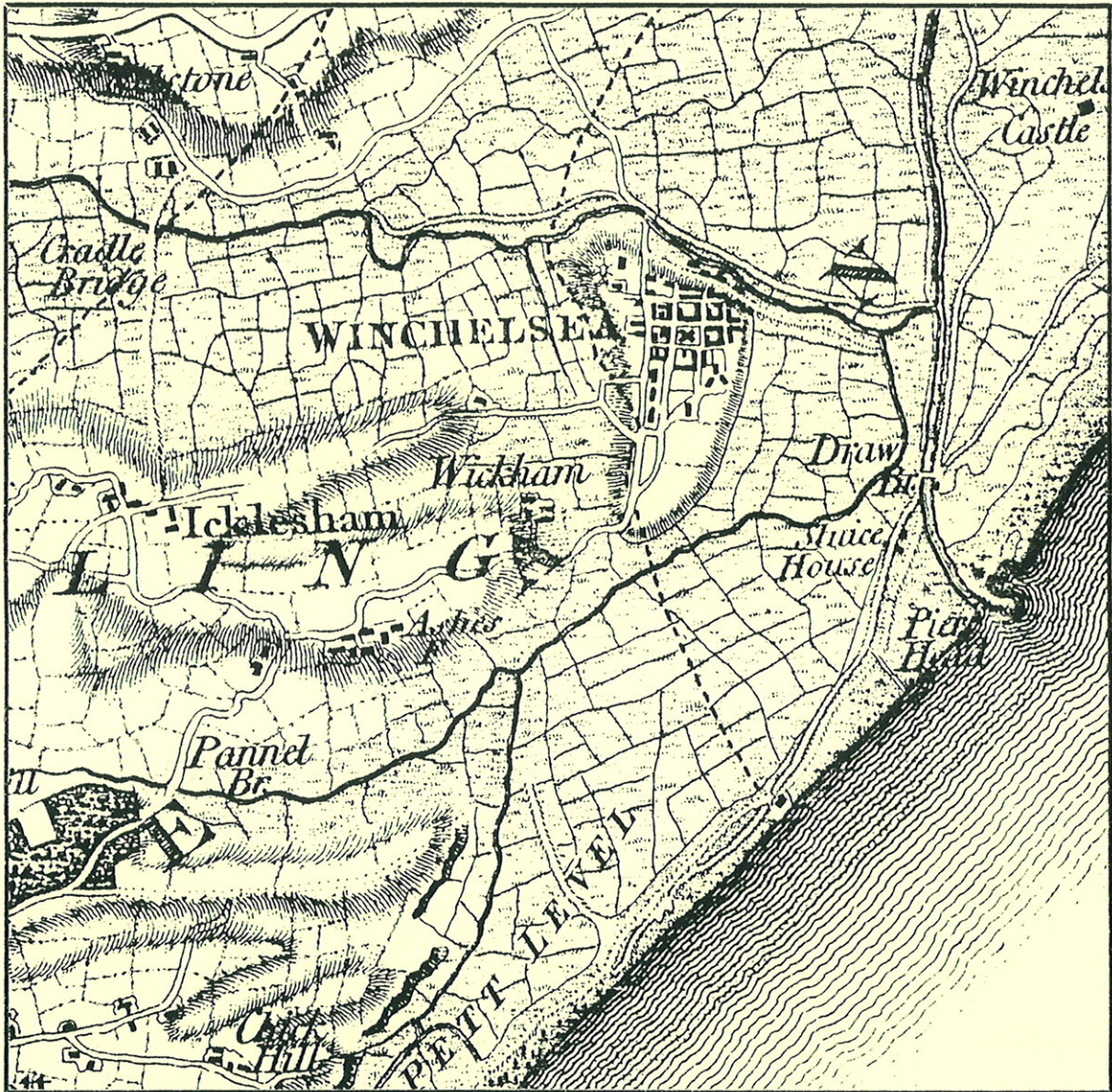


# EAST SUSSEX

## LAND ADJACENT TO ICKLESHAM VICARAGE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT





# LAND ADJACENT TO ICKLESHAM VICARAGE, ICKLESHAM, EAST SUSSEX

## INTRODUCTION

On the 7 and 8 July 1992 the Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a small-scale investigation in the area N of Icklesham vicarage centred at TQ 87941649. The trenches were dug within the area of a proposed new vicarage and bungalow.

## TOPOGRAPHY (Fig. 1)

The site is approximately of 0.26 hectares in an area of overgrown orchard trees. The site lies at 49.80m OD. The underlying geology is Wadhurst Clay. To the E in the area of the church it becomes Sand in Wadhurst Clay.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies, c50m S of the site of 6 bloomery furnaces (see Fig. 1 ) which were found associated with Belgic pottery and a denarius of Hadrian (Homan, 1936-7), (Antiquity No. TQ 81 NE 11). More recently the metalled surface of a substantial Roman road associated with the iron works was discovered by the Hastings Area Archaeological Research Group.

Approximately 50m to the E is the early Norman parish Church of St. Nicholas.

## STRATEGY

Two trenches were dug in the area of the proposed buildings. Trench 1 was 15m, Trench 2 13m in length. Both were 1.55m in width. The layers above the archaeological deposits were dug with a JCB and the archaeological deposits were hand dug to establish their type and preservation. Finds from the machine dug layers were recovered as they were dug and additional unstratified finds were recovered from the spoil.

## RESULTS

### TRENCH 1 (Fig. 2)

Trench 1 was dug E-W in the area of the proposed vicarage. The topsoil 1\1 overlaid an earlier post-medieval soil 1\2. Under 1\2 was a clay layer 1\3 which extended only along the western 9.60m of the trench. The layer had no soil

structure and is probably a dumped layer of redeposited clay. Pottery from this layer included Roman parchment ware, 13th century sherds as well as slag.

At the far W end of the trench 1\3 was cut by a ditch 1\5. The ditch contained 14th century W Sussex ware pottery.

1\3 overlaid a ditch 1\6. The ditch 1\6 orientated N-S was 4m wide and 0.99m in depth. The clay fill was very similar to the Wadhurst clay suggesting it had been redeposited. The later deposits within the ditch (1\6\1) contained possible post-medieval pottery. The earlier fills produced W. Sussex ware. The bottom of the ditch coincided with a geological layer of sandstone bedded in clay.

Two other N-S features probably ditches\gullies, 1\8 (overlaid by 1\2) and 1\9 (cutting 1\2) produced post-medieval finds.

A ditch 1\10 (overlaid by 1\2) was also orientated N-S, 0.68m in width and 0.27m in depth, it contained 13th century pottery.

In Trench 1 the Wadhurst clay was level along the trench, its surface had a distinct 'soapy' texture. At the western end it was 0.60m below the present ground surface and 0.35m At the eastern end. The difference is accounted for by the layer 1\3 and the greater depth of 1\2 at the W end.

## **TRENCH 2 (Fig. 2)**

Trench 2 was dug E-W in the area of the proposed bungalow. The topsoil 2\1 overlaid an earlier stiff clay 2\2. Layer 2\2 had no defined soil structure and is possibly a dump layer of redeposited clay. It contained Romano-British pottery, medieval pottery and slag.

The layer 2\2 overlaid a ditch 2\5, orientated ENE-WSW. U-shaped in profile it was 0.85m in width and 0.39m in depth. The pottery from the ditch was 14th century in date. The ditch had ill-defined edges with evidence of root disturbance at the E end.

The earliest feature in Trench 2, a shallow pit 2\7 contained medieval pottery sherds and was cut by the ditch 2\5. The ditch 2\5 was cut by a post-medieval posthole\pit 2\8.

At the W end of the trench a brick built drain 2\6 was exposed and is certainly associated with the existing upstanding wooden building just south of the drain.

In Trench 2 the undisturbed subsoil was 0.36m below the present ground surface.

## **FINDS** (see table 2) Catherine Underwood-Keevill

A total of 67 sherds weighing 0.538kg was recovered from 14 contexts, including unstratified material.

The majority of the assemblage consisted of West Sussex ware, an oxidised orange red iron rich fabric type with thick yellow green glaze dated to the mid 14th to early 15th century (Barton 1979, 97). Oxidised West Sussex ware has a wide distribution from Chichester to Lewes, Guildford and Southampton. West Sussex ware was recovered from 1\2, 1\5, 1\6\1, 1\7, 1\US and 2\2 and appeared to consist of jug fragments with a ridged neck rim of 14th century date being present in context 1\2.

The other main fabric type is a crushed flint tempered fabric which has parallels in Chichester and varies from a coarse type which dates to the Saxo-Norman period, 11th - 12th century and a developed wheel finished fabric type was produced at the Orchard Street kiln site in Chichester. It is worth noting however that the flint tempered wares may continue into the 14th century and that a Roman precursor to this fabric also exists (Millet 1980 fabric groups A and B) in West Sussex. The coarse fabric type has been noted in context 2\4 indicating a Saxo-Norman date. The developed flint tempered fabric is present in contexts 1\3, 1\10, 2\2, and 2\7. In context 1\US a flat topped everted rim cooking pot of late 13th century was noted.

Roman grog tempered ware dated to the late 3rd - 4th century occurs in context 1\1. Roman fine parchment ware and a Roman oxidised sandy ware are present in context 1\3, 2\2 and 2\7. The fine parchment ware could be Pevensey ware c A.D. 350 (Green 1980, 81).

A local red earthenware fabric type was recovered from context 2\8. This has been dated provisionally to the 17th - 18th century.

The assemblage is notable for the presence of flint gritted wares which have a long tradition in Sussex and in East Sussex appears to be the main fabric type in use from the 11th through to the 14th century. In West Sussex the fabric appears to be superseded although not completely replaced by West Sussex ware and the Black and White painted wares, the latter does not appear to be represented in this assemblage although a reduced ware sherd was recovered from context 1\6\1. The progression of vessel form and fabric improvement for the flint tempered ware is not completely known and the availability of a small collection of flint tempered wares from Icklesham does serve to improve our knowledge of the fabric distribution and vessel form.

## **Bibliography**

- Barton KJ, 1979. Medieval Sussex Pottery Phillimore Press  
Green C, 1980. 'Handmade pottery and society in late Iron Age and Roman East Sussex' Sussex Archaeological Collection 118 69-86

## THE SLAG

A total of 16.58kg of slag was collected (see table 1). 92% of this was from Trench 1. The slag consisted of randomly shaped lumps. Most were sized about 0.05m across although there were smaller pieces and occasional pieces up to 0.12m in size. Internally they were vesicular, some had a lava-like flow on their upper surface. Occasional lumps of fired clay and partly burnt sandstone were also associated with the slag.

The slag was examined by Chris Salter of the Department of Materials, Oxford University. The waste identified was:

1. Ore
2. Hearth lining
3. In-furnace slags
4. Tap slag
5. Bloom smithing waste

Most of the waste consisted of primary iron smelting slag. The slag was not typical of a Roman site. The slag was not diagnostic enough to attribute it to any particular period although it could be assigned to the period of 2nd century AD to the 12\13 century. Generally the slag gave the impression of being early medieval in character. This does not preclude it being a mix of different periods within this range.

The appearance of the slag was worn and broken indicating it had been redeposited once, possibly twice. If deposited immediately after its manufacture it would have had charcoal embedded on its surface. In this case there was no noticeable amounts of charcoal associated with the slag. In Trench 1 none of the slag appeared in any dumped concentrations or linked with any of the features. It occurred fairly evenly throughout the trench in all the deposits with a slightly higher occurrence in ditch 1\5 and layer 1\3.

## CONCLUSIONS

The earliest archaeological features are medieval in date. The pottery from within features and collected from the spoil was mainly 13th to 14th century with a small amount of residual Romano British pottery. The occurrence of the slag in Trench 1 would suggest it is probably near a primary smelting site creating waste which has subsequently spread to become residually deposited in later archaeological deposits.

The date of features in Trench 1 cannot be firmly dated. The later mixed fill of ditch 1\6 containing a possible post-medieval pottery, suggest the occurrence of

residual pottery within redeposited clay. This view is supported by the stratigraphic relationships, with ditch 1\5 containing earlier finds although stratigraphically later.

In Trench 2 the features (with the exception of 2\8) suggest a firm date within the 13th to 14th century.

**TABLE 1: Slag Weight.**

| <b>Context</b> | <b>Type</b>  | <b>Slag Weight Kg.</b> |
|----------------|--------------|------------------------|
| 1\US           | Unstratified | 1.75                   |
| 1\3            | Layer        | 6.275                  |
| 1\5            | Ditch        | 2.825                  |
| 1\6            | Ditch        | 4.30                   |
| 1\10           | Ditch        | 0.15                   |
| 2\2            | Layer        | 1.125                  |
| 2\5            | Ditch        | 0.08                   |
| 2\7            | Pit          | 0.025                  |
| 2\8            | Posthole\pit | 0.050                  |

**Table 2. Summary of Pottery**

| Context | Type   | Sherd No | Comments  |
|---------|--------|----------|---|
| 1\1     | Layer  | 10       | Roman C3-C4Pipkin? C14?\C19 ware                                    |
| 1\2     | Layer  | 4        | W Sussex ware C14   |
| 1\3     | Layer  | 4        | Roman fine parchment Med jug rim + strap handle C13?                |
| 1\5     | Ditch  | 2        | C14 W Sussex ware + Roman   |
| 1\6     | Ditch  | 6        | W Sussex C14\C15\ Green glaze aardenburg type medC14?\C17 Post med? |
| 1\10    | Ditch  | 1        | Possibly med  |
| 2\1     | Layer  | 3        | C19-C20 printed white wares   |
| 2\2     | Layer  | 4        | Roman to C13  |
| 2\4     | =2\5?  | 3        | Saxo-Norman   |
| 2\5     | Ditch  | 4        | Roman-Medieval  |
| 2\7     | Pit    | 4        | Roman-Medieval  |
| 2\8     | PH\Pit | 3        | Post medieval C17\C18   |



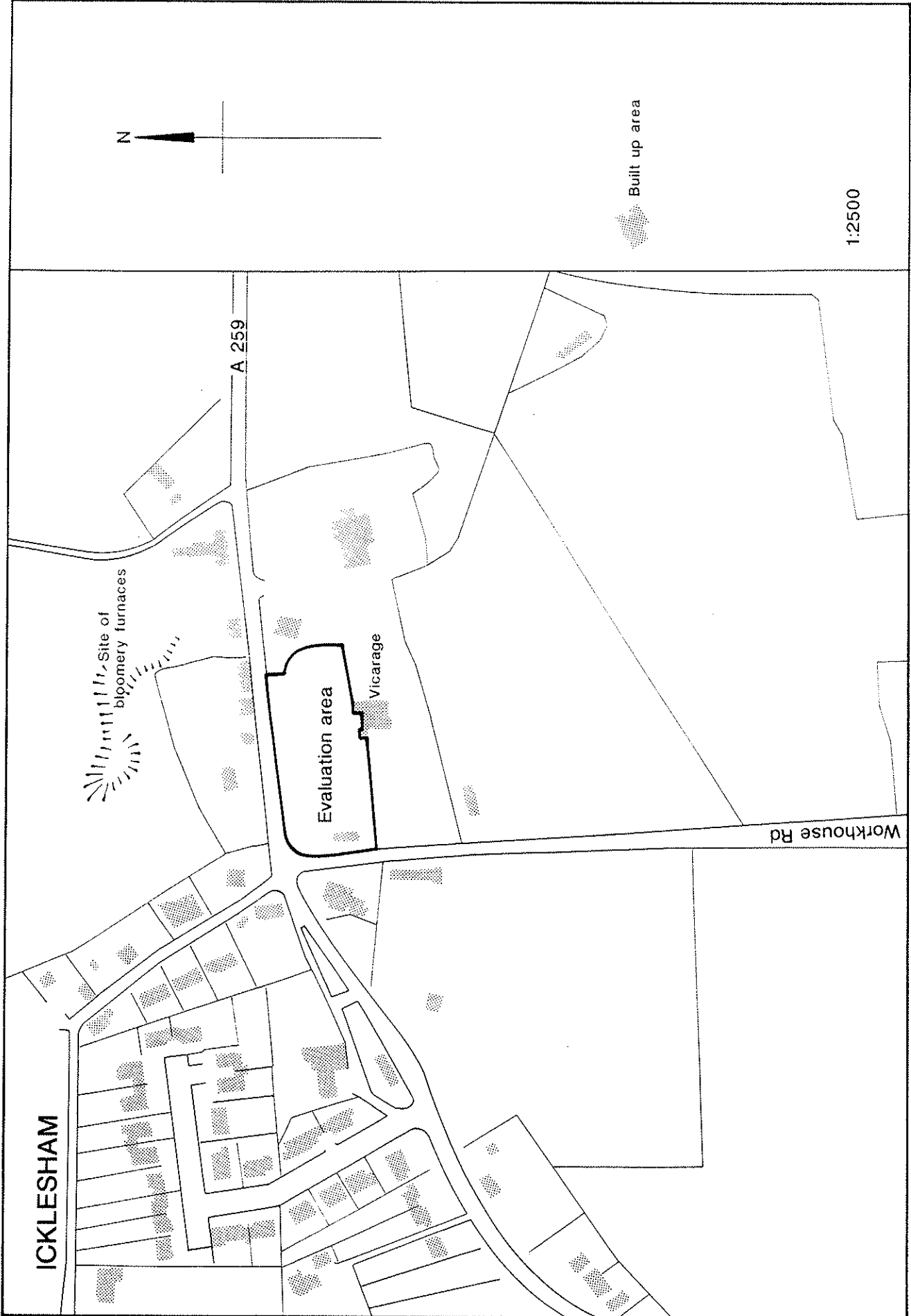


Fig. 1

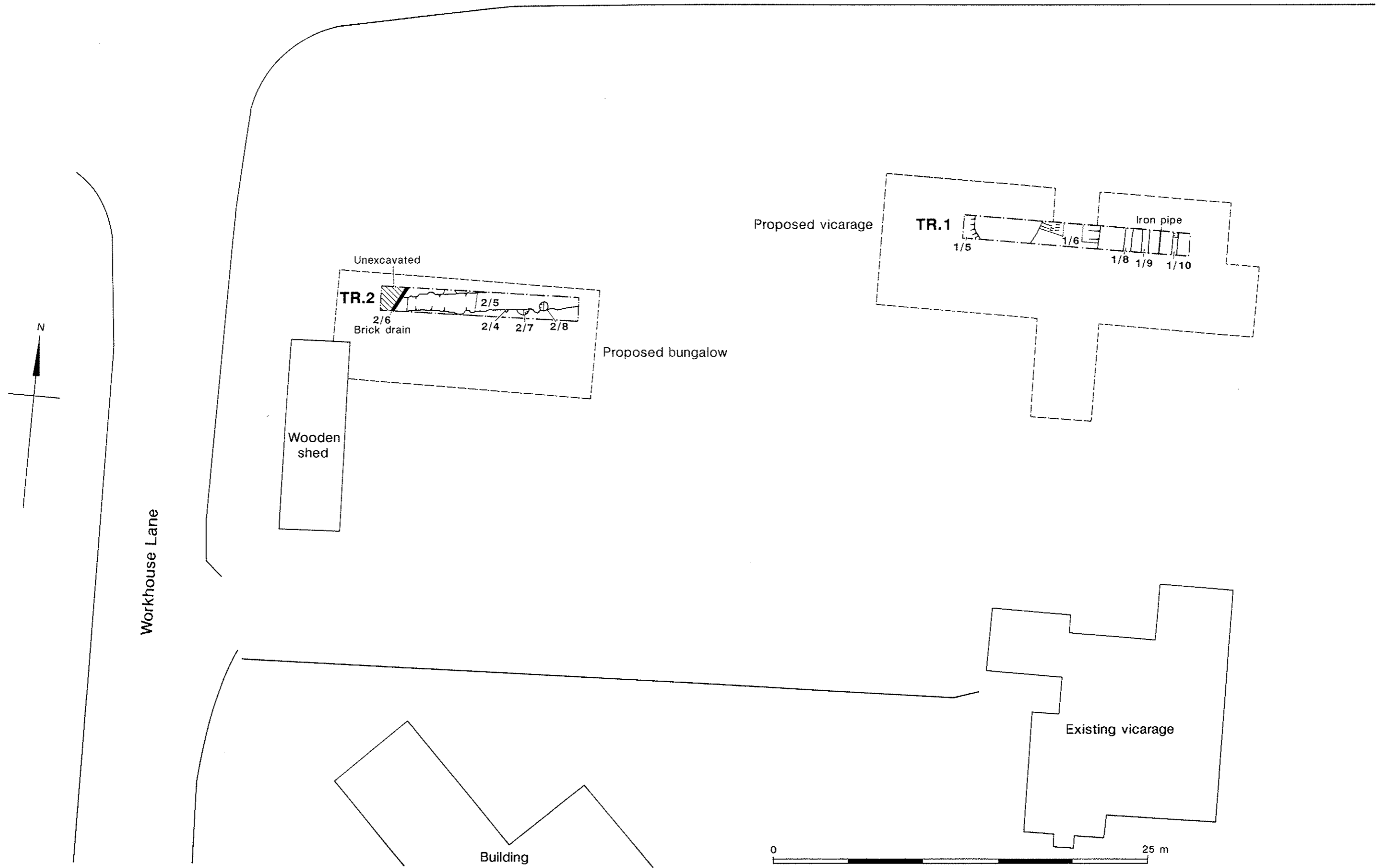


Fig. 2