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The Swan Inn Tetsworth

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

January 1994

Site at the Swan Inn, Tetsworth
Planning application P91/N0050/0
NGR SP 688018

Archaeological Evaluation

1. Introduction

A housing development is proposed for the area of land immediately to the north of the Swan Inn, Tetsworth.

As part of the requirement for planning permission for this development, the Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out an archaeological evaluation of this site, over a period of four days in January 1994.

The aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence and degree of preservation of any archaeological deposits, in order to determine the impact of the proposed development.

2. Summary of results

The only significant archaeological deposits located were a possible buried ground surface (Trench 2 layer 2/5), containing two small sherds of Iron Age pottery, and a curving gully (Trench 9 feature 9/5), containing fragments of medieval/post-medieval tile.

3. Archaeological and historical background

The Swan Inn contains a late medieval core (survey by RCHM) and previous archaeological investigations in Tetsworth have produced evidence from the 3rd to 14th centuries. Later prehistoric as well as other Romano British remains have also been recorded in the wider vicinity around the settlement.

4. Topography

Tetsworth lies 18 km to the east of Oxford. The site is located on the north-eastern edge of Tetsworth, east of the High Street (A40) and south of the green. The village is situated on the north facing slope of a gault clay ridge, which rises to just above 100 metres OD.

The site of the proposed development is presently wasteland, though the northern half of the area has been cultivated in recent times.

5. Strategy

14 trenches were excavated, each 30 m long x 1.85 m wide, comprising a 2% sample of the total area of the proposed development. (see fig. 1 for trench locations).

A 360 mechanical digger was used to excavate the trenches down to the top of archaeological deposits, or in their absence to the top of the natural subsoil.

The trenches were planned at 1:100 and sections were drawn where appropriate. Any archaeological features were sampled by hand to retrieve datable finds and then described and photographed.

6. Results

6.1 Trench 1 (see fig. 2a)

This was the only trench excavated in the immediate vicinity of the Swan Inn, and was positioned at right angles to and immediately to the north of the High Street (old A40), some 50 m to the east of the building.

A 7 m section in the NE half of this trench could not be excavated due to the existence of modern services.

No significant archaeological deposits were located in this trench. The natural clay, which was reached at a depth of 1.3 m below the present ground surface, was overlaid by layers of alluvium clay. A small irregular shaped feature (1/10), cut into the top of one of the earlier deposits of alluvium (1/8), proved to be only a treethrow pit.

6.2 Trenches 2, 3, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 (see fig. 2b for section of trench 2)

These trenches were excavated on the higher ground, which mostly exists in the eastern half of the site and consists mainly of a north facing slope.

The only deposit in these trenches which appeared to be archaeological was a layer of dark grey brown clay in trench 2 (layer 2/5), which contained flecks of charcoal and produced two small sherds of Iron Age pottery. This deposit, which appeared to be a buried ground surface, was sealed beneath three layers of colluvial silty clay (hillwash).

In all of the other trenches in this area the natural subsoil was overlaid by one to two layers of colluvial silty clay.

6.3 Trenches 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 (see fig. 3 for plan and section of trench 9)

These trenches were excavated in the lower lying part of the site, which is centred round two existing ponds.

The natural subsoil was overlaid in all of these trenches by one to two layers of alluvial clay. The only finds retrieved from the alluvium were a post-medieval horse shoe in trench 4 (layer 4/3) and four pieces of horse bone from trench 7 (layer 7/3).

Cut into the top of the alluvium in trench 9 was a curving gully with a 'U' shaped profile. The gully, which was some 0.80 m wide and 0.45 m deep, produced three fragments of tile. The size and character of the tile fragments makes them very difficult to date, other than the fact that they are no earlier than medieval. However, the level at which the feature is cut from suggests that it is of post-medieval date.

The only other feature to be located in these trenches was a treethrow pit in trench 6 (6/3), which produced a single sherd of post-medieval pottery.

6.4 Comment on Results

The water table was very high at the time of the evaluation and some of the trenches in the lower lying areas flooded soon after excavation.

Due to the lack of archaeological deposits, and the simplicity of the stratigraphy in these trenches, this did not affect the results.

7. Conclusions

The presence of alluvium, seen in all of the trenches in the lower lying parts of the site, which also includes trench 1, suggests that this area has always been wet and prone to flooding. The area to the north-west of the Green is called 'Marsh End' and the present Ordnance Survey map indicates marshy ground to the rear of the Swan Inn. The OAU undertook an archaeological evaluation along the north-east side of the Green several years ago. There modern ploughsoil was found to overlie the clay through which numerous land drains had been inserted.

It is likely that the Swan Inn has always stood alone on this side of the High Street. It is possible that there was a small slightly raised area on which the original medieval building was located although this is not visible. The present occupiers have said that the foundations have had to be replaced as they had rotted.

Davis's map of 1797 shows only the Swan and Petty's manor house (on the site of Mount Hill Farm) on the north side of High Street. This was still the case in 1839 as shown on the Title Award map. On the earlier map, fields and the Green are shown to lie next to the Swan.

The possible buried ground surface containing Iron Age pottery, located on the east edge of the site, is most likely to be related to a settlement or activity on the top of the hill, to the east of the development area.

C Bell
Oxford Archaeological Unit
January 1994

Pottery identification by P Booth
Tile identification by L Allen



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figure 1, Trench location plan

Trench 1

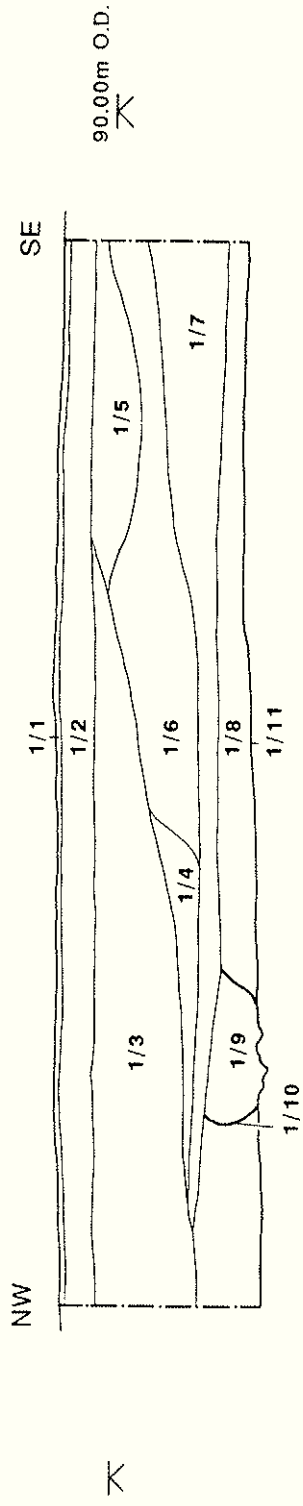


figure 2a, Trench 1 section

Trench 2

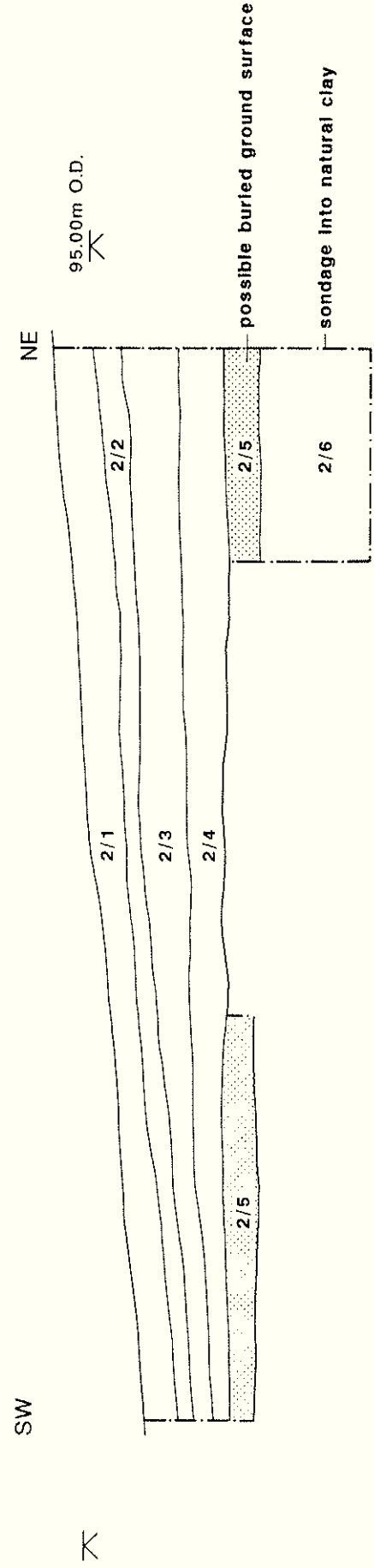
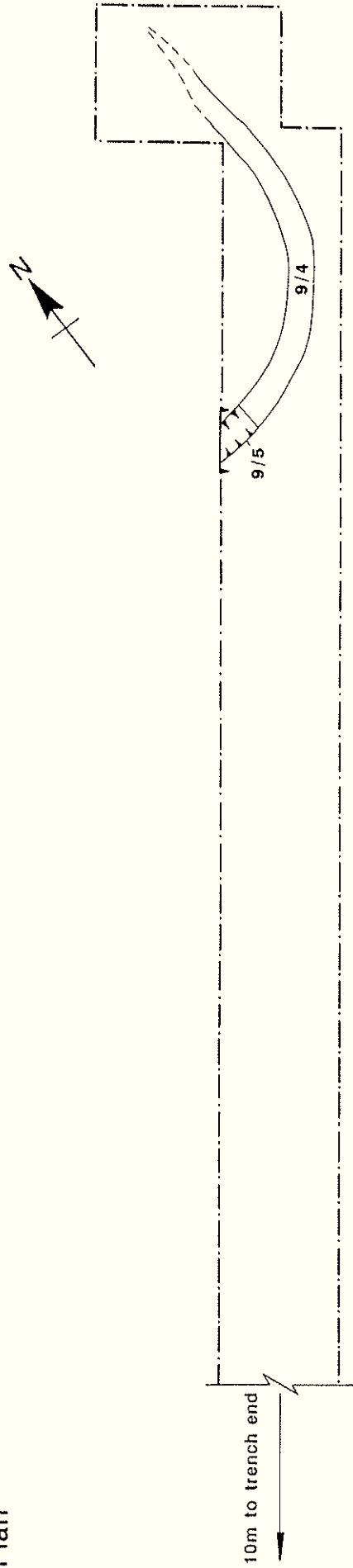


figure 2b, Trench 2 section



Trench 9 Plan



Section

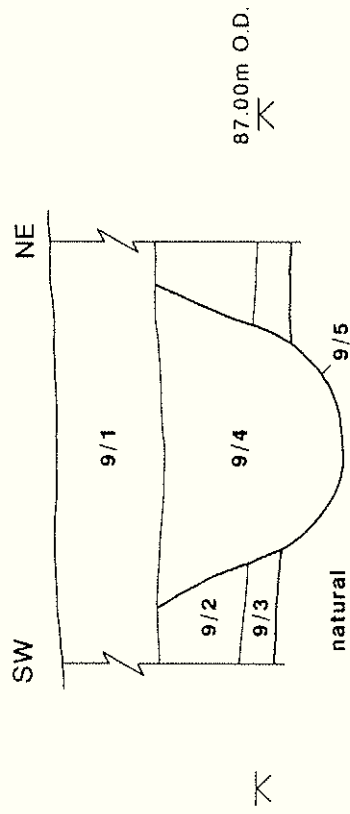


figure 3, Trench 9 plan & section

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