

**BUTTS LAKE, ALDERMASTON WHARF,
ALDERMASTON**

Archaeological evaluation

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Archaeological evaluation

Over the last few years, the sides and floor of the Kennet valley have come to be recognised as an important archaeological zone especially in the Bronze Age. The Archaeology section of Berkshire County Council have already highlighted the local presence of archaeological remains of either Bronze Age or Saxon date although their exact nature and provenance is unclear.

Method

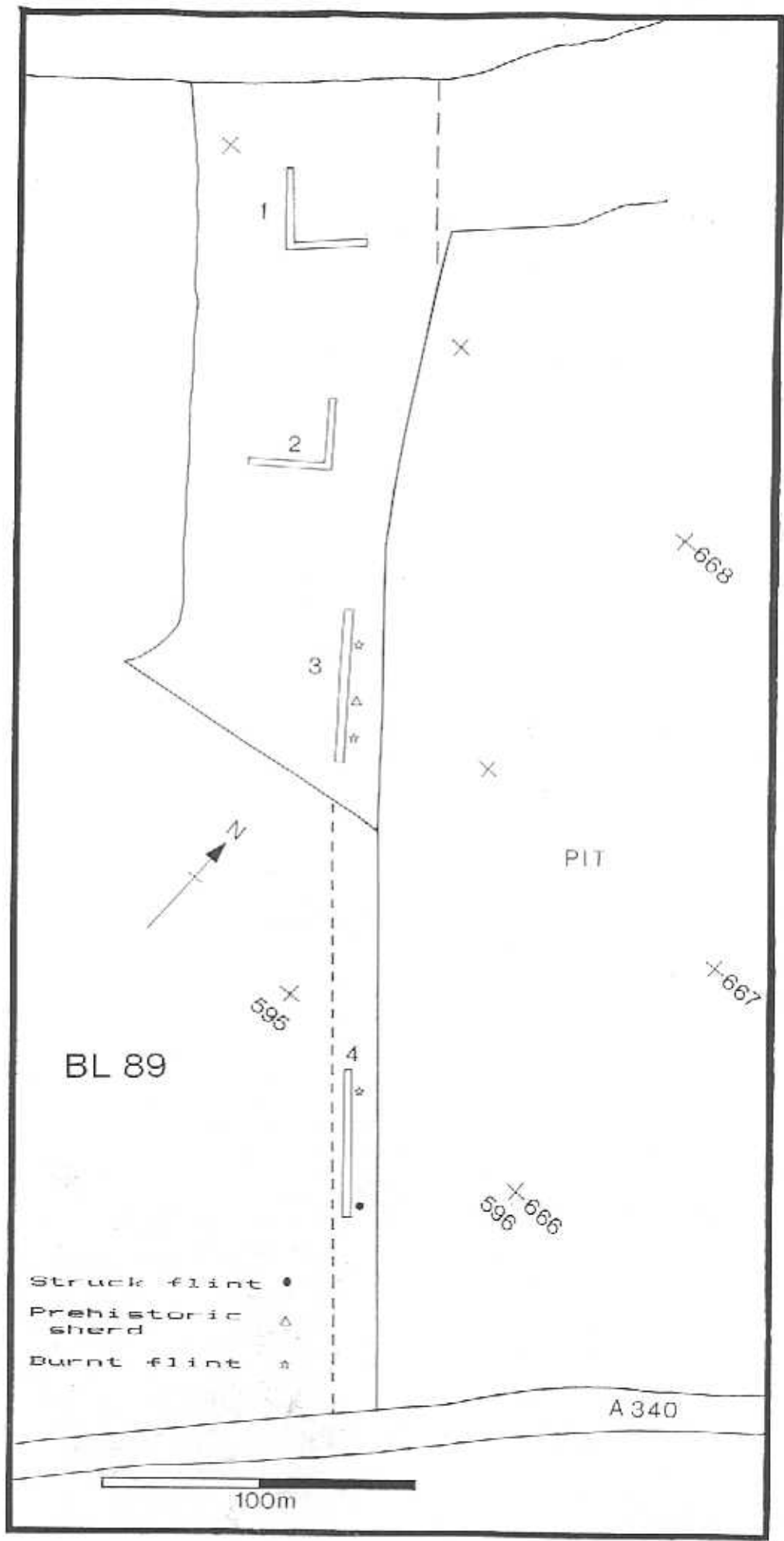
The main strategy used was the machine digging of four trenches nominally of 2m width. The trench arrangement is shown in Fig. 1. Approximately 2.5% of the site was examined. The spatial distribution of finds across the site was monitored by examining the spoilheaps. Prior to trenching in the arable field, this 15m wide strip was fieldwalked along six lines spaced approximately 2m apart parallel to the fence. Measurements were taken from the A340 end of the field.

Results

The fieldwalking produced very few finds other than burnt flint, comprising a few flint flakes and post Medieval pottery.

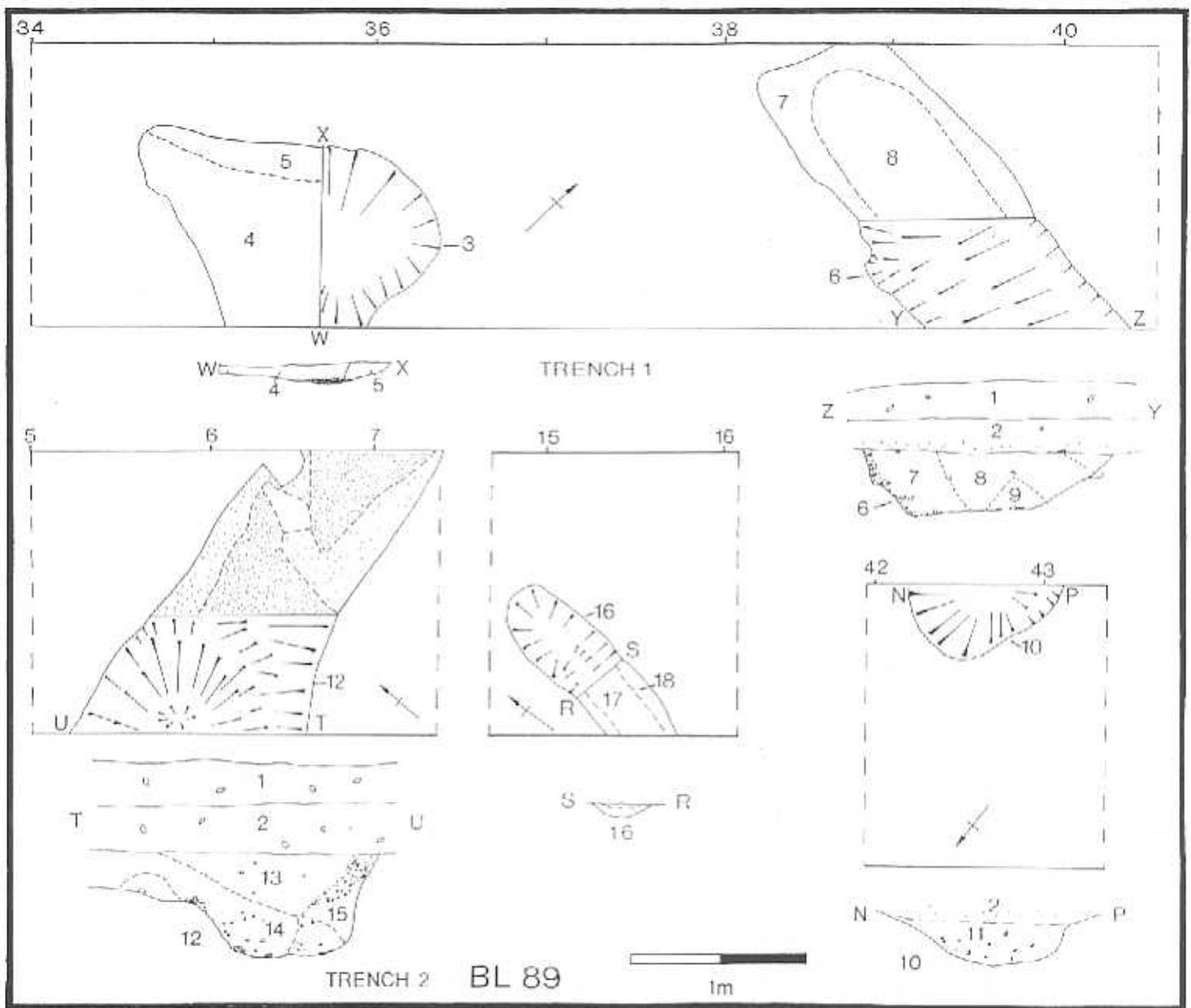
The machine cut trenches initially located a large number of subsoil features cut into the gravel. Typically, many could be shown to be of a geological nature such as silt/sand stripes and lenses. A smaller number of irregular features, sometimes containing artefacts were also eventually written off as being tree holes or burrows, etc. This left five features which could not so easily be dismissed. Excavation of two of the features (012, trench 2 and 06, trench 1) revealed fills inconsistent with typical archaeological features such as ditches. Features 03 (trench 1) and 10 (trench 2) did produce a few pieces of burnt flint and are possibly real features. However, no artefacts, burnt flint or charcoal was found on the gravel surface or in the spoilheaps for trenches 1 and 2. This raises certain doubts about the validity of these features.

A clue to the interpretation of these features may come from the buried soil most clearly observed in the northern spur of trench 2. This dark soil appears to have a high humic content perhaps as a result of waterlogged conditions. The fills of the features is very similar. It is probable therefore that their unusually dark colour is a natural occurrence and not, as first thought, due to human activity.



- Struck flint •
- Prehistoric sherd △
- Burnt flint *

100m



Conclusion

Most of the evaluated area appears to have no potential lacking both valid archaeological features and quantities of artefacts which might have indicated a site in the immediate vicinity. There is some doubt as to whether this conclusion applies to the whole area because of the anomalous features in trenches 1 and 2. On balance the evidence would tend to favour the view that these are natural phenomena.

Description of trenches

1 (52m) L shaped in plan. The gravel on average was 50cm below the surface and was buried by 25cm of alluvium. To the east was a shallow undulation in the gravel surface filled with up to 20cm of clayey silt. Feature 03 was a shallow irregular oval with an upper clayey fill (04) possibly of alluvial origin. Both this and the lower loamy fill (05) contained a small amount of burnt flint but no charcoal or other artefacts. Feature 06 was rectangular in plan with at least three fills (07-09). No finds or charcoal were found.

2 (50m) L shaped in plan. The gravel was 70cm deep with 23cm of alluvium (02) overlying what appears to be a buried soil on top of the gravel (29). Feature 10 was incompletely uncovered but appears to be a shallow bowl shaped hollow. It produced a tiny fragment of burnt flint and a small piece of charcoal. Feature 12 was a ditch like feature running across the trench but with an unusual stratigraphy both in plan and section. No finds or charcoal were found. Feature 16 was a shallow gully like feature but only 8cm deep. Again no finds or charcoal were found.

3 (51m) 60cm deep with 30cm of alluvium overlying the gravel. Five features were identified but were all regarded as natural features. Feature 19 (a treehole?) had the only piece of prehistoric pottery from the site in its uppermost fill.

4 (50m) 50cm deep with topsoil overlying 25cm of gravelly subsoil. At least eight features were observed but were all written off as non-archaeological. A single flint flake was found on the spoilheap.

CATALOGUE

a) Fieldwalking

line 2m

	Burnt flint	Struck flint	Pottery
11m	6		
12m	28		
26m	53		
45m	57		
60m	11	Spall (rolled)	
70m	28		
72m	8		
84m	48		
85m	22		
174m	-	Core frag?	Post Med

line 4m

	Burnt flint	Struck flint	Pottery
11m	14		
18m	9		
43m	23		
73m	38		
88m	157		
90m	23		
145m	76		
178m	48		

line 6m

	Burnt flint	Struck flint	Pottery
61m	66	Intact flake	
76m	78		
91m	13		
129m	20		
149m	36		
157m	7		
167m	14		
172m	27		
174m	-	-	Post Med
178m	71		

line 8m

	Burnt flint	Struck flint	Pottery
30m	6		
62m	84		
109m	39		
124m	49		
138m	33		
149m	48		
154m	49		
156m	13		

line 10m

	Burnt flint	Struck flint	Pottery
30m	37		
39m	38		
50m	33		
51m	57		
85m	16		
95m	-	-	Post Med
184m	22		

line 13m

	Burnt flint	Struck flint	Pottery
17m	96		
30m	46		
34m	-	-	Post Med
32m	42		
46m	81		
65m	17	Intact flake	
76m	20		
112m	42		
118m	76		
124m	11		
143m	-	-	Post Med
154m	35		
160m	49		

b) Trenches

(all measurements from north end of trenches)

	Burnt flint	Struck flint	Pottery
Trench 1			
04	63		
05 (feature 03)	30		
Trench 3			
	Burnt flint	Struck flint	Pottery
12m base	7g		
42m	16g		
020 top (feature 019)	-	-	Prehist.
Trench 4			
	Burnt flint	Struck flint	Pottery
8m	17		
19m	-	-	Post Med
48m	-	Intact flake	