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The South Cadbury Environs Project Fieldwork Report 1995

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The South Cadbury Environs Project
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by

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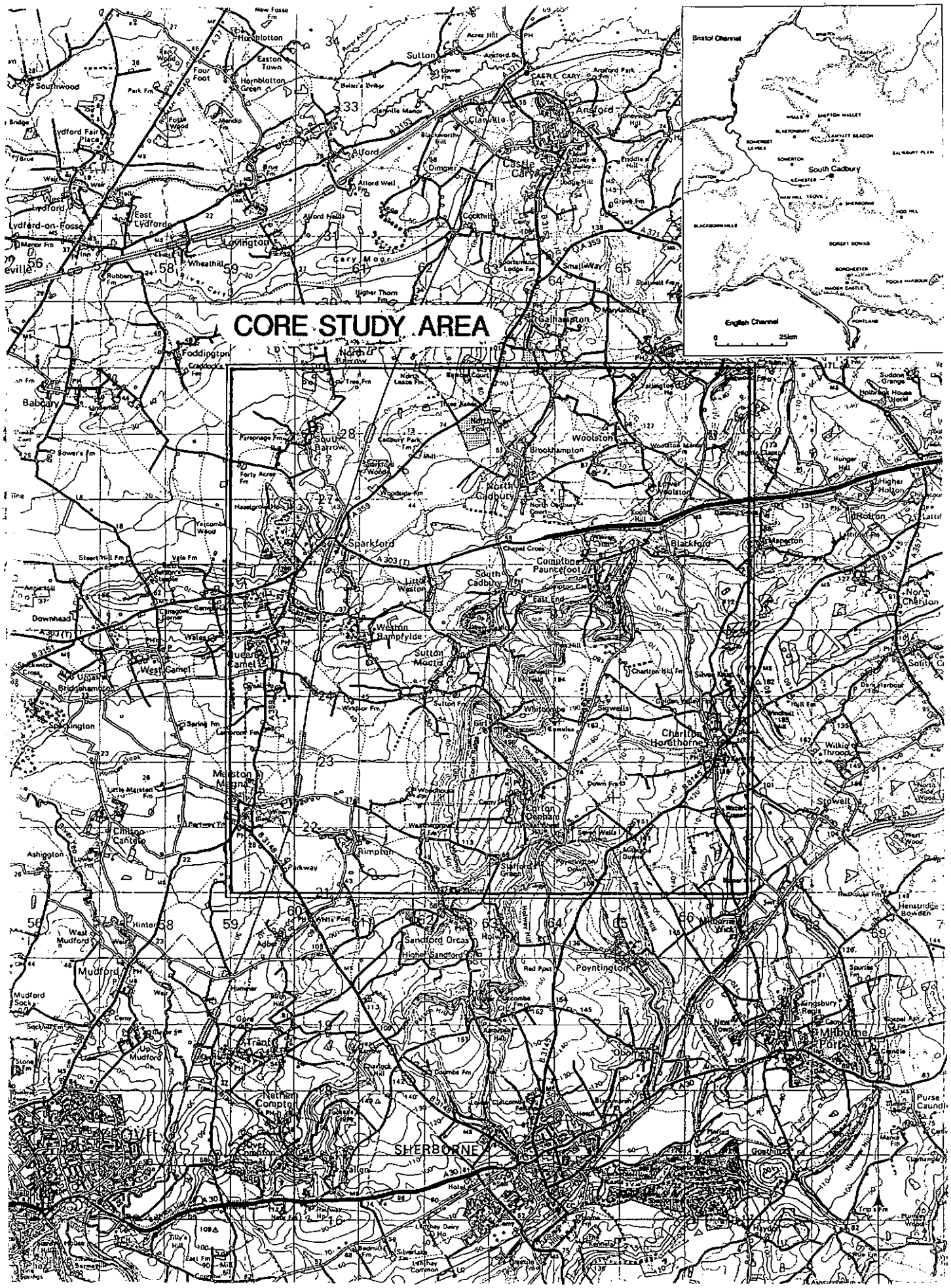
SOUTH CADBURY ENVIRONS PROJECT

FIGURE 1



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Introduction

Excavations at South Cadbury Castle in Somerset by Leslie Alcock between 1966 and 1973 revealed one of the largest and most extensive material and chronological sequences for the Late Bronze Age/pre-Roman Iron Age in Britain (Alcock 1972). Additionally, there was important evidence of Neolithic settlement, and outstanding remains of post-Roman/early Medieval occupation on the hill top (Alcock 1995). Preparation of the results for publication is now well advanced, through the corporate efforts of Professor Alcock and a range of specialist contributors co-ordinated through the Universities of Glasgow and Birmingham.

Following upon the heels of this project, and the input of a distinguished local amateur tradition, campaigns of archaeological survey and excavation in the two decades since have focussed particularly upon the Romano-British and Medieval periods in South East Somerset. Motivated both by academic research and the opportunities provided by development and land use threats, project research has focussed upon such topics as Romano-British settlement in the region (Leech 1978), the Roman and medieval towns at Ilchester (Leach 1982 & 1994), Urban settlements (Aston & Leech 1977), medieval rural settlements (Ellison 1983), and most recently the Roman town and its hinterland at Shepton Mallet (Leach 1991 and forthcoming). In the same period have come the publications of excavations and research on several other major archaeological sites in the region, and of local historical and documentary research, including a Victoria County History volume. However, until recently very little attention had been paid to the immediate hinterland of South Cadbury Castle itself.

Objectives

A new phase of research, building upon this legacy, seeks to characterise in more detail the cultural identity of a region centred upon the hillfort in later prehistory and through into the Romano-British period. Currently, the project involves members of the Universities of Birmingham and Glasgow - staff, research graduates and undergraduates; and the South East Somerset Archaeological Society. Specific objectives include investigation of settlement and landscape history in the study area, focussing upon its evolution from Meso/Neolithic and Bronze Age foundations and through the 1st Millenium BC, the Iron Age /Romano-British transition, and to the emergence of early medieval society. Through the application of the latest information technology to data collection (e.g. Geographic Information Systems) hypotheses concerning social and economic relationships within successive societies can be explored, while strategies for longer term management of archaeological resources, combining academic research with policies for their protection and public presentation, will be developed.

The Study Region

South Cadbury Castle lies within a region defined broadly by the Somerset Levels and Mendip Hills to the north, Bruton Forest and the Vale of Blackmore to the east, the Cretaceous outcrop of North Dorset to the south, and the upper valley of the River Parrett to the west. Within that region, detailed study is focussed upon an 8 kilometre square core area centred upon the hillfort (ST 59002100 to 67002900,

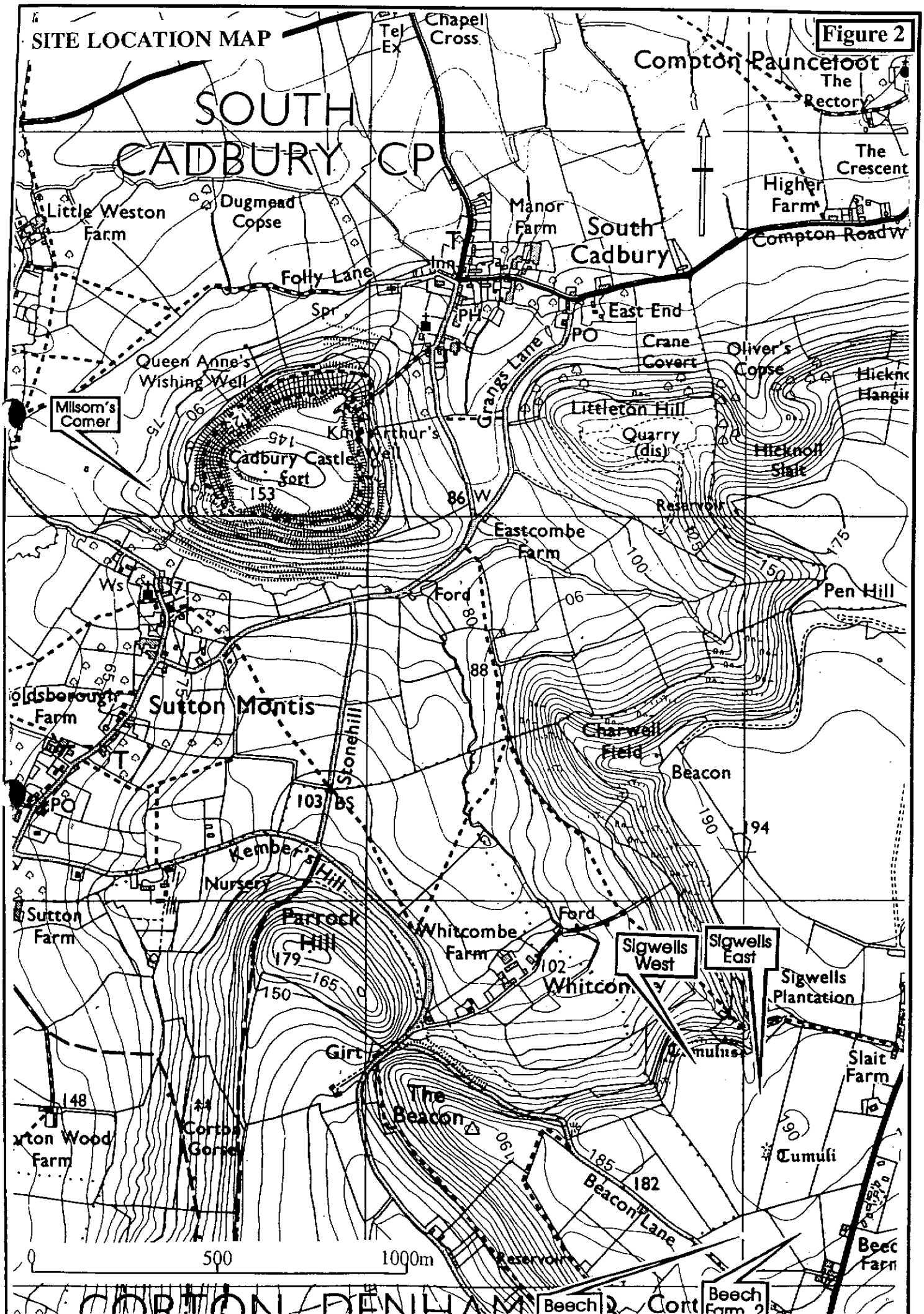

SITE LOCATION MAP
Figure 2
SOUTH CADBURY CP
Chapel Cross
Tel Ex
Compton Pauncefoot
The Rectory
The Crescent
Higher Farm
Compton Road W
Little Weston Farm
Dugmead Copse
Manor Farm
South Cadbury
Inn
Folly Lane
Spr
PH
East End
PO
Crane Covert
Oliver's Copse
Queen Anne's Wishing Well
Grangs Lane
Littleton Hill
Quarry (dis)
Hicknoll Slait
Milsom's Corner
King Arthur's Well
Cadbury Castle Fort
153
145
86 W
Reservoir
Eastcombe Farm
Ford
Pen Hill
Ws
Sutton Montis
Stonehill
Charwell Field
Beacon
103 BS
194
Kember's Hill
Nursery
Sutton Farm
Parrock Hill
179
165
150
Whitcombe Farm
Ford
102
Whitcom
Sigwells West
Sigwells East
Sigwells Plantation
Girt
Tumuli
Slait Farm
148
The Beacon
Corton Gorse
Tumuli
185
182
Beacon Lane
Reservoir
0
500
1000m
CORTON DENHAM
Beech
Cort
Beech Farm 2

Fig.1). A more extensive study area may be defined within an 18 km. square (ST 56001800 to 74003600), interlocking with hinterlands around such centres as Ilchester, Sherborne or Shepton Mallet.

Commencing with some preliminary assessment and fieldwork in 1993-4, a research design for the project was formulated in 1994 and a more concerted programme of work initiated. Stage 1 involves desktop survey to collate and assess all existing documented information, including County SMRs., map and photographic coverage, historic documentation, museum collections, published material, etc. Stage 2 involves field investigation and assessment by a variety of techniques, including remote sensing with geophysical prospection, fieldwalking, augering and test pitting, and excavation to evaluate or provide control samples at selected localities. Inevitably, these stages overlap, and while the first is largely completed the second should continue for at least three more years. Full publication of Stage 1 and 2 results and an overall project assessment will follow, preceded by interim reports in this format and summaries in the Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society. A third stage should then follow which seeks to integrate the foregoing with comparable or more extensive regional studies, expand or develop selected themes, and to promote better management of the archaeological resource and a wider dissemination of information relating to it.

Several specific landscape, period, artifact or functional research themes are emerging within the project, involving researchers at varying levels of commitment, from undergraduates to local amateur workers, post-graduate students and other academics. So far, field research has been concentrated upon the immediate environs of the hillfort, and around Sigwells some 2km to the south east (Fig.2). The latter area has proved exceptionally favourable for both fieldwalking and remote sensing techniques, and was the main focus of activity in 1994 (Leach & Tabor 1994). Work has continued here through 1995 but is now also intensifying around Cadbury Castle, while new sites are coming to light elsewhere within the study region.

Sigwells 1995

The Sigwells study area, centred on ST 640235 in Charlton Horethorne parish, lies at one of the highest points of the Inferior Oolite plateau, some 2km south east of South Cadbury Castle (Fig.2). Steep scarp slopes and combes, descend 100m and more north and westwards above the site of a deserted medieval village at Whitcombe, and are the source of several springs (sixwells - Sigwells). Today, much of the plateau is occupied by large arable or pasture fields and disected by shallow dry valleys. Earlier discoveries from a field south west of Slait Farm comprised three Bronze Age round barrows (opened by Pitt-Rivers and Rolleston in 1877, Grinsell 1971), worked flint, and artifacts of Romano-British date including a stone altar.

In 1993-4 a more systematic programme of fieldwalking and geophysical prospection concentrated upon this field, involving members of the South East Somerset Archaeological Society (SESAS), the Universities of Birmingham and Glasgow, and co-ordinated locally by Richard Tabor (currently a Phd.research student at the University of Birmingham). These surveys revealed concentrations of mainly Romano-British artefacts and prehistoric flint, and the outlines of a variety of potential structures. Surface distributions of stone building remains, dark occupation soil and charcoal, slag, burnt clay, bone and pottery are very apparent following ploughing; some of the densest corresponding with low spread mounds still visible as surface features on the field today. Continuing geophysical prospection, primarily by gradiometer, is revealing a palimpsest of rectilinear and curvilinear structures, other linear features and numerous smaller individual anomalies, as well as some modern disturbance (Figs.3 & 4). These results were

tested in 1994 and again in 1995 by trial excavations organised as training exercises for undergraduate students from the Universities of Birmingham and Glasgow, as well as local volunteers. The data collected so far by all these approaches indicates the site of an extensive Romano-British rural settlement, and apart from the round barrows, less coherent evidence for earlier prehistoric activity.

Fieldwalking

Since the autumn of 1994 crop regimes at Sigwells have not been conducive to further intensive fieldwalking, although it is hoped to continue the programme in 1996. However, all the material collected in 1993-4 has now been identified and analysed (Leach & Tabor 1994 & Fig.2). Lithics are relatively abundant wherever collection has been made, notably in Area C, Sigwells East. Over 1000 pieces of struck flint were recovered from 2500 sq.m. here, comprising 76% flakes, 10% cores, 8% blades and 6% retouched pieces. Diagnostic material indicates a predominance of Mesolithic and Neolithic techniques within the assemblage. Of particular note is the evidence for working on site (cores and hammerstones), and the presence of a Mesolithic type tranchet axehead of Blackdown Hills chert. A smaller and less diagnostic assemblage of over 300 pieces of worked flint has also been collected from the Sigwells West area.

Romano-British material, notably pottery, has also been collected from both areas and analysed. A fabric type series has been devised for the pottery, utilising material from the excavations as well as from fieldwalking. Once again, the largest assemblage has been collected from Sigwells East (Area C), coinciding with a dense concentration of geophysical survey anomalies and tested by excavation in 1994-5 (below). Among an assemblage of several thousand sherds almost 90% are of Dorset Black Burnished Ware (BB1) and 3rd and 4th century types predominate within the whole collection. The much smaller assemblage from Sigwells West was similar in content and date, though generally comprising smaller and more weathered sherds.

Geophysical Survey

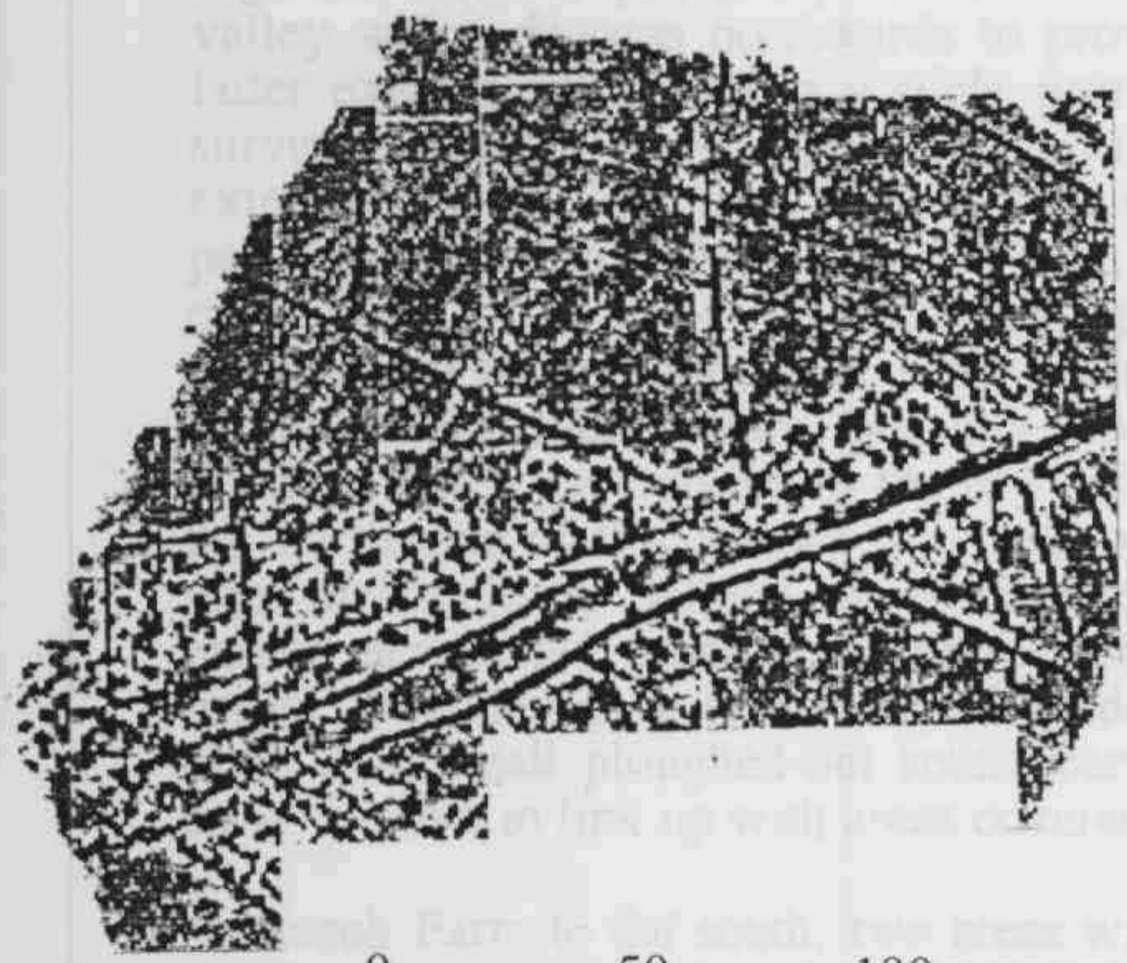
15796

Commencing in 1994, geophysical survey has been concentrated in the two halves of Sigwells (East and West) and at Beech Farm (Fig.4). Survey equipment comprised Fluxgate Gradiometers FM36 and a resistivity meter RM15 from the University of Glasgow, and a Fluxgate Gradiometer FM18 (upgraded to FM36) from BUFAU. Earlier parts of the survey were undertaken and the data processed by Paul Johnson with assistance from Janet Hooper (Glasgow). More recent and continuing survey and processing has been by Richard Tabor, monitored by Paul Johnson. The surveys have been carried out using grids of 20 x 20m., with traverse and sampling intervals of 1m. for both types of instrument. The processing has employed Geoplot 2.01, supplied by Geoscan Research, Bradford. Fuller technical data will accompany the final geophysical reports for each area.

At Sigwells East, with the exception of areas overwhelmed by readings influenced by highly ferrous (modern?) material, a strong pattern of subrectilinear positive anomalies is emerging, particularly to the north and often associated with scatters or concentrations of smaller discrete patches or blobs (Fig.3). Some chronological development may be discerned within these patterns, aspects of which have been confirmed here and there within a Romano-British context by excavation sampling. To the south west a double linear feature passes north of a semicircle representing part of the ditch surrounding the still upstanding twin barrows in the field. Both are potentially of prehistoric origin, as may be other anomalies in the area, the presence of which has once again been confirmed by limited trial trenching. The quality of data collected so far in this area suggests that completion of the gradiometer survey

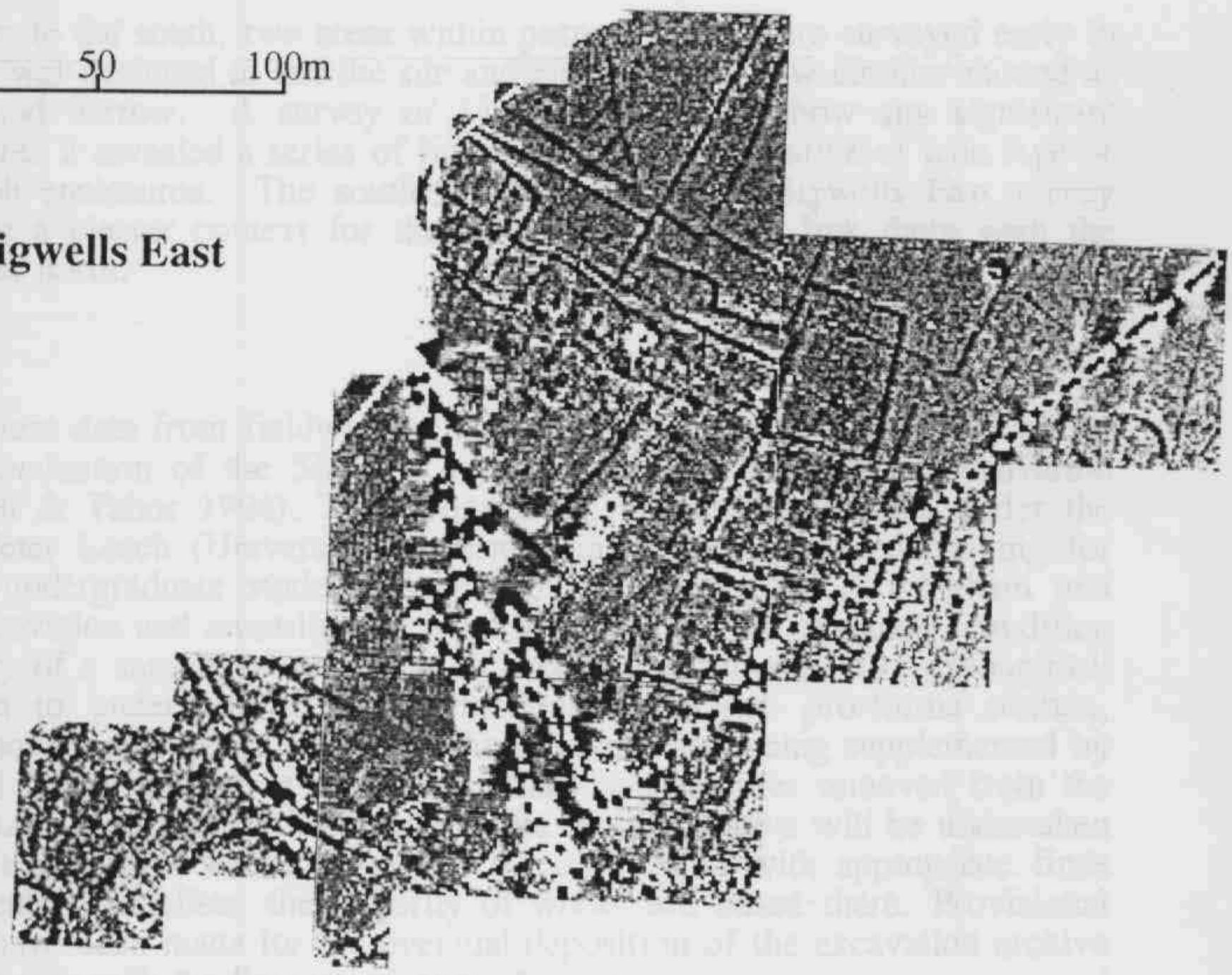
SIGWELLS GRADIOMETER PLOTS

Figure 3



Sigwells West

0 50 100m



Sigwells East

Beech Farm 2

here over the winter of 1995-6 will give a more comprehensive picture, elements of which can be tested by further selective sampling excavation at a future date.

Sigwells West is partly separated from the eastern zone by an uncultivated dry valley which deepens northwards to provide access through the escarpment. The latter extends north west as a slight promontory, where 73 grids have so far been surveyed (Figs.3 & 4). The most prominent feature is a strong linear anomaly extending south west from a short side gulley in the dry valley. The gulley was partly sectioned in 1994 (Leach & Tabor, Trench VI), but is also visible as a broad crop mark on a 1947 R.A.F. aerial photograph which appears to define the promontory to the south east. The geophysical anomaly develops westwards as a broad double linear feature, possibly representing a track or droveway defined by ditches, which gave access to the dry valley and a water supply at its foot. Along the north side of this feature is a band of fragmented disturbance, and towards its west end a clearly defined sub-rectangular enclosure. Less distinct linear features extend across the promontory to the north, some of which could be of natural origin. Another zone to the south includes a penannular feature which may be the ditch of a small ploughed-out round barrow. Survey work here should continue early in 1996 to link up with areas covered at the south end of Sigwells East.

At Beech Farm to the south, two areas within pasture fields were surveyed early in 1995. Area 1 was designed to test the site and environs of a low circular mound as a possible round barrow. A survey of 14 grids failed to show any significant anomalies. Area 2 revealed a series of linear anomalies suggestive of Iron Age or Romano-British enclosures. The southern extention of the Sigwells East survey should provide a clearer context for these features and may link them with the complex further north.

Excavations

In 1994 sufficient data from fieldwalking and geophysical survey was available to permit some evaluation of the Sigwells site by means of small-scale excavation samples (Leach & Tabor 1994). This programme, continuing in 1995 under the direction of Peter Leach (University of Birmingham), also provided training for graduate and undergraduate students from the Universities of Birmingham and Glasgow. Excavation and recording by hand has assessed the character, condition and chronology of a sample of surviving archaeological remains, from ploughsoil horizons down to underlying natural formations. Detailed pro-forma written, graphic and photographic records made in the field are now being supplemented by processing and further recording of portable finds and samples removed from the site. More detailed analysis of the finds and site record archive will be undertaken through the University of Birmingham and in consultation with appropriate finds and environmental specialists, the majority of whom are based there. Provisional arrangements have been made for the eventual deposition of the excavation archive of finds and records with the Somerset County Museum.

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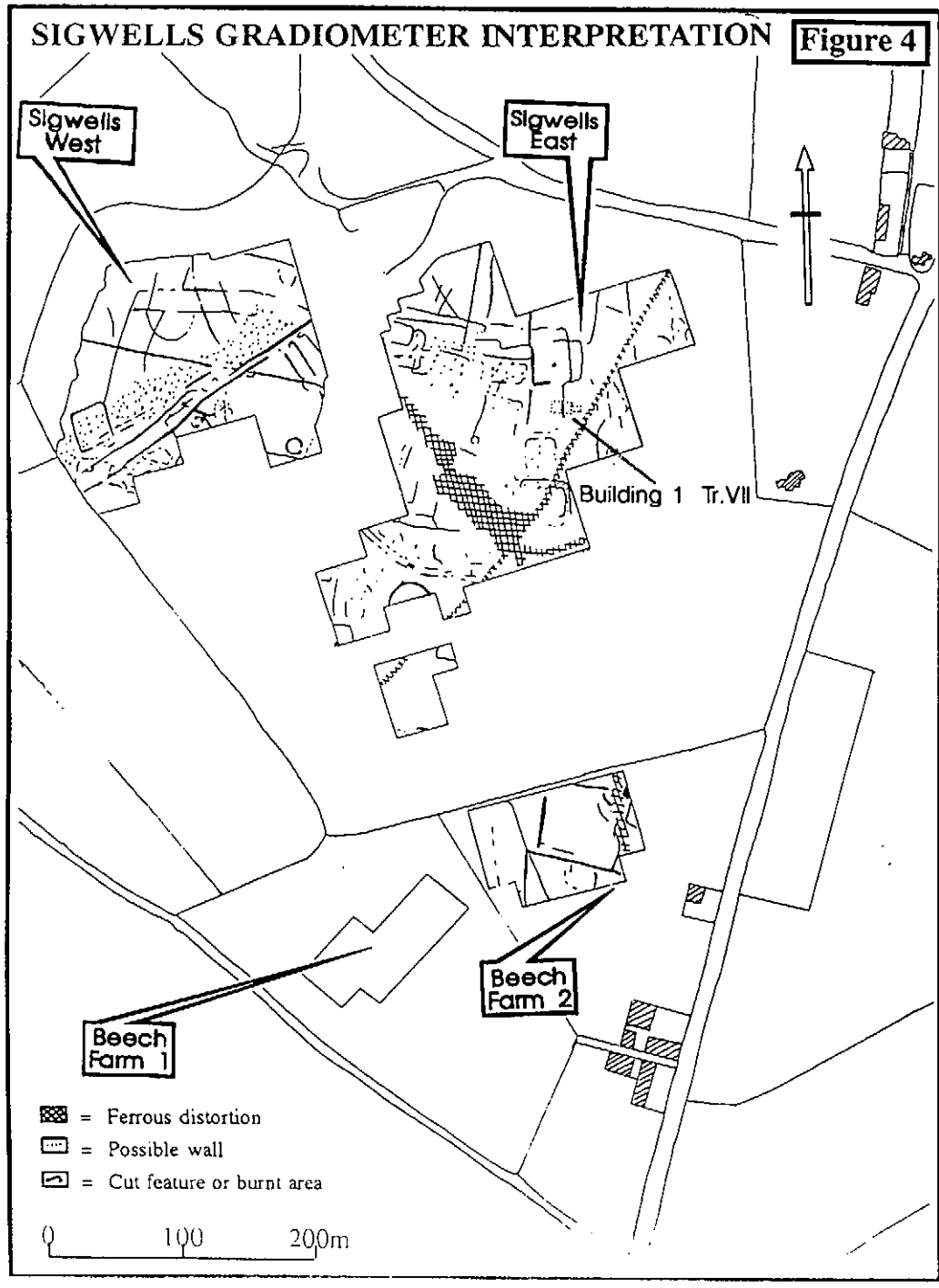
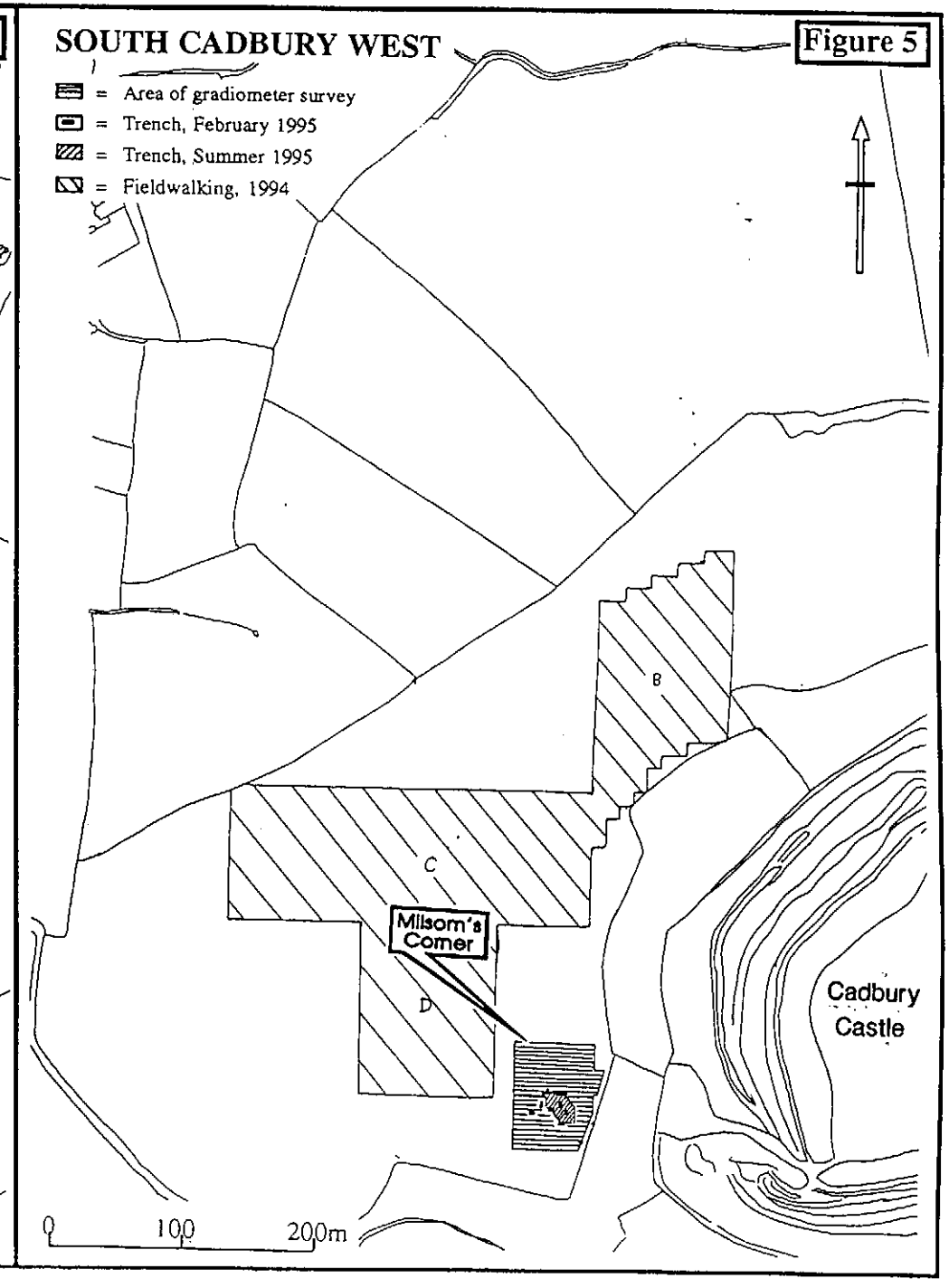
Excavation

Six trenches were excavated in 1994, nos. I-V to examine the Romano-British settlement remains and no.VI adjacent to the Bronze Age barrow at Sigwells West (Leach & Tabor 1994, Fig 2). As a follow up in 1995 further excavation was focussed upon a structure first located by gradiometer survey (subsequently re-surveyed) and partly exposed in the 1994 Trenches III and IV. In 1995 the objective was to fully expose and sample the remains of this structure, identified as Building 1, and to compare data obtained by fieldwalking, geophysics and excavation from a control area. This was designated Trench VII, although in the event it was opened as three separate areas - A, B & C which were not linked (Fig.4). Areas A and B were laid out to relocate the 1994 Trenches IV and III,


SIGWELLS GRADIOMETER INTERPRETATION
Figure 4
Sigwells West
Sigwells East
Building 1 Tr.VII
Beech Farm 2
Beech Farm 1
= Ferrous distortion
= Possible wall
= Cut feature or burnt area
0 100 200m


SOUTH CADBURY WEST
Figure 5
= Area of gradiometer survey
= Trench, February 1995
= Trench, Summer 1995
= Fieldwalking, 1994
B
C
D
Milsom's Corner
Cadbury Castle
0 100 200m

respectively, the backfill from which was largely removed from the overlapping portions (Fig.6).

Area A

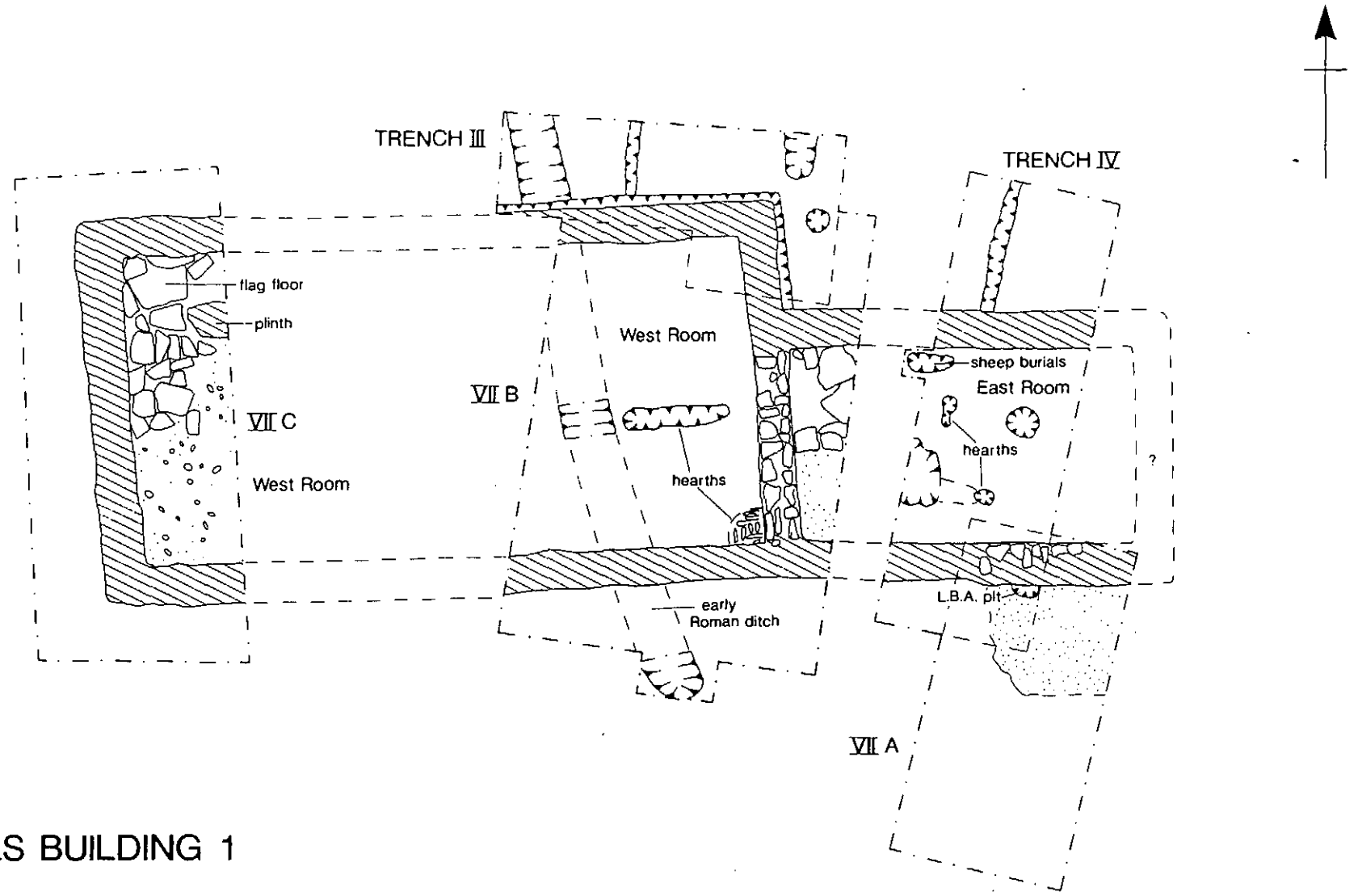
In this area the two principal objectives were first to establish a better context for 1994 finds of Late Bronze Age weapon moulds, and second to locate the south east corner of the Roman Building 1. A small pit containing the former was re-excavated, along with a segment of the building wall foundations which cut through it. Additional pieces of the fired clay spear and socketed axe moulds were recovered, but no other features or deposits which might have been contemporary were recognised in the 8 x 5m area of this trench. The foundations of the south wall of Building 1 were located but could not be followed east to confirm the position of a corner and the end wall, as indicated by the geophysical survey. A growing wheat crop prevented any further extention of the trench here. An area of cobbling and several large post-holes adjacent to the wall foundations, may mark the site of a contemporary timber-framed annex or ancillary structure alongside the building and continuing further to the east.

Area B

The main objectives for this trench were to confirm the relationship between the building foundations encountered first in Trenches III and IV, and to examine further the nature of features and deposits beneath and predating the late Roman building. In this area removal of no more than 0.20m of ploughsoil revealed dense spreads of stone debris, dominated in places by concentrations of Lias limestone roof tile fragments and elsewhere by tumbled and weathered oolitic limestone blocks and rubble; some burnt. Finds associated with these deposits included Romano-British pottery of late 3rd and 4th-century types, stone, glass, bone and metal artifacts, and animal bone. Much of this horizon was removed to reveal two sets of parallel wall foundations aligned approximately east-west and linked by a north-south cross wall (Fig. 6). These defined parts of two rooms belonging to Building 1. The larger West room was 8m. wide internally, its walls defined by several courses of pitched stone rubble foundations (as sectioned in Trench III, 1994); a horizontal bottom course of mortared stone blocks surviving only upon the wall separating this room from the East room.

Within the West room two major contemporary features were investigated, a semi-circular setting of heavily burnt stones in the south east corner of the room and an elongated trough cut into the sandy subsoil which was locally burnt red and contained deposits of ash, charcoal and heavily burnt stone. Both features evidently represent the remains of hearths or ovens, most probably of domestic character. No evidence of a floor level survived at this end of the room, which could originally have been timber planked or of beaten earth, unless the stones of a more substantial flag floor had been removed. Only a limited portion of the smaller East room was uncovered in this trench, *c* 5m wide, its wall foundations bonded in with those of the West room. Access between the two rooms was presumably through a doorway in the partition wall, although no clear remains survived. The disturbed remains of a Lias flagstone floor occupied the west end of this room. A larger sample of its interior was obtained in Trench IV (1994). The flagstone floor was not found further east, although one or two surviving displaced fragments suggested that much of the room may originally have had such a floor. Other features seen included the remains of at least two small hearths, a fire pit, and a late? burial of three sheep in a pit close to the north wall. The position of the east end wall is conjectured from previous gradiometer survey information.

In 1994 features and deposits predating the remains of Building 1 were encountered in Trench III. A ditch cut by the north wall of the West room, on a north west-south east alignment, was traced further in Trench VII B and extended beyond the south wall. Geophysical survey suggested a large pit or termination here, although its excavation revealed a more complex sequence which could not be fully



SIGWELLS BUILDING 1

Trenches III & IV 1994

Trenches VII A-C 1995

0 10m

Fig.6

investigated. Finds from this ditch and one or two other earlier features demonstrated their infill during the 2nd century AD.

Area C

The objective here was to locate the west termination of Building 1 and the possibility of other pre-building activity at this location (Fig.6). Pitched stone wall foundations representing the end wall of Building 1 and linked to the west ends of the north and south walls, were indeed located following the partial clearance of overlying rubble deposits. This confirms the West room to have been up to 16m. long internally, unless another room partition lies beneath the unexcavated baulk which separates Areas B and C.

Once again, the remains of a Lias stone flagged floor survived in the northern half of this room, though somewhat disturbed. The only other contemporary internal feature seen was part of a pitched stone plinth foundation which continued beyond the trench to the east. Part of the flagstone floor had subsided into an earlier underlying feature, a pit or ditch which could not be fully investigated. No further evidence of pre-building arrangements was encountered as time and resources did not permit full clearance of overlying deposits within or around the remains of Building 1 here. Similarly, it was not possible to physically link Areas B and C as originally intended.

Interpretation

Although not all the stated objectives were achived by the excavation of Trench VII A,B & C in 1995, a better context was provided for remains encountered in 1994 and the relationships and interpretation of results from a range of prospection techniques can now more readily be assessed.

A good context for the presence of prehistoric features and material, here and elsewhere at Sigwells, is still elusive, although further unstratified finds were recorded. These included over 100 worked flints (a Bronze Age tanged-and barbed arrowhead among them), a large sherd of Neolithic Mortlake/Peterborough ware, and further fragments of Late Bronze Age weapon moulds. The character of early Roman occupation here (1st-2nd centuries) also is still little better understood, though clearly related to parts of the rectilinear enclosure layouts being revealed by geophysical prospection. The erection of a later Roman stone building here appears to represent a new layout and perhaps expansion of settlement from the 3rd century, though perhaps directly succeeding the earlier remains. Building 1 can now be more clearly seen as a substantial two (or possibly three) roomed structure, of mortared stone and with a stone tiled roof. In all probability combining domestic residential, agricultural and small-scale industrial functions, this building undoubtedly stood with others within a more extensive, agriculturally-based rural settlement. There are hints of timber-framed structures, cobbled yards or streets, and a framework of ditched enclosures replacing or adapting an earlier layout. Finds give a firm 3rd and 4th century context for this phase of settlement, which from data accumulated so far was probably comparable in status and character with Catsgore (Leech 1982 & Ellis 1984).

As suggested previously, the priority for further work at Sigwells must be the completion of both geophysical and surface collection surveys. Results already obtained suggest other potential targets for sampling excavation, but this will not be pursued until all such data is gathered and a comprehensive assessment made to prioritize objectives. It is already clear that this area was to some extent complementary to Cadbury Castle as another focus for settlement and other activity over several millenia. Continuing exploration of this potential will remain a major theme of the project, which will also seek to expand the scope of survey and research more widely in this locality.

South Cadbury 1995

Fieldwalking

In September 1994 a fieldwalking programme sampled three areas in fields below and to the north and west of Cadbury Castle (Fig.5). The areas B, C &D were located within the field known as Milsom's Corner, a focus for continuing work through 1995. Material was collected by 10m squares based upon the National Grid, as part of University of Birmingham undergraduate and post-graduate field training. Analysis so far has identified prehistoric material including worked flint of Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age character and some Iron Age pottery. Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval artifacts were all recovered in some quantity, a concentration of the former in Area B below Queen Ann's Well suggesting a settlement location. A subsequent collection of prehistoric pottery was made from a spur to the east of Area C and below the South West gate of the hillfort (ST 624251). This discovery and the evident impact of continuing cultivation in the vicinity, suggested the requirement for further investigation here. Initially, this was pursued by means of limited trial trenching (members of SESAS directed by Richard Tabor). Eight small trenches (I - VIII) were opened by hand in February 1995 to expose hillwash horizons in all but one beneath the ploughsoil. Only Trench IV, the most westerly, encountered a plough truncated surface of natural banded clays and soft limestone. Small sondages were made into the hillwash in four trenches, from one of which in Trench VIII were recovered over 100 small sherds of prehistoric pottery and two small features seen. These results and the problems of the site and its interpretation, suggested the need for a more extensive investigation.

Geophysical Survey 16312

As a preliminary to investigative excavations proposed here for the summer of 1995, a gradiometer survey was carried out to include the area to be opened and an area around - a total of 13 20m grids (Figs.5 & 7). On the south side of the area surveyed, lynchets or geological conditions are probably responsible for the anomalies here, while to the west ploughing may be responsible for a fairly dramatic fading. Elsewhere, an extremely complex picture is revealed, although only the anomalies contained within the subsequent area excavation are considered in detail here (Fig.7).

A strong positive anomaly (1) to the south east runs almost north-south, before turning west at virtually a right angle (2) where the anomaly intensifies (11). A second intensification occurs at (12). Two more possibly circular anomalies (4 & 16), *c* 1m in diameter, lie further west. To the west, another strong positive linear anomaly (5) runs west-east to a slight bulb (6), from which project two prongs. The southern (7) takes a straight south east course, while the northern (8) curves sufficiently for the two to converge again after *c* 18m. Adjacent to the east is a strong anomaly (9), and a lighter oblong (10) just above it. Other less distinct linears (13 & 14) appear to cross (7 & 8) from north east to south west. A gap (15) at the crossing of (8) and (14) represents trial Trench VIII cut in February 1995. To the north of (8) a more complicated pattern is evident, extending well beyond the area of excavation. This will be described with reference to future work in the area.

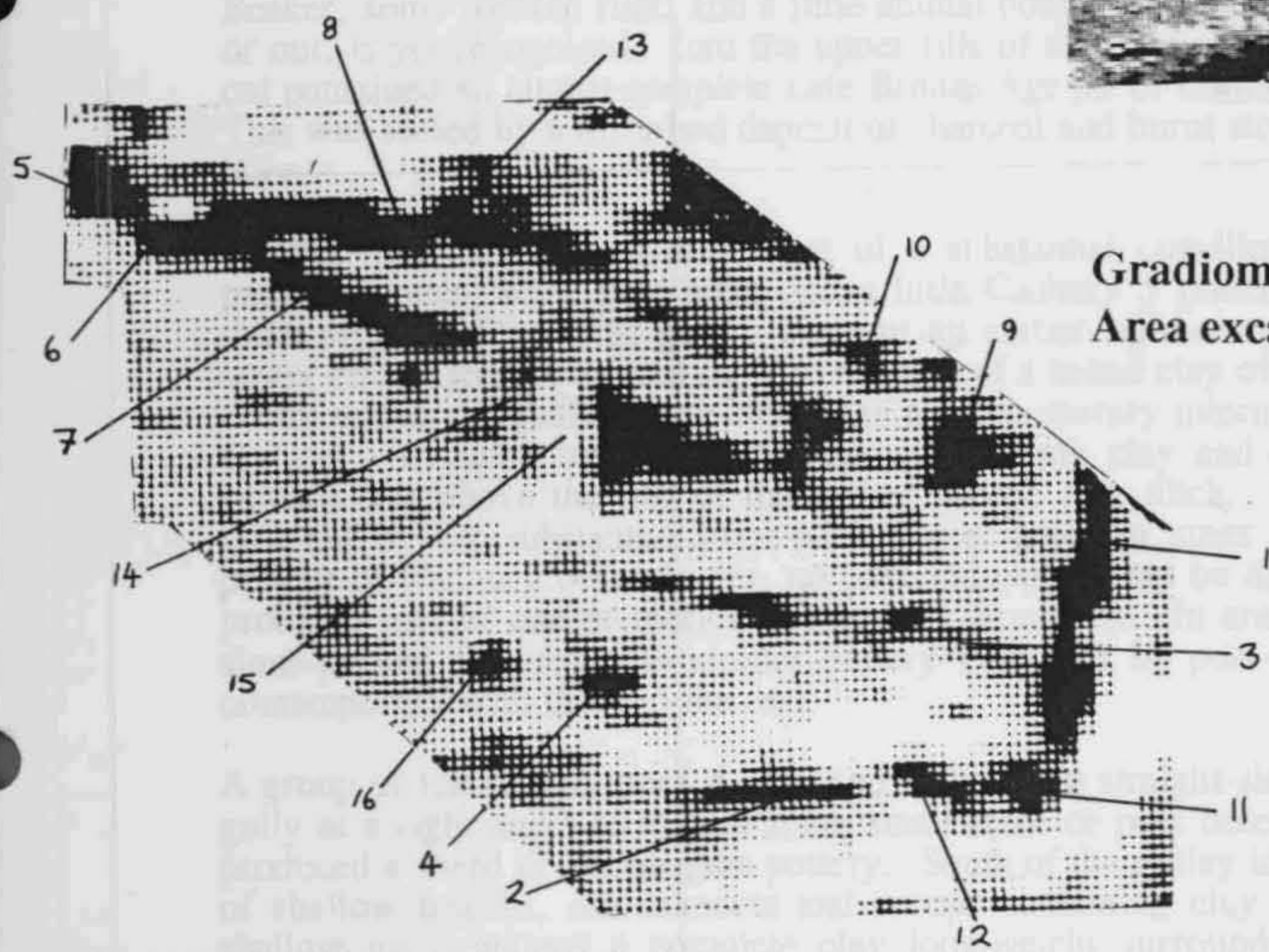
Excavation 16314

A hexagonal-shaped area of approximately 422m square was opened by hand in June 1995 to remove over 0.20m of ploughsoil (Fig. 7). This was undertaken by undergraduate students from the Universities of Birmingham and Glasgow,

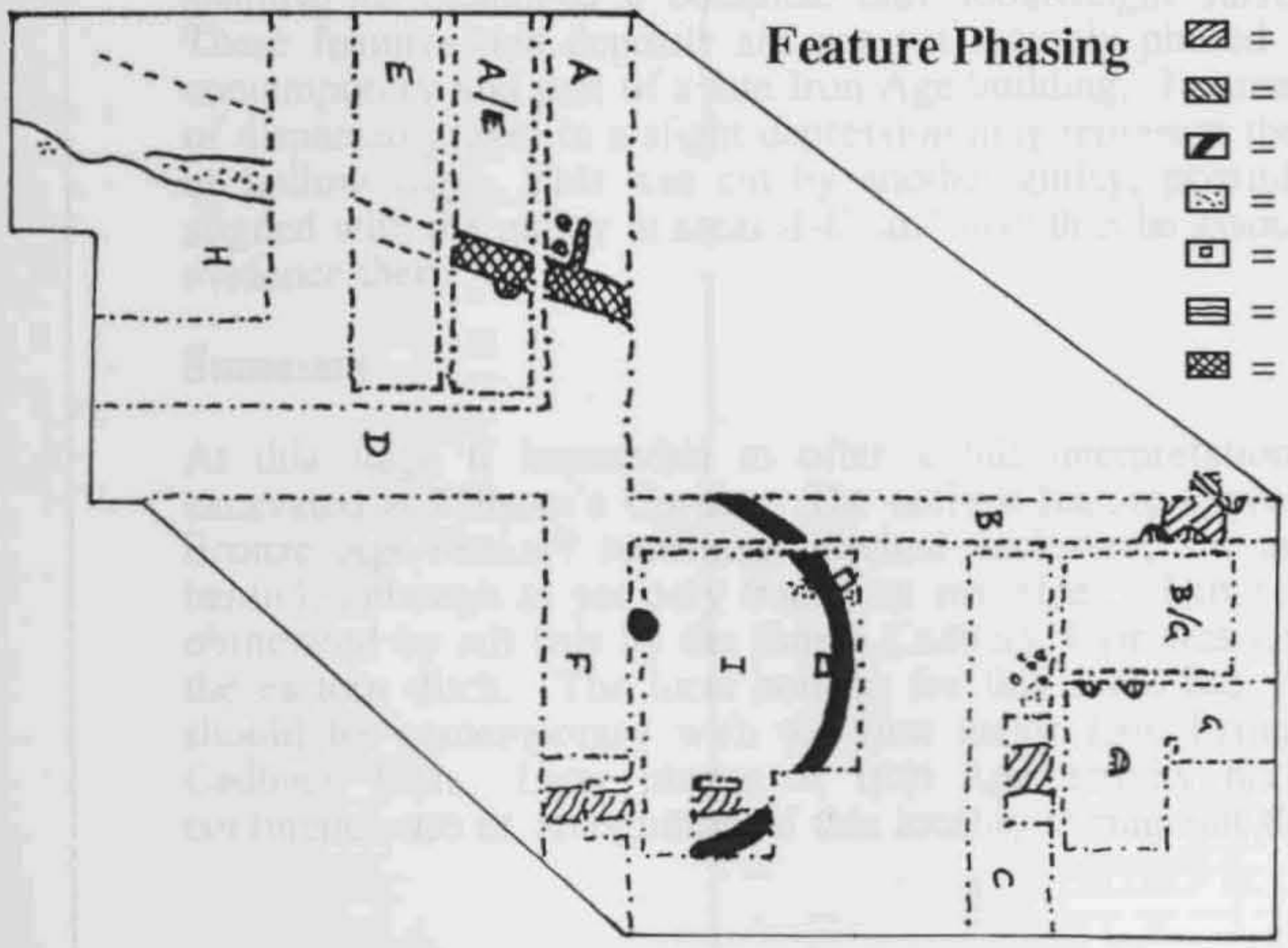
FIGURE 7

Gradiometer Plot,
Excavation area outlined

0 10 20m



Gradiometer Plot (Enlarged),
Area excavated



Feature Phasing

- = Early Bronze Age
- = Late Bronze Age
- = Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age
- = Gravel Dispersal
- = Middle Iron Age
- = Middle/Late Iron Age
- = Late Iron Age

members of S.E.S.A.S. and post-graduate supervisors under the direction of Richard Tabor and Dr. Christopher Pare (University of Birmingham). Trial Trenches I, II, VI, VII & VIII were incorporated into the area, and a layout of sub-trenches was determined with the assistance of the gradiometer. Considerable difficulties in excavation were experienced as a result of very warm and dry weather throughout a six week season in June and July 1995. The predominantly clay based deposits were frequently difficult to distinguish separately by soil colour changes, and were apt to bake hard. These conditions and the emerging complexity of archaeological evidence prevented more rapid progress, and a further season of excavation is planned here for 1996.

Sequence and Stratigraphy

The earliest feature identified is a ditch of two segments ((1) & (2) on the gradiometer plot), which was located within areas *B, C,I* & *F*. Cut with a V-shaped profile to over 1m deep and some 3m. wide where best preserved in *B*, the fills of this ditch contained a few small sherds of Early Bronze Age pottery, including Beaker, some worked flint, and a little animal bone. No evidence of a bank, inside or out, is yet recognised. Into the upper fills of this section an indistinctly defined cut contained an almost complete Late Bronze Age jar of Cadbury 4 (Alcock 1980). This was sealed by a disturbed deposit of charcoal and burnt stone with some animal bone.

Further west in areas *B* & *I*, part of a substantial curvilinear gully containing packing stones, some post holes and a little Cadbury 5 pottery, cuts the southern ditch segment (2). This gulley also cut an earlier semi-circular gully of slightly larger circumference around it. The remains of a baked clay oven in a small pit, off centre within the gullies, may have been a contemporary internal feature. All these features are sealed by a dispersed spread of stony clay and burnt gravel, which extends east above the fills of the earlier Bronze Age ditch. This horizon was in turn cut by six substantial stone-packed post holes in areas *B* and *G* containing pottery of Cadbury 6-8. As yet, no coherent pattern can be discerned but they are probably part of one or more contemporary structures. In area *I* another group of stone-packed features with similar pottery may also be post-holes, and could be contemporary with those to the east.

A group of features in areas *A*, *A/E* and *E* include a straight-sided gulley, a smaller gully at a right angle to it, and some small stake or post holes. One of the latter produced a sherd of Durotrigian pottery. South of the gulley in area *E* was a group of shallow hearths, ash rakeouts and scoops containing clay cess deposits, One shallow pit contained a complete clay loomweight surrounded by burnt stones. These features and deposits are not yet securely phased but may well be almost contemporary and part of a late Iron Age building. In area *H* a broad shallow band of dispersed gravel in a slight depression may represent the line of a metalled track or hollow way. This was cut by another gulley, possibly a later track which is aligned with the gulley in areas *A-E*, and may thus be associated with the occupation evidence there.

Summary

At this stage it impossible to offer a full interpretation of the remains so far excavated at Milsom's Corner. The earliest feature appears to be part of an Early Bronze Age/Beaker? rectilinear ditched enclosure, set astride a spur of the hill behind, although as yet only traced on two sides. This seems to have been totally obliterated by silt fills by the time a Cadbury 4 jar was inserted into the top fill of the eastern ditch. The local context for this event has yet to be established, but should be contemporary with the first major Late Bronze Age re-occupation of Cadbury Hill. Later phases of Iron Age activity here may represent almost continuous use or recognition of this locality throughout the successive occupations

of the adjacent defended hilltop to Cadbury 8. At least two phases of circular post-trench buildings, and subsequent phases of timber framed domestic? structures are represented, as well as a track or hollow way leading westwards away from the area.

A notable feature of this site is the variable degree of stratigraphic preservation, which improves progressively from west to east. This is almost certainly a reflection of more intensive plough erosion down slope to the west, while the better surviving succession closer to the hill is due in part to hillwash deposition. That effect has helped to bury and preserve earlier occupation horizons and maintain clearer separations between them. In the light of geophysical prospection results from the area immediately north of the excavation there is clearly immense potential for yet more complexity in the sequence of prehistoric activity at this locality. The sampling of that area, as well as continuing work on the present site, must be a priority for the project in the immediate future.

This locality, just below the South West gate of Cadbury Castle is surely significant; a site with whom it appears so intimately linked in prehistory, and a stepping stone into the hinterland of that outstanding monument.

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Peter Leach and Richard Tabor, University of Birmingham, November 1995.

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