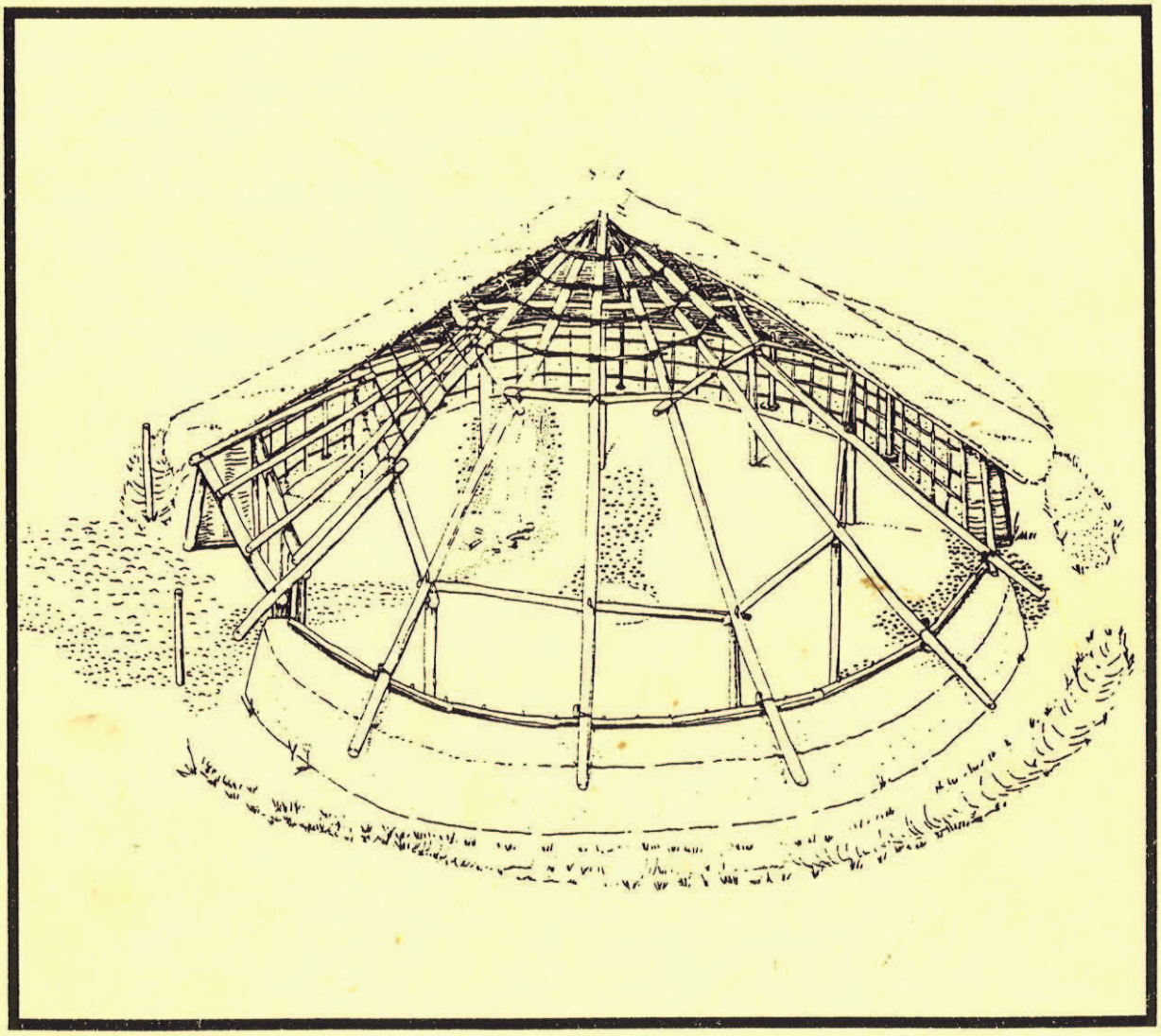
Duffield House, Duffield Road Woodley, Berkshire

Planning application no. 42699
An Archaeological Evaluation
NGR SU 766 744



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

November 1994

Abstract

The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out an archaeological evaluation at Duffield House, Duffield Road, Woodley on behalf of C A Lennon Associates in advance of an planning application for housing. Six trenches were dug, five of which produced early prehistoric features. The prehistoric features probably represent settlement activity, with three postholes and a dump of domestic debris (burnt flint) surrounded by possibly two phases of enclosures/paddocks.

Introduction

This report has ben commissioned as a part of a planning application for housing by C A Lennon Associates. The field evaluation followed a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by R Williams of the OAU in response to a Brief produced by C Moore of Babtie, Shaw and Morton on behalf of Berkshire County Council.

Archaeological Background

The principal reason for requiring archaeological work in advance of planning determination put forward in the Brief was the previous recovery of Palaeolithic flint tools from a gravel pit (Butts Hill pit) immediately S of the application site. Further late Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic flint work is recorded from the Railway cutting which lies to the NW, and from SE of the site.

The area of the river gravels adjacent to the Thames has been proved to be rich in archaeological remains. In particular there is evidence of extensive prehistoric, Roman and Saxon activity on the adjacent gravels. A brief overview of the adjacent archaeological sites was extracted from Ford (1987) and Gates (1975).

Palaeolithic and mesolithic flint tools have been found in comparative abundance to the N and W of the site towards the River Thames. A Neolithic ritual focus (including a cursus) identified from aerial photographs lies 1500 m to the N, near to the Thames at Sonning. Cropmarks identified as ring ditches (most likely to represent Bronze Age burial mounds) 1000 m to the N are aligned towards the earlier Neolithic focus from the S (Gates, 1975 map 19, 38 and Ford, 1987, passim).

Little Iron Age activity has been recognised around the site. A Roman settlement lies c2 km to the N of the site and further findspots of Roman material lie to the S. Saxon occupation and finds are documented from Sonning and Wokingham is a probably a Saxon settlement.

Archaeological methodology

Aims

The aim was to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the development area.

i) To determine the extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.

ii) To determine the environmental/ecofactual potential of any

archaeological features or deposits.
iii) In particular to establish whether any *in situ* prehistoric occupation or working areas survive within the application area.

Strategy
The evaluation was to consist of six 25 m long, 1.55 m wide machine-dug trenches placed across the application site, but avoiding areas covered by trees. The trenches represent a sample of slightly over 2% of the application area. the trenches were machined to the first archaeologically significant horizon under direct archaeological supervision. Artefacts were retrieved from the machine-excavated soil. Samples of 50 litres of soil were sieved through 25 mm mesh sieve from both ends of each trench. The fills of some features which did not produce finds were also subject to dry sieving. Pits and postholes were subject to a 50% sample by volume. Linear features were sectioned as appropriate. No carbonised material were recorded in any features from which it would have been possible to obtain a 30 litre sample for environmental analysis. None of the features contained waterlogged material. The trenches were planned at 1:100 or 1:50. Sections and sample sections of the trenches were drawn at 1:20.

Field evaluation by trenching, supplemented by dry sieving, was required as the site has been a garden up until recently and so no cropmark or find scatter prospective techniques could be employed.

Description of Results

In total six prehistoric linear features (ditches) and three postholes were identified. These were all cut into a reddish brown subsoil present over the gravel. Modern gardensoil directly overlaid the subsoil and archaeological features. Four trenches (1, 2, 4 and 6) contained one linear feature each and one trench (3) contained three linear features. Trench 6 also contained all three postholes and a layer of burnt flint up to 0.3 m thick. These are shown on figures 1 and 2 and details are to be found in Table 1. One linear feature in Trench 5 probably represents a modern boundary.

The archaeological features excavated and the sieving produced 28 pieces of struck flint and 323 pieces of burnt flint (see appendices for detailed report). The assemblage is small but on technological grounds is not inconsistent with a middle or late Bronze Age date.

Although inferring the absolute direction of linear features from a narrow evaluation trench is risky it would seem that the prehistoric ditches form two alignments ie either run broadly E-W/N-S or NW-SE (see Fig. 1). These alignments are likely (from analogy with other sites of this type) to form enclosures (Moore and Jennings, 1992, 120). From the differing alignments of the ditches it may be inferred that they represent two phases of activity. The presence of prehistoric postholes suggests that structures are present (a house reconstruction based on groupings of similar postholes and features from a different site is on the cover). The presence of a very large amount of burnt flint in Trench 6 indicates the presence of domestic (or industrial?) activity.

The prehistoric features probably represent settlement activity with possibly

two phases of enclosures/paddocks.

Deposit Survey

The site has been terraced and landscaped for use as a garden. The area of Trench 5 and the SW half of 6 has been reduced ie the natural sequence of deposits (gravel overlain by subsoil, the top of which represents the archaeological horizon, overlain by gardensoil) has been truncated. However, the gravel did not appear to have been greatly affected. The area of Trenches 1 and 2 has not been affected although Trench 2 ran through a very flat rectangle of lawn perhaps used previously as a tennis court or croquet lawn. The area of Trench 3 had been built up slightly and used for bonfires etc. Tree cover on this part of the site was quite thick and tree roots may have had an effect on the archaeological deposits.

The impact of the proposed development will be mainly from initial groundworks (ie area stripping of topsoil) associated with the construction of 11 houses and access roads. Some trees will also be removed (see Fig. 1). As the archaeological remains are slight they will be badly affected by groundworks of any nature. A new access to the site is to be from Alderley Close.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Following the Secretary of State for the Environment's published criteria for the scheduling of Ancient Monuments.

i)**Period** The features revealed in the evaluation trenches indicate early prehistoric (middle to late Bronze Age) activity on the site. These remains may shed light on a prehistoric settlement activity in the area.

ii)**Rarity** Not common on the plateau gravel geology.

iii)**Documentation** None

iv)**Group value** Potential for showing the extent of prehistoric landscape activity from the Thames to the N to the higher gravels.

v)**Survival/condition** Negative features survive. Areas have been only slightly truncated by ?ploughing and garden activity.

vi)**Vulnerability** Threat from development.

vii)**Diversity** See group value.

viii)**Potential** Excavation would reveal settlement activity to fit in with well preserved landscape of Neolithic, Bronze Age and Roman sites identified to N.

Comments

The location of a middle/late Bronze Age site with presumably domestic activity surrounded by enclosures on the plateau gravel overlooking the ritual sites to the N may have an impact on the interpretation of the history of the landscape in the area.

Area excavations and watching brief/recording action on the areas to be worst affected would recover a plan of the site and identify domestic and specialist zones and the stratigraphic sequence of the enclosures. Trench 6 is of particularly high potential as the remains of domestic activity were recovered. The remains of settlement activity may also lie between the evaluation trenches; the plans of early prehistoric settlements are not readily predicted.

APPENDICES

Bibliography

Ford S, 1987 East Bershire Archaeological Survey Department of Highways and Planning, Berkshire County Council, Occasional Paper No 1

Gates T, 1975 The Middle Thames Survey, an archaeological survey of the river gravels Berkshire Archaeological Committee, Publication no 1

Moore J and Jennings D, 1992 Reading Business Park: a Bronze Age Landscape Thames Valley Landscapes: The Kennet Valley, Vol 1. OAU

Flint Assessment by Philippa Bradley

Introduction
A small assemblage of 28 pieces of struck flint and 323 pieces of burnt unworked flint was recovered from the evaluation. The flint is fairly good quality, mid to dark brown in colour. Cortex where present is brown to white in colour. The flint is probably from a derived source. The assemblage is summarised in Table 2.

Discussion
The assemblage contains no diagnostic retouched forms, the retouched flake being a fairly common type. Dating therefore is largely dependant on technological indicators. The majority of the flakes are hard-hammer struck and there is little evidence for platform preparation. A single blade-like flake may indicate some earlier activity although it is hard-hammer struck and may not have been an intentional product. The keeled core, the core fragments and the tested nodules have had few flakes removed before discard. The technology of the small assemblage and the quantities of heavily calcined unworked flint, especially from Trench 6, would suggest a Bronze Age date (possibly mid-late) for this material.

Table 1
Context data

Trench	Context	type	width (m)	depth (m)	description	flint finds
1	100	natural	-	-	yellow/orange sand/gravel	
1	101	topsoil		0.25	grey/brown sandy loam	
1	102	subsoil	-	0.24	mid-brown sand	3 flake (1 retouched)[fro m linear feature]
2	201	topsoil	-	0.3	grey brown sand loam	4 flakes, 2 irregular waste, 1 burnt flint
2	202	subsoil	-	0.1	red-brown silt	1 flake, 1 keeled core, 2 tested nodules
2	203	natural	-	-	yellow-orange sandy gravel	
2	204	fill of 205	-	-	red-brown sandy loam	
2	205	cut	1.4	0.1	linear ditch	
3	300	natural	-	-	yellow-orange sandy gravel	
3	301	topsoil	-	0.32	grey brown sand loam	
3	302	subsoil	-	0.15	red-brown silt	3 flakes (including 1 blade-like), 1 burnt flint
3	303	fill of 304	-	-	dark brown silty sand	
3	304	cut	1.55	0.5	linear ditch	
3	305	fill of 307	-	-	mid brown silty sand	
3	306	fill of 307	-	-	light grey silty sand	
3	307	cut	2.5	0.6	linear ditch	
3	308	fill of 309	-	-	grey brown silty sand	
3	309	cut	0.78	0.3	linear feature	
4	401	topsoil		0.14	grey brown sand loam	
4	402	subsoil	-	-	red-brown silt	
4	403	natural	-	-	yellow-orange sandy gravel	
4	404	natural	-	-	compact gravel	
4	405	fill of 406	-	-	light grey brown silty clay	4 flakes, 1 core fragment, 7 burnt flints
4	406	cut	0.55	0.26	linear ditch	

Trench	Context	type	width (m)	depth (m)	description	flint finds
4	407	fill of 408	-	-	grey brown sand loam	
4	408	cut	0.85	0.4	tree hole/pit?	
4	409	tree hole				
5	500	topsoil		0.26	light grey stoney loam	
5	501	subsoil	-	0.15	red brown gravelly loam	
5	502	natural	-	-	yellow-orange sandy gravel	
5	503	as 500, fill of 504	-	-	mid brown stoney loam	
5	504	cut	1.55	0.96	linear ditch	
6	601	topsoil		0.1	grey brown sand loam	
6	602	subsoil		0.3	red-brown silt	
6	603	landscaping make-up		0.36	red brown silt loam	
6	604	natural	-	-	yellow-orange sandy gravel	2 flakes, 1 burnt flint (from surface)
6	605	fill of 606	-	-	light grey brown silt	2 burnt flints
6	606	cut	0.4	0.2	oval posthole	
6	607	fill of 608	-	-	light grey brown silt loam	1 flake, 3 burnt flints
6	608	cut	0.5	0.15	oval posthole	
6	609	fill of 610	-	-	light grey brown silt	5 burnt flints
6	610	cut	0.5	0.13	oval posthole	
6	611	layer		0.12	burnt flint	1 burnt flint recovered
6	612	fill of 613	-	-	dark brown sandy silt	26 burnt flints
6	613	cut	0.7	0.25	small pit	
6	614	fill of 615	-	-	mid brown/grey sandy silt	1 core fragment, 116 burnt flints
6	615	cut	0.7	0.25	linear ditch	
6	616	fill of 617	-	-	light grey silty sand	1 flake, 116 burnt flints
6	617	recut of 615	0.65	0.33	linear ditch	
6	618	tree disturbance	-	0.7	dark brown silty sand	

Table 2 Flint Assemblage Composition

Context	Flakes	Irregular Waste	Cores, Core Fragments	Tested Nodules	Retouched Forms	Burnt Unworked Flint
102	2	-	-	-	1 retouched flake	-
201	4	2	-	-	-	1
202	1	-	1 keeled core	2	-	-
302	3 (inc. 1 blade-like flake)	-	-	-	-	1
405	4	-	1 core fragment	-	-	7
604	2	-	-	-	-	1
605	-	-	-	-	-	2
607	1	-	-	-	-	3
609	-	-	-	-	-	5
611	-	-	-	-	-	1
612	-	-	-	-	-	26
614	-	-	1 core fragment	-	-	116
616	1	-	-	-	-	116
Tr 1, 1/1 Spit 1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Tr 3, 1/1 Spit 1	1	-	-	-	-	1
Tr 5, 1/1 Spit 1	-	-	-	-	-	2
Tr 6, 1/1 Spit 1	-	-	-	-	-	41
TOTAL	20	2	3	2	1	323

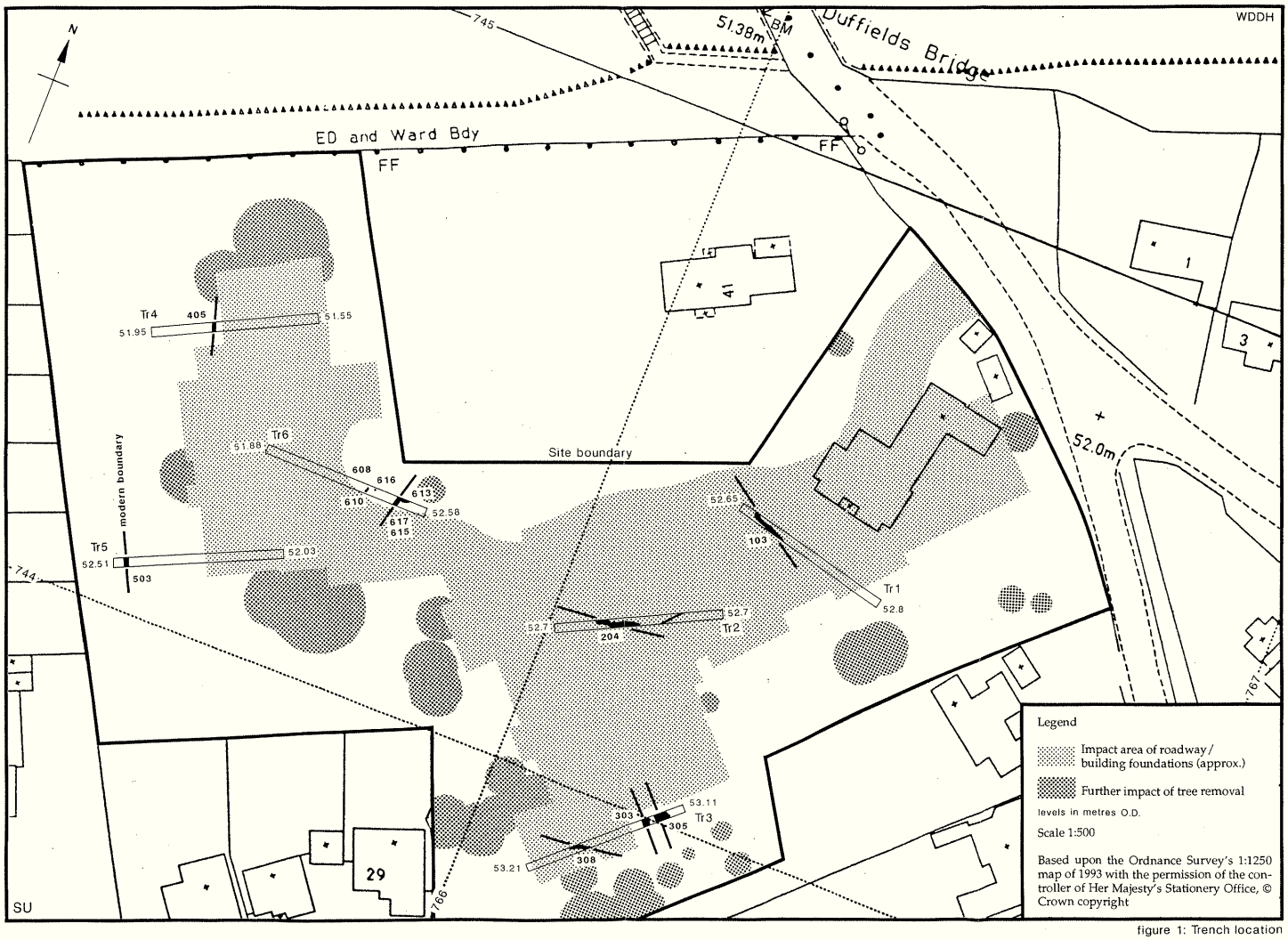
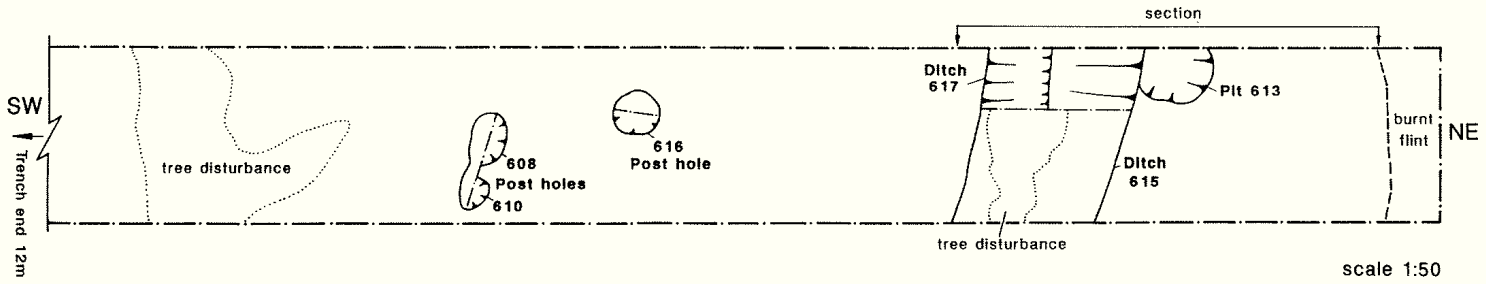


figure 1: Trench location

WDDH

Trench 6: Plan



Section

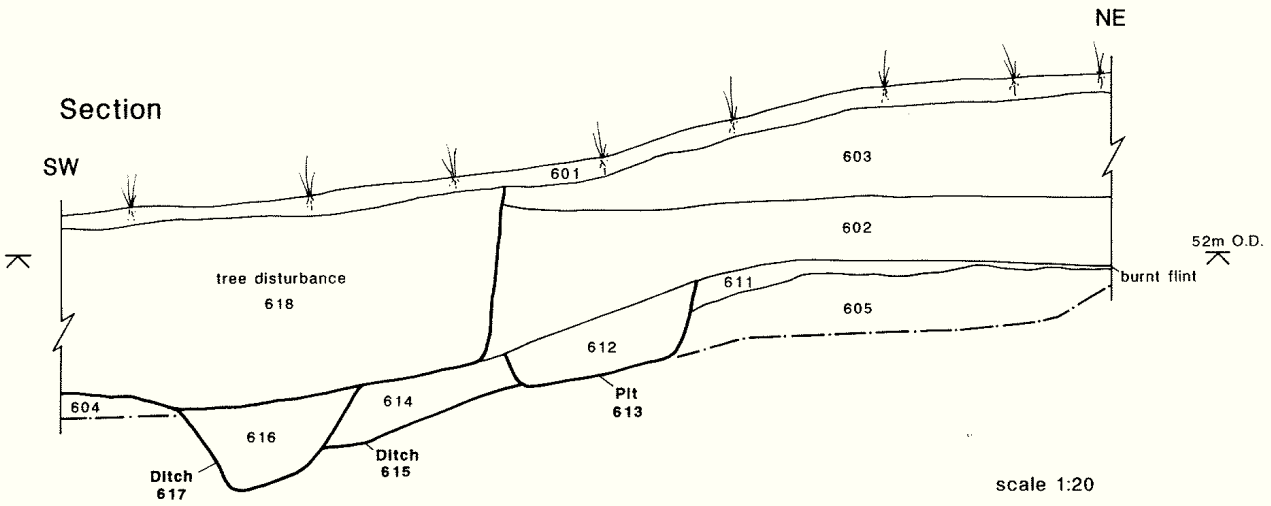


figure 2: Trench 6: plan & section

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