



INDEX DATA	RPS INFORMATION
Scheme Title A3 Mulford Bypass	Details Archaeological Evaluation
Road Number A3	Date 1991
Surrey County Contractor Archaeological Unit	
County Surrey	
OS Reference	
Single sided <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Double sided A3 <input type="checkbox"/> Colour <input type="checkbox"/>	

1991
SACU

A3 MILFORD BY-PASS, SURREY:

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SURREY COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT
1991

AN EVALUATION OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL OF THE A3 MILFORD BY-PASS

Summary: The evaluation was undertaken between August and November 1991, using field-walking and sample trenching as the methods used to gain information. No occupation sites were discovered, and only some disparate scatters of prehistoric material that may derive from settlements off of the line of the route, were noted. The only features that were sampled were of post-medieval date.

INTRODUCTION

The intended route of the new c1900m stretch of A3 by-pass to the west of Milford, passes through rolling countryside, which had, until recently, been utilised for a variety of land uses. All of it is underlain by lithologies of the Lower Greensand series. The northern end of the new road is to pass over the narrow valley of the River Wey, which, is notable here for a steep north-facing cliff. Between the valley edge and south to the Elstead road, the route is over well-drained arable land that overlies Bargate Beds, although the survey has shown that there is often a fairly deep superficial cover of in situ, or colluvially-transported sandy loams of the Folkestone Beds. Between the Elstead Road and Mousehill Lane the geology remains the same, but the topography is that of the head of an east-west flowing tributary stream of the Wey. This shallow vale has required a network of ditches to enable proper drainage for its use as arable land in recent years. Prior to that, and from at least as early as the 16th century, it seems only to have been fit for use as pasture, because of seasonal flooding. That part of it through which the new road is to be laid, was called Fowl meadow during the 19th century, and Fowlemede in 1548, when it lay at the east end of Bagmoor.

South of Mousehill Lane, the road will run north to south through the eastern flanks of Mousehill Down. All of the elevation of this hill is of basal Folkestone Beds loams, but the survey has indicated that its slopes are covered with considerable hillwash deposits of the same material. Mousehill Down is largely of heathland, but some assarts that have been taken in from the waste along its western and eastern lower slopes, are of uncertain age. The A3 route is to cut through the largest of these enclosures, which has substantial linear banks, and intermittent lengths of external ditches on its western and southern sides against the heath. The current land use of the enclosure is of plantation to the east, and a mixture of pasture and regenerative woodland to the west, through which the road will pass. The final c300m of the road will be through the heath of Mousehill Down itself, unto where it will rejoin the present alignment of the A3.

More archaeological sites have been found on the Greensand of Surrey than for any other lithology within the county, with the exception, perhaps, of the gravel terraces of the Thames and its tributary rivers. It was felt reasonable to assume, therefore, that the c15000m² that was to be taken up by the new road, could contain archaeological sites. It would, in any case, cut through several linear features of unknown antiquity, such as lanes, tracks, and field boundaries. Close to the route, but not directly to be affected, are the Late Saxon burh of Eashing, 300m to the north-east of the A3 Wey bridge, and a rectangular enclosure south of Norney, that has recently been identified from aerial photographs.

Little was known of the archaeology of the route itself, prior to the survey. Its northern end lies immediately adjacent to where a group of curious inhumation burials were found in 1931; a Neolithic polished axe was discovered in 1964 c200m north-west from where the nearest part of the intended roadworks are to be; and an indeterminate number of Roman coins and pot sherds have been discovered by a metal detector user in recent years, from 'north of Mousehill Down'.

It was intended to undertake field-walking surveys wherever these were possible along the route, so that collected archaeological material could be used to assess where further methods of evaluation would be best applied. Any concentrations of such material were to be further investigated by trial trenching, and possibly, by remote sensing surveys. If no concentrations of finds, or indeed, any significant finds at all, were located by field-walking, then trial trenching was to be used to sample selected lengths of the route, where it was thought that settlements may have been sited, with due regard to topographical considerations.

After the funding of the archaeological evaluation was agreed, a limited amount of preliminary work was undertaken during the period when permissions were being sought from the various land-owners along the route (compulsory purchase orders were not implemented until October).

A perusal of the Tithe map and apportionment of 1844 revealed that there had been no significant changes in the landscape since that time, and that there were no field names of any special archaeological interest along the route. Most of the land to the north of Mousehill Lane had lain within the large estate of Viscount Middleton, and that to the south was either waste, or part of a large enclosure that belonged to a tenant of the Viscount.

D Graham, a local archaeologist who has undertaken aerial sorties in the district in order to discover new archaeological sites, was approached for his comments, but his photographs that include the route, reveal nothing of interest. The information concerning the Roman finds from 'north of Mousehill Down', was also provided by D Graham, who had been in contact with the, somewhat evasive, metal detector user.

P G Inwood, an amateur archaeologist from Godalming, approached the County Archaeological Unit to report, for the first time, his discovery of flints and sherds from the southern slopes of Mousehill Down. His collection of between 30 and 40 small calcined flint-gritted sherds, calcined flints, and some flint blades, had been collected over several years from a ditch and its upcast along the south side of a track that is to be crossed by the new road (fig 2 : A). One sherd with finger nail impressions is probably from the shoulder of a jar, and is possibly of Bronze Age date.

In 1931, during the construction of the existing by-pass around Milford, a group of seven inhumation burials were uncovered a few metres south from the cliff edge of the River Wey (fig 1 : B). Six of them were 'carefully excavated' by Major Winbolt, but although some details of these were published (Winbolt 1932, 118-120; 1936, 149-152), the account given is much less than would be expected today. Unfortunately, there seems no longer to be an archive that relates to the work that was carried out, and only a single find from the site (a bronze hair pin) is now in Guildford Museum. See Appendix for a review of these discoveries.

Roman finds from the vicinity of the proposed route are few, and little was known of them prior to the survey work. They include two fragments of upper quernstones from the route of the present A3 Milford by-pass, and finds of pottery and at least one coin from 'north of Mousehill Down'. It has been suggested that the querns may have been from the vicinity of Winbolt's burials, but there seems no good reason to suppose this, since they could have been found anywhere along the 4km length of by-pass that was constructed in 1931. The location of the settlement detritus of sherds and coin has now been narrowed to a single small field that lies c600m west of the burials, on a site that overlooks the Wey (fig 1 : C). Some of the pottery and a few IA and Roman coins were retained by the landowner, Mr CF Baker of Oxenford Grange, and the sherds that he allowed to be examined, include vessel forms of both early and later Roman types.

THE PROGRAMME OF WORK

North of Mousehill Lane (fig 1)

Field-walking

Most of the fields along the intended route had been ploughed, and were made available by late August and early September. The exceptions were the grounds of the house called 'Chimneys' on the south side of Mousehill Lane (K), and a strip of woodland along the western edge of the present A3 (D).

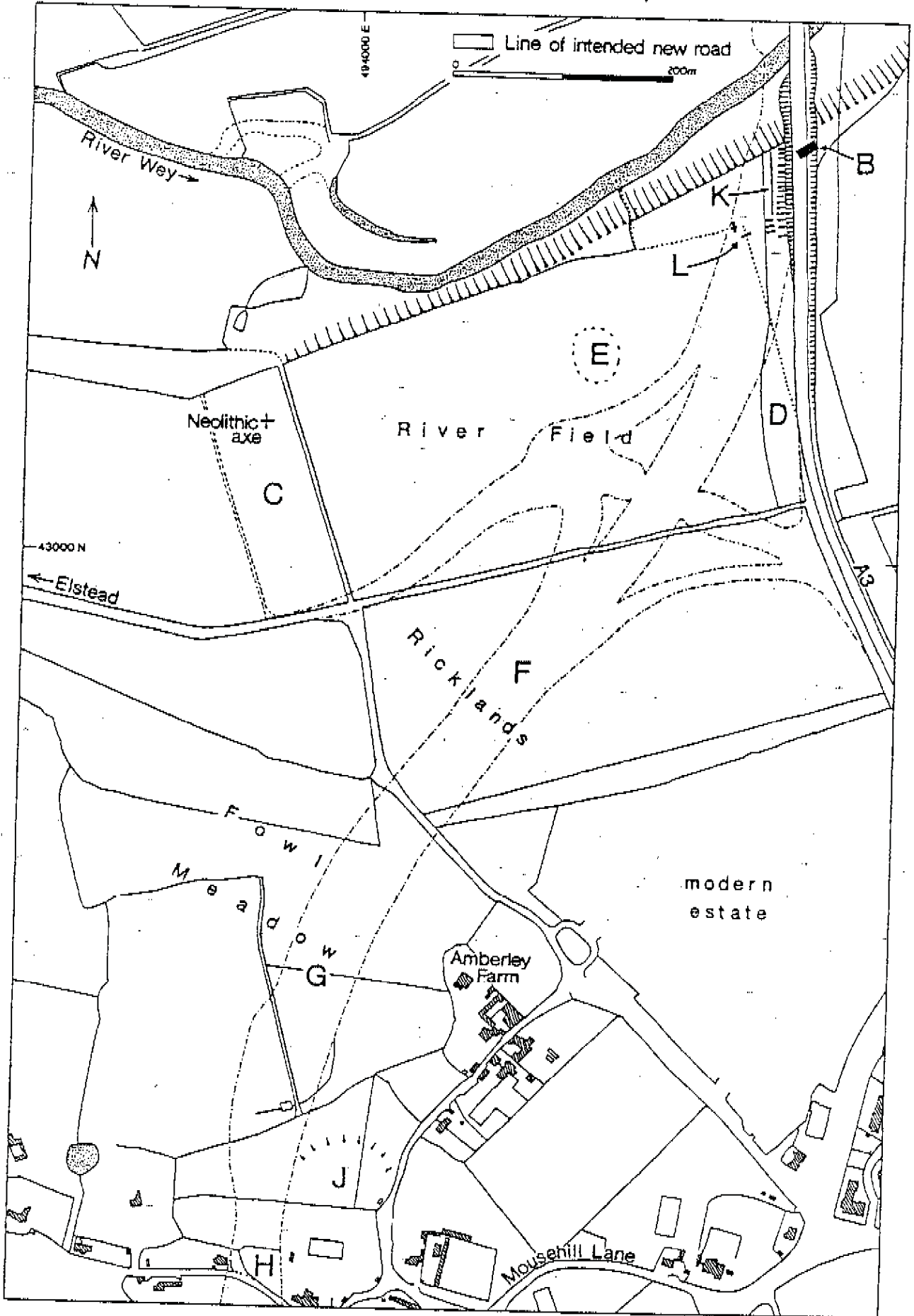
A greater part of the eastern half of River Field, c30000m in all, was systematically field-walked in lines 3m apart. c60 fragments of struck flint, and a lesser quantity of calcined flints were retrieved by this process, but there were no concentrations of such material along the line of the intended route. The only small area where they were found to have been a little more frequent, was just off of the route (E), but there is some doubt as to whether the marginal increase in frequency at that point, indicates the location of a buried occupation site. No pottery sherds or bone fragments were recovered from River Field, and the only other finds were a few fragments of well-worn post-medieval tile fragments.

Part of the field called Ricklands which is on the intended route (F), was also fieldwalked, but even fewer finds of struck or calcined flint were recovered, and no pottery sherds.

To the west of the Elstead-Milford road lies Fowl Meadow (G), which was low-lying meadow land of some antiquity (Fowlemede 1548), until recent years, when improved drainage has facilitated its use for arable. The intended route of the road was walked, but no finds were retrieved. The field was considered to be of low potential for the discovery of archaeological sites, but monitoring of any deep-cutting roadworks through this area will be a priority, however, since there may be some buried wetland deposits that could provide useful information about the local environment in antiquity.

Between Fowl Meadow and Mousehill Lane, the ground begins to rise, but since most of it lay within the grounds of 'Chimneys' (E), there was no opportunity for fieldwalking. Immediately east of the intended route is a prominent rise (J), that could have been suitable for early settlement. The ploughed ground was fieldwalked, but no finds other than a few fragments of med/post-med tile, were recovered.

FIG 1



Trench sampling

The area of the intended road that lies closest to where Winbolt's burials had been found, is on a c20m wide strip of woodland that borders the present A3. It was a priority for the evaluation work, to discover whether further burials lay there, and there was no other way to do this except by trench sampling. About 100m of the north end of the strip was very intensively trenched (K), so as not to miss any of what may have been dispersed burials. None were found, and neither were any sherds like those of Winbolt's 'flint and iron ware'. Only a few struck flints and pot-boilers were retrieved, in no greater quantities than were found in the adjacent River Field.

Immediately west of the woodland strip was where the old parish boundary of Witley and Godalming had formed a dog-leg angle, but not at the river, or even at the top of the river cliff, but c50m south from the cliff edge (L). This had given Godalming a rectangular extension of c1500m into Witley parish. The boundary is not marked by any hedge or ditch, and nor was it when the Tithe Commissioners had plans prepared during the middle of the 19th century. Two trenches were cut through the east-west and north-south parts of the boundary where they approached the dog-leg angle, but no buried features could be discerned. It is intended to monitor the roadworks through this area, just in case some features escaped the evaluation procedures.

South of Mousehill Lane (figs 2 & 3)

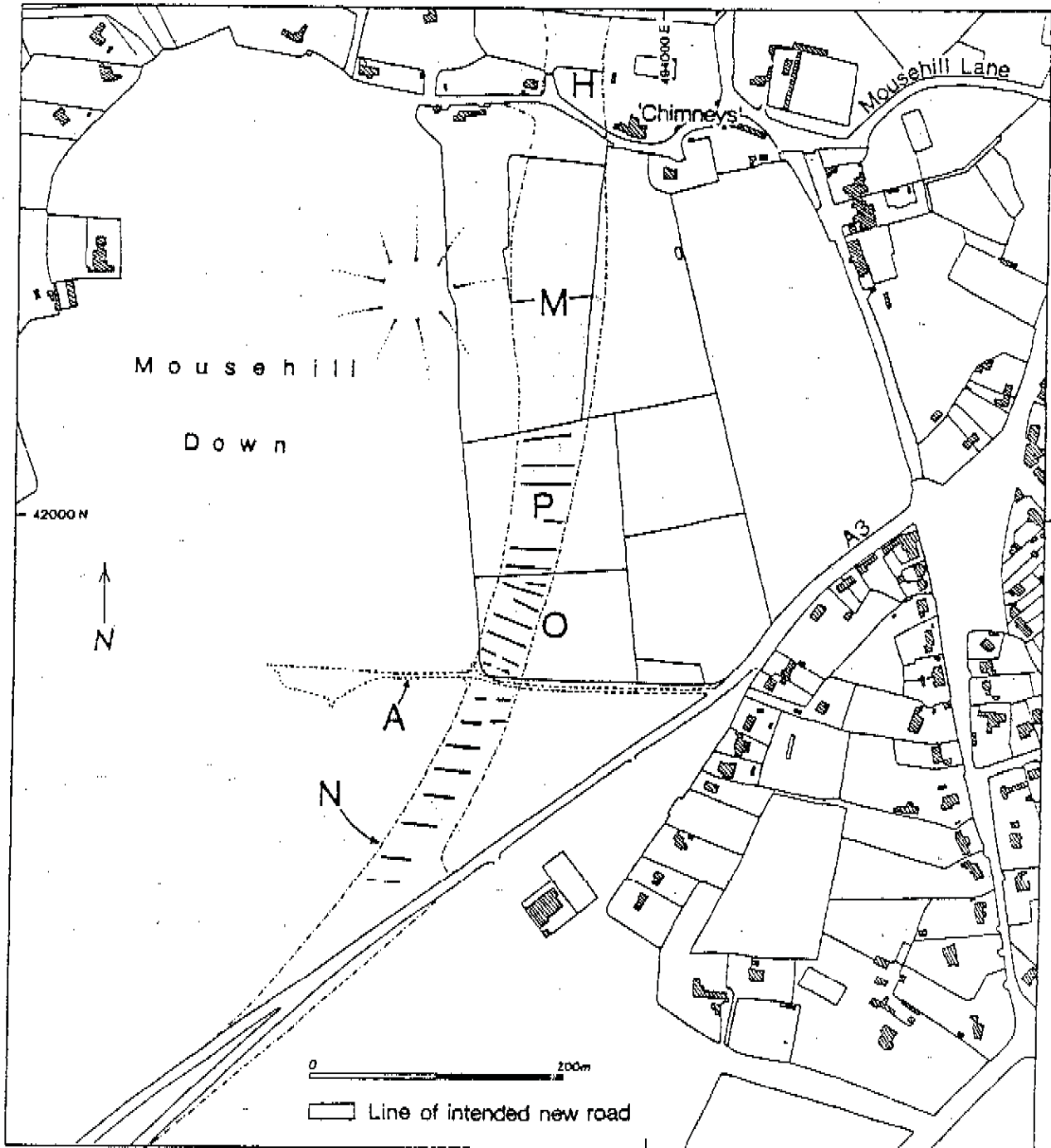
Fieldwalking

There was little scope for this, since the southern part of the intended road was through heathland and pasture. Most of the higher ground on the eastern flank of Mousehill Down, however, although within the boundary of the field that was mainly used as rough pasture, had been allowed to revert to woodland (M). This had become so riddled with rabbit burrows and the larger setts of badgers, that it was possible to adequately 'fieldwalk' the area for indications of settlement activity. There were none.

Trench sampling

Because of the finds of prehistoric material discovered by P G Inwood at A (see p2), it was decided to trench sample all of the route of the road in the near vicinity of his finds. Ten trenches were opened-up in the heathland to the south (N), and nine more in the first fenced enclosure towards the southern end of the pasture field (O), that lay to the east of the earlier discoveries. Although one or two worked flints, a few calcined flints, and very occasionally, the odd small sherd of prehistoric pottery, were found in most of the fourteen trenches (including, most notably, the butt end of a leaf-shaped arrowhead), only one feature was located (of post-med date, see below), and it was considered unlikely that any settlement had been directly on the line of the intended road. What was consistently found was up to a metre of hillwashed loams, and it seems more likely that what prehistoric material was found derives from occupation that lay further up the hillside of Mousehill Down.

FIG 2



Between the above sample trenches and the regenerative woodland within the enclosed field, another six trenches were opened-up in area P. Similar quantities of prehistoric material were found, and from within similar depths of hillwashed overburden. The only feature that was noted, was a shallow gully that appeared to lie below the hillwash, and from which a few flint scraps and prehistoric sherd crumbs were recovered. In order to trace the extent of this feature, and also to increase the sample size of finds so as to better date it, a series of 12 short trenches were opened-up (see fig 3). The southern part of the gully gradually disappeared probably as a result of having been truncated by seasonal ploughing. The northern termination was found, however, and this lay 8m short of the east-west fence that separates the woodland (M), from the pasture field (N). Although it did not extend through to this modern boundary, the terminus coincided with a line that could be imagined between two stag-headed oaks that stand just south of the fence. The oaks, which could be upwards of 300 years old, may be the remnants of an earlier sub-division of the assart, and the gully, which is set at a right angle from the assumed line between them, could also be as old. A post-medieval date for the gully, was confirmed by the discovery of a few small fragments of tile, and a sherd of 17th or 18th century red coarseware pottery from different sampled parts of its infill, even though most of the handful of recorded finds are of worked flints, calcined flints, and scraps of prehistoric pottery.

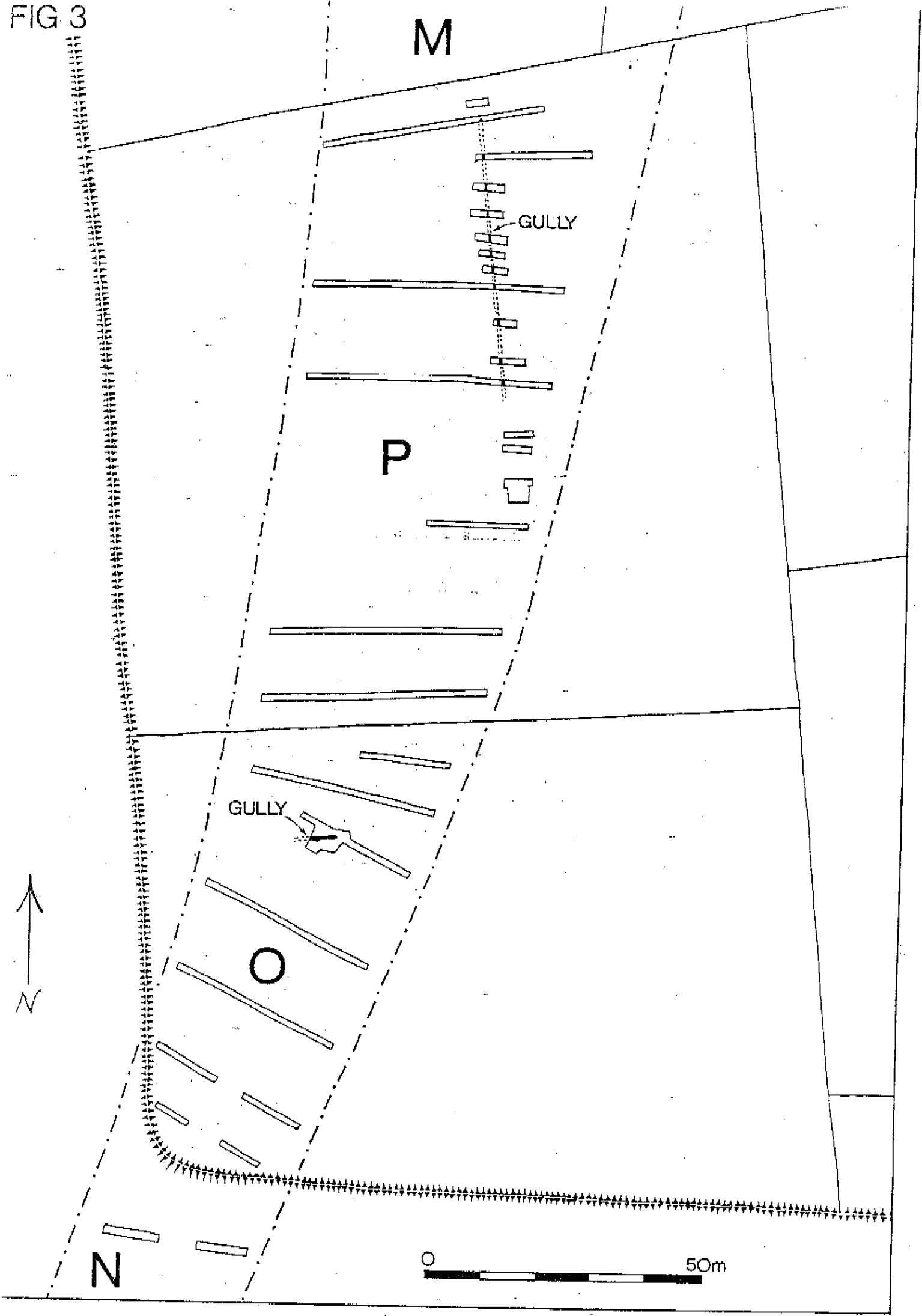
Further south in O, a similar length of gully was found in one of the long trenches that were initially opened-up. This was set at a right angle from the northern gully, and from the western bank of the enclosure, and also contained some comminuted fragments of prehistoric sherds and flint flakes, as well as a fragment of tile.

It is uncertain when this large assart to the south of Mousehill Lane had been taken in from the waste of Mousehill Down, and it was outside the scope of the present evaluation to undertake work on documentary sources which may have found this out. Although it could have been in the land-hungry years of the 13th and early 14th century, it may have been later, in the early post-medieval period. The oaks and buried gullies could date from the earliest use of the enclosure, but this is uncertain. Although it had appeared that the gullies were buried by the hillwashed loams, it was decided, upon closer examination, that since their fills were identical to the loams, any cut that may have been made through that overburden would not easily have been discerned.

DISCUSSION

The route of the A3 Milford by-pass is through the sandy loams of the Folkestone Beds, and can be divided on topographical grounds into three zones; that of elevated ground used for arable close to the River Wey river cliff; low-lying and less well-drained land that was once moor, between the Elstead Road and Mousehill Lane; and the lower slopes of a local high point that in antiquity had reverted to heathland, at Mousehill Down. In the first and last of these zones, the ubiquitous presence of worked flints wherever the ground was disturbed, is an indication of just how intensive had been the use of the Greensand landscape during the Mesolithic and some later prehistoric periods. The absence of any concentrations of such finds, however, implies that there was probably no major and/or long-lived

FIG 3



habitation sites, although it is possible that some temporary camps or other lesser foci of human activity have escaped the evaluation process. Comminuted sherds of Iron Age-type pottery from the hillwash over the lower slopes of Mousehill Down, may indicate the presence of a settlement of 1st millennium BC date immediately west of the route, and nearer to the hilltop of Mousehill Down itself. It is not known when Mousehill Down reverted to heathland, nor when the process of assarting its lower slopes had begun. It is possible that the large field enclosure on its eastern slopes through which the intended road is to pass, was taken-in from the waste during the early post-medieval period, but this is uncertain, and it may have been an earlier, medieval assart.

APPENDIX

The human burials discovered by Major Winbolt on the route of the A3 north of Milford in 1931

The burials were found in various alignments, with three more or less north to south, one approximately north-east/south-west, and another approximately north-west/south-east. Two were said to have been of females between the ages of 18-20, and three were males, of which two were thought to have been aged over 40. The orientation and gender of a sixth excavated burial, was not given by Winbolt. It presumably, had been in as bad a state of preservation as the seventh burial that was noted on site, which was not 'carefully excavated'. The interments were curious, in that, some, or perhaps all of the heads had been set, both face down, and upside down, from the rest of the bodies, and occasionally, the leg bones were found to have been arranged in lines. Whereas the disposition of the skulls could imply that they had been decapitated, there seems no logical reason for the limbs to have been disjoined prior to burial. Since the present whereabouts of the skeletons is unknown, and any in-situ drawings of them that may have been prepared, have not been found, little further comment can be made.

A recent survey of decapitated and prone burials from RB and AS cemeteries, has noted that the detached heads of these, were, almost invariably, placed towards the lower end of the body, and that the few examples where the head was replaced, had it facing upwards in a normal position. No examples of prone and also upside-down heads, were provided by the authors (Harman, Mollison, & Price 1981, 165).

One of the burials was accompanied by a bronze hair pin of Roman type, and a melon bead; and from the general vicinity of the site, but not directly associated with any of the burials, thirteen fragments of pottery were collected, of which only one was said by Winbolt to have been of 'definitely Roman type'. The others he described as being of a 'coarse flint and iron-tempered' ware, and included a 'clumsy flat base' and a body sherd with decoration of impressed lines. These do not seem to accord with any known RB type (unless they had been variants of the grog-tempered or Silchester ware-type traditions, with the grog mis-identified by Winbolt as iron inclusions), or with any of the known Saxon wares of the region. The apparent crudity of these loosely associated sherds, the haphazard orientation of the burials, and the presence of Roman trinkets with one of

them, may support Winbolt's supposition that they may have been 'Welsh', ie Romano-British people that survived in the area during the period after the cessation of Roman centralised control, but before the ascendancy of Saxon culture and language; and that they had probably been deliberately executed. Their position, close to the parish/estate boundary between Godalming and Witley, may be of some significance.

Phil Jones

Surrey County Archaeological Unit

14 November 1991

The survey could not have been undertaken without the active assistance of Stewart Norton and Margaret Longes of the Department of Transport, and of John Collingwood of the consultant engineers W S Atkins. I am extremely grateful to them, and to Kevin Conroy and Bob Crompton of Surrey County Council, for their advice and services.