

1992 Eval

THE MANOR, OLD WINDSOR.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

A field evaluation was carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit at The Manor, Old Windsor on behalf of Mr M. Smith. The four excavated trenches showed 19th century building and dumping to the S and E of the Manor and a buried old ground surface to the N.

INTRODUCTION

In March 1992 an assessment was carried out over 3 days by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) on behalf of Mr M. Smith in respect of an application for planning permission for an extension to the Manor, Old Windsor. The site was immediately to the N of the Manor, which is 70 m N of the parish Church of St Peter and St Andrew SU 993748 (fig.1 and cover).

TOPOGRAPHY

The site lies 100 m to the W of the Thames on the first gravel terrace. The area to be affected by the proposed development was approximately 0.345 Hectares at a height of 17.30 m O.D.

The site had until recently been covered with outbuildings for the Manor (see the insert in Figure 1).

The natural subsoil across the site was gravel covered with red brown silt.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Fig.1)

Mesolithic activity in this part of Berkshire is not well defined. Five Tranchet Axes have been found within 5 km of Windsor but no finds have been recovered near Old Windsor (Ford 1987).

There are many Neolithic finds from the River Gravels, axes are frequent finds; 16 have been recovered from around Windsor. Neolithic settlements have been excavated nearby at Wraysbury and Runnymede Bridge (Ford 1987).

A cropmark ring-ditch which may be a Bronze Age barrow is known 150 m to the W. There are more cropmarks, including 3 of ring-ditches or barrows, to the N the other cropmarks are linear field boundaries (Gates 1975).

Bronze Age settlements have been excavated across the river at Wraysbury and Runnymede Bridge (Ford 1987).

Excavations were carried out by Dr B. Hope Taylor to the S of the Church between 1953 and 1958. A 13th- to 14th century building was found, which may have been the Grange. The extent of the Saxon occupation located at Old Windsor has yet to be determined, but may be very extensive. The Royal palace at Old Windsor has documentary evidence for its existence between 1061 and 1107. Ninth century activity predating this may indicate the creation of the palace. Prior to this the area of Old Windsor had a small mid-Saxon settlement. A scatter of Roman building material and pottery suggests a substantial building which may be a Villa (Astill 1984 and Ford 1987). A Roman site lies one km across the river Thames.

Excavations by the OAU at Church Road found 12th century activity and traces of iron working (Mudd 1988). A probable medieval mill leat bounds the site to the E (B Durham pers com).

A building is shown in the position of the Manor on the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map (on the cover). The present Manor building dates to the 1870's or 1880's and has an addition at the rear adjacent to the site from the 1920's. The Victoria County History of Berkshire, written in 1914, does not include The Manor among its list of residences in the parish and the name must be recent as is the Church name which in 1914 was just St Peters rather than the Church of St Peter and St Andrew. The early manorial buildings are documented in the 13th century at the (moated) site of what is now Manor Farm and was formerly Tileplace Farm and there may have been another manorial focus or grange SW of the Church.

The site has recently been included in the Scheduled Ancient Monument area of Edward the Confessors Palace.

ASSESSMENT STRATEGY (Fig.2)

The assessment strategy was based on a 3.7% sample of the area. The sample consisted of four 2 m long and 1.5 m wide trenches dug by hand, a small 360 degree mechanical excavator was used to remove the tarmac and concrete surfaces and some recent dumping. (see fig. 2 for Trench layout) The trenches were excavated to a depth of 1.2 m as the information received from the developer indicated that the proposed foundations were to be around 1 m deep. The layers encountered were planned and their sections drawn when they were excavated. Trench 4 was moved W from its original position due to impenetrable concrete immediately below the surface and trench 1 was moved N.

RESULTS

Soils

The general soil type was clay silt. The general soil profile of trenches 3 and 4 was of just under 1 m of dumped 19th century layers overlying the old ground surface. In trenches 1 and 2 the disturbance was deeper.

Archaeology

Trench 1 revealed walls and foundations from 19th century buildings (seen in the insert of fig. 1). Trench 2 showed 19th century dumping overlaid by garden soil. Trenches 3 and 4 showed the gravel overlain by subsoil which was under an old ground surface covered by 19th century dumping.

Trench 1

This trench was overlaid by tarmac which sealed the two concrete and one brick floors of a building formed from two walls which formed the E and S sides of the trench. Under these floors was a deep deposit of 19th century dumping which sealed two walls, at a depth of around 0.70 m, one ran E-W and the other was aligned at an angle of 45° to the first wall. At a depth of 1.3 m this first wall was overlaid by layer 14 which contained late 19th century pottery.

Trench 2

The turf/garden soil overlaid five layers of 19th century dumping to a depth of 1.2 m. A wall, discovered at a depth of 0.06 m, was aligned E-W on the line of the present S wall of the Manor was overlaid by these layers. The wall was constructed of 19th century bricks with a pink/yellow mortar.

Trench 3 (fig. 3)

The tarmac surface overlaid a make-up layer of crushed mortar and bricks. Under this was a layer of dark grey silt with building debris. This overlay a grey silty clay (34) layer with tile lying flat at the bottom. The clayish layer overlay a layer (35) interpreted as an old ground surface at a depth of 0.80m. This contained a range of material including post medieval tile, oyster shells, medieval pottery, Romano-British pottery and prehistoric struck flints. Layer 35 overlay a clean brown silt (layer 36) which contained no finds and overlay the natural gravel. The flints recovered were lying flat in the interface between layers 35 and 36. Two disturbances (38 and 39) in the subsoil were filled by layer 35 and overlain by the clayish layer 34 but from the nature of the infilling by 35 they do not appear to be ancient, there was no distinction between their fill and layer 35 and are probably associated with the construction of the Manor.

Trench 4 (fig. 3)

This trench was close to (see fig. 2) and similar to trench 3. An almost identical pattern of 19th century deposits sealed layers interpreted as the same old ground surface at a depth of 0.90 m. There was a very slight difference between the two layers; the lower layer was slightly lighter in colour, perhaps because the upper part of the ground surface had been more disturbed than the lower part. These layers (44 and 45) were removed in 0.05 m spits. Romano-British pottery was recovered from 44 and 45, the flints came from the lower spit (layer 45). The E-W yard wall seen in Figure 1 insert was visible in the S side of this trench.

Finds

Pottery

In total 24 sherds of pottery and tile and 5 pieces of bone were recovered from layers forming the old ground surface. The 19th century layers contained much pottery and tile and a selected sample of this material was kept for dating purposes.

The pottery from the old ground surface differed between trenches 3 and 4, in trench 3, from layer 35, one sherd of Romano-British greyware accompanied 6 sherds of sandy tempered and 1 shell tempered 13th- to 14th century pottery. Trench 4 yielded 1 sherd of Black-Burnished ware fabric 2, 2 sherds of Romano-British greyware and 5 possible Romano-British sherds from layer 45, where there was also 2 tile fragments. Layer 44 contained one sherd of possible Romano-British greyware and some tile.

Flint

Forty-two pieces of flint were recovered comprising a small assemblage of 17 struck flints weighing 143g and 25 pieces of burnt flint weighing 346g, some of which showed signs of flaking, was recovered from the assessment excavations. Although the assemblage is small, some evidence for dating may be gained through a technological study of the material (cf Holgate 1988). One obliquely blunted point and five blades or blade-like flakes were recovered. The blades and blade-like flakes exhibited narrow butts, diffuse bulbs and many had parallel dorsal blade scars. This material and the obliquely blunted point may indicate a later Mesolithic date. Some of the blades may possibly be earlier Neolithic as similar knapping strategies were employed.

The remaining pieces are probably later Neolithic/Bronze Age although there is no definite dating for this material. Many of the flakes were less carefully produced, hard-hammer technique was used (wide butts, prominent bulbs of percussion) and there were some hinge fractures present. An end scraper may be of bronze Age date, it has a fairly steep scraping angle and

the retouch is quite crude.

The raw material is probably locally derived, possibly from superficial deposits to the NW. One or two pieces of flint may be gravel flint which came from the immediate area.

Environmental

Soil samples were not taken.

COMMENTS ON THE RESULTS

Reliability of field investigation

The sample size is considered sufficient to adequately define and interpret the archaeology.

The weather conditions were not ideal on the first day but the rain cleared for the 2nd and 3rd days and flooding was restricted to trench 3.

Overall Interpretation

The earliest archaeological deposit located was the old ground surface layer. The range of material they contained indicates it was the ground surface until the Manor was built in the late 19th century. The position of the flints, lying flat on the interface between the ground surface layers and the silty subsoil, suggests that the soil has been worm sorted possibly after ploughing as the horizontal distribution (fig. 3) does not indicate an undisturbed scatter. The date range of the flint may indicate some 'background noise' from nearby activity such as the nearby Bronze Age ring ditch/barrow or the Neolithic settlement across the River. Conversely the amount of flint, 17 struck flints and 25 pieces of burnt flint, which was recovered from a small sample area, only 6 square metres, may indicate a much larger scatter. The presence of burnt flint is generally accepted as evidence for prehistoric domestic occupation and the presence of burnt flints in trench 4 may indicate early prehistoric settlement in the vicinity.

The Roman and medieval pottery and tile, although not very abraded, may indicate that the area was ploughed and manured from the nearby Roman and medieval settlements. No features were located to suggest structures or boundaries although it is possible that the trenches were located within a settlement/activity zone.

The 19th century dumping may be explained in two ways; to raise the ground surface above flood level and to provide a flat area around the house.

Only one part of the site is below the flood level and that by a matter of centimetres. The house is surrounded by a raised area bounded by the drive to the NW and W, there is a marked drop on the level of the garden to the S. The ground level rises up towards the Church. As the clayish layer in trenches 3 and 4 overlaid layers with 19th century tile in must be part of this dumping rather than a waterlaid alluvial deposit.

OAU
April 1992

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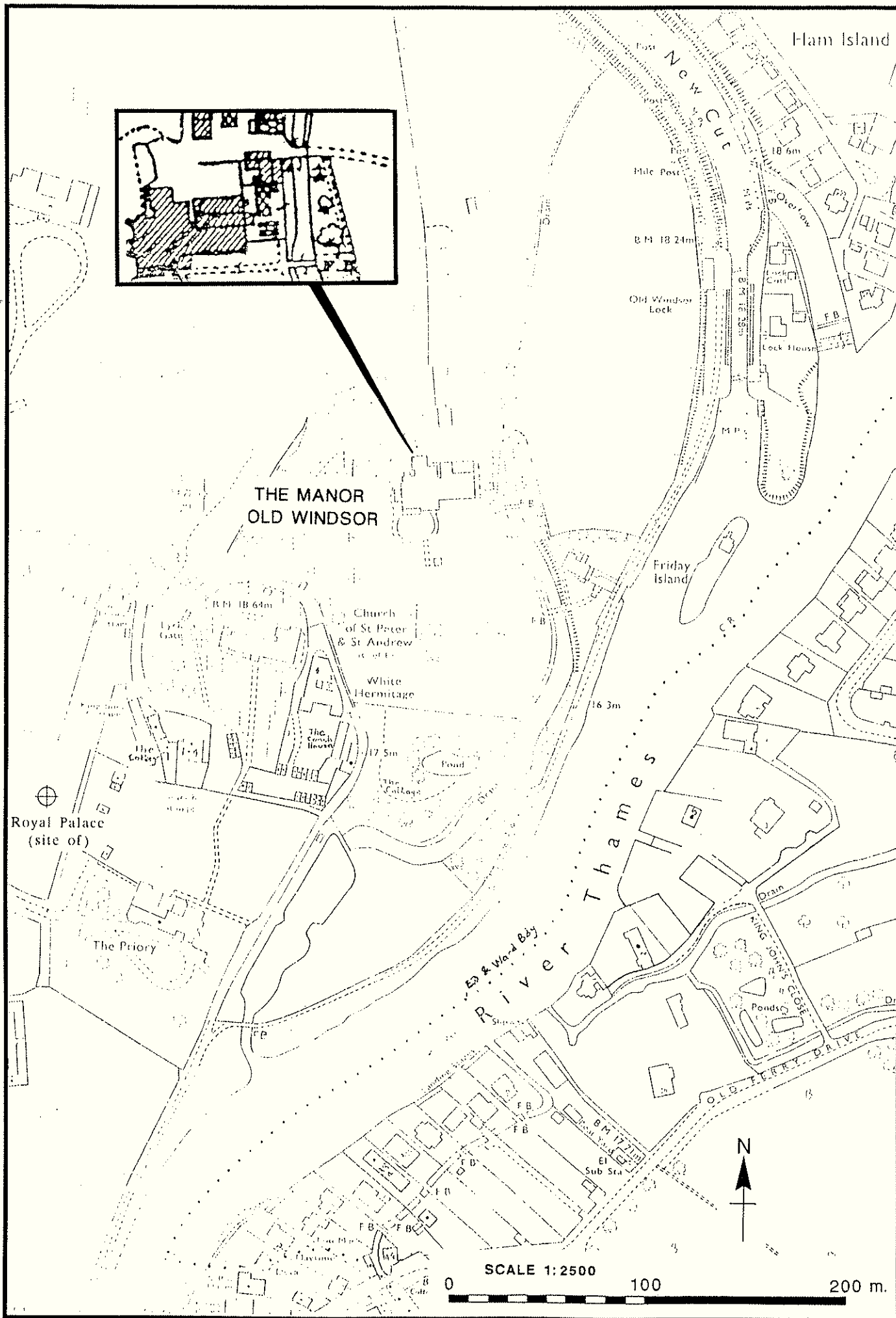


Figure 1

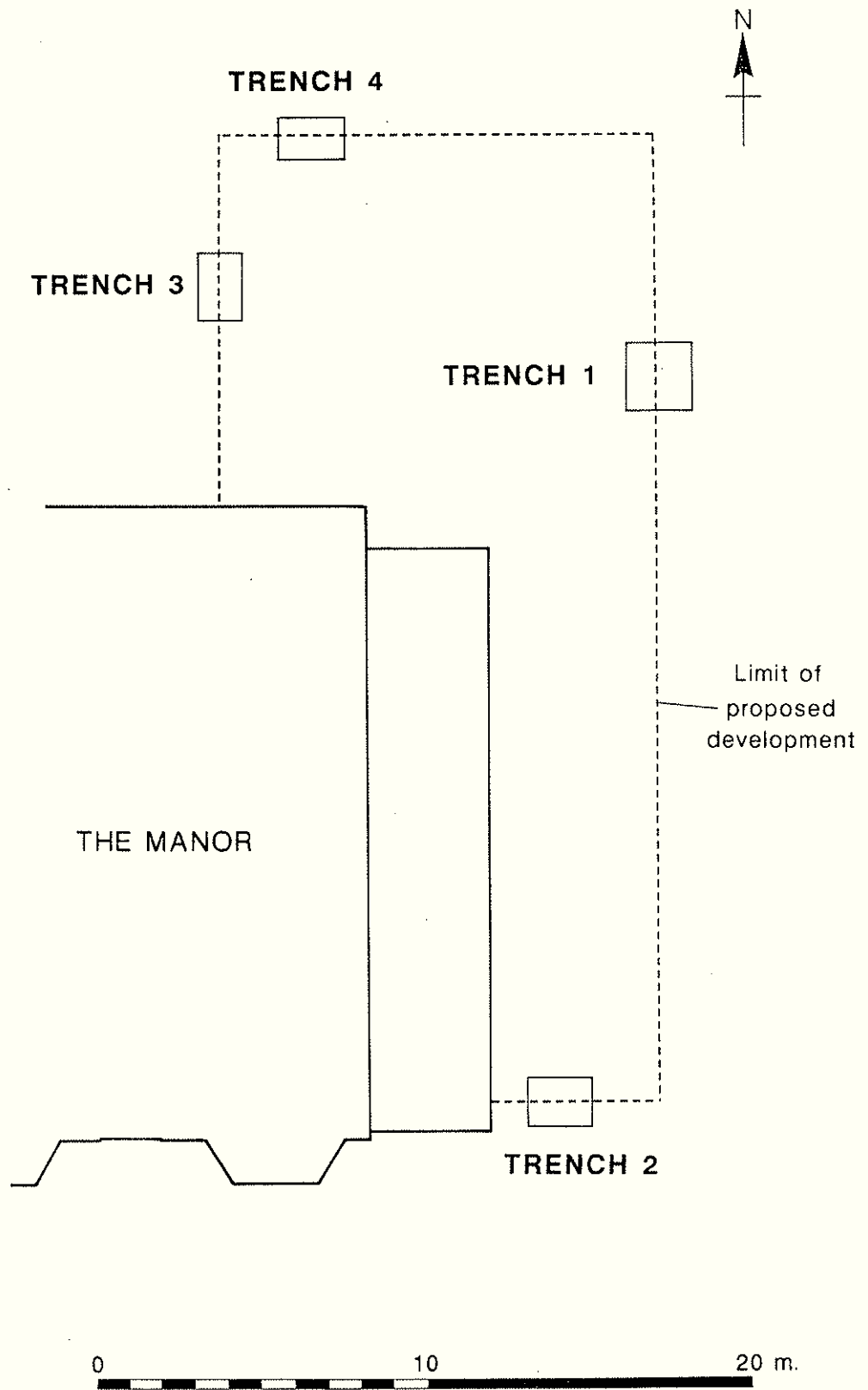
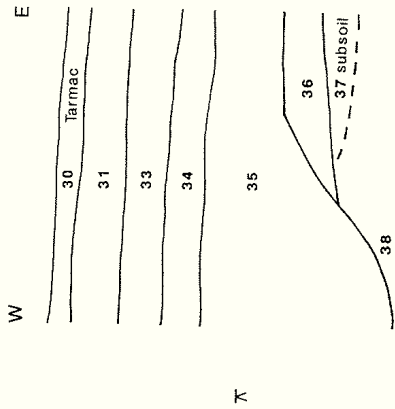
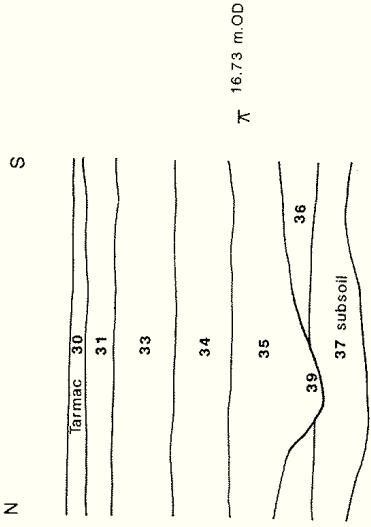


Figure 2

Trench 3 Section A

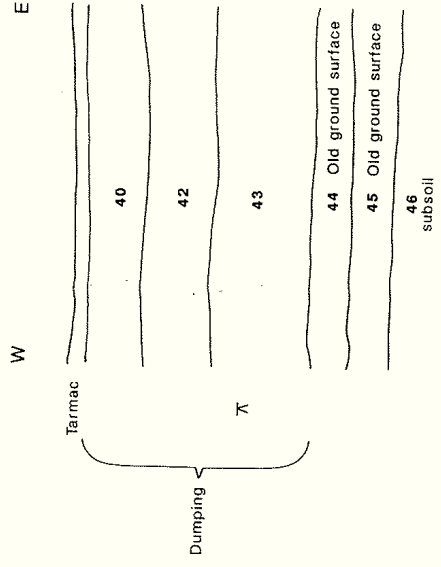


Section B

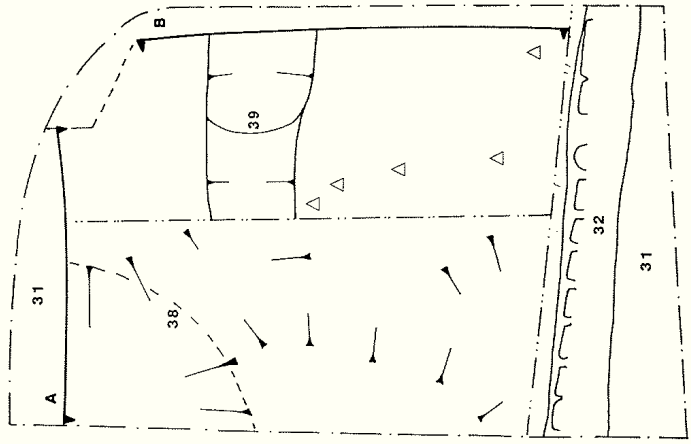


16.73 m.OD

Trench 4 Section C



16.78 m.OD

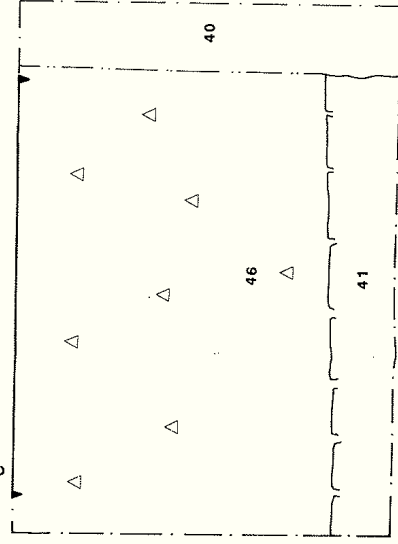


Plan



Key:

Flint Δ



Plan

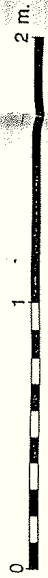


Figure 3