THE EXCAVATIONS

Two phases of excavation were carried out in 1993 and 1994/5 by what was then Essex County Council Field Archaeology Group (ECC FAG; now Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit, ECC FAU, and referred to as such hereafter). The first season's excavation (September-December 1993) was located in the immediate hinterland of a known Late Iron Age and Roman settlement, and the second (May 1994-March 1995) across the eastern half of the settlement itself. The project was necessitated by the imminent development of an area totalling c.29 hectares by Bovis Homes Ltd. (Fig. xxx, and see section on Planning Background if included).

The 1993 fieldwork (site code HYEF93) comprised a number of discrete open areas and trial trenches collectively referred to in this report as Area W, corresponding with Stage I in the development scheme outlined above (pxx-xx). It concentrated upon the known cropmark complex (Fig.xxx) covering a *c.*8 hectare area within the 13.2 ha northern part of the development area and was wholly funded by Bovis Homes Ltd.

The 1994/5 excavation (HYEF94) was financed by English Heritage as a separate project. This *c.*13 hectare area, corresponding to Stage III of the development scheme (p xx-xx) was investigated over a period of one year from April 1994, revealing extensive and complex deposits and features belonging to multi-period settlement. Figures xxx and xxx detail the areas examined. The remaining area (6.7 ha.) was investigated by means of trial trenching only, which revealed no archaeological features. Although the excavations ran into early 1995, the main effort, involving at times around 100 site staff, was scaled down considerably after early November 1994.

This section aims to examine some perceived problems with the excavation strategy and their effects on interpreting the results. It must be stressed at once that the site was nowhere near fully excavated, indeed, nothing like as fully explored as these outstanding remains deserved. Every area of the site suffered from not having been sufficiently explored, as the strategy worked out in the course of the project prioritized breadth of coverage and general 'legibility' over detailed understanding of individual areas.

Site Areas

During the course of planning, fieldwork and post-excavation analysis, a number of different codes for referring to areas within the site have been employed, leading to a very confusing mixture. It is hoped that these have been reduced for the purposes of this report to something more comprehensible. But, as the actual extents covered by the separate coding schemes do not always correlate in a straightforward manner, some traces of each must still linger.

The developer's plan of works imposed the first subdivisions, largely based on existing field boundaries. Stage I corresponds to an area which included the 1993 excavation trenches (Area W), although these trenches did not cover the whole area: clearance had to be left around high-voltage overhead power cables, and the northern extreme was only trial trenched, as the density of remains here was very low. Stage II comprised an area where the land surface was to be built up and no ground disturbance was planned: it was not investigated except by a few trial trenches which proved empty. Stage III consisted of the several fields which became the focus of the 1994/5 excavations; again, not all of this land was investigated.

Excavation strategy for the 1994 site was planned to follow the order of topsoil stripping adopted by Bovis Homes. This comprised 3 main areas (A, B, C), of which the first two were further subdivided (A1, A2, A3, A4, B1, B2) (Fig. Xxxx). Stripping proceeded in order from A1 through A4, and on to B. Area C was not intended to be subjected to excavation, as it was to be built up without any ground

disturbance. It was investigated only by means of a bore-hole survey whose results were entirely negative.

During excavation, the site was further parcelled out to teams of excavation staff, with discrete areas under individual area supervisors, each operating administratively separately (with separate blocks of numbers for contexts, plans, section drawings, samples, photographic film, etc.) These area subdivisions have been retained through analysis (and one new one introduced by subdividing Area J). The end result of this is that there is a sequence of Area letter codes from A to R (skipping O) and W. Stripping area A1 comprises Excavated areas D to K, A2 includes excavated areas L to P, Area Q is the excavated portion of A4, Area R is the excavated portion of B2. Area W includes the whole of the excavated portion of the 1993 site (Stage I). Areas B1 and C were not investigated, while A3 was planned after stripping but never excavated. The original codes (Stages I to III and stripping areas A to C) will no longer be referred to, and the only divisions of site retained are D to R and W.

Numbering and conventions
Context numbers ran in blocks of (usually) 1000 within individual supervisors' areas, with only minor exceptions. Thus all the numbers from 4000-4999 are in Area K, all the 17000's are in Area Q, all the 7000's in Area G, and so on. The major exceptions are that the division of I from J only took place in post-excavation work, and these areas thus share the 5000s, 13000s and 18000s contexts. All numbers above 25000 were also assigned in post-excavation purely for data-handling convenience. Any other exceptions are minor (usually arising from simple mistakes on site or when contexts crossed area divides). In addition, when a supervisor's team moved from one area to another, the context number blocks followed them, so that for example, 8000-8499 belong to Area E, while 8500 and up are in Area P. Naturally, some blocks were not fully used, so there are gaps in the sequence and the site contains only (!) some 17000 contexts, not 25274 as indicated by the last number issued.

Throughout this report, all negative (cut) features are referred to by the context number assigned to the cut, e.g., [5806] or pit [5940], and deposits other than fills by context number, e.g., (5763). Individual fills of cut features are referred to only rarely, in the form (5799)[5806]. In order to facilitate digital manipulation of the plans, ditches and other linear features excavated in multiple segments, or comprising both excavated and unexcavated portions, have been assigned purely administrative 'context' numbers in the 25000s. Thus [25078] refers to excavated ditch segments [15049], [15102], [15107], [15223] along with all of their fills and the unexcavated (unnumbered) parts of the ditch running between them. As far as possible, references in the text are to these 25000 numbers, and references to individual segments are kept to a minimum.

Collection and sampling policies
The 1993 and 1994 sites were investigated as two separate projects each with very different archaeological content and this is reflected in the differing approaches to sampling undertaken.

Machine stripping was undertaken in two phases: the first comprised the removal of only topsoil and turf; and the second the more carefully monitored fine stripping of any remnant topsoil and bland subsoil to a depth at which archaeological features and deposits could be clearly discerned. The risk that archaeological deposits might be removed in this second stage was felt to be outweighed by the physical impossibility of removing this vast amount of earth by hand, risking failing to reach any archaeology but the very uppermost survivals. The possibility of the loss of the latest episodes of activity on site will be explored below.

Some truncation had occurred across Area W due to ploughing, and 3.8 ha of this 7.4 ha site was machine-stripped directly on to natural gravel. The rest was trial trenched only. Within the stripped

area, sampling of all features was achieved, except where flooding prevented work in the south-eastern corner of the area. Discrete features such as pits and post holes were excavated to a minimum of 50% and larger features such as ditches sectioned as appropriate, although given the length of some of these, it was not possible to investigate them to a standard percentage. Features deemed to be of particular interest, notably the two pottery kilns, the ring-ditch and all possible cremation burials were excavated to a higher degree, often to 100%.

Excavation of the 1994 site began in April with an area of some 2.1 hectares (Area A1, excavated as Areas D-K), being machine-stripped. It immediately became apparent that there was significantly greater archaeological content than previously realized. Manual cleaning focused upon areas selected for initial work, and at this point the aim of sampling all features and deposits was still being pursued. The Roman road system, as exposed by machining, was used to impose subdivisions upon this area, each supervisor being allocated an area bounded by road and/or edge of excavation (Areas D to K). An exception to this was along the northern edge of the site where the need for a developer's haul road dictated the prioritizing of excavation along its route and a more arbitrary division was inserted here (i.e., the northern parts of areas D, E, F, G).

The intention had been to excavate 10% of all linear features, 50% of all other cut features, and more where the nature of the feature warranted it, as in the previous season. Early in the excavation it became obvious that the investigation of all of the archaeology to this pattern was not going to be possible across even this fraction of the whole site, within the time available (at this point, due to end in October, although this was later extended to the following April), and that the individual areas would have to be excavated on a selective (judgmental) sample basis. Within the overall strategy, area supervisors pursued a number of different tactical approaches depending on what seemed to be the significant characteristics of a given area. In some areas, where the features and deposits were reasonably distinctive, this was not too difficult; in others the density was such that the only approach possible was to start at the top and carry on, often within quite limited sub-areas. Selection of features to examine varied according to archaeological content, but generally included sampling of road sequences, buildings, boundary features, pitting and areas of good stratification. This area-by-area approach has, however, led to some inconsistency when the site is examined as a whole.

Once the second area (A2, excavated Areas L-P), another 2.1 ha immediately to the east of A1, had been machine stripped and the intensity of cut features here revealed to be on a par with those already revealed, it was decided to change the sampling strategy from this rather biased selective approach to one of a more random nature. The whole of Area A2 was divided into ten 20m wide strips, aligned on the site grid, running north-south. Excavation was undertaken in alternate strips (coded L to P) in order to achieve a 50% sample of this area. The strips ran at a tangent to the general NNW-SSE alignment of the many linear features, ensuring that full excavation of alternate strips would sample each plot of land so defined. However, even the full excavation of each strip in practice proved impossible to achieve within the available time, the area completed within each being dependent on complexity of archaeology, skill and speed (and number!) of excavators. Progress was further impeded by severe flooding of the northern end of the site during the period from October to the end of fieldwork. The high watertable throughout the period of excavation also precluded absolute confidence that the complete bottoming of many features had been achieved.

This alternate 20m strip sampling approach was also applied to Area A4 (0.4 ha, the excavated portion being Area Q, a single 20m by 20m square) and was intended to be continued across Area A3. However, due to slow progress elsewhere on site, once stripped, the latter (a 1 ha area) was planned at this pre-excavation stage only and no further investigation was carried out.

Investigation of Area B (3.6 ha) was limited due to slow progress elsewhere and also due to its exceptionally wet condition throughout the excavation period. Here, excavation was restricted to two small open areas linked by a machine-cut trench across the ancient watercourse which ran between them (taken together as Area R, amounting to only 0.1 ha). As with Area A1, notable features and samples of stratigraphic sequences were selected for excavation. One of the main aims was to determine the extent and nature of early Saxon occupation on this northern periphery together with the determination of the role of the watercourse itself.

A limited borehole study was undertaken in both Areas B and C to assess the depth of stratigraphy and nature of accumulated deposits in and around the watercourse. No excavation took place in Area C (1.9 ha) along the south-eastern periphery of the site.

The net result of this strategy was that, very approximately, some 18% by area of the development area was subjected to excavation. More meaningfully, excluding areas which were not examined at all (Area C, Stage II, clearance left under power lines, etc.), around 30% by area was excavated. Within the main 1994 site, still excluding C, but including B and A3, only 16% was explored. Interpretation of the results must bear these figures in mind.

As already mentioned, complex intercutting stratigraphy was a feature of the majority of the site. Only in peripheral areas were there many features cut directly into natural and not truncated by later features, and where such features were noted, they were nearly all post holes. In some areas, the natural subsoil was not always reached during excavation, or where brickearths occurred, excavation only reached this level, and there is reason to believe there may have been further archaeology below the brickearths. Thus some stratigraphic sequences are incomplete.

During post-excavation, some trends have emerged between and among areas, allowing blocks of Areas to be discussed together as zones. Thus Areas D, E, F, G come together as one block (North), while Areas H, I and J form another block (Core) and Areas K to Q are referred to as the South block. Areas R and W are usually discussed alone but are sometimes also referred to collectively as ‘the peripheral areas’.

Throughout the excavation, a site grid was maintained based on the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Individual excavators often worked within arbitrary divisions based on 5m or 10m grid squares, while much of the unstratified material was collected from the surface in reference to 20m squares.

Metal detecting policy

Metal detecting both by members of ECC FAU staff and supervised local enthusiasts accompanied the machine stripping process. Objects were retrieved in vast numbers from the intermediate stage of stripping, after removal of turf and before the ‘fine stripping’ down onto clearly recognisable archaeology. For the early phase of the project, this activity was somewhat selective and precise locations of most finds were not recorded. Across Areas A2 and A3, however, finds from this stage were located at worst to a 20m grid square, and thus broad locations are known for most. Throughout the excavation, sporadic sweeps were made of the spoil heaps (these were massive features in themselves, several metres high), providing another range of essentially unlocated finds. The information derived from the metal detected finds is thus not perhaps as complete as it might have been, as the vast potential of this scanning process had not been fully realised, and the scanning rarely kept pace with the stripping.

A number of measures were taken to limit illicit metaldetecting across the site (fresh holes were discovered almost every morning in the early stages of the excavation), including the employment of nightwatchmen. The most effective measure was found to be the ’salting’ of the site with thousands of

brass washers which give a metaldetector reading indistinguishable from a coin. However, from the sheer number of holes left by the thieves, and from anecdotal reports, it seems certain that hundreds of coins, including a good many Iron Age gold coins, were stolen from the site while the excavations were in progress. It is also certain that coins, and perhaps brooches, were particularly targetted, as other artefacts were repeatedly found to have been discarded on the site (though rarely *in situ*) by the thieves. The coin reports in particular must be read with this in mind.

Loss of archaeology in the machining process

The richness of the finds from the machining layers suggests that some of the deposits machined off may have contained real archaeological features. However, comparison between distributions of stratified and unstratified finds (of, for example, coins) suggests that the two bear little relation to one another, and thus perhaps relate to very different formation processes. Given a choice between less machining (and more manual cleaning) or less time to spend on excavating the clear archaeology, the authors feel that the information loss would have been greater if more time had had to be spent on manual removal of what were essentially undifferentiated soils. More time and money were simply not available, and even had they been, a choice to excavate more of the site in the same way would still have been preferred over a different stripping policy.

A couple of areas of site were deliberately machined less heavily and then hand cleaned to examine the possibility of significant loss of information due to the depth of machining. Neither produced appreciably more information than the deeper machined areas, as it remained impossible to define clear features at a higher level.

Examination of the baulks at the excavation's edge in Area P showed that although around 0.40m of deposit under the turf line had been machined off, it was largely bland and undifferentiated. One possible post hole feature was observed within this at the northern edge of site; none at the south. It is possible that the occasional entire feature may have been lost in this way, and certain that the tops of many were truncated; presumably it was the latter that provided many of the metal detected finds. But it should be stressed that if this depth of soil had been manually excavated across the entire site, there would have been no time at all to excavate stratified features.

One exception to out optimism in this regard should be flagged, however. The very first run of stripping across the first field, when the level of knowledge about what to expect was low, was more erratic. It is particularly unfortunate that this coincided almost exactly with the eastern side of the temple. It is fairly clear that more machine truncation took place here than elsewhere and features visible when the trial trenches were cut were not longer visible once excavation proper began. Loss of upper layers here must be assumed. This effect, conversely, may also account for the marked survival of deep silty deposits alongside the edges of the Roman roads. Such deposits could perhaps have existed more widely and been machined off. The very mixed nature of the finds from almost all of these layers suggests very different formation processes form other layers on the site.

The possibility that later periods of the site would have been more badly affected than the earlier periods also needs to be addressed. The balance of the dated features is strongly weighted towards the earlier end of the occupation, raising fears that the lack of later features may be due to their being at the top of the sequence and thus more prone to being machined off. In this respect, perhaps viewing the site stratigraphically is misleading, for the physical depth of the 'top of the sequence' was rarely very different from the top levels of the earlier features except in the 'core zone'. Crucially, there is no strong indication that the unstratified material contains a different balance of dating from the excavated features.

Effects of the excavation strategies on recovery and legibility

In this section, three site areas will be examined as representative of the whole. It is important to note from the start that none of Area A3 or Area C, and only tiny fractions of Areas A4 and B were excavated. Area W saw complete coverage (in that all features were sampled, though few were 100% excavated).

Area G

Area G was located in the north-east corner of Area A1 and defined by Road 5 to the south, the edge of A1 to the east and north, and Road 1 to the west. The full area was some 2800m^2, of which only around one quarter by area saw substantial excavation. It was an area wholly lying on brickearth, overlain by fairly homogenous dark silts within which feature definition was very poor. As a result, machine stripping was quite severe in places, and may have removed some late features as well as layers. Excavation produced relatively few late features, and such loss may perhaps be assumed; however features such as large pits should be expected to have survived and it may be the case that there was little late occupation in this area.

Excavation within Area G was fragmentary; largely confined to two small areas on its southern limit, targetted on specific features (Building 56 and the road junction; roadside build-up deposits) and along the haul road strip to the north. The picture which emerges is likewise fragmented. Of 130 5mx5m squares in this area, 37 saw substantial excavation and perhaps 16 more had limited exploration. Nearly all the sequences explored involved complex stratigraphy and significant stratigraphic depth. It is fairly clear that no sequence was really satisfactorily bottomed, and no sequence has much surface extent either. This is particularly important in relation to the brickearth deposits, where excavation generally stopped, but which may not have been the end of the archaeological sequence. Nor is it always clear where this was a single layer and where there may have been more than one, and if so which one was being referred to in the recording. Linking the stratigraphy across separate sequences is problematical, and largely a matter of conjecture and faith. Features cutting recognisable 'natural' were not encountered.

In summary this area produced a number of isolated keyhole glimpses of complex stratigraphy all of which are difficult to place into meaningful spatial context.

Area J

Area J showed the greatest concentration of structural remains on the site. Bounded to north, west and south by the road system, its initial boundary on the east was the division between site stripping Areas A1 and A2, although excavation later expanded eastwards into A2. Its overall extent was 2700m^2 Coverage in this area was reasonably comprehensive in terms of spatial extent. Of the 113 5mx5m squares falling wholly or mainly in this area, only 16 saw no excavation or nearly none, (two of which appear to have had no features visible) and 8 saw little. All of the rest had all, or nearly all, of their visible features sampled, so far as can be ascertained. However, it is not always entirely clear if excavation reached natural in many places, and it is certain it did not across most of the area, stopping at the level of pebble surfaces. Thus a reasonably full picture of this area was revealed for the period from the middle of the first century to the end of the fourth, but evidence for the early part of the first century (and earlier) is patchy.

Features excavated here concentrated on structural remains, with sampling of two pit complexes/ clusters, some limited exploration of roadside sequences and also limited exploration of the broader surfaces outside the temple precinct.

Area N

One of the 20m wide strips in A2, Area N demonstrates the tensions between a strategy of 'random' transects and a need to excavate obviously important features. This 1800m^2 area lay almost wholly on natural gravels. There were 70 5m grid squares which fell wholly or mainly within this area (excluding those covered by a spoil heap). Of these 25 were wholly or almost wholly explored, with 8 more partially examined. However, much of the shortfall can be accounted for by the fact that excavation was extended beyond the limits of the transect as strictly defined, in order to explore the very clear corner of the ditched land plot in the north of the area, and a kiln and its environs at the south. The result was that in the end some 44 squares were reasonably fully explored and 9 partially so within the expanded area. Most squares explored were taken down to the natural gravels, although in some cases there may have been artificial gravel surfaces left unexcavated. Stratigraphy was largely confined to sequences of pitting, and the majority of features were cut into natural.

Excavation here concentrated on the ditches, post holes and pits of domestic occupation, and two small kilns. Surfaces and trackways were not examined in any detail here.

Recording and Post excavation processes

All context details were recorded on standardised pro-forma context record sheets. This information was input in its entirety into a series of FoxPro relational databases. All finds were also recorded in the field on pro-forma sheets, and these were also put into a database. Similarly with environmental sample records. Thus some 50+ data fields for each of almost 17000 contexts, along with 26000 finds entries (by individual 'registered find' or as a single entry per category per context for 'bulk finds'), and details of 1350 soil samples, are all available to be interrogated and related to one another. Details of other ECC FAU sites have also subsequently been entered into similar databases. During the post-excavation processes, further databases were created specifically for the Roman building materials, and the LIA/Roman pottery, whose analysis required information in fields not provided in the main Finds database.

All site plans were digitised using AutoCAD and transferred to the geographic data management system package G-SYS, which allows the plans to be fully linked with information derived from the databases and creates yet further databases of its own. As the full databases are enormous, individual queries are simplified by creating smaller, customized databases based on reports created using the database interrogation package ReportWriter.

The huge size of the databases (the tables for the context database alone run to 14,549 Kbytes, not including indexes, supporting files and linking programming) has meant that not every field of every entry could be checked for accuracy. Context records were checked for basic information only (type of context, stratigraphy, grid reference) and errors amended. Where other errors were noted haphazardly during analysis, any that would actually affect report production have also been amended. Among those fields which were systematically checked, the levels of input error noted ran at around 1%, and in numeric fields, around 4%, so that for 17000 contexts each with 50 fields, 8500 to 34000 errors may be expected, a minority of which have been corrected. For the finds data, the same level of initial input error may be assumed, but fewer of these errors will have remained, as most finds records have been revisited at least once in the course of analysis and identifications tightened up or altered, and other errors corrected at the same time. For the specific pottery databases, where the types of entry tend to be very similar and easily confused, a higher rate of error may be expected but again most of these have been revisited and corrected. Thus almost all quantification within this report must be assumed to be no more accurate than $\pm$ 1% at best, perhaps $\pm$4 to 5%. It is also worth noting that the process of tailoring individual and idiosyncratic field records to standardised database formatting loses some of the character of the originals, including (albeit rarely) actual nuances of meaning that may be

significant: where an excavator has, e.g., 'Pit/Ditch', the database will have only 'Pit' and a check in a Query box. Also some excavators, and some inputters in this situation, aware that 'Pit/Ditch' was not 'acceptable' to the database, will have settled for 'Unknown', which is clearly worse.

Assessment and Analysis
After the end of excavation, the project undertook a thorough assessment of potential for analysis, as recommended in MAPII and as required by EH. This highlighted the exceptional potential of many areas of the project, and resulted in a research-led updated Project Design to focus the analysis stage. The processes of the assessment itself and production of an updated project design took two years and involved more than 30 specialists, leading to an analysis programme designed to run a further four years, but which in the end (dare one say, "of course"?) took rather longer, due to factors such as staff turnover, a change of premises and, inevitably, some tasks simply taking longer than expected.

Geophysical surveys
Shortly prior to the excavations, in 1993, a geophysical prospection survey was commissioned from Geophysical Surveys of Bradford. An initial rapid scan of the area followed by detailed gradiometer survey of an 80m by 80m area was undertaken in June of that year to test the susceptibility of the site to magnetic survey. The site proved to be suitable and several strong responses were detected. A further survey to cover the whole 13 ha of the 1994 site was then commissioned and carried out, leading to a report in September 1993, just as excavation was starting on Area W. A summary of the results has already appeared in the section 'PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE OF THE SITE: The immediate vicinity,' above. The full report from Geophysics of Bradford is retained in archive. This clearly identified the concentration of archaeology which subsequently turned out to be the dense pitting zone south of Road/ Track 3, the basic outline of the road network, the stream palaeochannel and numerous other features. However, although the density of features was seen to be great, areas of less dense anomalies, seemingly corresponding to the results being achieved in Area W, led to further under-estimation of the complexity and density of the archaeology which would be encountered.

An additional magnetometer survey was undertaken by ECC FAU in the wake of the excavations, in January 1998, covering two more fields to the south west of the site, totalling another 4.2 ha (Wardill, 1998). Funded by Essex County Council, this survey was designed to trace further the course of Road 2 and to determine the extent of further settlement in this direction. The results (Fig. Xxx) are only briefly sketched here, the full report being available in archive and in the EHCR. The course of the road was established as expected on the same alignment as where it left the excavated area, and strong indications of further ditch systems were present in the northern field. The southern field displayed a high density of pit-like anomalies and more ditches on the same alignment as in the excavated areas. In addition there were linear anomalies of more complex nature, including a concentric circular arrangement, superficially very similar to the temple. What appears to be a later road skirts this feature running on a curving line and cutting across the main layout of the area.

The similarity in character of the survey results strongly suggests that the excavated area included only the northern portion of the settlement, with a similar range of activities continuing to the south and west. This seems to have extended at least as far as the current course of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation and may be presumed to have run up to the Roman course of the Chelmer. Whether the settlement extended further remains to be discovered. However, a site bounded almost entirely by water would be in keeping with LPRIA practice and may easily have been a specially holy spot, given the oft-cited veneration of wet places in the Iron Age. More prosaically, of course, the riverside location would have made trade attractive, even if the site was not a major 'port' as such.

Trial Trenching

Various parts of the development area were explored only via trial trenching, as outlined in section (The Development) above. These areas have not been assigned area code letters, but are shown in Fig. Xxxx. No archaeological features were encountered here. (or possibly just one?)

Trial trenching of the 1994 site (during the excavations of the 1993 site) also produced little evidence of the true density of features, with only four of seven trenches having notable concentrations of archaeology, and none of these hinted at the full range of stratigraphy which was to be encountered. These trenches were stripped by machine and planned, but no excavation was undertaken at this stage.

Report Strategy

The current report is of necessity highly selective. Not all features excavated are even described in the text. Most of the omissions are features which could not be phased, but even many reasonably-phased features have had to be omitted, such as minor slots and post holes which did not belong to recognisable structures, pits with few finds, layers of unknown origin, etc. Only enough effort was expended to select and describe the 'key' features of the site. Even within the stratigraphic descriptions, corners have been cut wherever possible. Unless specifically relevant, feature fills have almost never been described (nearly all were some variant of grey-brown sandy silt, with a low gravel or small pebble component), and in most cases, plans alone (sometimes supported by sections) have been used to describe the cuts.

All features mentioned in the text, which had dating evidence, have had this evidence presented in the dating evidence sections. Thus, there is no text to say 'there was no dating evidence for this feature,' and this omission itself must be understood to convey this meaning. The only exception may be that occasionally, a feature with no finds has been dated purely on stratigraphy; in this case also, no dating evidence is presented, although the text will usually make this clear. (In any case, features with no finds have rarely been discussed.) The archives contain full details.

As far as possible, the presentation of alternative interpretations has been avoided. This should not imply by any means that the interpretations presented are the only ones possible, merely that full discussion of all alternatives in all cases would (at least) triple the length of the text. This is especially so in the realm of building plans, an area in which the authors are painfully aware of the inadequacies of the report. Although it may seem perverse to argue so, given that a huge area of the site was opened, legibility of post-or slot-built structures was hampered by the small areas excavated at any one time. The post holes visible at any given moment during excavation could belong to buildings 400 years apart. Everywhere, it would be possible to associate four or five, but rarely any more. The building plans presented are often unsatisfactory in terms of homogeneity or symmetry, and more often in terms of inclusivity: for each grouping of twenty post holes, thirty more could or should have been included or considered. We've done what we could, but we are aware that it has often fallen short.