

Hollybush Farm, Ramsdell,
Hampshire

An archaeological evaluation in advance of the proposed
construction of a golf course

for Price Waterhouse

Hollybush Farm, Ramsdell, Hampshire

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Fieldwalking Survey

by Steve Ford

Introduction

Thames Valley Archaeological Services were instructed to carry out this evaluation by Mr. Ian Burley of Stroud and Burley Partnership at The Lodge, 66 St. Leonards Road, Windsor on behalf of Mr. Richard Hanks of Price Waterhouse, the agricultural receivers of J and J M Boyle.

The purpose of the evaluation is to discover the date, nature, extent and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits within this additional area affected by the golf course proposals.

The nature of golf courses is such that their construction is not incompatible with the preservation in-situ of most, if not all, areas with archaeological deposits. The evaluation strategy can often be targeted on only those locations involving ground disturbance.

A second consideration is that the zone in which the site lies is not generally considered to be of the highest potential (see below) and a strategy involving machine-assisted trenching to search for subsoil deposits may not be appropriate at the initial stage of study.

With this in mind the field survey was to be divided into two components. The first consisted of fieldwalking as much of the area as was available, that is those areas under arable production. The purpose of this was to recover finds of struck flint and pottery. If such finds are found to cluster, they are likely to indicate the presence of former occupation sites. For Iron Age and later periods such clusters are also likely to indicate the presence of surviving subsoil features such as rubbish pits, postholes, etc. For earlier periods, settlement traces are more ephemeral and clusters of flint tools in the topsoil may be the last remaining trace of an occupation site.

If any areas of potential were discovered, the preservation in-situ of these deposits was to be considered by a shift in location of proposed areas of ground disturbance. The extent of the second, more detailed survey by machine-assisted trenching, if necessary, was to be determined in the light of the fieldwalking results and after consultation with the County Archaeologist.

Archaeological background

The proposal area lies within a geological zone not noted for its archaeological heritage. However, the apparent absence of archaeological evidence is frequently a result of a lack of systematic survey rather than a real absence. Factors, such as soil conditions unsuitable for the formation of cropmarks visible from the air, or largely pastoral land-use, limit the discovery of archaeological sites. Various surveys on similar geological outcrops in Berkshire (eg Ford 1987; Lobb 1983) suggest that the density and size of archaeological sites is lower than that for chalk downland or river valley regions.

There are some known archaeological deposits within the proposal area as the line of the Portway Roman road from Silchester to Old Sarum (Salisbury) crosses the western side of the site. This is visible on aerial photographs but was not seen as an earthwork or soil mark during the course of this study. The road could be a focus for Roman roadside settlements. Finds of Roman material are recorded beyond the proposal area west of Hollybush Farm between Cannon's and Sandpits copses.

Geology and topography

The site lies some 8 Km. to the north west of Basingstoke, Hampshire (SU 585585) at a height of about 100 m. above OD. (Fig. 1). It is located on several tertiary geological outcrops, mostly comprising Bracklesham and Bagshot Beds. Plateau gravel lies on the highest ground with London Clay and some valley gravel occurring on the lower ground to the south west.

The highest ground lies to the north east and slopes moderately steeply to the south west. Flatter areas with minor undulations occur to the south west with some wet low-lying areas.

Method

The fieldwalking took place along lines spaced at 10 m. intervals aligned north-south on the national grid with material collected at 10 m. intervals along these lines. Approximately 10% of the ground surface was examined. All struck flint and pre-17th century pottery was collected and retained. Notes were made of the locations of scatters of building debris, clusters of burnt flint and any earthworks. The in-field collecting conditions and local topography were also noted.

Results

The results are presented in Figures 2 and 3.

20 hectares were fieldwalked and produced 83 finds of struck flint together with 27 sherds of pottery.

Struck flint

Table 1 documents the numbers and types of struck flints recovered.

Table 1 Struck flint

Type	Number
Blade	6
Flake	58
Spall	4
Core	6
Core fragment/ Bashed lump	2
Scraper	1
Awl	1
Notched flake	1
Retouched flakes	4

No detailed metrical analysis was undertaken of the flintwork but there are a number of pointers as to the relative chronology of this material. Firstly, six pieces are blades/narrow flakes and they comprise 9% of the flake total. This proportion is indicative of a Mesolithic/Early Neolithic contribution to the flint work date and several of these pieces are clearly of this date rather than fortuitous by-products of later periods.

The collection does not appear to be homogeneous and the majority of the material is likely to date to the later Neolithic and Bronze Ages.

There is some tendency for the material to cluster, but not markedly so. It clearly reflects prehistoric activity in the area but not necessarily that of occupation sites.

Pottery

Table 2 documents the date range of the 27 sherds recovered.

Table 2 Pottery finds

Date	Number
Medieval	22
Early Post-Medieval	4
Undated	1
Total	27

The vast majority of the pottery is of Medieval or later date with just a single sherd which could be earlier. The material does cluster in two areas and these may indicate the location of Medieval habitations. However, these sherds are small and abraded and the numbers involved are not large. Given the extent to which Medieval pottery was distributed on fields accidentally incorporated within manure, these apparent clusters may be a random effect of their deposition.

Burnt flint concentration

A cluster of burnt flint spread over an area of c. 30 x30 m was located. It is of low density and with small pieces. It does not appear to be a type of archaeological site known as a Burnt Mound. It may be the site of a bonfire of relatively recent date which has accidentally led to the burning of flint present naturally.

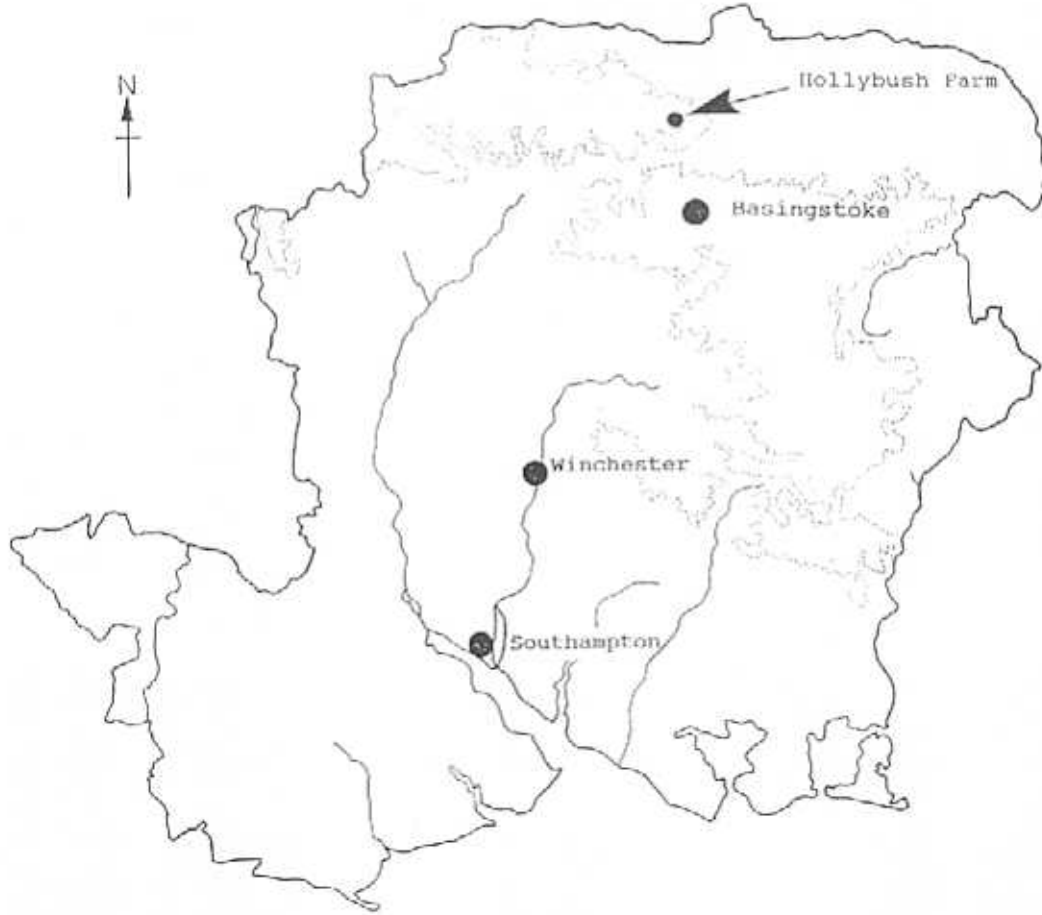
Areas of Potential

No clear cut areas of archaeological potential were identified. Two slight clusters of Medieval pottery and one of burnt flint were noted, along with a general spread of prehistoric struck flint. For reasons explained above these areas are at best of doubtful potential.

References

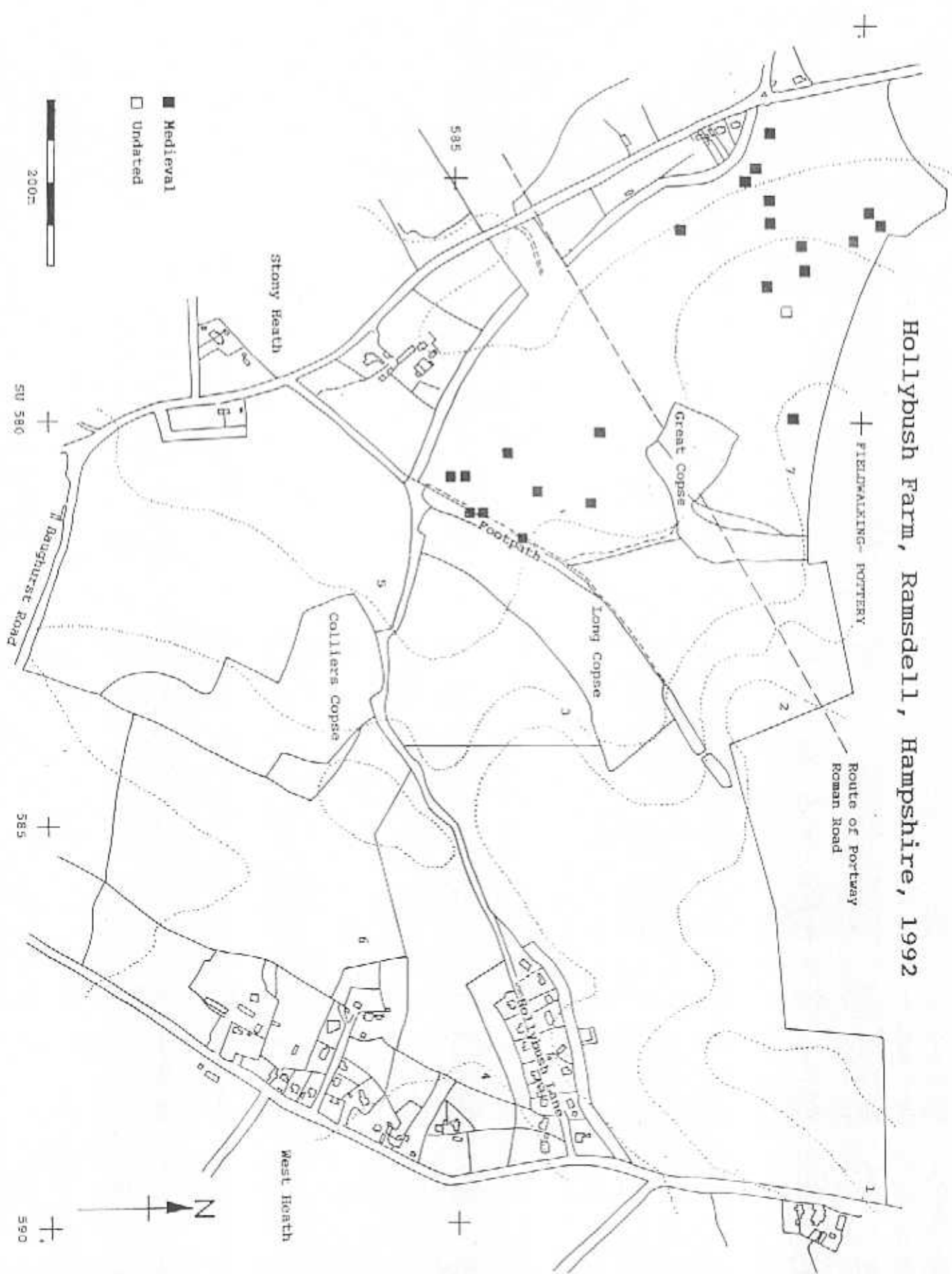
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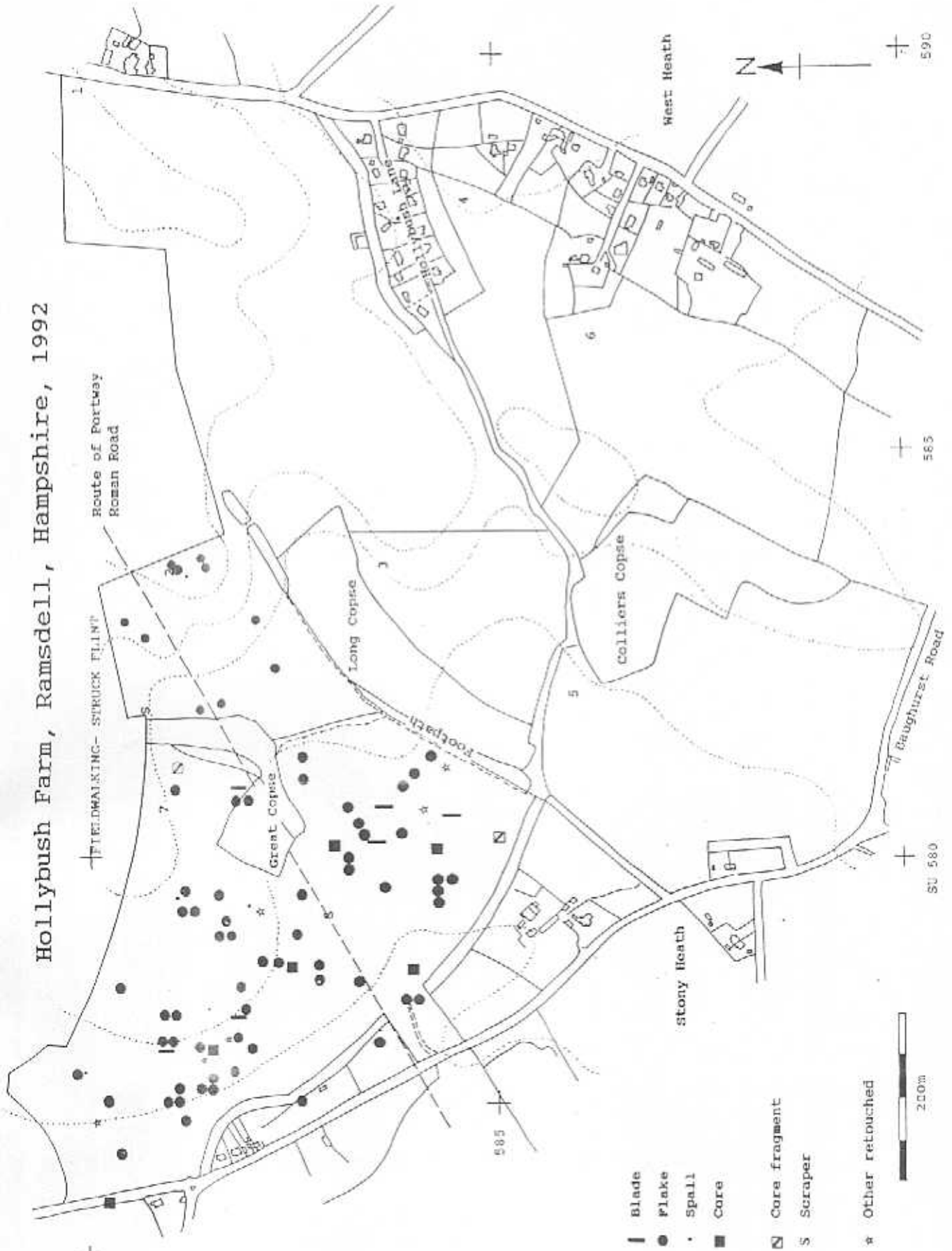


20 Km

Hollybush Farm, Ramsdell, Hampshire, 1992



Hollybush Farm, Ramsdell, Hampshire, 1992



- | Blade
- Flake
- Spall
- Core
- N Core fragment
- S Scraper
- * Other retouched



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