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Longdales Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham
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Post-Excavation Assessment

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1.0: SUMMARY

This report describes the results of trial trenching and archaeological excavation at Longdales Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham (centered on NGR. SP 05337761), and provides proposals to bring the results to full publication. Trial trenching and archaeological excavation in advance of proposals for a cemetery development was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) in August and September 2002 for Birmingham City Council. The trial trenching and excavation followed an initial archaeological evaluation earlier in 2002. The BUFAU trial trenching identified a ditched farmstead in the southeast corner of the site, and further Roman features including ditches, pits and cobbled surfaces, close to Ickniel Street in the east of the site.

The excavation was targeted at the farmstead located in the southeast corner of the zone proposed for development, which was occupied from the 2nd to the 4th century AD. At this assessment stage the sequence of activity was divided into four phases. Phase 1 consisted of three small ditches and a series of pits, largely concentrated in the south of the area excavated. Phase 2 comprised the majority of the features, including the outermost two enclosure ditches, as well as a ring gully and two stone surfaces laid out in the middle of the site. The inner enclosure ditch and an internal, rectangular stock enclosure were cut in Phase 3, possibly during to a reduction in site activity. All post-Roman features were included in Phase 4.

2.0: INTRODUCTION (Figs. 1-2)

2.1: Background

This report describes the results of trial trenching and archaeological excavation at Longdales Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham (centered on NGR SP 05337761, Fig. 1, hereafter ‘the site’). Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) was commissioned to undertake the archaeological excavation by Birmingham City Council, in accordance with the guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Department of the Environment, November 1990). The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken in advance of proposals for the layout of a cemetery. This report provides a post-excavation assessment of the archaeological data, prepared in accordance with the Management of Archaeology Projects 2 (MAP 2 - English Heritage). The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with a Design Brief prepared by the Council (Birmingham CC 2002), and a Specification prepared by BUFAU (BUFAU 2002), approved by the Planning Archaeologist, Birmingham City Council.

The site (Fig. 2) of the proposed cemetery is bounded by Longdales Road, Icknield Street and Primrose Hill. The land is currently overgrown pasture.

The proposed development site is bounded by Icknield Street to the east, which follows the line of a Roman road. Just outside the site boundary is Lilycroft Farm, thought to be of medieval origin and mentioned in a document of 13th century date. The Farm is a grade II listed building, including fabric of late 17th and early 18th century date. Previous stages of work comprise a desk-based assessment, walkover survey, and trial-trenching carried out by Worcestershire County Council Archaeological Service (Vaughan 2002) in March 2002. The trial trenching involved machine-cut trenches in Fields 1-2 and 4, which revealed ditches, shallow gullies and some pits/post holes. These features were interpreted as forming a Roman settlement focus, consisting of a farmstead to the northwest of Lilycroft Farm, with an associated ditched field system to the north. To avoid confusion the trenches dug by Worcestershire CC are prefixed with a 'W' on Fig. 2.

The initial BUFAU fieldwork consisted of trial trenching in Field 1, close to Icknield Street, to determine the extent of activity in this roadside zone, and further trial trenching to define the extent of the ditched Roman farmstead, followed by area excavation. Excavation was undertaken in two stages. The first stage investigated the northern side, and parts of the eastern and western sides, and the northern part of the farmstead interior. The second stage of excavation mainly concentrated upon the examination of the southern side of the enclosure, part of its western side, and part of its interior. The southeastern angle of the enclosure lay outside the area available for excavation. No further investigation was undertaken in Field 4 following the negative results of trial trenching there, except for part of Trench 11.

2.2: Aims

The general aims of the archaeological excavation were to identify archaeological remains, and to preserve those remains by record. The specific aims were to define the limits of the Roman settlement, and to excavate all archaeological remains associated with it.

3.0: METHODOLOGY (Fig. 2)

Initially, a total of eleven trial-trenches were excavated by BUFAU in August 2002, together with an area excavation (Fig. 2). Trenches 1-5, 9 and 11 were excavated in Field 2. Trench 11 was excavated across the boundary between Fields 2 and 4. The excavation was focused on the Roman farmstead previously identified by evaluation trial trenching. Trenches 6-8 and 10 were excavated in Field 1. Subsequent fieldwork examined the remainder of the Roman farmstead within Field 2. Within the excavated areas and the trenches the overburden was removed by a mechanical excavator working under archaeological supervision to expose the uppermost horizon of the natural subsoil. Sampling of the linear features by hand-excavation was 20% by length within the area

excavations. Pits and post-holes were examined in half-section. Finds were collected and bagged by context and samples for environmental analysis were collected from datable feature fills.

Recording employed separate running numerical sequences for contexts (four digit numbers) and features (three digit numbers, prefixed by an 'F'). Features were defined to include negative features such as ditches, pits and post-holes. Each ditch was given the same feature number, with individual hand-dug cuttings being allocated a decimal suffix (e.g. F100.01) for simplicity. Contexts include feature fills and discrete layers. During the excavation, pre-printed pro-formas for contexts and features were completed, together with digitally-surveyed and hand-drawn plans (1:50) and sections (1:20 and 1:10). Monochrome and colour slide photographs were also taken.

Subject to permission from the landowner, it is proposed to deposit the finds and paper archive in the Department of Human History, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.

4.0: RESULTS (Figs. 2-5)

The results of the BUFAU trial trenching and area excavations are described separately, with appropriate cross-reference. At this assessment stage the features identified in the trial-trenches have not been phased, except where the trenches were subsequently incorporated into an area excavation. Natural features, modern furrows and land drains are not described.

4.1: BUFAU trial trenching

All the trenches were 1.8m wide. The results are described in trench number order.

All the archaeological features were cut into the natural subsoil, a red-brown clay with islands of white-yellow sand (1002 and 2002), recorded at a depth of between 0.3-0.5m below the modern surface.

Field 2 (Trenches 1-5, Fig. 2, not illustrated in detail)

Trench 1

Trench 1 measured 30m in length and was aligned northeast-southwest. The trench was located towards the southeast corner of Field 1, at right angles to Primrose Hill. An east-west aligned ditch (F107), was cut through the natural subsoil approximately 4.5m from the southwest end of the trench. Approximately 2m to the northeast was another east-west aligned ditch (F108). Cutting the northern edge of this ditch was a small oval-shaped pit (F109), which contained 2nd-4th century AD pottery. Another east-west aligned ditch (F110), was located approximately 6m northeast of feature F108.

Trench 2

Trench 2 measured 30m in length and was aligned northeast-southwest. The trench was located towards the southwest corner of the field, at right angles to Primrose Hill and parallel to Longdales Road. A north-south aligned gully (F100) was located 2.5m from the southwest corner of the trench. This gully had been cut by a small circular post hole (F101) on its western side. Another circular post hole (F103) was located approximately 8.5m from the southwest end of the trench. No finds were retrieved from the trench.

Trench 3

Trench 3 measured 30m in length and was aligned northwest-southeast. The trench was located on the western side of the field. A shallow gully (F118) was located 7m from the northwest end of the trench. This gully was aligned east-west and contained 4th century AD pottery. A north-south aligned ditch (F120) was located 3.5m from the southeast end of the trench. Running parallel to, and 2m to the southeast of, feature F120 was a larger ditch (F121).

Trench 4

Trench 4, aligned northeast-southwest, measured 20m in length. It was located to the northeast of the area later excavated. A small, shallow pit (F123) was located 1m from the southern end of the trench and was sub-circular in plan. A further 5m southwest was another small circular pit (F124). A circular post hole (F127) was located 7m from the northern end of the trench and an east-west aligned gully was located 2.5m further northeast. No finds were retrieved from the trench.

Trench 5 (Plate 1)

Trench 5 measured 20m in length, and was located to the north of the area later excavated. The trench was aligned north-south. No archaeological features or finds were recorded within the trench.

Trench 9

Trench 9 measured 20m in length and was aligned north-south. This trench was located in the southeast corner of Field 1. A small north-south aligned ditch (F137) was located at the south of the trench. This ditch was cut by a recent field boundary (F136). Another ditch (F138), orientated east-west, was excavated at the northern end of the trench.

Trench 11

Trench 11 measured 50m in length and was aligned northwest-southeast, extending into Field 4. The terminal of a curvilinear gully (F140) was excavated at the northwest end of the trench. This gully contained a sherd of 2nd-4th century pottery. An 11m wide stone yard surface (F141) was located 10m from the northwest end of the trench. Numerous

sherds of 2nd-4th century AD pottery were recovered from both above and within the surface. A circular posthole (F142) was excavated 1.5m to the southeast of feature F141, and a north-south aligned gully (F143) was located to the southeast. A large north-south orientated ditch was excavated a further 2m southeast of feature F143.

Field 1 (Trenches 6-8, 10, not illustrated in detail)

Trench 6

Trench 6 measured 50m in length and was aligned northeast-southwest. A curvilinear ditch (F214) was located 4m from the southwest end of the trench and contained 2nd-4th century AD Roman pottery. A north-south ditch (F215) was excavated approximately 10m to the northeast of feature F214.

Trench 7

Trench 7 measured 50m in length and was aligned northeast-southwest. An east-west aligned ditch (F207) was located 21m from the northeastern end of the trench. Ten metres to the northeast of feature F207 was a circular post hole (F208), containing 2nd-4th century AD pottery. Another circular post hole (F209) was excavated 2m to the northeast. Two further post holes (F211 and F212), both circular in plan, were located 3m to the northwest of feature F209. An east-west aligned ditch (F213) was also excavated at the northeast end of the trench.

Trench 8

Trench 8 measured 60m in length and was aligned northeast-southwest, with the northern end located 10m from Icknield Street. A ditch (F200) was excavated 6m from the southwest end of the trench, running on an east-west alignment. A north-south aligned ditch (F201) was excavated 6m to the northeast of feature F200. This ditch produced 2nd-4th century AD pottery.

Trench 10 (Plate 2)

Trench 10 totalled 40m in length, and was L-shaped in plan. A cobbled surface (F218) was revealed along the whole of the north-south aligned part of the trench, and along part of the east-west aligned trench.

All trenches

The subsoil and the backfilled features were sealed by a mixed b-horizon (1001 and 2001), present in all trial trenches, comprising a reddish brown silty-clay, between 0.1m and 0.2m deep. The topsoil (1000 and 2000) was a dark brown sand-silt-clay, measuring between 0.2m and 0.3m deep.

Interpretation

The ditches in Trenches 1, 3, 9 and 11 are sections of the enclosure ditches surrounding the farmstead and were more fully recorded within the area excavation (see below). Most of the other features in Field 2 are the remains of a Roman field system. The results from Field 1 suggest Roman roadside activity across the field, and a separate focus of activity centered on Trench 6. The pottery recovered from Trenches 6, 7 and 8 comprised mainly large, unabraded sherds, suggesting *in situ* settlement.

4.2 Excavation (Figs. 3-5)

4.2.1 Phasing

The results from the area excavation have been provisionally divided into four phases, with all post-Roman deposits grouped into Phase 4. Phasing the site was difficult as all the pottery from the site is dated in relatively broad ranges from between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD. Few feature intersections were recorded.

The three enclosures are referred to in the text as the inner, middle and outer enclosures. Full descriptions are provided in Appendix 1-Appendix 4. All the Roman features were cut into the natural subsoil, a red-brown clay with patches of white-yellow sand (1002 and 3002), recorded at a depth of between 0.3-0.5m below the modern surface.

Phase 1

A line of stake holes (F166) ran northeast-southwest in the northern half of the area excavated, and may have been truncated by a roughly east-west aligned ditch (F133, F150 and F305) which in turn was cut by later enclosure ditches. Sherds of 2nd-4th century AD pottery were retrieved from ditch section F305.01. Two circular postholes (F308 and F311) were cut through the southern edge of this ditch, and another posthole (F337) was located directly to the north of ditch F305. Two small postholes (F341-2), were located approximately 3m to the south, and could have been associated with this ditch. A large stone filled pit (F135) was located 15m south of this ditch. The pit contained numerous heat shattered stones, although the absence of charcoal would suggest that the stones may not have been burnt *in situ*.

A sub-circular pit (F372) was cut through the natural subsoil on the western side of the excavated area. Another, similar pit (F374) was excavated approximately 22m north of F372. Another pit (F389), oval in plan, was located in the south of the area excavated, and was also truncated by a later ditch. To the east of feature F389 was a small gully (F386), cut by two later features. A further 6m to the east was a sub-circular pit (F384), also cut by a later enclosure ditch. A narrow curvilinear ditch (F380), located towards the southwest corner of the site. This ditch had three circular post holes (F381, F382 and F383) cut through the natural subsoil at its base. A shallower curvilinear ditch (F391) which could have defined the circumference of a circular building, was excavated to the west.

Phase 2

The majority of the features were assigned to this phase. A rectangular enclosure, with its main axis aligned north-south, defined by three ditches, was the main Phase 2 features found. No evidence of any associated banks survived as an upstanding feature. Each of these enclosures is described in turn, in the order from outermost to innermost. The outer enclosure ditch measured approximately 70m north-south and 60m east-west. Along its perimeter, the northern ditch was the deepest (0.4m-0.6m) and widest feature (0.8m-1.3m, F300, F146, F306). In the northwest corner, a narrow entry-gap was located just to the south of the return. The western side of this enclosure (F302 and F375) was not fully exposed but appeared to be both shallower (0.25m-0.45m) and narrower (0.9m-1m) than the ditches cut along the other three sides. The southern limit of the ditch along this side of the enclosure was cut flush with the southern side of the middle enclosure (F378, see below). The southern side of the outer enclosure (F363) was only partially uncovered. The western terminal of this side of the enclosure was 8m inside the projected line of the western side of the outer enclosure, possibly defining an entry-gap. The other side could have been formed by the middle enclosure ditch. The southern enclosure ditch (F363) was a similar size to the western arm of the outer enclosure, although it became much shallower towards its western end (0.15m). The ditches were mostly V-shaped in profile. Pottery was only retrieved from three sections on the northern side (F300.06, F302.01 and F306.01). The eastern side of the outer enclosure lay wholly outside the area excavated.

The middle enclosure (Plates 6 and 7) measured approximately 65m north-south and 55m east-west. It was cut approximately 3m inside the outer enclosure and followed a similar arrangement. The north side of the middle enclosure (F301 and F132) was deeper (0.55m-0.65m) and wider (1.35m-1.9m) than the corresponding section of the outer enclosure ditch. The northwest corner of the middle enclosure was defined by a rounded ditch (F303). The western side of this enclosure (F121 and F338) was slightly broader along part of its perimeter (maximum of 0.7m deep and 2.1m wide). The southern end of the western side of this enclosure terminated just inside the southern ditch of this enclosure (F378). The southern side of the enclosure (F378 and F376) was interrupted by an entry-gap, located approximately 15m from the southwest corner of the middle enclosure, and 10m to the east of the western terminal of the outer enclosure along the southern side, possibly defining an offset entry-gap. Ditches F376 and F378 were narrower (0.7m-1m) and shallower (0.3m-0.55m), particularly at their eastern ends. The eastern side (F144) of the middle enclosure was only partially uncovered. The middle enclosure ditch was mostly cut to a V-shaped profile. Pottery was retrieved from within the basal fills of most hand-dug ditch sections.

The inner enclosure (Plate 8) measured 50m north-south and 40m east-west and was located approximately 8m inside the middle enclosure. The northern inner enclosure ditch (F130 and F325) cut through Phase 1 ditch F133. The northwestern corner of this enclosure formed a right angle in plan (F130 and F356). The southern terminus of the western side of this enclosure was cut just inside the line of the southern side of the inner

enclosure (F349). The eastern side of the enclosure (F158) was only partially located. No entry-gap was found around the perimeter of the inner enclosure, although it may have been located outside the area excavated. The inner ditch contained considerably more pottery within its fills, and was stone filled, especially on the west and eastern sides, probably as a result of the plough truncation of adjoining stone surfaces. The increase in quantity of pottery suggests that domestic activity was taking place within this enclosure. The inner enclosure ditches were generally smaller (0.8m wide, 0.4m deep) and were cut to U-shaped profiles.

On the western side of the inner enclosure was a rectangular sub-enclosure, defined by gullies. The sub-enclosure consisted of a small gully (F361) on the northern side, two gullies on the western side (F360 and F368) separated by an entry-gap defined on either side of a further short gully (F366). Another shallow gully (F373) formed the southern side of the sub-enclosure. The western side was traced for a distance of approximately 3.5m to the north of the northwestern angle of the sub-enclosure. The eastern side of the sub-enclosure was formed by the western side of the inner enclosure. These gullies were all very shallow (a maximum of 0.15m deep) and devoid of artifacts. Two offset ditches in the south of the sub-enclosure (F373, F349) may have defined an entrance. Within the sub-enclosure was a small pit (F307) containing an almost complete pot, probably a small storage jar.

Another east-west aligned gully (F318) appeared to divide the inner enclosure off-centre. South of feature F318 was a small sub-rectangular stone surface (F340), measuring 5m east-west and 3m north-south, which had a small posthole (F390), cut through it. To the northeast was a much larger, irregular, stone surface (F141, Plate 9), measuring 25m east-west and 20m north-south. This had a large patch of burning (1069) towards the southeast corner. Several postholes were cut around the stone surface, two to the north (F151 and F152), three to the west (F321, F322 and F345) and one to the east (F148). A significant amount of pottery was retrieved from the two surfaces, and in particular the large surface, from whose surface sherds of Samian and mortaria were recovered.

North of feature F141 three beam slots were revealed. Two were on a north-south alignment (F311 and F320) with an east-west aligned beam slot (F310) crossing feature F311. These were shallow, truncated features belonging to a building whose full ground plan had not survived.

The other significant structure within the inner enclosure was a ring gully (F318), approximately 10m in diameter, located towards the eastern side of the enclosure. The ring gully was shallow (0.05m-0.15m) in most places and contained no dateable finds. Only the southern half of the structure was identified, the northern half was probably truncated. A line of three substantial postholes (F344, F339 and F333) ran across the middle of the ring gully on a north-south alignment, possibly forming a dividing wall. Feature F333 contained a single sherd of 2nd-4th century pottery. Two small pits (F331 and F362) were located in the centre of the structure, and a further pit (F348) was cut towards its western edge. Three small circular pits were located just outside the ring gully, one (F355) 5m southeast, and two (F161 and F162) approximately 5m to the

northwest. A sub-circular hearth (F134) was located approximately 5m north of the ring gully, containing a considerable amount of burnt material, but no finds.

Phase 3

Very few features were allocated to this phase. It is probable that at least the enclosure ditches were still in use within this phase, with evidence for recutting of the enclosure ditches towards the northwestern corner of the middle enclosure (F303, not illustrated) and the inner enclosure (F131, F312, not illustrated). An S-shaped gully (F153) was cut across the backfilled inner enclosure ditch towards its northwest corner. A similarly irregularly-shaped gully (F324, F319) was located south of the ring gully, cutting through the smaller stone surface (F340). In the same area, other gullies (F316, F327 and F323) were allocated to this phase, on the basis of their similarity with feature F324. A large pit (F367) was also cut through the backfilled inner enclosure ditch towards its southwest corner. This was the largest pit on site and was likely to have been a watering hole for stock, or even a refuse pit. Three small pits (F385, F387 and F388) were cut through the outer enclosure ditch near the offset entry-gap, possibly to re-define the entrance arrangement, although these could even represent a ceremonial 'closure' of the enclosure.

Phase 4

A field boundary (F164) was located on the eastern edge of the site, following the same alignment as middle enclosure ditch F144. Although Roman pottery was retrieved from the feature, the fill suggested that it could have been finally backfilled significantly later. Small charcoal filled features were located in towards the western part of the site (F313, F328, F329), all cut through the 'b'-horizon.

Unphased features

A significant number of features could not be confidently phased at this assessment stage, due to a lack of dating evidence, stratigraphic relationships and/or associated features. These unphased included a series of gullies towards the northwest of the inner enclosure (F139, F147, F148, F165), small pits on the western side of the area excavated (F149 and F156) and a series of pits and postholes in the southern half of the area excavated (F330, F334, F335, F336, F343, F348, F350, F351, F353, F354, F357, F358, F359, F364 and F377). Some of the pits in may have been natural in origin.

Overlying the natural subsoil was a mixed clay 'b' horizon, 0.1-0.2m thick, overlain by a silty clay topsoil, 0.1-0.3m thick.

4.22: Discussion

The Phase 1 features were largely concentrated in the south of the area excavated, and included pits, small ditches and fence-lines belonging to an unenclosed farmstead. It is probable that these were cut directly before the enclosures were constructed, with the pits

relating to entranceways perhaps associated with fencelines which had not themselves survived.

The most important characteristic of Phase 2 are the three concentric enclosure ditches, each forming a rectangle. Such a complex system of encircling ditches is perhaps unexpected in the context of a farmstead enclosure. Entry-gaps retained in the ditches suggest a function associated with livestock, although, unfortunately no Phase 1-3 animal bone was recovered, because of the soil conditions. An inner sub-enclosure, presumably for stock was formed just to the west of the inner enclosure, also with an entry-gap. Interestingly, the eastern side of the middle enclosure was on the same line as a later field boundary, parallel to the present field boundary, and it is possible that the present-day field systems follow much of the Roman pattern. Except for the sub-enclosure on the western side of the inner enclosure, and features associated with entry-gaps, there were no features cut between the inner and outer enclosures, and part of this area may have been occupied by earth banks. The inner enclosure defined the area occupied, which contained traces of buildings, stone surfaces, pits and other features. The stone surfaces were extensive, and could have formed yards, or even the platforms for timber-framed buildings laid on ground-fast beams, leaving no trace at excavation. The postholes surrounding the stone surfaces could represent parts of fences, or temporary timber structures. Phase 3 features were largely dominated by a series of gullies. These could have been cut to provide drainage away from the buildings, and they are all concentrated within the inner enclosure.

The size of the area enclosed by the Phase 2 enclosures is notable, as is the complexity of the triple-ditched arrangement. It is hoped that further research, and detailed analysis of the pottery will contribute towards an understanding of the site, in particular its status in the hierarchy of rural settlements in the west midlands, and its function.

No medieval pottery was recovered from the fieldwork.

5.0: ASSESSMENTS

5.1: Quantifications

Tables 1-2 quantify the evaluation and excavation archive.

TABLE 1: Quantification of excavation paper archive

<i>Record</i>	<i>WCC evaluation</i>	<i>BUFAU trial trenching and excavation</i>
Contexts	53	310
Features	-	255
Assemblage summaries		255
Colour slide	72	421
Black and white prints	-	324
Drawings	5	230
Env. sample record files		1
Survey file	-	1

TABLE 2: Quantification of excavation finds archive

<i>Material type</i>	<i>Quantity</i>
Post medieval ceramic tile	55
Post medieval ceramic brick	10
Fired clay/daub	5
Coarse Romano-British pottery	1520
Samian	27
Mortaria	13
Post-medieval pottery	31
Stone object	1
Lead object	1
Shale object	1

(Including material from WCC evaluation)

5.2: Factual data and statement of potential

5.2.1: Stratigraphy by Josh Williams

As described above, the features and deposits recorded on site can be divided into four phases. Phases 1-3 from the Roman period (2nd-4th century AD) and Phase 4 which is post-Roman. The majority of these features and deposits have been dated, either by chronologically-diagnostic artifacts recovered from their fills, or by the principles of archaeological stratigraphy. Further analysis and definition of the stratigraphic sequence will contribute to the research aims stated in Section 2.2 above, and updated in Section 6.2 below.

5.2.2: Small finds by Lynne Bevan

The majority of the small finds appeared to be of post-medieval or recent date. An amorphous fragment of lead (1069) appears to have resulted from on-site leadworking. The only items worthy of further research were: a fragmentary shale bracelet (1069), a possible whetstone (3138), a complete stone spindlewhorl and a fragment from a fired clay loomweight (both from 3114), all deriving from Phase 1-3 contexts. These items require cataloguing and a literature search for parallels.

5.2.3: Romano-British Pottery by Annette Hancocks

Quantity

A total of 1560 sherds (38, 548g) of pottery of Romano-British date were recovered from both evaluations and the excavation. This material derived from 98 different contexts. The majority of these were securely defined and well-stratified. The remainder of the pottery was of post-medieval date and was considered intrusive, deriving principally from drainage cuts. The overall Romano-British assemblage dates to the 2nd-4th century AD, with a substantial element of the ceramics being of late 3rd-4th century date. The majority of the samian was of Central Gaulish origin and dated AD 120-200 and would

appear to be residual (Willis 2003) from Phase 1 contexts. All the material was hand collected, with a substantial amount, over 2kg in weight, recovered from layer 1069.

Range and variety

Very little Romano-British pottery of this date and quantity has been recovered from small-scale rural settlements in the west midlands, although recent discoveries have been made along the route of the M6 Toll, at Wall (Site 12), Shenstone (Site 15), Langley Mill (Site 29), and Wishaw (Site 19). The range and variety of ceramics recognised during the assessment of the material from Longdales Road, will add to, and significantly extend, the current corpus of dated Roman pottery into the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, extending the ceramic sequence from the Metchley forts, Birmingham. The assemblage comprised Severn Valley ware, Black Burnished Ware 1, Malvernian ware, samian and mortaria (Table 2). Diagnostic forms recognised included tankards, cooking pots, wide-mouthed jars, 'dog dishes' and a single 'fish dish'. The ceramics are badly weathered and poorly abraded as a direct result of the acidic soil conditions. All the samian has its surface removed and all of the coarsewares have also suffered.

Statement of potential

The pottery is the principal source of dating evidence for the site, which will enable a relative chronology to be applied to the stratigraphic sequence. Ceramic supply to the site, along with the social networks and the cultural identity of the site inhabitants, will also be addressed through the detailed analysis of fabric, form and function. This may in turn provide evidence for the status of the settlement and its economic, social and cultural position at local, regional and national levels. This assemblage of over 1500 sherds represents an ideal opportunity to compare and contrast the data with the earlier Roman pottery from recent work at Metchley Roman fort (Jones 2002). The Roman assemblage from the nearby site of Parsons Hill (in Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery) will also be scanned for comparative material. The pottery study will be useful towards determining the character and nature of the site. The assemblage is of both local and regional significance. It ties in well with the national research framework for the study of Romano-British pottery which identifies pottery from rural sites as being 'highly significant for our understanding of the Romano-British economy and 'Romanization'' (Willis 1997, 15).

Recommendations

The pottery will be quantified by sherd count, weight (g) and minimum number of rims and Eves. The material will be fully catalogued by fabric and identified by phase for publication. The material will be cross-referenced to the Metchley type fabric series, where relevant and a publication report produced. It is recommended that both the samian and mortaria should be reported on separately by the appropriate specialist.

Storage and curation

The archive comprises two boxes of finds material, the majority of which consist of badly weathered ceramics of 2nd-4th century date. There is neither an immediate or long-term storage problem.

5.2.4: Charred plant remains by Marina Ciaraldi

Soil samples were collected from datable features of various nature, including pits, ditches and layers. The plant remains recovered from the samples are here assessed in order to understand:

- the potential of the samples in the reconstruction of human activities on site, particularly those related to agricultural practices
- the potential for the reconstruction of the site palaeoenvironment.

Methodology

The samples were processed by manual flotation. Due to the clayey nature of the soil matrix, the samples had to be soaked in a solution of sodium hydrogen carbonate prior to processing. The flots (light fraction) was recovered on a 0.5 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. Plant remains were identified with the help of the author's reference collection.

Statement of potential

None of the samples assessed produced charred seeds apart from the sample from feature F214/2017 (Table 3), from which a cereal grain and a few glume basis of spelt (*Triticum spelta* L.) were recovered. Some of the samples contained large quantities of charcoal.

Given the poor preservation of the botanical remains no further work is recommended on the samples. It will be sufficient to mention the result of this assessment in the final report.

TABLE 3: List of samples assessed for plant remains

<i>Feature/ Context</i>	<i>Vol. of sample (L.)</i>	<i>Type of feature</i>	<i>Vol. of flot (ml.)</i>	<i>% scanned</i>	<i>Notes</i>
F201/2004	5	Ditch	10	100%	Modern rootlets
F214/2017	10	Ditch	30	100%	1 cereal grain, a few glume basis of spelt (<i>Triticum spelta</i> L.) and 1 <i>Rumex</i> sp. (dock). Largish pieces of charcoal
F134/1049	5	Hearth	25	100%	Very minute fragments of charcoal (grass-like)
F131.07/1076	5	Gully	10	100%	Modern rootlets
F139/1066	10	Gully	10	100%	Modern rootlets
F153.04/1102	5	Gully	30	100%	1 barley (<i>Hordeum vulgare</i> L.). Largish pieces of charcoal
F150.02/1100	5	Ditch	10	100%	Modern rootlets
F158.02/1101	5	Ditch	10	100%	Modern rootlets
F141/1108	5	Stone surface	150	100%	Lots of charcoal, some are large pieces
F301.01/3006	10	Ditch	100	50%	Modern rootlets
F306/3001	10	Subsoil	10	100%	Modern rootlets
F310/3032	10	Beam slot	100	100%	Modern rootlets. Some charcoal
F307/3029	5	Post hole	20	100%	Modern rootlets. Elder seeds (2) modern or waterlogged
F325.01/3060	10	Ditch	10	100%	Modern rootlets
F331/3074	10	Pit	10	100%	Modern rootlets
F333/3090	5	Pit	20	100%	Modern rootlets. Modern or waterlogged buttercup seed (<i>Ranunculus acris/repens</i>) (1)
F338.04/3127	10	Ditch	150	100%	Modern or waterlogged buttercup seed (<i>Ranunculus acris/repens</i>) (2)
F367/3133	10	Pit	20	100%	Modern or waterlogged buttercup (<i>Ranunculus acris/repens</i>) (2) and thistle (1) seeds (<i>Cirsium/Carduus</i>)
F307/3134	5	Pit	200	50%	Large quantity of charcoal
F367/3135	10	Pit	20	100%	Modern or waterlogged buttercup seed (<i>Ranunculus acris/repens</i>) (2)
F376.03/3154	10	Ditch	20	100%	Modern or waterlogged buttercup seed (<i>Ranunculus acris/repens</i>) (1)
F340/3058	5	Surface	100	50%	Large quantity of charcoal

Numbers in parenthesis indicate roughly the seed number. The dimension of the flot (expressed in ml) and the percentage of the flot scanned are indicated in the notes

6.0: UPDATED PROJECT DESIGN

6.1: General

This section of the assessment defines the main research themes.

- Chronology

For the purposes of this assessment, the Roman features have been divided into three phases. Phase 1 represents the first activity on site, within an unenclosed enclosure. Phase 2 forms the main floruit of activity, including the three ditched enclosures, internal buildings and other features. Phase 3 represents the final Roman occupation of the site. Pottery dating indicates that the site was occupied in the range from the 2nd to the 4th century AD, with a possible floruit in the 3rd and 4th century. Further analysis of the pottery, and the stratigraphy will hopefully refine the sequence and dating.

- Site function and morphology: changes

Phase 1 occupation may have been unenclosed, or within an area defined by a wooden fence. Phase 2 is represented by the cutting of the concentric enclosures, and associated internal features, some of which may have continued in use in Phase 3. The size and layout of the enclosures raise questions about their function, suggested to be associated with livestock farming.

- Site economy and function

Comparison with other similar enclosures is important, not least because animal bone did not survive from Phase 1-3 deposits at Longdales Road. Thus, the comparative enclosure layout data is the only possible evidence for determining site function.

- Relate enclosure and peripheral features

An attempt should be made to relate the peripheral Roman field boundaries with the enclosures, based on their respective alignments, and stratigraphic relationships. Little dating evidence was available from trial trenching. The relationship between Roman field boundaries and the enclosure is of particular importance because of the suggestion that the modern field pattern has fossilised elements at least of the Roman pattern of land-division.

- Relationship with hierarchy of Roman rural sites

The size, complexity and arrangement of the enclosures, together with its near-roadside location could suggest that the site formed a more important function than purely a site associated with livestock farming. Comparison of excavated parallels will be important to explore this possibility. The complexity of the ditch arrangement may reflect considerations of status and prestige.

- Understanding of later Roman rural economy

Comparatively few Roman enclosures have been as extensively excavated in the midlands. The Longdales Road enclosures should be set in the midlands context, as well the broader context.

6.2: List of updated aims

- 1) To define the chronology of the enclosures, internal and external features.
- 2) To provide an understanding of the changes in site morphology and function.
- 3) To attempt to define the site economy and function, including a review of comparative enclosure complexes.
- 4) To attempt to relate the enclosure with the surrounding Roman features.
- 5) To relate the enclosure site to the hierarchy of Roman rural settlements in the midlands and in the surrounding region.
- 6) To consider how the site contributes towards an understanding of the later Roman rural economy.

7.0: PUBLICATION SYNOPSIS

The suggested layout of the report is as follows:

Text

Summary (300w)

Introduction, aims and methodology, archaeological setting (1500w, 2 figures)

Results and interpretation (5000w, 2 tables, 7 figures, 5 plates)

Roman pottery (4000w, 2 tables, 1 figure)

Summary of the other finds (250w)

Discussion (3000w)

Conclusion (500w)

Total 14550w, 4 tables, 5 plates, 10 figures

Figures

- 1 Site location
- 2 Areas investigated
- 3 Phase 1 plan
- 4 Phase 1 sections
- 5 Phase 2 plan
- 6 Phase 2 sections
- 7 Phase 3 plan
- 8 Phase 3 sections

- 9 Trench plans and sections
- 10 Small finds (part page)
- 11 Pottery

8.0: TASK LIST

STAGE A, PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS. Performance indicator, completion 1/4/2003

1	Project management	AEJ	1
2	Site archive/update phasing/plans	JW	1
3	Data entry	EM	0.5
4	Prepare detailed site plans/sections: roughs	JW	0.5
5	Roman pottery recording	AH	8
6	Summary of other finds	LB	0.25
7	Update database/finds management	AH	0.25

STAGE B, REPORTING AND ILLUSTRATION. Performance indicator, completion 30/5/2003

8	Project management	AEJ	1
9	Prepare plans and sections	ND	3
10	Prepare pottery illustrations	ND	3
11	Library research	JW	1
12	Roman pottery reporting/discussion	AH	7
13	Draft new stratigraphic text	JW	2
14	Draft discussion	JW	3
15	Mount illustrations/corrections	ND	1

STAGE C, COMPLETION OF FIRST DRAFT. Performance indicator, completion 30/7/2003

16	Project management	AEJ	1
17	First edit	AEJ	1
18	Corrections to text	JW	0.5
19	Prepare archive	KM	1
20	Liaison with referees/final corrections	AEJ	0.5
20	Deposit archive	KM	1

KEY: AEJ, A. Jones, Project Manager/report editor; JW, J. Williams, report author; L. Bevan, author, small finds summaries; EM, E. Macey, Finds Supervisor; AH, A. Hancocks, author, specialist pottery report; KM, K. Muldoon, archive and records officer.

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The illustrations were prepared by Nigel Dodds and John Halsted. The text was edited by Alex Jones, who also managed the project for BUFAU.

The evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire County Council Archaeological Service for the same sponsors.

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APPENDIX 1: Details of outer enclosure ditch

<i>Area</i>	<i>Feature no.</i>	<i>Context no.</i>	<i>Alignment</i>	<i>Shape in profile</i>	<i>Max width (m)</i>	<i>Max depth (m)</i>	<i>Description of fill</i>
A	F146	1077	E-W	V-shaped	0.8	0.4	Mid brown silty clay
D	F300.01	3003	E-W	V-shaped	0.98	0.25	Light grey brown clay
D	F300.02	3005	E-W	V-shaped	0.84	0.5	Grey clay
D	F300.03	3004	E-W	V-shaped	1.14	0.6	Light grey silty clay
D	F300.04	3008	E-W	V-shaped	1.2	0.65	Light grey brown clay
D	F300.05	3010	E-W	V-shaped	0.9	0.43	Grey clay
D	F300.06	3007	E-W	V-shaped	1.1	0.66	Light grey clay
D	F300.07	3012	E-W	V-shaped	1.06	0.6	Light grey clay
E	F302.01	3017 3015 3014	N-S	V-shaped	0.4	0.45	Light brown sandy clay Blue-grey silty clay Red silty clay
E	F302.02	3023	N-S	V-shaped	1.04	0.32	Light grey clay
E	F302.03	3025	N-S	V-shaped	0.9	0.3	Light grey brown clay
E	F306.01	3027	E-W	V-shaped	1.1	0.6	Light red grey clay
E	F306.02	3034 3035 3036	E-W	V-shaped	1.3	0.6	Light grey brown clay Blue grey clay Light grey silty sand
F	F375.01	3151	N-S	V-shaped	0.9	0.4	Mid brown silty clay
F	F375.02	3187	N-S	V-shaped	1	0.25	Light grey brown clay
F	F363.01	3132	E-W	V-shaped	0.8	0.4	Orange brown silty clay
F	F363.02	3165	E-W	V-shaped	0.64	0.39	Red brown silty clay
F	F363.03	3176	E-W	V-shaped	0.5	0.3	Light grey brown silty clay
F	F363.04	3179	E-W	V-shaped	0.64	0.16	Brown grey silty clay
F	F363.05	3186	E-W	V-shaped	0.6	0.15	Brown grey silty clay

APPENDIX 2: Details of middle enclosure ditch

<i>Area</i>	<i>Feature no.</i>	<i>Context no.</i>	<i>Alignment</i>	<i>Shape in profile</i>	<i>Max width (m)</i>	<i>Max depth (m)</i>	<i>Description of fill</i>
A	F121.01	1024 1025	N-S	V-shaped	1.95	0.65	Grey silty clay Blue clay
A	F121.02	1041 1042	N-S	V-shaped	2	0.7	Light grey brown sandy clay Brown grey sandy clay
A	F132.02	1059 1060	E-W	V-shaped	1.35	0.6	Red brown silty clay blue silty clay
A	F132.03	1053 1052 1051	E-W	V-shaped	1.4	0.6	Brown silty clay Brown grey sand clay Blue grey clay
B	F144.01	1072 1073	N-S	V-shaped	1.25	0.3	Stony grey silt Light grey brown sandy silt
B	F144.02	1104 1105	N-S	V-shaped	0.96	0.7	Light brown sandy silt Dark grey silty clay
D	F301.01	3006	E-W	V-shaped	1.8	0.63	Light grey silty clay
D	F301.02	3011	E-W	V-shaped	1.65	0.55	Light grey silty clay
D	F301.03	3009	E-W	V-shaped	1.9	0.62	Light grey silty clay
D	F301.04	3016	E-W	V-shaped	1.5	0.65	Light grey brown clay
D	F301.05	3013 3022	E-W	V-shaped	1.35	0.54	Light brown clay Light grey clay
E	F303	3019 3018	N-S	V-shaped	1.16	0.52	Light blue grey clay Light brown grey silty clay
E	F304 (recut)	3021 3022	N-S	V-shaped	1.16	0.32	Light brown grey clayey silt Light grey brown clay

<i>Area</i>	<i>Feature no.</i>	<i>Context no.</i>	<i>Alignment</i>	<i>Shape in profile</i>	<i>Max width (m)</i>	<i>Max depth (m)</i>	<i>Description of fill</i>
F	F332	3078 3077	N-S	V-shaped	1.5	0.54	Light red brown sandy silt Orange-brown silty clay
F	F338.01	3086 3085	N-S	V-shaped	1	0.6	Light red brown sandy clay Orange brown silty clay
F	F338.02	3097 3096	N-S	V-shaped	1	0.6	Light red brown sandy clay Orange brown silty clay
F	F338.03	3107 3108	N-S	V-shaped	2.1	0.68	Orange brown sandy silt Brown grey silty clay
F	F338.04	3127	N-S	V-shaped	1.75	0.35	Light grey silty clay
F	F338.05	3155 3156	N-S	V-shaped	1.8	0.65	Light grey brown silt Grey silty clay
F	F338.06	3160 3164	N-S	V-shaped	2	0.5	Grey brown silty clay Brown grey silt
F	F376.01	3152	E-W	V-shaped	0.8	0.43	Red brown silty sandy clay
F	F376.02	3153	E-W	V-shaped	0.96	0.55	Red brown silty sandy clay
F	F376.03	3154	E-W	V-shaped	0.85	0.51	Red brown silty sandy clay
F	F376.04	3169	E-W	V-shaped	1	0.44	Blue grey silty clay
F	F378.01	3172	E-W	V-shaped	1	0.4	Grey brown silty clay
F	F378.02	3177	E-W	V-shaped	1	0.5	Grey brown silty clay
F	F378.03	3159	E-W	V-shaped	0.7	0.3	Grey brown silty clay
F	F378.04	3186	E-W	V-shaped	0.8	0.35	Grey brown silty clay

APPENDIX 3: Details of inner enclosure ditch

<i>Area</i>	<i>Feature no.</i>	<i>Context no.</i>	<i>Alignment</i>	<i>Shape in profile</i>	<i>Max width (m)</i>	<i>Max depth (m)</i>	<i>Description of fill</i>
A	F130.01	1036 1037 1038	N-S	U-shaped	0.8	0.35	Orange sandy clay Dark grey silt Orange grey sandy clay
A	F130.02	1042 1044	N-S	U-shaped	0.87	0.36	Orange sandy clay Orange grey sandy clay
A	F130.03	1046 1047	N-S	U-shaped	0.71	0.39	Orange sandy clay Orange grey sandy clay
A	F130.04	1050	E-W	U-shaped	0.9	0.29	Orange sandy clay
A	F130.05	1057 1056	E-W	U-shaped	0.78	0.3	Orange sandy clay Orange grey sandy clay
A	F130.06	1061	E-W	U-shaped	0.93	0.33	Orange grey sandy clay
A	F130.07	1075	E-W	Irregular	1.23	0.35	Orange grey sandy clay
A	F131.01 (recut)	1039	N-S	U-shaped	0.5	0.2	Dark brown organic silt
A	F131.02 (recut)	1043	N-S	U-shaped	0.55	0.22	Dark brown organic silt
A	F131.03 (recut)	1045	N-S	U-shaped	0.48	0.27	Blue grey clay
A	F131.04 (recut)	1055	E-W	U-shaped	0.51	0.24	Grey organic silt
A	F131.05 (recut)	1058	E-W	U-shaped	0.45	0.19	Grey organic silt
A	F131.06 (recut)	1062	E-W	U-shaped	0.64	0.21	Grey sandy silt
A	F131.07 (recut)	1076	E-W	U-shaped	0.68	0.23	Grey organic sandy silt

<i>Area</i>	<i>Feature no.</i>	<i>Context no.</i>	<i>Alignment</i>	<i>Shape in profile</i>	<i>Max width (m)</i>	<i>Max depth (m)</i>	<i>Description of fill</i>
B	F158.01	1091 1092 1093	N-S	U-shaped	1.2	0.45	Red brown silty clay Grey brown silty clay Stony layer
B	F158.02	1101	N-S	U-shaped	1	0.6	Brown grey silty clay
B	F158.03	1107	N-S	U-shaped	0.92	0.32	Orange brown sandy clay
B	F143	1071	N-S	U-shaped	0.5	0.2	Light grey silt
C	F315	3041	E-W	U-shaped	0.5	0.4	Light grey brown silt
C	F325.01	3060	E-W	U-shaped	0.78	0.37	Grey silt clay sand
C	F325.02	3066	E-W	U-shaped	0.26	0.15	Red grey silt clay sand
F	F349.01	3099	E-W	U-shaped	0.38	0.15	Red grey silt clay sand
F	F349.02	3100	E-W	U-shaped	0.36	0.14	Red grey silt clay sand
F	F349.03	3149	E-W	U-shaped	1.04	0.29	Orange grey silty clay
F	F349.04	3161	E-W	U-shaped	1.14	0.34	Brown silty clay
F	F349.05	3184	E-W	U-shaped	1.4	0.3	Grey brown silty clay
F	F356.00	3124	N-S	U-shaped	0.5	0.12	Grey brown silty clay
F	F356.01	3112	N-S	U-shaped	0.54	0.15	Grey silt clay sand
F	F356.02	3113	N-S	U-shaped	0.5	0.19	Grey silt clay sand
F	F356.03	3136	N-S	U-shaped	0.58	0.18	Grey silty clay
F	F356.04	3183	N-S	U-shaped	0.33	0.18	Grey brown silty clay

APPENDIX 4: Details of ring gully and associated features

Area	Type of feature	Feature no.	Context no.	Shape in plan	Shape in profile	Max length (m)	Max width (m)	Max depth (m)	Description of fill
F	Ring gully	F318.01	3046	Curvilinear	U-shaped	-	0.25	0.1	Grey silty clay
F	Ring gully	F318.02	3047	Curvilinear	U-shaped	-	0.2	0.05	Grey silty clay
F	Ring gully	F318.03	3048	Curvilinear	U-shaped	-	0.25	0.15	Grey silty clay
F	Ring gully	F318.04	3049	Curvilinear	U-shaped	-	0.25	0.1	Grey silty clay
F	Ring gully	F318.05	3050	Curvilinear	U-shaped	-	0.3	0.05	Grey silty clay
F	Post hole	F333	3080	Sub-circular	U-shaped	0.42	0.3	0.25	Grey silty clay
F	Post hole	F339	3087	Sub-circular	U-shaped	0.45	0.3	0.25	Grey silty clay
F	Post hole	F344	3092	Sub-circular	U-shaped	0.45	0.3	0.35	Grey silty clay
F	Pit	F331	3074 3075	Oval	U-shaped	0.84	0.6	0.35	Grey silty clay Orange grey silty clay
F	Pit	F355	3109 3117	Circular	U-shaped	0.6	0.48	0.3	Light grey silty sand Orange grey silty sand
F	Pit	F362	3121 3122	Irregular	U-shaped	1.3	0.7	0.32	Grey silty clay Orange grey silty sand

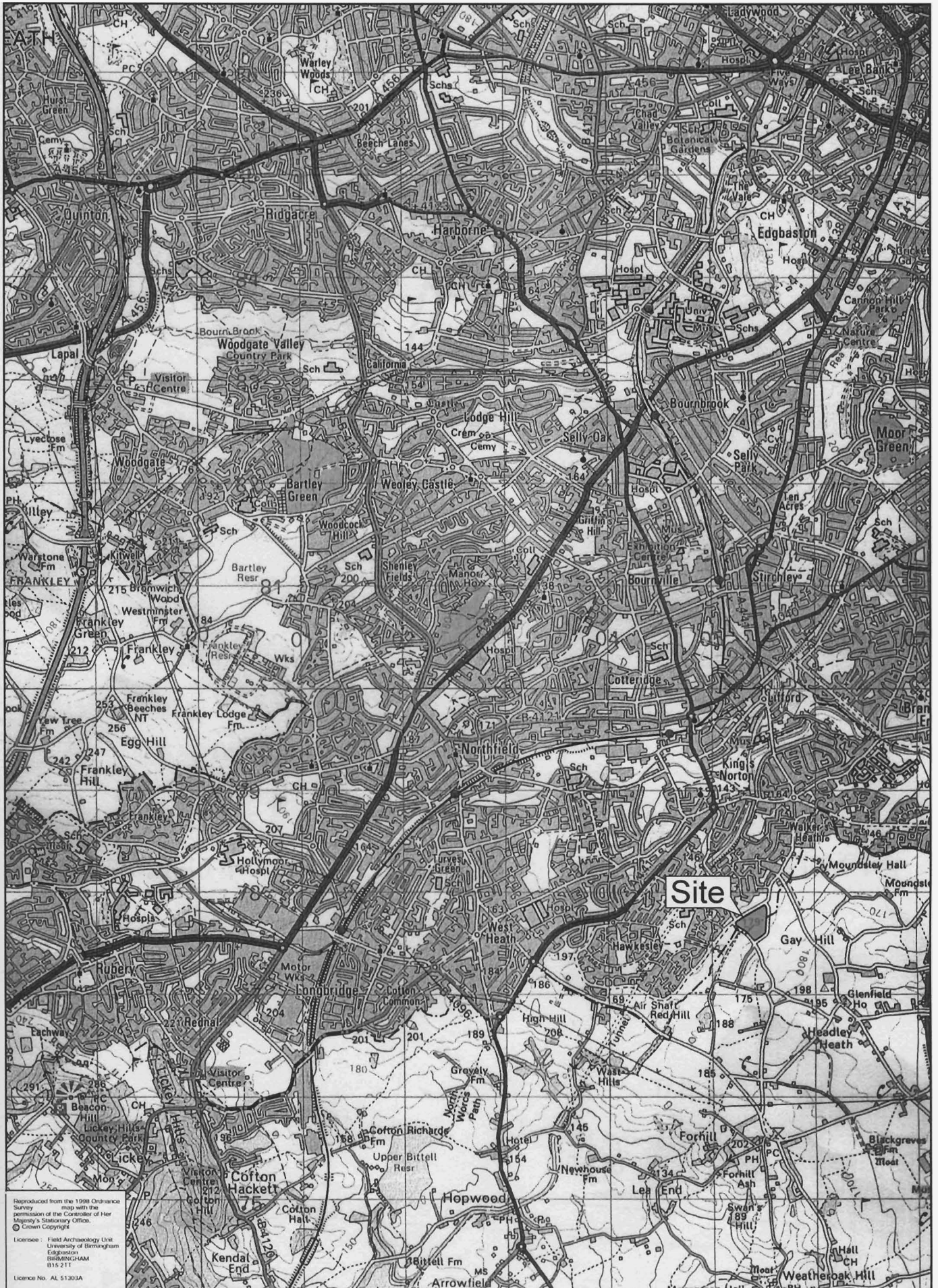


Fig.1

Reproduced from the 1998 Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office.
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 Licence No. AL 51303A

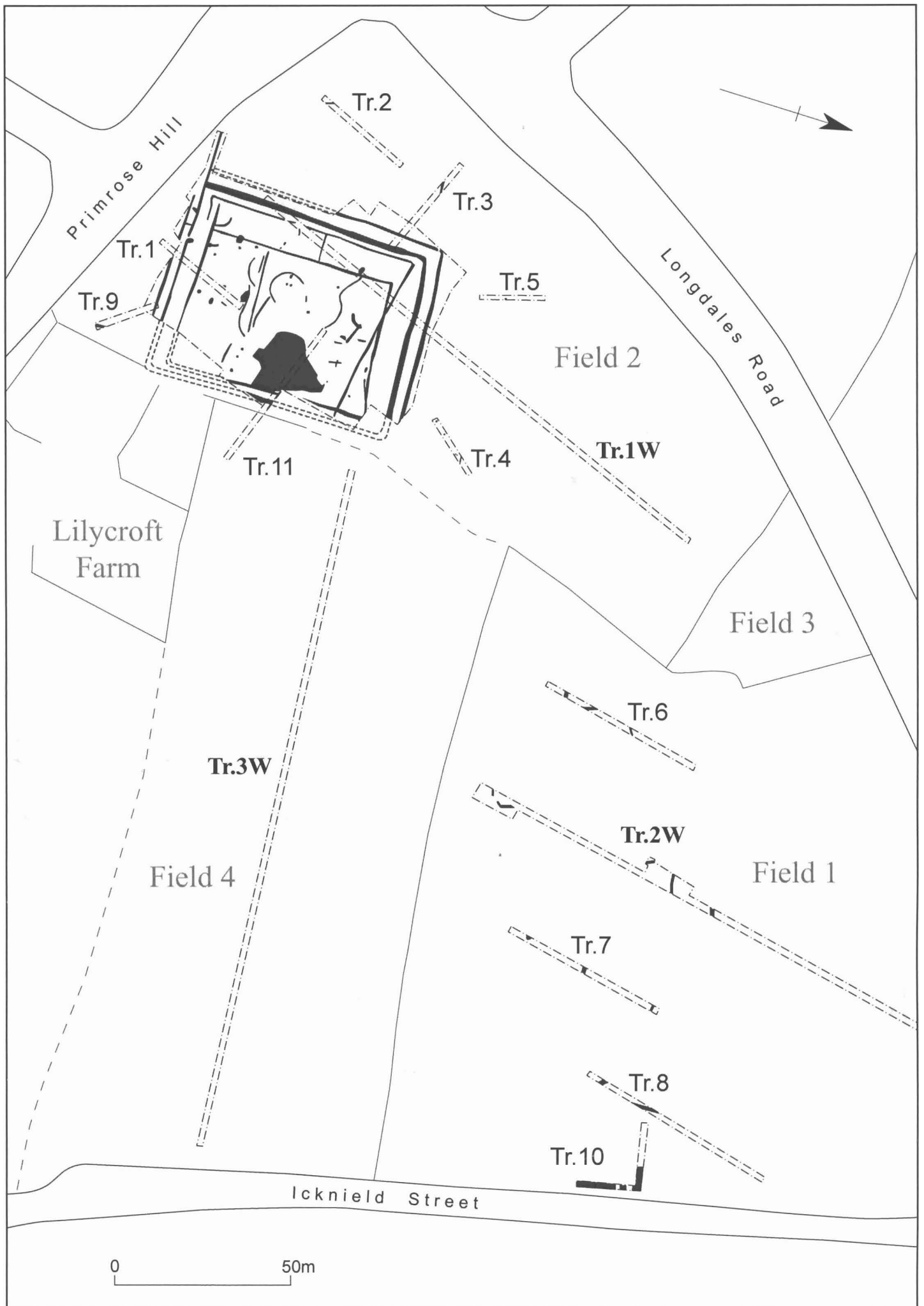


Fig.2

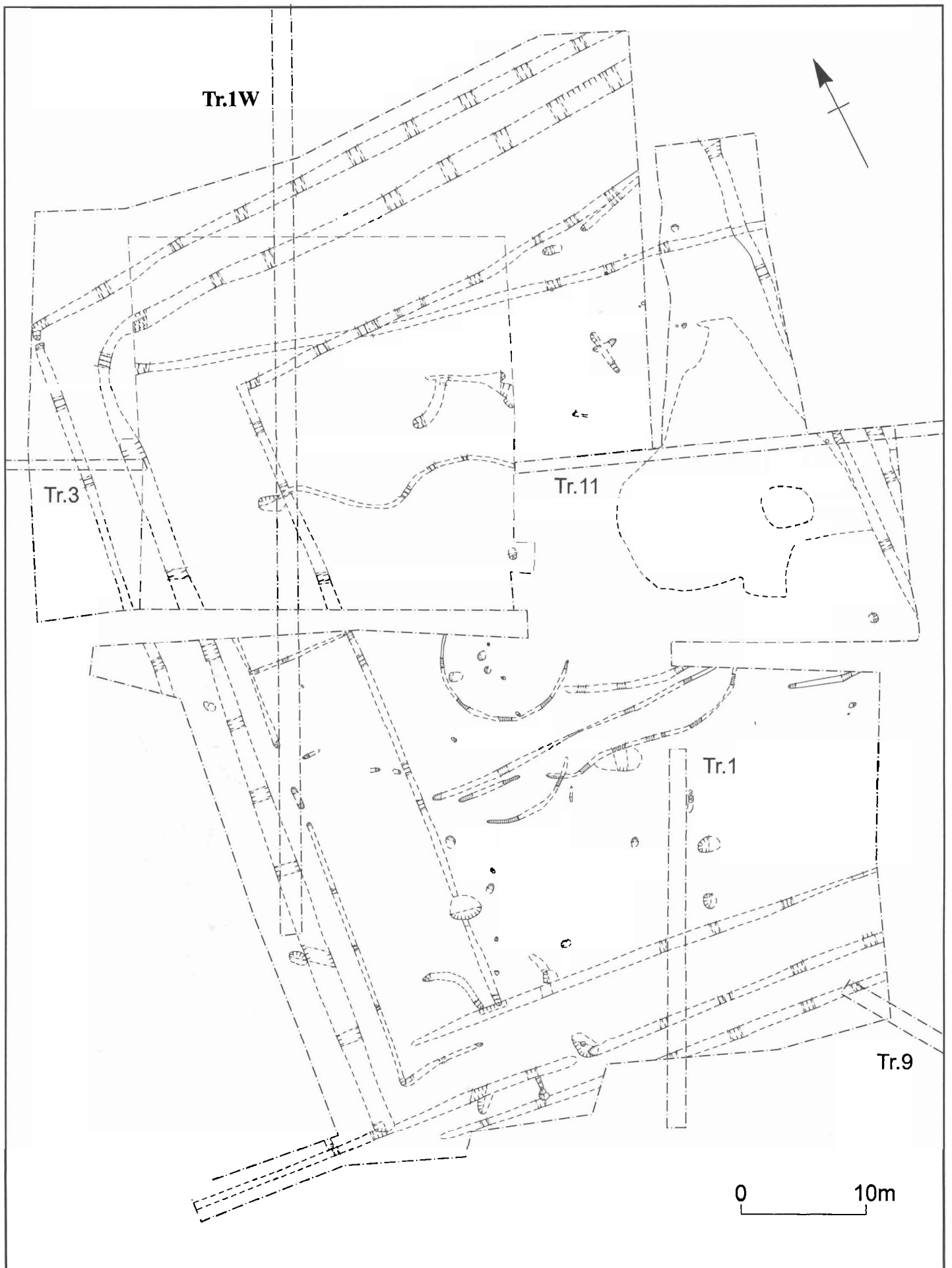


Fig.3

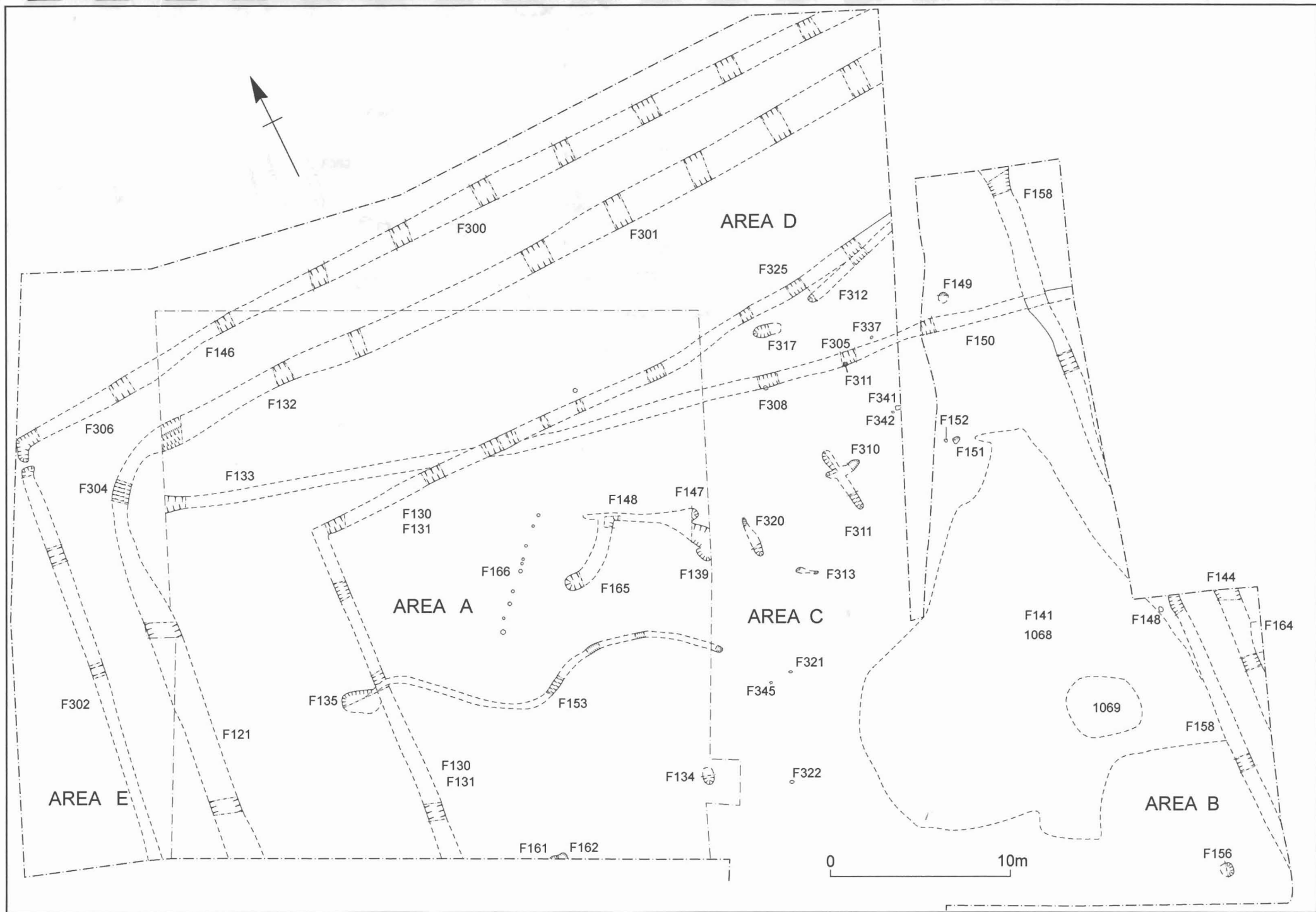


Fig.4

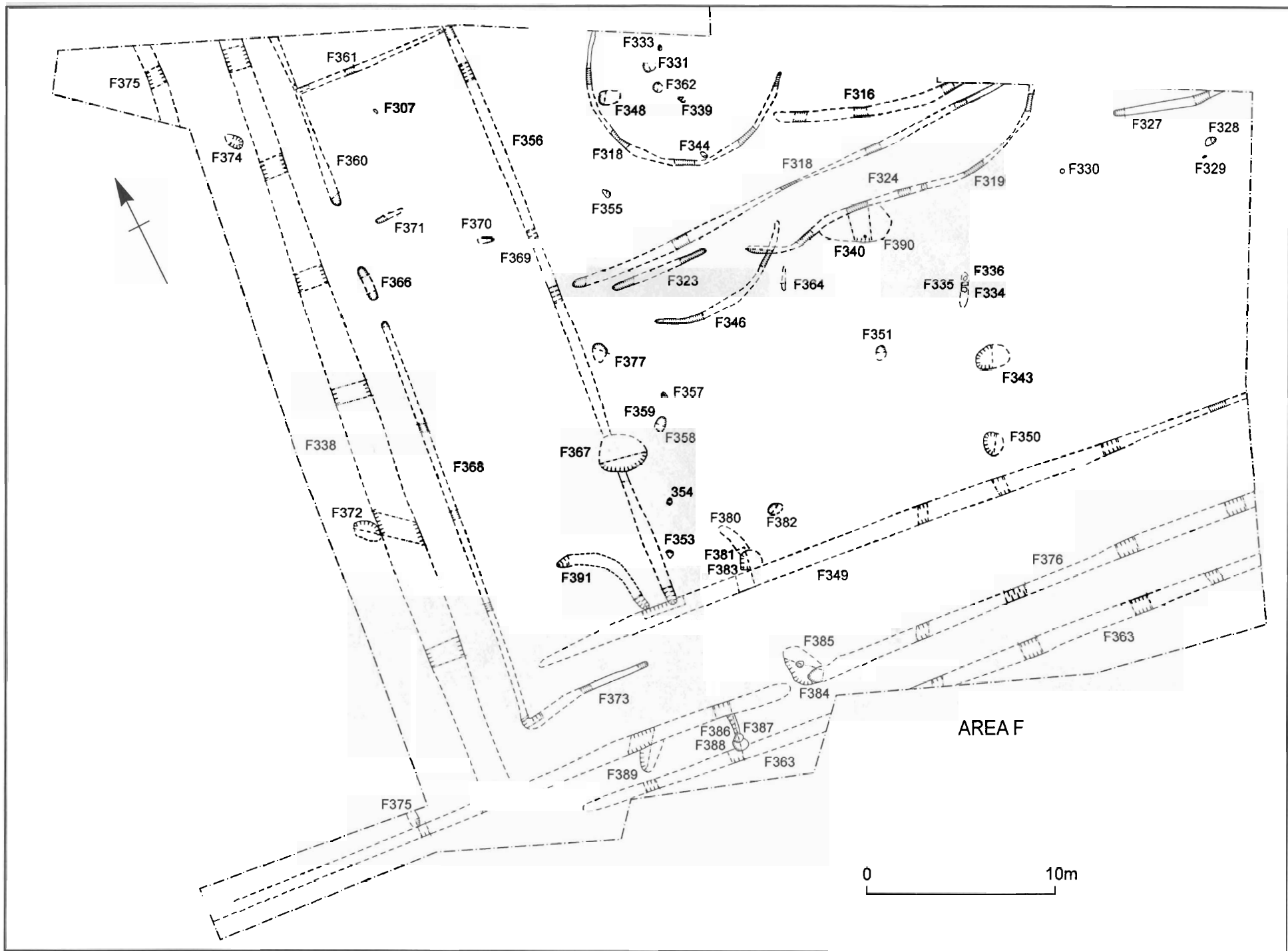


Fig.5



Plate 1: Trench 5.



Plate 2: Trench 10, stone surface F218.



Plate 3: Work in progress, Area F.

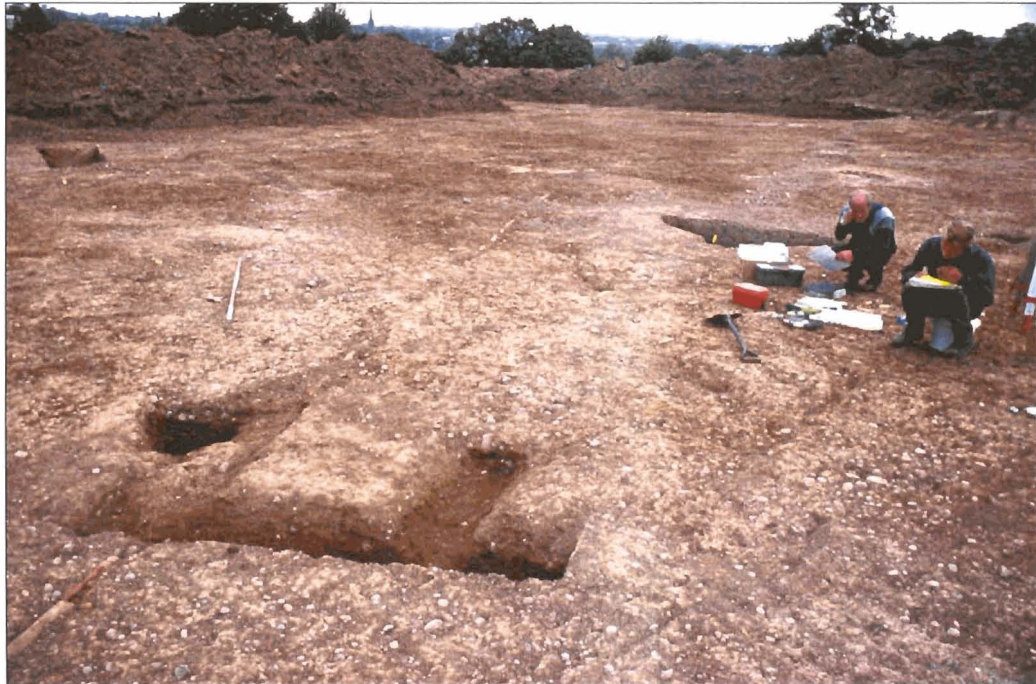


Plate 4: View of Area F, looking north.



Plate 5: Site survey.



Plate 6: View of Area F, looking south, showing middle enclosure ditch and stock enclosure.



Plate 7: Jar recovered from middle enclosure ditch F144.



Plate 8: Inner enclosure ditch F356 cut by phase 3 pit F367.



Plate 9: Stone surface F141