
THE HERTFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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THE FOOTBALL CLUB
PARK ROAD, WARE

PHASE 2

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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THE FOOTBALL CLUB, PARK ROAD, WARE **AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION, PHASE 2**

INTRODUCTION (Fig.1)

Between late June and early July, 1995, the Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust completed the second phase of an archaeological evaluation within the grounds of Ware Football Club, Park Road, Ware (NGR TL 354 145). The evaluation was undertaken in advance of proposed development of the G.M.S factory complex. The archaeological evaluation was commissioned by Glaxo Manufacturing Services Ltd.

TOPOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The site is located to the north of the river Lea, close to the eastern boundary of the G.M.S. factory complex.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The origins of the civil Roman town of Ware (largely beneath the present G.M.S factory) grew from the construction of the military road (later Ermine Street) as it crossed the River Lea. The road linked Roman Londinium to Lincoln.

Archaeological evaluations and excavations undertaken by the Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust (HAT) and its predecessor the Hart Archaeological Unit (HAU), in response to the development of the G.M.S factory site, have over the years revealed substantial remains of the Roman town, in addition to earlier and later periods of archaeology.

During 1976 development work, north of Ware Football Club, revealed four Roman burials, one of which was laid within a lead-lined coffin.

East of the Football Club, within the area known as The Buryfields, several large Roman ditches and a number of late Roman burials were recorded by HAU during sewage improvement works undertaken in 1977.

Further excavations undertaken between 1977 and 1979, by HAU, within the G.M.S factory complex, revealed scatters of Mesolithic flint within brickearth horizons overlain by Roman occupation levels. The principal features of Roman date revealed by the excavations comprised: the surface and ditches of Ermine Street, and the remains of

contemporary buildings (likely shops) which fronted the busy road. One of the buildings is interpreted as a potter's workshop.

Between early October and Christmas, 1989, an excavation undertaken by HAT in response to the construction of the new P11 building within the G.M.S factory site, revealed a second length of the Ermine Street with Roman workshops either side.

Phase I of the evaluation of the Ware Football Club ground was undertaken by HAT in September, 1993. The principal aims of the investigation was to identify and record the depth of overburden sealing the archaeological levels (where the latter are present).

The northern and eastern route of the new G.M.S access road within The Buryfields was the subject of an archaeological evaluation (undertaken by the HAT in December, 1994). The evaluation revealed ditches and pits of Roman date immediately to the north of the Football Club boundary. A notable find is a bronze bracelet.

Also part of the access project, six small trenches were excavated in advance of tree planting on the east side of The Buryfields. A substantial layer containing Roman finds (probably the fill of a large ditch) was found within Test Pit 4.

The Trust returned to The Buryfields in May, 1995, to excavate the small area of Roman activity identified within Phase II of the evaluation. In addition to the ditches and pits previously identified, twelve Roman burials were found. Some of the inhumations had been buried with grave goods. The principle finds are a ring and a small bracelet. The cemetery is thought likely to continue southwards, beneath the grounds of Ware Football Club.

Further excavations undertaken during June, 1995, by HAT within the G.M.S factory, immediately west of the Ware Football Club and part of Glaxo's Access Project, revealed the line of Ermine Street. A large number of Roman features were found either side of the road. The principal features comprised the frontage of a Roman timber building, a well, a pond, and domestic and industrial pits.

METHODS OF WORK AND OBJECTIVES (Fig.2)

The evaluation comprised a single trench, numbered WFC 8. The trench measured 25 m by 9-11.5 m, and was opened using a mechanical excavator fitted with a smooth-bladed, ditching bucket. A live electricity cable, on the west side of the trench, caused the width of the trench to be reduced. Archaeological features were found at a maximum depth of 1 m. The work on site adhered to the project specification.

All archaeological features revealed within the trench were examined, and between 50-70% of the deposits were fully excavated.

The evaluation was designed to locate and record archaeological features within Trench WFC 8. The results are considered in conjunction with the evidence of the earlier phase of the evaluation undertaken in 1993 (WFC 1-7). The findings are also reviewed in the light of the results from the numerous adjacent archaeological investigations, and allow a consideration of the development and status of the Roman town.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE (Fig.3)

PREHISTORIC PERIOD

A small number of residual struck flint flakes, found within Roman features, are suggestive of the former presence of prehistoric horizons within the brickearth.

ROMAN PERIOD (43- 410 AD)

Phase 1A. 1st-2nd Century

Two features (F124, F138) represent the earliest activity revealed within the trench. F124 comprised a large, shallow, rectilinear cut, filled by a single deposit (L125) of compacted gravel. F138 was a well-defined flat-bottomed linear ditch with rounded terminations. The ditch was oriented N/S, and was filled by a loose silty sand deposit (L139). Neither feature contained finds, and both were truncated by pits (F144, F150) which formed part of a later rectangular structure.

The features are tentatively identified. The function of F124 may have been to create a firm surface or support pad. The ditch (F138), although undated, may have been a back boundary to activity contemporary with the earlier Roman town, east of the Ermine Street.

Phase 1B. 1st-2nd Century

A number of sub-circular pits (F119, F121, F128, F134, F136, F140, F144, F150) and postholes (F126, F163, F165, F167) appeared to form the vestiges of a rectangular structure, oriented NNE/SSW. The structure was 5.5 m by 8 m. The NE and NW corners comprised double or re-cut post-pits which suggest that the structure was repaired. Four of the pits (F121, F128, F136, F140) contained greyware pottery sherds and/or samian. Pit F121 contained a finely decorated sherd derived from a 1st/2nd-century samian bowl; the rim of a jar with cordoned decoration, and part of a carved bone pin with a simple decorated head. Pit F128 contained 1st/2nd-century samian pottery, small tile fragments and the hooked rim from a coarse shelly-ware jar.

F171 comprised the vestiges of a short, silt-filled gully or ditch which is tentatively identified as representing part of a back boundary feature contemporary with a line of four post holes (F155, F157, F161, F169). The latter were constructed on a comparable E/W alignment. F171 contained greyware pottery. The gully or ditch was post-dated by a later (re-aligned) boundary (F169). A complete base from a grey-ware bowl and a sherd of red Hadham ware (2nd-century) had been used as packing material for post F159 (cut by F161).

A boundary, immediately SW of the rectangular structure, post-dating the ditch or gully F171, comprised two linear ditches (F130, F169), and two post holes (F142, F148). The boundary was extended SE by the cutting of a third ditch (F146), and it is possible that the boundary is a re-alignment of F171.

On the basis of their finds, the features found towards the northern end of the trench: a large post-pit (F115), a pit (F104) and two post holes (F106, F113), are thought likely to have been contemporary with the structure and boundary. All except F115, contained 1st- and 2nd-century pottery, including sherds from shallow samian bowls and platters, some decorated with grapes and vine leaves. F113 contained a red-ware flagon handle, decorated with a white slip, which was produced at Hadham during the 2nd century. F106 contained the handle from a large amphora, which was probably imported from Spain. A large mortaria rim was retrieved from the fill of F104. The remainder of the pottery comprises sherds from greyware cooking and storage vessels. The features also contained small mammal, cow, pig, and sheep/goat bones.

Phase 1C. 1st-2nd Century

F102 was a silted gully (truncated by F110) which was aligned E/W. The silt (L103) contained an almost complete wide-mouthed Roman greyware jar, and other locally-produced sherds which date from the 2nd century onwards. A few small fragments of samian (1st-2nd century), animal bone (including the lower jaw of a cow), and tile fragments (10) were also found.

A second, silted gully (F117, = F111), aligned NNW/SSE, may be contemporary with F102. Both may represent a later boundary which physically post-dates the rectangular structure (Pit F119) and the contemporary boundary. Noteworthy finds from F117 are a sherd from a decorated (combed) coarse Roman storage jar, and part of the handle from an imported amphora.

Phase 2. 2nd-4th Century

F110 was a substantial pit which cut F102, and measured 3 m in diameter and 1.1 m deep. It was backfilled by two distinct fills (L108, L123), each of which contained large quantities of Roman pottery and animal bone. The stratification on the site would indicate that the pit was cut during the 2nd-3rd century, and by means of pottery dating, back-filled during the 3rd-4th century.

The pottery from the backfills comprises mainly locally-produced greywares, much of it is fine and well-made. Some of the sherds have calcified internal surfaces, suggesting that they are derived from vessels which were used to carry or store water. Over 20 vessels are represented, including some with rilled decoration.

A number of 'red-ware' sherds manufactured between the 3rd - 4th century are also present and were probably produced at the Hadham kilns, an important area for pottery production during the Roman period. The most unusual example is the top of a flagon decorated with a human face (face decorations were popular during the 3rd and 4th century).

Sherds from at least four colour-coated 'poppy-head' beakers (named after their unusual shape) and a partially complete colour-coat 'dog-bowl' with a lattice-decorated interior (named because a hunting scene of a hound chasing a hare is usually depicted on the exterior) are present within the assemblage. The vessels were produced in the lower Nene Valley region, Northamptonshire, and date from the 3rd-4th century.

The presence of sherds of samian ware 1st-2nd century (one small base has been stamped with the Gaulish potters name), imitations of samian '*terra-rubra*' and other pottery types including: black-burnished storage jars, cooking pots, and a large cream-coloured mortaria bowl common in the 2nd and early 3rd century indicate the varied nature of the back-filled deposits.

Cattle, pig sheep and/or goat bones were also recovered. The presence of larger bones and horn-cores from cattle suggest that animals were butchered nearby.

The presence of between 50 and 100 roof-tile fragments and several large nails within the assemblage are likely indicative of the status of the surrounding tiled-roofed structures which fronted the Ermine Street road.

Also retrieved was a fragment of vessel glass, and a small amount of iron tap slag. The presence of tap slag suggests that iron smithing-smelting may have been undertaken within the near vicinity.

F177 found immediately south of quarry pit F110 comprised a large circular pit (coned in profile and with a flat base), which measured 6 m in diameter. The pit contained two fills, the primary deposit (L178) contained no finds and appeared to have accumulated naturally. The upper fill (L176) is interpreted as a deliberate back-filled deposit, similar to the primary backfilling (L123) of pit F177, and contained small sherds of samian and several rims and body sherds of well-made greyware vessels (some decorated), similar to the finely made greywares found within the F110.

The Post-Medieval Period (1650-1800)

The ground surface within the vicinity of the Ware Football club and The Buryfields area was raised sometime during the Post Medieval period. The imported soil (L101), now overlain by topsoil (L100), comprises a dark grey-brown silt loam, which was recorded up to 0.8 m thick within the exposed section faces of the trench. The layer contained brick, tile and clay pipe fragments. The occurrence of so many Roman finds suggest that the archaeological horizons were either disturbed or truncated (hence the shallow nature of the features). An interesting find from the layer is an iron key, made to fit a Roman barrel lock.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation revealed a small number of residual struck flint, Roman remains spanning several centuries, and evidence of a substantial re-modelling of the land surface during the Post Medieval period.

The Roman archaeology may be interpreted as the 'back plots' to the houses and workshops which fronted the eastern side of Ermine Street. The latter is located c.35-40 m to the west, and adjacent building remains were revealed during an excavation undertaken in June, 1995. The features and finds indicate that the character and size of the plots changed over the centuries with the increased use of the Ermine Street.

The pottery assemblages from the site date from the 1st to the 4th century and comprise large quantities of greyware sherds. This common type of pottery is known to have been produced within the Roman town of Ware. The presence of imported pottery types manufactured in the Nene valley, and more locally at Hadham and Verulamium, provide an insight into the local trade links of the town. The imported samian vessels from Gaul and amphorae from Spain remind us that Britain was part of the Roman Empire and imported the more luxurious items and goods from overseas.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Concordance of Finds

CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION	TR	SPOT DATE	POTTERY SHERDS	SAMIAN SHERDS	BUILDING MATERIAL	FLINT	ANIMAL BONE	NOTES AND SMALL FINDS
U/S		8		68	8	3 brick/tile frag 5 tile	1 flake	13 Frags	1 clay-pipe frag
101	levelling layer	8	Post-Med	6					
103	fill of gully 102	8	Roman	23	1	10 tile frags	2 flakes	5 frags	
105	fill of pit 104	8	Roman	8	11		1 flake	4 frags	Pot includes mortaria rim. Some samian slightly abraded
107	fill of pit 106	8	Roman	5	1			1 frag	
108	upper fill of quarry pit 110	8	Roman	385 +2 profiles	11	77 bri/tile frags 9 tile frags	1 burnt frag	155 frags	Mortaria present. 12 frags of oyster shell. 2 samian decorated. SF.1 - Bronze frag. SF.2,4,5,7,9,10 and 12 - Iron nails. SF.3 - Slag. SF.11 - Iron Obj. SF.13 - Pot sherd with face.
112	fill of ditch 111	8	Roman	1	1	1 brick/tile frag	1 flake		Amphora present.
114	fill of pit 113	8	Roman	12	1			9 frags	
118	fill of ditch 117	8	Roman	6		1 tile			Amphora present.
122	fill of pit 121	8	Roman	26	3		2 flakes	12 frags	SF.6 - Worked bone pin
123	primary fill of quarry pit 110	8	Roman	160 +1 profile	2	4 brick frags 1 tile frag	2 pieces	16 frags	Amphora and mortaria present. 1 Charcoal frag. 3 Oyster. SF.8 - Glass frag
129	fill of pit 128	8	Roman	19	1	1 brick frag	1 flake	4 frags	
133	fill of gully 132	8	?				1 flake		
135	fill of pit 134	8	?				1 flake		
137	fill of pit 136	8	Roman	2				5 frags	2 Oyster
141	fill of pit 140	8	Roman	2					
156	fill of pit 155	8	Roman	2					
160	fill of pit 159	8	Roman	3			1 flake		
170	fill of ditch 169	8	?Roman			1 tile	4 flakes	burnt frags	'Dump' of tiny burnt bone frags in eastern terminal
172	fill of ditch 171	8	Roman	1					
176	upper fill of pit 177	8	Roman	18	1		13 frags		

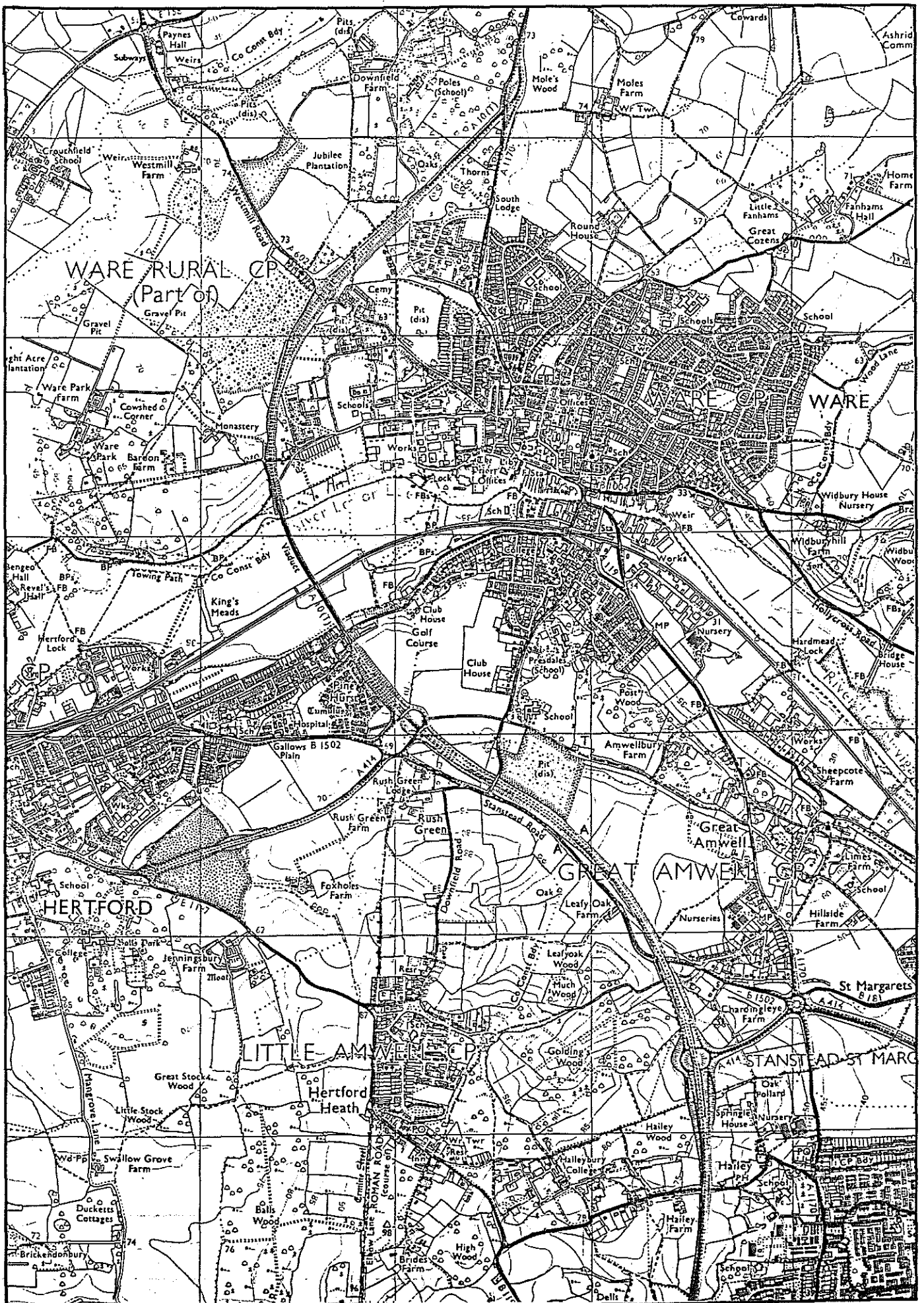


Fig.1 Site Location Plan

Fig.2 GMS Access Project, Location of Archaeological Trenches

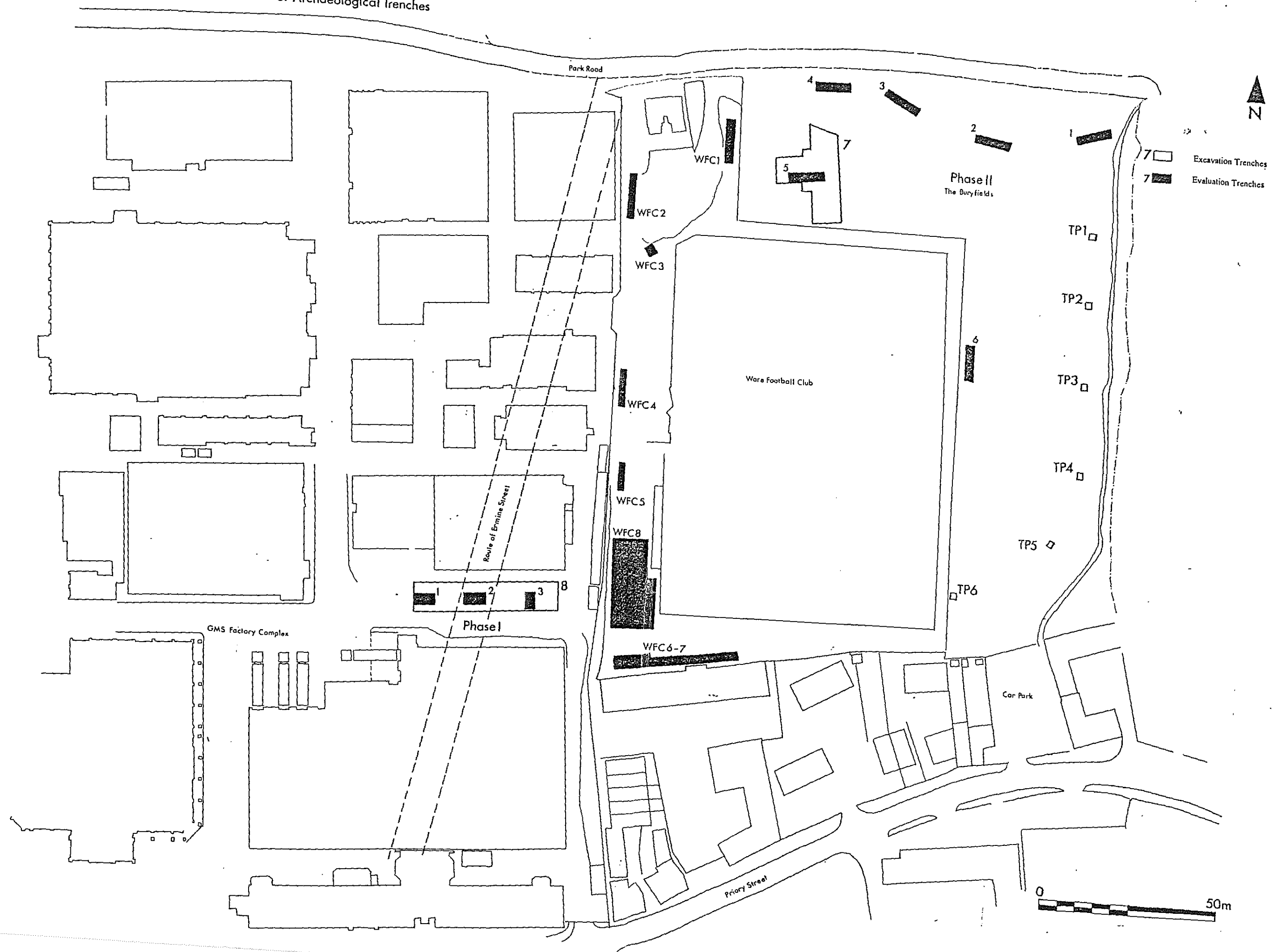


Fig.3 Plan of Archaeological Features

