

**The Paddock, Church Road, Old Windsor, Berkshire**

**Archaeological Assessment**

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+ bibliogr.*

**Oxford Archaeological Unit  
1987**

THE PADDOCK, CHURCH ROAD  
OLD WINDSOR  
BERKS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT  
DETAILED DESCRIPTION

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

1987

OLD WINDSOR, GRANGE PADDOCK ASSESSMENT 1987  
by Andy Mudd

Introduction

18 trenches (A-R) were dug by JCB using a 1.6m wide toothless bucket. An area of about 276 sq.m. was stripped down to natural gravel, representing a sample of about 6% of the total paddock. Only the south-east corner of the field was not investigated due to the presence of a foul sewer pipe, and trees hindered investigation to a minor degree in the central west part.

General Disposition of Field

The surface of the paddock was fairly level with a slight slope from north to south (17.72m OD at the northern end of J to 17.32m OD at the southern end of B) and from west to east (17.68m OD at the western end of O to 17.37m OD at the eastern end of E). The highest point was in the north-east corner of the paddock (17.83m OD) and the lowest in the centre (17.28m OD).

The natural gravel was highest at the northern end of the field (17.24m OD at the northern end of J) and sloped south (16.85m OD in A) and also west, reaching its lowest point, 16.72m OD in O. The deepest accumulation of soil (c. 0.8m) was thus in the western part of the field (Trenches K, L and O) suggesting a headland resulting from Medieval and later agriculture.

In this part of the field the natural geology was an orange-brown clay which was overlain by a dark brown heavy clay (K4, O5). Over most of the rest of the field natural geology was gravel, reached c. 0.4m below ground surface, underneath a dark rather greyish brown clay loam topsoil, and a similar, more gravelly subsoil. In the centre of the field (Q), the total depth of overburden was no more than 20cm. The natural gravel was everywhere generally rather 'dirty' with silty patches.

It appears that this difference in geology, in its influence on the drainage of the land, may have determined the extent of archaeological occupation in this field.

The Archaeology

There is sufficient similarity, in terms of the deposits encountered, between some of the trenches for them to be grouped, and excessive repetition avoided in the descriptions which follow.

1. Trenches A, P, N and G

These trenches were characterised by a fairly straightforward soil profile of 25-30cm of topsoil and 10-20cm of mid to dark greyish brown, moderately gravelly, sandy clay loam subsoil (except N which lacked a recognisable subsoil). They also contained large

pits/?ditch terminals of probable ?12th century date.

A3 was part of a sub-rectangular pit or ditch terminal (unexcavated) and with an uncertain relationship with the subsoil in this trench (A2) to which its fill was very similar. A sherd of ?12 century pottery was found on its surface.

It is probably of a similar date to other large sub-circular or oval pits (P4, N2, N3 and G3) with mid-brown gravelly or moderately gravelly sandy clay/clay loam fills. All had ?12th century pottery on their surfaces. N2 was partly excavated by JCB to a depth of c. 0.8m below ground surface without reaching the bottom. It appeared to consist of two large intercutting pits. P4, N3 and G3 were unexcavated.

It was originally thought that one or more of these features could be ditch terminals, but although this remains a possibility, the apparent plethora of ditch terminals without corresponding evidence of middle sections, makes this less likely.

In G, to the east of G3 were two further layers (G4 and G5). G4, a mid brown slightly loamy clay, up to 15cm thick, overlay G5, a mid brown pebbly sandy clay, up to 8cm thick. These were interpreted as an ?early Medieval top and subsoil (to be more fully discussed in connection with trenches D, E and F).

## 2. Trench B

Under 30cm of topsoil was encountered a moderately dark brown or greyish brown gravelly sandy clay loam (B2). It contained a small patch of yellow sandy clay (possibly mortar), patches of disintegrating red brick or tile, and fairly frequent sherds of ?12th century pottery, particularly at the southern end of the trench.

Under this was a narrow gully (B3) c. 25cm wide running approximately south-west - north-east, and two small features (B4 and B5), which may be post-holes, to the west of the gully (all unexcavated).

This suggests the presence of an ?early Medieval building in this area (to which these features may be related), although no part of this structure actually survives.

## 3. Trench C

Under 28-30cm of topsoil was encountered a mid- or slightly greyish brown gravelly clay loam 8-10cm thick (C2). This overlay a thin layer (4-7cm) of comparatively gravel-free mid-brown clay loam (C3), containing charcoal and smears of burnt clay or decayed brick/tile. This was interpreted as a surviving ?early Medieval soil layer (cf. G4, E3, F6, H3). This overlay a very pebbly slightly greyish brown sandy clay loam (C4), interpreted as an ?early Medieval subsoil directly overlying natural gravel (cf. G5, E5, F7, H4).

Although this trench was only 2m east of B, it provided no additional evidence of a structure in this area.

One feature (C5) appeared to be part of a pit or ditch in the extreme southern end of the trench, unexcavated but containing

quite frequent flecks of charcoal, decaying brick/tile and some ?early Medieval pot on its surface. It underlay C2, but its relationship with C3 was uncertain due to the similarity between the soils.

### 3. Trenches D, E and F

Under 20-30cm of topsoil was c. 20cm of dark, slightly greyish brown gravelly clay loam subsoil (D2, E2, F2).

This appeared to be cut by a ditch (D3, E4, F3) running c. north-south through these trenches. The relationship was clearest in E where the upper fill of the ditch E4/1 was a layer of yellow gravel occupying the sunken central portion of the ditch (possibly a deliberate deposit providing a surface over the ditch - see section). In D the ditch also appeared to cut the subsoil D2, though the evidence was less clear, while in F the similarity of the upper fill of the ditch F3/1 with the subsoil F2, made the relationship hard to determine.

In D the ditch (D3) was 1.4m wide, running north-south, and had an upper fill of grey-brown sandy clay with dark silty lenses (D3/1). It contained particularly large quantities of iron slag indicative of iron forging and probably some smelting (C. Salter). Worked bone with incised circular designs and considerable quantities (2.3kg) of ?12th century pottery were also found, as well as considerable quantities of well-preserved animal bone, with pig, sheep and cattle represented. Under this, a second fill (D3/2) was a yellow-grey silty clay and also contained much pottery, some slag, iron objects, a bone handle with a perforation at each end, and 2 pieces of ?Roman tile. The ditch was not bottomed in this trench.

In E, the ditch (E4) was c. 1.0m wide, running north-south, but was not excavated.

In F the ditch (F3) ran north-east - south-west, was 1.2m wide and 0.8m deep. It was V-shaped with a rounded base in cross-section. The upper fills were similar to those in D, though with less slag and 1.3kg of 12th century pottery. Under these was a dark greyish brown gravelly sandy clay occupying the bottom of the ditch.

To the west of this ditch, in E and F though absent from D, were a further two layers under E2 and F2. The upper was a mid greyish brown clay loam, largely gravel free (E3, F6), no more than 10cm thick, and interpreted as a preserved ?early Medieval soil. It is equivalent to layers C3, H3 and G4 in the other trenches on the eastern side of the paddock where a natural dip in the gravel has presumably protected the early Medieval soil from later ploughing.

The lower layer (E5, F7) was an orange-brown very gravelly clay, again equivalent to layers in other trenches on this side of the field (C4, a pebbly greyish brown sandy clay loam, G5 a pebbly mid-brown sandy clay, and H4 a slightly greyish brown gravelly sandy clay loam). This layer rests directly on natural gravel.

It was originally thought that this layer might represent a rudimentary cobbled surface but its ubiquity on this side of the field, and its stratigraphic position between the ?early Medieval

soil and the natural gravel, rather indicate that it is an ?early Medieval subsoil. There were 2 pieces of ?Roman tile from this layer.

Although no structural remains or floor surfaces were found, the potential for their discovery may still exist, though this would depend upon the extent to which this early Medieval land surface has been truncated by later activity.

There were numerous minor features to the east of this ?12th century ditch:

- E6 a possible pit/posthole c. 0.7m diameter, not excavated.
- E7 pit/posthole c. 0.8m diameter, not excavated.
- E8 possible small posthole next to E7, 0.3m diameter, not excavated.
- E9 possible small posthole next to E6, 0.25m diameter, not excavated.
- D4 possible ditch to the west of, and parallel to D3, though this may be the remains of the subsoil (D2) occupying a natural hollow, not excavated.
- D5 small posthole 0.2m diameter.
- F4 gully to east of and cut by ditch F3. May terminate here or simply be truncated by F3. U-shape in cross-section, 40cm deep. 3 sherds ?12th century pottery.
- F5 gully running north-west - south-east, 0.3m wide, 25cm deep, V-shaped cross-section. No clear relationship with F3 (appears to be another feature intervening). Contained 0.35kg 12th century pottery.

These features suggest the presence of a (presumably wooden) structure or structures on this side of the ditch, with some elements pre-dating it.

#### 4. Trenches I and J (Northern end of paddock)

Under 18-24cm of topsoil (I1, J1) was a light brown, fairly gravel-free, slightly loamy clay (I2, J2, J4 - c. 30cm thick) which became greyer and more gravelly towards the south.

J2 and J4 were very similar, but were stratigraphically separated by a ditch, J3 (unexcavated), at the extreme northern end of the trench. This may be a relatively recent feature associated with the modern field boundary.

J4 (18-25cm thick) contained large quantities of ?Medieval tile in the middle section of the trench. Under this J5, (25-30cm thick) a dark brown/greyish brown slightly loamy clay with moderately frequent gravel, contained some tile fragments.

There were no other features in this trench, but the presence of tile in what may be a Medieval plough-soil suggests that there was a building close by.

In I another ditch, I3 (1m wide), at the northern end of the trench but off alignment with J3 and not continuing into J, and a pit or posthole I4, were the only features. Both appeared to underline I2.

## 5. Trenches K, L and O

These trenches, along the west side of the paddock, revealed a similar and distinctive sequence of soils, and very few features.

Under 10-20cm (K and L) and 30cm (O) of topsoil, was a clean mid to light-brown largely gravel-free clay loam (K2, L2 and O2), 20-30cm thick at the western end but petering out and becoming greyer and more gravelly towards the east. This appeared to be post-Medieval build-up (similar to I2 and J2/J4 in character) and may represent a headland though quite broad and diffuse.

Under this was a dark or mid-greyish brown slightly loamy clay, fairly pebbly (K3, L3, O3) with small fragments of ?tile and pottery (L3 contained 3 fragments of later Medieval pottery and a clay pipe fragment, and there were 2 pieces of tile from K3) throughout its depth (30-40cm). This is probably a post-Medieval ploughsoil.

This overlay, in K and O, a dark brown or orangy brown hard sticky clay with sparse gravel (K4, O5), which appeared to be sterile, directly overlying natural orange-brown clay.

There were two possible features: O4, a small possible pit (or part of layer O3 occupying a natural hollow), and O6, a ?circular feature which may be quite recent (see section). Its relationship with O2 and O3 is not quite clear. There were a few other stains in the natural which were probably natural.

## Trenches H and M

These trenches contained no archaeological features. Under c. 30cm of topsoil was a thin mid to dark greyish brown gravelly subsoil (12cm thick). This overlay a slightly orange-brown clay or clay loam (H3, M3) possibly an ?early Medieval soil (cf. C3, E3, F6, G4). This overlay a mid or slightly greyish brown sandy clay loam with frequent gravel in H (H4), and natural clay in M.

## Trench Q

The thin topsoil and a more gravelly mid-greyish brown sandy clay loam subsoil (Q2) were scarcely distinguishable and only 15-20cm deep in total.

- Features:
- Q3 an indistinct sub-circular feature, c. 0.8m diameter, not excavated.
  - Q4 a sub-circular shallow scoop c. 0.65m diameter, 12cm deep, ½-sectioned. 6 sherds of ?12th century pottery.
  - Q5 a possible though indistinct sub-circular feature, not excavated.
  - Q6 a possible length of gully running east-west, or a natural hollow, not excavated.
  - Q7 a small circular posthole, 0.33m diameter, 20cm deep, U-shaped cross-section.

### Trench R

Under 45cm of topsoil was a thin layer of orange-brown clay (5-10cm thick), R2, representing the interface with the natural clay. No features.

### Conclusion

The eastern part of the field is archaeologically the most important. A 12 century ditch, with evidence of iron working, runs almost due north before curving north-east in trench F, and appears to enclose the land to the east.

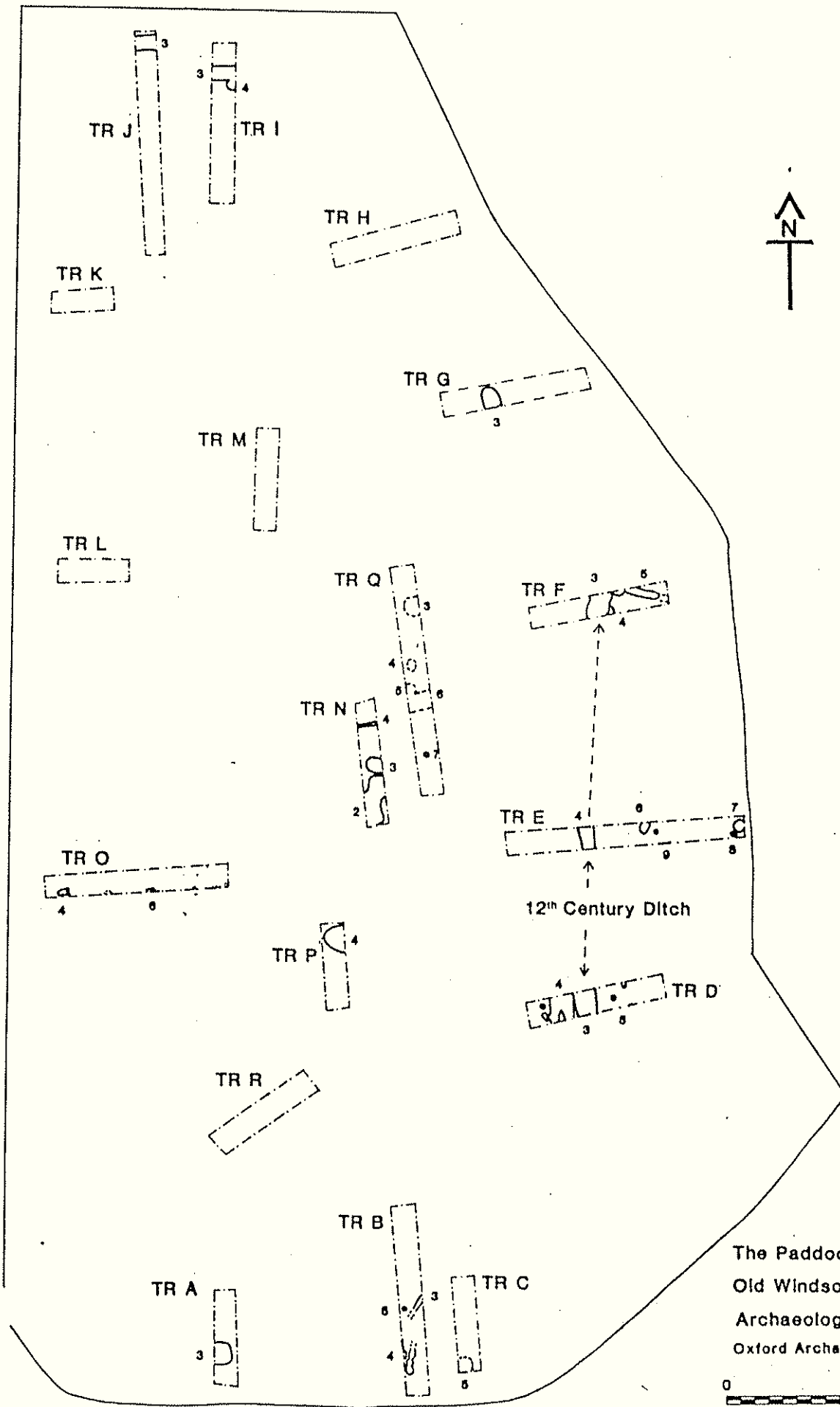
In this area are a number of ?postholes and gullies (possibly of structural significance) which cut a probable ?12th century soil layer. Thus, there is some surviving stratigraphy in this area of which the 12th century ditch is the most recent feature. No intact Medieval floor surfaces were encountered though the possibility of their surviving may still exist.

To the west of the ditch are a number of (5-6) ?12th century pits. No complete dimensions of any were found, but they appear to be quite large (1.5 - 2.0m diameter?) and conceivably contain waterlogged deposits in their lower levels.

Traces of a ?12th century structure exist in the CS part of the paddock though largely disturbed by ?Medieval ploughing. Although very few features were found at the northern end, quantities of Medieval tile suggest the presence of a building nearby (unless the tile was dumped at some distance from its point of origin).

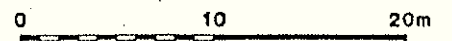
The western part of the field was very sparse, both in terms of finds and features, and may have been avoided for settlement because of the clay geology. The soil profile (in K, L and O) suggests that this area was an agricultural headland in Medieval/post-Medieval times.





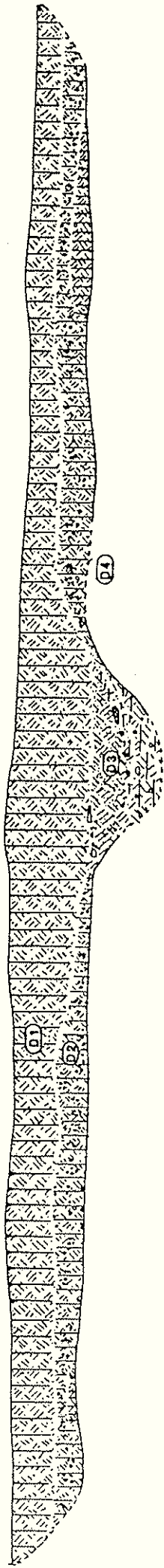
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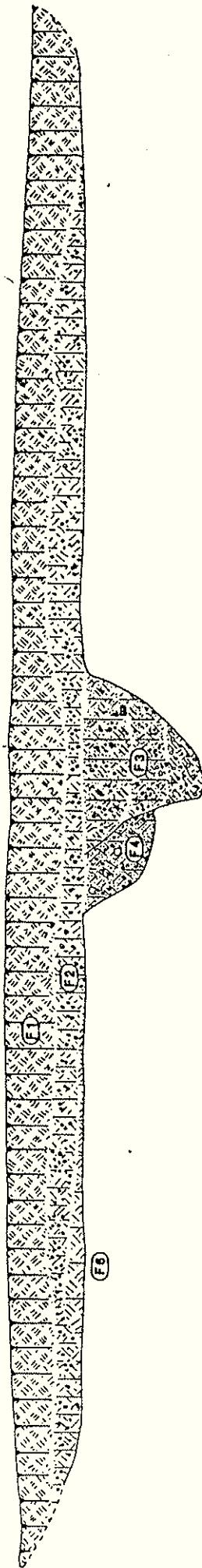


CHURCH ROAD

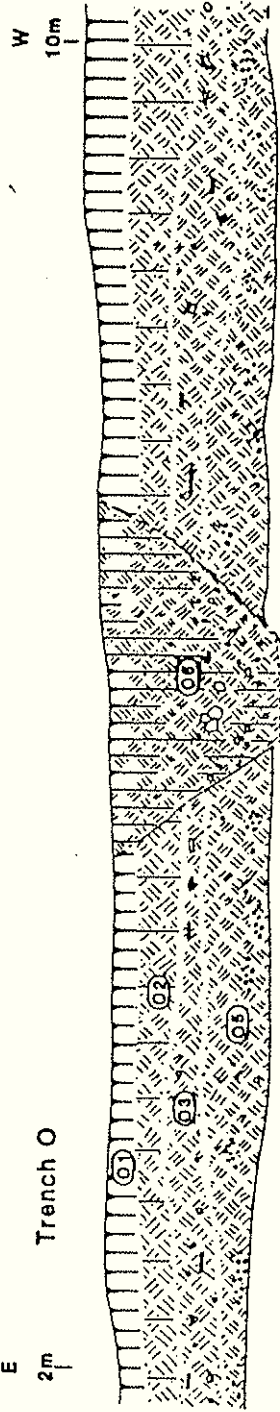
E Trench D



E Trench F



E 2m Trench O



Topsoil/Loam



Clay



Gravel



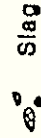
Silt



Tile



Charcoal



Slag



Pot

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