

BINFELD. (BR)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

PARK FARM, BINFELD

SU 855705

SEPTEMBER 1989.

## BINFIELD PARK FARM

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

An archaeological assessment of the site was undertaken in June/July 1989 by the Oxford Archaeological Unit on behalf of Bryant Homes and Beazer Homes to provide information for an application site for residential development, hotel, golf course and distribution road.

The application site occupies approximately 85 ha and comprises deposits of London clay and Plateau Gravel. Topographically the site is gently undulating with land-use including areas of arable, pasture and woodland.

#### Archaeological Background

The majority of the non-wooded parts of the application site have been fieldwalked as part of the East Berkshire Archaeological Survey. Three concentrations of artefacts indicated that at least three prehistoric activity centres A-C (Fig 1) existed in the north-western part of the application area. Sherds of Roman pottery from D and E hinted at the possibility of a small Roman site existing in the area.

Aerial photographs indicated the possibility of an enclosure (F) in the south-western corner of the application area.

#### Strategy

The assessment was carried out by a combination of shovel-test sampling and machine cut trenches.

The shovel-test sampling involved 30cm square holes excavated by hand in rows 10m apart and spaced every 10m. The rows were staggered. The modern ploughsoil was excavated and then sieved using a 1cm mesh.

The trenches were excavated by 360° excavator using a 6 foot ditching bucket. Hand excavation of features was carried out to establish their type, condition and date range.

#### Soils

The topsoil and modern ploughsoils were a clay loam containing c.5% flint pebbles. They were c.20-25cms thick, and overlay London clay. Weathering of the upper part of the clay had occurred on the slightly higher ground. The area around C (Fig - 1) had extensive patches of flint pebbles in the top of the clay.

The north end of Trench 101 contained deposits of hillwash up to 23cm. This was the only colluvial deposit found within the assessment area.

## Results

Field Boundaries - Trenches 12-14, 47, 49, 53, 56, 69 (Fig.1)

Evidence of an earlier field system was indicated by the presence of several boundary/drainage ditches mainly in the eastern part of the assessment area. The dark (in comparison with the Roman and prehistoric ) fills and the presence of brick and tile indicate a medieval or post-medieval date for this earlier system.

Relic stream course - Trenches 37-39

An old course of the river was found in the north end of Trench 38. Overlying this in Trench 38 and seen in other trenches extending to the line of the "drain" (marked on OS map running NW-SE across the field) was a layer of gravel and clay loam containing post-medieval brick and tile. This is interpreted as a dump of material to raise the level of the lower-lying area bordering the river.

Prehistoric activity - Trenches 1,2 23-25 (Fig 2).

Approximately mid-way along Trench 1, the bottom of two small pits were located. Pit 1/3 was c.20cm in diameter and 5cm deep. Pit 1/4 was oval in shape, 16-20cm across with again only the bottom 5cm having survived recent ploughing. The western end of Trench 2 contained another small pit c.25cm in diameter and 16cm deep. The fill of the two pits in Trench 1 was made up of 50-70 % burnt flint fragments while the pit in Trench 2 contained occasional pieces of burnt flint and moderate amounts of charcoal flecks. The burnt flint is indicative of use in the prehistoric period.

Additional trenches 23-25 were excavated to establish the extent of this archaeological activity. No features were located in these trenches.

Recent Activity - Area F - Trenches 5-8

The enclosure-like feature seen on the aerial photographs was located in Trenches 5 and 7. A ditch-like disturbance 12m from the east end of Trench 5 had been machine dug and backfilled mechanically. A layer of heavily disturbed clay and clay loam extended westwards for c.30m into Trench 7. The disturbed layer contained post-medieval tile and the activity in this area must be modern.

The shovel-test sampling produced 37 fragments of medieval or post-medieval tile and brick and 6 small sherds of post-medieval pottery. These are consistent with manuring of fields in these periods. In addition 2 flint flakes and 24 pieces of burnt flint were found. See Fig.II for a plot of the results of sampling.

Roman Occupation. Area E. Trenches 34-37, 53-56 (Fig 3).

Two parallel Roman ditches were discovered in Trench 53. These ditches were c.15m apart and orientated NE-SW. The northern ditch was further located in Trench 34. These ditches were c.1.30m wide at the top and 60-70cm deep. Both ditches contained quantities of 1st-2nd century AD pottery.

Additional features were encountered in this area. South of the Roman ditch in Trench 34 was a shallow post hole while two pits were found in Trench 36. These pits (one cutting the other) contained scorched material and a small quantity of 1st-2nd century AD pottery. One pit was 70cm in diameter and survived to a depth of 25cm while the other (later) was smaller at 40cm in diameter and 10cm deep. A possible pit was excavated in Trench 35. Two pieces of triangular loomweight were recovered from features in this area.

This area of Roman activity, in the form of features, did not appear to extend into Trenches 37, 54-56.

Evidence of land clearance in the form of scorched flint and gravel in the top of the subsoil was apparent in Trench 54. It may or may not have been associated with the Roman activity.

The shovel-test sampling produced 20 fragments of medieval or post-medieval tile and brick and 1 medieval sherd. These are consistent with manuring of fields in these periods. The two pieces of burnt flint recovered may have been associated with the land clearance. (See fig 10 for plot)

Undated Archaeological Features - Trenches 44, 52, 68 (Fig 4).

A possible post hole was excavated in Trench 44. It was oval in shape (43x33cm) and 15cm deep. An area of root disturbance was found at the east end of the trench and the excavated feature may have been the result of root penetration.

Trench 52 contained two features which again may have been the result of root penetration and land clearance. An oval feature (52/3) 70cm long and 14cm deep lay partly under the side of the trench. It had sides of 50-60° and an irregular bottom. The fill contained scorched earth and large amounts of charcoal. 80cm to the south was a small circular patch of charcoal staining 17cms in diameter extending 6cm into the top of the clay subsoil.

In the extreme west end of Trench 68 was a pit. It was only discernible from the surrounding clay subsoil by the large quantity of burnt flint fragments (25% of the fill). The edges were near vertical and it had a flint bottom. It lay partly under the side of the trench, and was c.60cm long and 8cm deep.

Prehistoric Area A Trenches 90, 95, 100.

No archaeological features were identified in the machine-cut trenches.

The shovel test sampling produced 2 flint flakes and 7 fragments of burnt flint from the 60 sample holes. In addition there were 14 pieces of tile and brick, 3 sherds of Post Medieval pottery, 1 sherd of medieval date, 1 fragment of glass and 1 piece of bone (recent from the condition). For a plot of these finds see Fig 5. The topsoil depth varied from 8-20cm.

Prehistoric Area B

Again no archaeological features were found in the trenches excavated in this area.

The shovel-test sampling produced 5 flints and 20 fragments of burnt flint from the 62 test pits. In addition there were 11 fragments of tile and brick, 1 post-medieval sherd and 1 glass fragment. See Fig 6 for a plot of the results. The topsoil thickness varied from 12-24cm.

Area I

This sample area was designed to test recovery rates in an area away from the concentrations of flintwork found by fieldwalking in Areas A, B and C. The shovel-test sampling produced 4 flints and 3 pieces of burnt flint for the prehistoric period while 19 fragments of tile and brick result from field manuring in the medieval and post-medieval periods. The top soil thickness varied between 17 to 24cm.(Fig 7).

Prehistoric Area C -Trenches 64-66 (Fig 4)

One archaeological feature was found in this area. Within trench 64 was the bottom (3cm deep) of a small pit or post hole. Oval in shape (18 X 36cm) it had been disturbed by a plough furrow.

The shovel-test sampling from 62 test pits produced 2 flint flakes and 8 pieces of burnt flint. The proximity to Park Farm may account for the high amount of tile and brick recovered - 76 pieces. In addition 2 post-medieval sherds and 3 fragments of clay pigeon were recovered. The topsoil depth varied from 17-25 cm.

#### Area D (Fig. 4)

Part of a small pit was found in Trench 76. The excavated part was 98cm long and 24cm deep. The fill was of sandy clay loam with frequent charcoal flecks.

The shovel-test sampling designed to investigate the presence of 2 Roman sherds in the material recovered from fieldwalking failed to recover any additional material from this period. The results of the sampling are: tile and brick 37, post-medieval pottery 11, medieval pottery 3, flint 3, burnt flint 10, glass 5, stopper for glass bottle 1. See Fig.9 for plot of the results. The topsoil depth varied from 17-25cm.

#### Area H

The one hectare area of shovel-test pitting produced 80 tile and brick fragments. There was also 1 sherd of medieval date and 2 of post-medieval date along with 2 pieces of post-medieval glass, a nail of uncertain date and 3 fragments of clay pigeon. Prehistoric activity was indicated by the presence of a flint flake, 2 flint chips and 11 pieces of burnt flint. The burnt flint however may have been associated with a period of land clearance. See Fig 12 for plot.

#### Other topsoil finds

One Roman sherd was recovered from the topsoil of Trench 35 in Area E while one post-medieval sherd was found in Trench 52. Prehistoric flintwork was recovered from Trench 60 (large flake), 63 (retouched flake and a core), 69 (flake), 87 (large flake), 88 (scraper) and Trench 95 (retouched blade). The topsoil of Trench 88 contained lumps of chalk and the flint may have been associated with the source of the chalk (a post-prehistoric import).

#### Woodland

The woods were examined for traces of possible earthworks. There were none present.

#### Summary

- 1) A small area of Roman activity of the 1st 2nd century AD exists in Area E.
- 2) The remains of a seemingly small scale prehistoric activity barely survive in the area of Trenches 1 and 2.
- 3) The feature seen on the aerial photographs at F is modern.
- 4) Archaeological features were not found to accompany the results of the field walking in Areas A and B.

5) The remains of one small pit was found in Area C, where fieldwalking indicated a site of prehistoric activity.

6) One undated pit was located in Area D where fieldwalking recovered two sherds of Roman pottery.

7) Elements of a medieval and post-medieval field system were located in the eastern part of the assessment area.

8) Low density archaeological activity across the large areas of the assessment site are indicated by isolated pits and finds of prehistoric flintwork.

9) The shovel-test sampling does not conclusively confirm fieldwalking results. If the findings of the sampling in Areas A, B and C are taken to confirm prehistoric activity then other prehistoric activity can be said to have occurred in Areas F, I and D.

J Moore  
OAU  
August 1989.

## Appendix 1. Features

Trench	Type	shape	Profile	Dia	Depth	Date
1/3	pit	oval	shallow	0.23	0.05	?preh.
1/4	pit	oval	shallow	0.11	0.05	?preh.
2/3	pit	round	steep	0.25	0.16	?preh.
5/4	ditch	linear		5.50		Modern
7	disturbance			25m	0.14	Modern
12/3	ditch	linear	V	5.00	0.45	Med/PM
13/3	ditch	linear	shallow	2.80	0.27	Med/PM
14/3	ditch	linear	flat btm.	5.00	0.55	Med/PM
34/3	ph	round	shallow	0.30	0.06	Roman
34/4	ditch	linear	V	1.24	0.56	Roman
35/3	?pit	round	flat btm.	2.10	0.18	Roman
36/4	pit	round	V	0.72	0.25	Roman
36/5	pit	round	V	0.38	0.10	Roman
37	drain	linear				Modern
38	stream	linear				Med/PM
44/3	?ph/pit	oval	steep	0.43	0.15	-
47	ditch	linear	flat btm.	1.00	0.18	Med/PM
48	silage clamp					Modern
49	ditch	linear	flat btm.	2.00	0.43	Med/PM
52/3	?pit	oval	shallow	0.70	0.14	-
52/4	?pit	round	shallow	0.17	0.06	-
53/3	ditch	linear	-	0.85		Roman
53/4	ditch	linear	V	1.30	0.60	Roman
53/6	ditch	linear	-	1.20	-	Med/PM
56/3	ditch	linear	flat btm.	2.00	0.26	Med/PM
64/3	ph/pit	oval	shallow	0.36	0.03	?preh.
68/3	pit	round	shallow	0.80	0.08	?preh.
69/3	ditch	linear	-	3.00	-	Med/PM
76/3	pit	round	steep	0.98	0.24	-



Appendix 2. Topsoil Finds

Trench	Material	Type	Amount	Date
34	ceramic	pottery	1	Roman
42	Flint	burnt	3	-
52	ceramic	pottery	1	Post-Med
60	flint	flake	1	?Nep/EBA
63	flint	core	1	-
63	flint	retouched flake	1	-
69	flint	flake	1	?Neo/EBA
87	flint	flake	1	?Neo/EBA
88	flint	scraper	1	?Neo/EBA
95	flint	retouched blade	1	?Neo/EBA

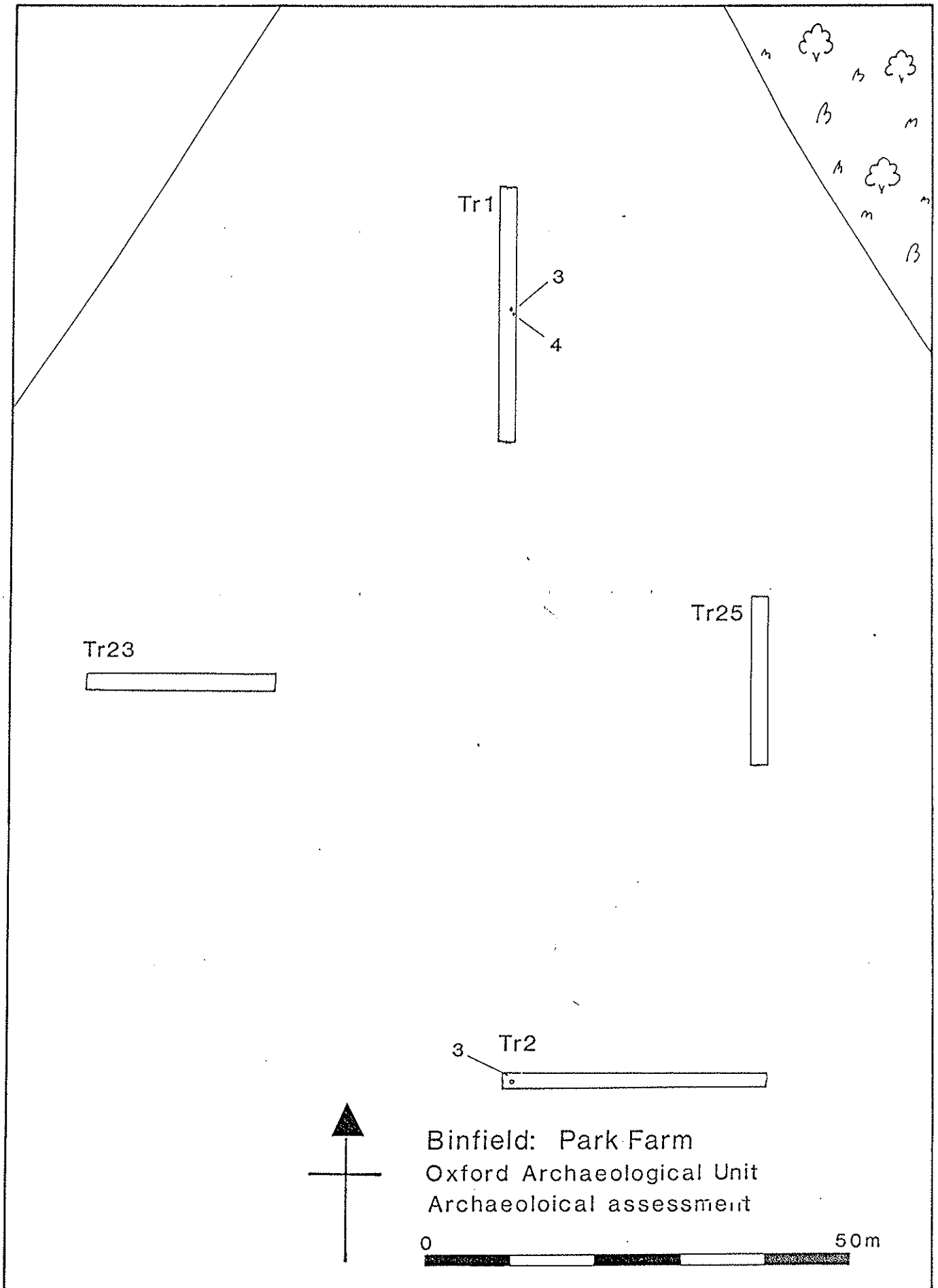


Figure 2

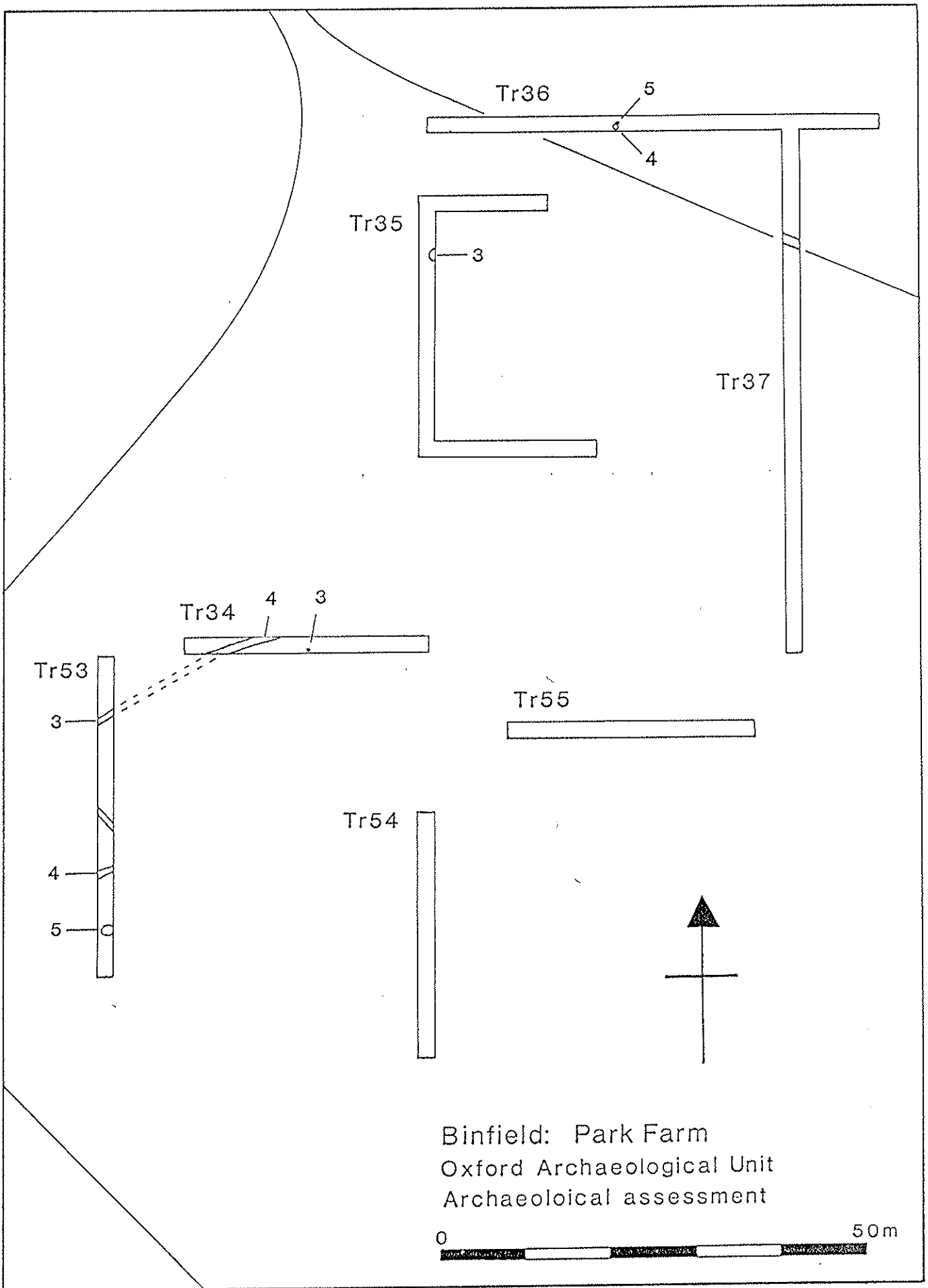


Figure 3

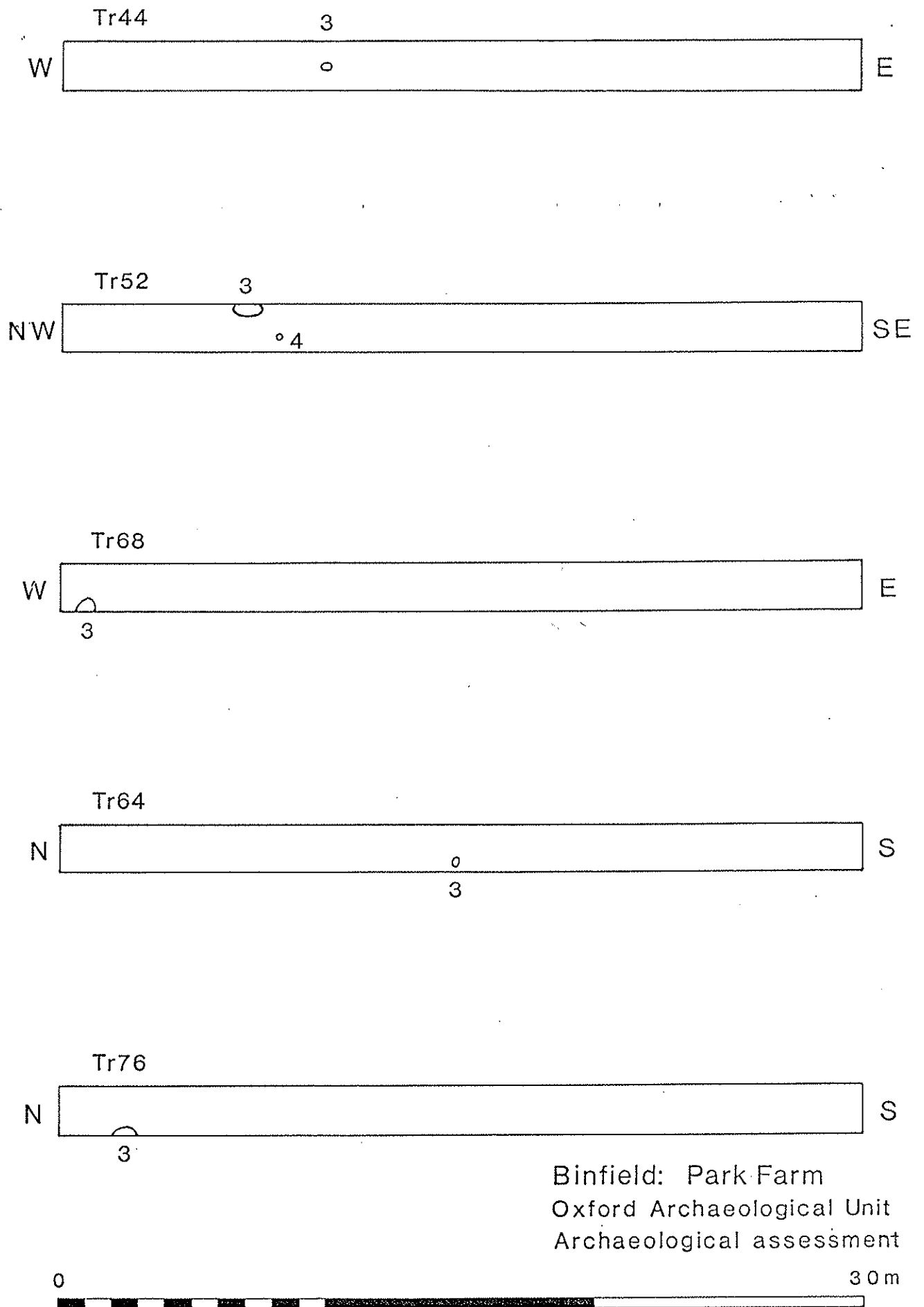
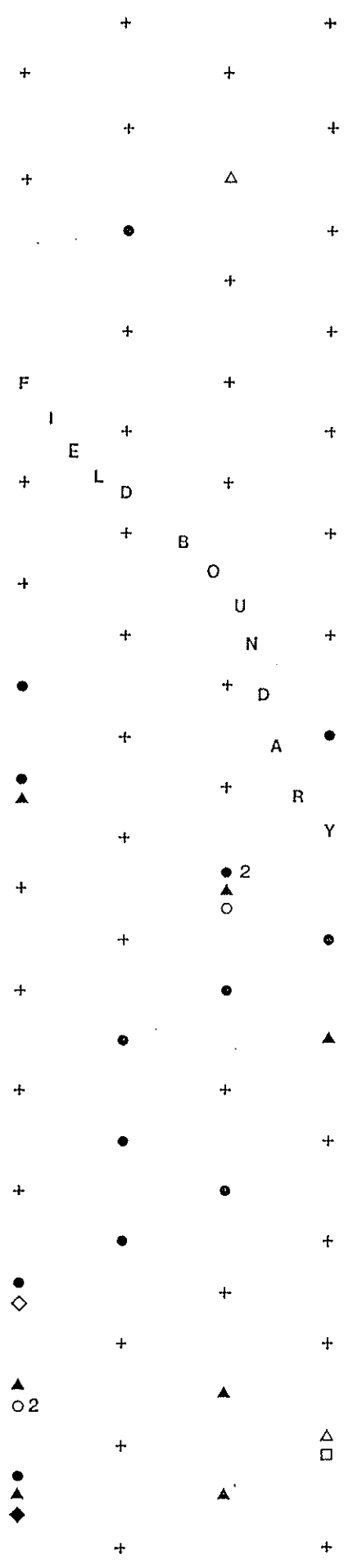


fig.4

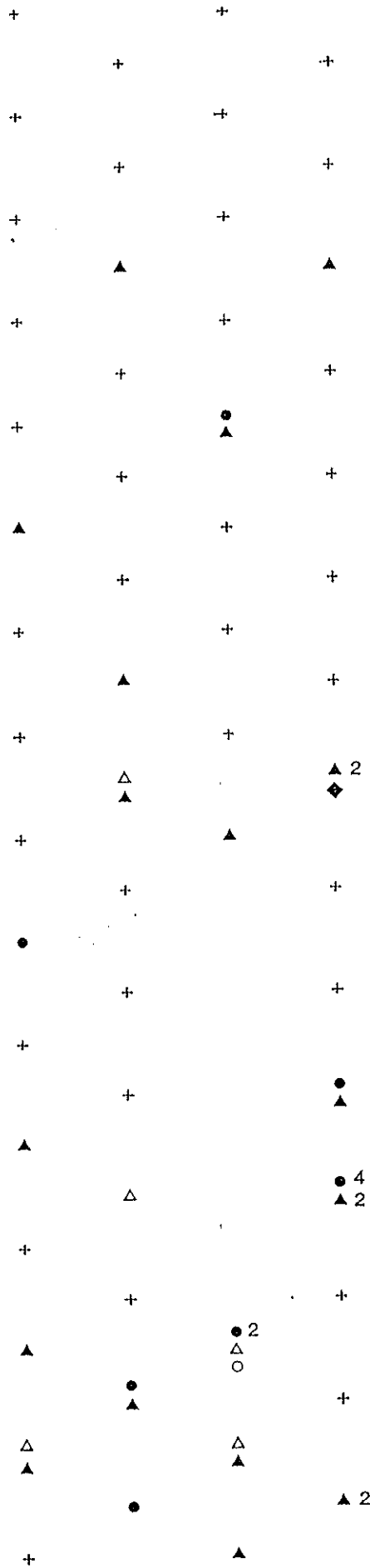


- Tile, Brick
- Pottery-post medieval
- ◇ Pottery-medieval
- △ Flint
- ▲ Burnt flint
- ◆ Glass
- \* Miscellaneous
- Bone
- + No finds

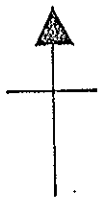


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fig.5

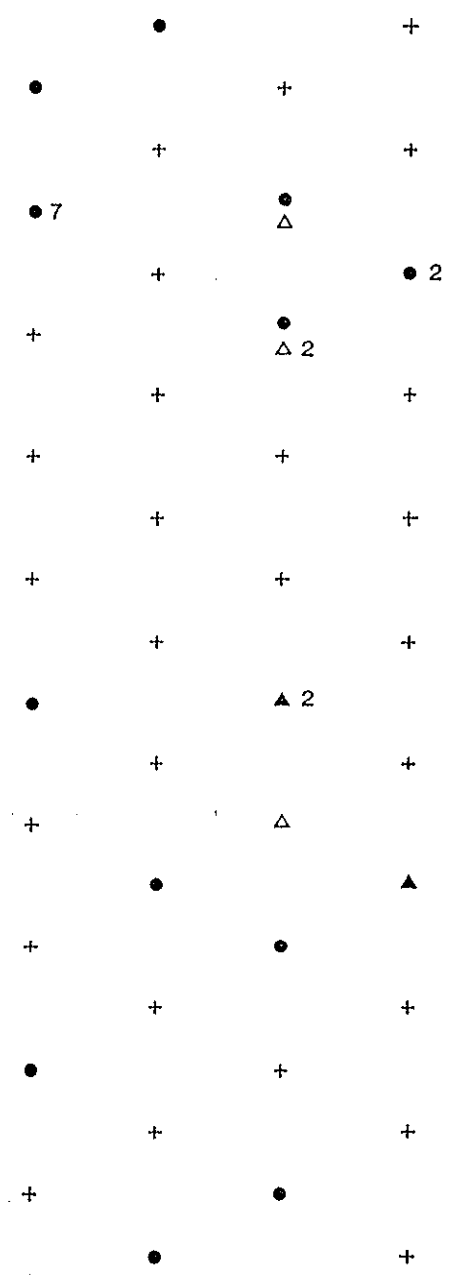


Area B

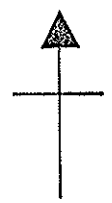


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fig.6

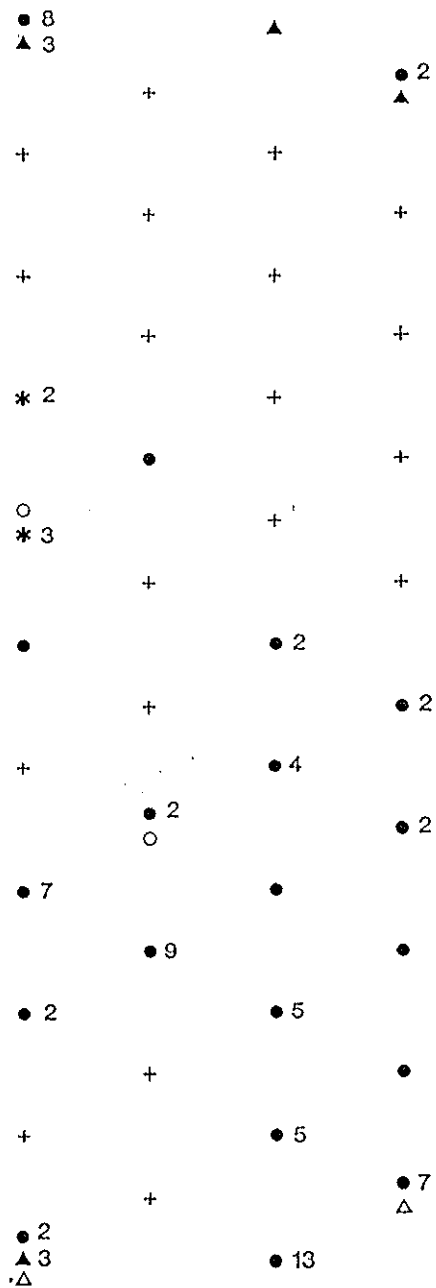


Area I



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fig.7



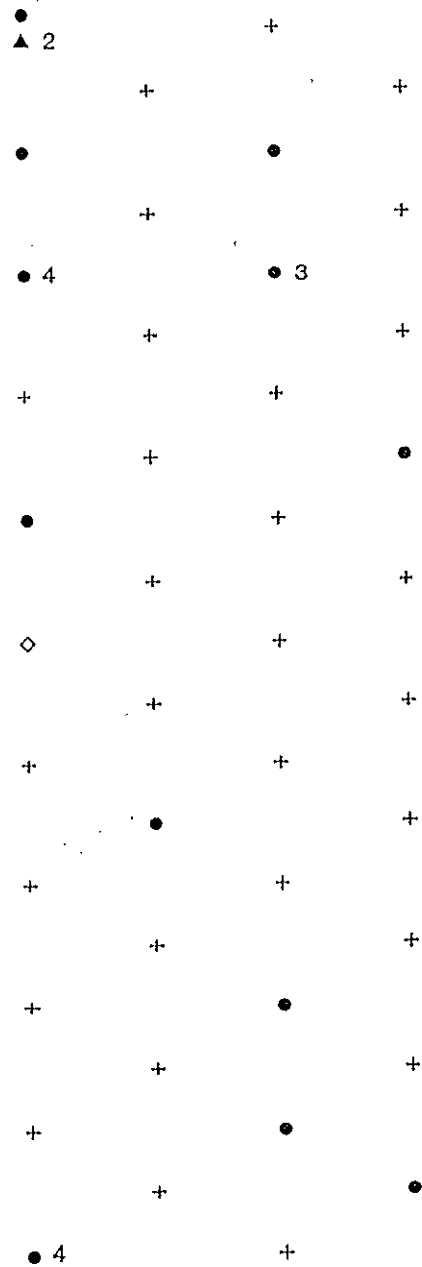
Area C



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fig.8



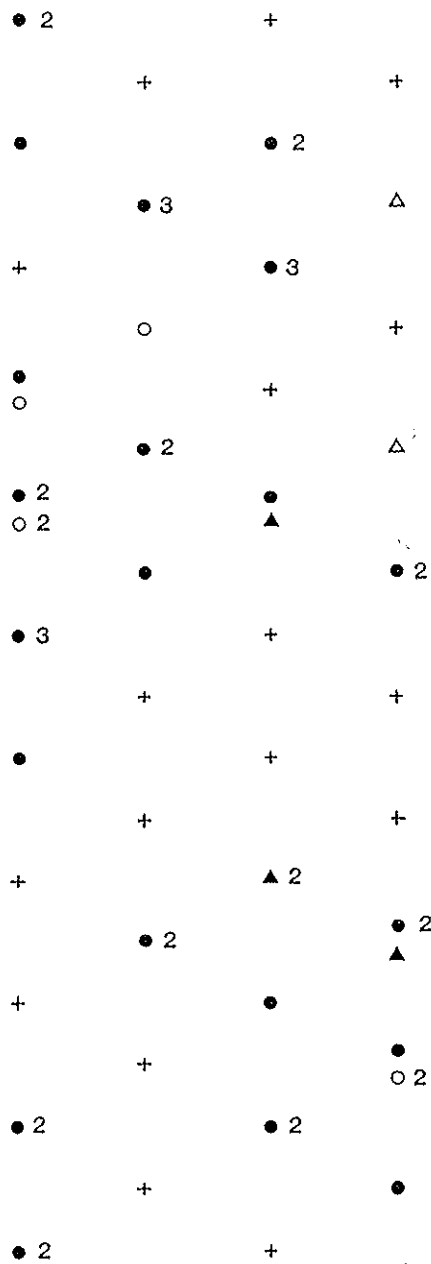


Area E



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fig.10

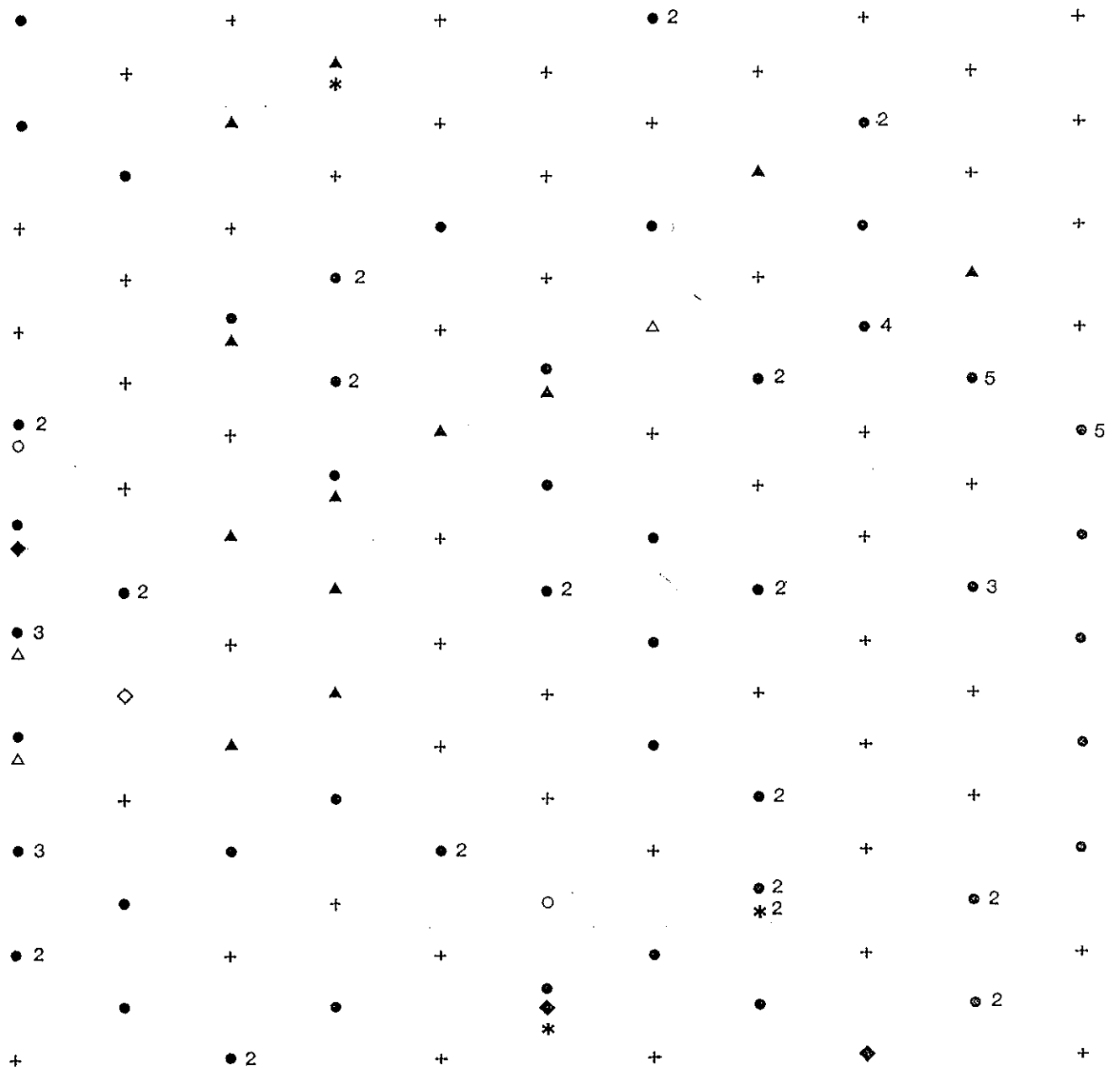


Area F



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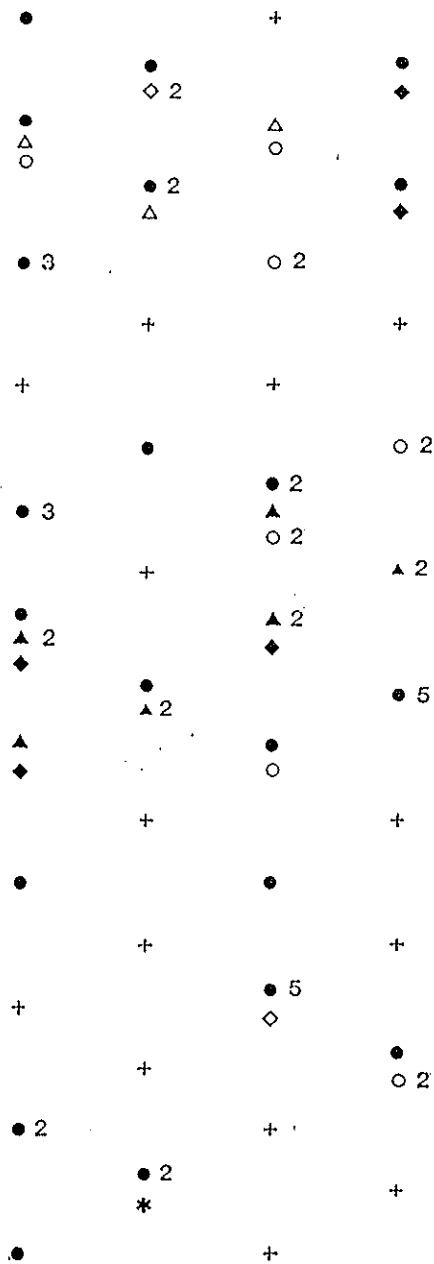
fig.11



Area H

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fig.12



Area D



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fig.9

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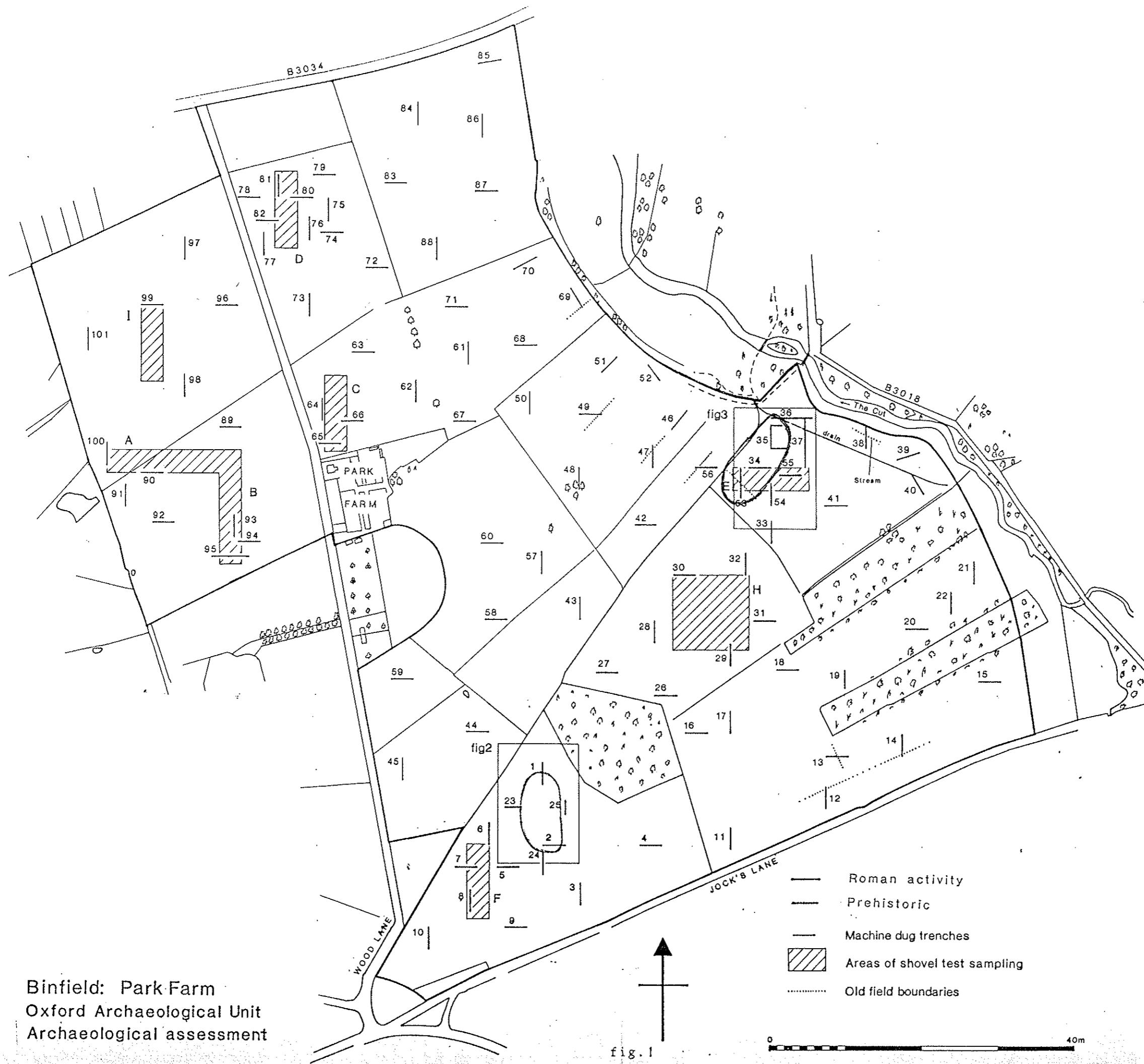


fig. 1

- Roman activity
- - - Prehistoric
- Machine dug trenches
- ▨ Areas of shovel test sampling
- ..... Old field boundaries

0 40m