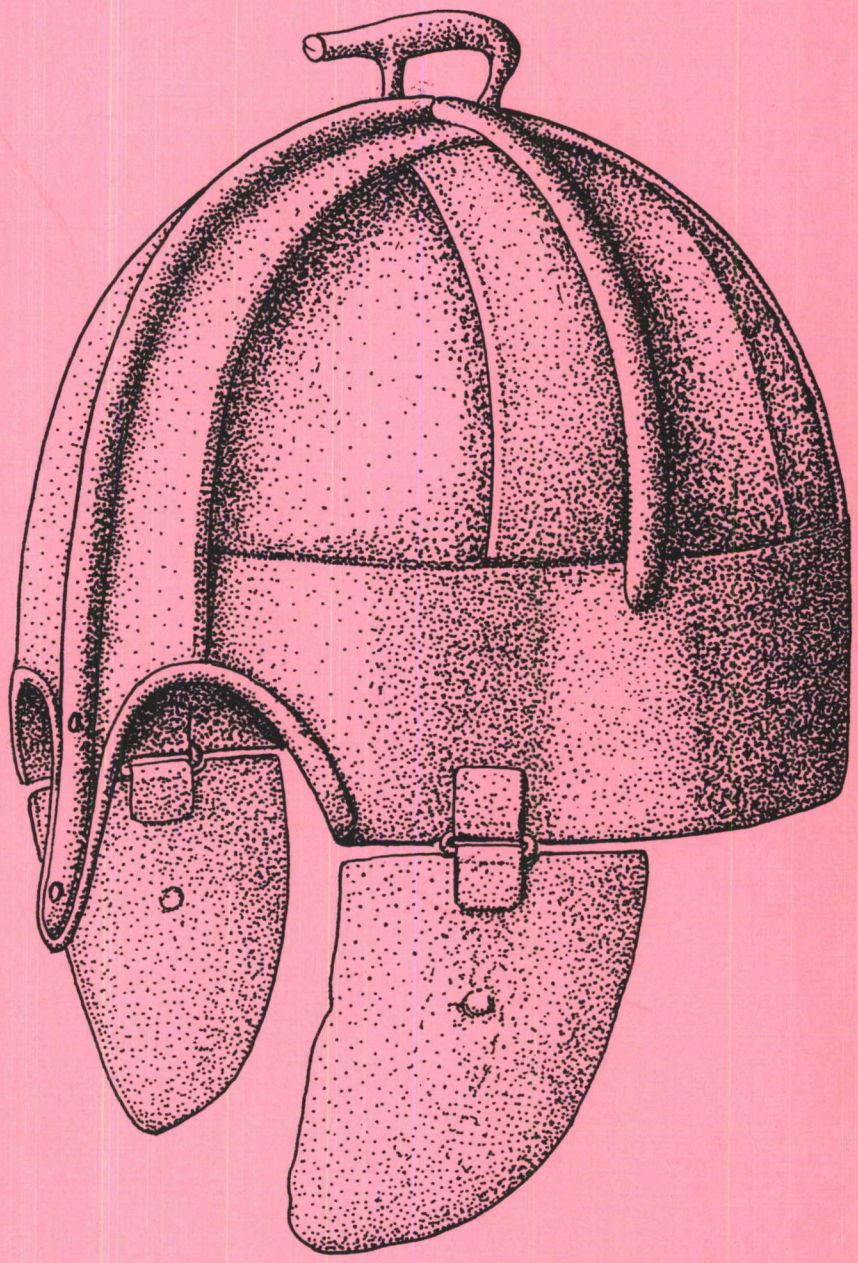
SOUTH MIDLANDS ARCHAEOLOGY

28
1998



CBA
SOUTH MIDLANDS GROUP

SOUTH MIDLANDS ARCHAEOLOGY

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

NUMBER 28, 1998

CONTENTS

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EDITORIAL

The archaeological picture in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire continues in a state of flux. Buckinghamshire is a disaster area with little Museum or archaeology provision. Mike Farley has gone, the county is now only funding one post, the other is being funded on a short term basis by English Heritage. The archaeological provision in Milton Keynes has improved slightly but is still causing the Group some concern.

At the time of writing it looks as though the Bedford Archaeology Unit is to be externalised; in other words it is to sink or swim as best it can.

You will see from the contents of this volume that lots of archaeology is going on in the Group's area. This is particularly so in Oxfordshire where a new vigorous group has started up in the north of the county.

Regretably some groups who dig in the area have not submitted a report; this is particularly disappointing with regard to the gas pipeline which discovered many new sites as it cut through Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire during 1997.

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* 29. Please send a note, however short, of any work carried out in the four counties.

Copy date for *SMA* 29 is **31st March 1999**; please refer to Notes for contributors.

Barry Horne AIFA

BEDFORDSHIRE

BEDFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE (BCAS)

Evelyn Baker
Archaeology Service Manager

The organisation has been in a situation of constant change over the last two years. Many readers of CBA South Midlands journal will be aware that David Baker the County Archaeologist was "retired" at the end of the financial year 1996 to 1997. We have been for a year without a County Archaeologist, and David's duties have fallen on the shoulders of the two County Council Groups who succeeded him: the Heritage and Environment Group (HEG) led by David Bevan, and BCAS. HEG includes the Historic Buildings Officers, the Bedfordshire equivalent of an SMR (which includes buildings), and the Archaeological Conservation Officer (archaeological planning). BCAS was originally put in a Consultancy Services Division along with Engineers (about to be externalised under Compulsory Competitive Tendering) and the Council's County Training Group. Since then it has moved into the Environmental Services Division alongside HEG, though the two parts are still entirely separate. We are now exploring the possibility of externalisation under a county-wide initiative to find external partners to carry out the Council's various functions.

The year has seen a combination of large scale fieldwork supported by a series of evaluations. Many of the projects are outlined below, and include useful additions to the major Bedford Southern Bypass project: Cardington Road, Elstow/Harrowden, and land west of Elstow village. The long-term excavation of the deserted Medieval and Saxon village of Stratton is one of the unit's show piece projects, arousing a great deal of interest. More pieces of the jigsaw projects of the origins of Bedford and the Romano-British settlement around Kempston are adding to several years of research.

Work in parallel has concentrated not only on post excavation but on reviewing and enhancing our systems and procedures. A new and considerably improved Procedures Manual, and a projects database have resulted. While BCAS has started to work in the neighbouring counties of Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire, the District Auditor confirmed that Bedfordshire County Council has the power to undertake commercial archaeological work. A substantial cut in BCAS' core funding saw a marked diminution of public service archaeology, but this has largely been made up by Redlands plc who provided funding which allowed Sandy Town Council to commission a full colour popular booklet on Roman Sandy. This has been a considerable success. Mike Dawson and I attended the Medieval conference in Bruges where our two papers were published. BCAS also produced another Annual Review and is already gathering material for the next issue.

One surprise project (14-15a St Paul's Square, Bedford) came with the refurbishment of an office into a public house, named The Bull-nosed Bat (a type of Bedfordshire brick). Although this did require planning permission there was no requirement for an archaeological evaluation. Consequently when the condition of the building forced the developers to alter their approach and dig a number of large deep pile shafts, the discovery of an early cemetery came as a complete surprise: The cemetery appears to predate the grid plan of the pre-915 burgh, with the dating confirmed by 10th or 11th century pottery in pits dug through the burials' sealing layer. Much was made of "Bedford's Oldest residents".

Ampthill, Feoffee Almshouses (TL03713824)
Drew Shotliff

Underpinning work on the rear wall of the Feoffee Almshouses (within the churchyard of St Andrew's Church) was monitored. It was clear that during the 19th century burials had been inserted right up against the wall of the almshouses; no traces of any Medieval deposits survived.

Bedford, 2 St Cuthbert's Street
Michael Dawson

Four evaluation trenches were excavated at 2 St Cuthbert's Street. They were designed to test the depth of surviving archaeology, to assess the character of the evidence and to determine its extent. The site was located on the eastern edge of what has been assumed to be the late Saxon burgh, although it has never been clear whether this particular area was within the defences. The results of the evaluation indicate the earliest surviving archaeology dates to the 10th century, with the dating evidence predominantly ceramic. The contexts from which the earliest ceramics were recovered were pits and together with the general lack of extensive structural evidence may suggest they were associated with extra mural settlement, close to the earlier Saxon burgh (Hill 1970). Furthermore the evaluation suggests this settlement may have developed in the 10th century.

However the nature of later activity indicates that occupation in this area may not have been continuous. The early pit digging certainly indicates the spread of habitation eastwards and later pits suggest the pattern of streets which developed at this time remained the framework of later settlement, despite the construction of the castle precinct during the 12th century in the south eastern quarter of the Saxon burgh. However the effect of the destruction of the castle in the 13th century could not be judged from this evaluation except insofar as the area does not seem to have generated any significant evidence of activity until the later Medieval period.

By the post-Medieval period historic map evidence shows St Cuthbert's to have developed as an area of habitation,

with houses, hostelries and shops as well as the rectory at 18 St Cuthbert's. It is during this period that the early evidence was substantially truncated by a diversity of activities from later pit digging to recent (early 19th century) house construction. In particular the provision of services to the latter in the 20th century has added another raft of damage. The damage was most acute on the frontage beneath the location of the proposed structures at 2 St Cuthbert's Street, due to the cellarage in the north portion of the site and geotechnical holes excavated in the 1960s. (extract from BCAS Report 98/02)

Bedford, Town Centre Improvement Scheme
Mark Phillips and Michael Dawson

The third phase of the town centre improvements scheme was initiated by Bedford Borough Council in 1997. It comprised limited works including the reconstruction of roads at the junction of Horne Lane and St Paul's Road, the junction of Midland Road and River Street and construction of a roundabout at the west end of Horne Lane. The shallow nature of the work confirmed that little archaeology survives above approximately 26 m to 26.5 m OD but below this height remains can be expected to be extensive. During this watching brief Medieval deposits, including a stone lined well and a pit, were disturbed along the east side of River Street.

Bedford, 14 - 15a St Paul's Square, Bedford (Fig 1, 2)
Mark Phillips and Sean Steadman

The site was discovered during the conversion of a former estate agent's office into a pub, on the north side of St Paul's Square in Bedford town centre.

The site is located within the northern burh which was established with its planned layout of streets sometime during the Saxon period, possibly by the end of the 8th century AD. Previous excavations in St Paul's Square in 1987 uncovered a number of burials of Late Saxon-Medieval date.

Archaeological involvement in the site commenced after the building inspector, Chris Sawford, recognised human remains in the builders' trenches. The refurbishment work involved the removal of most of the internal walls and the floors. Steel work to support the new internal structure required the excavation of foundation trenches at regular intervals. The trenches measured approximately 1.5 m square and were cut down to the top of the grave fills. The cemetery deposits and deeper cutting features were excavated archaeologically. The strata excavated by the builders were recorded in section.

The earliest phase of the site consists of a cemetery. The deepest graves were cut into the clean underlying sandy natural. It proved difficult to identify the grave cuts of burials found higher up the profile as they lay within a homogenous layer of only slightly modified subsoil. Excavation within small trenches has resulted in a discontinuous view of the cemetery, many of the burials could only be partially uncovered with the remainder lying beneath the baulk. The individual graves were aligned east - west and were arranged in closely set parallel rows running north-south. The skeletons follow two slightly different alignments, the earliest are eastnortheast-westsouthwest and the later skeletons are more regular east-west. In addition, quantities of charnel were recovered, some of which was still articulated and had clearly been incorporated into the graves of later interments. A single sherd of Early-Middle Saxon pottery dating from the 6th or 7th century AD was found in the backfill of one of the graves. This might suggest that the cemetery dates from before the foundation of the town.

Ultimately the cemetery went out of use to be succeeded by evidence of occupation. Some of the graves were cut by pits containing domestic debris dating from the 10th/11th centuries to the 15th/16th centuries. A bone counter, possibly a gaming piece, was recovered from one of the later pits. It was carved from the jawbone of a cow, and probably dates to the 11th century. The *terminus ante quem* provided by the material above the skeletons indicates that the cemetery is probably of pre-conquest date. Certainly, by the 11th to 13th centuries AD, when some of the burials were disturbed by the digging of later pits, this area was no longer considered sacred ground.

The Medieval pits were sealed by a thick layer of garden soil which in turn was cut by post-Medieval pits and wall foundations.

Bedford, Castle Close (TL52809635)
Mark Philips and Drew Shotliff

Work by Eastern Electricity within the bounds of the scheduled Bedford Castle motte and bailey gave rise to a watching brief. The excavation of a cable trench running 25 m southwards from the southern side of the motte was monitored. The trench was 0.6 m deep. Exposed but not excavated in the base of the trench was 19th century occupation debris. This was sealed by relatively sterile imported subsoil, which appeared to represent levelling for the present-day ornamental gardens.

Bedford, Cardington Road (TL065487)
Nick Shepherd

The proposal to build a bus lane on the north side of Cardington Road led to an archaeological evaluation. Five trenches were excavated parallel to the north edge of the road with one located to investigate an area designated for a balancing pond. A dispersed scatter of ditch and pit-type features, largely undated, indicated activity within a 200 m wide zone at the east end of the site. Two features contained pottery of 11th/12th century date.

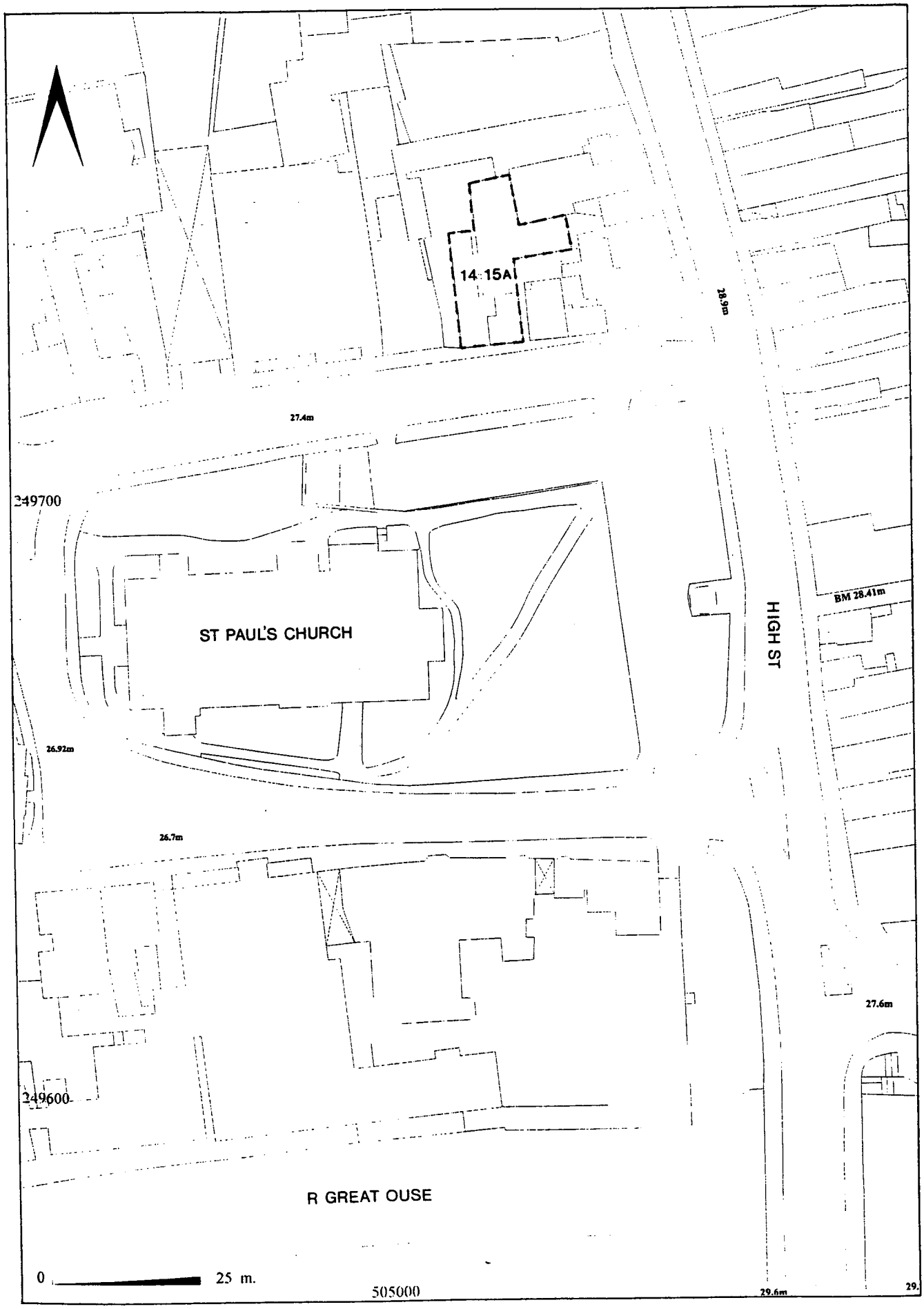

Fig 1. 14-15a St Paul's Square, Bedford

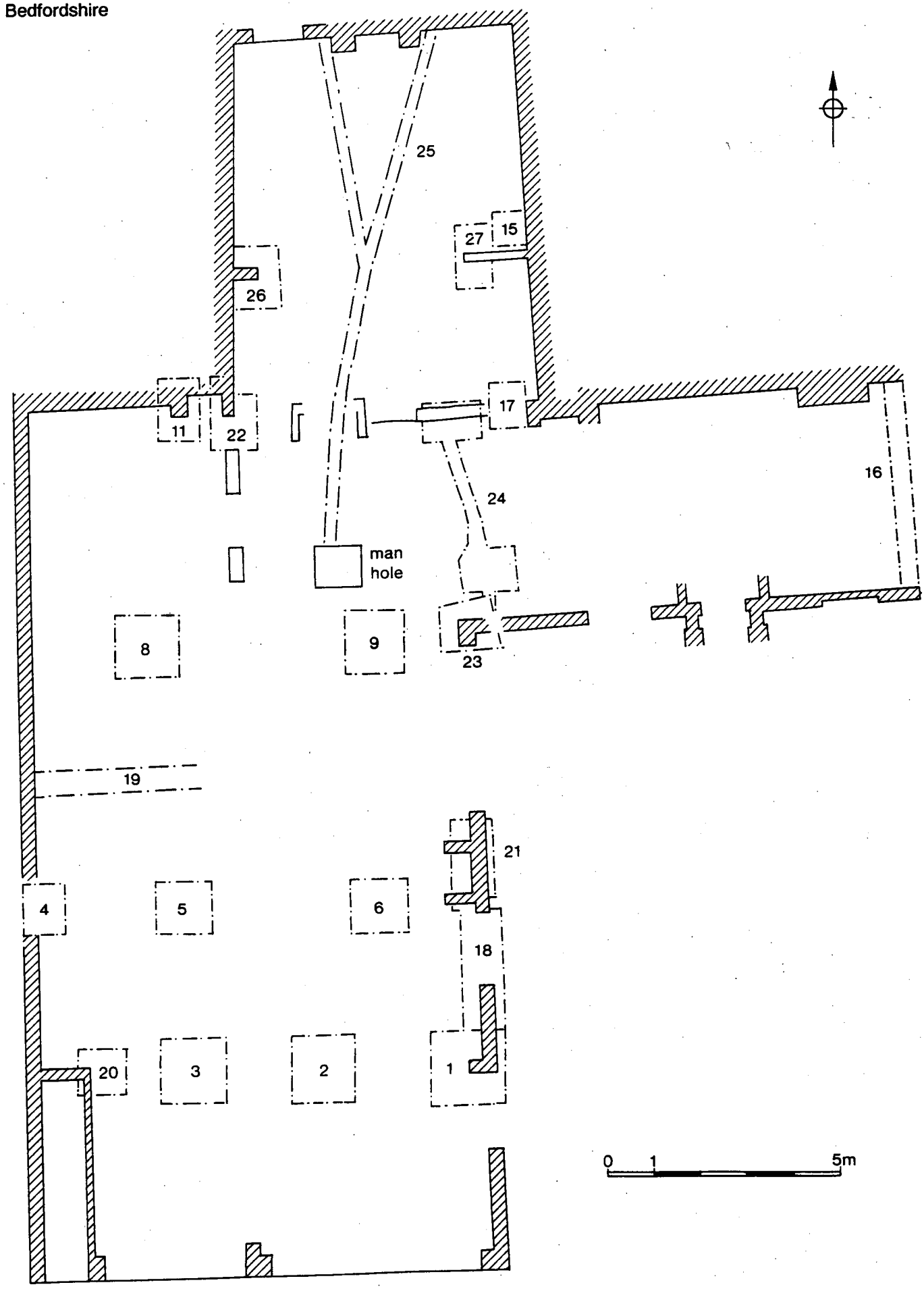

Fig 2. Trench location. 14-15a St Paul's Square, Bedford.

The study area is historically water meadow with the River Great Ouse 400 m to the north. The excavated evidence indicates previously unknown mediaeval activity, possibly settlement. Alternatively, it may indicate specialised or temporary activity associated with the particular environments and habitats close to the river. All deposits were found to be waterlogged although no direct evidence for preservation of complex organic structures was recovered.

Although significant and sensitive archaeological deposits were located, development will have little impact and no further work is planned.

Bedford, Elstow/Harrowden (TL055475)
Nick Shepherd

Archaeological investigations prompted by the construction of the Bedford Southern Bypass have been reported on recently in this journal (*SMA* 25). Land to the north of the road, between the villages of Elstow and Harrowden, is now subject to rapid development, as housing. Landscapes already partly investigated as part of the Bypass project are now under threat from this new phase of work and limited evaluation has taken place to further characterise sites at Village Farm, Bunyan's Farm and Manor Farm.

At Village Farm scattered unenclosed Iron Age settlement was found to extend into the development area although only limited recording was been possible and the full extent of activity is uncertain. At Bunyan's Farm an almost complete settlement of early to late Iron Age date has been discovered. Surrounded by ditches defining a rectangular enclosure 100 m by 70 m, the settlement comprises a large central yard with smaller enclosures to east and west. Pottery and bone indicate the normal range of agricultural and domestic functions typical on such sites. Further east at Manor Farm a more extensive network of rectilinear enclosures marks the site of later Iron Age, Roman and Middle Saxon occupation. Again a range of domestic and agricultural activities are represented including agricultural kilns and circular buildings. In addition to the settlement sites two ring ditches were also investigated and the location of a possibly contemporary palaeochannel confirmed.

The Elstow Harrowden evidence significantly adds to that already gathered during the Bypass project. Only the margins of the Bunyan's Farm and Manor Farm sites were investigated prior to the construction of the road while work within this phase of development will affect the core of both sites.

Bedford, Norse Road (TL090510)
Nick Shepherd

Watching brief during topsoil stripping of areas surrounding mid-late Iron Age/Romano-British settlement enclosure reported on in *SMA* 27. No archaeological features were observed beyond the settlement.

Biddenham, Biddenham Loop (TL023494)
Mike Luke and Raurigh Dale

During May 1997 a watching brief and excavation were undertaken in advance of golf course construction. An area of approximately 0.7 ha was recorded following topsoil clearance and will add to current knowledge of the early prehistoric landscape development within this loop of the River Great Ouse.

A linear concentration of small pits and postholes represents a Bronze Age settlement. The postholes did not form any obvious structures. The features appeared to concentrate in two discrete areas, each concentration containing one hearth. Within one concentration a larger pit was located containing cremated human bone and 171 flint artefacts. Two other small pits contained cremated human bone. Recognisable pottery forms recovered from the pits included Beaker and Mortlake style vessels.

Tree-throws, some containing pottery, flint artefacts or charcoal were located mainly to the north of the excavated area.

Biggleswade, Stratton (TL203439)
Drew Shotliff

1.6 ha of the Stratton Residential Development Area were investigated in advance of social housing construction. The area of excavation lay on the west central margins of the known area of Saxon and Medieval settlement remains, which cover a total area of around 18 ha. The recorded evidence was principally Saxon and Saxo-Norman in date with the subsequent Medieval phases represented only by field boundaries.

The first phase of occupation appears to date to the early 7th century. Its principal components were four widely spaced wells, a small number of pits, a sunken featured building, and the remnants of a probable post-built structure. These appear to represent peripheral elements of an unenclosed settlement. This type of activity continued into the middle Saxon period with replacement wells being constructed. The two deepest contained wattle linings, each of which had been renewed at least once. A considerable quantity of Maxey-type ware was recovered from these features.

By the late Saxon/Saxo-Norman period the majority of the wells had been abandoned and a farmstead site, comprising a post-built dwelling, an ancillary structure, and a concentration of pits and structural cuts had been established within a landscape increasingly characterised by ditched enclosures and trackways. The latest substantive activity within the excavated area was represented by the re-location of this farmstead site 60 m to the south. The replacement

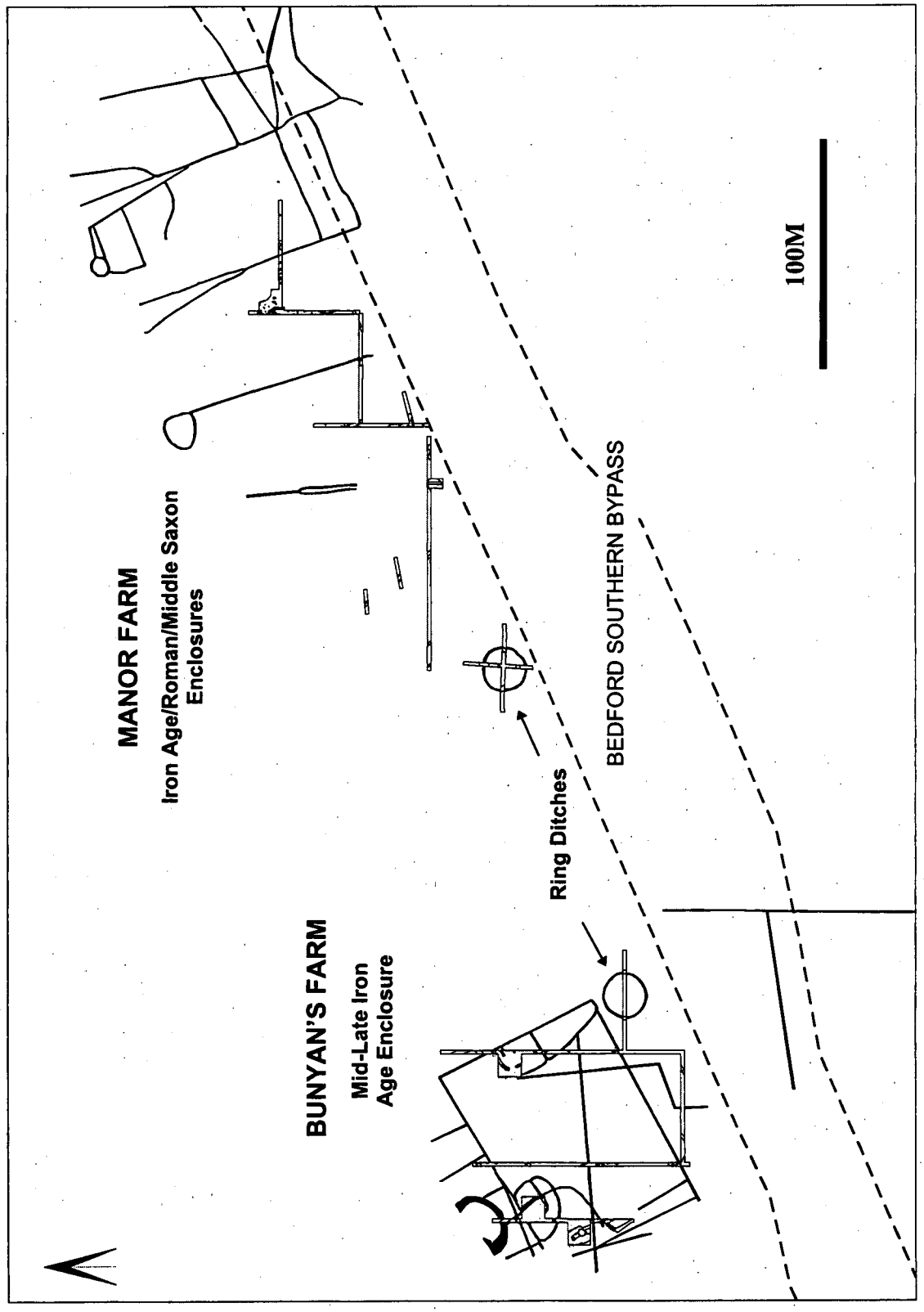

Fig 3: Evaluation trench location and cropmark plots from the Elstow Harrowden development.

dwelling was of beamslot construction. It was approximately 14.5 m long and 5.5 m wide with opposed entrances towards the centre of its long axis. The doorway, facing to the south-east, was defined by substantial door posts and a possible porch structure. This entranceway led directly to one of the abandoned middle Saxon wells, which was used as a dumping ground for domestic rubbish from the building. Large quantities of butchered animal bone, over 5 kg of St Neots-type pottery and various tools and domestic objects of stone, bone and metal were recovered.

Clapham (TL034527)
Mike Luke and Christiane Meckseper

During March and April 1997 an evaluation was undertaken over an area of 11 ha at Church Farm Clapham. The evaluation comprised field artefact collection, geophysical survey and trial excavation. Settlement activity of Iron Age, Roman, Medieval and post-Medieval date was located.

A square ditched enclosure of early Iron Age date was located on a ridge above the later settlement. No structural evidence was located within this enclosure. The later Iron Age activity is restricted to the south of the study area and represents the periphery of the settlement excavated at Ursula Taylor School (Dawson 1988) which was characterised by small rectangular fields or stockpens defined by ditches. No building plans were located but concentrations of postholes probably represent additional buildings. The reduction in the density of features suggests the northern and eastern limit of the settlement had been established. Only limited activity continued into the Roman period.

Saxo-Norman and Medieval settlement was restricted to the south of the study area. The evidence included ditches which were on the same alignments and evidence for buildings. Fragments of glazed floor tile and unglazed paviours located within these trenches probably represent debris from Clapham Manor, believed to be situated adjacent to the study area.

A post-Medieval farm and outbuildings were investigated to the north of the study area. These are visible on an 1812 estate map and no evidence was located for Medieval origins of the farm.

References

Dawson, M, 1988, Excavations at Ursula Taylor Lower School, *Bedfordshire Archaeology* 18, 6-25.

Cranfield, St Peter and St Paul's Church
Jackie Crick

The footings of the external walls were recorded during the construction of a French drain around the east and south sides of the church. This revealed the chancel had been founded on a shallow raft of coursed limestone slabs, continuous except to the west of the chancel's south door. In contrast the south aisle had been founded on a squared raft of coursed cobbles, largely absent west of the south porch. The area around the east side of the porch was heavily disturbed by services, a cellar and coal chute. The church is thought to date from the 12th century and a Norman doorway re-set in the north wall of the north aisle may be a remnant of the early church. The chancel arch and nave arcades are Early English, 13th century, which suggests the chancel was remodelled when the aisles were added. The chancel foundations seem to predate those of the south aisle, being cruder and less substantial in form, although the exact stratigraphic relationship could not be proved from the foundations alone. The south porch was added at a later date, probably during the Victorian period.

Dunstable, 1-5 Edward Street
Michael Dawson

A watching brief during demolition of terraced houses at 1-5 Edward Street, Dunstable, revealed only Edwardian and Victorian demolition rubble, house foundations, cellars and a brick lined well.

Dunton, St Mary Magdalene Church (TL238442)
Nick Shepherd

During a watching brief on drain construction through the churchyard loose bones were recovered from disturbed ground and immediately re-buried. Two brick vaults of probable nineteenth century date were observed.

Elstow, extension of churchyard, St Mary and St Helena's Church (Fig 3)
Tony Walsh and Michael Dawson

A proposal to extend the churchyard of Elstow Parish Church by *c* 46 m x 9.0 m led to the excavation of a single evaluation trench, orientated north to south, two metres east of the churchyard wall.

Beneath topsoil and farmyard levelling were the remains of a number of large irregular pit-like features, probably gravel quarry-pits, and at least three smaller sub-rectangular features, possibly postholes. In the north of the extension area were the remains of brick wall footings, and one square brick soakaway associated with the cottage known, from map evidence, to have faced onto the road and green. No evidence of Medieval activity was recovered.

Elstow, land west of Elstow village (TL0446)
Mark Phillips and Sean Steadman

A non-intensive fieldwalking survey located concentrations of artefacts dating from the early prehistoric to the Medieval periods. Early prehistoric activity was attested by a small concentration of lithic material. Concentrations of late Iron-

Age-Roman material were recovered from an area immediately to the north of Peartree Farm which was excavated in advance of the construction of the Bedford Southern Bypass in 1993. A small quantity of early to middle Saxon pottery was also recovered from across the study area. Concentrations of Saxo-Norman and Medieval material from the north-east of the site probably relate to Medieval occupation of Elstow Abbey and the adjacent village of Elstow.

Harrold (SP9557)
Nick Shepherd

During evaluation ahead of planned housing development eleven trenches and eleven test-pits were excavated across the study area. In combination with geophysical and aerial survey these indicated that the east half of the site had been disturbed by recent quarrying. Areas to the south had been subject to localised disturbance and dumping. A central/west area contained a concentration of pits, ditches and structural features. Although residual prehistoric and Roman material was present, these were dated by pottery to the Early-Middle Saxon period and appear to indicate a settlement focus. Saxon settlement with an associated cemetery was located immediately to the north of the study area during the 1950s (Eagles, Evison 1970). Among the structural features located during the evaluation were three rectangular scoops, possibly sunken featured buildings, and post-holes, possibly hall-type buildings.

References:

Eagles, B N, and Evison, V I, 1970 "Excavations at Harrold, Bedfordshire, 1951-53", *BAJ* 5, 17-55.

Houghton Conquest, All Saints' Church
Sean Steadman

Two trial trenches were excavated in advance of a proposed extension to the churchyard. Evidence of a cobble-lined pond, backfilled with large quantities of modern brick rubble and other debris was uncovered. Some, presumably residual, late Medieval/early post-Medieval pottery sherds were also recovered but there was no indication of any earlier settlement. The pond appears to have belonged to a farm, which formerly lay to the east of the proposed graveyard extension, and is now beneath a modern housing estate.

Kempston, Kempston Manor (TL0247)
Jackie Crick

Excavations in 1994 had revealed the remains of Medieval buildings close to the site of the present manor house, now the headquarters of the Institute of Legal Executives.

Two foundation pits for pier bases, dug adjacent to the south-west garden wall, exposed the clunch footings of the present wall. The wall structure was recorded and the lowest deposits identified with brown garden earth, similar to that located in the 1994 excavations (*BAJ* 22). The clunch footings of the wall may be contemporary with the red brick of the main structure but the 1994 excavations found parts of the early phase of the manor house, in the north-east corner of this garden. These were characterised by substantial clunch footings, suggesting the footings recorded during this watching brief may be further remains of the early manor.

Kempston Church End (TL 0147) (Fig 4)
Michael Luke and Christiane Meckseper

An archaeological evaluation comprising geophysical survey and trial excavation to the south of Kempston Church End has added to the nature and extent of the known Roman settlement situated to the west of the River Great Ouse. During September 1997 ten trial trenches confirmed the system of enclosures and trackways indicated by geophysical survey (undertaken by Geophysical Surveys of Bradford). The pottery assemblage suggests occupation in the area commenced in the late Iron Age and may have continued into the early Saxon period.

The system of enclosures and trackways was concentrated adjacent to the River Great Ouse and appeared to be more extensive to the north of the study area. Trackways were defined by ditches and in places gravel surfaces survived. There was no evidence for a trackway leading to the highly dubious Roman ford (a scheduled monument).

Many of the enclosures contained buildings (at least three were identified), surfaces probably representing yards, isolated hearths, concentrations of pits, possible wells and isolated burials. Recovered artefacts mainly comprised large quantities of Roman pottery and animal bone.

The Bury, Kempston Rural (TL 0147)
Mike Luke and Christiane Meckseper,

Field artefact collection, geophysical survey and trial excavation confirmed the location of a Roman and Medieval settlement (HER 163). During September 1997 three trial trenches confirmed the location of a number of pit and ditch-like anomalies identified during the geophysical survey (undertaken by Geophysical Surveys of Bradford). No settlement plan could be determined for either period and it appears the study area was on the periphery of both settlements.

Although several ditches, pits and postholes were identified, no system of enclosures or building plans could be identified. A well preserved cobbled trackway appeared to coincide with a trackway visible on an 18th century map, which linked Green End, The Bury and Kempston. The pottery assemblage suggests occupation commenced in the late Iron Age and continued throughout the Roman period. No evidence of Saxon activity was located within the study

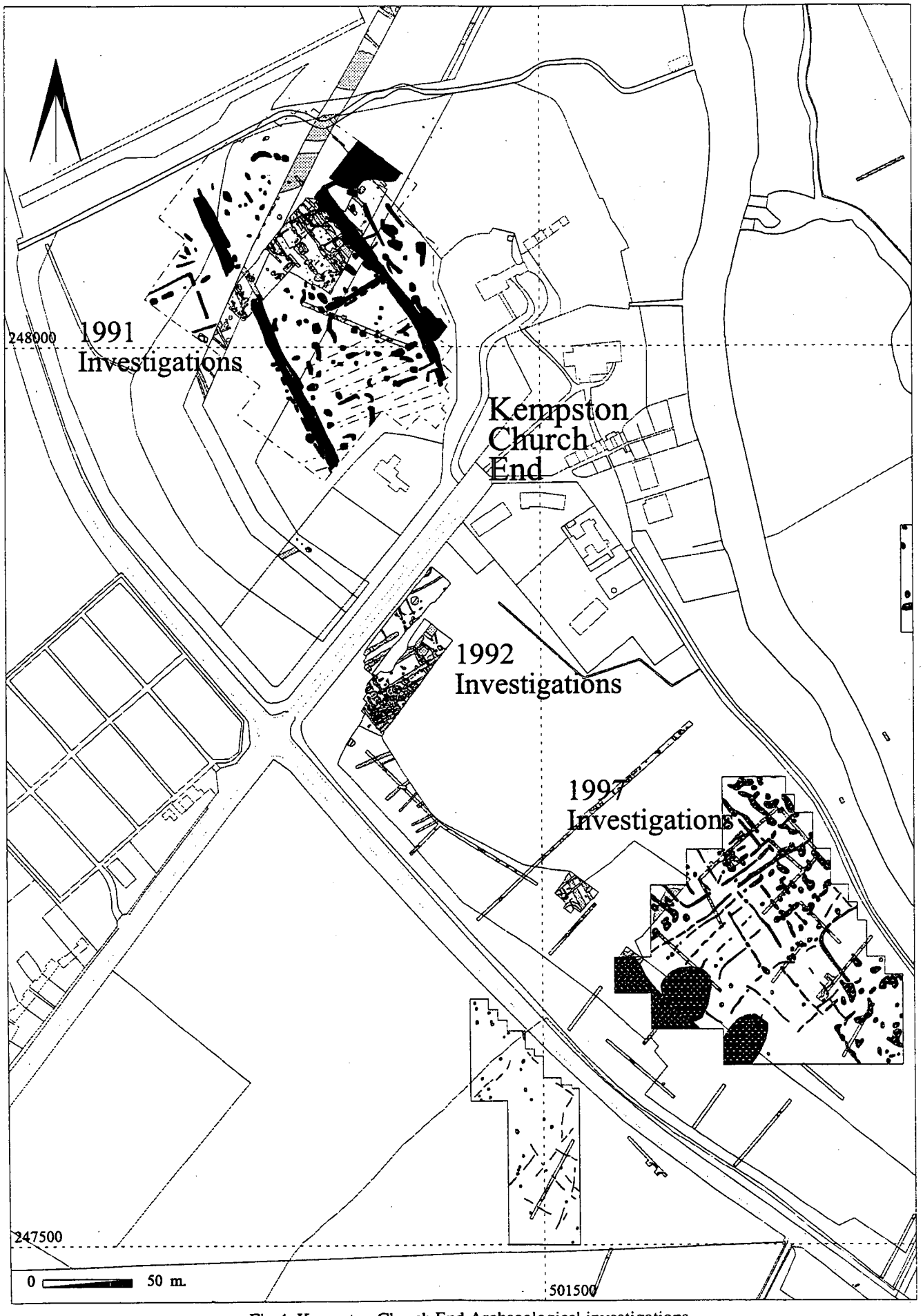

Fig 4: Kempston Church End Archaeological investigations

area, but occupation re-commenced in the Medieval period, possibly associated with the construction of a manor house in the vicinity.

Leagrave, Runfold Avenue (TL073244)
Mike Luke

An archaeological evaluation, comprising three trial trenches, was undertaken in June 1997 at Runfold Avenue. Two undated features were located comprising a small pit and posthole towards the south of the study area. A small quantity of early Roman pottery was recovered from topsoil, and given the proximity of known Roman settlement in the vicinity this is likely to be the date of the features.

Marston Moretaine, Land Adjacent To The Old Nursing Home Bedford Road (SP9941)
Christine Atherton and Sean Steadman

Archaeological excavation was carried out to the rear of the Old Nursing Home in the centre of Marston Moretaine. The site is adjacent to the site of Medieval settlement remains discovered during excavations undertaken in 1994.

Evidence was recorded for late Medieval to modern use of the land, in the form of a pond, boundary and enclosure ditches and a few pits which survived in the northern part of the site. The southern part of the site, however, was completely disturbed by modern features. The nature of these remains suggests that the area consisted of features peripheral to the settlement immediately to the west, such as pasture or other open areas, and/or back garden features behind the street frontage.

The features on the site can be divided into roughly four phases: late Medieval, late Medieval to post-Medieval, late post-Medieval to modern and modern. Most of the modern features were not recorded in detail. Residual pottery of Saxo-Norman and Medieval date indicates earlier activity on site but no features survived from these periods. A previously unknown late Medieval pottery type (coded E08 in the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series) was identified as a result of this excavation.

The earliest surviving features on the site comprise a possible pond and part of a ditched enclosure, dated to the late Medieval period (*c*14th-15th centuries). A later pond cut through the north-west corner of the ditched enclosure was subsequently enclosed within an irregular U-shaped ditch dated to the later Medieval to post Medieval period (*c* 14th-17th centuries).

The late post-Medieval to modern period is characterised by the laying out of regular ditched boundaries to the rear of Bedford Road which appear to correspond with boundaries shown on the 1840 Tithe map. Most modern features were not individually recorded although a large oval pit in the centre of the site contained cow bones in its fill. Local reports suggest that this is 20th century abattoir material which was borne eastwards from Moat Farm in a "cleaning wash", when slaughtering took place on the premises.

Melchbourne, Park Farm (TL0264)
Jackie Crick and David Fell

An archaeological watching brief, a condition of planning consent to convert former barns for residential occupation adjacent to Melchbourne Hall, was undertaken in the summer of 1997. The barns were located approximately 400 m south of the known Templar monastery site at Melchbourne.

Ground reduction revealed no archaeological remains but a large amount of dressed stone work, both limestone and white marble, was noted as re-used in these barns, particularly the west range.

Melchbourne, Hillands End House (SP02756537)
Drew Shotliff

Hillands End House lies within an enclosure defined, in part, by an earthwork ditch. The enclosure also contains the parish church and it has been suggested that it represents a magnate's enclosure centred on a church and manor complex. Topsoil stripping and the excavation of footings for a new garage/stable, adjacent to the south-west corner of the enclosure were monitored. No archaeological features were uncovered; a single sherd of late Medieval pottery was recovered.

Milton Ernest, land adjacent to Pendle, Thurleigh Road (TL02105612)
Sean Steadman

Two trial trenches were excavated in advance of building work within the Medieval village of Milton Ernest. No archaeological features were uncovered.

Pertenhall, St Peter's Church
Jackie Crick and Tony Walsh

During repair and re-construction of choir stalls (which involved lowering the height of the seating to its original level) a brick vault and column base were encountered. These were cleaned and photographed. The column base appeared to be of two phases, the earlier square with one corner visible. Above this had been built a second base for the present column which was topped by a bell capital, similar to the relatively simple style of the 14th century. The column probably relates to a side chapel, the arch to which is still visible in the north chancel wall. This had been infilled with brick and was visible beneath oak panelling which formed the rear of seats. A recumbent figure of a knight in armour, now at the east end of the north aisle, may

have come from the side chapel. Abutting the east side of the column base was a vertical oak timber with a rounded socket at the base, which may have been part of the panelling or support for a screen into the side chapel.

Poddington, Grey's Farm (SP940629)
Mike Luke

A watching brief was undertaken between October and December 1997 over an area of 0.6 ha. *In situ* archaeological remains comprised the gravel surface of a late Medieval trackway and a number of post-Medieval features. The pottery assemblage recovered from ground disturbance ranged in date from the middle Saxon to the late Medieval period.

Renhold, Abbey Farm (TL0753)
Jackie Crick

A watching brief was carried out in autumn 1997 during the extensive renovation of Abbey Farm, a Grade II listed building in Salph End, Renhold. The farmhouse building is timber framed, constructed on a dwarf wall and is late 16th century in origin. Despite its name the county's Historic Environment Record makes no mention of an abbey on this site and the farm does not appear to have been a grange. New building works included the construction of additional extensions to the rear of the present building and a garage to the north side.

Ground breaking works began in October. Archaeological evidence of past activity included the remains of limestone footings of farmyard buildings and a pit close to the rear of the central range.

Salford, land between Broughton Road and Brittons Lane (SP9339)
Anthony Walsh and Sean Steadman

A programme of earthwork survey and trial trenching was undertaken on land between Broughton Road and Brittons Lane, Salford.

The earthwork survey recorded a number of linear earthworks, areas of intentional ground levelling and the remains of possible quarrying. Trial trenching provided cross sections of the earthwork features and also uncovered limited evidence of Medieval activity, principally in the form of field boundaries.

Sandy, Warren Villas Quarry (TL1748)
Michael Dawson and Antony Maull

Trial trench evaluation of approximately 8 ha was undertaken at Warren Villas within the Ivel valley. The site lay on the flood plain at *c* 24 m OD. Nineteen trial trenches were evenly placed across the evaluation area. Surprisingly, given that the land was close to known areas of Iron Age and earlier prehistoric sites as well as the Roman small town of Sandy, no archaeological deposits were recorded. However, the evaluation located a series of waterlogged peat/clay and alluvial layers deriving from the post-glacial to the post-Medieval period, and identified at least two meandering paleochannels of the River Ivel. These deposits suggest a shift of the Ivel from east to west prior to the construction of the Ivel Navigation in the late 18th century.

Shefford, Chicksands Priory (TL12093935)
Sean Steadman with Christine Atherton, Jackie Crick and David Fell

A watching brief was undertaken during refurbishment of the Gilbertine Priory and construction of a new access road and car parks.

The Ha-Ha
The post-Medieval ha-ha discovered during the previous year's evaluation was recorded for a total length of 55 m, within the footprint of the new access road. The southern terminal was located but, to the north, the ha-ha continued beneath an existing road and footpath.

The ha-ha wall was formed of several well defined courses, although the exact number varied along the length, being dependent on the size of the stone blocks used. A significant feature of the lower courses was that they were significantly squarer and larger than the upper courses. The wall was predominantly composed of roughly hewn red sandstone blocks. A number of reused blocks of finely faced Totternhoe Clunch, probably originating from the adjacent monastic buildings, were also used in its construction. It was of predominantly dry stone construction, although local areas of mortaring were observed. The upper courses of the wall exhibited a well defined batter.

The southern end of the ha-ha butted against a further length of wall, which ran at 90° to the ha-ha and was aligned east west. Although not bonded into the ha-ha, its foundations were located at the same height and the coursing and stone type was in all respects similar. The perpendicular wall survived to a height of 0.9 m, although much of the stone from the upper courses had been removed, notably in the central area. It is likely that an architectural feature was present within this central area. A moulded architectural fragment, of Totternhoe Clunch, was located in the ditch backfill, adjacent to the point where the ha-ha met the wall. It exhibited a hollow chamfer and roll. Preliminary analysis suggests it may have been from the base of an arch.

The ditch, fronting the ha-ha wall was 1.2 m wide and had a slightly concave base cut into the natural sand. It had been backfilled with redeposited sand, containing much modern waste material - none of which was of archaeological significance.

Although well preserved for much of its length, the top of the ha-ha had been disturbed, in several areas, by modern service runs. The wall had partially collapsed in one small area and at one further point the top courses were slumping forward and, had backfilling not taken place, would have been in danger of collapse.

The Southern Quadrangle

Archaeological remains were uncovered during the construction of a fire exit with an associated staircase located within the south west corner of the southern quadrangle.

The buildings of the southern quadrangle contain the only standing remains of the original Priory. Within these buildings it is possible to trace the arcades of the north, east and south cloisters that skirted the interior of the quadrangle. The excavation within the south-west corner of the quadrangle has located the missing western cloister. Although only a limited view of its line was gained during the ground reduction works it is likely to have matched the others in form and extent.

Two phases of construction were identified within the lower-most foundations of the west range and the footings of the cloister and upper part of the west range. The lower course of these foundations comprised a cobble raft, offset from the main rise of the wall. The overlying foundations were noticeably different, comprising roughly squared carstone blocks. These stones were bonded by a pale yellow sandy mortar with angular limestone inclusions. With such a limited view of these footings it is difficult to determine the significance of these differences and their value in terms of interpreting the structural sequence of the west range. It may be that the earlier cobble raft may relate to an earlier form of the west range or another building.

A further stretch of stone footings, 1.9 m in length and aligned north-south, was located beneath a brick buttress on the east side of the excavated area. The footings comprised mainly large, roughly squared carstone blocks, 0.6 m in height and offset from the main rise of the wall by 0.15 m. The stones were bonded with a sandy, yellow/orange mortar with small limestone inclusions, similar to that recorded on the west side of the trench. This section terminated in a vertical northern face where it was butted by a block of masonry 0.6 m x 0.7 m x 0.3 m. Larger carstone blocks had been used in the construction of this and they were bedded in a hard pink/cream mortar, with large angular limestone and shell inclusions. This mortar overlapped the northern face of the stonework to the south indicating it was a later phase of construction. It is unclear whether the northern end of this block has been truncated by later activity or whether it originally terminated at that point and supported the base of a plinth for an arcade. On the north side of the quadrangle and in direct alignment with this masonry were footings of a similar construction and together these are thought to be the foundations for the original western cloister.

A square stone-lined structure, possibly either a well shaft or a water collection pit, was located within the southern end of the cloister. It measured 1.3 m x 1.25 m in plan and was set within a square construction cut and surrounded by a mixed packing deposit with frequent inclusions of building rubble. The stone lining comprised coursed carstone blocks, re-used clunch stone and half bricks. Its internal faces were vertical and probing suggested it was over 0.7 m deep. The shaft had been backfilled with a mixed deposit, which in its upper levels contained a large amount of cambered tile.

The juxtaposition of the well/pit and the southern end of the cloister suggests the two elements are not contemporary. On the basis of the re-used material incorporated into its lining the well/pit is thought to post date the cloister and probably relates to one of the many phases of alterations that occurred after the priory was dissolved in 1538.

The Priory Buildings and Courtyards

All internal and external drainage and service trenches were examined and any significant archaeological remains recorded. Footings of reused stone were observed in the post-Medieval buildings around the northern quadrangle and a number of Medieval structural elements which could relate to the presumed North cloister. Medieval floor tiles were also recovered from the make-up for a corridor between the northern and southern quadrangle. Several stretches of stone wall footing were observed running parallel and perpendicular to the east of the southern cloister. Carstone and clunch footings in the south of the eastern courtyard may relate to a former staircase at the south-east corner of the building which was demolished during previous refurbishment work.

A number of post-Medieval layers, probably landscaping or garden features, and drainage features from the same period onwards were also present.

Silsoe, Wrest Park (TL0935)

Michael Dawson and Jackie Crick

A photographic survey of the second courtyard in the range of 19th century courts adjacent to the main house at Wrest was undertaken in January 1997. The survey revealed that despite extensive remodelling since the second world war much of the original fabric of the sheds around the courtyard survives largely intact. The one exception is the re-built east wall and north-east corner. Although from within the courtyard the facade has been altered with the blocking-in of its previously open-fronted aspect, the original form of the building can still be read and the main feature, a cast iron colonnade survives intact along both the east and south sheds. The plinth, oversailing eaves and pilasters which mirror details within the larger confines of the adjacent stableblock survive on the north and south enclosing walls.

Stotfold, Fairfield Hospital (TL2035) (Fig 5)
Michael Dawson and Tony Walsh

Field artefact collection, geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation were carried out at Fairfield Hospital on a site which previously had no history of archaeological discoveries. The fieldwork was carried out in several episodes.

Two areas of dense archaeology were discovered. In the first, at the centre of the Hospital complex, were the remains of an Iron Age settlement, visible as a number of boundary ditches and structural components such as beam-slots and post-holes.

A second area of settlement was found some 300 m to the north-west, and comprised mainly ditches and post-holes, with the occasional pit. Amongst these was a Roman cremation burial, probably of late 1st early 2nd century date. The cremated remains had been interred together with a brooch in a blue glass amphora with large square handles. This was accompanied by fragments of three smaller glass vessels; a tall slipware flagon and a total of seven Samian cups, bowls and dishes. A small bronze spoon, which had probably formed part of a personal toilet set was also found in the grave. A number of iron nails found at the edges of the square grave, and a thin layer of decayed organic soil at the base of the grave, suggest that the whole assemblage had been buried inside a wooden casket.

Stotfold, Groveland Way (TL0203) (Fig 5)
Sean Steadman and Andy Thomas

Excavations were carried out in advance of a housing development off Groveland Way, Stotfold, to the north of the Iron Age and Roman settlement at Norton Road excavated in 1994 (*SMA* 25,1995).

In the east of the site, the ploughed out remains of an early to middle Iron Age settlement, comprising at least five round-houses, were discovered. Some of the houses had small yards attached to them and there were at least two larger ditched enclosures which were probably used for corralling cattle. A pit, containing a cattle skull and foot bones, may provide evidence for animal processing. Fragments of quern stones were also found which suggests that a mixed farming regime was being practised. In addition, a hand-made triangular-form crucible with traces of copper alloy residue found in another of the pits demonstrates that some metal-working was being carried out.

A substantial Roman ditch running along the western edge of the site, continues the alignment of a ditch uncovered during the excavation at Norton Road. Traces of metalled surfaces found associated with this ditch also echo discoveries at the earlier site. Several unurned cremations were also discovered in this part of the site.

The heavily truncated remains of a sunken featured building, with post holes at either end, were uncovered to the east of the ditch. Small quantities of early to middle Saxon pottery were recovered from its fill but no indication of the building's original function. A number of smaller sub-rectangular pits, scattered across the site, were also tentatively interpreted as sunken featured buildings. Very little Saxon pottery was recovered from any of these features. One of the pits contained a bone comb with multiple ring and dot decoration , which could derive from the late Iron Age or Saxon periods.

Stotfold, Baldock Road (TL02240363)
David Fell and Sean Steadman

Four archaeological trial trenches were excavated in advance of development on the southern bank of the River Ivel, off Baldock Road, Stotfold. The archaeological evaluation uncovered drainage or boundary ditches of early to middle Iron Age date representing fields or enclosures peripheral to the adjacent site Iron Age settlement excavated at Groveland Way. The archaeological features were sealed beneath a layer of alluvium which indicates that the River has been subject to periodic flooding from the Iron Age onwards.

Studham, Manor Farm (TL017159)
Drew Shotliff

An archaeological watching brief accompanied renovation of the Manor House, Manor Farm, Studham, near Luton. Removal and lowering of existing internal surfaces revealed a short length of mortared flint wall foundation. This lay directly on a 0.1 m thick layer of clay make-up, which in turn sealed a fragmentary floor surface constructed of re-used roof tile. A small quantity of post-Medieval red earthenware and blackware was recovered.

Thurleigh Airfield (TL 036610)
Michael Luke

A watching brief undertaken between May and September 1997 to the north of Thurleigh Airfield indicated that ground disturbance resulting from airfield construction is minimal. Late Iron Age pottery was recovered probably associated with cropmarks to the north, but no features were located. Medieval/post-Medieval artefacts suggested the presence in the vicinity of a previously unrecorded occupation site. Evidence was identified for the location, design and construction of various bomb storage buildings and access roads associated with the World War Two airfield. The accuracy of the 1944 airfield plan was generally confirmed, although some additional structures were located.

Westoning, Westoning Manor (TL0232)
Michael Dawson and Christiane Meckseper

Two trial trenches were excavated within the walled garden at Westoning Manor. No archaeology was recovered except

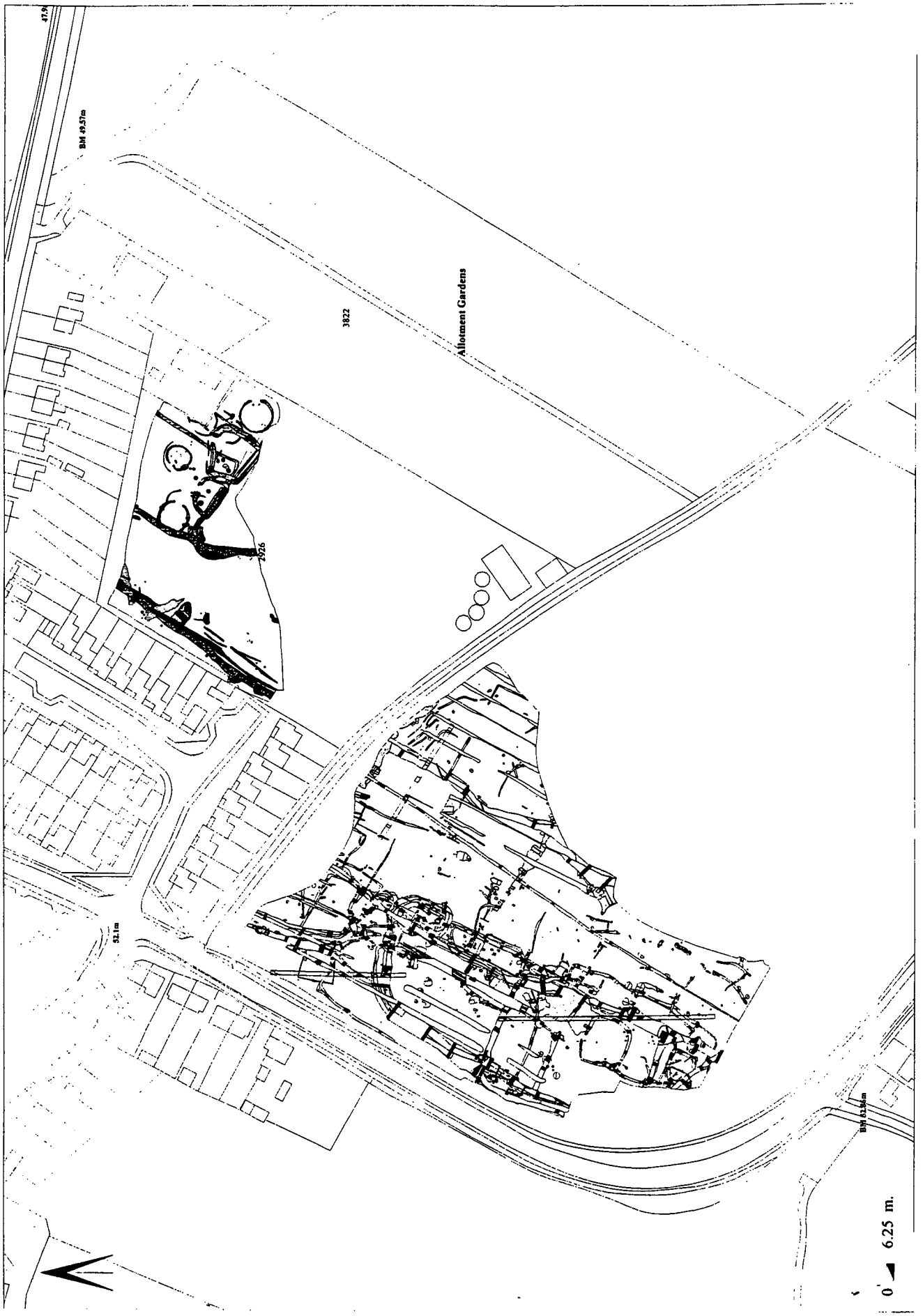

Fig 5 The Iron Age and Roman Period archaeology at Groveland Way and Norton Road, Stotfold

the remains of post-Medieval/modern plant pots, clay pipes and rubbish related to the recent use of the area as a garden.

Wilden, Butterfly Park, High Farm (TL09205422)
Andy Thomas and Sean Steadman

A programme of earthwork survey and trial trenching was undertaken at High Farm, Wilden. The earthwork survey recorded the remains of ridge and furrow cultivation and a number of linear features. Trial trenching provided cross sections of the earthwork features and also uncovered limited evidence of later prehistoric activity.

Willington, Chapel Lane (TL1150)
Michael Dawson and Christiane Meckseper

Three trial trenches were excavated in a building plot adjacent to a moated site known locally as the Danish Docks. The trenches (20 m in length) were excavated to natural and revealed a single quarry pit. One fragment of clay pipe was found in the topsoil at this point.

LUTON ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP

Wigmore Valley Park (TL 127219)
R Hudspith

During 1997 observations along the course of an anti-traveller trench at Wigmore Valley Park revealed features and finds of Late Pre-Roman Iron Age and Romano-British date. Identified features included a ditch which contained Late Iron Age sherds and Romano-British sherds of 1st-2nd century date, as well as fragments of burnt clay. Two exposed surfaces of flint and Romano-British tile (tegula, imbrex and hypocaust tile fragments - apparently re-used from a nearby demolished building) may have served as the floors of huts, with associated pottery finds suggesting 4th century occupation on the site. Amongst one of the flint and tile surfaces were finds of animal bones, potsherds, rusted nails, a lead strip, a blue glass bead, brooch fragments and charcoal-perhaps indicating a workshop, or metal working amongst other domestic activity. Other finds included quernstone fragments, a sherd base used as a spindle whorl and a bronze 'Follis' of Licinius *c* AD316.

Permission to investigate the archaeological features was obtained from Dr R Holgate, Luton Museum's Curator and Mr B Clarke, Luton Borough Council's Parks Manager.

MANSHEAD ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF DUNSTABLE

The following reports are by David Warren (Priory Middle School) and Renny Hudspith (Sundon House and fieldwalking). Complete copies of the reports are in *Manshead Journal* No 37.

The Society continued its excavation at **Priory Middle School**, Britain Street, Dunstable. A continuation of the metalled road and its southern edge were uncovered. Notable Medieval finds include a 12th century relief tile (St Albans type Fig 6), various "mosaic" tiles of 13th century date and later printed types. Also found was an iron arrowhead and a rowelled spur. Crossing beneath the road lay a Roman ditch. Dug into it was the grave of an adult female around whose lower limbs were voids conforming to the shape of her legs.

Sundon House, Lower Sundon
The archaeological potential of the site was identified by the Society's President, Ron Fowler, who arranged access and permission to carry out the survey and trial excavation.

In July 1995, the Society surveyed parchmarks indicating the site of a substantial house, visible in grassland to the south east of Sundon Church, Lower Sundon TL049268 (Fig 7. One wing of the house was particularly evident with the assumed line of its rear wall now marked by a modern fence line. A standing stable block of *c* 19th Century date shares the same boundary and appears to have formed part of the original building complex.

The area of parchmarks was identified as the probable site of Sundon House, Fig 7, built and demolished in the early 19th Century. A watercolour painting of Sundon House (*c* 1812-22) painted by Thomas Fisher is displayed in Luton Museum.

A collapsed brick culvert, in the field to the south (and upslope) of the building site indicated the source of water supply to the house was from springs/ponds on the hilltop.

Several trial trenches were cut (and backfilled immediately after being planned) to try and confirm wall lines away from the more prominent parchmarks. The evidence to the south west of the site was problematic, either because the building had been more thoroughly demolished, with walls completely robbed out or perhaps buried following post-demolition landscaping.

Brick floors and walls were found immediately below the modern turf in the presumed eastern wing of the building. A worn brick passageway was observed running inside the rear wall. Finds were mainly restricted to fragments of glass, china and potsherds, rusted nails and small pieces from lead glazing bars.

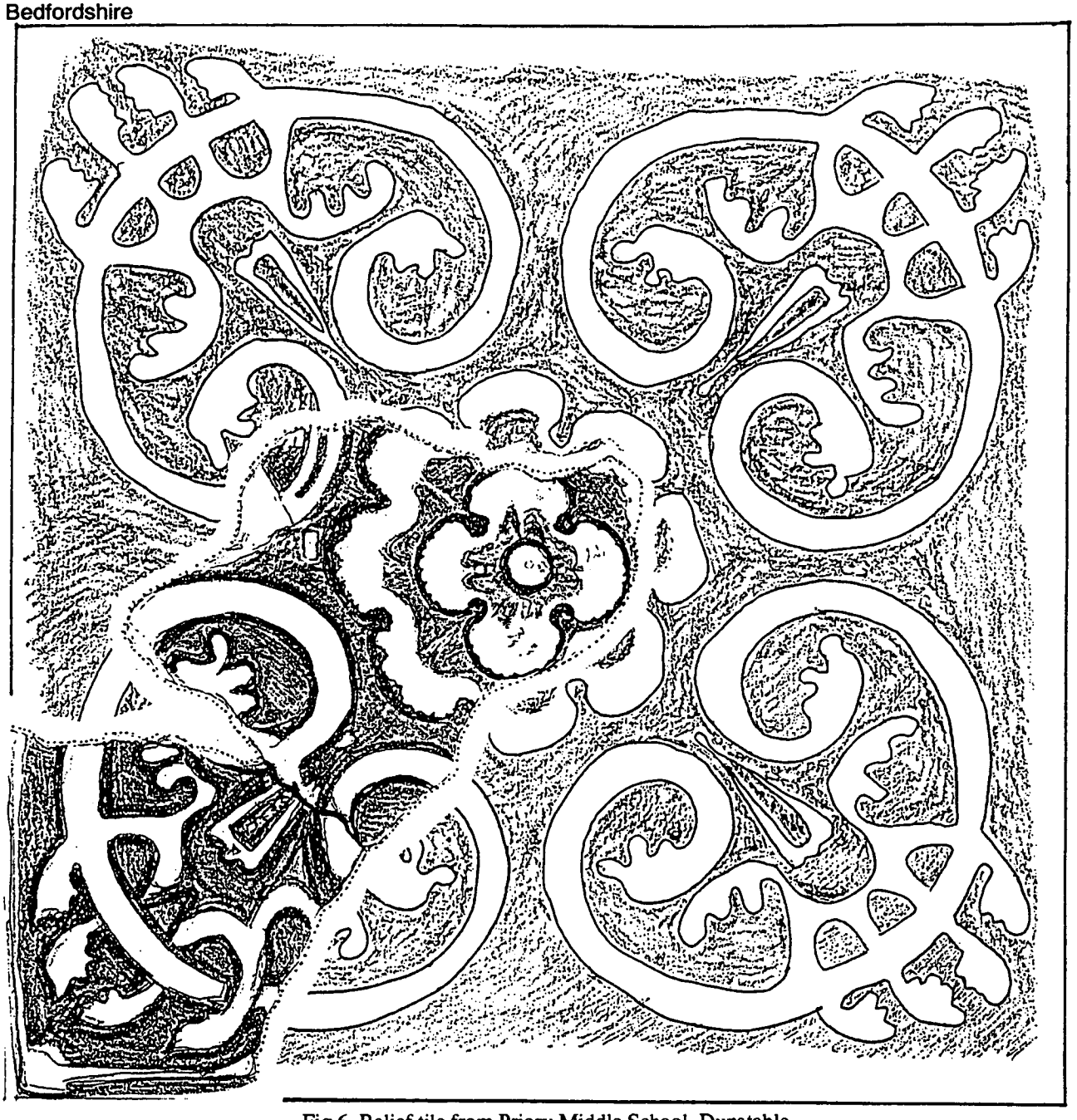

Fig 6. Relief tile from Priory Middle School, Dunstable.

In the central area of the building (perhaps coinciding with the main doorway) some slight evidence of earlier occupation on the site was suggested by finds of Medieval sherds and pegtile fragments. Other finds of Medieval sherds came from rabbit burrows around tree roots to the north of the site.

Fieldwalking

An area of *c* 0.25 km^2 at **Tankards Farm, Tea Green, Herts**, was walked by the writer in September 1996. The finds were principally of prehistoric worked flint and post-Medieval - modern material. A noticeable scatter of flints, including several flaked axe fragments, scrapers and knives (as well as a few fire fractured flints) was identified on the hilltop close to the modern village at Tea Green (TF3-TL137233).

This concentration of flints is similar in nature to other hilltop scatters found along the Chiltern Ridge at Cockernhoe and Whitehill Farm (Hudspith 1993, 1994). They may represent transient occupation sites, perhaps concerned with the procurement of flint and the exploitation of woodland resources. The results of the survey are shown in Fig 8.

Scatters of post-Medieval - modern material suggest the location of former dwellings, or rubbish pits in the area of the water tower at Tea Green and around Tankards Farm.

A large scatter of flint and pegtile (with iron objects) between Tankards Farm and Darley Wood indicates the former location of farm buildings recorded on the 1879 Ordnance Survey map as 'Mobbs Hole'. On the same map more buildings are sited alongside the trackways at

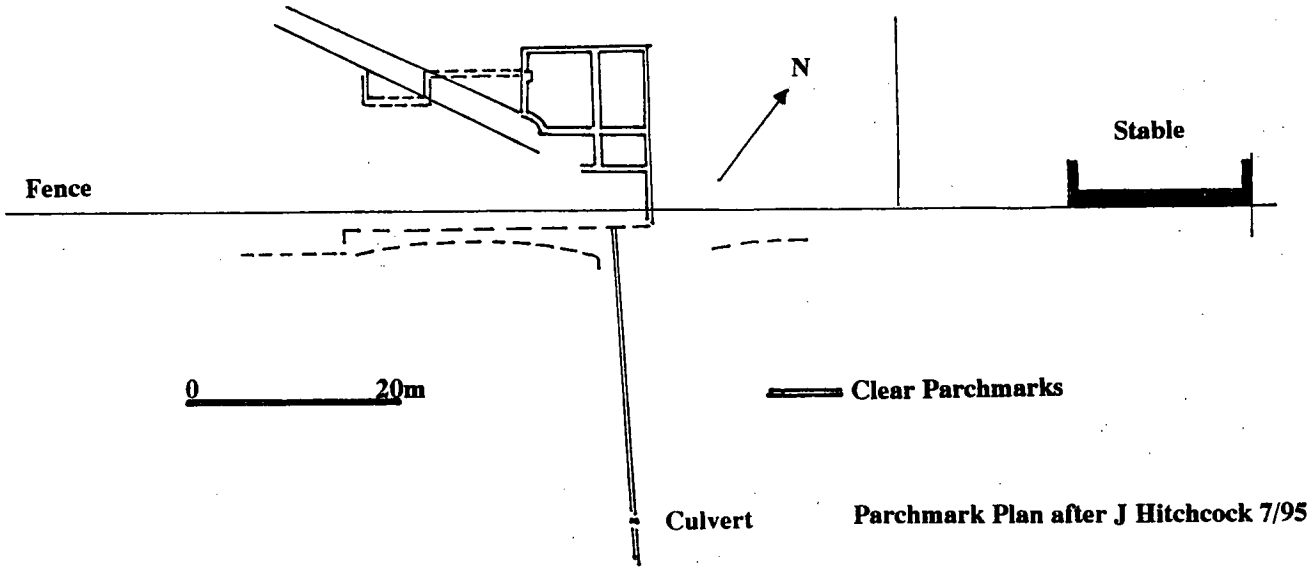

Fig 7. Sundon House, Lower Sundon, Beds.

Tankards Farm (formerly called Tankards) and at Tea Green the hamlet mainly consisted of a line of terraced cottages (demolished in the 1960s) behind the White Horse Public House.

Winch Hill Farm, Luton, the probable site of a Romano-British building (TL129219), previously reported in *Manshead Journals* 31 and 34 (Hudspith 1991, 1994) was fieldwalked and surveyed by the Manshead Society in 1996. The site, threatened by development, was particularly evident following cultivation (Fig 9). The location of possible building(s) was shown by patches of lighter gravelly soil, linear scatters of flints (suggesting wall lines) and scatters of tegula, imbrex, flue and brick tiles (including examples in shell grit fabrics) with fragments of *opus signinum* mortar. Coarseware sherds were recovered as well as a conglomerate quernstone fragment. Prehistoric sherds and worked flints were also found around the site. The surface evidence suggests the site and remains of at least one substantial building, with perhaps a hypocaust and/or bath house (or a building which included re-used material). Finds are to be forwarded to Luton Museum.

At **Totternhoe** the linear scatter of Roman material reported in *Manshead Journal* 36 (Hudspith 1996) was revisited following cultivation of the field (SP9822). The tile and pottery finds were also observed to coincide with a scatter of stones and iron slag, suggesting the site of some industrial activity. The linear scatter itself may indicate either material dumped in a ditch in Roman or Post-Roman times or unearthed during modern drainage work.

A large scatter of Romano-British pottery and tile together with a few Iron Age sherds was observed to continue in the field to the north of the former railway line suggesting much of the site could be covered by the railway embankment. The

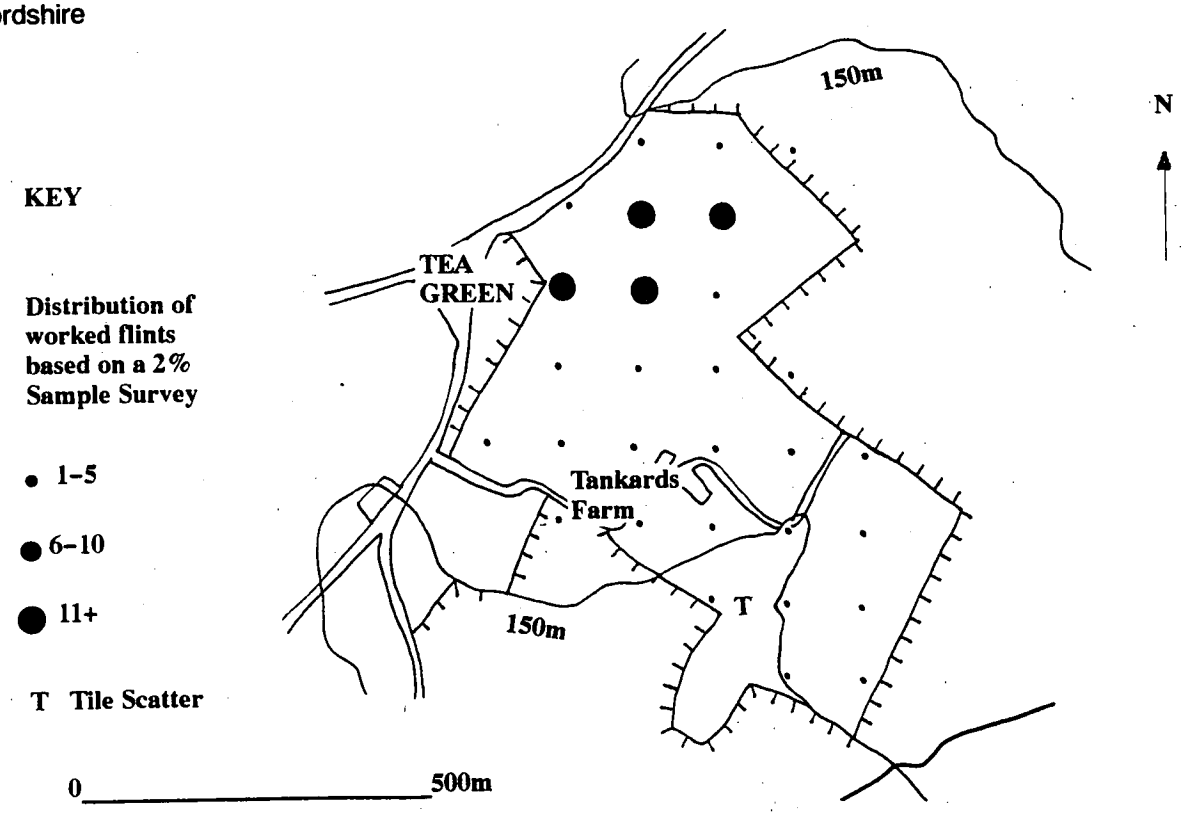

Fig 8. Fieldwalking survey at Tankards Farm, Tea Green.

size of the site suggests (along with the finds from Shirrell Spring: Simco 1984) an area of occupation in the Roman period, perhaps centred on a villa type building. Some continuity (or coincidence) of site usage from the Iron Age to Roman periods is also indicated.

The known Mesolithic site at **Houghton Regis** alongside the Edeway (TL0226: Hudspith, 1991) was revisited in an attempt to obtain a larger selection of representative artefact types (Palmer 1977). Further examples of Mesolithic flintwork were recovered, blade fragments and blade segments (some retouched) microliths, cores, flakes and debitage.

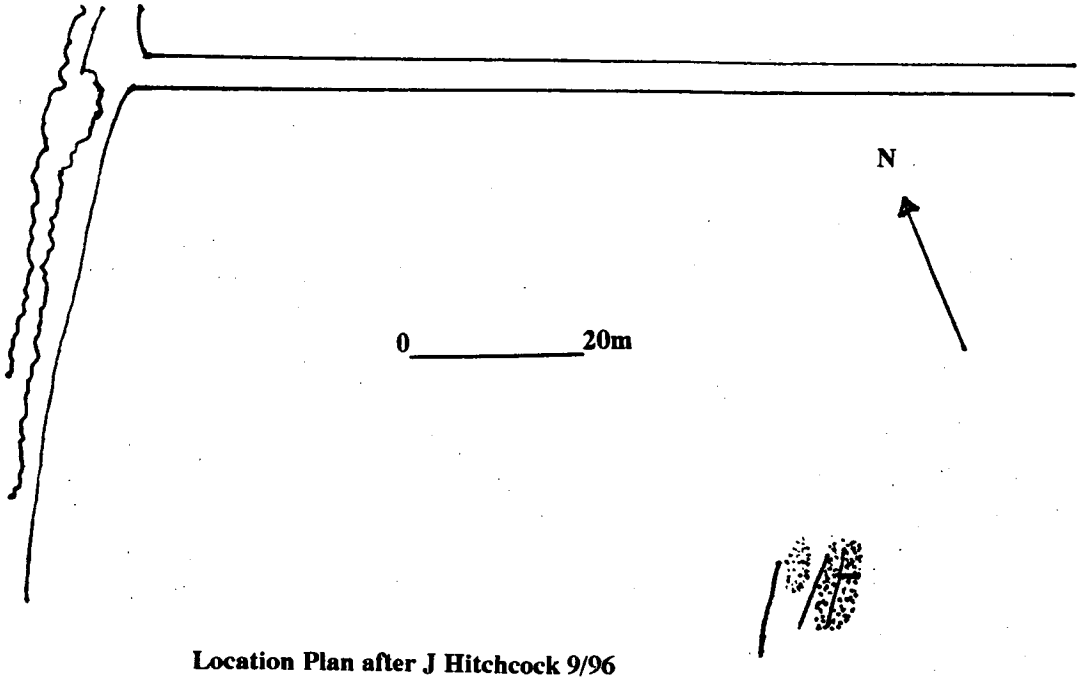

Fig 9. Winch Hill Farm Romano-British site.

The evidence from the site suggests procurement of flint, core reduction and blade and microlith production. The site represents a limited area of flintworking activity, perhaps utilised on a seasonal basis. The same site also appears to have been used for flint working (with Mesolithic waste re-used) in later periods. The finds are similar in form to material found at Priestleys Farm, Flitwick (Fadden, 1993).

Gatehouse field (TL047197), **Turnpike Farm, Caddington**, previously reported in *Manshead Journals* 31 & 34 (Hudspith 1991 1994) was gridwalked at 10 m transects by the writer in November 1996. Not a great deal of Roman material was recovered on this occasion, principally Roman tile fragments including three samples of flint dusted tegula (each with different size flanges) which may have been made on site from the local brickearth deposits. The pottery finds were mainly abraded sherds of hard sandy coarsewares (generally indistinguishable from Medieval fabrics) and grog tempered wares. A similar gridwalking exercise at Gatehouse Field in 1993 produced enough identifiable sherd finds to give the following percentage of fabric types: 70% Grey/Brown Sandy Wares, 27% Red Grog Tempered Wares, 3% Black Burnished Wares

Tegula fragments are found at most of the assumed rural occupation sites (identified by fieldwalking) in South Bedfordshire.

At **Toddington** set aside fields at TL006278 and a development site at TL008280 were walked. A few flint flakes were found and large scatters of post-Medieval - modern material (suggesting tipping or infilling) noted.

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NATIONAL TRUST

Gary Marshall

Willington Dovecote and Stables (TL10654997)

During the second half of 1997 repairs were carried out to the roof of the 16th century dovecote and a non-intensive archaeological watching brief was therefore maintained whilst this work was in progress. A series of carpenter's marks on the principal members of the roof trusses were noted and added to the comprehensive drawings prepared by the project architects, Freeland Rees Roberts. Some interesting 18th century graffiti carved into the tie beams of the trusses were also recorded.

It has always been assumed - from rather scanty documentary evidence - that these two buildings date from the first half of the 16th century and they were built with brick and stone recycled from the nearby Newnham Priory which was dissolved in 1535. Certainly both buildings incorporate moulded corbel stones, the stables incorporating several pieces with carved heads. With the availability of scaffolding in the dovecote the decision was taken to try and clarify the date for the construction of these buildings using dendrochronology. The survey provided specific dates for the timbers of both buildings - 1539 for the felling of the timbers in the dovecote and 1542 for the felling of the timbers in the stables, coinciding almost precisely with the assumed dates for the construction of the buildings.

A resistivity survey was also conducted around the two buildings and this revealed the outline of several missing buildings forming part of a much larger farm complex. On the south side of the stables the survey revealed the outline of a substantial structure which could be a late Medieval manor house. It also revealed a large circular structure with a path leading to it, possibly indicating the site of an earlier late Medieval dovecote.

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Dunstable, Totternhoe Road (TL00272162)
Bryan Matthews

The OAU carried out a field evaluation in October 1997 on land at Totternhoe Road, Dunstable, in respect of a planning application for housing. The site itself did not contain any known archaeological remains but within the immediate area there is evidence for sites dating from the prehistoric to medieval periods. These include Neolithic sites, a Roman villa and a substantial Saxon cemetery.

The evaluation revealed slight evidence of a former ridge and furrow field system, an undated pit and a small pit dating to the late Neolithic period. An area of modern disturbance was located at the extreme eastern side of the site. This is probably associated with the construction of nearby school buildings. The only archaeological feature of any significance identified in the evaluation was the single, small and isolated pit which contained late Neolithic struck flint and three sherds of Grooved Ware pottery.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY MUSEUM ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE

Work undertaken during 1997

Jonathan Parkhouse

1997 saw a diminution in the quantity of fieldwork undertaken by the Service. This was due in large degree to the uncertainties over the future of the service following local government re- organisation, which resulted in the decision taken in late 1996 to concentrate on bringing the results of earlier work to publication. This strategy was successful, with several pieces of work being sent for publication in Records of Buckinghamshire, and significant inroads being made into several other large outstanding projects.

The eventual shape of local government re-organisation did not, in the event, entail the loss of permanent posts, and the service was able to undertake a number of projects, including desk-based appraisals, field evaluations and building surveys.

Chenies Watermeadows (TQ0198)

Two fields at Chenies, which still show evidence for their former management as watermeadows, were surveyed for the County Council Environmental Service's Chilterns Project. The artificially irrigated watermeadows were originally constructed by George Dodds during the early nineteenth century, and have been integrated into the water channels associated with the adjacent mill, of which Dodds was the tenant. The watermeadow systems were both subsequently extended. Although the fields concerned are believed to be unique within the County, they represent a form of agricultural improvement which was widespread over much of southern Britain during the post-Medieval period. One field is of additional interest as a description and plan were published in the early nineteenth century.

(see J Parkhouse and N Smith (forthcoming) "Two Watermeadows at Chenies, Buckinghamshire" *Recs of Bucks* 38, 1996)

Grim's Ditch

A preliminary study of Grim's Ditch, commissioned in 1996 by the Planning and Transportation Department as part of the Chilterns Project, was completed. The study consisted of a desktop review and synthesis of existing data with a preliminary field reconnaissance. It is intended that the study will form the basis of positive management proposals, and for a more detailed, problem-orientated, topographical and geophysical survey to be initiated in 1998.

M40 Widening (SU 97 88)

Monitoring of the initial stages of widening was undertaken for Hyder Consulting. The archaeological impact is small, as most of the works are being carried out within the existing carriageway.

Inspection of the site compound at Hedgerley Lane demonstrated that all traces of the Hedgerley Lane Romano-British pottery kilns had been removed during the original motorway construction. A desk-top appraisal of two potential borrow-pit areas was also undertaken.

Aylesbury Northern Link Roads.

A desktop appraisal of the proposed road footprint was undertaken for Hyder Consulting Ltd, leading on from the Stage 2 assessment (desktop study with initial field reconnaissance) undertaken during the previous financial year.

Ellen Road, Aylesbury (SP8012)

An evaluation of this 6.6 ha site was carried out for Bruton Knowles/Buckinghamshire County Council. Trial trenching demonstrated the presence of a number of cut features, mainly ditches and pits. Only minimal dating evidence was retrieved.

It is considered that the greater part of the features were related to former agricultural field boundaries, many of which appear to date from the first millennium bc, and which may possibly have some association with the Iron Age site at Coldharbour Farm, some 500 m to the northwest (reported in last year's *SMA*). It is likely that several phases of boundary were represented. There was also evidence for probable small- scale activity during the Neolithic period. Finds of later material were almost entirely unstratified. There was very little Romano-British material and none from the Saxon period. During the Medieval period the site was used for agriculture, with a characteristic ridge-and-furrow system established.

Boarstall Tower Annexe (SP624142)

A building survey of the annexe to the 14th century gatehouse at Boarstall Tower was undertaken for the National Trust, in advance of a refurbishment programme. Much of the existing structure is relatively recent, but detailed analysis revealed evidence for at least six phases, the first of which probably pre-dates the depiction of buildings on the site of the annexe on the Burghers print of 1695.

King's Head, Aylesbury (SP81871377)

A building survey of the former stable block, constructed in the 15th century, was commissioned by the National Trust,

in advance of a programme of repairs. This proved to be a complex structure, exhibiting evidence for several phases of alteration. The earliest structural elements appear to have been of a sufficiently high quality to indicate that the building was not originally constructed as a stable. It had certainly become a stable by *c* 1650, when an inventory, drawn up prior to leasing the King's Head, describes the internal fittings. Unfortunately, it is difficult to reconcile this 17th century account with the surviving details, except in the broadest terms.

A watching brief was subsequently carried out for the National Trust during the excavation of two drain runs in the kitchen area. No deposits earlier than the nineteenth century were affected by the works.

Cholesbury (SP930072)

Hand-dug trenching was undertaken in advance of a small extension to the Village Hall. The extension was situated on the extrapolated circuit of the outer defences of the hillfort on its southern side, but no archaeological features were found to be present. On the basis of these and other recent observations it is thought unlikely that there was an outer line of defences here.

Subsequently a watching brief was undertaken within the hillfort at "Overburnts" as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent, granted for the construction of loose boxes. No archaeological features were disturbed during the earthmoving; however, two possible hearths, one evidently associated with ironworking, were exposed at the base of the excavations. There were no surviving finds to determine the date of the hearths, but the possibility that they may be Iron Age cannot be ruled out.

Gardens Register Review

A desktop review of the Buckinghamshire section of the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England was commissioned by English Heritage. The objective of the project was the preliminary identification of sites of sufficient interest to merit more detailed assessment. A wide range of cartographic and documentary sources were checked. A draft consultation document, which included a list of sites thought to merit a subsequent stage of more detailed appraisal, was sent to external bodies (including District Conservation Officers and the County Historic Buildings Officer) at the end of 1997.

Oxford Road Mill, Aylesbury (SP814137)

A desktop study of this site was undertaken, in advance of redevelopment. The site is of interest as being the only site in Aylesbury, apart from the parish church, where there is continuous documentary evidence for activity since the Norman Conquest. The buildings which existed on the site, until their destruction by fire in 1993, dated to the late nineteenth century. There was found to be potential for the survival of earlier archaeological deposits in the vicinity of the former mill buildings, but elsewhere, ground decontamination work has probably removed any archaeological deposits.

St Mary's Church, Mentmore (SP90381977)

The insertion of a small trench along the south side of the chancel, dug to alleviate problems with damp, was monitored. What were thought to be the foundations of the pre-19th century chancel were seen to be exposed. The present chancel (*c* 1858) is some two metres longer than its precursor.

Coombe Hill, Ellesborough (SP844061)

An inhumation, uncovered during building operations, was briefly examined at the request of Thames Valley Police. No dating evidence was found, although the burial had evidently taken place in antiquity.

Miscellaneous watching briefs

Watching briefs conducted at the following sites all produced negative results:

Abbey Farm Lodge, Lavendon Grange (SP903533)
St James' Church, Hanslope (SP80404672)
St Mary's Church, Edlesborough (SP97001905)
Wycombe Museum, Wycombe (SU867932)
St James' Church, Bierton (SP83611526)

Postscript.

At the start of 1997 the County Council's financial situation led to the difficult decision to cut the County Museum's budget by one third. Amongst the museum staff made redundant as a consequence were the County Archaeologist, Keeper of Archaeology and the Conservator, as well as one long-term member of the field staff.

The County Museum Archaeological Service will no longer be undertaking any fieldwork projects, and the primary duties of the two remaining archaeological staff will be concerned with maintenance of the County Sites and Monuments Record and the provision of planning advice. This will therefore be the last full report on fieldwork undertaken by the Buckinghamshire County Museum Archaeological Service.

Buckinghamshire

NATIONAL TRUST

Gary Marshall

Bradenham Manor (SU82879707)

During the summer of 1997 the central section of the roof of the manor was relaid and alterations were made to the internal system of guttering running through the roof. A watching brief was maintained whilst this work was in progress and as part of this exercise all the exposed trusses and rafters of the roof construction were drawn as a plan. The relationship between the various ranges of the roof would suggest several phases of construction, the earliest thought to be the south range over what is considered to be the remnant of an Elizabethan House. Dendrochronology once again proved the archaeological supposition to be wrong since the three main ranges - the south range, east range and west range - all seem to date from *c* 1652/3. This date lies between two significant dates for Bradenham, 1642 when Sir Edmund Pye acquired the manor, and 1673 when Sir Edmund died and the estate passed to his daughter. It has always been assumed that the two larger parts of the building belong to these two dates but the dendro date suggests that major works were carried out between the two dates, in which case the earlier (south) range is perhaps the remnant of the Tudor House, but refaced in the mid 17th century.

Between the east and west ranges of the roof there appear to have been a series of cross ridges. The ghosted impressions of these ridges could be seen against the elevations of the four chimney stacks which lie between these two ranges. The present arrangement consists of a single narrow ridge running parallel with the main axis of the roof. This alteration perhaps dates from the 19th century when attic rooms were inserted into the top floor of the house.

Closer to ground level, the gardens around the manor were the subject of a detailed topographical survey in 1997. The present arrangement of terraced lawns and yew avenues probably reflects the configuration of a Jacobean garden contemporary with the construction of the 17th century house. Using the topographical survey, proposals are to be put forward for the restoration of the gardens.

Boarstall Tower (SP62401240)

The 14th century tower served as a gatehouse to a manor house surrounded by a moat. It is all that remains of the complex, the manor house itself having been destroyed by fire. Attached to the tower is a small annexe and this was the subject of a building recording project undertaken by the archaeological unit attached to Bucks County Museum Service[1] prior to modernisation of the annexe. The survey revealed that the annexe - thought to be 19th century - in fact incorporates the remains of an earlier 17th century structure. This was therefore retained whilst alterations and additions are to be made to the 19th century partitions within the interior.

The gatehouse itself is to be the subject of a major programme of repairs to the roof during 1998 and a watching brief will be maintained whilst this work is in progress.

Claydon House (SP71922533)

Claydon House seems to have a rather unfortunate history of subsidence and cracking. Hopefully nothing will ever match the disastrous scale of the subsidence of the Ball Room and Rotunda which eventually had to be pulled down in the 1790s, little more than 10 years after their completion. However, cracks have begun to appear in the south wall of the Library and several trenches (nos 7-10) were therefore dug in 1997 to investigate the cause of this cracking. One theory is that the cracks are the result of seasonal expansion and contraction of the clays on which the building sits and that leakage from a large brick culvert running alongside the south wall had exacerbated this problem. The trenches were therefore dug to investigate the culvert and the make-up of the ground around and beneath the south wall. The clay and gravel layers overlying the culvert were found to continue beneath the footings of the south wall, suggesting that the culvert is a slightly earlier structure, perhaps constructed immediately prior to the erection of the south wall. The south wall itself was found to have very shallow stone footings and this may be one of the main reasons for the cracking, combined with the seasonal variation in the condition of the clay beds.

It was anticipated that these excavations might reveal remains of the earlier Tudor House since this was demolished to make way for the new west wing of the house incorporating the Library. No evidence for this earlier building was found, however, possibly because the outline of the earlier building was entirely subsumed within the outline of the west wing. Lifting of loose floorboards within the Library itself does suggest that there are brick and stone footings surviving below floor level which would almost certainly be part of the Tudor House.

An excavation on the north-west corner of the house (trench 11) at the end of 1997 revealed part of the outline of the aforementioned Rotunda. This was undertaken in order to investigate the reason for the subsidence (!) of the steps leading to the west terrace. The conclusion to be drawn from this discovery, and from the revelation of the footings of the Ball Room in 1995, is that the entire outline of the Rotunda and Ball Room survives beneath the present car park surface of the north front, in which case the present ground level is considerably above what it was in the second half of the 18th century immediately following the construction of the west range.

A comprehensive report on these investigations, and the examination of the central wing of the house has recently been completed[2].

Stowe Landscape Gardens

One of the great pleasures of working at Stowe is to witness a continually changing landscape as the task of restoring the gardens continues. The reinstatement of the 18th century paths - in 1997 in the north-west corner of the Elysian Fields - leads to new vistas and new perspectives to the landscape and its buildings. If nothing else the appearance of a major erection of scaffolding around a garden temple provides an interesting diversion to an otherwise familiar landscape.

In this case the scaffolding has gone up around Vanbrugh's Rotunda on the edge of the Home Park (SP674371), as a consequence depriving the Stowe golfers of the opportunity to knock off a bit of crumbling column but compensating them with a much larger and more audible target. A watching brief was maintained whilst initial enabling works were carried out to the building, involving lifting of the steps, cleaning of the stonework and the removal of the lead roof. The domed roof has an interesting timber structure, consisting of a series of semi- circular rafters radiating out from a central crown (Fig 1). Dendrochronology provided a date of 1752 for upper part of these rafters, a date which corresponds precisely with the period of alteration to the dome between 1752-54 recorded in the Stowe accounts (Fig 2 and 3). The feet of the rafters have been repaired with new timbers which were thought to be late 19th century. Dendrochronology dating disproved this theory - they are actually about a hundred years earlier, having been cut sometime between 1779 and 1811. We can be more precise about the date when the lead sheeting of the roof was laid since a date and an inscription - 'John Turpin 1898' - were discovered etched into one of the sheets[3].

The recreation of the paths has revealed the usual crop of footings for missing garden structures. The position of the paths are accurately shown on the 1843 estate map and this also shows what were assumed to be three statues on the south front of the house. An attempt was made to locate the most easterly base by trial trenching with the mechanical excavator and this revealed the stump of a substantial brick wall, plus three adjoining walls forming the sides of a small enclosure (SP676374). The position and alignment of the larger wall coincides with the position of the east wall of the 1670s kitchen garden shown on the earliest available plan published by Sarah Bridgeman in 1739, and on subsequent plans until 1788. If it is the remains of the garden wall - and this appears almost certain - then it represents a highly significant discovery since it allows the detail on the 1739 plan to be related to the form of the existing landscape. The adjoining brick enclosure is thought to be the remains of a garden privy (Fig 4). The walls form the outline of a pit slightly more than a metre in depth, the base of this pit formed of a layer of concretious lime. A number of items of rubbish were found in the pit, including a number of hand blown mould formed bottles, suggesting an early 19th century date for the deposition of this rubbish[4]. With the exception of the 1843 plan none of the other maps show this structure so there is a cautionary lesson to be learnt ie that the maps are selective in terms of what they portray.

References

[1] 'The Annexe, Boarstall Tower, Boarstall, Building Recording and Photographic Survey' Buckinghamshire County Museum Archaeological Service Report No. 501 for the National Trust , May 1997.
[2] 'Claydon House, Archaeological Report on Phase III and the excavations around the north, south and east fronts' Gary Marshall, September 1997.
[3] 'Stowe Landscape Gardens, Report covering the archaeological watching brief on the Rotunda' Report no. Stowe/21, Gary Marshall, March 1998.
[4] 'Stowe Landscape Gardens, Archaeological report covering the excavation of the garden wall footings in the north-west corner of the Elysian Fields - trench 179' Report no. Stowe/23, Gary Marshall, March 1998.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

Gayhurst, Gayhurst Quarry (SP853446)
Andy Chapman and Peter Masters

Geophysical survey and trial excavation was undertaken on a known cropmark site comprising several ring ditches and rectilinear enclosures (CAS 2553), and situated on land adjacent to the M1 motorway at Gayhurst Quarry. The presence of at least four round barrows was confirmed and three rectilinear enclosures were shown to be Middle Iron Age in date. An extensive area of alluvial deposits appears to comprise extensive, clay-filled hollows around a single minor palaeochannel system of the River Great Ouse.

Hanslope, Stocking Green Farm (SP802473)
Peter Masters

An earthwork survey defined the presence of closes and building platforms related to the former Medieval hamlet of Stocking Green, which had been one of several detached ends to Medieval Hanslope. A watching brief was maintained during excavation for a sewer pipe and associated balancing pond, and the exposed remains of walls, floors, yard surfaces and ditched boundaries, dating from the 12th and 13th centuries were recorded and sampled.

Wing, The Old Victorian School (SP881225)
Joe Prentice

Trial excavation to the south of the churchyard of All Saints church located inhumation burials within graves aligned east-west and apparently arranged in ordered rows. The burials were only partly exposed and all have been left *in situ*. They clearly form part of an early churchyard and confirm nineteenth century observations of burials in this area.

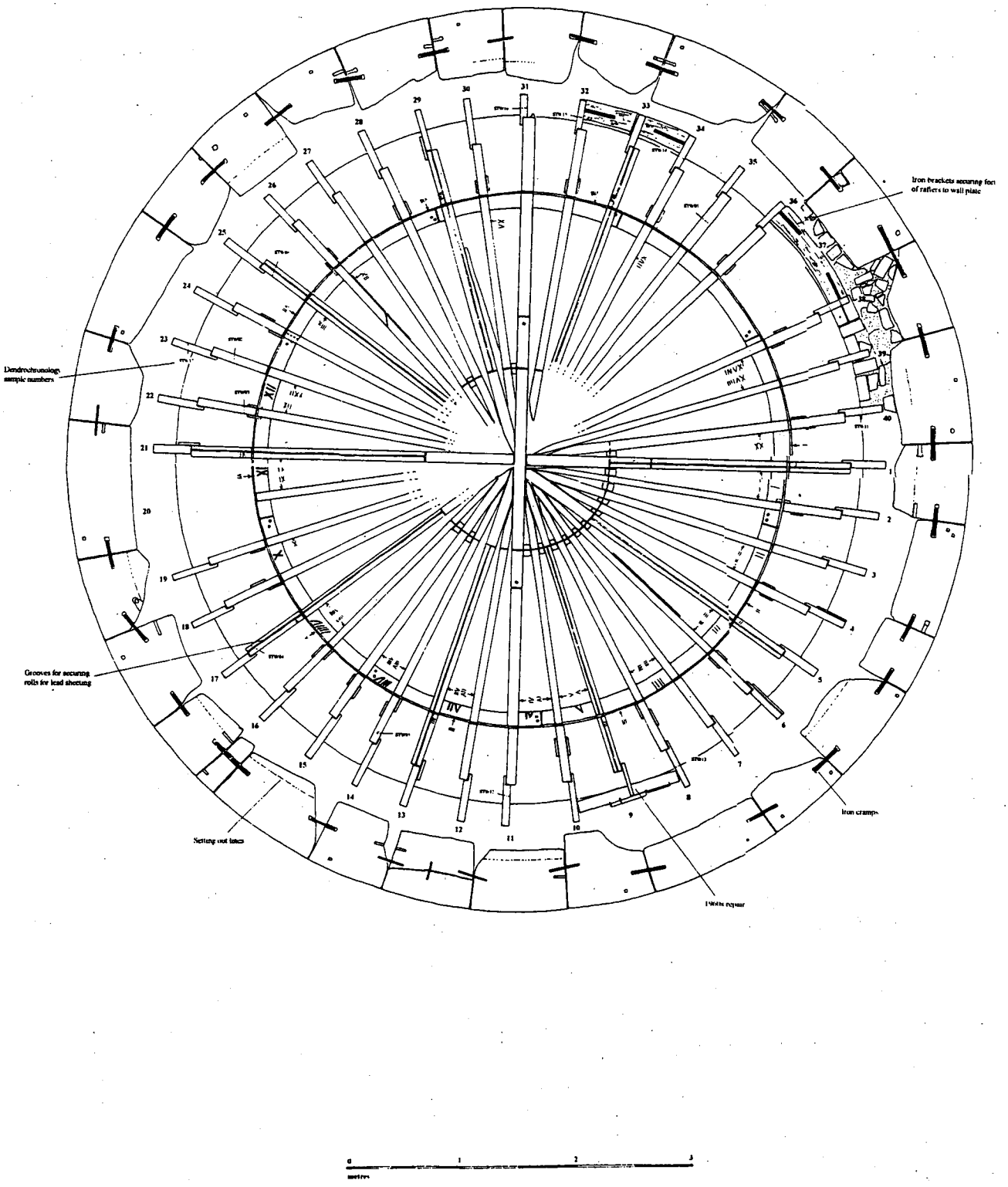


Fig 1. Stowe Landscape Gardens. Plan of roof construction of the Rotunda.

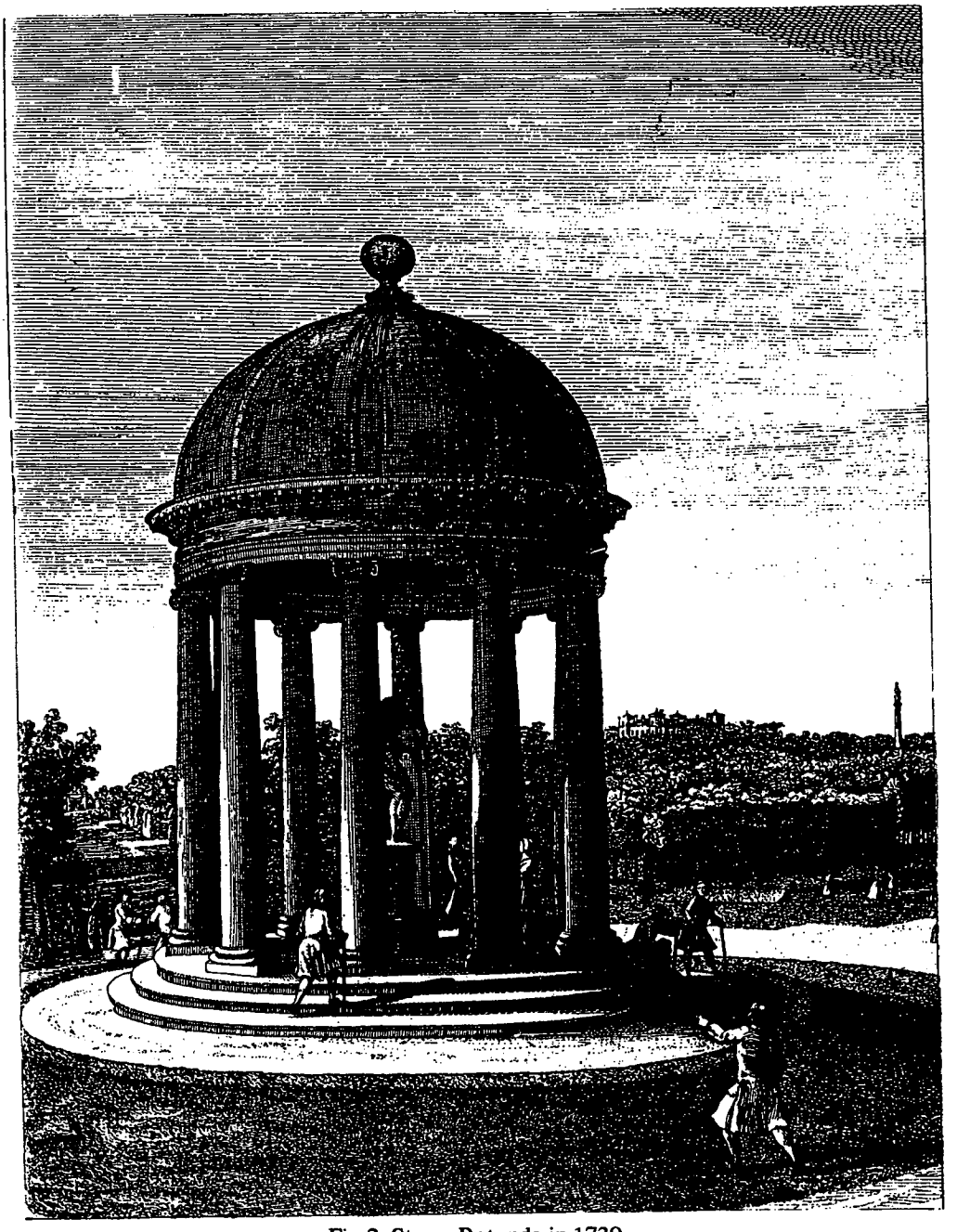


Fig 2. Stowe Rotunda in 1739.

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Ashendon, St. Mary's Church (SP 706 143)
J Hiller

A watching brief was maintained by the unit (OAU) at St. Mary's Church, Ashendon, Buckinghamshire in 1997, whilst new drainage facilities were being installed to replace an ineffective brick gully surrounding the church. This church was renovated with the aid of a grant from English Heritage: the West Tower of the building has been repointed and the parapet on top of the tower rebuilt. All groundwork was undertaken by contractors working to plans devised by architect Peter Gilbert Scott of Mount Vernon, Butterow, Gloucestershire.

Modern glass and whole bricks similar to those used to construct the brick gully surrounding the church were observed. A small sample of the bricks were retained. The footings of two buttresses at the corners of the tower were exposed, though the date of these additions is unknown.

Medmenham, Danesfield House Hotel (SP 8170 8430)
Stuart Foreman

A field evaluation and watching brief was undertaken in November 1997 at Danesfield House Hotel, Medmenham, in conjunction with a geophysical survey in respect of a planning application to construct a spa facility. The evaluation, consisting of four trial trenches, found no archaeological remains.

Fig 3. Stowe Rotunda in 1752.

Excavations in advance of the Environment Agency Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme

Stuart Foreman

Tranche 2: summary of results

Introduction

Three excavations in Dorney and Taplow, Buckinghamshire (Marsh Lane, M4 Motorway Diversion, Lake End Road West), comprised the second tranche of archaeological work in advance of the Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme, were carried out on behalf of the Environment Agency between March and October 1997. This work follows evaluation work by Environment Agency, Buckinghamshire County Museum (Hunn *et al* 1990) and Thames Valley Archaeological Services (Ford 1991), and previous excavations by OAU at eight sites comprising Tranche 1 (OAU 1997). A post-excavation assessment and revised project design for Tranche 2 have been completed (OAU 1998) and the post excavation analysis will begin in April 1998.

The route of the Flood Alleviation Scheme cuts a broad transect through the Middle Thames floodplain, an area which is relatively under-studied when compared to the upper or lower regions of the Thames valley. Considered together with the vast quantity of information recovered from the adjacent excavations at the Eton Rowing Lake (cross-reference to Tim Allen report), the project will form the basis for a broad landscape study of the human environment, settlement patterns and activity in this part of the Middle Thames valley, in particular the parish of Dorney, from early prehistory to the post-Medieval period.

The scheme passes less than a kilometre to the north of the Eton Rowing Lake excavations. Agreement has been reached in principal, between the Environment Agency and Eton College (the funding bodies) and OAU (the archaeological contractor) that the projects will be published together as a joint monograph series in four volumes.

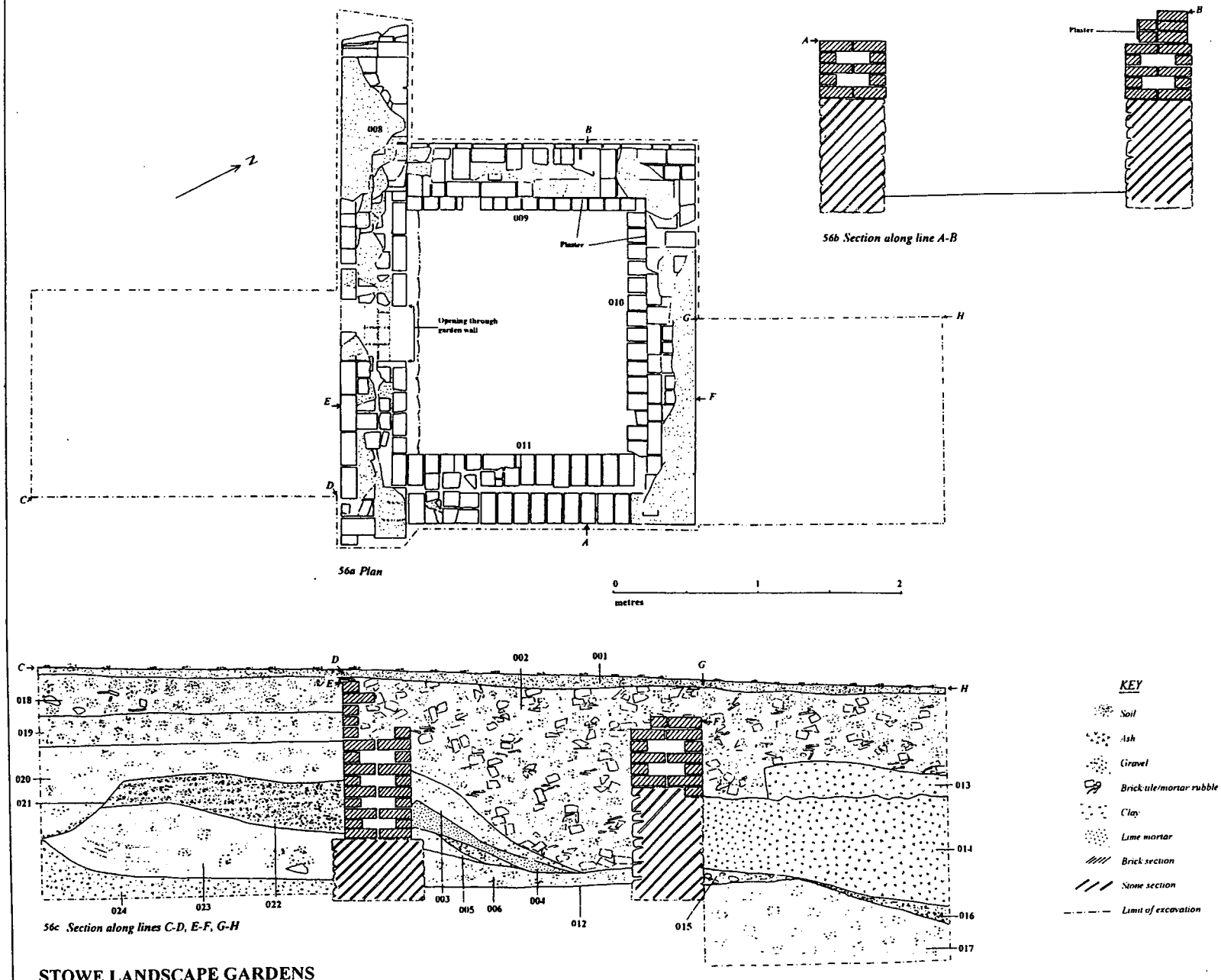
Tranche 2: Site locations, topography and geology

Marsh Lane, Taplow (SU 9180 8030)

The site lay at 22 m OD on the floodplain terrace and was 4.59 ha in extent. The site adjoins, and partly overlaps, the northern edge of Marsh Lane East Site 1 (Tranche 1). This group of sites, with a combined area of 4.95 ha, will be published together as 'Marsh Lane, Taplow'. The natural drift geology consisted of gravel overlain by patches of compact orange brown silty clay, cut at the south end by peat-filled relict water courses (palaeochannels). The subsoil was heavily disturbed by ploughing and the whole site was overlain by a clayey silt loam ploughsoil. An area of slightly higher ground lies immediately to the south-west of the site.

M4 Motorway Diversion, Taplow (SU 9200 7985)

The site, which lies alongside and to the north the M4 motorway, was situated at 22 m OD on the floodplain terrace



STOWE LANDSCAPE GARDENS

Plan and sections across the brick and stone lined pit in the Elysian Fields, trench 179, (illustration nos. 56a/b/c)

Fig 4. Stowe. Stone-lined pit in Elysian Fields.

and was 0.67 ha in extent. The excavated area adjoins Marsh Lane East Site 2 (Tranche 1) to the east. The two sites, which have a combined area of 1.38 ha, will be published together as the 'M4 Motorway Diversion, Taplow'.

The drift geology consisted of sandy and clayey silt alluvium overlying gravel, cut in some areas by peatfilled relict water courses (palaeochannels). The subsoil had been heavily disturbed by ploughing. The whole site was overlain by a clayey silty loam ploughsoil.

Lake End Road, Dorney (NGR SU 9290 7960)

The site lies at 22 m OD on the floodplain terrace and is 4.9 ha in extent. The excavated area extends 500 m westwards from the B3026 (Lake End Road) and lies 450 m north of Dorney Court. The site was separated from the previously excavated Lake End Road site (Tranche 1) by the line of the road. The two sites, which have a combined area of 5.9 ha, will be published together as 'Lake End Road, Dorney'.

The site is flat and is surrounded to the west and southwest by arable land and to the north and south-east land which was pasture in 1997 but had previously been under arable cultivation. At the western end of the site the drift geology consists of alluvial sandy and clayey silts overlying gravel. At the eastern end, the gravel generally lay directly below the ploughsoil except for occasional silt bands which may represent relict water courses or flood deposits.

Summary of excavation results

Early Neolithic

Lake End Road West
A concentration of early Neolithic pottery and flintwork recovered from a shallow, silt-filled hollow in the gravel, extended over an area *c* 20 m x 7 m and included *c* 650 sherds of pottery and *c* 920 pieces of worked flint. A section excavated through the hollow immediately to the north of the finds spread produced only two pieces of worked flint, indicating that the distribution of finds is likely to be a real indication of early Neolithic activity rather than an accident of survival. Further evidence for in situ activity was the presence of a single small pit cutting the fill of the hollow and containing a particularly dense concentration of early Neolithic pottery. Two finds spreads of similar date and character recorded at the Eton Rowing Lake have been described as Neolithic 'middens'.

Later Neolithic

Lake End Road West
Nine later Neolithic pits produced an exceptionally large assemblage of Peterborough Ware pottery and worked flint, including part of a polished flint axehead. The pits were clustered in two tight groups of three and four pits respectively (Group 1: 953, 1050, 1341; Group 2: 528, 600, 605, 1222). These were similar in shape and size, with shallow, bowl-shaped profiles, with a mean diameter of 1.07 m and surviving to a mean depth of 0.36 m. Two other isolated examples were found, of which one (684) was substantially larger and deeper than average (1.5 m in diameter and 0.86 m deep). Environmental samples from the pits produced significant quantities of hazelnut shells, with only occasional cereal or cultivated legume remains. In addition a group of Neolithic pottery was recovered from a probable Saxon pit (1434). A pit (1883) in Group 1 was also thought to be Neolithic on the basis of its profile and fill which were very similar to the others in the area, however, no finds were recovered from this feature.

Bronze Age

Marsh Lane
A 4.5 ha area excavated to the east of Marsh Lane, extended an area investigated during Tranche 1 (TAMLE 96). The Tranche 1 excavations revealed an area of Bronze Age activity including a series of ditches cut through the upper silts of a palaeochannel. This activity may represent the periphery of a settlement site, perhaps located on the slightly higher ground to the south-west of the site. The majority of the pottery suggests a middle Bronze Age date for this activity.

The Tranche 2 excavations identified eight cremations, and two possible cremations, of which three produced middle Bronze Age pottery as well as burnt bone. A possible posthole building, of uncertain form, is tentatively dated by a single fragment of pottery, of possible Bronze Age date, found in a posthole. A Neolithic laurel leaf arrowhead was found on the surface of the natural gravel in the area of the possible structure.

M4 Motorway Diversion
A 0.67 ha area was excavated along the northern side of the M4 motorway. The site adjoined Marsh Lane East Site 2, where two Bronze Age ring ditches, one with a central cremation, were investigated during Tranche 1. No further prehistoric finds or features were discovered during Tranche 2.

Lake End Road West
The greater part of a middle Bronze Age Bucket Urn was found in part of a segmented ditch. This was almost the only stratified Bronze Age pottery from the site. Another ditch produced an arrowhead of Bronze Age type. A number of other ditches are provisionally dated to the middle or late Bronze Age on the grounds of their common alignment with these dated features. There was little indication of Bronze Age settlement activity on the site, although the ditches seem to indicate the presence of a field system in the mid-late Bronze Age and the Bucket Urn suggests that a settlement may be located nearby.

Early-Middle Iron Age

Lake End Road West
Excavation failed to discover any trace of a possible banjo enclosure, identified as a curvilinear cropmark on aerial photographs (Carstairs 1991). Fieldwalking finds from the area of the site indicate a scatter of hand-made pottery (identified as prehistoric or Saxon) in the ploughsoil, concentrated at the western end of the site but no obvious concentrations in the vicinity of the cropmark. The absence of any subsoil features corresponding with the cropmark may be the result of plough damage. However, as it is only known from a single photograph, it is possible that it was a surface mark with no archaeological significance.

There was some evidence for early Iron Age settlement activity, comprising a group of six pits and two possible postholes. Five of the pits and both postholes (2075, 2097, 2099, 2102, 2105, 2107, 2142) were concentrated in a tight cluster at the western end of the site and between them produced a comparatively large pottery assemblage (507 sherds). The remaining pit (2109) was located *c* 50 m further to the west and contained a concentration of animal bone and 5 sherds of pottery.

A field system comprising seven regularly spaced boundaries on a north-west to south-east alignment, is provisionally dated to the early Iron Age. The dating of the field system relies on a small assemblage of early Iron Age pottery recovered from a group of severely plough-truncated single phase ditches at the western end of the site. The ditches at the eastern end of the site, which are linked to the early Iron Age ditches at the western end by their regular spatial arrangement, produced comparatively large groups of late Iron Age and early Roman pottery. They showed signs of frequent recutting, and it seems that a late Iron Age/early Roman settlement enclosure was superimposed over part of the early Iron Age field system, probably in the 1st century AD. The six measurable intervals between the boundaries range from 57.6 m to 61.5 m, with a mean of 59.4 m, suggesting that the system was laid out in a single episode, possibly using a standard unit of measurement. Two of the boundaries correspond closely with post-Medieval boundaries, indicating considerable continuity in the landscape from at least the late Iron Age to the present day. One of the boundaries comprised a pair of parallel trackway ditches. The trackway was also recorded *c* 550 m to the north at the M4 Motorway Diversion site, where the associated pottery was of late Iron Age/early Roman date. The trackway may be identified with a modern footpath running north-west from Dorney village towards Taplow. Further to the north the track can be traced as a cropmark forming part of the Taplow/Burnham Parish boundary.

Evidence for middle Iron Age activity on the sites is restricted to a small number of sherds, most of which are redeposited in late Iron Age/early Roman features, and all of which occur in the area of the late Iron Age/early Roman settlement.

Agar's Plough
It is expected that this site will be excavated during 1998. Evidence from fieldwalking, geophysical survey and evaluation trenching suggests that the route of the channel will pass through part of an enclosed middle Iron Age settlement site.

Late Iron Age/Romano-British

M4 Motorway Diversion
The Tranche 2 excavations uncovered traces of a trackway and associated posthole structure of probable 1st century AD date. The trackway formed part of an ancient landscape feature, which survived into the post-Medieval period and was also recorded at Lake End Road West, where the trackway ditches produced early Iron Age pottery. The small quantity of pottery from the M4 Motorway Diversion site suggests that a late Iron Age or early Romano-British settlement may be located nearby

Lake End Road
A late Iron Age and early Romano-British site, consisting of ditched enclosures and at least one posthole structure, is provisionally interpreted as a small farmstead. The pottery evidence suggests that the settlement enclosure was principally occupied during the 1st and early 2nd centuries AD. The limited range of forms and fabrics and small proportion of traded wares, suggests a low status settlement in an essentially native, late Iron Age tradition. A very small quantity of middle Iron Age pottery from the site is concentrated in the same area, suggesting that occupation on the site may have started in the middle Iron Age, but this material is mostly residual in later features and may derive from elsewhere.

A series of seven regularly spaced, north-south aligned boundary ditches may represent a contemporary field system, although the ceramic evidence from ditches at the western end of the site suggests that the field system is probably of early Iron Age origin and that the 1st-2nd century AD settlement enclosure was superimposed on an existing boundary system. A significant reorganisation of the boundary system at the eastern end of the site seems to have occurred during the Roman period, probably during the 2nd century AD. Unlike the later prehistoric and early Romano-British enclosures, which derive their alignment from the River Thames, the later Roman enclosures are perpendicular to Lake End Road.

Some of these ditches, and a group of pits (1262, 1274, 1689), are provisionally dated to the 3rd or 4th century AD, indicating that occupation continued into the later Roman period in the vicinity. Another pit in the same area (1351) produced a very large assemblage of 2nd to 3rd century pottery (1539 sherds). The very small quantity of later Roman pottery suggests that the site was on the periphery of settlement by the 3rd century AD.

Buckinghamshire

Early Saxon

Lake End Road West
The absence of sunken-featured buildings or diagnostic early Saxon artefacts suggests that the site was not intensively occupied between the 5th and 7th centuries AD, although many of the artefacts recovered from features currently dated to the mid-Saxon period could potentially be earlier in date.

Mid-Saxon

Lake End Road West
More than 80 Saxon pits were discovered. These add to evidence from two groups of similar features discovered during Tranche 1 on the neighbouring sites of Lake End Road East (11 pits) and Lot's Hole (10 pits). The limited number of datable artefacts suggest that most, if not all of the features are likely to date to the 7th-9th century, although there are some indications extends into the late Saxon period. Few, if any, of the artefacts from Lake End Road would be out of place in the 8th or 9th century context.

The Saxon pits have a wide range of profiles and dimensions. Some are likely to be wells, some seem to have been used as rubbish pits. Others which do not fit comfortably into either category require further analysis to determine their original function. Possibilities include storage or craft industrial activities such as tanning or flax retting. It is hoped that detailed analysis of a sample of the pits using a range of evidence (artefacts, charred plant remains, phytoliths, soil micromorphology) will shed some light on the composition of the fills, although the original function may not be discernible.

The pits have produced a wide range of artefacts including textile manufacturing implements (fired clay loomweights, pin beaters, needles, an iron weaving comb, spindle whorl and shears), items of personal equipment (16 bone comb fragments, including a rare, elaborately carved handled example, bronze and bone dress pins, tweezers, spearheads and knives), and domestic items (pottery, a sherd from a decorated glass vessel, a sherd of window glass, keys, a possible cow bell, latch lifters, iron tools, Rhenish lava quernstones and honestones). The pits have also produced a very large assemblage of animal bone (An estimated 16,700 fragments from mid-Saxon contexts) and a very rich assemblage of charred plant remains. There is evidence for smithing on or close to the site, in the form of dumps of metalworking slag and fired clay hearth lining.

The Saxon pottery assemblage comprises 673 sherds, the majority of which are in three hand-made fabrics. The assemblage also includes 18 sherds of imported pottery from France and the Rhineland, including silver-foil decorated Tating Ware, and 3 sherds of Ipswich ware.

Although no Saxon building remains have yet been identified (plough damage seems to have destroyed any postholes or sill-beam slots of this period that may have been present) the presence of organic-rich slag deposits in some of the mid-Saxon pits suggests that occupation layers formed from domestic rubbish extended over parts of the site during this period. The presence of butchery waste and smelting slag suggests that the site may lie on the periphery of settlement, in an area given over to craft/industrial activity. The main pit distribution, including the mid-Saxon pits excavated in 1996 to the east of Lake End Road (OAU 1997), extends over *c* 4 ha. Outlying groups have been identified to the west, at Lot's Hole and at the west end of the Lake End Road site, at distances of 350 m and 200 m respectively from the main distribution, indicating activity over a considerable area during the mid-Saxon period.

There is a strong likelihood that the core of the settlement lies under the present village of Dorney. Further research on the topography of the floodplain may help to establish the limits of the gravel island on which the village lies and thereby the probable maximum extent of the mid-Saxon settlement.

In the context of the Middle and Upper Thames Valley, the presence of imported pottery, decorated glassware and well-made bone and antler artefacts, even in comparatively small quantities, are accepted as indicators of high status. In the absence of documentary or archaeological evidence for a monastic connection, the mid-Saxon phase is at present best interpreted as the peripheral area of a secular estate centre, possibly a *villa regalis*.

Late Saxon

Lake End Road West
There is little clear evidence for a late Saxon presence on the site. However, many of the artefacts thought on current evidence to be mid-Saxon, could potentially be later in date. Three artefacts in particular suggest that some of the Saxon pits may date from the 10th or 11th century. A decorated handled comb from pit 1593 is of a type usually dated to the 10th or 11th century although it is entirely possible that this example was produced in the mid-9th century, at the earliest end of the date range for the type. A single vessel, of which two large sherds were found in the primary fill of pit 1056, has provisionally been identified as an early Medieval grogtempered ware spouted pitcher. These occur in London in very small quantities in mid to late 11th century contexts (Vince 1989), although no manufacturing source has yet been identified.A tile fragment from pit 356 has provisionally been identified as an early Medieval floor tile, which could also be of 11th century date.

Medieval and post-Medieval

Marsh Lane and the M4 Motorway Diversion
A small number of post-Medieval linear field boundaries were identified.

Lake End Road West
In contrast to the excavations to the east of Lake End Road in 1996, no definite Medieval features have been identified. The only post-Medieval features are four linear boundary ditches, two of which formed a trackway associated with a recently removed field boundary.

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Shenley Church End, St Mary's Church (SP 8318 3670)
Andrew Parkinson

In June 1997 the unit carried out a field evaluation on the north side of the churchyard of St Mary's church, Shenley Church End, in advance of an extension to the church. The upper levels of a number of graves were revealed but, as these were at the maximum depth of the building foundations, they were not excavated. A small assemblage of Medieval pottery was recovered which indicates activity from the 13th century within the vicinity. The material occurred in later deposits and was probably disturbed by post-Medieval gravedigging.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

AOC ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Report for 1997

Earls Barton, Saxon Lodge, High Street (SP85226385)
D Hopkinson

An evaluation consisting of three trenches revealed part of a ditch that appears to belong to the scheduled earthwork, Berry Mount. The pottery retrieved was limited and provided a late Saxon or Norman date. The ditch was truncated by Medieval and post-Medieval buildings.

COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Report for 1997

Burton Latimer (SP895755)
Alan Thomas

Field evaluation, following geophysical and fieldwalking surveys, identified several pits and ditches. Evidence of burning was apparent in a few pits and another produced an Iron Age potsherd. Other features identified during the geophysical survey proved to be of modern origin.

Towcester, Baptist Church (SP69534846)
David Kenyon

The Baptist Church lies approximately 150 m outside the south- eastern defences of the Roman town in an area known to contain Romano-British extra-mural occupation alongside Watling Street. Evaluation recovered a range of post-Medieval material, and some residual Roman pottery. As the evaluation did not penetrate to natural it is possible that earlier remains may survive at greater depth.

Towcester, Racing Stables (SP69584843)
Alan Thomas

Evaluation to the rear of burgage plots fronting Watling Street encountered Medieval ditches, pits, including a mortar mixing pit, and spreads of cess and domestic refuse. A road, possibly linking Watling Street and the deserted Medieval settlement of Easton Neston, was also identified. This road had been laid over part of a possible marsh. No features of Romano-British date were identified although a large amount of residual pottery of this date was recovered.

Towcester, 6-8 Watling Street (SP69604837)
Alistair Barber

Evaluation of an adjacent site to the Racing Stables (see above) recovered a complete, though fragmented, Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age pottery vessel resting on a clay setting. Residual Romano-British pottery was once again encountered. Medieval and later occupation deposits associated with tenements fronting Watling Street were also found.

Wellingborough, Land off Wilby Way (SP882660)
Dawn Enright and Alan Thomas

In 1997 the Trust carried out an excavation followed by a controlled watching brief of approximately 1.5 ha on the periphery of an extensive Iron Age settlement. This followed earlier aerial photographic transcription, geophysical survey, and field evaluation during 1996.

The site had been identified in the 1960s by aerial photography, and has been the subject of sporadic archaeological investigation in the 1970s and early part of the 1990s. In 1979 rescue excavation of several Middle Iron Age roundhouses and associated field boundaries, and a substantial Late Iron Age D-shaped enclosure, was undertaken in advance of the construction of the A45. This identified the site as being of national importance, and resulted in the preservation *in situ* of the core area of settlement. The CAT excavation was, therefore, concentrated on the western periphery of the occupation area. The site was characterised by a series of unenclosed and enclosed settlements, ranging in date from the Early to Late Iron Age. In addition two undated burials were encountered, one cremation and a single inhumation, in the northern half of the site.

Early-Middle Iron Age features were largely confined to the western part of the excavation. Enclosure A comprised a north-west to south-east aligned ditch which turned at its northern end to run south-west beyond the limit of excavation. Very few features were identified within the interior, suggesting a use as a stock enclosure. Apparently unenclosed occupation immediately to the east of enclosure A comprised four roundhouses, a possible granary, pits, gullies and postholes. A pit, located within Roundhouse 1, contained burnt grain-processing debris suggesting the structure may have been a working area. In addition an animal skull had been placed upside down in the base of the drip-gully terminal, presumably a ritual deposit and perhaps indicating the importance of grain to the community. The large quantity of pottery recovered from the gully defining Roundhouse 3 suggests a more domestic function, whilst a bone tool recovered from the gully of Roundhouse 2 may indicate a use associated with craft- based activities.

A number of intercutting clay quarry pits were identified immediately to the east of this settlement area. A further possible clay pit was also identified at the very eastern end of the site. The large quantity of pottery (115 sherds) recovered from this pit suggests that further Early-Middle Iron Age domestic activity may be located to the east of the excavation area.

In the Middle to Late Iron Age settlement shifted to the east. There was a slight overlap with the previous occupation, Roundhouse 1 being replaced by a small multi-phased enclosure with opposing entrances on the north and south sides. After rapid backfilling the enclosure ditches appeared to have been recut several times. There were no internal features associated with these enclosures to indicate their purpose. However the ditches were covered by a dark soil, from which 45 sherds of Mid to Late Iron Age cremation urn were recovered, suggesting that the area had some ritual/funerary importance.

Some 30 m to the north of these enclosures was another series of enclosures. Several phases of activity could be identified, all of which were dated to the Middle to Late Iron Age. At least seven roundhouses, which exhibited several phases of construction, were recorded. The boundary ditches enclosing this area showed evidence of modification over time, and are perhaps suggestive of stock control and corralling. It is possible that this evidence is a reflection of seasonal occupation, perhaps with the ritual/funerary monument also serving as a territorial marker.

Late Iron Age occupation comprised three enclosures, a clay quarry, and an isolated storage pit. Enclosure W cut through the ritual/funerary monument, whilst respecting its layout and maintaining the southern entrance. Environmental evidence suggests this deep-ditched enclosure contained permanent water, and is likely to have been connected to a nearby watercourse or pond. It was contained within a large rectilinear enclosure, measuring 36 m east to west by 38 m north to south where revealed by excavation. A further enclosure, with a western entrance, lay to the east. Towards the western edge of the excavation an isolated pit produced 41 sherds of Late Iron Age pottery.

Initial assessment of the overall pottery assemblage suggests occupation throughout the Iron Age. Whilst there are sites in Northamptonshire which produce either Early to Middle or Middle to Late Iron Age assemblages, there are few with the apparent longevity of this one. The material therefore appears virtually unique amongst the published pottery assemblages of the period within the County (P Blinkhorn, pers comm).

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Report for 1997

Corby/Newton - Corby South Trunk Main, for Anglian Water (SP877857 - SP892876)
Jon Coward

Fieldwalking, geophysical survey, evaluation/excavation and a watching brief were carried out in advance of and during construction of the north eastern extent of the Corby South Trunk Main (Corby and Newton parishes) for Anglian Water by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) (geophysical survey by GSB Prospection).

Prehistoric (?)
A dispersed flint scatter was located north of Little Oakley in Newton parish (SP888865).

The bases of two iron smelting furnaces were located during the watching brief of the topsoil easement stripping (Newton parish; SP887864). No dating evidence was recovered but on morphological grounds may be Iron Age or early Medieval.

Roman
Part of a limestone surface was located during the watching brief on the line of the Roman Gartree road which survives as an earthwork to the east (Corby parish; SP892876).

Medieval
A spread of charcoal located during the fieldwalking may be the location of a charcoal burning site (Corby parish; SP891872). Evaluation showed this to survive only in the ploughsoil. A radiocarbon date is awaited.

An Iron Age and Romano British Settlement Site at Potterspury (SP74744268)
Patrick Clay

Archaeological excavation of part of a Romano-British settlement site was undertaken in 1997 during the installation of the 1 m trunk main pipeline between Potterspury (SP753442) and Deanshanger reservoir (SP744415), phase 3 of the Salcey to Deanshanger Pipeline Duplication scheme by Anglian Water Services Limited.

The site is located 8 km to the south east of Towcester and 1.2 km to the south west of the village of Potterspury (SP74744268). The site lies at the top of a south facing slope (*c* 105 m OD) within the field on the eastern side of Redmoor Copse and within the parish of Potterspury. Aerial photographs of the site have revealed the existence of cropmarks (Fig 1).

During the construction of the pre-existing pipeline in 1979, archaeological observation was undertaken by D Jackson for the Northamptonshire Archaeological Unit. A number of features were recorded on the site and Iron Age pottery was recovered. Fieldwalking and metal detecting across the site have located some Iron Age and substantial quantities of Romano-British material (Clay, Cooper and Courtney 1996; Kings and Clay 1997). Archaeological evaluation was carried out by ULAS immediately prior to the excavation (Meek 1997).

The site was defined from the evaluation and the area of the excavation was a 150 m long and 12 m wide strip of the pipeline easement (Fig 2). It was evident from the outset of the machining that the site had suffered considerable damage from plough erosion and the western edge of the site was very badly disturbed, having been within the easement of the pre-existing pipeline in 1979 and subject to disturbance from heavy machinery. Archaeological features were concentrated at the southern and northern ends of the excavation area.

The remains of a discrete, possible Iron Age circular structure 8.5 m in diameter was revealed in the northern part of the site. Small fragments of Iron Age pottery were recovered from the excavated sections of the ring gully.

Possible evidence of two Romano-British circular structures were revealed in the southern part of the site. One of these structures was evident as a discontinuous possibly circular gully with associated postholes. The remains of the other structure was visible as a curving gully on the western edge of the site the majority of which would have been destroyed by the construction of the pre-existing pipeline in 1979.

The northern area of the site contained many gullies and small ditches of Roman date. A number of postholes were also recorded and there is the suggestion that some of the gullies and postholes may represent the remains of Romano-British structures in the area. A large ditch aligned north-south was excavated within the north eastern corner of the site, which could be seen running into the area to the north of the excavated area where it joined a large ditch aligned east-west. A second ditch within the excavated area, aligned east-west lying *c* 15 m from the northern edge of the site, was investigated and seen to comprise three separate linear features, two small gullies on the outer edges of a larger central ditch. This group of linear features bounded the majority of the Romano-British features in the northern part of the site.

The archaeology within the southern part of the excavated area was bounded to the north by a ditch aligned south-east to north-west *c* 36 m from the southern edge of the site. Enclosed within this area were a number of shallow pits, gullies, the two possible circular structures and spreads of material possibly representing working hollows. A second ditch running east to west was also visible *c* 16m from the southern edge of the site. Two deep pits were also recorded within the area. A ditch and pit of likely Roman date were recorded to the south of the excavation area during the construction of the pipeline. The pits within this area make it quite distinct from that of the northern area, with the environmental evidence also showing a contrast of activity.

Environmental analysis of samples from the site was undertaken (Monckton, forthcoming). The main cereal found was glume wheat, mainly spelt with a little emmer. The only evidence for other cereals was a few grains of oat and barley. The few weeds represented in the samples could have grown on the soils of the surrounding area and the cereals are likely to have been grown near by. Processing of glume wheat in the southern part of the site is indicated because the most numerous remains were of wheat chaff, mainly glumes, with some grains and weed seeds. The proportions of remains compare with those found in the cleanings of glume wheat separated from the grain by fine sieving after parching and pounding, the waste was then burnt possibly as fuel or kindling and then dumped or accumulated in pits and the ditch. Other samples appear to represent a scatter of the same type of waste. This waste therefore indicates the dehusking of glume wheat on the site. There is insufficient evidence from the plant remains or structures to suggest the scale of the processing of wheat at this site, but this activity is widespread on Roman rural sites and it is likely that any surplus would have been traded.

Crossing the site *c* 60m from the southern edge of the excavated area was an area of small, compacted pieces of

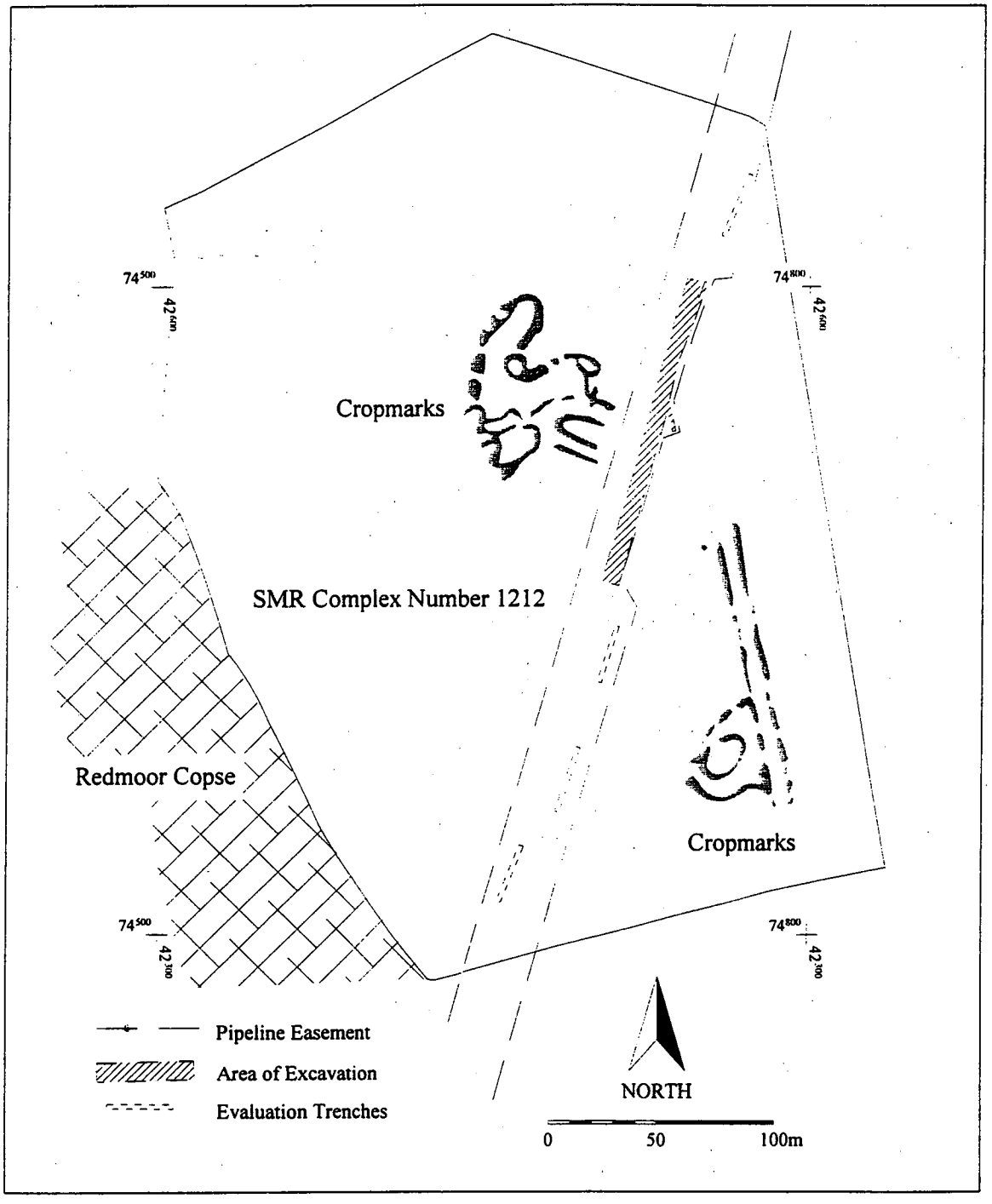

Fig 1. Redmoor Copse. Pipeline easement and excavation area.

limestone. Possible edges were revealed implying that this area of stone was a linear arrangement crossing the site in a southwest to northeast direction, possibly representing the remains of a road or trackway of Roman date.

The ditches recorded upon the site all appear to include at least one recut within them, implying prolonged usage of the features. Some of the ditches are likely to be contemporary features associated with Romano-British enclosure systems.

The cropmarks and finds recovered within the field suggest a large Romano-British site. The excavated area uncovered a thin swathe through this much larger site.

The existence of features recorded on the site and finds recovered from previous surveys of the field dating from the Iron Age and throughout the Roman period would suggest a continuation of occupation on the site through the transitionary period.

The majority of the pottery recovered from the site dates from the later first to third centuries, with some diagnostic material dating to the later third and fourth centuries (Cooper, forthcoming). The impression is that occupation did not continue until the end of the Roman period. This is based on the distinct lack of diagnostic regional wares which become widespread in the second half of the fourth century

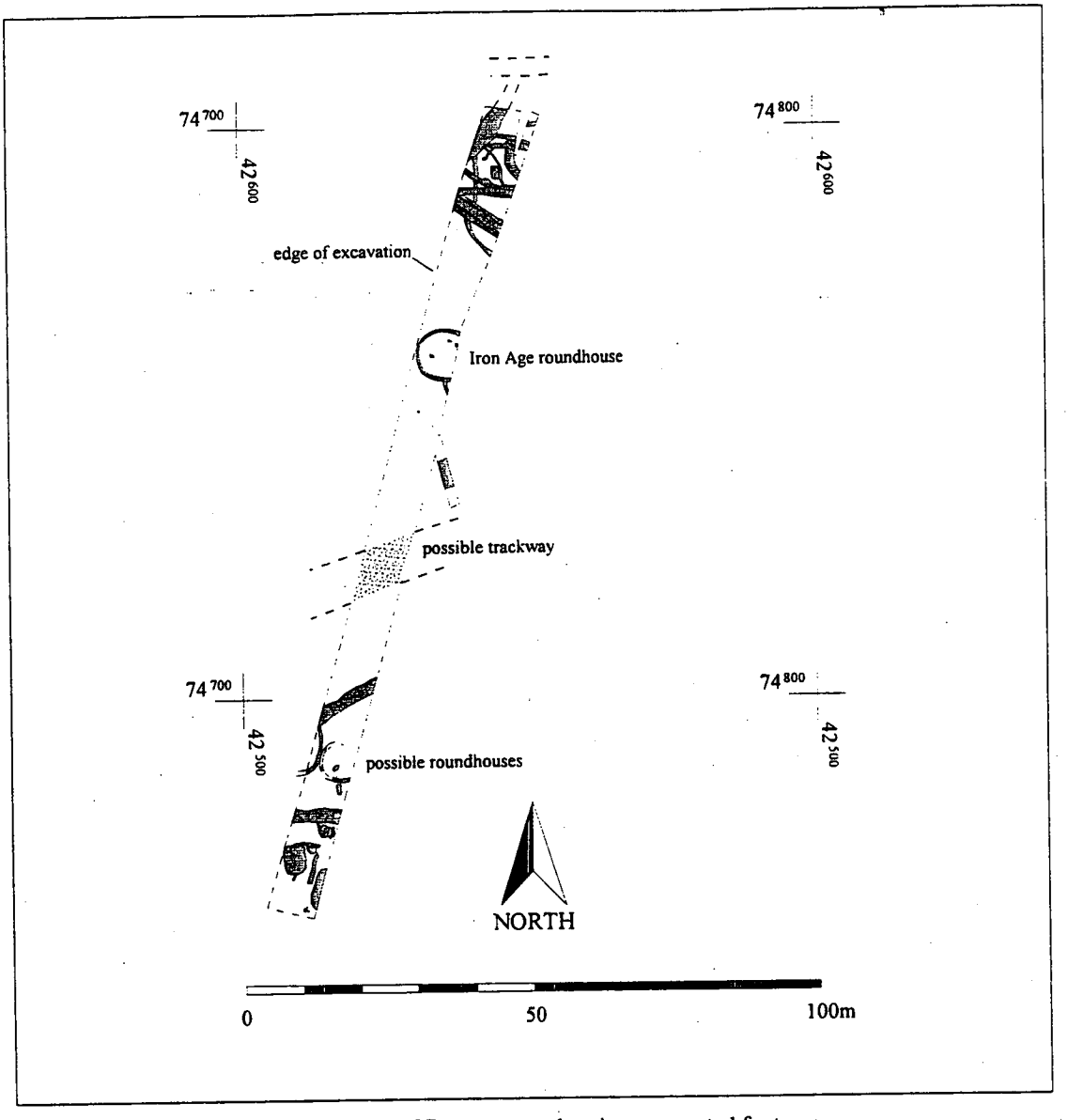

Fig 2. Site plan of Potterspury showing excavated features.

such as the late products of the Harrold shell tempered industry, the late products of the Lower Nene Valley colourcoated ware industry, and red colourcoats from Oxfordshire, all of which have been identified in such groups from sites in the Milton Keynes area, immediately to the east of Potterspury (Marney 1989).

Metal work and coins recovered from the site, the vast majority of which have been found by Bob King's surveys (Midlands Archaeological Research Society) in the area since 1988 (identified by Northampton Museum), date from the mid-late first to fourth century, with a concentration in the later third (Cooper, forthcoming).

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NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

The work carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology both within the county and beyond comprised a full range

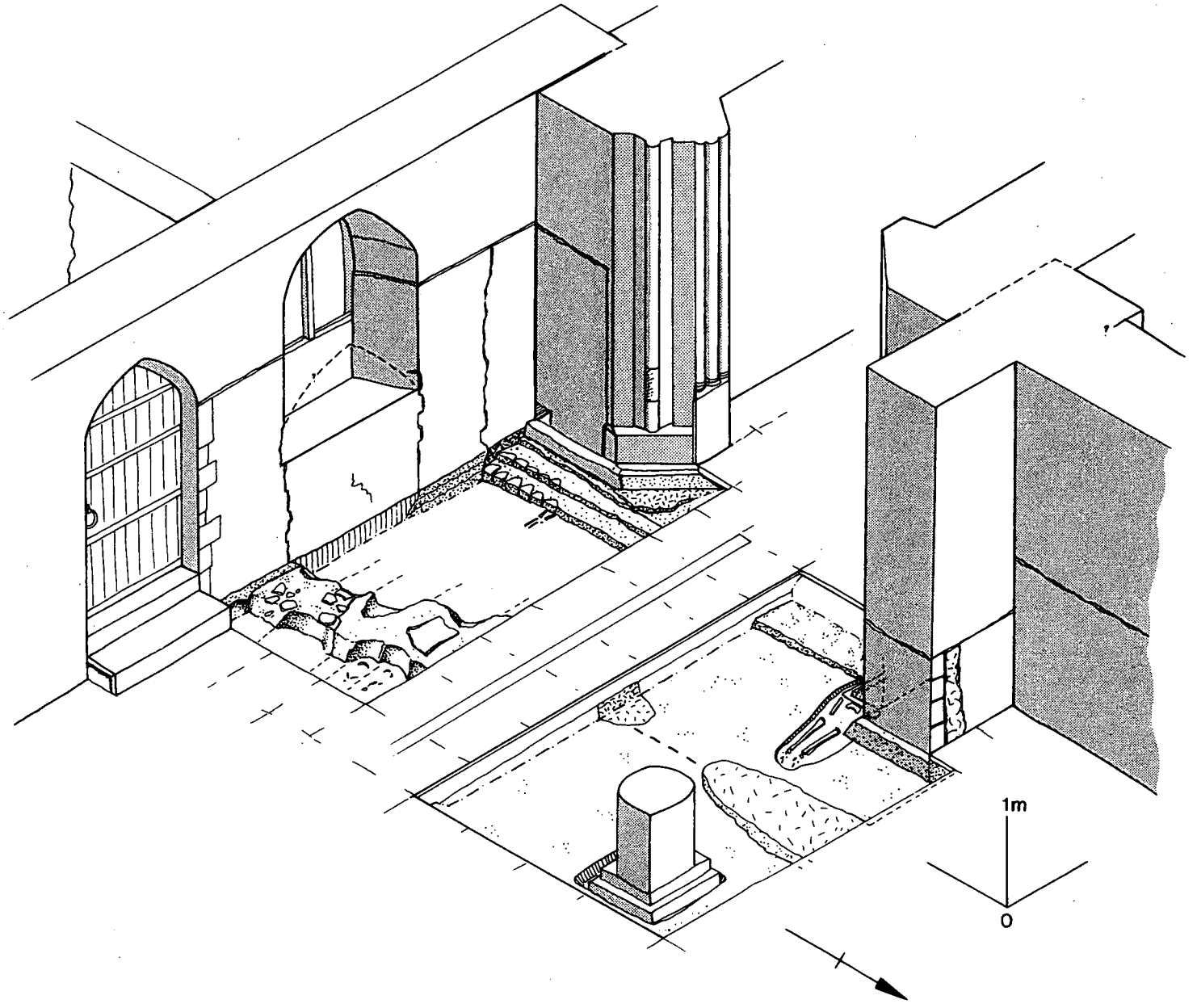

Fig 3. St Andrew's Church, Cranford; isometric view of early remains at the western end of the nave.

of developer funded desk-based assessments, field surveys, evaluations and recording actions. Those detailed below all produced some level of positive archaeological results, and most dramatically so with the discovery of the 'princely' Saxon burial at Wollaston; the numerous small projects producing largely negative evidence have been omitted.

Cranford, St Andrews Church (SP925770)
Alex Thorne and Michael Webster

An archaeological watching brief accompanied a programme of repairs which included the removal of pews and associated flooring in the western half of the nave. This work provided an opportunity to elucidate the earlier phases of church construction and, in particular, it confirmed the addition of the tower in the late 13th century. Most of the burials encountered were undated, but three predate the original west wall, presumed to be 12th century. Early wall footings to the east of these burials may be remnants of an earlier church (Fig 3).

Daventry, Church Walk/White House (SP576625)
Iain Soden

An archaeological evaluation showed that widespread Medieval quarries lie beneath most of a proposed development site adjacent to The White House, Daventry. No certain Medieval or earlier remains were present. One ditch, which may be Medieval or post-Medieval, was located. This limited discovery suggests that the former precinct of Daventry Priory lay further to the north, and may have covered part of the current churchyard.

Hargrave, Slade Farm (TL035708)
Michael Webster and Steve Morris

Earthwork survey and trial excavation ahead of the proposed redevelopment of the eastern part of a large plot of land to the south of Church Street, Hargrave, identified a group of shallow gullies and pits of Medieval date. To the rear of the plot a large bank and ditch first noted by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) were shown to be of later date. Together with a pond and hollows in the remainder of the plot they may be associated with nearby brickworks.

Irchester, Chester Farm Heritage Park (SP919665)
Peter Masters and Steve Morris

Detailed geophysical survey to the south of the Roman Town, on the opposite side of the A45, located remains of extra-mural activity comprising enclosure ditches, a droveway and pits. A limited area to the west was also surveyed in detail and the possible extent of modern ironstone quarrying was identified.

Kettering, Stamford Road (SP876791)
Joe Prentice and Mark Holmes

An archaeological evaluation was carried out on land fronting onto the southern side of Stamford Road close to an early-middle Saxon cemetery discovered in the early years of this century. Trial excavation suggested that the site had been terraced prior to the construction of former factory buildings and no archaeological features were present.

Nassington, Shortwood Lodge Equestrian Centre (TL043962)
Steve Morris, Peter Masters and Tony Baker

A geophysical survey of 1.5 ha of land identified a possible curving boundary ditch with a small enclosure and other ditches to the north-west. Subsequent trial excavation confirmed that these features were Middle to Middle/Late Iron Age in date.

Northampton, Cattle Market (SP756600)
Tora Hylton

An archaeological watching brief during the redevelopment of land off Victoria Promenade and Cattle Market Road, revealed only modern, Victorian or natural deposits; no evidence of the former town defences or other early deposits was recovered.

Northampton, St Giles Church (SP759606)
Iain Soden, Tora Hylton and Joe Prentice

An archaeological watching brief accompanying the reordering of the nave at St Giles' Church recorded the locations and details of the 12th century nave foundations and those of the former 13th century aisles. In addition numerous burials and previous major floor alterations were recorded which allow detailed predictions concerning overall patterns of survival across the existing nave and aisles.

Onley, Young Offenders Institution (SP517704)
Andy Chapman

A field survey recorded an area of well preserved earthworks of the Medieval ridge and furrow field system lying to the north and east of the present prison, and east of the deserted Medieval village of Onley.

Oundle School, New Technology Block (TL041884)
Mark Holmes, Tora Hylton and Peter Masters

Trial excavation showed that parts of the site had been disturbed by post-Medieval quarrying. No evidence for Medieval or earlier activity was discovered despite the presence of a known early-middle Saxon settlement to the south at Black Pot Lane.

Stoke Bruerne, AWA Pipeline (SP747499)
Joe Prentice, Tony Baker and Steve Morris

The discovery by Mr Rod Conlon of Roman remains during the replacement of a sewer to the east of Stoke Bruerne led to more detailed excavation and recording. The work revealed a group of pits, possibly relating to marl extraction, cut by part of a rectangular ditch system. Coins and pottery suggest that the remains date to the fourth century AD. The presence of roof, box flue and floor tile may suggest that there was a contemporary building nearby.

Towcester, Sponne School (SP691488)
Andy Chapman

A small area excavation immediately inside the Roman town defences revealed a stratified sequence of late 1st to mid 2nd century building levels dating from the late 1st to the mid 2nd century. The cut off is in the 160s or early 170s (C Woodfield pers com) and may be associated with clearance of the area at the construction of the town defences. These deposits had been subsequently truncated and they were sealed by a soil horizon containing later 4th century pottery; this activity may be associated with a late refurbishment of the defences. The excavation lay immediately east of trenches across the defences excavated in 1954 (Brown and Alexander 1954 Excavations at Towcester, 1954: the Grammar School site, *Northants Archaeol.*, 17, 24-59)

Northamptonshire

Towcester, Water Lane (SP692484)
Iain Soden

An archaeological evaluation of land off Water Lane, Towcester, has revealed a wide swathe of Roman deposits on low lying ground adjacent to Silverstone Brook. The remains comprise gullies, slots and postholes possibly associated with buildings along the former Alchester Road, together with a water-filled Roman ditch, possibly connected with the town defences; the defensive wall was not present. Roman inhumations within back plot areas were also located.

Warkton, St Edmunds Church (SP893878)
Alex Thorne

A programme of archaeological recording carried out in connection with structural extension to both aisles at St Edmund's Church, Warkton, identified evidence of 15th century remodelling and later insertions in the 14th century fabric of the north aisle. The total rebuilding of the south aisle in 1867-8 has been confirmed. Associated below-ground remains were also recorded.

Warmington, Manor House (TL078914)
Andy Chapman

Trial excavation on 4ha of land located early-middle Saxon features and a major Medieval complex, defined by rectilinear ditches and dated to the period 1050-1200 AD. The density of activity and the short duration of use make this enclosure system of considerable archaeological interest, and a chronological and functional relationship with the adjacent moated site, a scheduled ancient monument, is possible but cannot be confirmed.

Wollaston (centre SP885628)
Ian Meadows

Excavation and watching brief work during gravel extraction near Wollaston continued through 1997, funded by Pioneer Aggregates (UK) Ltd (cf *SMA* 26 (1996), 39-40 and *SMA* 27 (1997) 42).

A significant element of the excavation has been a total metal detector survey of extraction areas both before and after topsoil stripping to characterise the finds distribution patterns. The work has been carried out by Mr S Critchley, and in March 1997 it resulted in the discovery of a 'princely' Saxon burial.

The fragmentary remains of an adult male, aged about 25, lay supine with his knees slightly raised; his head had apparently originally been propped on a pillow. He lay within an oval grave pit 2.8 m long and 1.3 m wide, and surviving to a maximum depth of only 0.15 m. Beside the skull lay a bronze hanging bowl. It was old when buried, having been repaired at least once, and only one of five original decorative mounts was present. The mount was circular and contained a symmetrical arrangement of square millefiori glass rods set into red enamel.

A large double edged sword, 0.9 m long by 0.55 m wide, lay beside the legs. X-rays have shown it to be pattern welded from grip to tip in an elaborate alternating straight and twisted design which changes about every 80 mm down the blade. The corrosion preserved evidence of a scabbard constructed from wooden boards with a leather outer binding and possibly a fleece lining. Traces of the grip and lower guard of horn survived, but there was no trace of a pommel.

To the left of the body lay the remains of the helmet. It was resting on its left side, and the cheek guard had been folded inside the cap before the nasal guard was deliberately bent inwards as a ritualised, 'killing' of the helmet prior to its deposition (Fig 4). The right side of the helmet had been lost to plough damage. The helmet construction, comprising strips, plates and ribs is similar to the Coppergate helmet from York (Tweddle 1993), but the Pioneer helmet is significantly larger, perhaps to allow for a substantial padded lining, traces of which survived in the corrosion of the interior.

The helmet is surmounted with a crest formed from a single piece of iron drawn into the simple shape of a standing boar. Although well known from Saxon literature, such as Beowulf, the helmet from Benty Grange, Derbyshire (Bruce-Mitford 1974) is the only previous example of boar crested helmet, although there is a possible detached crest from Guilden Morden, Cambridgeshire (Foster 1977).

Corrosion on the exterior of the helmet bore the traces of two different textiles and of feathers, and these may represent bedding or cushions within the grave. In addition, the impressions of fly pupae cases were preserved in the rust, and their identification may help determine whether or not this burial took place immediately or some time after death, and even possibly the season of death.

A number of small artefacts were also present. A small iron knife lay beside the grip of the sword. A small D-shaped iron buckle lay adjacent to the scabbard and there was another buckle at the left shoulder. A copper alloy hook in the upper chest area was presumably a clothes fastening. These small artefacts are of forms not characteristic until the later seventh century, and they are therefore important in providing a terminus post quem for the burial.

Several short rods, perforated at least at one end, were found near the helmet and were thought originally to be related to it, perhaps forming part of an aventail. However, further consideration would suggest that they are part of a separate item, perhaps a belt.

The location of the grave adjacent and parallel to a Roman road suggests the route may still have functioned in the later

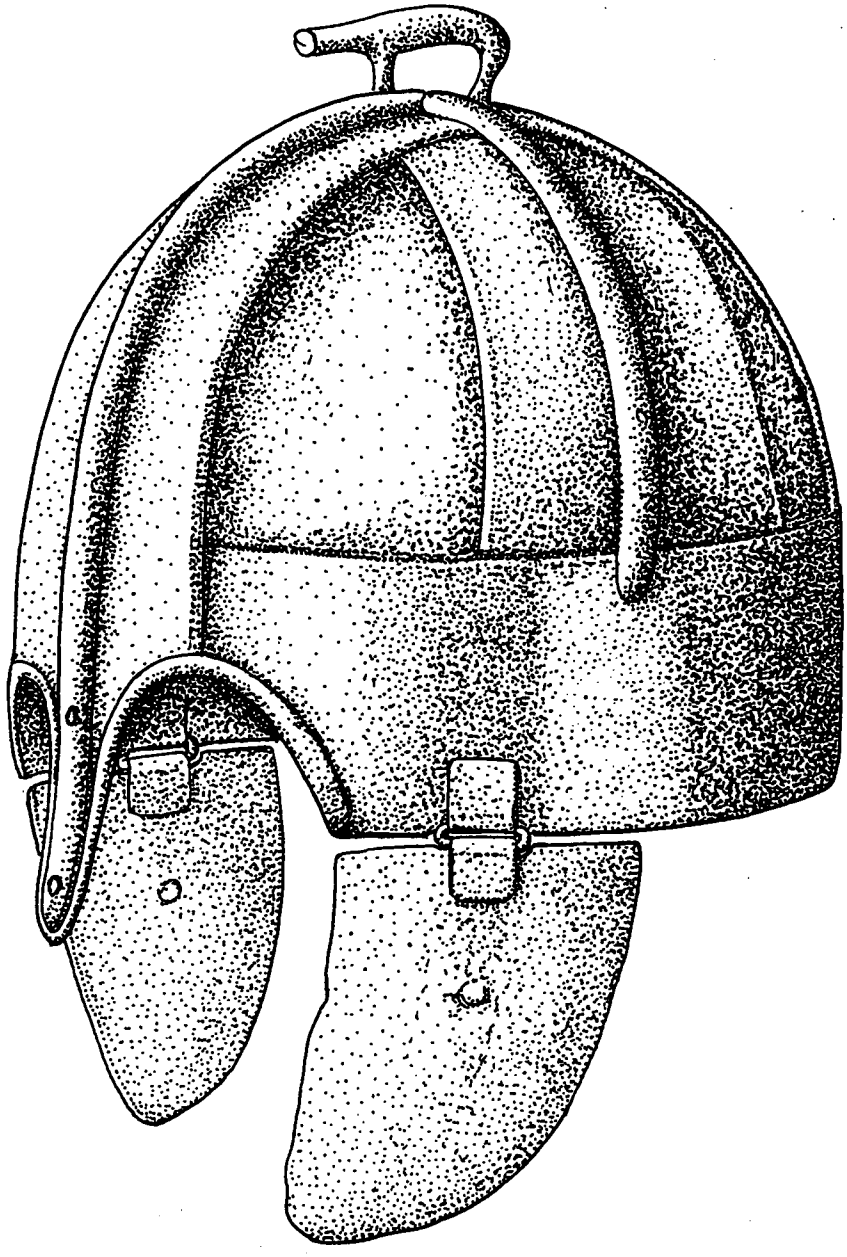

Fig 4. Wollaston, provisional reconstruction of the Pioneer helmet,

seventh century. No tangible evidence for a barrow was recovered but one is likely to have originally surmounted the grave. The work of analysis is continuing and a fuller report will then be produced.

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OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Crick, Forte Posthouse Hotel (SP 5811 7306)
Kate Atherton

The OAU carried out a field evaluation in October 1997 at the Forte Posthouse Hotel in Crick in respect of a planning application for an extension to the hotel. The evaluation, consisting of three trial trenches, found evidence of former ridge and furrow cultivation, almost completely removed by modern ploughing, but no archaeological features were located.

Great Billing, Land adjacent to the Elwes Arms (SP 81056290)
Andrew Parkinson

A field evaluation was carried out in December 1997 on land immediately to the north of the Elwes Arms public house, Great Billing, in response to a planning application for a housing development. The evaluation, consisting of two trial trenches, was specifically aimed at locating Palaeolithic finds and examining any associated Pleistocene geological deposits. These deposits were identified in both trenches but no Palaeolithic finds were recovered despite hand-sieving the topsoil.

The composition of the Pleistocene deposits suggests that they were of local origin and deposited at the margins of the ice sheet. It is likely that they are of Anglian age and, apart from some post-depositional freezing, have undergone little change. The hand-axe found in 1955 just south of the site had, therefore, probably lain upon this surface relatively undisturbed since its deposition.

In addition, a ditch and several pits were revealed. The assemblage of pottery was too small for reliable dating but it is likely that the ditch represents a post-Medieval plot boundary. The date of the pits must remain speculative.

Higham Ferrers, Walnut Tree Station (SP 9595 6915)
Steve Lawrence

A watching brief in January 1997 during a geotechnical survey of the former Walnut Tree petrol service station. A total of eleven trial pits were excavated under archaeological supervision. A thick medieval soil deposit and a limestone wall were recorded in one pit along with demolition debris.

The area at the northern end of Higham Ferrers is known to be rich in archaeological remains dating from the Roman to post-Medieval period. Of particular interest to this site is the extensive early-late Saxon settlement in the field to the north partially excavated by the OAU in December 1995 (*SMA* 26, 1996, 43). Earlier extensive evaluations of this area have suggested that the later Saxon settlement may continue towards the area of the watching brief. An evaluation by the OAU uncovered a probable Medieval building in a surprisingly good state of preservation in the corner of the field to the north. The remains of a 15th-century pottery kiln was found to the immediate north of the watching brief area. The area covered by the watching brief had been subject to a large amount of modern disturbance and little had survived except for a small glimpse of surviving Medieval deposits in one test-pit.

Northampton, Derngate (SP758602)

Summary report by Jon Hiller

Introduction

The unit carried out a watching brief and limited area excavation on the site of the former Girls School at Derngate, Northampton, during 1997 (Fig 5). The work was carried out on behalf of Hassall Homes of Tamworth, Staffordshire who were developing the site for housing on behalf of Hobden Partnerships Ltd and J S Bloor (Northampton) Ltd. The watching brief and recording action was requested by Northampton Borough Council, owing to the known presence of archaeological remains within the development area (Shaw 1991, Kidd 1996). The development area lies within the historic Medieval walled town of Northampton and comprised a triangular area of land covering *c* 1.2 ha near the south-east corner of the town centre and situated immediately inside the line of the Medieval town defences, by one of the gates.

The site is bounded to the north by the Derngate, to the west by Albion Place and to the south by Victoria Promenade. The topography of the site is uneven, and it lies on a pronounced south-facing slope leading down to the river Nene. The site slopes over a distance of some 60 m from a high point of *c* 72 m above OD to *c* 64 m above OD, a gradient of 1:7.5. The remains of several demolished school buildings occupied areas of the site, and these were removed in the course of the housing development. Landscaping in the form of cut terraces had occurred on the site, accentuating the uneven nature of the terrain. The underlying geology of the site is the Northampton sands and ironstone, which overlie Lias clay.

Excavation of deposits and a limited number of features was carried out by the OAU in the course of a watching brief during the excavation by the contractors for house plots, parking areas and a new sewer. The complex nature of the stratified deposits in some areas of the site meant that remains could not be dealt with adequately under the limitations of watching brief recording. Accordingly open-area excavation was targeted at specific areas of the site.

Historical Background

Historically the origins of Northampton date to the Anglo-Saxon period, when the town ('Hamtun') developed as a military and administrative centre for the conquering Danish army. The Anglo-Saxon burh was sited on a sandstone bluff above the Brampton branch of the River Nene. Its favourable geographical location close to the river made 'Hamtun' a natural focus for trading, and by the early 11th century the town was known as a port. Post-conquest, the Norman castle attributed to Earl Simon de Senlis I (1090-1111) was constructed over the Anglo-Saxon houses in the west of the old burh.

The town expanded to the east of the burh, and was enclosed with a defensive wall and ditch. It is generally accepted that

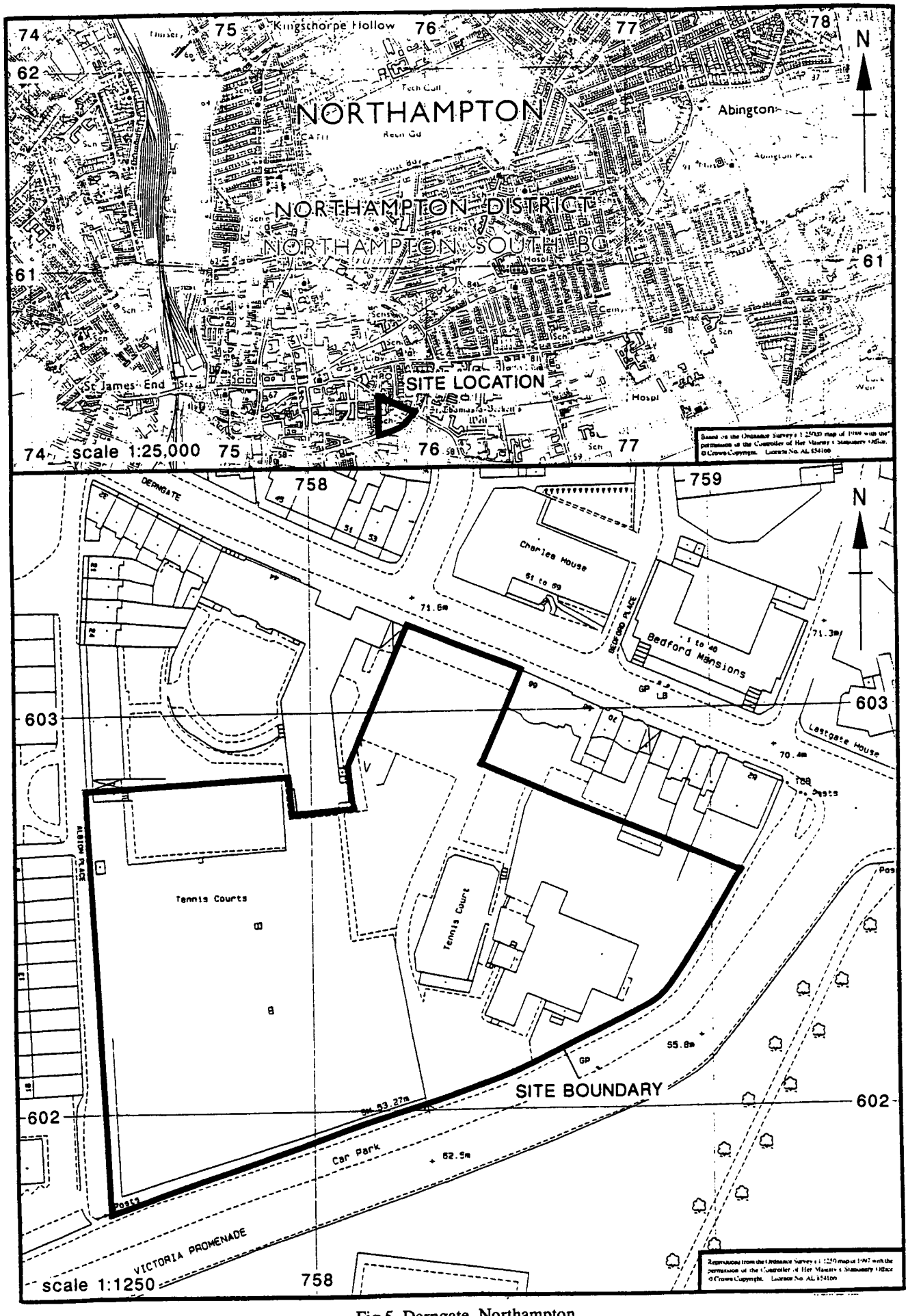

Fig 5. Derngate, Northampton.

the wall was constructed in the middle of the 12th century, *c* 1150. The line of the wall and ditch extended along the south side of the present day St George's Street (North Gate), Campbell Street, the Upper and Lower Mounts (East Gate), York Road, Cheyne Walk (Dern-Gate - the secret or 'hidden gate'), Victoria Promenade (South Gate) and up by the river to the West Gate near the castle (Steane 1974, 141-6). The Medieval street pattern seems to have been maintained throughout the ages, including the rebuilding of the town after the Great Fire of 1675. A consequence of the construction of the town defences was the creation of an exceptionally large enclosed area, with the result that even at the height of the town's growth in the 13th century, some parts of the town may not have been particularly built up (Foard 1995, 115). It seems probable that lightly populated areas within the town's limits would have been away from the main street frontages, and the effects of plague and famines from the 13th to the 15th centuries would have had an adverse effect on the number of houses in the town. Extra-mural suburbs such as North End and Cotton End grew up outside the walled town along the axes of the major north-south and east-west roads.

Derngate is first recorded in 1185 as 'Swinewelle Strete' (De dominabus, 22), and further references exist *c* 1215 and 1225 (Luffield Charters II, nos 326, 327; NRO Tresham cartulary, fol 152), when the site was known as 'Swynewellstrete'. The name Derngate referred to the gate itself. A fuller account of the documentary background to the site can be found elsewhere (Shaw 1984).

There was Medieval occupation in the area in the form of tenements on Swinewelle Strete evidenced by two town rentals; one dating from the time of Edward I (Public Record Office 12/13/38) and the other from 1504 (Northamptonshire Record Office). Documentary sources suggest that in the early 16th century the development area lay within a large urban property known as 'the Grange', whose principal building was known as 'The Towre'. This building was located to the north of the development area, and is shown on Speed's map of Northampton (1610). The triangular area of land which forms the present development appears on Speed's map, which also shows the town wall, its intermittent angled bastions, and the Derngate entrance at the east side of the town. Tenement buildings are depicted at the north-west of the development area.

By the time of Noble and Butlin's map of 1746, the tower was gone, although the area was known as Tower Close. J C Cox, writing in 1898, suggested that the Tower "disappeared in the Fire of 1675", although he did not give authority for the statement. Cox may be correct, as an abstract of the title to the property (NRO NPL2666) indicates that while in 1649 the property is described as containing a "capital messuage or tenement" and in 1653 a "house", by 1709 the "Tower grounds" are said to contain only lands and closes, barns and barnyards. The line of the town defences was depicted as 'The Old Wall', but was illustrated without bastions. By the time of Roper and Cole's Map of Northampton (1807) the area was still known as Tower Close and was divided up into a number of separate paddocks or closes. The west side of the site appeared to be occupied by trees, perhaps an orchard. The town's defences are again drawn as 'The Old Wall' and two angled bastions are clearly shown on the drawing. By 1847 suburban development along Derngate (depicted on Wood and Law's map, 1847, as Waterloo Terrace) included narrow plots of land at the rear of the houses. The town wall appears to have been removed by this time and a large ?ditch is shown following the approximate line of the wall. The garden plots at the rear of the houses on Derngate appear very well ornamented and arranged by the time of the Ordnance Survey 1st edition of 1885, and the western part of the site appeared to be a park equipped with seating.

In recent times the site was occupied by a school, including substantial buildings, tennis courts and playing fields.

Excavation and Watching Brief Results (Fig 6)

Trench I - House plots 59-60

Trench I was located at the south-east corner of the development area, adjacent to the boundary wall surrounding the site. A series of layers sloping from the south-east to the north-west were investigated. The nature of these layers and their topographic formation suggest that they formed a deliberately constructed bank, almost certainly immediately within the limit of the Medieval town wall, which is known from historic maps. The bank would have been a further defensive feature, probably dumped against the inner face of the town wall. The primary layer of the bank produced a single sherd of shelly coarseware of a type dated between the start of the 12th century, and still in use at the start of the 15th century. The bank layers above contained pottery dated to the early-mid 13th century. Towards the top of the sequence a further soil layer maintained the gradual slope of the established bank. This layer contained post-Medieval pottery and clay pipe fragments, perhaps suggesting that the structure was being maintained as a defensive feature.

At the western extent of the bank was a stone drain aligned northeast-southwest. The drain was constructed of 3 courses of parallel lines of large un-mortared ironstone blocks (average measurements 0.4 x 0.3 x 0.2 m). One piece of brick was used in the construction of the drain, which was 1 m wide and 0.4 m deep. A single sherd of post-Medieval pottery was recovered from between the slates which formed the drain capping. The fill of the drain consisted of light grey clay with substantial inclusions of shell and charcoal flecks. Environmental samples from the drain indicate that it was filled with poorly preserved sewage of recent date, suggesting a post-Medieval date for its construction and use. Above the drain were a series of levelling layers which extended up over the remains of the earlier clay bank.

Trench II - House plots 19-44

The trench was located on a low terrace which had previously been occupied by tennis courts. Previous

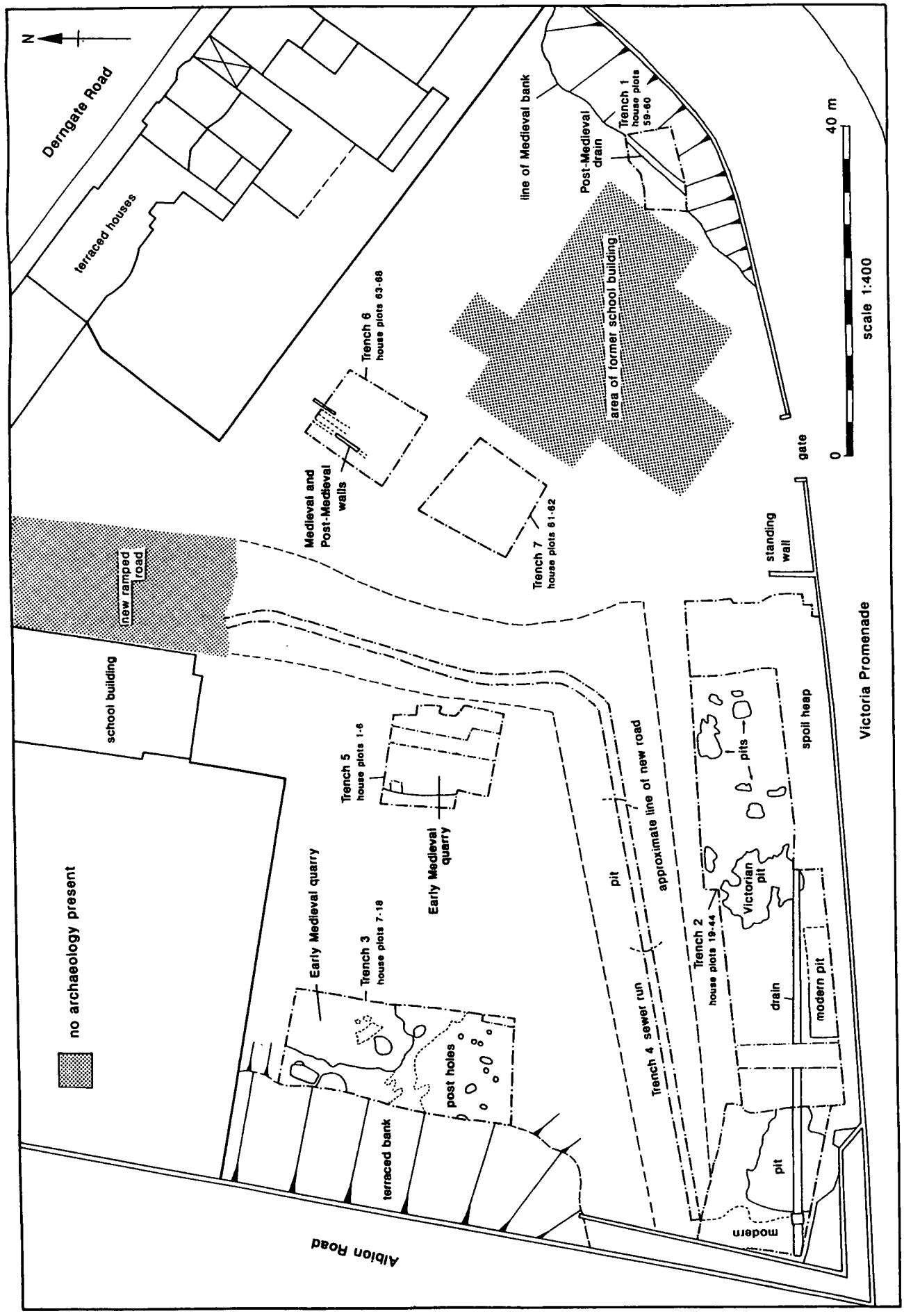

Fig 6. Derngate, Northampton. Site plan.

evaluation work here had suggested that Medieval quarrying had taken place. The full extent of quarry pits was lost due to the density of later 19th and 20th century rubbish pits containing vast quantities of late 19th and 20th century crockery, glass and oyster shells, and other domestic refuse including shoe leather, clay pipes and whole bottles.

Trench III - House plots 7-18

A substantial pit cut the natural ironstone at the north end of the trench. The pit extended outside the limits of the excavation area, but was 14 m long (north-south) and at least 7.5 m wide. Pottery from the pit fills was dated to the 12th and 13th centuries. The fills of the pit tipped steeply from west to east suggesting they were infilling an ironstone quarry, presumably dug early in the Medieval period, and infilled soon after.

A number of apparently domestic pit features containing pottery ranging in date from the 13th to the 15th centuries were cut into the infilled quarry pit, and into layers which were stratigraphically later than the infill. Two pits, on the basis of the ceramic evidence, seem to have been dug towards the end of the 15th century. Soil samples for environmental analysis were retained from some of the pit fills. Medieval and post-Medieval soils were recorded towards the south end of Trench III, together with a few post holes. These may have formed part of a timber structure, or possibly a fence. Pottery in one of the post holes was of 12th century date, suggesting that the structure or fence may have been contemporary with the quarry activity.

Trench IV Sewer Trench

The main site sewer associated with the new development extended from the south-west corner of the development area on a north-east alignment to the centre of the site, thence due north towards Derngate Road. The only notable feature was a large 19th to 20th century pit (perhaps a quarry pit?) which was over 4.5 m wide and at least 3.5 m deep, and filled with substantial quantities of modern glass bottles, crockery, leather shoes and humic material.

Trench V - House plots 1-6

This trench contained an infilled quarry pit similar to those in Trenches II and III. Pottery of 13th century date was recovered from the pit, which was filled with tipped material similar to the pit in Trench III.

Trenches VI and VII - House plots 63-68, 61-62

The earliest deposit in Trench VI was a layer of red-brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks and contained pottery of 12th century date, and some animal bone. It sealed the natural ironstone. The upper surface of the layer was even, and may represent an early Medieval soil horizon. This layer was sealed by a layer of compact grey-brown clay loam which included charcoal flecks, ironstone pieces, and animal bone. An ironstone wall in a construction trench cut this layer and extended northeast-southwest for a distance of 9.3 m within the trench. The wall was perhaps part of the boundary wall of the Medieval or post-Medieval building known as the Grange which was on the site. The wall was abutted on both sides by distinct thick layer of grey clay loam which included a very high percentage of charcoal flecks.

A second wall adjacent was represented by a robber trench infilled with mortar and bricks (possibly indicating a post-Medieval date for its original construction). Pottery of 18th century date was recovered from the robber trench, suggesting that it was demolished at this time.

Trench VII contained modern layers relating to the school - no archaeological features were observed here.

Discussion

The results were broadly comparable to those from previous evaluation work on the site. No features or finds of Prehistoric, Roman or early to middle Saxon date were found. Little evidence was forthcoming from this investigation about Derngate during the late Saxon period, as Medieval stone quarrying, perhaps starting as early as the 12th century, together with extensive landscaping and Victorian and later rubbish pits have removed the potential for deposits or features of this date. This corroborates the results of previous work on the site (Parry and Shaw 1996, 7 & 24-5). The recovery of a single sherd of Northampton ware of late Saxon date from the 1997 excavations is not enough to demonstrate activity here of this date. This is consistent with the generally accepted view that the Derngate area lay outside the late Saxon burh, and agrees with the general ceramic evidence recovered during earlier excavations (e.g. Shaw et al 1992, 18 & 22; Parry and Shaw 1996, 7).

The pottery evidence suggests that there was a relatively short period of activity here in the 12th and 13th centuries, which accords with the 1992 excavation results (Shaw et al 1992, 17 & 23; Parry and Shaw 1996, 7). In the 12th and 13th centuries the site appears to have been a quarry. Evidence of quarrying has been found at Swan Street, north (Shaw 1984). On the criterion of size, at least three quarry pits were certainly identified, whilst the loose ironstone material seen in the sewer trench may have been the infill of a further quarry. Quarry pit fills in the south and south-west part of the site were cut by later activity. There was no evidence of quarry pits in Trench V.

Williams (1979 p 143) suggests that it is unlikely that stone houses were built in the town much before the late 13th century, and Shaw (1984) suggests that quarrying was undertaken to provide the stone for the town wall. The evidence from these excavations suggests that such a hypothesis is likely and accords with the generally agreed view that the town wall dates to the middle of the 12th century.

No structural evidence of the town wall was observed during these excavations, although the clay and earth bank recorded at the south-east part of the site must represent the inner part of the town defences. Pottery from the layers of the bank suggest a date range between the 12th to 15th centuries for its formation, though the majority of the pottery from the bank suggests that its likely construction date is in the 12th or 13th centuries. It is unlikely that the bank predated the town wall, and given the location of the Saxon burh to the west, it is improbable that the Saxon town defences would have extended this far to the east. There was no Saxon pottery recovered from the area of the clay bank in the earlier evaluation trench (1992, Trench C). The low concentration of late Saxon pottery from all of the evaluation work on this site strongly indicates that the area was not built-up prior to the construction of the town defences. The fact that there was a layer of soil containing post-Medieval pottery and clay pipe fragments above the primary bank deposits might suggest that the bank was maintained, but the pottery evidence suggests that this was an 18th-century event. Any association with the Civil War, for example, is not proven. The earliest post-Medieval activity suggested by the pottery recovered from these excavations was of 18th century date. The evidence gathered in the 1992 excavation (Shaw et al 1992, 17) similarly indicates that there was little activity at Derngate that could be associated with the Civil War.

Recent work by Foard (1995) suggests that although the town of Northampton expanded rapidly in the early Medieval period, housing was concentrated along the major routes through the town with the suburbs being less densely populated. Excavations at the south end of Swan Street (Shaw and Steadman 1993/4) have shown that small posthole-built dwellings were present in the early Medieval period, probably the remains of small timber buildings occupied by the poorer people of the town. The small collection of postholes in Trench III may represent a part of a wooden building (or a fence), but otherwise there was little to suggest that there were substantial numbers of houses on the site in the early Medieval period. A posthole building with associated pits of early Medieval date was located at the south end of the site in 1992 evaluation Trench A, and the possible building in Trench III may be contemporary. Nothing can really be said about the function of the buildings, though it is possible that they provided accommodation for the quarry diggers. The presence of deep modern features, particularly at the south end of the site, may have removed the evidence for further post-built structures.

A number of pits in Trench III which were stratigraphically later than the infill of the quarry pit contained quantities of pottery and animal bone, which might suggest that there was domestic occupation nearby. However, the initial environmental examination of one of the rubbish pit fills indicates a weed assemblage with a large grassland component, tending to suggest that the area around Trench III was an open space after the quarry pit was infilled. The pits in Trench III may be indicative of the need to dump refuse away from the centre of the town. In the 16th century, an order by the town assembly enforced the disposal of domestic refuse away from the inner part of the town (Cox 1898, 264). Pits of a similar date were recorded in 1992 Evaluation Trench F, which was excavated to the west of 1997 Trench III. Whilst it is possible that there were tenements fronting onto a road along the line of what is now Albion Place, and that these pits were at the rear of the properties, there was no evidence for property boundaries extending back into the area of Trench III. No ditches or other property divisions were observed in the adjacent evaluation trench (1992, Trench F). The earliest appearance of Albion Place is on Wood and Law's map of 1846, so it is difficult to argue that there is a 'lost' Medieval street on this alignment: there was certainly no direct evidence in trenches III and F for a street to which the posthole structure/fence and the pits could be related.

There was limited evidence for part of the late-Medieval/early post-Medieval Grange (Towre) in Trench VI. The ironstone wall may have formed part of the boundary to the property, or of one of the buildings associated with the property. Pottery from the construction trench fill was of 13th century date, presumably residual and derived from layers below. The absolute date for the construction of this wall is uncertain. By the time of Noble and Butlins map of 1746 the Grange buildings had gone, and it may be that they were destroyed in the fire of 1675. A thick layer of soil which abutted the ironstone wall contained frequent charcoal inclusions, which might suggest that the debris from the conflagration in the town settled in the suburban areas, and became incorporated into the soil horizons here. The wall was demolished and robbed from the level of this soil horizon.

Activity on the site continued throughout the Victorian period into this century, demonstrated by the number of rubbish pits (Trenches II and IV), suggesting perhaps that this area of Northampton was used for the organised disposal of refuse at that time. The school buildings had also truncated the underlying deposits over much of the site. It is anticipated that a full report on these investigations including detailed reports on the pottery and other finds will be published in 1999.

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Historic Maps

Speed's map of 1610; Noble and Butlin's map of 1746; Cole's map of 1807; Wood and Law's map of 1847; O.S. 1st edition map of 1885

Sulgrave Manor Courtyard Development (SP56054558)
Andrew Parkinson

The OAU carried out a field evaluation in February 1997 at Sulgrave Manor in advance of a courtyard development. The existing manor dates to later than 1558. One of the two trenches revealed a sequence of post-Medieval deposits culminating in a limestone cobbled surface directly below the present lawn. The second trench, to the south-west of the manor, exposed a sequence of north to south aligned medieval ditches. The pottery indicated a date in the 12th or early 13th century. A layer cut by one of the ditches contained burnt hearth material that is likely to have resulted from domestic occupation. These ditches may form a Medieval plot boundary and may be a continuation of the earthworks which are recorded in the field to the west of Sulgrave Manor.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF ENGLAND

Simon Crutchley, RCHME, Swindon.

Work has continued in Northamptonshire as part of the National Mapping Programme (NMP) of the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME). The purpose of NMP is to map, document and classify, at a common scale and to a common standard, all archaeological sites and landscapes recorded in England on aerial photographs. Staff at Northamptonshire Heritage are funded by RCHME to carry out NMP work for the county. The project began in 1994 and to date has mapped over half the county (77 maps out of 130 to the end of March 1998). It has recorded over 8000 individual sites, increasing the number previously known by over 50%. These sites cover all periods from Prehistoric to post-Medieval, and include such diverse features as Prehistoric barrows, Roman forts, and Medieval settlements. The area currently being worked on lies in the west of the county, to the south of Daventry, and recently recorded sites include an area of possible Prehistoric settlement and field systems near Jobs Hill, near Chipping Warden.

OXFORDSHIRE

ABINGDON AREA ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Abingdon - 64 Bath Street (SU49509727)

Work continued in advance of a development at the rear of this property. This season we were able to investigate an area which had not been disturbed by 20th century earth moving.

The sequence was of Victorian garden soils which overlaid an early 19th century pigsty. Underneath this were deposits which had been dumped from elsewhere which contained Medieval jettons and third and fourth century Roman coins and much pottery. This deposit was cut by a pit of mid-18th century date which produced a very nice group of pottery including tin glaze, stoneware and cream wares.

Underneath this was a Medieval pit and a single Roman pit and gully/ditch. The difficulty here is that there was relatively little Medieval pottery in comparison with the Roman pottery which could lead to Medieval features being wrongly attributed to the Roman period.

The importance of the site to the archaeology of Abingdon is that it indicates that activity continued in the third and fourth centuries. An apparent lack of finds of these dates from the town centre may only mean that the town was occupied but the inhabitants had sorted out their rubbish disposal arrangements. Rather than throwing it away in the centre they were now dumping it outside the line of the earlier defences.

Although the site produced few features for the amount of finds these proved useful on National Archaeology day when approximately 200 people visited the site.

Sutton Courtenay (SU5147593917)

Bob Eeles has found a late-middle Palaeolithic point at the base of the gravel pits. Under approximately 3 m of gravel. It was found in a grey silty layer between the base of the gravel and the natural gault clay. Elsewhere in this vicinity unpatinated long flakes have also been recovered. The point has been inspected by Paul Mellars and Roger Jacobi and they consider that it dates to approximately 45-37 thousand years ago.

The importance of this is that it shows that in situ deposits remain underneath the gravel in this area and that these are of a period when relatively little is known of the occupation of Britain.

Radley (SU5145097185)

Jeff Wallis has found a peat deposit which is being removed during gravel extraction. The Society has investigated this

and it would appear that there are two layers of peat separated by approximately 1 m of alluvium. In the bottom layer of peat has been found traces of a possible trackway which appears to have started as a timber trackway made up of small stakes approximately 2 to 3 cm diameter. Above this is a more substantial track formed by depositing layers of burnt quartzite cobbles and limestone pieces, gravel and large, approximately 30 cm diameter, limestone and greensand blocks. Amongst this has been found several sherds of possibly early Iron Age pottery and several flint flakes.

Adrian Parker has taken a column in order to carry out pollen analysis and Mark Robinson has taken samples for snail and other analysis. It would appear from the snails identified by Bob Eeles that the water here was mostly still. It is yet to be established whether this trackway was crossing a fairly narrow, say 30 m wide, river channel which was silting up or whether there is a more extensive deposit of peat in this area. Finds from the gravel companies spoil heap include many animal bones such as roe deer, badger, cattle, horse and bird. and fragments of a human skull.

A.O.C. ARCHAEOLOGY LTD.

Report for 1997

Chipping Norton, The Ambulance Station, Spring Street (SP31382742)
D Tyler

An evaluation in advance of proposed residential development revealed several modern garden features, producing a small quantity of 19th to 20th century pottery.

Culham, The Manor, The Green (SU50199491)
I Grundon

No archaeological remains were encountered during a watching brief prior to the construction of a tennis court.

Shrivenham, Joint Service Command and Staff College, Watchfield (SU257907)
J Moore and D Tyler

An evaluation comprising 61 trenches along with geophysical surveys established the presence of significant areas of extensive and intensive archaeological activity. Features of the late Mesolithic/early Neolithic transition period and a Mid Iron Age settlement were identified in the westernmost field mainly located on higher ground. To the east was a small farmstead dating from the late Iron Age/early Roman transition period and extending into the earlier Roman period. The two fields in the eastern part of the site contained enclosures and a field system associated with the Roman settlement. Pottery of late Bronze Age date also suggested activity of this period to the south.

BAMPTON RESEARCH PROJECT

Bampton town centre: interim report 1993-7

John Blair

This report summarises the progress made in understanding the Anglo-Saxon origins of Bampton, and the underlying prehistoric monuments, since the last report (*SMA* 22 (1992), 55-62). Fig 1 is a general map of the historic core of the town, locating the features described below.

The churchyard: Bronze Age barrows and Anglo-Saxon burials (SP31260332)

The last report described a large Bronze Age ring-ditch to the west of the church, enclosing the Deanery house. A second, smaller ring-ditch, directly underlying the south transept, has now been located by two trenches in the churchyard (Figs 2 and 3). There can now be no serious doubt that Bampton minster, like many important Anglo-Saxon churches, was built on what was perceived to be an ancient ritual site with visible earthworks, in this case one of the many Bronze Age barrow cemeteries on the upper Thames gravels. In the light of this the low, eroded mound south of the chancel (Fig 4) can probably be interpreted as a third barrow, in line with the other two.

An important further discovery in these trenches was a sequence of three superimposed burials, overlying the inner lip of the Bronze Age ditch, which yielded (in sequence of deposition) uncalibrated radiocarbon dates of 1240 1 25 BP (feature 550), 1115 1 30 BP (feature 547) and 1035 1 25 BP (feature 546) (references OxA-7071, 7070, 7069). The earliest burial can be calibrated to between the late 7th and early 9th centuries, the other two to the 10th and early 11th centuries. This therefore demonstrates the existence of a graveyard through most of the Christian Anglo-Saxon period. Furthermore, the floors of the lower two graves sloped downwards in the direction of the underlying ditch, which strongly suggests that the barrow-mound was still an up-standing feature when the graves were cut.

It therefore seems likely, as suggested in Fig 5, that the late 11th century church and Deanery chapel, and perhaps their Anglo-Saxon predecessors, were laid out in relation to a line of barrows. The divergent axes of the barrows and the religious buildings can be explained on the hypothesis that the church was laid out so as to be aligned on the centre of the larger ring-ditch, but also so as to avoid the barrow standing immediately to its south.

An early Medieval canal? (SP31000368 to SP31210305)

Resistivity survey (kindly carried out by Arnold Aspinall) and two trenches showed that the fishponds south of the Deanery house are the remnants of a large artificial

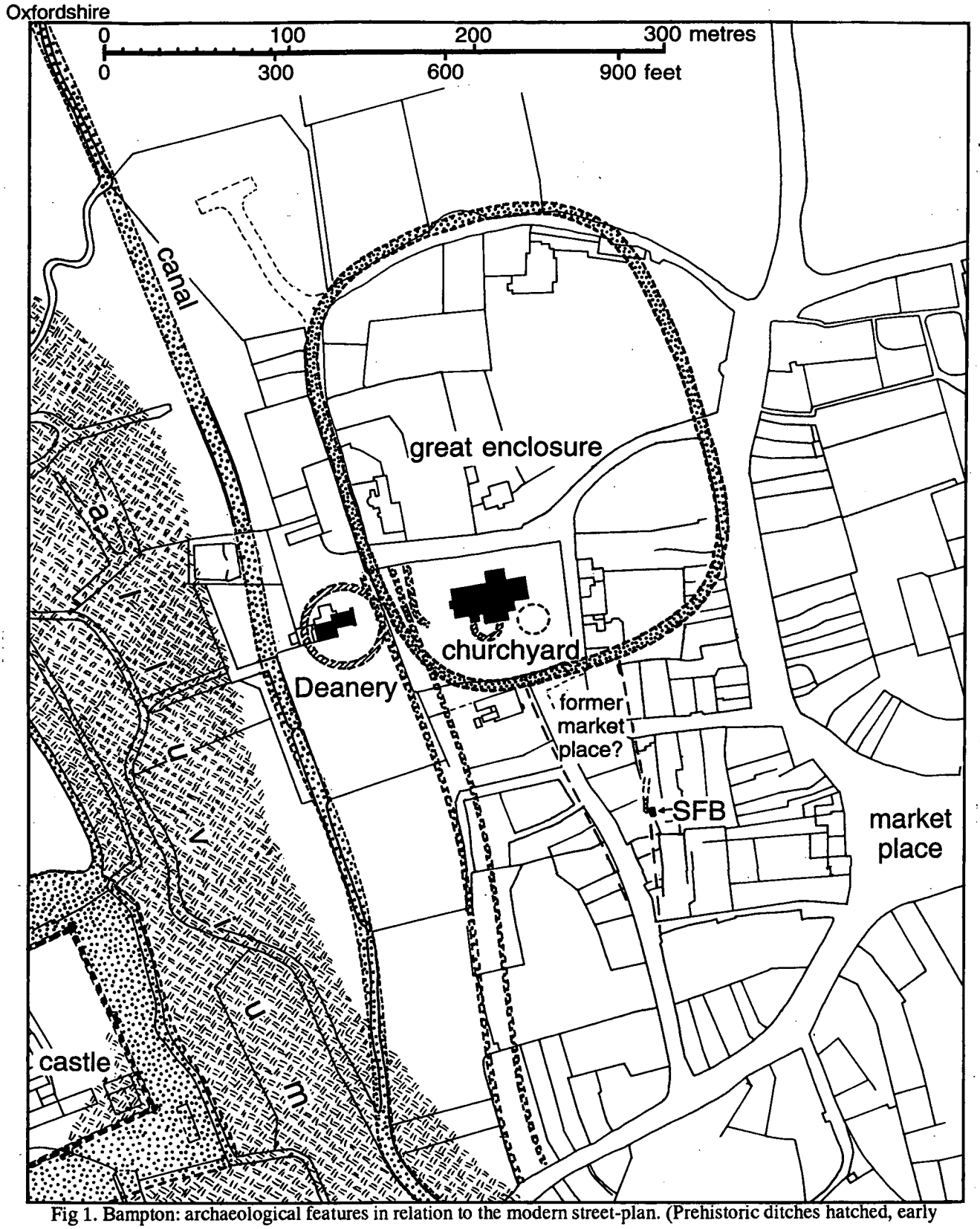

Fig 1. Bampton: archaeological features in relation to the modern street-plan. (Prehistoric ditches hatched, early Medieval ditches stippled.)

parallel with its edge. The original cut, flat-bottomed and probably vertical-sided, was about 7 m wide, but was recut several times, culminating in a broader and shallower profile in the post-Medieval period. Very little dating evidence was found, but fishponds at the Deanery are mentioned in 1317 and it seems likely that the original continuous channel had gone out of use by then.

Further north, cartographical and field evidence indicates an artificial channel connecting the Shill and Highmoor Brooks, effectively creating a watercourse from Black Bourton village to Bampton, which existed by the time of Saxton's survey in the 1570s. It seems likely that this was originally the same feature as the channel found by the Deanery. If so, it is altogether too large for a mill-leat and may fairly be described as a 'canal'. Written evidence shows

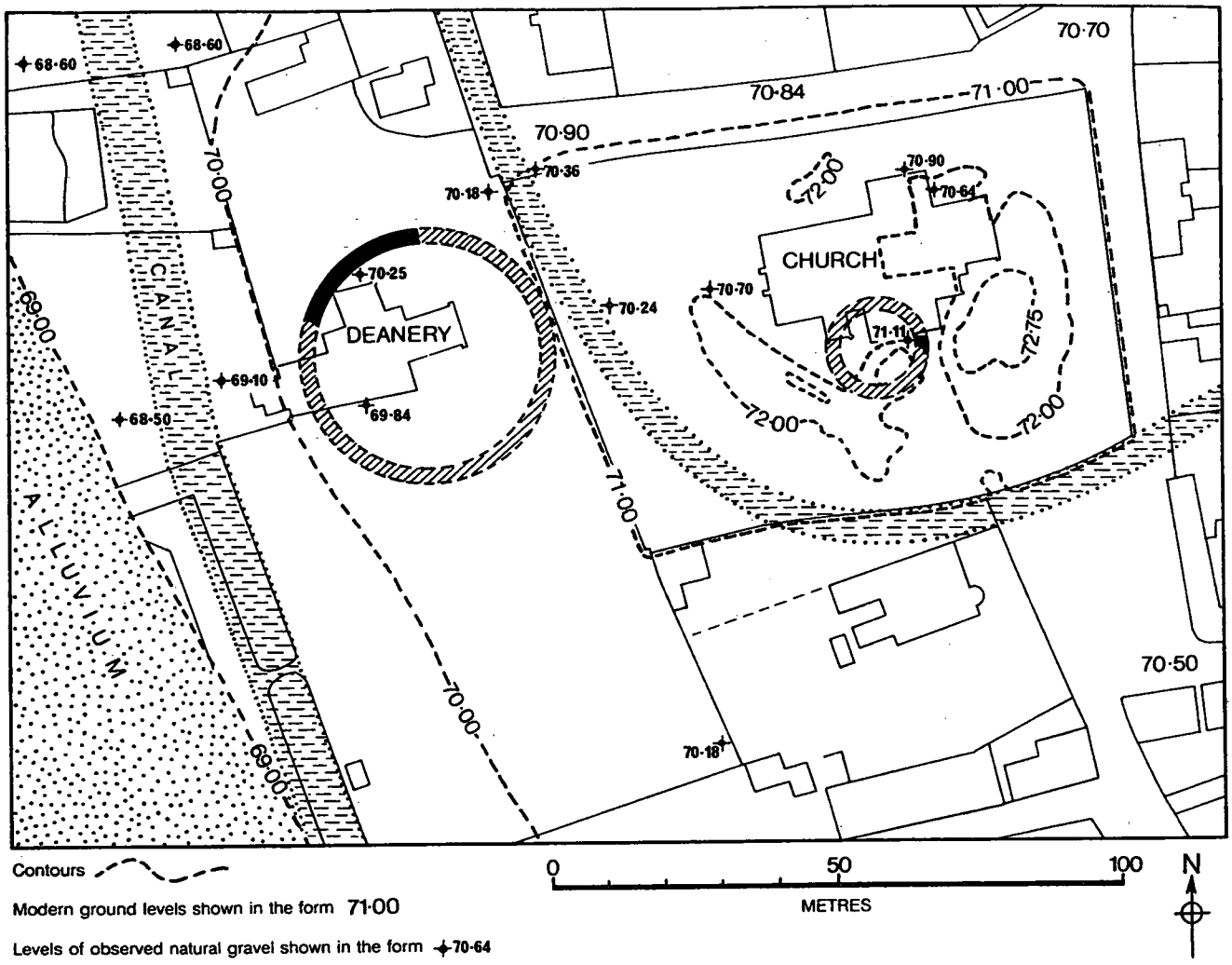

Fig 2. Bampton: the area of the church and Deanery, showing prehistoric and Anglo-Saxon ditches, surface contours, surface spot heights, and spot-heights on exposures of the natural gravel.

that Abingdon Abbey cut a navigation channel alongside the Thames in the 1050s; the possibility that the Bampton channel is something similar, and associated with the minster or royal manor there, will be explored in future seasons.

A Saxo-Norman sunken-featured building (SP31350321)

South of the churchyard, the layout of property boundaries suggests that the road from the south once broadened into a funnel-shaped open space, suggestive of an early market at the minster gate. Excavations on the east side of this area, in the garden of Thatched Cottage (by kind permission of Mr T Crowley), located a small rectangular sunken building of two phases (Figs 7 and 8). The first phase, represented by shallow post-settings, was dismantled and the floor raised slightly. A rubble footing for sill-beams was then built on the alignment of the old walls; several meat-bones served as chocks inserted under the sills to level them up. There were traces of an entrance on the east side, and the building was flanked on its west side by the terminal of a north-south ditch. The small amount of pottery suggested a date around the 11th century.

This building was clearly a small version of the late Anglo-Saxon sunken and cellared buildings now familiar from towns such as London, Chester, York and Ipswich. On purely rural sites they are rare if not unknown, but the smallest examples (most clearly Northampton and Steyning) come from just such places as Bampton: minster centres with signs of incipient urban life in the 10th and 11th centuries. The ditch, which may have marked the east side of the early market-place, separated the building off from it, though the ditch apparently ended in a gap immediately southwards. Possibly this suggests that the building was a store or lodge immediately inside the gate of a large ditched homestead. It is in any case important evidence for an early stage in the evolution of Bampton from monastic site to town.

COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Littlemore, Land off Heyford Hill Lane (SP02255320)
Alistair Barber

Field evaluation of an area which bordered known prehistoric and Romano-British occupation found a small

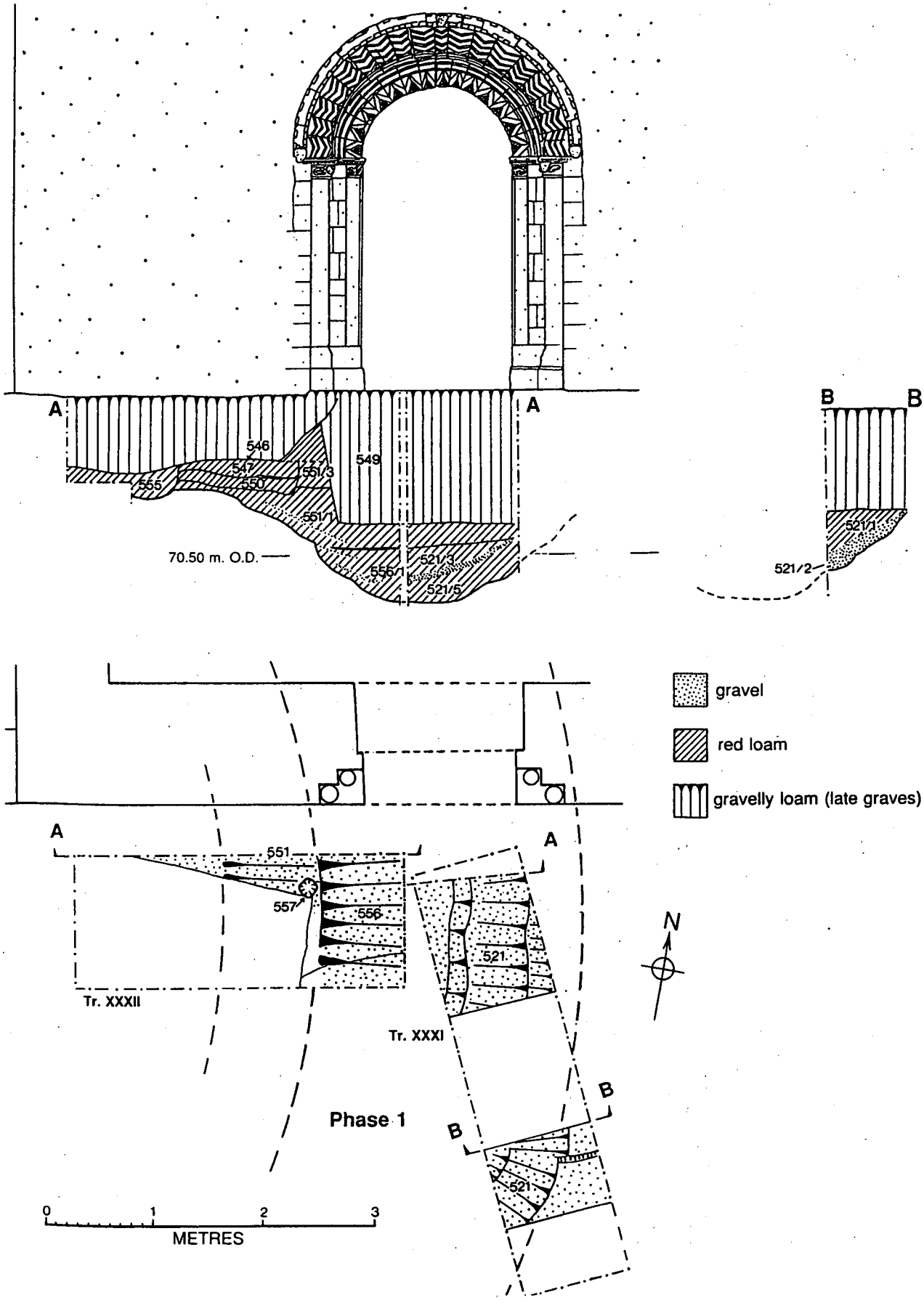

Fig 3. Bampton church: trenches south of the south transept. (The plan shows the Bronze Age phase; the section shows the Anglo-Saxon graves 550, 547 and 546 overlying the Bronze Age ditch.)

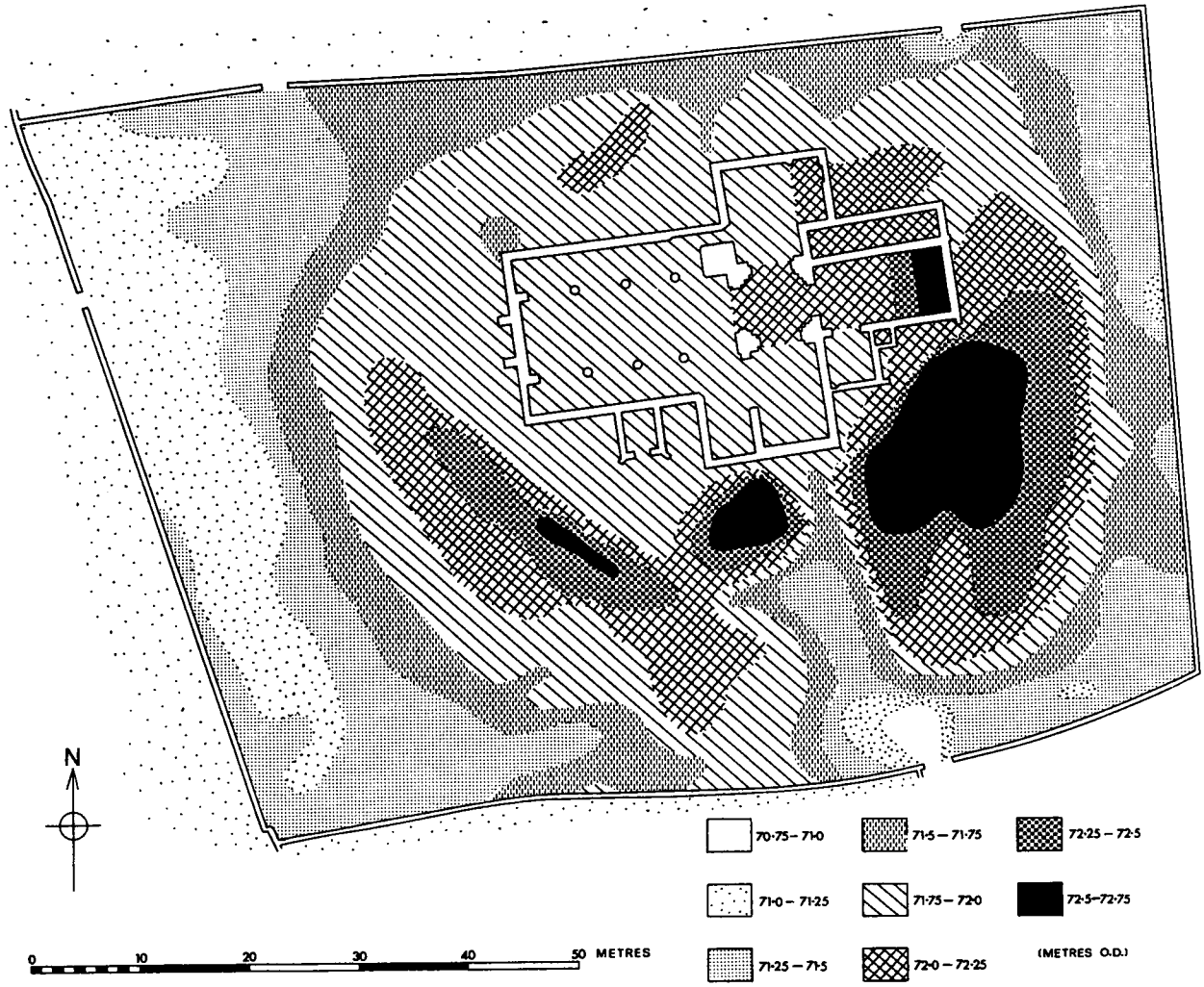

Fig 4. Bampton churchyard: contour plan, showing the large mound which can perhaps be interpreted as a third Bronze Age barrow. (Survey directed by R Ainslie.)

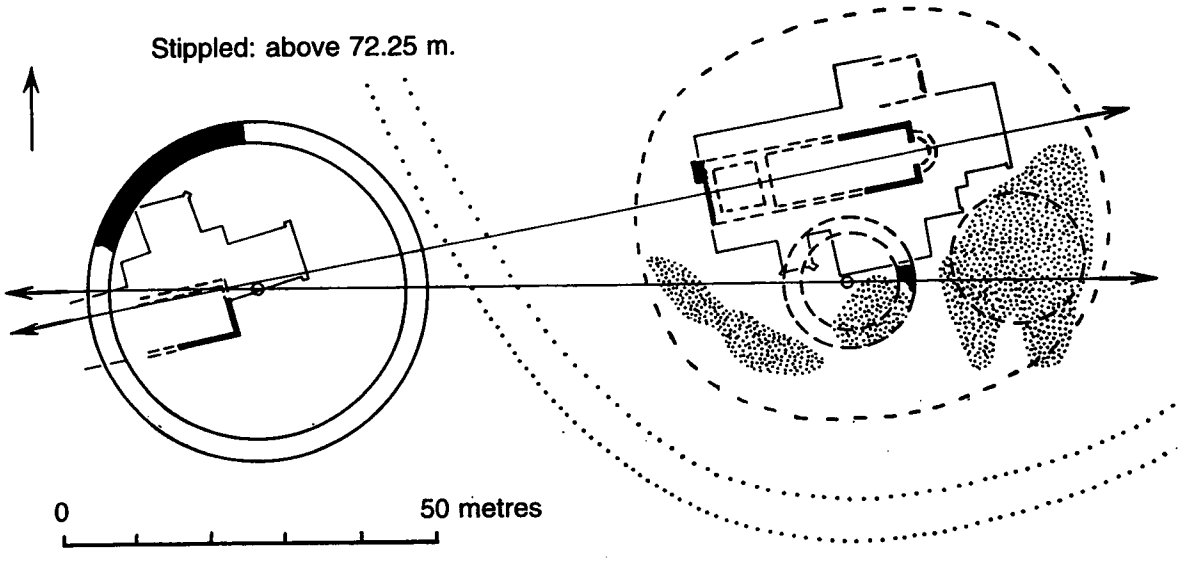

Fig 5. Bampton: the Romanesque church and Deanery chapel in relation to the Bronze Age barrows.

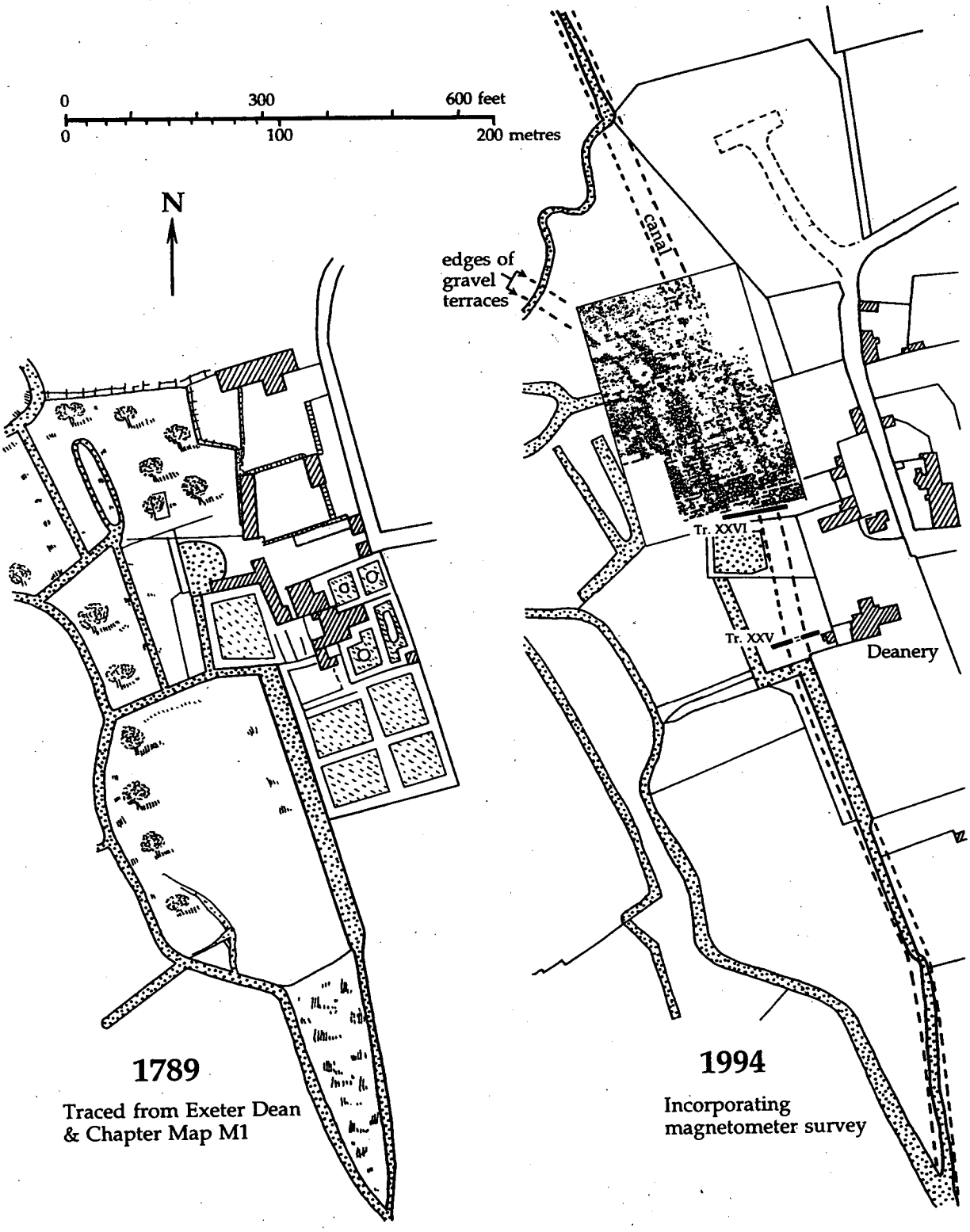

Fig 6. Bampton Deanery fishponds: topographical and magnetometer evidence for the underlying 'canal', compared with a map of 1789. (Magnetometer survey by Dr A Aspinall, University of Bradford.)

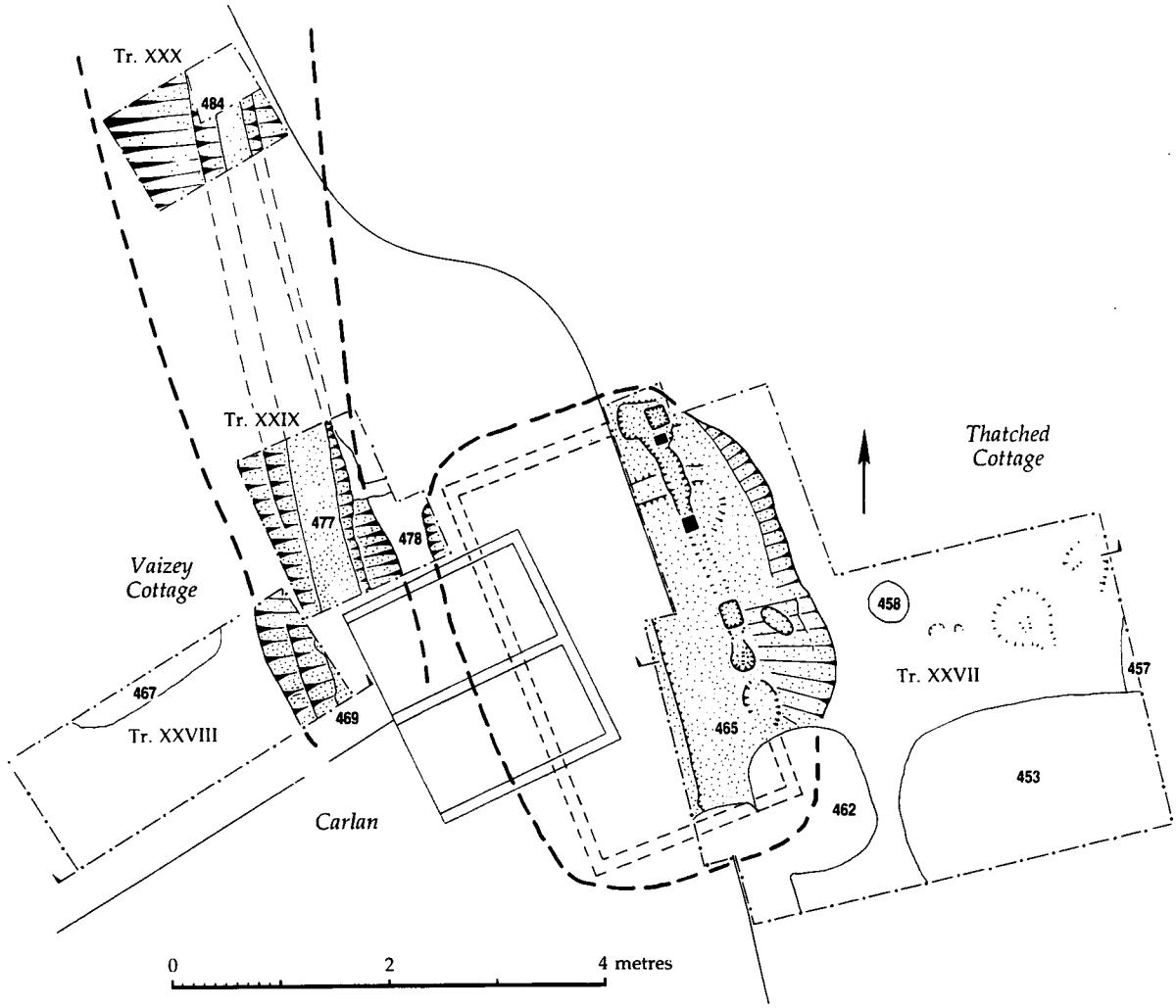

Fig 7. Bampton, Thatched Cottage garden: excavation plan of sunken-feature-building and associated ditch, showing the first phase of the building.

quantity of prehistoric flint, Romano-British and Medieval pottery, and a Medieval ditch. The main focus of activity clearly lay elsewhere.

Oxford, Churchill Hospital (SP45430063)
Mark Brett

A watching brief was conducted during topsoil stripping prior to the construction of the Wellcome Trust Centre and its associated car-park. This revealed only post-Medieval cultivation activity.

Sandford-on-Thames, Temple Farm (SP53170183)
Nicholas Turner

Temple Farm, comprising farmhouse, barns and outbuildings, lies on the site of a preceptory of the Knights Templars. Founded in 1239-40, the Templars made Sandford their headquarters, and the preceptory is thought to be one of their largest houses outside London. After the Templars were disbanded in 1312 the site was taken over by the Hospitallers of St. John who held possession until the dissolution in 1534.

A watching brief identified no evidence for structural remains on the southern and eastern sides of the existing buildings. Renovation work within the farmhouse revealed evidence of extensive alterations during the early part of the 20th century. It is thought that the western block of the farmhouse may be the only surviving element of the earlier buildings, with the majority of the fabric dating from the 17th century. Reused stonework, thought to be from the Medieval religious houses, had been extensively used in the construction of the barn, which had also been extensively altered in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

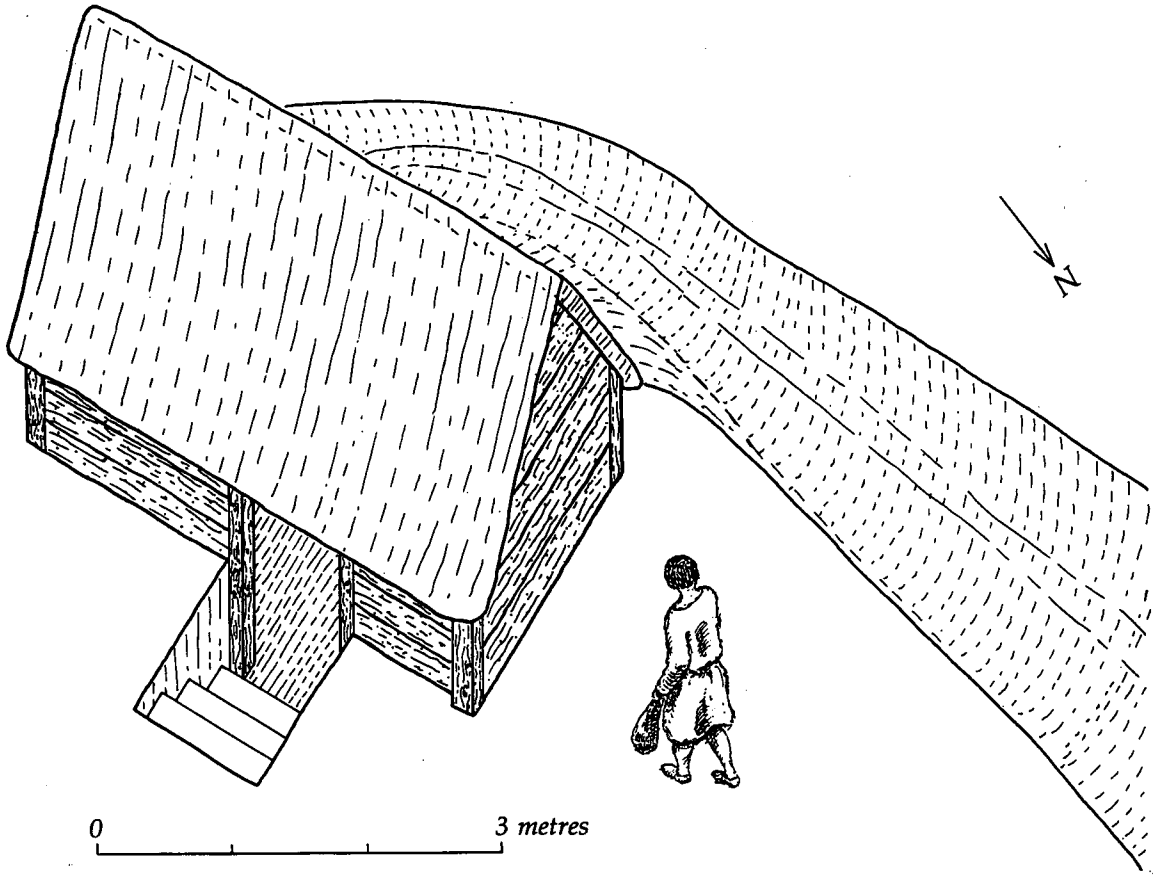

Fig 8. Bampton, Thatched Cottage garden: reconstruction of sunken-feature-building, seen from the north-east.

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Hillforts of the Ridgeway Project: excavations at Segsbury Camp 1997
Gary Lock and Chris Gosden

Introduction
Excavations continued for a second season at Segsbury Camp (SU385844, Oxon SAM 209, also known as Letcombe Castle) over four weeks in July 1997. These are part of the Hillforts of the Ridgeway Project which is designed to excavate a number of major sites along the Ridgeway between Liddington Castle in the west and Segsbury in the east and to set these in the context of a changing landscape represented by smaller sites, linear ditches and well-preserved field systems (Lock and Gosden 1997a; 1997b). The present report is an interim one, based mainly on the results of field recording, as post-excavation work is in progress

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

The Excavations
Aims
As with last year's work, the aims were to establish the character and dating of the construction and occupation of the hillfort in the light of existing work in the area. With the recent publication of the excavations at Liddington Castle (Hirst, *et al* 1997), together with Rams Hill (Bradley and Ellison, 1975; Needham and Ambers 1994) and White Horse Hill (Lock and Gosden 1997a; Miles and Palmer 1995), this area of the Berkshire Downs has increasing potential for detailed landscape study. Our research concerns concepts of cultural landscapes and especially notions of prehistoric history and their enduring impact on the physical landscape (Gosden and Lock 1998).

A more site specific aim was the continuing work in conjunction with the Ancient Monuments Laboratory (AML) of English Heritage as groundproofing of their magnetometer surveys. This is part of the Wessex Hillforts Geophysical Survey Project (Payne 1997) which is having remarkable success in providing information on the interiors of hillforts.

The final arrangement of trenches for the two seasons of work at Segsbury is shown in Fig 9. Trenches 2 and 3 were completed in 1996, Trench 1 was nearly completed in 1996 and partly re-opened and finished in 1997, Trenches 4, 5, 6 and 7 were started and completed in 1997. All trenches except for 7 were positioned to investigate specific

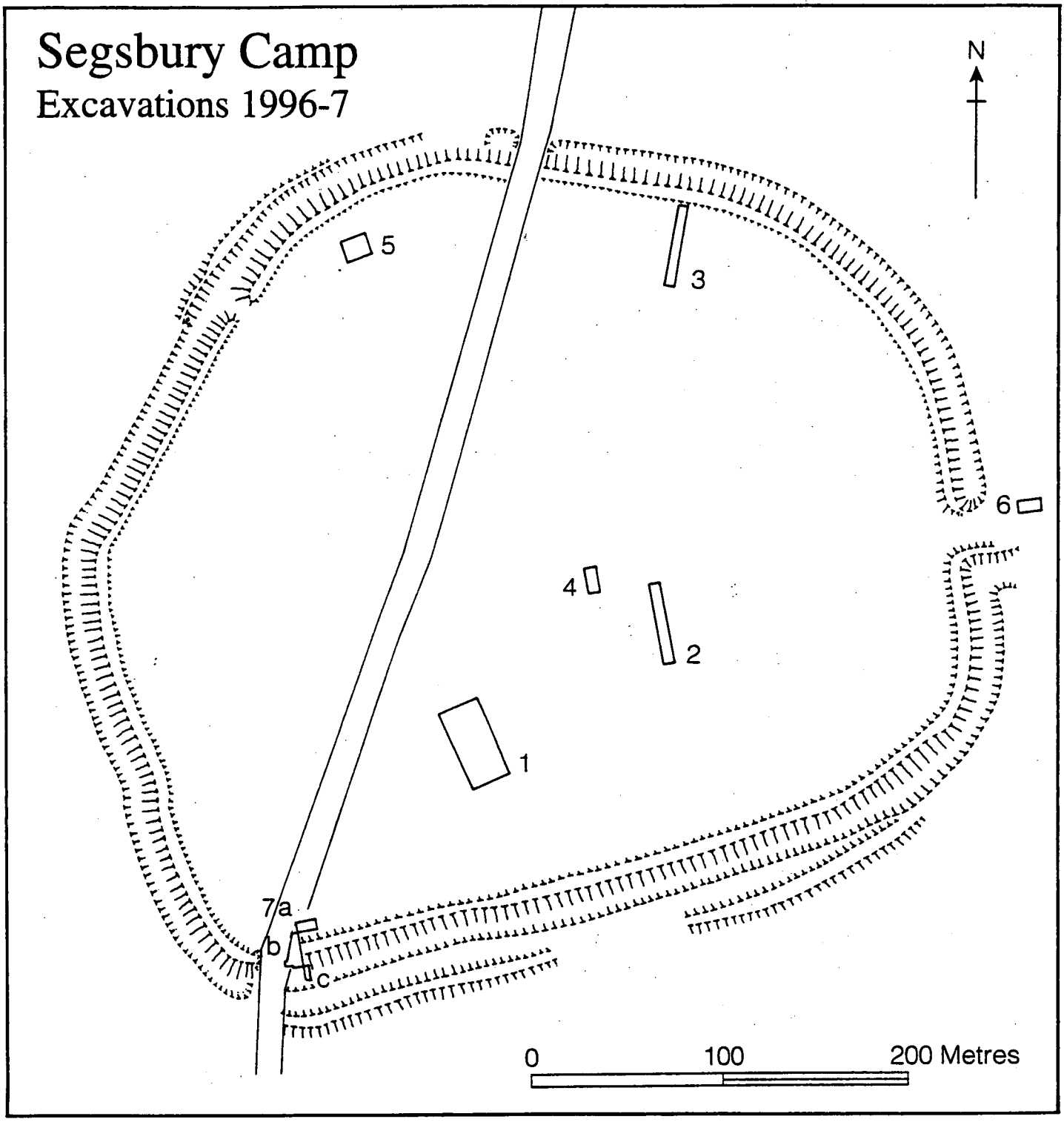

Fig 9. Segsbury Camp, Oxfordshire, showing excavation trenches and the modern road.

geophysical anomalies and had the topsoil removed mechanically.

Results

Trench 1

As described last year (Lock and Gosden 1997b; 69 and Figure 14), Trench 1 measured 40 x 20 m and revealed the bedding trench of a roundhouse *c* 12 m in diameter and a group of some forty pits to the north of it. The northern half of the trench was re-opened and the remaining unexcavated pits half sectioned, Fig 10. There was increasing evidence of so-called special deposits within the pits, including an almost complete, but broken, decorated pot with an iron perforated disc, both within the compacted deliberate fill around the outer edge of pit [1312]. The pot is decorated with a curvilinear zone on the shoulder infilled with punched dots, a design with Wessex parallels dated to the middle Iron Age (3rd - 1st century BC). The iron disc may have been a personal ornament sewn onto clothing or possibly a votive shield. Pit [1019] contained a child inhumation within its upper layers, otherwise material was mainly animal bone and ceramic. An initial analysis of the ceramics suggests a

Segsbury Camp 97
Trench 1 Northern end

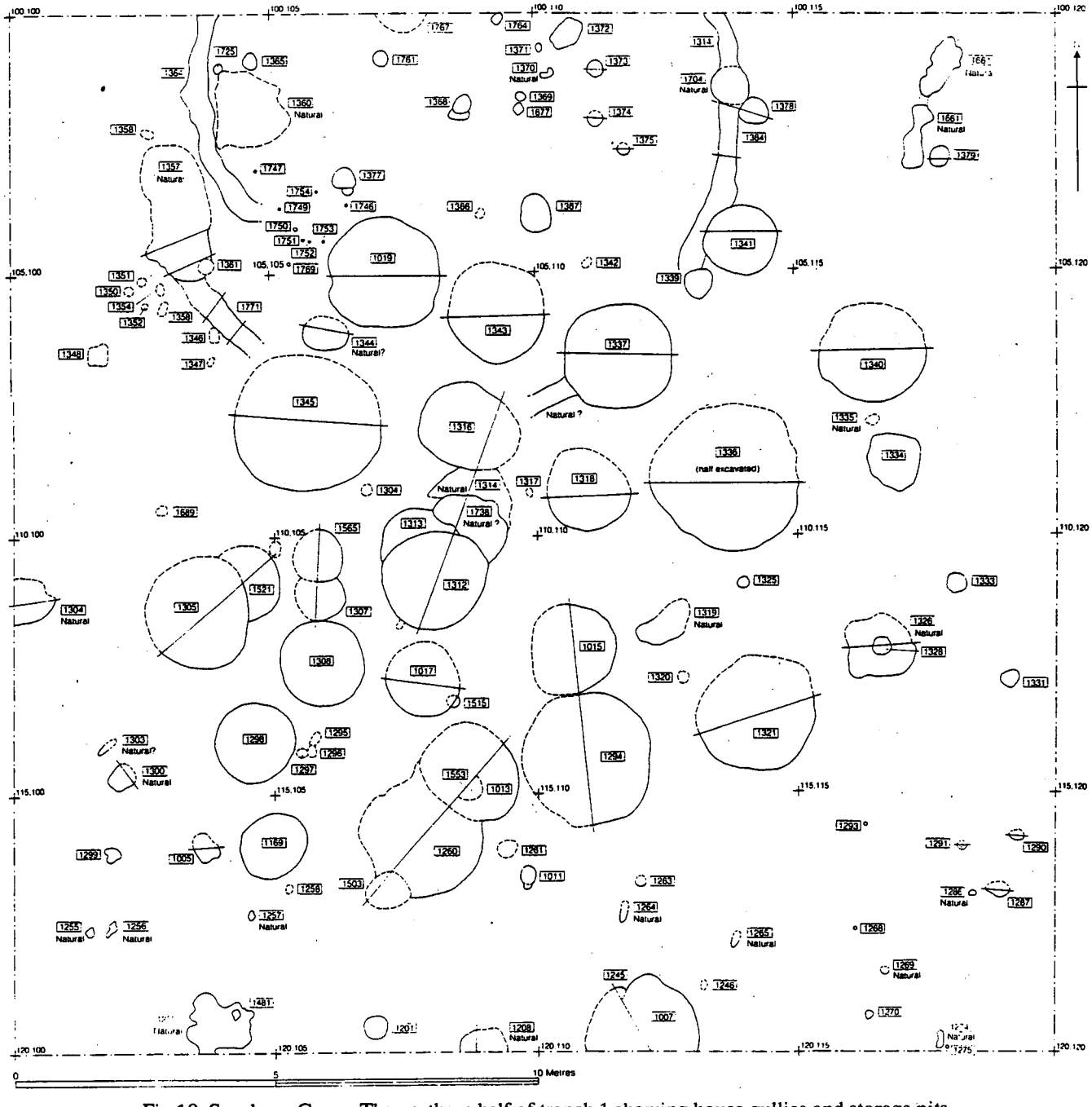

Fig 10. Segsbury Camp. The northern half of trench 1 showing house gullies and storage pits.

longer chronological span for the occupation of the hillfort than the purely middle Iron Age of last year, ranging from early Iron Age to late middle Iron Age forms and fabrics. Small amounts of the early haematite-coated vessels, as found at Uffington, were also present.

The foundation gully of a second roundhouse was noticed in 1996 at the very northern end of Trench 1 and explored thoroughly in 1997 [1364], Fig 10. This area was very badly damaged by ploughing and erosion resulting in seriously truncated features which were difficult to resolve. This is probably also the reason why this feature did not show up on the geophysics and has obvious implications for estimating occupation densities from geophysical data alone. There is at least one and possibly two foundation gullies which could represent a re-build of the same house (similar to the house to the south of the trench), together with an arc of five stakeholes. Due to the damage it was impossible to establish whether these represent a different phase of house building using a different building technique or whether they are a structural component of the gully roundhouse.

Trench 4

This measured 6 x 12.8 m and was located to investigate an ephemeral curvilinear feature shown by the geophysics, of

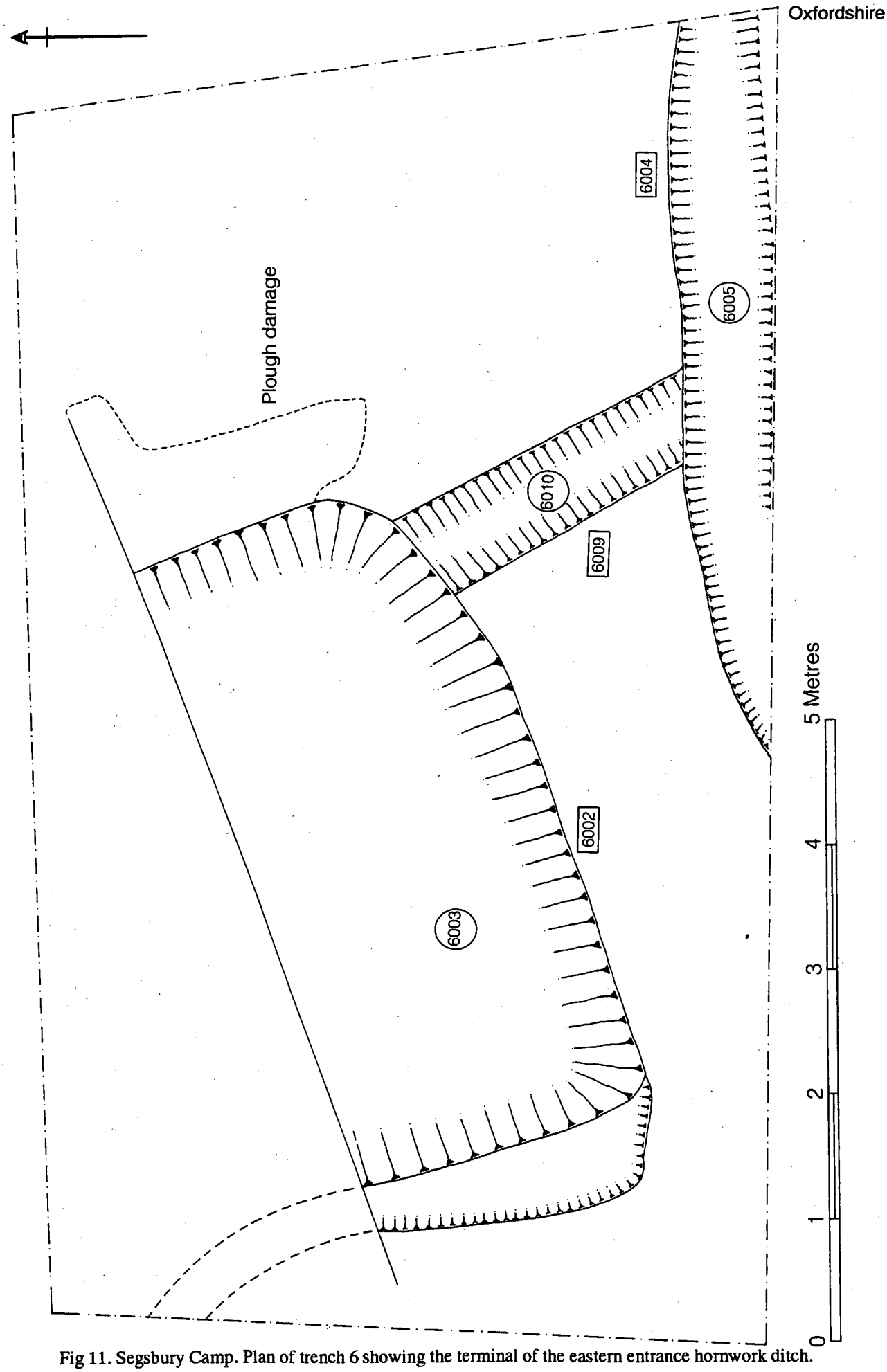

Fig 11. Segsbury Camp. Plan of trench 6 showing the terminal of the eastern entrance hornwork ditch.

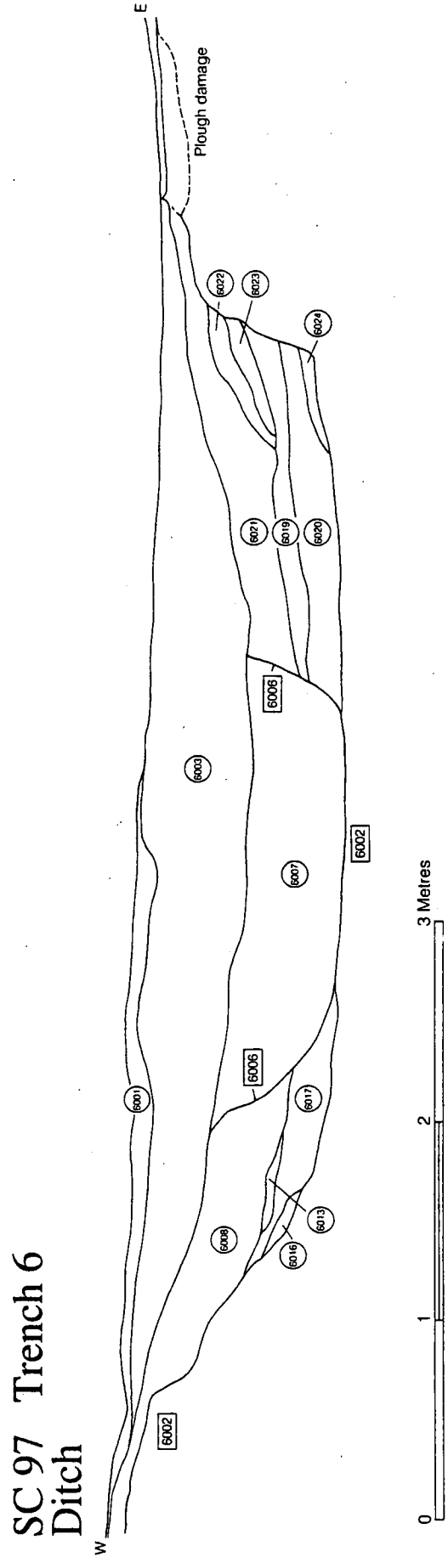

Fig 12. Segsbury Camp. Section across the eastern entrance hornwork ditch.

interest because it seemed to define the highest area of the hilltop as established by topographic survey in 1996. Excavation revealed several pits and postholes but nothing corresponding to the possible linear feature which was a very weak anomaly and could have been an artefact of the geophysics. The pottery from this trench included some Romano-British sherds (possibly early), and some stamped middle to late Iron Age types.

Trench 5

A trench measuring 10 x 10 m was located on a pair of very distinctive circular anomalies identified by the AML as being different to those created by storage pits. Excavation revealed two solution pipes in the chalk bedrock filled with clay with flints, similar to those found in previous years at White Horse Hill and in Trench 3 at Segsbury (Lock and Gosden 1997b; 73).

One point of interest about Trench 5 was the lack of features within it, especially compared to the density within Trenches 1, 4 and 2. This could represent zoning within the hillfort and suggest that the differences shown within the geophysics are real rather than being a product of overlying deposits masking features in the northern third of the interior.

Trench 6

Located to investigate a short linear anomaly curving around the northern side of the eastern entrance, Trench 6 measured 10 x 5 m, Fig 11. Excavation revealed the rounded terminus of a flat bottomed, steep sided ditch [6002] which appeared to be a hornwork extending from the main ditch, presumably with a corresponding extension to the rampart which has now disappeared. The ditch was very different in profile from the main ditch (compare Fig 12 and 15), being less than a metre deep with a wide flat bottom, giving the appearance of being unfinished. Romano-British pottery was present in the upper fill [6003] and Iron Age material in the lower levels and an apparent re-cut [6006 and 6007], suggesting that the ditch was dug, partly filled and then re-cut during the occupation of the hillfort. Further visual inspection of the eastern entrance shows considerable topographic evidence for the rampart continuing across the entrance so as to block it. The apparent starting and then abandonment of this enhancement of the original eastern entrance by the addition of a curving hornwork could be associated with the blocking of the entrance.

Two gullies were also located within Trench 6, Fig 11. Context [6009], a V-shaped gully tightly packed with clean chalk rubble was either contemporary with or pre-dated the large ditch. It also pre-dated the gully, [6004], running approximately at right angles to it, which contained the articulated skull, backbone and shoulder blades of a cow placed within its fill. Based on differential vegetation growth within the surrounding field, it would appear this gully runs for a considerable distance eastwards from the trench and the hillfort's eastern entrance.

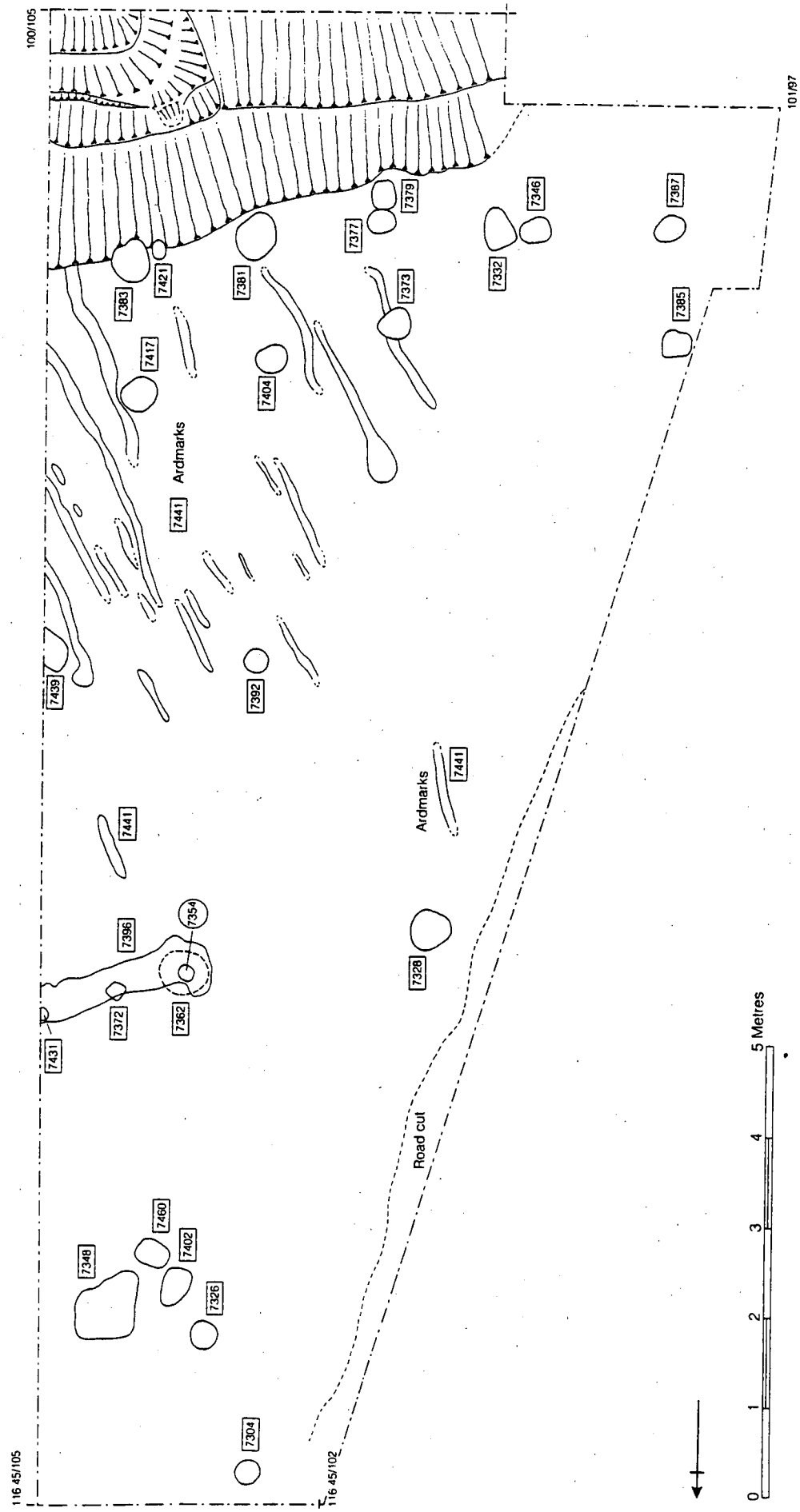

Fig 13. Segsbury Camp. Plan of trench 7b.

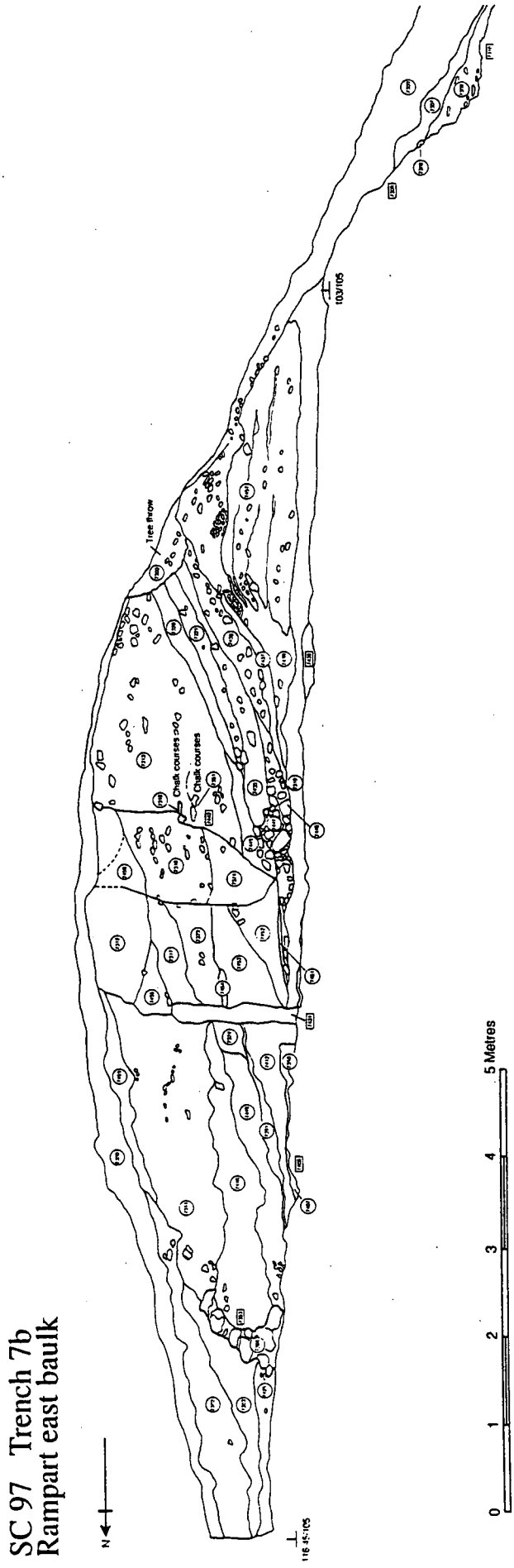

Fig 14. Segsbury Camp. Section through the rampart.

Trench 7

This consisted of three sub-areas: 7a, inside the rampart to the north; 7b, a section through the rampart; and 7c, a section through the outer main ditch, together providing a continuous north-south section through the rampart.

Trench 7a measured 9 x 5 m and was located primarily to investigate whether the pre-rampart ditch positioned inside the northern rampart (Trench 3 of 1996, Lock and Gosden 1997; 73, Fig 15 and 16) continued around the southern side of the hillfort. This was not located so the final interpretation of this feature, and its extent around the hilltop, will have to rely heavily on further analysis of the geophysical evidence. There were several postholes and gullies within Trench 7a although none formed any obvious structural patterning. A horizontal setting of flint cobbles located in the north western corner of the trench and visible along the western section appeared to be related to the modern road that runs north-south through the hillfort. Although there was no direct dating evidence for this feature, documentary evidence records the road back to at least the 18th century (J Rocque's map of 1762) and the possibility of it being much older must be considered.

Trench 7b was irregularly shaped in plan to achieve both an approximately perpendicular section through the body of the rampart and the maximum horizontal surface between the section and the modern road, Fig 13. This was a complex piece of excavation and the stratigraphy within the rampart has yet to be resolved, although it is apparent that at least three phases of rampart construction are represented, Fig 14.

A mixed soil [7319] was preserved beneath the rampart together with ard marks in the chalk bedrock, although their wide spacing suggests an initial breaking of the soil rather than ploughing. The upper central area of the section is disturbed by much more recent activity [7422], which included a piece of clay pipe stem within it towards the bottom. It is known that in the 18th century, and probably earlier (Hearne, 1717), many large sarsen stones were removed from the ramparts for building material which may account for this feature.

Based on the stratigraphy within the rampart (Fig 13) and the features cut into the bedrock beneath it (Fig 14) it is possible to suggest a provisional developmental sequence:

Phase 1 - the innermost of the two rows of postholes formed the front face of the rampart revetted by a chalk bank [7417, 7404, 7373], overlain by a turf line and retained by a low turf wall at the rear [7438]. There were considerable additions to the revetment extending it in size with at least one more turf line being allowed to develop [7321]. There is limited evidence for a small ditch in the south eastern corner of the trench which may belong to this phase.

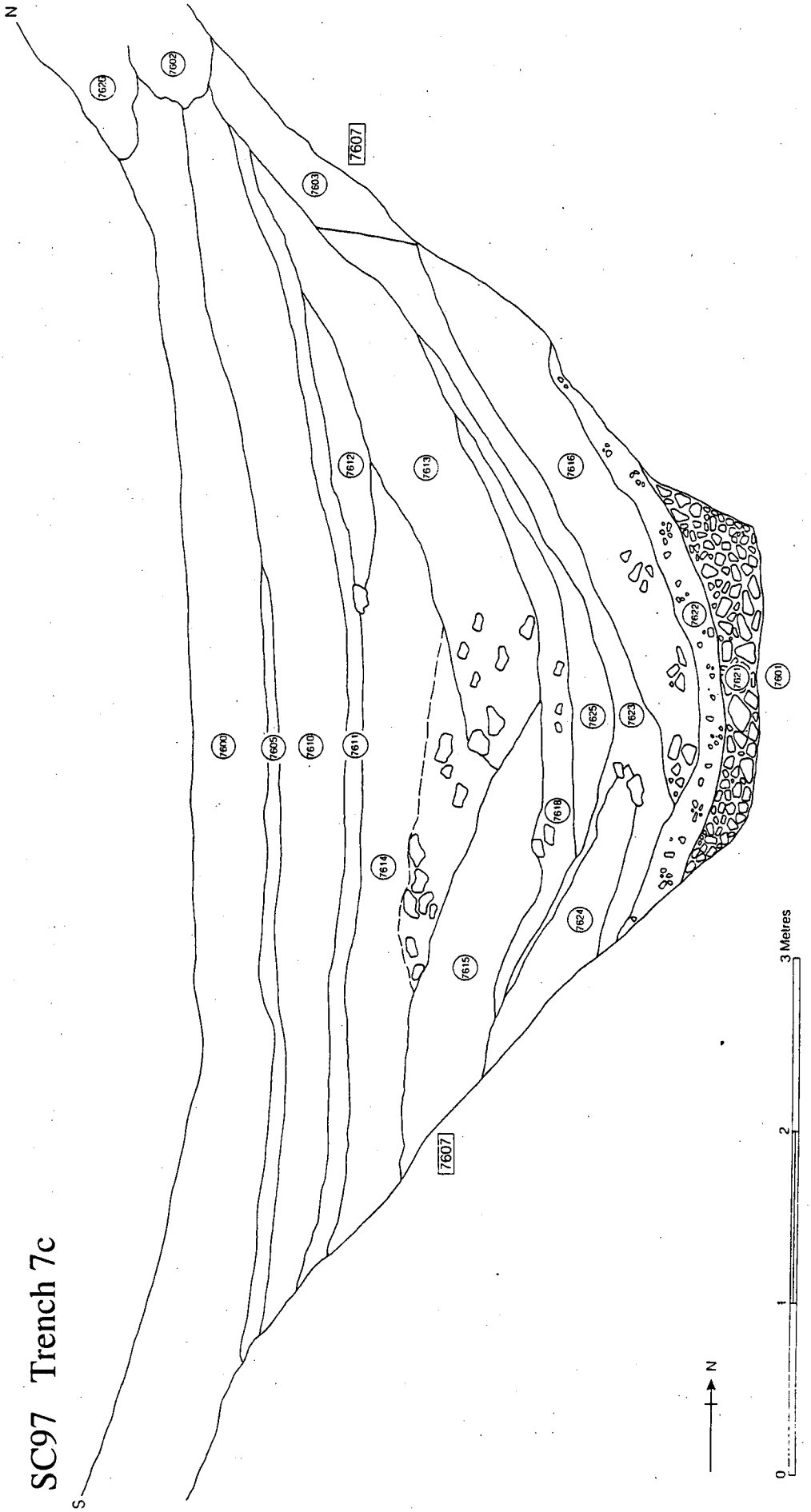

Fig 15. Segsbury Camp. Section through the main ditch.

Phase 2 - rebuilding of the front face involving the replacement of the rear row of posts by the front row, eg [7417] replaced by [7383]. Postholes in both of these rows contained post voids of half timbers with the flat face towards the front of the rampart. The rear was partly revetted by timbers embedded within a slot cut into the bedrock [7396] and preserved as triangular post voids within the fills. The minimum height of the rear timbers is shown by [7431] in the section, suggesting either the original height or indicating where the post was broken off. The rear revetting wall was itself revetted by a low chalk bank [7412] with a turf line [7391]. Internal structure within the rampart was probably associated with this phase, consisting of two or three courses of crude dry-stone walling creating a two-phase cell-like structure, a later wall [7318] overlying an earlier one [7351]. This was partly destroyed by the modern robber trench.

Phase 3 - a massive dump rampart revetted by a sarsen wall at the rear [7366]. The ditch was greatly enlarged to provide material for this rampart, cutting through and largely obliterating the Phase 1 ditch.

It must be emphasised that the first two phases are very provisional. The major structural change between the two is a substantial increase in the width of the rampart with the rear low turf revetting wall becoming the massive timber and slot structure. The stratigraphy suggests, however, that the first phase can be seen as a series of additions and minor changes to the original structure perhaps associated with regular ritual activity involving the acknowledging and maintaining of the rampart. This referencing of the past through physical structures could also explain the replacement of the front posts by an exactly corresponding second row. While not denying that ramparts may have had a practical function, searching for structural explanations based solely on functionalist interpretations, which is the usual approach to rampart phasing, raises major problems with the Segsbury evidence. There isn't an obvious simple solution based on the accepted sequence of early box ramparts replaced by later dump ramparts and the complexity of the evidence needs to be confronted. The internal structure of the phase 2 rampart mentioned above, for example, comprised very ephemeral dry-stone walling made from pieces of greenstone which are not indigenous to the site and have not been found anywhere else at Segsbury. This suggests a non-functional purpose for the internal structure of the rampart with meaning and social importance conveyed by the material used and its context of deposition.

Trench 7c was positioned across the phase 3 main ditch and started as being 3m wide but was reduced to 1m wide at the bottom for safety reasons. The ditch was nearly 4m deep and V-shaped with a narrow flat bottom, Fig 15. The stratigraphy suggests a combination of intentional filling in the lower half (except for an initial layer of primary chalk shatter [7621]), with slower accumulation of mainly natural fills towards the top. A group of sarsen stones within [7614] could be tumbled material from the destruction of the rampart. It is important to note the occurrence of Romano-British pottery beneath this context, in [7618], together with a 1st-2nd century Samian sherd above it, suggesting the destruction took place early within the Romano- British period.

Discussion

Perhaps not surprisingly the two seasons of work at Segsbury have raised as many questions as they have answered. More evidence has been gathered to elucidate the regional sequence of sites outlined last year (Lock and Gosden 1997b; 76), with the emphasis this season on the ramparts and eastern entrance.

If, as suggested above, the eastern entrance existed in the early phase but was blocked during later use of the hillfort it raises the question of other possible entrances. There are not obvious candidates from the surface evidence, although the earthworks associated with the north-western curve of the ramparts are suggestive of entrance outworks. The route taken by the modern road is of interest here with the possibility of it using at least one ancient entrance to break through the ramparts. The evidence of an Iron Age entrance from Trench 7 is not conclusive because the construction of the road has caused much destruction, although an entrance associated with the Phase 2 rampart could be suggested by the rear revetment slot not being continuous.

The possibility of the present road having Roman origins should be considered in the light of evidence from nearby sites, the enclosure at Rams Hill, for example, and particularly White Horse Hill, where the breaks through the ramparts of Uffington Castle date from this period (Lock and Gosden 1997a; 68). The cobbled road surfacing described above in Trench 7a is reminiscent of Roman roads and the Romano-British pottery in the ditch associated with the possible dismantling of the rampart could be part of the same works. It is interesting to note that the road is aligned between the two royal manors of Letcombe Regis to the north and Little Fawley to the south, as recorded in the Domesday Book. It is possible that that these early manorial estates may be founded on Roman villa sites as one is known nearby to the north at Challow. The road through Segsbury is aligned between the villa at Challow and the later prehistoric and Romano-British field systems on the Downs immediately south of the hillfort, and it is not inconceivable that it was constructed during the Romano-British period.

The focus of the fieldwork changes in 1998 to the site of Alfred's Castle, Ashdown, and its surrounding field systems.

Acknowledgements

Again we are extremely grateful to Mr Tony Good of Warborough Farm, the landowner at Segsbury, who helped in many different ways. The excavation would not have been possible without Sheila Raven, Richard Bailey, Johnny Dempsey, Marie Robertson and Tyler Bell on site, as well as the many students and volunteers. Sheila Raven is organising the post-excavation work. The 1997 excavations were funded entirely by the University of Oxford.

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NATIONAL TRUST

Gary Marshall

Greys Court (SU72488342)

Some interesting archaeological remains were turned up by a long narrow trench excavated for the purpose of relaying the water main running beneath the gravel drive on the west side of the main lawn (trench 3). A watching brief was maintained whilst the trench was cut by machine and eventually about a week was spent recording the various features and the section created by the trench. The most significant discovery was a pair of flint and mortar walls at the south end of the trench, suggesting the site of a large Medieval building within the confines of the 14th century walled enclosure of Greys Court. The north wall was abutted by a brick floor which was clearly part of this building, suggesting that this may have been the site of an earlier manor house. The floor had been cut away to allow for the construction of a substantial brick culvert which appeared to be heading towards the 16th century well house in the adjoining courtyard. There appears to be no previous knowledge of this structure, which is perhaps surprising considering its substantial size. It may have served as a sewer drain - comparisons with the suspected 16th century sewer system at Claydon House (Bucks.) spring to mind.

The culvert was found to lie beneath the remains of the brick wall forming the south end of an outer courtyard which appears on an engraving of *c* 1600. The wall is therefore likely to be 16th century and since it overlies the culvert this must also be pre 1600, although the two structures may be contemporary.

At the north end of the trench, close to the 16th century house, the excavation revealed the brick footings for a wall thought to be the north wall of the aforementioned courtyard. The north edge of this wall was abutted by a well-preserved cobbled surface, evidently running alongside this wall and leading to a central doorway through the north wall. A 16th century date can most probably be assigned to these two structures, although unfortunately the excavation uncovered very few dateable artifacts. Part of a green-glazed floor tile was found in an unstratified context resulting from the initial machine excavation [1].

[1] 'Greys Court, Oxfordshire, An archaeological watching brief over a trench for a water main on the west side of the main lawn' Report no. Greys/3, Gary Marshall, March 1998

NORTH OXON FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

Report for 1996-7

Edward Shawyer

This group was formed in May 1996 not long after the discovery of a previously unknown Roman farmstead by the founding members Edward Shawyer and Gary Kibblewhite. The group has grown rapidly since then and now has over 20 members. All in all 9 Roman sites have been surveyed by fieldwalking, 4 of which are previously undiscovered settlements, two new Medieval sites have also been discovered and a number of Prehistoric activity areas. The group has also conducted one major excavation on a post-Medieval mill and another two minor digs on other post-Medieval sites. Lastly a survey of a vanished part of Medieval Ledwell was carried out as well as a number of field-walking surveys of 5 farm properties in North Oxon. The group is currently continuing its systematic field-walking survey of the Banbury area and will shortly commence an excavation of a Roman villa site in Swalcliffe.

Excavations

Somerton Mill (SP488277)

From June to November 1996 extensive excavations took place on an old mill site that had been demolished in 1929. The owner, Pete Bryden is converting the adjacent stables into a house and was interested to know how old the mill was. It transpired that the mill was the last of three that were known to have existed in the parish of Somerton. The one that was examined belonged formerly to the wealthy Fermor family who were lords of Somerton Manor from 1504 and is mentioned in 18th century records as having a rent of £28 a year for the mill, millhouse and meadow. In the 19th century the rent varied between £90 to £145 per annum and employed a manager and five men. By 1890 the mill used auxiliary steam engines and some roller gear. The waterwheel appears to have been either undershot or breachshot.

The Excavation

Overall four rectangular areas covering a total of 13 x 8 m were excavated revealing most of the mill building on the east bank of the millrace. From estimations it appears that the main building measured 100 ft long by 25 ft wide in the old Imperial measurements, a ratio of 4-1. The eastern wing was 22 ft long by 16 ft wide and from old maps the western one appears to be of similar dimensions. These figures apply to the building in its final phase. A number of outhouses are shown on a map of 1765 but now only a woodshed and part of the stables remain. Excavations revealed that in all there were three main phases of construction.

Phase 1

The earliest building was found in areas 1 and 2. This consisted of a single room which was solidly constructed of randomly coursed ironstone walls 70 cm wide. The room had a fine stone floor made of flagstones laid upon a foundation of stone footings 21 cm thick. The architecture suggested a Post-Medieval date and this agreed with historical records. Finds for "Room 1" were very sparse and there was nothing to hint at its function, though its fine floor suggests that it was the living quarters. The earliest mill in Somerton is mentioned in the Domesday Book and by the 15th century a fulling mill was also present. The last mill was added in the 16th century and by then both this and the fulling mill belonged to the Fermors. Of the three the latter was the best candidate for the excavated structure and so this proved that the last mill built was the one which survived until the 19th century; the others disappearing by the 18th century. William Fermor was the most likely builder of the mill sometime between 1512 and 1552. He also built a new Manor House and a new Chantry for Somerton Church. From a small trench cut through the causeway across the valley it seems that he probably built that too, along with the seven small bridges that ford the river and its tributary streams. The Fermors were well off wool merchants from Witney and the well built structure in areas 1 and 2 could only have been built by wealthy people.

Phase 2

The next phase of building seems to belong to the 18th century. A detailed map of 1765 shows the mill and its outbuildings and an old photo of the mill shows a central section that clearly appears to be 18th century in style. The Tudor mill must have lasted about 200 years before it was demolished for the stone flag floor was well worn. The new building was rebuilt on a much grander scale, the millrace bridge was widened to twice its width and the stables and outbuildings were added. The new mill was built of white/grey limestone and the bases of the Tudor mill were used as firm foundations for the new building whose walls were only 59 cm wide. Room 1 was lengthened by 4 metres and two rooms made in place of one. The second room, "Room 2" had a well inserted into it, which was probably the reason why most of the foundations of the eastern wall of the Tudor mill were dug out. A remnant of the Tudor stone floor was retained in Room 2, but the rest of the floor was a pitched limestone cobble surface laid down upon a layer of blue clay 65 cm thick. This layer seemed to also serve as an extra seal for the well. The well had an outer retaining wall which formed part of the floor and it extended along the edge of the new eastern outer wall. This must have been done to retain the clay and strengthen the wall to prevent any subsidence. In Room 1 the Tudor floor was retained and merely patched up with irregular stonework and in one area of patchwork a coin of George II was found dating to about 1749. Of the small section of the east wing, "Room 3", that was excavated, nothing remained of the floor surface. Both wings were added in the 18th century, so the mill was greatly enlarged and the bridges of the causeway were either widened or improved. The building that was excavated on the east bank now had three rooms instead of one and new stables adjacent.

Phase 2a

All three rooms were given sand floors sometime during the early 19th century when a leak in the well in Room 2 caused the workmen to take out part of the retaining wall of the well, remove most of the cobble floor and its clay foundation and fill the hole back in with a mixture of sand and light clay. The leak was sealed with a thin plug of thick blue clay.

Phase 3

The final major phase of building took place in the late 19th century sometime between 1840 and 1872. Use of Welsh slate and manufactured red brick gives us the first date and the second comes from the details on the 1872 map of the site. The millrace bridge was widened to twice its width yet again and the bridges on the causeway were repaired and the causeway resurfaced with granite chips. It had earlier been heightened by a mixture of sand and clay upon which a stone surface was laid, the date of this seems to fit with the laying down of sand floors in the mill. Bay windows were added to Room 2 around 1850 between the introduction of the sand floors and the major rebuilding. An extra room, "Room 4" was added onto the eastern end of the mill and Room 3 seems to have been largely rebuilt. Room 4 may have been a kitchen since a brick lined drain was found leading into a space marked by a robber trench and the floor of this part of the room was red bricks laid down on a bed with a drainage channel running along the middle of the room. All the windows and doors were faced up with red brick and red brick pinions showed that floorboards were laid down in every room. The walls of Room 2 were narrowed and new stone floors laid down upon the earlier ones around the well, as well as weather bars being added to the doors. The stables were also faced up, a new floor of blue industrial brick added, similar to the one in Room 4 and a stairway added to the loft where the hay was stored. A new woodshed and outside toilet were also added onto the east wing and a pigsty and chicken shed added onto the stables. Very close to the mill are some cottages which were built in 1780 for workers on the Oxford canal and then enlarged for workers on the GWR railway in the 1840s.

An Old Stable In Cleveley (SP39202395)

A small excavation was carried out in an old stable belonging to Terry Ball who is currently converting it into part of a new house. He discovered an old flagstone and cobble floor beneath a later concrete floor and asked the group if they could investigate it since it appeared to be very old. Two trenches were dug, widening existing holes that Terry had made and the different layers of occupation were revealed. In all three phases of alterations were noted.

Phase 1

The original walls still remain, however the roof has been altered and it isn't possible to reconstruct the height of the loft. The building comprised two looseboxes for sick or foaling horses and these were separated by a wooden partition. There were two doors facing the field to the north and two matching windows facing south. The floor was two thirds stone flagstones and one third pitched cobble. The cobble was set into a thin layer of brownish clay and the flagstones lay upon a layer of small pebbles set into the same clay. The floor sloped gently south to north to the doorways. In places where the flagstones had been removed the hollows were patched up with crude stonework which left hollow areas. The flagstones were very well worn and must have been used for at least 100 years. Architecturally the floor was Post-Medieval and very like the floors found at Somerton, so since it had a mixture of flagstones and pitched cobble, it seemed to belong to a date between the 1500s and the 1700s. The stable was right opposite the old Cleveley Mill and there were no other buildings near, so it must formerly have belonged to the mill. The mill had cottages added in 1660 and this time marked a great building boom in Oxfordshire so it seems likely that the stable was built around the same time.

Phase 2

The stable now has a big bayed shed attached to its western end which was formerly a cow shelter shed with stone piers. These sheds mainly date from the late 19th century and upon examination it became clear that the western wall of the stable was demolished and another tacked on at a slight angle to the original building. The reason for this misalignment was that the builders had to dig into a steep slope on the western side and chose the easiest slope to make their terrace upon. The floor of the stable had a layer of brown clay put down on it after the higher southern end was removed and levelled, revealing the pebble layer beneath. In this brown layer was found late 19th century pottery. The western door was narrowed by the new wall so it was converted into a window and the west window on the south side was converted into a door. Large postholes in the south west corner indicated an old manger.

Phase 3

The final alteration was a concrete floor laid down in the early 20th century. In the make up for the floor were 1912 beer jars.

Surveys

Medieval village remains in Ledwell (SP419283)

A hachured survey of earthworks in Mr Wilson's field revealed five house platforms, one alleyway and the course of the old road to Great Tew. The sunken way led north to the Wortons and the Barfords and went out of use by the late 19th century. The existing road to Great Tew from the village was cut in the 18th century. At the northern end of the field was an old field boundary.

Fieldwalking

Drayton Park Farm (SP426406)

A previously undiscovered late Roman defended farmstead was found in April 1996. The site is on a hilltop facing west, 100 m away from a spring. The pottery included grey wares, Oxford red wares, colour coated wares, white wares, Nene Valley colour coated, one castor box, black burnished wares, grog ware, Central Gaulish plain Samian, calcite gritted wares and one bit of New Forest ware. Quernstones from the Forest of Dean were found and plenty of domestic livestock bones, which together with cow enclosures revealed by aerial photos hinted at a mixed arable/pastoral economy. Large amounts of tegulae and imbrices show that the roof was tiled and recently an extra outhouse on a small terrace 200 m away was found. Earthworks of a surrounding bank can still be easily seen. The site covers about 2 ha or so.

North Newington Park Farm - the Pike Farm site (SP430392)

This site was discovered by Banbury Historical Society in 1960 and a small hole 3 m square dug revealing an east-west wall and a few minor finds, but the site wasn't been properly investigated. The intense pottery scatter covered 2.5 ha. The building is situated on a terrace of a low hill facing south and west with springs nearby. A rectangular building with two wings is suggested by the fieldwalking survey. The complex had ironstone walls and it seems a tiled roof of Stonesfield slates which were found in reasonable quantity. The pottery range extended from the 1st-4th centuries AD and included Oxford wares (white, red and mortaria), Nene Valley wares, Samian, grog ware, calcite gritted ware and early pottery with vertical burnished lines. Scattered human remains were found near the 1960 dig site as they were then also. High domestic livestock bone counts associated with the building and bits of quernstone suggest a mixed arable/pastoral economy. A few worked flints were found, one a Neolithic or Bronze age scraper and there were other finds of the same age made in adjacent fields.

Bloxham Grove Farm (SP460368)

A fieldwalking survey was made of a Roman site known about since 1835 and which was held to be a Roman village

(See VCH). Luckily during the drought of 1995 the farmer Mr Adams noted a cropmark in the stubble and was able to sketch and measure it. The cropmark revealed a small rectangular building of the simple farmstead variety. The pottery scatter covered about 2 ha, but most of this was simply material washed downhill from the site. The pottery was the same variety as was found on all the sites investigated in the area and this includes grey wares, Oxford wares, Nene Valley wares, calcite gritted, grog ware, Samian and mortaria from Oxford and the Nene Valley. Other finds include a few worked flints, a coin of Antoninus Pius (another had been found in 1835) and plenty of domestic livestock bones associated with the site. One exceptional find was a small copper lioness head which might have been a decoration off a metal container. The site is by a valley looking north, but the building faces the east and again is close to a spring.

Manor Farm, Milton - Adderbury Ridgeway Roman Site (SP458354)

This site is another alleged village site known about since the 19th century. Once again the site turned out just to be a farmstead of middling prosperity. The pottery scatter covered 3.5 ha and two distinct concentrations were detected indicating a main building and a possible outhouse. The site faces south and not north as formerly believed and has the ridgeway to shelter it. A large scatter of ironstone building stones and Stonesfield slates gives some evidence as to the building's appearance. A great deal of domestic livestock bones were found associated with the pottery concentrations, though some might have come from the former allotments just to the east. The pottery was the same range mentioned before, grey wares, Oxford wares, Nene Valley, grog wares, calcite gritted and Samian etc. Large bits of quernstone were found and the rocks they are made from are very similar to those found in all the other sites investigated, suggesting a similar source or market. Other finds include a few coins of Constantius II (337-361 AD), one of which is the "falling horseman" type.

Grange Farm, Middle Aston (SP475273)

A fieldwalking survey was made of all of the fields of Grange Farm and during the process a new Roman site was found. The building is on a small terrace near the hilltop facing east, 100 m away from a spring. The pottery scatter covers about 1. 5 ha and the intense core was only small in an area 150 x 150 m. Analysis of the pottery showed that grey wares accounted for 61%, common Oxford red wares 32% and the last 7% was grog ware and fine table wares (Oxford red colour coated, Nene Valley colour coated, Samian, white wares and Oxford red and white mortaria. Low values of bone were found, though the soil was sandy. No tiles were found and the site appears to be quite poor.

Middleton Cheney Farm - Purston Crossroads Roman Site (SP517404)

This site was discovered by Derek Barrett in the 1970s and the pottery scatter covers 3 ha, though the site turned out to be a small, lower class one like Grange farm. Two concentrations were detected indicating a main house and a possible outhouse. Once again no tile was found and the bone count was low. In all these sites there was a lot of Late Roman pottery. Analysis reveals that Grey wares accounted for 56% of finds, Oxford red wares 36%, Samian and mortaria 1%, grog ware 5%, Nene Valley colour coated 2% and Oxford white wares 3%. Quite a few worked flints were found and a Neolithic/Bronze Age site existed in the adjacent field. The Roman site is on top of a hill facing south, but the building seems to point east or west. Springs were very close yet again. A late Roman coin was found (*follis*), but was unidentifiable.

Swalcliffe Lower Lea Roman Village (SP390385) (Fig 16)

This site is well known and a few excavations have taken place on the centre of the site revealing small rectangular buildings and the Roman road. A villa site is known of in the field known as Blakelands, though the site was not properly fieldwalked until 1996. The survey has covered over half the site and is ongoing. The villa site was walked and the pottery covers 2.5 ha. The pottery of all these sites still needs thorough analysis, but there was a large range of rich wares found on the villa site. A brief analysis revealed grey wares accounted for 55% of finds, all types of red wares and Samian 30%, grog ware 9%, Nene Valley 2%, mortaria 2% and white wares 2%. The ratios of poor and rich sites are similar, though these are relative values and don't express the percentage of fine wares. Plenty of tile both baked and Stonesfield was found on site, *Opus Signinum* and mosaic tesserae of the three primary colours red, white and blue. Many coins have been found on site, most are late Roman. Present finds included Allectus, Constantine and possibly Honorius. Earthworks and the survey hint at a rectangular building with two wings and a dig is planned for this site in September 1997. Surprisingly another villa site was discovered on the other side of the road in the field known as Blacklands. The pottery scatter covers nearly 7 ha and the values were very high. Earthworks and the survey suggest a large courtyard villa, twice the size of the old one on the south side of the road. The pottery was the same as the other site and there was a lot of decorated Samian found. There was a lot of tile, both baked and Stonesfield slate and there were high charcoal counts, which might point to a possible hypocaust. Some small buildings were found in the "cow leasure" field to the west and the central sector where the 1958 dig was located was looked at. From here a base of a Samian cup of the type Dragendorff 33 was found with a potter's stamp. The potter turned out to be an Aelianus from Les Martres de Veyre in Central Gaul and he was one of the Trajanic school of potters AD 100-125. Many late coins were found off the Blacklands site and very high bone counts

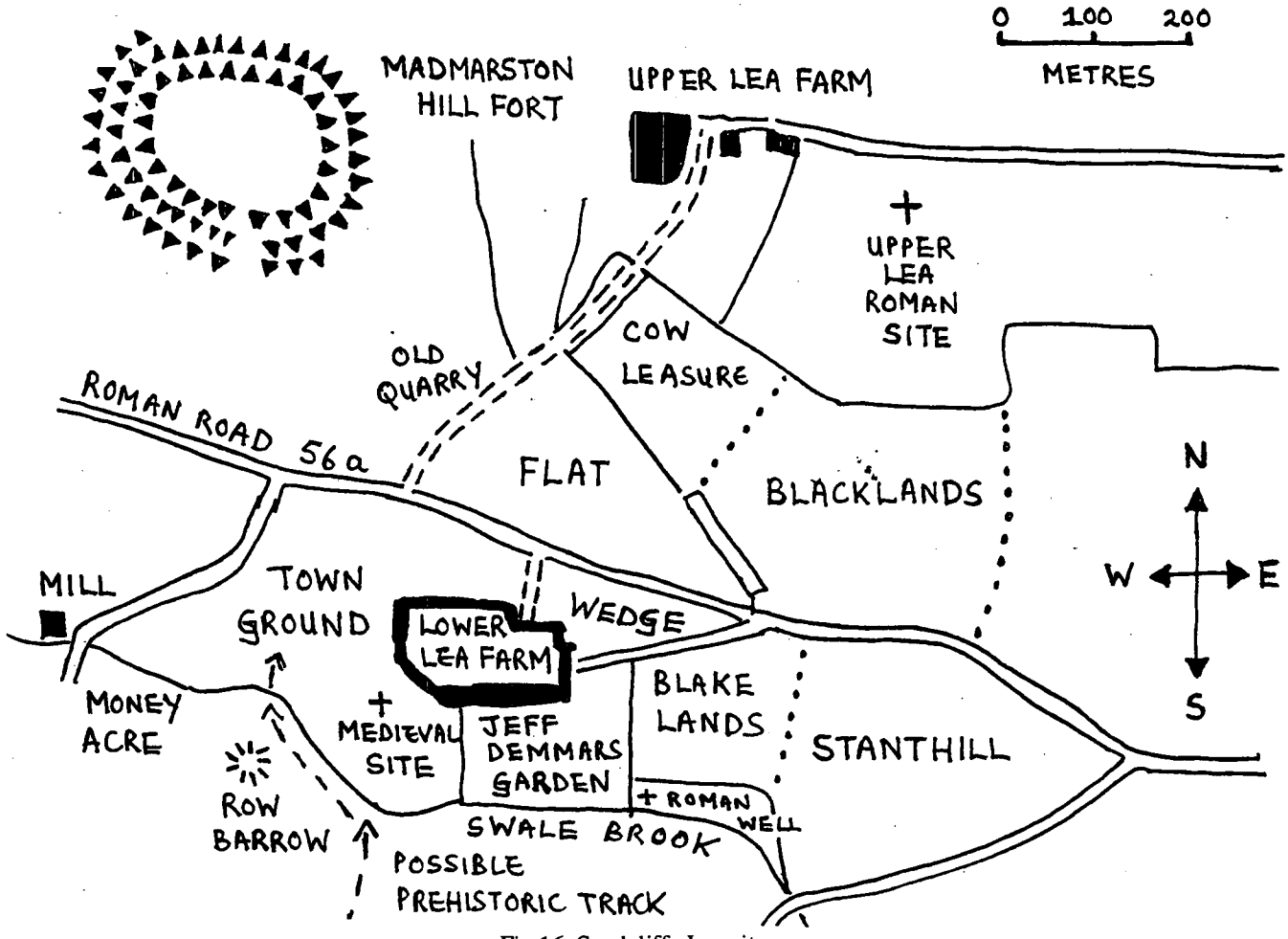

Fig 16. Swalcliffe Lea site.

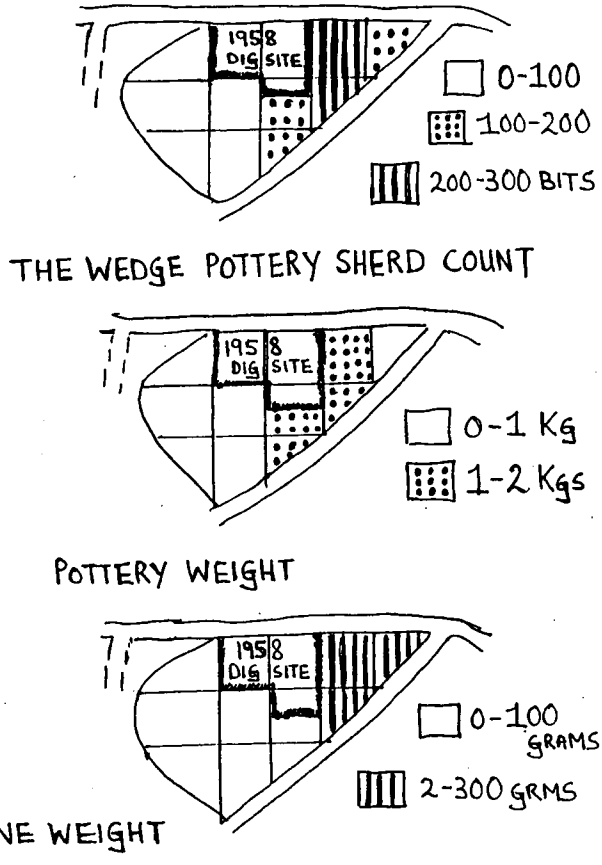

Fig 17. Swalcliffe Lea site.

off the entire village and a lot of quernstones, again suggesting mixed farming.

Swalcliffe Upper Lea (SP393388)

Another new Roman site was discovered on a hilltop just outside the Lower Lea settlement. The pottery scatter covered 3 ha, though much of this was washed downhill. The percentages were: grey ware 61%, red wares 22%, Samian 2%, grog ware 11%, calcite gritted 1%, Nene Valley 0.5%, white wares 2% and mortaria 0.5%. A few possible baked tiles were found, a few bits of quernstone and a reasonable count of domestic farmstock bones. Two activity areas were noted.

Breaklands Farm- Round Hill Roman site (SP38453935)

Another new site was found near the Lower Lea settlement. The site is on a low hill facing south, by a stream and springs. The pottery scatter covers 2.75 ha at its core and over 3 generally. Three activity areas were noted. The main house had a lot of baked tile associated with it. A careful metal detecting survey of the topsoil was carried out and over 20 early Roman *Sestertii* found dating from Claudius to Marcus Aurelius, along with bronze clasps and a blue enamel bronze

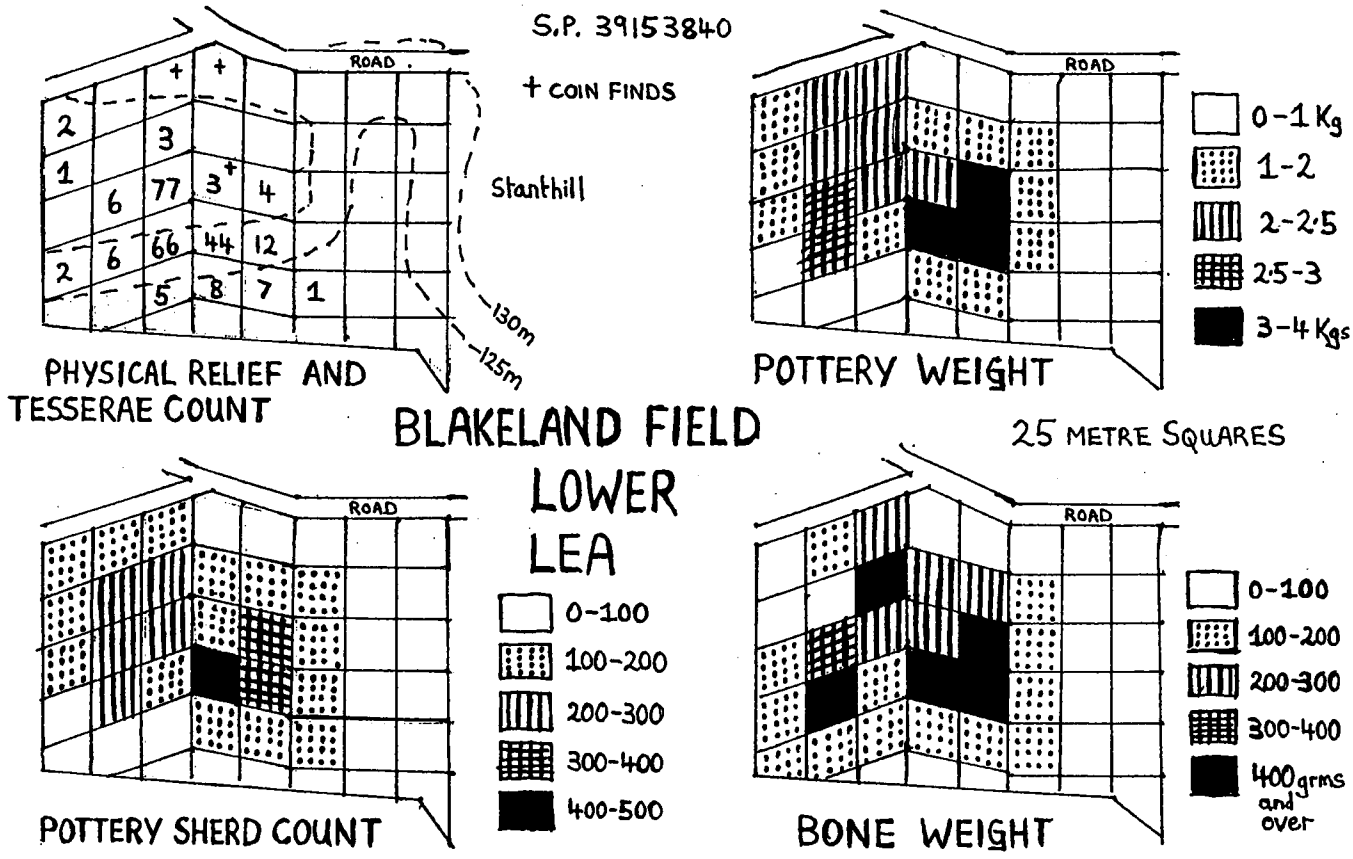

Fig 18. Swalcliffe Lea. Blakeland Field.

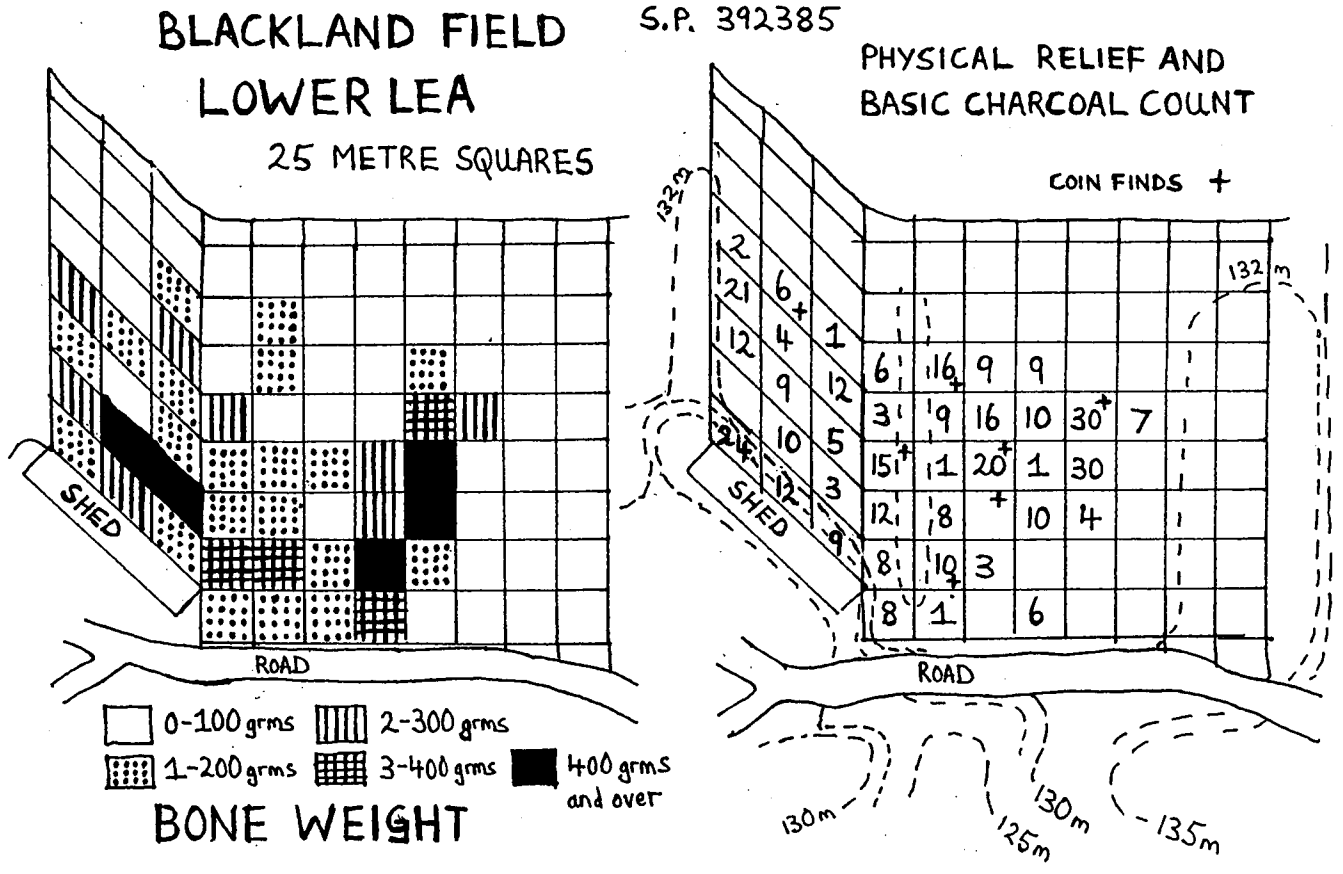

Fig 19. Swalcliffe Lea. Blackland Field.

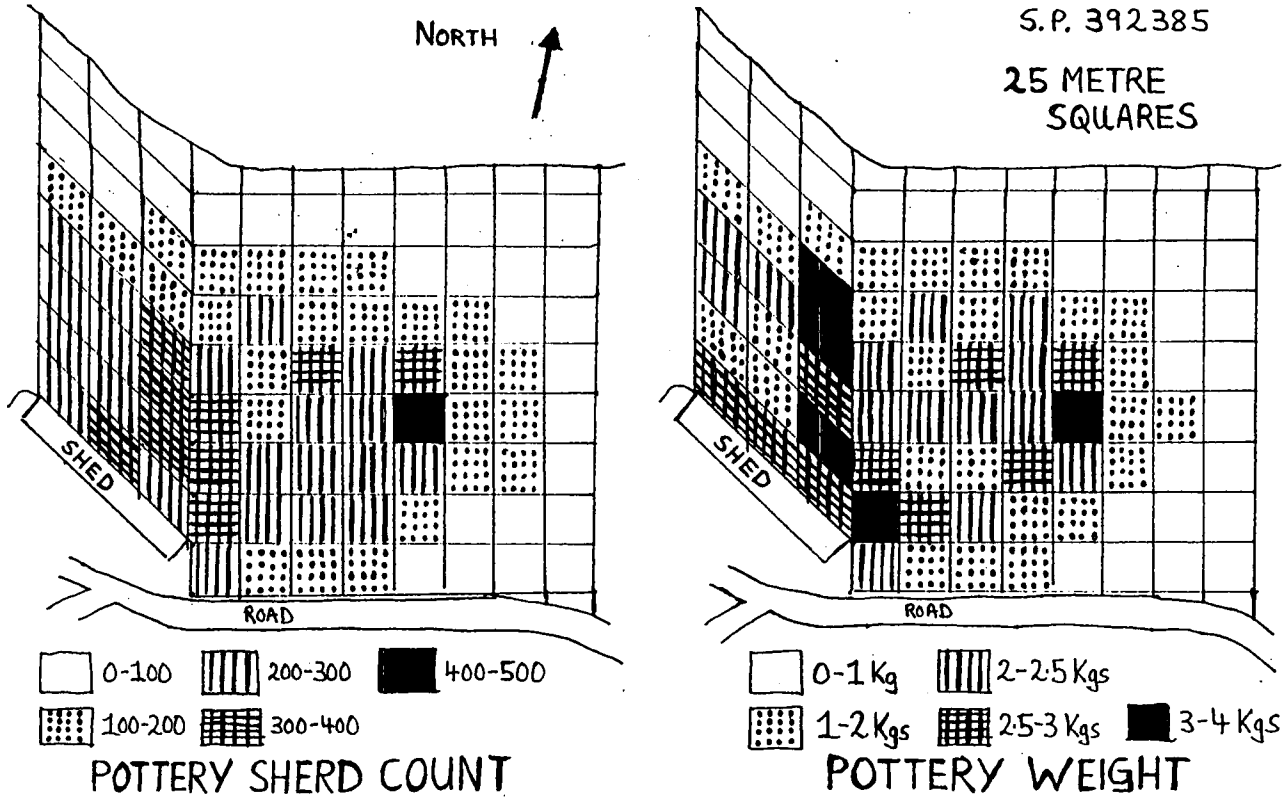

Fig 20. Swalcliffe Lea. Blackland Field.

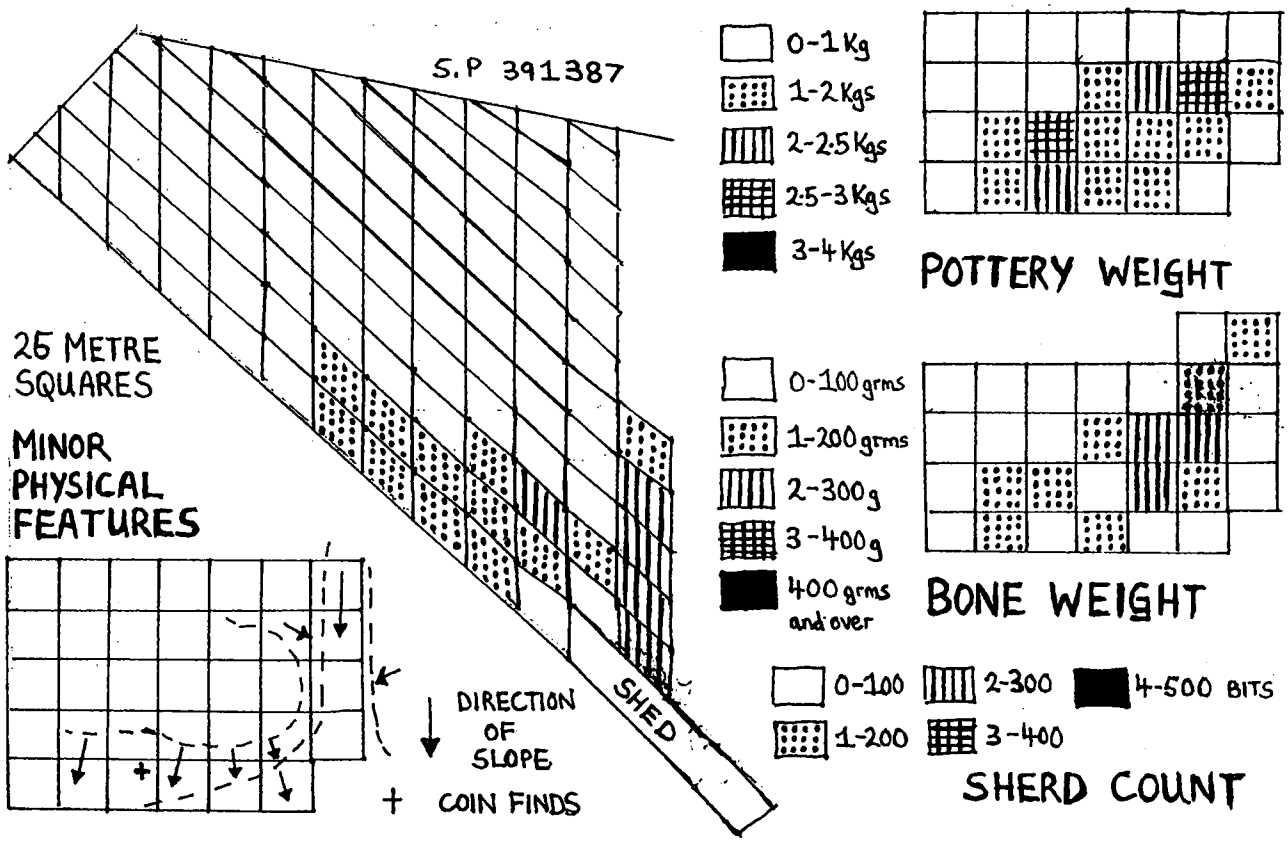

Fig 21. Swalcliffe Lea. Cow Leasure Field.

ring. One silver Celtic coin of the Dobunni was found by walking and a few late *folles* of Constantine were detected. The pottery includes a lot of crude grey and red wares, possible Iron age material and a quantity of fine table wares, Samian decorated and with graffiti, Nene Valley and Oxford colour coated and Oxford red and white mortaria.

Wykham Park Farm (SP446377)

A Roman pottery scatter was reported two fields distant from the old villa site by Tudor Hall school. The finds were Grey wares, red wares, Nene Valley wares, Oxford red and white mortaria and grooved tiles.

Prehistoric Sites

Madmarston Hill, Swalcliffe Lower Lea (SP38653890)

The hillfort was walked by Ivor Hornbrook in 1978 (See *CBA 9 Newsletter* 1978) and he found possible Neolithic/Bronze Age material. The site was re-examined and a ton of worked flints found, including Late Neolithic Lop sided arrowheads and tanged and Barbed Bronze age arrowheads. The fields all around are being walked and a scraper of the Bronze Age and a Neolithic leaf shaped arrowhead found at SP38403915. Another lop sided arrowhead was found on the southern slope of Madmarston and Neolithic and Bronze age scrapers and a Lop sided arrowhead found in the Blacklands field of the Roman settlement. The finds point to considerable activity around the hill.

Crouch Hill, Banbury (SP440394)

On the north facing slope Neolithic scrapers and a leaf shaped arrowhead were found. In the "Pick your own" next door a Bronze Age Axe was found and the field west of that is the Pike farm site where Neolithic/Bronze age scrapers were found. Both Crouch Hill and Giants Cave next to Pike Farm have Pagan religious rites associated with them and Crouch Hill may be a Harvest hill. Three fields to the south-east Roger Featherstone has found a Neolithic causewayed Enclosure by aerial photography.

Hanwell Fields Farm, Banbury (SP445426)

A small scatter of Bronze age flints and tanged and barbed arrowheads was found on a hill side. Two or three fields east is the Bronze Age settlement on the river crossing to Grimsbury excavated by the Oxford unit in 1989 or 91?

Bloxham Grove (SP454369)

Quite a few worked flints were found, possibly Late Neolithic, others of a similar age were found in 1959.

Medieval Finds

Williamscot - Kalabergo's Hill site (SP483448)

A great mass of pottery has been found in this field and a few Medieval finds made by a metal detector earlier. The finds are grey and red wares but they seem to be early Medieval. The field has been set aside for over a year so it has yet to be surveyed by fieldwalking.

Wykham Park Farm (SP452386)

A great mass of pottery was found by a footpath leading across a ploughed field and this covered at least an estimated 2 or 3 ha. The pottery turned out to be late Medieval Brill and Potterspury wares. A cropmark was noted on an old aerial photograph and this revealed a three roomed house that looked late Medieval in its ground plan.

Post-Medieval Finds

Crouch Hill (SP440394)

On the north facing slope where Neolithic finds were made was a large scatter of early-Late 17th century clay pipe bowls. This side faces Banbury Castle and was where Oliver Cromwell had his observation post.

West St, Banbury (SP462408)

During the building of a new estate, a conscientious metal detector Tony Lee discovered a Civil War minor encampment facing Banbury Castle across the river. The blackened area contained 17th century belt buckles and a mass of musketballs and the odd cannonball. Recently more Civil War material has appeared around Banbury and Birmingham University Unit are excavating Banbury Castle.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Merton/Wendlebury, The Roman military base at Alchester
Eberhard Sauer

Little is known about the Roman conquest of Oxfordshire. It has often been suggested that there was an important Roman military base at Alchester, given the central strategic position of the later town in the road network. Before the 1990s, however, only circumstantial evidence was available to support this hypothesis. There was no indisputable stratigraphic evidence, and the small number of pieces of military equipment could just as well have been lost by soldiers passing through. Recent research has now proved the hypothesis to be correct. The first discovery was made by Simon Crutchley (RCHME). Studying aerial photographs, he observed a 1.9 ha large enclosure (Fig 22) linked by roads to Alchester. After further research, the compilation of a detailed map and a field survey, he suggested to OUAS that it might conduct an excavation to

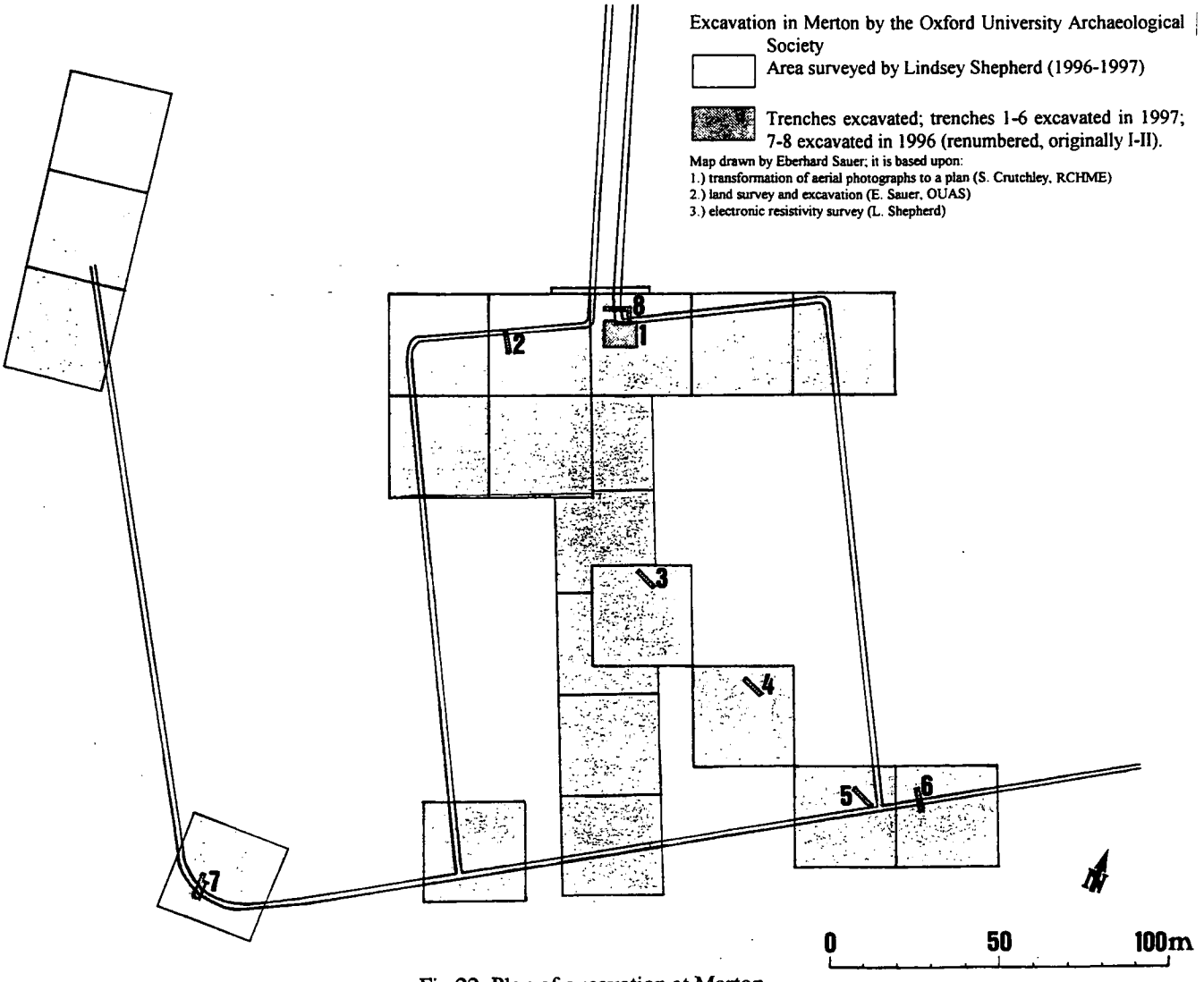

Fig 22. Plan of excavation at Merton.

test his theory that this was a fort. When Simon Crutchley and I discussed the aerial photographs we recognized that the smaller enclosure was situated inside a larger enclosure with a rounded corner in the southwest (Fig 22) and that it reused a section of its southern ditch. While there were great uncertainties as to how the former was to be interpreted, it was immediately clear that the latter could only be a Roman camp. With the kind permission of the landowners, Mr and Mrs Shouler, we were able to commence the exploration of these enclosures in 1996.

The fieldwork (1996-97) involved the excavation of eight trenches, totalling 140 m^2. The resistivity survey of 18,000 m^2 by Lindsey Shepherd (OU Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art) covered substantial parts of the smaller enclosure (Fig 22). The survey, in conjunction with the study of the aerial photographs, gave us a clear idea of the archaeological features and their exact location. The outer ditch of the smaller enclosure showed up very clearly, but neither cropmarks nor the survey revealed indications of any ditches (apart from modern drainage pipe ditches) or stone walls in the interior. The fact that the resistance in the interior is on average clearly higher than in the surrounding area (as well as the positive cropmark on the aerial photographs) clearly indicates that the interior of the smaller enclosure formed an artificially raised platform, consisting (partially) of stony material (local gravel); comparison with the parade ground of Tomen-y-Mur (Gwynedd) suggests that it was not just a paved area. This platform no longer exists; measuring the height (above sea-level) of the surface of the uppermost layer below the topsoil in our trenches (the natural gravel) we could prove that the height is comparable inside and outside the enclosure. The platform has long been destroyed by erosion and ploughing, and everything which survives today is a visibly higher stone content in the topsoil inside the enclosure (it is clearly much lower outside the smaller enclosure as already observed by S Crutchley on his field survey).

Our largest trench (nos. 1 & 8: 91 m^2) covered the eastern half of the entrance area of the smaller enclosure, just south and southeast of the point where the road leads into the enclosure. The main objective was to establish whether or not there was a gate. Despite careful investigation the evidence was negative. The surrounding ditch does not have a defensive character; it is U-shaped and 0.86 m deep (below the modern surface, 0.62 m below the topsoil). The few

datable finds from the filling of this ditch (from various layers, including a deposit at the very bottom and one immediately below the topsoil) were all Roman, but none was closely datable.

With trench 2 (7 m^2) we explored the north-west of the smaller enclosure where there are signs (positive cropmark and high resistance) for a bank inside the ditch. Three trial trenches (each 7 m^2) were excavated in the interior: trench 3 was in the centre of the smaller enclosure, trench 5 in its southeast-corner and trench 4 midway between 3 and 5. Their purpose was to ascertain whether there were internal timber buildings which cannot normally be detected by aerial photography or by a resistivity survey. Trench 4 contained a palisade ditch with a parallel drainage ditch, whereas the other two trenches did not contain any archaeological features whose function was evident. The orientation of the palisade trench is different from that of the enclosure (its extension would cut the southern ditch at an angle of 15°); therefore it may well belong to a different period than the smaller enclosure.

A comparison of the ground plan with other military installations, notably the parade grounds of Lambaesis (Algeria), Tomen-y-Mur (Gwynedd) and Hardknott (Cumbria), suggests that the smaller enclosure at Alchester was a training ground as well. The scarcity of finds is consistent with an interpretation as a parade ground which was abandoned soon, quite possibly even before the construction works were completed. It is hard to think of any possible alternative explanation for the smaller enclosure. In the early years after the conquest of Britain, the construction of such a regular monument and the labour-intensive earth-moving operations can hardly be explained as a civilian installation. There are, of course, villas and temple complexes with a comparably regular groundplan, but such an installation is only conceivable at a later date, and one would expect internal buildings and, given the close proximity to a Roman town, a much higher quantity of finds.

The main objective of the 1997 campaign was to reveal the function of the smaller enclosure, and not much time was left for the exploration of the larger enclosure. In trench 6 (7 m^2) we successfully located and sectioned the surrounding ditch. It is V-shaped and 0.95 m deep (below the modern surface, 0.70 m below the topsoil). Already in 1996 we had tried to explore the defences of the camp with trench 7 (14 m^2). This, however, was a disappointment, as the area of trench 7 was severely disturbed.

Strong support for the military interpretation of the two enclosures was offered by the discoveries of Mike Whitford, who has explored the area thoroughly, and very kindly made his finds accessible to us. We were able with his help to record the findspots of objects discovered in 1996-97, often to the centimetre. There is no space here to discuss them in any detail, but they include six early Roman coins (*denarii* of 151 BC; 78 BC; 2 BC-AD 4; AD 36-37 and *asses* of AD 37-41; AD 37-38, countermarked not before AD 41), early brooches and a few pieces of military equipment.

After I had, in May 1997, developed the theory that the smaller enclosure was a parade ground, it was obvious that there had to be an associated fort or fortress in the surroundings. That there may have been such an installation below the later town of Alchester has been proposed previously. There are, however, more indications to support this theory than have been recognized so far: in the northeast of Alchester the rounded corner of a ditch was excavated in 1928. It contained mid-first-century pottery and, in the upper section, a strap fitting of a horse harness. A similar piece, equally attributable to the early imperial period, was discovered by Mike Whitford in the area of the camp and the parade ground. The rounded corner probably formed the northeast of the military compound. The streets of the later town may well show the typical layout of a Roman fort(ress): the north-south-road does not continue in a straight line beyond the main west-east-road southwards. Does this hint two phases? If the latter is the successor of the *via principalis*, then the former has to follow the *via praetoria*, leading from the front of the *principia*, the headquarters, through the north-gate to the crossroads north of Alchester. Only after the demolition of the headquarters would it have been possible to build the southwards continuation. Unlike the northern section, its course may thus have been influenced by other existing constructions. If this argument is correct, then we have to assume, that, for reasons of symmetry, the military installation covered the major part of the later town. Another military installation was recognized by Simon Crutchley and myself in January 1998. Its western side is situated *c* 480 m west of the later E-wall of the town of Alchester. It is formed by a double ditch with clearly rounded corners in the southwest and northwest. The north-south-extent of *c* 240 m (this approximate distance includes the gap between the inner ditch and the untraceable rampart) suggests that we are dealing with an installation, much larger than most auxiliary forts for 500 men, but not large enough for a legionary fortress. The garrison of this large fort or vexillation fortress will have comprised *c* 1000-3000 men. Whether it was earlier or later than the vexillation fortress below Alchester is not yet known; alternatively it might form an annexe to the latter though, having looked at size and position of other military annexes, this seems to me to be less likely.

The distance between the base and the entrance to the parade ground along roads was *c* 750 m and even more, if it was associated with the western compound. While this may be used as an argument against the interpretation, proposed here, it should be noted that the parade ground at Lambaesis was over 2 km away from the fortress. The suitability of the terrain cannot be explored here, but it may be worth mentioning that for horses at least a trip over a certain distance before the start of the actual exercises could even have been an advantage (A Hyland, Training the Roman Cavalry (1993) 20-1). One can only speculate on whether the availability of hilly and boggy terrain in the surroundings was a relevant factor in the choice of the place; we know

from classical sources that manoeuvres in natural terrain formed part of the military training in the Roman army. The date of the entrenchment on Graven Hill is not known. If it was occupied in the invasion period, it might even explain the position of the camp and could potentially later have provided a suitable training area for siege warfare. Both the camp and the parade ground were parallel to the way continuing from Langford Lane to Astley Bridge Cottage, which is in the same axis as the ford, the road from the parade ground is leading to, and as the crossroads north of Alchester. There is nothing to suggest that the Roman road followed directly the north-western part of this straight line; it is likely, however, that the alignment of these features was based on early land surveying. Was this part of a predecessor of the road to Dorchester on Thames, which avoided Ot Moor? A possibly early coin (AD 14-50 or only 80-81/98) was found along or near its course in the 19th century. A cropmark just west of the north- south-leading section of Langford Lane identifies presumably a section of this road. The road through Ot Moor may be later than AD 95. It can hardly be coincidence that Field Road near Murcott, which may link up with the continuation of the lane parallel to the military installations, and the eastwards bend of the later(?) Dorchester-Alchester-road north of Beckley are in the same axis and parallel to a drainage channel in Ot Moor. This, however, does not necessarily form part of the potential predecessor of the Alchester-Dorchester-road, as it equally traverses the boggy terrain of Ot Moor.

The project has provided us with an insight into the first years and decades of Roman Oxfordshire, a period of dramatic change, about which little has been known as far as this part of Britain is concerned.

Acknowledgements:
I am most grateful to Mr and Mrs Shouler for their kind permission to excavate. For generous financial support I am indebted to the Roman Research Trust, the Association for Roman Archaeology and the OUAS. Without S Crutchley this project would not have taken place. For his truly fundamental contribution and for his initiation of this excavation, I would like to thank him warmly. L Shepherd's resistivity survey and M Whitford's explorations were both essential for the success of the project. I am very grateful to P Booth, Professor B W Cunliffe, R Featherstone, Professor S Frere, Dr M Henig, Dr C E King, A MacGregor, D Miles, Dr M Robinson, P Smith, G Soffe, R Ainslie, Dr Dodd and H Hatcher who all kindly offered support in various ways. The participants, of course, made the most crucial contribution, and though, unfortunately, I cannot list them here, I would like to thank them collectively, only singling out the great help by T Bryars and W Whiteley.

Middleton Stoney/Upper Heyford, Aves Ditch, an Iron Age linear earthwork (SP51852465)
Eberhard Sauer

Aves Ditch, also known under various other names, such as Ash Bank and Wattle Bank, is a linear earthwork, which is straight over 4.2 km(!). Its straightness, and its apparent orientation towards the ford over the river Cherwell, used by Akeman Street gave rise to the theory that this earthwork, whose bank resembles the agger of a Roman road, was indeed a road of this period despite its unknown destination. Others considered Aves Ditch to be either a pre-Roman or - much more often - to be a Roman or a post-Roman earthwork. To test these theories OUAS sectioned Aves Ditch in the woods the Gorse in 1997, where it is well preserved and significantly still forms the parish boundary between Upper Heyford and Middleton Stoney. Embedded in the bank of the earthwork was Iron Age pottery, datable only to the 4th to 1st century BC (kindly dated by Paul Booth). The material extracted from the ditch W of the bank which had been cut into the limestone bedrock had been used to raise the bank. Only the upper part of the ditch, which had been recut at least four times, could yet be excavated. The difference between the surviving height of the bank and the bottom of the ditch (up to 2.25 m in C Musgrave's excavations, mentioned below, and over 2.75 m in our excavations - we have not reached the bottom of the ditch in 1997)), excludes an interpretation as a Roman road. (It is, of course, perfectly possible, even likely, that tracks followed Aves Ditch already in the Iron Age and in the Roman period, but this was not its primary function.) It is not even possible to speculate that it was an unfinished Roman road, transformed in the post-Roman period into an earthwork. The Iron Age pottery in various layers of the bank could in theory, of course, derive from an unknown Iron Age site at the spot, to be redeposited only centuries later. Museum studies, however, render a Roman or post-Roman origin of this monument very unlikely. Only once had Aves Ditch been archaeologically sectioned before, by C Musgrave, who excavated in 1937 three trenches at and near its southern end, north of Kirtlington, 4 km southsouthwest of our trench. Alison Roberts was kind enough to search for the finds and plans of this excavation and to make them accessible to me. Time and lack of expertise in pottery studies did not yet allow me very detailed research, but from my preliminary studies it appears that no piece of pottery embedded in the bank or in the ancient topsoil sealed beneath the bank seems to be later than the Iron Age (but compare *Oxoniensia* 2, 1937, 202). Some were similar to one fabric represented in our trench in the Gorse. Some other sherds resemble pottery from late Iron Age contexts from the North Oxfordshire Grims Ditch, hinting that the bank of Aves Ditch may have been constructed in the same period. By contrast in the filling of the ditch distinctive Roman sherds were represented besides Iron Age pieces. It seems likely that the pieces found embedded in the bank had been deposited along the course of the earthwork before the completion of the bank; presumably the ditch was later, quite possibly in the late Iron Age, dug out deeper (or, as apparently in the north, dug anew next to the course of the old ditch) and the bank constructed or increased in height. We can thus conclude that the straight alignment of Aves Ditch goes back to the Iron Age. No traces of palisade posts or of timber facing or strengthening could be observed in our only 1 m wide trench, but a potential post-hole was observed on the west-side of the

bank in one trench in 1937. Beneath the bank we encountered in our trench the western and central upper section of what appeared to be a second ditch, but for safety reasons we could not yet fully explore it. The ditch below the bank excludes an interpretation as a shortlived linear earthwork, erected by the Roman army during the invasion period against uncontrolled penetration of hostile forces from the west to the military base at Alchester, even if we disregarded that similar installations in Roman military architecture were by and large a later development. If it was late Roman or post-Roman, one would not expect the distinctive pieces of Roman pottery, discovered by C Musgrave, to be confined to the filling of the ditch, and Iron Age pottery to be represented all along the line (besides the pieces recovered by excavation surface finds of late Iron Age pottery near Aves Ditch have been reported). No ditch underlay the bank at its south-end (or had at least not been observed in 1937). It is, however, conceivable that the ditch forms part of an earlier earthwork extending northwards. Traditionally a bank whose course can be traced along the footpath from the Gorse northwards, along Chilgrove Drive and Raghouse Lane to Fritwell is regarded as being the continuation of Aves Ditch. (Theories about its continuation beyond Fritwell are much more uncertain, and recent trial trenching at and north of Fritwell did not yield any positive evidence.) Unlike the straight southern section of Aves Ditch discussed here, there are frequent changes in its alignment and apparently also in its construction. The striking difference between this much more irregular section and the straight southern part, may well indicate that they are not contemporary. However, whether the ditch beneath the later bank forms a part of it, and whether it is thus earlier or whether the bank from the Gorse northwards was built more recently, is yet far from certain.

The orientation of Aves Ditch towards the point where Akeman Street crosses the Cherwell is hardly coincidence, even though the earthwork terminates in a butt-end, 1.15 km away from the ford. An early Iron Age site along Akeman Street north of Kirtlington and a gap in the North Oxfordshire Grims Ditch in Blenheim Park suggest that this section of the Roman road follows a pre-Roman route. To build an earthwork which is straight over 4.2 km (the distance between the ford to the north-end of the straight section is even almost 5.4 km), required not only considerable manpower, but land surveying and engineering skills rarely observed in the pre-Roman period. As far as the OS 1:2500 maps allow to tell, there seem to be three sections with slightly different alignments (disregarding changes of less than 1): the southern 0.6 km and the northern 3.1 km are orientated south 41 west - north 41 east; they are linked by a section running south 37 west - north 37 east; an absolutely straight line between the northernmost and the southernmost point of the 4.2 km long earthwork would have been just 1 m(!) shorter than the combined length of these three sections. It is worthwhile to ask whether it was only the ease of the terrain (perhaps also the absence of earlier land divisions?) which permitted the straight alignment. Interestingly, however, a change in direction occurs at the intersection with the prehistoric port-way. As this ancient way bends as well at this point, it is unclear which is the older feature.

Aves Ditch is an exceptional monument, and quite different from the numerous linear earthworks with irregular courses of the late Bronze Age and of the Iron Age. The closest parallel to Aves Ditch is the Mongewell Grims Ditch, which was, unlike Aves Ditch, constructed in hilly terrain. Both have a long straight section (though the latter never maintains the same course for more than a few hundred metres, and the changes in its orientation are more marked), both date in all probability to the Iron Age, and both are in a position where the tribal boundary of the territory of the Catuvellauni has been sought. The ditch is in both cases in most sections facing away from Catuvellaunian territory, the bank is inside. Classical sources attest that some tribes in Gaul and Germany protected their borders by linear defences, apparently along those stretches where natural barriers, such as forests or boggy terrain, were absent: the Angrivarii (Tacitus, annales, 2,19-20) and later also the Treveri (Tacitus, historiae, 4, 37) by long ramparts, the Nervii (Caesar, de bello Gallico, 2, 17) by impenetrable rows of specially pruned low ramose trees and thorny bushes. Were Aves Ditch and the Mongewell Grims Ditch

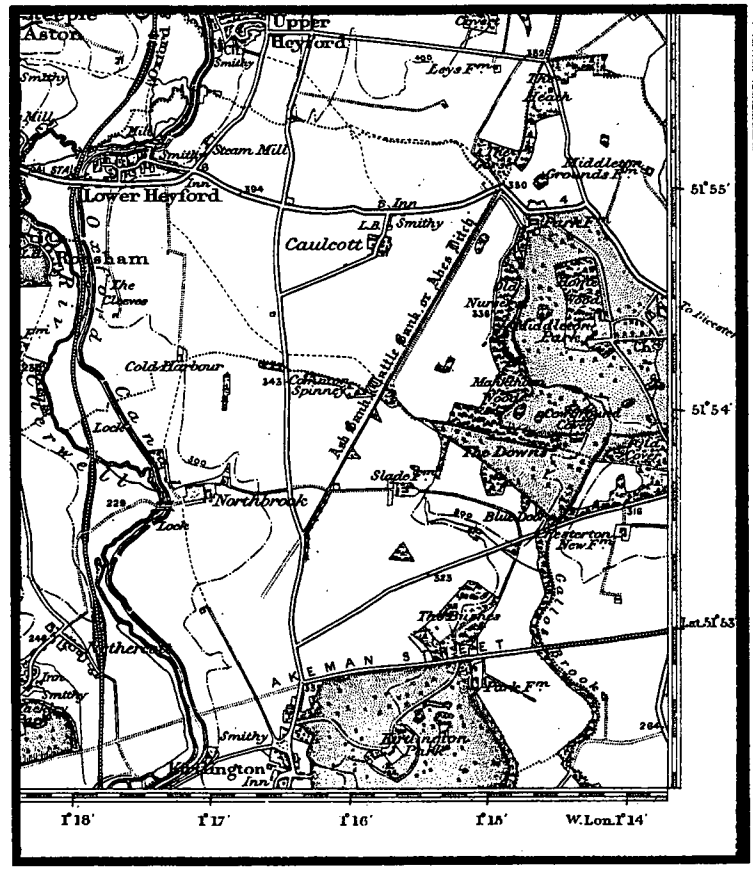

Fig 23. The straight section of Aves Ditch. Extract from the OS map Chipping Norton. Sheet 218 (1896). Scale: 1:63360. Note that the northernmost 200 m of the straight section of Aves Ditch has not been plotted on the map, but that it continues along the parish boundary (the dotted line).

similarly built as a powerful symbol of the extent of a tribal territory (and as an obstacle for mounted raiders?) where the boundary was not marked by rivers, scrub or woodland? Considering that the precise chronology of the earthworks within the Iron Age is not yet known with absolute certainty, but that Aves Ditch was apparently not a single-phase construction, its history may even go back to the time before ancient documents and Celtic coinage illuminate the tribal structure in Britain. In this case it is uncertain, whether it indeed indicates a continuity in the extent of the Catuvellaunian territory or whether it may be an older boundary (which would still suggest that some form of centralized organization of wider territories existed). A detailed discussion of the function of linear earthworks cannot be offered here, but it should be noted that alternative explanations for the function of Aves Ditch other than my theory of a territorial boundary for a large community cannot entirely be ruled out; they are, however, in my view less likely. It is in any case safe to conclude that Aves Ditch is an impressive monument for the technical sophistication and the highly developed organization of Iron Age society in this part of Britain.

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OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Eton Rowing Lake, Dorney, Buckinghamshire.

(SU919/787 to SU937/774)
Tim Allen and Ken Welsh

Third Interim Report

Introduction
The site covering approximately 150 ha lies on the north bank of the river Thames and consists of gravel terrace deposits incised by a number of palaeochannels, some of which remained active into the historic period. The Archaeological Mitigation Strategy and the results of excavations 1995 and 1996, which dealt with Areas EX1, EX2, Area 1, Area 3, Area 4, Area 5, Area 6, Area 10 and Area 15 have already been reported upon (*SMA* 1996, 22-30 and 1997, 25-34). This report deals with the third season of excavations which took place in the summer of 1997, and gives the results of radiocarbon dating obtained so far from some of the wooden structures and artefacts.

The 1997 excavations (Fig 24)
Three area excavations, with a total area of 2 ha were carried out in the summer of 1997. The excavation areas were EX3, Area 11 and Area 16. Watching brief was carried out on 1.4 ha of the former Thames channel. Two extra pieces of work, not part of the original Mitigation Strategy, were also carried out. Part of the route of a new access road, where it crossed the Bronze Age enclosure system, was excavated (see Northern Access Road below). In addition, thanks to joint funding by Sir John Smith and Eton College, more work was carried out in Area 6, first excavated in 1996, where an Early Neolithic midden deposit had been found.

The Neolithic middens - Area 6
In 1996 a silted glacial channel was found crossing the gravel terrace in the south-east half of the site. To the south of the former Thames channel in Area 9/10 a Neolithic deposit survived in the hollow left in the top of the channel. This was partly excavated and produced 2260 struck flints, 2000 sherds of Neolithic pottery and 320 fragments of animal bone. The pottery suggested a date in the Middle Neolithic. In Area 6 this silted channel was again exposed running west-east, and as in Area 9/10 a Neolithic midden deposit survived in the hollow left in its top. An area of 210 m^2 (about 7%) of the deposit was excavated, largely as a series of 2 m squares, and a total of 9000 struck flints, 4000 sherds of Early Neolithic pottery and 2600 fragments of animal bone was recovered (*SMA* 1997, 27-31 and Fig 9).

In 1997 another 0.45 ha was stripped in Area 6 at the east and west ends of the site to expose the full extent of the hollow and to look for any associated Neolithic structures.At the west end of the site the hollow ended at the edge of the former Thames channel. To the east, the hollow rapidly thinned out, and had almost disappeared at the edge of the stripped area.

The length of the hollow was divided into 4 m squares on a grid coinciding with the strips already excavated in 1996. The squares were numbered in groups of 40, and 4 (10%) of each group were selected randomly for excavation by hand. In addition, another seven squares were chosen both to fill in large gaps left by the random distribution and to concentrate upon known concentrations of finds. This brought the excavated area of the hollow up to 686 m^2, or about 18% in total.

Some areas of darker soil were noted and excavated separately from the layers around them. All of these putative features proved to be treeholes, although they did contain the largest concentrations of finds within the site. The reason for this is still a matter of conjecture.

All finds were numbered individually and their position recorded 3-dimensionally using a total station. Digital photographs of many of the finds scatters were taken, allowing visual comparison of the scatters with the point data on the computer screen. From the additional 476 m^2 of deposit excavated nearly 12000 struck flints, 3000 sherds of Neolithic pottery and 800 fragments of animal bone were

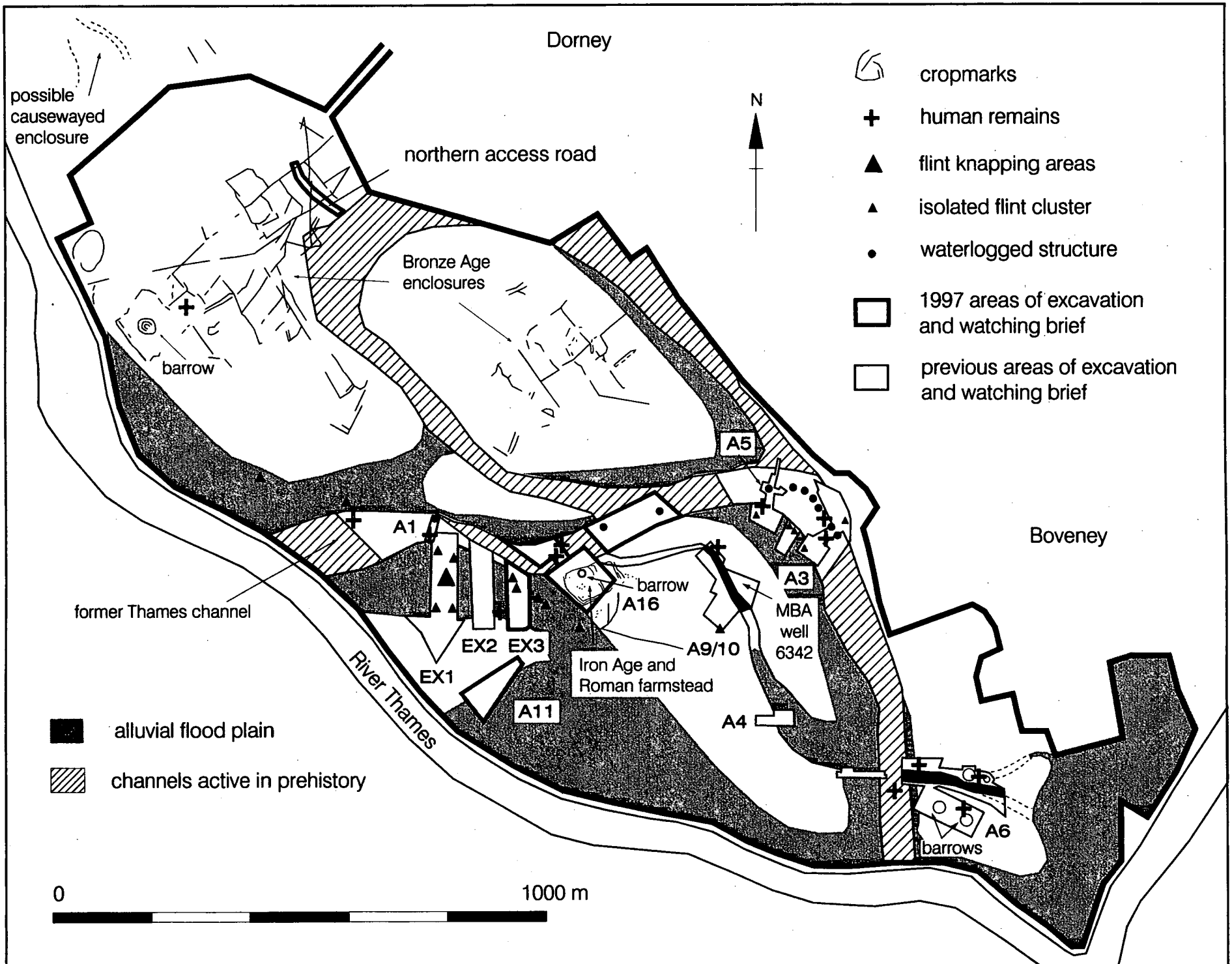

Fig 24. Eton Rowing lake.

recovered. This brings the total from the two seasons of excavation to 21000 struck flints, 7000 sherds of pottery and 3400 fragments of animal bone. The character of the finds was similar to those recovered last year, except that largely complete vessels smashed *in situ* were not found. However, this season's work has doubled the number of Early Neolithic Plain Bowl vessels represented to at least 200. A sample of the straight-edged flint flakes has now been assessed for edge damage caused during use. This has demonstrated that most of the flakes looked at were indeed used for a variety of functions, including cutting, whittling, scraping and boring, and on a range of materials. This very promising line of research may well cast light on the spatial organisation of activities on the site.

Area 16 (Fig 25)
More than 0.82 ha was stripped of topsoil and earlier ploughsoil by machine to expose the majority of a cropmark rectangular enclosure dated by evaluation to the Roman period. The stripped area covered the south-western corner of the gravel terrace and some 20 m of the former Thames channel to the west. The cropmarks show that the enclosure was in two parts, a square enclosure on the south with a smaller annexe on the north. The excavation included all of the square enclosure (except the south-east corner which lies beneath a haul road) and part of the annexe to the north; most of the annexe however lies in the gap between the main rowing lake and its return lane, and so was not excavated. South of the former Thames channel and of the gravel terrace a small area of the alluvial floodplain was also exposed.

On the gravel terrace within the area of the later enclosure were treeholes containing Early Neolithic struck flint, and fragments of both Plain Bowl and Peterborough Ware pottery have been found in later features. At the south end of the excavation the natural gravel gave way to alluvial floodplain, and here a group of burnt patches and possible postholes of Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date were found.

A cropmark ring ditch proved to be Early Bronze Age. Both Beaker and EBA pottery were recovered from the barrow ditch. There were no internal burials, but a crouched inhumation was found cut into the ditch, and another lay in a shallow pit just outside on the east side. A four-post structure lay slightly off-centre within the ring ditch but it was not clear whether it was contemporary with the ring ditch or was a later structure.

On the west concentrations of burnt flint and charcoal were found over a distance of nearly 100 m along the edge of the gravel terrace and extending south onto the floodplain. These spreads, which also infilled a group of pits along the channel edge, were associated with pottery of Middle-Late Bronze Age character, and are commonly known as 'burnt mounds' (see also Yarnton, Oxfordshire this volume); similar burnt deposits were found on the opposite west bank of the former Thames channel in the Watching Brief (see below). In Area 16 the burnt spreads dipped down into the base of the channel, suggesting that the channel ran close to the edge of the terrace in the Bronze Age. Middle Iron Age finds were recovered from the overlying silts, and the active channel had moved westwards by the Late Iron Age, the successive enclosure ditches being cut through the silted Bronze Age and Iron Age phases of the former Thames channel.

The enclosure proved to have several phases, starting in the later part of the Middle Iron Age and continuing into the Roman period. The main enclosure ditch was about 1.5 m deep and 2.5-3 m wide in both the Iron Age and Early Roman periods, and had a single narrow entrance on the north side. Because the interior had been ploughed the enclosure ditches were a particular focus for investigation, both in the hope of finding evidence of different activities taking place in different parts of the enclosure, and because of the current research into special deposits placed within boundaries of settlements. Hand-dug sections were excavated across the ditches all around the enclosure, and the remainder of the main enclosure ditch was later emptied by machine and the spoil hand-sorted for finds.

In the interior there was one rectangular 6-post building on the east side and an arc of gully surrounding a group of postholes on the south. Iron Age pits were found only in the south-eastern part of the interior, close to the southern cluster of postholes. A group of these Iron Age pits formed a continuation of the line of the gully arc, and this may have been the site of a house, although the postholes did not obviously indicate a building. A further cluster of postholes lay in the centre of the enclosure, but did not form any obvious shape. Much of the interior had no features, and the deep ditches may indicate that stock control was one of the functions of the enclosure. Arcs of postholes outside the enclosure suggest further structures. There are a substantial number of decorated vessels, perhaps indicating that the site was of some status. A Kentish potin coin was also recovered, confirming the 1st century BC occupation.

The enclosure was extended northwards in the Early Roman period, and lasted until at least the end of the 3rd century AD. The main enclosure ditch was accompanied and eventually replaced by smaller parallel ditches and gullies; on the west side, where the ditches were cut into the alluvial silts of the former Thames Channel, there were four separate ditch cuts and at least three gullies. During the Roman period a trackway formed by two parallel gullies ran south from the enclosure across the floodplain.There were no clear Roman buildings, though there were plenty of shallow pits with occupation debris, and 5 stone-lined wells, three within the southern enclosure (two of which had preserved timber linings at the bottom) and two in the northern extension. Two baby burials were found in the northern part of the enclosure.

Area 11
An area of 0.55 ha was stripped of topsoil and ploughsoils by machine, revealing natural gravel along the west side of the site and alluvial deposits within a palaeochannel on the east. A scatter of soilmarks, mostly treeholes but also

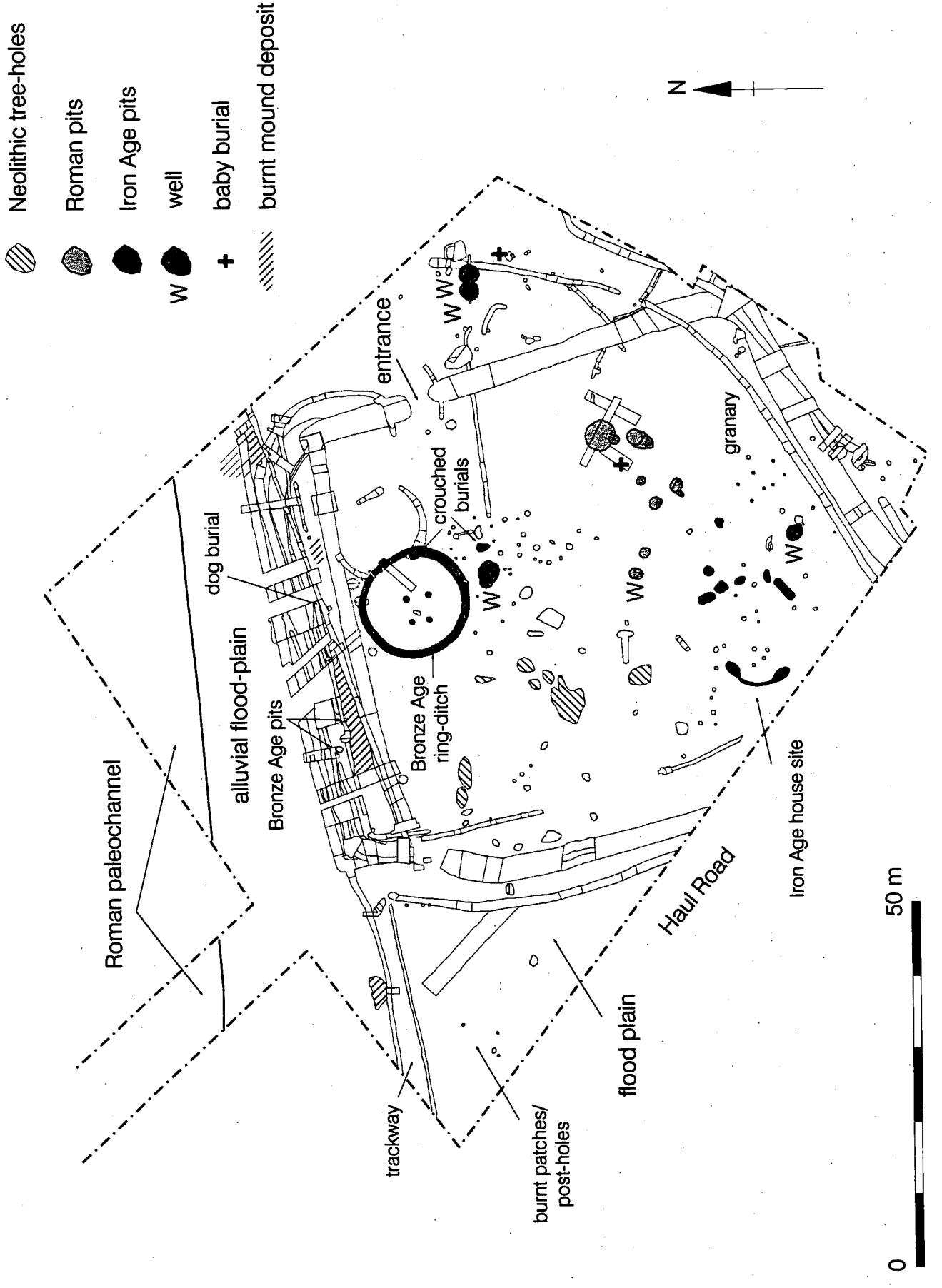

Fig 25. Eton Rowing lake.

including small round pits filled with dark soil and burnt flint, covered the gravel terrace, as in the adjacent excavation of EX1 in 1995 (*SMA* 1996, 23-4 and Fig 13).

As was the case with previous excavation on the floodplain, bucket-width trenches were dug along the sides of the area to a depth of 1.2 m to provide a preview of the stratigraphy within the palaeochannel. The alluvial deposits were then machined down to the first occupation horizon. No dense concentrations of finds were revealed, but there was a general scatter of artefacts at this level as well as a single shallow pit. Finds on the surface of the horizon were individually numbered and 3-dimensionally plotted and a sample trench, 2 m wide, was dug by hand through the horizon, but produced no further finds.

Two-thirds of the alluvial deposits were then machined down to a second occupation horizon. which had a very thin spread of charcoal across it, within which a burnt mound deposit some 3 m in diameter was found, consisting of in situ burnt soil overlain by a layer of charcoal and burnt flint. Scattered around the burnt mound was burnt flint but no other finds or features. Sample 2 m squares were excavated across the surface but there were no further finds. This was the only buried soil horizon so far encountered that could be traced over a large area, due to the charcoal staining on its surface. This charcoal implies extensive burning, possibly accidental but more likely connected to the burnt mounds and burnt flint pits adjacent on the gravel terrace. A further charcoal-stained horizon had been found in an evaluation trench, but on machine stripping this proved to be a very localised and sterile deposit.

One third of the alluvial area was then machined down to the surface of an orange clay deposit which overlay the peat in this area. Several vertical timbers were found protruding from the surface of the clay, but none of these were worked, and some of them forked into smaller branches in the peat below, suggesting that they were trees that had fallen over and sunk into the soft deposits in shallow water.

The orange clay was then removed by machine, as was the underlying peat. No artefacts were found, and the character of the peat clearly indicated reedswamp deposits of early post-glacial date.

Excavation of the floodplain and former Thames channel - EX3

This was the third area to be excavated running from the gravel terrace across the alluvial floodplain into the former channel of the river Thames. Area EX1, excavated in 1995, contained in situ knapping scatters dating to the Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age, including an Early Neolithic activity area where leaf-shaped arrowheads were manufactured. Area EX2, which ran parallel to EX1, was excavated in 1996. Although an occupation horizon was identified, no knapping clusters were found. However, part of a Neolithic Peterborough ware vessel and an early Bronze Age urn were found.

An area of 0.58 ha was stripped for EX3 in the same manner as in EX1 and EX2. Bucket-width guide trenches were excavated along the west and east of the area to provide a preview of the stratigraphy. An occupation horizon was found within the alluvium and the area was stripped to this level. Patches of burnt flints and two struck flint clusters were found, one of them containing in excess of 1000 struck flints. Overall, however, the activity was at a much lower density than that found in EX1. Several tree holes were also identified at this level.

Two-thirds of the area was then machined down again to look for further occupation horizons but none was found, though a perforated antler mattock of possible Mesolithic date was found. Machining was continued through the underlying peat layer, which was sterile.

At the north end of the site, part of the former Thames channel was excavated. Lying on the edge of the first phase of the channel was a mass of small branches, many of which were beaver-gnawed - characteristic teeth-marks were found on the ends of the branches - and it is likely that this is the remains of a beaver lodge or dam, better preserved than those found in EX1 in 1995. Unlike Area EX1, however, where struck flint and pottery was found in amongst the beaver-gnawed timbers, only a single struck flint was found in the channel in EX3.

A second phase of the channel was just clipped by the excavation. Most of the disarticulated skeleton of a cow was found at the edge of this phase of the channel, along with a little pottery.

Northern Access Road

A length of 165 m of the route of a new access road was subject to archaeological investigation. The road corridor was crossed by several ditches running on a north-easterly alignment, which correspond to cropmark ditches belonging to the Late Bronze Age enclosure system visible on this area of gravel terrace.

At the east end the road corridor ran across a former channel of the Cress Brook. The channel proved to slope down very gently; no concentrations of finds were recovered from the channel edge and no waterlogged deposits were encountered. Probing further east suggested that the palaeochannel continued to be shallow all the way across at this point.

Watching Brief on the former Thames channel

Watching brief was carried out during August and September, 1997. Isolated finds of human and animal bone, pottery, struck flints and wooden objects were made within the channel deposits, including a circular pebble 'macehead' of probable Mesolithic date. Although no structures on the

scale of last year's bridges were found, a number of interesting discoveries were made.

In Area 1, three upright posts had been driven into a sandbank within the former Thames channel (*SMA* 1997, 34). Human and animal bones were found on the sandbank and two complete Late Bronze Age pots were found close to the wooden uprights. A human skull was recovered from the channel upstream from Area 1 during watching brief operations. In Watching Brief Area 16 a continuation of the sandbank was found within the former Thames channel, and once again human bones were associated with it. Two human skulls were recovered, as well as three animal skulls, two cattle and one horse. None of these had a rolled appearance, and it seems likely that these bones were deliberately placed.

Some 100 m further downstream, in Watching Brief Area 14, within a similar sandy deposit, a number of upright wooden stakes and horizontal branches were found which appeared to form a rough platform. Finds of woodworking debris, animal bones and pieces of burnt wood were made within the area of the platform. Yet further downstream, on the east bank of the channel, a discontinuous line of uprights was found which coincided with a secondary phase of the channel. Although only a few uprights were found, it is possible that they formed part of a revetment lining the bank of the channel. Opposite, on the western edge of the channel, a burnt mound deposit ran down the bank of the second, probably Bronze Age, phase of the channel and was associated with a partially articulated animal burial. This deposit was traced for a length of 20 m. Burnt mound deposits, and pits filled with burnt flint, of probable Bronze Age date, have now been found alongside the channel and on the alluvial floodplain in EX1, Area 16, Area 11, Area 5 and Area 3.

Also on the western edge of the channel, but probably contemporary with the Neolithic bankside, a rectangular hearth was found. Immediately next to the hearth was the profile of a carinated vessel, possibly Neolithic. It is hoped to obtain a magnetic date for the hearth.

An update on timber structures excavated in 1995 and 1996 (Fig 26)

A series of waterlogged wooden structures was excavated within the former Thames channel in Areas 3 and 5 (*SMA* 1997, 31-4 and Fig. 10). The remains of six large structures (nos 7201, 7202, 7204, 7205, 3483 and 3483), two possible jetties (3887 and 7200) and fence lines were found, and the uprights of one of the bridges (7201) were re-used as anchors for a later hurdle trackway. Radiocarbon determinations from the laboratory at the British Museum have now been obtained on timbers from all of the major bridge structures, and upon the wooden ard found in Area 5 and a plank from a wood-lined waterhole in Area 10. These and their calibrated dates are given in Table 1.

(The percentage quoted after the date range expresses the degree of confidence that the actual date lies within this range).

The earliest bridge (numbered 3483) dates to the Middle Bronze Age, and the MBA globular urn found some 70 m upstream is broadly contemporary. The bridge may have been connected with an increase in activity on the gravel island south of the channel, where in Area 10 excavation found two Middle Bronze Age wood-lined waterholes, one of which (6342) has also been radiocarbon-dated. A group of human and animal burials close to one of the waterholes may have been associated, and another group of animal burials in Area 10 may also be Bronze Age.

Oddly, none of the other bridges is dated to the Late Bronze Age, although the ard belongs to this period. Four of the other bridges (3483, 7201, 7202 and 7204) date to the Early Iron Age. Unfortunately, the Early Iron Age corresponds with a 'plateau' on the calibration curve with the result that the date range obtained is as much as 400 years long, and we cannot distinguish the order in which these structures were built, although the hurdle trackway laid between the uprights of bridge 7201 appears to date from the later 6th or 5th centuries BC. The latest bridge, however, structure 7205, dates to the 4th or 3rd century BC, showing that this crossing persisted into the Middle Iron Age. Early Iron Age settlement evidence is sparse on the gravel terraces either side of the Thames channel, but the last bridge may have been contemporary with a small Middle Iron Age settlement

Table 1.

Structure	Object	Radiocarbon date bp	Calibrated date
Bridge 3483	Upright 3461	3150 + 40	1530-1310 BC (95%)
Bridge 3483	Upright 3258	3050 + 40	1420-1210 BC (95%)
Well 6342	Plank 6665	3010 + 45	1410-1120 BC (95%)
Wooden ard	Stilt 46253	2640 + 60	940 -760 BC or 690-550 BC (95%)
Bridge 3484	Upright 3260	2450 + 50	770-400 BC (95%)
Bridge 3484	Upright 3425	2420 + 50	770-400 BC (95%)
Bridge 7201	Upright 7251	2400 + 40	770-400 BC (95%)
Bridge 7201	Trackway support 7487	2350 + 35	530-370 BC (94%)
Bridge 7201	Trackway wattle S1789	2380 + 40	760-680 or 550-380 BC (95%)
Bridge 7202	Upright 7288	2430 + 40	770-400 BC (95%)
Bridge 7204	Upright 7308	2380 + 40	760-680 or 550-380 BC (95%)
Bridge 7205	Upright 7333	2260 + 40	400-340 or 320-200 BC (95%)

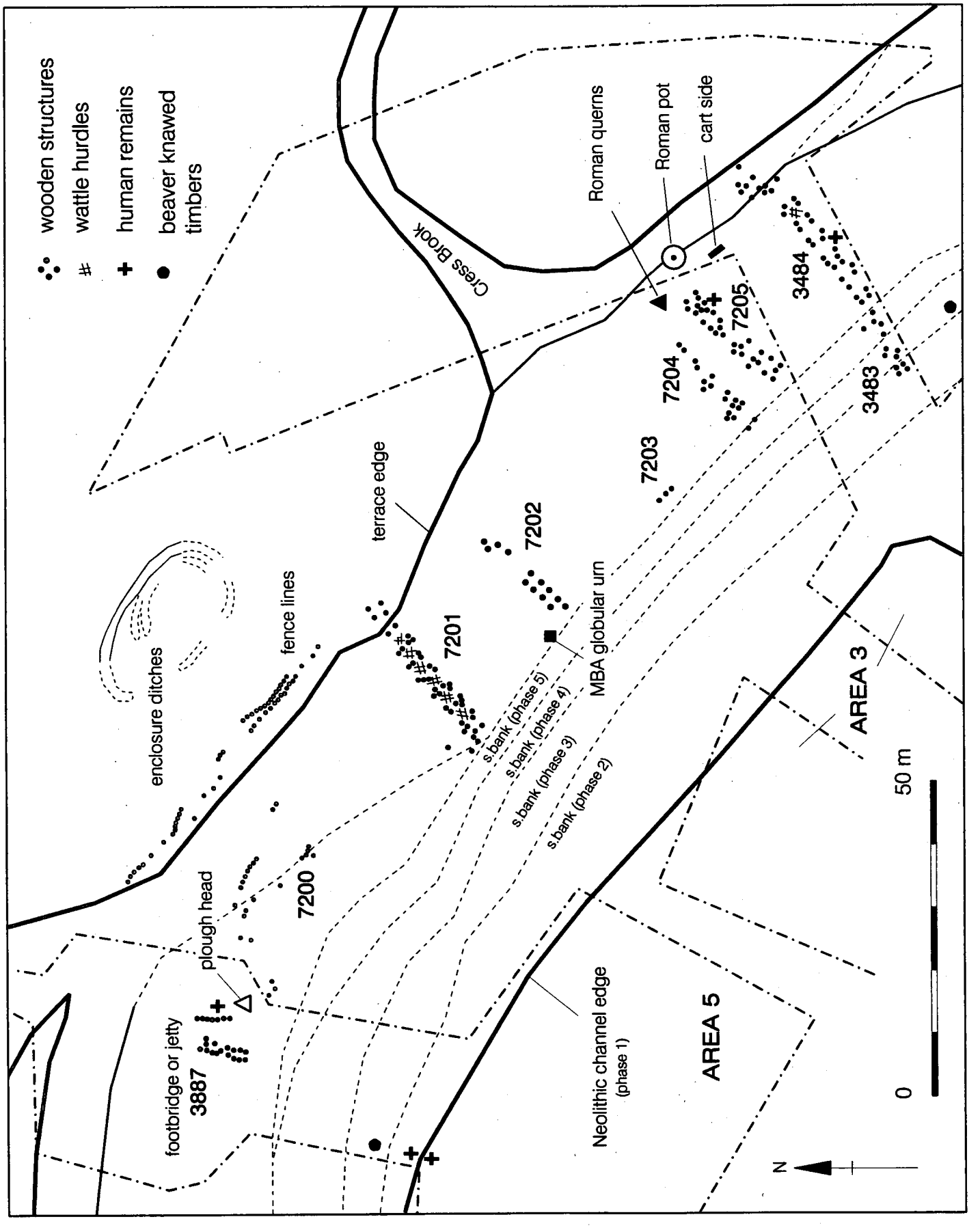

Fig 26. Eton Rowing lake.

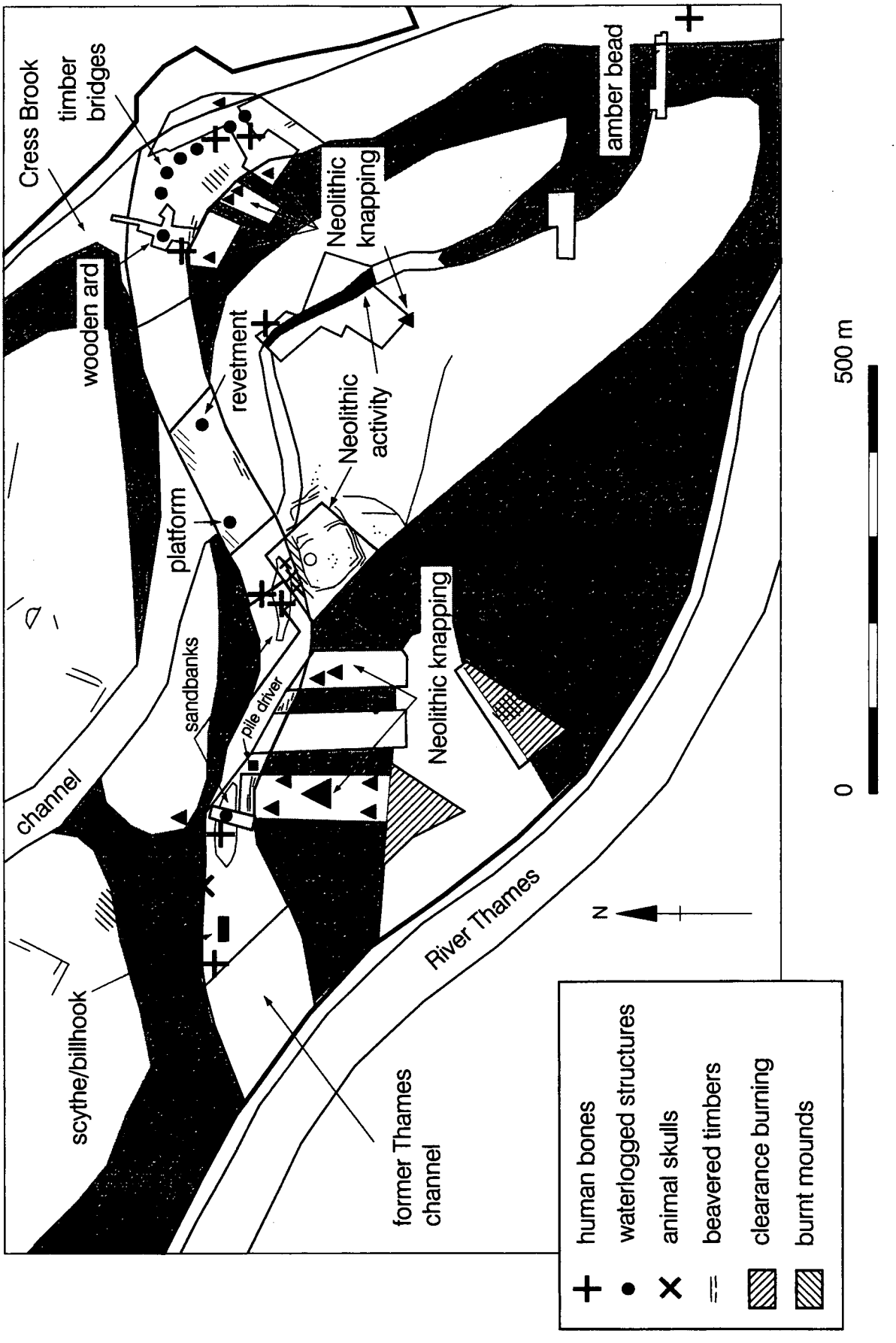

Fig 27. Eton Rowing lake.

found on the gravel island in Area 15, some 250 m to the south-east, which included three four-post structures and a series of intercutting pit groups.

The wooden ard is the oldest example from the British Isles that has been dated as yet. The date suggests that it is almost certainly Late Bronze Age, though there is an 11% chance that it may be Early Iron Age. The ard would therefore appear to be contemporary with the system of Late Bronze Age enclosures known from cropmarks north of the former Thames channel. Dating of the jetty 3887 and of the fence line along the channel edge is now underway, and a sequence of dates is also awaited for the earlier phases of the channel.

Conclusions (Fig 27)

The additional excavation in Area 6 doubled the number of Early Neolithic artefacts. The deposit appears to consist of a mixture of knapping debris and domestic midden material, on an unprecedented scale from Southern Britain for this period. This site may however only be unusual in the circumstances of its preservation; there is a second smaller deposit on Area 10 within 1 km, and another similar but smaller deposit has also been found on the Maidenhead-Windsor Flood Alleviation Scheme (Bradley and Foreman pers. comm).

The excavation in Area 16 demonstrated that the enclosed settlement began in the later Middle Iron Age and continued into the Roman period. Enclosed settlements of Iron Age date are rare in the Middle Thames Valley, but others are coming to light around Reading (Barnes *et al* 1997; K Welsh pers. comm.). For the Iron Age the enclosure may have been a settlement focus, but other buildings may have lain outside. In the Roman period no buildings were positively identified within the enclosure, although Roman rooftile was recovered from the excavation. In the Early Roman period the excavated enclosure may have primarily been used for stock control, and throughout the Roman period the focus of settlement may have been in the unexcavated area to the north, or have been outside the enclosures.

The 1997 excavations have again shown the importance of the former channel of the Thames in this landscape during prehistory. Further excavation on the alluvial floodplain produced more evidence of Neolithic knapping activity, and a pattern of widespread exploitation of the floodplain focussed on the river is emerging.

All of the ring ditches on this site are located close to the edge of the prehistoric River Thames, suggesting that they were sited to be prominent to traffic passing along the river. In the Early Bronze Age, when the environmental evidence suggests that much of the landscape was probably still wooded, clearances by the river were perhaps high-visibility sites suitable for burial.

Beaver-gnawed timber and beaver bones have now been found in the earlier phases of the channel in many parts of the former river. All of this evidence appears to relate to the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age periods; beavers seem to disappear in the Late Bronze Age, and this may be related to pressure from human activities once the landscape was opened up.

It is in the Middle-Late Bronze Age that environmental evidence suggests that the landscape was fully cleared, extensive ditched enclosures were dug and grazing areas complete with wells were established. During this period there is widespread evidence for burnt mound deposits, particularly on the gravel island at the south end of the site near to the modern Thames, on the floodplain adjacent, and all along the edges of the former Thames channel. Similar extensive burnt mounds have been found at the Reading Business Park (Early 1996), at Cippenham near Slough (Ford pers. comm.) and at Yarnton in Oxfordshire (Hey this volume). The charred samples from the Eton deposits have not yet been studied, but whatever this activity represents, it was clearly a common element of many Bronze Age settlements.

More human remains have been found within the channel, particularly upon a sandbank in the middle of the river. These deposits appear to be a continuation of those dating to the Late Bronze or Early Iron Age found in Area 1 in 1996, and perhaps suggest that sandbank deposits within the river were favoured areas for the deposition of human remains and other deliberate deposits in later prehistory.

The bridges and their associated human remains show that this tradition continued at least into the Middle Iron Age. At this period another aspect of the river, its role as a routeway for exchange, is clearly shown by the Kentish potin coin and by the motifs on the decorated pottery from Area 16. These are similar to those on vessels both from the Thames estuary and from Oxfordshire, suggesting that there was considerable regional exchange along the Thames in the later Iron Age. In the Early Roman period Roman pottery from Highgate in London was reaching the site, and Oxford products later in the Roman period. It was probably the silting up of the former Thames channel, perhaps aided by increased alluviation, which led to the final abandonment of the settlement sometime in the 4th century. After this there is no further occupation on the site.

Further work

There will not be an excavation season at the Rowing Lake in 1998 or 1999. Excavation of the Bronze Age cropmark enclosures at the north-west end of the site will be undertaken when the excavation of the Rowing Lake itself is approaching this part of the site, probably in AD 2000 or 2001.

Acknowledgements

The excavations were funded by Eton College, who also provided the campsite facilities. In addition, we are also very grateful to Sir John Smith of Shottisbrooke Park, who with

Eton College funded the additional season of work on the Neolithic midden in Area 6. We would also like to thank Eton Aggregates Ltd once again for their co-operation in carrying out the work. The work was monitored by Mike Farley, the former Buckinghamshire County Archaeologist, whose support and advice was much appreciated.

As in 1996, the fieldwork was carried out by a professional team of 20+ from the OAU aided by up to 80 volunteers, mostly students from British universities, working 6 days a week. We would like to thank all those who took part for their hard work and enthusiasm. We are grateful in particular to Mick Parsons, Phil Piper and Brian Matthews and Cecily Cropper who supervised, to Kate Atherton who ran the Finds processing, to Liz Stafford who supervised the Environmental Processing, to Nick Mitchell who identified and recorded the wood, and to Anthony Beck who ran the Digital Recording.

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Abingdon, Banbury Court (SU49759740)
John Dalton

The OAU undertook a watching brief in late 1997 at Banbury Court, the Vineyard, Abingdon, prior to the construction of two bungalows. No archaeological features were identified and no finds were recovered.

Abingdon Multiplex (SU48709654)
Greg Pugh

The OAU carried out a field evaluation in October 1997 at the land to the south of the Tesco superstore at the junction of the A34 and the A415 in respect of a planning application for the development of a multiplex cinema. The evaluation revealed several archaeological features including a probable Neolithic long barrow situated to the west of the site and two Bronze Age ring ditches, likely to be the remains of round barrows, situated to the north-east of the site. The evaluation confirmed the cropmarks evident on aerial photographs taken in 1993. A Bronze Age waterhole and two linear features of similar date were also revealed at the north-west end of the development area. Two incomplete of Beaker pottery vessels and charred plant remains were discovered to the south of the ring ditches.

Long barrows are rare in the Thames Valley region although there is an important group around Abingdon, the nearest being at Drayton less than 2 km away. Two incomplete human bones were recovered from the quarry ditches of the long barrow. The discovery of the Abingdon Common long barrow is of exceptional significance. It is the oldest monument discovered in Abingdon and the presence of the round barrows indicates that the monument became the focus for later ritual activity.

Abingdon Reservoir Proposal
Alan Hardy

The OAU participated in a series of evaluations in August and September 1997 in an extensive area south-west of Abingdon on the proposed site of a dual purpose reservoir and its ancillary works and structures. The evaluations revealed a variety of small settlements ranging in date from the Bronze Age to 4th century Romano-British.

Site 109 revealed evidence of two main phases of settlement, in the late 1st-2nd centuries and the late 3rd-4th centuries, with a possible hiatus in the early to middle 3rd century. Features included a 4th century cremation burial. Indications of a middle/late Iron Age presence were also found.

Site 153 uncovered an alignment of Medieval furrows under an accumulated plough headland. One possible posthole was revealed. No other archaeologically significant features were identified.

Site 402 revealed evidence of a late 1st to early 2nd century Romano-British settlement, with one, or possibly two, foci of activity, and associated with a trackway leading away from the settlement to the south-east. There was some ceramic evidence for a previous middle Iron Age presence on the site. The animal bone assemblage from the site was notable for the presence of skull and horn core fragments, suggesting animal processing or butchery activity which does not appear to be evident on the other sites.

Site 408 confirmed the presence of middle Bronze Age occupation, indicated by a field system and associated settlement, and animal husbandry or agricultural activity concentrated within the north- east part of the site.

Site 409 revealed three middle Iron Age subrectangular enclosures of uncertain function, but possibly serving as raised living platforms. A small early Iron Age presence was also identified.

Site 411 located evidence of a predominantly 1st and 2nd century Romano-British settlement and field system in the north of the site, previously observed in aerial photographs. The remnants of some middle Iron Age activity were recovered concentrated within the southern part, abandoned before the 1st century AD settlement.

Plot 1200 revealed a north-east to south-west alignment of ridge and furrow and associated drainage ditches, confirming the visible topographic indications, and apparently responsible for the linear features as identified

by the sample geophysical survey. One possible prehistoric feature was identified in the north-east corner of the site.

Abingdon Vineyard 6 (SU 4985 9733)
Tim Allen

The final phase of archaeological recording for this development took place in the summer of 1997 during the clearance of the site by Western Counties in advance of housing development. Trenches 1-5 had previously been excavated in 1990, 1991 and 1995 (*SMA* 26, 1996 51-55). The work was in two parts. A rectangular area north of Trench 2 and west of Trench 1 was lowered by 1 m, and the exposed surface was planned. Only post-Medieval deposits were exposed, including a stone-lined well and an infilled cellar.

At the south end of the site, just south of Trench 5, a small area *c* 10 m by 5 m was stripped to archaeological levels and was excavated and recorded. This exposed several pits of Medieval or post-Medieval date and several ditches and gullies of Roman date.

I would like to thank all who took part and, in particular, the supervisors Bryan Matthews and Paul Murray.

Appleford, land adjoining the Carpenter's Arms (SU525935)
John Dalton

The OAU undertook a watching brief in March and April 1997 on land adjoining the Carpenter's Arms public house in Appleford during the excavation of footings for two new houses. Four modern rubbish pits were revealed.

Sutton Courtenay, Appleford Sidings (SU522962)
Christopher Bell and Sean Cook

The OAU conducted a field evaluation in June 1997 on land near Appleford Sidings, Sutton Courtenay, in connection with a proposal for mineral extraction. An evaluation in 1993 immediately to the east of the site found a late Iron Age/Roman rectilinear enclosure with pottery of a significantly higher status than is normally expected from contemporary rural settlements. The enclosure lay within a carefully arranged field system.

The evaluation, consisting of twenty-six trenches, revealed a broad scatter of features throughout the area of investigation. These mainly consisted of ditches and gullies relating to Roman, Medieval and post-Medieval land division. However, features representing a low level of prehistoric activity were also present. A large pit, possibly a waterhole, produced a small quantity of Bronze Age pottery and worked flint. The flint included a redeposited Mesolithic microlith. Two Bronze Age sherds were recovered from two of the ditches but these may have been residual. The most significant deposits consisted of a cluster of six pits in the south-east of the site containing human cremation burials. The date of the burials is uncertain but the presence of worked flint suggests that these features are also prehistoric.

The distribution, character and alignment of the ditches, gullies and furrows closely mirrored those found during the 1993 evaluation and suggests a similar tradition of land use. The cluster of cremations appears to represent a distinct zone of significant prehistoric activity.

Bampton, land adjacent to Cromwell House, Cheapside (SP3140 0322)
John Dalton

The OAU carried out a watching brief in November 1997 prior to the construction of a new house on land adjacent to Cromwell House, Cheapside, Bampton. A large amount of modern intrusion was identified, associated with the previous use of the land as a bus garage, and three square brick-lined modern features were recorded.

Charlbury, Former Primary School (SP35801950)
Stuart Foreman

The OAU carried out a field evaluation in September 1997 at the former County Primary School, Charlbury, in respect of a planning application to demolish the existing houses and develop the site. Documentary and topographical evidence indicate that the site lies within the core of the Medieval settlement of Charlbury.

The only archaeological feature revealed during the evaluation was a 20th century soak-away. The levels of the natural bedrock suggest that the development area has been terraced and all archaeological deposits have been destroyed. No finds were recovered.

Chipping Norton, The Old Vicarage (SP31242733)
John Dalton

The OAU carried out a watching brief in July 1997 during ground reduction works in advance of a conservatory at the Old Vicarage in Chipping Norton. A water pipe trench containing 17th century and Victorian finds was the only feature identified. No features relating to the adjacent castle earthworks were revealed.

Cropredy, Prescote Manor Farm (SP47324697)
Helen Drake

The OAU carried out a watching brief during August 1997 at Prescote Manor Farm in Cropredy during the construction of a new stock building. Despite the close proximity of the

site to known sites of archaeological interest, no features or finds were encountered.

Ducklington, Area north-west of Gill Mill House (SP43792071)
Bryan Matthews

The OAU carried out a field evaluation in November 1997 as part of the ongoing archaeological evaluation of the Gill Mill quarry pit. The pit area has been the subject of several evaluations since 1988 which have identified Iron Age and Romano-British settlements and burials (*SMA* 1989, 49-50, *SMA* 1991, 95-6; *SMA* 26 1996, 56). The evaluation revealed a Romano-British field system, originating in the 1st to 2nd century AD, and quarrying activity within the paddocks which contained extensive spreads of late Romano-British occupation debris. Limestone surfaces were located within former shallow channels at the southern edge of the site. These are possibly parts of Roman fording points in an area liable to occasional flooding.

Substantial amounts of pottery were retrieved from the deposits, mostly dating from the 2nd century onwards indicating that the excavated features had gone out of use by the later Roman period. Ten coins, dating from the late 3rd century onwards, were also recovered. A copper alloy ribbon bracelet, typologically late Roman, was found along with fragments of shoe leather.

Fringford, The Paddock, Rectory Lane (SP604289)
Paul Blinkhorn

In April 1997 the OAU carried out a field evaluation at The Paddock, Rectory Lane, Fringford, in respect of a planning application for a housing development. The evaluation revealed three ditches, possibly Roman in date, and four Medieval ditches, a bank and a possible floor or surface. The bank had a post- Medieval trackway running parallel to it.

The site lies within the historic core of Fringford, in an area that may have once been part of a considerably larger village green. An excavation in 1993, immediately to the east of the evaluation area, revealed a long-lived and complex sequence of occupation from the late 1st/2nd centuries until the 4th century AD. A series of low status farming settlements were indicated and enclosure ditches dating to the 10th and 11th centuries were also detected. A watching brief carried out on land next to rectory Lane found further Roman ditches and pits together with Medieval activity. Numerous anomalies were detected during a geophysical survey of the site. Several earthworks survive on the site including a rectangular enclosure in the south west.

Archaeological deposits were located in all four trenches. The majority of the pottery sherds recovered were Medieval in date and suggested three main phases of activity, in the late 9th/10th, 13th and 17th centuries. Seven sherds of undiagnostic Romano-British pottery were residual in Medieval contexts. No Roman features were identified by pottery but it is possible that three ditches found towards the centre of the site are part of the enclosure system identified by the 1993 excavations at Crosslands. The remaining ditches contained mainly 13th century pottery. The trackway identified may have led to the rectangular earthwork or the possibly 19th century schoolhouse at the east of the site.

In the summer of 1997 the OAU returned to the site to carry out an excavation. A large number of features were uncovered with evidence of Romano-British, Saxo-Norman and Medieval activity.

The earliest features consisted of a series of Iron Age and Romano-British boundary ditches. In addition, a severely truncated cremation was noted towards the southern end of one area. The next phase was a series of ditches of 10th and 11th century date, including a possible domestic enclosure with an associated pit and a series of post holes. This was superseded by possible 12th century ridge and furrow which was noted in all of the open areas. Arable activity appears to have ceased during the mid to late 13th century when a series of three stone buildings were constructed at the site and the tops of the Saxo-Norman ditches were capped with stone.

Two of the three buildings were simple structures. The first of these was rectangular in plan with a single phase of stone wall and two phases of cobblestone floors. Very few artefacts were recovered. The other structure comprised a single-phase stone floor with no evidence for any sort of superstructure. Neither structure produced any evidence of a hearth and both were probably nondomestic.

The third building was considerably more complex. It consisted of a rectangular structure with an external room and an internal dividing wall being added. A number of clay floor surfaces with associated occupation debris were noted, as were several hearths, and a series of internal postholes and gullies which may represent an earlier timber structure. The building was surrounded by an occupation horizon which produced a large quantity of pottery and metal objects, particularly horseshoes and horseshoe nails. There were also wood-working tools, buckles, a lock, a key, a heckle-tooth and an animal bell. The building possibly functioned as a farrier's workshop for at least part of its life, but the complete absence of hammer scale suggests that metal was not being smithed at the site. The complex appears to have been abandoned during the 14th century and, apart from some sporadic stone-robbing, there was little activity at the site thereafter, which appears to have been under pasture until the present day.

Garsington, St Mary's Church (SP458203)
J Hiller

The OAU carried out a watching brief at St Mary's Church, Garsington, Oxon, in July 1997 during the excavation by the

Southern Electricity Board of a new electricity cable trench. The work was carried out on behalf of the Parish Council.

Part of an undated brick burial vault and a deposit of 19th century building material were observed during the work. No Medieval or earlier finds or deposits were observed during the work.

Oxford, Castle Mill Stream (SP50930612)
John Dalton and Paul Booth

The OAU carried out a watching brief at Castle Mill Stream, Paradise Street, Oxford, in September 1997 during refurbishment works to the weir. The Castle Mill is first recorded in Domesday Book although its position moved to an island formed at the end of the 16th century. The building was rebuilt against the tower around 1781 and finally demolished in 1930. The watching brief encountered massive foundations of wood, clay and stone in the sections of the main sluice suggesting the presence of a major structure, possibly the Castle Mill itself. However, too little of them remained to permit definitive interpretation. Two of the oak timbers were felled in the 14th century and later features between the two sluices on the island were examined and the sluice walls themselves were recorded.

The evidence suggests a substantial platform, formed of a lattice of baulks of oak, packed with rubble and reworked natural clay. The function of the platform is unclear but it was clearly large enough to have supported a major structure. It is almost certain that the platform represents some part of the late Medieval Castle Mill. The date of the trees indicate a construction date for the platform in the middle of the 14th century. The destruction layer above the timbers is dated by artefactual evidence to the 15th century or, possibly, a little later. Poorly-preserved fragments of the 19th century mill structure were also encountered on the top of the island.

Oxford, Cowley, Elder Stubbs, Cricket Road (SP53700461) John Dalton

The OAU carried out a watching brief in June and November 1997 at Elder Stubbs, Cricket Road, Cowley prior to a housing development. No archaeological features were identified and no finds were retrieved.

Oxford, Eastgate Hotel, High Street (SP51920618)
Sean Cook

In September 1997 the OAU carried out a field evaluation of the area of the proposed development and extension of the Eastgate Hotel on the High Street, Oxford. It has been suggested that all of the property outside the city wall, from the High Street to Rose Lane and to Christchurch Meadows, was the property of the Trinitarian Friars in the 13th and 14th centuries. However, the evaluation uncovered no evidence for use of the site by the Friars and there was no sign of defences associated with the city wall. Instead, the results indicate that the site was a garden in the post-Medieval period and garden features such as walls, buried soils and pits were uncovered.

Oxford, Headington, St. Andrew's Church (SP54450764)
J Hiller

The OAU maintained a watching brief during building work at St. Andrew's Church, Headington, Oxford in the spring months of 1997, during the construction of an extension to the north of the present vestry. Further building work east of the vestry was also monitored. Plans for the new buildings were drawn up by Carden and Godfrey, Architects of Long Acre, London. Foundation trenches, pits and service runs excavated by the contractors were monitored for the presence of features and finds.

Graveyard soil including disarticulated human bones was observed in a number of foundation pits. Three brick vaults of 18th or 19th century date were recorded together with the foundations of the 19th century north aisle. Residual Medieval pottery was recovered from some of the churchyard soil horizons. Disarticulated human bones were re-interred in the excavated trenches.

Oxford, Horspath Driftway (SP553051)
Greg Pugh

The OAU carried out a field evaluation in October 1997 at Horspath Driftway in respect of a planning application for a residential development. The evaluation revealed no archaeological deposits and no finds were retrieved.

Oxford, New College, Slype Wall (SP51800648)
John Dalton

The OAU carried out two phases of watching brief at New College, Oxford, during excavation works by Gifford Consulting Engineers. The examination of test pits in March 1997 revealed made-up ground and garden soils and a ledge on the outer city wall. One test pit uncovered limestone cobbling, at a depth of 0.60 m below the modern ground surface, that had been previously unknown. A further watching brief in the summer of 1997 recorded more garden deposits and cut features with associated stonework between the city walls. Details of the construction and repair of the outer city wall could be seen, as could the sequence of dumped deposits running between the walls. The area of limestone cobbling was reexamined and it is suggested that it possibly related to the gateway in the inner city wall.

Oxford, Nuffield, relocation of ACE Centre Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre (SP54780658)
Andrew Parkinson

The OAU carried out a field evaluation at Nuffield Orthopaedic Hospital in September 1997. The evaluation

test pit aimed to identify a probable kiln shown on a magnetometer survey. However, the test-pit did not uncover a kiln but, instead, uncovered a sequence of ploughsoils which contained Iron Age and Romano- British sherds. The strong magnetometer signal is probably accounted for by iron and concrete rubble.

Oxford, Rewley Abbey, Railway Station housing development (SP600305 centred)
John Dalton

The OAU carried out a watching brief throughout 1997 at Oxford railway station during the construction of a housing development. The deposits that were revealed are all believed to be Victorian make-up layers for the railway station and the buried site of Rewley Abbey has not been impacted upon. The watching brief continues into 1998.

Oxford, Rewley Abbey, Said Business School (SP600305 centred)
John Dalton

The OAU carried out a watching brief in November 1997 on the proposed site of the Said Business School at Oxford railway station. Deposits associated with the previous functions of the site as a rail yard, a coal yard and a city rubbish dump were revealed and only Victorian finds were recovered. None of the excavations impacted upon the buried remains of Rewley Abbey.

Oxford, Sackler Library (SP11006550)
Mark Gocher

In December 1997 and January 1998 the OAU carried out a field evaluation in respect of a planning application for the construction of the Sackler Library behind Beaumont and St John Street. The evaluation revealed the damaged remains of a number of substantial faced limestone walls, over 1 m thick, datable to before the 14th century. These were associated with numerous fragments of high-quality window glass painted with heraldic devices, along with white roof tiles, green-glazed ridge tiles and worn slipdecorated floor tiles. All the evidence indicates the presence of a secular building of the highest status dating from the 12th to 14th centuries. There seems little doubt that the remains are those of the Beaumont Palace within whose precinct the site lies.

Other remains, such as carved masonry fragments and walls, are of a date which indicates that they are associated with, or part of, the Whitefriar's priory. There is also some artefactual evidence of high status middle Saxon activity in the immediate vicinity although no features of this date were noted. The sherd of middle Saxon Ipswich ware is the first of its kind to be found in Oxford and, as such, is of importance. A ditch, perhaps of prehistoric date, was also revealed. The OAU is to undertake an excavation of the site in the spring of 1998.

Oxford, Salter's Boatyard, Folly Bridge, Abingdon Road (SP5144055)
Rob Johns

In November 1997 the OAU carried out a field evaluation at Salter's Boatyard, Folly Bridge, in respect of a planning application for a residential development. The evaluation revealed the remains of a building dated by pottery and clay pipes to the 19th century or later. The building was possibly associated with the 19th century timber wharf. Other deposits consisted of 19th century dumping and levelling deposits which were excavated to a safe depth and produced finds dating from the 12th to the 20th centuries. The earliest deposit in Trench 1 produced a single sherd of Tudor Green Ware but also produced a clay pipe stem. The Medieval material found in the modern made ground deposits need not derive from the site itself.

Oxford, 64-66 St Thomas Street (SP50586170)
Sean Cook

In May 1997 the OAU carried out a field evaluation at 6466 St Thomas Street, Oxford, in respect of a planning application for a residential development. The site lay on the north side of the road. The street has been developed continually from the Medieval period through to the present day. There have been three previous excavations along St Thomas Street which have uncovered 13th to 14th century cob walled buildings and associated deposits along with other structures and features dating to the post-Medieval period. The earliest activity appears to be represented by a large 12th century cob wall, which was discovered near the centre of the site, and which defined the areas of the yards to the south and gardens to the north. This wall was possibly built on the edge of a stream channel in order that the land south of this wall could be built-up and reclaimed for settlement. Near to the road, the evaluation revealed the possible back wall of Medieval stone building which would have fronted onto the street. Evidence for a post-Medieval building was also discovered near the street frontage. To the north, a post-Medieval wall on the line of the cob wall, back yard deposits, surfaces and a well were investigated. In the north of the site, near the back stream, approximately 2 m of post-Medieval levelling deposits were discovered.

The OAU returned to the site in November 1997 for an excavation at the site. The excavation partially revealed Medieval and post-Medieval buildings on the northern frontage of St Thomas Street. The remains formed the rear part of a Medieval building partially overlain by a post-Medieval building, formerly known as No 64 St Thomas Street. The excavation also exposed part of the remains of No 65 St Thomas Street and walls to the rear of the property that may date from the later Medieval period.

Shenington, Longwalls (SP37254295)
John Dalton

The OAU carried out a watching brief during June 1997 at Longwalls, Shenington, during works to the lower floor

levels inside the building and ground levels in the front garden. No archaeological features were revealed and a small quantity of Victorian finds were retrieved from the front garden.

Steeple Aston, Heyford Road (SU477255)
Jeff Muir

In March 1997 the OAU carried out a field evaluation on land adjacent to Heyford Road, Steeple Aston in advance of a housing development. The site itself has produced limited archaeological evidence but approximately 150 m to the south-east of the development area there is a probable site of a Romano-British villa unearthed in 1658.

Four trial trenches were excavated and produced evidence for six ditches, one pit and one grave. One ditch is likely to be of Romano-British date and the others may be Medieval. Although only one grave was found, it is possible that others exist in the area. The grave was that of an adult male of advancing years. There was evidence of a crush or compression fracture on a vertebra.In the north-west corner of the site a series of narrow, irregular gullies were found beneath a thick layer of hillwash. The gullies were probably connected to cultivation of the land. Only a small number of abraded pottery sherds, and one nail, were recovered and provide insufficient dating evidence. A single pit was found which contained deposits resulting from domestic activity. A late prehistoric habitation site has been recorded near the site and it is possible that the pit may date from this period on the evidence of the lack of ceramic evidence and the burnt composition of the fills. The pit is the most easterly feature and may indicate further prehistoric activity beyond the development area.

The substantial ditch was dated by pottery to the Roman period but its function remains problematic. The limited evidence suggests that it may be too wide for a field boundary and its position towards the crest of the slope may be significant. Although undated, it is thought that the inhumation is Roman in date. Land use in the Medieval period seems to have been one of arable cultivation and a number of features found in one trench are believed to be the scars of Medieval ploughing. The undated ditches are probably field boundaries. During the post-Medieval period the site was used for pasture and part of the site at least was converted to an apple orchard. Further archaeological investigations are likely to take place during 1998.

Thame St Mary's Church (SP47042063)
John Dalton and Andrew Parkinson

The OAU carried out a watching brief at St Mary's Church, Thame in February 1997 during the work for new heating for the chancel. The OAU had undertaken a watching brief to the north of the church during 1990 which had identified the presence of an extensive graveyard containing Anglo-Saxon burials. However, the 1997 watching brief encountered no archaeological features or human remains and no finds were retrieved.

Wallingford, Bullcroft Park (SU60618949)
John Dalton

In March 1997 the OAU carried out a watching brief at Bullcroft Park, Wallingford, during the excavation of a service trench for multi-media cables and an associated junction cabinet. Several pieces of animal bone and roofing tile were recovered and a massive flint foundation and a large quantity of encaustic tiles were encountered and retrieved from the junction cabinet pit, immediately behind 55a High Street.

Bullcroft Park is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and had been occupied by the Benedictine Priory of the Holy Trinity, founded after the Norman Conquest. In the 19th century massive flint foundations had been uncovered just outside the park together with inhumations, a small stone coffin, an ornamental seal and encaustic tiles. The stone work revealed during the watching brief is thought to be contemporary with that found in the 19th century.

Wallingford, 50 Croft Road (SU60348924)
Granville Laws and John Dalton

The OAU carried out a watching brief in 1997 at 50 Croft Road, Wallingford, the site of a demolished bungalow, prior to a housing development. The site lies approximately 30 m to the west of the Anglo-Saxon defences and previous work on Croft Road had noted that the ditch had formerly occupied most of the space between the road and the bank but that the ditch fills had been disturbed by 19th century tanning pits.

The demolition of the bungalow and the removal of tree stumps caused a large amount of disturbance to the topsoil but the watching brief encountered a layer of cultivation soil that covered the entire site and a cluster of four pits close to the road. The cultivation soil is likely to be the result of Medieval ploughing outside the Saxon defences. Finds from the pits were dated to the 12th century but there were no indications of a Medieval structure.

Wantage, Mably Way (SU89103950)
Greg Pugh

The OAU carried out an excavation in September 1997 on the site of a proposed residential development on land south of Mably Way on the outskirts of Wantage. The excavation followed an evaluation that revealed Romano British activity at the south end of the site. The excavation uncovered several linear features but the majority related to modern or post-Medieval field drainage systems and ploughing. Only two features could be tentatively

interpreted as Romano-British but the paucity of datable finds is problem.

Waterperry, The Coach House (SP62950634)
Granville Laws

The OAU carried out a watching brief in January 1997 at the Coach House, Waterperry, on two lengths of replacement churchyard wall. The coach house is a later addition to the manor house and the churchyard walls were possibly added during the restoration of the church in the 1840s. No human remains were found and no finds predated the 18th century.

Witney, Cogges, Meadow View (SP36320982)
John Dalton

The OAU carried out a watching brief in October 1997 at Meadow View, Cogges, Witney, during the excavation of cable trenches and junction box pits, part of which took place in a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The scheduled area includes several elements of archaeological interest including a castle of probable 12th century date. Cogges estate was recorded during the Domesday survey and earthworks in the southern half of the scheduled area indicate the presence of a Medieval village and part of an associated field system. The watching brief identified debris associated with the construction of the housing estate. No archaeological features were encountered and no finds were retrieved.

Yarnton and Cassington Floodplain 1997 (SP4711)
Gill Hey and Christopher Bell

A further season of fieldwork funded by English Heritage was undertaken during September 1997 by the Oxford Archaeological Unit on the floodplain at Yarnton and Cassington, Oxfordshire. The work took place within the ARC Yarnton-Cassington gravel extraction pit, in areas still under cultivation, between harvest and re-ploughing. Three areas were chosen for excavation (Fig 28) in order to examine aspects of prehistoric activity and land use, and in particular to investigate activities undertaken away from settlements. Waterlogged and other macrobotanical remains were recovered from all three sites, providing evidence of the floodplain environment and land use in the west of the study area which had not previously been investigated.

Site 17
This (75 m x 30 m) lay on an area of silt towards the northern limit of the floodplain and was designed to investigate Bronze Age burnt mound activity adjacent to a shallow dry river bed. Two distinct burnt mound areas were located. The main cluster of features comprised a large oval pit packed with burnt stone and charcoal, a waterhole located immediately to the south and spreads of burnt stone filling the tops of adjacent treethrow pits and also filling the top of the waterhole. A pit a little further to the north may have been associated. The lower fills of the waterhole were waterlogged and contained well-preserved plant remains and worked wood, including a complete (but broken) wooden implement with a notched blade and elongated handle (Fig 29). No good parallels for this object have yet been found, and if anyone has any ideas we would be delighted to hear from them.

The second burnt mound area lay 40 m further south, situated on the edge of the shallow palaeochannel, and consisted of a similar spread of burnt stone lying adjacent to another, smaller waterhole.

No dating evidence was recovered from the lower fills of either waterhole, or from the burnt stone spreads. The exact date of these deposits will therefore remain uncertain until radiocarbon determinations can be obtained. However, environmental indicators suggest that they may pre-date the late Bronze Age; the closest parallel found for this particular arrangement of burnt mound deposits dates from the late Neolithic (Jones 1990). The preservation and complexity of the burnt mound deposits exceeded expectation, and in particular the presence of associated waterlogged plant remains and worked wood is a significant discovery which may provide important evidence of the kind of processes involved.

Two parallel ditches which ran through the centre of the site appeared to be Roman in date.

Site 22
A trench, 6 m wide, was machine-excavated across a palaeochannel, primarily to recover waterlogged macrobotanical remains, beetles, snails and pollen to provide landscape evidence for this part of the study area. Unexpectedly, it exposed part of a gravel causeway which crossed the channel and, in addition, layers of animal trample and remnants of a compacted burnt stone and gravel surface were located on the edges of the channel. The degree of preservation of the environmental remains recovered suggests they will provide important information on the floodplain environment and land use.

Site 25
An area 90 m x 40 m was excavated on the gravel island to the west of the main island examined in the 1992, 1995 and 1996 excavations (Hey 1993, 1996; Hey and Bell 1997). It was located to examine a prehistoric ditch, which earlier evaluation work had traced for over 300 m across the floodplain, and which may have formed a boundary. Evidence of possible late Bronze Age/early Iron Age settlement was also sought west of the ditch.

Sections excavated through the ditch revealed that this feature had been recut at least twice, and a band of gravel tipping in along the east edge appeared to have derived from a bank which had lain on this side of the ditch. No artefacts were recovered to date it, but waterlogged plant remains were retrieved which will provide material for radiocarbon

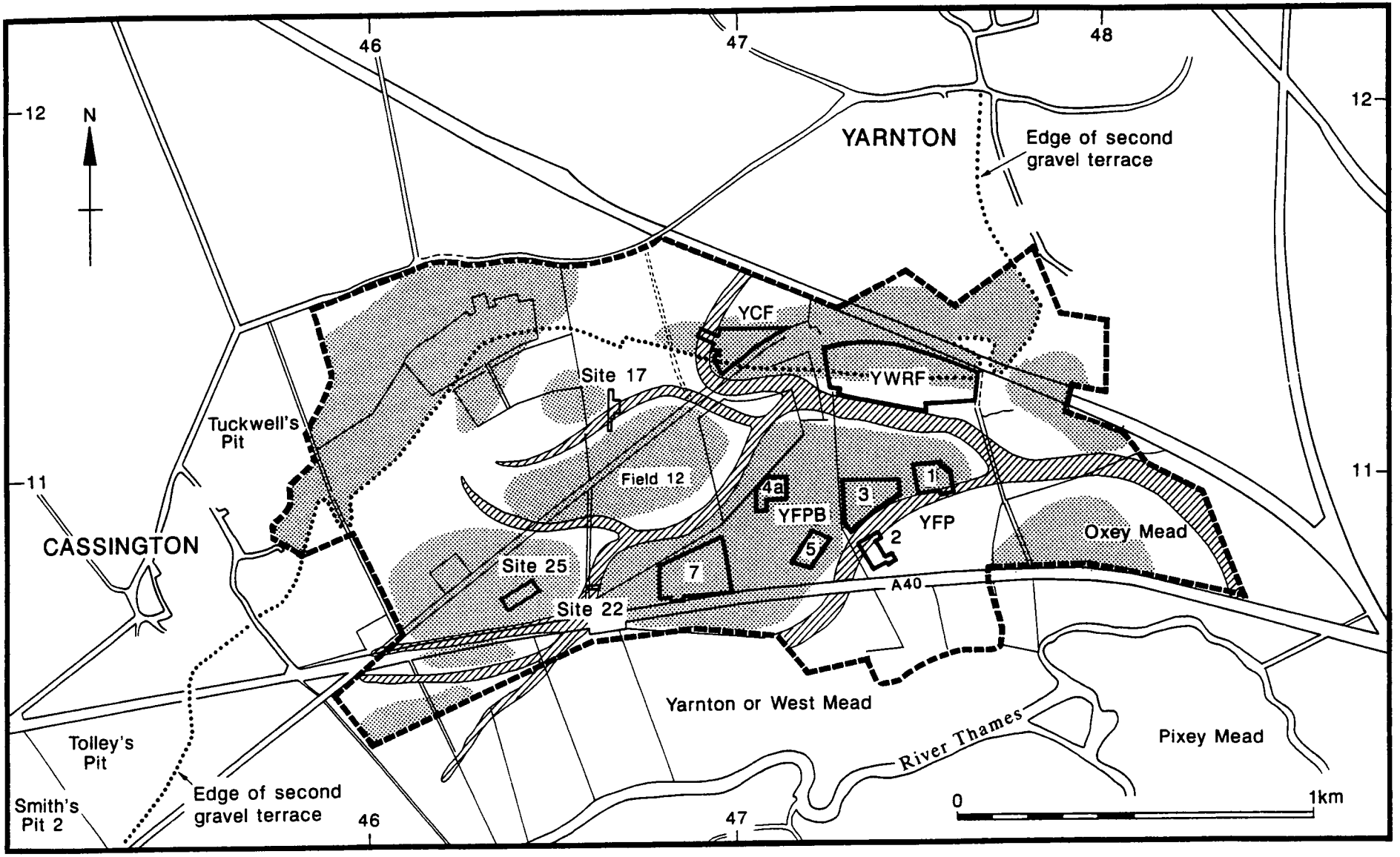

Fig 28. Yarnton-Cassington study area showing 1997 sites

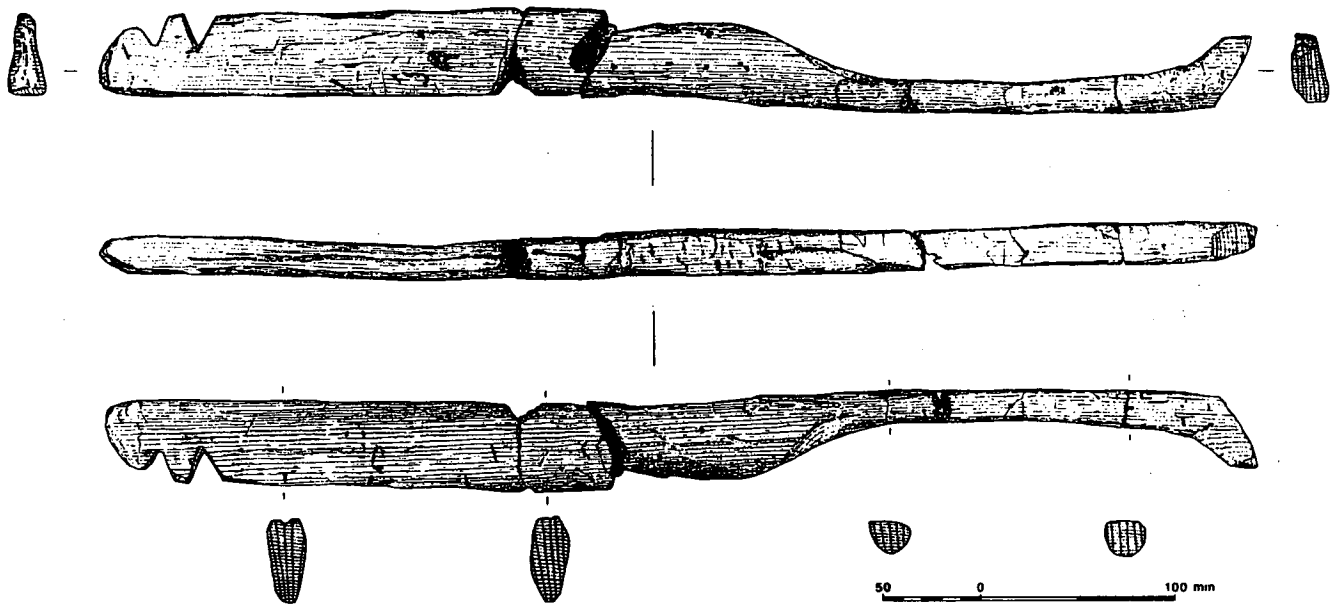

Fig 29. Wooden artefact 10171 from waterhole 10159, drawn by Steve Allen

dating. The preliminary analysis of the molluscs suggest the ditch was open when the floodplain was still relatively dry, suggesting that it probably pre-dates the late Bronze Age. A gully which ran westward from the prehistoric ditch appeared to be contemporary with the latest recut.

Only a small number of settlement features were discovered in the area to the west of the ditch and these were mostly earlier prehistoric in date, including a pair of finds-rich late Neolithic pits. A series of later ditches discovered on the site were Romano-British and Medieval field boundaries.

References

Hey G; 1993 Yarnton Floodplain, *SMA* 23, 81-5
Hey G; 1996 Yarnton Floodplain, *SMA* 26, 63-7
Hey G; and Bell C, 1997 Yarnton Floodplain 1996, SMA 27, 62-4
Jones P; 1990, Neolithic field monuments and occupation at Staines Road Farm, Shepperton, *Surrey Archaeological Society Bulletin* 252, November 1990

Yarnton, Worton Rectory Farm Recycling Plant
(SP4720211302)
Christopher Bell

In November 1997 the Oxford Archaeological Unit recorded a number of Roman ditches exposed on the site of a proposed extension to Yarnton Recycling plant, which lies to the south of the village of Yarnton, Oxfordshire. The work was commissioned by Worton Rectory Farms Ltd as a planning condition.

The site is situated to the north of the ARC Yarnton-Cassington quarry, and lies adjacent to areas excavated by the OAU as part of the continuing English Heritage project at Yarnton to examine aspects of the Neolithic to Medieval landscape prior to its destruction by gravel extraction. One of the excavations which formed part of this project examined the area immediately to the south of the current development site (Hey 1991) and discovered a complex sequence of intercutting features representing activity associated with an Iron Age and Romano-British settlement. In 1996 the continuation of this settlement was recorded prior to an earlier phase of construction associated with the recycling plant (Bell 1997).

The sparse arrangement of ditches discovered in 1997 represents a sharp contrast to the dense intercutting pits, postholes and enclosures seen in excavations to the south. This suggests a defined northern limit to the Roman settlement, and the ditches that were found probably formed part of a contemporary field layout, and a possible droveway, immediately adjacent to the settlement.

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

References

Bell C; 1997 Yarnton Worton Rectory Farm Recycling Plant, *SMA* 27, 64
Hey, G, 1991 Yarnton Worton Rectory Farm, *SMA* 21, 86-92

Monitoring of Yarnton-Cassington Electricity Poles
(SP4711)
Christopher Bell

In December 1997 the OAU undertook an archaeological watching brief during the replacement of existing electricity telegraph poles by Southern Electric in the vicinity of the villages of Yarnton and Cassington, Oxfordshire. This included the area of the ARC Yarnton-Cassington gravel extraction pit (see above). No significant archaeological deposits were observed during this course of this work and no artefacts were recovered.

PUBLICATIONS

ANTIQUITY

"The Earlier Palaeolithic Occupation of the Chilterns: re-assessing the Sites of Worthington G Smith". Article by Mark J White in December 1997 edition.

BEDFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL COUNCIL

Bridges of Bedfordshire Monograph series No 2 - see review

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Records of Buckinghamshire Volume 37 1995 (published 1997) - see review

MANSHEAD ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF DUNSTABLE

Manshead Journal 37 - reports of excavations and fieldwalking in and around Dunstable (£2). Available from the Editor of SMA.

UPPER NENE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

From Round House to Villa - Papers presented at a conference held in October 1993 (updated by speakers). Available from Hon Sec, UNAS, "Toad Hall", 86 Main Road, Hackleton, Northampton. NN7 2AD

REVIEWS

BRIDGES OF BEDFORDSHIRE, A Simco and Peter McKeague, Bedfordshire Archaeological Monograph No. 2, 1997, Bedford pp. 128, 139 figs. Available from Peter Woods, 14 Glebe Avenue, Flitwick, Bedford. MK45 1HS

Bridges are an understudied category of ancient monument. We take them for granted as we speed over them. To view them sideways frequently involves climbing walls, clambering down thorn-filled corners. They are difficult to survey. Close examination of their undersides involves a willingness to wade or the transportation of a small boat. Boats are notoriously cumbersome as survey platforms. They tend to whizz round in the current; I have used oars as the only stable measuring rod. All the more to the credit of these two authors who have produced the best book on bridges I have read in ten years. Backed by the resources of the Bedfordshire County Council in its bridge repairing and heritage roles and aiming at the high standards of RCHM (England) they have divided up the bridges of Bedfordshire by river valley and have produced a gazetteer of historical information supporting field survey of every significant monument. The astonishing variety is partly explained in terms of geological origin and availability of building materials, the bridges in the north are of limestone and in the south of sandstone. Partly the intricate and conflicting responsibilities of manor, parish and county account for the patchwork quilt appearance of the older bridges. There have been shocking losses. St. Neots lost its early post medieval bridge to a modern concrete replacement. Stafford bridge was allowed to crumble into dissolution after a recent bridge was built by its side. One hopes that with this admirable study the bridges of Bedfordshire will be safer because better understood. How could this book have been improved? There is plenty on individual bridges but the medieval road system served by them is hardly touched upon: other sources than the 18th century road maps can be used in reconstructing the Medieval road system as Hindle has demonstrated. Royal itineraries, witnessed charters and writs show the routes followed most frequently by Medieval kings. To fortify the point made in the text on page 107, the sites of the bridges should have been added to the geological map (Fig 129). I found some of the plans showing the evolution of historic bridges confusing because they failed to distinguish different periods by contrasting conventions (Fig 64). Barford bridge, on the other hand, was treated well; the evidence (in the construction materials) was set side by side with the interpretation (Figs 19, 20). These minutiae apart, Bridges of Bedfordshire sets a shining example in 1997 for others to follow. Such County based studies firmly founded on co-operation between County Council departments, monitored by a national body RCHM, make a notable contribution to a regional approach to the history of England.

John Steane, Oxford.

RECORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, Volume 37, 1995 (Published 1997). Published by Bucks Archaeological Society. pp 197, 58 figs.

The volume is a curious mix of "dirt" archaeology, architecture, documentary research and finds research, but is nonetheless valuable for that since it blurs unnecessary divisions between disciplines. Doubtless it meets a wider audience because of its scope. It is to be hoped that, with the changes (reductions) in heritage provision in Bucks and the "retirement" from the County Council of the County Archaeologist and co-editor of the series, Mike Farley, that the journal will survive; it is certainly one of the best of the genre.

Sadly, editors did not insist that some aspects of the illustrations matched the quality of texts - some ugly hand lettering and captions should have been replaced by the printer if the authors had not the skill or technical means themselves, and this could have been rectified for very little cost to the great improvement of the look of the volume. The

graphs on pages 102 and 103 of Bastardy:- Public Attitudes and Social Reality 1760 - 1840 are scruffy and some dates are illegible; the same is true of the map Fig 5 which has names but no location points. It spoilt an otherwise enjoyable paper on an interesting subject. The same applies to Elmondesham House - An Amersham Landmark for Three Centuries, jointly written by the Editor. Fig 2 of the correction on page 2 leaves much to be desired in its printing which has some of its lines fading out. Proof reading could have been more thorough. The volume would also have been improved by a heavier quality paper that did not let the other side show through so much. As a general observation the archaeological site plans are much more professional than most of the illustrations in other categories of papers.

The paper on Magiovinium justifies single watching briefs and their gradual accumulation of knowledge because here it uses various contributions of evidence, including previous investigations by David Neal, to piece together an impressive and convincing story. It is clear from the disclaimer on page 6 (3) that the dating has been dominated by the pottery report, and that ceramic date ranges are used rather than structural phases - even recuts not identified in the field are proposed because of the pottery. One is left to wonder how much independent structural analysis was undertaken., though this may be unfair criticism since the data may not have been available. The authors stress that some of the recording was under rescue conditions and needs to be used with caution. The finds have been treated in an old fashioned way, for instance classifying finds by material rather than function. I found the pottery report initially confusing; it might have helped if the table on page 26 included date ranges and perhaps forms. It does, however, relate to Yvonne Parminter's wider work rather than confine itself to an internal story; and there are some useful comments which illustrate the material culture represented by the fills of features and plots. The pottery and finds drawings here are of a very high standard except for Fig 21, the bronze ram from Fenny Stratford Bypass which looks as though it deserved better. Were the blades 16 and 17 in Fig 22 really worth publishing for the information the drawings gave? The Fig 19 histogram of coins is virtually useless without a key. The report tries very hard to pull together the various threads of evidence without giving them too much weight, and the tentative identification of the location of Magiovinium in the Fenny Stratford area is important for the study of small towns. Perhaps if this paper had preceded publication of Burnham and Wacher's "The small towns of Roman Britain" in 1990, Magiovinium might have been included.

If we turn to Dr Bailey's Buckinghamshire Slavery in 1086 the reader is given an easy introduction and terms of reference are declared at the beginning - but it is a tough read with a large mathematical content. One of the most surprising pieces of information is that "With the exception of royal and ecclesiastical estates, between one in five and one in six of the recorded population in Bucks. was in slavery at the end of the eleventh century". Among other fascinating insights is that a substantial part of these numbers are accounted for by the need to have plough teams to operate the demesne ploughs, and that a shortfall on many estates is compensated for by larger numbers of bordars. There are significant geographical shifts for which explanations are tendered. Manumission had arrived, but perhaps Bailey has demonstrated that it was happening more slowly in Buckinghamshire than in neighbouring counties.

A straightforward account of a watching brief and selected excavation at the scheduled site at Castlethorpe is a useful addition to castle studies but begs the question as to whether the level of detail published in multiple hard copy is following the welcome trend of modern/more selective archaeological publishing. The photographs reproduced poorly.

Following on from Castleford the reader is again confronted with a well written documentary based paper - on the subject of "Bastardy". This is readable research, but the sample size is perhaps too arbitrary and too small, and there are a few assumptions which would better not have been made. However, the author has identified several factors influencing the number of bastards and the manner in which society viewed mother and child. One quibble arising concerns the assumption that the deaths of both babes born base or legitimate that were not registered, effectively cancel each other out - some single mothers may not have had the same access to quality food and shelter, and this might be expected to have some effects on the proportion of live births or the viability of the new-born. This does not detract from the paper as a whole, which is a welcome contrast to the more tedious archaeological papers. It shows late 17th and early 18th century mothers were less automatically reliant upon "the state" than appears to be the case today, though the prejudices appear to be remarkably similar.

With the rescue of the hoards at Chalfont St Peter, the first question is how much further evidence could have been achieved had the find spot been archaeologically excavated from the moment its significance was surmised. Although the finder and landowner were generous it cannot be good that the hoard has been dispersed, some to private individuals; in the case of the latter one fears that their provenance will soon be lost, and only a paper record will survive.

The paper on Elmodesham house was an interesting analysis of a property, its decoration and its owners, together with insights into middle class education and social aspirations of the day, but once again was let down badly by some of the illustrations. It was good to see the museum contribution and a number of useful notes. The notes on the Society could be emulated by other journals. Indeed, it is devoutly hoped that, with the changes for the worse in Buckinghamshire's local authority archaeology and the loss of its County Archaeologist, that this, one of the better county journals, not only survives but flourishes.

Evelyn Baker

Index

NOTE: References in italics denote illustrations.

Notes for Contributors

1. The submitted article should follow the format of *South Midlands Archaeology*. That is:

name of the County followed by
name of the organisation (if applicable) followed by
name of the writer or compiler followed by
body of the article with suitable headings and sub-headings.

2. If the article consists of many separate site reports, each site should be reported as follows:

name of the site followed by
grid reference followed by
name of the person who wrote the site report followed by
individual site report with suitable headings and sub-headings.

3. One purpose of *SMA* is to act as a record of the work carried out in the area; this does not mean that it need be dull. Contributors are asked to be as interesting as possible for the many members of CBA South Midlands who are not archaeologists but who have a lively interest in the past.

4. If, during an investigation, nothing was found, don't be afraid to say so in simple terms.

5. When the article is submitted please ensure that all text (including captions) and pictures are included and clearly labelled.

6. The preferred method for receiving text is as a stripped Ascii file on a 3.5" IBM format disk; word-processors will invariably have a method of creating an Ascii file, sometimes called a text file; the relevant manual will have details. Text may be sent by email to bhorne@globalnet.co.uk. If you are unable to comply with the above please contact the Editor. (Barry Horne - 01525 221219 eve, 01908 652301 day or at the above email address)

7. Pictures and diagrams should be of the highest possible quality; the printed version can be no better than that submitted. Illustrations which are supplied ready to use should be no more than 173mm x 255mm.

8. Proofs will not be sent to contributors.

BJH
8th Sept 1998