

Excavations at Redhouse, Adwick Le Street, Doncaster



Excavations at Redhouse, Adwick Le Street, Doncaster

Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman occupation

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Contents

List of Figures	iii
List of Tables.....	v
Contributors	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Project background.....	1
Location, topography and geology	1
Historical and archaeological background	1
Mitigation works.....	1
Site phasing	5
Chapter 2 Neolithic and early Bronze Age	6
Overview.....	6
Ring ditch.....	6
Pits.....	6
Worked flint.....	8
<i>by Yvonne Wolfram-Murray</i>	
Bronze Age pottery.....	9
<i>by Blaise Vyner</i>	
Stone axe	11
<i>by Andy Chapman</i>	
Bronze awl.....	12
<i>by Blaise Vyner and Tora Hylton</i>	
Cremated human remains	13
<i>by Chris Chinnock</i>	
Environmental remains	14
<i>by Val Fryer</i>	
Radiocarbon dating	14
Chapter 3 Iron Age and Roman	16
Overview	16
Iron Age enclosures and field system	16
Enclosure E1.....	16
Enclosure E4.....	23
Field system.....	24
Trackway	26
Pits.....	27
Inhumation.....	27
Roman enclosures and field system.....	29
Enclosure E2.....	30
Enclosure E3.....	30
Enclosure E5.....	33
Enclosure E6.....	37
Enclosure E7	39
Enclosures E8, E9 and E10.....	43
Enclosure E13	49
Field system	52
The Roman Road	54
<i>by Ian Meadows and Andy Chapman</i>	
Late Iron Age/early Roman pottery	61
<i>by Chris Cumberpatch</i>	
Roman pottery	66
<i>by Ruth Leary</i>	

The Samian pottery	87
<i>by Felicity Wild</i>	
Post-Roman pottery	88
<i>by Chris Cumberpatch</i>	
The querns	88
<i>By Andy Chapman</i>	
Coins and coin moulds	89
<i>by Richard Brickstock</i>	
Non-destructive chemical and microscopic analysis of the coins and counterfeit coins	98
<i>By Sreelakshmi Sajeevukumar Nair and Nathaniel L. Erb-Satullo</i>	
Small finds	111
<i>by Tora Hylton with contributions by Ian Meadows and Don Mackreth</i>	
Human remains	114
<i>by Chris Chinnock</i>	
Animal bone	115
<i>by Rebecca Gordon</i>	
Environmental remains	119
<i>by Val Fryer, Matt Law and Robin Putland</i>	
Radiocarbon dating	131
Chapter 4 Discussion	132
Bronze Age funerary activity	132
Iron Age crouched inhumation	133
Iron Age and Roman field systems and enclosures	134
Enclosure origins	138
Structures	141
Roman Ridge	143
Economy during the Iron Age and Roman periods	144
Summary	145
Bibliography	147

List of Figures

Figure 1.1. Site location.....	2
Figure 1.2. Archaeological works.....	3
Figure 1.3. All features phased plan.....	4
Figure 2.1. Plan of Bronze Age ring ditch and sections.....	6
Figure 2.2. Ring ditch RD1, looking south.....	7
Figure 2.3. Pits within RD1, looking north-east.....	8
Figure 2.4. Bronze Age pottery.....	10
Figure 2.5. Stone axe.....	12
Figure 2.6. Bronze awl.....	13
Figure 3.1. Iron Age field systems and enclosures.....	17
Figure 3.2. Roman field system and enclosures.....	18
Figure 3.3. Plan of Iron Age enclosure E1.....	19
Figure 3.4. South-east corner of enclosure E1, looking south-west.....	20
Figure 3.5. Enclosure E1, D1 sections.....	21
Figure 3.6. Internal entranceway in ditch D2, looking west.....	22
Figure 3.7. Pit sections.....	23
Figure 3.8. Pit [186], looking east.....	23
Figure 3.9. Plan of Iron Age enclosure E4.....	24
Figure 3.10. Enclosure E4 sections.....	25
Figure 3.11. Trackway ditches D73, D76 and D77.....	27
Figure 3.12. Plan of Iron Age pits and sections.....	28
Figure 3.13. Crouched inhumation burial HB1 in pit PG100.....	28
Figure 3.14. Inhumation burial HB1 plan and section.....	29
Figure 3.15. Plan of Roman enclosure E2.....	31
Figure 3.16. Plan of Roman enclosure E3.....	32
Figure 3.17. Enclosure E3 sections.....	33
Figure 3.18. Pit PG36, looking south-west.....	33
Figure 3.19. Plan of Roman enclosure E5.....	34
Figure 3.20. Enclosure E5 sections.....	35
Figure 3.21. Plan of Roman enclosure E6.....	36
Figure 3.22. Ditch D80, looking west.....	37
Figure 3.23. Enclosure E6, section 435.....	38
Figure 3.24. Ring ditch RH1 plan and sections.....	40
Figure 3.25. Plan of Roman enclosure E7.....	41
Figure 3.26. Enclosure E7, D113 sections.....	42
Figure 3.27. Enclosure ditch D113 showing limestone blocks, looking north-east.....	43
Figure 3.28. Plan of Roman enclosures E8, E9 and E10.....	44
Figure 3.29. View of Roman enclosure E8.....	45
Figure 3.30. Enclosure E8, D132 and PG136 sections.....	46
Figure 3.31. Enclosure E8, PG135 and E9, D98/D129 and PG130 sections.....	47
Figure 3.32. Enclosure E10, PG147 and driveway G143 sections.....	48
Figure 3.33. Plan of Roman enclosure E13.....	50
Figure 3.34. Inner enclosure ditch D160, looking east.....	51
Figure 3.35. Oven G164.....	52
Figure 3.36. ABG found in pit PG166.....	53
Figure 3.37. Plan of pre-road activity.....	55
Figure 3.38. Plough scars G21 and section through the road, looking south.....	56
Figure 3.39. Section through the Roman road, looking south-east.....	56
Figure 3.40. Roman road section 135.....	58
Figure 3.41. Roman road, section 24.....	59
Figure 3.42. Reconstruction drawing of Redhouse in the Roman period, looking north.....	60
Figure 3.43. Iron Age pottery.....	64
Figure 3.44. Roman pottery.....	71
Figure 3.45. Roman pottery.....	72
Figure 3.46. Roman pottery.....	73
Figure 3.47. Roman pottery.....	74
Figure 3.48. Roman pottery.....	75
Figure 3.49. Roman pottery.....	76
Figure 3.50. Roman pottery.....	77
Figure 3.51. Roman pottery.....	79
Figure 3.52. Roman pottery.....	80
Figure 3.53. Roman pottery.....	81

Figure 3.54. Roman pottery	82
Figure 3.55. Relative quantities of jars and bowl/dish tablewares at urban and rural sites in Yorkshire and the north (deep, wide-mouthed jars are counted as jars for the purpose of this analysis)	85
Figure 3.56. Samian ware	87
Figure 3.57. The complete quern, SF 108 (photo scale 50mm).....	89
Figure 3.58. Roman coins	90
Figure 3.59. Roman coin moulds.....	95
Figure 3.60. Pipe fragment.....	96
Figure 3.61. Coin mould reconstruction.....	97
Figure 3.62. Stereo microscope image of the surface of SF 4, showing silver-coloured metal surface worn away to reveal and green-copper corrosion protruding from the coin interior.....	99
Figure 3.63. Stereo microscope image of edge of SF 26, showing silver-coloured metal worn away to reveal and green-copper corrosion underneath	99
Figure 3.64. Schematic diagram of a cross section of the coin surface, depicting how wear on the surface of a plated coin can expose the metal interior, as is the case for SF 4 and SF 26	100
Figure 3.65. Stereo microscope image showing dendritic structures visible on the surface of Coin SF 701. Dendrites are corroded to a greenish colour; the eutectoid retains a grey-white metallic appearance	100
Figure 3.66. Image of the edge of SF 701, showing area of a broken surface. Some possible layering is visible, but it is far less distinct than in the silver-plated forgeries (Figs 3.62 and 3.63)	100
Figure 3.67. The labelled XRF spectra of SF 25	101
Figure 3.68. The labelled XRF spectra for the coin SF 8.....	101
Figure 3.69. The labelled XRF spectra for the counterfeit coin SF 4.....	103
Figure 3.70. The labelled XRF spectra for the counterfeit coin SF 26.....	103
Figure 3.71. The labelled XRF spectra for the counterfeit coin SF 701.....	103
Figure 3.72. The backscatter electron image of SF 4, showing a close-up of the raised design shown in Fig 3.62. Due to its higher atomic weight, the silver plating (white) is clearly differentiated from the corroded underlying Cu-Sn alloy (mid-grey), and the adhering sediment (very dark grey)	104
Figure 3.73. EDS spectrum of silver-rich surface layer in the electron image (Spectrum 85).....	104
Figure 3.74. EDS spectrum of the copper-tin alloy core below the silver-rich plated layer (Spectrum 86)	105
Figure 3.75. Backscatter electron image of the surface of SF 26.....	105
Figure 3.76. EDS spectrum of black spots in the electron image (Spectrum 167).....	106
Figure 3.77. EDS spectrum of light grey region in the electron image (Spectrum 162).....	106
Figure 3.78. Backscatter electron image of the surface of SF 701, showing dendritic structure.....	107
Figure 3.79. EDS spectrum of the black coloured region of the electron image (spectrum 35). This is likely pitting in the corroded dendrite that has trapped some adhering sediment.....	107
Figure 3.80. EDS spectrum of the eutectoid (light-grey region of the backscatter image) (spectrum 40)	108
Figure 3.81. EDS spectrum of a corroded dendrite (dark grey phase in the backscatter image) (spectrum 41).....	108
Figure 3.82. Backscatter electron image of the surface of SF 9.....	109
Figure 3.83. EDS spectrum of light grey spots in the electron image (Spectrum 106).....	109
Figure 3.84. EDS spectrum of dark grey coloured region in the electron image (Spectrum 109)	110
Figure 3.85. The backscatter electron image of coin SF 25.....	110
Figure 3.86. EDS spectrum of black coloured region in the electron image (Spectrum 6)	111
Figure 3.87. Small finds	113
Figure 4.1. Sites mentioned in the text.....	133
Figure 4.2. Cropmark data of the magnesian limestone	135
Figure 4.3. Pottery distribution	139
Figure 4.4. Comparative sites in the area	142

List of Tables

Table 1.1. Periods of activity	5
Table 2.1. Pits within ring ditch RD1	8
Table 2.2. Radiocarbon dates for early Bronze Age cremation burials in Yorkshire.....	11
Table 2.3. The radiocarbon determinations for the Bronze Age ring ditch and cremations	15
Table 3.1. Fabric groups by estimated number of vessels.....	61
Table 3.2. Fabric groups by weight	62
Table 3.3. Quantification of Roman pottery.....	66
Table 3.4. Vessel quantification by chronological group	86
Table 3.5. Quantification of samian pottery	87
Table 3.6. Quantification of Roman coins.....	91
Table 3.7 continued. Quantification of coin moulds.....	94
Table 3.7. Quantification of coin moulds.....	93
Table 3.8. The major and minor elements detected via pXRF in the coins. Entries highlighted are the coins identified as counterfeit.....	102
Table 3.9. Summary of small finds by material type and enclosure	111
Table 3.10. Species representation (NISP) of hand collected bones,	116
Table 3.11. Species representation by body parts for hand collected bones (calculated using the maximum count of zones per body)	117
Table 3.12. Environmental samples from enclosure ditch D1.....	121
Table 3.13. Environmental samples from ditch D4	123
Table 3.14. Environmental samples from structures S5 and S6.....	124
Table 3.15. Environmental samples from pits PG9 and PG12	125
Table 3.16 continued. Environmental samples from enclosure E8	127
Table 3.16 continued. Environmental samples from enclosure E8	128
Table 3.16. Environmental samples from enclosure E8.....	126
Table 3.17 continued. Environmental samples from features associated with enclosure E13	130
Table 3.17. Environmental samples from features associated with enclosure E13	129
Table 3.18. The radiocarbon determinations for the Iron Age, Roman and medieval.....	131
Table 4.1. Comparison of fields within co-axial system.....	136

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Project background

From May 2000 to June 2017, MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) undertook a programme of archaeological excavations and watching briefs at Adwick Le Street, 6.5km to the north-west of Doncaster (Fig 1.1). They revealed evidence for Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman activity. The excavations were originally commissioned by Jacobs Babbie (formally Babbie Group) on behalf of Teesland Management Services Ltd, who had been granted planning consent for the construction of a retail park. The most recent works were commissioned by RPS Heritage, on behalf of their clients Redhouse Developments and Cromwell Property Group.

The development area, totalling 70ha was initially divided into a series of areas for the purposes of geophysical surveying which were then targeted during subsequent excavations and watching briefs (Figs 1.1 and 1.2). Part of a Roman road forming the principal routeway linking Doncaster to York, via Castleford and Tadcaster and known locally as the Roman Ridge (SAM SY1179) survived as a standing earthwork monument in the eastern part of the area.

Location, topography and geology

Topographically, the development area was within a triangular parcel of land on a valley side rising from approximately 35m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the north-east corner of the site to approximately 50m aOD in the south. Further afield, the land rises gradually to the west to around 90-100m aOD around the villages of Hooton Pagnell and Brodsworth. Whereas the land to the north and east falls gently from the A638 towards the stream of the 'Old Ea Beck', Adwick and Carcroft commons. The area is bounded by the A1M motorway on its western side and by the Great North Road (A638) on its northern and eastern sides. The southern boundary is defined by Long Lands Lane.

The geology comprises Upper Magnesian Limestone, with areas of colluvial soils, red clay and Middle Permian Marl (BGS 2022). During the excavation, the natural substrate varied across the area in both depth and composition, ranging from solid horizontal strata in the north-east, central and southern part of the area to decayed, fragmented beds comprising a soft powdery cream coloured limestone in the extreme north-west between the rock were deposits of red brown clay.

Historical and archaeological background

Most of the activity previously identified in the area comprised cropmark data showing a landscape of dispersed enclosures set within associated field systems thought to date to the Iron Age and Roman periods. Recorded cropmarks extend from Hooton Pagnell c3.5km to the west to cropmarks visible within the wider Redhouse development area. A further extensive landscape of prehistoric and Roman enclosures and fields was located to the north at Campsall (c5.5km), and at Burghwallis (c3.5km). Several investigations have also been undertaken at sites just to the south of Redhouse such as Pickburn Leys (1.5km), Balby Carr (15km) and Rossington (12km) all of which recorded extensive remains of Iron Age/Roman settlements set within field systems. More recent investigations at Rossington, investigated an enclosure and associated ditches, which were found to be integral parts of an extensive field system previously visible as cropmarks in the surrounding landscape (Powell *et al* 2020). At Outwood Academy just 0.8km to the east of Redhouse, further remains of an Iron Age/Roman ditched field system were identified (Tuck and Dawson 2012).

Within the Redhouse area, cropmarks visible on aerial photographs showed a landscape of enclosures set within rectangular fields and trackways defined by ditches thought to be of Roman date (HER 02691/01). A desk-based assessment and geophysical survey (Badcock and Merrony 1995) were followed by evaluation works (NA 1996) which confirmed the presence of the cropmark features. The subsequent mitigation works outlined below confirmed the presence of an extensive Iron Age/Roman landscape comprised of enclosures, field systems and trackways.

Mitigation works

The mitigation works began in May 2000 with the excavation of an Iron Age enclosure (E1) and a section of the Roman road (Upson-Smith 2002; Meadows and Chapman 2005) (Fig 1.2). Further areas within the development area were allocated for excavation and/or watching brief recording. Enclosures E2, E4 and E7 were subject to excavations in 2001 (NA 2005 and Simmonds 2016) and E3 was identified during a watching brief undertaken at the same time. Enclosure E5 was examined as part of a watching brief in 2003 and the excavation of enclosure E8 was conducted between October and December 2004 (Upson-Smith 2006).

EXCAVATIONS AT REDHOUSE, ADWICK LE STREET, DONCASTER

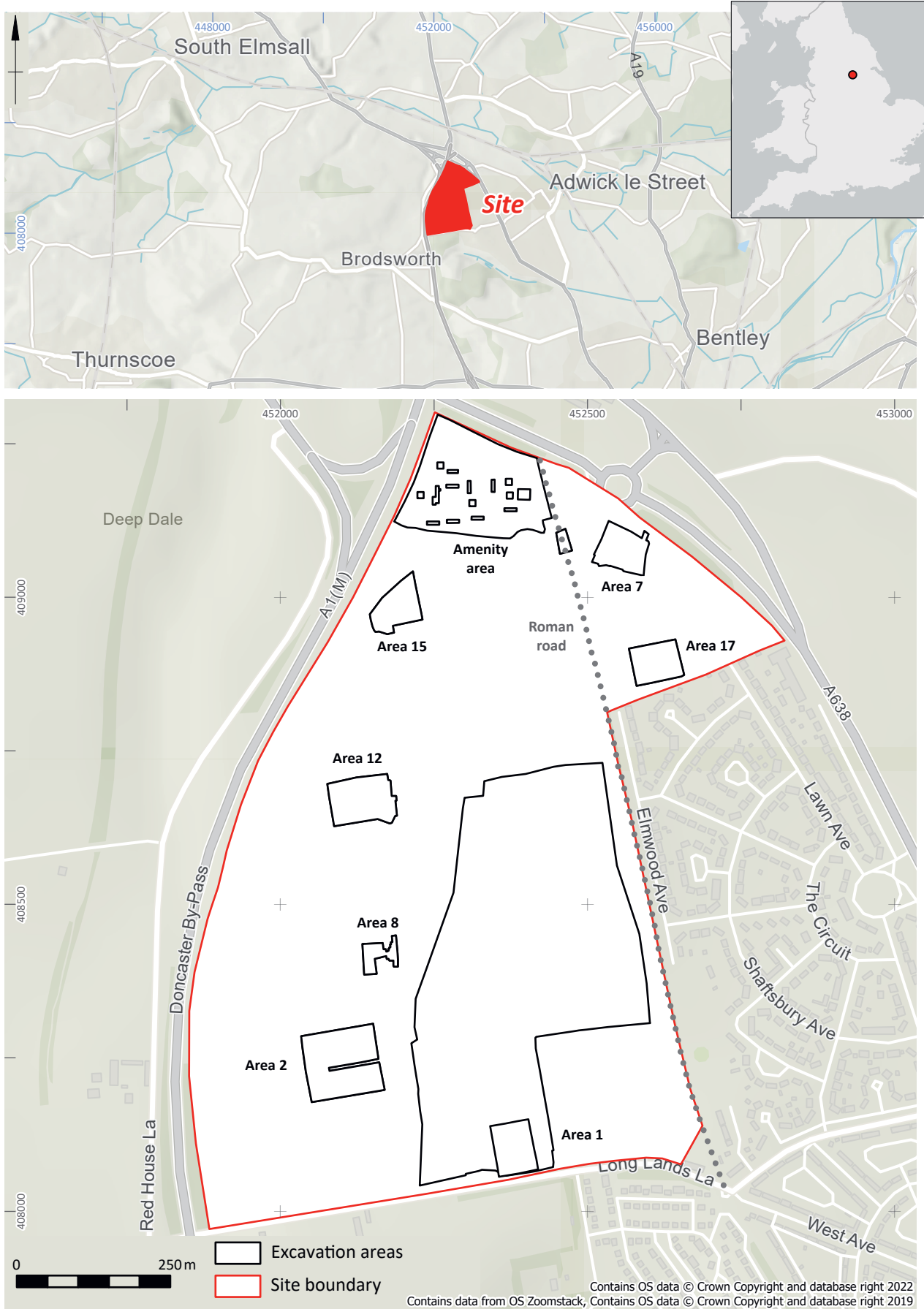


Figure 1.1. Site location

INTRODUCTION

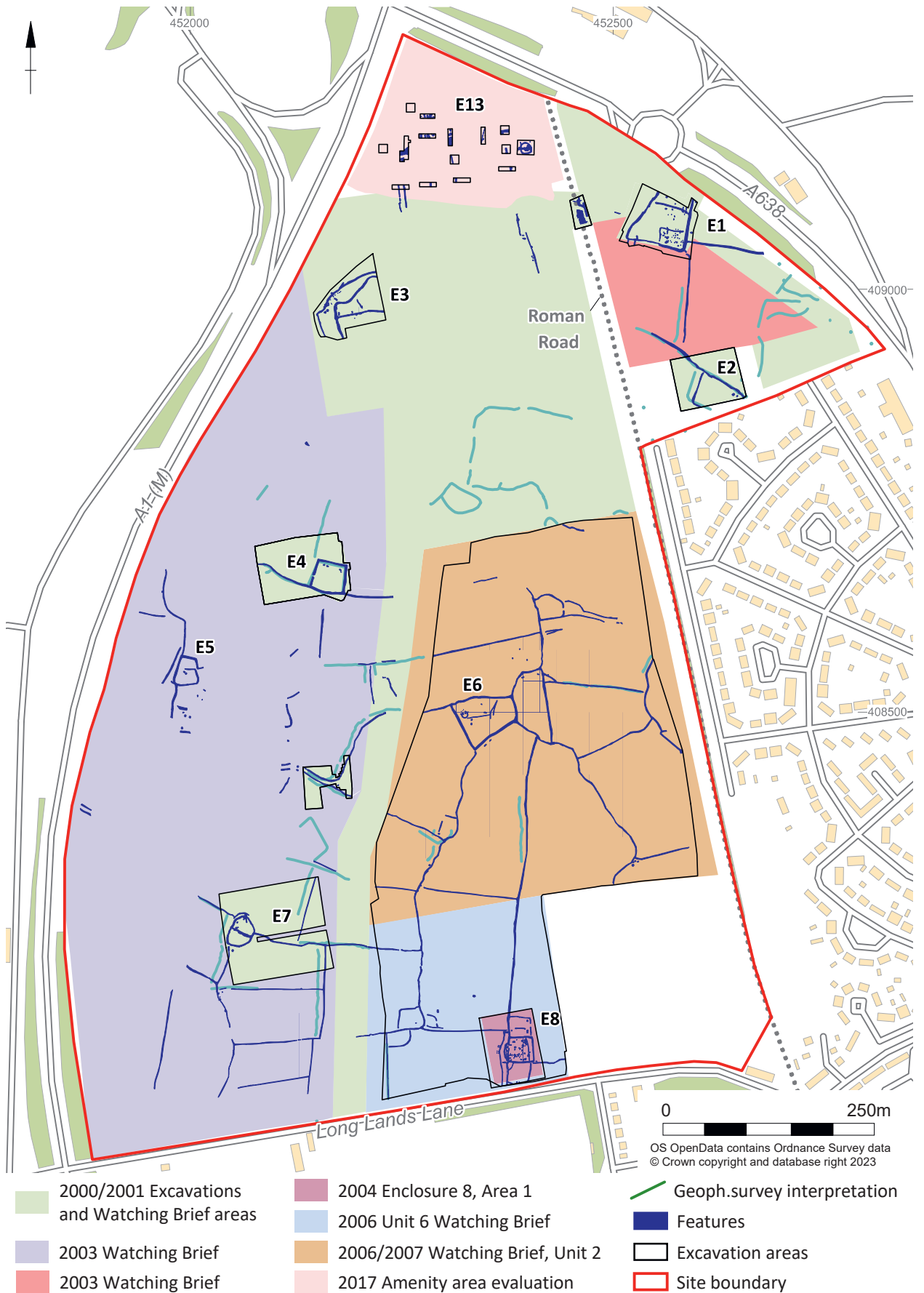


Figure 1.2. Archaeological works

EXCAVATIONS AT REDHOUSE, ADWICK LE STREET, DONCASTER

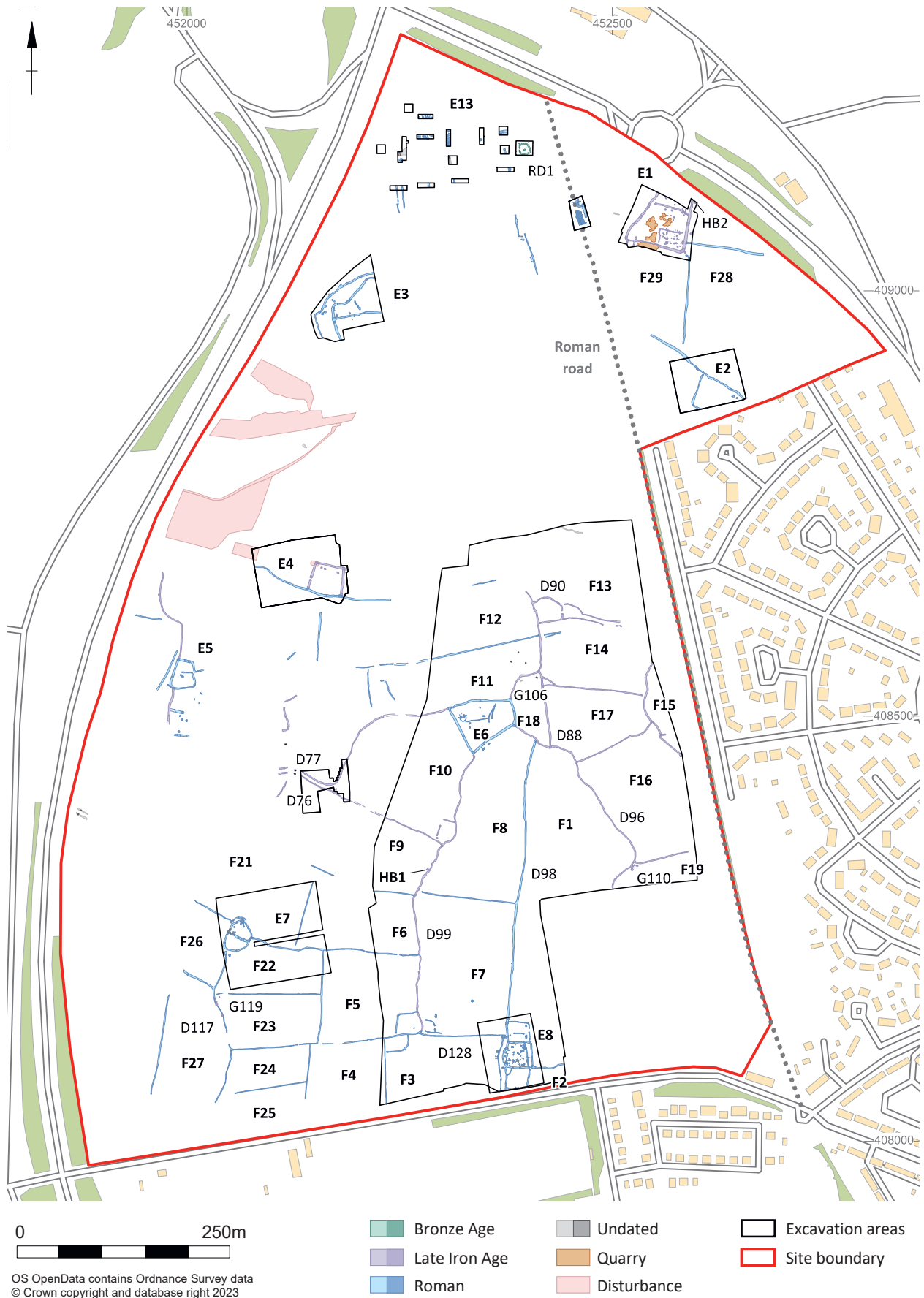


Figure 1.3. All features phased plan

Enclosure E6 and the surrounding fields and the wider area around enclosure E8 were investigated between November 2006 and January 2007 (Upson-Smith 2007). Finally, in 2017, the very northern part of the area was investigated which contained enclosure E13 and a ring ditch. These final works comprised archaeological evaluation consisting of eight trenches, six small areas and a single mitigation area (Simmonds 2017). The results of all of the archaeological works undertaken have since been reported on (Preece 2022).

Archiving

Doncaster Museum are presently unable to take in archaeological archives and the Redhouse archive will therefore be held temporarily at MOLA Northampton. Doncaster Museum has agreed to take in the Redhouse archive once they are again able to accept archaeological deposits. The accession numbers for Redhouse project are DONMG:2000.112, DONMG:2000.113 and DONMG:2000.114.

Site phasing

Archaeological features dating from the early Bronze Age through to the Roman period were identified across the development area (Fig 1.3 and Table 1.1). The stratigraphic analysis combined with the artefactual evidence has enabled a chronological sequence to be established, which is summarised below.

Evidence for Bronze Age activity was identified during the 2017 works in the northern part of the area and comprised a ring ditch (RD1). The ring ditch defined a burial monument as at least two of the six pits within its interior comprised early Bronze Age cremation burials. The remnants of pottery vessels from the early Bronze Age were also found in three of the pits.

Table 1.1. Periods of activity

Period	Activity
Bronze Age 2000 BC - 700 BC	Ring ditch Cremation burials Pits
Middle Iron Age 400 BC - 100 BC	Inhumation burial
Late Iron Age 100 BC - AD 60	Enclosures Field system Trackway Structures Cremation burial Pits Quarrying
Roman AD 60 - 450	Enclosures Field system Road Structures Oven Pits

During the Iron Age period, initial landscape elements began to be established by the inhabitants which comprised ditched enclosures and an associated field system. A crouched inhumation pit burial, radiocarbon dated to the middle Iron Age period, was identified adjacent to one of the field ditches and may be an indication that some of the field ditches were established prior to this event. There was continuous occupation from the Iron Age into the Roman period with the establishment of new enclosures and the expansion of a more rectilinear field system. The Iron Age enclosures were incorporated into this activity while newly established enclosures utilised the existing field system.