

THE
OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT



THE THREE PIGEONS, DRAYTON ST LEONARD
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

APRIL 1991

THE THREE PIGEONS DRAYTON ST LEONARDS

Introduction

In April 1991 an assessment was carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) on behalf of Waterlane Properties Ltd in respect of an application for planning permission. The site is in the grounds of the former public house the 'Three Pigeons' in the north of Drayton St Leonards village, immediately to the S of St Leonard's and St Catherine's Church, at grid reference SU 597963. (see Fig 1.)

Archaeological background

- i) To the N and W of the village late Neolithic Peterborough ware, Beaker pottery and a beaker Burial had previously been discovered.
- ii) There is also a Bronze Age ring ditch about 1 km to the N.
- iii) To the N at SU 597972 and SU 599975 are a series of undated cropmarks identified as enclosures.
- iv) To the S of the village, across the river Thame, are deserted medieval settlements.
- v) The village is not mentioned in Domesday Book but later belonged to the Bishop of Lincoln and was probably extant at that time. It is first mentioned in 1146 as having a Church and presumably was then a flourishing community.
- vi) The tithe map of 1841 shows one building in the area of the Three Pigeons.

Assessment strategy

The assessment strategy was based on a 4.5 % sample of the area. The sample consisted of one 8.0 m, one 9.0 m, one 11.5 m and one 13 m long, 1.6 m wide machine-dug trenches. (See Fig 2 for Trench layout.)

The features were sampled by hand excavation to determine their nature and depth and to recover dating evidence.

Soils

The general soil type was a silty sand loam. The turf overlay a mid reddish brown sandy slightly gravelly silt loam. This is probably an old garden soil; it had been disturbed but had no clear indications of having been ploughed. This overlay an layer of mid brown sandy slightly gravelly silt (undisturbed subsoil). This layer overlay natural sand and gravel and was not present in all the trenches.

The surface of the natural gravel sloped away to the S and varied considerably in depth from the surface, from 1.30 m in trenches 1 and 2 to only 0.40 m in trenches 3 and 4.

The gravelled carpark of the public house had sealed the layers in trenches 2 and 4.

The features cut the garden soil and subsoil and were filled with a dark grey silty soil similar to the turf layer.

Finds

The garden soil contained 19th-century and later pottery as did the features, except for the gully in trench 3 and the tree-hole in trench 1. The finds included complete modern gin bottles

among other recent artefacts. The preservation of the pottery was good. Bone was recovered from the tree-hole in trench 1. (see table 1)

Archaeology (Fig. 2)

A ditch along two sides of the property boundary was observed in trenches 1 and 2 (1/3 and 2/5). Trenches 3 and 4 contained pits and dumps of 19th-century rubbish (3/6, 3/7 and 4/3). Trench 1 contained a tree-hole (1/6), a modern soakaway (1/4) and a small pit (1/5) associated with the soakaway. The tree-hole was the only feature to be overlain by the garden soil.

Trench 3 contained a small gully (3/4) aligned NE-SW containing 18th- or 19th-century pottery. There were also two small features (3/3 and 3/5) next to the gully which could have been post-holes or planting pits.

Environmental

Soil samples were not taken.

Discussion

The only archaeological features located were modern. These features may form part of a series of rubbish pits in the old public house garden.

The tree-hole may be an indication of the land clearance for the village. Unfortunately no pottery was recovered to date this feature.

The gully in trench 3 and the ditch in trenches 1 and 2 may indicate the property divisions of the 18th or 19th century.

No buildings were located in the trench adjacent to the road and the lack of any finds dated prior to the 18th century indicate that this area was not occupied before that date. There was no evidence of activity associated with the 18th- and early 19th-century smithy which was on the site of the 'Catherine Wheel' public house which is next to the 'Three Pigeons' so the area was probably non-domestic.

Summary

The features located were modern with perhaps the exception of the tree-hole. There was no evidence located for any activity earlier than the 18th and 19th centuries.

TABLE 1**Contexts and finds**

Trench	CTX	Type	Width	Depth	Date of finds
1	3	ditch	?	0.70	19th
1	4	soakaway	1.10	?	very recent
1	5	pit?			mod
1	6	treehole	?	0.65	bone?
2	5	ditch	?	0.42	19th
3	3	posthole?	0.20	0.30	
3	4	gully	0.54	0.30	18th?19th
3	5	posthole?	0.20	0.04	?
3	6	pit	1.15	-	modern
3	7	pit	3.0	-	1960's
4	3	dumping	-	-	19th
4	4	subsoil	-	0.40	mid 19th

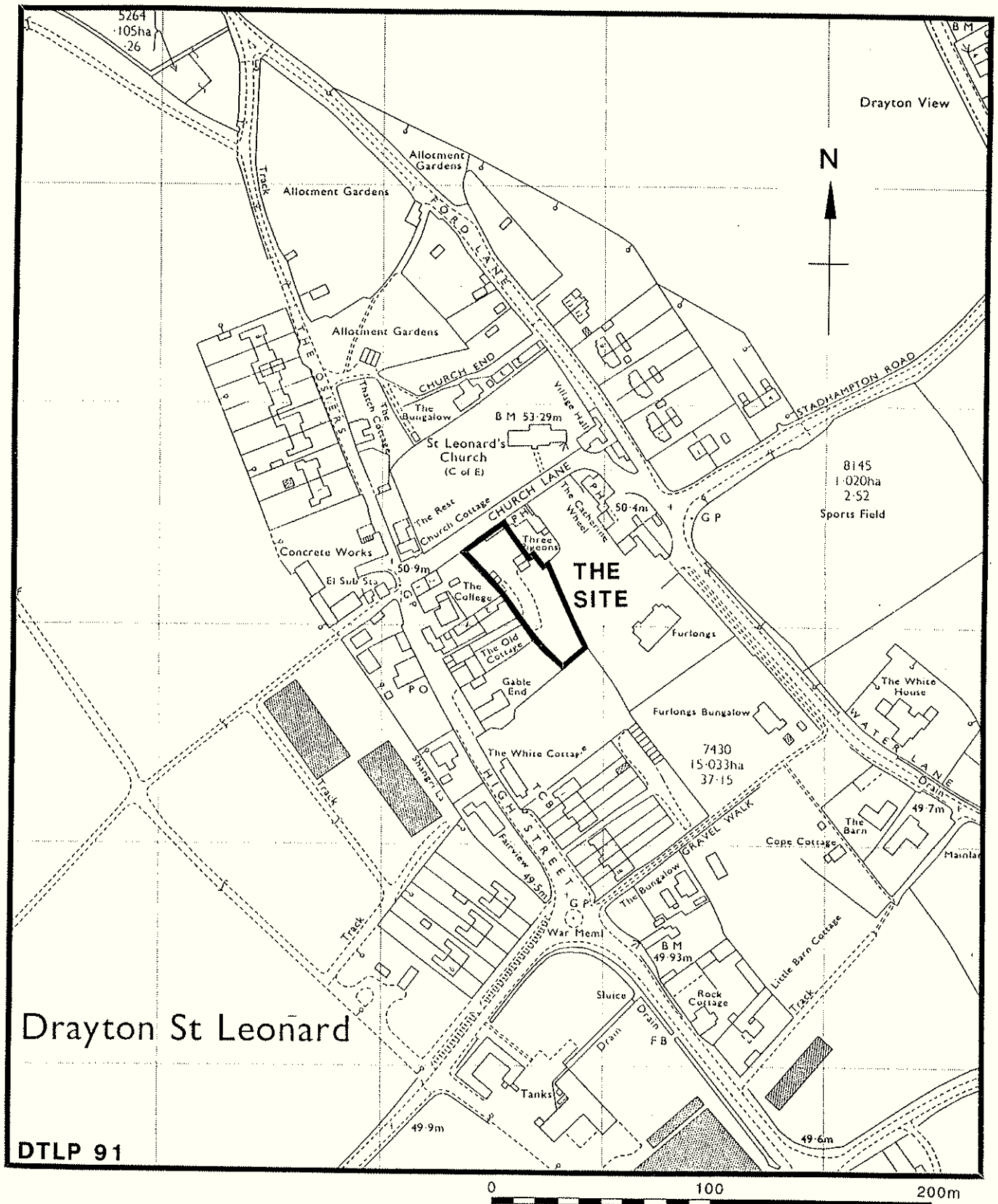


Figure 1

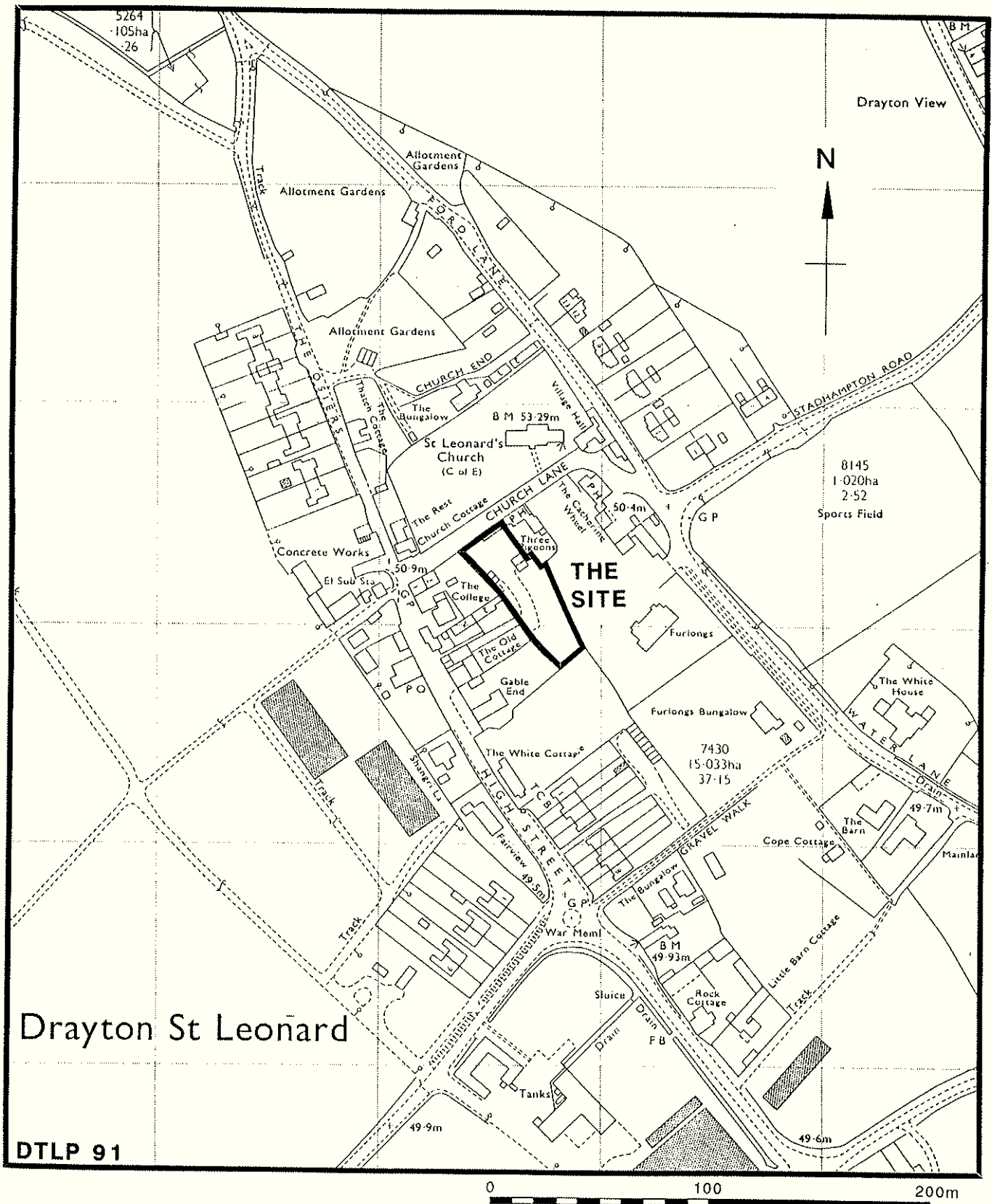
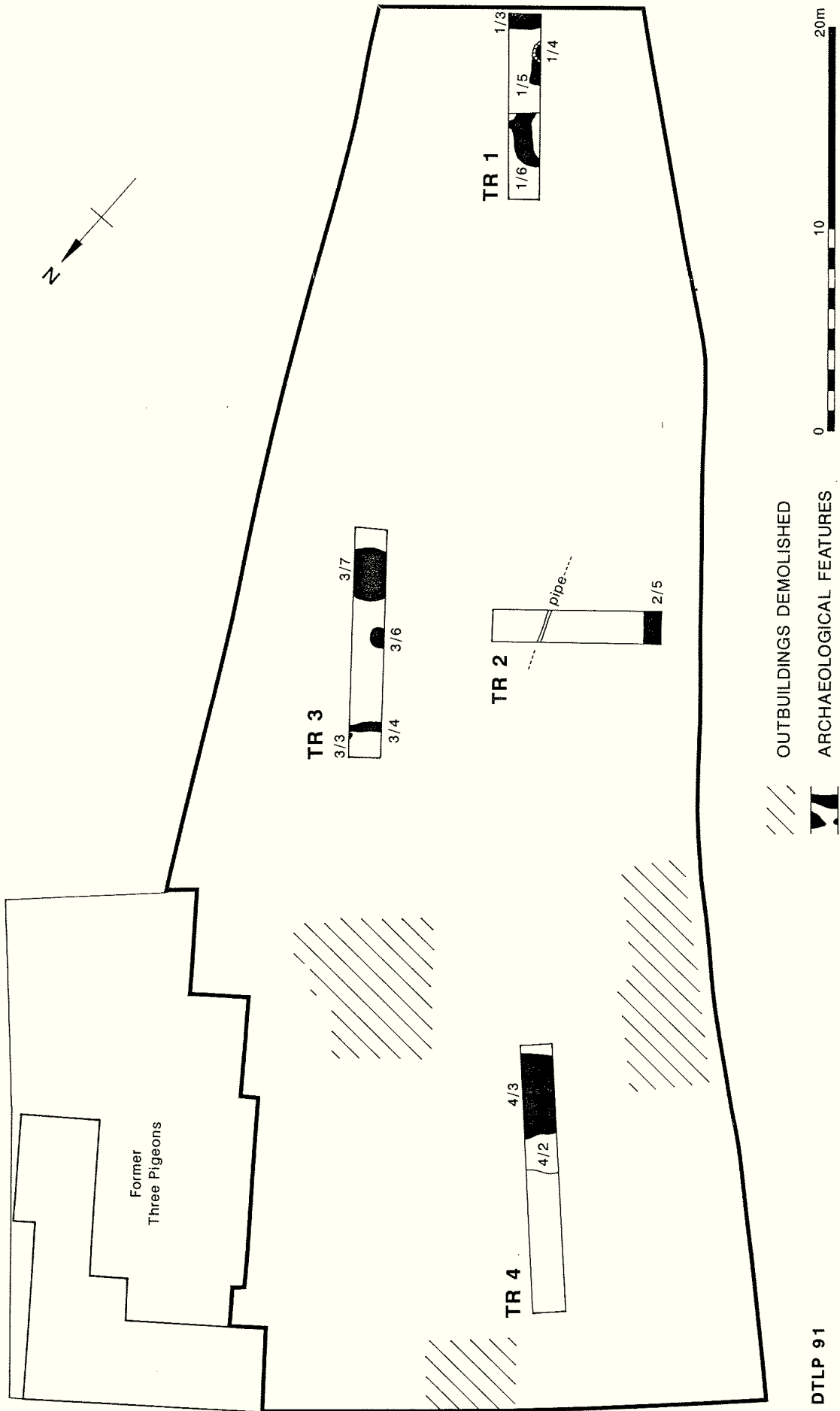


Figure 1



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Figure 2



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