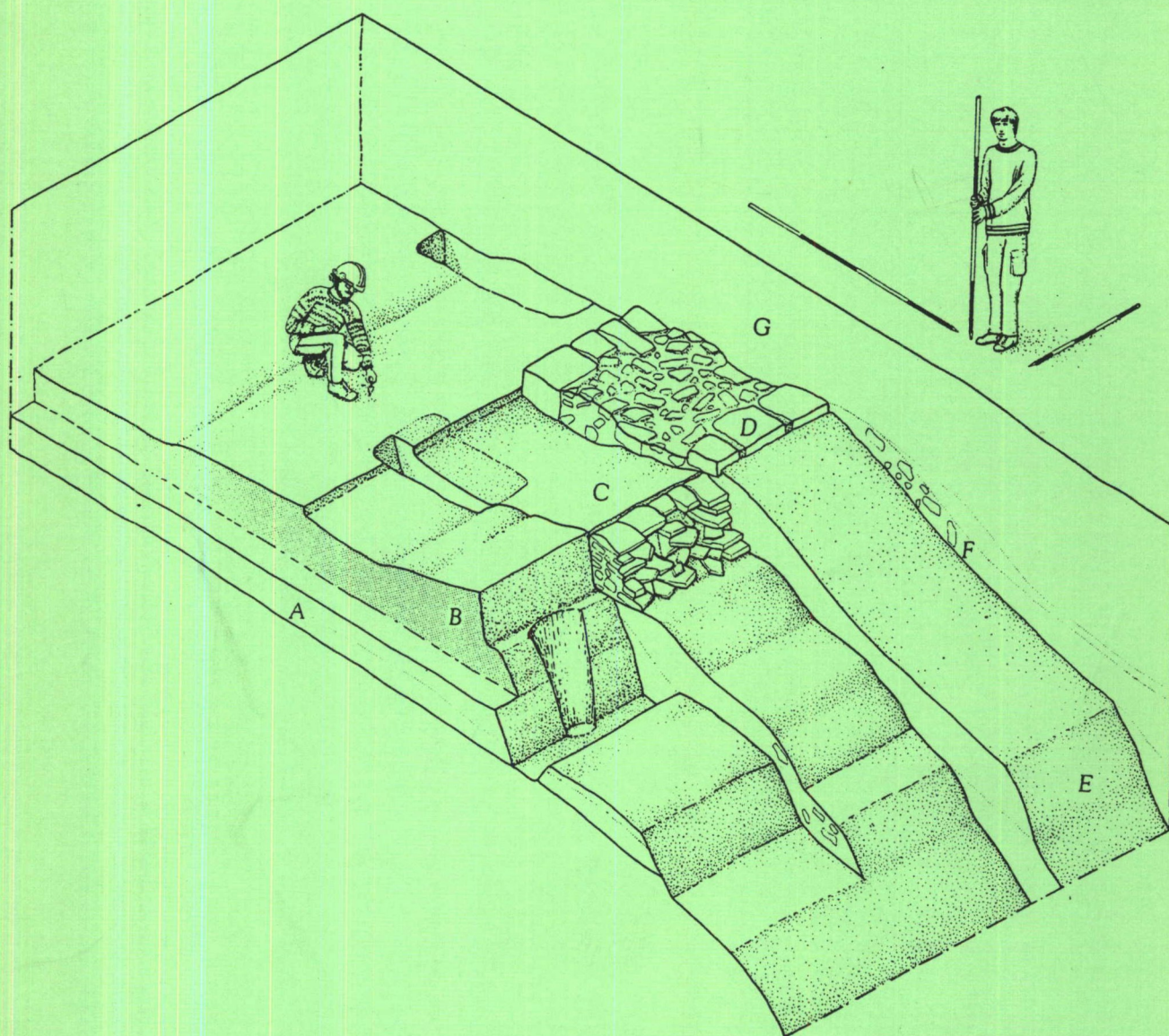




Green Street, Northampton: isometric reconstruction of the town defences.

SOUTH MIDLANDS ARCHAEOLOGY

The Newsletter of the Council for British Archaeology, South Midlands Group (Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire)

NUMBER 27, 1997

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Editorial and Conference

Editorial

This publication continues much as before but the archaeology scene of two of the four counties has changed dramatically. Luton has left home and taken about a third of the archaeology budget with it. Goodness knows how this percentage was arrived at when Luton is such a small proportion of the county of Bedfordshire; perhaps someone should have pointed out that the amount of archaeology tends to be related to land area rather than the density of the population. I'm sure we all look forward to reports of archaeological work in Luton funded by their windfall.

Buckinghamshire seems to have fared better in its own divorce from Milton Keynes. Indeed at the time of writing there is no archaeology provision in Milton Keynes, 'they are hoping for the best'. Considering all the building work going on this is a scandal. Where is the MKAU when we need it?

While I am Editor this publication will use the post 1974 county boundaries.

During the early part of 1997 a gas pipeline cut a swath, at breakneck speed, through Bucks and Beds avoiding sites which were known about but 'discovering' sites which prospecting fieldwork had failed to discover. Prospecting methods certainly help populate the landscape but they produce a far from complete picture.

Once again I would like to thank all the contributors and ask that they, and anyone else, send in articles for *SMA* 28. Please send a note, however short, of any work carried out in the four counties.

Copy date for *SMA* 28 is **31st March 1998**; please refer to **Notes for contributors**.

Barry Horne AIFA

Report on Spring Conference held at Bedford Museum on Saturday 26th April 1997

Summary by Linda Parkhouse

'RECENT EXCAVATIONS AND DISCOVERIES IN RIVER VALLEYS'

River valleys were chosen for the theme because of their rich range of habitats and because of the type of material preserved. A notable example of this awareness is the English Rivers Project supported by English Heritage, a study of all the English river drainage networks, intended to map all known finds of palaeolithic material and their geological contexts, with a view to determining which areas hold the best archaeological potential. Papers 5 and 7 were outside the theme.

The Upper Thames at Stanton Harcourt and Cassington: work in progress.

Terry Hardaker, Oxford.

The area of investigation available at Stanton Harcourt could only provide a small window into a large site. Deposits in a palaeo-river channel of Stage Seven warm interstadial (200,000 BP) were the most archaeologically interesting. Species represented included mammoth, bison, horse, red deer, brown bear, lion, pine, alder, beech, grass and herbs. Freshwater molluscs include specimens which today exist no further north than the Black Sea and Nile Delta. River bank deposits yielded beetles, pollen and fish remains. These indicate open grassland with woods and a warm climate, implying that Lower Palaeolithic peoples would have been able to penetrate this area.

Unfortunately, the preservation of bone was not good and evidence of gnawing and cut marks are hard to find. A few stone tools - hand axes, flakes and a chopper - were found and, although there was no trace of human occupation in the channel deposits, various criteria favour the contemporaneity of some tools with the Stage Seven channel.

In contrast, a section of Devensian gravels dating from a warm interstadial of Stages Five/Four (60,000 BP), were examined at Cassington. They overlay a river channel. Bison and reindeer bones occurred.

Seven flint and nine quartzite tools of pre-Acheulian age which were recovered demonstrated the value of archaeology to geologists. Quartzite tools came from the western end of the site, flint from the eastern end, the divide coinciding with a river channel.

It is evident that the toolmakers became skilled opportunists and expert geologists. All the smaller implements were made from flint nodules in lieu of good imported flint, or from other local nodules when no flint could be found. This upsets the theory that all flint used in the Upper Thames was imported from the Chilterns and, furthermore, now establishes evidence from a worked core for a Lower Palaeolithic flake industry in the Upper Thames.

The Palaeolithic of the Lower Ouse Valley.

Tim Reynolds. Cambridge Archaeology. (This paper was read by Jonathan Parkhouse)

The English Rivers Project inspired a synthesis of evidence of Palaeolithic settlement in the lower reaches of the River

Great Ouse. There is an urgency for further study because existing permissions for substantial gravel extraction span the next ten years, when the archaeological resource will dwindle.

The British Isles have been intermittently occupied for at least 500,000 years during which there have been seven major climatic changes. A major debate about the origins of ourselves (*Homo sapiens sapiens*) and the relevance of Neanderthals focuses, in Europe, in the Mousterian and Middle to Upper Palaeolithic transition, when both hominid types were present. Modern humans appeared in Africa and Asia in the Wolstonian and Ipswichian Stages (c 128,000-105,000 BP), substantially earlier than in Europe. Does the brief increase in blade use in northwest Europe during the (Acheulian) Ipswichian indicate the presence of modern humans long before the usually accepted date of 40,000-30,000 BP?

Any site of 128,000-30,000 BP is therefore of international importance. In the context of the River Great Ouse, archaeological evidence may also be particularly informative about local adaptations as indicators of behavioural flexibility and intellect.

The Pleistocene landscape was very different from that of today. Drainage ran not through the Thames system, but through the Cam- Ouse area to combine with a greater Rhine river system in what is now the North Sea. The present river system was only laid down after the passage of the Anglian and Wolstonian ice-sheets. The few earliest surviving deposits result from Wolstonian glacial out-wash and contain late Acheulian handaxes and flake scrapers, although finds in situ are very rare. Most of the axes were made on large flakes derived from terrace gravels. Two bone tools are known.

The Cam-Ouse terraces have produced a variety of environmental remains spanning the Ipswichian - Devensian stages, a date range of 128,000-10,000 BP, which supports the typology and technology of the artefacts. The study of artefactual-faunal-environmental associations is potentially one of the most valuable contributions that the River Great Ouse can make to archaeology, particularly from the fine-grained deposits within the Ouse terrace formations. Monitoring mineral extraction is of crucial importance; it is probably only a matter of time before it impacts upon an in situ Palaeolithic campsite. Inclusion of Palaeolithic archaeology with Local Authority mineral plans is an urgent requirement, which the English Rivers Project will assist.

The Eton Boating Lake.

Tim Allen. Oxford Archaeological Unit.

Excavation on the grand scale is happening on Thames-side in advance of the construction of the Eton rowing lake, on a site approximately 2.5 k. x 700 m. Previous flood-plain studies elsewhere have been on tiny and concentrated digs. Here, the size of the site meant that the mitigation strategy

which was adopted was a mixture of evaluation, preservation, stripping and excavation. The targets were the River Thames, its flood-plain and terrace gravels and the flood-plain south of an old channel.

The site is traversed by a major channel of the Thames which persisted until the Romano-British period and so, importantly, an unmodified stretch is preserved. Well preserved peat deposits in all the channels are overlain by alluvial deposit sequences, one of them containing an early Bronze Age hearth. Mesolithic lake-side sites investigated in the 1995 season produced 50,000+ flints.

The three main crop-marks, mainly on the gravel terraces, were an early Bronze Age barrow cemetery, a middle Bronze Age field system and a Romano-British enclosure. On the edge of the flood-plain early Neolithic flint knapping sites and early Bronze Age flint and pot scatters were found. A channel contained beaver gnawed timbers as well as beaver bones. Beavers would have had a major effect on rivers. Two fallen oak trees were found lodged in the silt which, it is hoped, will yield dendrochronological dates.

The southern half of the site had two areas of large-scale Neolithic activity, including the largest Neolithic middens so far known in Britain, but there were few pits and no buildings. Of the two pairs of barrows, the northern had slight remains and a southern one had peripheral middle Bronze Age burials. Middle Bronze Age settlement on the middle terrace included a wood-lined well, animal burials and (rare) human inhumations.

A series of timber bridges and jetties (c 800-400 BC) showed various re-builds, probably linked to rising river-levels. Human bones were found next to the bridges and on a sandbank a complete late Bronze Age pot was buried next to three posts. A skull on the end of a horizontal post compares to offerings at La Tene. This 'ritual' use continued into the Romano-British period with the deposition of a complete pot and two quernstones.

Late Iron Age & Roman in the Ouse Valley.

Mike Dawson. Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service.

Work concentrating on the middle Ouse has developed understanding of Iron Age and Romano-British environments. The prehistoric landscape was one of lowland open pasture and woodland in transition due to human usage, with a fauna and climate similar to that of today.

No extensive field systems are known, but a series of 'hill-top' enclosures probably represent settlements of pastoralists. The Sandy Lodge site included a middle Iron Age (c 500 - 400 BC) low promontory fort. Clusters of round houses with animal burials are considered not to be villages, but 'preferred settlements', ie sites which were spasmodically occupied by family groups. At Salford Quarry there was evidence for mixed farming for the first

Editorial and Conference

time. The hill-top enclosures might represent territorial markers at a time of tension, pastoralists v. farmers, during land use change.

The late Iron Age/early Romano-British landscape was packed with small farms, many being of the 'preferred site' type. Around 0 BC/AD richly furnished cremations appear, in common with southeast England. A major disruption occurred with the arrival of towns and villas. To three types of Romano-British village - villa, temple and military dependent - is added a fourth type in the Ouse Valley: de-population around villas and a re-location to marginal land.

A Roman site in Wallingford.

Colin Clarke. Wallingford History and Archaeology Society.

No Romano-British site is known in the town, but a small Romano-British cemetery has been excavated near Benson airfield. A central inhumation had 19 aligned burials, the outer ones being shallower. The central burials were in oak and in one beech coffins, while the outer had no coffins. They were not DNA related.

Several interesting burial rituals were evident. One skull had a flint firmly wedged between its teeth and some coffins had small lumps of flint placed around them. Large nails were found hammered into some coffins under the skull and one at the foot end, but do not appear to have a structural purpose. Two corpses were surgically decapitated and an unusually large space was left in the grave at the head end. A two year old child was partially decapitated. One grave had three pairs of pits along the long edges, possibly posts for a canopy. A bone comb was found under the elbow of a young man. There was one possibly pre-natal infant.

Subsequently, a ditch filled with domestic rubbish including very over-fired Towcester imbrex tiles, and a corn drier were found nearby. This was assumed to be part of a small farmstead.

Wollaston, Nene Valley, Northants.

Ian Meadows. Northamptonshire Archaeology.

Gravel extraction in the Nene Valley has produced finds from the Palaeolithic onwards, although the site had been severely damaged by 19th century gravel extraction and by ploughing of all periods. An alluvial blanket covered a black layer whose pollen indicated lime woodland following cereals in the Neolithic and woodland with cleared patches in the early Bronze Age. The Neolithic horizon had clusters

of small pits, all containing roasted hazel nut shells.

In the Bronze Age predominant grassland was divided into rectangular blocks by pit alignments, a system which lasted for a thousand years into the Romano-British period. Some alignments became fossilized into an Iron Age droveway and then into a Roman road. This may have been open pastureland, the pit markers allowing movement of stock.

Excavation of middle Iron Age enclosed farmsteads, wells and wicker-lined pits, produced pole-axed ox skulls, dung beetles, honey bees, wheat and barley, bracken, and thorn bush trimmings (perhaps from hedges planted along the pit alignments). Many clay-lined pot boiling hollows were found and also one inhumation.

Farming persisted after the Roman invasion, although the valley had a poor material culture. A villa was established at the northern end of a track along which farmsteads were aligned. A puzzling series of parallel trenches 5 m apart with bare ground between them were demonstrated to be a vineyard of the type described by Columella. Many pits, burials and cremations were also found. There was an apparent partial abandonment after the Roman period.

An isolated high-status Saxon grave discovered next to the road contained a hanging bowl, an oval pit with a large pebble, an iron buckle and knife, a pattern welded sword and a helmet with a boar crest. The position of the skull suggested that the head had rested on a pillow. The grave goods had been stripped down prior to burial, possibly at the time of transition from paganism to Christianity.

Southwick : opposite the pub : a watching brief.

Jill Johnston. Middle Nene Archaeology Group.

A Medieval building discovered during a watching brief revealed an interesting history. The property was in the hands of the Nivett family and was possibly a manse in 1277. Structural changes included the ceiling over of an open hall and addition of a stair turret, the insertion of kitchen or brewhouse vats and conversion to an animal house before final abandonment in the 15th century.

Industrial activity was based on local ironstone deposits and suggests itinerant smithing, possibly working for the manor house. No bell metal was present, but window lead, solder and iron vessels were found. Quarrying for ironstone at the back of the property necessitated revetment of its back wall. A burnt area in the quarry indicated where the ironstone was roasted before being transferred to the building to be worked. Pre-Conquest and medieval ironworking is a feature of villages in this area.

BEDFORDSHIRE

THE BEDFORDSHIRE INTEGRATED HERITAGE SERVICE

Evelyn Baker
Archaeology Service Manager

The Bedfordshire heritage provision is no longer an integrated whole, the metaphor for everything that could be good about local government archaeology - an example to which others could aspire (Richard Morris, Director of CBA, in *British Archaeology* 19, November 1996). Nevertheless, there is life after death: all the functions remain but in some areas somewhat reduced because overall funding is cut by some 40%. The reason for such drastic reduction is finance rather than strictly policy led, and is the direct result of Local Government Reorganisation which gives Luton independence as a unitary authority on 1st April 1997. Luton takes with it about one third of historic Bedfordshire's resources, while leaving most of the heritage behind in New Bedfordshire. The cuts have been applied across the board except for statutory services, hence the apparently disproportionate cut to a service that actually sees no work reduction, and no staff transferred to Luton.

Two consequences should perhaps be highlighted here for CBA readers. The first is a hard purchaser/provider split which was not proposed in an exercise calculating the effects of a lesser, mere 35%, County Council wide reduction in staffing. With the 40% vision one and a bit Historic Buildings posts, the Archaeological Conservation Officer and Historic Environment Information (Beds SMR with buildings) Officer moved to Environmental Services, in a mixed disciplinary Heritage and Environment Team (HEAT) without their administrative assistant. The Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service (BCAS) which works from the St Marys Church Archaeology Centre has been placed in the Consultancy Services Division along with the County Training Group and roads engineers, with a 40% reduction in core funding (seen as a staffing provision). Both are in the Department of Environment and Economic Development (DEED). Service Level Agreements are being put in place to maintain the essential links between the two teams, and to ensure the continuation of the valuable joint working in non-contentious areas that worked so well in the old Heritage Group.

The second consequence is the early retirement of David Baker, the Head of Heritage and County Archaeologist, who used to manage and regulate all areas of work. There is no such post in the new enlarged Departmental structure which has subsumed functions from several smaller departments. David will be badly missed on a number of counts, but maintains his place on a number of national committees *ad hominem*.

Much energy and time has been taken up by reorganisation, but with the reorganisation comes a new start. Evelyn Baker now reports to the Assistant Director Consultancy Services,

while David Bevan (HEAT Team Leader and ex Senior Historic Buildings Officer) reports to Assistant Director Environmental Services. BCAS core staff remain the same, and despite our financial blow, every effort will be made to maintain and even improve standards and to maintain the breadth and quality of service Bedfordshire people have become accustomed to.

It has nevertheless been a productive year as the summaries show. We are working with our erstwhile HEAT colleagues on Research Frameworks for Bedfordshire, and have put *Bedfordshire Archaeological Procedures Manual* Volume 1, Fieldwork out for consultation by the two Registered Museums, Luton and Bedford, the Archaeological Conservation Officer and the Bedfordshire Archaeological Council with a view to its formal adoption as the benchmark for fieldwork standards in Bedfordshire. Thoroughly tested in the field, this vastly improved tome borrows from best practice nation-wide, and we make no apologies for our fully acknowledged plagiarisms. Groundwork for the matching post-excavation analysis volume will be started this coming year, and we hope to publish the Bedfordshire Archaeological Projects Database as a mark of 25 years work in the county.

The major fieldwork project, directed by Michael Luke, has undoubtedly been the pre-destruction recording of the Biddenham Loop prehistoric landscape. This was in advance of housing development by Bovis Homes; mitigation measures worked in concert with the Archaeology Conservation Officer and Bovis Archaeological Consultants CPM have been successful in protecting much of the most important archaeology but inevitably, on a site of such a scale, important archaeology has been discovered. There has also been another bite at the Stratton DMV cherry by Drew Shotliff; this has to be the most extensive and complete village excavation in Britain, and provides interesting and important revelations regarding the evolution and movement of rural settlements. Norse Road Iron Age complex is reported upon here by Michael Dawson.

Post excavation has progressed on a wide front, including the Bedford Western Bypass (Shepherd) which was launched by the Minister for Roads and Rail John Watts. This was the largest and most expensive archaeological project yet undertaken by the Highways Agency. The Minister also launched a travelling exhibition on the discoveries together with an attractive (free) booklet to accompany it. *Bedfordshire Archaeology* 22 sees the liquidation of a substantial portion of BCAS reporting commitments by the publication of seven excavations at Willington Quarry (Dawson), excavations at Kempston Manor (Crick and Dawson), Tempsford Park (Shotliff), (part of) Elstow Abbey (Dawson and Fell) and Manor Farm Clipstone (Crick and Shotliff), fieldwalking at Kensworth Quarry (McSloy and Shotliff) and an interim report on the series of excavations at Warren Villas (Dawson and Maull). The technical report on a number of Anglian Water pipeline sites (Dawson) is well on the way, and will include the

Bedfordshire

important Roman cemetery and settlement evidence at Kempston Church End. Grove Priory (Baker) is nearing completion, and has thrown up a new research element at the eleventh hour. Detailed and deliberate planning according to known Medieval methodology and measurements of an apparently random settlement, its infrastructure and buildings, has allowed significantly better reconstruction and assisted with phasing problems which could not be determined through stratigraphic analysis.

As well as the Bedford Western Bypass exhibition, a general travelling exhibition showing our work is still going round various centres in the county. A successful Stratigraphy Conference, organised by Nick Shepherd was hosted by BCAS in Bedford.

Bedford College, St. Marys Street, Bedford (TL 05054948)

Drew Shotliff

An archaeological evaluation, comprising documentary research, trial trenching and boreholes, was carried out on behalf of Gleeds Management Services during late December 1995 and early January 1996 on the site of a planned college extension. With the exception of Trench 1 on the northern edge of the site, archaeological deposits were identified and recorded in all the interventions. On average, the archaeological deposits lay at a depth of 1.26 m below the present ground surface. The overall thickness of the deposit ranged from 0.96 m to at least 1.20 m.

Analysis of the artefacts recovered during the fieldwork and the results of the documentary research suggest that the majority of the deposits date to the late Medieval period (13th-15th centuries). They appear to be associated with domestic and light industrial use of properties which took advantage of a dual frontage on the River Great Ouse and on St Marys Street.

Beancroft Road, Marston Moretaine (SP 992415)

Drew Shotliff

Between October 1995 and December 1996 an archaeological watching brief was maintained by BCAS on behalf of Bellway Homes (North London) at the site of a 2 ha residential housing development at Beancroft Road, Marston Moretaine.

Evidence for Early, Early-Middle and Late Iron Age occupation was found in the form of scattered, isolated pits and occasional ditches. No traces of buildings were recovered. A single Late Iron Age Belgic cremation burial was excavated. This comprised a small, circular pit, containing the remains of three ceramic vessels. The largest of these contained cremated bone and was accompanied by two smaller accessory vessels.

Three isolated features produced a limited amount of St.

Neots-type pottery. Several furrows, cut into the subsoil, were investigated during the watching brief. They contained pottery dating from the 10th - 15th centuries. A substantial headland, surviving as an earthwork at a right angle to the sub-surface furrows, was also recorded.

Stratton, Biggleswade (TL 203443, HER 518)

Drew Shotliff

A further 1.2 ha of the north-western periphery of the Saxon and Medieval settlement of Stratton were excavated on behalf of Bedfordshire County Council in advance of housing development. The area formed part of Phase 2B of the residential development area and had been evaluated by trial trenching during 1994 (SMA 25, 16-17).

With the exception of an isolated early Bronze Age pit, the bulk of the excavated evidence dated to the early and middle Saxon periods. A series of pits, wells and sunken featured buildings produced a small assemblage of animal bone, pottery and non-ceramic artefacts. The latter included five fragments of vessel glass from dark coloured, globular beakers with opaque yellow trailed decoration. The site of the Saxon settlement was overlain by a series of boundary ditches, forming part of the open field system associated with the later, Medieval settlement.

The Biddenham Loop, Bedford (TL0249)

Michael Luke and Michael Dawson

Excavations were carried out between April and December 1996 at Biddenham on behalf of Bovis Homes Ltd. The fieldwork strategy was carried out in accordance with a "Brief for a programme of archaeological investigation, recording, analysis and publication for Biddenham Loop, Bedfordshire" (June 1995) prepared by Countryside Planning and Management (CPM) and agreed by the County Heritage Officer.

There were two fieldwork elements in the mitigation strategy:

- a watching brief on testpits, road and drainage works and the service corridor in areas thought to be of "low" archaeological potential.
- Detailed excavation in the areas expected to be of "moderate" to "high" archaeological potential.

The archaeological investigations were all conducted in advance of construction work.

The total area of the 1996 fieldwork comprised approximately 17 ha. Archaeological features and artefacts were located and recorded from all areas under investigation, although densities varied from area to area. The majority of archaeological features were relatively well preserved, with few areas of truncation.

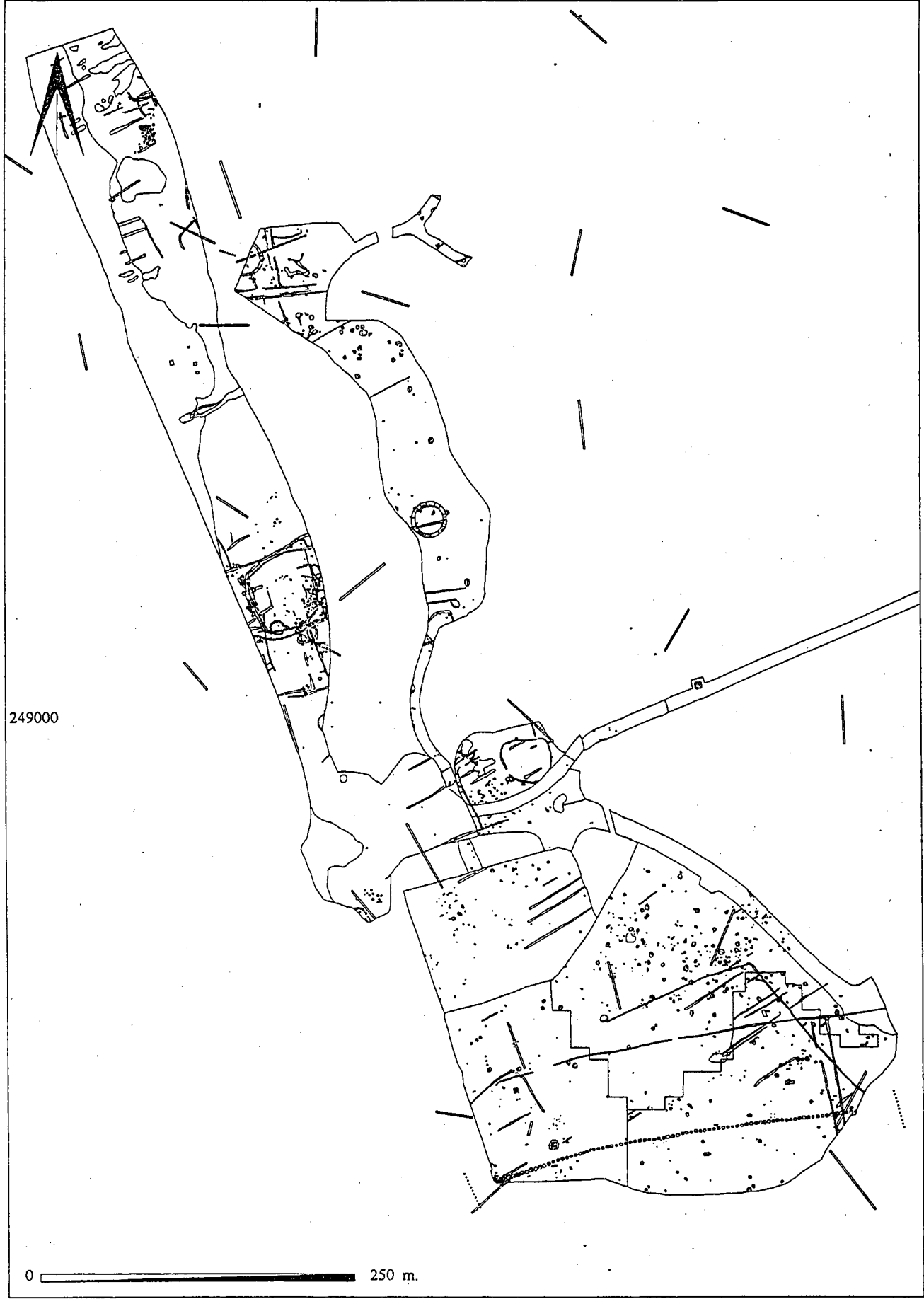


Fig 1. All features plan of the Biddenham Loop excavations

Bedfordshire

The majority of archaeological evidence indicated settlement and ritual activity in the Bronze and Iron Ages, with some less focused evidence from the Neolithic, Roman and Medieval periods.

Neolithic (c 4,000-2,400 BC)

In the early Neolithic period the landscape may have been heavily wooded and most activity focused on hunting, with limited seasonal occupation of temporary camps. Isolated shallow pits containing either pottery or flint were characteristic of this period. A concentration of small pits of this date at the west end of Biddenham Loop suggest a preferred location which may have sustained longer term settlement.

In the northern central area a pit was excavated which would have originally been 1.3 m in diameter and 2 m deep and in which an aurochs antler was deposited possibly a propitiatory offering. The pit was truncated by the construction of a later ring ditch. The location of the pit and ring ditch may indicate a continued ritual significance into the Bronze Age.

Several Neolithic urned cremations were recovered from the southern area of the Loop.

Bronze Age (c 2,400-700 BC)

In the Bronze Age settlement patterns probably changed from the transitory locations of pastoralists to the farms of early agriculturalists. Several large features interpreted as waterholes and storage pits seem to have been associated with such farms. The concentration of waterholes, large pits (probably storage pits), small pits and postholes, suggest several farmsteads were located within the southern area of the excavation, whilst the remainder of the Loop contained small pits with pottery or flint artefacts.

Located centrally within the northern area, was a badly plough damaged ring ditch. Measuring 28 m in diameter, the ditch was 2 m wide and 1.2 m deep. No central burial was located, but this is likely to have been placed within the ploughed out mound. A cremation, probably contemporary, was located on the inside of the ditch. A second similar monument was partially examined on the edge of the excavation over 75 m to the north.

In addition to the ring ditches a small number of cremations in "beaker" style pottery vessels were located within the southern housing area. The urns were placed, occasionally upside down, in small pits situated on the periphery of settlement areas.

Early Iron Age (c 700-400 BC)

In the early Iron Age there appears to have been an increase in the number of farmsteads, although it is likely that some of the farms established during the Bronze Age continued to be occupied. The presence of a farmstead within the central area was indicated by a concentration of large storage pits. These were 1.5 m in diameter and 1 m deep and were reused as rubbish pits. No remains of contemporary

houses were located, although the presence of charcoal and burnt stones within some of the pits indicated domestic activity nearby. The buildings associated with these farmsteads are likely to have been constructed without deep foundations and, therefore, did not survive as features within the gravel.

The southern area part of the Loop was subdivided by a pit alignment. Initially identified from aerial photographs and during the evaluation, the alignment was known to be over 1 km in length, extending to the River Great Ouse on either side of the loop and isolating a large D-shaped area. Eighty pits were located within the excavation area, spaced fairly evenly at 0.5 m apart. The pits were either rectangular or oval, often 2 m wide and over 1 m deep. The enormous investment of labour represented in the construction of a pit alignment rather than a straightforward ditch, and the regularity of the pits, makes these unusual and important monuments. They are doubtless of ritual significance.

Middle Iron Age (c 400-100 BC)

In the middle Iron Age changes in the landscape were evident with the construction of three farmsteads. These were on the western edge of the Loop and comprised round houses, cremation burial sites and enclosures, peripheral activity was also identified within the Loop. This mainly took the form of isolated hearths, pits and postholes. Trackways associated with these farmsteads comprised parallel ditches and appear to have acted as a focus for this activity. Within the central area an oval enclosure with an entrance to the west may have functioned as a cattle corral. Two additional farmsteads were located further to the east. The first was established over the filled up ring ditch, which was characterised by postholes, stone pads and pits, all containing domestic rubbish. In the south-west corner of the southern housing area a farmstead was identified, in this case characterised by an area of storage pits, which were located over the earlier silted up pit alignment. The majority of this farmstead was located outside the excavation area.

Three simple cremations placed in shallow pits were located 10 m east of the settlement in the central area, whilst over 100 m south of these, another simple cremation was placed in a small pit just outside the cattle enclosure. Lastly a crouched inhumation was placed in a grave cutting the top fill of one of the pits in the pit alignment, and probably derived from a farmstead to the west.

Late Iron Age - early Roman (c 100 BC-AD100)

By the late Iron Age it seems that only the farmstead located within the central area remained in use, where for the first time pottery kilns were recorded. The two kilns, of different sizes, were subsequently demolished and re-used as rubbish pits. On the eastern side of the Loop the watching brief identified a number of boundary ditches and trackways which correspond to field systems revealed on aerial photographs.

In the central eastern part of the watching brief area a small building, 3 m square, surrounded by a drainage gully was

investigated. The arrangement of the postholes suggests a doorway to the south, although there was no corresponding break in the drainage ditch. Seventy-two nails were located within the upper fills of the drainage ditch, suggesting the building was shingled. This was an unusual structure, small, isolated from contemporary settlement, and producing very little domestic rubbish. These elements, and the similarity of the ground plan to the Heathrow temple suggest the building was a shrine.

Roman (c AD100-400)

There is no evidence for settlement in the Roman period within the excavated areas. The presence of a rectangular ditched field system containing Roman domestic artefacts, suggests contemporary occupation may be located not far beyond the limits of the excavation area. Two extended inhumations were placed in graves aligned on the field system.

Postscript

Currently the records from the fieldwork are being checked and consolidated and within six months an assessment report covering all the archaeological fieldwork carried out to date and detailing the potential for analysis will be presented to Bovis Homes for a decision to be taken on the direction of post excavation analysis and publication.

Norse Road, Bedford (TL 0951)

Michael Dawson

Outline planning permission was granted in 1991 to Old Road Securities plc for development of a site at Norse Road, Bedford, an area incorporating an archaeological site (HER 1830). A PPG16 condition requiring an assessment and evaluation of the archaeology was imposed prior to the determination of a mitigation strategy.

The specification for the first stage of archaeological work was issued in July 1992 by the conservation officer of the County Planning Department. An assessment and evaluation was subsequently undertaken by the BCAS at the end of 1992 comprising desktop, topographical survey followed by fieldwalking, extensive geophysical survey and the excavation of a series of evaluation trenches (BCAS 93/3) (Fig 2). Based on recommendations in the assessment of stage 1 (BCAS 93/3) a brief and specification for a mitigation strategy was issued by the Cambridge Archaeology Unit, acting as archaeological consultant for the developer.

The results of the excavations carried out by BCAS over four weeks during October and November 1996 are the subject of this report.

Archaeological Fieldwork

Following the recommendations in the assessment of Stage 1 (BCAS 93/3) the entire area of dense cropmark evidence in the western part of the site was retained and preserved in the development plan. Only two areas of

cropmarks situated in the east were affected by the development. This included the north-eastern corner and southern side (Fig 3, A & B) of an Iron Age enclosure. Area C consisted of an area of a proposed deep-rooted tree-stand situated in the centre of the enclosure.

The methodology outlined in the project design (BCAS 96/22) for the investigation of Areas A and B consisted of a series of trenches focusing on the line of the enclosure ditch as well as possible ditch terminals and areas of entrance structures. Their aim was also to determine the nature of gaps and blank areas defined in the south and northwest course of the ditch by the geophysical survey. The interior of the enclosure was sampled by a series of 5 m square test pits staggered axially across the internal area of the enclosure. Their aim was to determine the nature and density of settlement within the enclosure. In the event that few or no settlement features were found within Areas A and B, Area C was to be tested through the excavation of a machine-dug trench across its diameter. The use of contingency funding for further investigation was available depending on the results of the fieldwork.

The excavation was successful in locating the complete course of the ditch and its entrance within the excavated trial trenches. The segments of the enclosure ditch excavated in the southwest and northwest had a largely uneroded V-shaped profile measuring up to 2.5 m - 3.5 m in width and up to 1.25 m in depth. To the southeast the ditch was steep-sided but with a more rounded base, changing to a wide flat-based ditch profile in the northeast. Several fragments of Mid to Late pre-Belgic Iron Age pottery and occasional fragments of animal bone were retrieved from the ditch fills.

The gaps and blank areas in the south and northwest part of the ditch, identified by the geophysical survey, represented areas of extensive plough truncation with only the base of the ditch surviving. In the northeast the remaining basal fill of the ditch consisted of a clay deposit, almost identical to the surrounding natural clay, which accounts for the low response in the magnetometer survey.

An entrance to the enclosure was situated in the east. It was defined by two opposing squared termini of the enclosure ditch and measured c 3 m in width. The possible remains of an internal bank, considerably truncated and modified by ploughing, was recorded near the southern part of the enclosure entrance. Gravel deposits in several ditch segments to the south may also be interpreted as the remains of a possible outer bank which eroded and slumped into the ditch.

A possible re-cut of the enclosure ditch was recorded in southwest corner of the enclosure and two excavated segments to the east. The southern arm of the ditch terminated in the southwest corner. It seems to be re-cut by a shallower ditch cut on the same southwest-northeast alignment curving sharply at this point to a northnorthwest-southsoutheast alignment.

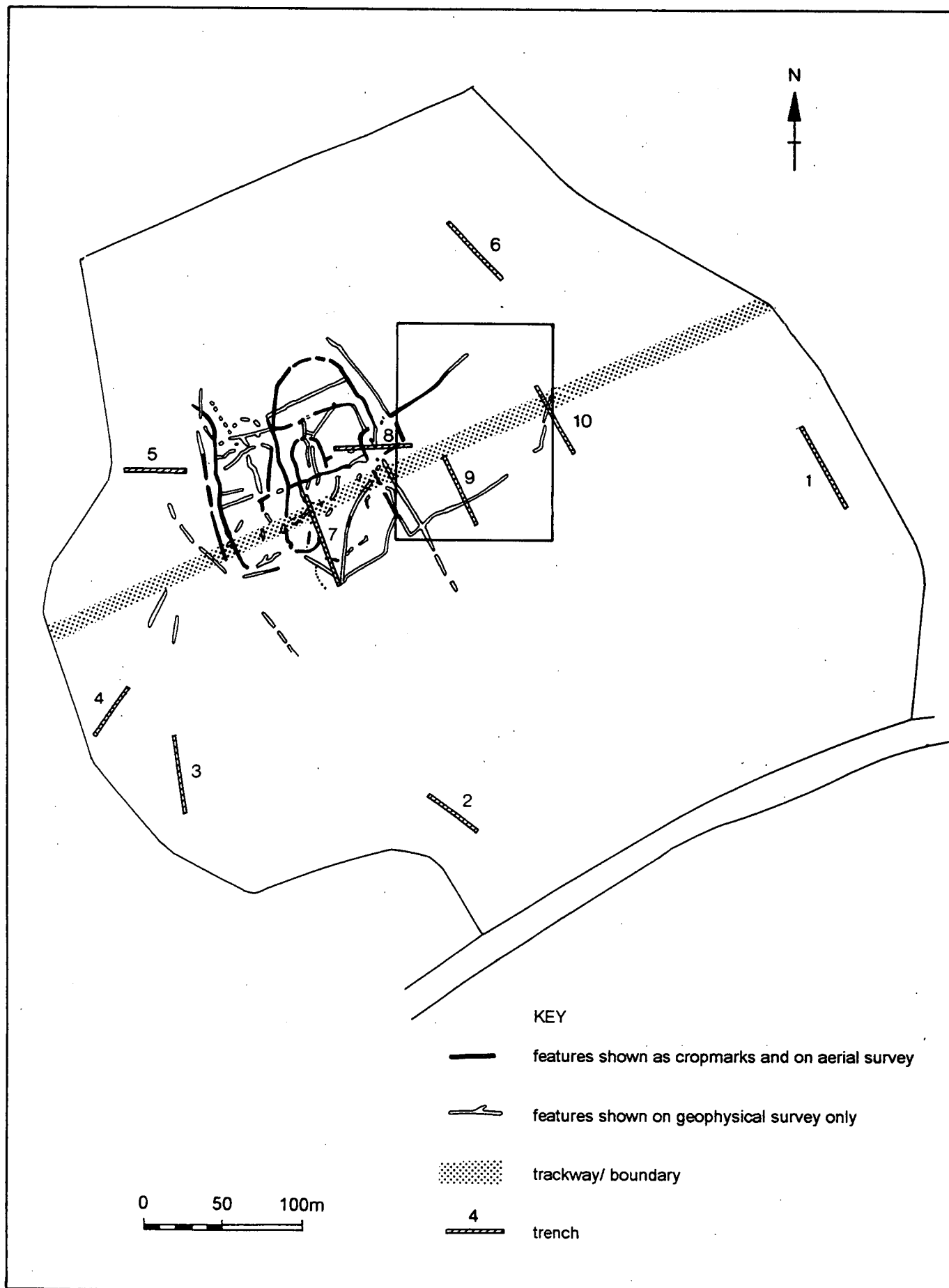


Fig 2. The results of assessment and evaluation at Norse Road. Fig 3 inset.

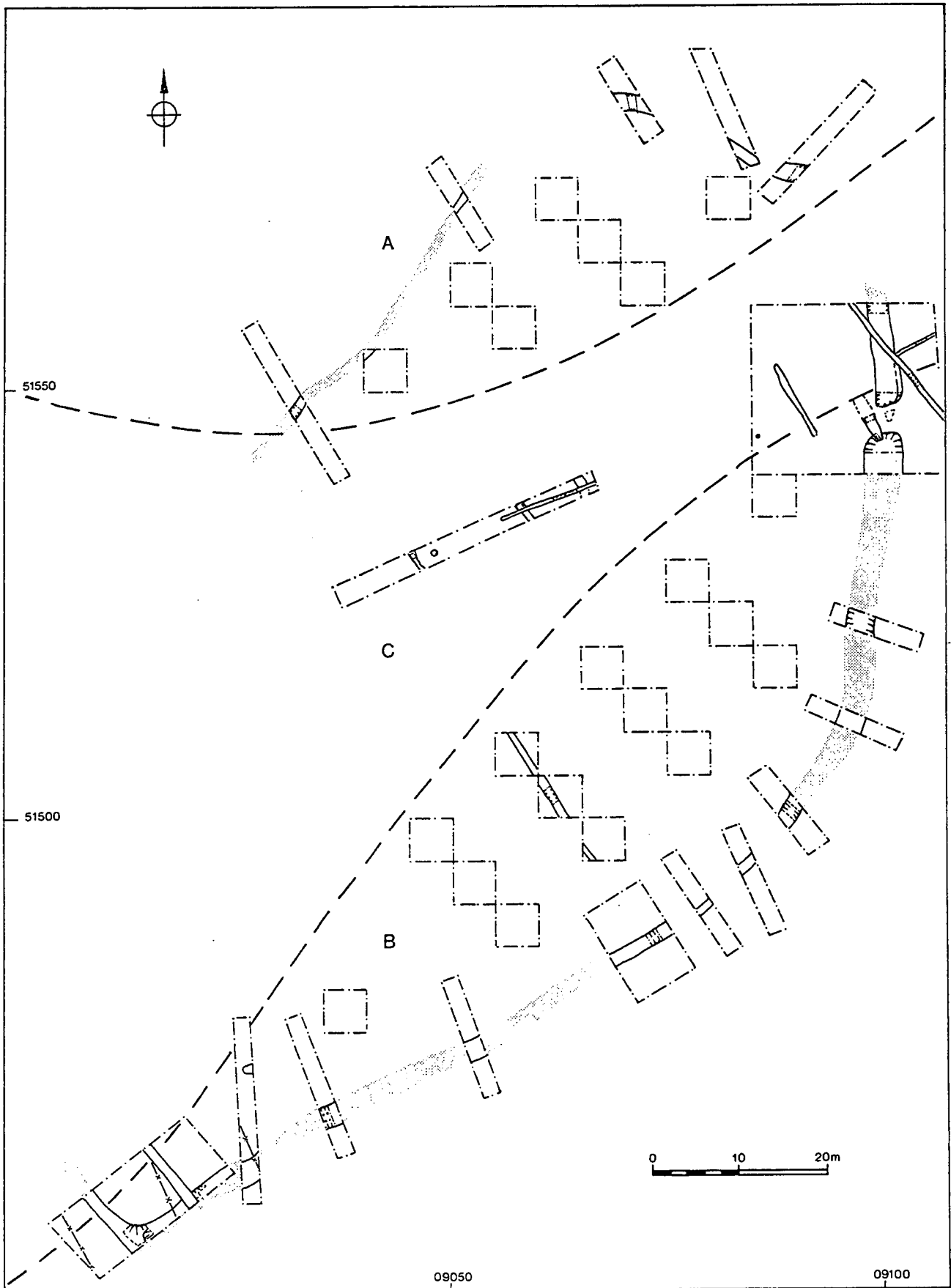


Fig 3. The mitigation strategy at Norse Road.

Bedfordshire

The excavated internal area of the enclosure revealed very few archaeological features. A small pit or posthole 0.8 m x 0.4 m and 0.145 m in depth was situated immediately inside the southwest corner of the enclosure. Another pit measuring c 1.6 m in diameter and 0.4 m in depth was situated c 10 m inside the south arm of the enclosure. It contained several fragments of Mid to Late Pre-Belgic Iron Age pottery. The square test-pits within the enclosure did not contain any archaeological features. In order to ascertain the nature of archaeological survival, the area around the entrance of the enclosure was enlarged by 360 m² and a 23 m long trench was excavated through Area C (see plan). This revealed two postholes and a narrow gully on an east-west alignment. The gully is possibly post-Medieval in date.

In the southeast the enclosure ditch was truncated by a shallow ditch on a northnorthwest-southsoutheast alignment, situated parallel to the north-south arm of the enclosure ditch. The geophysical survey indicates that the ditch is possibly part of a large boundary partly enclosing an area to the west. A segment excavated further north across the ditch in the 1993 evaluation (BCAS 93/3) recovered the fragment of a bone comb, giving a tentative date of the 1st or 2nd century for this feature.

Postscript

The excavations at Norse Road have confirmed the existence of a Middle to Late Iron Age enclosure with a possible internal bank. The enclosure is part of a small-scale rural settlement, represented by the cropmarks to the west, spanning a period from the Middle Iron Age to the late Roman period. The excavated enclosure probably represents part of an early phase of activity. It is truncated by a boundary ditch which extends to the west which probably enclosed the Roman focus of settlement. It is unclear whether the enclosure was initially open to the west and only fully enclosed at a later date. The main entrance to the enclosure is situated in the east. The fills of the enclosure ditch and surviving internal features suggest that activity areas were present within the enclosure (Richard MacPhail pers. comm.), however any possible traces of settlement activity have been destroyed by the plough.

St Johns Area Relief Scheme, Bedford (TL0515 4920)

Sean Steadman

An archaeological evaluation was carried out along the proposed route for the St Johns Area relief scheme, Bedford. Documentary research suggested that the evaluation area comprised farmland and marginal land with marshy areas until the railway was built in the mid 19th century and trial-trenching confirmed this.

There was no surviving structural evidence for the former St Leonards Leper hospital (HER 273) which was located in the area of the old St Johns station. It was first recorded in 1207, but had gone out of use by the end of the Medieval period by which time leprosy was no longer a major disease

in England. The hospital buildings were incorporated into St Leonards Farm, which was demolished to make way for the Bedford to Cambridge railway in 1862.

Chicksands Priory (TL 1209 3935)

Sean Steadman

A number of previously unrecorded structures were discovered to the north-east of the Priory buildings during an archaeological evaluation undertaken by BCAS.

Stone foundations and evidence of subsequent stone robbing may be contemporary with the Medieval fabric of the Priory. An apsidal brick structure was subsequently constructed over part of the backfilled robber trench. The date, form and function of either of these structures could not be established during the evaluation.

A section of ha-ha wall and ditch uncovered further to the north probably dates to the 18th or 19th century, when the parkland around the Priory was landscaped. Its course was traced by means of probing and it seems likely that further, unrecorded, sections of the ha-ha originally encircled the Priory. The ditch had been used to carry an electric cable and filled in, probably some time after the Second World War. Finds from the trial trenches date mainly to the post-Medieval and modern period. The almost total absence of Medieval material from an important site which was occupied for several hundred years suggests that ground clearance during the periods of landscaping in the 18th and 19th centuries must have been remarkably thorough.

4 Market Square, Leighton Buzzard (SP9216 2500)

Sean Steadman

Archaeological evaluation, comprising a programme of documentary research and trial trenching, was carried out to the rear of 4 Market Square, Leighton Buzzard by BCAS.

Documentary research indicates that the evaluation area was formerly sub-divided into three plots, all of which were densely occupied by structures associated with a variety of light industries from at least the 17th century onwards. Although no in-situ deposits relating to earlier activity were encountered, pottery sherds dating from the Medieval period were recovered from the trial trenches suggesting that the site was occupied prior to this date. Trial trenching uncovered a possible boundary ditch of late Medieval or early post-Medieval date. Although no contemporary structural remains were encountered, masonry rubble within the backfill of the ditch implies the former presence of stone buildings. A stone-lined drain in the south of the site was also probably roughly contemporary. A substantial pit cut through the backfilled ditch in the north of the site contained domestic refuse, building debris and the skeletons of two fighting cocks. Successive episodes of demolition, levelling and reconstruction were identified in the south of the site which confirm the intensive activity suggested by the documentary research.

New Street, Shefford (TL1413 3868)
Sean Steadman

Archaeological evaluation, comprising a programme of geophysical survey and trial trenching, was carried out at New Street, Shefford by BCAS. Plough furrows, together with the numerous land drains, encountered in the trial trenches indicate prolonged agricultural activity on the site.

There was no evidence to suggest that the Roman settlement located beneath Robert Bloomfield School immediately to the north-west extended south or east into the evaluation area.

Katherine House, Dunstable Street, Ampthill
(TL0440 3800)
Sean Steadman

An archaeological Watching Brief was carried out during the construction of footings for an extension to the front of Katherine House. A small quantity of Medieval pottery and some animal bone, including a canine skeleton, were recovered which probably derived from rubbish pits located behind former buildings fronting on to the street.

Howard Chapel, Mill Street, Bedford (TL0514 4981)
Sean Steadman

A programme of documentary research and trial trenching was undertaken on the site of the former Howard Chapel, Bedford.

Trial trenching uncovered pits backfilled with domestic refuse dating from the 10th-12th centuries. Evidence for contemporary ironworking was recovered, although no actual structures were found. Substantial quantities of residual Saxo-Norman and Medieval pottery were recovered from both within the chapel and from the area of the burial ground. This suggests that extensive archaeological deposits lay undisturbed until the chapel was built in the 18th century.

Documentary research detailed the development of the chapel from its construction in 1754 to the final extension to the schoolrooms in 1878. In addition, records suggested that the burial ground around the chapel was densely occupied and that as many as 400 burials may have occurred between 1755 and 1855. Trial trenching confirmed the density of the burials around the chapel, which were much more shallow than had been previously expected. The massive stone foundations of the original chapel facade were also uncovered shedding some light on the building methods employed. The foundations comprised re-used masonry and tile of late Medieval or post-Medieval date which might indicate the former presence of stone structures on the site.

1 St Pauls Square, Bedford (TL 0495 4965)
Sean Steadman

An archaeological Watching Brief was carried out during the excavation of a single slit trench adjacent to the east wall of the existing building. A possible wall footing comprising a single course of roughly hewn limestone pieces was observed in the base of the trench. It was founded directly upon a homogeneous silty clay loam deposit flecked with charcoal. Animal bone, post-Medieval pottery and a single sherd of St Neots type pottery were observed within this layer which may represent backfilled rubbish pits but is equally likely to have been introduced onto the site as a levelling deposit.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY MUSEUM ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE

Linslade Bypass
Jonathan Parkhouse

Three sites were evaluated, one in Buckinghamshire and two in Bedfordshire.

Site A is recorded elsewhere in this volume, in the Buckinghamshire section.

Site B (SP 896 241). Magnetometry undertaken in 1995 had revealed a discontinuous annular feature which was interpreted as a possible ring ditch.

Trial trenching demonstrated the existence of a discontinuous curvilinear ditch 13 m in diameter, which exactly matched the plot of the geophysical anomaly, but the presence of a number of Iron Age sherds within the ditch fill makes its interpretation as a late Neolithic/early Bronze age ring ditch difficult to sustain; in addition the recovery of fragments of fired clay, possibly daub, could be interpreted as evidence in support of a structural function.

A small number of cut features were also discovered in the vicinity of the curvilinear ditch and may be of similar date, although the evidence was inconclusive.

Site C (SP 901 240). Four parallel ditches were identified, two of which contained small quantities of late Iron Age and Romano-British pottery. It is thought that these represent field boundaries. No other features were identified, although worked flints had been recovered from this area during earlier fieldwalking.

**Initial Observations on Excavations in Advance of Gas
Pipeline Construction at Flitwick (TL 01653320)**

I P Brooks

Fieldwalking as part of the pre-construction archaeological survey for the Steppingley to Aylesbury Gas Pipeline revealed a marked concentration of lithic material near to Priestly Farm, Flitwick. The site had previously been discovered by the Ampthill and District Archaeological History Society (Fadden, 1991) during the construction of another gas pipeline in 1976, but the desk-top study commissioned by British Gas Transco failed to locate the records. Initial fieldwalking was carried out, in 1995-6, to assess the possibility of adjusting the pipeline route, unfortunately this proved to be impossible. A sample excavation was therefore planned and carried out between December 1996 and March 1997. The work has been funded by British Gas Transco throughout.

The flint scatter covers an area of at least six hectares on the Woburn Sand Ridge, overlooking the River Flit. Terrace gravels are reported (Symonds Travers Morgan, 1995) at the base of the slope to the flood plain of the River Flit presumably acting as a raw material source for the flint artefacts. The area investigated consisted of a strip, 35 m wide and 280 m long within the wider scatter. This strip was equivalent to the area to be disturbed by pipelining activities.

Methods

The method used to investigate the site from a set of nested approaches designed to solve specific problems. Initially the site was discovered by 'line walking'. Transects were walked at 10 m separations with finds being sketch plotted onto 1:2500 maps. This method was designed solely to locate possible sites along the proposed pipeline corridor. For the flint scatter at Flitwick it soon became impossible to plot each individual find, so groups of flint artefacts were plotted and bagged together.

The next problem was the extent of the scatter. Three blocks of 5 m x 5 m squares were laid out at right angles to the proposed line and total collection of the surface material undertaken. Two of these blocks of sample squares were 100 m x 20 m and the third 55 m x 5 m in size. These showed that the density of the scatter continued throughout the area in which it was possible to move the proposed route of the pipeline. Random walking within the two fields, which comprise the site, has shown that the scatter extends for at least six hectares making it impossible to avoid because of engineering restrictions.

The two fieldwalking projects discussed above took place in the winter of 1995-6 and served as background data to design the current project. The route of the pipeline was pegged out by British Gas Transco and this served as a base line for all future work. A grid of 5 m squares was laid out to cover the main concentration of lithic material and the

area to be disturbed by pipelining activities. This block was 35 m wide and 280 m long, extending from the plateau to the edge of the flood plain of the River Flit. A total collection of the surface assemblage was undertaken with the flint artefacts being recorded by the 5 m x 5 m grid squares.

The distribution pattern from the fieldwalking was then used to define 30 grid squares for investigation. These were chosen to represent both areas with high flint density and areas of apparent low density. Within each of the 5 m x 5 m squares, five 1 m x 1 m squares were excavated. All material excavated was sieved through a nested set of sieves at 13 mm and 6 mm, recovering all flint and other artefacts. Experiments with sieving at 3 mm showed this to be much slower and not to significantly increase the recovery of flint artefacts. The patterns from this sample excavation process were then used to define complete 5 m x 5 m squares for excavation, based on high levels of flint artefacts.

Nine complete 5 m x 5 m squares were excavated with six of these forming three 10 m x 5 m trenches, thereby giving 'open areas' with the hope of locating sub-soil features. The trenches were excavated by 1 m x 1 m square with all artefacts being record to those 1 m x 1 m squares. Once again all soil was sieved at 13 mm and 6 mm.

Results

Work has only just started on the flint assemblage from Flitwick and thus firm results can not be reported. However a number of observations from the fieldwork can give an indication of the quality and quantity of the assemblage. A total of approximately 19,500 flint artefacts were collected from all stages of the project. These form a number of concentrations together with a general spread of material. The comparison of fieldwalking and excavated material suggests that the surface collection is a good reflection of the sub-surface collection and represents approximately 1% of the total assemblage.

The assemblage appears to be largely Early Mesolithic in date, however some later Mesolithic microliths were recovered. A marked concentration of flint artefacts in the middle area of the site contained a number of scrapers and other tools suggesting possible Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age occupation on the site.

No Mesolithic features were recorded, the fields had been ploughed and slurry injected into the sub-soil for many years effectively destroying the sub-soil structure. Further it is suggested that deflation has lowered the field level over time, thus all of the flint assemblage is within the plough zone. Even so, the distribution patterns within the excavated trenches suggests that the flint has not moved laterally to any great degree. Indeed it may be possible to recognise some of the prehistoric features as concentration of flint artefacts within the plough soil.

The quality of the lithic assemblage should allow for a number of detailed analyses to be carried out. A range of lithic types were used within the assemblage. These include

a range of flint types, from highly translucent dusky yellowish brown (10 YR 2/2, Goddard et al, 1948) to an opaque light grey (N7), greensand chert and even a few fragments of vein quartz. This should allow for the differential use of these raw material types to be investigated. The distribution of tools and waste appears to vary within the distribution. Initial impressions suggests that even with the narrow strip sampled differential use of the landscape can be demonstrated. It is assumed that the gravels at the base of the slope to the flood plain of the River Flit were the source of the flint and chert used for the assemblage. From here, at least part of the raw materials were brought up to a slight knoll at the southern end of the site and some initial testing of the raw materials took place. Further reduction and presumably production of tools took place further back on the plateaux.

Only a limited range of retouched tool types were recovered including microliths, scrapers and awls from the Early Mesolithic assemblage, although the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age assemblage also includes a range of arrowheads and knives. These assemblages presumably reflect activities carried out on the site in the past.

It should be stressed that analysis is at a very early stage. However the impression is that the assemblage from Flitwick, although it is within the topsoil, represents the large scale use of the landscape within the Early Mesolithic with later use in the Late Mesolithic and Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. There is potential to demonstrate the differential use of the landscape together with differential use of raw material types for this area of Bedfordshire.

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MANSHEAD ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF DUNSTABLE

The following are summaries of work carried out in 1995 and reported in full in *Manshead Journal* 36 by David Warren (excavation) and Renny Hudspeth (fieldwalking).

Excavation continued at **Priory Middle School, Dunstable** on a site adjacent to Dunstable Priory. Evidence was found for a metallised roadway of probable Medieval date which continued in use following a brief hiatus after the Dissolution; this was preceded by an earlier trackway. At one end of the excavation a series of postholes and a number of small finds indicate a fence possibly with a style.

A sampling excavation was carried out in the back garden of **18 Aldbanks, Dunstable**. A small struck flint flake and several tiny Medieval pot sherds were found on the surface; predominately modern finds came from the topsoil; the subsoil produced flakes, Medieval sherds and a couple of minute Roman ones. A particular discovery was a bi-facially worked ovate flint scraper/knife. No archaeological features were revealed.

A PPG16 assessment was undertaken ahead of office development at **21 - 23 Princes Street, Dunstable** to determine the archaeological potential of the site. The area was of interest because of a history of human remains being found at various places in the surrounding area. Despite the presence of Medieval sherds and a small amount of Romano-British material no feature can be shown to be earlier than the late 17th century. The principal and earliest feature is a metallised trackway running north-south, probably 18th to first half of the 19th century in date.

Three test pits were excavated in an area of Roman surface finds at **Chalton Cross Farm**. Two of the pits found no features, the third cut the edge of a natural hollow, possibly a pond or marshy area. The material collected suggests rubbish dumping from the later second century onwards.

Fieldwalking

An area of c 3 km² was fieldwalked by the Society at **Kensworth** during the winter of 1994-5. A few Mesolithic blade fragments were found on the north easterly facing scarp slopes above the A5 (Watling Street). There was a generally low level of Neolithic-Bronze Age flints in each field within the survey area, with small scatters noted in fields TL034192, TL038194, TL038196 & TL029190. Only a few worked flints were found at Chute Farm and Kensworth Common suggesting a densely wooded and under exploited landscape in the prehistoric period. A large fire-fractured flint scatter was noted in field TL022182 near Whipsnade Heath (comparable to scatters seen at Harpenden and Sandridge (Hudspeth, 1995)) fire-fractured flints were also noted in fields TL034192, TL027187 & TL027201.

Late Iron Age & Romano-British sherds were found on the hillslope in field TL027187 (near Hollick's Lane) and on the Downs at TL010197 (near Robertson Corner). Possible Roman sherds were found with fired flints and Medieval sherds at TL034192. Quern stone fragments, possibly Romano-British in date, were found at TL 033198 (conglomerate quern stone) and TL036194 & TL027185 (lava quern stones). A corroded 4th Century Roman coin was found at TL034196.

Medieval sherds were found in field TL034192 (with scatters of peg-tile fragments) and field TL027201. Possible ploughed out lynchets were noted on the hillslopes above the A5 and near Hollick's Lane, hollow ways defining field boundaries are visible between Beech Road and the A5.

Local metal detectorists have reported recent finds of a

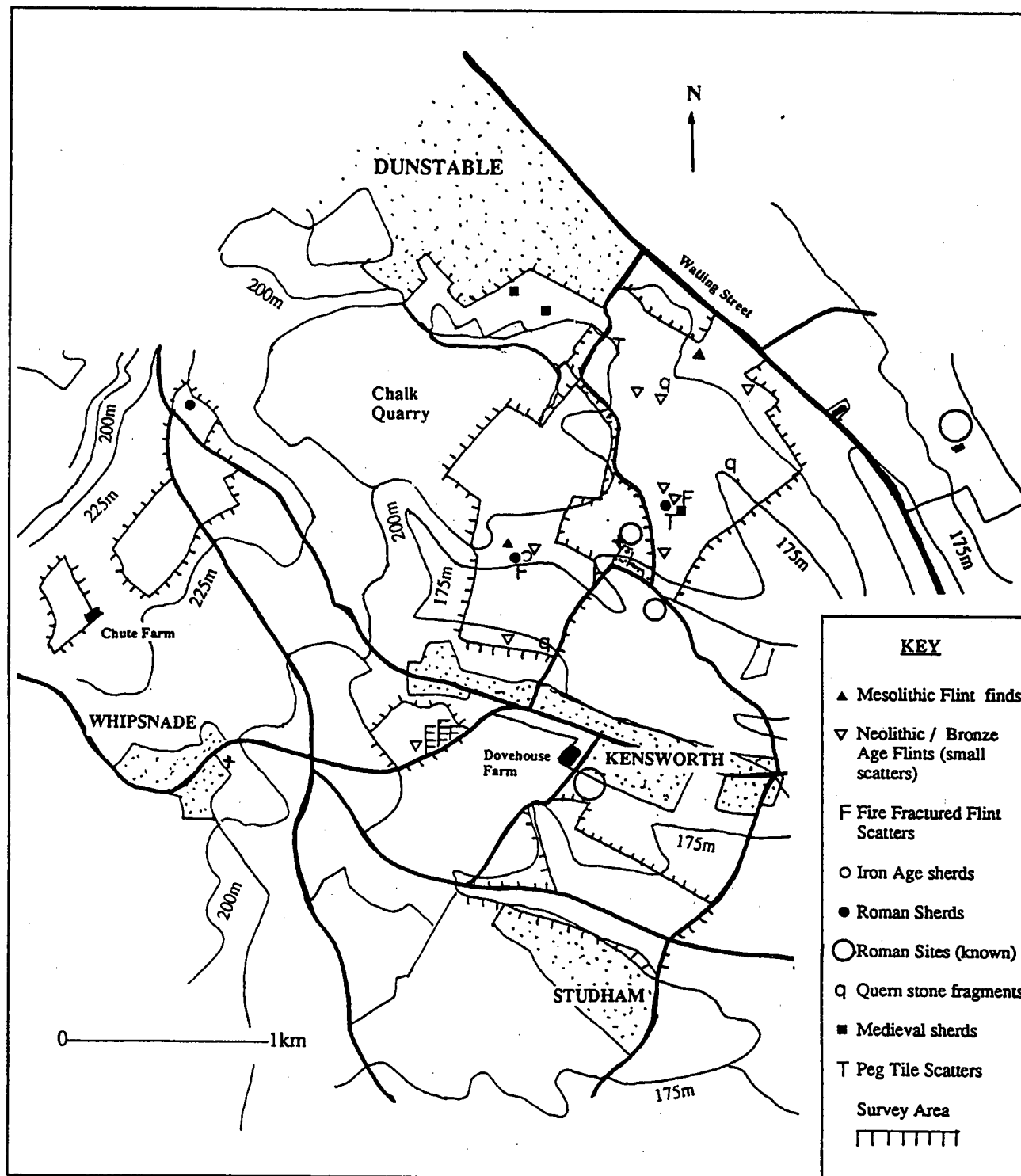


Fig 4. Kensworth and Whipsnade.

bronze palstave axehead and Roman coins from TL0318 and a Late Pre-Roman Iron Age coin from TL0418.

An area of $c 2 \text{ km}^2$ of arable land around **Wingfield** was walked during the autumn of 1995. Much of this clay covered ridge top area (between the Wingfield and Tebworth roads) had been pasture for many years. Since it has been returned to arable cultivation several hedgerows have been removed.

The second area of land, some 3 km^2 of clays, gravel and

chalk marl, around Trinity Hall Farm, to the west of Tebworth slopes down to the parish boundary along the A5 (Welling Street).

There was a low level of flint finds in the survey area; particularly around Trinity Hall Farm, between the A5 and Tebworth. No noticeable concentrations of worked flints were observed. A few of the flint finds were recognisably the remains of implements, a Mesolithic core and Neolithic ovate at SP992257 and axe fragments and a side scraper from TL001269.

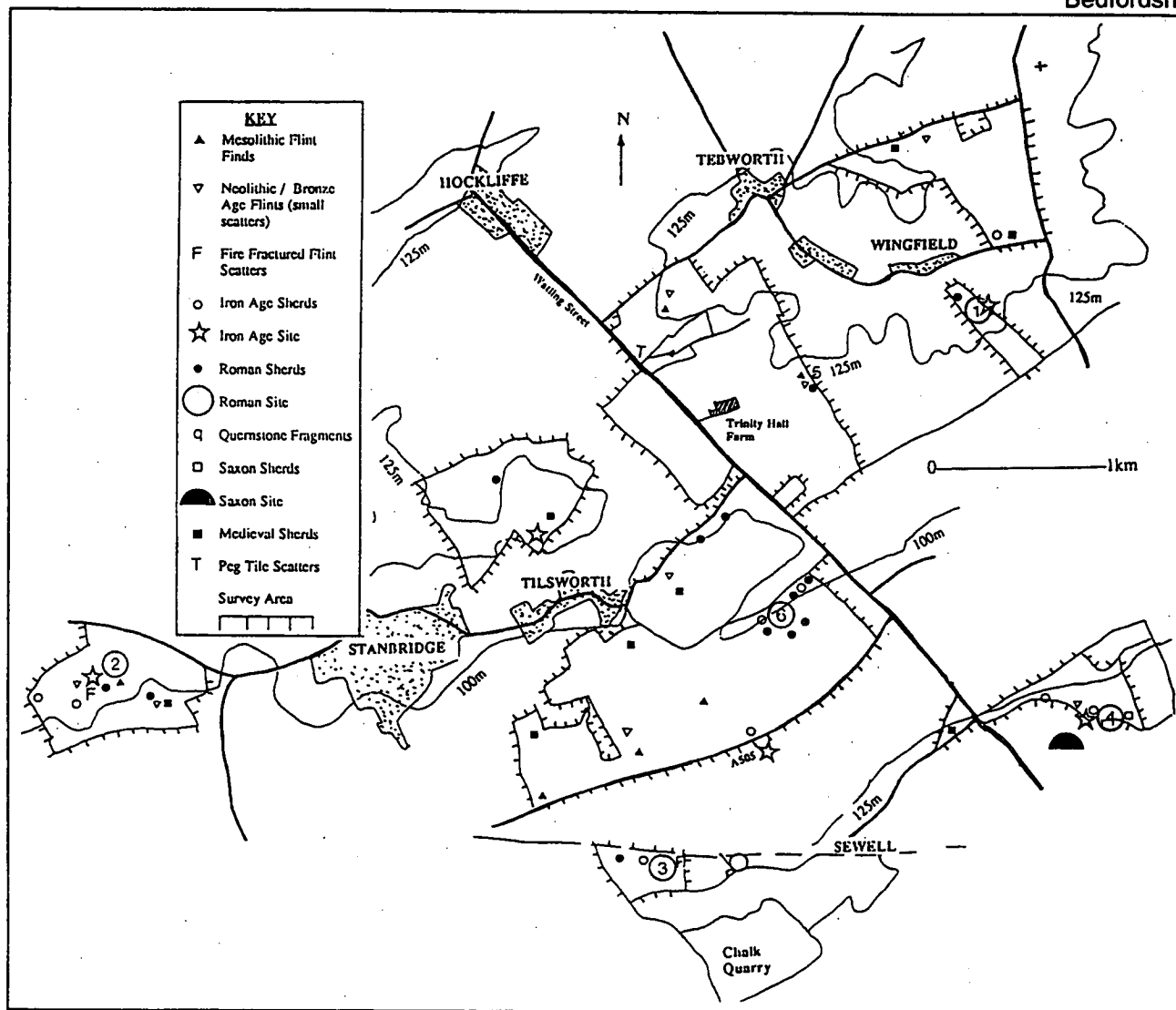


Fig 5. Map of Wingfield, Tebworth, Stanbridge and Tilsworth.

Early & Late Iron Age and Roman potsherds were found on the hillslope at the known site at Wingfield TL004259, Fig 5, No 1 (Hudspith 1991, 1992). A sherd of Late Iron Age pottery was found at TL006264 to the north of the Wingfield Road. A few fragments of possible Roman tile were found at TL003269. A localised scatter of Roman pottery was found at SP992257 (north-east of Trinity Hall Farm, Fig 5, No 5) possibly indicating the edge of a 'site' now under pasture (and ridge & furrow) significantly, perhaps, located near to the ancient trackway known as 'Theedway' as were the sites at Wingfield, Chalgrave Manor Farm, Chalton Manor Farm, Bidwell and Sundon Park (Hudspith 1992). The Roman sites at Tilsworth and Puddlehill (Fig 5 No 4 & 6) appear to have been deliberately sited close to the Roman Watling Street; but it should be noted that these sites (as with the others aforementioned) appear to have Iron Age origins and may represent later settlements within a land unit initially defined in the prehistoric period.

A few Medieval sherds were found in the survey area, probably indicating manuring scatters, a Late Medieval horseshoe was found at TL008268. Ridge and furrow is visible in the fields around Trinity Hall Farm.

At **Chalgrave** evidence of ploughed out metallurgy from an earlier road surface is evident alongside the hedgerow to the west of the present Dunstable Road (TL0026).

Ploughed out Post-Medieval/modern building remains can be seen close to the A5 (Watling Street) to the north west of Trinity Hall Farm (Former Old Farm/Bull Inn site).

A block of land to the west of **Stanbridge**, c 1 km² in area was walked by the Society during November 1995.

The survey area comprises a boulder clay covered ridge to the north sloping down to low lying gault clay land to the south. Several worked flints of possible Mesolithic date were recovered. A small quantity of Neolithic-Bronze age flints was found in each field in the survey area.

Scatters of Iron Age pottery (Early-Late) and Roman potsherds and tile fragments were found along the ridgetop as well as fire fractured flints and animal bone fragments Fig 5, No 2.

Medieval sherds were found on the hillslope and low lying fields. Ridge and furrow is clearly visible in adjacent fields

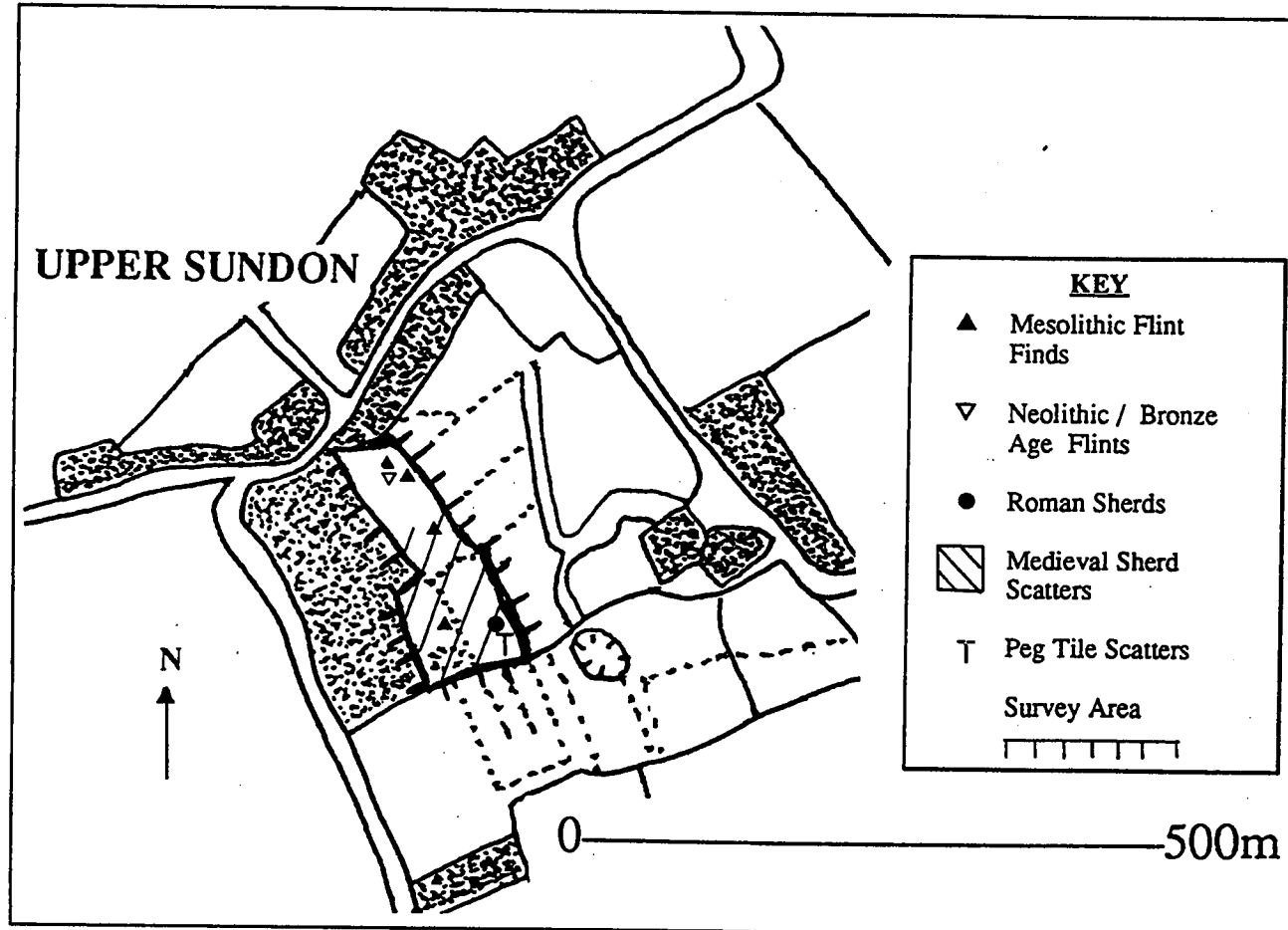


Fig 6. Map of Upper Sundon.

of pasture. A large (and recently, in part, re-landscaped) gault clay covered field to the east of Stanbridgeford was walked; finds there included: a few worked flints of possible Mesolithic-Neolithic/Bronze Age date, several fire-fractured flints and Medieval sherds around the area of Blackgrove wood. Slight evidence of ridge & furrow is still visible in the field. A possible Medieval enclosure can be seen on air photographs of the field (Manshead archive).

The field to the west of the A5 and Trinity Hall Farm, was walked (Tilsworth parish); finds included only a few worked flints and Post-Medieval material.

An area of $c 0.5 \text{ km}^2$ was surveyed to the north of **Totternhoe** quarry (SP9822). A few worked flints were identified, along with fire fractured flints, early Iron Age flint gritted sherds, late Iron Age, Medieval sherds and a previously unrecorded linear scatter of Romano-British material (Fig 5, No 3) tegula, imbrex (including shell gritted types) and potsherds (Fig 5). Roman finds have been recorded from Shirrell Spring (Simco, 1984) $c 500 \text{ m}$ to the east.

Flaked axe fragments and a leaf shaped arrowhead were found on uncultivated ground at the 'Arrow' (Avenue, TL001210) a previously identified Neolithic-Bronze Age site (Hudspith, 1993).

Neolithic-Bronze Age worked flints, Iron Age and

Romano-British potsherds, conglomerate quernstone fragments as well as possible Saxon and Medieval sherds were found on set-aside land at **Puddlehill** TL009238 (Figs 5, No 4).

Small scatters of Medieval sherds with possible Romano-British sherds were found in field TL001235, at **Sewell** (Fig 5).

A few Romano-British sherds were found at TL016245 (**Bidwell**).

An area of $c 1 \text{ ha}$ (TL046277) of open land in the central area of **Upper Sundon** (uncultivated since World War 2) was 100% surveyed following ploughing. The soil in this area is a mixture of clay, loam and gravel. Earthworks, including possible building platforms have been recorded from the area (Hall, 1991).

Evidence from the present survey included finds of Mesolithic flintwork, blades and cores, also a few Neolithic-Bronze Age worked flints. Suggested areas of modern tipping and possible late Medieval and Post-Medieval occupation and cultivation areas were indicated by numerous finds of potsherds and peg tile fragments. A corroded Roman coin and a few sherds of Romano-British and possible Saxon pottery were also found.

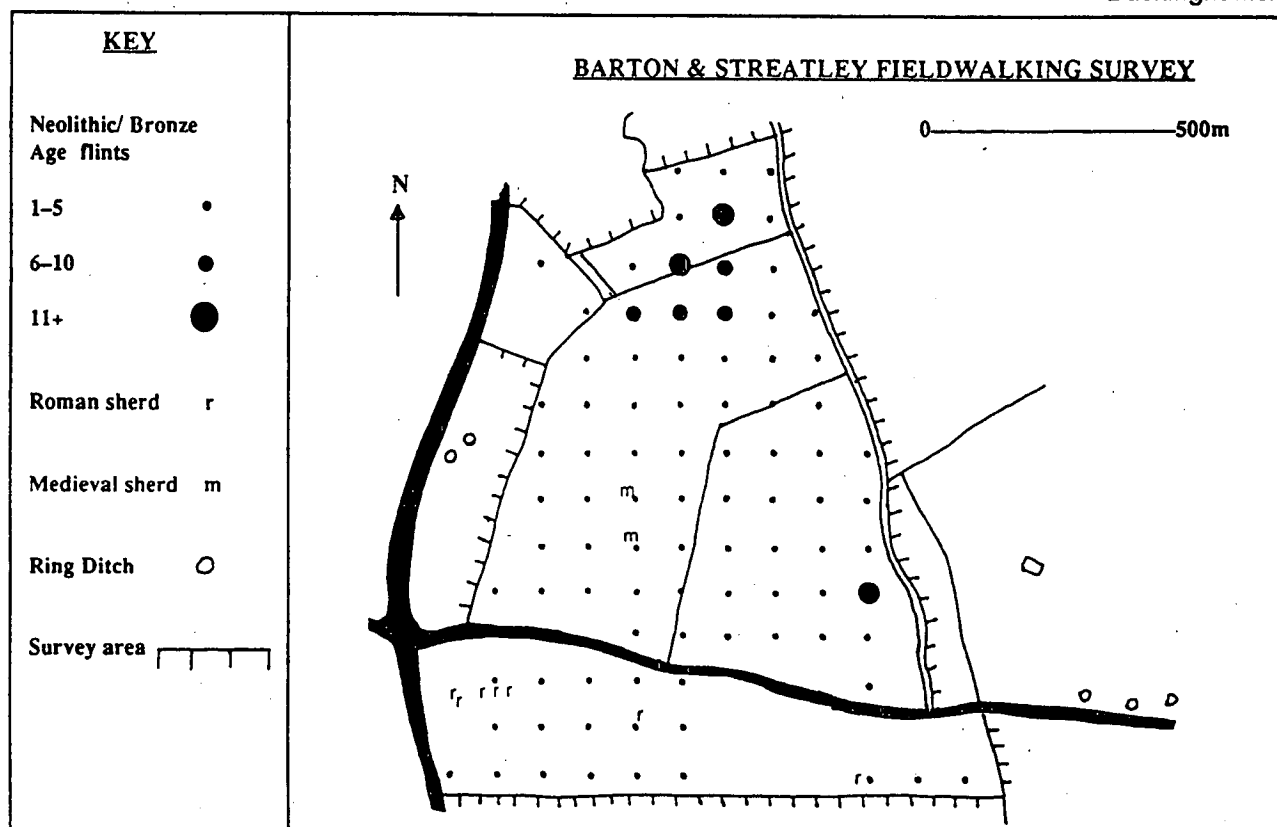


Fig 7. Barton and Streatley Survey.

An area of c 0.5 km² was walked at **Barton and Streatley** on chalky clay & loam covered fields alongside the Lilley Road (TL0829). Finds were predominantly of white Neolithic-Bronze Age worked flints, including several scrapers. Previous finds from the area have included flaked axe fragments (Hudspith, 1995).

The density of worked flint scatters may relate to settlement or activity sites (Holgate, 1995) situated within c 0.5-1 km of known barrows/ring ditches excavated at Barton (Clark, 1991) and Streatley (Dyer, 1962). A dispersed scatter of Roman sherds to the south of the Lilley Road suggests areas of Romano-British cultivation.

Acknowledgements

Permission to fieldwalk was kindly granted by: Mr D Buckingham of Griffin Farm, Mr P Maxey of Trinity Hall Farm, Mr P Sinfield of Dove House Farm, Mr B Wood, Mr S Chandler & Mr S Westrope.

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BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

COUNTY MUSEUM ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE

Fieldwork conducted during 1996

Compiled by Jonathan Parkhouse

Hambleden Villa. (SU 786 848)

A watching brief was undertaken for Thames Water as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent during replacement of a pipe which runs through the villa. The engineering proposals had been designed to minimise interference with archaeological deposits, and the works were accomplished entirely within the area of disturbance occasioned when the pipe was originally laid; no archaeological deposits or artefacts were observed.

Church Farm, Bierton (SP 835 153)

Trial trenching was undertaken for Banner Homes in advance of development in an area close to the site of

Buckinghamshire

excavations carried out in 1979 (Allen 1987) which had revealed a continuous sequence of occupation from the late Iron Age to early Saxon periods. There is also 19th century evidence from this area for burials, some of which may have been Saxon but including one middle Bronze Age urn burial.

The evaluation recovered evidence for Iron Age, Romano-British, Saxon and early Medieval activity. These discoveries led to an excavation, which was undertaken by Tempus Reparatum. (This organisation has now ceased to exist; the finds are at the County Museum. Ed)

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Allen D 1987 "Excavations at Berton 1979" *Records of Buckinghamshire* 28, 1-115

Burnham Cattle Pound (SU 955 839)

Small-scale excavation work was undertaken for the Corporation of London in advance of repairs to the eighteenth century cattle pound at East Burnham. This revealed a brick culvert, contemporary with the pound.

Boddington Bank (SP 882 079)

A survey of Boddington Bank Hillfort was completed. This work was undertaken on behalf of the County Planning and Transportation Department's Chilterns Project and Forest Enterprise for monument management purposes. Geophysical survey was commissioned from Alister Bartlett in order to confirm the nature of a short length of possible earthwork tentatively identified as a "missing" section of bank at the northern end of the hillfort. The results indicated that the bank was probably of relatively recent origin, perhaps associated with the demolition of Calloway Farm c1953. The survey, however, located a feature which is interpreted as the ditch around the hillfort.

Little Kimble Medieval earthworks (SP 827 063)

A survey of the Medieval earthworks was undertaken on behalf of the County Planning and Transportation Department's Chilterns Project for monument management purposes. None of the earthworks surveyed could be assigned to the considerable Romano-British Villa which is known to have stood on this site. The earthworks were interpreted as the remains of a motte with one definite bailey and a possible second. The motte was later superseded by a moated site. Extensive landscaping took place during the nineteenth century.

Reckitts Colour Site, Bletchley (SP 8840 2340)

Archaeological monitoring of an area of the former pigment works, immediately adjacent to Watling Street and close to Magiovinium, was undertaken for Golders Associates during a programme of ground decontamination prior to

redevelopment. No archaeological finds or features were observed.

Marlow, Whitbread Brewery (80-86 High Street) (SU 8499 8637)

Investigation of a small area of the frontage of the High Street was undertaken in advance of development for Turner Woolford Sharp (Chartered Architects) and Whitbread Development Ltd. The earliest features were pits of 11th/12th century date. A Medieval beam-slot and post-holes were also recorded, but it was difficult to determine whether these structural remains represented the front or the rear of a structure. If the features represented the front of a building, the line of the Medieval street frontage must have been set back some distance from the present edge of the High Street. It is interesting to note that in both the Medieval and post-Medieval periods there were notably fewer features in the area closest to the present street, which may indicate either that the road was originally wider than at present, or that the area was protected from intrusive features by the footprint of one or more buildings. There appears to have been something of a hiatus in occupation during the 15th and 16th centuries. Another structure was erected in the 17th or 18th century; only the cellar, lined with blocks of flint and chalk and with a tiled floor, had survived. The cellar was set back from the street frontage, but the ground floor frontage may have been situated on the present street frontage. There were a number of wells and pits contemporary with the cellared building and with Thomas Wethered's brewery, constructed in the late 18th century.

Hampden Road, Wendover (SP 8730 0796)

Staff were called in to assist the police when a householder in Hampden Road discovered, and partially excavated, skeletal remains whilst digging in his back garden. It was established that burial had taken place in antiquity. Sufficient of the skeleton remained in situ to be able to confirm that it was supine, extended, and orientated east-west within a shallow rectangular grave-pit cut into the chalk bedrock. The individual was in the order of 1.48 m (4'10") tall, suggesting that this is the burial of an adolescent; palaeopathological study may provide a firmer estimate of stature and age. There were, however, no finds to provide firm dating evidence, although it is unlikely to be later than the early Saxon period. The situation of the burial on a slight false horizon would not be inconsistent with a prehistoric or early Saxon date. The area investigated was too small to be able to determine whether the burial was isolated, or part of a cemetery.

Coldharbour Farm, Hartwell. (SP 806 136)

Investigation of an area of approximately 1.8 ha was undertaken in advance of a major development. This work

High Street

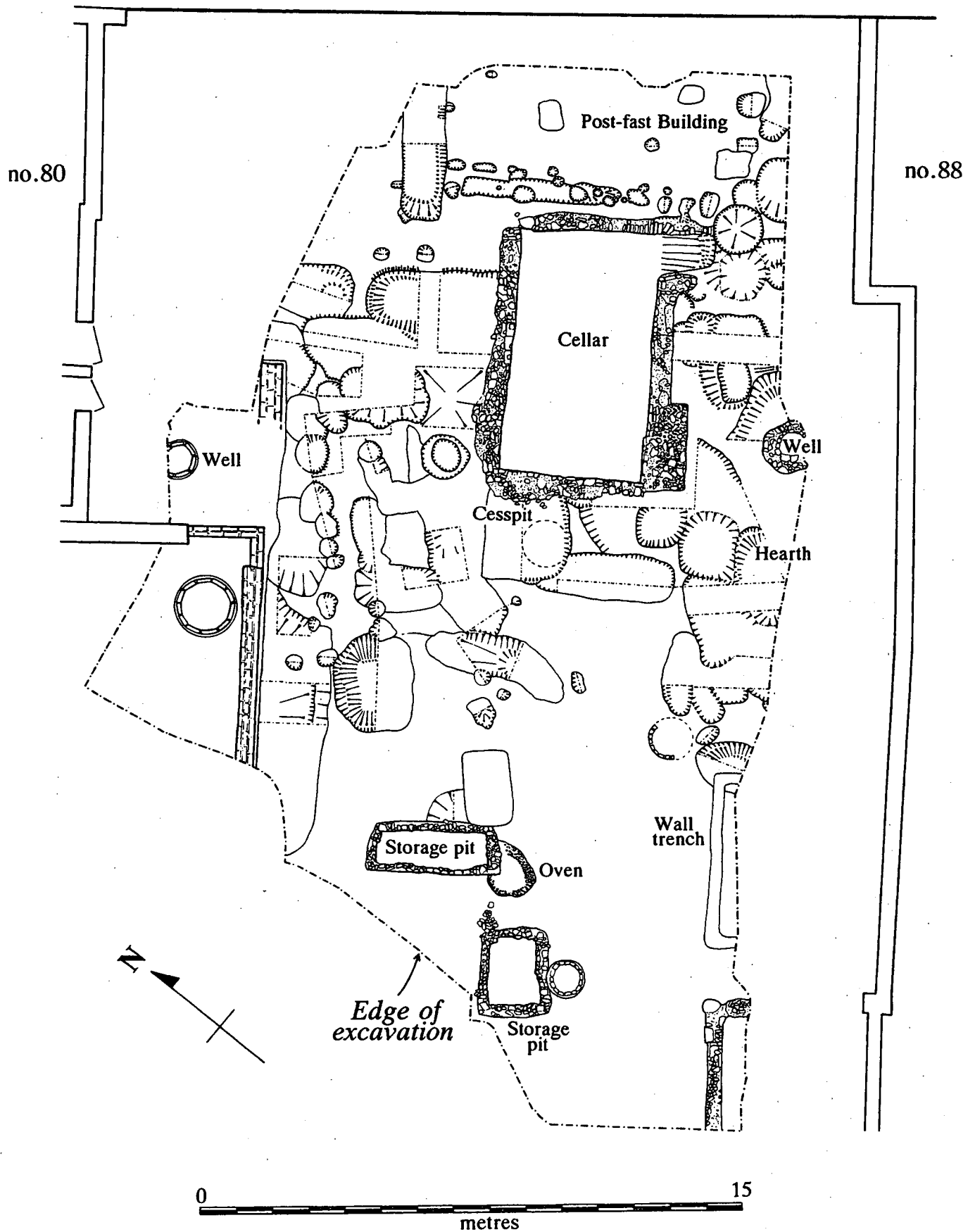


Fig 1. Marlow: Whitbread Brewery, 80 - 86 High Street. General plan.

Buckinghamshire

was made possible by the support of the developers (Fairford Leys Consortium), who provided earthmoving plant and site premises, and the Ernest Cook Trust. A small professional team was augmented by volunteers. Priority was given to stripping as large an area as possible with the plant available, planning all features and sampling as many as possible. Priority was given to boundary features, which intersected with sufficient frequency to provide a framework for identifying phases of activity, and structural features. Limited sampling of a small proportion of the many pits was also undertaken. It must be admitted that the constraints imposed by the very limited resources led to the recovery of a much smaller sample of data than is desirable for a site of this nature.

The site was first identified during the late 1980s, when Saxon material was recovered during fieldwalking. Evaluation by trial trenching over a relatively small area was undertaken in 1990; this revealed a number of features of early/mid Iron Age date (SMA 29, 1991, p39).

The most recent investigations revealed several hundred features. Most of these date to the early/middle Iron Age. Several phases, each probably of relatively short duration, were indicated by a sequence of boundary ditches defining a series of enclosures. Two complete annular ditches, probably the vestiges of circular structures, were recorded, together with parts of two others. At least five four-post structures were investigated.

In addition to the early/middle Iron Age features there was a small number of Neolithic and Belgic features. One ditch appears to have still been open during the Romano-British period.

The results of trial trenching suggest that the density of features falls off beyond the areas investigated, but the limits of the site were only defined on the eastern side, where the site is bounded by a tributary of the Bear Brook. Part of the site (c 0.4 ha) was not investigated as the area concerned is to be retained for recreational use with minimal archaeological disturbance.

Post-excavation analysis of the material recovered during the investigations is still in progress. The pottery assemblage and the palaeoenvironmental samples will, it is hoped, provide an opportunity to study a site of a period which until now has received little attention within the county.



Fig 2. Coldharbour Farm: General plan of prehistoric features (10 m grid superimposed)

Rislip Farm, Soulbury. (SP 888 276)

The remains of an inhumation cemetery were discovered in the course of a monitoring visit by the County Planning and Transportation Department during the summer of 1995, when inspection of the topsoil dumps from a sand quarry were found to contain human skeletal material together with Saxon artefacts (pot sherds, two knives and bone comb fragments). A small quantity of prehistoric ceramic and lithic material was also found; this was also unstratified. Inspection of the surface of the unquarried sand revealed the presence of a small number of cut features, some of which were evidently graves. The site is situated near the top of a ridge, a typical location for a prehistoric or early Saxon cemetery.

During the summer of 1996 the quarry operator agreed to fund the excavation of the skeletal material still in situ, together with archaeological monitoring of the stripping of topsoil from the adjacent area. As suspected, the remains had been considerably damaged by the quarrying operations. Parts of four extended inhumations were recovered. It is possible that further burials had been removed in their entirety, but it is thought unlikely that the cemetery had been extensive. The presence of the prehistoric material is of interest, and the possibility should not be discounted of an earlier episode of activity (such as a bronze age barrow on the crest of the ridge), evidence for which has subsequently been eroded, leaving only a scatter of "winnowed" artefacts.

Holywell Mead, Wycombe. (SU 8740 9240)

Monitoring of the refurbishment of the public swimming pool resulted in the identification of some of the robber trenches of the Rye Villa, excavated by Dr Brian Hartley in 1954. Plotting these features has helped in pin-pointing the precise position of the villa, which was not very clear from the published account (BR Hartley (1959) "A Romano-British Villa at High Wycombe" *Records of Buckinghamshire* 16, 227-257).

Stoke Hammond Bypass

Two sites were evaluated on the route of the Stoke Hammond Bypass, following earlier phases of assessment. Both sites were selected on the basis of the results of geophysical survey.

Site A, near the outskirts of Water Eaton, produced evidence of an enclosed Iron Age site, consisting of two possible roundhouses, ditches, gullies, pits, and an inhumation. The pottery suggested a relatively long period of occupation.

Site B, west of Chelmscote Manor Farm, was examined in order to investigate faint anomalies revealed by magnetometry. No archaeological deposits were found, and it was concluded that the geophysical anomalies were a result of variations in the underlying boulder clay.

Linlade Bypass

Three sites were evaluated, one in Buckinghamshire and two in Bedfordshire, for Buckinghamshire County Council Planning and Transportation Department.

Site A (SP 894 243) revealed evidence of a Late Iron Age/Romano-British rectangular enclosure and other ditches and possible pits.

Sites B and C are recorded in the Bedfordshire section

Aylesbury Northern Bypass

A desktop assessment of a possible road corridor was undertaken. Although the objective was primarily a synthesis of existing data, three new sites, all relating to the Second World war, were added to the SMR.

Grim's Ditch Study.

A study of Grim's Ditch was commissioned by the Planning and Transportation Department as part of the Chilterns Project. The study was intended to bring forward positive management proposals to minimise future damage and to inform the public of its significance. The project combined a desktop review and synthesis of existing data with a preliminary field reconnaissance. Some very recent damage was noted on one sector. It is envisaged that a future stage will involve detailed topographical and geophysical survey.

Uphoe Manor Farm. (SP 9231 5360).

Evaluation by means of two hand-dug trial trenches was undertaken for the owner as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent, in order to assess the archaeological implications of proposed underpinning of one of the buildings on this moated site.

The investigation produced evidence for an 18th century cobbled yard surface above the natural boulder clay substrate. Quantities of Romano-British pottery were discovered in the topsoil, but this material had almost certainly been imported to the site during rebuilding work some ten years previously.

A watching brief was undertaken during the subsequent underpinning, but no further archaeological deposits were exposed.

Quarrendon. (SP 801 159)

A watching brief was undertaken during the positioning of fencing and interpretation panels by the County Council as part of a scheme to make part of this important series of earthworks more accessible to the public.

Buckinghamshire

St John's Hospital Wycombe. (SU 8700 9283)

The insertion of new sign boards and lighting in the area in front of the old Grammar School and immediately adjacent to the surviving ruins of the Medieval hospital was monitored as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were observed.

Gayhurst (Mill Farm Quarry). (SP 855 447)

Visits were made to monitor topsoil stripping in advance of gravel extraction in an area adjacent to the River Ouse and close to an area containing a palimpsest of cropmark features including a number of ring-ditches. This is an ongoing watching-brief which has been carried out over the past few years. No new features were discovered during 1996.

Cuddington Church. (SP 737 112)

Drainage trenches within the churchyard were monitored; no archaeological deposits or artefacts were observed.

Little Marlow Church. (SU 874 877)

The initial stages of construction of a kitchen on the northwestern corner of the church were monitored; no archaeological deposits or artefacts were observed. The insertion of a doorway in the tower revealed the presence of a massive boulder of Denner Hill stone; such boulders have also been recorded at other Chilterns churches, including Chesham (A Morley Davies and AHJ Baines "A Preliminary Survey of the Sarsen and Puddingstone Blocks of the Chilterns" *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association* 64, 1-9).

Wycombe Museum. (SU 867 932)

A watching brief was undertaken during rebuilding of the stable block (bodger's hut), close to the base of the motte. No trace of a ditch around the motte was found.

22a Willen Road, Milton Keynes Village. (SP 8894 3911)

A watching brief was undertaken during the initial stages of construction of a house on a site close to 22 Willen Road, a hall-house of c AD 1300 which is the oldest domestic building in Milton Keynes, possibly built as the Manor House of the Cahaines family. The core of the village appears to have shifted westward to the site of the church and adjacent moated site during the later Medieval period. A late Saxon cemetery, investigated to the north of the Willen Road site in 1992, is thought to have been associated with a former church. No further archaeological data were discovered to amplify our understanding of the development of the village topography.

Priory Street, Newport Pagnell. (SP 883 440)

A watching brief was undertaken during the early stages of a small housing development adjacent to Tickford Priory. No archaeological features were observed.

Land adjacent to Drayton Parslow Parish Church. (SP 8373 2848)

A watching brief was undertaken during construction of a new house. No features of archaeological significance were recorded.

Iron Age Pottery Study.

Collation of a gazetteer of Iron Age pottery was undertaken as a part of an English Heritage national survey.

Publications

Items submitted to the editor of *Records of Buckinghamshire* include a report on the watching brief and excavations undertaken at Weston Underwood in 1994, an account of the discovery of a 14 th century effigy at Thornton Church, and a report on the excavations undertaken at Magiovinium in advance of construction of the Little Brickhill Bypass.

NATIONAL TRUST

Gary Marshall

Stowe Landscape Gardens, Bucks.

The National Trust have continued over the past twelve months with the major task of restoring the landscape gardens at Stowe, as far as possible back to the mature form which they had attained by the turn of the 19 th century. Archaeological recording and interpretation has played a significant part in this process and close collaboration between the garden staff and the Trust's archaeologist based at Stowe is essential to the accuracy of the restoration.

The restoration of the paths provides a good example of this collaboration. The gardens were served by a network of gravel paths, strategically positioned so that they led the visitor to a specific temple or statue group, yet at the same time provided distant views to other garden features on route. The alignment of these paths gradually changed throughout the 18 th century as buildings and statues were removed or relocated. The evidence - both the surviving physical evidence and the documentary evidence therefore needs to be untangled to ensure that the most appropriate path is recreated and this is where the archaeological investigation comes to the fore. The paths are most accurately depicted on a coloured estate plan of 1843

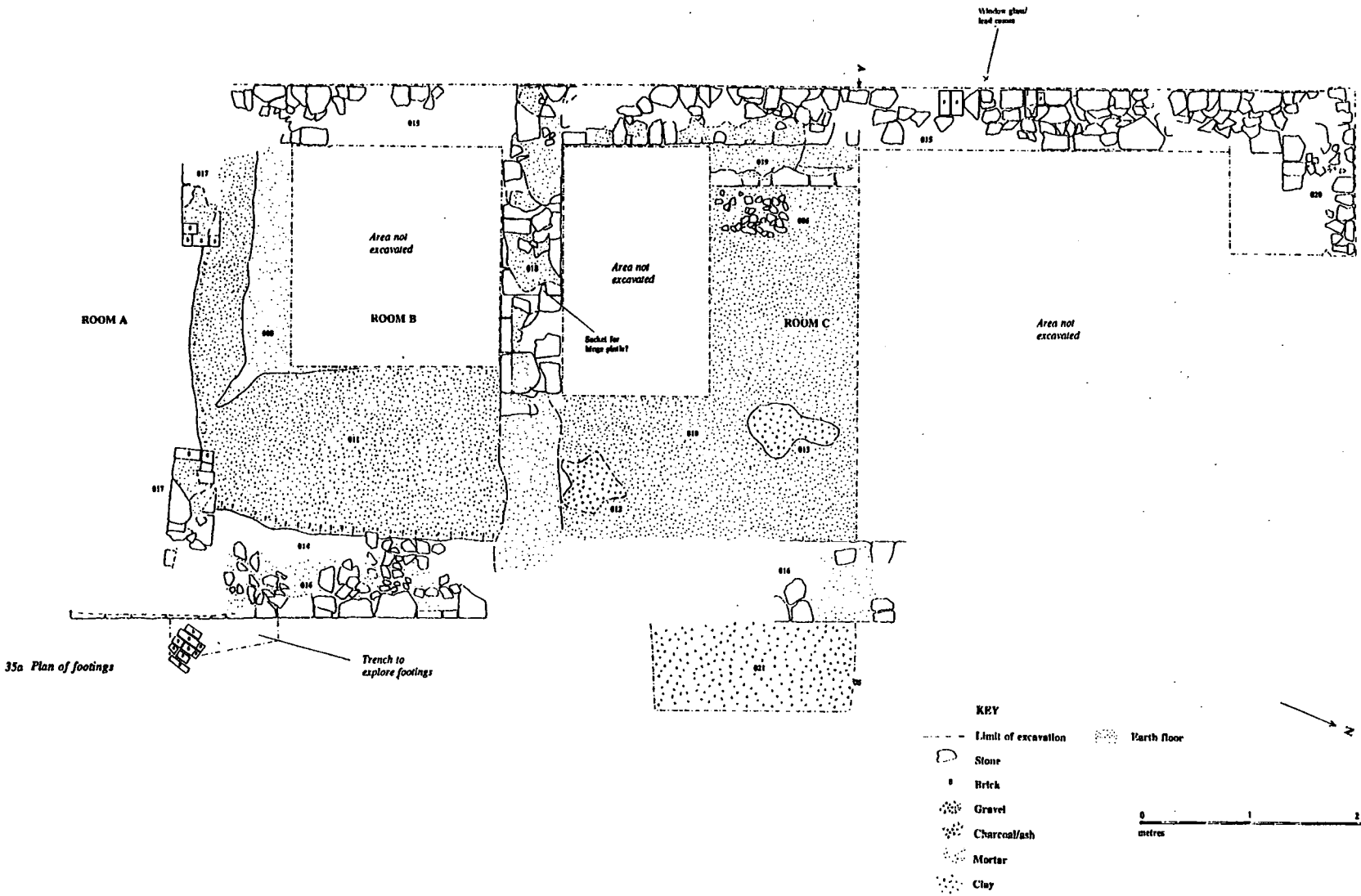
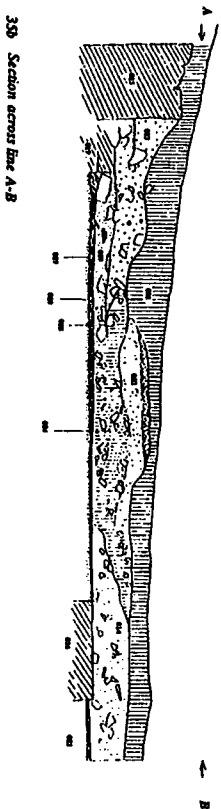


Fig. 3. Stow Landscape Gardens. Plan and section across the footings of the vicarage(?) on the west side of Elysian Fields.

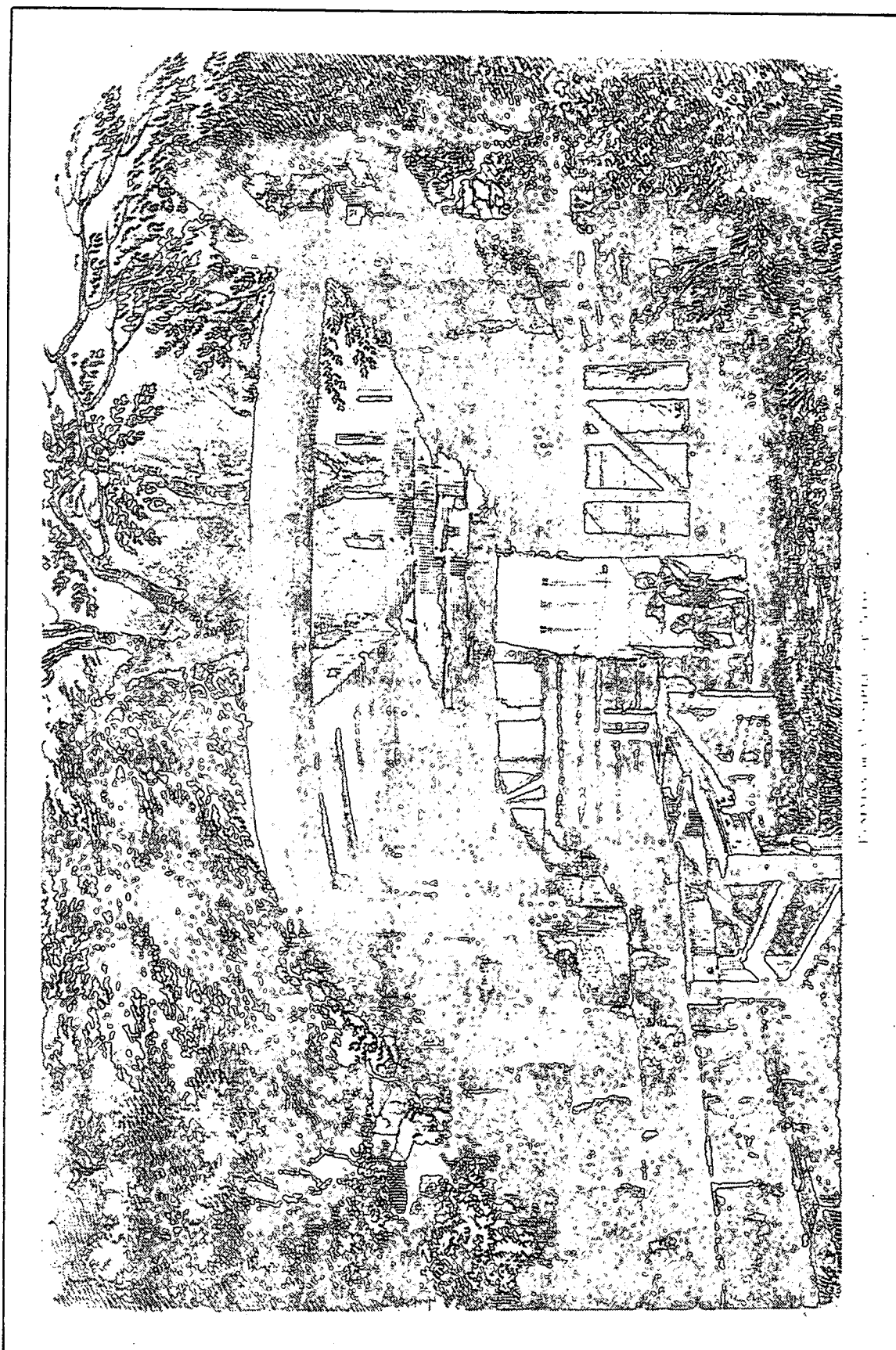


Fig 4. Stow Landscape Gardens. Watercolour by J C Nattes titled 'Remains of a Temple at Stowe' (1809). It almost certainly depicts the remains of the vicarage unearthed on the west side of the Elysian Fields.

(appropriately enough in yellow since the gravel has a distinct yellow colour) and their approximate position can therefore be staked out on the ground. Some of the paths can even be accurately traced as the cambered profile results in a very slightly rounded earthwork. Excavation then comes into play, except in this case it involves the use of a JCB in the hands of a highly competent driver who can tickle off the topsoil over a series of trial trenches to reveal the underlying gravel.

The quality of preservation of these paths is in most cases superb and with the position of the path revealed in a series of trial trenches it is then possible to turn the JCB at right angles and expose the full length of the path. The original paths average about 2 - 2.4 m (7-8 feet) in width and in section consist of an underlying base of sandy yellow gravel and a topcoat of graded limestone pea gravel. There are many payments recorded in the 18th century accounts for grading or sieving of gravel and for subsequent sweeping of the paths. The Trust has experienced some problems with using local gravel because it tends to give way under the weight of pram wheels and the wheels of batricars providing access for the disabled. However, our forebears at Stowe must have been faced with the same problem because the 18th century engravings portray several instances of bath chairs perambulating up and down the paths!

The focus of recent path restoration has been in the Elysian Fields which lie to the south of the House. Before the development of the gardens this was the site of Stowe village but now the only survival from the village is St Mary's Church. Perhaps inevitably footings were encountered in several of the path trenches. Substantial stone footings for a rectangular building 15 m in length and 5 m in width were uncovered 130 m south of the Church and documentary evidence (a terrier of 1700) suggests that this was the site of the Vicarage. A Diocesan licence was obtained for the removal of the Vicarage in 1732 yet it seems that this building remained as a garden folly throughout the 18th century since it appears on the sequence of maps accompanying the guidebooks of this period. An engraving of an unknown temple was produced by J C Nattes at the start of the 19th century and there are characteristics on this engraving which match the excavated evidence, notably the use of heavy stone coursing. The engraving therefore appears to confirm that the Vicarage did survive as a ruin throughout the 18th century.

Substantial stone footings 5 m in length were also found on the north edge of the Octagon Lake. The presence of a number of pieces of stone tile in the vicinity of these footings suggests an early building predating the development of the gardens. Certainly nothing appears in this location on any of the 18th century plans. Perhaps this is one of the village buildings or perhaps the mill which is known to have been in this area? Or perhaps this is the house of Thomas Stops which - according to the accounts - was pulled down in 1718. It would have intruded onto the east edge of a great avenue of trees planted on the south front of the house and with the

development in the early 1720s of the formal Octagon Lake as the terminus of this avenue Sir Richard Temple may have decided that it was time for Stop's house to go!

It is not only built evidence that turns up in these trenches. Artifacts are also occasionally recovered. In 1996 an iron spear head was recovered from the base of the topsoil in front of the Temple of Concord and Victory when the ground was being rotovated for reseeded. The spear head measures 36 cm in length and has slightly pronounced ribbing running down the centre of each face. It has a split socket for accommodating what is assumed to have been a wooden shaft. We are faced with a dilemma in identifying its age and provenance. Is this a genuine piece of antiquity, perhaps Roman or Anglo Saxon? Or was it brandished by one of the statues standing on the corner acroteria of the Temple? At the time of writing (February 1997) it has gone away for conservation treatment but perhaps this will reveal evidence to resolve the debate.

Claydon House, Bucks

Some interesting archaeological evidence came to light in 1996 when the Trust opened up a couple of deep trenches to examine and repair the brick culverts forming the sewer system on the north front of the House. The Trust actually owns only the 18th century west wing of the house. The remainder of the building, which incorporates some interesting 16th/17th century fabric brought to light as a consequence of an archaeological watching brief in 1994, is still occupied by the Verney family. Visitors to the Trust part of the building may not be immediately aware that this west wing was in fact part of a much larger west range built to replace an H-shaped Tudor or Jacobean building which stood on this site. When it was built in the 1760s and 1770s this west range incorporated a massive central Rotunda and a Ball Room which would have stood on the site of what is now the north front car park. According to contemporary accounts - mainly letters to Sir Edmund Verney from the architect Sir Thomas Robinson - the quality of the workmanship and the quality of the materials used were so bad that the range began to crack and subside as soon as the roof was added. The plaster decoration was still being added to the interior in the 1780s, yet within ten years the larger part of the range incorporating the Rotunda and Ball Room had been pulled down, leaving only the present portion of the west range to form the family apartments. It seems almost certain that no dancing ever took place in the Ball Room and the house has had to wait for the recent filming of 'Emma' for this to occur.

Contemporary plans of the demolished section of the north range do exist but nothing remains visible above the existing ground level and the Trust was therefore concerned to assess and record the archaeological potential when the two trenches were dug down to the culverts. Both trenches had to go down to a depth of about 2.5 m to reach the culverts and in both the ground composition was found to be entirely man-made with thick dumps of silty clay overlying layers

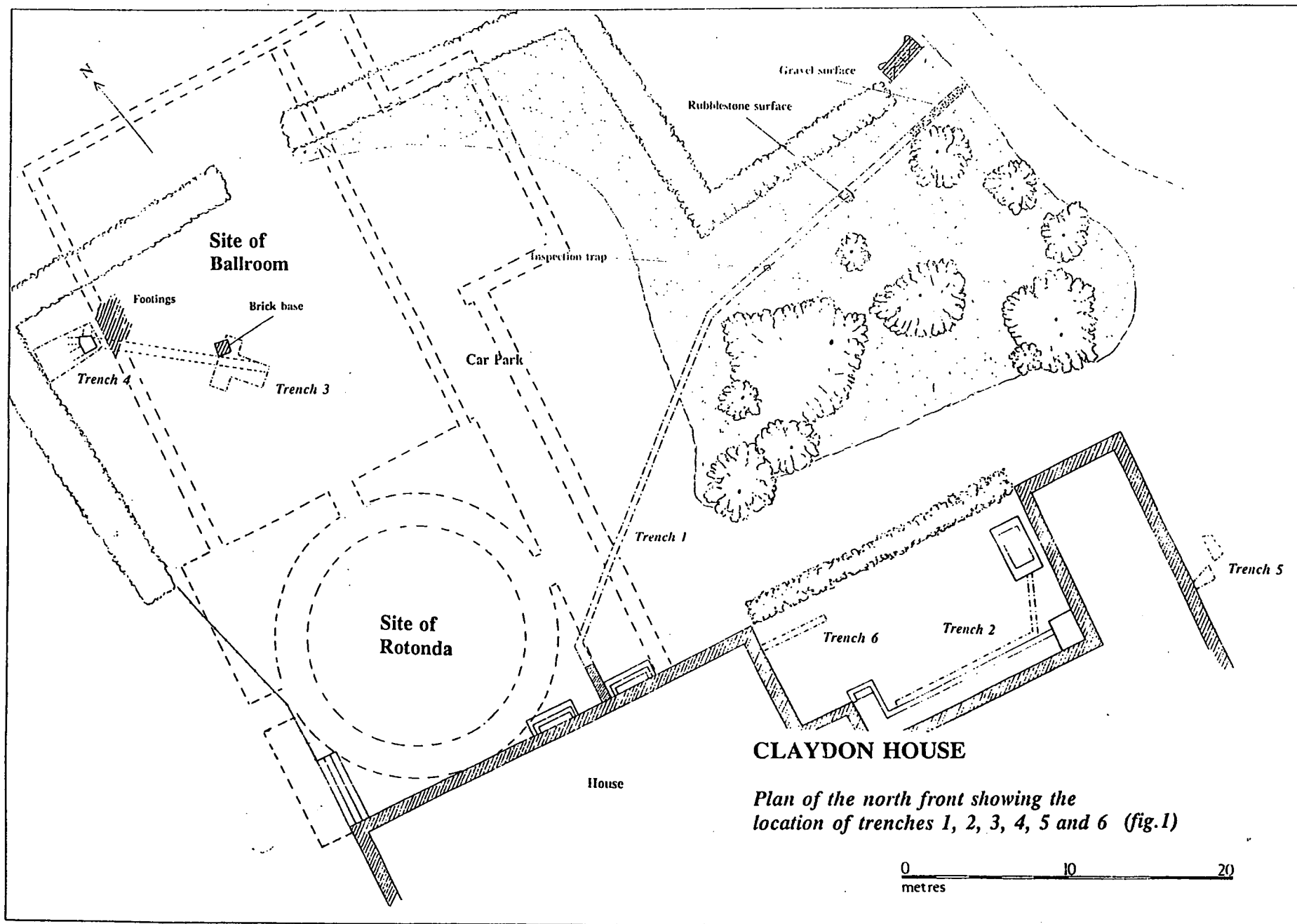


Fig 5. Claydon House.

of crushed brick and broken roof tile. Two distinct types of brick were identified. In the lowermost layer at the base of each trench these were 55 mm thick and clearly hand moulded. In the uppermost layer the bricks were 75 mm thick and also hand moulded. The conclusion drawn from this stratigraphy is that the lowest layer is probably a dump of 16th/17th century brick from the earliest Tudor House, and the thicker brick is derived from the destruction of the aforementioned Rotunda and Ball Room.

In one of the trenches a mortared brick base was encountered at the base of the trench, composed of the thicker brick and therefore almost certainly 18th century. The depth of this base would correspond roughly with the cellar floor of the surviving portion of the 18th century range and it might therefore have carried a column or pier for a vaulted undercroft below the Ball Room. In the second trench some very substantial brick footings were encountered, in fact so substantial that they extended beyond the margins of the trench i.e. in excess of 1.5 m. If the contemporary c 1770 plan is scaled up it is clear that these footings correspond precisely with the west wall of the Ball Room as it is shown on this plan.

It seems almost certain therefore that at least the footings for the Ball Room and Rotunda remain intact, preserved beneath at least 2 m depth of made up ground. This made up ground in turn seems to seal the destruction material from the Tudor building and the whole sequence suggests that the archaeological potential beneath the present car park surface remains well preserved.

It is also worth pointing out that when the system of culverts was reached these were found to lie directly below the brick footings of the Ball Room. Whether or not they are contemporary with the construction of the west range remains uncertain. It is just possible that the culvert system is a relict from the period of Tudor construction. The reason for making this suggestion is that the section of the culvert examined in the second trench was found to be made up of the narrow 55 mm bricks. Alternatively, it is possible that the bricks were recovered from the demolished Tudor building and re-used in an 18th century phase of construction immediately prior to the formation of the footings for the west range.

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Eton Rowing Lake, Dorney, Buckinghamshire. Second Interim Report (SU 919/787 to SU 937/774)
Tim Allen and Ken Welsh.

Introduction

The site, which lies on the north bank of the river Thames, covers approximately 150 ha, and consists of gravel terrace deposits crossed by former palaeo-channels incised in the Late Devensian, some of which remained active into the historic period. Last year we reported upon the first summer

season of excavation at the site (SMA 1996, 23-30), which dealt with Area EX1 and Area 3 (Fig 6). Area EX1, which ran from the gravel terrace across the alluvial floodplain to a former channel of the river Thames, contained Neolithic and Early Bronze Age in situ knapping scatters, including an Early Neolithic activity area where leaf-shaped arrowheads were manufactured. Area 3 also included floodplain knapping scatters, but the main discovery was a wooden 'bridge' within the former Thames channel, which was provisionally dated to the Middle Bronze Age. The former Thames channel appeared to have two main phases, phase 1 dating to the Neolithic and phase 2 to the Bronze Age, and the channel appeared to have largely silted up by the Roman period.

The Mitigation Strategy

In June 1996 a Mitigation Strategy for the archaeology of the site was agreed between Eton College and Buckinghamshire County Council (Fig 6). This allows for the detailed Area Excavation of selected areas totalling 10.5 ha, Planning and limited Salvage Excavation after machine stripping for another 2.8 ha, and a continuous Watching Brief upon the excavation of the former Thames channel in the middle part of the site, with provision for areas to be left for Contingency Excavation should major timber structures or other significant discoveries come to light within the channel.

The most important elements of the site were considered to be the survival of nearly 2 km of the prehistoric Thames and the successive occupation deposits preserved in situ on the alluvial floodplain. Adjacent excavation areas EX1, EX2 and EX3 were chosen to investigate a wide expanse of floodplain running from the dry gravel terrace to the river's edge, and a smaller expanse of floodplain was targetted by excavation in Areas 3 and 5. Excavation Areas 3, 5 and 1 were also aimed to investigate waterlogged timber structures found during evaluation within the former Thames channel, and were to be supplemented by the excavation of a further trench across the channel adjacent to the Roman enclosure in Area 16, and by the Watching Brief on 750 m of the channel in the middle part of the site.

Other excavation areas were focussed upon the cropmark barrow cemetery (Area 6), the Roman enclosure (Area 16) and the Bronze Age enclosure system at the north-west end of the site. In addition, three area excavations were located on the gravel island between the former Thames channel and the modern course of the river: Area 9/10 was designed to investigate Middle Bronze Age inhumations and settlement features plus a Neolithic finds scatter, Area 15 to investigate a possible Iron Age settlement alongside a defunct channel, and Area 4 to examine the relationship of this channel to the former Thames channel, and to look for Mesolithic occupation. Lastly, excavation in the south corner of Area 11 was designed to investigate the alluvial succession close to the modern Thames, where evidence of Mesolithic and Bronze Age occupation deposits have been revealed by evaluation.

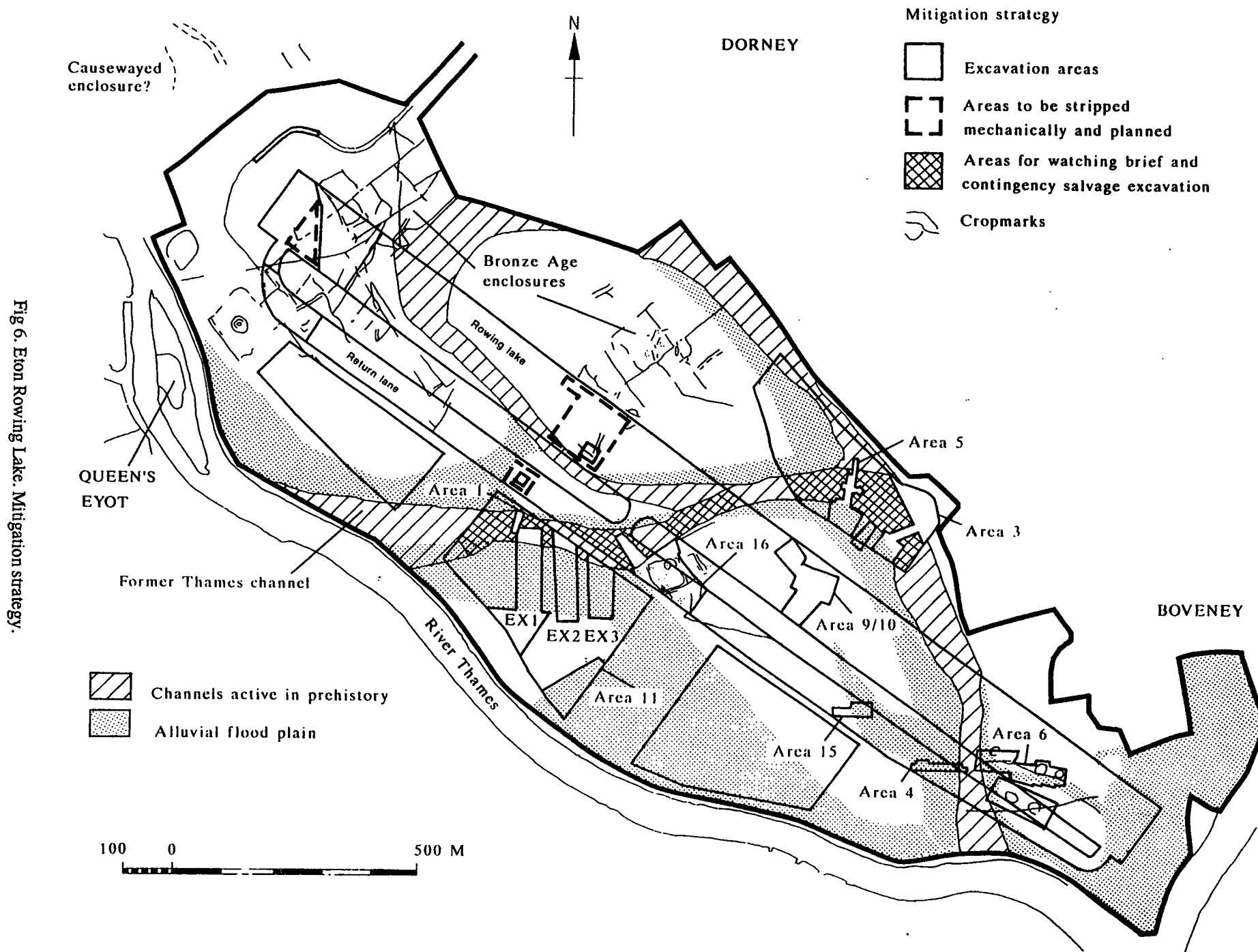


Fig 6. Eton Rowing Lake. Mitigation strategy.

The 1996 excavations

Seven area excavations totalling 3.4 hectares were carried out over a period of 9 weeks, with a further 2.5 weeks of Contingency excavation following Watching Brief in Area 3. These sites were: Area 1, EX2, Area 9/10, Area 15, Area 4, Area 6 and Area 5. Watching Brief was carried out in Areas 1a, 2a and 3 (Fig 7).

Area EX2

An area of 0.67 ha was stripped in the same manner as EX1, using bucket-width trenches up to 1.5 m deep running north-south along the west and east edges of the excavation as a control on the stratigraphy. An occupation horizon was identified within the alluvium c 0.5 m below ground, and the entire area was stripped to this level. Unlike EX1, however, hardly any flint clusters were found, though part of a Neolithic Peterborough Ware vessel and an Early Bronze Age urn were found at slightly different levels. Sample 2 m squares were dug by hand through the underlying deposit, but very little was found, so the central part of the site was machined down to look for further occupation horizons. None were found, and machining therefore continued into the underlying peat, which also proved to be sterile.

The adjacent fills of the former Thames channel were sterile, but two oak trees that had been growing on the river bank had been undermined by water erosion and had toppled into the river, where they were preserved just as they had fallen. These should provide good dates for this phase of the channel. In Area EX1 it had been unclear whether the former Thames channel had been active throughout the development of the Mesolithic reedswamp and floodplain, or had only come into existence during the Neolithic, reactivating a much earlier glacial channel. A section cut through the bank or levee in Area EX2 showed that the accumulation of levee material began sometime during the Mesolithic.

Area 9/10

On the gravel terrace south of the former Thames channel 0.82 ha was stripped of ploughsoils by machine. The subsoil was solid gravel on the north and mixed silt, sand and gravel deposits further south, with a linear hollow marking the course of a former glacial channel running north-west to south-east between them. The majority of this channel was filled with late Pleistocene fine chalky silt and sand, which was sterile, but the top fill was a clayey silt, only 2-3 m wide on the west, but broadening to over 20 m wide at the east edge of the excavation.

At the south end of the site, where a scatter of Neolithic material had been found in the evaluation, one small pit, possibly Neolithic, was cut into a large area of silt. This silt was divided into 2 m wide strips, and alternate strips were excavated by machine and sorted to see if any artefacts were present, but nothing was found.

In the top of the linear hollow in contrast struck flints and pottery of Neolithic character were visible throughout, but were concentrated towards the south-east. Three areas at the

west, centre and east were selected for excavation; these were gridded in 2 m squares and every alternate square was excavated. The clayey silt deposit was generally very shallow, with a maximum depth of 0.2 m. Some darker soil patches were noted towards the bottom of the deposit, and where necessary additional squares were excavated to reveal their full extent. These patches were partly excavated, and were found also to contain struck flint and other Neolithic finds, but their irregular shape and profile suggested that most of these were treeholes rather than man-made features.

All finds were numbered individually and were plotted three-dimensionally using a total station. From the 375² m of deposit excavated a total of 2260 struck flints, 2000 sherds of Neolithic pottery and 320 fragments of animal bone was recovered. The struck flint includes polished axe fragments, leaf-shaped arrowheads and a single chisel arrowhead, and there are several concentrations of cores and flakes that may refit. Quern fragments are also present. The pottery is mainly round-bottomed Plain Bowl, but includes a small proportion of early Ebbsfleet ware, suggesting a Middle Neolithic date. Animal bone was poorly preserved, and flotation for charred plant remains has not produced any seeds. To the south-east the hollow continues and deepens towards Area 15, where however only a thin scatter of struck flint was found (see below).

While no structures or hearths were found, the presence of refitting scatters and the very fresh character of the material suggests that it was either in situ or deliberately dumped. Oddly, no clearly Neolithic features were found in the surrounding gravel.

The excavation of this area had been undertaken in the expectation of further Middle Bronze Age human burials, but none were found. However, 5 animal burials of similar date were found, one of these being of a mare and neo-natal foal. There was a distinct concentration of activity on the east edge of the area, marked by a concentration of burnt flint. Middle and Late Bronze Age pits were clustered here, though there was a second group at the west edge of the site, and a scatter across the rest of the area. A large 'working hollow', part of which was excavated, lay on the east, and north of this palisade slots were found at right angles to a boundary ditch or fence slot continuing south-east beyond the limits of the excavation.

Three large waterholes were found, all containing waterlogged organic deposits, and all partly lined with wood. One contained much Middle Bronze Age debris, one was undated, and the third, which had a vertical plank lining similar to a barrel, contained abraded Roman pottery in its upper fills, and was probably Saxon. Similar Saxon wells have recently been published from other Middle Thames gravel sites, for instance Wickhams Field near Reading (Andrews and Crockett 1996, 132-5). Roman pottery was recovered from a few of the pits and postholes, presumably associated with the farmstead to the south-west.

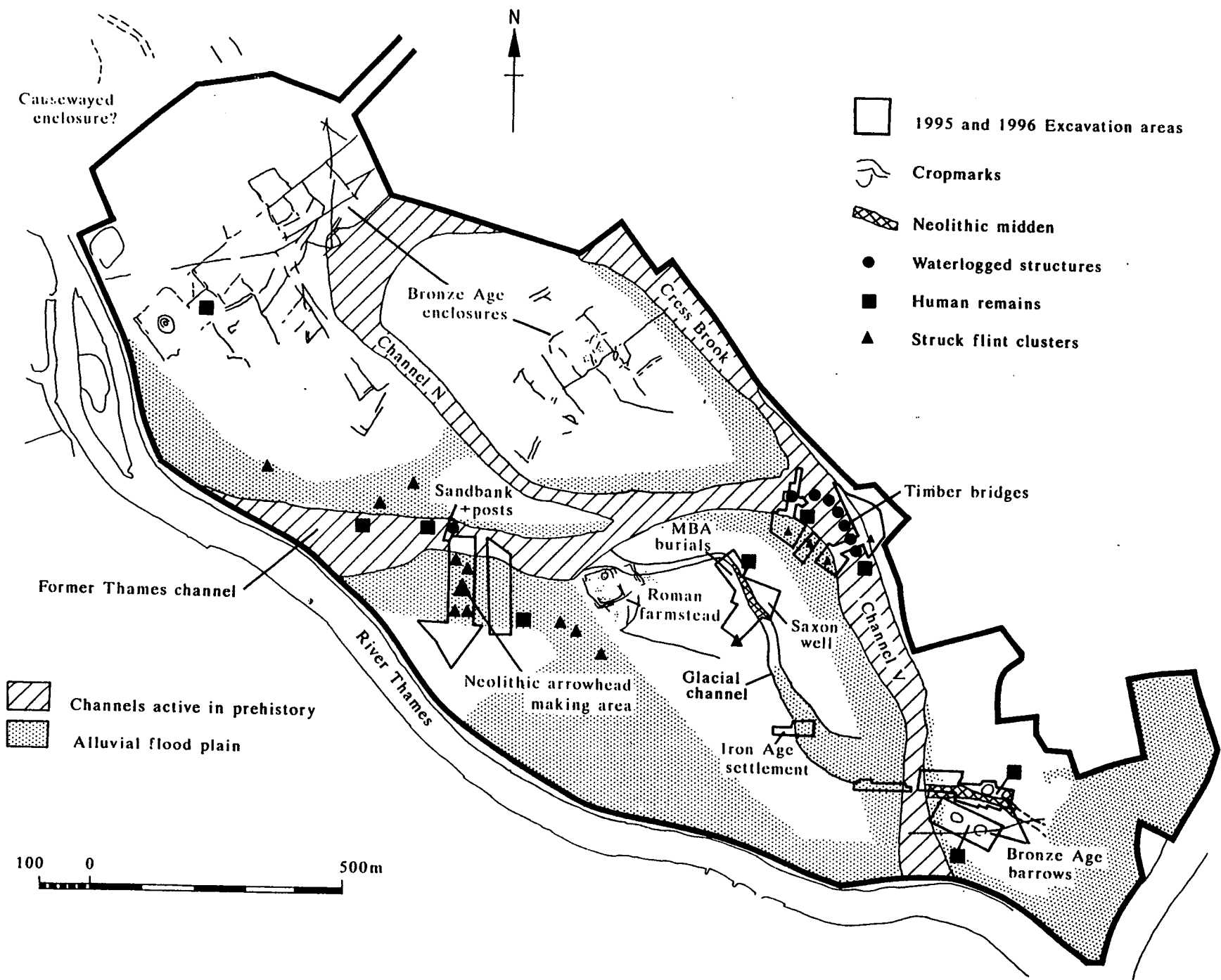


Fig 7. Eton Rowing Lake. Plan showing 1995 and 1996 excavation areas.

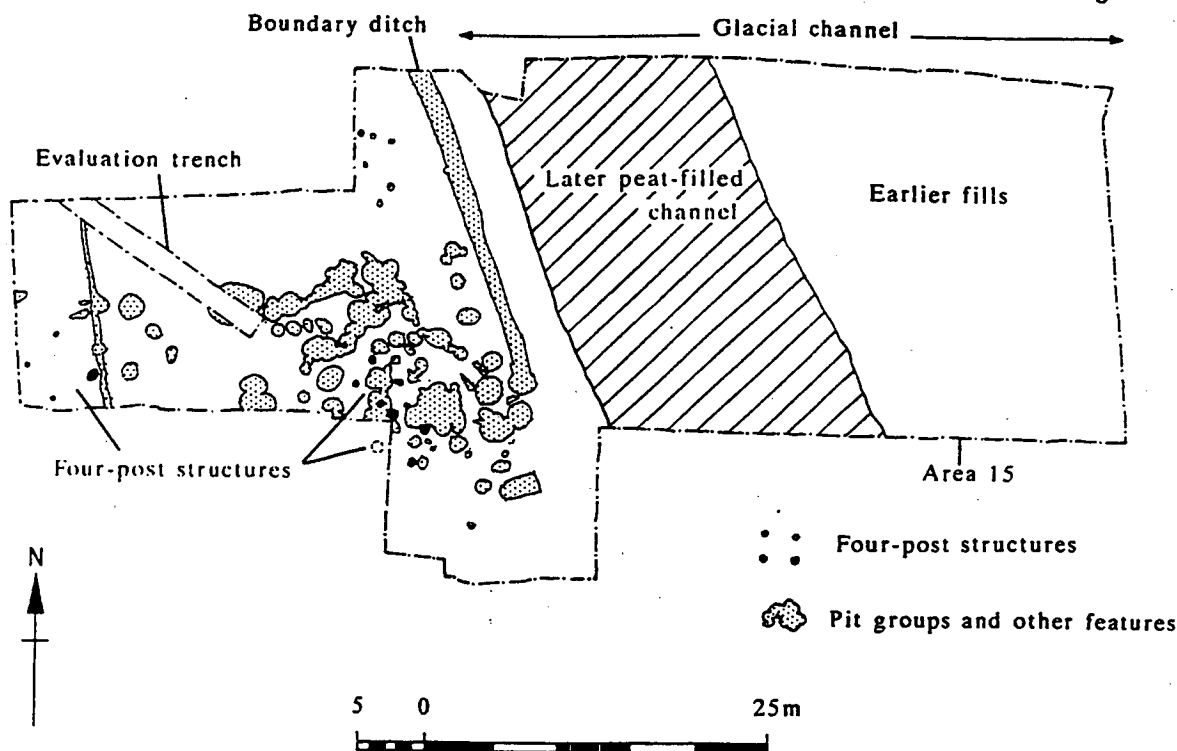


Fig 8. Eton Rowing Lake. Area 15.

Area 15 (Fig 8)

Some 250 m further south-east an area of 0.15 ha was stripped of topsoil and underlying ploughsoil on the western edge of the glacial channel. This area was chosen because evaluation had revealed occupation including ditches within the upper fills of the glacial channel, and on the gravel terrace to the west was a possible posthole containing Iron Age pottery.

The edge of the channel was marked by a parallel boundary ditch, west of which a series of intercutting pit groups and 2 four-post structures were found. A sample of 50% of the features was dug, providing pottery, animal bones and charred plant remains. The occupation appears to be of two phases, the earlier being Late Bronze Age as on the south-east edge of Area 9/10, the later Middle Iron Age. Most of the features date to the Middle Iron Age.

This stretch of the glacial channel lay downstream of the blocking evident in Area 9/10, and had filled more gradually, resulting in a sequence of waterlogged peat and clay deposits of Post-Glacial date. The full width of the former glacial channel was not recovered within the trench, nor, due to the high water table and the very unstable nature of the lower fills, was the depth, but a sediment column nearly 1.8 m deep was recovered for pollen analysis. On the east side the fills were sterile and of very early date, but along the western side a shallow and narrower peat-filled channel existed, which represents the latest active phase of the channel, presumably draining from the higher gravel terrace to the north-west. The peat contained hazel nuts, possibly indicating a Neolithic date. Alluvial clays sealed the peat within the channel, and from the surface of these came a scatter of animal bones and a 1st century trumpet

brooch. The ditches observed during evaluation lay just south of the excavation within these alluvial deposits.

The densest area of Iron Age occupation was extended by machine 10-15 m to the south, revealing more Iron Age pits and another four-post structure. A similar extension was dug on the north, showing that the Iron Age boundary ditch continued along the edge of the channel, which was curving north-westwards.

Geophysical survey was carried out between Area 15 and Area 9/10 to examine the density of activity between them, but the response was poor and failed to show any concentrations.

Area 4

An area of 0.1 ha was stripped across the junction of the glacial channel with the former Thames channel. This excavation was positioned both to investigate the channel sequence and to look for Mesolithic and later activity on the floodplain created as the former Thames channel migrated eastwards.

The trench was machined to the first archaeological horizon (c 0.4 m down), and a guide trench was dug to a depth of 1.2 m along the south edge to inspect the stratigraphic sequence. The trench proved to lie upon five or six phases of infilled channel moving successively from west to east.

At the stripped level patches of charcoal and scatters of animal bone and of flint (including a barbed-and-tanged arrowhead) were found on the surface of the infilled second phase channel. There were no concentrations of material. At the very east end of the trench, overlying the latest observed

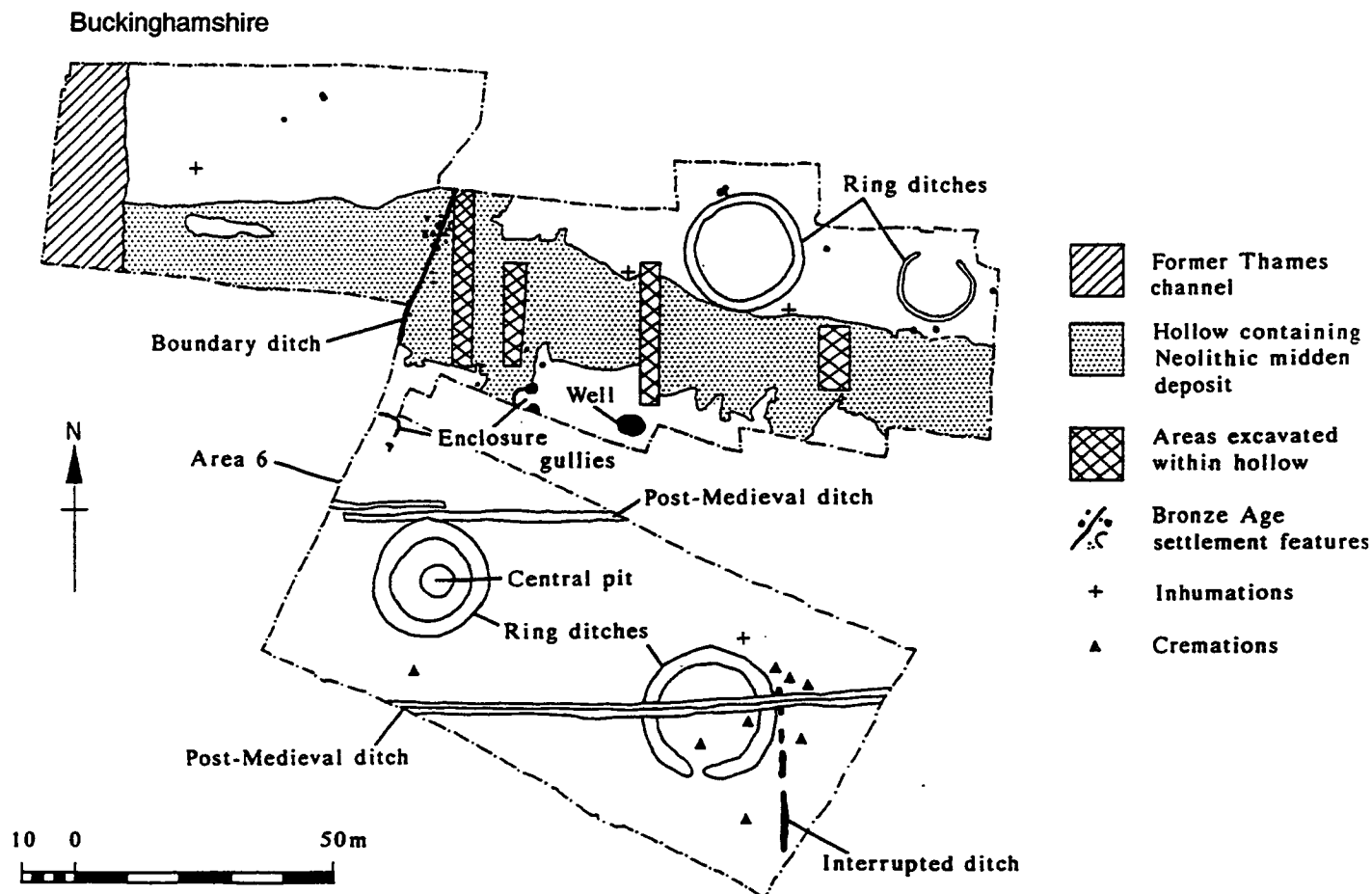


Fig 9. Eton Rowing Lake. Area 6.

phase of channel, a few sherds of Roman pottery were recovered.

Sample 2 m square boxes were dug through the upper deposits all along the trench, mostly proving sterile. Following this the trench was excavated to greater depth by machine in order to look for further occupation horizons, but none was found. Despite pumping it proved impossible to excavate and record below 1.5 m, since water percolated through the gravel bottom from the Thames nearby. An amber bead of probable Bronze Age type was recovered from the machine excavation.

Area 6 (Fig 9)

A total of 1.35 hectares was stripped covering the area of 5 suspected ring-ditches, and incorporating a continuation of the glacial channel crossing Areas 9/10, 15 and 4, within which struck flints and a little pottery had been found. Fieldwalking in 1985 and subsequent evaluation trenching had identified Mesolithic flintwork apparently covering a large area of the gravel terrace.

In March 1995 this area was ploughed in order that students from Reading University could fieldwalk the area surrounding the barrows, and in May-June 1995 fieldwalking took place over an area of 1.26 ha, though lack of rain meant that the ploughed area had not weathered well. A report upon the struck flint showed a concentration north of the glacial hollow, and before topsoil was stripped from the excavation in 1996 a total of 160 test-pits each 1 m

square were dug by hand through the topsoil and earlier ploughsoil and were sieved through 10 mm and 4 mm sieves for finds. Recovery of struck flints was low, and there were no concentrations of Mesolithic activity.

Areas were then stripped around the cropmark ring-ditches. The southern barrows, both of which were dug into gravel, had ditches between 1.2 m and 1.5 m deep which contained few finds. The western barrow ditch surrounded a central pit nearly 5 m wide and 1.4 m deep, which contained only scraps of Beaker pottery, and may have been robbed. Other internal soilmarks proved to be treeholes. There was one unaccompanied cremation outside the barrow ditch on the south.

The centre of the eastern barrow was cut through by a post-Medieval ditch, and no trace of a central burial was found, but there were three cremations just inside the inner lip of the ditch, one of which was accompanied by a Middle Bronze Age decorated globular vessel. Other internal soilmarks proved to be treeholes. The ditch had a narrow gap on the south side. Outside the ditch on the north was a crouched inhumation burial and three cremation pits in a line, and there were two other satellite cremations, one on the east and one on the south-west. On the east side of the barrow was an interrupted ditch containing freshly struck flint flakes and cores, which stopped just short of the line of cremations, and may have been associated.

The aerial photographs suggested three circular cropmarks in an east-west line further north, but only the eastern two

proved to exist. These, which were dug into silt covering gravel, were both shallower than those on the south. The easternmost was defined by a narrow gully only 0.3 m deep, and had a very wide gap on the north side. There were no accompanying burials, and few finds from the ditch. The more westerly barrow was the largest of the group, but its ditch was only 0.5 m deep. There were no internal burials, but a crouched inhumation was found on the south-east side and another on the west. Neither burial had any associated finds.

Where the fifth barrow was supposed to be no ditches were found, but within this area was an isolated extended Roman inhumation. This lay with the head to the south and had a silver ring at the neck and an amethyst pendant and copper ring below the pelvis.

The hollow running west-east between the barrow groups was stripped over a length of 170 m. The clayey silt in its top was between 15 m and 25 m wide, and struck flint and Early Neolithic pottery was visible throughout the deposit, but was concentrated towards the east end of the trench. More than 6000 finds were retrieved from the whole exposed surface of the deposit.

A section 2 m wide was machined across the hollow towards the west end, establishing that there were two artefact-bearing layers, which had a combined depth of 0.2 m. Three trenches at the west, centre and east were then excavated across the hollow by hand. The west and central trenches were completely excavated, the eastern trench was gridded in 2 m squares and every alternate square was excavated. Very little was found in the western trench, more in the central one, and yet more in the eastern trench. As in Area 10 almost all finds were recorded and plotted individually.

From the surface and from the 210 sq m of deposit excavated a total of 9000 struck flints, 4000 sherds of Neolithic pottery and 2600 fragments of animal bone was recovered. The struck flint has not been catalogued, but includes polished axe fragments, flaked axes and leaf-shaped arrowheads. Quern fragments are also present. The pottery represents at least 100 Early Neolithic Plain Bowl vessels including a number of carinated examples. Some vessels had clearly been deposited more than half complete and were broken in situ, and the preservation of the pottery in general is very good. The bone is fragile but a significant proportion is still identifiable. Flotation of two samples for charred plant remains has only produced a small number of seeds, though identifiable charcoal is abundant.

While no hearths or structures have yet been found, the broken vessels and the quantity of fresh struck flint indicate that the deposit is either in situ or is deliberately dumped from very close by. Only 7% of the exposed deposit has so far been excavated, and this appears to be a midden deposit of very considerable proportions.

The western limit of the deposit is marked by the course of

the former Thames channel. Along the channel edge north of the hollow were patches of burning and spreads of pottery and struck flint. There were few diagnostic sherds, but the fabrics were consistent with the Early Neolithic material from the hollow, and appear to indicate bankside occupation of the same date.

As in Area 9/10, no clearly Neolithic features have been identified in the gravel either side of the hollow. Visible in the surface of the hollow and in the gravel adjacent on the south a small settlement of probable Bronze Age date was found, consisting of a scatter of pits, a well, a boundary ditch and arcs of enclosure gully.

Area 5

An area of 0.2 ha was stripped into floodplain deposits within channel V along the southern bank of the former Thames channel. As in areas EX1, EX2 and Area 3, control trenches were dug along the west and east edges of the area to a depth of 1.5 m. An archaeological horizon consisting of features containing burnt flint and small areas of flint-knapping debris was found close to the edge of the channel (Fig 6). The level of activity was similar to that found in Area 3 in 1995. In one place burnt flint and dark soil extended down the bank, suggesting activity contemporary with the adjacent channel. One third of the bankside was then machined down to look for lower occupation horizons within the alluvium and to monitor the underlying organic deposits for artefacts, but these were sterile.

A trench 100 m long was excavated south-north across the former Thames channel, and an area was opened up around evaluation trench 129, in which vertical timbers were found in 1994 (SMA 25, 30-31). A sequence of seven successive phases of the Thames channel was recorded, the river migrating north over time. A human skull and pottery of probable Early Neolithic date was found in the first phase channel, a series of beaver-gnawed stakes in the third phase, and Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery, human bones and wooden structures in the fifth phase (the phase identified by evaluation in 1994).

The wooden structure was possibly a footbridge or jetty. It consisted of two parallel lines of stakes only 1 m apart, set at intervals of up to 2 m and running for 10-15 m out into the phase 5 channel. This structure was later replaced, the replacement being driven in from higher up (Fig 10). The original structure was associated with another line of uprights, around which horizontal withies had been woven. At a later date a wattle panel, of which only the very bottom survived, had been set upright into the channel close by. This collection of structures may be connected to a line of stakes found in the watching brief 20 m to the east (see below). Just a few metres downstream the head and part of the stilt of a wooden plough was found. This object is very similar to examples from Donnerupland, Denmark and from Milton Loch crannog, Kirkcudbright, dated respectively to 700 BC and to the 5th century BC (Jensen 1982, 224-5; Cunliffe 1991, 291).

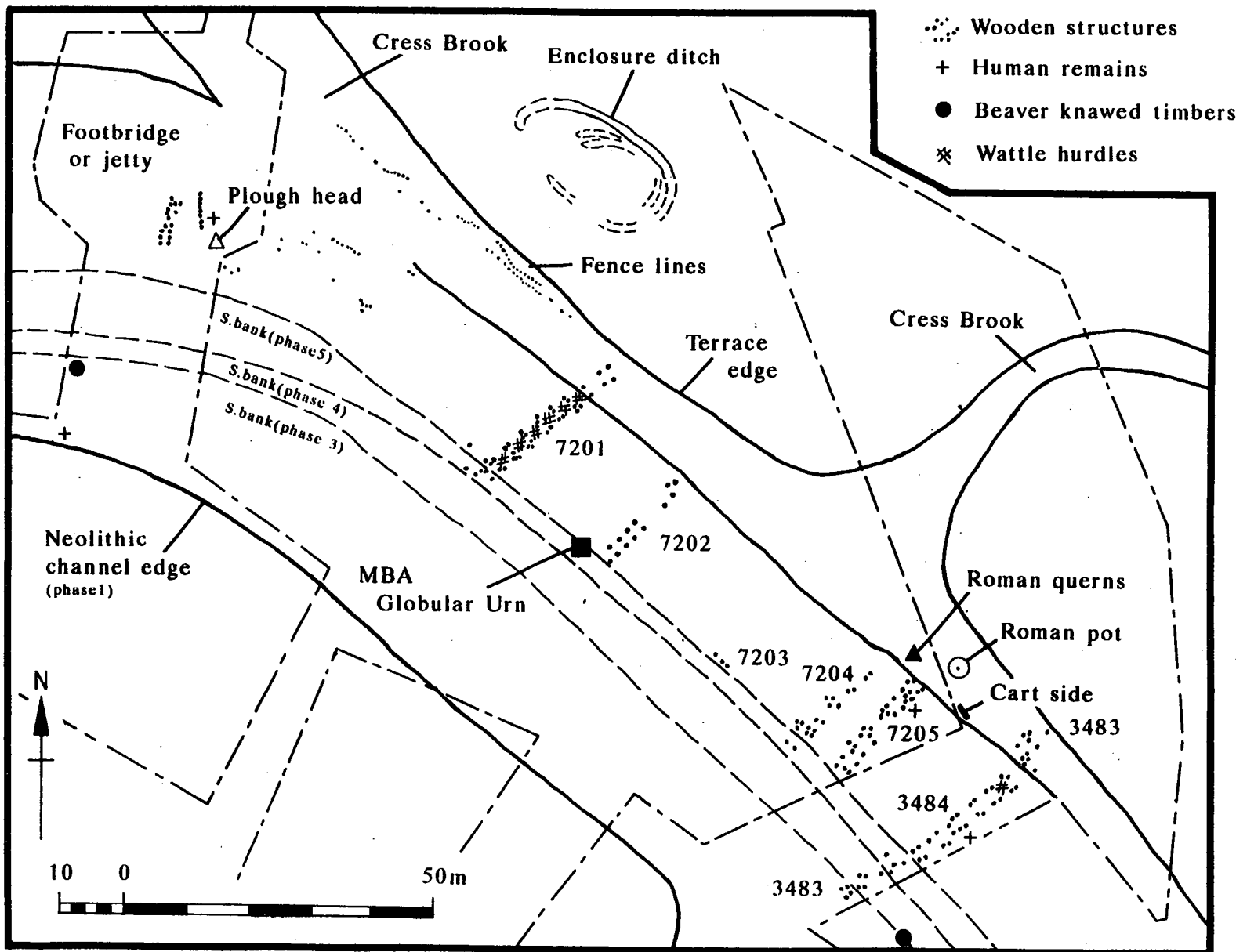


Fig 10. Eton Rowing Lake. Plan of bridge structures.

At the north end phase 7 of the Thames channel was cut into glacial deposits within the Cress Brook (channel P). Later silts in the Cress Brook merged with the phase 7 Thames channel within the excavation, showing that both were active in late prehistory.

Watching Brief in Area 3 (Fig 10)

Radiocarbon dating of the timber structure excavated in Area 3 (SMA 1996, 28 Fig. 14) subsequently showed that this was in fact two adjacent structures, the earlier Middle Bronze Age, the later Early Iron Age. The paired lines of large posts on the upstream channel edges formed one structure (numbered 3483), the continuous line of paired double smaller posts offset from the larger posts on the downstream side the other (numbered 3484). One post from each end of the larger series was sent for dating, and the dates were 1530-1310 cal. BC and 1420-1210 cal. BC at 95% confidence. The posts were up to 0.5 m across, and several had blind mortices on either side. One post from each of the lines of paired double posts was also dated, and the dates were 770-400 cal. BC and 770-390 cal. BC at 95% confidence.

Watching brief was carried out from August 7th until September 13th. Re-examination of the channel section adjacent to the structures suggested that there were at least 5 phases, structure 3483 belonging to the third phase and 3484 to the fifth phase. During removal of the 1995 structures by machine several further large timbers with blind mortices were recovered from the channel bed, suggesting that the Middle Bronze Age structure 3483 had originally extended right across the river, but that the middle part had collapsed and had been partly washed away.

Upstream of the 1995 structures four more wooden structures, each consisting of two or more lines of upright piles in pairs, were found crossing the former Thames channel. These are numbered 7201, 7202, 7204 and 7205. Three large uprights were also found on the southern bank (structure 7203), and another group (structure 7200) upstream between 7201 and the Area 5 structures. Three lines of stakes were found on the north side of the channel, two running adjacent to one another parallel to the course of the former channel, the third running across the junction of the former Thames channel with the Cress Brook. A truncated ditched enclosure was also observed cut into the gravel terrace on this side. The wooden structures were left on islands of silt for excavation using contingency funding.

Between the wooden structures a complete profile of a Middle Bronze Age decorated globular urn was recovered from the bottom of the channel, and on the northern channel edge adjacent to the cartside and Roman pot found in 1995 a pair of rotary quernstones were found. At the extreme south-east corner of Area 3 in an early (possibly Neolithic) phase of the former channel beaver-gnawed timbers similar to those in Area 5 were found.

The wooden structures, the fence lines and the enclosure were recorded between 30th August and 18th September. In

each case the surrounding silts were lowered by at least 0.5 m to expose the tops of all of the timbers, and trenches were dug alongside the lines of timbers to record their relationships in section. A selection of the timbers were excavated either to gravel or as deep as pumping permitted; many of the timbers in the centre of the channel were over 3 m long. Trenches were dug across the interior of the structures to look for associated structures and deposits. All of the uprights were recorded in situ, and a section was taken for wood identification, dendrochronological study and other analyses. A sample of at least 2 timbers from each line was also recovered complete.

Structures 7204 and 7205 each consisted of lines of paired single posts with double posts at intervals; in some cases the second post appeared to be a repair. In both structures there was a third intermittent line of uprights between the two main lines, which appeared to be contemporary with the main structure. At the north-east end part of 7204 had been obliterated by mechanical excavation of a sump for pumping. Alongside one of the uprights of 7204 a morticed horizontal was found, and one or two of the uprights had surviving lengths of branch, perhaps suggesting that natural forks had been used as supports for the superstructure. Where 7205 met the gravel bank on the north-east a number of post-voids were found, showing that some of the timbers had been removed when this structure went out of use. In view of the absence of surviving evidence for the superstructure of these pile-built structures, evidence of deliberate demolition is significant.

Structure 7204 appeared to have been constructed in phase 4, structure 7205 in phase 5. Middle Iron Age pottery was recovered from the silts abutting the timbers of 7205 on the north side of the channel. A partial human burial (a pair of femora and a skull) and large quantities of animal bones were also found in the silts accumulating around this structure. There were no dateable finds associated with structure 7204.

Structure 7202, which also appeared to lie within phase 5, had only single posts in each line. The north-western line had been damaged during the watching brief excavation, and only survived in part. There was no pottery associated with this structure.

The westernmost of the four bridge structures, 7201, had double posts all along each line, except on the northern gravel bank, where the posts were single. This form of construction is similar to that of Early Iron Age bridge 3484, although the posts of 7201 were of larger diameter. A large sherd of handmade pottery, probably Iron Age, was recovered alongside one of the posts just above the gravel. On sampling the uprights one of those at the south-west end was found to be a log-ladder.

Between the lines of uprights of 7201 a hurdle trackway had been constructed at a later date. This consisted of large horizontal timbers laid across the channel, which supported wattle hurdles or lengths of fence lying flat. Between each

Buckinghamshire

set of paired double uprights there were two wattles, often lying upon or overlain by brushwood. One of the horizontal supports had been anchored between one pair of double uprights. This hurdle structure was constructed after at least 1 m of silting had accumulated around the original bridge structure, at a time when the channel was no longer very deep, and was probably a shallow ford across the river. No associated dating material was found.

All of the six well-preserved wattles exposed were either planned in situ or photographed from above to allow photogrammetric reconstruction of the plan in post-excavation. All the wattles were then levelled and recorded in situ and then sampled extensively for wood identification. None were lifted complete.

The enclosure on the gravel terrace was very badly truncated by ploughing. This was sectioned in several places, but proved to be very shallow, and no dating evidence was obtained. The fence lines were planned and recorded in situ, and were sampled extensively for wood identification of the non-oak timbers.

Area 1 excavation and Area 1/2 Watching Brief

A trench 40 m long and 10 m wide was opened up around two upright timbers located during evaluation within the Bronze Age phase of the former Thames channel in 1995. Only one further upright was found, and the three posts were not in line. Two of these posts however were shown from matching tree-rings to be contemporary, and all three posts seem to have been driven in around a sandbank in the middle of the river. Limited excavation upon the sandbank produced both animal and human bones, but whether washed downstream or deposited by man was unclear. Adjacent to one of the driven posts, however, was a complete Late Bronze Age bipartite bowl, sitting upright at the level from which the post had been driven in. A second complete pot was found during machine clearance only 2 m from a second post, also at approximately the same level. This appears to indicate deliberate offerings alongside driven posts within the channel.

A continuous watching brief was maintained upon the excavation of the former channel deposits throughout Areas 1 and 2. No significant wooden structures were found, but several wooden planks were found, one with a mortice hole at one end. Some 20 m downstream of Area 1 a 2 m long section of oak tree trunk with a large square mortice hole in one side was found. This resembled the head of a mallet, and may have been used as a pile-driver. Several deliberate deposits were also noted. The plank with mortice hole was accompanied by a human skull, and on the north bank of the channel an antler had been placed upon a complete ox skull. An iron scythe of probable Roman date was also found with the end of the wooden handle still attached.

Conclusions

The 1996 excavations have shown that the Neolithic

occupation on this site includes two extremely artefact-rich areas which may represent middens, as well as in situ activity areas on the floodplain. Situated between the two causewayed enclosures of Dorney Reach and Eton Wick, this area may have been of particular significance in the Early and Middle Neolithic.

The site has also produced a series of wooden pile-driven structures crossing a former channel of the river Thames. These are interpreted as a succession of bridges used from the Middle Bronze Age to sometime in the Iron Age, linking the north bank of the river to a large island between the modern and ancient courses of the Thames, upon which Middle Bronze Age human and animal burials and settlements of the Late Bronze Age and Middle Iron Age have been found. Some of these structures, and also the piles around the sandbank in Area 1, are associated with human bones and other deliberate deposits, indicating a tradition of offerings which may continue into the Roman period.

Acknowledgements

The excavations were entirely funded by Eton College, who also provided the campsite facilities. We would also like to thank Eton Aggregates Ltd for their co-operation in carrying out the work. The digging was carried out 6 days a week by a team of students (particularly from Leicester, Glasgow and Durham Universities) and other volunteers supervised by OAU staff. We would like to thank all who took part, and in particular Cathy who stood in and cooked when our temperamental chef left. The work was monitored for Buckinghamshire County Council by Mike Farley, whose support and advice was much appreciated.

1997 excavations

During July and August a third season of excavation will take place, examining a Roman ditched enclosure (Area 16), a third area of floodplain and Neolithic channel (EX3), part of the gravel terrace and floodplain close to the modern Thames (Area 11) and a swathe across the Bronze Age enclosure system at the north-west end of the site. In addition, a second season of work will be carried out upon the Neolithic deposits in Area 6. Anyone wishing to take part please contact Denise Price at the OAU on 01865 243888.

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Hedsor, St Nicholas Church (SU 907 862)

J. Hiller

A watching brief was maintained by the Unit during the installation of new drainage facilities at this church in June 1996. Post-Medieval soil horizons and a grave (dated to the Victorian period by an inscribed headstone) were observed. No pottery of any date was recovered from the excavated material from the drainage trenches, and a number of roof tiles present in the excavated spoil probably derive from Victorian restoration of the building.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Brackley, The Elms (SP 58783747)

Alistair Barber

Archaeological assessment identified the study area as a possible site of the documented, but imprecisely located, Medieval leper hospital of St. Leonard's. Trenching revealed evidence of Medieval stone-quarrying and of a subsequent building occupied in the late 13th-14th century. The status of the building remains uncertain but the hospital site now appears most likely to have been situated on the other side of High Street. Several post-Medieval linear boundaries were also recorded.

Wellingborough, Wilby Way (SP 882660)

Alistair Barber

Geophysical survey and evaluation trenching was conducted to clarify the extent of a Mid to Late Iron Age settlement. The evaluation showed that features, though truncated by later ploughing, were both denser and more extensive than aerial photographs had suggested.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

Report for 1996

The work carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 1996 followed the now well established pattern of developer funded desk-based assessments, field survey and evaluation, together with a few more substantial recording actions carried out in advance of site development. A total of 80 projects were carried out comprising 44 evaluations, 26 recording actions or watching briefs and 10 research projects.

The major rural excavation project has been the continuation of the extensive study of the Iron Age and Romano-British landscape at Wollaston, in advance of gravel extraction. The

recent, much publicised, recovery of a Saxon burial accompanied by a helmet with a boar's crest, a sword and a hanging bowl, will be more fully reported next year. An area of Iron Age settlement was also investigated at Great Houghton, where an inhumation burial within a pit had a bi-partite lead torc or collar in-situ around its neck.

In Northampton the excavations and watching brief at Woolmonger Street were completed, while a well preserved and near complete sequence of the town defences was recovered at Green Street, to the south of the former castle and west gate.

The research projects include the Urban Archaeological Database for Northampton, the Raunds Area Project Saxon and Medieval Synthesis, the Weedon Depot buildings survey, the Kirby Hall inventory and the Ipswich Ware project.

Bozeat (SP 897600)

Ian Meadows and Mark Holmes

A desk-based assessment indicated that a proposed mineral extraction site contained extensive remains of Romano-British date and undated cropmarks. Fieldwalking, geophysical and metal detecting surveys more closely defined the areas of archaeological interest. The finds were largely of Roman date but some early Saxon pottery was also recovered.

Brackley, Bronnley Soapworks (SP 585368)

Joe Prentice and Andy Chapman

The site of the Bronnley Soapworks occupied former tenements fronting onto the eastern side, and at the southern end, of the market place. Trial excavation of a small overgrown garden revealed the truncated remains of a late Medieval building and associated floor levels, buried some 0.9 m below the modern ground level. A ditch at the rear boundary of the tenements abutting the Lord's "Grove", recorded in documentary evidence, was not located in a test pit.

Cogenhoe, St Peter's Way (SP 828608)

Michael Webster and Mark Holmes

Trial trenches on land off St Peter's Way revealed a sparse scatter of undated features comprising three gullies and four postholes, all truncated by subsequent cultivation.

Daventry, Brook Street (SP 571625)

Iain Soden

Trial excavation confirmed the indications of the desk-based assessment that cellars and modern landscaping had destroyed almost all of the street frontages. On one area only

Northamptonshire

small discrete islands of pre-19th century remains survived, and on a second area no earlier remains were present.

Daventry, Vicar Lane (SP 577626)

Iain Soden

Archaeological evaluation of a plot of land on the east side of Vicar Lane revealed some ditches and hollows of Medieval date cut into the natural clay. Above these lay buildings of 17th century date which stood until the mid-19th century. After their destruction a railway embankment sealed the earlier remains at the west while terracing substantially removed them at the centre and east of the site.

Deanshanger, Kingsbrook School (SP 768397)

Mark Holmes

An evaluation was carried out on the site of a known Roman villa complex (*Milton Keynes J. of Archaeol. and Hist.*, 3, 8-9). Geophysical survey and trial excavation showed that archaeological remains associated with the villa had been largely removed during previous building work and only a few insubstantial ditches survived.

Deanshanger to Old Stratford (SP 744415-777414)

Steve Parry, Tora Hylton and Michael Webster

Desk-based assessment, trial excavation and a watching brief during construction were carried out for Anglian Water Services Ltd along a water pipeline to the north of Deanshanger. Examination of historical maps had identified houses and lanes associated with the dispersed hamlet of Puxley within the Forest of Whittlewood. Trial excavation adjacent to Puxley Grange Farm proved sterile, but the watching brief identified findspots of Roman and Saxon material, together with metallised surfaces and Medieval pottery related to Puxley hamlet.

Hardwick, Manor Farm (SP 851698)

Joe Prentice and Andy Chapman

Desk-based assessment indicated that proposed development most probably lay within part of a former manorial enclosure. Trial excavation showed that Victorian and modern yard surfaces had removed any earlier features. A single ditch possibly of early-middle Saxon date was found in grassland outside the complex of farm buildings.

Harrington, SS Peter and Paul's Church (SP 778806)

Joe Prentice

A topographical survey and the excavation of three test pits was carried out within the churchyard. A viewing hole was also cut into the wooden floor of the vestry. Beyond the exposure of the foundations of the church, only subsoil and

grave earth were found; there was no evidence for a mound pre-dating the construction of the church.

Hemington (TL 093853)

Iain Soden

Trial excavation on land at the east end of the village recorded two Medieval ditches, a pit and a truncated linear feature dated between c1150 and 1250. In the western half of the site early features were absent or had been removed by post-Medieval and modern buildings.

Isham, A509 Bypass (centre SP 890749)

Mark Holmes

A corridor of land 3.65 km long was investigated by geophysical survey and fieldwalking. Three sites previously identified as lying close to the route were not directly affected by it. A further three possible sites were discovered during the survey; they comprise an extensive Romano-British farmstead lying partly on the bypass route and slight scatters of Iron Age and Saxon pottery.

Little Weldon, Water lane (SP 921896)

Joe Prentice

A desk-based assessment and trial excavation was carried out ahead of the proposed redevelopment of a small plot of land to the west of Water Lane. A map of the parish dated to c 1585 shows three houses along the frontage of the plot, but excavation has shown that no trace of ancient occupation survives beyond a small fragment of wall foundation and a single ditch.

Long Buckby, Long Buckby Castle (SP 675626)

Michael Webster and Paul Thompson

Evaluation was undertaken on part of the scheduled ancient monument (SAM No 13666) to supply information for assessing the impact of proposed development. No remains associated with either the castle or contemporary domestic occupation was found, and the Medieval ditches that were located appear to be plot boundaries. A small assemblage of Romano-British pottery was recovered from a single ditch.

Nassington, Shortwood Lodge Equestrian Centre (TL 043962)

Ian Meadows

A desk-based assessment of the archaeological significance of 4 ha of land was carried out for Cloverbrook Developments Ltd. The study shows that the majority of adjacent sites listed in the County Sites and Monuments Record relate to previous field boundaries which are now ploughed out.

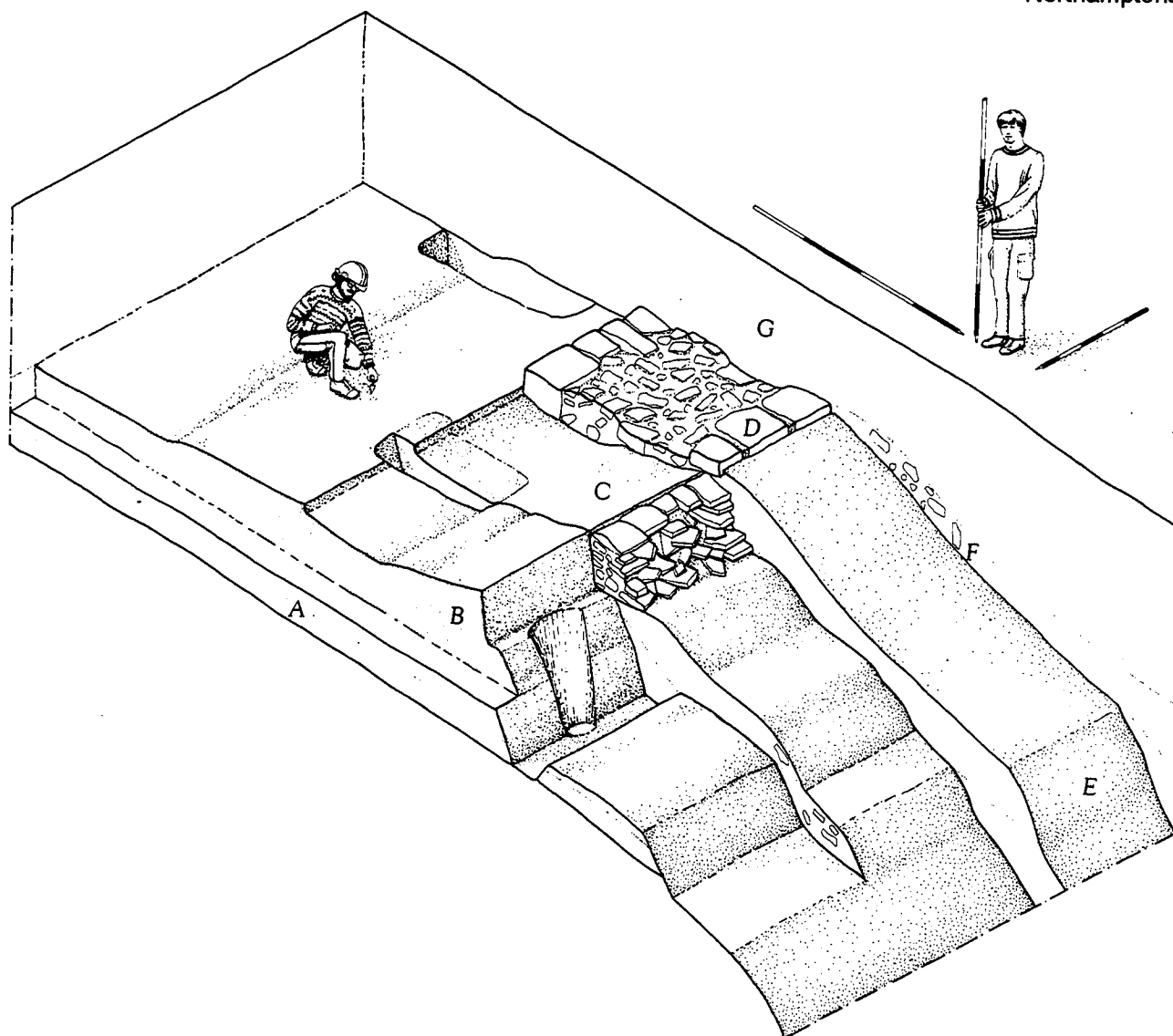


Fig 1. Green Street, Northampton: isometric reconstruction of the town defences.

Northampton, Albion Place (SP 758602)

Mike Shaw

Evaluation on part of the former Northampton High School for Girls' site was undertaken in order to establish whether any remains of an important Medieval property, The Grange, and its associated main building, The Tower, were present.

Excavation did not reveal any substantial remains. Archaeological deposits are well preserved only in the south-west corner of the site. Elsewhere extensive disturbance caused by post-Medieval terracing, the recent construction of tennis courts and an extensive modern rubbish pit has removed all but deeply cut Medieval and later quarry pits and a single wall foundation of post-Medieval date.

Northampton, Campbell Square (SP 755610)

Iain Soden

Excavations to the north of Campbell Square revealed three

phases of occupation, spanning the period from the 12th century to the 19th century. A deep, wide ditch may relate to the Medieval or Civil War town defences. It may have been short-lived and ironstone structures were built over it in the late 16th - 17th centuries. The site was subsequently extensively quarried before being redeveloped in 1845.

Northampton, Green Street (SP 748603)

Andy Chapman

Further excavation and evaluation (cf *SMA* 26 (1996), 34) revealed the best preserved and most complete sequence of the town defences so far discovered (Figs 1 and 2). A soil horizon containing middle Saxon, Maxey-type pottery pre-dated the defences (Fig 1, A). The late Saxon defences, dated by Northampton ware to the earlier 10th century, comprised a 6 m wide clay bank (B) with a slot and post-pits of a timber revetment set along the outer face. This was later rebuilt in stone (C) and a gateway was inserted; two phases of road metalling were recovered.

Northamptonshire

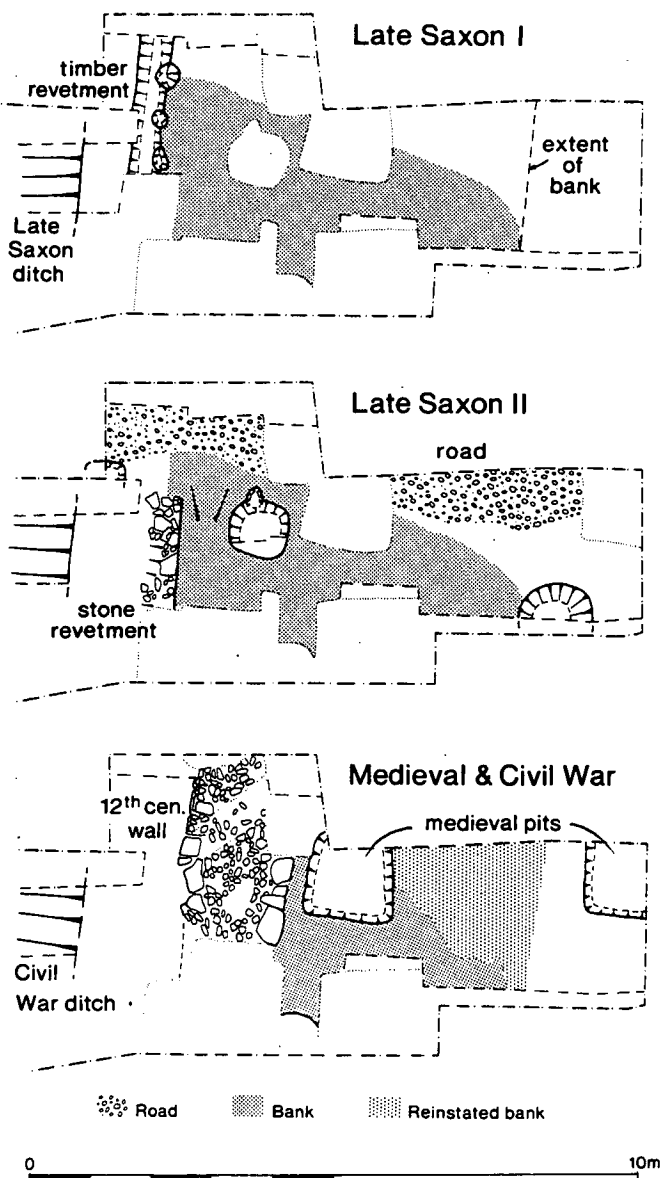


Fig 2. Green Street, Northampton: the town defences, main structural phases.

The gateway was blocked in the 12th century when the Medieval town wall was constructed on top of the bank (D). The sequence of defensive ditches, ranging in date from late Saxon to the Civil War (E), was partially investigated. The infilling of the Civil War ditches and the final levelling of the Medieval wall occurred at the end of the 17th century (F).

Northampton, St Giles' Church (SP 759606)

Michael Webster

Archaeological investigation below the existing floor of the nave and aisles of St Giles' Church shows that Medieval and earlier floor levels were destroyed by extensive structural modifications in the 19th century. Fragments of the Medieval church fabric survive only as isolated piers beneath the pillars of the nave arcades, and now merely provide indirect information on the height of former floors.

Truncated graves of possible Medieval date, together with two disconnected islands of buried soil between them, were found at a depth of 0.62 m below the floor of the nave.

Northampton, St James' End (SP 745603)

Iain Soden

Desk-based assessment and subsequent trial excavation were carried out on the former Travis Perkins depot at St James' End, which formed the western suburb of the Medieval town. Trial excavation confirmed the presence of Medieval tenements and former river courses. Two phases of building were dated to the mid-13th to end of the 14th centuries. There was no evidence of subsequent occupation until the mid-19th century. One of the former river courses had silted up in the Medieval period.

Northampton, St John's Street (SP 755 602)

Joe Prentice

An archaeological watching brief of land lying between St John's Street and Victoria Gardens confirmed that the entire area had been severely damaged by the construction and subsequent demolition of St John's railway station. No significant archaeological remains or individual finds were discovered.

Northampton, Woolmonger Street (SP 753603)

Iain Soden

Work continued from previous years (cf *SMA* 26 (1996), 34 and fig 2, and *SMA* 25 (1995), 41 and fig 3). A fuller plan of the late Saxon cellared structures was revealed, and the 10th century AD date was confirmed. They were infilled at some time before the buildings above burnt down, as indicated by a widespread ash layer, heavily laden with charred plant remains. Their alignments indicate that they predate the recent line of Woolmonger Street. A watching brief during development recorded the locations of a further 60 features, mainly pits. The fieldwork came to an end in January 1997.

Outer Northampton, Duston Mills Reservoir (SP 735598)

Andy Chapman

A watching brief during gravel extraction did not recover any Palaeolithic artefacts or faunal remains associated with the underlying glacial lake deposits (cf *SMA* 26 (1996), 34-5).

Outer Northampton, Great Houghton/Brackmills (SP 791582-795583)

Andy Chapman

Topsoil stripping of a corridor 400 m long by 15 m wide

along part of the course of a proposed Anglian Water pipeline, revealed a dense palimpsest of features which were sampled in an archaeological recording action.

At the east there was an extensive area of middle Iron Age settlement, including a single roundhouse, two small enclosures, and a scatter of numerous shallow pits and postholes. An adult inhumation burial within one pit had been buried face down with a lead collar or torc around its neck. The collar comprised two square-sectioned, twisted rods with circular sectioned expanded terminals.

At the west a group of 23 inhumation burials, aligned west-east, form the southern part of a probable late Roman cemetery of unknown extent. In one burial, set slightly apart, the fills of the large grave pit indicated the former presence of a wooden coffin, while post-pits at the corners held the uprights of a small timber mausoleum.

Outer Northampton, Salthouse Road, Brackmills
(SP 785585)
Mark Holmes

Desk-based and geophysical surveys, and related test-pitting were carried out on land off Salthouse Road, Brackmills. No evidence of buried archaeological remains was recovered.

Oundle, East Road (TL 044085)
Mark Holmes

A desk-based study indicated that closes to the east of East Road lay outside the Medieval town, and trial excavation showed that one of the closes did not contain any early remains.

Oundle, Glapthorn Road (TL 033890)
Michael Webster

A fieldwalking survey produced evidence of a concentration of Roman pottery in the western part of the site. A thinner and more extensive scatter of Medieval and late Medieval pottery probably denotes former manuring. Several metal finds located by metal detecting reconnaissance include a Roman brooch in the area of the pottery scatter.

Passenham, Manor Nurseries (SP 779396)
Rob Atkins and Steve Parry

Archaeological desktop assessment and limited trial excavation were carried out on behalf of Nodex Enterprises Ltd. Four ditches, four postholes and a pit were found buried beneath a deep blanket of topsoil. The presence of Ipswich Ware shows some of the remains to date from at least the middle Saxon period (AD 650-850) but other features may be Iron Age. The remains will be preserved *in situ* beneath the proposed building.

Rainsborough, Long Barrow (SP 524349)
Andy Chapman

A programme of investigation was carried out to inform proposals for the possible re-location of a badger sett which had damaged the scheduled ancient monument of Rainsborough Long Barrow (SAM No 13672). The character of the monument and the extent of the damage were assessed by topographical and geophysical surveys (Fig 3). No evidence was recovered to support the existing interpretation of the monument as a Neolithic long barrow, and it may be an 18th century landscape feature.

Raunds, 60-64 Hill Street (SP 998727)
Joe Prentice

An evaluation of land at 60-64 Hill Street, Raunds showed that the western part of the area had been raised to make a flat platform in recent times. No significant archaeological remains were found.

Rothwell, Wales Street (SP 814812)
Iain Soden

Desk-based assessment of land west of High Street indicated that the plot was formerly occupied by late Medieval or early post-Medieval buildings. Excavation showed that the site contains dispersed and eroded remains dating from the Iron Age and possibly the late Saxon or early Medieval periods. No evidence was found for former street frontages and earlier lanes supposed to lie across the site. Possible former property boundaries were present, however, in the centre of the site. Dating evidence was sparse.

Rushden to Higham Ferrers, A6 Bypass
(SP 960699-965648)
Mike Shaw, Peter Masters, Steve Morris

A desk-based assessment identified four possible sites within the 5.4 km long road corridor, and a further two sites lay close by. Field evaluation, comprising fieldwalking and geophysical survey only identified two settlement sites dating to the late Iron Age and Romano-British periods. No new sites were discovered.

Silverstone, A43 Bypass (SP 683482-650421)
Mike Shaw, Peter Masters, Steve Morris

A desk-based assessment revealed no known archaeological sites along the published route of the bypass, although the line of the Roman road from Towcester to Alchester passes close by. The 7.5 km long corridor was investigated by geophysical survey and fieldwalking. Three archaeological sites were identified, comprising a large enclosure and a group of enclosures, both of Iron Age to Romano-British date, and a slight concentration of Romano-British pottery.

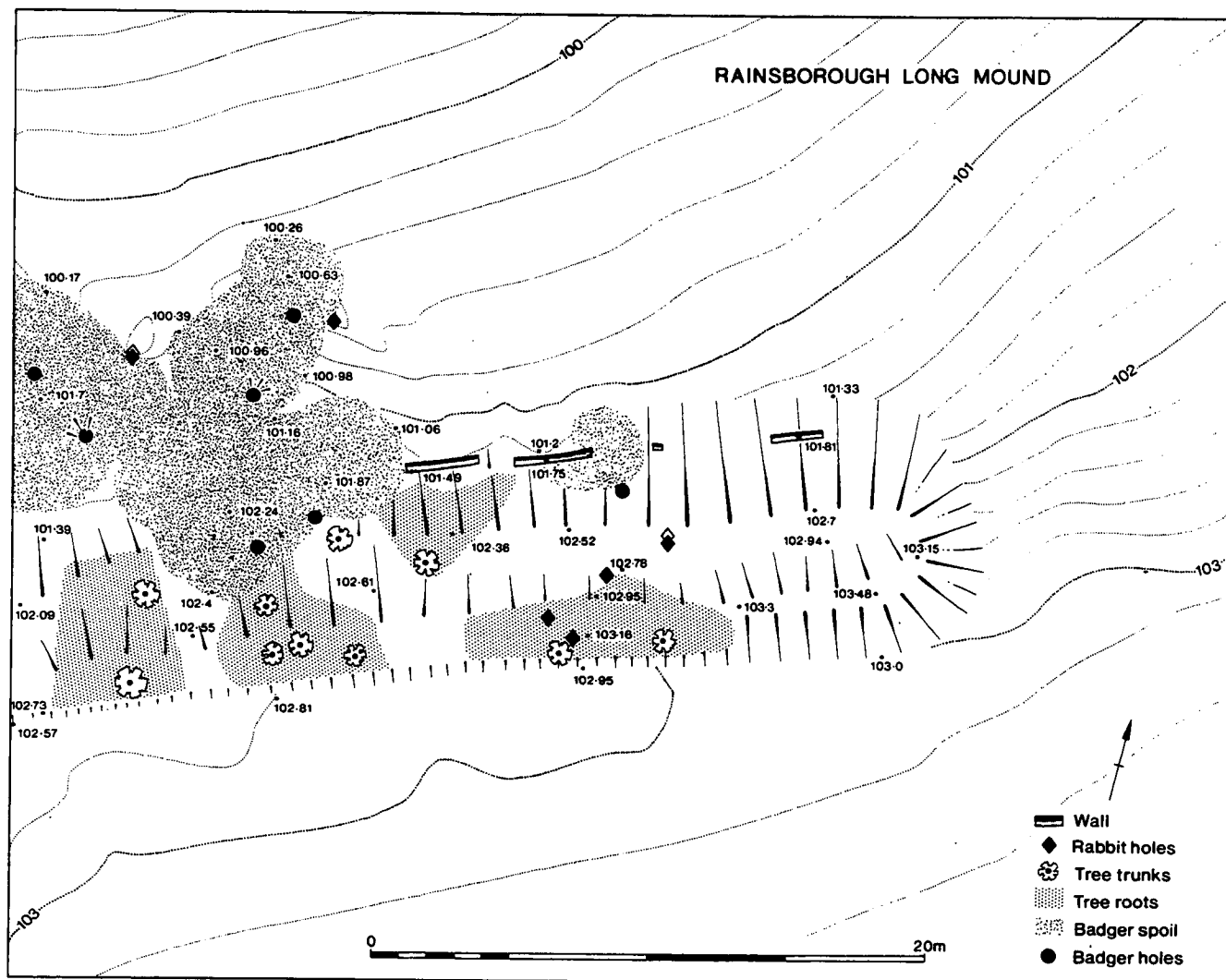


Fig 3. Rainsborough Long Barrow: topographical survey.

Stanford-on-Avon; St Nicholas' Church (SP 589789)
Iain Soden

A programme of archaeological recording of buildings accompanied the extensive repair of the north aisle roof of St Nicholas' Church, Stanford-on-Avon (Figs 4 and 5). The works revealed that the original re-roofing of the aisle of c1500 was altered to offset the serious degeneration of many of the timbers. Similarly, an early decorative scheme had been overpainted, possibly in the late 17th century. Further alterations and repairs throughout the roof have been carried out up to the present works.

Stanwick, Newbridge Lane (SP 982712)
Joe Prentice

A desk-based study and trial excavation ahead of the proposed redevelopment of a small plot to the west of Newbridge Lane identified a possible Medieval pit or ditch but no other ancient occupation.

Sywell, Sywell Aerodrome (SP 825675)
Michael Webster

Part of a small Iron Age settlement, first identified from cropmarks, was investigated by magnetometer survey, small scale excavation and observation during construction. The excavated remains comprised parts of two small enclosures, a four-post structure and several pits. A later linear boundary ditch cut across the enclosures.

Towcester, Methodist Church (SP 691487)
Joe Prentice and Tora Hylton

The church straddles the projected line of the defences of the Roman town of Lactodurum. An extension to the church provided a limited opportunity to investigate the former wall and rampart. A watching brief during the excavation of foundation trenches identified a bank possibly related to the rampart together with an area of limestone and cobble metalling set within clay at the rear. Small amounts of mostly second century AD pottery were associated with these features.

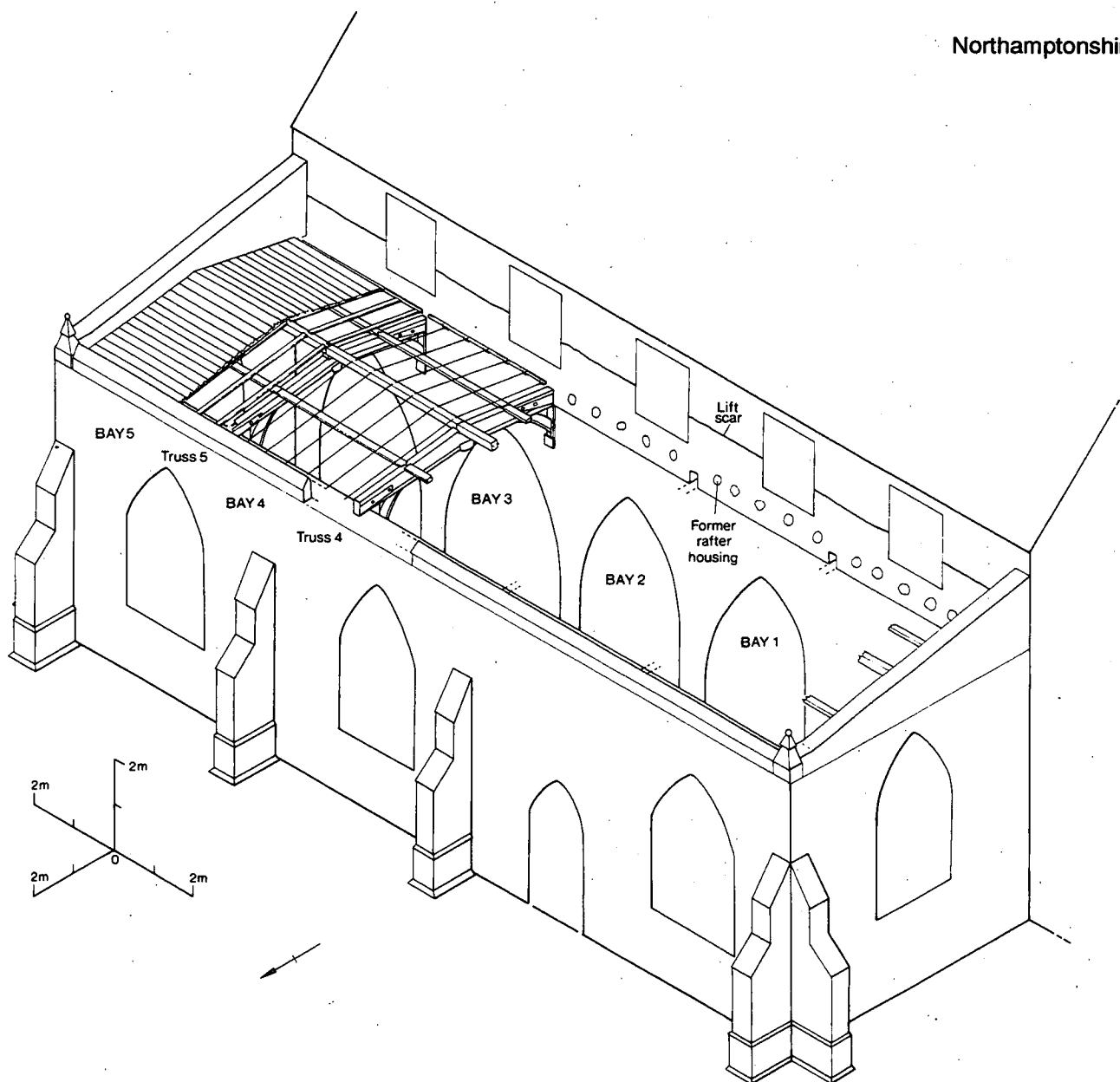


Fig 4. St Nicholas' Church, Stanford on Avon: isometric view of the north aisle roof.

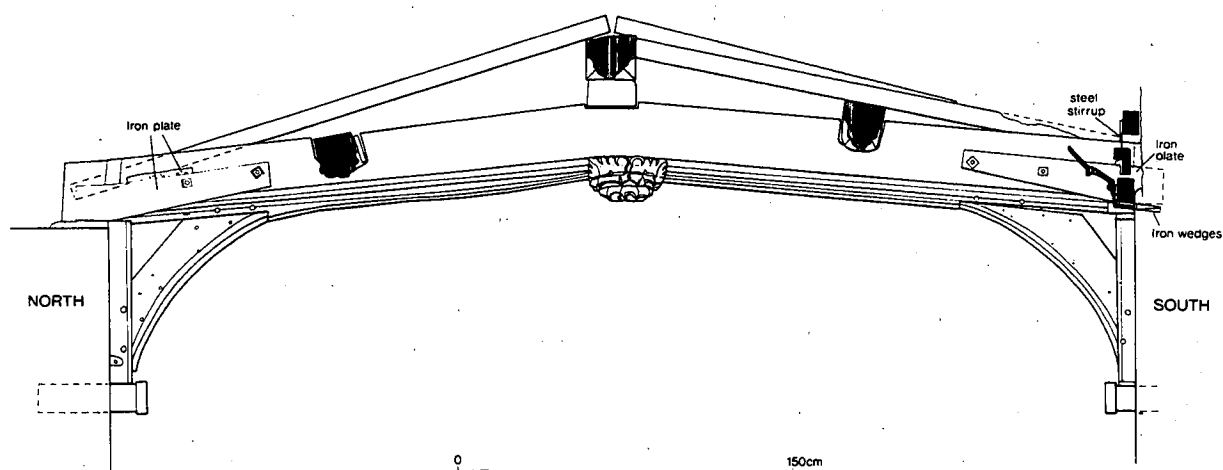


Fig 5. St Nicholas' Church, Stanford on Avon: elevation of tie-beam assembly, truss 4.

Northamptonshire

Warkton, St Edmund's Church (SP 893878)

Iain Soden

A programme of archaeological recording carried out during the extension of both aisles of the church identified evidence of 15th century remodelling and later insertions in the 14th century fabric of the north aisle. The total rebuilding of the south aisle in 1867-8 has been confirmed. Associated below-ground remains were also recorded.

Wellingborough, Redhill Farm (SP 884694)

Michael Webster

Archaeological survey and excavation carried out on land to the east of Great Harrowden Road confirmed the presence of a late Iron Age and Roman square enclosure, first identified from cropmarks. The remains, comprising ditches and pits, were heavily truncated and partly destroyed by extensive 19th century ironstone quarrying. An Iron Age coin of Andoco, 10BC- AD10, was found in one of the pits.

Wollaston (centre SP885628)

Ian Meadows

Post excavation work on one part of the quarry began (cf SMA 26 (1996), 39-40 and figs 5 and 6) followed by the opening of a new pit to the south. Geophysics (Fig 6) followed by pre-emptive excavation of one Iron Age farmstead and one Romano-British farm was carried out on behalf of Pioneer Aggregates UK. In addition a watching brief over the other areas being stripped indicated the continuation of the dense pattern of occupation identified previously. Work is continuing on this project.



Fig 6. Wollaston: magnetometer survey plot showing the Iron Age farmstead before excavation.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE HERITAGE

Open field systems in the Midlands

David Hall, Rog Palmer & Glenn Foard

During 1996-7 Northamptonshire Heritage, in consultation with the county archaeologists from neighbouring counties, have managed a regional project for English Heritage as part of their Monument Protection Programme (MPP). The project is intended to establish the surviving extent and value of Medieval field remains, essentially represented by ridge and furrow earthworks, and to conduct scoring to enable the selection of a representative sample of these field system remains to be preserved. The area dealt with was that defined by Roberts & Wrathmell, in their national analysis of Medieval and later settlement for English Heritage's MPP programme, as the Central Midland region. The counties covered wholly or in part were Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire & Leicestershire. The extent of survival was established by systematic survey of the latest vertical air photography for each county, work undertaken for us by Rog Palmer of Air Photo Services. The historical analysis and overall assessment is being undertaken by David Hall. All mapping and assessment has been conducted on GIS and so together with the final report there will be the provision to each county of a digital data set. A detailed report on the methodology and conclusions will be prepared for publication in a national journal following completion of the project in April 1997.

Archaeology and Planning

Sandy Kidd

This year has been the busiest since the publication of PPG16. We received 694 consultations of which 246 had some archaeological implications. Briefs were issued for 43 evaluations and 13 recording actions. Thirty fieldwork projects required monitoring. Fieldwork projects undertaken as a consequence of our advice are reported elsewhere but it is worth noting the successful imposition of conditions requiring archaeological investigation on the renewal of old planning consents at Higham Ferrers and the Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal. In both cases nationally important archaeology was only discovered after the granting of the original consent. Three planning appeals contested our recommendations for archaeological evaluation. Two appeals were dismissed but at Grendon the inspector allowed the appeal for mineral extraction but only with a condition which could preclude the working of up to 40% of the mineral deposit if this is found to be necessary following evaluation.

The Northamptonshire Archaeological Network volunteers continue to observe small-scale developments in the county. The most significant results are summarised below:

High Nook, Brixworth (SP 7469 7113)
Dennis Jackson

Observation of a house extension close to the Saxon church revealed a Medieval quarry.

Station Road, Irthlingborough (SP 953 708)
Dennis Jackson

Trial trenching revealed 11th to early 13th century occupation and a trackway. The occupation probably fronted on to a road running from Irthlingborough to the Medieval bridge over the Nene.

The Rectory, Southwick (TL 0197 9205)
Gill Johnson

With the developer's agreement, a watching brief developed into the full excavation of a Medieval stone building, which may have been a rectory, and which contained several metal-working furnaces.

1996 Conservation Summary

In addition to its development control and SMR responsibilities the Branch has maintained its role of providing conservation management advice and guidance in respect of archaeological monuments, historic buildings and historic landscapes throughout the county.

The Branch is responsible for the direct management of some 27 County Heritage sites located across the county. These range from archaeological monuments to smaller historic properties such as village stocks and crosses. Major programmes of repair were undertaken by the Buildings section to the stocks at Gretton and Eydon with other works at Warmington dovecote, Overstone gates and the Naseby Obelisk. New interpretation panels were installed at Culworth Castle and Walgrave Moated site completing the programme of essential capital works planned following acquisition of these sites a few years ago. Any future additions to the portfolio of sites directly managed by the County will be heavily dependent on finding resources with which to guarantee long term annual maintenance works. The latter can be labour intensive, especially where for example, an absence of grazing necessitates the hand cutting of grass in order to ensure that sites remain accessible and safe for visitors.

Though not the responsibility of the County, one major site recently opened to the public for the first time deserves mention. This is the hillfort of Borough Hill, by far the largest in Northamptonshire. Now owned and managed by Daventry Council this represents a very valuable addition to the number of archaeological monuments now freely accessible to the public in the county. It provides an excellent vantage point with extensive views over Daventry,

across the upper Nene valley and over to the line of Watling Street.

Working closely with Daventry District Council through the planning process, plans were advanced in 1996 to enhance long term conservation and improve public access to over 2.5 km of Watling Street where it crosses the Watford Gap in the north west of the county. A leaflet is to be launched in 1997 which will focus on this part of Watling Street and the later utilisation of the Watford Gap as a major canal, railway and road route across the Jurassic ridge to the Midlands Plain.

The number of consultations received by the Branch on conservation-related matters reached new heights during the year. Besides the nationally circulated consultations on portable antiquities and the Treasure Bill, woodland creation and hedgerows, by far the most numerous with a direct opportunity to enhance aspects of the historic environment in the county, were those concerned with the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. During 1996 and 1997 one of the Scheme's main targets in Northamptonshire is well preserved areas of open field 'ridge and furrow'. About 60 responses were completed with some 6 historic landscape applications likely to be accepted into the Scheme. Amongst those expected to be confirmed are historic parkland at Boughton and Steane and the DMV of Mallows Cotton.

Work to characterise historic landscapes has continued, a new initiative in 1996 being the commencement of a joint project with English Nature and the County Wildlife Trust to investigate the nature and extent of historic, and existing heathland relics, in the county. Another joint programme undertaken in 1996, this time in partnership with Forest Enterprise, was a rapid desk-top and field programme of survey by David Hall of Salcey Forest the immediate objective of which was to help inform the development of forest management and interpretive strategies. Undertaken in the largest intact area of former Royal forest in the county, this work was able to demonstrate the presence of numerous, previously unrecorded earthwork features including a late Medieval coppice network and parts of an earlier system of enclosures. The work helps confirm the extent and good preservation of earthwork remains in the counties more established woodlands. It is to be hoped that the work will be extended to other areas of woodland yet to experience systematic survey.

In respect of the Defence of Britain Project the year has seen a large increase in the number of 20th century sites now known to the SMR; over 150 as opposed to the less than 50 previously identified.

Deenethorpe (c SP95509160)

Earthwork traces with adjoining ridge and furrow noted during site inspection in January.

Northamptonshire

Fotheringhay (c TL06159315 - TL06259321)

Former road visible in fields immediately north of the village. The road visible on Eyre's 1791 map of the county was replaced by the present road to Nassington which is located further west.

Hartwell (SP802503)

Reconnaissance survey conducted in March as part of programme to advise Forest Enterprise with felling proposals in this part of Salcey Forest.

Mears Ashby (SP83426803)

Survey of semi-derelict Vicarage Barn undertaken December 1996. This field barn is almost certainly of post-Medieval origin but was converted during World War 2 into a disguised pillbox helping guard the nearby Sywell airfield.

Oundle (c TL01208807)

Northants Field Group reconnaissance survey in January confirmed the presence of ironstone quarries and waste together with iron working debris including slag in Oundle Wood along with other features of local interest.

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Chipping Warden, Blackgrounds Farm (SP 505 482) John Dalton

A watching brief was carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit in October 1996 during the construction of a horse exercise ring. This revealed no archaeological features but a variety of finds were recovered from the topsoil. These included two Neolithic flints, 34 sherds of Romano-British pottery of 3rd to 4th century date and two fragments of Roman tile. A sherd of middle Saxon Ipswich Ware was also recovered. The finds indicate the proximity or former existence of multi-period activity.

Wellingborough, land north of Niort Way (SP 874 697) Granville Laws

A fieldwalking survey carried out in two fields north of Niort Way to the north-west of Wellingborough. The fields covered approximately 20 ha. The fieldwalking recovered a limited range and quantity of finds, including 19 pieces of burnt unworked flint and 27 pieces of worked flint. The sample of struck flint is too small to date with confidence but is probably of late Neolithic or Bronze Age date. The bulk of the other materials recovered comprised ceramic building materials and post-Medieval pottery.

WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY

BT Distribution Centre Crick (centred on SP 567 740) Compiled by Karen Walker from client report

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by the Drivers Jonas on behalf of British Telecommunications plc to undertake an archaeological desktop study of the 14 ha area of its proposed distribution centre and associated facilities at Crick.

The study covered both the proposal site and a wider area to assess the general context of the site. It revealed that there are no Scheduled Monuments nor other known archaeological records on the proposed distribution centre site. Eleven archaeological sites are, however, known from the wider study area. These range in date from Iron Age to Anglo-Saxon, and include the Roman Road of Watling Street the line of which forms the western boundary of the proposal site. However, adjacent to the site the modern road follows the line of the Roman Rd and any archaeological remains are likely to have been damaged or destroyed. There are also 18th century documentary references to a turnpike road c 250 m west of the proposal area's west boundary, but no physical remains.

The nearest known archaeological site, an Iron Age settlement of regional importance, lies within 100 m of the southern boundary of the proposal area, and is thought from survey work on the Regional Agricultural Centre site (south of the proposal area) to be extensive. The archaeological remains at this site lay beneath a thin layer of topsoil and cut into the natural gravel and clays; their upper layers are likely to have been disturbed by ploughing. It is possible that contemporaneous (Iron Age) archaeological remains may extend into the southern part of the proposal site. The proposal site is therefore considered as an area of medium to high archaeological potential, particularly the most southerly of the three main fields within the proposal area. Whilst it is possible that archaeological features of Iron Age date associated with the Long Dole settlement may occur within the proposal area, they are unlikely to be of greater significance than those already partially-examined in the area to the south.

Brackmills Extension and Employment Sites, Northampton (centred on SP 7850 5850) Compiled by Karen Walker from client report

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by The Commission for New Towns to undertake an assessment comprising a desktop study and archaeological field evaluation of two sites of proposed landscaping (the Brackmills Extension Site) and development (the Brackmills Employment Site), both of which lay just within the south-east boundary of Northampton. The purpose of the desktop study was to collate information on known or potential archaeological resources within the proposed landscaping and development areas and within 1 km around them.

The field evaluation involved a rapid geophysical scan of the entire area of both sites, detailed geophysical survey of parts of these areas, to be followed where necessary by trial trenching. A total of 67 sites or findspots was identified, of which 12 lie within the development area. Nine of these sites are not yet listed in the County Sites and Monuments Record.

OXFORDSHIRE

ABINGDON AREA ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Drayton (near Abingdon) (SU 4675 9560)
Roger Ainslie

Three small trenches were put into this field to investigate the nature of the mound which is marked as a barrow on maps and the effect of ploughing on the area. The trench into the barrow (2 m x 0.5 m) found Roman pottery to a depth of 1 m when it was decided not to continue further. This shows that the mound is of post-Roman date - probably a Medieval windmill mound.

The other two trenches showed that the depth of protective topsoil varied considerably. Trench A found natural gravel at a depth of 0.5 m possibly as topsoil may have been removed to form the windmill mound. Trench B had 0.5 m of topsoil over an Iron Age ditch with natural gravel at a depth of 1 m. This area may have been protected by a plough headland.

Finds were 10 flints including a leaf-shaped arrowhead. This indicates that the Neolithic occupation of the area may be earlier than expected. (R Holgate, *Oxoniensia* 1986 p 10). There were 18 sherds of Iron Age pottery and 53 of Roman pottery including sherds of poppy beakers indicating a 2nd century date. The 31 pieces of bone included remains of sheep, cattle, pig and dog from the Iron Age levels. A sheep metatarsal had been polished, possibly by use in a weaving process.

The finds and archive will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service, accession number 1996.116. The site was directed by Stuart Hughes. Mr De Haan gave consent for the excavation and Mr Bartlett kindly carried out a magnetometer survey of the area.

BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT

Slade Farm, Bicester (SP 580 240)
Laurence Jones

Excavations of a late Bronze Age to late Iron Age settlement at Slade Farm, Bicester, Oxfordshire were undertaken, in

advance of a housing development, between September and December 1996. The work followed an extensive geophysical survey and programme of trial trenching undertaken in February and March 1996. This initial evaluation identified numerous late Bronze Age to Late Iron Age features, including a major north-south linear boundary, multi-period pit clusters, and at least one sub-circular ditched enclosure. Mesolithic flint artefacts were recovered from the topsoil within the southern part of this complex.

A total of five areas were excavated within the late prehistoric settlement. Prior to the removal of the topsoil in the area of the Mesolithic flint scatter, a series of test pits was excavated in order to provide a measure of their distribution and concentration. Over 1000 flint items were recovered from this area. The assemblage includes a high proportion of blades and is Late Mesolithic in date.

The linear boundary ditch was recorded in three of the excavated areas. It appears to have been redefined on at least two occasions on slightly different alignments. Provisional dating of the pottery from this ditch suggests that it was in use throughout the first millennium BC and into the 1st century AD. The majority of associated features appear to be clustered to the west of this feature. These included three circular ring gullies, the sub-circular enclosure identified during the evaluation and numerous circular and sub-circular pits. The circular ring gullies are probably the foundation trenches for the walls of roundhouses. In all three cases there was a suggestion that the entrances of these probable roundhouses faced southeast. Internal pits were recorded in two of these features; one of which contained a bronze razor. Provisional dating of the pottery suggests that the circular features date to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age date and Middle/Late Iron Age. Some of the pits adjacent to the linear boundary appear to be final Iron Age ('Belgic') in date.

The ditch of the sub-circular enclosure was recut on at least one occasion. A few sherds of Early Bronze Age pottery in this area suggest that this enclosure may have had a longer history and is possibly the remains of a ploughed-out round barrow.

The chance to investigate in detail a block of late prehistoric landscape at Slade Farm has provided an opportunity to study settlement processes in the little-known limestone uplands zone of North Oxfordshire. This area is dominated by hillforts but no major excavations had previously been undertaken. This is in contrast with the Oxfordshire gravels, the Avon valley and the upper Thames valley. The excavations at Slade Farm will contribute to an understanding of the relationship between the limestone uplands and these lower-lying areas and also test some of the more general economic and social hypotheses that have been propounded.

Oxfordshire

COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Cokethorpe, St Mary's Church (SP 374063)

Nicholas Turner

A fire in the church tower destroyed the roof structure and partially removed the roughcasting to reveal sections of timber framing and brick panels. Recording occurred prior to restoration. Dendrochronological analysis showed that there were at least four phases of construction within the tower, although unfortunately none of the in situ timbers could be accurately dated. The timber framing and brick infilling may date to the late 16th century.

Dorchester-on-Thames, Malthouse Lane

(SU 56509428)

Alistair Barber

Archaeological assessment identified the potential for survival of up to 2.5 m of Roman, Saxon and later stratigraphy on the site, and led to the design of minimally-intrusive groundworks. Subsequent fieldwork revealed only post-Medieval garden soil, containing residual Roman and later pottery.

Eynsham, Mill Street (SP 433094)

Nicholas Turner

A watching brief during development recorded only 18th-19th century agricultural features.

Great Milton, Milton Common Pipeline

(SP 633023 to 630028)

Nicholas Turner

A watching brief was undertaken during groundworks associated with the laying of the Thames Water pipeline. The route crossed the putative line of the Roman road from Dorchester-on-Thames to Fleet Marston, although no trace of this, or any other archaeological features, were recorded.

Hardwick Farm, Banbury (SP 460430)

Alistair Barber

A watching brief undertaken during construction of an access road recorded the continuation of a medieval hollow-way visible as an earthwork in the adjacent field.

Kidlington, Park Farm Barns (SP 48601440)

Nicholas Turner

Prior to conversion a photographic survey was conducted. The barn is thought to date from the 17th century, with the addition of a combined granary and cart-shed, and a range of bullock sheds, during the 18th-19th century. A watching brief during groundworks recorded walls and ditches which are likely to relate to divisions of the farmyard.

North-East of Witney Development Area (SP 370105)

Alistair Barber

Desk-based assessment, fieldwalking, geophysical survey and trenching were undertaken. This confirmed the existence of three putative ring ditches observed from cropmark evidence (PRNs 4526, m4852 and 5413) whilst finding no evidence on the ground for a fourth (PRN 5711). A putative enclosure (PRN 5710) was also shown not to exist. Random trenching revealed only limited archaeological remains, predominantly of post-Medieval date.

South Moreton to Hagbourne Hill Pipeline

(SU 496871 to 553889)

Nicholas Turner

A watching brief was maintained during groundworks associated with a Thames Water water-main. No archaeological features were recorded.

Stanford-in-the-Vale, 27 High Street (SU 34349321)

Clifford Bateman

An evaluation identified five linear ditches and two pits. The initial phase of activity, represented by a wide boundary ditch is broadly dated to the 2nd-4th century, while the majority of the other features date to the 4th century. One 12-13th century Medieval pit was also revealed.

Swinbrook, Old Farm (SP 28121203)

Nicholas Turner

A watching brief during groundworks recorded no archaeological features.

Wantage, Denchurch Road (SU 39458837)

Clifford Bateman

Evaluation identified linear ditches and small pits. The initial phase of activity is dated to the late 1st or early 2nd century. The majority of the remaining features are broadly dated to the 2nd-3rd century. Artefactual material from a loam deposit which sealed all archaeological features indicates that the land boundaries were redundant by the late 3rd-early 4th century. The evaluation confirms the extensive nature of Romano-British activity in Wantage.

NATIONAL TRUST

Gary Marshall

Chastleton House

There has been a lull in the archaeological activity at

Chastleton since the conservation work on the house was completed in 1995. However, further excavations have been carried out over the winter of 1996/97 around the Brewhouse as a consequence of the partial conversion of this building to a holiday cottage. A watching brief has also been carried out whilst the work was in progress and this has brought to light a number of interesting discoveries.

Firstly, outside the building two trenches excavated for the purpose of laying French drains have revealed extensive areas of pitched stone paving on either side of the building. These lie below late 19th century cobbled surfaces. They are almost certainly the original 17th century path surfaces providing defined routes between the Brewhouse and the house cellars on the north side of the building and the Brewhouse and the stables on the south side of the building. On the north side of the building this paving was found to be flanked by compacted rubblestone containing numerous fragments of clay pipe, pottery and bone and it is assumed that this area served as a midden yard during the 17th century with domestic rubbish from the kitchens deposited here before it was taken out to the fields.

Beneath the paving on the north side of the building a crudely constructed rubblestone wall was found, built up against the face of the natural bedrock which lies close to the ground surface in this area of the gardens. The wall in fact forms a right-angled return, suggesting the corner of a building built up over the bedrock. A number of pieces of Medieval pottery were found in the soils abutting the face of this wall, suggesting perhaps a 13th/14th century date for its construction.

This wall is almost certainly associated with a wall found beneath the brick floor of one of the rooms constituting the Brewhouse (the Brewhouse actually occupied the middle portion of the building: there are two further rooms partitioned off from it at the west end of the building). This was exposed when a small square trench was excavated to bring the modern services out to connect with the aforementioned trench on the north side of the building. This structure had clearly been cut by the construction trench for the footings of the Brewhouse which is thought to be contemporary with the construction of the house i.e. the first decade of the 17th century. Close examination suggests that the below floor structure may in fact belong to two phases of construction, the lower three courses of stone separated from the upper courses by a thick band of charcoal and ash. Charcoal was also found beneath the lower section of the wall and it should therefore be possible to get some radio carbon dates for these two phases of construction. The upper section possibly dates from the 16th century, whilst the lower section is probably contemporary with the right angled section of wall found outside the building i.e. 13th/14th century.

On the opposite side of the building 17th century pitched stone paving was also found in the stableyard with the kerbs of this paving leading between the various doors incorporated into the stables and the Brewhouse. Overlying

this paving, a substantial dump of broken tile, stone and mortar points to a previously unrecorded phase of repair to the building. This phase of repair can be fairly accurately dated after the discovery of a 1723 penny in the layer. Evidence was also found to suggest that repairs were carried out in the early 19th century, in this case two perfectly circular postholes for scaffolding poles which had penetrated into the paving. The backfill of one of these holes contained Westmoreland slate, a roofing material introduced to Chastleton in the early 19th century (suggested by contemporary accounts).

The Trust's policy at Chastleton has been to bury all the modern services such as drainage pipes and electrical cables. An electric main was laid to the Brewhouse as part of the repairs and in order to bury this cable it was necessary to lift the flagstones forming the paving around the west stair tower. When these stones were lifted they were found to be marked on the underside with a carved letter, either a T or a G (Fig 1). Each letter was also accompanied by a set of Roman numerals, suggesting that the stones were laid according to some pre-arranged pattern which was devised away from the site. It is thought that these stones - cut from what appears to be a hard blue/grey limestone - originally formed the floor of one of the basement rooms of the house, possibly the Dairy. It would therefore follow that if the masons were given the dimensions of the room they could have cut the stones away from the site and pieced them together using the system of numerals. The letter presumably indicates the individual mason responsible for cutting the stones. Mason T seems to have had a steadier hand than mason G (!), although to be fair the latter had a much more difficult letter to cut.

On the subject of scratching and scribbling one of the more interesting observations made in the Brewhouse has been a series of short lines incised into the stone mullions of the windows on the first and second floors. The lines are grouped together so that there are perhaps six or seven groups with a variation in the number of lines between ten and twenty. The early history of the building is not known but it is thought that part of the building may have served as a wool store since a 'Woolhouse' is mentioned in an inventory of 1633. Perhaps then these could be crude tally marks, serving as a rather crude form of stocktaking for whatever was stored in the building - wool or perhaps grain or malted barley used in the brewing process?

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Abingdon : West Central Redevelopment Area
SU 4962 9702
Tim Allen

Introduction

The Vale of White Horse District Council, who own the Municipal Car Park on the west side of West St. Helen Street, recently acquired the SEB depot to the north and the

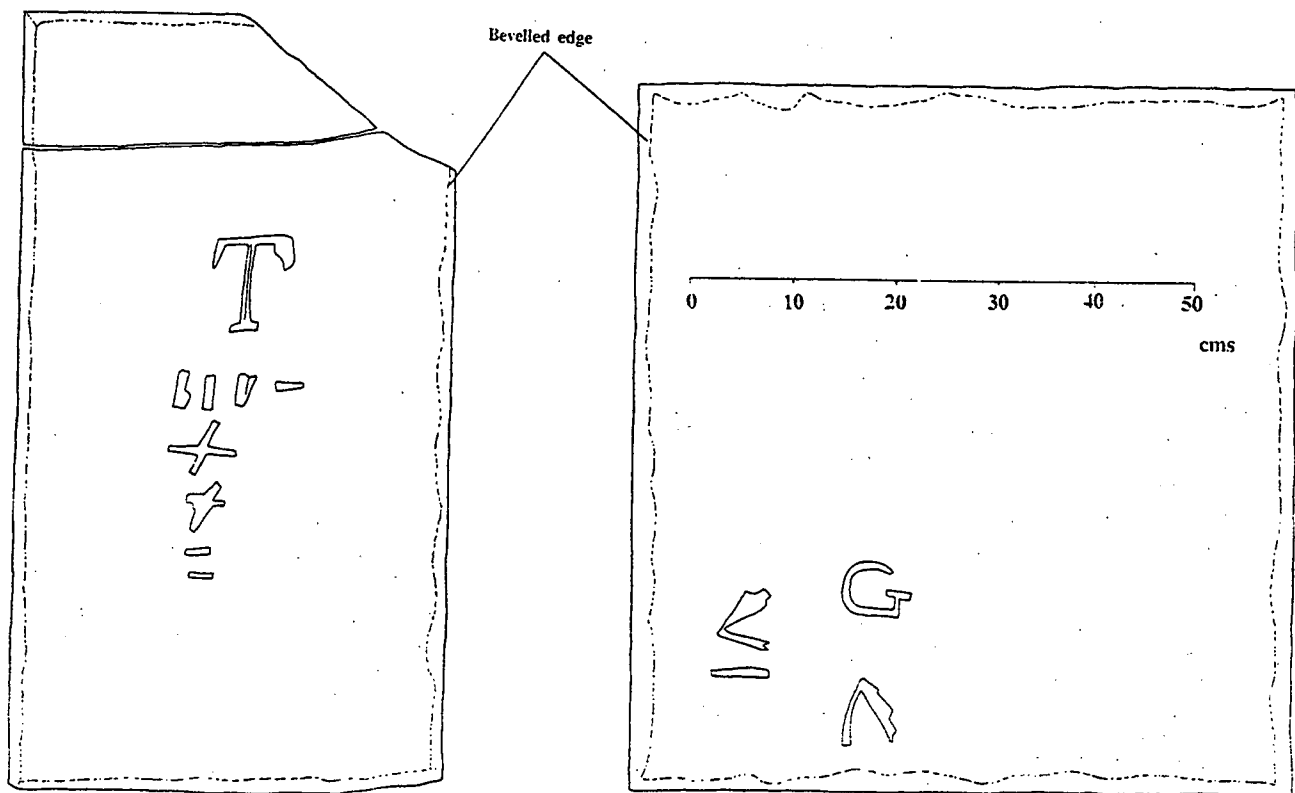


Fig 1. Chastleton House: mason's marks on flagstones.

Regal Cinema site which fronts onto The Square, providing them with an area of approximately 0.93 ha. for redevelopment. They asked the OAU to undertake the archaeological evaluation of the site. A Desktop Study of Archaeological Potential was written for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services, who then asked for a 4% evaluation by trenching. This took place from November 1996 and January 1997.

Archaeological background (Fig 2)

Excavations carried out on and around the site of the Vale offices in the Vineyard (Allen, T G in *SMA* 19-26) showed that Abingdon was settled over 2600 years ago, and has been a place of importance ever since. Before the Romans came the town was already a bustling riverside market centre surrounded by massive defensive ditches on the landward side. Other finds suggest that the pre-Roman and Roman town stretched from the Abbey gardens on the east to beyond West St. Helen Street on the west, and that its western limit lies within the redevelopment area (*SMA* 2, 22; Miles 1975; R Thomas unpublished; *SMA* 20, 90-93; *SMA* 21, 114-5).

Saxon Abingdon is little known, but St. Helen's Church at the south end of West St. Helen Street is thought to have been a Saxon minster church serving the town (Blair 1994, 64-5). West St. Helen Street was certainly in existence by the 12th century, when documents refer to tenements along the street. Behind West St. Helen Street documents also mention 'town ditches', presumably town boundaries on the west side of Abingdon. The Shitebourne ditch (Fig 2) may be part of these. There are no maps old enough to show these 'town ditches', but study of the Christ's Hospital map of

1844, which shows all the properties handed over to the Corporation and charitable institutions at the Dissolution of the Abbey, shows a line of undeveloped properties that runs around the town centre as far as the junction of Broad Street and Stert Street, and this is likely to reflect the position of the former town ditches. This also lines up with the excavated prehistoric defensive ditches in the Vineyard, which suggested to us that the Medieval ditches may have been directly recutting the prehistoric ones.

Understanding the layout of the buried defences may explain some of the peculiarities of the modern street layout, particularly the curious curve of West St. Helen Street, and why Bath Street and West St. Helen Street do not join up.

The name of St Edmund's Lane, which runs from West St. Helen Street through the redevelopment area, suggested that the site includes the birthplace of St. Edmund, the only archbishop of Canterbury to come from Abingdon. After his death a chapel dedicated to him was built close to his birthplace in AD 1288, which survived until at least AD 1495. Both the Historic Towns Survey of Oxfordshire (Rodwell 1975) and Two Cartularies of Abingdon Abbey (Lambrick and Slade 1990 and 1991) place the chapel in this general area, though the exact site of the chapel is disputed.

Principal Results of the evaluation

Twelve trenches were dug (Fig 3). Two parts of the area have not been evaluated; the area covered by the Regal Cinema itself, which is unsafe, and the north-east part of the Municipal Car Park, which includes the only access to the car park.

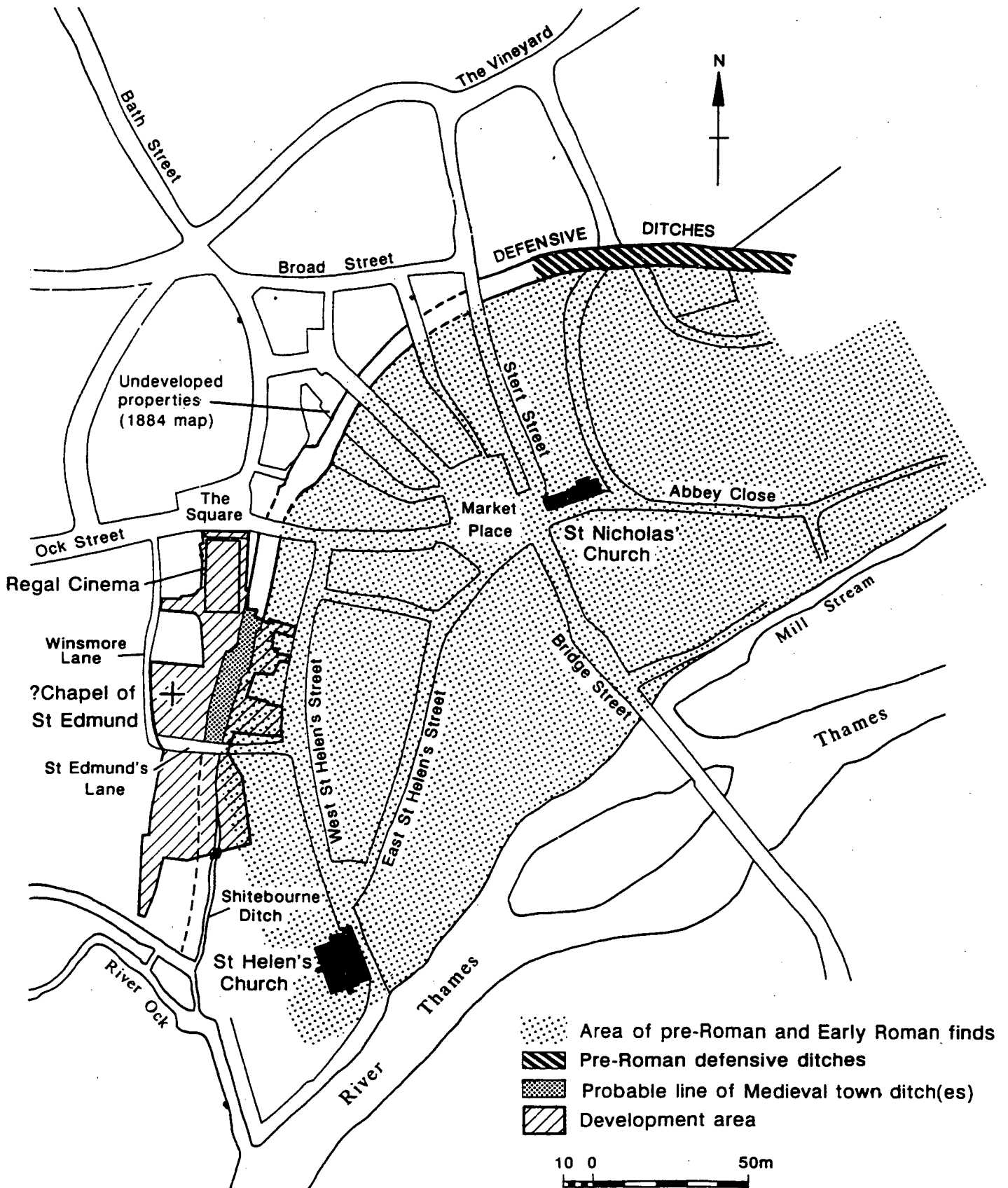


Fig 2. Abingdon showing archaeological background.

Oxfordshire

Iron Age ditch and burial

The earliest finds from the site were residual flints including a fragment of a ground implement, possibly a Neolithic axe, and a knife and a core probably dating to the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. The latter were residual within a north-south ditch in Trench 6 containing sherds of Iron Age pottery and a crouched inhumation burial halfway up the fill. The ditch was 0.9 m deep and over 2 m wide. The burial was of an adult male with head to the south, lying on his left side. A probable continuation of the ditch was traced through Trenches 4 and 5, suggesting that the ditch was curving slightly eastwards as it ran north. Here the ditch was nearly 4 m wide and 1.35 m deep.

The knees of a second adult male were found at the east end of Trench 5 in a severely truncated grave. The position of the bones suggested that the body was flexed or crouched on its right side. This may also be Iron Age.

The 'Oppidum' defences of Abingdon

Two defensive ditches were found on an approximately south-north alignment in Trenches 7, 5 and 3. The ditches ran parallel 8 m apart, and although there was no direct stratigraphic relationship between them, both contained Early Roman pottery and are likely to have been contemporary. The western and outer ditch was between 6.5 and 7 m wide, and was 2.1 m deep in Trench 3 shallowing to 1.75 m deep in Trench 7. The ditch bottom sloped gently south towards the Thames. The ditch fills contained Early Roman pottery in the middle fills, and in all three trenches a series of gravelly fills were seen above this, suggesting deliberate backfilling during the Roman period.

The inner ditch was recut several times, and its width at any one time is not known. It appears to have been slightly deeper than the western outer ditch, 2.5 m deep in Trench 3 shallowing to 2.0 m in Trench 7, and again had a slight fall south towards the river. The maximum width of the ditch cuts was 12 m wide in Trench 7 and 10 m wide in Trench 5. The earliest cut in Trench 7 contained only Middle Iron Age pottery, possibly indicating a Middle Iron Age origin for the defences; the later cuts, and those in the other trenches, contained Early Roman pottery. Waterlogging at the bottom of the ditches suggests permanent shallow groundwater.

The dimensions, character and date of these ditches are very similar to those of the defensive ditches found in the Vineyard, and the prehistoric defences of the town have now been confirmed on the west and north of the town, surrounding at least 15 ha (Independent drawing). The ditch sections here however have shown that the inner ditch in particular has a number of recuts, suggesting that it survived for longer than on the north-east of the town.

A third possible ditch or large pit was found between the two in Trench 5 with a human skull, a complete late 1st century pot and a paste melon bead at the bottom.

A Medieval 'Town Ditch'

A substantial Medieval drainage ditch was found in

Trenches 3, 5 and 7, recutting the inner prehistoric defensive ditch. This ditch had two lines of wooden posts in the bottom in Trench 7, possibly originally a wood-lined culvert, and associated waterlogged plant remains included rye. South of St. Edmund's Lane this ditch was still open in 1844, as it is marked on the Christ's Hospital map of the town (Fig 2 Shitebourne ditch). The eastern edge of the ditch was marked by a succession of stone walls, and the line of these walls is followed by the backs of properties all the way along West St. Helen Street. This ditch is almost certainly one of the 'town ditches' mentioned in Medieval documents, marking the limit of the Medieval town.

The Vicarage of St. Helen's

North of St. Edmund's Lane in Trenches 9, 10, 11 and 3 a complex of Medieval stone buildings was found, covering an area 17.5 m east-west by 22.5 m north-south, with an additional 4 m of lesser structures south of that. The evaluation trenches were not sufficiently extensive to recover a full plan of the building, but several significant elements were investigated (Fig 4).

The north-west corner was found in Trench 3. Inside this corner was a cellared room whose walls survived 1.75 m high, with holes to take the joists of a suspended floor visible near to the top. No clear floor was identified in the narrow excavated slot, and the cellar was infilled with debris including a Purbeck marble mortar in the 17th century.

The east end of the building was found in Trench 12, and was constructed within the west side of the Medieval town ditch. The external face of the east wall was followed down 1 m below the internal floor level, but was not bottomed. At the south-east corner this wall was strengthened with a massive buttress, now largely robbed. The south wall was also robbed, and a continuation of the robber trench was found in Trench 11. The east room was c 5 m north-south, and had a gravel mortar floor; a small trench against the north wall showed that there were earlier floors beneath.

The north wall of this room (wall 2200) was offset 2 m to the south of the wall in Trench 3, perhaps indicating an L-shaped building. Wall 2200 was the best-preserved part of the exposed building, surviving 0.9 m above contemporary ground level, probably because it had been reused as part of a later boundary wall. Below ground this wall was supported upon an arch at least 2 m wide, probably a stone-saving relieving arch; at a later date the wall appears to have been strengthened on the north outer side with a buttress. The area north of the wall was not fully investigated, but the walls were abutted by cess-like fills, possibly indicating a garderobe.

In Trench 9 the south-west corner of another room was found, whose west wall ran north across Trench 10. It is probable that this is all part of one building. Another room was added outside the south-west corner in the 16th century, with a doorway and threshold leading out to the south, where cobbled surfaces, gullies, wall slots and a hearth were found.

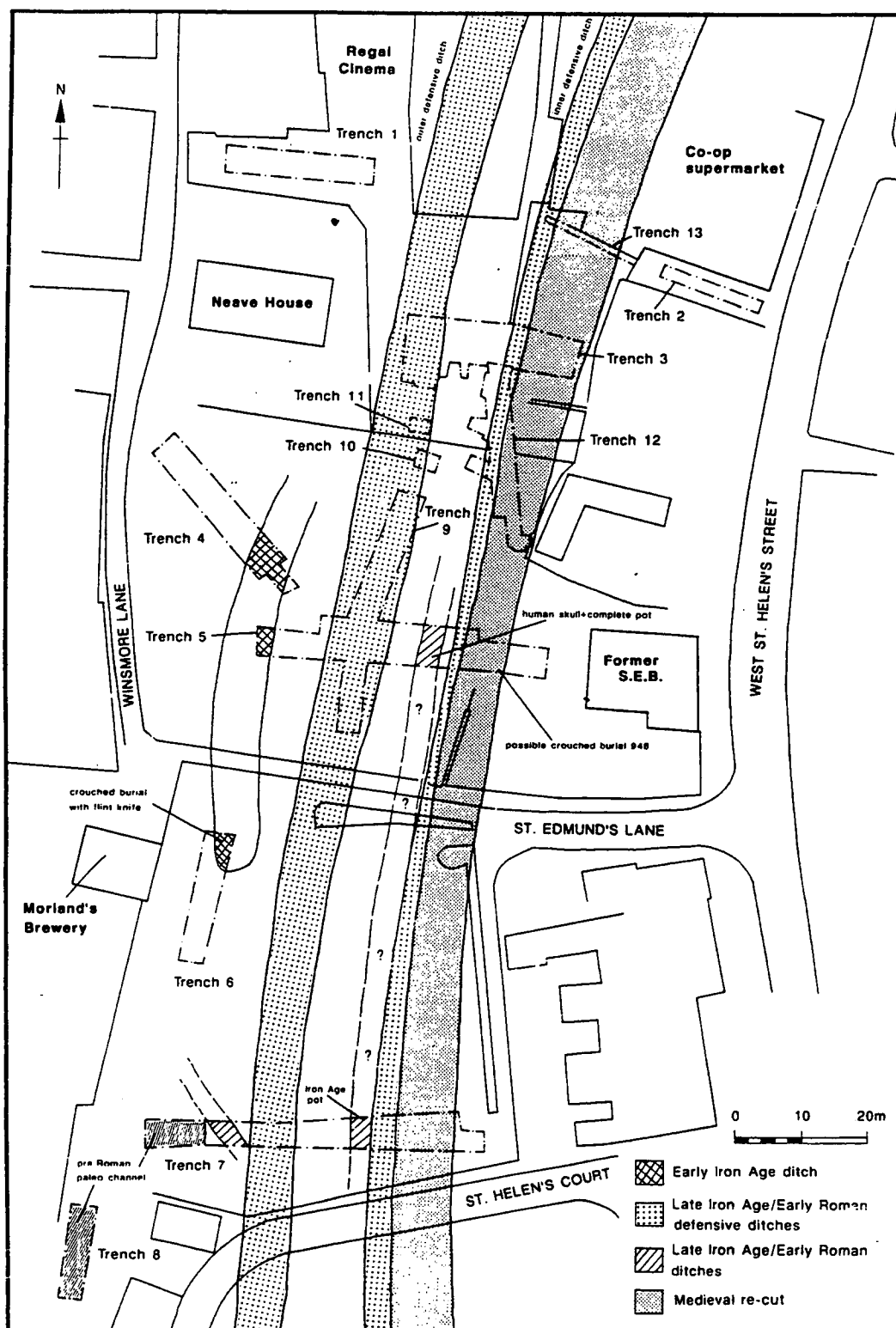


Fig 3. Part of Abingdon showing results of evaluation.

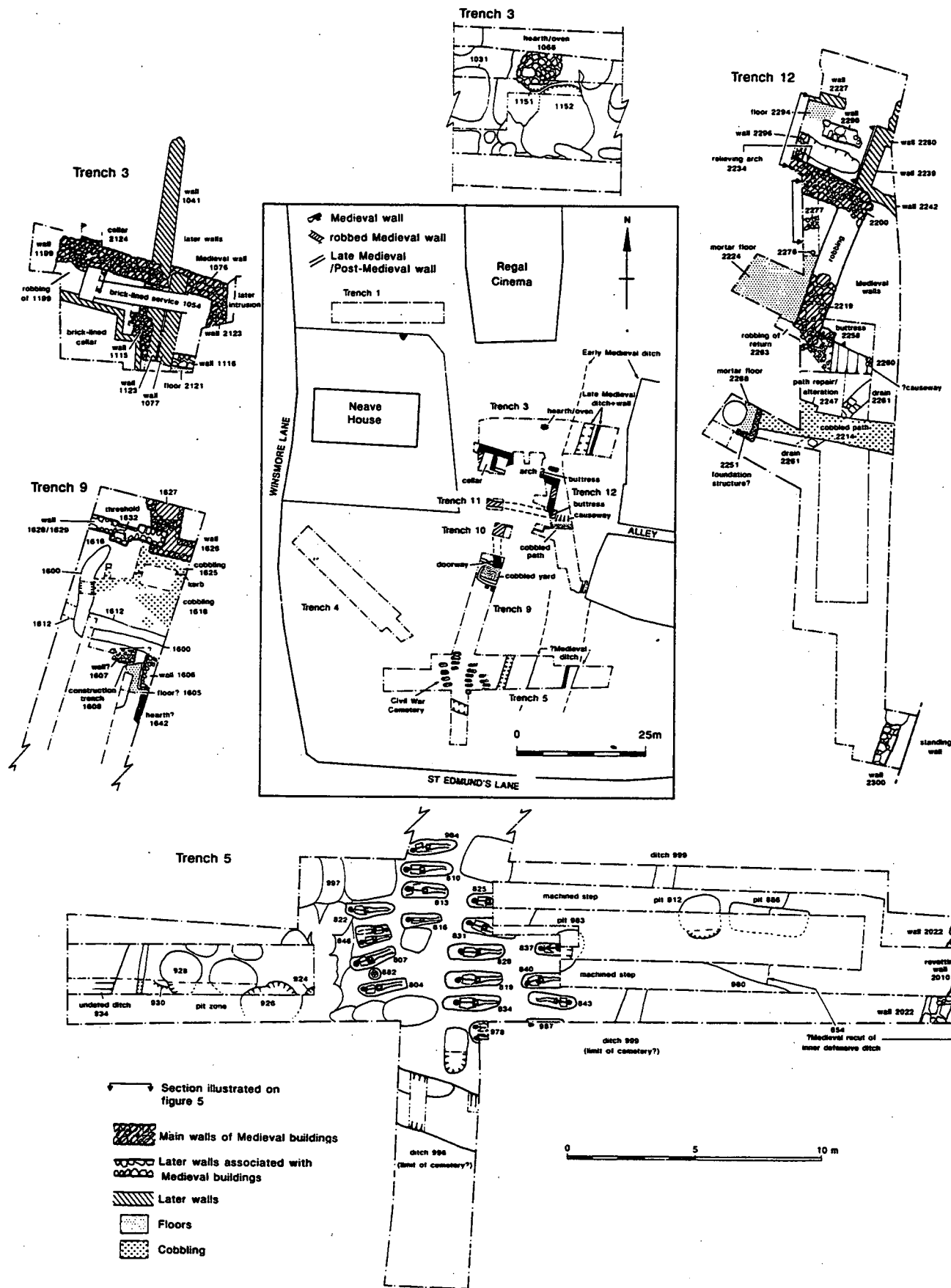


Fig 4. Evaluation trenches in the area of the 'Vicarage of St Helen's'.

The pottery from the earliest layers contemporary with the building was consistent, suggesting a construction date in the later 12th or 13th century. A widespread demolition layer was found over the east and southern part of the building, which is dated to the 17th century.

The building was approached from an alley (now blocked) leading from West St. Helen Street. In the post-Medieval period a well-made cobbled path led from a porch on the south side of the building towards the alley. The south-east corner of the building is in line with the north wall of the alley, and a dump of sandy soil within the hollow of the town ditch next to this corner appears to represent a medieval causeway leading from the alley to the building across the town ditch.

Documentary evidence shows that this was the Vicarage of St. Helen's, recorded by Amyce in West St. Helen Street in AD 1554 and described in a terrier of 1634 as 'A vicarage house in West St. Helen's with orchard and a garden mounted round with a stone wall compassed with a lane on the south and west'. The churchwardens of St. Helen's reported in 1666 that the vicarage was destroyed during the English Civil War and was not rebuilt, which fits with the date for the destruction of the excavated building.

The vicar of St. Helen's was first appointed in the 13th century when Abingdon Abbey appropriated the church, and was given 'the house formerly held by the rector of St. Helen's'. There are no Medieval documents which indicate the position of this house, but it is likely that this is the building found in the evaluation.

Nothing unequivocally links the excavated building with the Chapel of St. Edmund, which is attributed to this site because Edmund's father Reginald Rich had a house in West St. Helen Street, and the chapel was founded on the site of Edmund's birthplace. It is still possible that the chapel lies beneath the Regal Cinema or the standing buildings to the west of this. Alternatively, however, since Reginald did hold other properties in and around Abingdon, Edmund may have been born at one of these, indeed Amyce's survey of 1554 places the site of the Chapel 800 m further west on the south side of Ock Street.

The Cemetery

South of the buildings a cemetery was found in Trench 5, cut into a deep build-up of garden soils. There was only one layer of burials, all oriented west-east. Eighteen graves were excavated out of a likely total of thirty, and contained 21 individuals. The graves were all very shallow, and were presumably dug from higher up, but were later truncated by cultivation.

The bodies were a mixed group including children and men and women of all ages. Most graves only contained odd sherds of residual pottery, but some had shroud pins, one had a post-Medieval lace tag and another contained a group of 16th/17th century pottery. The garden soil into which they were dug also contained post-Medieval finds.

There is no record of a cemetery registered on this site, and it is most likely that this shortlived burial ground dates from the Civil War, when the Vicarage had just been destroyed and the garden plot lay vacant. This is the second cemetery of Civil War date to be found in Abingdon, the other having been excavated by the OUA in the Vineyard (SMA 19, 44-7).

Other discoveries

Medieval pits were widely distributed across the site, particularly around the Medieval building, along Winsmore Lane and in Trench 6. One of the pits in Trench 6 contained the prone skeleton of an adult woman, probably the victim of foul play. In Trench 7 at the south-west corner of the site a palaeochannel was cut by a Roman ditch; this was probably the original course of the stream later canalised by Morlands Brewery in the 19th century, within which Trench 8 proved to lie.

The eastern edge of the site (within the prehistoric defences and Medieval town) was investigated by Trench 2 and the eastern part of Trench 5. Here recent build-up was deeper, and post-medieval features had obliterated almost all traces of earlier activity. The cellar of a former tenement on West St. Helen's Street was found at the east end of Trench 2.

Conclusions

The evaluation has confirmed the line of the prehistoric defences on the west of the town, and has shown that the inner defensive ditch survived into the Medieval period, becoming the western boundary of the Medieval town. The Medieval street layout was thus constrained within the limits of the original prehistoric defences. The town ditch appears to have gone out of use gradually during the Medieval and early post-Medieval periods, but did not finally disappear until the late 19th century.

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Abingdon, George and Dragon, Stert Street (SU 4982 9711)

A. Parkinson

A watching brief was undertaken by the OAU in February 1995 at the George and Dragon public house. A stone feature was revealed oriented approximately east-west. Some of the stones were loose, and mortar was noted adhering to some stones. The exact nature of the feature is unclear. 12 sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered. All were probably Oxfordshire ware. The majority of sherds dated 3rd to 4th century with an overall date range of 2nd to 4th century.

Abingdon, Tilsley Park Development, Dunmore Road (SU 4945 9930)

J. Hiller

A second phase of work was undertaken by the OAU at this Sports and Leisure development site on the western outskirts of Abingdon in the spring of 1996. The construction of new buildings was monitored. The sequence of soil horizons on the site was as recorded in an adjacent part of the site by the OAU the previous year. No archaeological features or finds were observed.

Ascott-under-Wychwood, land adjoining 21 High Street (SP 3048 1882)

J. Hiller

The OAU carried out a watching brief at Land Adjoining 21 High Street, Ascott-Under-Wychwood in August 1996 in the course of groundwork associated with the construction of two dwellings. The development site lies c 300 m south-east of the twelfth century castle of Ascott D'Oilly, partly excavated in the 1940s (Jope and Threlfall 1959), in an area adjacent to known evidence for Medieval pottery production. A probable kiln was discovered in the 1930s in an area to the south of the western end of the High Street (ibid, 246).

Medieval pottery of Wychwood type ware and post-Medieval material was recovered from general soil horizons during the course the watching brief. Part of a probable post-Medieval stone building and associated yard surface of post-Medieval date were also seen. It seems very likely that the quantities of Wychwood-type ware (Oxfordshire fabric OXCX - Mellor 1994, 106-11) are wasters from a nearby kiln, though no certainly associated features were identified. Dating the assemblage is somewhat problematic, but a case can be made for it being 12th century. The total lack of Brill/Boarstall ware at this site, whilst perhaps being simply chance, may have

chronological significance. Wychwood ware has been found in association with Brill pottery at several sites in the area (ibid, 110), giving a terminus post quem of the 13th century. However, a few sherds of Wychwood Ware are known from 12th-century deposits at Witney (ibid.), and Wychwood types were the major ware in the 12th century levels of Ascot D'Oilly Castle (Jope and Threlfall 1959, 246). The fact that no vessel forms of the later Medieval tradition (eg bung-hole cisterns) were present amongst this assemblage, would add support to it being datable to the earlier part of the Medieval period.

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Asthall, Orchard House (SP 2885 1109)

Paul Booth

A watching brief was carried out by the OAU in May 1996 during construction work. Orchard House lies just south of the village of Asthall and is probably situated close to the south-western edge of the major Roman settlement of Asthall, some 70 m south of part of the site excavated in advance of pipeline construction in 1992.

A number of irregular features were observed, associated with a small quantity of Roman pottery but not closely datable. These were probably pits dug for the extraction of gravel for use within the Roman settlement.

Bampton, Lime Tree House (SP 3172 0324)

J. Hiller

The OAU carried out a watching brief during the construction of a new swimming pool in the grounds of Lime Tree House, Bampton, in the summer of 1996. A former ?ploughsoil of uncertain date and structural features relating to modern landscaping of the garden were observed. Modern finds were recovered from the excavations, but no Medieval finds or features were seen.

Banbury, land adjacent to Cooper's Gate, Southam Road (SP 4545 4105)

J. Hiller

The OAU carried out a Watching Brief at Land Adjacent to Cooper's Gate, Southam Road, Banbury, during the construction of new housing (SMA 26, 55). The development site was located 200 m north of Castle Street and is bounded by the Oxford Canal to the east and Southam Road to the west. The site comprised 2.97 ha of land, located in the vicinity of the Medieval castle in Banbury.

No archaeological features or finds were observed during

the excavations of foundations and services for new houses. The site did not reveal land use of any period predating a modern horticultural nursery. It is possible that the entire area, generally low-lying and apparently poorly drained, never saw significant archaeologically-detectable activity until recent times.

Blackthorn, land adjacent to The Royal Oak
(SP 6228 1934)

A. Hardy

A watching brief was undertaken by the OAU during the demolition of 'Regina Cottage' and the subsequent excavation of footings for new housing south west of the Royal Oak Inn in Station Road. An evaluation in 1995 had produced a small quantity of 12th or 13th century pottery from the fill of a pit, but no structures were located. Otherwise material of 17th and 18th century date was found associated with the foundations of 'Regina Cottage'. During the watching brief, two sherds of 12th to 13th century pottery were recovered together with more post-Medieval material.

Cassington, Worton Rectory Farm (SP 4595 1150)
Gill Hey and Jeff Muir

As part of the investigation of settlement sites and landscapes in the Yarnton-Cassington study area (see *infra* Yarnton), English Heritage funded a small evaluation on a cropmark site west of the hamlet of Worton in September 1996 (Fig 5).

Air photographs taken over many years show a palimpsest of features which indicated mainly late Iron Age and Roman settlement, but many pit-like marks were interpreted as sunken-featured buildings. Medieval ridge-and-furrow could also be seen. The cropmarks were plotted by the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England in 1993 (Fig 6). Fieldwalking in 1970 by the Oxford University Archaeological Society, in 1991 by the OAU and over the years by Jane Randall of Cassington has produced quantities of Romano-British and Medieval finds, but also Saxon pottery sherds. Evaluation by OAU in 1993 to the south of the path from Worton to Cassington uncovered two Saxon sunken-featured buildings (Hey 1994), where pit-like marks could be seen from the air.

A rectangular feature on the air photographs, approximately 16 m x 6 m, attracted particular interest. Its dimensions were similar to the Saxon timber-hall buildings excavated at Yarnton in 1990/1 and its location adjacent to sunken-featured buildings and in an area where Saxon sherds had been recovered raised the possibility that this, too, was a Saxon hall. If so, its method of construction would differ from those found at Yarnton which were built of earthfast posts; however post-in-trench structures are a well-documented Saxon building form.

Saxon hall buildings are rare in the Oxford region and have only been excavated on any scale at Yarnton. If the feature at Worton proved to be a Saxon building, it would indicate that such structures were more common than has been supposed; they may have been a component of many mid Saxon settlements. It was also possible that Worton, Yarnton and the buildings found on Cresswell Field in 1995 (Bell and Hey 1996) formed part of a continuous ribbon of settlement which shifted its focus through time, as at Mucking (Hamerow 1993). Clarification of the form and date of the feature at Worton was thus important for understanding Saxon settlement patterns in this area.

The Worton cropmark site is not threatened at the present time and the aim of the 1996 evaluation was to establish the date and character of the feature with minimal intervention. Geophysical survey was undertaken by Archaeometry Branch of English Heritage which clearly demonstrated the presence of the rectangular feature. Four trenches were then excavated to transect all four sides and the exposed features were excavated.

The evaluation confirmed the identification of the feature as a Saxon hall (Fig 7). It was a post-in-trench building, 17 m x 8 m, aligned east-west and with two possible entrances in the middle of both the west and the south walls. No floor surfaces had survived. It had cut through a sunken-featured building as well as Roman ditches. A small amount of Saxon pottery was recovered from the wall trench, and it was cut by a ?rubbish pit which also contained Saxon sherds.

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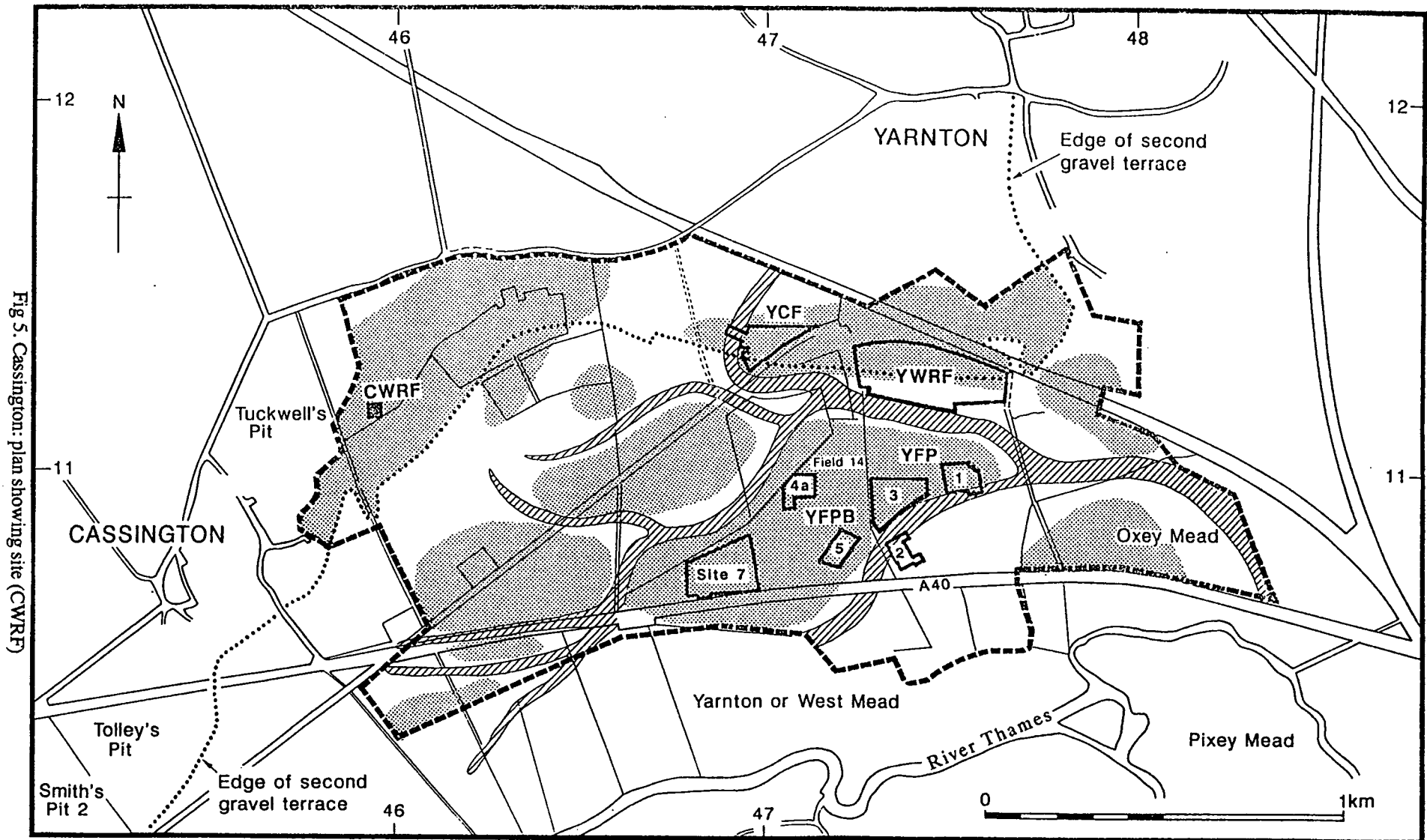
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Church Enstone, St Kenelm's Church (SP 370 241)
Paul Booth

A watching brief was carried out by the OAU in July 1996 during replacement of parts of the 19th century floor of the Medieval church. No Medieval features were revealed, but a number of memorial slabs principally of late 18th and early 19th century date were recorded. These had been redeposited in the bases of the brick-walled voids built beneath the 19th century wooden floors. The main locations of the redeposited stones were at the east end of the nave and at its extreme west end and at the west end of the north aisle. The stones remain *in situ*.

Drayton, 17 Eastway (SP 4767 9384)
Richard Brown

A watching brief was undertaken by the OAU during topsoil stripping in advance of house construction, on land set back some 200 m from Eastway. No archaeological remains or deposits were revealed.



- | | |
|---|---|
|  Excavated areas |  Palaeochannel |
|  Evaluated area |  Gravel |

Fig 5. Cassington: plan showing site (CWRP)

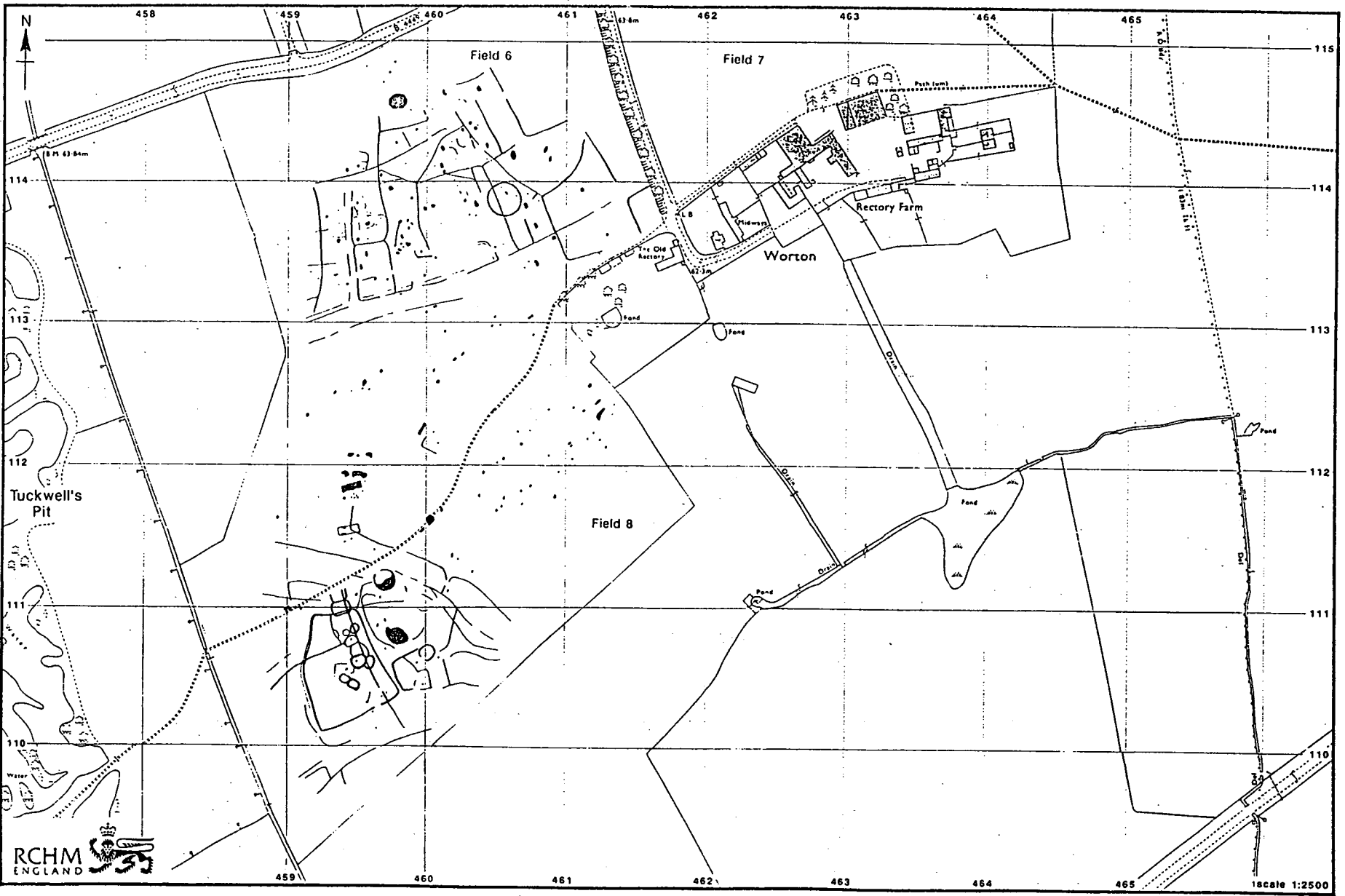


Fig 6. Cassington. Site plan showing crop marks.

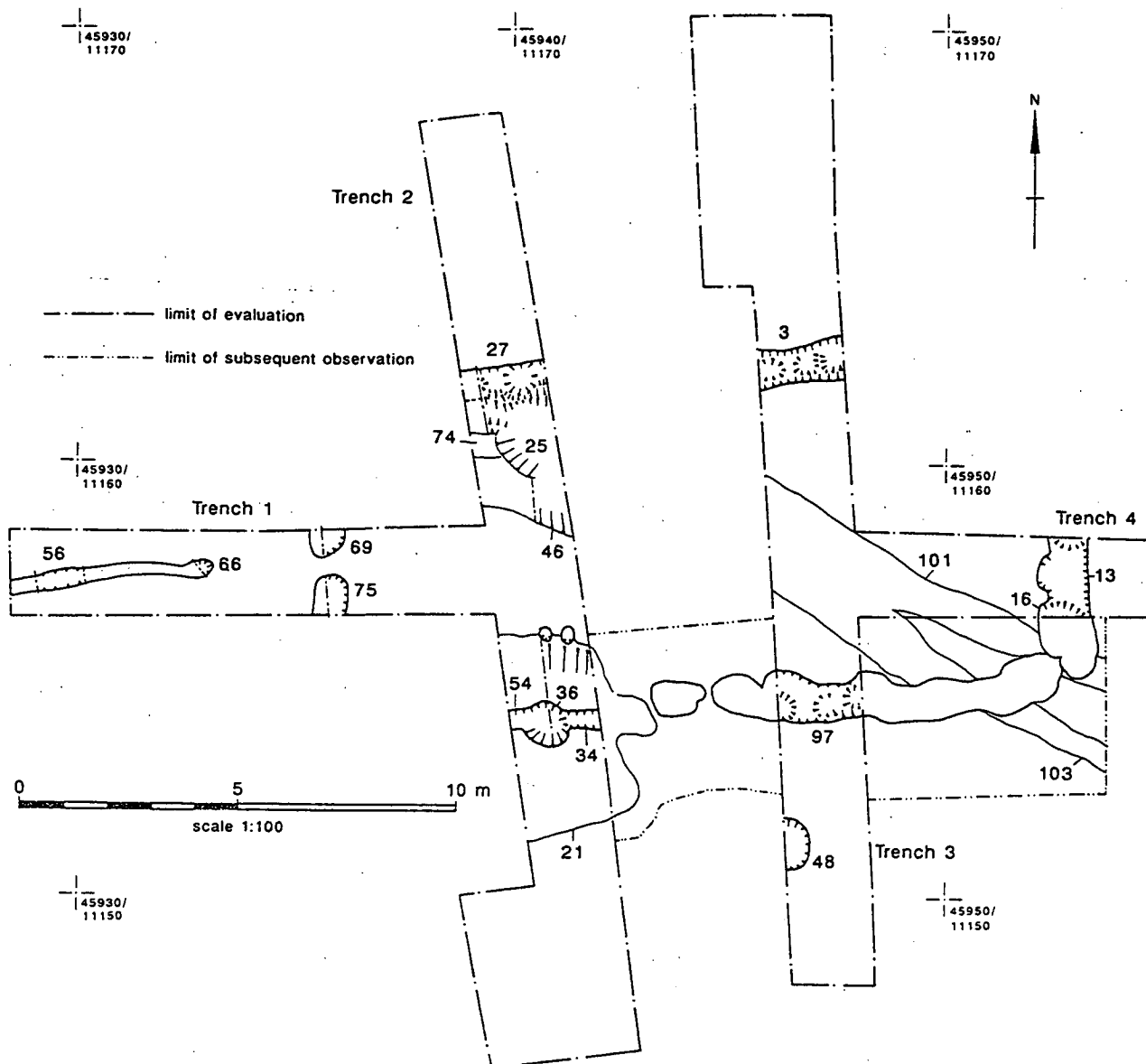


Fig 7. Cassington. Plan of rectangular building.

Fringford, Fringford Manor (SP 6068 2918)
Bryan Matthews

A watching brief was carried out by the OAU in September 1996 during the excavation of foundations for a new residence within the grounds of Fringford Manor, Fringford, near Bicester. Three cut features were revealed, two of which were possibly part of a robber trench. The features were filled by rubbly soils which spread over the whole of the area examined. The third feature was of post-Medieval date but the possible robber trench could have been earlier. The rubbly deposits probably represent landscaping activity.

Henley, Phyllis Court Club (SU 7629 8306)
Cheryl Bishop

A watching brief was maintained during construction of an extension to the Phyllis Court Club at Henley-on-Thames.

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were located.

Hampton Poyle, Kidlington, land east of Home Farm (SP 500 156)
J. Hiller

The OAU carried out a watching brief during the construction of a new house on land adjacent to Home Farm, Hampton Poyle throughout the latter part of 1996 and January 1997. The site lies within the core of the Medieval village of Hampton Poyle and is located just north-west of a probable moated site.

A ditch of Medieval date and a further undated ditch were observed during the course of this watching brief. The fills of the first ditch produced six sherds of pottery dated c AD 1075-1200. Two possible pits of unknown date were also observed. A few unstratified Medieval sherds were also

recovered, the latest of these dating c 1200-1400.

The dated ditch may be associated with a property within the shrunken Medieval village of Hampton Poyle, although no structural remains were observed. It is noticeable, however, that the apparent northeast - southwest alignment of the main linear feature does not conform with the alignment of the present Church Lane (c east-west), which seems likely to reflect the principal axis of the Medieval village. The significance of this is uncertain, but a possible east-west return of the ditch might suggest that this was enclosing or draining an area set at some little distance north of the lane and therefore not dependent on its layout.

The early-middle Medieval date of the finds from the ditch, and the total absence of significant later Medieval and post-Medieval material from the feature or elsewhere on the site might suggest some decline of the village from the 14th or 15th century.

Kidlington, land to the rear of Church Street
(SP 4960 1475)

Dan Poore

A field evaluation was undertaken by the OAU on land to the rear of Church Street, Kidlington. Seven evaluation trenches were excavated, on the western half of the site. The trench at the extreme west of the site produced evidence for three east-west aligned ditches. The trenches to the north and south of the site revealed evidence for further ditches. To the north a possible east-west ditch and three broadly north-south aligned ditches were noted. The latter may link with those found to the south of the site where at least five ditches were found; some were aligned northwest to southeast and others north-south. A small number of pits were noted during the evaluation. Very few finds were recovered. These included five sherds of pottery: four sherds were of late Iron Age to early Roman date and the remaining sherd was Medieval.

Kidlington, land south of Lock Crescent
(SP 493 126)

Paul Booth

Post-excavation analysis of this site (SMA 26, 57) reveals that the linear features excavated in 1995 were of late Iron Age date, superimposed on a site of later Mesolithic-early Neolithic date. The site had been ploughed in the Medieval period and the possible mound located above the small enclosure was the remains of a north-south aligned headland.

Kingston Bagpuize, Church of St John the Baptist
(SU 407 981)

Ian Scott

A small field evaluation, comprising three hand-excavated trenches, was carried out in advance of a proposed church

hall on the north side of the church. The trenches revealed no archaeological features, but 58 sherds of Medieval pottery with a date range from the late 11th to the late 15th century were recovered. A small amount of post-Medieval pottery was also found.

Minster Lovell, Minster Lovell Hall (SP 3234 1138)
Mark Roberts

An watching brief was undertaken by the OAU. A field evaluation had revealed structural evidence and a number of graves (SMA 26, 57). Nine undated graves were excavated during the watching brief, and recorded prior to reburial. A gully cut through three graves. Otherwise a single posthole, comparable to those seen in evaluation, and traces of two walls, belonging to a probable 19th century structure, were located.

Minster Lovell, Manor Farm Tythe Barn (SP 3234 1138)
Mark Roberts

An evaluation was undertaken by the OAU within the barn and comprised four small hand-excavated trenches. Part of a substantial stone-built structure pre-dating the present barn was found in the south-west corner. Other evidence suggested Medieval garden activity.

Nuneham Courtney, Lower Farm (SP 538 005)
Graham D Keavill and Mark Cole

Further geophysical work was carried out by the Ancient Monuments Laboratory on the site of a major Romano-British ceramic production site late in 1996. The new survey covered the southern half of the arable field to the east of Lower Farm, extending the study area up to the modern main road (A4074). The magnetometer survey shows that the system of enclosures on either side of the trackway continues eastward at least as far as the main road. Further kiln-like anomalies have been recognised as well, both in groups and individually. There now seems to be every reason to believe that the site actually extends beyond the artificial boundary of the modern road. The possibility that the trackway continues as far as the Roman road between Alchester and Dorchester-on-Thames had already been acknowledged (SMA 26, 58), but that the site extends that far now seems to be a real possibility.

Further survey work will be necessary to determine the limits of the site. Geophysics and fieldwalking both indicate a rapid fall-off of activity to the north and west, but equally they both show continuation to the south and east. Future work will concentrate in these directions, assuming that landowners' permissions are forthcoming. In the meanwhile, we still hope to undertake some trial excavations in the arable field (and possibly in the pasture also) in order to determine the condition of the remains.

Oxfordshire

Oxford, British Home Stores, between St Ebbe's and Queen Street (SP 5123 0610)

Gwilym Williams and Alan Hardy

The OAU maintained a watching brief during the excavation of test pits beneath the City Chambers Building. Limited archaeological evidence was revealed, some possible Medieval pit fills were noted.

Oxford, Christchurch Tom Quad (SP 5148 0599)

A Hardy

The OAU maintained a watching brief during the installation of an access ramp to the south-west terrace of Christchurch Tom Quad. No cut features were revealed. The lowest deposit found was a spread of dark brown silty clay mixed with coarse gravel. It contained inclusions of pottery, including residual Medieval pottery of 13th and 14th century date, some animal bone and charcoal flecks. This layer was sealed by a mortar layer. These two layers may have been deposited when the southern part of the Quad was built in the 16th century. They were sealed by soil layers.

Oxford, Cornmarket (SP 5127 0637)

A Hardy

The OAU carried out a watching brief during the excavation of the trench for the replacement gas mains along Cornmarket Street. No structural remains or significant archaeological deposits were revealed in the vicinity of the site of the North Gate (adjacent to the surviving St Michael's Tower). Human bone and a fragment of grave slab were found at the south end of Cornmarket Street where the trench went over the east end of the site of St Martin's Church (demolished 1820). The fragment of tombstone was dated to the mid-19th century on stylistic grounds.

Oxford, Cowley, Rover Paint Shop Building, Garsington Way (SP 5590 0390)

J. Hiller and G D Keevill

The OAU carried out a watching brief on behalf of Rover Group during construction work for a new building at the Rover Car Factory during July and August 1996. Particular attention was given to some very deep excavations on the Paint Shop site. A deep pit close to the reported location of Roman burials being a particular concern. The OAU had evaluated an area of the Paint Shop site in 1995 as a part of Rover Group's original planning application. Roman and Medieval ploughsoils were found in three of the four evaluation trenches, but no significant features were observed (SMA 26, 58-9).

A low level of archaeological activity was observed during this watching brief, which confirmed the results of the previous evaluation. Ploughsoils perhaps of Roman and Medieval date were sealed by make-up layers for the floor

of the recently demolished building, which had stood since 1939. A single sherd of very abraded Medieval pottery was recovered from the machine-excavated deposits. The evidence suggests agricultural use of the site since at least Roman times, and until the construction of the car factory in the 1930s.

Oxford, Holywell Mill Lane (SP 5210 0654)

Mark Roberts

The OAU undertook a field evaluation on the site of the proposed Centre for Islamic Studies, Holywell Mill Lane. Three trenches were excavated and two features were located. Both appear to be Medieval in date, on the basis of a small number of Medieval pot sherds. One feature was a slight ditch or gully, the other was a substantial ditch. The latter was only partially investigated.

Oxford, Littlemore, Lawn Upton School, Sandford Road (SP 5370 0270)

J. Hiller

The OAU undertook a watching brief during the construction of new housing at land adjacent to Lawn Upton School, Littlemore, in January and February 1996. Modern brick structures relating to backyard activity to the rear of properties on the Sandford Road were observed. Probable ploughsoil deposits were noted below the present topsoil, and the site may have been in agricultural use over an extended period. The only finds recovered were of 19th and 20th century date. No Roman material was seen despite the fact that the site was in relatively close proximity to evidence for pottery production at sites such as the Ashurst Clinic.

Oxford, Littlemore, Littlemore Park Road (Littlemore Hospital Grounds) (SP 536 023)

J. Hiller

The OAU undertook a watching brief during the construction of a new road in the grounds of Littlemore Hospital during the summer of 1996. The work revealed a very low density of archaeological activity in the south and east areas of Littlemore Hospital, and confirmed the results of an evaluation of the Hospital grounds by OAU in 1995 (SMA 26, 59). A probable Medieval plough-soil was identified, but no archaeological features were observed. A few sherds of Medieval pottery were recovered during topsoil stripping. No evidence of significant activity of any period before the 19th century was identified in the areas examined.

Oxford, New College, The Slype (SP 5180 0648)

A Hardy

The OAU maintained a watching brief during the excavation of a test pit against the south side of the retaining wall on

the north side of the Slype at New College. This wall lies on the probable line of the northern wall of city. The pit was excavated to a depth of 2.4 m, and the footings of an east-west wall were uncovered under the present retaining wall. The earlier wall appeared to have been built within an infilled ditch; the natural gravel was not located.

Oxford, land to the rear of 6-8 South Parks Road
(SP 5176 0693)

Bryan Matthews and Paul Booth

A field evaluation comprising three small machine-cut trenches, was undertaken by the OAU. No significant archaeological features or deposits were found. Only a very small quantity of finds was recovered.

Oxford, St Giles' Church (SP 5113 0698)

J. Hiller

The OAU carried out a watching brief at St. Giles' Church, Oxford during excavations prior to the installation of a new drainage system north of the Chancel and the North Aisle of the building. Three trenches and two soakaway pits were monitored for the presence of features and finds.

Redeposited Medieval and post-Medieval pottery, and Medieval decorated floor tiles were recovered from contractors' excavations. Two ?Victorian pits which contained disarticulated human remains were examined in the course of the groundwork. The excavated soil from the trenches and pit contained a substantial quantity of loose human bones, which were replaced in the service trenches.

Small quantities of finds of Medieval and post-Medieval date were recovered from two layers observed in deep soakaway pit sections. The finds groups were mixed, indicating extensive disturbance probably in the 19th century, and the Medieval material was clearly residual.

Sandford-on-Thames, Lower Farm Barns
(SP 5380 0064)

J. Hiller

A watching brief was carried out at Lower Farm Barns in the summer of 1996 by the OAU. The site lies just northwest of a major Roman pottery production complex partly excavated in 1991 (Booth, Boyle and Keevill 1993). Geophysical surveys carried out by the Ancient Monuments Laboratory supplemented by fieldwalking indicate that enclosures and associated pottery kilns and pottery scatters cover some 10 ha of the Lower Field of the farm (see note *supra*).

The watching brief did not reveal any archaeological

features or finds. A possible limestone surface observed in the grounds of the farm was probably of recent date. All of the deposits observed related to recent use and activity near the farm. The watching brief has, in part, confirmed the results of recent fieldwalking by OAU. The density of surface finds of pottery concentrated to the south and to a lesser extent to the east of the site declined markedly in the vicinity of Lower Farm itself. Both surface collection evidence and the geophysical survey results suggest that the Roman pottery production site, while very substantial, did not extend quite as far as the farm itself, a conclusion which appears to be supported by the negative evidence of the watching brief.

Reference

Booth, P, Boyle, A and Keevill, G; 1993, A Romano-British Kiln Site at Lower Farm, Nuneham Courtenay, and Other Sites on the Didcot to Oxford and Wootton to Abingdon Water Mains, Oxfordshire, *Oxoniensia* 58, 87-218.

Wallingford, Wallingford Lower School (SU 6050 8990)

Greg Pugh

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by the OAU on a storm drain at Wallingford Lower School. No features of archaeological significance were revealed.

Woodstock, Sansomes Farm (SP 4505 1899)

Mick Parsons

An evaluation was carried out by the OAU in September 1996 in advance of determination of an application to construct a new studio building at the Oxford School of Drama at Sansomes Farm, north of Woodstock. The site lies immediately south of Roman Akeman Street and adjacent to a Scheduled Ancient Monument covering part of the Roman roadside settlement known as Sansomes Platt. A single trench revealed two shallow ditches of 2nd century AD date close to the line of the Roman road and running approximately parallel to it. No other features were located. Some 177 Romano-British pottery sherds were recovered, together with small quantities of other materials. The site may have lain beyond the principal focus of Roman settlement, but it is also possible that post-Roman ploughing has led to truncation of deposits here, as the topsoil cover over limestone bedrock was only c 0.20 m.

Yarnton (SP 4711)

A further season of fieldwork funded by English Heritage was undertaken at Yarnton-Cassington in 1996. The work comprised excavation on the floodplain and a small evaluation at Cassington, Worton Rectory Farm (see *supra* Cassington). A further evaluation at Yarnton, Worton Rectory Farm was funded by Worton Rectory Farms Limited.

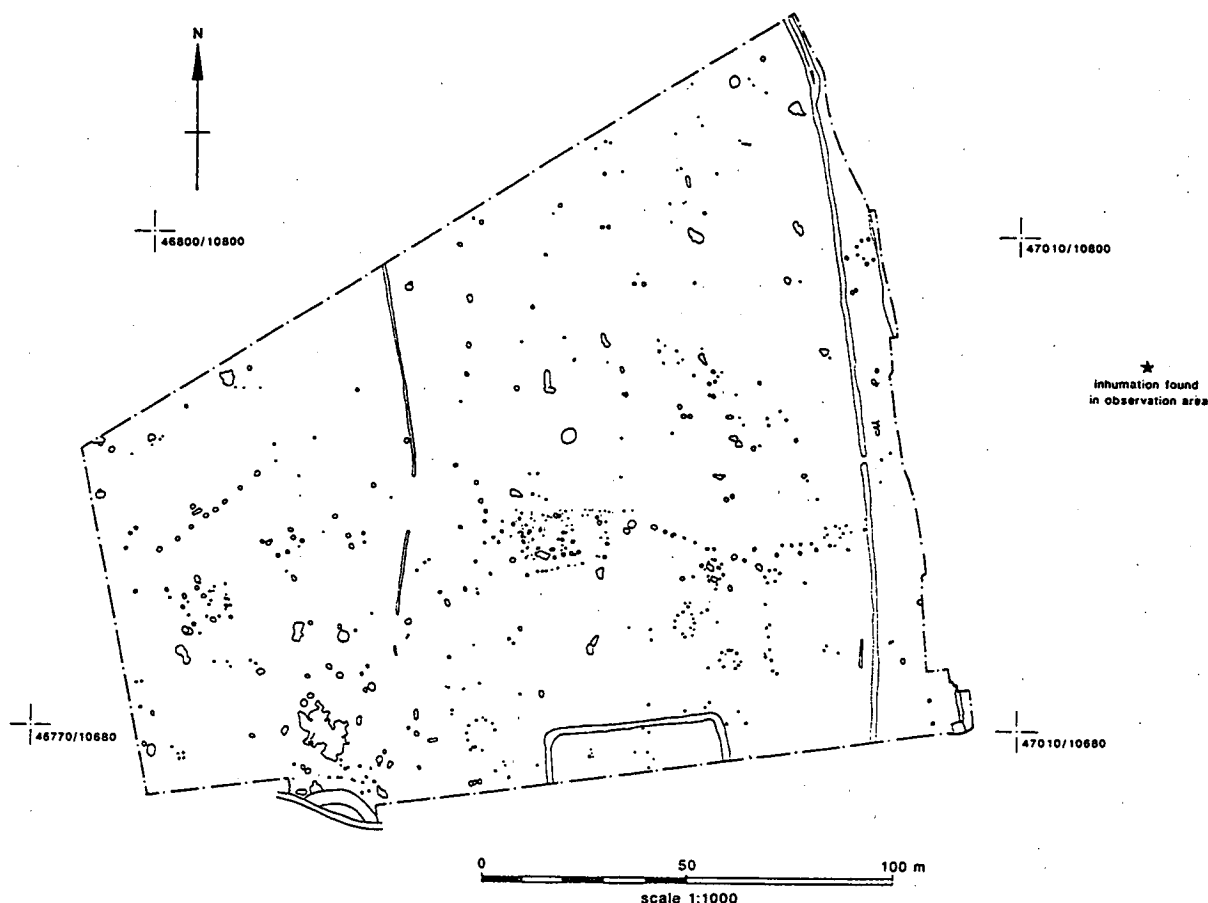


Fig 8. Yarnton. Excavated area showing pits and postholes.

Yarnton Floodplain 1996 (SP 469 107)

Gill Hey and Christopher Bell

English-Heritage funded fieldwork continued at Yarnton, Oxfordshire in advance of gravel extraction by ARC. A 3 ha area was excavated which, in the prehistoric period, had lain on a gravel island in the floodplain of the River Thames (Fig 5). The evaluation of the site in 1993 (Hey 1994) exposed postholes and pits, some of which contained Neolithic material. The apparent absence of funerary and ceremonial features and the presence within the pits of pottery with burnt food refuse and burnt stone suggested that the area had been used for domestic activity.

The remains exposed in 1996 were generally scattered, but small clusters of pits and postholes could be identified, as well as hearths and wells, which appeared to represent occupation sites (Fig 8). A large rectangular building, c 20 m x 10 m, of Neolithic date was found in the centre of the site (Fig 9). It can be most closely paralleled in Britain in the earlier Neolithic period (Darvill and Thomas 1996). Its presence was entirely unexpected and considerably enhances the potential of this area for the understanding of early settlement. It cannot be assumed without detailed analysis, however, that the structure represents a domestic building.

Neolithic and late Neolithic/early Bronze Age 'domestic' areas were represented by clusters of pits and postholes but

without any identifiable structures (Fig 8). They were provisionally dated by the presence within them of a few pits which contained substantial assemblages which appeared to have been formally deposited. The excavation on this site of discrete groups of features associated with Peterborough Ware, Grooved Ware and Beaker suggests the repeated use of the area over a considerable period. Variations through time in the spatial organisation of the features and their form and content could be seen. A substantial assemblage of pottery was recovered, and its associations with good flint assemblages and material suitable for ^{14}C dating, will allow questions of the chronological overlap of different pottery styles and/or the different uses to which they were put to be addressed.

In the Bronze Age, small circular structures can be recognised, as settlement became more archaeologically visible and, perhaps, more long-lived through time. An apparently organised group of five buildings and associated fencelines in the southeast of the site was provisionally early Bronze Age in date. This needs to be confirmed by more secure dating.

A range of other features of a seemingly utilitarian nature were excavated, for example a well and hearths, which will contribute to an appreciation of the activities that were carried out both within and away from occupation sites. The recovery of a wider range of implements than have previously been found at Yarnton, particularly worked stone

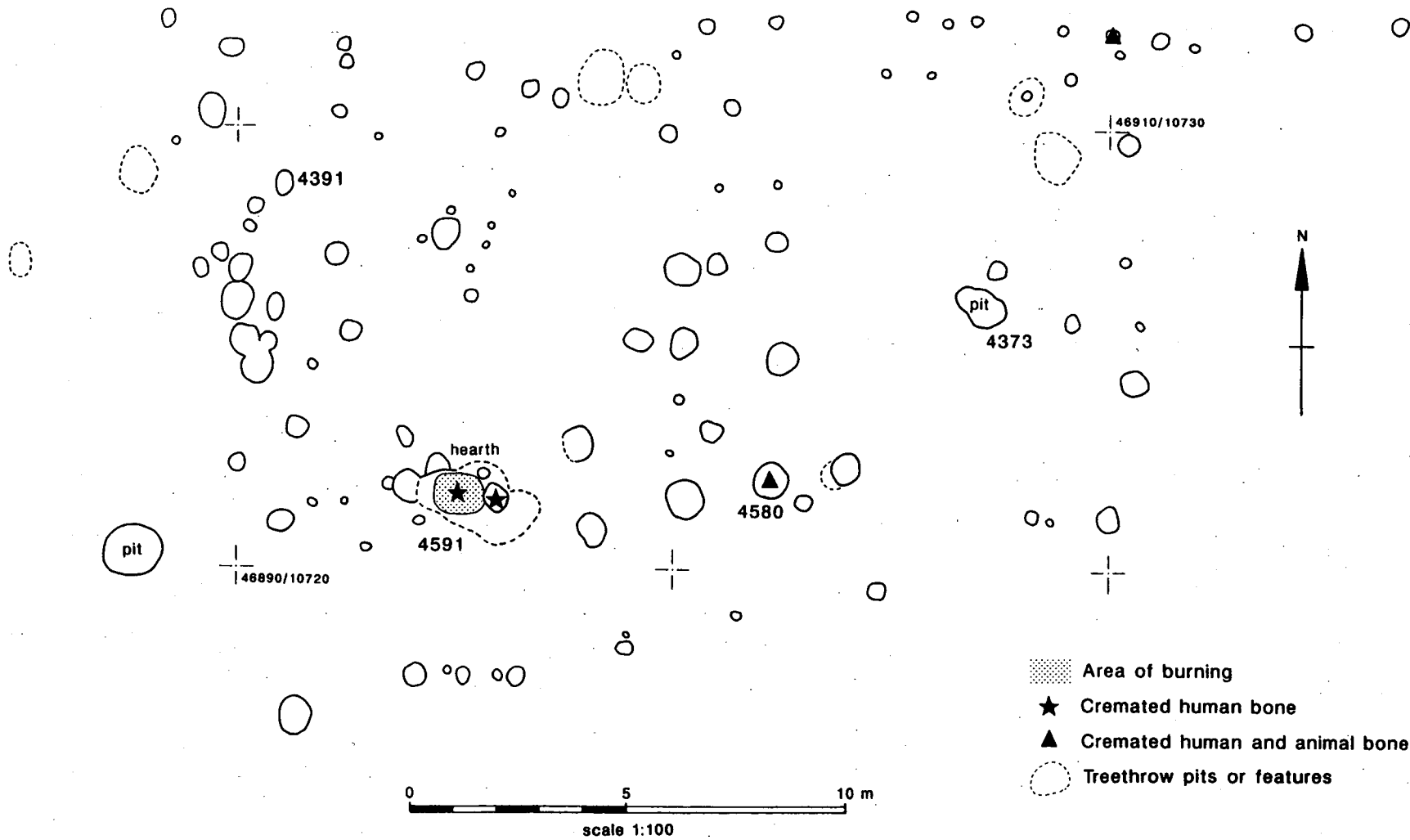


Fig 9. Yarnon. Plan of large building of Neolithic date.

Oxfordshire

and bone tools, will enhance a study of domestic life.

The northern part of a ring ditch was located on the southern edge of the site, though its interior could not be examined, and an inhumation burial was exposed during ARC stripping 65 m to the east of the excavation area. Of greater significance was the location within putative domestic areas of two human cremations, both associated with pit alignments (one lay close to the rectangular building), and small deposits of burnt human bone (sometimes with animal bone) within pits and potholes. These pieces of evidence contribute to a knowledge of funerary practices on this gravel island during the earlier prehistoric period and, in particular the contexts in which human remains were deposited on domestic sites.

Yarnton, Worton Rectory Farm Recycling Plant
(SP 47201 11308)
Christopher Bell

A trial trench evaluation, followed by small area excavation, examined part of an Iron Age and Romano-British settlement on the second gravel terrace at Yarnton. The work was undertaken by the OAU on behalf of Worton Rectory Farms Limited in connection with a proposal to build a recycling plant.

The site is situated within the ARC Yarnton-Cassington gravel extraction pit and lies in close proximity to areas of excavation undertaken by the OAU as part of the continuing English Heritage funded project at Yarnton. This is examining areas of the Neolithic to medieval landscape prior to their destruction by gravel extraction. A large-scale excavation in the area to the south of the recycling plant in 1990 (Yarnton Worton Rectory Farm, Hey 1991) revealed a complex sequence of intercutting features representing activity associated with a long-lived settlement dating from the late Bronze through to the late Saxon period. The excavation on Cresswell Field in the area to the west of the site in 1995 (Bell and Hey 1996) recorded a dense scatter of features, predominantly representing occupation activity from the late Bronze Age through to the middle Iron Age.

The investigations on the site of the recycling plant revealed a scatter of early Iron Age pits and postholes truncated by a slightly later phase of ditches and gullies. Part of a shallow ditched enclosure of Romano-British date was also uncovered. These features represented the continuation of the settlement observed in the Yarnton Worton Rectory Farm excavation (YWRF). However, whereas the area of early Iron Age activity in the adjacent corner of the YWRF excavation consisted almost entirely of pits, the features in the area of the recycling plant also comprised ditches and gullies, suggesting a different zone of activity within the early Iron Age settlement.

The results of the archaeological work on the site of the recycling plant will be integrated into the report on Iron Age and Roman Yarnton (Vol 2 of the Yarnton-Cassington Project).

References

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Darvill, T, and Thomas, J; 1996 *Neolithic houses in northwest Europe and beyond*, Oxbow Monograph 57, Oxford
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OXFORD UNIVERSITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Fieldwork in the area of the moated site north of St. Mary's Church, Kidlington (SP 49761504)
Eberhard Sauer

OUAS has continued and completed the excavations in Kidlington (cp. M. Richards: *SMA* 26, 1996, 68). The detailed final report of the excavations in 1996 has already been submitted to another journal, and therefore I limit myself to a very short summary of the results. The research project has disproved the old theory that there was a paved Roman road between Kidlington and Kirtlington. The distribution of late Roman coins (discovered by Vic Strange), however, proves that the ford between Kidlington and Hampton Poyle was an important regional traffic junction.

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Hillforts of the Ridgeway Project: excavations on White Horse Hill 1995

Gary Lock and Chris Gosden

Introduction

Excavations took place for four weeks during August directed by the authors. The workforce consisted of undergraduate students from the BA Archaeology and Anthropology course at Oxford University fulfilling their compulsory fieldwork requirements, students on the Department for Continuing Education Adult Summer School and volunteers many of whom were local. While considerable emphasis was placed on providing good quality training for the students, which inevitably slows down the work, the overall aims of the season were met in full.

Work concentrated on the three areas described in more detail below and shown in Fig 10: the interior of Uffington Castle hillfort; an enclosure to the west of Uffington Castle identified from an aerial photograph; a linear feature to the south of the hillfort. Geophysical surveys within the hillfort and of the enclosure were conducted in early summer 1995 by Andy Payne of the Ancient Monuments Laboratory (AML) of English Heritage.

It must be noted that post-excavation is still at a very early

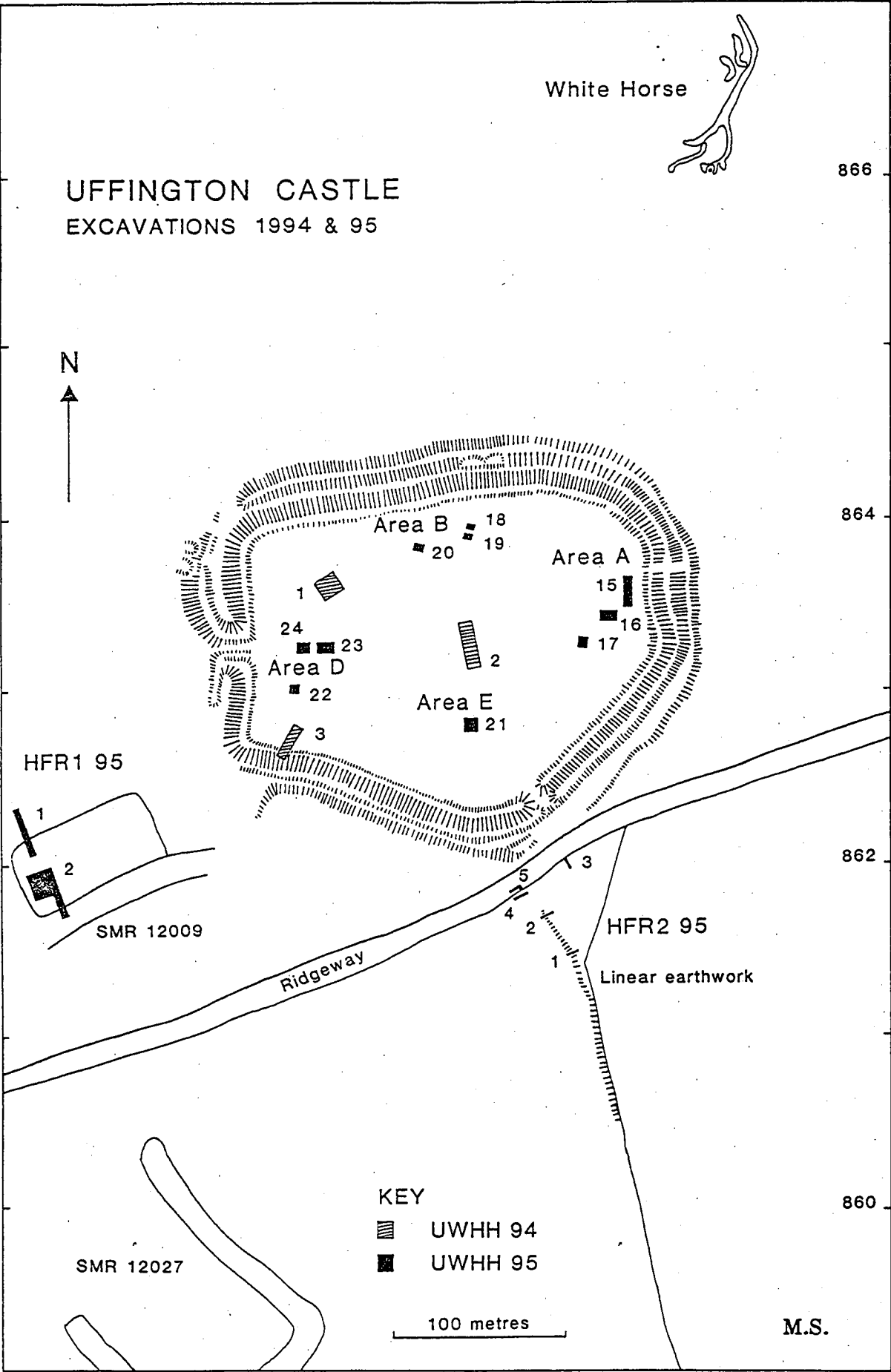


Fig 10. Uffington Castle. Plan showing excavation areas.

Oxfordshire

stage and the following is based mainly on field recording.

The interior of Uffington Castle

Excavations during 1994 were based on an AML magnetometer survey of 1989 and were disappointing in identifying very little archaeological evidence. A new survey conducted with more sophisticated technology and at a finer resolution of 0.5 m produced surprisingly enhanced results in which individual pits and other negative features produce recognizable anomalies. Part of the remit of the Scheduled Monument Consent was to work with the AML in groundproofing the geophysics to enable predictive modelling based on anomaly signatures to be explored. Consequently, trenches 16-24 were located to investigate specific anomalies with different characteristics.

A turf-cutting machine and mini-digger were hired for the initial exposure within the trenches. The sub-soil overlying the chalk bedrock was very variable in both depth and character probably due to ridge and furrow and more recent ploughing. The preservation of archaeological features above bedrock was generally poor and difficult to ascertain although there were some notable exceptions particularly in Trench 15 in the lee of the rampart.

The internal trenches (16-24)

Most of the anomalies were, in fact, pits cut into the bedrock and a total of ten were completely or half excavated. They consisted of two types based on morphology: a smaller group whose width was less than the depth with vertical sides and the rest with a diameter greater than the depth usually with sides sloping inwards towards a flat base. There was no discernible difference between the fill or the included artefacts of the two groups.

All of the pits contained a concave layer of dark soil varying in thickness up to c 30 cm at the top. This invariably contained Romano-British material particularly grey-ware pottery, small copper-alloy coins, animal bone and a few instances of iron nails. The remaining fill of the pits was mainly different types of chalk rubble giving the impression of fairly rapid deliberate filling. Within the rubble were various Iron Age finds with a noticeable concentration either towards the bottom of the pits or on the actual bottom. These included chalk loom-weights, a spindle-whorl of re-used pottery, possible pieces of iron and bronze, small pieces of possible human skull, various portions of pots, animal bones and a complete dog skeleton placed centrally on a pit bottom. Two or three pits showed evidence of basal burning. Soil samples were taken from each pit for environmental analysis and for magnetic analysis by the AML.

Isolated postholes, none of which were identified by the geophysics, were also located and excavated. Trench 21 was particularly interesting with a setting of nine postholes surrounding a pair of intercutting pits together with two gullies. Although the postholes appeared to be in lines either side of the centrally placed pits, the chronology was impossible to establish and as no pottery came from within the postholes it may well never be resolved. The larger of

the gullies showed some evidence for being clay-lined for a part of its length especially where it was cut by the larger of the pits. The pit wall below and around the point of intersection with the gully was also clay-lined giving an impression of water having run along the gully and into the pit. This could be rare evidence for water management within a hillfort with the pit being a clay-lined cistern and the surrounding postholes representing an associated structure.

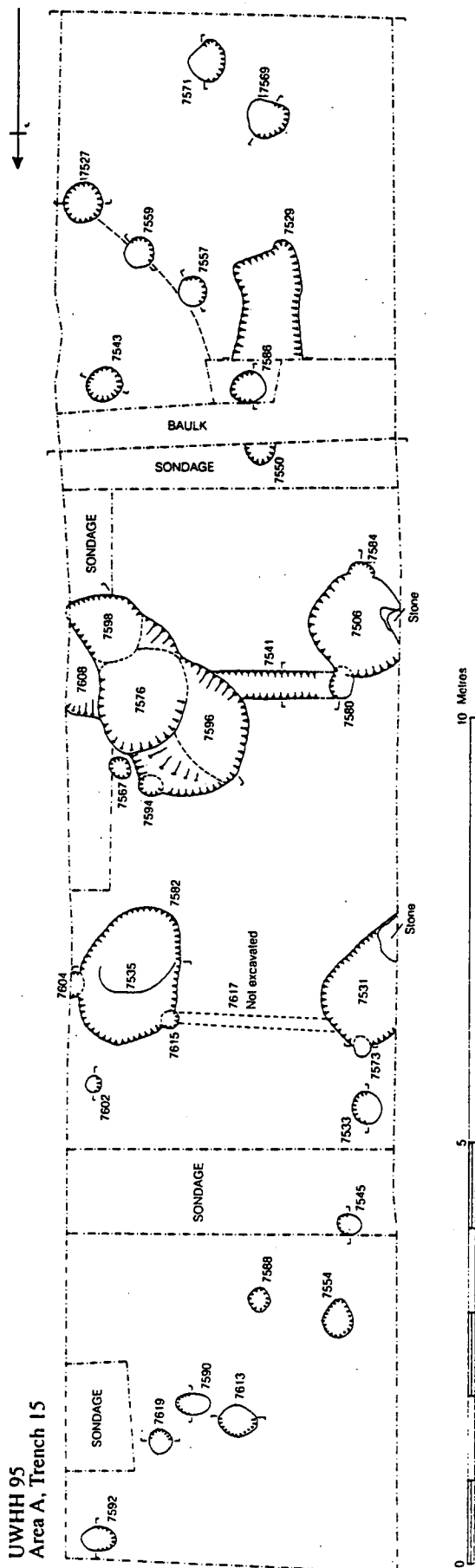
The blocked entrance (Trench 15)

Trench 15 was located in the lee of the eastern inner rampart where it thickens and changes direction suggesting a blocked entrance although the geophysics for this area were not clear. Many archaeological features were identified and excavated within the sub-soil zone of shattered bedrock producing a complex sequence which is still being worked on. However, it is clear that an early phase gateway consisted of massive timbers set in rows to produce an entrance passageway, Fig 11. Either side of the entrance the inner rampart thickened to join it and was revetted internally with posts. Stone and post-built structures within the ramparts suggest a room of some kind although probably not a guard-chamber as the orientation is towards the inside of the hillfort. The picture was complicated by one of the gate postholes being re-cut several times and by the difficult nature of the material.

Many of these features, and certainly two of the gate postholes, were overlain by slumped second phase rampart material which, according to the Oxford Archaeological Unit's (OAU) recent excavation across the rampart just north of this point, dates to the third century BC. Considerable amounts of pottery were found in these features which on initial inspection appear to be mainly early Iron Age with a variant of All Cannings Cross wares perhaps dating to the seventh century BC. Two or three isolated postholes, different in character could represent even earlier activity, perhaps even pre-rampart. Two of the large gate postholes were totally filled with massive pieces of sarsen which could not have been for post packing. These appear to be associated with the dismantling of the first phase gate and the blocking of the entrance, perhaps connected to the sarsen blocks within the structure of the rampart found during the OAU excavations.

Trench 24

One of the interesting aspects of the excavations is the amount of Romano-British use of the hillfort and in Trench 24 the only structure from this period was located. This was a small oven, probably too small to be a corn-drier, which was cut into the sub-soil. It was key-hole shaped and approximately 1.5 m long with ledges to support a raised floor and blocks of burnt sarsen within its fill. Also within its fill were approximately twenty coins, glass, an iron spearhead and large amounts of Romano-British pottery. There was also considerable evidence of burning and samples of charred grain were retrieved.



The enclosure was first apparent as a soil mark on aerial photographs. It was picked out for investigation as a possible focus for Romano-British activity, an understanding of which could add an extra dimension to the amount of Romano-British material inside the hillfort. It was investigated by Andy Payne of the AML, using resistivity analysis, which confirmed it to be a rectangular feature, with the long axis roughly east-west, around a low hill to the west of the hillfort. A circular feature in the interior, which showed up on the aerial photograph, was not detected through resistivity. Excavation took the form of two long trenches (30 m x 5 m) running down the two sides of the hill (Fig 10), which were placed to look at the enclosure and any possible internal features. Most of the length of the trenches revealed chalk with no internal features. However, half way down the northern trench and at the bottom of the southern one was a shallow linear feature cut into the chalk of the hillside, some 2 m across, with a number of undisturbed fills, which produced a small amount of Romano-British pottery. The feature was rather deeper in the southern trench than the northern one, being just over 1 m deep. The date of the feature is not in doubt: it is Roman. However, its function is uncertain. It might conceivably be a lynchet, but this seems unlikely due to its regularity and length. It is more likely that it was a shallow ditch dug to create a small enclosure of uncertain purpose (although see below).

Where the southern trench reached the hill top, a shallow v-shaped ditch was found. When the trench was extended this was seen to be circular in shape, with a diameter of roughly 17 m, although only a little over half the ditch was uncovered. The ditch was almost totally devoid of finds, having one leaf-shaped arrow-head in primary context and one skeleton, of probable R-B date, as a secondary. This appears to be the ring ditch of a round barrow, almost identical in form to that excavated elsewhere on the hill in the last century and re-excavated by the Oxford Unit. There were no interior features and the barrow has been totally ploughed away, with modern ploughing leaving score marks in the chalk.

In the south west corner of our extended Trench 3 features were found which cut the barrow ditch and ran into the baulk of the excavation. One of these, a circular feature some 1.7 m in diameter was excavated down to a depth of almost 2 m. It was a straight sided shaft filled with clay with flints, but devoid of any finds. We were unable to reach the bottom of this feature in the time available and without proper shoring, but it appears to be a shaft of some kind. The fact that it cuts the ditch shows that it post-dates the barrow, but we have no more definite idea of date. It would be satisfying if it were R-B in date, as that would throw more light on the purpose of the enclosure. We are hoping to continue excavation of this one feature at Easter 1997 to gain a clearer idea of its date and nature.

Fig 11. The excavated features of Trench 15 showing the large postholes of the blocked entrance. The rampart is to the east

Oxfordshire

The Linear Ditch

Four trenches were excavated across the Linear Ditch, which was visible on an aerial photograph and on the ground for some of its length. One extra trench was excavated across one of a series of ridges and depressions to the east of the Linear Ditch, lying roughly parallel with the Ridgeway. This trench threw little light on the possible purpose of these features but showed that they are probably Romano-British in date. The purpose of the excavation of the Linear Ditch was to ascertain its date and nature, as well as its relationship with both the Ridgeway and the hillfort.

The trenches across the Linear Ditch showed it to be a flat-bottomed ditch with a maximum depth of 1 m and roughly 1.5 m across at the top. No bank was located in any of the trenches. The upper fills of the ditch contained Romano-British pottery suggesting that it was still in use in that period (or, at least, still existed as a substantial hollow in the ground), so that its final phase may well have been contemporary with field systems dated elsewhere in the region to the Romano-British period. The lower fills were almost devoid of finds, but contained small sherds of probable early Iron Age date. The final trench was dug at the meeting point of the Linear Ditch and the Ridgeway. Here no clear relationship was ascertained, but we can say that the compacted chalk which forms the present Ridgeway runs over the fill of the ditch. This was uncovered just to the south of the present Ridgeway and appears to be an early trackway complete with wheel ruts. The dating of this and whether this compacted chalk surface is a recent phase of use of the Ridgeway is not clear. However, on the basis of this one excavation we can say that there is no reason to believe that the Ridgeway is earlier than early Iron Age. Further excavation and thought is needed to really demonstrate the date of the Ridgeway conclusively.

Conclusions

The work of 1995 adds considerably to the understanding of the long term use of White Horse Hill as a ritual locus within a wider landscape. The focus of the earlier periods seems to be on burial or at least on activities which include the construction of monuments as represented by the Neolithic long mound and the early Bronze Age barrows. Direct evidence for use of the area increases from around the seventh century BC. Recent dating of the White Horse suggests a late Bronze Age date which together with the re-dating of nearby Ram's Hill and the contemporaneity of the settlement with a bronze hoard at Tower Hill in the opposite direction along the Ridgeway, all imply an intensification of landscape use.

There are still problems with the ceramic chronology of the late Bronze Age and earliest Iron Age, but it could be that in the eighth to seventh centuries BC, not only were Ram's Hill and Tower Hill in use but also the linear ditch and the first phase ramparts and gate at Uffington. Similar All Cannings Cross type wares were also found in a ditch at Wayland's Smithy which could be associated with a settlement. Alternatively this could be a linear ditch connected to nearby Hardwell Camp (a site about which

virtually nothing is known) analogous with the situation at Uffington. There is also topographic evidence to hint at the possibility of the Uffington linear being connected to a low bank encircling the hilltop and later becoming the counterscarp bank of the hillfort rampart. This pre-hillfort enclosure with a linear is a situation suggested at Danebury, Quarley and other Wessex hillforts and the possibly early postholes in Trench 15 at Uffington could be associated with this phase. The implication of this is that the Ridgeway is post-early Iron Age, a chronological relationship which, while not directly supported by the rather ambiguous evidence of this year's excavation, is certainly not refuted by it.

Overall, then, there is considerable evidence for activity both on White Horse Hill itself, and in the surrounding area during the late Bronze and early Iron Age periods. An initial impression of the contents of the pits inside Uffington is of an early/middle Iron Age date, albeit based on small amounts of pottery. The evidence suggests occupation with weaving, spinning, animals and other activities taking place within the hillfort together with the structured deposition of material in pits, an aspect of disposal recently recognised at many Iron Age sites. Extrapolating the density of pits (and postholes) within the interior, while also using the geophysical results, it would be possible to argue for occupation on a par with other excavated hillforts although not to the density levels of Danebury.

In comparison there is a distinct lack of material from the late Iron Age and early Romano-British periods, perhaps from the third/second century BC. If the extensive field systems of the Berkshire Downs are Romano-British, as field work has recently suggested, then there is an interesting hiatus, or at least change of use which results in very little material evidence, until the late Romano-British period. The considerable amounts of material, mainly pottery and coins, from within the hillfort date to the late third century/fourth century AD. Taken together with the enclosure to the west of the hillfort, the secondary burials within the Neolithic long mound, and wider afield the known Romano-British villas in the Vale and the field systems on the Downs, the area is one of both religious and secular activity. The large number of coins of low denomination within the hillfort, together with large amounts of pottery, animal bones and the small oven which is possibly to be interpreted as a bread oven, and the proximity of the White Horse itself suggest a ritual significance for the hilltop and the re-used hillfort in the fourth century AD. The suggestion is of the existence of a temple or shrine, perhaps within the hillfort, which was the centre for activities including eating, drinking and the exchange of money either casually within some kind of fair or more formally perhaps as offerings within defined ritual ceremonies.

It is also interesting that access to the interior of the fort is increased during this period by creating the two eastern breaks through the ramparts. This breaks down the internal/external dichotomy of the enclosure and encourages movement around the hilltop towards the long

mound with its burials and the White Horse itself via the northern break and onto the Ridgeway via the southern. Outside the western hillfort entrance on a visually dominant spur of land was the enclosure of unknown function but with the intriguing possibility of ritual shafts contained within it.

The final publication

The excavations of 1994 and 1995 will be written up by the current authors and integrated into the publication of the White Horse Hill Project being prepared by the Oxford Archaeological Unit. Part funding by English Heritage is being sought.

Treating the hilltop as a whole makes sense in archaeological terms which means the Hillforts of the Ridgeway, at least in terms of a separate publication programme, will start in 1996. This does not affect the integration of the areas for wider landscape research and the Ridgeway and its environs between Uffington and Segsbury will remain the focus.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the Society of Antiquaries of London and the Roman Research Trust for grant aid. Also the National Trust for permissions and considerable practical help; Mr R Salmon for assistance with the linear ditch; Mrs. Seymour for the shower and local information and the numerous other people who helped in many ways.

Hillforts of the Ridgeway Project: excavations at Segsbury Camp 1996

Gary Lock and Chris Gosden

Introduction

Excavations at Segsbury Camp SU385844, SAM 209 (also known as Letcombe Castle) took place over four weeks in July 1996. These represented the first season of the Hillforts of the Ridgeway Project which is designed to excavate a number of major sites along the Ridgeway between Liddington Castle in the west to Segsbury in the east and to set these in the context of a changing landscape which is represented by smaller sites, linear ditches and well-preserved field systems (Fig 12). This work built on excavations which took place in 1995 at Uffington Castle. A further season of work at Segsbury is planned for July 1997. The present report is an interim one, based mainly on the results of field recording, as little post-excavation work has taken place.

A further major aim of the excavation was the training of both undergraduate students reading the BA in Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Oxford and students on the Department for Continuing Education Adult Summer School. We were also aided by a number of local volunteers, many of whom have dug with us in previous seasons. The emphasis on good quality training inevitably slowed the pace of work, but it was still possible to achieve the aims of the excavation in full.

The Excavations

Aims

Segsbury Camp had never been systematically excavated before. A Saxon, or possibly Iron Age, burial is reported from the southern rampart from investigations in the last century. One primary aim of the work was to establish a date for the occupation of the fort and how this occupation related to the nearby sites of Rams Hill, Uffington and Liddington. A more site specific aim was to groundproof the results of a magnetometer survey carried out in May 1994 by Andy Payne of the Archaeometry Branch of the Ancient Monuments Laboratory, English Heritage. A comparison of the results of the magnetometer survey and those from excavation could then be fed back into the Wessex Hillforts Geophysical Survey Project. In sum, the magnetometry showed a central area of intense occupation with pits and the gullies of roundhouses, with lesser densities of features towards the southern rampart and the north east. The interior of the hillfort was ploughed heavily until mid-1993 and we were also concerned to see the effects of this.

Three trenches were excavated (Fig 13), each with different specific aims, deriving from the magnetometer survey. Trench 1, the largest trench at 20 m x 40 m, covered a set of anomalies which appear to be a circular structure and a set of associated pits and we were interested to see whether this combination of features represented some sort of settlement unit. The likelihood of this possibility was increased by the relatively low density of features around this area as revealed by the magnetometry, making this group relatively isolated from the central cluster of pits and houses. Trench 2, 40 m x 5 m, was sited in the centre of the fort to determine whether a linear strip running south west from the entrance was a road and to investigate features showing up at both the southern and northern ends through the geophysics. Trench 3 was 5 m x 40 m in size and located at the rear of the rampart on the north side of the fort to determine whether ploughing had damaged the rampart, but also to determine whether build up of deposits behind the rampart had preserved lower layers from the effects of ploughing which were also hidden from the geophysics by the depth of deposits here.

A turf-cutter and Kabota were hired for the initial exposure of deposits untouched by the plough. It was found that in Trenches 1 and 2 and the southern end of Trench 3 that ploughing had extended down to bedrock, so all topsoil was removed mechanically to this depth. The areas were then brushed and trowelled clean prior to excavation.

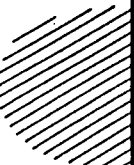
Results

Trench 1 revealed a circular structure [1003] at the southern end and a large number of pits (c 40) at the northern end. Work started at the southern end and moved north, so that half the features at the northern end were either partially excavated or unexcavated. These will be completed in 1997. The circular structure is some 12 m in diameter, with a possible entrance to the west, Fig 14. The circular gully was recut, either to produce a vestibule area to the west, or to reconstruct the structure on the western side. There was what

0 1 2 3 4 kms

-  Field systems
-  Modern town/village
-  Linear ditch excavated 1995
-  Hillfort
-  Other important prehistoric sites

 UFFINGTON

WANTAGE 

Edge of chalk escarpment

Hardwell Camp

White Horse

Uffington Castle

Rams Hill

Wayland's Smithy

Ridgeway

LETCOMBE
BASSETT

SEGSBURY CAMP

Alfred's
Castle

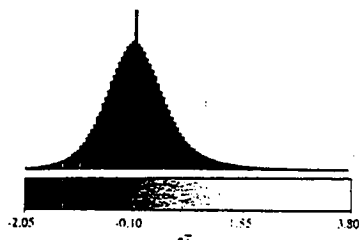
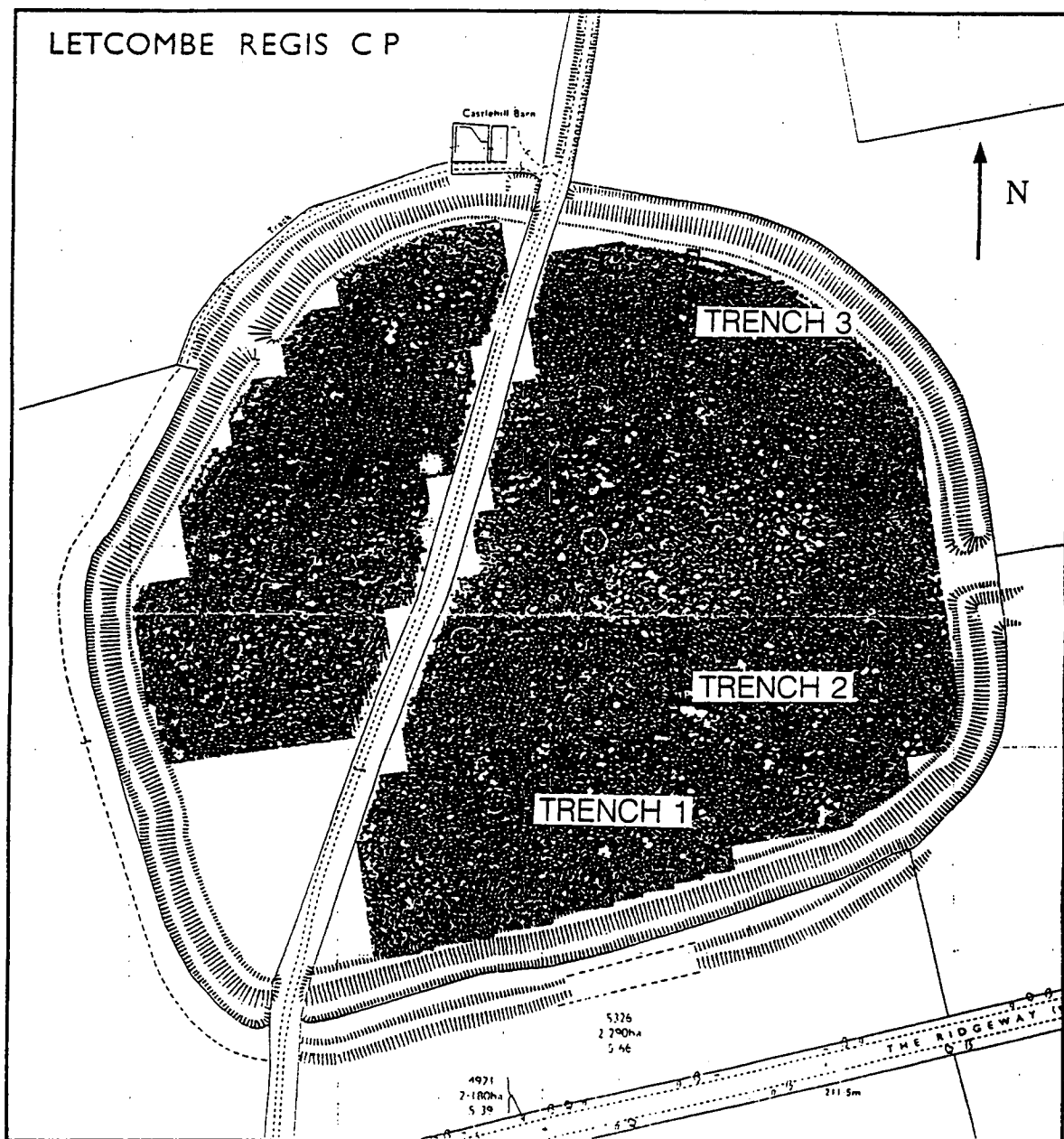
 UPPER
LAMBOURN

Fig 12. Uffington Castle and Segsbury Camp in relation to the surrounding area.

Segsbury Camp (or Letcombe Castle), Oxfordshire.
Location of Magnetometer Survey, May 1994.

PLAN A.

SU 3884.



0 90 m

Ancient Monuments Laboratory 1994.

Fig 13. Segsbury Camp showing excavation trenches in relation to the magnetometry results.

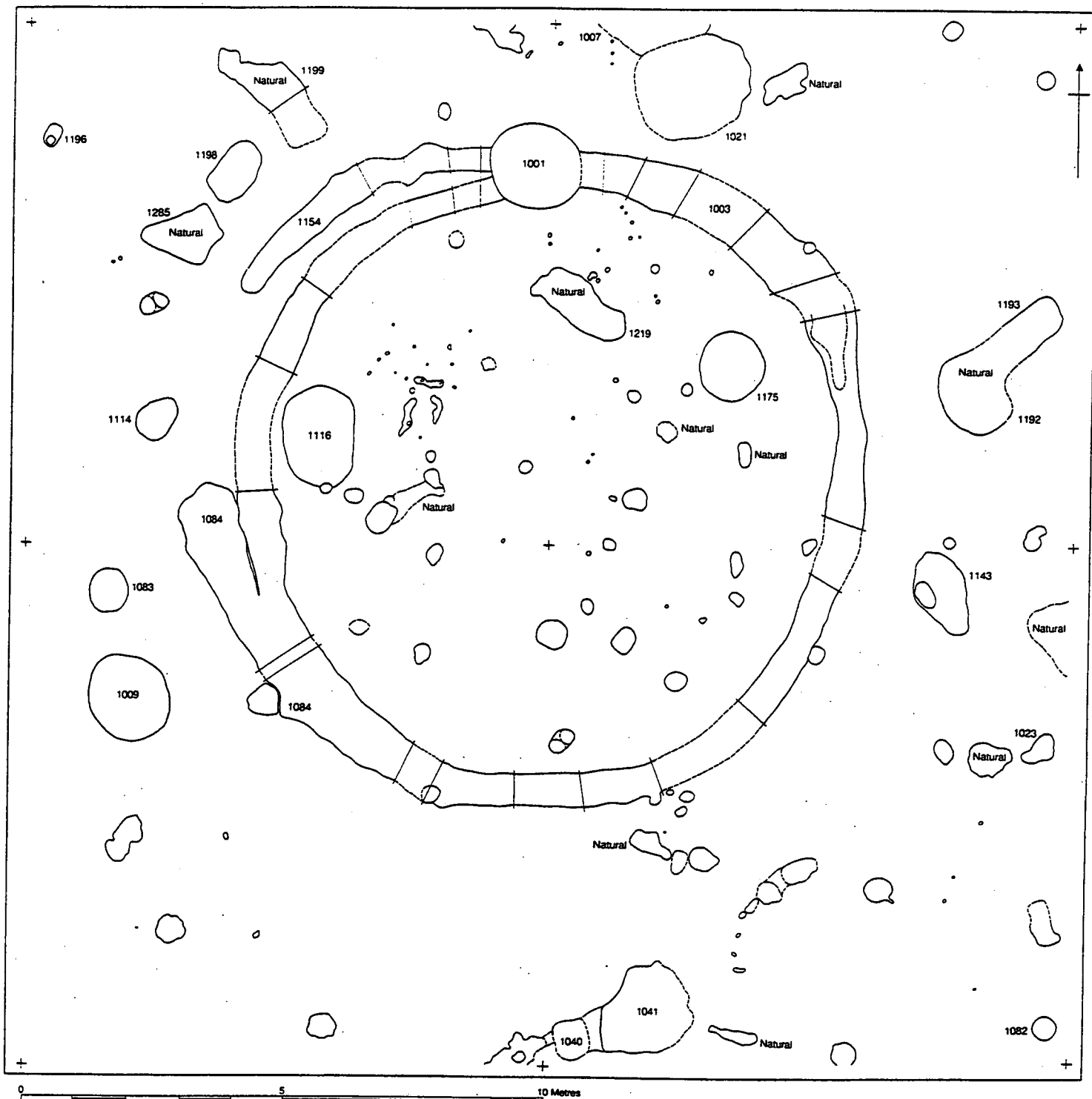


Fig 14. The southern half of Trench 1 showing the round house and adjacent pits.

may have been the deliberate deposit of a number of red deer bones in the recut terminal of the gully to the west. However, by and large the gully produced few finds. There were a number of pits in and around the circular structure. One pit inside and one outside had evidence of what may be metal working. A preliminary inspection of pottery from the gully and associated features indicates a middle Iron Age date. There was a large number of small post holes and stake holes inside the structure, a possible house, but these do not appear to form convincing interior divisions and it is not certain if they are all contemporary with the house. Three

large post holes (c 50 cm in diameter) were found around the house to the east, south east and north west, all of which contained parts of human skeletons. The post hole to the east contained a part of a skull of a baby or young child; that to the south-east contained the torso of an adult and that to the north-west produced the skull of an adult. In the last two cases it is not clear whether these bones were from the same individual. Also, their relationship to the house is unclear, but all are roughly equidistant from it and may represent deposits in some way connected to the occupation. Across the site were a number of semi-circular (banana-shaped)

holes, interpreted as tree throws of unknown date.

To the south of the structure were a set of features which, when they were first uncovered, were thought to represent an ephemeral structure, but after excavation it was concluded that this was unlikely although not impossible. There were a number of post holes and stake holes, especially to the south east of the structure, but no pattern can be discerned in these as yet.

The area north of the structure contained a large number of pits, many of which inter-cut, providing the possibility of a relative sequence. As had been found at Uffington, none of the pits were classical bee-hive shaped storage pits and many were less than a metre deep with sides not far off vertical. Pits were half-sectioned, with a small number being fully excavated. Most contained little internal layering and the basal deposits of the deeper pits were composed of shattered chalk which looked like the material that had been dug out of the pits in the first place and replaced within the pits soon after they went out of use. Although there were some exceptions to this, such as pit 1009 which had a series of layers and over 500 river rolled pebbles at its base. Most of the pits contained few finds, with small numbers of pottery sherds and bone, and the occasional piece of metal. A small number were rather richer and with animal bone as possible deliberately placed deposits and some larger pot sherds. It is impossible to assign a function to these pits at present, although we can say that they do appear to be generally contemporary with the circular structure. There is also a strong possibility that there is a second circular structure at the very northern end of the trench, which appears to be cut by pits and thus may be early in the sequence. The exact nature and date of this feature will be further elucidated by excavation in 1997. Samples for environmental analysis were taken from all the major features, as well as a smaller number of soil samples for magnetic analysis by the AML to create a model of magnetic susceptibility of different features.

Trench 2 contained a smaller number of features, which accorded well with the results of the magnetometry. The main clusters of features were at the northern and southern ends. At the northern end there was the circular gully of a house or similar structure, revealed less than a quarter of its circumference. Few finds were made in this and its date and function are not certain, but presumably it falls within the middle Iron Age period. Around the gully to the south there was a series of post holes which may have run in three concentric circles. Some of these had evidence of post pipes, but contained few finds. There were also a series of rather amorphous features, which we were uncertain as to whether they were human or naturally created. In the centre of the trench there was a post hole containing the remains of a human cremation, plus a number of smaller post holes. At the southern end of the trench was a cluster of pits composed of two inter-cutting features and one square pit. None of these produced many finds and their functions are unknown. At the southernmost end of the trench was a feature which was circular in plan, roughly 1.5 m in diameter with near

vertical sides and which was filled with clay. We are not absolutely certain what this feature represents, but it is most likely to be a natural solution pipe of geological origin, similar to a much larger version of the same type of feature found in Trench 3 and also at Uffington (see below).

In sum, Trench 2 revealed one circular structure of unknown function and a scatter of stake holes, post holes and pits, which are nowhere near the density of those in Trench 1.

Trench 3 contained the most surprising results of all and has added an extra dimension to our understanding of the fort. The soil depth in this trench varied from being relatively shallow at the southern, up-slope end (roughly 50 cm) to much deeper at the lower end of the slope up against the rampart (1.5 m). This accords with the suspicion we had prior to excavation that there might be build up of deposits behind the rampart. At the southern end and in the centre were a small number of pits and post holes, with one possible four-poster structure just to the north of the centre of the trench. These all appear to be of middle Iron Age date. The one exceptional feature was circular in plan and roughly 3.5 m in diameter, the walls were vertical down into the chalk and the fill was a homogeneous thick sticky clay. Although we excavated to a depth of 2.5 m and augered down another 2 m no bottom was found, nor were any finds made. After consultation with Dr Jim Kennedy a geologist of the University Museum, University of Oxford we concluded that this was a solution pipe, known from other areas of chalk, formed many millions of years ago and with no evidence of human use or modification. The clay-filled feature at the southern end of Trench 2 is probably a smaller version of the same thing.

The main interest in this trench was just inside the rampart at the base of the slope. Here a ditch was found immediately inside the existing rampart with a depth of a little over a metre, Fig 4. A layer of tumbled chalk blocks [3012] [3031], almost certainly from the rampart construction, lay over the top of the ditch fill on the north side of the ditch. Within the fill of the ditch was a heap of chalk blocks and underlying this a dark organic layer with relatively high concentrations of bone and pottery [3017], which might have washed in from the interior of the hillfort, Fig 16 shows the eastern baulk section. Radiocarbon determinations will be necessary to discover the date of the various layers and to attempt to piece together the relationship of the ditch and the rampart, which is obviously crucial to understanding the history of the hillfort as a whole.

The ditch terminated in the middle of the trench and we are uncertain whether this represents an entranceway or the fact that the ditch is discontinuous. However, close inspection of the magnetometer plot revealed what is almost certainly the same feature, but unnoticed by anyone prior to excavation, which continues around much of the present circumference of the rampart on the southern and eastern sides of the fort (it is only on these sides of the fort that the rampart area was surveyed using the magnetometer). There are grounds for believing that this ditch ran right the way round the present

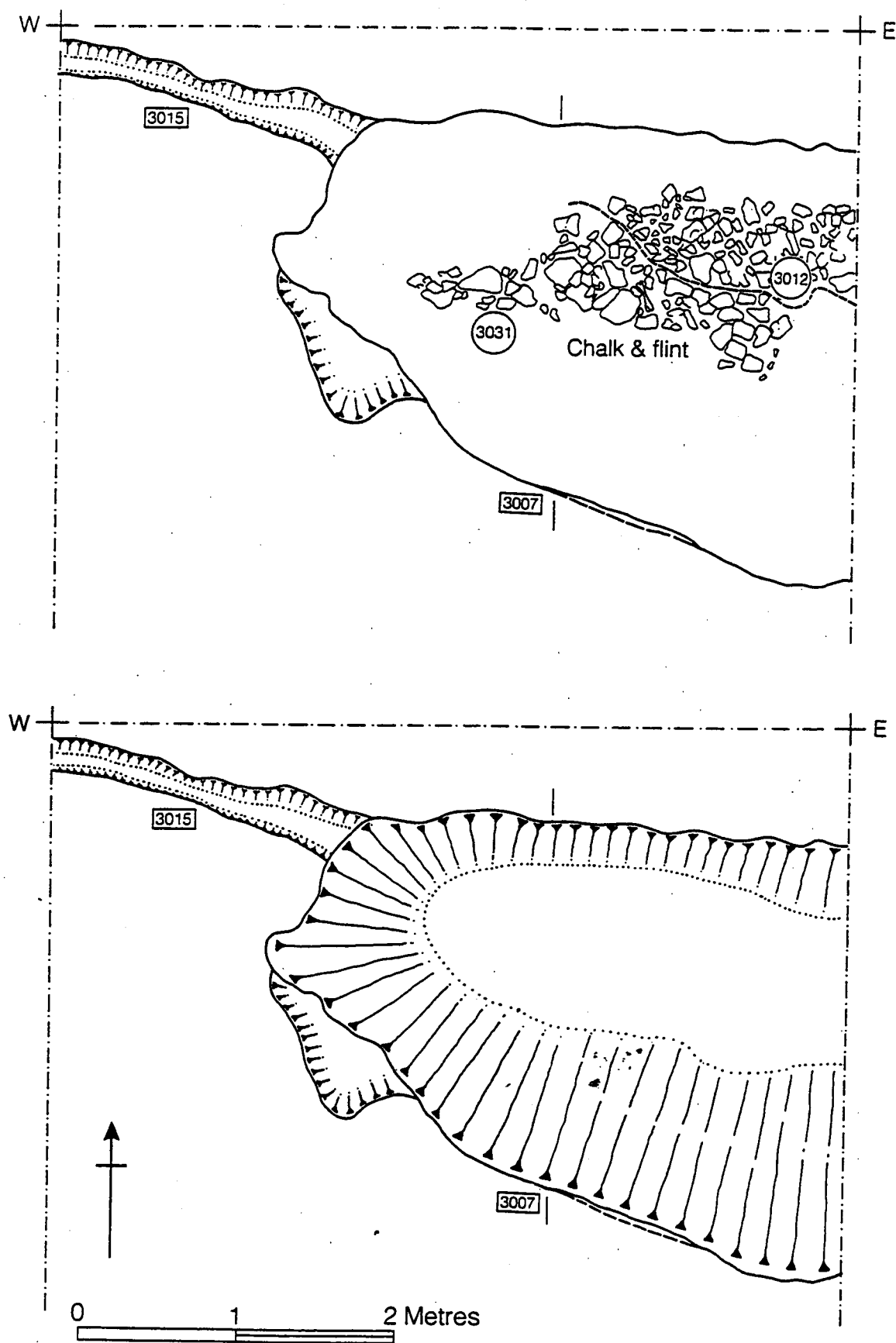


Fig 15. The northern end of Trench 3 showing the ditch just behind the rampart.

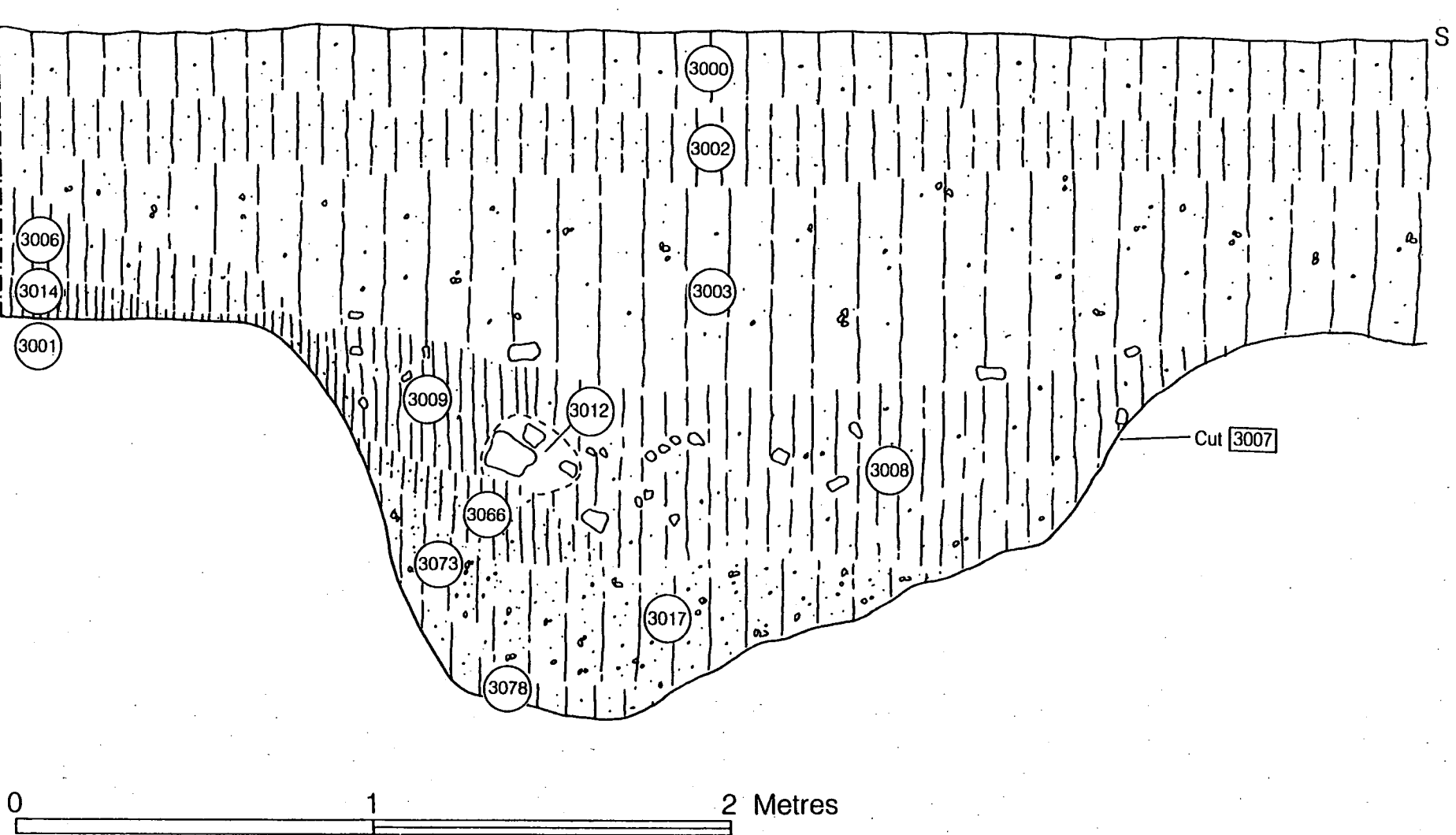


Fig 16. Section of the northern end of Trench 3 showing the relationship between rampart and ditch fills.

Oxfordshire

perimeter of the fort, enclosing the same area as does the existing rampart, although without further excavation we cannot tell whether it was discontinuous or not. Also, we do not know at present if it was accompanied by a rampart. Preliminary indications are that the pottery from the ditch is Late Bronze Age or Earliest Iron Age in date, thus pre-dating any evidence from the interior of the fort or presumably the rampart. Further analysis of the finds and radiocarbon dates are needed in order to confirm the dating of this feature.

Other work

In addition to excavation at Segsbury, landscape artist Simon Callery worked with secondary school students to produce a series of art works on the site, supported by a residency from Southern Arts and the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford. The work will be displayed in the coming year and provide a new dimension to the process of excavation and understanding its results.

A geomorphological survey was also carried out by D.Phil. student Chris Day to look at human impact on the landscape in the late prehistoric and Romano-British periods through the discovery and dating of colluvium. This work will continue for the next few years and will be extremely important in our understanding of changes in the landscape as a whole. Also, a field walking project is on-going, currently around Uffington Castle and we hope to integrate the results of both the work on colluvium and surface finds into a Geographical Information System.

One further piece of work was carried out at Uffington Castle. At the end of the 1995 season we found a circular feature that appeared to cut the ring ditch of the Bronze Age barrow outside the hillfort to the west. Lack of time prevented us from excavating this feature to any great depth, so we returned this season to attempt to get to the bottom of it both literally and in terms of understanding its genesis and function. We excavated to a depth of just over 4 m and found the same fill as was encountered in 1995: thick clay with a large number of flint nodules. Apart from the flint nodules in the clay the feature appeared to be identical to that in Trench 3 at Segsbury: it was roughly 2 m in diameter, straight and smooth sided and of an unknown depth. It is therefore almost certainly a solution pipe by origin. However, the fact that the top fill appears to have cut the ring ditch of the Bronze Age barrow may indicate some human modification of the pipe some time after the Early Bronze Age, although we have no other direct evidence for this. Evidence of a similar situation has recently been reported from the Yorkshire Wolds, where there may have been modification of geologically formed clay-filled features to provide sources of water on the chalk (Hayfield *et al* 1995).

Discussion

The 1996 excavations at Segsbury provide vital information on a previously little known site. First of all, the general nature and date of the evidence seems to accord with what is becoming more obvious as a regional pattern. Many of the hillforts of this area, such as Rams Hill, Uffington,

Liddington and now Segsbury seem to have had forerunners in a late Bronze or Early Iron Age enclosure of the hill top. The only one of these sites which appears to have interior occupation contemporary with the enclosure (and possibly even pre-dating it) is Rams Hill. Certainly at Uffington and Segsbury the interior evidence seems rather later than this earliest phase of enclosure. Such enclosure is also linked to a great deal of other activity in the landscape in the late Bronze Age with the possible construction of linear ditches south of Segsbury, and Uffington, the possible construction of the White Horse and the hoard of bronze and recently excavated settlement on Tower Hill. At Segsbury the majority of the occupation seems to date from the middle Iron Age and we need to excavate the rampart to see if this is contemporary or covers a number of phases. There may be some overlap in time with the Uffington occupation, which although mainly early, may also have a middle Iron Age element and possibly with Liddington. In terms of the regional picture the hillforts at Hardwell, in close proximity to Uffington and Alfred's Castle to the southeast, are unknown in terms of either date or role within the landscape.

However, what differentiates Segsbury from any of the evidence at other sites in the area is the intensity of occupation in the interior. Uffington produced no evidence of house structures and a much less densely scattered set of pits, which may reflect occasional use, rather than permanent occupation. The magnetometry at Segsbury showed at least 20 'house' structures, plus an unknown number more which may only be picked up through excavation. From our preliminary observations it appears that Segsbury represents a settlement with a full range of domestic activities relating to agriculture and to crafts such as metal working, in addition to the disposal of human remains. Furthermore this activity may relate to a relatively brief period of the middle Iron Age and it is uncertain at this stage where peoples' activities concentrated before and after that, and how this occupation relates to the use of the landscape as a whole. This is again in contrast to sites such as Uffington and Rams Hill, both of which show extensive use in the Romano-British period. It is tempting to see the combination of domestic debris and structures within Segsbury and the field systems outside as representing a practical use of the landscape, in contrast to the non-domestic activity at Uffington, which is surrounded by burial monuments and the White Horse, but few field systems. However, these are questions we hope to be able to address as the project as a whole unfolds.

We are planning to publish the preliminary results from Segsbury as a full interim report and the final analyses of both seasons as a project monograph.

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to Mr Tony Good of Warborough Farm, the landowner at Segsbury, who gave us permission to excavate, allowed us to camp on his land, made earthmoving equipment available and helped us in many different ways. We also thank Steve Trow of English Heritage for advice. The excavation would not have been

possible without the help of Sheila Raven, Richard Bailey, Tyler Bell and Jon Henderson on site. Sheila Raven has also put the archive in order and has started the process of post-excavation work. Mark Robinson and Esther Cameron provided extra on-site teaching and advice.

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LATE ITEM

ABINGDON AREA ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Role of Manhole Covers in Contour Surveys.
Roger Ainslie

One of the difficulties in dealing with urban sites is that in order to understand the area it is necessary to have an idea of the contours. Unfortunately the Ordnance Survey contours are not at close enough intervals to be of much help for archaeological purposes.

A fairly rapid means of making a basic map is to use the spot heights which are given on maps and this can be enlarged upon by using the heights of drain manhole covers. The Water Authorities keep records of the heights of these covers and they can greatly assist this work. Fig 17 shows a survey of central Oxford produced exclusively from such sources which took approximately 5 hours to produce.

PUBLICATIONS

BEDFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL COUNCIL

Bedfordshire Archaeology Volume 22 1996
Edited by Evelyn Baker and Stephen Coleman. Published by Bedfordshire Archaeological Council. Available from Peter Woods, 14 Glebe Avenue, Flitwick, Bedford, MK45 1HS. Price £9.50 inc p+p. See review.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Records Of Buckinghamshire Volume 16 1994 (Published 1996)
Edited by John Chenevix Trench. Published by Bucks Archaeological Society, The County Museum, Church Street, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP20 2QP. See review.

CHESS VALLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Journal 1996 - various reports and articles including excavations at Pann Mill, High Wycombe and Lacemaking in Bucks.

MANSHEAD ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF DUNSTABLE

Manshead Journal No 36 - reports of excavations and fieldwalking in and around Dunstable (£2). Available from the Editor of *SMA*.

RCHME

Maiden Bower, Bedfordshire. NMR number SP92 SE 6; Neolithic industry and enclosure

REVIEWS

BEDFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY Volume 22 1996
Edited by Evelyn Baker and Stephen Coleman. Published by Bedfordshire Archaeological Council. Available from Peter Woods, 14 Glebe Avenue, Flitwick, Bedford, MK45 1HS. Price £9.50 inc p+p.

This volume contains a satisfying mix of excavation, fieldwalking, survey and documentary history, and the excavations reported upon cover a wide range of periods and site types, from Neolithic through Saxon to post-Medieval, resulting in a balance that should have something of interest for everyone.

The sites are generously, almost lavishly, illustrated; it is rare to find a journal with the resources to devote so much space to section drawings, many of which could have been reproduced at half the size. The standard of the illustrations is varied but generally good, and the pot drawings, particularly those of the Willington report, are excellent. It is a shame that the plans from the same report are not as informative as they might be; feature numbers mentioned in the description are not always numbered, and the location plan at the beginning and the landscape plans at the end fail to identify the principal sites or topographic features mentioned in the text. The Kempston overall site interpretation plan is in contrast very clear, whether or not one believes all three putative Saxo/Norman buildings.

The finds reports themselves are in general competent and very thorough. It is the nature of evaluations, and of short reports that do not merit monograph publication, that the finds assemblages are usually short, and it is important that the pottery fabrics are tabulated, though whether all merit publication may be questioned. What is very noticeable is the extremely low weight of individual potsherds,

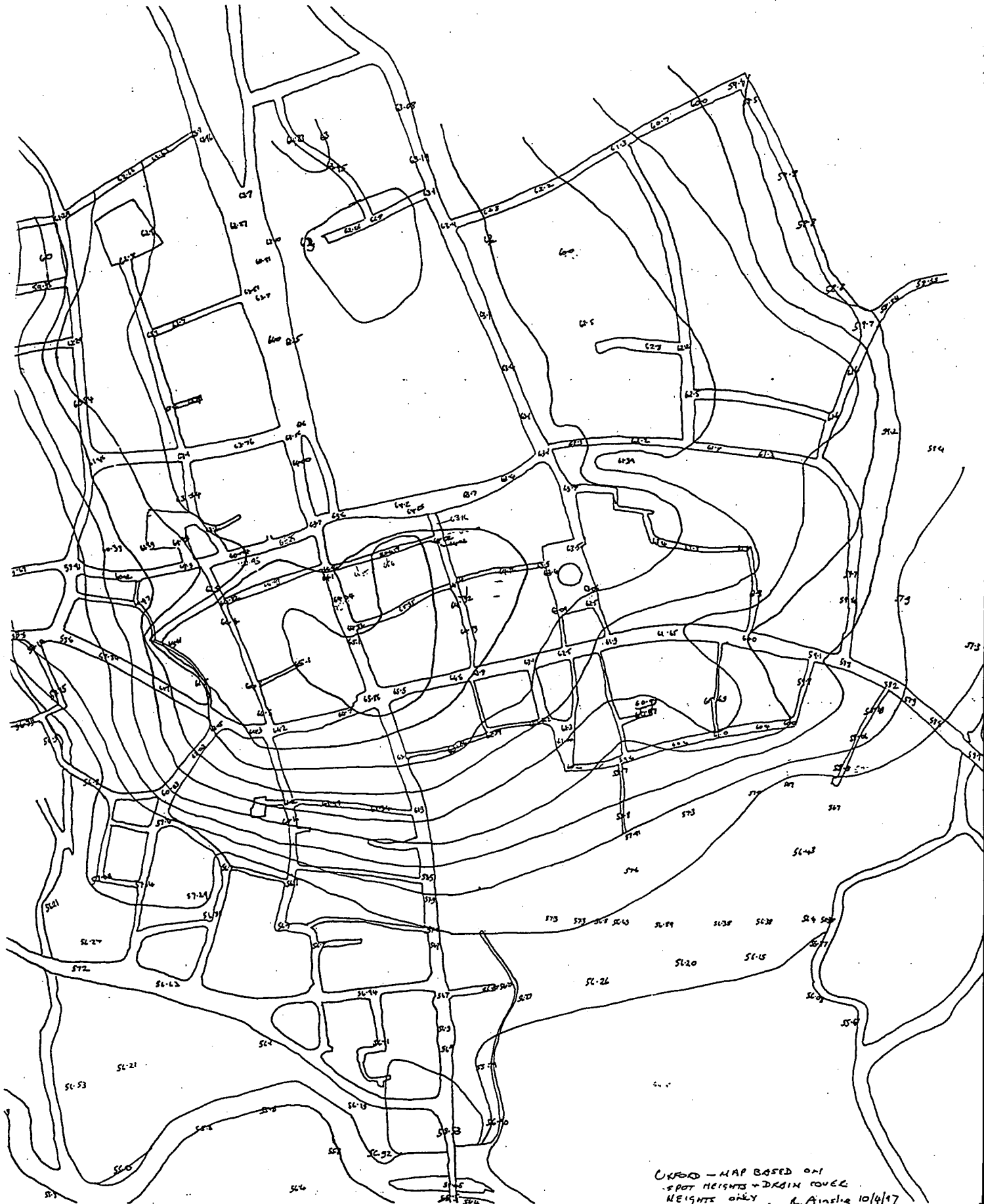


Fig 17. Contour survey of part of Oxford made using manhole cover heights.

particularly in the Willington report, which merit further consideration in the discussion sections. Either the 'number' of sherds is inflated, perhaps including recent breaks, or they are so comminuted as to raise serious doubts about redeposition.

The presentation of the volume is very professional, and it is therefore surprising that the largest report, on Willington, includes a lack of integration of some of the specialist reports with the main author's discussion, and errors missed at the editing stage. The refitting flints from the pit within the ring ditch at Sites 3 and 4 are described by McSloy as Bronze Age, disturbed when the pit was dug, but in the Discussion the flints are considered as evidence of Early Iron Age ritual. The pottery from Site 5 was considered by McSloy to be residual, but both the enclosures and posthole alignments are dated to the Early Iron Age without further comment in the Discussion of the site.

Posthole 40 etc in Sites 3 and 4 are described as 12 m east of the enclosure Site 4 where Site 3 ring ditch is meant, and in the Double enclosures Site 7 hearth 10 is described as north of ditch 12 though the plan shows it to be south. More glaring are the repeated references to an 'abraded' river system, presumably a 'braided' system, and the dating of the henge monuments as 'usually late 2nd millennium' instead of 'late 3rd millennium'.

The discussions throughout the report which attempt to put the excavations into a wider context are to be commended, but in the case of Willington the discussion does not really grow from the results of the excavations, and would have been better as a separate paper with comparative illustrations.

Overall an informative and well-constructed volume, but in need of greater editorial control in the finishing stages.

T G Allen OAU

RECORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Volume 16 1994 (Published 1996)

Edited by John Chenevix Trench. Published by Bucks Archaeological Society, The County Museum, Church Street, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP20 2QP

The Journal of the Archaeological and Architectural Society for the County of Buckinghamshire includes papers on varied subjects of historical interest and also some natural history notes. Only one of the articles (**An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Bottle Dump Corner**) is purely archaeological, reporting the rescue excavation of some 7th century burials on the route of a drainage line near the A421, that would probably have been completely overlooked but for the reporting of finds to Aylesbury Museum by metal detectorists. The burials were disturbed and in poor condition, but some jewellery and spear heads were recovered.

All the other contributions to the publication make use of documentary evidence in one form or another. Dr Keith Bailey reconsiders the Anglo-Saxon Tribal Hidage list and the possible location, north and south of the Thames, of the areas named in it. Another case of disputed location, this time in Domesday Book, is discussed by Arnold Baines, who gives his reasons for identifying "Hanechedene" with Radnage. Dr. Baines also considers an Anglo-Saxon charter in **Monks Risborough: New Light from Islington**.

The contents of an unusual library at Langley Marish in Slough provided in the early 17th century for the use of the parish priest is the subject of **The Kedermister Library** by Jane Francis and Elizabeth Berry writes about the **Household Account Book of Thomas Wharton** which details expenditure at Upper Winchenden House in the years 1702-3, supplying interesting information, particularly about the food and drink supplied to a great house, and who was helping to consume it.

Documentary evidence is combined with study of the landscape by John Chenevix Trench and Miles Green, who follow the history of Wycombe Heath through local disputes over common rights and a probably forged charter, and identify the old bounds on the modern map.

In **The building of Padbury Bridge** S Eveleigh links maps, drawings and documents with the "architectural" part of the Buckinghamshire Society's interests in describing the replacement of an old bridge and ford, found necessary when the road now the A413 was turnpiked. Architecture is also the subject of an account by John McCann of an early 18th century Dovecote at Stewkley.

When **Bradwell Abbey Farm** was acquired for the New Town of Milton Keynes, part of the site, protected as an Ancient Monument, was allocated to the Milton Keynes Archaeology Unit. Among their other tasks during the development of the New Town they researched the past of their headquarters. Documents trace the history of the monastic foundation. It apparently made a certain amount of income from pilgrims who visited the image of the Virgin standing in a niche on the outside of the church's west wall. A small chapel was built to enclose the statue and a chapel still stands on the site. A survey in 1913, when it had been used as an outhouse for about 200 years, concluded that it had been completely rebuilt in the 17th century using old materials. However, in the 1950s, after the roof fell into disrepair, the weather began to clean off old whitewash and reveal Medieval wall paintings of pilgrims and this caused a fresh assessment. A detailed examination of the fabric, together with observations and drawings from the 18th and 19th centuries, confirmed that this was indeed the only surviving part of the monastic church, used after the Dissolution as a domestic chapel by the family who acquired the Abbey buildings. In 1524 Bradwell Abbey was among the earliest monasteries to be suppressed, with papal consent, because they were no longer viable concerns. A survey of 1526 speaks of buildings "in decay", repairs made with "very evil timber" and recommends which parts should

Obituary & Education Liason Officer

be retained and which demolished. The survey by the MK Unit showed that much Medieval work remains in the farm buildings, notably in the great Cruck Barn. Dendrochronology was used to date its construction to c.1320.

Actual excavation was limited by shortage of money and labour. Test trenches were cut when the MK Development Corporation first acquired the site to determine the extent of monastic remains, and in 1981-2 further exploration was undertaken with the help of school children, and again in 1987 after a geophysical survey.

An accidental find at Old Wolverton has provided the Great Seal of the Abbey. Recollections of the farm in the 20th century were contributed by those who had owned and worked it. Conservation work has been carried out on the buildings. After the winding up of the MK Archaeological Unit in 1987, Bradwell Abbey Farm became the "City Discovery Centre"

These different strands have all been gathered together by Dennis Mynard, Paul Woodfield and R J Zeepvat to provide an illuminating history of the site of Bradwell Abbey and show what can be achieved by combining evidence from the widest possible range of sources: documentary, archaeological and oral. A fitting memorial to the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit.

The mixture of topics contained in the 200 pages of Vol. 36 of *The Records of Buckinghamshire* provides for a wide range of interests. If pages were headed with the title of the article they carried it would save the reader referring constantly back to the contents page when searching for specific articles. Many of the contributions include interesting illustrations, but a few more would have been welcome: for instance as well as the striking portrait reproduced of Sir John Kedermister it would be interesting to see the room where his library has always been housed, and an extract from the 1638 catalogue. Also a photograph to show Padbury Bridge today.

Proof reading has been efficient on the whole, but a section of the early history of Bradwell Abbey is repeated with the acknowledgments, and it is also startling to read on p.46 that a ditch "was at least 1.1 myy mp, mp, moc moc mt mt man man m24 m24 mm mm map m."

J P Schneider

OBITUARY

Joan Taylor - died 25 October 1996

Joan was a loyal and enthusiastic long-time member of CBA Group 9 and gave much active support both on and off the Committee. An early gatherer of information for the News-sheets, for many years Joan had also organised the tea and coffee breaks for our conferences and AGMs, even providing a buffet lunch with help from her WI on one occasion.

With her deep interest in archaeology and ability to grasp the core of the subject matter, Joan could be relied on to fill those awkward silences which arise at meetings! She was also very good at talking to members of the public when the occasion arose.

Her wide range of interests included natural history and gardening, and she was also an excellent cook and talented needlewoman. A great talker, her mischievous sense of humour sometimes landed her in trouble and she could be very argumentative and controversial, but Joan always had an interesting topic as the basis for an entertaining conversation.

Kind and generous, there was always much laughter around Joan and, in her own words, "my epitaph should read, 'she DID enjoy life'".

BDE

EDUCATION AND THE CBA SOUTH MIDLANDS

Ian R Scott

The South Midlands region, in line with most other regions, has a Educational Liaison Officer (ELO) and I am the ELO for the South Midlands region. I am employed by the Oxford Archaeological Unit as post-excavation project manager. All ELOs are volunteers. They have two main roles: to act as a focus for information regarding educational matters (courses, resources, etc) and to promote archaeology in education. In recent months the CBA nationally has been reconsidering the role and effectiveness of ELOs.

To act as a point of contact between education providers and those seeking courses, archaeological teaching resources, or simply wishing to work on an excavation, requires that the ELO has the necessary information to hand. Without information the ELO is unable to function properly. This note is in part a request for information about archaeological courses being run, whether for GCSE or as adult education courses run by the WEA or LEAs and about excavations which can take volunteers, especially beginners and young people, or about individuals or organisation who can provide archaeological teaching whether within the framework of the national curriculum, or more informally. Any

information about any activity involving archaeology and education would be welcome (I can be contacted at the OAU).

As part of the review of the role of ELOs it has been recognised that many regions are extensive and that therefore it makes sense for more than one person to be involved. I am conscious that Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire and the more distant parts of Buckinghamshire are a long way from Oxford where I am

based. In South Midlands steps have already been taken to involve more people to provide better coverage for the region. We now have coverage in Northamptonshire and in Buckinghamshire, but there is still a need for someone to provide a point of contact in Bedfordshire.

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