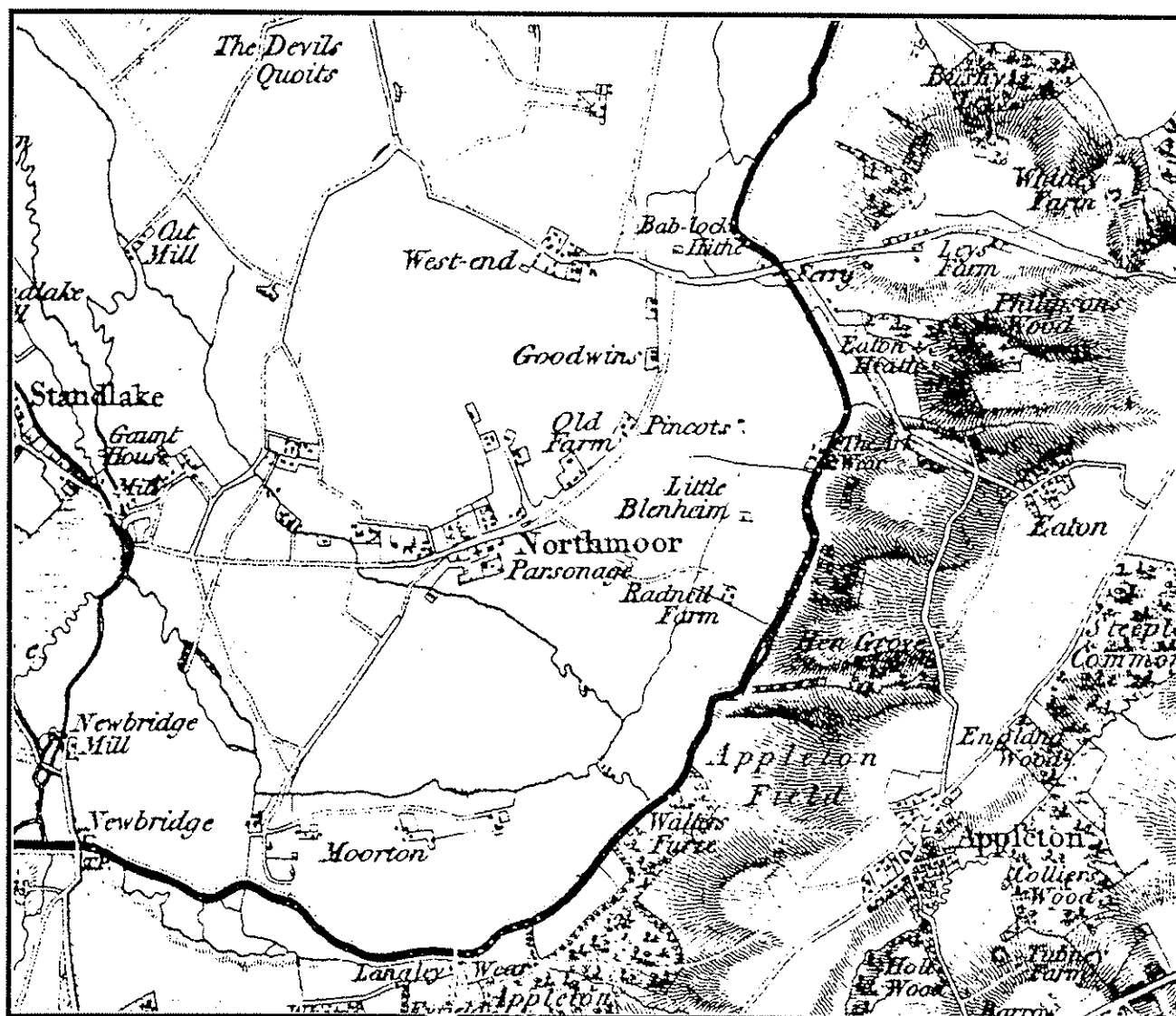


EOX 178
SOX 224

Littlebrook Nurseries, Northmoor, Oxfordshire

SP 4154 0283

Archaeological Watching Brief



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

January 1996

LITTLEBROOK NURSERIES, NORTHMOOR,

OXON

SP 4154 0283

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OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

APRIL 1996

LITTLEBROOK NURSERIES, NORTHMOOR

OXON

SP 4154 0283

SUMMARY

The footings and a service trench for a new dwelling revealed no archaeological features. The foundation trenches exposed the top of the natural gravel. A shallow sequence of alluvial clay deposits was recorded and an area of disturbed clays and gravel (probably a tree-throw-hole) produced no datable finds.

INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at Littlebrook Nurseries, Northmoor during summer and autumn 1995. The work was carried out as a condition of planning consent in respect of an application submitted to West Oxfordshire District Council for permission to construct a single dwelling and garage. The building work was carried out by Hopgoods Ltd.

LOCATION (see Fig. 1)

Northmoor is situated nine kilometres SW of Oxford. The area of development is at the western limits of Northmoor within the existing horticultural nursery on the north side of the Standlake Road (SP 4154 0283).

GEOLOGY

The geology consists of low-lying First Gravel Terrace gravel overlain by alluvium.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Littlebrook Nurseries is situated just N of an area of extensive cropmarks, Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) Oxfordshire 141(b). These include trackways and rectilinear enclosures, partly evaluated by the OAU in 1988. Present evidence suggests that these date to the Romano-British period, although Iron Age occupation also occurs. The Middle Iron Age and early Roman settlement at Watkins Farm (SP 426 035), also excavated by the OAU, is situated just to the NE (Allen 1990).

STRATEGY

All the trenches were excavated by JCB. The foundation trenches were examined during machine excavation in June 1995. The subsequent excavation of the main service trench was monitored in September 1995. Detailed records of the stratigraphic sequence exposed within these trenches were made where appropriate, and are contained in the project archive (site code NOLBN 95).

RESULTS (Fig. 2)

For dimensions of deposits and features see Appendix 1.

The new building was L-shaped in plan with the sides approximately 13 m x 13 m. On the eastern side of the building the natural gravel was located at 0.24 m below the present ground surface. In the remaining foundation trenches it occurred at a depth of c 0.50 m. In the shallow areas the topsoil directly overlaid the natural gravel. In places the natural gravel had patches of shelly sand mixed into it.

Three alluvial clay deposits were recorded, 1/2, 1/3 and 1/4. The alluvium 1/2 only existed in the northern half of the site, while 1/3 covered the whole site. The lowest alluvial layer 1/4 only occurred as isolated spreads within the top of the gravel.

An irregular, ill-defined feature (1/11) was partly excavated by hand at the SW corner of the new building. The sides were difficult to define and the fills 1/6, 1/7, 1/8, 1/9 and 1/10 were intermixed with the natural gravel. Fill 1/9 contained fragments of bone. No other finds were recovered.

Observation of the service trench excavation revealed a sequence of gravel and hardcore layers relating to the present road and access drive through which the trench was excavated to a depth of c 0.65 m. These deposits appeared to overlie natural gravels. Any deposits of archaeological significance had therefore presumably been truncated by road and track construction.

CONCLUSIONS

The alluvial sequence identified on the site of the new building was undated. The shelly sand in the top of the gravel suggests that the gravel had been scoured by water action. The existence of a brook presently running E-W through the site indicates that relict stream channels would be likely to have occurred in the vicinity.

Feature 1/11 almost certainly represents tree-throw disturbance, the tree perhaps being sited on the edge of a stream channel.

No significant archaeological features or deposits were seen, although it is possible

that such had been truncated in the area of the present day road south of the site. On balance, however, it seems more likely that the area was genuinely one with a low level of activity, situated between a number of adjacent settlements.

REFERENCE

Allen T G, 1990 'An Iron Age and Romano-British enclosed settlement at Watkins Farm, Northmoor, Oxon' OAU Monograph.

A Parkinson
Oxford Archaeological Unit
April 1996

APPENDIX 1: Table of Contexts and Finds

LITTLEBROOK NURSERIES, NORTHMOOR, OXON (NOLBN 95)						
Context	Type	Depth (m)	Length (m)	Width (m)	Comments	Finds
TRENCH						
1/1	Layer	0.20-0.30			Topsoil of horticultural bed	
1/2	Layer	0.10			Alluvium	
1/3	Layer	0.12-0.20			Alluvium	
1/4	Layer	0.10			Alluvium	
1/5	Layer	-			Natural Gravel	
1/6	Fill	0.12-0.16			Fill of 1/11	
1/7	Fill	0.08			Fill of 1/11	
1/8	Fill	0.02-0.03			Fill of 1/11	
1/9	Fill	0.14			Fill of 1/11	Bone
1/10	Fill	0.14			Fill of 1/11	
1/11	Cut	0.04	2.60m+		?Tree throw hole	
1/12	Fill	0.05			Fill of 1/13	
1/13	Cut				Animal/root Disturbance	

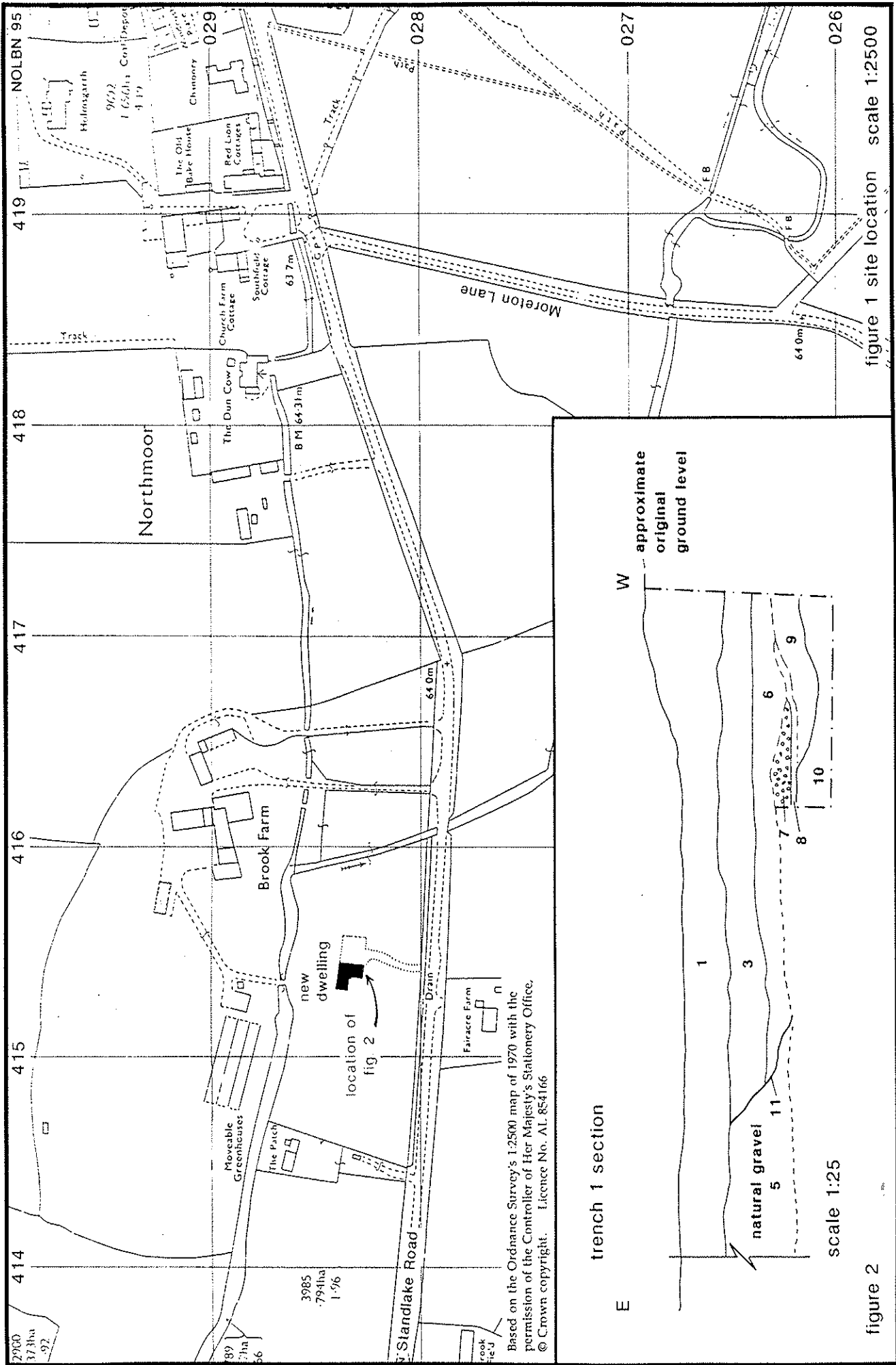


figure 1 site location scale 1:2500

figure 2

Based on the Ordnance Survey's 1:2500 map of 1970 with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown copyright. Licence No. AL 854166



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