

1. Introduction

In response to a request from C & C Planning Services an archaeological assessment was carried out of Hill Field, near Bowling Green Farm (SU 312952). The purpose of this was to establish, prior to a Planning Enquiry into the suitability of the site for sand extraction, the nature, extent and state of preservation of underlying archaeological deposits.

2. Background

Over the past few years the Oxford Archaeological Unit has carried out field surveys in the area of Bowling Green Farm and Chinham Farm, along the valley of the Frogmore Brook. This has located many Roman remains, notably a large villa and a nearby native Romano-British village. This village stretches from the valley floor north-west of Chinham Farm up onto a ridge of Corallian Sand. This field, immediately east of Hill Field, has recently been severely ploughed. The soil is black with occupation debris and has produced scores of Roman finds, notably coins and brooches, and a bronze spear head dating to about 1000 BC.

This settlement area continues to the east edge of Hill Field. Hill Field itself is at present under grass, therefore archaeological evidence is not visible on the surface. The purpose of the assessment was to see if the Roman settlement continued into Hill Field and if so, to what extent.

3. Method of Sampling

In view of the limited time available and the need for results to be provided before Easter 1987, it was decided to cut a series of machine-dug

trenches along the crest and flanks of the ridge. The sample taken was smaller than is usual in this type of exercise (a 2% sample is normal) but it was felt that useful results could be obtained in view of the likely nature of the deposits.

Approximately 400m. of trenches, 1.5m. wide, were cut in the east part of Hill Field. These were cleaned up and archaeological features were plotted and photographed. A limited number of features were sectioned in order to establish their character and obtain dating material.

4. Results

Dense Roman settlement was located over about 1.6 ha on the eastern side of Hill Field (see Plan 1). These lay beneath a ploughsoil 0.20 ³to 0.35m. deep. The features were cut into brashy Corallian limestone and sand. On the lower part of the northern slope of the ridge hill wash had accumulated to a depth of 0.40m. as a result of the erosion of ploughsoil (See Plan 2).

The approximate limit of the Roman occupation lay about 100/120m. west of the eastern boundary of Hill Field. In the adjacent property to the east this settlement has been traced for a further 400m.

There was only a limited amount of archaeology to the south of the ridge. Evidence showed that the occupation was more intense on the north slope down to the Frogmore Brook, though this did not continue all the way down the slope, which was originally steeper. The clay soils near the base of the slope suggest that the ground here was boggy.

All the trenches on the crown and upper flanks of the ridge produced archaeological features. The most interesting remains were found in the north end of Trench 6, the centre of Trench 3 and Trench 5, (See Plan 3).

In Trench 3 a stone wall foundation ran north-south and abutted a cobbled surface. To the north in Trench 6 the cobbled surface was more worn and seemed to form a road surface with a wheel rut running east-west worn into it. To the south in Trench 5 a feature cut through the cobbles may be a robber trench where the wall in Trench 3 had been quarried out. Here the cobbled surface lay over an earlier Roman hearth. In places a layer of occupation material lay on the cobbled surface containing large quantities of good quality pottery, mostly of the 3-4th centuries AD.

Further north in Trench 6-D there was an oven covered in charcoal and surrounded by burnt sand.

To the south in Trench 1 was another feature of particular interest. This consisted of two parallel rows of limestone scorched by burning and was probably a corn-drying oven. To the west was a further stone wall foundation and robber trenches.

Most trenches produced evidence of pits, gullies, and ditches. In Trench 1 several of these were sectioned; ~~and~~ one ditch was 0.75m. deep and contained a thick layer of charcoal.

5. Finds

The distribution of finds reflected the areas of greatest archaeological interest, except for large quantities of Roman pottery in Trenches 6-B, 6-C, and 7 and a relatively large number of coins in 6-C.

A large fragment of a middle Iron Age pot (c. 300 BC) indicated the presence of prehistoric settlement. The pottery recovered was mainly Roman dated from 100-400 AD. Much of it was very good quality, including large fragments of wine jars, Samian bowls from Gaul and locally made pots.

About 35 coins were found, all of copper alloy and dating predominantly to the mid 4th century.

6. Conclusions

Hill Field contains the western extremity of a large Romano-British village, probably overlying an earlier prehistoric settlement. The village may be associated with a nearby Roman villa. About 1.6 ha of the settlement is in the survey area. The site has been damaged by ploughing in the past but extensive ~~remains~~^{traces}, including roadways, ovens and possibly half-timbered building foundation remain. Outside the ^Ssurvey area to the east the site is being extensively damaged by ploughing.

It is only recently that extensive Roman settlement has been identified along the Corallian Ridge on the north side of the Vale of the White Horse. Several years ago this site would have merited Scheduled Ancient Monument

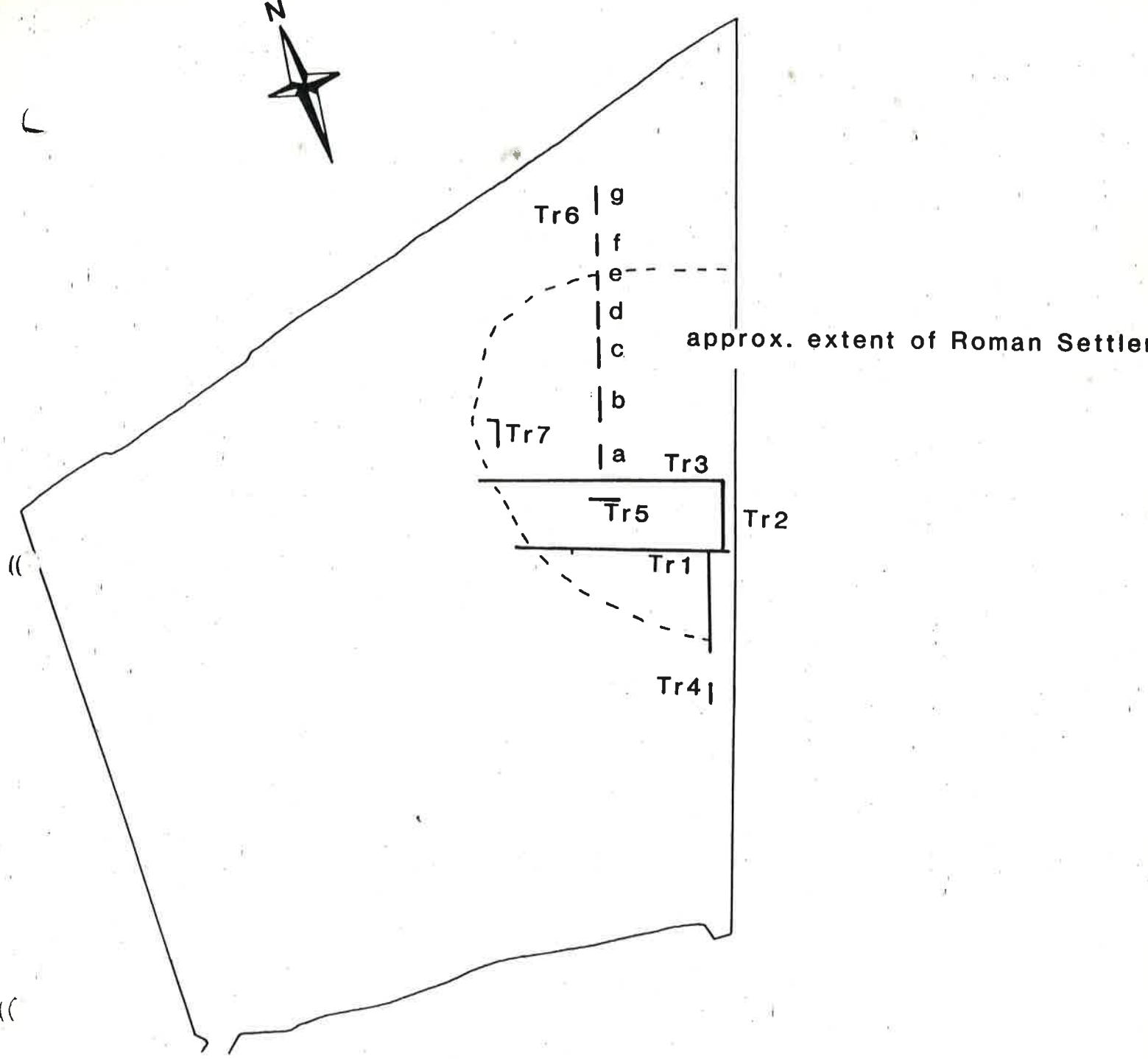
status. In view of the recent damage from agriculture its value for long term preservation is more problematic. However no Roman settlement in the area has ever been properly excavated. This one would certainly merit investigation if sand extraction were to proceed.

Detailed records of the assessment and finds are, for the time being, located with the Oxford Archaeological Unit.

David Miles

Oxford Archaeological Unit

9 April 1987



0 50 100 m

HILL FIELD Plan (1)
Stanford-in-theVale
Nr. FARINGDON. OXON.
Archaeological Assessment
Oxford Archaeological Unit
April 1987 Scale 1:2500

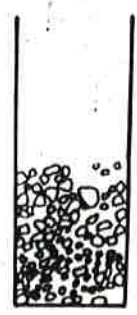
Details of Archaeological features

Plan (3)

Scale 1:100

Indicated in red on Plan (1)

Tr6/a



Cobbled Surface

Tr3



Wall

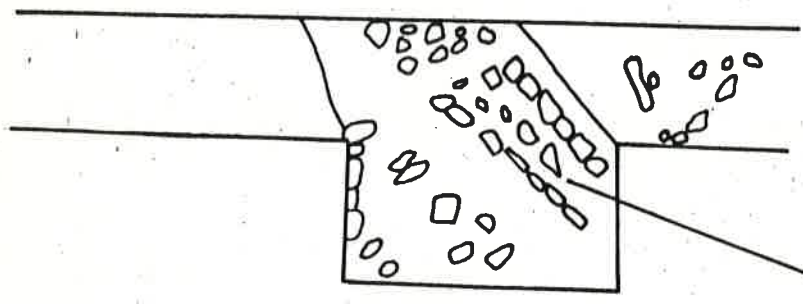
Cobbled Surface

Tr5



Robbed Wall

Tr1



Corndrying Oven