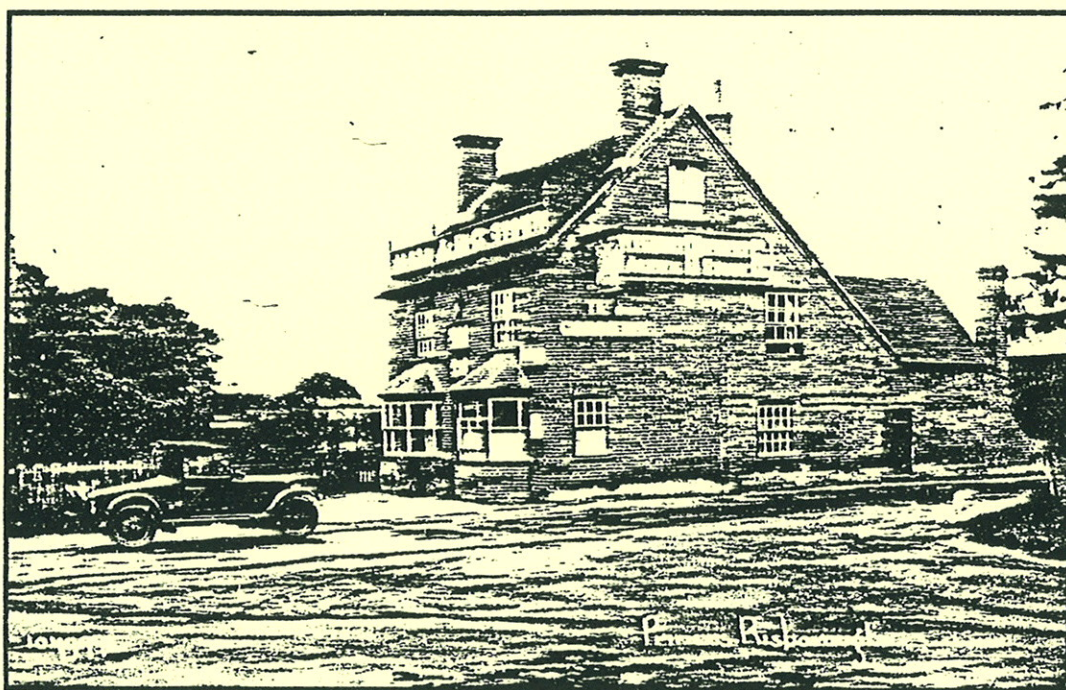


Tesco Stores Development

Buckingham Arms Site Princes Risborough, Bucks

Archaeological Appraisal



Oxford Archaeological Unit

1994

TESCO STORES DEVELOPMENT

BUCKINGHAM ARMS SITE PRINCES RISBOROUGH, BUCKS

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TESCO DEVELOPMENT SITE AT PRINCES RISBOROUGH, BUCKS

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Oxford Archaeological Unit was commissioned by Tesco Stores PLC to undertake a desk-top appraisal of land at and adjoining the Buckingham Arms, Longwick Road, Princes Risborough, being considered as the site for a new Tesco Stores Development. The purpose of the appraisal is to assess the archaeological and historic background to the site (*Appendix 1*) and to place these in a wider context. A wide range of published and unpublished sources, including cartographic evidence, were consulted (*Appendix 2*).
- 1.2 The Unit was also requested to attend on site during the excavation of Geotechnical test pits undertaken by Ground Explorations Ltd. Although the locations of the pits were primarily determined by geological considerations, their observation for archaeological evidence has provided a useful insight into the likelihood of archaeological levels/features existing on the site. The results of this work have been integrated, where relevant, into the following report and a fuller account appears as *Appendix 3*.

2 Topography and Geology

The site is located towards the northern limits of the historic medieval core of Princes Risborough, which lies in a hollow on chalk subsoil at the foot of the western escarpment of the Chiltern Hills. In the middle of the 19th century Princes Risborough was described as a small market town on the road from Marlow to Aylesbury with a population of 2,390 (Sheahan 1862, 188). Since the 1920s there has been considerable expansion and it has developed into a small town of almost 10,000 inhabitants.

3 Archaeological Background

- 3.1 The Buckinghamshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) has been consulted to ascertain whether there is any known archaeology within the proposed development area (4 below) or in its immediate environs (Fig. 1 and Gazetteer *Appendix 1*).
- 3.2 The parish of Princes Risborough, incorporating parts of the Vale of Aylesbury and the Chiltern hills, is comparatively rich in prehistoric remains. A number of important Neolithic and Bronze Age burial mounds and a linear earthwork of probable later prehistoric date survive in the eastern part of the parish (Wise 1991), but some distance away from the immediate study area.
- 3.3 Two prehistoric human burials (OAU Gazetteer Nos 4 and 23) have been located in recent years during building work in Princes Risborough. In addition, three

groups of Bronze Age bronze artefacts (OAU 2, 15 and 16) and two scatters of prehistoric flintwork (OAU 9 and 21) have been recorded from the general area of the town.

- 3.4 Evidence for Romano-British activity is restricted to the discovery of two isolated bronze coins (OAU 5 and 26) and a small quantity of pottery sherds, the latter found in the garden of 18, Chiltern Close in c.1966 (OAU 20). Two more substantial probable occupation sites (OAU 1 and 28) are also known, both located over 1 km to the north-east and south-east respectively from the development site.
- 3.5 The only recorded discovery of Saxon date from the immediate area is a small late Saxon bronze stirrup mount. The general paucity of evidence of Saxon settlement is, however, a common phenomenon of rural villages which have not been subjected to any major archaeological study or excavation. Therefore the apparent absence of Saxon settlement should in no way be considered as a true reflection of the probability that it may have existed in or around the later medieval village nucleus.
- 3.6 Princes Risborough is mentioned in the Domesday Book (*Riseberge*) and a small Saxon settlement undoubtedly existed beneath or very close to the present historic core (see 3.5). Throughout much of the medieval period two manors are recorded, one called the King's Manor and the other the Abbot's Manor (VCH, 264). The manorial descents are well documented by the 19th century historians such as Lipscomb (1847) and Sheahan (1862). The Abbot's manor undoubtedly correlates with the site of the building (OAU 12) known as the Manor House, but formerly called Broke or Brook House, sited to the south of the proposed development area.
- 3.7 To the south-west of the church, beneath a modern car park, is the site of one of the largest 14th century moated manorial complexes in Buckinghamshire (Reed 1979, 120) known as the Mount (OAU 7), almost certainly the site of the King's Manor (3.6). Between the years of 1346 and 1365 there are 52 entries in the Register of Edward the Black Prince to the Princes Manor at Risborough. Excavations in 1955 (Pavry and Knocker 1955-56) revealed a range of building of 13th to 17th century date.
- 3.8 The Princes Manor is also known to have possessed an important stud. A curving ditch attached to the west corner of the mount, the two arms of what have been termed a moat (OAU 6) and a bank more recently found in the garden of the Manor House (Fig. 3) may have originally enclosed a rectangular annexe containing stables and paddocks. In 1299 there is also reference to a park (OAU 8) lying near the manor house (Cantor and Hatherly 1977, 445). Although primarily stocked with deer, by the 14th century the stud farm and park were closely related. VCH suggests that the park may have survived until at least 1660 and cartographic evidence indicates that the park lay just west of the town (Fig. 1).

- 3.9 Apart from the excavations of The Mount (3.7) only a relatively small number of medieval artefacts, including an iron arrowhead (OAU 3), a decorated floor tile (OAU 24) and two groups of pottery (OAU 17 and 18), have been found either during building works in the town or from gardens.
- 3.10 A detailed study of the listed buildings is outside the scope of this assessment. The proposed development area does, however, fall within the Conservation Area Boundary (Fig. 2) which contains many buildings of architectural importance such as St Mary's Church (OAU 11), the former rectory known as "Monk's Staithe" (OAU 10) and the Market Hall (OAU 13).

4 Archaeology of the Study Area

- 4.1 The Buckinghamshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and the RCHME's National Archaeological Record (NAR) record no archaeological sites or finds within the area of the proposed development. The eastern boundary of the development fronts the eastern edge of Duke Street/Longwick Road, a route of considerable antiquity. The presence of a large surfaced car park, a public house (Buckingham Arms), an electrical sub-station, a petrol filling station and miscellaneous workshops makes it difficult to estimate the likelihood of archaeological deposits or structures having survived along the street frontage. Behind the street frontage the land is divided into two properties, a large garden now laid to poor quality grass and a plant hire yard covered with a thick deposit of modern hardcore. Inspection of the garden area shows no obvious earthworks and the ground surface is generally even and relatively level. Approximately 17 m to the west of the west side of the public house the ground rises more steeply, possibly related to the additional soil deposits of medieval or later date noted in Geotechnical Pit 4 (*Appendix 3*). Modern disturbance in the plant hire yard will have obscured any extant earthworks. However the first edition OS 25" and 6" maps of the 1880's (Fig. 4) suggests that no earthworks existed on the site.
- 4.2 A vertical aerial photograph (Ref. 106G UK 1379 4 April 46 - 4941) shows a number of possible linear earthworks (it is impossible from the scale to determine whether they are banks or ditches) running parallel with Longwick Road, in the area to the north of the development site, now occupied by Woolerton Court. Although it is difficult to determine whether these features ever extended across the proposed development site they may correlate with the feature(s) recorded in Geotechnical Pit 4 (*Appendix 3*), which also appeared to be aligned approximately north to south.
- 4.3 The western boundary of the development site backs on to a small water course, referred to as water cress beds (Fig. 5), and lies to the immediate east of the moated site (OAU 6), which may have been the western boundary of the Black Princes manorial and stud complex (3.8 above). Part of the southern edge of the site also forms the boundary with the Manor House (OAU 12). With the site's

proximity to two manor complexes it is likely that a number of outlying features or smaller structures of medieval date might have existed within the proposed development area. However, the results of the archaeological watching brief of the geotechnical test pits (*Appendix 3*), several of which (Fig. 8) were excavated near the moated site and Manor House boundary, does not support this assertion.

- 4.4 Study of the available cartographic sources is more helpful in determining the post-medieval and more recent history of the development site. The Enclosure Award of 1823 indicates that most of the site and the area now covered by Woolerton Court was a field known as *Great Cannons* owned by John Grubb Esquire of the manor (Fig. 6). The western and southern site boundaries were the same as present, and have probably remained unchanged since the medieval period. Only one large house, occupied by James Biggs, at least one outbuilding and a rectangular garden are shown along the Longwick Road frontage. The 1880's and 1920's 25" editions (Fig. 5) of the Ordnance Survey indicate that several more outbuildings had been constructed and the shape of the house had changed by the end of the 19th century. Whether the house shown on the map of 1823 had been rebuilt or only altered is impossible to establish without a more detailed search of the title deeds of the Buckingham Arms Public house. Since no pre-19th century maps of this part of Princes Risborough are known it is also impossible to establish the age of the house shown on the Enclosure map of 1823.
- 4.5 Trade directories of 1831-32 (Pigot's), 1842 (Pigot's), 1847 (Post Office) and 1850 (Slater's) contain no reference of the Buckingham Arms, and it is first mentioned in Kelly's directory of 1869 under the ownership of Thomas Syred. Whether this building is the same as that shown on the map of 1823 is uncertain, but the position of the first Buckingham Arms is clearly marked on the 1920's 25" OS map (Fig. 5). This building (Fig. 7) was demolished in 1938 and replaced by the modern public house, built slightly north of the earlier structure and set back further from the road. It is recorded that parts of the foundations and cellars of the previous public house were recently revealed during road works (MacFarlane 1984, 7).

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 With its proximity to the outer enclosure of the Black Princes Manor/Stud Farm, and to Brook Manor House it is only reasonable to assume that some medieval activity may have occurred within the development site. Furthermore, although there is no documentary or cartographic evidence to indicate there was medieval occupation of the street frontage, this must also be considered as a possibility. The site is, however, located towards the recorded northern limits of the town's historic core and any occupation may have been of limited duration.
- 5.2 While further evaluation of the eastern side of the site might seem to be the logical progression from this desk-top assessment, two points should be noted. Firstly, the construction of the two Buckingham Arms public houses, the

electricity sub-station, the filling station (including the underground petrol tanks) and the workshops and garages is likely to have significantly damaged or destroyed any archaeological structures or deposits. Secondly, were further evaluation proposed, the logistical problems of trenching in and around the standing structures probably outweighs the likely return of archaeological information.

- 5.3 The watching brief of the geotechnical pits (*Appendix 3*) has indicated that the general level of archaeological activity on the site is low. Apart from the NW corner of the site and the street frontage the test pits have provided a representative coverage of the site. The medieval or later boundaries or disturbance noted in Pit 4 were the only likely archaeological features noted. Finds, other than the modern material, were notably lacking from the area.
- 5.4 The discovery of a shallow buried soil in Pit 4 (*Appendix 3*) dating to the late glacial period, although of possible geological interest, is of little archaeological significance unless associated with traces of human activity.
- 5.5 The development brief (September 1993), prepared by Wycombe District Council Planning and Development Department, makes reference to the possibility that the site could be enlarged to the south-west over the water course and part of the adjacent moat. However, this would have serious implications to the archaeology of the moated site (OAU 6), which may be part of the more extensive Black Princes Manor complex. Were this proposal to be pursued another archaeological assessment (in addition to those outlined in 6 below) would undoubtedly be required by the County Archaeologist before any planning application is considered.

APPENDIX 1

GAZETTEER OF CULTURAL HERITAGE FEATURES

<i>OAU No.</i>	<i>SMR No.</i>	<i>Grid Ref. (SP)</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	2142	81450412	Possible enclosure recorded in association with Roman pottery and brick/tile in c.1933. Nothing visible on Aerial Photographs.
2	0984	813041	Late Bronze Age copper-alloy chisel or knife found c.1932.
3	0977	808039	Medieval iron barbed and tanged arrowhead found c.1992.
4	5834	8138503757	Fragmentary remains of probable prehistoric inhumation, found in rear garden of 28 Crossfield Road in 1992.
5	0396	80750375	Roman bronze coin of <i>Constans</i> found in rear garden of Police Station in 1963.
6	0390	80610362	Two arms of ? medieval moat - may be part of 7 (below). A 1m high bank in the orchard of 12 (below) to the south-east may also be a continuation of this earthwork.
7	0389	80530345	Moated site known as the 'Mount', thought to have contained the palace of Edward the Black Prince. Excavations in 1955 (Pavry and Klocker) revealed several substantial stone buildings. Additional earthworks to the north (6) may have enclosed the stables for the Prince's Stud. Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 4 (Bucks).
8	0982	?802036	Documentary reference to a Medieval Park, lying near the Manor House (7). Recorded field names suggested that the park lay to the west of the Manor and Church.
9	0494	801035	Group of prehistoric worked flints found 1950's.
10	2082	80580353	17th-century building, containing parts of an earlier structure. Formerly the rectory now known as 'Monks Staithe'.
11	0990	80600349	St. Mary's Church. An earlier church probably existed on the site to which aisles were added in the 13th century.
12	0976	80650352	17th-century manor house incorporating earlier features - Listed Building Grade II (National Trust Property).

13	0984	80740350	Red brick Market Hall rebuilt in 1824.
14	5646	80790353	19th-century brewery included in local trade directories.
15	0975	803034	Middle Bronze Age bronze spearhead and fragments of 14th-century tile.
16	0395	80660326	Two Bronze Age bronze socketed axes found in 1933/34.
17	0493	80830328	Small quantity of medieval pottery sherds found in garden of Jasmin Cottage between 1940 and 1956.
18	0422	80710323	Quantity of medieval pottery found during excavation of foundations for British Legion Hall in 1950.
19	5583	80940322	Baptist chapel and burial grounds established c.1701. Meeting house erected 1707, superseded in 1804-5 by present building.
20	0974	80640314	Small quantity of Romano-British pottery sherds found c.1966 in garden of 18 Chiltern Close.
21	0495	810031	Four Neolithic flint flakes found on field surface in 1950's.
22	4324	811031	Post-medieval windmill.
23	5236	8082002876	Human skeleton, buried in crouched position in a shallow grave, dug into the natural chalk. Found during pipe laying in rear garden of 35 Clifford Road. Thought to date to late Neolithic or early Bronze Age (Farley and Browne 1983).
24	0989	80480284	Late medieval decorated floor tile found 1925 in garden of Hillcrest, Wycombe Road.
25	5937	80780278	Saxon triangular copper-alloy stirrup mount.
26	5937	80400275	Roman bronze coin of Vespasian found 1977 during construction of garage of 8 Poppy Road.
27	2856	80180259	Medieval/post-medieval watermill.
28	0397	81100245	Roman settlement located by trenching in 1932.

APPENDIX 2

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Estate map of 1728 - Land purchased by William Gomme in Princes Risborough (Bucks C.R.O. ref. D99/67/2).

Enclosure Award map of 1821 showing the main roads (Bucks C.R.O. ref. IR/22.2.R).

Enclosure Award map of 1823 (Bucks C.R.O. ref. IR/87.Q).

Map of the estate belonging to John Grubbe c.1823 (Bucks C.R.O. ref. Ma 257 R).

A. Bryant's map of the County of Buckingham from actual Survey 1824 (published 1825)

Ordnance Survey 6" First edition 1885.

Ordnance Survey 25" First edition 1885.

Ordnance Survey 25" 1921 edition.

APPENDIX 3

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF OF GEOTECHNICAL TEST PITS

Introduction

In addition to preparing the desk top appraisal of the proposed development site, the Oxford Archaeological Unit was also requested to be present during the excavation of geotechnical pits. The pits were excavated by Ground Explorations Ltd subcontracted to Scott-White and Hookins, consulting engineers.

The Pits

It was originally proposed that eight pits were to be dug (Fig. 8). However, at the request of Mr Arthur Andrews, the occupier of the plant hire yard, Pit 6 was not excavated and Pits 5, 7 and 8 were relocated to minimise disruption to his business. Pit 2 also had to be resited to the rear of the car park, because much of the parking area was being used by market traders.

The seven pits (Fig. 8), were excavated by a JCB 3cx using a 0.60 m wide toothed bucket. Each pit, dug to a maximum depth of 3.5 m, averaged 2.0 m long. Pit 4 was extended to 5.0 m long, at the request of the archaeologist in attendance, to investigate a possible archaeological anomaly.

The pits were initially excavated to approximately 1.5 m deep under the supervision of Mr Robert Leonard of Ground Explorations Ltd. Where possible one side of each pit was rapidly cleaned by hand using a small trowel to determine if any archaeological layers or cut features were visible. Where appropriate the resulting stratigraphy was drawn (Fig. 9) and photographed. On completion of the archaeological recording each pit was deepened for geological sampling and then backfilled.

The work was carried out over a single day (22 April 1994). The weather was fine and the ground conditions generally dry. Neither is considered to have adversely affected the visibility and subsequent interpretation of the archaeology.

The following is a brief summary of the main discoveries. A more detailed description of Pit 4 appears in the site archive.

Pit 1

This pit was repositioned c.13 m to the south-west of its intended position to investigate a small concrete slab visible on the ground surface. An initial trench disturbed a deposit of modern refuse and was rapidly flooded when a tubular ceramic land drain was damaged. A new trench, excavated 1 m to the north, revealed a 0.3 m thick dark grey crumbly loam topsoil over a light grey soliflucted chalk of geological origin. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were noted. The concrete slab was partially removed and was found to have been the base of a modern shed.

Pit 2

Resited to the extreme rear of the car park, this trench revealed a series of redeposited layers, of probable post-medieval and modern origin containing much burnt matter and mortar, sealing the original buried soil (Fig. 9). The upper surface of the soliflucted chalk, of identical composition to that in Pit 1, was encountered at a depth of 1.10 m below the modern ground surface.

Pit 3

This trench revealed a 0.28 m thick crumbly dark grey loamy topsoil immediately above the soliflucted chalk with a very clear division between. No archaeological features or artefacts were noted.

Pit 4

The initial 2.0 m long trench was extended in both directions to 5.0 m long to investigate a deep silty loam deposit of possible medieval origin. The trench was excavated transversely across a slight slope which appeared to form a boundary between the small garden to the immediate west of the public house and the much larger garden backing on to the stream. A very thin loamy topsoil (Fig. 9 - Layer 1) sealed a layer of redeposited weathered chalk (Layer 2). Towards the west end of the trench the redeposited chalk was thicker and lay above a lens of redeposited grey clay (Layer 9). The layer of chalk and clay sealed a much thicker deposit of grey silty loam (Layers 3 and 4). Both layers contained fragments of animal bone. The upper layer (3) contained fragments of red ceramic roof tile (of the pegged type) and a pottery sherd of probable late medieval date (c.14th to 15th century). A single pottery sherd of 12th or 13th century date was found at a greater depth in Layer 4. Apart from a slight distinction in colour between Layers 3 and 4 (4 being slightly lighter than 3) there was no other obvious stratigraphy, with the entire deposit being relatively similar in consistency. The configuration of the base of Layer 4 indicates that it may have formed either as a series of silted up linear ditch cuts, or as an area of more irregular pitting/ground disturbance. The homogeneity of the deposit would appear to support the latter supposition. Although difficult to be confident in its interpretation, the crumbly dark grey topsoil, found across the rest of the site, was just visible (Layer 10) in the west side of the trench sealed by Layers 3/4.

The grey silty loam of possible medieval or even later origin sealed soliflucted chalk of similar type to that noted elsewhere on the site. However, between the light grey chalk (Layer 5/7) and the slightly greener chalk (Layer 8) was a thin horizon (Layer 6) of dark brown highly mineralised semi-peat. A brief examination of Layers 5/7, 6 and 8 by Dr Mark Robinson has suggested that Layer 6 represents a buried soil formation of the Late Devensian Allerod interstadial, sealed between solifluxion layers of Devensian *zone III* and *zone I*, above and below respectively. The soil was formed c. 12,000 years ago during a period of climatic amelioration sufficient for continuous vegetation cover to have formed.

Pit 5

Approximately 0.4 m of modern hardcore sealed a 0.12 m thick lens of medium grey clay which extended across the trench, sloping from north to south. This layer contained fragments of modern glass and brick and sealed undisturbed soliflucted chalk.

Pit 6

Not excavated

Pit 7

Undisturbed soliflucted chalk was encountered at 0.82 m below the ground surface. A 0.57 m thick layer of modern hardcore lay above a 0.25 m thick buried topsoil. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were noted.

Pit 8

Identical stratigraphy to Pit 7. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were noted.

Conclusion

With the exception of Pit 4, the other six pits were totally devoid of any visible archaeological deposits or artefacts. In addition several foundation trenches, excavated some years ago in the south-west corner of the plant yard (Fig. 8), were also inspected. Although heavily weathered the interface between the chalk and the buried soil beneath the hardcore was clearly visible but no traces of earlier deposits were evident.

Full interpretation of the archaeological deposits recorded in Pit 4 would have required considerable extension of the trench in both directions, which was outside the brief. While the ground level rose from west to east across the site the geological deposits remained level, as indicated by Layer 6 in Pit 4 and the depth of the chalk in Pit 2. This may indicate that the eastern side of the site towards the street frontage had been artificially raised. Since no pits were excavated through the public house car park or in the area of the modern garage and workshops to the south it is impossible to determine the extent of the made-up ground.

Whether the build up of silty loam in Pit 4 was an intentional attempt to raise the ground level, or whether it resulted from the silting up of disturbed areas, or even the amalgamation of the fills of a number of earlier linear ditches is impossible to establish from the limited evidence available. The small amount of dating evidence suggests that it is no earlier than medieval and quite probably considerably later.

The discovery of a late glacial buried soil probably dating to the Allerod interstadial, although of geological interest, is unlikely to be archaeologically significant. Since it was only visible in Pit 4 its survival must in any case be very localised.

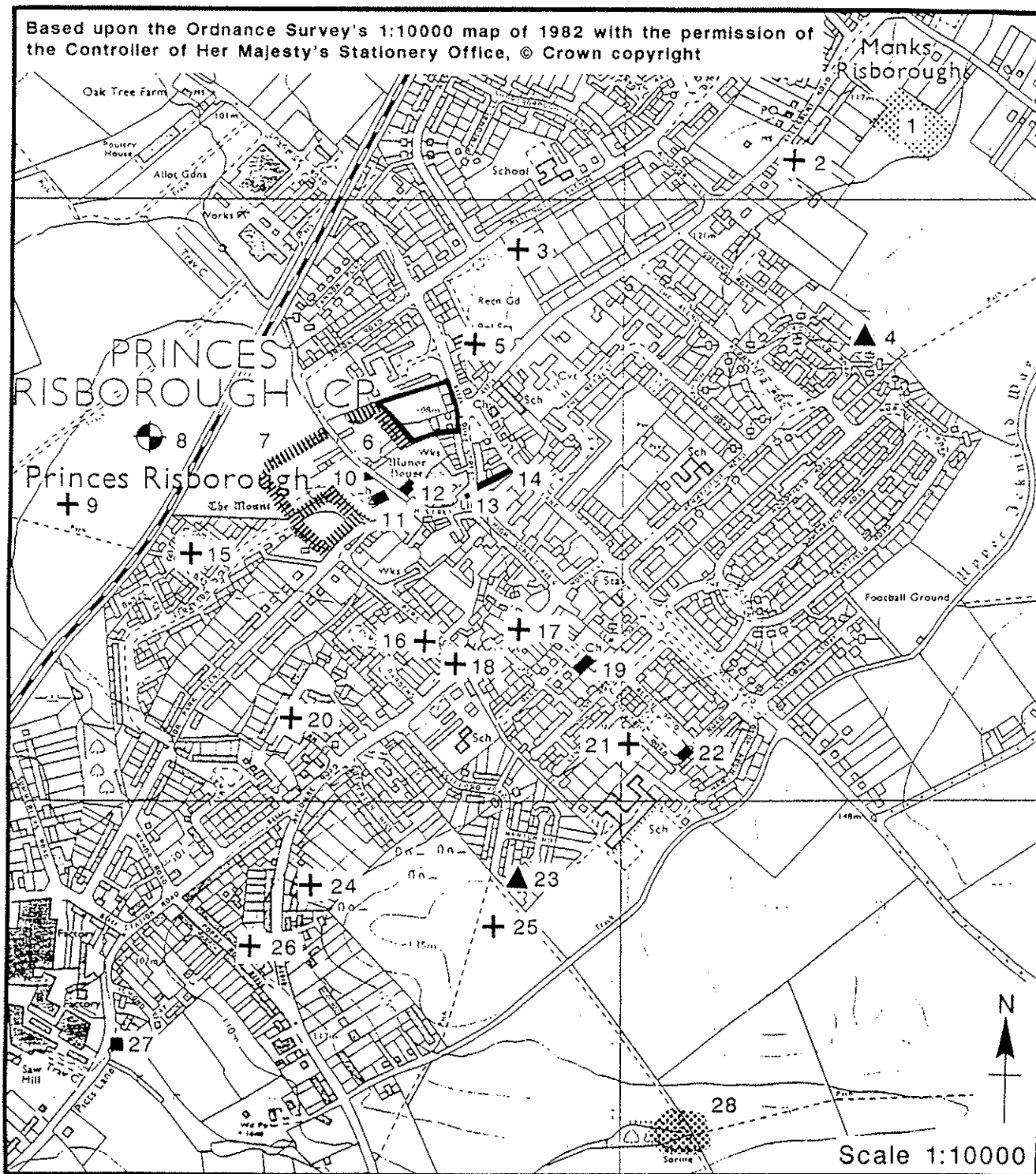
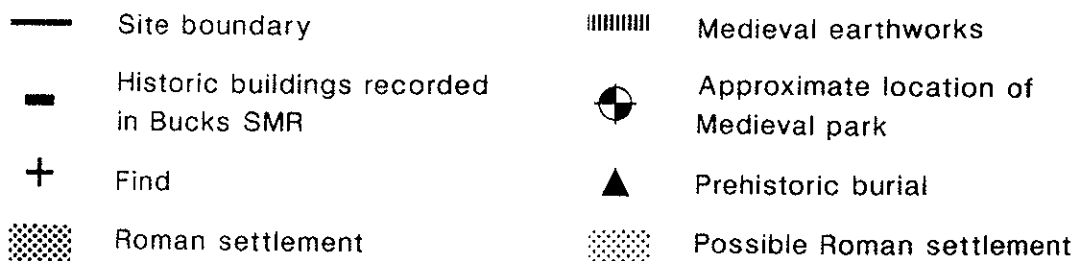


figure 1 Cultural Heritage Features of the Study Area



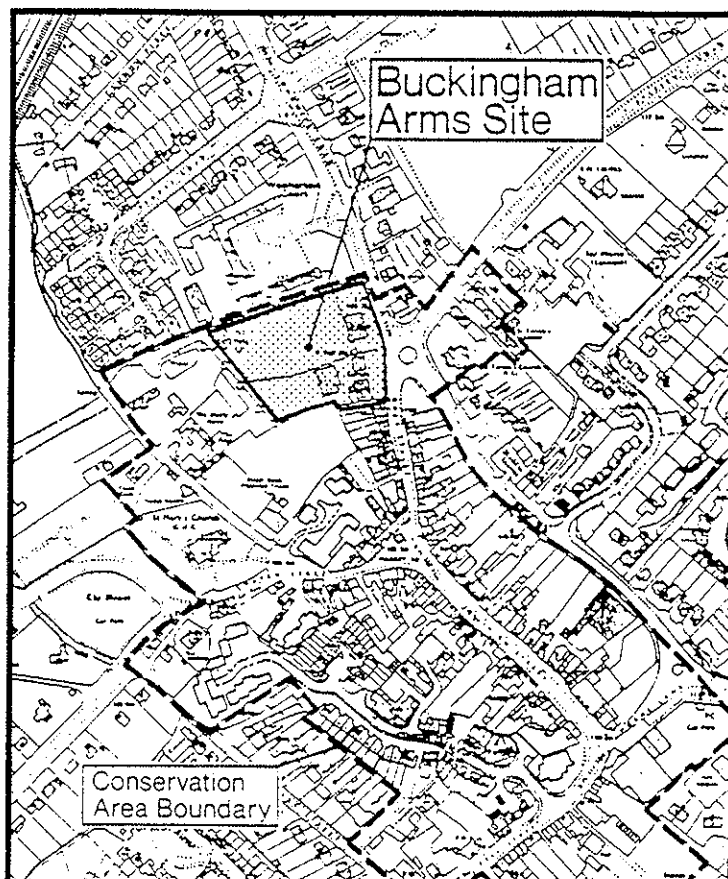


figure 2
Site location plan showing
Conservation Area Boundary

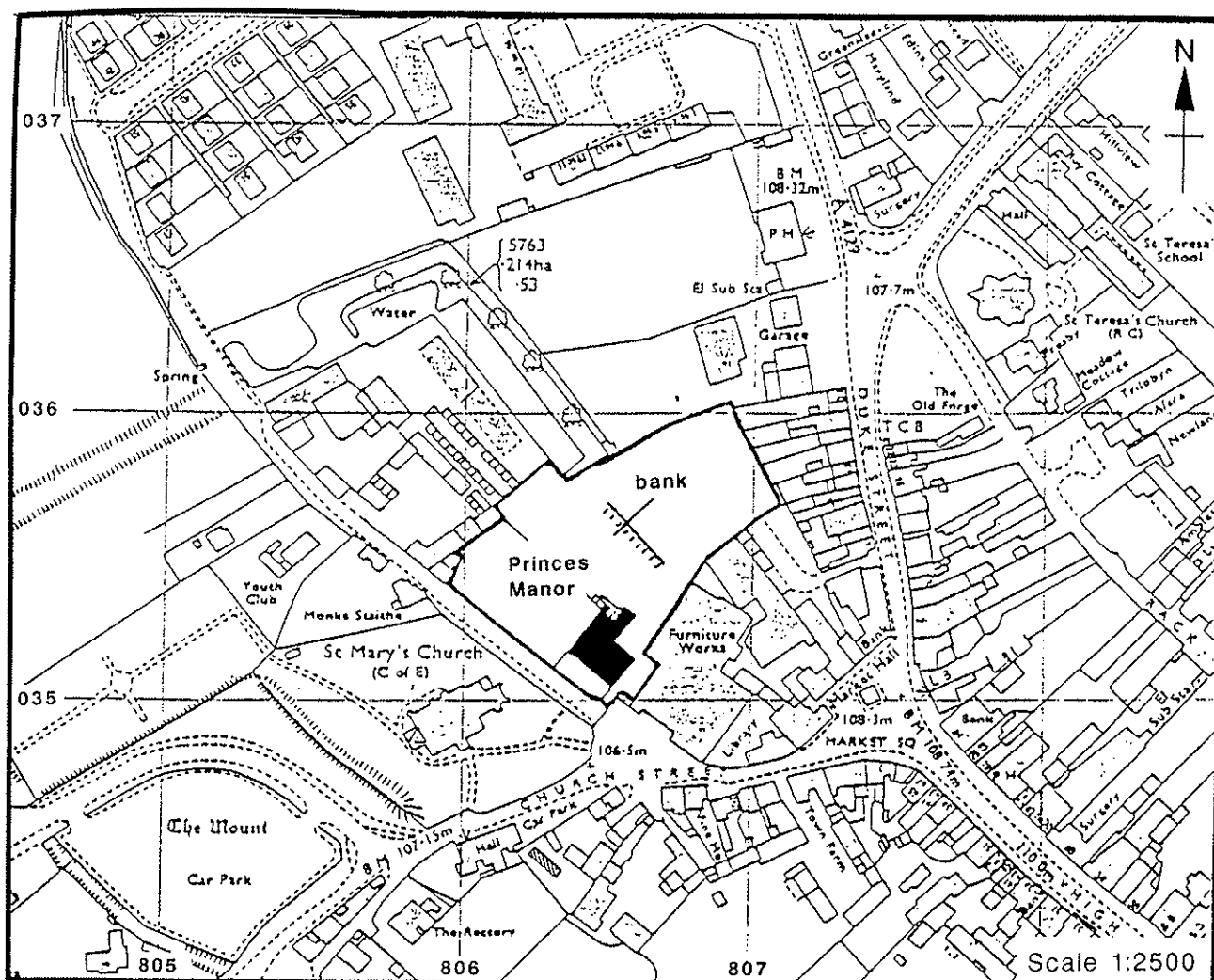


figure 3 Modern OS map showing the ditched northern annexe of the Princes Manor

figure 4 OS 6" map of 1885 showing the site in relation to the historic nucleus of the village prior to modern expansion

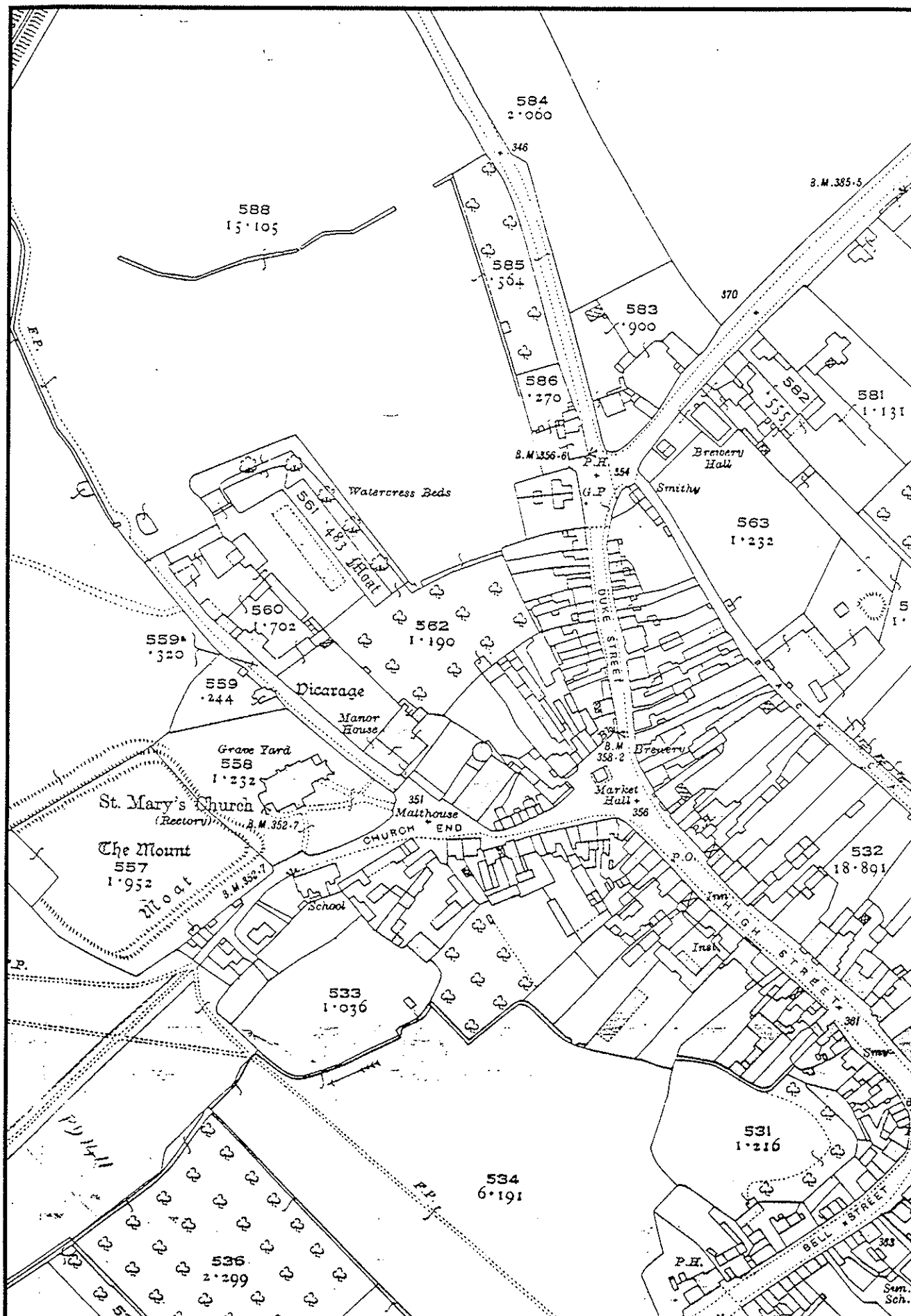


figure 5 OS 25" map of the 1920's showing the site of the first Buckingham Arms

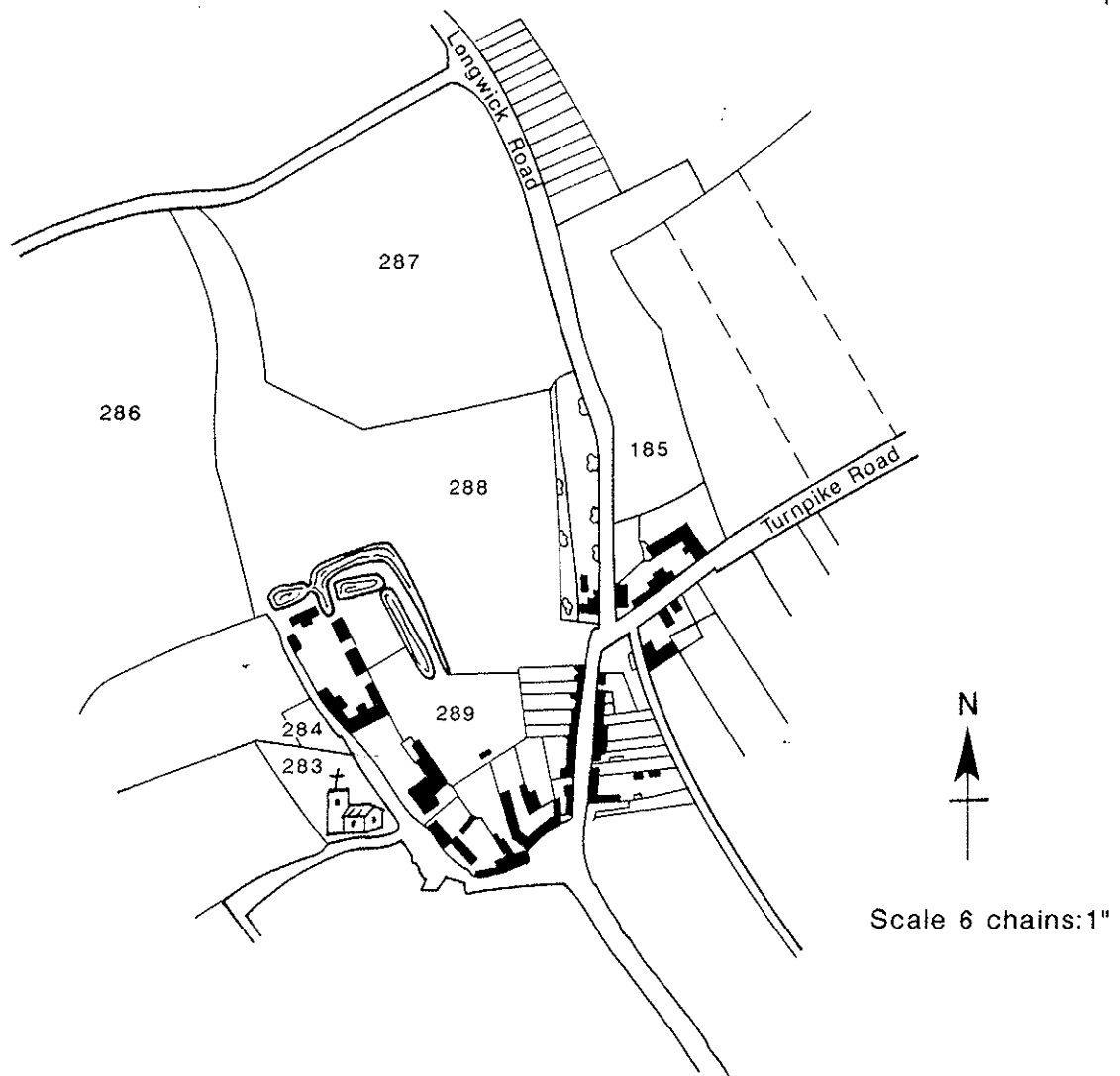


figure 6 Tracing of part of the 1823 Enclosure Award map

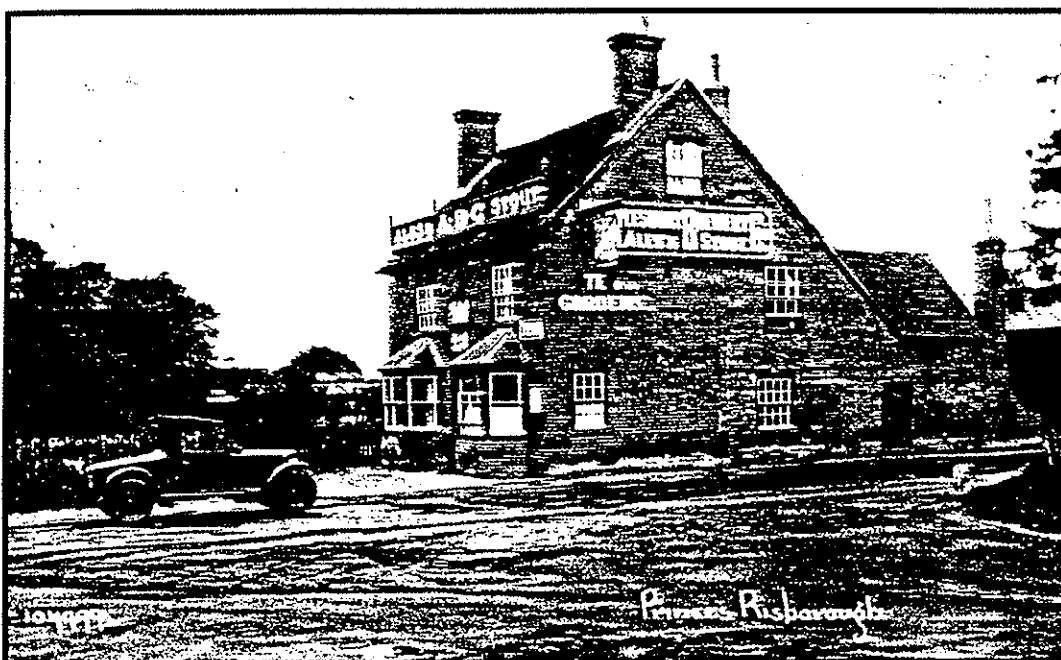


figure 7 Photograph of the first Buckingham Arms taken c. 1920's

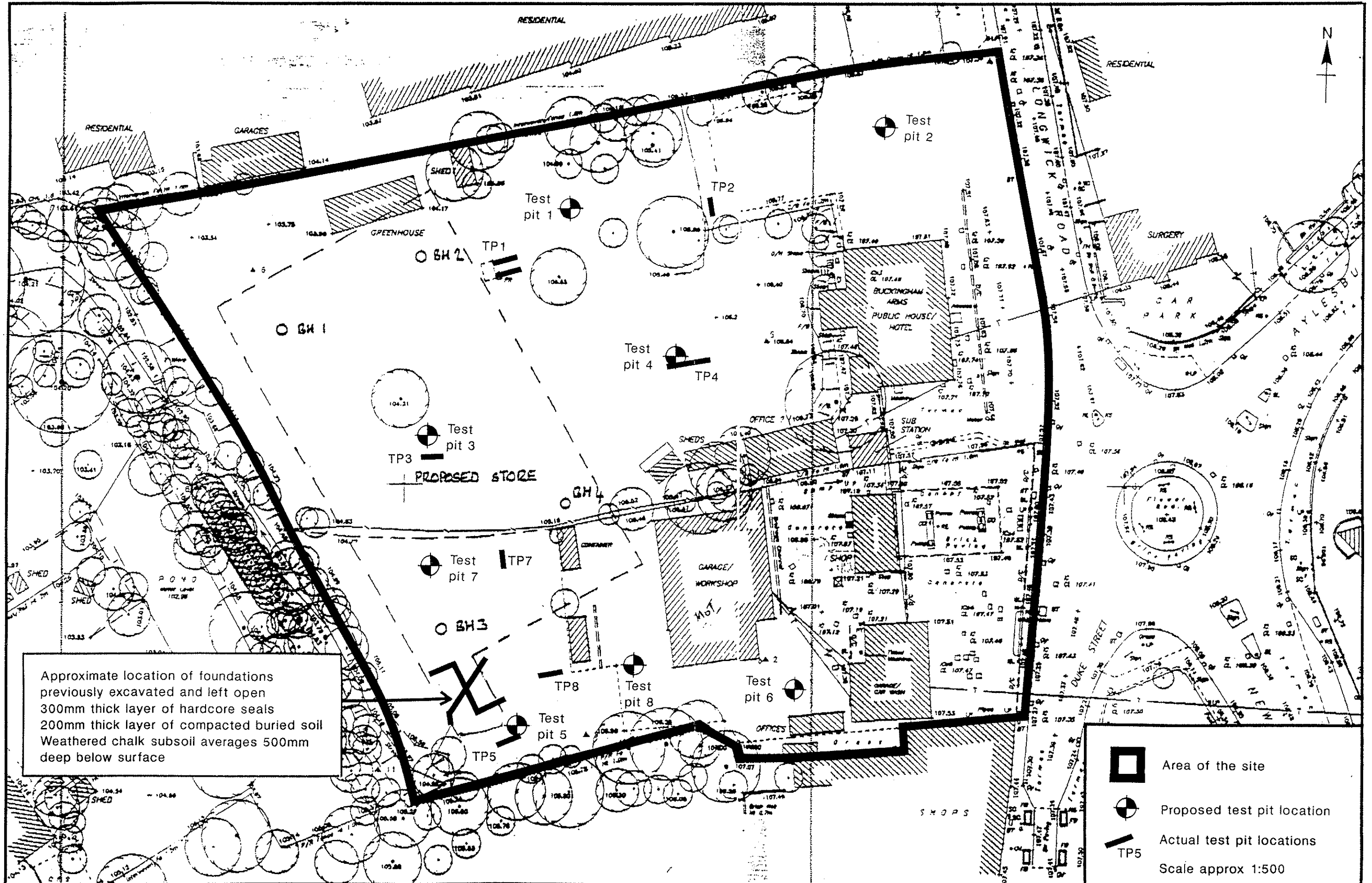
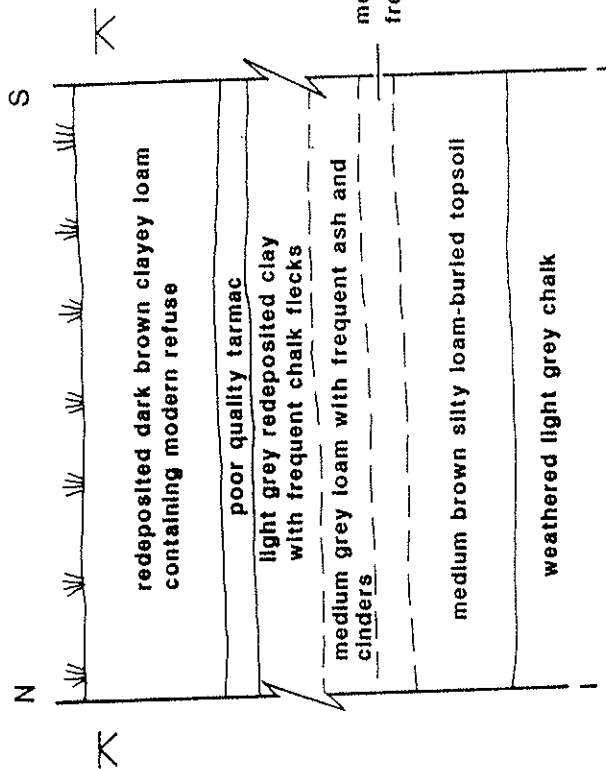
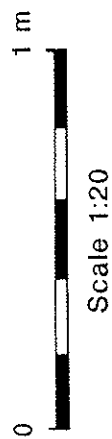
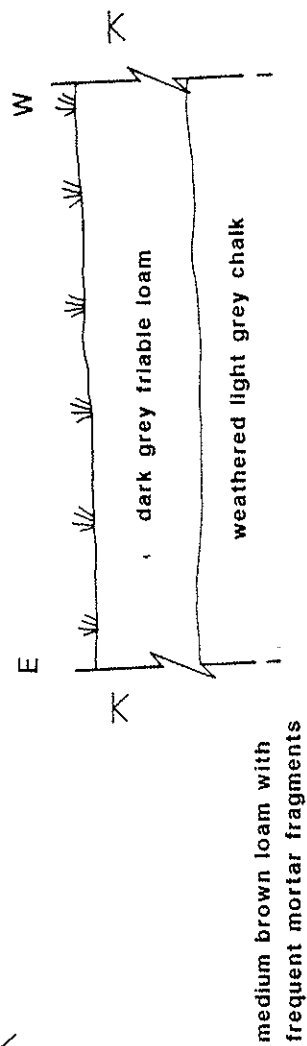


figure 8 Location of geotechnical test pits

Test pit 2



Test pit 3



Test pit 4

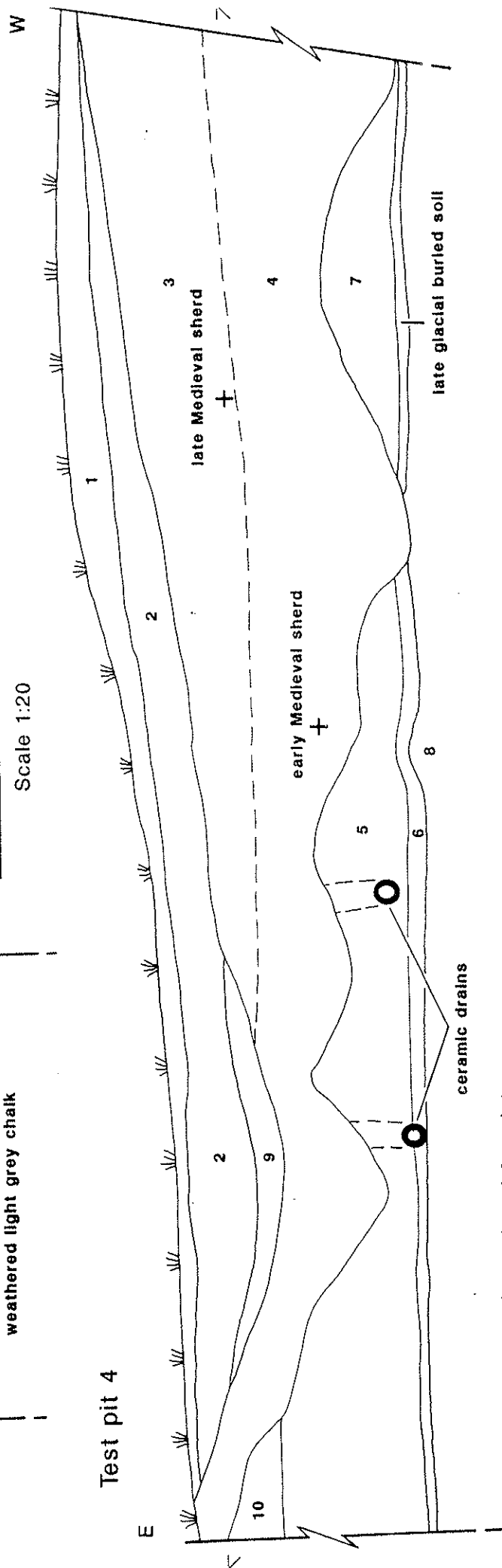


figure 9 Sections of trenches 2,3 and 4