



INDEX DATA	RPS INFORMATION
Scheme Title Beals Southern Bypass.	Details Archaeological Evaluation.
Road Number	Date June 1993
Contractor Beals CC	
County Beals	
OS Reference	
Single sided <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Double sided	
A3 <input type="checkbox"/> Colour <input type="checkbox"/>	

**The Bedford Southern Bypass
Archaeological Evaluation
June 1993**

Report 93/11
Prepared for the Department of Transport
and English Heritage.

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THE ASSESSMENT REPORT

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Preface

This report has been prepared by Bedfordshire County Council Planning Department's Archaeology Service (Contracts and Consultancy). The project was directed by Michael Dawson (Senior Archaeological Field Officer), assisted by Anthony Maul and Steve Robinson (Archaeological Supervisors). Finds reports were undertaken or supervised by Holly Duncan and Anna Slowikowski; documentary and map research was undertaken by Stephen Coleman (Historic Environment Record Information Officer). The maps were prepared by Cecily Marshall and Michael Trevarthen. We are indebted to the to landowners along the route upon whose co-operation we depended for access to urban and farmland alike.

*Evelyn Baker
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June 1993*

1 INTRODUCTION

Linear developments such as roads can be enormously damaging to the archaeological resource. However, they provide an opportunity to examine a transect across the landscape and the spatial and temporal variability of human behaviour within it. In addition the relatively long period of time between inception and implementation of such large engineering projects means that archaeological implications can be taken on board at the earliest opportunity, and a detailed programme of mitigation and investigation and recording can be developed.

A number of stages of archaeological work can be identified related to road schemes.

1 Desktop Study (review of existing data held in the County Sites and Monuments Record)

2 Initial Assessment (documentary study and initial rapid field study)

3 Fieldwork Evaluation (fieldwork including systematic field walking, topographic and geophysical survey and trial excavation).

4 Site Investigation (detailed excavation of those sites which it is not possible or desirable to protect).

5 Watching Brief (during earth moving stages of construction).

6 Assessment of Results (to determine the level of post excavation analysis).

7 Post Excavation Analysis (archive and technical report production and dissemination).

8 Deposition of Archive (to the local registered museum).

9 Monitoring (the long-term secondary effects of road construction on the archaeological resource).

In the context of this nine stage model programme, the work presented in this report is equivalent to **Stage 3**, but incorporates the results of Stages 1 and 2.

The evaluation report is constructed as follows. The aims and objectives of the evaluation and the methodology are presented in separate sections. The results of the Walkover Survey, trial trenching and geophysical survey are presented site by site. This is then followed by a regional synthesis which includes the results of the assessments and provides the landscape context for the sites investigated.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

To define the extent of the archaeological deposits within the construction limits of the Bedford Southern Bypass (western section) providing a detailed evaluation of their importance in order to propose mitigation and/or recording strategies, and to assess the potential for these and for new sites as yet unrecorded.

While every effort has been taken in the preparation and submission of this report in order to provide as complete an evaluation as possible within the terms of the brief, the Archaeology Service is not responsible for the chance discovery of sites to which there was no access, or which did not lend themselves to discovery by methods available during the time of the survey.

The evaluation of the Bedford Southern Bypass from Cardington Cross to the A6 west of Elstow has followed a staged programme, from topographical assessment and desktop survey to intrusive sample trial trenching. The synthesis of this programme is presented here. This report acknowledges that the route of the bypass is now fixed and any measures to mitigate the effects of road building must involve archaeological recording in advance of destruction. The aim of this report is the evaluation of the importance of sites along the bypass and of the extent of their survival in order to design and cost recording strategies.

Contingency arrangements in respect of unexpected discoveries arising during the course of construction works are made as a part of the recommendations in a separate section of the project design section .

This report has been produced as part of a series of reports on the route of the Bedford Southern Bypass. The first report was written in October 1992 *Bedford Bypass Archaeological Evaluation: The Norse Road Link*. This report includes a consideration of the results of that evaluation particularly in respect of the prehistoric elements at the sites of Eastcotts, Manor farm, Bunyan's Farm and Village Farm.

2 METHODOLOGY

The information presented has been compiled from various sources: the Historic Environment Record (HER), walkover, trial trenching and aerial photographs. In addition Mr Dring of Cambridge Road, Bedford was contacted to discuss his findings at the Mile Road kiln site, and those of D King in the area of Manor Farm and Bunyan's Farm. Field records from all aspects of the evaluation are currently held by the Archaeology Service at St Mary's Archaeology Centre, St Mary's Street, Bedford.

2.1 Field data:

Following contact established with landowners and/or tenants, each parcel of land was visited. The basic unit for information collection was the Ordnance Survey land parcel, as shown on 1:2500 plans. Where these are used in the report they are prefaced by the letters OS so as not to be confused with HER numbers (for details of HER see below).

For each land parcel the following categories of data were recorded on *pro formae*.

Date of visit
OS Parcel No
Civil parish
Other descriptive name in current use
Owner/tenant (where different from or supplementary to existing data)
Present land-use
Former land use (where evident, or where volunteered by the owner/tenant)
Topography

Field visits were brief, restricted to the length of time required to collate the simple data required at this stage. This was sufficient to detect any possible earthworks and to describe local topography and land-use. Quantitative data collection, such as surface artefact collection from systematic field walking, did not form a component of this stage of the assessment, but artefact spreads were noted. This aspect of the work was undertaken prior to the Public Inquiry in 1990 by Stephen Coleman (HER Information Officer); Royston Clark (Senior Archaeological Field Officer); Michael Dawson (Senior Archaeological Field Officer).

2.2 Documentary and Known Archaeological Data:

Non-field data was collected from a variety of sources. The most important was the County Historic Environment Record. This records known all archaeological sites and finds relating to the County. HER data has been compiled from a wide range of sources over a period of many years. It represents the repository for virtually all collated archaeological data, and is constantly being updated. In the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record each site is identified by an HER number. The record is held and curated by the Conservation and Archaeology Section of the County Planning Department of Bedfordshire at County Hall.

2.3 Cartographic and Documentary Sources.

Documents and maps held at the County Record Offices were examined and early editions of the large scale (25" and 6") Ordnance Survey maps were inspected. The tithe maps and awards were examined for each parish, and field names were collated. Of more significance, enclosure maps and awards were examined. Earlier maps, including parish terriers, glebe surveys and estate maps, were also examined wherever available.

In Bedfordshire the HER holds a set of transcripts of historic maps at a scale of 1:10560. These are based largely on originals in the County Records Office, also based in County Hall. Associated parish survey essays for most of the historic parishes detail the development of occupation and the historic landscape in each parish and provide a context for individual sites. Relict ridge and furrow recorded from aerial photographs, fieldwork and historic maps has been plotted as part of the series of parish surveys

2.4 Aerial Photographic Data.

Air photograph data was available from both national and county sources. The two most important national collections are the Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photography's library, and the National Library of Air Photographs held by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, located in Swindon.

In Bedford the Planning Department and HER hold a large collection of air photographs, both vertical and oblique. This collection includes copies of prints from the Cambridge and Swindon collections. The collection also includes prints obtained from local sources, often oblique and vertical photographs taken by the RAF between the mid-1940s and mid-1950s. The County Planning Department holds vertical photographs for 1968, 1976, 1981, 1986 and 1991. All oblique and vertical prints relevant to the survey corridor were examined.

2.5 The Ground Assessment

2.5.1 Geophysical Survey

This was conducted over selected areas of the route. The principal method was magnetometry in areas of, or adjacent to, cropmark sites. The final selection of survey areas was made once the evidence of the aerial photographs had been correlated with the results of the field walking or survey. The subcontractor for this work was Geophysical Surveys of Bradford who has considerable experience of working in this area and on these geological types.

2.5.2 Sample Trial Transects

Trial transects were excavated in accordance with the scheme agreed with the County Archaeological Officer and English Heritage. The layout was specified in document in the research design presented to HBMC after the Public Enquiry.

The specification for the trial trenches was as follows:

- The transects were accurately surveyed in and marked out on the ground prior to ground disturbance. The transects were targeted on known cropmark sites but accurate surveying was also essential for assessing compensation.
- The transects were mechanically excavated under archaeological supervision using a JCB 3C equipped with a toothless ditching bucket.
- Topsoil and alluvial deposits were removed and stockpiled separately. Backfilling took place immediately on completion of archaeological recording, with topsoil as the top deposit and reinstatement to a good standard.
- Mechanical excavation uncovered only the top surfaces of archaeological features, but included any alluvial masking deposits.
- Areas showing archaeological deposits, possible archaeological features or natural/archaeological features, needing verification were cleaned by hand.
- All features of whatever origin were planned at the initial clearance stage to a scale of 1:20.
- Sampling of features was undertaken in order to ascertain their nature, date and quality of preservation.
- Excavated features were fully recorded by means of drawings, context sheets, photography and surveying.

- Recording systems and *pro formae* are those used in on-going research into the wider adjacent area being undertaken by the Bedfordshire Archaeology Service (BCC 1992a).
- Artefacts of all kinds were labelled, processed and analysed in a manner compatible with the systems, including Type Series, in operation for the research area. These will be integrated into the records of the Bedfordshire Archaeology service (BCC 1992a) supplementing the local database. These follow the IFA guidelines for finds work (IFA 1992) and *Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition with Registered Museums in Bedfordshire* (draft document).
- The discovery of human remains led to the notification of the Home Office together with application for an Exhumation Licence. Arrangements for the detailed professional study of any such remains will be undertaken when further work is carried out.
- Environmental sampling was undertaken where suitable ground conditions allowed.
- Arrangements were made for the conservation of artefacts (IFA 1992).
- The full archive of finds and records has been retained in St Mary's archaeology centre pending further work before arrangements are made for the archive to be accessed into the collections of Bedford Museum. The archive will be adequately catalogued and packaged for transfer and storage. Guidelines for boxes etc are outlined in *Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition with Registered Museums in Bedfordshire* (draft document).

3 THE RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Introduction

The assessment of archaeological remains along the route of the Bedford Southern Bypass was undertaken not only to evaluate the survival of sites but to assess their importance within the context of the landscape and in the light of other archaeological work carried out in the Ouse Valley and surrounding area. This process of evaluation includes an appraisal of the sites importance regionally and nationally; the results of archaeological work in the Ouse Valley provides a context within which the results of this work can be assessed.

The entire route of the Bedford Southern Bypass has been assessed and six discrete sites identified within the western section. Of particular interest were those blank areas between sites (fig 1) which may indicate areas which were used as pasture, or were so wet in the past as to have been unsuitable for any occupation. Investigating the possibility that such areas actually indicate genuine open spaces or woodland was carried out as part of the evaluation process. The thin soil and alluvial gravels of the area has resulted in the identification of a large number of cropmark sites and the Southern Orbital Sewer pipeline at Kempston Church End allowed some testing of the cropmarks against actual ground conditions. More recently trial trenching and test pitting along the Elstow Brook east of Cardington Cross has helped clarify the extent of activity in the area.

However, there are several areas where there is no information, but which might prove to be archaeologically sensitive. On the southern margins, the evaluation of Eastcotts (3.1 below) indicates the presence of a layer of masking alluvium where sites may yet come to light. A second area of concern is the land between Old Harrowden Lane and the A600, which is low lying pasture with some evidence of ridge and furrow. Documentary evidence (Wood 1985 15 & refs), in particular field names Brook Furlong, March Furlong, Marsh Common, indicate along with the figures for meadow land in Domesday that this area has been marshy from probably the early medieval period until the 19th century. Extrapolating data from the Ouse Valley (Robinson 1992) where flooding prior to the 2nd century AD led to a rise in the watertable, we may assume that any archaeological survival will relate to the prehistoric and early Roman periods for which there is yet no evidence. The area was so wet that geophysical survey was considered inapplicable during assessment of the Elstow Brook and area. A third area of concern is that close to the Wilstead Road where ridge and furrow, now pasture, ruled out field walking or aerial photography.

Six discrete archaeological sites were identified within the construction line of the western section of the Bedford Southern Bypass. They were:

3.1 HER 1623 Eastcotts

3.2 HER 3920 Harrowden

3.3 HER 3640 Manor Farm

3.4 HER 1626 Bunyan Farm

3.5 HER 2421 Village Farm

3.6 HER 1625 Peartree Farm

Assessment of these sites is dealt with individually, and should be read with the project proposal for that section. Details of methodology common to all aspects of the project have been outlined above.

3.1 EASTCOTTS (HER 1623)

Introduction: before the evaluation

A widespread complex of drove ways and field boundaries as well as a single ring ditch were recorded located across the landscape from the Elstow Brook to Cambridge Road. The linear triple ditch was seen to continue beyond the Cambridge Road Industrial Estate as far as the river Ouse, and appeared to form a boundary line between the Elstow Brook and the river Ouse. The line of the bypass cut the triple ditch at a point where the cropmarks were beginning to fade. Two ring ditches may form part of this cropmark complex but both are located north of the route (Fig 2).

3.1.2 The Evaluation

Since the initiation of the evaluation, the site at Eastcotts has remained under grass which has made fieldwalking impossible. Geophysical survey of the site was considered but deemed unnecessary since the quality of the aerial photograph coverage was high. The gravel terrace on which the site stands was also a factor as survey elsewhere on the route has shown very little magnetic variation, pointing to possible disappointing results and little further progress.

Four trenches were designed to examine the cropmarks identified on the route of the bypass, and are summarised below.

Trench 16

Trench 16 was 20m long, machined to a depth of c600mm through topsoil and sub-ploughsoil. At 600mm was a layer of light brown silty clay 350mm thick. This trench was intended to investigate a broad linear cropmark which now appears to represent a band of clay soil which either originated as a post-glacial outwash deposit or is the remains of an old river course.

Trench 17

This trench was 28m long. The topsoil was removed by machine to 350mm to reveal archaeological features. This comprised two ditches c 5m apart, both were aligned NE-SW. In the fill of one of the ditches were three flint flakes, both hammer flakes, probably of late neolithic date. Two small pits were found without finds (Fig 4).

Trench 18

Trench 18 was 18m long. Topsoil to a depth of 400m was removed by machine before revealing archaeology which comprised four small pits from which no finds were recovered. A ditch aligned NW-SE, had partially truncated an earlier crouched burial associated with five flint grave goods (Fig 4).

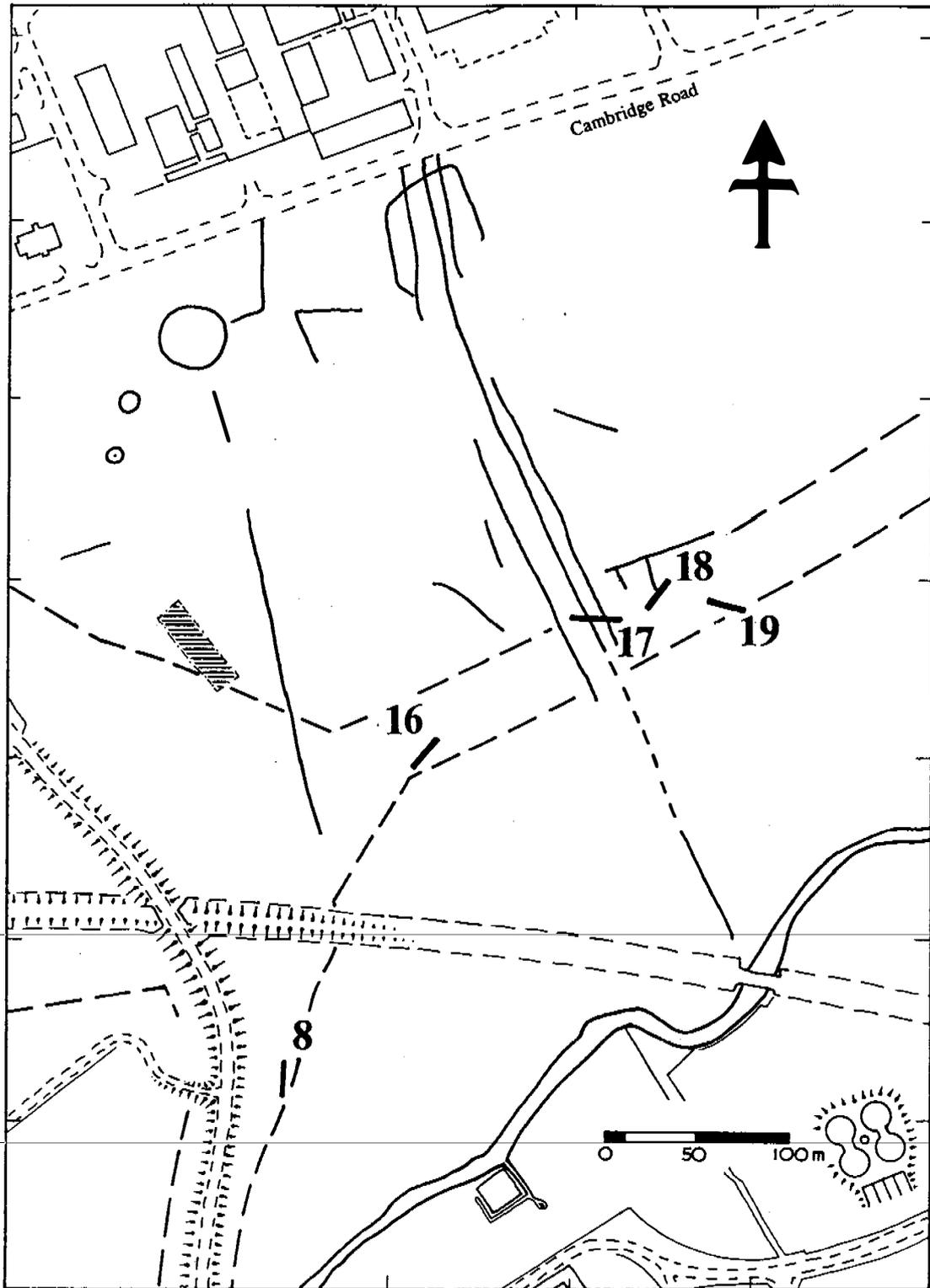


Fig 2 The Eastcotts site showing the location of trial trenches and cropmarks. Trench 8 (Harrowden) is shown to the south.

Trench 19

Trench 19 was 20m long and situated on the south facing slope of the terrace above the Elstow Brook. The uppermost topsoil horizon sealed layers of alluviation and colluvial soil build-up as well as archaeology. Colluvial material sealed a ditch and a gully at the north end of the trench. These features contained Roman material - a coin of Valentinian (364-375) and pottery of late Roman date. The colluvial soils contained largely Roman material but this is probably due to the erosion of Roman features by later ploughing. The alluvial silts sealed a ditch in the southern part of the trench which contained late Roman pottery and smithing slag (Fig 4).

Sealed below the alluvium and the Roman deposits was a single isolated pit of probable prehistoric date which contained a large quantity of flint which may be associated with the burial in trench 18.

3.1.3 Assessment of the Eastcotts site

The extensive evaluation work on the Norse Road Link (Clark 1992) has highlighted the importance of the prehistoric landscape in the Cardington /Willington/Octagon Farm area. Geophysical survey, field walking and trial trenching were employed to assess the extent of survival and integrity of sites identified from aerial photographs.

The prehistoric ritual complex appeared to focus on the Octagon Farm area, but it is clear from the more recent assessment of the Eastcotts site that the landscape unit extends at least as far as the gravel island under investigation. In particular the linear ditches appear to mark the boundary of an area which may be the ritual landscape explored by Clark (1992). By itself, the recovery of the three flint flakes cannot be seen as conclusive regarding the date of the ditches, particularly as this hypothesis of early dating is in opposition to the present understanding of such boundaries in the area. Elements of Dray's Ditches seem to date to the late second millennium and other ditch systems in the Chilterns probably relate to territories associated with Iron Age hillforts on the Chiltern Ridge (Dyer 1961).

A second, and entirely unexpected, element from the assessment was the discovery of the flexed or crouched inhumation in Trench 18. The time scale for the evaluation project is too short to include the results of the C14 date (British Museum), but examination of the accompanying flint suggests a late neolithic date. Five flint objects were found as grave goods: a leaf shaped arrowhead; two bladelets; a cutting blade and a soft hammer flake. All these objects point to the Late Neolithic (Holgate pers comm). Nearby in Trench 19 a pit was found, containing a large quantity of flint: three scrapers possibly from the same nodule; a fragment of sickle or arrow head, and many fragments of debitage including fire-fractured flakes and crested flakes core rejuvenation material. Many were soft hammer flakes and probably came from four or five nodules.

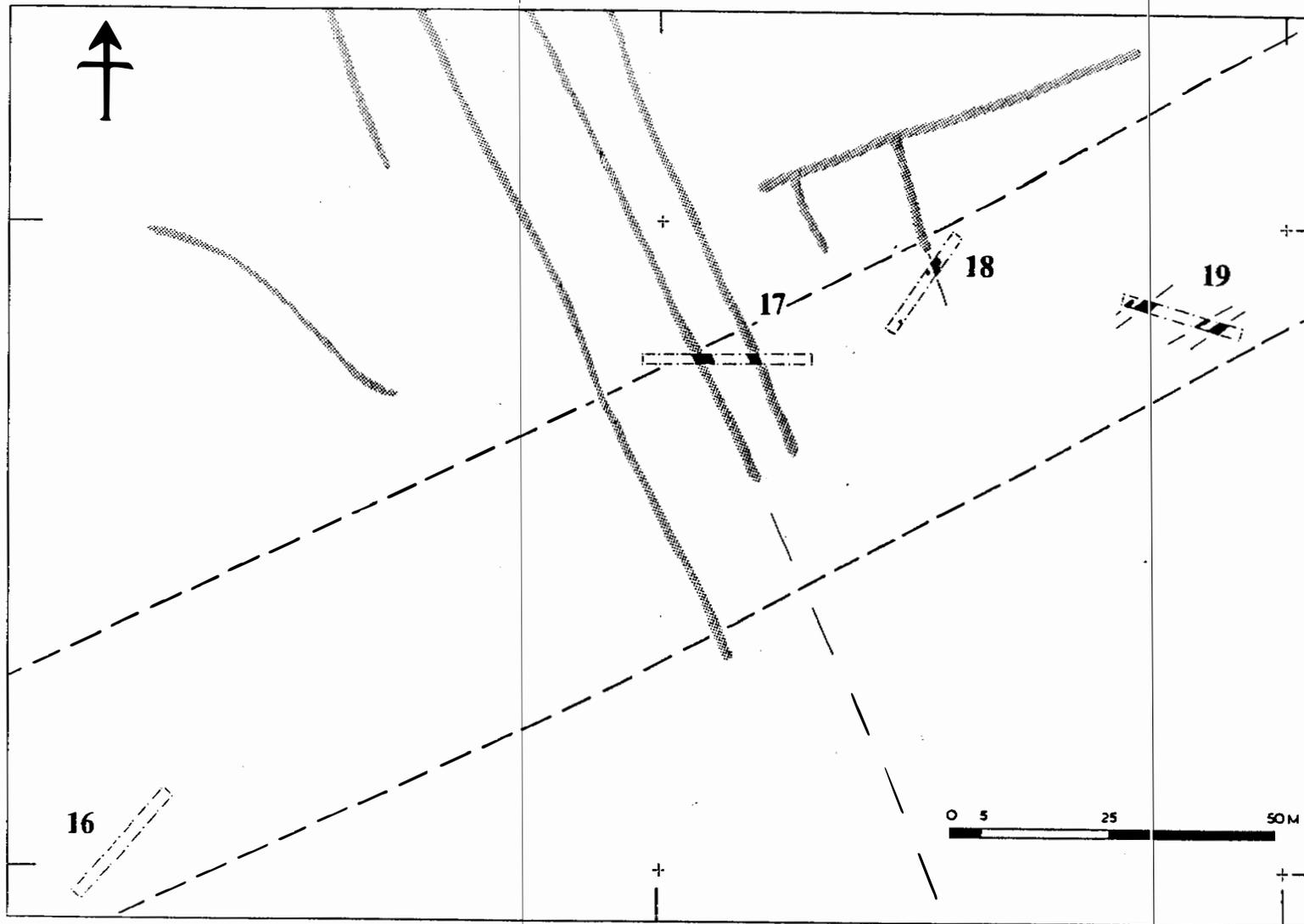


Fig 3 Eastcotts. The map shows the line of the Bedford Southern Bypass and the location of trial trenches 16, 17, 18, 19.

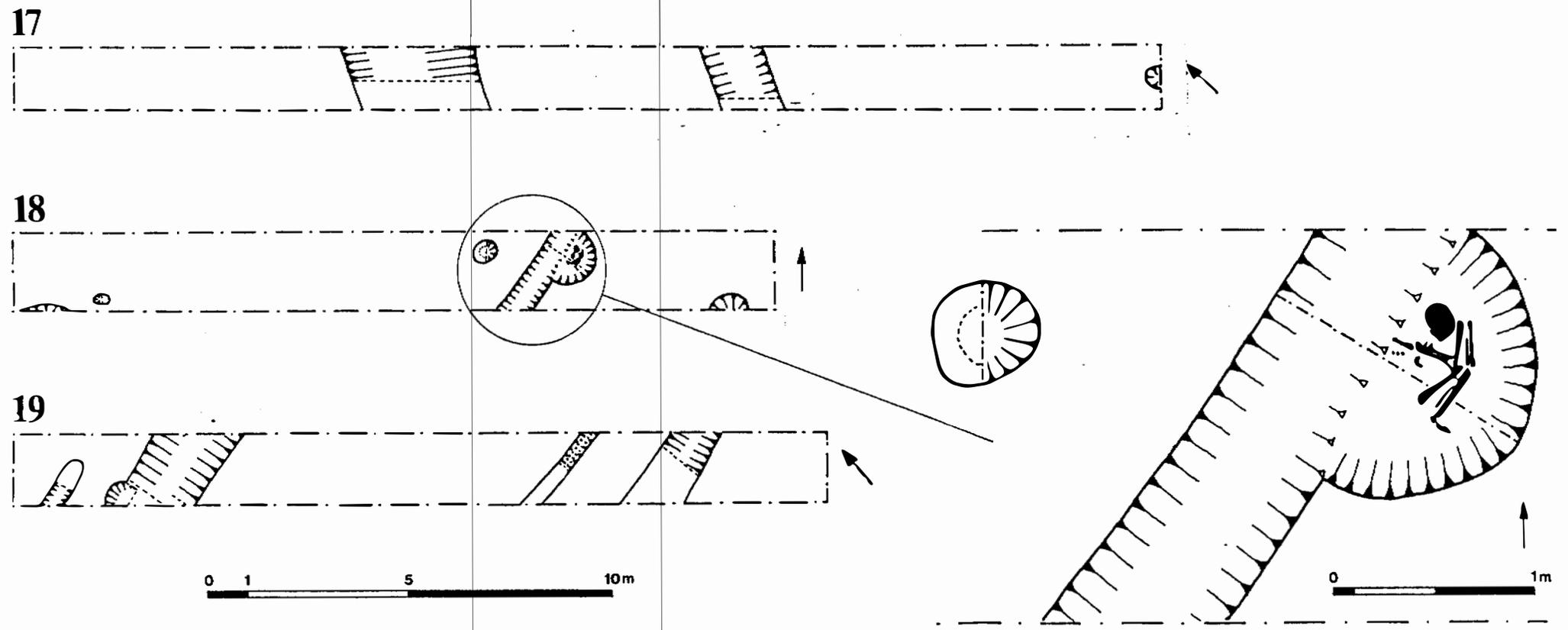


Fig 4 Eastcotts. The plan of archaeological features found in trenches 17, 18, 19.

The cohesiveness of this assemblage suggests that the pit may be associated with the burial.

The discovery of the human burial, and the questions raised regarding the date and role of the linear ditches, require that further excavation takes place here before destruction of this area. The importance of this area is enhanced by two further factors: the proximity of the ring ditches which may be the focus for peripheral activity, and the topography which is typical of the location of settlement from the late Iron Age to Roman periods.

3.2 HARROWDEN (HER 3920)

Introduction: Before the Evaluation

The earthwork remains of the deserted medieval village of Harrowden were surveyed by John Wood for Bedfordshire County Council (Wood 1985), and although damaged by construction of road, railway and Southern Orbital Sewer constructed two large areas may remain intact (Fig 5 & 6). Access was denied to the western area of this earthwork complex. Due to these difficulties a single trench was excavated in the area of the earthworks.

3.2.1 The Evaluation

Trench 8

Trench 8 was 18m long, from which a shallow topsoil c400mm had been removed by machine. At the south end were two ditches, one cutting the other. these were both aligned NW-SE. At the northern end of the trench were five post holes and a large pit. The pottery recovered from these features was predominantly 13th century with 17th century material represented in the ploughsoil. In addition two fragments of Roman roof tile were recovered from the plough-zone and medieval roof tile from the loam fill of a post hole.

3.2.2 Assessment of the site

The trial trench confirmed the identification of the site of the deserted medieval village, and demonstrated the level of survival was good in areas where road and railway had not encroached. The absence of major plough erosion due to ridge and furrow or more recent ploughing suggests this site had been pasture for a considerable period. The assessment of the bypass route has shown that the remains of structures in occupation in the 13th century may also indicate the period of decline in occupation. The surviving area of earthworks is extensive and the publication of the parish survey has placed the village in an historical framework. Although the village was first mentioned in Domesday it's name has Saxon connotations of pagan worship and a Saxon origin is possible. However the discovery of fragments of Roman roof tile during the assessment also raises the possibility of a Roman period settlement nearby.

The area under threat is small but represents a valuable opportunity to sample an area of the early medieval village which would otherwise be destroyed. One objective must be to investigate the possibility of early Saxon origins.

The level of survival suggests that excavation could be used to construct building and structural detail from areas of the village which could be also be used to elucidate the date of abandonment of the major part of the village. The pottery and other finds, placed in the context of work at Bedford and Stratton,

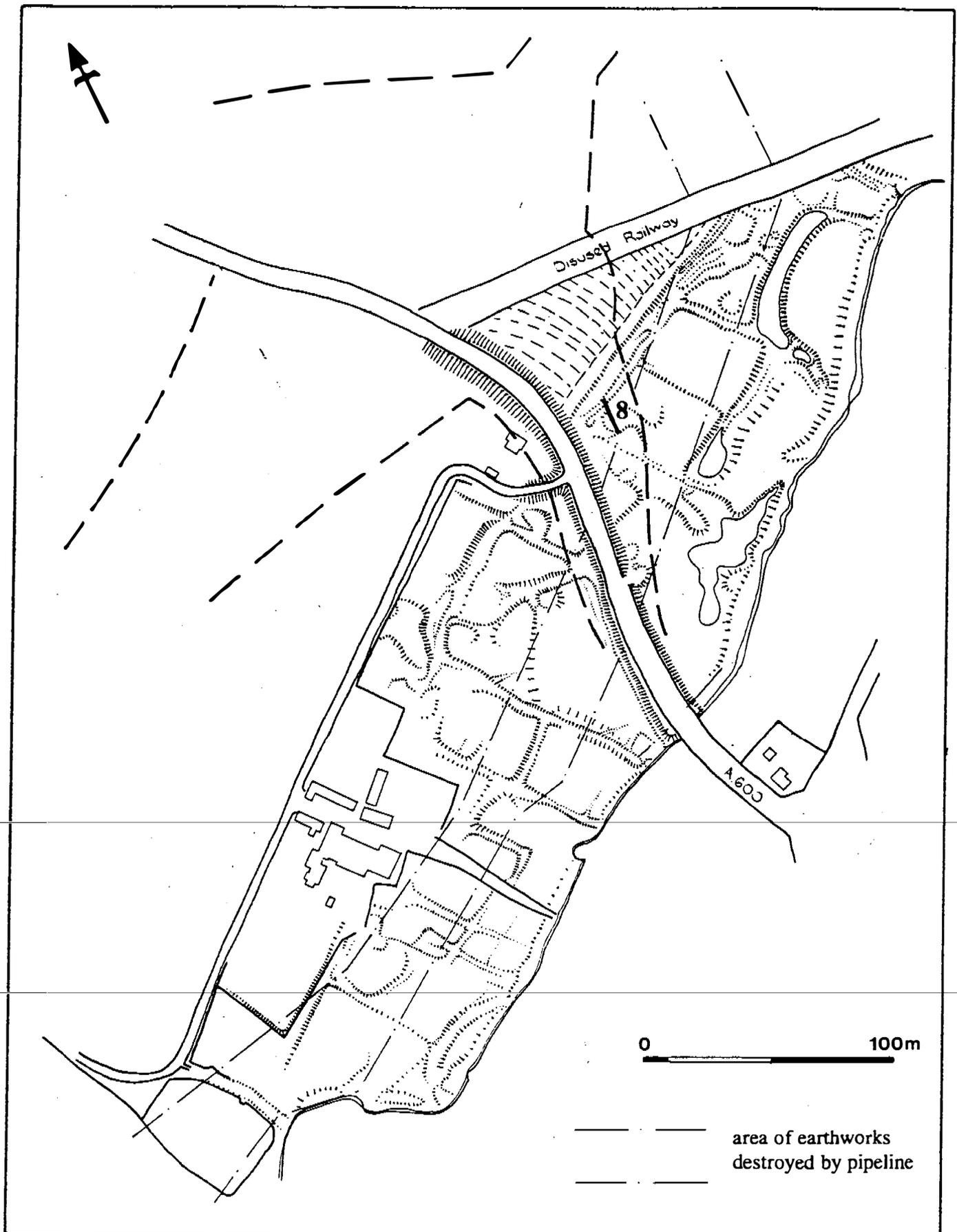


Fig 5 Harrowden. The map shows the location of all known archaeological features at Harrowden. The route of the Southern Orbital Sewer running north to south is shown as are the limits of the Bedford Southern Bypass construction line.

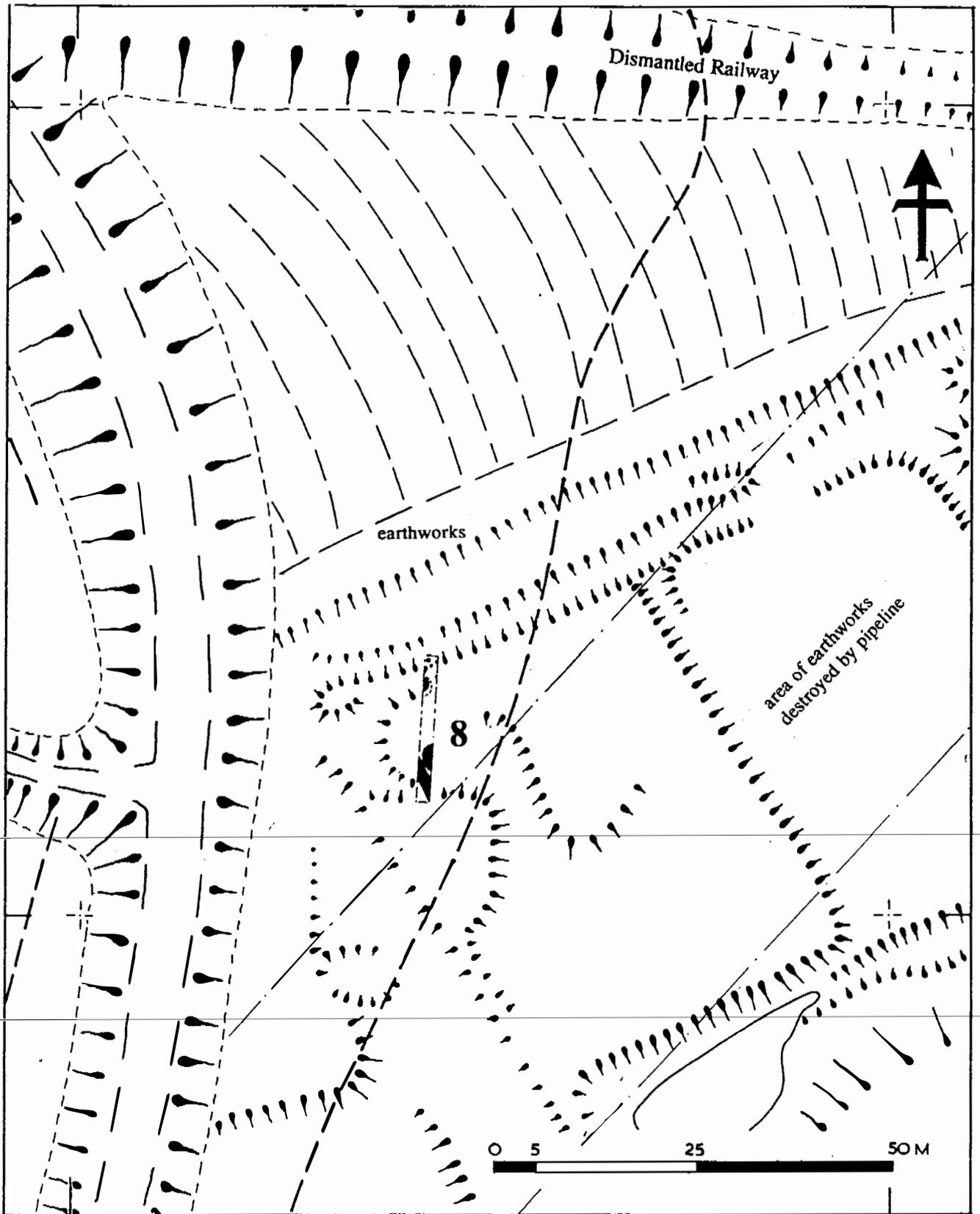


Fig 6 Harrowden. The assessment trench at Harrowden dispersed village was located north of the area damaged by the Southern Orbital Sewer. The area of damage is shown — . — . The Bedford Southern Bypass is shown — — .

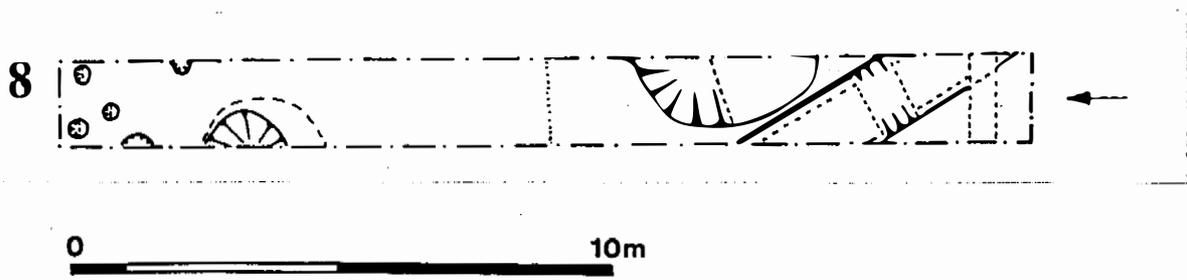


Fig 6.1 Plan of all archaeological features from trench 8, Harrowden.

could make a significant contribution to our knowledge of the material culture of the region. A subsidiary element concerns the Roman period material recovered from the site which may indicate early settlement. The potential for environmental data is not high, but should earlier courses of the Elstow Brook be found, and/or deeper pits, then this could form an important element in the rescue project.

3.3 MANOR FARM (HER 3640)

Introduction: Before Evaluation

Cropmarks of rectilinear enclosures have been recorded close to the south bank of the Elstow Brook in an area reputedly close to Roman kilns (G Dring and D King). The cropmarks were not otherwise associated in the Historic Environment Record with any artefact assemblages, but are close to a single ring ditch (see Bunyan's Farm). The area is one of late medieval watermeadows only recently brought into arable cultivation. They remain very wet close to the Elstow Brook but the rising ground of the gravel island, of which the Bypass route takes advantage, is well drained.

3.3.1 Evaluation

Desktop: Cropmarks

The cropmarks identified from aerial photographs suggest a series of enclosures which may focus on a small enclosure close to the Elstow Brook (fig **)

Aerial photographs:

Hunting Surveys: 1976: 11/0959, & 12/1032
Cambridge: YT 28; BQJ 87

Fieldwalking

Fieldwalking in the area of the cropmarks produced a small amount of pottery from the surface. This comprised three groups, Romano-British, Saxon and medieval.

The medieval sherds came from three different vessels and are slightly abraded. They are unglazed, sandy wares which probably date to the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. Further sherds of grey brown sandy wares could be Romano-British but are largely indistinguishable from 14th century fabrics.

The Anglo-Saxon group consists of one very abraded body sherd, a rim sherd and two unabraded sherds belonging to the same vessel. The fabric of all the vessels is dark grey throughout, hard fired with a fine sand temper. The form of the only recognisable vessel is a small hand made jar with an uneven, slightly everted rim. There is slight burnishing on the exterior and just within the interior. This jar has clean unabraded breaks and appears to have been recently disturbed from its archaeological context. The body sherd is from an upright rimmed vessel. The sherds are characteristic of the type A2 found in excavations in Bedford and dated to the early middle Saxon period (Baker & Hassall 1979 152). There are remnants of sooting on the exterior and a sooty deposit on the interior of the everted rimmed jar, a common feature on Anglo-Saxon pottery

found on habitation sites. The Romano-British pottery comprised a small assemblage including: a base sherd in a light-coloured grey ware, body sherds and a tile fragment in a shell-tempered fabric as well as a bead rim from an orange sandy jar, and a rim from a wide mouthed jar in black sandy ware. The shelly tile and body sherds are probably of fourth century manufacture and may have been produced at Harrold.

The fieldwalking material was concentrated in the area north of the route of the bypass, fieldwalking on the route itself produced no finds.

The evidence recovered during fieldwalking and the form of the cropmarks suggest a Romano-British settlement which may have continued in occupation into the Saxon period. However no evidence of kilns had been noted on the ground, nor from the aerial photographs. Three trenches and an area of geophysical survey were designed to test the spatial extent of survival of the remains so far identified by aerial photography and enhanced by fieldwalking evidence.

Geophysical survey

The report is enclosed (*Report on Geophysical Survey Bedford Southern Bypass. Report No 92/76*)

Summary of results:

The areas for geophysical survey were selected to clarify the level of surviving archaeology between the areas of recognised cropmarks. (Fig 7)

Area A was located east of Manor Farm. The geophysical survey recorded the presence of a several pits or manmade features in the central part of the survey area. (Fig 8)

Area B was located on the west side of the Manor Farm site. The geophysical survey recovered only slight evidence of archaeological features, probably a series of isolated pits. (Fig 9)

Sample trial trenching

Two irregular enclosures appear to encroach upon the route of the bypass and these were targeted for investigation by trial trench (Fig 10).

Trench 13

Ploughsoil to a depth of 400mm was machined away before archaeology was visible. One ditch was observed which produced no finds (Fig 10.1).

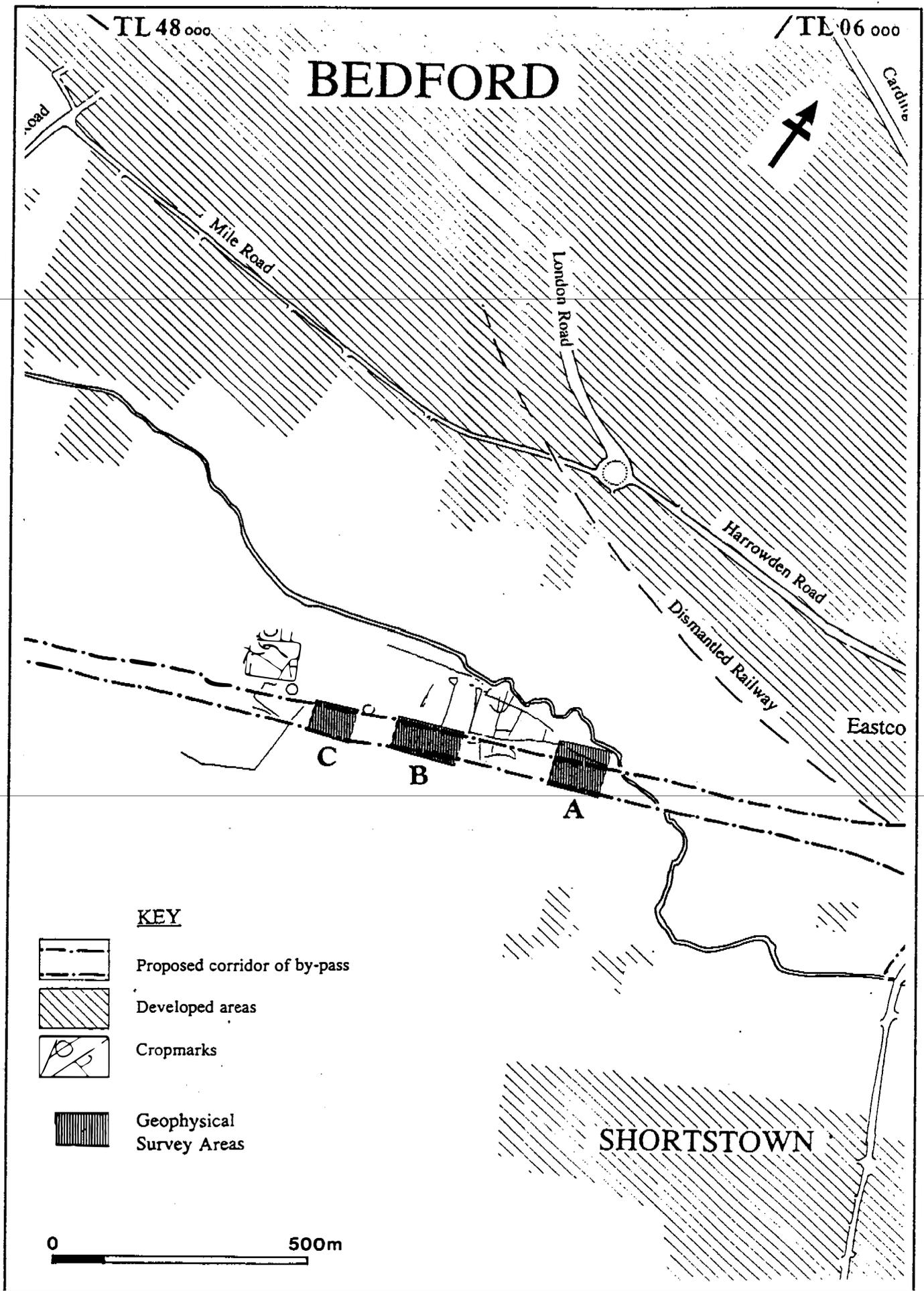
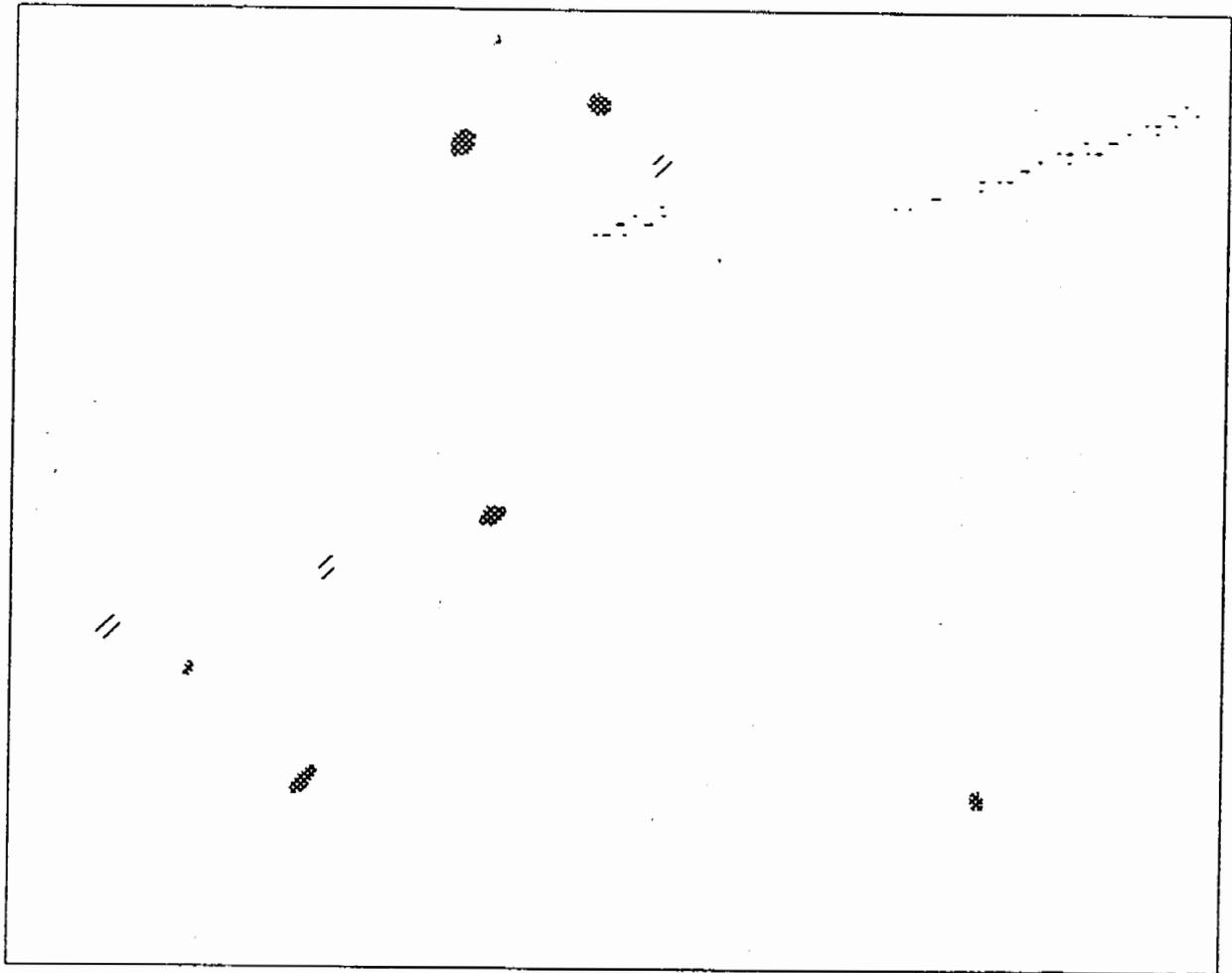


Fig 7 Location plan showing the areas of geophysical survey at Bunyan and Manor Farms



?Archaeology



?Agricultural



Ferrous

0 20m

Fig 8 Manor Farm Interpretative plan of geophysical survey results at Manor Farm Area A

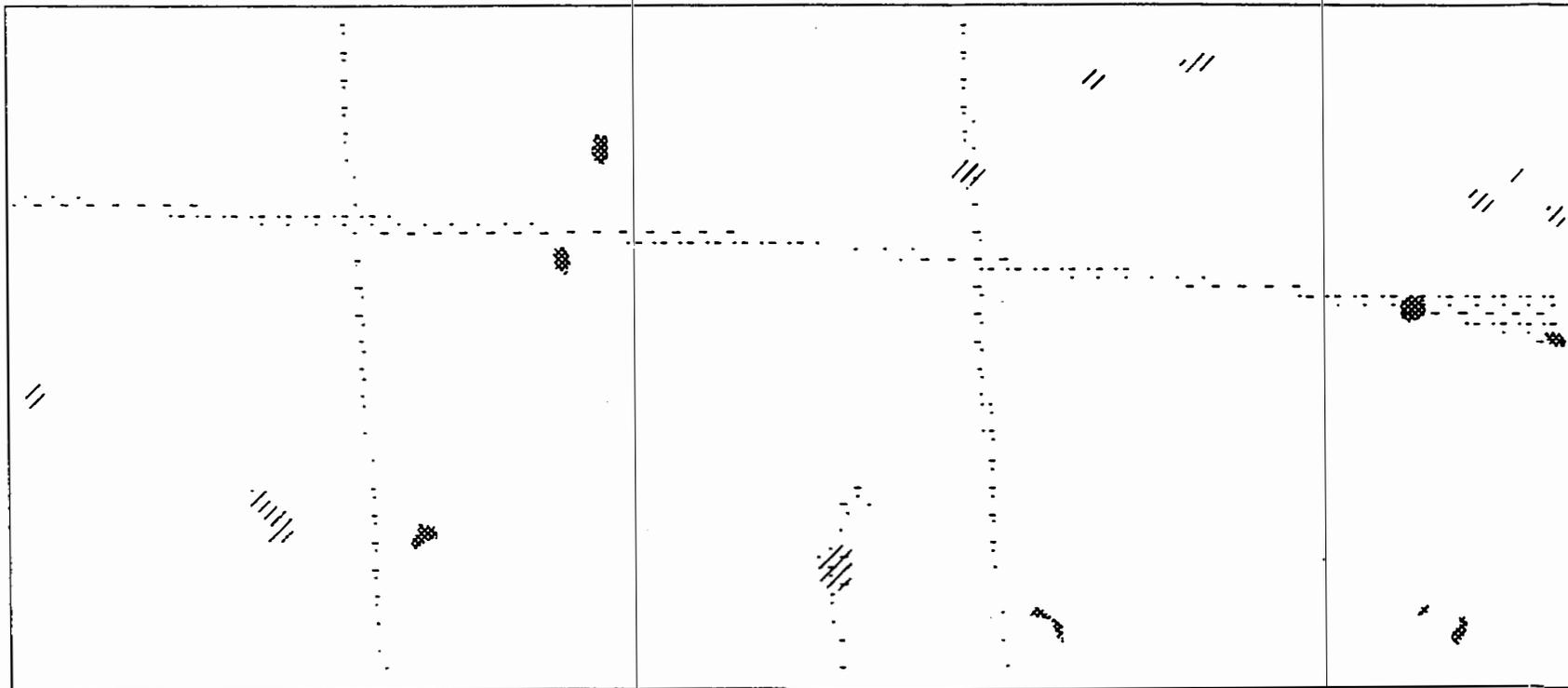


Fig 9 Manor Farm Interpretative plan of geophysical survey results at Manor Farm

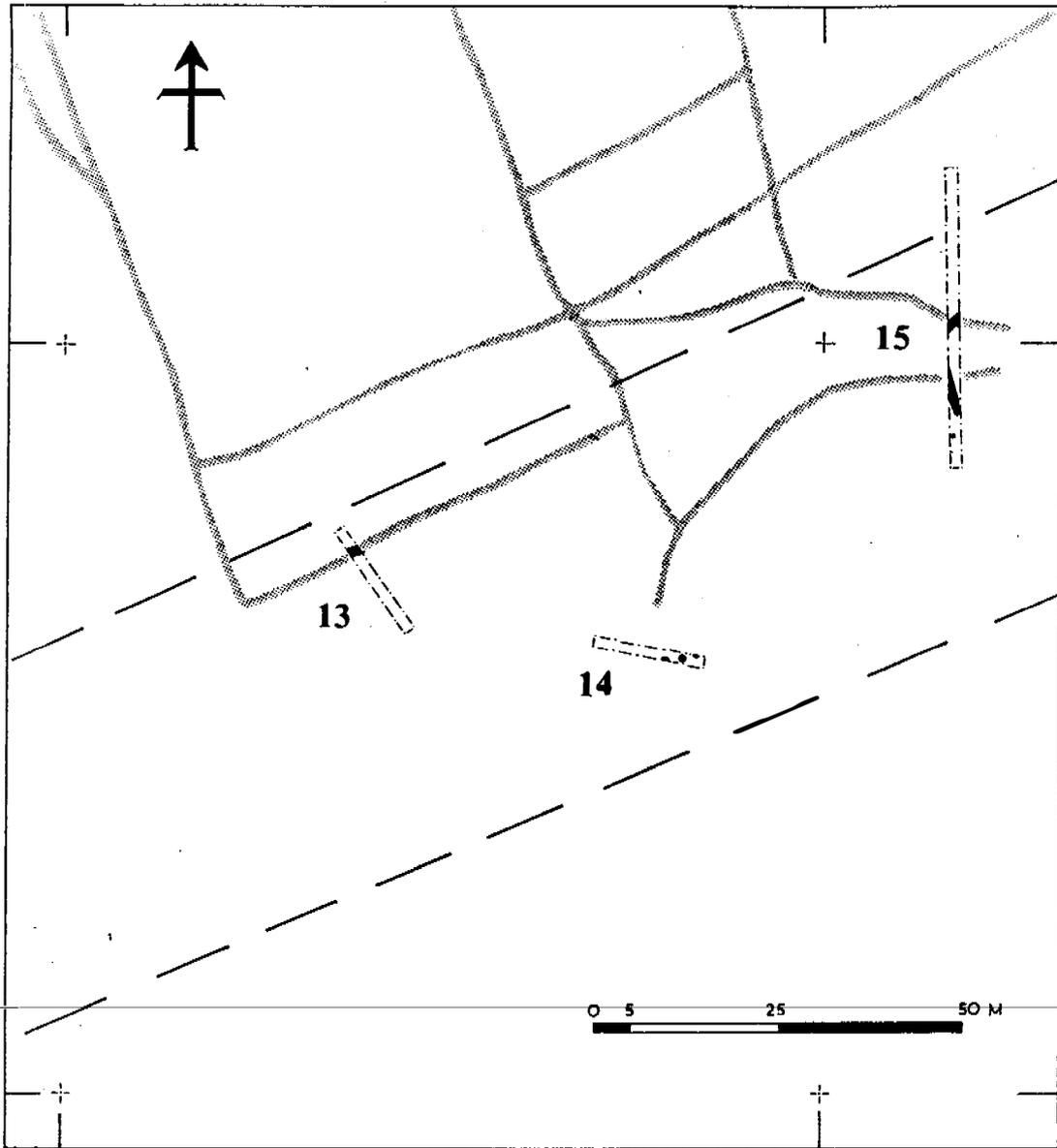


Fig 10 Manor Farm. Map showing the location of crop marks and trial trenches at Manor Farm

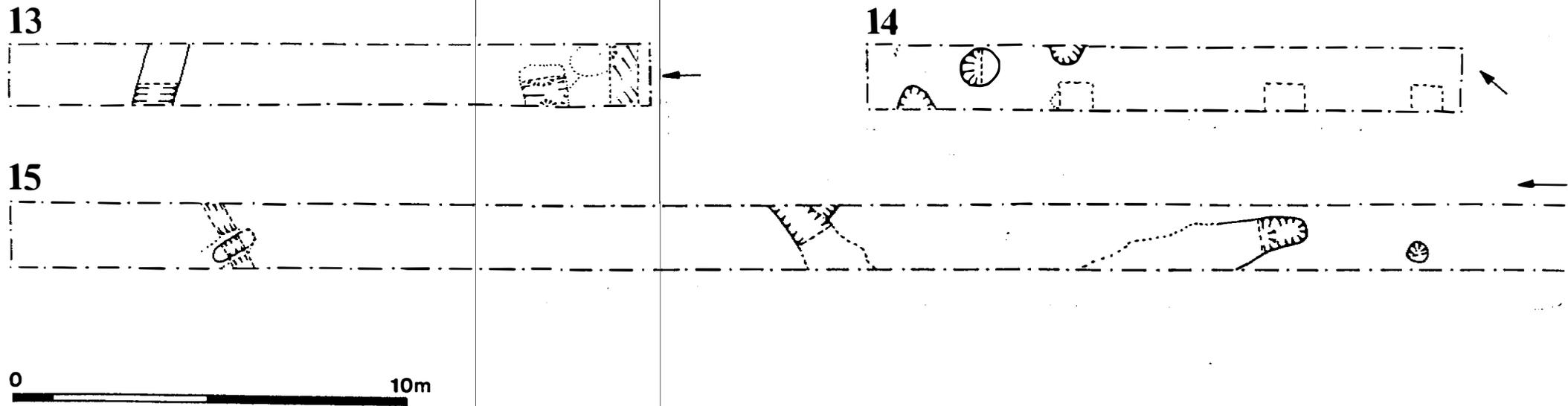


Fig 10.1 Plan of all archaeological features in trial trenches at Manor Farm

During excavation a single neolithic scraper was recovered from the ploughsoil in Trench 13.(Fig 10.1)

Trench 14

Trench 14 was 15m in length, with topsoil to depth of 400mm. Archaeological features comprised three sub circular pits and an irregular shaped pit. Two of the pits produced animal bone.(Fig 10.1)

Trench 15

This trench was approximately 39m long, and topsoil 400mm deep was machined away before archaeological features were apparent. These comprised a small pit at the south end of the trench and a linear ditch at the north. (Fig 10.1)

3.3.2 Assessment of the site

The archaeological evidence recovered from HER 3640 Manor Farm indicate that the evaluation area is peripheral to a Romano-British or late Iron Age site. The combination of fieldwalking, geophysical survey and excavation data suggests that not only are the ditched features truncated by modern ploughing, but that their importance is slight. The presence of Saxon pottery of the type normally associated with habitation sites might well indicate the presence of occupation immediately adjacent to the ditches.

3.4 BUNYAN'S FARM HER 1626

Introduction: Before Evaluation

Bunyan's Farm comprises a series of interwoven enclosures, probably of late prehistoric or Romano-British date. Adjacent to the settlement was a single ring ditch. None of the enclosures encroaches upon the line of the Bypass. Two trenches were designed to investigate a possible droveway (Trench 9) and field boundary (Trench 10) to the south in the road line.

One long angular ditch was identified to the south of the site which did not appear related to the Romano-British site. It crosses the line of the Bypass, and a trial trench was excavated to assess the survival of this feature and ascertain its date (Trench 11).

A third feature was the ring ditch between the two sites of Manor Farm and Bunyan's Farm. Although this was adjacent to, rather than within the Bypass line, a trench (Trench 12) was dug to investigate the possibility of peripheral burials or other features that would not be identifiable through geophysical survey. An area of geophysical survey was designed to investigate the possibility of features between the ring ditch and Bunyan's Farm.

3.4.1 Evaluation

Geophysical survey

The report is enclosed. (*Report on Geophysical Survey Bedford Southern Bypass. Report No 92/76*)

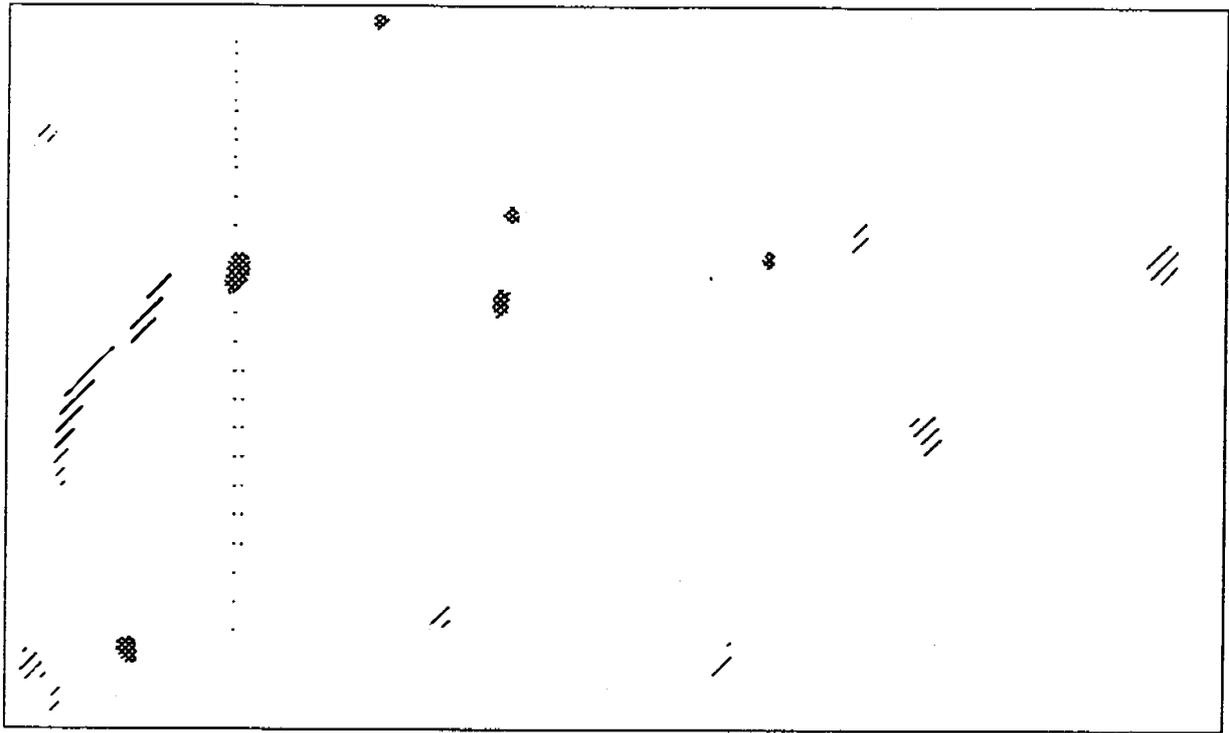
Summary of results:

Area C was located to the west of the eastern ring ditch at Bunyan's Farm. Two areas of possible archaeology were located. These comprised a possible ditch line on the western side of the survey area and the remains of a several pits on the east. The ditch is insubstantial and could be either the result of low magnetic differentiation between their fills and the natural or the survey may indicate a pit alignment. (Fig 11)

Sample trial trenches (Fig 12, 13, 14)

Trench 9

Trench 9 measured 19m long from which 400mm topsoil was removed by machine. The archaeology comprised a single ditch oriented E-W and three pits



?Archaeology



?Agricultural



Ferrous

0  20m



Fig 11 Bunyan's Farm Interpretative plan of geophysical survey at Bunyan's Farm

of various sizes. None of the features produced finds, except for a single undiagnostic flint waste flake which was recovered from the upper pit fill.

Trench 10

Trench 10 measured 17m in length, from which topsoil was machined to a depth of 400mm. Archaeological features were visible at this depth and comprised two ditches and several pit-like features. No finds were made in any of the ditches, suggesting that these were probably prehistoric in origin.

Trench 11

Trench 11 was 19m long from which 400mm of topsoil was removed by machine. The archaeology comprised a single ditch terminal which confirmed the cropmark evidence. The ditch had been recut at least once. Nearby was single gully aligned NE-SW. No finds were recovered from these features which are possibly prehistoric.

Trench 12

Trench 12 was 18m in length from which 400m topsoil had been removed. Archaeological features were visible at this level and comprised five pits of varying size and depth. No finds were recovered from any of these features. (Fig 13)

3.4.2 Assessment of the site

The results show that the Bypass will pass close to a site which has yet to be firmly dated. The absence of finds suggest that the features investigated are prehistoric with a possible date range from neolithic to middle Iron Age. This view is reinforced by the nearby presence of possible ring ditches. These cropmark sites have been truncated by plough damage but their contribution to our knowledge of the prehistoric landscape is likely to be high.

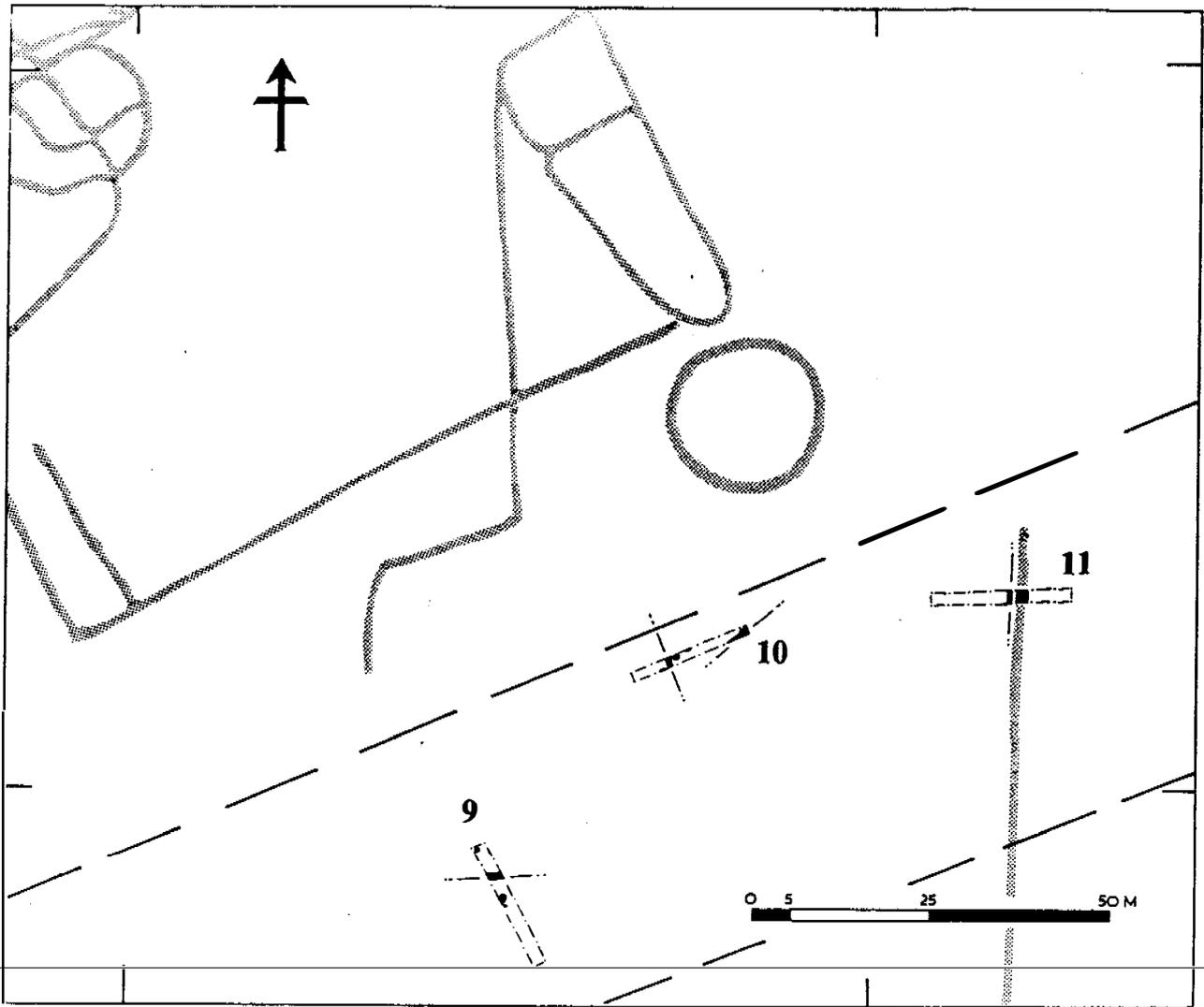


Fig 12 Bunyan's Farm The Bunyan's Farm Site showing the location of trial trenches and cropmarks. Note the additional archaeological features discovered in trench 10.

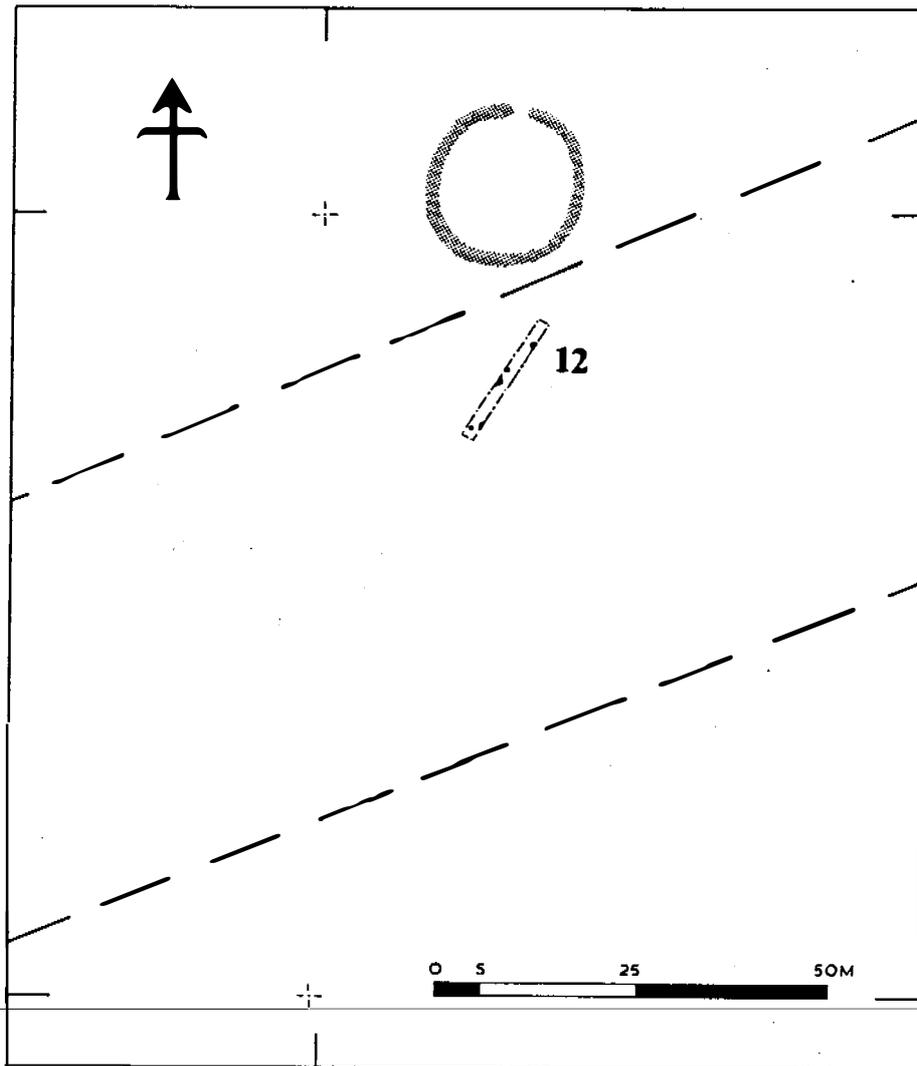


Fig 13 Bunyan's Farm. The eastern side of the Bunyan's farm site showing the location of trial trench 12. Note the archaeological features peripheral to the ring ditch.

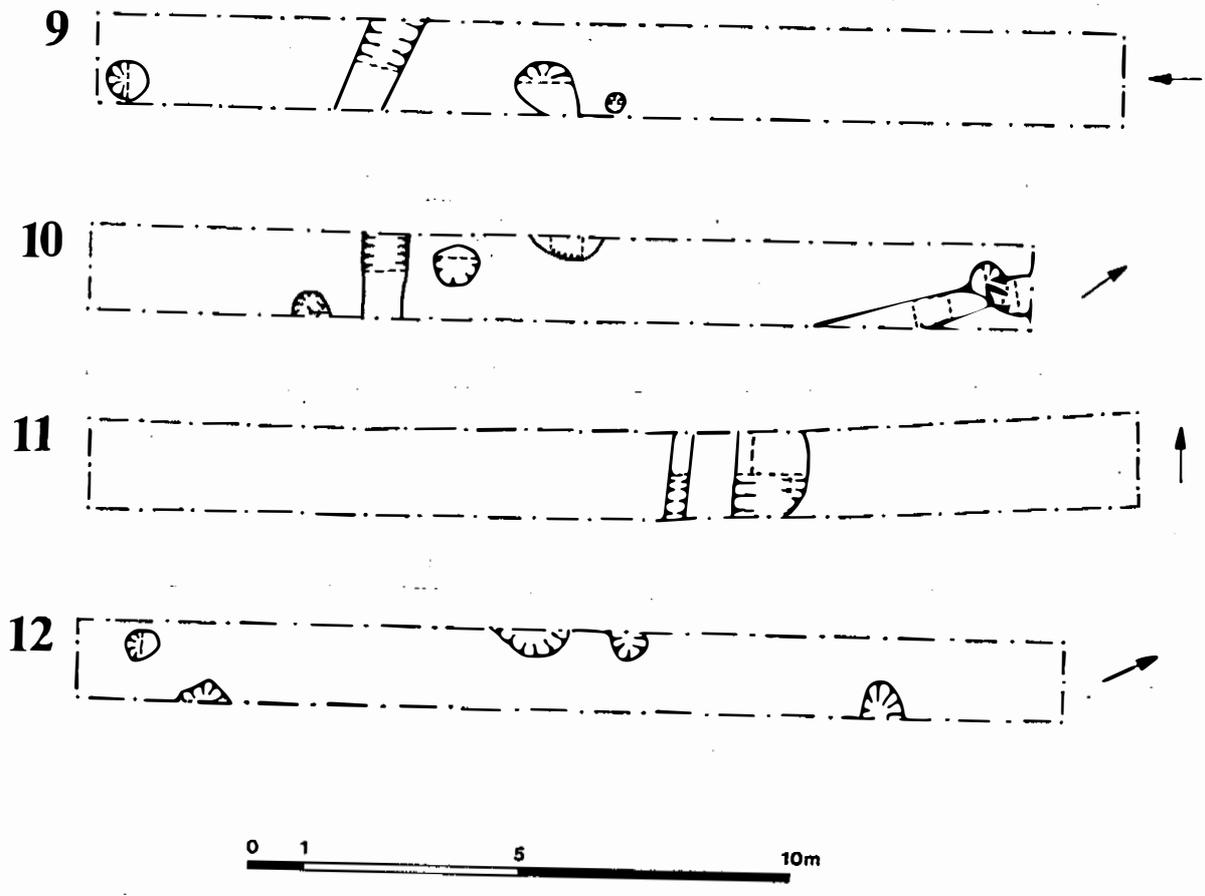


Fig 14 Bunyan's Farm. The archaeological features excavated at Bunyan's Farm

3.5 VILLAGE FARM (HER 2421)

Introduction: Before Evaluation

The cropmarks of which this area is made up comprise several linear features and two large ring ditches. The latter, which do not appear to have any breaks in their circumference, are probably the remains of barrows. The sparse cropmark evidence is strongly reminiscent of the Goldington Bury Farm site where a series of linear features and ring ditches was the first indication of the ritual landscape.

3.5.1 Evaluation

The site comprises two large rings ditches estimated at 30m diameter with associated linear ditches. The site occupies a position on the gravel terrace on well-drained soils. Comparative sites apart from Goldington include many of those explored by Woodward (1978; Taylor & Woodward 1985). In addition to the possibility of peripheral features not visible on aerial photographs, the assessment suggests that there may be features other than linear ditches in this area which relate to both the rings and to prehistoric land division.

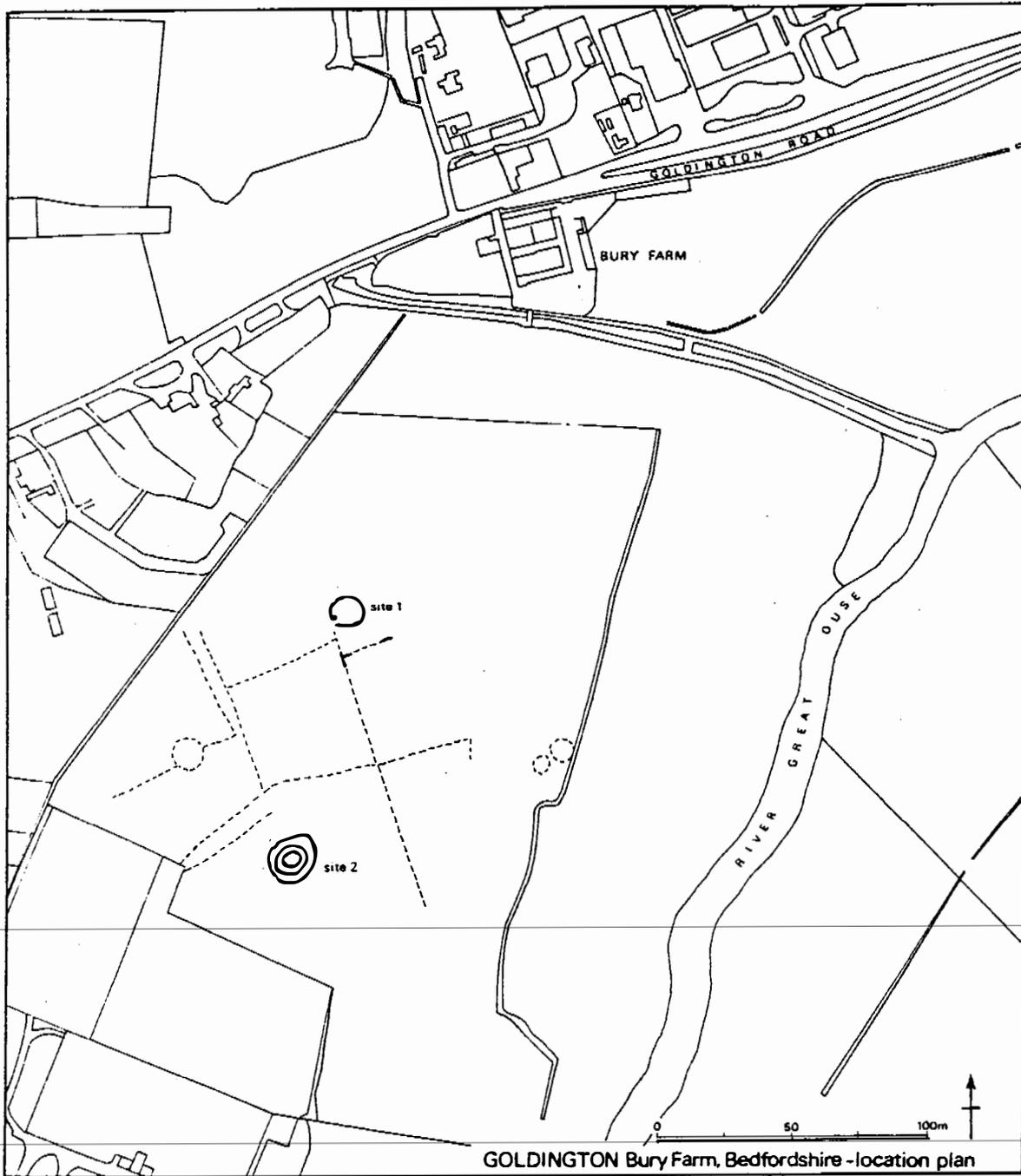


Fig 15 Village Farm. This map of the Goldington complex shows possible parallels with Village Farm (see Fig 1).

3.6 PEARTREE FARM (HER 1625)

Introduction: Before Evaluation

Aerial photographs indicate the presence of an enclosure complex which includes a droveway and a large enclosure subdivided internally. Observation on the ground suggests that a headland running approximately north-south protected an area of the site on its northern margins. Sample trial trenching was designed to assess the survival of the site.

3.6.1 Evaluation

Trench 1

Trench 1 measured approximately 21m from which topsoil to a depth of 300mm was removed by machine. At the east end were four linear ditches. All four ditches were aligned north to south. At the eastern end of the trench was a curving ditch or gully. Slightly to the west of this was a series of intercutting ditches and gullies. Finds from these features were predominantly 4th century pottery including Nene Valley colour coats. Of particular interest was the recovery of firebar from a pottery kiln in a ditch, implying some ceramic production at this settlement. Domestic activity was otherwise clearly in evidence from the pottery forms which included a fragment of strainer (Fig 16).

Trench 2

Trench 2 was 19m in length. Two ditches were sealed by 400mm of topsoil. Both were aligned approximately E-W. One of the ditches produced Roman greyware, while the second had fabrics of the 3rd-4th centuries. In addition there was residual 1st century pottery as well as some late Iron Age types which suggest activity continuing from the Iron Age into the Roman period. However this hypothesis must be examined in the light of possible episodic occupation of sites at this time. (Fig 16)

Trench 3

Topsoil to a depth of 400mm overlay a single ditch aligned approximately NE-SW in which Iron Age pottery was found. (Fig 16)

3.6.2 Assessment of the site

The trial trenching and aerial photograph evidence together are clear evidence of a complex site comprising a series of enclosures adjacent to a sinuous droveway. The droveway is an increasingly familiar aspect of sites like Peartree farm, and other part-excavated examples are known at Warren Villas and Norse Road Industrial Estate (Dawson 1993).

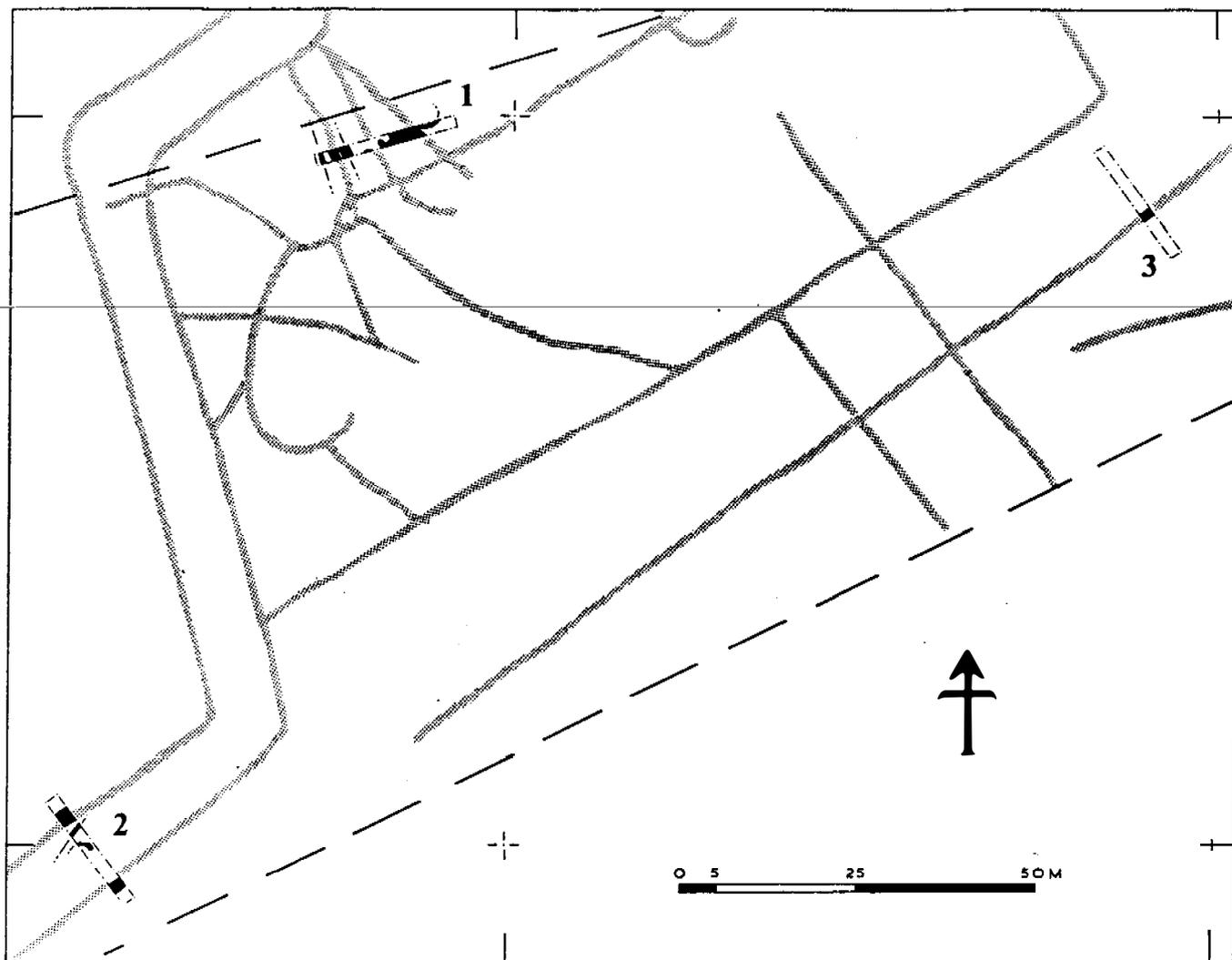


Fig 16 Peartree Farm. Map showing the location of cropmarks and trial trenches at Peartree Farm.

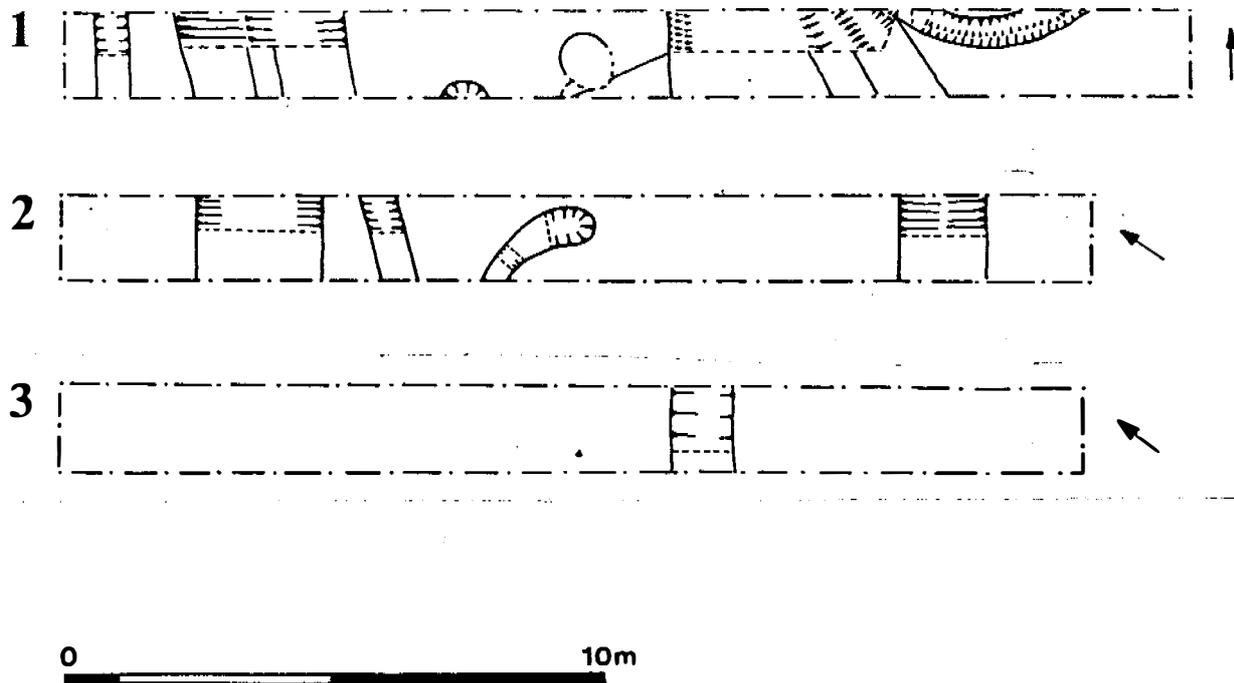


Fig 16.1 Plan of all archaeological features in assessment trenches at Peartree Farm.

The sample trial trenching of Peartree Farm has shown that this site is a rural settlement of late Iron Age and Roman date. No site of this type and period has so far been fully excavated in the county. Sites at Stagsden and Salford were occupied up to the Roman conquest but in both cases occupation either ceased in the 1st century AD or as at Stagsden, shifted away from the area under excavation. At Odell a substantial settlement and some peripheral areas were excavated but have not yet been published (Dix 1980).

At Norse Road, Industrial Estate, the site evaluation seems to indicate that several enclosures, in plan superimposed one on another, were occupied successively from the early Iron Age through to the late Roman period.

Late Iron Age settlement in Bedfordshire has been discussed most recently by Hall (1981) whilst Cunliffe (1992) has shown how comparatively little work has been undertaken. An interpretation of contemporary evidence has been presented above to provide a context for the destruction of this site and a measure of its importance. The primary questions to be addressed by excavation are whether episodes of occupation can be identified. This should provide a regional context for information about activities on the site and relationships with other settlements in the landscape.

The complexity of the site and the material recovered from it suggests that the bypass route will cross not only the centre of the complex but outlying areas too. This gives a clear opportunity to rescue a site of considerable importance both from the point of view of its function within the landscape and the extent to which theories about episodic occupation can be measured.

The inevitability of the total destruction of the core of the site at Peartree Farm makes it imperative that full excavation is carried out.

4 THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE REGION

4.1 Introduction

A general assessment of the route based on surveys held within the Planning Department was prepared as part of the Public Inquiry submission (*Public Inquiry into the proposed Bedford Southern Bypass, Proof of Evidence 23rd April 1990*). Since the publication of that report further evidence has been recovered, which has been incorporated into a review of the evidence for archaeological activity in the valley through which the Bedford Southern Bypass is to be built.

The topographical survey took place in 1990; when trial trenching took place two years later in 1992, the farming regime had undergone some changes. This was particularly evident in the lower-lying areas where very poor weather conditions had led to delays both to ploughing and to drilling. Consequently the timetabling of assessment fieldwork had to be tailored to accommodate farming needs. Access was denied altogether to the area of Village Farm HER 2421 and access was delayed until February and March 1992 in other areas.

4.2 The archaeology of the Ouse valley between Cardington Cross and Elstow

The Topography

The route of the southern bypass passes along the shallow valley of the Elstow Brook, a tributary of the River Great Ouse. The area is low lying and prone to flooding which has resulted in a concentration of meadow and pasture between the Harrowden Road and Old Harrowden Lane. West of Old Harrowden Lane the generally higher ground of what appears to be a low gravel island has resulted in arable fields dominating the landscape as far as the A6. On the east side of the A600 Harrowden Road the farmland was ploughed in 1991 and seeded with grass.

The topography of the area is dominated by alluvial gravel beds eroded by the Elstow Brook. The gravel beds were laid down at the end of the Last Late Glacial and cross bedding observed nearby, at Willington, suggests erosion has flattened out undulations left by fast running glacial outwash streams. In some areas, notably Octagon Farm, Bunyan's Farm, Manor Farm and Eastcotts, islands of gravel have survived. Some alluvial deposition is evident dating to the late Iron Age and late Roman period, which has further added to a general levelling of the landscape (Robinson 1992).

4.3 Archaeological background

The alluvial soils and river valley route of the bypass have provided a focus for amateur activity which has been concentrated on the Roman kilns at Mile Road and adjacent area, generally in those areas referred to in this report as Bunyan's and Manor Farms. Some archaeological work was undertaken during the construction of the Southern Orbital Sewer when a Roman lime kiln was partially excavated at Mill Farm (White 1977) and a 2nd-century pottery kiln in Eastcotts parish (White 1980). Excavations of two areas of Roman pottery kilns were undertaken by Mr J Dring but have yet to be published in detail (Swann 1984). The building of John Bunyan School north of the Elstow Brook revealed enclosure ditches of Belgic and Roman date. Small-scale excavations took place at a second Peartree Farm site in 1976 (HER 1624; Woodward 1977). Between 1965 and 1972 excavations took place at Elstow Abbey (Baker 1966, 1969), which although off the route of the bypass yielded extensive evidence of medieval activity including a Saxon cemetery and structural remains of the Abbey. There was also evidence of prehistoric, early Saxon and Roman activity.

Cropmark sites near the Elstow Brook at Manor Farm and Bunyan's Farm have been noted from aerial photographs. General surveys (Knight 1981; Hall & Hutchings 1972) have drawn attention to the density of prehistoric settlement. In the protohistoric and historic periods the evidence of settlement is generally more extensive in the area than prehistoric evidence. In the medieval period a series of linear and sub-rectangular earthworks (HER 3920), now close to the railway bridge on Harrowden Road, suggest the location of the deserted medieval village of Harrowden close to the modern dispersed Harrowden village. The site must have been damaged in the mid-19th century by the construction of the railway and later the road bridge of the A600. More recently damage must have occurred during rebuilding of the bridge for the Elstow Brook and the its diversion associated with the construction of the Southern Orbital Sewer (Fig 5 & 6).

4.4 The Post glacial Period

Evidence from quarry sections at Willington and Bromham together with excavations at Bromham, Warren Villas and Stagsden has been used to create a model of environmental development since the Late Last Glacial in the middle Great Ouse valley (Rogerson 1987; Robinson 1992).

The solid geology of the area is Oxford clay through which the river Ouse has eroded to expose both cornbrash and the underlying Great Oolitic limestone. Situated at the edge of the ice sheet in the Late Last Glacial, the origin of the River Great Ouse lies with glacial outwash. This has meant that gravel beds are found both underlying the Ouse flood plain and on terraces to both north and south of the river in Bedfordshire. Initially these gravels were laid down unevenly with considerable cross bedding. The stabilisation of the river soon after the ice retreat and the deposition of alluvium in the valley has had a gradual levelling effect. Occasional islands of gravels however still protrude above alluvial deposits. The resulting topography reflects both post-glacial drainage and the glacial gravel capping boulder clays. This phenomenon is repeated along the northern ridge of Oxford clays which define the Ouse valley. On the southern side of the Ouse valley at Shortstown, glacial drift gravels have been deposited to form a raised platform above the valley of the tributary Elstow Brook. Further south still the greensand ridge forms a distinctive landmark across the county.

4.5 The Palaeolithic Period (c 11000BC - 8300BC)

Generally the area has evidence of human activity from the Palaeolithic (Harding, Bridgeland, Keen, Rogerson 1991; Clark 1992).

The discovery of palaeolithic material at Biddenham (Clark 1992) and the re-examination of the quarry section at Deep Spinney (Harding et al 1991) suggest that evidence of the Upper Palaeolithic period in this area of the Ouse will be largely re-deposited.

4.6 The Mesolithic Period (c 8400BC - 3000BC)

Subsequent to the ice retreat, evidence of mesolithic activity has been restricted to flint assemblages. These have been recovered as part of assessment work on the M1 widening (Dawson, Coleman & Enright 1993) and more recently at Meppershall (Dawson 1993). The assemblages which include both tools and waste flakes suggest a picture of mobile hunter-gatherer groups. This model can be tentatively proposed for the Ouse valley where microliths and other diagnostic implements have been recovered from, most recently, the Norse Road Link (Clark 1992) and the Biddenham Loop evaluations (Clark 1992).

4.7 The Neolithic Period (c 3400BC - c 2000BC) and Bronze Age (c 2500BC - 600BC)

There is evidence of neolithic activity of a similar nature in the Ouse and Nene Valleys, and Holgate (1993) has further suggested that in contrast to Chiltern assemblages, the artefact repertoire of the Ouse valley and its hinterland relates better to East Anglian material. More specifically recent work on the line of the proposed Norse Road link of the Bedford bypass has identified a complex ritual area (Clark 1992).

In many respects recent fieldwork in the Ouse valley is a continuation of the work carried out in the 1970s (Woodward 1978; Taylor and Woodward 1985) as it centres on the large number of ring ditches and associated cropmarks dating to the Neolithic period and the Bronze Age. Woodward's fieldwalking suggested that a high density of early-to-middle Bronze Age lithic material, and the corresponding Bronze Age settlement, was located on the river valley and its gravel terraces. He was also able to suggest that habitation areas were spatially related but did not impinge on the ring ditch sites, and that the most concentrated habitation areas were located on the junction of the clay and the gravel terraces. Excavations at Roxton (Taylor and Woodward 1985) suggested early Bronze Age dates for many of these ring ditches. More recent work argues for neolithic origins for this landscape.

Since 1987 a series of field projects has added to this picture and it appears that many ring ditches date to the Neolithic period. The information presented below consists of preliminary statements as important results such as radiocarbon dates and environmental analysis are still awaited.

Central to the prehistoric landscape east of Bedford is a complex of cropmarks that are of neolithic origin. These include Goldington, the Cardington causewayed enclosure and, to the north of it, a group of cropmarks known as the Cardington cursus complex.

Excavations at Bury Farm, Goldington (Mustoe 1988) have provided information to suggest that the Ouse Valley prehistoric landscape was well established prior to the Bronze Age. A triple ring ditch, immediately north of the river, produced a central burial consisting of two children aged between 7 and 10 years old. Mildenhall pottery, dated to c 2500 BC, was excavated in the primary fill of the earlier ditch. This puts the earlier phase of Goldington well back into the Neolithic period. The burials at Goldington are significant in that out of a total of eight, three were female and the remaining five were children (T Jackman pers comm.).

An adjacent site at Goldington was a henge-type enclosure which contained an inner ring of post holes and a later cremation in a collared urn. As yet no radiocarbon dates are available for these sites, but it would appear that Goldington was used as a funerary/ritual site for a considerable period. Preliminary results suggest that food consumption also took place on site.

Goldington, compared to other excavated sites nearby, such as in the Willington Plantation, has produced a relatively larger animal bone assemblage, with a high percentage of meat-bearing cattle bones with clear evidence for butchery (Clark in prep).

In the past soil analysis, including those from buried soils, has failed to provide a clear environmental history of sites or their context. At Goldington a Bronze Age buried soil was examined using micro morphological techniques. Preliminary results suggest the local environment had undergone extensive cultivation and that prior to its burial, the soil was a mature but wet grassland (R Macphail pers comm.). This would support the view that the well-drained terraces of the Ouse were cleared of trees in the earlier Neolithic. Unfortunately soil pollen samples failed to provide detail on the vegetational history (P Wiltshire pers comm.).

South of the River Ouse, but within close proximity to Goldington, a series of small-scale excavations and field surveys have added further information with regard to prehistoric settlement in the Ouse Valley. A group of nearby ring ditches between Bedford and Willington have produced tentative evidence that they date to the Neolithic period. At Mill Farm a ring ditch produced a central pit with a double inhumation similar to that found at Goldington. The bones, however, were in very poor condition. At Willington, a square enclosure produced a central pit containing a female inhumation, and above the body a red deer antler was deposited. Pottery sherds for the associated ditch were undatable, but the association with a red deer antler and other ring ditches in the immediate area could suggest a neolithic date. A second ring ditch in the same group produced a central pit containing poorly preserved pig skull fragments, together with flint flakes of probable neolithic date, and pottery that also dates to the later neolithic period.

The Cardington cursus complex has recently been the subject of archaeological evaluation. The Cardington group of sites occupies an area south of the first river terrace of the Ouse and immediately north of the Elstow Brook. Both Goldington and the other ring ditches occupy adjacent land. The cropmarks show a series of rectangular enclosures, a cursus and numerous ring ditches, including a further triple ring ditch. The orientation of the cursus and the rectangular enclosures suggests common alignments and archaeological work was conducted over a large area in order to confirm preservation and the date range for the group of sites. Preliminary soil studies suggest that these monuments were located in a relatively wet environment and that some of the monuments appear to have been positioned on natural rises in the otherwise flat topography of the area.

Fieldwalking has produced a relatively large assemblage of Neolithic and Bronze Age flint, including leaf-shaped arrowheads and thumb-nail scrapers. Three polished stone axes and a red deer antler "macehead" were also recovered from the same field by farm workers. The distribution of the lithic material is significant in that the main concentrations of material is markedly reduced in

quantity within the enclosures area. This might suggest that domestic and any other activity associated with flint tools did not take place inside the enclosures. Small scale excavation provided stratigraphical evidence indicating that one of the large rectangular enclosures was sealed by a later ring ditch. A geophysical survey has also indicated that a smaller rectangular enclosure predates the construction of a later ring ditch immediately above it (J Gater pers comm). This has been confirmed by recent trial excavations. A further enclosure produced a single sherd of pottery. The form of the vessel has affinities with Ebbsfleet style material and is therefore of earlier Neolithic date (A ApSimon and D Tomlin pers comm). The fabric itself is shell-tempered and in many ways is similar to the Mildenhall pottery from Goldington.

The main concentration of enclosures has been the subject of a detailed geophysical survey (Geophysical Surveys of Bradford 1991). This produced evidence for further ring ditches and likely enclosures. The possibility of a henge type site within this group was also suggested by a ring ditch with a much bigger and deeper ditch, together with evidence for an internal bank. Recent work has confirmed the presence of internal pit features containing a few flint flakes.

The Cardington complex belongs to a group of Neolithic and early Bronze Age sites that have a geographical distribution extending through the Midlands from the Trent valley across to the North Sea and as far south as the Upper Thames. Similar sites include West Cotton, Stratford St Mary and Lechlade (Loveday 1989). They have been referred to as Barford-type complexes (Loveday 1989) and are often characterised as having a cursus as a central element with large rectangular enclosures and ring ditches. Henges are sometimes directly associated with such groups. Published radiocarbon dates for such sites are limited, but they would appear to centre on the earlier third millennium and extend into the early Bronze Age. This suggests a relatively long tradition of use. The evidence from Goldington indicates that this relatively long term activity was also present on the north bank of the River Ouse where the date range of pottery extends from deposits with Mildenhall pottery to cremations in collared urns in the "hengiform" site. It is perhaps significant that the distribution of Barford-type complexes does not appear to extend into the area of the Chilterns.

As to their precise function, the enclosures have been considered as possible long mortuary enclosures and, with the proximity of numerous ring ditches some of which contain burials, it is difficult to argue against such an idea. In addition, it has been suggested that sites of a similar date and ground plan, such as Dorchester on Thames and Godmanchester, were aligned with the movements of the sun and moon, e.g. the midwinter sunset or midsummer moonset (Bradley and Chambers 1988; McAvoy pers comm.). Bradley (Bradley and Chambers op cit.) has noted the possibility that during the mid-third millennium BC, there was a fundamental change in ideology that saw a shift from beliefs centred on the moon to attention focusing on the sun, and that this happened at a similar

time to a change from collective to individual burial. Certainly, at Cardington the associated burial tradition would appear to relate to individual burial.

The development of the landscape east of Bedford forms part of the same continuum as sites along the route of the Southern Bypass from Cardington Cross to Elstow. The linear cropmark at Eastcotts (HER 1623) probably forms a western boundary to the area dominated by funerary and ceremonial monuments on the south bank of the Ouse.

4.8 Later Prehistory (c 600 BC - c 500 AD)

The Iron Age in the Bedford area is well represented in the landscape. Especially prominent is the hillfort at Mowsbury, the recently evaluated Norse Road Industrial Unit site (Dawson 1993) and a succession of other possible Late Iron Age sites along the Ouse valley located on the first gravel terrace. In the immediate vicinity of the bypass route are two probable Iron Age rural habitation sites. The closest sites are those at Norse Road, with another now destroyed beneath the Shuttleworth Road Industrial Estate, while a third survives as a cropmark west of Workhouse End (HER 15340). On the south side of the river east of the road route HER 1480 was assessed for the Department of Transport as part of the Bedford Southern Bypass Norse Road link project. Closer still to Cardington Cross was the site at Mill Farm, already noted for its Bronze Age evidence. Extensive but complex cropmarks on the plateau above Shortstown suggest late Iron Age and Romano-British settlement. A general landscape framework for the area has not yet been developed in detail (Clark & Dawson forthcoming 1993), although recent research into late Iron Age and Roman settlement patterns has begun to give greater insight into regional aspects of the landscape development. As late as 1973 evidence of Iron Age settlement in Bedfordshire had been dominated by pottery evidence (Simco 1973) with few sites excavated. Ten years later Knight used a wider range of excavation evidence in a study of the Ouse and Nene valleys (Knight 1984, 304), concluding that settlement density in the hinterland of the two valleys was unaffected by soil differences, noting however, a predilection for sites on south-east facing slopes.

At Stagsden two settlement sites have been excavated recently, discovered on the route of the Stagsden Bypass (Dawson forthcoming). One is on the edge of the clay, west of the modern village and indicates exploitation of the heavier soils (calcareous gley soils of the Hanslope series) had begun by the 1st century BC. In the Roman period (Simco 1984) settlement was similarly once thought to be dominated by sites on the lighter soils, with only sparse settlement in the Oxford clay vale and Woburn Park. Recent excavations and survey work have shown that many more sites are becoming visible in the north of the county on the clays. This is partly due to increased plough erosion on the top of the clay ridges, but is also due to increased assessment work in the area.

The evidence of late Iron Age and early Roman activity in the landscape along the Ivel and Ouse valleys, although dominated by cropmark sites, in the main,

seems to indicate Iron Age rural settlement was made up of small farms. These were possibly single family units, comprising an occupation area enclosed in some cases within a ditch and bank. Many, such as Mill Farm (HER 302) and Cople (HER 1480), had limited field systems, but only a few sites occupy more than 6ha. The period of occupation of these sites shows considerable variety. The Iron Age farm site at Stagsden was occupied from the late Iron Age to the 2nd century AD, although in the mid 1st century there seems to have been a re-siting of structures within the same site. A similar site was found one km to the west at Stagsden; it had round houses evident through surviving drip gullies, and seems only to have been occupied in the Roman period. Neither site was fully excavated.

At Warren Villas quarry, less than a kilometre south of Sandy, settlement dating from the late Iron Age continued into the Roman period. The site was on the gravel terrace immediately above what, in the 1st century BC, became the flood plain of the river Ivel (Robinson 1992 200-201). At Wyboston (Tebbut 1957) a similar settlement established on the gravel terrace, occupied in the Late Iron Age, may have been abandoned for about 60 years after flooding, re-occupation only taking place in the early Roman period. The expansion of agriculture into more marginal areas, increasingly intense agricultural activity, and more extensive ground clearance in the late Iron Age have been suggested as being responsible for raising the water table; this follows the discovery of mould board plough marks in the gravels of the flood plain at Warren Villas. The plough marks, dating to the 1st century BC, have been found with waterlogged environmental material in them which indicates cultivation in very damp conditions (Robinson 1992 203 & Table 19.1). In the same area the waterlogged silts of ditches highlight the problems, not of seasonal flooding, but of more permanent inundation in a marshy environment.

Survival of some of these settlements into the late Roman period has yet to be demonstrated conclusively. At two sites, Norse Road Industrial Unit and Warren Villas, late Nene valley colour coated and shell tempered pottery suggest activity at the end of the fourth century. At Warren Villas the coin series ends with issues of Valentinian (AD 383) but the site material and records have yet to be fully analysed. At Norse Road a complex picture is emerging. The site was occupied in the early Iron Age within a single ditched enclosure. Subsequent occupation may have ceased before re-occupation in the late Iron Age, but in a slightly different location. A pattern of abandonment and re-occupation may account for a series of enclosures on the same site.

One possible major trend occurring in the countryside of the 1st century BC and later is the agglomeration of settlements and the growth of local centres (Fulford 1993, 23-28). In particular the cropmark complex at Willington combines the route of a Roman road with a series of enclosures and probable habitation sites spread over more than a kilometre (Simco 1984 p. 63 & 64). Not all sites follow this pattern: at Salford a palisaded settlement with at least fourteen round house sites and four post structures may have been abandoned by the 1st century AD. This extensively excavated site was an Iron Age village which was first

occupied at the end of the Bronze Age. Pottery of the middle Iron Age predominates, but there are three 1st century AD cremations with metalwork, and three small groups of Samian and Roman coarse wares. At another ditched Iron Age enclosure, Willington (Pinder 1986 22-40), no date closer than the Iron Age could be adduced from the excavated pottery assemblage, although it too seems to have been abandoned by the Roman period.

Thus the transition period around the Roman invasion appears to be one of increasing pressure on the landscape, and although there is tendency towards the growth of hamlets and small villages (Hingley 1989 76-77) this may be tempered by settlement pattern which is still subject to the periodic abandonment of sites.

The lack of settlement dislocation or destruction horizons, despite military action during the conquest period, implies continuity in the pattern of rural settlement in this area.

4.9 The Medieval Period AD 500-1600

Excavations in the great Ouse valley have examined sites of all types from the period, and the evidence of parish surveys has provided a detailed overview of settlement patterns from the late Saxon period on. Excavation in Bedford town has shown how the late Saxon burgh grew and expanded first on the north bank of the Ouse (Baker & Hassall 1979) while the south bank is occupied by village settlements, probably including Kempston and Harrowden which may have originated in the early Saxon period. Settlement evidence, with pottery showing both early Saxon and Iron Age characteristics, was found at Thurleigh Castle on clay land by Baker and Simco in 1976.

Pagan Saxon pottery was located under Bedford Castle (Baker et al 1974), and Middle Saxon wares in both north and south burghs. Pagan Saxon cremations and a later Saxon cemetery have been excavated at Elstow Abbey, founded by Judith, niece to William the Conqueror. Extensive excavation has taken place within the Saxon and medieval town of Bedford, and within Bedford Castle. (Baker et al 1979). This work has given a framework for ceramics, environmental evidence and other finds which will aid placing the structural and material culture expected to be recovered from the deserted medieval village site at Harrowden. To this must be added the recent excavations at the medieval village of Stratton (Shotliff forthcoming).

Excavations at the monastic sites of Elstow Abbey and Newnham Priory have established the wealth of such houses but land holdings such as the granges at Fenlake Barns and Willington are outside the scope of this assessment.

The recognition of an overall pattern of landscape development derived from documentary research has been published (Wood 1985) and this has served to raise questions regarding the origin of the settlement at Harrowden which:

'was evidently an early focus of human activity. In the Domesday book it appears as 'Herghetone' or 'Hergentone', from the Anglo-Saxon 'hearg-dun'. The first element means a place of heathen worship with some form of sacred grove or shrine, while the second part refers to the slight rise in the ground here.' (Wood 1985,12)

Of particular importance in the vicinity of Harrowden is the proximity of the Parish boundary between the parishes of Cardington and Eastcotts which is crossed by the bypass opposite Fenlake Barns. Bilikowski in examining Saxon settlement noted that up to 20% of Saxon burial took place on or near parish boundaries (Bilikowski 1980).

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Key to the maps:



cropmark



trench



proposed route of bypass



geophysical survey area

