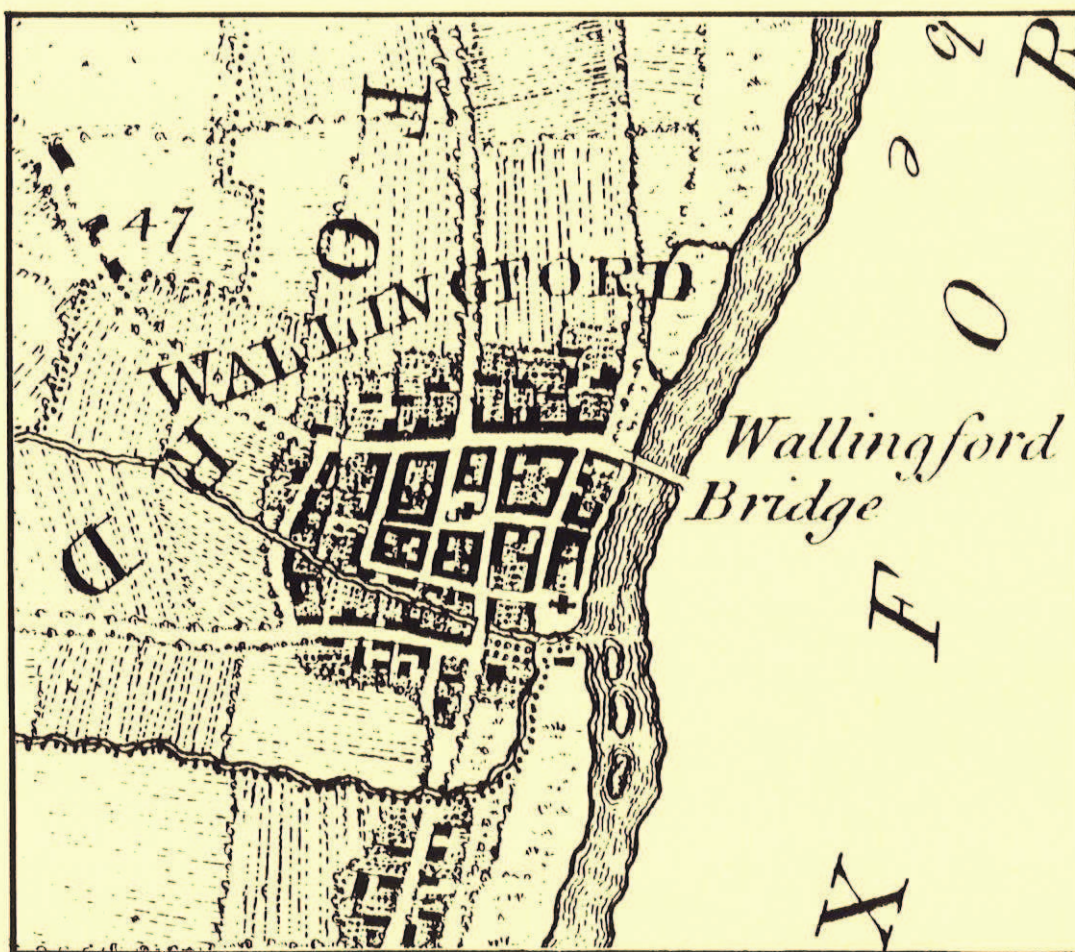


WASP (OX)
17/94

R C Lester and Sons. Ltd

St Peter's St., Wallingford, Oxon.
(NGR: SP 6083 8941)

Archaeological Evaluation, May 1994



Oxford Archaeological Unit
May 1994

**St Peters Street, Wallingford, Oxon.
Archaeological Evaluation, May 1994**

(NGR: SP 6083 8941)

Oxford Archaeological Unit
May 1994

**St. Peter's St., Wallingford, Oxon.
Archaeological Evaluation, May 1994**

List of Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Geology and Topography	1
3	Historical and Archaeological Background	1
4	Implications for the Evaluation Area	3
5	Evaluation strategy	3
6	Trench descriptions	3
7	The Pottery	5
8	Conclusions	5

Appendix A

Appendix B

Appendix C

List of Figures

Figure 1: Location of evaluation area and surrounding known archaeology.

Figure 2: Trench location plan.

Figure 3: Trench plans.

Figure 4: Representative sections.

**St Peter's St., Wallingford, Oxon.
Archaeological Evaluation, May 1994**

Summary

An archaeological evaluation to the rear of properties at 5 & 6 St Peters Street, Wallingford, Oxon. (former abattoir) revealed a late-post medieval garden soil level and series of pits. A former yard layout was revealed to the rear of no.6. A small assemblage of medieval pottery indicates C12-C14 activity in the vicinity, though the finds could not be assigned to any specific archaeological context. Earlier activity on the site was indicated by the presence of two sherds of late Saxon pottery and one sherd of Roman grey ware. Unfortunately, again, no features of a corresponding date were identified. Archaeological deposits within the former cutting room were considerably disturbed by the laying of drainage services to the former abattoir, those in the yard area by C19 activity.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) was commissioned by RC Lester and Sons Limited to undertake an archaeological evaluation to the rear of properties at 5 & 6 St Peters Street, Wallingford, Oxon. (NGR: SP 6083 8941) in advance of building work to extend and convert the premises from use as an abattoir to residential and retail purposes. The work was carried out, between 12th - 19th May 1994, in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by OAU and approved by the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Officer.

2 Topography and Geology

- 2.1 The town of Wallingford is situated at an elevation of c.46m OD on a gravel terrace of the Thames at a point where the river leaves the underlying upper greensand to pass through chalk which makes up the Chilterns. The natural subsoil is gravel and sand of considerable thickness overlying upper greensand. It commands an excellent ford across the Thames and also the Goring Gap where the river cuts through the chalk downs providing easy access to the London Basin.

3 Historical and Archaeological Background

- 3.1 Evidence for the urban settlement on the present site of Wallingford stretches back at least to the late Saxon period, the Burghal Hidage (c.919 AD) recording Wallingford as the largest Burh (or defended town) in Wessex. However, chance finds and the evidence of aerial photography show that the area has been exploited throughout the prehistoric, Roman and earlier Saxon periods (see 3.2-3.4 below) . Numerous finds from all periods have been recovered from the town and its environs,

in particular from the Thames to the east (see fig.1).

- 3.2 Traces of prehistoric activity abound in the vicinity of the town and finds include flints from a wide range of industries, a Bronze Age burial and a fine hoard of Bronze Age implements dredged from the Thames just south of Wallingford Bridge. Two areas of Iron Age settlement have been identified and partially excavated to the south of the town and a number of late Iron Age coins have been recovered in the vicinity.
- 3.3 Roman finds, predominantly of pottery and coins, have been numerous and appear to be concentrated to the western half of the enclosed area and on the land to the west of the Saxon defences. Coins range in date from Augustus (23BC-14AD) to Honorius (395-423AD), the later issues being more common.
- 3.4 A 5th-6th century pagan Saxon cemetery was excavated to the south-west of the Kine Croft external to the later earthwork defences. Saxon pottery has been recovered from the body of the earthwork defensive bank, again in the area of the Kine Croft, although no specific Anglo-Saxon settlement sites have as yet been identified.
- 3.5 The present town preserves its later Anglo-Saxon form in the survival of extensive 9th century earthwork defences, particularly along the western limit. The north eastern sector of the Saxon defences were superseded with the building of a motte and bailey castle by Robert D'Oilley soon after the Norman conquest.
- 3.6 At the time of Domesday, Wallingford was already a royal borough of considerable importance with 491 houses, 276 in the ownership of the King, and a population of c. 2000. Its description in the survey shows that it was the chief town in Berkshire far outstripping its later rivals of Reading, Windsor and Newbury.
- 3.7 Wallingford obtained its first Royal charter in 1155-6 by grant of Henry II in recognition of services to the King. Privileges included freedom from payment of Geld, Danegeld and hidage. The King himself forfeited the right to collect Geld from the tenants of his properties within the borough.
- 3.8 By the early 13th century Wallingford contained a total of some 15 churches. The town however seems to have entered a decline during the 14th century, following the removal of the royal household from the castle and the Black Death of 1349. The construction of further bridges across the Thames at Dorchester, Culham and Abingdon only served to hasten the decline.
- 3.9 The castle was redefended in 1642 by Charles I in response to the threat of Civil War, and it withstood a lengthy seige by the Parliamentarians surrendering in 1646, the last Royalist stronghold to do so. The defences were slighted in 1652.
- 3.10 A survey of 1584 shows that the occupied area of the town had shrunk dramatically and this decline was not to be reversed until the 19th century. Indeed, an 1831 survey of the town records two less houses than are recorded in the Domesday Survey.

4 Implications for the Evaluation Area

- 4.1 It is apparent from the archaeological and historical background outlined above that the potential for buried deposits within the walled town is considerable. The decline of Wallingford during the later medieval period adds to the possibility for preservation of relatively undisturbed early medieval and Saxon deposits.
- 4.2 The site is located within the area of the developed early medieval town and thus has potential to produce data relating to former buildings and land use in this period.

5 Evaluation Strategy

- 5.1 The aims of the evaluation were as follows:
 - (i) to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the area of proposed development.
 - (ii) to determine the extent, nature, character and date of any archaeological remains.
 - (iii) to establish the potential of archaeological remains for environmental data.
 - (iv) to appraise the likely impact of the development proposals on any archaeological remains.
- 5.2 The evaluation was undertaken by the excavation of two small trenches, one within the former cutting room at the rear of no.5 St Peters Street, the second within the yard area to the rear of no.6 (see fig.2). Concrete floor slabs were removed using a mechanical breaker, all subsequent excavation was by hand. Written recording of the trenches was in accordance with the OAU standard system. Trench plans and relevant sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20.

6 Trench Descriptions

- 6.1 A summary of the deposits encountered in each trench is given below, individual context descriptions are included in tabulated form as appendix A.
- 6.2 *Trench 1* [see figs.3(a) and 4(a)]
 - 6.2.1 Trench 1 was located within the former cutting room of the abattoir to the rear of no.5 St Peters Street, and measured 3.2 metres (E/W) x 1.7 metres (N/S). Archaeological deposits within this trench were heavily disturbed by the laying of modern services.
 - 6.2.2 Natural subsoil, a mid orange-brown sandy silt (124), was located at a depth of c.0.80m below the modern slabbed cutting room floor. This layer was exposed only

in the eastern half of the trench, the western half being heavily disturbed by modern service pipes (103) and a brick built man hole (104). Into the natural was cut a single feature (126), not fully exposed within the trench but probably representing a ?circular pit. The pit was truncated by the construction trench (121) for a ceramic pipe (119) and a related brick retaining structure (comprising 116, 117 & 118), and survived only from c.1.00m below ground level to a maximum of 0.35m in depth. Pit 126 yielded early medieval and one sherd of possible late Saxon pottery.

- 6.2.3 Overlying 124 was a layer of friable mid brown silty sand (123), 0.15m deep, with 10-15% small gravel inclusions. The isolated survival of this layer in the NE of the trench only made it difficult to interpret with any degree of certainty though it may represent a layer of dumped material (together with 115) imported to the site from closer to the river.
- 6.2.4 Into the top of 115 were cut two small features (111 & 113) of unknown function which yielded quantities of C19 pottery. These features were sealed by layer 105, a mid grey-brown silty loam with modern brick and tile inclusions along with C19 pottery.
- 6.2.5 From a level of 0.70m below floor surface, the ground in the SW of the trench was extensively disturbed by modern services (103, 119, 102) related to the most recent use of the site (see figs. 3a and 4a). The upper levels of the trench comprised a substantial hardcore build-up (101) for concrete slabbing (100).

6.3 *Trench 2* [see fig. 3(b) and 4(b)]

- 6.3.1 Trench 2 was located within the yard area to the rear of no.6 St Peters Street and measured 2.5 metres (E/W) x 1.4 metres (N/S).
- 6.3.2 A relatively undisturbed soil layer (214) was exposed at a level of 0.50m below the modern ground surface. This layer was excavated to a depth of 0.30m and produced pottery of C12-C16 date, the later sherds coming from the higher levels. Layer 214 was overlain by a later ?garden soil (209) into which were dug a series of pits (210, 212, 224 & 226). A chalk block drain (216) running approx. N-S across the trench slumped into 212 at its southern end. At the southern edge of the trench, drain 216 joins another, perpendicular chalk block drain (only partly exposed within the trench). To the west of drain 216, and running parallel to it was a chalk built wall (219), surviving to 2 courses and partially robbed out (220). At the extreme SW corner of the trench was partially exposed a further chalk built wall or possible well (222). These features probably represent a former layout of the yard area and may be related to a former gravel and mortar surface (207) to the east which overlies 209 and seals the series of pits. Any relationship of surface 207 to wall 219 has been lost by the digging of a construction trench (205) for the installation of a ceramic drain pipe (204). Surface 207 was overlain by a thin deposit of charcoal which was in turn overlain by a make-up layer (201) for the modern yard surface (200).

7 The Pottery

- 7.1 A small assemblage of medieval and post-medieval pottery was recovered from 19 contexts, comprising a total of 212 sherds weighing 3.7kg. The pottery was examined by Catherine Underwood-Keevil, and the results are summarised below. A context by context record of pottery finds is included as appendix B.
- 7.2 The majority of the material was post-medieval in date. However, three sherds do indicate Roman and late Saxon activity: these consist of one Roman grey ware sherd from context 209, a sherd of Oxford late Saxon ware (OXB) also from context 209, and a sherd of possible Michelmarsh ware datable to the tenth-eleventh century from context 125. The main medieval fabrics were Oxford Medieval ware (OXY) and Oxford fabric AG/Wallingford type 34. The medieval pottery, where dated, dates to the late twelfth/early thirteenth centuries, although two sherds of Oxford late medieval ware (fabrics OXAM and OXAW) from context 115 indicate a late thirteenth - fifteenth century presence. The post-medieval material is mainly factory produced nineteenth century table wares and local red earthenware dating from the seventeenth/eighteenth through to the nineteenth centuries.

8 Conclusions

- 8.1 It is apparent from the evidence of trench 1 (see 6.2 above) that survival of archaeological deposits within the area of the former abattoir buildings is limited due to the laying of extensive drainage services. The isolated survival of pit 126 makes any interpretation of the feature impossible.
- 8.2 Features exposed within the yard area to the rear of no.6 (trench 2) appear to represent a former yard layout of no great age, and a preceding garden soil probably related to buildings fronting onto the present St Peters Street. The series of pits and garden horizon (209) appear to be of C19 date. Although it is apparent that a lower archaeological deposit (214) survives below the garden soil, within the excavated trench it has been effectively destroyed by C19 activity and no features of a corresponding date were encountered. The survival of 214 within this trench does however indicate the increased potential for preservation external to the extant abattoir buildings.
- 8.3 The finds of medieval pottery from both trenches is of no great surprise given the location of the site within the core of the medieval town. Unfortunately, due to the extent of post-medieval activity on the site and the limited scale of the excavated trenches it was not possible to define any specific features of a corresponding date.
- 8.4 The small amount of late Saxon pottery recovered from the evaluation trenches indicates pre-conquest activity in this area of the defended town, and as such, adds to the known history of the area. Unfortunately again, no features of a corresponding date can be identified with any degree of certainty.

Appendix A: Table of Contexts

Context No.	Location	Type	Description
100	Trench 1	Layer	Modern concrete floor slabs.
101	Trench 1	Layer	Hardcore make-up for 100
102	Trench 1	Pipe	
103	Trench 1	Layer	Modern drain encased in concrete
104	Trench 1	Structure	Modern brick built manhole
105	Trench 1	Layer	
106	Trench 1	Cut	Construction cut for 103
107	Trench 1	Cut	Construction cut for 104
108	Trench 1	Structure	Modern brick built manhole
109	Trench 1	Cut	Construction cut for 108
110	Trench 1	Fill	Fill of 111
111	Trench 1	Cut	Filled by 110
112	Trench 1	Fill	Fill of 113
113	Trench 1	Cut	Filled by 112
114	Trench 1	Fill	Fill of 106
115	Trench 1	Layer	?Dump layer
116	Trench 1	Wall	Part of brick structure containing downpipe of 119
117	Trench 1	Wall	Part of brick structure containing downpipe of 119
118	Trench 1	Wall	Part of brick structure containing downpipe of 119
119	Trench 1	Pipe	Modern ceramic drain
120	Trench 1	Layer	Concrete and rubble packing around 119
121	Trench 1	Cut	Cut for drain 119
122	Trench 1	Fill	Fill of 121
123	Trench 1	Layer	?Dump layer
124	Trench 1	Layer	Natural
125	Trench 1	Fill	Fill of 126
126	Trench 1	Cut	?Pit
200	Trench 2	Layer	Modern concrete slabs
201	Trench 2	Layer	Make-up layer for 200
202	Trench 2	Layer	Charcoal deposit

Context No.	Location	Type	Description
203	Trench 2	Cut	Modern service trench
204	Trench 2	Pipe	Fill of 203
205	Trench 2	Cut	Cut for modern services
206	Trench 2	Fill	fill of 205
207	Trench 2	Layer	Compact gravel/mortar surface
208	Trench 2	Layer	
209	Trench 2	Layer	?Garden soil
210	Trench 2	Cut	Pit
211	Trench 2	Fill	Fill of 210
212	Trench 2	Cut	Pit
213	Trench 2	Fill	Fill of 212
214	Trench 2	Layer	Layer
215	Trench 2	Cut	Cut for 216
216	Trench 2	Fill	Drain of chalk block construction
217	Trench 2	Layer	Clay deposit on edge of 212
218	Trench 2	Cut	Cut for 219
219	Trench 2	Fill	Chalk block wall
220	Trench 2	Layer	?Robbing of 219
221	Trench 2	Cut	Cut for 222
222	Trench 2	Fill	Chalk block ?well/?wall
223	Trench 2	Layer	Deposit (?fill of well)
224	Trench 2	Cut	Pit
225	Trench 2	Fill	Fill of 224
226	Trench 2	Cut	Pit
227	Trench 2	Fill	Fill of 226
228	Trench 2	Layer	Layer
229	Trench 2	Fill	Fill of 216

Appendix B: Table of Pottery

Context No.	Fabric Type	Sherd No.	Sherd Wt. (g)	Comments/Date range
105	GREW	2	66	1 rim to pantheon, C17/C18.
105	CREA	3	18	Creamware, mid C19.
105	NOTTS	2	6	Notts Stoneware, mid C19.
105	PEAR	3	7	Pearlware, C19.
105	MOCH	1	2	Mochaware, C19.
110	CREA	1	5	C19.
112	OXAG	1	7	Med. sandy ware, C12-C14.
112	GREW	1	8	
112	CREA	1	1	C19.
112	MISC/WHW	1	3	White ware with sponge dec. C19.
114	OXAE	1	6	Triangular rouletting in block pattern.
114	OXAG	1	4	B/S late C11-C14.
114	OXAQ	1	5	B/S late C12-C15.
114	OXBF	1	4	B/S late C10-C12/C13.
114	GREW	3	28	Small bowl rim C17/C18.
114	TPW	7	23	Transfer printed ware (1800-1900).
114	CREA	3	12	1770-1900.
115	OXAG type	2	13	Very hard fabric with occ. white limestone on surface/surf. margin C12-C14.
115	OXAW	1	14	Very hard orange glazed jug (rounded jug sherd) C13-C15.
115	OXAM	1	4	Ribbed and slip dec. jug sherd C13/C14.
123	OXBK(?)	1	12	Flat topped clubbed rim bowl with incised diagonal scoring on top surface. Late C12.
125	MISC	1	16	Fabric-Mica & dense quartz Burnished to rim wiped external surface. Poss. Michelmarsh ware pitcher rim. C10/C11.
125	OXAE	1	4	C12. (Quartz and occ. flint/limestone).
125	OXAC(?) type	1	8	Limestone & quartz.

Context No.	Fabric Type	Sherd No.	Sherd Wt. (g)	Comments/Date range
202	OXY	1	14	Med sandy ware everted triangular rim with groove. Early-mid C13.
202	OXBB	1	36	Oolitic limestone. Late C13/Mid C15.
202	GREW	3	246	Handled Breadbin. C18.
202	ENGs	2	178	English C19 stoneware.
202	TPW	6	65	C19.
206	ENGs	2	39	English stoneware tankard C19.
206	GREW	1	10	Orange int. glaze C18.
208	PEAR	8	187	Jug handles tureen C19, moulded dec.
209	R20	1	13	Roman grey ware
209	OXB	1	12	Oxford late Saxon ware C9-C10.
209	OXY	11	147	Early C13 cooking pot rim & 2 bases knife trimmed B/S late C12.
209	OXAG	5	70	Thumbled rim CP C12/C13, pitcher B/S C12/C13.
209	OXBB	1	12	Minety? late C13.
209	GREW	4	13	C17 bowl, dark grey glaze
209	OXFR/FS	6	435	Wallingford types grey-red earthenware casserole dishes, C18/C19.
209	CREA	4	51	C19 dishes.
209	TPW	4	29	White salt glaze, C18.
209	ENGs	3	96	English stoneware, 1670-1900.
209	MISC/TPW	8	148	Earthenware, C19.
211	OXBF	1	12	C10-C12.
211	OXAG	9	210	Late C12-C15.
211	OXY	2	22	C12-C14.
211	PEAR	4	57	C19.
213	OXAG	12	142	Late C11-C15
213	OXY	7	56	Splash glaze B/S C12-C14.
213	GREW	4	244	Marbled Glaze B/S C19.
213	TPW	3	70	Crookstock handle, mid C19.
214	OXAG	19	217	Knife trimmed shoulders, late C12/C13 CP rim.

Context No.	Fabric Type	Sherd No.	Sherd Wt. (g)	Comments/Date range
214	OXY	6	79	Pitcher sherds, glazed 2x, C12/C13, thumbbed rim CP.
214	GREW	1	8	C16/C17 cup form, orange int. glaze.
223	OXAG	1	7	C12-C15.
223	CREA	1	16	1770-1900.
223	TPW	4	65	C19.
223	GREW	1	30	C19.
225	GREW	1	4	Small jar/bowl, C18.
227	OXAG	5	39	C12-C15.
227	OXY	1	2	C12.
227	GREW	2	172	Pantheon C18.
227	ENGs/NOTS	5	51	1700-1900.
227	TPW	4	27	Feather edged plate, mid C19.
229	OXAG	6	52	C12-C15, knife trimmed C12.
Total	-----	212	3688g	-----

Oxford Archaeological Unit
June 1994

Appendix C: Sources consulted

Archival Sources

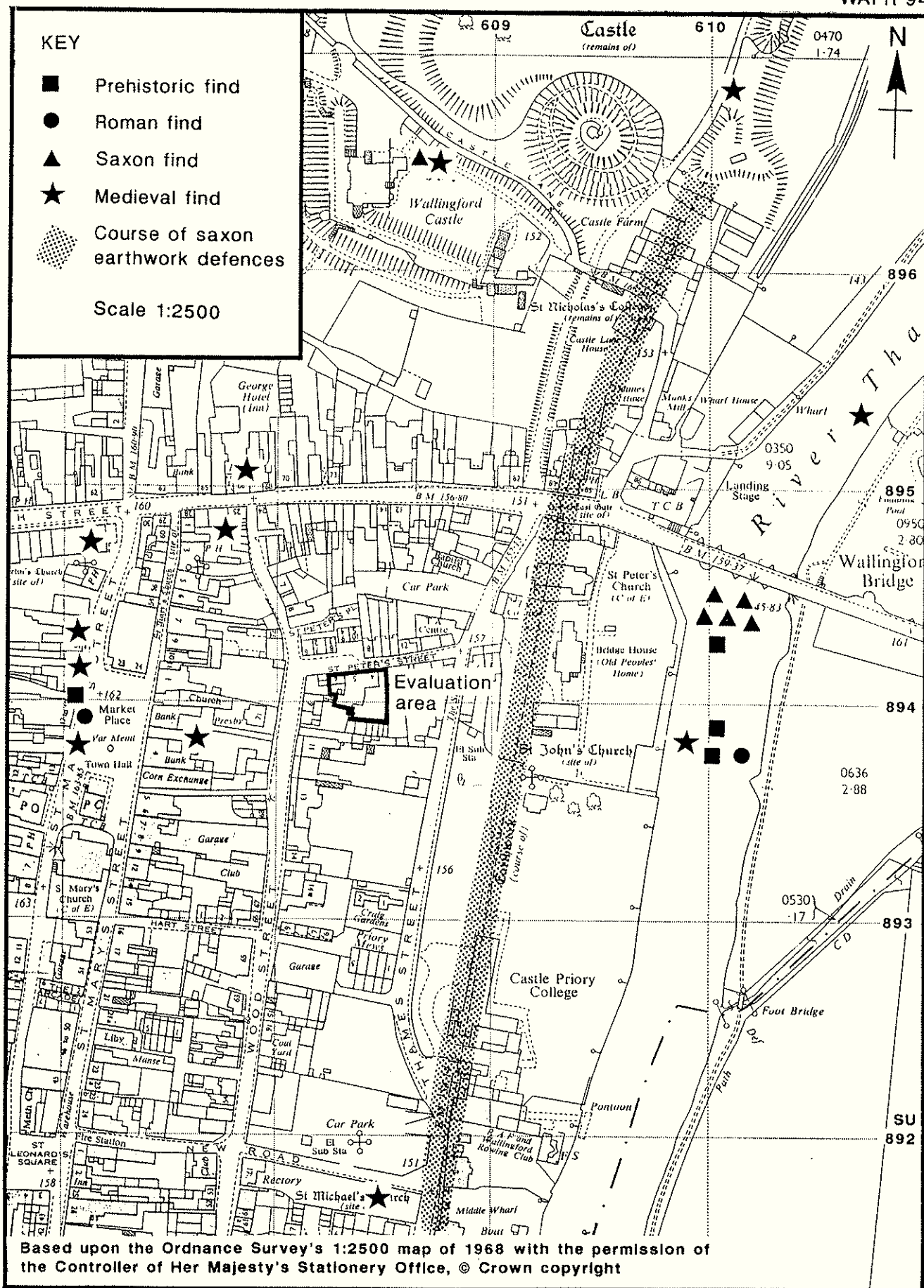
Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Record

Published Sources

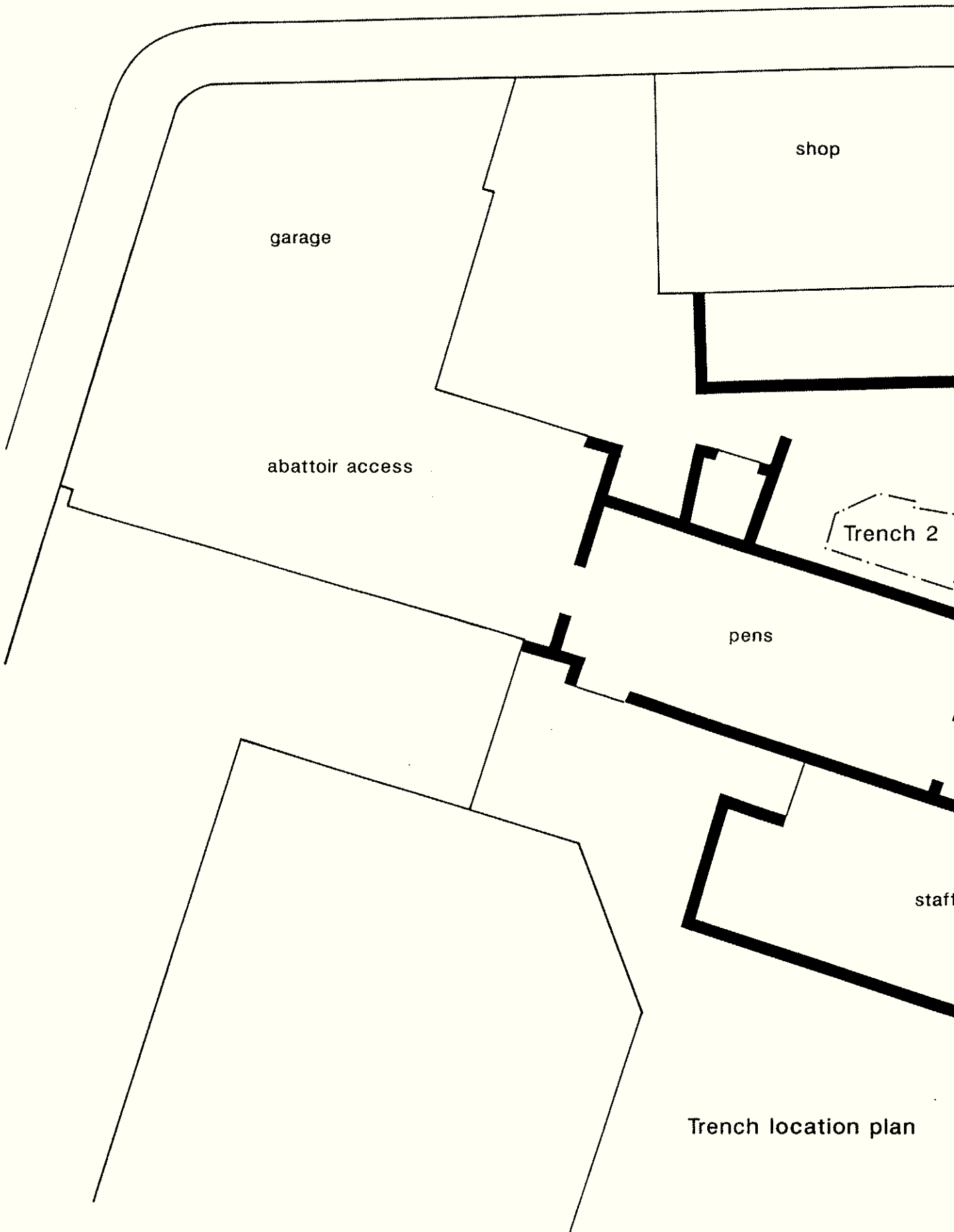
Rodwell K 1974. *The Historic Towns of Oxfordshire: A Survey of the New County*.

Simpson C 1973. *Wallingford: the archaeological implications of development*.

VCH (Berks.) **III** 1923.



Location of Evaluation Area and surrounding known archaeology



Trench location plan

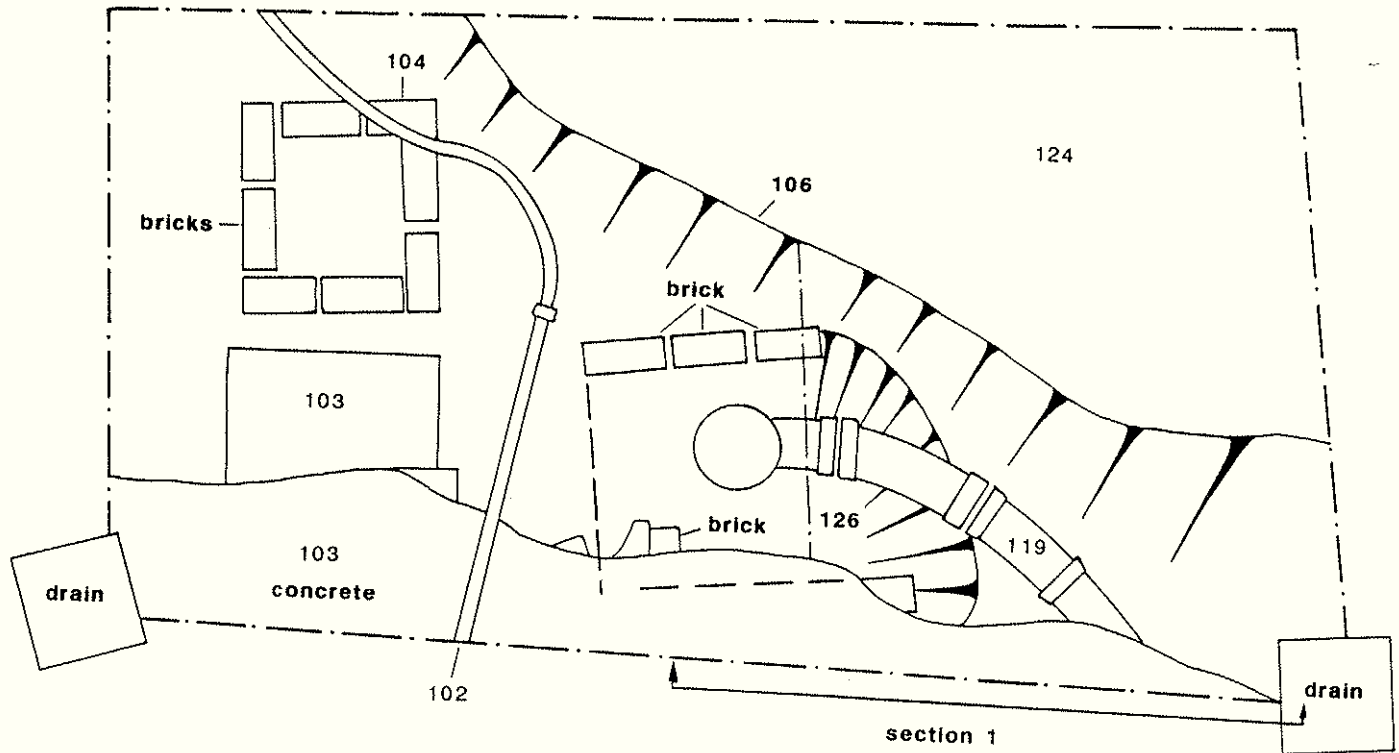


Figure 3(a)

0 1 m
Scale of trenches 1:20

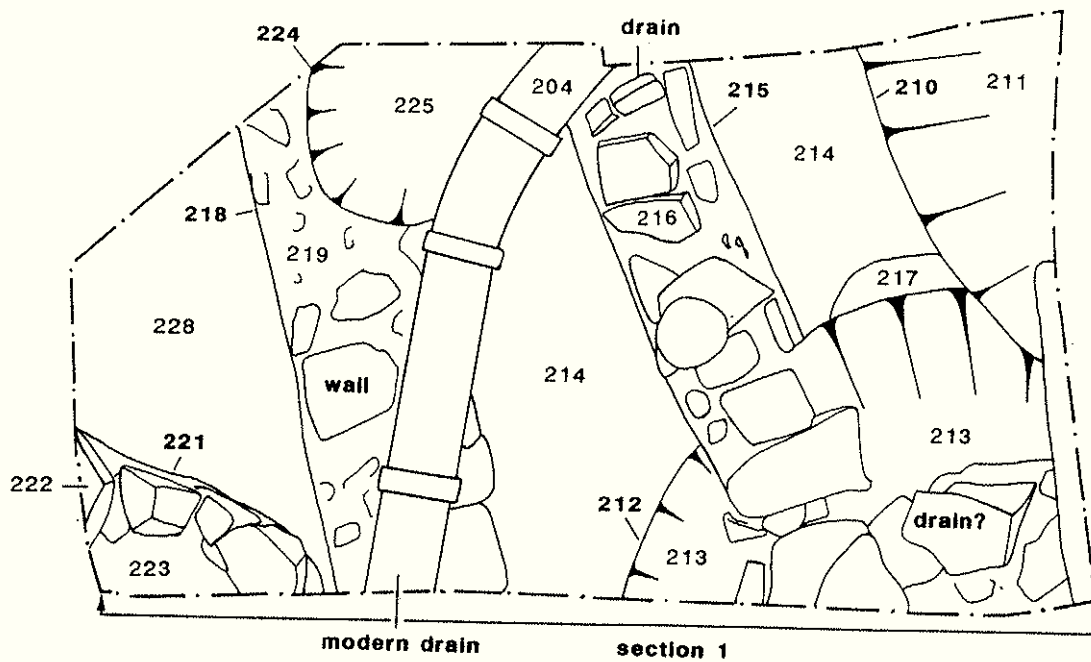


Figure 3(b)

Trench 1, section 1

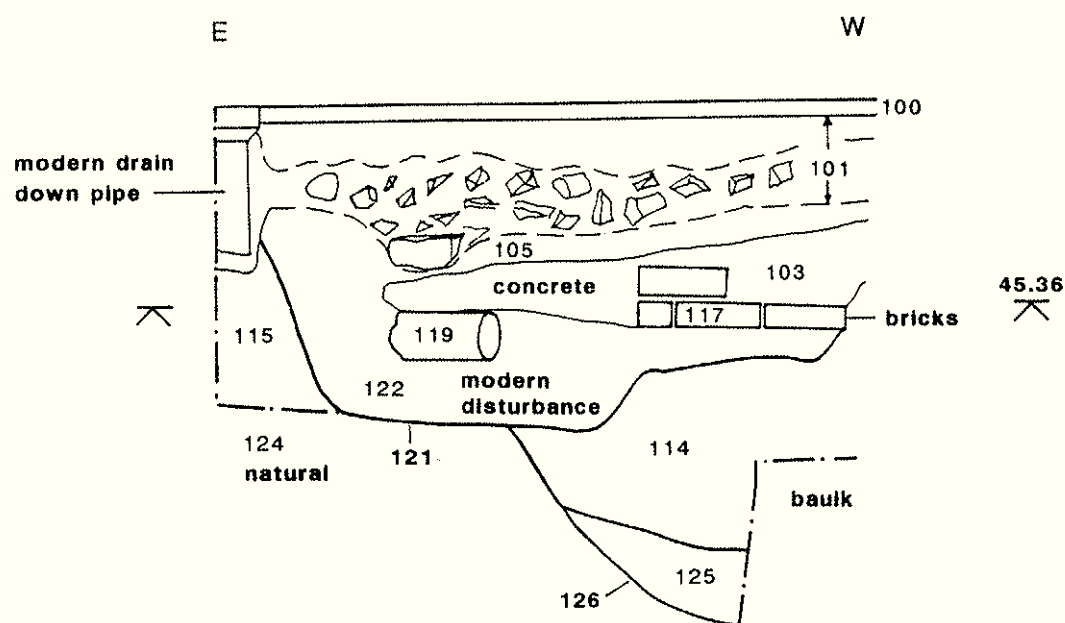
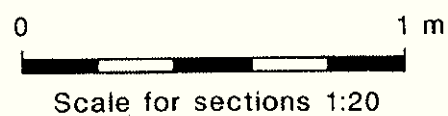


Figure 4(a)



Trench 2, section 1

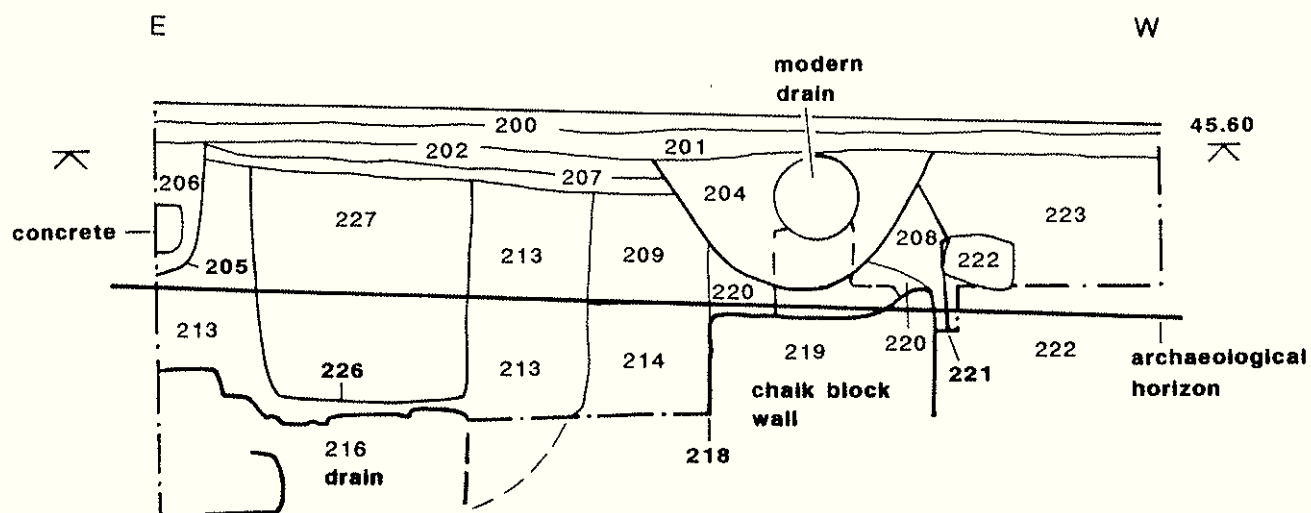


Figure 4(b)

