

Phases 1 – 2

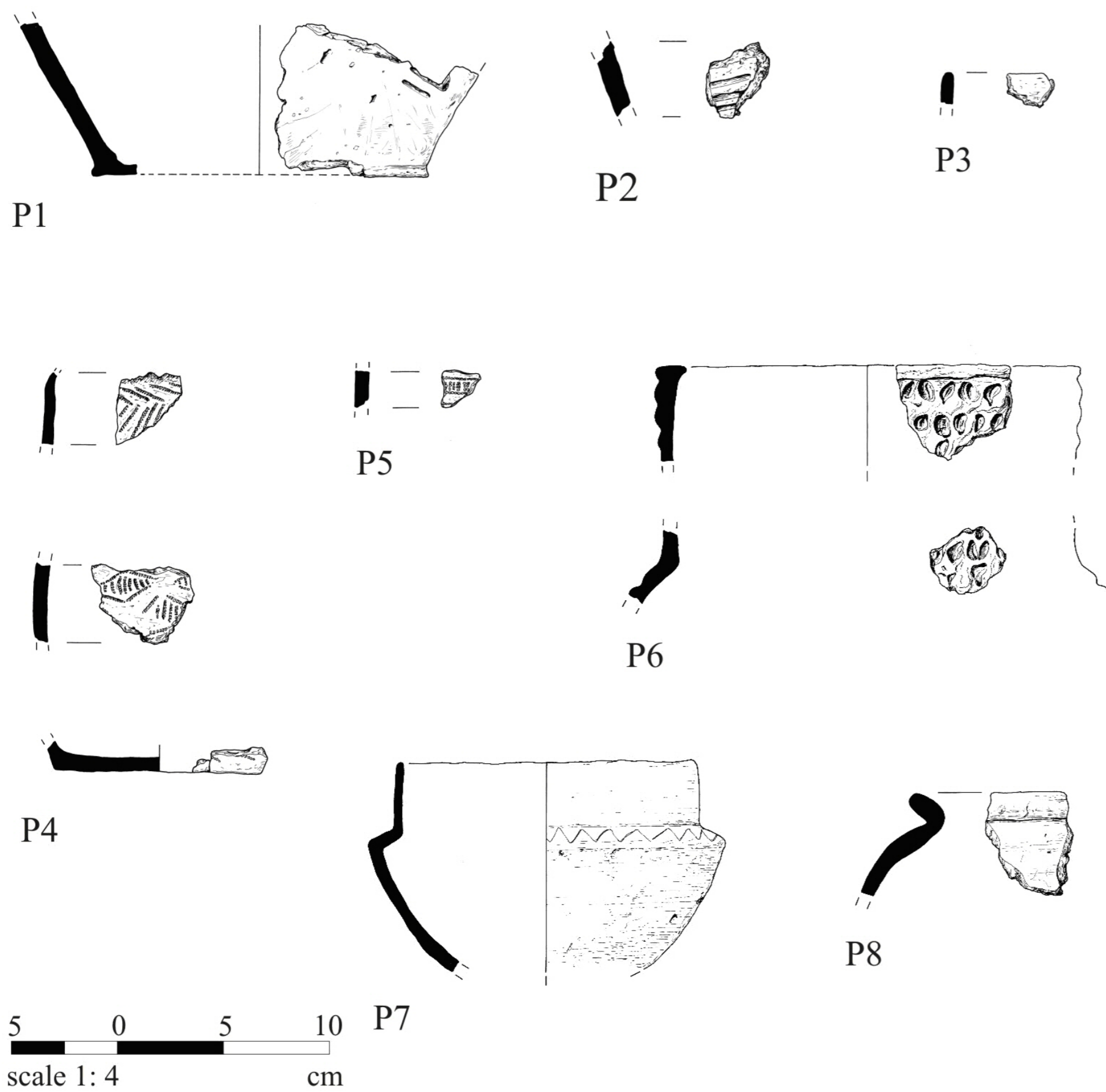
Late Neolithic to Roman

3300 BC – AD 410

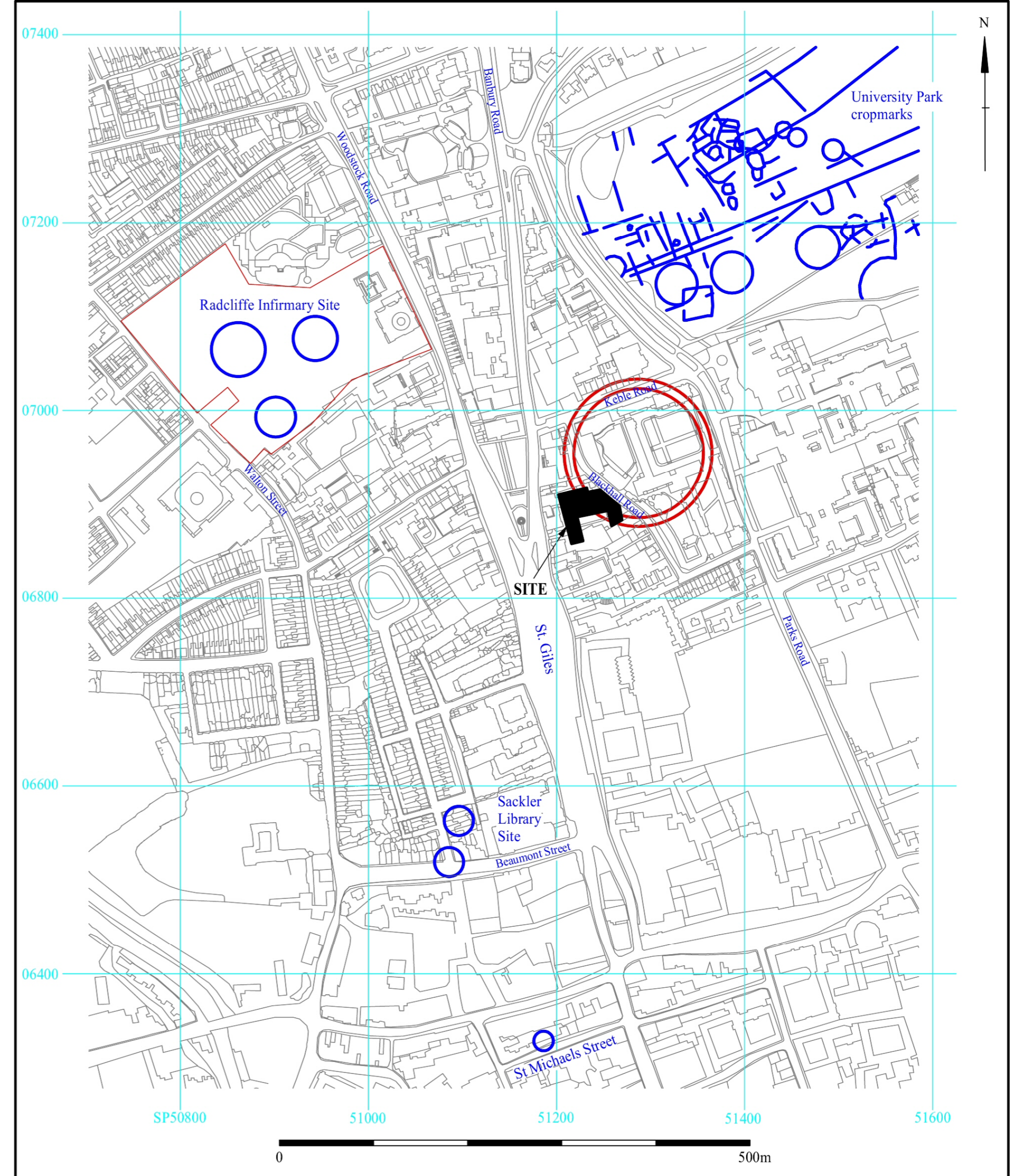
Prehistoric Oxford

In the last few years our knowledge of the landscape of earlier prehistoric Oxford has made a significant leap forward with several sites coming to light. The area of north Oxford is increasingly considered as a later Neolithic and early Bronze Age ritual landscape. This is the result of the number of Bronze Age barrows found in the vicinity despite the difficulties of survey within an urban environment. The site at Kendrew Quadrangle lies amidst a dense concentration of excavated barrows with cropmarks visible from the air showing the location of more.

Neolithic finds seem to be concentrated in the area of modern Christ Church, suggesting that this may have been the site of a major settlement to the southeast of the city. Cropmarks visible in the University Parks area, close to the site, show a complex of features which almost certainly represent Bronze Age barrows and Iron Age or Roman settlement. Cropmarks are variations in crop growth visible from the air that are dependant on moisture levels which are often determined by the presence of buried archaeological features such as ditches and gullies.



Above: Illustrations of a selection of the prehistoric pottery recovered from the site. P1-3: Late Neolithic grooved ware in various forms. P4-6: Late Neolithic to early Bronze Age Beaker vessels. P7: Early Iron Age carinated bowl. P8: Roman (AD60/70) high shouldered “Belgic” vessel.



Above: Map showing the prehistoric sites in northern Oxford. The complex of cropmarks in University Park can clearly be seen in the northeast corner. The double red rings show the projection of the henge ditch found during the Kendrew Quadrangle excavations.

Kendrew Quadrangle 2000 years BC

The earliest feature on the site was a massive ditch, around 8m across at the top and 2.5-2.9m deep, projected to occupy a roughly circular layout about 150m in diameter. It was constructed in the late Neolithic, around 2200 BC, and remained a feature in the landscape for the next three millennia. The ditch has been interpreted as a ‘monumental’ henge. No other features can be securely assigned to this phase but a bank is assumed to have accompanied the ditch.

The henge ditch gradually silted up, with clear episodes of stabilisation and soil formation, and was visited at intervals during the Bronze Age, perhaps the Iron Age, and maybe into the early Roman period, with deposits of pottery and hearths from all these periods being found. The only other feature identified as belonging to this period was a single pit, possibly of later Iron Age or Roman date.

Relatively few finds were recovered from the prehistoric period, with the majority of those that were collected being small fragments of a variety of types of pottery. The earliest of these was late Neolithic grooved ware which was found in two clusters within the infill of the henge ditch.