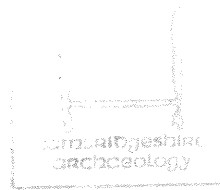


FULBOURN OFFICE COPY
Do NOT REMOVE No 1



ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD OFFICE
FULBOURN COMMUNITY CENTRE
HALLS GAP FULBOURN
CAMBRIDGE CB1 5HD Tel: 881614
(Fax 881678)

OFFICE COPY.

**Bluntisham
Barleycroft Farm 1988**

ARC Gravel Extraction Project,
Barleycroft Farm, Bluntisham

Archaeological interest in the area focused on a number of cropmarks visible from air photographs at TL3673. This area was stripped in preparation for gravel working by ARC in 1985 and a series of archaeological features were noted in the brief time before they were obliterated by the extraction process. Sensible interpretation therefore was not possible but finds show that activity from the Neolithic, Bronze Age, and Roman times occurred, and large blocks of stone, a mortar wall, and tile suggest the presence of a Roman villa in the 3rd - 4th centuries A.D.. Across the Ouse at TL3772 Bronze Age barrows have been found on gravel islands during field survey, whilst the earliest finds in the area were two Palaeolithic hand axes found on the graded gravel heaps of the workings, in 1985.

Thus there is evidence for considerable human activity in the area over a long period of time.

In April 1988 a small study was conducted of the fields projected for development from the 1st May 1988. These fields lie at TL359728 and cropmarks have not been detected on air photographs. Presently they are covered by a patchy growth of rape, grass and kale. This, and the fact that the soil has been weathered to a uniform fine till, makes poor visibility for field walking. No soil marks were apparent, the surface being a homogeneous dull brown alluvial deposit, and the only artifact noted was a flint core found during field walking at a 10m interval. However a dip and a rise orientated north - south could be observed in the northern-most field. Test pits dug down to the sand and gravel revealed 35 - 60 cm of alluvium overlying a silty sand with rust-coloured mottling in it. Dr. Charlie French identified this as a buried soil that developed in the silts and sands brought down by colluvial action. This soil is 30 - 35 cm thick and seems to be calcareous giving good preservation of molluscs. It is waterlogged as the soil lies partly beneath the watertable, and rests on sand and gravel deposits which can continue up to 3m in depth.

The lack of features or finds in the immediate development area normally would suggest that little human occupation occurred in the past. However, the thickness of the alluvium deposited since Roman times could easily mask

any earlier archaeological remains. At Haddenham, 2 miles away, excavations beneath a similar mantle of alluvium revealed a complex of Iron Age round houses and various other episodes of occupation. Only very major features showed through the alluvium and were spotted on air photographs, such as large enclosure banks and ditches. Thus the fields at Bluntisham may contain features as yet unapparent, and the depth of ploughing would have been insufficient to disturb and bring to the surface any artifacts from the buried soil. Conditions for preservation of archaeological features, protected by the overburden of alluvium, are therefore good. The waterlogging of the old soil would give excellent preservation to many types of artifact, and the non-acidic nature of the water means that complementary evidence on the ancient environment would be available from an analysis of the molluscs. A full examination of the relict soil is of importance in Dr. French's study programme of prehistoric land surfaces (proposed for summer 1988), whilst the proximity of these fields to so many archaeological finds just north of them, shows that the ancient occupants were living on the slightly higher ground of the fen edge, but would undoubtedly have utilised the whole area in question for farming and subsistence activities.

It is therefore important that an archaeologist is present during the stripping process to be on hand should any features come to light. Presumably the present high water table will be a problem to the gravel extraction and it would be interesting to know how the company plans to deal with it. If it involves digging a trench and deep pit to bring in a pump in advance of the main programme of work, then it would be very helpful at the same time to put in an exploratory trench for archaeological purposes, some 60cm deep to remove the alluvium and reveal the buried soil. Likewise when the site is to be stripped of topsoil it would be most helpful to have discussions on site with an archaeologist to determine optimum depths, in order to reveal the buried soil and archaeological features without unnecessary destruction before they have been recorded.

26th April 1988

TIM MALIM

HUNTINGDON DISTRICT

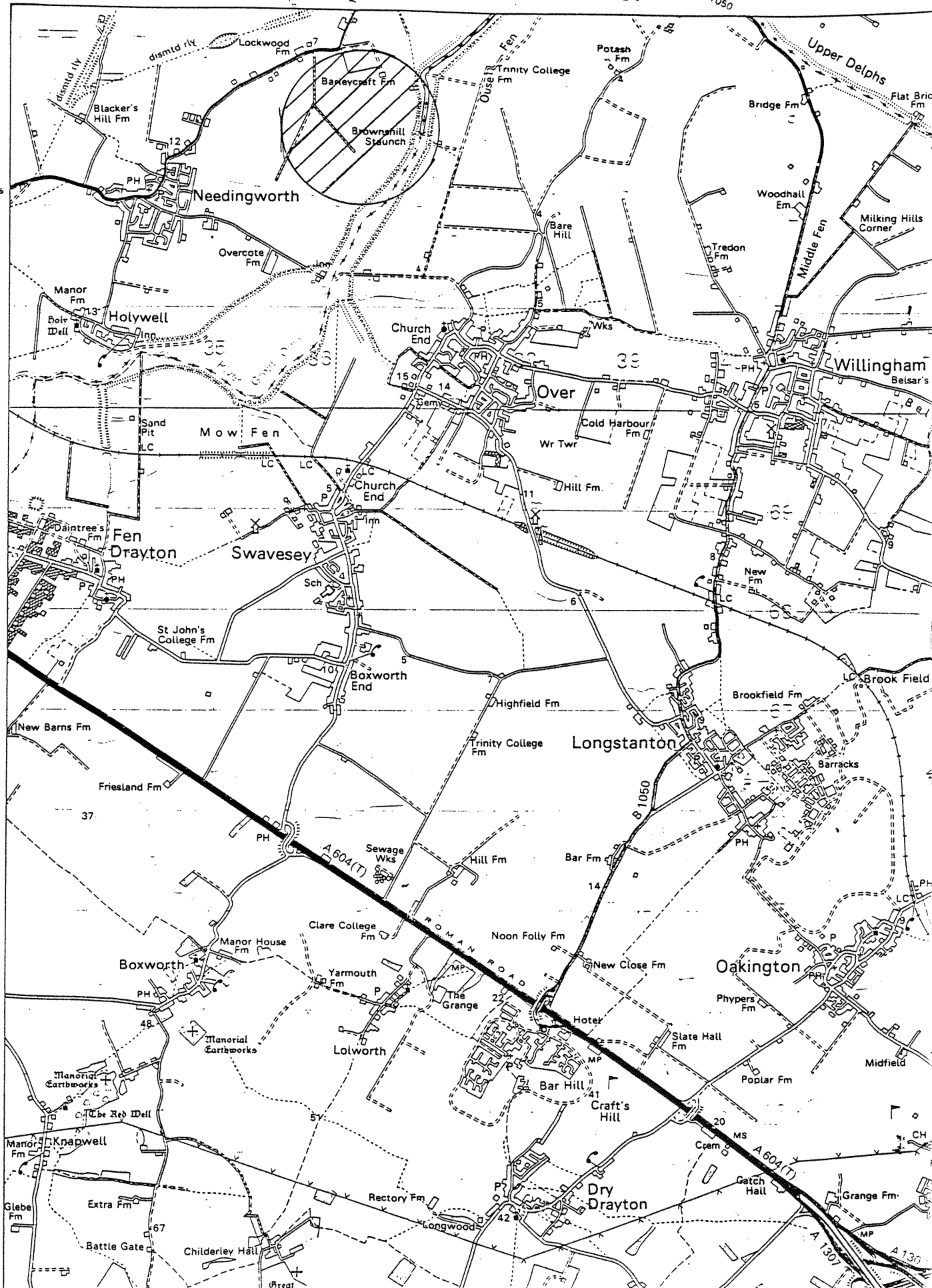
HEIGHTS IN METRES

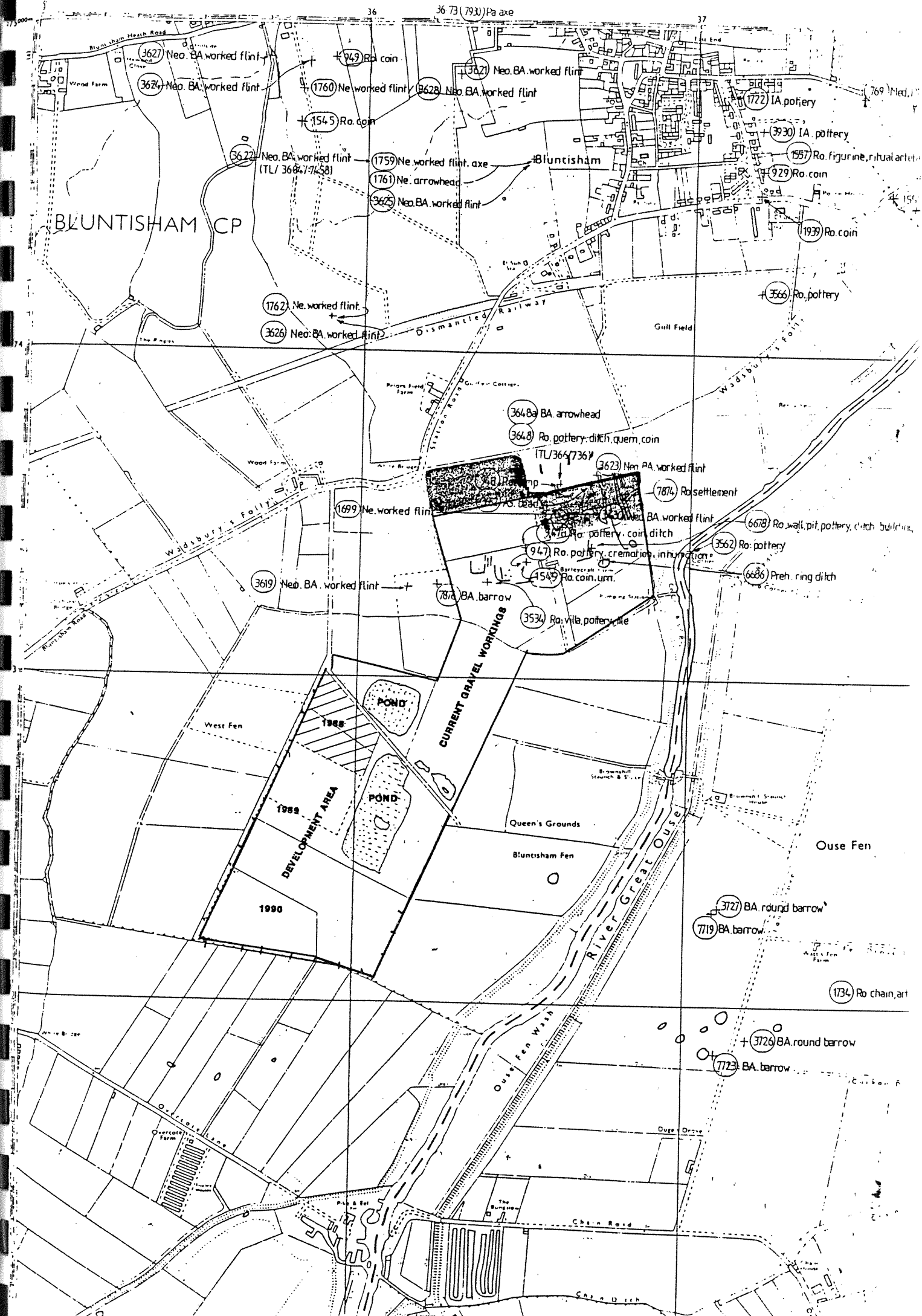
Siretham
16 km or 10 miles
A 1123

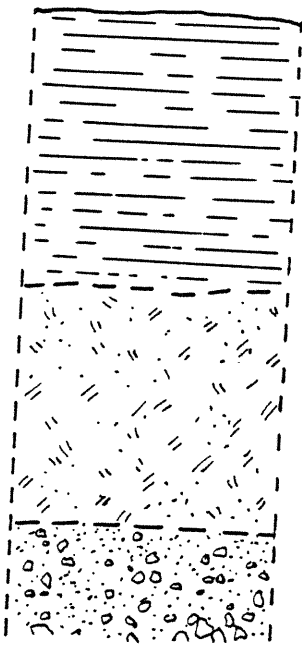
B 1050

Lat
52° 20' N
Huntingdon
10 km or 6 miles
A 1123

Huntingdon
11 km or 6 miles
A 604(T)



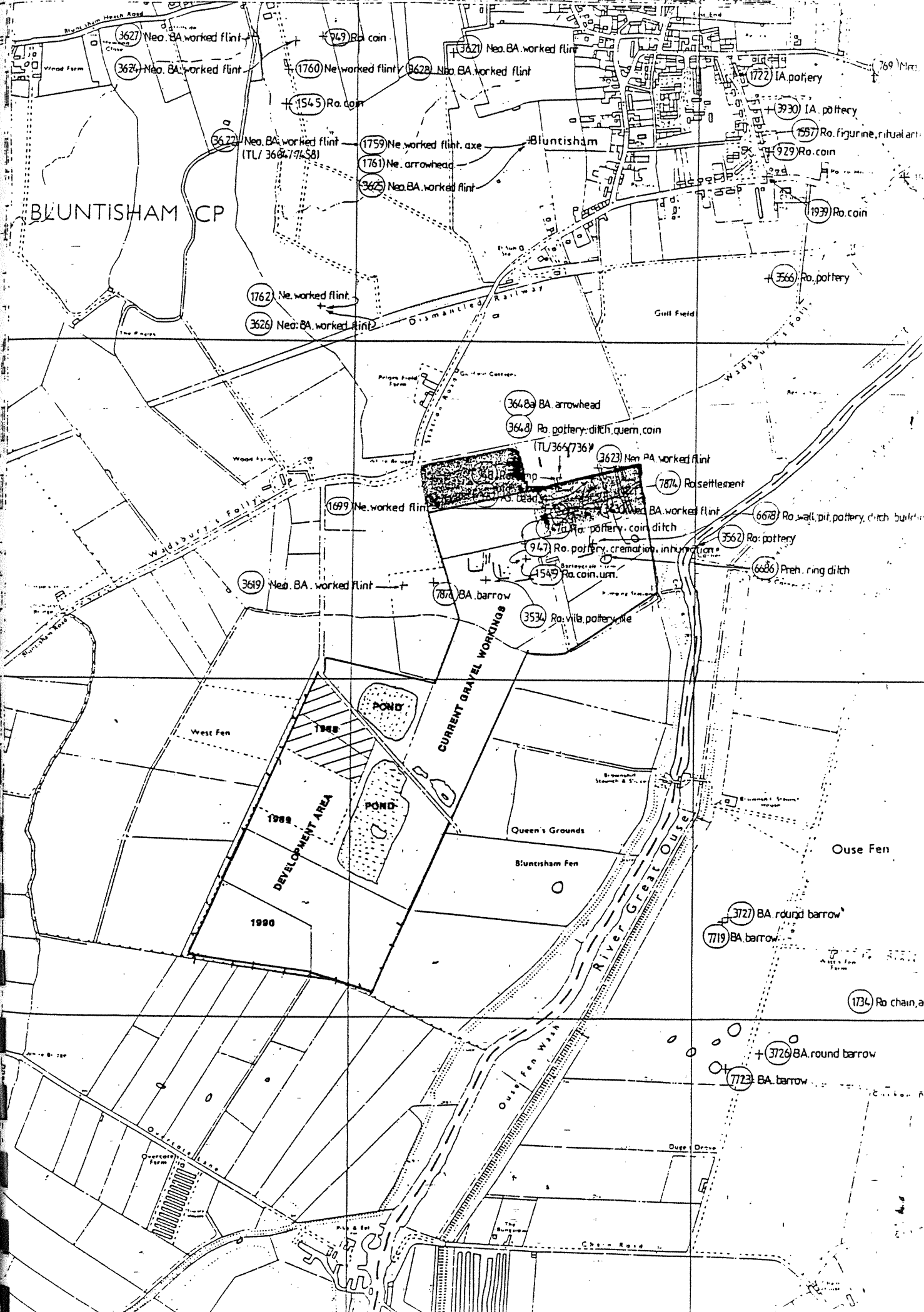




ALLUVIUM
35 - 60 cm

**COLLUVIAL
SILTY SAND
BURIED SOIL**
30 - 35 cm

**SAND AND
GRAVEL**



BLUNTISHAM CP

Bluntisham

CURRENT GRAVEL WORKINGS

RIVER GREAT OUSE

DEVELOPMENT AREA

Ouse Fen

West Fen

Queen's Grounds

Bluntisham Fen

3727 BA round barrow

7719 BA barrow

1734 Ro chain art

3726 BA round barrow

7723 BA barrow

949 Ba coin

3627 Neo. BA worked flint

3624 Neo. BA worked flint

1760 Ne worked flint

3621 Neo. BA worked flint

1722 IA pottery

3930 IA pottery

1557 Ro. figurine, ritual art

1929 Ro. coin

1939 Ro. coin

3566 Ro. pottery

1762 Ne worked flint

3626 Neo. BA worked flint

3622 Neo. BA worked flint (TL/ 3664/7458)

1759 Ne worked flint axe

1761 Ne. arrowhead

3625 Neo. BA worked flint

3648a BA arrowhead

3648 Ro. pottery: ditch, quern, coin

TL/3664/7367

3623 Ne. PA worked flint

7874 Ro. settlement

3624a worked BA worked flint

3624b Ro. pottery, coin, ditch

6678 Ro. wall, pit, pottery, ditch, building

3562 Ro. pottery

947 Ro. pottery, cremation, inhumation

1549 Ro. coin, urn

6686 Preh. ring ditch

3619 Neo. BA worked flint

787d BA barrow

3534 Ro. villa pottery, tile

1699 Ne worked flint

1988

1989

1990

7719

7723

Quebec Farm

Ouse Drive

Chain Road

Bluntisham Heath Road

The Pines

Priggs Field Farm

Old Farm Cottage

Wood Farm

Wood Farm

Wild Surfs Folly

Surrey New Mill

Bluntisham Station & Stn

Bluntisham Station

Bluntisham Station

Bluntisham Station

Bluntisham Farm

Pole & Fen

Ouse Fen Warden

Ouse Drive