

BERKYN MANOR FARM 1995: Preliminary Statement

(File 04107.00.000)

Introduction

The archaeological excavation took place over five weeks in September/October 1995. On completion of this work the records and finds were checked/processed and archived, but the production of an assessment report was postponed until completion of the watching brief. This preliminary statement is, therefore, based on the information available at the end of 1995.

In 1990 Wessex Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation comprising a series of 12 machine trenches across the entire area covered by fields 1 – 5 (**Fig. 1**). The trenches, mostly between 100 and 150m long, provided clear evidence for Iron Age and Romano-British activity. Settlements appear to have been established on some of the higher gravel ridges, and were represented by a series of shallow features including ditches, pits, post-holes and gullies. Although not all of the features were excavated (including those in Trench M which fell within Area A – the excavation area), the degree of archaeological preservation was shown to be high, as was the potential for retrieving environmental evidence and organic artefacts from waterlogged deposits.

In 1995 Wessex Archaeology excavated an area (Area A) 80m x 60m centred over the Iron Age and Romano-British discoveries revealed by the archaeological evaluation in Trench M (**Fig. 1**). In addition to this, limited machine trenching would be used to locate and investigate isolated ditch-like and pit-like features encountered during the evaluation at five points marked B1 – B5 on **Figs. 1** and **2**.

Results

Topsoil between 0.2 and 0.3m thick overlay natural gravel over the majority of Area A, with a layer of dark subsoil along the east side of the site where the surface of the gravel began to drop away slightly. Up to 1.4m of silty soil overlay natural gravel in Trenches B1 – B5, all of which were lower lying than Area A.

Archaeological features were concentrated in Area A which lay on a slightly raised gravel island (**Fig. 3**). Virtually all appeared to have been associated with a small Romano-British rural settlement, perhaps a single farmstead, on the west side of the Colne Brook. The Romano-British pottery (748 sherds) suggests that the main period of occupation was in the 2nd – 4th centuries AD. Activity in other periods is represented by small quantities of Middle – Late Bronze Age pottery (24 sherds, including one with an impressed cordon) and Middle – Late Iron Age pottery (12 sherds), and a rather larger quantity of medieval (?12/13th century) pottery (111 sherds). The ditch in Trench B4 was almost certainly of Middle – Late Bronze Age date, but no Middle – late Iron Age features were identified and it is uncertain pending further stratigraphic analysis whether any medieval features were present.

A variety of archaeological features were identified, generally sealed directly beneath topsoil. These comprised ditches, gullies, pits, post-holes, one inhumation (of uncertain date) and at least one small tile-built structure of uncertain function. The

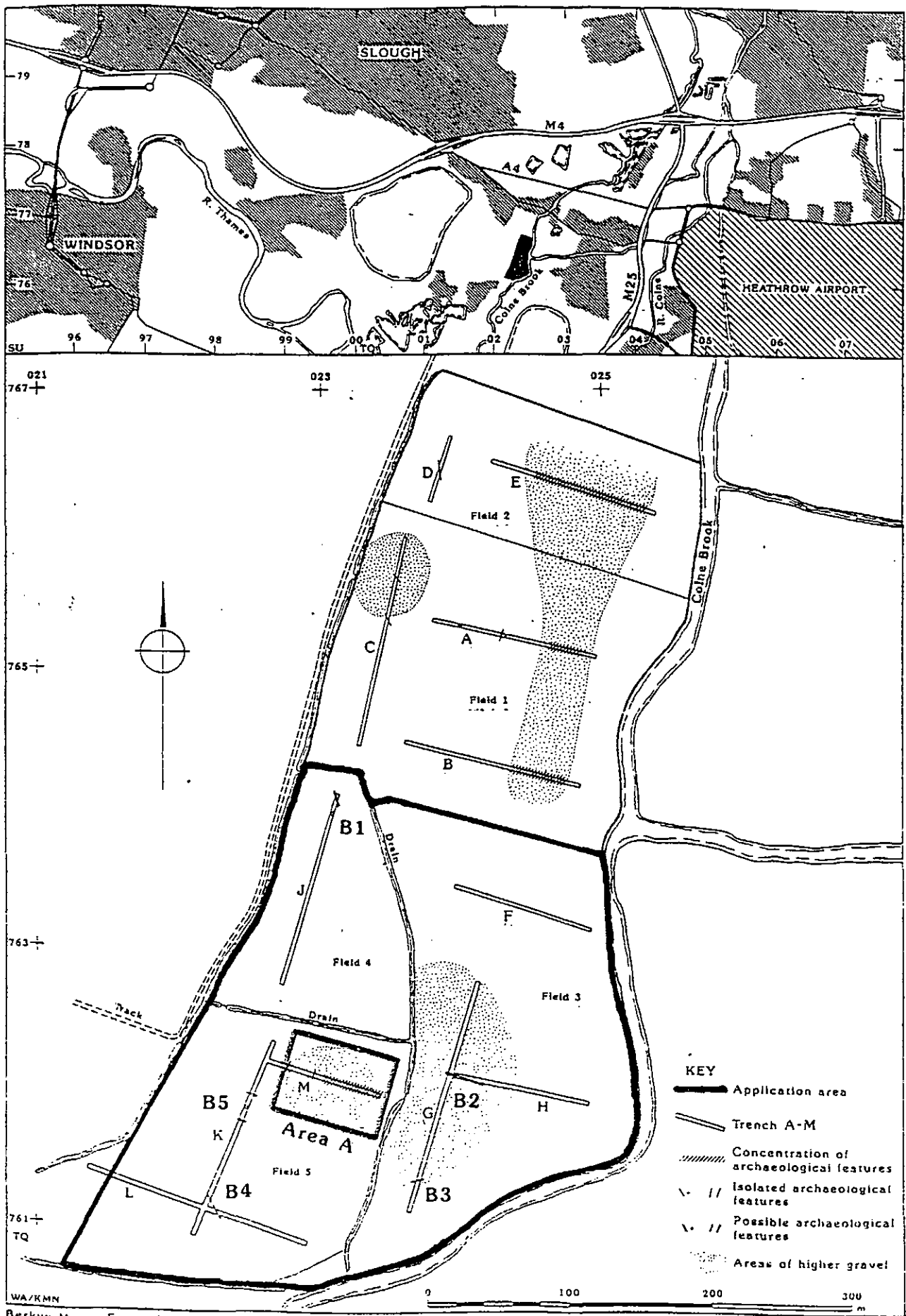
majority of negative features were very shallow and contained single, undifferentiated fills similar to the overlying topsoil.

Some complexity in the layout of features is apparent from Fig. 3, and it is likely that two or more phases of Romano-British activity are represented. The general layout of features indicates the presence of at least one possible enclosure approximately 50m square (ditches on the north and west sides were found, with those to the south and east perhaps lying just outside the limits of excavation). Within this putative enclosure were several shallow gullies perhaps representing internal divisions, a group of shallow pits towards the south-east corner of the excavated area, and a group of post-holes perhaps belonging to one or more circular structures towards the south-west corner of the enclosure. Outside the enclosure to the north-west was a complex of (?) earlier gullies, and to the west were several ditches and gullies which probably formed a system of broadly contemporary boundaries and enclosures.

Single ditches were found in Trenches B1 (A-B), B2 and B4, two in Trench B5, but none in Trench B3. The ditch in Trench B4 produced Middle – Late Bronze Age pottery, but no datable finds came from any of the others. The alignments of the two ditches in Trench B5, however, suggest they belong to the system investigated in Area A and a Romano-British date is considered most likely.

As well as pottery, finds included animal bone (1052 pieces/7248g); small quantities of burnt flint (74 pieces/1617g) and worked flint (25 pieces/110g); ceramic building material including *tegula*, *imbrex*, and box flue tile fragments (819 pieces/138,620g); fired clay (156 pieces/3263g); stone (8 pieces/2445g); and 11 items of metalwork (1 Cu alloy, 1 Pb and 9 Fe). No waterlogged deposits were encountered in Area A which probably reflects its location on a slightly raised gravel island, but well-preserved organic remains might be expected to survive elsewhere on the site.

Phil Andrews
16 June 1998



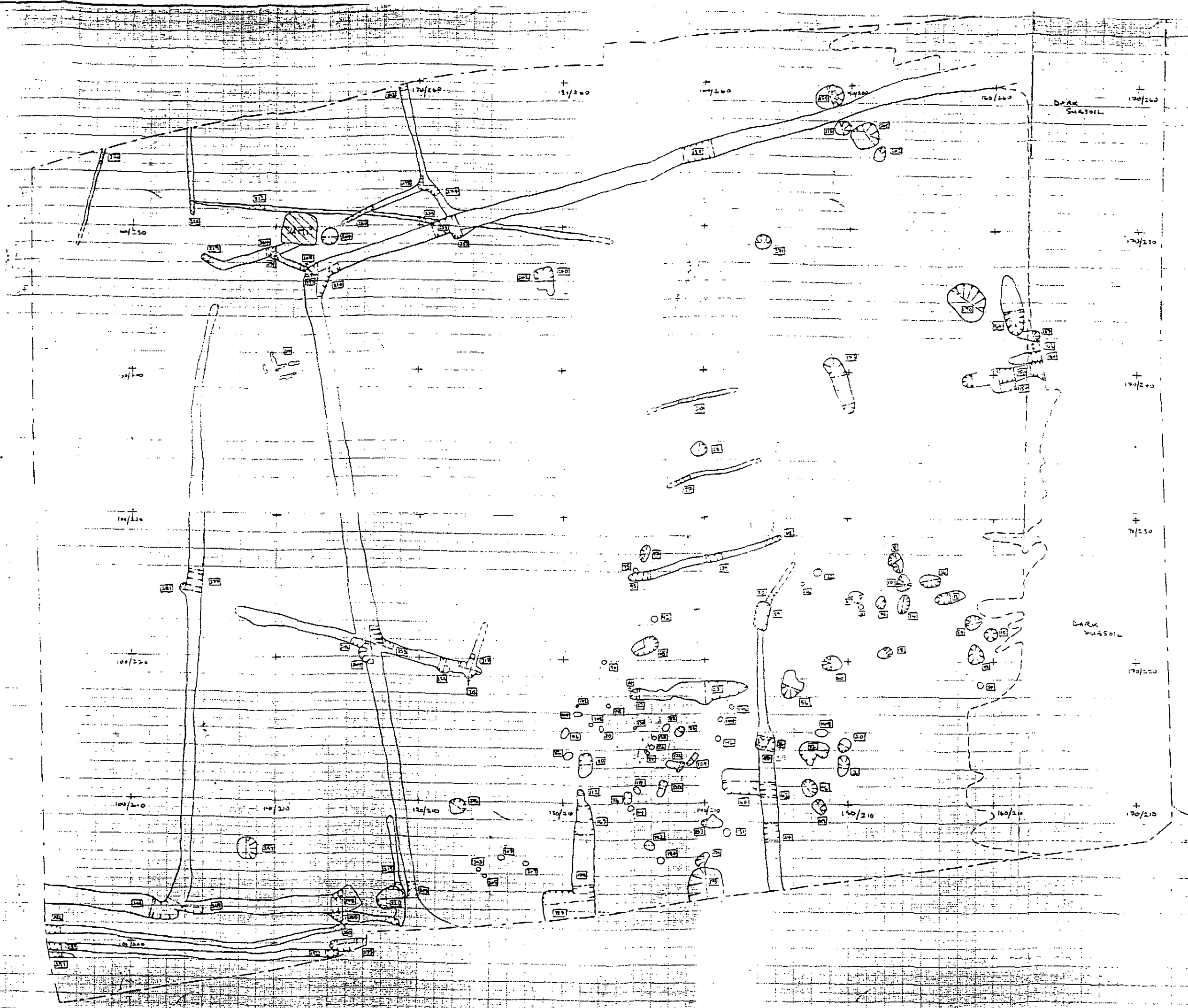
Berkyn Manor Farm: site & trench location plans

Fig. 1

Fig. 1

WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY

SITE CODE	12422	SITE SUB-DIV.		DRAWING No.	111
SCALE	1:100	DRAWN BY	CRS	DATE	6/11/95



NOTES

BERKYN MANOR FARM (DOYLE)

