

**HOGOAK, BERKSHIRE:  
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT  
1990**

by  
Alex Jones

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**1.0: INTRODUCTION**

This report provides an archaeological assessment of approximately 25 ha. of land at Hogoak, Berkshire (centered on NGR. SU 889745: Figure 1A), set within its archaeological and historical context. The site is located 15 km north east of Reading and 2 km south of Bray (Figure 1A). The report was commissioned by Nicholas Pearson Associates of Bath, in advance of the submission of development proposals.

This report follows an earlier archaeological outline (Jones and Buteux, 1989), based upon examination of the data contained in the Berkshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). No archaeological discoveries were recorded within the site, but a number of discoveries have been made in the surrounding area, despite the limited extent of fieldwork.

The aims of the present preliminary assessment were:

- 1: To study the archaeological and historical sources for the site and its surroundings to determine the evidence for settlement in the area. To assess the implications of the settlement pattern for the possible exploitation of the site itself, and the survival of archaeological evidence.
- 2: To locate archaeological features apparent on aerial photographs.
- 3: To assess of the value of systematic fieldwalking. (At the time of the site visit the site was under crop (flax) and examination was limited to the field edges.
- 4: To provide a synthesis of the archaeological and historical information available for the site and its setting, and propose a programme of further work, if this is required.

**2.0: THE PREHISTORIC AND HISTORIC LANDSCAPE SETTING**

**2.1: Topography and geology**

North and east of the Thames an expanse of flat and low-lying ground is formed of flood-plain gravel and alluvium (Figure 1B). South of the river the rich, gently undulating country is underlain by sediments resting on Upper Chalk. Above the chalk are the Reading Beds, comprising a mixture of sands, silts and clays, capped by stiff reddish-brown London clay: a sequence confirmed by extensive borehole excavation on site. Higher ground south-west of the site at Cruchfield, and to the east at Foliejon Park (Figure 1C) is capped by terrace gravels. South of the site the ground rises in the form of a long plateau composed of sands of the Bagshot series (Dewey and Bromehead, 1915).

**2.2: Settlement patterns in east Berkshire**

Archaeological investigation in Berkshire has been concentrated away from the site, on the Thames gravels to the north and the Berkshire Downs to the west. A recent survey of east Berkshire (Ford, 1987) focussed attention on a broad north-south transect, to investigate the chronological and spatial patterning of settlement on a representative variety of subsoils. Although not directly concerned with the site or its immediately surrounding area, the survey provides a provisional model for the interpretation of settlement patterns within the vicinity of Hogoak. The identification of a number of new sites during the course of this systematic study suggests that the existing distribution of archaeological discoveries around Hogoak may reflect the limited nature of the fieldwork undertaken, rather than the true archaeological potential of the area.

An increase in oak and pine pollen within the natural elm and lime woodland may be the first evidence of Man's appearance in east Berkshire, recorded during the Paleolithic (ending ca. 8000 BC): during this period activity was concentrated on the gravel and brickearth areas along the Thames valley (Ford, 1987).

The survey (Ford, 1987) indicates that Mesolithic settlement (8000-4000 BC) was not confined to the valley floor, but extended to include sporadic, seasonal occupation on London clay. Flint tools have been found at Winkfield and Holyport (Figure 1C).

In the Neolithic (4000-2500 BC), activity was clustered along areas of river alluvium and the Thames floodplain, with increasing settlement on the chalk and Reading beds. A wide distribution of sparse finds on all subsoils suggests sporadic, but extensive hunting (Ford, 1987): flint tools are widely distributed on the London clay (Figure 1C).

Analysis of Bronze Age (2500-700BC) activity in the survey area (Ford, 1987) suggests that settlement extended beyond the gravels and alluvium. Round barrows are recorded on the poorer soils in the south east of the county. Other types of site, including ring-ditches, appear to be concentrated on the river gravels, but this distribution may simply reflect factors that restrict aerial reconnaissance. A late Bronze Age settlement was located south-east of Hogoak, and scattered finds of contemporary pottery are recorded on the London clay (Figure 1C).

Little data is available for the Iron Age (700BC-50AD). Caesar's Camp is the only hill fort recorded nearby, but the general lack of settlement evidence contrasts with the apparent suitability of the topography. A group of pits containing Iron Age pottery was excavated near Foliejon Park (NA511-517), during the construction of a pipeline (Start, 1981-2).

Two major Roman roads crossed Berkshire: from London to Silchester and St. Albans to Silchester (Figure 1A: Margary, 1955). Romano-British settlements, especially villas were concentrated along the road lines. Several new discoveries have been made in the course of recent field survey (Ford, 1987). However, only one villa is sited on London clay, perhaps due to

the low agricultural productivity of the clay. Such poorer soils may have been confined to use as summer pasture. A villa is recorded at White Waltham, on chalk 4km north-west of Hogoak (Figure 1C). Pipeline construction revealed evidence of Roman occupation close to Hogoak, including two intersecting ditches at Foliejon Park (Start, 1981-2). This evidence suggests there was more small-scale Romano-British settlement near the site than was previously suspected.

The Hogoak site was located in the Bray hundred, on the boundary with the Ripplesmere hundred to the east (Gelling, 1973). Parish names ending in 'field' represent unsettled land used as common pasture (e.g. Winkfield and Warfield: Figure 1C, Gelling, 1976). A Roman and Anglo-Saxon cemetery has been located at Bray (Figure 1C). A manor farm at Chawridge, west of Hogoak (Chawridge Bourne: Figure 2) is mentioned in a document of 942 (Gelling, 1973).

The underlying London clay strongly favours the growth of oak and elm woodland. Much of the area around Hogoak may have been forest in the medieval period, subject to harsh forest laws that restricted settlement. The Domesday survey of 1086 (Morris, 1979) records villages at Bray (56 villagers, 4 slaves and a church), at Warfield, 2km south of Hogoak (13 villagers, with woodland for 100 pigs), at Winkfield 2km south west of the site (20 villagers) and at Fifield (Figure 1C). Pressure on the woodland is recorded: in 1219 Henry III investigated settlement on woodland in the Reading area. By 1225 policy had changed and an order was made for the deforestation of the whole of Berkshire, except for Windsor forest. In the early medieval period farming already extended onto the poorer soils because of pressure on land but this reverted to woodland after the Black Death. The establishment of Foliejon Park measuring 100 ha. in extent, 1km east of Hogoak is typical of the widespread creation of parks, during the 13th and 14th centuries, partly as a result of royal patronage. Medieval ridge-and-furrow survives around Holyport, White Waltham, south of Hornbuckle Farm and north east of Warfield, near Hogoak (Figure 1C).

Medieval moated sites are widely distributed, both on London clay and gravel (Figure 1C).

### 3.0: THE SITE

#### 3.1: Topography and geology

The site is located south of Pickens Farm, between the 40m and 60m contours (Figure 2). A stream (Chawridge Bourne) lies 0.2km to the east (Figure 2). Topographically the site may be divided into two zones: a lowlying plateau to the north, and higher ground to the south, forming an irregular north- west facing slope.

The site is wholly underlain by London clay: borehole records suggest a minimum thickness of 12m. Topsoil varies in depth from 0.2m-0.3m (borehole information). Beyond the site, to the south-west and east the higher ground is capped by terrace gravels (Figure 1B).

The site was under crop (flax) at the time of visiting, and inspection was limited to the extreme edges of the field. A quantity of heat-shattered flints were noted in the south east corner of the site. These may derive from prehistoric or Roman hearths. A sherd of roof tile (possibly Roman), was also noted in the same area.

#### 3.2: Cartographic evidence

Part of the eastern boundary of the site is formed by Hogoak Lane, an overgrown track leading from Drift Road to Nuptown (Figure 2). The site is named after an oak tree described as the 'Hogoak' in the Warfield enclosure map of 1817: it was common practice to allow pigs to graze in woodland. Hogoak Lane, formerly known as Ashmore's Lane (Parish of Warfield enclosure map, 1817), is recorded on early 19th-century maps of Bray parish. The modern parish boundary follows the line of the track before turning slightly to the west along the eastern site boundary to the south. Present parish boundaries may follow medieval parish boundaries, which are often marked by a bank or ditch, although no such earthwork is clearly visible above ground here. A narrow strip of land along the outside of the north western site boundary (south of Pickens Farm) may represent the line of a medieval trackway. This trackway, and the wood north-east of the site were recorded on the Bray enclosure map of 1812.

The site boundaries were mostly defined by

1812 (Bray enclosure map) but at that time subdivided into small irregularly-shaped fields. This field layout is recorded in the Bray parish tithe map of 1844, which provides important information about land use and ownership. The site comprised meadow and pasture: the north part owned by St. John's College, Cambridge, the remainder by the Fishmonger's Company. Land was let to a number of tenants who also rented small parcels of land outside the site. The present site access to Hogoak Lane was formed later, by sub-division of a meadow to the west.

#### 3.3: Aerial photographs

The County Council's collection of aerial photographs was examined to identify crop or soil marks which may be archaeologically significant. The most distinct crop mark (Figure 2:C), of S-shape, represents a ploughed-out field boundary marked on the enclosure map of 1844. Two slightly inturned L-shaped soil marks (Figure 2: A and B), are caused by localised differences in soil colour (1986 negative 60/86/130). Morphologically these two marks resemble parts of small single ditched enclosures, usually dating to the later prehistoric period, but these poorly defined marks may simply be caused by variations in the natural subsoil.

#### 3.4: Fieldwork

The excavation of a gas pipeline crossing the south west angle of the site was archaeologically monitored but no discoveries were made on the site itself. There is no record in the SMR of the recovery of any archaeologically significant artifact or structure from within the area of the proposed development.

### 4.0: IMPLICATIONS AND PROPOSALS

#### 4.1: Implications

The archaeological survey of east Berkshire, and recent discoveries during pipeline construction, have served to demonstrate more intensive activity on London clay in east Berkshire than was hitherto suspected. This new information suggests considerable potential for the recovery

of important information relating to the prehistoric, Roman and medieval exploitation of areas of London clay.

The recovery of a scatter of heat-shattered flints from within the site perhaps hints at the existence of settlement on or near the site in the prehistoric or Roman periods. The evidence from aerial photographs is unclear and ambiguous and requires testing by fieldwork.

The course of the present parish boundary, along part of Hogoak Lane and following the southern part of the eastern site boundary, may be of historical and archaeological significance. This boundary, recorded on the enclosure map of 1812, may follow a medieval parish boundary, and may be a restatement of the boundary between the Bray and Ripplesmere hundreds. Such boundaries were often marked by a bank or ditch. Fieldwork may be required to examine this area, if it is affected by the development proposals.

#### 4.2: Proposals

It is recommended that fieldwalking be undertaken after ploughing, to test the archaeological potential of the area proposed for development. Fieldwalking is based on the principle that archaeological deposits below the ploughsoil may be identified and characterised by locating scattered artifacts that are lifted into the ploughsoil during ploughing.

A series of rapid passes across the entire site would check for major concentrations of surface artifacts (Stage 1). The recording (but not collection) of surface finds within a grid composed of 50m squares will permit an initial check on the presence and distribution of

artifacts. A field team of three would be required for two working days to complete this stage.

If dense concentrations of artifacts were recorded during Stage 1, more intensive fieldwalking (Stage 2) may be required to pinpoint concentrations of artifacts that possibly represent settlement sites. The data from more intensive fieldwalking could ideally be complimented by selective survey with a Magnetic Susceptibility meter (Bartington Instruments M.S. 2) to identify localised variations in magnetic field typically caused by the processes of human occupation. A field team of three could complete Stage 2 in five working days.

If major concentrations of finds are defined during Stage 2, and the results of magnetic susceptibility survey are encouraging, a small trial excavation may be required in targetted areas, to investigate the survival of structural, artifactual, and eco-factual evidence.

#### 5.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## 7.0: MAP SOURCES

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- 1812 Parish of Bray, Forest Division, Enclosure Map.
- 1815 Plan of roads set out by order of the commissioners of Warfield.
- 1817 Parish of Warfield Enclosure Map.
- 1821 The Parish of Bray by W.Francis (Copied by Messrs. Crawter and son 1852).
- 1844 Apportionment of tithes in lieu of rent charges: Bray parish.

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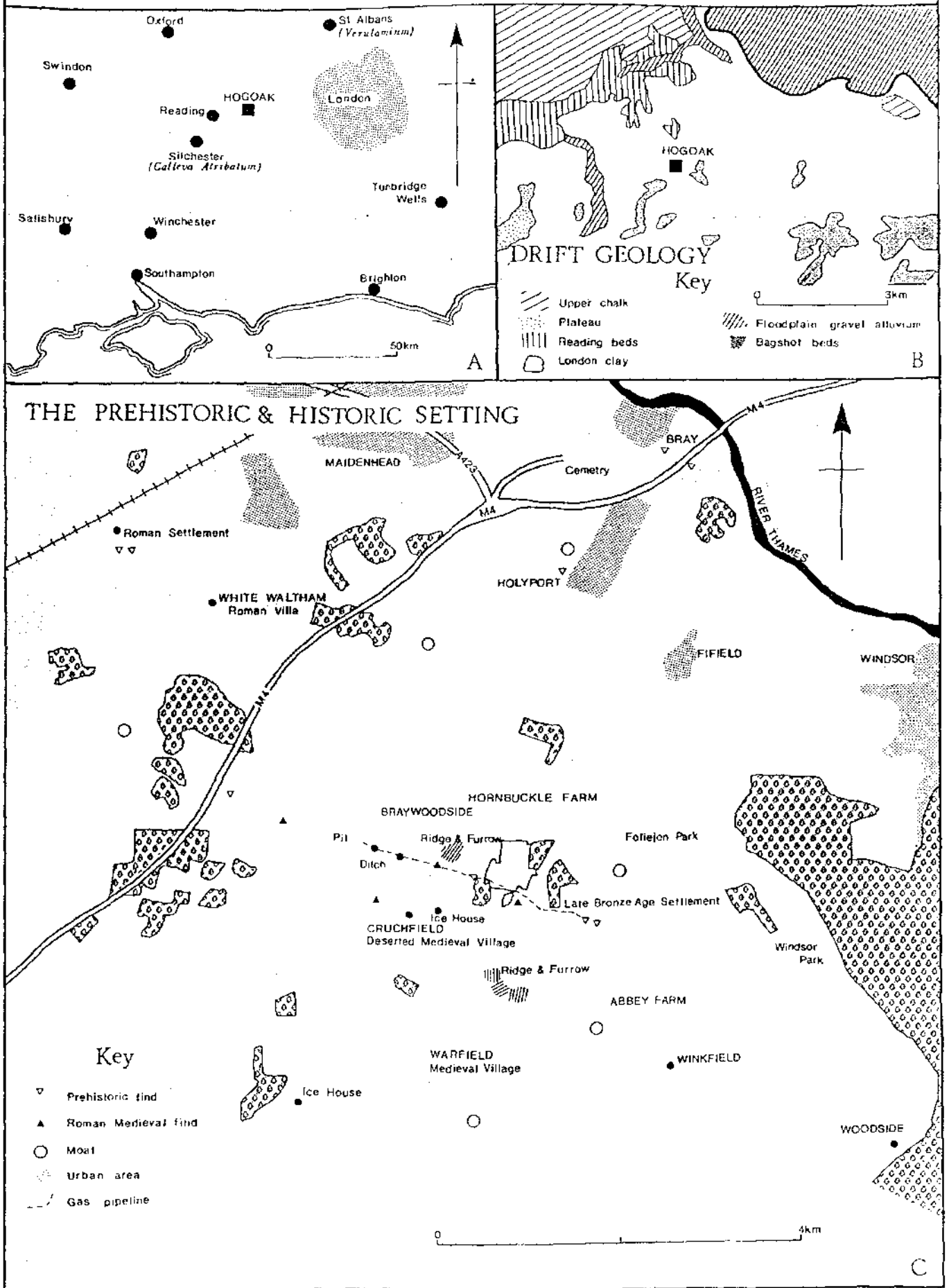


Figure 1



# HOGOAK BERKSHIRE 1990 The Site

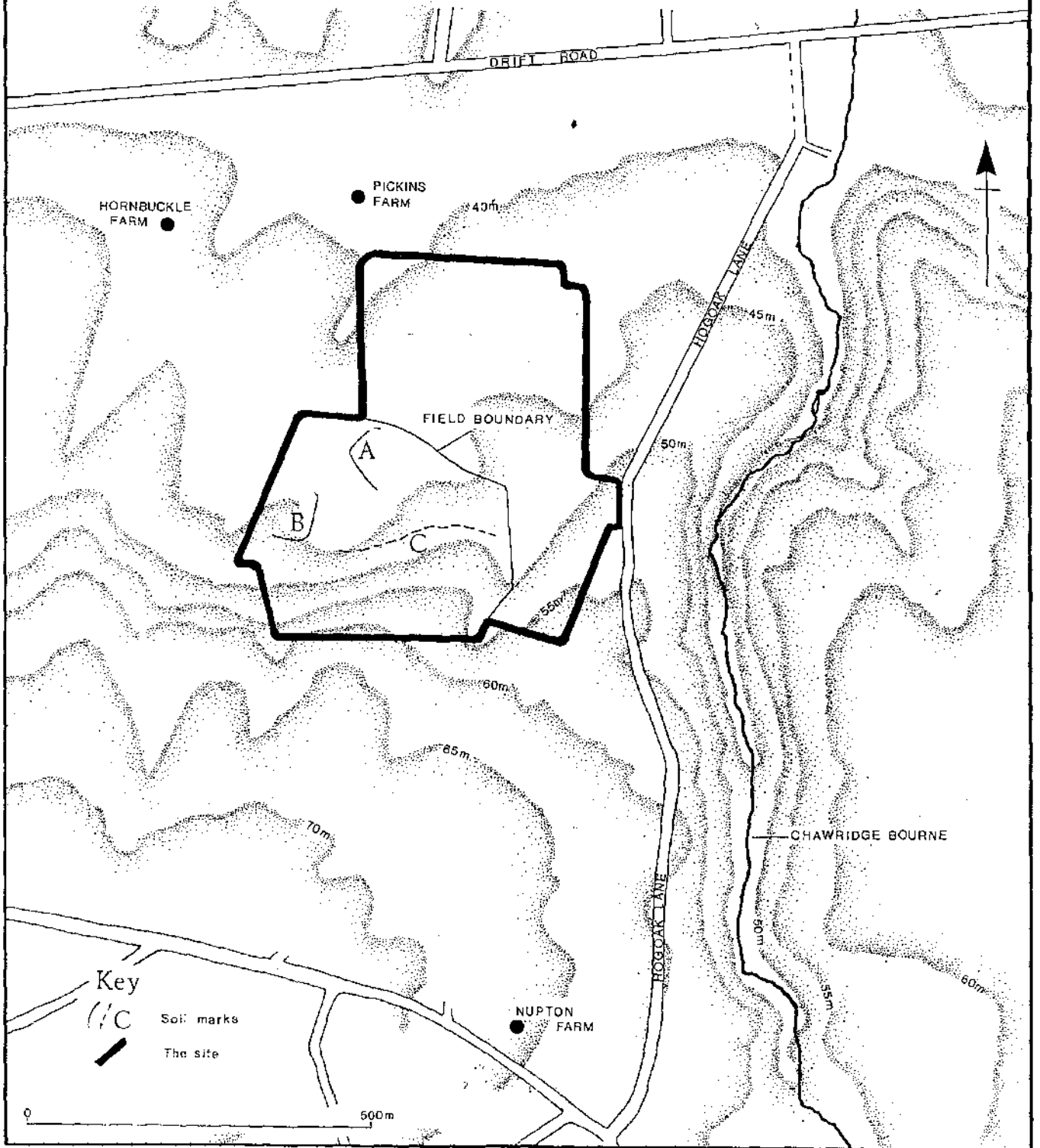


Figure 2