



**Birmingham to Solihull
Link Main**

**Archaeological Survey,
Excavation and Watching Brief
2002**

Project No. 686
December 2004

Birmingham to Solihull Link Main
Archaeological Survey, Excavation and Watching Brief
2002

by
Charlotte Neilson and Eleanor Ramsey

For further information please contact.

Alex Jones (Director)
Birmingham Archaeology
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 5513
Fax: 0121 414 5516

E-Mail: biam-arch@bham.ac.uk

Web Address: <http://www.barch.bham.ac.uk/burau>

Birmingham to Solihull Link Main
Archaeological Survey, Excavation and Watching Brief
2002

Contents

	Page
Summary	1
1.0 Introduction	2
2.0 Aims	2
3.0 Method	3
4.0 General Background	4
4.1 Geological and Geographical Background	4
4.2 Historical and Archaeological Background	4
Prehistoric Period	4
Roman Period	4
Medieval Period	4
Post-Medieval Period	5
5.0 Results	5
5.1 Zone 1 Berry Mound Camp Environs	5
Background	5
Results	6
Discussion	10
5.2 Zone 2 Creynolds Lane, Cheswick Green	11
Background	11
Results	11
Discussion	12
5.3 Zone 3 Monkspath Hill	12
Background	12
Results	12
Discussion	13
5.4 Zone 4 Colwell Lodge Environs	13
Background	13
5.5 Zone 5 Ravenshaw Hall Environs	13
Background	13
Results	14
Discussion	14
5.6 Zone 6 Walford Hall Farm Environs	15
Background	15
Results	15
Discussion	15
5.7 Zone 7 Bickenhill Environs	15
Background	15
Results	15
Discussion	16
5.8 Zone 8 Hampton Lane Cropmarked Enclosure (and Field 268)	16
Background	16
Results	17
Discussion	18

5.9 Zones 9 and 10 Berry Fields Farm and Old Meriden Environs	19
Background	19
Results	20
Discussion	21
6.0 The Finds	21
6.1 The Pottery by Stephanie Rátkai	21
6.2 Assessment of the Flint by Lynne Bevan	23
7.0 General Discussion	24
Prehistoric Period	24
Roman Period	25
Medieval Period	25
Post-Medieval Period	26
7.0 Acknowledgements	26
8.0 References	27

List of Figures

Fig. 1	Route of pipeline
Fig. 2	Detail of pipeline route including Zone 1
Fig. 3	Detail of pipeline route including Zone 2 and Zone 3
Fig. 4	Detail of pipeline route including Zone 4 and Zone 5
Fig. 5	Detail of pipeline route including Zone 7
Fig. 6	Detail of pipeline route including Zone 8, Zone 9 and Zone 10
Fig. 7	Location of pipeline easement in relation to Berry Mound Hillfort
Fig. 8	Plan of archaeological features identified in Zone 1
Fig. 9	Plan of archaeological features identified in Zone 2
Fig. 10	Plan of archaeological features identified in Zone 8

List of Tables

Table 1: List of archaeological zones and corresponding figure numbers
Table 2: Medieval Pottery

**Birmingham to Solihull Link Main
Archaeological Survey, Excavation and Watching Brief
2002**

Summary

A programme of archaeological work comprising three stages of investigation was commissioned by Severn Trent Water Ltd ahead of the construction of the Birmingham to Solihull Link Main, in the West Midlands. The Link Main is 27km long, and runs from Highters Heath to Meriden, predominantly through open fields and grassland located to the south of the Birmingham conurbation. The programme of archaeological work was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit periodically between August 2000 and August 2001. A desk-based assessment prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (Bridgman, 1998) identified all the known archaeological sites threatened with partial or total destruction by the construction of the Link Main. Two stages of walkover survey reassessed the extent and survival of the known archaeological sites and aimed to identify any unknown sites affected by the Link Main. On the basis of the results of the desk-based assessment and the two stages of walkover survey, ten zones along the 27km stretch of easement were highlighted as possessing archaeological remains significant enough to warrant further investigation. These zones included an area around Berry Mound Iron Age hillfort near Highters Heath and a possible Bronze Age and Iron Age cropmark complex located south of Hampton Lane near Hampton in Arden. Within these zones a third stage of work was conducted where possible which included excavation and watching brief to sample and record any archaeological features or deposits identified. The majority of known archaeological sites in and around the area investigated date from the medieval and post-medieval periods, with only a few sites identified as being potentially earlier than this. Undated features that may belong to the prehistoric period were identified during the three stages of archaeological investigation at both Berry Mound and Hampton Lane, and at Berry Mound evidence of rampart levelling was also encountered. More evidence for prehistoric activity was recovered in the form of a flint scatter and a possible burnt mound cluster, both located near the River Blythe. The majority of the deposits and features encountered during the three stages of archaeological investigation were, however, indicative of agricultural activity from the medieval and post-medieval periods a bias that reinforces the idea that settlement in the area before the Middle Ages was fairly scarce, due mainly to large amounts of the area being covered by the Forest of Arden. In the medieval period, the process of deforestation coupled with a well-documented population boom meant land that had previously been uninhabitable was now colonised, creating the settlement pattern that can still be seen today. Although the archaeological evidence recovered from individual sites along the length of the pipeline may be fairly unenlightening, taken together it provides important information on the relic medieval landscape as a whole, and the effect that intensive farming in the Post-medieval period has had on this landscape.

1.0 Introduction (Fig 1)

This report provides the results of a programme of archaeological work undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) along the route of the Birmingham to Solihull Link Main (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Severn Trent Water and was undertaken between August 2000 and August 2001.

This work followed an archaeological desk-based assessment (Bridgman, 1998), prepared by BUFAU on behalf of Severn Trent Water Ltd, which identified all the known archaeological sites within a study area 1km wide to either side of the route of the pipeline. The work carried out by BUFAU comprised three stages of archaeological investigation.

Prior to the commencement of any construction work each field transected by the pipeline route was subjected to a walkover survey, which comprised an enclosure record and site inspection (Stage 1 survey). After the initial topsoil strip of the pipeline working easement, a second walkover survey was performed (Stage 2 survey). Both these tasks were undertaken with a view to reassessing the archaeological potential along the route of the pipeline and the formulation of a mitigation strategy if need be. The full results of both walkover surveys have been incorporated into the gazetteer compiled as part of the desk-based assessment, and will not be repeated in this report unless relevant to the interpretation of a specific area.

The desk-based assessment, and subsequent walkover surveys, identified a number of significant archaeological sites threatened with total or partial destruction by the proposed Link Main. These were highlighted as archaeologically sensitive zones where an agreed programme of archaeological work, including excavation and watching brief, was to be undertaken prior to construction work. It is the results of this third stage of archaeological work that this report will focus on.

Due to access problems caused by the foot and mouth outbreak, it was not possible to conduct the full programme of suggested archaeological work on several of the areas highlighted. These zones will, however, where appropriate, be included in the final discussion and analysis.

2.0 Aims

The aims of the programme of archaeological work were to:

- Assess the state of preservation of previously identified archaeological remains
- Identify any previously unknown archaeological remains and define the survival, nature, extent and significance of these remains
- Re-assess the impact of the pipeline construction on all archaeological remains along the route of the pipeline
- Preserve by sample and record, any archaeological remains threatened by total or partial destruction by the construction of the pipeline
- Contribute to the understanding of the archaeological and historical activity in the area

3.0 Method (Figs. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6)

The pipeline route was approximately 27km long and possessed a maximum 25m-wide working easement. The route was predominantly through open fields and grassland (Fig. 1) and has been illustrated in detail in five sections (Figs. 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6).

For the two walkover surveys each field or enclosure was allocated an individual number. Where it was possible, the field or enclosure number corresponded to the original number allocated in the desk-based assessment. Fields and enclosures with no previously allocated number were assigned new numbers, each preceded with an 'X'.

Ten areas were highlighted in the desk-based assessment and subsequent walkover surveys as possessing archaeological remains significant enough to warrant further investigation. In each case, a Zone number was allocated.

<u>Zone</u>	<u>Figure number</u>
Zone 1 Berry Mound Camp environs	2
Zone 2 Creynolds Lane, Cheswick Green	3
Zone 3 Monkspath Hill	3
Zone 4 Colwell Lodge environs (re-routed, pipeline not illustrated)	4
Zone 5 Ravenshaw Hall environs	4
Zone 6 Walford Hall Farm environs	5
Zone 7 Bickenhill environs	5
Zone 8 Hampton Lane crop marked enclosure (and field 268)	6
Zone 9 Berry Fields Farm	6
Zone 10 Old Meriden environs	6

Table 1: List of archaeological zones and corresponding figure numbers

After the pipeline easement had been surveyed and fenced off, the Stage 1 walkover survey and enclosure record was conducted. This was to assess the present state of preservation of archaeological sites identified by the desk-based assessment, such as ridge and furrow, and to identify any previously-unknown earthworks that would be affected by the route of the pipeline. The topsoil was then removed using bulldozers and large 360° excavators and deposited at the side of the easement, creating a working surface for the construction works. After this, the Stage 2 walkover survey was conducted. The purpose of the second walkover was to identify any pottery scatters or other evidence within the topsoil and working surface that might suggest archaeology was present in these areas.

In the zones highlighted as being archaeologically significant, the pipeline easement was re-stripped using a smaller 360° excavator with a toothless ditching bucket, under direct archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features and deposits were encountered, a representative sample was excavated by hand.

Recording was by means of pre-printed pro-formas for contexts and features, supplemented by plans (at 1:20 and 1:50), sections (at 1:10 and 1:20), monochrome and colour print, and colour slide photography. Where appropriate, an archaeological watching brief was conducted during the excavation of the pipe trench proper. A complete photographic record was maintained in these areas

4.0 General Background

4.1 Geological and Geographical Background

The geology of the study area is predominantly Mercia Mudstone, with small zones of Keuper Sandstone and alluvium adjacent to riverbeds. Some boulder clay is also present to the southwest of Solihull. The region is well watered, mainly by the River Blythe and several other small streams and ponds. This undulating landscape was once covered by the Forest of Arden.

4.2 Historical and Archaeological Background

Prehistoric Period

In the West Midlands generally, a widely scattered population is believed to have existed with intense cultivation and dense settlement from as early as 3000BC. In Warwickshire the earliest settlements focused on the easily cultivated gravel soils of the river valleys, and it was not until this land had been used up that settlement began to appear on the sandstone soils of the Arden plateau (Slater 1981, 17-18). Nevertheless knowledge of prehistoric settlement in the study area is extremely limited. The Iron Age hillfort at Berry Mound (Zone 1, Figures 2, 7 and 8) is the only prehistoric site which has been studied in any detail, and this site together with the cropmarked complex at Hampton Lane (Zone 8, Figures 5 and 8) were the principal prehistoric sites directly affected by the construction of the pipeline. There were, however, other prehistoric sites within the vicinity of the pipeline route that were not directly affected by the construction of the new Link Main.

Roman Period

The advance of the Roman army through Warwickshire led to the construction of a large number of forts and marching camps in the region. Following the departure of the army, the region is thought to have been left largely to the native population who continued farming their land. This is the explanation given for the absence of large-scale rural Roman sites, such as the villas found further south (Slater 1981, 22). Only one potential Roman site directly affected by the construction of the pipeline was identified during the assessment. This comprised a scatter of Romano-British artefacts from fields near to Creynolds Lane, Cheswick Green (Zone 2, Figures 5 and 6).

Medieval Period

The first documented settlement in the area came in the 6th century, when the Anglo-Saxons settled the region that was to become known as Mercia (Slater 1981, 32). Several medieval settlements in the study area are thought to have originated during

this period (Skipp 1963, 11). The Domesday Book provides the first systematic record of the region, indicating that the countryside was and had been for some time, a complex landscape of human exploitation and habitation (Gelling 1992, 191). From at least the 13th century moated sites appear in the region in much greater numbers than had been seen previously. However, these sites were no more isolated in the landscape than previous forms of settlement, and extensive water management systems may have been a distinguishing characteristic of the local medieval landscape (Kirsty Nichol *pers. comm.*). The majority of the known sites in the study area are medieval in date, in contrast with the paucity of Roman or Prehistoric sites. It is possible, however, that earlier settlement patterns may be masked by later medieval sites which may overlie Roman and Prehistoric activity.

Most of the medieval sites identified in the desk-based assessment as being affected by the pipeline were earthwork features of local archaeological importance, such as ridge and furrow. Other important features of the historic landscape, which were identified as potentially affected by the route of the pipeline, include pits, ponds and watercourses. A number of place names also suggest medieval occupation or activity. The majority of the sites of medieval date do not have a high archaeological potential in their own right. However they do tend to cluster in groups indicating important relic medieval landscapes.

Post-medieval Period

Considerable changes occurred in the organisation of the landscape during the post-medieval period. Enclosure of land occurred officially in the 19th century, although it had been an on-going process in some areas since Tudor times. This led to the desertion of some villages and settlements and the conversion of land from arable to pasture, as rich landowners took control of the region. These landowners built large country houses, which frequently overlaid medieval dwellings, such as moated sites. Improvements in transportation systems with the turnpiking of roads, and the building of canals and railways were a factor in the development of some settlements (Slater 1981, 75, 83). The industrial revolution led cities such as Birmingham to flourish and expand, gradually encroaching on areas of countryside. This process is on-going and many areas that were until very recently green fields have now become urbanised, forming part of the Birmingham conurbation.

In addition to the known sites of post-medieval date, many of the sites identified from cartographic evidence may also date to this period. Many of these features appear on maps dating to the late 18th century or 19th century. Sites of this period may in some cases be regarded as of high importance despite their more recent date.

5.0 Results

5.1 Zone 1 Berry Mound Camp Environs (Figs 2, 7 and 8)

Background

Zone 1 (Figures 2, 7 and 8) was identified as a site of archaeological importance primarily due to the proximity of Berry Mound Hillfort. The route of the pipeline runs

through the fields immediately to the west and southwest of the hillfort, outside the existing defences and scheduled area. It was known, however, that substantial parts of the ramparts were flattened in the 19th century, and it was possible that the defences may have extended further than the protected area. Ridge and furrow located to the north of Truema's Heath Farm was identified in the desk based assessment as having local archaeological value and so was also included within Zone 1. This ridge and furrow was aligned north-south, and was thought to be medieval in date.

Berry Mound Camp is a scheduled ancient monument; an oval univallate hillfort dating to the Iron Age. Typically, the site is on the summit of a low hill overlooking the River Cole, and is surrounded on three sides by valleys, which would have provided an effective natural defence. The hillfort has already been studied in some detail, by surveys and by excavations in 1956 and 1960 (Whitehouse 1980).

Results (Fig. 8)

After the Stage 2 walkover survey had been completed, two large potential ditches were identified. One followed the natural line of the base of the ridge on the southwestern side of the hillfort and was aligned northwest – southeast. The second potential ditch was located to the southeast of the hillfort and was aligned southwest – northeast, in line with an existing field boundary. A wide band of organic material, which appeared on the surface to be the upper fill of a substantial feature/features, identified both these potential ditches.

An area of pipeline easement, approximately 330m in length and 25m wide, was re-cleaned to the top of a mixed red clay-gravel layer (2002). The height of the re-cleaned area was between 142.6m and 146.8m Above Ordnance Datum. Part of Zone 1 was not re-cleaned by machine in order to avoid the environmental problem of excess silt washing into the Peterbrook at the western edge of the zone.

A sondage (Sondage 1), approximately 3m wide and nearly continuous throughout the whole length of the area, was excavated through layer 2002 to the top of a mixed yellow creamy silt and orange sandy gravel (2060). This sondage was located to correspond with the position of the pipe trench itself. A second sondage (Sondage 2), narrower than the first and approximately 50m long, was excavated adjacent to the edge of the area. The two sondages excavated showed the depth of the mixed red clay gravel layer (2002) varied throughout the length of the area, from approximately 0.1m to 0.4m. At the base of the sondages, cutting 2060 and sealed by the mixed red clay and gravel layer (2002), several small features were identified. These were largely concentrated at the eastern end of the area and comprised mainly shallow linear features and post-holes.

A sub-circular feature (F200) was identified in Sondage 2. This feature was 0.8m wide and 0.35m deep, with a U-shaped profile cut into the natural subsoil (2060) at a 45° angle. The fill (2003) was a grey orange silt with a high proportion of charcoal, concentrated central to the feature, suggesting *in situ* burning of a stake or tree root. A smaller sub-circular feature was identified adjacent to F200. This feature (F226) was 0.24m wide and 0.17m deep, with a V-shaped profile. The fill (2043) was a sandy clay with a high charcoal concentration, again suggesting *in situ* burning, and it is possible that the two features are contemporary. A large pit (F203) was also identified

in Sondage 2. This feature was sub-circular in plan, with steep, sloping sides and a flat base. It was approximately 5.1m wide and 0.5m deep. The lower fill (2006) was a light brown silty clay with a large amount of orange mottling. This was sealed by a dark brown silty clay soil (2007). The upper fill of the pit was a grey silt clay (2008) which contained evidence of waterlogged wood. This feature was sealed by the layer 2002.

A small pit (F239) was identified in the base of Sondage 1. This pit was approximately 0.3m deep and had sloping edges. The fill (2053) was a grey sandy clay with some stone inclusions and black mottling. A shallow, linear gully (F238) aligned northwest – southeast, truncated the pit (F239). This gully was approximately 1m wide and 0.3m deep and had curving sides and a flat base. A brick drain was also identified to the west of F238, on a similar northwest – southeast alignment. The fill of the drain cut was similar in composition to the overlying layer (2002) and so may have been cut from higher in the stratigraphic sequence.

All other archaeological features and deposits encountered were cut through the mixed red clay gravel layer (2002) and sealed by the topsoil (2000) and cleaning layer (2001). This layer (2002) appeared to be re-deposited natural. It was relatively clean, though it contained occasional fragments of brick and charcoal. No dating evidence was recovered from this layer.

A large ditch (F234) was identified aligned northeast – southwest, in line with the existing field boundary. It was approximately 4.7m wide and 0.8m deep. It possessed sloping sides and a flat base, and is unlikely to have represented a defensive structure. The fill (2049) was a light orange brown sandy silt, similar to the natural subsoil (2060). Cutting ditch F234 on its northeastern side was a small pit (F235), irregular in plan, with steep, sloping sides and a flat base. It was approximately 1.1m wide and 0.45m deep, and the fill (2050) was a light bluish grey silty clay. Also cutting the larger ditch was the remains of the modern field boundary (F233). This ditch was 1.6m wide and 0.3m deep, with curving sides and a round base. It ran central to the larger ditch and was filled with a mixed black silty sandy clay with a high organic content (2048).

A group of intersecting features was located to the north of the field boundary, against the northern edge of the excavation. A small pit (F209) and a possible posthole (F231) were identified beneath the fill of a shallow linear ditch (F230). The pit (F209) was sub-circular in plan and had steep sides and a flat base. It was approximately 1.1m in diameter and 0.5m deep and contained two fills (2013 and 2037). The lower fill of the pit (2037) was an orange sandy clay with gravel. The upper fill (2013) was a light grey sandy silt with occasional charcoal stones. One fragment of metal was recovered from this context; no other artefacts were found. The posthole (F231) was sub-circular in plan and had steep sides and flat base. It was approximately 0.2m wide and 0.2m deep, and the fill (2046) was an orange sandy clay with patches of mottling.

Truncating both these features was a shallow linear (F230), approximately 1.2m wide and 0.2m deep. It was tested in two sections. The edges and base of the feature were irregular. No finds were recovered from the fill (2038), an orange clay with frequent gravel. The feature was aligned northeast – southwest and was one of a series of three linears in this area, all on a similar northeast – southwest alignment.

The central linear (F202 and F210) was the best preserved. This linear was approximately 1.6m - 1.9m wide and 0.16m – 0.2m deep, and had irregular sloping sides and a slightly rounded base. To the north of F202, a second linear was identified (F212). This linear was 1.2m wide and 0.1m deep, had irregular edges and a flat base and continued in plan for nearly the whole width of the easement, truncating a drain cut (F219) at the southwestern end. One fragment of tile was recovered from feature F212. Part of a small linear gully (F215) was identified immediately to the south of F202/F210. This gully was approximately 0.5m wide and 0.05m deep, with an irregular 'U'-shaped profile. A fragment of modern pottery was recovered from feature F202.

A sub-circular depression (F201) was also identified in this area. This feature was 0.56m wide and 0.25m deep and sloped gently on the northern side and steeply on the southern side. It is possible this feature represented root activity and was not archaeological in origin. Between F201 and the linear F230 was an area of root or animal disturbance (F208). The fill of this disturbance contained three fragments of slag.

A shallow pit (F224) was identified to the south of linear F212. This feature was sub-circular in plan and had a 'U'-shaped profile. It was approximately 1.9m wide and 0.22m deep. No finds were recovered from this feature. Another shallow pit (F211) was located near the edge of Sondage 1. This pit was approximately 1.1m wide and 0.12m deep and had curving sides and a flat base. The lower fill (2015) was a dark black silty clay with some gravel and a high proportion of charcoal, concentrated at the base of the feature, suggesting *in situ* burning, indicating the feature may represent a fire pit.

A narrow linear feature (F219), aligned east – west, was located near the southern edge of the area and was approximately 0.7m wide and 0.5m deep. It had steep sides and a round base and is likely to represent a drain cut. No finds were recovered from this feature.

Part of a linear gully (F244) was identified to the west of F219. This gully was aligned northwest – southeast and was 0.3m wide and 0.2m deep. It had curving sides and a flattish base. No finds were recovered from this feature. F244 was cut by another linear feature, excavated in two sections (F229 and F243). This linear was aligned north-northeast – south-southwest and was approximately 0.8m – 0.95m wide and 0.3m deep with curving sides and a round base. No artefacts were recovered from this feature in either section. A shallow sub-circular pit (F228) was located to the east of F229. This feature was approximately 1m wide and 0.1m deep with irregular edges and a flattish base. It was filled by a dark reddish brown clayey silt with occasional stones and charcoal fragments (2045).

Further to the west, two north – south aligned linears were identified (F216 and F220). F216 was 2.95m wide and 0.2m deep, with sloping sides and a flat base. F220 was located to the west of F216. This linear was 2m wide and 0.2m deep, with sloping sides and an irregular base. No artefacts were recovered from either feature.

Further to the west again, a small pit (F227) was identified. This feature was sub-circular in plan, with gently-sloping sides and a round base. It was approximately 1.3m wide and 0.35m deep. The fill (2044) was a black silty clay with a high concentration of charcoal, suggesting *in situ* burning. No finds were recovered from this feature. Again, it is possible that this feature represents a fire pit. A number of possible features was investigated to the north of F227, but these were found to be depressions within the layer 2002, filled with topsoil, and not of archaeological origin.

The density of features petered out towards the western end of the archaeological zone. A single linear feature (F221) was identified aligned northeast – southwest, parallel to the existing field boundary. This linear was approximately 1.65m wide and 0.18m deep, with sloping sides and a flat base. Tile and glass were recovered from this feature. A modern test pit (F213) and two linears (F205 and F214) were located on the western side of the existing field boundary. Both linears were orientated on a northwest – southeast alignment, and were approximately 1.5m wide and 0.25m deep. A few fragments of post-medieval pottery, glass and slag were recovered from the upper and lower fills of F214 (2019 and 2020), and brick was recovered from the fill of F205 (2009). The pottery recovered from the fills of F214 was 17th and 18th century in date.

A natural ridge was located near the western end of the archaeological zone. A sondage was excavated through the top of the ridge, to investigate the continuation of the linear F214 and the possibility of rampart material being present within the stratigraphy at the edge of the ridge. Several layers were exposed within this sondage, all of which followed the natural downward slope of the ridge. At the base of the sondage, a clean red brown sandy deposit was identified as the natural subsoil in this area (2032). Overlying 2032 was a layer of clean orange yellow clay silt (2031), similar to the natural subsoil encountered at the base of Sondages 1 and 2 (2060). Overlying this layer was a layer of dark grey sandy silt (2030). Overlying 2030 was a layer of grey sandy silt with gravel (2029). Cut through 2029 was a small, semi-circular feature (F217). This feature was approximately 0.4m wide and 0.2m deep, with sloping sides and a round base. The fill (2028) was a greyish red sandy silt with gravel and charcoal flecking. It is likely that this feature represents root or animal disturbance and is not archaeological in origin. Sealing this feature, and overlying layers 2029, 2030 and 2031, was a layer of pale yellow brown sand silt with gravel (2027). Overlying this layer was a thick layer of mixed red brown sand silt clay with gravel (2026). This layer was equivalent to 2002, identified in the eastern part of the zone. The continuation of the northwest – southeast linear feature F214 was visible in this sondage (as F218), cutting the layer 2026. The fill of F218 was a red brown sand clay silt (2025), and contained brick, tile, and one fragment of post-medieval pottery.

A second, larger, sondage was excavated by machine, through the potential rampart material and possible ditch at the base of the natural ridge. The layers exposed in this section were similar to those identified in the first sondage section, following the natural downward slope. At the base of the ridge organic material, thought to delineate a large ditch, was shown to be a thin band and was not the upper fill of a feature.

Discussion

Although the pipeline easement ran very close to the scheduled ancient monument that is Berry Mound Camp, no features or deposits that could be securely dated to the Iron Age were encountered. The lack of dating evidence for this period, however, is in keeping with the results of the 1960s excavation through the surviving ditch and rampart of the hillfort itself, where no artefactual evidence was recovered (Whitehouse 1980). No features that pre-date the deposition of the mixed red clay and gravel layer (2002) contained dating evidence of any period, and although the layer itself did contain brick and charcoal fragments it was also devoid of datable artefacts. It is not possible, therefore, to interpret with any certainty the function of this layer. It is likely, however, that the layer represents redeposited rampart material, associated with the levelling of the hillfort defences. Previous reports state that the ramparts had been partially destroyed by agricultural activity in the last century (Whitehouse 1980), and this would place the deposition of layer 2002 to this period. Earlier descriptions of the site, however, suggest that it may have been a multivallate enclosure with three ramparts and ditches (Burgess 1872). In this case, the deposition of the rampart material may date to this time, although no evidence of other ditches was recovered. Although fragmentary and possibly residual, the pottery recovered from plough furrow F214 may date the re-deposition of the rampart material to pre-17th or 18th century. It is possible that the ramparts were not levelled in one go, but instead were flattened by progressive agricultural activity over many years.

All the features exposed beneath the redeposited rampart layer (2002) in sondages 1 and 2 were sampled and recorded. Although no dating evidence was recovered, it is possible that some or all of these features were associated with the hillfort. Any features or deposits securely dated to the Iron Age would have significant importance in relation to the function of the hillfort itself, and in relation to our understanding of Iron Age landscape as a whole. The redeposited rampart layer would have protected any other features and deposits that may have been present within the confines of the easement, and associated with the hillfort or later activity. It was therefore decided to strip the layer down to natural only along the route of the pipe trench itself and to leave any other remains preserved *in situ*.

The majority of features identified cutting the putative rampart material were wide, shallow, linear features. The even spacing and similar morphology of these features suggests they were the bases of plough furrows. These ran in different directions on either side of the field boundaries, and where they were misaligned with each other in the same field, appeared to follow the natural downward slope of the hill.

Due to the high concentration of charcoal within the fills of features F213 and F227, they were interpreted as possible fire pits. Dating evidence was not recovered from either of these features, but it is possible that they were associated with the episode of rampart levelling.

5.2 Zone 2, Croynolds Lane, Cheswick Green (Figs 3 and 9)

Background

Zone 2 was highlighted as a site of potential archaeological interest due to the pipeline route transecting a field to the east of Cheswick Green from which a scatter of Romano-British pottery had been recovered (SMR 10818). The finds were of considerable local importance, as they suggested the possibility of unidentified Roman occupation in the area. Romano-British pottery was also recovered from The Mount, Cheswick Green during excavations carried out in 1953 (SMR 6015), which is in the vicinity of Zone 2.

At the time that the archaeological work was being carried out, the field was being used as pasture. The plough furrows identified in the subsequent archaeological work were not visible as earthworks during the Stage 1 and Stage 2 walkover surveys. One fragment of medieval pottery and two fragments of post-medieval pottery were recovered during the walkover surveys. In the fields to the east of Zone 2, however, Fields X12 and X14, substantial amounts of post-medieval pottery, and a small amount of medieval pottery were recovered.

Results (Fig. 9)

After the Stage 1 and Stage 2 walkover surveys had been completed, an area of easement, approximately 300m long and 25m wide was re-cleaned by machine to expose a mixed yellow orange silt sand clay natural subsoil (4001). The majority of features encountered comprised mainly plough furrows, land drains and field boundaries, and provided evidence of previous agricultural activity in the area.

Three plough furrows were identified at the western end of Zone 2 (F400, F401 and F402). Each furrow was aligned northwest – southeast and was approximately 2m-3m wide, with irregular bases. Central to each of these plough furrows was a land drain. Located between furrows F401 and F402, a narrower, northeast – southwest aligned linear feature was identified (F403). This was very shallow, with a very irregular base.

To the east of plough furrow F402, a linear ditch was identified (F404). This ditch was also aligned northwest – southeast, and corresponded to the existing field boundary line. Adjacent to ditch F404 were several small sub-circular features (F405, F406 and F407). These were tested and were shown to be root disturbance, possibly associated with the field boundary, and not to be of archaeological origin.

Two other northwest – southeast aligned plough furrows were located to the east of the field boundary ditch (F408 and F409). Again, land drains were identified cutting the centre of the furrows. Between these two furrows, a northeast – southwest aligned plough furrow was identified (F410), narrower than the northwest – southeast aligned furrows, which also had a land drain running through the centre.

To the east of plough furrow F409 a series of curvi-linear plough furrows was identified, aligned roughly northeast – southwest. They were very regular, each approximately 1.5m – 2m wide, with 2.5m – 3m space between each one, and a

maximum depth of 0.1m. They may represent headland in this area. A northeast-southwest aligned land drain was also located within this set of furrows. Further to the east a wide linear feature (F411) was located on a north-south alignment and also in line with a man-hole cover located outside the easement. The fill of this linear contained modern pottery, and it is likely to represent a modern service.

The ridge and furrow with land drain pattern continued from the modern service to the end of the field. Each furrow was approximately 2m wide, with 2m spacing between each one.

None of the features sampled in Zone 2 produced any datable artefacts, although a few sherds of medieval (15th–16th centuries) and post-medieval pottery (18th century) were recovered during the Stage 2 walkover survey. Significant quantities of 18th and 19th-century pottery were recovered during the Stage 2 walkover survey in fields adjacent to Zone 2 (Fields X12 and X14).

Discussion

No evidence of activity or occupation in the Romano-British period was encountered within this zone. Indeed, no archaeological features or deposits that pre-date the post-medieval period were identified. Although the field is currently under pasture, and contains no traces of ridge and furrow on the surface, the extensive ridge and furrow and later land drainage systems that survive beneath the topsoil layer give a good indication of previous land use.

5.3 Zone 3 Monkspath Hill (Fig. 3)

Background

This area was highlighted as a zone of potential archaeology, due to several known archaeological sites within the vicinity of the pipeline route. A settlement called 'munchespath' was first recorded in 1153, although there is no documentary evidence to support the name. By c.1200 the Archer family owned the manor of Monkspath. Although the exact location of the medieval village is unknown, earthworks relating to ridge and furrow, Sydenham's moat, and fishponds, are all located within the vicinity of the pipeline route. Any remains dating from this period that survived within the pipeline easement would have been directly affected by its construction. The area has, however, been badly affected by the construction of the M42 and other modern development. The current land use is scrub and grassland, with part of the area being developed as part of a new business park.

Access to this part of the pipeline route was limited, and it was not possible to conduct the full programme of suggested archaeological work.

Results

The Stage 1 and Stage 2 walkover surveys confirmed the impact of the encroaching development in the area by the construction of the new road and Business Park. Several fragments of post-medieval pottery were recovered, however, during the Stage 2 survey.

After the walkover surveys had been completed a section of the pipeline easement within Zone 3 was re-cleaned by machine to the top of a layer of mixed red clay redeposited natural. This layer was tested to a depth of approximately 1m in a sondage central to the easement width. At the base of the sondage, a narrow ditch was identified, with post-medieval pottery associated with the fill. Several features were identified cutting the layer of redeposited natural. These comprised mainly linear features on an east-west alignment.

An archaeological watching brief was conducted at the eastern end of the highlighted Zone where a possible hollow-way was being truncated by the pipejack under the M42. Modern plastic was recovered from the base of this feature, which demonstrated significant disturbance in modern times.

No further archaeological work was conducted within Zone 3.

Discussion

No evidence for any activity during the medieval period or earlier was encountered during the limited archaeological monitoring at Zone 3. The redeposited natural layer was likely to have been associated with the construction of the M42, and is indicative of much modern disturbance and truncation in the area. The features identified as cutting this layer are therefore likely to be modern, again possibly associated with the construction of the adjacent road. It was not possible to ascertain whether the redeposited natural layer was from a local source or imported from elsewhere during the construction work. With this in mind, the pottery assemblage recovered from the walkover stage of the archaeological work should not be treated as being indicative of earlier activity on this site.

5.4 Zone 4 Colwell Lodge Environs

Background

The route of the pipeline was altered to exclude this section since the desk-based assessment highlighted this area as a zone of archaeological potential. Zone 4, therefore, no longer existed as part of the pipeline route and no archaeological work was required here.

5.5 Zone 5 Ravenshaw Hall Environs (Fig. 4)

Background

Zone 5 was highlighted as an area of archaeological potential due to the likelihood of relic medieval landscape surviving in fields adjacent to the medieval moated site of Ravenshaw Hall. This included a number of sites of surviving ridge and furrow, a possible kln site, a clay pit, a pond and other features of archaeological interest. The ridge and furrow identified in the desk-based assessment (in Fields 98 and 99) as being directly affected by the construction of the pipeline, was still evident at the time of the Stage 1 walkover survey and was noted during the Stage 2 walkover survey. No medieval pottery, however, was recovered during this stage of work.

To the southeast of the pipeline route through Zone 5, a number of possible prehistoric sites, represented by cropmarked features, was identified in the desk-based assessment. These included a possible long barrow and probable ring ditch (in Field 85) and an oval pit or mound (in Field 86). These were outside the area of impact, but should be taken into consideration when analysing the archaeology of the area as a whole. During the Stage 1 and Stage 2 walkover surveys of the two fields immediately to the north of Zone 5 (Fields 133 and 138), an assemblage of worked flints was recovered. The results of this evidence will be incorporated into the discussion of Zone 5.

The fields are presently being utilised as pasture. While the two walkover surveys and limited archaeological monitoring were carried out, due to the foot and mouth crisis, it was not possible to conduct the full programme of suggested archaeological work in this area.

Results

No evidence of previously unknown medieval deposits or features was encountered during the archaeological work conducted within Zone 5. Two undated linear features were identified within Field 98, and it is likely that these represent earlier field boundaries that had subsequently been removed. The remains of ridge and furrow, noted as earthworks in both the desk-based assessment and in the walkover survey, were evident as linear features cutting the natural subsoil along the length of the easement. A small amount of post-medieval pottery was recovered during the Stage 2 walkover survey. Archaeological monitoring of the cutting of the pipe trench was carried out within fields 98 and 99 and produced no further evidence of archaeological features or deposits.

No earthworks were visible during the Stage 1 walkover survey of Field X28 (incorporating 133 and 138). The Stage 2 walkover survey, however, produced a small assemblage of struck flint, mainly collected from the topsoil near the border between fields 133 and 138, approximately 100m north of the River Blythe. Where the route of the pipeline crossed the River Blythe, care was taken to identify any possible burnt mounds, but none was encountered either within the pipeline easement or in the immediate vicinity.

Discussion

The ridge and furrow and boundary ditches identified within fields 98 and 99 are indicative of past agricultural activity and should be considered as part of a relic landscape surrounding the moated site of Ravenshaw Hall. The lack of dating evidence, however, either from the furrows and ditches themselves or from the topsoil layer, negates the possibility of attributing these archaeological features to a specific period.

Although the flint assemblage recovered from fields 133 and 138 was from an unstratified context, its importance within the prehistoric landscape as a whole should not be underestimated. The proximity of the scatter to the River Blythe is unlikely to be coincidental, as the river is the main water source in the area and would have been

of vital importance. The proximity also of other possible prehistoric sites to the southwest of the river helps to build a picture of prehistoric activity within the area of interest. No evidence of prehistoric activity was encountered in the fields immediately to the south of the River Blythe, however.

5.6 Zone 6 Walford Hall Farm Environs (Fig. 5)

Background

This area was highlighted as a zone of archaeological importance due to the proximity of the Medieval moated site at Walford Hall Farm. The sites directly affected by the route of the pipeline included ridge and furrow, a pit, and possible cropmarked ditches. In addition, place name evidence suggested the survival of possible medieval features, including a possible defensive ditch or enclosure.

Due to problems with access it was not possible, however, to conduct the full programme of suggested archaeological work. Only a limited amount of Stage 1 walkover survey could be completed.

Results

The archaeological potential of Zone 6 was indicated by place-name and crop-mark evidence. No earthworks were visible during the Stage 1 walkover survey of this area.

Discussion

No further information was gained from the archaeological work conducted in this area.

5.7 Zone 7 Bickenhill Environs (Fig. 5)

Background

The medieval settlement of Bickenhill was noted in the desk-based assessment as a site of potentially national importance. Church Bickenhill was a colony settlement. A church was constructed here in the 12th century and the area became a pre-eminent site in the Bickenhill parish. The area was originally known as Alia Vill during the Anglo-Saxon period, with the village being the focal point of the parish.

The route of the pipeline was designed to minimise damage to known archaeological sites surrounding, and associated with, the village of Bickenhill. The pipeline would, however, transect fields within the historic landscape as a whole, and it was possible that unidentified archaeological features or deposits would be affected. The land is currently being used as a mixture of pasture and arable.

Results

The ridge and furrow identified in the desk-based assessment within fields 205, 208 and 209 had mostly been ploughed out by the time the Stage 1 walkover survey was conducted, and survived only as very shallow earthworks where present at all. A

plough headland was visible in Field 205 as a raised earthwork. The ridge and furrow identified within Field 202 was in a similar state of preservation, and there was no evidence of the possible bakehouse postulated as being present within this field. Neither was there was evidence of additional archaeological earthworks within the confines of the pipeline easement in any of the other fields allocated to Zone 7 (X1, X2, X74, X73, X63, and X72).

During the Stage 2 walkover survey, only Field 205 produced significant amounts of medieval and post-medieval pottery. Ridge and furrow was identified in this area as linear features cutting the natural subsoil. These linears were aligned in different directions, and the remains of the plough headland was also visible. No other archaeological features or deposits were identified in any of the other fields within the zone.

No further archaeological work was undertaken in this area.

Discussion

Although the assemblage was relatively small, the pottery recovered from field 205 indicated continuous activity in the area from mid 13th century through to the 19th century. The assemblage consisted of a whiteware sherd (mid-13th to mid-14th centuries), Chilvers Coton C sherds (late-13th to 15th centuries), and late medieval transitional ware (15th to 16th centuries). Pottery dating from possibly the 17th century, as well as from the 18th and 19th centuries was also recovered from this field.

5.8 Zone 8 (Hampton Lane cropmarked enclosure (and Field 268) (Figs. 6 and 10))

Background

Zone 8 was highlighted as a zone of archaeological importance due to a series of cropmark features, which would be transected by the pipeline. The cropmark complex was situated to the south of Hampton Lane and to the east of Cornets End Lane, between Hampton in Arden and Meriden.

Several cropmark features were identified during examination of aerial photographs of the area. These included a possible ditched enclosure, which consisted of a sub-triangular crop or parch mark located across two fields. The dimensions of this feature suggested a ploughed-out enclosure. Another series of cropmarks, which may have formed part of an Iron Age field system, was located to the north and south of the possible ditched enclosure. Three ring-ditches, possibly Early Bronze Age in date, were also apparent on the aerial photographs and were threatened by the route of the pipeline. To the west of two of the ring-ditches was a possible mound, which had probably been ploughed out, and which was also likely to date to the Bronze Age.

All of the cropmark features are likely to have been affected or partially affected by the construction of the new roundabout on the junction of Cornets End Lane, Meriden Road, Hampton Lane and A452. Cornets End Lane was slightly rerouted after the aerial photographs had been taken and bisected the field containing the cropmarks from the southern field boundary to the northwestern boundary.

A building complex of unknown date was identified by cartographic evidence in the field to the south of the cropmarks within Zone 8, and to the east of a gravel pit (Field 268). It is marked on both the 1st edition OS map and the estate map of the Earl of Aylesford. Unfortunately the name or the purpose of these buildings is unknown, as the OS map does not name the complex and the papers listing the names of small fields and buildings marked on the estate map were badly burnt in a fire in 1979. The Stage 1 walkover identified some earthworks situated in Field 268 between a modern house (now built on part of the complex) and the gravel pit. During the Stage 2 walkover a large amount of post medieval pottery was recovered. It was not possible, however, to identify individual features as the topsoil in this area had been stripped using a bulldozer.

Results (Fig. 10)

With the exception of the earthworks located in field 268 the initial walkover survey conducted within Zone 8 identified no above-ground archaeological remains that could be related to the cropmark complex identified by the aerial photographic evidence. The second walkover in this area, however, revealed linear and irregularly-shaped features which merited the re-excavating of this zone. The zone was approximately 140m in length and 25m wide and the easement was on a north-south alignment. The features were cut into the orange/brown sandy gravel natural subsoil (3002). No dating evidence was found in any of the features excavated in this area.

At the northernmost end of the zone, a drain aligned northwest – southeast was identified (F313). This drain was constructed by sandstone blocks forming the uprights and capping, though no dating evidence was recovered.

Three linear features (F301, F302 and F303) crossed the easement on a roughly east – west alignment. These linear ditches appeared to be three separate features, running immediately parallel to each other. The three gullies had similar characteristics, in that they were all shallow, U-shaped gullies, with a maximum depth of 0.16m and width of 0.95m. F302 was furthest north, F303 was in the centre and F301 to the south, none of the gullies appearing to cut each other. The cuts for the three features contained one fill, a dark brown silty sand, with some small stone inclusions (3006). This was reminiscent of the topsoil, which may indicate that this was a modern feature. To the south of F301, F302 and F303 was another linear feature (F304), aligned northeast to southwest, but not crossing the entire width of the easement. It consisted of a shallow, U-shaped gully, 1.0m wide and 0.15m deep, with gently-sloping edges and a rounded base.

F323 was a linear feature aligned north-west to south-east, but terminating approximately 3m from the eastern edge of the easement. The gully was U-shaped in profile, but had fairly irregular edges and a flattened base. It was 1m wide and 0.5m deep. The ditch contained two fills, the upper fill (3033) was a compact, light grey sandy silt/gravel, whereas the lower fill (3034) was a mottled orange silt-sand with gravel; neither of the fills contained any artefacts.

A number of irregular or sub-circular features were encountered in this section of the easement. They included F109, F305, F306, F214, F317 and F326. These features ranged in depth from 0.22m to 0.44m and in diameter from 0.7m to 1.5m, and the fills

were alike in consisting of dark brown/grey silt-sand with organic material, again very similar to the topsoil. F305 and F317 were cut by land drains. The nature of these features and the lack of artefactual evidence makes dating and function difficult to determine, but it may be that they represent the remains of tree boles, or changes in the natural soil.

Towards the northern part of this stretch of easement was a cluster of irregularly-shaped features. F321 was a shallow, U-shaped linear feature, aligned north west to south-east and approximately 3m in length, 0.32m in depth and 1.0m in width. F321 intersected F322, but the relationship between the two features was difficult to determine and it was thought that F321 and F322 were contemporary. F322 was also a shallow, U-shaped linear feature, 0.30m deep and 1.10m wide. F321 and F322 contained similar fills, a dark brown silt-sand, with grey mottling and small stone inclusions (3031 and 3032 respectively). To the south of F321 and F322 root action had disturbed the features and made them irregular in plan.

To the south-west of F321 and F322 was another irregularly-shaped, shallow feature (F308), a short, crescent-shaped linear feature, aligned roughly east-west. It had been disturbed by root or animal activity and was 0.2m deep and 1.8m wide. At the western end of F308 it was cut by a very shallow, small pit, 0.1m deep and only 0.3m wide, which may simply represent a small depression or result from root action (F307 not illustrated). Similar root activity truncated F308 at the eastern end (F310).

A pit (F325) was situated to the south of F308. It was circular and bowl-shaped, 0.52m deep and 1.75m wide, and filled with a pebbly, grey/light brown sand-silt, with some orange patches (3036). It did not contain any evidence to assist with dating or possible function. A later linear feature (F324), aligned east-west, cut F325. This ditch was U-shaped, with fairly regular edges and a rounded base, 0.40m deep and 0.74m wide. It did not extend across the entire width of the easement and petered out towards the centre.

Land drains, some of which were substantial enough features to perhaps create a crop or parch mark visible on aerial photographs, also bisected this stretch of the easement (F311, F312, F315 and F316).

It was not possible to reclean all of Field 268, due to time constraints, so a trial trench was excavated by machine to test for archaeological deposits within the possible building complex. The trench was located along the route of the pipe trench and revealed some remnants of a post-medieval building and a layer of post-medieval pottery and building rubble. The earliest pottery recovered dated to the 16th/17th century, which may give an indication of the earliest date of the previous occupation.

Discussion

This section of the pipeline transected some cropmark features as seen on aerial photographs of this area. However, the construction of a roundabout joining Hampton Lane, A452, Meriden Road and Cornets End Lane after the aerial photographs had been taken is likely to have destroyed a substantial part of the field, which contained the cropmarks.

None of the features found during the excavations contained any dateable evidence, making the date and function of these features difficult to establish. Some of the features were irregular in plan and their fills similar to the topsoil or natural soil in this area and it is likely that they were simply caused by root disturbance or changes in the natural. These included F307, F308, F321 and F322. The pits, F300, F306, F314, F317 and F326, which were identified may also represent the remains of tree boles or animal disturbance, rather than genuine archaeological features.

One of the three parallel linear features F301, F302 and F303 may be the remains of a ditch or ditched enclosure that appears on the aerial photographs, but it is difficult to accurately assess date and function with no artefactual evidence and with only a small stretch of feature being exposed. These linear features may have some relationship with F324, and may share a similar date and function, but this cannot be determined as no intersections were discovered within the easement.

The land drain F313 was fairly substantial in construction and may be responsible for one of the cropmarks on the aerial photographs, but this was not an archaeological feature relating to prehistoric settlement.

Although features were found within this section of the pipeline easement, there was little firm evidence to suggest prehistoric settlement in this area. This, however, could change if the field in which the easement was situated ever came up for archaeological evaluation. Examining a more substantial section of the cropmarks would aid the assessment of preservation, date and function. It would also contribute to the knowledge gained during this phase of investigations.

The excavation of a trial trench within Field 268 revealed the remains of an insubstantial building or buildings. A modern house and garden had been located on much of the site of the building complex and the earthworks which remained to the west of the house were unaffected by the pipe trench. It appeared that the building had mostly been destroyed within the area of the easement.

5.9 Zones 9 and 10, Berry Fields Farm and Old Meriden Environs (Fig. 6)

Background

Zones 9 and 10 were adjacent lengths of pipeline easement at the easternmost extent of the pipeline route. Zone 9 was highlighted as an area of archaeological potential as the pipeline route transected fields adjacent to Berry Fields Farm. The term 'Berry' is usually associated with an early defended settlement, suggesting the potential survival of significant medieval features in the area. The first walkover survey noted that there was a large bank and ditch on the north-east boundary of the field incorporating Zone 9, which the pipeline easement would not transect. The second walkover produced little dating evidence, however, and due to the logistical problems caused by the foot and mouth crisis, no further archaeological work was conducted in this Zone.

Zone 10 was highlighted as an area of archaeological potential as the pipeline route transected fields adjacent to the original medieval settlement of Meriden. The desk-based assessment identified Field 214 as containing remnants of ridge and furrow from an aerial photograph dating from 1946, although the first walkover survey

showed that this earthwork was no longer visible on the ground. There were also other potential features in the vicinity and a strong possibility that the hill associated with the settlement at Old Meriden had been the focus of earlier prehistoric activity. The second walkover survey of the fields within Zone 10 produced significant quantities of medieval and post-medieval pottery. The land is currently being utilised as pasture.

Results

The majority of Zone 10 was reclaimed to the top of a red silt clay subsoil (1001). This layer was approximately 0.2m – 0.4m deep throughout the zone. It overlay a hard red clay with seams of light blue clay natural (1002). Both levels were tested for archaeology, though the majority of the features encountered were visible at the higher level. The zone covered several fields (X34, X35, X69, 273, 244 and X70).

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered in the three westernmost fields within the zone, X34, X35 and X69. The westernmost 40m of Field 273 was also devoid of any archaeological features or deposits, though archaeological features were identified to the east including three small sub-circular features cutting the subsoil (1001). These features (F101, F102 and F103) were irregular in section and were filled with a high concentration of charcoal, suggesting *in situ* burning. They were sealed by a layer of black silt and charcoal (1003), approximately 5.7m across and 0.1m deep. No artefacts were recovered from any of these deposits.

A stone land drain (F104, F105 and F106), aligned northwest - southeast, was located to the east of the charcoal spread. This land drain was approximately 0.3m wide and 0.4m deep, and cut the subsoil layer (1001). It was constructed with slabs of sandstone, each about 0.1m - 0.3m in size, with no evidence of facing or bonding between the stones. Medieval pottery was associated with this feature. A linear ditch (F107), also on a northwest – southeast alignment, was located to the east of the stone land drain (F104). This feature was approximately 1.4m wide and 0.25m deep and was U-shaped with a flat base. The fill (1004) was very similar to the subsoil layer (1001), and although the ditch was clearly visible cutting the natural (1002) at the base of the sondage, it is likely it also cut the subsoil, higher in the stratigraphy.

Further to the east in this field, a large linear ditch (F108) was identified. This linear feature was also aligned northwest – southeast and identified cutting the subsoil layer 1001. It was 8.5m wide and 0.85m deep with sloping sides and a flat base. One fragment of medieval pottery was recovered from the surface of the fill (1005), but no other artefacts were recovered during excavation. A field boundary was noted in the desk-based assessment visible as a cropmark within Field 273. It is likely that this corresponds to feature F108. The base of a severely truncated pit (F112) was located 7m from the eastern end of Field 273. This pit was sub-circular in plan and had an irregular base due to modern disturbance. Medieval pottery was recovered from the fill of this feature.

Several other linear features were also located in the adjacent Field 244. These were visible only in the sondage, which was excavated down to the natural subsoil (1002). The southwesternmost linear feature (F111) was aligned roughly east-west, with a U-shaped profile with a flat base, and was 1.8m wide and was 0.34m deep. The fill

(1008) contained no finds or charcoal. A small linear gully (F110) was located to the north-east of linear F111, on a similar east-west alignment. This gully was 0.6m wide and 0.1m deep with a U-shaped profile with a flat base. The fill (1007) was a mid-brown pink silty clay with no finds or charcoal. Further to the north east, a third linear feature (F109) was identified. This was aligned east-west, and was 0.6m wide and 0.14m deep. It had a U-shaped profile with a round base. The fill (1006) contained no finds or charcoal. No archaeology was visible to the northeast of this linear.

Field X76 at the very eastern end of the pipeline route produced much medieval pottery during the second walkover survey stage. No archaeological features were identified after this, however, perhaps due to appalling ground conditions during fieldwork.

Discussion

The archaeological features identified within Zone 10 are indicative of previous agricultural systems, and, as the desk-based assessment suggested in this area, date back to the medieval period. The majority of medieval pottery was recovered from the topsoil walkover, although several of the archaeological features identified also dated from this period. It is likely that the stone drain, large ditch and truncated pit identified during this episode of archaeological investigation were associated with the medieval settlement at Meriden.

6.0 The Finds

6.1 The Medieval Pottery by Stephanie Rátkai

The medieval pottery was examined macroscopically, and a selected sample of sherds examined under x20 magnification for comparison with the Warwickshire County Pottery Type Series (Soden and Rátkai 1999). Most of the pottery could be matched with the type series. The range of fabrics was largely what would be expected from the location of the pipeline, i.e. a mixture of fabrics commonly found in Warwick and Coventry and some of which are thought to have been made in or in the environs of these settlements. Some of the fabrics could be sourced to production centres e.g. Chilvers Coton wares and Cannon Park ware. There was an absence of non-local pottery or exotica in keeping with the strongly utilitarian nature of the vessels, which comprised mainly cooking pots.

Perhaps the most interesting sherds were represented by a number of igneous tempered sherds, which were found in Zone 2 and Zone 10. Igneous tempered wares have been found at Dunchurch (Rátkai forthcoming) and Coton Park (Denham 2001) near Rugby, Wolvey (Rátkai 1998), Coventry (Wright 1987) and Birmingham (Rátkai in prep b). Some of the sherds are paralleled by fabric STR 10 in the Warwickshire pottery type series and others are paralleled by pottery recently excavated in Birmingham city centre. There are igneous outcrops in the Nuncaton area but it is also possible that the igneous temper in some of these sherds derives from Boulder Clay deposits. Certainly, Dr David Williams (in Rátkai in prep a) has suggested such an origin for some igneous tempered sherds found at Stafford Castle.

The pottery was very abraded and largely undiagnostic. Most of it came from Zone 10. Possibly the earliest post-Roman sherd was represented by a sandy black neck-shoulder sherd, which may have been early-middle Saxon (although a late Iron Age date is not impossible). The sherd came from the vicinity of the boundary between Field 69 and Field 35.

Features or layers which may have been early e.g. "subsoil", "subsoil near post-hole" and "surface of large ditch" all produced single sherds of Coventry type ware dating to the 12th to 13th centuries. Two other features produced pottery: a possible pit near the boundary in Field 273 and a wall in the same field. The former contained two whiteware sherds. The fabric contained large angular and sub-angular quartz grains (some stained pink). This is not typical of Chilvers Coton Fabric A, which is finer and sandier. However, similar fabrics have been found along the line of the Birmingham Northern Relief Road particularly at Wishaw and Coleshill (Rátkai 2002) and seem to represent a second tradition of whitewares, which stretches through northern Warwickshire into South Staffordshire. The *floruit* for these fabrics is mid 13th to 14th centuries.

The wall in Field 273 produced three sherds; a Coventry type ware, a Chilvers Coton A/C sherd and a possible prehistoric sherd. The likely date for this group is late 13th century.

The spread of fabrics across Zone 10 was not consistent. The pottery from Field 70 consisted mainly of Coventry type ware including a Coventry tripod pitcher sherd (mid-12th to early-13th century), cooking pot fabrics Sq01, Sq02 and Sq051 and two igneous tempered sherds, all of which have a broad date range of 12th to 13th centuries. The latest sherd was in Chilvers Coton C fabric (late 13th to 15th centuries) and there were a small number of Roman sherds. This group of pottery would seem to represent mainly mid-12th to mid-13th century occupation.

In contrast the pottery from Field 273 consisted mainly of Chilvers Coton Fabric A and Fabric C sherds giving a date range of mid-13th to 15th centuries. There were also a few late medieval /early post-medieval oxidised sherds, which extend the date range into the later 15th to 16th centuries. However, there was also residual Roman and prehistoric pottery.

Pottery from Fields 34 and 35 was scant. The former contained a possible Belgic rim sherd, Roman sherds, a Chilvers Coton C sherd and a Cannon Park type ware sherd. Field 35 contained Roman sherds, Chilvers Coton C sherds, Coventry type ware and one proto-Midlands Purple ware sherd (15th century). Field 69 only produced Roman sherds.

In Zone 7 a small collection of pottery was recovered from Field 205. It consisted of a whiteware sherd decorated with applied scales (mid-13th to mid-14th centuries), Chilvers Coton C sherds (late 13th to 15th centuries), and late medieval transitional ware SLM 20 (15th to 16th centuries). The whiteware sherd belongs to the same tradition as the whiteware from Zone 10 discussed above. The use of applied scales as decoration seems to have been a popular decorative motif within this tradition.

Field 12 situated just outside Zone 2 in Chiswick Green produced only two igneous sherds, a Chilvers Coton C sherd and a late oxidised ware sherd SLM20 (15th to 16th centuries).

The range of fabrics present from the pipeline is limited and strongly local in character. It seems most probable that Coventry was the major marketing centre for the sites discussed above.

	Field 12 Cheswick Green	Zone 7 Bickenhill	Zone 10 Old Meriden	X 14
Fabric				
Prehistoric			x	
Roman			x	
Early-middle Saxon?			x	
Coventry tripod pitcher Sq21			x	
Coventry type ware Sq20-20.3			x	
?Coventry type ware Sq21.1			x	
Whiteware WW01.2		x	x	
Chilvers Coton A WW01			x	
Chilvers Coton C Sq30	x	x	x	
Sq31			x	
?Warwick sandy cooking pot Sq01			x	
Warwick Sandy cooking pot Sq02			x	
Cooking pot Sq05.1			x	
Canon Park type ware Sq23.1			x	x
Glazed sandy ware Sg13			x	
Igneous temper	x		x	
Late medieval oxidized ware SLM 13			x	
Late medieval oxidized ware SLM 20	x			
Proto Midlands Purple PMP			x	
Midlands Purple MP			x	

Table 2: Medieval Pottery

6.2 Assessment of the flint assemblage by Lynne Bevan

Field 138

The flint assemblage consisted of 12 items, comprising a small scraper, three blade-like flakes, one of which was broken, and eight flakes. The majority of the flint including the scraper, two of the blade-like flakes and six of the flakes, was of a medium to red-brown coloured flint with a cherty appearance. The third blade-like flake was totally recorticated, and the other two more substantial flakes were of a

coarser light grey flint. It was apparent from the thin compacted remnant cortex that all of the assemblage consisted of pebble flint derived from a secondary source, probably local river pebbles or boulder clay deposits. Despite the small size of the flint pebbles the flint appears to have been of a fairly good quality.

None of the items was chronologically diagnostic, although the blade-like flakes suggest a Later Mesolithic to Early Neolithic date. The small scraper might be Mesolithic, and thus possibly contemporary with the blades, or alternately it is of Early Bronze Age date, since small discoidal scrapers are also typical of Beaker industries. Alternately, three of the larger pieces of waste might be more suggestive of simple later Bronze Age smashed pebble technologies. The small size of the assemblage (four of the red-brown flakes might have originated from the same flint pebble), combined with its unstratified and generally undatable nature, negates further study in this instance.

Field 133

This small assemblage comprised two blade-like flakes, five flakes and a struck chunk, all of which were of a light to medium brown pebble flint. As with the flints from Field 138, the blade-like flakes might be of Later Mesolithic to Early Neolithic date, but the other flakes and chunk are not closely datable.

7.0 General Discussion

The overall pattern of archaeological and historical activity in the area is heavily influenced by the dominating features of the local topography. Throughout the region's past, the Forest of Arden and the River Blythe have played a vital role in shaping the nature and location of settlement patterns within and around the study area. It is only in this context that the apparent lack of significant archaeological features and deposits along the route of the pipeline can be understood.

Prehistoric Period

During the prehistoric period the dominant topographical features in the area would have been the Forest of Arden and the River Blythe. Settlement and activity within the forested area would have been avoided, whereas the River Blythe and the Blythe valley would have been an attraction for settlement, providing a stable water supply and fertile land for both hunter-gathering and early farming. Evidence for pre-Iron Age activity along the route of the pipeline may seem scarce, and only four sites were identified within the whole of the archaeological scheme of work. It is significant, however, that at each of the areas where the pipeline crossed the River Blythe evidence for pre-Iron Age activity was recovered. Approximately 500m to the south of the pipeline/Blythe intersection (see Fig. 4), the pipeline route ran parallel to the River Blythe at a distance of approximately 100m. During the Stage 1 walkover survey of this area a cluster of possible burnt mounds was identified within field X33, adjacent to the River Blythe, although outside the area of investigation. The second crossing of the River Blythe was located at the north of Zone 5 (Fig. 4). Approximately 100m north of the river in this area the flint scatter from fields 133 and 138 was recovered. A long barrow, possible ring ditch and another pit or mound were also identified approximately 500m to the south of the River Blythe crossing in

this area during the desk based assessment. The third crossing of the River Blythe by the route of the pipeline was located immediately to the west of Zone 8 (Fig. 6). Zone 8 itself was highlighted as an area of archaeological potential due to cropmarks being identified from aerial photographs. The photographs were taken in the 1950s, and showed definite cropmarks likely to relate to ring ditches and enclosures dating to the Bronze Age and Iron Age periods. No dating evidence was recovered from Zone 8, and no significant archaeological features that may have related to the cropmark evidence were identified within this zone. Extensive farming, however, is likely to have truncated any below-ground archaeology in this area, and the construction of a new road, parallel to which the pipeline easement was aligned would have truncated any archaeological features along the pipeline easement even further. It is possible that archaeology relating to the cropmarked features survives within this field away from the disturbance caused by the construction of the new road. The other prehistoric site identified in the study area was the Iron Age hillfort at Berry Mound. This site was not in the proximity of the River Blythe, being supplied instead by the River Cole and the Peterbrook.

The evidence therefore suggests that settlement and activity in the prehistoric period in the region was relatively dense, but concentrated on the habitable areas near the water supplies. The lack of identified sites, therefore, should perhaps be attributed to lack of fieldwork in the area, and not to lack of previous activity.

Roman Period

There is even less evidence of activity and settlement in the Roman period along the route of the pipeline, and this again should be examined in context of the dominant topographical features in the region at the time. The Forest of Arden would still cover much of the area in this period and the native population would still have been concentrated in the habitable areas within the Blythe valley. Although the advance of the Roman army along the Fosse Way and other roads led to the construction of a large number of forts and marching camps, none of these roads were particularly close to the area of interest. It is not surprising then, that there is little evidence for activity in the Roman period within the study area.

Medieval Period

One of the most widely accepted demographic trends in medieval England is the population boom in the first few centuries of the last millennium, which put pressure on land for agricultural use resulting in the colonising of areas including woodland that had never before been cultivated; so the process of deforestation began. The Forest of Arden, which had previously prevented much settlement in the region, was dramatically reduced in area to provide agricultural land for the rapidly expanding medieval population. Whereas in other areas of England the colonising was taking place in areas that had been waste such as fens, moorlands and other marginal areas, the deforestation of the Forest of Arden provided rich and fertile agricultural land for the local inhabitants in and around the Blythe valley. It is possibly for this reason that there are few, if any, deserted or shrunken medieval villages within the area of interest, the settlement at Monkspath being the exception.

The rapidly expanding medieval population and settlement being evident in the area surrounding the route of the pipeline, much evidence of relic landscape was not encountered. There are two possible explanations for this. The route of the pipeline passes through farmland on the periphery of modern day urban settlement. Given the stable nature of medieval settlement in the area, this land was likely to also have been on the periphery of the ancient settlements as well. Although the land was likely to have been utilised as farm land, the distance from the medieval settlement centres makes it more likely this land was used as pasture and not for crops. Hence the conspicuous lack of medieval pottery in the topsoil, as manuring might not have occurred in these areas. It is also possible that much manuring was unnecessary given the fertile nature of the soil.

Intensive farming in the post-medieval period would also have taken its toll on any surviving archaeology relating to relic landscape surrounding medieval settlement. Indeed, much of the ridge and furrow identified from aerial photographs by the desk-based assessment is not evident on the ground.

Post-Medieval Period

As has been previously stated, farming in the post-medieval period was intensive, and likely to have covered the whole of the area. Evidence for this can be seen at Berry Mound Hillfort (Zone 1) where the ramparts relating to the hillfort defences were flattened to increase usable farming land. It is also evident in the systematic destruction of ridge and furrow, especially in the last century. Various post-medieval features including ridge and furrow, land drains and boundary ditches were encountered along the whole length of the pipeline easement. Any evidence of past activity in the area is likely to have been severely truncated by such intensive farming.

8.0 Acknowledgements

The programme of archaeological work was conducted by BUFAU and was sponsored by Severn Trent Water Ltd. It comprised three major stages of work in an area of 27km in length, over a timespan of nearly a year, and was no small undertaking. It was made possible only by the help, advice and co-operation of many people involved in the Link Main project as a whole. Sincere thanks are therefore due to Alan Jones (Liaison Officer, BIRSF) and also to the following people; Rick Fowler and Don Wilson from Severn Trent Water, Mick Killbain, Paul Harris and John McCloughlan from BIRSF, and all the machine operators from Nigel Jones Plant Hire who were involved with the archaeological work. Thanks are also due to Dr Iain Ferris (Archaeological Consultant, Severn Trent Water Ltd).

The fieldwork was carried out by Charlotte Neilson and Eleanor Ramsey with the help of Kate Bain, Bob Barrows, Alex Firth, Roy Krakowicz, Erica Macey, Philip Mann, Helen Martin, Emily Murray, Zoe Outram, Lucretia Piper, Andy Rudge, Sarah Watt and Josh Withams.

Charlotte Neilson and Eleanor Ramsey wrote the report, which was edited by Malcolm Hislop. John Holsted prepared the illustrations and specialist contributions.

were from Lyano Bevan (flint) and Stephanie Rátkai (pottery). The project was managed by Steve Litherland.

9.0 References

Bridgman, R. 1998 *Birmingham to Solihull Link Main Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment* BUFAU Report No. 545

Burgess, J. T. 1872 *Early Earthworks in Warwickshire* Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society Transactions 1872

Denham, V. 2001 *The Saxon and Medieval Pottery in ?? author Excavation of the deserted medieval village of Coton at Coton Park, Rugby, Warwickshire 1998.* ?forthcoming Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society Transactions

Gelling, M. 1992 *The West Midlands in the Early Middle Ages*, Leicester

Rátkai, S. 1998 *The pottery in C Coultts and C Jones Archaeological Evaluation at the Church of St John the Baptist, Wolvey, Warwickshire* Warwickshire Museum Archive Rep (unnumbered) May 1998

Rátkai, S. 2002 *The Medieval Pottery recovered from the Birmingham Northern Relief Road.* Assessment reports for Oxford-Wessex Unit edited by P Booth.

Rátkai, S. forthcoming *The Pottery in S C Palmer Cawston Medieval Village: Excavations on the Rugby western Ring Main for Severn Trent Water in 1999.*

Rátkai, S. in prep (a) *The Pottery in J Darlington (ed) Excavations at Stafford Castle*

Rátkai, S. in prep (b) *The Pottery in C Mould Excavations at Edgbaston Street, Birmingham.*

Skipp, V. H. T. 1963 *Discovering Bickenhill*, Birmingham

Slater, T. 1981 *A History of Warwickshire*

Soden, I. and Rátkai, S. 1999 *Warwickshire County Pottery Type Series.* Document held by Warwickshire Museum.

Whitehouse, D. 1980 *Berry Mound, Solihull.* Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society Transactions for 1978-79 Vol. 89

Wilson, D. 1985 *Mound Sites*, Bucks

Wright, S. M. 1983 *Much Park Street, Coventry: the development of a medieval street. Excavations 1970-74* Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society Transactions 92, 1982 1-132

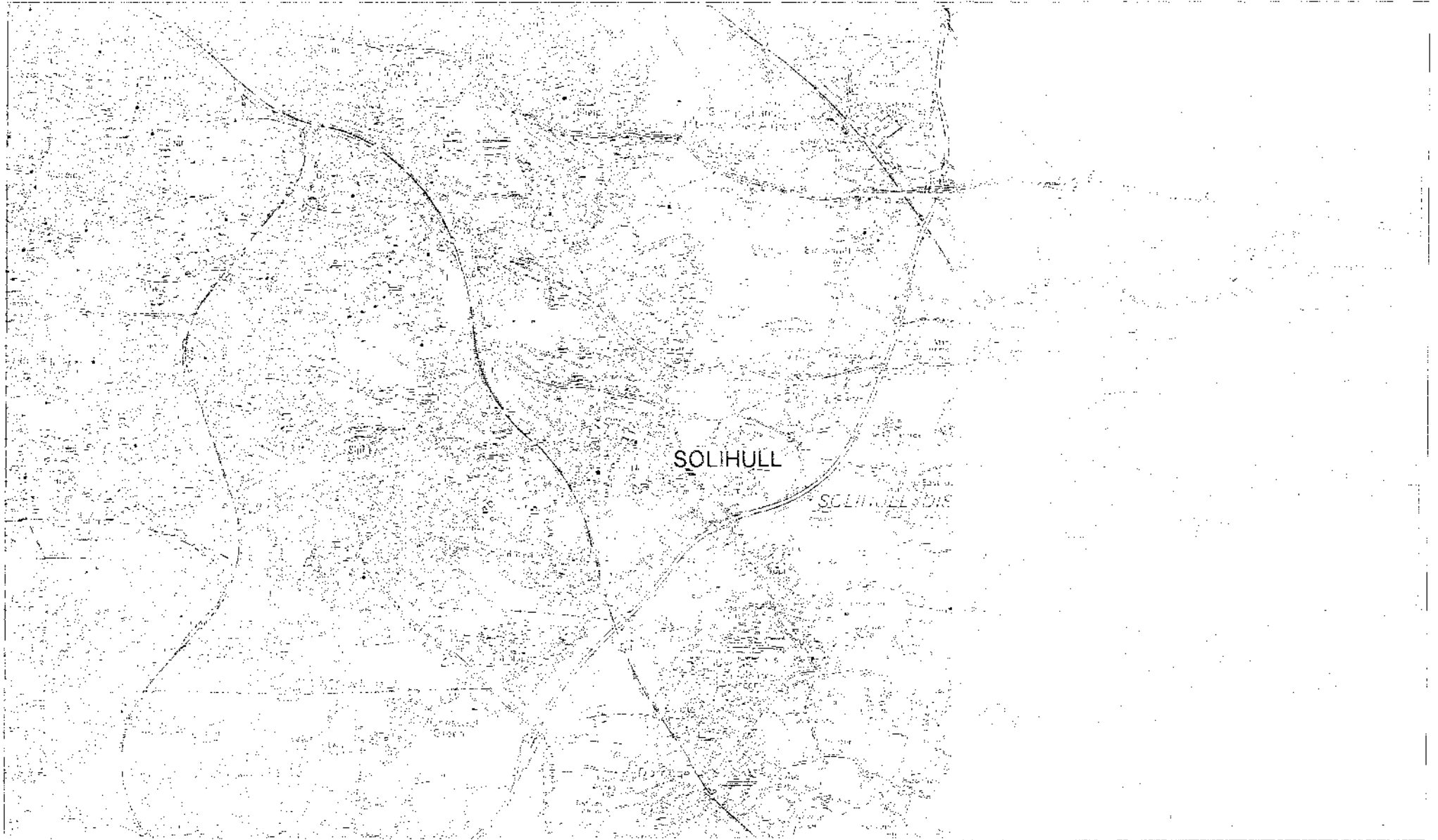


Fig. 1

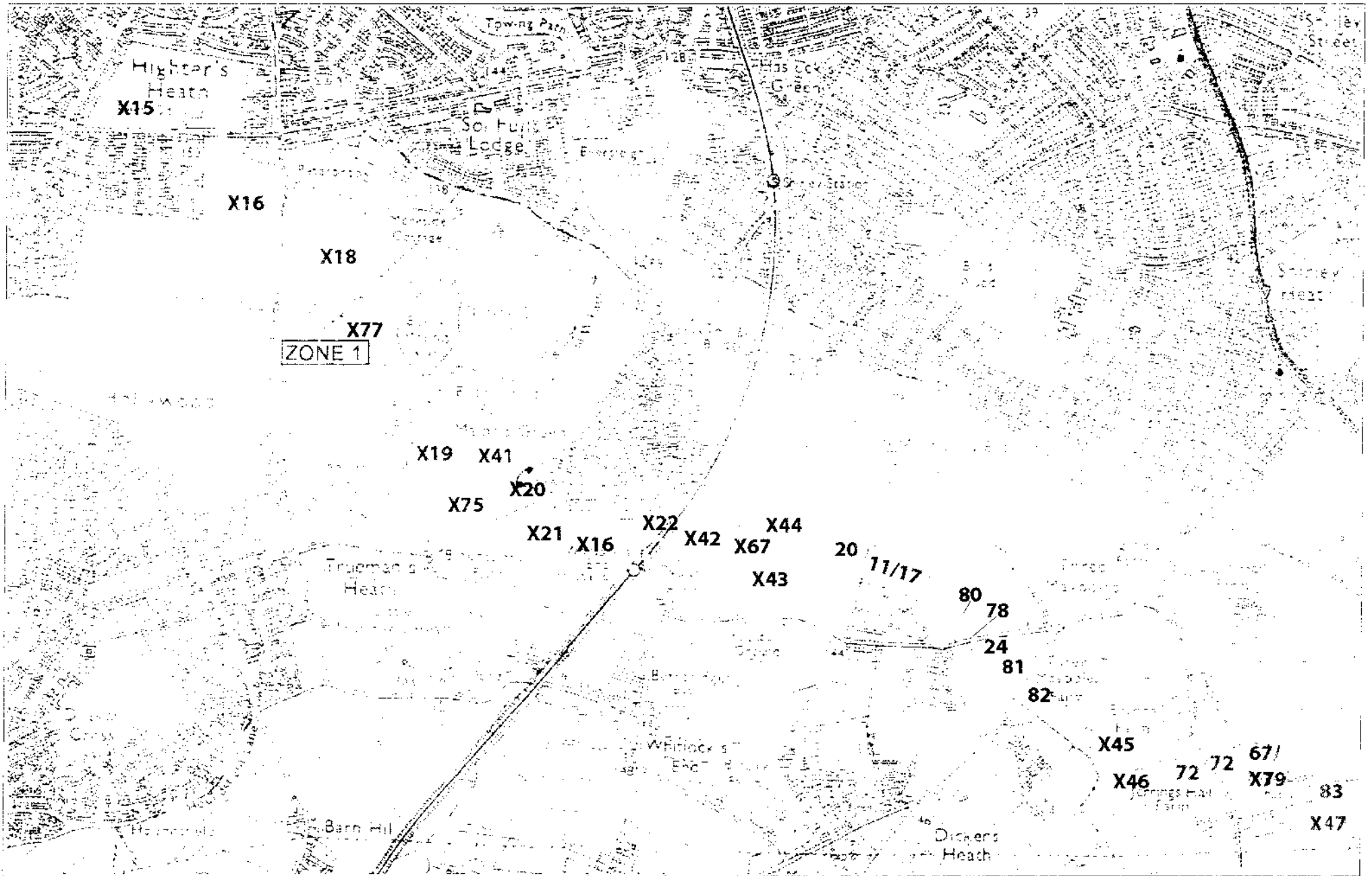


Fig. 2

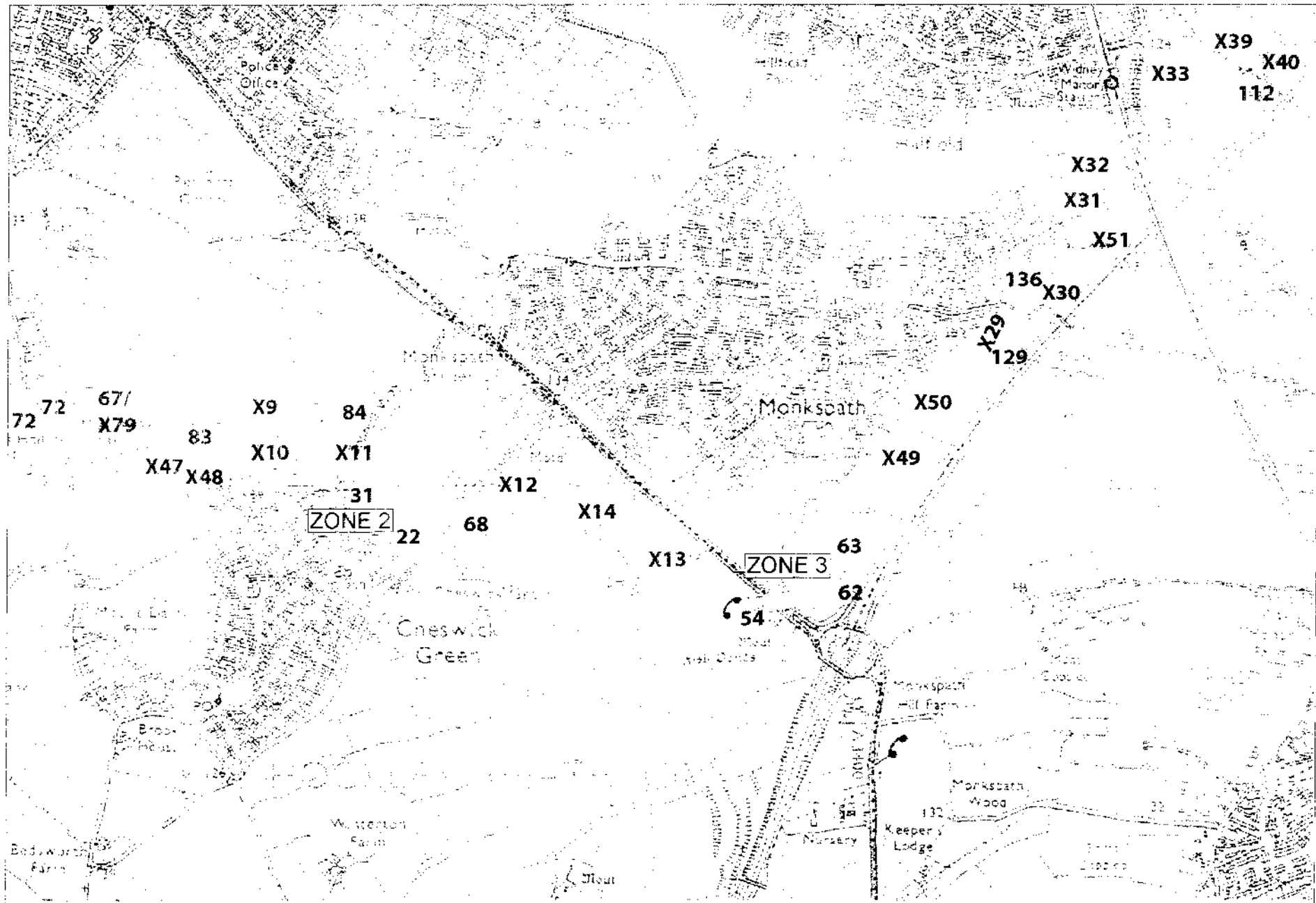


Fig. 3

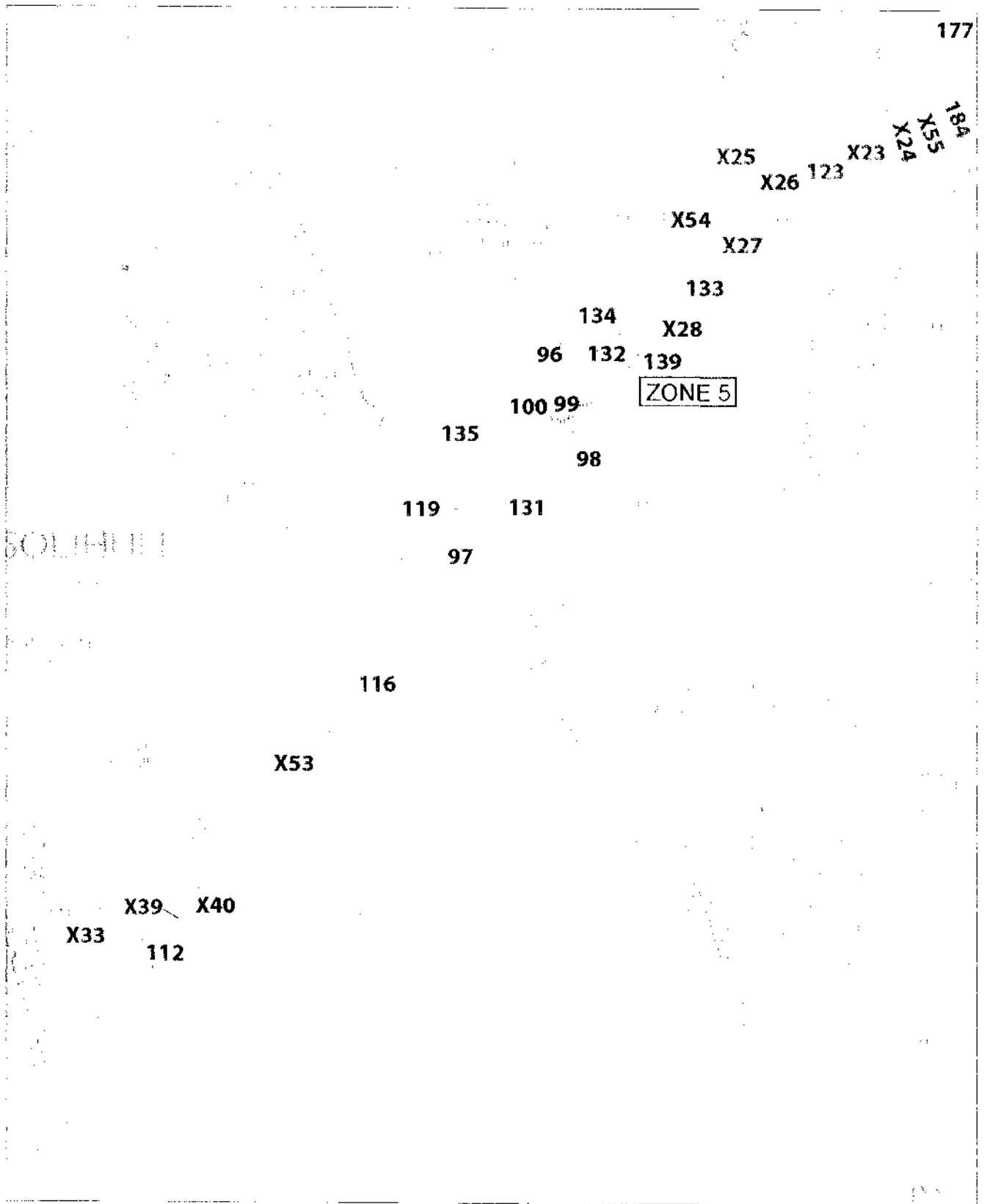


Fig 4

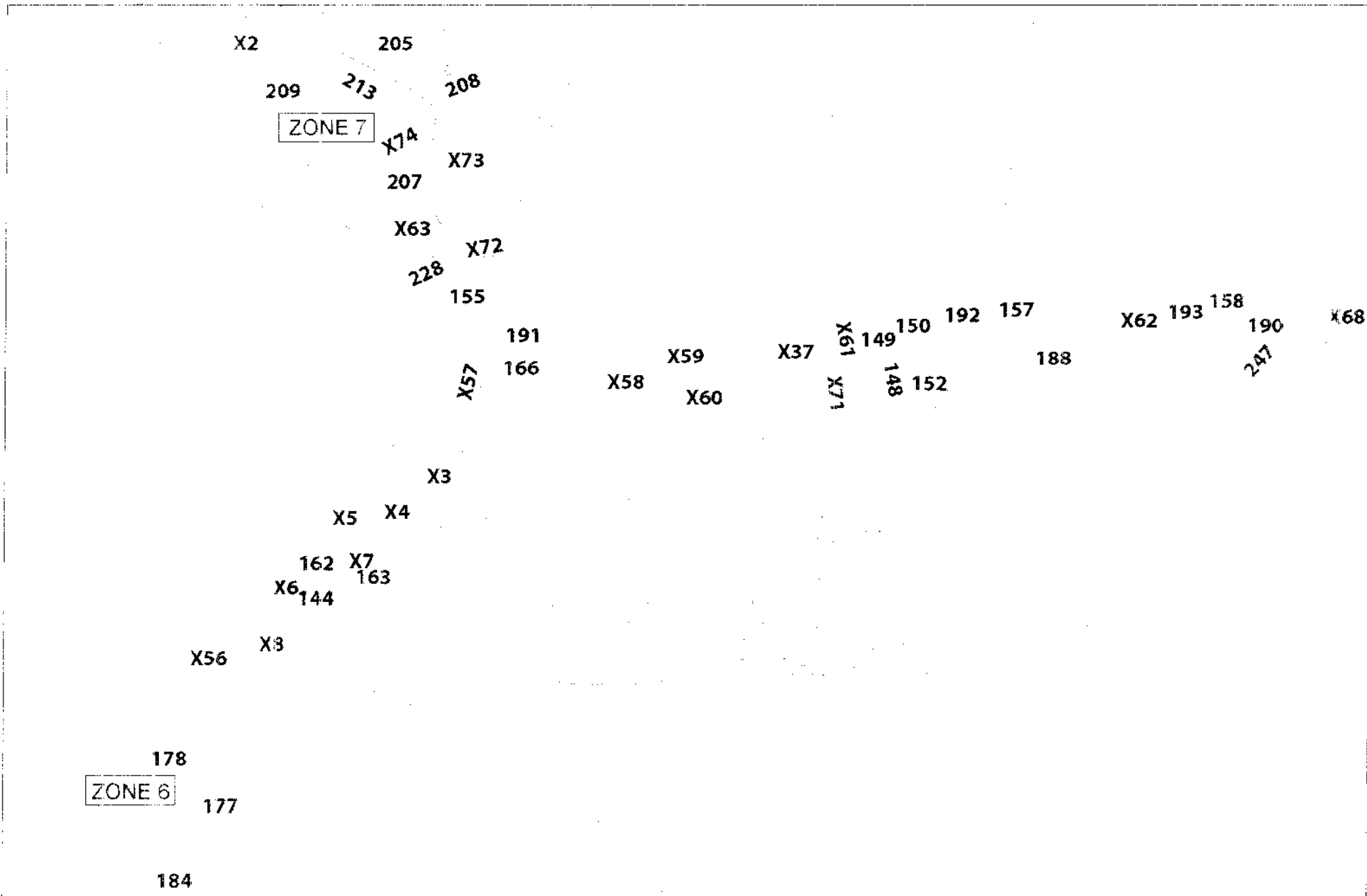


Fig. 5

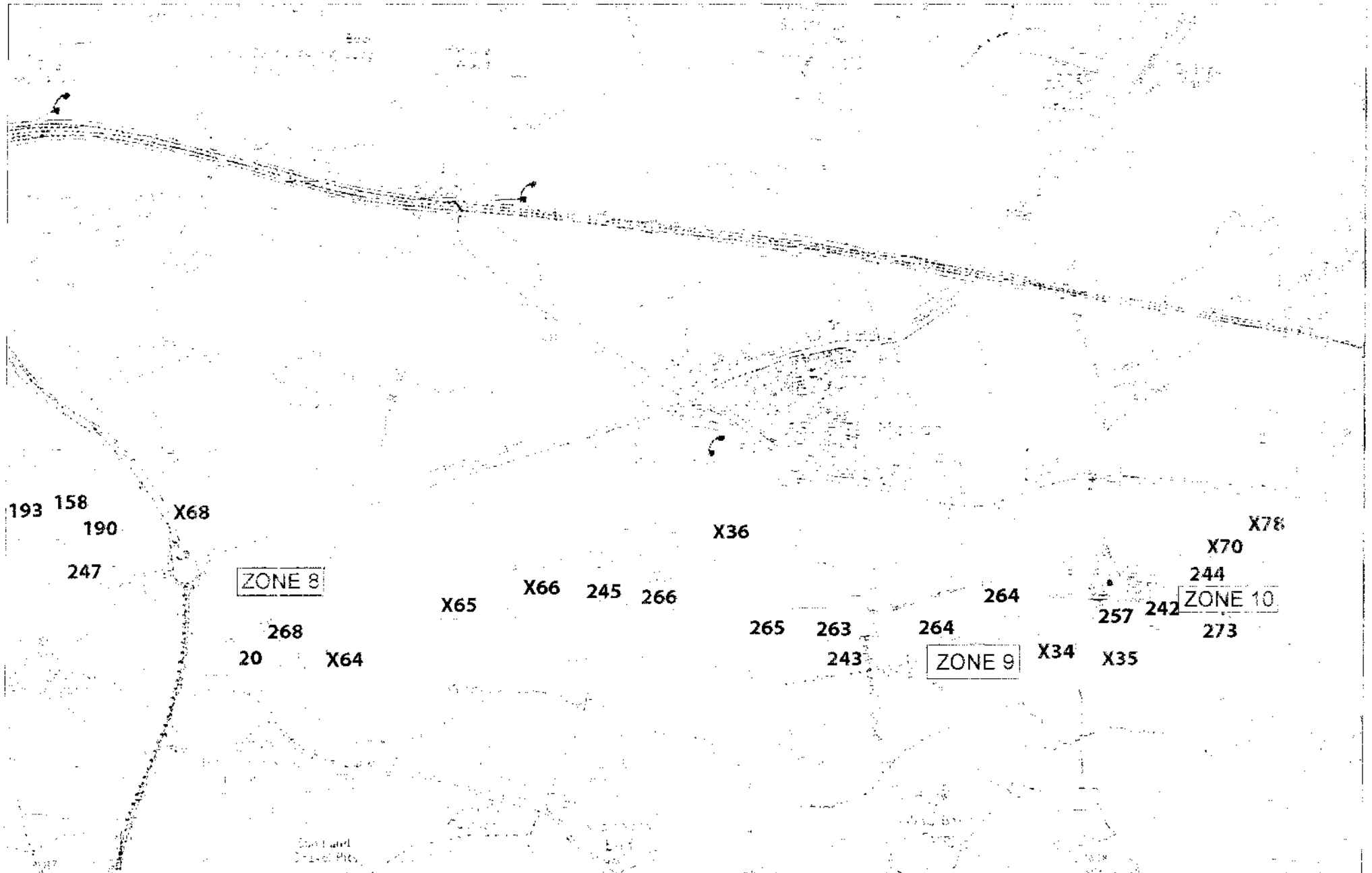


Fig 6

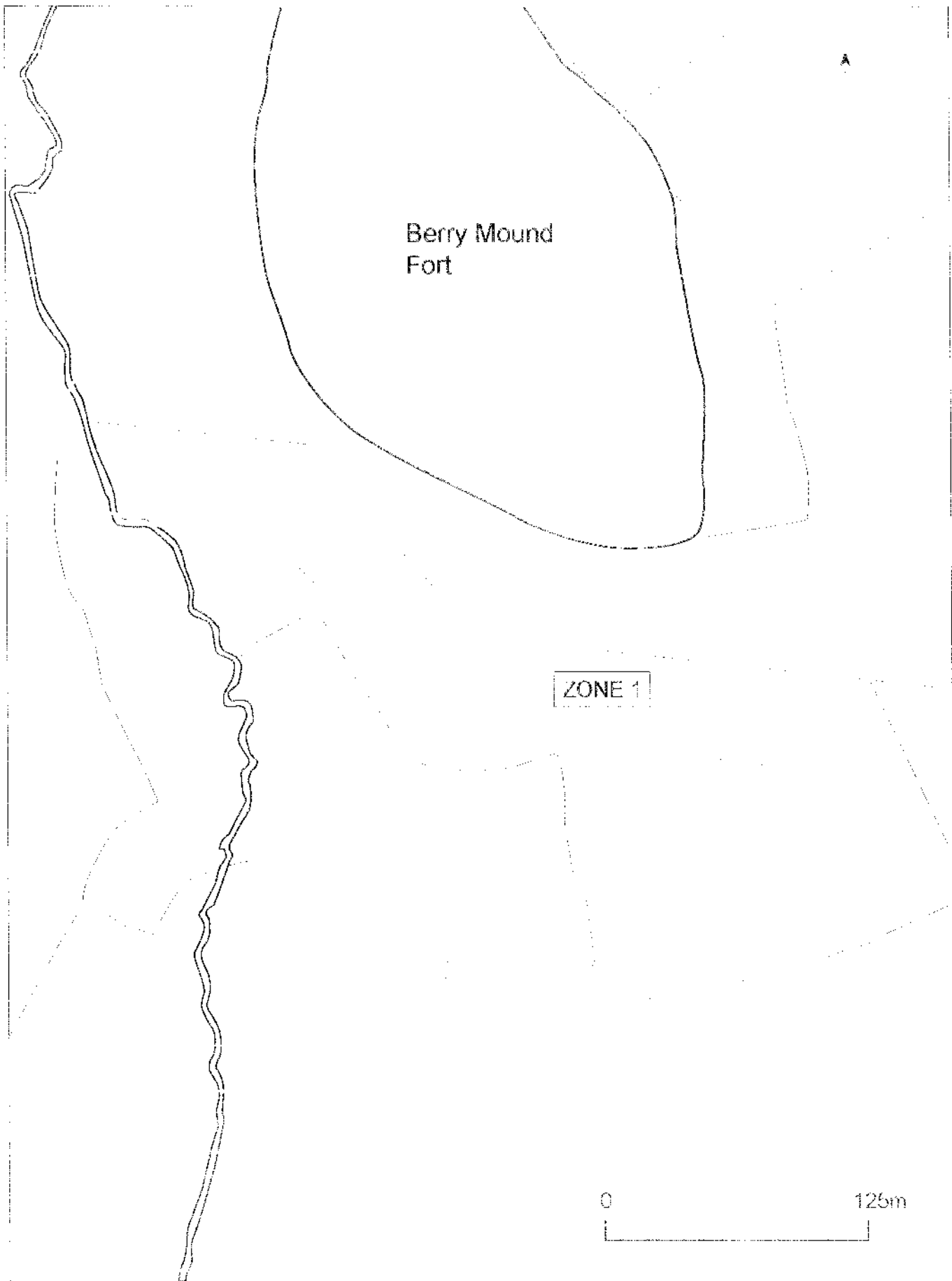


Fig. 7

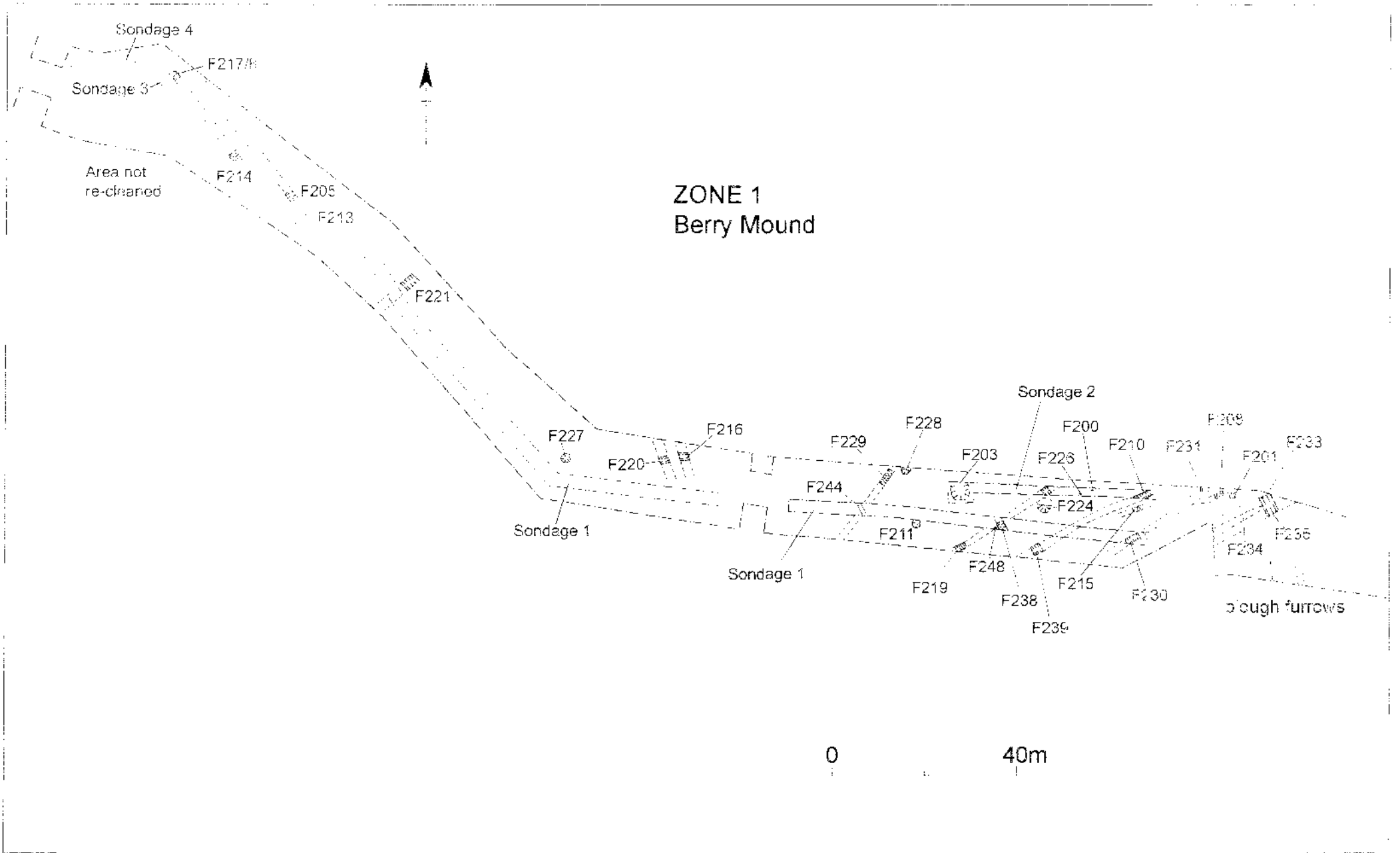


Fig.8

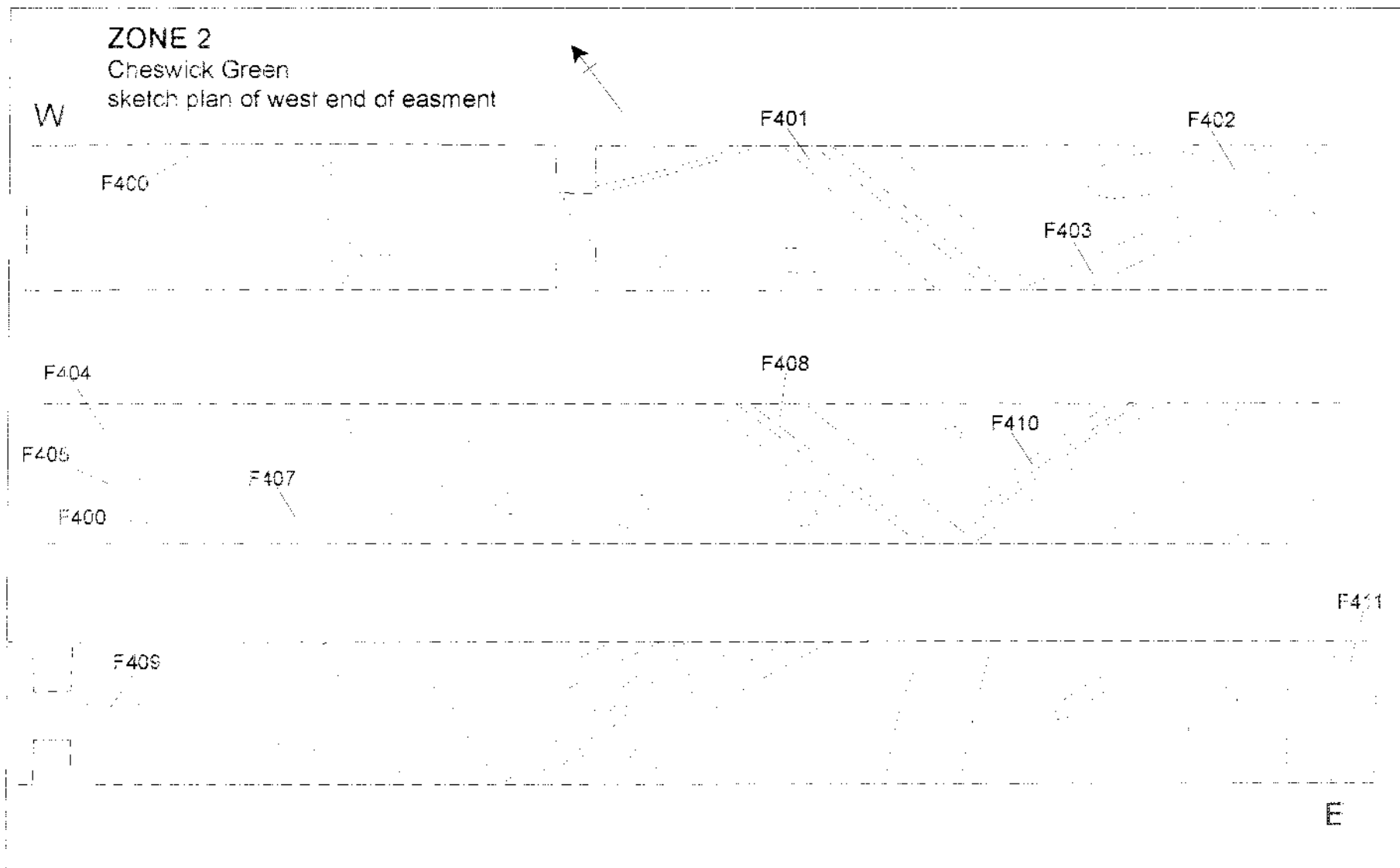


Fig. 9

ZONE 8
Hampton Lane

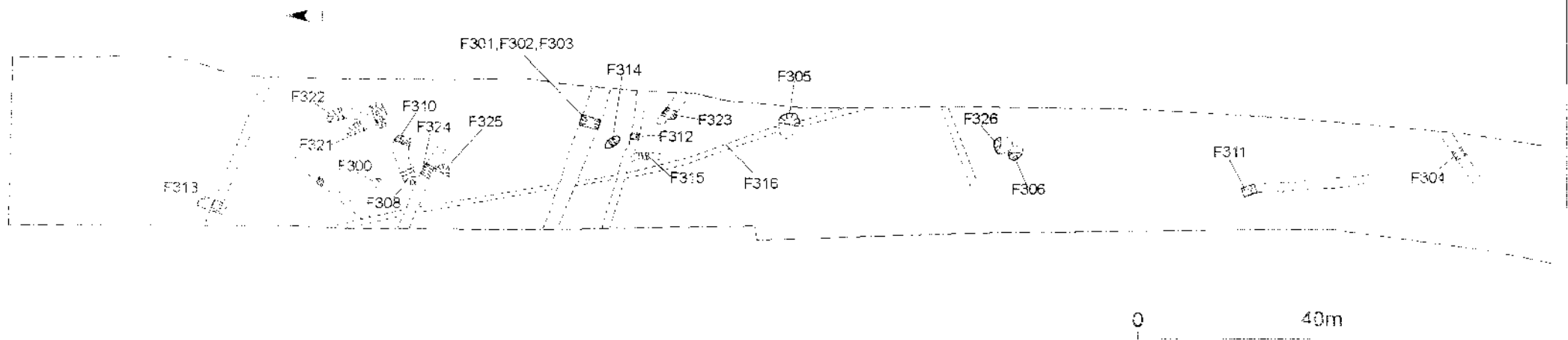


Fig. 10