Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society 76, 2010, pp. 115–134

Refitting Etton: Space, Time, and Material Culture Within a Causewayed Enclosure in Cambridgeshire

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This paper considers the dynamics of deposition around and across the causewayed enclosure at Etton, Cambridgeshire. As a result of detailed re-analysis (particularly refitting) of the pottery and flint assemblages from the site, it proved possible to shed new light both on the temporality of occupation and the character of deposition there. Certain aspects of our work challenge previous interpretations of the site, and of causewayed enclosures in general; but, just as importantly, others confirm materially what has previously been suggested. The quantities of material deposited at Etton reveal that the enclosure was occupied only very intermittently and certainly less regularly than other contemporary sites in the region. The spatial distribution of material suggests that the enclosure ditch lay open for the entirety of the monument's life, but that acts of deposition generally focused on a specific part of the monument at any one time. As well as enhancing our knowledge of one particular causewayed enclosure, it is hoped that this paper – in combination with our earlier analysis of the pit site at Kilverstone – makes clear the potential that detailed material analysis has to offer in relation to our understanding of the temporality of occupation on prehistoric sites in general.

INTRODUCTION

The way in which archaeology as a discipline has come to understand the temporality of occupation and practices of deposition at causewayed enclosures is central to their interpretation. In many ways, Smith's discussion of Windmill Hill set the agenda over four decades ago (Smith 1965). She suggested that the enclosure there would have been visited periodically, that it may have acted as a focal point for dispersed groups, that it would have seen goods and livestock exchanged, and ceremonies carried out (1965, 19). In a slightly later paper she added that the deposits within the ditches may have been placed in them for 'magical' reasons (1971; see also Evans 1988, 60). As Healy points out in her discussion of the enclosure at Hambledon Hill (2004, 15), Smith's description of what may have gone on at Windmill Hill is instantly recognisable in many more recent interpretations of sites excavated elsewhere (eg, Pryor 1998; Edmonds 1999; Whittle *et al.* 1999). Causewayed enclosures as a group have come to be described and understood in quite a particular way.

The study presented here sets out to investigate the temporality of occupation and the character of deposition at one specific causewayed enclosure – Etton in Cambridgeshire (Pryor 1998; Figs 1 & 2). It is important to stress at the outset that we do not view this as a reinterpretation of Etton. We are all too aware of the fact that the knowledge of a site gained as a result of excavating it first-hand cannot ever be matched when simply excavating its archives. Over 20 years since the site was dug, we are simply coming back to look at the material found there from a different perspective, with a different set of questions, in a different interpretive context; as a result, we arguably do present a somewhat different interpretation of the material from the site.

The idea of revisiting the material from Etton first occurred to us whilst analysing the finds from a contemporary, but very different, Early Neolithic site at Kilverstone, 50 miles (80 km) to the south-east in

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Received: February 2008. Accepted June 2009

Fig. 1.
Etton: site location

Norfolk (Garrow *et al.* 2005; 2006; Fig. 2). Kilverstone produced a total of 226 small pits in two separate excavation areas but no other contemporaneous features. Most of these pits were densely grouped together in clusters (containing 3–17 pits). Although no evidence for any buildings was found, we interpreted the site as a long-term settlement which had been impermanently occupied over the course of several decades. The pits contained some of the 'rubbish' produced as a result of that occupation. As we recorded, refitted, and subsequently rethought the finds from Kilverstone – which, importantly, we had laid out together in one go (see Garrow *et al.* 2005, fig. 8) – we became intrigued as to what the material from a comparable but different site – such as Etton – would look like as an assemblage if set out in the same way.

At Kilverstone, we argued – on the basis of patterning in both the distribution of refitting sherds and flint and the weathering and attrition of pottery – that the different clusters of pits there had been dug in sequence, during separate visits to the site. It proved possible to put forward a *temporal* interpretation as a result of assessing the *material* dynamics evident within and between the pits. As the temporality of occupation at causewayed enclosures is so central to their current interpretation, an investigation of the 'material temporality' of one such monument seemed a logical next step.

Our basic aim with the Etton project was to understand in detail how that site had been occupied and used, through the spatial dynamics of the material deposited there. In so doing, we also expected to be able to revisit previous interpretations of the site's occupation, seeing whether and how these would be reflected materially. More broadly, we also hoped to situate our understanding of this 'monumental' site in relation to a 'settlement' site; the finds assemblages from causewayed enclosures are usually compared with one another, but rarely with other types of contemporary site. We wanted to see what 'happened' to an Early Neolithic assemblage when it was deposited into a causewayed enclosure rather than a pit site. Although our focus in this case is East Anglia specifically, the interpretation which develops tackles issues of broader relevance to the Neolithic in Britain as a whole.

Our second objective in undertaking the Etton project was methodological. At Kilverstone, our detailed material analysis produced very strong spatial patterning. The strength of the interpretation we were able to build arguably derived from the fact that we took the surprisingly rare step of looking at what the flint and pottery assemblages were able to tell us in combination. However, we were also aware that the character of the material at Kilverstone was in many ways unusual: the immediate availability of good quality flint on site, the excellent preservational conditions for pottery, and the way in which that particular place had been occupied and those particular pits filled, conspired to make conditions for establishing refits especially good. The process of undertaking a similar project, focusing on what appeared to be a very similar assemblage, but from a totally different kind of site, offered us the chance to scrutinise our methodology in new circumstances.

Our final aspiration was to redress what might be seen as an imbalance which has developed in approaches to causewayed enclosures (and arguably

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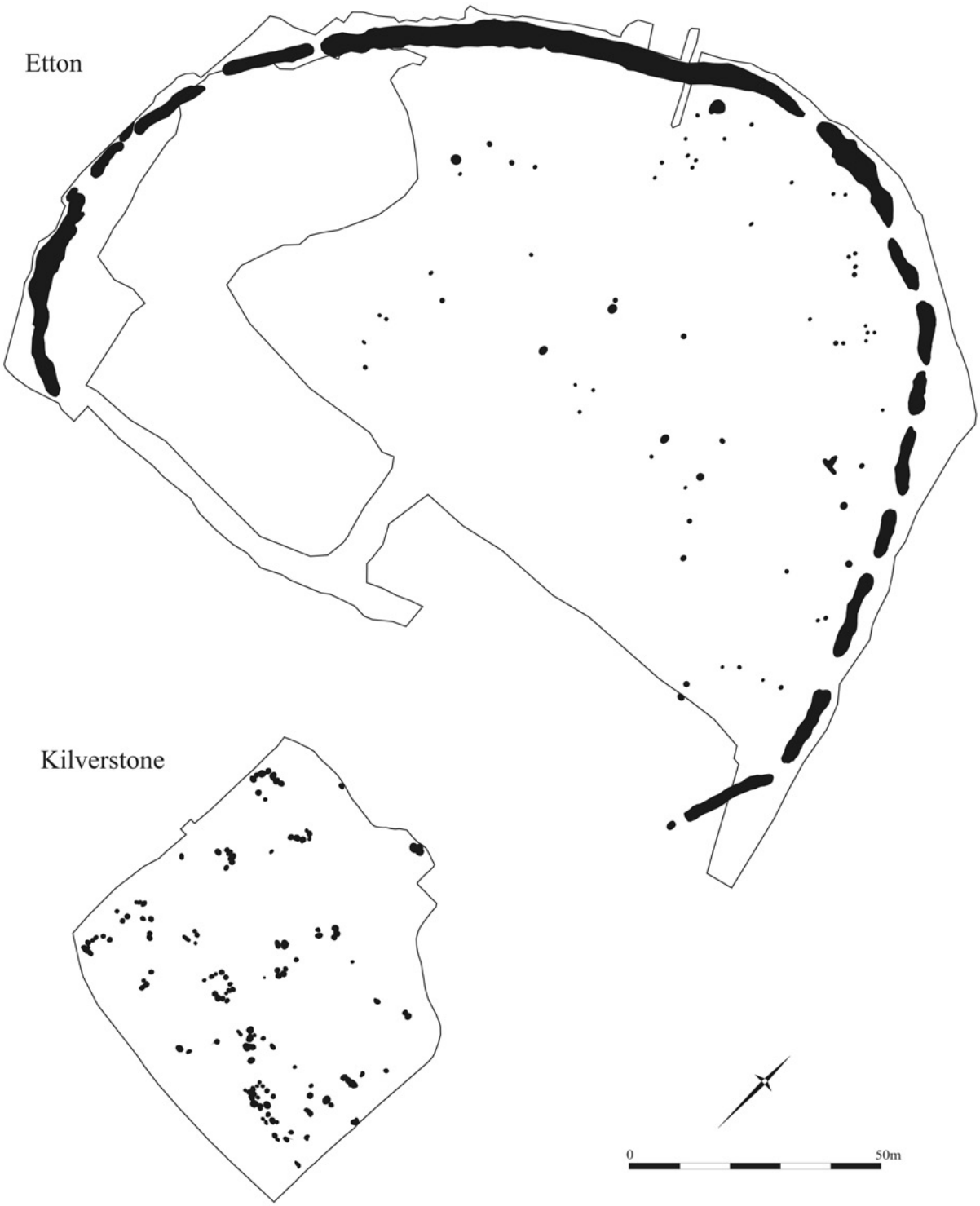

Fig. 2.
Plans of Etton and Kilverstone (at same scale). The plans have been rotated so that Etton is aligned in relation to the fen edge. Only those features containing Mildenhall pottery are depicted

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Neolithic sites in general) over the past decade or so. In his paper charting changing interpretations of causewayed enclosures over the 20th century, Evans makes the very important point that understandings of these monuments have oscillated between the sacred and the profane, mostly because an *either* 'domestic' *or* 'ritual' label never quite seems to fit (1988, 47). Arguably, at the moment, we find ourselves in a 'ritual' phase of the cycle, a situation augmented significantly by the concept of 'structured deposition', which is often viewed as being at its zenith in the context of causewayed enclosures (see for example Whittle *et al.* 1999; Pollard 2001; Harris 2005; Bradley 2007). While we do not necessarily wish to deny that there may have been 'ritual' aspects to the depositional practices seen at Etton, our aim here is to refocus attention onto what would, in these terms, be viewed as the 'domestic' aspects of the site (see also Cooney 2001, 173). (In our own terms, we chose not to think about or describe the deposits as either ritual or domestic; our concern was simply to gain a better understanding of *practice* at the site.) Rather than discussing the motivations people may have had for placing the debris of occupation in the ground, we focus our attention one step further back in time: we look at what this material can tell us about the broader dynamics in which it was caught up *prior to being deposited*. In so doing, we also wanted to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the temporality of occupation at these sites. At present, the interpretation of causewayed enclosures as places which were not permanently occupied rests almost exclusively on evidence for recutting within the ditches, and deep-seated, generalising assumptions. We hoped to address the temporality of one site's occupation directly through the dynamics of pottery and flint deposition, as we had done at Kilverstone.

The kinds of question we were asking are: How 'much' occupation did the enclosure witness over the course of its lifetime, and in comparison to a site like Kilverstone? How many people may actually have visited and how long did they stay? How did they deal spatially with the material generated as a result of that occupation? What were the processes by which it ended up in the ditches? Were all of the segments of the ditch circuit open at one time, and how did the internal pits relate to them materially, spatially and temporally? What does 'an Early Neolithic assemblage' in East Anglia look like, and what does that tell us? As will become clear below, it was only possible to answer many of these questions convincingly as a result of comparing, contrasting, and critiquing our results in relation to those obtained at Kilverstone. While the paper presented here does stand alone as a coherent piece of research in itself, it certainly would not hinder the reader to have visited Kilverstone (Garrow *et al.* 2005) before reading it.

THE CAUSEWAYED ENCLOSURE AT ETTON

The causewayed enclosure at Etton, near Maxey in northern Cambridgeshire, was excavated between 1982 and 1987 in advance of gravel quarrying, under the direction of Francis Pryor. As many readers will already be very familiar with this well-known and well-discussed monument, and the site has been described in excellent detail within a substantial monograph (Pryor 1998), it is necessary here to give only an outline impression of the archaeology uncovered.

The enclosure consisted of a single circuit of segmented ditch which formed a roughly circular shape *c.* 180 m in diameter. The interior of the monument was dotted with numerous small pits. While very little of the area immediately outside the monument was examined archaeologically at the time, this situation has been remedied to an extent as a result of recent developer-funded work (see below). A substantial proportion of the monument – between one-quarter and one-third – remained unexcavated (and unquarried today) due to the fact that its southern end extended under the bank of a massive drainage channel. Almost all of the enclosure ditch which was exposed, and approximately 80% of the interior, were excavated. Importantly for our purposes, the vast majority of features revealed were 100% excavated. The enclosure ditch and internal pits produced substantial assemblages of Mildenhall pottery (along with lesser amounts of Fengate and other Peterborough Wares, Grooved Ware, and Beaker), worked flint and stone, animal and human bone, and well-preserved organics (*ibid.*, chaps 4–14).

Radiocarbon dates obtained following the original excavations at Etton suggest a probable construction date for the enclosure ditch around 3700 cal BC (Ambers in Pryor 1998, 349). Given the nature of the site's stratigraphy (Mildenhall pottery was found throughout the fills of the enclosure ditch, with Peterborough Wares only becoming prevalent towards the top), and the dates usually associated with the

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Mildenhall pottery style (*c.* 3750–3200 cal BC), it is likely that the main phase of the enclosure's use lasted until 3300–3200 BC, or approximately 400–500 years in total (detailed and more precise date estimates for the various phases of Etton's use can be found in Whittle *et al.* forthcoming). Material from some internal features (Grooved Ware pottery, etc) suggests that the site continued to be visited for centuries after the enclosure ditch itself was no longer a focus for deposition.

In the original Etton report, Pryor presented a considered account of the micro-scale temporality of occupation. Drawing on a varied range of evidence, including the absence of permanent houses, the site's tendency to flood in the winter, fill patterns within the ditches, and the seasonality of faunal and wood remains, he suggested that 'after a possible initial period of large-scale construction work, the episodic gatherings were of perhaps variable, but generally short, duration' (1998, 361). These, he suggested, probably occurred between late spring and early autumn, and would have involved groups of varying sizes. He also made the point that visits need not have taken place even as often as every year. Importantly, Pryor suggested that after its initial construction phase, the different segments may have been recut at different times, ensuring that the monument was never again open in its entirety: 'the ditch was originally dug in segments because its use was henceforward to be segmentary' (*ibid.*, 376).

At some point during the life of the enclosure, the north-western part of the site appears to have become unusable due to waterlogging. In the original report, significant emphasis was placed on differences between the western and eastern halves of the enclosure. The western half was seasonally wet, the eastern half dry. The western half appeared to have been left to silt up naturally, the eastern half to have been rapidly backfilled after construction. In the western half there was a large amount of wood debris, in the eastern half there was very little (not apparently a consequence of preservational conditions). More generally, deposits within the western half were viewed as being 'general' and 'public', within the eastern half as 'detailed' and 'private' (*ibid.*, 13 & 364). Importantly, this distinction was seen as having been purposefully established from the point of construction (*ibid.*, 66). It is also one which has been dwelt upon in detail within many secondary discussions of the site (eg, Edmonds 1999; Whittle *et al.* 1999; Pollard 2001; Bradley 2007).

In his interpretation of the deposits within both ditches and internal pits, Pryor placed significant emphasis on their 'ritual' aspects. Perhaps most importantly, while much of the material found there could well have been generated as a result of relatively 'normal' occupation, he argued that it was actually placed in the ground intentionally: 'everything that was found there was put there – and presumably for a purpose' (1998, 67). Certain combinations of artefacts were viewed as material 'statements' constructed for an onlooking audience (eg, *ibid.*, 68; see also Harris 2005), and subtle variations in the types of flint tools or animal bones found in different parts of the circuit were viewed not as inadvertent, natural fluctuations but as a sign of intentionally selective deposition (eg *ibid.*, 253). Many would no doubt concur with these interpretations (see for example Whittle *et al.* 1999 where a similar argument is put forward in relation to the differential distribution of finds at Windmill Hill). However, in his *Antiquity* review of the Etton monograph, Evans was less convinced. He made the point that 'the *demonstration* of interpretations plays a minor part in the Etton report' (2000, 450), and argued that 'Etton's ritual 'logic' risks becoming much too all-embracing and verges on circularity' (*ibid.*, 451). He concluded with a key suggestion, echoing the point he made in 1988: 'it is clear in the case of causewayed enclosures that ritual/domestic is not a matter of either/or … the challenge remains to find an appropriate language to integrate them' (*ibid.*, 452).

Since 1998, excavations extending over 30 ha immediately to the south and east of the causewayed enclosure have been carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Meadows 2006). As a result, over 1000 pits have been identified, along with later monuments, field systems, etc. Although post-excavation analysis of this landscape is still at a relatively early stage, most of the datable Neolithic features appear to contain Peterborough Ware and Grooved Ware rather than Mildenhall pottery. This evidence is interesting for two main reasons: it implies that in the enclosure's Early Neolithic heyday, activities focused predominantly on its interior space; and that the area around the enclosure, if not the enclosure ditch itself, continued to represent a significant focus in the landscape for centuries afterwards. As our main interest is the Early Neolithic occupation of Etton, we will not be considering the evidence from these more recent investigations in any detail here.

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PRACTICES AND PROCESSES OF DEPOSITION AT ETTON

The enclosure

During the 1980s excavations at Etton, 14 separate segments of the enclosure were revealed. Three main phases were defined in the enclosure's Early Neolithic life history: initial construction (1a), backfilling and recutting (1b), and later deposits in the upper fills (1c). Within this simplified phasing, however, there was significant variability: the separate phases were actually very difficult to discern in the western arc (Pryor 1998, 16), whilst recutting appeared to have been carried out to different degrees in the eastern arc (*ibid*., 69). The character of artefactual deposits also varied significantly between different segments and in different phases: 'the complexity of the deposits within the enclosure ditch cannot be overstated' (*ibid*., 69). As a result, practices of deposition were difficult to characterise succinctly (*ibid*., 13). Generally speaking, though, Pryor suggested that in Phase 1a there had been a greater concern with the construction of specific 'statements' involving particular objects, whilst later on in Phase 1c deposits became more 'abstract' involving linear spreads of material rather than specific items.

The pits

In the original report, a distinction was drawn between 'small filled pits' (which were generally relatively deep and contained significant numbers of artefacts) and other 'pits' (which were often very shallow, contained few or no finds, and may actually have been natural scoops filled with buried soil (*ibid*., 89)). In total, 30 'small filled pits' were attributed to Phase 1 (*ibid*., 88). It is worth noting that only ten of these produced anything approaching substantial (>75 g) assemblages of pottery. During the Mildenhall phase of the site, deposition was clearly focused predominantly on the enclosure ditch not the pits, a situation which came to be reversed over time. All of the small filled pits were viewed as having been backfilled shortly after excavation. The deposits within them 'were tipped in and showed no obvious signs of careful arrangement' (*ibid*., 366). However, very occasionally, what were described as 'valued objects' (such as quernstones or polished axes) had been placed in the top of pits (*ibid*.). Overall, Pryor viewed the pits as entirely contemporary with, and directly related to, the enclosure ditch itself.

REVISITING THE ETTON MATERIAL: OUR ANALYSIS

Within our own analysis of the Etton material, we aimed to mimic closely the methodology we had successfully employed for Kilverstone. Since the pottery and flint from the site had already been described within the original site report (Cleal *et al.* and Middleton, in Pryor 1998[1]), we were able to focus our attention entirely on the more interpretive aspects of post-excavation analysis. As before, our primary focus was an investigation of material connections across the site. Having secured access to a large enough room, we laid out all of the flint and pottery from the enclosure ditches and Phase 1 pits together on the floor (Fig. 3). Given the fact that every individual flint and each group of related sherds had been bagged separately (Fig. 4), this was no small undertaking. As before, we did this in a way which closely echoed the spatial order the material had been found in on site, situating finds from contiguous contexts, adjacent segments, etc, next to one another. Ideally, we would also have liked to look at – and indeed perhaps tried to refit – other materials from the site, especially bone. However, for logistical reasons, as well as in order to make the results directly comparable with Kilverstone, we stuck with pottery and flint only.

Finds assemblages

In total, Etton produced 2684 sherds of 'Mildenhall' pottery and 7407 flints of all dates (only 1854 of which came from the enclosure ditch). The quantities of pottery were thus closely comparable with those from Kilverstone, while there was substantially less flint (a discrepancy made all the more telling when it is remembered that a sizeable proportion of the Etton flint assemblage was probably later Neolithic in date). In overall terms, given the size of the site and the large proportion of it which it was excavated, the figures from Etton seem relatively low. In answer to one of our original questions (see above), the overall assemblage from Etton looked diminutive in comparison to Kilverstone. Certainly in contrast to the causewayed enclosure at Windmill Hill, for example, the numbers of finds seem miniscule (Table 1). We are, of course, comparing very different sites here, of varying sizes and geographical locations.

The amounts of material deposited in different places around and across the enclosure at Etton varied considerably. Some segments and pits contained large

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Fig. 3.
Analysis of the Etton material in progress

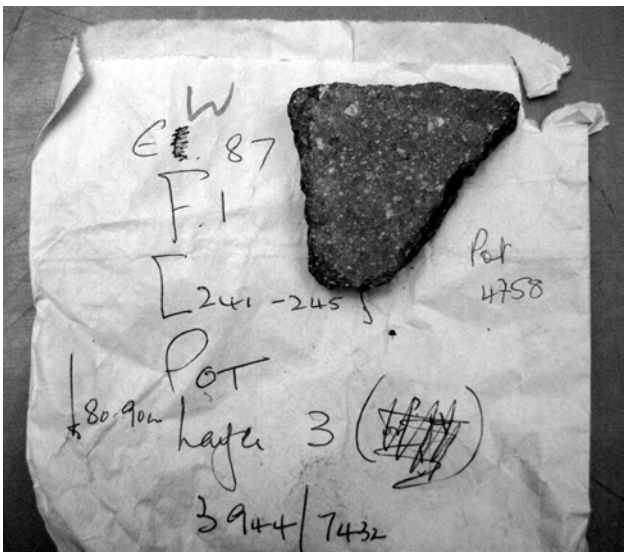

Fig. 4.
A sherd from the enclosure ditch on its bag

TABLE 1. RELATIVE QUANTITIES OF POTTERY AND FLINT AT ETTON, KILVERSTONE AND WINDMILL HILL

	Pottery (no.)	*Flint (no.)*
Etton	2684	7407
Kilverstone	2352	13,205
Windmill Hill	20,000+	100,000+

Information for Windmill Hill is taken from Whittle *et al.* (1999, 275 & 333)

quantities, whilst others contained very little. Generally speaking, there was a fairly close correspondence between the amounts of flint and the amounts of pottery in different segments (Fig. 5; this analysis was only carried out in relation to segments in the eastern arc, as the required information was not available for Segments 1 to 5). Interestingly, the quantities of material in each segment also corresponded approximately to the length of that segment: put simply, the longer segments generally had more material than the shorter ones. The pits at Etton were, however, much more variable.

An estimated minimum of 199 pots were deposited at Etton. These came in a range of shapes and sizes, notably including a number of extremely large vessels (up to 600 mm diameter). Fabric types were fairly uniform across the assemblage, and could all have been derived locally: there was nothing to suggest that any had been imported from afar, as has been the case on enclosures elsewhere (Healy 2004). Generally speaking, a broad range of different vessel types was recovered within each segment. Some pots were represented by many sherds, but others were identified from one sherd alone. Overall, 81% of the feature-derived assemblage came from the enclosure segments, and 19% from the pits. There was also a clear disparity in terms of the condition of pottery from enclosure contexts and that from pit contexts,

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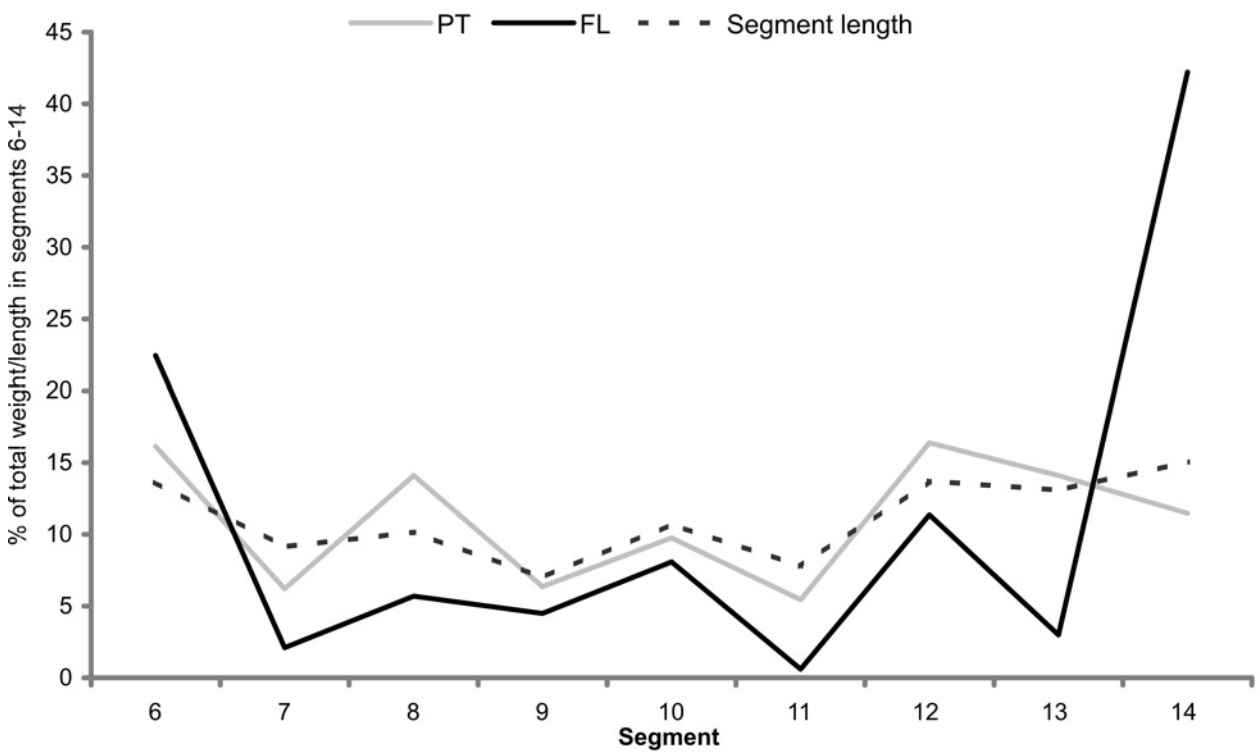

Fig. 5.
Comparison of assemblage sizes and segment lengths (each expressed as a percentage of the total for Segments 6–14)

with material from the pits being far more fragmented than that from the ditches.

The majority of the flint assemblage at Etton (82%) could be characterised as working debris, the rest as tools. These figures differ significantly from most Early Neolithic sites in the region, on which the average proportion of working debris is around 96% (Garrow 2006, table 4.5), a point considered in more detail below. Whilst all stages of the reduction process were present, only very small parts of each working sequence were recovered. A broad range of Early Neolithic tools was represented. The different tool types were not noticeably found in separate parts of the enclosure (see Pryor 1998, fig. 231), and generally speaking their distribution corresponded fairly closely with the areas in which large quantities of flint overall were found. All of the flint found at Etton could well have derived from local sources.

Material patterning

Within our analysis we assessed first of all what had happened to the material prior to deposition, looking in particular at how artefacts had been affected by attritional processes. Secondly, we sought to find refits both *within* enclosure segments and pits, and *between* segments and segments, pits and pits, and segments and pits. The importance of the fact that, as before, we were able to lay out all of the material at once cannot be overemphasised. In this section, we describe the results of this process, before moving on to consider their implications in the next section. It is vital to emphasise from the outset that, due to the peculiar character and qualities of the two different assemblages at Etton (see below), in the discussion which follows our interpretation is driven predominantly by the pottery analysis, with the flint generally taking a back seat.

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Incomplete assemblages and pre-depositional processes

The fact that many of the assemblages at Etton were 'incomplete' has been hinted at already. Amongst the pottery, for example, 196 of the 199 separate vessels recovered were present only in partial form, and in many cases represented by only a few small sherds. Similarly, amongst the flint, while entire knapping sequences must originally have been produced through on-site working, these were also partially represented within the deposits.

In terms of the physical processes affecting material prior to deposition, again similar patterns to those elsewhere were identified: both pottery and flint had been weathered and burnt, often to different degrees within the same vessel (too few flint working sequences were identified to make any meaningful observations), and more rarely between refitting sherds (Fig. 6).

Refits

At Kilverstone, numerous refits were established within individual pits, and between pits in the same cluster, none could be made between pits in different clusters (Fig. 7). We argued that this very clear material patterning had come about as a result of the temporality of occupation on the site: the clusters were materially separate because they were also temporally separate, produced during different occupations of the site.

It is important to point out first of all that, at Etton, the character of the flint assemblage ensured that we were unlikely ever to find many refits in that material. Whereas at Kilverstone, abundant high quality flint was available locally and substantial amounts of working had clearly taken place, this was not the case at Etton. The flint available locally was adequate but not good, and relatively low amounts of flint working had been carried out on site. As a consequence, the flint assemblage simply was not appropriate for, or conducive to, refitting in any significant way (see also Middleton in Pryor 1998, 220).

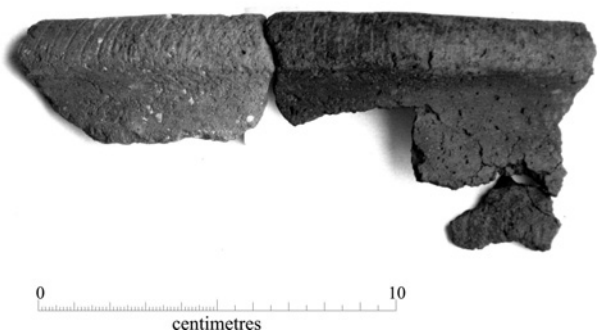

Fig. 6.
Refitting burnt and unburnt sherds

By contrast, numerous pots do appear to have been broken at Etton, and so the potential for refits was high. The condition of the pottery assemblage at Etton was good. From the beginning, right through to the end of our analysis, our overall impression of the assemblage was that it had considerable refitting potential (being either comparable with or better than most other Early Neolithic assemblages we have seen). This potential was, however, slightly less than at Kilverstone: the pottery was generally more crumbly (a consequence of the soft, shell-tempered fabric), more fragmented (a result of pre- and post-depositional factors), and more significantly affected by post-depositional attrition (especially in the waterlogged segments, where sherds had been leached, abraded, and subject to iron-pan encrustation).

The refits we were able to establish at Etton could be divided into three categories. The first category was refits *within* a single pit or enclosure ditch section (the enclosure segments were dug and recorded as a series of 'sections' usually between 2 m and 4 m long); the second was refits *between* different 'sections' of the same ditch segment; and the third refits between different ditch segments, between different pits, and between pits and segments.

Figure 8 shows all of the category 2 and 3 refits together. In addition, it also depicts a fourth category of material connection – the less definitive, but nevertheless potentially very informative links between 'sherds from the same vessel' (which could not actually be refitted). In direct contrast to the situation observed at Kilverstone where these connections were very tightly defined spatially (extending a maximum of 5 m), the refits at Etton are extremely dispersed (extending a maximum of 90 m). Whilst at Kilverstone material assemblages might be said to exist at the level of the pit cluster, those at Etton clearly exist at the level of the site as a whole (Fig. 9).

Within the refit diagram for Etton, there is a notable absence of connections between the eastern and western arcs. As discussed, Pryor identified a number of differences between the two 'sides' of the enclosure, ultimately suggesting that the monument may always have been conceived and used in two separate halves. This interpretation could be used to explain the refit patterns as well. However, it is also important to consider other possibilities. First of all, it is worth noting that very little pottery was actually found within Segments 2, 3, and 4 (407 g); there was also relatively little in Segment 5 (1108 g) despite its size. Consequently, the *potential* for making refits which connected to these segments was relatively low from the start. Furthermore, the area between Segment 3 and Segment 7 – where connections between east and west could have occurred via a series of shorter leaps to the north – was flooded for a significant part of the enclosure's life, while the area between Segment 1 and Segment 14 – where such connections could have occurred to the south – was not excavated. As a result of all of these factors, we should perhaps be careful not to jump too readily to employ 'symbolic' explanations; physical factors can be used to explain the lack of connections between east and west equally well.

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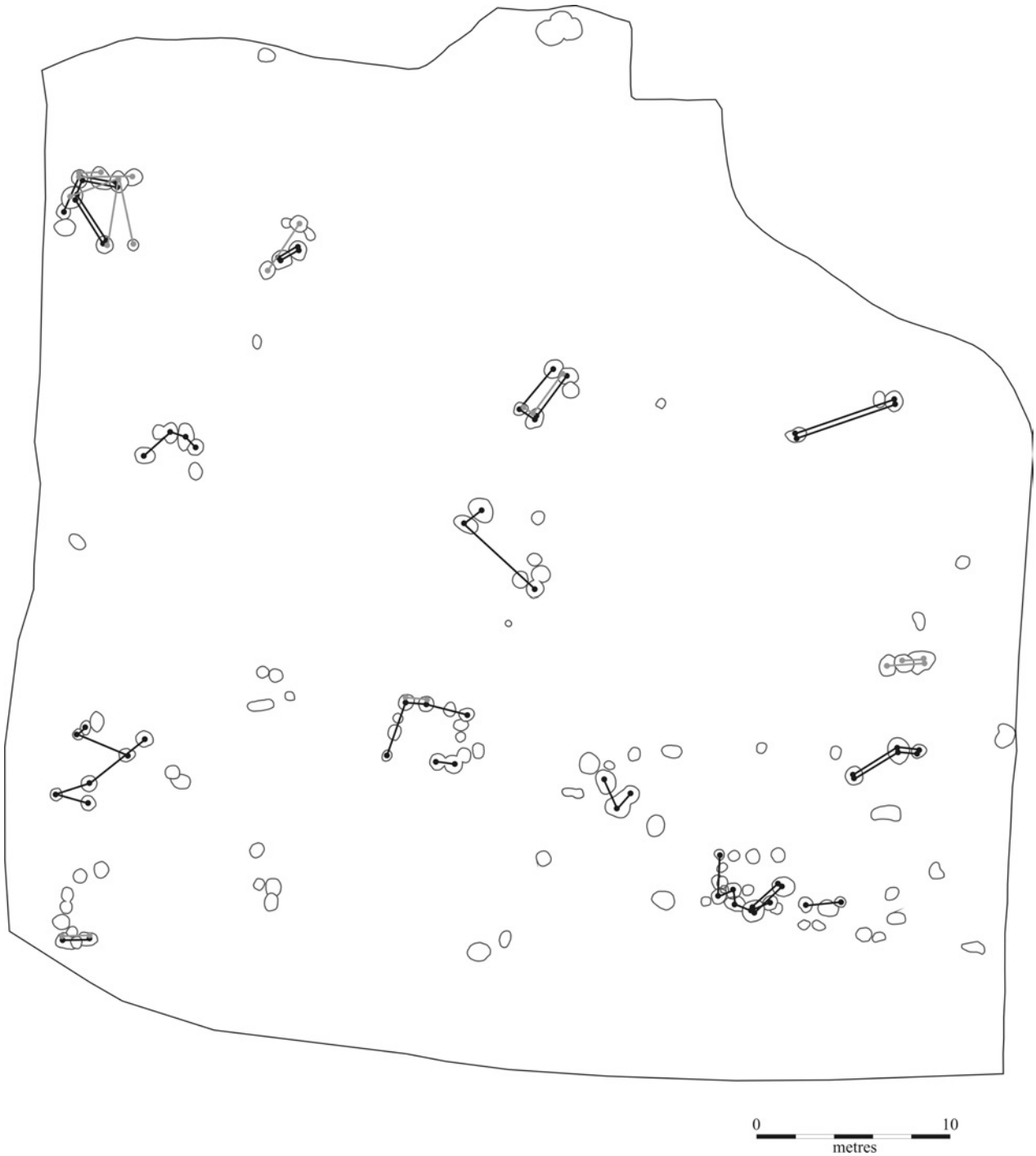

Fig. 7.
Refits at Kilverstone, Area E (pottery in black, flint in grey)

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THE DYNAMICS OF DEPOSITION AT ETTON

Having described the material found across the enclosure, it is time to consider what patterns within that material can tell us about the two main issues at hand: the character and temporality of occupation at Etton.

Pre-ditch/pit contexts

The condition of the material deposited at Etton was closely comparable with many other Early Neolithic sites in the region (Garrow 2006, chap. 4). The fact that complete pots (even in a fragmented state) were almost entirely absent, whilst sherds from the same vessel were weathered and burnt to different degrees, suggests that, as elsewhere, the material recovered at Etton had been 'stored' in a 'pre-pit' or 'pre-ditch' context – where broken pots, the debris of flint working, food remains, and other materials were accumulated – prior to its final deposition. While complete pots were almost certainly brought to the site from elsewhere, there is no good reason to think that broken pots were. Similarly, there was no evidence to suggest that pots had been deliberately smashed prior to deposition. Consequently, we can perhaps assume that the broken fragments we see were 'created' as a result of 'normal' use during the course of occupation at the site.

If this scenario is correct, it is clear that not all of the material collected in the pre-ditch/pit context made it into the enclosure ditch or interior pits: substantial elements were missing. There may, of course, have been a degree of deliberate selection in terms of what was deposited and what was not. In some cases – the deposits which Pryor described as material 'statements' for instance – this could have involved people actively choosing particular sherds or specific flint tools to place in the ground. However, importantly, in other cases – particularly those deposits which Pryor described as 'abstract', such as the Phase 1c 'linear dumps', and the 'tips' of material recovered within many pits – it could equally have involved the collection and burial of an unselected, essentially random portion of what was available in the pre-ditch/pit context.

At Etton, the surviving Neolithic buried soil may well once have held the material of, and thus the key to understanding, these 'missing' assemblages. Although it was actually heavily sampled, unfortunately pottery appeared not to have survived well within it, whilst only low amounts of flint were recovered (Pryor 1998, 71–3).

Material connections

In terms of material connections at Etton, the most striking observation is that refits were made right across the site (Figs 8 & 9). At Kilverstone, we suggested that the absence of connections across the site was evidence that the pit clusters had been dug and filled at different times. At Etton, the presence of multiple connections between different segments (and between segments and pits) can be seen as strong evidence that they were open and filled at the same time.

Alongside this striking, broad-scale patterning, it is important to note a further series of material connections: those within the same section of one segment. Since these occur at a much smaller spatial scale, they are not visible in Figure 8, despite the fact that they are actually more numerous than the cross-site refits. As an example, Figure 10 depicts in schematic form the location of every sherd deposited in Segment 1. It shows that not only were pottery deposits clustered in specific parts of the segment rather than being spread throughout it (something which can also be seen to an extent in Pryor 1998, fig. 12), but also that multiple sherds from the same vessel were, for the most part, found together within the same part of the ditch. Importantly, similar patterns were visible around the whole of the circuit, not just in Segment 1. It thus becomes clear that Figure 8, with its long distance refits, represents only part of the story. The situation we are looking at is one in which sherds from the same vessel often *did* end up being deposited together, not only in the same ditch segment, but in the same part of the same segment.

In terms of the material connections observed at Etton, we therefore have two patterns occurring simultaneously to explain: the broad refits across the site, and the more numerous, very localised refits within individual segments. As already discussed, the former can only have resulted from the fact that – unlike the different clusters at Kilverstone – the different segments at Etton were open for deposition at the same time. The fact that parts of the same vessel often ended up close together in one segment suggests, however, that material was *not* simply taken from the pre-ditch/pit context and deposited all around the enclosure, but rather that individual acts of deposition apparently focused on (one part of) one segment at a time.

In attempting to address issues of temporality, we would ideally have liked to investigate connections between the different recuts of each segment, and

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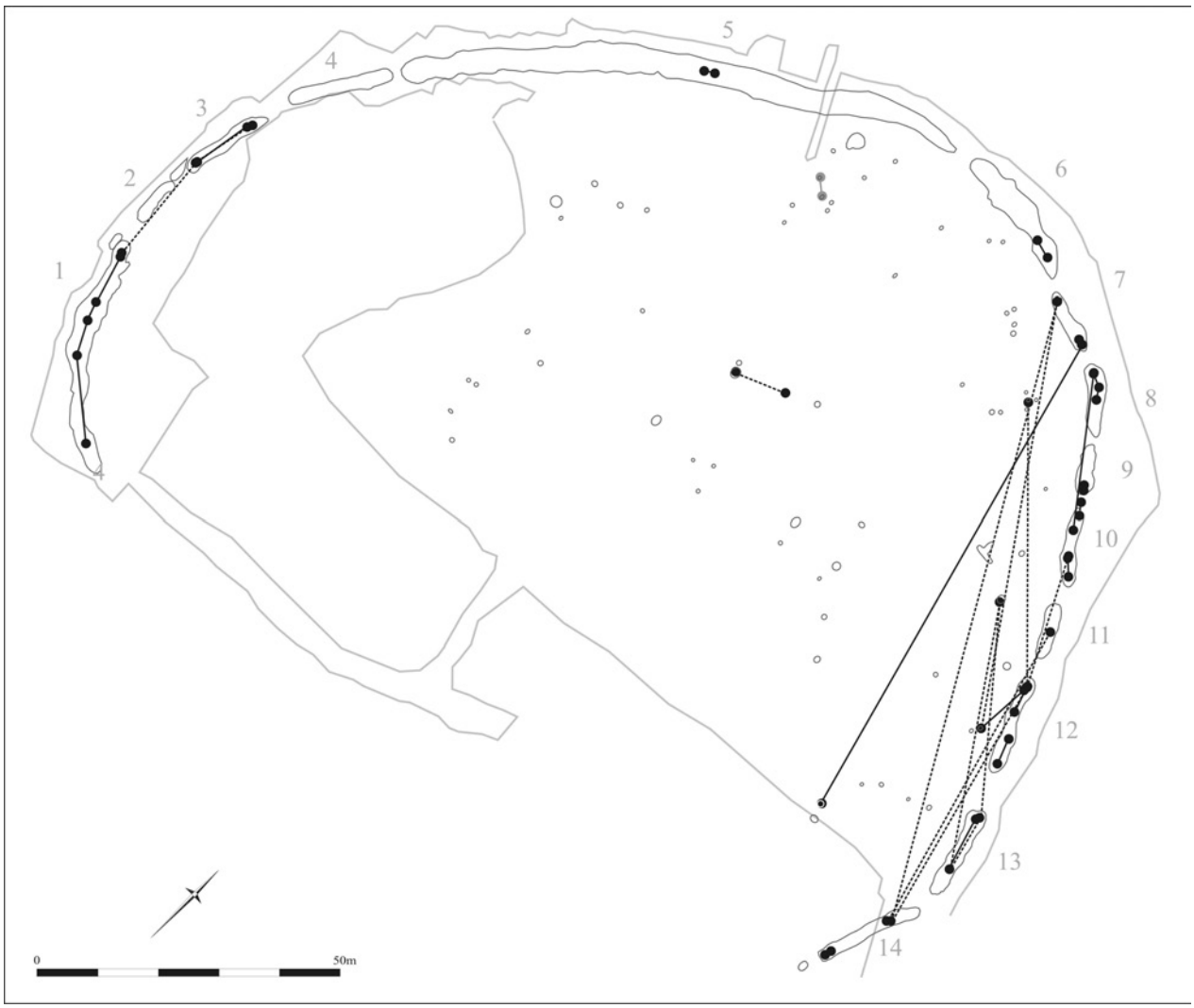

Fig. 8.
Refits at Etton (pottery in black, flint in grey; 'sherds from the same vessel' are shown as dashed lines; segment numbers are given around the edge)

indeed deposits of the same phase within different segments, in more detail. Disappointingly, due to the difficulties experienced in identifying multiple recuts and contemporary layers in different segments during the process of excavation (eg, Pryor 1998, 16), it simply was not possible to carry out such a refitting exercise at a level detailed enough to make such an exercise meaningful.

Material quantities

In order to understand the nature of occupation at Etton better, we turn now to our second main point of comparison with Kilverstone – the 'amounts' of material deposited on either site. Within our description of the material recovered at Etton, we hinted at the fact that the overall amounts of material culture deposited there might be viewed as relatively

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Fig. 9.
Plan showing extent of refits at Etton and Kilverstone

'small'. As it happens, a number of causewayed enclosures in the region have been characterised as containing fairly low amounts of material culture (Evans *et al.* 2006, table 12; see also Germany 2007). Etton nevertheless stands out in comparison to these, not only because the site was excavated to such a substantial degree (making the impression of low quantities more definitive), but because, in contrast to these other sites, it clearly *was* used over a very long period of time.

As discussed, the flint assemblage from Etton was significantly smaller than at Kilverstone. It does seem likely that the quality of the flint available locally was at least partly responsible for this discrepancy. However, it is also important to consider other factors which may have led to low amounts of flint overall at Etton. It is therefore worth remembering that Etton was unusual in terms of its high proportion of tools (which made up 18% of the assemblage). The presence of high proportions of tools in a flint assemblage has traditionally been taken as evidence for the intentional selection of material for deposition (eg, Cleal 1984). However, particularly because these figures refer to the complete assemblage at Etton including the buried soil, it is worth considering an alternative explanation: that the proportions of flint deposited there do actually reflect those brought to the site. If, as is generally assumed, people visited the enclosure periodically in order to meet up for feasting, exchange, etc, it is quite possible that they did not 'timetable' flint working into their visits, especially as the material available there was not of the highest quality. Instead, they may have brought tools ready-made onto the site from elsewhere. Occasionally, of course, some working would have taken place, but generally speaking this scenario would have led, quite

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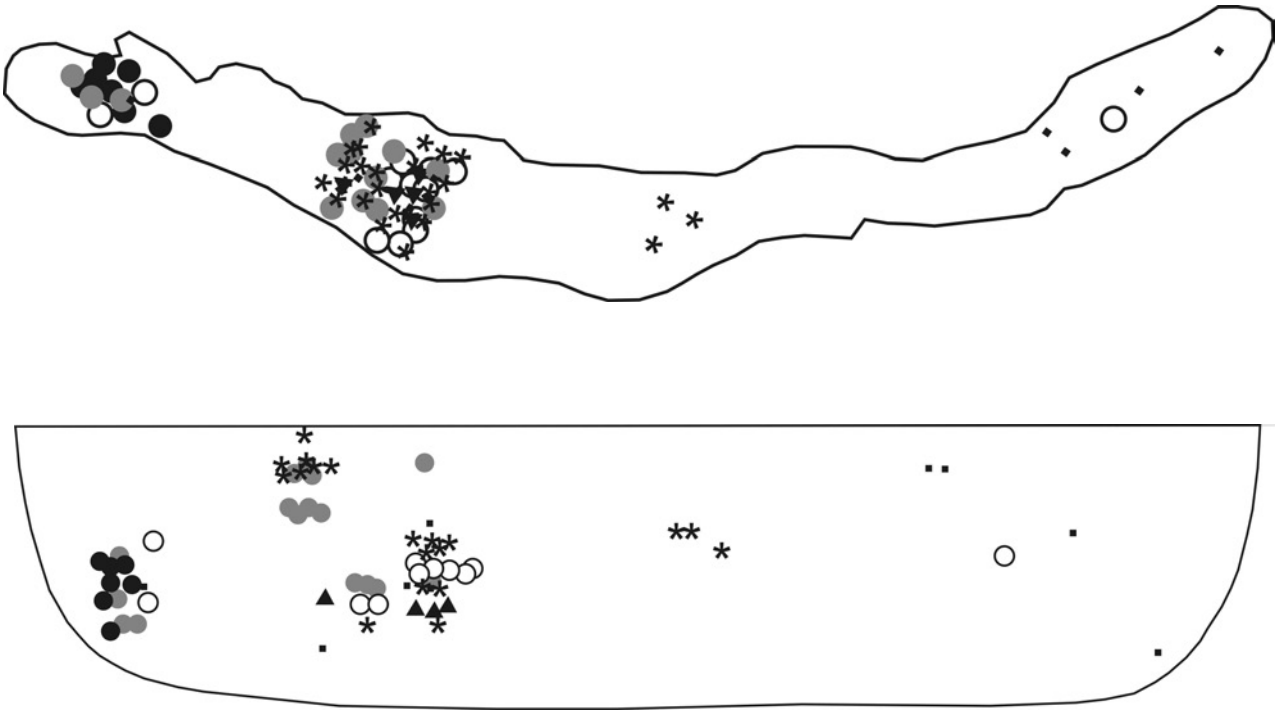

Fig. 10.
Schematic plan and section of pottery within segment 1. Each different symbol relates to a different vessel. The small square dots depict vessels represented only by one sherd

naturally, to a high percentage of tools and relatively low quantities of flint overall at the site.

In contrast to the flint, the Mildenhall pottery assemblage at Etton was actually larger than that at Kilverstone, producing 2684 sherds in comparison to 2352, and 199 vessels in comparison to 152. It is important to remember that not all of the enclosure at Etton was excavated, whilst the edge of the pit site at Kilverstone remained essentially undefined. Thus, working at the scale of 'the site', we must be cautious. The comparison between the two sites nevertheless does stand up very well once the quantities of pottery are compared at a different scale. Figure 11 shows very clearly that, in terms of the amount of pottery each contained, the different segments at Etton are directly comparable with the different pit clusters at Kilverstone.

At Kilverstone, we argued that one cluster contained the remnants of one phase of occupation, the varying quantities of material within each perhaps reflecting varying lengths or intensities of occupation. At Etton, the enclosure was comprised of 14 segments, rising to perhaps 20 in total if we include an estimate for the unexcavated portion of the site. Continuing the comparison, we might therefore go on to suggest that, in total, the causewayed enclosure contained the equivalent amount of material created during 20 separate occupations of the pit site at Kilverstone. Although it is difficult to introduce exact figures at this stage[2], this overall comparison between the two sites does allow us to approach an understanding of the kinds of occupation each site may have seen. At Kilverstone, although it is impossible to say for sure, it is perhaps reasonable to envisage regular reoccupation of the site over a period of 50 or 100 years (the radiocarbon dates for the different clusters were essentially indistinguishable). Given the closely comparable amounts of pottery

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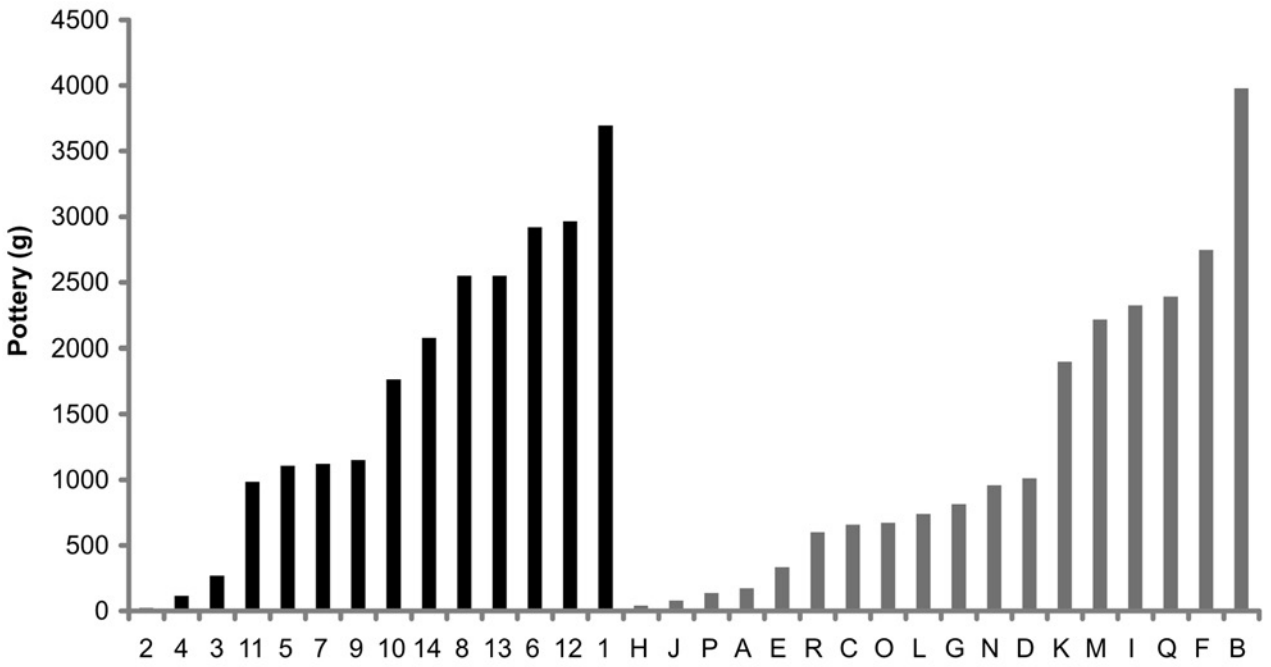

Fig. 11.
Quantities of pottery found in each segment at Etton (shown in black) and in each cluster at Kilverstone Area E (grey). The segments/clusters were ordered according to size in order to facilitate comparison between the two sites.

found at Etton, we might suggest that the site witnessed similar 'amounts' of occupation. However, bearing in mind that this occupation was apparently spread out over 400 or 500 years, and may well have involved larger numbers of people, we are presumably looking at much more intermittent occupation at the enclosure than at the pit site.

DISCUSSION

At the beginning of this final discussion, it is worth reiterating the three main objectives we had in mind at the beginning of the project. We aimed (a) to come to an understanding of the temporality and character of occupation at Etton through the material found there; (b) to explore the refitting methodology we had employed at Kilverstone in a different but contemporary context; and (c) to focus attention back towards the more 'domestic' aspects of the site in order to counterbalance the 'ritual' interpretations of causewayed enclosures which have dominated discussion in recent years.

The temporality and scale of occupation

In his original discussion of the temporality of the site's occupation, Pryor drew on a wide variety of evidence in putting forward a convincing argument that occupation at Etton had been impermanent. Our investigation of the material from the site very much supports that interpretation: the overall 'amounts' of material culture found there simply did not appear sufficient to have resulted from 400 or 500 years of permanent settlement. Given the kinds of occupation usually expected at pit sites like Kilverstone (fairly small scale, intermittent) and at an enclosure like Etton (large scale, seasonal/annual), the broad material comparability between the two sites was in some ways surprising.

The scale of occupation at Etton is difficult to assess directly from the material (see also Mercer &

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Healy 2008, 753–5). As discussed, the quantities of material culture deposited there nevertheless could be said to fit comfortably with a scenario in which several groups of people visited for a relatively short period of time only every few years (see endnote 2), thus complementing the picture generally assumed for causewayed enclosures very well. The fact that several exceptionally large vessels were found at Etton could be seen as adding weight to the suggestion that visits involved large numbers of people simultaneously, as this size of pot may have been needed to cook. It is also worth noting that many of the vessels were heavily worn around their rims; one possible explanation for this very specific wear pattern may have been that they were actually stored upside-down for long periods of time, perhaps in between separate occupations. Interestingly, other than a few worked stone axes, there was nothing within the material recovered that had clearly come from a long way away, or even from as far as the Brecklands around Kilverstone and Hurst Fen. It is quite possible, therefore, that these gatherings were predominantly local affairs.

It was also possible to infer important differences in the character of occupation at Etton in comparison to Kilverstone from the condition of the material deposited at each site. At Etton, sherd sizes, and the overall proportion of each vessel represented, were both generally smaller than at Kilverstone; equally, complete flint reduction sequences were much less well represented. This discrepancy is no doubt at least partly a result of the different temporal relationship between the material and the features it ended up in on the two different sites (Fig. 12). However, it may also have been a consequence of the different speeds at which material was 'processed' (from breakage to deposition) on the two sites as well. As we have discussed previously in relation to the separate excavation areas at Kilverstone (see Garrow *et al.* 2006, 79), differences in sherd size could reflect the fact that the two sites were occupied at different intensities (with Kilverstone being occupied more intensely, and material therefore being processed quicker and so ending up less fragmented, than at Etton). If this was indeed the case, the fact that the 'settlement' site was occupied more intensely than the causewayed enclosure again challenges normal assumptions as to the nature of occupation on sites of this kind. The generally assumed model of landscape occupation in the Earlier Neolithic still for the most part views causewayed enclosures as 'central places' (at least conceptually) where large groups of people gathered, and pit sites as rather more peripheral places where smaller family-sized groups of people lived at other times of the year. Given the amounts and intensities of occupation described above at the two sites, it is possible that – in this case at least – we actually need to reverse this conceptual polarity, seeing Etton as more 'peripheral' and Kilverstone as more 'central'.

Site 'management' and depositional practice

Importantly, in trying to understand the artefactual patterns identified at Etton, we chose *not* to take what would, in many ways, have been the easy option, and see material connections across the site as a result of the careful selection of each sherd and every flint for deposition. Instead, we sought to understand them in relation to the rhythms, tempo, and spatial dynamics of everyday practice. It appears that, prior to deposition, material was 'stored' for a while before ending up in the ground, as happened at Kilverstone and indeed on many other contemporary sites. The existence of refits between different parts of the enclosure ditch suggests that multiple segments were open at the same time. However, individual acts of deposition arguably appear to have focused primarily on one particular segment at a time, leading to a degree of spatial coherence in terms of where individual vessels ended up. The existence of refits between pits and enclosure ditch broadly confirm Pryor's suggestion that those pits had been dug during occupation of the enclosure (but not his suggestion that the deposits within pits were closely related to those in ditch segments immediately adjacent to them). The fact that materially connected pits and segments are not always spatially close to one another tells us that, while deposition might have focused on one particular segment at any one time, it did not simply focus on one part of the enclosure.

Fig. 12.
'Sequence' of deposition illustrating a key difference between the Etton 'ditch' site and the Kilverstone 'pit' site

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It is also worth noting that the pits at Etton appear to have played a less central role than they did at Kilverstone. At Kilverstone, an unenclosed site, they represented a key focus for substantial amounts of deposition. As discussed, the material within them was often fresh and unabraded, suggesting an immediacy in the relationship between pre-pit context and pit. At Etton, this was not the case. The material within the pits there was generally highly fragmented and abraded, suggesting a more distant relationship between the generation of material and its deposition within them. At Etton, the enclosure ditch clearly represented the primary focus of deposition during the Early Neolithic. Pits, on different sites of the same date, it appears, did not always 'do' the same thing.

Methodology

As discussed above, on reflection, we felt we had been lucky with Kilverstone. The availability of good quality flint there, the excellent preservational conditions for pottery, and the way in which that particular place had been occupied and those particular pits filled, conspired to make conditions for establishing refits especially good. Our 'experiment' in applying the same methodology on a contemporary but very different site proved that, to a degree, this was indeed true. The process of refitting Etton was ultimately less satisfying in many ways; and, it must be said, much harder work. Nevertheless, crucially, it did still work. The process of refitting the two different materials, and of coming to terms with the dynamics of deposition there, did lead us to significant new insights.

What we gradually came to realise was that we should not simply dwell on the differences between Etton and Kilverstone in terms of how they affected the effectiveness of our work, or the simplicity of the spatial patterns made visible. Those differences were not, for the most part, *post*-depositional, and thus actually had something to tell us about Neolithic practice – about the particular character of occupation and deposition in those two places. For instance, we suggested that at Kilverstone the pits within one cluster may have been dug *throughout* one episode of occupation of the site, perhaps each time too much material had accumulated in the pre-pit context. As a result, a pit was dug, filled, and closed to further deposition very quickly. At Etton, this simply was not the case. The ditches were dug right at the beginning of the enclosure's life, and apparently remained open to deposition for around 500 years. As a result, the pattern of refits is less neat – the potential for 'cross-contamination' between segments was ever present, which it simply was not, once a cluster had been dug and backfilled, at Kilverstone (see Fig. 12).

As a result of having successfully explored – on a different site – the refitting methodology initially employed for Kilverstone, we hope to have shown the tremendous potential that detailed material analyses such as these have to offer in terms of understanding prehistoric sites (see also Chapman & Gaydarska 2007, especially chap. 5). A comparative study of material dynamics at the Windmill Hill or Hambledon Hill enclosures, for example, would not only be interesting in its own right, but could well reveal significant differences within this 'class' of monument. These seem to have been very varied sites. This methodology provides us with a means of evaluating that variability. Equally, it could well be rewarding to build on the methodology described above, using it in collaboration with, and indeed to test, other analytical techniques (such as trend surface analysis, for example).

'Ritual' and 'domestic' interpretations

We do not want to dwell in too much detail on any polarised opposition between 'ritual' and 'domestic' aspects of Etton. In line with Evans (1988), we feel that the most productive way to talk about causewayed enclosures is to find a language which requires neither term. Nevertheless, in these terms, it could certainly be argued that we have not dwelt at length on what would be described as the 'ritual' aspects of the site. This was a conscious decision taken at the start. Not only did we think that these matters had been discussed in sufficient detail already, but we also felt that, in focusing on the motivations behind and detailed description of such deposits, previous interpretations had sometimes missed out on other important aspects of the site. Consequently, we tried to extend our focus beyond the act of deposition itself ('ritual' or otherwise), to look at processes occurring one step further back in time: pots being broken, rubbish being stored, flint being worked, people coming together and then moving away again.

SUMMARY

We hope that, as result of our having revisited Etton, both general and specific understandings of the site have improved. In some cases, our work confirmed

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what others, particularly Pryor, had suggested about Etton previously: that the enclosure was probably visited occasionally for several centuries, that certain ditch segments may have come into focus at certain times, that pits and ditch were broadly contemporary. However, one of Evans's (2000) main criticisms of the original report was that it failed to *demonstrate* its interpretations. As a result of the heavy empiricism of our work, the same, we hope, cannot be said for our own. Similarly, we also confirmed a number of broader interpretations put forward in relation to causewayed enclosures: that those sites were occupied intermittently, that deposition was often event-like, focusing on very specific parts of an enclosure, etc. Even if our work did not necessarily revolutionise our understanding of these aspects, again, the fact that it has confirmed earlier arguments *materially* undeniably makes them stronger.

In other cases, however, we did bring about a different type and quality of understanding, often as a consequence of the perspective we brought to Etton having studied the material at Kilverstone. The process of refitting enabled a different appreciation of individual acts of deposition around the enclosure. Equally, our assessment of the condition of different parts of the same vessel enabled a fuller appreciation of the pre-ditch/pit contexts in which material had been stored, and thus of the way in which the site as a whole may have been 'managed'. Similarly, as a result of comparing Etton and Kilverstone, we now have more of an idea of the character of both sites, and consequently have questioned some widely-held assumptions about earlier Neolithic landscape occupation.

Within our original discussion of Kilverstone, we argued that previous considerations of the temporality of occupation on Neolithic settlement sites in Britain had often been rather vague, and based on negative rather than positive evidence. As suggested at the beginning of this paper, parallel criticisms might also be levelled at previous discussions of causewayed enclosures. These too have tended towards the vague and generalised in relation to the character of occupation, relying almost exclusively on widely variable evidence for the recutting of ditches to suggest that these places were visited only occasionally. Similarly, it might also be said that in recent years, the strong focus on 'ritual' deposition has resulted in other aspects of these sites fading from view. Within our work on both sites, we have intentionally avoided the generality of many previous discussions, focusing in on the detailed dynamics of deposition in order to provide an account which relates to those two specific places. We have also made sure to discuss the temporality of occupation based on empirical analysis, constructing our interpretations from the material actually generated and deposited on each site. As a result, we hope to have brought a new side of the evidence – and thus new narratives – into focus.

Acknowledgements: Without the assistance, advice and good will of many different people, we would never have been able to undertake the work described above. Gill Varndell provided crucial support from the very start, especially in terms of gaining access to the Etton archive at the British Museum; in this regard we would also like to thank Marta Flannelly and Elena Jones for their much-needed assistance with the many boxes which make up the physical archive at Blythe House stores; and Anwen Cooper, Lesley McFadyen, and Jonathan Tabor for their considerable help in putting the material away. We would also like to thank Francis Pryor for his support; Kasia Gdaniec for her advice, encouragement, and invaluable assistance in making the pottery paper archive available to us; Bob Middleton for taking the time to discuss his original work on the flint more than two decades on; Chris Evans and the University of Cambridge estates management team for their help in finding a space to carry out the analysis; Mark Edmonds, Chris Evans, Charly French, and Kasia Gdaniec for sharing their memories and knowledge of the original Etton excavations, and their advice on our own work; Frances Healy for allowing us to see the relevant results of the causewayed enclosure dating project in advance of publication, and for taking the trouble to come all the way to Cambridge to see the Etton material and talk to us about its implications; Richard Bradley and Chris Gosden for their assistance and encouragement; Anwen Cooper, Mark Edmonds, Frances Healy, and Fraser Sturt for their comments on earlier versions of this paper; the anonymous referees for their helpful suggestions; and finally the British Academy whose funding enabled the project to take place at all.

Endnotes

[1]The original pottery report provided an impressive gazetteer of individual feature sherds (including numerous excellent drawings), but little in the way of information about overall sherd numbers, weights, rim forms, frequency of fabrics, etc. Luckily for us, however, during our analysis, we were given access to elements of the original paper archive, including Kasia Gdaniec's notebooks and pre-publication analysis of the pottery, which did provide important information about sherd numbers, weights, etc. The flint had been comprehensively analysed, reported, and discussed, presenting detailed information about many different aspects of the assemblage. In keeping with normal practice at the time, however, Middelton focused primarily on characterising this material as 'an assemblage', and although he did discuss intra-site variability at the broadest level (eg,

between the enclosure ditch and the interior features), he did not, for example, discuss differential distributions of artefact types between different parts of the enclosure.

[2]It is, however, possible to provide very speculative figures. As discussed, at Kilverstone, we argued that each cluster contained the remnants of one phase of occupation. In a subsequent paper, it was argued – on the basis of ethnographic data about pottery breakage rates which suggest that on average 5.4 pots are broken per 'household' per year (see Hill 1995, 129–31 for a more detailed discussion of how this figure was worked out) – that these occupations could have varied in length between 2 and 29 months (Garrow 2010, 10). There was of course nothing within the evidence at Etton to suggest that each segment contained the remnants of a single occupation; in fact, many ditch segments appeared to have been recut numerous times suggesting quite the opposite. Nevertheless, these figures do provide us with an interesting insight in terms of what the overall quantities recovered from the site *could* mean. Using the same figures again, we can get a very crude estimate of the temporality represented by the material deposited at Etton: 199 vessels, being broken at a rate of 5.4 per year, translates to a *total* figure of 46 years of occupation by one 'household' (adding an extra 25% to account for the unexcavated portion of the enclosure). Once the likely overall date span for the enclosure is added into the equation, we can begin to think in more detail about the temporality of its occupation. It is likely that the period between the first primary deposits in the ditch, and those in its uppermost fills, was around 400–500 years. The total number of vessels deposited during this time was 199 (rising to approximately 250 if we include an estimate for the unexcavated part of the site). As stated above, according to the ethnographic data, on average 250 vessels would be broken by one 'household' over the course of approximately 46 years. However, causewayed enclosures are not, of course, thought to have been occupied permanently by a single 'household'. We might, therefore, choose to view this total as having been produced by 12 households occupying the site for one month per year over the course of 46 years. Alternatively, if we assume that only half of the vessels which were originally broken actually came to be represented within the ditch and pits, we end up with a figure of 12 households occupying the site for one month every 5 years for the whole of a 460 year span of the site. And if we assume that only one-tenth of the original vessels were represented, we come to a figure of 12 households occupying the site for one month, or 24 households occupying the site for two weeks, every year for 460 years. While this method of addressing the temporality of occupation at Etton is inevitably extremely speculative, interestingly the figures it provides us with are in fact relatively close to those usually assumed for causewayed enclosures.

It is worth mentioning that, since we wrote this endnote, Mercer and Healy have published a very similar exercise which they carried out in relation to the causewayed enclosure at Hambledon Hill (2008, 753–5). Despite the significantly larger overall quantities of material on that site, they too came to suggest that, in fact, the quantities of material culture deposited were actually quite low: 600 sherds and 1370 flints maximum per year (*ibid*., 755). As a result, they argued that 'the surviving material *could* be compatible with distinctly infrequent use' and that 'the abiding impression is that the site was little used, and that, when it was used, it was for occupation for short periods' (*ibid*.).

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