BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT

Archaeological Sites on the Hatton Bank to Wellesbourne Water-Main Pipeline, Warwickshire

B.U.F.A.U.

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
Project No. 396
March 1997

Archaeological Sites on the Hatton Bank to Wellesbourne Water-Main Pipeline, Warwickshire

by
Steve Litherland and Peter Ellis
with contributions by Lynne Bevan and Ann Woodward

For further information please contact:
Simon Buteux, Iain Ferris or Peter Leach (Directors)
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 5513
Fax: 0121 414 5516
E-Mail: BUFAU@bham.ac.uk
Web Address: http://www.bham.ac.uk/BUFAU/

Archaeological Sites on the Hatton Bank to Wellesbourne Water-Main Pipeline, Warwickshire

by Steve Litherland and Peter Ellis, with contributions by Lynne Bevan and Ann Woodward

Summary

A programme of archaeological watching briefs and excavation undertaken on the Hatton to Wellesbourne pipeline resulted in the location of Middle or Late Iron Age settlement features at a site already known from aerial reconnaissance. Observations at other suspected archaeological sites proved negative.

Introduction

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the laying of a water pipeline by Severn Trent Water Ltd. The work was undertaken in accordance with a brief prepared by Warwickshire Museum, and was planned to involve excavations at selected sites in advance of pipelaying as indicated by the watching brief results. The fieldwork was preceded by documentary, cartographic and aerial photographic research. The work was financed by Severn Trent Water Ltd and was undertaken in March and April 1996. The pipeline route of *c*7km ran from NGR SP 2358 5856 to SP 2747 5700 through the parishes of Hampton Lucy, Charlecote and Wellesbourne (Fig. 1). The geology of the area comprised second, third and fourth river terrace gravels for the main part, with some areas of Rhaetic Beds and Mercia Mudstone.

The gravel terraces of the River Avon, over which the pipeline was routed, are the location of a large number of archaeological sites, ranging from Neolithic ritual sites to post-medieval parks. In particular, excavations at Wasperton, 2km to the north of Charlecote, identified major multi-period occupation sites of prehistoric, Romano-British and early-medieval date (Hughes and Crawford 1995).

The brief by Warwickshire Museum highlighted five areas of potential archaeological interest that might be affected by the pipeline. At a scheduled Saxon site (SAM 133), located south of Hatton Bank Farm and comprising settlement and perhaps palace-type features, it proved possible to reroute the pipeline away from the areas of known archaeology. The remaining four sites were: a possible Roman road (WA 4764), the site of a possible former earthwork boundary of Charlecote Deer Park (WA 1112), a prehistoric pit alignment and enclosure known from air photographs (WA 1144 and WA 6307), and a second possible Roman road (WA 4760). These are shown as Sites 1-4 on Figure 1.

Topsoil stripping within the *c*15m wide pipeline easement, at or adjacent to the above sites was carried out under archaeological supervision. Along the remainder of the pipeline route the line was walked following the topsoil stripping. Topsoil was dumped on one side of the easement leaving a 10m wide area stripped of topsoil generally available for examination. In the event, no archaeological features were observed along the pipeline with one exception. This was at Site 3. Here test pitting established that the exposed subsoil was a layer of hillwash colluvium, and a 110m long trench was therefore excavated initially by hand and then by machine, its line sited exactly along the proposed pipeline trench (Fig. 2). The features exposed were then excavated by hand.

Results

Site 1

The suggested Roman road line is marked by a modern farm track. No evidence of a Roman road or roadside ditches was found. The tarmac track was seen to be set on 0.3m of stone hardcore, set directly on the red sandy silt subsoil which was recorded in the pipe trench to a depth of 2m.

Site 2

No linear boundary features were recorded in the areas where the park boundary may have lain. The pipeline route followed an earlier redundant service trench over part of the area and this may well have obscured ditch features. North of the river, colluvium was recorded running up to a gravel terrace. Two worked flint flakes on the terrace suggested possible prehistoric activity in the vicinity.

Site 3 (Figs 2 and 3)

The natural surface comprised sandy gravel in the north, changing to red and grey clay to the south. A ditch, F302, running north-west to south-east, had been cut into the natural subsoil where a clear change in its gravel content was noted. It had a V-shaped profile and was *c*2.8m wide and 0.9m deep. The primary fill of the ditch was light brown clayey sand, 3006, overlain by a slightly darker sandy clay, 3005. A patchy gravel layer mixed with sandy silt, 3004, ran along the ditch line.

A second feature, F301, a ditch or pit, lay 10m to the south. This had a shallow bowl-shaped profile and was 3.3m wide and 0.7m deep. A single fill of dark brown

silty sand, 3008, was recorded. Immediately to its south was a shallow scoop, F305. The west side of the feature was excavated within the trench where it was 1.9m wide and 0.25m deep. Almost 30m further south was a gulley, F303, aligned north-south. This had a U-shaped profile and was filled with orange sandy silt, 3009.

These features were sealed by a layer of colluvium, 3002, 0.2-0.3m deep. Although no horizons of deposition were observed in excavation, the layer had evidently accumulated over a period of time since a steep-sided V-shaped feature, F306, possibly a ditch, had been cut from a level just below its surface. The feature was 1m wide and 0.9m deep and, if a ditch, was aligned north-east/south-west. It was filled with a red-brown silty sand, 3013. The colluvium lay beneath a 0.25m deep layer of topsoil.

F302 is likely to represent a large ditch with a primary silt fill and an upper layer, 3004, settled into the subsidence of its main silt fill. F301 could also be seen as a ditch, but its profile and single silty fill suggest a pit. F305 may also be part of a pit. Gulley F303 to the south could represent part of an enclosure gulley traced for a distance of 5m. These features were then buried beneath layer 3002. The later feature, F306, might represent a drainage gulley.

Pottery of Middle to Late Iron Age date was recovered from layers 3005 and 3006 filling F302, and from the overlying alluvial deposit, 3002. Two possible loom-weights were found in layer 3006. Flint flakes and a possible tool of Neolithic or Bronze Age date were also found in F302, and a flint flake was found in F301. Further flakes came from 3002. A small collection of animal bone came from layer 3005 in F302.

Of these features F302 can be equated with the cropmark record of an apparent boundary running on the same alignment. The location of ditch and cropmark are not exactly the same but within the margin of error to be expected from the plotting of air photographic evidence. The cropmark evidence shows a D-shaped enclosure feature to the north of this boundary, while the excavation evidence located features only to the south. The air photographs suggest a turn northward at the east end of the main boundary. The excavated features suggest pits and enclosure gullies. The pottery, loom-weights and animal bone can be seen as evidence of domestic occupation in the vicinity. There was no dating evidence from F306. This may be a modern drainage channel, and its profile suggests a recent feature. However it may represent a later episode of prehistoric activity following an episode of flooding and abandonment.

The limited nature of the cropmark evidence may be explained by the fact that features are sealed beneath colluvium, although F302 nevertheless remained visible. However, the change in subsoil noted on the line of F302 may explain why the cropmark evidence is limited to the area to its north. The natural subsoil into which the southern features were cut may not be conducive to cropmarks. Alternatively,

cropmarks may appear at a different time to those to the north and remain to be recorded.

Site 4

At the intersection of the pipeline and the suggested line of the Roman road the pipeline crossed the Charlecote to Loxley road at an oblique angle. No evidence of the Roman road was seen in the pipe trench with orange red clay natural observed at the intersection and on either side. About 50m to the north a spread of gravel in the topsoil seemed likely to be recent.

Other sites

No features or finds spreads were seen on the remainder of the pipeline route. Occasional flint flakes, potsherds - principally post-medieval - fragments of brick or tile and occasional glass and metal finds, all apparently modern, were found. These were noted but not retained.

Specifically, no significant archaeological remains were recorded to the east of the possible Saxon palace site (SAM 133). A slight east-west running bank, visible on the ground to the east of the site, was a natural feature. Cut into it was a shallow hollow, visible on the ground *c*100m in diameter. Topsoil stripping revealed that this was filled with dark soil containing modern bottle glass, iron objects and plastic suggesting that the feature was a recently backfilled quarry. A sherd of Romano-British pottery was recovered to its south.

Directly to the south of the Avon, an estate map of 1791 shows a complex of fields on the pipeline route to the north of Site 3. Narrow, separately-owned strips are shown running at right angles to the river. By the time of the 1886 OS 1st edition map no evidence of these fields remained and their area is marked as 'liable to flooding'. There was no evidence of these features on the ground.

Finds

Objects of flint by Lynne Bevan

The flint used for the eleven struck pieces in this small collection was beige to light and medium grey in colour with the compacted brownish cortex characteristic of pebble flint from secondary deposits. Five pieces are an opaque, whitish beige colour, the result of re-cortication. The only recognisable tool was a broad, retouched flake from layer 3005 in F302 (Fig. 4). This was a flake knife or scraper of medium grey mottled flint with a single row of shallow flaking along one dorsal edge and remnant

cortex along the other. There are traces of a further retouch on the corticated edge near to the tip which is shattered. The main retouched edge would have fulfilled a sawing or scraping function. Although not chronologically diagnostic, a Neolithic to Bronze Age date is proposed for this tool type.

Of the flint flakes, two also came from layer 3005 in F302 and one from 3006. From 3005, one was of grey flint and was in a fresh condition, the other was re-corticated and slightly iron-stained. The flake in layer 3006 was beige and had possible retouch along one side. A further beige-coloured flake came from layer 3008 in F301. Six flakes came from layer 3002, two of which were light grey in colour and four were re-corticated and an opaque cream colour. Three of the latter were water-rolled and one of the grey flakes showed signs of utilization.

The pottery by Ann Woodward

A total of 31 sherds and two objects of fired clay were recovered. Three fabrics were recognised. Fabric A (20 sherds) was a dense micaceous sandy fabric, the second, Fabric B (9 sherds), contained shell fragments, and the third, Fabric C (2 sherds), was a fine sandy fabric. Three feature sherds, a simple rim and a flat rim in Fabric A and a flat rim with part of the neck of a vessel in Fabric C, were recorded. None of the sherds was decorated. The fabrics represented, together with the rim forms, suggest a Middle to Late Iron Age date for the assemblage. There were also two baked clay fragments which may derive from one or two loom-weights.

The pottery derived from the colluvium, layer 3002, and from layers 3005 and 3006 in F302. None has been illustrated.

Discussion and review

Results from archaeological work on the Hatton to Wellesbourne pipeline are limited to the records made at the cropmark site, Site 3. The cropmark is matched by similar, denser, cropmarks on either side of the Avon, 1.5km to the north (Webster and Hobley 1965; Hughes 1995, 118), and a similar pit alignment is recorded in the group on the east side of the Avon. Excavations at Wasperton have revealed a succession of open and enclosed settlement sites. The gravel terraces were clearly favoured sites in prehistory. The excavation evidence gives a Middle to Late Iron Age date to the Site 3 cropmark features, while the loom-weight and animal bone finds, and the evidence of nearby pits and enclosures, suggest settlement activity.

The recognition of a sealing hillwash layer underlines the importance of careful observation where areas have been stripped of topsoil, but where the underlying surface is floodplain or hillwash material. The archaeology at Site 3 is therefore well protected and damage to it was limited. On the pipeline as a whole, the level of

observation was sufficiently high and the natural surface sufficiently clear to make it unlikely that archaeological features were missed. The absence of evidence for the suggested Roman road lines is not unusual since many possible Roman routes were undithched and lacked the classic Roman road features. The failure to locate a possible early boundary of Charlecote Park was equally unsurprising, although the coincidence of the pipeline route with an earlier pipeline may have masked the evidence.

Acknowledgements

The watching brief was carried out by Steve Litherland who also directed excavation of the features at Site 3 with the assistance of Kirsty Nichol, Gary Coates and Martin Wilson. Thanks are due to the site engineers of Severn Trent Water Ltd for assistance and advice.

References

Hughes, G. 1995 'Excavation of a possible Iron Age cropmark at Hampton Lucy, Warwickshire, 1993', *Trans. Birmingham and Warks. Archaeol. Soc.*, 99, 118-21.

Hughes, G. and Crawford, G. 1995 'Excavations at Wasperton, Warwickshire, 1980-1985. Introduction and Part I: the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age', *Trans. Birmingham and Warks. Archaeol. Soc.*, 99, 9-45.

Webster, G. and Hobley, B. 1965 'Aerial reconnaissance over the Warwickshire Avon', *Archaeol. Journ.*, 121, 1-22

Documentary records consulted

Copies of five oblique air photographs of Site 3, held by the Field Archaeology Office of Warwickshire Museum (SMR SP2555), were examined and sketch plotted. At the Warwickshire County Record Office, the following maps were examined in researching the boundaries of Charlecote Park:

Copy (1887) of Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map (1886)
Estate map of 1791 (Z628L) made for J. Lucy
Tithe apportionment maps for Hampton Lucy, 1847, and Charlecote, 1849 (CR569/122 and CR569/69 respectively)
Hampton Lucy meadow map, mid-18th century (CR1461/Box 2)
Map of Lucy estate by James Fish, 1736 (L6/103)

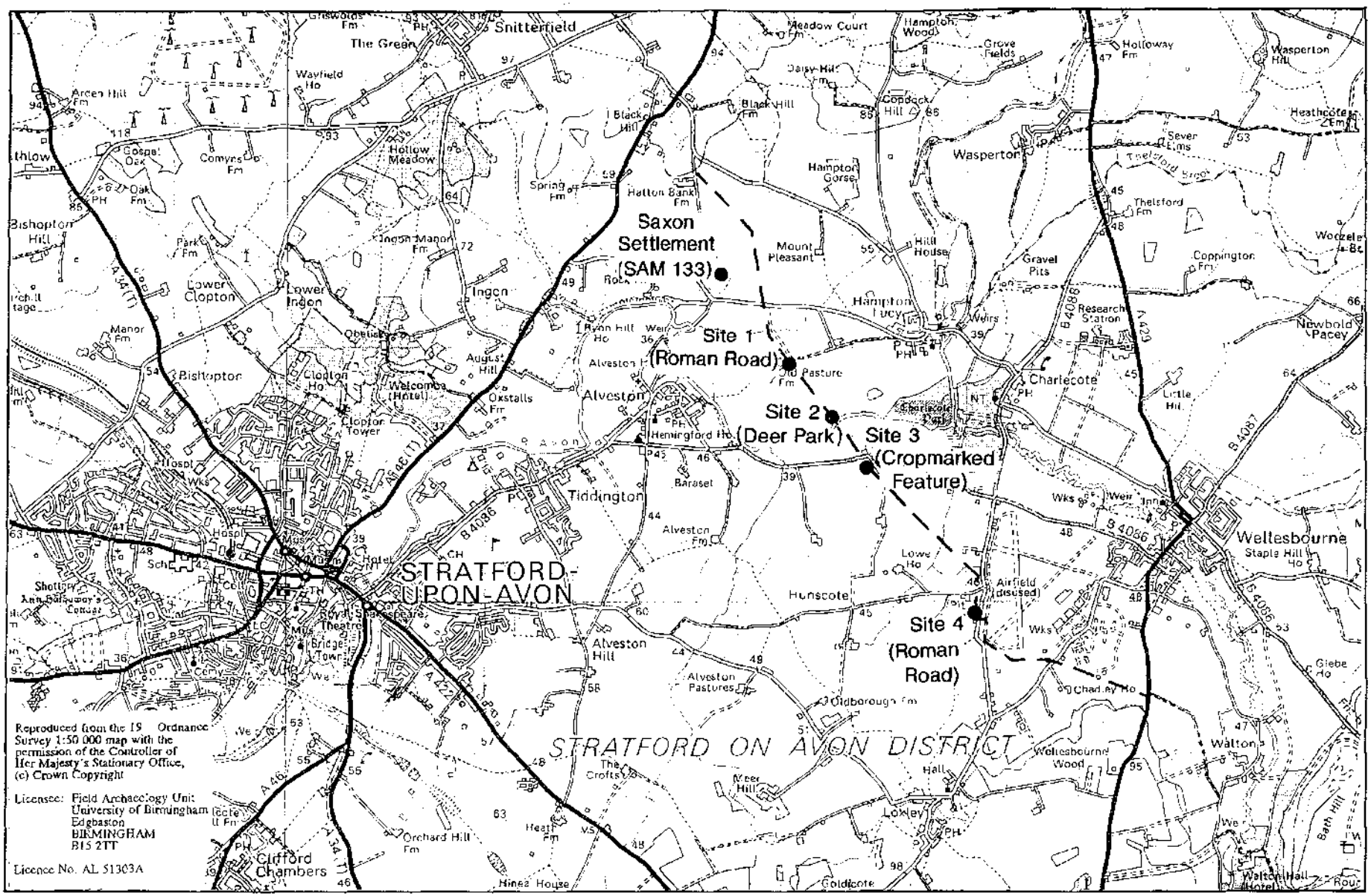

Saxon Settlement (SAM 133)
Site 1 (Roman Road)
Site 2 (Deer Park)
Site 3 (Cropmarked Feature)
Site 4 (Roman Road)
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON
STRATFORD ON AVON DISTRICT
Alveston
Tiddington
Hunscote
Wasperton
Charlecote
Welcombe (Hotel)
Clopton Tower
Clifford Chambers
Reproduced from the 19 Ordnance Survey 1:50 000 map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office, (c) Crown Copyright
Licensee: Field Archaeology Unit University of Birmingham Edgbaston BIRMINGHAM B15 2TT
Licence No. AL 51303A

Fig.1

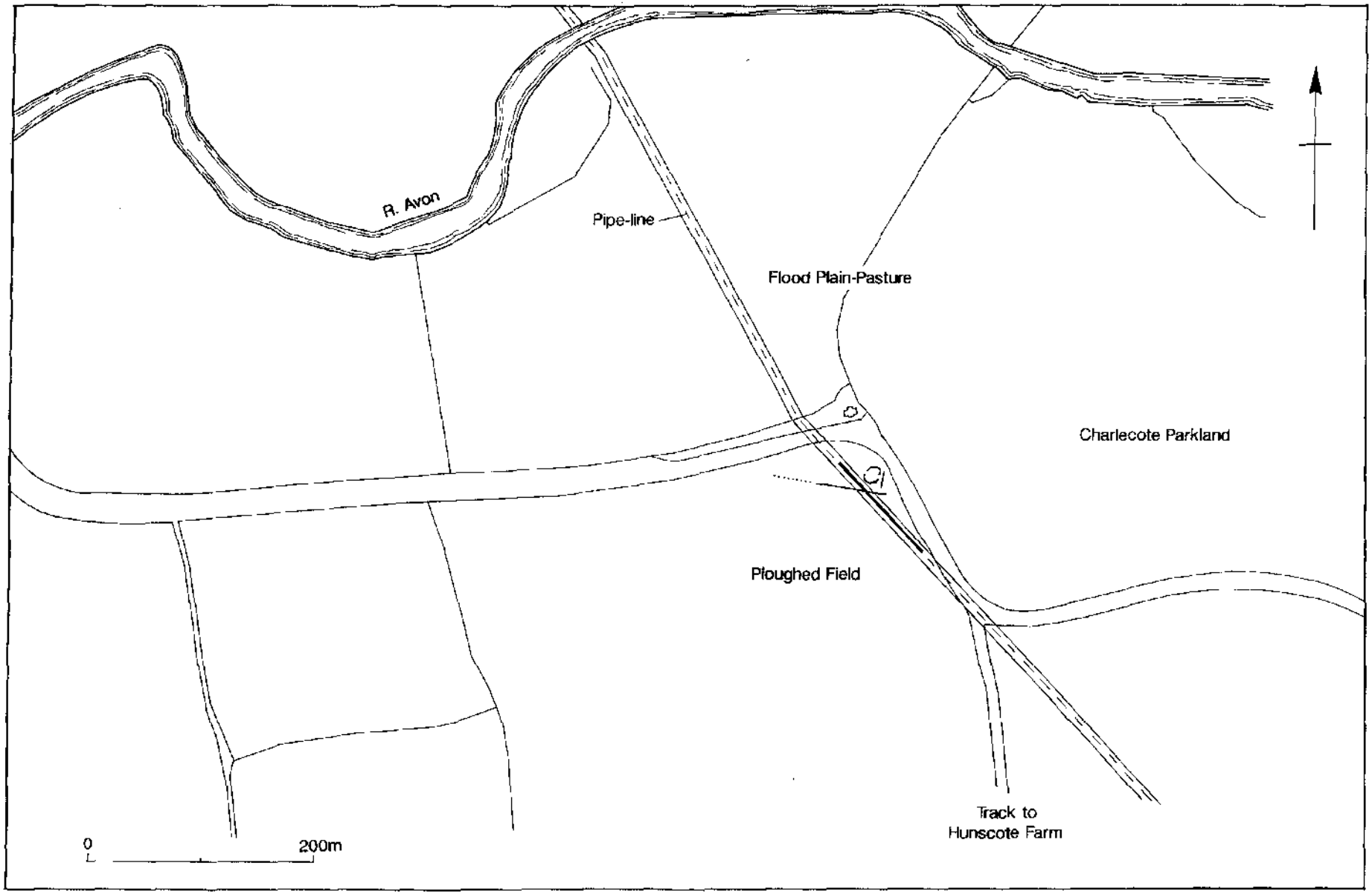

R. Avon
Pipe-line
Flood Plain-Pasture
Charlecote Parkland
Ploughed Field
Track to
Hunscote Farm
0
200m

Fig.2

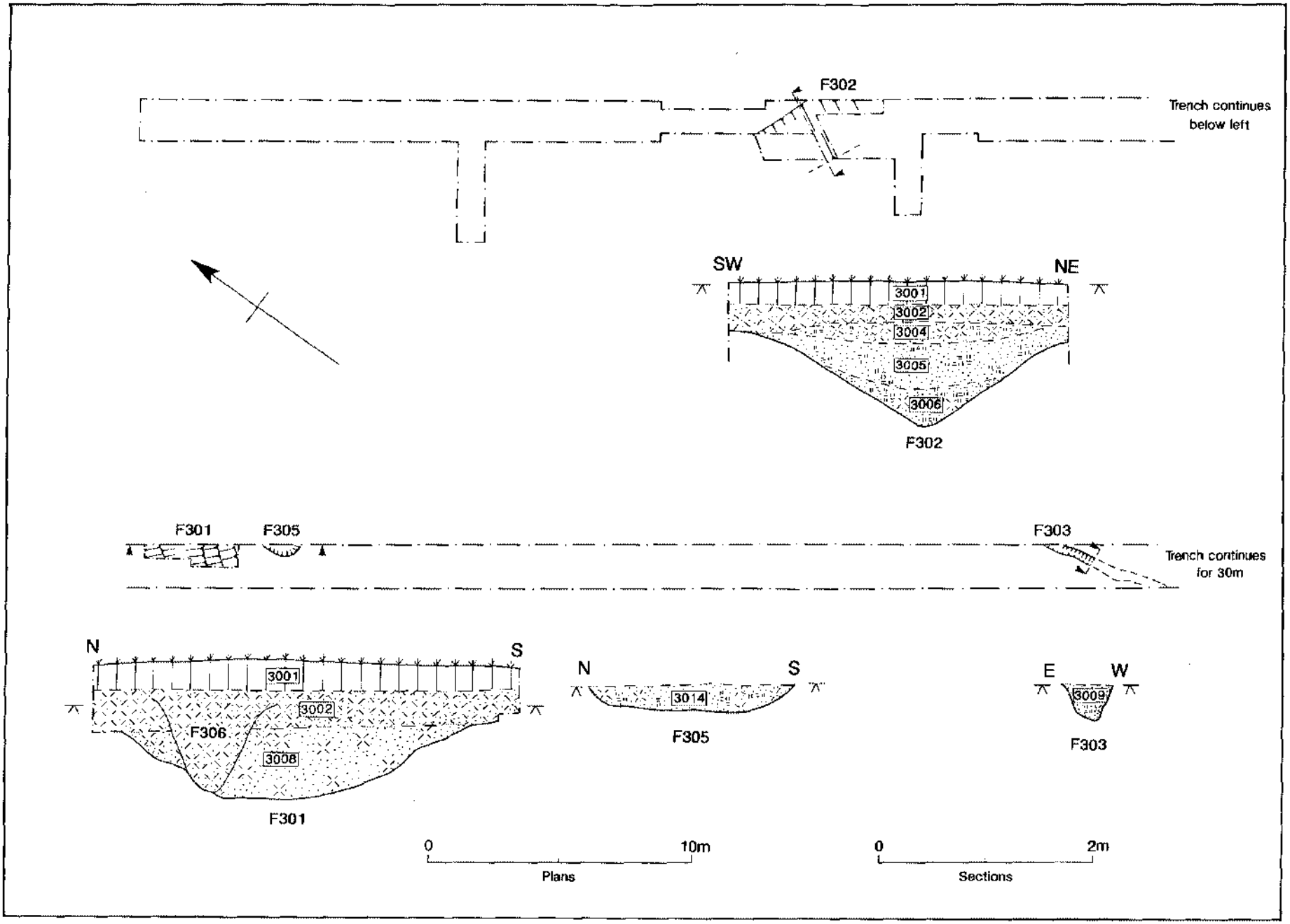
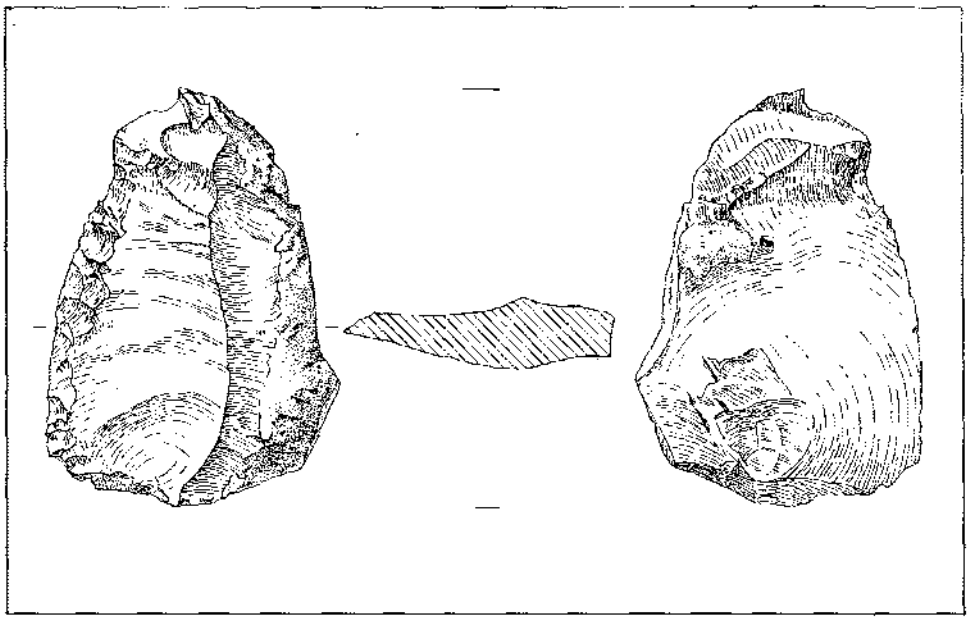

F302
Trench continues below left
SW
NE
3001
3002
3004
3005
3006
F302
F301
F305
F303
Trench continues for 30m
N
S
3001
3002
F306
3008
F301
N
S
3014
F305
E
W
3009
F303
0
10m
Plans
0
2m
Sections

Fig.3



0 5m

Fig.4

A small-scale excavation at Charlecote, Warwickshire

by Steve Litherland and Peter Ellis

Introduction

An excavation was undertaken at Charlecote in April 1996 during an archaeological watching brief on the laying of a water pipeline. A prehistoric pit alignment and enclosure known from air photographs was cut by the pipeline (Warwickshire Museum SMR nos WA 1144 and WA 6307). The site lay on the gravel terraces of the Avon, and the cropmark is matched by similar, denser, cropmarks on either side of the Avon 1.5km to the north (Webster and Hobley 1965; Hughes 1995, 118; Hughes and Crawford 1995), while a similar pit alignment is recorded in the group on the east side of the Avon. Initial test pitting established that archaeological features lay beneath a layer of hillwash colluvium, and a 110m long trench was therefore excavated by machine, with the features exposed then excavated by hand. The project was funded by Severn Trent Water Ltd.

Results

The natural surface comprised sandy gravel in the north, changing to red and grey clay to the south. A ditch, F302, running north-west to south-east, had been cut into the natural subsoil. The fills of the ditch were brown sandy silts and clays. A second feature, F301, a ditch or pit, lay 10m to the south. This had a single fill of dark brown silty sand. Immediately to its south was a shallow scoop, F305, and almost 30m further south was a gulley, F303, aligned north-south and filled with orange sandy silt.

These features were sealed by a layer of colluvium, 3002, 0.2-0.3m deep. Although no horizons of deposition were observed in excavation, the layer had evidently accumulated over a period of time, since a steep-sided, V-shaped feature, F306, possibly a ditch, had been cut from a level just below its surface. It was filled with a red-brown silty sand, 3013. The colluvium lay beneath a 0.25m deep layer of topsoil.

F302 is likely to represent a large ditch with a primary silt fill and an upper layer, 3004, settled into the subsidence of its main silt fill. F301 could also be seen as a ditch, but its profile and single silty fill suggest a pit. F305 may also be part of a pit. Gulley F303 to the south could represent part of an enclosure gulley traced for a distance of 5m. These features were then buried beneath layer 3002. The later feature, F306, might represent a drainage gulley.

Pottery of Middle to Late Iron Age date was recovered from layers 3005 and 3006 filling F302, and from the overlying alluvial deposit, 3002. Three fabrics were

recognised in the collection of 31 sherds. Two possible ceramic loom-weights were found in layer 3006. Flint flakes and a possible tool of Neolithic or Bronze Age date were also found in F302, and a flint flake was found in F301. Further flakes came from 3002. A small collection of animal bone came from layer 3005 in F302.

Of these features F302 can be equated with the cropmark record of an apparent boundary running on the same alignment. The location of ditch and cropmark are not exactly the same but within the margin of error to be expected from the plotting of air photographic evidence. The cropmark evidence shows a D-shaped enclosure feature to the north of this boundary, while the excavation evidence located features only to the south. The air photographs suggest a turn northward at the east end of the main boundary. The excavated features suggest pits and enclosure gullies. The pottery, loom-weights and animal bone can be seen as evidence of domestic occupation in the vicinity. There was no dating evidence from F306. This may be a modern drainage channel, and its profile suggests a recent feature. However, it may represent later activity of prehistoric date following an episode of flooding and abandonment.

The limited nature of the cropmark evidence may be explained by the fact that features are sealed beneath colluvium although F302 nevertheless remained visible. However, the change in subsoil noted on the line of F302 may explain why the cropmark evidence is limited to the area to its north. The natural subsoil into which the southern features were cut may not be conducive to cropmarks. Alternatively, cropmarks may appear at a different time to those to the north and remain to be recorded.

References

Hughes, G. 1995 'Excavation of a possible Iron Age cropmark at Hampton Lucy, Warwickshire, 1993', *Trans. Birmingham and Warks. Archaeol. Soc.*, 99, 118-21.

Hughes, G. and Crawford, G. 1995 'Excavations at Wasperton, Warwickshire, 1980-1985. Introduction and Part I: the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age', *Trans. Birmingham and Warks. Archaeol. Soc.*, 99, 9-45.

Webster, G. and Hobley, B. 1965 'Aerial reconnaissance over the Warwickshire Avon', Archaeol. Journ., 121, 1-22