

ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD OFFICE  
FULBOURN COMMUNITY CENTRE  
HAGGERS HALL, FULBOURN  
CAMSPURH, CE1 5HD Tel: 881614  
(Fax 881676)

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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ASSESSMENT  
AT  
MACHINE BARN FARM  
LONGSTANTON**

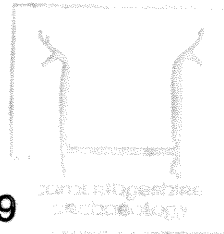
**JUNE 1991**

**by Gerald A Wait BA MA DPhil AIFA**



Cambridgeshire  
County Council

Rural Strategy



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ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD OFFICE  
COMMUNITY CENTRE  
MILTON  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE CB24 0JN  
Tel: 881614  
(Fax 881670)

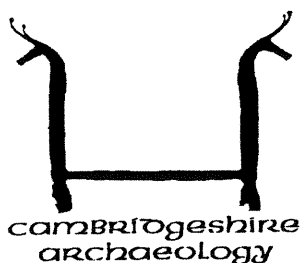
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Property Department  
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Castle Hill  
Cambridge CB3 0AP  
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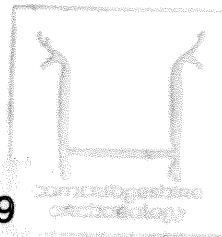
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*Report No 25*





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ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD OFFICE  
FULBURN COMMUNITY CENTRE  
HAGG'S GAP, FULBURN  
CAMBRIDGE CB1 5HD Tel: 881614  
(Fax 821670)

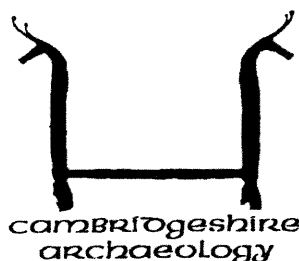
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AT  
LONGSTANTON, MACHINE BARN FARM 1991**

**June 1991**

**Gerald A Wait BA MA DPhil AIFA  
Archaeology Section  
Department of Property  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
Shire Hall  
Cambridge**

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AT LONGSTANTON MACHINE BARN FARM

TL 403 / 658

## ABSTRACT

A small archaeological assessment by trial trench excavation was carried out at Machine Barn Farm, Longstanton, in compliance with a condition of the planning permission for the site. The work was funded by T G Building Services. Limited archaeological features were recorded, apparently dating to the post-medieval period.

## INTRODUCTION

The presence of a thirteenth century church, and documentary references to three closely sited medieval manors, adjacent to a site proposed for development led the County archaeology office to request an archaeological assessment prior to determination by South Cambridgeshire District Council Planning Department. A planning condition requiring an archaeological assessment was made by the District Council. This work was commissioned by T G Building Services and carried out by the County's Archaeology Section in June 1991. The site finds and archive are held by the Cambridgeshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record.

## BACKGROUND

The village of Longstanton lies largely on fen-edge gravels ( BGS drift and solid geology). Information from local builders indicates a more complicated local stratigraphy, with bands of the underlying Gault clay protruding through the gravel.

The historical documentation for Longstanton is summarised in the VCH (Cambs vol IX, 1989, 220-37). Longstanton was a bi-focal village, with each focus oriented around the two medieval churches, each incorporating manorial holdings. At least eight major manors or landholdings are discussed. Four of the manors can be approximately located on the ground; one (the Cheney's manor) to the northwest of Longstanton All Saints church, and the other three (the two Colville manors and the "French Ladies Manor") around Longstanton St Michaels church. Further to the south of the site investigated lies the site of the so-called Bishops Palace - this is an incorrect interpretation of a reference to a dinner given to Queen Elizabeth I by Bishop Cox of Ely in 1564, which actually occurred at Bishop Cox's private house at Fenstanton (information held by

CCC Sites and Monuments Record). The site marked on some maps and replicated by the Ordnance Survey may nonetheless represent one of the manors mentioned above.

The church of St Michaels (now redundant) located immediately to the east of the site investigated (Figure 1) is mostly of thirteenth century date. The west front with its massive buttresses is most impressive, and it's thatched roof reaches unusually far down the walls resulting in small windows. The chancel (correctly rebuilt 1884) has lancet windows along the sides and a group of three stepped lancets at the east end.

## STRATEGY

The assessment undertaken was by trial trenching and limited earthwork survey (see Figures 2 - 5). The location of the trial trenches was constrained by the positions of the standing buildings, and also by the positions of the proposed buildings, so that their foundations should not be prejudiced. Five small trenches (Figure 2) were excavated down to subsoil by a Kubota mini-digger and thereafter archaeological features excavated by hand. Plans, sections, and photographs were recorded, and a small finds collection made.

During the fieldwork the presence of adjacent earthworks, previously unknown, were noted by the Assistant County Archaeologist, and as some were to be affected by the proposed development a limited earthwork survey was also made (Figure 5, discussed below).

## RESULTS

The five trial trenches excavated are detailed as follows.

### Trench I

Grid Ref TL 40328/65856 to 40333/65861, 5.50 x 0.80 metres.

Placed to investigate the possibility of burials associated with the Church of St Michaels extending into this area.

No archaeological features observed, natural a yellow orange clayey gravel.

Finds 7 and 10, consisting of post-medieval glass and pottery, mostly of the 19th century.

### Trench II

Grid Ref TL 40339/65851 to 40342/65846, 4.0 x 0.80 metres.

One archaeological feature identified, context 3, a 20th century yard surface of gravel. Overlay yellow orange clayey gravel.

No finds.

### Trench III

Grid Ref TL 40341/65832 to 40344/65827, L-shaped 7.0 x 0.80 metres.

Archaeological features (see Fig 3):

4, a small gully of unknown length, about 0.40m wide, contains medieval pottery, small and abraded (Finds 1).

5, a large ditch about 1.60 metres wide and 0.95 m deep. Contained a burial of a sheep/dog of recent date (Find 8) in the upper layers, and medieval pottery, again small and abraded sherds (Finds 2) in lower fill.

6, a small posthole ca. 0.40 m diameter and 1.20 m deep, contained medieval pottery, again small and abraded sherds (Finds 3).

Natural as above.

### Trench IV

Grid Ref TL 40363/65863 to 40366/65857, 6.0 x 0.80 metres.

No archaeological features, natural as above.

### Trench V

Grid Ref TL 40355/65819 to 40364/65823, 7.60 x 0.80 metres.

Eight archaeological layers of an feature of unknown nature excavated (see Figure 4). Layer 5 contained 19th century brick (Finds 4), layer 7 contained 17th century glass (identified by J Ette) and fragments of animal bones, Finds 6 and 5 respectively.

### Earthwork Survey.

This was conducted on the areas affected and adjacent to the proposed development, see Figure 5. This includes additional information on the adjacent ridge and furrow recorded in the SMR as number 09923, and also entirely new ridge and furrow earthworks, as well as headlands and other traces disturbed by the modern farmyard occupation, all seemingly associated with an earlier, medieval use of the land.

## CONCLUSIONS

The gully, ditch and posthole (features 4 - 6) in Trench III indicate at least some medieval occupation of the site, Unfortunately the finds are insufficient to elaborate on the nature of the occupation. The layers excavated in Trench V represent either a late medieval or post-medieval phase of usage. These layers are the filling of some very large hollow or feature (no side was located) which can be dated by the finds of brick and glass from well stratified locations. It is suggested that this large hollow is a farm pond, deliberately filled on several occasions ( layers 3, 5 (dated to the 18-19th century by brickwork) and 7 (dated 17th century by bottle glass)) separated by phases of use as a pond represented by the more alluvial layers 4, 6 and 8 (see section drawing, Figure 4).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The archaeological assessment undertaken was of the most minimal nature, but some general conclusions are valid. The archaeological features and finds recorded do not suggest a very intense level of occupation prior to the post-medieval period. The adjacent earthworks of medieval farming (the ridge and furrow, and headlands) would tend to confirm that this area was intermediate between the St Michael's medieval village focus of Longstanton and the medieval agricultural fields. Further excavations on this site would seem to be unlikely to result in sufficient new information to justify the expenses. If convenient a watching brief could be maintained during the excavations of foundation and service trenches during development.

Gerald Wait  
10 July 1991



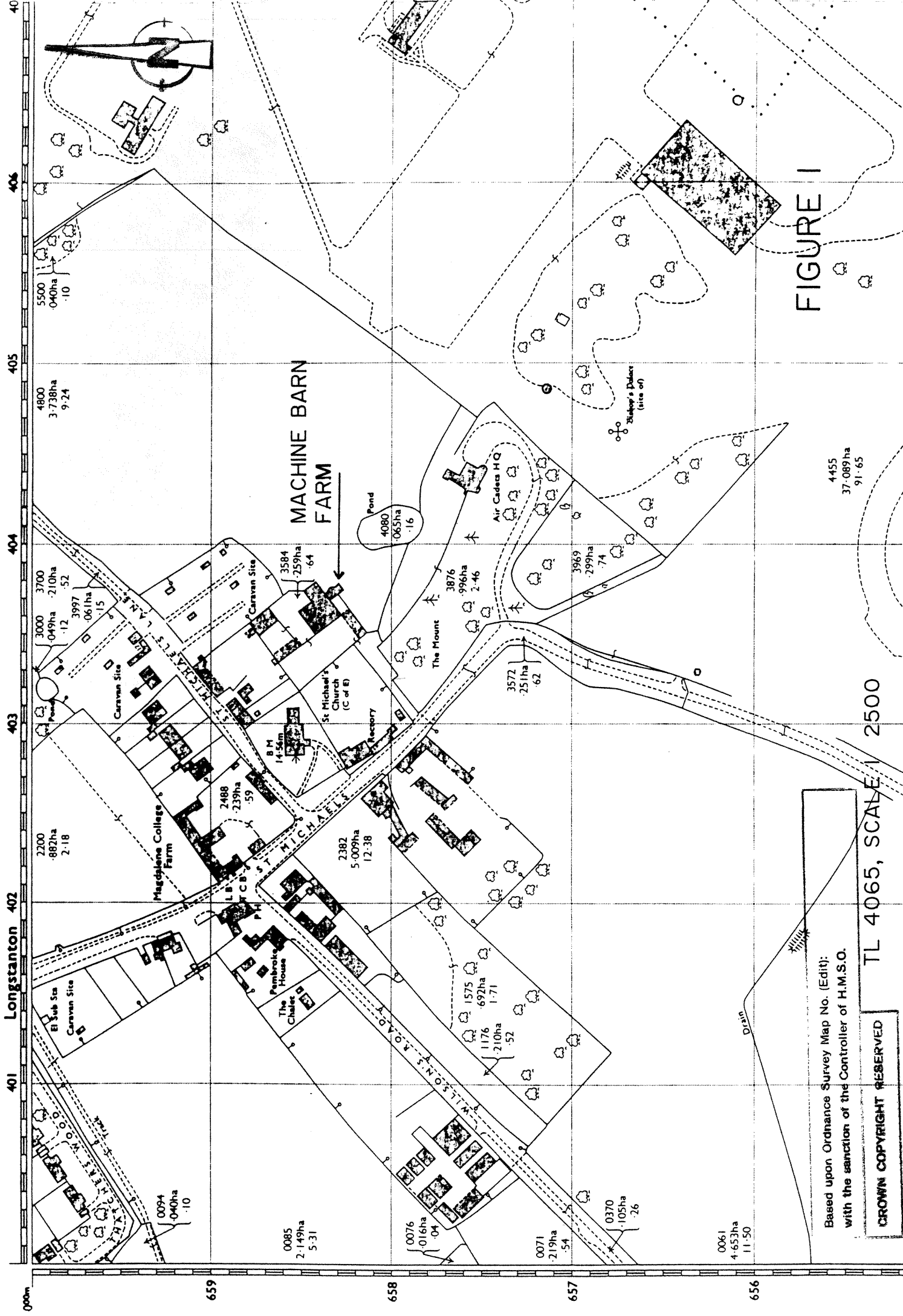


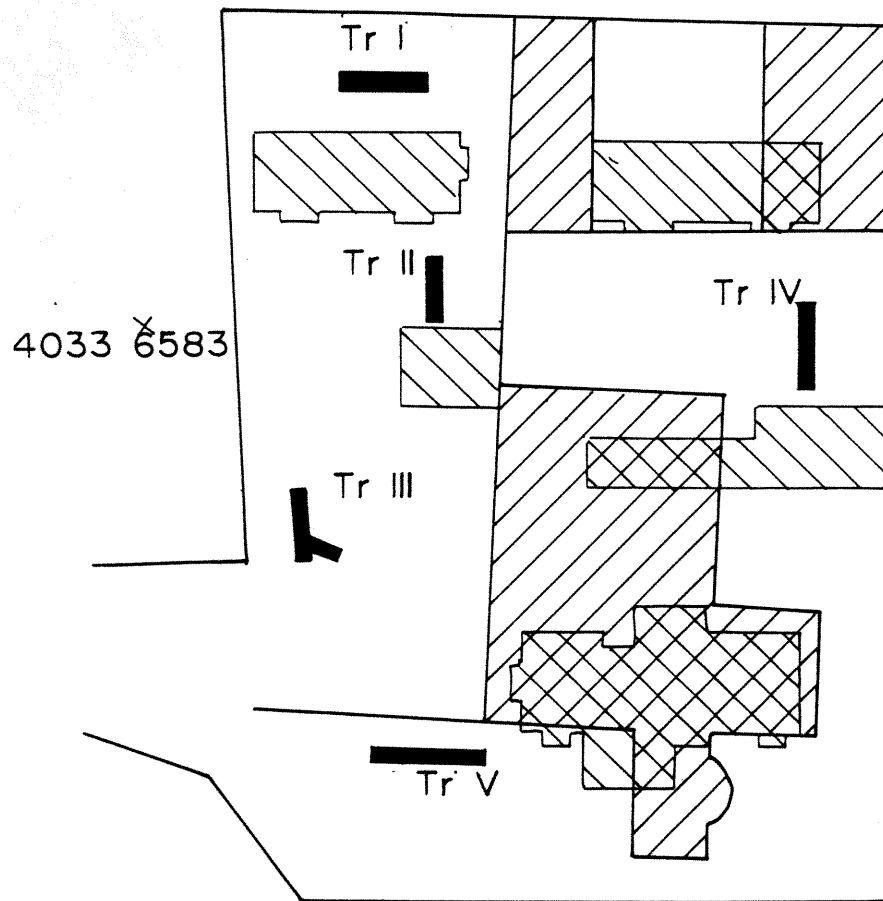
FIGURE I



Based upon Ordnance Survey Map No. (Edit):  
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TL 4065, SCALE 1:2500

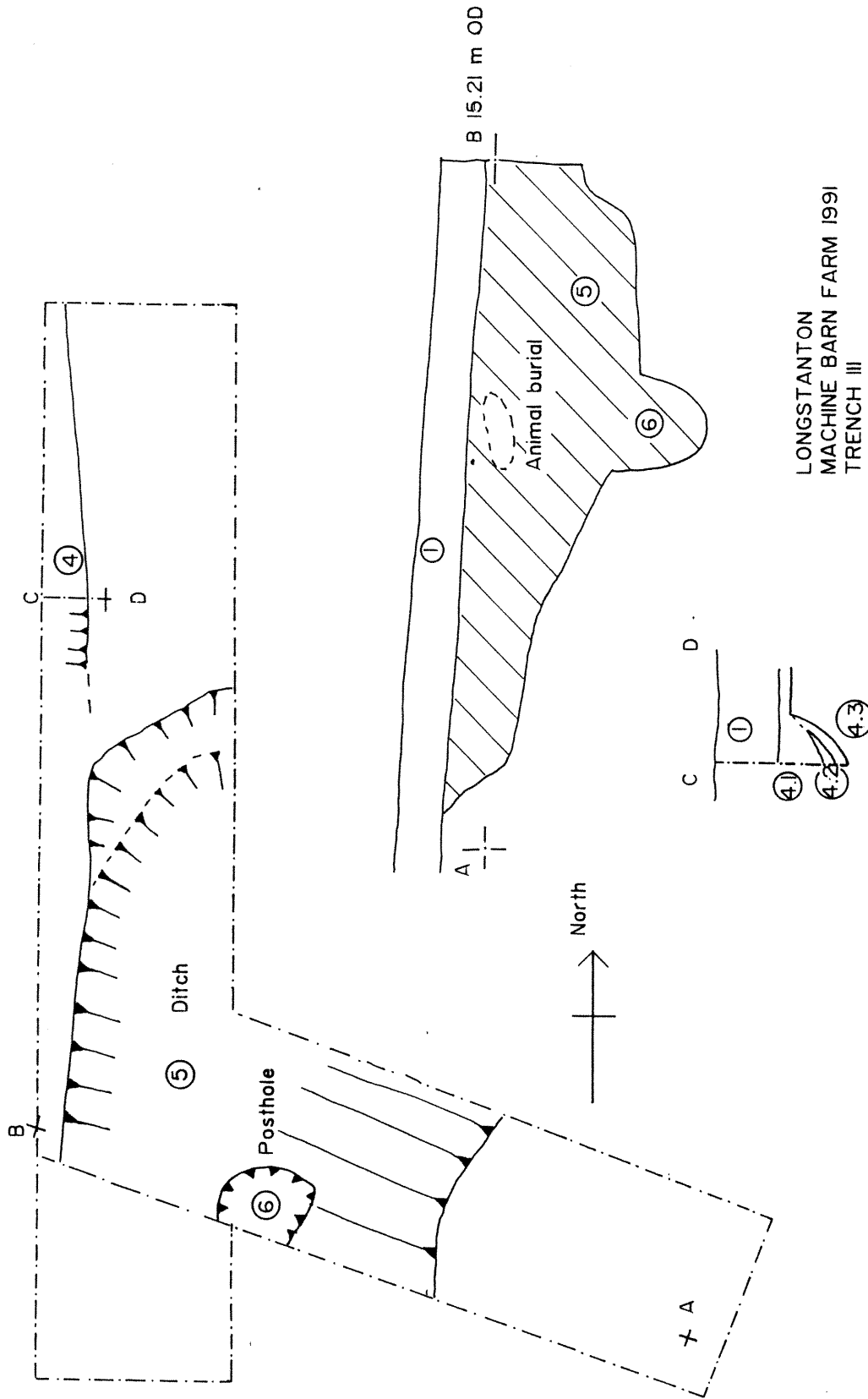
LONGSTANTON  
MACHINE BARN FARM 1991



Standing buildings   
Proposed buildings 

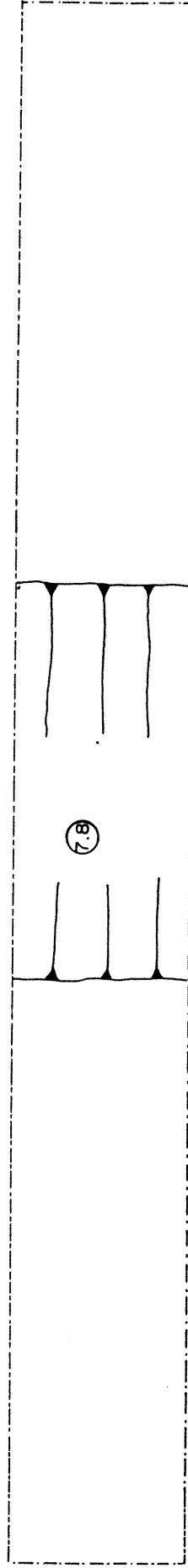
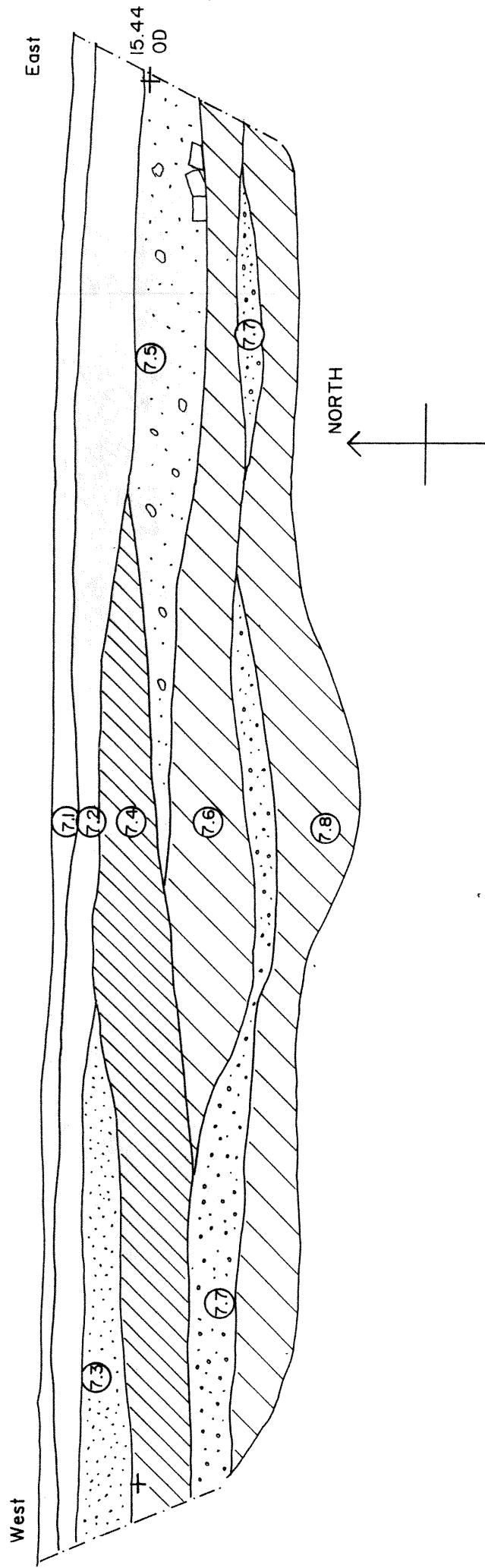
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FIGURE 2



LONGSTANTON  
MACHINE BARN FARM 1991  
TRENCH III

FIGURE 3



LONGSTANTON  
MACHINE BARN FARM 1991  
FIGURE 4

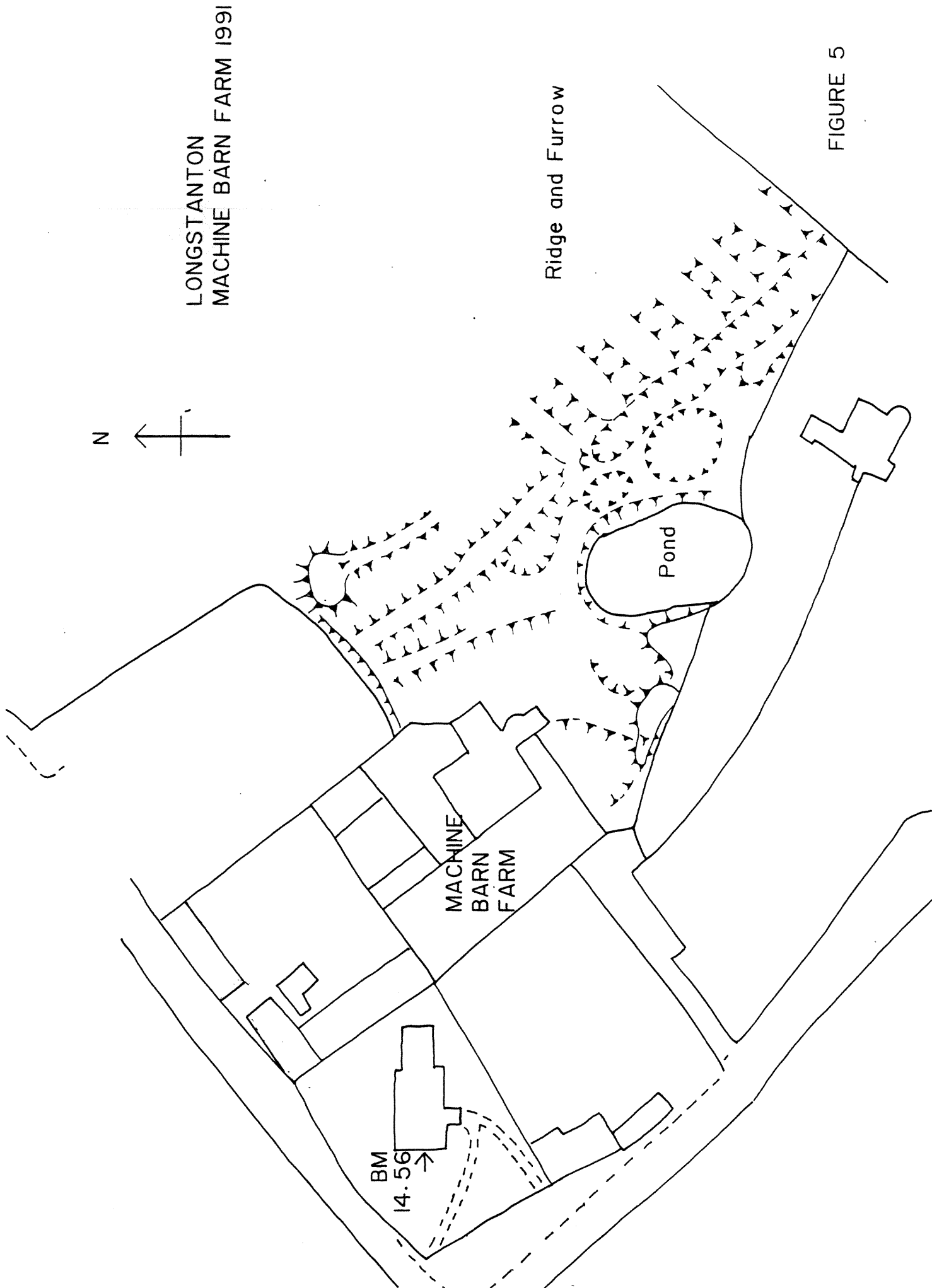


FIGURE 5

Rural Management Division  
Department of Property  
Shire Hall  
Cambridge  
Tel. (0223) 317404

