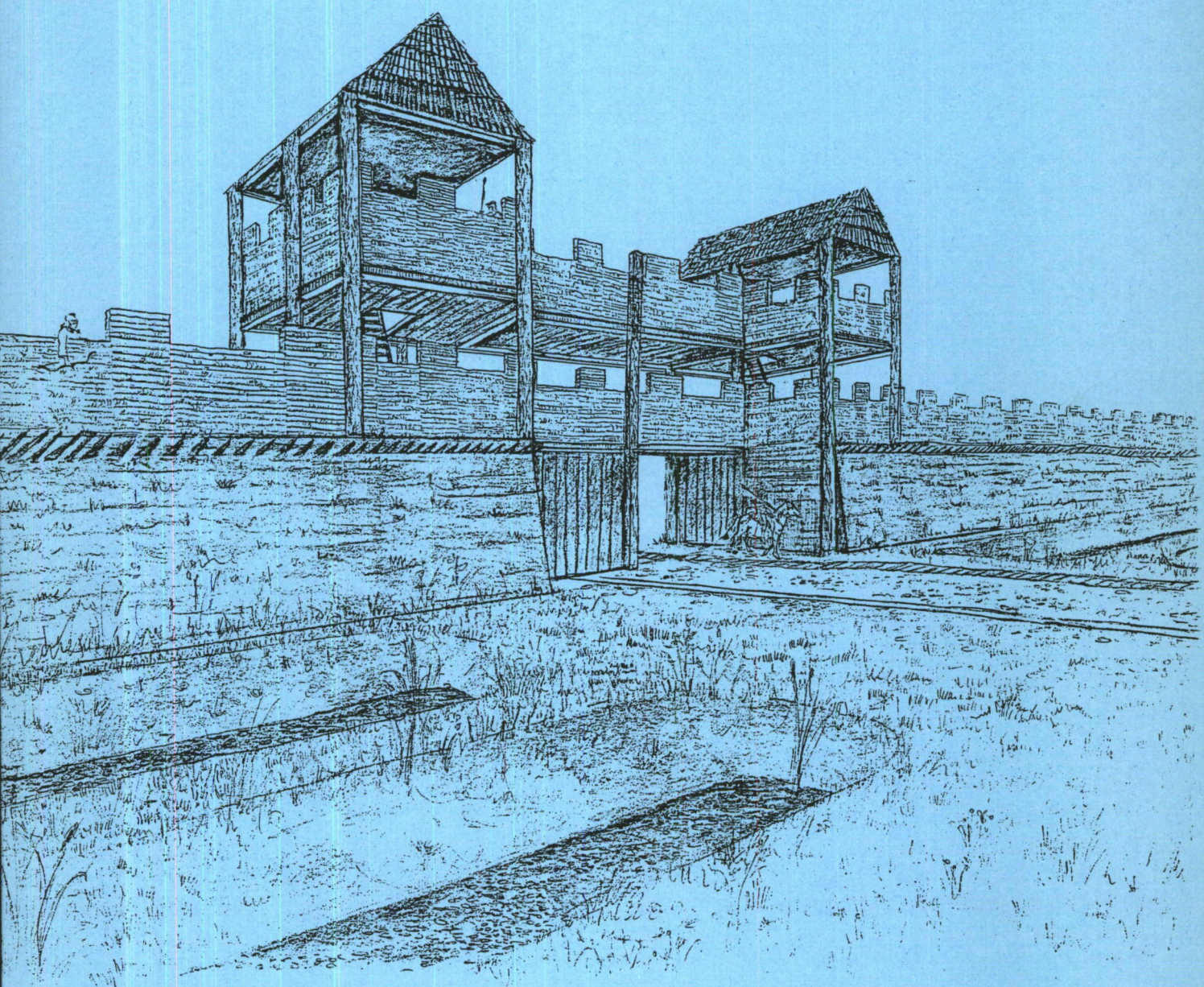


SOUTH MIDLANDS ARCHAEOLOGY

**31
2001**



**CBA
SOUTH MIDLANDS GROUP**

SOUTH MIDLANDS ARCHAEOLOGY

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

NUMBER 31, 2001

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to volume 31 and the new millennium.

The cumulative index to volumes 1-30, mentioned in the last editorial, is complete and available on the website at **www.britarch.ac.uk/smaindex**

If anyone wishes to have a copy for their own PC would they please send me a 3.5" disk and a stamped addressed envelope and I will provide them with a copy. For those with no computer I will provide a copy at cost; this is likely to run to £10 to £20 plus post and packing as the index is large.

A number of new organisations have provided reports and this is very encouraging. However, some organisations continue to provide no report of their work in the area, in particular I know of one which has done work in it on a gas pipeline and a churchyard near where I live. I'm sure there are others. County archaeologists and peers must apply pressure to these defaulters.

Through this editorial could I please request that when contract archaeologists do work in an area they make their presence known to the local archaeological society, because it is that society to which the public will address questions about what is going on; it does help archaeology's image if we all seem to be working together.

In conclusion I would like to thank all those who sent in reports and ask that they, and anyone else, send in articles for *SMA* 32. Please send a note, however short, of any work carried out in the four counties.

Copy date for *SMA* 32 is **31st March 2002**; please refer to Notes for Contributors.

Barry Horne AIFA
Editor

BEDFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES AND CONSULTANCY LTD

Anglian Water Cople-Biggleswade
David Fell and Nicola King

A desk-based assessment of the route of the Biggleswade Reinforcement Water Main from Cople to Topplers Hill, southeast of Biggleswade, was undertaken in June and August 2000. The route passes through agricultural land throughout its 15 km course. A number of significant cropmark sites were identified, most notably on the eastern half of the route, adjacent to Broom Quarry on the west side of the Ivel valley, and between Holm Green and Topplers Hill, south of Biggleswade. Fieldwork will be undertaken during 2001.

Bromham Reinforcement Water Main (SP 980 510)
David Fell, Nicola King and Nigel Wilson

A Desk-Based Assessment of the route of the Bromham Reinforcement Water Main along the A428 from the water tower at 'Long Tag', east of Turvey, to Bromham Hospital site, on the western edge of Bromham, was undertaken in August 2000. The route passes through agricultural land throughout its 2.4 km course. The surrounding area includes several cropmark sites and shrunken medieval settlements. One small cropmark site was identified as being directly on the route of the water main.

During September and October 2000, a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken during the laying of the pipeline. A single enclosure ditch, identified in the Desk-Based Assessment probably of Middle Iron Age date was revealed near the farm track to London Barn Farm.

BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE

Clapham, Dera (tunnel) Site (TL 0341 5626)
Mike Luke and Tony Walsh

Archaeological evaluation comprising trial trenching was followed by open area excavation in advance of construction of an Immigration Detention Centre within the DERA complex.

The archaeological remains extended over 0.5 ha and appeared to represent a prehistoric unenclosed settlement. This included probable sub-circular and rectangular buildings, two and four-post structures, fencelines and pit clusters. Initial examination of the all-features plan suggests the different settlement elements may be grouped together into discrete areas.

Bedfordshire

Although the features were convincing, only a small number of artefacts (a handful of struck flint and one sherd of pottery) was recovered from the feature fills. The settlement is most likely to date to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age and is comparable to sites investigated 3 km to the south at Biddenham Loop (BCAS in prep) and within the Upper Thames Valley, for example at Aldermaston.

Edworth, Topplers Hill (TL 2167 4036)
Mike Luke and Rob Edwards

The construction of the bridge and junction on the A1 was modified to reduce the impact on the archaeological remains reported in *SMA* 29 (1999). 0.5 ha of open area excavation confirmed the presence of a settlement comprising a series of inter-linked ditched enclosures, originally identified by geophysical survey. The two partially investigated enclosures contained settlement evidence including roundhouses and pits, all of early-middle Iron Age date. They were separated by a ditch 4 m wide and 1.4 m deep. One of the pits contained two fragments of human bone. To the periphery of these, parts of an extensive ditched field system were investigated.

The results of the investigations are currently the subject of a MAP2-style assessment.

Houghton Conquest, All Saints' Church (TL 0436 4143)
Matt Edgeworth, Jeremy Stone and Sean Steadman

Archaeological recording was undertaken as a result of trenching for a French drain around the church.

No evidence for an earlier church structure was discovered. Possible evidence for a change to the pattern of the external buttresses was uncovered at the junction of the east wall of the chancel and the vestry. Footings for a former buttress on the south wall of the south aisle were also uncovered.

The footings and other stonework observed in the drainage trench tended to confirm the accepted chronology of the construction and later restoration of the church.

Kempston, Marsh Leys Farm (TL 0280 4580)
Mike Luke and Ian Beswick

Evaluation comprising aerial photographic analysis, field artefact collection, geophysical survey and trial excavation undertaken during 1998 and 1999 identified a probable late Iron Age/early Romano-British farmstead. This was subject to open area excavation, over 2 ha in extent, during the second half of 2000.

Residual pottery within later features suggests the farmstead may have originated during the early-middle Iron Age. However, the first firm evidence for activity comprised a major boundary feature (re-dug on a number of occasions)

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and two roundhouses (the fill of one of the latter contained a human skull). These appear to be contemporary with a small ditched enclosure which surrounded a small square building (c 7 m). Based on parallels elsewhere this is interpreted as a possible "shrine". The only obviously "ritual" feature which may be contemporary was situated c 3 m to the north of the enclosure ditch. This comprised a small pit in which two complete skeletons of chickens and two early Roman coins were deposited. A small cremation cemetery (urned and unurned) was situated 20 m to the east. With the exception of one grave, which contained a miniature handmade vessel, no grave goods were present. It is hoped further analysis will be able to confirm whether the site did represent a farmstead or whether it could be a religious focus.

The enclosure ditch of the possible "shrine" was incorporated into a rectangular system of ditched enclosures aligned on the earlier boundary. A number of these contained evidence for structures in the form of postholes but no building plans could be determined. Several appear to be devoid of activity, but were associated with deep water pits suggesting they may have been stock enclosures. Two inhumation burials were placed within separate enclosures, one of which contained evidence for hobnail shoes placed under the head and a jar (which may have been broken on deposition).

A system of parallel medieval furrows, approximately 9 m apart, extended over the entire excavation area.

The results of the investigations are currently the subject of a MAP2-style assessment.

Pulloxhill, Flitton Road (TL 0643 3432)

James Pixley

An archaeological excavation, only 13 m x 3 m in extent, was undertaken next to a recently constructed bungalow. Despite the relatively small area of investigation, significant archaeological deposits were encountered. These included a north-south aligned ditch containing late Neolithic/early Bronze Age pottery, the first to be found on the Boulder Clay ridge where Pulloxhill now stands. The presence of a large pit containing post-medieval pot and a cultivation furrow attest to later activity, probably associated with upstanding earthworks in the vicinity.

Shefford, Robert Bloomfield School (TL 1381 3866)

Sean Steadman and Rob Edwards

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken within the grounds of the school ahead of the construction of new buildings and a multi-use games area. The development was adjacent to an area of known archaeological remains, including a Roman cremation cemetery and a possible Roman villa.

Despite the high archaeological potential of the area, none of the trenches within the study area produced features or deposits of an archaeological character.

The majority of the trenches only revealed deposits associated with the landscaping of the school grounds and playing fields. A Roman sesterius coin of 1st to 2nd century date was recovered from this material.

The absence of artefacts, except for the coin, within the landscaping deposits suggests that archaeological remains may not have been significantly disturbed during the landscaping of the school grounds. Though it must be noted that the source of the landscaping material is uncertain and it may have been imported to the site.

The evaluation has contributed to the definition of the area of known archaeological remains by effectively redefining the southern limit of Roman activity in this part of Shefford.

RAF Stanbridge (SP 9586 2304)

Mark Phillips and Jackie Wells

A watching brief was maintained during the construction of a sewer main from the Stanbridgeford sewerage treatment works to a housing development on the former site of RAF Stanbridge. Two areas of archaeological significance were identified.

Iron Age and Romano-British pottery was found in the alluvium deposited by the Ouzel Brook. The earliest dated from the Late Iron Age, 50 BC-AD 50, whilst the latest Romano-British pottery belonged to the 3rd or 4th century AD. No archaeological features were found associated with the pottery but it is likely that it is derived from an area of occupation nearby. Previous archaeological work along the line of the Brook also produced evidence of Romano-British activity, including ditches found beneath the alluvial layer.

Two features were found at the north side of the small wood adjacent to Billington Road. These consisted of a ditch that contained pottery dating to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age. A short distance away, set into the natural clay, was a large pottery storage vessel dated to the same period. The ditch and the storage vessel together suggest that this may be the remains of an enclosed occupation site.

Shefford, Shefford Lower School (TL 1375 3875)

Sean Steadman, Mark Phillips and Rob Edwards

Archaeological investigations, comprising an intrusive evaluation and open area excavation, were undertaken within the grounds of the school, prior to the construction of a new classroom. The development was adjacent to an area of known archaeological remains, including a Roman cremation cemetery and a possible Roman villa.

For the intrusive evaluation a single trench 9.8 m long by

1.5 m wide was opened. The evaluation demonstrated that the ground had been subject to recent disturbance by building work. This disturbance and mixing extended a short distance into the upper surface of the underlying natural geology. Below the disturbance was a large portion of a Romano-British two handled flagon. The vessel was located within the base of a truncated cut and demonstrated the survival of archaeological deposits within the area.

Subsequently an open area excavation of c 20 sq m was undertaken. A number of modern intrusions were identified and one feature of possible archaeological origin. The feature, a tree throw, had an irregular oval cut with concave sides and an irregular base. The light natural derived fill contained moderate amounts of charcoal and burnt clay, which may derive from burning of the root bowl. No finds were recovered from the feature, but Romano-British and modern ceramic building material, late Bronze age pottery and a worked flint scraper were recovered from the topsoil and landscaping disturbance.

Silsoe, Church of St James the Great (TL 0825 3559)

Sean Steadman, Tony Walsh, James Pixley and Ian Beswick

Archaeological recording was undertaken during construction of footings and associated drainage runs for a kitchenette extension at the north-west corner of the church.

A possible boundary ditch of Early-Middle Saxon/early medieval date was partially revealed in two sections, running roughly parallel to Church Road. The combination of animal bone fragments and pottery dumped in this ditch suggests settlement in the vicinity. A leaf shaped flint arrowhead found in the ditch was clearly residual in this context, but nevertheless it indicates activity in this area in the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age period.

The Extensive Urban Survey For Bedfordshire

Sean Steadman, Matt Edgeworth, Jim MacQueen, Amy Rushton and Martin Oake.

English Heritage has initiated a national series of Extensive Urban Surveys. The Extensive Urban Survey for Bedfordshire is funded by English Heritage and managed by the County Archaeological Officer of Bedfordshire County Council. The survey is being jointly undertaken by staff of Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service and the Heritage and Environment Section of Bedfordshire County Council.

The Monuments Protection Programme Monument Evaluation Manual lists 12 Historic Towns for Bedfordshire (Darvill 1992). These are Ampthill, Bedford, Biggleswade, Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Leighton Linlade, Luton, Potton, Sandy, Shefford, Toddington and Woburn.

Leighton appears twice, as Leighton Buzzard and Leighton Linlade. In fact Leighton Linlade was never a town and has been excluded from the list. However, Harrold did have

the attributes of a small town during the medieval period and has now replaced Leighton Linlade in the list of Bedfordshire towns.

The criteria used to define urban characteristics for the twelve historic towns in Bedfordshire are categorised in accordance with MPP format (Darvill 1992).

Roman small towns are defined as: settlements of urban character which lack the administrative status of public towns, but which have a range of monuments and features characteristic of urban areas. Dunstable and Sandy fall into this category. The Roman town at Dunstable is on the same site as the medieval and modern town, while Sandy is effectively a green field site on the southern edge of the present town although partly under the modern town cemetery.

Royal/ecclesiastical centres are defined as: urban areas founded as, or determined by, royal or ecclesiastical institutions between the 5th and 10th centuries. Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable fall into this category.

Fortified centres are defined as: planned or reorganised early medieval towns with a street or streets occurring within a new or pre-existing system of defences. Bedford is the only town within the county that meets these criteria.

Small market towns are defined as: having no urban characteristics other than a market, a population of 300-400 and a catchment area of a few square kilometres. Ampthill, Biggleswade, Harrold, Potton, Shefford, Toddington and Woburn are all included in this category.

Medium-sized market towns are defined as: an urban area which provided a market and service centre for surrounding communities, related in some way to the exchange and redistribution of commodities. Bedford, Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard and Luton fall into this category.

County/provincial capitals are defined as: different from local market centres in that they served a much larger area and maintained a higher population density. Bedford is the only town within the county which falls into this category.

Industrial towns are defined as: urban areas which developed around a specific industry or group of industries. Bedford, Dunstable and Luton are included in this category.

In only three of the towns have there been significant levels of archaeological investigation: Bedford, Sandy and Dunstable. In Bedford and Dunstable the investigations have been in the core of the present towns. At Sandy the excavation concentrated on the Roman small town on the present town's southern edge (Dawson 1995). Although investigations in Bedford and Dunstable have been relatively extensive publication of the results has been patchy. The main publication covers work in Bedford between 1967 and 1977 (Baker *et al* 1979). Only Bedford has been subject to any attempt at a synthetic study (Hassall

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and Baker 1974). This is now somewhat dated and has not been revised in the light of subsequent fieldwork and research. Elsewhere archaeological investigations in towns have been limited to small scale watching briefs and more recently evaluations, none of which are published.

With the exception of Luton, the project has concentrated on the historic urban core of each town, defined from the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey, with a cut off date of 1914. However, because the historic environments of Luton, Dunstable and Bedford are heavily influenced by industrial development in the 19th and 20th centuries this date has been extended where appropriate. However, because of the wealth of material for this period it has been dealt with at a summary level, identifying general zones of activity rather than individual sites and buildings.

The treatment of most of the towns included in the survey has been standard, but three of the towns required a different approach.

Both Bedford and Dunstable were known to contain significant areas of archaeological deposits dating from the Saxon (Bedford) and Roman (Dunstable) periods onwards. To date, there have been over 50 archaeological interventions within the historic town of Bedford, while in Dunstable, The Manshead Archaeological Society have undertaken over 40 investigations in the town and BCAS have completed 20 projects in the town. In order to produce an effective management tool and strategy it was necessary to undertake a more detailed analysis of the available information.

The whole of the Luton Borough Council area is now urban in character, and therefore the threats to the heritage resource and the mode of its management are also urban in nature. The Borough area is not well known archaeologically, and it is essential therefore that the survey should provide an effective tool for the management of the historic resource. Accordingly, the historic core, defined from the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey, was extended to include the core of the 19th century hatting industry which was so important to the development of Luton.

The Extensive Urban Survey comprises three stages: Data Compilation, Assessment and Strategy. The first stage draws together the accessible history of the town, known archaeological sites and historic buildings data. The Assessment stage leads to a report which provides a brief history of the town, and an assessment of the archaeological and historic buildings data to define areas of archaeological potential. Each Assessment report comprises a description of the Location and Topography, the Nature of the Sources is discussed and a Historical Summary for the town is presented. The Archaeological Background and Historical Development of each town are described by chronological period. An Assessment of each town's Character, Importance and Potential is also included. The historical development of the town and areas of archaeological potential are presented in plan form at the end of each report.

Draft Assessments for each of the twelve towns have now been completed and will be finalised following discussions with English Heritage. The Strategy stage will draw on the Assessments to develop a strategic framework for the management of the archaeological and historic resource of each town. It is hoped that the proposed strategy for each town will be adopted as supplementary guidance notes for the relevant District plans.

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Willington Quarry North (TL 5093 2506)

Sean Steadman and Andy Thompson

Lafarge Redland Aggregates Ltd obtained planning permission to extract sand and gravel at Octagon Farm North, Willington. A condition on the planning permission required the implementation of a scheme of archaeological works, which included open area excavation of an area of crop marks, listed as Historic Environment Record (HER) 1480.20.

Prior to construction of the Bedford Southern Bypass in 1990, HER 1480.20 was investigated through study of aerial photographic data, field walking, and the excavation of two intersecting trial trenches. Cropmarks revealed at least two phases of superimposed feature complexes. Field walking resulted in few finds, explained by a depth of topsoil and alluvium of around 0.40 m to 0.60 m, due to upcast from a drain and the relatively close proximity to the river. Trial trench excavation demonstrated Late Iron Age and Early Roman activity on the site.

The study area occupied approximately 0.6 ha, lying between the Bedford southern bypass and the River Great Ouse, 1 km north-east of Octagon Farm. This area was situated on the river's flood plain, at c 22 m OD, with the underlying geology consisting of gravel. In the recent past the area had been under pasture and arable cultivation. Excavation began in late August 2000 and continued until mid-October.

Spot dated pottery ranged from Late Bronze Age to Late Roman, and was combined with stratigraphic evidence to define six provisional phases of activity. Each phase being defined by distinct changes in the way that land was subdivided and used.

The initial three phases of activity included ditches,

enclosures and a crouched inhumation, but produced no direct dating evidence.

During the Late Iron Age at least two large enclosures were constructed on either side of a central drove-way. To the west of the drove-way an enclosure extending c 120 m north-northwest - south-southeast, c 73 m east-northeast - west-southwest, included a penannular enclosure of c 18 m internal diameter within its bounds and a neonate burial in the southern boundary. To the south-east, on the eastern side of the drove-way, a second enclosure extended c 70m north-northwest - south-southeast, c 50 m east-northeast - west-southwest. A north-south orientated burial, situated within the western drove-way boundary, probably dates to this period of occupation. Maintenance and re-cutting of boundary ditches implied use of this complex over a number of years.

During the Early Roman period substantial changes to land division occurred, although the central drove-way was retained. This included construction of linear boundaries, perpendicular to the drove-way, opposite each other, forming c 22 m wide strips. Around 40 m west of the drove-way a c 22 sq m enclosure was incorporated within the linear division. Around 30 m west of the drove-way a well was constructed in the northern land division. Maintenance of this boundary was continued after infilling of the well. Three further wells were excavated within the western drove-way boundary. All showed evidence of wood revetment with varying degrees of preservation; finds included a leather shoe.

A kiln was situated around 4 m east of the drove-way, midway between the two east-west land divisions. The oven survived to a depth of c 0.40 m, with a smooth clay lining and integral tongue, constructed from clay and stones, for the support of a raised floor. The fills contained a mixed assemblage of pottery, predominantly shell tempered.

Around 20 m to the south, separated by the southern of the two east-west land divisions, a second kiln was recorded. This oven survived to a depth of c 0.16 m with a smooth clay lining and employed kiln-bars, for which there was no trace of support. Fills contained principally reduced wares.

Situated to the south of the site, around 4 m east of the drove-way, the heavily truncated remnant of an inhumation was encountered. The surviving portion of right leg and hands suggested an east-west orientation. The grave fill contained pottery spot-dated to the late 3rd/early 4th century AD. The difference in date between finds associated with the site and this grave suggests that abandonment of the drove-way complex may have occurred sometime before the burial took place.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD UNIT

Woburn Road, Marston Moretaine (SP 992 412)
A Connor

The Unit carried out an evaluation on 6 ha of land to the west of Woburn Road in Marston Moretaine on behalf of The Howe Family, as part of a condition on planning permission. A desktop assessment was undertaken in 1998. Following the desktop assessment a programme of trial trenching took place during January and February 2000.

Of the 20 trenches excavated, 11 contained features that may be described as archaeological, and nine of these contained late Iron Age or early Roman pottery. Pottery was abraded and fragments were small from most of the trenches, however trenches 1, 2 and 4 contained larger fragments found in pits. Little animal bone was recovered and this consisted mainly of small fragments, except in trench 1 where a small quantity of better preserved bone was found.

Medieval ridge and furrow was observed in nearly all the trenches, and many trenches also showed signs of more recent disturbance, probably from ploughing, possibly using a sub-soiler.

One area of high archaeological potential and a further two of limited to moderate potential have been identified.

THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Drays Ditches, Luton (TL 080 265)
David Hillelson

As the result of a breach of Scheduled Monument Consent for the construction of a temporary hoarding within the curtilage of Dray's Ditches at Bramingham Lane, Streatley, Luton, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the developer to undertake archaeological observation and recording of the remedial works.

Dray's Ditches is a linear dyke which runs between Great Bramingham to the west, and the foot of Warden Hill to the east. It consists of two Bronze Age ditches, three Iron Age ditches and at least one earth bank. The earthwork, although greatly degraded, can be traced for part of its length, where it runs to the east of the New Bedford Road. It is thought to continue to the north of Bramingham Lane, on the western side of the New Bedford Road.

The study area lies to the south of Bramingham Lane and forms part of the curtilage of the monument, representing a protective strip running to the south of the supposed line of the ditches.

Remedial works on the site involved the removal of four timber posts and their concrete settings. The pits were then

Bedfordshire

cleaned and recorded. No conclusive evidence was revealed regarding the extent of the monument and it appears unlikely that any damage to significant archaeological deposits was caused by the unauthorised construction.

Dunstable, Half Moon House: (TL 026 211)

David Hillelson

In response to a planning condition placed on the redevelopment of land to the rear of Half Moon House, London Road, Dunstable, the Heritage Network was commissioned, by the owners, to undertake archaeological observation and recording of groundworks.

It was hoped that evidence for the 12th-14th century Hospital of St Mary Magdalene might be uncovered in the course of site works, but only two features were recorded, both dating to the late post-medieval period. The most interesting of these was a tile hearth, formed from broken peg tiles. The tiles were hand-moulded and of different dates, the latest dating to the first half of the 19th century, the earliest, with punched out peg-holes, dating to the early 18th century. The second feature comprised the butt-end of an extended pit, which produced occasional fragments of late post-medieval and Victorian pottery in its fill. Evidence of root activity, including substantial tap roots, suggests that this feature was dug as a planter.

HERTFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Biggleswade, 24-39 Shortmead Street (TL 1871 4487)

Tom Vaughan

An evaluation to the north of the Saxon and medieval settlement revealed only late post-medieval and modern features, probably associated with development of the street frontage with houses in the 19th century, their subsequent demolition and redevelopment of the site in the 20th century. Two undated pits and three undated ditches were recorded, though their loose, loamy fills indicate an 18th century or later date. No indications of earlier courses of the river were present, nor alluvial layers that would indicate the presence of established water-meadows prior to the 19th and 20th century development of the site. The western part of the site was terraced for use as a wharf following the Ivel Navigation Act of 1756, and it is possible that a number of features may date from this period of use.

Dunstable, Ashton St Peters Junior School (TL 0200 2200)

Peter Boyer

An archaeological trial trench evaluation of the above site in October 2000 revealed features of Roman and high medieval and late medieval date across the site. A small

quantity of late Iron Age pottery from the site also suggestive of activity of this date in the vicinity of the site. Considerable quantities of residual Roman pottery was found in medieval features, suggesting truncation of the site during the medieval period.

Dunstable, Land at West Parade (TL 0131 2180)

Jon Murray

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out in July 2000. No archaeological features or finds were revealed, despite the known presence of Roman and medieval activity in the vicinity. It would appear that the site had been scoured and levelled during the construction of the playing field present today.

Leighton Buzzard, 33 Lake Street (SP 974 268)

Jon Murray

During May 2000, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken in advance of residential development. Five trenches revealed a single large late medieval pit, possibly relating to the quarrying of sand on the site, in addition to a number of 19th century foundations and soakaways, probably relating to the use of the site as a maltings at this time.

Tingrith, Church of St Nicholas (SP 3243 0065)

Nick Crank

Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out during drainage works at the church in October 2000. The church is of medieval date. The drainage trenches and soakaways revealed general 'graveyard soil' containing disarticulated human bone, to a depth of up to 1.4 m below existing ground level. No articulated burials, earlier phases of church construction or other finds were made.

MANSHEAD ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Billington Hill excavation (SP 9425 2270)

Renny Hudspith

The Iron Age ditch in Cut C was completely excavated in 1999. This revealed an ashy deposit overlying large blocks of sandstone at the base of a cleanly scoured ditch. The evidence suggests a violent destructive event following the scouring of the ditch, which included the burning and slighting of the enclosure (or hill fort) defences.

Some slight indications of Roman activity on the site were a possible stone feature set into the ditch fill adjacent to a metallised surface.

Another feature revealed during the season was a length of

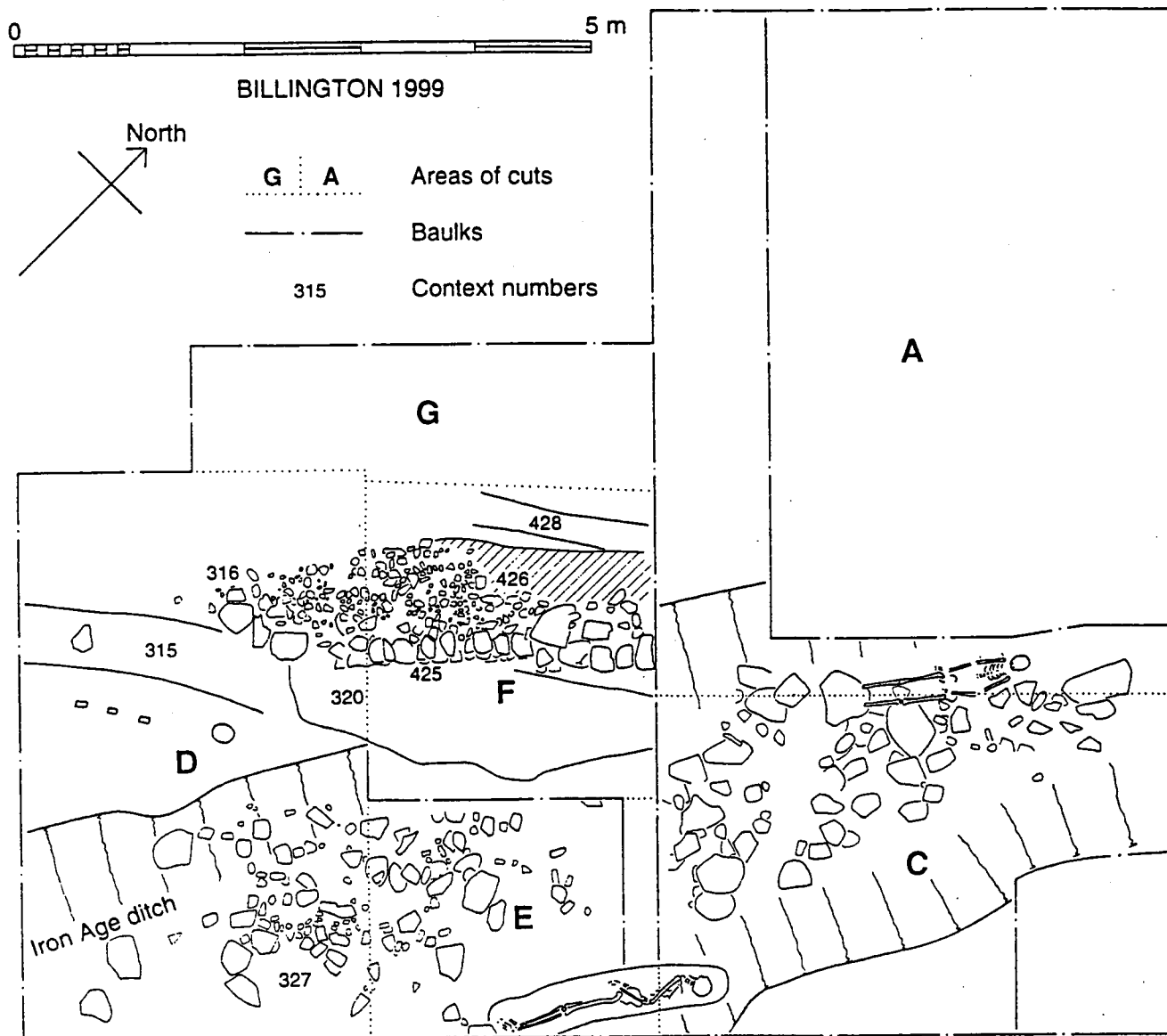


Fig 1. Billington Site Plan.

drystone wall foundation for a later medieval timber-framed building which stood (on a building platform) on the site (Hudspith 1999).

Reference

Hudspith R 1999; *Manshead Journal*, 39, 2

Bedford, 26a Russell Avenue
Dave Warren

Introduction

The Society was invited by Mr 'Mike' Hargreave-Mawson the owner to participate in an excavation in his back garden over Easter 2000.

His researches had shown that Russell Avenue existed as a track at least as far back as the 16th century. It is also recorded that during the development of the area in the 1890s Saxon skeletons, complete with swords and spears, were discovered. The details of just where are unfortunately vague. The track had led to a nearby windmill and, if this

had been built on an ancient mound, it is possible that this served as the focus for later burials.

The Excavation.

A single cut was made 5 m x 1.5 m (long axis north-northwest - south-southeast) diagonally across the garden, the southern end being nearest the house. The topsoil was c 20 cm deep at the south end deepening by another 10 cm about halfway along the cut; in its lower level was some 19/20th century material derived from context 2 below. Context 2 contained the bulk of the finds and such was the density of building rubble, tile, bottle glass etc at the southern end it was designated context 3 in the initial belief it was a soakaway but it proved to be just a concentration of the material found throughout 2.

Context 4 was the pre-development (1890s) ploughsoil of clayey loam becoming somewhat sandier with depth. It contained none of the modern building detritus although pegtile was in evidence. Also present were sherds of white glazed wares including willow pattern, scribble ware, glazed red earthen wares, bottle glass and a horseshoe nail. Two

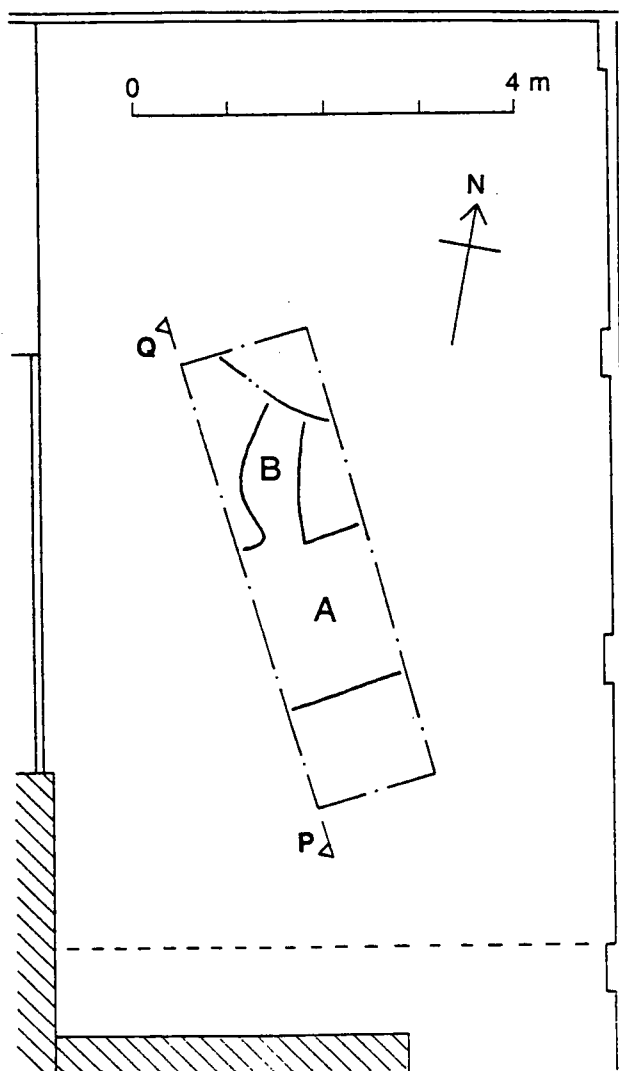


Fig 2. Back garden. 26a Russell Avenue, Bedford.

ends of iron bar, (each c 1.5 x 7.5 cm in cross section) both embedded in rectangular pockets of lead were recovered. Below lay a yellowy orange sandy clay (context 5) which in the absence of evidence to the contrary was taken to be natural. However, at 180 cm, the greatest depth reached, it was noticed the earthworms were still active.

⌘ Level of OSBM at junction of York Road and Russell Avenue

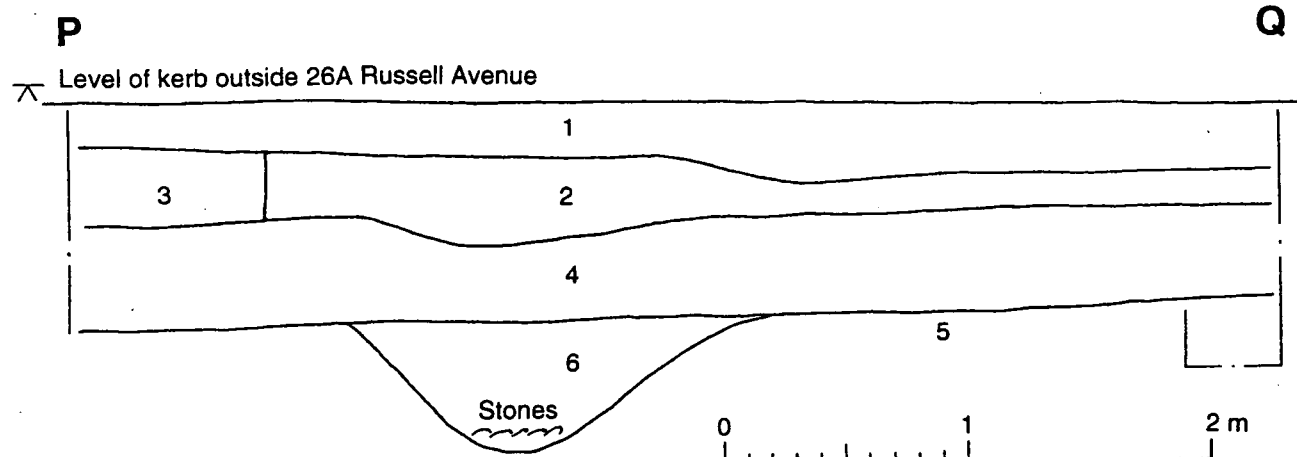


Fig 3. Section P-Q, 26a Russell Avenue, Bedford.

Going across the excavation at right-angles to the long axis (ie southwest-northeast) was a feature (A) 170 cm wide with another feature (B) leading off to the north. Feature A proved to be a ditch 50 cm deep with a flat bottom c 30 cm wide on which lay a number of stones. There was nothing datable in the fill. Due to the fact that the length uncovered was less than its width it was not possible to determine whether it was linear, eg a field boundary, or curved, in which case a wide ring ditch is a suggestion.

Feature B proved to be irregular and only about 5 cm deep and being filled with the same material as feature A, it is probable that they are contemporary. One small sherd of shellgrit pottery of Romano-British appearance was found immediately on top of the fill.

Discussion

The building material and the traces of industrial waste such as the fragments of various slags suggest it was left over dross from the earlier phases of development dumped on a still vacant site. When No 26 was built in 1905-6 the ground was simply brought up to its present level with imported topsoil. The ditch was the only deliberate feature found, as feature B appears to have been nothing more than a shallow natural depression produced by water running back into the ditch. Although no datable artefact was discovered in its fill there are indications that it is of some antiquity. That portion which survives is clearly below the lowest level affected by agriculture with an unknown amount shaved off by this process. The small Roman sherd found over Feature B, at the bottom of the plough level, indicates that both Feature B and ditch A are earlier than the Roman period. Unfortunately the section discovered is far too short for us to know whether it is a straight ditch or a curving one. If the former, a field system, and a date nearer the Roman period might be indicated. If it is a segment of a ring ditch then a Bronze Age date would be in order. See Dawson, (1996) and Steadman, (1999) for nearby examples and Green, (1974).

References

- Dawson M 1996; Plantation Quarry, Willington: Excavations 1998-1991, *Beds Arch* 22, p2-49
- Green H S 1974; "Early Bronze Age Burial, Territory and

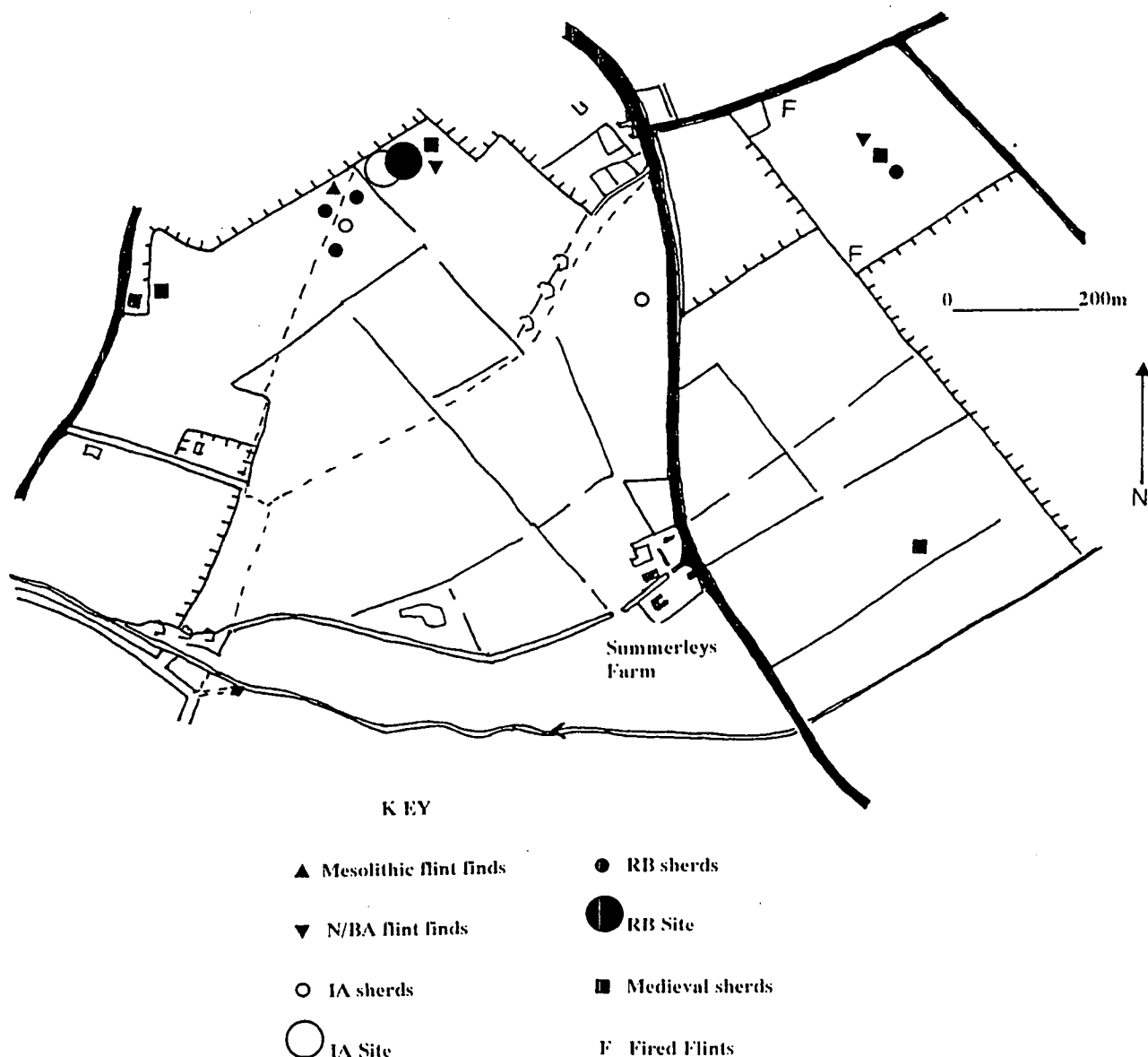


Fig 4. Finds distribution. Summerleys Farm, Billington.

Population in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, and the Great Ouse Valley", *Arch Journal* 131, p75-135

Steadman S 1999; "A later Neolithic and Bronze Age mortuary complex and Iron Age settlement at the Bunyan Centre, Bedford", *Beds Arch* 23, p2-31

Fieldwalking Renny Hudspith

Billington

An area of c 1 km² was fieldwalked by the Society in the southern part of Billington Parish during the autumn of 1999 (Fig 4). Permission to fieldwalk was granted by Mr C Adams of Summerleys Farm, Billington.

The survey area comprises land sloping southwards from Billington Hill (c 125 m OD) down towards the Ouzel Brook which forms the County Boundary in this area. The soils range from sandy gravels with chalk on the hilltop to heavy chalky clays at the hillfoot; and closer to the river, alluvial

deposits (silt, gravel and peat) denoting former river channels, areas of flooding and former marshland.

Over two hundred sherds of late Iron Age, Romano-British and Medieval pottery were found scattered across the hilltop (SP9322) with the greatest concentrations of sherds to the east of the survey area. A few worked flints, sherds of early Iron Age pottery and several Roman tile (tegula) fragments were also found on the hilltop.

Elsewhere, there were finds of Neolithic-Bronze Age worked flints from a field adjacent to the Stanbridge Road (SP947223). Medieval sherds and possibly Roman sherds (indicating manuring scatters) were also found in fields SP947223 and SP946215.

Post-Medieval - Modern sherds, glass & china, pegtile fragments & pieces of corroded metal (nails, cart fittings & horseshoes) were the commonest finds during the survey.

Evidence of ridge and furrow at Summerleys Farm has



Fig 5. Grid walking survey. Grove Farm, Houghton Regis.

mostly been removed by ploughing. However, ridge and furrow is still visible on adjacent areas of pasture. Summerleys farmland includes a large area of former common land, which was enclosed in 1848.

A sample survey of 20 hedgerows on land at Summerleys Farm gave a range of averages of 1-5 species for hedges which were all of post enclosure date.

Houghton Regis

An area of c 6 ha at Grove Farm, Houghton Regis, was gridwalked by the writer in September 1999 (Fig 5, TL015255). The field conditions were not particularly favourable for surface collection (dry, dusty and recently ploughed) which reflected in the small quantity of finds recovered.

A bronze coin of c 3rd - 4th century date was also found on the field's surface amongst the Roman coarseware sherds and tile fragments.

Bone fragments were also noted in the same area.

Fieldwalking was last carried out by the Society at Grove Farm in 1990 (Hudspith 1991).

Permission to fieldwalk was given by Mr R Dryden of Grove Farm.

Woodside

Fieldwalking, by the writer, on land at Woodside Farm (Fig 6, TL0718) in January 2000, identified large scatters of fire-fractured flints (with Neolithic-Bronze Age worked flints - perhaps indicating prehistoric occupation) small scatters of medieval sherds and post medieval-modern (manuring) scatters of potsherds, glass & china (mainly 19th century).

Linear peg tile scatters adjacent to the Slip End Road may indicate the possible sites of former buildings in the area.

Permission to fieldwalk was given by Mr D Brown of Woodside Farm.

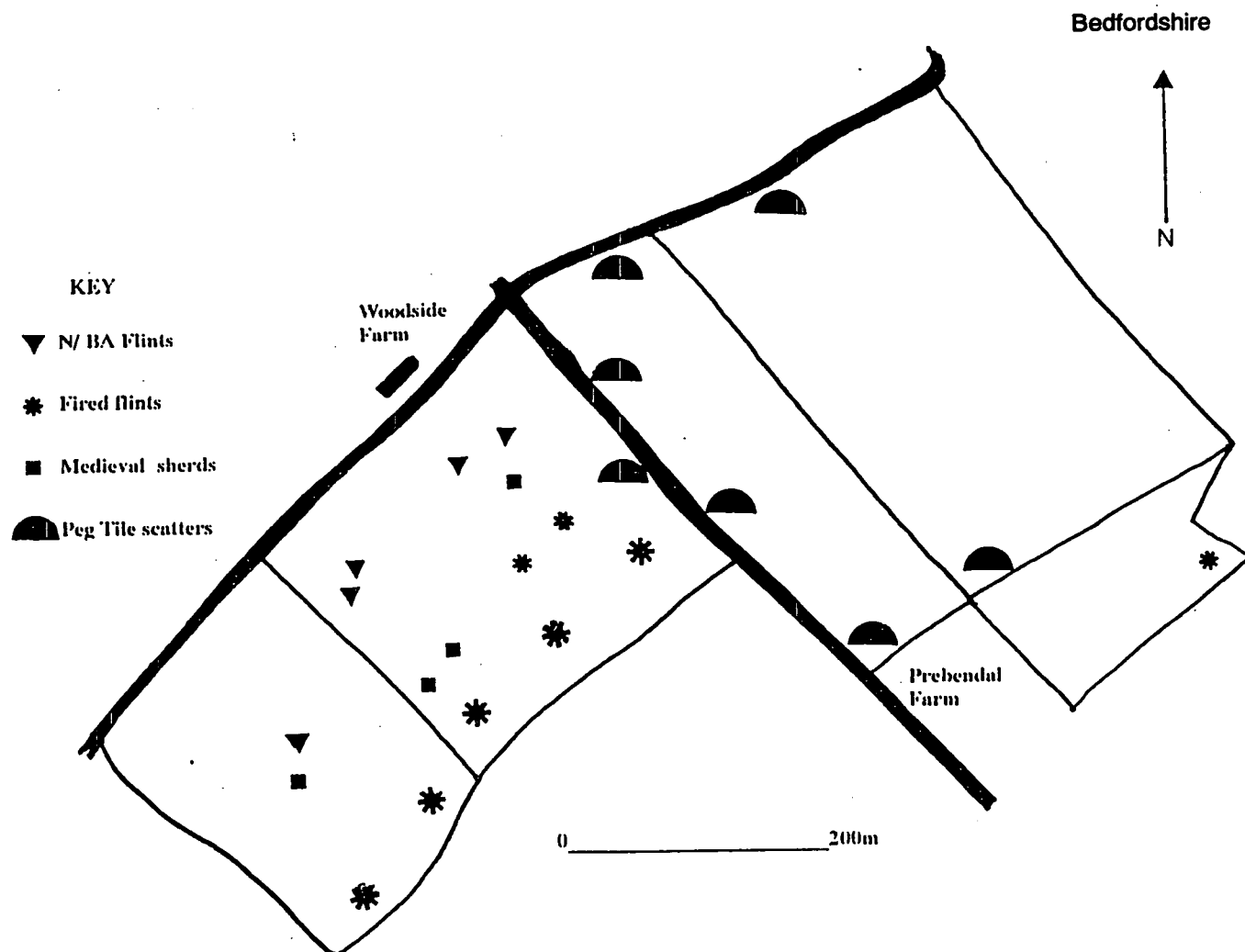


Fig 6. Fieldwalking survey. Woodside Farm.

East Hyde

During February 2000 some enigmatic soil marks were observed (both from the air and on the ground) in fields at East Hyde, on either side of the Lea valley. Subsequently, available footpaths and trackways through the area were walked to see if there was any visible surface archaeology relating to the soil marks. Two small scatters of worked flints were observed, on the hilltop at TL130181 and on the exposed chalk downslope at TL126179. Otherwise there was plenty of evidence for post-medieval - modern manuring scatters (along with one or two fragments of possible Roman tile) but little else of note, apart from a linear scatter of large flints indicating a ploughed-out metallised trackway at TL 135187.

References

Hudspeth R; 1991 *Manshead Journal* 31, 44-51.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

Dunstable, Queensway Hall (TL 0190 2218)
Erland Hindmarch

Archaeological investigations were undertaken in advance

of redevelopment for a new supermarket. The work comprised an evaluation, followed by a staged programme of excavation undertaken during construction. The work uncovered parts of a late Iron Age enclosure, but the remains had been heavily truncated by recent building works.

Podington, Manor Farm (SP 9424 6284)
Steve Morris

A watching brief was carried out during demolition of existing buildings and prior to the construction of new extensions to the farm. A short length of wall and associated yard and floor surfaces were revealed on the north side of the house. The east wing may have been a much later addition, as the wall forming the staircase is of a much thicker build, suggesting it formed a gable end. Residual pottery of 12th century date was recovered.

Willington, Danish Camp (TL 1128 5027)
Gary Edmondson and Andy Mudd

Excavation was carried out in advance of the construction of a visitor centre within the Camp (SAM No 1535). Excavations in 1973 had located a series of walls, with pottery from associated features dating them to the 12th to

Buckinghamshire

13th centuries (Hassall 1975). The present excavation identified at least three structural phases, with a timber construction replaced by masonry walls. There was also a high density of pits and other features. The pottery indicates activity at the site from the early 12th through to the early 13th century, confirming the previous interpretation of the site as early medieval in date.

References

Hassall T 1975; 'Excavations at Willington 1973', *BAJ* 10, 25-40

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES AND CONSULTANCY LTD

Buckingham, Land Adjacent to 6 Station Terrace
(SP 694 333)
David Fell

A Watching Brief was undertaken in October 2000 on land adjacent to 6 Station Terrace, Buckingham during excavations of the footings of a new building. No archaeological remains were present on the site.

Castlethorpe, Sustrans Cycleway (SP 481 242)
Bob Zeepvat

During May 2000, a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken during drainage work on the route of the Sustrans Cycleway (Castlethorpe to Haversham section), where it passed over the flood plain of the river Great Ouse. No archaeological features or finds were observed.

Dinton, Dinton Hall (SP 766 110)
David Fell and Bob Zeepvat

In September and October 2000 an archaeological assessment was undertaken of Dinton Hall, near Aylesbury, during refurbishment and improvement works. The assessment confirmed that the present house was of 16th century origin and that an earlier house had stood on the same site, but its remains had probably been obliterated by the later building. It also showed that the present house and its landscaped gardens had been subject to changes, many of a major nature, throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Following on from this, an examination of the grounds and the fabric of the house in the light of the construction works that were either in progress or completed indicated that no significant archaeological remains were likely to have been disturbed, or were likely to be present in areas not yet affected by the construction works.

Great Brickhill, St Mary's Church (SP 901 307)
David Fell and Nigel Wilson

An evaluation was undertaken at St Mary's Church, Great Brickhill, in advance of the construction of a new church building. Two trenches were excavated, one against a blocked door in the north wall of the church and a second trench within the churchyard. No structural remains were present at the north door, but articulated burials were found in the trench. A number of post-medieval/modern inhumation burials were found in the second trench. A survey of memorial headstones in the area to be affected by the development was also undertaken.

Ledburn, Anglian Water Main (SP 9100 2200)
Nigel Wilson

During June 2000, a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken on behalf of Anglian Water, during the insertion of a replacement water main. The route extends from Ledburn to Grove, Buckinghamshire, a distance of some 1.1 km. As the pipe was inserted by drilling, the only observable groundworks were a series of small drill access pits at roughly 100 m intervals. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were observed in any of the pits.

Pitstone, Cement Works Off-site Water Main
(SP 9400 1550)
Nigel Wilson

During May 2000, a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken during topsoil stripping on the route of a new water main at Pitstone, Buckinghamshire. The route extends from Lower Icknield Way and Vicarage Road, passing close to the 17th century Pitstone post mill. No archaeological features or finds were observed.

Wendover (NGR withheld)
David Fell and Nigel Wilson

The discovery of a Roman cremation burial by metal detector enthusiasts led to the need for an archaeological excavation near Wendover. The cremation comprised a single burial, placed within a wooden box. The cremation had been placed within a flagon and was accompanied by a number of grave goods, including an adze hammer, lampholder and a variety of ceramic vessels. Post-excavation analysis leading to report in *Records of Buckinghamshire* is to be undertaken in 2001.

Winslow Zone Main Trunk Renewal Pipeline
(Mursley - Wing) (SP 816 292 - SP 875 216)

Archaeological monitoring during the construction of this

pipeline continued (see *SMA* 30, 11) and a group of prehistoric ditches was found west of Mursley centred on NGR SP 8085 2876. Work on this project is continuing and further details will be provided in the next edition of *SMA*.

Milton Keynes Emerson Valley First School (SP 839 344)
David Fell and Bob Zeepvat

An archaeological Watching Brief was maintained during the construction of a new school at Emerson Valley, Milton Keynes during December 2000 and January 2001. The site was adjacent to an area of known Roman settlement excavated in 1989 by the Milton Keynes Archaeology Unit (*SMA* 20, 1990, 22), but no archaeological features were present.

Milton Keynes, Fenny Stratford, Watling Street
(SP 884 342)

A desk-based assessment of a canalside site north of Watling Street, Fenny Stratford revealed the probability of archaeology of late prehistoric and Roman date extending from adjacent known sites. It also demonstrated that the assessment site had been in continuous industrial use for the last two hundred years, and that this had caused serious disturbance to a large part of the site, rendering the preservation of archaeological features unlikely.

Milton Keynes, Portishead, Tattenhoe (SP 830 335)
Nigel Wilson

A Watching Brief was undertaken during July 2000 during road construction at Portishead, Tattenhoe, Milton Keynes. The only features of archaeological interest were medieval plough furrows. A number of sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the area to the west of the Deserted Medieval Village of Tattenhoe

Milton Keynes, Shenley Brook End Middle School
(SP 8278 3537)
Nigel Wilson

In October 2000 an evaluation was undertaken on the proposed site for a new middle school at Shenley Brook End, Milton Keynes. The site is located to the south-west of the site of the deserted village of Westbury-by-Shenley, adjacent to areas of known Roman and Saxon activity. Twenty three trenches, amounting to a 3% sample of the entire site, were excavated. The only archaeological features exposed were traces of medieval ridge- and-furrow ploughing.

Milton Keynes, Walton Hall (SP 8876 3678)
Bob Zeepvat

In July 2000 a Watching Brief was maintained during

groundworks for the construction of new offices at The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes. The site, between Walton Rectory and H9 Groveway, was the subject of evaluations in 1990 and 1999, when a well-preserved Roman site was located in the southern half of the field. Observation of development in the north half of the field revealed only modern land drains and a scatter of medieval and post-medieval pottery in topsoil, but no earlier features or finds.

Milton Keynes, Wolverton College (SP 80924 41045)
David Fell and Nigel Wilson

An evaluation was undertaken in the grounds of Milton Keynes College, Wolverton. The site was located immediately to the west of a Saxon period cemetery. A single trench was excavated, but no archaeological remains were present.

Milton Keynes, Wolverton, Manor Farm (SP 8072 4176)
Bob Zeepvat and Nicola King

During November 2000 an historic building survey was carried out on the house and farm buildings at Manor Farm, Old Wolverton, in advance of proposals to refurbish the existing structures for residential and commercial use. The farmhouse dates originally from the 17th or early 18th century, with extensive additions in the 18th and early 19th century, and a largely Victorian interior. The earliest farm buildings are of 18th century date, but were significantly altered and adapted to new uses in the 19th century, when the farm was turned over wholly to cattle (Fig 1).

BABTIE

Aylesbury, Aylesbury High School, Walton Road
(centering on SP 8248 132)

Introduction

The Group was commissioned by Buckinghamshire County Council to carry out an archaeological watching brief for a series of developments at Aylesbury High School, at a height of 83 m AOD. These were:

- Phase 1, a new Music Centre development (AHS 2000);
- Phase 2, the replacement tennis courts and long jumps (AHS 2000- 2); and
- Phase 3, the classroom extension development (AHS 2001)

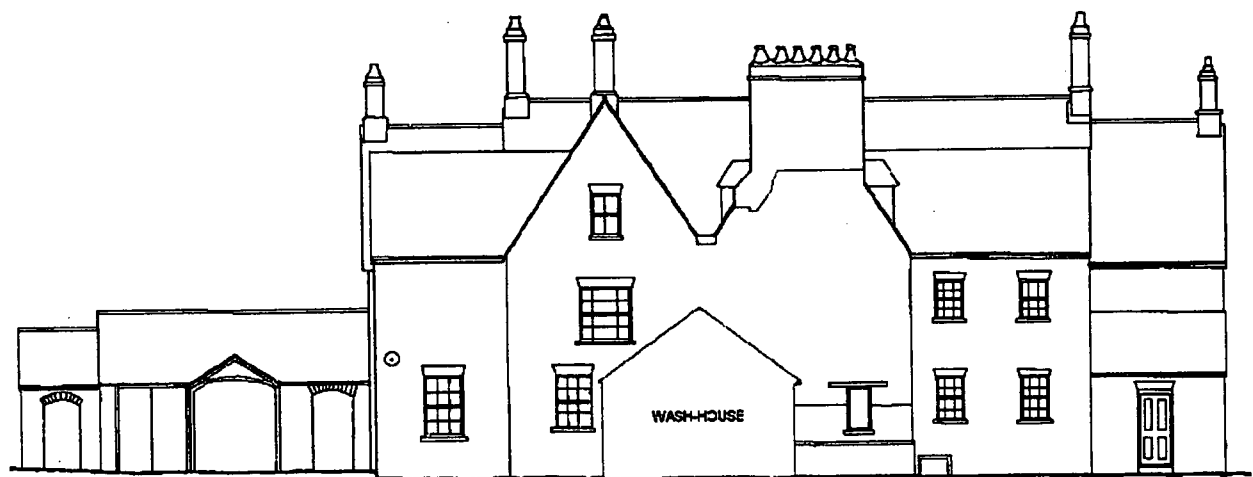
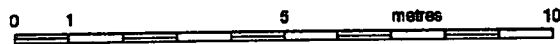
Three watching briefs were undertaken between 14 September 2000 and 26 February 2001.

Background

The Aylesbury High School site lies on a ridge of Portland Limestone which runs north-east to south-west mainly on



South elevation



North elevation



West elevation

**Manor Farm
Wolverton
Milton Keynes**

Fig 1. Manor Farm, Wolverton, Milton Keynes.

the west side of Walton Road. This limestone ridge provides a free draining focus for settlement within the clays of the Vale of Aylesbury and, as such, is known to have attracted occupation activity since the Neolithic, with further settlement in the Bronze Age, Roman and Saxon periods also identified.

Archaeological Results

Phase 1. Despite the high level of post-depositional disturbance evident at the new Music Centre site, a number of archaeological features were discovered. The post-deposition disturbance meant that in addition to a large proportion of post-medieval glazed earthenware and miscellaneous modern sherds of pottery the overburden contained residual sherds of Medieval, Roman and Late Belgic date pottery.

The earliest datable pottery is from the early-middle Iron Age, but the majority of the assemblage is datable to the Roman period; primarily of a probable 2nd century AD date. The vessels recovered are indicative of a domestic assemblage, comprising tablewares, storage jars and cooking pots, presumed to represent an accumulation of settlement debris. A total of 132 sherds of pottery (2 kg) was recovered together with 143 fragments of animal bone (1.5 kg).

Table 1. Date of assemblage by percentage

Period	% of Assemblage
pre-Belgic Iron Age	3%
Late Belgic Iron Age	23%
Roman	49%
Post-Roman	20%

Area A contained a large pit (003) to the south of the site, which yielded securely-dated Roman pottery. The pit was fairly steeply sloping, roughly circular in plan, and was interpreted as a clay pit. A residual sherd of pre-Belgic pottery was also recovered from this pit. Also in Area A a layer of rammed limestone was interpreted as the remains of a floor surface (021) to the south of the site. The area was bounded by a cut [1016] on the east side, interpreted as a north/south orientated foundation trench. Although this trench contained no surviving evidence for masonry, it is possible that the trench was robbed out, or may have only contained a timber wall. The floor surface yielded a Roman hobnail, Romano-British pottery and part of an iron brooch. The robber trench yielded Romano-British pottery and a hobnail.

Area B revealed an east/west orientated ditch (45) and a pit (48) both of which contained pre-Belgic early to middle Iron Age sherds. These were the earliest features identified on the site.

Area C revealed a large northeast/southwest orientated ditch cut [028] and 10231 which was recorded in the sections of two construction trenches. The fill yielded sherds of a number of late Belgic vessels within a securely datable context, representing primary deposition. This feature was interpreted as a boundary ditch, the line of which could be

projected under the existing school gymnasium building.

Phase 2, the tennis courts replacement site, and Phase 3, the classroom extension site, yielded no archaeological features. It is clear that the previous development and landscaping of the playing fields will have had an important impact on these sites.

Conclusions

The range of pottery types and artefacts from the new Music Centre site revealed evidence of occupation, dating from the early/middle Iron Age to the Roman period. In view of the previous scarcity of material from the Iron Age in the vicinity, this is significant in providing missing evidence for activity from this period in the Walton area. The evidence appears to indicate a more-or-less uninterrupted occupation of Walton from the Neolithic onwards. However, although the material hints at the presence of an Iron Age settlement close to the Walton Road, this has not yet been pinpointed.

The presence of Iron Age activity along Walton Road appears to back-up the assertion that subtle differences in the underlying micro-geologies and topography of an area have great importance in determining land use (Farley 1995). The special qualities of the Walton area have continued to attract settlement throughout all periods.

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 Farley M 1995; The Buckinghamshire Chilterns in the Later Prehistory in Chiltern Archaeology (ed R Holgate)
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BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE

Hartwell, The Church of the Assumption of Our Lady
 (SP 7950 1250)
 Rob Edwards

A watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Rodney Melville and Partners, architects at The Church of the Assumption of Our Lady, during the excavation of four new drains and two new soakaways, built in the course of renovation works.

The church lies within a designed 18th century landscape garden. It was built close to the site of Hartwell's medieval church, the graveyard of which was closed in the 18th century. The site of the medieval church is believed to lie approximately 80 m to the north-west. It is unclear whether or not the 18th century church lies within the boundary of the medieval church's graveyard. There are also reports of considerable quantities of medieval pottery from the area

Buckinghamshire

suggesting that the 18th century church may lie in an area of former medieval settlement.

Two drains and one soakaway were excavated on the southern side of the church. Within the soakaway a probable east-west aligned grave cut was observed. Within the cut the skull of an undisturbed inhumation was clearly visible. It is tentatively suggested from observations on the skull that the burial was extended and supine and that of an adult male (brow ridges on the skull were quite pronounced). Retrieved from the grave fill were a numbers of square profiled, probably hand made, nails up to 40 mm in length, which may denote the presence of a coffin. Three further inhumations were observed within the drain trenches. All remains were left in situ.

A deposit of mixed limestone fragments and tile up to 0.17 m thick overlay the graves. It is probable that the tile is of a late medieval to early post-medieval date, but it is unclear whether this deposit relates to construction or abandonment of the church, or if the material derives from the demolition of the earlier church.

Two drains and one soakaway were excavated on the northern side of the church. down to natural gravels or bedrock. At the northern end of the western pipe trench a small quantity of disarticulated bone was observed. This comprised animal, adult human and juvenile human long bone and rib fragments.

The date of the inhumations is unclear. Iron nails of possible late medieval to early post-medieval date were observed within the fill of one of the graves. Some of the graves appear to be aligned parallel to the axis of the church. However, this evidence must be treated with caution given the very narrow width of drain trenches in which the observations were made.

The balance of probability is that the observed burials are within the late medieval to early post-medieval parish cemetery. However, in the light of the tentative evidence for their alignment on the Church of Our Lady it is also possible that they may post-date the construction of the 18th century church. Gravestones on the northern side of the church indicate that burials continued to be made in the vicinity of the new church up to the early 20th century.

Stony Stratford, 81 High Street (SP 7860 4050)

Mike Luke and Tony Walsh

A watching brief was undertaken during the extension to the rear of the present building at 81 High Street, Stony Stratford. The building is described in "Historic Buildings of Milton Keynes" by Paul Woodfield and MKDC (1986) as originally comprising a timber framed building of the 15-16th century. Excluding churches, it is considered to be the oldest building in the town. Two trenches were dug (both c 4 m in length), c 0.75 m wide and c 1.5 m deep.

The stone foundation of the upstanding boundary wall comprised roughly squared limestone blocks c 0.4 x 0.3 m, roughly coursed to a depth of 1.5 m. The majority of the trenches were filled by a thick depth of made ground, with brick and tile rubble and pockets of dark grey ash. The natural brown clay natural was exposed at the base of the trenches.

A vertical cut was revealed at the end of one trench which coincided with a straight joint visible in the wall elevation. Its distinctive fills (alternating horizontal deposits of lime, mortar-sand and black ash, with occasional stony layers) and base comprising a single course of brick, suggest this may be a cess-pit.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE

Sandy Kidd

Senior Archaeological Officer

The County Archaeological Service has focussed on the preparation and implementation of a management plan entitled "A Future for Our Past" which was formally approved by the County Council in October 2000 following a consultation exercise. The plan has been published and is available on the council's web site at <http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/council/information/archaeology.htm>. The service faces the challenge of maintaining the planning advisory function whilst investing in the Sites and Monuments Record, policy development and conservation projects.

Development control-related archaeology continued at a relatively low level in 2000 - individual sites are reported by the contract units. The service has been involved with major new developments proposed to the north of Aylesbury in the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan which has been the subject of a planning inquiry this year. There is particular concern about the impact of residential development and a new road on the setting and future management of a large scheduled ancient monument at Quarrendon. The service is working closely with the County and District Councils to mitigate these impacts.

The Bucks SMR had not seen much development since the early 90s and was in need of new systems and data input. The installation of purpose-designed SMR software purchased from Exegesis SDM Ltd and linked to an ArcView Geographical Information System has brought the SMR up to a modern standard whilst the undertaking of an SMR Data Audit has quantified the inputting backlog and other development priorities. It is hoped that the modernisation of the SMR combined with increased staffing will enable a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for resources to enhance public outreach.

At present the service has only very limited resources for

conservation archaeology but has nevertheless been involved in a number of exciting initiatives. A bid has been submitted to the Heritage Lottery for the stabilisation of the chalk cross on Whiteleaf Hill, Princes Risborough, combined with a research and public outreach programme. This includes the re-excavation of a Neolithic barrow which was partly excavated in the 1930s then abandoned as a spoilheap on the outbreak of war. The establishment of a Chilterns Historic Environment Group to advise the AONB Office has raised the profile of historic environment issues in the Chilterns. This is timely in view of recent legislation to give AONBs an enhanced status and the review of the Chilterns Management Plan. It is allowing us to link historic environment issues into AONB wide programmes, such as the Chilterns Chalk Heritage and Streams Projects.

After several difficult years, it is heartening to be able to report a more positive message from Buckinghamshire with the hope that the millennium year has seen the establishment of firm new foundations for archaeology in the county.

COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Denham, The Lea (TQ 0490 8600)
Laurent Coleman

An evaluation of land to the west of The Lea identified elements of a field system dating to the later prehistoric and Romano-British periods. Domestic settlement of some form was indicated by the identification of a small number of pits dating to the same periods, and by palaeoenvironmental evidence. At the eastern side of the site a shallow sub-rectangular pit containing burnt human bone, charcoal, and burnt clay was identified as a probable pyre site with associated stakeholes possibly representing a windbreak. Adjacent to this feature was a ditch from which pottery dating to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age was recovered.

HERTFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Gerrards Cross, Wild Thyme, Hedgerley Lane
(SU 9929 8735)
Nick Crank

During June 2000, HAT carried out an archaeological evaluation in the rear garden of the property known as 'Wild Thyme', Hedgerley Lane, Gerrards Cross, in advance of residential redevelopment of the site. The evaluation examined anomalies revealed during an earlier geophysical survey of the site, which were interpreted as possibly relating to a Roman kiln complex excavated nearby in the 1930s. No archaeological features were identified, and the anomalies were found to be caused by modern activity.

Milton Keynes, Plot 6, Aldwyckes Close, Shenley Church End
(SP 828 368)
Peter Boyer

The site lies within the historic settlement of Shenley Church End, where extensive remains of the mediaeval settlement are known. A number of Roman finds have also been made close by. Archaeological observation and recording during groundworks associated with redevelopment of the site in October 2000 revealed no archaeological features.

Newport Pagnell, Mill House Stable, Mill Street
(SP 87543 44143)
Nick Crank

An archaeological evaluation undertaken at the above site revealed no archaeological features or finds. Newport Pagnell was heavily fortified in the Civil War. The site is shown on a 1644 map of the fortifications of Newport Pagnell as being within the area of the 'Mill Halse Bulworcke'. Internal features of the bulwark are known to have included a building and defensive wall. The results of the evaluation suggests that the bulwark may have been located to the east of the site.

LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Chesham, 128 High Street (SP 9590 0175)
Rob Armour-Chelu

In the summer of 1998, two areas were excavated adjacent to the existing High Street in Chesham town centre, prior to the construction of a new supermarket. Evidence for occupation during the medieval period was identified on the larger of the sites comprising two phases of domestic dwellings, dating from the 14th and 15th centuries respectively. The lower courses of chalk and flint walls, floor layers, hearths, garden deposits and a refuse pit were all preserved at a depth of 1 m below the modern High Street level.

The buildings were constructed on an area formerly utilised as pasture, probably used for grazing stock from at least the 12th century and from which a number of prehistoric flint tools were also recovered.

Subsequent reuse of the site as part of a tanning works, dating from the 16th century was also present in the form of several clay lined tanning pits with an associated system of wooden water pipes constructed below ground level.

A final report is in preparation.

MARLOW ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Some evidence of prehistoric activity at Low Ground Farm adjacent to Marlow

John Laker

This report concerns the investigations carried out during the 1999 and 2000 seasons by the newly formed Marlow Archaeological Society. This Society, conceived and successfully set up by Mr John Laker during 1998, now boasts a membership of more than 100.

Several projects were instigated during our first two formative years. But the main thrust of our archaeological investigations was centred on the Thames-side meadows at Low Ground Farm, close to the west of Marlow. Here there are sited three prominent circular crop marks together with other indications of prehistoric activity. All these marks are now only visible from aerial photographs, which also indicated that the area of our interest was situated in what was almost certainly a paleo-river island. Other work during this period included time over-flying with photography, and surveying some places of possible future interest.

In September 1999 a field walking training exercise was carried out over an area of 60 x 200 m close to the crop marks at Low Ground Farm. A survey team from our group set out a grid of thirty 20 x 20 m squares from a known reference point, plotted the position of the crop marks and surveyed a contour line across the area of interest. The walk was carried out in one day by about 30 volunteers, teams of 7 or 8 walkers working in each square.

The results of this exercise could almost be described as spectacular! Apart from the usual scattering of post-medieval and recent ceramics, ceramic building material and metallic

finds, a total of 265 worked and waste flint and flint cores was recovered from this comparatively small area.

Also recovered were one Middle Iron Age and two Romano-British pot-sherds. The flintwork was found to be mainly confined to the northern half of the area walked.

Because of this result, in August 2000 a second field walk of a further fifteen 20 m squares was organised in an area immediately adjacent to the northern half of the previous year's walk.

At the same time a resistivity survey was carried out over one of the main circular crop marks, the northern 30 m circle of the three on site. On this occasion a further 206 worked, waste and core flints were recovered.

A preliminary classification of the flint tools and cores and the few sherds shows that these finds may well represent activity periods at this site from the Mesolithic to the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age; (not necessarily continuous). The paucity of burnt flint recovered, 42 small nodules from both walks, however, perhaps indicates that we have not yet located the actual Bronze and Iron Age settlement area.

The resistivity survey confirmed that the plotting of the position of the crop marks, not visible on the ground, was within reasonable tolerances and also revealed an anomaly within the anomaly that defined that crop mark in its south east quadrant.

We feel pleased, we believe justifiably, with the success so far of our first operation. In view of the apparent importance of these findings, we are currently in consultation with the Bucks County Archaeologist, Alexander (Sandy) Kidd, informing him of our findings and are liaising with him as to

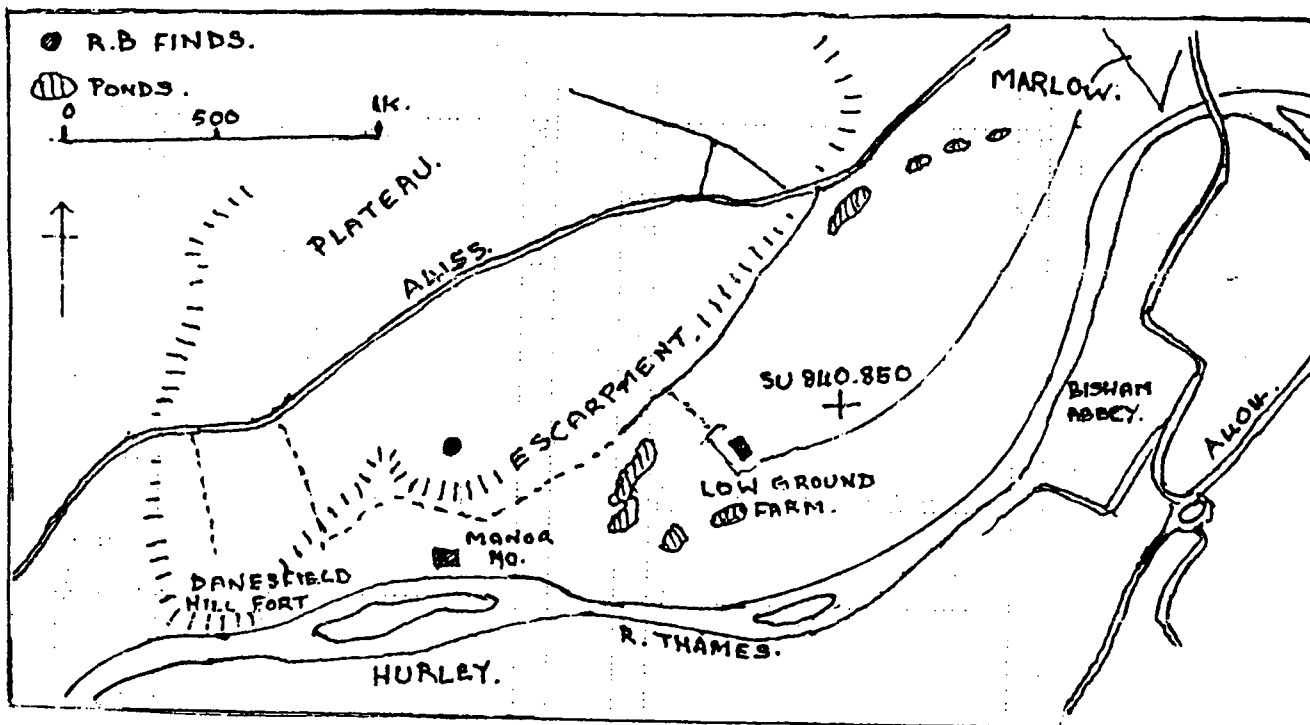


Fig 2. Sketch map of area under research between Low Ground Farm and the west side of Marlow.

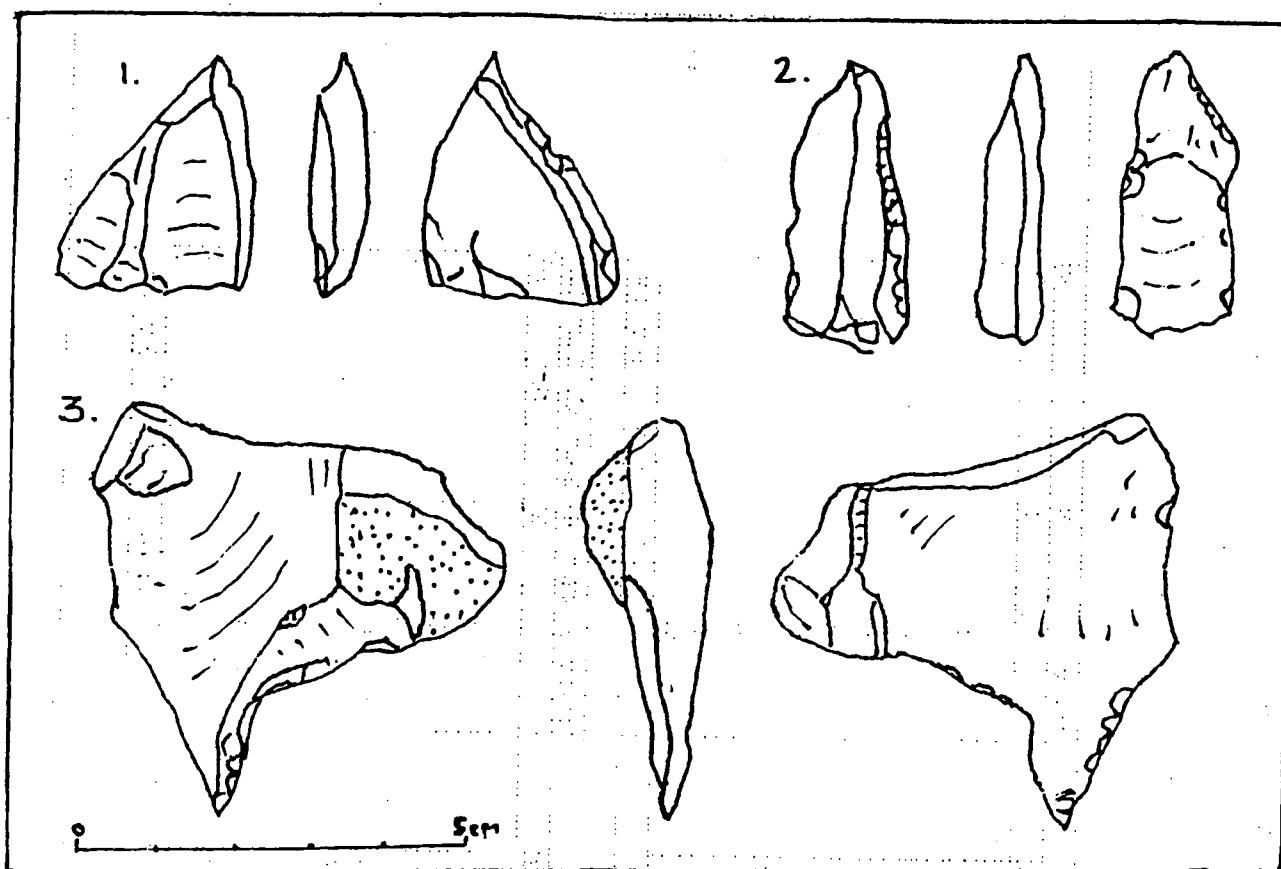


Fig 3. Flint tools from Low Ground Farm, Marlow.

1. Projectile Point. (Neolithic); 2. Retouched Blade. (Mesolithic); 3. Awl/Borer. (Bronze Age)

what future investigations we can carry out on this site.

Of course we would be pleased to hear from any of our sister societies, or indeed anyone, on matters of possible mutual interest.

MICHAEL FARLEY ARCHAEOLOGY

Copies of full reports on the work summarised below have been deposited with Buckinghamshire County Council's Sites and Monuments Record.

Bierton, St Osyth's Well (SP 83591521)

A watching brief was carried out for the Countryside Agency during restoration of St Osyth's or Uptown Well, Bierton. The well lies within the village and is adjacent to a known Belgic period settlement site. The well-house, which encloses a spring, was first constructed in limestone, itself probably a rebuild of the early Victorian period. It was subsequently substantially repaired and refaced in brick, probably in the later 19th century. In the course of the current restoration work some associated 19th and 20th century features were identified, including a separate cistern constructed in 1900 to which the well was connected and from which water was drawn through a freestanding cart-pump. No features certainly of pre-19th century date

were identified.

Attention is drawn to the possible significance of an adjacent building, apparently of 17th century or earlier date, now demolished, shown on the Inclosure Map of 1780 and in later photographs. Earthworks in an adjacent field include the route of a trackway, but there are also some landscape features here probably associated with the former house.

Buckingham, St Rumbold's Well (SP 688355)

A study of St Rumbold's Well and its environ was carried out for the St Rumbold's Well Management Group. The well and earthworks in its vicinity were surveyed. The 'well' (in fact an enclosed spring) has recently been scheduled as an ancient monument. The surviving remains are the footings of a conduit house built in 1623 on the site of St Rumbold's Well; the latter being depicted on Speed's map of 1611. The conduit house was connected to Castle House in Buckingham by lead pipes. A sale catalogue of 1903 includes a description of the conduit house and a map showing the course of the pipes which had to cross the Ouse in order to reach Castle House. When the Banbury, Buckingham and Bletchley Railway was built in 1850 the water supply appears to have been reconstructed over the line. The whole suggests at least 250 years of continuous use. It was noted that the Buckingham parish boundary diverts to incorporate the spring (well) site, hinting at Saxon

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antecedents. There is well-preserved ridge-and-furrow in the field, which is being considered for development.

Unfortunately no illustration of the conduit house when it was standing has been located. If any reader is aware of such an illustration, the writer would be pleased to learn of it.

Chearsley, St Nicholas Church (SP 7203 1031)

A small investigation was undertaken beneath the brick floor of the 15th century tower of St Nicholas Church, Chearsley, Buckinghamshire. The excavation located a probable early ground-surface and an apparent cut-feature containing an *in situ* deposit of lime mortar-mixing. It is possible that this might be associated with the tower's construction but it could equally well be within another feature such as a vault. A single find of a plain, glazed, late medieval floor-tile could indicate the former existence of a tiled floor.

Flaunden, St Mary Magdalene Church (TQ 0085 9866)

A watching brief during the excavation of six post-holes for a new fence enclosing the site of St Mary Magdalene church, Flaunden, a scheduled ancient monument, recorded no archaeological features. A small amount of roof-tile was present. The shallowness of the soil-deposit overlying undisturbed flint gravel was noted. Whether the church was associated with medieval settlement remains an unresolved issue.

Great Missenden, The Warren, Potter Row (SP 9033 0257)

A watching brief was carried out during construction of single-storey building adjacent to The Warren, Potter Row. Some years previously a quantity of 17th century pottery, including wasters, had been discovered in the garden of the house and medieval pottery wasters collected from a field nearby. The watching brief produced a small amount of 17th century pottery with clear similarities to that previously recovered, but only one waster. No further examples of the distinctive stamped-ware characteristic of the site were recovered. One piece of heavily overfired brick/tile and a partially glazed brick, which may have originated from the structure of a kiln, were recorded.

The absence of pottery pre-dating the 17th century at The Warren suggests that the Potter Row industry is of two distinct phases, medieval and 17th century and that there may have been no continuity between them. Nearly all of the finds came from the infill of a shallow feature which may have been a clay pit. Only the northern edge of this feature was seen, but it appeared to mark the limit of the site since beyond it lay undisturbed ground. The 17th century site may therefore have fronted the existing road with clay pits behind.

A sample of the underlying clay was taken and, after processing, a small pot was thrown from it and fired. This limited experiment confirms that the local clay is broadly suitable for making pots but that it cannot be used straight from the ground.

Medmenham, Medmenham Abbey (SU 806 838)

A watching brief continued from 1999 at this house during the excavation of pipe trenches around the south and east of the house and in the driveway to the north. Further skeletal material was observed together with some evidence for walls of clunch and a rammed chalk floor. Most of the material evidence was located east of the house. The whole is thought to reinforce the belief (SMA 1999) that an earlier reconstruction plan of the abbey by Plaisted may need substantial revision. A full report is in preparation.

Princes Risborough, Whiteleaf (SP 822040)

A preliminary management study of Whiteleaf was carried out for Environmental Services, Buckinghamshire County Council, in preparation for a Heritage Lottery Fund bid focussing on restoration of Whiteleaf Cross. The study area included various earthworks amongst which is the Whiteleaf Neolithic barrow and some First World War practice-trenches (previously resurveyed by the writer). The study drew attention *inter alia* to an impressive sequence of holloways, a roadway stopped up at the time of enclosure, and a previously unrecorded arc of interrupted trenches on the side of the hill (discovered by Julia Carey) and probably of First World War date.

Stewkley, Littlecote Farmhouse (SP 83182428)

A watching brief was carried out whilst pipe trenches and footings for a conservatory were being dug at Littlecote Farm. The farm lies adjacent to the site of Littlecote village, a scheduled ancient monument and itself incorporates part of a 17th or 18th century stable block. No features or finds certainly earlier than the 18th century were recorded, but a densely packed layer of cobbles may indicate the route of an 'ancient private road' shown on a map of 1814.

NATIONAL TRUST

Gary Marshall

Bradenham Manor (SU82889705)

The outer slopes of the roof of Bradenham Manor near High Wycombe were re-tiled during 2000 and an archaeological watching brief was maintained whilst this work was in progress. Several years previously the inner slopes were also re-tiled and much of the roof structure was therefore

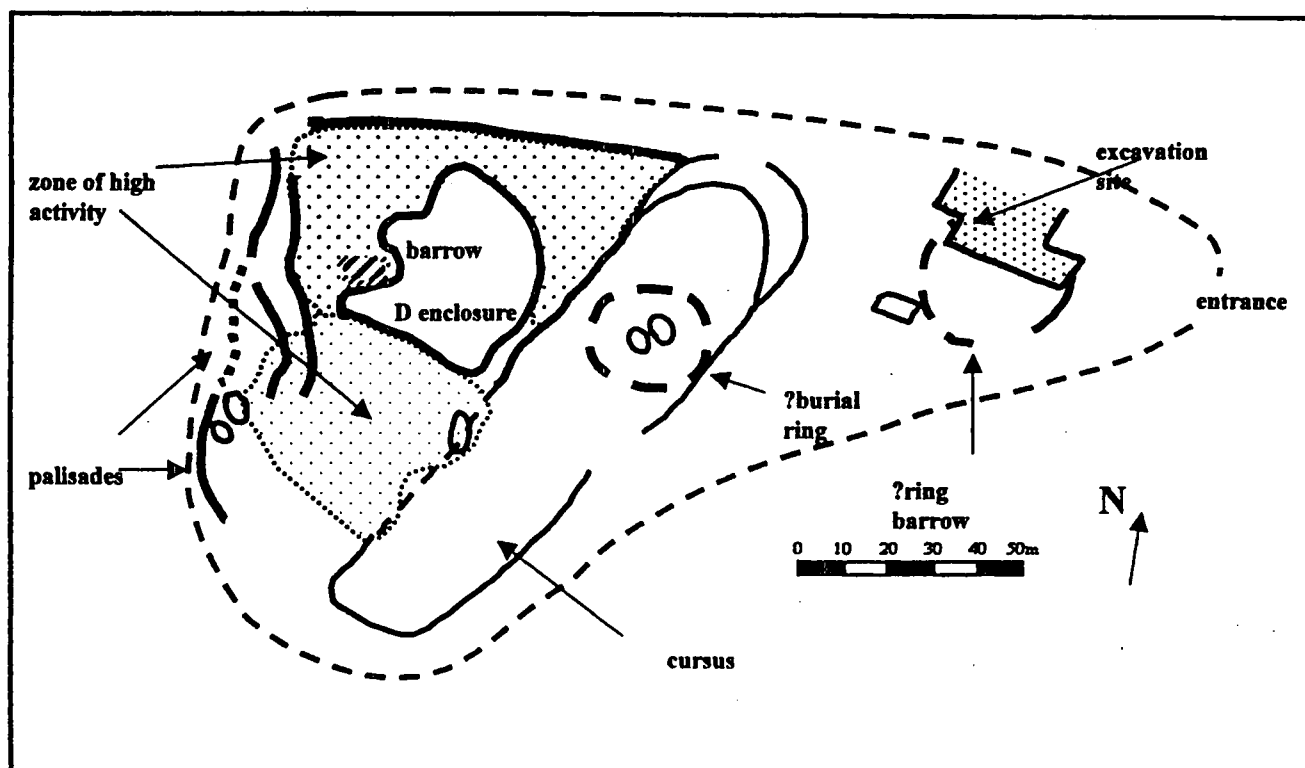


Fig 4. Ivinghoe Beacon, interpretation of the anomalies from the geophysical survey (John Gover "A Geophysical Investigation of Ivinghoe Beacon").

recorded during this earlier phase of work. Samples taken for dendrochronology dating during this earlier phase had established a felling date of 1652-53 for the timbers of the roof trusses. Similar dates were established for the trusses forming the south and west ranges of the roof, contradicting architectural evidence apparent in the elevations of the building which suggests that the west range is perhaps 20-30 years later than the south front.

During the latest watching brief it was possible to examine and record the wall plates running around the entirety of the building. Many of these were found to be re-used timbers since they carried empty mortices for the feet of rafters no longer in situ. These timbers probably originate from the 1650s phase of construction but were re-ordered when the west range was added 20-30 years later. Above the wall plates the outer slopes of the roof were found to be clad with horizontal softwood planks. These battens serve as insulation and also carry the battens for the tiles. On the east and north slopes an arrangement of timbers for two earlier dormer windows predating the existing 18th century dormer windows were noted and recorded.

A trench for an electrical cable laid across the east front of the house and continuing across the Kitchen Garden was also monitored. This resulted in the discovery of several 19th century (?) brick and cobbled paths outside the east front. However, no evidence was found for earlier buildings pre-dating the existing 17th century house. This is perhaps not surprising since evidence from excavations and geophysics surveys undertaken in 1999 suggests that the remains of the Elizabethan Manor lie beneath the south front. It was disappointing, however, not to have found

evidence of medieval occupation in the Kitchen Garden since this lies close to the Church incorporating late Saxon detailing.

Ivinghoe Beacon (SP960168)

Several small trial pits were excavated on the north side of the hill fort to investigate the find spot of a late Bronze Age sword discovered by illicit metal detecting. The results of the excavations suggest that the sword was removed from the base of the topsoil at a point halfway up the rampart. Two pieces of similar Wilburton type swords were recovered from the interior of the fort during excavations in the 1960s. The recovery of this latest example (The National Trust were eventually able to recover the item) from the base of the topsoil, rather than from a sealed context, suggests that the interior of the fort has been ploughed at some stage, thus relocating artefact material.

Recent geophysics surveys undertaken by John Gover, a student of Reading University, have revealed tantalising evidence of what may be a short Neolithic cursus and an associated D-shaped enclosure within the fort. Within the suspected cursus the survey has identified a 20 m diameter ring with two central anomalies, suggesting the possibility of a contemporary burial within the cursus. A second circular feature of similar dimensions was located within the eastern portion of the fort. On the west edge of the fort a series of north-south orientated anomalies suggest that there may have been several ramparts defending the western side of the fort, although no evidence for such structures is traceable above ground.

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During 2000 English Heritage also undertook a detailed topographical survey of the earthworks of the fort. This forms part of the Ridgeway Project which is an Heritage Lottery Funded scheme to enhance the management and interpretation of archaeological features on the Ridgeway.

Lodge Farm, Medmenham (SU808847)

English Heritage were commissioned during 2000 to produce a survey of the buildings at Lodge Farm. Clustered around a large courtyard, this intriguing group of buildings occupies a commanding hill-top location overlooking the Thames Valley. The tall flint and brick house dates from the early 17th century and was probably built as a hunting lodge by the Borlases, owners of Bockmer House, 1.5 km north of the lodge. In the late 17th century it was downgraded to a farmhouse. Dormer windows were added to the roof to provide attic accommodation and a single storey outshot was added on the east side of the building to provide a kitchen. Despite its reduced status the building remained as a prominent eyecatcher, embellished by the addition of the dormers, which were executed in a style matching the original construction.

Sampling for dendrochronology produced felling dates of 1564-5 for the chunch barn and 1545-77 for one of the trusses for the stables, suggesting that the lodge was added to an existing manorial farm. A felling date of 1724-25 was also obtained for the barn on the east side of the farm.

Pulpit Wood Hill Fort (SP832050)

During 2000 English Heritage undertook a detailed topographical survey of the earthworks of Pulpit Wood Hill Fort. This forms part of the Ridgeway Project which is an Heritage Lottery Funded scheme to enhance the management and interpretation of archaeological features on the Ridgeway.

Stowe Gardens (SP675375)

The restoration of the 18th century gardens at Stowe continued throughout 2000. Beyond the curtilage of the gardens two additional projects are currently underway as a result of grants made by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The North Front of the house is being conserved by the Stowe House Preservation Trust and the park surrounding the historic gardens is being replanted and restored by The National Trust.

Watching briefs have been carried out during the North Front works, revealing evidence for the original gravel forecourt and several former roads leading to the house. On the east edge of the North Lawn archaeological investigations have established that the ha ha was an iron rail fence set in limestone coping stones. This is in contrast to the sunken stone ha ha surrounding the remainder of the garden.

In the park the initial phase of restoration will involve re-establishing the historic water system, involving lake dredging and dam repair. A breach through the Haymanger Pond dam was examined by excavation and further work is planned. The earliest timber phase, consisting of an interlocking timber frame infilled with earth and clay, has been dated by dendrochronology to 1780-1812. Brick alterations to the sluice occurred in the mid 19th century.

English Heritage have been commissioned to undertake a detailed archaeological survey of the park. A programme of field-walking over ploughed areas of the park is also being run in conjunction with the Whittlewood Project. Directed by Birmingham University, the project is using a range of archaeological techniques to examine the evolution and form of medieval settlement in an area of the South Midlands, of which Stowe forms a part.

West Wycombe Hill Fort (SU800970)

An archaeological watching brief undertaken by Oxford Archaeological Unit over the excavation of a trench for a water pipe laid to the Church led to the discovery of several ditches, possibly outer defences for the Iron Age fort.

West Wycombe, 57 High Street (SU823946)

Recording by the National Trust of the fireplace in the Dining Room of this property during repairs led to the discovery of the outline of the original 17th century fireplace (Fig 7).

West Wycombe Park (SU8492)

English Heritage have been commissioned to produce a detailed survey of the archaeology of the gardens and park. The survey is to be used for enhancing the Trust's SMR since this is one of the few properties in the Thames and Chilterns Region which does not have an archaeological property survey. The results of the survey will also form the basis of a Conservation Plan for the management and restoration of the park and gardens. A survey of Mausoleum Hill which includes the Iron Age hill fort will complete the project in 2001.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

Broughton Barn Quarry (SP 9076 4056) Andy Chapman

Monitoring of soil stripping at the gravel quarry continued (SMA 30 (2000), 21). Linear and curvilinear ditch systems of Iron Age and Roman date were located, but the main concentration of features is still to be exposed.

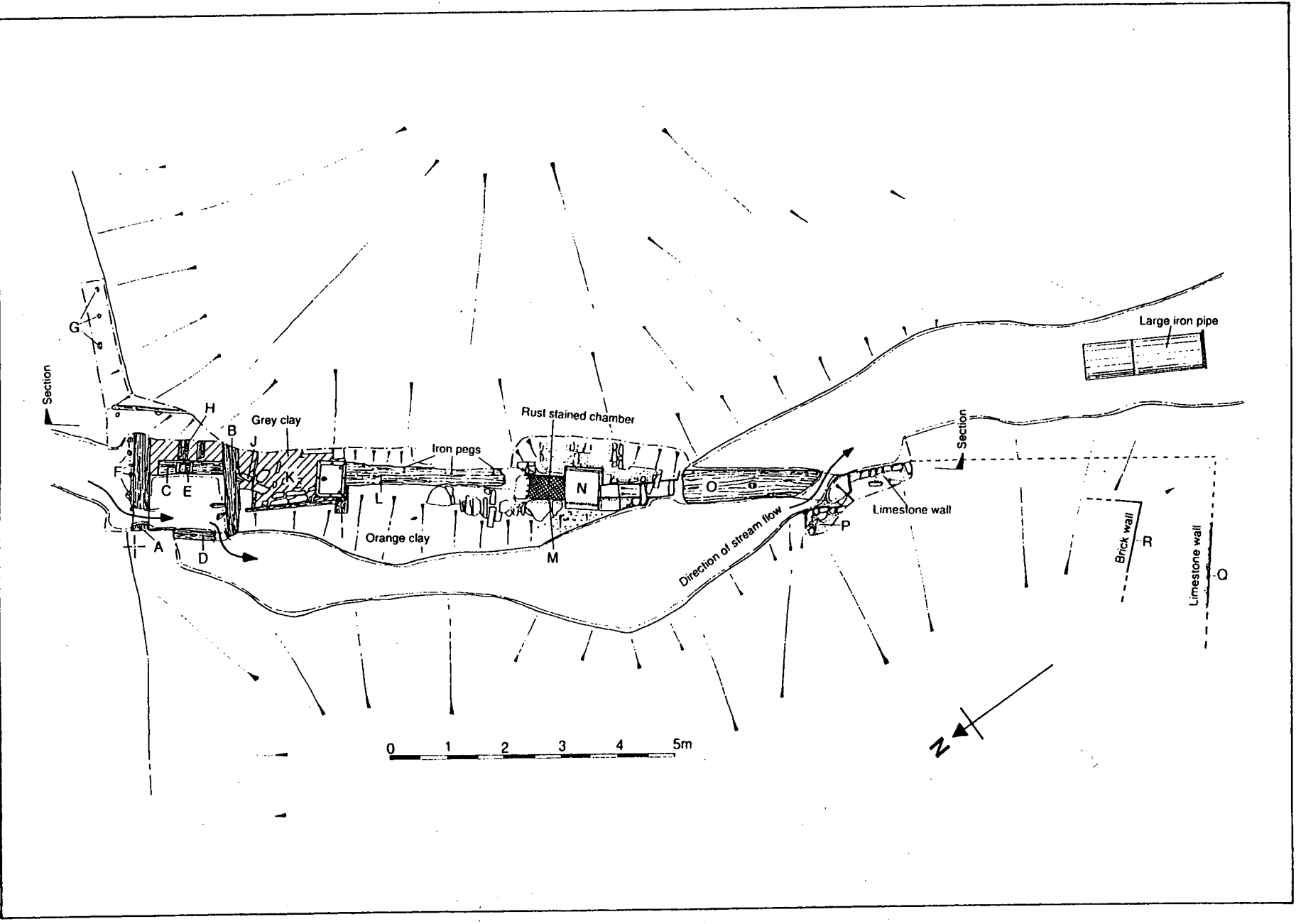


Fig 5. Stowe Gardens. Plan of the timbers and sluice revealed in the construction of the Haymanger Pond Dam.

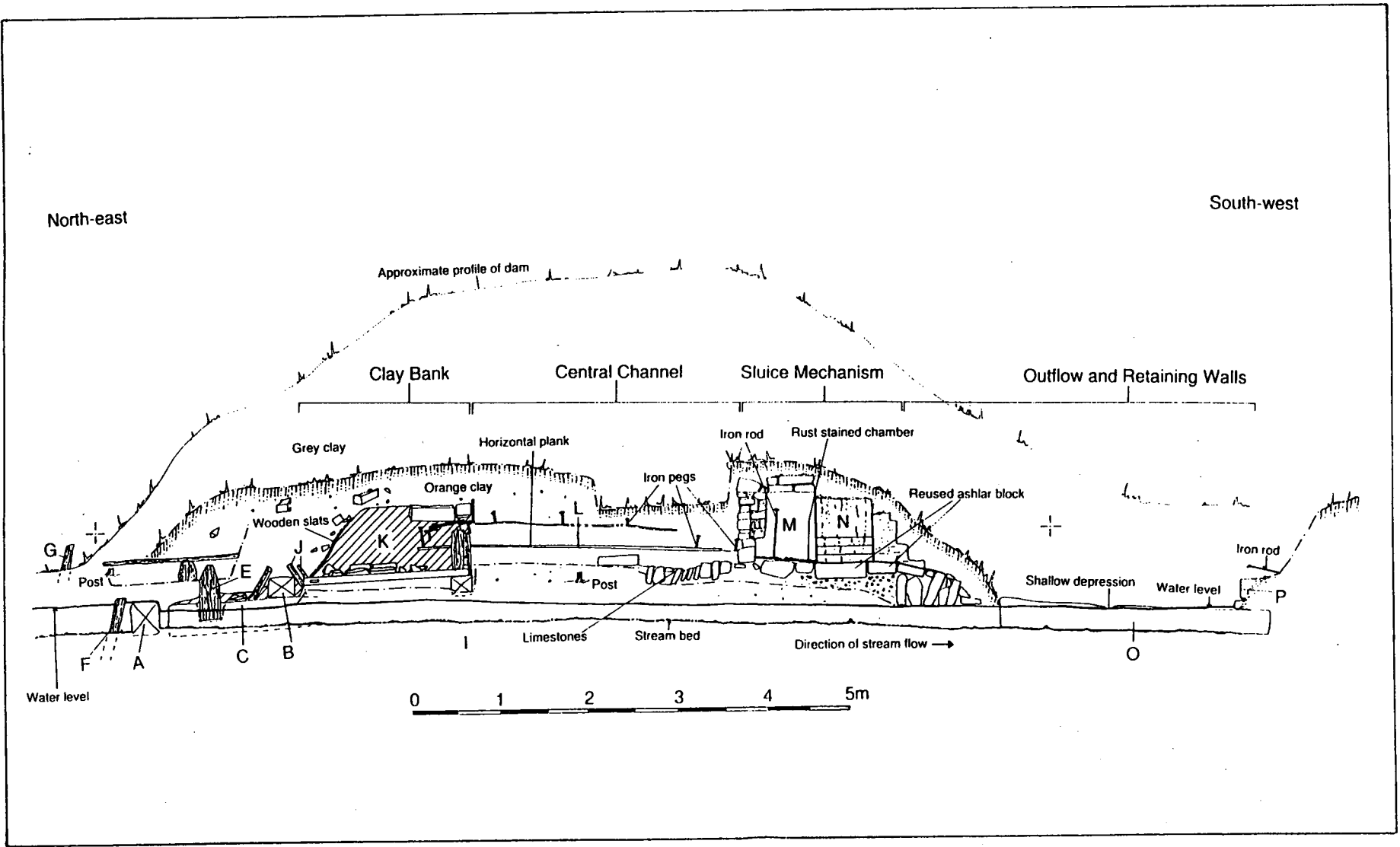


Fig 6. Slowe Gardens. Section through the construction of the Haymanger Pond Dam.

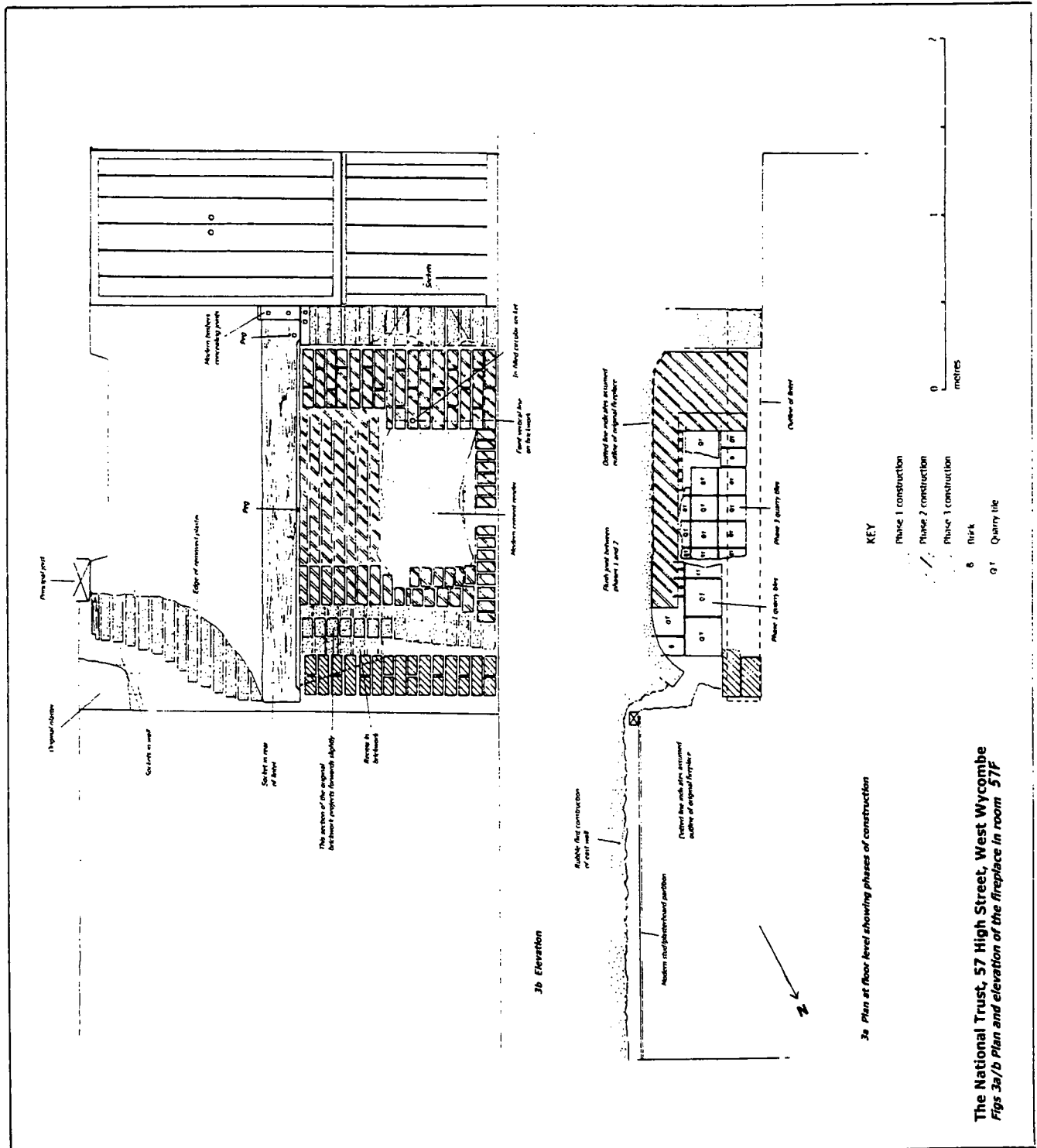


Fig 7. 57 High Street, West Wycombe. Plan and elevation of the fireplace in room 57F.

Gayhurst Quarry (SP 853 446)
 Andy Chapman

Fieldwork at the Gayhurst barrow cemetery (see *SMA* 29 (1999), 17- 20 and *SMA* 30 (2000), 21) was completed with the excavation of a length of one of the pit alignments. The watching brief on the final area of soil stripping was also completed.

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Aylesbury, Ardenham Hill House (SP 817 142)
 Robin Bashford and Dan Poore

Following a field evaluation in February 1999, the Unit undertook a watching brief at Ardenham Hill House. The proposed development area was divided into three zones. Zone 1 revealed limited archaeological evidence other than three post-medieval linear features and three possible post-holes of uncertain date. Zone 2 revealed a rectangular

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post medieval pit, possibly associated with the features in Zone 3. Zone 3 revealed a group of sub-rectangular post-medieval quarry pits and a number of linear features.

28 Mitre Street, Buckingham. (SP 6921 3332)

Jonathan Hiller

In July 2000 the Unit undertook an archaeological field evaluation at land adjacent to No 28 Mitre Street, Buckingham in advance of a planned redevelopment. The site of the proposed development lies within an area known historically as 'Prebend End over the water', which may have Saxon origins. The evaluation was requested by the County Archaeologist for Buckinghamshire owing to the presence of archaeological remains in the area and the documented ancient history of the town of Buckingham.

A single 10 m long trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 2 m. Layers of clay and gravel were present to this depth and all contained finds of 19th century or later date. No soil horizons or finds of earlier date were discovered in the course of the work. It seems likely that the excavated layers represent infilling of a hollow or of a large pit, possibly associated with a known marl pit on the site, which in the mid-late Victorian period was also the location of a brick works. This activity appears to have removed the original ground level of this part of the site, and with it any traces of the medieval street frontage depicted on Speed's map of Buckingham of 1610.

Dorney, Eton Rowing Lake (SU 919/787 to Su 939/774)

Fifth Interim Report.

Tim Allen and Nick Mitchell

Scope of work (Fig 8)

A fourth major season of archaeological excavations was carried out between July and October 2000. The principal aim of the investigations was to examine the cropmark Bronze Age rectilinear enclosure system at the north-west end of the site (Areas 20 and 24). Smaller areas were also examined in advance of the grading of the sides of the Rowing Lake next to the Iron Age and Roman enclosure excavated in 1997 (Areas 16C and 16D), south of Area 10 (Area 10J) and in between Areas 10 and 15 (Area B). In addition, a Watching Brief and limited excavation was carried out in Areas 18 and 22.

The work was carried out mainly by professional OAU staff, assisted by a small number of students and volunteers. We would like to thank all those who took part.

The Bronze Age enclosure system (Areas 20 and 24, Fig 9)

An area of 3.55 ha where the Rowing Lake and Return Lane crossed a cropmark Bronze Age enclosure system was stripped of topsoil and ploughsoil under archaeological supervision. A narrow trench extended the excavation area eastwards towards a palaeochannel (Channel N). Most of

the stripped area was excavated, but 0.7 ha of the larger area was subject only to a watching brief.

The earliest evidence of human activity was an early Mesolithic flint scatter found in alluvium on the east side of Area 20 close to Channel N. A background scatter of Early Neolithic pottery was found across the excavation areas in later contexts. The earliest features were a small group of pits in Area 24, one dated to the Late Neolithic and two others to the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age. These pits may be related to the cropmark triple ring ditch south of Area 24.

The enclosure system produced few finds, but appears to have been laid out in the Middle Bronze Age. Two small enclosures, one at the north end of Area 20, the other on the west side of Area 24, each contained a single waterhole, and the ditches forming successive phases of these enclosures contained more finds than the other ditches within the excavations, suggesting that they may have been domestic foci within a field system. Both waterholes contained Deverel-Rimbury pottery, in one case a fine comb-decorated globular urn, and one of the enclosure ditches contained the only saddle quern. Truncation by ploughing had clearly been severe across much of the excavation areas, and this may be part of the reason for the absence of associated postholes.

On the west edge of Area 20 was the only other waterhole, closely associated with two sub-rectangular pits with possible clay linings and full of burnt flint, and a semicircular gully. Not far away was the only scatter of postholes from Areas 20 and 24. This area is interpreted as a possible cooking place.

The enclosure system was cut by an east-west Roman ditch, and a possible north-south return was found in the very east end of the narrow eastern extension in Area 20 (Fig 9). On the east side the ground was lower, and here the Bronze Age and Roman features cut into, and were then sealed by, alluvium, evidence that parts of the site were flooded after the 2nd century AD. The alluvium was itself cut by a curving ditch, which appeared to follow the approximate limits of the lower-lying area, and may have been dug to mark the boundary between dry and wetter ground. This ditch contained only two finds, both horseshoes, one of 13th century type, the other as yet undated. If both are medieval this may help date the alluviation to the Saxon and early Medieval periods.

A watching brief and limited excavation was also carried out on Area 18 just south of the other area of cropmark Bronze Age enclosures. This showed that, as the cropmarks had suggested, there were ditches and occasional pits/postholes on the areas of gravel terrace, but it was not possible to follow the ditches across the lower-lying silt-filled hollows in between. Finds were very few, but included a background scatter of Neolithic material and a very few Bronze Age fragments.

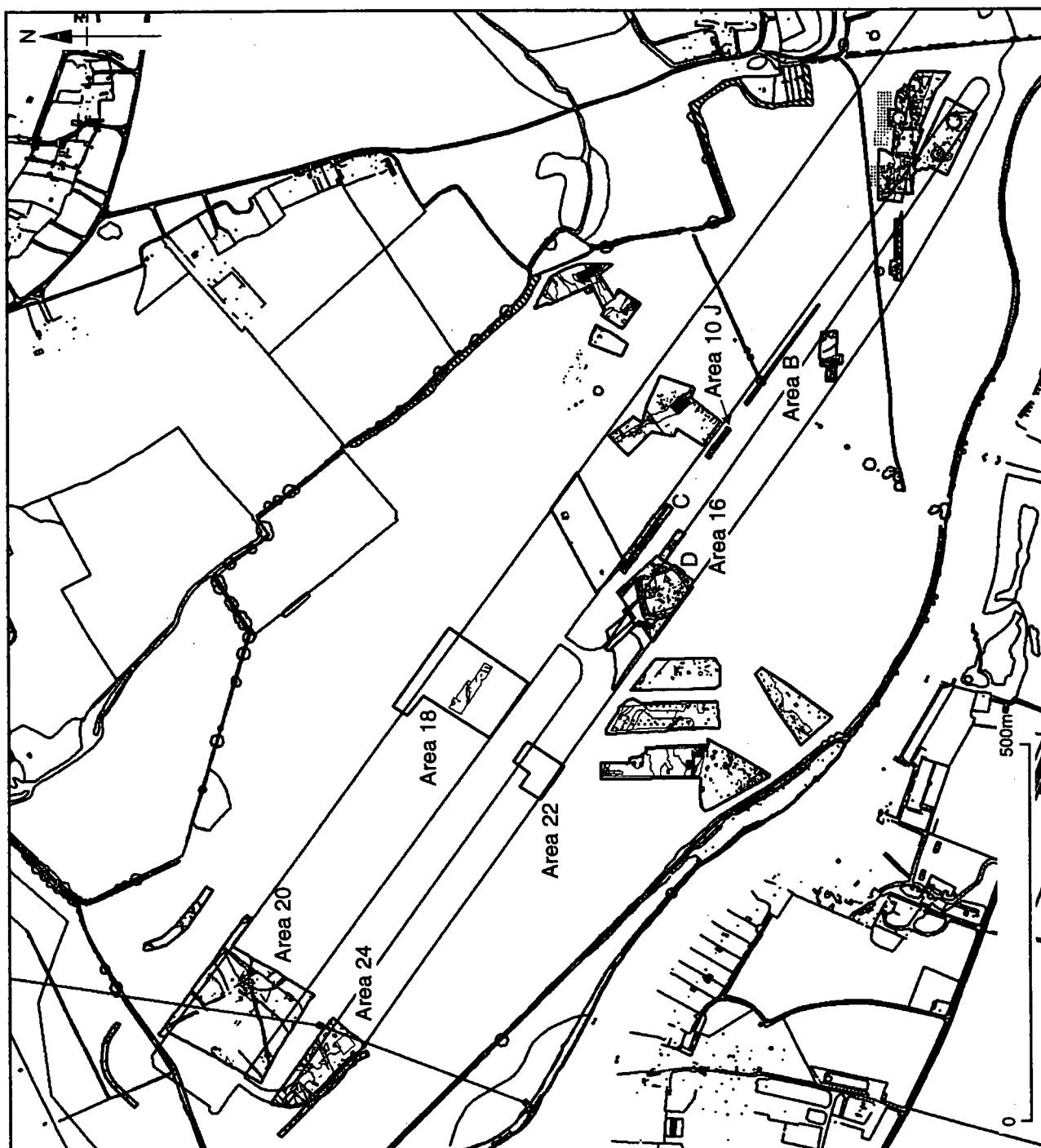


Fig 8. Dorney, Eton Rowing Lake.

A Watching Brief was also carried out on a smaller area (Area 22) in the Return Lane, where it had been hoped to pick up Mesolithic finds on a channel edge. The only find was an unworked antler.

Areas 16C and 16D: Grooved Ware pit and Iron Age and Roman Enclosure (Fig 10)

The recording of an 8 m wide strip along the southern edge of the Rowing Lake late in 1999 was reported in *SMA* 30. Another 8 m alongside was stripped and recorded during the summer of 2000 (Area 16C), and a second 16 m wide strip along the north edge of the Return Lane (Area 16D).

Within Area 16D pottery from at least 5 Late Neolithic

Grooved Ware vessels was found in a shallow oval pit, the largest assemblage of this date from the excavations. The pit also contained struck flints and part of a worked bone object.

Area 16D contained a substantial Late Iron Age ditch overlain by the flint-packed post pads of a timber building. The building, only two bays (4.5 m) of which lay within the excavation, was 6 m wide and had an internal partition represented by smaller postholes towards the west side. Just north of the end of the building was a group of ovens or possibly kilns built in the hollows left by earlier ditches. These ovens showed evidence of repeated firings, suggesting a long period of use. Towards the end of this time a shallow rectangular cut was excavated parallel to the end

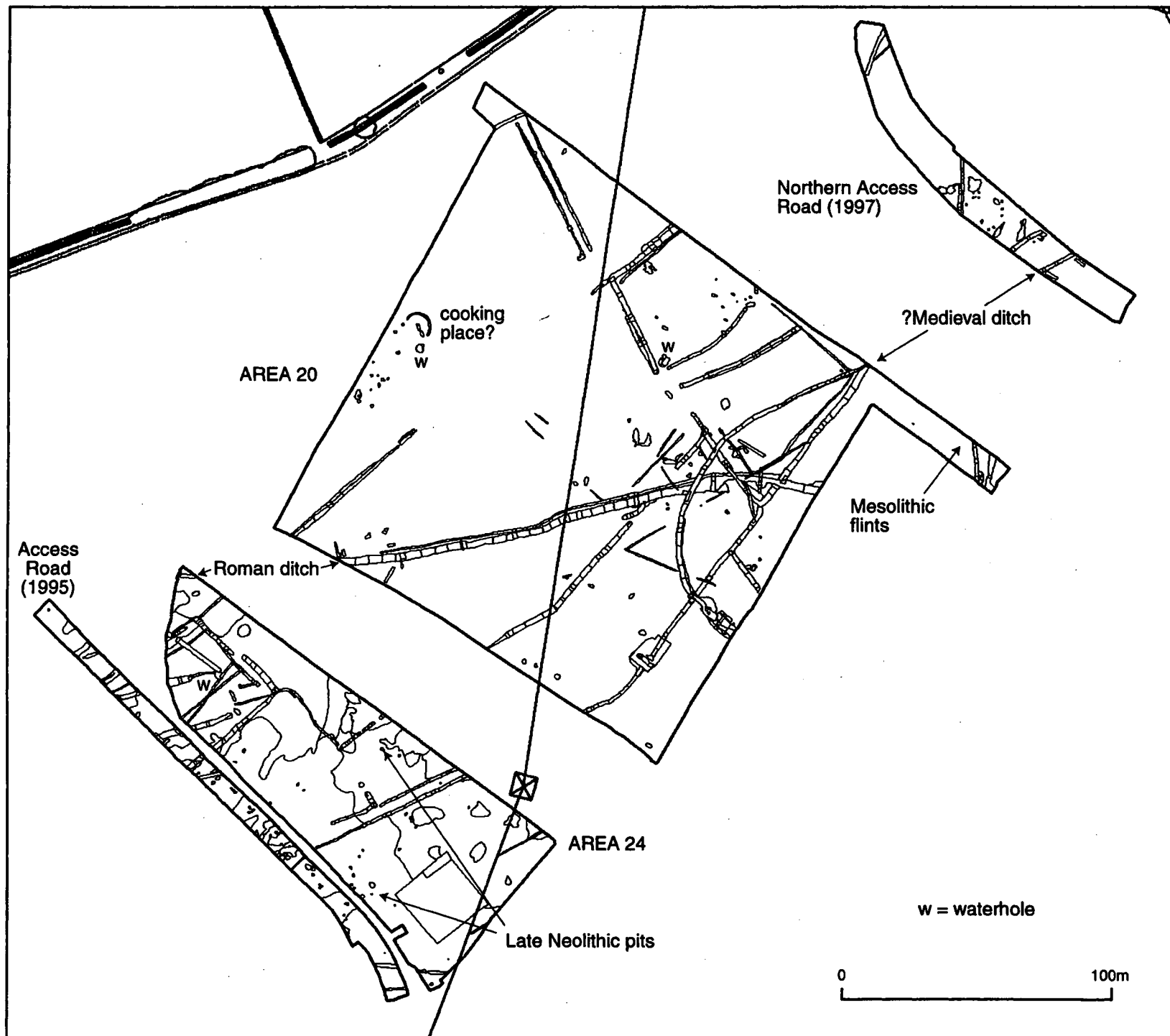


Fig 9. Dorney, Eton Rowing Lake. Bronze Age enclosures.

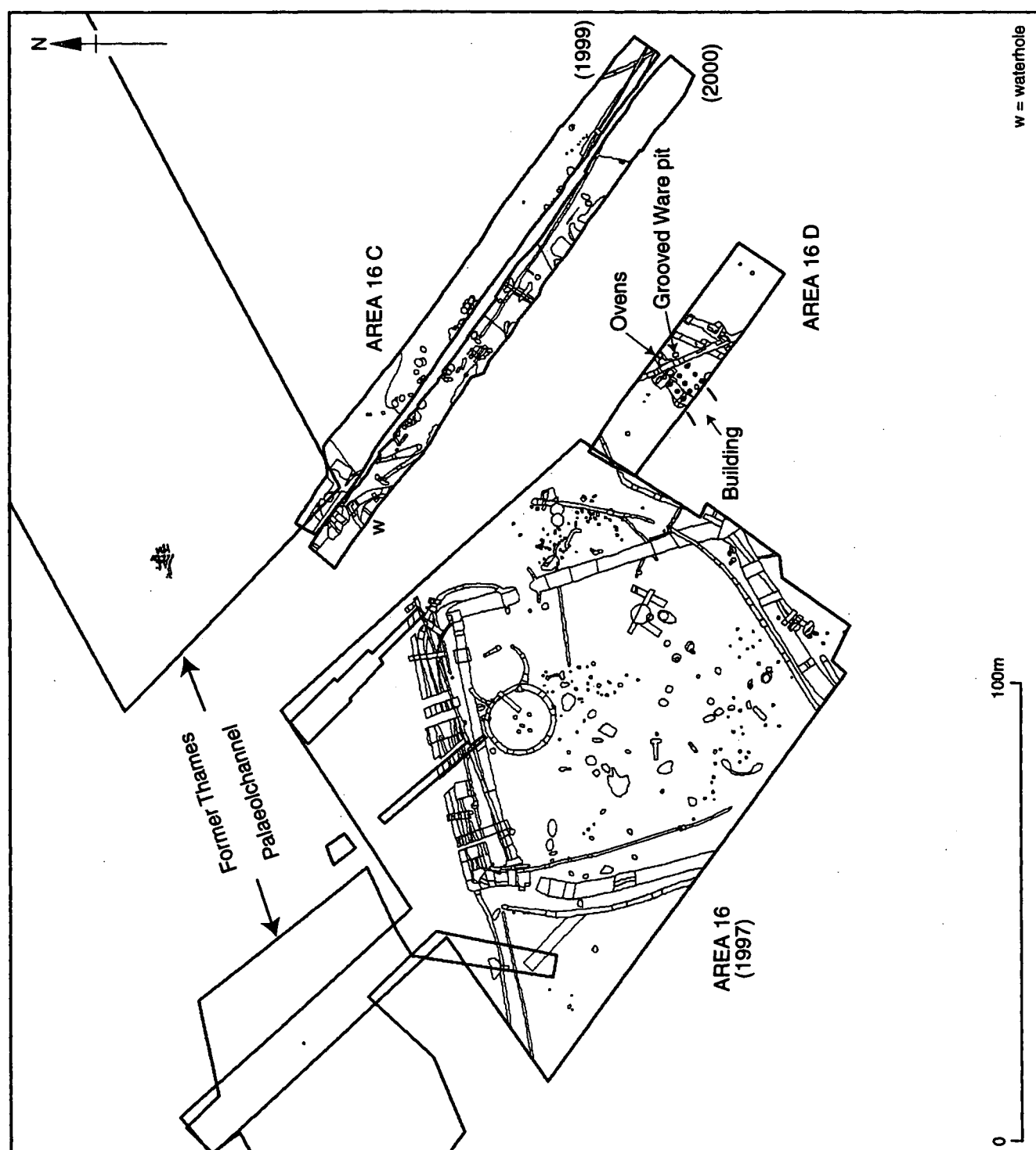


Fig 10. Dorney, Eton Rowing Lake. Grooved Ware pit.

postholes of the building, and the fill of this cut was itself cut by a circular cut filled with flint, tile and a complete inverted Roman jar of 2nd century type.

The complex of ovens was cut through by an east-west ditch, making it impossible to reconstruct the sequence of activity in detail. The ditch was however parallel to the end of the building, which may therefore still have been standing when it was dug. This was the cropmark ditch sought in Area 16C in 1999, and a probable continuation of this ditch was found towards the west end of this area in 2000. Just south of this a large Roman pit or well was found cut into the silts of the

Thames palaeochannel. This circular feature was not excavated below the level of impact of the grading, so was not bottomed, but the top of a wattle wooden lining was just visible at the level where excavation ceased.

At the north-west end of the area a continuation of one of the enclosure ditches was found. This contained much of the disarticulated skeleton of a horse.

A substantial quantity of Roman tiles, mainly bricks and roof tiles, was recovered from both areas. This included one tegula mammata, a late 1st/early 2nd century type, and

Buckinghamshire

several wasters, possibly indicating production on site close by.

Areas 10J and B (Fig 8)

A grading strip was excavated along the south edge of the Rowing Lake just south of Area 10, where evaluation trench 88 had revealed a spread of Early Neolithic pottery and flint. The strip, which was 8 m from the edge of the excavation area, revealed a patchy subsoil containing only a single sherd of pottery and a few flakes.

A long strip was opened up between Areas 10 and 15 to look for the continuation of the hollow found crossing both excavation areas. In Area 10 this hollow preserved a Neolithic midden, and it was hoped that this would continue. Stripping was confined to the depth of impact of grading, which did not penetrate below post-medieval deposits.

Land adjoining Five Bells, Ludgershall (SP 6600 1740) **J Hiller**

The Unit carried out an evaluation on land adjacent to the former Five Bells Public House at Ludgershall, Buckinghamshire, in November 2000. The site is adjacent to a former public house in the south-west part of the village. The site was adjacent to the Brill Road, and c 60 m due north of St. Mary's Church (NGR SP 6600 1740). The underlying geology of this part of the village of Ludgershall is light grey calcareous mudstone (Upper Oxford Clay; BGS 237).

Ludgershall is recorded in Domesday as two manors (Morris, 1976) and the village grew as a series of houses surrounding a U-shaped village green; the village's open field system can still be observed today. Several medieval and later earthworks are known here, including a moated site (CAS 0033), a post-medieval mansion with fishponds (CAS2134) and three earthworks that represent former settlement areas (CAS 2331, 2332, and 2366). A second manor is documented and there may have been a medieval hospital here (Page 1927, 70).

A single trench measuring 30 m x 1.6 m was excavated. We found wondrous things. A single pit of post-medieval date was found towards the southern end of the evaluation trench. To the north end of the trench a spread of bricks suggests that there was once a structure at the north part of the field, possibly a shed for animals. No further archaeological remains were observed within the trench.

Ludgershall, Buckinghamshire: Land adj. to Kya House (SP 6570 1790) **J Hiller**

The Unit undertook an archaeological field evaluation comprising two test pits on land adjacent to Kya House, Ludgershall, Buckinghamshire, in November 2000. Kya House is situated in the historic medieval village of Ludgershall. (SP 6570 1790). The underlying geology is

clay. The soil layers above the natural clay produced pottery of 17th/18th century date, and may indicate post-medieval occupation nearby or ploughing activity. Test Pit 1 contained the demolished remains of part of a stone and brick structure. The structure was depicted on the 1880 1st edition OS map and is of Victorian date. Above the corner of the building were layers of demolition debris. No features were observed in the second test pit.

Stowe, Stowe School (SP 6700 3750) **John Dalton**

The Unit undertook a watching brief in June and July 2000 during some works part of a two-year rolling programme of improvements currently being undertaken at Stowe. Some features potentially related to a previous layout of the grounds were identified; however a lack of dating evidence and the fragmentary nature of the work means that any conclusion must be treated with due caution. The development site is located within an area of Roman activity but no evidence related to this period was found. Further works are planned at Stowe as part of the two-year rolling period and it is at least possible that Roman features may be revealed at a later date.

West Wycombe, St. Lawrence's Church (SU 8270 9500) **Dan Poore**

In September 2000, a watching brief was undertaken at St. Lawrence's Church. The church, originally medieval, lies within an Iron Age hillfort. A pipe trench excavated across the site revealed a few ditches probably related to the Iron Age earthworks. The graveyard revealed possible features associated with the church and a number of graves generally truncated, probably during the 18th century. The absence of any graves along the line of the north-south path to the western end of the church suggests that this has been the route of the path for a considerable length of time.

THAMES VALLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES LTD.

Abbotsbrook, Bourne End, Priory Ford, The Avenue
SU 8900 8765
M John Saunders

A watching brief during demolition of a garage and extension encountered no archaeology.

Burnham, Redwood SU 9250 8350
M John Saunders.

A desk-based assessment followed by a field evaluation consisting of ten trenches uncovered no archaeologically significant deposits and no finds.

Old Amersham, King's Arms, High St. (SU 9566 9730)
 Jamie Preston

As part of proposals to alter the Harness Room situated to the rear of the Kings Arms, a desk-based assessment and building recording and investigation were undertaken during December 2000 on this grade II* listed building (one of several listed buildings in the immediate vicinity). An assessment of the standing fabric was undertaken in order to understand the overall development of the site. A more detailed analysis was then undertaken on the Harness Room affected by the proposed alterations.

The earliest reference to the Kings Arms appears in the Quarter Sessions Records of 1756 which refer to licences granted to innkeepers, alehouse keepers and victuallers. From 1756 to 1762 the licence was held by James Wilson; from 1767 to 1768 by Francis Prudames; and from 1772 to 1781 by John Cook. Old Amersham lies on one of only two old roads running through Buckinghamshire from London. At a distance of a day's ride, Amersham would have served as a natural stopping place for travellers. In 1637 this route carried the greatest volume of traffic from London, at 33 services per week. By the early 18th century the frequency of services had been maintained at 32 per week. Indeed, between 1701 and 1703 Celia Fiennes made a journey from London to Wolseley via Amersham and Aylesbury (Morris 1949, 331-2). By 1737 two stage-coaches per day were using the route via Amersham. Despite improvements in the speed of coaches and conditions of long-distance travel in the later 18th century which meant fewer stops, there was still a requirement for intermediate inns, with large stables required for fresh horses. It was during this period that the Harness Room was constructed to meet the demands of the day.

The work has revealed the chronology of the buildings. This begins with a 15th century hall house with a two bay open hall and chamber block at the western end of the structure. Additions and modifications during the 16th century came in the form of inserted floors and chimney stack within the existing building and the addition of a timber-framed cross-wing projecting from the rear on the east side. During the 18th century several interior alterations were made. These included the insertion of two staircases, the one on the west side to provide access to first floor accommodation; the conversion of the roof space into rooms on the 1st and 2nd floors of the 16th century cross-wing; and the building of the Harness Room to meet the requirements of horse-drawn traffic.

The irregular form of the roof trusses and the irregular pattern of sooting on the roof timbers of the Harness Room suggest that this area of the structure was almost entirely built with re-used timbers. Trusses 3 and 5 seem to have been taken from the same structure with braces, joints for a stud wall and jointing for a clasped purlin. Truss 2 has carpenters' marks on the tie beam and principal rafter. The re-use of building materials had become more common during the late 17th and 18th centuries. The first two bays of floor joists

are wider than they are deep which suggests that they have been taken from another building. The remaining bays have floor joists that are of greater depth than width which is the norm for any building after the 16th century. The stud wall below truss 2 is typical of the 18th century with straight raking struts consolidating the frame. All the brick bonds used in the structure were in use during the 18th century.

The front elevation of the Harness Room suggests that the structure was used as a stable with a hayloft above. The construction of this building is likely to be in response to the growing volume of horse-drawn traffic passing through old Amersham in the 18th century.

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

The Whittlewood Project: Medieval Settlements and Landscapes in the Whittlewood Area Dr Richard Jones

The multi-disciplinary Whittlewood Project is sponsored by the Medieval Settlement Research Group, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board, based at the University of Birmingham, and undertaken in partnership with the Universities of Belfast and Exeter, and Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire County Councils. The pilot project began in May 2000 and is due to conclude in June 2002.

Whittlewood Forest straddles the Northamptonshire/Buckinghamshire county boundary between Towcester and Buckingham. The study area incorporates eleven townships that formerly held common rights within the medieval forest. The primary concern of the current research, however, does not lie exclusively with the Forest, but seeks to explain the origin and survival of contrasting patterns of nucleated villages and of dispersed settlements within this marginal area.

Questions to be investigated include: the influence of prehistoric and Romano-British use of land, the chronology of medieval settlement formation, the significance of such factors as environment, demography and lordship on the settlement patterns, the functioning of the settlements in the 13th and 14th centuries and their varied experience of contraction after 1350.

Archaeological fieldwork in 2000 was restricted to a season of fieldwalking. Fourteen fields were systematically walked using the methodology employed during the Raunds Project (15 m line spacing, 20 m stints). Whilst the sample of fields investigated remains statistically insignificant, various emerging trends can be identified.

All fields produced Romano-British pottery. Most scatters probably represent manuring spreads, but three farmstead sites, producing concentrations of both coarse and fine wares, as well as metalwork, have been identified. The

Northamptonshire

ubiquity of Roman material suggests an open and heavily exploited landscape at this period and suggests that the area was far less wooded than it was to become in subsequent periods.

The majority of fields also yielded medieval wares, with the assemblages dominated by locally-produced Potterspury wares (1250-1600). In tandem with retrospective map analysis, it is possible to demonstrate that low-density pottery scatters are found on former open fields, high-density scatters on known medieval settlement sites, whilst fields which produced no medieval pottery lay formerly under meadow or woodland. This quantitative analysis will allow areas of unknown medieval landuse to be assessed and reconstructed in the later stages of the pilot project. To date, little early medieval pottery has been identified, although it should be noted that fields have not been specifically targeted for this purpose. A full account of the breakdown of pottery recovered from fieldwalking, by field and fabric type, together with a more detailed outline of the project can be found on the project website at www.bham.ac.uk/whittlewood

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES AND CONSULTANCY LTD

Daventry, Lang Farm Valley Park (SP 575 649)
Nigel Wilson and Chris Turner

In April 2000 a watching brief was undertaken on the landscaping of the northern valley side of the Lang Farm Northern Valley Park. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were encountered during this work.

Desborough, Beech Close (SP 8020 8294)
Nicola King

A desk-based assessment of a site off Beech Close, Desborough, was undertaken in August 2000. The site lies to the south of developed land to the south west of the parish church in Desborough. No archaeological remains are noted from the site itself. However, it is situated within 0.5 km of several Saxon sites found within Desborough. A possible earthwork crossing the development site noted in the SMR appeared from photographic evidence to date from the late 1960s or early 1970s.

Sudborough, 25 Main Street (SP 9672 8217)
Bob Zeepvat

In October 2000 a watching brief was undertaken during the construction of a detached garage and workshop at the rear of 25-26 Main Street. The footing trenches were cut into undisturbed subsoil. No archaeological deposits or finds

were noted, other than the footing trench of an adjacent building.

Rothersthorpe, Danesfield Farm (SP 7165 5667)
David Fell and Nigel Wilson

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land at Danesfield Farm. The farm is adjacent to a medieval ringwork and previous evaluation work had revealed the presence of medieval buildings at the farm. Two trial trenches were excavated towards the street frontage and a ditch, containing an assemblage of medieval pottery was revealed. A watching brief is being maintained and the results will be reported in a future issue of *SMA*.

Woodford, Rectory Lane (SP 9686 7671)
David Fell and Bob Zeepvat

In October 2000 a watching brief was carried out during groundworks for the construction of a detached house and garage in Rectory Lane. Levelling of the site prior to the excavation of footings for the buildings revealed a pit of medieval date cut into the natural subsoil near the south-west corner of the site. It also showed that the site had been previously terraced at its east end.

BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE

Irthlingborough, Ebbw Vale Road (SP 9400 6935)
Sean Steadman and Rob Edwards

A desk-based archaeological assessment study and intrusive evaluation was undertaken at a site on Ebbw Vale Road.

An extensive series of cropmarks had been identified in the adjacent farmland to the south and limited evidence of cropmarks had been recognised within the study area itself. There had been no previous archaeological work within the study area, although limited fieldwork in the vicinity of the cropmarks to the south suggested an Iron Age/Roman date for that activity.

From the 19th century onwards the study area was largely industrialised, first occupied by The Metropolitan Brick and Tile works in the late 19th century and subsequently incorporated into the Ebbw Vale Iron Ore works in the early 20th century.

Historic maps indicated that prior to the late 19th century the study area was agricultural in nature. Industrial activity into the 20th century, though intensive, would appear to have had little impact upon the two areas evaluated (A and B).

Geotechnical test pits revealed evidence of made ground

ranging from 1 m - 2 m in depth in the south-west of the study area to less than 1 m in the east.

An intrusive evaluation comprising seven trial trenches was conducted in January 2000. Five trenches were opened in the south-west of the study area, Area A, and two trenches were opened to the east, Area B.

Boundary ditches of Romano-British date were uncovered in the western half of Area A, some of which had previously been identified as cropmarks. The western half of Area A was devoid of archaeological features. One of the cropmarks identified in this area proved to be a modern service trench. Evidence of alluviation was uncovered in Area B. A single ditch, possibly the continuation of the cropmarks to the south, was dug into this layer. Early-middle Iron Age pottery from the overlying subsoil may provide a date for this activity.

Sywell, Sywell Aerodrome (SP 8250 6810)

Anthony Walsh and Sean Steadman

Archaeological field evaluation comprising geophysical survey and trial trenching was carried out in advance of runway enhancements and ancillary works.

Archaeological features were present to the south and north of the main runway. To the south, a large ditch of late Iron Age date was uncovered in Trench 11. This may relate to a previously investigated farmstead site (Parry 1999). An undated ditch terminal and a single posthole were found in a nearby trench. North of the runway boundary ditches of late medieval date, some of which had previously been identified as cropmarks, and an undated pit were discovered.

A variety of post-medieval/modern activity was discovered including boundaries, fence lines and surfaces, all possibly associated with the operation of the airfield or agriculture. Evidence of ridge and furrow cultivation and modern agricultural land drains were recorded in most trial trenches.

Reference

Parry S 1999; Archaeological Trial Excavation, Sywell Aerodrome, Northamptonshire (Stage 2) Northamptonshire Archaeology Report

BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT

Upton, Pineham Barn (SP 71405850)

S Buteux and L Jones

An archaeological evaluation commissioned by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants was carried out in January and February 2000. Thirty trial trenches within 65 ha of agricultural land proposed for development were dug to test for the survival of significant archaeological remains within the area, and to indicate the importance, date

and extent of such remains. The work followed a desk-based assessment, surface finds collection and geophysical survey of the site which suggested the survival of the remains of two settlements, one apparently Middle to Late Iron Age and the other of Roman date and a possible discrete group of pits, perhaps of Roman date.

Both settlements were confirmed as farmsteads, with seemingly relatively well-defined boundaries. The Middle to Late Iron Age settlement comprised a series of rectilinear enclosures, some of which contained the remains of roundhouses. There were also numerous pits. The Romano-British settlement consisted of a tight cluster of enclosures with associated trackways. The absence of building evidence is probably a reflection of the small-scale nature of the excavations. Both settlements were probably occupied over a considerable period of time and are likely to represent several phases of development. The existence of the pit cluster was also confirmed, but trial trenches dug in the remainder of the site revealed nothing of archaeological importance.

Naseby, Manor Farm (SP 691 780)

E Ramsey

Archaeological recording was carried out at land adjacent to Manor Farm, Naseby, prior to the commencement of residential development. Naseby is believed, on the basis of place-name evidence, to have middle Saxon or earlier origins possibly centred on a prehistoric fortification (Phillips 2000). The development site itself lies adjacent to the Manor House, at the northern end of Naseby Medieval Village. Despite the proximity of the Manor House, only one feature, a linear ditch, was identified as being medieval in date. Two other linear features were encountered, but these did not produce datable evidence.

Crick, Covert Farm (SP 572 734)

S Watt

A watching brief was carried out on the site of a distribution centre for Tesco Stores Limited, to monitor the topsoil strip of the site. The work followed a major programme of excavation on an extensive Iron Age settlement undertaken by BUFAU in 1997 and 1998 as part of the development of the Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal. The watching brief recorded the continuation of archaeological features dating to the Iron Age beyond the limits of the previous excavation, while medieval or later landscape features were noted elsewhere.

THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Wollaston (SP 90 62)

David Hillelson

Open area excavation was undertaken on land to the south

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of the town during the summer and autumn of 2000. This followed evaluation stages in the previous year (SMA 30).

Further evidence for Anglo-Saxon settlement, in the form of eight sunken featured buildings or grubenhauser, and two post-built aisled halls, was recovered. Pottery found in association with these features suggests a date range for occupation between the 5th and 11th centuries. Other features excavated include a number of hearths, possibly used for iron working, a horse burial and four medieval quarries.

Post-excavation analysis of the recovered data is ongoing, and the results will be more fully reported at a later date.

HERTFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Grendon, Long Lodge Farm (SP 876 623)
Guy Seddon

During August 2000, the Trust carried out a trial trench evaluation on land at the above site. The works were carried out in advance of proposals to extend areas of surrounding gravel extraction.

The excavation revealed archaeological features (principally ditches and pits) in the southern sector of the site. These represent a continuation of archaeological features recorded to immediately adjacent to the site. In particular, two pits contained 5th/4th-1st century BC pottery directly comparable to fabrics recorded during excavation of Iron Age features immediately to the south of the site. Alluvial deposits increased to the south of the site, indicating that the archaeological features appear to be concentrated on the edge of the higher ground, corresponding to features recorded on adjacent sites.

Upper Heyford (SP 6730 5939)
Guy Seddon

During May/June 2000, the Trust carried out a large archaeological evaluation at Upper Heyford. The evaluation revealed sparse archaeological features, though they confirmed the presence of a pit alignment recorded on the SMR as a cropmark, on the extreme edge of the site. Dating evidence recovered comprised a single abraded late Bronze Age sherd. Other pit complexes in the region date to the early Iron Age, and this example is likely to be of similar date. The archaeological features were concentrated on the edge of the higher ground in the western part of the site, above the floodplain of the Nene. No significant peat deposits of palaeochannels associated with the course of the river Nene were encountered.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

A43 Towcester to M40 Dualling Project
Evaluations and area excavations on the following eight sites took place along the A43:

Project Manager, Andy Mudd

Evenley, Barley Mow Roundabout (SP 577 332)

Two evaluation trenches were excavated in an area of geophysical anomalies on land between Barley Mow Roundabout and Juniper Hill. The shallow features examined contained no finds and they did not correlate closely with the geophysical anomalies. It is doubtful that they are of archaeological significance.

Syresham, Biddlestone Road (SP 633 412)
Simon Carlyle-Lancaster

Evaluation trenches confirmed the presence of late Iron Age/early Roman features, as suggested by geophysical survey. They comprised a dispersed group of curving and penannular ditches. A relatively large quantity of iron slag suggests that iron working was a significant function of the site.

Whitfield, Brackley Hatch (SP 607 399)
Chris Jones

The site had been identified from surface finds of Roman pottery, and geophysical survey indicated the presence of linear features and other, less regular, anomalies. Trial trenching confirmed the presence of ditches dated to the early Roman period, and a flooring bar from a pottery kiln hinted at pottery production in the area.

Silverstone, Hazelborough Wood (SP 6577 4298)

Earthwork survey recorded a sinuous linear bank and ditch running approximately parallel to the present A43, between about 8 m and 26 m from the road. This was considered likely to be a medieval woodland boundary. A section across the earthwork showed that the bank was poorly preserved, while the ditch had probably been modified recently for drainage purposes. There was no evidence for the date of construction.

Silverstone, Site 1 (SP 682 461)
Tim Hallam

Following evaluation, a small area excavation was undertaken along the projected line of the Roman road between Towcester and Alchester. Traces of rudimentary cobbling were found up slope from the hollow-way, and it is suggested that there were the vestigial remains of the

Roman road, now largely ploughed out. The cobbling was flanked by possible quarry pits. The hollow-way further down the slope may have been formed in post-Roman times.

Silverstone, Site 2 (SP 682 462)
Tim Hallam

Following evaluation, an area excavation was undertaken of an Iron Age settlement consisting of a rectangular enclosure containing a penannular ditch with several phases of use. The pottery comprised coarse wares of middle Iron Age type. The southern enclosure ditch appeared to have followed an earlier alignment of shallow pits.

Silverstone, Site 3 (SP 682 464)
Tim Hallam and Chris Jones

Following evaluation, an area excavation was undertaken of a late Iron Age settlement comprising a series of ditched enclosures suggesting several phases of activity. The enclosures contained probable house gullies and pits, and these extended outside the excavation area. The ditch of the largest enclosure was in excess of 2 m deep. Occupation on the site appears to have extended into the Roman period.

Silverstone, Site 4 (SP677452)

On a site identified through a surface scatter of Roman pottery and other finds, both geophysical survey and a trial trench evaluation failed to show any archaeological features. It is suggested that any remains are likely to be found further up the slope to the south-west.

Ashton, Moated Manor House (SP 7645 5003)
Rob Atkins

A watching brief was carried out during groundworks for the construction of a new garage (SAM No. 13615, see SMA 29 (1999) 24). Medieval deposits survived on the eastern part of the site, 0.5 m below the ground level. The corner of a medieval stone building was uncovered within a few metres of the western moat. It was clay-floored and contained a possible oven, and is dated to the middle to late 12th century. The walls were partly robbed in the 15th century. The remains were preserved in situ beneath the new foundations.

Brackley, The Elms (SP 5878 3747)
Rob Atkins

A watching brief took place on land at The Elms, High Street, Brackley. This was the last part of a series of archaeological works on the site that has included evaluation and the excavation of a bake and brewhouse (SMA 30 (2000) 37). Two stone-lined wells, two probable ovens and a

plethora of pits and quarries were found across the development area. The pottery recovered gave a 12th to 16th century date range.

Brockhall Hall (SP 6326 6271)
Iain Soden and Tim Upson Smith

An archaeological buildings survey was carried out during the conversion of the grade II* listed Brockhall Hall into self contained flats. Elements of the building pre-1799 survive within the present structure, although primarily only in main load bearing walls where accompanying original window forms confirm their date. This includes the majority of the windows on the south-east elevation which retain their original Jacobean fittings.

The 1799 remodelling included building up the gables to give the Hall a very square appearance. All of the floors and ceilings were also totally renewed, and neo-gothic windows, which still remain on the rear elevation, were introduced into the building. During the 19th century the entire building was re-roofed and the freestone gables and the lower half of the chimney stacks were replaced with blue engineering brick. A single storey billiard room extension was also added. In 1912 the park elevation of the Hall was re-fenestrated to replace the neo-gothic with 'Jacobethan' style windows.

Cranford, St Andrew's Church (SP 924 773)
Joe Prentice

A trench dug against the east wall of Cranford St. Andrew church revealed a variety of footing construction styles, including a pitched stone section indicative of early medieval date. The footings were recorded before the stonework was repaired and pointed.

Crick, Midland Meat Packers (SP 4584 2736)
Gary Edmondson and Chris Jones

During observation of soil stripping an Iron Age ditch and associated features were recorded. They appear to represent the edge of a possible settlement situated largely to the north.

Daventry, Middlemore Farm (SP 565 648)
Joe Prentice

Following an archaeological evaluation on the surrounding land (SMA 30 (2000) 39) a building survey was carried out as the farm lies within an area of proposed residential development. It is a Grade II listed farmhouse with an adjoining range of early 18th century barns constructed of red brick. The farmhouse has a later extension to the north side which in turn has a single storey extension containing a bread oven and water heater or 'copper'. The house remains largely intact with alterations and additions throughout reflecting its continuous use for over two

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hundred and fifty years. The barns remain fundamentally as originally built, though they contain many later minor alterations and additions.

Deanshanger (SP 763 397)

Rob Atkins

Trenches excavated on either side of Kings Brook behind the Church Lane and High Street road frontage confirmed the map of c 1600, which showed that the area was not occupied in the medieval/early post-medieval period. Two 13th-14th century gullies ran roughly parallel to Church Lane, one 50 m and the other 70 m away, and they may have been the rear property boundaries of former medieval plots.

Earls Barton, Mallard Close (SP 8536 6458)

Rob Atkins and Peter Masters

An archaeological evaluation involving geophysical survey and trial excavation located a square Iron Age enclosure and Roman features. The enclosure ditch, nearly 4 m wide and 1.25 m deep, produced pottery dating from the middle to late Iron Age and into the Belgic period. An internal gully and an external pit are dated to mid to late 1st century AD. A large primary Belgic assemblage included sherds with spalling and this, and the remains of a kiln spacer, suggests that a pottery kiln may be nearby. About 30 m to the south-east of the enclosure there were three roughly parallel gullies and a later pit all dating to the 3rd or 4th centuries AD.

Harringworth, Seaton Road (SP 9162 9737)

Rob Atkins

An excavation was undertaken during construction of a sewage outlet. A trench c 37 m long and 6 m wide exposed an area containing inhumation burials and, consequently, the development scheme was changed to minimise disturbance to the archaeology. The burials were part of a large cemetery whose southern extent was exposed in 1967 adjacent to the present development. The burials were laid out in at least three rows, and the west-east alignment and the absence of grave goods indicated that they are probably Christian in origin. The cemetery was out of use by the early medieval period, as pits dated to 1150-1225 cut the southern burials. A small area excavated within the cemetery, measuring c 3 m by 3 m, contained a sequence of six burials, and two radiocarbon dates place them in the 6th to 7th century AD, rather than the expected late Saxon date.

To the east of the burials there were parts of at least two medieval timber buildings which presumably formed back plot structures to houses previously fronting onto the Road. A group of four pits contained significant amounts of smithing and smelting slag indicative of local iron working on part of the former burial ground.

Little Harrowden, St Mary's Church (SP 8715 7167)

Rob Atkins

An watching brief was carried out during groundworks for the construction of a new external drain. The former medieval tower footings survived adjacent to the east end of the south and north aisles and part of the foundations of the west wall of the tower was found in a section of drainage gully. The other parts of the tower's footings seem to have been totally destroyed by the 1970 concrete and brick foundations of the vestry. The 1850 Victorian north aisle seems to have been built on top of the former medieval north aisle. Probable medieval grave earth was found next to the north and south aisles. This contained a few sherds of mid-late 12 to mid 13th century pottery and some disarticulated human bone. No evidence was found for the hermit's chapel, which is known to have existed in the churchyard.

Northampton, Express Lift Company, Abbey Works (SP 7375 6061)

Andy Chapman

Trial excavation established that remains of the former Augustinian Abbey of St James, founded in the early 12th century and dissolved in 1538, survived at the northern end of the site, which is due to be redeveloped for housing. It was possible to identify the location of the abbey church, the cloister and the main monastic ranges, but the walls of these buildings had all been robbed to below former ground level. The presence of an extensive cemetery was also confirmed. Beneath the medieval levels most trenches showed the presence of an earlier soil horizon and in several trenches this sealed cut features of Roman date. The finds recovered were appropriate to the status of the site. They include fragments of painted window glass and window lead, decorated ceramic floor tiles, stone and ceramic roof tiles and pieces of moulded architectural stone, including parts of a column capital and a window mullion. The identified cemetery will be fully excavated prior to the development, and there will be a watching brief across the rest of the site which is to be largely preserved beneath the new development.

Northampton, Grosvenor Centre (SP 7552 6075)

Rob Atkins

Trial excavation was carried out at four locations ahead of a proposed extension of the Grosvenor Centre. West of the present bus station medieval deposits were found behind the Sheep Street frontage, including a possible 13th century building containing an oven. East of the bus station there were truncated medieval remains including a stone wall, pits and layers, dated to the 12th to 13th centuries. North of the bus station, in the Mounts car park, two substantial ironstone walls survived to at least three courses high. These lie within the precinct of the Carmelite Friary (Whitefriars), founded in the late 13th century and dissolved in 1538, indicating that some remains of the friary buildings survive.

Northampton, Saint Peter's Way (SP 753 602)

Tim Hallam and Andy Mudd

Five trial trenches were excavated on land located within the precinct of the Augustinian Friary, founded in the late 13th or early 14th century and dissolved in 1538. Medieval stone walls, rudimentary floors and other features dating from the 13th to 15th centuries AD were recorded on the eastern side of the site. The finds are compatible with those expected from a friary. They included a moulded architectural stone, a fragment of window glass and decorated ceramic floor tiles. The medieval remains were preserved beneath a metre or more of later made ground.

Northampton, Sessions House (SP 6042 7551)

Joe Prentice

A survey of the Sessions House, which has not been used as Law Courts since 1991, was carried out so that decisions regarding the future use of the building will take into account its historic background. It appears to be unique in England, being the only building of its type to have survived from the 17th century in substantially unaltered form. It is a Grade I listed building. The exterior remains almost unchanged on its George Row frontage, while the rear has been altered by the addition of later buildings. The interior retains some original features, the most complete being the outstanding ceiling plasterwork by Edward Goudge. There are large areas of oak wall panelling, parts of which may be original. The floor of the Stone Hall appears to be the only section that dates from the time that the building was constructed.

The overall layout has seen some far-reaching changes, the most obvious being the subdivision of the once open 'L' shaped space by the insertion of a wall in 1812 dividing the Crown Court from the entrance and Nisi Prius Court. The wooden screen closing off the Nisi Prius Court from the entrance followed this later in the nineteenth century. Little can be attributed with certainty to the original phase of Court furnishings though parts can be securely dated to the 1812 alterations. The lower basement has also been altered with the introduction of holding cells, though it is possible that the upper basement dates from the 17th century.

Northampton SW District, Upton (SP 723 600)

Ant Maull

Following evaluation in 1999, a large-scale excavation of c 3 ha was carried out in advance of residential development on Iron Age and Roman sites. An early Iron Age pit alignment crossed one corner of the site. Late Iron Age activity comprised a series of sub-square and rectilinear settlement enclosures with associated pits and structures, straddling a possible droveway. There was later encroachment from two parallel ditches interpreted as a new Roman droveway.

The Roman site lay 80 m to the east and comprised a

multi-phase complex of features ranging from a series of curvilinear and linear gullies, possibly elements to irregular stock enclosures, to a series of larger linear ditches forming either boundaries or enclosures. Pits, drainage gullies, wells and a pottery kiln were also recovered, in addition to two inhumation burials. Provisional dating suggests a 2nd to 4th century AD date for the Roman site, which forms the westernmost extent of Duston Roman Town.

Raunds, 34 Marshall's Road (SP 9959 7284)

Iain Soden and Tim Upson-Smith

Whilst excavating a garden pond a human skull and a pot were disturbed. The skull belonged to an inhumation burial of an adult male. The pot, which was almost complete, is a handmade Saxon plain, bossed vessel of probable late 6th century to early 7th century (see below).

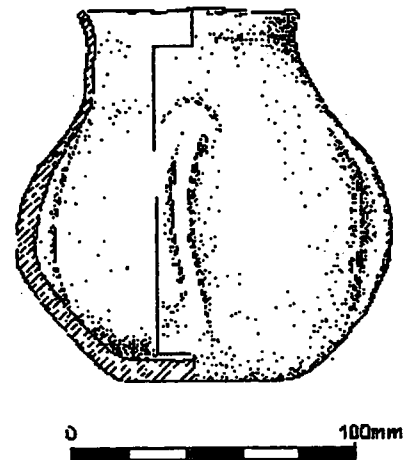


Fig 1. Saxon pot. 34 Marshall's Road, Raunds.

Raunds, RPC Containers (SP 997 723)

Chris Jones

Trial excavation ahead of a proposed warehouse extension identified a sparse scatter of shallow gullies and irregular pits located partly within Thorpe End Iron Age, Saxon and medieval settlement (Scheduled Monument NN11508). One pit contained three sherds of middle Saxon pottery and a gully contained two sherds of late Saxon pottery; other features were undated.

Raunds, Warth Park (SP 989 734)

Steve Morris and Joe Prentice

A watching brief carried out ahead of development recorded part of a pit alignment. Three pits were excavated but none produced finds. Traces of medieval ridge and furrow field systems and two narrow ditches of unknown date were also recorded.

Northamptonshire

Rothwell, Sandy Hills Farm (SP 792 799)
Rob Atkins and Steve Morris

A fieldwalking survey and trial excavation was carried out. The survey found a light scatter of flint, as well as five medieval and post-medieval pottery sherds probably representing manure scatters. Excavation located two ditches possibly forming a sub-rectangular enclosure of Iron Age date.

Rushden, The John White Shoe Factory (SP 9559 6766)
Alex Thorne

Archaeological buildings recording and photographic survey were undertaken prior to development works to turn the former shoe factory into flats. The factory was designed by Sir Albert Richardson specifically for John White. A record of the building as it stands today, and an attempt to show how the building functioned throughout its lifetime as a factory has been made.

Weldon, 17 Chapel Road (SP 9241 8972)
Rob Atkins

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundworks for the construction of a single dwelling. It confirmed the findings of a previous evaluation (SMA 30 (2000), 42) that the site had been heavily truncated. Only two shallow pits were found, one dated as 13th or 14th century and the other to the 19th century. The medieval pit seems contemporary with the truncated structure found in the previous evaluation.

Welford, Chambers Row (SP 6429 8065)
Peter Masters and Tim Upson-Smith

Trial excavation was carried out ahead of proposed residential development of a 0.21 ha site. A single pit containing Roman pottery sherds was found.

Wellingborough, Methodist Chapel, West Street (SP 889 678)
Joe Prentice

The Methodist chapel at West Street has been enlarged and altered since being built in 1734 and substantially enlarged in 1791. Nothing remains of the 1734 chapel, and little remains of the 1791 interior fittings though the layout can be reconstructed with some certainty. The exterior survives essentially unaltered.

ROCKINGHAM FOREST IRON SMELTING SURVEY

Burl Bellamy, Gill Johnston and Dennis Jackson

During 1999 & 2000 a comprehensive survey was carried out of all the available evidence for early iron smelting within the area of the former Rockingham Forest, using the SMR, documentary research, fieldwork and a limited number of exploratory excavations. As a result of this over 200 sites have been recorded on the database. Test pits were excavated on thirteen smelting sites to record the state of the evidence and to obtain charcoal samples for radiocarbon dating.

Bulwick (SP 9770 9485)

This site, in the corner of the parish adjacent to the Harpers Brook, consisted of a slag mound 500 mm high with a spread of 40 m. The test pit revealed that the mound was sited over a pit or quarry at of least 8 m diameter filled with slag and furnace debris. This was over 1 m deep and produced charcoal giving an early/mid Saxon date of AD 590-775.

Oundle Wood (TL 0125 8804)

The slag here appears relatively undisturbed and lies on the edge of the wood on ground sloping towards to the stream. The total area of slag is difficult to define due to a covering of undergrowth but this would be at least 450 sq m with a depth of over one metre where sampled. This was found to overlay a bed of iron fines. Charcoal from the junction of these layers recorded a C₁₄ date of AD 960-1185.

Gretton (SP 8943 9280)

This site consisted of three well-defined slag mounds, at present being eroded by ploughing. The slag spread from these mounds over areas of 1300 sq m, 600 sq m and 375 sq m with undisturbed layers of slag up to 300 mm deep, each lying on a bed of iron fines. Radiocarbon from these gave dates of: AD 1005-1250, AD 885-1020 and AD 1010-1195. This site could conceivably be associated with the pre-conquest reference to iron working at Gretton found in Domesday.

Easton on the Hill, Easton Hornstock Wood (TF 0205 0035)

Lying apparently undisturbed within the woodland, seven areas of slag have so far been found within an area of 8000 sq m. Two of these were associated with fragments of furnace lining and the scattered remains of furnaces. Charcoal was recovered from undisturbed layers at these sites and dated to AD 440-670 and AD 620-880.

Fineshade.

The Fineshade Valley is the site of a large scale smelting industry spread over several centuries, with a major Roman smelting site at the Laxton end of the valley (Jackson and Tylecote 1988), and sites of early-mid Saxon date, late Saxon and early medieval at the upper end of the valley around the site of the former castle and priory.

(SP 9730 9800)

Two charcoal samples were obtained here from two heavy concentrations of slag within a 50 m diameter slag patch. The test pits showed that underneath the ploughsoil a 150 mm undisturbed layer of slag and furnace refuse still remained. In pit one this was overlying a 250 mm layer of iron fines and in pit two, a 100 mm layer of black ash and charcoal. Both of these gave similar dates of AD 1140-1290 and AD 1155-1285.

(SP 9724 9750)

This site consists of a natural knoll of ironstone within the bend of a stream. Slag is visible in an arc around the knoll along the stream bank. A test pit was excavated between the lower slope of the knoll and the stream, uncovering 600 mm of slag deposited over six alternating layers of ash and iron fines. Charcoal from an ash layer was dated to AD 970-1195.

(SP 9742 9827)

Here, an extensive area of black soil can be seen spreading for over 100 m down a small valley towards the stream, culminating in a low mound of slag, with black and red soil over an area 35 m in diameter. A one metre deep test pit showed a 120 mm layer of iron fines covered by 280 mm of slag and ash overlain by 600 mm of reddish soil and slag. A C₁₄ date of AD 995-1225 was obtained here.

(SP 9765 9784)

Charcoal from this site was obtained from a 150 mm layer of slag beneath a 300 mm layer of black soil. This site consists of a 7 m area of black earth and slag on the edge of ridge and furrow close to Mill Wood and was dated to AD 465-480/AD 520-660.

(SP 9738 9803)

Known as Cendry Holme on a mid 16th century map, this site lies on a knoll in a permanent pasture field. Slag can be seen exposed by rabbit burrows over an area of 1600 sq m. To the south of this is a 30 m diameter hollow, which appears, from the fragments of iron ore, to be a quarry. A magnetometer survey carried out over the site by Adrian Challands highlighted furnaces and areas of roasting. Trenching over these features revealed the remains of a smelting furnace built within an elongated, lined pit of a type believed to be used for ore roasting. Charcoal from beneath the slag mound was dated to AD 890-1030.

Reference

Jackson D A & Tylecote RF 1988; "Two new Romano-British iron working sites in Northamptonshire, a new type of furnace?" *Britannia*, XIX, 275-89.

TIME TEAM**Alderton, Alderton Mount (NGR SP 740 470)**

Katie Hirst

Time Team was invited to carry out an archaeological survey and excavation at Alderton Mount ringwork by the current owner between 27-29 July, 2000. Alderton lies in the Tove valley, 11 km south of Northampton, midway between the A5 and the A508. The soils in the area are predominantly fine loam soils overlying limestone.

The ringwork is roughly triangular in plan covering an area of roughly 50 m square. Although 'The Mount' was only raised 1 m above the surrounding land, it has an inner rampart which survives up to 1.5 m above the interior and is surrounded by a substantial ditch at least 5 m deep in places. To the south-west modern houses have encroached over the line of the moat.

Little archaeological work has taken place in the area, it is only chance finds of pottery and metal work that have given any indication of pre-conquest activity in the area. It is thought that the village has Saxon origins, the odd shape of The Mount is certainly indicative of re-use of an earlier feature, possibly Iron Age or Saxon.

Documentary evidence for Alderton or the Mount is also sparse; the Domesday Book lists an Aldrington in 1086 consisting of two manors with a population of eight held by Count Mortain. In the mid 13th century the manor was acquired by Pagan de Chaworth from Thomas le Sauvage and passed through a number of hands until 1539 when the crown bought it and the manor was annexed to the Honour of Grafton.

Seven trenches in total were excavated, one across the moat, one over the rampart and a third within the interior. A fourth trench was opened in the west across a breach in the rampart where the entrance was thought to be. Three further trenches were opened in the garden of Magnolia Cottage to the west of the ringwork.

The moat was at least 2.5 m deep and 10.15 m wide, possibly deeper but excavation was stopped for safety reasons. Deposits within the cut were sampled for environmental remains and waterlogged wood from the base of the ditch was radiocarbon dated. The C₁₄ sample gave a date of 1020-1220 AD for the construction of the ditch, not Iron Age or Saxon as suspected.

A trench opened across the rampart revealed that it had been constructed by heaping layers of sandy clay, probably excavated from the moat, onto the natural subsoil. A dark

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loam deposit at the base is probably a layer of turf, often found at the base of ramparts. Limestone boulders at the base of the interior rampart may have been a revetment to prevent collapse into the interior of the ringwork. The only evidence of a palisade at the top of the earthwork came in the form of one post hole low down the exterior slope, other evidence may have been erased by erosion of the sides subsequent to the original construction.

A rectangular platform in the east of the interior was examined. A possible palisade slot was seen exposed in the west of the platform and a number of post-holes may be evidence of a structure which was sealed below a layer of 14th century roof tiles. However, an extensive gravel bank over the mound which some of the post holes cut is not consistent with evidence of building foundations. Further excavation may reveal more of the structure.

A substantial stone rubble construction with a mortar bonding 3.5 m wide and 1.15 m high marked the southern side of the breach in the rampart. The rubble core was dressed and a post-hole on its southern side may be evidence of a timber revetment designed to support the construction. Earthworks on the northern side of the gap indicate that a similar structure survives opposite and has been interpreted as a substantial stone and timber gatehouse defending the entrance into the ringwork interior. A horse harness fitting with an enamel decoration of an eagle was found immediately above the stone work probably dating from the late 14th to 15th centuries.

A ditch running on a north south alignment was exposed some 20 m to the west of the rampart containing an early medieval knife, and is thought to mark an annex attached to the main enclosure.

The presence of a stone tower at the entrance to the ringwork is significant, as few are known. Stone towers are a late development and are usually associated with motte and baileys from the late 12th century onwards; ring works have either developed into mottes or have been abandoned by the 13th and 14th centuries. The structure over the house platform also suggests that the ringwork was occupied until the 14th century but further investigation would have to be made as to the status of the occupants.

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

The Whittlewood Project: Medieval Settlements and Landscapes in the Whittlewood Area
Dr Richard Jones

See Buckinghamshire Report.

OXFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES AND CONSULTANCY LTD

Caversham, Hammerhead Quarry (SU 745 758)
David Fell and Jonathan Hunn

A watching brief was undertaken on land at Hammerhead Quarry, Caversham. No archaeological features were observed.

Witney, East Witney Development Areas (SP 36 08)
David Fell and Nicola King

A desk-based assessment was undertaken in October 2000 to assess the archaeological impact of proposals for development on five areas situated east of the town of Witney. The assessment revealed that archaeological remains are not known within the assessment area.

BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT

Bicester, Bicester Retail Village (SP 580 219)
L A Mather

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken, during groundworks for the Phase 2b development of Bicester Retail Village. Earlier archaeological work to the east had demonstrated the survival of previously unrecorded Late Iron Age and Romano-British settlement remains within the flood plain of the Langford Brook. The results of the watching brief showed that the subsoil horizon had been significantly reduced prior to the present development and as such no archaeological features had survived.

COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Abingdon, Radley Road (SU 5140 9840)
Franco Vartuca

In March 2000 an archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundworks associated with the construction of a bungalow and two houses at Radley Road Nurseries. Despite lying to the west of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Barrow Hills Round Barrow Cemetery) and near a large oval cropmark, possibly a Neolithic long barrow, no features or finds of archaeological interest were identified.

Banbury, 4-10 Dashwood Road (SP 4548 4012)
David Kenyon

In June 2000 an archaeological evaluation of gardens to the rear of 4-10 Dashwood Road revealed a single square

posthole of medieval or later date. No other features of archaeological interest were identified.

Banbury, Hardwick Farm, Southern Road
(SP 4600 4300)
Mark Brett

Between June and July 2000 an archaeological watching brief during alteration and building works was carried out at Hardwick Farm.

The watching brief successfully identified a number of archaeological features across the development area, including pits, ditches, gullies, a drain and culvert, areas of cobbled yard surface, and a length of possible remnant building foundation.

Dating evidence across the site was relatively scarce. However, it was surmised that the presence of many of the features further substantiated previous archaeological and historical investigation of the site, intimating that settlement at Hardwick Farm is long established, and that elements of the current farm complex may be directly associated with, and part of, the wider settlement pattern represented by the medieval and post-medieval earthwork complex in which it is situated.

The discovery of Roman deposits, concentrated in one part of the development area, demonstrates that there is also an earlier, previously unknown element to the site.

Finmere, Foxley Fields Farm (Finmere Quarry)
(SP 625 325)
David Kenyon

Excavation of land at Finmere Quarry in advance of gravel extraction from the site was carried out in November and December 2000. The work followed on from fieldwalking and evaluation conducted in 1993, and was centred around several ditched enclosures visible on aerial photography and recorded in Oxfordshire SMR.

The earliest features identified were an urned cremation, containing two inverted vessels, and possibly as many as four further un-urned cremations, dating from the Bronze Age. The enclosures visible on the aerial photographs were also investigated. A ring ditch previously interpreted as Bronze Age was found to probably date from the later Bronze Age-early Iron Age and a large rectilinear enclosure was confirmed as of Iron Age date.

A series of at least six Iron Age roundhouses, as well as a series of pit groups, were also uncovered within the area of the rectilinear enclosure, but these were seen to extend beyond the limits of the enclosure and are clearly from a separate phase of activity within the Iron Age. Several linear trackways were also uncovered crossing the excavation area, representing a further phase of probably prehistoric

activity. Determination of the chronology of the various features and phases of activity, including analysis of artefactual material, is in progress.

Little Faringdon, Nr Lechlade (SP 2305 0035)
Mark Brett

Evaluation identified a single Iron Age pit, a number of furrows and peat deposits and several ephemeral features. In addition, a number of palaeochannels were encountered, representing former courses of the nearby River Leach.

Milton, Milton Park (SU 4960 9213)
Laurent Coleman

An evaluation was conducted immediately to the south of a scheduled ancient monument, comprising an extensive multiperiod site known from cropmark evidence (Oxfordshire SAM 250). A trackway, which appeared to have been in use during the Iron Age and Romano-British periods, was identified in the western part of the site. The central part of the site contained a ladder enclosure, which probably dated to the Iron Age. Both of these features extended northwards into the SAM. To the east, a zone of multiperiod occupation activity was identified which dated from the Iron Age, Romano-British, and Saxon periods. The eastern edge of the site was characterised by a series of broadly parallel Romano-British ditches.

Oxford, Proposed DEM Centre, Churchill Hospital
(SP 5437 0670)
Mark Brett

A watching brief conducted during the excavation of a series of engineering test-pits identified no archaeological features or artefacts.

Oxford, Churchill Hospital (SP 5425 0580)
Franco Vartuca

A watching brief conducted during the groundworks associated with the construction of two new car parks identified no archaeological features. Two residual sherds of Roman mortaria were recovered from the topsoil.

Wilcote/NW Oxon Supply Improvement Pipeline
(SP 445086 to SP 360198)
Alistair Barber and Jon Hart

A watching brief conducted during installation of a 17 km Thames Water pipeline revealed no significant archaeological remains, despite crossing the line of the Late Iron Age earthwork known as Grims' Ditch. Associated excavation within the known Roman roadside settlement at Wilcote recorded, however, 1st and 2nd century AD activity

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extending at least 0.6 km south of the now confirmed line of Akeman Street (here surviving as a late, poor quality, rebuild). Intensive quarrying activity was associated with the construction and maintenance of the road. A previously unknown cobbled trackway, with adjacent drainage ditch, ran southward from Akeman Street. Running beneath the track three narrow stone-built drains may have directed run-off from the hillside above, or perhaps channelled water to an as yet unlocated feature further downslope.

The padstone remains, and remnant hard-standing, of a post-built timber structure or building lay 130 m south of the road. Nearby two small ovens were set into an earlier quarry pit. Areas of heat-affected clay, pits, postholes and rubble-packed scoops may represent the plough-damaged remains of further hearths, and associated activity near the structure. The absence of metallurgical remains suggests a domestic nature to this activity, whilst the paucity of structures may indicate this was peripheral to the main settlement. A series of ditched boundaries were noted further south.

The site was relatively rich in artefacts, and finds include large unabraded pottery sherds, fragmentary wall plaster, and brooches spanning the 1st to 4th centuries AD

FOUNDATIONS ARCHAEOLOGY

Tracy Michaels

Hanwell Fields, Banbury - Evaluation

Site Summary

In September 2000 we were commissioned by Bryant Homes Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation comprising twenty-nine 30 m trenches on the land at Hanwell Fields, Banbury (NGR: SP437425).

Evidence of Medieval and Post-Medieval ridge and furrow was present across the majority of the site; although most was ephemeral. The best-preserved examples were in the southwestern part of the site. Apart from the ridge and furrow; very few features were present within the study area, these included a small section of a possible curvilinear ditch, three linears, a pit and a dewpond. The majority of the dating evidence on site was from the post-Medieval period, in the form of clay pipes, brick and tile, but five sherds of Medieval pottery, three worked flints and fragments of industrial waste were also uncovered.

Evidence from the Trenches

Trench 1 yielded the most archaeological evidence, with a curvilinear gully running approximately east-west and two large intercutting ditches orientated north-south. The shallow U-shaped curvilinear ditch did not contain any artefactual evidence and unfortunately had only a small identifiable area. Thus interpretation is difficult but it does share several characteristics of a drip gully for an Iron Age roundhouse. The two ditches were both steep sided and flat bottomed, the fill of which contained metal working waste,

fragments of fired clay, frequent charcoal fragments and a residual Mesolithic microlith. The flint was not contemporary with the ditches and the burnt clay, charcoal and iron slag probably represent furnace debris.

Trench 4, situated close to Trench 1, contained a large, irregular-shaped pit containing small quantities of industrial waste, charcoal and bone. The bone in the pit showed no evidence of burning and the quantity of charcoal was quite small, indicating that the material in the pit was a secondary deposit, possibly also furnace debris. No other fragments of industrial waste were present in the rest of the site; suggesting that the metalworking process took place off-site but within the vicinity of Trenches 1 and 4.

Trench 7 contained a northeast-southwest orientated U-shaped linear feature. The feature did not contain any artefactual evidence and probably represents a pre-Medieval drainage feature.

Trenches 15 and 16 cut through a large depression on the site, which contained large quantities of modern, dumped material. As the cut was relatively shallow (approximately 1 m) it seemed likely that the feature represented a dewpond of Post-Medieval/modern date.

No other features were present within the study area. The two other worked flints (a side scraper and Neolithic blade fragment) and all the Medieval pottery present on site were unstratified.

Conclusions

The majority of the unstratified finds showed signs of abrasion, most likely due to movement during ploughing. Ploughing may also have removed the potential for the survival of earlier archaeological features.

All features were sealed beneath Medieval ridge and furrow and represent activity pre-dating this period.

The evaluation demonstrated that there had been low-level early activity within the study area, with potential for better survival of evidence in areas unaffected by agricultural interference.

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

Aston Tirrold, Crossways, Aston Street (SU 5565 8594)
John Moore

An archaeological watching brief undertaken during the course of excavation for a new swimming pool found a drain not related to the present house. The drain may indicate the presence of an earlier building on the site just to the north-west of the present building. This earlier building would have been fronted onto Rectory Road as opposed to being positioned in the angle of Rectory Road and Aston Street as at present.

Bicester, Chapel Street (SP5845 2230)
John Moore, S Sworn and G Thacker

A small-scale excavation was carried out on the site of last year's evaluation (SMA 30, 47) to the rear of 1 Causeway and fronting onto Chapel Street. The site of proposed development is located on the west side of Chapel Street, Bicester just south of where the Town Brook forms a dogleg to the west.

The further discovery of Romano-British finds, including tiles from a hypocaust, may indicate the presence of a relatively high status building in the near vicinity of the site. Alternatively the local Saxon population may have brought this material into Bicester from Alchester although the distribution is relatively widespread (see below). Pottery of the early/mid Anglo-Saxon period shows that the settlement found further south-east extended towards the Market Square.

The, perhaps deliberate, filling of a ditch, parallel to the Town Brook was dated to c late 11th century. The function of this feature may have been to keep livestock from the marshy area to the west. Subsequent use of the excavated site was for agricultural or horticultural purposes during the 12th and 13th centuries.

Re-ordering of the Town Brook took place during the 17-18th century with subsequent building of cottages along Chapel Street in the mid 18th century.

Bicester, Land to the Rear of Nos. 3-5 and 9-13 Causeway (SP 5843 2231)

Dawn Casey, John Moore and Gerry Thacker

An evaluation of the site proposed for residential development added important information on the development of the area over the last millennium. The finding of further sherds of Roman pottery in late deposits added to earlier finds in the town centre and the evaluation on Chapel Street to the rear of No 1 Causeway (SMA 30, 47) may indicate the presence of Romano-British settlement of relatively high status in the vicinity of Chapel Street and Market Square.

Previous archaeological work had established that the area south of Causeway had been low-lying and marshy. This evaluation confirmed that this was the case in the 10-11th century when rubbish was being disposed of in the marsh. The waterlogged seeds suggested fen grading into reedswamp. The most numerous seeds from sedge that, along with meadowsweet, probably grew on seasonally exposed areas of peaty sediment. Bogbean and valerian are likely to have grown with the sedge in the wettest areas of the fen while the seeds of bulrush were probably from emergent reedswamp vegetation. The remains of dogwood and hazel were perhaps from scrub growing on drier areas. The molluscs found are all species that are either

characteristic of marshes or readily live in marshy habitats. Molluscs of flowing water were absent.

The first attempt at land reclamation appears to have been carried out in the 14-15th centuries with further raising of the land in the 17th century. From that date activities relating to the shops fronting Causeway were carried out on this land.

Cholsey, White Cross House, Reading Road, Winterbrook (SU 6055 8815)
John Moore

The development site is located in the grounds of White Cross House off the A329 Reading Road, Winterbrook, in the parish of Cholsey (SU 6055 8815). The site lies on the junction of the Thames Gravel Terrace and the alluvial deposits in the Thames floodplain. The Thames lies some 200 m to the east

Known from aerial photography is an extensive complex of probable Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age ritual, funerary and settlement sites immediately to the west of the proposal site. To the southeast lies a late Bronze Age riverside settlement known by partial excavation to be located on a long eyot bounded to the east by the present course of the Thames and to the west by a silted-up channel spanning the area of land towards Winterbrook.

300 m to the west is a cropmark of a segmented ring ditch (County Sites and Monument No. PRN 2995, while a similar distance to the north-west is a double concentric circle cropmark (PRN 8593). An area of linear cropmarks including an enclosure lies c 600 m to the north-west (PRN 15391). From within the garden of White Cross House part of a stone axe-head was found in 1920-30s (PRN 2198).

The river Thames and its banks to the east of the site have provided evidence of archaeological activity. Approximately 300 m to the east of the site three Neolithic bowls (PRN 2006) were found on the east bank while four mid Bronze Age objects (PRN 15809) were recovered 300 m upstream from the other side of the river bank. Close to the find spot of the Neolithic bowls finds from the river bank and limited excavation indicate Iron Age settlement from the finds of quantities of pottery and animal bone, two fragments of human skull, bronze implements, flint flakes and spindle whorls (PRN 2482).

The watching brief during excavation for a swimming pool, pool house and garages located a pit of Neolithic or Bronze Age date dated by a flint tool, as well as three other flints. One is a broken blade of Mesolithic or Early Neolithic date while the others are flakes of probable Neolithic or Bronze Age date. The location of the finds is on the top edge of the valley side suggesting that further occupational evidence may be found further west towards Reading Road.

Oxfordshire

Dorchester, 73 High Street (SU 57734 94469)
Gerry Thacker

A watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of the footprint of a swimming pool at number 73 High Street, Dorchester. Although there was a degree of truncation from relatively recent landscaping there were sufficient postholes, pits and a gully surviving to confirm that extra mural settlement of the 2nd to 4th centuries was present.

Drayton, Ladygrove House and Ladygrove Close
(SU 4880 9661)
John Moore

The development site is located on the east side of Drayton Road (B4017) between Caldecott Road and Ladygrove Paddock. While the area is well known for archaeological sites ranging from prehistoric cropmarks, Roman buildings and trackways, and the Anglo-Saxon cemetery 300 m to the south an evaluation carried out on this site failed to find any remains of archaeological significance.

Drayton, Old Farmhouse, Brook Farm, Milton Road
(SU 4877 9360)
John Moore

A small evaluation just to the east of the Drayton South Cursus and to the south of the Saxon settlement found evidence for medieval ridge and furrow cultivation and later ploughing. A Saxon sherd of pottery was recovered from a medieval ploughsoil.

Gosford, Acacia Nurseries, Water Eaton Lane, Kidlington (SP 5022 1336)
John Moore

The development site is located on the east side of Bicester Road, within the angle created with Water Eaton Lane, at Gosford. An archaeological watching brief undertaken during the course of excavation for footings for three houses and associated garages proved that the site had not been used in antiquity.

Kingston Bagpuize, Kinston Hill Farm (SP 4085 0001)
John Moore

A watching brief during ground reduction for a new dairy building uncovered evidence of former occupation of the site during several periods. The site is located at Kingston Hill, to the north of the village of Kingston Bagpuize, on the east side of the road to Witney (A415). The site of new development was to the north of the current farm buildings on the east side of the north south track through the buildings. The site lies on the north side of a ridge of higher

ground running east west. The farm buildings are situated on the ridge.

In 1975, during the excavation of a pipe trench artefactual evidence of a Romano-British settlement or possibly a high status farmstead was recovered (County Sites and Monuments Record PRN 10604). This included pottery and building debris including plaster, tesserae and roof tiles. There was also evidence of a mortar floor. Further evidence of the settlement was found during the excavation of a small exploratory trench (Parrington 1976) while pottery from the 1st - 5th centuries was recovered from drainage ditches (Cowell 1979). The site is centred on SU 408 999 to the south of the farm buildings. An extended inhumation burial was found when the original water pipeline was dug (PRN 5923).

Evidence of Middle Iron Age activity, probably a settlement, has been found at SU 4084 9984 through a scatter of pottery covering c 300 m (PRN 13312).

During the recent work middle Iron Age pottery was recovered indicating that the extent of possible settlement of this date extends at least 120 m further north than known. A cemetery associated with the Roman settlement, which is again further south, was identified. It is considered that at least 20 burials, both inhumations and cremations, were present within the area investigated. Ground conditions prevented the identification of grave cuts. The shallower burials had been severely affected by ploughing but deeper ones survive and remain under the new building. Pottery spanning the whole length of the Roman period was retrieved.

Finds of domestic Anglo-Saxon material point to resettlement of the site in the earlier Anglo-Saxon period. Probable early Anglo-Saxon sherds were found in association with two reused Roman base sherds. These sherds almost certainly derive from an early Anglo-Saxon domestic context, perhaps originally from a Grubenhaus.

Oxford, Former Transco Site, Watlington Road
(SP 5585 0335)
John Moore

The site of an evaluation lay in the angle of Watlington Road and Oxford Road, Garsington. The evaluation failed to find any archaeological features other than recent pits and services. However the finds recovered from a ploughsoil indicate activity on the site over a considerable period. A sherd of probable Bronze Age date was found. Sherds of Iron Age and Roman (both early and late) date in the quantity found suggest that they derive from manuring of fields. The area is known for finds of Roman material related to the Roman road alignment to the east. The County Sites and Monuments Record records Roman settlement immediately to the south along the line of the Roman road, whose projected line runs c 40 m to the east of the site. The

deep ploughsoil examined was found to have formed in both the medieval and post-medieval periods.

Oxford, Oxford Science Park, Grenoble Road (Phase 2 area SP 5390 0210 centred, Phase 2a area SP 5415 0240 centred)

John Moore

Further watching brief work was undertaken on this site (see SMA 30). Several more sunken featured buildings were found and excavated in the Phase 2 area. At least two beaver dams were identified during bulk peat removal in the Phase 2a area. One of these was found to belong to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age by C₁₄ dating.

South Moreton, South Moreton County Primary School (SU 5598 8830)

John Moore

The school lies on the north side of the High Street within the historic core of the settlement. An archaeological watching brief undertaken during the course of ground reduction for a new classroom proved that the site had not been used in antiquity.

Sutton Courtenay, Land at Sutton Wick (SU 4960 9435)

John Moore

An evaluation of an area of proposed mineral extraction was examined to determine the presence/absence of significant archaeological remains. The area examined is the field to the south where excavation has previously been carried out (SMA 29, 35-39). The evaluation established that no archaeological remains of any significance are present within the proposed mineral extraction area.

This part of the landscape in prehistoric and Roman times must have been peripheral to the known centres of activity centred on the Drayton North cursus to the north-west and the sites of Drop Short Roman villa, the Neolithic and later prehistoric activity of the Drayton South cursus area and the Saxon settlement on the higher gravel terrace south of the Drayton to Sutton Courtenay road. The area under examination may just have been used for grazing or hunting and gathering activities.

Sutton Wick, Land East of Stonehill Lane, North and South of Bassett Lane (SU 4875 9482).

John Moore

In the fields to the west of where excavation of the Drayton North Cursus has been carried out (SMA 17, 85-7; Ainslie and Wallis, 1987; Barclay, Lambrick, Moore and Robinson forthcoming) an evaluation was attempted. Due to a high water table the evaluation of this proposed mineral extraction site was only partially carried out. However

archaeological remains were located. Prior to the evaluation by machine-cut trenches, the presence of archaeology was suspected from cropmarks seen on aerial photographs. The site covers the west edge of an 'island' of first terrace gravel surrounded by alluvium marking the courses of former river channels. A channel is present along the western and southern parts of the site.

A suspected trackway was dated to the later Roman period and appears similar to one excavated further east. These trackways appear to be associated with a change in landuse from arable to pasture when there was a raise in water table leading to alluviation in the area. An undated ditch found on the south edge of the 'island' may belong to the Roman arable phase of landuse.

A small pit containing burnt bone is most probably a human cremation and may indicate the presence of a funerary monument not located by trenching. Undated pits and a post-hole along with burnt-out tree throw pits on the south edge of the island indicate activity probably of the prehistoric period. The presence of an apparent copse providing a ready supply of firewood may have been the reason for activity in this place. The clearance of trees may well belong to the earlier Roman period when arable agriculture was taking place.

Witney, Land to the East of Cogges Hill Road

(SP 3690 0970)

John Moore and Gerry Thacker

An evaluation of an area proposed for development as a cemetery was carried out in the angle between Cogges Hill Road and Oxford Hill. Previously a ditch containing substantial amounts of Iron Age material had been found to the east during house building on the west side of Cogges Hill Road. One sherd of middle to late Iron Age pottery was recovered from the evaluation.

Evidence for settlement during the Roman period was found to be focused on the glacial gravels present in the north-east corner of the site. It is probable that the 1st-2nd century settlement extends to the north-east along the ridge of gravel across Oxford Hill towards Gibbets Close Farm. The evidence for the settlement in this period included ditches that may enclose paddocks or fields, post holes and pits. An undated curved gully may represent an eaves drip gully outside a circular building.

Evidence of medieval occupation on the site was also found. Earthworks consisting of two ditches and slight banks at right angles to each other may define a house platform in the north-east corner of the site. Elsewhere ditches, pits and post holes were found. The form of the pottery assemblage collected prevents close dating. Ridge and furrow earthworks survive on the site but may be of a surprising late date with pottery of 18-19th century date being retrieved from one of the furrows.

Oxfordshire

Witney, Rear of 68-72 High Street (SP 3576 0999)

John Moore

Little constructive evidence for the history of the site was gained from the watching brief. However, evidence for use of the site from the 11th or early 12th century is attested by pottery of that date in a pit. It is probable that a wall parallel to the property boundaries and founded on the natural gravel is also of an early date. An arched structure would appear to be a flue leading into the structure that was on the south side of the wall. The use of the structure cannot be guessed at

Evidence for divisions between the properties that front onto the High Street were found. During the 17th century an area had been quarried for gravel. The rear of the plots appeared to have been used as gardens or orchards in the 18th century.

Reference

Ainslie R and Wallis J 1987; "Excavations on the Cursus at Drayton, Oxon.", *Oxoniensia* 52, 1-10

Barclay, Lambrick, Moore and Robinson; forthcoming "Cursus Monuments in the Upper Thames Valley: Excavations at the Drayton and Lechlade Cursuses"

Cowell R 1979; Notes. *Oxoniensia* XLIV, 96-7

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NATIONAL TRUST

Alfred's Castle, Ashdown

A third season of excavation by students from Oxford University was carried out on the hill fort, revealing the full extent of the Romano-British building discovered in 1998. A resistivity survey of the interior of the fort was undertaken by the Trust prior to the excavations.

Buscot Park (SU24349680)

Brick and stone footings for the 18th century Orangery were discovered during the excavation of trenches for underpinning the south-east pavilion at Buscot Park. The pavilion dates from the 1920s but overlies the site of the Orangery. This was built soon after the house was completed in the 1780s. It was eventually demolished in the late 1850s or early 1860s after Robert Campbell, an Australian tycoon whose money was made in gold mining, acquired the estate.

Little is known about this building. It is depicted in rather sketchy detail on engravings dating from 1793 and from the mid 19th century. These show a single storey building of seven bays, the front three bays slightly projecting beneath a pediment.

The trenches for the underpinning exposed parts of the north, south and east walls of this building at a depth of about 0.8 m below the floor level of the pavilion. Each wall measured 0.78 m in width. The quality of construction

appeared to be exceptionally high with dressed limestone rubble forming the outer face and coursed brick the inner face. It is assumed that brick was used on the interior since it would be better able to absorb and retain heat. Measured from the north-east corner to the south-east corner the building would have had a width of 6.8 m. Unfortunately it was not possible to ascertain the length of the building since the construction of the swimming pool in the 1920s removed its westerly continuation. However, it is possible that the full length of the north wall survives beneath the yew topped embankment which flanks the pool.

As a consequence of discovering the wall footings at an early stage it was possible to influence the design of the piling and thus retain much of the evidence in situ.

Coleshill WWII Bunker (SU244938)

Dating from the early 1940s, this is one of the Trust's most ephemeral yet significant archaeological sites. During WWII Coleshill House was used for training members of the Special Auxiliary Services whose role was to go to ground and carry out acts of sabotage behind enemy lines in the event of a German invasion. Eight prototype submerged bunkers were created on the estate and the last surviving example has recently been excavated and partially restored by the Trust's Coleshill warden, Keith Blaxhall. There are concerns about the condition of this structure since it is built on the cut and cover principle with about a metre of earth placed over the corrugated iron frame. A survey of the interior was therefore carried out during 2000 to record important internal detail, including the position of fixtures for fold-down beds, a cooker, toilet, magazine and ventilation shafts. The vent for the coal-fired cooker was cleverly concealed in a tree trunk, whilst the aerial for the radio was run up an adjacent tree!

Great Coxwell Barn (SU26909403)

A watching brief carried out by the Trust over the excavation of a trench for an electrical cable on the west side of the barn revealed a length of stone footing running north-south across the trench. A rough cobbled limestone surface was also found running up to the west face of the barn. It is possible that this may be the remains of an outbuilding associated with the barn, which dates from c 1300 and formed part of a monastic grange farm belonging to Beaulieu Abbey. However, photographs recently given to the Trust dating from the 1930s show several 19th century (?) outbuildings, eventually removed in the 1960s. A geophysics survey is to be undertaken on the site during 2001 as part of a programme of archaeological investigation to examine the ground surfaces inside and outside of the barn. Repairs to the building are to be carried out in 2001 and the investigations, which include excavation inside and outside of the barn, have been designed to provide evidence about the nature and depth of the footings and earlier ground surfaces.

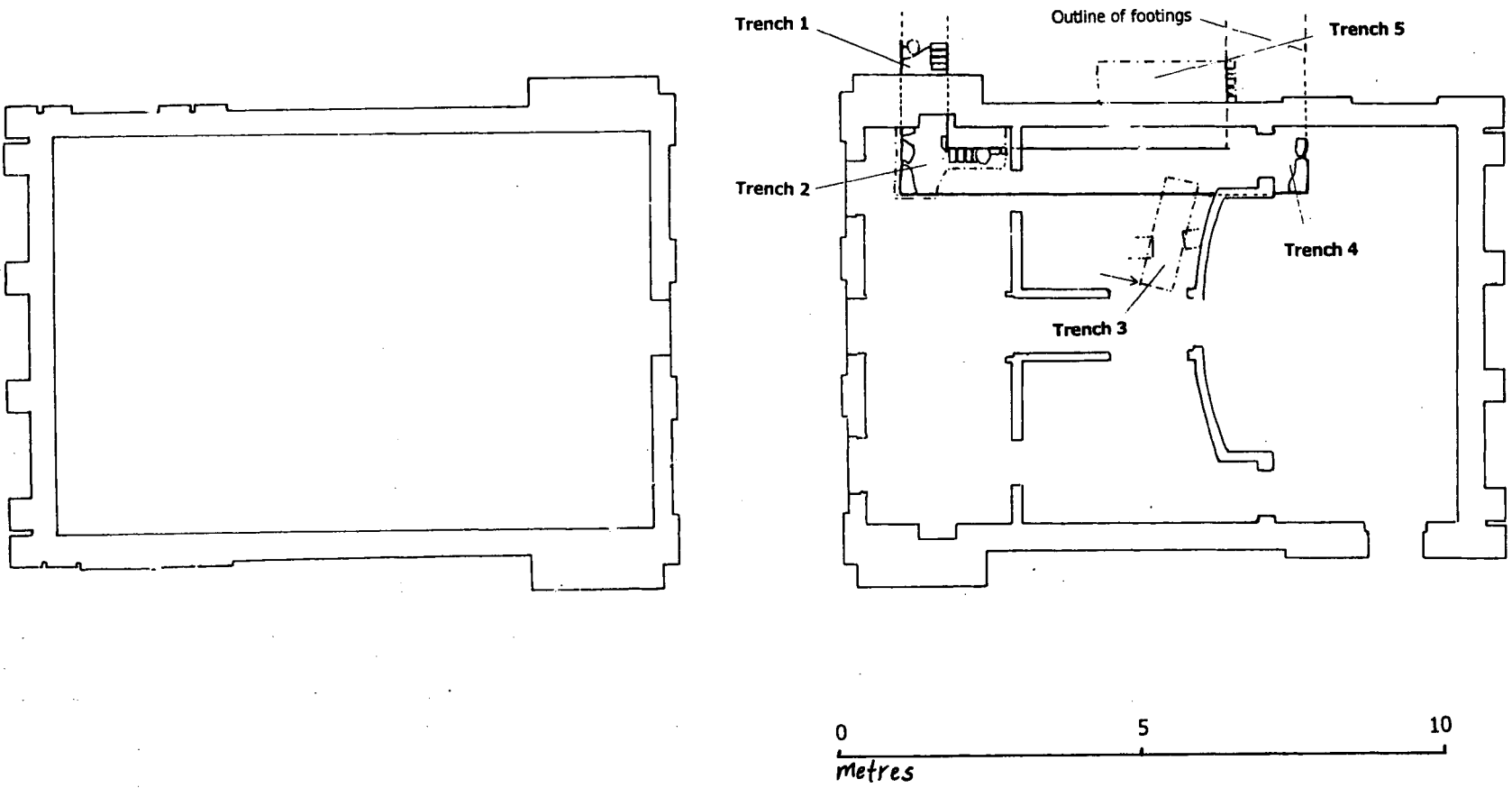


Fig 1. Buscot Park. Plan of the footings of the Orangery beneath the south-east pavilion.

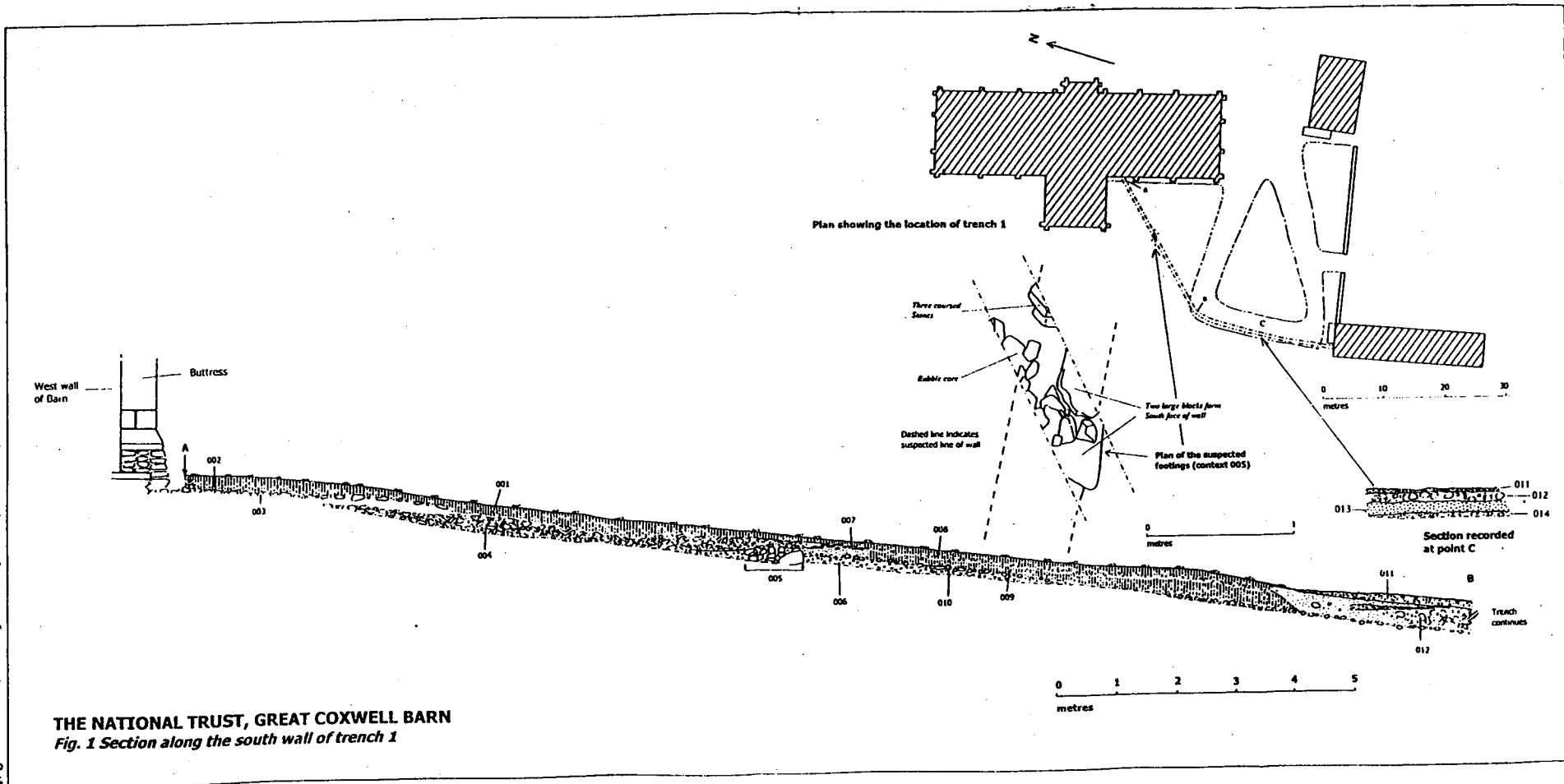


Fig. 2. Great Coxwell Barn. Plan and section across the trench on the south-west corner of the barn.

NORTH OXON FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

Edward Shawyer

Activities in 2000, as in the previous year, were somewhat scaled down and centred mainly around Swalcliffe. A final, fourth season of excavation was carried out on the villa building, this being sited on the area of the old spoil heap which lay roughly between the two trenches. The primary aim of the excavation concerning the Late Roman complex was to establish that the east wing did indeed join the main building and the entire complex was as large as had been conjectured. The results from the subsequent dig did in fact confirm this hypothesis and added more details about the villa's evolution as well. Fieldwalking and surveying in Barford St Michael and Epwell revealed possible, undiscovered Medieval features and indications of past land use.

Excavations

Swalcliffe Lea villa site (SP 3913 3838)

The first trench (trench 3) was sited on the western edge of trench 2 and most of room 6 and the rest of room 7 (the *porticus*) were exposed. Two more rooms beyond (rooms 12 and 13) were revealed before the main building joined the east wing. It transpired later that these last two rooms belonged to a later phase, which meant that the original Late 3rd century phase consisted of two buildings at right angles 3m apart.

Trench 4 was sited to the north of trench 1 and revealed the continuation of the east wing corridor (room 10) and a part of two rooms of the wing (rooms 11 and 14). Overall the developmental sequence of the complex remained true and more dating evidence was obtained, as well as very clear indications of how the villa entered its final phase. A few deep sections revealed more information about the early Roman buildings beneath and dateable material in context.

It is difficult in conclusion to be able to say much about the shape of the early complexes from the small sections dug over the entire site, but it is clear that they did cover roughly the same area as the later buildings and showed a series of developmental changes.

It can now be proven that occupation spanned the entire Roman period and the evidence shows that the village was romanized as early as the late 1st century AD. In addition the first definite traces of a Saxon presence in Swalcliffe Lea have now been found in the form of two Early Saxon saucer brooches.

The policy of the director of excavations throughout the four years was mainly to dig deep sections only in the poorly preserved or eroded parts of the late villa, thereby preserving the more impressive remains for posterity, since the site is not in any way threatened by development.

Phase 3a

Excavation showed that room 6 was small and narrow, measuring 2.15 m wide x 6.28 m long, with a fireplace situated midway against the western wall. The fire was a squarish stone structure butted up against the west wall, the stones of which were deeply reddened or oxidised. It measured about 70 cm wide x 90 cm long. It is possible that the room served as a kitchen, given its dimensions, and a small quantity of bones and an oyster shell were found in the fire.

In trench 4, unfortunately, there was not enough time to section the corridor (room 10), but part of the floor of room 11 was exposed and this consisted of a layer of white clay (heavily burnt) laid down upon packed stone and soil footings. The floors and walls of the east wing show no sign of mortar being used in their construction and the walls were wider than those of the central building indicating that they were probably low sill walls supporting a timber structure. Overall the impression of the east wing being of cheaper construction remains. On the last day of the excavation a possible north wall to room 11 was found with another stone fireplace on the other side in what has been designated room 14, but time was lacking to investigate further.

Phase 3ba

An internal wall was found running parallel to the course of the main south wall of the central building with two stone slab floors on either side of it. This wall was built off-line from the main outer wall so that there would be extra space to create two rooms between room 6 and the east wing. Later on, the footings and robber trench of the southern wall were also found and clay floors found under the slab floors were discovered to be contemporary with the two walls. It became obvious for a number of reasons that these rooms (12 and 13), belonged to a later phase. Firstly the construction of the walls was identical to those of phase 3b and not 3a; that is, they had deeper foundations and mortared stone footings, unlike 3a walls which were of much shallower foundation and rested on a layer of humus deposited to provide a firm even base above the stony remains of the early Roman buildings.

The construction of the floors on either side of the wall was the same as found in the 3a surfaces, namely white clay laid down on packed stone bound by weak lime mortar. The level of the floor in room 13 however was 26 cm deeper than the neighbouring portico and led the excavators to believe at first that it was much earlier. The floor in room 6 sloped 10 cm upwards from west to east apparently following the natural tilt of the land surface, but the floor in room 12 sank 10 cm on the other side of the dividing wall to return it to its original value, which indicates that these two rooms on the eastern end of the building were a later correction to a gentle tilt to the original house.

The decisive evidence came with the discovery of a C47 Oxford red coloured vessel in the footings of the clay floor which dated between 270-400 AD. The vessel had been used some time and showed signs of repair, so it must date to the

SWALCLIFFE LOWER LEA ROMAN VILLA
MULTICONTEXT PLAN OF TRENCHES 3 AND 4
EXCAVATIONS IN 2000

KEY

- ① WHITE LIMESTONE
- ⚡ BREAK OF SLOPE
- ⬤ DARK BROWN CLAY HUMUS
- ⬤ SANDY LIME MORTAR
- ⬤ BURNT STONE
- ⬤ FIRE REDDENED TESSERA
- ⬤ FIRE BLACKENED TESSERA
- ⬤ IRON SLAG
- ⬤ CHARCOAL
- ⬤ BONE
- ⬤ WHITE CLAY
- ⬤ SURVEYING LEVEL
- ⬤ OYSTER SHELL
- ⬤ BLUE LIMESTONE
- ⬤ BAKED TILE
- ⬤ BURNT WHITE CLAY

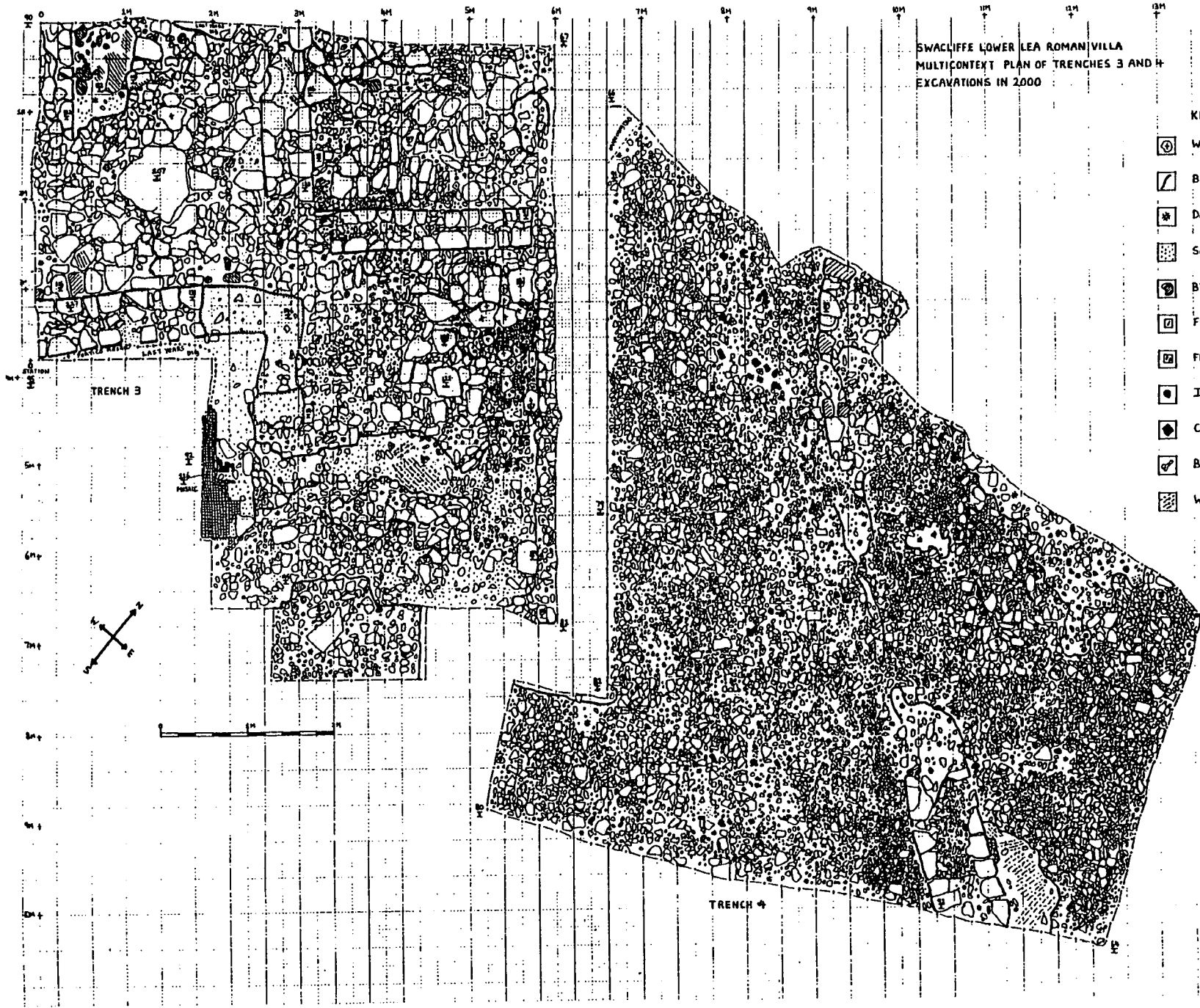


Fig 3. Swalcliffe Lea Roman villa. Plan of Trenches 3 and 4.

early 4th century. Finally the footings of rooms 12 and 13 were far deeper than the rest of the original building and lay directly upon the early levels without an intervening 20 cm of humus.

No dividing wall between these rooms and the east wing corridor was found, but it would have lain under the baulk between the two trenches and there was unfortunately not enough time to investigate the relationship.

Phase 3bb

In room 6 traces of a fine lime mortar surface were found on top of the clay floor and in the section dug in this room a rectangular feature was detected inserted through the earlier clay floor. This feature was a hole full of the same fine white mortar and stone and seems to have been a base for some structure, possibly another fireplace to replace the older one. The fine mortar was the same as used in the mosaics and so probably was the surplus mortar from the mosaic laying used to resurface a small room.

In both rooms 12 and 13 there was a patchy layer of weak lime mortar and stone between the clay floors and the slab floors above, which indicates the presence of another floor. These new surfaces would have rectified the greater difference in the floor levels caused by the new surfaces laid down in room 6 and the portico. No alterations were encountered in the east wing.

Phase 3c

Excavation of room 6 revealed the slab floor extending to the east wall, which it seemed to respect, although here it was slightly difficult to differentiate the slab floor from the rubble above. A few feet from the southern wall of room 6 was a large circular stone, which was clearly another pillar base, like the one found in the late 4th century west wall of this structure. It seems that these pillars would have supported some kind of a timber structure erected within the shell of the old building and it looks as though they utilized some of the surviving walls, which would also account for the greater depth of rubble covering the part of the site where the smithy was.

Room 12 had a nicely preserved and well constructed slab floor, which was well worn and adds extra evidence that this phase must have lasted a good 30 years or more, thus extending into the early 5th century. The slab floor in room 13 appeared to be cruder and was less well preserved, it being hard to tell it apart from the rubble. It also appears that rooms 12 and 13 may have been open sided on the east side, though as mentioned this area was not fully investigated, so there could have been a wall or even a wooden partition.

It became apparent from the excavation of trench 4 that the east wing no longer existed during this phase, since worn stone cobble covered the walls. The same layer of charcoal was found beneath it and this showed itself in bare patches all along the length of the corridor (room 10), as it did in last year's excavation. This evidence and that of the burnt eastern edge of the portico mosaic (room 7) seems to

indicate that the east wing burnt down sometime in the late 4th century and the fire engulfed the eastern edge of the central building as well. This then provides a good reason why the villa ceased to be used as a house, along with the economic problems of the late 4th century. Excavation of trench 4 showed that once the east wing burnt down and the central building was reutilised as a smithy, the east wing was levelled and cobbled over to become part of the yard. It is also apparent from the large amount of bone, pottery and iron slag found on the cobbled yard all around the building that, by this stage, it was used for dumping waste. First century fibulae found amongst the waste indicate that the villa had already begun to be robbed for building material. More interesting finds among the waste were two fragments of early saxon circular brooches, which still await more close dating. These are the first solid Saxon finds from Swalcliffe Lea and may be the earliest Saxon discoveries found so far this far north in Oxfordshire. It is highly likely that they either represent an early presence in the form of either raiders or federates, most likely the latter since the finds are in a Roman context and soldiers would have great need of blacksmiths and as mentioned in last year's report Swalcliffe Lea seemed to have a minor metalworking industry developed in the late 4th century.

The Early Phases

Only three sections were dug to the lower layers and these were situated in rooms 6, 12 and 13 of trench 3. These sections yielded some closely dateable pottery to a well differentiated sequence of undisturbed, sealed layers, which when compared to some of the other early layers across the site where little pottery was found suggests for them a more definite chronology.

Phase 1a

This phase was not detected in trench 3 and pottery from the stone filled gully in trench 1 was dated by Paul Booth of the Oxford Archaeology Unit to the 1st century AD, with one piece dateable to around 70 AD. The evidence at present suggests that the hypothetical round house represented by the gully, a hearth and postholes would date to about this time. The material found in the wall trenches of the succeeding rectangular building was also late 1st century, so it is safe to assume that the roundhouse was shortlived and soon replaced by a Roman style dwelling.

Phase 1b

The section in room 13 was the largest and was irregular in shape, out of a desire to preserve certain features; it was 4 m long north-south by 0.5-1 m wide. The deepest feature was the cut of what must be either a ditch or a pit, it was not possible to say what, since only a very small segment of it was excavated. The cut was at least 1 m deep and was filled with a rich loose dark brown humus. Above the cut was a wall which had a layer of stones bound by a thick white-grey clay used as footings above the cut. The ditch/pit was cut into the natural and the pottery found in it was the usual 1st century soapy textured, grog tempered ware with one possible piece of black burnished ware dateable to after 120

SWALCLIFFE LOWER LEA VILLA EXCAVATIONS 1997-2000

GENERAL SITE PLAN

KEY

  EARLY ROMAN WALLS STAGES 1-2

 LATE 3RD C. WALLS

 LATE 3RD C. WALLS FLOORED OVER

 EARLY 4TH C. WALLS  LATE 4TH C. WALLS

 MID 4TH C. WALLS

 KNOWN/HYPOTHETICAL CONTINUATION OF WALLS

YA LATE 3RD C. YARD

 LIMIT OF EXCAVATIONS

 EXTENT OF EXCAVATED FLOOR SURFACES

A1, B1, C1, FLOORS OF EARLY ROMAN BUILDINGS
1a, 1b, 1c, SEQUENCES OF LATE ROMAN FLOORS WITH THEIR ROOM NUMBERS

 LATE 4TH C. PILLAR BASES

EF EARLY ROMAN FIRE PITS

FB FC LATE 4TH CENTURY FORGES

 LATE ROMAN FIREPLACE

 LATE 3RD C. ENTRANCE SLAB

 LATE ROMAN DOG BURIAL

EG, P1, P2 EARLY ROMAN

HUT GULLY AND POSTHOLES

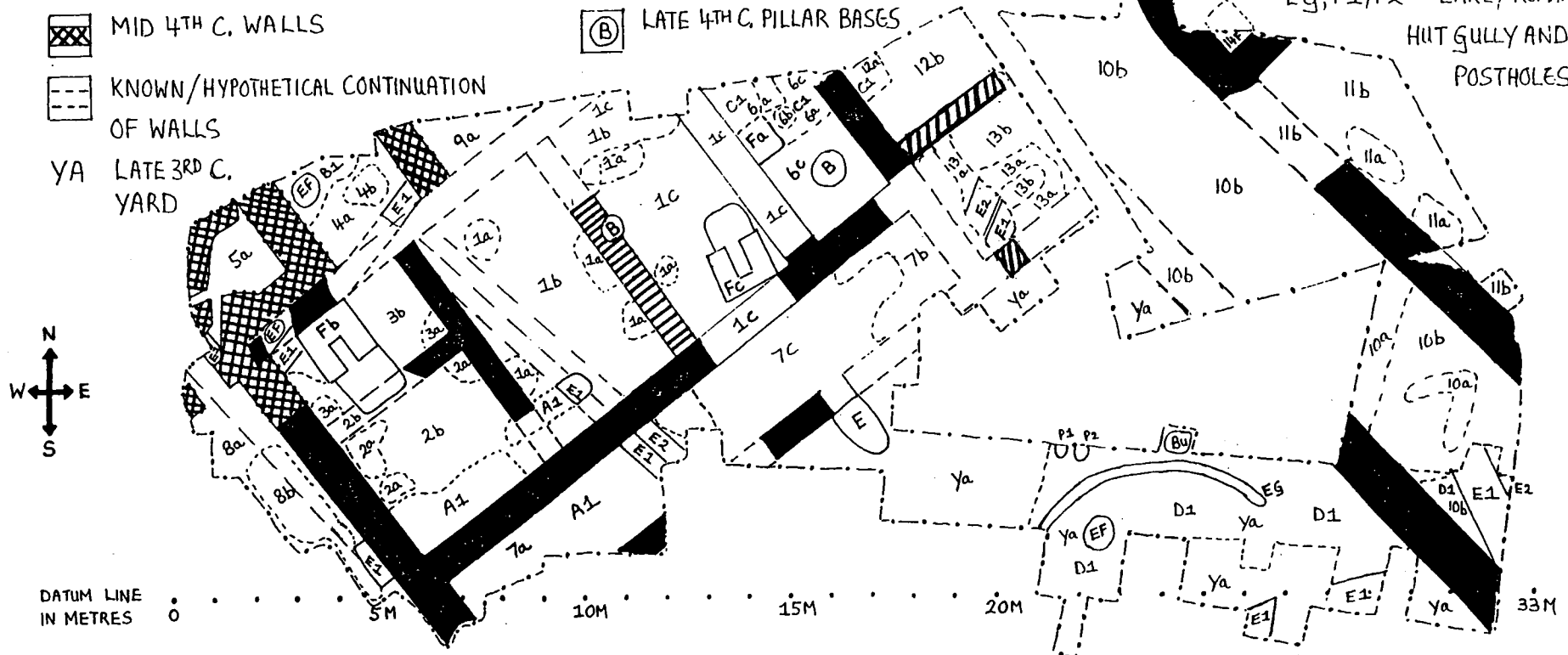


Fig 4. Swalcliffe Lea Roman villa. General site plan.

AD. Since this material was in the fill we can date the feature to the late 1st century AD.

In rooms 6 and 12 the two small sections revealed sequences identical to the one found in the earlier section dug in room 6 in 1999, but only one piece of pottery was found and this was a fragment of a grey ware vessel dateable to the late 1st-early 2nd century AD, which was found on the same level as the wall above the ditch/pit feature. In conclusion the feature may be a ditch since a floor was found 2.5 m to the north of it, but nothing to the south.

Phase 1c

The presence of what looked like two walls running parallel on a northeast-southwest alignment for a short distance were revealed in the room 13 section. The walls were constructed of dressed stone with white-grey clay and stone packing. They were covered by 16 cm of rubble and the same clay. The southernmost wall lay directly upon the natural, while the more northerly wall lay over the ditch/pit feature. There was ample evidence in the side sections that these walls were laid in trenches and would have been at least one course deep. The second clay floor downwards in the sequence of the early surfaces found in the rooms 6 and 12 sections would have been on the correct level for these walls. The ditch/pit beneath the northerly wall was filled in after 120 AD and a piece of grey ware dating to the early 2nd century was found on this level in the room 6 section, so we can give phase 1c a provisional date of circa 130 AD. An interesting feature to emerge from the early layers in rooms 6, 12, 13 and in trench 1, is that all the clay floor surfaces are covered by 5-10 cm of soot and charcoal, mixed in with humus. This would seem to suggest, from the uniform nature of the layers that the central building of this complex was ravaged by fire and rebuilt on three occasions, while the more southerly building was burnt down only once. Fire was a common hazard for roman buildings and the nature of the finds suggests that the houses were largely wooden, resting on low, sill walls and were probably thatched, since very little evidence for slates has been found; which means that they would have been particularly vulnerable to this menace.

Phase 1d

The section in room 13 exposed a reddened, burnt clay surface resting upon a thin layer of weak lime mortar, which lay above the rubble and clay covering the 1c walls. The mortar was probably used to provide an even, smooth surface to which the clay could adhere. By way of contrast, the contemporary floors found in the sections 2.5 m north rested upon a layer of humus and sooty charcoal. The pottery found in the rubble/clay layer in room 13 belonged to the second century and a Samian dish, form 32 (Dragendorff or Curle) was discovered, which dated to the mid-late 2nd century AD. Therefore a provisional date of c 180 AD can be given to this phase.

Overall no walls belonging to this period have been detected in the few small sections dug, but there are floors and surfaces in rooms 1, 3, 6, 12 and 13. This seems to have been the last phase of the early buildings before they were replaced by the late Roman villa around 270 AD. Pottery

found in trench 1 suggests that the early houses were still in use during the early 3rd century.

Overall a basic chronological table for the phases can now be suggested.

- Phase 1a Round House (c AD 75)
- Phase 1b Roman style houses (c AD 90)
- Phase 1c Roman style houses (c AD 130)
- Phase 1d Roman style houses (c AD 180)
- Phase 2 Soil layer above early levels (c AD 250-270)
- Phase 3a Villa complex (c AD 270)
- Phase 3ba Rooms 12 and 13 (c AD 300)
- Phase 3bb Northern extension and mosaics (c AD 330)
- Phase 3c Blacksmithing phase (c AD 375)

Discussion

Four years of excavation have now firmly established that the late Roman villa (270-375 AD) was of the winged corridor variety. The richest period in its development was undoubtedly in the early-mid 4th century when the northern range and the mosaics were added. It is now also probable that a fire in the east wing caused its final abandonment as a house, although the fire could be secondary to economic depression first making the villa run down. The site was not left idle for long since the central building was converted into a smithy and the east wing levelled and covered by a cobbled yard. All the evidence suggests that the ironworking phase lasted into the early 5th century, probably when we first detect the arrival of the Saxons in some form.

The early Roman phases can now be dated more accurately and it can be demonstrated that there was a succession of building phases stretching from the late 1st to the late 2nd centuries AD, beginning with a simple round house in the native Iron age tradition. The early buildings, while not remarkably well off, do show a gradual evolution of increasingly sophisticated architectural technique. This is apparent in the change from trench built walls of unhewn blocks bound by clay, to dressed stones bound first by clay and later by lime mortar. The clay floors also progressed from simple stone and soil footings to stone and mortar instead.

On the other hand many features of Roman building are continuous and one can also see great similarities in local building techniques with even medieval structures. A large amount of animal bones has been found in most of the contexts and also occasional quernstones which when properly analysed will give us a good indication of the village's, if not necessarily the villa's, economy.

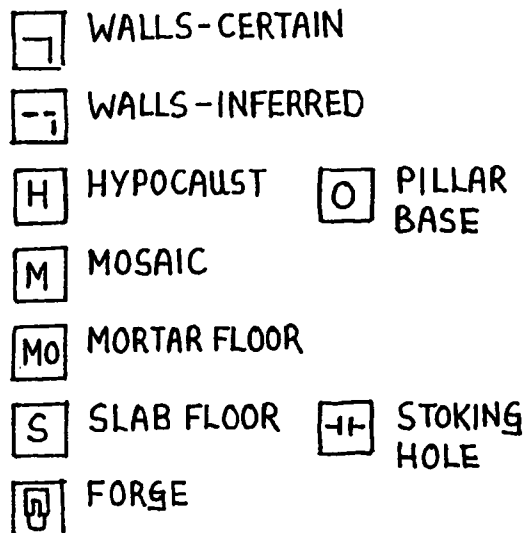
Fieldwalking

Prehistoric sites

Manor Farm, Barford St Michael (SP 425 327)

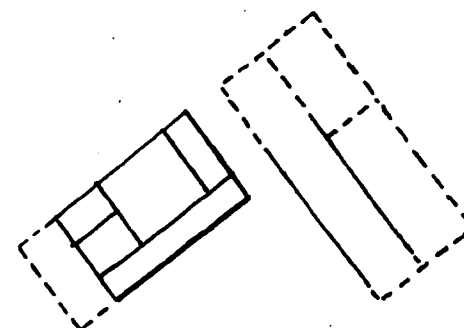
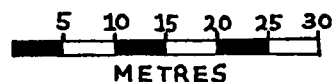
The only pre-medieval find in the fields walked so far was a

KEY

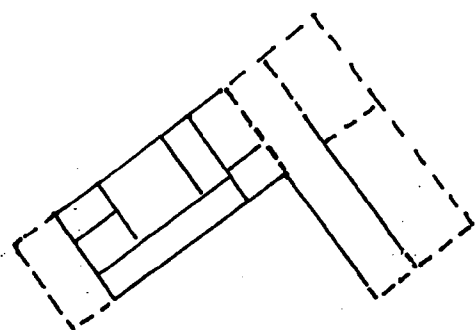


DEVELOPMENT OF
THE LATE ROMAN VILLA
AT SWALCLIFFE LEA
(EXCAVATED AND INFERRED
SECTIONS ONLY)

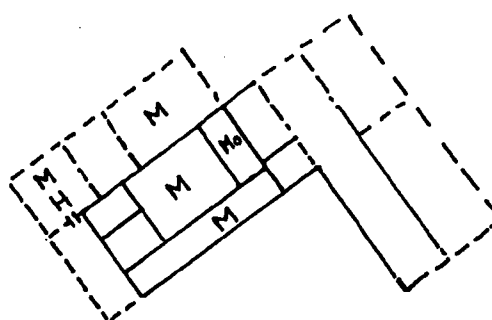
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PERIODS OF CONSTRUCTION)



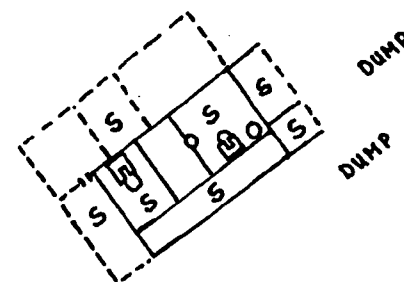
c.A.D. 270



c.A.D. 300



c.A.D. 330



c.A.D. 380

Fig 5. Swalcliffe Lea Roman villa. Suggested phases.

single worked flint of either the Neolithic or Bronze Age. Other flints found were not apparently worked.

Roman Sites

Breaklands Farm, Swalcliffe Lea, The Rowbarrow Field (SP 387 383)

Paul Booth's analysis of last year's pottery revealed that the ceramics were mainly 2nd-3rd century AD in date. The assemblage included the usual Oxford wares, Nene Valley, Samian and grey wares. The observation of baked tile and tesserae was confirmed, though the site is certainly not a villa and lies on the edge of the Roman village.

Steeple Aston (SP 478 253)

The bulk of the pottery turned out to be 2nd-3rd century with some early 4th century sherds. This reveals that this farmstead probably flourished in the former period, but that there was some later activity in the vicinity. Though the site examined was not the villa found in the 17th century, Paul Booth confirmed that the red tiles were from a hypocaust, so the villa must be nearby, though further examination of the historic records now show that it may well lie under an adjoining modern cul de sac. The assemblage included Oxford wares, Nene Valley, black burnished wares, local shell-tempered wares, grog wares, Spanish amphora and a late Severn Valley ware tankard. Also Middle-Late Iron Age shell-tempered pottery was found, which along with other Iron age wares found 150 m away by the Oxford Archaeology Unit, shows that there was prehistoric settlement in the locality.

Medieval sites and finds

Manor Farm, Barford St Michael (SP 433 327)

The arable fields of this farm, to the west of the village and farm were fieldwalked. A reasonable amount of medieval pottery was found, which awaits proper analysis; but it is clear that the higher ground was used as arable since early medieval times, while the fields near the river were probably always pasture and woodland, since these fields yielded no finds earlier than perhaps the 17th century.

Manor Farm, The Manor House (SP 432 327)

The farm comprises the old manor house and a host of farm buildings to the north, which all are enclosed by a restored medieval moat. On examination it was possible to trace the course of the old southern moat which was filled in and replaced by a formal garden possibly during the 17th-18th century. The existing manor now only consists of the eastern end of a since vanished central building facing the road to the south, with a northern extension added to it. Traces of the central building are still visible in the garden wall in the form of doorways, niches and a fireplace, as well as structural alterations in the standing building. The existing manor appears to be 17th century and hopefully it will be possible

to get some architectural experts to examine it in the future. The old main entrance appears to have been through a pillared gateway, which has been blocked off and the entrance is now a short distance to the west.

St Michaels Church, Barford St Michael (SP 433 326)

The church, which dates at least from Norman times, is sited on an impressive mound, which looks artificial and on its south side the mound is level with a natural spur of hillside, to slope 3 m east to west. Upon observation, it looks as though the site where the church is would have been the edge of a natural spur sloping east to west and the spur edge was levelled by the creation of an artificial mound. The new vicar related that workmen had found a layer of rubble quite a depth beneath the soil around the church. The mound, then, certainly appears artificial and the Norman church might even rest upon the rubble of an earlier Saxon church.

Manor Farm, field to the east (SP 433 327)

Minor earthworks in the pasture field seem to show the presence of at least two house platforms; these are marked by houses on the 1833 map, but vanish afterwards.

Epwell, private field to the north (SP 355 408)

Observations made in this pasture field revealed the old course of the main north road into the village, now marked by the public footpath. The road appears as a hollow way in one section and there are possible house platforms nearby. Late medieval expansion out of the old village is known along the road leading south, but not north, until now. The old Saxon village is sited around a green, which type of plan was believed to serve a defensive purpose. It is hoped this year to dig some small exploratory trenches across the house mounds to investigate their date and nature.

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Abingdon Spring Road Cemetery (SU 4875 9755)
Jonathan Hiller and Tim Allen

Introduction

The Unit was commissioned by English Heritage, with the co-operation of Abingdon Town Council, to undertake archaeological excavations in advance of further burials at Abingdon Spring Road Cemetery in the summer and early autumn of 2000. The excavations were supplemented by a geophysical survey of the unused part of the cemetery and part of the sports fields of Larkmead School immediately to the west. The excavations represent the successful completion of a project initiated by the OAU in 1990, when English Heritage funded an evaluation, and furthered by the

Oxfordshire

Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society's excavations in 1994 (reported in *SMA* 1999, 29-30).

Spring Road municipal cemetery (SU 4875 9755) is situated north-west of Abingdon town centre, near to where Larkhill stream and the river Ock meet (Fig 6). The site lies on Summertown-Radley 2nd gravel terrace deposits and occupies a slight eminence (Dunham 1971; BGS 253, Drift), as the ground slopes away to the west and north into the valley of the Larkhill stream, and the terrace dips gradually southwards to the river Ock some 400 m away. The site has been used for burials since 1940 and is landscaped and divided into numbered blocks (Fig 7). Excavation was carried out in blocks 8, 9 and 5, which constitute almost all of the cemetery unused for burial.

Archaeological background

The potential of the site was recognised by the previous superintendents of the cemetery, Messrs Bill Skellington and John Bell, who both recovered substantial numbers of finds during grave digging. Many of the finds have been precisely located thanks to notes kept by the superintendents. Neolithic activity is represented by struck flints, Peterborough Ware pottery and numerous fragments of Beaker pottery (Gray 1972, 238), while Bronze Age pottery may have been associated with two crouched inhumations found during the 1950s (Case 1957, 104). A complete late Bronze Age fine-ware bowl was also recovered together with early Iron Age pottery.

Abingdon Town Council lacked the resources to fund effective archaeological mitigation prior to the expansion of the cemetery. In 1990, at the instigation of OAU, a field evaluation was commissioned by English Heritage. Six trenches were excavated in this phase of work. The evaluation suggested that Roman and possible Saxon remains survived within the undisturbed cemetery blocks (OAU 1990). Owing to the substantial build up of soil in this part of the site, thought originally to represent a wide medieval headland, the remains appeared to be very well preserved.

Subsequently limited excavation was undertaken by the Abingdon Archaeological Society who excavated 4 test pits in 1994-5 near to the site of the trenches excavated by OAU (Ainslie 1999). In 1998 a crouched inhumation was found during the digging of a grave in the north-west part of the site. OAU recorded the presence of the burial under the aegis of a watching brief. An absolute date for the burial was not ascertained, although it may be associated with the prehistoric crouched burials found here in the 1950s.

Interim Results

The earliest find was a Mesolithic flint burin. The first evidence of significant activity dates to the mid-late Neolithic. Area 8 contained a pit containing a large assemblage of struck flint and a Grooved Ware sherd, and at the north end was an arc of closely spaced postholes of substantial diameter and depth. There were very few finds, but badly abraded Peterborough Ware pottery from two of

the posthole fills, and a Neolithic sherd from a posthole inside the arc suggest that this was the site of a Neolithic timber circle some 16-20 m in diameter. Across the site was a background scatter of similar mid-Late Neolithic flintwork including a high proportion of retouched tools. Area 5 (not illustrated), which is just north-west of this presumed circle, contained only one significant feature, a crouched burial accompanied by a copper or bronze awl and a single flake. This could be an associated burial of Beaker date, but could be later prehistoric. Residual Early Bronze Age sherds were found in later features.

Further south in Area 9 part of a middle-Bronze Age bucket urn and another vessel were recovered from a purpose-dug pit in Area 9 - the pit and its contents may have been the result of a ritual act. A few other later Bronze Age sherds were found in later contexts.

Further prehistoric settlement evidence includes three crouched inhumation burials in Area 8. Pottery from the grave fills was dated to the early Iron Age (though the sherds could have been residual). The group consisted of a child burial and two young adults, and all of the burial positions were different. The child was laid in a shallow pit with the legs flexed; one adult lay in a large pit in a half-sitting position while the third was laid in a forward kneeling position within a pit. The child burial was interred with a bone ring. Just south of the burials in Area 8 was a substantial pit containing pottery of early Iron Age date, and at the north-west part of Area 8 was part of a shallow ring gully, possibly an eaves-drip gully surrounding a building that lay just outside of the excavation area.

The burials may have been associated with a small settlement here although it has been difficult to identify structures amongst the mass of postholes and small pits in the western part of the site. Pottery from the fills of some of the postholes dates to the Iron Age, but the majority of the postholes are undated. A possible round building can be discerned in Area 9 and the east-west ditches at the south end of the excavation appear to be of Iron Age date.

In the Roman period the site appears to have seen low level domestic occupation, beginning in the late 1st century and ending by the early 3rd century. Central to the site was a long linear ditch that appeared to divide the site into an area of 'domestic' activity to the west from an 'industrial' quarry area to the east. The outline of a post-built rectangular building may date to this period, as it lay within the limit of two ditches that produced a significant quantity of pottery fine-wares dating to the late 1st-2nd century AD. At the east side of the site was an extensive group of intercutting pits dated broadly to the Roman period, though generally few finds were recovered from their fills. The pits appeared to have been excavated for gravel over a short space of time, with the overburden dug from each being used to infill the next feature. The extraction of gravel here may suggest that there was a road in the vicinity or that material was required for a more substantial building. The end of the Roman occupation may be suggested by a mixed soil layer with a

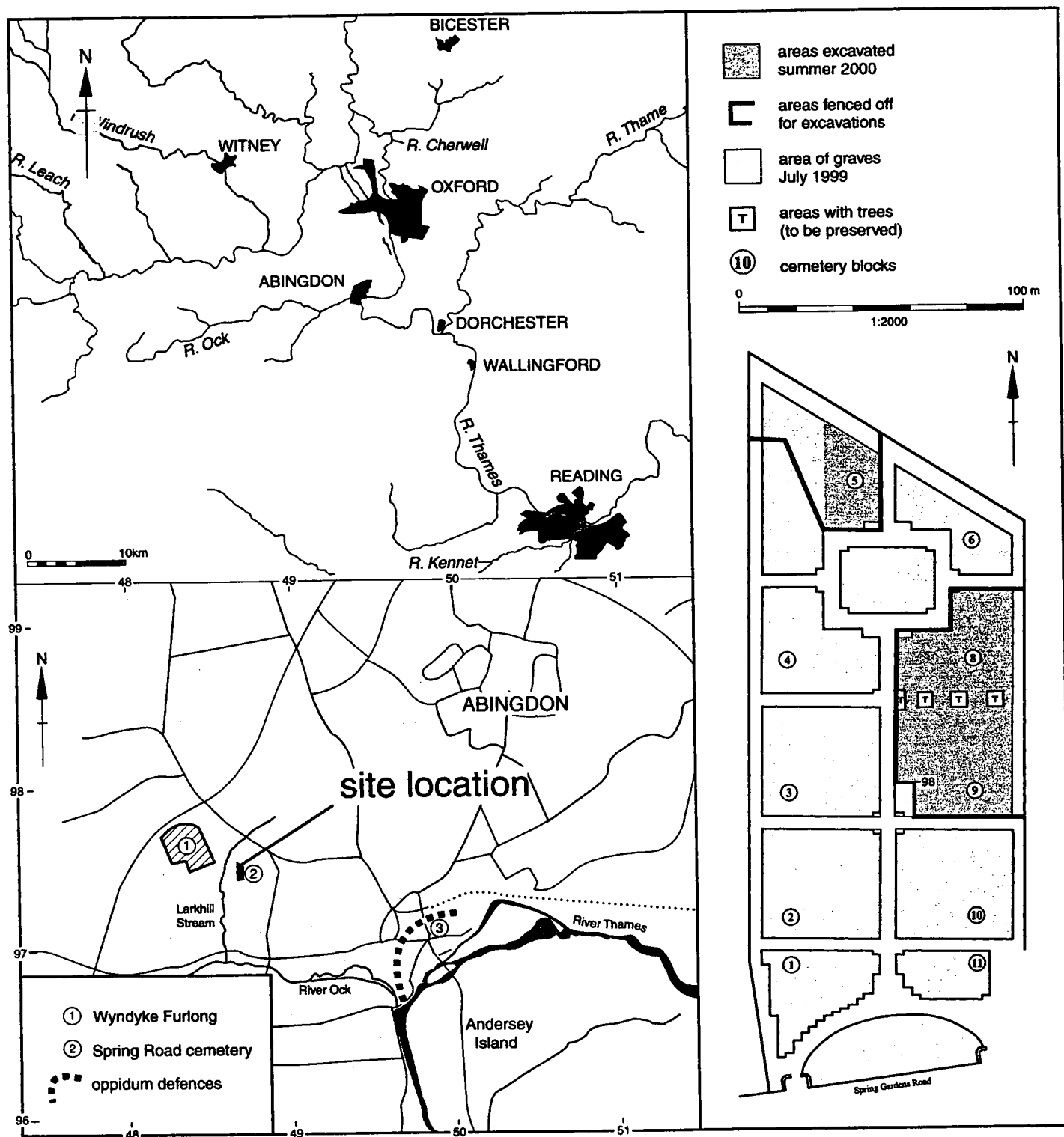


Fig 6. Abingdon Spring Road cemetery. Location plan.

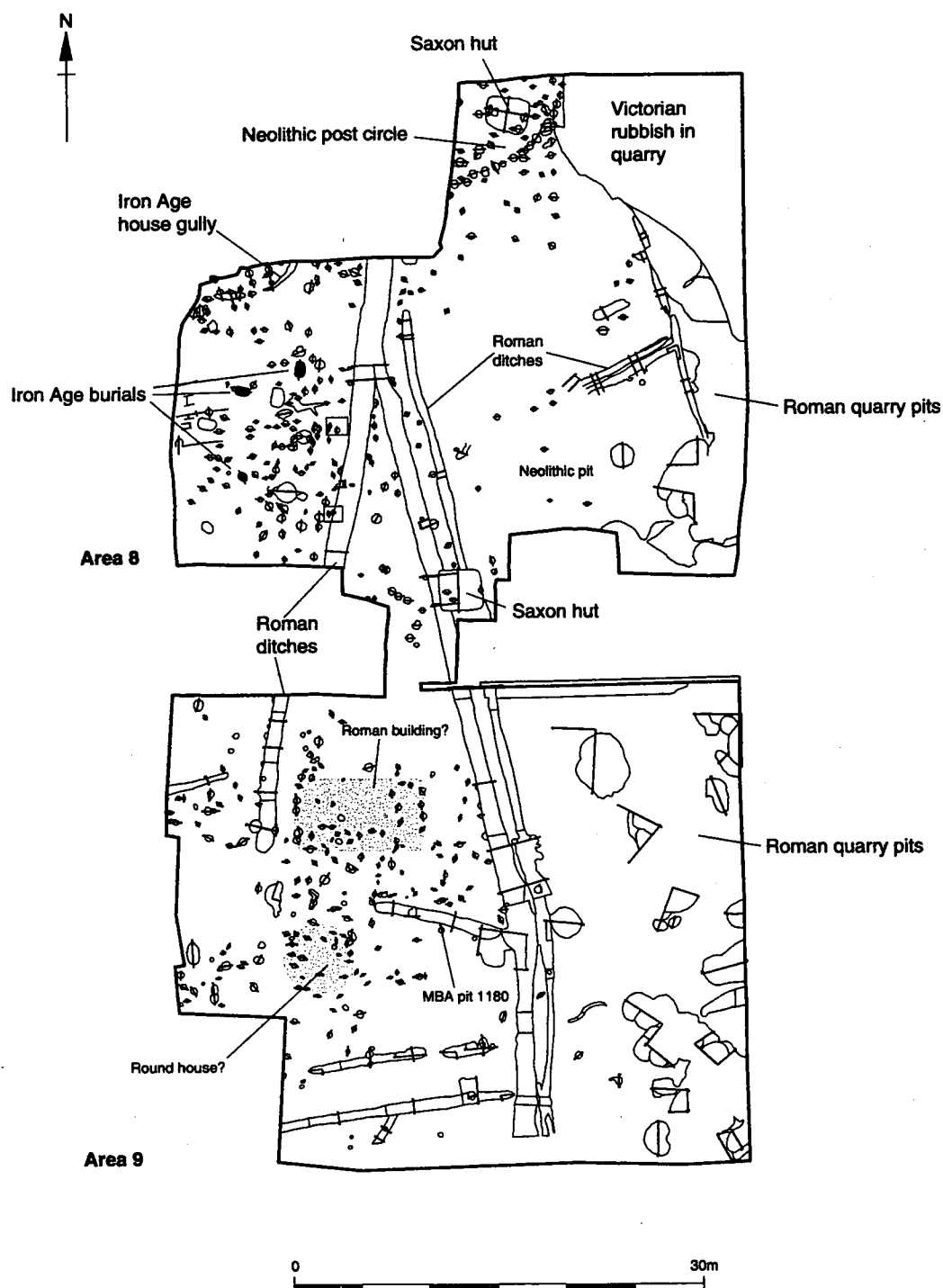


Fig 7. Abingdon Spring Road cemetery site plan.

distinctive reddish hue that overlay the fills of the quarry pits at the north part of Area 9. The soil may indicate a period when the site was covered, perhaps for the purposes of agriculture.

At either end of Area 8 was a rectangular sunken-featured buildings of characteristic early Saxon type, with associated postholes. Both pit buildings had porch entrances of posthole construction and substantial quantities of pottery and animal bone were recovered the fills of the central pits. Articulated animal bone was recovered from one of the building fills, and the pottery from each structure is of 6th

century date. Following the Saxon occupation into the medieval period there was apparently a build-up of soil across the site. A substantial late Victorian rubbish pit was partly excavated in the north-east part of Area 8; the site had been used as agricultural land and allotments until its conversion for cemetery use. In Area 5 a line of postholes of post-medieval date flanked a post-medieval gully, suggesting some form of boundary division here prior to the creation of the cemetery. No other features were observed here. Further analysis of the site data is planned leading to a publication.

Appleford Sidings (SU 523 927)
Paul Booth

The final phase in an ongoing programme of archaeological recording in advance of gravel extraction was carried out between August and October on behalf of Hanson Aggregates. An area of c 3 ha was examined immediately west and south of the main quarry road near Appleford Crossing. There was slight evidence for prehistoric activity, principally of Late Bronze Age date, in the form of isolated hollows and occasional linear features.

The principal Roman features related to a rectangular enclosure recorded on aerial photographs and evaluated in 1993. This covered about 1 ha and appeared to have triple ditches on the north and south sides and a double ditch on the east, where a rectilinear field system seems to have been added to the enclosure. Only one ditch was seen in the western side of the enclosure, but its western margin lay beyond the limit of the site. The enclosure had a single (off-centre) entrance in its southern side, defined by north-south aligned ditches which linked the terminals of the three enclosure ditches. There was very little evidence for significant internal features, though a number of slight gullies towards the south side and south-west corner of the enclosure may have related to structures.

Quantities of finds, mainly pottery, were relatively small, though there were notable localised concentrations of material in the southern enclosure ditches, particularly towards the south-east corner. The pottery ranged in date perhaps from mid 1st to mid 2nd century. There are slight indications that the pottery assemblage was of above-average status, which could be consistent with the very regular layout of the enclosure and the unusually elaborate arrangement of its entrance. No significant later Roman or post-Roman features were noted.

Benson, Fyfield Manor (SP 6308 9214)
John Dalton

A watching brief was undertaken at Fyfield Manor during the excavation of foundation trenches, prior to the construction of a new single storey conservatory with associated services. Fyfield Manor is a Grade II Listed Building which dates from between the 12th and 14th centuries with alterations and additions occurring in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, no archaeological features were observed; 19th century tile was examined on site but not retained.

Chadlington, St Nicholas' Church (SP 326 221)
John Dalton

The unit undertook a watching brief at St Nicholas Church during the excavation of a new drainage ditch around the north transept of the church, and the installation of new

pipework. No archaeological features were found and no finds were retrieved.

Drayton, Manor Farm (SP 4772 9425)
Alan Hardy

In the summer of 2000, an excavation was conducted on behalf of Earl of Plymouth Estates Ltd on land immediately north of the heart of the modern village of Drayton (SP 4772 9425). Drayton's earliest documentary reference comes from 955 AD, as part of the estate of Eadwold, a thegn of King Eadred. It was later divided into two manors, held by Abingdon Abbey and New College, Oxford. The excavation revealed archaeological features and deposits spanning the period from the Bronze Age to the 17th century, although none of the evidence seems to link it to the major Saxon or prehistoric sites which lie to the east and south east of the modern village. The analysis is ongoing, but provisionally it appears that the area has been criss-crossed by a sequence of property boundary or field ditches, often radiating from a large, so-far unidentified feature (possibly a waterhole) in the centre of the site. This may have originated as a well, possibly in the Roman period, but at any rate it subsequently provided a convenient nodal point for converging property boundaries through to the late Saxon period. This suggests an orderly, systematic (and democratic?) division of the area. Slight evidence of structures was found in the form of groups of postholes, but it is thought that any dwellings would have been outside the area examined. A full report on this excavation will be submitted later this year for publication in *Oxoniensia*.

Ewelme, The Annexe, Ewelme School (SU 646 913)
John Dalton

The Unit undertook a building watching brief at the Annexe, Ewelme School during the construction of a new extension. A possible robber trench was seen within the new foundation trench. Modern finds, derived from the topsoil were examined on site but not retained; works to the standing building did not reveal any features of architectural or historic interest within the fabric.

Islip, Village Hall Extension, Church Lane (SP 526 141)
Granville Laws and John Hiller

A watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of foundation and service trenches for an extension to the extant village hall building. No archaeological features were discovered. Layers of relatively modern build-up were noted in several places. These appear to have derived from the construction of the hall itself, and some landscaping to the south and west of the hall was noted. The only finds were clearly of modern date.

Land at Kingston Blount (SU 738 995)
By John Dalton

In March 2000, a watching brief was undertaken during the construction of a new single dwelling with associated garage

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and services. No archaeological features were seen and no finds were retrieved.

Oxford, St. Anthony's College, Woodstock Road (SP 5102 0739)

John Dalton and Kayt Brown

A watching brief was undertaken at St. Anthony's College during the excavation of foundation trenches for the construction of 50 new study bedrooms. The only archaeological remains encountered were three cut features. These are interpreted as evidence of quarrying, an activity already known to have occurred at the site. The date of the backfill material suggests the quarrying was probably connected to the period of building in this part of the city in the late 19th century. The watching brief confirms the evidence from the evaluation, in that any earlier archaeological deposits are likely to have been destroyed through this quarrying activity.

Oxford, Staircase 2, Pembroke College (SP 513 059)

Andy Holmes

A watching brief was carried out during construction (trenches 1 and 2) and refurbishment (trenches 3-7) works in the vicinity of Staircase 2 in the North Range at Pembroke College. The earliest deposits in Trench 1, adjacent to the north side of the staircase, appeared to represent shallow layers of occupation material, the earliest of which contained a few sherds of early medieval pottery, possibly from the 12-14th centuries. However these sherds were recovered from the upper surface of a deposit that was not fully excavated, so it is unclear whether they formed part of an in situ medieval horizon. Above the occupation layers was a stone structure set within a layer of mortar. The stones exhibited signs of burning and the approximate circular shape of the stone arrangements suggests that this was the remains of a small hearth. Above the level of the hearth were superimposed layers of probable levelling or building debris, that contained artefacts of post-medieval date. The remainder of the trenches (3-7) were cut through a similar layer of general debris, probably construction material, that produced a number of post-medieval finds including animal bone, tile, pottery and iron nails.

Oxford, St Aldate's Church (SP 5135 0600)

Ric Tyler

The Unit undertook a programme of archaeological excavation during the internal refurbishment of St Aldate's Church, Oxford (SP 5135 0600) between August and December 1999. The main element of work requiring archaeological monitoring was the reduction of the floor level by some 0.50 m over the full area of the nave, aisles and chancel of the church prior to the installation of a new concrete floor slab. An additional watching brief was maintained, during January 2000, on the excavation of the

footprint of a new entrance building to the north-east of the church.

Historical Development Of The Church (Fig 8)

St Aldate's Church is first recorded as an established church in the early 12th century AD (*Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*) though it is probable that it represents an earlier foundation, possibly of Saxon origin. The 12th century church would have comprised an aisleless nave and chancel (VCH, 1979, 135) of which only fragments of a much restored Romanesque arcade, reset in the east end of the north aisle, survive. A western tower was added in the 13th century. In the early 14th century, a three bay chantry chapel was added to the south side of the church including a two bay, vaulted crypt which survives today as the boiler rooms below the south aisle. A further chantry chapel was added to the north side of the church (the western two bays of the north aisle) in 1456. This chapel remained separated from the nave until 1581 when the north arcade was erected.

During the 17th century, a small family mortuary chapel was appended to the south side of the chancel and a south porch, in classical style, added.

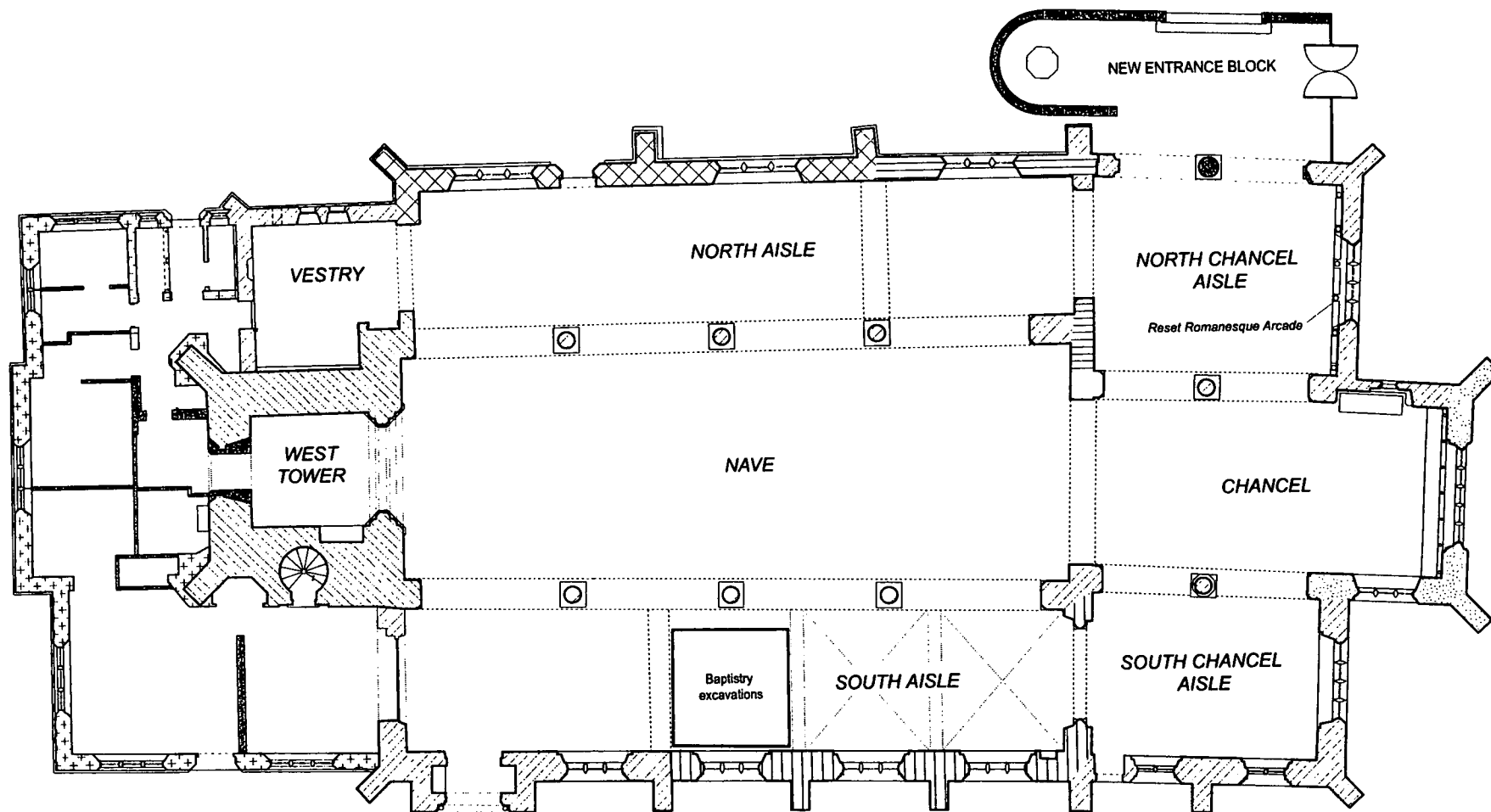
The 19th century saw two major phases of re-ordering and extension of the church. Firstly, in 1832 and 1843, a scheme was undertaken by H J Underwood, to extend the north aisle to the full length of the nave. However, the main phase of works was undertaken in 1862 by J T Christopher; works comprised not so much a refurbishment as a major rebuilding exercise. The 17th century mortuary chapel and south porch were demolished, both the north and south aisles were again extended eastwards alongside the chancel, the south aisle was extended westwards to the full length of the nave, both aisle arcades were rebuilt, all roofs renewed and a new vestry was added to the north of the tower. The tower itself was rebuilt in 1873.

The 20th century has witnessed a series of internal re-orderings while a series of single storey buildings was added at the west end in 1961.

Results Of Excavations

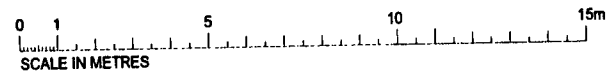
Little was exposed during ground work relating to early structural arrangements of the church, the result of extensive internal disturbance caused by grave digging. A total of 46 brick-lined shaft graves and one brick constructed barrel vault were exposed within the church, all of 18th/19th century date. Shafts were identified within both the north and south aisles although the main concentration appears to be within the central section of the nave. Many retained capping slabs while a number of examples were noted to contain the fragmentary remains of wooden and/or lead coffins. The exposed graves were left undisturbed and were simply recapped with concrete slabs prior to the installation of the new floor slab. The Burial Boards Act prohibited intramural burial in the 1850s and the law was variously reinforced by pastoral measures. It is interesting to note in this respect that one of the shaft graves exposed within the north aisle at St Aldate's was cut through the footings of the

Fig 8. St Aldate's Church. Phases.



KEY TO PHASING

	14th-century (c1334) Chantry Chapel with undercroft		1862 Christopher Rebuild
	15th-century (1456) Chantry Chapel		1871 Christopher Rebuild
	Uncertain; 15th-16th century extension of chancel		1962 Extension
	1832 /43 Underwood Extension		1999/2000 Refurbishment



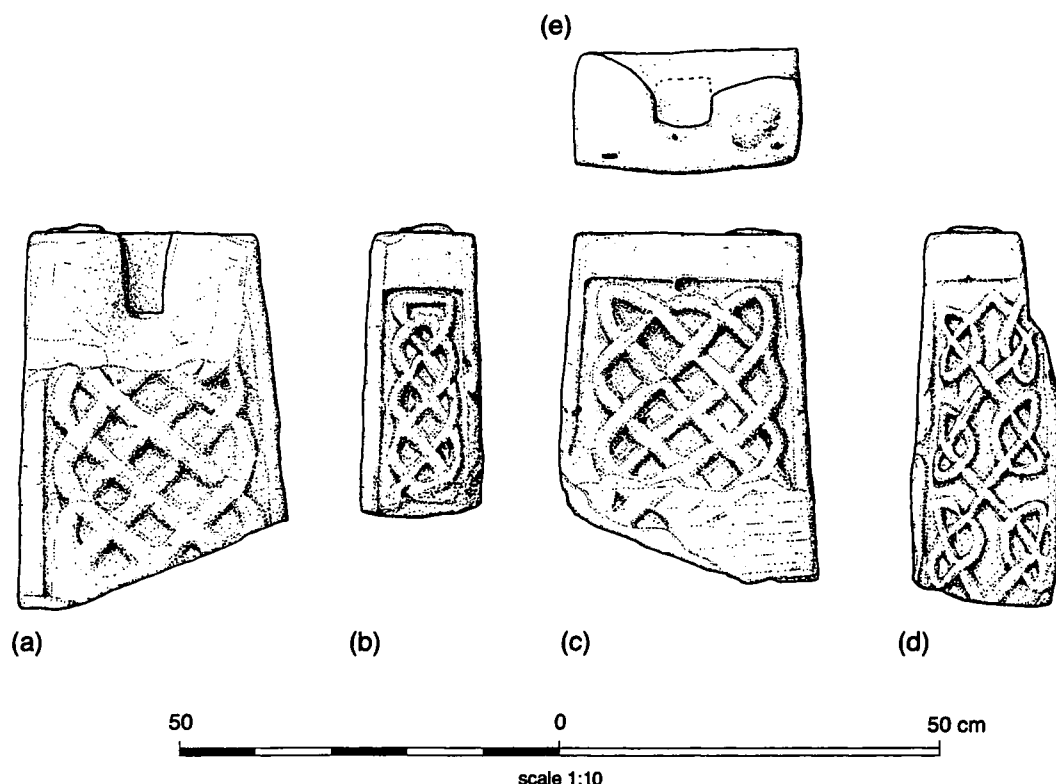


Fig 9. Mid 10th century cross shaft fragment.

1832 Underwood extension; suggesting that the grave was dug after this wall became redundant in 1862.

The most interesting results from the excavations comprised evidence for Saxon occupation which was revealed in three distinct forms. Firstly, the identification of a small area of possible Saxon floor surface is of interest, not least for its miraculous survival amongst the honeycomb of later grave structures which has destroyed any related structural remains. Evidence of a far more tangible nature was revealed in the form of a fragment of fine, carved cross-shaft (Fig 9) re-used as building stone in the 14th century south nave wall footing. Each face of the stone displays single plain relief borders enclosing panels of interlace decoration: the two broad faces display a similar motif of six strand plait while the narrow faces display a four strand plait and a 'Stafford Knot' (Cramp's type 23e; 1995, fig 23 p.xli) respectively. The stone can be dated on stylistic grounds to the middle-late 10th century.

The most significant find, however, came to light at the base of deep excavations within the area of the south aisle, undertaken for the installation of a new total immersion baptistry. A total of sixteen burials pre-dating the construction of the aisle (c 1334) were recorded. Of these, eight were of a form commonly referred to as 'charcoal burials'. All burials were aligned west-east (head to the west) and were in an extended supine position, unaccompanied by gravegoods. In each case, the burial was laid upon a bed of charcoal and, in some cases, further covered by a thin deposit of charcoal spread over the top of the skeleton. Charcoal burials of this type are known from numerous sites in England dating from the 9th to the 12th century. A number of examples are known from Oxford,

most notably at Christ Church where burials have been discovered in the Great Quadrangle (Hassall 1973, 270) and the cloister (Scully 1988, 33). The significance of the burial rite remains unclear.

The results of the excavations would appear to support the argument for an early origin for St Aldate's, and as such can be seen to lend weight to Blair's hypothesis of three Saxon churches (with the Minster church to the east and St Ebbe's to the west) forming an axial alignment on the northern bank of the Thames just within the limits of the defended Saxon town (Blair 1988, fig.93).

References

- Blair J 1988; 'St. Frideswide's monastery: problems and possibilities' in *Oxoniensia* 53, 221-258. OAHs.
- Cramp R 1995; 'A General Introduction to the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture: Grammar of Anglo Saxon Ornament'
- Hassall T G 1973; 'Excavations at Oxford 1972: fifth interim report' in *Oxoniensia* 38, 268-298. OAHs.
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- VCH 1979 Oxon Vol. X.

Oxford, 13-21 Cornmarket Street (SP 5130 0632)
Alan Hardy

A watching brief held by OAU during redevelopment of the basement of Nos 13-21 Cornmarket Street Oxford identified the truncated remains of a single 10th century rubbish pit behind the Saxon street frontage. It was estimated that perhaps 0.3 m of the original depth of the pit had been truncated, if a reasonable depth of contemporary (ie late

Saxon) topsoil is assumed. The construction of the existing basement earlier this century had also removed all traces of later medieval occupation. Finds from the pit included burnt daub, 10th century pottery, and a single piece of 3rd century mortarium.

Oxford, Land at Osney Mead Industrial Estate
(SP 5040 0555)

Jonathan Hiller

The Unit undertook a field evaluation at land at Osney Mead Industrial Estate, Oxford, in March 2000. The work was undertaken in advance of new development for the Really Good Card Company on a derelict plot adjacent to the Bulstake Stream. The Unit was commissioned to do the work by Knowles and Son Design and Build Ltd. Three evaluation trenches were opened in the course of the project. No archaeological features were identified in any of the trenches; several features cut into the gravel were interpreted as tree disturbances.

The evaluation demonstrated the presence on the site of low lying gravel 'islands', by-passed by a relict watercourse filled with alluvial silts. Above the natural gravel in all three trenches were a series of alluvial clay layers that represent episodes of flooding on this low-level site. No artefactual evidence was recovered from the excavated alluvial silt deposits.

A possible plough/meadow soil horizon was identified above the alluvium that might represent the meadow depicted on the historic maps of the Osney Mead area; the soil horizon was, however, undated. Above lay a series of modern build-up layers that were deposited at the time the site was turned into a business estate, in the 20th century.

Oxford, Centre for Islamic Studies, King's Mill Lane, Marston Road. (SP 5275 0650)
Jonathan Hiller

Areen Design Services commissioned the Unit to undertake an archaeological evaluation in October 2000 as part of their planning application for the construction of a new Centre for Islamic Studies. The development site is located on the west side of Marston Road, Oxford, due south of King's Mill Lane (SP 5275 0650) that leads to King's Mill House on the river Cherwell. The site comprises c 1.3 ha of grassland and a derelict farm of at least 18th century date in the north-west corner, situated east of the alluvial flood plain of the River Cherwell. The underlying geology is Oxford Clay and Kellaway clay beds of the upper Jurassic.

The King's Mill and the surrounding fields were historically located outside Oxford within the 'rural' Bullingdon Hundred. The mill is drawn on a map of the estates of Magdalen College (1847); a caption identifies part of the development site as King's Mill Meadows. The first edition OS map (1877) shows the area of the site as two parcels of

land (No 7 - houses and yards, and No 9 - pasture) and by the time of the third edition OS map (1913) the south part of the site was a market garden complete with greenhouse and formal pathways. By 1966 the southerly range of farm buildings had been replaced with new structures. Part of the site was an orchard, and some of the earlier paths were still in use. The mill is last mentioned as a working mill in 1832.

There was no evidence from the trial trenches of activity of the prehistoric, Roman, Saxon or medieval periods. The open area of the development site produced a series of superimposed natural clay layers; the uppermost usually affected by natural weathering and/or alluvial processes. Post-medieval finds were located from worked soils, possibly ploughsoils, as was the line of a trackway formerly flanked with walls that is known to date to at least 1913 from cartographic evidence. This trackway led directly from Marston Road to the farm and there was evidence of a further trackway south of the farm, also known to have been in use in 1913. Structural remains of a greenhouse and a well were also found south of the farm compound; these are both likely to date to the 19th or early 20th century. Within the limit of the farm were the remains of earlier [demolished] structures, including a well-preserved cobbled yard surface and stone trackway. The pottery from beneath the surface dates to the 18th/19th century, thus giving an approximate date for the construction of these structures.

Oxford, Christ Church Old Buildings, Woodbine Place.
J Hiller

In October 2000 the Unit was asked by Thames Valley CID to make an impromptu site visit to look at bones discovered during service trench digging in the yard behind these buildings. Some fragments of human skull bone were recovered together with animal bone, in association with post-medieval pottery.

The site of the find was Christ Church Old Buildings, Woodbine Place off Hollybush Row, Oxpens. The buildings here were constructed as public housing in the 1860s based on house types devised for London after the Great Exhibition in 1851. The site is off St. Thomas Street where evidence of medieval tenements was recovered in 1994 and adjacent to the Hamel where medieval tenement remains are known, that formed the western suburb of the medieval city.

A series of trenches for new drainage were dug in the yard behind the extant buildings. The trenches were 0.9 m deep. At the base of the trench was a dark grey-brown loam with bricks and mortar and building rubble. Post-medieval pottery sherds and animal bone and three or 4 fragments of disarticulated human skull bone were recovered by the diggers from this layer. Above was a mixed rubble layer supporting the current path. The layers appeared to be disturbed ground and very mixed. The human bone may derive from activity at the castle, or from nearby St Thomas' Church, though it is likely to be redeposited.

Oxfordshire

Reading, Greyfriars Church (SU 7120 7390)

Jonathan Hiller

The Unit carried out a limited programme of archaeological investigation at this church between February and April 2000. The work was carried out during the installation of a new 'total immersion font' at the east end of the church. A test pit was excavated in February 2000 and a watching brief was maintained during the course of further intrusive groundwork for the installation of additional services. The work was commissioned by MacGuire & Co., architects, of Thame. The programme of archaeological work was requested by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor due to the possibility of encountering medieval remains of the church.

The test pit was excavated to the level of the natural gravel and revealed a build-up of c 1 m of Victorian and later deposits. A modern service trench occupied part of the test pit, that otherwise contained 'made ground' fills including Victorian and later building materials. No significant archaeological deposits were observed within the limits of the test pit. The modern service trench extended around the nave and also cut through part of a semi-circular well(?) structure that may have related to a former water supply associated with the period when the church was re-used as a prison. The brick type suggests a post-medieval date for this structure. Other post-medieval features were identified in the extended area of the new immersion font pit. Part of a wall, possibly a fireplace, was recorded overlying a deposit that included clay pipes, pottery and tile and is therefore of post-medieval date.

The foundation cut for the 12th century church wall was identified in one of the service pits at the west side of the nave. The remainder of the service pits were generally only 0.2 m deep and were cut through the modern make-up for the present church floor. Disarticulated skeletal remains from two adult males were recovered from two modern deposits, indicating that building work has in the past disturbed burials at this church. The date of the skeletal remains is uncertain.

OXFORDSHIRE BUILDINGS RECORD

Report for 2000

David Clark

The Oxfordshire Buildings Record (OBR) was formally launched in May, and attracted over 60 members. The objectives of the OBR are to advance education and promote research on the vernacular buildings of the county by encouraging the recording of buildings and to create and manage a publicly accessible repository of records relating to such buildings. During the year, the basis was laid for the effective management of 'recording days', and two of these were held during the summer. Reports of recording work are included in the group's newsletter, 'The Oxon Recorder', as

follows:

February 2000 - The Recording of the Tolsey, Burford.

Priory Farm, Cold Norton

April 2000 - Church Farm House, Dry Sandford

December 2000 - The Cottage, The Green, Grove

Long Wittenham, The Manor (SP 5466 9395)

The Manor is a relatively recent name given to this farmhouse, called 'Willington's' on the 1st edition OS map of the village. St John's College, Oxford, were lords of the manor, following its sale by the King to Sir Thomas White, who used it as part of the endowment of his new college in 1554-6. In the 1662 Hearth Tax returns, the house belonged to James Jennens, whose family lived there from the 1660s until the late 18th century. It was assessed at 8 hearths. The Will of William Jennens dated 1708, describes a house with a hall, great parlour, little parlour, study, nursery, three other downstairs rooms and at least five upstairs rooms, plus a kitchen, servant hall and pantry, mealhouse, wash-house, larder and dairy, servants' bedchamber and cellars. On the 1809 map of the parish showing the acreage allotted in particular to the Rev. J C Clutterbuck, Vicar, under the enclosure award, the land around the house is shown as belonging to one George Hayward.

The building comprises a three-bay timber-framed range with substantial jowled posts, clasped purlins and queen posts supporting collars, possibly dating from the 16th century, but with considerable later alteration, including brick infill. To the rear is a later northwest wing, of similar construction, but with much re-used timber. Further extensions to the north date from the 20th century. Fragments of the timber frame are visible inside; the parlour has an inserted 18th century stack and stripped pine wall-panelling. Other early features include an unglazed medieval window and a late 16th century wooden doorway, with decorated spandrels and a plank door with strap hinges.

Long Wittenham, Church Cottage (SP 5485 9395)

This three-bay cruck cottage was examined by Portman (1958, 1974), Fletcher (1968) and Currie (1976). It was known to have been three cottages from c 1840 to 1952, when it was converted into a tractor shed. The present owner is engaged on its restoration for domestic use.

Church Cottage lies on the main road through the village, at the point where a track leads off to the church. Of the three bays, two are demarcated by three cruck trusses. The western gable wall is a single brick skin, a later westward extension of an earlier brick wall, vestiges of which can be seen in the structure of the fireplace some 45 cm (18") to the east. There is no evidence of there ever having been a fourth cruck truss at this point, and indeed the western-most cruck shows signs of significant weathering on its outer face, suggesting that the original building was only of two bays, unless there was a third, missing bay to the east.

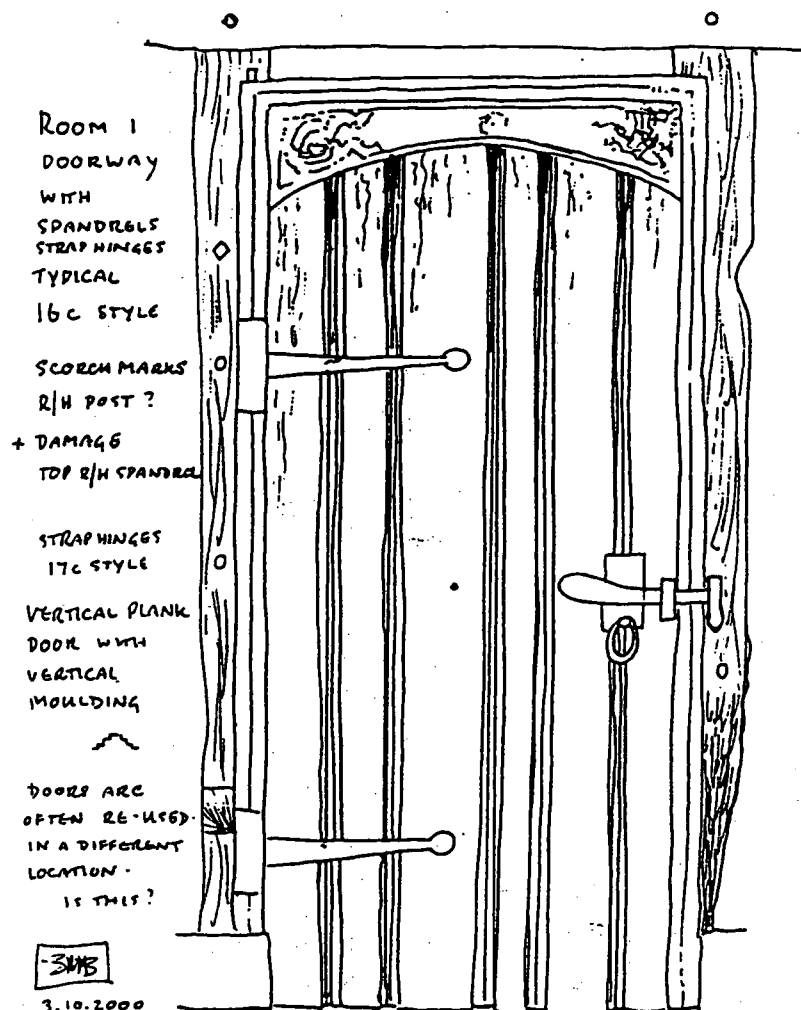


Fig 10. The Manor (Willingtons), Long Wittenham.

The upper parts of the crucks are blackened, but may have been cleaned when a ceiling was inserted in the 19th century, and it was not possible to tell whether this was caused by soot. The central truss has lost any horizontal members, making it impossible to tell whether or not this was originally open. A massive rubble stone stack has been inserted into the western cruck truss.

The later phases of reconstruction include the insertion of the two brick stacks at the gable ends when the building was converted into three cottages, floored and ceiled. At a further stage a newel stairway was inserted to the upper floor, the rear wall was raised, the western gable was moved out, and the street wall was replaced with brick in Flemish bond with some burnt headers.

The roof is thatched, probably with long straw, and early layers may have been removed when the various alterations described above were made. Neither the underside of the thatch, nor the rafters and battens were smoke-blackened.

Only the western bay is fully floored now, the others having been removed when the building was converted to a tractor shed. At some point the lower 1.6 m of the brickwork facing the street was covered with a cement render. There are some 19th century shutter hinges and catches.

Dating

The timbers were dated by radiocarbon in the 1960s, producing a date of c 1480, samples having been taken from all three cruck trusses.

Documentation

Three cottages in Long Wittenham, known as Church Cottages, were the subject of documents in the archives of St John's College, which show them in the ownership of Mary Maria Ody in 1908, whence, after her death in 1912 to Miss E H Winter for £130.

Conjectural phasing

Phase 1: 1480-1650 - single open-hall family dwelling

Phase 2: insertion of central stack c 1650

Phase 3: c 1840 conversion to three cottages
Phase 3a Wattle and daub walls replaced with brick, new stacks built in gable walls. Floors and ceilings inserted

Phase 3b Western gable wall moved outwards, northern roofline raised, stairs inserted.

Phase 4: removal of some flooring to form tractor shed 1952

Phase 5: 2000 in course of conversion to dwelling house.

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THAMES VALLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES LTD.

Abingdon, Morlands Brewery, Ock Street
(SU 4950 9690)

Kate Taylor

Part one of a two-stage evaluation in advance of demolition and redevelopment for residential use of a 1.75 ha site involved 17 trenches, almost all of which revealed archaeology, mainly of the 11th to 16th centuries, although finds of all periods were rare. No evidence of activity on the site pre-dating the 10th century AD has been recovered, although there are tiny quantities of Roman pottery in some later deposits. A considerable depth of Medieval deposits

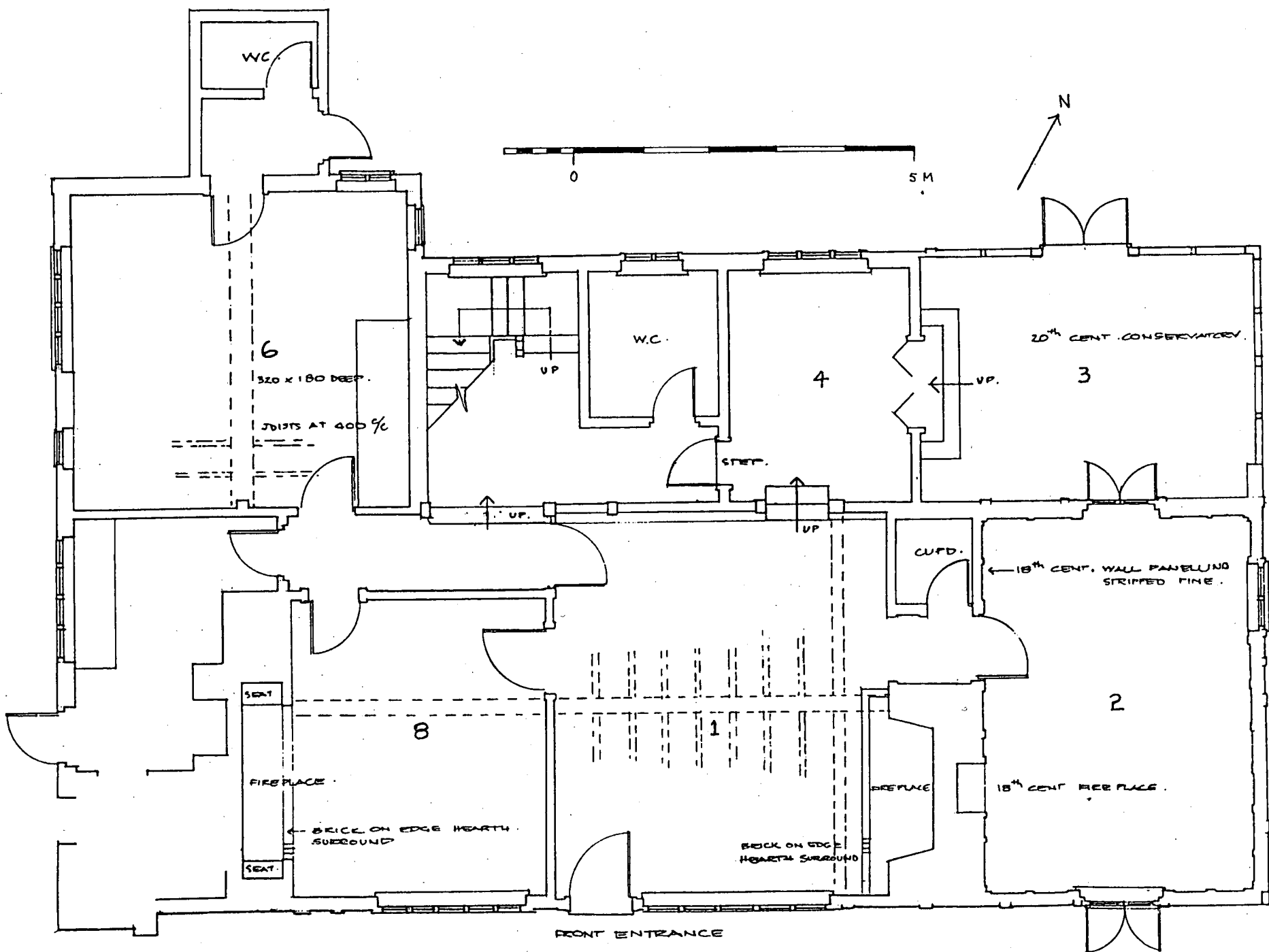


Fig 11. The Manor, Long Wittenham. Ground floor plan.

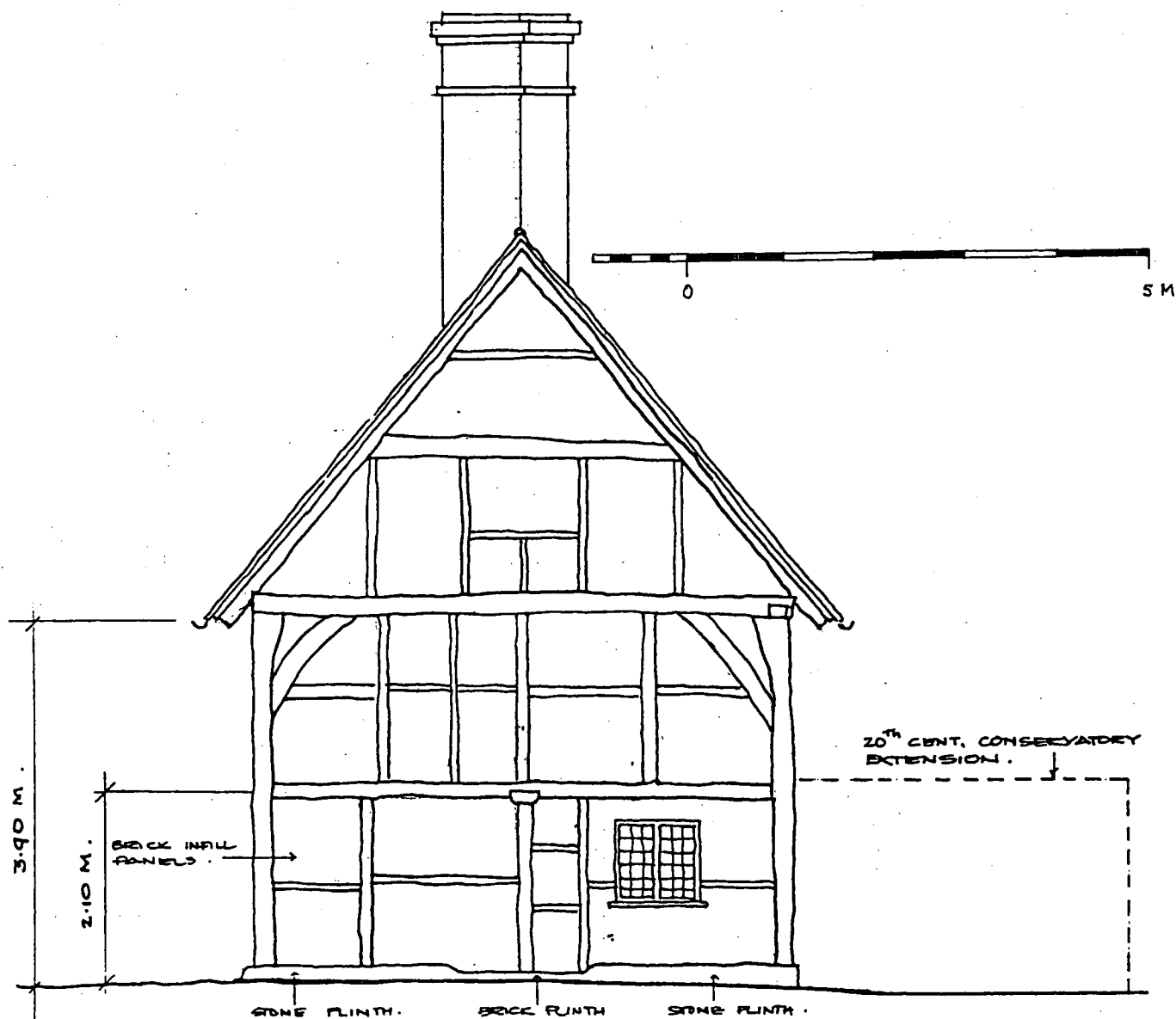


Fig 12. The Manor, Long Wittenham. North east elevation.

towards the north of the site may, however, be masking earlier features. Of interest is a single late Saxon ditch, since finds of this period are rare in this part of Abingdon. Medieval buildings fronting Ock Street survived, dated from the 11th century onwards, and backlands activity, mainly pits, extended a considerable distance to their rear, as is usual. The potential of the site to yield environmental evidence appears good, with a number of features producing grains and seeds, and animal bone in good condition. Later medieval deposits seem mainly to have been removed by 16-18th century truncations. A further stage of evaluation (6 more trenches) is planned.

Bicester, Skimmingdish Lane (SP 591 242)
Joanna Pine

An evaluation consisting of 22 trenches in advance of shop construction produced negligible results from 17 of the trenches, where modern activity related to the sewage farm

had removed any traces that had ever been present. The projected line of the Roman road from Alchester to Towcester (road 160a; Margary, 1955, 148, marked as Roman Road on the OS maps), for example, ought to have passed along the western edge of the site, but there was no trace of it. The remaining five trenches, all concentrated in the southeast corner of the site, produced a number of Roman features which had been protected below a layer of cornbrash dumped over a buried soil horizon which sealed the features. Two ditches containing Roman pottery also promised exceptional organic preservation; one ditch ran on a line approximately parallel to the Roman road. Several lesser features were also likely to be Roman. This would suggest Roman occupation extended to this point, at least 200 to 250 m back from the line of the road.

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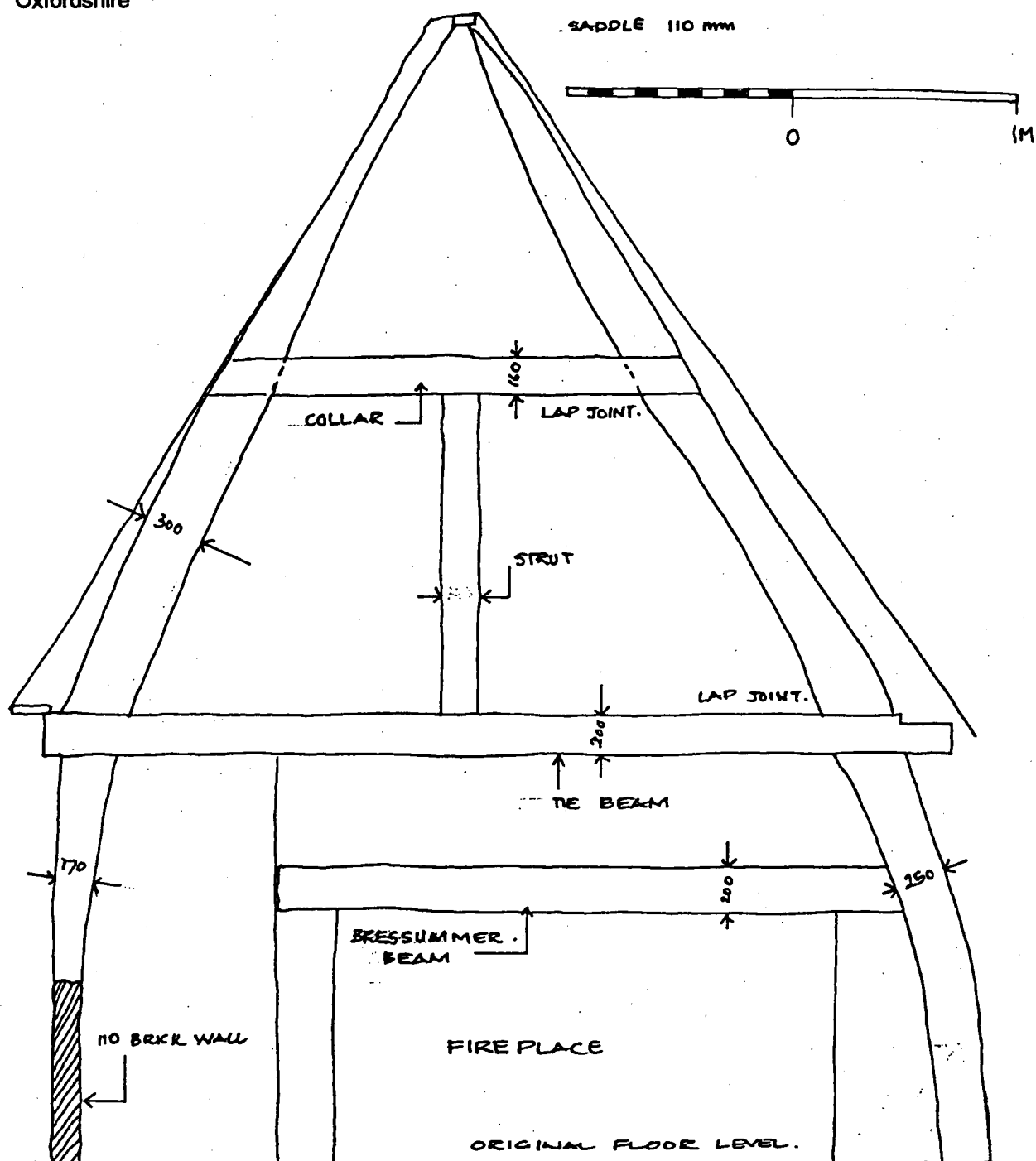


Fig 13. Church Cottage, Long Wittenham. Eastern cruck truss.

Childrey, Parsonage Farm, Sparsholt Road
(SU 3605 8760)
Kate Taylor

Drayton, 54-80 Abingdon Road (SU 7782 9451)
Kate Taylor

A watching brief during barn conversion and construction of new houses revealed a number of features in the foundation trenches of all three plots. The features included seven ditches or gullies, along with five pits and a single post hole. The few finds from these features were as often as not probably residual, and no single feature produced more than three sherds of pottery, so dating is extremely tentative. However, the probability is that most of the features were Roman, probably later Roman. Both Saxon and medieval material was also recovered, in tiny quantities.

A nine-trench evaluation in advance of housing construction produced archaeology in three of the trenches. A single sherd of Beaker pottery could suggest prehistoric activity in the vicinity. No Saxon material was present, but the morphology of some of the features resembled sunken-featured buildings. Well-defined, deep pits, post holes, gullies and ditches mainly of 12th to 13th century date were the main features recovered. The Medieval features exhibited stratigraphy of more than a single phase of activity. The ditches may represent the rear boundaries of crofts or tenements.

Faringdon, Old Town Hall, Market Place (SU 2888 9558)
 Jamie Preston

A watching brief on the excavation of trenches for new wall footings showed no deposits earlier than the 20th century. A building survey resulting in a photographic record of the existing (grade II* listed) structure and detailed discussion of its fabric. The survey noted a likely pre-1709 date and the replacement of the floor in the early 20th century.

Henley-on-Thames: The Old Brewery Yard, New Street and The Cottage Inn, Riverside (SU 7630 7277)
 Jamie Preston

The Cottage Inn, Riverside, and the half-timbered structure in the south-east corner of the Old Brewery Yard (west side of Church Avenue), both grade II listed, were subjected to a level 2 building recording survey (RCHME, 1996) in advance of a regeneration project along Riverside which would result in alterations to both. The survey revealed a number of points of interest.

Both buildings are likely to date from the 17th century and their original function may have been quite different from those attested in the existing documentary evidence. Early malthouses dating from the late 16th to early 17th century rarely survive, as a result of demolition or modification to re-use as barns or dwellings. The earliest evidence for the original appearance of the Cottage Inn can be found in the picture painted c 1698 by Jan Silbrechts with the title 'Henley with a Rainbow'. It is likely that the building with barrels outside is the present Cottage Inn (Cottingham 2000) although caution should be taken over the accuracy of this representation. By the mid 18th century there were two breweries operating in Henley; one in Bell Street, the other on the present site of Brakspears in New Street (Sheppard 1979). A recently discovered map provides a clear plan of the Riverside c 1793 (Cottingham 2000). Ordnance Survey and other maps (Climenson 1982) show the plan and usage of the Cottage Inn and the plan of the half-timbered structure in Brakspears yard by the later 19th century. There are a number of 19th century photographs that demonstrate the appearance of the façade of the Cottage Inn at this time.

Half-timbered structure in Brakspears brewery yard

There was a brewery in existence in New Street at least by the early 18th century. A local landowner and maltster, Benjamin Sarney, was living in a house on the present site of the Old Brewery House and was malting in a malthouse to the rear (Sheppard 1979). This malthouse refers to the structure in the southeast corner of the modern brewery. The inventory of 1826 states that this building was then being used as a store with a lumber store on the upper floor. A plan of the brewery in 1836 shows the continuity of usage as No. 4 store (Sheppard 1979). A photograph of the brewery yard c 1900 illustrates this east range of buildings with brick, two-storey gabled projection.

The half-timbered structure has six extant bays. Each bay is

consistently 3.08 m long, apart from the southern end bay, which measures only 2.12 m. This suggests that this end of the building has been truncated and a later wall inserted. The character of the timber construction of the gable end is distinctly different to the cross frames evident in the rest of the building. The roof construction at the southern end of the structure comprises collar, clasped purlins and straight wind/rafter brace. The slightly cambered tie beam has curved braces fixed with wooden dowels. The wall post is corbelled out to support the tie beam, which has joints for a stud wall, although there are no corresponding joints in the floor joist below. The clasped purlin method of roof construction, although known in 13th century buildings (eg the Wheat Barn at Cressing Temple in Essex dating to c 1250), became common by the early 16th century as an alternative to the crown post truss.

The wall construction at first floor level is timber box frame with knee braces infilled with bricks and with openings which possibly served as louvred windows in the building's original form. The transverse floor beams with 7.5-10 cm (3-4 inch) chamfer and crudely worked chamfer stop supported by arched braces are typical of 17th century timber buildings.

The external wall facing along Church Avenue is heavily rendered, thus masking any evidence for original features. The plinth is composed of panels of flint rubble enclosed in a brick surround and is identical to the plinth of a later building at the New Street end of Church Avenue.

The timber frame itself is likely to reflect local construction methods during this period. Early malthouses would have been simple structures consisting of two storeys for the growing and storage of the grain, and with a kiln at one end. Unfortunately, there are no existing kiln structures, which would provide definite evidence for the building being a malthouse in the later 17th to early 18th century. For this period it is likely that a conical kiln structure would have been employed (Crosby 2000).

In summary: the half-timbered structure may have originally been a malthouse and on the evidence of the roof construction and floor beam ornament dates to the later 16th or 17th century. The original fabric is composed of six cross frames and the west longitudinal wall; the box frame visible at first floor level; and fragments at ground floor level including a cill beam and wall posts. There is also a fragment of wall post in the east wall at the southern end. The gable end facing the churchyard is not likely to be part of the original build.

Cottage Inn

Cottingham (2000, 154) uses the evidence of Jan Silbrecht's depiction of barrels outside what appears to be the Cottage Inn to suggest that this building was the Brewer's Arms in the late 17th century. In the later 18th century this structure was being used as a granary and the raised doorways in the Silbrecht painting are very suggestive of the raised floor one might expect to find in a granary building. However,

Oxfordshire

timber-framed granaries were rare until the later 18th century so it seems unlikely that this was the original function.

The earliest mention of this structure as a granary was at Michaelmas 1793 when a Mr March was leasing these granary buildings. In 1787 a Mr Hollier was leasing the gable end, cross-wing structure to the right of the Cottage Inn and this is also referred to as two granaries. The 1878 Ordnance Survey map suggests that the granary buildings had become part of the much expanded Little White Hart. A photograph dating to c 1880 shows the Cottage Inn before it was whitewashed. At this time it is thought to have been a stable although this description probably applies to the lost structures to the rear.

The ground floor interior appears to have no visible original fabric extant apart from a wall plate running just above the segmental arched windows. The Silbrecht painting suggests that by the late 17th century the walls at ground floor were constructed from brick, perhaps infilling a timber frame. It is a possibility that the original building had a jettied first floor, as is the case with the buildings on the corner of New Street and Riverside where a view of 1812 demonstrates this type of construction before the façade was aligned with a brick face. A clue to the existence of a jettied first floor for the Cottage Inn can be found in a document concerning a fine charged to W H Brakspear on 26th October 1868. The penalty was made for an encroachment onto the Waste Manor by bringing forward the wall to the north of the Little White Hart by 56 cm (22 inches).

The present façade has the earlier gateway lintel still visible with dentilated brickwork cornice over an inserted dormer window. The scars of both the infilling of the gateway and the small window over the timber lintel are still visible in the existing fabric. To the left of this feature are a doorway and four segmental arch sash windows at ground floor level and five windows, one blocked, on the first floor. The window style fits well with a mid 19th century remodelling of the façade.

Inspection of the first floor revealed a queen post roof truss at the northern extent of the building. This example is characteristic of pre-18th century style queen post roof trusses. The roof construction of the granary building comprises queen post, clasped side purlins and curved wind braces, which survive through the entire length of the structure. There are four bays visible on the first floor each measuring 3.4 m in length. The width of the building is 4.96 m.

There is evidence for three rectangular structures, now lost, associated with the back wall of the garden.

In summary: it seems likely that the existing original fabric dates to the 16th or 17th century based on the evidence of the roof structure. If the building was originally jettied a 16th century date is more likely as this form of construction was becoming redundant by the early 17th century.

Documentary evidence suggests that the building was being employed as a granary by the later 18th century but it is unlikely this was its original function. It has been suggested that in the later 17th century the building was the Brewer's Arms. The façade was altered during the later 19th century with the blocking up of the gateway and small window above some time after.

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Middleton Stoney, Park Farm (SP 5185 2415) M John Saunders

A three-trench evaluation in advance of construction of new cattle yard and barn revealed only two small, probably modern features (a shallow pit and a post hole).

Oxford, Frys Hill, Blackbird Leys (SP 5530 0190) S Ford

An evaluation in advance of residential development recovered 19 sherds of Roman pottery, all unstratified except 8 sherds from a gully or slot which also contained 19th century roofing slate. No archaeological features were identified.

Oxford, Magdalen College School, Cowley Place (SP 5222 0574) Stephen Hammond

Evaluation in advance of construction of the new Sports Hall, followed by a watching brief during the groundworks, both failed to locate any features of archaeological interest. This negative evidence may for once be important, as this sort of position, on a gravel terrace near the confluence of major rivers, has long been thought to be a favoured location for prehistoric occupation.

Oxford, Post House Hotel, Peartree Service Area (SP 4945 1095) Sarah Coles

A watching brief during construction of the new hotel did not reveal any finds or deposits of archaeological interest. Areas stripped of topsoil and the digging of foundation and service trenches were observed and revealed made ground overlying the natural geology (clay).

**Shipton-under-Wychwood, Bradleys Garage
(SP 2783 1801)**

Sarah Coles and Stephen Hammond

Five trenches were opened in an evaluation in advance of housing construction. Only a small number of features (a small pit, two gullies and an area of limestone surface) were uncovered. The finds were meagre, but all the pottery can be dated to the second half of the 13th and perhaps into the 14th century.

**Witney, Oakfield Lodge, Langdale Gate, Church Green
(SP 3574 0946)**

Stephen Hammond

A watching brief was executed during groundworks for five new houses, following an earlier evaluation which had revealed possible roman activity. No features were identified, and only four sherds of pottery were retrieved (Roman, Medieval and post- Medieval).

TIME TEAM

Thame, Rycote House (SP 667 047)

Katie Hirst

Time Team was invited to carry out a geophysical survey and archaeological excavation of the remains of Rycote House, Oxfordshire, after a brick culvert was discovered in the gardens by the groundsman. Rycote House is located between Oxford and Aylesbury, just north of the A329 and close to Junction 7 of the M40. The soils are slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged clayey soils with similar fine loamy over clayey soils of the Denchworth (712b) Association overlying Jurassic and Cretaceous clay (SSEW, 1983). Work took place between 6-8th June, 2000.

The earliest documentary evidence for Rycote is in the form of a land grant by William I to Geoffrey de Mandeville in 1086 but the origins of the actual house are unclear. A new brick house, replacing an earlier one was erected between 1521-1539 and underwent several phases of redevelopment; an etching by Kip in 1707 shows a house of essentially two parts. The southern half surrounded a courtyard, its façade decorated with towers capped by ogee domes and castellations which ran below the roof line rising to Flemish gables at each end. The entrance was approached over a bridge that crossed a moat encircling the building. The rear (north) of the house had a more eclectic arrangement of buildings arranged parallel to one another on a southwest-north east alignment, possibly remnants of the earlier house and likely to be the domestic quarter.

In 1760 a fire started in the kitchens setting the whole of the north side ablaze leaving only the south front and some of the east range standing. In 1760 some attempts were made to restore Rycote when Willoughby, the owner, employed

Capability Brown to lay out formal gardens; however the house was eventually demolished in 1801 leaving only the stables, chapel, the south west tower and a few garden features.

Resistance and gradiometer survey recorded a broad complex of responses typical of a building. No further areas of significant archaeological response were noted by the magnetic survey. Beyond the main core of foundations several high resistance anomalies presumed to reflect former garden features were detected. Unfortunately it was not possible to determine the extent of these features within the time scale of this project.

Excavation revealed several phases of building work at the House. Six trenches in total were opened. The robbed out foundation walls of the 13th-14th century medieval house were discovered running on a north-south orientation but no floors or other structures were found associated with them.

A trench across the presumed line of the façade of the Tudor house revealed the main doorway into the house, the foundations for the house façade as well as an internal dividing wall. Opposite the entranceway were the remains of a bridge abutment which had originally spanned the southern length of the moat; from its dimensions it can be speculated that the bridge was up to 3 m wide. Immediately to the east of the entranceway were the dressed foundation stones for an octagonal tower, one of the four which decorated the façade of the house.

The discovery of the doorway was of particular importance as measurements from it to the extant south-west tower give the dimensions of the western half of the house. As the building was symmetrical the measurements could then be doubled to give the overall dimensions of the width of the house; approximately 33 m from the mid point of the west tower to the centre of the eastern tower.

Two more foundation trenches were seen to the north of the façade wall which may have been the remains of further internal walls of the house.

The culvert was re-exposed and seen to cover the original moat, running for at least 16 m. A second, probably contemporary, culvert was discovered on the western side of the house. The deposits overlying the culvert clearly show an episode of destruction with a high concentration of tiles, many of which were decorated, brick and painted window glass.

18th century cellar walls were found cutting through the fills of the moat in the northern area of the house, a period of building that does not appear to have been documented, indicating that the residence was in use long after the fire.

Wendlebury (Alchester), a vexillation fortress of the
year AD 44

(SP 570 203)

Eberhard Sauer

The front gate (porta praetoria), trench 23

The main aim of the 2000 season had been to find the front gate (*porta praetoria*), not only to explore its military architecture, but also in the hope that its posts would reach beneath the water thus allowing the dating of the foundation of the fortress to a precise year. In the previous issue (SMA 30, 75) a foundation in the AD 40s with a preference for a date before the middle of the decade had been predicted on the basis of the coin evidence. This prediction was proven to be correct.

The front gate was situated behind the point where the road from the headquarters building led over the fortress ditches. The remains of the gate were covered by thick civilian demolition layers. Only five of the presumed 14 postpits were within our trench; we had narrowly missed the back row and there was no intention to excavate the northern half of the gate. Two of those five posts, (the northern row of the southern gate tower), were in the area of a later roadside ditch and the posts had consequently been removed in antiquity. The two posts of the southern row, however, were in a remarkably good condition and had not been squared; even the bark was preserved. They were examined by Ian Tyers at the University of Sheffield's Department of Archaeology. Both yielded the same felling date: October AD 44 to March AD 45. By contrast, the post dividing the gateway was squared and thus had not the potential to yield a precise date. It is almost inconceivable that we are dealing with re-used timbers. The careful demolition of an earlier military timber structure of similar height and the overland transport of the heavy timbers (without any damage to the bark) would have involved much more effort than the exploitation of local timber resources. According to Ian Tyers' research both posts appear to derive from the same woodland: Both samples have a very distinctive growth trend; it seems unlikely these two piles come from a single tree, but it does suggest they originated in the same woodland (Ian Tyers, unpubl. report). It is well known that the Roman army at war exploited timber resources without consideration for the environment (Joseph, BJ 5,522-3; 6,5-8). Gates and defences would, obviously, have been built first and before the cold season. We can thus be sure that the foundation date of the fortress was still within the year AD 44.

Despite having excavated less than half of the gate, we can be reasonably sure about its reconstruction. There can be no doubt that the north-eastern post in trench 23 divided the gateway; the absence of a post in line with the front posts of the south tower indicates clearly that it was preceded by a forecourt. Such a forecourt was a typical architectural feature of military gates of the time. Attackers trying to

break down the gate were exposed here to bombardment from three sides, the two towers and the bridge over the gate. Two gullies led through the gate, the southern gully through the southern driveway, the northern gully, excavated in the northern extension of trench 23 outside the gate, through the northern gateway. Undoubtedly they would have been covered with timber in antiquity. The bottom of the southern gully is 0.21-0.25 m above that of its northern counterpart, at 62.52-62.56 m above sea-level. This is similar to the level of the gully sectioned in the northern extension of trench 20 in 1999 (bottom at 62.61 m above sea-level) beneath the *via praetoria* which contained a *dupondius* of Caligula (SMA 30, 73). The 5 cm difference in height over a distance of 90-100 m need not indicate that the water was flowing out of the fortress, especially since the gully in trench 20 survived to a depth of 0.44 m. The original timber lining might have helped to even out surface irregularities. It seems likely that we are dealing here with two sections of the same gully that channelled water through the gate into the fortress. It was presumably supplied with water from the Gagle Brook via a waterlifting device or a wooden aqueduct. Within the base, as in the contemporary fort at Oberstimm in Raetia (southern Germany), the central buildings would have been supplied with flowing water. Patrick Erwin's resistivity survey revealed a rectangular anomaly with a linear long resistance feature (a gully?) leading towards it north of trench 25. This may be, again in parallel with Oberstimm (Schoenberger 1976 and 1978), a water basin in the military workshops (*fabrica*). The deeper northern gully in trench 23 must have been a drainage ditch. While further investigation is needed to reconstruct the details of this water supply and drainage system, it appears that Alchester is the earliest site in Britain with an artificial flowing water supply.

The defences, trench 24

The 2000 season revealed that the defences were more varied and sophisticated than we had thought previously. In trench 21 the defences consisted merely of the rampart and two V-shaped ditches. However, hidden traps awaited enemies who attacked the fortress near its north-west corner. The outer ditch was a so-called *fossa Punica* with an almost vertical side towards the enemy, but a gentle slope on the defenders' side. If enemies approached it while being exposed to bombardment from the rampart they probably would not have noticed the steep side and might well have fallen. Between the outer and inner ditch there was a third shallow flat-bottomed ditch, not a real obstacle if it was left open. We think this may have been the ancient equivalent to a minefield. Caesar (B Gall. 7,73) described similar obstacles consisting of pointed stakes, sometimes tied together, in pits and ditches covered with brushwood which caused severe injuries to those who stepped on these hidden traps. We did not find any traces of stakeholes, but it is difficult to conceive an alternative function for this shallow ditch. Any stakes could easily have been pulled out of the gravelly fill after the abandonment of the fortress without leaving any traces; this would have removed a dangerous trap for playing children and it would have provided firewood. We found many pointed stakes with notches in the inner fort ditch. Might they have been originally part of the

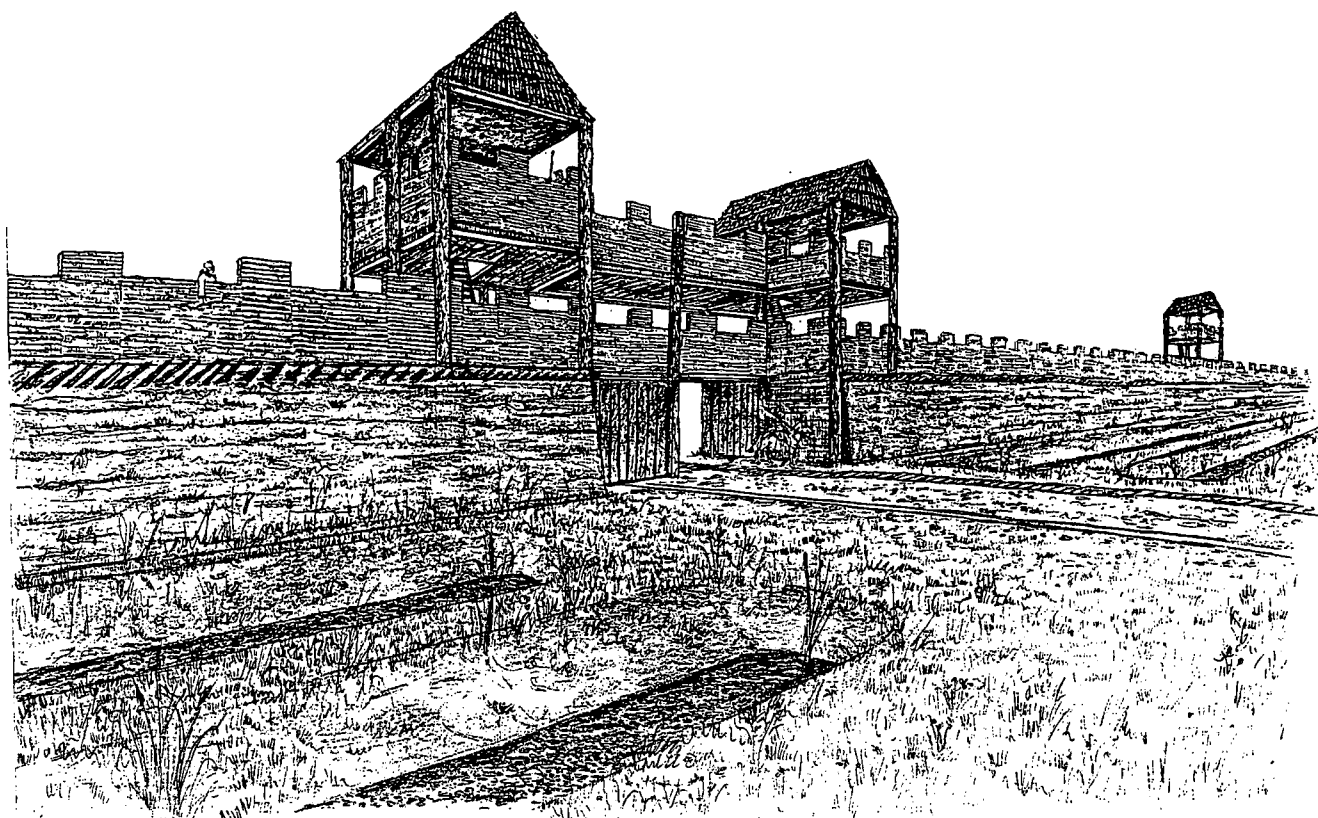


Fig 14. Reconstruction drawing of the gate by Deborah Miles-Williams.

'minefield'? It seems more likely that they formed part of the rampart which was intentionally destroyed or collapsed into the ditch on the occasion of the abandonment of the fortress or soon thereafter. Pointed stakes tied together protruding out of the rampart would have made it very difficult for enemies to climb the steep turf and gravel bank or to remove the obstacle. If enemies tried to overcome all these obstacles, the defenders had plenty of time to discharge missiles at close range from an elevated position. Those who survived and tried to flee had to climb up the almost vertical side of the outer ditch.

All that survives of the rampart is a c 3 m wide band within the ancient ploughsoil with a higher gravel content. It probably consisted of turf with a gravel core. Depending on the gradient of the slopes and the width of the turf front and back, the gravel extracted from the ditches would have allowed the building of a c 3 to 3.50 m high rampart. These values are close to those mentioned by Caesar (B Gall. 2,5) for a fortress rampart of 12 feet (c 3.60 m) height. Whether the presence of three thin shingles in the fortress ditch is the result of rubbish deposition or whether they may have fallen into the ditch from a tower in the vicinity is unknown.

Buildings in the interior, trenches 20 and 25

Comparatively little is known as yet about the interior occupation of the fortress. In trench 20 a 15.65 m long timber ground sill was unearthed with mid-first century objects in its fill. No certain timber ground sill at a right angle was observed. Given the depth of disturbance by Roman horticultural activity it seems possible that other more shallow ground sills may have been destroyed. The full

analysis of the finds has to be awaited before a detailed interpretation of other features in trench 20 is possible.

In the south of trench 25 a civilian period wall running parallel to the road was excavated. On a deeper level we unearthed traces of a military building. This could have been part of military workshops to which also the probable water basin further north could have belonged. However, only the surface of the timber ground sills in trench 25 has been exposed so far; the 2001 season will hopefully clarify the issue. We also hope to explore in 2001 possible traces of the *via principalis* and to clarify the location of the headquarters (*principia*). What is clear already now is that the fortress had been occupied long enough for the construction and dense occupation of the interior with permanent timber buildings.

Historical implications

Few subjects have been discussed as passionately recently as the Roman invasion in Britain. Yet, despite continuing uncertainty about the place of landing, the first few months of the Roman invasion, until Colchester was captured in July AD 43, are comparatively well covered by Cassius Dio (60,19,1-22,2). However, the ancient sources fall silent for several years thereafter. Roman operations at the south coast form the only exceptions as the later emperor Vespasian was in command here. We did not know how long it took the Roman army to establish military control over the Midlands. We did not know whether or not there was much resistance to the imposition of imperial rule.

Now it is clear that already in the second year of the war the southern Midlands were under tight military control. The marching camp (SMA 28, 72 and 29, 62) may pre-date the

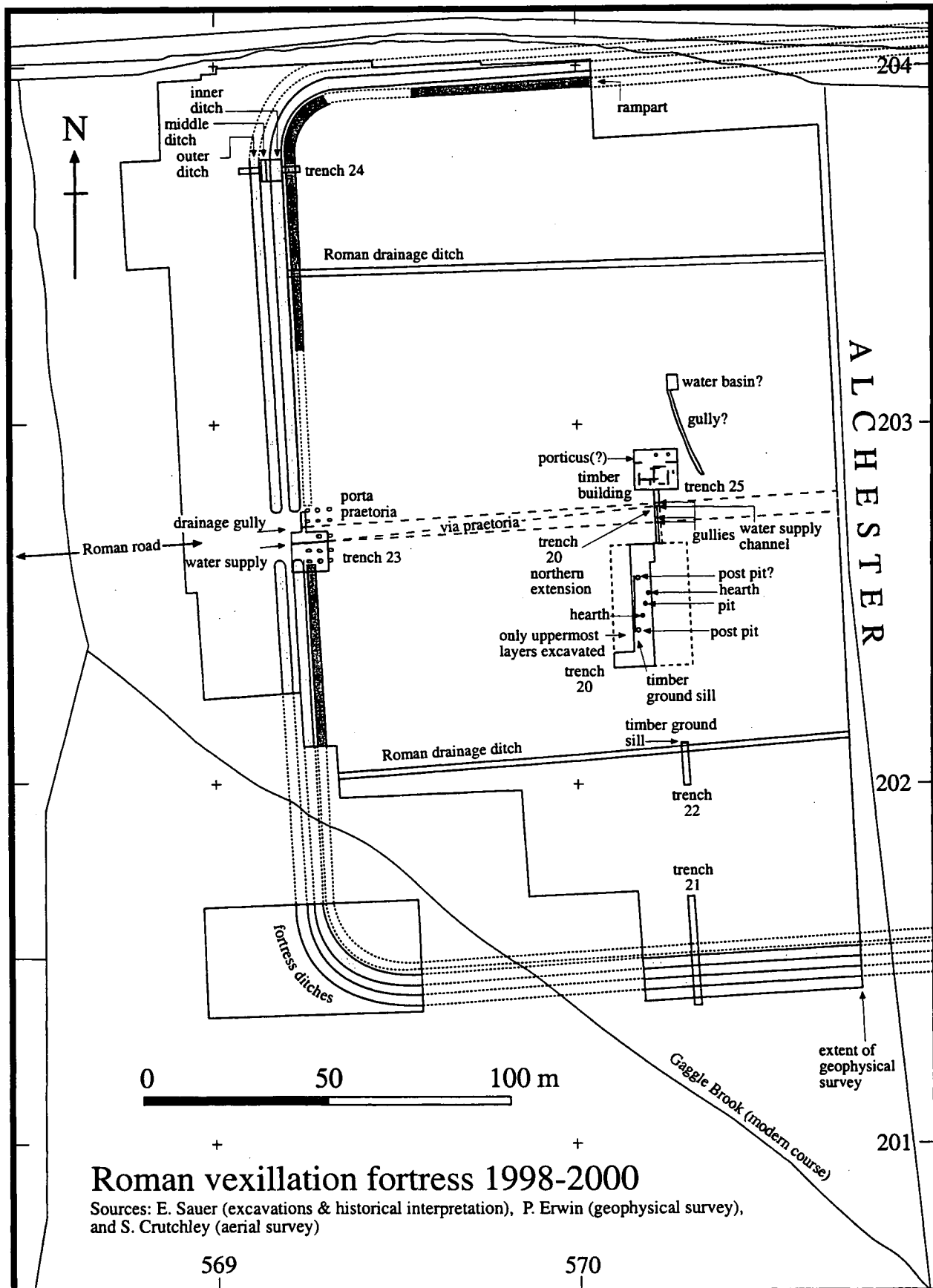


Fig 15. Plan of the Alchester vexillation fortress.

fortress and could date to AD 43 or, more probably, to the campaigning season of AD 44. The finds from the area of the marching camp date it only to the AD 40s to AD 60s and probably early within this period; they do not exclude the possibility that it could be a contemporary short-lived base for additional troops. The defences of the marching camp are insubstantial and render it unlikely that it could have housed the garrison Aulus Plautius left behind when leaving the territory of the Dobunni in AD 43 (Cass. Dio 60,20,2). The date of the enclosure of Graven Hill is yet unknown, but it may be Roman military (SMA 30, 70-71). One might speculate whether this naturally defended hilltop enclosure might be its base, but the absence of Roman finds from our, admittedly small, trenches, argues against a large garrison or longer occupation. The enclosure, incidentally, may have encompassed the entire hilltop, not just the east. The Oxfordshire SMR contains records of further linear ditches on Graven Hill although a much more recent origin is suggested there (kind information by the Oxfordshire SMR: PRN 1607, 12855 and 13593). An archaeological survey of the ditches to the west of those examined in 1999 (SMA 30, 71 fig. 12) has not yet been carried out. Aulus Plautius' base presumably has to be sought elsewhere; it was probably in Dobunnian territory rather than, like Alchester, in the tribal area of the Catuvellauni. Christopher Hawkes' (1961, 58-61) theory that it refers to a site in Kent where Aulus Plautius received an embassy from the Dobunni, while being compatible with Dio's Greek text, is not an association Dio could have expected his readers to make; thus it is less likely. Whether or not there was a (yet undiscovered?) strong base amongst the Dobunni or in the western fringes of Catuvellaunian territory as early as AD 43, it seems likely that Alchester was only reached within the campaigning season of AD 44 when the contingents of the invasion force reached, or consolidated their control, over the Midlands. After the end of this campaigning season the vexillation fortress at Alchester was constructed as a winter quarters for some 2,500 men.

The Alchester fortress lay at the point where the westward route from the Colchester fortress and the northward route from the Chichester fortress met. Its garrison was in an ideal position to control the recently conquered territories and the key supply routes. We know that the Roman garrison in Mauretania which had been conquered AD 40-42 still depended on grain supplies in AD 44 (Cass. Dio 60,24,5). It seems likely that also in Britain Rome did not solely rely on local food requisition (cf. Fulford 2000b). The sophisticated defences and the permanent wooden building in the interior suggest that the fortress was never intended to be a transient installation. The very fact that Rome felt it necessary to station a strong garrison at such a key road junction strongly suggests, at the very least, that revolts in the hinterland of the frontier were considered to be a real possibility. We cannot be sure to what extent potential rebels may have been deterred by the military might of the invaders and to what extent Alchester's garrison may have been involved in guerrilla warfare against freedom fighters in the hinterland of the frontier zone. Evidence from other sites equally suggests that co-existence between Roman soldiers

and natives was by no means always peaceful. It is tempting to assume, for example, that the skulls of five young adults found at the bottom and sides of the defensive ditch near the back gate of the legionary fortress of Colchester were displayed at the gate as a deterrent (Crummy 1984, 94-7; Luff 1984; cf. Frere 1991). It seems unlikely that the mortal remains of ordinary criminals, let alone executed army members, would have been displayed in such a prominent way at the gate of the fortress or early colony, especially if we consider how scarce parallels are (Fulford 2000a); the heads of rebels, by contrast, would have been a powerful reminder of Rome's determination to stamp out any armed resistance. Furthermore, had there been no serious threat of rebellion in the south-east of Britain, then it seems likely that Rome might have maximised the area coverage by splitting its forces into smaller forts as in south-west Germany between the first and third centuries AD rather than building a smaller number of strong bases. Parts of Alchester's garrison consisted of horsemen and could react quickly to hunt down rebels or to intercept hostile communication. Three-winged barbed arrows were in the garrison's arsenal, a long range weapon which was particularly effective against Rome's unarmoured opponents in Britain. Alchester's central location made it not only an ideal site to control central and south-eastern Britain, it could also have offered reinforcements for both the northern and western frontier zone. The base was abandoned some time between the AD 50s and the mid AD 60s. It may have been replaced by a later vexillation fortress; there are indications that such a fortress exists beneath the later small town (SMA 28, 72; 30, 75-76).

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Wendlebury, the Alchester town walls and the town in Anglo-Saxon times (SP 571 201) Eberhard Sauer with Chris Green

The opportunity arose for an examination of the Alchester town walls in the course of an evaluation. The town walls were sectioned before in 1892 (Anon. 1895), 1925 (Taylor/Collingwood 1925, 231), 1927 (Iliffe 1929), 1928 (Iliffe 1932) and 1974 (Young 1975). All sections were in the area of the eastern defences; the northern, western and southern sections of the town wall have never been investigated archaeologically prior to our evaluation in the year 2000. In 1974 Young (1975) examined part of the eastern defences with a hand-dug trench in the southern field and a machine-dug trench in the northern, arable, field. He found a gravel and sand rampart with a scatter of pitched stones on the tail end fronted by a robbed out wall. Pottery from the rampart dated its construction to the later second century (Young 1975, 140; 150). The late second century is the time when most town walls in Roman Britain were constructed; in many other towns, however, the late second centuries defences were subsequently strengthened (Frere 1984; Hartley 1983; Hobley 1983; Wachter 1995, 71-81).

The excavation was to be limited to exposing the first significant archaeological level with sufficient cleaning and sampling to characterise and date any features. In general evidence of fortifications similar to those found by Young was found in three of the trenches. The stratigraphy under the rampart and town wall could not be examined.

Trench 1

The whole yard of the existing early nineteenth century farm buildings is covered with a layer of cobbles and accumulated rubbish some 0.10-0.20 m thick. Immediately under this were the remains of what appeared to be the rampart consisting of silty sand extending from the western end of the trench as far as 4.34 m east. It contained a fragment of a

Hadrianic samian transitional between plate and bowl (Geoffrey Dannell, unpubl. report). This piece (found 4.30 m east, 0.60 m north and 62.815 m above sea-level) is consistent with Young's dating of the town wall to the later second century (Young 1975, 140; 150), but it does not allow to establish a more precise date.

Immediately east of the silty sand rampart a 2 m wide flat stone cobbling was unearthed that probably formed the foundation for the tail of the rampart; stones were piled on top of the tail end to stabilise it. A similar construction has been observed in 1927 (cf. Iliffe 1929, 114 fig. 4). The stronger compaction and darker colour of the tail in comparison with the rampart suggests that the silty sand of the rampart is here mixed with topsoil and/or organic material. Perhaps the rear of the rampart was stabilised in a later phase. Pitched stones covering the tail or rear of the rampart have also been observed at Cirencester (Wacher/Pamment Salvatore 1998, fig. 35 facing p. 63; 63 fig. 37; 86 fig. 57). As in the case of Cirencester the surface of the stony layer is raising from the tail, suggesting that it overlies the tail of the rampart.

It appears that the remains of the preserved parts of the rampart are within the western 6.60 m of the trench. Beyond the tail of the rampart no undisturbed structural remains of any feature could be identified at all. The stone layer on the tail of the rampart appears to be partially disturbed. There were no remains of a stone corner tower within this trench.

The presence of one piece of pre-Flavian samian ware each in trench 1 and 2, in both cases re-deposited, may indicate that there were features of this period in the area, destroyed by later earth-moving operations. It is conceivable that they belonged to a potential second (Neronian?) vexillation fortress which underlies the town. If anything survives at all of this potential fortress in the area, it is likely to be ditches, pits and post-holes cut in the natural which may survive beneath the levels of the deposits exposed during the evaluation.

Trench 2

The layers disturbed in medieval or post-medieval times in the eastern part of trench 1 (ie east of the town wall) and in all of trench 2 with the probable exception of the area of a stone structure (2.05) encountered in 0.65 m depth reach, wherever explored down to this level, to a minimum depth of 0.78 m, but mostly to c 0.90 m below the present surface; the pottery spectra of deposits in trench 2 reaching this depth yielded termini post quem of 13th century and 15th century respectively (Nick Cooper, unpubl. report). A test pit 2.90-3.80 m east of the south-west corner of the trench revealed a deposit (2.10) whose compaction, colour and composition matches that of one observed in trench 1 (1.13), soft dark yellowish black silty clay, and whose depth (62.41-62.11 above sea-level) is almost identical to that of 1.13 (62.33-62.14 m above sea-level). The pottery (Nick Cooper, unpubl. report) provides a terminus post quem of c 2nd/3rd century, although it is perfectly possible that we are dealing with a late antique or medieval layer. The small

number of sherds (four) gives no certainty that the date of deposition is close to the terminus post quem provided by the latest piece. Considering the dark colour and composition of contexts 1.13 and 2.10, suggestive of decayed organic matter, and the fact that such virtually identical deposits are encountered in different trenches it is tempting to assume that we are dealing here with the widespread phenomenon of 'dark earth' accumulating at the transition between the late Roman and Anglo-Saxon period. 'Dark earth', should this hypothetical interpretation be correct, presumably attests that the walls of Alchester like those of other towns provided refuge for a comparatively large population of humans (and animals?) in this transitional period. Unlike previously much organic matter was allowed to build up while the habitations were so lightly built that they left no clear structural remains (cf. Dark/Dark 1997, 120-2). Admittedly, the area exposed at Alchester is yet too small to be certain whether 1.13 and 2.10 indeed form evidence for the 'dark earth' phenomenon or possibly that already in the 3rd and/or 4th century rubbish was allowed to accumulate within the perimeter of the town walls. The rich organic material of 2.10 is in any case unlikely to have accumulated after the abandonment of the town (presumed to be in the early Middle Ages) whether we are dealing with a later Roman rubbish layer of early medieval 'dark earth'.

The only stone structure found extended from 6.60 m east of the south-west corner of the trench (0.65-0.70 m below the present surface, at 62.28-40 m above sea-level) to the eastern limit of the trench. It seems to date to the fourth century. Its function is unclear as too little of its surface has been exposed; it appears to continue both beneath the west-facing and the south-facing profile. No eastern continuation was found in trench 3, at this point 3.60 m away.

Trench 3

This trench is within the now disused farm-house of the first half of the 19th century. Excavation revealed relatively modern make-up layers whose combined depth is between 0.36 and 0.66 m.

At the south end of the trench a short stretch of consolidated gravely sand appeared, 0.65 m below the surface at 62.86 above sea-level, interpreted as part of the rampart. This continues south beyond the trench. At 1.60 m it ceases abruptly at a vertical cut above a stony deposit. A small test pit was dug, which followed the stone feature down into the natural sand/gravel at 61.995 m above sea-level, 1.44 m below the surface. It is possible (and perhaps the most likely interpretation) that we are dealing here (similar to trench 1) with a later refurbishment of the tail of the town wall.

The lowest deposit encountered in this test pit (3.15) contained four sherds that date all to the first or first to second centuries (Nick Cooper, unpubl. report): all four pieces could have been deposited as early as the first century. In the east of the town mid-1st century ditches were observed underneath the town wall (Iliffe 1929, 114-15 with fig. 4; Iliffe 1932, 37-9 with figs. 1-2; 43-5; Young 1975,

139-40; 151-2), but the flat bottom of the feature whose lowest fill is formed by 3.15 does not support an interpretation as a ditch. The question arises whether we are dealing with a 1st century feature of a different nature or whether the early pottery is re-deposited. Given the general scarcity of re-deposited sherds of such an early date in later contexts in the evaluation trenches it seems very unlikely that 3.15 dates to the time of a postulated refurbishment of the town wall or to a later period.

Between 7.10 and 8.10 m north was a layer of larger stones (3.05), typically 0.15-0.25 m across, sloping down to the north. These are in line with a similar feature in trench 4. As in trench 1 we are probably dealing with pitched stones to stabilise the tail of the rampart. While most of them were relatively flat on the sloping plane, some were more sharply tilted. This feature is discussed further under trench 4.

No significant archaeological layers survive within 0.56 m of the present surface. North of the tail end of the rampart (3.05) the ground is disturbed, probably by late Roman, medieval or early post-medieval ploughing, at least down to the bottom of our trench, ie down to c 0.70 m below the present surface. There are no signs of any features at this level north of 3.05 with the exception of a possible pit. With the exception of the test pit we did not reach anywhere the depth at which we encountered in trenches 1 and 2 what is tentatively explained as 'dark earth'. The composition of the deposits in the test pit does not support an interpretation as 'dark earth'.

Trench 4

This trench was situated outside the farm complex in what appeared to be undisturbed ridge and furrow. At the south end a layer of stones lying flat was uncovered, 0.30-0.50 m below the surface at about 62.60 m above sea-level. Although these might have been discards, the layer appeared to be a course of the southern town wall which both crossed the trench and extended beyond the southern end. Two robbing fills and cuts were seen above it, the earlier one which was not fully excavated, appearing to have been aimed at facing stones and containing Anglo-Saxon pottery in the backfill. The occurrence of Anglo-Saxon pottery dating to AD 650-850 (Nick Cooper, unpubl. report) from the robbed out layers of the town wall (4.09) is highly significant. Especially a well preserved sherd with suspension lug from context 4.09 is unlikely to be residual. However, no traces of the outer facing could be observed. The question arises whether it survives at a deeper level or, what is perhaps more likely, whether it is just south of our trench. The robber trenches are 2.30 m wide, but since the earliest cut is likely to be beyond the actual facing we may well have exposed less than 2.30 m of the area of the wall. Since the wall footings in the eastern section of the town wall measured 2.40-2.50 m width (Young 1975, 140-1), it seems likely that the south facing is indeed beyond the limits of the trench. Thus we do not know whether the outer facing was robbed at the same time or at a later date than the inner facing. The inner facing of the town wall could have been robbed without compromising the defensive

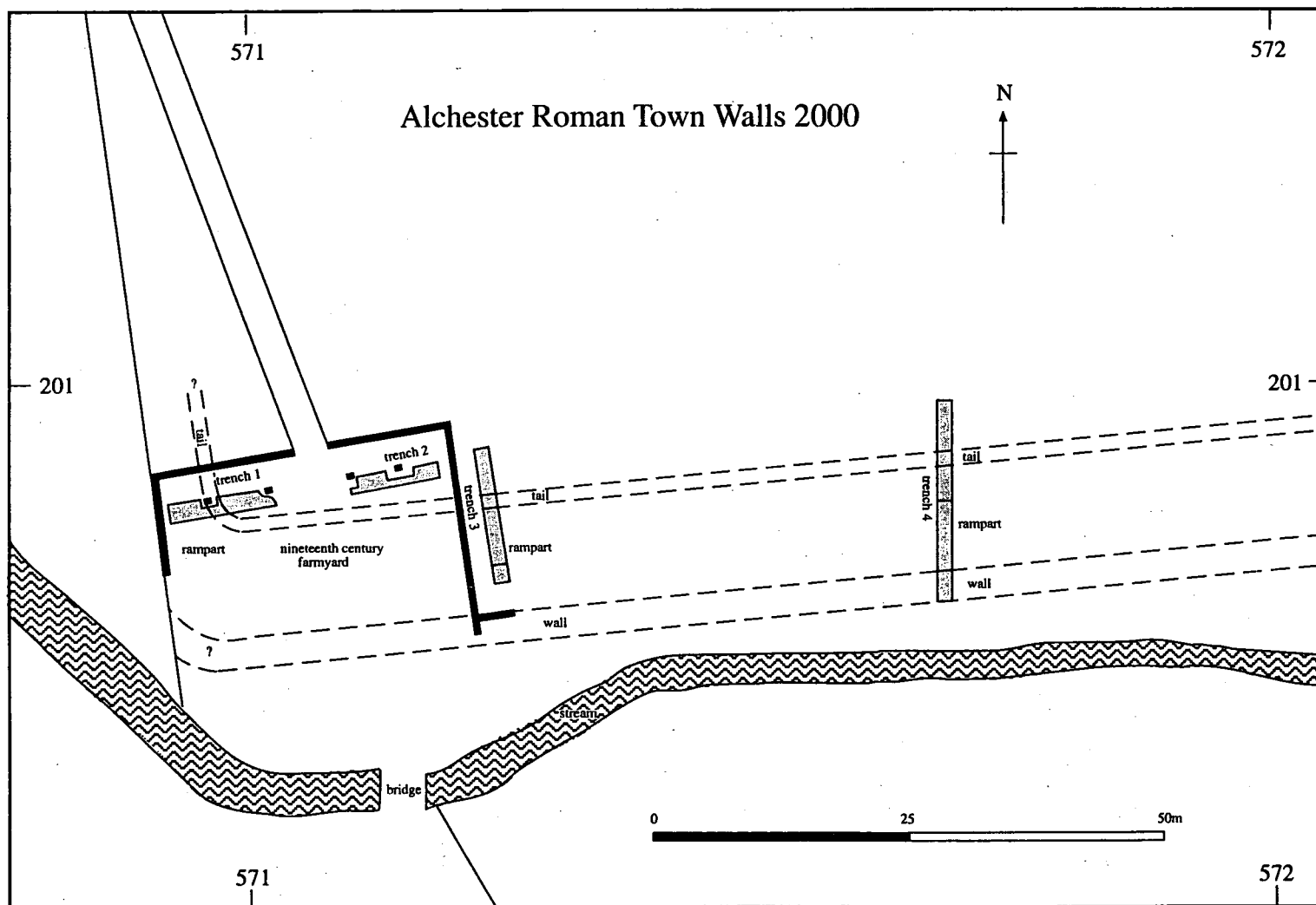


Fig 16. The south-west corner of the town walls of Alchester

value of the town wall. However, as long as we cannot be sure whether the outer facing was robbed at a later date, we cannot decide whether Alchester still continued to be occupied by a population sizeable enough to have an interest in maintaining the wall. It may however be worth noting that there is also one Anglo-Saxon sherd in the robber trench of the core of the wall besides two Roman sherds (Nick Cooper, unpubl. report). The lower number and concentration (one Anglo-Saxon and two Roman sherds from the wall core as opposed to 29 Anglo-Saxon and five Roman from the inner facing despite they greater volume of material from the core) may indicate that the three fragments in the core were re-deposited at a later date.

It is in any case likely that occupation of Alchester continued until at least the mid seventh century as it is hard to think of a reason why stone robbers living elsewhere should have brought pottery into a ghost town: there were 29 fragments, although they may well belong to a single vessel (Nick Cooper pers. comm.) The absence of Anglo-Saxon pottery elsewhere in our trenches, however, may, despite the limited extent of our investigation, be an argument against an intensive and prolonged occupation beyond the 7th or 8th century.

North of the wall a stretch of gravel and sand ran to 12.20 m where there is again a layer of pitched stones which seems to form or to cover the tail end of the rampart. It is some 1.30 m wide laid in a plane which dipped at about 12.5 degrees to the north. Thus the overall width of the rampart north of the robber trench for the inner facing of the wall (cut 4.10) was 11.20 m. If we estimate that the cut 4.10 was 0.20 m outside the original facing and that the wall was 2.40 m wide, the combined width of rampart and wall would add up to 13.80 m.

A colour change and new context (4.2) at 9.20 m north of the southern end of the trench might have been above a robbed out revetment giving a rampart a width of some 7 m compared to 6 m found by Young (1975, 140) on the east side. The pitched stones belong presumably to a later phase of the rampart and served to stabilise the tail of the rampart.

Immediately north of the tail of the rampart lay stones which seemed to have been displaced by ploughing. We encountered mixed layers from 14.50 m to the northern end of the trench, containing Roman 3rd and 4th century artefacts, below the ridge and furrow. They cannot pre-date the 4th century according to pottery evidence (Nick Cooper, unpubl. report). The ridge and furrow deposit (4.2) contained late or post-medieval pottery. However it is worth pointing out that out of a sample of 164 coarse pottery sherds from 4.2 161 were Roman and merely three (1.8 %) late medieval or post-medieval. There is thus a reasonable chance that other disturbed deposits containing fewer sherds could be medieval without yielding any medieval pottery. The ridge and furrow assemblage indicates that even in late or post-medieval plough soil at Alchester the proportion of medieval or post-medieval sherds is very small. The probability of a deposit (which stratigraphically could be

both, Roman or medieval to post-medieval) being medieval to post-medieval without yielding any post-Roman artefacts can be calculated mathematically.

North of the tail end of the rampart the layers disturbed, probably by late Roman, medieval or early post-medieval ploughing, reached to the bottom of our trench, ie at least to a depth of 0.48-0.76 m. Since there were no signs of any structural remains, it is likely that the disturbed layers reach deeper. By contrast, Roman layers are found in relative proximity to the surface in the southern section of the trench.

The abandonment of Alchester and the origins of Bicester
Trench 4 has interestingly yielded evidence for the date of the robbing of the wall. It seems likely that the Anglo-Saxon pottery dates the robber trench to the 7th to 9th century. The question arises what the ashlar was intended for? Stone construction in the south-eastern part of Britain ceased after the end of Roman rule and was not re-introduced until the 7th century. The seventh century was also the time of the re-Christianisation of Anglo-Saxon Britain although it is matter of academic controversy whether the population under Anglo-Saxon rule had largely stuck or reverted to paganism or whether the missionaries encountered a high proportion of Christians. It was in any case churches which were the first buildings to be built in stone again. Richard Gem (1996, 5) claims that "The reintroduction of masonry construction to England in the 7th century may have derived from ideological requirements; that is, a belief that church buildings should proclaim something of the culture of the international church, a culture that was Roman in origin." To the ideological reasons for masonry construction may be added the wish to construct a building which, in line with the theological message, symbolised permanence in a changing world. The town walls of Alchester would have provided a convenient source of stone to construct such a lasting symbol of eternity.

Where was this church? There could, of course, be a yet undiscovered church at Alchester itself. However, if Alchester was occupied long beyond the 7th century one would expect more extensive material evidence. It seems unlikely that an early stone church was built for a dying community. Alchester was probably in decline and its remaining population may have decided to leave the old town's ruins in their low lying wet surroundings. The origins of Bicester may date back to the 7th century and, according to tradition, the church was founded then by Birinus, the bishop of Dorchester (Blair 1994, 61; cf. 17; Lobel/Dannatt 1959, 14; 40; 44; Munby/Rodwell 1975). The remaining population of Alchester may have moved to Bicester. However, while this seems to be the most likely interpretation, it should not be pretended that there is certainty. It is puzzling, for example, why stones for the church at Bicester would have been robbed from the south-west corner, the corner furthest away from Bicester, especially since the new church cannot have required the demolition of the ashlar, not even of the inner facing alone, around the entire circuit of Alchester's town walls. We

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cannot, of course, be absolutely sure that the pottery dates the robbing of the wall to AD 650-850 and whether it could not have been re-deposited at a later date. However, the Anglo-Saxon pottery suggests at least that the town of Alchester was not entirely abandoned before the 7th century at the earliest.

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Please see previous article.

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

The Hillforts of the Ridgeway Project: excavations at Alfred's Castle 2000.

Chris Gosden and Gary Lock.

Introduction

Alfred's Castle is a small earthwork enclosure of approximately hexagonal shape with an interior area of 1.2 ha (c 2.75 acres). It has been a Scheduled Ancient Monument since 1958 (English Heritage SM 28163,

originally Berkshire No. 89, now Oxfordshire SAM 203) owned by the National Trust and located on their Ashdown Estate at Ashbury, Oxfordshire (SU27738223). Excavations took place for four weeks in July 2000 and represented the seventh season of fieldwork within the Hillforts of the Ridgeway Project. This follows two seasons at White Horse Hill (Lock and Gosden, 1997a; Cromarty *et al*, in press), two at Segsbury Camp (Lock and Gosden, 1997b; 1998) and two at Alfred's Castle, the former of which includes a detailed background to the site (Gosden and Lock, 1999; Lock and Gosden, 2000).

This was the third and final season of excavation at Alfred's Castle and Fig 17 shows the total number of trenches excavated except for three further north, which investigated linear features. The two previous seasons of excavations had indicated evidence that the enclosure had been located in relation to earlier linear ditches, probably dating from the late Bronze Age and that there was a substantial Romano-British building in the interior of the enclosure, overlying earlier Iron Age features. The 2000 season had three aims: to elucidate the relationship between the enclosure and earlier features; to gain more evidence of the Iron Age interior occupation and rampart construction on the western side of the site and to resolve whether the Romano-British building was mainly secular or sacred in character. We were successful, to a large extent, in realising all three of these aims. It must be stressed here that post-excavation analysis is at a very early stage and the following interpretations are provisional.

As previously, the fieldwork is organised as a compulsory training excavation for students on the Oxford University BA in Archaeology and Anthropology and part-time students on Continuing Education Undergraduate Certificate and Diploma courses. Education remains an important aspect of the project, not just involving the students working on-site but also informing a wider audience. Many site tours are given during the period in the field and numerous talks to local groups throughout the year.

The excavations

In the 2000 season we pursued the following excavation strategy. We continued to excavate trenches 1 (H and J), 4, and 5, the latter two inside the enclosure and targeted on the Iron Age occupation and the former looking for earlier ditches to the east of the enclosure. We also opened a number of new trenches on the northern side of the enclosure to further investigate these ditch systems and these comprised trenches 10, 20 (a-J) and 21 (Fig 17). Inside the enclosure we opened a series of trenches 11 - 19 to discover the ground plan of the Romano-British building. We decided on the layout of trenches 11 -19 because excavation within trench 2 in 1998 had revealed a series of rooms which appeared to be part of a larger building. However, a series of geophysical features had failed to reveal the overall plan of the building. These included a magnetometer survey by the Ancient Monuments Laboratory (AML) of English Heritage, two resistivity surveys (one by the AML and one by the National Trust) and a ground penetrating radar survey

Alfred's Castle 1998-2000 Villa Structure

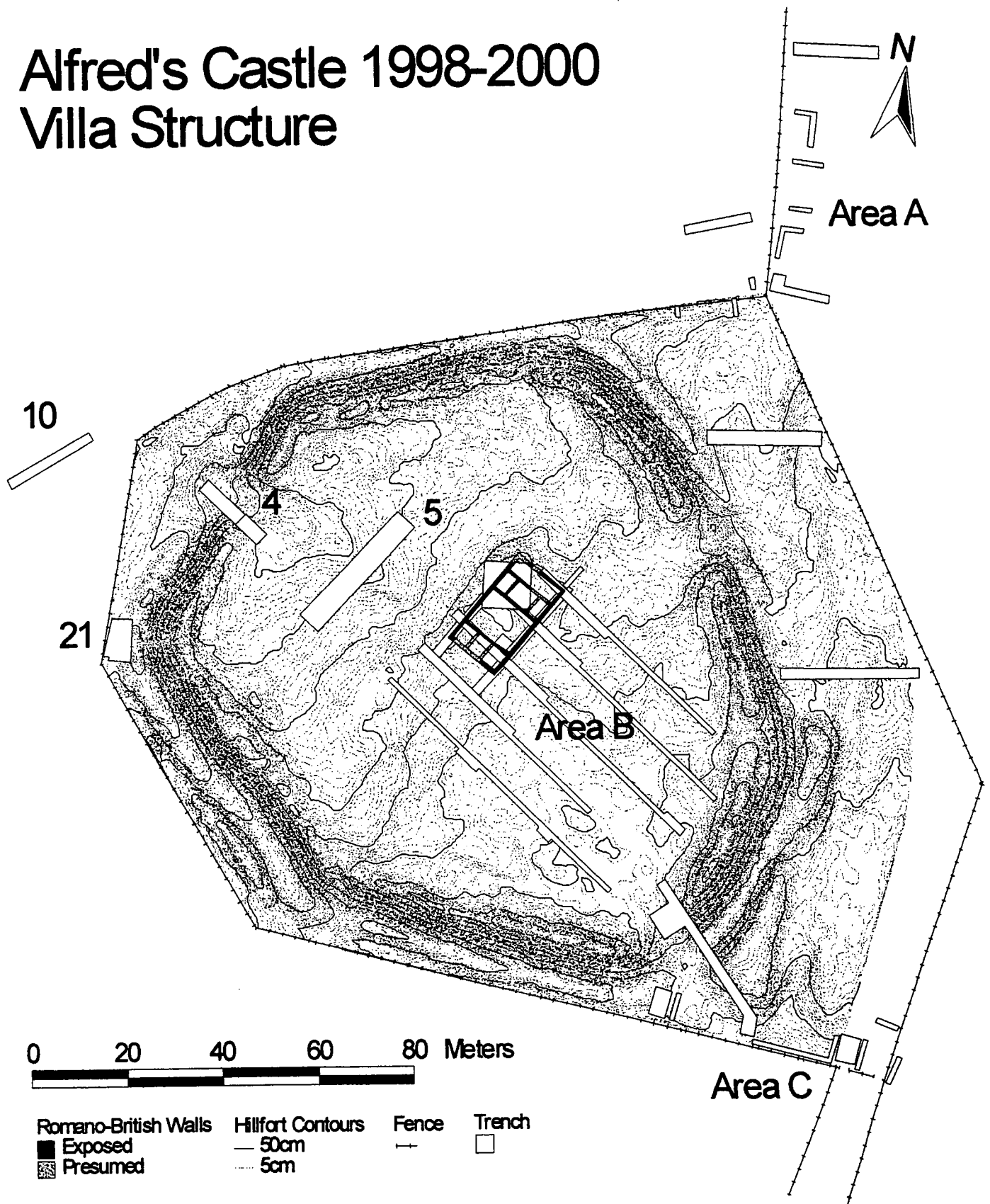


Fig 17. Excavation trenches for the three seasons 1998-2000.

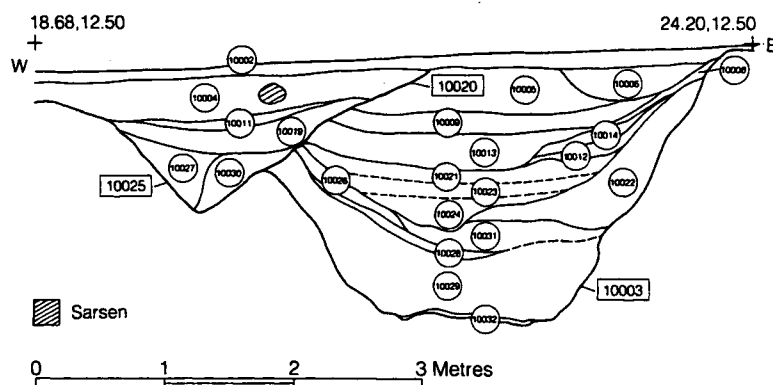
AC 00
Trench 10
Section 10.03

Fig 18. Trench 10, section 10.03.

carried out by Stratascan Ltd. Conclusions from the geophysics were inconclusive and none of the surveys produced a convincing ground plan. We therefore adopted a flexible programme of topsoil stripping along transects in the vicinity of the building to find the tops of walls and plan them. The transects were a maximum of 2 m wide, spaced at 10 m intervals, but were reduced to 1 m wide where there was less evidence of Romano-British archaeology. To minimise the amount of the site excavated, for most of these transects only the topsoil was removed and underlying Iron Age features were planned but not excavated. However, we knew the Romano-British building to have a number of phases so that we planned for up to four 3 m x 3 m trenches which could be excavated down to Romano-British floor levels in order to attempt to establish the date of both construction and destruction phases of the building. In what follows we will move from the outside of the enclosure into the interior, starting with the late Bronze Age and Iron Age ditches outside the enclosure (areas A and C Fig 17), then looking at the Iron Age occupation in the interior, before finally moving to the Romano-British building overlying the Iron Age features (area B Fig 17).

The ditch sequence: Areas A and C, Trenches 10 and 21

A series of different ditches was sectioned in various parts of the site and the sequence suggested here is based on ditch profiles, fills and a limited amount of pottery found in situ. The earliest features are a pair of late Bronze Age linear ditches which appear to have joined at the south-western corner of Alfred's Castle. These were identified in Trenches 10, 21 and Area C, both being steep-sided and flat-bottomed although the northern one was deeper than that in Area C (c 2 m compared to 1 m). The ditch in area C terminated there, not being found in the most easterly of our trenches (the only one beyond the fence line Fig 17). In the two trenches to the west of the fence the ditch was found to reduce in width by a half and then terminated. This provides some evidence of a change of plan on the part of the Bronze Age ditch diggers: having dug half the ditch they decided not to dig the other half and terminate the ditch entirely. The medieval pale ditch enclosing the woodland around Ashdown House runs along the present fence line and we can only speculate as to whether this might have made use

of the line of an earlier ditch.

The western ditch of the large enclosure has been visible as a crop mark for many years and Trench 10 was positioned to explore it. This revealed two ditches: a large flat-bottomed linear ditch which we had excavated at a point some 150 m to the north in 1999. Cut partially into the fill of the large linear feature and slightly to one side of it, was a smaller V-shaped ditch, approximately 1 m deep and re-cut at least once

(Fig 18), following the line of the linear ditch to join the Alfred's Castle ditch in Trench 21. Trench 21 revealed clearly that the linear ditch was cut by the enclosure ditch surrounding Alfred's Castle, although the relationship between the smaller V-shaped ditch and the enclosure ditch was unclear. The V-shaped ditch was dug after the linear V-shaped ditch had fully silted up and could only have formed an ephemeral mark on the landscape. Trench 10 contained some indication of the ring ditch of a round barrow, cut by the V-shaped ditch and it may have been that the linear ditch was aligned on an earlier barrow at this point.

In area A a series of re-cut ditches was followed and these were not indicated by aerial photographs. Two and sometimes three ditches were revealed in different trenches and at some points these were separate and sometimes they cut each other, indicating a number of phases of cutting, silting and re-cutting ditches. These ran along the fence line north-south and then turned sharply where the fence runs east-west to connect up with the main ditch of Alfred's Castle at the northernmost corner. At several points along these ditches large pieces of early Iron Age pottery had been placed on the ditch bottom suggesting that the building of Alfred's Castle and the large northern enclosure were contemporary. Samples for Optically Stimulated Luminescence and Magnetic Dating were taken from the upper fill of the linear feature in Trench 10 by Dr Ed Rhodes of the Research Laboratory for Archaeology, University of Oxford. In both Trench 10 and Area A ring-ditches were identified and partially excavated although no burials were located as excavation did not reach the centre of either. The one in Area A was recorded by Grinsell in the 1960s while the other was unknown. In both cases, the late Bronze Age linear ditch and the Iron Age ditches may have been laid out in respect to earlier round barrows and Alfred's Castle itself may have been sited near an existing barrow cemetery (a third barrow immediately on the northern side of Alfred's Castle is suspected from aerial photographic evidence).

Roughly 700 m north of Alfred's Castle a further trench (23) was excavated to investigate two ditches, which are part of a larger system following the contours of the land to the west

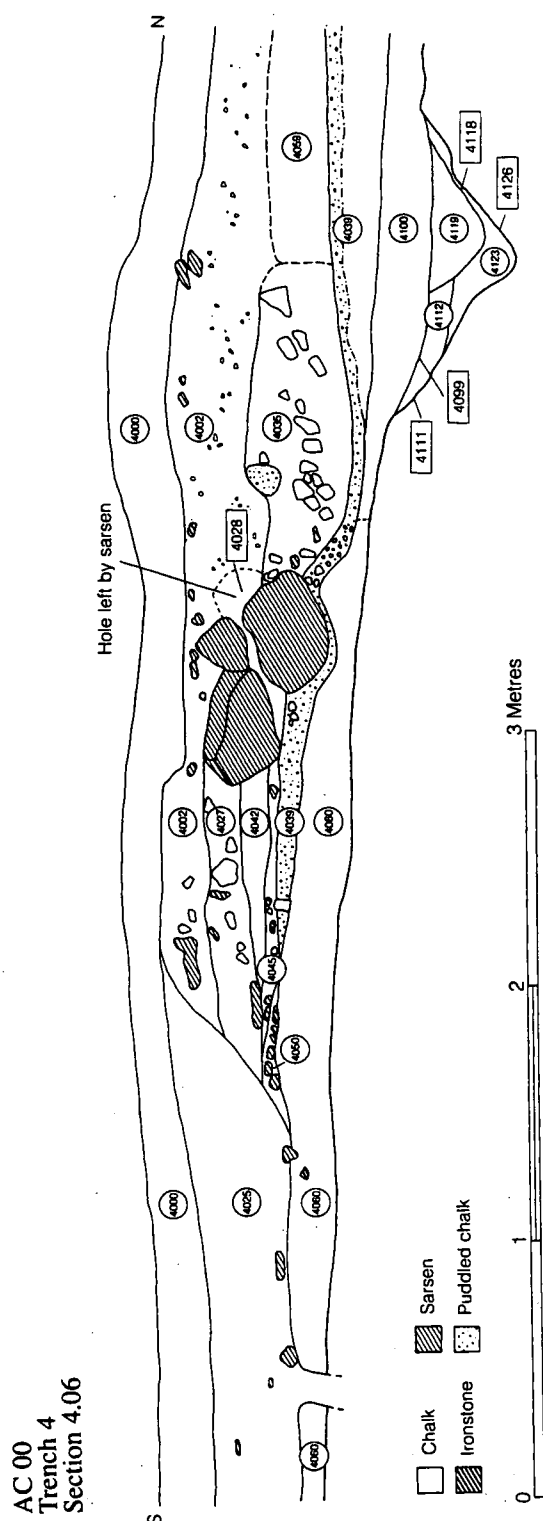


Fig 19. Trench 4, section 4.06.

of Alfred's Castle visible from aerial photographs. The northern ditch was relatively shallow and flat-bottomed, looking like a less well defined version of the shallow, flat-bottomed ditch in area C and probably dating to the late Bronze Age. This was cut by the ditch to the south which has a more V-shaped profile, resembling the ditches in area A and probably dating to the Iron Age. The Iron Age ditch was clearly cut along the same line as the late Bronze Age ditch echoing the situation around Alfred's Castle. Both ditches terminated within our excavation trench, showing

that when the earlier ditch stopped, so did the later one. Subsequent magnetometry has revealed that the two ditches follow each other for some 100 m to the west and the Iron Age ditch may cut a round barrow (P Gait, pers comm), again resembling the relationships between ditches and barrows around Alfred's Castle. The history of ditch digging is a long and complex one, integral to the history of the site and we are hoping to carry out some more magnetometry surveys and key-hole excavation to elucidate these histories further.

Excavations within Alfred's Castle

Trench 4 - this trench was placed on the western side of the enclosure to uncover the rampart sequence and the nature of one of the original entrances into the fort. Trench 4 was started in 1999 and completed in 2000. The sequence of the rampart at this original entrance was resolved into two phases (Fig 19 showing section 4.06). The earliest comprised a sarsen-faced rampart (4028) which was enlarged by the addition of a substantial chalk bank at the front (4035 and 4059) and revetting posts at the rear (not shown on the section). Beneath both phases was a prepared surface of puddled chalk (4039). Beneath this was an old land-surface (4060) pre-dating the rampart construction. Feature (4111) was ill-defined and contained no artefactual evidence, it is either a tree throw or possibly a small V-shaped ditch. If this was a ditch, it clearly pre-dates the rampart. There was also a series of possible ard marks in this area, but their identification was again complicated by tree throws and the feature 4111.

To the rear of the rampart and cut through the old land surface (4060) was a large bee-hive-shaped pit (4063) and a possible flat bottomed ditch (4073), which appears to cut the pit. A series of large posts for revetting the rampart ran round between the rampart and the pit, which appears to have been dug immediately inside the rampart. The pit was subsequently overlain by a build up of soil behind the rampart. The pit produced large amounts of bone and pottery and within layer 4077 especially there was evidence of placed deposits of bone. Feature 4073 showed up only in the north-east corner of trench 4 and appears to cut pit 4063 after this had been filled (Fig 20). This is slightly puzzling as the flat-bottomed form of the ditch would make it late Bronze Age. Alternatively, this may not have been a ditch at all, but a flat-bottomed feature of unknown type.

Trench 4 has demonstrated that the gap in the rampart here does represent an original entrance (see Gosden and Lock 2000) and that the rampart at this point had a two-phase sequence. This is unlike the sequence found on the opposite side of the enclosure in trench 1 (Fig 17) where only a single phase was identified. This suggests that the rampart as a whole may have had a complex history, with different sections being constructed in varying manners and not all as a single unit. Pit 4063 shows that there was activity immediately inside the rampart, near the entrance, and this is reinforced by 4073, although the date and purpose of this feature is obscure.

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Trench 4
Section 4.07

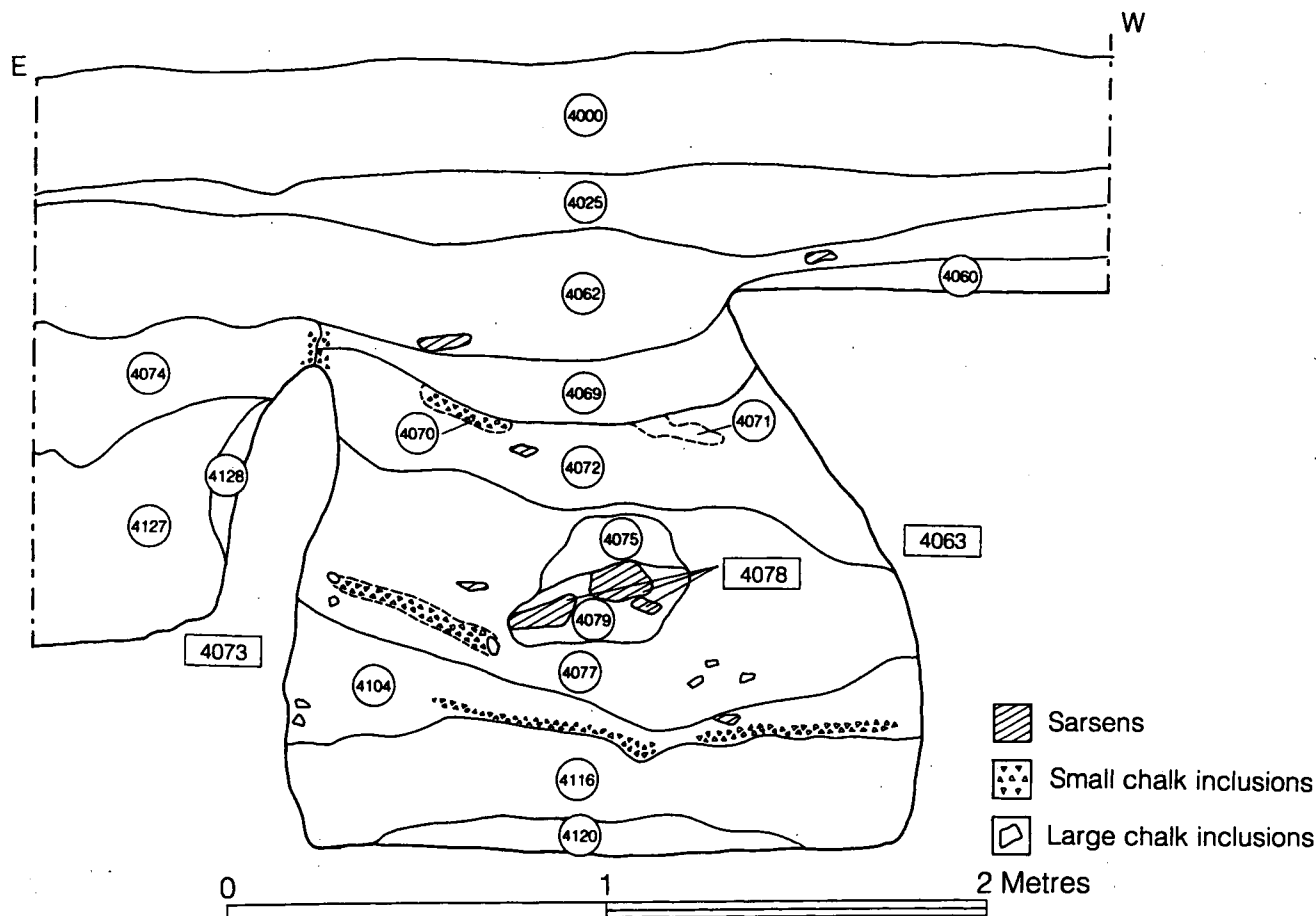


Fig 20. Trench 4, section 4.07.

Trench 5 - the aim of the excavations in this trench (30 m long and 5 m wide) was a detailed examination of the Iron Age features in an area outside the main Romano-British structure. Excavation was started in 1999 and completed in 2000. Overall, the trench contained a considerable number of Iron Age features, mainly pits and possible structures, with some Romano-British features overlying them, particularly at the northern end.

At the southern end of the trench part of the circuit of a double stake-wall round-house was excavated (Fig 21). It was approximately 10 m in diameter and the wall line was cut by at least one later pit (5119). This is the only evidence of an Iron Age habitation structure that we have uncovered on the site. A large number of other stake holes was also found in this vicinity. In the southern end of the trench there was also a number of Iron Age pits. These ranged in morphology from deeper bee-hived-shaped ones (Fig 22), to shallow, straight-sided pits (Fig 23 - 5028). Many contained a complex series of layers and a large number of finds, including pottery, loom weights, worked bone and metal. Inter-cutting pits show some horizontal stratigraphy: the round-house structure is cut by pit 5119, which is cut in turn by 5066 (a pit containing large sherds and a loom weight), which was then cut by 5257 (Fig 21). Pit 5257

contained a loom weight and worked bone in one of its lower layers (5596 - see Fig 22). Overall, the morphology of the pits and the nature of their contents are similar to those excavated in trench 2 in 1998 and 1999 (Gosden and Lock 1999, 2000). Analysis of the pottery, metal, bone and the loom weights will provide us with extremely important chronological information and provide real insights into the nature of the site.

In the central area of the trench was a large, deep feature (5022) which we had thought to be a possible well (Gosden and Lock 2000) bottomed out at c 3 m deep and appears to be a very large pit with vertical sides and a flat bottom filled at some point during the Iron Age (Fig 24). A number of placed deposits of bone were found in the vicinity of the top of the pit. Pits of such depth are unusual, but some over two metres deep are known from elsewhere (Cunliffe and Poole 1991). At the northern end of trench 5 excavation was completed on a series of lines of sarsens which are features of probable Romano-British date and may represent ephemeral structures outside the main Romano-British building (see area B for other sarsen structures of this date). These were underlain by a number of Iron Age features, mainly large post holes or small pits, but at a much lower density than found at the southern end of the trench.

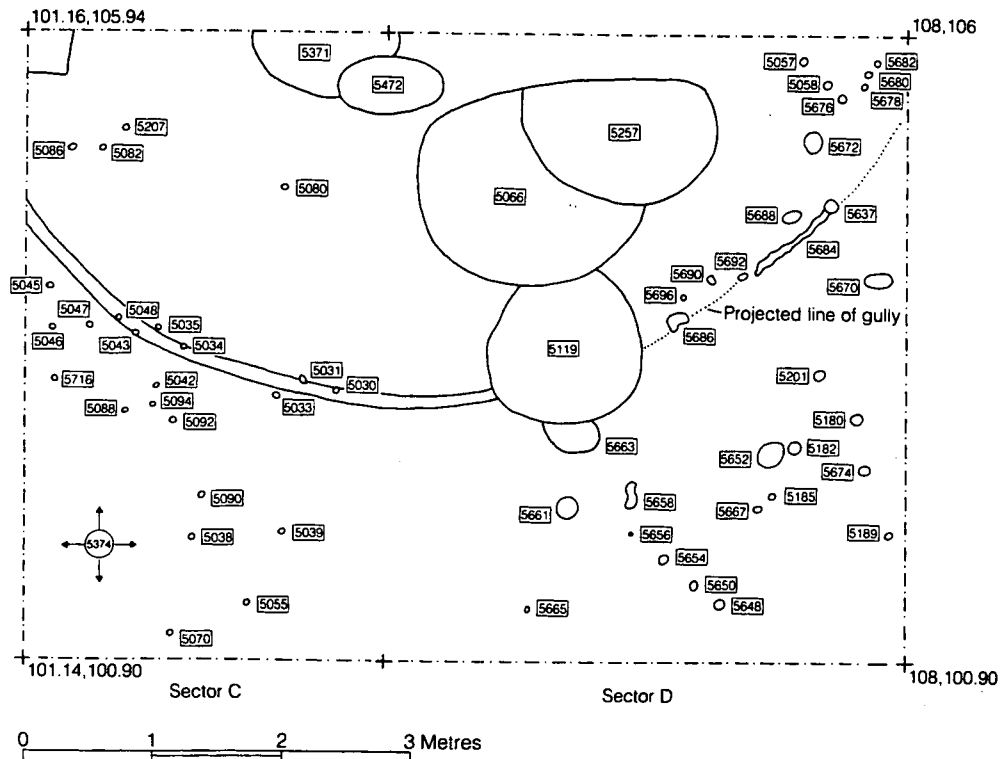


Fig 21. Plans 533 and 555 of trench 4.

In all trench 5 confirms and adds to the picture found in trench 2. In these areas of the site at least there was evidence of a considerable number of pits, which were filled with a rich assemblage of artefacts, bone and carbonised grain. The interior of Alfred's Castle was probably densely used and occupied and the fact that only a single house structure has been found may be due to the relatively ephemeral nature of early Iron Age houses. Preliminary inspection of the finds indicates that the rampart and ditch construction

and the interior occupation all fall within the early Iron Age, with little evidence of use during the earliest Iron Age or the middle Iron Age. There is a considerable chronological gap between the last Iron Age occupation and the construction of a Romano-British building on the site.

The Romano-British building, Area B.

As described above, our excavation strategy in area B was to strip off the top soil in a series of trenches from the centre of the enclosure towards its south eastern rampart (Fig 17). The main aim was to uncover the plan of the building and to determine its type. Indications on the ground surface and hints from some of the geophysical surveys led us to wonder whether the building may have extended over much of the south eastern part of the site. However, our trenches revealed definitively that it did not. The building is relatively small, centrally located within the enclosure and might best be termed a 'villa house' (Henig and Booth 2000: 82; Fig 4.2). The initial trenches running north-west to the south-east were complemented by two trenches (16 and 17) at right angles, which revealed the longer walls of the building to a depth which they could be planned. Finally trenches 18 and 19, each measuring 3 m x 3 m, were excavated inside two rooms of the building down to Romano-British floor levels to provide a suite of finds to give insights into the role of the building and its date.

The building was made up of six rooms, five of which were probably constructed together in the late first century and the final one, at the south western end was a later addition, probably in the third century, not long before the building was allowed to collapse (Fig 25). It had been thought that

AC 00 Trench 5D Section 5.40

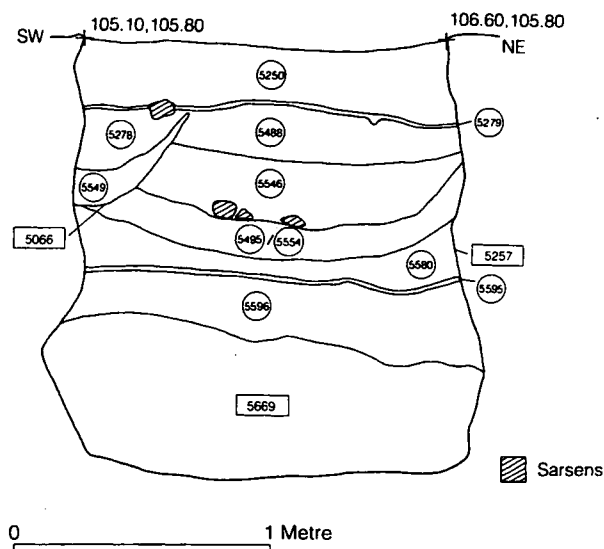


Fig 22. The section 5.40 of pit 5257.

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Trench 5E
Section 5.30

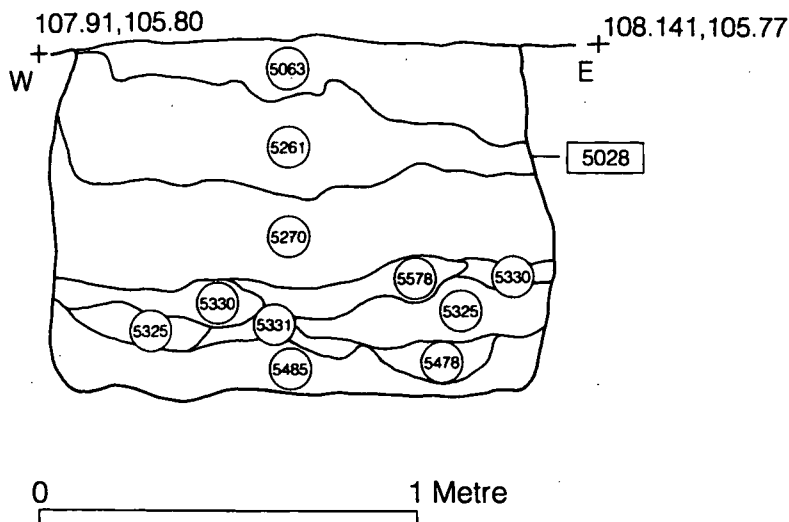


Fig 23. The section 5.30 of pit 5028.

the area labelled room 1 (first encountered in 1998) was a courtyard. Some of the other areas, particularly room 3, had opus signinum floors, but the 1998 excavations showed no flooring in room 1. However, the excavations in 2000, in what we assume to be the opposite corner of the same room (there might be an intervening wall which we have not detected), showed wall plaster, a hearth and probable floor levels, albeit disturbed. As just mentioned, more wall plaster was recovered, some of which was painted, to add to that found in 1998. However, there was no trace of a mosaic pavement or a hypocaust, indicating that although the building was a substantial stone-built structure, it was not especially rich or magnificent. This impression is increased when the slightly irregular layout of some of the walls is taken into account, not all of which are straight or square. Excavations in trenches 18 and 19 revealed a large amount of pottery, glass, roofing nails and other artefacts, which will throw more light on the role and date of the building. Context 16010 made up of ceramic tiles set into the corner of a wall might have been a small domestic shrine (M Henig, pers comm) showing some ritual activities were carried out on the site, but overall the site appeared solidly domestic.

Our provisional conclusion is that this represents a villa/farm house which is earlier in the local sequence than the nearby villas at Maddle Farm and Starveall Farm. Around the main villa house were a number of ancillary structures formed of sarsen and tile (both ceramic and stone) and with a scatter of Romano-British pottery and roofing nails. These are likely to have been smaller working structures around the main villa house, used for a range of purposes now difficult to determine. The sarsen structures at the northern end of trench 5 might also fit into this class of feature. No features from the post-Roman-British period were found. There had been some robbing of the stone from the walls of the villa house (see Fig 25), but this is likely to have occurred in the later Medieval period when Ashdown

House was first built.

It is worth also noting that the trenches revealed a large number of pits and other features, almost certainly of Iron Age date. However, as our stated aim (as well as our Scheduled Monument Consent) was to strip off the topsoil, we did not excavate or even clean the tops of these features. We made plans of those which appeared reasonably definite, in the knowledge that there were probably many more features that we had not detected. This did confirm to us that there was a considerable scatter of Iron Age features across the site, although more work would need to be done to discover their exact numbers and distributions. On the southern and eastern areas of the site were deposits of clay with flint, such as had been in trench 1 in 1998, indicating that the area had once been covered in clay with flints, some of which had eroded away prior to the Iron Age. The remaining patches of clay with flints tended to look like minor terrace features when seen on the surface and might have been structures, but excavation proved that they were not.

Discussion

The key aspect of this site is its long-term history, stretching from the early Bronze Age to the Romano-British period in a discontinuous sequence. The earliest features on the site are represented by an early Bronze Age linear barrow cemetery comprising at least two barrows although aerial photographs suggest more. This was followed by the establishment of a system of linear ditches possibly aligned on the barrows, dividing up the landscape south of the Ridgeway, in the Late Bronze Age (possibly 9th/8th centuries). These ditches probably had a different relationship to the landscape than many found elsewhere, including other areas of the Berkshire Downs. The more common pattern is for the linear ditches to run along ridges between river valleys (Ford 1982, Llobera 1996), whereas

AC 99/00
Trench 5F/X
Section 5.04 & 5.44

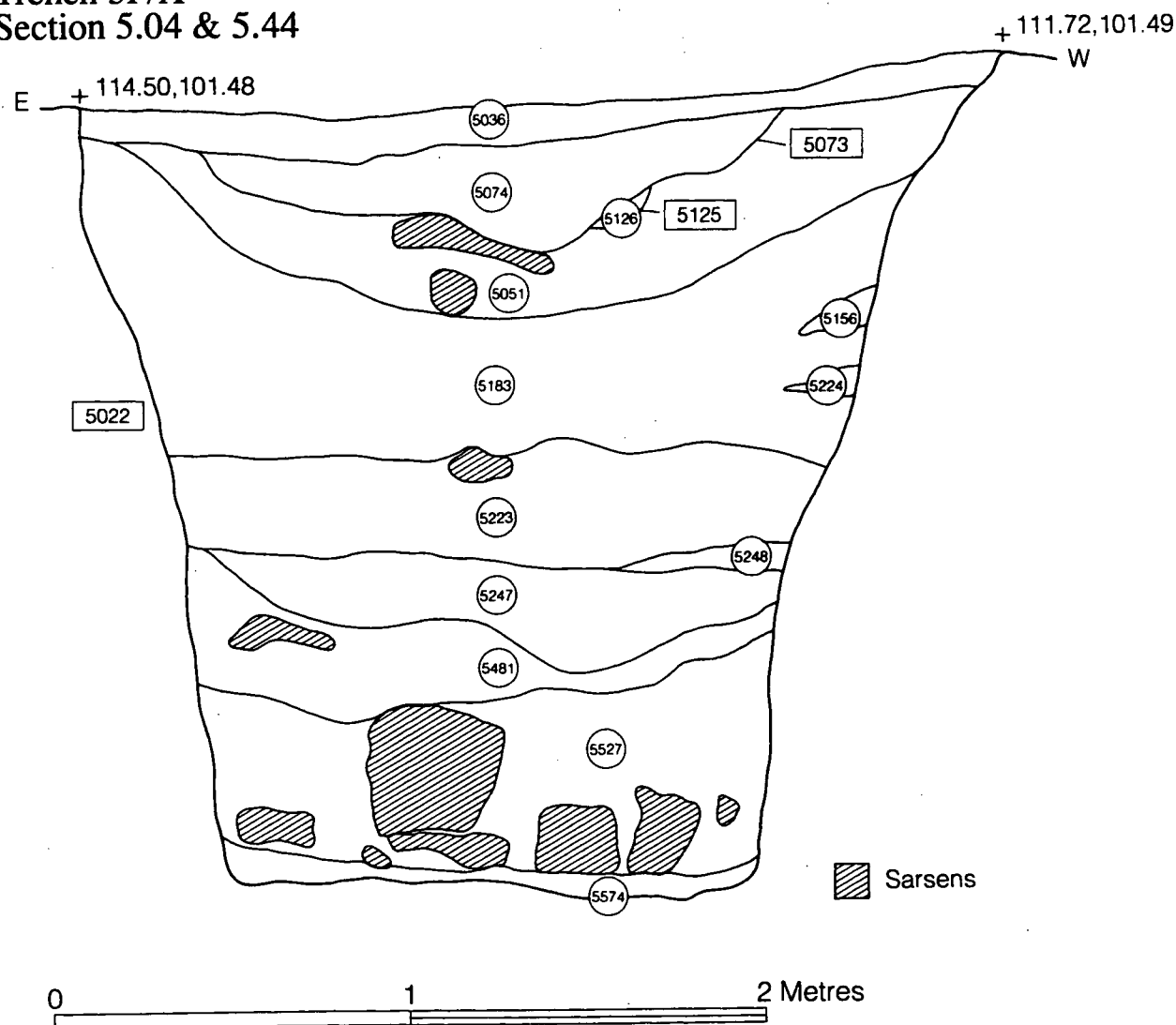


Fig 24. Sections 5.04 and 5.44 of pit 5022.

the linears around Alfred's Castle either follow the contours around the bowl-shaped depression in which the enclosure sits or cut across the contours. This might reinforce the impression that the linear ditches were aligned on the round barrows, rather than with respect to topography. The area west of Stanton Harcourt in the Thames Valley may exhibit a similar situation with Iron Age settlements laid out with respect to earlier Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments (Lambrick *et al* forthcoming). The digging of these ditches was broadly contemporary with the nearby settlements on Tower Hill and Weathercock Hill in the late Bronze Age (Cromarty *et al*, forthcoming).

The construction of a double enclosure occurred in the 6th century, Alfred's Castle being the smaller element, re-using two earlier linear ditches which create a corner of its substantial ditch. The larger enclosure to the north has a shallower ditch which follows the line of a filled-in linear ditch on its western edge. There was intense early/middle Iron Age occupation within the small enclosure with crop growing and processing and an emphasis on sheep and wool

production. There were at least two phases of rampart construction with entrances at the north-west and (possibly) north-east. At present we would prefer to see Alfred's Castle as an enclosure, rather than a hillfort, and thus rather different in type from Liddington, Uffington and Segsbury, which are all larger and positioned on the edge of the chalk escarpment. Ditched settlements were uncommon in the early Iron Age in this region, but one well-known exception is Allen's Pit near Dorchester, which is surrounded by a ditch 5 m wide and nearly 3 m deep (Harding 1972). We know of no other examples of the combination of a large and small enclosure, which are contemporary. The smaller enclosure obviously had intense interior occupation. Excavation and some preliminary magnetometry has shown the existence of pits both inside and outside the large enclosure and we hope to investigate this distribution further through geophysics and key-hole excavation. There is little evidence for late Iron Age activity.

In the 1st century AD the Romano-British farm house was built, probably high status within a local context, extended

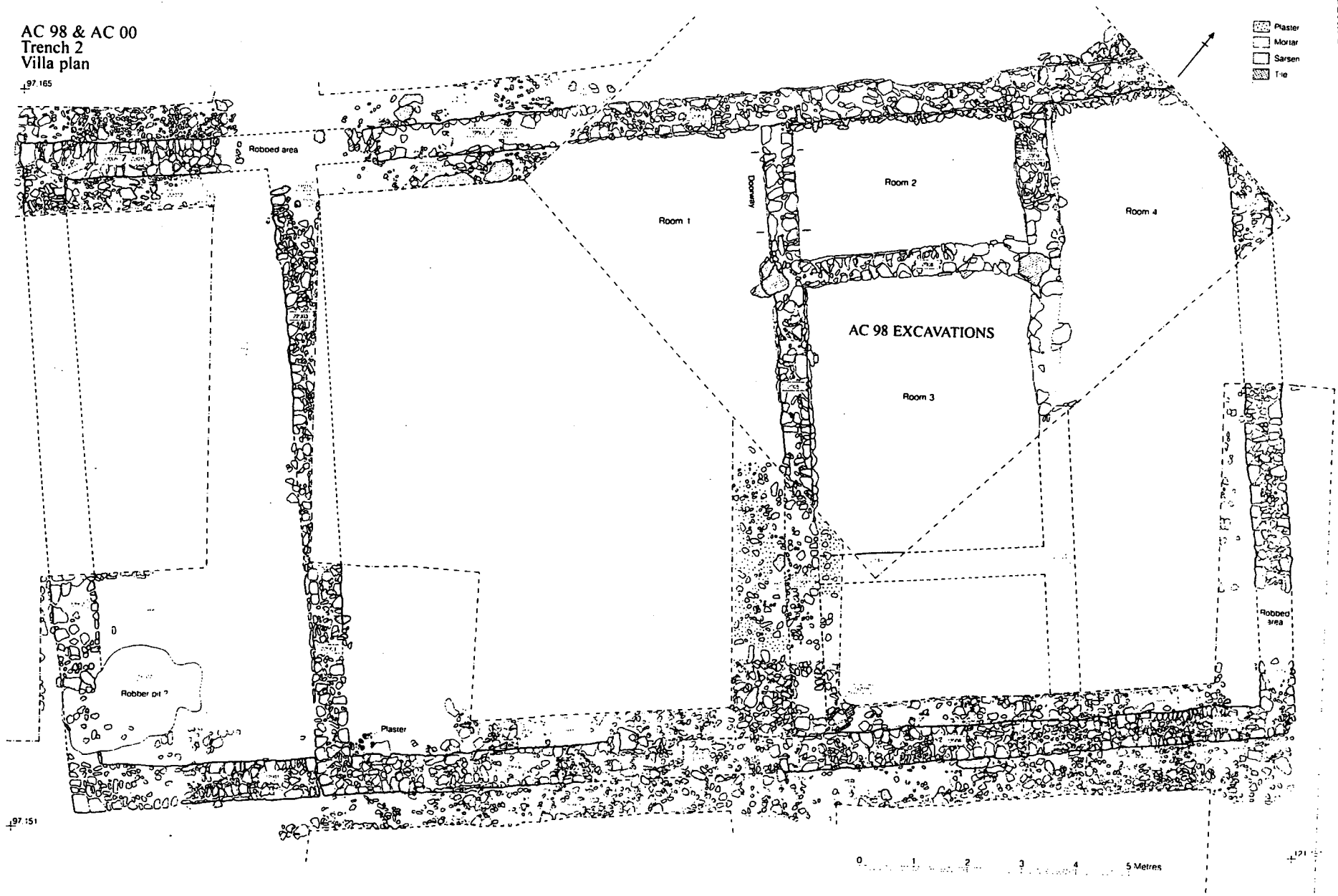


Fig 25. Plan of the villa house showing the area of excavations in 1998 (rooms 1-4) and of the 2000 excavations. Trenches 16 and 17 ran the length of the walls and trenches 18 and 19 were excavated in southern corner.

at least once and demolished in the late 3rd century. This was one of a number of villa houses across the Berkshire Downs and at the foot of the chalk escarpment, representing one element in an organised agrarian landscape, which probably made use of both field systems and arable areas. There is very limited evidence of anything sub-Roman or later within Alfred's Castle.

This is obviously an important site for the understanding of the Berkshire Downs in the later prehistoric and Romano-British periods. The evidence for this area is now impressive with relatively recent excavations at Liddington Camp, White Horse Hill, Tower Hill, Weathercock Hill, Rams Hill, and Segsbury Camp. An emerging theme is variability of these sites in terms of their origins and sequence, occupation, function and structural details, something to be expanded upon in the final report for Alfred's Castle.

Educational value

The Project maintained its high educational profile with the training of over 80 full and part-time students. Numerous site tours were given to archaeological, environmental and other groups and talks to local societies continue throughout the year. The site was open as part of National Archaeology Day when, in conjunction with the National Trust, various activities were organised for over 200 visitors. On-site computing and environmental sampling formed part of the student's training programme. Two artists in residence were funded by Southern Arts throughout the four week season, Simon Callery, an artist, and Andrew Watson, a photographer. Various works were created on site and presented as part of National Archaeology Day including a life size 20 m by 2 m plaster cast of the surface of Trench 10 which was removed for future display in a gallery and a series of photographs of the trenches as they were excavated.

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to the National Trust and especially Keith Blaxhall for all of the help and support given before, during and after the four weeks of digging. We are also very grateful to Charles Peploe for permission to excavate a trench on his land. The excavation would not have been possible without the supervisory skills of Sheila Raven, Richard Bailey, Patrick Daly, Tyler Bell, Les Higgins and Tom Evans on site, as well as the many students and volunteers who worked with such enthusiasm and good will. Special thanks are due to Maurice and Sue for glorious food on a small budget, to Tyler Bell for looking after the computing and to Michael McKeon for the hot showers. The 2000 excavations were funded by the University of Oxford, the Roman Research Trust and the British Academy.

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WITNEY

The following reports were produced in the 1970s when the work was carried out. No attempt has been made to bring them up to date, the intention being to make the information available (Ed)

Excavations at the rear of 13. Market Square, Witney.

Geoffrey F. Williams

These observations relate to the north face of a drainage trench at the rear of the above premises, and were discovered during the course of building alterations in September 1975.

Viewed in section the 11 m length of drainage trench was overlaid by a confused mass of building debris to a depth of some 50 cm. However, the following features appeared quite clearly in the south facing exposure.

F1, F3 and F4 were sections of ditches and/or pits, all were filled with light yellow clayey soil containing chips of natural limestone, interspersed with large fragments of charcoal, pottery and bone.

F3 also contained a 3.5 x 2 cm pellet of bronze slag.

All these features contained similar pottery, the majority of which was coarsely gritted with oolitic limestone and other filling (Oxford Fabric AC). Two sherds were entirely flint-gritted and four others had a sandy fabric. Two other sherds, one of which was partly glazed, were representative of Oxford Type BB.

Both straight sided and everted cooking pots were present,

Oxfordshire

and the whole assemblage suggests a 12th century date, although there is a possibility that it may be slightly earlier.

F2 appeared to be contemporary with most of the overlying rubble, and consisted of an isolated layer of pottery in a shallow pit immediately underlying a stone wall. All the pottery was closely dateable to the early 18th century and a collection of salt glazed stoneware included fragments of a brown tankard in addition to a 'combed' and green glazed and Leaffield type ware.

The material from this excavation would appear to represent the earliest provenanced pottery from the town centre of Witney, and a careful watch will be kept on the immediate vicinity of the above features in view of proposed development plans.

Thanks are due to Mr R Allen of the Anglia, Hastings and Thanet Building Society for permission to excavate, and to the staff of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit, particularly Maureen Mellor and Joe de Goris for identifying the pottery.

Excavation of a section of Iron Age Ditch at Oxford Hill Cogges, Witney. (SP 36750970).

Geoffrey F. Williams

Summary.

During in-fill building between the Witney By-pass and the old A40 road at Oxford Hill, Witney, a ditch of Iron Age origin was discovered. It was excavated for a one metre length, and further work is planned to establish whether or not it formed part of an enclosure.

Acknowledgements.

Thanks are due to Mr P Evans and others who helped with the excavation, and to the West Oxfordshire District Council for their co-operation and supply of plans.

Introduction

The site lies some 300 m east of Church Lane, Newland Witney, with the ditch running some 10 m south of, and almost parallel to, the old A40 road which has now been by-passed.

The excavated area at SP 36750970 was the only portion of the feature open long enough for any detailed recording to take place and was first observed when an entrance to the development area was cut at right-angles in a southerly direction into the bank of the existing A40 road. Although it was then seen as two separate profiles, (one on each side of the cutting), it is assumed to have been continuous for the 15 m length prior to its removal by contractors.

The ditch was aligned slightly southwest of the existing A40 and followed the downhill contour, unfortunately the western (lower) section terminated in an area which had been disturbed by building operations and trial trenching failed to locate it any further in that direction.

Geology.

The ditch was cut into the underlying Oxford Clay which forms part of a low step in the flood plain of the River Windrush.

Cropmarks.

The area of the site is covered by aerial photograph OCCM A557/006 SP 3609N which includes Cogges Manor, but no trace of the ditch is visible in the overlying ridge and furrow which is presumably associated with the Cogges Manor complex.

The Excavation

The eastern section of the ditch was excavated for a 1 m length and it was seen to have been originally cut into the natural clay to a depth of 48 cm. with no sign of re-cutting. The fill consisted of lightish grey soil, so darkened by the charcoal fragments (some of which exceeded 5 cm in length), as to give an overall dark grey appearance.

Most of the recognisable debris was found in the north side of the ditch in an area extending from the centre to the edge, and consisted of many small fragments of animal bone, (some calcined), small slabs of limestone, (some burnt), several pieces of burnt daub, fragments of at least three different pottery vessels together with a flint scraper and a dogs tooth which had been drilled, possibly for use as part of an ornament. The density of the deposits increased with ditch depth, until midway across the ditch from whence they became more scattered and the fill gradually degenerated into grey/yellow clay with occasional flecks of charcoal and isolated bone fragments.

Time did not permit an excavation of the lower (western) part of the feature, but from the observations that were made, the fill appeared to be devoid of debris, and consisted mainly of lightish grey soil interspersed with flecks of charcoal.

The centre part of the ditch where it had cut deeply into the underlying clay was covered by a whitish/grey deposit 5 cm in depth.

Discussion

Apart from the artifacts being almost undatable (being made from local material), and in the absence of either rim form or decoration on the surviving pottery sherds, the feature itself poses several questions. The total presumed length of 15 m was a virtual straight line, and followed the land slope downhill towards Newland, yet the lower (western) section of the ditch appeared devoid of artifacts.

The animal bone fragments gave the appearance of having been the remains of meals and most had serrated or broken edges as if scavenged by dogs. This was common to bone from all levels of the excavated section, and is open to two interpretations.

1. The bones, after the meal, were deposited along with other refuse en masse possibly as the result of a clearing out of nearby habitations(s), this would indicate that the observed

ditch length was filled at the same time thus preventing the heavier objects being washed (westwards) downhill.

2. The refuse was deposited in small amounts over a prolonged dry period during which time it was available for scavenging by dogs and other animals. The dryness allowing time for the surface to form a congealed deposit which was almost impervious to later precipitation. This interpretation is supported by the layer of apparent 'primary silting', which could be an amalgam of white clay particles and calcined bone etc, which leached slowly through the contents of the ditch after it had been filled.

It is assumed that the feature was originally constructed for enclosure purposes and the observed section represents its northernmost side, this view is supported by the fact that the heavier deposits were found in the north side of the ditch, as would be the case had they been thrown from the south, or from inside such an enclosure.

The feature is in an area which could possibly be associated with the 'failed' Newland settlement of AD 1212/13, although it is generally accepted (and more recent fieldwork tends to support this), that it lies under the later 15th century burgrave plots between the River Windrush and Madeley Brook, some 500 m west of the area under discussion. The ditch lies under the ridge and furrow, so obviously predates the Cogges Manor and deserted medieval village complex, yet there is no mention of it in the Saxon Charters, and it is assumed that if the feature was extant or existed as part of a settlement or boundary at that time, it would have been included. In fact the charter of 969 AD covers the area wherein the feature lies, ie Item 18c - "AEFTER WYRTWALAN ON WENRIC" which Grundy interprets as 'The WYRTWALEN may be the foot of the slope along which the Witney boundary runs just northwest of Newland, the reference to the Windrush is to that point where it meets the west boundary of Witney'.

The documentary evidence then offers no support that the site is of Saxon origin, and with the negative evidence of late Romano- British survival sherds amongst the pottery, it must therefore be assumed to date from the late Iron Age.

Pottery of similar fabric was found during the construction of the Witney by-pass in 1975 in a similar geological position and some 800 m to the south of this site. This was also designated as being of late Iron Age origin: whether the two sites were contemporary must await the outcome of further fieldwork.

Alluvial Cropmark Research (Upper Thames Valley) Evidence of Romano-British Settlement

**Meadow Farm, Buckland Road, Bampton
(SP 334 010)**

Summary.

The following excavation was undertaken in order to

confirm the results of research mentioned in the Oxford Archaeological Unit publication 'The Upper Thames Valley. An archaeological survey of the River Gravels' (Benson & Miles, 1973). The object of which was to draw attention to, and discover the cause of the occurrence of newly emerged cropmarks which appeared on the alluvial soils in the Upper Thames Valley in the years between 1962 and 1970.

In the above survey it is mentioned that reasons for these cropmarks would be published in a forthcoming report (Benson D, Miles D and Williams G) in 1974, however, due to the formation of the Oxford Archaeological Unit and relocation of staff, it had not as yet been published. (p.13).

Nevertheless, an extensive study of the agrarian history of over 30 fields in the alluvial soil area was undertaken by the author. This included plough depths, soil moisture deficit readings, river meanders, field drains, types of crop grown since 1960, information from local farmers' records, and main seed chandlers.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Met. Office (Bracknell) for records of water tables; Refuge Insurance Co. for excavation permission; Tom Hassall for arranging loan of tools from Oxford C.C.; Louise Armstrong and members of the Witney Archaeological Research Group for their help.

Aims

Considering that in excess of 60 possible hitherto unknown sites had emerged over the 8 year period, and research into the anomaly had been completed, it was decided to carry out a small trial excavation in order that the origin of the cropmarks and the reason for their emergence could be confirmed. This was discussed with the OAU Director (Tom Hassall) who was in agreement that it should be undertaken on a site which had an uncertain historical background (suspected Deserted Medieval Village), and was located near the River Thames. From this Meadow Farm (Alluvial Research Field No 9) was selected.

Strategy

In an area exceeding some 40 featureless acres, the main problem was to be that of locating a specific cropmark shown in the small scale aerial photograph of the whole site (NMR 71 SP 330/8/363) and aligning it with an extant marker point. This was achieved by utilizing a seemingly permanent 10 m length of ancient wall which, when sighted longitudinally, gave a magnetic bearing of 186 degrees. A marker line was then extended from its southern end to the north bank of Great Brook, a distance of 268 m. This is shown as line A to B on the excavation map; to aid future excavators and enable them to locate the position of the remaining features.

In view of the inclement weather conditions and the time scale available it was decided trial excavations would be limited in both surface area and depth, as prior research had shown that beneath the 40 cm depth of alluvial soil there was an Oxford clay layer of unknown depth.

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Excavation

Excavation was commenced on 13 April 1977 with Cutting No 1 which was made at 85 m north of Great Brook and triangulated to 15 m east, with a trench measuring 3 m length 1 m width. The 40 cm of alluvial soil was then removed from this area revealing a layer of Oxford clay into which a 1.3 m northeast/southwest ditch had been cut. A 1 m length of the ditch was then sectioned and seen to have been cut into a 35 cm clay layer which overlaid the natural silty gravel subsoil.

The uppermost filling of the ditch itself consisted of dark silty soil which was probably the result of the topsoil wash using the feature as a drain to the water table. The remainder of the ditch contained a fairly consistent fill of dark loamy soil, which, below the outer clay level, became interspersed with small lenses of silty gravel, together with many small Romano-British potsherd fragments.

The water table at that present time (4/1977), was reached 1.05 m below the field surface level and was within the continued ditch profile down to its base which was reached at a depth of 1.35 m. This contained larger sherds of Romano-British pottery and fragments of jawbone. (These were kept apart from those discovered above the water level.).

Discussion

The material obtained from the random 1 m length of ditch complex exceeds the amount of detritus normally associated with boundary ditches; thus considering that the whole cropmark area probably consists in excess of 750 m in total length it can only be assumed that it was associated with habitation rather than for coralling or drainage/irrigation purposes. The ratio of ditch depth to width exceeds that normally associated with gravel terrace occupation. The consistent shaping of the ditch profile during construction is a possible indication that the water table was at least 20 cm lower at that period, and the ratio would have been compatible with the problem of penetrating the impervious clay to procure drainage facility into the underlying fine silty gravel, there was no evidence of recutting related to this feature.

Further investigation of the settlement to the north and east, particularly the sub-rectangular enclosures with pits and trackways will no doubt yield conclusive evidence as to dating and function of the whole complex

G.F. Williams. September 2000. Based on original excavation report and finds marked 'MF/77' submitted to OAU in 1977.

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