# PREHISTORIC AND SAXON FEATURES AND MEDIEVAL LAND ALLOTMENT AT LOWER FARM, PENNINGTON, HAMPSHIRE

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### ABSTRACT

Excavations prior to mineral extraction revealed widespread evidence for medieval land allotment comprising fields, droveways and enclosures but without direct evidence for occupation. Other finds indicated a low level of prehistoric activity and, unexpectedly, evidence for early/middle Saxon occupation.

### INTRODUCTION

An excavation was carried out by Thames Valley Archaeological Services, in advance of gravel extraction from a parcel of land at Lower Farm, Pennington Hampshire (SZ315 935), in compliance with a planning condition. The archaeological potential of the site had been demonstrated by desktop study and evaluation (WA 2003; Anthony & Challis 2003).

The site is located on the south edge of the New Forest directly to the south of Lymington. The two fields excavated lie to the west of Lower Pennington Lane and Lower Farm and north of Iley Lane (Fig. 1). The site lies at approximately 5 m above Ordnance Datum. The fields were pasture, and sloped gently down from the north and west with a slight ridge aligned westeast across the southern field. The underlying geology is gravel (Osborne and Headon Beds) (BGS 1976). To the south lie salt marshes, at around 1 m above Ordnance Datum, which are protected by sea walls.

Pennington was first documented as *Penyton* in the 12th century and *Penington* in 1272. The Chantry Chapel was recorded from 1285 (Feet of Fines Hants file 13, no. 66) and it was listed as a vill in the Lay Subsidy Roll of 1327–8

(WA 2003). A small concentration of 12th-to 13th-century features (post holes, a hearth), was recorded c. 200 m to the south of the site during a watching brief in 1996, although there were few finds (WA 1996). There is no known Saxon evidence within 1 km of the site and very little in the wider area.

The area is known for the production of salt in medieval and later times (Lloyd 1967; KR Customs Acct bdle 137, no. 8 (Edw. III)). Documentary evidence in the form of grants, rentals and production figures from 1132 onwards confirms the existence of the medieval industry in the area but not its exact location; a more precise reference to salt production at Pennington dates from 1217 (Rot. Lit. Claus. (Rec. Com.) i 339). Extensive evidence for what appears to be salt working, at least some of which is thought to date from the 12th to 14th centuries, has been revealed at the site of Efford Landfill, about 1 km to the south-west of the site (WA 1999 and 2001). During the late medieval and early post-medieval periods there appears to have been a seaward shift in the industry continuing until the early 19th century when it went into serious decline.

## GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY AND EVALUATION

A geophysical survey (Mercer 2003) indicated faint linear anomalies thought to represent ditches and probably plough scars, and circular anomalies interpreted as ferrous objects. A 90-trench evaluation located archaeological features, centred on two areas, the first towards the south corner of the south field and the second centred in the north of the north field,

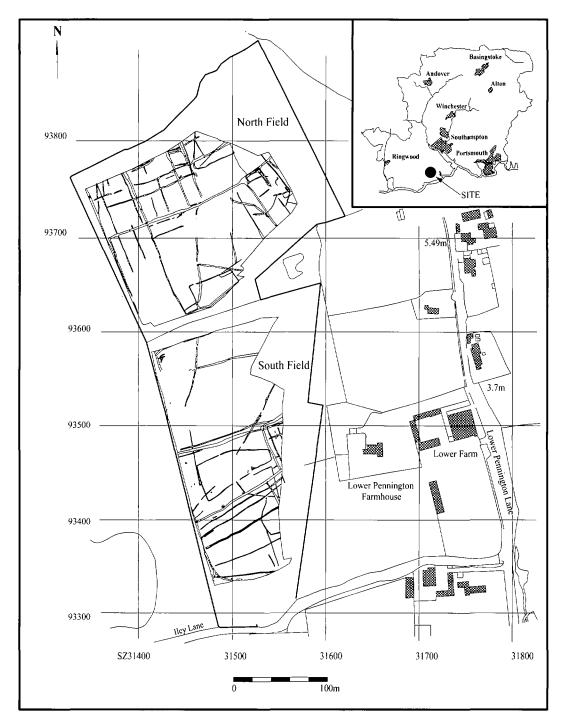


Fig. 1 Lower Farm, Pennington, site location, showing all excavated features

with some outlying features. These comprised ditches and gullies indicative of medieval field systems probably of 12th- to 13th-century date. There was little or no correlation between anomalies found by the geophysical surveys and features found in the trial trenching.

### THE EXCAVATION

Topsoil and overburden were removed by machine under constant archaeological supervision. Ditches and gullies were sampled by means of separately numbered slots, but are referred to in this report by a single overall number. Pits and postholes were half-sectioned as a minimum.

### PHASE SUMMARY

The majority of the features encountered on site have been assigned to the early medieval period and therefore the overview is that of a medieval landscape pattern. However, caution must be noted: no individual feature on site can be regarded as securely dated, as few contexts yielded more than five sherds of pottery. Phasing on stratigraphic grounds can be applied to some of the major ditches and by association to other elements, which appear to be parts of the same landscape. Some features which contained exclusively prehistoric or Saxon material can be considered to be of those dates. However, given the low sherd numbers in these features the same level of caution must again be noted. The few clearly post-medieval features are not discussed here.

## Phase 1: prehistoric

Pit 224 contained one sherd of a flint tempered jar which may be of later prehistoric date (Figs 2 and 4). This pit was 2.24 m by 1.43 m and 0.36 m deep. Five residual struck flints were also recovered during the fieldwork, which suggests a low level of earlier prehistoric activity in the area.

A segmented ditch (1005-1014-1053-

1054–1058) was aligned NE–SW for c. 115 m with a large (c. 40 m) gap in the centre of the alignment. This could be because the ditch was not deep enough to penetrate the subsoil in all places, but more probably the gap was intended. No dating evidence was recorded for this feature and stratigraphically all that can be said is that it is probably earlier than the 11th century. Segmented ditches, where dated, however, are usually assigned a prehistoric date and it is plausible this feature is also prehistoric in origin.

## Phase 2: early to middle Saxon

Pit 214, in the south field, contained forty-six sherds from no more than 3 vessels of chaff tempered pottery. This pit was roughly circular, 0.85 m by 0.80 m and 0.30 m deep (Figs 2 and 4). Close by were a number of similar, but undated pits (215, 216 and 218) and it is possible these may be contemporaneous with 214. The sherds from pit 214 can be considered primary refuse and are unlikely to have been deposited far from the occupied area which may lie beyond the stripped area further to the west. Five further Saxon sherds are residual finds in later ditches (1062 and 1086).

## Phase 3: late Saxon to early medieval

A small assemblage of pottery has been given a broad date from the mid/late Saxon to early medieval period. All of these finds are residual but again suggest occupation of this date in the environs. Some of the (essentially undated) ditches in the northern field are stratigraphically not later than the late 12th century and some in the southern field not later than the late 11th. It is possible that these features date to a late Saxon period of site development.

In the northern field, ditch 1071 (Fig. 2) defined the south-western corner of an enclosure, although the rest of the plan was not confirmed within the excavation area. It was at least 50 m by 50 m with a probable entrance to the south-east. In the south field, ditches 1007 and 1017 may be this early, as they were cut by Phase 4i ditch 1000.

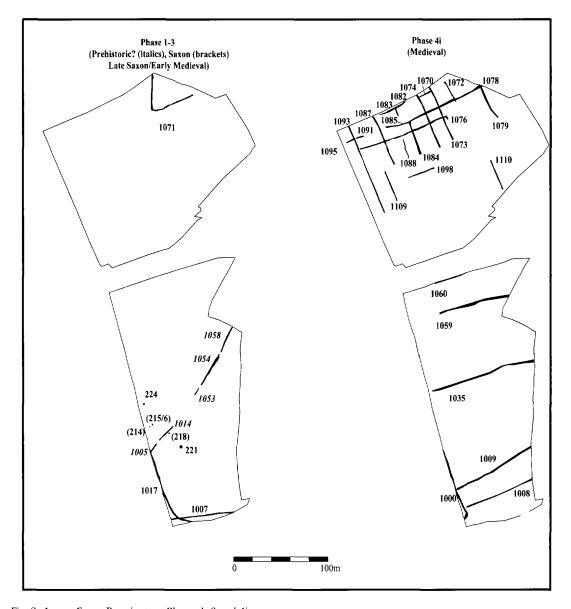


Fig. 2 Lower Farm, Pennington, Phases 1-3 and 4i

## Phase 4: medieval 12th–13th century

There is no ceramic basis for subdividing this phase, but the stratigraphy provides a very clear sequence of three field systems. The two dozen ditches of phase 4i produced just 64 sherds of pottery between them; a similar number of features in phase 4ii yielded 67 sherds, and phase 4iii, again with two dozen features, produced a total of 106 sherds of pottery.

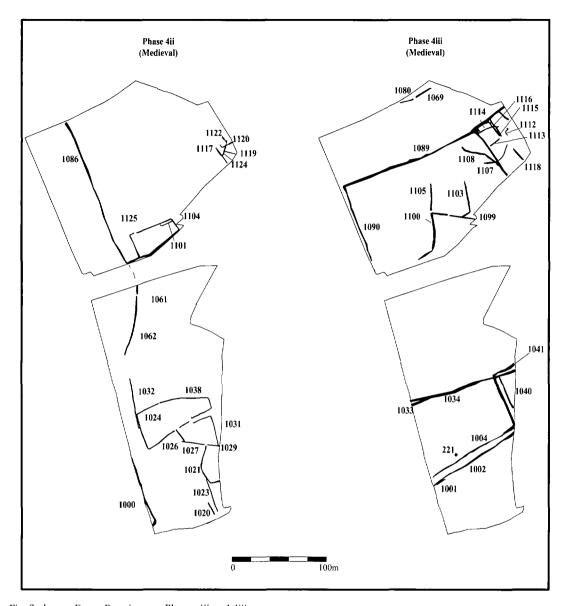


Fig. 3 Lower Farm, Pennington, Phases 4ii and 4iii

## Phase 4i

The next phase of activity on the site appears to be the excavation of boundaries, which divided the area into long, thin land divisions (Fig. 2) aligned broadly NE-SW. In the northern field this comprised the excavation of numerous ditches and gullies defining small rectilinear paddocks or stock pens, all aligned off a more major boundary 1078. They probably extended further than shown on plan but given the shal-

lowness of the features, they may not have been originally dug deep enough to penetrate the natural geology. There does not appear to be a standard unit of measurement to the fields but they are all quite small, around 20 m wide. There may be two phases within this scheme but it is difficult to disentangle them and they certainly represent the same pattern of land use.

In the southern field ditches 1000, 1008, 1009 and 1035 appear to be the next phase of development. There is nothing certain to indicate they are contemporary with the linear features in the northern field but they share a similar orientation and stratigraphically fall into the same broad phase.

## Phase 4ii

The next phase in the southern field appears to be the excavation of a series of smaller interlocking enclosures (Fig. 3). There were no internal features within any of the enclosures to suggest it was for settlement and it is possible it was for stock. The latest pottery within these features was of late 12th century date, but again from a landscape perspective, it is highly probable it is linked in an enclosure system with ditches 1021, 1026–7, 1029 and 1031 which contained late 12th century pottery. Probably contemporary with this was ditch 1023 which together with 1020 possibly represented a droveway.

It is probable that the above enclosures were sited within a larger field system, which extended into the northern field and also included ditch 1000, still in use. Again, direct stratigraphic evidence is lacking, however on a landscape perspective this arrangement is not out of place. Ditch 1032 appears to be part of this larger system as it respected enclosure 1024. This then links ditches 1061, 1062 and 1086 to the same system, and again ditch 1086 contained late 12th century pottery.

At the southern part of the northern field were again small enclosure systems which appeared to respect ditch 1086. Enclosure 1125 was roughly rectangular and enclosed an area of c. 0.18 ha with an entrance to the north, again no internal features were observed, apart

from a small subdivision in its north-west corner 1101 and stock management may have been its function.

### Phase 4iii

If the above field development hypothesis is correct, it appears that a droveway may be the next phase of activity in the southern field, marked by ditches 1001, 1002, 1004, 1040 and 1041. Elements of this truncated the most southerly of the phase 4ii enclosure ditches. However enclosure 1024/38 could still have been in use. The droveway entered the site from the east turned sharply to the south and then appeared to turn again after 60m to the south-west. The gap between the ditches was c. 6m and this droveway truncated boundary ditch 1034 which seems to have re-instituted the boundary previously marked by 1035 but out of use in the previous phase.

In the northern area of the site it appears that a large field was laid out by the excavation of ditch 1089/ 1090, cut across earlier ditches 1086, 1093, 1109 and others. At the eastern edge of this field, a series of paddocks was created by the digging of series of lesser gullies. It is probable that ditch 1034 defines the southern edge of this field, in which case it measured 240 m by 160 m. However, it is just as likely this large area would have been divided (somewhere in the unexcavated area), since the northern part includes subdivisions while the southern part is undivided.

The earlier small enclosure 1125 was replaced by irregular enclosure 1099/1100. This enclosed an area of at least 0.12 ha again with an entranceway in the north. Ditches 1103 and 1105 to the north seem have been contemporary with this enclosure and represent an outer paddock.

Apart from a couple of later (post-medieval) ditches, the site appears to have lain abandoned from the 13th century onwards.

A large circular pit (221), 3.00 m in diameter and 0.80 m deep produced no finds from its seven fills (Fig. 4) apart from charcoal fragments. This pit could be interpreted as a waterhole constructed as part of any one of the site's field systems.

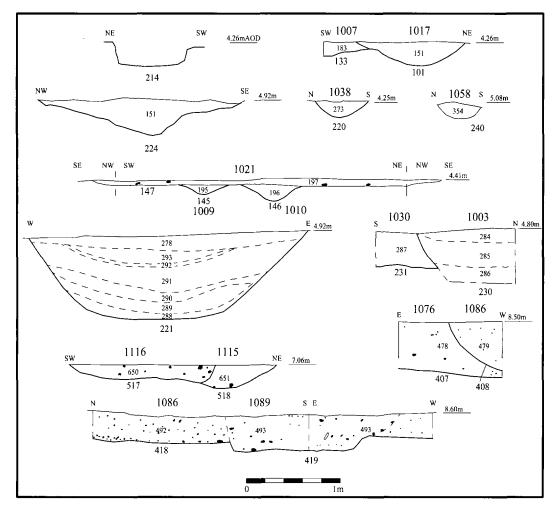


Fig. 4 Lower Farm, Pennington, selected sections

### **FINDS**

## Pottery by Alan Vince

Three hundred and fourteen sherds of pottery were recovered from the excavations, representing no more than 103 vessels and weighing 2.417 kg (Table 1).

## Prehistoric?

A sherd of a flint-tempered jar from the fill of feature 224 may be of later prehistoric date.

However, the sherd is featureless and weighs only 5 g.

## Early to middle Anglo-Saxon

Fifty one sherds of chaff-tempered pottery were recovered from three features, pit 214 (46 sherds, no more than 3 vessels), ditch 1062 (4 sherds from 1 vessel) and ditch 1086 (1 sherd). Except where the sherds were subsequently burnt, they have dark surfaces and dark grey cores, with blackening around the voids left by organic inclusions. Most of the sherds are

undecorated body sherds but those from ditch 1062 appear to come from a biconical vessel with faceting on the carination. Facetted, carinated vessels are characteristic of Anglo-Saxon pottery of 5th-century date although pottery of that date in Hampshire is often mineral-tempered rather than chaff-tempered. Chaff-tempering appears to be by far the most common tempering technique used in Anglo-Saxon south central England from the 6th to the early 8th century, at which point the technique was completely replaced by a range of mineral tempers (Hamerow *et al.* 1994; Timby 1988).

## Late Saxon to early medieval

Pottery with the bag-shaped profile and everted rim with thickened neck, typical of the 8th to 10th centuries, was present (for example, a jar rim from ditch 1089). However, several vessels made in this fabric (Fabric 1) have features which are probably post-conquest or immediately pre-conquest in date, such as fettling of the body ('scratch marking'), globular bodies with everted rims without any thickening at the neck and sagging bases with sharp base angles. Therefore, where featureless body sherds of Fabric 1 occur they can only be broadly dated to the mid/late Saxon or early medieval periods. One rim (from ditch 1090, slot 417) comes from a vessel which is either wheelthrown or wheel-finished, reminiscent in form of late Saxon Portchester ware.

Only two vessels in different fabrics are likely to be of immediately pre- or post-Conquest date. One, from ditch 1038 (Fabric 2: Fig. 5: 1) is represented by the top half of the jar and has a globular body and sharp neck angle and simple everted rim. This feature is typical of vessels produced in the 11th/12th centuries in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire but the darkstained flint gravel temper suggests a source in an area of Tertiary deposits, such as the Hampshire Basin. A second vessel is represented by a single sherd, from ditch 1069. This vessel is tempered with abundant onliths in a fine-textured, slightly micaceous groundmass, and is probably an example of Gloucester TF41B, produced at Haresfield in the Vale of Gloucester from the mid 11th to the early 13th centuries. However, there are two reasons to doubt this find: the calcareous inclusions in fabric 2 are completely leached, yet these ooliths are present in good condition, and; at recent excavations at Quedgeley, the adjoining parish to Haresfield, this fabric is the most common ware present (Vince forthcoming).

Fabric 1: Abundant coarse quartzose sand, composed of rounded, subangular and angular quartz, rare polished quartz and subangular flint (some brown-stained). The groundmass is usually dark brown or black and inclusionless.

Fabric 2: Moderate mixed coarse sand, composed of angular brown-stained and white flint and well-rounded calcareous inclusions (now all leached). The groundmass contains quartz and sparse muscovite silt.

#### Medieval

Two hundred and twenty eight sherds, representing no more than 73 vessels and weighing 1.974 kg, date to the post-Conquest medieval period. None appears to date later than the mid 13th century, since they include no wheelthrown wares and no highly decorated glazed wares such as those produced in south Hampshire and Laverstock from the mid 13th century onwards.

The majority of these sherds have the same fabric, Fabric 4. These vessels are all handmade and include jars, jugs, storage jars and a probable curfew. However, jars are by far the most common form (37 out of 43 vessels). Glaze is found on the exterior of the jugs and the interior base of some of the jars. Mostly, it is a plain lead glaze but a sherd from the rim and handle of a large storage jar (Fig. 5: 2) has a spot of copper-stained glaze on the interior. The use of copper as a glaze colorant is known in the 12th century (e.g. Developed Stamford ware) but probably did not become widespread in southern and western England until the 13th century. One of the jugs, represented by a collection of non-joining sherds, has features which suggest an early 13th-century or later date, including a ribbed neck and cordon at the neck (from ditch 1115).

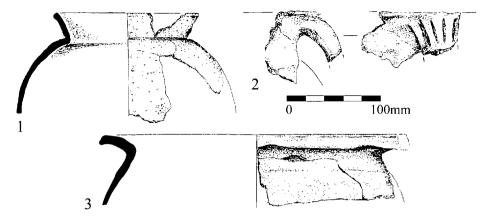


Fig. 5 Lower Farm, Pennington, selected pottery (see text for details)

Other wares present are south-east Wiltshire scratch-marked jars (such as a large fragment from ditch 1073: Fig. 5: 3) and glazed tripod pitchers, probably produced in the Salisbury area, including Laverstock (27 sherds, from no more than 19 vessels); South Hampshire sandy wares (15 sherds, no more than nine vessels) and a few sherds of a coarse white-firing ware (Fabric 5). The latter consist of a sherd from a handmade glazed vessel and two sherds from a handled storage jar with a strap handle which has thumbing down the back of the handle.

Fabric 4: Handmade, moderate coarse quartzose sand temper. The sand consists of overgrown quartz grains, polished rounded quartz grains and subangular white flint up to 2.0 mm. The groundmass contains abundant angular quartz up to 0.2 mm and is usually oxidized, light brown, often with a light grey core.

Fabric 5: Handmade, abundant coarse quartzose sand temper. The sand consists of polished quartz and sparse white flint. The groundmass is an inclusionless white-firing clay.

#### Post-medieval

A single sherd of Verwood ware was recovered, from feature 22 (1075). This sherd comes from a jar with an internal glaze and hooked rim, not

a common post-medieval form, and this vessel may, therefore, date to the early years of the Verwood industry, which is first documented in the 15th century.

### Discussion

Many of the assemblages consist of groups of sherds from the same vessel, indicating probably that they are primary refuse deposits and certainly not the result of a manure scatter. Such assemblages include one with chaff-tempered pottery (pit 214), one of Saxo-Norman date (ditch 1069) and several of medieval date, including vessels with typological features which suggest a 13th-century date. In the absence of demonstrable occupied areas, this suggests that the pottery originated from close to the site.

Most of the pottery can either be paralleled by types current in the Southampton/Winchester area (Brown 2002; Platt & Coleman-Smith 1975) or in south-east Wiltshire (Musty & Ewence 1969). However, given the similarity in geological background of the New Forest to these areas it is by no means certain from a visual study that the Pennington pottery was obtained from those areas, rather than being made in or on the fringes of the New Forest but in similar traditions. No pottery was identified as being of Dorset or south-western origin and no imported types were present.

*Table 1* Pottery by phase (sherd count)

Phase	Preh	Echaf	F1	F2	Glos41B	F4&5	SEW	S Hants sandy	VERW	Total
2	1	46	_	_	_	_	_	***	-	47
3	-	_	1	-	_	_	-	_	-	1
4i	_	_	4	_	_	46	14	_		64
4ii	_	5	4	10	1	31	4	12	_	67
4iii	_	_	7	_	-	94	3	2	_	106
later and/ or unstrat	_	-	6	_	-	15	6	1	1	29
Total	1	51	22	10	1	146	27	15	1	314

## Struck flint by Steve Ford

Just five struck flints were recovered: two flakes, one broken flake and two spalls, all from the sieved samples, from ditches 1016, 1019 and 436. None is closely datable and whilst they are probably Neolithic or Bronze Age, there is a possibility that they are accidental by-products of the ditch digging where they were found. Seven pieces of burnt flint may have been the result of heathland and scrub clearance.

## Other finds

A small assemblage of 106 pieces of fired clay weighing 258 g was recovered. A close examination suggests these were fired/heated in the presence of salt, giving a distinctive reddish colour. None of the fragments appears to be from briquetage however. Other finds from the site were very few and in very poor condition. No significant information is forthcoming from them; details can be found in the archive. Although 64 bulk soil samples were sieved, no charred remains of cultivated seeds such as cereals or pulses, or nut shells were observed. The majority contained small amounts of wood charcoal with a very few containing isolated examples of weed seeds (unidentified).

Similarly, the tiny amount of animal bone from the site was all in extremely poor condition: only two teeth (one cattle, one sheep/goat) were identifiable.

### DISCUSSION

Inevitably, for such a large area of excavation, finds and deposits of several periods are represented.

The earliest finds are a few prehistoric struck flints which probably represent no more than casually lost items. A single late Iron Age sherd possibly dates an isolated pit but may equally be residual. A length of segmented ditch is also considered possibly prehistoric; speculation on its function seems pointless in the circumstances.

A somewhat surprising discovery is the early or middle Saxon material on the site. No Saxon sites are known for the immediate area, and there is very limited archaeological evidence for occupation in this period in the broader area, although there are plenty of Anglo-Saxon place names. In Lymington to the east, some Saxon pottery was found at South Street, and a gully and a pit close to the church have been suggested to be of this date (Edwards 2002). It is conceivable that a higher mean sea level in

this period may have driven settlement further inland.

Early or middle Saxon deposits are represented by a single pit and residual material in later features. A small number of other pits may be of this date although no pottery came from them; again, beyond their existence, these features tell us little. These deposits, close to the western boundary of the southern field, may be the entirety of the evidence of Saxon occupation, as areas further west are now a landfill site.

The majority of the features excavated are elements of several phases of changing medieval land allotment. By virtue of their scale and the opportunity for detailed investigation, gravel extraction sites are ideal for allowing examination of landscape organization, rural settlement patterns and the articulation of social relationships in the landscape. This site shows how sparse the evidence can be unless it is seen on a broad enough scale. Even with the large area opened here, and a high sample fraction of each ditch excavated, much is still unclear, and a certain amount of faith is required to permit any sort of interpretation.

The medieval features on site comprised droveways and successive field systems altered over what appears to be a relatively short period, although given the processes by which a handful of sherds of pottery arrive in a ditch, this may be of several hundred years duration. Some of the changes to the system appear to be organic and it is possible that some of the alterations were additions to a field system that was still in use rather than replacements. Others, however, do appear to represent substantial alteration of the landscape. In contrast to the somewhat static pattern that it is all too easy to envisage for medieval farming, similar patterns of renewal and reorganization can be recognized in medieval field systems elsewhere, although excavated examples seem to be rare (e.g., Anthony & Taylor 2006), and, as here, may be difficult to date unless viewed across a large enough area.

The paucity of finds and general absence of small features such as pits and postholes, despite the survival of shallow gullies forming the field boundaries, suggest that the area of the site was not occupied at any stage. The site was sufficiently far away from a settlement for little rubbish to be distributed in the features identified, giving rise to very sparse dating evidence and very little useful economic evidence. A settlement has been located further to the south, where features such as postholes, a hearth, medieval pottery and ceramic building material were recorded (WA 1999; 2001).

On a wider scale the evidence from this site and adjacent areas provides an overview of the landscape in the medieval period. There appears to be a settlement on the higher gravel ridge with agricultural fields located to the north. To the south-east of this settlement, on the lower marshes, salt production has been identified archaeologically at Efford Landfill site (WA 1999) and, in the area more generally, from documentary and cartographic sources (WA 2002).

The typical overview of medieval settlement is that of nucleated villages surrounded by open fields and ridge and furrow cultivation (Taylor 1983). This is clearly the established pattern for a large proportion of England, especially the claylands of the English Midlands, though other regions, with an emphasis on pastoral farming, maintained a dispersed settlement pattern with enclosed land (Roberts & Wrathmell 2000). Recent research suggests the regional patterns may mask local complexity (e.g., Rippon et al. 2006; Oosthuizen 2005; Foard 2001), a question on which excavated evidence may shed more light in future. The evidence here for the presence of paddocks and stock control could merely be a detail in the complex working of any medieval settlement, or reflect a wider pattern of medieval land use. Excavations at Somerley, 25km to the north-west suggest a similar pattern of land division (Smith 1996; Oram 2004).

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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approved by Mr Ian Wykes, then archaeological officer of Hampshire County Council, and were funded by New Milton Sand and Gravel. The majority of the fieldwork and initial post-excavation work was supervised by Helen Moore with Andrew Taylor assisting in the final stages of fieldwork. The other members of the site team were Nial Armstrong, Natasha Bennett, Simon Cass, Sarah Coles, Danielle Colls, Ceri Falys, Pamela Jenkins, Richard Oram, Andy

Mundin and Andrew Taylor. Jo Pine, assisted by Natasha Bennett and Simon Cass, undertook the remainder of the post-excavation work. Stratascan Ltd conducted the geophysical survey. Ceri Falys examined the animal bone. Steve Preston prepared the report for publication. The archive will be deposited with Hampshire Museum, under accession number A2003.51. The site code is LFP03/33.

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