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Hartsfield JMI School
Baldock, Herts.

Archaeological Evaluation Report

THE HERITAGE NETWORK

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA, MIFA

HARTSFIELD JMI SCHOOL
Baldock, Hertfordshire

HN031

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Prepared on behalf of the Hertfordshire County Council

by

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CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	ii
SUMMARY	iii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	3
<i>GENERAL</i>	3
<i>SITE SPECIFIC</i>	4
3. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS	9
<i>TRENCH A</i>	9
<i>TRENCH B</i>	11
<i>TEST PITS 1-10</i>	13
4. DISCUSSION	16
5. METHODOLOGY	19
6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	22
7. BIBLIOGRAPHY	23

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	Key to Figures	following page ii
<i>Figure 1</i>	Site Location	following page iii
<i>Figure 2</i>	Archaeological Setting	following page 2
<i>Figure 3</i>	Trench Location	following page 8
<i>Figure 4</i>	Location of Archaeological Features: trenches	following page 12
<i>Figure 5</i>	Trench Sections	" " "
<i>Figure 6</i>	Feature Sections: trench A	" " "
<i>Figure 7</i>	Feature Sections: trench B	" " "
<i>Figure 8</i>	Location of Archaeological Features: test pits	following page 15
<i>Figure 9</i>	Test Pit Sections	" " "

Key to Figures

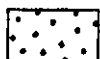
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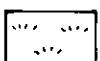
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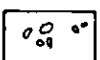
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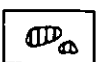
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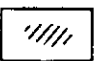
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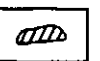
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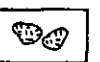
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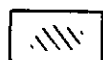


Chalk

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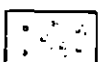
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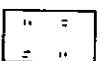
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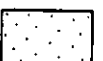
Bone



Chalk fragments



Chalk natural



Ploughmarks

SUMMARY

As part of a proposal for a further extension to the Hartsfield JMI School in Clothall Road, Baldock, the *Heritage Network* was commissioned by *Hertfordshire County Council* to carry out an archaeological evaluation of the site, which forms part of a *Scheduled Ancient Monument* and lies at the core of a well documented *Romano-British* settlement.

Data was collected from two trenches positioned so as to cross the proposed footprint of the extension and its associated hard standing; from six test pits positioned at equal intervals along the south-eastern boundary of the school grounds, running down to the Clothall Road; and from four test pits positioned in a square pattern between the school playing field and the Clothall Road.

Within the trenches a variety of features were identified which complemented the extensive, previously recorded archaeology from the area. A number of pit and ditch features were sampled and these yielded finds largely dating from between the second and fourth centuries AD. Finds collected from the surfaces of unsampled features proved to be of a similar date range.

Archaeological activity was also identified in eight of the ten test pits, which were principally excavated to provide geotechnical data concerning depth of overburden, the presence or otherwise of buried soils, and the extent of disturbance caused by previous development and ploughing.

The data collected in the course of this evaluation, and compared with data from previous investigations, has clearly demonstrated that a high density of archaeological remains can be expected across the proposed building footprint, and that despite the destructive process of modern ploughing, these survive to a considerable depth. It has also been established that significant archaeological remains are also likely to be present in the area between the proposed building and the Clothall Road.

Site Location

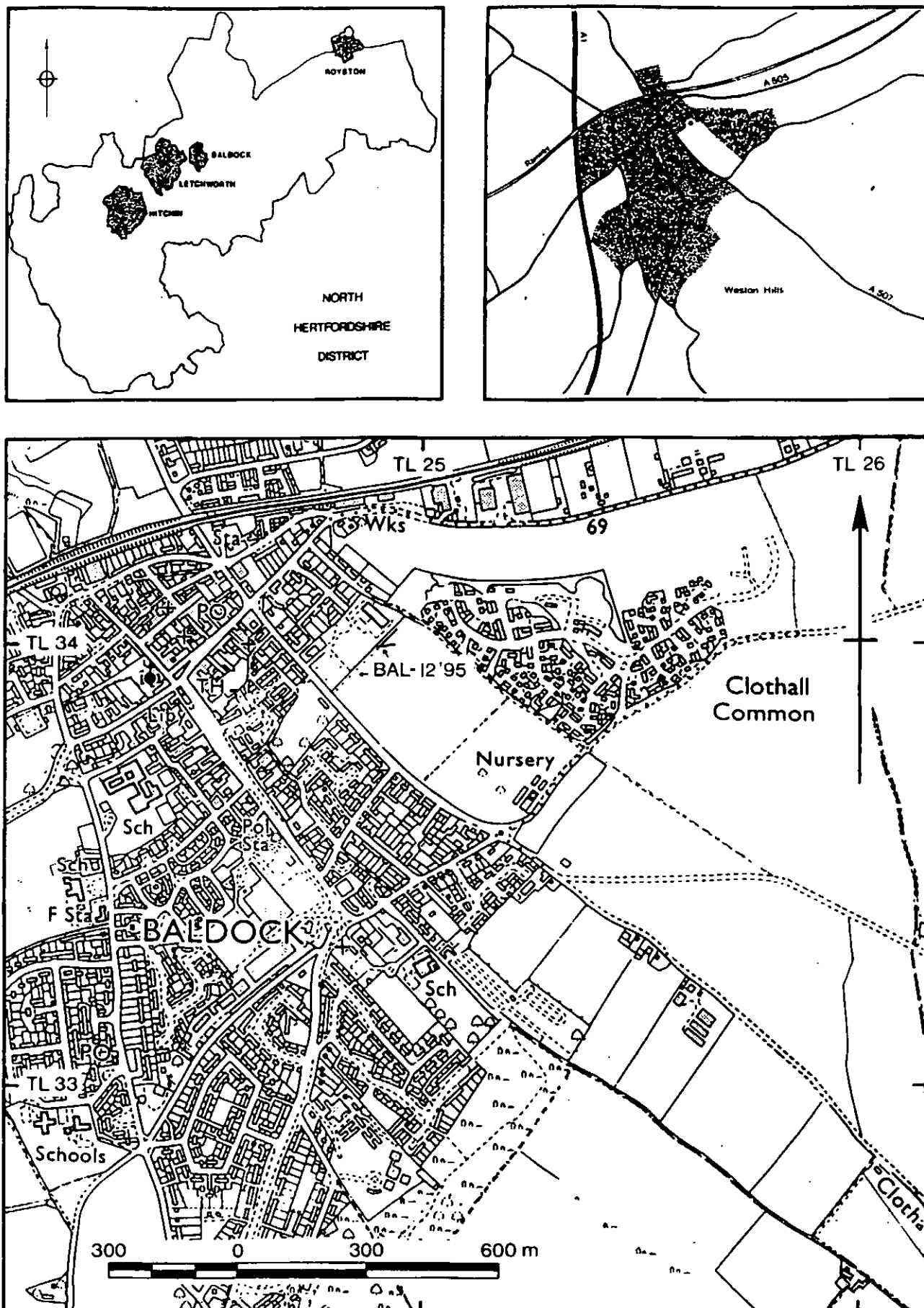


Figure 1

1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 In April 1995, a *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation* was produced by the County Archaeology Office (CAO) of the *Hertfordshire County Council*, responding to a proposal for the expansion of Hartsfield JMI School, Baldock, to accommodate additional classes.

1.2 Hartsfield School, and the proposed site for its extension (TL249340) (see *Figure 1*), lie within the scheduled area of the *Romano-British* settlement at Baldock, and consequently any development would require *Scheduled Monument Consent*. The CAO, in consultation with *English Heritage*, decided that an evaluation was required to assess the density and state of preservation of the archaeological remains which were believed to be present within the area of the proposed footprint for the extension, and to provide additional geotechnical information from the surrounding area.

1.3 The *Heritage Network* was commissioned by the CAO to carry out this Evaluation on behalf of the *Hertfordshire County Council*, and the fieldwork took place during August 1995.

1.4 The evaluation area is situated at the north-west end of a piece of land known as Walls Field. This area was scheduled as an Ancient Monument after the Second World War, after excavations by W.P. Westell, in the 1920s and 1930s, demonstrated that it was the site of an extensive, and previously unrecorded settlement of the *Romano-British* period. The field is also situated within *Archaeological Area No. 96*, and *Ancient Monument No. 11*, as defined in the *North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2*.

1.5 Since the scheduling, various investigations over the years have provided detailed information regarding this part of the *Roman* 'small town'. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Dr I.M. Stead, then of the *Ministry of Public Buildings and Works* carried out two open area excavations, one on the site of the present telephone exchange on Clothall Road (*Area C*), and the other approximately 50m to the south-east of the present school buildings (*Area B*) (Stead and Rigby, 1986). These excavations were followed by an extensive magnetometer survey carried out by the *Ancient Monuments Laboratory* in 1973 (ibid.). Further saivage

excavations, in advance of the various building phases of Hartsfield School, were carried out at various times during the 1980s and early 1990s.

1.6 The following report provides details of the aims and methods adopted in the course of the evaluation; information concerning the nature, location, extent, date, significance and quality of archaeological and environmental material uncovered; an assessment of the anticipated degree of survival of archaeological deposits and structures across the site, as deduced from its present state and recent past; and a description of the nature and location of the sub-soil deposits encountered. This data is further discussed in the context of previous work in the immediate vicinity of the site and includes supporting illustrative material.

*Hartsfield School;
Archaeological Setting*

— TL 341

TL 248

TL 249

TL 25

AREA 1

Existing School
Building

AREA 12

Proposed position of
extension

— TL 34

AREA C

Trench B

Trench A

TP9

TP1

AREA 13

TP2

AREA B

TP10

TP7

TP3

TP4

TP5

TP6

TP8

30 0 30 60 m

Figure 2

— TL 339

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

GENERAL

2.1 Walls Field lies at the core of the *Roman* settlement at Baldock, one of the most highly researched *Romano-British* small towns in England.

2.2 W.P. Westell, late curator of Letchworth Museum, was the first person to identify the archaeological importance of the town, with excavations carried out in the 1920s and 30s. His work on Walls Field revealed an extensive *Roman* cemetery, with settlement activity nearby. These discoveries prompted further interest in the town as a whole, and led to the site being scheduled as an Ancient Monument. During the late 1960s and 70s organised excavations took place under the direction of Dr I.M. Stead for the *Ministry of Public Building and Works* (Stead and Rigby, 1986). During the 1980s and up to 1994, extensive excavations took place around the town under the direction of G.R. Burleigh, Keeper of Archaeology for the *North Hertfordshire District Council Museums Service* (Burleigh, forthcoming; Atkinson et al. 1992; Richmond and Burleigh, 1992; Richmond et al, 1992). Further excavations have been carried out in an around the town since 1994, under the direction of D.J.Hillelson for the *Heritage Network*. Together these studies have produced, perhaps, the most detailed picture available of the evolution and nature of a *Romano-British* small town in Britain.

2.3 The limits of the *Roman* settlement appear to have been demarcated by the series of large cemeteries known to exist to the north, east, south and south-west of the present day Clothall Road. Only to the north-west have no cemeteries been located, and this is probably a reflection of the lack of fieldwork opportunities in that part of the town. *Roman* Baldock appears to have grown steadily around the junction of several major roads, revealing an element of co-ordinated organisation demonstrating the 'early interaction between native and Roman traditions' (Burnham, 1987, 168). At Baldock, the Icknield Way, known to have been an important routeway along the edge of the Chiltern chalk escarpment from the *Neolithic* period onwards, converged with other roads which led to some of the major towns of Roman Britain. A primary road led southwards to the large provincial town of *Verulamium* (St. Albans), and ultimately onto *Londinium* (London), affording contact with the continent and

communication systems reaching deep into the heart of the Roman Empire. Another important road stretched northwards to Godmanchester, Lincoln and beyond, whilst a third road led south-east, to Braughing and ultimately to the largest of all *coloniae*, *Camulodunum* (Colchester), originally the capital city of the new Roman province of *Britannia*. These routes were doubtless the source of much trade during the Roman occupation allowing access to a great variety of goods and influences from much of the Empire. It was around these communication systems that the town developed and grew, the roads often acting as boundary markers demarcating sub-divisions and properties within the settlement. During the Roman occupation, Baldock developed as a prosperous small town, undoubtedly displaying the wealth of services to be expected from a settlement acting as a local market centre. The trackways that had connected *Iron Age* regional centres were improved and soon came to carry the increased trade which was an integral part of the operations of the Empire. Imported goods, although still rare and expensive, began to appear in greater quantity in the town, alongside the products of local manufacture. Prosperity was reflected in the emerging street pattern and density of new buildings, as well as in Romanised styles of pottery and articles of dress. The town continued as a market centre for an agricultural community and as a focus for religious activity. A variety of burial practices have come to light through extensive excavation programmes, and these might suggest that Baldock was also fulfilling a separate function as a centre of local religious cults. Rich high status *Late Iron Age* burials have been found in The Tene and on Upper Walls Common; it appears that the local aristocracy in the *Iron Age* regarded Baldock as a suitable centre for the conspicuous display of wealth in their funerary ritual.

SITE SPECIFIC

2.4 The present study area is situated in the northern corner of Walls Field, on the boundary with Hartsfield School. Since Walls Field was scheduled, a number of archaeological investigations have taken place including open area excavations in advance of development or proposed development, and an extensive magnetometer survey carried out in 1973, which included the present school grounds, Walls Field and Clothall Common to the north. The evidence collected over this period is summarised below and has been incorporated in *Figure 2*, which draws together information from a variety of sources.

Ministry of Public Buildings and Works

2.5 Between 1968 and 1972, Dr I.M. Stead investigated a number of sites in Baldock on behalf of the *Ministry of Public Buildings and Works*. Of these, *Site B* was located at the north-east end of Walls Field, to the east of the present Hartsfield School. A range of features were identified which can be related and compared with the findings from later excavations on the school site.

2.6 The earliest phase of activity on *Site B* dated approximately to the first century BC, and the most prominent feature was a boundary ditch orientated east/west and located at the north-east end of the site. This ditch appears to represent a continuation of an *Iron Age* pit alignment identified more recently in *Area 12*, and also apparent in the magnetometer survey.

2.7 By the end of the first century BC, a road aligned north-east/south-west had been built, together with two possible funerary enclosures. Further gully and pit features suggest that by the time of the *Roman* conquest settlement had become quite dense.

2.8 During the middle of the first century AD, a side road on a north-west/south-east alignment, was added. This linked the main north-east/south-west road from *Area B*, with the *hollow way* running north-east/south-west, which was also recognised during the 1987 and 1991 excavations on the school site. During this same period, between c. AD 50 and 70, it was also possible to identify a distinct change in the pottery tradition on the site, as handmade ceramics and a variety of fabrics took precedence over wheelmade wares.

2.9 A roundhouse, indicating the beginning of domestic settlement, was dated to the first part of the second century. The roads also continued in use during this period, and into the third century.

Ancient Monuments Laboratory

2.10 The magnetometer survey carried out by the *Ancient Monuments Laboratory* in 1973, revealed a number of ditch and pit features, many of which have since been recorded and excavated. The survey clearly shows the roadside ditches of a substantial roadway running north-east/south-west, which developed into a *hollow way* as it climbed the hill towards the

Icknield Way. The road can be traced for a distance of 230m, from Clothall Road to the northern edge of the school grounds. An alignment of closely spaced pits extending in an east/west direction across the north-east end of the school grounds can also be identified.

Hartsfield School excavations

2.11 Excavation on the site and within the grounds of the present Hartsfield School has been extensive, and investigations in 1982, 1987 and 1991 have revealed settlement activity through the *Late Iron Age* and into the *Roman* period

2.12 In 1982 work began on the first phase of the Hartsfield School building (*Area 12*). Not only were the archaeological horizons beneath the building platform at risk from the development, but also a further large area between the school and Clothall Road was threatened by levelling of the gentle slope for the creation of a playing field (*Area 13*).

2.13 Although the investigation of *Area 13* was extremely limited, a section through the *Roman* road, identified by the 1973 geophysical survey, was recorded on a north-east/south-west alignment. The edges were defined by substantial drainage ditches, and the surface consisted of well worn flint and chalk metalling. Two *Romano-British* cremations were recorded to the south-east of the roadway. One included in its assemblage, two bronze pins, a beaker, and a samian cup and dish, dating it to c.AD 60-180.

2.14 Four structures were revealed on the site. The most complete was a T-shaped kiln, probably used as a corn drier. Two isolated stretches of robbed-out flint and rubble wall were investigated, one to the north-west of the road, and the other on the north-west edge of the site. Finally, a surface of tile, flint and sandstone rubble, on the southern extreme of the site, was interpreted as the hard-core base of an interior floor.

2.15 Further pit and ditch features were observed across the site. A coin hoard, consisting of 23 coins deposited in a pot in c.AD 350, was recovered from one of the pit features.

2.16 The 1982 excavations of *Area 12* revealed an extensive pit alignment, which has since been traced for a distance of approximately one kilometre through excavations, geophysical

surveys and examination of aerial photographs. It was seen to extend in an east/west direction from the Ivel springs to the edge of the Weston Hills. Several of the pits in *Area 12* were sectioned, and were shown to have contained large upright timbers posts, which may have been part of an impressive boundary feature. The *terminus ante quem* for these pits appears to be no later than the *Late pre-Roman Iron Age (LPRIA)*. Further discoveries included the vestigial remains of a *Late Iron Age* roundhouse, in the form of two concentric ring ditches.

2.17 Further excavations on *Area 12* in 1987 and 1991 preceded extensions of the school to the east. The earliest phase covered the *Late Iron Age* (200-100 BC), and incorporated the pit alignment. This was seen to continue across the area, with the pits spaced approximately one metre apart.

2.18 It has been suggested that the pit alignment remained in use as a land boundary during the second phase of activity, the *LPRIA* (50 BC-AD 50), and it is probable that the later settlement respected the boundary, even after the posts in the pits had rotted away. The first evidence for domestic settlement occurs within this phase, as shown by a semi-circular gully, interpreted as the drainage ditch surrounding a roundhouse. Various pit features were also shown to belong to this phase.

2.19 By the *Early Romano-British* period (mid first-late second centuries), both the pit alignment and the roundhouse had fallen into disuse, but the construction of the north-east/south-west roadway, previously identified in *Area 13*, falls into this phase. Where it crossed *Area 12*, it had formed a *hollow way* which was bounded by gullies and ditches. Towards the north end of the site, the roadside gullies diverged from the main roadway on to an east-west alignment which ran parallel to, and truncated, the pit alignment. It is possible that these represent a secondary roadway, the surface of which has not survived. The *hollow way* clearly existed over a period of several centuries. At least two phases of chalk and flint metalling were recognised, together with further repairs to these surfaces.

2.20 The last phase represented was the *Later Roman* period (3rd-4th centuries AD), the most active period of the site's use. The *hollow way* was still in use, as shown by the constant recutting of the roadside gullies, although, at intervals, the road surface had been defaced by

numerous large pits, some of which were sealed by later road surfaces or repairs. Pottery recovered from the upper deposits during the 1987 excavations suggested that the *hollow way* may have remained in use until the *Medieval* period. The east-west gullies were maintained throughout the *Later Roman* period, implying that the road they served was still in use. Quarrying, in the form of shallow scoops cut into the chalk natural, was also taking place at this time and it is possible that the quarried chalk was being used for repairing the road.

2.21 A large square storage pit was recorded in the south-east corner of the 1991 excavation; a central circular shaft, 3.68m deep, was cut into the base of the pit, and was bordered by four beam-slots. It is thought that the pit was possibly a cool store, within a cellar feature. It was backfilled with rubbish, the lower layer consisting of destruction debris, and directly above this layer were the skeletal remains of two adults, an adolescent and a child, which had been thrown in from the top of the pit. Grave goods, including a flagon, a fourth century *Colchester* type red-slipped ware bowl and the remains of a fine copper necklace, were also thrown into the pit at this time.

2.22 Finally, a 9.68m deep well, with a distinct weathering cone, was observed close to the pit feature. The abundance of butchered and worked animal bone retrieved from its fills, suggest that the immediate area may have been used for butchery and the manufacture of bone pins.

Trench Location

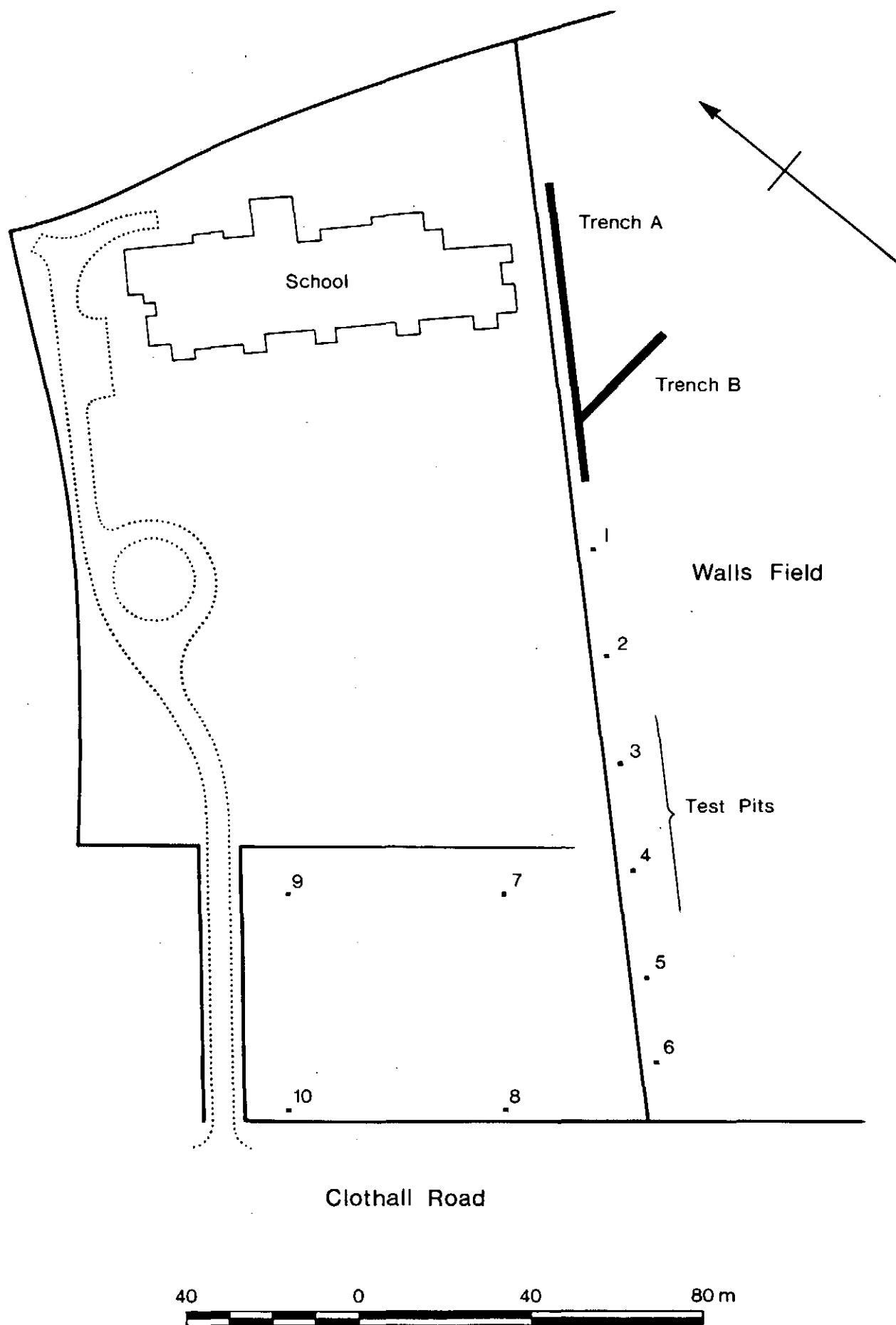


Figure 3

3 TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

TRENCH A

3.1 *Trench A* (see *Figure 3*) was 70m long and 1.5m wide, and extended in a north-east/south-west direction. It was positioned at a distance of thirty five metres from the north-east edge of the field and three metres outside of the boundary of Hartsfield JMI School. Walls Field slopes downward in a south-west direction, and *Trench A* was positioned to follow this incline. The north-east end of the trench was situated at a level approximately 3.80m higher than the south-west end. The topsoil was approximately 0.25m deep throughout, and the subsoil varied in depth from 0.10m at the north-east end of the trench to 0.35m at the south-west end. Deep ploughing had disturbed the chalk natural and the ploughmarks were seen to run in a north-northeast/ south-southwest direction.

3.2 The first 45m at the north-east end of trench contained only three recognisable features (see *Figure 4*). These included a large pit, and two rather tentative posthole features. The sub-oval pit (*cut 35*) was 2.50m in width, and was situated 14.5m from the north-east end of the trench extending under the north-west baulk (see *Figure 6*). The top of the feature had been damaged by ploughing and consequently the break of slope at the top of the cut was rather irregular. The sides sloped almost vertically. It was excavated to a depth of 0.50m, and to this depth contained a single uniform sandy loam fill. Finds from the pit included *Roman* pottery (mainly second and third century wares), a fragment of worked bone, *Roman* roof and floor tile, a large fragment of quern stone, daub, slag, butchered bone and oyster shells, all indicative of a rubbish deposit.

3.3 The two possible posthole features (*14* and *15*), were situated 27.5m and 30.5m respectively from the north-east end of the trench (see *Figure 4*). Both were interpreted tentatively as they were on the same alignment as, and also contained a similar make-up to the ploughmarks. They were both sub-circular in shape, with diameters of approximately 0.30m. No finds were collected from their surfaces. Neither feature was excavated.

3.4 A series of parallel ditch features, aligned north-west/south-east, were recorded towards the south-west end of the trench (see *Figure 4*). Ditches *06* (3m wide) and *21* (0.90m

wide) were located approximately 7m and 14m respectively from the trench end. A gap of 6m separated them from ditch 17 (2.70m wide), which was 1m south-west of ditch 16 (0.95m wide). All four ditches contained mid brown silty clay loams and they all produced dateable finds from their surfaces. A coin was retrieved from the surface of ditch 16, together with second to third century pottery, stone, bone and both floor and roof tile. Ditch 17 produced *Romano-British* pottery with the main concentration focusing on the period from the *LPRIA* to the second century AD; tile and butchered bone was also collected from this fill. A variety of sherds from the *LPRIA* through to the late second century AD were retrieved from the surface of ditch 21.

3.5 Ditch 06, was the closest of the four ditches to the south-west end of the trench and was excavated to a depth of 0.50m (see *Figure 4*). This demonstrated at least three phases of activity (see *Figure 6*). The earliest recorded phase, *Cut 54*, was 0.70m wide; it contained at least one silty loam fill, which produced bone and pottery, dating from the *LPRIA* to the second century AD. The south-west edge of this cut sloped gently down, whilst the north-east edge was truncated by ditch recut (*Cut 53*). The south-western edge of this recut had a steep concave slope, and was greater than 1.50m in width; it contained at least four highly silty fills, three of which produced bone and pottery dating between the *LPRIA* and the early second century AD. Context 50, consisted of an ashy deposit, which contained a high quantity of charcoal and calcined bone. It extended under the south-east section, and was left unexcavated. It is likely that this represented an unurned cremation cut into a soft silty ditch fill. The latest phase of activity, a concave shaped ditch cut (*Cut 52*) was 1.40m wide and 0.40m deep, and truncated the north-east edge of *Cut 53*. It was orientated west-northwest/east-southeast and contained a single silty loam fill which produced pottery of a *LPRIA* to early second century date. Only the latest ditch cut in this complex (*Cut 52*) was excavated to its full depth.

3.6 It is probable that the arrangement of two wide and two narrow ditches is significant. These may represent roadside ditches, associated with the *Roman* road on a west-northwest/east-southeast alignment, already identified in the magnetometer survey of Walls Field. Ditch 17, which was unexcavated, may possibly parallel the ditch complex 06. Finds collected from

the surface of 17 ranged from the *LPRIA* through to the fourth century AD, which may suggest the presence of a number of recuts spanning several centuries.

3.7 No road surfaces were apparent between the ditches, which may indicate truncation as a result of ploughing. However, three features were recognised in the area between the ditches including a possible linear feature (18), and two further indeterminate features (19 and 20). Feature 18 was aligned parallel with the four ditch features; it was approximately 0.45m wide, and may represent a gully. First to fourth century AD pottery was collected from the surface, together with mortar and daub.

TRENCH B

3.8 *Trench B* was approximately 30m long, and extended in an westerly direction, from a point on *Trench A*, located approximately 16m from its south-west end (see *Figure 3*). The topsoil was 0.15m deep and the subsoil 0.25m deep along the length the trench. Groups of intercutting pit and ditch features were identified along the length of the trench, and two of these complexes were selectively sampled.

3.9 Two intercutting pit and ditch features (23 and 24), were situated at the very western end of the trench (see *Figure 4*). These were not excavated, but a number of abraded pottery sherds were collected from the surface of both and these could be dated to the *LPRIA* and *Romano-British* periods.

3.10 Context 25, represents the surface fill of an unexcavated sub-circular shaped pit, which extended under the northern baulk (see *Figure 4*). It consisted of a silty loam with a high chalk content, and had a diameter of at least 2.50m. The pottery collected was wide ranging in date, and suggested that the pit was probably no earlier than the late second to third century AD.

3.11 A little to the east was a complex of pit and ditch features (see *Figure 4*). A section measuring 0.50m in width was excavated across part of this complex in order to establish the relationships between the features and to ascertain their dates and depths. One large feature (*Cut 46*) was at least 2.3m in length and extended under both baulks in a north-west/south-east direction (see *Figure 7*). The rounded sides of the feature suggest that it

is a pit, although its alignment may suggest that it forms a continuation of ditch 17 identified in *Trench A*. It had gently sloping sides, and contained at least three fills, with a width of 3.50m. The ceramic finds indicate a second to fourth century assemblage. A copper coin was also recorded. This pit appeared to truncate at least two linear features which ran in both east and westerly directions. Both of these ditches contained second to third century pottery.

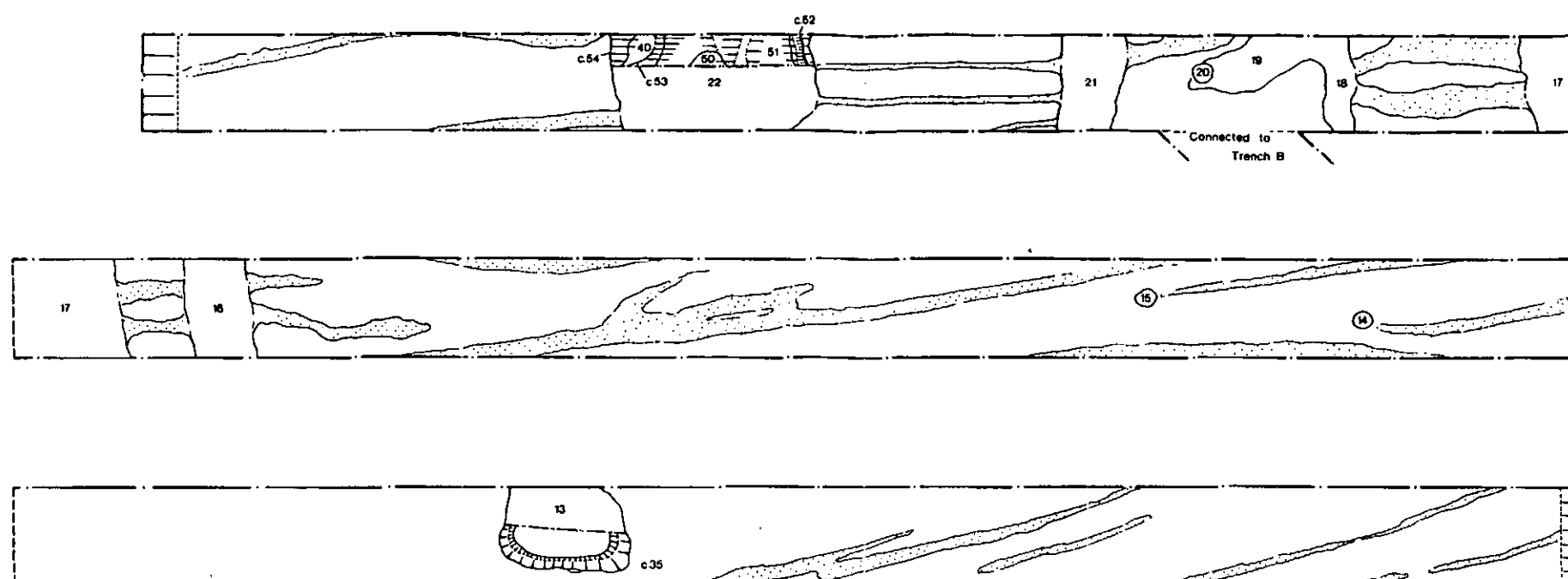
3.12 Context 30 represents another sub-circular pit which extended under the northern baulk. It had a diameter of at least 2m, and contained a mid brown loamy fill with a moderate chalk content. Finds collected from the surface were of a late *Romano-British* date.

3.13 Another ditch complex was observed adjacent to the western edge of feature 30, and approximately 7m from the eastern end of *Trench B* (see *Figure 4*). It extended in a north-east/south-west direction across the width of a trench. A 0.50m wide section of the feature was excavated to a depth of 0.50m (see *Figure 7*). The latest recut (*cut 48*) contained three silty loam fills with varying quantities of chalk inclusions. It was approximately 0.40m deep, and produced second to third/fourth century pottery, as well as bone and a fragment of copper wire. It truncated two earlier ditch features, *cut 47* to the west, and *cut 49* to the east, which shared the same alignment. Neither of these earlier ditches were fully excavated, but both produced second to fourth century pottery from the silty fills. *Cut 49* in turn truncated an earlier, unexcavated pit (33), which produced second/third century pottery and the remains of a lava quernstone.

3.14 This assortment of features indicate a pattern of dense settlement, paralleled in previous excavations in Walls Field, and within the grounds of Hartsfield JMI School.

Location of Archaeological Features: trial trenches

Trench A



Trench B

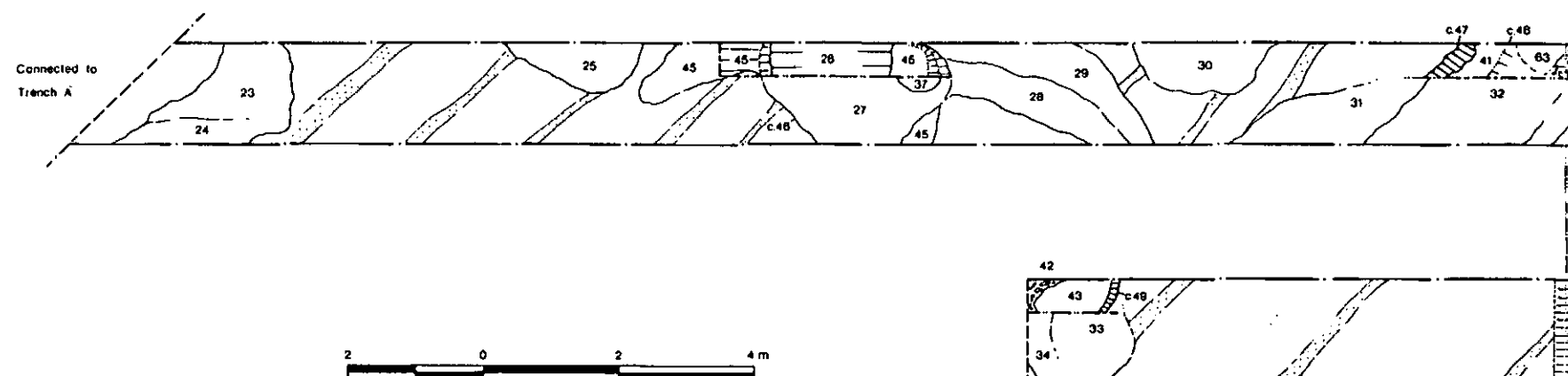
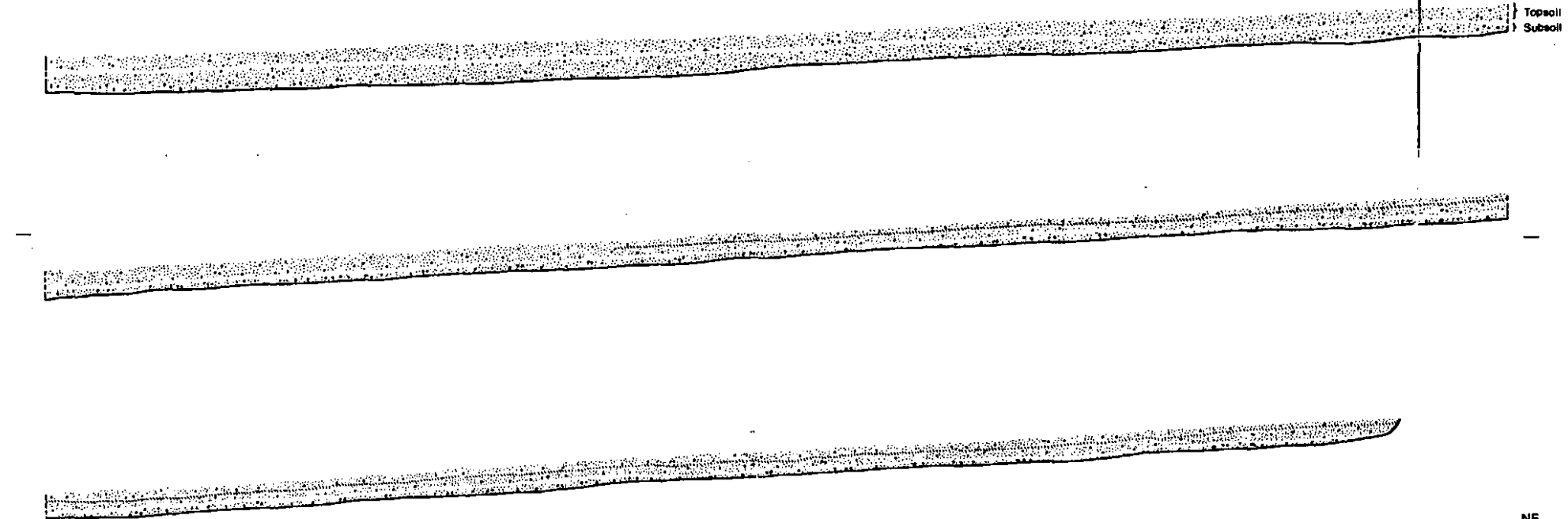


Figure 4

Trench Sections

Trench A

SW



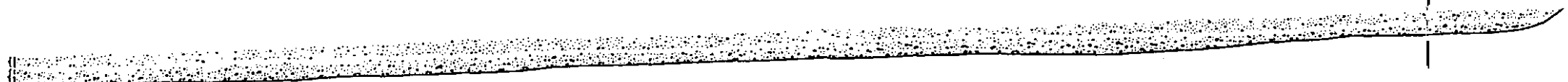
NE
— Datum 66.00 mOD

2 0 2 4 m

Trench B

W

Topsoil
Subsoil



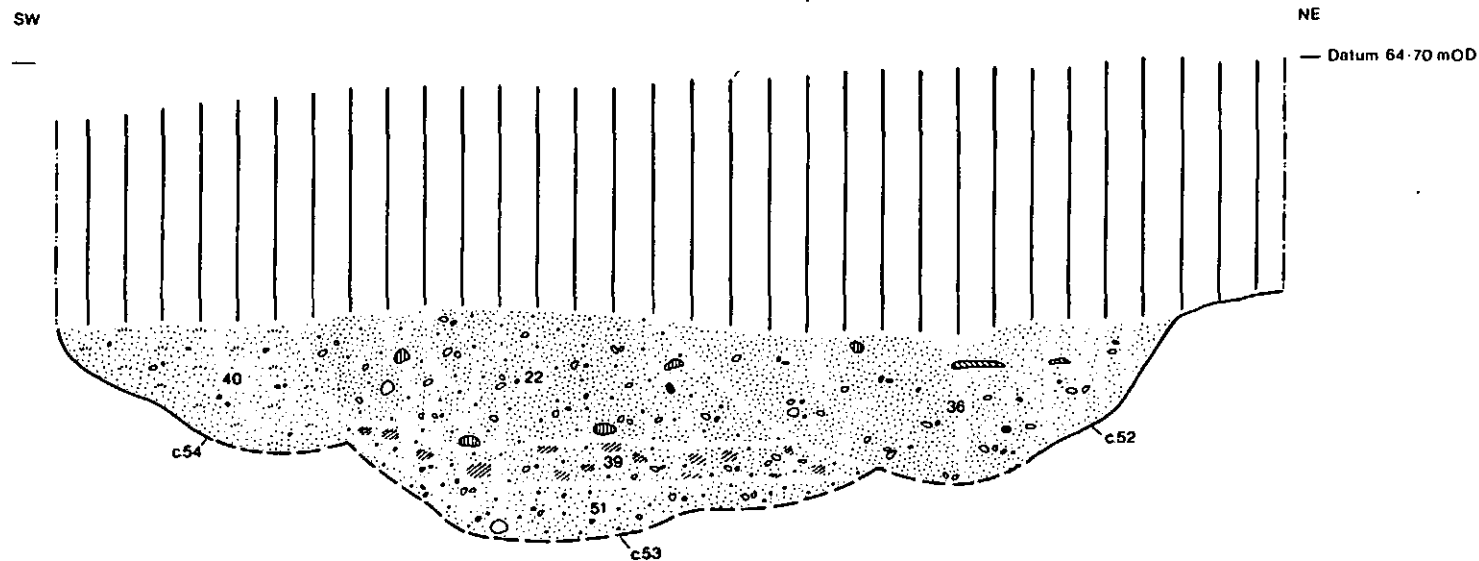
E
— Datum 66.00 mOD

2 0 2 4 m

Figure 5

Feature Sections

Cuts 52, 53, 54



Cut 35

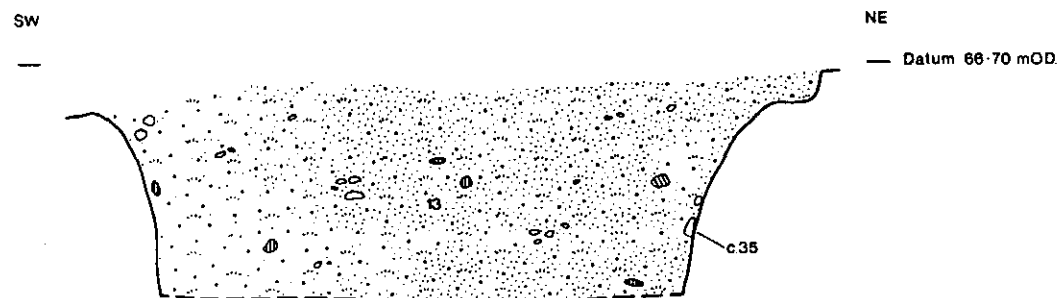
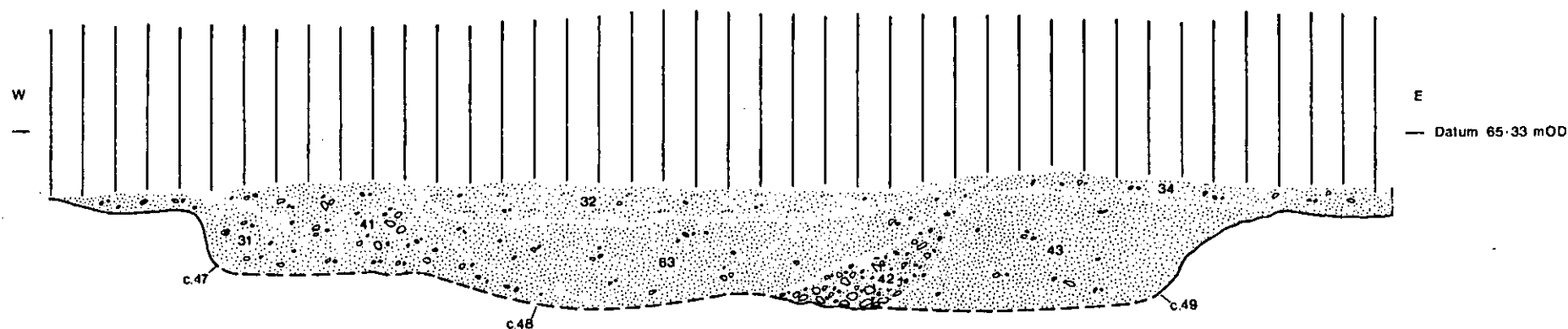


Figure 6

Feature Sections

Cuts 47, 48, 49



Cut 46

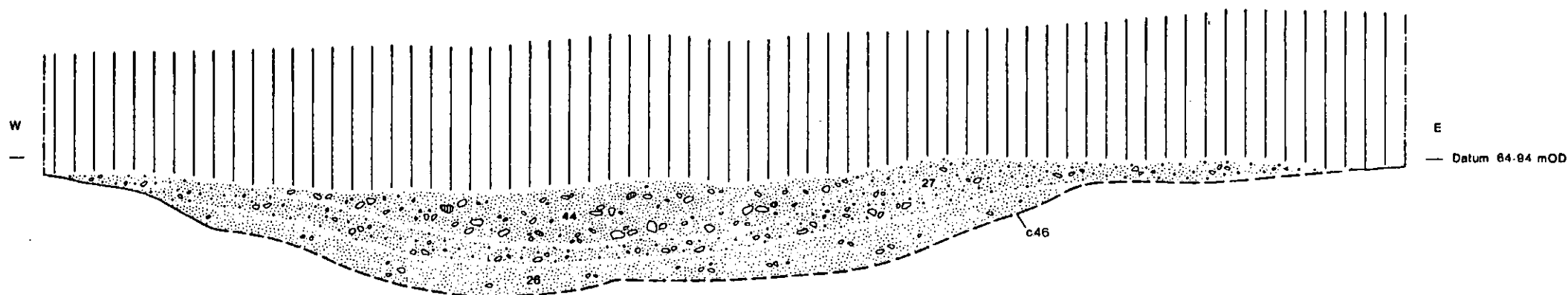


Figure 7

TEST PITS 1-10

3.15 Within each test pit the topsoil and subsoil were excavated, until either the natural chalk, or an identifiable archaeological horizon was reached (see *Figure 3*).

Test Pit 1

3.16 The topsoil in *test pit 1* was 0.30m deep and the subsoil 0.16m deep (see *Figures 8 and 9*). These sealed a dark brown context (55), which spread across the whole test pit and contained a high quantity of mainly third/fourth century pottery sherds, including *colour coat* wares, *amphora*, *Oxfordshire* wares and *black burnished* wares, together with a moderate amount of mortar.

Test Pit 2

3.17 The topsoil and subsoil deposits in *test pit 2* were each 0.24m deep (see *Figures 8 and 9*). Their removal revealed a decayed chalk natural, which showed evidence of possible plough disturbance.

Test Pit 3

3.18 The topsoil in *test pit 3* was 0.22m deep and the subsoil was 0.34m deep (see *Figures 8 and 9*). A small sub-circular pit (56), was identified beneath the subsoil, and it extended under the south-east facing section. The feature was at least 0.75m in diameter, with an homogenous sandy loam fill. Although no finds were retrieved from this context, the lower subsoil produced a copper alloy coin, together with pottery which ranged in date from the *LPRIA* to the third century AD.

Test Pit 4

3.19 The topsoil in *test pit 4* was approximately 0.20m deep, and the subsoil was approximately 0.18m deep (see *Figures 8 and 9*). Two features were revealed beneath the subsoil: context 57, a possible linear feature, 0.50m wide and aligned north-east/south-west, which contained a mid brown sandy silt fill; and context 58, a sub-circular pit feature, at least 0.60m in diameter, which extended under the southern corner of the test pit. No finds were collected from context 57, but context 58 produced a single abraded *Romano-British* pottery

sherd. Further pottery sherds retrieved from the subsoil mainly dated to the third/fourth century AD.

Test Pit 5

3.20 The topsoil in *test pit 5* was 0.26m deep and the subsoil 0.18m deep (see *Figures 8 and 9*). Their removal revealed a degraded chalk natural with striations created by modern ploughing.

Test Pit 6

3.21 The topsoil in *test pit 6* was 0.20m deep, and the subsoil was 0.40m deep (see *Figures 8 and 9*). Five different contexts were recorded in this test pit. Contexts 59, 60 and 61 extended under the southern and eastern corners of the pit. 59 and 61 were silt-rich deposits, and 60 was silty, but with a high chalk content. 59 produced one small sherd of *samian* pottery. Contexts 62, a dark brown silty deposit, and 64, a chalky deposit continued beyond the northern and western corners of the test pit. The subsoil produced pottery dating to the second/third centuries.

Test Pit 7

3.22 The topsoil in *test pit 7* was 0.09m deep and the subsoil was 0.23m deep (see *Figures 8 and 9*). Two separate deposits were recorded in this test pit, contexts 65 and 68. Context 65, a sandy silt extended over most of the test pit and produced a large lump of fired clay, together with animal bone and late first/second century pottery. No finds were collected from the surface of context 68, which was situated in the northern corner of the test pit. The subsoil produced mainly second/third century pottery with some residual *LPRIA* sherds.

Test Pit 8

3.23 The topsoil in *test pit 8* was 0.24m deep, and the subsoil, 0.22m deep (see *Figures 8 and 9*). Two contexts were identified, both on a north-west/south-east alignment. Context 66, a grey brown, sandy silt fill produced mainly late third/fourth century ceramics, whilst a single undiagnostic grog tempered pot sherd was collected from the surface of the shallow chalky silt of context 67. These deposits may represent a road ditch associated with the *Roman* road

which was recorded during widening of the present day Clothall Road. This feature was also recorded in test pit 10.

Test Pit 9

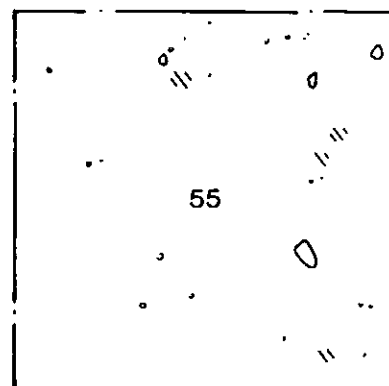
3.24 The topsoil in *test pit 9* was 0.36m deep and the subsoil was 0.32m deep (see *Figures 8 and 9*). One linear feature measuring 0.44m wide (context 70), ran across the test pit on a north-south alignment. Its sandy silt fill produced no dateable finds. A further possible feature, made up of redeposited natural was recorded in the eastern corner of the test pit, but once again no finds were recovered. The subsoil produced abraded sherds dating mainly to the second/third century.

Test Pit 10

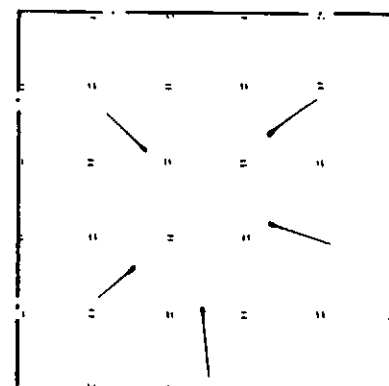
3.25 The topsoil and subsoil in *test pit 10* were both 0.22m deep (see *Figures 8 and 9*). A single feature was recorded, aligned north-west/south-east, with a silty loam fill (context 69). It appears to correspond with context 66 in *test pit 8*, and once again may represent a roadside ditch. A copper alloy coin was retrieved from the feature, along with second to fourth century wares. The subsoil produced abraded second to third/fourth century pottery, as well as a circular hinged brooch.

Location of Archaeological Features: test pits

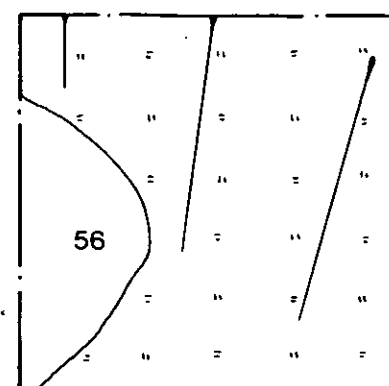
Test Pit 1



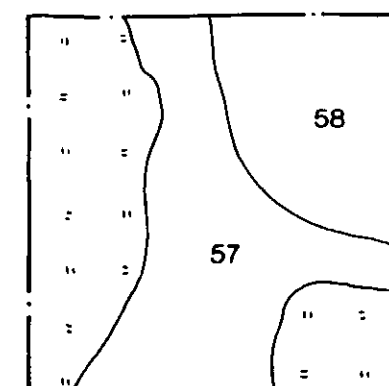
Test Pit 2



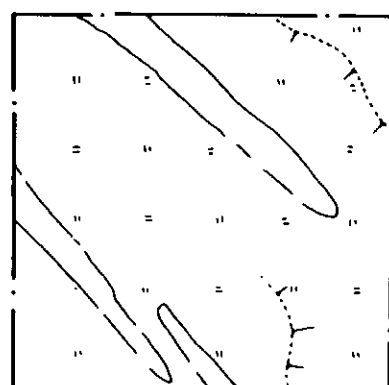
Test Pit 3



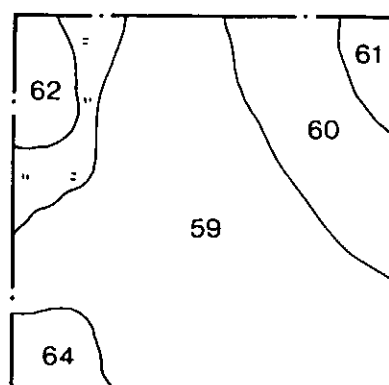
Test Pit 4



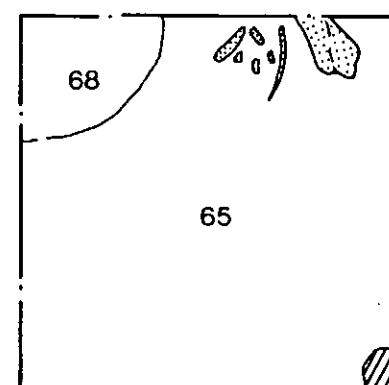
Test Pit 5



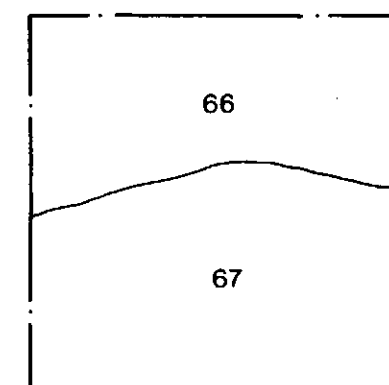
Test Pit 6



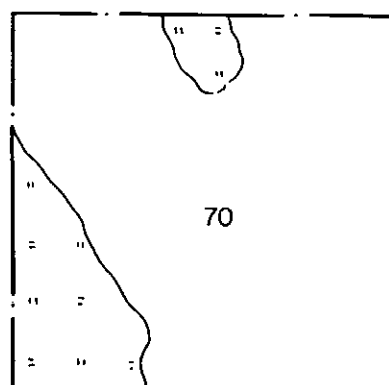
Test Pit 7



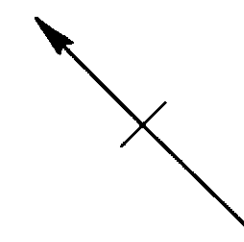
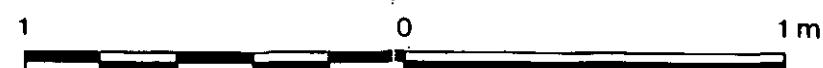
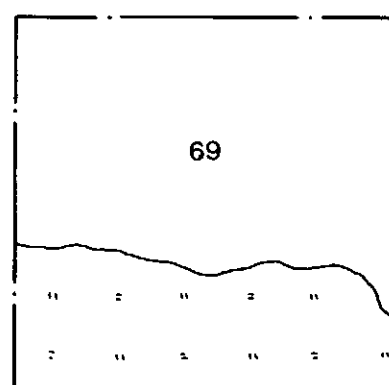
Test Pit 8



Test Pit 9



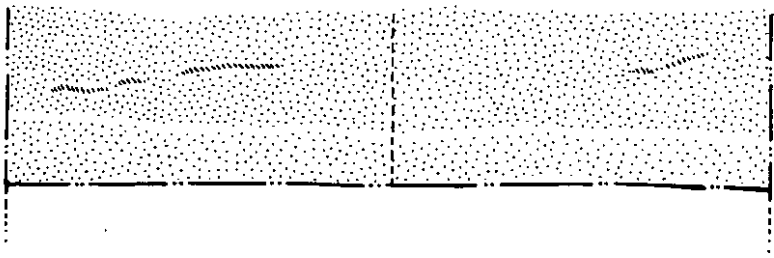
Test Pit 10



Test Pit Sections

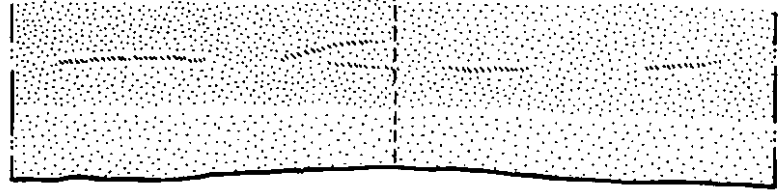
T.P.1

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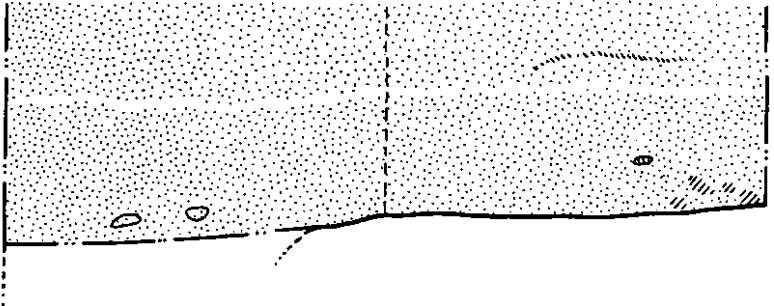
T.P.2

— Facing SE Facing SW — 63.94 mOD.



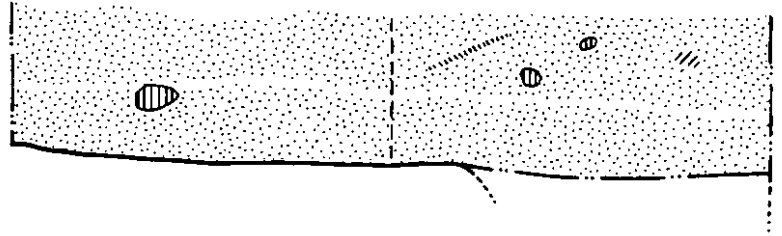
T.P.3

— 64.10 mOD.



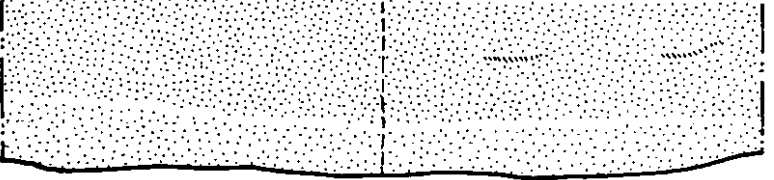
T.P.4

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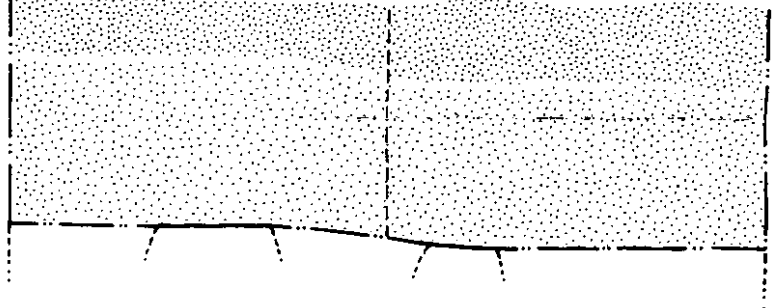
T.P.5

— 64.83 mOD.



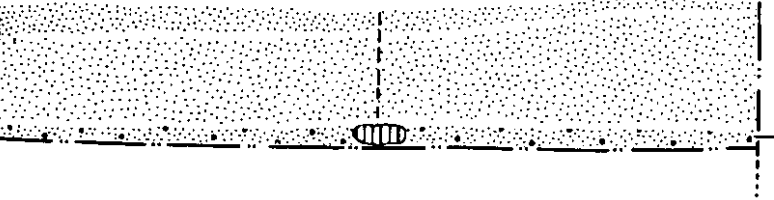
T.P.6

— 65.30 mOD.



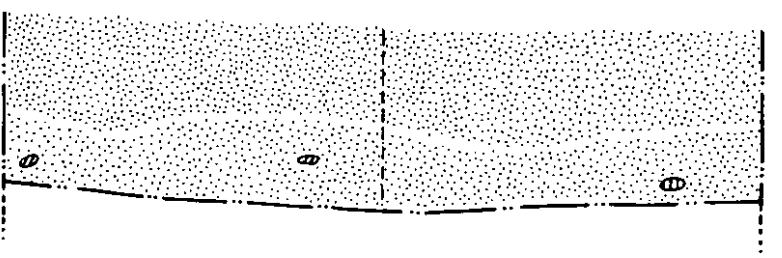
T.P.7

— 64.02 mOD.



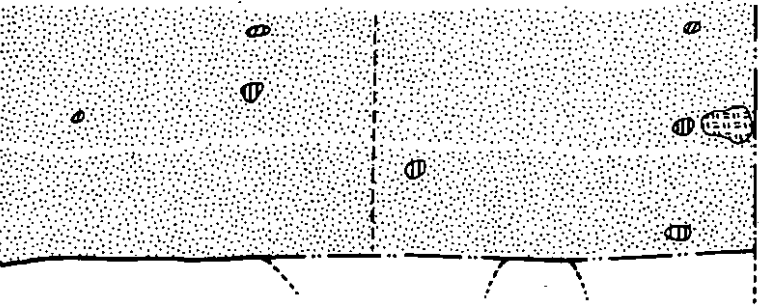
T.P.8

— 65.38 mOD.



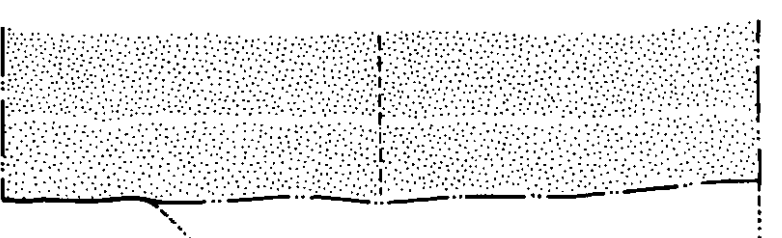
T.P.9

— 63.38 mOD.



T.P.10

— 64.67 mOD.



4 DISCUSSION

4.1 The present evaluation is intended to provide an indication of the likely level of archaeological survival in the vicinity of a proposed extension to Hartsfield School. It has made use of specifically commissioned excavation data, together with detailed information from a variety of sources gathered over a period of some thirty years.

4.2 Because of the level of previous investigation, a principal aim of the evaluation was to assess the level of damage caused to underlying archaeology by ploughing. Destructive excavation was therefore limited to a demonstration of the potential depth of survival of recognised features and a confirmation of their date range.

4.3 A series of test pits were also excavated from the south-west end of *Trench A* across the field as far as the Clothall Road, and to the south-west of the present school playing field. These were intended to provide information concerning the effect of ploughing and landscaping on soil movement, and the present depth of overburden protecting the stratified archaeological layers.

Trenches A and B

4.4 *Trench A* transected the proposed footprint on a south-west/north-east axis beginning just to the south-west of a road, the existence of which has been demonstrated in *Area B* (Stead and Rigby 1986), in the results of the magnetometer survey, and in the 1987 season of excavation. The majority of recorded features consisted of ditches located in the south-west half of the trench. These correspond with roadside ditches known from the magnetometer survey. One section was excavated, revealing a number of recuts which produced predominantly first/second century pottery. The road surface between the ditches had not survived, and was probably destroyed by ploughing. In the north-east half of the trench, recorded features were limited to a large second to third century pit, together with two possible post-holes. This density is unlikely to be indicative, however, given the number and variety of features recorded in the 1991 season some ten metres to the north-west, and in the magnetometer survey some ten metres to the south-east.

4.5 *Trench B* transected the proposed footprint on an east-west axis and revealed an abundance of pit and ditch features which were selectively sampled. These were fairly substantial, and showed a number of recuts, suggesting that they were in use over a long period of time. Those features which were not sampled are likely to be equally substantial, demonstrating several phases of activity, and mirroring the evidence of previous investigations.

4.6 Along the length of *Trench A*, the topsoil and subsoil horizons deepened towards the south-west end by approximately 0.15m, as might be expected with regular ploughing. In *Trench B*, the topsoil and subsoil remained roughly constant in depth along its length. Although ploughing had caused some disturbance, most features in both *trenches A* and *B* appear to have survived to a considerable depth. The evaluation proved that some of the features survived to a depth of at least 0.50m below the chalk natural.

Test Pits

4.7 The depth of the combined topsoil and subsoil overburden was recorded in all the test pits. Along the natural incline of the field towards the south-west, the overburden increased in depth between *test pit 1* (0.46m) and *test pit 3* (0.56m), which was situated on the north-eastern edge of a relict field boundary. Here, ploughing had caused soil to build up, prior to the abandonment of the boundary, increasing the depth of the overburden, and creating a ridge. *Test pit 4* was situated to the south-west of this ridge, and consequently the depth of overburden was reduced by almost 20cm. From this point, the overburden steadily increased again in the direction of the Clothall Road, to a depth of 0.60m in *test pit 6*.

4.8 Of the four test pits within the grounds of the school, the depth of overburden in *test pits 8* and *10*, closest to the road, was much the same. *Test pits 7* and *9*, positioned parallel with *8* and *10*, 50m to the north-east, were of different depths which may be the result of landscaping.

Conclusion

4.9 From the limited trial trenching on the footprint of the proposed extension to the school buildings, and the evidence provided by previous investigations, it is clear that a good

level of survival of archaeological features can be expected, although it is likely that shallower features may have been ploughed out.

4.10 Ploughing over the years has clearly had an effect on the depth of the overburden protecting the archaeology and this might be a consideration in the future management of the scheduled area. The upper slope of the field, to approximately seventy metres from the north-eastern field boundary, is at a higher level of risk from plough damage as a result of erosion, as is a similar band to the south-west of the relict field boundary that divides the field.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The archaeological evaluation was divided into three specific stages, the first relating to the proposed development, and the second and third concerned with the collation of geotechnical information.

5.2 Two trenches were positioned in order to take into account the footprint of the main extension, and the proposed area of hard standing.

5.3 *Trench A* measured 1.5 x 70m, and ran parallel to, and 3 metres to the south-east of the south-eastern boundary of Hartsfield JMI School. It was positioned to follow the natural incline of the south-westerly slope of Walls Field.

5.4 *Trench B* measured 1.5 x 30m and was positioned on an east-west alignment from the edge of *Trench A* across the diagonal of the proposed construction footprint where it lies outside the school grounds.

5.5 Both trenches were accurately located in relation to the boundaries of the field by triangulation.

5.6 The topsoil and overburden were carefully stripped, under close archaeological supervision, using a JCB type excavator with a 1.5m toothless ditching bucket fitted to its back actor. The overburden was reduced until horizons of archaeological activity were exposed. Where no archaeological features were encountered reduction continued until the natural geology, consisting of tabular chalk, disturbed by deep ploughing over the past 50 years, was reached.

5.7 Both trenches were cleaned by hand, photographed using colour and monochrome film, and then planned at a scale of 1:50. One longitudinal section of each trench was drawn at a scale of 1:20. Absolute heights were measured with an optical level, and calculated from an accurately located temporary benchmark.

5.8 A percentage of the archaeological features were hand excavated stratigraphically to a depth of approximately 0.5m below the level of the chalk natural. This was to ascertain the depth, date and quality of preservation of features on the site. All features were planned at a scale of 1:20 on polyester draughting film, and all sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10.

5.9 The trenches were backfilled, with the approval of the County Archaeology Office, once the excavation was completed.

5.10 A series of six one metre square test pits were positioned at a distance of three metres from the outside edge of the south-eastern boundary of Hartsfield School.

5.11 *Test Pit 1* was located directly 15m to the south-west of *Trench A*. *Test pits 1* to *5* were then positioned at 25m intervals. *Test pit 6* was sited 20m to the south-west of *test pit 5* to avoid unforeseen obstacles.

5.12 A series of four further one metre square test pits were situated in the area to the south-west of the present school playing fields, between the Clothall Road, and the existing mobile classrooms. They were positioned in a square pattern, approximately 50m apart.

5.13 All ten test pits were positioned in order to provide general information about the depth of overburden, the presence of buried soils, and the extent of disturbance caused by previous development and ploughing.

5.14 Each of the test pits was accurately located in relation to existing features using an optical theodolite and tapes, or, where appropriate, by triangulation.

5.15 The topsoil and subsoils within each test pit were excavated by hand until either the geological natural or archaeological layers were encountered.

5.16 The ten test pits were planned outlining all archaeological features at a scale of 1:20 on polyester drawing film. The south-east and south-west facing sections of each test pit were recorded at a scale of 1:10.

5.17 Once all recording was completed each test pit was backfilled.

5.18 All plans and sections of trenches and test pits were annotated with absolute heights derived from an accurately located benchmark.

5.19 Each layer, fill and cut were individually numbered and recorded in detail on single pro-forma context cards, taking into account soil details, stratigraphic relationships, dimensions and artefact occurrence. The context system was cross-referenced with all other records, including plans and sections. Separate registers were maintained for levels, photographs and context sequences.

5.20 *Trenches A and B* were recorded photographically using both colour and monochrome film after they had been cleaned. All sections were photographed, as were the features that were sampled. Each of the test pits was photographed in both section and plan.

5.21 All finds relating to the site were collected in reference to context and location. Those of special cultural or scientific interest were recorded three dimensionally. Finds were thereafter cleaned, logged, labelled, bagged and boxed and will be accessed in due course, together with the archive records, into the collections of the *North Hertfordshire Museums Service*.

6

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7

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