

Lympsham Sewage Treatment Works Elimination
Archaeological Observations July - September 1991

A report prepared by AC archaeology

AC archaeology
Manor Farm Stables
Chicklade
Hindon
nr Salisbury
Wilts SP3 5SU

Lympsham Sewage Treatment Works Elimination
Archaeological Observations July - September 1991

1. Introduction

This report summarises the results of archaeological observations made during the construction of a sewage pipeline between Lympsham and Brent Knoll in the county of Somerset (Fig. 1). The fieldwork was commissioned by Wessex Water and was carried out by R. A. Broomhead for AC archaeology.

The pipeline crosses an area of high archaeological potential although, prior to the construction of the pipeline, the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) contained no specific data relating to the route.

The methods employed in both pre-construction research and in the subsequent watching brief were as detailed in the specification for pipeline observation produced by AC archaeology and endorsed by the County Archaeological Officer.

2. Methodology

2.1 Documentary research.

All available sources were examined including the SMR, the Claylands Survey, tithe and other early maps held at the Somerset County Council Record Office and aerial photographs deposited with Somerset County Council and Somerset Local History Library.

2.2 Field observation and recording.

The easement was examined after topsoil stripping and the spoil heap was searched for artefacts.

The pipe trench was examined during trenching and exposed archaeological deposits were recorded by means of notes, drawings and photographs. The marine clays through which the pipe trench was cut proved to be highly unstable and prone to almost instantaneous collapse. This instability, and the consequent necessity for rigid box shoring limited the opportunity for detailed recording of exposed deposits which in some cases could only be sketched and photographed.

3. Results

3.1 Preliminary document search and ground observation

As noted above, no archaeological sites or monuments were recorded in the County SMR along the course of the pipeline or in the immediate vicinity.

WESSEX WATER
Lympsham STW Elimination
LOCATION

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF

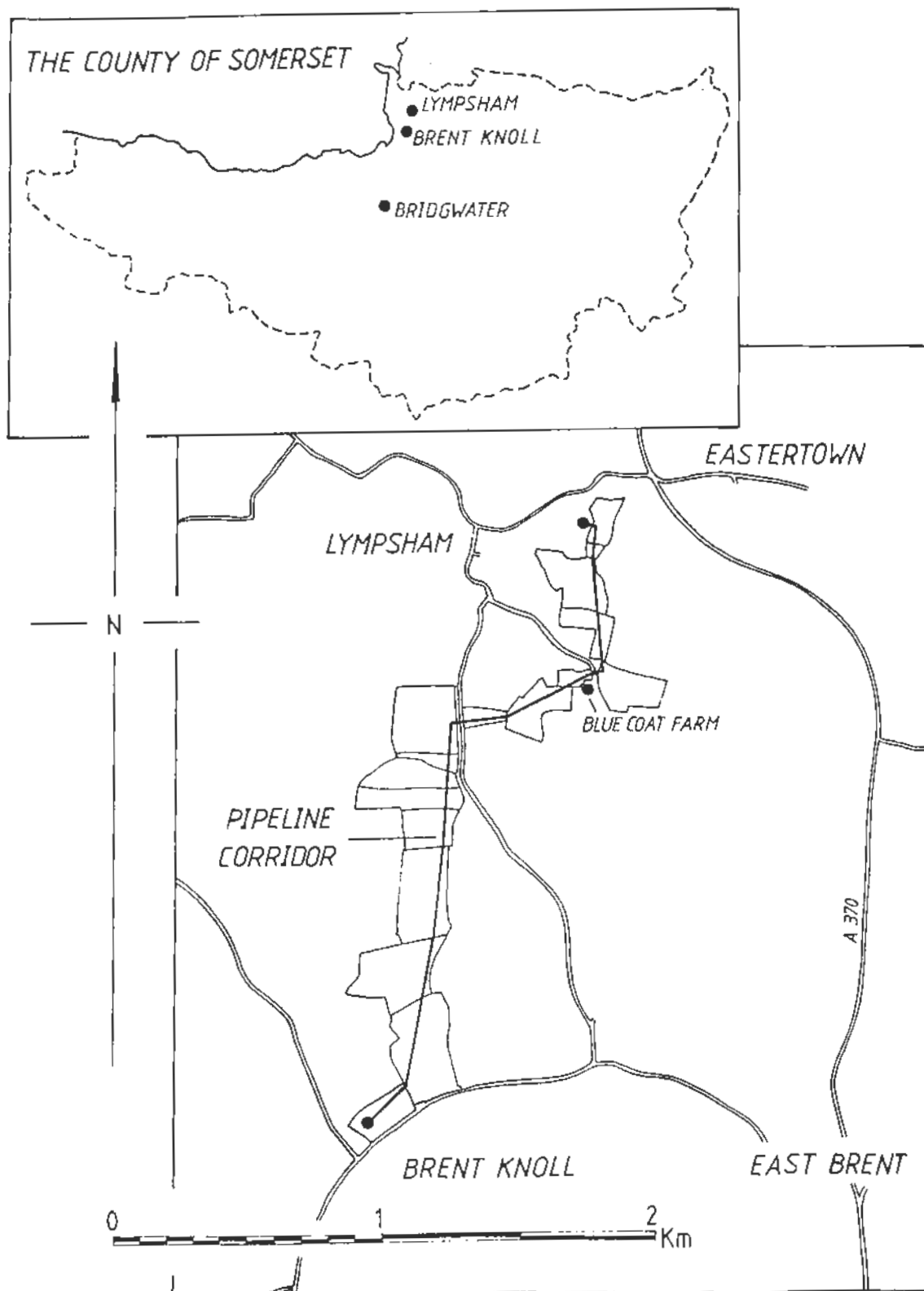


Fig 1

Examination of R.A.F aerial photographs taken during the winter of 1946 revealed substantial traces of medieval cultivation in the form of ridge-and-furrow earthworks (Fig. 2). More recent aerial photographs together with ground checking show much of this to have been levelled by ploughing or to have been considerably modified by modern field drainage. The broad pattern of medieval fields does, however, remain fossilised in the present field pattern and some names, for example Beason Field (plots 3 and 4) suggest former open fields. The widespread occurrence of sherds of abraded medieval and post-medieval pottery along the pipeline provides further indication that these fields, now pasture, were formally in arable cultivation.

In only one field (plot 16) did the field pattern visible on the aerial photographs differ substantially from either the medieval or modern field patterns. This plot proved to contain substantial Romano-British structural remains the layout of which appears to correlate at least partly with features visible on the aerial photographs.

3.2 Watching brief

Surface artefacts recovered after topsoil stripping within the easement are summarised by plot in Fig. 3 and quantified in Table 1.

Five previously unknown sites were identified during the course of construction.

Site 1 (Plot 7, ST 3386 5375) 12743

Substantial quantities of later Iron Age pottery, daub, slag and animal bone were recovered from trench spoil 20m from the western end of the plot. No features were visible in the trench section prior to its collapse and it is possible that the trench cut through an entire pit. The quality and quantity of artefacts suggest an occupation site within the immediate area.

Site 2 (Plot 9, ST 3351 5360)

— 12744

A ditch, orientated approximately north-south, was visible in the trench section 40m from the western end of the plot. A small quantity of abraded Romano-British pottery, stone and animal bone was recovered.

Site 3 (Plot 10, ST 3346 5355)

A ditch, orientated approximately north-south, and possibly a continuation of Site 2, was visible in the trench section 22m from the southern end of the plot. The upper levels of the ditch fill had been heavily disturbed by a modern land drain. A large quantity of unabraded Romano-British pottery, dating

WESSEX WATER

Lympsham S.T.W. Elimination

SURFACE FEATURES BY PLOT

[Field and aerial evidence]

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

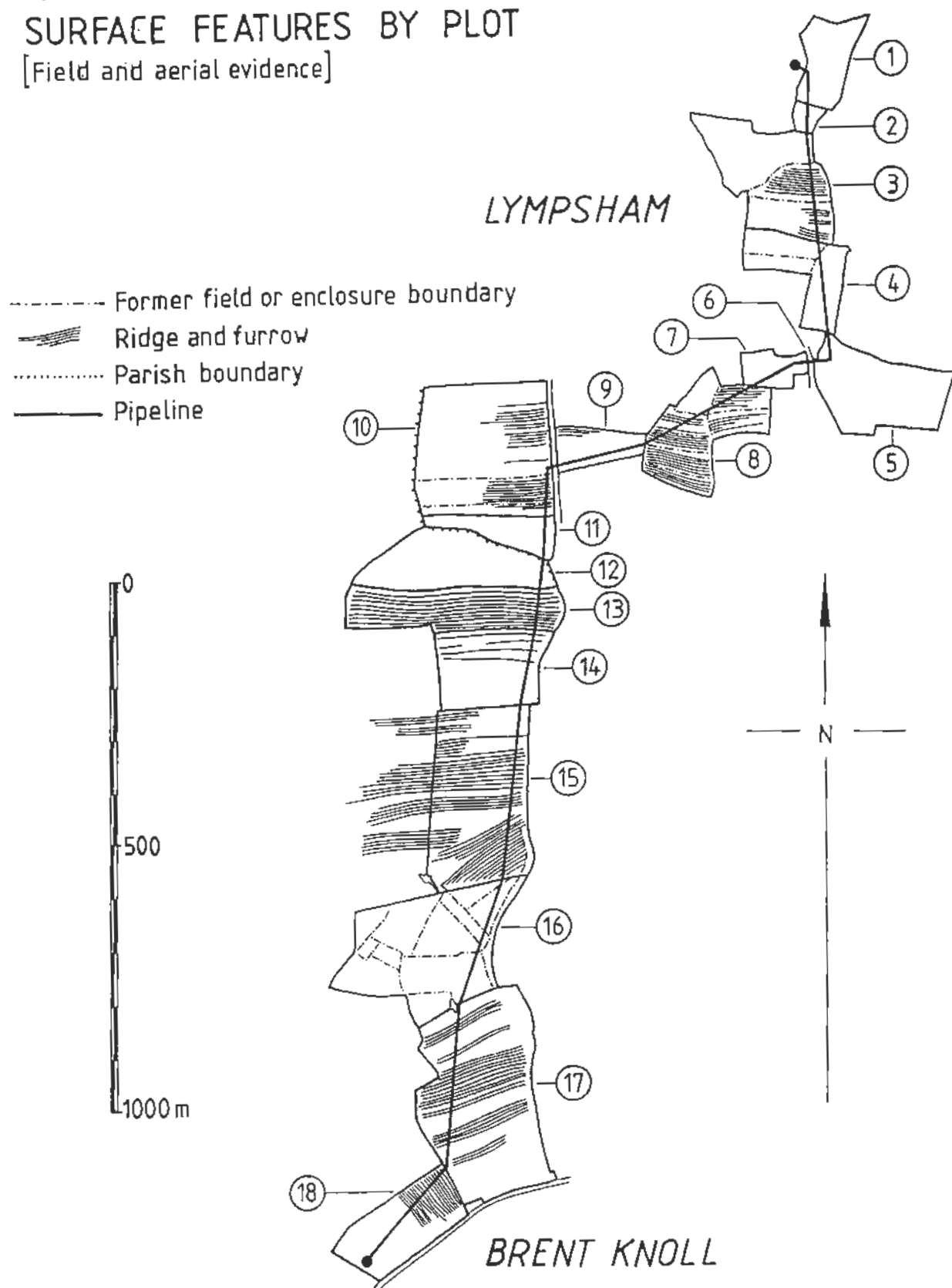


Fig 2

WESSEX WATER

Lympsam STW Elimination

SITES & SURFACE FINDS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Surface finds by plot

PREHISTORIC POST-MEDIEVAL ROMANO-BRITISH MEDIEVAL

Sites

- ① Iron Age pottery and occupation debris
- ② Romano-British feature
- ③ Romano-British features
- ④ Romano-British structural remains
- ⑤ Romano-British features

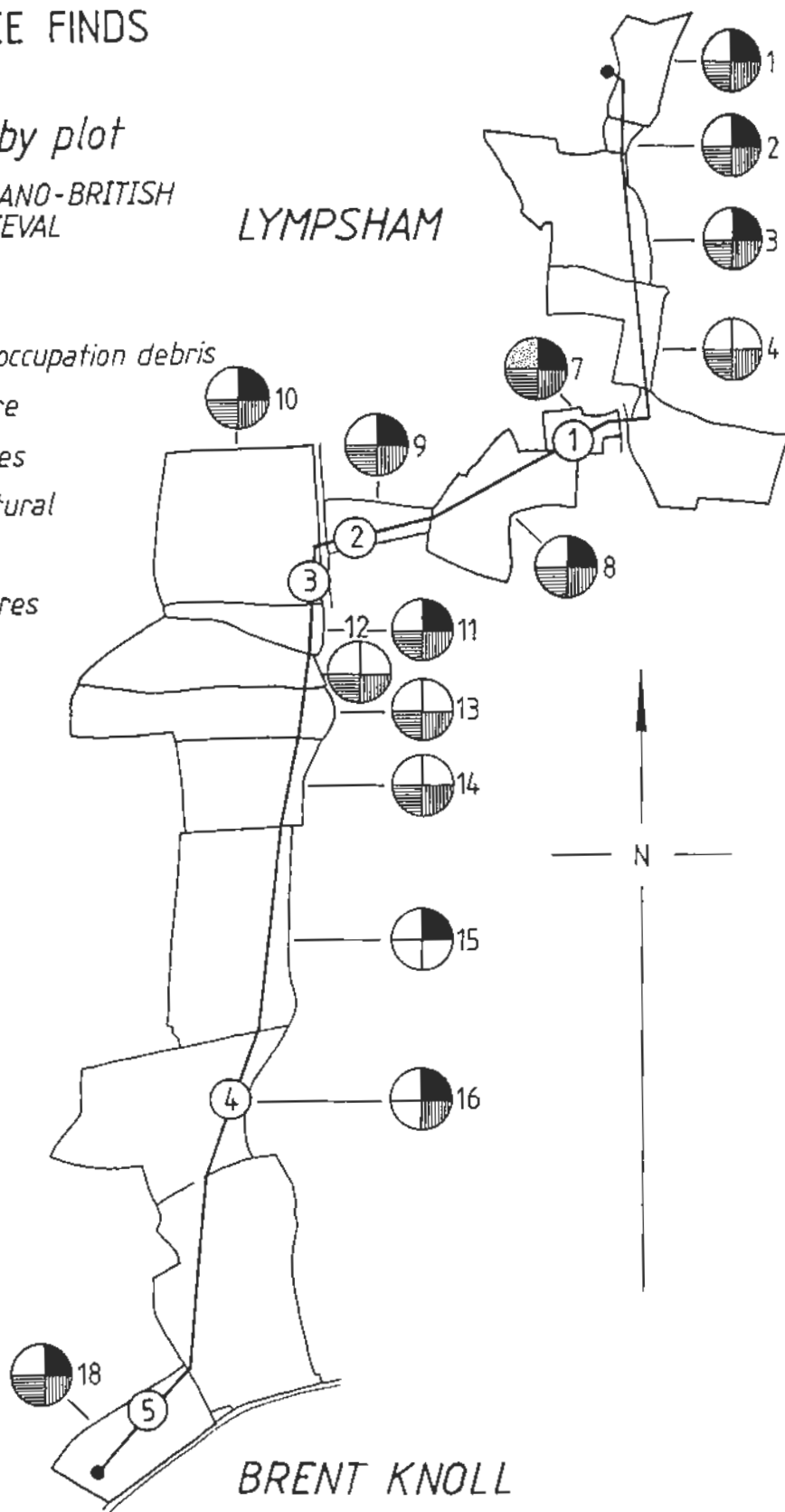


Fig 3

from the 1st-3rd centuries AD, was recovered from nearby trench spoil.

Surface finds of Romano-British pottery from plot 10 were substantial and an ephemeral horizon of dark (? charcoal-streaked) clay containing occasional stone and pottery was intermittently visible at a depth of c. 0.70m. Infrequent pottery finds continued into plot 11 and, together with those from plot 10, suggest an occupation site in the near vicinity.

Site 4 (Plot 16, ST 3333 5256)

Considerable quantities of worked stone and stone roof tile were observed after topsoil stripping. Several structural features, possibly wall footings, were also noted at this stage and would appear to correspond, at least partly, with features visible on aerial photographs.

Trenching produced considerable quantities of large and unabraded sherds of Romano-British pottery and revealed traces of ditches, wall footings, mortar and other structural remains. The surface horizons had been heavily disturbed by ploughing but more substantial features would appear to survive to a depth of up to 1.5m.

Site 5 (Plot 18, ST 3320 5280 - ST 3323 5212)

The digging of this section of trench was not observed and the trench had collapsed to within 1m of the stripped surface by the time recording took place. An extensive spread of Romano-British pottery was noted in the trench spoil, extending almost the entire length of the plot. Within the trench a continuous horizon of charcoal-flecked clays containing bone, stone and pottery was observed, extending to a depth of approximately 0.70m and sealed by recent ploughsoils. This horizon extended for a distance of 50m.

4. Summary

The observation of this pipeline, most specifically the deep trench, has provided a unique insight into the pre-medieval settlement pattern of this low-lying area of clayland. The density of recorded sites is surprising and analysis of the recovered assemblages of pottery, animal bone and other artefacts will provide important indications of economy and trade.

The programme of analysis and full report preparation will commence immediately and should be completed (pending specialist reports) by December 1991.

Table 1 Summary of artefacts

| Plot No. | Prehistoric | Romano-British | Medieval | Post-medieval | Total weight |
|------------------|--------------|------------------------|----------|---------------|--------------|
| 1 (topsoil) | | 1 | 4 | 7 | 380gm |
| 2 (topsoil) | | 19 (roof tile) | 13 | 11 | 745gm |
| 2 (trench fill) | | 3 | 2 | | 100gm |
| 3 (topsoil) | | 1 | 5 | 9 | 265gm |
| 2 (trench fill) | | | 2 | | 80gm |
| 7 (topsoil) | 2 | 4 | 46 | 4 | 480gm |
| 7 (trench fill) | 67 (pottery) | | 25 | 7 | |
| | 3 (slag) | | | | |
| | 32 (daub) | | | | |
| | 3 (stone) | | | | 3142gm |
| 8 (topsoil) | | 4 | 40 | 2 | 826gm |
| 9 (trench fill) | | 62 2 (slag) | | | |
| | | 3 (fired clay) | | | 530gm |
| 10 (topsoil) | | 34 | 7 | 15 | 500gm |
| 10 (trench fill) | | 179 12 (fired clay) | | | |
| | | 1 (hone) | | | |
| | | 2 (iron) | | | 2700gm |
| 11 (topsoil) | | 24 2 (fired clay) | | | |
| | | 2 (stone) | | | |
| | | | 2 | | 480gm |
| 12 (topsoil) | | | 2 | 3 | 50gm |
| 13 (topsoil) | | | 6 | 4 | |
| | | | | coin | 100gm |
| 14 (topsoil) | | | 39 | 8 | 640gm |
| 15 (topsoil) | | 1 | | | 5gm |
| 16 (topsoil) | 1 (flint) | | | | |
| | | 139 6 (fired clay) | | | 700gm |
| 16 (trench fill) | | 257 6 (fired clay) | | | |
| | | 1 (roof tile) | | | 4900gm |
| 18 (topsoil) | | 4 | 4 | 1 | 160gm |
| 18 (trench fill) | | 195 2 (fired clay) | | | 2000gm |

Acknowledgements

Mr R. A. Croft, the Somerset County Archaeologist was most helpful during the SMR search and in making available recent aerial photographs.

The successful outcome to the fieldwork owes much to the interest and goodwill of Ian Armstrong, the Site Engineer and the construction crews of Westwick Construction, whose help we wish now to acknowledge.

R. A. Broomhead and J. C. Richards
for AC archaeology
September 1991