

SMR Processing date:

GIS? ✓

PRN= 04288

EvUID ~~ESA~~ 3326

Source UID = SA9313

**AN EXCAVATION AT THE ROMAN
ROADSIDE SETTLEMENT AT HEATH ROAD,
NEAR WHITCHURCH, 1991: SITE NARRATIVE**

**GIFFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE WITH
SHROPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE**

GIFFORD
Consulting Engineers

Shropshire

Leisure Services

Michael Blanch T.D., B.Soc.Sc., Ph.D., F.B.J.M., A.M.A., Dip.Ed.
County Leisure Services Officer

G. I. McCabe, MA, F.M.A.
Chief Cultural Services Officer,
Winston Churchill Building,
Radbrook Centre,
Radbrook Road,
Shrewsbury, SY3 9BJ.
Telefax: 0743 254047

MEMORANDUM TO:

Miss P Ward
Property & Planning Services Dept.
SHIREHALL

10 December 1991

My ref.

Your ref.

Tel. Shrewsbury (0743)

Please ask for

MDW/NU

254018

HEATH ROAD, WHITCHURCH

I enclose for your information and incorporation into the SMR a copy of the site narrative report on the above excavation carried out earlier this year.

M.D. Watson

M D Watson
Senior Archaeologist

Enc



HEATH ROAD (V), WHITCHURCH, 1991

CONTENTS

	Page No.
INTRODUCTION	1
RESULTS	3
DISCUSSION	9
OVERVIEW	11
REFERENCES	13

HEATH ROAD (V) 1991

H.R. HANNAFORD & D.J.P. MASON

An Excavation at the Roman Roadside Settlement at Heath Road, near Whitchurch, 1991

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This report outlines the preliminary results of a four week excavation undertaken during the period June - July 1991. The site lies approximately 2.5km SSE of the centre of modern Whitchurch. It occupies gently undulating ground and is traversed from north to south by Heath Road, the former A41 Trunk road, which in this section reputedly follows the line of the Viroconium to Mediolanum Roman road.

Road improvements in 1972 led to the discovery of a hitherto unknown Romano-British settlement at Heath Road (SMR No. 4288; Rogerson and Greuter) about 2.5km outside Whitchurch; itself the site of an early Roman auxiliary fort and subsequent civilian settlement. The Heath Road establishment would appear to have straddled the Roman road from Viroconium Cornoviorum (Wroxeter) to Deva (Chester). Further roadworks in 1991, in the form of the new A41 Whitchurch By-Pass, afforded the opportunity for a more detailed investigation of a portion of the site. A short section of the Roman road and a confined area of the deposits lying to its west were examined during the winter of 1990/91 (Hannaford 1991) while the proposed construction of a new lay-by later in 1991 alongside the northbound carriageway of the existing A41(T) gave rise to the examination of a larger area immediately adjacent to the site of the 1972 salvage operations (Figs. 2 & 3). Foundation works for the new lay-by would destroy all archaeological deposits to a depth of 1m below existing ground level over an area of approximately 675m². Previous observations (Hannaford 1991) had shown that significant firmly stratified deposits lay undisturbed between 0.4 and 1m below ground level and so a rescue excavation of the area was undertaken.

Owing to the limited scope of previous archaeological work at this site the precise nature, development and function of the settlement remained unclear. The excavation described below was designed to produce sufficient information to allow a more accurate assessment of the status of the settlement especially the significance of the industrial activity known from previous work to have been carried out on the site (Rogerson & Greuter; Hannaford 1991). As one of only two roadside settlements of the period presently known in Shropshire the site also has considerable potential for illuminating this poorly understood element in the hierarchy of Roman settlement in the region, providing essential comparative data

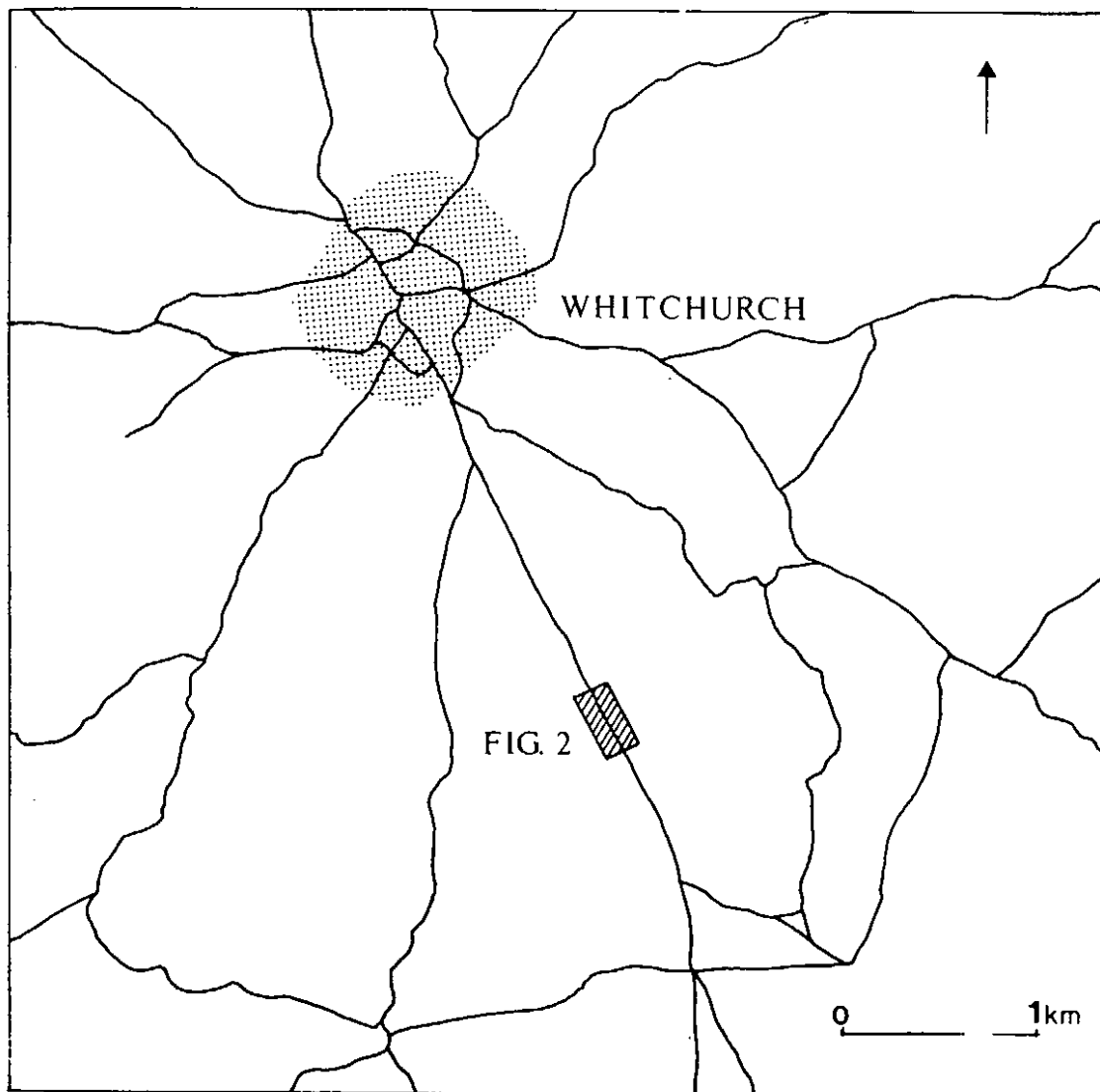


FIG. 1

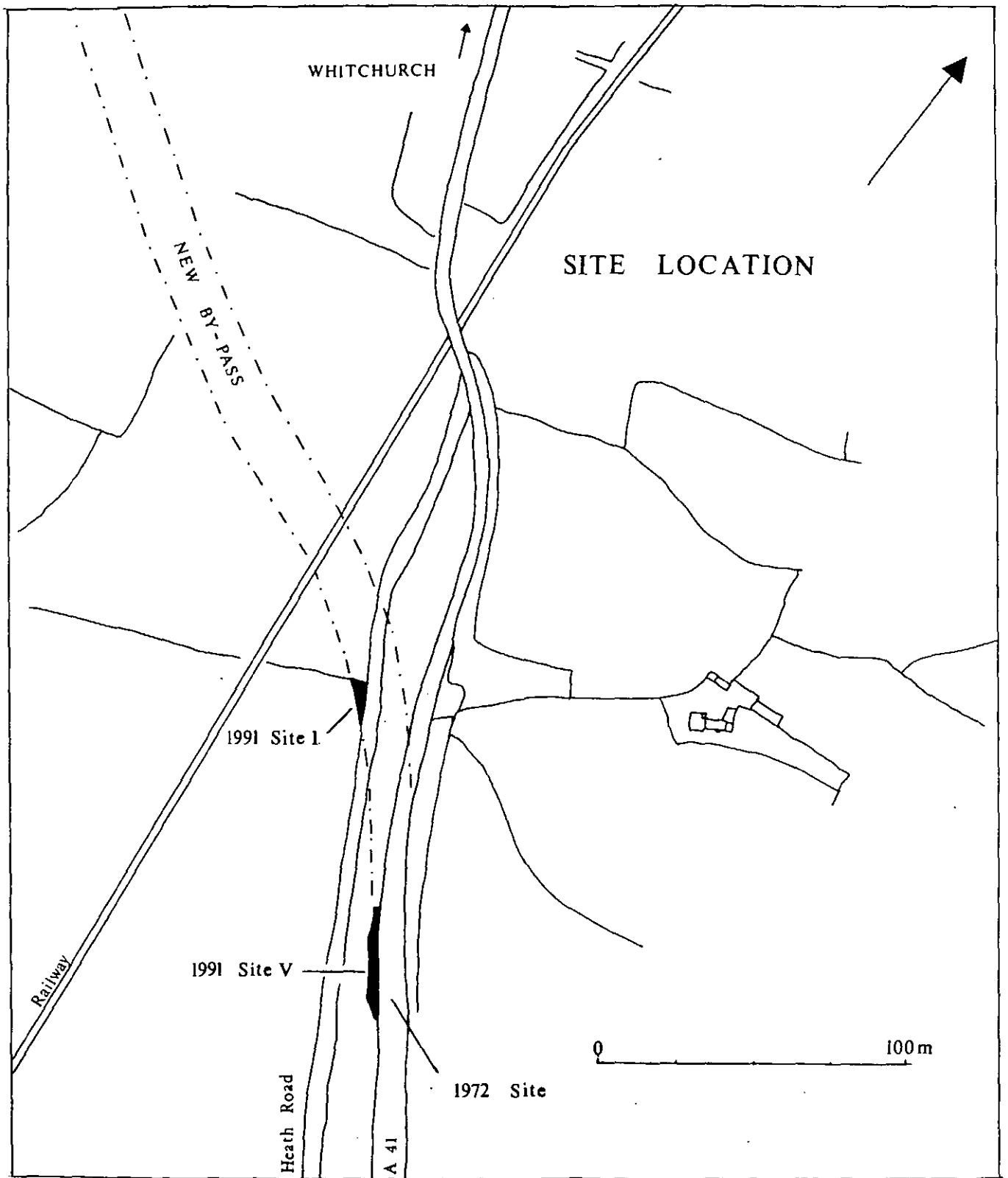


FIG. 2

for the recently explored site of similar character at Meole Brace, near Shrewsbury (Hughes 1990) and that at Heronbridge, near Chester (Mason 1988). In addition, the site is of major importance with regard to revealing the economic, social and administrative relationships which existed between Whitchurch and its hinterland. Finally, the recovery of ceramic and other artefactual assemblages from well-stratified deposits at Heath Road for the first time would not only clarify the chronology and function of the site but would also facilitate greater understanding of the regional assemblages as well as patterns of supply and exchange in the region during the Roman period.

The excavations were undertaken as a joint venture by the Leisure Services Department of Shropshire County Council and the Archaeology Group of Gifford and Partners (Consulting Engineers) and with the assistance of volunteers from the Whitchurch Area Archaeological Group. The project was grant-aided by English Heritage with help in kind being given by Birse Construction Limited.

The following narrative presents a preliminary phasing of the site based on an initial examination of the stratigraphic relationships encountered during the excavation (Fig. 5). It should not be regarded as a definitive account and may be subject to revision following the final and exhaustive analysis of the data.

1.2 Method of Excavation

As a first step the majority of the area under threat was stripped of topsoil by machine under archaeological supervision, a 3m wide strip along the western edge of the A41 being left untouched for safety reasons. In the light of the evidence thus revealed a sampling strategy was then devised with selected areas being chosen for careful manual excavation.

These were (Fig. 3):-

an area 10 x 2m from 008E/020N to 008E/030N = Area 'A'

an area 6 x 1m from 007E/040N to 007E/046N = Area 'B'

an area 20 x 2m from 006E/050N to 006E/070N = Area 'C'

an area composed of three blocks 5 x 3, 10 x 3 and 5 x 2m in size extending from 006E/070N to 008E/090N.

The total area thus excavated was 121m² which achieved the minimum 25% sample of the total area under threat considered desirable.

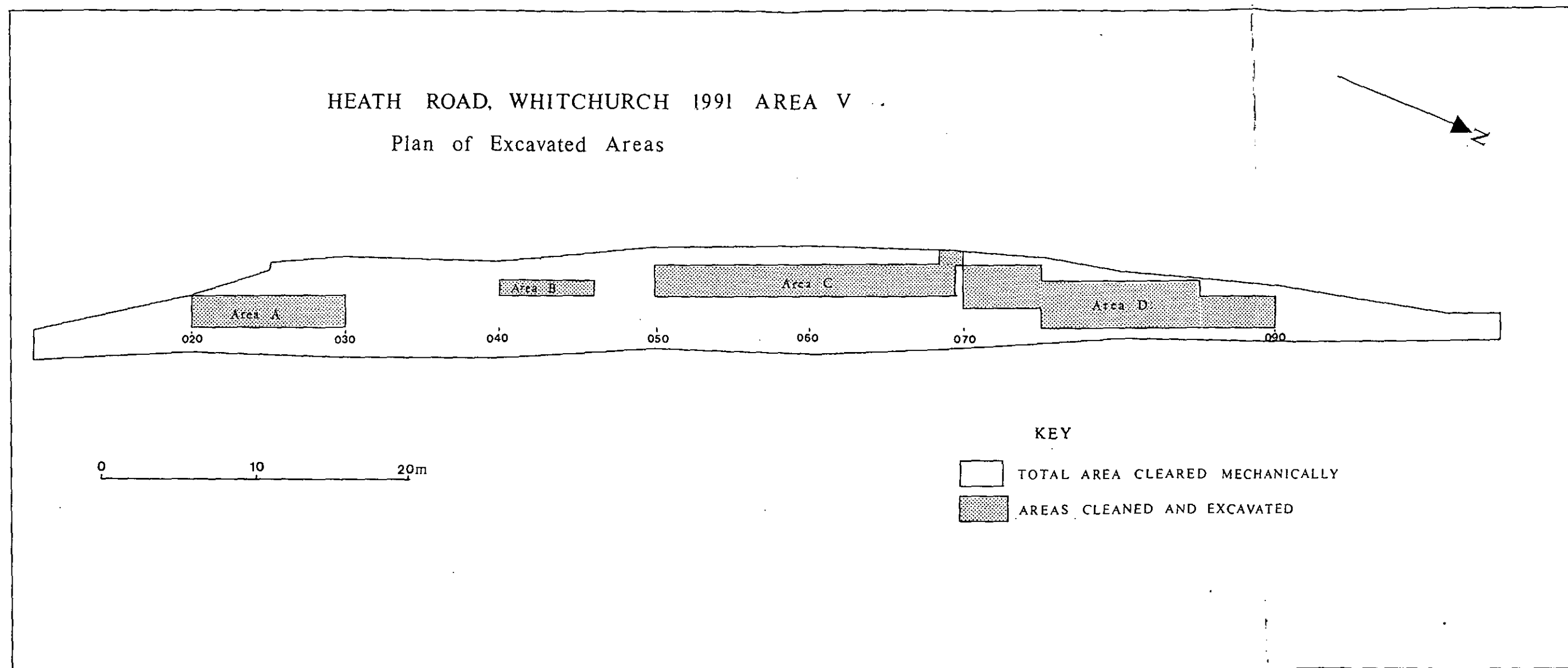


FIG. 3

2.0 RESULTS

2.1 Phase I : Pre-Roman, Natural Sub-Soil

The natural light grey sandy sub-soil encountered over the southern portion of the site (Areas A, B and much of C) appears to have been sealed naturally by the formation of silts and peat in a boggy or waterlogged area. Areas displaying similar boggiess were noted during salvage work in 1972 (Rogerson and Greuter 14 F.26). Farther North, in the northern part of Area C and in Area D, the light grey sand sub-soil gave way to natural sandy clay (1765-66-67). This sandy clay was sealed by a brown soil mottled with natural clay (1691, 1764), initially this deposit was seen as an early floor level but more plausibly perhaps it may have represented initial clearance and site levelling - preparatory work immediately prior to development and occupation.

2.2 Phase II : Earliest Roman : Primary Occupation/Activity

2.2.1 South

The waterlogged nature of the southernmost portion of the site, Area A, seems to have precluded this area from the development. The thick layer of dark grey silty sand (1603), immediately above the natural peat and silt accumulations, appeared to have an organic content and also contained a substantial quantity of Romano-British pottery together with indications of iron working. Thus, this area may have been given over to rubbish dumping and suggests a southern limit to the settlement at this time; perhaps more formally recognised later by the digging of an east-west ditch (see Phase III). However, the findings from 1972 salvage work (Rogerson and Greuter, Figure 2) showed occupation farther south and this boggy area may have been used as a dumping ground between properties, the cutting of the ditch (during Phase III) was probably for drainage purposes.

Area B, a little farther to the north, produced evidence for an early, level, thin pebble surface (1671, 1682, 1771). This surface sealed a number of thin clay and sand layers, the uppermost of these (1683) contained finds and may have been redeposited natural sand used as levelling material. No structural evidence associated with this surface was observed and an external yard seems the most plausible interpretation; but, in the small area exposed such evidence may well have been lain outside the excavated area. The surface here was subsequently sealed by a layer of dark grey silty sand (1672, 1679), similar to 1603 to the south, and it is probable that the yard surface fell out of use because of the boggiess of this part of the settlement and was considered useful only for the dumping of rubbish.

2.2.2 Central

Again, in Area C, in the central area of the site, a level layer (c. 0.05m thick) of compact, orange sand (1613, 1724), although much disturbed by later features, may have been the vestigial remains of a floor related to the initial occupation. It was laid immediately over the Phase I grey silts. Approximately 3m to the north of the sandy surface a large pit (1711) cut through the natural silts; the exact purpose of this pit is unknown but its fill, rich in charcoal and containing boulders on its surface, suggests a specialist, industrial function. The pit was partially sealed by two sandy layers, the uppermost of which (1763) appears to have been contemporary with the compact sand surface (1613). Once more, features associated with the subsequent phases of activity cut through the sandy soil accumulation (1781, 1763).

At the north end of Area C a layer of brown silty sand mottled with yellowish sandy clay (1776) overlay the natural light grey sand (1777). The mottled silt quite possibly represented redeposition of natural material during the process of site levelling and preparation; it was sealed by a small patch of pebbling (Figure 4) and an associated area of burnt clay (1709), and cut by a single post-hole (1710) with traces of a post-pipe possibly visible in its half-section. No other structural evidence associated with these features was found.

2.2.3 North

Notwithstanding the incompleteness of the evidence the northernmost portion of Area C, together with the findings from Area D yielded the most interesting and coherent structural sequence on the site. The earliest structural evidence comprised three post-holes (1740, 1742, 1746) (see Figure 4) cut by and sealed beneath the fill of a later gulley (1707), but essentially following the same alignment and suggestive of a rectilinear timber building. The levelled, compact mixed natural (1691) may have formed a contemporary surface for this early structure but evidence for this was inconclusive. Subsequently, a timber slot (1707) was cut and the earlier structure was superseded, using a different constructional technique, again by a rectangular building, probably aligned east-west and some 2.5m wide. Recognising contemporary floor levels was difficult but the very compact, mixed natural (1691) may have continued in use.

The gulley (1707) contained two separate fills : a grey sand (1729) formed the lower fill and the upper fill (1708) comprised a brown silty sand topped with a layer of pebbles (see drg No. 28). Initially the upper fill was considered to be levelling material in anticipation of a pebble and cobble surface (1618) associated with Phase IV. However, an oval cut (see plan No. 26) similar in size and shape and with a very similar fill to feature 1688 (see plan 26) was positioned across the line of gulley 1707 on its west side;

HEATH ROAD, WHITCHURCH 1991 AREA V

Phase Plans Areas B-D

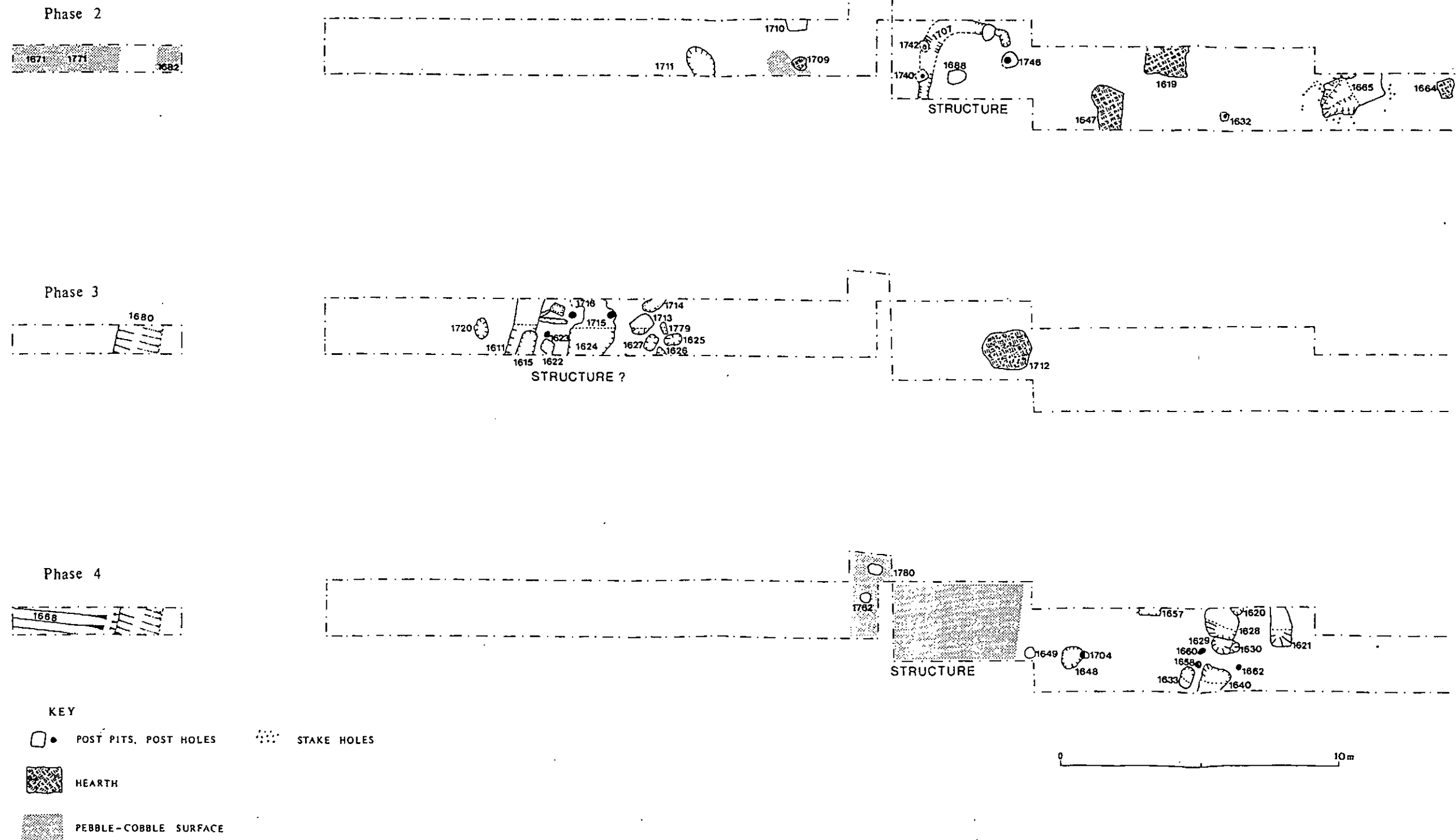


FIG. 4

but, this feature cut through only the lower, grey gulley fill. Subsequently, there appears to have been a second cut, on the same line as the original gulley but this time through the oval feature. The large fragment of amphora (drawing 26) almost certainly related to the second gulley cut and possibly represented a post-pad at this point.

The evidence was inconclusive and a wider expanse totally exposing the area of successive structures here would have been desirable. But, the relationship between features certainly points to a complex structural history, temporarily perhaps on a different alignment.

In Area D, approximately 5 m north of the gulley, 1707, two rectangular hearths were discovered (1647, 1619) (Figure 4), both comprised rectangular pads of clay with indications of burning, 1619 also incorporated a central strip of cobbles. Both hearths cut slightly into a layer of mottled clay sand (1764), which probably represented initial site levelling over the natural orange clay sand (1765, 1766). A third, smaller hearth (1664) was located some 10 m farther north. Also in Area D, cutting into the natural, was an oval pit (1665) over 2 m long by 1 m wide and c 0.32 m deep. The loose, sandy fills from this feature yielded neither diagnostic nor dating material of any kind. A single deep post-hole (1632), with indications of a post-pipe and possibly re-used as a rubbish pit during a later phase of the site's occupation, appears to have been contemporary with the hearths, and, further, the pit (1665) was surrounded by a number of stakeholes, some of which may have formed a partial double ring around the pit - possibly a shelter or cover of indeterminate form.

2.3 Phase III : Roman

2.3.1 South

In Area B the phase III layer 1669, possibly buried turf, was cut by a U-shaped ditch (1680) which appears to be on the same alignment as a modern field boundary approaching the site from the east. However, the ditch may be a continuation of ditch 1/1a (Rogerson and Greuter, 5 and Figure 2) which runs in a south easterly - northwesterly direction towards this point. The fills from this ditch all contained Romano-British pottery and no later material, but only the lowest ditch fill probably belongs to this phase. As discussed briefly in paragraph 2.2.1 the cutting of this ditch was probably for drainage purposes in this boggy area; it does not appear to have delimited the southern edge of the settlement for occupation features were identified farther south during the 1972 salvage recording (Rogerson and Greuter, Figure 2).

2.3.2 Centre

The results from Area C assigned to this phase of activity were rather complex and confusing (Figure 4) and it is difficult to recover coherent information from a narrow trench. However, the phase II sand floor (1613, 1724) was cut through the middle by a shallow u-shaped ditch (1611) running essentially in an east-west direction; the dark grey fill of this feature contained charcoal. The north side of the sandy floor (1613) was cut by a large, shallow oval pit (1624) whose dark grey fill (1706) contained fragments of copper alloy sheet. The fill of the linear feature (1611) was itself cut by a shallow rectangular pit (1615) which was probably associated with two other similar pits (1622) and (1730) with similar dark grey silty sand fills.

Three small, probably associated, post-holes (1715, 1716, 1623) were also recorded but their precise structural significance could not be determined within such a small exposed area. Two shallow, linear gulleys (1717, 1719) perhaps beam slots, were also observed to cut through the sandy floor (1724).

Other possible small pits or post-holes (1779, 1625-7, 1713-4) were noted but time did not allow thorough investigation; they cut through the phase II silty soil which accumulated possibly in the yards of structures associated with the first phase of activity. These features emphasise the increased difficulty encountered when attempting to recognise the plans and sequences of ephemeral timber structures within a confined area.

Some of the features described above were sealed, or partially-sealed by a thin accumulation of dark grey silty sand (1718) containing charcoal, slag, iron objects and copper alloy fragments, quite possibly industrial residue and waste.

2.3.3 North

At the south end of Area D, the northern arm of gulley (1707) appears to have been cut by a large hearth (1712) (Figure 4). The hearth was placed within a circular scoop (1745) filled with silty sand (1744) and topped with a thick layer of hard, yellow-brown clay and cobbles (1712) which showed signs of burning. The hearth may have continued to be in use when the cobble and pebble surface, which respects the edge of the hearth, was laid down; the levels also suggest continuation of use. Conversely, the cobble surface may have once lain over the hearth and been removed subsequently as a result of plough action; this was suggested by the disturbed and diffused burnt clay in the vicinity. However, if this were the case the surface would have sloped quite noticeably north to south and this seems unlikely.

In the same area a pit (1737), at the edge of the excavated area, was again filled with silty sand (1739) and capped with clay (1738), but the feature showed no signs of burning.

2.4 Phase IV : Roman

2.4.1 South

In Area B, on the south side of ditch 1680, a deposit of brown clay (1668) formed a raised bank which tailed off gradually for about 20m and probably showed in Area A as context (1602). The bank of clay seems to have slumped into the ditch to create the fill (1678) and was not the result of local upcast from the cut for the ditch (1680), which at this point cuts peat and sand. A layer of grey clay (1667) formed against the south edge of the ditch and a similar clay (1677) filled the remainder of the ditch. The function of the bank is unknown; it may have been created to reinforce property boundaries or delimit the settlement at this time.

2.4.2 Centre

Over much of Area C this phase was marked by a thick accumulation of mottled sandy silt with charcoal (1612, 1617) which sealed the numerous features here and had the effect of levelling up much of the area. This silt contained a lead weight, an iron object and a whetstone, an indication perhaps of the activity on the site at this time. No structural evidence or later features cut into this layer.

2.4.3 North

In the southern half of Area D, a substantial pebble and cobble surface was laid c. 6m wide north-south and of uncertain extent east to west. This may have been part of a road surface running perpendicularly eastwards from the known Wroxeter to Whitchurch Roman road immediately to the west. But possible post surrounds (1762, 1780) on the southern edge of the surface and a further similar feature 1649 on the northern edge of the surface suggest that the cobbling functioned as a floor to a similar structure. The exposed cobbled area was not even and the upper surface was contained within a matrix of brown silty sand; patchy repair work over occupation accumulations was suspected. Lower down the cobbles and pebbles formed a very dense, tightly-packed surface.

North of the pebble and cobble surface, a number of intercutting pits and post-holes cut into the phase I/II soil layer (1764) and natural (1766). The exact relationships between these features and, indeed, their allocation to different phases of site activity was at times difficult to establish. However, these difficulties aside, this area c. 8m north of the pebble spread appears to have been used as a yard with large rectangular rubbish pits (1620, 1621,

1654), the fills of which contained both charcoal and burnt clay fragments and point to continuing industrial processes, but with no obvious, diagnostic residues.

A large post-hole (1632) may well pre-date the larger rubbish pits and belong to the phase III hearths (see 2.3.3); but it appears to have been re-used during this phase as a rubbish pit. Its fill (1640), which usefully contained fragments of an almost complete Black Burnished pot, is very similar to the fills found in pits (1620, 1621, 1654). Pit features (1654) and a shallow rectangular pit (1657) with a post-pipe both cut through the edges of a phase II hearth (1619). Four post-holes (1704, 1658, 1660, 1662) may well be contemporary with these larger pits but their locations within the trench defy exact interpretation: three are neatly grouped with one outlier (1704). The remaining smaller and shallower features (1628-31, 1633, 1648) appear to be later than the larger pits and the possibility remains that at least some of these features may have supported posts.

2.5 Phase V : Roman/Post-Roman

2.5.1 Centre and North

A layer of brown silty sand (1604, 1605, 1608, 1610), possibly representing post-settlement plough soil, covered Areas C and D and a similar layer may have covered the southern end of the site, but most of this may have been removed by machine during preparatory work. This layer produced a good quantity of abraded Romano-British pottery with some post-medieval contamination.

2.6 Phase VI : Modern

2.6.1 South

The only evidence for modern activity on the site came from the southern part of the site; no activity in the north was recorded before the 1972 roadworks. The upper fills of the phase III Roman ditch were cut on the north site by a further ditch (1675) which contained the line of the modern field boundary on the east side of the A41. The bottom of the fill (1676) of this ditch produced a little material from the late 19th or early 20th centuries. This fill was partially-sealed by a layer of very hard clay (1672) which was cut by a modern re-cut of the ditch (1673) which, in turn was probably buried by the 1972 roadworks.

It is not inconceivable that the line of the Roman ditch has been continuously in use as a hedged field boundary. But the earlier findings on the site (Rogerson and Greuter, Figure 2), although inaccurate in detail, do not suggest this and perhaps more plausibly the superimposition of modern ditch cuts upon an ancient line at this point can be put down to coincidence. A small trench across the line of the existing hedgerows to the east of the A41 would be informative.

3.0 DISCUSSION

- 3.1 The results from any small-scale excavation on an archaeological site of this nature will always be, in many respects, incomplete and inconclusive. The nature of the structures, ephemeral and often superimposed, and the intercutting ditches and pits which relate to different phases of activity within the settlement can only really be unravelled and properly understood by large-scale area excavation. Furthermore, although they must have existed, relationships between settlements of this period, both at a local and regional level, will always remain conjectural and unclear. Questions regarding the stimulus behind the settlement, whether the result of purposeful encouragement or initiative on the part of commercially-minded individuals, can never be adequately answered.
- 3.2 However, embodied within this report are the preliminary - results of the largest and most thorough investigation of the site since its discovery in the early 1970's. They are supplemented by the salvage recording at that time (Rogerson and Greuter) and by the findings from the very recent archaeological investigations, some 100m to the north of the site, carried out in an area earmarked for destruction during the 1991 road improvements (Hannaford 1991).
- 3.3 Analysis of the pottery assemblages from the salvage recording in 1972 has shown that intensive settlement on the Heath Road site probably coincided with the beginning of civilian activity at Whitchurch during the 2nd century A.D. (Rogerson and Greuter, 55). Preliminary inspection of the material recovered during the 1991 work suggests that the Heath Road settlement came into being during the closing years of the 1st century A.D. with the occupation continuing well into but not beyond the 3rd century. The settlement may represent ribbon development south-eastwards along an important Roman road. However, the results from the early 1991 investigations strongly suggest that the northern limit of the settlement was marked by an ancient stream (Hannaford, 1991, 'summary') some 200m north of the most southerly archaeological remains recorded in 1972. Consequently, the Heath Road site may be seen as a Romano-British settlement separate from but doubtless related to the civilian town at Whitchurch. The nature of the relationship is not clear; the Heath Road settlement, on the basis of the present evidence, may well have served at least some of the requirements of the town dwellers through manufacturing. Metalworking involved charcoal burning and this would have been inconvenient in a normal settlement and called for a specialised community, separate but close-by. Possibly an early form of zoning.

- 3.4 The initial activity on the site, which must have involved a short period of site clearance, levelling and preparation, is difficult to recognise archaeologically. Identification of these activities is further restricted by the different natural subsoils encountered on the site, but, the mixed deposits immediately overlying the natural subsoils probably represented those operations. The southern area of the excavation, most notably Area A, was evidently a very boggy location suitable only for the dumping of rubbish. The findings from the 1972 salvage work (Rogerson and Greuter, Figure 2) show that this waterlogged area was encircled by development and would have been used as a communal dumping ground. Initial occupation, in the form of a thinly-spread pebble surface, encroached very close to this area but the surface seems to have fallen out of use quite quickly (probably due to the boggiess here) and the silty sealing deposit overlying it suggests further rubbish dumping. The subsequent cutting of an east-west ditch through this early surface suggests that the inhabitants were constantly battling against waterlogging and drainage measures became necessary.
- 3.5 This initial occupation also comprised working surfaces and hearths to the north and probably associated with this activity, was the first structural phase of a house plot, Area D, of which only three post-holes were exposed. Their locations, respecting the line of the structure which superseded it on the same plot, suggests a rectangular timber building aligned east-west. But this flimsy evidence does not allow a confident reconstruction of the superstructure which could have taken many forms.
- 3.6 The main structural evidence came from the house plot in Area D and these findings are possibly representative of the different phases of activity on the site. Subsequent buildings on this plot displayed a fairly complex sequence and exact details are unattainable; but the findings do show, perhaps typical of the settlement as a whole, continuation of building plot and possibly property boundaries. The areas interpreted as yards and working areas yielded evidence for hearths, pits, post-holes and stake-holes; all this activity presented a confusing, often incoherent palimpsest of intercutting contexts which are probably best seen as small ephemeral structures such as shelters, open-sheds or perhaps property boundaries. There was a degree of difficulty in confidently associating the 'yard' areas with the different building phases. Again, the limitations imposed by excavating long, narrow strips restrict the introduction of more positive assertions.
- 3.7 The deep post holes associated with the first timber building, Area D, imply that the posts were ground-fast; but this structure was replaced, on the same alignment using a different constructional technique represented by a timber slot cut to accept sleeper beams - the base for a timber superstructure the form of which can only ever be speculative. The evidence for two further reconstructions, on essentially the same plot before the laying down of a rubble spread, is less convincing but remains a distinct possibility that can only be satisfactorily resolved by uncovering the full building plot.

- 3.8 The final building on this plot comprised a rubble platform (there were suggestions of parallels for this during the salvage recording in 1972 and during the early 1991 investigations) with gaps in the surface where posts may have one stood. Again the evidence was inconclusive. Although indication of tiled roofs has been found in the form of unstratified *tegulae* (Rogerson and Grenter, 54) no finds suggested the roofing material used on this house plot.
- 3.9 A distinct feature of the settlement was an element of industry with iron working perhaps being the principal activity. Fragments of querntstone, both from this excavation and earlier (Rogerson and Grenter, 17) point also to agricultural practices.
- 3.10 The structural evidence on the site was incomplete but quite complex. The building plots appear to have been static and re-used, perhaps up to five times on this plot, with only a slight and temporary deviation from the early established building line. The post-holes, stokeholes and hearths in the working areas and hearths suggests mobility of shelters and sheds; some of these features may have formed palisaded property boundaries but this is pure conjecture.
- 3.11 Essentially the activities pursued on the site remained similar throughout its occupation but the fills of the later pits, with fewer indications of industrial residues may suggest an agricultural bias and a decline in manufacturing.
- 3.12 No overall plan or elements of planning or organisation can be recognised using the information to date, but property plots may have stretched back at right angles to the main road.

4.0 OVERVIEW

- 4.1 The 'lay-by' excavation together with that undertaken earlier in 1991 further to the north constitute the first ever systematic examination of any part of the Heath Road Roman settlement. The northern limits of the latter now seem to have been defined and a better idea of the overall extent of the occupied area has been gained.

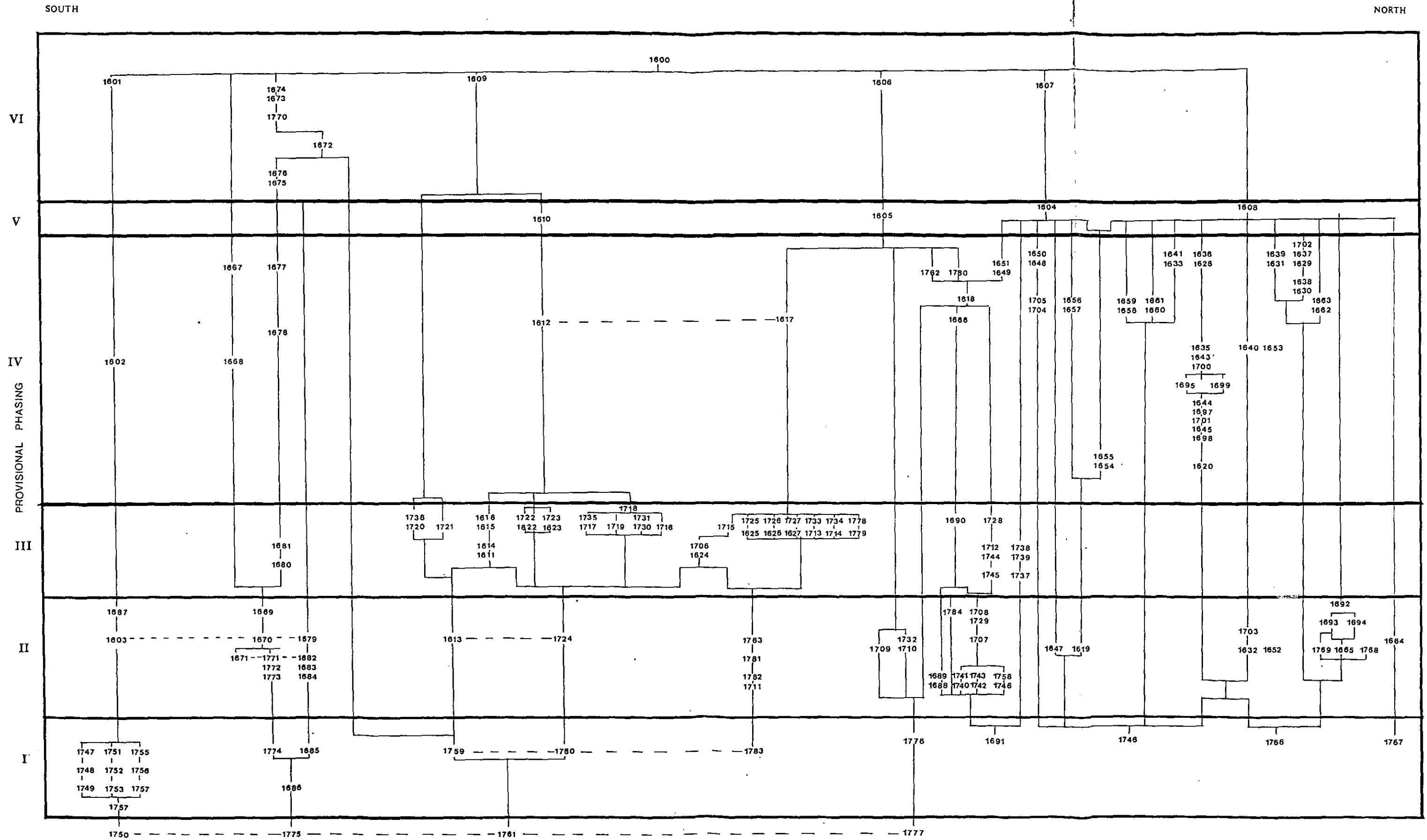
The area available was somewhat removed from the street-frontage zone of the settlement bordering Heath Road, the modern successor of the Roman road, and so the presumably most intensively occupied part was not sampled. Nevertheless, an interesting sequence of structures, features and deposits was encountered which, with further post-excavation analysis, will afford a valuable insight into the level, nature and intensity of occupation and provide some idea of the overall character and status of the settlement.

Although the restricted nature of the area available makes interpretation of the structural remains encountered less than straightforward it is clear nonetheless that these were non-residential outbuildings probably associated with the carrying on of industrial activity. More detailed post-excavation analysis of the structural remains, their accompanying features and associated artefact assemblages should help clarify the significance in the economic life of the community of the industrial activity which earlier discoveries had also indicated.

The artefact assemblage recovered is overwhelming ceramic and although, by no means vast is of a size and composition to repay further study. It will certainly enable the overall chronological span of the settlement's occupation to be fixed and will also shed light on the patterns of supply and trade as well as increasing knowledge of the ceramic assemblages in the region.

In overall terms, the 1991 Heath Road excavations have produced new and much needed information relating to the development, pattern and hierarchy of settlement in the hinterland of a 'typical' small Roman town in the region. Detailed study of the data retrieved will begin the process of elucidating the social, economic and administrative relationships which existed between this community, Whitchurch, and the other elements of the settlement patterns of the area.

STRATIGRAPHIC DIAGRAM SHOWING PROVISIONAL PHASING



5.0 REFERENCES

- Hannaford H.R. 1991 Excavations on a Romano-British Roadside Settlement at Heath Road, Whitchurch, Shropshire. Shropshire County Council.
- Hughes E.G. 1990 "Meole Brace", in Ellis P., Hughes E.G. and Jones A.E. A5/A49 Shrewsbury By-Pass Archaeological Project 1989-90. B.U.F.A.U.
- Mason D.J P. 1988 "The Roman Site at Heronbridge, near Chester, Cheshire: Aspects of Civilian Settlement in the Vicinity of Legionary Fortresses in Britain and Beyond", Archaeol. J. 145 (1988), 123-57.
- Rogerson A and Greuter S A Romano-British Site at Heath Road, Whitchurch. Unpublished.