5
Raunds in the Region

There's nothing else so fine to see
As a fast flowing river
Hemm'd by green banks continually
And winding on for ever

John Clare, A Ramble by the River Side

5.1 The wider Raunds landscape

The immediate context of the Raunds monuments is provided by the analysis of over 10,000 pieces of struck flint collected during the Raunds Area Survey over the area shown in Figure 1.2 (Humble 2006; Parry 2006). Wherever fieldwalking was possible, there was a ubiquitous thin scatter of struck flint, within which there were areas of higher density, but no clearly defined 'sites' (Figs 1.4, 5.1). The areas of higher density were invariably on the light, permeable soils formed on the Jurassic deposits exposed in the sides of the valleys of the Nene and its tributaries and, in the south-east of the survey area, of the river Till, rather than on the largely Boulder Clay-covered interfluves. The lithics of the alluviated valley floor remain unknown beyond the excavated areas. Within the suite of deposits in the valley sides (Fig 1.3), the Northampton Sand with Ironstone was particularly well used, comprising three per cent of the area

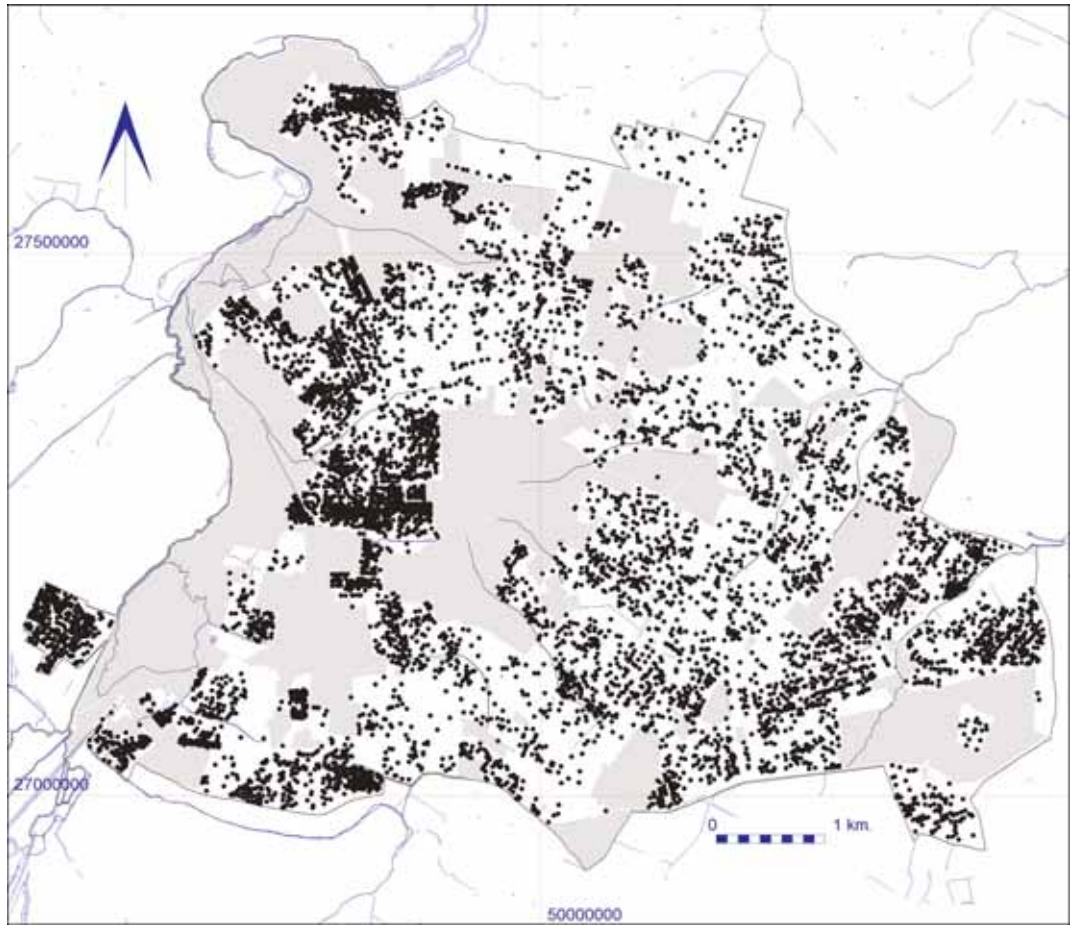

Figure 5.1
Distribution of all struck flint found during field-walking survey. Unwalked areas are shown in grey. The watercourses and areas of water are modern ones, included to help locate the image in the landscape.

walked but yielding ten per cent of the total lithic collection, and a higher still proportion of finished implements. A springline at the junction of this pervious formation with the impervious underlying Lias Clay would have contributed to the attraction of its light, well-drained soils as an area for settlement and other activities.

Diagnostically Mesolithic material, well-represented at West Cotton in the excavated area (Fig 3.1), was scarce beyond it, with a slight concentration immediately east of the West Cotton monuments, on the side of the valley of the Cotton Brook (Fig 5.2), suggesting that settlement and other activities were indeed focused on the valley bottom, at the confluence of the brook and what was then a course of the Nene (3.2.2). Blades have a wider distribution, although largely confined to the valley bottom and sides, but with a thin scatter over the interfluves (Fig 5.3). Those from the valley sides and interfluves tend to be larger than those from the valley bottom, and more likely to be of Neolithic than of Mesolithic date. They have a common distribution with finished implements of Early Neolithic character (Fig 5.4), especially along the Cotton Brook and along the valley side to the north of it. The lithic signatures of Early Neolithic occupation can be slight and easily swamped by those of later periods (Edmonds *et al* 1999, 72–4) so, as there is no evidence of settlement in the valley bottom after the construction of the 4th-millennium monuments there, at least some of the builders and users of these and subsequent monuments are likely to have occupied the valley sides. The scarcer transverse and barbed-and-tanged arrowheads of later periods have a similar distribution, and a preponderance of oblique forms over chisel forms – the reverse of the situation among the excavated material – indicates a more substantial Late Neolithic component in the lithics from this zone than in those from the valley bottom (Fig 5.5). The Stanwick flint axe hoard (Panel 3.4; Humble SS3.7.2) also came from a valley-side location (Fig 1.4). The scarcity of Neolithic material on the interfluve suggests that it may have remained largely wooded.

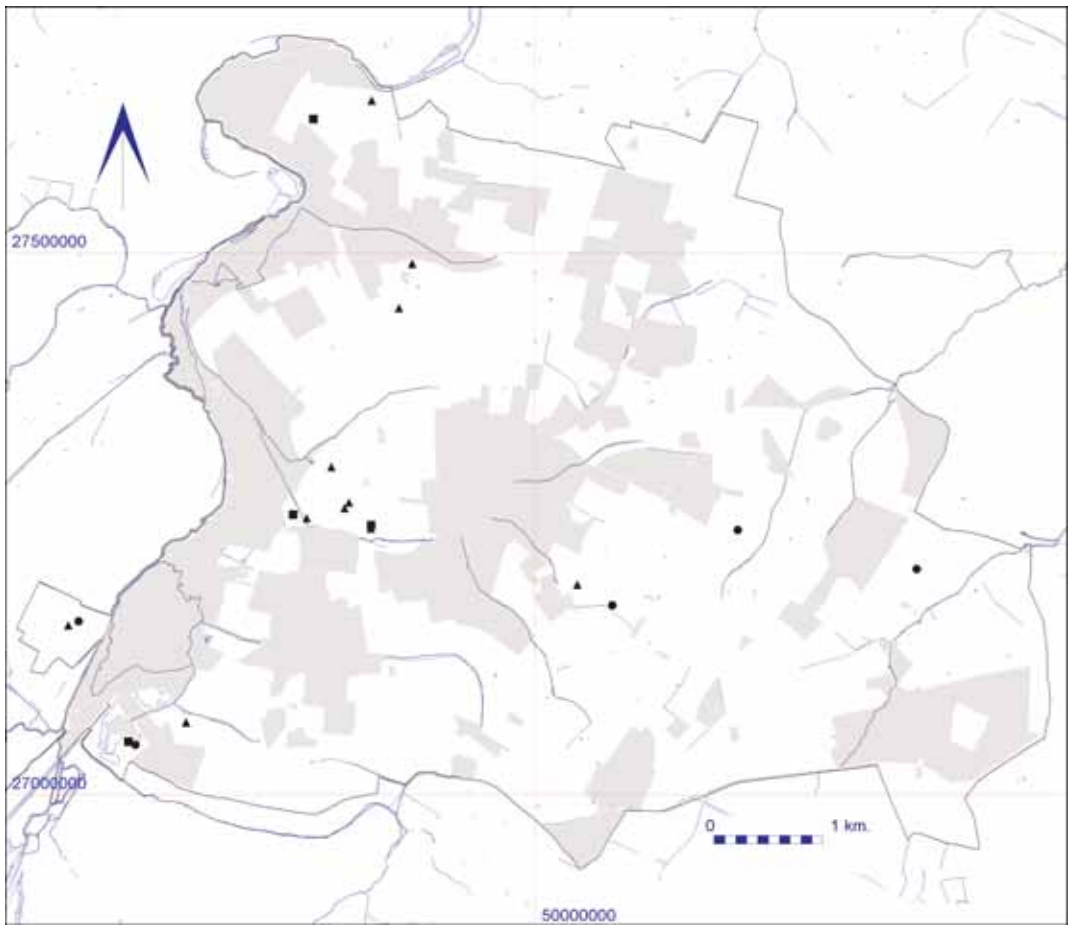

Figure 5.2
Distribution of microliths (triangles), microburins (squares) and burins (circles) found during field-walking survey. Unwalked areas are shown in grey. The watercourses and areas of water are modern ones, included to help locate the image in the landscape.

The Neolithic lithics are outnumbered by a technologically simple flake industry, much of which is likely to date from the 2nd millennium. It is this material that extends, relatively thinly, over the interfluves, with a lower level of retouched forms and a higher frequency of burnt flint than on the valley sides, suggesting an expansion onto previously little-used terrain, perhaps for a restricted range of tasks. Its extent is represented by the distribution of notches, denticulates and piercers, retouched forms more frequent in this period than in previous ones (Fig 5.6). In this period too, however, the valley sides were the most intensively used. The same zone was favoured for settlement over more than two thousand years, as were some of the same locations. A similar pattern on the steeper west side of the valley is suggested by a concentration of lithics of every period from the Mesolithic onwards on Crow Hill – the only area there to be fieldwalked (Figs 5.1–6). It is as if a distinction between an area of monuments, ceremony and pasture on the valley floor and an occupied zone on the valley sides developed during the 4th millennium and was reinforced late in the 3rd, when the relation of the living sites in one zone to the barrows in the other is reflected in cremation urns that may previously have been used as cooking vessels (Copley *et al* SS3.8.2). The only monument on the valley side is the Cotton 'Henge', of different form and perhaps of different date from any of those on the valley bottom (3.4.2). It lies fully in the occupied zone, on Northampton Sand with Ironstone and in one of the most extensive concentrations of lithics.

A corollary of this is that life and its preoccupations were focused on the river valley, even when there was an apparent lull in activity in the valley bottom. People at the valley-bottom monuments would have seen the valley sides and varying distances along the valley bottom (Figs 5.7–8). Even the lithic concentrations higher up the valley side, like Top Lodge, command views that include far more of the Nene valley and/or one of its tributaries than of the plateau (Fig 5.11), and the lower-lying

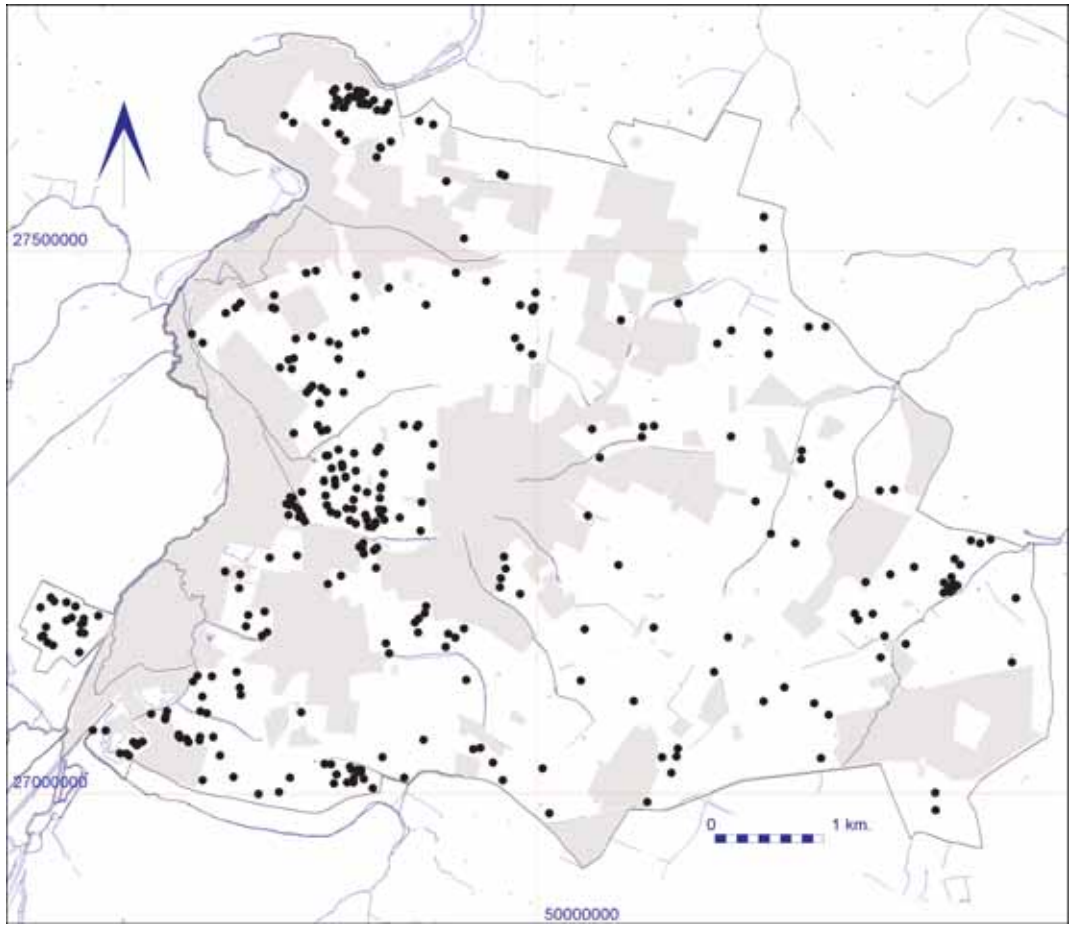

Figure 5.3
Distribution of blades found during fieldwalking survey. Unwalked areas are shown in grey. The watercourses and areas of water are modern ones, included to help locate the image in the landscape.

ones, like Mallows Cotton (east) (Fig 5.12), are oriented almost entirely on the valley and its tributaries. This is also true of the extensive scatter over and around the Cotton 'Henge' (Fig 5.9). Even Crow Hill – later the site of an Iron Age hillfort – is overlooked to the west and commands the valley and, to some extent, the opposite slope, not the interfluve. It does, however, provide an exceptionally full perspective of the valley and all the Raunds monuments, including the Cotton 'Henge' (Fig 5.10), raising the possibility that it may have been a significant location long before earthworks were built on it.

The 2nd-millennium droves and enclosures on the terrace at Raunds must themselves have been part of a wider system of stock management encompassing the island, the valley sides and perhaps the plateau (3.7.2). The paucity of artefacts from the ditches and associated structures indicates that the principal settlements were still on the valley side, among the spreads of Bronze Age lithics. This too must have been where the cleaned grain brought to the area of one of the huts in the field system was grown. Equally significant may be the absence from Raunds of burnt mounds, in contrast to the contemporary spreads of burnt stone, often including Bronze Age artefacts, which line the palaeochannels of the occupied Thames floodplain at Yarnton (Hey 1997, 109). Movement between the Boulder Clay plateau and the valley bottom is evidenced by the appearance of flint from the plateau, absent from the earlier industries, in knapping clusters that post-date the Raunds barrows (Ballin Panel 3.7; SS3.7.6). The development in the 2nd millennium of a less-intensively used zone on the interfluves completed a ladder of complementary land-uses that was later replicated in the valley-side location of the present (Saxon) villages, and in their parish boundaries, each of which encompasses valley bottom, valley side and interfluve.

5.2 And beyond

In the subtle, unemphatic relief of the south-east Midlands, the major rivers are

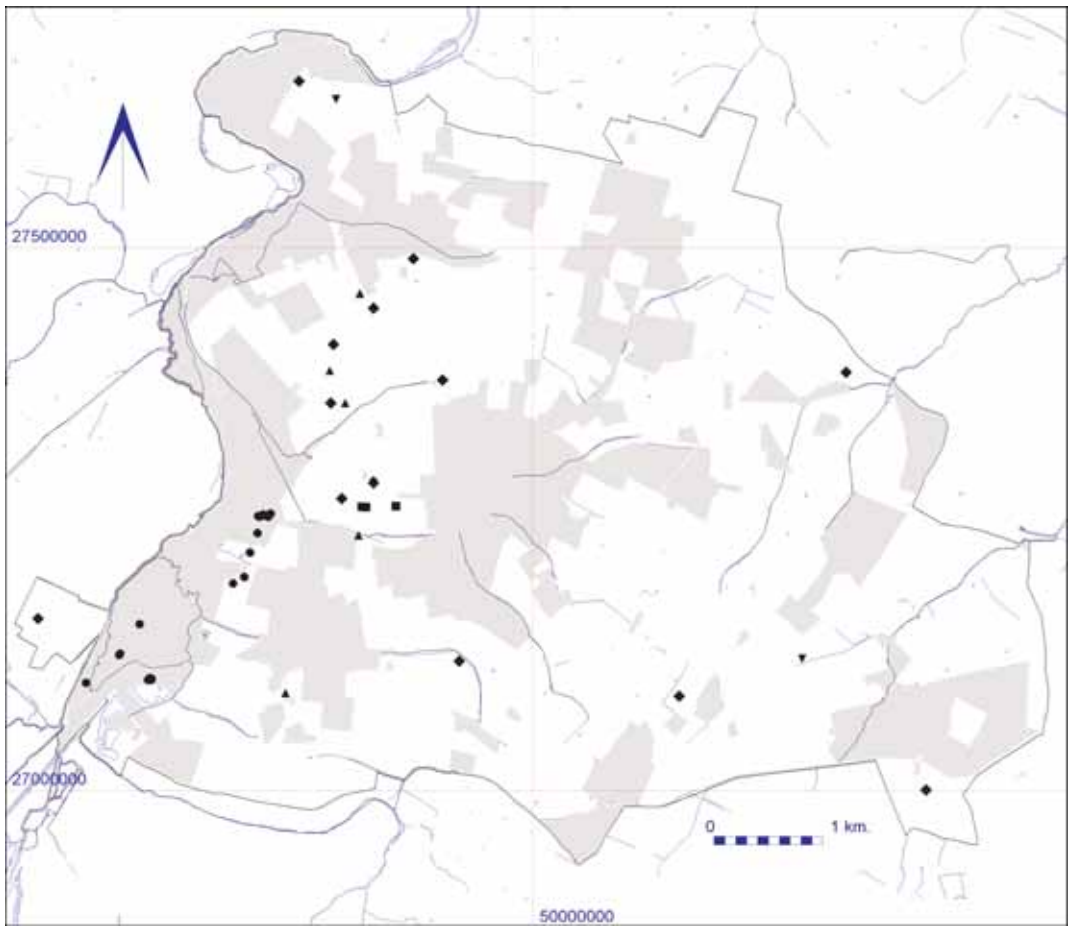

Figure 5.4
Distribution of leaf arrowheads (lozenges), laurel leaves (squares), serrated flakes and blades (circles), ground flint axeheads or fragments of them (triangles) and stone axeheads (inverted triangles) found during fieldwalking survey. Unwalked areas are shown in grey. The watercourses and areas of water are modern ones, included to help locate the image in the landscape.

the salient features of the landscape (Figs 5.13–14). The Welland, Nene and Great Ouse all rise in the Cotswolds or their continuation, the Northamptonshire Uplands, and flow north-eastward, at first in well-defined valleys, further downstream along courses that have changed many times as they cross the flatlands of the fenland basin, which was scoured out of soft Jurassic clays. The Welland and the Nene cut through relatively hard Jurassic strata, like those shown in the side of the Nene valley in Figure 1.3, almost until they enter the basin; and most of the interfluve between them is gently undulating, since the Boulder Clay that blankets it conforms to the contours of the underlying limestone. The Great Ouse, on the other hand, leaves the limestone much sooner, in what is now the Bedford area, and winds across a greater expanse of flat claylands (Field 1974, 59–60). The interfluve between the Nene and the Great Ouse, including most of the Raunds survey area, is correspondingly flatter than that between the Welland and the Nene, as here the Boulder Clay largely overlies Oxford Clay. The width of the great Ouse valley in the Bedford area (Figs 5.13–14: transect 2) is the distance between a limestone spur to the north and the Cretaceous strata to the south. As relief diminishes along all the rivers, their gravels fan out across the claylands.

The low altitude and relief of the fenland basin have combined with its openness to the sea to make for dramatic changes in hydrology and sedimentation. In the early 4th millennium, what now appear to be 'fen edge' sites – like some of those shown in Figure 5.13 – were no such thing. Dry land then extended farther north and east than it was to again until recent drainage, with substantial forest cover, and with peat confined to particularly low-lying places such as river channels, the succession to seasonally flooded land, fen carr and reedswamp occurring well out into the basin. It was the subsequent interplay of intermittently encroaching marine sediments and freshwater peats that transformed the environment of the lower courses of the rivers, so that, in the late 2nd millennium, the Flag

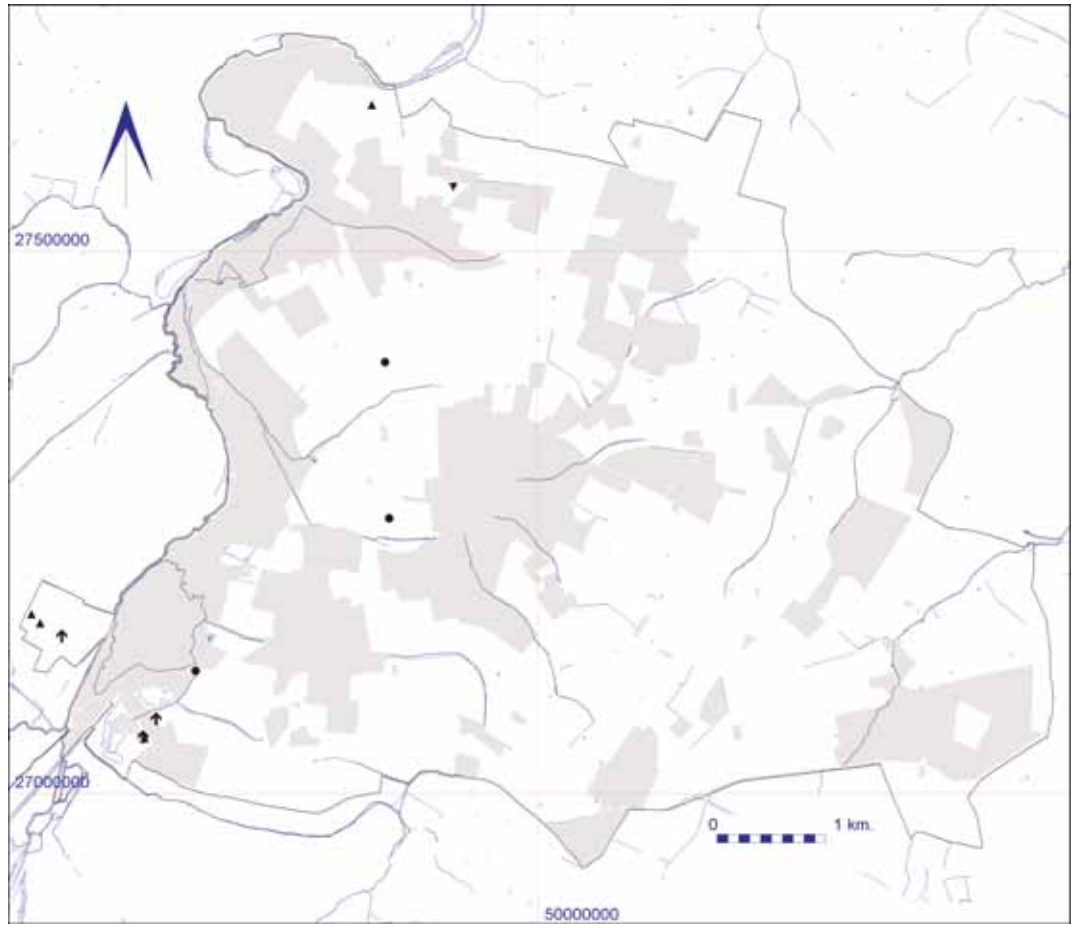

Figure 5.5
Distribution of chisel arrowhead (inverted triangle), oblique arrowheads (triangles), indeterminate transverse arrowheads (circles) and barbed-and-tanged arrowheads (arrows) found during fieldwalking survey. Unwalked areas are shown in grey. The watercourses and areas of water are modern ones, included to help locate the image in the landscape.

Fen platform was built in an expanding area of open water (French 1985; 2001; French and Pryor 1992, 101–5; Waller 1994).

The archaeology of the three main valleys is unevenly known, in part because development and other disturbance have intensified with proximity to London and the South-East. The Welland valley remains largely intact above its lower reaches, apart from iron- and limestone-quarrying on the valley side in the Corby area, so that long tracts of alluviated valley floor, often a kilometre or more wide, survive. The Nene valley has been more extensively exploited, and the Great Ouse valley most intensively of all. The available information suggests that monuments and living sites were topographically separated wherever the valleys were relatively well defined; and that spatial separation persisted as relief flattened downstream, but became more subtle.

5.2.1 Settlement

Observations made at Raunds can be replicated in adjoining areas with varying levels of confidence. The riverside focus of Mesolithic activity recurs in the Barleycroft Over area of the lower Great Ouse valley, where Mesolithic material is almost confined to the river edges, while Early Neolithic lithics are more widespread across the terrain (C Evans and Knight 2000, 94). This may be a more widespread occurrence, and is certainly matched in one other region; an exceptional concentration of Mesolithic sites in the Kennet valley contrasts with a paucity of contemporary material on the Berkshire Downs to the north (Gaffney and Tingle 1989; C Richards 1978). In Northamptonshire, lithic scatters, most of them multi-period, recur on valley sides, on geologies that give rise to lighter soils – often, as at Raunds, on the Northampton Sand with Ironstone (Bamford 1985, 4–5). Fieldwalking by David Hall has documented this for substantial tracts of the county, as well as showing that lithics are much sparser on interfluve areas and that, again as at Raunds, the scatters tend to lie away from round barrows and ring ditches (Hall 1985,

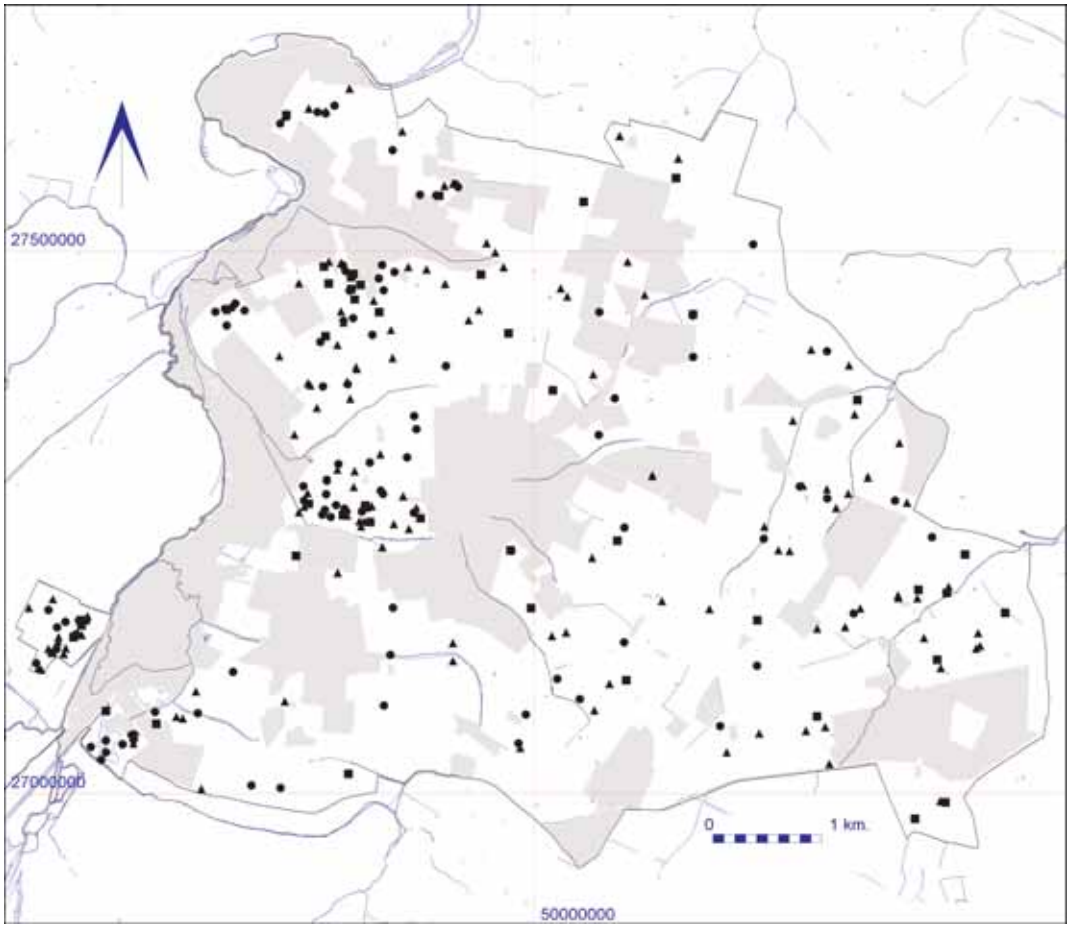

Figure 5.6
Distribution of notches (squares), denticulates and denticulate scrapers (circles) and piercers (triangles) found during fieldwalking survey. Unwalked areas are shown in grey. The water-courses and areas of water are modern ones, included to help locate the image in the landscape.

30–43; Hall and Martin 1980). This is seen in microcosm at Coggenhoe, a little downstream from Northampton, where a predominantly Late Neolithic and Bronze Age scatter lies on Northampton Sand with Ironstone, upslope from ring ditches on Lias Clay and a barrow protruding through the alluvium covering the valley bottom (Hollowell 2001). Flint and stone axeheads also cluster along the valley sides of the Nene and its tributaries, like those found during the Raunds Area Survey (Cummins and Moore 1988, 42; RCHME 1980). Despite the scale of valley-bottom excavation at Raunds, and the frequency of valley-bottom salvage excavation elsewhere along the Nene, the only attested Neolithic or Bronze Age settlement on the valley bottom is a Middle Neolithic site at Ecton (Moore and Williams 1975).

These patterns are repeated in the distribution of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age

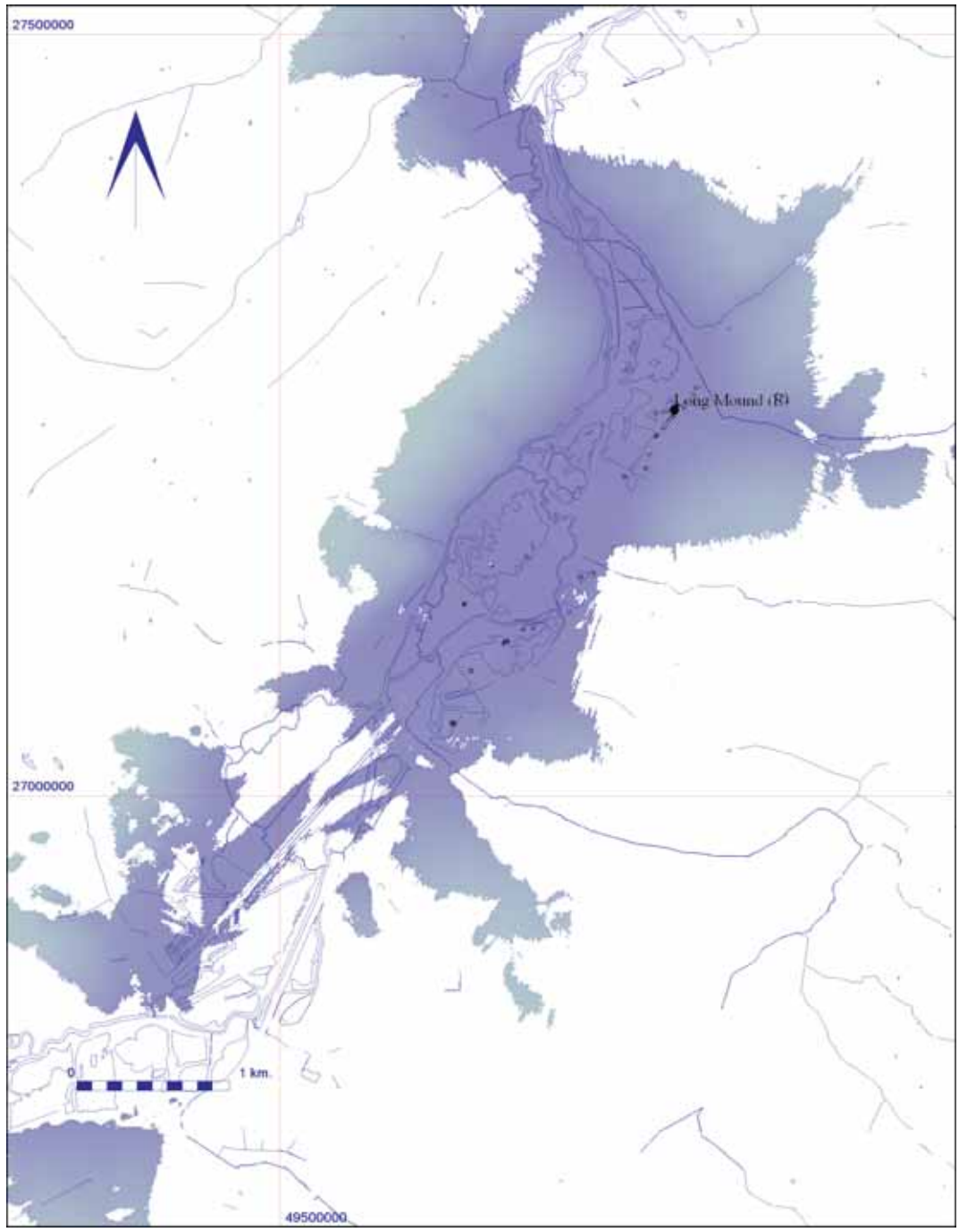

Figure 5.7
Viewshed for the Long Mound. The areas potentially visible to an observer standing on the east end of the mound, vegetation and other obstacles permitting, are shaded. The watercourses and areas of water are modern ones, included to help locate the image in the landscape.

pits, which are linked to settlement in that they often seem to preserve a sample of material used and generated during an episode of occupation. They are correspondingly less scarce on the valley sides than they are on the valley bottoms. Pits containing plain Neolithic Bowl and Mortlake Ware have been found within a multi-period flint scatter in Dog Kennel Field, Elton, on the Cornbrash (French 1994b, 25–6, 36–42, 47–8), and pits or depressions containing flint arrowheads and scrapers were found on Northampton Sand with Ironstone during 19th-century excavations in the Roman town at Irchester (RCHME 1979, 91). A Neolithic or Early Bronze Age pit was found on the valley side in Wellingborough (A Thomas 1999), and an Early Bronze Age one on the valley side on the outskirts of Northampton (Jackson 1989). Small-scale salvage excavations have also recovered pits on the side of the Welland

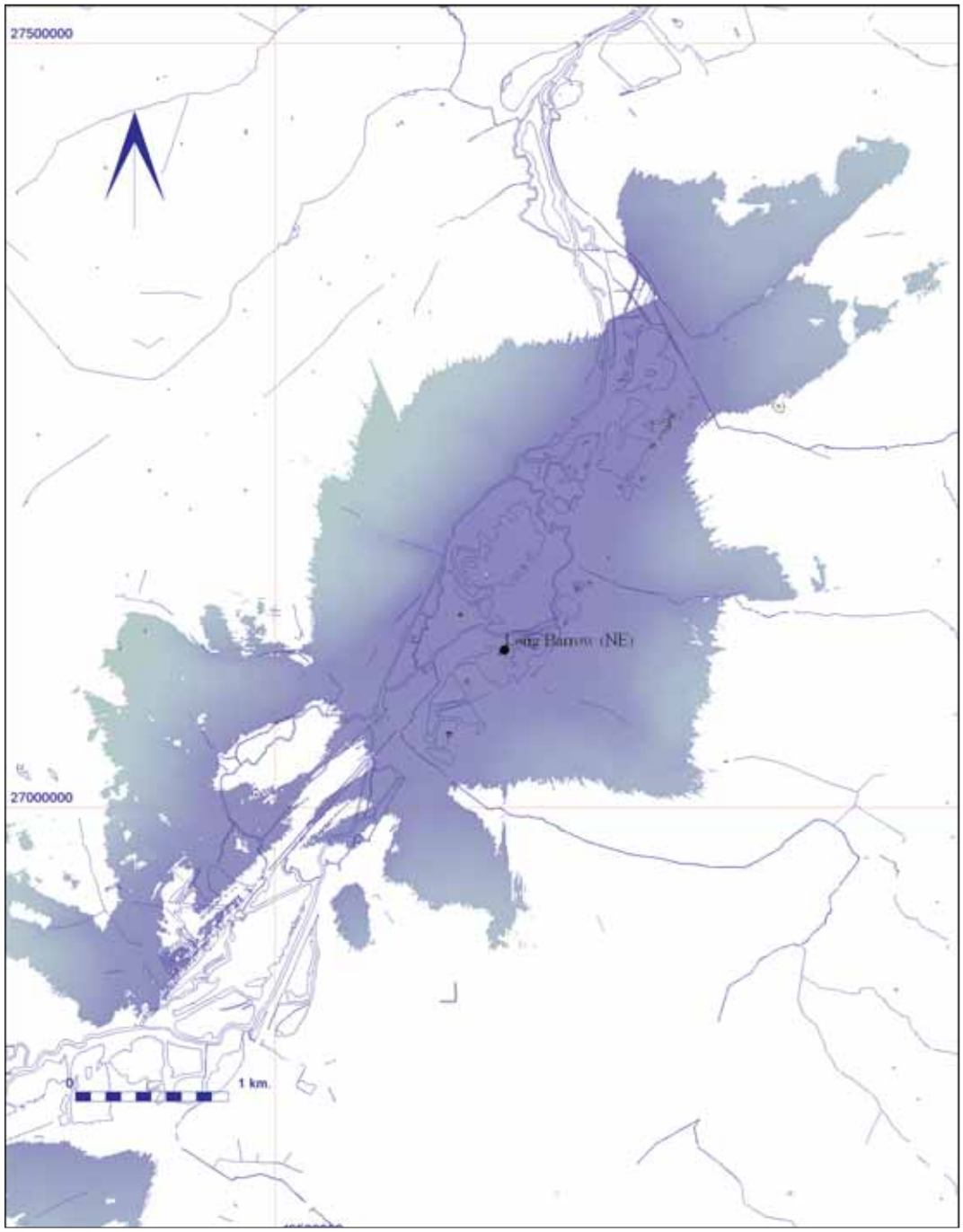

Figure 5.8
Viewshed for the Long Barrow. The areas potentially visible to an observer standing on the north-east end of the mound, vegetation and other obstacles permitting, are shaded. Actual visibility would have been considerably less in some periods, as the barrow was built in a clearing and was the site of scrub regeneration both soon after its construction, and at the turn of the third and second millennia. The watercourses and areas of water are modern ones, included to help locate the image in the landscape.

valley, with Beaker pottery at Gretton (Jackson and Knight 1985) and with Collared Urn at Harringworth (Jackson 1978a). Against this, extensive area excavation on the terrace at Raunds yielded only one pit containing Grooved Ware and another containing Beaker (3.4.2; 3.5.5). Repeated salvage excavations on the gravels of the Nene valley floor have similarly yielded little more than a handful of pits at Grendon, ranging from Early Neolithic to Early Bronze Age in date (Jackson 1995, 7–9; Last 2005, 340).

Pits and flint scatters proliferate on the lower Nene as the relief flattens. Spatial distinctions still obtain, but are less obviously topographically linked. At Fengate, for example, the number of pits exposed in the 'Gravel Pits' area in the early 20th century, and the quantity of Peterborough Ware, Grooved Ware and Beaker that came out of them (Abbott 1910; Leeds 1922), far

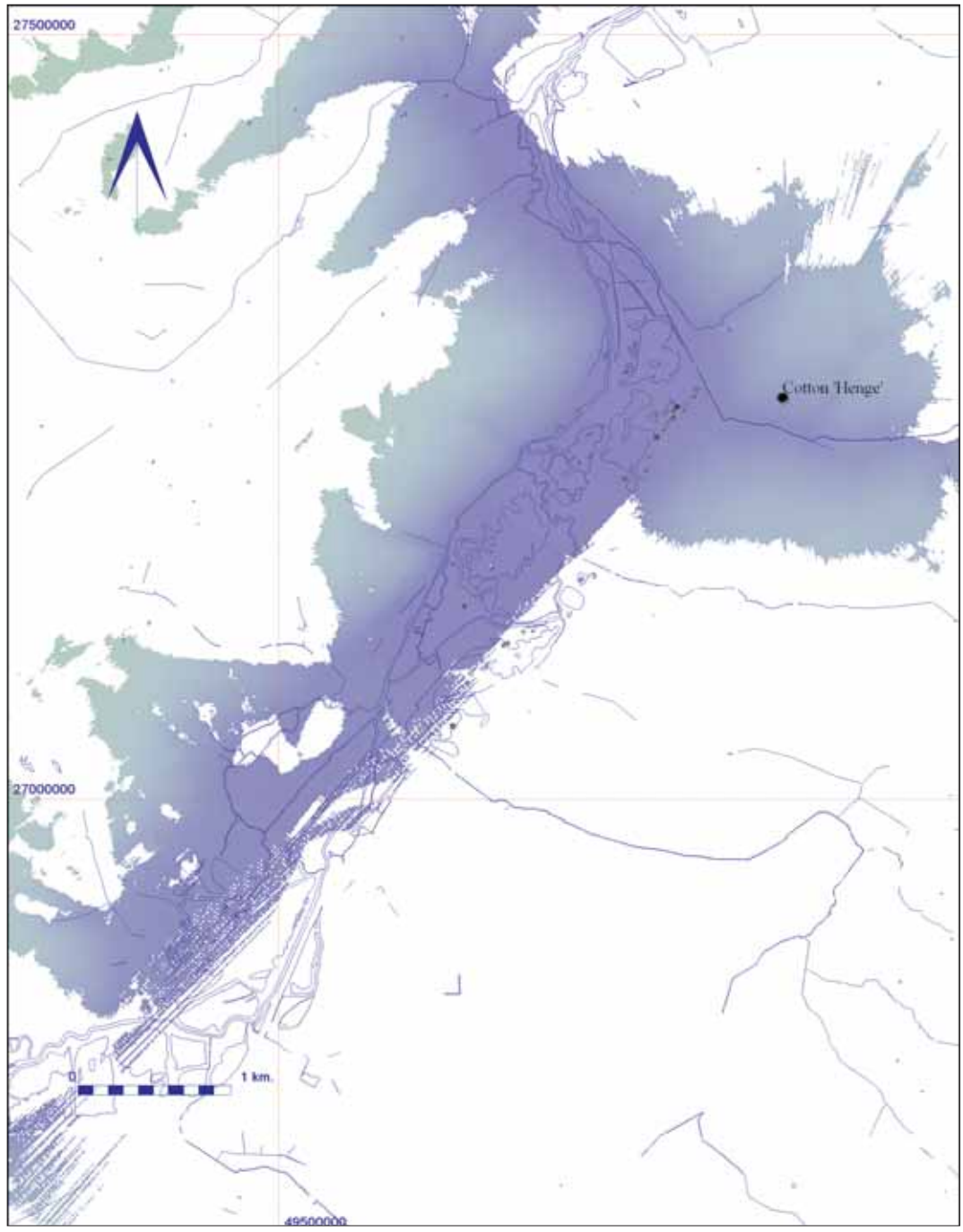

Figure 5.9
Viewshed for the Cotton 'Henge'. The areas potentially visible to an observer standing on the central mound, vegetation and other obstacles permitting, are shaded. The watercourses and areas of water are modern ones, included to help locate the image in the landscape.

outweigh those found in extensive excavations immediately to the north and west in the later decades (Pryor 1978a; 1980; 2001a, 17–51). If pits are a proxy for settlement, they give the impression that living sites were interspersed with small-scale monuments and burials (both listed in the final rows of Table 4.1) on the same terrain, although not the same areas of it, and that the segregation of monuments and living areas was less abrupt here than at the Borough Fen barrow cemetery further out into the basin (4.4).

On the lower Welland there is the same impression of interspersed but distinct settlement and monuments. Restricted excavation on the route of a pipeline recovered Peterborough Ware and struck flint from a palaeosol preserved beneath a later plough headland, a possibly Neolithic pit and a pit containing Beaker pottery at a spot 40–50m from one end of the Barnack cursus (Pryor *et*

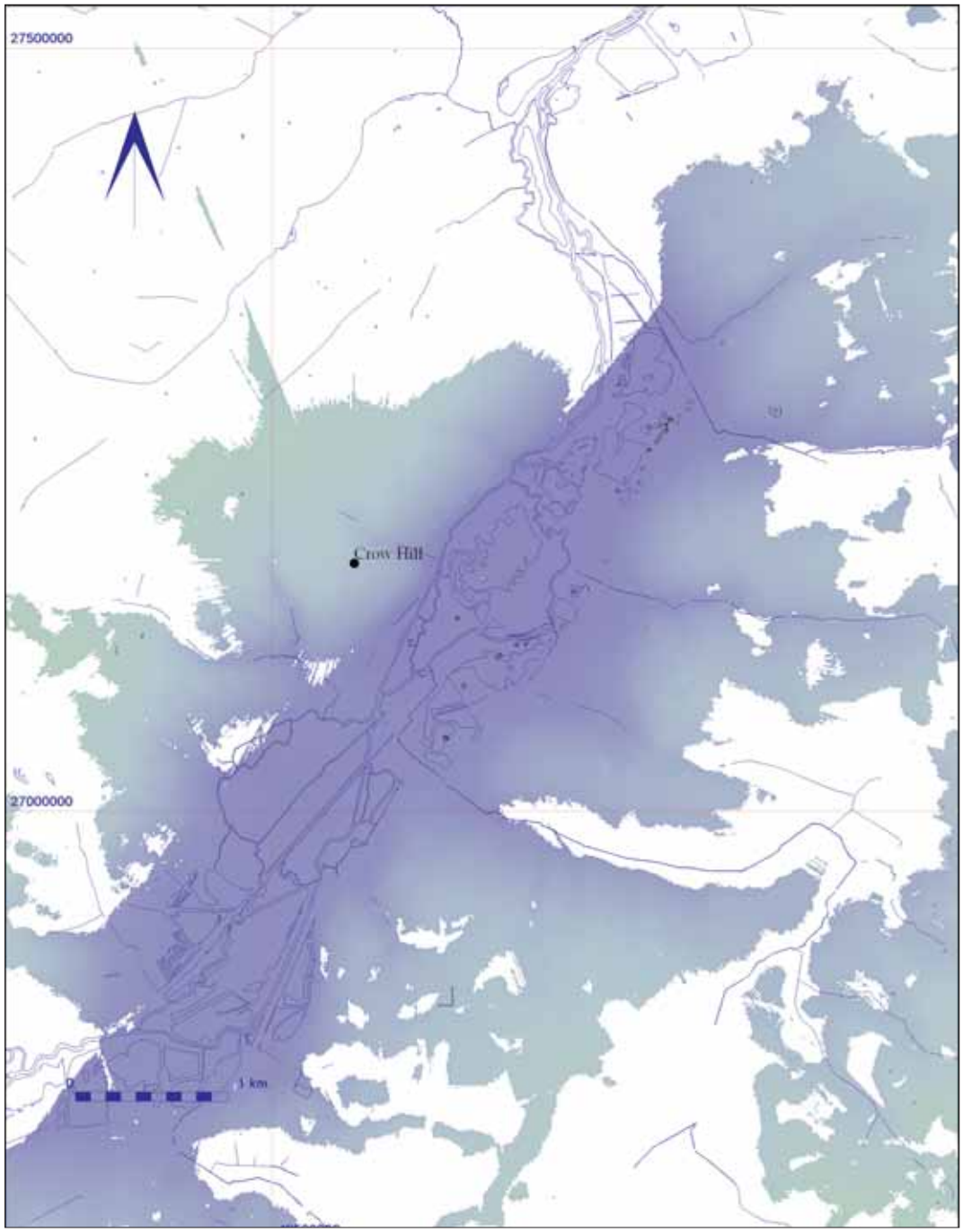

Figure 5.10
Viewshed for Crow Hill. The areas potentially visible to an observer, vegetation and other obstacles permitting, are shaded. The watercourses and areas of water are modern ones, included to help locate the image in the landscape.

al 1985, 265–97). Downstream, intercutting pits were dug, a midden-like deposit of artefacts, animal bone, charcoal and burnt stone was accumulated, and a burial was made by users of Beaker pottery on the site of the Early Neolithic Etton Woodgate enclosure, 200m south of a row of hengiform monuments and Early Bronze Age barrow. Grooved Ware was also placed in pits not far away. A kilometre to the east (on the line of the A15 bypass), a cluster of hengiforms and ring ditches, including Early Bronze Age barrows, lay on the centre of a sand and gravel ridge, and less than 100m away, on the edge of the ridge by a stream channel, were late 4th- to late 3rd-millennium occupation deposits. Successive field systems were laid out, and further pits were cut. Dates in the first half of the 2nd millennium for a pit and a well suggest that people lived around the barrows (French and Pryor 2005).

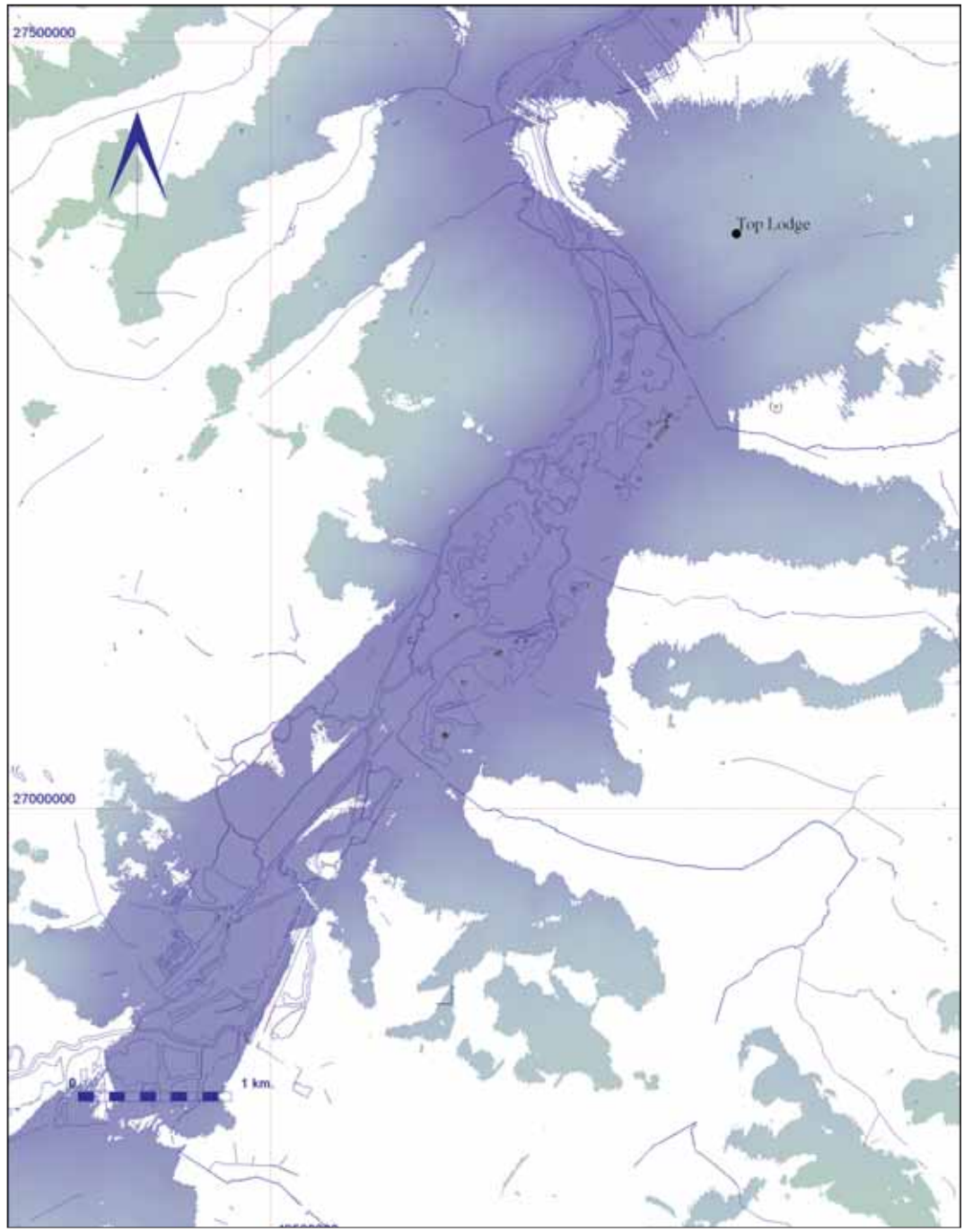

Figure 5.11
Viewshed for struck flint concentration 23 at Top Lodge. The areas potentially visible to an observer, vegetation and other obstacles permitting, are shaded. The watercourses and areas of water are modern ones, included to help locate the image in the landscape.

A similar picture to that of the lower Welland and Nene is apparent for most of the length of the wider, shallower Great Ouse valley. In a loop of the river at Biddenham, just upstream from Bedford, cropmark monuments and lithics occurred on the same low gravel terrace, but Mesolithic and Neolithic material tends to lie to either side of a cursus and to extend well away from it (Dawson 2000, fig 6.3), and Neolithic and Beaker pits and post-holes were clustered in defined areas (Luke and Dale 1998; Luke and Dawson 1997). Downstream from Bedford, flint scatters were concentrated to the south of the Octagon Farm monument complex (Dawson 1993, 10). At Roxton, downstream again, predominantly Bronze Age lithics were concentrated on the same terrace close to a barrow group, with further activity away from the barrows on the Boulder Clay (P Woodward 1978, fig 13).

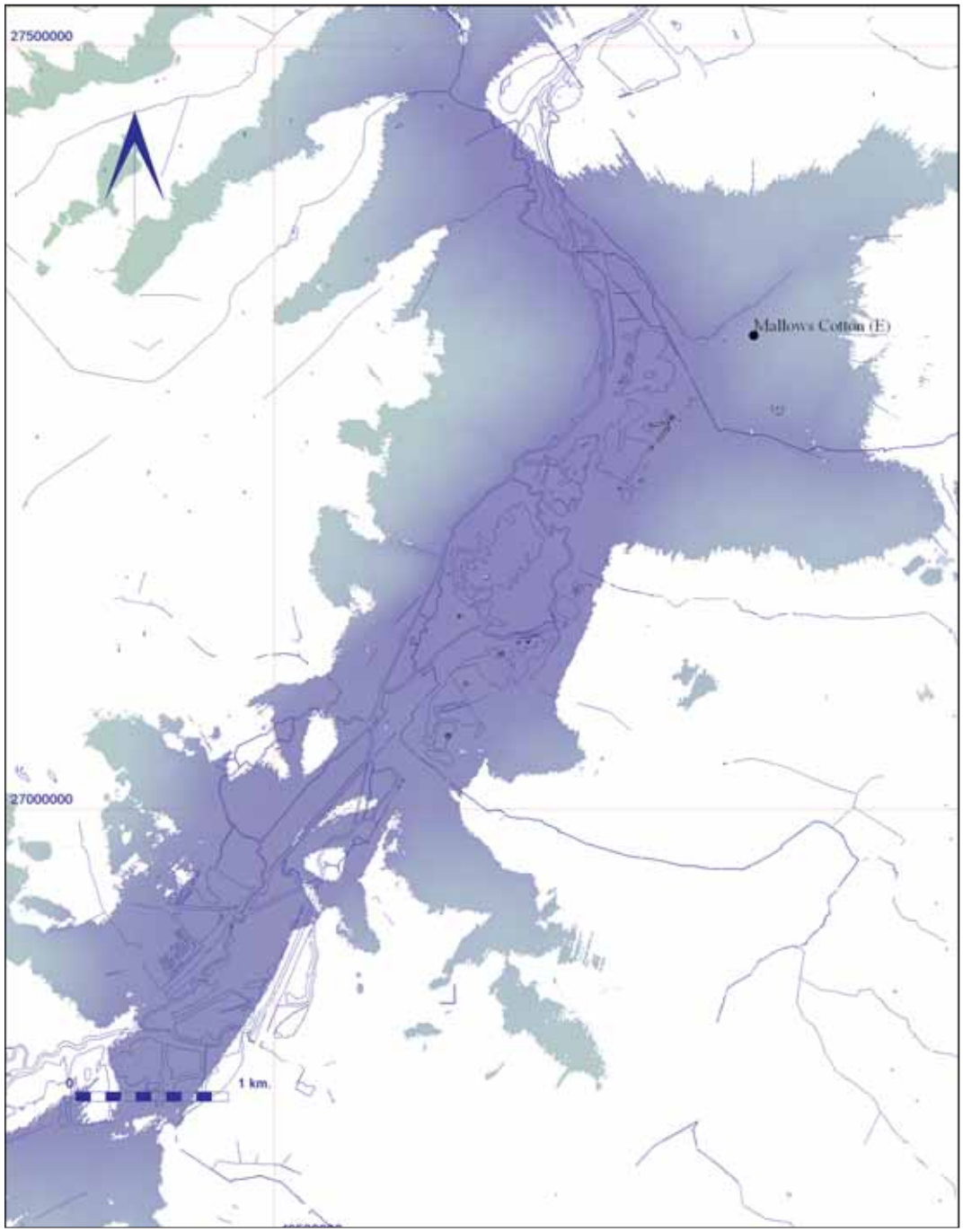

Figure 5.12
Viewshed for the struck flint concentration 11a at Mallows Cotton (east). The areas potentially visible to an observer, vegetation and other obstacles permitting, are shaded. The watercourses and areas of water are modern ones, included to help locate the image in the landscape.

Occupation traces and monuments continue to occur in proximity along the rest of the river. Remains and pits from Neolithic and Early Bronze Age settlements have been found in and around a cursus-centred monument complex at Brampton and Stukely on the outskirts of Huntingdon, where a field system was established while round barrows were still being built (Malim 2001, 15, fig 2.5); and Early, Middle and Late Neolithic pits were dug in and around a similar complex at Eynesbury, near St Neots (C Ellis 2004). Artefact scatters and pits of Early Neolithic and subsequent dates abound in the Barleycroft Over area, the later ones contemporary with Early Bronze Age ring ditches, and the 2nd-millennium field system that developed around the ring ditches incorporated at least one living site, with artefacts, food remains, evidence for metal-working and substantial structures (C Evans and Knight 2000).

5.2.2 The locations of Neolithic monuments

The concentration of Neolithic monuments along the major rivers and their tributaries is almost certainly genuine, as they do not figure in the aerial photographic record of the Welland–Nene interfluve, where cropmarks of later periods are readily identifiable. But their frequency is almost certainly underestimated. Some measure of this is provided by the nine Nene valley sites (out of the 28 listed in Table 4.1) that were surrounded by relatively small ring ditches and would have been interpreted as Early Bronze Age barrows if they were known only as earthworks, or from air photographs. The locations of different monument types are summarised in Table 5.1. Many of the valley-bottom monuments were built on low, subsequently alluviated terraces, like most of the Neolithic monuments at Raunds, or on gravel ridges or islands, like the Long Barrow at Raunds, the Neolithic and later monuments at Grendon (built along a gravel ridge standing slightly above the floodplain – RCHME 1979, fig 53), or the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age monuments at Octagon Farm on the outskirts of Bedford (N Shepherd 1995, 7). 'Valley bottom' grades into 'flatland', where many monuments were similarly built on gravel islands, like the Etton and Northborough causewayed enclosures. Most of the question marks in the 'Smaller linear monument' and 'Oval barrow' columns represent cropmark enclosures of a size and shape that would fit with either category.

Parallel traditions of monument-building and use developed during the first half of the 4th millennium. Causewayed enclosures and long barrows broadly conformed to contemporary norms across north-west Europe, while other monuments were more idiosyncratic, among them a trapezoid enclosure at Godmanchester; the Long Mound, Avenue and Turf Mound at Raunds; a small enclosure in Dog Kennel Field, Elton; successive burial alignments at Orton Meadows, Peterborough; and perhaps the initial stages of ring ditch V at Grendon and some of the uncertainly dated small monuments at Fengate (the 'other early 4th-millennium monuments or burials' of Table 5.1). The use-lives of both groups would have run side-by-side, but distinct types of location were chosen for each, the distinction becoming less clear as the relief flattens, like that between monuments and settlement.

Most of the early or possibly early 4th-millennium monuments were modest, and each might be seen as built and frequented by a relatively small community. As with Early Bronze Age round barrows (4.2.3), their diversity would be compatible with the needs, preferences and history of fairly autonomous units. The two largest non-classic monuments, however, were on a comparable scale to that of causewayed enclosures, and are found where there are no near examples of the latter (Fig 5.13). Godmanchester in the Great Ouse valley enclosed more than 6ha, in the upper part of the causewayed enclosure range (Oswald *et al* 2001, fig 4.23), and the Long Mound at Raunds would have had a similar labour requirement to the outer circuit of Briar Hill (3.6). However, apart from the obvious differences of form, the non-classic monuments in this region are distinguished from the causewayed enclosures by a frequent dearth of artefacts and food remains deposited in their early stages. The cultural material in causewayed enclosures differs not only in quantity but also in the inclusion of stone implements from distant sources (Bamford 1985, 92–3; Edmonds 1998) and Neolithic Bowl pottery in a range of fabrics suggesting contributions from a number of social groups (Bamford 1985; Kinnes 1998, 161). Very different practices and beliefs may accordingly be associated with these traditions.

Table 5.1 Correlation of Neolithic monument types and location types in the east midlands. The sites represented are plotted in Figure 5.10 and listed in Appendix SS7.2

The location types in the first column are generalised divisions. 'Valley bottom' encompasses low, often alluviated first gravel terraces, like that at Raunds, and grades into 'Flatlands'. Sites are listed from east to west within each location group. A single uninvestigated cropmark is sometimes represented by a question mark in more than one column.

Location	*Site*	*Causewayed enclosure*	*Long barrow*	*Other early 4th millennium monument or burial*	*Cursus*	*Smaller linear monument*	*Oval barrow*	*Hengiform*	*Other middle Neolithic monument or burial*	*Henge*	*Other late neolithic monument*
Hill top	Flore (1)						?				
	Dallington	●								?	
Valley side	King's Sutton									?	
	Husband's Bosworth	●									
	Flore (2)		?			?	?				
	Flore (3)		?								
	Briar Hill	●									●
	Chipping Warden		?								
	Pitsford		?								
	Stow-Nine-Churches					?	?				
	Woodford									?	
	Cotton 'Henge'									?	
	Southwick	●				?					
	Uffington	●									
	Tansor Crossroads								●		
	Elton Henge									?	
	Fotheringhay					?			?		
	Brigstock					?	?				
	Dog Kennel Field, Elton			●							
	Upton	●									
	Great Wilbraham	●									
Valley bottom	Hardingstone				?						
	Grendon			?		●			●		
	Raunds		●	●		●		●	?	?	
	Aldwincle			?					●		
	Biddenham				?	?	?				
	Barnack		?		●			●			
	Goldington							●			
	Barholm and Stowe	●									
	Octagon Farm				●	●		●			
	Cardington	●									
	Willington								●		
	Orton Meadows			●							
	Bunyan Centre							?	●		
	Eynesbury			?	●		●	●	?		
	Stirloe-Buckden				?	?					
	Brampton				●	●		●			
	Godmanchester			●	●						
Flatlands	Etton/Maxey	●			●		●	●		●	
	Etton 2	●									
	Northborough	●									
	Peakirk	?									
	Fengate			●		●		●	●		
	Haddenham	●	●								
	Landbeach	?									

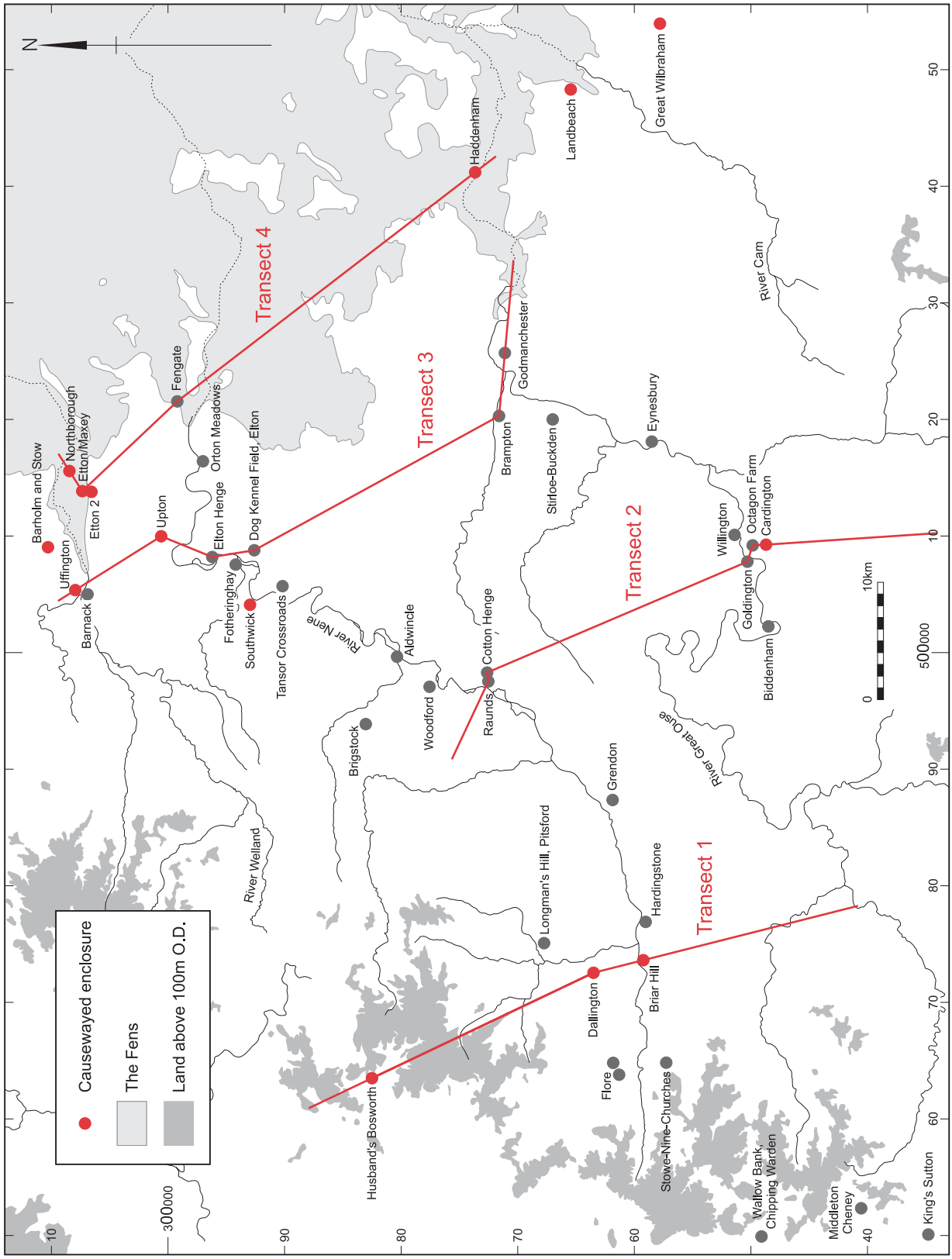

Figure 5.13
Neolithic monuments in the Welland-Nene-Great Ouse area and the transects through them, which are represented in the next figure.

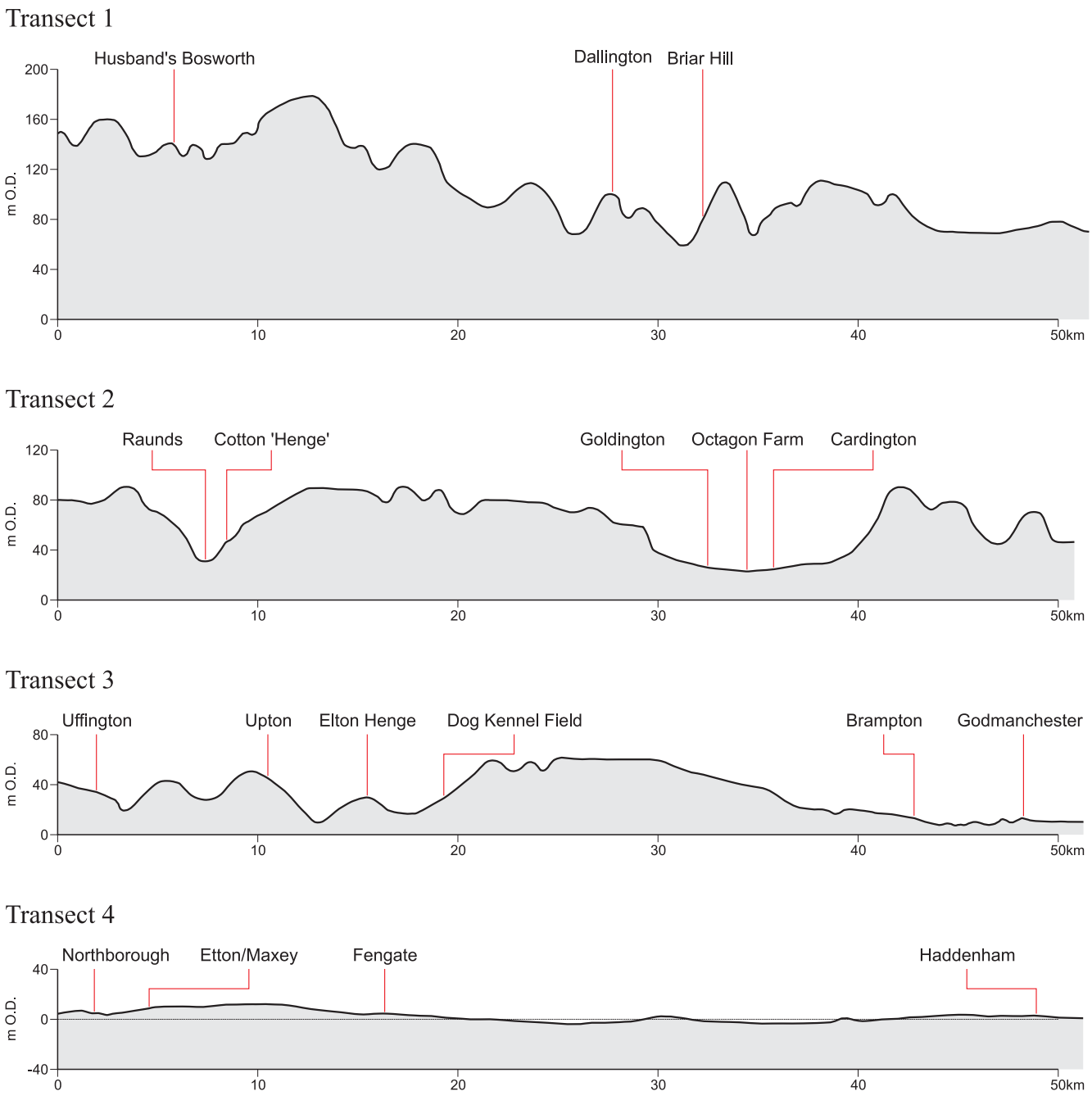

Figure 5.14
Schematic sections through the transects shown in the previous figure. Note that the vertical scale is greater than the horizontal scale.

There is furthermore a contrast between the diverse locations of causewayed enclosures and long barrows and the consistent valley-bottom locations of the definitely identified non-classic monuments, among which only a small enclosure in Dog Kennel Field, Elton, was built on a valley side, while only two of the region's thirteen definite causewayed enclosures lie in valley bottoms (Fig 5.13; Table 5.1). Some monument types, in other words, were built in a habitually occupied zone and others in one that had become rarely occupied. The Briar Hill causewayed enclosure, for example, lay within an extensive scatter of lithics ranging from Mesolithic to Bronze Age in date (Bamford 1985, 1–2), and three possible long barrows at Flore – two overlooking the Nene and one overlooking a tributary – lay in the area of a group of flint scatters made up of Mesolithic and predominantly Neolithic material (Hall 1985, fig 4, table 1).

Causewayed enclosures have often been seen as the sites of multiple boundaries,

none of them mutually exclusive: the edges of occupied land, the edges of groups of other monuments, the transition – in the sense of excarnation and disarticulation – between the living and the dead, the conversion of raw material into axeheads, the transfer of goods between different exchange systems, and the passage of stock from one season's pasture to the next (Edmonds 1999, 110–29; J Thomas 1999, 38–45). While causewayed enclosures in the south-east Midlands seem to have lain in cleared and occupied areas, more so than other kinds of contemporary monument, they can nonetheless be seen as topographically and ecotonally liminal. The enclosures at Briar Hill and Dallington, for example, lie in the area where the Nene leaves the higher part of the Northamptonshire Uplands and flows through their lower, more dissected and undulating south-eastern fringe. They can be seen as occupying the boundary between an 'upland' zone, where long barrows were less rare than farther east and monuments tended to be scattered out away from the main watercourses as well as clustered along them, and a river-focused zone to the east, analogous to the contrast in monument distributions between the Cotswolds and the valleys of the upper Thames and its tributaries the other side of the watershed (Fig 5.13; A Barclay *et al* 1996, 14–15; J Thomas 1999, 185–8). The Cardington enclosure lies where the Great Ouse rounds a spur of Cornbrash and starts to flow in a wider valley through a flatter terrain of Oxford Clay covered by Boulder Clay. Further downstream, the Haddenham enclosure lies on a slight gravel rise in an area where relief becomes minimal. In the converging Cam catchment, the Great Wilbraham and Landbeach enclosures span the transition from defined valley to flatland. The cluster of enclosures on the lower Nene and Welland does the same, its lower-lying elements similarly sited on slight gravel islands, as at Northborough (Oswald *et al* 2001, fig 5.16) or Etton.

The topographically and ecotonally liminal location of these enclosures hints at their strategic placement in those parts of the landscape that are best suited to the periodic coming together of otherwise dispersed populations. They could have been located at the edges of 'homeworlds' – those paths and places routinely used by individual groups – in what were socially neutral parts of the landscape (J Thomas 1999, 42–3). This could also explain their tendency to cluster together. Briar Hill and Dallington stand 5km apart on either side of the Nene east of Northampton, and there is a concentration of seven causewayed enclosures, all of rather similar size and plan, on the lower Nene and Welland, in an area measuring 16km by 10km (Oswald *et al* 2001, fig 1.1; 109–10, fig 6.3). Their number and proximity here invite speculation. Successive currencies for adjacent monuments are unlikely, as all excavated causewayed enclosures – including Etton and Briar Hill – seem to have been in use for virtually the whole of the Early Neolithic. Cyclical use remains a possibility. Alternatively, several different groups may have needed gathering places in one particularly significant area.

Oswald *et al* (2001, 96–7) show that causewayed enclosures in valley-side locations consistently avoid the highest points and are 'tilted' towards the lower slopes and the valley bottoms with which they are intervisible, without commanding extensive views of the higher ground 'behind' them. Briar Hill and Uffington are two of the sites used to make this point, and it holds true for the enclosures at Husband's Bosworth, Southwick, Upton and Great Wilbraham. Riverine orientations persist into the flatlands. At the Haddenham enclosure a straight façade with a central entranceway fronted the then course of the Great Ouse (C Evans 1988, 137) and the Etton enclosure was set tightly into a meander in an active channel (French 1998), with a major entrance at the point closest to the stream (Pryor 1998a, 98–9). Their riverine locations serve to emphasise their role as seasonal gathering-places.

Whatever beliefs and practices were expressed in differently used and more consistently located monuments – such as the Godmanchester enclosure and the Raunds Long Mound – these monuments were surely ancestral to those of the later 4th millennium. Like them, the cursus monuments, smaller linear monuments and hengiforms of the succeeding centuries were built in valley bottoms (Fig 5.14; Table 5.1) and were often poor in artefacts and food remains. The elongated, rectilinear plans of cursus and other linear monuments may also derive from these earlier forms. It may be significant that a cursus was appended to the Godmanchester enclosure (McAvoy 2000), and the Long Enclo-

sure was aligned on the Turf Mound at Raunds, while cursus monuments were built *across* causewayed enclosures at Etton (Pryor 1998a, fig 4) and, east of the Fens, at Fornham-all-Saints in Suffolk (Oswald *et al* 2001, fig 4.25).

The cluster of causewayed enclosures on the lower Nene and Welland was succeeded by a scatter of idiosyncratic smaller monuments on the flatlands at Fengate and, on a far larger scale, by at least two cursus monuments, one smaller linear monument and numerous hengiforms on the flatlands and valley bottom extending from Etton and Maxey at least to Barnack, for 9km or more (Pryor *et al* 1985, fig 3). An often-asserted relationship between cursus monuments, water and linear movement (*see* 4.1.2) reflects their widespread occurrence in valley-bottom and flatland locations. In this area at least, all the later 4th-millennium monument types have the same kind of location, often in the same complexes.

An apparent lull in valley-bottom monument-building at Raunds in the early 3rd millennium (3.4) seems echoed along the Nene and Great Ouse valleys. Malim's (1999; 2000) thorough documentation of monument complexes on the Ouse gravels records cursus monuments, smaller linear monuments and hengiforms, but only one henge monument, and the status of that one – at Goldington, near Bedford – is questionable, as it was only 25m in diameter and could be seen as a hengiform (Mustoe 1988). On the Nene, the valley-side location of the Cotton 'Henge' is replicated by those of possible henges at Elton and Woodford (Appendix SS7.2). The same is true of another possible cropmark henge across the watershed to the west, above the Cherwell at King's Sutton (Northamptonshire SMR 5223/0/0). A shift of monument-building away from the valley bottoms would have been a shift to a consistently occupied zone in which several causewayed enclosures and long barrows already stood, and in some cases to the enclosures themselves. As well as a Late Neolithic timber 'cove' inside Briar Hill (Bamford 1985, 42–6), a possible henge, 55m in maximum diameter and slightly elongated on the axis of a single south-east-facing entrance, lies in the centre of the Dallington enclosure (Oswald *et al* 2001, fig 3.4).

At Maxey, monument-construction continued without any locational shift, as the superimposition of cursus on causewayed enclosure was replicated in the superimposition of henge on cursus. The Middle and Late Neolithic monuments here may have been short-lived, and their use episodic (Pryor 1995), but the extended history of construction and the extent of the complex argue that it retained the importance marked by the cluster of causewayed enclosures at the heart of which it lay.

5.2.3 The distribution of round barrows and ring ditches

When round-barrow-building gained momentum in the later 3rd millennium (3.5.1), there was an incalculable increase in the frequency with which it was thought appropriate to build new, relatively small monuments. The scale of this transformation is reflected in the contrast between a spacing of 10.5–12.5km between the five known Neolithic funerary monuments in the Nene valley (Chapman 1997a, 16) and the hundreds of round barrows and ring ditches that line the river, increasing in density, monument size, cluster size, and frequency of multiple ditches towards the flatlands (Gibson and McCormick 1985, 65, fig 26), with others clustered on the tributaries north of Northampton. As with Neolithic monuments, round barrows and ring ditches were concentrated along the Welland, Nene and Great Ouse, fanning out over the flatlands where each river reached what was by then indeed the fen edge (C Evans and Knight 2000 figs 9.1–2; 2001, fig 8.1; Field 1974; Hall and Coles 1994, 65–91; Malim 2001, 17–18, fig 2.6; A Taylor 1981). A relationship with watercourses extended to the flatlands, where, for example, a course of the Welland flowed through the Borough Fen barrow cemetery on the contemporary fen edge north-east of Peterborough (Hall and Coles 1994, 75), as its several channels flowed among the newly built barrows and older monuments at Maxey and Etton a little further upstream (French 1998).

The original total must have been larger than it now appears, a point reinforced by this record, derived from the card index maintained by the former Archaeology Division of the Ordnance Survey:

> *'Within this area [Barnack Quarry] there are 21 ring ditches of which 3 (at least) are double and 4 interrupted, sizes* c *10–40m… Site is now completely destroyed by mineral extraction.' (Peterborough SMR record number 00036a)*

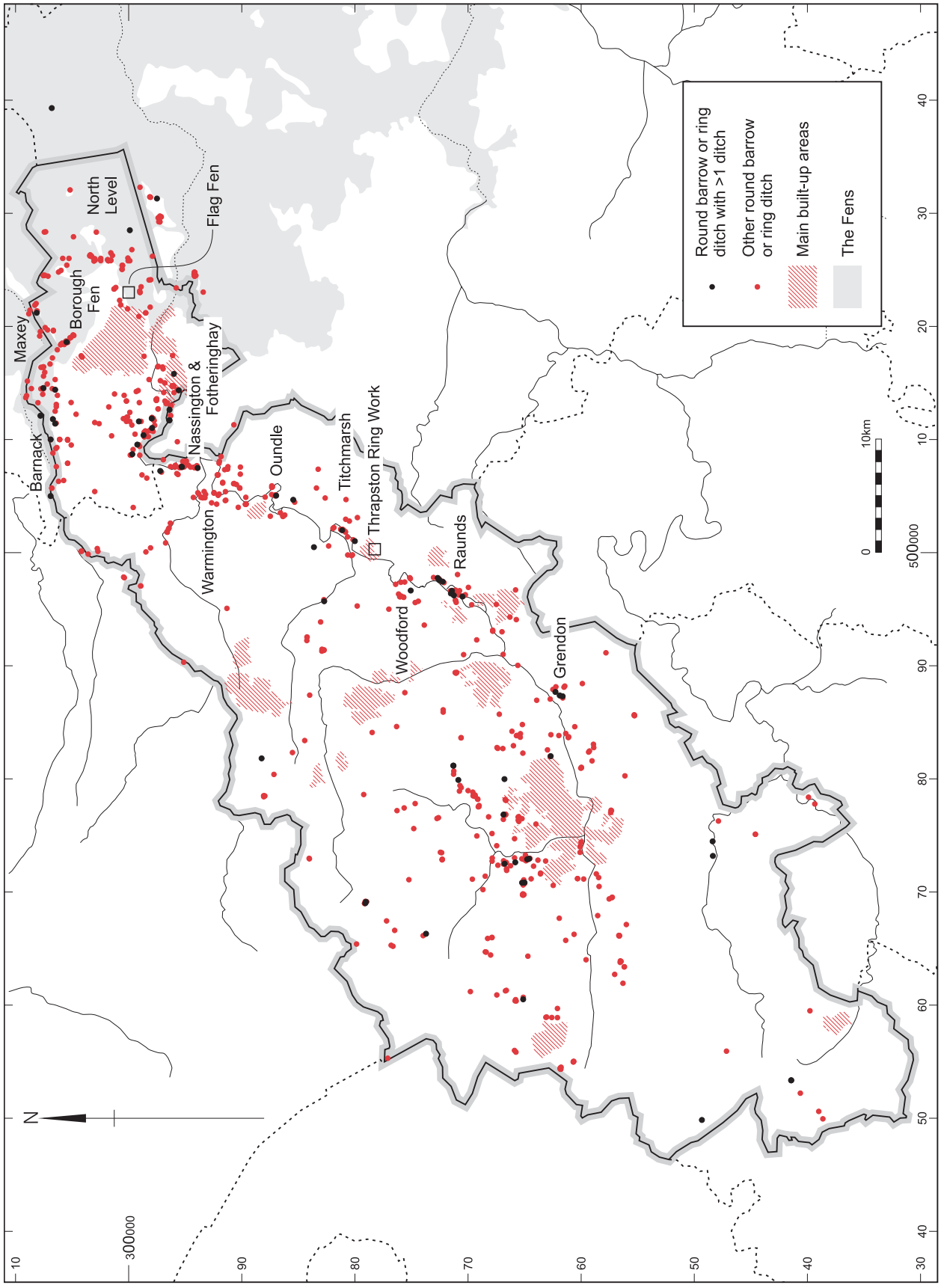

Figure 5.15
The distribution of round barrows and ring ditches in Northamptonshire and Peterborough.

Figure 5.15 shows the distribution of round barrows and ring ditches in Northamptonshire and Peterborough, and the sites plotted are listed in Appendix SS7.3. They are mainly drawn from the Northamptonshire and Peterborough City Council Sites and Monuments Records, augmented from published sources and from the Raunds data. The total is necessarily approximate. Ring ditches noted as uncertain or as possibly of post-Bronze Age date have been excluded. But some others which are not Early Bronze Age round barrows, undoubtedly remain. Unlike the possible henges of the previous centuries, they were mainly built along the valley bottom, like those at Raunds, on the same terrain as, and sometimes on the same sites as, the majority of the 4th-millennium monuments (Table 4.1). In the early 1970s, the still-upstanding Three Hills at Woodford were the only known valley-side examples (Hall and Hutchings 1972, 2). There are now more, including the cropmark ring ditches at Coggenhoe mentioned above, but valley-floor locations remain the commonest.

Only nine per cent of the barrows and ring ditches in Appendix SS7.3 have more than one ditch, the most obvious sign of enlargement and remodelling, and the proportion is even lower for ring ditches in the upper and middle Ouse (Field 1974), Norfolk (Lawson 1981, 35) and Suffolk (Martin 1981, 66). However, among the thirty known barrows and ring ditches at Raunds, eight (over twenty-five per cent) had more than one ditch (Barrows 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 9, the Double Ring Ditch, Ring Ditch 5). To these may perhaps be added a barrow investigated by Dr Robb in the 1930s (1.2). This suggests that the Raunds barrows were frequented and reworked more than many of those elsewhere, and that the exceptional primary burial in Barrow 1 may have had a significance, perhaps dynastic, which not only drew on the latent power of the area's history but endowed it with new potency. Perhaps comparably, four of the nine double ring ditches recorded by Field on the upper and middle Ouse were clustered in a major barrow cemetery on the site of the Octagon Farm Neolithic monument complex (Field 1974, figs 1–2; Malim 2000, fig 8.13).

In Cambridgeshire, the overall proportion of multiple ring ditches rises to ten per cent (A Taylor 1981, 110–11). This almost certainly reflects their frequency in the barrow cemeteries on the west side of the Fens (Hall and Coles 1994, 66–83), which is seen in part on the lower Nene and Welland (Figure 5.15). Like the scale of barrow-building on the river banks, inlets, islands and peninsulas of this fen margin, the heightened frequency of enlarged barrows suggest that this was a place of repeated resort. On the lower Nene and Welland, the numbers of barrows echo the concentration of 4th-millennium causewayed enclosures. There is a recurrent impression that the area was a gathering place for more than just local communities. The succession of monuments of all periods from the Early Neolithic onwards at Etton-Maxey, and the large area that they cover, invoke Loveday's (1999) interpretation of the comparable Dorchester-on-Thames complex as a major cult centre, reached by way of the satellite centres that surrounded it.

5.2.4 Communities and cattle

The often-voiced equation of the importance of the fen margin with its value as pasture finds support in the establishment of systems of paddocks and droves, concentrated, like the barrow cemeteries before them, around the debouchments of the major rivers into the Fens (Yates in prep) and often laid out around barrows. Upstream examples are relatively rare and, if the systems at Raunds are anything to go by, may have had a shorter life than, for example, the millennium-long span of the Fengate fields (3.7.2; Bayliss and Pryor 2001, fig 16.5). The distribution conjures up a picture of seasonal convergence of herds going out to summer pasture on the fen or returning from it, most of them from the immediate fen margins, but some perhaps from much further up-river, a procedure that may well have been enacted around the barrows in the centuries before the paddocks and droves were established.

The uneven distribution of such field systems highlights the likelihood that they would have served as communal gathering places (Pryor 1998b, 136–7). Indeed, some boundaries of the period may actually have been built for gatherings and ceremonial. At Babraham Road, Cambridge, a ditch at least 100m long, cut in the mid-2nd millennium, broke either side of a timber structure and ended in a second, similar structure. It is more

readily interpreted as built to control movement and visibility across a natural chalk ridge than as part of any larger enclosure (Hinman 2001). Later in the millennium, while field systems established in the Middle Bronze Age were still in use, a series of post alignments, some successive and some more than 100m long, was built at Barleycroft Farm on the Great Ouse. All ended without forming enclosures, some in terminals formed by three-post rows at right-angles to the main alignment. The firing of part of one had been accompanied by the deposition of human remains. Like the Babraham Road ditches, they could have formed large-scale screens, relating especially to the location of a pre-existing barrow cemetery and a natural knoll (C Evans and Knight 2001). In both cases, linear structures may have served to guide the movement of numbers of people.

Field systems not only cluster with earlier barrows where the major rivers meet the fen, they cluster with contemporary metalwork in the rivers and fens themselves (Malim 2001, figs 2.3, 2.7), a correlation that extends to the Thames valley, as if the livestock management and metalwork deposition were linked (Pryor 1998a, 142–4; Yates 2001). Away from the fen, on the upper and middle Nene, finds of Bronze Age metalwork have been rare. A Camerton-Snowshill dagger found during gravel-quarrying on the valley bottom at Wellingborough (Northamptonshire SMR 579/0/0) may have come from a burial, as did the comparable dagger from Earl's Barton (Jackson 1984). When Middle and Late Bronze Age artefacts can be located with any precision they often come from the valley sides. There are no known metalwork finds from the vicinity of an early 1st-millennium ring work over 100m in diameter on the valley side at Thrapston, 8km downstream from Raunds. Limited excavation, however, showed it to have been surrounded by a substantial bank and ditch, in which there were placed deposits, and possibly to have been the scene of feasting (Hull 2001). The rarity of such monuments seems to reflect a greater centralisation of power and influence than is indicated by the fields and barrows of previous periods.

Metalwork finds become less infrequent as the Nene approaches the fen. Between Orton Waterville, in the west of Peterborough, and Whittlesey, some 12km downstream, the Peterborough Sites and Monuments Record documents a possible hoard, at least two flat or flanged axes, six palstaves, four socketed axes, a torc (RCHME 1969, 4), two dirks or rapiers and four swords. The various axeheads are from both dry-land and possibly river-bed contexts. A dirk (Pryor 1978b, fig 8) and a Balintober sword (Colquhoun and Burgess 1988, 20, pl 5:25) found separately at Orton Waterville, upstream from Peterborough, almost certainly came from the river on the evidence of their surface encrustations. The same holds for palstaves, socketed axes and weaponry found between Horsey Toll and the south margin of Whittlesey island, along a former course of the Nene (Hall 1987, 55–7). The weapons comprise a Hemikofen sword, probably of Rhenish origin, from Horsey Toll (Colquhoun and Burgess 1988, 27, pl 12:72), a Ewart Park sword (Colquhoun and Burgess 1988, 80, pl 58:383; Pryor 1978b, fig 7:2) found close to a rapier (Pryor 1978b, fig 7:1) at the edge of Whittlesey island, and a further sword found nearby (all three: Peterborough SMR 02960). The currencies of all these objects and of most of the metalwork from the adjacent North Level (the area of fen between the lower Welland and the lower Ouse; Downes 1992, fig 6) would have overlapped with the use-life of the Flag Fen structures, where at least 276 pieces of metalwork of unparalleled diversity and, often, rarity were deposited from the late 2nd millennium to the late 1st (Pryor 2001a). The contrast between the relatively dispersed finds from the river, the fen and the then dry land, each perhaps resulting from a single event enacted by one person or a few people, and the intensity and longevity of deposition at Flag Fen, emphasises the exceptional nature of the Flag Fen structures and the activities that took place there. It requires little imagination to see Flag Fen as a cult centre. This comes full circle to the notion of a major, extra-local focus in the zone where the Nene and Welland entered the flatlands and, subsequently, the Fens: first dispersed through several causewayed enclosures, focused at Maxey, dispersed again through the fen-edge barrow cemeteries and field systems, and focused again at Flag Fen. Concern with reusing and re-working already old places and objects forms a strong thread through the Raunds story. This proposition weaves that thread into a larger tapestry.

5.3 Ties and territories

The burden of this chapter is that the major rivers, the most conspicuous features of the south-east midland landscape, were centres of population and ceremony. They were also arteries of communication, uniting the nested territories of communities who made up larger peoples, and providing the routes by which they gathered in an abidingly important zone, where the rivers entered the flatlands and, subsequently, the Fens. There would, of course, have been communication between and beyond the river catchments: the Nene and the Welland almost converge, and the whole area under discussion is not large. Of the sites shown in Figure 5.13, even those farthest removed from each other would have been no more than three days walk apart. It seems plausible, however, that the commonest contacts were within and along the major valleys. The possibility of catchment-based territories is reinforced by the greater frequency of cursus monuments along the Great Ouse, and to some extent the Welland, than along the Nene. The differences between the peoples of these river valleys might have been expressed in the construction and use of a varying balance of monument types.

Last's (1999, 88) view that long-used riverine routes became ritualised and controlled through partial monumentalisation emphasises the valleys as corridors and as *sancta* rather than as familiar, lived-in terrain full of the signs of human habitation past and present and full of livestock, as well as of monuments. Travel along a valley would have entailed dealing with its occupants as well as with the forces embodied in its earthworks, in its trees, or in the river itself. How much of the valley was familiar to any group or individual is a matter for conjecture, as are the extent and nature of that group's mobility (cf Whittle 1997) and the level of affinity felt by people who frequented a monument or a monument complex. However, if the cluster of Early Neolithic monuments at Raunds was as exceptional as it now seems, a large part of the population of the valley may have had a stake in it, the participation of many groups being reflected in the segmentary construction of the Long Mound (3.6). The West Cotton confluence may have acted as a locus for organising and disseminating the material resources, people and information of a dispersed community. In this case a suggested Mesolithic range stretching from the Northamptonshire Uplands to the fenland basin (3.2.1) might be projected into the 4th millennium. The clustering of causewayed enclosures (Fig 5.13) suggests even more strongly that they were reached by journeys of 30 or 40km or more. People travelling along the Nene, whether to the Briar Hill and Dallington enclosures upstream from Raunds, or to Southwick and Upton downstream from the site, possessed a high degree of social affiliation – an identity based perhaps on common ancestry, most probably dependent on interbreeding, and almost certainly owing to the sharing of resources and information. But the distances travelled by groups (or some of their number) to major ceremonial centres may have borne no relation to distances travelled during the daily round, and other monuments along the valley could have been part of these more local cycles.

It may also be possible to identify nodes in the social networks that developed along the Nene during the 3rd millennium and early 2nd millennium. With all proper reservations as to the consistency of identification and visibility, there seem to be seven concentrations of round barrows and ring ditches at (going downstream from south-west to north-east) Grendon, Raunds, Woodford and the adjoining parishes, Titchmarsh, Oundle and the adjoining parishes, Warmington and Nassington together with Fotheringhay (Fig 5.15). The intervals between them diminish downstream from approximately 13km (between Grendon and Raunds) to as little as 5 or 2km, until the distribution becomes virtually continuous. If each concentration was a territorial focus, their number and spacing might be some index of the scale of social divisions within the larger territory. There may also be a link to Late Neolithic organisation, in that the Raunds and Nassington concentrations are in the same stretches of the valley as possible henge monuments, although displaced from them: the Raunds barrows lie 500m away from the possible cropmark henge and 700m away from the Cotton 'Henge', and the Nassington barrows lie 1km away and on the opposite side of the river from the possible henge at Elton. Given the many changes that took place in the second half of the 3rd millennium (3.5.7), this may reflect a perpetuation of existing foci. A third possible henge, at Woodford, does not seem to fit this pattern, lying 1.5km from the Three Hills and 2.5km from the barrow concentration centred in Titchmarsh.

The ceremonial landscapes of the Early Bronze Age were expressions of kinship, and the sheer number of monuments built during this period hints at the importance now attached to spiritually 'belonging' to particular tracts of land. Furthermore, groups resident away from a lesser monument may have retained an historic link to it. The contemporary practice of cremation and inhumation in the Early Bronze Age (4.4) may reflect the distinct treatment of those who died either away from or close to the place where they should be buried. The concentration of Early Bronze Age barrows – not only along the river valleys, but also along the Icknield Way formed by the chalk ridge bordering the south and east sides of the Fens (Lawson *et al* 1981, fig 1; Malim 2001, fig 2.6) – links them to routeways, with the connotation that members of a lineage might travel to their barrow rather than live near it.