INVESTIGATIONS AT WARREN WOOD, LITTLE MARLOW, 2014–2018

MARTIN FOWKES

With contributions from JOHN LAKER, ANDY FORD, PAUL BLINKHORN AND KATHY GARLAND

From June 2014 to October 2018, Archaeology In Marlow (AIM) carried out Project WW14, a further intrusive investigation within the inner of the two enclosures at Warren Wood. The purpose was to locate structures and obtain artefacts that might help to date this part of the site and determine related structures and activities. These investigations confirm previous work (WW10) suggesting the inner enclosure dates from the medieval period, although artefacts from earlier periods were identified. The purpose and exact form of the structures were not determined.

Introduction

WW14 is the fourth phase of a project carried out by AIM at Warren Wood (Fig. 1), where an earthwork containing an inner and outer enclosure is located. The site was thought to date from medieval times and both AIM and the landowners were interested in trying to determine the purpose of the site and find dating evidence.

Throughout the various phases of the project, AIM gave opportunities to as many members and visitors as possible to explore the areas of archaeology they were interested in, with training provided in all aspects of the work during the investigations. Guidance from professional archaeologists was sought during all four phases.

Geology and Topography

Warren Wood lies within the parish of Little Marlow, off Winchbottom Lane, at NGR SU 8715 8972. The earthwork is visible from the public footpath behind the AIM information board. The enclosures are on private land and permission must be obtained from the landowners, A & R Mash, in order to visit them. The site is not scheduled, or an SSI or SSSI.

Situated on the chalk hills of the Chilterns about 100m above sea level, the inner enclosure of the earthwork is about 50m in diameter and the outer enclosure measures roughly 75m in diameter. The earthwork is constructed on a plateau of glacial sand and gravel, which overlies the chalk bedrock. There is a good sprinkling of trees on the site. Beech, sessile oak, ash and holly predominate, along with a liberal covering of brambles, ferns and bluebells.

Archaeological Background

There have been three previous AIM projects at Warren Wood.

Between 2005 and 2008 AIM conducted part of its ROMADAM (Recording Of Marlow And District's Ancient Monuments) Project within Warren Wood. Although the enclosures were accurately surveyed, no decisive dating evidence was found at this time.

For the WW10 project (2010–11) AIM excavated four test pits (Fig. 2, 1 to 4 and 5 to 8 respectively) in each enclosure and carried out a resistivity survey and some soil sampling. The inner enclosure pits (5 to 8) yielded substantial amounts of medieval pottery and roof tile, along with a large amount of pieces of flint. This suggested a building or buildings with occupation/use dates of around AD1050 until AD1400 but probably not much later. Some late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pottery indicated a much earlier occupation of the site. There were very few finds in the test pits (1 to 4) in the outer enclosure, suggesting this might have been used for keeping animals.

The aim of WW12 (2012–14) was to excavate a trench (test pit 9) across the bank and ditch of the outer enclosure (Fig. 2) to see if the bank

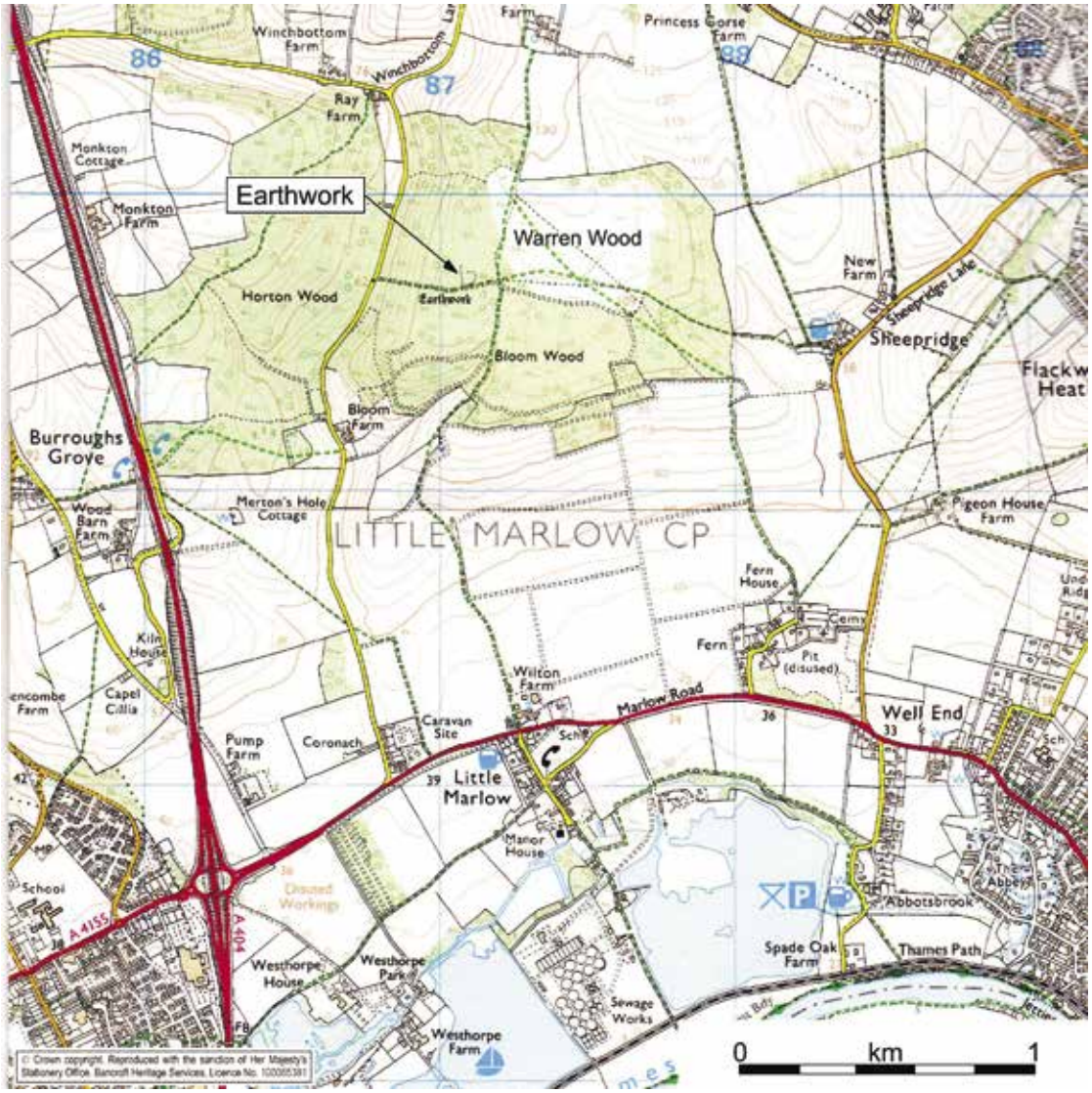

FIGURE 1 Site Location

was a naturally occurring feature or a man-made construction, and to accurately date it. The whole operation was undertaken as a training event, to give AIM members an insight into archaeological surveying and excavation techniques. Excavation showed that a naturally occurring bank had been raised by around 1 metre by digging a shallow ditch or cutting into/scarping the slope and using the excavated material to enhance the bank. This material incorporated small quantities of finds from earlier periods, including pottery roof tile and worked flint. The fact that the pottery sherds were worn and also relatively small indicates that they were residual. From the evidence gained, it is considered most likely that raising took place in the medieval period.

The ROMADAM project was published as a book in 2008. The WW10 and WW12 projects have been reported in Records of Buckinghamshire 53 and 55 respectively. In addition, reports

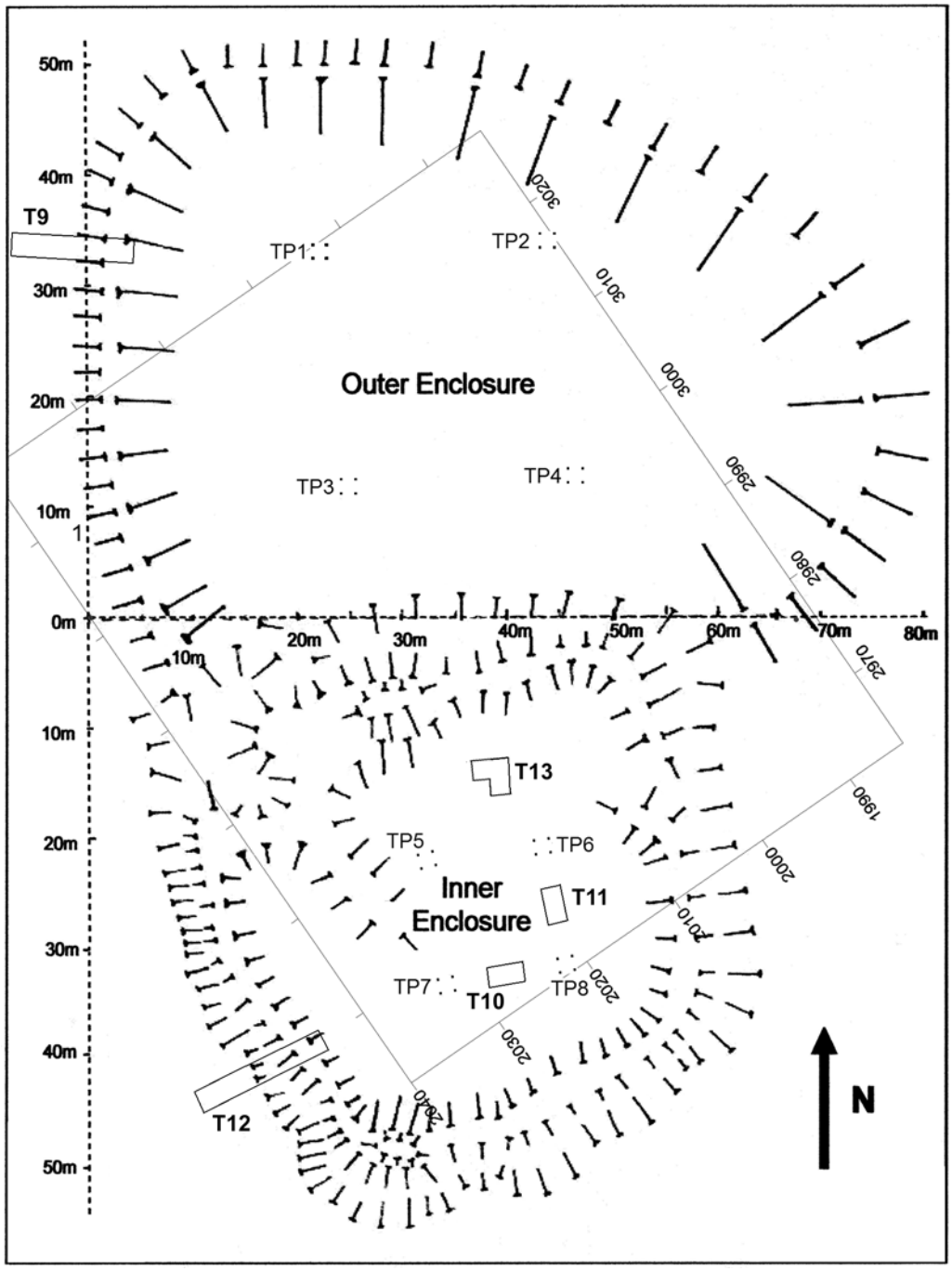

FIGURE 2 Overall site plan, showing test pits 1 to 13

on these two projects were produced for the Bucks Historic Environment Record (HER) in Aylesbury and for AIM members.

WW14 Excavation

Aims and Strategy

The aim of the WW14 project was to carry out further investigations within the inner enclosure. Excavation would be used to determine the date of construction and the date and nature of the usage and activities. This would include an attempt to locate any buildings, including a flint wall previously reported by local archaeologist Arthur Boarder in 1978. Professional advice was given throughout the project by Phil Andrews of Wessex Archaeology.

Methodology

In the inner enclosure between the test pits, 6 and 8 and 7 and 8, excavated during project WW10, new test pits were marked out and excavated (Fig. 2, 10 & 11). In addition, test pit 12 was marked out and excavated across the inner enclosure bank and ditch. A resistivity survey carried out by the Berkshire Archaeological Research Group suggested a location for a further test pit (Fig. 2, 13) in the area of the inner enclosure where Arthur Boarder reported a flint wall. . All trenches were excavated down to the natural geology, and back-filled on completion of recording. Also, a series of measurements were taken across the bank and ditch (including Test pit 12) to produce ten profiles representative of the monument (Fig. 8).

Test Pit 10

This trench was first excavated as a 1 metre square and later extended by 0.5m on the east and west sides. Five contexts were excavated, the most significant of which was context 3, which comprised a layer of compact flint rubble covering the entire trench (Fig. 3). There was also a significant amount of large flint rubble in context 2 and the total weight of the flint from both contexts was 335kg. The flint was probably the remains of a

Figure 3 Trench 10, context 3: flint rubble layer

wall footing, but it did not appear to be in situ and the position or alignment of the wall could not be determined. No trace of mortar was found.

Below the flint, context 4 was a compact layer similar to context 3 in Test pit 11 (below), with few finds. It may represent an external surface.

Context 5 was an irregular depression or cut into undisturbed natural filled with darker softer material but did not have an obvious shape or function.

Test Pit 11

This trench was first excavated as a 1 metre square and later extended by 0.5m on the north and south sides. It was similar to Test pit 10, though it produced a lot more broken roof tile and much less flint rubble. Four contexts were identified. Context 3 is similar to context 4 in Test pit 10 and may represent an external surface. At the northern end of the trench contexts 3 and 4 both yielded several pieces of very poor, coarse hand-made pottery as well as medieval pottery, which suggests these contexts have been disturbed, possibly by tree-root disturbance. Context 5 consisted of an irregular-shaped cut into the natural geology and may have been the result of a fallen or uprooted tree.

Test Pit 13

The resistivity survey did not give any clear indication of structures or other features, possibly due to the environmental conditions and the large number of trees in the area. Phil Andrews of Wessex Archaeology suggested excavating an L-shaped trench to investigate a potential wall junction revealed by the survey. This was in the area where Arthur Boarder reported a flint wall.

Test pit 13 was opened as a 2 metre square with the south-western quadrant omitted. Context 3 comprised a compact layer of flint rubble which roughly matched the resistivity results and suggested a corner where two walls joined (Fig. 4). Two additional trenches 0.5m wide were dug 0.5m from the north-eastern and north-western edges of the main trench to determine if the suggested walls extended in those directions, but the flint rubble

FIGURE 4 Trench 13, context 3: flint rubble

was less concentrated in these trenches. The flint rubble was very similar to that found in Test pit 10, weighing 170 kg in total.

Test Pit 12

This comprised a trench across the inner enclosure bank and ditch measuring 10 x 1m and was divided into 1m squares, although not all squares were excavated. The ground was very hard and stony, particularly on the top of the bank (Fig. 6) and an auger was used to help distinguish the natural geology from the overlying deposits. There was little difference between the four main layers in the ditch and very few finds within them. A piece of roof tile and a few pieces of pottery near the bottom of the ditch strongly suggest a medieval construction date for the ditch and bank.

Surveying

The positions of 10 profiles across the inner enclosure bank and ditch were surveyed in and measurements taken at 1m intervals. Profile 10 was one side of Test pit 12. Fig. 7 shows the profile locations and Fig. 8 the profiles recorded.

The Finds

Following completion of the excavations, the pottery was reported on by Paul Blinkhorn, who prepared the pottery report for the 2010–11 excavation. Other artefacts were examined by staff at Wessex Archaeology.

Pottery

by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 603 sherds with a total weight of 6475g. It comprised a mixture of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age and medieval material. The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

Figure 5 Test pit 12, looking west across the bank and ditch

FIGURE 6 Test pit 12, square A, showing the hard stony material excavated

Prehistoric

The following fabric types were noted:

F1: Sand and Flint. Moderate to dense sub-rounded quartz up to 0.5mm, most 0.2mm or less. Sparse angular white flint up to 1mm, some carbonized organic material. 5 sherds, 394g.

F2: Coarse flint. Moderate to dense angular white flint up to 2mm. Moderate to dense sub-rounded quartz up to 0.5mm, most 0.2mm or less, some carbonized organic material. 92 sherds, 1964g.

F3: Fine flint. Rare to sparse sub-angular flint up to 0.5mm, sparse to moderate sub-rounded quartz up to 0.5mm, most 0.2mm or less, some carbonized organic material. Thin-walled, burnished vessels. 14 sherds, 92g.

F5: Sand. Moderate to dense fine quartz up to 0.5mm, most 0.1mm or less. Rare flint up to 1mm. 31 sherds, 706g.

The range of fabric types is similar to those from previous excavations here, other than the sandy F5 fabric. It is typical of the Iron Age pottery of the region, and can be paralleled at a number of sites, such as George Street, Aylesbury (Allen & Dalwood 1983) and Oxford Road, Stone (Last 2001).

The pottery from contexts 3 and 4 in Test pit 11 appears to be a single deposit, with a number of cross-fits noted. The medieval sherds from the former are likely to be intrusive, although they could be the result of medieval disturbance of the top of context 4.

The range of vessel types is very similar to that from previous excavations, with many of the jars having finger-tipped rims (Fig. 9) and/or shoulders, and/or fairly sharp shoulder carinations. A fairly large fragment of a finely-potted bowl with a sharp shoulder carination was noted in Test pit 11 context 4, and fragments of other vessels of the same type occurred in the same deposit. As before, this is all very typical of the pottery of the Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age in the region (e.g. Last 2001).

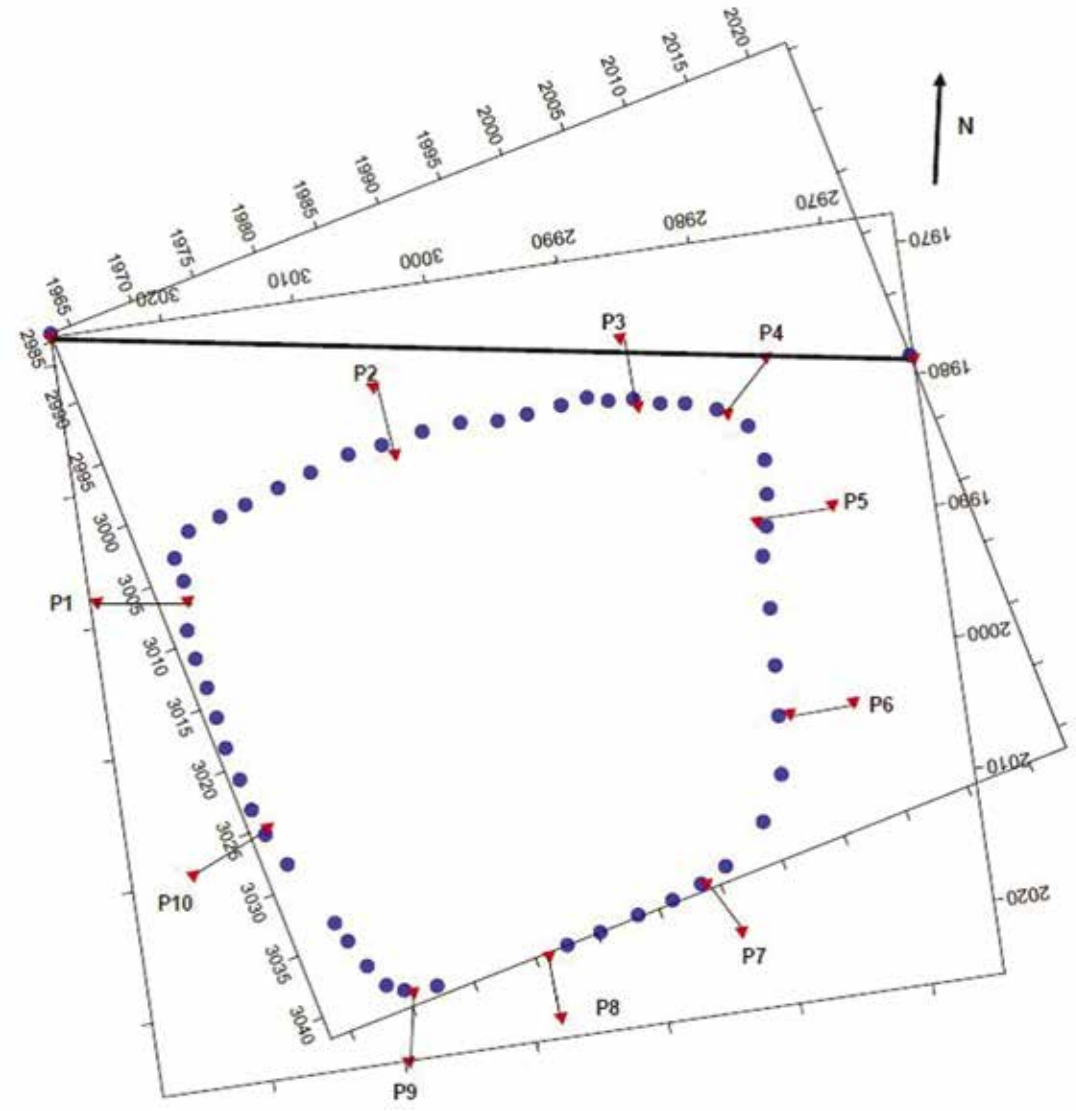

FIGURE 7 Locations of the inner enclosure profiles

Medieval

The medieval assemblage was recorded using the conventions of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit type-series (e.g. Mynard & Zeepvat 1992; Zeepvat *et al.* 1994), as follows:

MS2: Medieval Sandy Ware, 12th – 14th century. 11 sherds, 71g.

MS3: Medieval Grey Sandy Wares, mid-11th – late 14th century. 435 sherds, 3068g.

MS29: Flint-gritted Ware, 12th – 13th century. 15 sherds, 180g.

The MS2 medieval sandy wares all appear to be Oxford Ware, i.e. Oxfordshire county type-series fabric OXY, and dated late 11th – 14th century (Mellor 1994). The flint tempered wares are largely

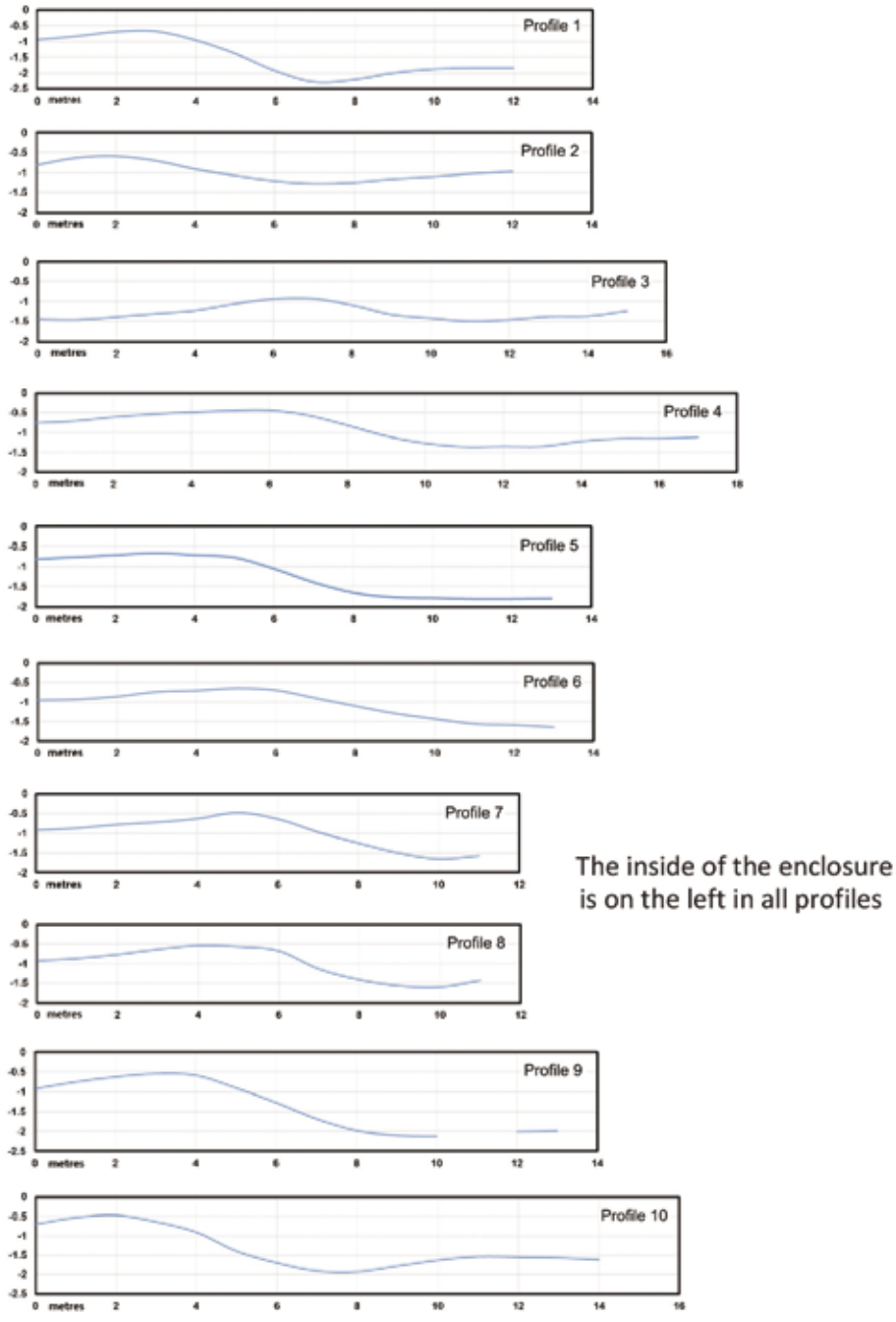

FIGURE 8 Profiles of the inner enclosure

FIGURE 9 Prehistoric pottery with finger-tipped decoration

Newbury A/B types of broadly the same date as OXY (Mepham 1997), other than a single sherd of "M40 Ware" (Hinton 1973) with typical scratched decoration from Test pit 11 context 3.

The MS3 Grey wares are very typical finds at sites in the region, and were manufactured at numerous sites in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire. The ware was given a start date of the mid-11th century for finds from the Milton Keynes area (e.g. Mynard & Zeepvat 1992), but recent work (Blackmore & Pearce 2010) has suggested that the bulk of the industry dates to the mid/late 12th – 14th century, and so this date has been used here, and should be for finds of this material from previous excavations at the site.

All the rims are from jars, apart from two bowl rims in MS3, one from Trench 10 context 4 and the other from Test pit 13 context 1. This is a typical pattern for the earlier part of the medieval period. The complete lack of fairly common glazed wares suggests that there was very little medieval activity after the beginning of the 13th century. However, the presence of medieval roof tile in some contexts (see below) suggests that some of them are of 14th century or later date, possibly due to later disturbance at that time.

Ceramic Building Material

A small assemblage of ceramic building material was noted, mainly in the form of roof-tile. The occurrence by number of weight of fragments is shown in Table 2.

Some of the roof-tile, the fragments from Test pit 13 contexts 1 and 2, Test pit 13A contexts 1 and 2 and Test pit 13B context 2 were very over-fired and were warped with glassy, vitrified surfaces. The distortion of the fragments indicates very strongly that the tiles could not have been used and are almost certainly manufacturing waste, suggesting that there was a tile-kiln in the vicinity of these excavations, or that waste from such a facility was introduced to the site as landfill. Given that the site is near the medieval tile manufactory at Penn, either of these explanations is possible. The only other possible explanation is that there was a building on the site which was destroyed by a very severe fire, but the archaeological evidence does not appear to support this.

The tiles themselves are very similar to Penn types (Green 2005) suggesting a 14th to 15th-century date for them. This is somewhat later than the pottery dates for the contexts in which they occurred would indicate, suggesting that there may have been later disturbance of the upper deposits in the trenches where the tile occurred.

The unvitrified fragment from Test pit 13 context 2 was in a red sandy fabric with a grey core and was 12mm thick. It had parts of two suspension holes 15mm in diameter spaced 45mm apart at one end. It is of medieval date, likely to be of Penn type. The small fragment of ridge-tile was 16mm thick, and in a similar fragment to the unvitrified tile with suspension holes.

Pottery and Tile Densities

by John Laker

The distribution of the medieval tile and pottery for all the trenches within the inner enclosure has been analysed. The table below shows the densities of the material per trench. The densities for the tile and pottery are not the same, except Test pit 5 has significantly less of either material, so may have been a little bit further away from any building. The tile is concentrated in test pits 8, 10 and 11 and the pottery in test pits 7, 10 and 13. Although the tile is therefore mostly in the south-eastern part of the enclosure, this does not prove that the building(s) were in that area as the tile could easily have been moved after any buildings were demolished

TABLE 1 Pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type

			F1		*F2*		*F3*		*F5*		*MS3*		*MS29*		*MS2*		
Test Pit	*SQ*	*Cntxt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*Date*
10		1									23	108					M12thC
10		2			1	6					23	203					M12thC
10		3									15	151					M12thC
10		4			3	12					27	243	12	150			M12thC
10		5									2	4					M12thC
11		1			7	56					17	125					M12thC
11		2			6	36					11	67					M12thC
11		3	1	62	21	496			7	78	7	43					M12thC
11		4	4	332	49	1324	14	92	24	628	1	3					LBA/ EIA
12	E	2									1	2					M12thC
12	F	2									2	2					M12thC
12	G	1			1	5					6	21					M12thC
12	G	2									2	46					
12	G	4									3	11					
12	H	1			1	1					1	6					M12thC
13		1									67	323					M12thC
13		2									103	827					M12thC
13		3			2	18					12	131					M12thC
13		4			1	10					14	131			4	43	M12thC
13A		1									8	30					M12thC
13A		2									32	199	3	30	4	9	
13A		3									4	41					M12thC
13A		4									8	97			1	10	M12thC
13B		1									17	97					M12thC
13B		2									25	128			1	4	M12thC
13B		3									3	25			1	5	M12thC
13B		4									1	4					M12thC
		Totals	**5**	**394**	**92**	**1964**	**14**	**92**	**31**	**706**	**435**	**3068**	**15**	**180**	**11**	**71**	

or collapsed. The small size of the trenches also makes it difficult to reach any meaningful conclusions although these distribution densities could be used to help plan any future investigations.

Struck Flint
by Kathy Garland

The most recent work at the site has produced 57 struck flint flakes of probable prehistoric date. These comprise 18 tertiary flakes, 36 secondary flakes, two primary flakes and one pebble; many flakes show possible reuse.

TABLE 2 CBM occurrence by number of weight of fragments per type

Test Pit	*Sq*	*Cntxt*	*Roof tile, vitrified*		*Flat Roof tile*		*Brick*		*Ridge tile*	
			No	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*
10		1					1	125		
12	G	4			1	93				
13		1	1	57						
13		2	2	166	1	278				
13A		1	2	22						
13A		2	7	402					1	23
13B		2	4	185						
Totals			**16**	**832**	**2**	**371**	**1**	**125**	**1**	**23**

TABLE 3 Medieval pottery and tile densities per test pit

	Medieval roof tile				*Medieval pottery*		
Test Pit	*Area (sq m)*	*Weight (g)*	*Avge/sq metre*	*% of whole*	*Weight (g)*	*Avge/ sq metre*	*% of whole*
5	1	2550	2550	2.4	4	4	0.3
6	2.25	18402	8179	7.8	475	211	10.4
7	2.25	9969	4431	4.2	1266	563	27.8
8	1	40850	40850	38.9	269	269	13.3
10	2	35394	17697	16.9	859	430	21.3
11	2	45456	22728	21.6	238	119	5.9
13	5	42886	8577	8.2	2134	427	21.1
Totals		**195507**	**105012**	**100**	**5245**	**2023**	**100**

Patination on the struck flint varies considerably, from incipient to heavy on the dorsal or ventral face, the ventral surface usually having an incipient or fresh surface. The majority have incipient patination, with heavy patination on approximately a quarter of the flakes.

The majority of the flakes are medium blades (33), with 20 squat and one long blade. Most of the flakes have a hinged termination, with six examples feathered/conchoidal. A small number of flakes are broken at the distal or platform end.

Only two of the 57 flakes are of note:

Flake 1 (Test pit 12, Sq J, context 1) is a damaged end scraper, with approximately one-half missing. It was made on a short tertiary flake and has a striking platform and a large bulb of percussion suggesting it was made with a hard hammer. The flake is thick and narrows towards the proximal end. Retouch is abrupt, minimal and with wide, short flakes removed. This piece is likely to be either later Neolithic or Bronze Age, with the latter date more likely.

Flake 2 (Test pit 12 B, context 1) is a tertiary flake,

FIGURE 10 Tertiary flint flake

with the remains of a flake removed from the dorsal surface. The platform and some edges are damaged, with a possible rolled edge at the distal end of the lateral edge (Fig. 10).

Iron

Approximately 14 iron objects were recovered, including 13 probable nails. The nails are in very poor, fragmentary condition, at least one comprising the shank only, and are not closely datable. Possibly as many as eight are 'fiddle-key' type, probably used with horseshoes, while there is a single larger nail fragment with a flat head.

The only other object is approximately half of a probable prick spur from Test pit 13-B, context 2 (Fig 11). The surviving arm is formed of a flattened D-section strip (the surfaces lost to corrosion and flaking) 120mm long and 10mm wide, increasing to a width of 18mm at the oval-shaped terminal; this is perforated by a single sub-rectangular hole measuring 9 x 5mm. The 'goad' is of simple conical form, 12mm in length. Such spurs are likely to date between the mid-11th century and the end of the 13th century, when they declined in popularity (Ellis 2002).

Other Finds

The small quantity (16 pieces/184g) of burnt flint is perhaps most likely related to prehistoric (Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age) activity but is intrinsically undatable, while the few pieces of stone

FIGURE 11 Medieval prick spur

retained (including chalk and flint nodules) all appear to be unworked.

The only animal bones (Test pit 11, context 2) are from a chicken of uncertain date.

CONCLUSIONS

The evidence of these excavations supports the conclusions of the WW10 project, but has not enabled us to add much in our understanding of the buildings within the inner enclosure. The significant amount of flint rubble is probably from wall footings for a small number of small buildings, rather than evidence for one larger building, but this could not be confirmed. It is assumed that the main part of the walls were constructed of other material as there is not enough flint rubble to suggest that the walls were entirely built of flint. No mortar was found. The function of the buildings cannot be determined, though the large amount of pottery strongly suggests that domestic activities took place.

The majority of the pottery dates from the mid/late 12th – 14th century, but as Paul Blinkhorn notes above, occupation may have ceased early in the 13th century as there is none of the common glazed wares normally found after this date. However, the large quantity of medieval roof tile of 14th – 15th century date suggests a later phase of

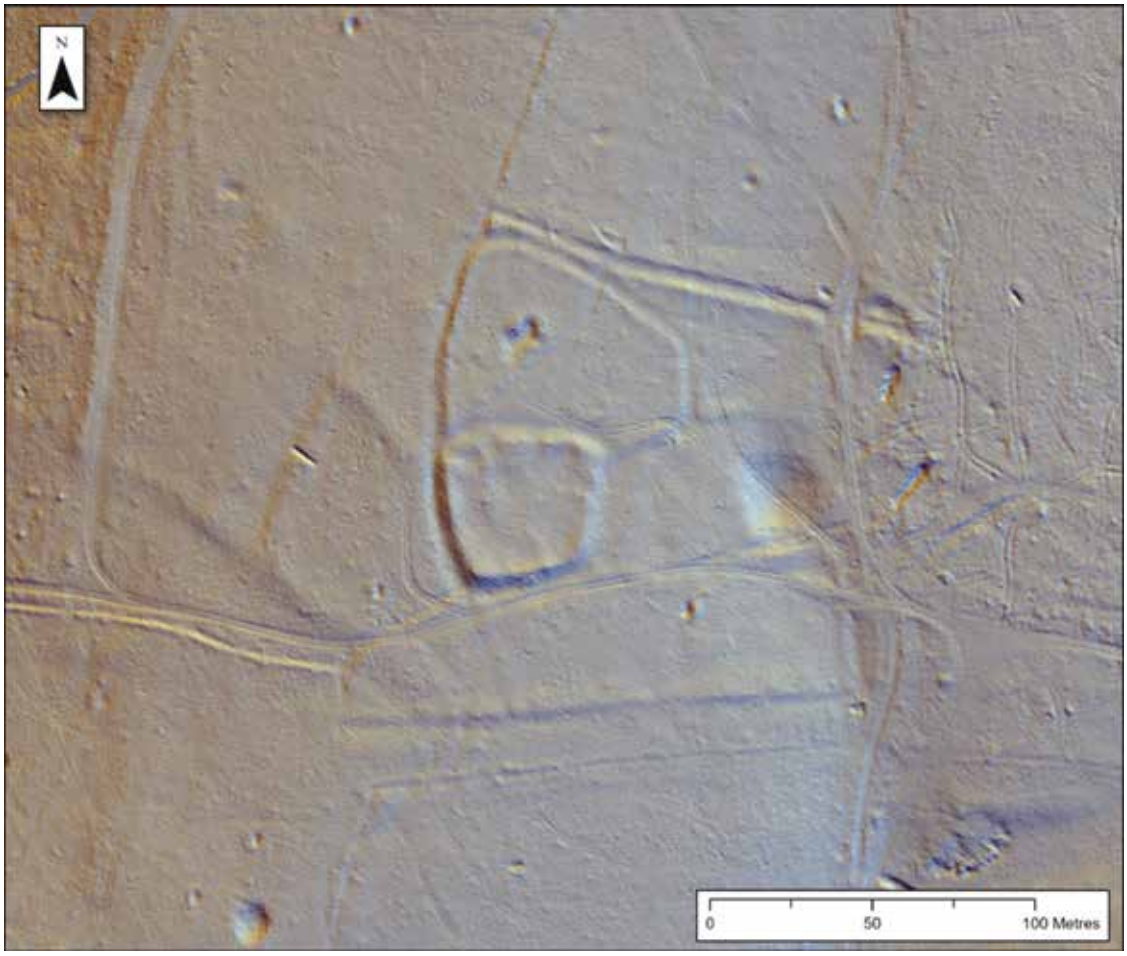

FIGURE 12 LiDAR image of Warren Wood enclosures (copyright – Chilterns Conservation Board)

use associated with the reroofing of the buildings. As there is no pottery of this later date, this later phase must have been associated with a change of use of the buildings – possibly to functions associated with animal husbandry.

Although a significant amount of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery has been found none of it has been associated with a clearly defined feature or context and most of it is probably residual, having been disturbed since deposition. The flint cannot be precisely dated so it is not certain if the prehistoric activity covers one phase or more, but it is likely that the site was occupied and used more than once in prehistoric times.

A similar site to Warren Wood can be found at Bradenham, near High Wycombe, where there is an earthwork enclosure of a similar date, containing the remains of flint wall footings. Although the pottery is of a similar date it is not exactly the same and as there has been no excavation at Bradenham, detailed comparisons are not possible.

Enclosure Interior

Test pits 10, 11 and 13 produced similar results to test pits 6, 7 and 8 excavated previously, with flint rubble and a lot of roof tile present. The amount of tile and flint was more than that found in the WW10 trenches, but it was still not possible to determine the exact location or direction of any walls, so we cannot be certain how many buildings they relate

to. All the buildings are probably of the same date. The significant amount of pottery found shows a considerable amount of activity over a period of time, though it is not possible to determine the function of the building(s). The later roof tile may suggest a change of use and reroofing later on.

The flint rubble in Test pit 13 is in the area of the wall found by Arthur Boarder but it was not possible to confirm if this was the remains of that wall.

The prehistoric pottery found in Test pit 11 was mostly mixed with medieval pottery so is almost certainly intrusive – possibly the result of tree or other disturbance. The amount of prehistoric pottery (plus flints found in all trenches) shows activity from this period and a larger excavation may reveal more.

Bank and Ditch

The pottery and tile found in Test pit 12 are of the same date as that found within the enclosure and therefore implies construction in the 12-14th centuries – with a 12th-13th century date most likely. There is no evidence to suggest the enclosure was originally of prehistoric construction and later reused in the medieval period.

Future Plans

Following advice from Phil Andrews of Wessex Archaeology, we have decided not to excavate further trenches at present as they would probably not add much to what we already know. We have carried out initial surveys of the surrounding woodland but they have not revealed any specific associated features that merit immediate investigation.

The Chilterns Conservation Board project 'Beacons of the Past' carried out a LiDAR survey of the Chilterns in 2019 which included the Warren Wood area. The image below (Fig. 12) clearly shows the enclosures in the centre, plus nearby saw pits, quarry pits, banks and ditches. The LiDAR results also show signs of field systems in the surrounding woodland, some of which may be Romano-British or prehistoric in date. In conjunction with the Buckinghamshire Thames Archaeology project, AIM are analysing the results to look for features that may provide ideas for future investigation All of the artefacts, the archives and records of the investigation are to be deposited with the Buckinghamshire Museum Resource Centre.

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