

The Archaeology of the M40 through Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire, 1988-91

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SUMMARY

This article summarises the archaeology revealed by 25 miles of motorway construction. Fieldwalking followed by archaeological surveillance of topsoil stripping and roadside drainage ditches along the M40 and its associated road schemes revealed previously undetected occupation sites from the Neolithic to post-medieval periods. Artefact scatters suggested that past land use may have been as intensive in the Cherwell Valley as in the Thames Valley.

The archaeological potential of six sites along the M40 route between Wendlebury and Waterstock was assessed by trial excavation: the prehistoric occupation at Merton quarry (Oxon.), a deserted medieval village at Ledall (Oxon.), an Iron Age settlement at Waterstock (Oxon.), and three Roman or Anglo-Saxon period find-spots in Buckinghamshire. Ledall and one Buckinghamshire site, as well as the Merton quarry site, would have merited further selective excavation, but the speed of motorway construction made additional detailed archaeological work impossible.

Three sites were subjected to more extensive archaeological excavation: Bronze Age barrows and a Middle Iron Age enclosure at Merton (Oxon.); early Saxon occupation associated with a Roman villa at Aynho (Northants.); and at Fritwell (Oxon.), where no evidence for Aves Ditch was found north of Fritwell.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

Motorway construction is often described as a random archaeological trench providing a unique opportunity to view and record a continuous section through past landscapes. The M40 traversed some 37 km. of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, passing through areas which had received scant attention and whose archaeology remained unknown. It thus offered a unique opportunity to begin to redress the imbalance in our knowledge of the archaeology of the Oxfordshire region away from the Thames Valley gravels, in particular the archaeological potential of the Cherwell Valley and the North Oxfordshire Uplands N.W. of Banbury.

The unprecedented rate at which the Wendlebury-Waterstock section of the motorway was built set new standards within the construction industry and precluded major archaeological intervention. Funding of preliminary desk-top surveys, of field prospection, and (until the commencement in spring 1990 of the last stage of the route between Wendlebury and Waterstock) of any watching briefs was a subject of continu-

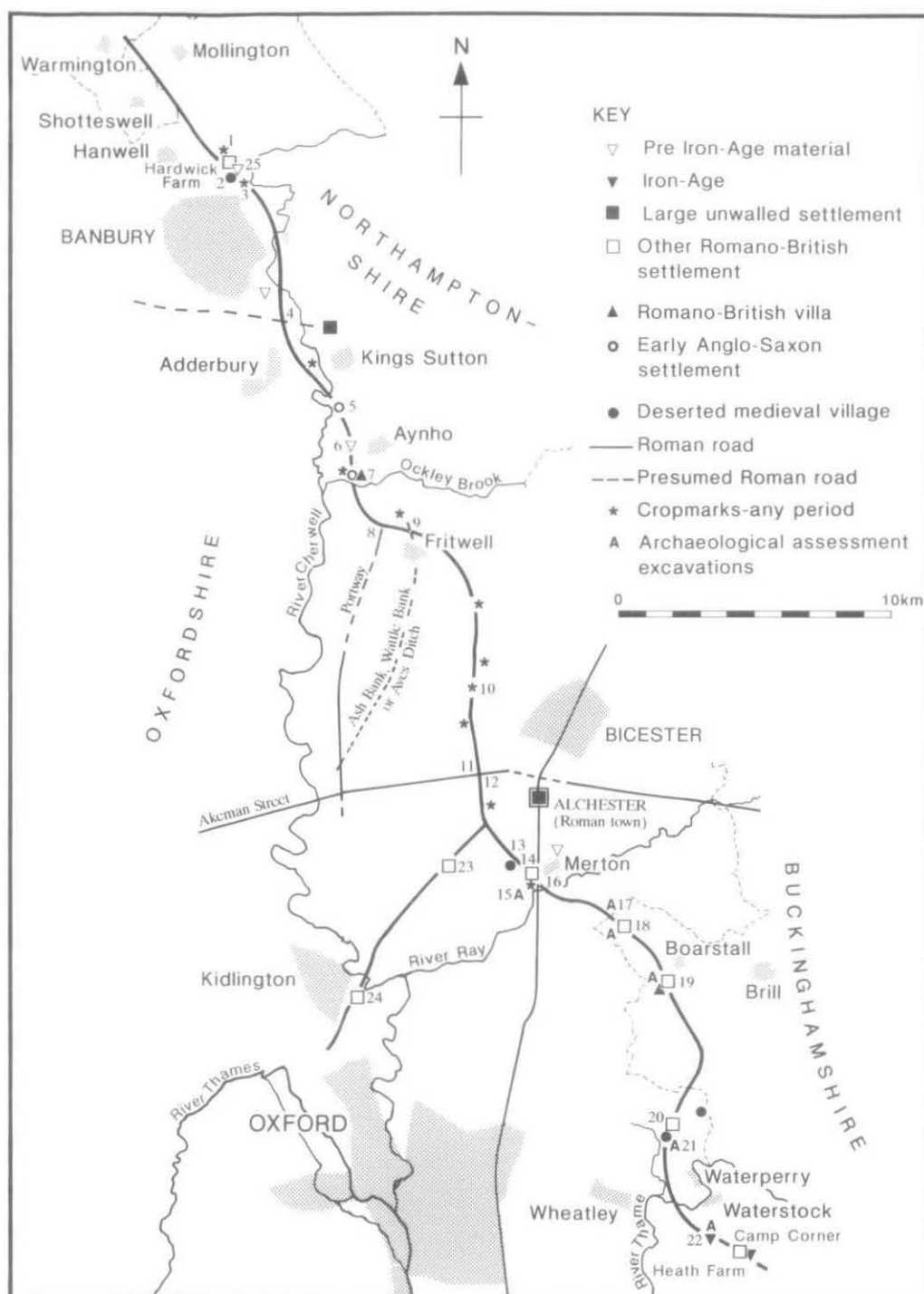


Fig. 1. The M40 route from Waterstock, Oxfordshire, to the Warwickshire border.

ous dispute between the Department of Transport and English Heritage.¹ Lack of government commitment before 1989 resulted in insufficient archaeological investigation north of Wendlebury both before and during construction, representing some 34 km. (or 66%) of the route between Warmington and Waterstock (Fig. 1).

PRELIMINARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEYS

Inspired by the highly successful effort of the previous M40 Archaeological Research Group in recording the archaeology of the M40 from Stokenchurch (Bucks.) to Waterstock Crossroads (Oxon.) in 1972,² preliminary desk-top surveys of the known archaeology of the alternative routes were produced by the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit in 1974³ and an 1979⁴ and by the consulting engineers.⁵ Each survey highlighted the possible impact on known sites and settlements lying on or close to each of the proposed routes, and for which there might be some destruction of related archaeological information. None of the surveys included archaeological field prospection along the routes, and therefore could not evaluate the full impact of motorway construction on the archaeological record or suggest the frequency of major archaeological sites, which elsewhere have occurred at the rate of two per mile (1.3 per km.).⁶

In 1979–80 engineering test pits dug along the preferred route were monitored but provided little material from known sites, and no new sites were detected.

The preliminary surveys, based mainly on the County Sites and Monuments Record,⁷ showed that the route finally chosen cut 5 linear monuments, comprising 4 Roman roads and the enigmatic Aves Ditch. Only one possible settlement site, a rectangular cropmark N.W. of Banbury, lay on the road line. Following the announcement of the preferred route north of Wendlebury, English Heritage agreed to fund the excavation of a section across Aves Ditch at Fritwell. The route from Wendlebury to Waterstock, which linked the two halves of the London–Birmingham motorway, proved controversial and was subjected to a second public enquiry, and the final route was announced early in 1990 less than four months before construction began.

FIELDWALKING IN 1985

Immediately after harvest in 1985 the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit fieldwalked the route north from Wendlebury to Mollington. Thirteen kilometres (38%) of the c. 34-km. route crossed non-arable land and was not available for prospection. Only one major new site was located, a scatter of flintwork in Aynho parish (Northants.) which later

¹ Formerly within the Dept. of the Environment.

² D.A. Hinton and T. Rowley (eds.), 'Excavations on the Route of the M40', *Oxoniensia*, xxxviii (1973), 1–183.

³ J. Hinchliffe, 'M40 Motorway Extension, Oxford to Birmingham. A Preliminary Survey of the Route Corridor in Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire' (unpubl. Oxon. Archaeol. Unit Report, 1974): copies in Oxford Central Library Centre for Oxon. Studies, Sites and Monuments Record.

⁴ A. Cookson, 'Evaluation, M40 Oxford–Birmingham, Waterstock to Warwick Extension, Archaeology – Oxfordshire' (unpubl. Oxon. Archaeol. Unit Report, 1979): copies in Sites and Mons. Rec.

⁵ 'Initial Geotechnical Study: Vol. IX, Archaeological Appraisal' (Ove Arup and Partners, 1974: unpubl., produced for the Dept. of Transport).

⁶ T. Rowley, 'Archaeology of the M40', in Hinton and Rowley, *op. cit.* note 2, 1–5.

⁷ Oxford Central Library Centre for Oxon. Studies, Sites and Monuments Record.

revealed a Neolithic pit; the nearby Roman villa at Lower Aynho Ground Farm was not located at that stage, as the field was under crop. The result of this exercise appeared to follow the pattern observed on previous road schemes, where fieldwalking has been relatively successful only after topsoil has been removed. The delayed announcement of the route south of Wendlebury left no time for field prospection, although six known sites were assessed by trial trenching before road construction prevented further work.

The construction of the M40 extension and associated road schemes represent one of the most unsatisfactory episodes in Oxfordshire's archaeology in recent times. The government's refusal until 1989 to fund work inhibited full-time surveillance and investigation of artefact scatters recovered by fieldwalking during motorway construction. Surveillance during construction was undertaken by two self co-ordinating voluntary fieldwork groups based at Adderbury and Bicester, which had been formed through evening classes organized by the Oxford University Department for External Studies (now the Oxford University Department for Continuing Education).

ARTEFACT AND SITE DISTRIBUTION

The pace at which road building was undertaken, including construction without topsoil stripping, limited the fieldwork potential compared with the previous stretch of the M40 built in 1972, although the roadside drainage ditches generally provided good sections. The resulting distribution of sites and surface finds shown in Figure 1 illustrates the difficulty, in areas of different geology and current land use, of detecting with equal success evidence of man's past activities. Generally, archaeological features were revealed only on the higher ground; north of Banbury the route within Oxfordshire provided little of significance, as the route followed the floodplain of a brook.

As with the fieldwalking in 1985, archaeological surveillance produced many occasional finds of pottery, much of which may have been distributed by external settlement-activities such as manuring, and which cannot be taken to indicate primary domestic settlement foci.

NEOLITHIC AND BRONZE AGE

Possible late Mesolithic and Neolithic flintwork, not associated with occupation features, was recovered from excavations at Grimsbury⁸ E. of Banbury and at Merton⁹ S. of Bicester. Motorway construction revealed a spread of Neolithic flintwork to the S. of Twyford Lane N.E. of Adderbury, where a contemporary land surface appeared to have survived. A fourth site, on a ridge of high ground at Aynho 200 m. from a previously discovered ring ditch, contained a Neolithic pit and possibly-associated postholes.

No trace of the enigmatic linear earthwork ascribed to either the prehistoric, Roman or Anglo-Saxon periods, and known variously as Aves Ditch, Ash Bank or Wattle Bank, was found N. of Fritwell.¹⁰ The monument as a whole is more likely to represent the various forms of construction to be found along a Roman road crossing different types of ground, rather than a ditched boundary, prehistoric or otherwise.

⁸ T.G. Allen, 'Archaeological Discoveries on the Banbury E.-W. Link Road', *Oxonienia*, liv (1989), 25-44.

⁹ To be published separately by the Oxford Archaeological Unit.

¹⁰ Sites and Mons. Record, P.R.N. 8925.

The presence of two Bronze Age settlement sites was established by excavation at Grimsbury and at Merton (above); several likely Bronze Age ring ditches, seen previously as cropmarks close to or cut by the route, were not detected. Occasional flintwork found elsewhere along the route was undiagnostic, and need not have been directly associated with settlement foci. At Grimsbury (located E. of Banbury and the River Cherwell on a tongue of higher ground), excavation of part of the deserted medieval village in 1985 in advance of the construction of a road linking Banbury to the future M40 revealed in addition Bronze Age settlement ditches, and some possibly earlier flintwork.¹¹ At Merton (S. of Bicester), two Bronze Age ring ditches with five associated burials and a Middle Iron Age enclosure were detected through the vigilance of the County Museum Service, and were excavated in advance of a motorway roadstone quarry; that excavation was funded by the contractor, Alfred McAlpine PLC, to fulfil the County Council's planning requirements.

IRON AGE

Iron Age settlement remains were detected at Merton and Tiddington through assessment excavations. In contrast with the previous phase of the M40 in 1972, no new Iron Age settlements were subsequently encountered during motorway construction, and the distribution of Iron Age settlements in Figure 1 is undoubtedly incomplete.

At Merton the Bronze Age burials were overlain by an Iron Age enclosure, and an adjacent field to the W. which was to be stripped for quarry landscaping was assessed. This revealed more Iron Age settlement activity which was subsequently preserved. Twelve kilometres S.E. of Merton, the periphery of a another Iron Age settlement was detected in assessment trenches at Lower Farm, Tiddington and Albury. This lay on the edge of the gravel terrace already well known for the Iron Age settlement excavated 0.7 km. to the E.S.E., and for the extensive cropmarks to the S. and E.¹²

ROMAN ROADS

The M40 provided an opportunity to view 100–200 m. lengths of four principle Roman roads, including those S. and W. of the deserted town at Alchester. No traces remained of the road serving the extensive, unwallled Romano-British settlement N. of King's Sutton, or of the Port Way; nor was there any recognisable trace of the road S. of the Merton–Islip road, even though it had previously shown as a cropmark, and lay immediately N. of a bridge discovered in 1979 and dendrochronologically dated to soon after A.D. 95.¹³ Though aerial photographs have recorded cropmarks of the road at different times as side ditches only¹⁴ and as metalling only,¹⁵ no metalling or obvious traces of side ditches were seen during topsoil stripping, although irregular features within the oblique section of the motorway drainage ditch may have represented

¹¹ Allen, *op. cit.* note 8, 35–6.

¹² T. Rowley, 'Site 3: Excavations at an Iron Age Village at Heath Farm', in Hinton and Rowley, *op. cit.* note 2, 23–40.

¹³ R.A. Chambers, 'A Roman Timber Bridge at Ivy Farm, Fencott with Murcott, Oxon., 1979', *Oxoniensia*, li (1986), 31–6.

¹⁴ Fairey Air Survey (1961), Oxon. 6" to the mile, photo no. 9.054.

¹⁵ Astral Surveys Ltd., Oxon. 1/10,000 (1981), no. 355.

Lengthwise section through Akeman Street

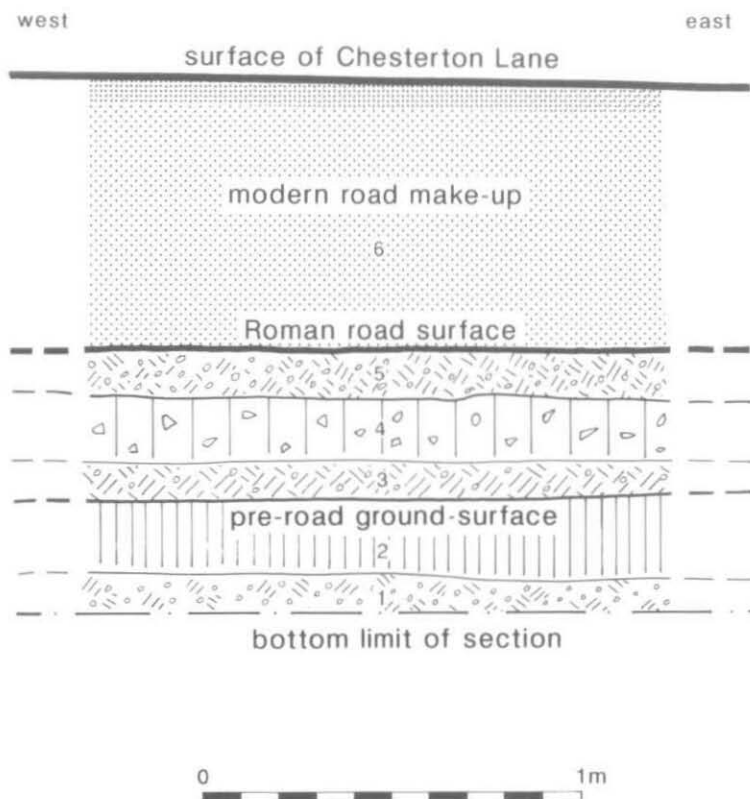


Fig. 2. Lengthwise section through Akeman Street Roman road beneath Chesterton Lane. This section was recorded in the centre of the W. bridge abutment of the Chesterton Lane overbridge. Layer 1 – natural, gravelly brown clay subsoil; 2 – darker pre-road ground surface; 3 – redeposited natural subsoil; 4 – small, broken subangular limestone and soil; 5 – redeposited natural subsoil with two pottery sherds; 6 – Chesterton Lane, the modern road bed of limestone and clay capped with tarmac.

roadside ditches. As the road crossed an outlier of brashy limestone which lay immediately below the topsoil at this point it seems highly likely that the road utilised the natural brashy limestone surface, and that no further metalling was necessary. Shallow marking-out trenches and compaction may well have contributed to the different ways in which cropmarks have represented the road. It is likely that more remains of the road would have been detected had the subsoil been subject to closer inspection before removal.

West of Alchester, metalling from Akeman Street was revealed in the Chesterton Lane overbridge foundations, 0.8 m. beneath the present road surface (Fig. 2). Metalled with brashy subsoil quarried from the roadside ditches (layer 3), the road appears to have been patched, and subsequently a new surface (layer 5) was laid over 0.2 m. of

accumulated soil and stoney detritus. A track c. 5 m. wide in places, thinly metalled with rough stone cobbling 0.1 m. thick, lay beneath the topsoil 10 m. S. of Chesterton Lane. This track appears to represent an alternative route to Akeman Street, although as Akeman Street has continued in use down to the present day it may be post-Roman.

Some 10 km. N. of Akeman Street the present 19th-century road marking the line of Aves Ditch N. of Fritwell,¹⁶ sometimes suggested as a former Roman road,¹⁷ displayed no sign of pre-19th-century construction when sectioned.

ROMAN SETTLEMENTS

The Romano-British period was represented chiefly by occasional abraded pottery sherds present as surface finds along the whole route. They had probably been distributed in part by manure spreading in this period of intensive agricultural activity and did not necessarily help to locate either farmsteads or larger nucleated settlements. However, they remain a clear indicator of the intensive nature of the occupation of the landscape along the Cherwell Valley and the North Oxfordshire uplands.

The route skirted two Roman villas. At Boarstall in Buckinghamshire the road revealed a pit and hearth near a previously recorded spread of tesserae.¹⁸ At Aynho in Oxfordshire the route passed immediately W. of a rectangular walled enclosure where rubble spreads clearly outlined internal buildings after ploughing in 1986.¹⁹ On low floodable clay land N. of the Croughton brook, enclosures to the W. of the villa were occupied into the early Saxon period.²⁰ The site appears to have been occupied throughout the Roman period, and early Saxon pottery was recovered from the top of one of the adjacent later Roman ditches.

The upgrading of the A41 linking Oxford to the M40 junction at Wendlebury created 4 km. of new dual carriageway to the E. of Kidlington and Gosford. This revealed two new Roman settlements, both ploughed out beneath former open fields. The dualling of the A41 from Wendlebury to Bicester through the outskirts of the Roman town at Alchester will begin in mid 1991.²¹

ANGLO-SAXON AND MEDIEVAL

In contrast to some observations along the M5 the removal of hedged field boundaries was not particularly informative, and there was little opportunity to examine the development of the medieval landscape. Only two early Anglo-Saxon settlements were discovered along the M40 corridor, both in Northamptonshire. Pottery was recovered from the upper fillings of late Roman boundary ditches immediately W. of the Roman villa at Lower Aynho Ground Farm, Aynho.²² A possible sunken-featured building 2.5 km. S. of Aynho was seen in section, and pottery was recovered.²³

¹⁶ O.S. Map 6", SP 52 NW (1955).

¹⁷ I.D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain* (1952), 152.

¹⁸ M.E. Farley in *Records of Buckinghamshire*, vol. 3 (forthcoming).

¹⁹ Photographed by the present writer.

²⁰ Information from Northants. County Council Archaeological Unit (NCCAU).

²¹ Since this paper was written, excavations and trial trenching have been undertaken along the A41 to the W. and N.W. of Alchester by Oxford Archaeological Unit for English Heritage: O.A.U. *Annual Report* (1991-2), 14.

²² Information from NCCAU.

²³ Ibid.

No mid Anglo-Saxon settlement evidence was discovered, but late Anglo-Saxon material presumably representing pre-Domesday Grimsbury was excavated in advance of the Banbury-M40 link-road in 1985, where a number of features continued into the 13th century.²⁴

Grimsbury was one of four known medieval deserted sites from which the motorway and associated works were likely to provide additional information. In Oxfordshire, Ledall (in Waterperry) was dissected by the route; the clayland site had previously been ploughed level, and an assessment excavation did little other than confirm the settlement's extent at that point, and its 13th- to 15th-century date. Both Hardwick (to the N.W. of Banbury) and Thomley (to the E. of Oxford) lay adjacent to the route, but nothing was revealed of either settlement.

The majority of the medieval pottery sherds occasionally found along the route during construction were most likely the product of manuring. No previously undetected medieval settlements were discovered.

GAZETTEER OF SITES

The following gazetteer provides details of each site cut by the motorway and secondary road schemes. The archaeology was difficult or impossible to detect along parts of each route and this gazetteer cannot be regarded as exhaustive. The sites are listed from N. to S.

Sites within Northamptonshire were recorded for the Northamptonshire County Council Archaeology Unit, who hold the archive. Archives for the sites in Buckinghamshire are held by the Buckinghamshire County Museum. The Oxfordshire archive will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Council Department of Museum Services.

- 1 *Banbury, Oxon.*
Oxon. PRN 9184

SP 457 437

Three circular cropmarks and one linear cropmark close to or cut by route. Nothing revealed.

- 2 *Banbury, Oxon.*
Oxon. PRN 1098

SP 462 431

Deserted medieval village of Hardwick lay immediately W. of the route. No medieval features were recognised within the motorway corridor and the whole of the settlement appears to lie to the W. A thin scatter of medieval pottery was recovered between the A423 Southam road and the railway.

- 3 *Banbury, Oxon*
Oxon. PRN 5702

SP 464 428

Rectangular cropmark located at bend in Oxford canal, E. of aluminium works. Lay directly on route line. Covered by topsoil dump.

- 4 *Bodicote, Oxon.*

SP 4785 3760

Line of Roman road cut by motorway between Bodicote and Twyford Mill. No trace of metallurgy or ditches detected.

²⁴ Allen, *op. cit.* note 8.

5 *Kings Sutton, Northants.*

SP 499 345

Anglo-Saxon pottery, animal bone and burnt stones in indeterminate feature 2.0 m. wide \times 0.4 m. deep cut into limestone. Either a sunken-featured building, a quarry or a curving ditch. Seen in section only. A ditch and several other undated, indeterminate features were possibly associated with a nearby prehistoric henge.

6 *Ayhno, Northants.*

SP 502 332

Early Neolithic pit approx. 0.8 m. \times 0.45 m. deep with pottery fragments and flintwork. Four shallow undated postholes nearby, others possibly destroyed. Ring ditch 200 m. to W.

7 *Ayhno, Northants.*

SP 505 318

Early Saxon pottery and Roman villa. Early Saxon pottery in top of late Roman ditch. Several ditches appear to represent enclosures or paddocks to W. of villa. Low, walled rectangular platform with buildings outlined by stone scatters in freshly ploughed site recorded 100 m. E. of motorway line in 1986. A rubble wall footing and rough cobbling later cut by a ditch was also revealed. Three coins dated to A.D. 320–350, metal objects and 1st- to 4th-century pottery were recovered during a brief excavation by the Northamptonshire County Council Archaeology Unit.

8 *Souldern, Oxon.*
Oxon. PRN 8926

SP 5175 3040

Port Way, presumed prehistoric track and Roman road. No northerly extension visible.

9 *Fritwell, Oxon.*
Oxon. PRN 8925

SP 5255 3000

The Ordnance Survey depicts the present Fritwell-Souldern road from Fritwell to Inkerman Farm as an extension of the ancient linear monument variously known as Aves Ditch, Ash Bank or Wattle Bank. Four sections over a distance of 100 m. failed to show any trace of the monument beneath or beside the present road. South of Fritwell this monument appears as a ploughed down bank and W. of Middleton Stoney as a bank flanked by at least one ditch. Seventeenth- and 18th-century cartographers depict this monument as a road from Kirtlington to Plough Hill. Sometimes this monument is interpreted as four intersecting Roman roads which might explain its several changes in direction over a relatively short distance, and may also explain the apparent absence of archaeological remains N. of Fritwell.

10 *Bucknell, Oxon.*
Oxon. PRN 9189

SP 5480 2450

Parallel linear cropmarks and one circle possibly cut by route. Nothing revealed.

11 *Chesterton, Oxon.*
Oxon. PRN 8921

SP 5520 2110

Akeman Street Roman road 2 km. W. of Alchester was shown to lie beneath Chesterton Lane. Partly sectioned by bridge foundation (Fig. 2). Indeterminate coarse-ware pottery sherd from road surface. Roadside ditches not visible in contractors' workings. Metalled with weathered brashy subsoil presumably quarried from the roadside ditches, the road appears to have been patched and once remetalled during its lifetime.

12 *Chesterton, Oxon.*

SP 5485 2105

Slight agger about 5.0 m. wide parallel to and 10 m. south of present Chesterton Lane. Rough stone cobble surface 0.1 m. thick and 2.0–5.0 m. wide below turf line. Laid upon natural subsoil. Undated. Exposed in two trenches by Mr. A. Boarder.

13 *Fencott with Murcott, Oxon.*

SP 563 179

Pit or ditch sectioned by motorway drainage ditch. Contained daub. Neighbouring shallow features contained late medieval and post-medieval pottery for just over 200 m. N.E. of Starveall Farm (Oxon. PRN 11970), which is thought to mark the site of a deserted medieval village.

14 *Merton, Oxon.*

SP 570 175

A previous occasional find proved to mark an area of dark earth and Romano-British occupation debris revealed during topsoil removal. Site exposed for only 1 hour.

15 *Merton, Oxon.*

SP 570 169

Two Bronze Age barrows which were ploughed level in antiquity and 5 associated cremations excavated in advance of the M40 stone quarry. Residual fragments of Beaker Pottery in one of the ring ditches. One ring ditch measured 24 m. in diameter with a ditch 3.0 m. wide and 1.0 m. deep. The second ring ditch was of similar diameter but shallower. Neither barrow had a central burial. Of the associated cremations 3 were in collared urns and 2 were in food vessels.

There was some residual late Mesolithic or early Neolithic flintwork. One barrow was overlain by a middle Iron Age rectangular enclosure, three associated pits and several postholes. Archaeological assessment trenches revealed Iron Age occupation extending to the W.

This site will be published separately in *Oxoniensia*.

16 *Merton, Oxon.*

SP 5725 1745

Roman road (Margary 160b) from Alchester to Dorchester-on-Thames. Variable cropmarks show only the side ditches or just the metalled area. However there was no metalling visible during topsoil stripping and perhaps the cropmark was due partly to compaction. North of the River Ray (for Roman bridge see *Oxoniensia*, li (1986), 31-6) the road crossed Cornbrash limestone which lay immediately beneath the topsoil. The roadside ditches were not clear during stripping or in the oblique section provided by the drainage ditch.

17 *Boarstall, Bucks.*

SP 600 159

An area likely to contain medieval or early post-medieval pottery kilns was lost to motorway construction before access was allowed for assessment.

18 *Boarstall, Bucks.*
Bucks. PRN 4474

SP 605 155

Assessment trenches located one Roman-period ditch. Iron Age and Roman findspot nearby.

19 *Boarstall, Bucks.*
Bucks. PRN 1800

SP 611 137

Assessment trenching near the Angrove Quarry Anglo-Saxon burial site (SP 6160 1412) revealed a Romano-British pit, a hearth and an undated ditch. A tegulae scatter was detected 500 m. to the S. beyond the motorway.

20 *Waterperry, Oxon.*

SP 621 082

Scatter of Romano-British greywares 100 m. N.E. of lane which led to Ledall Cottage. No associated archaeological features. Recorded in assessment trenches on N. side of Ledall deserted medieval village. Linear cropmarks recorded on Oxon. SMR probably represent elements of the medieval common field system.

21 *Waterperry, Oxon.*

SP 619 083

Ledall medieval clayland village centred SP 616 083 was first mentioned in 1279. Evictions in 1492 and 'Ledall Pasture' mentioned c. 1550 suggest depopulation by enclosure (Alison et al. (1966), 40). Levelled and ploughed since the 1950s the site is now marked only by a pottery scatter.

Assessment trenches in June 1989 revealed boundary ditches and pits with domestic debris. These were almost entirely confined to the field S.W. of the lane leading to Ledall Cottage. No medieval ground surfaces or building plans remained. Occasional medieval sherds occurred for 100 m. N.E. of the lane.

None of the pottery recovered need be any earlier than the 13th century and none later than the 15th excepting occasional 19th- to 20th-century sherds, which agrees with the documentary evidence for the life span of this settlement. The village lay on an exposed level hilltop on the heavy, impermeable Amptill Clay. Waterlogged environmental remains probably survive elsewhere within the settlement. Ideally the settlement enclosures should have been planned following topsoil removal but this was prevented by construction work in 3rd week of July 1989.

22 *Tiddington with Albury, Oxon.*

SP 635 042

Oxon. PRN 5810-11 and 2979

Archaeological assessment trenches immediately N. of the A40 and W. of Lower (Chilworth) Farm along the northern edge of the plateau gravel revealed periglacial features and occasional Iron Age occupation debris at E. end, but no structural remains, pits or ditches. Appears to mark the periphery of an extensive Iron Age settlement seen as cropmarks S. and E. of the assessment site (Oxon. PRN 5810 and 5911; O.C.C. 1981). Further Iron Age and Romano-British settlement features were excavated at Heath Farm Camp Corner some 0.7 km. E.S.E. of the present site in advance of the construction of the M40 in 1972 (Gray 1974; Rowley 1974).

23 *Weston-on-the-Green, Oxon.*

SP 547 175

An extensive spread of Romano-British pits and ditches for 50 m. N. and 100 m. S. of Oddington Lane. 1st- to 4th-century Romano-British wares and building-tile fragments recovered. Two pieces of medieval glazed, crested roof tile with vent holes may be associated with a rubble spread at the base of the top soil on the southern side of Oddington Lane.

24 *Gosford*

SP 506 130

Shallow, dark soil-filled linear features below modern plough soil in E. drainage ditch for 30 m. N. of farm track. No features on W. side of carriageway. Land liable to flood. Settlement possibly centred on higher ground to S.E. Three-metre wide layer of poor quality limestone rubble metalling on N. side of present ditch bounding the field. Apparently not associated with Romano-British material. Possibly medieval and abandoned at enclosure.

25 *Banbury, Oxon.*

SP 456 435 to SP 463 428

Neolithic to Bronze Age flint scatter E. of Hardwick Farm contained waste and utilised flakes in pristine condition. This suggested that an undisturbed prehistoric ground surface was present.

There was also a thin scatter of Romano-British greywares between the A423 and the railway E. and N. of Hardwick Farm.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit was responsible for the overall organisation of the surveillance of the Oxfordshire sections of the M40. The bulk of artefact recovery was undertaken by two voluntary self co-ordinating fieldwork groups organised through the Adderbury Historical Association, principally by Mr. T. Woodall, and through an

evening class at Bicester. Mr. M. Farley of the Buckinghamshire County Council Museum Service undertook the assessment and surveillance of the Buckinghamshire section assisted by Miss N. Hutchings, who later continued the watching brief in Oxfordshire for the OAU. Mr. D. Jackson recorded the sites in Northamptonshire for the Northamptonshire County Council Archaeology Unit. Archaeological survey and prospection between 1973 and 1989 were funded partly by the then annual Oxfordshire County Council grant to the OAU. The fieldwork groups were recruited from evening classes run by the University of Oxford Department for Continuing Education (previously the Department for External Studies) through the foresight of Mr. T. Rowley, then staff tutor in archaeology. We are indebted to the many contractors and the Department of Transport for access to the Motorway Construction. English Heritage funded the recording, analysis, and publication.

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