



Leicestershire  
County Council

Historic Environment Record

SLE: 1134

ELE: 5367

MLE: 3992 (Roman)

3995 (IA)

MELTON MOWBRAY

*Excavations at Scalford  
Brook, Melton Mowbray*

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LEICESTERSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL  
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RECORDS SERVICE

LEICESTERSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Melton Mowbray  
Scalford Brook

SK 756208 / SMR 72 SE AC

A162.1990

**Summary**

During the summer of 1989, members of the Melton Field Workers group conducted a watching brief during the groundworking of an area of agricultural land some 300m to the west of the Scalford Brook, 2km north of the centre of Melton Mowbray. The groundworks were associated with Melton Borough Council's Flood Alleviation Scheme involving the damming of Scalford Brook and the creation of a Country Park around the resulting reservoir.

The Melton Field Workers identified archaeological deposits and in the following months conducted excavations which produced quantities of Roman pottery with associated animal bone. These deposits were focused within and around a dense spread of limestone, sandstone and ironstone pebbles and boulders oriented as a group, southwest, northeast, approximately 22m long and 4m wide.

With the granting of planning permission for a residential development in the adjacent field to J.S.Bloor (Measham) Ltd., and the imminent construction of a carpark over the site excavated by the Melton Field Workers, Leicestershire Archaeological Unit with the assistance of L.C.C. Employment Training conducted evaluation excavations on the two fields for an initial six week period from September 1990, later extended until January 1991, prior to the developments and consequent destruction of the archaeological deposits.

The excavations identified a multi-phase Romano-British farmstead site occupied from the second to the fourth centuries AD. A small quantity of evidence points to the site having pre-Conquest origins. Evidence of settlement and traces of timber structures were identified in most phases of the site with various associated drainage complexes also recorded. The boulders identified by the Melton Field Workers were shown in their final form to act as a capping on a sump that had utilised surface drainage.

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Found by Mr G.Holmes of Melton Field Workers

## Introduction

The aim of the work was in the first instance evaluation of the deposits; to establish the nature and define the extent of the deposits in the Melton Borough Council Field; and secondly to investigate the existence, character and extent of deposits in the Bloor's Field.

The excavations were undertaken by Leicestershire Archaeological Unit, with the assistance of the Employment Training team, and the voluntary assistance of members of the Melton Field Workers.

The topography of the land was of a sharp slope from west to east, falling from 105m OD in the extreme west of the Bloors Field to 92.5m OD on the east edge of the Melton Borough Council development area. This slope continued becoming more gradual for another 300m until reaching Scalford Brook at which point the land began to rise again. To the north of the site area, the land rose sharply to a small hillock. In essence, although with a protected aspect, higher ground lay to the west and north of the site.

The subsoil was a glacial boulder clay with drift borne flint, limestone, ironstone and sandstone inclusions along with the occasional pocket of mixed gravels.

Forty trenches were opened in the Bloors development field which covered approximately 10 hectares. Topsoil (0.15<0.30m) and ploughsoils (0.10<0.30m) were removed by a JCB with dyking bucket to natural subsoil.

Where deposits were identified the natural clay was selectively hand-cleaned. Where a density of features was encountered, trenches were widened to form areas of excavation. (Fig 3)

The two fields were both covered by medieval and post-medieval ridge and furrow oriented southwest/northeast at 7m spacings. The furrows were selectively hand excavated.

Trenches and boxes were excavated by hand through the boulder deposits to natural in the Melton Borough Council (MBC) development area. Areas to the immediate south, west, north and northeast of the boulder deposits were hand cleaned, planned, and selectively excavated. Other discrete areas in the north, south and east were similarly treated.

Trenches and Areas are identified by Roman numerals (these correspond to Arabic numerals given during excavation); the hand excavated boxes in Area I are identified by Arabic numerals.

As the initial evaluation demonstrated the existence of an important complex covering the eastern end of the Bloors Field as well as the MBC area, further funding was generously granted from the developers involved, permitting further rescue work to be undertaken, prior to inevitable total destruction of the deposits in the Bloors field, and limited destruction of deposits in the MBC area.

Excavations were funded by Melton Borough Council, J.S.Bloor (Measham) Ltd., and Leicestershire County Council.

## The Excavations

As the archaeology of the site was for the most part flat and lacking in stratigraphic links between features, the phasing of individual features is interpretative. Even with the benefit of pottery finds (which in the Roman period are remarkably diagnostic of period of manufacture over the four centuries of occupation), the degree of intrusion and residuality possible must be borne in mind. The combination of these two factors can lead to a degree of distortion in interpretation and phasing.

Further problems that are to be mentioned, are firstly the difficulty in identifying earthfast features in boulder clay, and secondly, the degree of plough damage that had occurred.

Boulder clay by its very nature is an admixture of materials, picked up by glaciers and subsequently deposited. As a consequence, the subsoil, which is predominantly clay contains a variety of sediments and coarse components, in various mixtures.

Earthfast features that do not contain a high proportion of different coloured material in their filling all too easily disappear or at worst never appear at all to the excavators, the visible contrast with the background material dependent upon the quantity of moisture in the soil. As a result, it is possible that natural pockets of different sediment types can be mistaken as arteficial, and vice versa, and some features are never recognised at all.

The site had suffered considerable plough damage from the medieval period onwards. This is perhaps best illustrated by the two graves excavated. Both were situated on an apex of a ridge (ie where least destruction had occurred), and both surviving skeletons were partial, with essentially only leg, arm, pelvic and lower lumbar bones surviving. On an estimated depth of burial originally at c.1 metre of which topsoil may have constituted c.0.30m, c.0.70m of original deposit cutting natural can be calculated as having been lost on the plough ridges. In the plough furrows, this figure increases to nearer c.1m.

## The Bloors Field

An attempt has been made at phasing and interpreting the archaeological deposits recorded; the necessarily limited scale of the excavations resulted in sample rather than total areas being opened up. As a consequence a large part of the settlement was not opened-up. However, it is hoped that we have a true reflection of the archaeology.

## The MBC Field

Only a small sample of deposits were excavated in the knowledge that they were not threatened with total destruction. The integrity of the phasing when much is based upon extrapolation and projection cannot be absolute. On this basis some of the following interpretation is bound to be erroneous, as we only have a small picture of the extent and nature of many of the features.

Bloors: F96;F101;F134;F143;F135

Fig 4; Fig 10,A-A'

F96 was a shallow pit, 1.25m in length and 0.3m in depth. It had a homogeneous silty clay fill which contained a piece of worked flint and bone of cow and sheep/goat.

The pit was truncated in the south by a ditch F101, oriented WSW/ENE (which itself was truncated at its western end by F122 of phase 4b). With a sharply sloping southern and more gradual northern edge, there was a pronounced slot in the base of the feature, 0.10m in depth and 0.15m wide. The fill was an olive brown compacted silty clay, heavily stained with mineralised iron pan, which contained bone and pottery possibly of Iron Age date.

F134 and F143 were two adjacent subcircular dished features 0.2m apart, the former 0.42m by 0.30m and 0.06m deep, the later 0.34m in diameter and 0.08m deep. Interpreted as post-holes, both were filled with olive brown silty clays, 727 containing two sherds of Iron Age, Ancaster-Breedon ware pottery.

Filled by a similar matrix, and directly to the south of the postholes, was a poorly defined spread of material 2m by 1.2m that was not excavated. This feature is placed within this broad phase only by virtue of its proximity with F134 and F143.

In a watching brief carried out in February 1992 during the grading of the carpark two features, one clearly curvilinear, were recognised and rapidly sketch planned in the extreme south of the development area. On the basis of the absence of substantial Roman features or material to the south of ditches F24 and F109, those features observed in this area are suggested as belonging to a pre-Roman phase.

Attesting further to this probable prehistoric activity on the site were residual Ancaster-Breedon pottery sherds, in Roman features F55, F109 and F110.

### Discussion

Little can be deduced from the few features identified particularly as their contemporaneity, and dating, is based upon insecure data.

The sterility of the filling of the ditch F101, and pit F96 would suggest they were backfilled with available clays, rather than silted up naturally in the proximity of settlement.

The slot at the base of F101, may represent a basal channel (cf Knight 1984i;198). However, the lack of cultural material within the feature does not support this hypothesis, and it perhaps better resembles the type of 'ankle-breaker' more commonly associated with military defensive ditches (cf Todd 1968; 21).

Of greatest significance is simply the presence of a small amount of material, in indicating the origins of the later Roman occupation.

Bloors: F3;F9;F109;F118;F124;F139;F141;F142  
MBC: F24;F54;F55;F60;F61-F78;F84;F85

Fig 5; Fig 10, B-B', C-C'

F3 and F142 were parallel, 8m apart, oriented NW/SE. F3 varied from 0.3 to 0.8m in width, and from 0.03 (in the south where it terminated) to 0.4m in depth. F142 of which 7m was observed, was 0.97m in width and 0.5m in depth. Pottery recovered from the yellowish brown clay loam fill of F3 (84) included two near complete mid to late 2nd Century flagons. (It should be noted that it is possible that these vessels perhaps derived from the later cemetery in this area, although they were clearly excavated from the top gully fill. The relative dating is secure, but the absolute insecure).

F3 and F142 were both cut by a F139, a SW/NE oriented gully 1m to 1.2m in width and 0.35m deep. Pottery from its fills (744,738) would suggest that this feature was out of use by the end of the 2nd Century when it was perhaps replaced with F8.

Although F139 clearly cut the fills of F3 and F142, the fact that both of the earlier gullies terminated where cut would suggest that in the mid 2nd Century all three formed a continuous enclosure, F139 being uniquely recut at a slightly later stage.

Contemporary with this activity was F9 in Area II, a linear feature oriented NW/SE running for 16m from the western baulk to a terminal in the south east. Varying from 0.45 to 1.0m in width and from 0.14 to 0.25m in depth, it contained two fills. It had a generally rounded profile with a dished base. On the evidence of pottery recovered from it, and its stratigraphic relationships, it can be demonstrated that it had fallen out of use by the end of the 2nd Century.

Possibly contemporary on the basis of its spatial relationship with F9, and its stratigraphic relationship with F8 was F118, an ill defined feature 3.4m in length fully truncated at its eastern end. In the west it was linear, 0.6m in width for 2m before widening and becoming more circular. Where excavated it had a maximum depth of 0.1m with a gradually sloping northern edge, that was sharper and better defined in the south. No finds were recovered from its olive brown silty clay fill.

It is quite probable that F109 existed in this phase, in a form later obliterated by recutting. It is fully described in Phase 2b.

Parallel and to the south of F109 was a small gully F124 which ran for 7m from the southern bulk before terminating. Where excavated the feature was consistently V shaped, 0.50m wide and between 0.10 and 0.16m deep. It was filled by a lone olive to yellowish brown silty clay.

Midway along its length, F124 cut through F141, a subcircular scoop 2.1m in length, and 1m wide where surviving F124. The feature was half sectioned and found to be 0.14m deep, filled by a light olive brown clay silt. Neither F124 or F141 produced any finds.

F109 is interpreted in the MBC area as F24, a wide ditch running continuously SW/NE, and present specifically in Area XII and Trenches XIII, XIV and XV. Segments were excavated in Area XII and Trench XV.

In Area XII the feature was 2.25m wide and 0.70m deep, V shaped with 45 degree sides containing four distinct layers (Fig 10 B-B'). The primary fill a greyish brown silty clay contained Mancetter-Hartshill mortaria from the mid 2nd Century.

Where excavated in Trench XV, F24 was 0.8 to 1.5m wide and 0.25m deep with a flat base beneath a 45 degree southern edge and 70 degree northern edge (Fig 10 C-C'). It had a lone greyish brown clay silt fill containing predominantly 2nd century pottery along with 4th Century and Post Medieval sherds that are considered to have been intrusive. It would seem that F24 was originally cut in the mid 2nd Century. After extensive silting making recutting necessary in the late 2nd Century it clearly survived as a landscape feature through the third century, and existed as a landmark needing infilling in the 4th Century, although F29 belonging to the early 3rd Century was clearly cut through it in Phase 3A (Fig 6, Fig 12 P-P'). Similarly, as observed in watching brief, a later ditch F5 was cut through the filling of this ditch in Phase 4b (Fig 7).

The discrepancies between the profiles of F24 can be explained by the degrees of truncation suffered. Prior to archaeological work on the site, topsoil was removed with machines, leaving the post-medieval plough soils and the underlying archaeology undisturbed. However, downslope within a 7m wide strip on the eastern side, the ploughsoils and some natural were removed. Prior to the groundworks the fall of the ground was generally of 1.0m over 26m. The base of the excavated segments of F24 corresponded to this gradient, falling from 92.73m to 91.81m. However the ground surface fall was of 1.33m from 93.49m to 92.16m. Given a hypothetical fall of 1.0m prior to machine destruction, F24 would have survived to 0.68m below the plough soils, probably with multiple filling.

F55 was a one of a group of five gullies belonging to various phases running more-or-less parallel with one another SE/NW on the west side of Area 1. 2m of its length were exposed between the edge of excavation and an extensive overlying layer of clay loam F164 (possibly a colluvia or ploughwash), deposited immediately upslope from the boulder deposits (Fig 8). Where excavated it was 1.0m wide and 0.25m deep, with gradually inclined sides to a narrow dished base. It contained two clay silt fills from which were recovered 2nd Century pottery and some residual Ancaster-Breedon sherds. Within the same area and possibly belonging to this phase was F54, a well defined but amorphous feature cut away by later activity on its southern edge. Vaguely P shaped in plan, it contained Roman pottery, including colour-coated and grey wares. It was a maximum of 0.85 wide, and 0.15m deep.

Possibly contemporary with this activity, where the three earliest features excavated in Box 212, within the boulder deposits. F63 was an ovoid cut (0.30 by 0.20m), cut away on its north, west and eastern sides. It was stratigraphically linked with two similar cuts F68 and F74, 0.44 and 0.26m in diameter respectively. Also within box 212, F60 was cut on the north side, cutting F63; only 0.7m of the feature survived later activity, 0.24m of its width and 0.12m of its depth being exposed within the confines of the sondage. With relatively steeply sloping sides to a flat base, it was filled by a greyish brown clay silt from which were recovered no finds. So little of the feature had escaped truncation, that assigning it a function would be highly speculative.

Also present within the box at this level was an abundance of small circular features, probably stakeholes (Fs 61, 62, 64-67, 69-73, 75-78, not numbered in illustration). Perhaps associated with these stakeholes were those in the box to the east F84 and F85. None of these features were excavated.

## Discussion

The pottery assemblage from the site contains very little in the way of 1st Century or early 2nd Century pottery. This may indicate that there is no unbroken continuity between the preceding phase and the establishing of the Romano-British settlement. The dominant feature of the phase is the single ditch F109/F24. It is suggested that this represents a single boundary and not part of an enclosure. This can be paralleled amongst other low status compound sites (Hingley 1990;97).

F9 is a drain perhaps serving a settlement area upslope. It seems likely that F118 perhaps functioned sympathetically, although it is too truncated and shallow to be securely interpreted. Further to the lack of material within the feature, there were no other clues to its function such as signs of burning, that might otherwise aid interpretation.

The F109 boundary continues to the northeast, perhaps defining a settlement compound. As this is the precursor of the later enclosure, it marks a stage in the site's development (cf Hingley 1990;97).

The nature of the activity area enclosed by this compound ditch, in the form of the various slots and stakeholes that begin to appear upslope in the excavated boxes, and continue into perhaps the mid-3rd Century, is not understood.

The Area III gullies F3, F139, F142 are suggestive of sub-enclosure or field system.

### Late 2nd - Early 3rd Century AD

### Phase 2b

Bloors: F8;F109;F110;F174;F141

Stakeholes/Slots: F103;F104;F105;F106;F113;F114;F115;F116;F117;F174

MBC: F24;F45;F46;F47;F48;F56;F59

Fig 5; Fig 10,B-B'; Fig 12,L-L'

Cut along a similar line to F9 but at a slight tangent to it and consequently crossing it, F8 ran from the western baulk to the southeast for 17m before terminating at F109. Varying between 0.95 and 0.5m in width, and 0.3 and 0.1m in depth its profile was generally shallow and flat, but where best preserved in the southeast had near vertical edges. It produced late 2nd to early 3rd Century pottery.

Perpendicular with F8 and terminating 0.40m to the north of it (and phased on this basis) was an irregular but straight linear feature F174. This feature appeared to be cut by F160/F97 of later phases. To the west of the feature were twentyone discrete pockets of darker silts some of which were subcircular, and some of which were oblong. A line of seven were aligned parallel with F124, 2m to the east (and are consequently phased with it).

Nine were excavated (Fs 103-106,113-117); all were filled with yellowish brown silty clays and varied in depth between only 0.02 and 0.08m. The subcircular features varied in between 0.09 and 0.24m in diameter. None produced any finds from their fillings. These features are not individually numbered in illustration.

Contemporary with F8 and lying 1m from its southeastern terminal was pit F110. Keyhole shaped in plan, 1.3m SE/NW, 2.6m SW/NE and with a depth of 0.33m the linear portion of this feature ran into baulk. The filling was of two yellowish brown clay fills, the lower of which produced Late Antonine Samian and other late 2nd Century pottery. The finds recovered from the fully excavated feature were not of a sufficient quantity to be suggestive purely of domestic refuse.

Like F8, F110 was partially cut away by Ditch F109, a feature which it is inferred enjoyed a longer usage than the other two features but was nevertheless contemporary with them at some stage. It is most probable that early cuts of the feature were subsequently obliterated by later recuts.

Oriented WSW/ENE, a well defined cut 0.8m to 1.3m in width, with a maximum depth of 0.47m. The cut had pronounced shoulders on both sides, beneath near vertical upper edges. The rounded base sloped to the ENE falling 0.2m in 2.6m.

The ditch contained a single yellowish brown clay fill that produced pottery dating from the late 2nd to the first half of the 3rd Centuries, and some fragments of painted wall plaster (that may possibly be intrusive from the overlying F94 of a later phase). Also present was a residual sherd of Iron Age pottery. This fill clearly sealed the fills of F8 and F110. However immediately beneath where F8 ran into F109, there was a step and consequent depression in its base. F110 was also situated at this juncture.

The single ditched boundary F24 may have at this stage been centrally recut (Fig 10 B-B' context 144).

Perhaps also gully F56 was cut on the west side of Area I, a narrow linear feature cut through F54. 0.22m wide and 0.1m deep, no finds were recovered from its lone dark greyish brown fill.

The four earliest features within box 191 to the north may also belong to this phase. F45, F46 and F47 were three intercutting stakeholes, perhaps representing the rebuilding of a structure, possibly over gully F48 with which they were stratigraphically contemporary. F48 described an arc across the southeastern corner of the box, varying from 0.13 to 0.32m in width and of a depth where excavated of 0.17m. The base of F48 sloped down at a rate of 10 degrees from north to south. No structural evidence was present within it, and the interpretation of it as a drainage feature would seem to be the best. No finds were recovered from its lone olive brown silty clay filling, but its was clearly sealed by a later deposit, F166, whose lower boundary was defined by a gradual slope from north to south which truncated F48, F45, F46 and F47. This is interpreted as the cutting of a sump in a following phase - F173

Within box 212, stratigraphically linked and in plan aligned with F48 was F59, a linear feature running SSW/NNE parallel with the eastern edge of the box. With 0.2m of its width exposed and a level depth of 0.2m it was filled by a greyish brown loam which contained late 2nd to 3rd Century pottery. It is possible that the feature represented a foundation trench of one sort or another, but given that the base of the feature lay at least 0.45m below the level of surrounding natural 2.0m to the west with a great susceptibility to flooding (as experienced during excavation), the interpretation of it as a drainage feature, thus also equating it with F48 is the best.

### Discussion

F8 is a recut and slight redefinition of drain F9. F110 obviously had a related function perhaps using the soaking and draining action the upslope drain. The definition of the feature was thought to be too clear to have resulted purely from water erosion.

F174 may represent a sleeper beam footing with the possible stakeholes to the south representing internal building partitions.

F8 and F109 served as enclosural and drainage features, F109 representing a relatively major land division. All where in use in the late 2nd Century, F109 being recut in the 3rd Century once F8 and F110 had fallen out of use. This cut - the only visible cut of the feature, may possible relate to the central recut of F24 (context 144) (Fig 10 B-B').

To the south of F109, F124 could represent an eavesdrip gully of a building once standing to the south of the F109 boundary, although the filling of the feature was not organic or refuse rich. Furthermore no other features were identified in the later watching brief on the MBC field, to the south of F24, and it would seem that F109/F24 represents a clear boundary to settlement at this point. To the north it may be noted that in the following phase the infilled F24 is clearly built over (Fig 6, inset F29/F30).

Early 3rd Century AD

Phase 3a

Bloors: F160;F107;F109;F17;F10

MBC: F29;F30;F36;F57;F44;F51;F58;F173

Fig 6; Fig 10,D-D'; Fig 12,L-L',M-M',P-P'

To the north of this complex of features was F160, a well defined continuous gully, 20m in length running NW/SE, from western to eastern baulks. 0.9 to 0.7m wide and 0.16 to 0.23m deep it had gradually inclined sides. It was filled with a yellowish brown clay. Its base sloped from 94.31m OD in the extreme northwest to 93.87m OD, 4m from the eastern baulk. Arguably this feature performed a similar function to F8, draining into F109 (which is inferred from the orientation of the two features and a contemporaneity based upon spot dates). It is thought likely that F160 lasts into Phase 4 when it is recut as F97 (Fig 12 M-M').

A solitary posthole F107 0.24m in diameter and 0.07m deep was recorded on the northern edge of the most western segment excavated. Its yellowish brown silty clay fill which contained no finds was truncated by the later recutting.

Two linear features may belong to this phase. F17 was a wide, shallow flat based gully c1m wide and a maximum of 0.09m deep. It formed a clear right angle with F160.

F10 was a poorly defined gully 0.50m wide and 0.10m deep. It was clearly cut by F6 of a later phase.

In trench XIV, a portion of probably rectangular slot F29 was present (1.5m N/S and 1m E/W), running into baulk at both ends. In the east, the feature was cut through the infilled F24. The slot was irregular in width, varying from 0.66m to only 0.22m at the turn, and incorporated within the feature was a post-setting, F30, 0.70m in diameter and 0.10m deep, evidenced by a clear depression in the base of F29 and the presence of packing in the form of pebbles and a fragment of Roman tile (probably tegula). Finds excavated from F29 and F30 included a white-ware flagon neck and greyware dateable to the late 2nd to early 3rd Centuries.

0.4m to the west of F29 was the butt end of an unexcavated feature, F36, in Trench XIV, that produced mid 2nd to 3rd Century pottery from its surface, and may belong to this phase.

Perhaps within this phase within box 262 was F57, an E/W aligned gully cut away at both ends by later features. 0.37m wide and 0.16m deep, it was filled with a dark grey clay silt. Its base sloped 0.10m from west to east. It was soon replaced, and perhaps contemporary in part with slot F44, running N/S with the suggestion of a return to the west at its northern end. Where excavated, the feature was 0.45m wide and 0.15m deep, with an upper vertical edge grading down to a dished base. Finds included 3rd Century pottery. F51 within trench 210 may also relate to this phase. A substantially wide flat based cut oriented NE/SW, 2.52m wide and 0.79m deep, the feature was continuous within the trench. It had gently sloping shoulders increasing in gradient to a maximum of 45'. Towards the southeastern side was a slot in the base of the feature, 0.27m wide and 0.17m deep. The primary fill of the main feature and the slot was continuous - a dark yellowish to dark greyish brown silty clay that contained late 2nd Century pottery. The secondary fillings contained late 2nd to 3rd Century pottery. F51 clearly represents a length of discontinuous ditch. In box 212 3m to the south and aligned with F51 was F58, a cut 0.90m in width with a maximum depth of 0.42m. It had a rounded terminal in the north, and ran into baulk in the south. It contained a yellowish brown clay silt fill that contained 3rd Century pottery. There was a 0.04m difference between the Ordnance Datum depths of F58 and F51. The feature was also located (but not excavated) in trench 217 to the south. It was not present further to the south, and therefore must have directly terminated, or turned sharply.

Within box 191, the natural into which F48 of the preceding phase had been cut (and into which the later F166 and F167 were deposited) was at this stage clearly lowered effecting an extensive sump F173. The level of natural fell from 93.19m OD in the north to 92.76m OD on the southern edge of box 191.

It would seem likely that F51, 58 and 173 are all part of the same complex of activity.

#### Mid 3rd Century AD

#### Phase 3b

Bloors: F160;F88

MBC: F79;F148

#### Fig 6

Perhaps contemporary with F160 was F88, a probable pit on the western edge of Area II cut through the infilled F8. The feature ran into bulk, but possessed a dished base suggestive of a discrete feature. It was filled with a single deposit of olive brown clay loam (589) that contained pottery from the 3rd Century and an enamelled Cu alloy brooch of British manufacture, of a similar date (S.F.39).

Within box 262, F79 a slot oriented SW/NE with steep sides and a flat base, continuous in the south, but with the hint of a terminal in the north, was cut through the preceding slots F44 and F57. Within its grey clay silt fill were 3rd Century ceramics.

To the southeast, F148 would also seem to belong to this phase. Excavated within box 296, it was linear and aligned NW/SE. Only part of its width was exposed within the box. Its brown silty clay fill contained 3rd Century pottery. The drainage features of this and the preceding sub-phases all probably relate to one another.

## Discussion

The major boundary in the Bloors field is maintained, although its extension downslope to the east is abandoned as part the settlement's reorganisation. The various gullies within the Bloors field may well demarcate dwellings of which no other traces are left. Alternatively, it is possible that this area is being used for perhaps live-stock at this stage, and dwellings lie in unexcavated areas upslope.

On the MBC field, F51 must function as a boundary, from its magnitude alone. It is thought that it also performed other functions, but with such scant evidence, these cannot be speculated on. New gullies and drainage channels are established within the sump area, as needs change according to the activity patterns within the site.

F29 is interpreted as the post-trench of a building constructed over the silted up ditch F24. The structure was in use in the early 3rd Century. It is a good example of the placing of a structure over an earlier boundary. The siting of a structure over an infilled boundary may have had a symbolic importance (Hingley 1990;99). Too little of the building was identified to allow speculation on form. It is clear evidence of shifting settlement within the site.

### Late 3rd - Early 4th Century AD

### Phase 4a

Bloors: F4;F86;F92;F93;F94;F97;F98;F99;F100;F111;F128;F129;F161;F166;F170  
MBC: F32;F42/F50;F52;F53;F166

Fig 7; Fig 10,D-D'; Fig 11,E'-E,F'-F; Fig 12,K-K',N-N'

In the late 3rd to early 4th Century a substantial ditch F170 was cut, 3m wide and 0.84m deep. Located in the north of Area II, it was oriented NW/SE in the 5m of it which were exposed within the confines of the excavation. At the segment excavated in Area II, the primary filling of the feature was a vivid burned yellowish red clay (504) containing BB1 pottery that is considered to be residual. This dump of material was clearly cut at its northern end by a subcircular cut that ran into the northern section (F161 517,518) of the segment excavated. 0.9m wide, 0.3m long and 0.3m deep, included in the brown silty clay fill (517) were granite, limestone and sandstone pebbles to 0.20m. This feature although cutting the primary fill of F170 (504), was sealed by the secondary fill (98), a brown silty clay dateable to the late 3rd to early 4th Centuries. This fill was subsequently sealed by a later silting deposit of similar matrix (65) and of close date.

Traces of F170 were possibly picked up to the north in Trench XI, context 708, beneath the later recuts (Figs 7 & 11 F'-F).

It is clear that F170 was not part of a continuous enclosure, but it may have linked in with some other boundary form that did not leave an archaeological deposit recognised within the excavated areas.

F4 was an L shaped slot, cut through the fills of F8. 3.6m SW/NE and 3.0m NE/SE, its width varied from 0.1m at its terminal in the southwest, to 0.26 at a mid-point. Both terminals of the feature were ill-defined in contrast to the good definition enjoyed along its length. However it appeared that the north eastern terminal of the feature ran into the recut F97, suggesting that both features served as drains and were contemporary in part.

F4 contained three fills where best preserved - a light olive brown primary clay silt, yellowish brown loam secondary silt, and a probably slumped final olive brown clay silt. No structural evidence was observed within the filling of the feature.

Parallel with F4 and to the south of it, was an irregular linear feature F128, 7m long, c 0.50m wide and where excavated a maximum of 0.11m deep it was filled with an olive brown silty clay. Within one of the segments, a small stakehole found to be filled with identical material was excavated.

At the northern end of F128, and just within F4, was a posthole F111, a circular dished 0.22m in diameter, and 0.13m deep, filled with a yellowish brown clay loam (629).

At the southern end of F128 was another posthole, 0.65m in diameter, and 0.20m deep, filled with an olive brown silty clay (697).

To the immediate north of F4, and cutting the primary fills of F160 was a group of four stakeholes, and one posthole (Fs 92,93,99,100 and 98 respectively). The features were in a crude linear form crossing the line of F160 at an oblique angle.

1.5m to the north of the southwestern terminal of F4 was F86, a straight linear cut running northwest for 6m and into the western baulk. With a lone yellowish brown silty clay filling a steeply sided dished base cut, there were few indications as to its purpose. On the basis of its spatial relationship with F4 and its stratigraphic relationship with F8, it is phased within this group.

Perhaps contemporary with this group, and cut into the fully infilled F109 was F94, a square cut pit 0.84m square and 0.24m deep, cutting the now obsolete F109, in the south of Area II. Forming the boundary between its highly atypical brown sandy clay fill (559) was large quantity of red shelley pottery lining which had strongly stained the filling. The vessel has not be found to correspond with any clear pot form, was found on excavation to contain tiny fragments of painted wall plaster (S.F.34,35).

On the west side of Area I two linear features were cut in this phase. 0.4m apart in the northwest, but merged together in the southeast, F52 on the south side was continuous, running into baulk in the west, whereas F53 terminated in the northwest. Both were sealed by a silting deposit F169 of a later phase. F52 varied between 0.70 and 0.90m in width, and 0.20 to 0.67m in depth. It had sharply sloping sides at 45' on its upper shoulders. At the eastern segment excavated, the depth increased from 0.54 to 0.67 as defined by a subcircular cut against the eastern section with near vertical sides, thereby forming a flat based V shaped profile, perhaps indicative of a post trench. At this point it had two greyish brown silt clay fills, containing late 3rd to 4th Century pottery. At the western segment contained within the fill were sandstone, limestone and chalk pebbles to 0.20m in a linear arrangement F52 is interpreted as a foundation trench.

F53 was of a consistently shallower depth varying between 0.10 and 0.18m, and 0.60m wide. In the west it was well defined and dished, but in the east it had an undulating base.

In trench 209, beneath the stone deposits, was the butt-end of a linear feature, F42. Within the 1.2m exposed, it was 0.62m wide and 0.32m deep, with sharply sloping 50' sides sloping to a narrow flat base which shelved up towards the terminal. The upper greyish brown fill contained late 3rd Century pottery, and the lower dark greyish brown silty clay, 2nd to 3rd Century pottery. F42 was probably the same feature as that located in Trench 210, where it was clearly cut through the upper fills of F51 on the eastern side (Fig 10 D-D'). Of a similar size, here it had a terminal in the north, and ran into the edge of the trench in the south, thereby forming a slot 6m in length. Furthermore, the section showed the slot to be centrally packed with boulders and stones, so forming a wall. The sides of the surrounding cut were irregular and near vertical. Its base was uneven due to stones being compressed into it. The surrounding fill was a dark olive grey to black clay. It is probable that the wall is contemporary with a surface formed at the top of context 207. There was a 0.02m difference between the depths of F42 and F51.

Also belonging to this phase was a continuous olive brown clay silt layer present in boxes 212 and 191 to the north, that sealed all of the features within these boxes from earlier phases. Varying from 0.03 to 0.05m in depth, it is interpreted as a silting deposit F166. It contained late 3rd Century pottery. Through it were cut later features.

### Discussion

Soon after the original cutting of a discontinuous ditch F170, a substantial post F161 was erected in its base, that was soon robbed out. Progressive silting then took place. This discontinuous boundary may perhaps have its origins in the earlier discontinuous boundary F24/F109. The feature was recut as part of a continuous enclosure system later in the 4th Century (Phase 4b).

F4 is interpreted as an eavesdrip trench for a possibly aisled structure whose western edge was formed by postholes F111 and F129, with F128 forming a wall trench between the two. For other examples, see Morris 1979;193-199, and for a particularly similar example Millett 1991;241-243. A large post built rectangular structure has recently been identified at a similar Roman-British settlement, at Normanton le-Heath in Northwest Leicestershire (Trimble forthcoming).

It is possible that F92-93 & F98-100 are connected with some small timber platform crossing the open drainage gullies and accessing the building. F86 may delimit a form of path.

F94 is interpreted as a buried storage jar, perhaps similar to that found at Skeleton Green (Partridge 1981;38). The fragments of wall plaster recovered from it clearly indicate the contemporary presence of a high status building although perhaps not in the immediate vicinity. They may possibly derive from an area upslope unidentified, or possibly from the Villa site identified by the Melton Field Workers to the north (?SK761222).

With the interpretation of F52 as structural, it is possible that F53 performed a related function perhaps as a drip-trench, again giving small but strong evidence of structures.

To the northeast, the type of activity clearly changes with the construction of wall F42 along the eastern edge of the infilled sump area. The purpose of the wall is not clear. At only 0.20m wide the footing is rather insubstantial when compared with load bearing Roman walls in urban settings (at nearer 1m in width). It is thought that the wall may have functioned as a retainer, possibly to a bank on its eastern side, that was eventually collapsed upslope to eradicate the sump.

### Early/Middle 4th Century AD

### PHASE 4b

Bloors:F1;F2;F5;F6;F7;F11;F13;F82;F119;F122;F131;F132

MBC:F20;F26;F43;F169;F172

Fig 7; Fig 11,E-E',F'-F,G'-G,H-H'; Fig 12,L-L'

Lengths of ditch (F5) were present in Area II and Trenches V,VI,VII,VIII,IX and XI.

Pottery recovered from the segments excavated in Area II and Trench XI (contexts 46, 689) suggest that the ditch was in use in the 4th Century AD. In Area II the cutting of the ditch took place following earlier use of the feature, F170.

Ditch F5 varied from 1.2 to 2.9m in width and 0.34 to 0.6m in depth. Given differential truncation by the ridge and furrow this variation is unsurprising. The ditch was generally V shaped in profile with relatively regular 45 degree sides. The filling of the ditch consisted of silty clays, clay loams and silty clay loams, varying in colour between yellowish, olive and dark greyish browns

In Trench V the ditch changed its orientation in the south, from SW/NE to NW/SE. A linear feature of the same character was also present in the west of Trench XVII, 26m to the southeast of Trench V. It is interpreted as the continuation of F5.

Also of an early 4th Century date and perhaps related to an obliterated portion of enclosure ditch was F122, a linear feature in Area IV, clearly cut through the Phase 1 ditch F101. Running NW/SE for 9.6m before narrowing and curving to the north for 3m before terminating. It was generally U shaped in profile, and sloped heavily from northwest to southeast. From a yellowish brown primary fill (698) was excavated a lead weight probably derived from a Steelyard or balance (SF 41) (cf Crummy 1981;101)

Within the enclosure a partitioning gully F6 was present. The feature was continuous and L shaped, running for 7.4m SW/NE from the southern baulk before turning sharply to the northwest for 8m. In the extreme northwest the feature curved gently to the west-north-west for a further 5m. In the south F6 wholly cut away F109.

The segments excavated showed the feature as having a depth of 0.3m and width varying between 0.6 and 0.7m (increasing to 1.15m at the turn). Consistently containing two fills, the upper varying from a dark greyish brown to a very dark grey silt clay loam, and the lower a yellowish to olive brown clay silt. Generally the edges were at fortyfive degrees with a dished base. In places the sides and base were very irregular, with depressions and bulges. Initially it was considered that these anomalies represented post-settings, but without clear definition either in the form of packing or differentially filled post-ghosts, the excavator cannot uphold this interpretation. It is thought that the slight variations in the profile of the feature were more due to weathering and water action in antiquity than any artificial activity.

The fills of the feature contained 4th Century pottery along with some residual elements and bones from sheep/goat, pig, and cow (including a partial cranium with horncores found in a linear arrangement with sandstone and limestone boulders 0.25<0.40m). Also present was an unfinished and broken antler pin (S.F.36)

F7 was positioned 4m to the southwest of F5 in Area II. A square shaped linear slot, 2.3m long, 0.30m wide and 0.12m deep. The predominant fill was of a black silty clay including two lenses of yellowish brown clay. Pottery within this context dates from the later half of the 4th Century.

Unphasable but possibly within 4b, were features F13 and F11. F13 was a well defined posthole, 0.60m by 0.47m and 0.30m deep, with vertical sides to a flat base. It was filled with upper brown silty clays, and lower dark greyish brown sandy clays. F11 was 0.60m in diameter and 0.10m deep, filled with a yellowish brown silty clay with abundant charcoal flecking. Neither feature produced any finds.

Within Trench XVI were three features, all linear and probably contemporary with each other in part. F131 was a short length of gully 1.4m long running west from the eastern baulk, 0.5 to 0.85m wide and 0.2m deep. With a lone olive brown silty clay fill, it produced 2nd Century or later ceramics. F132 was an L shaped linear feature, with its turn 0.20m from the terminal of F131 - forming a Y shape in plan. 0.75m wide (where not truncated) and 0.23m deep the cut had 45 degree sides and a flat base. With a fill undifferentiable from F131 it contained Roman pottery.

Parallel and cutting F132 in the southeast was F119, of which 2.3m was exposed. 0.7m wide and 0.23m deep, it had a dark brown silty clay fill which contained Late 3rd to 4th Century pottery, and a Cu alloy coin of the same date (S.F.40).

Possibly contemporary with the activity phased within 4b were two human burials in Area III, F1 (519) and F2 (521), 0.8m apart aligned SW/NE, the former 1.74m by 0.6m, the later 1.6m by 0.56m. Both had a maximum depth of 0.10m. Both plough-damaged, bones present were restricted to partial and fragmentary elements with feet to the southwest. Work on the bones suggests that both were adult, 519 (to the south) female, based upon diameter of femoral head with a stature of 157.31cm, and 521 (to the north) male, based upon size and robusticity of hand bones and right tibia. Also found between the femora of 519, were the phalanges of a small mammal, 520, possibly representing the forefoot of a cat (Baxter I L forthcoming). Two square-shanked iron coffin nails and part of a cu alloy ring (possibly a chain link) were also excavated from F1. The cuts of both graves were exceedingly badly defined.

Traces of a third burial were excavated as F82, 2m to the east of F2. Running into the baulk, although on a similar alignment to its neighbours, the cut was considerably deeper and well defined but contained no articulated human bone.

It is highly likely that further cemetery deposits accompanied F1 and F2 prior to plough destruction. F1 and F2 lay at the apex of a ridge of the ridge and furrow (at the point of least disturbance), but both had suffered severe truncation thereby suggesting that other graves may have been ploughed away. Other discolourations within the subsoil were recorded of vaguely grave shape that produced no finds and had no definition. These 'ghosts' may relate to ploughed out graves.

Stratigraphically F1 sealed F3, giving a terminus post quem of the Late 2nd Century. Given the pagan alignment and the juxtaposition of the graves to the 4th Century enclosure, they are placed within Phase 4b.

At this stage further activity was apparent in Area 1. Cutting the silting layer F166 were four features, stratigraphically contemporary with one another, F20, F26, F43 and F172.

F26 was a circular cut with a dished profile, 0.47m in diameter and 0.18m deep. It contained a very dark greyish brown clay silt fill with common pebbles in the lower part. Included was a lens, 0.02m thick sloping at 30'. F26 is interpreted as a post hole. To the west was a stakehole, F172 0.05m wide and 0.12m deep.

F43 was a linear cut running into the box from the west. In the area to the west of the box, furrow and the colluvial deposit F164 were removed to natural thereby exposing F43. The feature had a length of at least 3.2m, a width of 0.4m and depth where excavated of 0.17m. The base clearly sloped to the east at 10'. It is therefore interpreted as a drainage slot.

F20 had sharply sloping upper sides at 60' flattening out to a level base at a depth of 0.40m. It contained two fills, the lower a dark grey clay with light brown mottle which produced no pottery, and the upper a dark grey loam with common boulder inclusions (to 0.30m) which perhaps derived from the succeeding subphase. Also present in the top filling was a part Ox skull (earlier identified by the Melton Field Workers). F20 may represent a pit.

On the west side of Area 1, F52 and F53 had clearly fallen out of use by this stage, as evidenced by a layer of greyish brown silty clay F169 sealing both features, that contained 4th Century pottery and a post-Diocletian coin (S.F.32).

## Discussion

Given its irregular form, it is interpreted as a drainage gully, perhaps draining away from an activity area since lost to the plough, upslope. Spatially it is without the enclosure ditch with which it is contemporary. On the basis of the ditchesis information, a continuous enclosure is postulated, 46m in width from southwest to northeast, cut in the early 4th Century AD.

On the basis that the enclosure would seem to date from a later phase than the earlier settlements it is also possible to suggest that the settlement develops from an open to a closed state as has been suggested for other sites (ibid;97).

The angle of F6 may well have housed a structure, the gully acting as an eavesdrip trench for a rectangular structure on the two lowermost sides. This may be paralleled with the building of houses on other Romano-British sites into the enclosure wall of compounds (Hingley 1990;98).

Postholes F11 and F13 would both seem to survive structures that have otherwise been lost, or were not detected. F7 also represents clear structural evidence, in this case as a solitary stretch of beam slot. This again reflects the placing of structures just within enclosural boundaries.

F119 and F132 may also relate to rectangular structures. Initially F132 and perhaps an earlier cut of F131 was made, followed by a recutting of F131 and a partial recut of F132 as F119. It is possible that F131 represents the western end of F6, although this is speculative. The linking of F119 and F131 is based upon their spatial relationship, as is that between F132 and F131.

### Mid 4th Century

### PHASE 4c

Bloors :F121;F6

MBC :F22;F25;F31;F32;F34;F138;F144;F147;F167

Fig 7; Fig 8; Fig 10,B-B',D-D'; Fig 11,F'-F,G'-G

In Trenches IX and XI a secondary ditch F121 was present, stratigraphically later than F5. In Trench XI it was 0.52m in width and 0.40m in depth and cut on the southern side of the now filled F5. It contained one 4th Century greyware rimsherd in its yellowish brown clay loam fill (707). In Trench IX F121 was 0.55m to the north of F5, 1m wide by 0.4m deep, cutting natural. It had irregularly sloping sides to a narrow dished base. Clearly neither as deep nor as wide as the antecedent F5, F121 nevertheless followed roughly the same alignment, running from southeast to northwest before returning to the west. A recut of F5 detected in Trench V, 0.8m wide by 0.4m deep, 46m to the southwest may well represent this same phase of activity. Later in the 4th Century after heavy silting and some backfilling, redefining took place, effecting a shallower and narrower ditch

At this stage, as part of the consolidation of the land downslope (F167), F24 was capped by a brown clay loam with granite, sandstone and limestone boulders, containing 2nd to early 4th Century pottery (Context 133). This activity would seem to have been contemporary with the deposition of the boulders within Area I, capping the silting up that had occurred over the now disused features, and consolidating the land for a different usage. The boulders may have been derived in part from the wall F42 (Fig 7) F167 was excavated in trenches 209, 210, 217, 191, 212, 262 and 296. It consistently produced 4th Century pottery.

Within box 262, F167 contained the partial crania of two Oxen contexts 141, 142, (possibly deriving from the same individual). In this instance, the skull fragments were within a general spread, and not in specific features or individual cuts. The secondary filling of F6 which is placed within this phase (Fig 9), within the enclosed settlement, also contained a complete Ox crania. The skull was found amongst a line of boulders, overlying pottery and other animal bone including sheep/goat and pig, at the corner of a gully.

Within the final filling of F20 was a partial Ox crania and late 3rd to 4th Century pottery. This fill was similar to the overlying boulder deposits and their surrounding matrix, F167.

At the southern end of the deposit, the boulders and pebbles decreased in their size to purely pebbles, at the same time perhaps increasing in density from around 60% of surface coverage to 75%. Made up from the same varieties of limestones, ironstones, sandstones and flints, they took on more the appearance of cobbling or metalling, neither as randomly nor as sporadically placed as those to the north.

Perhaps associated with the cobbling and the deposition of the boulders was F34, a thin slightly kinked linear feature, running broadly SW/NE, 0.3m wide and 0.08m deep. With an evenly dished profile, and a greyish brown clay fill similar to the natural, it is interpreted as a wheel rut (Not illustrated).

Also contemporary with this activity, several linear features were cut to the west and north of Area I, F31, F22, F138, and F147. F31 was a narrow linear feature running NW/SE from the western edge of excavations for 2.4m before turning to the south for 2.1m before terminating, forming a wide angled L shape in plan. 0.5m in width and 0.17m deep, it contained a brown to dark greyish brown silty clay, from which was recovered 4th Century pottery. To the north of F31 were two parallel and similar features, F138 and F147. F138 was 4.3m in length (although truncated by a furrow in the north), and varied between 0.49 and 0.72m in width, with a depth of 0.20m. With a lower interfacing fill and upper main greyish brown silty clay, also present was a pocket of purer clay circular in plan and U shaped in profile, positioned hard against the eastern edge of the feature, 2.1m from the southern terminal. Finds excavated from the feature included 4th Century pottery, including parts of the same Colour-coat Wide mouthed Jar or Bowl (Howe, Perrin & Mackreth 1980 7.75) found within F31. The fill also contained fragments of daub. F147 lay 1.4m to the west, immediately under a furrow (and thus was severely truncated). Its orientation and character both in terms of dimension and filling was identical to F138, and thus the two are considered to be contemporary. 1.6m to the east of F138, was F144, a subcircular dished depression, 0.30m in diameter and 0.15m deep, filled by a dark grey clay silt overlain by a boulder of burned limestone 0.32 by 0.10m. This feature may represent a posthole or post-pad, related to the other structural evidence and thus contemporary with it.

A similar feature with no stratigraphic relationships was F32 to the east. An ovoid cut with vertical edges to a flat base, it produced Roman pottery, and is interpreted as a post hole. Its presence in this phase cannot be certain.

To the north was a gully, F22, with a well defined cut 0.4 to 0.8m wide and 0.2m deep, running for 4m to the north before curving to the west and running under the colluvia, F164. In the south the feature was similarly obscured by a later context. Its dished profile and linear form would suggest an enclosural or drainage function. From its lone dark greyish brown fill were recovered fragments of the same vessel as excavated from F138 and F31.

At the northern end of Area I, there was a high density of relatively discrete and well defined slots and postholes cutting natural, with grey brown clay and silty clay fills. Only one, F25, was excavated. 5m long, aligned WNW/ESE (truncated by furrows at both ends), where excavated this feature had a fine silty charcoaly fill within its main brown clay silt filling - possibly representing the decayed uprights of a foundation trench. Within the main filling were broken flint and chalk pebbles.

### Discussion

F121 represents a minor cleaning out and redefinition of the enclosure.

F22 is thought to be an enclosing drainage gully, perhaps associated with the more clearly structural F25.

F147 and F138 are interpreted as post trenches, their form is reminiscent of those structures interpreted as granaries at Mucking and Whitton (Morris 1979;187). F31 is more problematic in interpretation, but the more western stretch of its length was perpendicular with F138, and the tapering tail of the feature is reminiscent of elongated eavesdrip gully terminals, eroded through time. The finds evidence suggests a close contemporaneity.

Evident as a deposit following the groundworkings, the western and eastern edges of F167 had been disturbed by the post-medieval ploughing, somewhat straightening the edges of the boulders, and dragging some of the boulders down slope, leading to a more dispersed scatter in the northeast.

The boulder deposits had been partly excavated by the Melton Field Workers and left open to the elements once their excavations had ceased leading to considerable silting and an unknown degree of unsolicited investigation. Thus, the uppermost portion of the deposit had no specific integrity, as it was not stratified. None of the boulders had any mortar remains. A small percentage showed signs of crude dressing.

Amongst the boulder deposits, the Melton Field Workers had excavated a number of Ox skulls. Contextually the description by the Melton Field Workers of 'near black earth' in which the Ox skulls were found, equates with near black silty clay which was infilling most of the boulder deposits. The reason for the presence of the Ox skulls is not clear. A ritual origin has been proposed on the basis of Ox skulls having been found upon fully excavated temple sites (cf Henig 1984;159). Indeed the presence of animal bone on temple sites is known (ibid;23).

We do not have a full enough picture of the archaeology at Scalford Brook to argue forcibly for the deposits to result from either ritual or refuse, if the two can be regarded separately. The evidence of the ox skull deposits is not enough in itself to evidence ritual behaviour. Although it has been argued that each skull was associated with Roman pottery in a varying degree of fragmentation, similar pottery was found in abundance over much of the site, particularly in the site's later phases when the colour-coated wares become prolific. Furthermore, varying quantities of other bones of cow, sheep/goat, pig, and to a small extent horse and red deer, came from across the site in the majority of phases, and the cattle skulls cannot be seen in isolation. Within the enclosure in this phase, the one Ox skull recorded was located in a drainage gully surrounding a building (ie a location in which one might expect to find a build-up of refuse). In this instance, the deposit was part of the filling of the whole feature, and was clearly not placed within any especially formed cut.

This does not rule out a ritual origin for the deposits. However, fuller evidence is needed for a claim to be seriously contended.

## Conclusion

The evidence at Scalford Brook is thought to reflect the development of a small farm throughout the Roman period following pre-Roman activity. The site falls in the category of non-villa/native settlement (Hingley 1989;23) perhaps the most common form of settlement site. It may well have formed part of an estate complex with a Villa site - perhaps that one identified by the Melton Field Workers to the north.

It perhaps has its origins as a settlement in the pre-Roman Iron Age. In the centuries of the Roman occupation settlement boundaries in the form of ditches and gullies were cut and recut, as they filled up with natural silts and debris. Some were intentionally removed from the landscape, so as to enable a different land-use or symbolise a change in the status of the site and its occupants, whereas others were simply left to fill naturally. One of the boundaries ,F24, appears to have been deliberately built over (F29/30) in Phase 3, and where one building once stood, in early Phase 4 a new boundary perhaps marking the position of a new building has been dug at a later stage.

In the late 3rd and 4th Centuries the site itself changed from being perhaps semi-open to fully enclosed. In addition to the continued shifting settlement, demarcation of land perhaps for agricultural reasons also occurred, along with intensive activity downslope in Area I combining the excavation of a sump into the natural subsoil, and the cutting of various drains and slots in its base as part of an ongoing process. The reason for this activity is not fully understood, but whatever process or function such groundworking served must have necessitated a through flow of water. It is possible that some form of industry was the prime mover. To the north, the Melton Field Workers excavated some slag, suggesting in situ smelting. Indeed the many slots and stake impressions at the northern end of the boulder deposits may represent the remnants of flues and kilns. A further suggestion is that the sump was excavated as some form of holding tank to enable a water-powered process such as milling. Various pieces of quern stone were excavated from amongst the boulders infilling the sump, but again they were fragmentary and not conclusive evidence. The existence of a wall footing, on the immediate east side of the deposits indicates that the area remained a foci even in its final phases.

The structural evidence from the site is vague; however it is clear that rectangular dwellings stood at various locations within the occupation areas. It is broadly the case that the round houses of the Bronze Age and Iron Age are replaced in the Roman period by rectangular buildings (Hingley 1989).

The settlement at Scalford Brook was probably one of many similar indigenous farmsteads and is an important addition to known site distribution (Liddle 1982;28); our knowledge of the distribution of such settlements is constantly improving, although hampered by the lack of cropmarks on clayland sites. Field walking is successful in identifying settlement sites.

Until recent years, it had been thought that the heavy clay soils of Leicestershire were so inconducive to agricultural settlement that they had remained uncleared until the medieval period. This hypothesis is being shown to be erroneous, site distributions nullifying the theory that populations could afford to avoid exploiting any part of the arable landscape (Clay 1989:111).

The nearest larger Roman settlement is that of Goadby Marwood some 6km to the north situated on the Salt Way. Much of the site has been quarried, and no recent controlled excavation has been undertaken there. However, it is clear from the material collected from the site in the 1950s, and those substantial features identified, that a sizeable settlement existed there (Abbott 1956 pp17-35).

Only a small number of non-Villa rural Roman settlements have been excavated; similar sites investigated include enclosures at Humberstone Farm (Lucas 1988;72) and more recently particularly thoroughly at Normanton le-Heath (Trimble forthcoming). Interestingly, the pottery assemblages from Scalford Brook and Normanton le-Heath contrast, showing predominant pottery origins, and thus trading influences, from the east and west respectively (Marsden a & b forthcoming).

The excavations at Scalford Brook although undertaken in far from ideal conditions have enabled us to glean important information on the development of a farmstead site in Leicestershire in the Roman period. Although the site in many ways lacks clarity because of the necessarily limited nature of the excavations we have an interesting picture of its past. The bulk of the archaeology in the MBC field, is preserved and sitting beneath the Visitor Centre carpark. At some future stage, further excavation would perhaps answer some of the questions that the excavations of 1990 have posed.

#### Environmental Information

The samples taken from various deposits investigated on the site are currently being analysed for environmental data. It is hoped that we will recover the carbonised seeds of the crops being grown around the farmstead in the Romano-British period, and those of the wild trees and shrubs that surrounded the enclosure and perhaps also formed part of the inhabitants' diet. We hope to add to the number of animal species already identified from the site and to our knowledge of both the domesticated species that were being grazed and the wild animals that were present during the settlement's life. Knowledge of the domesticated animals may help us reconstruct livestock patterns and the products they were being kept for (generally meat against dairy). The identification of various wild species may help us build upon what we already know of the immediate localities environment - for instance whether the farmstead existed within a cleared or a forested landscape.

## Acknowledgements

Melton Borough Council and J.S.Bloor (Measham) Ltd are to be particularly thanked for funding a project for which they were under no obligation.

Thanks to all the Melton Field Workers for their initial identification and work on the site. Mary Hatton and Gerry Beaver deserve special praise for their dedicated help both during the excavations and in the later watching-brief.

Thanks to all from Leicestershire Archaeological Unit involved, for their work on a site that was excavated in continually appalling conditions culminating in complete frozen submerssion. Thanks especially to Jules Hagar for his supervisory assistance and constant optimism, and to Patrick Clay and Richard Pollard for their management of the project.

Thanks again to Richard Pollard for his spot-dating, and to Pat Marsden for his work on and analysis of the pottery assemblage. Thanks to Ian Baxter for his work on the human and the animal bone from the site.

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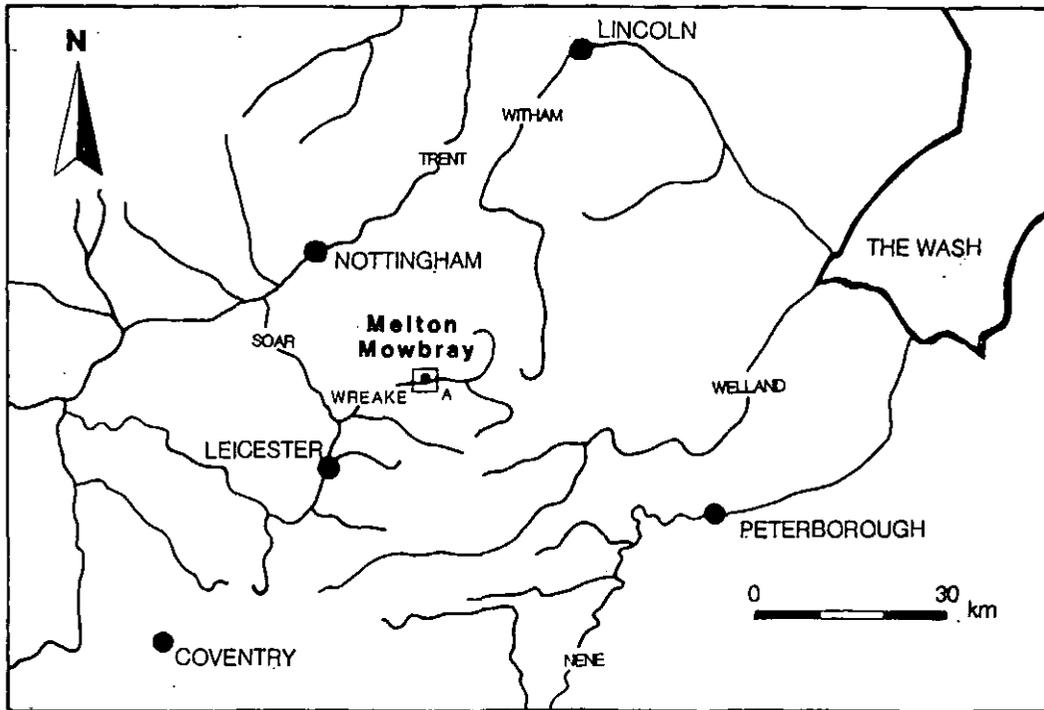


Fig 1 The East Midlands

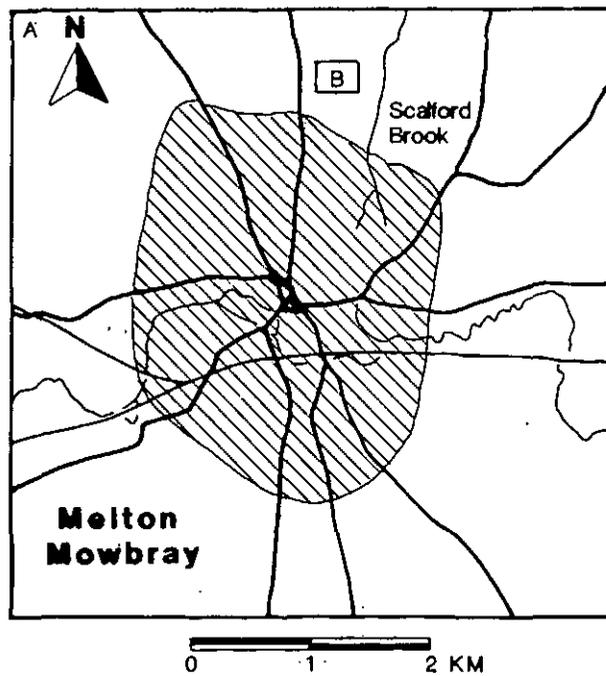


Fig 2 Melton Mowbray (Area A on Fig 1)

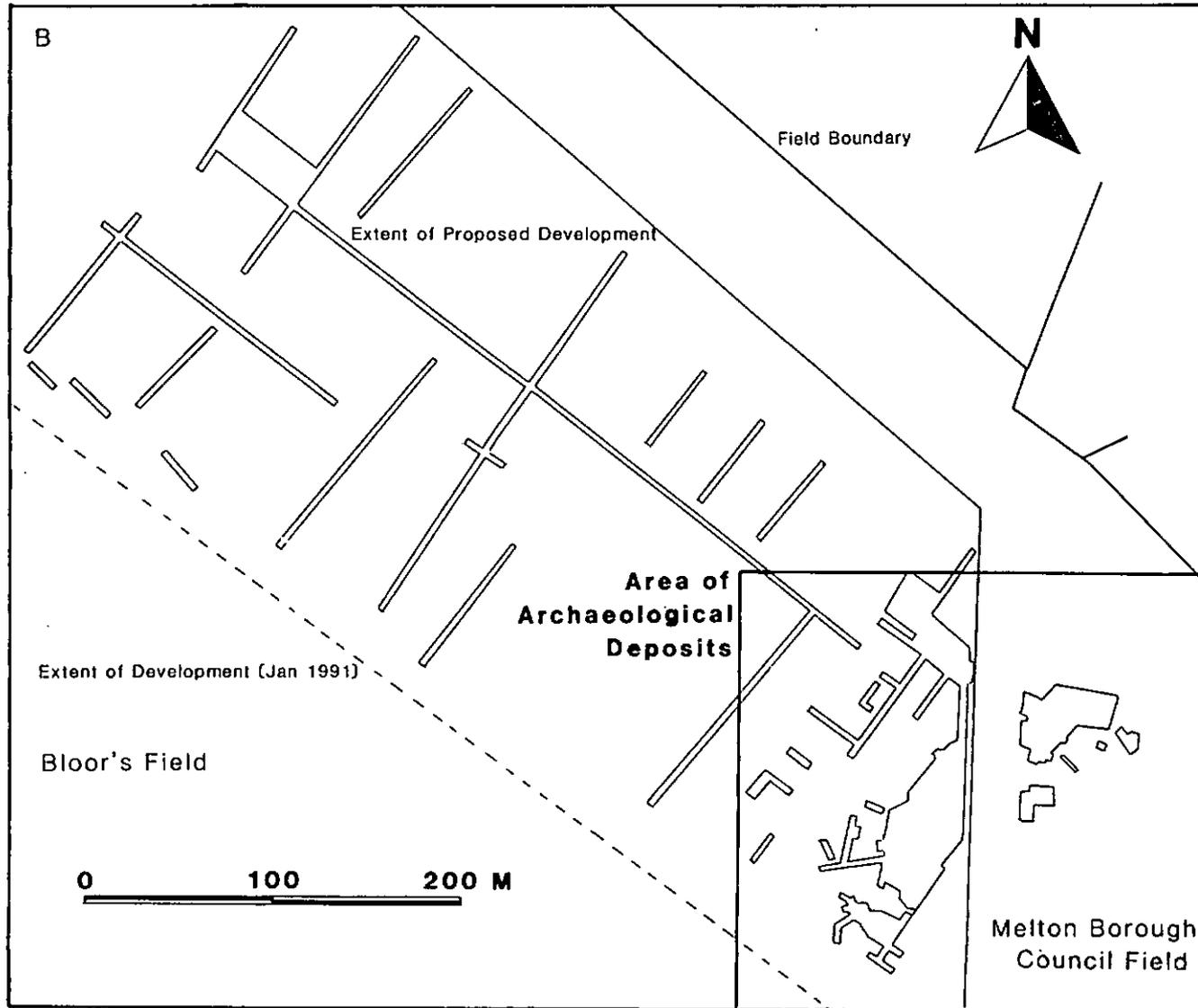


Fig 3 The Evaluation & Excavation Areas (Area B on Fig 2)

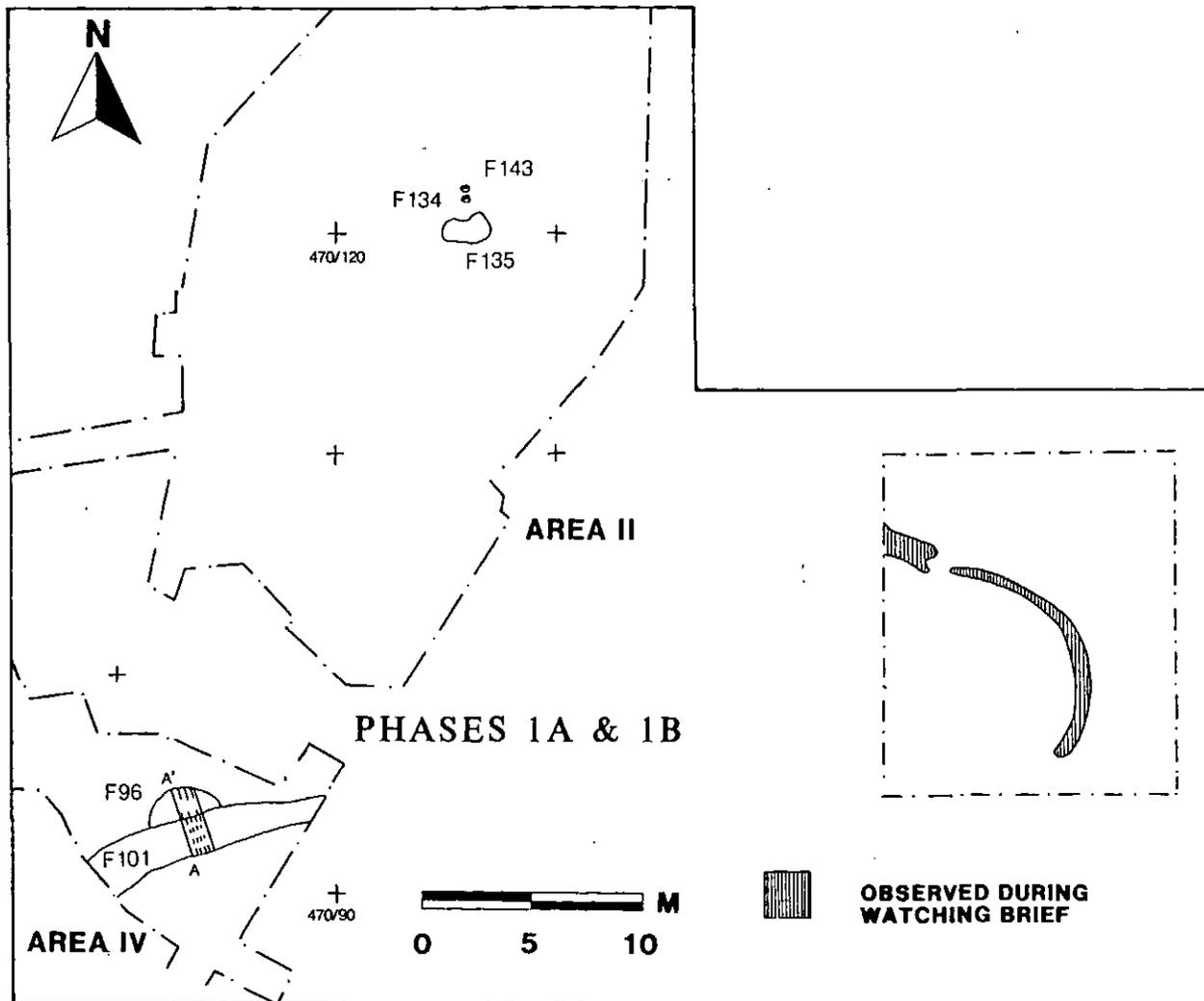


Fig 4 Phases 1A & 1B

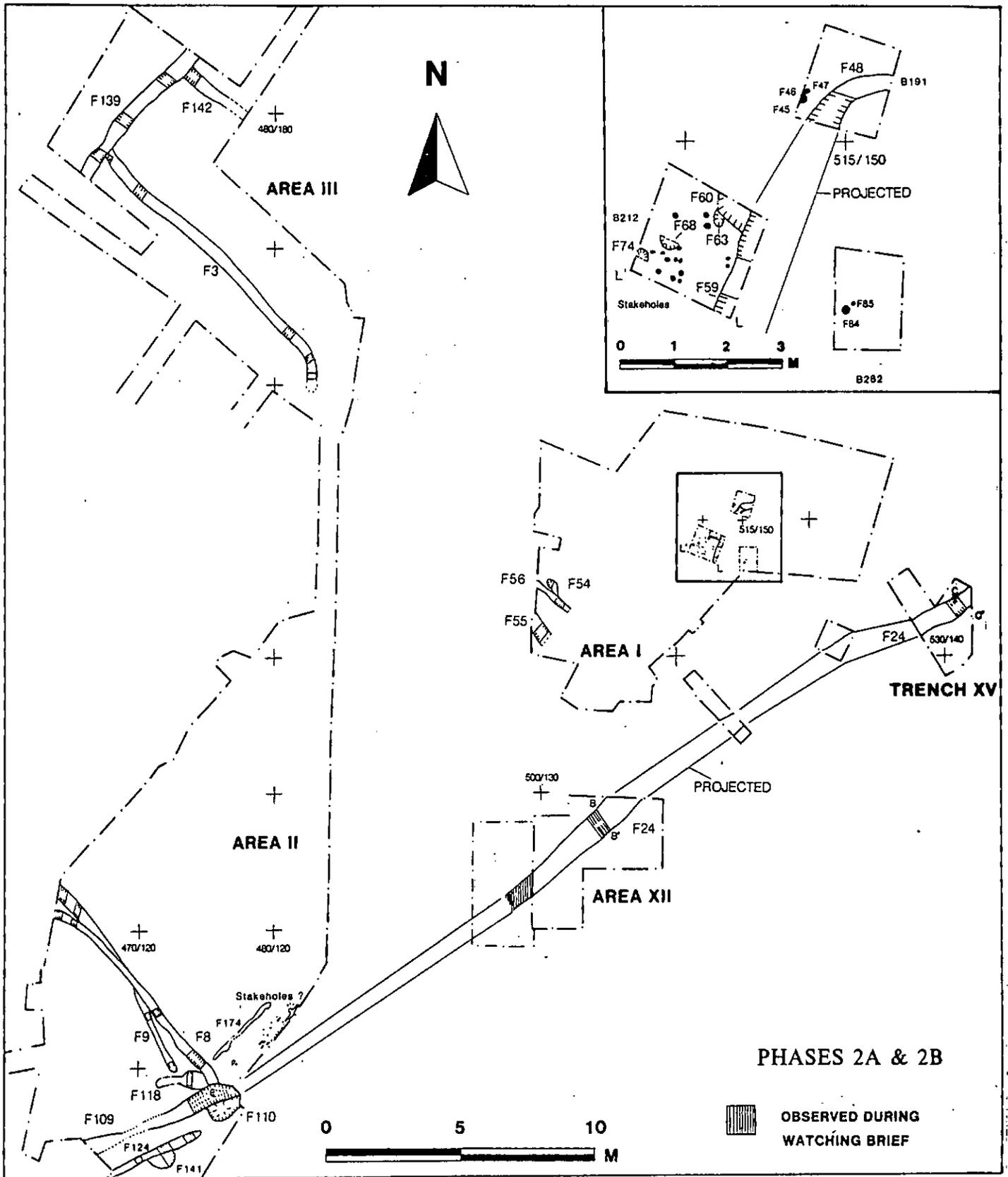


Fig 5 Phases 2A & 2B

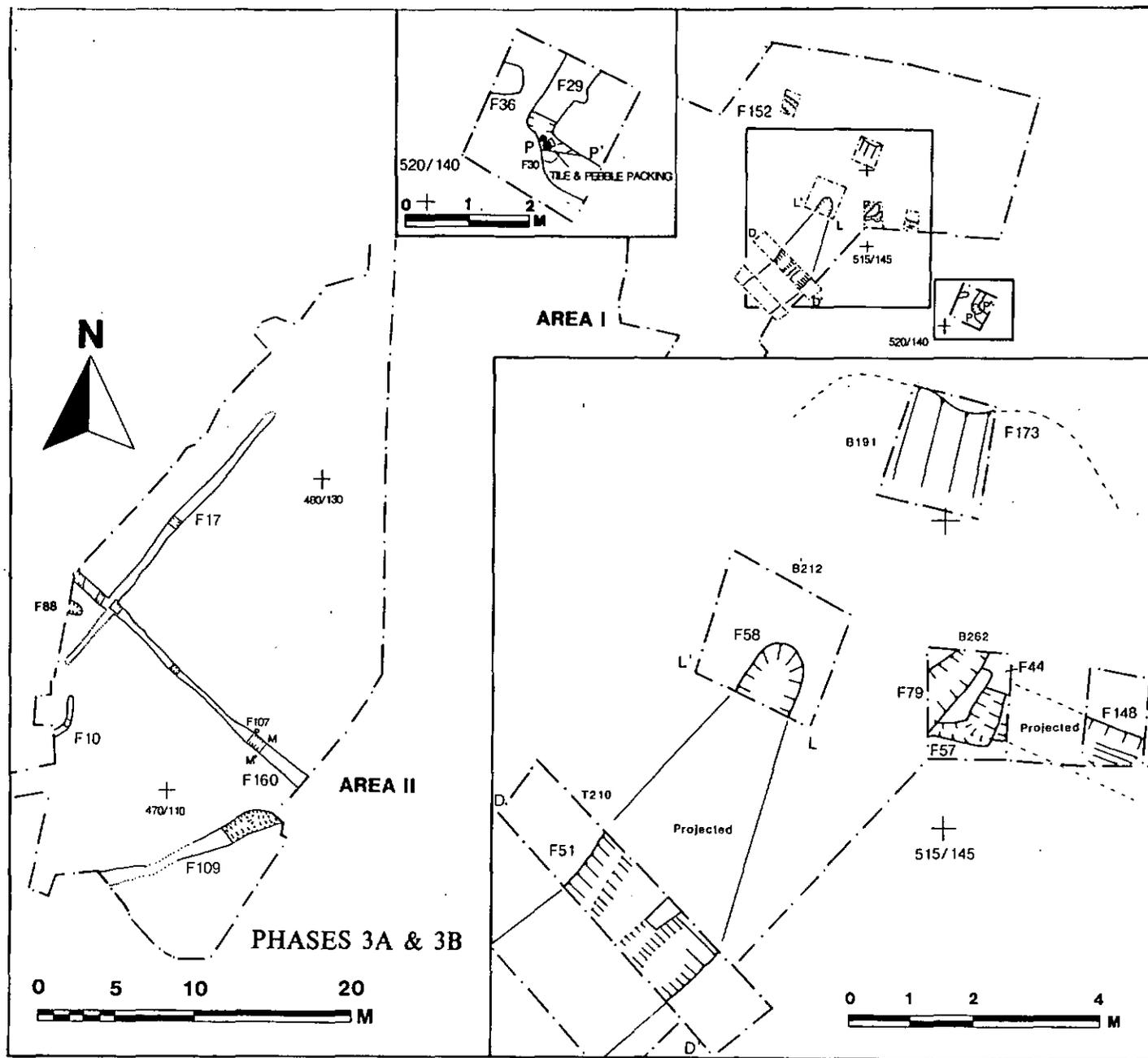


Fig 6 Phases 3A & 3B

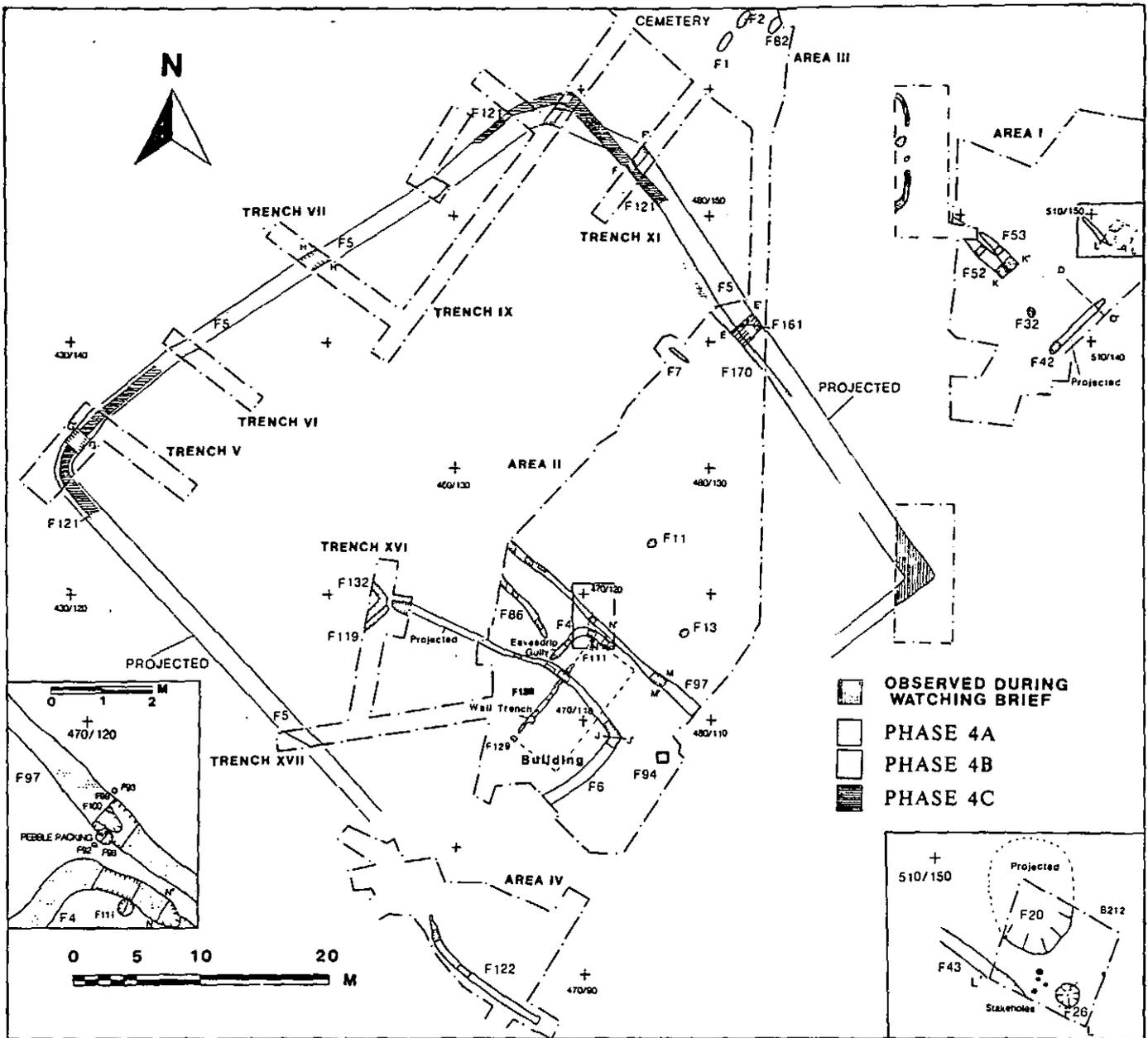


Fig 7 Phases 4A, 4B & 4C

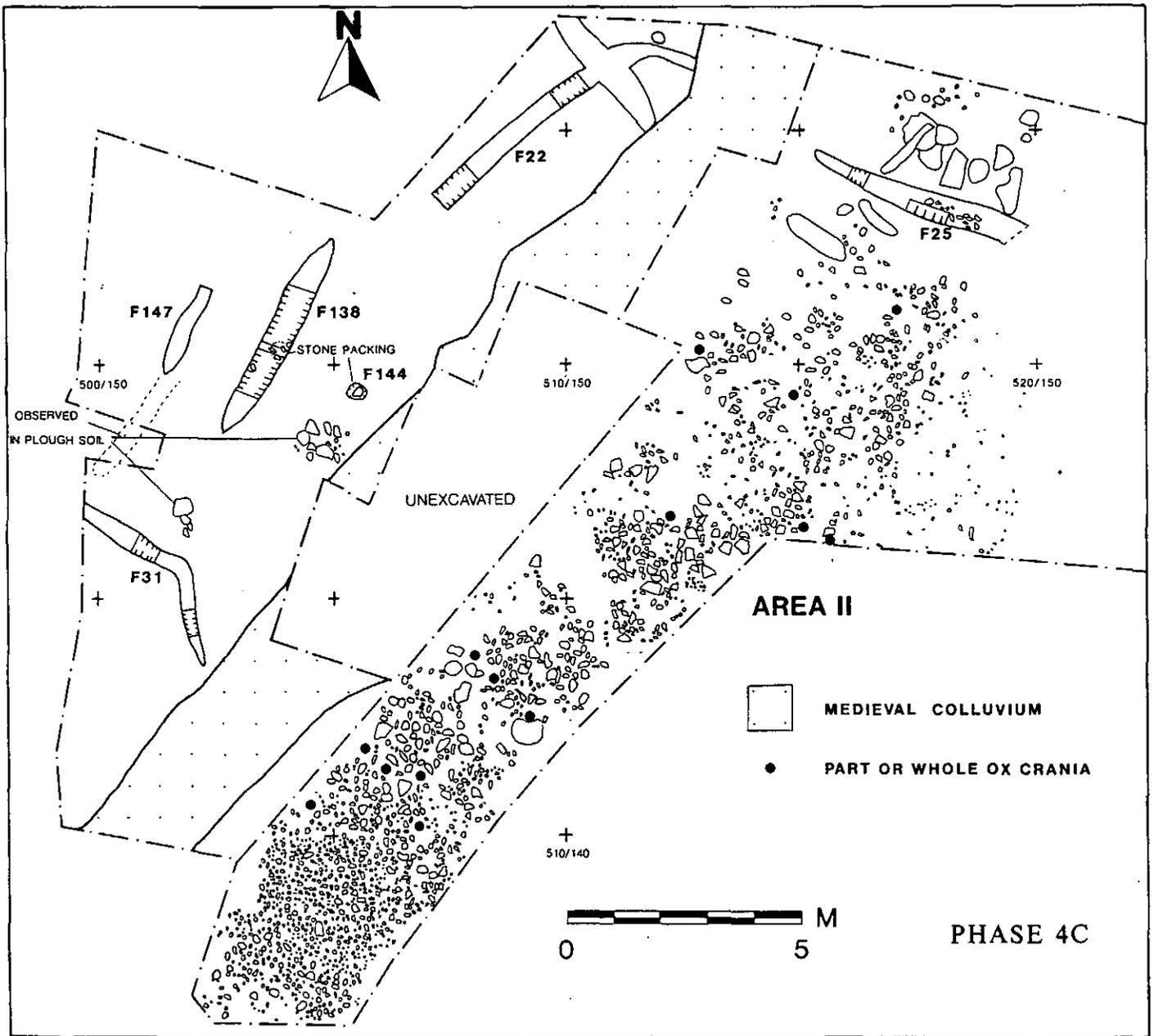


Fig 8 Phase 4C Detail - The Stone Deposits

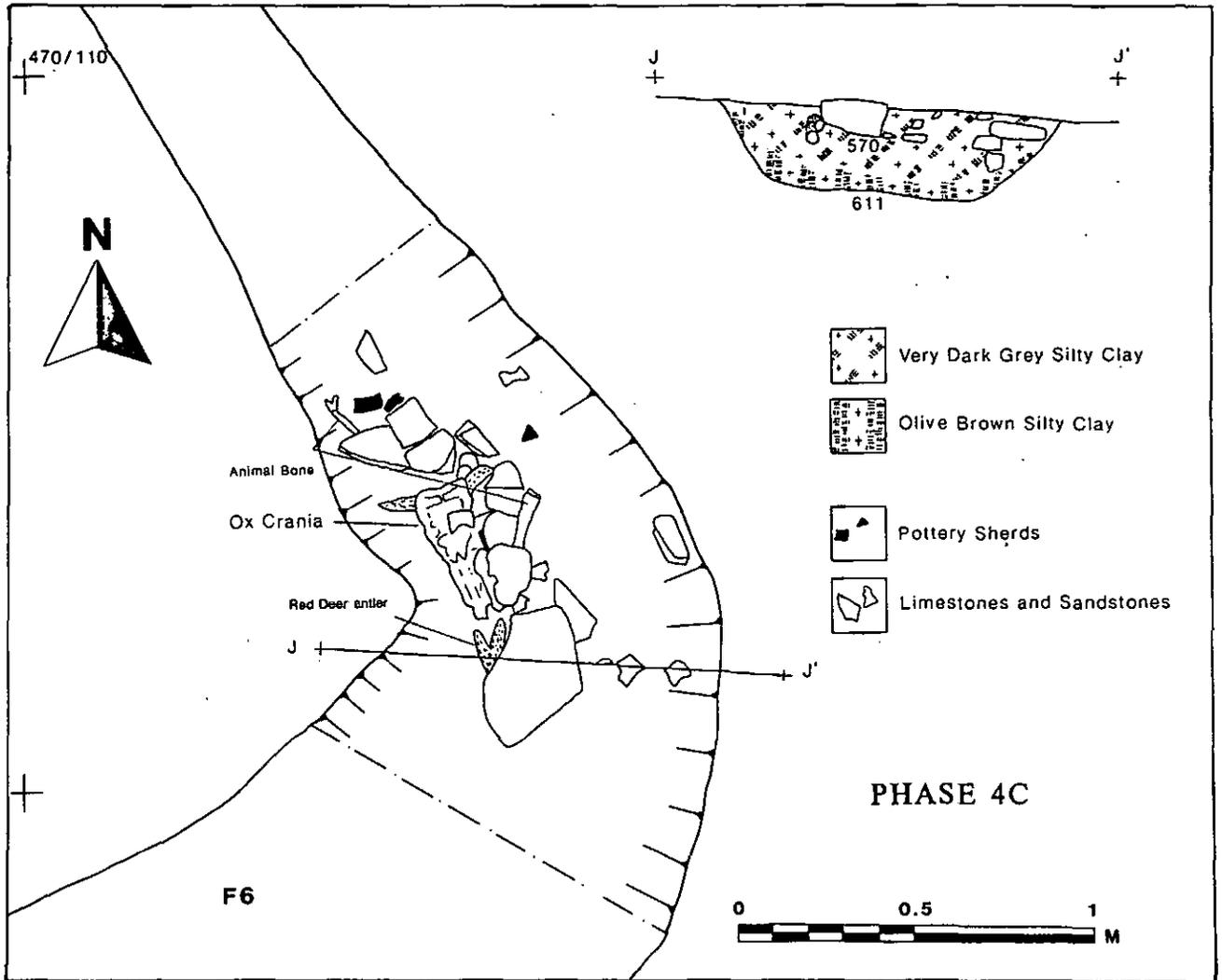


Fig 9 Phase 4C Detail - Ox Crania in F6

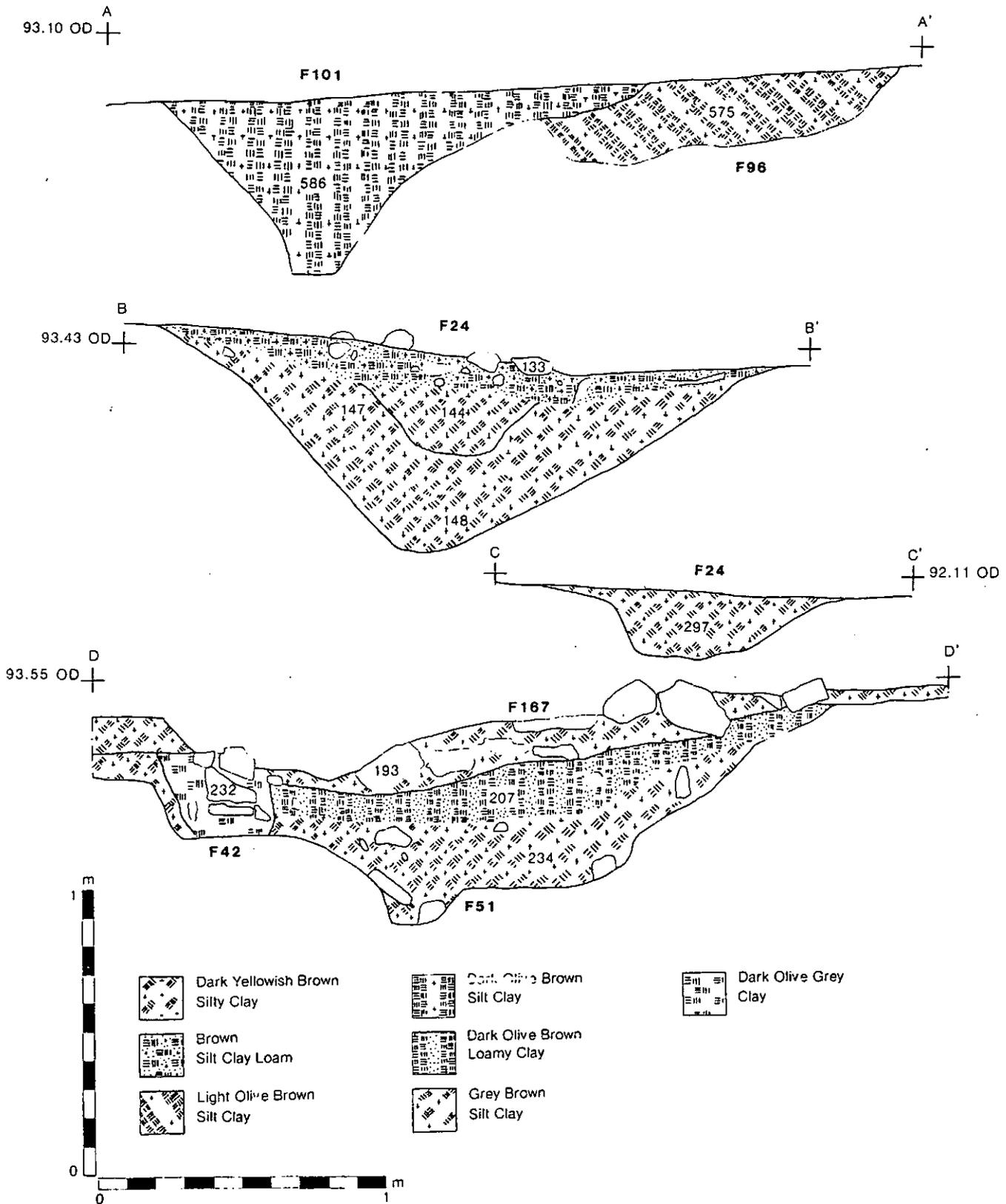


Fig 10 Sections A-A' (F96, F101), B-B' (F24), C-C' (F24), D-D' (F51, F42, F167)

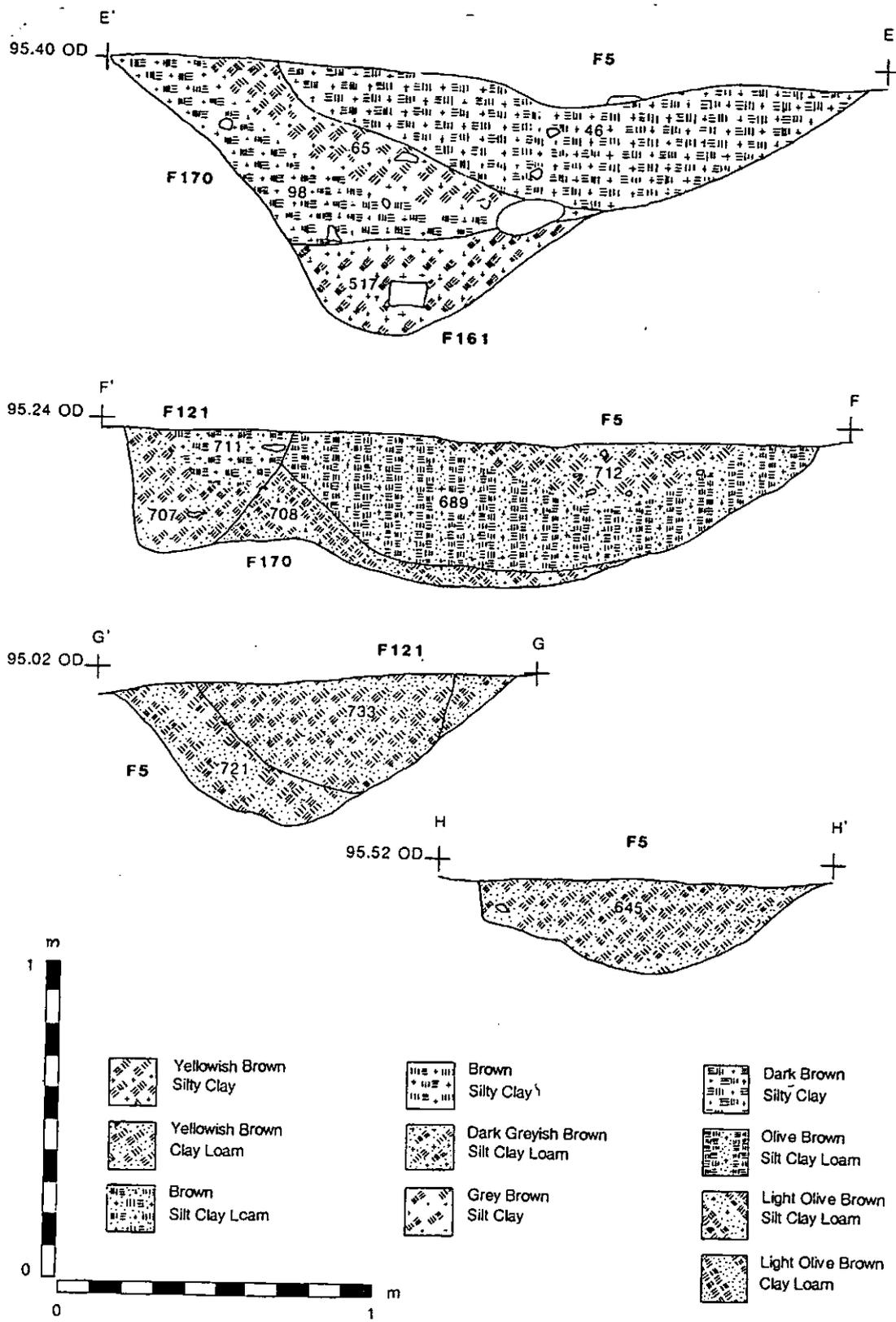


Fig 11 Sections E'-E (F161, F170, F5), F'-F (F170, F5, F121) G'-G (F5-F121), H'-H' (F5)

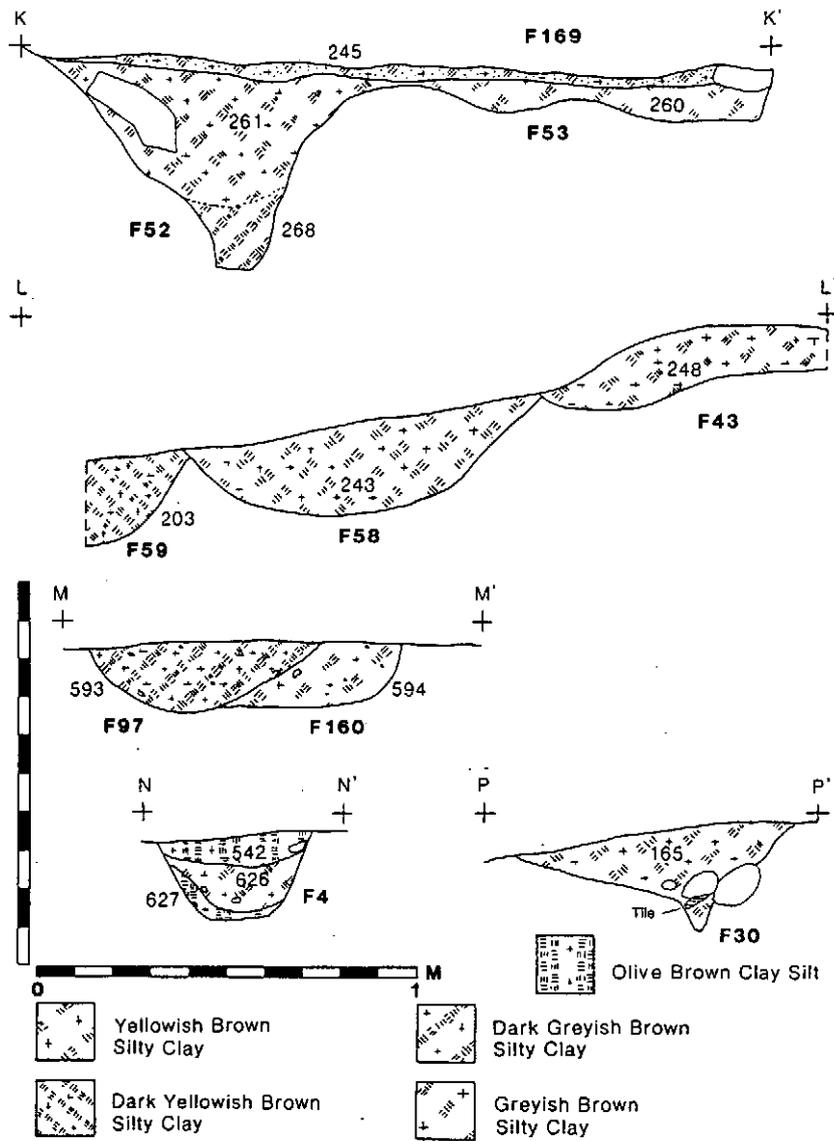


Fig 12 Sections K-K' (F52, F53, F169), L-L' (F59, F58, F43)  
M-M' (F97, F160), N-N' (F4), P-P' (F30)

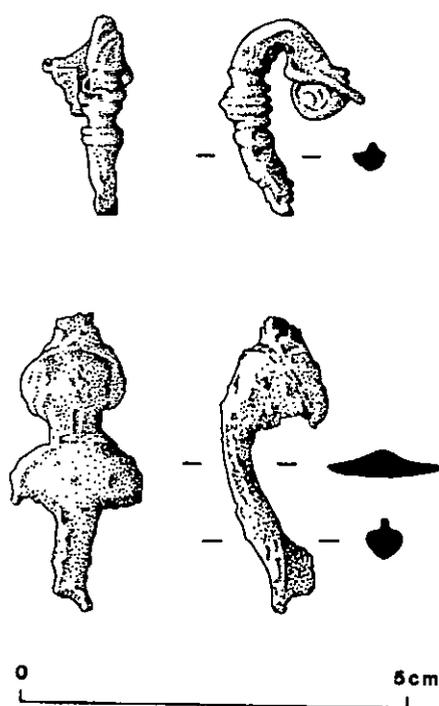


Fig 13 Two 2nd Century AD Trumpet Brooches.  
Found by Mr G.Holmes of Melton Field Workers

