

**THE VYNE SCHOOL PLAYING FIELDS,
BASINGSTOKE, HAMPSHIRE.**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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Archaeological evaluation at The Vyne School Playing Fields, Basingstoke

Report No. 89/14

INTRODUCTION

An evaluation of 2.6 hectares of land to the south of the school buildings at The Vyne School, Basingstoke (NGR SU 639530) was carried out during January 1990. The work was carried out on behalf of Hampshire County Council to assess the extent, nature, date and preservation of archaeological deposits below the topsoil.

Topographically the area is situated to the south of the crest of a chalk ridge known as Oakridge. The east-west orientated ridge dips very gently to the south from the crest.

To the north east, at a distance of 500m, is an Iron Age and Romano-British settlement, while 200m to the south west a series of Iron Age pits are recorded. The site was considered to have considerable archaeological potential because of its location and the neighbouring earlier discoveries.

METHOD

The specification required that a series of linear machine cut trenches, nominally 2m wide, cross the site orientated on the cardinal points of the compass. Short lengths of additional trench were to be cut to enhance the findings in the initial trenches. The trenches are shown on Fig. 1. In addition, the spoil heaps were monitored for artefacts to give a general indications of the extent activity in the area. A local metal detector user monitored the topsoil for metalwork.

RESULTS

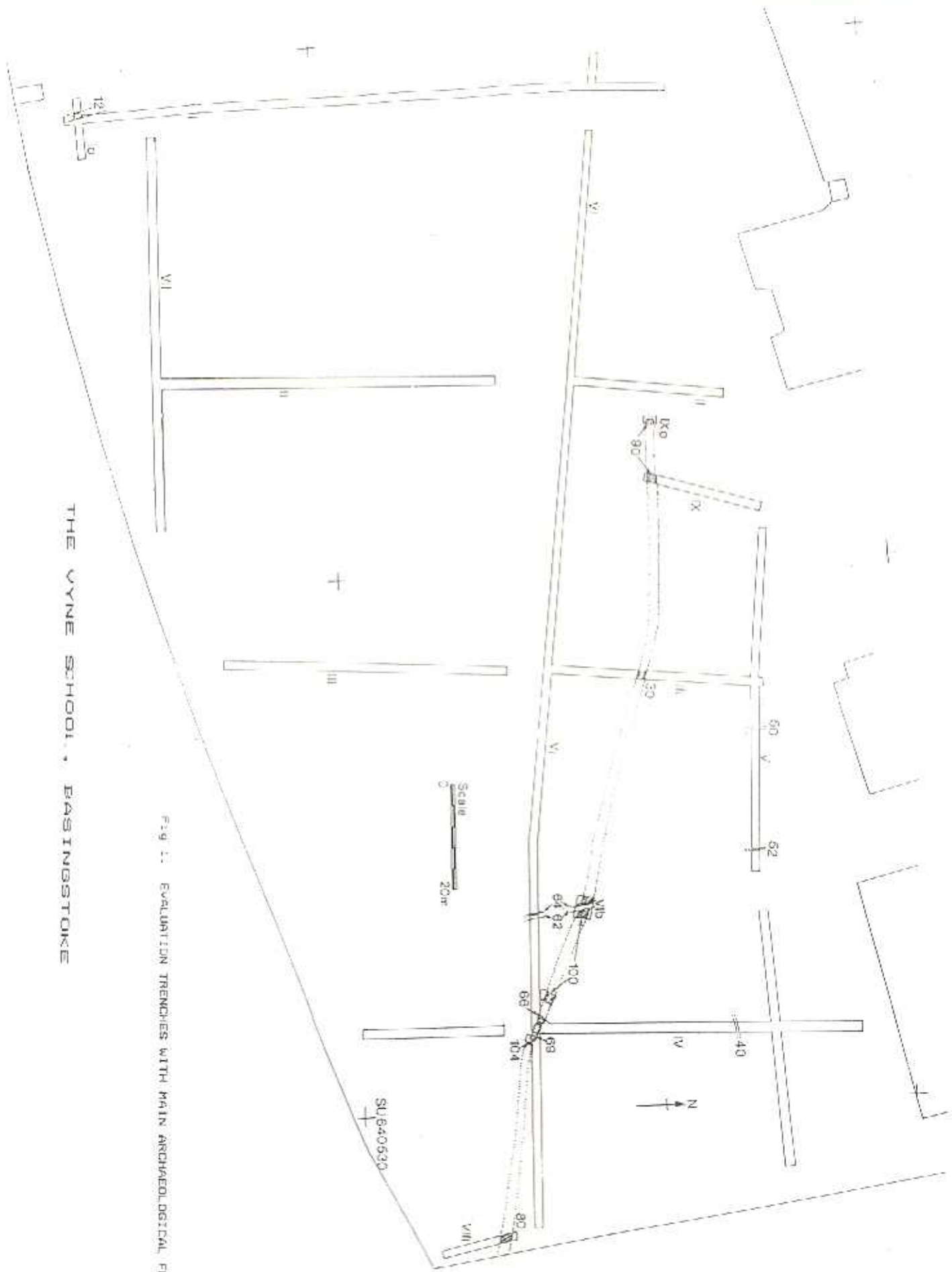
The topsoil stripping revealed the chalk natural a minimum of only 0.18m below the current ground surface. Towards the south and west of the site a natural reddish brown silty clay subsoil containing many flints was found, at first patchy, but continuous in the south west corner to a maximum of 0.3m deep. The chalk under the silty clay was notably more broken and contained large flints, than where it lay directly under topsoil.

The subsoil, where it was patchy, appeared to form features within the chalk. These were recognisable as irregular shaped features containing the reddish brown clayey silt with flints. Some had more regular edges, but upon investigation were found to be of natural origin.

A limited number of archaeological features were discovered consisting of a series of gullies and ditches. In the southern end of trench I ditch F12 was cut. This was a broad shallow, flat bottomed ditch, orientated north-south and split into two levels in its base.

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Fig. 1. EVALUATION TRENCHES WITH MAIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES.



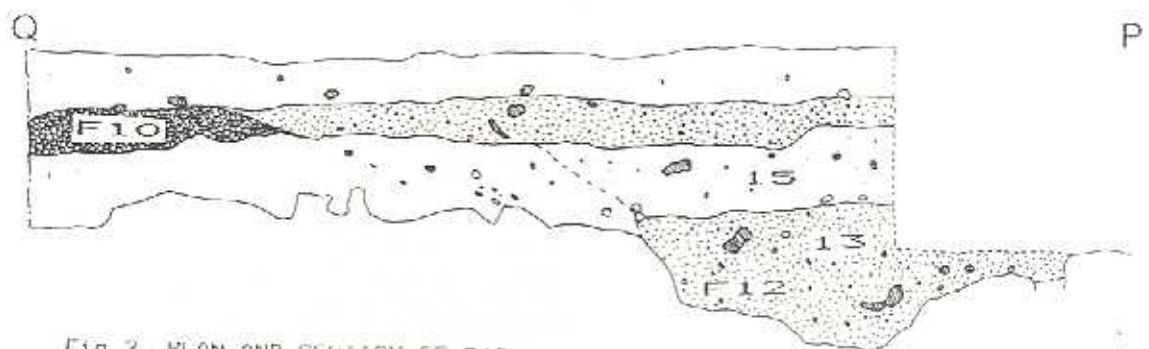
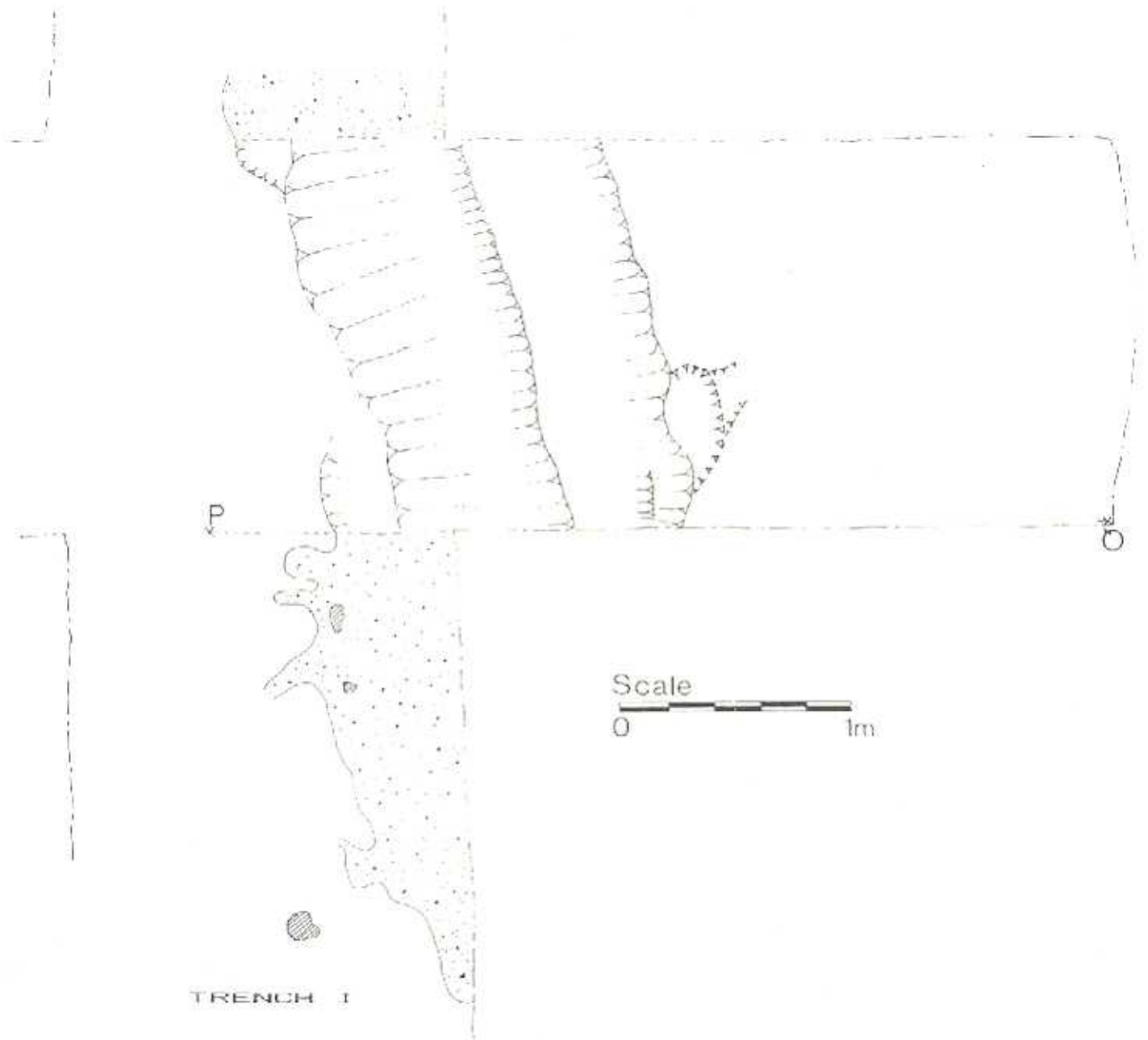


Fig 2. PLAN AND SECTION OF F12

A chalk dump to the west of the ditch, (F10) may be the remains of an associated bank, but is more likely to be of more recent origin, associated with a pipe trench just to the west of Trench Ia. Fragments of Tudor Green Glaze pottery in the fill suggest a late medieval or later date for the ditch.

The line of the ditch F12 passes close to a hawthorn tree about 20m to the north. This may indicate it is the ditch associated with a late medieval or post-medieval hedge line.

A number of undatable plough marks were recorded but no other archaeological feature were found in the southern and western parts of the evaluation area.

In trench III, a substantial ditch aligned east-west (F30) was excavated. (Figs 2-3) The ditch was 2.0m wide and 1.15m deep, with a V-shaped profile. The ditch was traced westwards through Trenches IX and IXa, but was not found in Trench II. The ditch terminates in a butt end in Trench IXa.

To the east, at the intersection of Trenches IV and VI the ditch line is interrupted by a 4.5m gap in Trench VI. To the south east of Trench VI the ditch continues, through Trench VIII and beyond the site under Shooters Way.

The 4.5m gap between the ditches was filled with a further short segment of ditch. This ditch overlapped by 0.3m with the westerly section of ditch, but fell short of the easterly section by the same distance. The relationship with the western ditch could not be determined as the top fills of both were indistinguishable, probably because they were infilled at the same time.

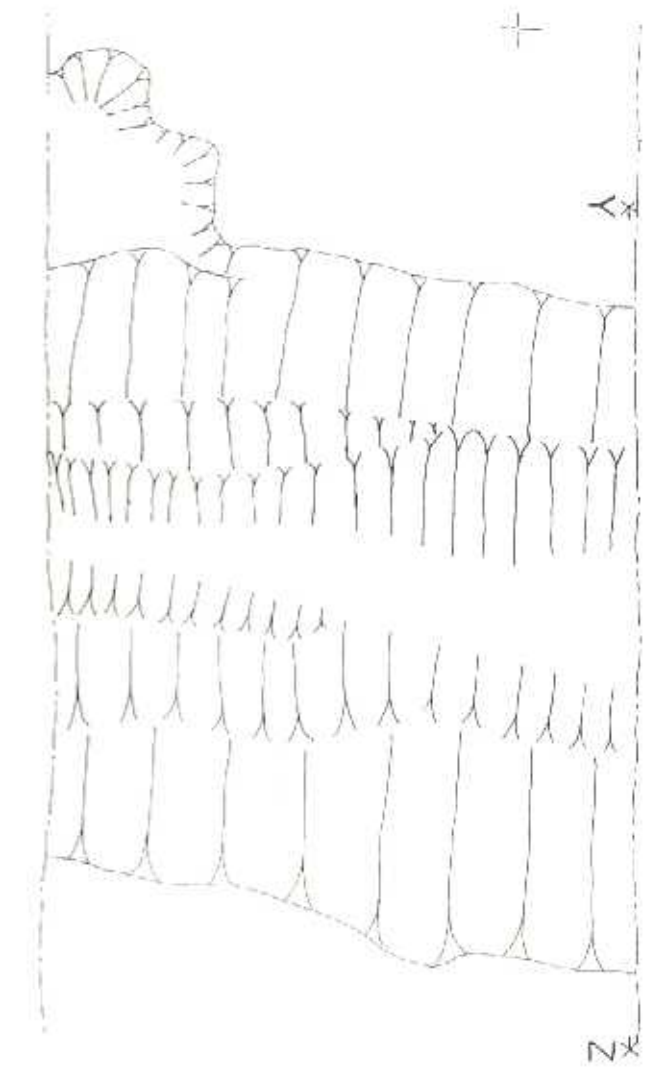
There was no visible evidence for a bank on either side of the ditch, but in all the excavated sections more chalk appeared in the north half of the fill. This suggests the former presence of a bank on the north side of the ditch which eroded gradually into the ditch cut. Dating evidence for the ditch is limited with finds of bone, a few struck flints and sherds of Bronze Age/ Iron Age pottery all coming from the tertiary silts.

The linear ditches run for a total distance of 160m across the site, with the westerly ditch comprising the longest part at 114m. The eastern section of ditch crosses the evaluation for 42m while 4.3m of ditch fills the gap between the two long sections of ditch. 50% of the infilled gap was excavated, while only 5% of the western section was dug at Tr VIB (F100) and Tr VI (F66).

In Tr VIB the linear ditch was cut by two parallel gullies, F62 and F64. The broader gully, F62, orientated north-south, was 0.5m wide and 0.2m deep, and contained a fill very similar to the top fill of F66, but with a slightly greater concentration of flints. This gully was very similar to gullies found in Tr IV (F40) and Tr V (F50 and F52). No reliable dating evidence was obtained.



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SECTION THROUGH F30 IN TRENCH III

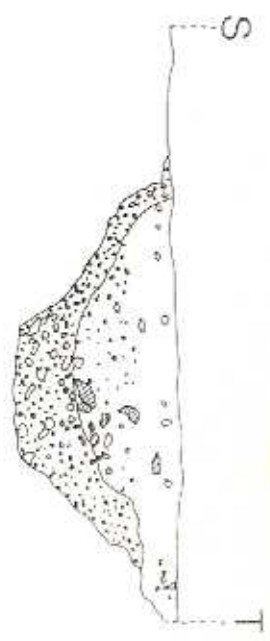
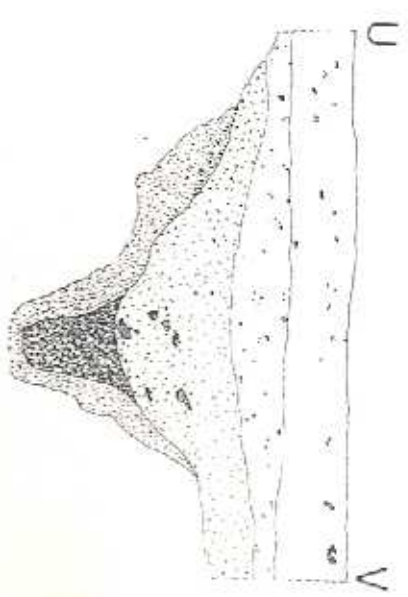
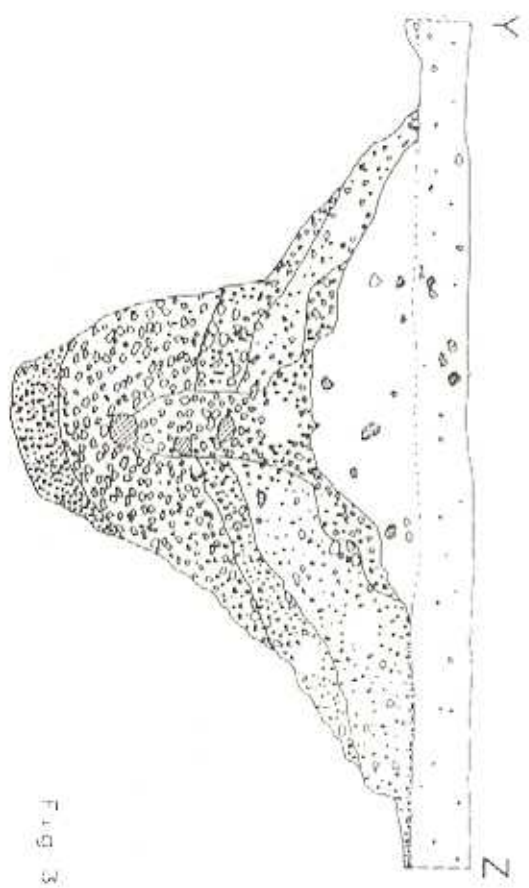


FIG 3. SECTIONS ALONG LINEAR DITCH



Fig 4. PLAN OF LINEAR DITCH IN TRENCH VI

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Separated by only a very narrow 'wall' of natural chalk, to the west of F62 was a small U-shaped gully, F64. This gully ran parallel to F62 across both Tr VI and VIb although in the very north of Tr VIb it appeared to become narrower as if coming to an end. It was filled with a darker silty loam with very few chalk or flint fragments. However, its relationship with F62 suggests that the two are contemporary.

One of the two gullies in Tr V, F52, may be a continuation of F62. Both the gullies in that trench had very similar profiles to F62 and were orientated north to south. A further gully of similar profile was recorded in the northern part of Tr IV, but this was orientated east-west.

The spoil heap monitoring failed to produce any material to suggest that the site had been more intensively occupied than was suggested by the quantity of subsoil features. The metal detecting produced similar results, the majority of material being of twentieth century origin.

CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological potential of the site appears to be limited to the linear ditch. This ditch, with the blocked 'entrance', (F69), is impossible to date accurately. All the pottery fragments were located in the upper fills, and could therefore be residual fragments washed out of the topsoil. It is likely however that this ditch is of Bronze Age or early Iron Age origins, with silting continuing from that point until possibly the Romano-British period.

The series of similar shaped gullies are likely to be contemporary with each other. The gullies were probably not cut any earlier than the Romano-British period as F62 was not cut until the linear ditch had entirely silted up. It could of course date to any time after F100 had become infilled. No reliable dating evidence was forthcoming from the gullies.

The function of the gullies is difficult to ascertain. They may well be boundaries for an agricultural land division. This does not explain the narrow gully F64 however, which must be contemporary, as it so carefully borders F62.

APPENDIX 1

Trench details.

Trench I (Length 125m)

Orientated north-south at west side of evaluation area. Topsoil, 0.18m deep, sits directly on natural chalk at north end of trench, while at the south end an increasing amount of subsoil is present. The subsoil seemed to fill a hollow in the chalk in the area of ditch F12, with a maximum depth of 0.33m.

Trench II (98m)

Cut north-south c.50m to the east of Tr I, this trench had a similar stratigraphy although the subsoil was never deeper than 0.2m. A 7m gap was left south of its junction with Tr VI to allow access.

Trench III (98m)

Cut c.55m east of Tr II again north-south. Topsoil sat directly on natural in the north of the trench with some subsoil dividing the two towards the southern end. A gap of 6.1m was left to the south of its junction with Tr VI for access.

Trench IV (94m)

Most easterly of the main north-south trenches, 65m east of Tr III. Similar stratigraphy with a maximum subsoil depth in the south of the trench of 0.2m. A small gap of 3m was left to the south of Tr VI for the spoil heap of that trench.

Trench V (121m)

Most northerly of the east-west trenches. The topsoil sat directly on chalk across the whole of the trench, with just traces of subsoil visible. A 9.5m gap left half way between Tr III and Tr IV.

Trench VI (219m)

East to west cut trench, with a gap of 7.1m to the east of Tr I for access. A few natural features may be areas of root disturbance.

Trench VIa (1.5 x 2m)

Hand dug trench to locate the line of F66 as discovered in Tr VI. The ditch was excavated here as F100.

Trench VIb (4 x 3m)

Machine cut trench on line of ditch F66/F100 where it is cut by F62 and F64 to examine the relationship between the

trenches.

Trench VII (74m)

Most southerly of the east-west cut trenches, reaching not as far east as Tr III. Subsoil c.0.2m deep exists along the entire trench.

Trench VIII (11m)

Machine cut trench on north-south axis to establish the line of the linear ditch. Subsoil 0.14m deep exists along the line of the trench.

Trench IX (21m)

Machine cut trench to follow line of linear ditch to the west of Tr III. Subsoil only existed in small patches, perhaps as a result of root holes.

Trench IXa (3m)

Machine cut trench to locate the butt end of the linear ditch between Tr IX where the ditch existed and Tr II, where it did not.

APPENDIX 2

Catalogue of finds.

Trench I

- (U/S) 3 frags tile (99g)
- Ditch F12, (013) 4 frags tile (305g); 1 frag burnt flint (7g); bone frag; Rim sherd, Tudor Green Glaze; Sherd, black, fine sandy fairly soft.

Trench Ia

- (U/S) Sherd. Orange glazed interior. Post med.
- Ditch F12, (015) 4 frags burnt flint (283g); Clay pipe frag.; Intact flake; Sherd. Soft red sandy fabric.

Trench II

- (U/S) 4 frags tile (199g); Sherd. Tudor Green Glaze.

Trench III

- (U/S) 5 frags burnt flint (85g); Sherd, reddish fabric, reddish brown glaze, white applied glaze decoration, Post med.

Trench V

- (U/S) 1 frag burnt flint (184g); 2 frags tile (56g); Broken flake (unpatinated); Sherd, salt glazed stopper top, Post med.; Sherd, reddish hard, flint tempered.

Trench VI

- (U/S) 5 frags burnt flint; 9 frags tile (305g); Sherd, reddish glaze, Post med.; Sherd, white glaze, white fabric, c.18 cent.; Sherd, soft red exterior and interior, black core, flint tempered;

- Gully F62, (063) 12 frags burnt flint (425g); Bone, horn core; 1 frag tile (10g); Sherd, soft red exterior, dark grey core and interior, some sand; Sherd, dark grey/black core, dark reddish brown interior and exterior, flint tempered, Bronze Age/Iron Age ?.

- Ditch F66, (067) 3 frags burnt flint (156g); 2 intact flakes; Iron nail; Bone; Sherd, buff/grey patchy exterior, dark grey interior and core, flint tempered (1-3mm) slightly soapy fabric, Bronze Age/Iron Age; Sherd, dark grey, up to 2mm flint tempered, Bronze Age/Iron Age; Sherd, red brown exterior and core, slightly blackened interior, up to 1mm flint and grog tempered with some sand.
- Ditch F66, (068) 12 frags burnt flint (298g).
- Ditch F69, (070) 4 frags burnt flint (270g); Sherd, greyish buff exterior, dark grey interior and core, up to 1mm flint tempered; Sherd; pale reddish exterior, dark grey interior and core, flint tempered with single rounded 5mm white quartz grain, some sand; Sherd, dark grey with buff patches, fine flint tempering.
- Ditch F69, (071) Bone.
- Trench VIa
- (001) 3 frags burnt flint (71g); 4 frags tile (184g); 3 sherds hard red/brown reddish glaze, Post med.; Sherd, hard orange, brown glaze with black patches.
- Ditch F100, (101) 41 frags burnt flint (695g); 2 broken flakes; Sherd, black, red/buff exterior up to 2mm flint tempered, Bronze Age/Iron Age; Sherd, red brown exterior and interior, black core, tempered with some sand and up to 5mm flint, Bronze Age/Iron Age.
- Ditch F100, (102) Sherd, dark grey core, pale buff exterior, flint tempered; Sherd, sandy, buff core, greyish interior and reddish exterior.
- Trench VIII
- (U/S) 1 frag tile (14g); Broken flake.

APPENDIX 3

Catalogue of Metalwork

Metal detecting courtesy of Mr. R W Tite of 17 Kenilworth Drive, Basingstoke. All finds from topsoil.

Trench I area.

Iron heel of shoe; Blazer button.

Trench II area.

Painted lead lion; Circular lead shot; Rectangular iron tool with wedge shaped profile, circular hole in the centre; Squared lead shot; Modern coins; Machined bronze cog on rod with a decorated circular disc on end; Iron handle fragment.

Trench V

Short iron knife; 2 Bronze irregular shaped plates; Lead weight; Circular copper ring; Part of iron handle; Bent bronze decorated band; Lead shot; Lead weight; 2 Blazer buttons; Modern machined button; Bronze circular handle.

Trench VI

A number of modern coins; 1/5th of a token inscribed '...INGSTOK.'; 2/3 of thin stamped coin, (medieval?); Lead weight; Lead circular stamped, hollow object; Modern belt buckle; Lead shot; Lead fragment; Gripping lead weight; Uneven lead strip; Bronze flower shaped object; Coin, 1d, 1922; Concave fragment; Small iron buckle;

Trench VII

Large iron buckle; Lead plate; Lead 'purse'; Bronze lump; Iron spear shaped railing?; Irregular lead lump; Wrapped lead; Modern coins.

North of school

Worn round coin, Romano-British?;
2 fragments of one pewter spoon.