

Oxford  
Archaeological  
Unit

 Annual Report 1981

The Oxford Archaeological Unit is an organisation devoted full-time to the excavation of archaeological sites which are about to be destroyed by modern developments. The Unit carries out excavations in Oxford and Oxfordshire and occasionally on specific sites in neighbouring counties. The Unit works closely with amateur societies in the County.

The Unit welcomes volunteers who can help on its excavations and also assist with the sorting of finds at the Unit's offices. Details of all current Unit projects can be obtained from the Unit's Secretary or by subscribing to the Unit's Newsletter. The Newsletter describes work in progress and gives details of excavations, open days and archaeological talks.

The Unit is independant of Local Government and the University and is a registered Charity. It needs a substantial income each year to carry out its work. Financial contributions however small are always welcome and can be sent to the Treasurer at the address below.

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The front cover shows the Rt.Hon.Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State for the Environment, visiting the Roman cemetery on the Dorchester by-pass with Tom Hassall, the Director of the Unit.

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OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT 1981

- Tom Hassall,  
Director

In spite of the Unit's continued financial insecurity the number of projects undertaken was even greater than in previous years. Recently surveys have not featured largely in the Unit's programme, but this year the Thames Floodplain Survey (No.11) was continued and new projects were begun at Rollright (No. 12) and Harefield, Middlesex (No. 13). George Lambrick's work on the Floodplain, funded by the British Academy has also highlighted the importance of the interrelationship between archaeological sites and sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). A special study of these within the County (No. 8) has been completed by Duncan Brown with a view to maximising the benefits of management agreements. The work at Rollright, also carried out by George Lambrick, was specifically commissioned by the Department of the Environment (DoE) with a view to defining the area of interest around the Rollright Stones, the county's oldest Scheduled Ancient Monument. Although the techniques of this type of survey are familiar to the Unit, work of this sort on a Scheduled Ancient Monument is breaking new ground, since previously the DoE had commissioned non-local agencies to carry out work on local Guardianship or Scheduled sites for instance at Deddington and Northleigh. However a second survey of part of a Scheduled Ancient Monument was also carried out by Brian Durham and Duncan Brown at St George's Tower at Oxford Prison (No. 7). Claire Halpin's survey at Harefield, commissioned by the Greater London Council, was a project about as far afield as the Unit has ever ventured. Extra county excursions by the Unit have up to now been confined to Oxfordshire's neighbouring counties, however given the Unit's financial circumstances we are clearly prepared to work wherever our skills are in demand, provided that staff are available and the logistics can be overcome. Other surveys are discussed under the heading Survey Projects. Attention should be drawn to the vital role of the county's part-time archaeologists in this respect particularly Tim Copeland, around Charlbury (Nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10) and Roger Thomas and Jeff Wallis and other members of the Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society (AAHS) at Barrow Hills, Radley (Nos. 9 and 74).

It is excavation however, rather than surveys which the public mostly associates with the Unit. A total of forty separate sites are listed in the section dealing with Excavation Projects and Observations. Obviously these projects vary enormously in scope from the Unit's flagship project at Claydon Pike, Fairford/Lechlade (No.60) to very small watching briefs often again carried out by part-time helpers such as Geoff Williams of Witney. Just as the size of the site varies so do the periods covered.

Comparatively few sites earlier than the Iron Age have had to be excavated in advance of development in this area, during the Unit's history. However 1981 saw the excavation

of a series of Neolithic sites. At Dorchester (No. 25) the construction of the by-pass has now obliterated a swathe running straight down the middle of the well known cursus including the eastern terminal. Richard Chambers with the help of labour provided through the Manpower Service Commission (MSC) Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) excavated the terminal together with two small henges and Bronze Age features. The site should provide useful radio-carbon dates. Just as interesting however has been the work of Roger Thomas and Jeff Wallis and other members of the AAAHS at Drayton (No. 74). Here constant vigilance of the Curtis gravel pit has rewarded the society with the discovery of the Drayton Cursus sealed beneath alluvium with the Neolithic ground surface undisturbed. This is a major find and an important project for the society to undertake. At both sites Richard Bradley of Reading University and a member of our Committee has provided invaluable advice.

The alluviation which sealed the cursus at Drayton is now seen by Mark Robinson to be a product of increased arable cultivation during the Iron Age. Mark Robinson's work on the problems of alluviation (No. 73) carried out as part of his research into the past environment of the Upper Thames has made use of the evidence of a number of the Unit's excavations and is an exciting spin-off from the Unit's work particularly on Iron Age sites. The largest site of this period currently being undertaken is the Claydon Pike project. The site continues to provide more evidence for the history of this Iron Age and Roman landscape. Phosphate sampling has joined the many techniques employed on this site. The work has been undertaken by Jeff Mees, one of the Oxford University Department for External Studies (OUDES) Archaeology Certificate course students, as part of his dissertation. Another familiar Iron Age site has also been the subject of further excavations this year. The former MG car factory, adjacent to the Ashville Trading Estate excavated by Michael Parrington in 1974-6, is now being developed by Standard Life Assurance who have contributed towards further excavations. The work (No. 14) has been directed by Claire Halpin. Other local societies have also been involved with further Iron Age sites: at Checkendon the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group have completed the work at the Devil's Churchyard, the Didcot and District Historical and Archaeological Society have located a site in Didcot (No. 23) while the AAAHS have continued to work at Thrupp, Radley (No. 74).

The most exotic Romano-British site of the year must undoubtedly be the discovery and trial excavation of an amphitheatre at Frilford (No. 32). This was the work of Richard Hingley as part of his post-graduate research at Southampton University. Work has begun on a large-scale on the Roman area at Claydon Pike where David Miles with the MSC YOP scheme supervised by Simon Palmer with Alan Hardy and Peter Rooke are now uncovering the Roman settlement area (No. 60). Nearby at Rough Ground Farm Lechlade, Tim Allen

with the Oxford University Archaeological Society (OUAS) have been clarifying some outstanding problems related to the villa excavated by Margaret Jones. It is good to see the OUAS in the field again after a rather quiet period. At Dorchester-on-Thames Richard Chambers has supervised the AAHS and the OUAS section the defences (No. 26). Richard Chambers has also uncovered more of one of the town's cemeteries as part of the Dorchester by-pass project (No. 25). More of one of the Cowley Kilns has been recorded by Brian Durham at Between Towns Road (No. 38).

In the late Saxon and medieval period the Unit's work is again dominated by excavations in Oxford. Brian Durham has uncovered part of one the fords linking Oxford with the south in St. Aldates (No. 45). It is tempting to think of this site as part of the 'Ox Ford' for which the City derives its name. The laying of new drains in the High Street (No. 41) and sewers in Christ Church Meadow (No. 39) have provided more information on the late Saxon town's topography. Work by Eleanor Forfang has raised the exciting possibility of part of one of the town's medieval gates surviving in Corpus Christi College (No. 40). John Blair's theories about Frewin Hall have been confirmed (No. 42). Finally Brian Durham has confirmed that if the Oxford Station site is developed, as seemed likely during the year, substantial remains are to be expected of Rewley Abbey (No. 44).

Outside Oxford there have been no major medieval excavations, Richard Chambers has however coordinated the work on a number of small site including the Launton History Society's watching brief in that village (No. 36) and the Witney and District Archaeological and Historical Society at Witney (No. 57).

Less obvious to the outside world than the excavations are the Post Excavation Projects. Amongst the projects nearing completion are George Lambrick's multi-period site at Mount Farm, Berinsfield (No. 74); Tim Allen and Mark Robinson's Iron Age site at Mingies Ditch, Hardwick (Nos. 73 and 74); Tim Allen and Sarah Green have worked on Margaret Jones' site at Rough Ground Farm, Lechlade (No. 71); the pagan Saxon cemetery at Wally Corner, Berinsfield, the weapons from which have been studied by Heinrich Härke (No. 62); the medieval moated manor house at Harding's Field Chalgrove which was excavated by Phillip Page (No. 63) and finally great progress has been made by Maureen Mellor with Claire Halpin, and John Wood helped by Pat Horsman, Barbara Howes, Sally Jones and Jean Mitchell on the St. Ebbe's, Oxford sites (No. 68). Susan Hockey of the University Computing Service has continued to help Maureen Mellor with the programming of the pottery from the Oxford sites. A number of other Unit staff are involved in these post excavation projects: Gwynne Oakley, the Unit's finds administrator helped on a voluntary basis by Mrs Caruthers, John Garlinge, Jane Gordon-Cummings, Michael Newman and Stephen Terry Barbara Howes; Wendy Page and Eleanor Beard in the drawing office and the Unit's long

suffering secretaries: Lindsay Donaghy who left during the year to have a baby and Jocelyn le Petit who took over. The typing of the reports would also not have been possible without the continued use of a golf-ball typewriter loaned by St. Cross College. Reports on the multi-period site at Appleford, excavated by John Hinchliff, Neil McGavin's report on the Roman cemetery at Stanton Harcourt cricket ground and Nicholas Palmer's excavation at the Hamel, Oxford were all published in Oxoniensia.

As last year the Environmental Projects have a section to themselves. Bob Wilson describes his work on animal bones (No. 72) and Mark Robinson on Waterlogged Plants and Invertebrates (No. 73). After very protracted negotiations these two have now left the formal employ of the Unit as part of the scheme by John Musty of DoE to transfer all DoE funded environmental work to University Departments. The University Museum has now become their official home, although their work continues to be dominated by Unit projects. Martin Jones, formerly of the Unit left the Department of Botany during the year to take up a post at Durham University, but he has continued to advise the Unit. Mary Harmon has continued as the Unit's freelance human bone specialist (Nos. 19 and 21).

The Unit's work has continued to attract attention in the media including the visit by Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State for the Environment to the excavation at Dorchester-on-Thames. The Unit's own exhibitions including one entitled 'Pungent Pipes and Potent Potions' on post medieval material; the Claydon Pike Project and 'Old Bones and Beasties' have greeted visitors to the Unit in our entrance. A special display arranged by Duncan Brown was put on at Thame Show to try to put over archaeology to the local farming community.

Apart from those whose names have already been mentioned it is a pleasure to thank all those who have helped the Unit in its work during the year. A special thanks should go to the young people on the MSC YOP Scheme. Other colleagues who have assisted the Unit during the year, have been Professor Shepherd Frere, The Chairman, and Louise Armstrong, the Secretary, and all the members of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Committee; Wally Castle, the Unit's Treasurer; Trevor Rowley and Shirley Hermon, his secretary of the University Department for External Studies; James Bond, Dan Chadwick, John Steane, Ahmed Shishtawi and John Rhodes of the Oxfordshire Department of Museum Services; David Brown, Arthur MacGregor, and Gwyn Miles of the Ashmolen Museum; John Ashdown and Malcolm Airs of Oxford City Council and South Oxfordshire District Council. Particular thanks must also go to our colleagues at DoE particularly Sarnia Butcher, Tony Fleming, John Musty, Steve Nelson and Geoffery Wainwright.

The Unit would like to acknowledge the generous support from all the organisations who by grant aiding the Unit have

made its 1981 programme possible. These organisations include, from Central Government: The Department of the Environment and the Manpower Services Commission; from Local Government: Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, Cherwell District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, the Vale of White Horse District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, Abingdon Town Council and the following Parish Councils: Appleton with Eaton and Sutton Courtenay; from the University: The Department for External Studies and the following Colleges: St. Cross, St. John's, St. Peter's and Wadham. Special gifts were received from Mrs Elizabeth Payne of the Nag's Head Public House and members of the Smithsonian Seminar. The Unit is also grateful for the major covenanted grant from the Amey Roadstone Corporation and other substantial grants from the British Academy, the Oxford Preservation Trust and Standard Life Assurance. Without the continued support of all these donors the rescue archaeology programme of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit would not have been possible in 1981.

## SURVEY PROJECTS

### Oxfordshire

#### 1. CHADLINGTON - Tim Copeland

A worked flint core and a flange of Oxfordshire white ware mortarium have been found in the ploughsoil at SP335213.

#### 2. CHALGROVE - Richard Chambers (Fig.31)

A survey has been made of the earthworks in the paddock to the west of the Churchyard at Chalgrove (PRN 11,136; SUI6365 9655). The earthworks were prone to water-logging and have now been partially infilled with dredgings from the stream that borders the paddock to the west and south.

The survey revealed traces of linear boundaries of uncertain age but probably remnants of the medieval village. The boundary bank from a former road that survives in part as a pathway leading to the church, was seen to continue south-eastwards as shown on Davis's map of 1779. One boundary ditch turned to join one or possibly two heavily silted ponds A and B. Whether these ponds were entirely man-made or were remnants of a previous stream-bed was not clear. Several shallow meandering depressions suggested remnant stream courses within the field (C, D & E). The 1841 Tithe Award indicates osiers as having once been grown on part of this ground.

The Unit is extremely grateful to Mr Monck for permission to survey this site.

3. CHARLBURY: Banbury Hill - Tim Copeland

A pottery scatter of 90 sherds of R-B pottery over an area of 50m by 100m, overlooking the incised, dry valley of Clarkes Bottom (PRN 12,853; centred on SP 361203). It included fragments of Samian Ware, shell tempered ware with late rim forms, Black Burnished Ware, Oxfordshire white and red colour coated ware and a rim of Oxfordshire mortarium. These sherds date to the 3rd-4th centuries. The site lies alongside Hundley Way, a possibly trackway connecting the Meareway (which runs from beyond Churchill to Stonesfield) and the River Evenlode.

4. CHARLBURY WITH SHORTHAMPTON - Tim Copeland (Fig.32)

Intensive field work has been carried out over the last 18 months in fields either side of the section of the bridleway that connects Walcot and Shorthampton. The work has been concentrated in the fields either side of the Bridleway between S0352192 and SP334200, bounded to the south by Wychwood Forest and the north by the River Evenlode. The surface geology is riverine alluvial clay, and upslope, the Clypeus Grit of the Inferior Oolite. This section of bridleway is part of what appears to be a very ancient routeway from Wilcote, where it joins Akeman Street, to Ascott-U-Wychwood, and possibly further up the Evenlode Valley. Historic features are found along its length including Topples Wood D.M.V. (PRN 1208; centred on SP371165); a tumulus at SP356181; an earthwork and ditch (PRN 1290; SP35601795); a promontory fort (PRN2400; SP353188), the Walcot D.M.V. (PRN 1207; centred on SP348197) - see below No.5; Shorthampton Shrunken Village (SP328202) and a courtyard type Romano British villa (PRN 5655; SP3171913).

The finds that have been recorded are as follows:

Prehistoric:

Scatters of worked flint, probably Neolithic, have been found on either side of the routeway all along the length examined:

Moss Close:	3 scrapers centred on SP348191
Moss Close Field:	10 scrapers centred on SP347193
Walcot Field:	Barbed and tanged arrowhead SP3495 1945
Blue Gate Piece:	3 scrapers and arrowhead centred on SP347195 1 scraper and 1 arrowhead had centred on SP338198
Beggars Piece and Fir Ground:	3 scrapers centred on SP338198 6 scrapers centred on SP341200 2 scrapers centred on SP336199



CHALGROVE Earthworks Next to the Church 1981

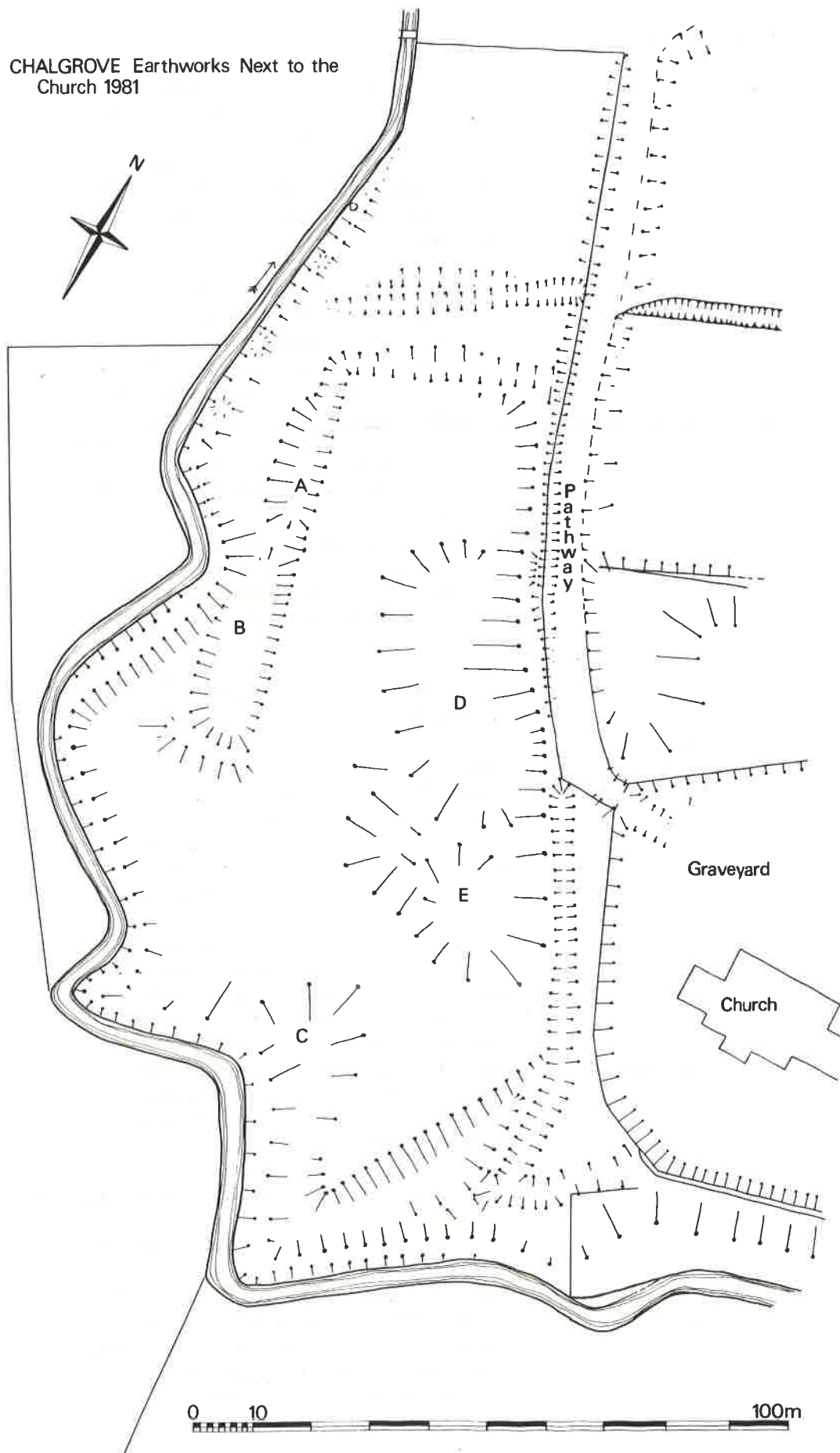


Fig.31

Romano-British:

Mossy Close:

A dense scatter of RB potsherds 200m x 100m (long axis being NE-SW) centred on SP348191, and occupying the shoulder of a spur of the R. Evenlode. 350 sherds recovered small decorate including the following fabrics:

- i) Samian Ware, 4 body sherds, small decorated sherd with sherd with indistinct figures, base of plain form vessel. 4 body sherds of indeterminate form.
- ii) Red colour coated sherds of the Oxfordshire industry
- iii) Buff/orange fabric with darker inclusions.
- iv) Black Burnished Ware.
- v) Calcite gritted Ware
- vi) Grey fabric, micaceous with darker inclusions black coated

Majority of sherds were of iii) and vi). They appear to be of 2nd-4th centuries date.

Area Centred on SP335198:

Scatter of 30 sherds includes flanged rim of Black Burnished ware bowl: two flanges from from segmental bowls of Oxfordshire oxidized ware; thick rolled rim of a redware bowl copying Dragendorf 27. Body sherds mainly of oxidized fabric. All sherds date from 2nd-4th centuries. The aerial photographs indicate a shadowy rectangular feature in the area of the pot scatter

Area Centred on SP345197:

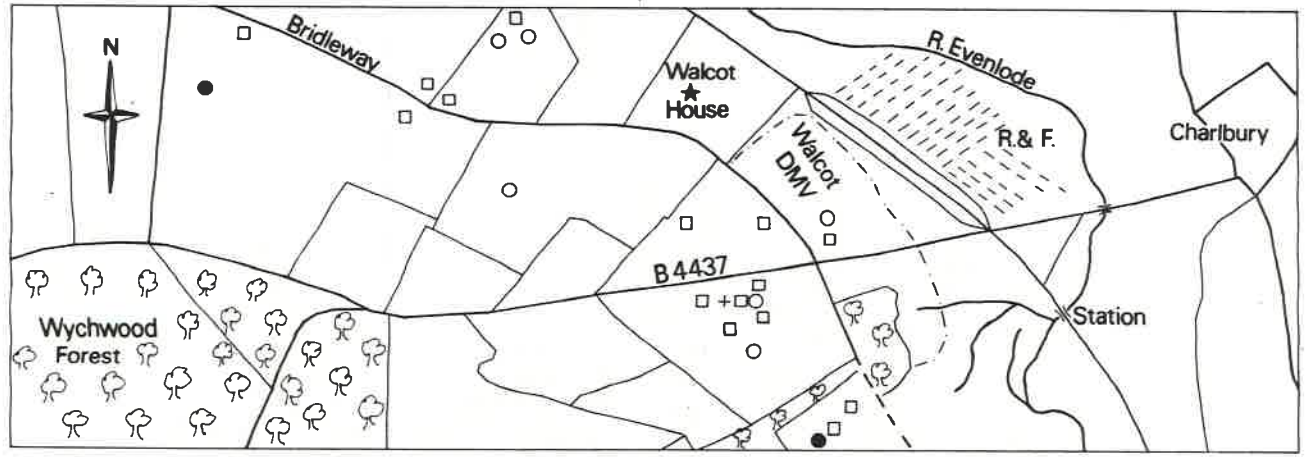
rim of red fabric flanged bowl copying Dragendorf. Rectangular whetstone of sandstone similar to one from Shakenoak No. 41.

Area centred on SP341196:

- i) rim of necked bowl in micaceous, buff-fabric with out-turned rim;
- ii) body sherd similar in fabric to i);

Area centred on SP349196:

Sherd of Samian Ware of uncertain form. There has been a marked absence of Roman building materials and these scatters probably represent native settlements

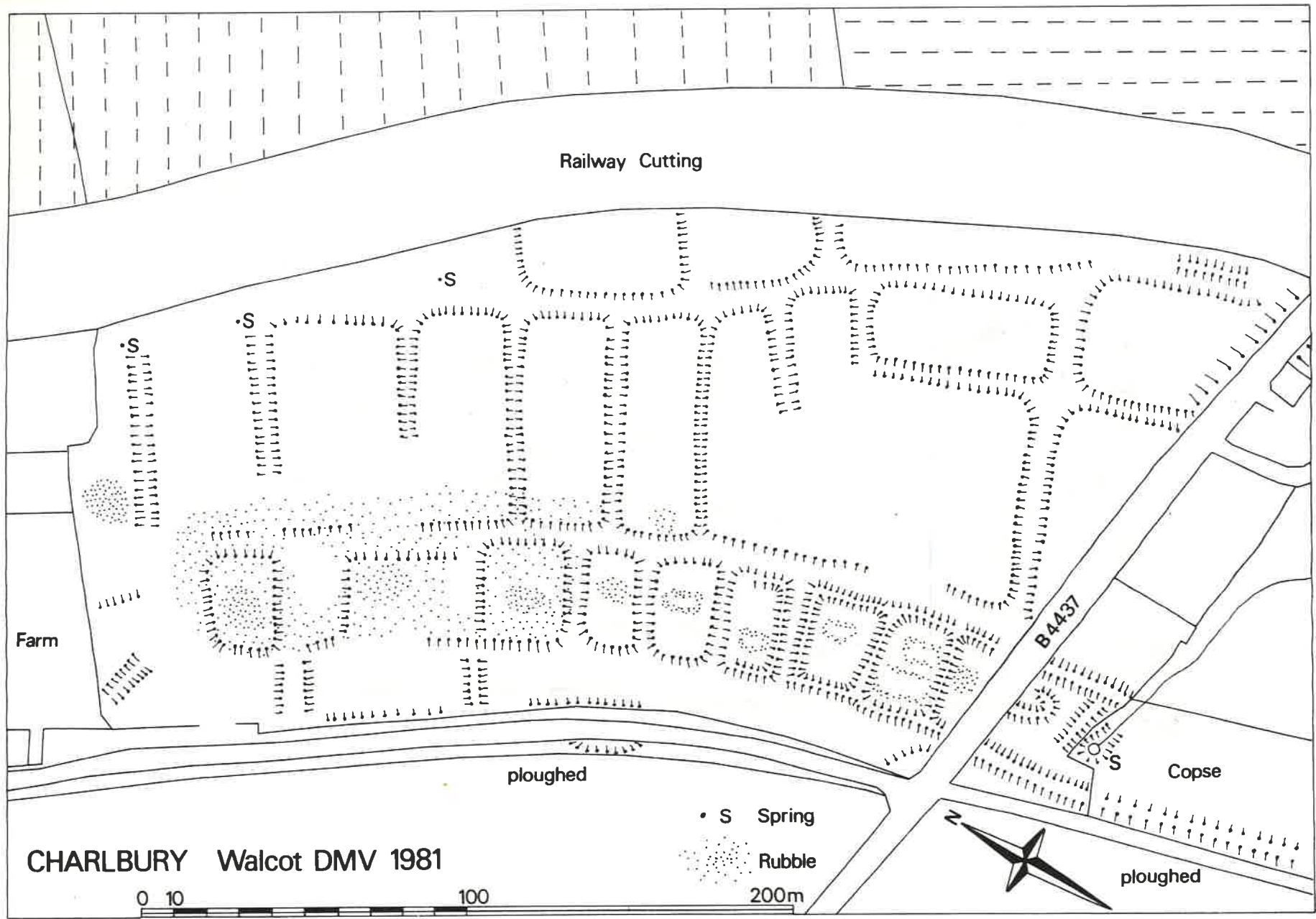


- Flint Scatter
- Large Scatter of Roman Pottery
- Roman Pottery
- + Anglo Saxon Burial

**CHARLBURY Walcot to Shorthampton Bridlepath**  
**1981**



Fig. 32



Saxon

Moss Close Field: Burial at SP347194 (PRN 12,876)  
see below No.19).

Medieval:

The former Charlbury-Leaffield roan (PRN 12854) was superseded by the present B4427 in 1835 when the O.W.W. Railway was built. The old line has been traced from SP354196 to SP349194.

Post Medieval:

Charlbury Gasworks (PRN270 centred on SP 3500 in 1945); Brick revetted springs from circular features connected with the water supply for this industrial site.

5. CHARLBURY: Walcot - Tim Copeland (Fig.33)

During 1979-81, when the ploughing further destroyed the earthworks of the village, the visible features and stone scatters were planned and photographed (PRN 1207 , centred on SP248197). A series of c.10 tofts were identified over an area of 300m by 160m aligned roughly NW-SE with a hollow way bounding them on the NE. Beyond the hollow way were a series of possible paddocks. All these features have now been totally destroyed.

Documentary evidence is sparse but in the Hundred Rolls of 1279, 11 tenants were recorded, and in 1334 tax was paid by the tenants totalling 18 shillings. In 1377 the Poll Tax returns indicated 17 tenants, but by 1609 just one house remained, probably Walcot House, which was again enumerated in the Hearth Tax returns of 1665 with 15 hearths.

The village site was cut by the road which is now B4437 in 1835, and further untouched tofts, paddocks and hollow ways have been discovered and await planning, centred on SP350195.

400 sherds have been collected, from the site. The pottery sequence indicates that the village came to an end in the 14th century. The dominant fabric varies in surface colour from brick red to grey and black, the majority is a mottled buff brown. Texture in break is hackly, with inclusions of oolitic limestone detritus, occasional shell, quartz and gypsum plates. The surfaces are highly vesiculated and vary in hardness from soft to very hard. The pottery has all the characteristics of a small local production centre firing Evenlode river clay in unstable kiln or clamp environments. It bears great similarity to the collections from Ascott-under-Wychwood and Coat D.M.V. This fabric is classified as Oxford Fabric CX.

The Archaeology of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Oxfordshire

	Largest 200 ha (6 SSSI's)	Large 50-200ha (20 SSSI's)	Small 10-50ha (28 SSSI's)	Smallest 10ha (29 SSSI's)	Totals (83 SSSI's)
Extant	30 (on	25 (on	7 (on	-	62 (on
Earthwork	3 SSSI's)	9 SSSI's)	5 SSSI's)		17 SSSI's)
Crop/ parchmark	10 (on 2 SSSI's)	6 (on 5 SSSI's)	4 (on 3 SSSI's)	-	20 (on 10 SSSI's)
Destroyed sites	1 (on 1 SSSI)	2 (on 2 SSSI's)	1 (on 1 SSSI)	-	4 (on 4 SSSI's)
Other sites	7 (on 3 SSSI's)	3 (on 3 SSSI's)	5 (on 4 SSSI's)	1 (on 1 SSSI)	16 (on 11 SSSI's)
Find spots	10 (on 5 SSSI's)	14 (on 5 SSSI's)	12 (on 6 SSSI's)	1 (on 1 SSSI)	37 (on 17 SSSI's)
Miscell.	2 (on 2 SSSI's)	-	5 (on 2 SSSI's)	1 (on 1 SSSI)	8 (on 5 SSSI's)
Total No. Sites	61 (on 6 SSSI's)	50 (on 12 SSSI's)	34 (on 11 SSSI's)	3 (on 3 SSSI's)	148 (on 32 SSSI's)
Scheduled	121 (on 3 SSSI's)	7 (on 5 SSSI's)	1 (on 1 SSSI)	-	20 (on 9 SSSI's)
% SSSI's with Arch. sites	100%	60%	39%	10%	39%
Au. Sites per SSSI	10	4	3	1	5
% sites surviving	50%	50%	21%	-	42%
% sites scheduled	20%	14%	3%	-	14%
% earthwork scheduled	23%	28%	14%	-	27%

Table 1

6. FINSTOCK: Mount Pleasant - Tim Copeland

A probable moated site has been identified alongside the B4022 (PRN 12860; SP34951575). Earthworks are very distinct on NE with ditch c. 3m deep and c. 10m wide. The platform is c. 25m by 100m and is aligned NE-SW. Further earthworks are detectable on S. and E. outside the moated area.

7. OXFORD PRISON: St George's Tower - Brian Durham

The Home Office is replacing the post-medieval timber ground floor of the eleventh century tower, and at the request of DoE a record of the structure was made by Duncan Brown as an in-service training project. An elaborate basement frame clearly supported some sort of machine which was driven through a vertical shaft from a capstan-like 'gin' on the floor above. Whatever or whoever pushed the gin round had worn three concentric grooves in the floorboards.

There is no reason why this machine should be any older than the rebuilding of the prison in 1786, and it is therefore most likely that it was a predecessor of the Victorian treadmill used to discipline the prisoners.

8. OXFORDSHIRE: The Archaeology of Sites of Special Scientific Interest - George Lambrick (Table 1)

Sites of Special Scientific Interest are areas chosen as being of outstanding value for nature conservation by the Nature Conservancy Council. Such sites are of interest archaeologically because most areas are unaffected by modern agriculture and other destructive developments, and therefore contain well preserved archaeological sites, as well as being ideal for wildlife conservation. The statutory protection afforded to SSSIs is generally weaker than that given to ancient monuments, especially since the new Ancient Monuments Act of 1979 - the Wildlife and Countryside Act will by no means catch up with it in potential effectiveness of protection for nature reserves. In practice, however, the effectiveness of protection depends, both for nature conservation and archaeological sites, on ownership and the maintenance of specific management agreements.

On the whole the SSSIs vary much more in this respect than do archaeological sites, since their protection will vary from ownership and management by local Naturalist Trusts (in this case BBONT) to short-term agreements with farmers with little sympathy for restrictive management of large areas. Scheduled Ancient Monuments are seldom owned by bodies with specific archaeological interests, except those in DoE Guardianship (7 in Oxfordshire), excluding standing buildings and while they have better statutory protection and are smaller, enforcement and the maintenance of management agreements can still pose problems.

Given the obvious potential for mutually reinforcing these protection policies where archaeological and nature conservation interests coincide, the amount of direct contact between the two interests has in the past been insufficient to be of much help when the need has arisen. The most glaring example occurred in 1980 when permission was given for the reseedling of a Scheduled Ancient Monument on Lowbury Hill, an SSSI. This involved light cultivation of a previously unploughed site, and whatever the destruction to the archaeology (observation of the earthworks before and after suggested some definite damage), the botanical value of the SSSI was totally destroyed. This case demonstrates how the potential for secure preservation afforded by mutual archaeological and wildlife interests can be destroyed through one party's ignorance of the other's protection policies. This case and the general potential for mutual co-operation made an archaeological assessment of SSSIs seem highly desirable, and this study was carried out by Duncan Brown as a project for his in-service training course.

The objectives were mainly to ensure that both the archaeological and nature conservation bodies were aware of each others interests in these areas, but also to see whether the SSSIs were indeed particularly rich havens of well preserved archaeological sites, and if so whether these were adequately protected under archaeological legislation. Detailed lists and maps have been sent to the principal interested bodies (The Nature Conservancy Council, DoE, BBONT and ODMS) and the DoE's lists of scheduled Ancient Monuments. The overall results are shown in the Table, and this allows a preliminary assessment to be made.

It is clear from the very high proportion of sites surviving as earthworks that the SSSIs do act as havens for well preserved monuments, and the fairly high proportion of earthworks which are scheduled (27%) suggest that in general the sites most worthy of protection are often scheduled. These scheduled monuments account for 13% of the total in the county while the SSSIs account for only c. 1% of the county's total area, further indicating the value of the SSSIs as areas of good archaeological preservation. On the whole the two categories of larger SSSIs (over 50 hectares) appear to be most valuable archaeologically, as might be expected.

Although in many respects the position is encouraging, the ploughing of Lowbury Hill is a clear warning against lapsing into complacency and there is undoubtedly scope for extending ancient monument protection to some of the remaining three-quarters of extant earthworks. In some instances quite obvious omissions occur, such as around the limited scheduled areas on Port Meadow and a detailed review of sites worth putting forward for scheduling is still desirable.

It is hoped to extend the study to cover other protected areas, such as other BBONT Nature Reserves and perhaps National Trust properties.



9. RADLEY: Barrow Hills - see No.74

10. SPELSBURY: The Hawkstone - Tim Copeland

A light scatter of R-B pottery appeared in ploughsoil 10m east of the Hawkstone (PRN 12,852; SP 340235). Nine sherds recovered, including one fragment of red colour coated vessel similar to Young type C25.

11. THAMES FLOODPLAIN SURVEY - George Lambrick (Figs. 34 and 35 and Table 2)

This year's work is still in progress and is concentrating on consolidating background information for particular sites, and establishing the general pattern of changing land use. A large collection of air photographs of the Thames in flood has been examined at the Thames Water Authority's offices, and several of these provide excellent views of sites under floods - often with earthworks rising clear of the floods, or ditches just covered by water. Work has begun on producing accurate plans of some sites from the more conventional collections of air photographs, and the plan of Port Meadow is illustrated. The main elements of this major complex of sites are the Bronze Age Ring Ditches, the groups of small Iron Age enclosures, and the linear ditches, whose dating is uncertain in many cases. The three groups of Iron Age enclosures occupy slightly higher, drier areas in the meadow which, from the photographs, seem to have been surrounded by marshy areas. This arrangement is closely comparable to the Claydon Pike middle Iron Age Settlement (see below No.60) and the discovery there of the remains of paddocks or fields and other divisions in the landscape, divided up by linear ditches makes it likely that several of the port Meadow ditches are Iron Age. This particularly applies to the large rectangular enclosure at the northwest corner of the meadow, and the curving ditch running north from it, enclosing one of the groups of Iron Age enclosures. More than one phase of ditch is apparent from detailed examination of the photos, and a complex sequence of relationships with the small enclosures is evident at its north west corner. The existence of well preserved organic deposits has been demonstrated from the Iron Age ditches, and these will shortly be sampled by excavation. The Bronze Age ring ditches filled up under somewhat different conditions in which preservation was not good; this corresponds to the observations of other Bronze Age floodplain sites at the Hamel and King's Weir. An important part of the Survey's findings has been the establishment of the sequence and dating of alluviation on the floodplain which is outlined below by Mark Robinson (see below No.73). So far this has been based on accumulated observations from several different excavated sites, but a more detailed investigation of specific deposits is planned, and it is hoped that it will be possible to relate the developments in the sequence of alluviation to

the general pattern of human activity within the catchment area of the river.

Another part of the consolidation of background information has been the compilation of statistics on the survival of sites, and on the changing pattern of land use. The survival of sites was considered in terms of use and the type of evidence surviving (see the accompanying table) the dating being based on a preliminary assessment of last year's fieldwalking and the morphology of the sites themselves. Various problems of definition make the figures only approximate. Generally speaking the survival of sites on the floodplain is not obviously better than the county generally (though no exact figures are available). The four earthworks on arable land or reseeded pasture can be regarded as most seriously under threat of destruction by ploughing and include the important Iron Age fort at Burroway where burnt clay from the rampart structure is being ploughed up, and one of the "Highworth" type ring ditches, as well as two Bronze Age tumulus sites. The occurrence of sites buried under alluvium is rather a matter of chance discovery and those revealed by finds scatters are almost certainly considerably under-represented in the figures. The fairly even proportions of known sites of different periods (except for Neolithic and Saxon) is also probably misleading: the 53% of undated sites are mostly cropmarks which are much more likely to be Iron Age and Roman than most other periods, while more Neolithic sites also are likely to be found from further fieldwalking.

The present distribution of sites by land use category corresponds remarkably well with the actual proportion of the floodplain devoted to those types of land use (see the accompanying Figure). On the face of it, this would suggest that our current picture of floodplain settlement is not severely distorted by modern land use (though future fieldwork may bias it heavily towards the arable areas). In detail, however, biases are evident between the different periods: almost all the Roman sites are on arable while most of the medieval ones are either buried beneath Oxford or survive as earthworks. With such a high proportion of land now devoted to arable, however, further biases are likely to relate to the recoverability of different types of evidence from ploughed fields: flints survive well; prehistoric pottery does not, Roman and medieval pottery; also different periods are not equally well represented by cropmarks.

The cumulative changes in land use are shown in the accompanying figure. The evidence comes from a mixture of sources: mostly aerial photography for ridge and furrow and landuse of the last 30 years; Rocque's and Davis' maps of Berkshire and Oxfordshire for the extent of later 18th century arable; and modern fieldwork (partly by the Nature Conservancy Council) for current land use. None of this information is completely accurate - simply because of practical difficulties of interpretation - but the general

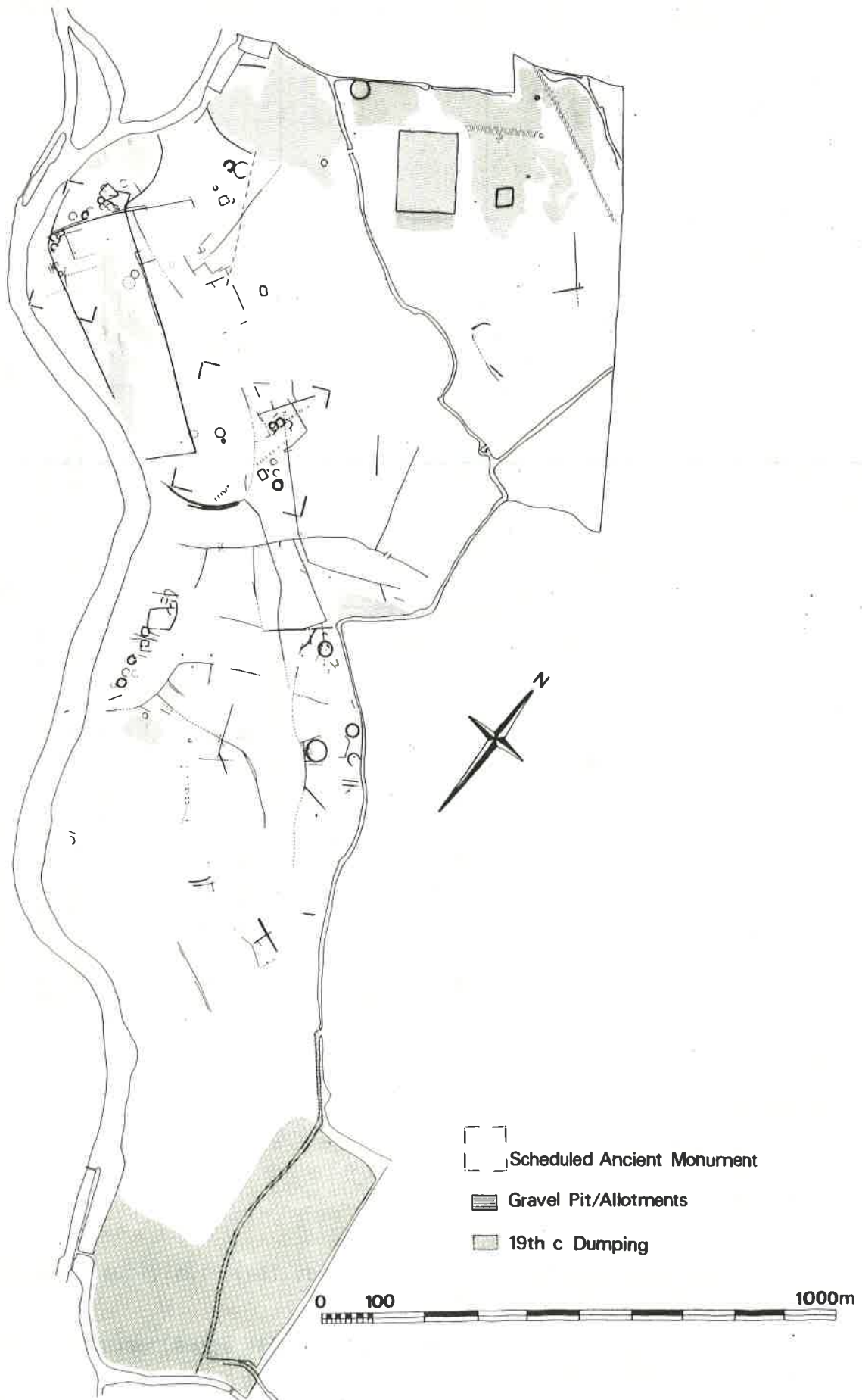


Fig. 34  
Cropmarks on Port Meadow, Oxford

	Unploughed Undisturbed	Arable/ reseeded	Destroyed in Gravel pits etc.	Built Over/ Urban	All Conditions
Earthworks	• 6 □ 2 ○ 4 * 4 13%	• 1 □ 2 ○ 1 3%	○ 1 1%		• 7 □ 4 ○ 6 * 4 17%
Buried Deposits	Δ 2 2%	□ 1 + 2 2.5%	○ 1 1%	□ 1 * 6 6%	Δ 2 □ 2 ○ 1 + 2 * 6 12%
Cropmarks & Parchmarks	• 2 ○ 1 2.5%	• 52 Δ 1 □ 5 ○ 4 + 6 * 1 58%	• 3 □ 1 3%		• 57 Δ 1 □ 6 ○ 5 + 6 0 * 1 63%
Finds Scatters etc.		Δ 3 □ 1 + 5 * 1 8%		× 1	Δ 3 □ 1 + 5 × 1 * 1 9%
All types of evidence	• 8 Δ 2 □ 2 ○ 5 + 0 × 0 * 4 17%	• 53 Δ 4 □ 9 ○ 5 + 13 × 0 * 2 73%	• 3 Δ 0 □ 1 ○ 2 + 0 × 0 * 0 5%	• 0 Δ 0 □ 1 ○ 0 + 0 × 1 * 6 7%	• 64 53% Δ 6 5% □ 12 10% ○ 12 10% + 13 11% × 1 1% * 12 10% T2T

undated •  
neolithic Δ  
bronze age □  
iron age ○  
roman +  
saxon ×  
medieval \*

- "sites" 1. include major complexes of cropmarks not their individual components, and whole suburbs of Oxford.
2. finds scatters only count where they suggest actual occupation or funerary deposits.
3. river crossings and roads have not been counted.
- "undisturbed" includes sites only partly undisturbed.

Table 2

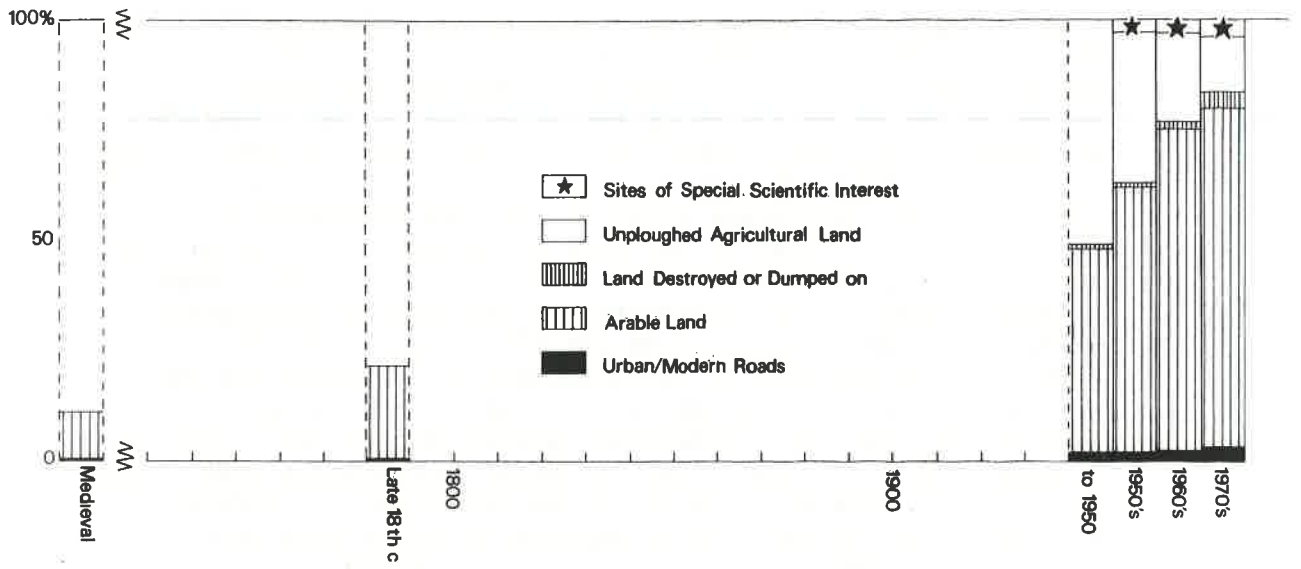


Fig. 35

Thames Floodplain Survey: Cumulative changes in land use

trends are probably reliable. The proportion of arable to unploughed land provides the main area of concern, and the massive increase of arable since the war is very striking. The percentages of unploughed land remaining which was lost in the three decades since 1950 were approximately 27% (1950-60) 35% (1960-70) and 22% (1970-80). The relative slowing down recently of new cultivation reflects how little remains to be ploughed up, and it is significant that 28% of the remaining areas are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, of which Port Meadow is the largest, and archaeologically by far the most valuable. The precise toll of archaeological sites in the modern extension of arable is uncertain, but there are records of sites near Northmoor, now revealed only by cropmarks, surviving as earthworks in the 1940's. A comparison with figures for other areas shows similar rates of loss of the Dorset heathland for example, whereas on the chalk the ploughing up of unploughed grassland has tended to be slower since the last War. The figures provided by this study seem to confirm greater emphasis recently on the conversion of poorly drained grassland to arable use, and reinforces the need for protection of sites still surviving in such areas. Another ominous trend, though it affects only a small percentage of the total area as yet, is the increased destruction of the floodplain by gravel quarrying. So far much of the area lost is accounted for by Farmoor Reservoir, but gravel extraction is increasing significantly as areas of adjacent gravel terrace are exhausted and this seems likely to be an increasing trend. Its effects on the archaeology of the floodplain is evident from the recent excavations at Mingies Ditch, Drayton and Claydon Pike. The value of such sites was clearly established at Farmoor, and all the subsequent excavations have confirmed the high priority that should be attached to threatened floodplain sites, not excluding those under new or continuing agricultural threat.

The survey is financed by a grant from the British Academy.

12. ROLLRIGHT: Rollright Stones- George Lambrick (Fig.36)

At the request of the DoE a small excavation was carried out in the hollow adjacent to the King Stone to see whether topsoil stripping and dumping of spoil from roadworks on the A34 had revealed any archaeological features or done any damage. No features of interest were seen, and little damage appeared to have been done. The hollow has usually been regarded as a 19th century quarry, but this was not entirely evident from the excavation. In one area there were layers of rubble and soil as might be expected of a disused quarry, but elsewhere a layer of largely stone free reddish loam overlay apparently undisturbed rock. Two pieces of china were recovered from the base of the topsoil (the hollow has been cultivated this century) but neither was properly stratified in the underlying deposits. The reddish loam may

well be soil which washed in from the side of the hollow before it was brought into cultivation rather than being the remains of an ancient ground surface. Antiquarian drawings of the site and contemporary descriptions by e.g. Stukely give no indication of the hollow existing before the nineteenth century. It therefore seems likely that it was a quarry.

The DoE also asked the Unit to carry out a survey of the area surrounding the stones to identify all evidence of archaeological sites along that part of the ridge, so that their scheduling policy might be reviewed. This work is currently in progress, with the documentary research and aerial photograph evidence largely completed and a detailed fieldwalking programme also nearing completion. Much of this work has been done by Shiela Girardon and John Margham. The figure shows the evidence of structural remains in the area, and the fieldwalking (so far in the fields either side of the King's Stone, south of the road) has produced several hundred flints and a moderate scatter of Roman pottery. Except for the Iron Age, for which there is no positive evidence of occupation in the area, there are traces of human activity throughout the period from the later Neolithic to early Saxon times. Absence of ridge and furrow or medieval pottery suggests that during the middle ages the area may have been turned over solely to grazing, and 18th century references indicate that it was still rough grazing then. Arable agriculture probably resumed with the enclosure of the area, perhaps for the first time since the Roman period (indicated by the thin scatter of Roman pottery over the fields). The prehistoric flintwork constitutes a large and useful collection from the Cotswolds, though its value is diminished in being a surface collection rather than from stratified deposits. Its distribution is fairly general with only slight concentrations other than a broad variation between areas of relatively high density and areas with rather little flintwork. The source material was evidently very poor, small nodules (probably all that was available locally) except for one large core, probably of chalk flint, which seems to have been lost early in its use. The high proportion of very small cores and the reuse of old implements, natural lumps and discarded cores as scrapers etc are good evidence of the poverty of the raw material. Implements form a fairly high proportion of the flints recovered and a wide range is present.

The overall impression from the distribution and make-up of the assemblage is one of occupation over a long period but never concentrated in a single locality, but rather spreading over much of the southern facing slope near the Stones. The relatively high proportion of implements to waste may indicate little permanent settlement, and taken together these characteristics could be regarded as being consistent with regular temporary occupation connected with the religious or ceremonial functions of the Stones themselves. It will be interesting to compare the results of this survey

Fig. 36

KEY

1. Roman pottery scatter.
  - 2-5. Tumulus with remains of stonework various positions given by different authors, most reliably, No.5.
  6. Round barrow.
  7. Possible long barrow: excavations by Ravenhill 1925 suggested it is natural.
  8. Cropmarks of Ring Ditches.
  9. "Old stones" in hedgerow.
  10. Cropmark of possible enclosure with internal features. Stukeley's "Druids courts or houses.... 100 cubits square."
  11. Faint cropmarks of linear ditches and pit(s).
  12. Finds of "Bones of men and horses".
  13. Finds from part of Saxon burial ground.
  14. Cropmark of Ring Ditch.
  15. Cropmark of Trackway.
  16. Finds of Saxon burial ground, including cremation urn and 12 skeletons with grave goods.
  17. Find of human skeleton and 10ft. long stone.
  18. Find of human cheekbone in Whispering Knights Chambered tomb.
- A)  
B)  
C) Fields walked 1981 (to date) for collection of surface finds.  
D)



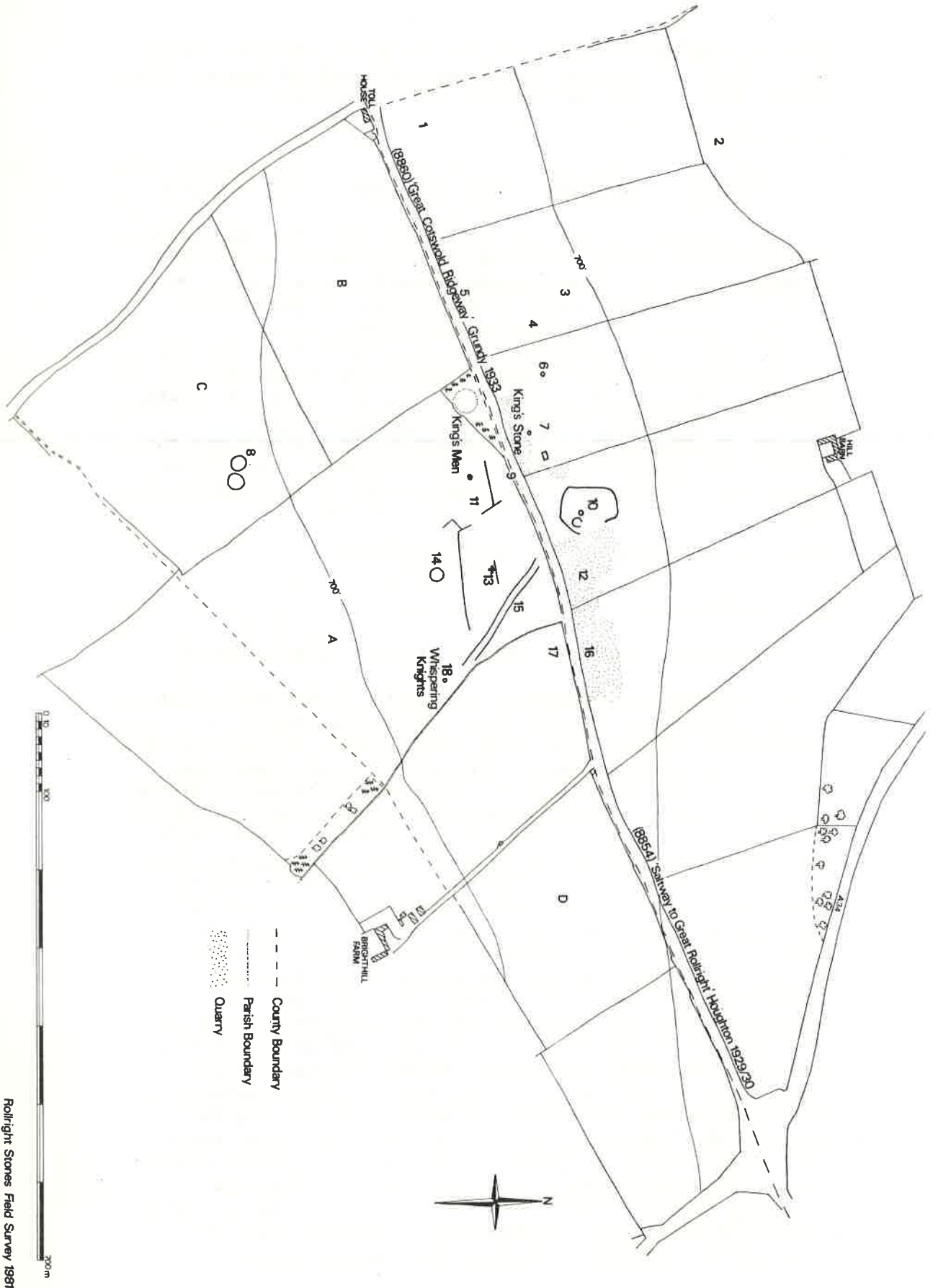


Fig. 36

with the similar exercise carried out by the Abingdon Society in the field adjacent to the Abingdon Causewayed Camp and the Barrow Hills Bronze Age cemetery (see below No.74).

#### Middlesex

#### 13. HAREFIELD - Middlesex: Park Lodge Farm - Claire Halpin

In October the Unit, in conjunction with the West London Archaeological Group, conducted a parish survey of Harefield, Middlesex, for the Greater London Council. The G.L.C. owns large tracts of land around London as part of their Green Belt policy and hope to develop within these areas recreational and teaching centres to be visited in the main by children from London schools. Park Lodge Farm, within Harefield, has already been established as a visiting working farm, like Cogges at Witney. By commissioning an archaeo-historical survey of the parish the G.L.C. hopes to increase the educational aspects of the centre. The October survey simply covered written sources, but it is possible that it will be followed up by a field survey.

#### EXCAVATION PROJECTS AND OBSERVATIONS

#### Oxfordshire

#### 14. ABINGDON: The Former MG Car Factory - Claire Halpin

A fortnight's excavation on the site of the old MG Car Factory, Abingdon, was undertaken during the summer, in anticipation of the large scale redevelopment of the site as factory and warehouse units. The site's prime importance lies in the fact that it is the southerly continuation of the site excavated by Michael Parrington at the Ashville Trading Estate, and now published as a C.B.A. Research Report No.28. The Ashville excavations of 1974-76 revealed Bronze Age ring ditches with associated cremations, two phases of Iron Age settlement, late Iron Age and Roman field ditches and two Roman wells indicating a settlement nearby. Clearly the primary aims of future archaeological work must be a) to define the southern and eastern limits of the Iron Age settlements and thereby allow some quantification of settlement size; b) to expand the known pattern of Iron Age and Roman field ditches and c) to locate and determine the nature of the Roman settlement. Further to this the very large scale of development allows investigation considerably beyond the normal confines of an excavation and therefore provides the opportunity to pick up satellite sites should they exist, and/or accurately define archaeologically sterile areas. With these aims in mind and given the detailed recording at Ashville as a working base, future investigation will be broadly based, encompassing the entire area and implementing sampling strategies where appropriate.

The entire area is covered with tarmac so usual methods of field survey are not applicable, although some experiments with a magnometer have been undertaken by the Ancient Monuments Laboratory. The main approach at present is to

mount a series of detailed watching briefs.

The trench excavated in the summer was 70m x 2m and ran due south from the 1974 Ashville excavations. The depth of soil removed before striking natural was a mere 0.5-0.6m. Within the trench an Iron Age ring ditch, recut four times, and cut through by a later Iron Age linear ditch, was partially revealed. It lay c. 10-15m south of the earlier excavation trenches. Some distance from Ashville, between c. 50-55m, a possible two post structure, recut three times, was uncovered. A scatter of pits and post holes were found, as well as further lengths of Iron Age and Roman field ditches, on similar alignments to those previously recorded. One ditch contained large quantities of Roman pottery and butchered bone, a coin was also recovered from this feature. The trench demonstrates that there is good preservation of archaeological material, provides further information to the Ashville excavation and increases the still tantalising evidence of a nearby Roman settlement.

15. ASTHALL - Richard Chambers (Fig.37)

Agricultural operations at Asthall have led to the discovery of the small, Roman bronze brooch illustrated in the figure (PRN 2255).

The brooch is finely cast with a recessed back. The motif depicts a bird of prey attacking a rabbit or hare. The bird is possibly an eagle. At present the brooch cannot be closely dated. An identical brooch in Norwich Castle Museum is unprovenanced. Several brooches with similar motifs housed in the Ashmolean Museum's collection are ascribed to the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

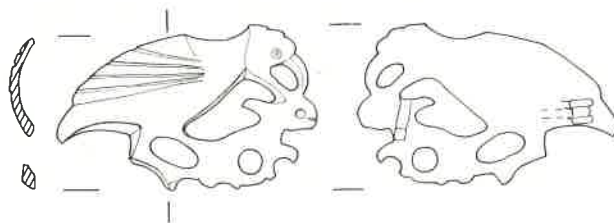


Fig. 37

Asthall: Roman brooch

16. BANBURY: 33-4 High Street - Richard Chambers

Nos. 33-4 High lie within the area occupied by the medieval town (PRN 13,021; site centred SP 4543 4542). A watching brief was maintained over building work at the rear of the premises. However after the contractors had cleared the site of modern rubbish it was apparent that little or nothing of any medieval stratigraphy remained. The garden at the rear of nos. 33-4 had been terraced into the hillside at an unknown date removing all medieval stratigraphy. Mechanically dug foundation trenches revealed undisturbed natural subsoil immediately below the surface.

17. BICESTER PRIORY - Humphrey Woods

During the winter of 1980-1 a gas pipe was laid across the western edge of the area formerly occupied by the medieval Augustinian Priory. The trenches were shallow and no medieval material was observed (area centred SP 5841 2217; PRN 1593).

18. BLADON - TACKLEY: T.W.A. Water Main - Richard Chambers

A trunk water main has been laid from the Thames Water Authority's pumping station in Tackley (near Weaveley Farm, Tackley) to Burleigh Lodge in Bladon (SP 4473 1368 to SP 4570 1600). The easement skirted the western edge of the Roman villa sited to the north-east of the Bladon roundabout, south of Woodstock in Kidlington Parish (PRN 13,022). Following topsoil removal the entire length of the easement was walked but no archaeological features were observed at that stage nor in the pipe trench.

19. CHARLBURY: Cornbury Park Estate - Brian Durham and  
Mary Harman

At the invitation of the Estate office, George Lambrick and Brian Durham excavated a partially crouched burial with an iron spearhead and two knife blades. The provisional date is sixth-seventh century. There is no previous Saxon evidence from the immediate area, but within a few days of the Unit's visit Tim Copeland had found a child burial at a spot apparently very close to the first. Tim's report (copy at OAU) also shows that the estate workers suspected yet another burial although this could not be confirmed. His findings will be published in the 'Programme of the Charlbury Street Fair' 1982.

Mary Harman examined the skeleton, which was nearly complete, but was in poor condition, the bone being broken and eroded. The size of the bones and the conformation of the skull and pelvis suggest that the bones are those of a male, while wear on the teeth suggests an age of between thirty and forty years. The height, calculated from the length of the tibia, is about 5' 6½" (1.69m.).

On the whole dental health was good though the upper

first left molar was reduced to roots by caries, and there were abscesses associated with both this and the adjacent molar, which was lost *post mortem*. The less severe wear on the left teeth and heavy deposits of calculus even on the occlusal surfaces of the molars were probably connected with the pain from these abscesses: probably more chewing took place on the right side of the mouth. Slight hypoplasia suggests a period of illness or poor diet when the individual was between two and three years of age. Two mid thoracic vertebrae show slight signs of osteo-arthritis. The upper half of the right femur shaft has a twisted appearance and is narrow medio-laterally and wider than normal antero-posteriorly. It is not obviously different in length from the left femur but the two are not complete. There are at least six wormian bones in the lambdoid suture.

20. CHECKENDON: The Devil's Churchyard - Richard Chambers

During 1981 the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group continued work on this Iron Age earthwork enclosure with a level survey. This has provided topographical sections to compliment the earthworks survey (CBA 9, *Newsletter* 10 (1980), 172, Fig.47). The level survey concludes the field work programme on this site (PRN 9, 131; centred SU 65258400).

21. CHURCHILL: Churchill Grounds Farm - David Miles and Mary Harman

In July 1981 a stone coffin was discovered during ploughing of old pasture at Churchill Grounds Farm, 3km south-west of Chipping Norton. The grave was excavated by Duncan Brown and David Miles.

The plough had broken the lid into two parts. The lid was of rough cut limestone 2.04m long, 0.7m wide and 0.15m thick. The surface of the lid was only about 0.005m below the surface of a ridge in the ridge and furrow system which survived in the field.

The coffin was 0.36m deep and one long side was curved so that the whole had a flattened D shape. The coffin contained the body of an adult lying extended on its back with the head to the north-east.

No grave goods were found and the date of the burial is uncertain, however Roman pottery and building material including a possible tessera were found in the ploughsoil around the burial.

In December 1981 Churchill Grounds Farm was revisited after the farm manager had reported finding further Roman material in the field to the north-east of the burial during ploughing. He had dug two holes and located a Romano-British building including a wall of about four courses of limestone about 0.8m wide and pilae tiles *in situ* of an underfloor heating system.

The building, probably a villa, sits on a north-west facing slope on a band of lias clay. The ground rises behind it to the south east onto Clypeus grit and Chipping Norton limestone. There is a slight break of slope, creating a platform on which Romano-British debris has been found but the wall and *pilae* were just to the north-west of the edge of the platform.

Pottery from the area spanned the whole of the Romano-British period and suggested a settlement nucleus of about 0.5ha. Romano-British pottery was also found about 300m south of the building around a natural spring suggesting that this area was also utilised.

The skeleton which was virtually complete and in excellent condition was examined by Mary Harman. The large robust bones and conformation of the skull indicate that the individual was male. Wear on the teeth suggests an age of between twenty five and thirty years. The height was about 5' 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (1.67m.). The teeth were in good condition with no sign of caries, though there was an abscess associated with the upper left second molar which was lost *post mortem* and there were deposits of calculus on premolars and molars on that side, including the occlusal surfaces. All the third molars were still erupting, the upper two slightly malpositioned: had they erupted fully they would have protruded slightly laterally from the maxilla. There were very slight signs of osteo-arthritis in the lower thoracic vertebrae. There were, on the exterior surface of the maxilla just above the alveolus, small nodules of bone which were reminiscent of tori. The right humerus was 14mm. longer than the left, but the right lower arm bones were 1 and 2mm shorter.

22. DIDCOT: A4130 Link Road - Richard Chambers

The Didcot and District Historical and Archaeological Society have maintained a watching brief over the initial stages in the construction of the Didcot Link Road. Topsoil stripping revealed grey weathered sub-soil in which archaeological features were difficult to recognise. Field walking the topsoil strip produced occasional Romano-British and medieval pottery sherds. The roadside drainage gulleys provided almost continuous sections along the length of the new road. Several undated ditches and many periglacial features were noted. An area of cropmarks thought to represent an Iron Age/Romano-British settlement was buried beneath an embanked section of the road without having the topsoil removed or drainage gullies dug.

23. DIDCOT: The Rectory - Richard Chambers

Dr. Alan Briggs and members of the Didcot and District Historical and Archaeological Society have continued trial excavations in the grounds of the Victorian rectory (PRNs 12,391 & 13,018-19; SU 5195 9051). The redundant rectory with its garden and orchard occupies approximately 1.7 acres

(0.7ha) of land adjacent to the medieval parish church. The land already has outline planning permission and it is expected that building will commence in the near future.

A totally unexpected discovery has been the recovery of a quantity of early-mid Iron Age pottery sherds present in apparently undisturbed levels. The bulk of this pottery comprises coarse, hand made wares with the exception of one rim sherd from a straight sided vessel decorated with an incised herringbone pattern. The modern garden soil rests upon a weathered grey clayey subsoil in which archaeological features are difficult to see but several post holes have been recognised from their stone packings. The discovery of early Iron Age sites in this area is not common. The present site will help to provide background information against which the results of recent major excavations of other Iron Age settlements may be set.

#### 24. DORCHESTER ABBEY - Richard Chambers

The removal of the organ from the Chapel of St. Birinus to the new organ loft has revealed a low masonry bench against the south wall of the Chapel. Although there is evidence for several alterations to the fabric of this part of the church there was no clue as to the date of the bench. The plaster covering the bench has been repaired (PRN 1930; SU 5792 9420).

#### 25. DORCHESTER BY-PASS - Richard Chambers (Figs.38,39 and 40)

A series of excavations took place during the first half of 1981 in advance of the construction of the Dorchester by-pass (SU 569585 to SU 581481). Labour was supplied through the Youth Opportunities Programme. Members of the Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society enabled excavation to continue seven days a week.

The prime aim of these excavations was to record a group of Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments centred 1km to the north of Dorchester. Part of this prehistoric complex had been lost to gravel quarrying during the 1950's. As a result of Professor Atkinson's excavations in advance of this quarrying the Dorchester Neolithic complex has been recognised as being of national importance.

The largest monument in the Neolithic complex was the cursus. This consisted of two parallel, linear ditches set some 64m apart and with a known length of 1,620m. Although good cropmark evidence existed for the south-eastern terminal no details were known about the north-western end and this remains the case. In common with other British cursuses, both funerary and other monuments of similar age occurred in the vicinity.

Four separate sites were excavated in advance of the bypass sites 1-4 on the accompanying figure.

Site I examined the sub-rectangular south-eastern terminal of the cursus (see the accompanying figure). This comprised a shallow ditch averaging 1m wide by 0.4m deep. A late Neolithic oblique flint arrow head in the upper fill was the only dateable artifact. The terminal ditch was interrupted by a central entrance. A later trackway represented by two parallel ditches, was driven obliquely across the end of the cursus through the terminal entrance.

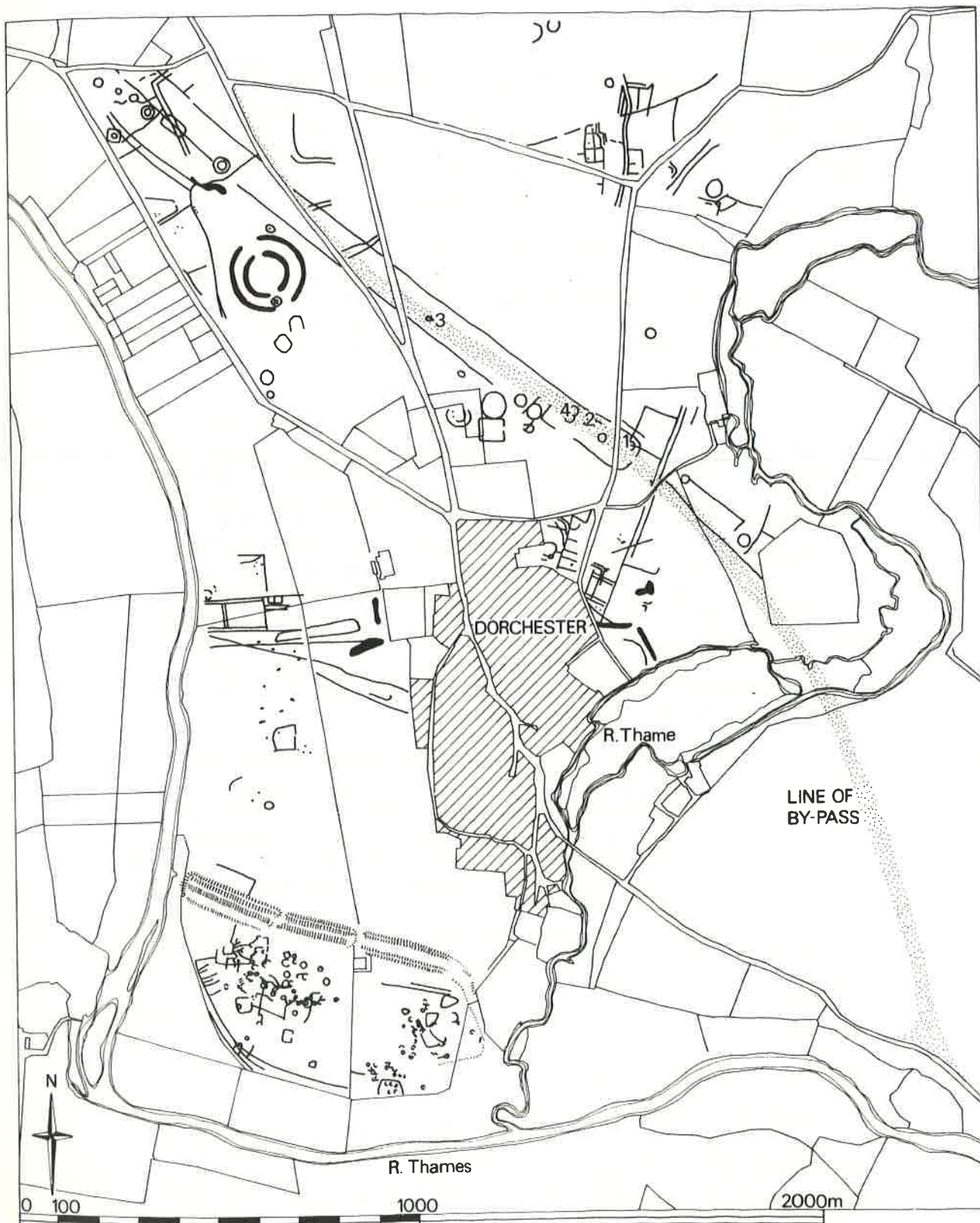
A small, penannular, henge-type enclosure ditch, sited off centre within the cursus terminal was excavated. An antler pick was discovered on top of the primary silting and it will provide a radio-carbon date. When the ditch had virtually silted up the surviving low central mound became the focus for a small cremation cemetery. A heavily burnt flint blade accompanied one of the cremations. Radio-carbon dating will be employed to date these burials accurately.

A much later feature on Site I was the southern edge of one of the main cemeteries to have served the Roman town. The original cemetery enclosure had been laid out on the west side of a Roman road leading out from Dorchester to the River Thames just north of Queenford Farm. An area in the northern part of this cemetery had been excavated in 1972 in advance of gravel extraction. In 1981 nearly eighty burials were excavated from the southern part of the cemetery and the outline of other graves planned. The boundary ditch had silted up before the cemetery went out of use and a small rectangular ditched enclosure surrounding two inhumations was found lying across the cemetery boundary. A composite bone comb was found with one of these inhumations. The comb suggests that burial took place sometime during the last half of the fourth century. The comb was the only grave good to have been found anywhere in the cemetery. The burial rite appears to have been exclusively inhumation. With the exception of one east-west burial all the bodies had been laid west-east (heads to the west). Only a few graves contained evidence of coffins having been included in the burial rite. As in the northern part of the cemetery the graves had been laid out in short, orderly rows. Graves placed in the same orderly fashion to the south of the cemetery enclosure alongside the Roman road appeared to represent a continual use of this area for burial after the cemetery enclosure was full.

Site 2 consisted of a pit cut by a later "interrupted" ditch which from cropmark evidence appears to have once formed a small rectangular causewayed enclosure. In the pit were several human tooth crowns, some small pieces of bone and a flint scraper. Although Romano-British pottery was found in the upper ditch filling, the lower filling was barren of finds and may be earlier.

Site 3 proved to be a Wood-Henge type monument. The cropmark showed a circle of large pits some 20m in diameter. Excavation disclosed that the pits, which varied in size, had





DORCHESTER By Pass 1981

Fig. 38

each held a wooden post. The monument appears to have ended its useful life when each of the posts was burnt *in situ*. In three cases (nos 2009; 2013-4 on the plan) the burning continued down into the pit leaving a clear ring of charcoal preserving the shape of the post. This showed that in each case a whole oak tree had been used. The charcoal will provide a series of radio-carbon dates.

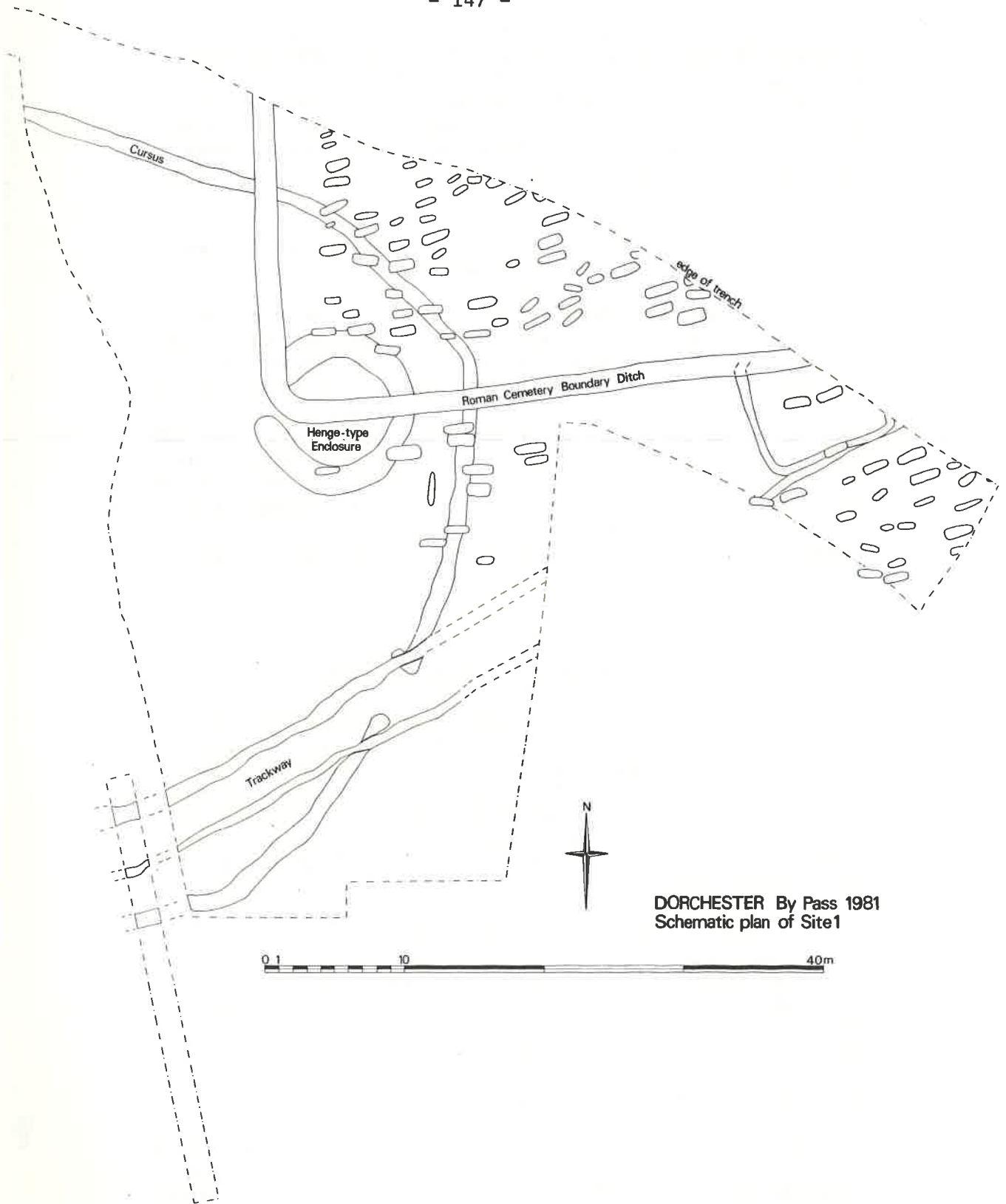
Site 4 consisted of an early Bronze Age ring ditch, the ditch surrounded a mound erected over a cremation buried in a shallow, central pit beneath an inverted "collared urn". Immediately after this primary barrow had been constructed a circular annex was added. A single cremation was found within the annex.

Following these excavations a continuous watch was maintained over the topsoil stripping along the line of the by-pass and also over the excavation of the roadside drainage gullies. The mechanical topsoil stripping was shallow and never penetrated through the subsoil to the underlying gravel. A concentration of worked flint was found in the area between the end of the *cursus* at Queenford Farm and the River Thames. This flint scatter contrasted with the area enclosed by the *cursus* to the north-west of Queenford Farm where very few flints had been recovered both before and after topsoil stripping had taken place. The only new feature recorded was an undated ditch half way between Queenford Farm and the River Thames.

The side ditches of the Roman road beside which the Roman cemetery enclosure had been laid out were also sectioned. The main Roman road which joined Dorchester to Alchester was cut by a drainage gully. The bridlepath to Berinsfield follows the previous road line exactly. Soil had been dumped to create the raised foundation for the road but none of the original road metalling had survived. The road remained a right-of-way since the end of the Roman period it was probably open and unfenced until the 19th century when hawthorn enclosure hedges were planted. The original roadside ditches had been recut at least once during the 19th century.

#### 26. DORCHESTER: 51 High Street - Richard Chambers

Excavation has confirmed the line of the north wall of the Roman town (PRN 1984; SU 5733 9466). The work was undertaken by the Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society and by the Oxford University Archaeological Society. A trench across the southern half of the property sectioned the line of the former town wall. The north wall had been constructed directly on the surface of the underlying gravel. The wall had been entirely robbed of its stone leaving only the impressions of foundation rubble in the gravel surface. This indicated a wall at least 1-8m.wide. Although one edge of the robber trench was clearly defined, protected by the soil from the rampart, the soil covering the



DORCHESTER By Pass 1981  
Schematic plan of Site 1

Fig. 39

berm had been heavily disturbed. A small inner ditch occupied the berm between the main town ditch and the wall. A similar ditch was discovered by Professor S.S. Frere in his excavations across the western defences. Two trenches on the north side of the former builder's yard revealed the inside lip of the main town ditch. No stratigraphic relationship survived between the wall, the inner ditch and the main town ditch.

27. DORCHESTER: Land Adjacent to No.4 Samian Way, Bridge End - Richard Chambers

A watch was kept over ground work for a new bungalow and garage to be built on the line of the rampart behind the assumed line of the Roman town wall on the southern side of the Roman town (PRN 12,397; SU 5786 9893). The south wall of the property was all that remained of a former row of cottages demolished soon after the First World War. Over the rest of the property the ground surface stood well above the levels of neighbouring properties. The level of the site was mechanically reduced by 1m-1.75m. Demolition rubble from the cottages incorporated much burnt material. Their foundations were found at a depth of 1m. The foundations were shallow and laid partly on topsoil.

28. DRAYTON - see No.74

29. DUCKLINGTON: Grain Store - Geoff Williams

A watching brief was kept during groundwork for the erection of a new grain storage depot. The area concerned lay between a backwater and a re-canalized channel of the River Windrush on the Southern edge of the village, and had obviously been used as a dump some time during the late 19th century. It was badly waterlogged and did not produce any archaeological features despite being only 250 metre from the known Romano-British settlement at Red Lodge.

30. DUCKLINGTON: Manor Farm - Geoff Williams

A watching brief is being kept on this new housing development which adjoins the Ducklington By-pass. From observations so far, it would appear that the South eastern part of the site is an infilled quarry.

31. FENCOTT & MURCOTT: Ivy Farm - Richard Chambers

The preliminary result from the wood sample submitted to A.E.R.E. Harwell for radio-carbon dating has confirmed the dendrochronological dates derived for two piles from the Roman timber bridge reported in last year's annual report (PRN 11,881; SP 5720 1688). Dr John Fletcher of the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art at Oxford has calculated the felling dates for the oak trees from which the two piles were made as soon after 95 AD. A summary of recent advances in Roman and Saxon dendrochronological dating

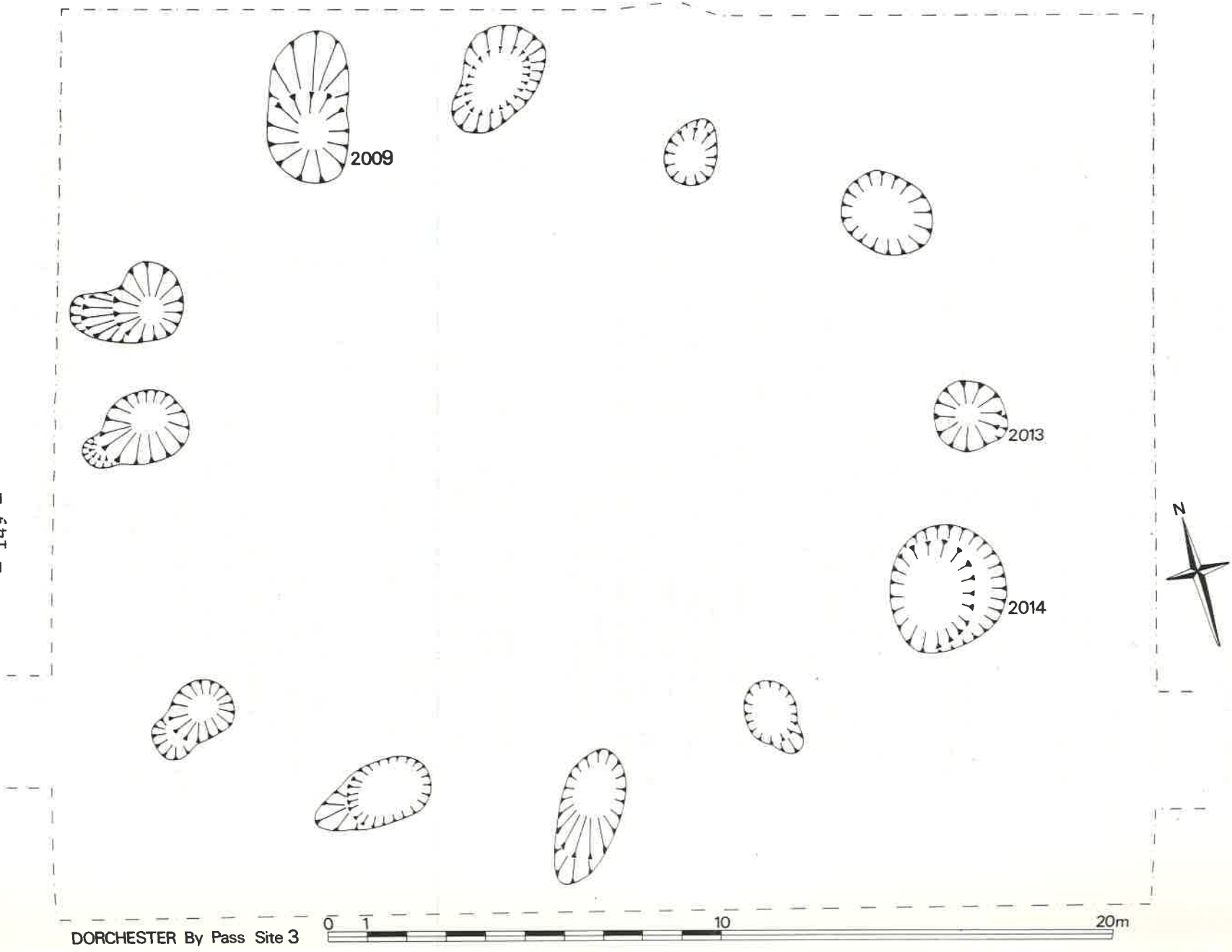


Fig. 40

technique which includes Dr Fletcher's work on the Otmoor bridge has been published in *Current Archaeology* no. 76, 150-2.

32. FRILFORD: Noah's Ark - Richard Hingley (Figs.41 and 42)

The site at the Noah's Ark, Frilford is well known. The site consists of an Iron Age/Roman temple and also of an extensive late Roman/early Saxon cemetery excavated by numerous individuals in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In addition the site forms the point at which a Roman road crossed the river Ock. This road may originally have run to Alchester although the roads course has been lost over much of this route.

Detailed fieldwork undertaken by Richard Hingley over the past four years has produced evidence for a Roman "small town" of about 30 ha (72 acres) in the vicinity of the road/river crossing, temple and cemetery. Work during the survey has also led to the unexpected discovery of an amphitheatre. Trial excavations were carried out on this amphitheatre in August 1981.

The amphitheatre lies in a field called "trendles" (meaning "circle" or "ring") and the name presumably refers to the structure and must have originated at some time in the past when the earth work was more clearly defined than it is today. However the significance of the name was not realised until after an examination of air photographs and ground survey indicated the presence of an amphitheatre constructed into a dry valley which runs down to the river Ock to the east of the temple.

The amphitheatre is approximately circular with a total diameter of about 65m. The arena is about 45m in diameter and has been lowered in order to provide material for a surrounding bank 11 to 14m wide, on which wooden seats for spectators would have been located.

The air photographs indicate entrances on the west and possibly on the east of the structure. A small rectangular walled alcove is also clear in the bank on the south.

Excavation was intended to confirm the date of the structure and to examine its state of preservation. To this end one trial trench was cut across the bank and was excavated down into the arena. A second trial trench was excavated with the intention of locating the small rectangular chamber which was visible on aerial photographs to the south of the amphitheatre.

The first trench uncovered the bank of the amphitheatre which survived as only a slight earthwork. The bank was constructed of yellow clay with an admixture of white clay and rubble. No clear sign of revetting wall was found on the outer side of the bank. On the arena side a mortared stone

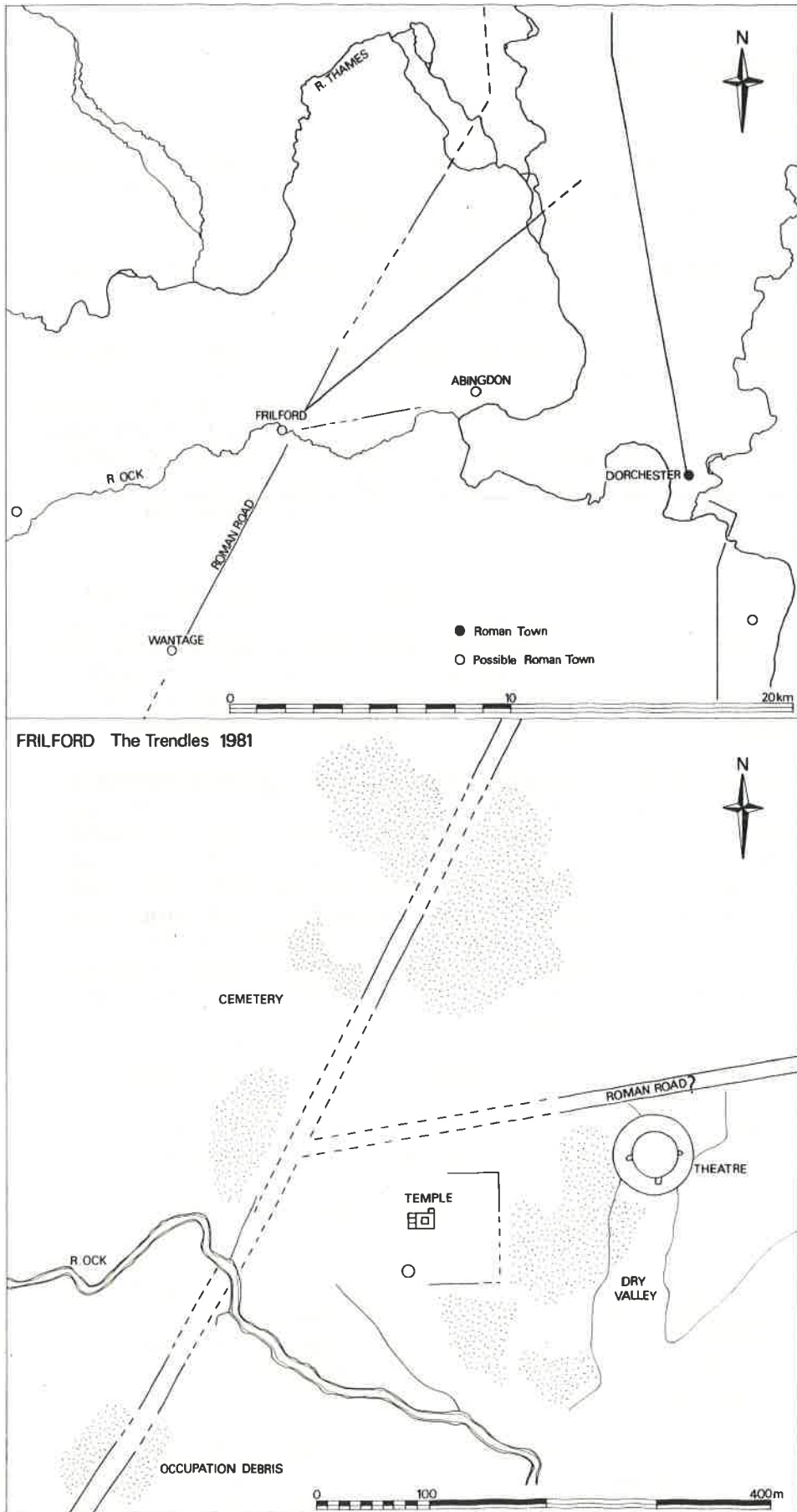


Fig. 41

wall was found and a possible floor level was found 1.5m below the ground level.

The second trench uncovered part of the rectangular chamber in the south of the bank of the amphitheatre. It may be part of an entrance or a spectator box and it can be paralleled at other amphitheatres in Britain.

The trenches produced some Roman pottery, animal bones and three late Roman coins, but close dating was not possible

Temples with associated theatres are a common occurrence in Gaul. In Britain temples associated with theatres are known at Gosbecks (Essex), Catterick (N.Yorks) and Verulamium (Herts). Possible amphitheatre-temple associations are less common. At Richborough (Kent) the amphitheatre is far closer to the temple site than to the fort with which it is sometimes thought to be associated. A further possible example is at Winterslow (Wilts).

It is assumed that such theatres would have been used for religious festivities of one form or another. Theatres had stages and as such would be ideal for religious acts and displays. Amphitheatres had large arenas and were primarily designed for fights of various forms, but they could also have been used in connection with religious ceremonials.

The presence of an amphitheatre at Frilford presumably indicates that the site was a major cult centre; the temple must have attracted worshippers from a wide area. It seems possible that some of the buildings traced via fieldwork in the area between the temple and amphitheatre were connected directly with the temple complex. Associated buildings are likely to have included a guest-house, bath-house and possibly a priests' house. This situation is paralleled on the continent and possibly at British temple sites such as Harlow and Gosbecks (Essex).

Religious centres are known to have attracted market functions in diverse cultural contexts and the existence of an extensive "small town" at the Noah's Ark Inn may also indicate that the site was a market centre of some form.

33. HANBOROUGH: Church Hanborough, The Cottage -  
Richard Chambers

A one-metre square post pit dug to repair a horse shelter yielded several kilograms of Romano-British pottery (PRN 8797; SP 4257 1312). The pottery dated to the 1st-2nd centuries AD. It had come from a boundary ditch which ran in a NW direction.

The ditch was re-cut once and then backfilled with soil and domestic rubbish. The filling was subsequently roughly paved over with large, irregular pieces of limestone. Some of the stone was burnt and all had been re-used. A large storage jar was set into the paving to a depth of 0.45m.



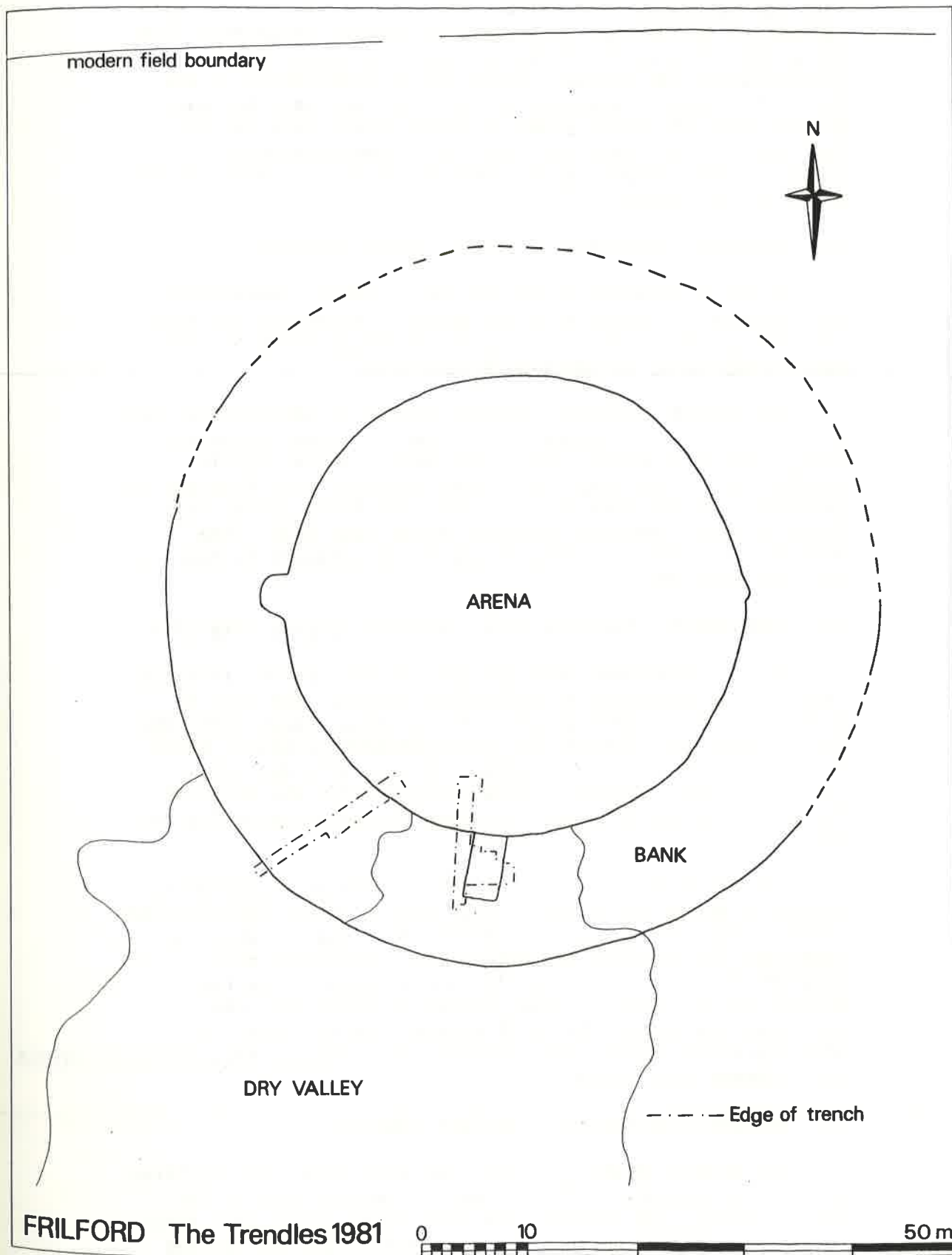


Fig. 42

The pit in which the vessel was set cut through the ditch into the natural gravel below. The base of the jar had been wrapped in yellow clay apparently to provide protection from the gravel. The mouth of the jar had originally stood 10-15cm. above the paving. There was no evidence as to the use of the vessel, although it may have been used for water storage. Several chance finds of Roman period material have been made in the immediate vicinity in previous years. Several linear cropmarks have been noted in the field to the north of the shelter.

34. HARDWICK: Manor Farm Cottage - Geoff Williams

Prior to alterations to the above premise, permission was received to excavate in the garden area to the south of the cottage and close to the Hardwick Bypass where an Iron age to Roman site was excavated in 1976.

The topsoil yielded a medium scatter of abraded 1st-4th century pottery contemporary with the previously excavated site. The only feature was a ring ditch, which (had it existed in its entirety) would have measured some 8 metres in diameter. It had been cut into the underlying gravel to a depth of 20cm., with an entrance on the west side. The feature contained no artefacts and it is presumed to date to the late Iron age.

35. KIDDINGTON: Tomlin's Gate - Richard Hingley (Fig.43 )

Trial excavations were carried out on a rather irregular 'banjo' type enclosure in Kiddington parish. The site is known from aerial photography and lies on a slight north west facing slope just inside the north Oxfordshire Grim's Ditch (a supposed "territorial oppidum" of late Iron Age date). Excavation was intended to locate and examine the ditch of the enclosure and provide stratified dating evidence for the site.

The ditch of the enclosure was located and appeared to contain a series of recuts. There were no finds and the site remains undated but it is presumably Iron age. However an intensive fieldwalking project carried out during the excavation produced some quantities of pottery from the surface of the field. This pottery clusters over the enclosure and appears to be of middle Iron Age date. In addition flint flakes, some possible daub and two Millstone grit rubbers were found.

36. LAUNTON: The Rectory - Richard Chambers

The Launton History Society has kept watch over building work in the grounds of the rectory at Launton next to the parish church. No material has been found, although a large spread of medieval pottery was recorded to the west during the insertion of land drains in 1980

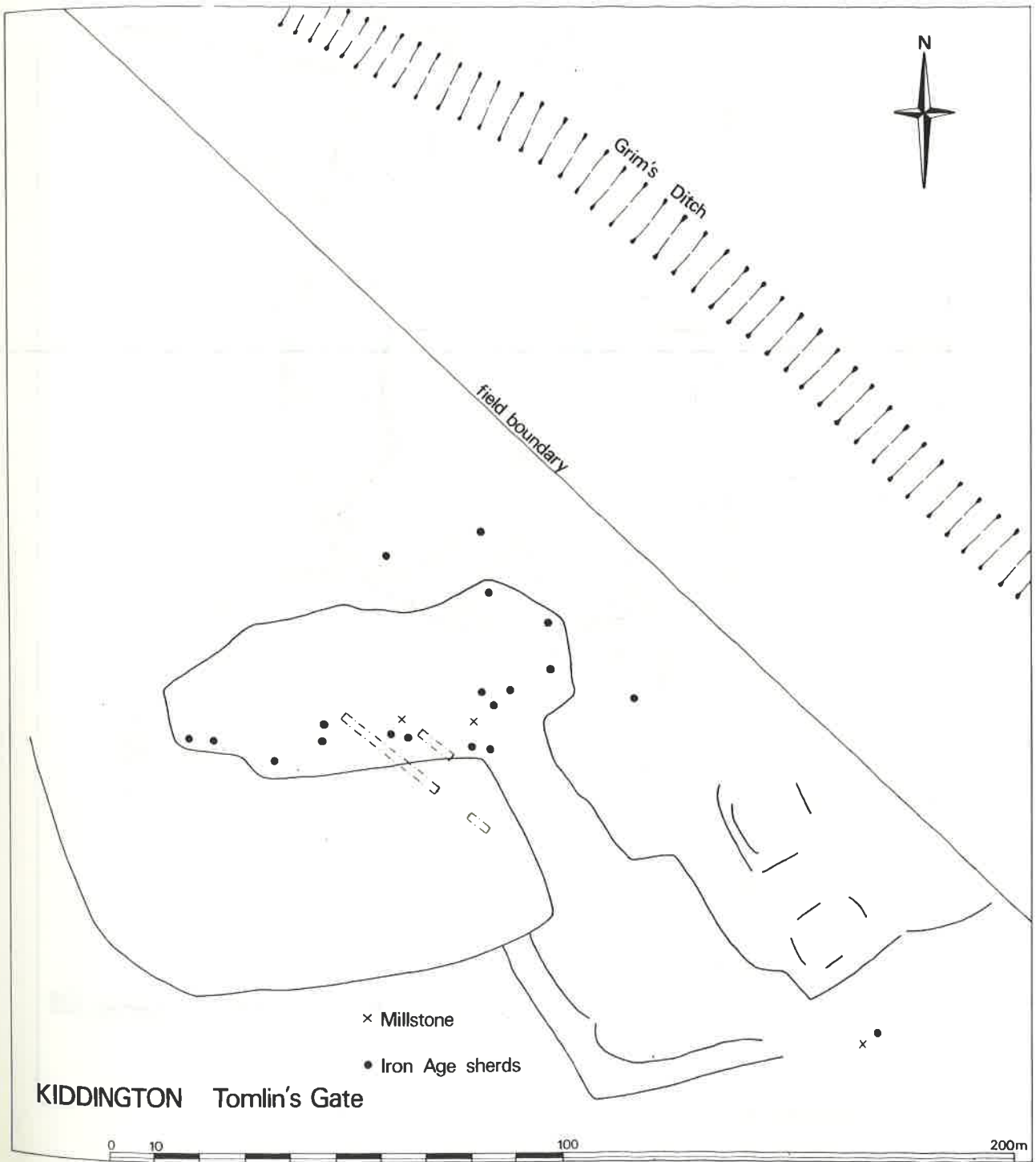


Fig. 43

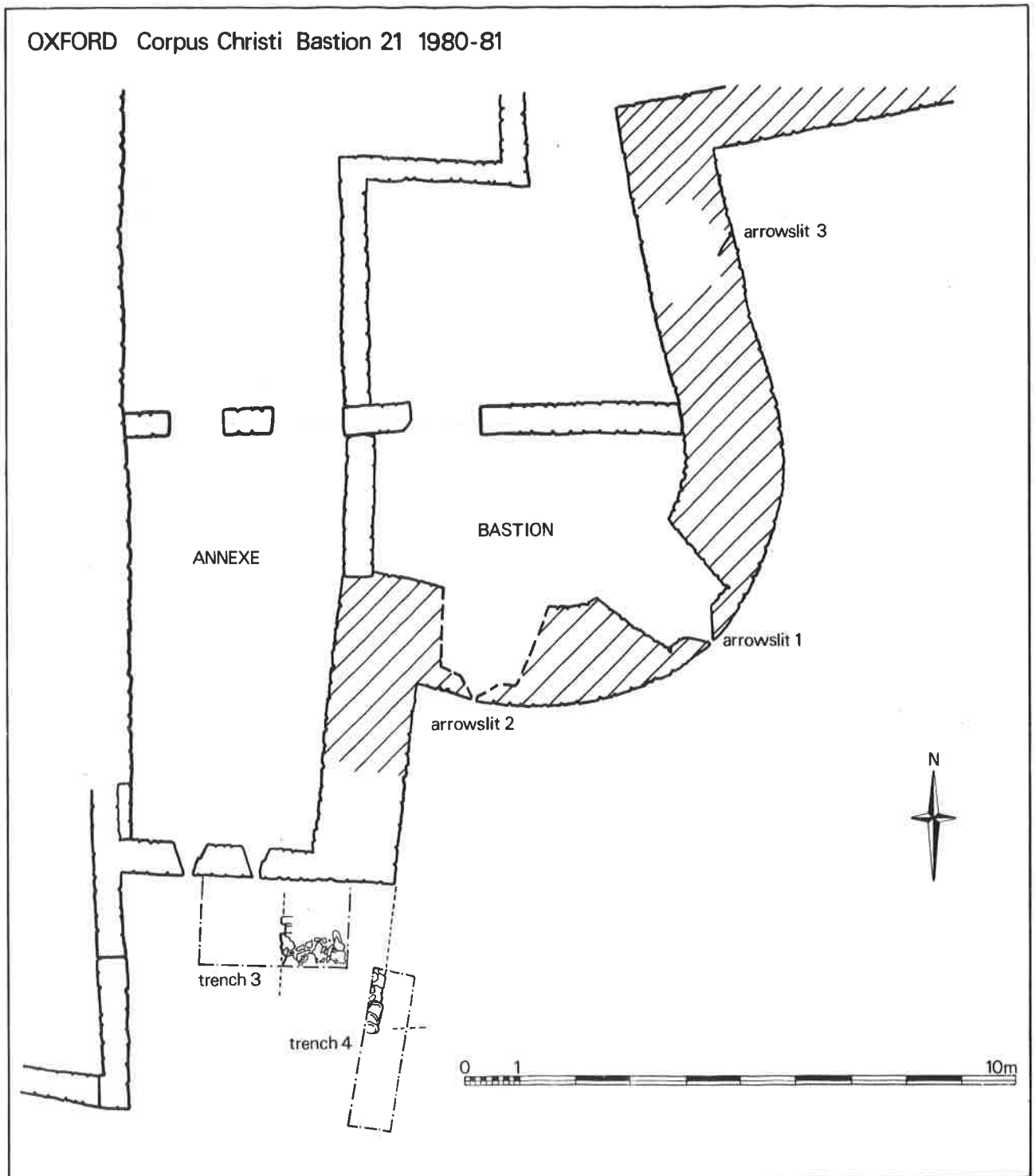


Fig. 44

37. LONG WITTENHAM: North Field Farm - Richard Chambers

In January 1980 trial excavation was undertaken to evaluate the likely effect of a proposed land drainage scheme on the scheduled cropmark site at Northfield Farm (centred SU 55999546; AM No. 180). The particular part of the site contained no cropmarks however the area was examined to confirm that the site would not be damaged. No features were found in four trenches and the absence of recognisable archaeological features was confirmed by an inspection of the land drainage trenches themselves.

38. OXFORD: Between Towns Road, Cowley - Brian Durham

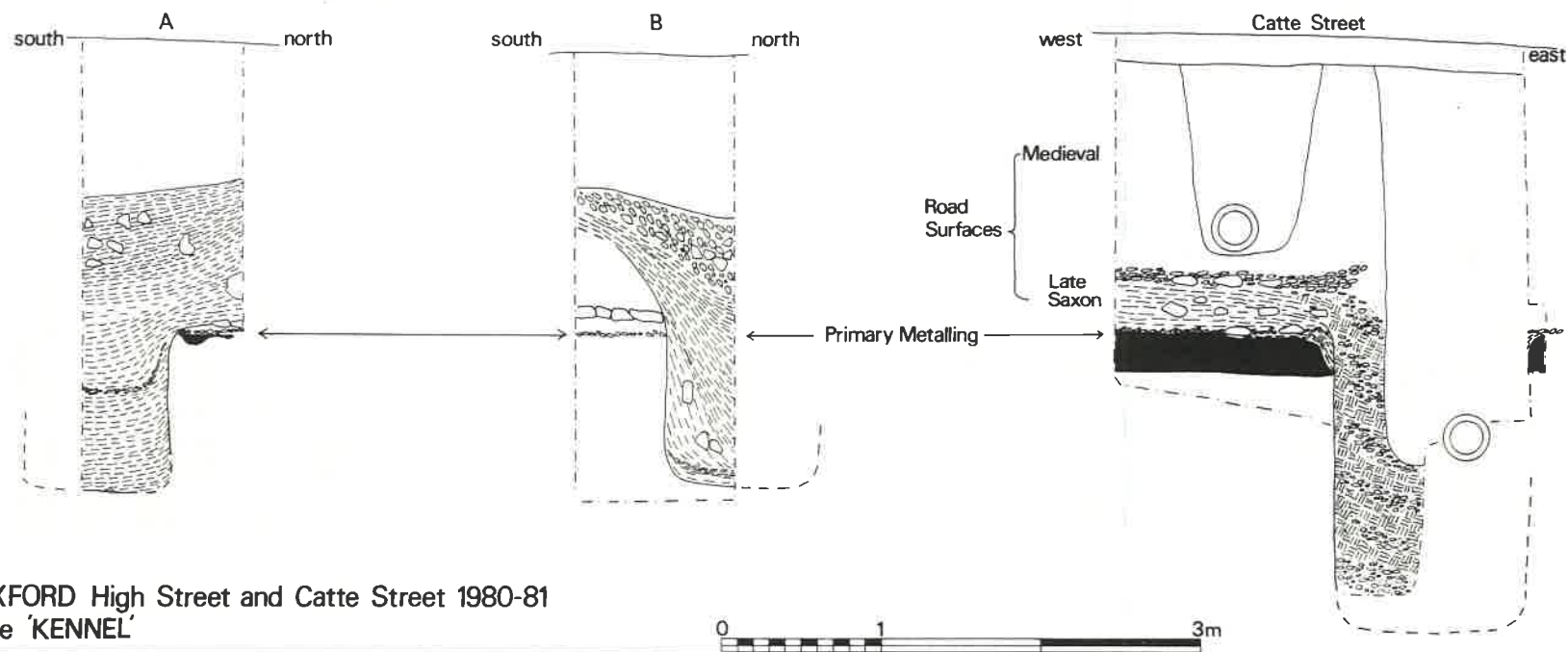
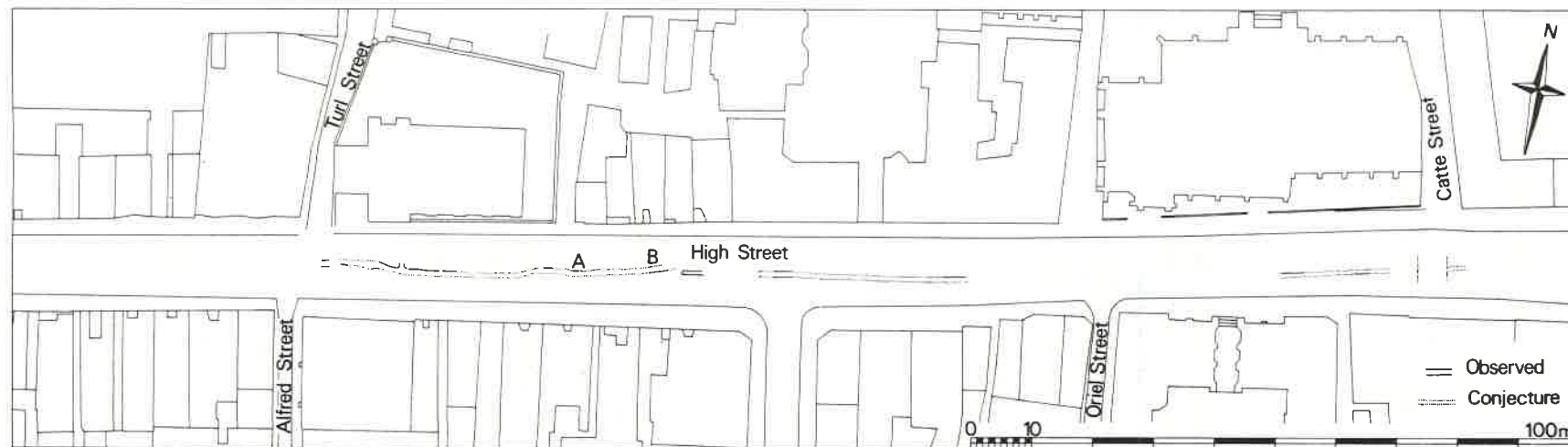
The foundation grid of a large office development made it possible to plot the distribution of Roman features on this important kiln site first identified in 1936. The number of known features has now been doubled with large ditches, puddling platforms and pits. It has also been possible to confirm the location of a second century kiln just outside the new area. The latter evidence comes from a large stoke-hole, packed with mortaria with illiterate stamps, and surrounded by waster heaps which on three occasions have produced sherds stamped VOSSULOS or VASSULUS. The kiln itself must be beneath the new car park, and was presumably worked by Vossulus for a period, after which it was abandoned with the work of his illiterate successors.

39. OXFORD: Christ Church Meadow & Floyd's Row -  
Brian Durham

Contractor's excavations for the City's new trench sewer showed a major medieval river channel beneath the Broad Walk in Christ Church Meadow. This is possibly the channel shown on Agas's plan in 1578, and it increases the plethora of major watercourses on this side of the town. One channel which still survives as a topographical feature is the Trill Mill Stream on the east side of St. Aldates. A large manhole at the townward end of the new sewer gave a section across this channel which, as usual, turns out to have been very wide, with a sequence of three fragmentary stone river walls on its west bank, the earliest dating to the thirteenth century.

40. OXFORD, Corpus Christi College - Brian Durham (Fig.44)

As part of an in-service training scheme Eleanor Forfang excavated part of the interior of Bastion 21, surveyed the remainder of the medieval masonry, and then dug two small trenches in the adjoining Canon's Garden of Christ Church to investigate the wall line to the south. This Bastion is the largest surviving one at Oxford unique in English town defences because it is on an inside angle where the wall turns a right-angle to enclose the Cathedral precinct. The excavation of an embrasure left no doubt that the structure is medieval, but provided no reason why it should be so



OXFORD High Street and Catte Street 1980-81  
The 'KENNEL'

strongly fortified. The most likely explanation is that it was defending a gate or postern linking Shidyard Street (now Oriel Street) with a ford below St Frideswide's mentioned in 1265. The arrow slits are sited to defend an east-facing gate just to the south, but there were no signs of jambs in the surviving masonry. There was however tenuous evidence of another flanking bastion to the south, heavily robbed, and unavailable for excavation since it lies beneath the canopy of a superb 17th century Oriental Plane tree.

41. OXFORD: High Street, - Brian Durham (Fig.45)

A watching brief during the laying of a new drain down the middle of the High Street produced evidence of 12th century pits, presumably used by market traders, and a well constructed "kennel"(central gutter) of a similar date. The contractor's work could normally only be watched from the top of the trench, with brief digging forays during work breaks. Dating evidence was therefore minimal, but features could be clearly recognised in section.

As the trench proceeded westwards, a broad ditch was seen opposite the end of Catte Street, but even at six feet the contractor's trench was still not deep enough to be sure whether the gravel was cut by a Saxon defensive ditch opposite St Mary the Virgin. By this stage it was clear however that one of the 'pits' was unusual, being of indefinite length and full of soft silt. This was clearly an early surface water drain, or "kennel", and in two places the new trench was deep enough to give cross sections. Its walls were so straight that it must have been timber-lined to prevent weathering and erosion, though no timber survived. If it had been cleaned out, it must have been carefully done because there were no recuts, although it is possible that one butt-ended section was a kennel disused in the tenth century, replaced by a more northerly line outside our trench.

The City Engineer's trench was laser-straight, but the kennel clearly wandered. The most likely explanation is that it was respecting blocks of property which had encroached, such as the All Saints Church block. The twelfth century pottery from the fill of the kennel gives the date when the deep channel was abandoned. If its wanderings respected encroaching frontages then its line was presumably only established after there had been some urban growth. But the original street surfaces must have been drained somehow, as there has never been any sign of serious weather damage. The kennel compares so well with the Catte Street ditch recorded last year they they must be treated as identical, and the latter seems to have been abandoned before the Conquest. So perhaps one should see the kennel as late Saxon defining the area of street which the individual householder was obliged to keep paved.

Unlike the Salisbury kennels and the Winchester brooks, Oxford's kennel would have had no source of flowing water. But it would still have been a hazard to unwary pedestrians, and it is possible that it was planked over. After the twelfth century it would have degenerated into a shallow ditch which may have been lined with chain stones, but if so they had been salvaged at each re-paving. See below No.74.

42. OXFORD: New Inn Hall Street, Frewin Hall - Brian Durham

A watching brief on the re-furbishing of the twelfth century undercroft provided an opportunity to dig a small hole down from the ground floor onto the top of Oxford's oldest surviving vault. There were about seven floor layers, presumably from the medieval life of the building, but yielding no dating evidence. However the deepest layer of fill, just above the vault, produced eleven sherds of twelfth century pottery, provisionally dating to about 1150. This is slightly later than the date of the vault from John Blair's architectural evidence.

43. OXFORD: Oriel College, the Provost's Lodging -  
Brian Durham

Refurbishing work in the college exposed a long narrow chamber built ingeniously into the footings of an outside wall and chimney stack. There was evidence that it was a deliberate attempt at concealment during the decade before the Civil War. Its use as a cess pit is likely to have been secondary therefore, but for coprophiliacs it has some interesting aspects. Firstly, the 'tide line' was well above the floor level of the adjoining cellar and must have caused offensive seepage. Secondly the chamber had only one opening and all the stench would have been released into the house. Thirdly, Mark Robinson has shown that for every fruit seed that went down, a fly came up, to add to the noisome atmosphere of the seventeenth century Provost's household.

44. OXFORD: Rewley Abbey - Brian Durham

The site of this small Cistercian abbey came within the area of an ambitious commercial and residential development proposed by British Rail and associates. It offers the possibility of total excavation if funds are available. The trial trench dug this year was designed to locate the north wall of the chapel range and assess the condition of the structure and depth of overburden. It is clear that there will be far more post-dissolution modification than has been seen on other Oxford religious houses, but the main medieval wall was intact. A metre of Victorian rubbish has protected it from any ill effects of the current usage as a coal-yard.

45. OXFORD: 65 St Aldates and 92 St Aldates - Brian Durham

Oxford's main Thames crossing is still producing surprises, continuing the story outlined in our last two



annual reports. Thames Water Authority installed a new valve in an 18" water main opposite No. 92 for which they had to dig through solid mortared rubble. This seems likely to be a stone bridge of the 'Grandpont' type crossing the enlarged Trill Mill Stream just outside the south gate. More recently a brief rescue excavation at 65 St Aldates has now shown how the main Grandpont frontage to the south was developed on reclaimed land in the thirteenth century, and beneath this was a stone ford abandoned in the late 11th century.

The former Morris Garages premises are being refurbished as a complex of Crown and County Courts, and the generous cooperation of P.S.A. and George Wimpey Ltd has enabled the Unit to complete the study of the threatened part of the frontage. It seems originally to have been a flat-bottomed river channel across which a ford was constructed on 0.5m of stone rubble. This was ninth or tenth-century on the evidence of two sherds of coarse pottery, but there is little doubt that it had been widened, and its original course beneath the modern road may belong to the period of the Mercian clay causeway further north, i.e. c 800. However that may be, the surface finds from the ford were of the late 11th century, after which a metre thickness of fine silt accumulated over a period of about a century. Its abandonment would therefore agree well with the documented construction of Grandpont by 1092, and provides further circumstantial evidence for what is perhaps the earliest known medieval stone bridge in England. This causeway may be part of the earliest known medieval stone bridge in England. The silt accumulating on its upstream side would have gradually encouraged the idea of building houses against it to take advantage of passing trade, and this process began in the late 12th to early 13th century (provisional dating).

46. OXFORD: Turl Street, New Foul Sewer - Brian Durham

Sections were observed at four feet intervals as a hand-dug tunnel inched its way up Turl Street. The ubiquitous Late Saxon primary street metalling was recorded in many of the sections, and it can be shown that the street was then much straighter than it is now. It is assumed that the deflection was caused by the westward extension of All Saints Church.

47. RADLEY: Lower Farm - see below No.74

48. RADLEY: Thrupp Farm - see below No.74

49. SANDFORD-ON-THAMES: Village Hall - Richard Chambers

The new village hall occupies a position on the west side of the Sandford-Oxford road (PRN 11,588;SP 5335 0180). The area between the road and the Norman parish church was until recently covered by earthwork remains of the medieval village which were recorded in 1980. A substantial proportion of these earthworks were levelled to create the

present recreation ground. Construction work for the new village hall has now destroyed more of the earthworks and revealed medieval building and domestic debris. Fragments of 13th-15th century pottery, animal bone, shell, fire ash and trace of a cobbled surface were recorded.

50. STANTON HARCOURT: Brown's Pit - Geoff Williams

A watch was maintained during topsoil stripping prior to gravel extraction. No archaeological evidence was found.

51. STEVENTON: Manor Farm - Richard Chambers

The surface of a field centred 200 metres north of the medieval parish church at Steventon has been raised 0.6 - 0.9m. using soil surplus to the construction of the Didcot Link Road (PRN 13,023; Centred SU 46409126). The field lies on the eastern side of the causeway leading to the Mill Farm and formerly comprised permanent marshy pasture. The initial bulldozing of the topsoil did not reveal any archaeological material. The irregular surface of the field seems to have caused by periodic flooding leading to the erosion of natural surface drainage channels.

52. SUTTON COURTENAY: Amey Roadstone Gravel Pit -  
Richard Chambers

A tooth and a four foot long section of a woolly mammoth's tusk and part of a tooth from a woolly rhinoceros have been recovered from the base of the gravel deposits.

53. THAME: 87 High Street - Richard Chambers

This building is a three bay cruck built house of the 14th century which appears to belong to the westward expansion of the new town (PRN 11,488; SP 7050 0606). Renovation work recently involved the excavation of several foundation trenches. One trench revealed that the central bay formerly contained a cellar walled with mortared limestone rubble. The cellar may have reached beneath the whole of the actual bay. However there was no evidence that the cellar was an original feature of the house. The cellar was filled in possibly during the second quarter of the 20th century and sealed with a two-layer concrete floor incorporating a damp proof paper membrane.

54. THOMLEY: Deserted Medieval Village - Richard Chambers

Excavation of a drainage ditch across the site of the medieval village has provided several sherds of medieval pottery and a possible boundary ditch from the former settlement (PRN 1077; SP 631090).

55. WALLINGFORD: Bridge House Old People's Home -  
Richard Chambers

Bridge House is situated to the south of the medieval castle inside the late Anglo-Saxon town defences (PRN 12,395; SU 8942 6093). A substantial wall foundation of unknown date was revealed in a foundation trench for a laundry extension. The foundation lay at a depth of 0.6m from the present ground surface. It was 0.9m wide and was constructed of chalk and flint rubble set in lime mortar. Another mortared chalk rubble wall foundation, 0.45m wide, had been set on top of the first wall footing. This later footing only appeared in one side of the trench and appeared not to be directly related to the foundation beneath. An accumulation of occupation levels continued down beyond the deepest point reached by the foundation trench at 1.5m. No pottery was found.

56. WITNEY: Burwell Farm Estate - Geoff Williams

A watch is being kept on the extension to the above housing site, which lies some 200 metres north of the Roman cemetery excavated at Coral Springs, Curbridge in 1976. The previous site lay on the clay, but the area currently being developed is covered by a 20cm layer of cornbrash. There are no distinguishable archaeological features to date, but the topsoil has yielded several badly abraded coins, various fragments of bronze, and a few sherds, all of which are from the late 3rd Century AD.

57. WITNEY: 27 Market Square - Richard Chambers

The excavation of the medieval frontage is being undertaken by the Witney and District Archaeological and Historical Society (PRN 13,024; SP 3563 0958). A clay floor with a central open hearth as yet undated has been found. Only residual medieval pottery has been found.

58. WITNEY: Newland Mill - Geoff Williams

This site of a former blanket mill which was destroyed by fire in 1971 has been purchased for housing development. During the construction of cellars for the dwellings, a ditch, some 2 m wide and 12.8 m deep was observed running parallel with the scarp of the Windrush floodplain, and has so far been traced for a distance in excess of 100 m. Apart from a few sherds of Oxford and Gloucester ware dating from the 11th Century from the uppermost layers of the feature, the remainder of the observed sections have been devoid of dateable material. From its extreme length and topography, it is possible that the ditch forms the southern boundary of an Iron Age lowland hill fort. The nearest other known Iron Age site lies 1.2 kilometres to the southeast and consists of a similar length of ditch which possibly formed part of an enclosure.

59. WROXTON ST MARY: Barn Lodge - Richard Chambers

The reduction of the ground surface surrounding the former barn has now been completed. No further burials from the Romano-British cemetery were found (PRN 11,870; SP 4150 4185).

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

60. FAIRFORD/LECHLADE: Claydon Pike - David Miles  
(Figs.46,47,48 and 49 )

In 1981 excavation at Claydon Pike has concentrated on two major areas: the first in Lechlade parish uncovered a Middle Iron Age settlement and associated fields, also Romano-British fields and a metalled road; the second in Fairford parish was within the nucleated Romano-British settlement.

The middle Iron Age settlement was the third gravel 'island' of middle Iron Age settlement to be excavated at Claydon Pike. The tongue shaped 'island' was surrounded by marshy deposits and subdivided across its central area by a series of straight middle Iron Age ditches. The resulting rectangular settlement area (60 x 40m) included ten round houses and a four-post structure. A pair of stone packed post-holes is thought to indicate the door of an eleventh house of which they are the only surviving trace. The houses belonged to several phases, with a maximum of four or five contemporary with each other.

The standard house as in the previous two settlement areas of this period was sited inside a circular drainage gully c. 10m in diameter with an entrance to the south-west. A pair of stone-packed post-holes c. 2m apart indicated the doorway. In one house the faint line of a stake built wall was traced forming a circle 8 m in diameter. Inside each house there was usually a clay-lined pit, full of burnt stones. The pits were possibly used as cooking pits or as water containers; burnt stone was ubiquitous and its purpose uncertain. Several houses showed evidence of rebuilding as much as three times with recut drainage gullies and replaced door posts.

Most houses seemed to be single units but one pair stood facing each other. The southerly house had a north-western entrance facing directly into the entrance of a second house, 5m away. The northerly structure was the only one of the two with a clay-lined pit and also to be rebuilt.

The most northerly house on the 'island' was of a different construction to the rest. It consisted of a circle (6.5m diameter) of post-holes and a projecting pair of door posts. The preserved line of the outer wall (8.5m diameter) was not traceable.

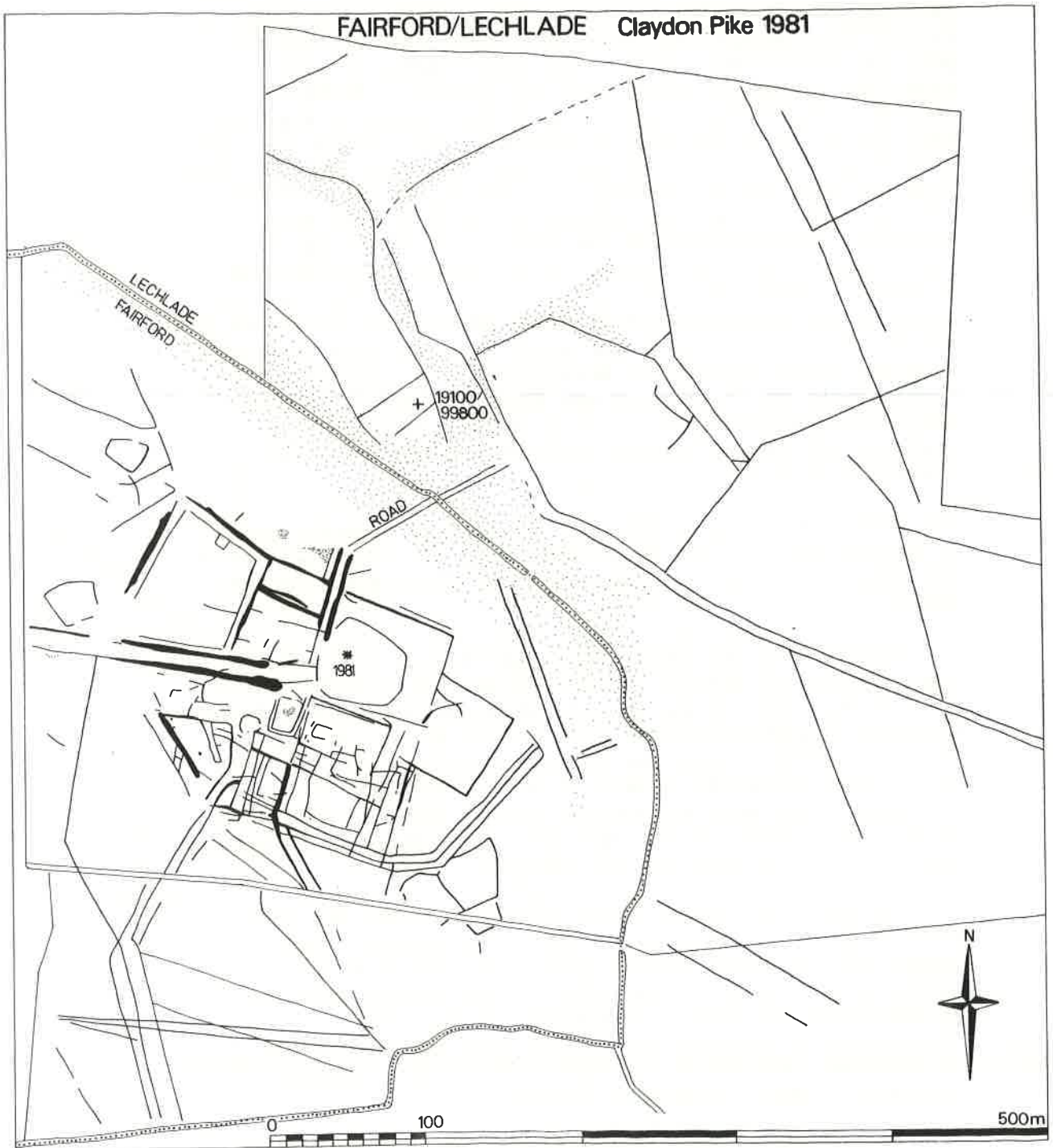


Fig. 46

The 'island' was surrounded by marshy areas. Sections through these revealed a basal layer of peat circa 0.7m thick. Tree stumps and roots were found growing into the peat all around the island. The upper layers of peat contained sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery. Along the western side of the island the peat was sealed by a gravel bank thrown up in the Middle Iron Age. It appears that the peat stopped growing about that time - perhaps 300 B.C. The Iron Age bank was cut through by a series of Romano-British ditches. The latest ones showed evidence of post-Roman flooding. Alluvium filled the upper half of the ditches and was a maximum of 0.8m thick. The alluvium contained snails of fresh flowing water (see below No.73). If the alluvium dates to the immediately post-Roman period then it may be the result of the collapse of the local land drainage system, and possibly a more widespread deterioration in climate. The increasingly wet conditions may have influenced the Saxon settlement pattern with its local foci at Fairford and Lechlade and parish boundary through the middle of the Claydon Pike settlement complex.

Medieval and post-medieval documentary evidence points to the use of the area as pasture until the establishment of the first post-Roman settlements - two seventeenth century farms.

Middle Iron Age fields have been traced over 16ha. of the first gravel terrace orientated basically north-east - south-west. Most of the ditches were shallow and meandered slightly, often around the edges of the marshy deposits. They are barely visible on the aerial photographs and have mostly been traced by excavation and large scale topsoil stripping. The most substantial ditch, the only one to be recut in the Roman period, may have been the boundary between two 'islands' of Iron Age settlement.

In the Roman period fields were found over the same area, aligned basically north-west - south-east. The Romano-British field ditches only coincided with the prehistoric ones along the edges of the marshes with the exception of the largest 'boundary' ditch. The Romano-British ditches were larger than the prehistoric ditches and laid out in straight lines though forming irregularly shaped geometric blocks.

The parallel lines of Romano-British trackway ditches were traced for about 800m running north-west - south-east. Where the trackway met the relict channel of the present day parish boundary stream it turned sharply south-west towards the nucleated Romano-British settlement. In the marshy area the trackway was buried beneath 0.8m of post Roman alluvium. In this wet area the road was well constructed with a foundation of limestone blocks, covered by a layer of gravel and surfaced with small limestone cobbles. The cambered road was about 5m wide with 1.5m wide ditches on either side. How the stream passed under or through the road has not yet been

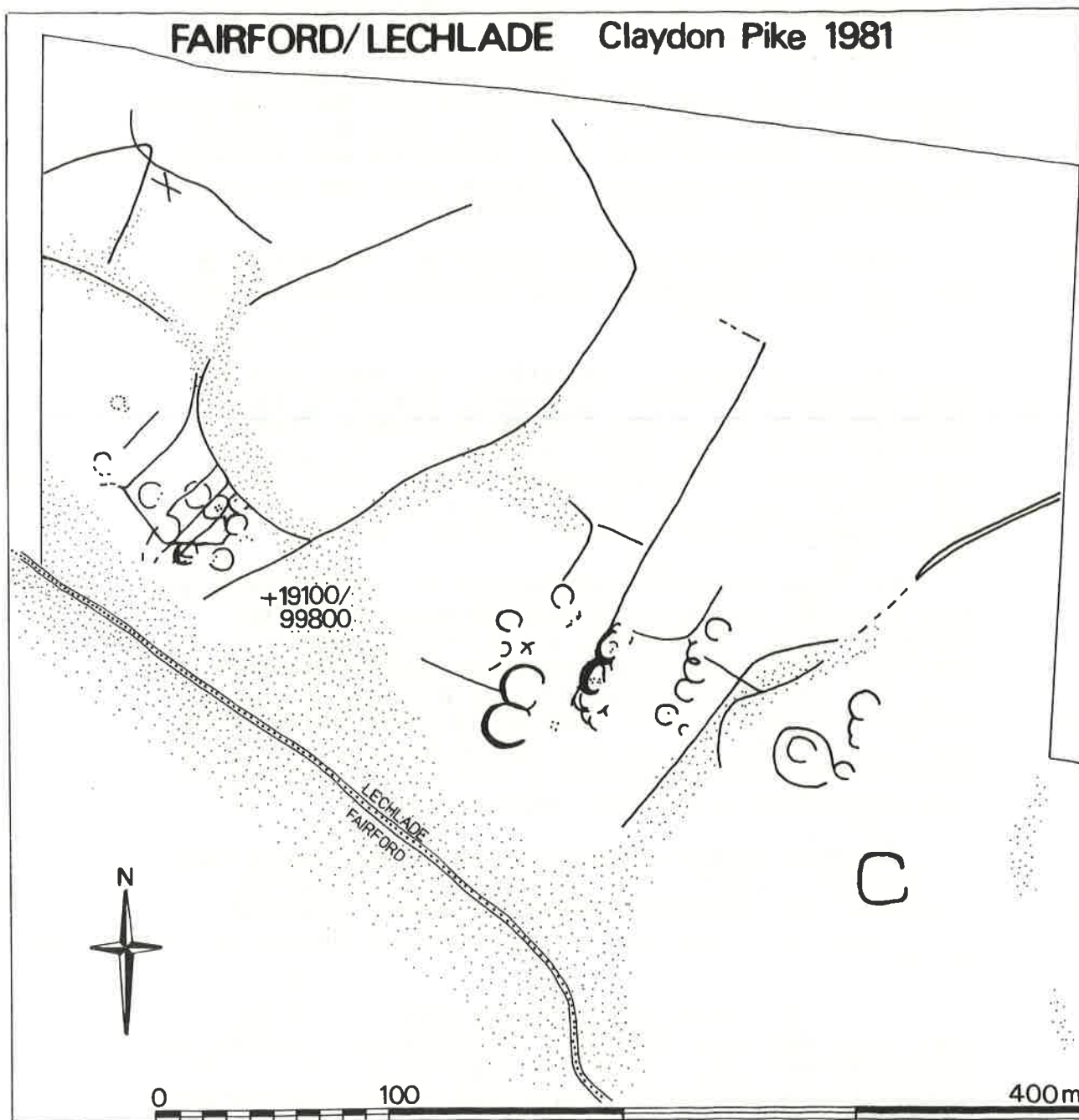


Fig. 47

Fairford/Lechlade: Claydon Pike - Middle Iron Age Settlement

discovered. There is no trace of a bridge, so conduits are a possibility.

The road ran into the Romano-British settlement and acted as its main street. Branching off from the street were side lanes, some of which were metalled where they crossed damp areas. Where the underlying surface was well-drained gravel neither the main street nor the side lanes had any trace of additional limestone metalling.

A trench of 0.8ha has been opened up at the centre of the settlement uncovering a large, platform (80 x 64m) and two smaller enclosures.

The laying out of the rectilinear settlement plan has been provisionally dated to the second half of the first century AD. Traces of late Iron Age settlement (first centuries BC/AD) have been found throughout the trench, emerging beneath the Romano-British levels. These gullies and ditches suggest that the settlement began prior to the Roman Conquest and was at least 0.8ha in size.

The large Romano-British platform has been uncovered but only partially excavated. It was surrounded by a ditch showing evidence of recutting and deliberate infilling. At the front of the platform, facing the main street were traces of domestic buildings with mortar floors. Behind them, to the east, a stone lined second/third century well was found in 1980. At the back of the platform was a stone based aisled building, probably a barn, (19 x 11.4m) with a central entrance on its long, southerly side.

The ditch at back of the platform was infilled by the later Romano-British period and replaced by a fence-line marked by stone packed post-holes. A pathway of angled stones was laid across the infilled ditch and through the fence.

In the late third/fourth century a ditch was dug around the front, that is western, part of the platform forming a D shaped enclosure (56m x 54m). In spite of this the Romano-British settlement seems to have remained basically constrained by its first century AD layout.

At the nucleus of the settlement was an open area, about 28m x 52m. This was infilled at an uncertain date in the Roman period. West of this nucleus was a small enclosure/platform (maximum dimensions 44 x 34m) with side lanes on its west and north side. Trace of a stone based building have been uncovered but not so far excavated. Finds this year include a nest of bronze bowls from the north side of the large toft or platform, third/fourth century coins, brooches, a stylus and cattle goad.



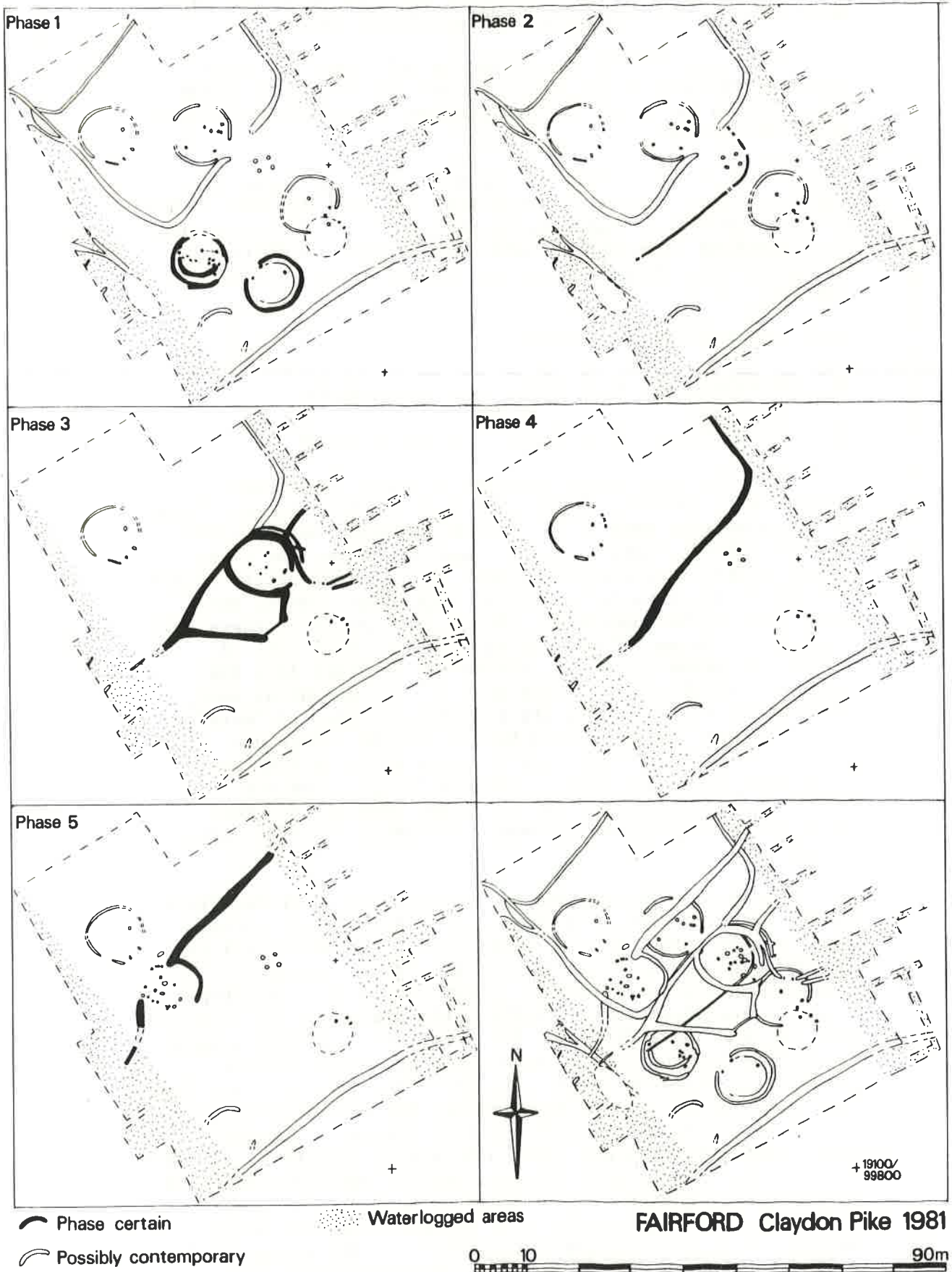


Fig. 48

Fairford/Lechlade: Claydon Pike - Middle Iron Age Settlement

Neolithic flint and a reworked polished stone axe have been found on the Romano-British settlement area.

Extensive phosphate sampling by Jeff Mees has shown distinctive patterns of activity. An Iron Age house which did not show on aerial photographs was located from its high phosphate levels.

Elaine Morris's work on the Droitwich salt-containers and Malvernian pottery from the site has been included in her article 'Ceramic Exchange in Western Britain: A Preliminary View' printed in *Production and Distribution: A Ceramic Viewpoint*, eds. Hilary Howard and Elaine L. Morris (BAR 1981).

#### POST EXCAVATION PROJECTS

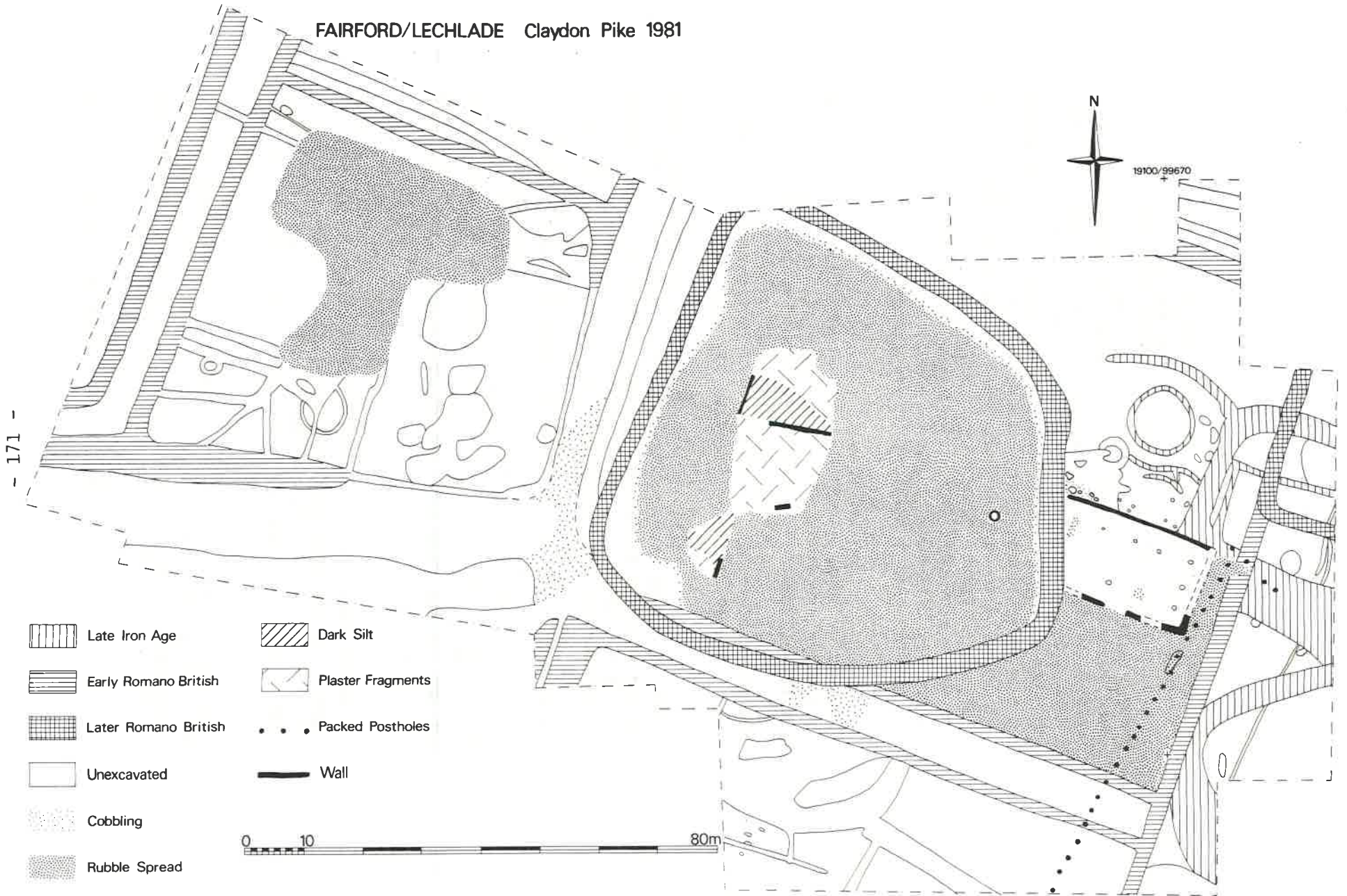
61. BERINSFIELD: Mount Farm - see below No.73.











62. BERINSFIELD: Wally Corner - Heinrich Härke

When the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Wally Corner was excavated in 1974/75, weapons, or part of weapons, were found to be associated with 25 of 105 inhumations. Weapon types include shields, spears, knives, and one arrow. At first sight, Berinsfield does not appear to be a fascinating sample for weapon studies, lacking as it does swords, axes, and other more conspicuous arms. But closer analysis proves this cemetery to be an interesting case in its own right. A relatively large number of shields had been put into the graves, a total of 16. While this is not unusual as such, Berinsfield stands out by its surprising number of 'shield only' burials: seven shield burials out of 16 did not contain any other weapon, apart from a knife in some cases. This lack of complementary, offensive weapons has few parallels in Anglo-Saxon burial sites. Another uncommon observation is that men and women preferred different types of knives.

The detailed inspection of weapons, and their locations in the graves, produces a wealth of technical information. Most shields were just over 40cm (16") in diameter, and the boards were between 6 and 7mm thick. Two bosses show unambiguous traces of repair. Spear shafts were tapering from the spearhead socket to the butt; one spear was equipped with an iron shaft fitting. The correlation between weapon burial and anthropological data turns out to be another interesting field of study. The three smallest men, but also the three tallest men in the cemetery had been buried without weapons - in the latter cases quite contrary to what one would expect intuitively. All male adults between 20 and 30 years of age had weapons in their graves, but the likelihood of being buried with weapons seems to have decreased with increasing age. Sub-adults were not excluded from weapon burial: four children and one adolescent were accompanied by arms, among which figures the only arrowhead found at Berinsfield.

FAIRFORD/LECHLADE Claydon Pike 1981



- |   |                      |   |                   |
|---|----------------------|---|-------------------|
|  | Late Iron Age        |  | Dark Silt         |
|  | Early Romano British |  | Plaster Fragments |
|  | Later Romano British |  | Packed Postholes  |
|  | Unexcavated          |  | Wall              |
|  | Cobbling             |   |                   |
|  | Rubble Spread        |   |                   |

0 10 80m

Fig. 49

63. CHALGROVE: Harding's Field - Phillip Page (Fig.50)

The report on the excavation of the medieval moated Manor House at Harding's Field, Chalgrove is now well under way. As a result of the detailed investigation of the site records some new interpretation of the structures has now emerged.

The interpretation of Phase 1 of the site remains the same. The major structure being a cobwalled building of late 13th century date, containing a large unmade hearth. Parts of other structures belonging to the same pre-moat phase were also located.

In the next phase, early 14th century, the moats were excavated. It is now thought that the moat which forms the south western side of the large island, and is common to both moated islands, represents the medieval course of the stream which today lies to the south. This stream was widened and possibly deepened to form part of the moat and it also fed the moats. When the moats went out of use and silted up the stream migrated 35-40 m south where it lies today. The buildings on the island consisted of a large rectangular hall. To its north was a kitchen and to the east of the kitchen was a circular dovecote. Access to the site was over a bridge by the dovecote. The fragmentary remains to the south represent the demesne farm buildings.

It now seems that the hall was a 3 bayed aisled building, each aisle being c. 6m.wide. The eastern end bay was divided from the great hall by a wall and this bay probably had a first floor. The great hall was divided into two bays by a pair of aisle posts, and there was a central hearth in the western bay. The extension added on to the hall to the west is believed to be a parlour.

The alterations of Phase 3 occurred in the second quarter of the 14th century. A stone cross-wing was added on the eastern end of the hall. This comprised on the ground floor, a buttery and pantry divided by a corridor, beyond them to the north was an undercroft, which was probably vaulted and tacked on to the undercroft there was a garderobe. The garderobe may have been a timber-framed structure in this phase. On the first floor of the cross wing above the buttery and pantry would have been the solar. This had a fireplace against its eastern wall, and the base of its chimney can be seen on the plan, looking like a large buttress. The room above the undercroft was entered from the solar. This room was either the lord's bedroom or the wardrobe. Access to the garderobe would have been from this chamber only.

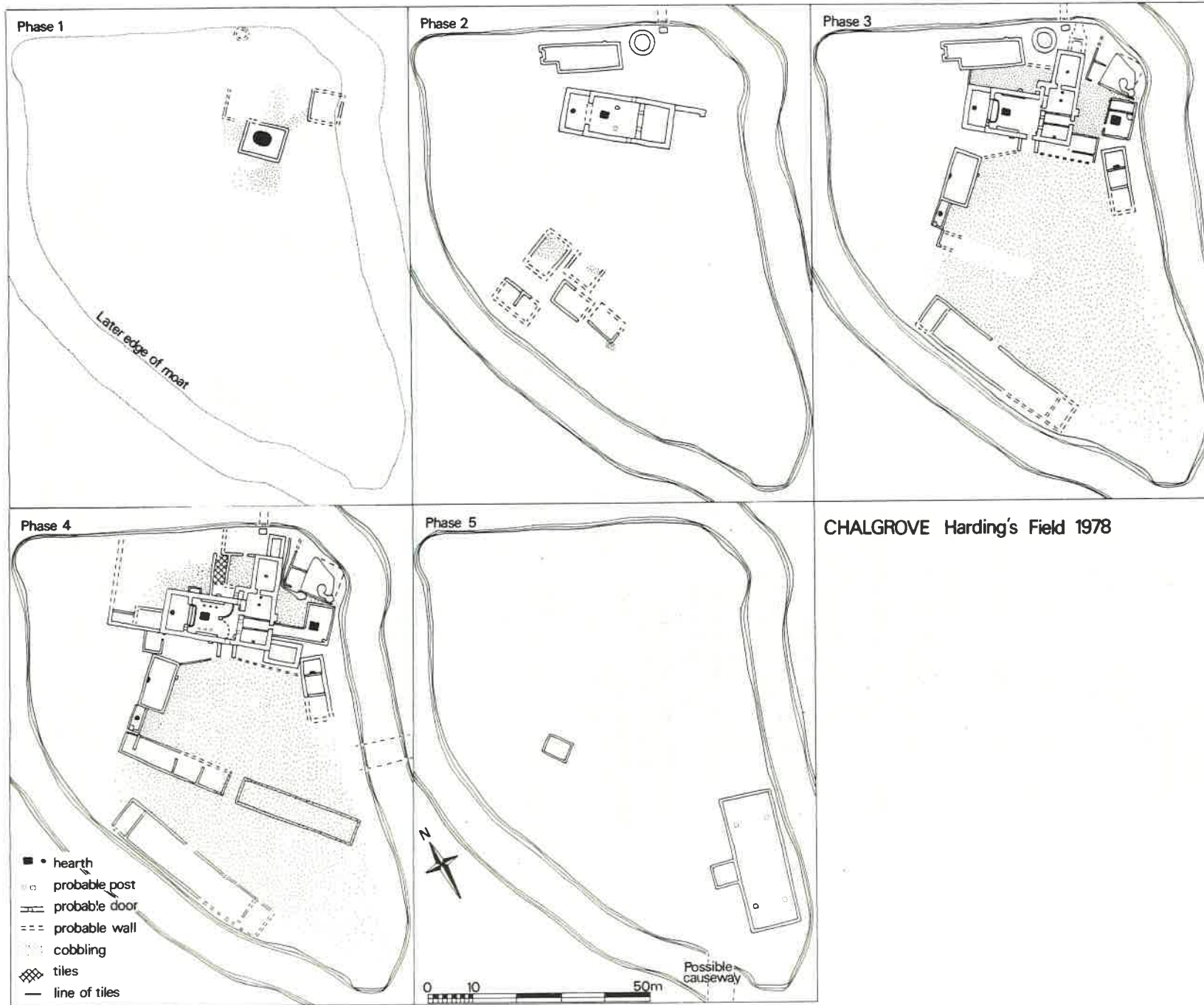


Fig. 50

In the angle between the hall and the cross wing was a small room which may have been an oriel chamber and might have contained a private stairway, giving access to the wardrobe/bedroom. Alternatively it could have had a doorway going out onto the courtyard between the hall and kitchen.

In the great hall stone benches were inserted against the side walls and across the west end. A dais was also made at that end indicating that it was the high end of the hall. The construction of the roof seems to have been improved for the aisle posts were removed, however two buttresses were added on the outside walls of the hall presumably to counter the extra thrust from the new roof supports.

The porch was added on the south side of the hall building and on the south east corner a timber-frame structure that may have been a chapel was built.

To the east of the hall a detached kitchen was constructed with an oven and a central hearth, north of this was the bakehouse. The old kitchen to the north of the hall was retained but presumably its use altered.

The farmyard was totally rearranged, the buildings of the second phase were demolished and a large flint and gravel courtyard laid, around which were constructed a number of buildings. The building just to the south of the new kitchen survived as a two-bayed structure, but was originally at least three-bayed. In the northern bay there was an oven. This may have been the accomodation for the *famuli*, the servants who lived on the manor. Opposite this across the courtyard was a large rectangular stone building. This may have been the lodgings for the lord's retainers or for visiting nobility. Attached to this building to the south-east was a small structure whose function remains unknown. The very long building situated on the edge of the moat most closely resembles a stable block. These almost certainly were not the only buildings associated with the courtyard but the others have left no trace.

The Phase 4 alterations take place round the first quarter of the 15th century. Both the chapel and garderobe were replaced by stone buildings and in the former a floor of decorated tiles was laid. The kitchen to the east of the hall was replaced with another of similar dimensions, but this time it was attached to the main building with a corridor. The lower end of the great hall was floored over. This floor was supported by a large central post. Leading out from this floor on the north-east side of the hall was a gallery supported by three posts.

The old kitchen and dovecote were demolished and over them a timber framed pentice was built attached to the north side of the hall. This had contained a decorated tile floor and probably gave access to a screens passage at the lower end of the great hall. On its east side was a small private

courtyard enclosed by buildings and on its north side by a wall. This wall is believed to be contemporary with that which abutts the parlour and encloses an area of possible garden to the west of the pentice. Constructed against this garden wall and the north west wall of the parlour was a small building whose function is unknown. Between the lodgings and this garden wall another structure was inserted but this may have been a pen rather than a building. The large courtyard was divided into two smaller ones by the construction of two long narrow buildings. These are both believed to be of agricultural use.

Phase 5 sees the demolition of the manor. A documentary reference tells us that the site went out of use and the buildings were pulled down in 1485. A large aisled barn with a wagon porch on its western side, and a small rectangular building post-date this demolition. These two buildings are believed to be a barn and culver house (dovecote) mentioned in a document of 1520.

The site is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument and has been preserved beneath a cover of gravel and topsoil by the Department of the Environment.

64. COGGES, Manor Farm - see below No.72
65. HARDWICK WITH YELFORD, Mingies Ditch - see below Nos.72  
and 73
66. OXFORD, All Saints - see below No.73
67. OXFORD, Churchill Hospital - see below No.74
68. OXFORD: St Ebbe's Sites (31-34 Church Street,  
Greyfriars, Littlegate, Selfridges & Westgate)  
- Maureen Mellor

The post medieval project on the above sites has dominated the bulk of the work this year. Eleanor Beard has been responsible for the majority of the drawings and some 90 figures have been prepared for publication. Adrian Oswald has isolated four local types of tobacco clay pipe which were manufactured in the vicinity of Oxford from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries. John Woods, an in-service trainee spent three months collating much of the documentary evidence for the area. This enabled the individual pit groups to be related to specific tenements whose occupiers and occupation were sometimes known. This information has given a new and exciting dimension to the interpretation of the finds. A Public House, the Saracen's Head, hitherto unknown, was located and contemporary pits at the back of this tenement have been excavated (Westgate F45 etc). Some of the college servants also ran eating houses and taverns and had their names hand-painted on items of crockery at the production centres in 'The Potteries' Staffordshire.

The suburb was essentially poor but the presence of college servants within the area may account for the wealthier assemblages in some rubbish pits (Greyfriars VII F5).

Claire Halpin has latterly prepared the evidence plan for the two major sites (31-34 Church Street and Greyfriars) and the report should be submitted to the editor by the end of the year. See also below No.72.

69. STANTON HARCOURT - see below No.72

70. WALLINGFORD - see below No.72

#### Gloucestershire

71. LECHLADE: Rough Ground Farm - Tim Allen

Margaret Jones' 1957-65 excavations of the Roman villa and surrounding field system are currently being prepared for publication. This should provide a local pottery sequence and useful comparison for the current work at Claydon Pike.

Some small-scale trenching is being carried out with the help of the O.U.A.S. to investigate the areas south of two of the masonry buildings. The later of these, previously traced for 29m, has been found continuing 6m further south, and the channelled hypocaust that underlay two rooms down its west side clearly continued into a third. A trench dug 4m south of this did not find the building, but this may have hit later disturbance.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS

72. ANIMAL BONES - Bob Wilson

The Iron Age site at Hardwick has attracted attention because it is an unusual opportunity to examine the distribution of bones across an almost totally excavated settlement. The enclosing ditches coherently define the limits of most occupational activity in a way that no other excavation has yet provided.

Chief interests have been (1) the effects of leaching and scavenging on the bone and (2) the reconstruction of site activities from the spatial spread of debris. Many bones were reduced to small unidentifiable fragments and to loose teeth. Nevertheless analysis shows that most debris, especially of sheep and other medium sized mammals, was concentrated at the centre of the site while fewer but larger fragments and bone of large animals were more evident toward the periphery.

Cultural relics such as pottery and burnt clay as well as charcoal and burnt bone are associated with hearths rather than the centres of buildings - only some of which had recognisable hearths or much bone debris. Most human



activity, probably including butchery of sheep, seems to have occurred centrally. This is confirmed by offcuts and other remnants of worked bone which however may be largely associated with the most central hut.

Perhaps the horse bones are from individuals slaughtered, or dying and decomposing on the periphery of the site. Also the few crania of dogs, as well as a puppy skeleton, tended to end up in outside features. This kind of evidence demonstrates that every part of a site must be sampled in order to obtain a reliable reconstruction of the animal husbandry.

Much of the year has been spent on the recording of the huge quantity of medieval bones from the centre of Oxford. Apart from the bird bones reports have been completed for the post medieval material from Church Street (Site A) and the Greyfriars (Site B). Unfortunately there are only hints at the environment of the tenements and require confirmation by documentary evidence: gardens (hedgehog and birds); pig sties (diseased skeleton of pig); and rubbish dumps (cat skeletons and black rat bones).

As dietary evidence, the remains include several innovations such as edible crab, and probably, turkey but in general the debris is unexceptional. Characteristic items are rabbit, domestic fowl, goose, oyster, mussel and cockle.

Nearly all debris appears to be domestic rubbish. However sheep head debris (Westgate W F22), horncores of long horned cattle (Greyfriars B I F27), and a high percentage of calf mandibles, all indicate specialist butchery or slaughterhouse activity in the area during the 18th or 19th century. Perhaps the horn cores came from the 17th-19th century tanneries adjacent to the Greyfriars.

From Greyfriars BIV F44 there are two metatarsi of domestic fowl which have the bone spurs sawn off. Almost certainly this occurred during the training of the birds for cock fighting. Long, curved metal spurs would have been bound to the legs about the stumps of the bone spurs. The bones date to the mid 18th or early 19th century. The aim is to produce basic reports although the usefully large sample sizes of some medieval data are unlikely to be duplicated by future excavations and deserve further discussion.

Other small collections have been written up: Cogges Priory near Witney, Stanton Harcourt and Thrupp, Wallingford.

Some general findings of the past few years were displayed to the public for two months. 'Old Bones and Beasties' featured wild animals, and extinctions, introductions and other changes in their regional ecology over the last 6000 years.

73. WATERLOGGED PLANTS AND INVERTEBRATES: Mount Farm, Berinsfield; The Cursus, Drayton; Claydon Pike, Fairford/Lechlade; Mingies Ditch, Hardwick with Yelford; All Saints, Oxford; Churchill Hospital, Oxford; Church Street, Oxford; High Street, Oxford; Oriel College, Oxford - Mark Robinson

While work in 1981 has mainly been concentrated on three major sites: Mingies Ditch, Claydon Pike and Mount Farm, various excavations within the City of Oxford have provided diversion ranging from curious to amusing. The Iron Age enclosure at Mingies Ditch seems to have been set in pastureland which graded into marsh along the banks of the River Windrush and on the bed of minor seasonal streams which traversed the floodplain. The landscape was relatively open, although there may have been willow swamp over some of the marshy areas and scrub or willows lining the banks of the water courses. The Iron Age enclosure itself was surrounded by scrub of a very mixed composition, with at least 11 species present. The scrub was probably in the form of hedges on the enclosure ditches and the presence of *Acer campestre* (common maple), which has very poor colonizing powers, suggests that either the hedges had been created by selective scrub/woodland clearance or mixed stock had been obtained from woodland. Carbonized cereal remains were present but Martin Jones suggests, on the basis of the weed species he identified, that the grain was brought to the site from elsewhere. There was evidence that the water table rose during the period of occupation of the Iron Age enclosure and this factor may eventually have been responsible for the abandonment of the site. However, there was no evidence of flooding until a very much later date.

One very important discovery from Mingies Ditch was the head of a worker honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) in a well stratified peatlayer. So far, this is the only Iron Age honey bee known from Britain, the next earliest record being several individuals from a Saxon well at Portchester Castle. Many archaeologists have assumed that the Neolithic inhabitants of Britain exploited the honey bee whereas entomologists have tended to regard it as an alien species introduced by the Romans, but neither side had any evidence to support their contention. Obviously the single find does not prove that the inhabitants of Mingies Ditch kept bees, but it does show that honey, wax and propolis (a resinous substance that can be used as a waterproof glue) were available in Iron Age Oxfordshire. Even if the bees were wild rather than domestic, it is probably that the right to exploit a particular "bee tree" was as jealously guarded as it was within historic times.

Work was begun with the assistance of Ann James examining a sample from the Roman well at Claydon Pike. So far, the results correspond reasonably closely to those from other Roman sites on the first gravel terrace but the identification of fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) was a not

unexpected addition to the culinary herbs/spices recorded from Roman sites in the region.

Yet another member of the Umbelliferae cultivated by the Romans was identified from a water hole/well at Mount Farm. It contained many thousands of seeds of celery (*Apium graveolens*). It is naturally a local species of wet or marshy ground, especially where conditions are saline. The other plant and insect remains from the deposit suggested the relatively dry conditions that would be expected on the third gravel terrace. Therefore it seems unlikely that celery would have grown wild at Mount Farm. Perhaps the site supplied Dorchester with market garden produce including celery seeds. Another Roman sample from Mount Farm contained flax (*Linum usitatissimum*) rippling (threshing) debris along with capsule fragments of gold of pleasure (*Camelina sp*), a weed very closely associated with flax growing. Possibly the ponds at Mount Farm were used for flax retting.

The first Oxford site investigated was the new trunk sewer in The High (see above No.41). The trench cut through a 19th century cast iron water main which was filled with a mass of shells of the zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*). The zebra mussel has minute free-swimming larvae capable of passing through filter beds. These larvae would then attach themselves by byssal threads to the pipe side and metamorphose into small mussels. The mussels are very efficient filter-feeders and would have been able to feed on impurities in the water. Prior to the days of chlorinated water, these mussels were serious pests, either blocking water mains or polluting water supplies when individuals died.

A stone chamber within the Provost's lodging at Oriel College which had been used as a cess pit during the late seventeenth century provided an insight on the diet of an upper class household in Oxford their diet was exceptionally rich, including grapes/raisins, raspberries, black pepper strawberries, apples, plums, figs, mulberries and a walnut. All these remains had passed through the alimentary canal (apart from the walnut, which was entire!). There were a few beetles in the chamber, all species which would have been at home there, but the deposit also contained numerous puparia of sphaeroceridae (sewage flies). The flies suggest a squalid aspect to living conditions in the Provost's lodgings, because the only opening to the chamber was in the house. In the words of Brian Durham, who excavated the site 'there were sufficient fly puparia to say that for every seed that went down, one fly came up' (see above No.43).

The remaining three Oxford sites from which material was examined had all been excavated before the foundation of the OAU. Gorse (*Ulex sp*) was found preserved in the corrosion products on the exterior of a small 17th century brass box from Church Street. Like the discovery of a late medieval deposit of gorse at Bicester last year, it is an example of

gorse being brought into a town where it would not have been growing for an unknown purpose. A sample was investigated from a Roman well at the kiln site at the Churchill Hospital. Waterlogged remains were poorly preserved, although they included seeds of greater celandine (*Chelidonium majus*) and opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*). The deposit was, however, surprisingly rich in spelt wheat chaff.

Several Saxon samples were investigated from All Saints Church. With the help of Martin Jones, what proved to be a remarkably pure carbonized deposit of threshed bread/club wheat was examined. Out of a total of 4643 seeds, only 35 were weeds and a further 65 were barley grains. The last surviving remains of wood in the timber voids of the Saxon cellar showed it to have been constructed of oak. Finally, charcoal was examined from a charred fence. The upright posts were oak and the horizontal wattles hazel. The hazel showed much apparent evidence of woodworm damage. This was confirmed on splitting the charcoal open by the discovery not of the beetles but five individuals of *Theocolax formiciformis*, a minute hymenopteran parasite of *Anobium punctatum*. Until I saw these insects, I had not realised that preservation by charring could be so good.

The main sites sampled this year were Claydon Pike, Fairford/Lechlade, and the Drayton Cursus. At Claydon Pike a sequence of samples was obtained from a natural peat deposit on the edge of one of the "islands" of gravel terrace occupied during the Iron Age. Samples were taken from the Drayton Cursus ditch where it crossed the floodplain and also the alluvium covering it (within which Roman features were interstratified). In last year's Annual Report it was mentioned that much of the Upper Thames floodplain probably did not suffer flooding in the Bronze Age but that a rise in the water table and ultimately the deposition took place in the Iron Age. The evidence from Drayton has enabled a reappraisal to be made of the results from previous sections through the alluvium on the Thames floodplain.

In the Neolithic and Bronze Age, much of the floodplain did not flood and either had a true terrestrial soil covering with a high silt content (Drayton, King's Weir and the Hamel) or an ancient, earthworm-sorted alluvium (Mingies Ditch). By the middle of the Iron Age, there had been a rise in the water table (Mingies Ditch and Port Meadow) with an onset of flooding in some places (Farmoor). Before the end of the Iron Age significant quantities of clay alluvium were being deposited (Farmoor), and a further or continued rise in the water table occurred (Farmoor and Mingies Ditch). On some sites, the clay alluvium contained molluscs, at least 95% of them being aquatic individuals (Farmoor) on others, the alluvium had been de-calcified and molluscs were absent (Drayton). Alluvial deposition may have continued until the end of the Roman period. A second phase of alluvial deposition seems to have begun in the late Saxon period and continued perhaps up until the end of the 13th century

(Mingies Ditch, Farmoor, Drayton and Claydon Pike). Flooding was probably more extensive than during the earlier phase and the alluvium was of a different nature. On all these sites the alluvium had a much coarser particle size, being a silt to a silty loam, and was mollusc-rich, but only about 50% of the shells were from aquatic species.

The earlier phase of alluviation may have been related to a later Iron Age/Roman arable expansion on the Cotswolds while the later phase was perhaps the result of a later Saxon agricultural recovery followed by the well-documented great Medieval arable expansion prior to the Black Death. Excavations in Oxford at St. Aldates and on the Blackfriars Priory are due to take place soon and sections through the alluvium on these sites are avidly awaited.

#### ABINGDON AREA ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

74. Recent work on Neolithic and early Bronze Age sites in the Abingdon Area - Roger Thomas and Jeff Wallis (Figs. 51 - 56)

The vicinity of Abingdon is well known for the variety of archaeological sites of all periods which it contains. Important among these is a number of monuments of the Neolithic and early Bronze Age (see accompanying figure). Some of these monuments had already been excavated before the 1970's - these included the Abingdon causewayed camp; the adjacent Barrow Hills Early Bronze Age cemetery; a ring-ditch to the south of Abingdon; and ring-ditches, late Neolithic pits and a part of the Drayton curses, encountered by T.E. Leeds in his excavation of the Saxon village near Sutton Courtenay.

More recent excavations, firstly by the Abingdon and District Archaeological Society and latterly by the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit, have examined a Neolithic henge, Bronze Age ring-ditches and a Middle Bronze Age farmstead at Corporation Farm, Abingdon; late Neolithic pits containing Grooved Ware, in the Ock Valley (Abingdon Bypass) and at Barton Court Farm; two ring-ditches enclosing Early Bronze Age cremations, at Ashville Trading Estate; and a Neolithic ring-ditch at Thrupp Farm.

Additionally, aerial photography has extended our knowledge of both the distribution of sites and the range of site-types represented. Recent discoveries have included a long-barrow near Drayton, a large number of ring-ditches and a possible Neolithic mortuary enclosure and post-circles henge at Barrow Hills, next to the causewayed camp.

Since 1977 members of the Abingdon and District Archaeological Society have been continuing a programme of work on prehistoric sites round Abingdon. This work comprises two main elements - rescue excavation on site threatened by gravel-digging, and an attempt to fieldwalk as much as possible of the surrounding landscape within which the excavated sites are contained. Work so far published include the excavation of a Beaker ring-ditch at Tuckwells pit, Radley (*Oxoniensia* 45 (1980), 306). What follows is an interim report on work currently in progress.

#### FIELDWALKING

Fieldwalking has so far concentrated on Radley parish. Several major flint scatters have been located.

##### Barrow Hills, Radley

A dense scatter of worked flint lies at the west end of the linear barrow cemetery, adjacent to the Neolithic causewayed enclosure. In anticipation of the redevelopment of this area, the field has been walked on a 10 metre grid. The flintwork seems to be concentrated in the western part of the site, close to the banks of the stream and area of marshy ground which separates this field from the causewayed enclosure. The material seems to be mainly later Neolithic and Early Bronze Age. Types recovered include tranchet and barbed-and-tanged arrowheads, and horseshoe-shaped scrapers. A glass bead and a grass-tempered sherd presumably relate to the Saxon sunken huts visible on the aerial photograph. As an adjunct to the fieldwalking, the cropmarks visible from the ground were surveyed in the summer of 1980.

##### Lower Farm, Radley

This site lies on a ridge of gravel between the present Thames floodplain and what appears to be a former channel of the Thames, now filled with peat and alluvium. The scatter of worked flint is about 500m long and 100m wide. The flint work is not of a very high quality, but appears to include material of Neolithic date.

##### Thrupp Farm, Radley

Here a large flint scatter containing Neolithic and Early Bronze Age types lies within an area which is being quarried for gravel. Types found include leaf-shaped and barbed-and-tanged arrowheads, scrapers, blades and cores. The flint-scatter complements the Neolithic features discovered during the excavation of an Iron Age settlement at this site (see below). As at Lower Farm, the site is on the edge of a former channel of the Thames.

#### EXCAVATION

During 1981 excavation has been taking place on two

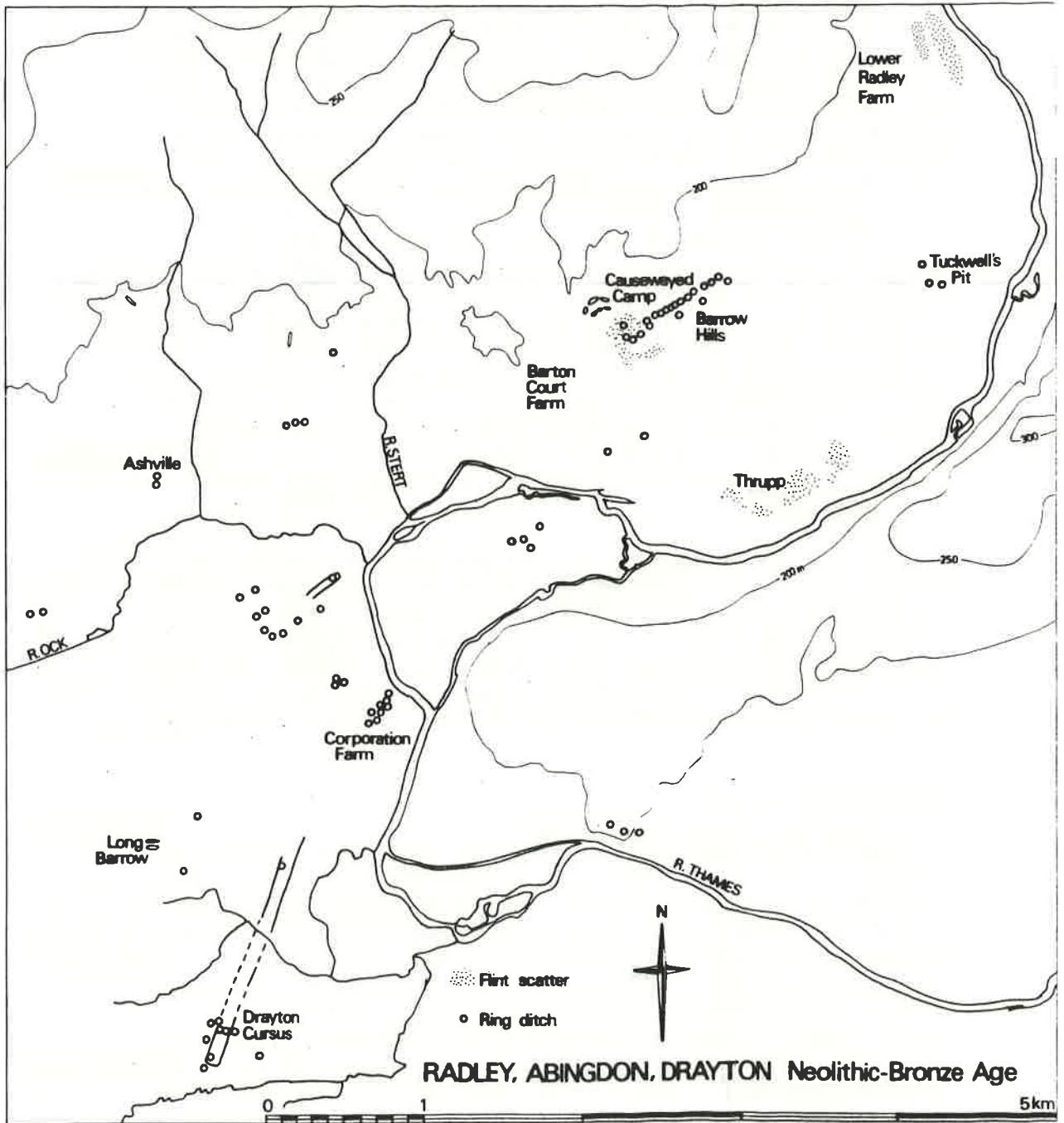


Fig. 51

sites, Thrupp Farm and the Drayton cursus

#### Thrupp Farm, Radley

This site has been investigated primarily from the point of view of its Iron Age settlement features (see CBA 9 Newsletter No.11 (1980), 28-41). However, during the course of this work a certain amount of earlier prehistoric material has come to light. A few sherds of Neolithic and Bronze Age pottery have been found in topsoil stripping, in 1972 a Beaker was found here, and in 1976 the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit excavated a Neolithic penannular ditch. This feature was 15m in diameter. The filling of the ditch produced Abingdon Ware, and some flint and animal bone.

In 1980 during the excavation of Site C (Iron Age circular gullies), a pit containing late Neolithic material was found. The pit was 1.2m in diameter and 0.3m deep. It contained an assemblage of 40 Grooved Ware sherds in the Durrington Walls style (see figure) 14 flint flakes, a number of fragments of antler and the cutting edge of a ground stone axe of Whin Sill (Group XVIII) rock. A sample of carbonised material from this pit is being examined by Martin Jones. This isolated pit is similar to examples which have been excavated at Barton Court Farm and on the Abingdon Bypass.

These discoveries of earlier prehistoric material at Thrupp must be seen in the context of the extensive scatter of worked flint in the topsoil at this site. The flintwork include a wide range of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age types (see above for details). As at Lower Farm, Radley, the site lies on the first Gravel Terrace, adjacent to the now alluviated Thames flood-plain and beside a former channel of the Thames

#### The Drayton Cursus

Work in 1981 has concentrated on a feature which is now thought to be the northern part of the Drayton Cursus. This section is being destroyed by gravel-quarrying. The southern end of this presumably late Neolithic monument lies on the Second Gravel Terrace. It has been known from aerial photographs since the 1930's, and was located by E.T. Leeds in his excavations at the Sutton Courtenay Saxon village site. About 30 metres to the north of the known portion, on the First Gravel Terrace, cropmarks show a pair of parallel ditches running for about 600 metres, on the same alignment as the cursus. Recent work confirms the suggestion that these ditches are indeed a northerly continuation of the cursus. This would give a total length for the monument of at least 1700m (see accompanying figure). No northern terminal has been located; it may well already have been destroyed by gravel pits further to the north.



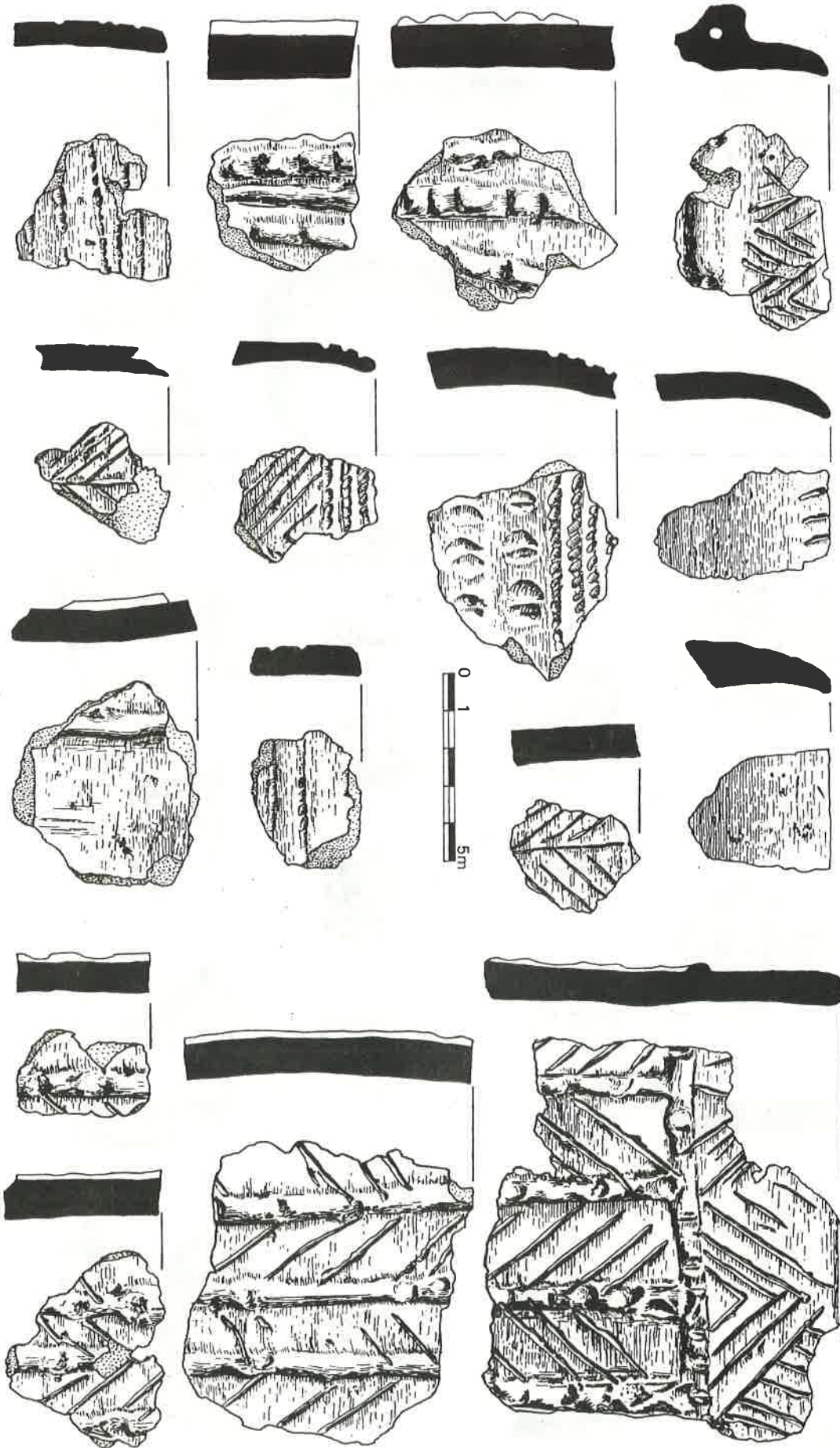


Fig. 52

RADLEY Thrupp House Farm

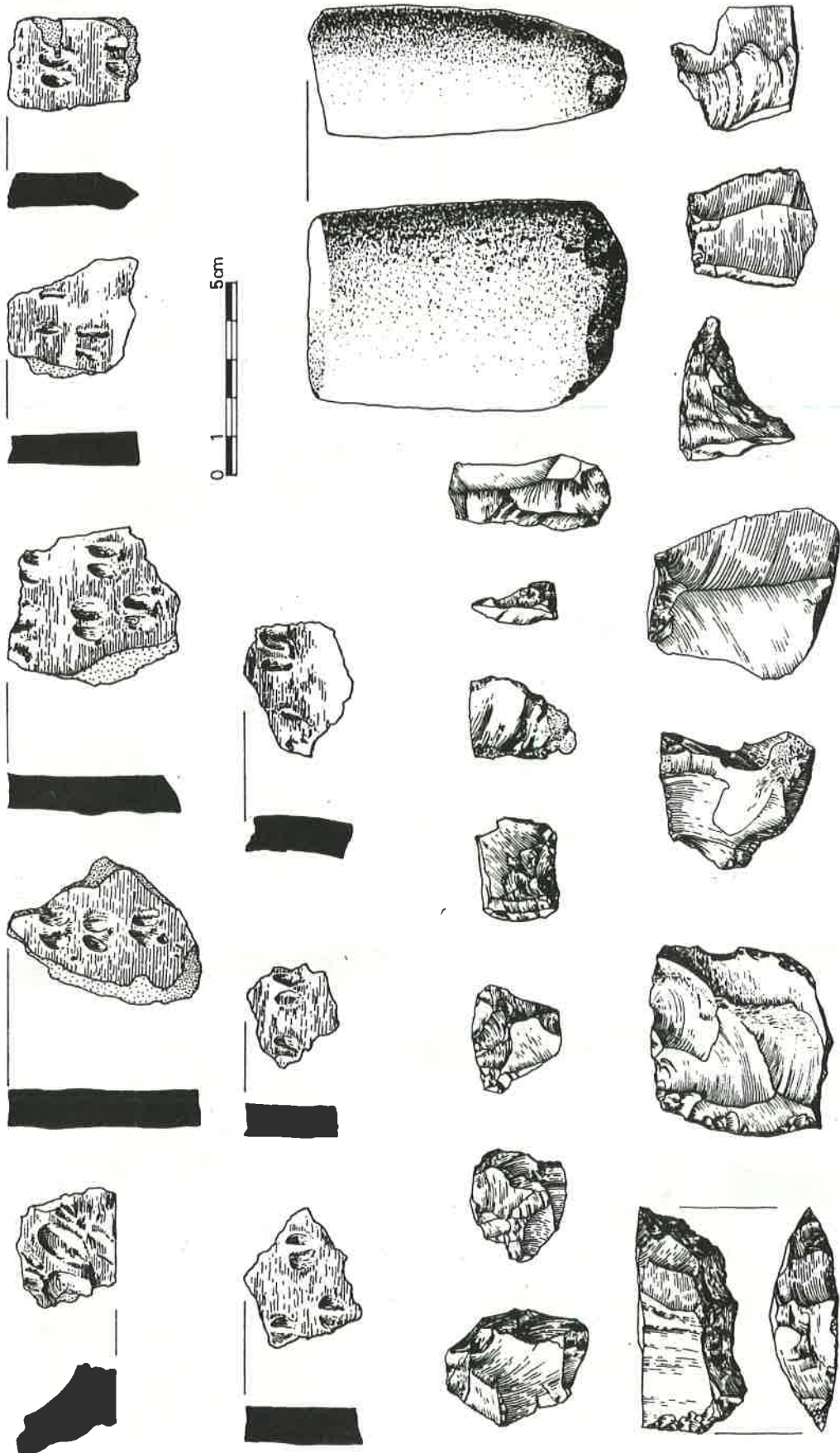


Fig. 53

Neolithic Grooved Ware Pit Site C

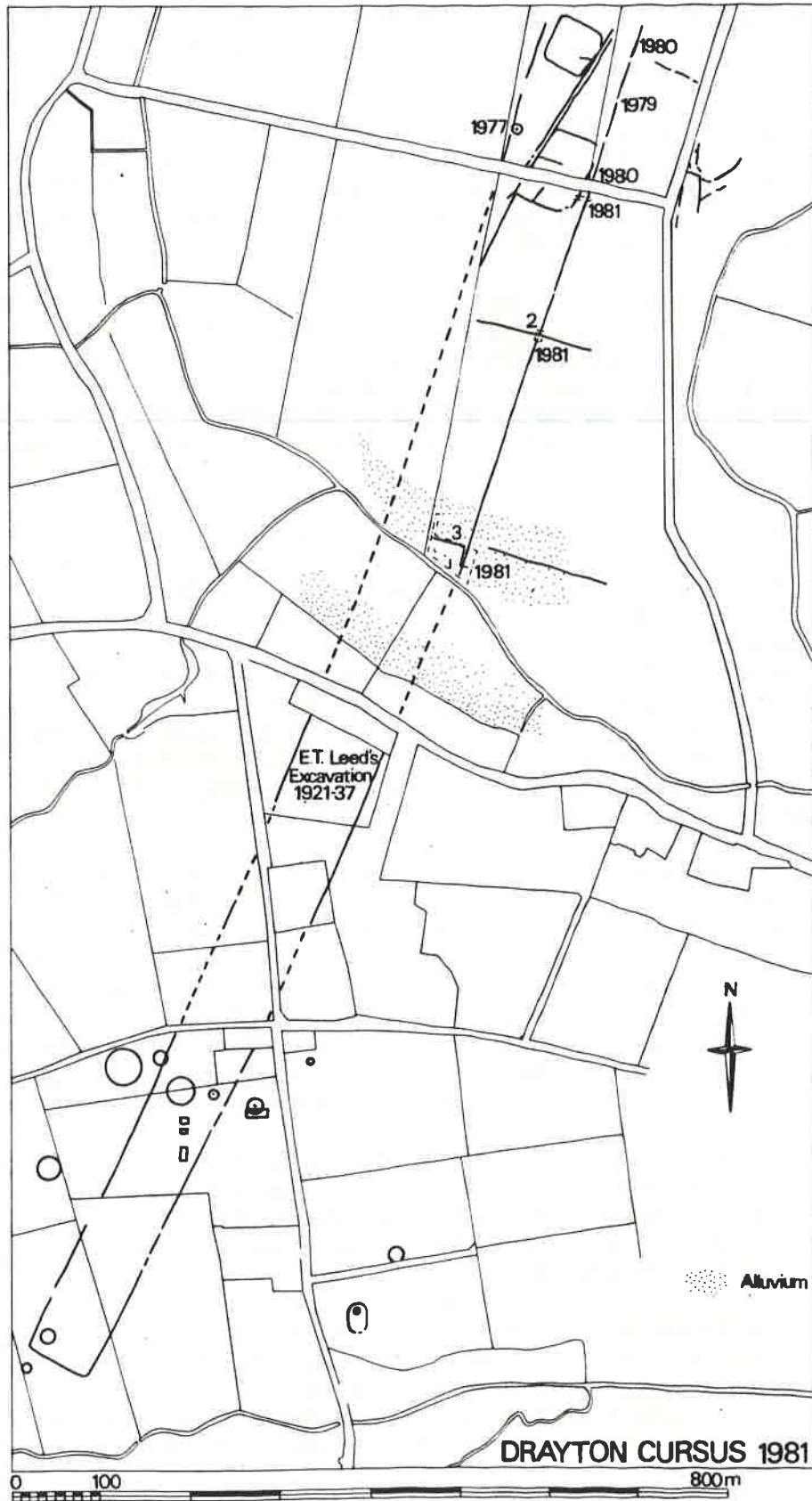


Fig. 54

In 1974 Mike Parrington excavated sections across a length of the western ditch which had been exposed by gravel-quarrying. No direct dating evidence was recovered, but the ditch was seen to be cut by a small, also undated, ring-ditch.

The Abingdon Society's work began in 1979 when a 200m long stretch of the eastern ditch to the north of Peep-o-Day Lane was stripped of topsoil prior to quarrying. The ditch was seen to be cut in segments of varying length, separated by causeways about 2m wide.

The extension of quarrying to the south of this area has enabled further work to take place on the eastern ditch. Several sections have been hand-dug prior to topsoil stripping, and another causeway has been located. A system of Roman ditches has also been exposed by the gravel-pit, and trenching has shown that one of these ditches cuts the cursus ditch.

Most recently, work has been taking place at the southern edge of the gravel-pit where the terrace gravel is buried under alluvium. No cropmarks are visible in this area but excavation has shown that the cursus continues beneath the alluvium, the ditch being sealed by alluvial clay. The bottom of the ditch is waterlogged here and contains some organic materials. The state of preservation is not particularly good, but some hazel nut shells have survived and it is also likely that pollen is preserved in this deposit. Samples for analysis have been taken by Mark Robinson.

At this point the internal bank of the ditch survives; it consists of gravel upcast from the ditch. The original land surface on which the bank is built is also preserved under the alluvium, and an area of this surface is currently being excavated. The surface has produced flint flakes and few sherds of Peterborough ware, from a point just beyond the outer lip of the cursus ditch. Several irregularly shaped pits, so far undated, have been found, cut through the old land surfaces. They lie both inside and outside the cursus.

The area that is being excavated also contains a Roman ditch, which runs parallel with the cursus ditch for part of its length. The gravel upcast from this Roman ditch sits in a hollow above the filling of the cursus ditch, sealing the lower filling of the ditch.

The Roman ditch is cut from a level within the alluvial clay, and is itself filled with and sealed by further alluvial clay. This suggests that there were two episodes of alluviation (for a general interpretation of the alluvial sequence in the Upper Thames Valley, see No.73 above).

Work on this site will continue as the gravel-quarrying progresses. The section of the cursus which is under the

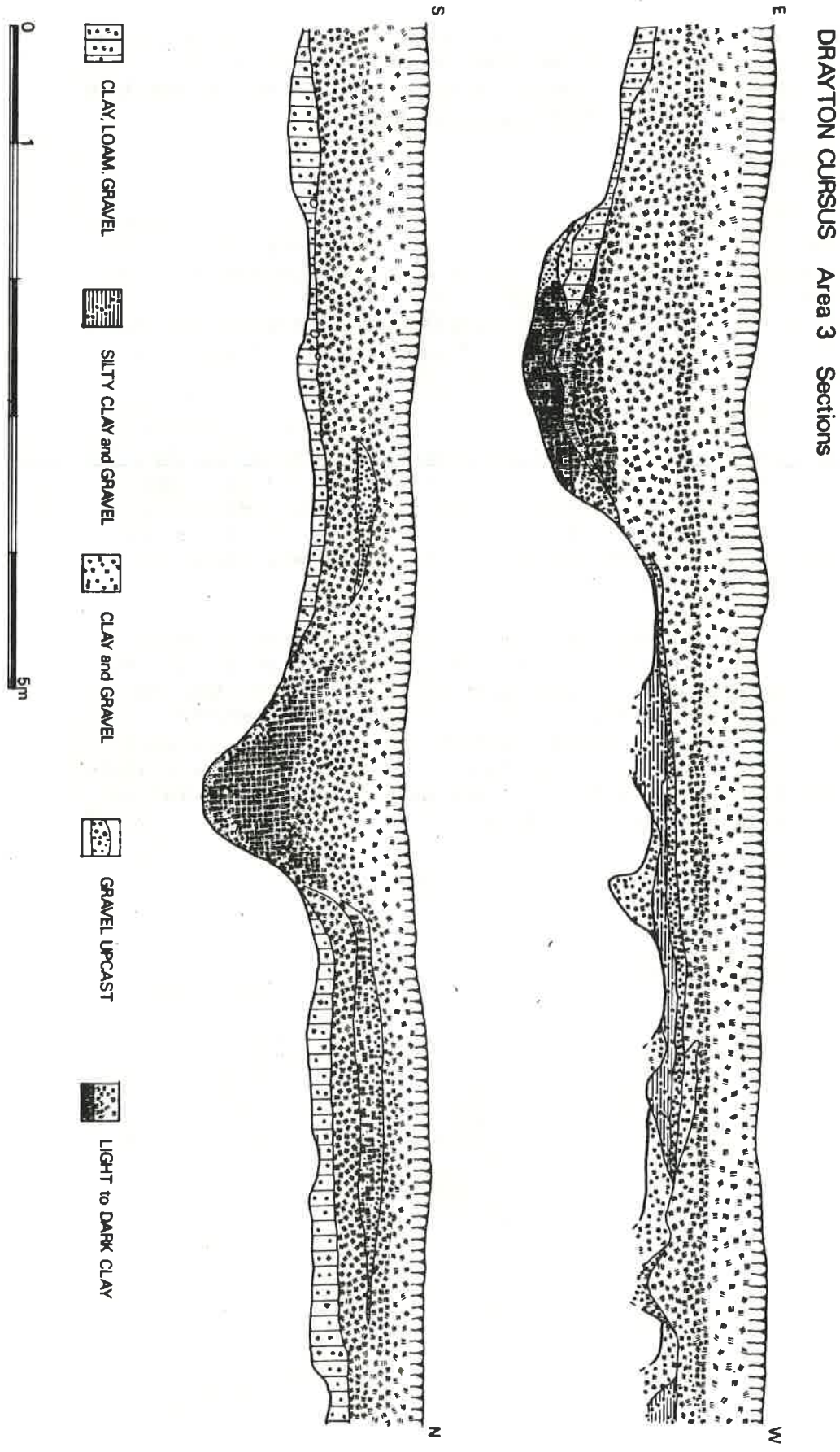


Fig. 55

Top: Section through Cursus (F4) and internal banks  
Bottom: Section through Roman field boundary ditch (F11)

alluvium is of some importance, because of the unusual degree of the preservation of the feature and the presence of waterlogged deposits, and it is hoped that it may be possible to carry out further investigations here.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The work being carried out by the Society on prehistoric sites in the vicinity of Abingdon is confirming the importance of this area as one of considerable Neolithic and Bronze Age activity. This is seen in 'ceremonial' monuments such as the cursus while the programme of fieldwalking, along with chance finds such as that Thrupp, is also bringing to light evidence of domestic sites.

Of particular interest is the location of a number of flint-scatter sites on the lowlying First Gravel Terrace, with an apparent emphasis on river-side situations. This is a characteristic situation for Early Neolithic settlement in England. The margins of the river must have offered a very different environment before the floodplain was blanketed by clay alluvium.

The work at Drayton stresses the importance of areas of alluviation. The evidence suggests that much of the alluvium in the Upper Thames Valley dates to the late Iron Age and later. We may therefore expect to find well-preserved remains of earlier periods beneath these alluvial deposits, as has been shown to be the case at Drayton - but the opacity of the alluvium to archaeological survey makes the location of these sites a major problem.

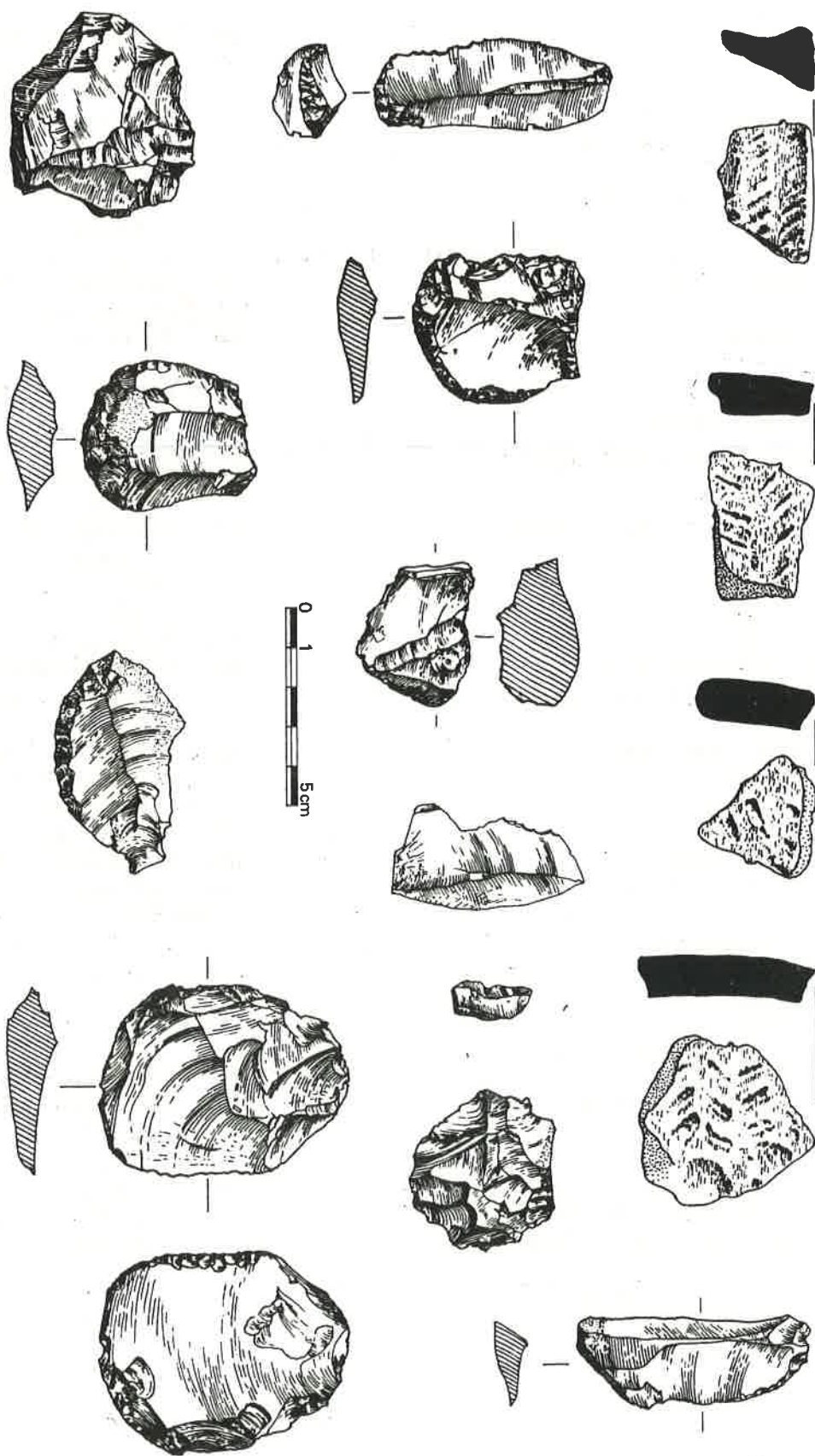


Fig. 56

Key to Figure 57

SURVEY PROJECTS

Oxfordshire

1. Chadlington
2. Chalgrove
3. Charlbury, Banbury Hill
4. Charlbury to Shorthampton
5. Charlbury, Walcot
6. Finstock, Mount Pleasant
7. Oxford Prison
8. Oxfordshire sites of Special Scientific Interest
9. Radley, Barrow Hills
10. Spelsbury
11. Thames Floodplain Survey
12. Rollright

Middlesex

13. Harefield (not shown)

EXCAVATION PROJECTS AND OBSERVATIONS

Oxfordshire

14. Abingdon, former MG Car factory
15. Asthall
16. Banbury
17. Bicester Priory
18. Bladon - Tackley
19. Charlbury- Cornbury Park
20. Checkendon, Devil's Churchyard
21. Churchill
22. Didcot, A4130 Link Road
23. Didcot, the Rectory
24. Dorchester Abbey
25. Dorchester by-pass
26. Dorchester, 51 High Street
27. Dorchester, Samian Way
28. Drayton
29. Ducklington, grain store
30. Ducklington, Manor Farm
31. Fencott and Murcott
32. Frilford, Noah's Ark
33. Hanborough, Church Hanborough
34. Hardwick, Manor Farm
35. Kiddington with Asterleigh
36. Launton
37. Long Wittenham
38. Oxford, Between Towns Road
39. Oxford, Christ Church Meadow
40. Oxford, Corpus Christi College
41. Oxford, High Street
42. Oxford, New Inn Hall Street
43. Oxford, Oriel College
44. Oxford, Rewley Abbey
45. Oxford, 65 St. Aldates
46. Oxford, Turl Street
47. Radley, Lower Farm
48. Radley, Thrupp Farm
49. Sandford-on-Thames
50. Stanton Harcourt, Brown's Pit
51. Steventon, Manor Farm

52. Sutton Courtenay
53. Thame, 87 High Street
54. Thomley
55. Wallingford, Bridge House
56. Witney, Burwell Farm
57. Witney, 27 Market Square
58. Witney, Newland Mill
59. Wroxtton, St Mary

Gloucestershire

60. Fairford/Lechlade

POST EXCAVATION PROJECTS

Oxfordshire

61. Berinsfield, Mount Farm
62. Berinsfield, Wally Corner
63. Chalgrove, Harding's Field
64. Cogges, Manor Farm
65. Hardwick with Yelford, Mingies Ditch
66. Oxford, All Saints
67. Oxford, Churchill Hospital
68. Oxford, St. Ebbes
69. Stanton Harcourt
70. Wallingford

Gloucestershire

71. Lechlade, Rough Ground Farm

ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS

72. Bones (not shown)
73. Waterlogged Plants and Invertebrates (not shown)
74. ABINGDON AREA  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
(not shown)



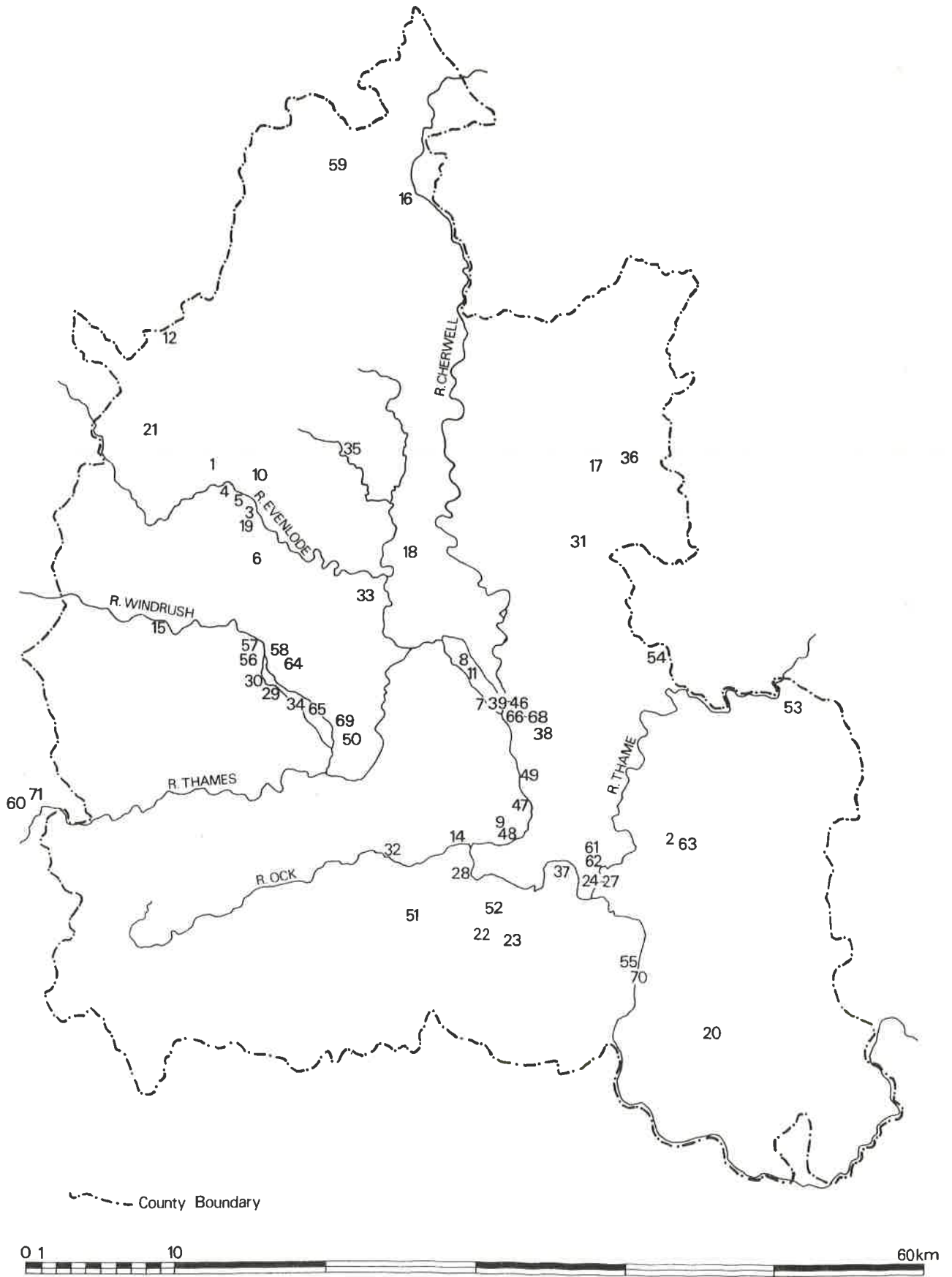


Fig. 57

Archaeological Projects in Oxfordshire 1981

