

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AT BLETCHLEY PARK,
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

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Buckinghamshire County Museum
Archaeological Service
for Lawson-Price



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Note: whilst every effort has been taken in the preparation and submission of this report in order to provide as complete an assessment as possible within the terms of the brief, the County Museum Archaeological Section cannot accept responsibility for consequences arising as a result of unknown and undiscovered sites or artefacts.

ABSTRACT

An archaeological evaluation carried out on part of an area of proposed development at Bletchley Park, NGR SP 8654 3425, revealed that part of a Roman site, CAS 3100, known to have existed to the north, extended into the area evaluated. Romano-British features excavated included a 'corn drier' and various ditches. Several Post-Medieval features were also encountered.

INTRODUCTION

Trial trenching was undertaken on part of an area of proposed development at Bletchley Park by Buckinghamshire County Museum Archaeological Service between 3rd and 9th November 1992, in accordance with a brief prepared by Mr. Paul Chadwick for Lawson-Price. Previous archaeological investigations both to the north of and within the area of evaluation had produced evidence of Romano-British activity (CAS 3100), particularly in the area to the northeast of the small area of woodland situated to the north of the project area. Further Roman finds have been reported to the west (CAS 3047). In addition a find of a Neolithic scraper had been reported in the area (CAS 3033).

The northern part of two contiguous areas under evaluation consisted of rough grassland with a gentle slope facing southeast. The southern part consisted of a flatter grassed area between existing buildings. In the recent past this second area had been the site of part of the Government Code

and Cypher School. The northern area had been used as a GPO/British Telecom training area for cable and post work; traces of practice telephone pole holes and service trenches were still visible on the surface of the northern area. The underlying geology consisted of Oxford Clay overlain by drift deposits of Boulder Clay. In the very northernmost corner a small deposit of sand and gravel of uncertain geological date is recorded on geological maps.

Excavations carried out in 1972 to the north of the area under evaluation beyond the wood had revealed the presence of a substantial Romano-British agricultural settlement dating from the first to fourth centuries A.D. (Mynard 1987, 39-40). There was also the hint of late Iron Age occupation in the vicinity. Small scale excavations were carried out in 1973 within the northern part of the project area, where the roadway from Bletchley Park meets the wood to the north of which the focus of the settlement was located. The work demonstrated that the spread of artefacts, including pottery and tile, extended south of the wood, but no structures were observed (Anon 1974, 7). In addition at this time a spread of Post-Medieval material was recorded to the northwest of this location. This was tentatively identified as debris from the demolition of the early eighteenth century Water Hall, although the precise location of this building is unclear.

METHODOLOGY

The work was undertaken in accordance with the brief set by

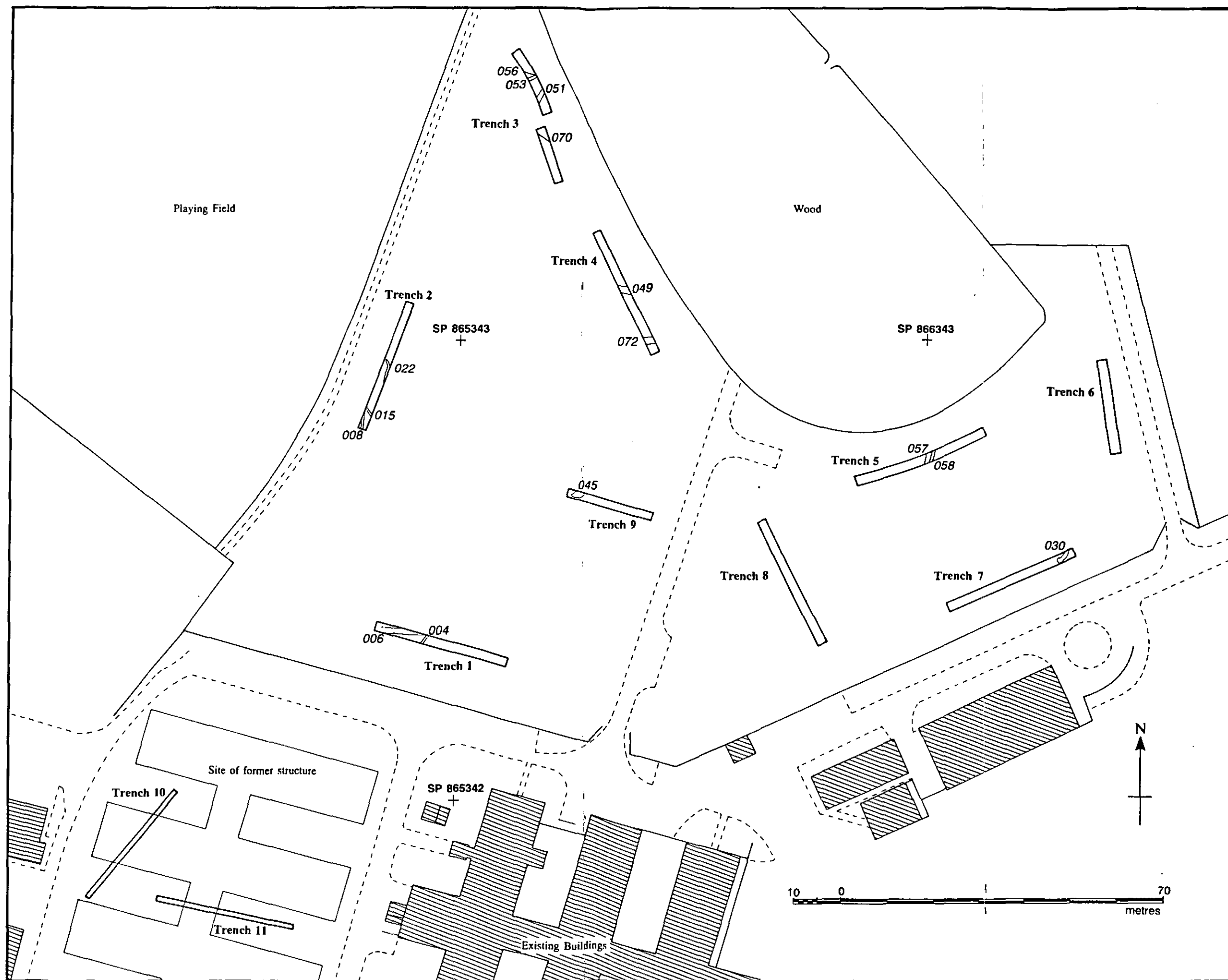


Figure 1 : Plan of area under evaluation showing trial trenches and archaeological features

the client's consultant, although the suggested locations of several of the trenches were adjusted to avoid service trenches and road surfaces too thick to break through. Eleven trial trenches were excavated (Fig.1); nine were 30m in length and two were 20m in length. The two trial trenches excavated in the southern area, the site of the government buildings, were dug with a 1m wide toothed bucket owing to the presence of rubble and concrete. The remaining trenches were excavated with a 1.8m ditching bucket. All trenches were machine dug to the tops of archaeological features or the undisturbed Boulder Clay. Features were recorded and examined with limited hand excavation to determine date and function where possible. The large Post-Medieval feature in Trench 3 was partly excavated by machine following limited hand excavation in order to determine its size and function.

DESCRIPTION OF TRENCHES

Assessment results are described by trench. Trench and feature locations are given in Figure 1.

Trench 1.

Trench 1 contained two ditches, Features 004 and 006. Feature 004 was a shallow cut, 0.2m wide and 0.08m deep, orientated northeast-southwest and was probably the lower part of an almost ploughed out ditch. No artefacts were found in the section excavated. Feature 006, located to the west of Feature 004, was a more substantial ditch, orientated west-east 1.25m wide and 0.57m deep, with steeply sloping sides and a flat bottom. The fill contained moderate quantities of bone and first century Romano-British pottery in coarse local fabrics including a large storage jar rim.

Context	Soil colour and type	Depth	Interpretat -ion	Finds
001	2.5Y 3/2 clay loam	0- 0.2m	Topsoil	None

002	10YR 4/4 clay loam	0.2-0.8m	Lower ploughsoil	None
003	10YR 5/6 clay	0.8m	Boulder Clay	None
004	Ditch cut	0.8-0.88m	R-B? ditch	
005	10YR 3/4 clay loam	0.8m	Fill of 004	None
006	Ditch cut	0.8-1.4m	R-B ditch	
026/007	10YR 3/3 clay loam	0.8m	Fill of 006	Pottery bone

Trench 2.

Trench 2 contained three ditches, Features 008, 015 and 021. Feature 008 was a shallow ditch orientated north-south with a rounded bottom 0.5m wide and 0.1m deep. Finds from the ditch consisted of small abraded sherds of Romano-British pottery and a piece of bone. Feature 015 was a small gully 0.2m wide and 0.05m deep, orientated northwest-southeast, and contained only fragments of bone. Feature 021, a ditch orientated northwest-southeast which appeared to terminate within the trench, contained fragments of bone and one small sherd of coarse pottery.

Context	Soil colour and type	Depth	Interpretation	Finds
014	10YR 3/6 clay loam	0-0.2m	Topsoil	None
018	10YR 3/6 silty sand	0.18-0.24m	Road surface	None
013	10YR 2/1 ash/cinders	0.22m	Road fill	None
012	10YR 3/4 clay loam with rubble and crushed stone	0.2-0.4m	Road fill	None
011	10YR 3/6 clay loam	0.3-0.7m	Lower ploughsoil	None
017	10YR 3/4 clay	0.6m	Lower ploughsoil	None
010	10YR 4/6 clay	0.7m	Boulder Clay	None
019	10YR 5/8 sandy clay	0.6m	Boulder Clay	None

008	Ditch cut	0.7-0.8m	R-B ditch	
009	10YR 3/3 clay loam	0.7-0.8m	Fill of 008	Pottery bone
015	Ditch cut	0.7-0.8m	R-B ditch	
016	10YR 3/3 clay loam	0.7-0.8m	Fill of 015	Bone
021	10YR 3/3 clay loam	0.8-0.9m	Fill of 022	Pottery bone
022	Ditch cut	0.8-0.9m	R-B ditch	

Trench 3.

Trench 3 contained four features, all apparently ditches. Two could not be completely defined, 070 because one edge lay beneath a concrete roadway 0.25m thick, 056 because one edge lay beyond the end of the trench (Figure 2). Feature 051, one of the ditches that was completely exposed, was orientated northeast-southwest and was 1m wide and 0.35m deep with a gently curving profile. One piece of tile/pottery was found in the fill. This ditch, unlike the other features in the trench, was not visible until the lower ploughsoil had been removed, indicating an earlier date; it was probably Romano-British. The other features all contained large quantities of Post-Medieval tile with occasional pieces of Roman tile. Feature 053 was a small ditch orientated northeast-southwest 1.25m wide and 0.45m deep with a curved profile. Feature 056 seemed to be a large ditch orientated west-east; it was only partly sectioned and was at least 0.8m deep and 4m wide. The lower part of the ditch filled rapidly with groundwater, preventing further excavation. The finds from the ditch were all concentrated in the upper portion of the fill immediately below a buried topsoil (066). Another ditch, Feature 070, was visible at the north end of the southern part of Trench 3. It was not excavated but seemed to be broadly similar in character to Feature 056 with a similar layer of tile in the upper part; it was orientated west-east. In the absence of artefacts other than tile it was not possible to date these features more precisely.

Context	Soil colour and type	Depth	Interpretation	Finds
068	10YR 4/3 clay loam	0-0.3m	Topsoil	None

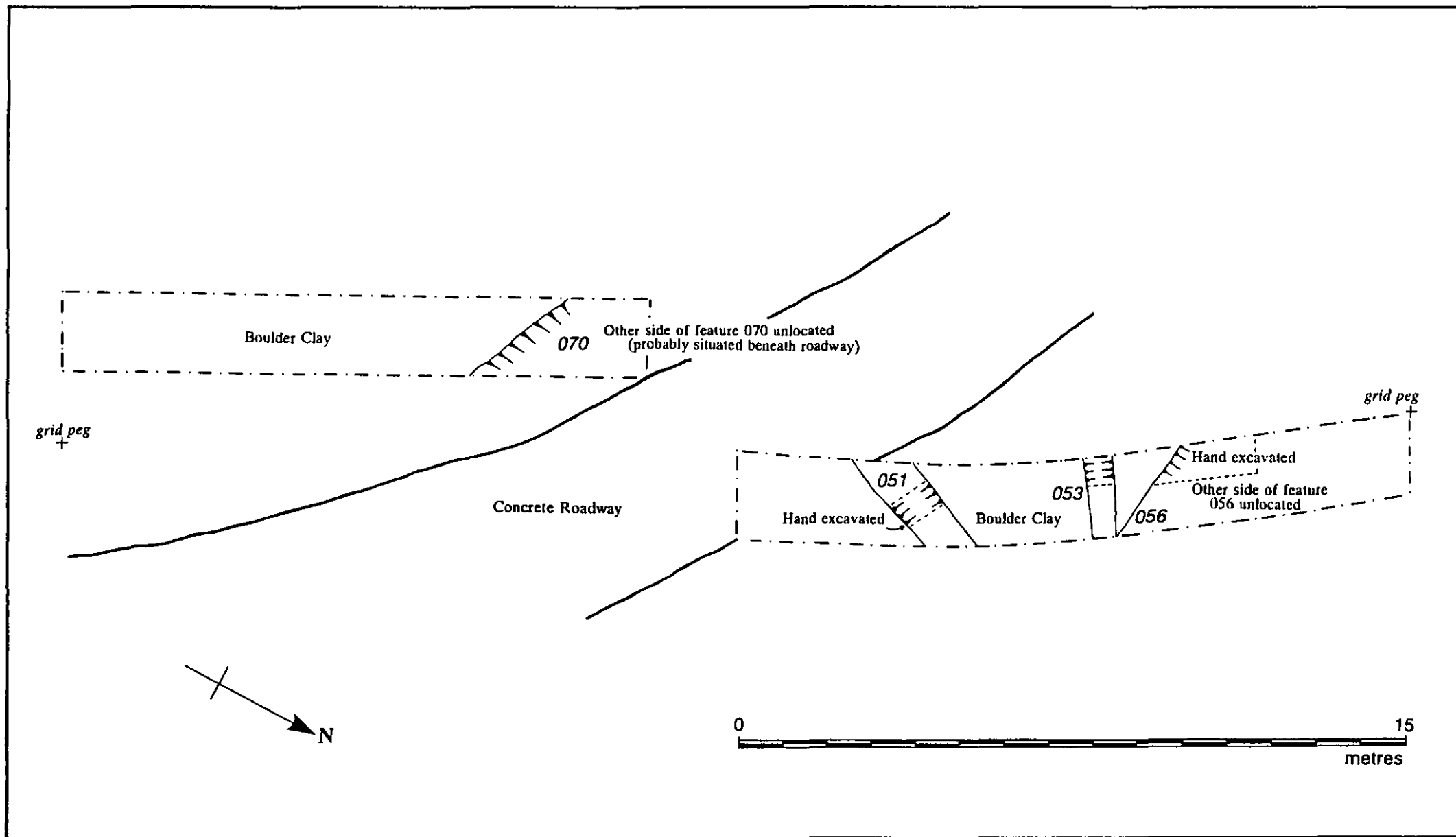


Figure 2 : Plan of Trench 3

069	10YR 5/4 clay loam	0.3-0.9m	Lower ploughsoil	None
066	10YR 4/2 clay loam	0.5-0.7m	Former ploughsoil	None
067	10YR 5/3-5/2 clay loam	0.15-0.5m	Fill layer	None
070	Ditch cut	0.3m	Post-Med. ditch	
071	10YR 5/3-4/3 clay loam	0.3m	Fill of 070	Unexcavated
051	Ditch cut	0.8-1.2m	R-B ditch?	
052	10YR 5/3 clay loam	0.8-1.2m	Fill of 051	Pottery
053	Ditch cut	0.6-1.1m	Post-Med. ditch	
054	10YR 5/3 clay loam	0.6-1.1m	Fill of 053	Pottery tile, bone
056	Ditch cut	0.75-1.7m	Post-Med. ditch	
055	10YR 5/3 clay loam	0.75-1.7m	Fill of 056	Tile, bone

Trench 4.

Trench 4 contained two features, both ditches orientated west-east. Feature 072 was not excavated owing to high groundwater levels. Feature 049 was sectioned to reveal a cut, 1.5m wide and 0.4m deep, with gently curving sides and a flat bottom. Both the feature fill, 050, and the lower ploughsoil south of Feature 049 produced significant quantities of Romano-British pottery, tile and bone, as well as a small fragment of crucible which had apparently been used for bronze casting.

Context	Soil colour and type	Depth	Interpretation	Finds
074	10YR 2/2 clay loam	0-0.2m	Topsoil	None
075	10YR 5/4 clay loam	0.2-0.7m	Lower ploughsoil	Pottery tile
049	Ditch cut	0.7-1.1m	R-B ditch	

050	10YR 4/6 clay loam	0.7-1.1m	Fill of 049	Pottery tile, crucible, bone
072	Ditch cut	0.7m	R-B ditch?	
073	10YR 4/3 clay loam	0.7m	Fill of 072	None

Trench 5.

Trench 5 contained one ditch orientated north-south. It had been recut at least once. The earliest cut, 057, was about 1.2m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.2m at which depth the high groundwater level prevented further exploration. No artefacts were found in the fill. A shallow recut, 058, on the same alignment ran along the eastern edge of 057. A sherd of late Iron Age/early Romano-British pottery was found in the fill (060).

Context	Soil colour and type	Depth	Interpretation	Finds
061	2.5Y 3/2 clay loam	0-0.15m	Topsoil	None
062	10YR 4/4 clay loam	0.15-0.5m	Lower ploughsoil	None
064	Compact gravel and hardcore	0-0.1m	Gravel road	None
065	Wire mesh layer	0.05m	Road bed	None
057	Ditch cut	0.5m	R-B? ditch	
059	10YR 4/3 clay loam	0.7m	Fill of 057	
058	Ditch cut	0.5-0.6m	R-B ditch	
060	10YR 5/3 clay loam	0.5-0.6m	Fill of 058	Pottery bone

Trench 6.

Trench 6 did not contain any archaeological features, and no artefacts were found. The presence of a number of service trenches and a concrete road to the east meant that the trench had to be relocated six metres westwards from the originally intended location.

Context	Soil colour and type	Depth	Interpretation	Finds
023	2.5Y 3/2 clay loam	0-0.2m	Topsoil	None

024	10YR 4/4 clay loam	0.2 - 0.6m	Lower ploughsoil	None
025	10YR 4/6 clay	0.6m	Boulder Clay	None

Trench 7.

Trench 7 contained Feature 030, a 'corn drier'. It was roughly 'T' shaped with a 3m long flue stretching to the northeast (Fig.3). A layer of large stones (037) overlay the flue. Both the stony layer and the feature had been disturbed by several practice service trenches. 037 was probably the remains of the superstructure of the corn drier. One of the stones proved to be a fragment of millstone grit with a dressed face, part of a quern. The flue was shallow and curved in profile terminating in a small bowl shaped pit at one end. Several of the fill layers were dense in carbonized material and charcoal; the sides and base of the flue were severely scorched. There was no sign that the flue had originally had a stone lining. Finds from the fill layers of the flue included Romano-British pottery and tile.

Context	Soil colour and type	Depth	Interpretation	Finds
027	2.5Y 3/2 clay loam	0-0.2m	Topsoil	None
028	10YR 4/4 clay loam	0.2-0.6m	Lower ploughsoil	None
029	10YR 4/6 clay	0.6m	Boulder Clay	None
030/038	Pear-shaped shallow feature	0.6m	R-B 'corn drier' flue	Pottery bone
031	10YR 2/1 charcoal	0.6-0.75m	Charcoal layer	Pottery bone
032	10YR 4/6 silty clay	0.6-0.75m	Fill of stokehole	Pottery tile, flake
033	10YR 2/1 charcoal	0.6-0.65m	Charcoal	None
034	10YR 2/2 sandy silt	0.6m	Scorched Boulder Clay	None
035	2.5Y 2/0 clay	0.7m	Scorched Boulder Clay	None
036	2.5Y 3/2 clayey silt	0.6-0.7m	Fill of flue	Pottery

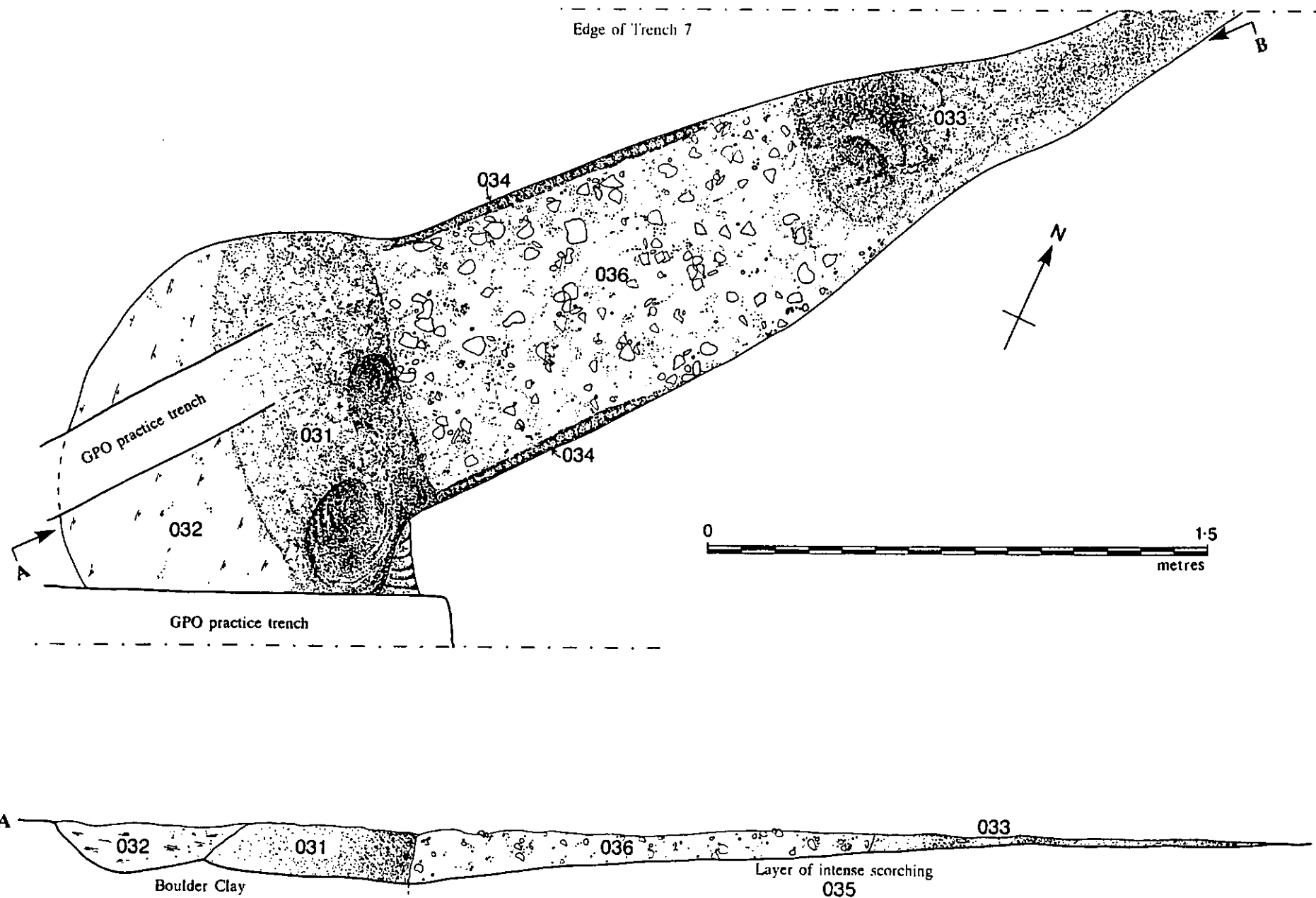


Figure 3 : Plan and Section of Feature 030

037	Layer of large stones	0.6m	Remains of corn drier superstructure	Quern-stone
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Trench 8.

Trench 8 did not contain any archaeological features, and no artefacts were found. The presence of a number of 'practice' service trenches had resulted in a moderate degree of disturbance to the subsoil. A dense lens of modern concrete tile in the topsoil was recorded.

Context	Soil colour and type	Depth	Interpretation	Finds
041	2.5Y 3/2 clay loam	0-0.25m	Topsoil	None
040	10YR 4/4 clay loam	0.25-0.6m	Lower ploughsoil	None
039	10YR 4/6 clay	0.6m	Boulder Clay	None

Trench 9.

Trench 9 contained one feature, 045, which was either a ditch terminal or part of a pit. A partly excavated section across the feature produced a flint flake and an abraded sherd of coarse gritty pottery. The date of this feature could not be ascertained from the limited evidence available.

Context	Soil colour and type	Depth	Interpretation	Finds
042	2.5Y 3/2 clay loam	0-0.25m	Topsoil	None
043	10YR 4/4 clay loam	0.25-0.6m	Lower ploughsoil	None
044	10YR 4/6 clay	0.6m	Boulder Clay	None
045	Ditch/pit cut	0.6- >0.8m	Ditch cut	
046	10YR 4/4	0.6- >0.8m	Ditch fill	Pottery flake

Trench 10.

Trench 10 did not contain any archaeological features, nor were any artefacts found. The layer of building rubble which was present in the middle of the trench was probably the remains of the wing of part of the building marked on Ordnance Survey maps.

Context	Soil colour and type	Depth	Interpretation	Finds
076	10YR 3/1-4/1 clay loam	0-0.1m	Topsoil	None
077	2.5Y 6/1 clay	0.1-0.4m	Clay cap to seal rubble	None
079	Brick rubble	0.4-0.6m	Demolition layer	None
078	10YR 5/4 clay loam	0.6-0.8m	Lower ploughsoil	None

Trench 11.

Trench 11 did not contain any archaeological features, nor were any artefacts found. Three wall foundations, two of them substantial, were encountered; these related to the central corridor of the GCCS buildings marked on Ordnance Survey maps.

Context	Soil colour and type	Depth	Interpretation	Finds
080	10YR 3/1-4/1 clay loam	0-0.1m	Topsoil	None
081	2.5Y 6/1 clay	0.1-0.4m	Clay cap to seal rubble	None
082	Brick rubble	0.4-1.1m	Demolition layer	None
083	10YR 5/4 clay loam	0.75-0.9m	Lower ploughsoil	None

DISCUSSION

The evaluation's principal goal has been to determine the presence, extent and character of any archaeological remains within the area and to assess their condition.

GENERAL STRATIGRAPHY

In general the trenches contained a consistent succession of Boulder Clay, lower ploughsoil, topsoil except where recent activity such as road building had disturbed the stratigraphy.

With the exception of three features in Trench 3, all of the features discovered were visible only below the lower ploughsoil, cut into the Boulder Clay. Based on the evidence from the features in Trench 3, it is likely that the lower ploughsoil was formed in the medieval period, and, at least in the northwest corner of the site, had not been exposed to more recent ploughing.

Trenches 1-9: evidence for disturbance

There had been some recent disturbance to the soils in all of the trenches by the digging of practice service trenches and postholes by GPO trainees. These features were visible in both the lower ploughsoil and the Boulder Clay in Trenches 3 to 9. They appeared as narrow straight edged slots in the case of the service trenches and circular post hole cuts for telephone poles. Both types were filled with a dark loam with chalk fragments. These features were particularly dense in the area of Trench 8. Throughout the field, unfilled trenches and post holes were partially visible in the long grass. The service trenches usually only went down as far as the Boulder Clay and so had not destroyed archaeological features at a greater depth. Feature 030 in Trench 7 had not been seriously disturbed despite being cut by two such practice trenches. Damage to features cut deeply into the subsoil had been negligible and in general disturbance to archaeological deposits by recent activity seems to have been less than anticipated.

Trenches 10 and 11: evidence for disturbance

Trenches 10 and 11, situated in the grassy area where former buildings belonging to the Government Code and Cypher School had been located, presented a more disturbed profile. The construction and demolition of the buildings had truncated the lower ploughsoil and in places, particularly along the foundations, gone down into the boulder clay. The rubble from the demolition had been levelled and sealed over with a clay cap and a layer of turf. While no features were encountered in Trenches 10 and 11, it was possible to demonstrate that the lower ploughsoil which overlay Roman features elsewhere in the project area still survived, albeit in a truncated state, except where wall foundations and service trenches cut through it. Thus the degree of disturbance was not so great that any large feature in this area such as a ditch or pit would not have survived.

Romano-British Features.

The locations of features discovered in Trenches 1-9 are illustrated in Figure 1. The Romano-British features were found to be fairly evenly distributed across the project area, although the density of artefacts was greater towards the area of previously known Roman activity, in the north around the wooded area. All but one of the features were ditches, with the exception of Feature 030 in Trench 7, a type usually described as a 'corn drier'.

Feature 030 consisted of a shallow flue about 3m long, with a

bowl shaped pit at one end. The sides and base were intensely scorched and there was much charcoal amongst the fill. The feature therefore belongs to that class of structures usually, but misleadingly, referred to as "corn driers". The form of such features varies from a T-shaped flue with a pit at one end to dumb-bell shaped features. Unusually, the Bletchley Park example contained no stone flue lining, and the scorched earth would suggest that no such lining had ever existed. The flue extended beyond the trench edge at the northeast end, and at the southwest a GPO practice trench had clipped the edge. The greater part of the feature probably lay within the excavated area. The pit at the southwestern end may have been either a stokehole or a cross-flue. The stone layer, 037, which overlay the shallow pit may have been debris from part of the superstructure.

Several different functions have been proposed for these features and it is possible that they were used for widely differing purposes, including perhaps grain/crop processing, malting and even in some cases ore processing (e.g. Reynolds and Langley 1979). Soil samples were taken for possible future analysis. Corn driers tend to occur amongst agricultural buildings or towards the periphery of settlement. The location of 030 may therefore be an indication of the approximate extent of the activity associated with the complex of buildings examined in the 1970s.

All of the other Romano-British features encountered consisted

of ditches. Pottery finds in these were sparse, a fact which may be interpreted in terms of their distance from the focus of the settlement. Only Trench 4 produced significant quantities of pottery, bone and tile. This trench was located in the vicinity of the supposed location of unpublished excavations carried out in 1974 when considerable quantities of material were recorded, but no structures observed. The Post-Medieval features in Trench 3 also produced some Roman tile but no pottery of any date.

Feature 006, a ditch, in Trench 1 contained pottery made from coarse poorly fired fabrics, in forms indicative of a first century date. The density of finds was contrary to the overall trend across the assessment area of a marked reduction in finds recovery at greater distances from the supposed main site.

Post-Medieval Features.

The three Post-Medieval features located in Trench 3 (070, 052, 056) contained dense concentrations of tile in their upper fill layers, as well as occasional fragments of bone. No pottery or other finds occurred in these features. The presence of tile would normally be indicative for the proximity of a building, but the absence of other evidence for occupation, is perplexing. No buildings are recorded in this area either in the enclosure map or in the first edition of the Ordnance Survey, suggesting that the remains predate the nineteenth century. Two buildings are documented as having

stood in Bletchley Park between 1500 and 1800 (Low 1971), although neither can be positively identified with this area.

The one large ditch, Feature 056, was substantial enough to be part of the moat of a moated lodge recorded in 1563 (*VCH, Bucks IV, 279*), or of Water Hall constructed in 1711. If Feature 070 was a parallel ditch forming the opposite side of a moat, the resulting platform would have been very small. RAF vertical aerial photographs taken in 1954 show earthworks adjacent to the area where Trench 3 was located. These earthworks appear to align with Feature 056, and form an 'L' shape to the northwest of the trial trench. If this ditch were continued to make a moat, the resulting platform would be about 40 or 50m square. Feature 070 would then be a second outer ditch; the aerial photographs are not clear enough to confirm the presence of a second ditch. The field name recorded for the field adjacent to this area was 'Lodge Coppice' (Bennitt, no date). The date of this field name is uncertain; Bennitt's work was published in the earlier part of this century.

The methodology reviewed

Given the known extent of recent disturbance, evaluation by means of pattern trial trenching was the most reliable and efficient method. It may be confidently assumed that all spatially extensive features within the assessment area have been located. On this basis, it has proved possible to construct a tentative delineation of the boundaries of Romano-

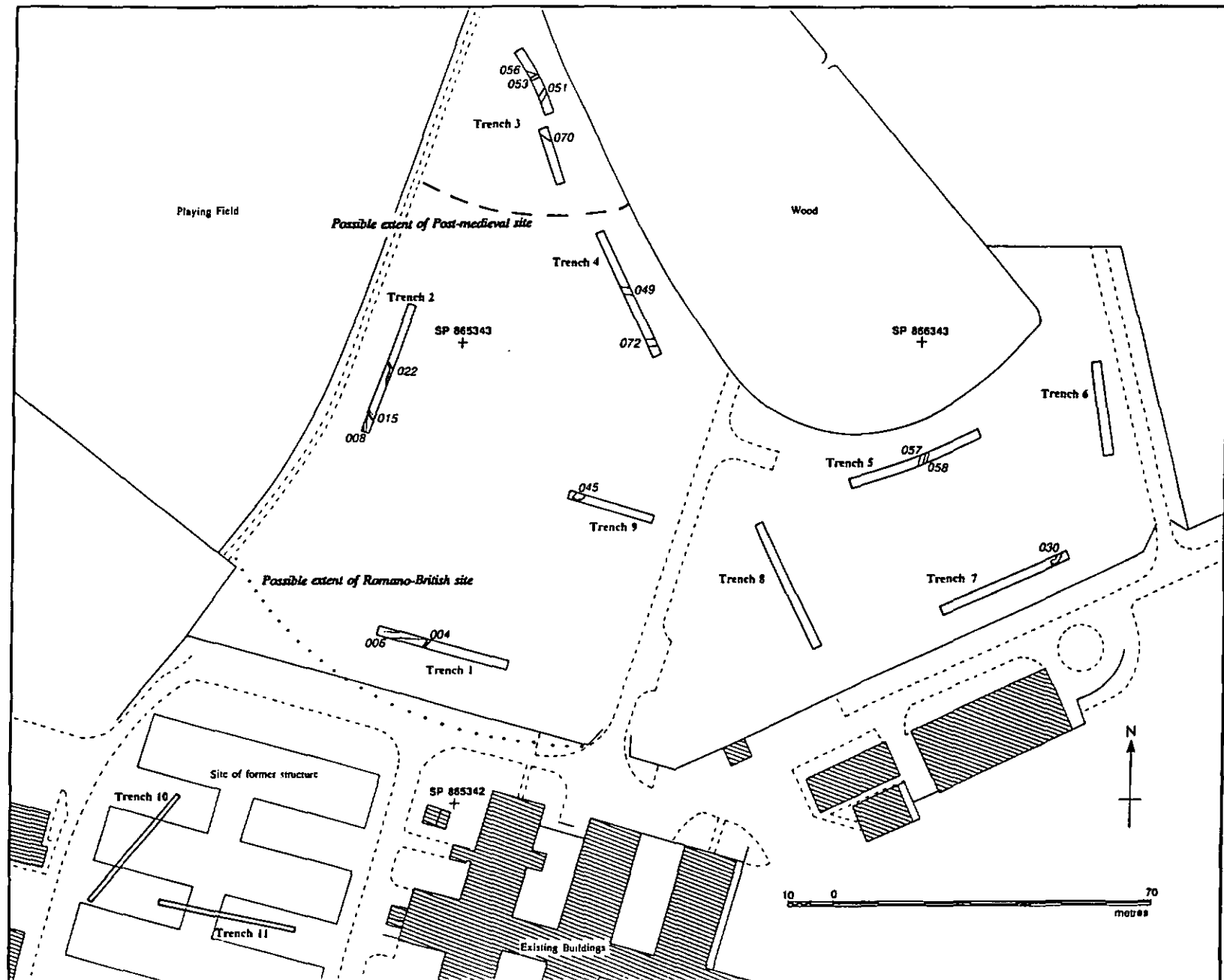


Figure 4 : Plan of evaluation area indicating tentative limits of Post-medieval and Romano-British features

British and Post-Medieval activity (Figure 4). In the case of the Romano-British activity, this appears to have been generally dispersed, although the main focus was north of the assessment area. The Post-Medieval features on the other hand appear to be restricted to a quite tightly defined area.

It is possible, therefore, that the overall extent of Romano-British features, characterised for the most part by narrow ditches, may be greater than was actually demonstrated by this evaluation. Additionally, it is possible that small, isolated features of other periods may lie within the assessment area.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation revealed evidence of Roman activity throughout the area defined by Trenches 1-9, with the area closest to the woods and to the southeast being most prolific. A small concentration was also observed in Trench 1. Other than the corn drier, all the features were ditches, and the evidence suggests that the area under investigation lay on the periphery of the Roman settlement previously recorded in 1972-3. The Post-Medieval features encountered in Trench 3 could relate to a moated lodge recorded in 1563. Little evidence for prehistoric activity was encountered; only two flint flakes were found; some of the pottery recovered from Romano-British features may be late-Iron Age in date.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX

Appendix: Finds catalogue.

Context	Finds description	Quantity (weight)
7	Sand tempered pottery Shell tempered pottery Grog tempered pottery Bone	1 1 3 12
9	Sand tempered pottery Coarse tempered fired clay Bone	1 2 1
16	Bone	5
21	Grog tempered pottery Sand tempered pottery Shell tempered pottery Bone	2 1 1 9
26	Storage jar rim, grog tempered Grog tempered pottery Sand tempered pottery Shell tempered pottery Coarse tempered fired clay Bone	5 21 1 2 4 18
30	Sand tempered pottery Bone	4 1
31	Sand tempered pottery Shell tempered pottery Grog tempered pottery Bone	7 4 2 2
32	Shell tempered pottery Sand tempered pottery Flint flake	1 1 1
36	Sand tempered pottery	1
37	Quernstone fragment	1 (1.3kg)
46	Coarse sand tempered pottery Flint flake	1 1

50	Sand tempered bowl, slip lines	15
	Sand tempered pottery	26
	Sand tempered pottery, burnish	3
	Sand tempered pottery, incised	3
	Shell tempered pottery	14
	Grog tempered pottery	10
	Sand tempered crucible sherd with slag deposits on surface	1
	Coarse tempered fired clay	2
	Sand tempered tile	2 (0.2kg)
	Shell tempered tile (imbrex)	2 (0.6kg)
	Shell tempered tile (tegula)	15 (1.1kg)
	Iron nail fragments	3
	Bone	110
	Oyster shell	4
52	Shell tempered pottery/tile	1
54	Grog tempered pottery	1
	Shell tempered tile (Roman)	2 (0.25kg)
	Roof tile (Post-Med)	32 (1.5kg)
	Roof tile, peg hole (Post-Med)	5 (0.27kg)
55	Shell tempered tile (Roman)	4 (0.4kg)
	Roof tile	48 (2.6kg)
	Roof tile, peg hole (Post-Med)	3 (0.2kg)
	Bone	4
60	Late Iron Age pottery	1
75	Reduced bowl, sand tempered	4
	Bowl, sand tempered	2
	Sand tempered pottery	1
	Shell tempered pottery	1
	Grog tempered pottery	3
	Shell tempered tile	9
	Roof tile (Post-Med.)	1
	Grog tempered tile	1
	Earthenware field-drain	1