

Somerfield Stores Ltd.

Somerfield Hungerford

*ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT*

SU 339 687

Planning Application No.150118



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

June 1998

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**OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

**June 1998**

# Somerfield Hungerford

## *ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION*

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## SUMMARY

*The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out Phase 1 of a field evaluation at land to the rear of the Somerfield Store, Everland Road, Hungerford, on behalf of Somerfield Stores Ltd. The evaluation revealed a single feature of possible prehistoric date, and layers containing three pre-historic flint flakes and three small and abraded sherds of Romano-British pottery. The Romano-British pottery is likely to be residual, but the flint flakes could indicate that the layer was prehistoric. Structures relating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century vertical brewery were encountered to the north of the standing brewery building. Made ground deposits of variable thickness were present in all trenches.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Location and scope of work (Fig. 1)

1.1.1. In May 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a field evaluation on land to the rear of the Somerfield Store, Everland Road, Hungerford, on behalf of Somerfield Stores Ltd. The evaluation was the first stage of archaeological fieldwork and building survey carried out in respect of a planning application to develop a new store (Planning Application No. 150118). The work was conducted in accordance with a brief prepared by Babbie Group (archaeological advisors to Berkshire County Council), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by the OAU. The development site lay in the centre of Hungerford, bounded by the High Street to the west, a canal and post office buildings to the north, a track and light industrial buildings to the east and the railway to the south. The site is c. 0.9 ha in extent.

### 1.2. Geology and topography

1.2.1. The site lies on the interface between clay with flint inclusions and river valley gravels, underlain by upper chalk, at c. 100 m above OD. The site is situated on a sub-rectangular plot of land, which slopes gradually from north to south. Modern light industrial buildings, a disused 19th century brewery, and an existing Somerfield supermarket, which fronts onto the High Street, currently occupy the site. The development proposals include demolition of all existing buildings and the construction of a new Somerfield Store and car park.

### 1.3. Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1. The archaeological background to the evaluation has been the subject of a separate desk study (OAU 1998), the results of which are summarised below.

1.3.2. The site itself has previously produced no archaeological evidence. Hungerford lies in an area long regarded as an important prehistoric landscape. Avebury and Stonehenge are located close by, and numerous prehistoric sites survive on the chalk downlands. There is very limited evidence for prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the site, but chance finds recorded in the County Sites and Monuments Record point to activity from the Palaeolithic onwards. Two Palaeolithic flint tools have been found within 250 m of the site (one to the southeast and the other to the southwest) and a Mesolithic flint axe has been found in the vicinity, although the exact location of its discovery is unknown.

- 1.3.3. An Iron Age and Roman settlement site has been found at Eddington to the north of Hungerford. Two Iron Age pits, which were found during the construction of a new road in 1968, c. 300m from site may also indicate later prehistoric occupation.
- 1.3.4. During the Saxon period Hungerford lay within the estate of *Inge Penne* (Ink Pen), probably a royal estate of the Kings of Wessex. There is likely to have been a settlement at Hungerford during this period, attached to this estate, probably located in the vicinity of the church. A cluster of pits, one of which was of late Saxon or early medieval date, was encountered during a watching brief in this area. Hungerford is not mentioned in the Domesday Book, probably because it formed part of the royal manor of Kintbury. It is recorded as a separate manor with a parish church by AD 1103.
- 1.3.5. The early medieval settlement was probably largely abandoned in the late 12th or early 13th century in favour of plots in the new planned town, which lay in the open fields of the former village. The new town was laid out on either side of the Oxford to Salisbury road. The boundaries of the burgage plots can still be traced on modern maps. The proposed development includes parts of at least two of these plots.
- 1.3.6. The post-medieval period saw the town's communication and trade networks expanding. The Kennet and Avon Canal was constructed between 1794 and 1813 and by 1823 had a wharf with warehouses and a crane. The arrival of the railway in 1847 seems to have had a detrimental effect on the town's economy as it reduced road traffic on the Oxford to Salisbury road on which the economy of the town was based. However, two breweries and an ironworks were built in the town during this period.

## **2. EVALUATION AIMS**

### **2.1. General Aims**

- 2.1.1. To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area.
- 2.1.2. To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- 2.1.3. To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.4. To make available the results of the investigation.

### **2.2. Specific Aims**

- 2.2.1. To investigate evidence for medieval activity on the site: Trenches 1 and 2, in the centre of the site, were expected to locate medieval activity or buildings. Trenches 3 and 4 were expected to detect activity associated with the rear of the burgage plots of the medieval tenements and/or medieval property boundaries.

### **3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. General**

- 3.1.1. Four trenches were excavated in the locations shown in Figure 2. The trenches were located to investigate *c.* 2% of the Stage 1 development area. The trench locations were limited to open areas between the standing buildings. The presence of services and the need for access by the occupiers of the light industrial facilities on Everland Road were also constraints on the trench locations.

#### **3.2. Survey**

- 3.2.1. A service search was carried out before fieldwork commenced, and each trench was scanned with a cable detector before excavation. The location of the trenches was recorded in relation to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

#### **3.3. Excavation**

- 3.3.1. Four 10 m x 2 m trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket (after the breaking out and removal of tarmac). The trenches were excavated under close archaeological supervision. They were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples.

#### **3.4. Recording**

- 3.4.1. All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50 and where excavated their sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. Soil profiles were also drawn at a scale of 1:20 where appropriate. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

### **4. RESULTS: GENERAL**

#### **4.1. Presentation of Results**

- 4.1.1. The following briefly summarises the deposits and features encountered during the evaluation including major modern disturbances. The trenches are described individually and by context in chronological order, starting with the earliest deposits. The relevant context numbers are given in brackets after the description of the deposit or feature.

#### **4.2. General Stratigraphy**

- 4.2.1. Modern disturbance was apparent in all four trenches, indicating that the site has been the focus of much post-medieval and modern activity. Made ground deposits comprising brick, tile and mortar were found to fill and cover the partially demolished buildings on the north side of the brewery building (Trench 2). Foundation layers for the present tarmac surface were of considerable thickness over the whole site. Some levelling of the ground by terracing was apparent in the eastern part of the site. The tarmac in Trench 4 was particularly thick (0.45 m), where it had been used to partially level the site.

### **4.3. Site Archive**

- 4.3.1. The written, drawn and photographic record will be ordered, quantified and security copied. The records and finds will be lodged with the West Berkshire Museum. Copies of the report will be sent to the Berkshire Sites and Monuments Record.

## **5. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS**

### **5.1. Trench 1 (Fig. 3)**

- 5.1.1. Natural flint gravel mixed with an orange brown silt (108) was encountered at 98.9 m above Ordnance Datum (OD) at the east end of the trench. Two dump deposits (107, 106) comprising mixed clays and silts with brick and tile fragments and patches of mortar, were overlain by a large concrete block (102) which was visible for 7 m in the west of the trench and continued under the north, south and west baulk sections. A manhole (part of the concrete mould) had been filled in at the west end of the trench. A series of modern fill and made ground layers (103, 104, 105) butted against the concrete platform. A concrete collar for a service run was visible in the south section at the east end of the trench overlying these deposits. The ground surface consisted of Tarmac.

### **5.2. Trench 2 (Figs 3 and 4)**

- 5.2.1. Natural subsoil (208) was reached in the west part of the trench at *c.* 98.4 m OD. A layer of brown clay (206, 219) overlay the natural. A small structure (220) of which three brick walls were visible, was based on layer 219 at the east end of the trench. The structure was 1.6 m wide and continued into the north section. The surviving walls comprised 8 courses of orange, frogged bricks (each measuring 0.23 m x 0.1 m x 0.07 m) in English Bond. The bricks were similar to those used in the standing vertical brewery building, whose wall lay 2 m to the south of the trench. A second structure (223) comprising 2 brick walls with at least 12 courses was located to the west of structure 220. The full depth of structure 223 was not exposed for safety reasons. The interior of this structure was filled with two layers of material. The first comprised demolition material from the structure itself (222). The second was a layer of silt loam with brick and tile rubble inclusions (207). The remains of a wall (215) located *c.* 2 m to the west of structure 223 were of the same build as 223. No relationship was established as wall 215 had been partially demolished.
- 5.2.2. An east west aligned wall (218) recorded running along the south baulk section at the west end of the trench, was constructed from later materials in stretcher bond. Remains of another north-south aligned wall of similar build (217), can be linked with a scar on the standing wall which separates the brewery from the Post Office buildings to the north. A manhole (213) was located towards the centre of the trench. Made ground layers and a tarmac surface overlay all deposits in this trench.

### **5.3. Trench 3 (Figs 3 and 4)**

- 5.3.1. A 0.13 m thick interface layer of orange brown silty clay (304), which produced three undiagnostic pre-historic flint flakes, overlay the natural subsoil (307). This was overlain by a 0.32 m-thick brown cultivation layer (303) which produced three sherds of Roman pottery, a single sherd of post-medieval pottery and several fragments of



brick and tile. A ceramic water pipe cut into layer 303 and was in turn overlain by a series of modern dumping and make-up layers (301, 302, 305 and 306) and were sealed by a layer of tarmac (300).

#### 5.4. Trench 4 (Figs 3 and 4)

5.4.1. Natural subsoil (407) was encountered at *c.* 98 m OD but sloped down to the north-east. The terminus of a 0.6 m wide gully (408) cut through the natural and was filled by a single deposit (409) containing a high proportion of burnt stone (sarsen) and charcoal. Flint flakes were also produced from this deposit. A layer of silty clay (410) sealed the feature and overlay the natural. This deposit produced no finds and sloped down to the north-east. A light grey clay silt (406), 0.33 m thick, overlay layer 410. Modern dump deposits and make-up layers (404, 405) overlay 406. A service drain filled with a concrete housing cut through 404 at the west end of the trench. A 0.45 m thick tarmac surface sealed the trench.

### 6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

TRENCH	CTXT	TYPE	WIDTH (M)	THICK. (M)	COMMENT	FINDS	NO.	DATE
001								
	101	Layer	-	0.2	Tarmac	-	-	-
	102	Structure	-	0.4	Concrete Structure	-	-	-
	103	Layer	-	0.25	Hardcore	-	-	-
	104	Layer	-	0.15	Build-up deposit	-	-	-
	105	Layer	-	0.1	Make-up deposit	-	-	-
	106	Layer	-	0.2	Build-up deposit	-	-	-
	107	Layer	-	0.4	Dump Material	-	-	-
	108	Natural	-	-	Natural flint gravel and silt	-	-	-
	109	Layer	-	0.3	Concrete	-	-	-
002								
	201	Layer		0.1	Tarmac	-	-	-
	202	Layer		0.2	Make-up for tarmac	-	-	-
	203	Layer		0.25	Rubble make-up	-	-	-
	204	Layer		0.2	Modern build-up of mortar and CBM	-	-	-
	205	Layer		0.35	Backfill of silt loam and klinker	-	-	-
	206	Layer		0.35	Silt loam backfill	-	-	-
	207	Layer		0.4	Clay silt deposit	Copper tack	1	
						Bottle sherd	1	C18th

TRENCH	CTXT	TYPE	WIDTH (M)	THICK. (M)	COMMENT	FINDS	NO.	DATE
	207 cont.					Clay Pipe Stem Pot	1 4	Pmed
	208	Natural			Flint and gravel silt	-	-	-
	209	Wall			Brick wall	-	-	-
	210	Wall			Brick wall	-	-	-
	211	Wall			Brick wall	-	-	-
	212	Wall			Brick wall	-	-	--
	213	Structure			Manhole for drains	-	-	--
	214	Fill			Backfill in manhole	-	-	-
	215	Wall			Brick wall	-	-	-
	216	Wall			Brick wall	-	-	--
	217	Wall			Brick wall	-	-	-
	218	Wall			Brick wall	-	-	-
	219	Layer			Dark grey clay silt with CBM fragments	-	--	-
	220	Structure			Room comprising walls 209, 210 and 211	-	-	-
	221	Wall			Brick wall	-	-	-
	222	Layer		0.41	Post-med backfill layer	Tile Bone	1 1	Pmed
	223	Structure			Structure comprising walls 212 and 221	-	-	-
003								
	300	Layer		0.16	Tarmac	-	-	-
	301	Layer		0.17	Make-up deposit	-	-	-
	302	Layer		0.17	Make-up deposit	-	-	-
	303	Layer		0.32	Former cultivation layer	Pottery Tile	3 1 1	Roma no-British Pmed
	304	Layer		0.13	Interface between 303 and 307	Flint flakes	3	Prehis toric
	305	Layer			Modern build-up with CBM fragments	-	-	-
	306	Layer			Modern build-up	-	-	-

TRENCH	CTXT	TYPE	WIDTH (M)	THICK. (M)	COMMENT	FINDS	NO.	DATE
	307	Natural		-	Natural	-	-	-
004								
	401	Layer		0.45	Tarmac	-		
	402	Cut	0.3	0.9	Service trench	-		
	403	Fill		0.9	Concrete housing for service	-		
	404	Layer		0.3- 0.5	Modern build – up/dumping	-		
	405	Layer		0.12- 0.3	Dark grey clay silt deposit	-		
	406	Layer		0.3+	Light grey clay silt deposit	-		
	407	Natural		-	Natural	-		
	408	Cut	0.7	0.35	Terminus of gully	-		
	409	Fill		0.35	Fill of gully	Flint flake	11	
	410	Layer		0.25	Mid brown clay silt	-	-	-

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

### 7.1. Reliability

7.1.1. Dating of the deposits and features within Trenches 3 and 4 was not possible due to the small and mixed nature of the finds assemblage. The nature of the burnt material in feature 408 is unclear and can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly that the deposit is part of a burnt prehistoric deposit, with intrusive tar and coal; Secondly that the deposit is a post-medieval burnt yard surface or dump of sarsen stone, containing residual prehistoric flint working debris. The presence of worked flint and the relative quantity of microdebitage within the deposit coupled with the possibility that the post-medieval coal and tar was intrusive indicates that the deposit may be prehistoric. The activity in Trench 2 clearly relates to the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Brewery buildings. Despite the lack of artefactual evidence from Trench 1 all the deposits above the natural are likely to be post-medieval. The concrete platform is certainly recent and the majority of deposits have been laid after its construction.

### 7.2. Summary of Results

7.2.1. Apart from the walls related to the Brewery in Trench 1, the only other archaeological feature revealed was the gully terminal in Trench 4. A soil sample taken from the only fill of the terminal of a gully (deposit 409) was processed by flotation, sieved and sorted for bones and artefacts. Based on this sample there is little potential for environmental indicators to reconstruct human subsistence. The coal and tar recovered from the flot is medieval or later, probably considerably later and related to the use of the site as a post-medieval brewery. It is possible that the material is intrusive from

later deposits as discussed in 7.2.1 above. The stratigraphic sequence in Trenches 3 and 4 is very similar, but differs to the sequence in Trenches 1 and 2 due to the greater level of post-medieval activity at the west end of the site. Made ground deposits of variable thickness were present in all trenches.

### 7.3. Significance

- 7.3.1. The presence of artefacts indicates Prehistoric and Romano-British activity in the vicinity but is likely to be limited within the confines of the site. The structures encountered in Trench 2 indicate that the brewery building extended to the north of its present range. They are likely to have been outbuildings constructed about the same time as or later than the lean-to addition on the north side of the Vertical Brewery and will add to information brought to light by the results of the building survey. Post-medieval deposits have accumulated throughout the site and may seal any features such as that discovered in Trench 4. These may be revealed in the second phase of the evaluation.

## 8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cartwright, C 1992                      *Hungerford Beyond Domesday.*
- OAU 1998                                  *Somerfield Store, Hungerford Desktop Assessment*
- Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992                *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual*, (First edition, August 1992)

## APPENDIX 1

### *The Finds* by Kate Atherton

Table 1: Occurrence of finds by context

CONTEXT	COPPER	GLASS	RB POT	PMED POT	BRICK/TILE	FLINT	CLAY PIPE	BONE
207	x1 tack/ rivet	x1 bottle sherd (C18th)		4 sherds			1 stem frag	
222					1 frag			1 rib
303			3 sherds	1 sherd	5 frags			
304						3 flakes (sf's 1, 2, 3)		
409						11 flakes: sf 4 and 10 from soil sample 1		

The assemblage of finds from the site is too small and mixed to permit conclusions about the dates of their contexts. While the collection of finds from context 207 suggests a possible date from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, contexts 222 and 303 can only be broadly dated to the Post-medieval period. The three sherds of Romano-British pottery are small and abraded and are almost certainly residual.

The flake flints are not diagnostic and must be generally dated to the prehistoric period. The absence of any later finds except small fragments of coal and tar, may indicate a prehistoric date for contexts 304 and 409. With the exception of the blade-like flake (SF 3), they are all hard hammer-struck and show no signs of reworking.

The building material and pottery fragments are all small and worn, as is the glass bottle fragment, and this indicates that the finds are likely to be redeposited.

## APPENDIX 2

### *Assessment of the environmental indicators* by Greg Campbell

A single soil sample from the sole fill of the terminal of a gully (deposit 409) was processed by flotation with the flot collected on 0.5 mm mesh. Following flotation, the mineral residue of the sample was sieved through 10 and 4 mm meshes and the sieved material sorted for bones and artefacts.

Artefacts recovered were a single piece of struck flint, and approximately 10 pieces of flint microdebitage. Burnt flints were present but rare. Natural flint was virtually absent from the deposit, about 50% of which was poorly burnt stone, probably sarsen.

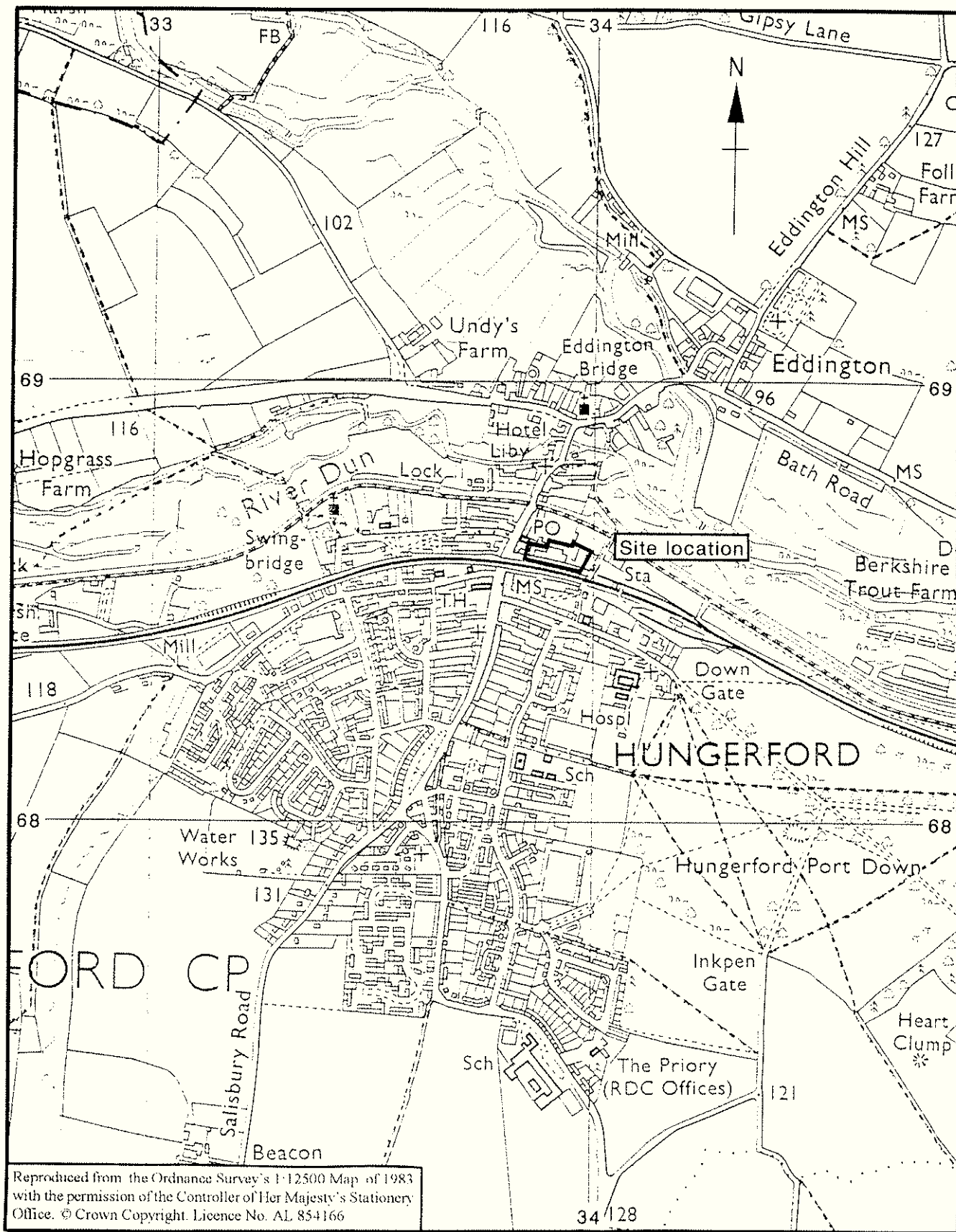
The flot was large and dominated by wood charcoal, little of which (approximately 15 pieces) was large enough to identify. The only other items of note were small and large pieces of coal (some cokified) and about five pieces of sandy tar. Charred plant remains appeared absent.

Bone and terrestrial snails were absent from the sample, which confirms the view about the preservation of these materials at the site from the hand-retrieved material.

Based on this sample there is little potential of environmental indicators to reconstruct human subsistence or land-use. The coal and tar recovered from the flot is medieval or later, probably considerably later and related to the use of the site as a post-medieval brewery. It is possible that the material has been brought down from later deposits.

There are two possible interpretations, neither of which can be differentiated on the basis of its environmental indicators:

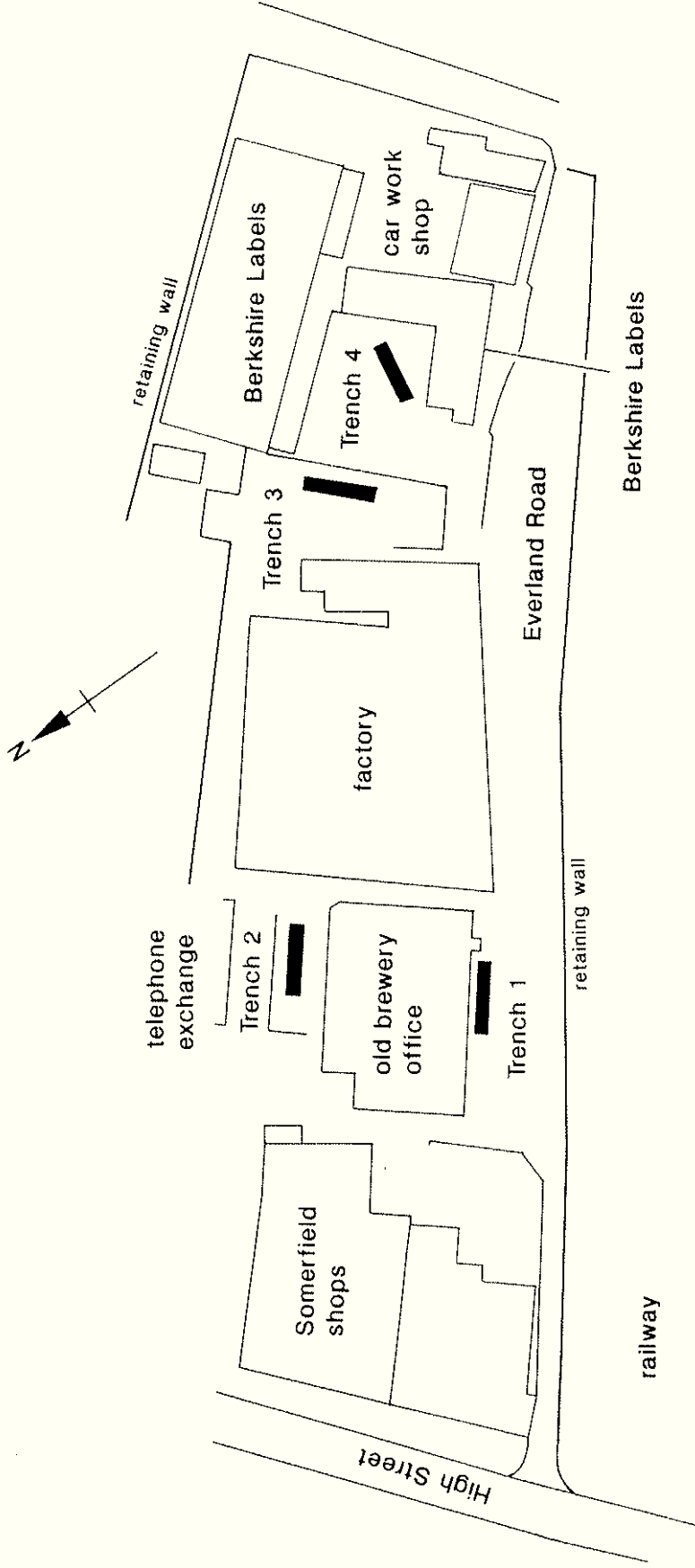
- the deposit is part of a burnt prehistoric deposit, with intrusive tar and coal;
- the deposit is a post-medieval burnt yard surface or dump of sarsen stone, with some residual prehistoric flint working debris.



scale 1:12500

Location of site

Figure 1

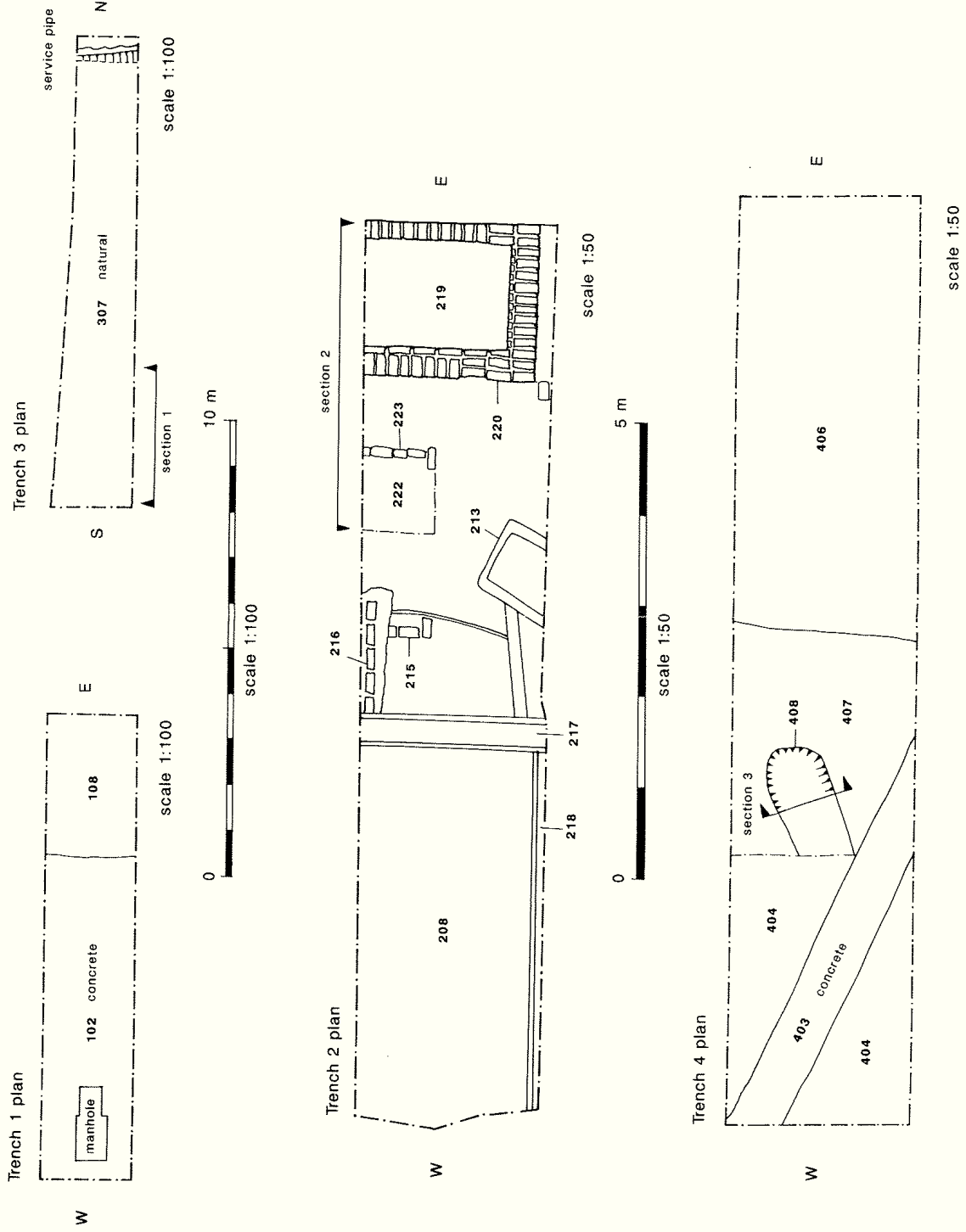


scale 1:1000

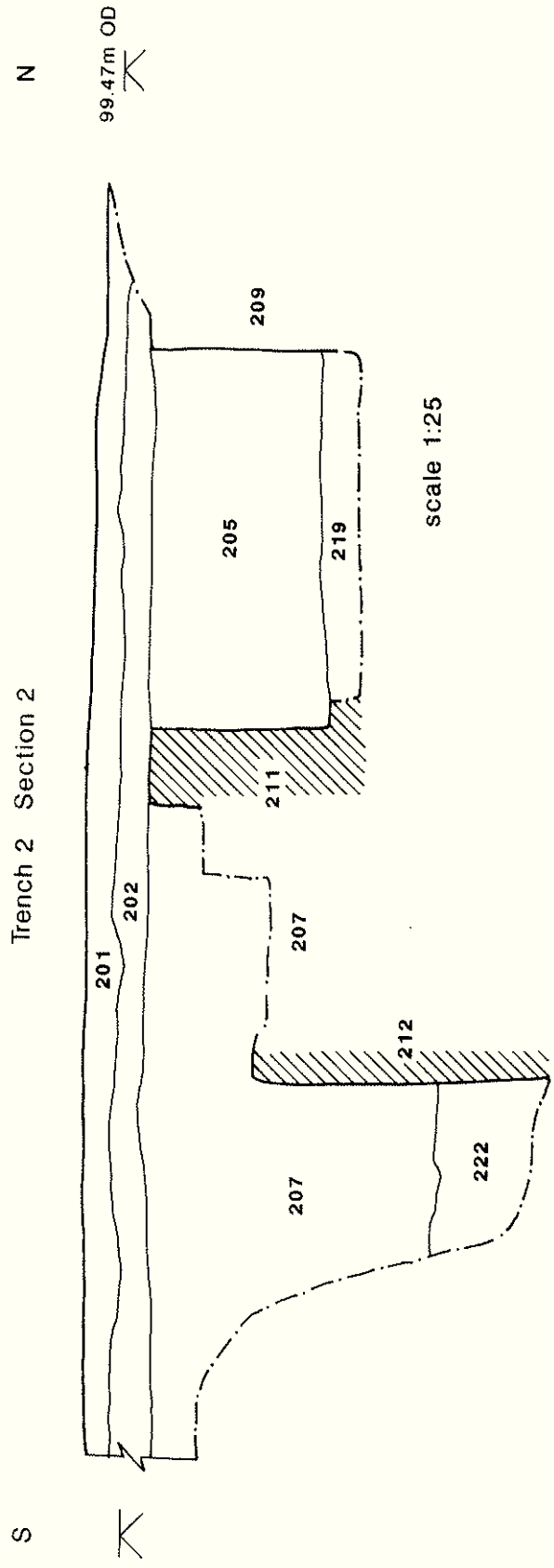
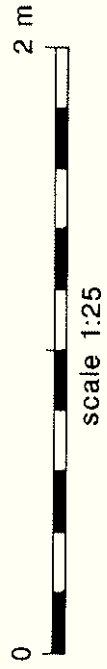
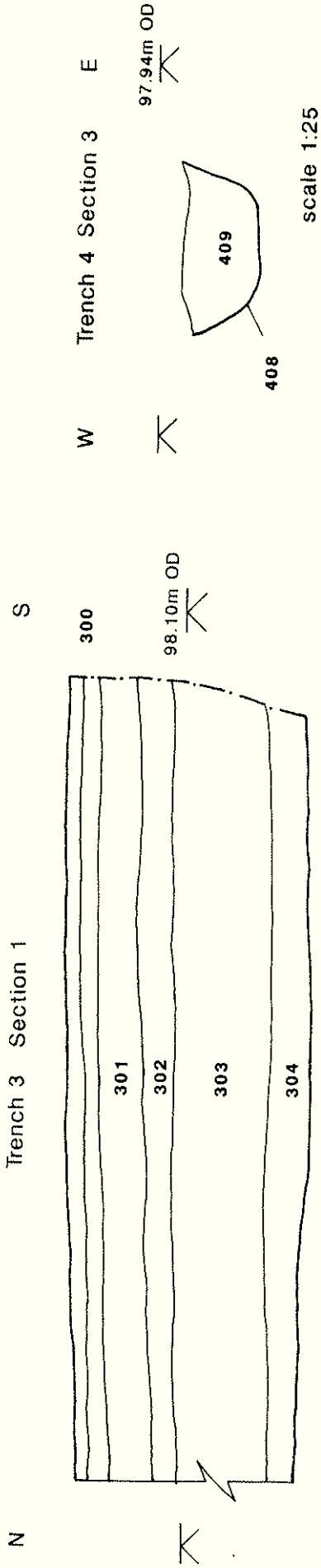
Location of trenches

Figure 2





Trench plans



Sections

Figure 4



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