

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## LOCATION AND SITE CHARACTER

The Roman settlement of Westhawk Farm, Kingsnorth, Ashford, Kent, lies some 3 km south-south-west of the centre of Ashford, with its centre at NGR TR 000399 (Fig. 1.1). Topographically it is located along the north-east – south-west aligned edge of a slight plateau of Cretaceous Wealden Clay, and also extends down its south-eastern side towards the Whitewater Dyke, a tributary stream of the Great Stour. The underlying geology is capped with moderately acidic silty clays. The development site within which the Roman settlement principally lay covered a larger area of some 24.5 ha, divided in two by a major north-east to south-west aligned field boundary which ran along the edge of the plateau mentioned above.

The settlement is situated at the junction of two important Roman roads (Fig. 1.2). The main axis of the settlement is formed by a road (Margary route 130 (1973)) running up from the Weald on a generally WSW-ENE alignment, which adopts a more south-west – north-east line through the settlement before heading down the valley of the Great Stour towards Canterbury, some 25 km away. This is met in the area of the settlement by the road (Margary 131) from Dover and Lympne (the latter only about 13 km distant to the south-east). Previously thought to have formed a crossroads with road 130, it is now clear that road 131 heads north-westwards towards Maidstone, and thence (via Margary 13) to Rochester, from a point some 3 km west of Westhawk Farm in Shadoxhurst parish (Aldridge 1995; 2006).

The situation of the site and its scale as revealed by excavation and geophysical survey justify its description as a nucleated, roadside settlement or ‘small town’. This is discussed in detail below, but for simplicity much of the site description and preliminary discussion takes this interpretation as its starting point. For present purposes the term roadside settlement, which carries less semantic baggage (cf Burnham 1993, 101) than ‘small town’ (with or without the quotation marks), is preferred.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Prior to the commencement of exploratory work, occasioned by the proposal of a major housing development, and despite the potentially important junction location, there was little evidence in the immediate area, except the find of a single late 1st century cremation burial from the site of Westhawk Farm itself, to indicate the presence of a substantial Roman settlement. The work carried out prior to the determination of the planning application for the site, took the

form of a gradiometer survey undertaken by Geophysical Surveys of Bradford (GSB 1996; 1997; 1998), supplemented by evaluation trenching, principally of the north-western half of the development area, by the Kent Archaeological Rescue Unit (Philp 1997), in part informed by the results of the geophysical survey (Fig. 1.3). The success of the initial gradiometer survey, carried out at the end of 1996, led to expansion of its scope in successive stages, until detailed survey eventually covered some 18 ha. This showed a complex settlement plan based around the major road junction but incorporating numerous other features on several alignments (Fig. 1.6).

The broad chronology of the site was suggested by the evaluation trenching which revealed evidence of occupation, including timber structures, mostly within a date range of AD 70-250. There was only a little evidence for 4th-century activity, in particular. This was subsequently borne out by a controlled metal-detector survey carried out over the site in Spring 1998, which produced a range of material, principally Roman, but with some later items, and one pre-Roman coin (of Epillus). Only 6 out of a total of 87 Roman coins were demonstrably of 4th-century date, a remarkably low proportion had the site seen significant late Roman activity. Superficially, at least, this material confirmed the apparent early Roman emphasis of the site.

After negotiations between Kent County Council, Ashford Borough Council, English Heritage and the developer (Wilcon Homes), it was agreed that the part of the site including the focal area of the settlement as defined by the geophysical survey (Area A, an area of *c* 10 ha) would be taken out of the development proposal and retained as open space, while the south-western part of the settlement (Area B) would be subject to excavation. Both these areas lay south-east of the major modern boundary mentioned above. Provision was also made for limited excavation on the north-west side of the focal area of the settlement (and north-west of the major modern boundary), principally in order to see if the Roman road to Maidstone could be located here (Area C). Otherwise, it was felt that this area lay largely beyond the limit of the Roman settlement, had produced no significant features in either the geophysical survey or evaluation trenching, and did not justify the expenditure of significant resources upon it. The extent of the site to be examined in whole or part by excavation was approximately 8 ha.

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (now Oxford Archaeology, hereafter OA except in relevant publication references) offered a successful tender to carry out the excavation and subsequent work on a phased

The Roman Roadside settlement at Westhawk Farm

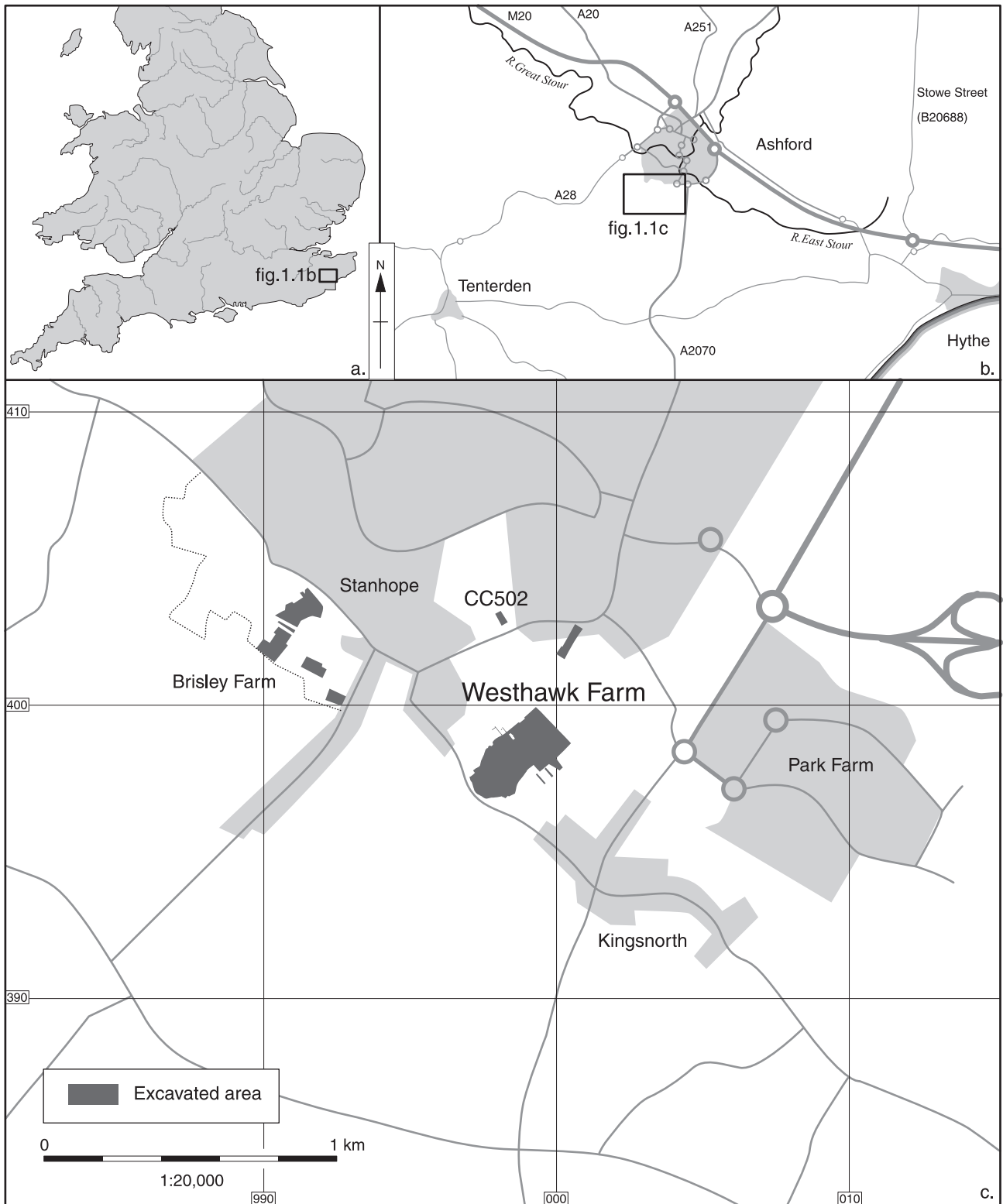


Figure 1.1 Site location.

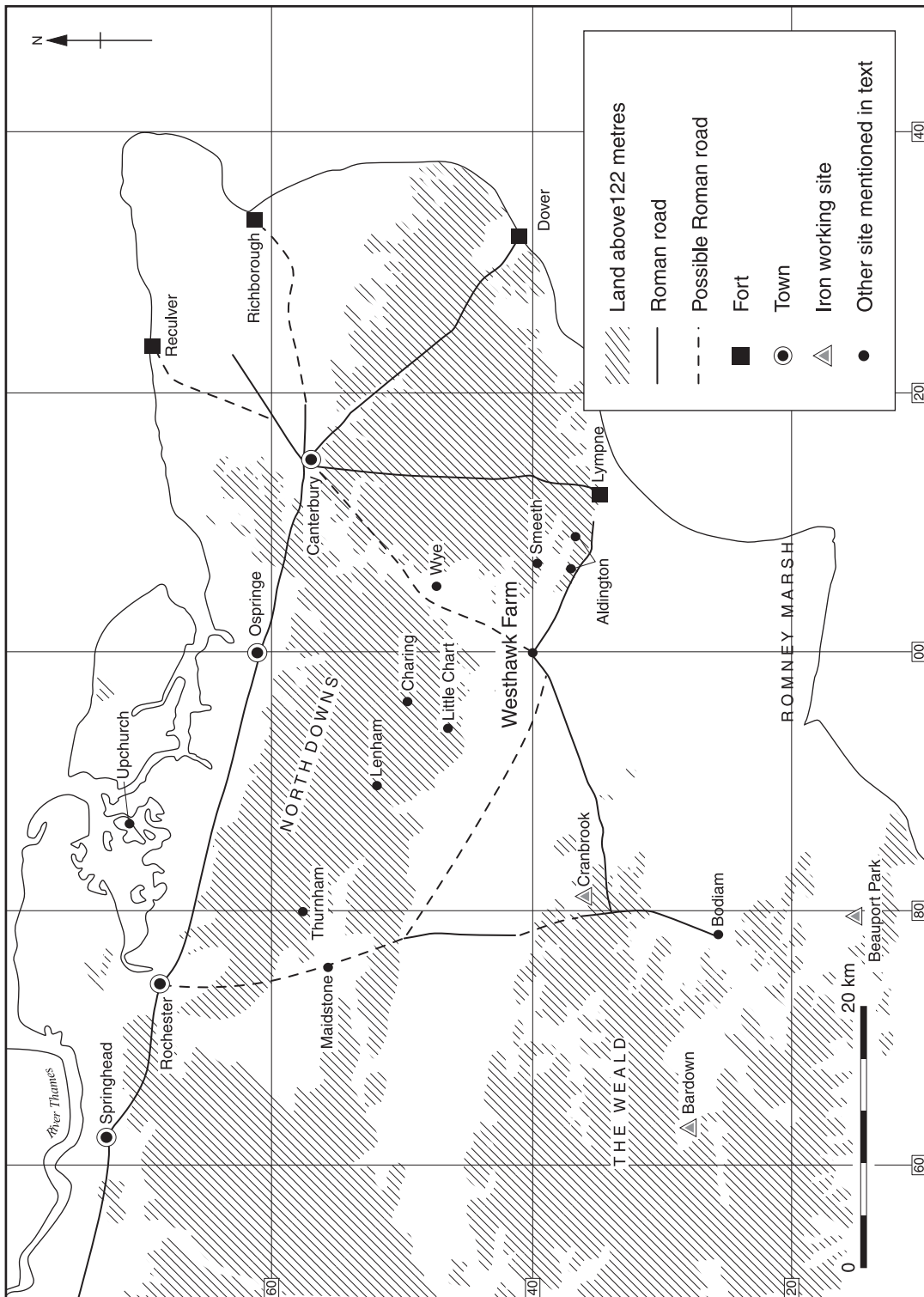


Figure 1.2 Principal Roman roads and settlements in Kent.

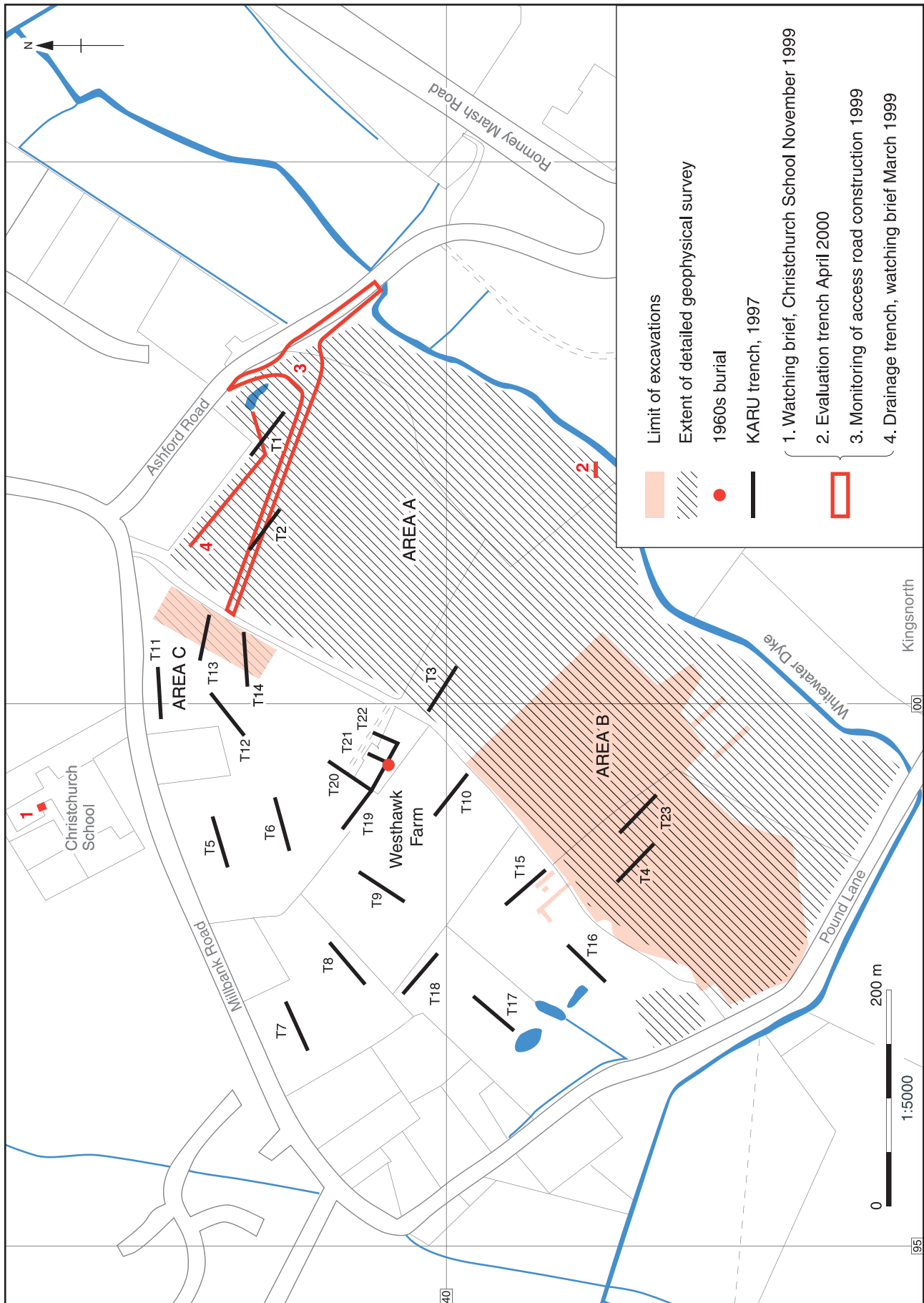


Figure 1.3 Site plan showing extent of detailed geophysical survey and location of evaluation trenches, main excavations and other archaeological observations.

programme, and the first season of excavation was carried out between late August and mid November 1998. The second - and last - season of fieldwork commenced in early July 1999 and was completed in early November of that year. Funding for the project was provided almost entirely by Wilcon Homes, and was administered by the Heritage Conservation team of Kent County Council, who commissioned the work on behalf of Wilcon Homes and also developed the strategic framework for the site's investigation. In the second year the excavation team was supplemented by students from the Universities of Bradford and Leicester and by (mostly local) participants in a training excavation programme put together with support from Kent County Council, the Kent Archaeological Society, English Heritage and Ashford Borough Council. The total excavated area was eventually almost exactly 6 ha. On completion of the basic site archive a programme of post-excavation assessment was carried out between June and December 2000 (OAU 2001) and followed immediately by the commencement of work on the full-scale analysis and reporting of the results of the excavation.

A number of small-scale observations in the Westhawk Farm area were made in the course of and subsequent to the main programme of excavation. These consisted of:

- 1 A watching brief during limited building work at Christchurch School, Millbank Road (NGR TQ 999 404), just north of the site, unrelated to the main housing development, in November 1999. No archaeological features or finds were revealed.
- 2 Excavation of a short length of sewer trench adjacent to the Whitewater Dyke at NGR TR 003 398, on behalf of Babbie Group in April 2000. No archaeological features or finds were revealed.
- 3 Monitoring of construction work for a new access road across Area A in 1999. This was built on a causeway entirely above modern ground level and had no impact on the underlying archaeological deposits.
- 4 Recording of a drainage trench at the north-eastern margin of Area A in March 1999.

Only the last of these provided useful information relating to the Roman settlement, and this is summarised below.

## PHYSICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The following brief summary of the physical and archaeological background is focussed on an area within a 10 km radius of Westhawk Farm, with only selected reference to sites and features beyond this.

### Geology, Topography and Soils

Kingsnorth and south Ashford lie towards the northern margin of the extensive Weald Clay deposits

which constitute the earliest part of the (Cretaceous) geological sequence in this area (Fig. 1.4). To the north the Weald Clay is overlaid by the component deposits of the Lower Greensand, upon which central Ashford is located, in turn succeeded by Gault and the Lower, Middle and Upper Chalk of the North Downs, the last of these being exposed barely 5 km north of Ashford. Locally the Lower Greensands are capped with river gravels and deposits of Head and Head Brickearth, the Brickearth occurring particularly north of Ashford between Kennington and Wye. On the Downs the Upper Chalk is widely overlaid by Clay-with-flints.

The southern margins of all these deposits lie broadly on a WNW-ESE aligned front, cut by the valley of the Great Stour which runs north-north-eastwards from Ashford past Wye as far as Chilham, and then turns north-eastwards in the direction of Canterbury. Significant alluvial deposits are found in places not only in the valley of the Great Stour but also associated with the East Stour and its tributary stream the Whitewater Dyke. Such deposits extend around the east and south margins of the Westhawk Farm complex. They are much wider than would normally be expected in relation to such relatively small streams (Smart *et al.* 1966, 278) and may date to a late stage in the last glaciation (B Worssam, pers. comm.).

The geological sequence of the region gives rise to a series of historical/topographical zones or *pays* (Everitt 1986, 44-5) on the same broad WNW-ESE alignment (Fig. 1.5). From the north these are the Chalk Downland, bordered by the narrow band of Holmesdale and then the slightly wider Chartland zone, giving way to the Weald in the south. Holmesdale corresponds broadly to the underlying Gault Clay, and Chartland to the south lies on the Lower Greensand formation, while the Weald zone lies on the eponymous Clay. Some 8 km north of central Ashford the Downs reach a height of 176 m at Rattle Hall. To the south, the Holmesdale and Chartland zones lie roughly between 50 and 90 m OD, while the Stour valley is lower-lying. Westhawk Farm itself lies at about 40 m OD. The Weald country immediately south of Westhawk Farm is undulating, for the most part ranging between *c* 25 and 45 m OD, with localised higher and lower points (Plate 1.1).

The 'natural' subsoil revealed in the excavation varied distinctly, reflecting the site topography. The strip of land on the highest ground at the plateau edge, lying north-west of the north-east to south-west aligned Roman road, was occupied by a mottled yellowish brown silty clay (perhaps the surface of the Wealden Clay). South-east of the road on land sloping gently down to the Whitewater Dyke, the subsoil comprised an orange brown clayey silt *c* 0.2-1 m thick overlying clay. This deposit contained locally high concentrations of manganese and several palaeolithic flints were recovered from it. Towards the bottom of the slope the subsoil was a relatively homogenous alluvial clay with a low to moderate silt content.

The predominantly silty and/or loamy clay drift soils are characteristic of the Wickham 1 (711e) soil



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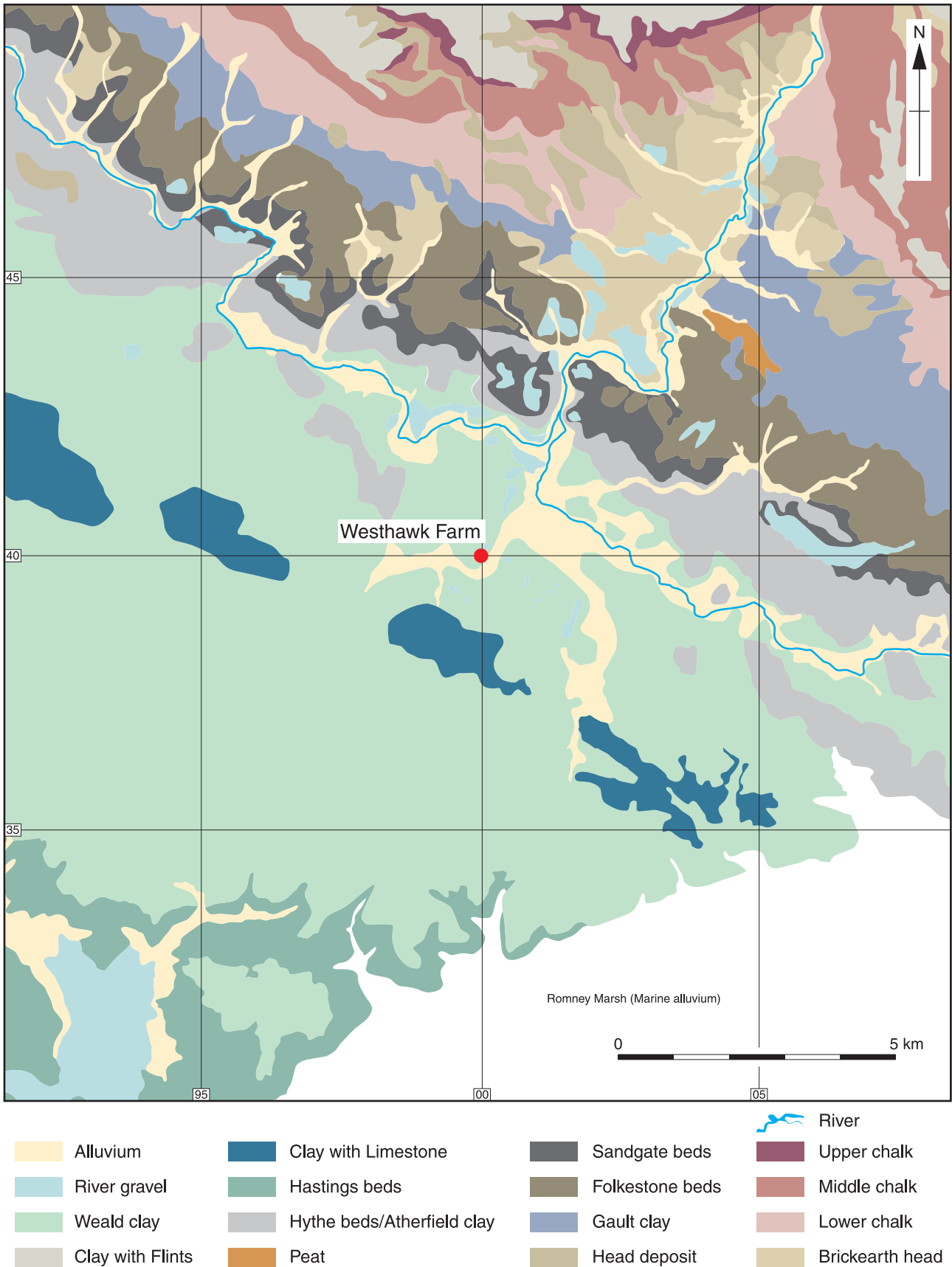


Figure 1.4 Simplified geology map of the Ashford area, centred on Westhawk Farm.



Plate 1.1 General view of the site looking south-west.

association (SSEW 1983). The soils were consistently quite acidic (the specific pH was not recorded), to the extent that bone did not normally survive unless burnt. There was localised survival of bone in unusual conditions such as waterlogged deposits.

### Prehistoric

Relatively little earlier prehistoric material has been recorded from the Ashford area. A single Palaeolithic hand-axe was found c 3 km NNW of Westhawk Farm and Palaeolithic and Mesolithic flint flakes come from Stanford some 13 km east of Westhawk Farm. Further Mesolithic material is known at Aldington some 9 km to the south-east and at a dozen or so locations within a 10 km radius of Westhawk Farm, but many of these are findspots of individual objects. The most significant Palaeolithic and Mesolithic material in the area comes from Park Farm, a little over 1 km east of Westhawk Farm. Here a few Upper Palaeolithic flints were found, together with very extensive evidence for flintworking in the Mesolithic period (Clark 1996). A small quantity of Neolithic flint is also known from Park Farm.

Neolithic and Bronze Age finds are more common across the area than those of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic, but they lie largely to the north and east of Westhawk Farm, with very few finds of this date located on the fringes of the Weald to the south and

south-west. The Neolithic material again consists almost entirely of finds, some single objects, principally of flint. The Bronze Age evidence is more diverse and includes barrows and ring ditches on the Downs in the north of the area and indications of settlement in the lower lying areas in the vicinity of the lower East Stour. Significant Late Bronze Age settlement evidence comes from Little Stock Farm, just east of Mersham (Glass 1999, 196), and closer to hand from the Waterbrook area south-east of Ashford (Rady 1992, 32). A small but striking concentration of Bronze Age metalwork finds clusters around the Stour Valley in north Ashford.

A broadly similar distribution of sites and finds is observed in the Iron Age, at which time the absence of evidence for activity south and south-west of Westhawk Farm is even more marked than in the Bronze Age. At the same time there is also less evidence for activity on the Downs, though there is a minor concentration of sites and findspots in the vicinity of Wye and on the adjacent higher ground on both sides of the Stour Valley. No major foci of settlement, in the sense of hillforts and/or *oppida*, lie in the area, the nearest being at Canterbury to the north-east and towards Maidstone to the north-west. (For a recent distribution map of hillforts in the region see Hamilton and Manley 2001, 10). The principal concentration of Iron Age sites and finds in the area is in the vicinity of Ashford itself. This is largely a consequence of the increased

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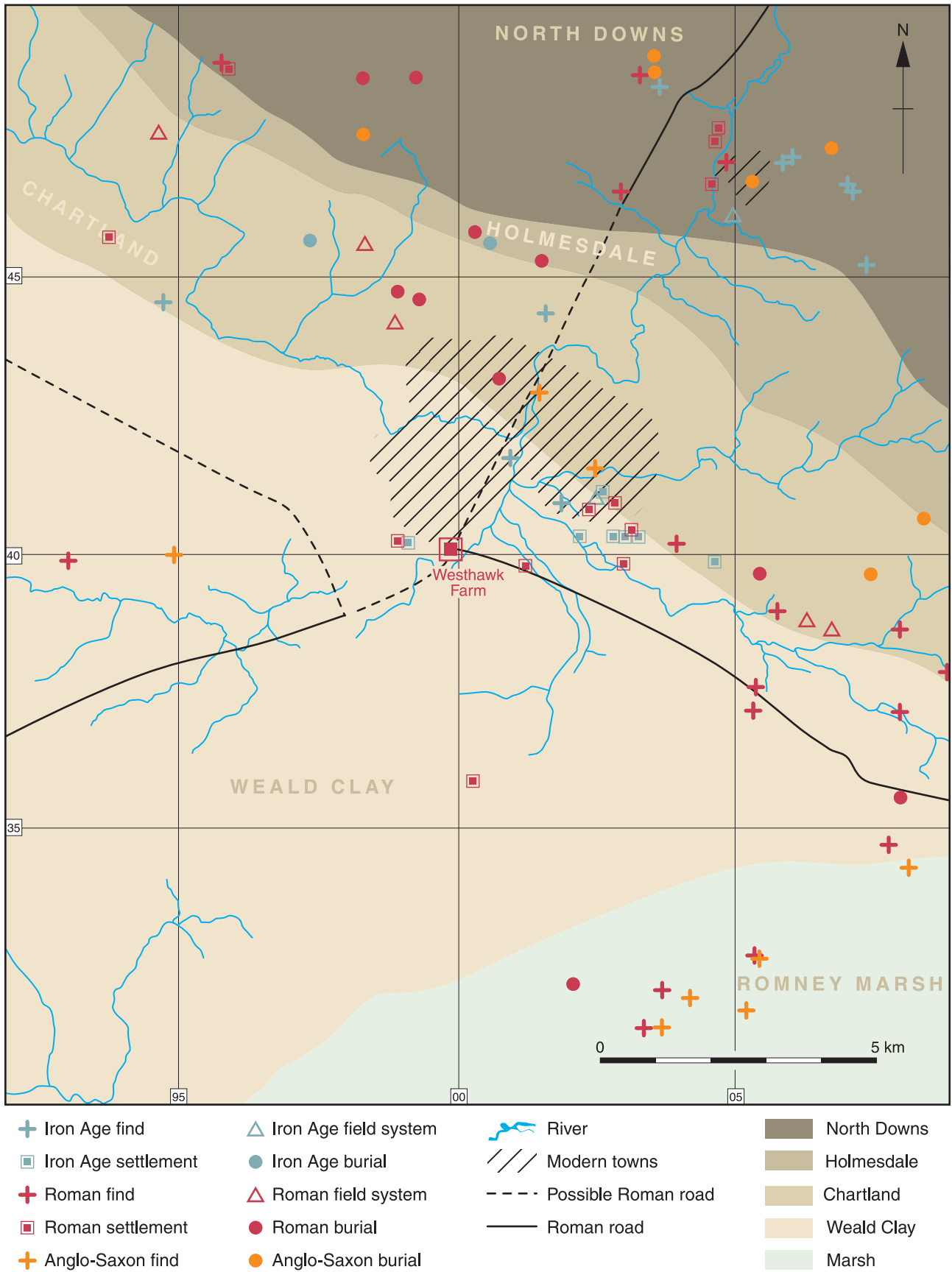


Figure 1.5 Location of Westhawk Farm in relation to principal topographic units and Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon features in the Ashford area.



volume of archaeological work in the area arising from the major development of Ashford in recent times, particularly on the south and south-east sides of the town, and also reflects the volume of archaeological fieldwork associated with the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL; for detailed reports on all the CTRL work see <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/projArch/ctrl>). However, the new evidence also serves to underline the contrast, in this and other periods, between the desirability of Holmesdale, with its relatively fertile and well-watered soils, and the less tractable Weald Clays to the south-west. Chartland, lying between these zones, is also typically poor ground, though more fertile in the 'central reaches, between the Medway and the Stour' (Everitt 1986, 51).

This recent work has generated considerable evidence for late Iron Age settlement in the immediate vicinity of Westhawk Farm, though much of the evidence, some of it only from evaluation rather than larger scale excavation, has yet to be formally published (Fig. 1.5). Little Stock Farm, east of Mersham, has produced late Iron Age settlement evidence, succeeded by Roman field systems (Glass 1999, 196). A notable concentration of late Iron Age finds and related features occurs at Sevington, south of the railway line roughly 3 km east of Westhawk Farm (Booth and Everson 1994, 412, 433). The nature of the dating evidence is such, however, that some of these sites could date to the early Roman period rather than (or perhaps as well as) the late Iron Age. A similar situation prevails at Waterbrook Farm just to the south of this area, where ditch systems and associated domestic activity including at least one structure were located by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust (Rady 1996).

The most significant evidence for late Iron Age settlement in the area, however, comes from recent excavations by Archaeology South-East at Brisley Farm, only *c* 600 m west-north-west of Area B at Westhawk Farm. Here there was extensive settlement of later Iron Age date, with which were associated two high status 'warrior' inhumation burials (Johnson 2002).

## Roman

As already discussed the site lies at the junction of two major Roman roads which link it to major settlements within the region (Fig. 1.2). To the east these are the ports and military establishments of Lympne and Dover, the former only *c* 13 km distant, while Canterbury, 25 km distant to the north-east, was the tribal capital of the Cantiaci. West of Canterbury, however, significant nucleated settlements ('small towns'/roadside settlements) seem to be confined to the line of Watling Street, leaving the south-western part of Kent apparently without such settlements. Despite the peculiarities of the chronological range of activity at Westhawk Farm it is now clear that this site can be regarded as a major nucleated settlement in a classic road junction location. Maidstone, to the north-west, has also been suggested from time to time as the location of another 'small town' (cf

Wheeler 1932, 98-101; Webster 1975, 59 and 63; but see Detsicas 1983, 78-9; Houlston 1999, 158). While the evidence is not conclusive such an identification is plausible in terms of distribution. Whatever the status of Maidstone, however, the identification of Westhawk Farm as an important centre, certainly at local if not at regional level, is clear.

A range of Roman rural settlement is found around Ashford, though as in earlier periods there is much less evidence for the Wealden area west and particularly south-west of Ashford than for the Stour valley and the area immediately south-west of the Downs (Fig. 1.5). Knowledge of the latter area has again been considerably enhanced by work carried out in connection with the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (Glass 1999). The most obvious evidence for rural settlement consists of stone buildings, including a bathhouse near Little Chart (Detsicas 1983, 143), a small villa near Charing (*ibid.*, 96-7) and a further villa and another building near Wye (*loc. cit.*), all to the north of Ashford. Recent finds of building material in Wye indicate the presence of additional structures there, though the character of these is unknown (Sparey-Green 1999). Two more presumed villas are known at Aldington, one close to the Roman road from Lympne *c* 7 km south-east of Westhawk Farm, and another some 2.5 km further east.

Rural settlement types not characterised by stone buildings have only tended to be recognised relatively recently in the area, particularly in work associated with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and with the expansion of Ashford. Boundary ditches relating to field systems and settlement have been located at several CTRL sites both east and west of Ashford. The most significant settlement site to emerge from this work is that at Bower Road, Smeeth, where several posthole structures were associated with rectilinear enclosures and other features (Diez forthcoming - see below), the majority of activity falling in a late Iron Age to late 2nd century date range. Scattered evidence for Roman activity, again mainly of early Roman date as discussed above, comes from Park Farm, the Boys Hall area and Brisley Farm.

The presence of rural settlements is indicated additionally by the occasional occurrence of burials, almost invariably cremations, at a number of sites in the area. The Ashford area has also produced evidence of iron production in several locations, on such a scale that these are characterised as ironworking sites, rather than as agricultural sites in which iron production was a secondary activity. Such a site is identified at Wye (Bradshaw 1970, 178). The principal focus of iron production in the region, of course, lies in the Weald some distance to the west of Ashford (Cleere and Crossley 1985, 57-86; Hodgkinson 1999).

## Post-Roman

Anglo-Saxon material, most either demonstrably or probably associated with early burials, is found in the Ashford area at some eight sites stretching in an arc from Westwell through Wye to Brabourne Lees,

with further findspots in Ashford and Willesborough (Fig. 1.5). A number of these finds (including the two last) are, however, only approximately located. A further group of Anglo-Saxon finds, mostly of pottery, is known from an area centred roughly 9 km south-east of Westhawk Farm near Newchurch in Romney Marsh.

The principal historically attested foci of Anglo-Saxon activity in the area were at Wye and at Westwell. Wye lay at the point where the Pilgrims Way and the Downland ridgeway joined to cross the Stour. Having been something of a focus of Roman settlement it became 'an important *villa regalis* [by 762], the *caput* of a Kentish lathe, an early market centre, and a focal point of heathen worship' (Everitt 1986, 86) and in due course the site of a Minster church. Westwell was also an early estate centre, one of a number found on the springline of Holmesdale, and the site of secondary mother-church, a category of churches unlikely to have been minsters themselves but known to have given birth to secondary foundations (ibid, 197).

Archaeologically almost nothing is known of the middle-late Anglo-Saxon period in the area, though recent work at Mersham has produced finds of both these periods as well as 11th-12th century material (Glass 1999, 212-213).

In the area only South Ashford(?) is clearly referred to in the Domesday record, under the name of *Este-fort* (VCH 1932, 247). It was part of Hugh de Montfort's lands and was held by Maigno. In the time of Edward the Confessor, Turgis had held it from Earl Godwin. South Ashford (?) had land for half a plough, with one in the demesne, and eight acres of meadow. Two villeins (unfree tenants) are recorded, having a plough between them. Two serfs are also recorded. The land was assessed at one sulung (the Kent equivalent to a hide). The land was valued at 30 shillings, compared with 25 shillings when Turgis had held it.

According to Edward Hasted (1797-1801, 588-9), "West Halks" was usually called "West Hawks", and was held by the Manor of Kenardington. The farm gave its name to the Halk family; hawks were present on the family seal. This family, and hence the farm, extend back to at least the 14th century: Sampson de Halk died in AD 1360 (loc.cit.). By the mid-15th century, the Halks family estate had passed to the Taylor family, and had in turn passed to the Clerk family by c 1500. By the time Hasted was writing, Westhawk was in the possession of Henry Eaton. Alternative views of the origin of the placename are possible, one being that it is Anglo-Saxon, perhaps meaning 'west corner', with analogous names in Kent including Hawkinge and Hawkhurst (Arthur Ruderman pers comm). The locational description would fit exactly the position of the site at the western end of Ashford parish (see below).

Documents relating to the site of Westhawk Farm, rather than the owning family, are scarce, and a potential 16th-century reference (cf Philp 1997) proved on examination to contain three deeds, two dated 1776 and one 1769, that refer to properties and

named fields in the parish of Bexley with no reference to Westhawke Manor (*Ashford Parish Index* ref U.6.T.36, of 1581 'Westhawke Manor'). The recently-demolished farm buildings may have been of early 19th-century date (Philp 1997). They appear on the Kingsnorth tithe map of 1839 (Ref: IR30/17/208) but not on Kent Sheet 3 of the Ordnance Survey one inch to one mile survey, published in 1819 (Harley and O'Donoghue 1975). The latter clearly shows West Hawk on Pound Lane a little to the south-west of the recent site at a location which would correspond with 'Old House Field' as given in the documentation associated with the Kingsnorth tithe map. The mid 19th-century mapping shows a linear pond here (no longer extant) which might suggest that the 'Old House' was moated, like nearby Kingsnorth Court Lodge, barely 300 m distant to the south-west, or Park House (Farm) some 1.5 km to the east.

Both the Kingsnorth tithe map and the Ashford tithe map of 1843 (Ref: IR30/17/12; "Copied and corrected" from an 1818 survey and with the Apportionment book dated 1842) give information on the associated fields at that time. These, including 'Old House Field', were principally pasture, but there was some arable. The field names do not generally provide any hint of the existence of a Roman settlement, but it is notable that the small field immediately south-east of Whitewater Dyke and south-west of the present Ashford Road is called Stone Acre, and that the adjoining field to the south-east, separated from Stone Acre by the Kingsnorth-Ashford road, is called Causeway Field. Both names must refer to the existence of the Roman road from Lympe which runs through them.

The site of Westhawk Farm itself lay in Kingsnorth parish, but the tithe maps and the subsequent 1st Edition Ordnance Survey 6" map (surveyed 1871-2) show that land immediately south-east of the farm buildings, including much of the area of the recent excavations, lay within a narrow south-westerly projection of Ashford parish, the south-westernmost point of which, then (as until recently) situated in the middle of an open field, was marked by a boundary post, the position of which was identified in the excavation of Area B. The correspondence between this projection and the extent of the Roman settlement, while not precise, is generally quite remarkable. While there is no clear evidence to indicate why this should have been the case the only likely explanation is that the area of the Roman settlement, and perhaps in particular the line of the Canterbury road, retained some significance, though the cartographic evidence suggests that the line of the latter through Ashford was no longer known by the mid 19th century.

## GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

The initial gradiometer scan of the site, carried out in 1996 by Geophysical Surveys of Bradford, covered 25 ha in scanning mode while simultaneous detailed survey covered some 4 ha (GSB 1996). Further detailed work was undertaken in 1997 (GSB 1997) and

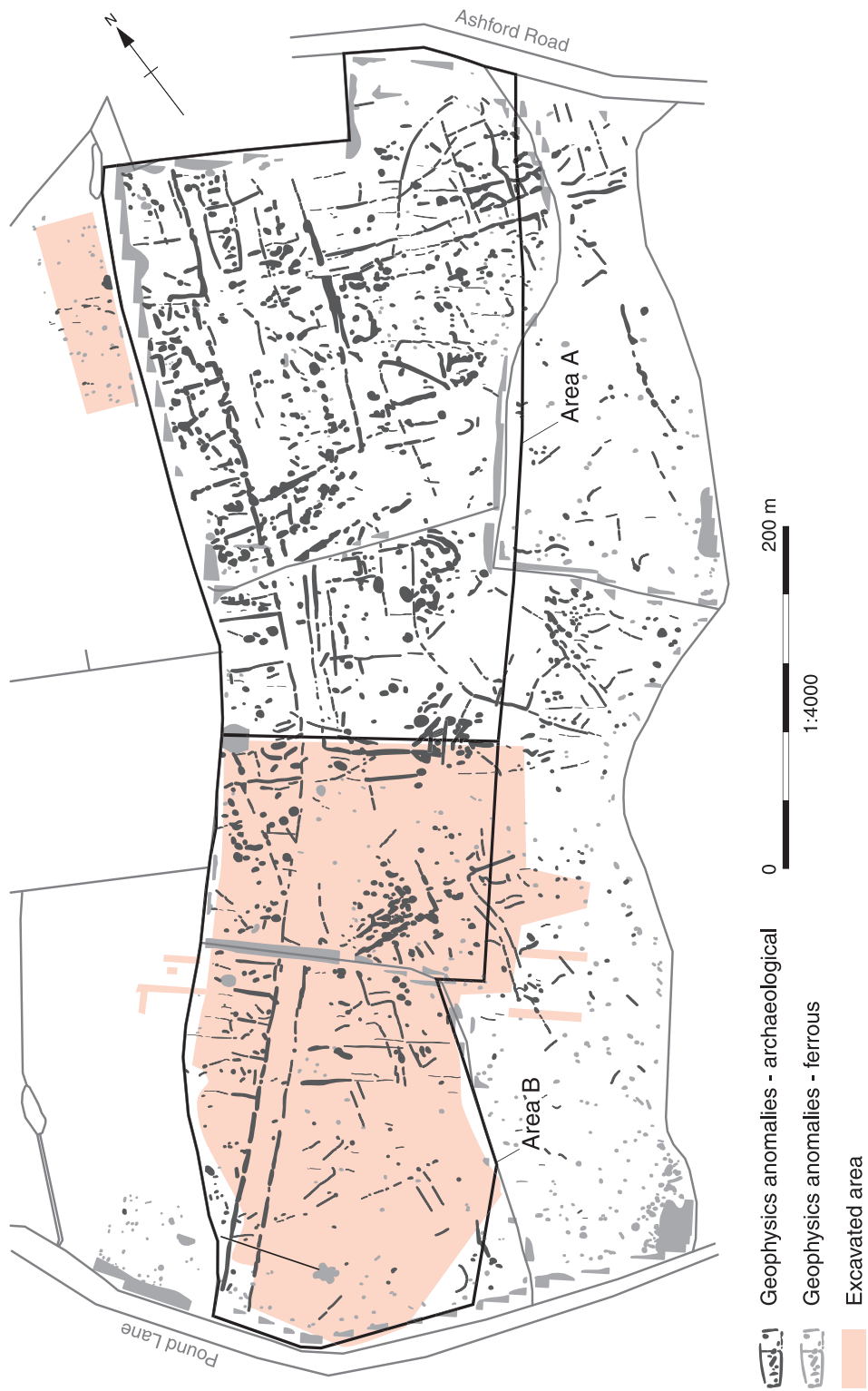


Figure 1.6 Plan of geophysical survey.

with additional work in 1998 (GSB 1998) the area subjected to detailed survey was ultimately almost 18 ha (note that Figure 1.6 only shows the extent of detailed survey). The principal features revealed by the survey were linear anomalies, but numerous discrete features were also present, although their interpretation was more problematic.

In outline, the survey showed that the Weald-Canterbury road, defined along much of its length by linear boundaries, formed the axis of a settlement extending along it for a distance of at least *c* 700 m, with the north-east extent of the settlement lying under existing housing beyond the development area. There was a distinct bend in the road alignment at about the midpoint of its detected length. The road from Dover and Lympne was also detected, the two roads meeting at right angles at what was presumably the focal area of the settlement (towards the northern end of the development site). Here there appears to have been a substantial rectilinear open space, defined by ditches which were particularly marked (in the gradiometer survey) at the point where the Dover/Lympne road entered the focal area. There was no sign of a north-westerly continuation of that road towards Maidstone, however. The settlement along the axial road was characterised on its north-west side by ditched plots ranging from *c* 18-30 m in width laid out at right angles to the road alignment. South-east of the road there was more variety of layout, including (from the north-east) the focal ditched zone or possible open space already mentioned, groups of substantial linear features, some of which may have defined a large enclosure, an area where there was no indication of roadside ditches and, at the south-western end, clear definition of the road but little sign of large-scale activity adjacent to it. In the central part of the surveyed area, south-east of the axial road and south of the focal ditched zone, a number of concentrated magnetic anomalies were detected which were interpreted as being associated with ironworking. A number of linear features were noted which did not conform to the general pattern of the site layout. These were of two types; irregular alignments which it was thought could indicate pre-Roman activity, and straighter features, at least one of which is now known to be of early Roman date.

#### **KENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESCUE UNIT EVALUATION**

The evaluation, undertaken by the Kent Archaeological Rescue Unit on behalf of the then owners of the site, was carried out in March 1997, in the light of information derived from the ongoing programme of geophysical survey. Twenty-three machine trenches were excavated (Fig. 1.3). Five of these were sited within or adjacent to parts of the Roman settlement (as indicated by the geophysical survey) on the south-east side of the axial modern field boundary. The remaining trenches lay north-west of this boundary in areas suggested by geophysical scanning to be largely devoid of archaeological interest. Four of

these trenches were located in and around the site of Westhawk Farm itself in the hope that further evidence relating to the burial found in the 1960s might be revealed. In the event this hope was not realised, and only one trench (Trench 14) of those on the north-west side of the axial field boundary revealed any archaeological features or dating material. This was situated in the area subsequently excavated as Area C (see below). Trenches 1-4 and 23 to the south-east of the boundary all produced Roman features and finds. Trench 3 contained two areas of metallurgy, one of which was thought likely to be part of the surface of the Weald-Canterbury road, also indicated by roadside ditches. In Trench 4 eight large postholes indicated a substantial timber building identified in the subsequent excavation as Building D.

The assessment of the finds from the evaluation suggested that the settlement was occupied mainly between *c* AD 70 and 250 and that on the basis of 'the absence of masonry buildings, the substantial absence of building materials and the generally poor quality of the artefacts' the settlement, though extensive, was 'of low quality' (Philp 1997, section H; see also Philp 1998).

#### **METAL-DETECTOR SURVEY**

The survey, carried out in April 1998, was organised by Richard Hobbs of Kent County Council as part of an initiative to involve local metal-detector users in formal archaeological projects. Members of a number of clubs participated in the survey under the direct supervision of Richard Hobbs and significant objects (as defined in the field) were pinpointed using an EDM, the survey work being done by Peter Guest. The survey covered a wide area of the proposed development site, but concentrated most intensively on the focus of the Roman settlement in Area A. The results were summarised by Hobbs (1998). The finds consisted principally of Roman and later material, of which the coins were the most important. These included one pre-Roman coin (of Epillus), and some 87 Roman coins (see Guest below), the majority of which were of 1st-2nd century date. A summary listing of the most significant non-coin finds is contained in the project archive. Inevitably, much metalwork of relatively recent date and little archaeological interest was recovered.

#### **1998-1999 EXCAVATION**

##### **Site Methodology**

The excavation was carried out in two seasons, from late August to mid November 1998 and from early July to early November 1999. Topsoil and a subsoil consisting of plough-disturbed horizons, possibly reflecting activity of medieval as well as post-medieval date, were removed by tracked 360° excavators using toothless ditching buckets under direct archaeological supervision. The two deposits were removed separately, and in 1999 in particular the exposed sub-



soil was subject to systematic scanning by metal detector users before its removal. Metal objects found within this deposit were then located precisely using an EDM, to allow the possibility of relating some of them to underlying, subsequently-excavated features. Topsoil heaps were also scanned with metal detectors. Excavation and on-site recording followed standard Oxford Archaeology procedures.

### Preservation

Excavation conditions varied very considerably. The natural subsoil, which ranged from clays and silty clays to a compact silty sand with a high manganese content, particularly in the south-western part of Area B, was relatively poorly-drained both on the valley side as well as on the plateau (Area C) and at times was very wet indeed. A major question that had to be resolved was the extent of the truncation of archaeological deposits. The plough-worked subsoil deposit was variable in preservation and thickness. At the top of the slope in the northern corner of Area B this deposit did not survive at all and the modern topsoil, averaging 0.25-0.28 m in thickness, directly overlay the natural Wealden clay at most points. The subsoil layer increased in depth down the slope, and at its greatest depth, at the south-east corner of Area B, was up to *c.* 0.28 m thick below a topsoil averaging *c.* 0.35 m in depth. However, while the greater depth of subsoil afforded protection from modern ploughing to the underlying archaeological deposits, damage had already been done to these deposits in the course of formation of the subsoil layer itself. Nevertheless the greatest truncation of the archaeological deposits was clearly towards the top of the slope in the north-west part of Area B and in Area C. The extent of this can be judged in part from the degree of truncation of vessels placed in cremation burials. On the assumption that when placed in the ground the cremation urns were complete vessels and did not project above the contemporary ground surface, it can be estimated that at least 0.15-0.20 m has been lost from burial groups 210 and 220, at the north-eastern margin of Area B, and the extremely poor preservation of a number of the cremation burials in Area C would be consistent with a similar if not a greater depth of truncation. The level of truncation cannot be quantified consistently across the site, but there are no convincing indications that it was ever significantly less than the values proposed here.

As a consequence of plough truncation of the archaeological deposits there was very little *in situ* stratigraphy. For example, there was limited, localised survival of surface or sub-surface material within the corridor of the Weald-Canterbury road. Elsewhere, almost the only significant accumulations of vertical stratigraphy were noted halfway down the valley side in the vicinity of the ironworking structure R at the north-east edge of Area B and in the circular structure P some 90 m to the south-west. In both cases the presence of underlying features with gradually settling fills may have contributed to the sur-

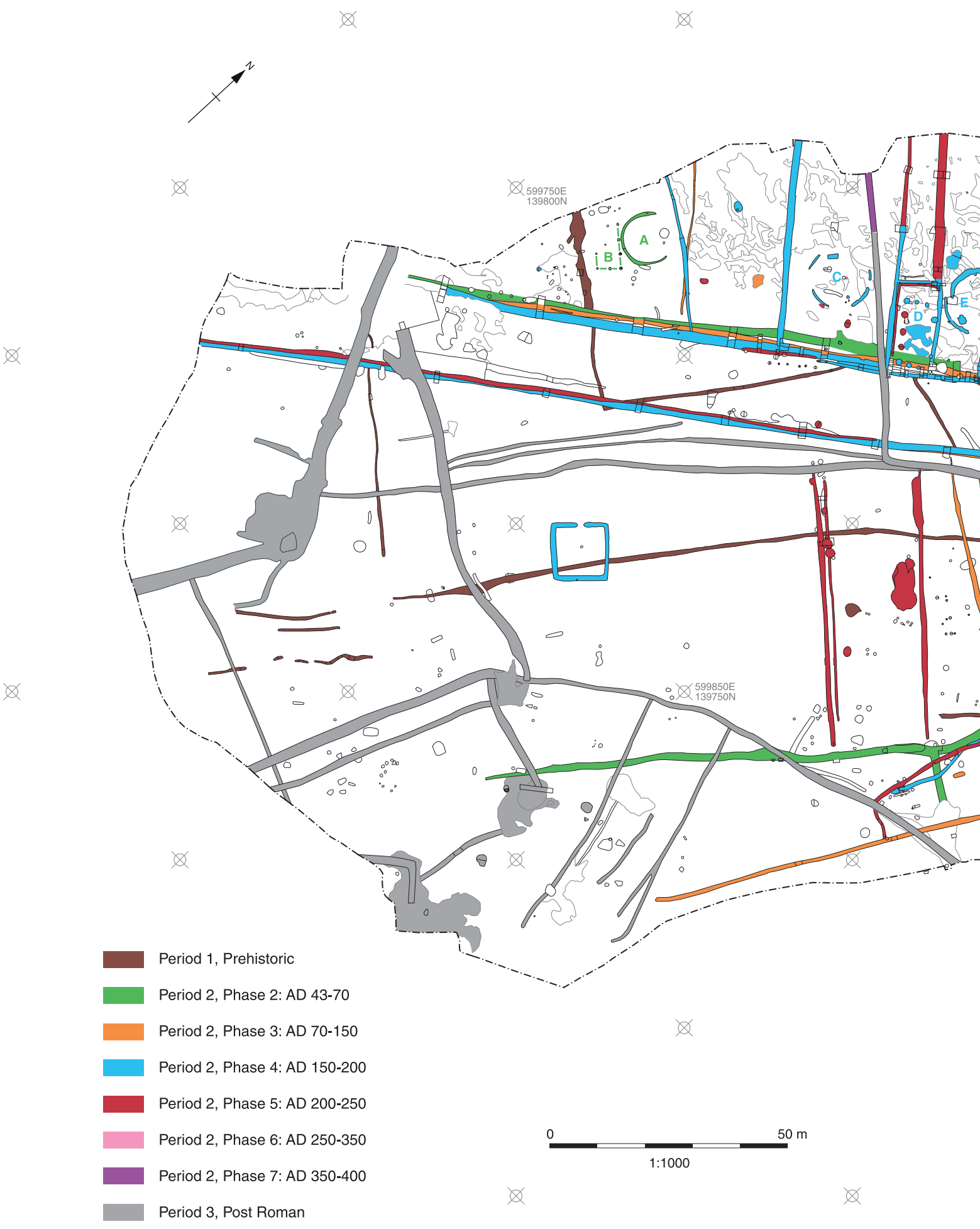
vival of deposits associated with the buildings, but it is notable that both structures lay relatively close to the line of a post-medieval field boundary running across the valley slope. It is therefore possible that accumulation of soil adjacent to this boundary afforded a degree of protection from post-medieval ploughing and thus enhanced the preservation of deposits in this area.

Overall, however, areas of surviving stratigraphy were few and very limited in extent. The nature and quality of what has been lost cannot be assessed adequately. Nevertheless it is clear that post-Roman truncation of the site sequence is not the explanation for the relative absence of late Roman activity, since this, had it been present, would still have been reflected in the presence of some cut features and of late Roman finds, and particularly coins, in the topsoil and subsoil. Such material was conspicuously absent.

Despite the variations in preservation it was clear that the surviving features constituted an important sample of the settlement and that the complexity of the remains still necessitated careful consideration of the overall approach to excavation within the resources available. The broad approach decided upon was to reveal as much as possible of the plan of the settlement rather than to concentrate on intensive examination of localised sequences within it. Emphasis was also placed on establishing the chronological framework of the development of the site. Sampling of features was perforce of limited extent in parts of the site, and some discrete features were not examined at all. This approach of 'strip, map and sample' has been developed by Kent County Council's Heritage Conservation team for work in Kent in response to large-scale development activity in the County. A priority is to consider the wider spatial and chronological frameworks both intra- and inter-site, rather than concentrating in detail on more limited areas.

### Site sequence

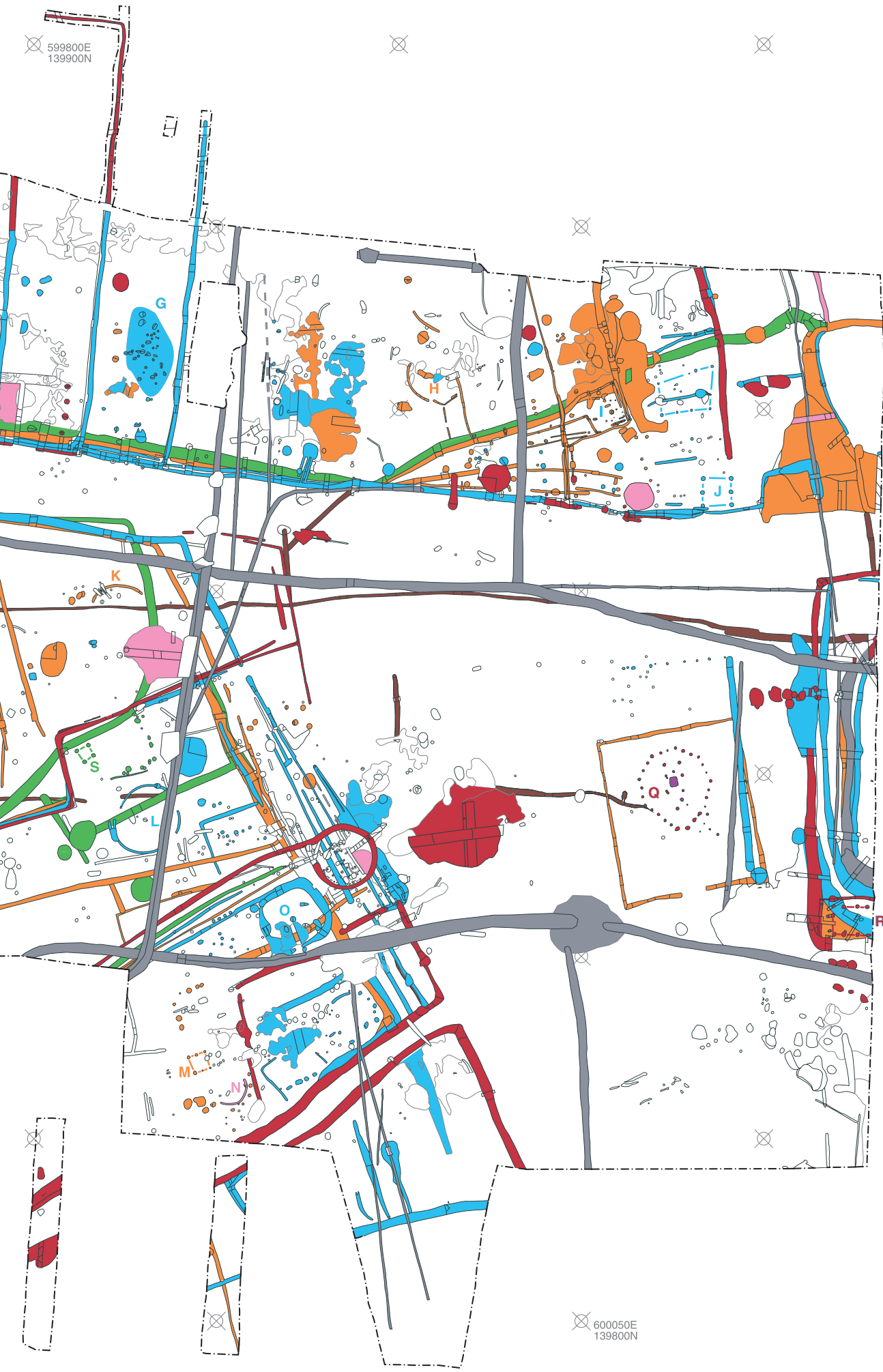
For the most part understanding of the site sequence was based upon the relationships between cut features (Fig. 1.7). These were sufficiently numerous to allow the construction of a phasing scheme for the principal linear elements of the site plan. Groups of related features, or constituent cuts of the same linear feature, were combined (after careful examination to confirm their equivalence) under *group numbers*. The basis of the site sequence is provided by group number matrices, which establish in particular the sequence of the principal linear features on the site - ditches and gullies which formed part of or could be related to the two roadside ditch sequences along the axial Weald-Canterbury road. Establishment of the chronological framework of the site, based on the sequence in Area B, involved consideration of the horizontal as well as the vertical stratigraphic sequence. This resulted in the definition of a series of *phases* within major *periods*. The resulting sequence was then closely correlated with dating evidence provided principally by ceramics and



NB: In case of multi-period features,  
phase shown is latest, not construction

Figure 1.7 Overall plan of excavation in Area B showing all periods/phases

599800E  
139900N



⊗

⊗

600050E  
139900N

⊗

600050E  
139800N

coins to provide at least approximate 'absolute' date ranges for the Roman phases. Discrete features were assigned to these phases, where possible, on the basis of spatial relationships with features of known phase and of independent dating evidence, particularly that of pottery. Some features of course could not be assigned to phases in this way and so do not appear on individual phase plans. Alternatively, features which are only broadly dated may appear on more than one phase plan. Such features might have been in use over an extended time span or have had only a short life within the overall date range of the phases to which they are assigned.

### Site narrative

The following narrative presents a highly condensed summary of the information available for the stratigraphic sequence of the site. Much detail is omitted and while the description is as objective as possible it necessarily relies for ease of use upon an interpretative framework developed in part during the fieldwork and refined further during the post-excavation assessment. Justification for the assignment of individual features to a specific phase is not normally presented, though the most problematic points are discussed. More detailed information can be found on the CD-ROM attached to this report, and also in the project archive.

The site description proceeds chronologically as far as possible, but for the Roman period a spatial and chronological approach has been followed, the principal excavated area (Area B) being divided into a number of zones both for ease of reference and to facilitate presentation of the data.

The chronological scheme adopted is as follows:

- Period 1. Prehistoric
- Period 2. Late Iron Age-Roman
  - Phase 1 Late Iron Age-*c* AD 43
  - Phase 2 *c* AD 43-70
  - Phase 3 *c* AD 70-150
  - Phase 4 *c* AD 150-200
  - Phase 5 *c* AD 200-250
  - Phase 6 *c* AD 250-350
  - Phase 7 *c* AD 350-400+
- Period 3. Medieval
- Period 4. Post-medieval and modern

The scheme of phasing within Period 2 has been deliberately left quite broad in view of the character of the archaeological features and the limitations of the dating evidence. Subdivision of individual phases, particularly of Phases 3 and 4, is possible in some parts of the site, and is presented in the site narrative below, but was considered inappropriate for many areas where the phasing of discrete features was largely dependent

upon pottery dating. The suggested beginning and end dates for each phase are, of course, only approximate.

### Terminology of spatial units

For the purposes of the site narrative as systematic as possible a set of terms has been used to define component zones or distinct topographical or functional components of Area B. These terms are both interpretative as well as descriptive. This is intended to make them more readily comprehensible; justification of the interpretative aspects will be presented in the narrative and subsequent discussion. The principal units of the site narrative for Area B Period 2 are as follows:

- 1 The axial Weald-Canterbury road (abbreviated to 'the Canterbury road' or 'the road') and its associated ditches.
- 2 Features north-west of the Canterbury road:
  - North-west oblique ditch (an early feature diverging from the road alignment) and related features, superseded by,
  - North-west roadside plots defined by linear boundaries (numbered NW1-?NW4);
  - North-west undivided roadside area, between the north-west and south-west groups of roadside plots;
  - South-west roadside plots defined by linear boundaries (numbered SW1-SW6).
- 3 Features south-east of the axial road:
  - North-east enclosure area, comprising the ditch complexes at the north-east margin of Area B which related to features beyond it;
  - The Shrine area, consisting of the whole of the open space within which the shrine enclosure proper was placed;
  - South-central settlement area, consisting of the complex sequence of linear boundaries, enclosures and associated structures located at the south margin of the shrine area. These can be defined further as a series of plots (numbered SC1-SC6). An isolated Plot (SE1) fronting onto the Canterbury road is also relevant to the definition of Plots SC1 and SC2. This area includes the 'south trackway', a well-defined north-south trackway running through this complex;
  - South peripheral area. The southern margins of the settlement, including burials and a possible mortuary enclosure.

### ARCHIVE

The archive is currently held by Oxford Archaeology pending identification of an appropriate repository. A microfilm copy of the archive is held by the NAR at Swindon.