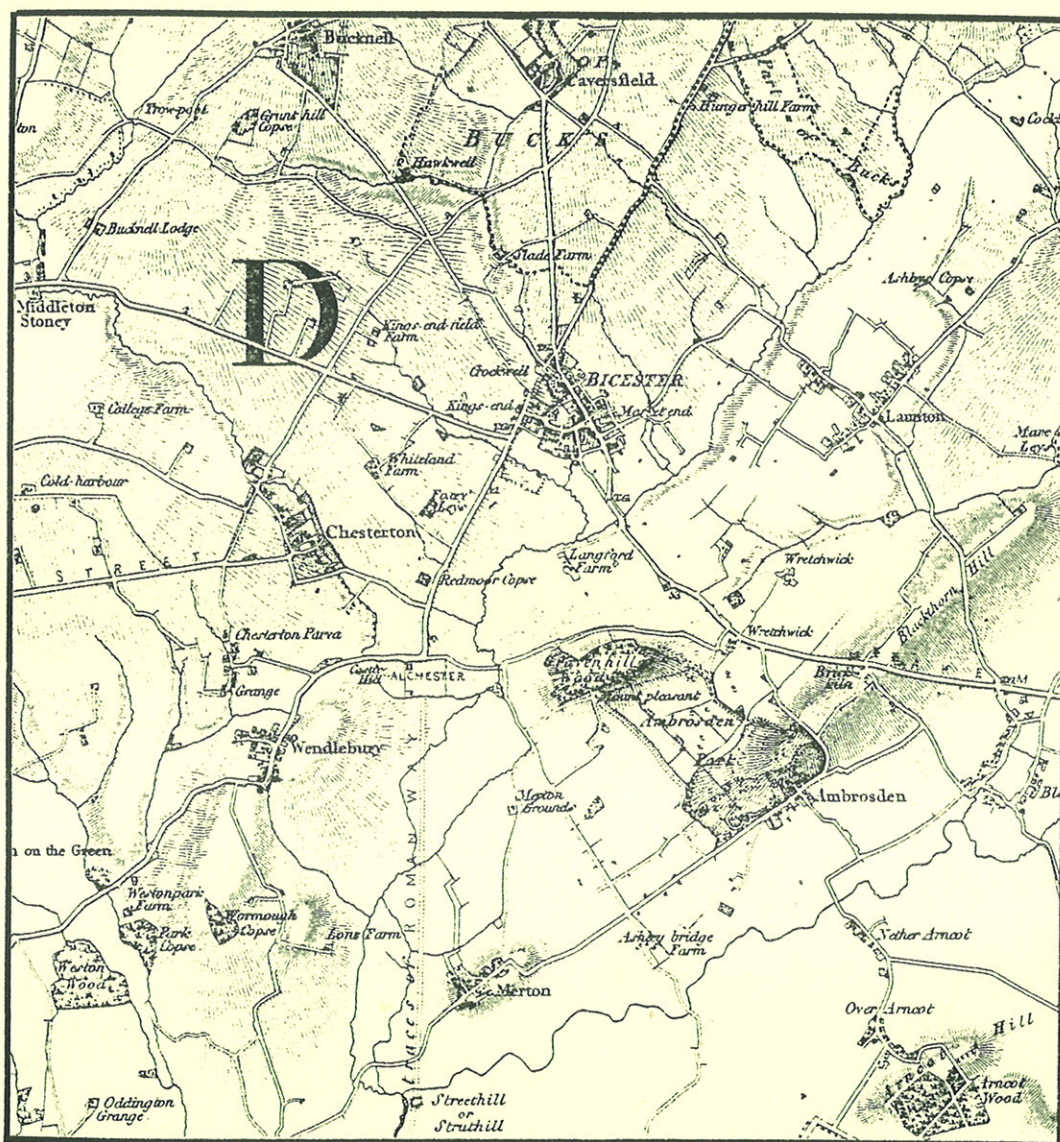


# 7-8 MARKET SQUARE BICESTER OXFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION 1992



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION CARRIED OUT AT THE REAR OF 7-8 MARKET SQUARE BICESTER OXFORDSHIRE.

The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation, during February 1992, at 7-8 Market Square, Bicester, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 5865 2245) on behalf of Andrews Design Partnership. This evaluation was requested by the County Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire in advance of the determination of a planning application for the above plot of land.

The land is currently used as a market garden, greenhouses cover virtually all of the site, and this controlled the areas examined in this evaluation.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Bicester itself is a medieval town thought to have developed from a Saxon settlement and lies three kilometres to the north of the Roman Town of Alchester. The site is within the manor of Market End, originally a Saxon settlement by the ford over the river Bure on the Aylesbury road. The development area covers the rear of four medieval burgage plots immediately off the market square.

Certain 13th century leases for this area indicate the presence of prosperous merchants' houses.

## TOPOGRAPHY

The area covered by this evaluation consists of a market garden with an approximate area of 3500 m<sup>2</sup>. About 90% of the proposed development area is covered by greenhouses.

## STRATEGY

The specifications set by County Archaeologist required four per cent of the available area, 61 m<sup>2</sup>, to be evaluated. It should be noted that there are more greenhouses present than shown on the OS 1:2500 plan and the trench locations are different to those originally specified by the County Archaeologist.

It was considered desirable by both the client and OAU that the size of the area evaluated should be as near to the standard 4% of the development area as possible. A total of 96m<sup>2</sup> was evaluated, representing virtually the entire area that was available and equating to approximately 3% of the proposed development area.

Six trenches were excavated, their locations were controlled by both the position of the extant green houses and safety considerations. While these trenches represent a 'grab sample' (an opportunist sample based upon availability) there is nothing to suggest that they are not both typical and representative of the entire development area. Effectively this is a single transect through the application area.

In all the trenches topsoil was removed by a JCB with a ditching bucket and all the other deposits were excavated by hand. The layer of redeposited natural found in some trenches was excavated by machine once the modern date of this deposit had been established. The

locations of these trenches are shown in Fig 2.

All archaeological features were recorded using the system outlined in the 'Oxford Archaeological Unit Recording Manual'. In addition to the insides of the greenhouses, where topsoil was exposed was "fieldwalked" using 5m transects.

The archive has been prepared in accordance with the standard Oxford Archaeological Unit methods and will be deposited with the County Museum Service. No finds have been retained.

## RESULTS.

The archaeological interest is confined to very late post medieval deposits and features essentially of a non structural nature. Included amongst these is a nineteenth century property boundary shown on a 1909 plan of the site. There is a layer of soil which is interpreted as a garden soil. At the northern end of the site, that is at the very rear of the plots a cobbled surface was recorded. This is securely dated to the post medieval period by the presence of clay pipes immediately below.

These are detailed in the appendix.

It is considered probable that these findings are typical of the development area as a whole and that there are no significant archaeological deposits present on the site.

## APPENDIX DETAILED TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS.

### TRENCH A:

Location:

Size: 11.0 x 1.7m

Area: 18.7

Maximum depth: 1m.

Lowest horizon examined: natural cornbash.

Archaeological Interest: Post-medieval features.

Stratigraphy:	Layer	Thickness
	Topsoil	0.4 m
	Post Medieval Soil	0.3 m

Feature List: Context 4 Post medieval Post hole.

Context 6 Post medieval property boundary.

### Description.

Two archaeological features were identified. One of these was small and linear filled with a mix of small lumps of cornbash and soil. Given that the position and alignment of this feature co-coincides with the property boundary between numbers 8&9 Market square it is considered likely that this is a foundation trench or similar for the property boundary. A boundary wall is shown on this position on a plan of the site dated 1909. Late Post-Medieval (eighteenth or nineteenth century) pottery was found in this feature. The other feature, a post hole, is also late post Medieval in date. In this trench a layer of "dumped" soil was present above the natural sub-soil. This is considered to be of no great antiquity given that willow pattern china was observed in this deposit. As these two features cut this layer they too can be regarded as modern.

Residual medieval pottery was found in this trench.

### TRENCH B:

Location:

Size: 5.6 x 1.7m

Area: 10.1 m<sup>2</sup>

Maximum depth: 1m.

Lowest horizon examined: natural cornbash.

Archaeological Interest: Late post medieval deposit.

Stratigraphy:	Layer	Thickness
	Topsoil	0.7 m
	Redeposited Natural	0.2 m
	Post Medieval Soil	0.3 m

Feature List: None

Description: The redeposited natural is modern. Post Medieval Soil as trench A.

#### TRENCH C:

Location:

Size: 21.0 x 1.7m

Area: 35.7 m<sup>2</sup>

Maximum depth: 1m.

Lowest horizon examined: natural cornbash.

Archaeological Interest: Late post medieval deposit.

Stratigraphy:	Layer	Thickness
	Topsoil	0.8 m
	Redeposited Natural	0.2 m
	Post Medieval Soil	0.3 m

Feature List: None

Description: The redeposited natural is modern. Post Medieval Soil as trench A.

#### TRENCH D:

Location:

Size: 14.6 x 1.7m

Area: 24.8 m<sup>2</sup>

Maximum depth: 1m.

Lowest horizon examined: natural cornbash.

Archaeological Interest: Late post medieval deposits

Stratigraphy:	Layer	Thickness
	Topsoil	0.8 m
	Redeposited Natural	0.2 m
	Post Medieval deposits	0.3 m

Description: The layer of post medieval soil described for trench A seals a number of other deposits; all of which are post medieval in date.

At the eastern end of the trench a rough layer of cobbling was found. This is interpreted as an area of hardstanding or a yard; it is clearly late post medieval in date. Beneath the cobbling a thin lense of charcoal, 50mm, was identified. This is interpreted as dumped burnt material given that there is no evidence for a structural interpretation. The deposits are dated by the presence of both post medieval pottery and clay pipes.

Feature List: Cobbled Surface 12

Description: The redeposited natural is modern. Post Medieval Soil as trench A.



TRENCH 5:

Location:

Size: 2.8 x 1.7m

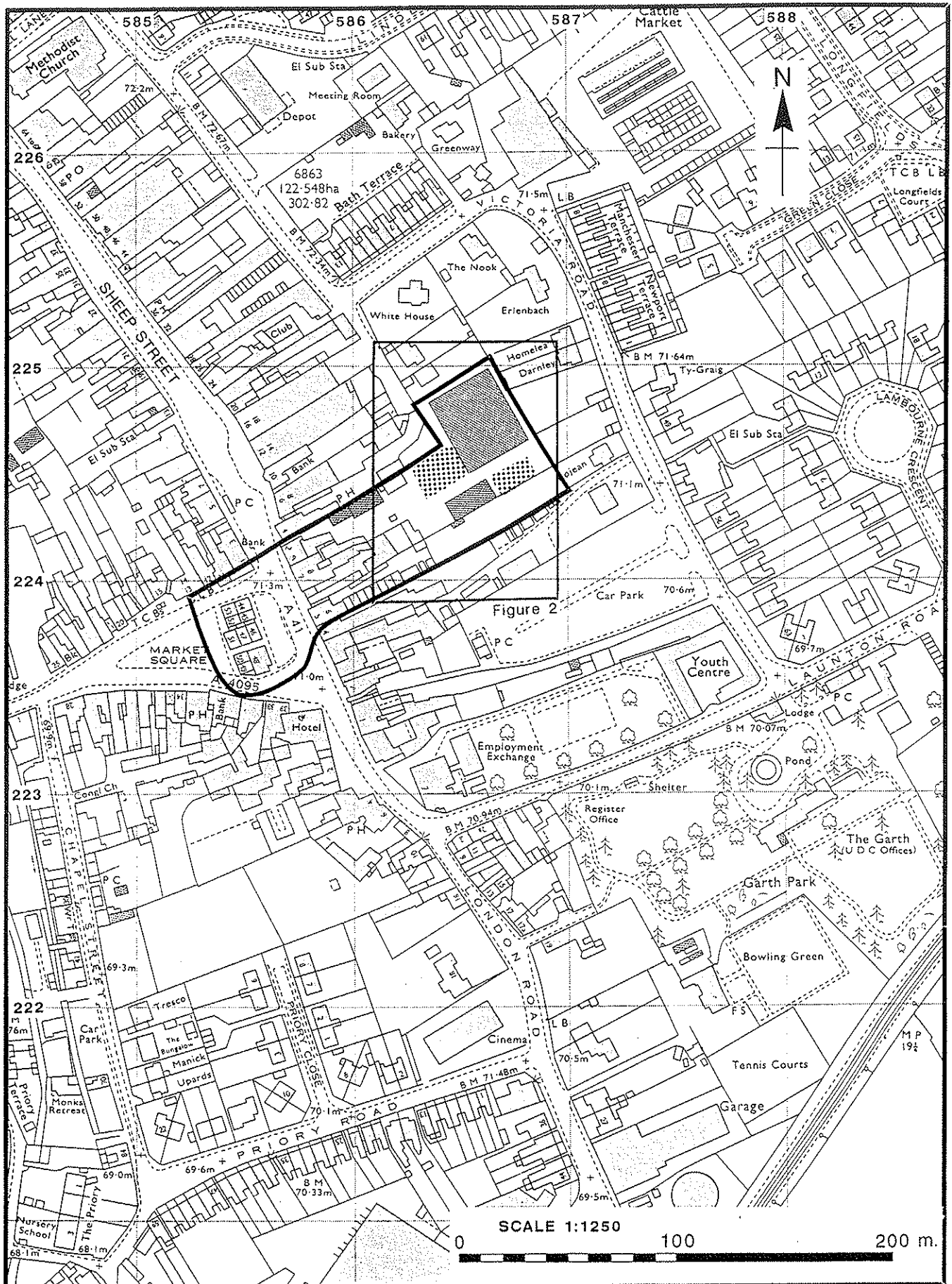
Area: 4.8

Maximum depth: 1m.

Lowest horizon examined: natural cornbash.

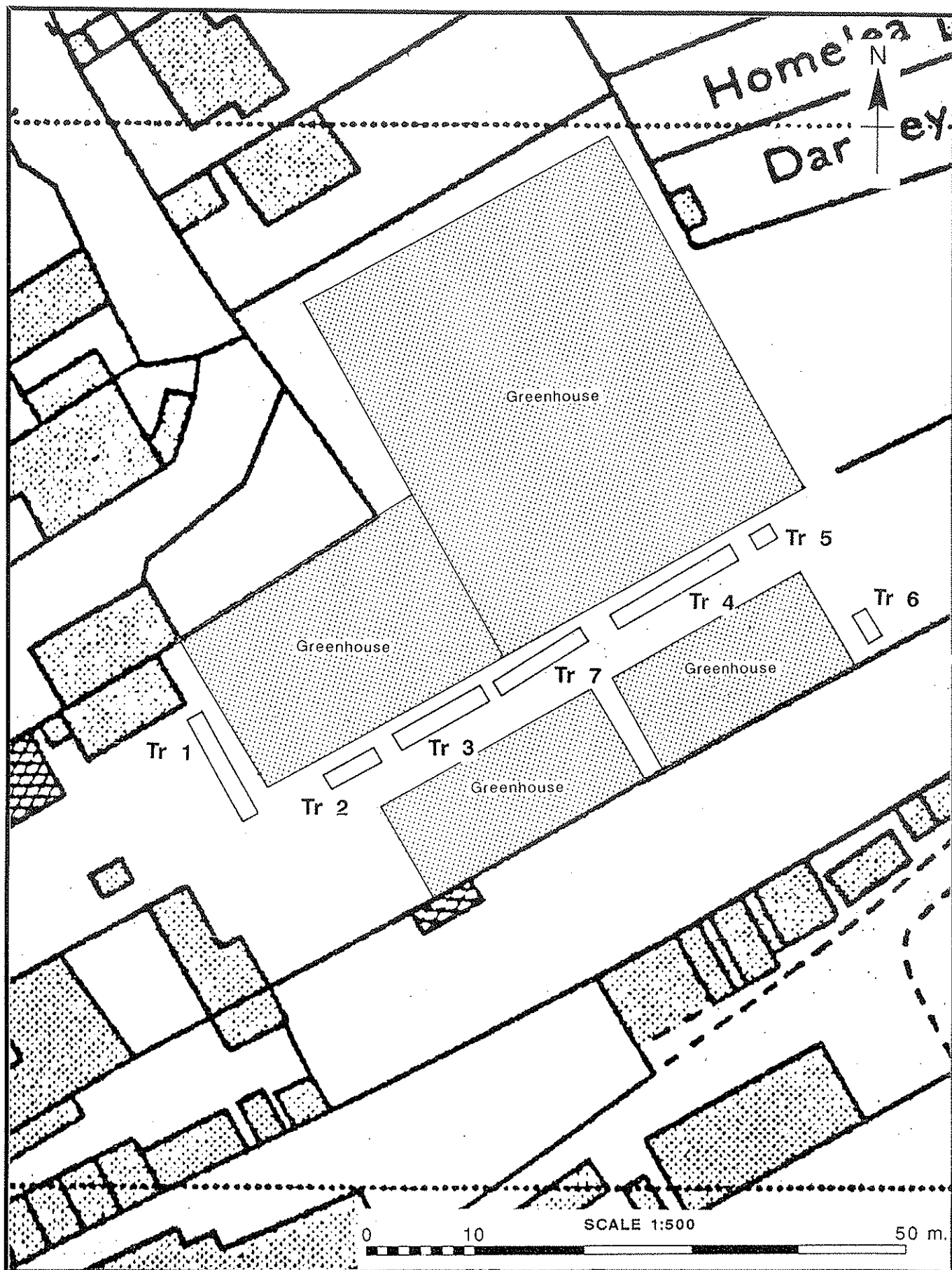
Archaeological Interest: None

Stratigraphy:	Layer	Thickness
	Topsoil	0.4 m
	Post Medieval Soil	0.3 m



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Figure 1



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Figure 2