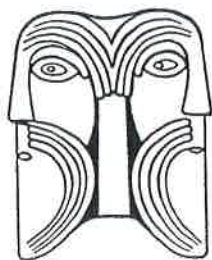


CUAUA

THE
OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT



Pinkhill Meadows,
Farmoor, Oxon

Watching Brief 1990

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

A watching brief was carried out at Farmoor Reservoir during the nature conservation and landscaping of Pinkmill Meadows. This consisted of five visits over a period of two weeks in June 1990 to check for archaeological features or artifacts during the landscaping. The site is approximately 1 kilometre to the NE of Iron Age and Roman settlements excavated by Oxford Archaeological Unit during the 1970's (Lambrick and Robinson 1979). The work was commissioned by Thames Water.

Three lakes were excavated in the area: a large central lake (approx 110 m x 70 m) and two smaller lakes/ponds (approx 22 m x 15 m); one to the NE of the central lake and one to the S. The topsoil was stripped to reveal the alluvium immediately beneath and the deeper sections of the lakes excavated by a JCB with a toothed bucket. Below the alluvial clay was a fairly thick layer of pre-alluvial soil, dark orange brown in colour and more silty than the alluvial clay. These two layers together were approximately one metre thick, immediately below was the natural gravel. In the small NE pond, natural gravel was not revealed. In the two smaller ponds the water level in the area meant that they half-filled almost immediately, but in the case of the large lake, a pump was used which kept the water level to well below the top of the natural gravel during the work. However, both the presence of water on the site and the use of the toothed bucket for the work meant that the excavations were very messy, and features were therefore difficult to recognise in plan.

The only obvious archaeological feature was an EW linear ditch showing in the E side of the deeper part of the central lake (1) again in the E side of a small 'island' within the central lake (2), and possibly re-appearing on the W side of the 'island' (3) (See Fig 2). On the S side of the deeper excavation within the central lake was a small burnt area in the top of the natural gravel (4). Part of a quartz hammerstone was picked up some 10 m to the E, on the S side (see Fig 2).

Feature 1

Feature with a U-shaped profile, presumed to be part of an EW linear ditch, cut from below the alluvium, cutting the pre-alluvial ground surface. This feature showed in the W side of the large lake, in the sloping side of the deeper excavation in the centre of the lake. One metre wide and 1 m in depth, the feature was filled by very dark brown silty clay loam similar to the pre-alluvial soil and contained sherds of soft, crumbly Late Prehistoric pottery. There were six small sherds, with several very small fragments, of a calcined-quartzite fabric, probably all from the same vessel but all were body sherds, so closer dating by form cannot be attempted.

Feature 2

This U-shaped feature was presumed to be a continuation of ditch 1, and showed 6 m to the E, in the W side of a small 'island' within the deeper excavation of the central lake. The dimensions were the same, and the feature appeared to be cut for approximately the same level in the alluvium, but here it was filled by blue-grey clay with orange and yellowish-brown mottling. The finds consisted of two pieces of burnt flint.

Feature 3

The U-shaped ditch (1 & 2) possibly continued into the E side of the island, but was not well-defined here. It appeared to be filled by a similar dark brown silty clay loam to that found in 1, but contained no finds.

Feature 4

In the S side of the deep central part of the larger lake was a shallow scoop containing burnt silty clay but no finds, approximately 0.40 m in width and 0.20 m deep. This feature appeared to be cut from just above the natural gravel.

Excavations at Farmoor (Lambrick and Robinson 1979) have indicated that the floodplain in this area was at least seasonally occupied during the Iron Age. In enclosure group 3 the farmstead ditches cut a pair of narrow-spaced, straight parallel gullies. These were undated and were not traced from any distance, though they can now be seen as comparable to some middle to late Bronze Age field boundaries (Lambrick & Robinson 1979, 25 and fig. 14), and it is therefore possible to see the linear ditch as part of a field system. The small burnt area could be part of earlier activity as it appears to have been cut from the top of the natural gravel, but as features were difficult to identify it is possible that the edge of the feature was not visible except at the bottom where it showed clearly against the natural gravel. If the two features are contemporary it is likely that they represent a settlement site, perhaps similar to those identified as middle Iron Age farmsteads at Farmoor. These farmsteads consisted of ditched enclosures for circular houses, with associated outlying enclosures for stock. The settlements were seasonal, using the wet grassland during the spring and summer. It is possible that similar farmsteads existed further N on the floodplain, at Pinkmill Meadow.

Bibliography

Lambrick G and Robinson M, 1979 Iron Age and Roman riverside settlement at Farmoor, Oxfordshire

CBA Research Report, 32

Naomi Hutchings
Oxford Archaeological Unit
August 1990

Cumnor Pinkhill Meadows

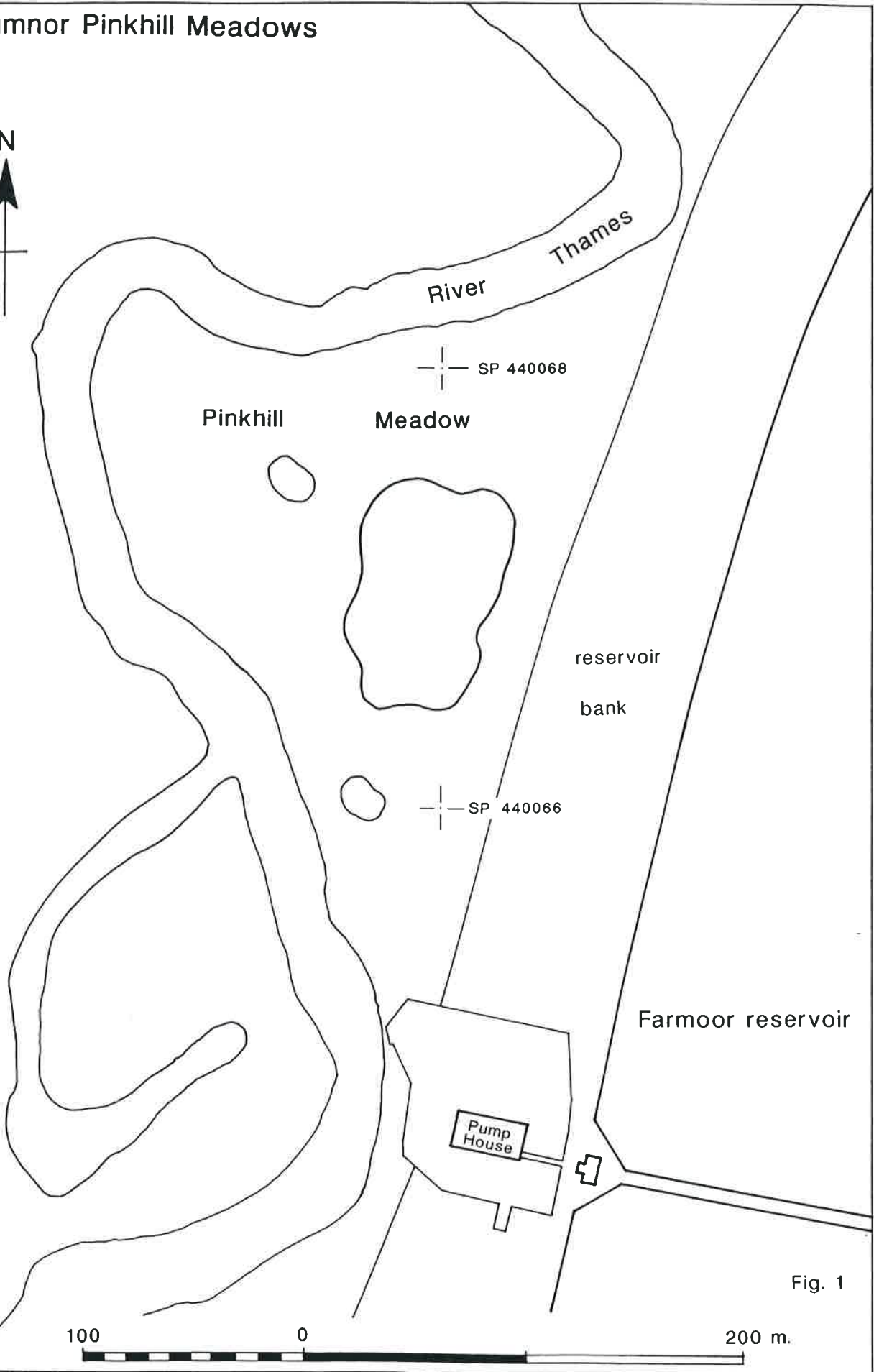
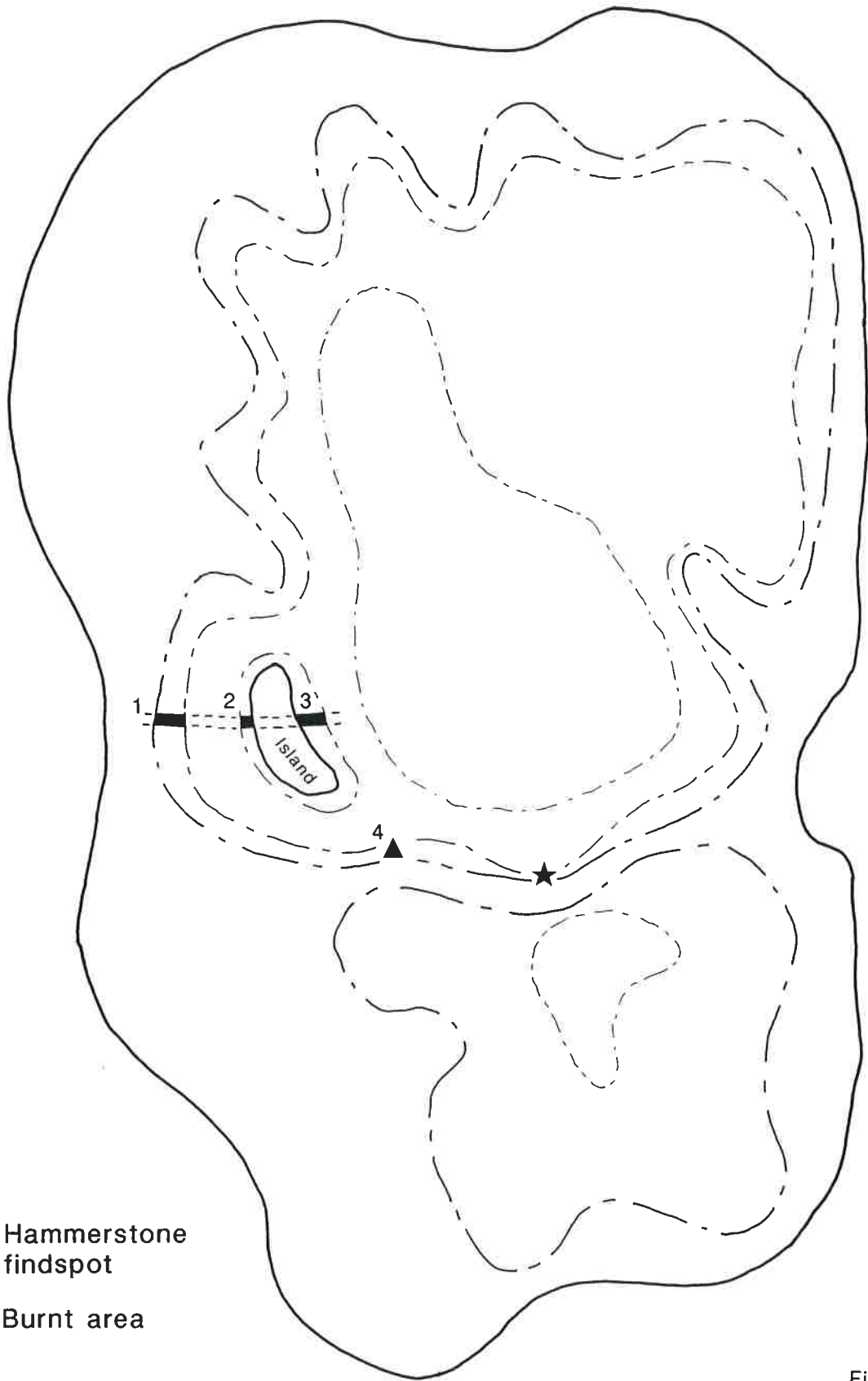


Fig. 1

Cumnor Pinkhill Meadows



- ★ Hammerstone findspot
- ▲ Burnt area



Fig. 2