

# Manor House, Great Shefford

## Archaeological Evaluation

NGR SU 3795 7530

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

August 1995

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1. Introduction

The site lies to the south of the manor house and church at Great Shefford. A planning application was submitted to demolish redundant buildings and build three new houses on the location.

Great Shefford is recorded in Domesday Book and the site is in close proximity to both the manor house and church. This suggested that archaeological remains or deposits might be disturbed by the intrusive work of this development.

The Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook an archaeological evaluation on behalf of Aricab. This was in accordance with a condition attached to the consideration of planning permission and within the guidelines set by a written scheme of investigation approved by Babcote Public Services Division on behalf of Berkshire County Council.

2. Historical and archaeological background

Manor Farm is situated on the south-western edge of the village of Great Shefford just to the south of the church and the River Lambourn. Great Shefford, which is probably a Saxon foundation, is first mentioned in Domesday Book (1086) and the village and the surrounding area contains evidence of Prehistoric and Roman activity. A Mesolithic flint core and undated prehistoric flakes (Berks Sites and Monuments Record: BSMR no 2684) were discovered on a construction site in the village itself and the fields to the west of the village have also produced a number of undated prehistoric flint implements (BSMR 2770). About 500m to the south of the village lies the site of a Bronze Age Bell Barrow (BSMR no 1344), sited on the brow of a hill near Coldridge Wood. This feature was excavated in the 19th century and found to contain a number of cremations together with an incense cup, a bone needle and a collection of flint implements.

There is no evidence of Roman activity in the village itself although the Baydon Road, which runs across the southern end of the Parish, forms the line of Ermine Street, the road from Silchester to Cirencester (National Archaeological Record: NAR Roman Road 41b).

The principal site in the area is the 5th and 6th-century Anglo-Saxon

cemetery (BSMR no 2637) which was discovered at East Shefford during the construction of the railway in 1890. The site was further excavated in 1912 and probably contained in total over 80 burials. A number of grave goods were discovered including swords, spearheads, brooches, bead necklaces and decorated pottery vessels. This site lies just over 1km to the south-east of the development site.

Hugs Ditch (BSMR no 1343), a linear earthwork consisting of a bank with a ditch to the west which runs along the parish boundary beneath East and West Shefford, is traditionally of Anglo-Saxon date although both the National Archaeological Record and the Berkshire Sites and Monuments Record now consider that it is more likely to be a late medieval or post-medieval field boundary bank.

The manor obviously has pre-conquest origins, and its history can be traced from 1086 to the present day. The present Manor House is a Grade II\* Listed Building, dating from the 15th century and with substantial remains of its open hall and chamber block, recently investigated by OAU. The former farmyard contains two further Listed Buildings, a 17th and 18th-century aisled barn (Listed Grade II) and a 19th-century Brick Granary (Listed Grade II for group value).

The surrounding area contains other medieval features: construction sites in the village itself have produced quantities of medieval pottery, dating from the 11th to the 15th century (BSMR 2693), and Maidencourt Farm, to the north-west of the development site, has been identified as the centre of a Deserted Medieval Village (BSMR 2692).

### **3. Development of buildings**

The development area lies above the former farmyard of Manor Farm with the barns mentioned above. Historic maps going back to 1761 have been consulted (see below). These indicate that from 1820 onwards the development site was located within the farmyard of the Manor complex but that it does not begin to be developed until the mid-19th century (sometime between 1841 and 1879), when two small buildings were constructed at the northern and southern sides of the site. These do not appear to be the same buildings that currently occupy their positions. The additional, or supplementary, buildings were all constructed between 1912 and 1980. It is difficult to be more specific than this as, according to the Ordnance Survey, no OS maps of the area were produced between 1913 and the latest edition which was produced in 1980.

### Historic map evidence

1761 (Rocque):	At this scale it is a little difficult to tell, however it looks as if the development area contains no buildings and in fact is an area of pasture lying just to the west of the farm boundary. Farm and outbuildings parallel very closely those shown in 1820 Inclosure map.
1820 (Inclosure Map)	Development area contains no buildings. Buildings marked within farmyard are very similar to Rocque: these consist of: the Manor House, two rectangular buildings hugging the road(s) (still extant), two rectangular buildings to south-east of manor house (gone). Development area now lies within farmyard.
1830 (OS 1st edn 1")	No buildings within development area, pattern of buildings very similar to/same as 1761 & 1820.
1841 (Tithe Map):	No buildings within development area, pattern of buildings within yard same as previous maps. Development site is described in Tithe Award as lying within area marked 'Manor House and Barns', occupied by John Langford and owned by the Marquis of Downshire.
1879 (OS 1st edn 25")	Development area now shows two buildings (see plan). They are grey rather than red on the original (ie not residential). These two buildings are on the same site as two of the buildings currently occupying the development site.
1899 (OS 2nd edn 25")	Same layout of buildings as 1879.
1912 (OS 3rd edn 25")	Same layout of buildings as 1879.
1980 (Latest edition (1:2500))	This map shows the farmyard in its current state.

#### 4. Methodology

Six trenches were excavated using a combination of JCB and 3 ton 360° machines with concrete breakers and ditching buckets. The trenches were 1.55m wide and varied between 10m and 22m in length. Approximately 80m of trench was excavated amounting to a 4% sample of the development area. All trenches were excavated down to the "natural" chalk horizon, and all deposits and structures were recorded in written and drawn form as well as on colour slide and monochrome film. All the machine-excavated spoil heaps were searched for finds.

#### 3. Trench descriptions

##### 3.1 TRENCH ONE

An east-west orientated trench measuring 22m x 1.55m (maximum depth 0.40m), situated to the south-east of the site.

Natural chalk (layer 103) was revealed within this trench at 120.21 OD (0.24m below existing surface level) at the west end of the trench. This layer sloped gently down towards the east end of the trench to a level of 119.79 OD (0.42m below existing ground level).

Cutting layer 103 to the east of the trench was 105, a sub-rectangular (from portion visible) feature measuring 1.45m x 0.55m x 0.22m depth. Feature 105 was filled by deposit 104 a friable mid brown sandy clay with 10% chalk fragments and occasional small red brick fragments.

In the centre/east of the trench layer 103 was cut by feature 113 a north-south orientated linear cut 1.3m wide with a 0.60m eastern offset (suggestive of a robbed foundation cut). This cut was filled by deposit 112, a friable dark brown sandy clay with 20% chalk fragments and occasional modern red brick fragments.

In the centre/west of the trench layer 103 was cut by 111 a north-south aligned linear feature measuring 1.10m (visible width) x 1.55m (visible length) x 0.70m (depth). Feature 111 was filled by three sandy clays 110, 114 and 115 all of which contained modern red brick and chalk fragments.

Sealing the top fills of cuts 105, 113, and 111 (deposits 104, 112, and 110 respectively) was layer 102 a friable mid brown sandy clay with 20% chalk and red brick fragments. This layer appears in section 6.5m in from the west end of the trench and continues throughout the rest of the trench.

Cutting layer 102 in the centre/west of the trench was a modern animal burial 106,107 and the remains of a brick rubble wall foundation 108 and 109.

The trench was overlaid throughout its length by hardcore/rubble make-up 101 and concrete yard surface 100.

Interpretation:

The features represented by contexts 113,111, and 105 appear to be robbed farmyard building foundations probably demolished prior to the landscaping (of which layer 102 indicates the eastern limit).

### 3.2 TRENCH 2

An east-west aligned trench measuring 10m x 1.6m, maximum depth 1.2m, situated to the south west of site.

Natural chalk (layer 204) was revealed at 120.42m OD (0.30m below the existing ground level) throughout the trench. Overlying layer 204 was an east west orientated, partially surviving/demolished modern brick wall foundation 202. Which in turn was overlaid by hardcore/rubble make-up 201 and existing concrete yard surface 200.

### 3.3 TRENCH 3

A north-south aligned trench measuring 9m x 1.6m x 0.50m maximum depth, situated in the central eastern part of site within a standing brick building.

Natural chalk (layer 306) was revealed at 120.15m OD (0.34m below the existing floor level) at the southern end of the trench, sloping gradually off to a level of 119.90m OD (0.59m below the existing floor level) at the northern end of the trench.

Layer 306 was overlaid to the south-east and the north of the trench by layer 305 a friable mid brown sandy clay with 10% chalk fragments and occasional red brick fragments. Layer 305 was cut in the centre of the trench by structure 303,304 a square concrete partially demolished foundation.

The trench was overlaid throughout its length by hardcore/rubble make-up 302 and existing concrete floor surface 301.

### 3.4 TRENCH 4

A north-south aligned trench measuring 5m x 1.6m x 0.36m maximum

depth 0.36m, situated to the central/southern area of site.

Natural chalk (layer 405) was revealed at 120.295m OD (0.35m below the existing ground level) throughout the trench. Layer 405 was cut in the middle of the trench by east-west orientated concrete foundation and partially demolished concrete block wall 404,403 and 402.

The trench was overlaid throughout its length by hardcore/rubble make-up 401 and concrete yard surface 400.

### 3.5 TRENCH 5

A north-south aligned trench measuring 8.6m x 1.6m x 0.35m maximum depth, situated in the central/west area of site.

Natural chalk (layer 505) was revealed at 120.38m OD (0.29m below the existing ground level) through out the trench. At the northern limit of the trench layer 505 was removed by a modern concrete foundation, a partially surviving concrete block wall and their construction cut 504,502 and 503 respectively. To the centre of the trench layer 505 was disturbed by a demolished concrete foundation 507 and 506.

The trench was overlaid through out its length by hardcore/rubble make-up 501 and concrete yard surface 500.

### 3.6 TRENCH 6

An east-west aligned trench measuring 15m x 1.6m x 0.30m maximum depth, situated to the north of site within a standing brick building.

Natural chalk (layer 603) was revealed at 119.66m OD (0.50m below the existing floor level) throughout the trench. Layer 603 was overlaid throughout the trench by deposit 602, a brick rubble and sand demolition/levelling layer which in turn was overlaid by two concrete floor layers 601 and 600.

## 4. Finds

Brick samples were taken from deposits 106,112,202, and 305. Brick and tile samples were taken from 110. All building material recovered was clearly post-medieval in date and appeared to range from the 18th to the 20th century.

No other finds were retrieved.



## 5. Discussion

The development site has been cut into a hill sloping down towards the north and east from the south-west. All available map sources show this area as undeveloped up until 1879 (OS 1st edn 25 inch) by which time two (presumably) farm buildings had been constructed to the north-east and south-west. This would indicate that the landscaping that is visible today is unlikely to have occurred any earlier than 1879 but may date to any time before 1980 (current OS 1:2500), when the site is shown as it is now. (If the truncation is a recent event the date may be known locally)

Deposits 305 and 102 are surviving soils overlying the chalk and give an indication of the extent of landscaping to the east of the site. The features revealed below 102 in trench 1 (19th-20th century robbed foundation cuts 112, 113 and 110, 111) suggest the possibility of surviving archaeological deposits or remains just outside the evaluation area.

## 6. Conclusions

It is clear both from the on-site investigation and examination of the map sources that most of the area within the evaluation limits has been massively landscaped (up to 2.5m of natural chalk removed) in the 19th or 20th century, thus removing the potential of surviving archaeological remains or deposits.

The evaluation has defined the west, east and southern limits of the landscaping, and shows that the surrounding areas are still potentially of archaeological interest.

Oxford Archaeological Unit, August 1995.



### Appendix: Table of Contexts

CTX	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	FINDS
100	Deposit	Modern concrete yard surface	
101	Deposit	Hardcore make-up for 100	
102	Deposit	Friable mid brown sandy clay,5% chalk fragments	
103	Layer	Chalk "natural"	
104	Fill	Fill of pit cut 105, a friable mid brown sandy clay with chalk fragments	
105	Cut	Pit cut, sub-rectangular, filled by 104	
106	Fill	Modern animal burial	Brick sample taken
107	Cut	Irregular cut for 106	
108	Cut	Cut for red brick rubble foundation 109	
109	Deposit	Red brick rubble foundation	
110	Fill	Tenacious dark brown sandy clay with 10% chalk fragments, fill of robbed 18th/19th century farm building foundation?	Brick and tie sample taken
111	Cut	Robber trench (?) filled by 110,114,115	
112	Fill	Friable dark-brown sandy clay with 20% chalk fragments and occasional red brick fragments. Fill of 18th/19th century farm building foundation?	Brick sample taken
113	Cut	Robber trench (?) filled by 112	
114	Fill	Tenacious mid-brown sandy clay 20% chalk fragments, fill of cut 111	
115	Fill	Friable light brown sandy clay with 50% chalk fragments, fill of cut 111	
200	Deposit	Modern concrete yard surface	
201	Deposit	Hardcore make-up for 200	
202	Structure	Demolished wall foundation	Brick sample taken
203	Cut	Construction cut for 202	
204	Layer	Chalk "natural"	

CTX	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	FINDS
301	Deposit	Modern concrete floor surface of existing building	
302	Deposit	Hardcore/rubble make-up for 301	
303	Structure	Concrete foundation of demolished building	
304	Cut	Construction cut for 303	
305	Deposit	Friable mid-brown sandy clay with 10% chalk fragments	Brick sample taken
306	Layer	Chalk "natural"	
400	Deposit	Modern concrete yard surface	
401	Deposit	Hardcore make-up for 400	
402	Structure	Partially surviving concrete block wall of demolished building	
403	Cut	Construction trench for 404	
404	Structure	Concrete foundation of 402	
405	Layer	Chalk "natural"	
500	Deposit	Modern concrete yard surface	
501	Deposit	Hardcore make-up for 500	
502	Structure	Partially surviving concrete block wall of demolished building	
503	Cut	Construction trench for 504	
504	Structure	Concrete foundation of 502	
505	Layer	Chalk "natural"	
506	Fill	Fill of robbed 20th century foundation	
507	Cut	Cut caused by robbing of 20th century foundation	
600	Deposit	Modern concrete floor surface of existing building	
601	Deposit	Concrete surface below 600 in existing building	
602	Deposit	Hardcore/rubble make-up for 601	
603	Layer	Chalk "natural"	

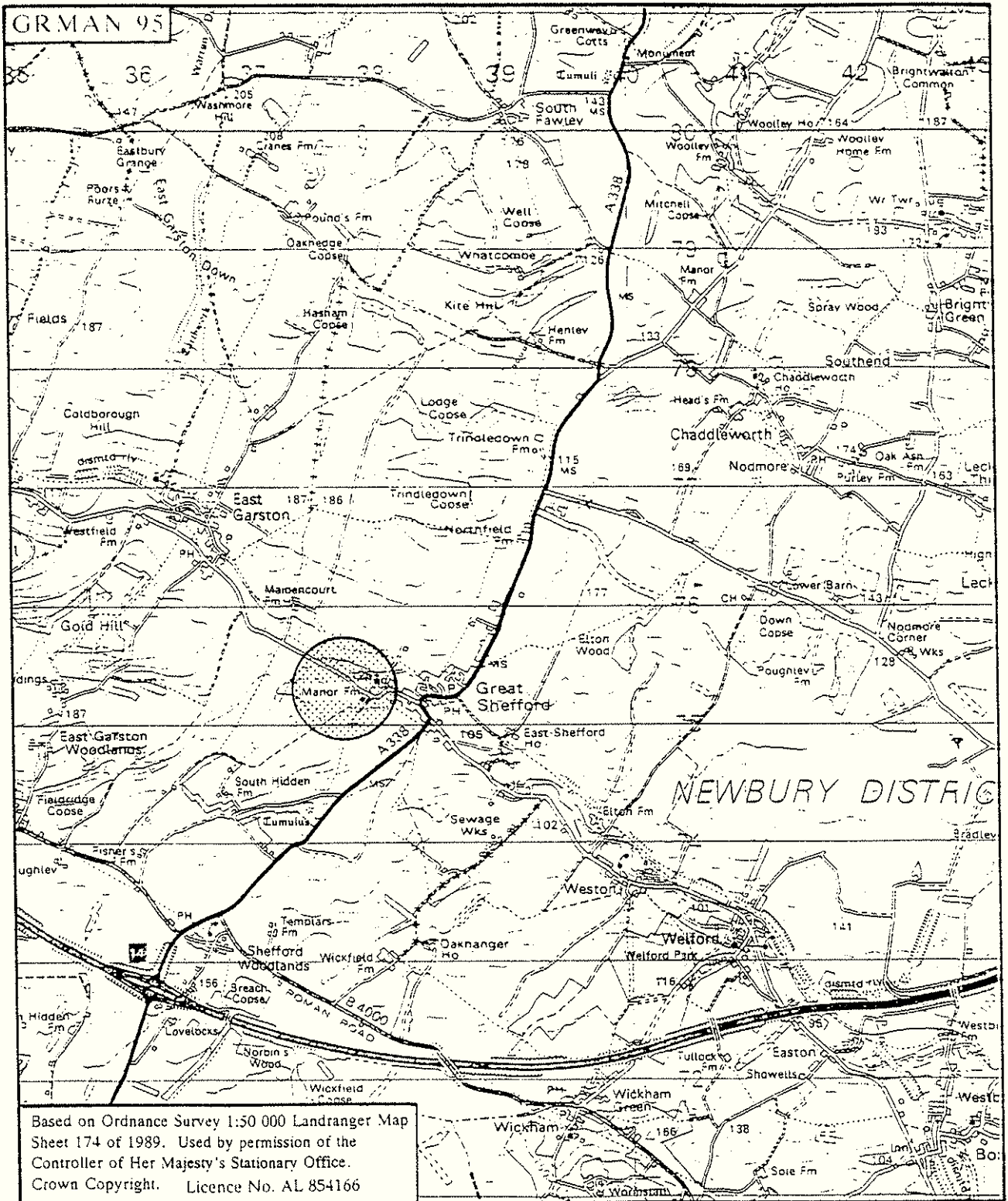
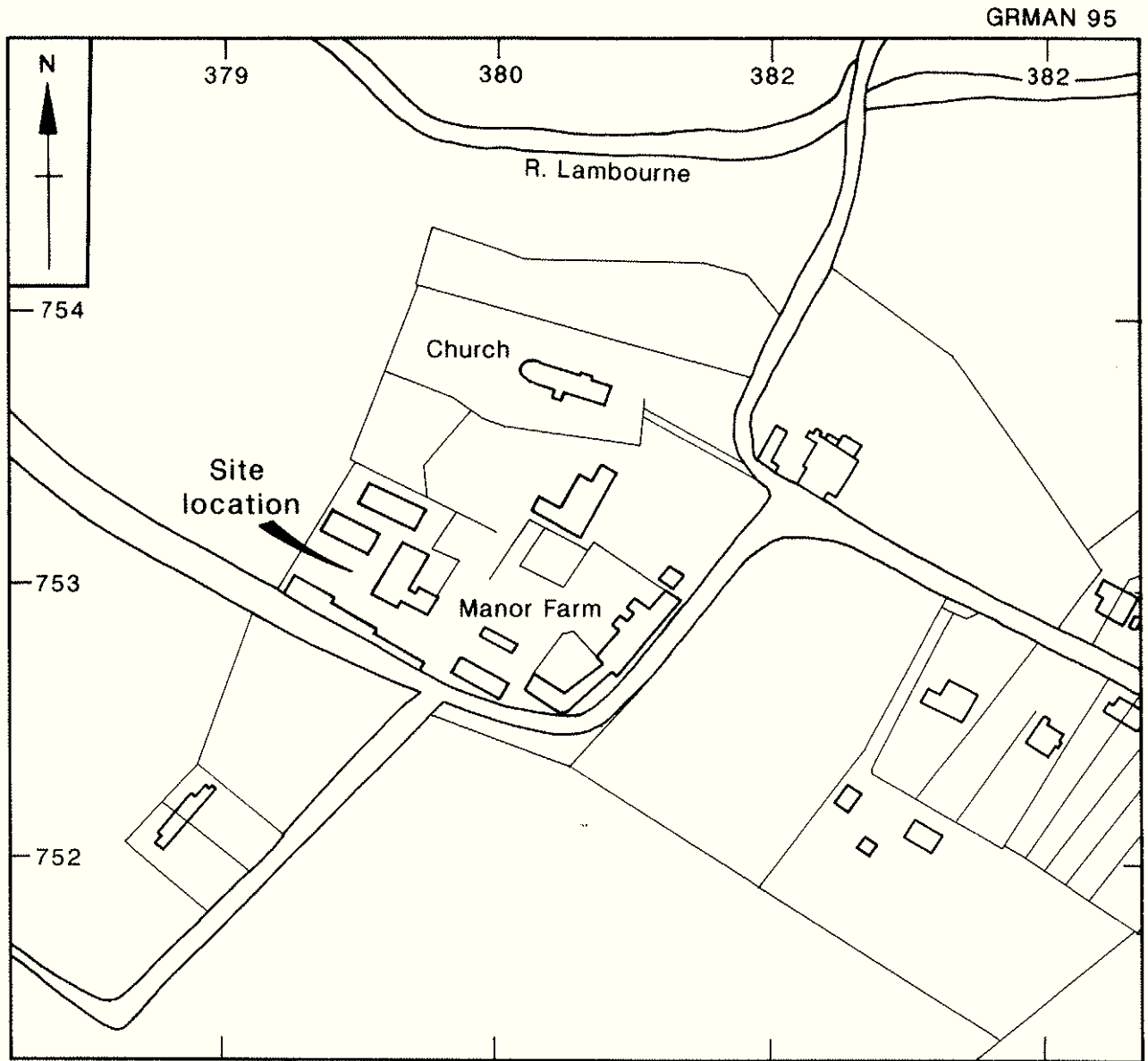


Figure 1



Based on the Ordnance Survey's 1:2500 map of 1980 with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown copyright. Licence No. AL 854166

0 150m

Figure 2

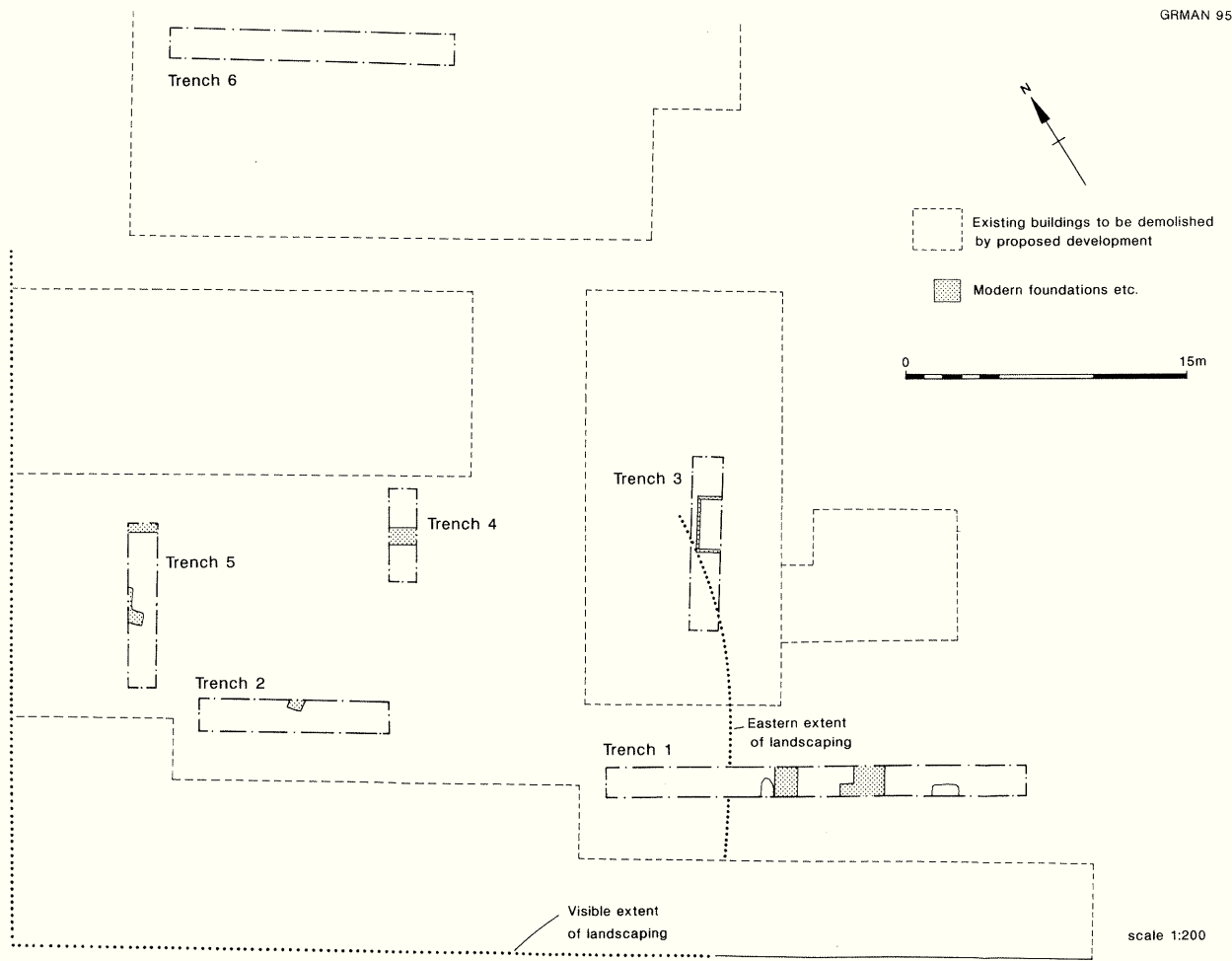


Figure 3



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