Oxbow Books

Chapter Title: Background

Book Title: Ariconium, Herefordshire
Book Subtitle: an Iron Age settlement and Romano-British 'small town'
Book Author(s): Robin Jackson
Published by: Oxbow Books. (2012)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvh1dv8t.11

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at https://about.jstor.org/terms

This book is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

Oxbow Books is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Ariconium, Herefordshire*

This content downloaded from 58.97.216.251 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 06:42:14 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Section 1. Background

Introduction

The site

The Roman settlement at Weston-under-Penyard is located at NGR SO 645 240, a few miles to the east of Ross-on-Wye in south Herefordshire (Fig. 1.1). The site is generally recognised as the Roman 'small town' of *Ariconium* (Rivet 1970). Much of the former settlement is under regular arable cultivation although several minor roads cross it and its eastern side is affected by the small hamlet of Bromsash.

Ariconium is one of the most important Roman sites in Herefordshire and the region as a whole. Part of the settlement area is a scheduled ancient monument (County Monument number, Here. and Wor*c.* 154; Fig. 1.2) and it has long been known as a major iron production centre. As such it has been identified as one of a group of specialised 'small towns' with an industrial function (Burnham and Wacher 1990). Of these *Ariconium* is probably one of the least well understood and, over the years, the general paucity of information has hindered synthetic studies (VCH I 1908; Crickmore 1984; Burnham and Wacher 1990; Dalwood 1994). The most recent of these was able to define an urban area (CMHTS; Dalwood 1994; Fig. 1.2). However, no details of the chronology, development or layout of the settlement could be identified.

The combination of poor understanding of the settlement allied to a threat from soil erosion mean that effective management and protection of the archaeological deposits has been identified as problematic (Jackson and Hancocks 1998).

The *Arionium* Project was consequently undertaken between 1998–2003 in response to this situation with the aim of assessing the current state of knowledge and establishing a framework for future research and management at the site.

Topography and geology

The focus of occupation lies between 85m and 125m OD on a fairly flat hilltop from which the ground falls away gently to the north and south (Fig. 1.2). A scarp forms the eastern side of the hill and slight promontories extend to the north and west. Drainage is predominantly westwards along three small streams. The focus of occupation lies on the western side of the hill with activity quite clearly extending down the hillsides towards the streams.

The solid geology consists of Breconian and Dittonian Old Red Sandstone (British Geological Survey 1990, 1:250,000 sheet 51ºN–04ºW) giving rise to well drained easily cultivated soils typical of the Eardiston 1 association (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1:250000, Sheet 3, Midland and Western England). These soils are subject to erosion especially on cultivated slopes, where sheet and gully erosion often occur following heavy storms (Ragg *et al.* 1984). At *Ariconium* erosion of this type has been noted during fieldwork by both the Service and the Agricultural and Development Advisory Service (ADAS).

The project

Project design

The project was designed in recognition of the poor level of understanding of this nationally important site and, particularly, to address specific problems identified by the CMHTS (Dalwood 1994). These were considered to relate to both management and research frameworks. In addition, hillslope erosion has been identified as a potentially significant threat to archaeological deposits and one of the principal aims of the project was to assess the impact and extent of this problem.

Data has been drawn from a study area based upon a 2km^2 centred on the scheduled area, thus covering the whole of the main cropmark complex and finds concentration as well as incorporating several areas of activity in the immediate hinterland (Figs 1.1 and 1.2). A wide range of sources have been consulted and reassessed, including aerial photographs, excavation and fieldwalking data, and museum collections. A significant amount of material has been available for study for the first time. In addition, data gathered from the area of the settlement by ADAS has been analysed and, in conjunction with archaeological evidence, has contributed to the development of an understanding of the nature, scale and causes of erosion at *Ariconium*. This has implications for the future management of this particular site as well as other sites in similar locations.

The project is seen as being particularly opportune, combining the study of both old and recently published evidence with analysis and incorporation of a large amount of data which had previously been unpublished. Assessment, analysis and discussion has lead to a synthetic overview of the archaeology of an important, but poorly understood, Roman industrial 'small town' and to an improved understanding of the impact of erosion on the site. This has led to the creation of a better and more focussed management and research framework for this nationally important site.

This content downloaded from 58.97.216.251 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 06:42:14 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

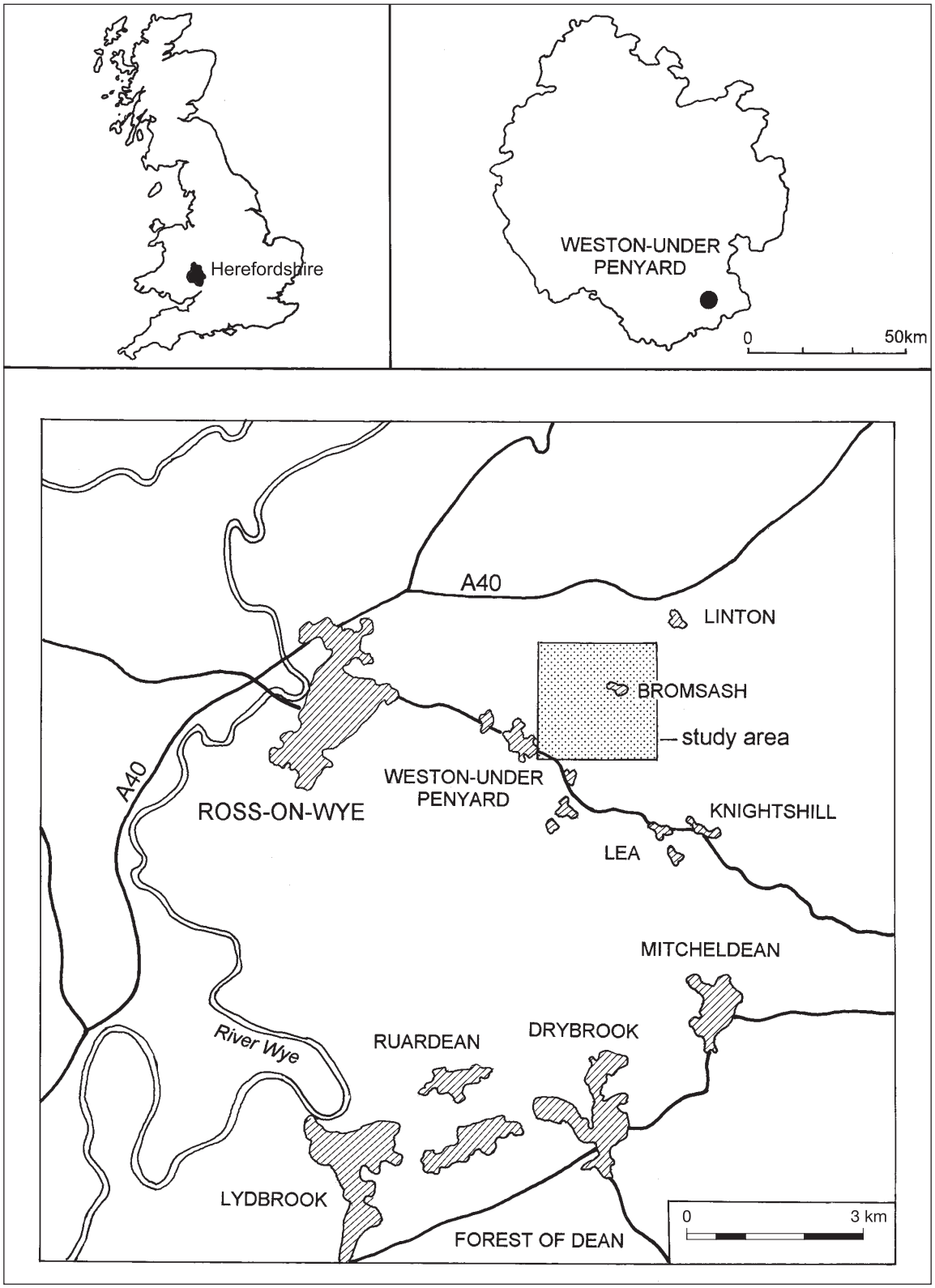

Figure 1.1. Location of Ariconium *project study area. Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO. © Crown Copyright 2011. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100051813*

Aims and objectives

The original aims and objectives (CAS 1995) remained little changed throughout the project, falling under two headings management and academic. These largely arose from the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey report (Dalwood 1995) and from the preparation of the Project Design (CAS 1995, sections 4 and 5.1).

This content downloaded from 58.97.216.251 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 06:42:14 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

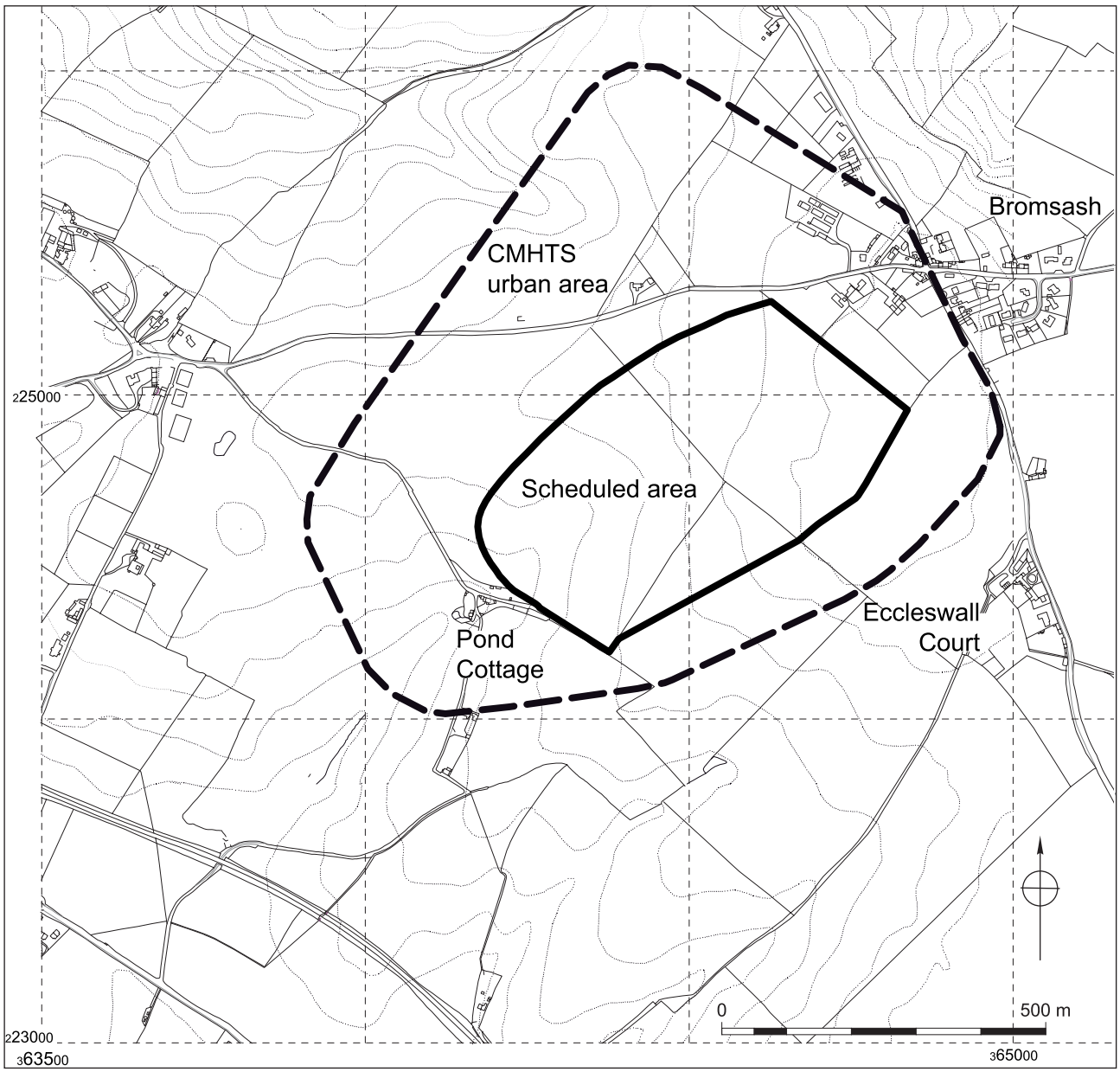

Figure 1.2. Study area showing CMHTS urban extents and scheduled area. Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO. © Crown Copyright 2011. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100051813

Academic objectives

These are grouped under five headings: character, development, morphology, economic activity and hinterland settlement. These were more specifically broken down as follows.

Character (Section 5)

1. What was the nature of pre-Roman occupation at the site?
2. What is character of the earliest Roman occupation?
3. Does the evidence support the suggestion of religious and military activity?
4. How does *Ariconium* compare with other Roman-British industrial 'small towns' in the area such as Droitwich and Worcester, and with the town of Kenchester? How can it contribute to the understanding of 'small towns'?
5. What was the nature of post-Roman activity at the site?

Morphology (Section 5)

1. Can an Iron Age occupation area be defined?
2. Can the area of the earliest Roman occupation be defined?
3. How was the settlement laid out in the Roman period and can roads and domestic and industrial zones be identified? Do these change through time? What implications do these have for the understanding of the settlement as a 'small town'?
4. Can areas of military and religious activity be defined?

This content downloaded from 58.97.216.251 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 06:42:14 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Development (Section 5)
1. Can Iron Age origins be demonstrated and how do these relate to the subsequent Roman activity? What are the implications for the understanding of the Iron Age to Roman transition period?
2. What is the date of the earliest Roman occupation at the site?
3. Can the chronological development of the Roman settlement be established?
4. Can a date for the decline and desertion of the Roman occupation be established?

Economic activity (Section 5)
1. What was the nature of the Roman ironworking industry? What were its sources of supply, its technology and products? What can this information contribute to the understanding of this highly important regional and national industry?
2. What does the other evidence for the economic function of the settlement tell us about it in terms of other industrial activities, agricultural base, and the evidence of its trading network?

Hinterland settlement (Section 5)
1. What was the nature of the other Roman settlements (farmsteads etc) known in the immediate hinterland (within the study area; Fig. 1.2) of the site? Can these be related to *Ariconium* and if so what was this relationship?
2. What is the potential for reconstructing the surrounding landscape before and during settlement of the site? What impact did settlement, industry and agriculture have on, for example, woodland cover and soil erosion?

Management objectives (Sections 3 and 6)
1. What impact has post-Roman activity had on Roman deposits?
2. What is the condition, survival and vulnerability of deposits and artefacts across the site?
3. How severe is hillslope erosion across the site and what are the factors which are causing it?
4. Can changes in the composition of the surface assemblage and visible cropmarks through time be detected and if so what contribution can they make to understanding the impact of erosion?
5. What are the effects of hillslope erosion and deposition on archaeological deposits and on approaches to identifying and interpreting them?
6. What is the role agricultural management plays in determining whether hillslope erosion occurs? What options are there for future management which would minimise the effects of such erosion?
7. What is the identifiable extent and potential impact of metal detecting in and around the scheduled area?

Focussing on these aspects of academic research and management has allowed the project to achieve the following:

- Contribute to the research framework and understanding of the site, with particular reference to its origins and chronological development.
- Revise definition of urban area and definition of components.
- Define immediate hinterland settlements and road network within study area.
- Contribute to the development of an effective site management framework.
- Contribute to the identification and understanding of the effects of hillslope erosion on archaeological sites.
- Enhance SMR and CMHTS.
- Disseminate the results through publication.

Related work

The project has been related to a number of other independently resourced areas of research, contributing to them and also drawing on them. Two particular areas of interest have been identified:

1. The information relating to erosion and its impact on a scheduled ancient monument is seen as having particular relevance to the long-term aims of the English Heritage funded Monuments At Risk Survey (MARS). *Ariconium* falls within one of the MARS field transects and it is envisaged that the project will provide information on causes and scale of the deterioration of preservation of deposits at this particular site over a period of time. This can potentially contribute to one of the key long-term focuses of investigation by the MARS project (Darvill and Fulton 1998).
2. Ongoing research as part of a PhD thesis and research programme being undertaken at Cardiff University into sourcing iron ores and products has fed into the project. Samples taken from Roman contexts and one potential Iron Age context at *Ariconium* on the Welsh Water pipeline were submitted for analysis as part of the University's research programme (Thomas and Young 1999a; 1999b). In conjunction with data from work undertaken by English Heritage (AML) on slag from *Ariconium* resulting from the same project this has supported discussion of the character and scope of the ironworking industry at *Ariconium* and in the Forest of Dean. In particular this data has supported the production of tentative estimates of the potential output of the iron industry at the site.

Methodology

Sources

An SMR and literature search of the study area was used to establish a basic index of all reported discoveries (Project Database 1). Principal sources comprised primary archives, excavation reports, other fieldwork reports and documented find spots. A full list of sources consulted is included in Appendix 1 while Appendix 2 provides an index to fieldwork and the sites registered on the Herefordshire County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).

This content downloaded from 58.97.216.251 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 06:42:14 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Three further datasets have been created, one for buried remains (Project Database 2), one for all artefacts (Project Database 3) and one for the pottery (Project Database 4). A sub-set of the pottery database covering the more tightly dateable pottery fabrics has also been created (Project Database 4b). Subsets of the databases have been used in conjunction with a Geographical Information System (GIS).

The databases are briefly described below. Copies of the databases and detailed descriptions of their structures and fields are held in archive.

Dating

Wherever possible deposits, artefacts and other forms of evidence have been dated, either through stratigraphic analysis or through spot dates. A *Terminus Post Quem* (T.P.Q.) has been assigned wherever possible.

To simplify the dating two fields have been included in the databases and used in analysis, the first covering broad periods and the second a more specific sub-division of the Roman period. The following broad periods have been identified:

- Prehistoric (all pre-Iron Age finds)
- Iron Age (including some Roman Republican and early Empire material)
- Roman (AD 43–*c.* 400)
- Medieval (AD 1000 – 1650)
- Post-medieval (AD 1650 +)
- Modern (post 1900)

More specific date ranges for the latest Iron Age and Roman periods are as follows:

- Phase 1. Iron Age/Transitional (up to *c.* AD 100)
- Phase 2. Early to Mid-Roman (*c.* AD 100 to 250)
- Phase 3. Later Roman (*c.* AD 250 to 400)

Buried remains

Analysis of buried remains has been undertaken at two levels, a site specific level and at a broader, settlement wide level.

Site specific analysis has been undertaken on two pieces of previously unpublished work. Firstly, the archive from the excavations undertaken in 1967 by Garrod and Moss has been analysed leading to the production of a phased structural sequence and site narrative with discussion of the associated artefactual and environmental remains (Jackson 2000). Secondly, analysis of a large collection of unanalysed pottery from Bridgewater's excavations in 1963 (Willis, this volume) has lead to refinement of the dating sequence and some reconsideration of selected deposits. The resultant information has been incorporated into the wider, whole site analyses.

Overall analysis and discussion of the evidence from buried remains has been based upon a re-examination and consideration of individual excavation reports and available archives. Each piece of fieldwork undertaken has been summarised and where necessary has been critically considered and re-interpreted (Section 2). The resultant information has contributed to map-based analyses undertaken using the GIS.

Artefactual analysis

Analysis of the Garrod and Moss and the Bridgewater ceramic assemblages has been undertaken as described above. Analysis has also included fieldwalking and other surface assemblages, including those collected by Garrod and Moss, by Bridgewater and the extensive DAG collections (Sections 2 and 4).

Several ceramic assemblages were not analysed, notably those from the Welsh Water pipeline (Jackson, Hancocks and Pearson 1999) and from the excavations on the 'military installation' to the north (Walters and Walters 1989). The latter were not available for study while the former had only recently been analysed. Both groups of material have, however, been considered in the pottery report (Section 4).

Apart from the ceramic analysis described above, a range of other specialist assessments have concentrated on classes of artefacts with the potential to contribute to the dating and characterisation of deposits and activities (brooches, small finds, coins, glass, mortaria, samian, stone and iron working residues). As with the pottery analysis, this work incorporated study of previously unanalysed material in conjunction with consideration of already published material and known collections. Details of the methods used by specialists are included in the individual reports presented below.

The completed artefactual data has been entered onto two further databases (Project Databases 3 and 4) the structures of which are described briefly below. Analysis has been undertaken in conjunction with other sources of data and using the GIS. Artefactual data has also been used to consider whether there is any evidence for changes in the composition (range, date and character) of fieldwalking assemblages through time. As anticipated, this has only been demonstrable on a very broad basis, as insufficient data from comparable areas is available for study. However, the information has supported consideration of the potential effects of soil erosion (Sections 3 and 6) and has identified the potential value of a systematic programme of fieldwalking (and subsequent comparison with existing evidence) in enabling the development of a greater understanding of the impact and effects of erosion.

Environmental analysis

Analysis and reporting of the charcoal samples from Bridgewater's excavations and of the animal bone from Garrod and Moss's excavations (Jackson 2000) has provided information which has contributed towards the wider analysis and discussion of environmental evidence.

Beyond this no further environmental analysis has been undertaken. However, the results of the environmental work undertaken on the Welsh Water pipeline and all other (albeit

This content downloaded from 58.97.216.251 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 06:42:14 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

limited) data from the settlement have been used to update an earlier assessment undertaken as part of the CMHTS. An assessment has also been made of the environmental potential of the study area beyond the currently identified urban area.

Recommendations for future environmental research have been made which take into account paleoenvironmental techniques not previously used at this location (Section 7).

Aerial photographic data

Cropmarks showing on aerial photographs covering the study area have been plotted and an accompanying interpretative report has been produced (presenting and discussing the results of the mapping; Cox 1995). This is summarised here (Section 2 and Appendix 3) and the full report is held in archive. The cropmark plots have contributed to, and supported, analysis of other data sources and form part of the project archive. The mapping and interpretation of geological and soil features has facilitated the understanding and mapping of areas of erosion and deposition.

Erosion and deposition data

The ADAS data has been analysed and a report produced (Section 3 and Appendix 4). A range of further information on activities, which may potentially have affected rates of erosion of archaeological deposits, has been considered in conjunction with the ADAS report. These include information on previous landuse and cropping regimes, tithe maps and 1st edition Ordnance Survey maps (which allow identification of areas where field boundaries have been removed) and archaeological data relating to the survival of deposits (and any discernible erosion of deposits).

This information has formed the basis of a discussion of the past and potential future impact of erosion (and deposition) on archaeological deposits and the threat that they constitute (Section 6). The resultant data has been used to identify and map areas of potential erosion and this is hoped to be of considerable value in formulating any land management approaches developed for the site.

Map based analysis

Rachel Edwards

A significant element of the analytical work has involved spatial analysis of data through the use of a GIS. This was undertaken following all other analysis, specialist reporting and updating of the four project databases.

Only well located data sources were used. To this end, subsets of the four project databases were employed to produce distribution plots on a map base derived from Ordnance Survey digital vector mapping.

The GIS computer programme used was MapInfo. The spatial analysis was not complex, consisting of plotting two-dimensional distributions of subsets of the recorded data. The databases could be queried on any logical combination of the contents of their fields. Eighty-two distributions were plotted and printed out. Key plots have been reproduced within the report (Figs 4.20–22 and 4.27–29), the remainder are held within the archive.

Plots focussed on a number of themes:

1. Plots were undertaken using all sources of located data to define the extents of the main settlement as well as to identify any areas of activity in the immediate hinterland.
2. Data relating to the character of both finds and deposits was used to generate plots which identify areas (components) of industrial activity and domestic occupation as well as any areas associated with military or religious activity.
3. Dating evidence was used in conjunction with the data from the first two plot types to support development of an understanding of the early origins, chronological development and eventual abandonment of both the main settlement and other areas of activity within the study area. In conjunction with the plots of data relating to the character of various areas of the site this analysis allowed certain activities or areas of activity to be linked to particular periods of the settlement's development.
4. It was initially hoped that the data would allow more detailed consideration of patterns of erosion and deposition across the site. However, the relevant data were only recorded in the most recent excavations at *Ariconium*, so these distributions merely demonstrated the locations of recent fieldwork.
5. Plotting of metal detecting finds has allowed identification of those areas most affected allowing consideration of the potential threat, which this poses to the settlement, and associated areas of activity.

In considering these matters the overall understanding of the distribution of fieldwork across the monument and of the effects of erosion/deposition on distributions of data have been used to consider where such processes may have caused bias in these distributions.

Synthesis and discussion

Following completion of all analyses and GIS plotting, the resultant data and distribution plots have been used for synthesis and discussion (Sections 5 and 6). Through use of overlays of GIS plots, mapping of buried remains and cropmark plots in conjunction with the information from the specialist analyses it has been possible to generate a model for the chronological and morphological development as well as the character and status of the settlement and its associated iron industry. Other sources, in particular the ADAS report, have combined to enable assessment and discussion of the potential impact of erosion upon archaeological deposits.

This content downloaded from 58.97.216.251 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 06:42:14 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

The Ariconium databases

Rachel Edwards and Robin Jackson

The databases referred to above were created during the course of the project to support analysis of various categories of information. Details are held in archive. Each database includes common fields such as County Sites and Monuments Record number and National Grid reference.

Project Database 1 provides a basic index for the site, cross-referencing sources (see also Appendix 2). Database 2 covers buried remains and includes data on excavation history, deposits and dating as well as interpretative information at a structural level (*e.g.* oven, pit, *etc.*) and a higher functional level (*e.g.* domestic or industrial). The third database relates to artefacts and includes contextual and interpretative information along with a range of fields to enable recording of different classes of artefact. Lastly two databases (Databases 4 and 4b) were created for the pottery data, one covering all pottery, the other a subset of particularly date sensitive material. These databases were used both within their own right and during GIS analysis.

Site history

Antiquarian investigations

The site has a long history of antiquarian and archaeological interest. This initially stemmed from its inclusion in the Antonine Itinerary (*Itinerarium Antonini Augusti*) in which *Ariconium* is listed on the Iter XIII as being 15 Roman miles from Gloucester (*Clevo*) and 11 from Monmouth (*Blestio*; Margary 1955).

The first known antiquarian reference is by William Camden in Britannia which was published in 1586. Both Camden and Stukeley, the 18th century antiquarian (1724) equated the site listed in the Itinerary with that at Kenchester (*Magnis*), near Hereford. They recorded that the site was reported to have been destroyed by an earthquake.

It was not until 1732 that it was realised that it was unlikely that the Itinerary was referring to Kenchester when John Horsley in his Britannia Romana calculated that *Ariconium* had to lie near Ross-on-Wye. The first references to Roman remains being uncovered at the site date from some 20 to 30 years later. At this time the land was apparently unenclosed and in a rough state, with heaps of rubbish overgrown with briars. The landowner, Mr. Thomas Hopkins Merrick of Bollitree, had this land levelled and enclosed. During the course of this work many finds were reported to have been uncovered. In 1785, in response to a request for more information, Mr. Merrick reported the remains in a letter:

> 'I received a note from Dr Matthews, of Hereford, requesting that I would inform you of what I knew relative to the Old Town, which formerly stood in this neighbourhood. I imagine it to be larger than the City of Gloucester. It covered a great part of the land I occupy at Bollitree, together with much more of the neighbouring lands; indeed, where the streets stood might almost be traced by the colour of the soil. I have never heard that the least ruin appeared above ground, though we often on ploughing strike against some of the old ruins underground, from which I have obtained vast quantities of stone, the walls lying on their sides from a foot to a yard and upwards under the surface. Some time since, being with my men at plough, I observed that the plough struck against a part of the ruins, and raised many large stones; upon examining with my stick I found a very deep cavity where my stick went in. I imagined it an arch or vaulted cellar, and called my men together with proper tools to dig, but found only one of the walls lying as above related. However, not discouraged, we proceeded to dig four or five feet further, when we came to a sound floor, and on it we found a quantity of wheat as perfect in shape as when newly threshed, but it had turned quite black, and vanished to dust by the touch or the least puff of air. Digging at another time a hedge about the depth of four feet we came to a very fine, smooth floor, the face of it being so hard and impenetrable that the spittle would not make the least impression. On this, I procured iron bars, pickaxes, etc, for raising it, but to my disappointment I found it to be nothing but sand – very fine sand, such as is used to shower over writing to dry up ink
>
> This floor must have been a great curiosity, as having so hard a face that nothing less than pickaxes would touch it. We often find Roman, and sometimes British coins (but of the latter very rarely), besides images, fibulae, and other curiosities. Several of the coins that were pretty deep in the earth appear well preserved and as perfect as ever. Several gentlemen, lovers of antiquity, have visited this place, and from its distance from Gloucester, Monmouth, etc, say this is the *Ariconium* of the Romans'.

In 1788 a bronze statuette of Diana reputedly from the site was exhibited to the Society of Antiquaries (Archaeologia, ix, 368). The date of its exhibition suggests that this object, if correctly provenanced, may have been one of the images reported by Merrick. It has unfortunately been 'lost' but an engraving of the statue dated 1843 shows a figure 'about five inches high, of the usual type, apparently represented as drawing a bow' (VCH I 1908).

Early in the nineteenth century, these discoveries led to the first formal identification of the site of *Ariconium* as that at Weston-under-Penyard (Brayley and Britton 1805). They recorded that Merrick had found immense quantities of Roman coins and some British, along with fibulae, lares, lachrymatories, lamps, rings and fragments of tesselated pavements, pillars and 'stones with holes for the jambs of doors.' They also noted that the soil at the site was of an 'extremely dark hue' and that this covered several acres, while adjoining lands were strewn with 'scoria of iron ore'. Coins and innumerable pieces of grey and red pottery could apparently be picked up after ploughing. Coins included some of Constantine and Trajan, many of Tetricus and one of Antonius Pius. They also recorded that in 1804, during the course of widening a road across the site, several skeletons and a wall had been discovered. The wall was constructed from well-worked masonry and was considered to be the front of a building. Within what appeared to be the inside of this building, the soil was

This content downloaded from 58.97.216.251 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 06:42:14 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

'extremely black and shining'. Pottery, bones (animal and human) and bits of iron were also recorded.

In 1821, in Ariconensia, Thomas Dudley Fosbroke recorded that a large bronze head with rams' horns had been found by Merrick, along with the remains of statues, heads, arms, *etc.* He also reported that the bronze and coins had been sold for £15, a sum which later reports suggest was a figure paid for it by weight (*i.e.* its scrap value). He described the site as a Roman Birmingham due to the quantities of cinders of ore.

Later writings through the 19th century add certain details to this information but tend to elaborate on it, perhaps a little unreliably (Wright 1844; Thompson Watkin 1877; Cooke 1882; and Haverfield 1896). A further development came in 1853 when James Davies in Archaeologia Cambrensis explored the possible links of the place-name *Ariconium* with what was then the present name of the surrounding district, '*Irchenfield*.' He noted the name '*Yrcinga-field*' in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and '*Arcenefelde*' in Domesday and suggested that *Ariconium* might have been a district centre which survived, in name at least, in the post-Roman, British state of *Ereinwg* or *Herging* which lay in this vicinity.

By 1870, there was sufficient interest for the site to warrant a visit by the British Archaeological Association to whom a collection of finds was displayed by M. C. Palmer (Journal of the British Archaeological Association, XXVII). These included nine British coins, two of which were copper coins of Cunobelin. There were also 118 Roman coins dating from Claudius (AD 41) through to Magnentius (AD 353) and a wide range of small finds.

In 1882, Dr Bull recorded a visit of the British Archaeological Society in the Woolhope Transactions. He summarised knowledge relating to the site and remarked that the blackened soil extended over an area of nearly one hundred acres. He referred to it as the 'Merthyr Tidfil of the Romans' and indicated that Roman finds were still easily found.

These antiquarian reports and discoveries were summarised in 1908 in the Victoria County History for Herefordshire, however, it was concluded that:

> '*Ariconium* is a conspicuous example of the utter inadequacy of the investigations into Roman sites hitherto carried out in Herefordshire'.

Twentieth century investigations

Excavations

Excavations and other archaeological fieldwork have been undertaken sporadically since 1922. These are considered in more detail below (Section 2; Figs 1.3 and 1.4), however, are briefly summarised here as part of the general overview of the history of investigations at *Ariconium*.

The first excavations were undertaken in 1922 by G. H. Jack (Jack 1923) who opened six trial trenches and one larger excavation ('The Buildings'). A range of deposits was recorded notably in the main trench where remains indicative of a building of some status were recorded. These were published the following year.

In the summer of 1929, Jack returned to investigate the line of a road known from cropmarks. Three years later, two further roads were recorded by the Reverend E. R. Holland (Watkins 1932) while N. P. Bridgewater carried out further investigation of roads in the area in 1959.

During the 1960s more excavations were undertaken. The first, in 1963 by Bridgewater, lay to the north of the main settlement area in what he called 'New *Ariconium*' (Bridgewater 1963). This revealed the remains of six Roman furnaces and associated deposits. The second of the 1960s excavations, by Garrod and Moss (1967), comprised eight small trenches. One trench produced evidence of a partially robbed sandstone building which overlaid the remains of earlier ironworking structures. Other trenches produced further oven or hearth structures, metalled surfaces and occupation horizons. Only an interim report was published, however, Mr. Garrod has made the archive available and an archive report has now been produced (Jackson 2000). A summary of the results of this work is presented below (Section 2).

In 1989, Bryan Walters and Mark Walters undertook investigation of a cropmark site showing 'at least four overlapping enclosures' in a field known as the Great Woulding (Walters and Walters 1989). This lies some distance to the north of previous excavations and beyond the main settlement focus. A long trench across the cropmarks led to the identification of the site as representing 'Roman military installations'.

The most recent large-scale fieldwork occurred in 1992/3 during the construction of a sewage transfer pipeline across fields to the south-west of the scheduled area (Jackson, Hancocks and Pearson 1999). Extensive and well-preserved Roman deposits were revealed which were clearly associated with industrial activity and in particular ironworking. Limited stratified evidence for Iron Age activity was also recorded along with a 'satellite' settlement to the south-west in Bull Meadow. Still further to the south-west, a small-scale watching brief on Wigg Meadows (Topping 1993) confirmed the presence of one of the previously known roads (Bridgewater 1959; Wigg 3). An occupation layer was also identified and can probably be associated with previously identified activity at this location (Bridgewater 1959; Wigg 2). Further work in this area was undertaken two years later (Fagan and Hurst 1994; Napthan, Ratkai and Pearson 1995) during evaluation of the route of the proposed Ryeford Bypass. This recorded further evidence of the road line along with a ditch complex and adjacent metalled surfaces.

Finally, two small-scale pieces of work on the western fringes of the survey area have proved sterile, a trial pit (Walters 1988) and a watching brief undertaken during construction of a swimming pool at the Vicarage (Jackson 1996).

This content downloaded from 58.97.216.251 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 06:42:14 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

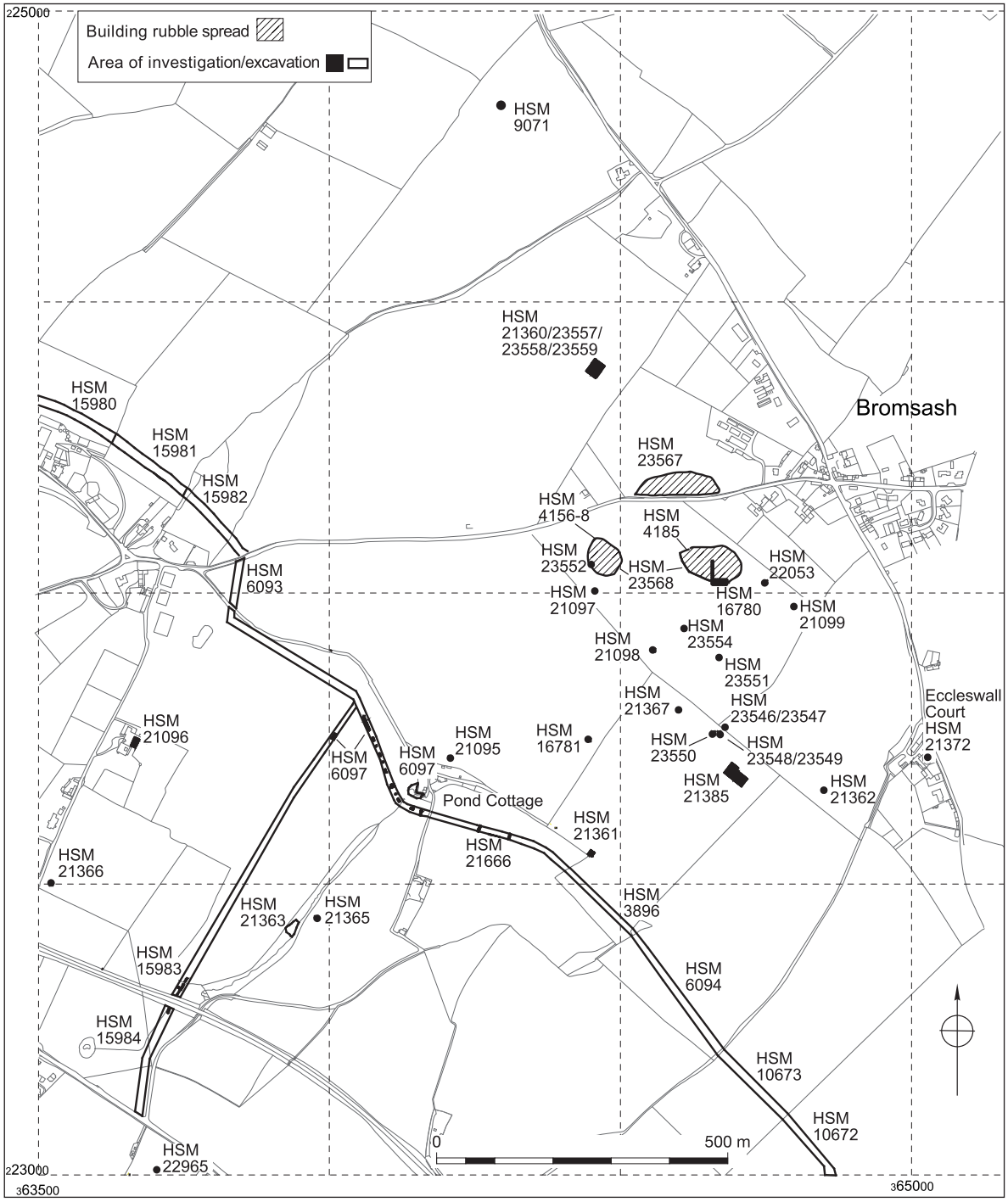

Figure 1.3. Areas of trenching (salvage recording, evaluation and excavation). Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO. © Crown Copyright 2011. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100051813

Other fieldwork

Apart from the excavation and investigation of buried remains, a wide range of other sources are available including fieldwalking, other surface finds, surface observations, metal detector finds, aerial photographic evidence and the results of a survey by ADAS.

Since the 1960s a number of fieldwalking projects and less formal (but relatively well-located) surface collections have been undertaken, both in their own right and accompanying excavation and salvage recording projects (Section 2; Figs 1.3 and 1.4). Such collections survive from both the Bridgewater and Garrod and Moss programmes of fieldwork during the 1960s. Other collections by Bridgewater and Garrod as well as several other individuals also survive and date from work between 1958 and 1971.

This content downloaded from 58.97.216.251 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 06:42:14 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

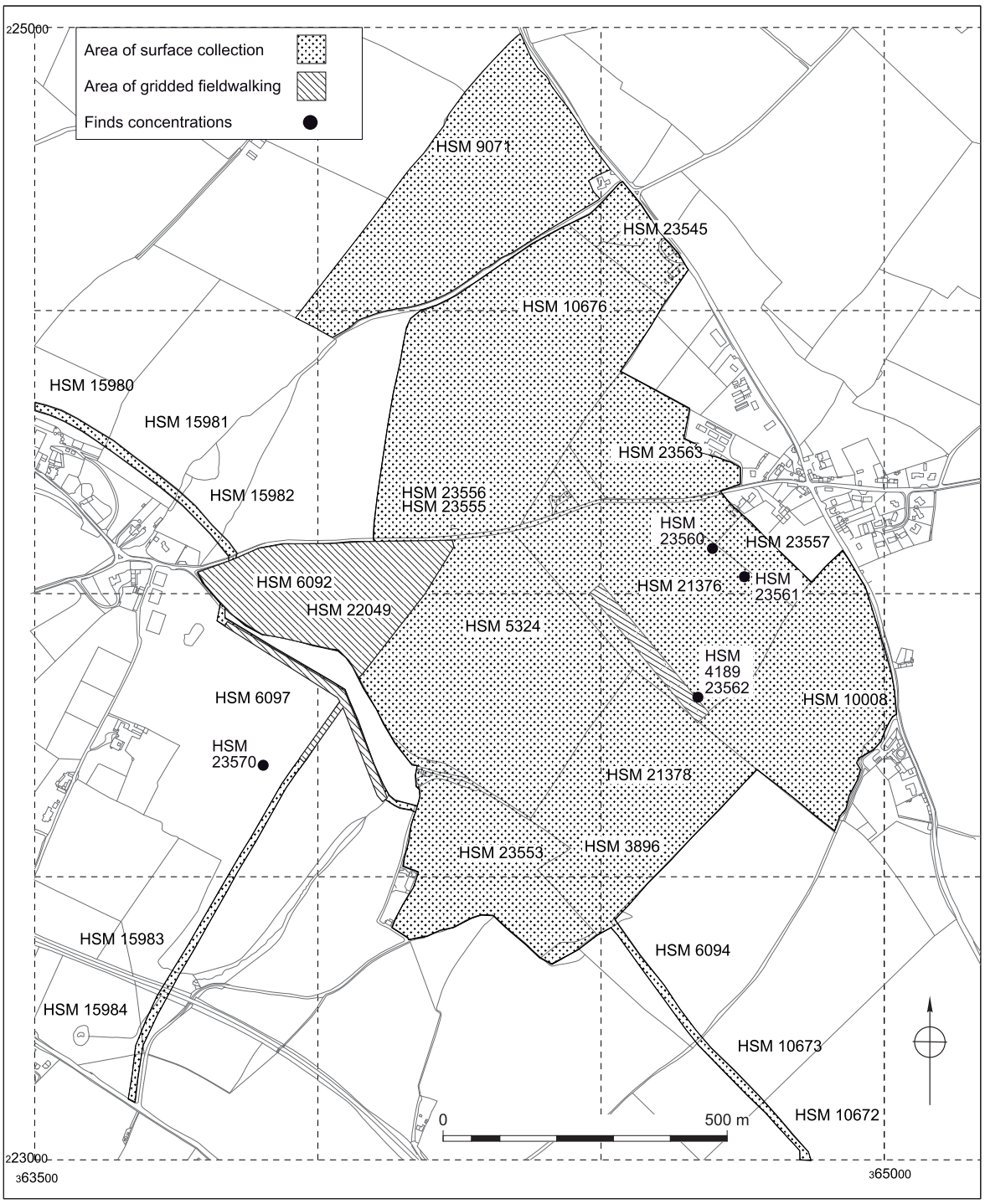

Figure 1.4. Areas of surface collection (fieldwalking, metal detecting, spot finds). Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO. © Crown Copyright 2011. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100051813

More significantly, over a period of five years from 1984–1989, the Dean Archaeological Group (DAG) carried out a number of well-recorded and located areas of fieldwalking. The South Worcestershire Archaeological Group (SWAG) carried out further gridded fieldwalking in 1986 and on part of the Welsh Water pipeline in 1993.

In addition to the more specifically located material, several concentrations of artefacts and building debris have been noted during the past 30 years. Further information derives from metal detecting which has affecting the site since the early 1990s and from various aerial photographs taken over a 45 year period from 1946 to 1992 which have been assessed and plotted (Cox 1995; Fig. 1.5).

Lastly data on erosion in the area was collected by ADAS over five winter periods, from autumn 1989/90 until late winter 1993/4 (Appendix 3).

This content downloaded from 58.97.216.251 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 06:42:14 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

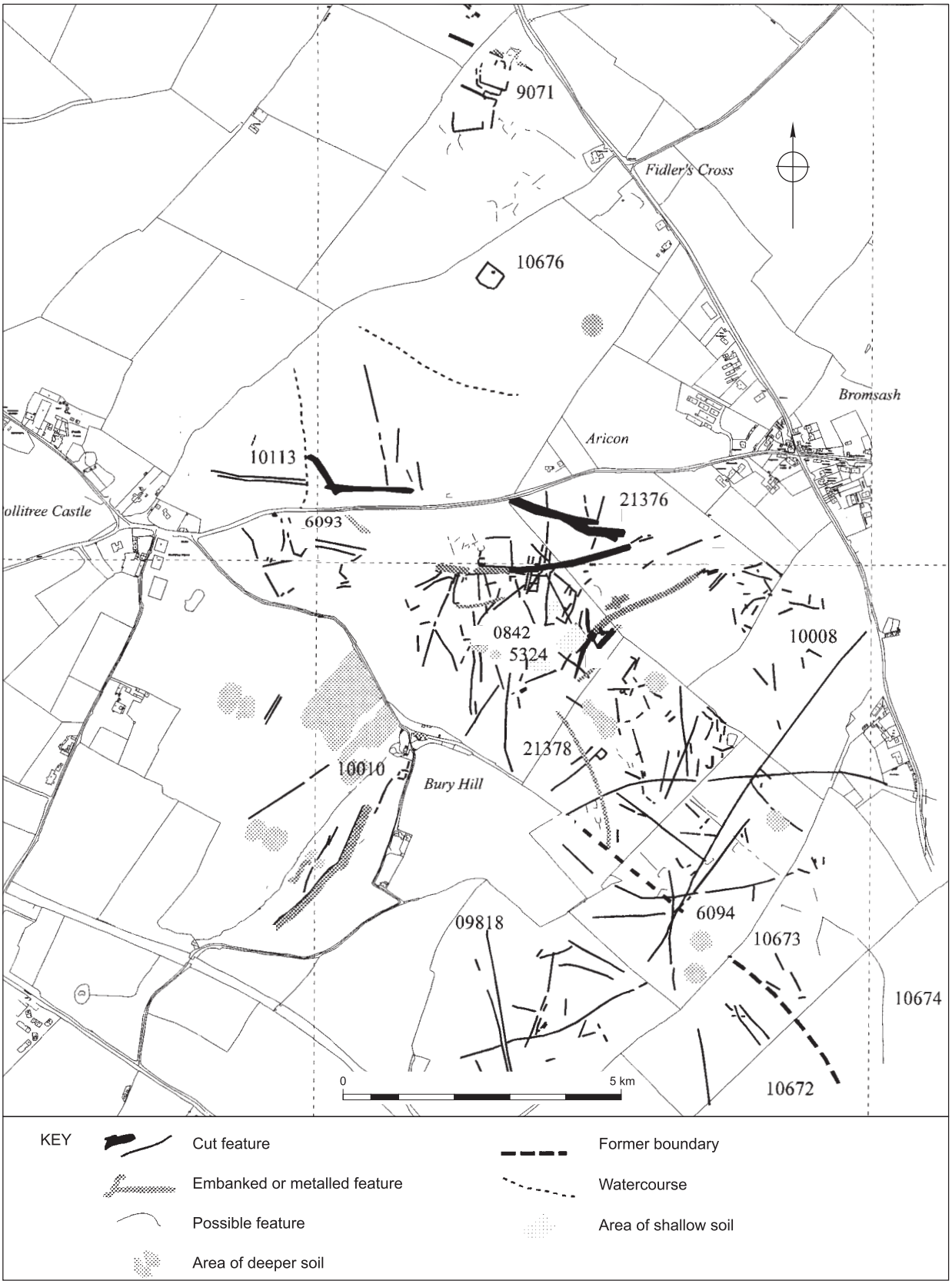

Figure 1.5. Cropmark plot. Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO. © Crown Copyright 2011. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100051813

This content downloaded from 58.97.216.251 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 06:42:14 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms