

Jones, G.G. 1993 *Animal Bones. In...* Neo 12-14, LBA 34-5, EIA 45-6, RB 171-3  
and Fiche Neo 1#9-10, RB 2#89-90.

The Oxford Archaeological Unit

Thames Valley Landscapes: The Cotswold Water Park, Volume 1

(Series Editor: Ellen McAdam)

2 Levitan B. RB p173-5, fiche 2#91

Jgg 93b-RGF-Lechlade

Excavations at  
**Roughground Farm,**  
Lechlade, Gloucestershire:  
a prehistoric and Roman landscape

by

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*Published for*

The Oxford Archaeological Unit

by

The Oxford University Committee for Archaeology  
1993

Roughground Fm Lechlade. 1993 Neo, BA, 1A, RB.

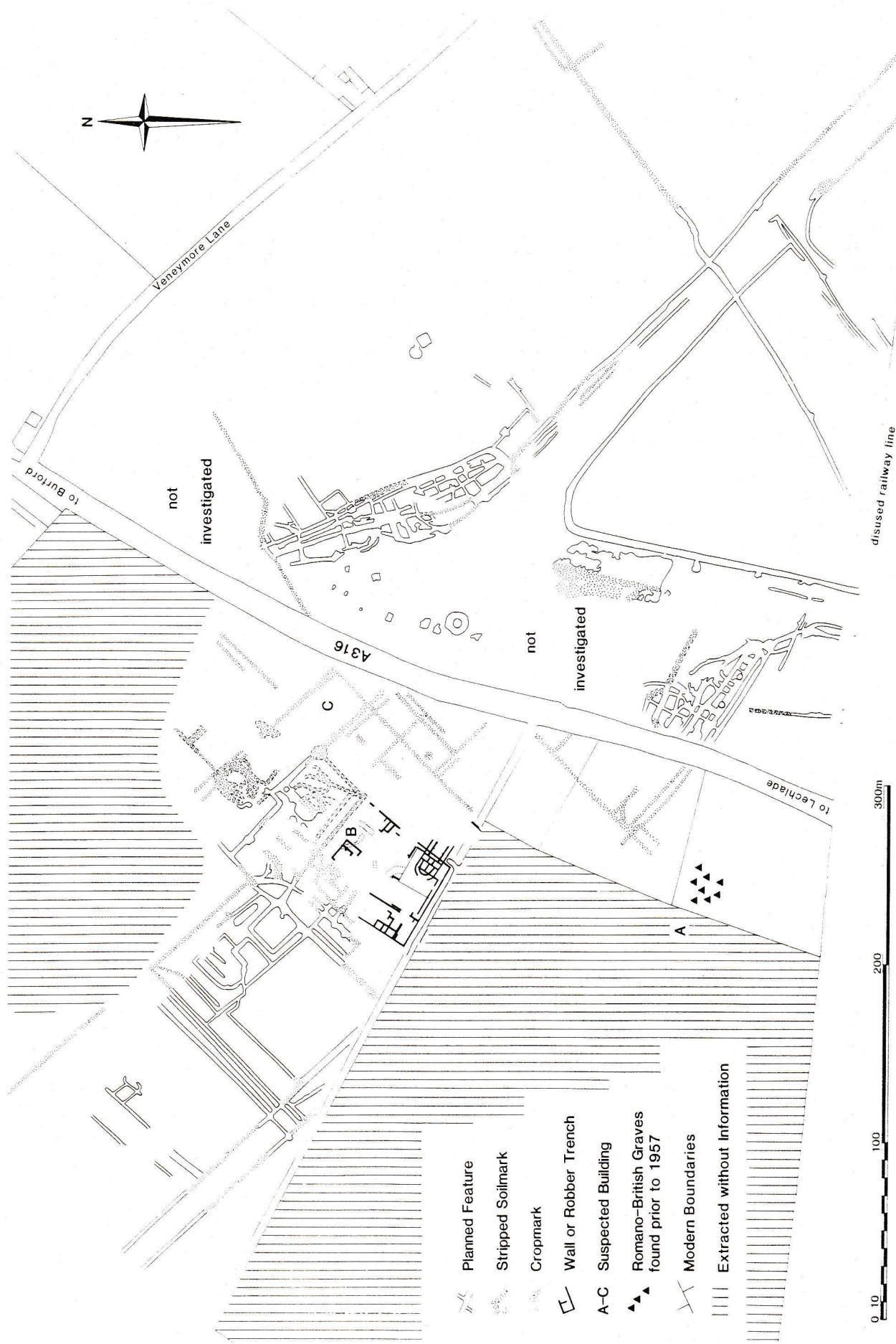


Figure 1 Overall site plan



## Summary

The archaeological remains at Roughground Farm cover an area of c 8 hectares on the second gravel terrace just north of Lechlade between the rivers Leach and Thames (SP 216/009 to 221/005). The site was investigated by Margaret Jones in advance of gravel extraction between 1957 and 1965. These excavations revealed evidence of occupation from the Late Neolithic to the end of the Roman period and represent one of the first landscape studies undertaken in this country. The work was stimulated by the discovery of a Roman villa, whose buildings were partly investigated in 1957 and 1959. Further excavations on the villa buildings were carried out by Tim Allen in 1981-2 and in 1990 prior to a housing development.

The Neolithic occupation consists of a small cluster of pits containing Grooved Ware, contrasting with a dispersed scatter of pits with Beaker pottery. The Earlier Bronze Age is only represented by a stray sherd, but there is a wide scatter of Later Bronze Age pits, which tend to congregate in small groups. In the Early Iron Age the landscape was divided by large boundary ditches, roughly parallel to one another and at right angles to the river Leach, with smaller ditched subdivisions. This land-division appears to respect established trackways, which met within the excavated area. Pit groups indicate an arable economy and occupation, including posthole groups and burials, was concentrated at the east edge of the site.

The Middle and Late Iron Ages are hardly represented, but an Early Roman native settlement was established just west of the trackways. This included an oval house-enclosure with accompanying pit-group, small stock enclosures, and pens, lying within a larger rectilinear enclosure. Between the trackways and the settlement was an open 'green'-like area. The economy was similar to that of the Iron Age and this settlement persisted until the early 2nd century AD, when it was replaced by the building of a villa.

At least two masonry buildings were put up in the mid 2nd century and were surrounded by an enclosure ditch. One of these was an aisled building, with an apsidal end unique in Roman Britain. Outside this was a regular system of paddocks and larger fields laid out to a standard unit of length. The villa occupation area, however, kept within the limits of the preceding native settlement. Trackways and droveways approaching the villa were delineated by boundary ditches.

In the 3rd century another large domestic building was constructed, while the ends of the trackways east of the villa were overlaid by two groups of enclosures facing each other across the 'green', which were used for various agricultural and semi-industrial activities and may also have been occupied. These may represent centralisation of the villa's estate management. Small groups of late Roman burials were found in and around these enclosures. In the 4th century, if not before, another domestic building was added to the villa. Occupation of the villa and adjacent enclosures continued beyond 360 AD, but possibly not as late as the end of the 4th century.

There was very little evidence of Saxon activity, although the villa buildings were robbed for stone for graves in this period. The east part of the site was overlaid by ridge and furrow in the medieval period and the west appears to have been pasture; both parts remained open fields until gravel extraction began in the 1930s. Virtually the whole site has now been destroyed.



One flint nodule weighing 330 grams was recovered from 784 and may reflect the manner in which raw material was brought to the site.

Types	Features				Totals
	983	962	784	785	
Scrapers		3	8		11
Serrated flakes		2	1		3
Projectile point			1		1
Misc. retouched			2		2
Utilized flakes		2	4	2	8
Hammerstone	1			*	1
Cores		4	3	1	8
Unmodified flakes	17	36	26	15	94
Calcined lumps		1		5	6
Nodule			1		1
Totals	18	48	46	23	135

\* A quartzite hammerstone was present in this feature (see Ch. II.A.4)

Table 2 Summary of flintwork from Grooved Ware features

- Bulb present & position
- Bulb absent
- ◻ Cortex
- Polished / ground areas
- ( ) Break lines

Figure 10 Drawing conventions used for flintwork

Fig. 9 illustrates a representative selection of the tools and worked pieces. For details of the assemblage see Ch. 2.A.3 on Fiche 1#8.

Overall, the assemblage is dominated by tools, especially scrapers and serrated blades, and by working waste. The presence of cores and hammerstones suggests that working took place nearby; and the contents of pit 785 (Fig. 11) suggest that debris from one episode of flintworking was disposed of as a single group. Implements and utilized pieces represent 20% of the assemblage, which is high even for a site away from naturally abundant supplies of raw materials, where frugal use of raw material might be expected.

Only 3 of the 19 categories of flint implements recurrently found in association with Grooved Ware were present in the Roughground Farm assemblage (cf. Wainwright & Longworth 1971, 254). Particularly notable is the absence of points/awls, knives, and axe fragments. Many of the Grooved Ware pit groups in the upper Thames Valley yield rather little flintwork, as for example at Vicarage Field, Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire (Case 1982c), and in this respect the Roughground Farm collection is an important assemblage. Comparable groups are known from the Thames

valley, as for example at Sutton Courteney, Oxfordshire (Leeds 1934) and Cassington, Oxfordshire (Case 1982a). In both these cases scrapers and serrated blades dominated the assemblages. Little is known of contemporary assemblages from the Cotswolds, but further west at Trelystan in Powys scrapers, knives and points predominate (Healey in Britnell 1982, 175), possibly reflecting slightly different economic and subsistence practices in the uplands (Darvill 1983, 210–11).

## II.A.4 Stone object

A single quartzite hammerstone was recovered from 785. This was an unmodified quartzite pebble crazed and fractured by use at both ends (Figs. 13 and 11). This stone was found associated with a worked-down flint core and at least nine unmodified flakes which probably derived from the core, suggesting that it had been used in flint knapping and discarded along with the other debris.

Hammerstones are relatively rare from sites with Grooved Ware pottery: Wainwright and Longworth list only one example, from Newport, Essex (1971, 262). In addition Pit P at Sutton Courteney, Oxfordshire, contained a quartzite hammerstone and two flint hammerstones associated with Grooved Ware pottery (Leeds 1934, Pl. xxviii.a.)

## II.A.5 Bone objects

A complete bone point/awl (Fig. 12.1) and the tip of another (Fig. 12.2) were recovered from 784. The complete point is made on a portion of long bone, probably a piece of tibia or fibula. Both were ground to shape, and are typical of the range of such artefacts known from Grooved Ware sites in Britain. At least nine awls of comparable form were found at Durrington Walls, Wiltshire, all within the size range 80–124 mm long (Wainwright & Longworth 1971, 181).

## II.A.6 Animal bones

by Gillian Jones

Animal bones were recovered from all four features associated with Grooved Ware. More than half the bones were of pig, and a quarter were bovid. Of the red deer, all except three bones were antlers. Sheep or goat was represented by a single tooth, and a fragmentary atlas vertebra was from a dog or wolf. Table 3 summarises the animal bone assemblage by context.

The composition of the assemblage from the Grooved Ware pits varied, although pig was the most common species by fragment count in all the pits. 962 contained the sheep/goat tooth, the fragment of dog/wolf, and all the fairly complete antlers. It also contained relatively more cattle bones than any of the other pits.



Species	Features				Totals
	784	785	962	983	
Pig	6	16	27	6	55
Cattle	1	1	17	2	21
Red deer	1	4	11		16
Sheep/goat			1		1
Dog			1		1
Totals	8	21	57	8	94

Table 3 Animal bones found in the Grooved Ware pits (by fragment count)

The pig bones are chiefly from domestic animals, with the exception of one male lower canine tooth, which was large and may be from a wild boar. Butchery marks were observed on one pig bone. Evidence of the age at death of the pigs suggests that few reached maturity and that they were killed at a variety of ages.

Most of the red deer remains came from 962, which contained at least four fairly complete shed antlers (Fig. 14). No signs of intentional use or wear were observed. Table 31 on Fiche 1#10 summarises the measurements taken on the antlers. In addition to the antlers in 962, three tines and two fragments were recovered from other pits.

Red deer was also hunted, to judge from the presence of three red deer metapodial bones. One of these bore many fine marks around the condyles, probably caused when skinning the animal. Animal skins would have been important, particularly bearing in mind that wool, if it was used at all, was available only in small quantities.

The cattle bones appear to be from domestic animals,

none being large enough to suggest the presence of aurochs (one scapula neck — SLC 40, after Driesch 1976). A mandible and a few loose teeth indicate three individuals, all less than about five years old.

Some information on the probable season of use of two of the pits may be put forward. Most of the young of wild boar are born in late March or early April (Grigson 1982). If one assumes that Late Neolithic domestic pigs also generally produced only one litter, in the spring, then it is likely that the piglet bones in 785 were deposited some time in the summer. The find of several antlers together in 962 may be interpreted as a store. Red deer drop their antlers in February or March, and these would be collected soon after; antlers left on the ground, apart from being soon covered by plant growth, may be gnawed and damaged by the deer themselves. It is worth noting that no bones of very young pigs were found associated with the antlers. On the basis of this rather tentative argument, it can be suggested that the site was occupied or visited in both late winter and summer.

The bone sample is similar to those from the Late Neolithic sites discussed by Grigson (in Smith *et al* 1981) notably in the predominance of pig. Cattle were, as here, of secondary importance in terms of the number of fragments found, though given their greater size they may have provided the major part of the food output through milk and/or meat. Sheep were present at all sites but in very small numbers. Grigson observed that horse bones were recorded only from henge sites and not at those sites, like Roughground Farm, comprising only groups of pits.

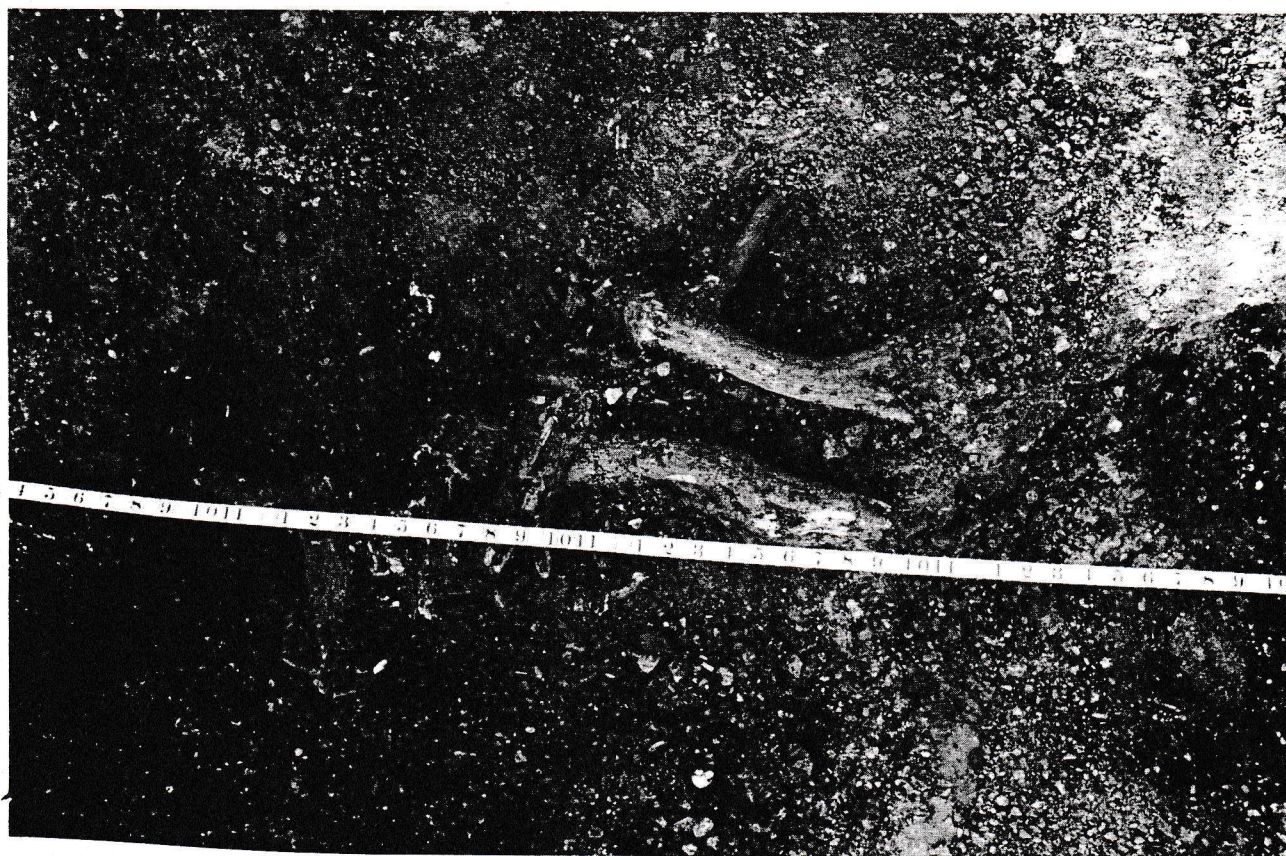


Figure 14 Deposit of antlers in Grooved Ware pit 962

RG14



With such a small assemblage it is uncertain to what extent the collection is contemporary with the pottery, rather than residual from Late Neolithic and Beaker period activity in the vicinity.

The raw material is all good quality imported flint, and is broadly similar to that used during Late Neolithic and Beaker times (see Ch. II.A.3 and Ch. II.B.4). Thin cream to light-grey coloured cortex predominates, although a few fragments display a thicker and lighter coloured cortex. Most of the flints have a light milky-white patina. No drift flint is present.

In contrast to most Neolithic/Bronze Age flint assemblages the percentage of unutilized flint flakes as a fraction of the total assemblage is rather low at about 66%; a figure of over 90% is customary (Saville 1980, 19). Several factors may account for this, among them the small size of the sample, the position of the site in an area where good flint is not available naturally and thus has to be used sparingly, and the possibility that worked pieces were preferentially collected during the excavation. The flakes represent a wide range of sizes from 18 mm in length to over 45 mm long, but no small chips or splinters from retouching and fine flaking are present. In general the flakes are squat with abundant hinge fractures and rather ragged irregular outlines. Insufficient pieces are present to allow any metrical analysis, but the general character of the cores and the flakes is similar to material from other Bronze Age sites in southern England (eg Fasham & Ross 1978).

Overall, this small assemblage is extremely difficult to evaluate. All the tool forms present could be accommodated within the typological and stylistic range represented by examples from the Late Neolithic and Beaker period features, and there are also similarities in the types of raw material represented. Given these features, together with the small size of the assemblage, it seems unlikely that flintworking was undertaken on any scale, if at all, by the Later Bronze Age inhabitants of the site.

### III.A.4 Other finds

#### III.A.4.a Worked bone

Two bones from pit 1001 showed signs of working.

1. The point of a pin or needle, slightly curved and polished at the end, probably through wear. Length 32 mm.
2. A sheep or goat metatarsal split lengthways, much of the split edges being smoothed. There were traces of polish on the abraded exterior, and a number of short incisions or scratches down the length on one side, though these did not form any pattern. One end of the metatarsal was broken. In the Iron Age split bones such as this were often used as gouges or awls, as at Ashville (Parrington 1978, 81–82). Surviving length

94 mm, width 13 mm.

#### III.A.4.b Fired clay

582 grams, all in Fabric A—Mixed streaky Clays, came from four of the Bronze Age pits. (For details see Ch. 5.11.b on Fiche 2#63 and Table 53 on Fiche 2#66).

These included one possible mould fragment, part of a flat slab and daub fragments.

#### III.A.4.c Stone

One worn lump, probably of Sarsen sandstone, came from pit 1001. This was possibly a quern rubber.

### III.A.5 Animal bones

by Gillian Jones

Under 200 animal bones were recovered from the Bronze Age pits. Table 11 lists these and gives percentages of the species.

	Cattle	Sheep	Pig	Red deer	Dog	Unidentified	
						Large	Medium
879	2	1	—	—	—	4	3
968	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
1001	7	46	—	—	—	11	107
998	2	3	—	—	—	—	1
1296	2	—	—	—	—	3	4
Total	13	50	—	1	—	18	115
Percentages of identified bones of each species							
20 78 — 1.7 — (32% identified)							

Large — cattle-sized fragment; medium — sheep/pig-sized fragment

Table 11 Animal bones: percentages of species from Bronze Age features

Bones from the Later Bronze Age features, all of them pits, were dominated by those of sheep or goat. The sample size is small, but comparison of the unidentified fragments gave a similar pattern, 87% being of sheep size (and few of these being at all like pig bone).

One horn core fragment was identified as sheep; no bones were positively identified as goat, and most of them are probably from sheep. Evidence of the age at death was scant. One mandible was well worn (wear stage 44E, Grant 1975), but of nine first or second molars, all probably from different individuals, only one showed sufficient wear to have come from a mature animal.

The cattle bones included two from calves (a mandible with  $M_1$  unerupted, and a very immature femur) and only one from an adult beast. The surface of the bones was rather eroded, and no butchery marks were observed.

Deer was represented only by a single piece of large antler, presumably red deer, and no pig or horse bones were found.