

Berkshire Archaeology

Mon.: SL15463 <sup>07</sup>  
Event: EK W162 <sup>165</sup>  
Source: SRW12757 <sup>EX</sup>

BERKYN MANOR FARM, HORTON, BERKSHIRE

Archaeological Evaluation

Mems: 04107.01.000-400  
04107.01.401  
04107.02.000-200

SL15463

C A Farwell

Trust for Wessex Archaeology  
Portway House  
South Portway Estate  
Old Sarum, SALISBURY  
Wiltshire SP4 6EB  
Tel: Salisbury (0722) 26867

Trust for Wessex Archaeology

April 1990

## Archaeological evaluation at Berkyn Manor Farm, Horton, Berkshire, 1990.

### Introduction

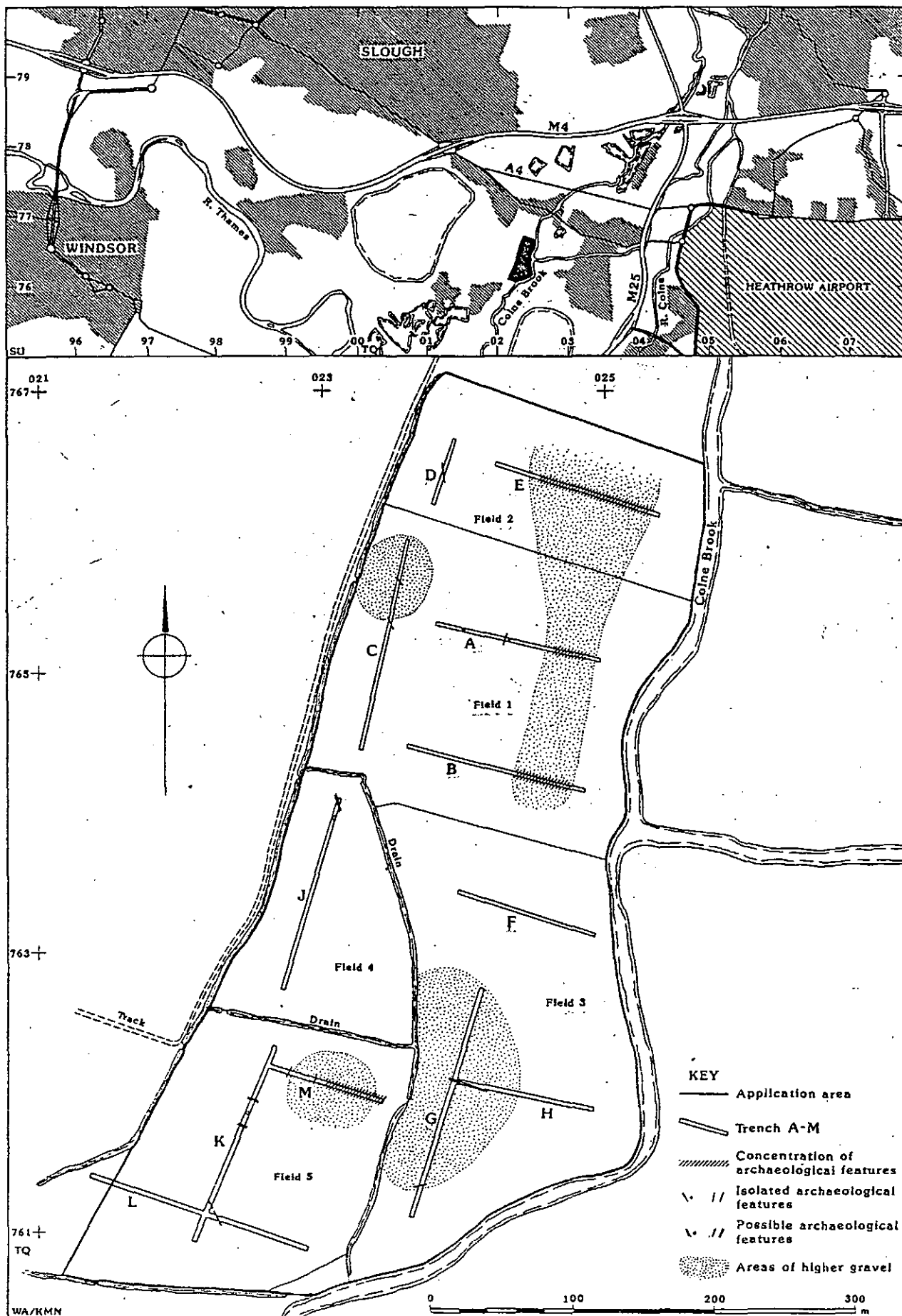
In February 1990 the Trust for Wessex Archaeology was asked to carry out the archaeological evaluation of five fields comprising some 15.7 hectares at Berkyn Manor Farm, Horton (centred on TQ 024764). The assessment was requested by Berkshire County Council before determination of a planning application for gravel extraction and was commissioned by Oxford Archaeological Associates Ltd. on behalf of the RMC Group. The field work was carried out between 2nd and 19th April 1990.

No cropmarks, finds or other indications of archaeological activity were known from within the application area, but cropmarks and artefact scatters have been recorded in the surrounding locality. A cropmark complex indicative of enclosures and linear boundaries had been identified north west of the application area and fieldwalking had located flint scatters and large quantities of Romano-British pottery and tile to the west of the site (Berkshire SMR no 13).

### The site (Fig 1)

The application area extends over part of a low-lying gravel terrace immediately west of the Colne Brook. Much of the ground lies between 18m and 19m OD, although some rises a little higher; raised banks have been built up alongside the Colne Brook and deep drains mark all field boundaries. Water quickly filled parts of all trenches, except L and M, soon after they were opened, rising to within 0.18m of the ground surface at the southern end of trench C and the eastern end of trench H.

The north western boundary of the application area (fields 1 and 2)



Berkyn Manor Farm: site & trench location plans

coincides with a slight but noticeable change in ground level and soil type, probably defining a higher terrace to the west. Fields 4 and 5, sown with, and considerably obscured by well-grown oilseed rape may also lie on this higher terrace, although no great variation in height between trenches in fields 4 and 5 and those in fields 1-3 was noted. Minor undulations were noted in fields 1 and 3, both of which were under grass. Field 2 was sown with spinach.

### Strategy and method

The evaluation strategy was designed to establish the presence or absence of archaeological deposits and, where these were found, to examine their extent, density, date and state of preservation. A series of machine trenches was planned on a grid basis to cover the whole area, to be followed by sample excavation of any features thus exposed. Twelve trenches, each two metres wide, were excavated altogether, comprising approximately 2958m<sup>2</sup> or 1.88% of the application area and providing a good coverage of the upper gravels (Fig 1).

### Soils

Topsoil was quite consistent across the whole site, being dark greyish brown loam or silt loam between 0.20 and 0.30m deep; it was at its shallowest in the fields under grass, fields 1 and 3, neither of which have been recently cultivated because of the high ground water. In parts of fields 1-3 topsoil lay directly over gravel; elsewhere very dark grey organic or possibly mineral-stained silty clay was recorded. The dark clay overlay paler and increasingly sandy silt and peat deposits were also seen in those areas where the gravel lay deepest, that is at the southern end of

trench C (gravel at 1.20m) and the eastern end of trench H (gravel at 1.40m); former river channels probably crossed both these areas. Paler silt also occurred at rather higher levels in trench E, where some features cut it rather than the underlying gravel.

Through much of fields 4 and 5 yellowish brown silt, silt loam or sandy silt up to 1.40m deep lay beneath topsoil and above gravel; in the north east corner of field 5 the yellowish brown silt was absent, gravel occurring beneath shallower dark silty clay deposits like those seen in fields 1-3. In trenches K,L and the western part of trench M in field 5 an intermediate deposit between topsoil and the underlying silt was noted, possibly the result of occasional deeper ploughing.

## Results

Potential archaeological features were noted in all trenches except trench F, although it was not possible to record or investigate all of them because of the high level of ground water. In trenches C,D,G,H,J,K and L features were generally undated isolated ditches. Concentrations of Late Iron Age and, more commonly, early Roman (1st/2nd C AD) features were recorded on gravel ridges or 'islands' in trenches A,B,E and M, although not all such ridges contained evidence of archaeological activity (see Fig 1). Pottery recovered during the evaluation has been briefly scanned by Lorraine Mephram to give an indication of date; see Table 1. Summaries of all recorded features giving dimensions and alignments are also given in Table 1. Finds totals are given in Table 2.

The concentrations of features investigated in the three north eastern trenches, E,A and B, suggest quite intensive activity on a gravel ridge running parallel with the present course of the Colne Brook. All features

were sealed only by topsoil and many, particularly in trenches A and B, were very shallow and appeared to have been at least partially truncated or eroded, either by cultivation or by natural causes such as flooding; in support of the latter suggestion, late 1st/early 2nd C AD pottery, animal bone, fired clay and other occupation debris was recovered from the upper 0.15m of silt overlying the deeper gravel at the eastern end of trench B, suggestive of material being washed off the gravel ridge. In trench E there was some indication that ploughing may have both disturbed and disguised the upper levels of features. A thin (0.07m) spread of re-deposited gravel sealed and completely masked ditch 108, the ditch only being recognised during the excavation of an adjacent parallel ditch, 106. However, features appeared to survive well enough in most areas to preserve some indication of stratigraphic relationships where these occurred. In addition, finds were recovered from approximately half of the features investigated in trenches A, B and E.

Some apparent variation in feature type and chronology among the three trenches was noted. Linear features predominated in trench E; five gullies, and four ditches were examined, including parallel or possibly paired ditches and gullies 106 and 108 and 98 and 100. Two pits, a hollow and a possible cobbled track or yard surface, 138, were also recorded in trench E. Pits and post-holes were more common in trenches A and B, although the areas investigated were not large enough to show any evidence of buildings; in trench A nine possible pits, five post-holes and three gullies were investigated; in trench B five pits, seven post-holes, two ditches and a gully were recorded. Some of the features recorded as pits, such as 63 in trench B, were very large in area and may simply have been natural depressions in the gravel in which finds had accumulated. Most of the

datable pottery from features in the middle trench, A, appeared to be slightly earlier, Late Iron Age/early Roman, than that from features in trenches B and E, predominantly late 1st/early 2nd C AD.

Most features were filled with very dark silty deposits, little different from the silty clays overlying gravel in trenches A and B. The lower levels of many features, even some of the shallowest, were below water level, providing excellent conditions for the preservation of environmental evidence but making excavation difficult; as far as could be determined, the lower fills of the deeper features contained much organic material. Two pieces of well-preserved worked timber, the points of two stakes, were recovered during machining from the dark silty clays at the southern end of trench C and the eastern end of trench H; neither was thought to have been in situ.

There was not enough time to excavate any of the features in trench M, but finds recovered during machining and recording suggest that they are of similar date, 1st/2nd C AD, to those in trenches B and E. Here also linear features, both ditches (five) and gullies (five), predominated, with only a single post-hole being recorded. It was clear from the plan view alone that stratigraphic relationships of some complexity might survive in this area.

The almost complete absence of features from two other areas of high gravel, one at the northern end of trench C and the other along almost the whole length of trench G, is noteworthy and may be of some as yet unrealised significance.

Very few of the isolated features were examined in any detail, indeed several were either machined away before they were recognised or so quickly flooded that excavation was impossible. Only ditch 90 in trench C and a gully, 122, and ditch, 132, in trench G were excavated; no readily datable

finds were associated with any of them. A second possible gully and two possible post-holes (not on plan) were also excavated in trench G, but were thought to be natural undulations in the gravel. The articulated but fragmentary skeleton of a cow was noted in a doubtful but possible feature in trench K.



Table 1

Berkyn Manor Farm: all recorded features

Dimensions are given in the following order:- length, width (diameter), depth.  
Features have been dated by scanning the pottery recovered from them; where no pottery was found but other finds were recovered, n p is recorded in the date column. Where no finds were recovered - is entered in the date column, although it is likely that they are contemporary with other dated features in the immediate area. Features on gravel ridges or 'islands' are indicated by ‡ in the final column,

<u>Feature/ Fill Nos</u>	<u>Trench</u>	<u>Feature Type</u>	<u>Align- ment</u>	<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Additional Comments</u>
5 (4)	A	Pit	-	1.20x1.05x0.05m	Late 1st/early 2nd C AD	‡
7 (6)	"	Pit	-	1.30x0.75x0.10m	LIA/early Roman	‡
9 (8)	"	Post-hole	-	0.50x0.12m	LIA/early Roman	‡
11 (10)	"	Post-hole	-	0.50x0.12m	-	‡
13 (12, 14)	"	Pit	-	1.27x0.30m	LIA/early Roman	‡
16 (15)	"	Post-hole	-	0.50x0.40x0.20m	LIA/early Roman	‡
18 (17)	"	Gully	SW-NE	0.50x0.20m	n p	‡
20 (19)	"	Pit	-	1.75x0.25m	-	‡
22 (21)	"	Pit	-	1.40x0.25m	-	‡
25 (23, 24)	"	Pit	-	0.70x0.25m	-	‡
27 (26)	"	Gully	SE-NW	0.50x0.30m	LIA/early Roman	‡
29 (28)	"	Pit	-	1.20x0.26m	n p	‡
31 (30)	"	Post-hole	-	0.25x0.06m	-	-
33 (32)	"	Post-hole	-	0.36x0.30x0.25m	-	-
35 (34)	"	Pit	-	1.90x0.25m	-	-
37 (36)	"	Pit	-	1.20x0.80x0.19m	LIA/early Roman	-
39 (38)	"	Gully	SW-NE	-	Late 1st/early 2nd C AD	- Unexcavated
56 (54, 55)	B	Ditch	SW-NE	1.72x0.29m	-	‡ Not fully excavated
58 (57)	"	Gully	Not known	0.49x0.19m	-	‡ Not fully excavated
60 (59)	"	Post-hole	-	0.70x0.55x0.10m	-	‡
61 (64)	"	Post-hole	-	0.50x0.06m	-	‡
63 (62)	"	Pit/hollow	-	4x0.70x0.15m	1st/2nd C AD	‡
66 (65)	"	Pit	-	1.70x1.35x0.17m	-	‡
68 (67)	"	Pit	-	1x0.70x0.13m	-	‡
70 (69)	"	Ditch	S-N	3.60x0.23m	1st/2nd C AD	‡ Not fully excavated
72 (71)	"	Pit	-	1.10x0.90x0.07m	-	‡
74 (73)	"	Post-hole	-	0.60x0.36x0.26m	n p	‡
76 (75)	"	Post-hole	-	0.35x0.12m	-	‡
78 (77)	"	Post-hole	-	0.55x0.15m	n p	‡
80 (79)	"	Post-hole	-	0.65x0.47x0.08m	-	‡
82 (81)	"	Post-hole	-	0.30x0.22x0.13m	-	‡
84 (83)	"	Pit	-	1.10x0.45x0.07m	n p	‡
90 (89)	C	Ditch	SE-NW	1.50x0.30m	-	‡
95 (91)	E	Gully	SE-NW	0.70x0.24m	Late 1st C AD	‡
98 (97)	"	Gully	SW-NE	0.80x0.20m	Late 1st C AD	‡ Parallel to and near 100
100 (99)	"	Gully	SW-NE	0.70x0.20m	-	‡

<u>Feature/ Fill Nos</u>	<u>Trench</u>	<u>Feature Type</u>	<u>Align- ment</u>	<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Additional Comments</u>
102 (101)	"	Pit	-	1,90x0,14m	-	*
104 (103)	"	Ditch	SE-NW	2,05x0,15m	1st C AD	* Not fully excavated
106 (105)	"	Ditch	SE-NW	1,60x0,45m	Late 1st C AD	* Not fully excavated; ? parallel and adjacent to 108
108 (107, 124)	"	Ditch	SE-NW	1,27x0,0,54m	Late 1st C AD	* Not fully excavated
111 (110)	"	Gully	SE-NW	0,38x0,12m	-	*
113 (112)	"	Gully	SE-NW	0,60x0,22m	-	* Not fully excavated
115 (116, 117)	"	Ditch	SW-NE	1,45x0,35m	-	*
122 (121)	G	Gully	SW-NE	1x0,20m	n p	*
126 (125)	"	??Gully	SW-NE	0,80x0,12m	-	* Not on plan
128 (127)	"	??Post-hole	-	0,55x0,13m	-	* Not on plan
130 (129)	"	??Post-hole	-	0,30x0,12m	-	* Not on plan
132 (131)	G/H	Ditch	SE-NW	2,30x0,35m	-	*
133 (134, 135)	E	Hollow	-	1 65x0,22m	Late 1st/early 2nd C AD	*
136 (137)	"	Pit	-	0,62x0,22m	n p	*
138	"	?Cobbled surface	-	5,20x0,18m	Late 1st/early 2nd C AD	*
143 (142)	M	Gully	E-W	W 0,40m	n p	* Unexcavated
145 (144)	"	Gully	E-W	W 0,80m	1st/2nd C AD	* Unexcavated
147 (146)	"	Ditch	S-N	W 1,30m	1st/2nd C AD	* Unexcavated
149 (148)	"	Ditch	SW-NE	W 1m	1st/2nd C AD	- Unexcavated
151 (150)	"	?Ditch	SE-NW	6,50x1m	1st/2nd C AD	* Unexcavated
153 (152)	"	Gully	SE-NW	0,60x0,20m	n p	* Unexcavated
156 (155)	"	Gully	SW-NE	W 0,60m	-	* Unexcavated
158 (157)	"	?Ditch	SE-NW	-	-	* Unexcavated
160 (159)	"	Ditch	S-N	W 0,90m	1st C AD	* Unexcavated
162 (161)	"	Post-hole	-	0,50x0,40m	n p	* Unexcavated
164 (163)	"	?Gully	SW-NE	W 050m	1st C AD	* Unexcavated

Table 2

Berkyn Manor Farm: all finds

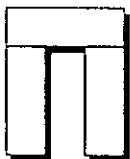
<u>Category</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Animal bone	89	731g
Burnt flint	36	1023g
Ceramic Building Material	23	2358g
Fired clay	70	1182g
Flint	4	19g
Pottery	441	3120g
Slag	1	19g

### Discussion

There is clear evidence for late Iron Age and Romano-British activity within the application area. It would appear that settlements were established on some of the higher gravel ridges. This phenomena has been noted elsewhere, including recently during work conducted by this Trust in the Yeo valley near Ilchester, Somerset. It would appear that the spatial development of a settlement through time may be observable in trenches A, B and E. The degree of archaeological preservation is high, as is the potential for retrieving environmental evidence and organic artefacts from waterlogged deposits.

### Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to J. Rayner and Sons Ltd. and especially to Mr Colin Rayner who kindly tolerated the disturbance to their crops. The project was managed by Richard Newman. The fieldwork was directed by Christine Farwell, supervised by Steve Tatler and carried out with the assistance of Sue Diamond, Joe Dortch, Kevin Ritchie and Andy Towle. The pottery was examined by Lorraine Mephram and the plan drawn by Karen Nichols. The site records are currently held by the Trust for Wessex Archaeology, indexed under the site code W367.



**THE TRUST FOR WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY LTD.**  
Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB  
Tel: (01722) 326867 Fax: (01722) 337562 E-mail: [wessexarch@dial.pipex.com](mailto:wessexarch@dial.pipex.com)  
Registered as an archaeological organisation with the Institute of Field Archaeologists  
Registered Charity No. 287786  
A company with limited liability registered in England No. 1712772