

**Vincent Drive,  
Birmingham  
Archaeological  
Investigations 1999-2001**

**Post-Excavation  
Assessment**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
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**Vincent Drive, Birmingham**  
**Archaeological Investigations 1999-2001**  
**Post-Excavation Assessment**

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## **1.0: SUMMARY**

This report describes the results of archaeological trial-trenching and area excavation of land to the south of Vincent Drive, Birmingham (centred on NGR SP 045836), adjoining the western defences of Metchley Roman forts, and provides proposals to bring the fieldwork results to full publication. The archaeological trial-trenching and excavation was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of the University Hospital Birmingham NHS Trust, in advance of proposals for a new hospital development and associated new roads. The trial-trenching followed a desk-based assessment which highlighted the potential of the area investigated to contain evidence of Roman civilian and military occupation.

The area investigated lay immediately adjoining the western side of the complex of Metchley Roman forts, and directly adjoining the western gate of the forts. The trial-trenching identified ditched features, interpreted as plot boundaries, together with traces of timber-framed buildings and pebble road or yard surfaces. The excavation revealed evidence of three phases (A-C) of activity, dating to the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Phase A was represented by a sequence of shallow military ditches dug to the west of the forts, and by the layout of a gravel trackway, leading westwards from the western fort gate. In Phase B a civilian settlement was laid out, mainly represented by a scatter of open-fronted timber-framed buildings, mainly adjoining the gravelled trackway. The buildings went out of use and were replaced in Phase C by two re-cut ditches forming a 'funnel-shaped arrangement', flanking the western fort entrance, and by further, flat-based ditches cut on a north-south alignment, defining the western limits of an annexe or enclosure adjoining at least part of the western side of the fort defences.

## **2.0: INTRODUCTION**

This report integrates the results of trial-trenching and area excavation within land to the south of Vincent Drive (centred on NGR SP 045836, Fig. 1), and adjoining the western defences of Metchley Roman forts (Birmingham SMR NO. 2005). The trial-trenching and excavation were undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of University Hospital Birmingham NHS Trust. The trial-trenching was preceded by a desk-based assessment (Jones 1999a) which also examined other areas of land both within and outside the fort complex. Similarly, the subsequent programme of trial-trenching (Jones 1999b) also examined other areas to the southwest of the fort which lie beyond the area investigated by excavation in 2000-1. The strategy for the excavation was set down in a Written Scheme of Investigation and Environmental Plan (BUFAU 2000), approved by Birmingham City Council.

The trial-trenching (Jones 1999b) identified pebble surfaces, probably forming part of the east-west aligned road entering the fort's western gate. The other features

identified by trial-trenching comprised drainage and plot boundary ditches, post-holes, some possibly defining fence alignments. These features were together interpreted as defining a small extra-mural Roman settlement, located outside the western fort defences, and provided the first evidence for civilian activity adjoining the forts, with the exception of hint provided by a collection of copper alloy objects of civilian associated recovered from the western defences in 1963 (Webster forthcoming). The differing feature alignments suggested more than one phase of activity, although the pottery dating suggested that activity was confined to the Claudian-Neronian period. Although some charred plant remains were found within datable Roman features, the testing of waterlogged deposits for pollen and insect remains was largely negative in result. Although the desk-based assessment and trial-trenching confirmed that the area had been little disturbed, there was some evidence of machine tracks evident over part of the area subsequently excavated.

Earlier trial-trenching was undertaken by St Joseph and Shotton in the area of the western fort entrance during 1935-6 (St Joseph and Shotton 1937), to the east of the area investigated in 2000-1. In the 1930s a trench was cut adjoining the northern terminal of the western Phase 1 fort entrance, and both entrance terminals of the innermost, Phase 3 fort were identified. Narrow trenches were also cut along the line of the entranceway, but no trace of entrance gates or other associated structures could be found, although a metalled road was traced for a distance of approximately 12m to the west of the western fort entranceway.

The western part of the area investigated both by trial-trenching and excavation (Area 1) comprised the eastern edge of a plateau, defined on its western side by the infilled valleys of two north-south aligned former palaeochannels. The western limit of the excavation was formed by the eastern edge of an area disturbed during the excavation of a north-south aligned underground duct. The eastern part of the excavated area comprised a steep, west-facing scarp (Area 2), adjoining part of the western fort defences. The northern limit of the excavation was defined by Vincent Drive, and the southern side of the excavation was formed by a gentle south-facing scarp, infilled with modern debris. Although the excavation described in this report was undertaken in fulfilment of condition C9 of the Outline Planning Consent for the New Hospital Development (dated January 2000), because of the environmental sensitivity of the excavation site it was necessary to submit a detailed Environmental Plan for formal planning consent, to enable the excavation to be undertaken. The Environmental Plan described measures to limit the impact of the archaeological excavation upon the surrounding woodland and wildlife, and limited the extent of the area which could be excavated to safeguard those ecological aspects. A number of mature trees within the core of the excavation area was therefore retained, and for this reason there are some gaps in the excavated area. Because of these constraints, it was not possible to excavate the full extent of the civilian settlement and other Roman features lying outside the west of the fort complex, although most of the area identified by the preceding trial-trenching as being of archaeological potential was archaeologically investigated.

Details of the 1963-4, 1967-9 and 1997 excavations at Metchley forts may be found in Jones forthcoming, and the 1998-9 excavations are summarised in Jones 1999b and 1999c.

The aims of the 2000-1 excavations were to:

- 1) Recover as complete a ground-plan of the Roman settlement as was possible, and to identify any evidence for re-planning and for new overall boundary layouts.
- 2) Examine the economic basis of the settlement, including evidence for small-scale manufacture, e.g. ironworking.
- 3) Study the pottery, to provide dating evidence for the settlement, and also to compare the ceramic sequences from the fort and the settlement in terms of dating and also of the respective sources of supply.
- 4) Consider the evidence for the abandonment of the settlement.
- 5) Consider the evidence for purely military activity, such as outer defences or annexes, within the excavated area.
- 6) Relate the settlement stratigraphically and spatially to any associated outlying features.
- 7) Test the potential of the features to provide evidence concerning the flora and fauna within its environs, paying particular attention to waterlogged, or possibly waterlogged, deposits.
- 8) Contribute on a national and regional level to studies of forts and associated settlements.
- 9) Compare the evidence from the settlement with the suite of features of 2<sup>nd</sup>-century date associated with a possible official function of the Roman fort site during its latest period use.

### **3.0: METHODOLOGY**

Because of the ecological constraints the excavation was undertaken in two stages, Areas 1 and 2, being dug in that order. The area excavated was stripped of topsoil by a 360 degree excavator working under continuous archaeological supervision. The surface exposed by machine excavation comprised the subsoil or the uppermost archaeological horizon, whichever was first identified. The machined surface was hand-cleaned, and the archaeological features were base-planned. The plan provided the basis for the definition of the excavation strategy. Ditches and other linear features were sampled by hand-excavated segments, in total amounting up to approximately 25% by length. Pits and post-holes were examined in half-section. Where identified, colluvial horizons were removed as a separate process, by a combination of machine excavation under archaeological supervision, and by hand-excavation. Recent disturbances were removed by mini-digger working under archaeological supervision. Excavation was hampered by the high water-table, caused by the recent infilling of the palaeochannels to the west of the excavation, and by extreme wet weather. Part of Area 1 could not be excavated because recent contaminants were found.

Recording was by means of pre-printed pro-formas for contexts and features, plans (at 1:20 and 1:50), sections (1:20 and 1:50) and monochrome and colour slide photography. Contexts (overall layers and feature fills) were numbered in a sequence of four digit numbers, beginning with 1000. Features ('negative' or cut features such as ditches, pits, post-holes and 'positive' features such as earth banks, ramparts and floors) were numbered in sequences, prefixed by 'F'. Where several cuttings were dug through a single feature, these were distinguished by the use of a decimal suffix (e.g. F205.01, F205.02), and, additionally the fill sequences were separately numbered, even when apparently the same material was encountered. Separate sequences of

features and contexts were recorded in Arcas 1 and 2. The feature numbers allocated at excavation have been largely retained, and sometimes simplified, although in some cases re-numbering has been necessary for clarity.

Twenty litre samples for general biological analysis were taken from datable feature fills during the excavation, and waterlogged, or potentially waterlogged, samples were collected on a judgemental basis.

Permission for the excavation in the area under the ownership of the University of Birmingham was granted by the Estate Management Office of the University. Subject to the permission of the landowners (the University and the Hospital Trust), it is intended to deposit the paper and finds archives with Birmingham City Museums and Art Gallery.

For simplicity in the following account it is assumed that the fort is orientated north-south (Fig. 1), although the plans remain labelled with compass north.

## **4.0: RESULTS**

### **4.1: Phasing**

The results of the 1999 trial-trenching and the 2000-1 excavation have been conflated in the following account. The phasing has been devised according to the recorded stratigraphy and the spot-dating of the pottery. The phasing broadly follows the sequence defined for the Metchley forts.

Phase A: Early military activity (AD 40s; Fort Phase 1)

Phase B: Early civilian activity (AD 40-50s; Fort Phase 1)

Phase C: Later Roman activity (60s-AD 80; Fort Phase 2A/B)

Phase D: Post-medieval/modern

The phasing is provisional only at this stage. Phasing of Area 1 in particular was difficult because of the small quantity of relatively undiagnostic material.

The results are illustrated in a series of simplified phase plans (Figs. 2-4). The main dating evidence is tabulated (Tables 1-3).

The Phase A-D features were cut into the subsoil, which largely comprised an orange-brown sand-silt (1003) with gravel scatters.

### **4.2: Phase A: Early military activity (AD 40s, Fig. 2)**

#### **Description**

The Phase A features and deposits comprised the southern terminals of three north-south aligned military ditches, the westernmost continuing to the south of an entry-gap, and a gravel trackway leading westwards out of the western fort gate, flanked by pebble surfaces. Phase A features were cut into the subsoil, and into natural palaeochannels (not illustrated or described).

### *Area 1*

Possibly the earliest feature identified was an east-west aligned linear hollow (F164), in the subsoil, measuring a maximum of 1.5m in width and 0.1m in depth. This feature was backfilled with mottled brown-orange clay-silt (1090). The feature was overlain by an east-west aligned gravelled trackway and adjoining gravelled yard surfaces (F165), measuring a total of 6m in width and 0.01m in depth. The surface of the trackway was slightly cambered, particularly in the south. The trackway and adjoining surfaces were flanked by two roughly-parallel ditches (F149, F178), dug 7m apart (measured centre-to-centre). The ditches were cut to a U-shaped profile, and measured an average of 0.55m in depth and 0.9m in width. They were backfilled with grey-brown sand-silt, interpreted as silt washed from the trackway during its use; the northern ditch (F178) backfill also contained charcoal fragments.

### *Area 2*

The earliest defensive arrangement was represented by two parallel ditches (F254, F235), aligned north-south. It was not possible to discern the relationship between the two ditches because of disturbance by a later Phase A military ditch (F253, see below), although they could have been contemporary. Ditches F254 and F235 were recorded for a distance of 6m and 7m within the excavated area; both terminated in rounded butt-ends. The westernmost ditch (F254) was V-shaped in profile, with the outer, western edge cut to a steeper angle. It measured a maximum of 1m in depth and 3m in width. The primary fill of this ditch comprised brown sand-silt (2097) which may represent collapse from an associated rampart, not recorded as an above-ground feature. Above was a dark brown sand-silt (2098) containing burnt clay and charcoal, interpreted as a destruction deposit, sealed by a deposit of dark brown sand-silt (1097) which included quantities of charcoal and burnt clay. The eastern ditch (F235) was flat-based in profile, and measured a maximum of 2.2m in width, and 0.8m in depth. It was backfilled with dark brown sand-silt (2065), flecked with charcoal. After both ditches were fully backfilled, a third ditch (F253) was cut on the same north-south alignment. It terminated in a rounded butt-end cut, slightly to the south of the terminal of ditch F235. Ditch F253 was cut to a U-shaped profile, more steeply-cut on its eastern side, and measured a maximum of 1.6m in width and 0.6m in depth. Its primary backfill comprised a dark orange-brown silt-sand (2095), containing a large quantity of small sub-rounded pebbles, sealed by an orange silt-sand (2094).

There was no evidence for the southward continuation of ditches F235 or F253 to the south of a possible entrance, despite repeated hand-cleaning and the excavation of east-west aligned hand-dug sondages. The line of the westernmost ditch (F254) was continued to the south of an entrance gap which measured 2m in width. This southern ditch (F271) measured a maximum of 2.5m in width, but its full depth and profile could not be established because of the high water table. The northern terminal of the ditch was slightly tapered. The excavated, upper ditch fills comprised red-brown sand (2132), sealed by brown silt-clay (2125), overlain by brown silt-sand (2124), recorded below a layer of brown-red sand (2123), interpreted as the remains of a collapsed rampart, not otherwise recognised to the south of the entrance. It is possible that any trace of a southern continuation of the other military ditches could have been dug-away by later Roman activity, which was intense. The only features associated with



the northern group of military ditches were a short, northwest-southeast aligned slot (F268) adjoining the southern terminal of ditch F235, and palisade gully F270 which adjoined the western and southern terminal of ditch F254. The palisade gully terminated to the east at a circular post-pit (F276), measuring a maximum of 1.2m in diameter.

A gravelled trackway (F324), aligned approximately east-west, was laid out westwards from the forts' western gate. The trackway overlay the subsoil, and measured an average of 3m in width. Although disturbed by later Roman activity traces of a slight camber could be identified in places. Pebble yard surfaces, extending for a distance of 6m to the north of the trackway (2033), and for a distance of 5m to the south of the trackway (2032), could have been laid in Phases A or B. Lengths of roadside ditches (F238 and F282), cut on slightly different, though generally east-west alignments, and separated by a distance of 4m, were identified to the south of the trackway, but their course could not be fully identified because of later, Phase B-D activity. No roadside ditches could be identified to the north of the trackway. The roadside ditches were backfilled with orange-brown silt deposits, containing charcoal flecks and small rounded pebbles.

**TABLE 1: Phase A dating**

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Layer</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dating</i>
F149	1071	Ditch	Coarse ware, 1 <sup>st</sup> cent
F149	1073	Ditch	Coarse ware, pre-Flavian
F149	1078	Ditch	Samian AD 40-100
F235	2001	Military ditch	Samian AD 40-70; 55-70; 60-70; coarse ware, early Roman
F254	2046	Military ditch	Samian AD 40-70; 40-85; 40-100; coarse ware pre-Flavian
F271	2221	Military ditch	coarse ware, early Roman
F271	2015	Military ditch	Samian AD 40-70
F282/4	2161	Roadside ditch	Samian, AD 40-55; coarse ware, early Roman

### Interpretation

Military ditches F235 and F253 terminated approximately 6m inside the area excavated, and may have represented a *titulum* (Johnson 1983, fig. 30), providing additional defence against attack to the forts' western gate. Only the westernmost ditch could be traced to the south of a postulated entrance, despite repeated cleaning. It is possible that traces of a southward continuation of ditches F235 and F253 could have been scoured-out by later Roman activity, since the military ditches were relatively slight in profile. In comparison to the excavated fort and annexe ditches at Metchley, the small size of the Phase A military ditches may suggest an association with a marching or construction camp rather than a fort or annexe, although the evidence is not conclusive. Roughly north-south aligned feature F285 may have formed part of a military palisade. It was cut by a roadside ditch (F282). The trackway post-dated the infilling of southern ditch F271. Trackway F165/F324 formed a road exiting the west gate of the fort, leading to the streamcourse to the west. A slight change in alignment may be suggested towards the centre of the area excavated, although not proven, because the suggested intersection could not be excavated.

Closer to the fort defences the trackway adjoined more extensive pebble surfaces (2032-3). The northern road ditch (F178) was traced only in the west of the area excavated; closer to the fort, roadside drainage would not have been required where the natural slope was steep. The southern roadside ditches (F149/F282 and F238) were cut on slightly different alignments and may not have been contemporary. No traces of contemporary structures could be located, although their remains could have been scoured-out by later Roman activity.

### **4.3: Phase B: Early civilian activity (AD 40s-50s, Fig. 3)**

#### **Description**

Early Phase B activity was represented by continued use of the Phase A gravel trackway F165/F324. The road was later encroached upon by buildings. Two timber-framed buildings (Structures 1 and 3), and a further building represented by a gravel spread (Structure 2) with an associated yard surface were recorded in Area 1. Three timber-framed buildings (Structures 3-6) were recorded in Area 2, both to the south and north of the trackway. The timber-framed structures were represented by ground-beams. Phase B features were cut into backfilled Phase A features and deposits and into the subsoil.

#### *Area 1*

The Phase A east-west aligned gravel road (F165) probably continued in use into the early part of this phase, and may have been resurfaced and patched with gravel. The Phase A northern (F178) and southern (F149) roadside ditches had become silted-up and had gone out of use. Southern ditch F149 was replaced by a northwest-southeast aligned ditch (F144) dug across the line of its predecessor. Northern ditch F178 was replaced by an irregular, slightly sinuous ditch (F179), measuring an average of 1m in width and 0.4m in depth. Neither Phase B ditch could be traced across the whole width of Area 1. Ditch F144 was backfilled with brown silt-sand (1065), and ditch F179 was backfilled with brown sand (1108).

Structure 1, in the extreme south of the area investigated occupied a slightly raised southwest-northeast aligned natural plateau. Only part of the building lay within the area excavated. Parts of the northwestern (F119) and southeastern (F103, F108) sides of the building were identified; the northeastern and southwestern sides lay outside the area investigated. The building was represented by floor surfaces, and its timber walls by flat-based and vertically-sided beam-slots. The long axis of the building appeared to respect the natural plateau. Structure 1 measured 6.5m in width (measured from the outside of the beam-slots), and was exposed for a length of 13m within the excavated area. The earliest feature in this area may have been the slightly curvilinear northern terminal of a shallow beam-slot (F106), backfilled with grey silt (1011). This may have been associated with a curvilinear beam-slot (F109), cut by the southeastern side of the building (F108). Backfilled beam-slot F106 was sealed by the lower floor of Structure 1, a grey clay (1013, not illustrated), which measured 0.03m in depth and overlay the subsoil (1003). This clay floor was sealed by an upper floor deposit which comprised small, river-washed pebbles (F130, 1020). This upper floor surface was cut by a northeast-southwest aligned beam-slot (F105), dug slightly tangential to the main axis of the building, but only recorded within its interior. This beam-slot was

backfilled with red-brown silt (1006), interpreted as the remains of a ground-beam which had rotted *in situ*. The northwestern beam-slot (F119) measured 0.4m in width and 0.3m in depth, and was backfilled with similar material (1029), although most of its backfill had been scoured out by a post-medieval disturbance (not illustrated). The southeastern beam-slot (F103, F108) measured 0.45m in width and 0.25m in depth, and was backfilled with brown sand-silt. Traces of re-cutting (F102, not illustrated) were recorded along this side of the building. Adjoining the southeastern side of the building was a stone yard surface (1023), exposed in the extreme southern angle of the area investigated.

Structure 2 was rectangular in plan, measuring 4.2m by 5.5m, with rounded corners. The long axis of this building was roughly north-south. The northern and eastern sides of the building appeared to be slightly out-turned, while the other sides were concave. It was defined by a compacted spread of brown gravel (F127), measuring 0.05m in depth, overlying the subsoil (1003). To the west was a spread of coarse red gravel (1044/1056) which may have formed an associated yard surface. No other associated features were recorded, and no finds were collected. It is possible that the gravel spread (F127) may have formed the base of a building constructed wholly above ground-level, of which no trace otherwise remained. Although no associated features or finds were recovered, its regular shape suggests an anthropogenic origin, and the absence of post-medieval finds suggests a Roman context.

Structure 3a/b was represented by beam-slots, cut into the northern edge of the Phase A and early Phase B gravel road (F165) and into the backfilled Phase A (F178) and Phase B (F179) northern roadside ditches. The earliest features (Structure 3a) comprised a northwest-southeast aligned beam-slot (F167), which contained a post-hole (F169), and beam-slot F175 which was cut at angle of approximately 45 degrees to feature F167, and was separated by a possible entry-gap, measuring 0.05m in width. The western side of the entry-gap was further defined by a post-hole (F176) cutting the southern terminal of beam-slot F175. A further post-hole (F174) lay to the south of the latter. The beam-slots measured an average of 0.01m in both depth and width. Feature F167 was backfilled with grey-brown silt (1095) and feature F175 with mid-brown sand-silt (1104). Post-holes F174 and F176 were backfilled with brown silt-clay (1103, 1105 respectively). No other features associated with this building could be identified, and its original size and layout cannot be reconstructed.

Structure 3b, represented by beam-slots, was aligned east-west. Only the western side of this building was fully identified; part of the southern side was recorded but the eastern side lay outside the area investigated. The northern side may have been open, although much of this side lay outside the excavated area. Its western beam-slot (F168) cut Structure 3a beam-slot F167. Beam-slot F168 measured 6m in length and terminated at a rounded terminal to the north, with a post-hole (F172) to the west. Feature F168 measured 0.05m in depth and 0.15m in width. The southern side of this building was defined by a beam-slot (F166), recorded for a length of 10m and cut along the approximate line of Phase A roadside ditch F282 (Fig. 2). The beam-slot measured 0.5m in width and 0.2m in depth. Beam-slot F168 was backfilled with red clay (1096) and pebbles, and beam-slot F166 was backfilled with orange sand-silt (1094). There were no floor surfaces associated with Structures 3a/b.

## *Area 2*

Structure 4 was located to the north of the trackway and the associated pebble surfaces. It was irregularly-shaped in plan, and measured a maximum of 3m in width and 6m in length, and was divided into two rooms along its length. It overlay the backfilled Phase A military ditches and the subsoil. The eastern side of this building was represented by a mainly north-south aligned slot (F216), which turned to the southwest towards its southern terminal, presumably framing one side of an entry-gap. Only part of the western side of the building could be identified; it was represented by a slightly curvilinear slot (F213). Part of the southern side of the building may have been open; part of the western side may have been obliterated by a later disturbance, while the northern side was probably located outside the area investigated. Slot F228 which formed a right-angle with the eastern side of the building (F216), divided the building into two rooms. The southern room was surfaced with pebbles (2017). The southern room also contained a circular hearth (F221), backfilled with brown silt (2043) and containing small pebbles and flecked with charcoal. Slots F213 and F216 were backfilled with grey-brown silt-sand.

The eastern end of east-west aligned Structure 5 was located to the north of the gravelled trackway. This building was defined by beam-slots and by internal and external pebble surfaces. The northern side of the building was represented by east-west aligned beam-slot F224, which was recorded for a length of 10m. The beam-slot measured an average of 0.04m in width and 0.1m in depth. The western side of Structure 5 was formed by a beam-slot (F225) measuring 3m in length, forming a right-angle with the northern side of the building; the eastern side of the building lay beyond the area excavated. Beam-slots F224-5 were backfilled with light brown silt-sand. The southern side of the building, facing the trackway, was probably open, as were the northern sides of Structures 3 and 6 (see below), both located to the south of the trackway. One room within the western side of the building, measuring a maximum of 4m in length and 2m in width, was surfaced with dark orange silt-sand (2051), which could be distinguished from the surrounding pebble surfaces, both within the remainder of the interior of the excavated eastern end of the building and in the area immediately to the south (2033). A roughly rectangular area of pebble surfacing (2048) was identified to the south of the building. Adjoining the eastern end of the northern side of the building was a band of stony gravel (2142), adjoining the more extensive pebble surface to the north and west (2016). Further pebble surfacing (F297) was recorded to the west of surface 2177, but the definition of surfaces to the west of feature F297 was obscured by later, Phase C-D disturbances. Extending to the southeast of surface 2177 was a 2.3m wide pebble pathway (2028).

Further to the west of Structure 5 were further pebble surfaces (3002, 3007, 3009), and traces of a spread of gravel (F400), overlying the subsoil, which could possibly have defined a yard surface or a building (perhaps similar to Structure 2), although its full extent could not be defined because of the low water-table.

Structure 6 was the only building which could be identified within the limited area investigated to the south of the pebble trackway. Structure 6 overlay colluvial and occupation deposits (2115, 2117, 2143, 2156; not illustrated) which may be attributed to Phase A or early Phase B, and the backfilled Phase A military ditch (F271). As excavated, this building was rectangular in plan, with its long axis aligned east-west.

The building measured 9.5m in length and 5m in width. The northwestern corner of the building encroached upon the trackway with followed a slightly different alignment. Structure 6 followed a similar alignment to Structure 5 on the opposite side of the gravel trackway, which may have been in contemporary use. The northern side of Structure 6 was approximately flush with the northern side of Structure 3, which was also probably open-sided. Part of the eastern (F258) and western (F274) sides of Structure 6 were identified. Like Structure 5 this building was open-sided towards the trackway frontage; the southern wall of the building lay outside the area excavated. Structure 6 was divided along its length by a beam-slot (F230) measuring a maximum of 0.4m in width and 0.25m in depth. The excavated part of the building was further divided into four rooms by a north-south aligned beam-slot (F265, F231), positioned slightly off-centre. The northernmost pair of rooms measured 3.5m square. The southern pair of rooms was not fully excavated. Internal beam-slot F230 was cut by internal beam-slot F231/F265. The beam-slots for both the eastern (F258) and western (F274) external walls cut internal beam-slot F230. The external beam-slots (F258, F274) and internal beam-slot F231/F265 were backfilled with black-brown organic silt, suggesting that the beam-slots had decayed *in situ*. Internal beam-slot F230 was backfilled with orange-brown clay-silt-sand (2075).

To the rear of Structure 6 was cut a southwest-northeast aligned ditch (F240), truncating Phase A ditch F238, and possibly representing a change in plot layout arrangements. Ditch F283 cut southern Structure 3 beam-slot F166. Further pebble surfaces (2120, 2113a/b) were recorded to the north and east of Structure 6.

Sondages 1 and 2 towards the east of the excavated area recorded disturbed rampart material (2148-9; 2192, not illustrated), sealed by charcoal-rich layers (2107, 2109, not illustrated), interpreted as evidence of the slighting of the western fort defences.

**TABLE 2: Phase B dating**

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Layer</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dating</i>
-	1020	Structure 1, floor	Samian, AD 40-100; coarse ware, 1 <sup>st</sup> cent
F216	2034	Structure 4 beam-slot	Coarse ware, pre-Flavian
F216	2039	Structure 4 beam-slot	Coarse ware, early Roman
F225	2050	Structure 5 beam-slot	Coarse ware, early Roman
F224	2053	Structure 5 beam-slot	Coarse ware, early Roman
F230	2060	Structure 6 beam-slot	Coarse ware, early Roman
F231	2061	Structure 6 beam-slot	Samian, AD 40-85; coarse ware, mid-late 1 <sup>st</sup> cent.
F238	2068	Ditched plot boundary south of road	Coarse ware, early Roman and 1 <sup>st</sup> cent.
F230	2081	Structure 6 beam-slot	Samian AD 40-70; coarse ware, 1 <sup>st</sup> cent
F230	2136	Structure 6 beam-slot	Samian AD 40-100; coarse ware 1 <sup>st</sup> cent.
F259	2107	Boundary ditch	Samian AD 55-70; coarse ware, pre-Flavian; early 1 <sup>st</sup> cent

## Interpretation

Structure 1 was located away from the road frontage, to take advantage of a slight, natural plateau. Two floor surfaces survived. It is impossible to determine the original function of the building from the excavated part, although it was sub-divided into at least two rooms. This internal sub-division was tangential to the main axis of the building, suggesting a later re-arrangement.

The rectangular building formed by a spread of gravel (Structure 2) has no parallel in the areas excavated during 2000-1 (with the possible exception of feature F400), although similar spreads of gravel were noted during earlier fieldwork to the north of Vincent Drive (Jones 1988, Jones 1989).

Structures 3 and 6, both encroaching on the line of the Phase A/B trackway and associated pebble surfaces, may mark a diminution of roadside traffic, but probably not total abandonment of the route, although both structures (and Structure 5 to the north) followed a slightly different alignment. Although Structures 3, 5 and 6 were not fully excavated, they appear to have been of similar form, with an open side facing the frontage. This characteristic suggests that they formed small booths, market stalls or shops, the type of structures which would be anticipated close to the fort's west gate, occupying the steep, natural west-facing slope which may have been unsuitable for habitation. A number of timber-framed structures of similar dimensions to Structures 3 and 6 was excavated at Alcester (e.g. Mahany 1994, fig. 64).

Structure 4 is more difficult to interpret, particularly since only part was recorded within the excavated area. It shares some of the morphological traits of Phase C building remains, and may be contemporary with that phase. No buildings could be identified between Structures 3 and 6 because of later, Phase C disturbances.

### **4.4.: Phase C: Later Roman activity (AD 60s-AD 80, Fig. 4)**

#### Description

Phase C activity was represented by two distinct feature groups or types. In Area 1 a cluster of shallow slots, post-holes and shallow field boundaries was recorded to the south of the Phase A-B trackway (F165). Area 2, closer to the fort, contained a number of curvilinear and linear ditches, one pair defining a 'funnel-like arrangement' entering the fort's western gate, the second comprising ditches recorded further to the west, on either side of an entrance, replaced by a slightly sinuous north-south ditch, defining the western side of an annexe or enclosure on the western side of the fort. Phase C features were cut through Phase A-B features and into the subsoil. No Phase C buildings could be identified.

#### *Area 1*

The shallow ditched field boundaries were mainly aligned east-west or northeast-southwest. It is possible that ditch F120/F159 formed the southern side of a drove-way, measuring 1.5m in width (measured centre-to-centre), which may have respected Phase B Structure 2 to the south. Curvilinear ditch F163 and ditch F136 may have formed the northern side of the drove-way. An entry-gap measuring 6.5m in width

was recorded within both sides of the driveway, framed on its eastern side by a post-hole (F123) in ditch F120. There was no surviving evidence for the continuation of the northern ditch (F136) to the west of the entry-gap, although post-hole F162 may have defined the western side of an entry-gap along the northern side of the driveway. The eastern side of the entry-gap may have been further defined by post-holes F141 and F136, both backfilled with grey clay-silt. Post-holes F126 and F157 to the east may have defined a fenceline. A later plot boundary alignment was represented by northeast-southwest aligned ditches F139 and F158, which cut ditch F136 and ditch F159 respectively. The alignment of ditch F128 suggests it may have belonged to this latter.

The other Phase 3 features comprised two groups of parallel, short slots, measuring an average of 0.05m in width and 0.01m in depth and cut into the subsoil (F132-4; F129-131), located to the north of the driveway, and backfilled with brown clay-silt. The alignment of these slots suggests that they may have belonged with the later group of plot boundaries (F128, F158).

### *Area 2*

A pair of curvilinear ditches, together forming a 'funnel-like arrangement', was recorded in the east of the excavated area. The southernmost of the pair was recorded for a length of 9.5m. Its ditches were mainly aligned east-west, along the alignment of Phase A trackway (F324, Fig. 2), through which the ditches were cut. The earliest ditch in the sequence (F215) was sinuous in form. It was re-cut slightly to the north by a ditch (F222) following its alignment. A third, sinuous ditch (F210) was cut slightly to the north of the former. The western terminals of the three ditches were flush. The ditches were cut to irregular, flat-based and U-shaped profiles. They measured an average of 1.2m in width and 0.25m in depth. The ditches were backfilled with grey-brown silt. A round-ended slot (F247) was dug at a right-angle to the western terminal of ditch F210. Post-hole F208 was cut to the north of ditch F210, and a post-hole (F217) was cut into the edge of the same ditch may have defined the positions of two gate-posts. To the west of the ditch terminals an oval pit (F206) was cut into Phase A-B surface 2040 (not illustrated). The pit was flat-based in profile and measured a maximum of 0.7m in depth and 4m in diameter. To the north of the ditches three irregularly-shaped but parallel ruts (F246, F250, F257) were recorded in the underlying Phase B pebble surface (2023), which may be attributable to Phase C.

The northernmost ditch of the pair was recorded for a total length of 15m within the excavated area. It comprised three segments dug at different angles, the slightly inturned western ditch terminal being aligned east-west. The ditch had been cut through the backfilled Phase A military ditches, through Phase B Structure 5 and associated surfaces, and into the subsoil. The terminal was round-ended and had been repeatedly re-cut. The earliest terminal of this ditch (F232) was round-ended and flat-based, measuring a maximum of 0.3m in depth, and 1.4m in width. It was backfilled with grey-brown silt-clay (2135, 2137). The later re-cut (F276) of this terminal was dug slightly to the south and east of the former feature. This re-cut had an enlarged terminal, measuring a maximum of 1m in width and 0.25m in depth. It was backfilled with orange-brown sand (2102). The latest re-cut in the sequence (F212) was U-shaped in profile, and measured a maximum of 0.8m in width and 0.2m in depth. It was backfilled with grey-brown silt-sand (2021). The ditch (F209) was slightly

enlarged towards the main change of angle. No trace of re-cutting could be identified away from the terminal, possibly because the ditch was re-cut along the same alignment. Associated with this sequence of northern ditches were two post-holes (F237, F267), dug adjoining the southern side of the ditch terminals. It is not clear if these post-holes were associated with successive ditch re-cuts or if they were contemporary. A further post-hole (F251) was cut to the north of the ditches, towards the terminals.

Further ditches were recorded to the west. In the south of the area excavated a mainly north-south aligned ditch (F289) was recorded for a length of 12m, before turning to the west or terminating in an out-turned butt-end. This ditch measured a maximum of 2m in width and 0.8m in depth. It was backfilled with grey-brown silt (2175, 2182-4). It was truncated by the excavation of a curvilinear palisade trench (F293) which turned to the west just to the north of the former ditch terminal. The palisade trench measured 1m in width and was V-shaped in profile. It was backfilled with mid-brown sand (2185). Mainly north-south aligned features F306 and F304, recorded in the north of the excavated area, may have been contemporary with features F289 and F293. No relationship could be observed between these two northern ditches because of disturbance by later Phase C ditch F307, which also truncated the possible western terminals of features F289 and F293 mainly recorded to the south. The southern terminal of ditch F306 was cut to a V-shaped profile, and measured a maximum of 0.5m in depth and 2m in width. It was backfilled with brown sand-silt (2223). To the east was a further north-south aligned palisade trench (F304) which had been heavily disturbed by a later ditch (F307, see below), possibly forming an entry-gap measuring 6m in width (with feature F293) to the south. Feature F304 was backfilled with grey silt-sand (2232). Cutting feature F304 to the north, and features F289 and F293 to the south, was a slightly curvilinear, mainly north-south aligned ditch (F307), measuring a maximum of 1.5m in width and recorded for a length of approximately 25m.

A further sinuous palisade trench (F295-7), mainly aligned north-south, was recorded to the east of ditch F304. The former appeared to turn slightly to the southwest towards its terminal, which was slightly enlarged. It was cut to a U-shaped profile and was backfilled with dark brown sand-silt (2193). The southern terminal of feature F295-7 was cut by an oval slot (F308), possibly framing the northern side of an offset entrance, defined on its southern side by slot F247.



**TABLE 3: Phase C dating**

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Layer</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dating</i>
F159	1081	Ditch	Coarse ware, 1 <sup>st</sup> cent.
F222	2011	Southern ditch of pair	Coarse ware, early Roman
F206	2010	Pit	Samian, AD 40-60
F210	2013	Late disturbance	Samian, AD 55-70; coarse ware, late 1 <sup>st</sup> -early 2 <sup>nd</sup> cent.
F208	2018	Northern ditch of pair	Coarse ware, early Roman
F212	2021	Northern ditch of pair	Samian AD 40-55
F210	2022	Ditch cut through road	Coarse ware, mid 1 <sup>st</sup> -cent.
F209	2025	Northern ditch of pair	Coarse ware, early Roman
F215	2031	Ditch cut through road (=F210)	Coarse ware, pre-Flavian
F222	2035	Ditch cut through road (=F218)	Samian, AD 40-100; coarse wares, pre-Flavian
F267	2121	Gate-post associated northern ditch of pair	Samian, AD 40-55, coarse ware 1 <sup>st</sup> cent.
F296	2194	Curvilinear palisade gully	Coarse ware, early Roman
-	2211	Layer below 2208	Coarse ware, early Roman
F306	2223	Re-cut of ditch F305	Early Roman coarse ware
F304	2226	Ditch	Coarse ware, early Roman
F306	2234	Ditch	Coarse ware, early Roman
F293	2251	Ditch	Coarse ware, mid 1 <sup>st</sup> -cent.
F289	2252	Ditch	Coarse ware, early Roman
F289	2254	Ditch	Samian AD 40-100; coarse ware 1 <sup>st</sup> cent.

### Interpretation

Ditches F210/F215/F222 and F232/F276/F212 in the east of the site together formed a 'funnel-like entrance' which led towards the forts' western gate. The layout of this ditch group may be compared to the entrance arrangement of a banjo enclosure (e.g. Fasham 1987), which theoretically was intended to facilitate the herding of stock. At Metchley this arrangement may have been intended to herd livestock or horses into the fort interior. Vincent Drive Phase C was roughly contemporary with the use of the fort interior as a military stores depot (Phase 2B), and this external arrangement appears to be entirely consistent with that specialised function, although, of course, it is not possible to relate the dating evidence too closely at this preliminary stage. Oval slots F247 and F308 also probably formed part of an arrangement for sorting or controlling livestock, possibly together with feature F295-7 to the north.

Further to the west the linear features appear to belong to two sub-phases. In the earliest sub-phase an entrance may have been defined between the possible terminals of ditches F289 and F306, and between internal palisade trenches F293 and F304, although the area of this suggested entrance is disturbed by later activity (ditch F307). This ditch may have defined one, uninterrupted side of an annexe or ditched enclosure attached to the western side of the fort. Its function may have been to mark a boundary, rather than to be for defence.

Further to the west of the ditch groups were shallow ditches forming field or plot boundaries, possibly including a roughly southwest-northeast aligned droveway, together with evidence of shallow slots, that may have formed part of heavily-

truncated timber-framed buildings such as booths or stalls, although no detailed ground-plans were identifiable.

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the Phase C features were associated with the use of the fort and surrounding area as a hunting park, mapped and documented in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **4.6: Phase D: Post-medieval/modern activity**

Post-medieval/modern activity was mainly represented by machine disturbance (in Area 1), and by plant bedding trenches (in Area 2). This post-Roman activity is not illustrated or described in detail.

### **5.0: ASSESSMENTS**

This section of the report conflates the evidence from the 1999 evaluation and 2000-1 excavations, although the finds (pottery only) from the latest stage of investigations undertaken in 2001 are not included. Throughout post-medieval material was noted, but not collected.

#### **5.1: Quantifications**

Tables 4-5 quantify the archive. Quantifications include material from the evaluation.

**TABLE 4: Quantification of paper archive**

<i>Record</i>	<i>Quantity</i>
Contexts	470
Features	265
Col. Slide	8 films
Monochrome prints	8 films
Drawings (all sizes)	319
Admin files	4

**TABLE 5: Quantification of finds archive**

<i>Material</i>	<i>Quantity</i>
Glass	1 object
Copper alloy	3 objects, 2 plate fragments; various unidentified objects
Lead	1 object
Iron	6 objects; 14 plate fragments; 74 nails
Leather	1 fragment
Worked stone	6 fragments
Roman coarse wares	1242 sherds
Samian	56 sherds
Mortaria	11 sherds
Amphora	326 sherds

## **5.2: Factual data and statement of potential**

### **5.2.1: Stratigraphy**

As noted during the evaluation (Jones 1999b) the majority of the features were cut into the subsoil. In addition, gravel trackways and pebble yard surfaces were identified. Within Area 2, deposits of colluvium and stratified deposits, comprising successive pebble surfaces and occupation deposits, were identified within areas where trial-trenching was not permitted. In Area 2 complex sequences of intercutting features were identified, including evidence for the succession of Roman military to civilian features. Beam-slots which defined the inner and outer walls of timber-framed buildings were identified, together with traces of both internal and external pebble surfaces. Notably little evidence of disturbance by tree roots was uncovered. No trace of recent plough truncation was found; modern disturbance was limited to occasional bedding trenches used for the cultivation of vegetables.

In contrast, the features identified in Area 1 were mainly confined to features cutting the subsoil, such as ditches, gullies and post-holes. Exceptionally, a sequence of internal floor-deposits was identified within Structure 1. The features and gravelled trackways overlying the subsoil were truncated, and in places destroyed by recent machine disturbance, confined to Area 1.

The areas available for investigation were restricted by the requirement to retain large areas of trees, which were protected by preservation orders, and, likewise, some trees within the areas originally proposed for excavation were required to be preserved. Another area could not be investigated because of a chemical spillage.

Despite the restrictions upon the extent of the area which could be investigated, much information concerning the early military occupation of the site and the layout, sequence and dating of its civilian occupation have been identified. However, it is important to note that other areas of military and civilian occupation outside the western fort defences remain to be investigated; the 1999-2001 investigations must not be seen as a complete record of the Roman extra-mural evidence on this side of the fort.

## **5.3: Finds and environmental evidence**

The abbreviation 'SF' denotes a small find.

### **5.3.1: Small Finds by Lynne Bevan**

Quantity, range and variety

#### *Glass*

Glass finds consisted of a glass gaming counter (F234, 2097) and two half melon beads (layer 2212, SF9; layer 3013, SF1).

### *Copper alloy*

Three objects were recovered: the handle of a ladle (F203, 2001, SF2) with a *graffito*, a penannular brooch (F259, 2107, SF8), and a stud head (F268, 2122). Two small fragments of plate were also found (layer 2001 x 1; F259, 2069 x 1), as well as several unidentified fragments (F242, 2073 x 2; F203, 2006 x 1; layer 2091 x 3) and an amorphous fragment, possibly manufacturing waste (F219, 2039). None of the items was very well-preserved.

### *Lead*

A small weight was recovered (F248, 2079).

### *Iron*

Identifiable finds consisted of a brooch (layer 2110), a possible stylus (F259, 2109), a hook (layer 2001), a large ?mattock head (F248, 2079), and two small fragments of chainlink (layer 2189). In addition, 14 fragments of plate (layer 2028 x 1; F249, 2080 x 7; layer 2090 x 1; F260, 2109 x 2; layer 2110 x 1; F268, 2125 x 1), a thick, corroded tubular object (F259, 2109), and four amorphous lumps (layer 2057 x 1, F239, 2069 x 2; F249, 2080 x 1) were found. The generally poor standard of preservation precluded identification in most cases, and illustration will not be appropriate.

A total of 74 nails was found from the following deposits: layer 2001 x 8; layer 2022 x 3; layer 2026 x 1; layer 2028 x 2; F222, 2035 x 1; F231, 2061 x 3, F202, 2004 x 1; F211, 2084 x 1; F214, 2030 x 1; F238, 2068 x 6; F245, 2081 x 1; F249, 2080 x 2; F000, 2090 x 4; F259, 2107 x 2; F263, 2105 x 1; F260, 2109 x 3; layer 2110 x 9; F271, 2124 x 2; F268, 2125 x 3; layer 2177 x 1, F294, 2189 x 7; F295, 2193 x 2; F311, 2207 x 1; F311, 2211 x 3; F317, 2247 x 4; F318, 2251 x 1; layer 3001 x 1.

### *Leather*

One small fragment of dried black, or very dark brown, leather was found (F317, 2247). Although the preservation of this small fragment is exceptional, it is not possible to identify whether it came from a shoe, a garment or other item of clothing, or whether the surviving thickness of the piece reflects its original dimensions.

### *Worked stone*

Worked stone items consisted of a ballista ball or weight (F249, 2079), a possible polishing implement (F260, 2109), a possible whetstone (F156, 1078), a gaming counter or token (layer 3003, SF2), a rectangular-shaped piece of stone which might have been a fragment of *tessera* or inlay for jewellery (layer 2001) and a roughly square-shaped unidentified fragment (layer 2086).

### Statement of potential

Full cataloguing and further research is recommended for the identifiable, and better preserved, of the small finds, particularly the glass items, three of the copper alloy objects, the stone items and the leather fragment. In addition, the stone items will

require geological identification. The ladle handle *graffito* will be reported on by Dr. Roger Tomlin. It is also recommended that a selection of the finds is illustrated.

### 5.3.2: Roman Pottery by Jane Evans

#### Quantity

1635 sherds of Roman pottery were recovered, most of which were very abraded and often fragmentary. A breakdown of the quantifications is provided in Table 6. The pottery dated primarily to the pre-Flavian period, although small quantities of Flavian-Trajanic pottery were also noted. Of particular interest was a sherd of scored ware, which provides rare ceramic evidence for Iron Age activity in the Birmingham area. There was some evidence for a functional bias in the assemblage, particularly relating to the quantity of amphorae represented.

**TABLE 6: Summary of the pottery**

Area	Sherd count				Total
	Coarse ware	Amphora	Samian	Mortaria	
1	72	7	5	5	89
2	1170	319	51	6	1546
<b>Total</b>	<b>1242</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1635</b>

Only 89 sherds were recovered from Area 1, derived from 26 deposits. Of these, most deposits produced less than five sherds, the larger groups coming from topsoil and cleaning layers (1001, 21 sherds; 1002, 15 sherds) and ditch F149 (1071, 10 sherds).

More deposits in Area 2 produced pottery (66). The largest groups, of more than 100 sherds, came from Structure 6 (F231, 2061), ditch F271 ( 2123, 2124, 2125), and ditch F222 (2035). One of the largest groups, however, came from Roman military ditch F235 (2001).

#### Range and variety

##### *Area 1*

A small number of diagnostic pieces provided some dating evidence for the group. Five sherds of South Gaulish samian, probably from La Graufesenque, indicated a broadly 1<sup>st</sup> century date that can probably be refined when a more detailed analysis is undertaken. These came from Structure 1 internal floor deposits 1002, 1020, 1078. The topsoil (1001) also produced a sherd of Lyon ware, a typically pre-Flavian import. There was further evidence for pre-Flavian activity from other deposits. Ditch F151 (1073) produced a characteristically early handle from a Dressel 20 amphorae (Pcacock and Williams 1986, fig. 65, types 3 and 5), and ditch F149 (1071) a rim from a collared, Hofheim-type flagon. The latter has been noted elsewhere at Metchley (Green *et al.* forthcoming), and was also noted in the military assemblage from Wroxeter. Sherds of imported mortaria were noted, possibly from northern Gaul/Pas de Calais. These also support a 1<sup>st</sup> century date that may be refined when they are subject to specialist analysis. The sherds came from two features (F149/1071, F159/1081) but may represent a single vessel.

The most unusual piece was a possible fragment of Gallia-Belgica Craquelée Bleutée, which will require more specialist identification. This ware is rare in Britain, and the sherd would be a very interesting find, if the identification is correct. Gallo-Belgic wares generally are scarce and tend to be associated with sites with concentrated Late Iron Age occupation in southeastern England and East Anglia. The rare occurrences elsewhere in the country seem, however, to be associated with military occupation. The coarse wares from Area 1 were not closely dated, but included early fabrics noted elsewhere at Metchley (Green *et al.* forthcoming; Hancocks forthcoming), such as organic-tempered wares and grog-tempered ware. No diagnostically Flavian or later types were noted, such as rusticated jars or ring-necked flagons.

### *Area 2*

The range of fabrics represented was similar to that from Area 1. A number of diagnostic sherds provided dating evidence for the group. The samian all appeared to be South Gaulish ware from La Graufesenque. This was dated broadly to the 1<sup>st</sup> century, but can be dated more precisely with specialist analysis. Some diagnostically pre-Flavian samian was noted, and most of the other evidence also pointed to a pre-Flavian date. This included a number of Hofheim flagon rims, diagnostic amphorae handles and rims, and occasional sherds of Lyon ware. Unlike Area 1, however, there was also some evidence for Flavian activity. Military ditch F235 (2001) produced some typically Flavian-Trajanic rusticated ware, a late 1<sup>st</sup>-century amphora type (Peacock and Williams class 16), and a Flavian Dr 29 bowl (Webster 1996, fig. 26c). Rusticated ware was also noted amongst material from a late pit cutting the road (F205, 2014), while another layer (2090) produced a typically Flavian ring-necked flagon.

The Area 2 assemblage contained a noticeably high proportion of amphorae, 21% by count compared with 7% by count from the Metchley fort Area 7-8 excavations (Hancocks forthcoming). A number of other storage vessels, such as flagons and jars, was also represented. The proportion of samian, in contrast, was lower than in Areas 7-8, 3% compared to 4.5%. This may reflect functional variations between the fort and the settlement, and is an aspect which should be explored.

One sherd was of particular interest, a fragment of scored ware. This ware is typical of East Midlands assemblages dating to the Iron Age and into the conquest period (Annette Hancocks, pers. comm.). It is not entirely surprising to find this ware so far west; it is been recognised in Warwickshire at Wasperton for example (Ann Woodward pers. comm.). The micaceous fabric and the type of scoring, however, is more typical of the Iron Age than the conquest period (Annette Hancocks, pers. comm.). This may therefore provide some rare ceramic evidence for Iron Age activity in the vicinity.

### Statement of potential

#### *Coarse wares*

The assemblage includes a range of diagnostic forms and fabrics, publication of which will add to the growing body of data from Metchley Roman fort. Detailed analysis and recording will allow statistical comparisons to be made between the

range of forms and fabrics recovered from the fort and the settlement, as well as direct comparison between the pottery from military Phases A and C and civilian Phase B. This will allow any possible functional variations to be explored.

### *Samian*

56 sherds of samian were recovered, all but five from Area 2. All were very abraded, some extremely so. Eleven sherds were decorated, but no stamps were noted. All the samian dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century. A rapid scan of the fabrics suggested the group was dominated by material from La Graufesenque, as in the other Metchley fort assemblages. The emphasis seemed to be on pre-Flavian material, although this will obviously need to be confirmed by specialist identification. Identifiable forms included Dressel 29 bowls with the trailing plant motifs typical of pre-Flavian vessels, a Ritterling 12 bowl, and a Dressel 27 cup, with a typically-early flat topped rim. The only possible Flavian vessel was a Dressel 29 bowl with a splayed rim.

In addition to refining the provisional dating presented here, specialist analysis will also provide a more precise identification of the forms and sources represented. Worthwhile comparison could be made between the samian from Vincent Drive and the assemblages from the fort to explore, for example, any differences in the proportions of decorated and plain samian.

### *Amphorae*

326 sherds of amphorae were recovered, mainly from Area 2. Like the other assemblages studied from Metchley, the group was dominated by Baetican Dressel 20 olive oil amphorae (Peacock and Williams 1986, Class 20). However, various other fabrics and thus sources were also represented. These included Dressel 2-4 (Peacock and Williams 1986), a container for wine, and possibly Southern Spanish amphorae, containing fish sauce (Peacock and Williams 1986, Class 16). There was a number of chronologically-diagnostic handles and bases, which provided useful spot-dating evidence. Preliminary assessment suggested that most of the amphorae ranged in date from *c.* AD 30-70 (Peacock and Williams 1986, fig. 65, 3-10). This dating will be refined by detailed analysis. All sherds of amphorae have been recorded on the database. Fabric and form identification needs to be undertaken by David Williams. No stamps or *graffiti* were noted.

### *Mortaria*

Eleven sherds of mortaria were noted during the assessment, including three diagnostic rims. The group included one imported mortarium, a possible Verulamium product, and a possible local vessel. All the mortaria will need specialist identification by Kay Hartley, to identify the sources and date ranges represented.

### *Thin section analysis*

It is not anticipated that many sherds will require thin sections, as petrological analysis has previously been undertaken on pottery from other Metchley fort sites (Hancocks forthcoming). A small number of thin sections may be required to cover specific questions as they arise.

### *Graffito*

A sherd of coarse ware was noted with a possible graffito. This needs to be reported on by Roger Tomlin.

### *Illustration*

A number of diagnostic coarse-ware forms was represented in the assemblage, including some more unusual items such as a tettina spout, a patera handle and a sherd with graffiti. The amphorae included some chronologically-diagnostic handles and rims and there were eleven decorated sherds amongst the samian, some of which may be selected for illustration. Overall it is estimated that a maximum of 40 sherds may require illustration.

#### 5.2.4: Charred plant remains by Marina Ciaraldi

##### Methodology

A programme of soil sampling was implemented during the excavation, under the supervision of the author. The samples were collected from datable features. Some of the samples were processed during the course of the excavation in order to establish the type of preservation of the biological remains and refine the sampling strategy.

The sampling strategy and the present assessment aimed to establish:

- 1) The state of preservation of the organic material.
- 2) The potential of the samples for the general understanding of the human activities (agriculturally or craft-related) on site.
- 3) The potential in the reconstruction of the human diet, particularly in relation to the civilian association of the site, and its comparison with charred plant remains from Roman military deposits (Moffett 1999, Ciaraldi forthcoming).
- 4) The potential of the samples for the reconstruction of the environment around the site.

The samples were floated with a York flotation machine. Due to the clay-rich nature of the soil matrix, the samples had to be soaked in a solution of sodium hydrogen carbonate before processing. The flots (light fraction) were recovered on a 0.5mm sieve and the residue (heavy fraction) on a 1mm mesh. The residue was sorted by eye while the flots were scanned under a low power stereomicroscope. The identifications of the plant remains in Table 7 are based on a preliminary analysis only and are therefore provisional.

##### Range/variety

The overall preservation of biological remains was very poor, as in the case of the samples from Metchley forts. Only two of the 17 samples contained some charred seeds, including a few barley and spelt grains.



Small fragments of coal were observed in all of the samples. The presence of coal had already been observed in soil samples from the evaluation stage of the project (Smith 1999, Ciaraldi forthcoming). None of the samples from the excavation, however, contained significant quantity of coal. Coal appears to be present as a 'background noise', rather than in association with a particular activity area or deposit.

No waterlogged deposits were observed in the samples examined.

**TABLE 7: Charred plant remains**

<i>Feature/ Context</i>	<i>Vol proc (l.)</i>	<i>Type of feature</i>	<i>Spot date</i>	<i>Vol. flot (ml.)</i>	<i>Notes</i>
-/1020	2	Possible floor	-		No biological remains
F107/1045	1	Possible wooden beam	-		Fungal spores and manganese concretions
F210/2022	20	Roadside ditch	Mid 1 <sup>st</sup> century	20	
F212/2021	20	Ditch	1 <sup>st</sup> century	10	Small pieces of charcoal. Small frags. of coal
F218/2034	10	Roadside ditch	Pre-Flavian	10	Small frags. of coal. Burnt bone
F222/2035	20	Roadside ditch	? 1 <sup>st</sup> century	50	Barley (10), small pieces of charcoal. Small frags. of coal. Burnt bone
F233/2046	20	Military ditch	1 <sup>st</sup> century	20	Small pieces of charcoal. Small frags. of coal, some burnt. Burnt bones
F234/2063	20	Military ditch	? 1 <sup>st</sup> century	20	Small pieces of charcoal. Small frags. of coal. Burnt bone
F234/2097	20	Military ditch	? 1 <sup>st</sup> century	10	Small frags. of charcoal. Some small coal probably burnt
F234/2122	20	Military ditch	? 1 <sup>st</sup> century	10	Small frags. of charcoal
F238/2068	20	Plot boundary ditch	? 1 <sup>st</sup> century	20	Small pieces of charcoal. Small frags. of coal. Burnt bone
F254/2098	20	Military ditch	? 1 <sup>st</sup> century	50	Burnt bone
F254/2099	20	Military ditch	? 1 <sup>st</sup> century	5	Small frags. of charcoal
F259/2107	20	Plot boundary ditch	? 1 <sup>st</sup> century	100	Burnt bone
F260/2109	20	Plot boundary ditch	? 1 <sup>st</sup> century	50	Large pieces of charcoal. Some seeds of barley (4), cereals (2), Carex (1) and Poaceae (1). Burnt bone
F261/2110	20	Plot boundary ditch	? 1 <sup>st</sup> century	>200	Sample extremely contaminated by modern plant remains. Very large charcoal fragments and only a few coal frags; some burnt. Burnt bone
F267/2121	10	Post-hole	1 <sup>st</sup> century	30	Large pieces of charcoal. Well preserved cereals seed of barley (1), spelt (2) Triticum (4) and cereals (2). Burnt bone

NOTE: Numbers in parenthesis indicate a rough estimate of the seed number

## Statement of potential

Given the poor preservation of the botanical remains it is suggested not to proceed with the full analysis of all samples. Full reporting of the charred plant remains from features F260 and F267 is, however, merited.

## 6.0: UPDATED PROJECT DESIGN

### 6.1: Research themes

A number of research themes may be highlighted.

#### 1) Early military activity

The military (Phase A) ditches are the earliest Roman features identified. Their interpretation is uncertain. Ditches F235 and F253, which did not continue across the excavated area, may have formed part of a *titulum*, providing additional defence against attack (Johnson 1983, fig. 30). Ditches F254 and F271 may have formed part of a marching camp, or even of a construction camp (Sommer 1984, 8).

#### 2) Settlement layout and re-planning

Comparatively few civilian settlements have been investigated in any detail. Indeed, Bidwell (1997, 72) has noted that the study of forts has eclipsed that of the associated civilian settlements. The most extensively excavated settlements are often associated with Hadrian's Wall, and are thus of later date. Other settlements are known from aerial photography, and have not been excavated in detail. The most extensively excavated civilian settlement within the midlands is at Wall, Staffordshire (Jones 1998; Gould 1964; Oswald 1968), although in size, prosperity and longevity it is not directly comparable to Metchley settlement.

Sommer (1984, 22) notes that an allotment of land for civilian settlement could have been made during the initial survey of a fort site and its surrounds. The excavation and preceding trial-trenching at Vincent Drive have located the first features associated with extra-mural civilian settlement at Metchley. Previously the evidence was limited to a group of unstratified copper alloy objects (Webster forthcoming). The main focus of activity, as may have been anticipated, was along the east-west trackway, along which were laid out several buildings (Structures 3-4, and 6). Interestingly, the layout of other buildings was more haphazard, and apparently dispersed, including Structures 1-2 and Structure 6, located away from the trackway frontage, perhaps similar to the arrangement at Melandra Castle, Derbyshire (Webster 1971), although presumably, this layout, as elsewhere, was at least initially the result of military intervention. These buildings were placed roughly parallel to the road frontage, and not end-on, as for example at Godmanchester (Green 1975), perhaps suggesting the small scale of the area settled, the lack of pressure for space, or both. These structures may have occupied individual plots whose bounds have not survived, although space may well not have been provided for adjoining market garden plots or gardens. Structure 1 may have been located to take advantage of a slightly better-

drained raised plateau. Two of the buildings (Structures 1 and 3) show evidence of re-planning.

Perhaps the most dynamic change at Vincent Drive was the replacement of the military Phase A ditches by the Phase B civilian settlement. Equally, the roadside buildings were in turn replaced by the Phase C ditches framing the forts' western entrance, and by outer ditches which may have been used for land-allotment or stock control. This Phase C activity must have resulted in the displacement of the civilians to land outside another side of the fort, or even elsewhere.

### 3) Economy

In all phases the settlement economy may be dissected by analysis of the ceramic evidence and by comparison with contemporary assemblages from the fort and associated annexes. The economic lifeblood of the Phase B settlement will have been the opportunities for small-scale trade with the garrison, and, perhaps to a lesser extent, with passers-by along the nearby road network. The open-sided buildings (Structures 3, 5 and 6) and their location adjacent to the trackway leading out of the fort gate suggests they may be interpreted as booths or traders' 'market stalls'. Structure 6, which was two rooms in depth, may have additionally provided domestic accommodation to the rear, with a shop on the frontage of the building. In Phase C the settlement site became subsumed into the function of the fort itself as a stores depot, and it appears not to have been re-settled after that time.

Recent research (Leather 1998) has placed Metchley at a major road junction, with routes radiating to Droitwich, Alcester and Wall (near modern Lichfield). Despite this apparent roadside location, providing opportunities for trade with passers-by, this comparatively early abandonment demands explanation.

### 4) Comparison of pottery from the fort and settlement

As noted by Evans (above) detailed analysis and recording will enable statistical comparisons to be made between the range of forms recovered from the fort and the settlement, and a direct comparison to be made between the Phase A assemblage from the military features excavated at Vincent Drive and the contemporary assemblages from the Phase 1 fort. Comparison between the Vincent Drive assemblage and the fully quantified material from the recent 1998-9 excavations at the fort may be particularly informative.

Given its comparatively early date, study of the Phase A-C material will contribute towards the study of early military supply, highlighted as a priority by Hurst (1985) because of the less-formalised supply arrangements, and the evidence for 'polarity' in the use of resources, which derived either from the immediate locality or from the continent, with little evidence of inter-regional trade until the Flavian period. The Phase C material may be directly compared with the small group of Phase 2B ceramics from the fort interior, also associated with the military stores depot, and may provide better dating overall for this important episode in the fort's history.

## 5) Comparison of settlement and fort chronology

The fort phasing is based upon a recent re-evaluation of the extensive 1960s excavations within the fort interior (Jones forthcoming), and more recent work (Jones in preparation) which has provided quantities of stratified pottery, including samian, which are closely datable. The pottery from the settlement excavations, including material which is military in origin (Phase A features) may be directly compared with the fort Phase 1 pottery. The settlement features (Phase B) may be compared with Phases 1-2A within the fort. The most direct comparison can be made between the settlement Phase C and fort Phase 2B which were probably contemporaneous and related. The later activity within the fort and southern and eastern surrounds (Phase 3-4) post-dates the apparent abandonment of the settlement area.

The dating evidence suggests that activity at Vincent Drive was dynamic, rather than static, with Phases A to C together perhaps occupying a time-frame of between 30-50 years in total.

## 6) Settlement Phase B and fort stores depot (Phase 2B)

Vincent Drive Phase C is likely to have been both functionally and chronologically associated with the fort stores depot (Phase 2B). The main Phase C feature is the inturned ditched entrance, similar to the entrances of banjo enclosures (Fasham 1987), in theory laid out to facilitate the herding of livestock. At Metchley the arrangement may have been intended to herd livestock, or horses into the fort interior. Study of the Phase C features may contribute towards the better understanding of the largely enigmatic suite of features within the fort interior associated with the military stores depot, as well as to reinforce their overall interpretation and dating.

Neither Vincent Drive Phase C nor the Phase 2B features are likely to be associated with a civilian context, since the fort and its surrounds would have formed part of the *ager publicus* (Sommer 1984, 51), not relinquished by the army until the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The form of the ditch complexes and domestic structures (inside the fort) could suggest influences from native domestic architecture, as at Alcester (Mahany 1994, fig. 109 on). Furthermore, the evidence for clearance of the Phase 1 internal structures and construction of their Phase 2B successors within the fort interior as part of a single operation serves to support the military character of Phase 2B (Jones forthcoming).

## 7) Contribution to national fort and settlement research

Metchley is an important site for research into early Roman military deployment and related civilian settlement. The dating evidence obtained suggests that the settlement was a comparatively early, Claudian foundation, contemporary with the civilian settlement established at Alcester, but probably pre-dating the Neronian settlements at Droitwich, Wall, and Mancetter.

With the notable exception of Baginton, few early Roman military sites have been so extensively excavated in the west midlands. The unusually large and detailed investigations within the fort interior at Metchley allow some basic assumptions to be

made concerning changes in early military deployment. Notably, Metchley has provided evidence for a specialist function, that of a military supply depot (Phase 2B), a function that appears also to be represented in the Phase C evidence from the Vincent Drive excavations. The paucity of synthetic works concerning settlements should be emphasised (Sommer 1984).

The apparent 'failure' of the settlement to survive after the departure of most of the military, despite its location at or adjoining a major road junction demands explanation. The comparatively early abandonment of the settlement has meant that the early plan is largely preserved intact. Comparison between the Metchley settlement, and other roughly contemporary settlements established on a larger scale, including evidence for specialist functions, would also be worthwhile.

Clearly, study of a fort and settlement as part of a single research programme, as at Metchley, is of particular academic value.

#### 8) Evidence for settlement abandonment.

As at trial-trenching (Jones 1999a), the pottery dating suggested that the settlement area had been abandoned by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, only a single sherd of late 1<sup>st</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> century date being found at excavation. This early abandonment demands explanation, since recent excavation (Jones 1999a-c and Jones in preparation) has confirmed that the fort interior and the adjoining annexes to the south and east were in use at least in part up to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The early abandonment may be suggested to have been a reaction to a drastic reduction in the garrison, although seasonal flooding of this part of the fort surrounds may have played its part. The evidence for a late 2<sup>nd</sup> century abandonment at Metchley may be contrasted with continuing settlement at other roadside settlements such as Wall (Jones 1998), and Greensforge (Jones 1999e).

### 6.2: Updated project design

The excavation research aims may be re-focused, as follows:

- 1) To consider the evidence for purely military activity within the excavated area.
- 2) To recover a complete ground-plan of the Roman settlement, and to identify any evidence for re-planning.
- 3) To examine the economic basis of the settlement, including evidence for small-scale manufacture, trade or animal husbandry.
- 4) To study the pottery to provide dating evidence for the settlement, and also to compare the ceramic sequences from the fort and the settlement in terms of dating, and also of the respective sources of supply.
- 5) To attempt to relate the sequence of activity within the settlement to the phased sequence of events within Metchley forts.
- 6) To compare the Phase C features with the evidence for a supply depot within the fort (Phase 2B).
- 7) Contribute on a national and regional level to integrated studies of forts and associated settlements.

- 8) To consider why the settlement area was abandoned by the late 1<sup>st</sup>-early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, and to relate this abandonment to the changing, later function of Roman Metchley.

## 7.0: PUBLICATION SYNOPSIS

It is proposed to publish the report as part of a monograph in the *Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society*. The *Transactions* have agreed to publish the report in principle. The monograph will also contain reports concerning the 1998-9 excavations at Metchley Roman fort.

### *EXCAVATIONS TO THE WEST OF METCHLEY ROMAN FORTS: MILITARY ACTIVITY AND CIVILIAN SETTLEMENT, INVESTIGATIONS 1999-2001.*

The suggested layout of the report will be as follows:

#### Text

Summary (1,000w)  
Introduction, methodology, aims, background (4,000w, 1 table)  
Results and interpretation (10,000w, 2 tables, 10 plates)  
Small finds (1,000w)  
Coarse pottery (5,000w, 2 tables: plus appendix 2,000w, 2 tables)  
Pottery fine wares (2,000w, 1 table)  
Charred plant remains (1,000w, 1 table)  
Discussion (5,000w)  
Conclusion (1,000w)

*Total 32,000w; 9 tables; 10 plates*

#### Illustrations

- 1 Location
- 2 Areas investigated by trial-trenching and excavation
- 3 Phase 1 simplified plan
- 4 Phase 1 detailed plan
- 5 Phase 1 sections
- 6 Phase 2 simplified plan
- 7 Phase 2 detailed building plans
- 8 Phase 2 other detailed plans
- 9 Phase 2 sections
- 10 Phase 3 plan
- 11 Phase 3 sections
- 12 Small finds
- 13 Coarse pottery
- 14 Coarse pottery
- 15 Pottery fine wares

## 8.0: TASK LIST

<i>Task</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Initials</i>	<i>No. of days</i>
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### **STAGE A, PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS. Performance indicator, completion December 2001**

1	Site archive: update phasing	AEJ	2
2	Data entry: database	EM	1
3	Site archive: Harris matrix	AEJ	2
4	Preparation detailed site plans: drafts	AEJ	2
5	Prepare information pack for specialists	LB	1
6	Coarse pottery, preparation of fabric & form series	JE	2
7	Iron, lead and copper finds, analysis	LB	1.5
8	Stone objects, analysis	LB	1
9	Coarse pottery, recording	JE	14
10	Coarse pottery, data entry	JE	2
11	Mortaria, analysis	KH	0.5
12	Samian, analysis	SW	0.5
13	Amphorae analysis	DW	1
14	Charred plant remains, analysis and report	MC	1.5
15	Graffito, analysis and reporting	RT	-
16	Revision of phasing/ update Penmap plans	AEJ	2
17	Database revision of phasing	EM	1

### **STAGE B: REPORTING AND ILLUSTRATION. Performance indicator, completion April 2002**

18	Library research	AEJ	2
19	Iron, lead and copper finds analysis	LB	2
20	Stone objects, reporting	LB	1
21	Coarse pottery, library research	JE	1
22	Coarse pottery, reporting	JE	6
23	Mortaria, reporting	KH	0.5
24	Samian, reporting	SW	0.5
25	Amphorae, reporting	DW	1
26	Update database	EM	1
27	Preparation of finds illustrations	ND	14
28	Checking of pottery illustrations/text	JE	1
29	Checking small finds illustration	LB	0.5
30	Preparation of draft phase plans and sections	AEJ	5
31	Preparation of site description and interpretation	AEJ	3
32	Preparing site illustrations	ND	6
33	Preparation of discussion	AEJ	4

**STAGE C, COMPLETION OF FIRST DRAFT/DEPOSITION OF ARCHIVE.  
Performance indicator June 2002**

34	General edit	AEJ	2
35	Internal edit of first draft	IF	1
36	Corrections to text	AEJ	1
37	Corrections to illustrations	ND	2
38	Submission for external refereeing	AEJ	0.5
39	Final revisions to text	IF	0.5
		AEJ	0.5
40	Preparation and dispatch of archive	KM	2

**Key to initials:**

AEJ = A. Jones, Project manager, report author; EM = E. Macey, finds supervisor; L.B = L. Bevan, small finds specialist; JE = J. Evans, coarse Roman pottery; KH = K. Hartley, mortaria; SW = S. Willis, samian; RT = R. Tomlin, graffito; MC = M. Ciaraldi, charred plant remains; DW = D. Williams, amphorae; IF = I. Ferris, final editor; KM = K. Muldoon, archive supervisor.

**9.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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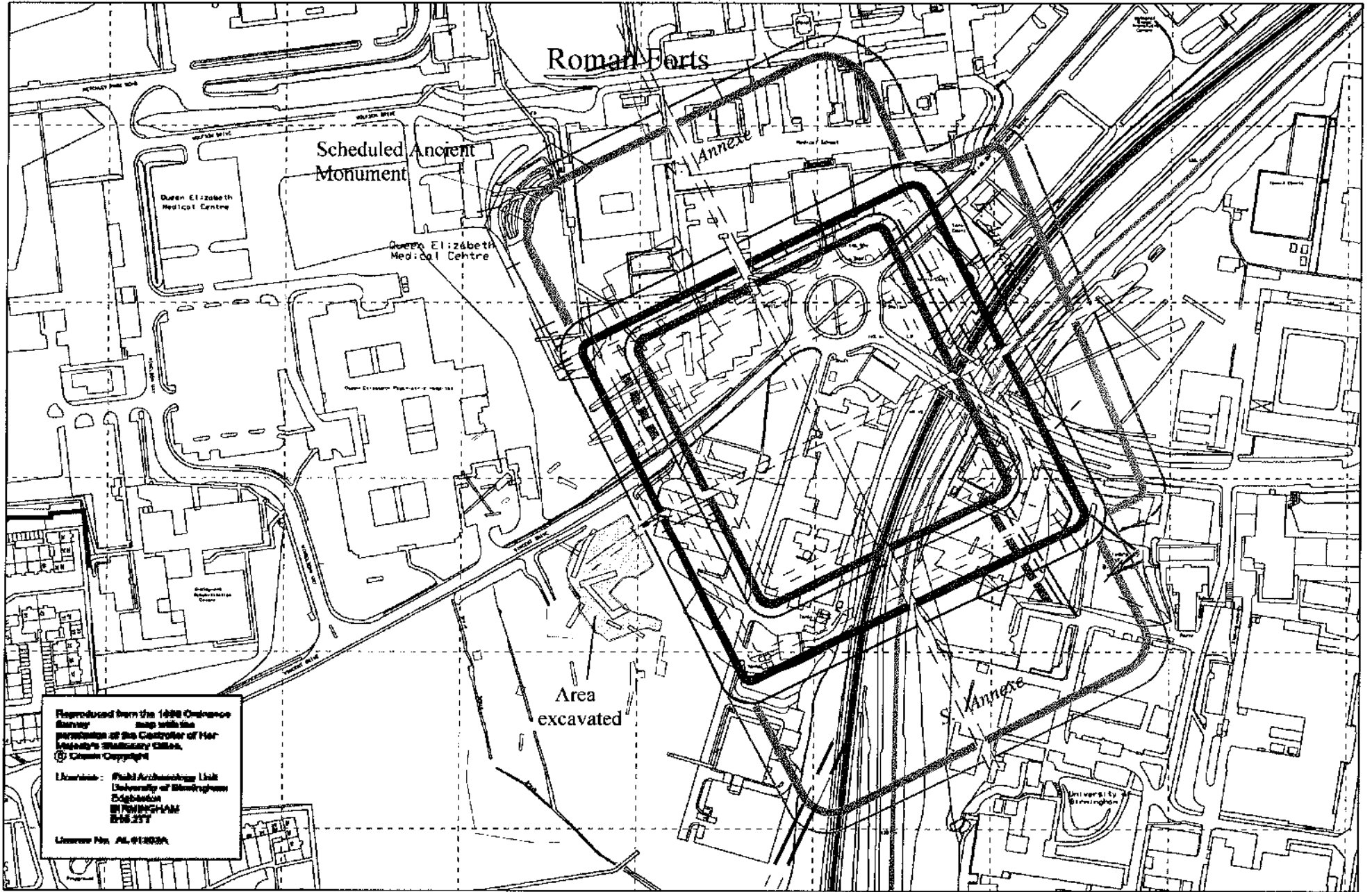


Fig. 1

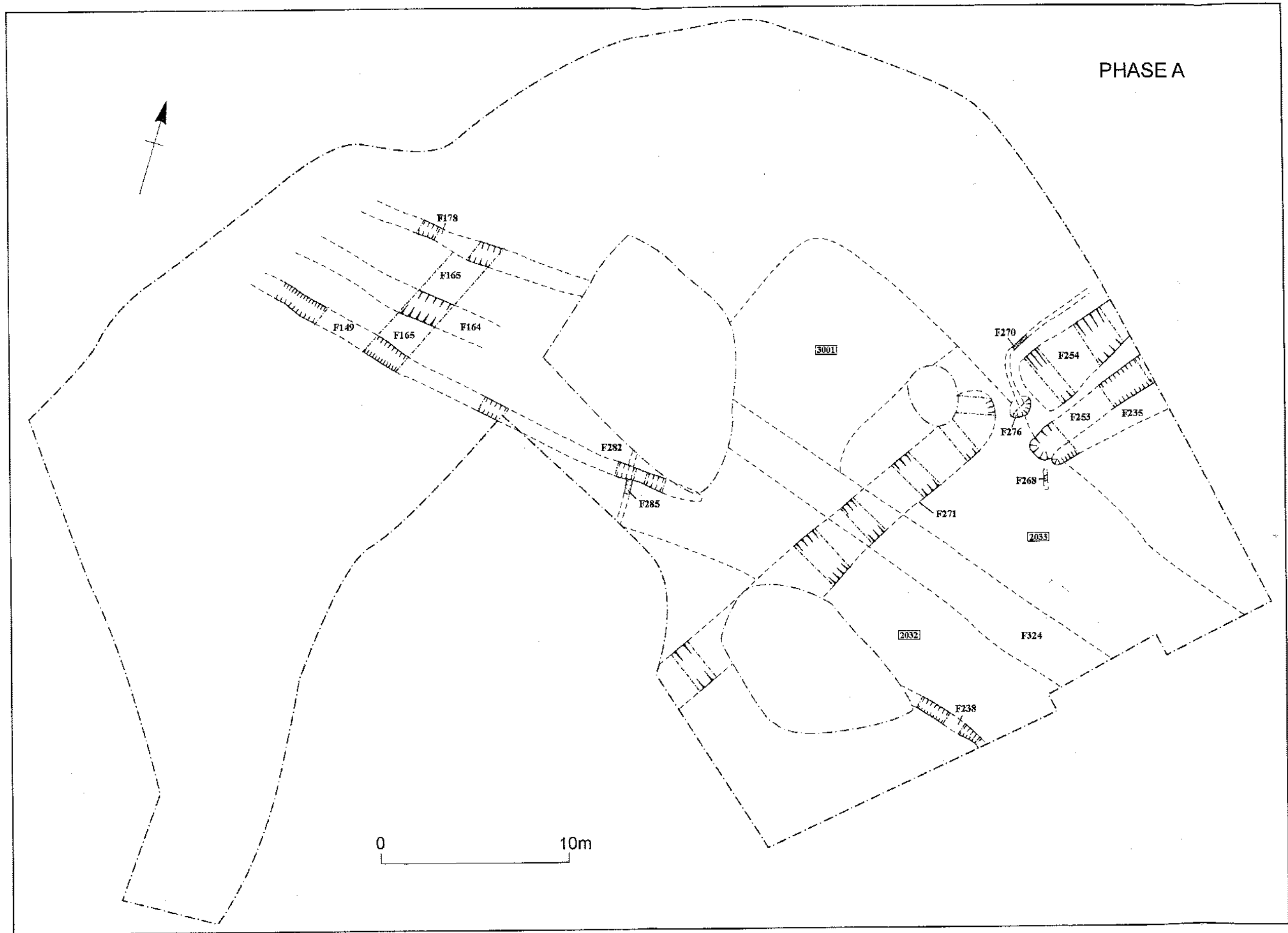


Fig.2

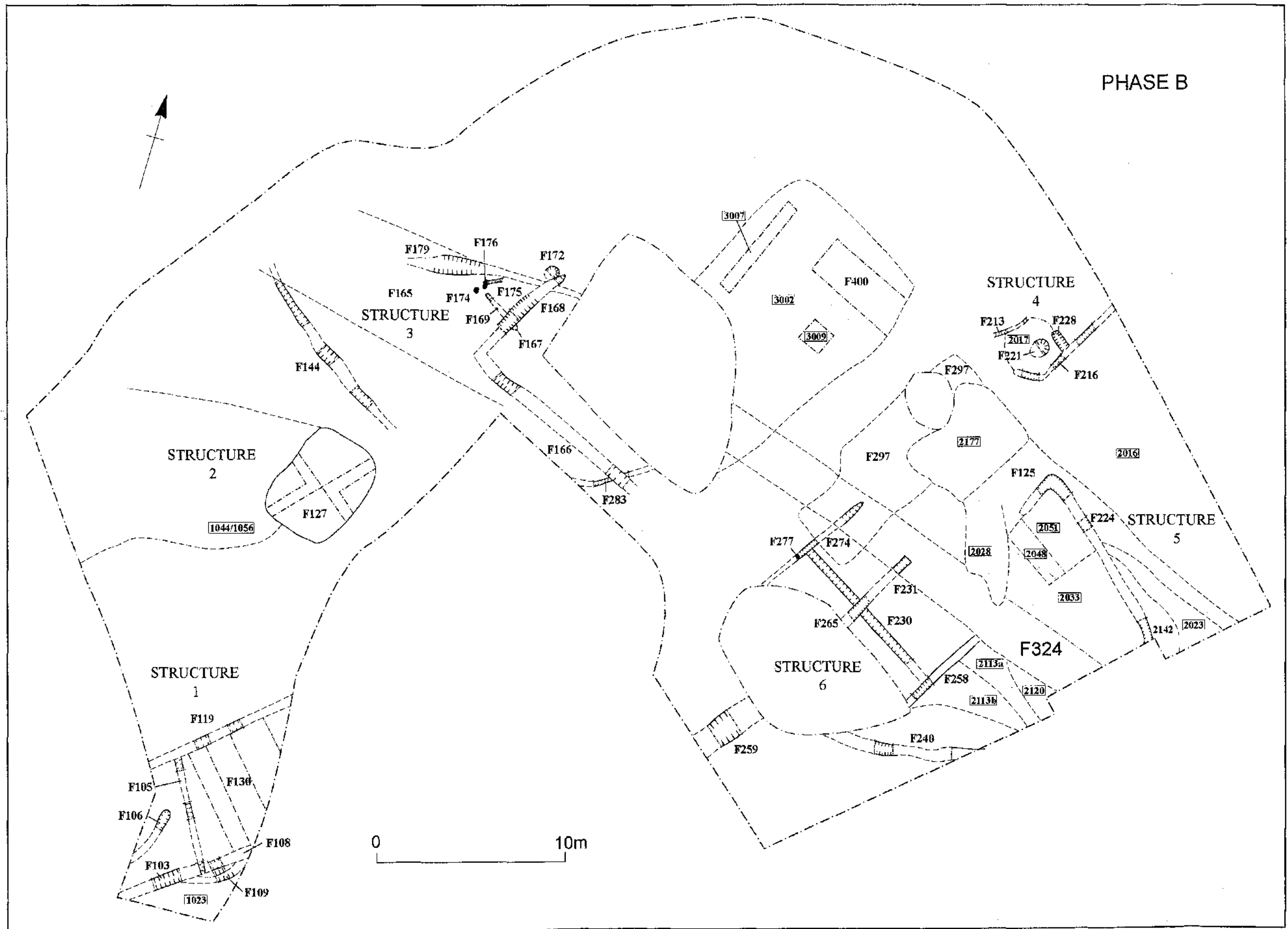


Fig.3

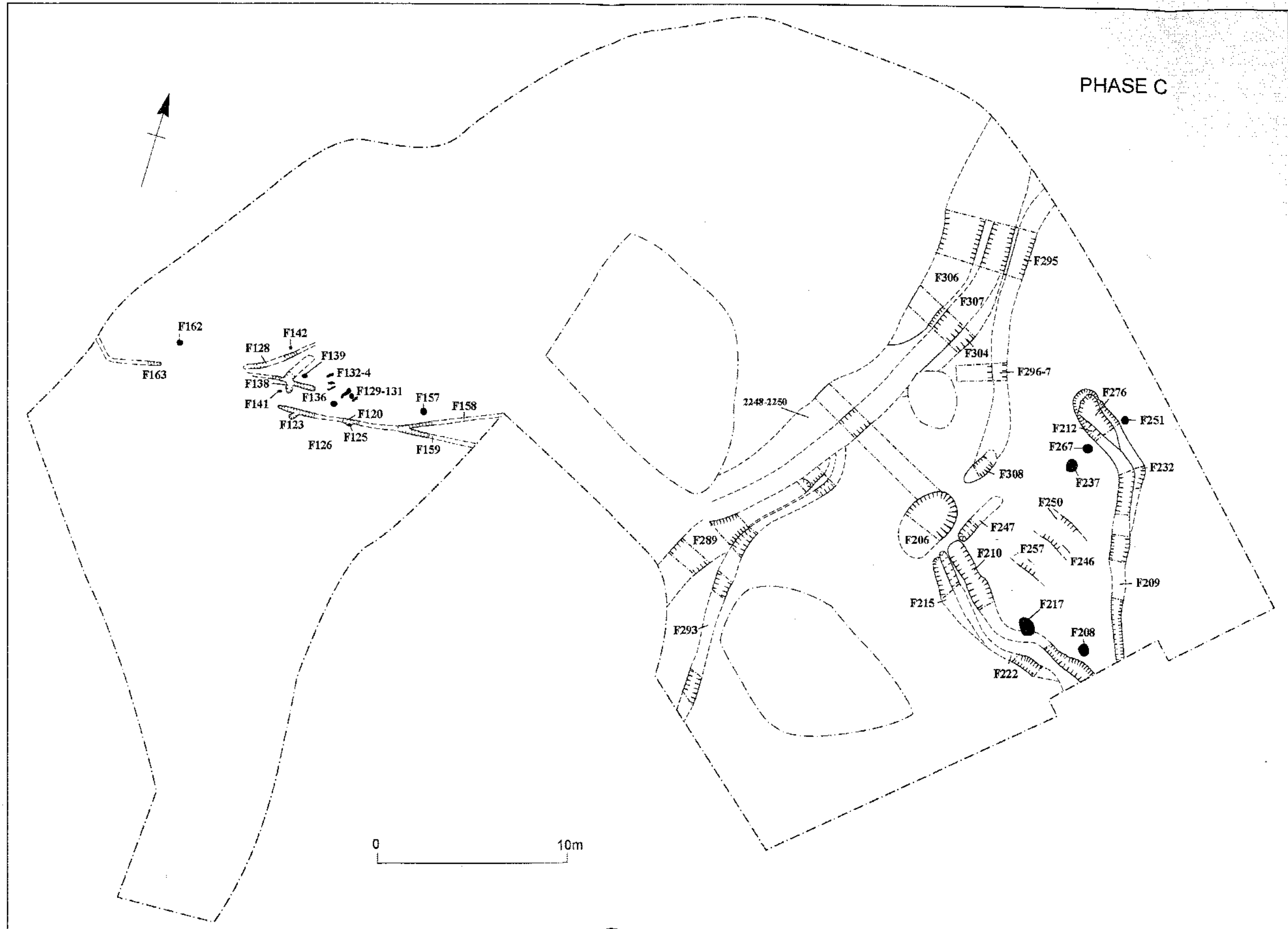


Fig.4