

10. RECOVERING ARCHÆOLOGICAL DATA

After digging and sifting the topsoil from 166 five-foot squares, the team identified and recovered 59 features, including two wells and a probable failed pump.

Phase III work began in January 1995, after a Christmas break. The first Phase III task was to hand-strip and sift all the topsoil from a “core” area bounded roughly by grid lines 1110 and 1170 east-west and grid lines K through P north-south. Within this space were nearly 100 possible five-foot squares, of which about 15 had been opened in earlier phases. Finally, as the boundaries of the site were interpreted, the topsoil was removed and sifted from 166 five-foot squares.

The plan was to hand-dig and sift topsoil from a core that had been identified by artifact distribution, features, and soil characteristics. All three indicators pointed to a site centered on the original five-foot tests, now known as 13a and 12a. Two wells had been identified in this space, together with several other features of unknown purpose.



Plate 24

The west block March 17, 1995: the partly-opened west well is in the middle. Standing behind the unit are Jeffrey Harbeson, Kim Dugan, Travis Hale, George Keeler, and Stephen Vicuna.

Topsoil was removed in three blocks, for convenience. By the end of winter, through April 7, a total of 78 units had been hand-dug and sifted (Figure 29). The west block contained 28 units, and the east was 45 units, with an additional five units that were opened to the eastward, to check the east limits of the site. During this stripping, it became obvious that there was neither foundation nor postmold pattern, even though we obviously were working on a domestic site.

Without physical house remains, it clearly would be necessary to use proxy measures to locate the house and other activity areas. Artifact and soil chemical distribution maps would be the most important of these tools. Two field strategies resulted from this realization.

First, soil chemical evidence would be

more important. We already had a broad chemical profile, covering all the well-drained ground in the field, both topsoil and subsoil at ten-foot intervals.

Would more closely-spaced sampling provide a finer-grained picture of intrasite geography? Literature search and personal inquiries failed to uncover any substantial amount of previous experience with close-spaced testing, on grids smaller than ten feet.

A thirty-inch spacing was adopted for the final soil chemical tests in the site core, halving the five-foot grid. The tests would be taken on the stripped site, below the plowzone on the top of the subsoil.



Plate 25

Soggy mess in January

When the Department of Transportation helicopter flew over the site January 23, 1995, the timing could not have been worse for the crew's morale. A winter storm had filled the units with muddy water, and the tent had blown down. In this picture, the crew is seen re-erecting the heavy, soggy, tent and clearing the mess.

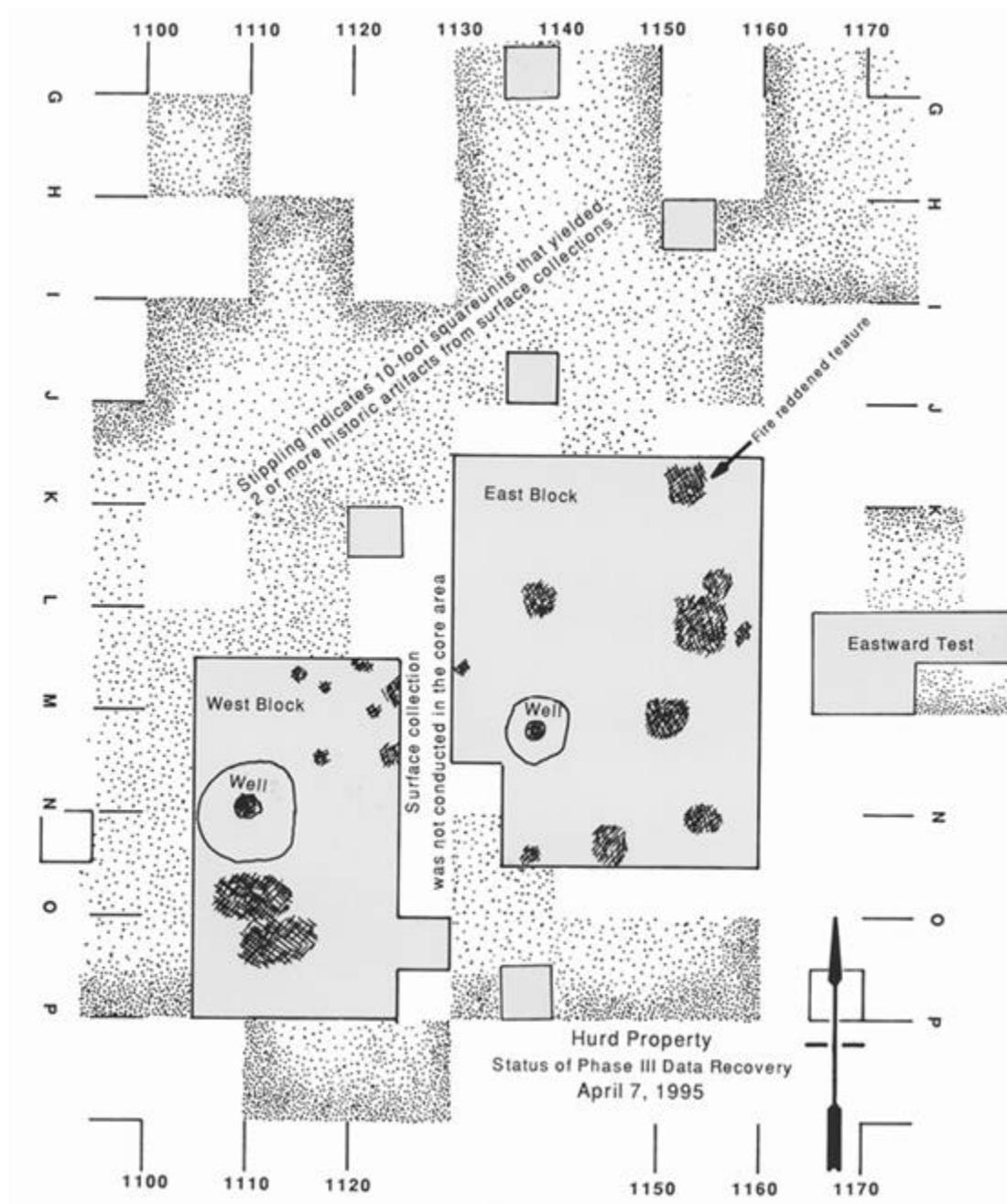


Figure 29
Progress Report

Sketch diagram of the status of work about halfway through Phase III surface stripping, on April 7. By this time it was obvious that very few, if any, structural remains would be found. The fire-reddened area suggested a hearth location that might be the only architectural clue on the site. This sketch map was prepared as part of the fieldwork planning process, as the investigators attempted to evaluate progress to date and plan excavation strategy. The amorphous features south of the west well turned out to be the “pump” feature uncovered during the last days of the excavation. Its presence was not suspected when this map was drawn. During excavation, sketch maps like this one were used to keep track of work.

Artifact distribution analysis would require intensive sampling over an area larger than the obvious site core, since we were seeking to define activities that might have left fewer durable artifacts in the plowzone.

While it might have been possible to hand-strip the entire site, practical considerations dictated an arbitrary stopping point should be established. It was therefore decided to stop digging 16 feet past the outermost feature encountered. This limit was adopted because it is the standard bay spacing of Delaware traditional houses.

An additional 45 units were dug between April 17 and May 17. The Gradall arrived May 9, stripping a large well-drained area north of the site core.

This left only a few baulks to be excavated by hand. The site closed May 17 for Memorial Day vacation, after which a final assault would begin June 7. By the end of June, topsoil was fully removed from the core, and it was time to turn our attention to the features. First, the surface of the site was shaved and grid

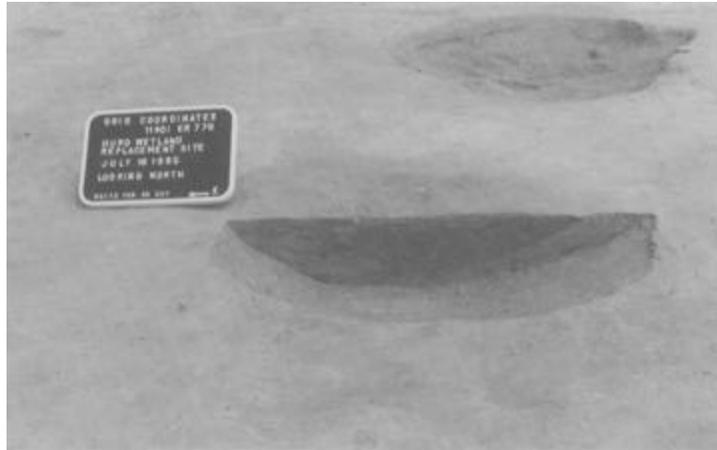


Plate 26

Feature 57, one of the dish-shaped pits, sectioned

unit stakes were reset on the uncovered subsoil surface. The features were exposed and sketched, in preparation for excavation and detailed study.

At this point, revised construction deadlines mandated accelerated dig completion. Fully-qualified archaeologists Lyle Browning and William Sandy were added to the staff, specifically to dig the wells, and Dr. Louise Heite joined the project to provide curatorial and research support.



Plate 27

The east block, mostly cleaned and scraped, April 7, 1995, from the south, the same area shown opposite

The field crew was divided into three teams, each supervised by a qualified archaeologist: one crew for each of the two identified wells and one for all the other features. The groups worked independently of one another as much as possible, and the three directors each followed their own procedures and techniques.

The two wells were dug first from the top, until it was no longer safe to work in the hole. Features north of the wells were cleared and a Gradall was brought in. The Gradall cut a deep hole, ramped northward from the wells, and dug away the

undisturbed soil around the wells. The well digging personnel were then able to work on the wells from the side.

Both wells were cased in split oak clapboard planks supported by square upright frames. The top part of the eastern well contained evidence of a fully robbed brick casing to a depth of at least about two feet below the original grade. This evidence consisted of tiny brick spalls along the interface between the brown well fill and the lighter colored fill of the original shaft. Samples of the wood were saved for dendrochronological analysis.



Plate 28

Hog and oyster remains in feature 22, a small round pit

Two wells had been identified during earlier work, but an unusual and unsuspected third well proved a distressing logistical surprise in the last days of excavation.

This third well lay just south of the eastern well, and it was exposed during the early part of the project, but its identity as a well was not suspected until, literally, the last minute. From the surface, it appeared to be just one of many shallow, dish-shaped features. Since it lay south of the two wells, it was not excavated during the push to clear the north part of the site that preceded the Gradall's arrival.

Feature fill was mottled, indicating that it was backfilled soon after it was dug. As the pit was dug, the mottled fill continued, deeper and deeper. Finally, at 6'6" below plowzone, a wood cylinder was encountered. This was interpreted as a piece of a pump stock.

Most features were shallow dish-shaped depressions all probably associated with household activities and small industrial activities.

Soil samples were taken at thirty-inch intervals on a grid across the site, totalling 630 samples on the grid, plus twenty from features. Since feature soils were separately sampled, gridded samples were taken only when grid points lay over apparently undisturbed subsoil.

Thanks to extra staff, overtime, and Gradall digging, the site was finally closed near the deadline, on August 11, and the office tent was struck for the last time.

SERENDIPITOUS BOUNDARY DITCH

Across the drainage ditch, in the eastern field, only a few artifacts had been found on the surface of the supposed eastern site. Purely by happenstance, a five-foot test square had been located over a five-foot trench in the middle of the field during the Phase II work.

While the Gradall was on the site in May, it was used to further uncover segments of the ditch feature (Figure 24, page 11). When the ditch was mapped on May 11, it became even

more certain that it lay along the division line between the west and center divisions on the 1771 estate map.

The west project-area boundary, which was a seventeenth-century property line, was trenched by hand (photo, page 127) but no boundary ditch was detected. Instead, the present hedgerow appears to have been maintained in its present form for the entire three-century history of the property.

In the machine-stripped area to the north of the site core, no further features were detected.

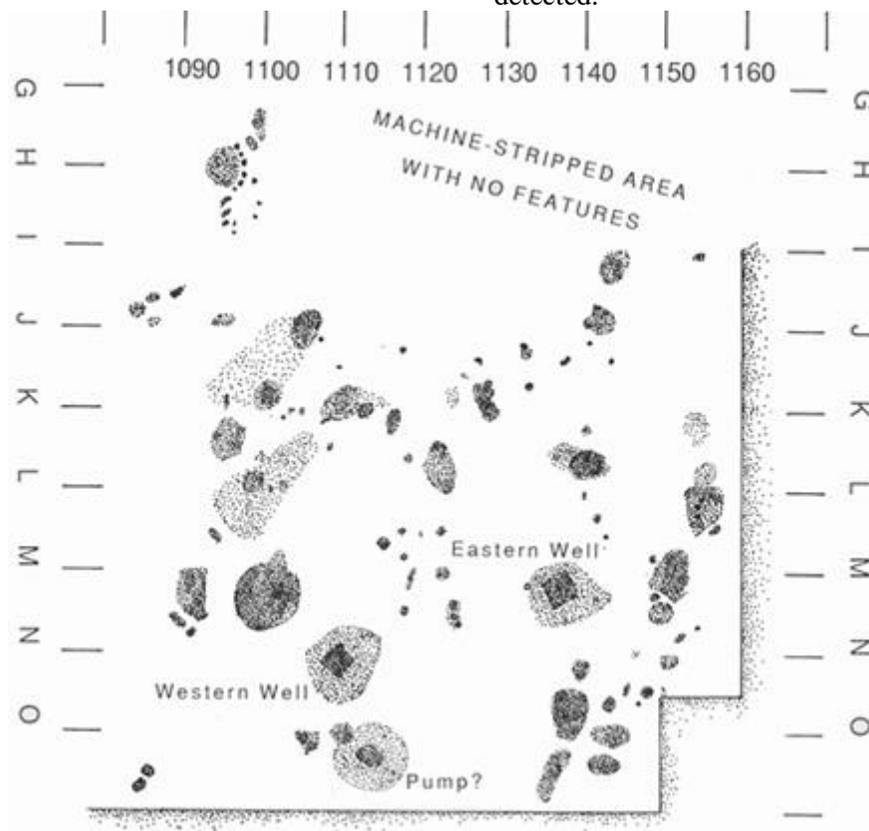


Figure 30

Site sketch map at the end of the excavation project, August 11, 1995

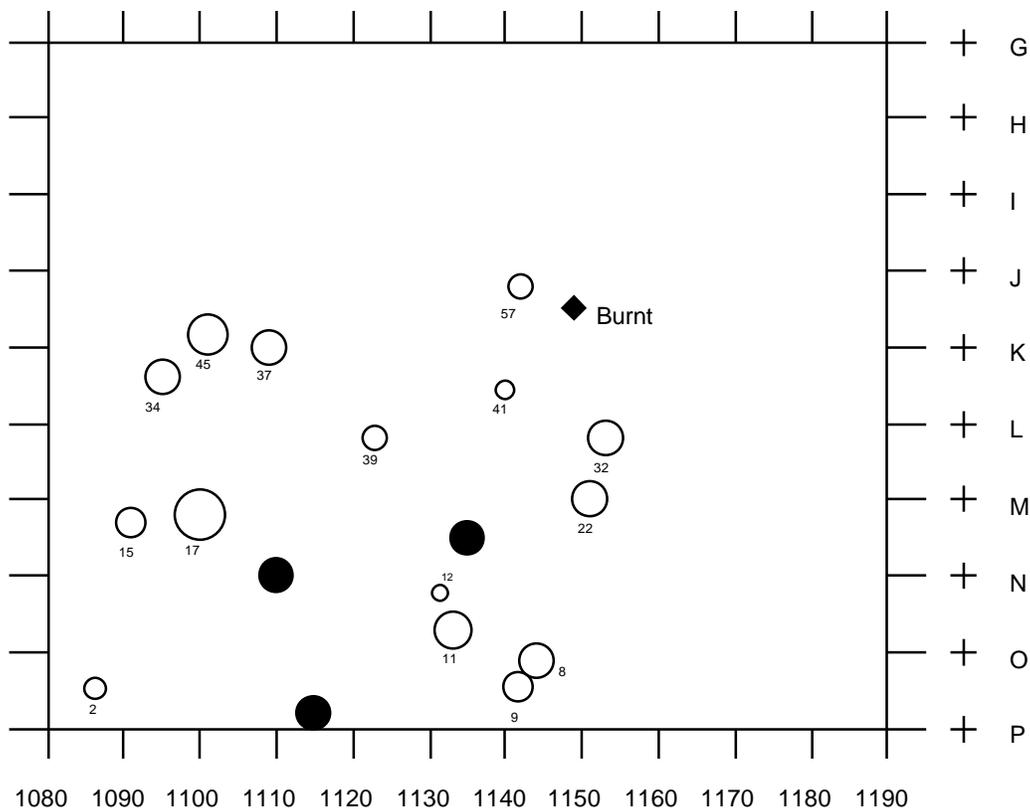


Figure 31

Selected numbered feature locations on the Bloomsbury site, with ten-foot grid. Solid circles are wells. Grid north is at the top, and the grid interval is ten feet.

FEATURE LIST

Features were sectioned wherever possible by removal of the south half first. Width along the section line is generally an east-west line. Feature numbers were assigned after excavation, and do not appear in the field records.

No.	Location of 10-ft. square	Register number(s) of feature	Interpretation or identification of feature	Surface width E-W	Depth below PZ	Mean ceramic date	Photos on 35 mm roll no.	Cross mends with feature	Terminus post quem
1.	1080 O	119a	Square planting hole	18"	3"		28		
2.	1080 O	119b	Dish-shaped activity hole	2'10"	5"		28		
3.	1100 O	131e	Irregular feature				28		
4.	1100 O	131f	Irregular feature						
5.	1110 O	137e-m	Pump or well	10'	6'9"	1790.10	32, 34, 35	21,18,14	
6.	1120 O	200	Irregular shallow pit not inventoried				25		
7.	1130 O	146b, f	Irregular pit feature	2'6"		1791			1762
8.	1140 O	149e	Dish shaped pit feature	4'	5"		32		

No.	Location of 10-ft. square	Register number(s) of feature	Interpretation or identification of feature	Surface width E-W	Depth below PZ	Mean ceramic date	Photos on 35 mm roll no.	Cross mends with feature	Terminus post quem
9	1140 O	149f	Irregular feature	4'	13.5"		32		
10.	1110 N	130e	Large irregular pit with daub	6'	11"				
11.	1130 N	145f	Large shallow pit	4'10"	7"	1785.83	30		1762
12.	1130 N	145e	Small pit with daub & shell	2"	2' 6.5"		30		
13.	1140 N	211f	Small disturbed shallow pit	20"	3"		30		
14.	1140 N	211e	Dish shaped pit feature	2'2"	7"		30		
15.	1090 M	123b,d,e	Pot shaped hole in clay soil	4'	18"	1796.78	25, 26, 27		1790
16.	1090 M	123c	Pair small square features (props?)		3"				
17.	1100 M	129e	Dish shaped pit feature near well	7'	9"		24, 17		1767
18.	1110 M	182 i-ah	Western of two framed wells	10'	9'		8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 26, 29, 33, 34, 35	34, 21	
19.	1120 M	201e	Rectangular post mold	18"			24,17		
20.	1120 M	201f	Three irregular adjacent features	30"					
21.	1130 M	180 l-ab	Eastern of two framed wells	12'	10'5"	1791.54 1797.93 1797.37 1798.31	7, 9, 16, 27, 28, 29	18, 14, 5	1798
22.	1140 M	179e	Fill of a round feature	4'9"	9"	1789.29	26, 27, 28		1762
23.	1140 M	179f	Round feature	18"	6"				
24.	1140 M	179g	Irregular pit feature	32"	12"				
25.	1140 M	179h	Round feature with no artifacts	12.5"	6.5"				
26.	1140 M	179i	Double pit feature, non cultural	15.5"					
27.	1140 M	179j	Puddle?	2'					
28.	1140 M	179k	Rodent hole	16"					
29.	east field	171	Boundary ditch between 1772 thirds	5'0"	28"		6		
30.	1110 L	13e	Post hole with indefinite mold	14"	14"		17		
31.	1140 L	12	Ephemeral rectangular feature	18"	minima		2		
32.	1150 L	210e	Fill of a basin with 2 postmolds	5'	9"		25		
33.	1150 L	210f	Round feature (burrow)	2'10"	1'10"				
34.	1090 K	42 e, g	Basin-like feature	5'	14"		22	18	
35.	1090 K	42f	Round feature	1'					
36.	1100 K	212e, 57e	Round feature	21"	3		22		
37.	1100 K	212f	Irregular pit feature	5'	5"				
38.	1110 K	57e	Pit fill in northwest corner of unit						
39.	1120 K	64g	Irregular pit feature	3'4"	5"	1791	22		1762
40.	1120 K	64b	Irregular pit feature	3'11"	5"	1791	18		1762
41.	1130 K	71e	Basin on east boundary of unit	2'9"	9"	1802.5	23		1780
42.	1130 K	71f	Round basin feature	3'8.5"	8"		23		
43.	1140 K	209	Reddish discoloration from heat						
44.	1150 K	175e	Lens feature	3'6"	6"		22, 23		
45.	1100 J	47e, h, i, j, k, l, m	Ashy fill of feature at north of unit	5'6"	12"	1793.89	17, 18, 22	46	1780
46.	1100 J	47f	Round feature	2'3"			21, 22	45	

No.	Location of 10-ft. square	Register number(s) of feature	Interpretation or identification of feature	Surface width E-W	Depth below PZ	Mean ceramic date	Photos on 35 mm roll no.	Cross mends with feature	Terminus post quem
47.	1110 J	56e	Rodent hole						
48.	1120 J	63f	Irregular charcoal-flecked hole	9"			18, 21		
49.	1120 J	63e,g	Tree root				18		
50.	1130 J	70e - h	Post hole and mold	28.5"	27.5"		18		
51.	1130 J	70f	Plant mold	13"			19		
52.	1140 J	78e	Probable planting hole	8"	8"				
53.	1080 I	33a	Round hole, not excavated	29"			22		
54.	1080 I	33b	Round hole, not excavated	40"					
55.	1080 I	33c	Irregular hole, not examined						
56.	1140 I	77e,f	Irregular hole, possibly fallen tree	4'6"	9"	1795.67	19, 21		1780
57.	1140 I	77g	Basin feature	3'6"	9"		18		
58.	1150 I	81e	Post mold	6"	16"				
59.	1090 H	48a	Cluster of postmolds and pits	6'9"	12"		33, 34		



Plate 29

Scraping the larger area

A Gradall was used to scrape away the topsoil from the relatively well drained area north of the site, where outbuildings should have been found, if they had existed