

**Shaw-cum-Donnington Village Settlement, Berkshire**

*SU 463 694*

**Archaeological Assessment**

**Oxford Archaeological Unit  
August 1989**

## SHAW-CUM-DONNINGTON - VILLAGE SETTLEMENT

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

#### Introduction

An archaeological assessment was undertaken in August 1989 by the Oxford Archaeological Unit on behalf of Mr Gladstone to provide information for a planning application for village settlement.

The application site occupies c. 40 hectares on deposits of Reading Beds and Upper chalk. The archaeological assessment was carried out on the area of the proposed village site and along the route of the access road (fig 1). The proposed village site was under pasture while the access road was under stubble after harvesting.

#### Archaeological background

Prior to the assessment there was no known archaeological evidence from the application area. However, two Roman hearths interpreted as signal fires are known from immediately to the east of the application area and the Roman road from Silchester to Cirencester runs just to the south.

The land immediately to the west has produced prehistoric flintwork, and a considerable amount more was found to the east in a similar topographic position. Flintwork has recently been recovered by the Trust for Wessex Archaeology from the field bisected by the proposed new access road.

#### Strategy

The assessment was carried out by a combination of machine cut trenches and topsoil sampling for artefact densities.

At the end of each machine cut trench a 50cm square was excavated through the topsoil, and the material carefully hand sorted. In addition two bucket samples of selected colluvial deposits were hand sorted.

The trenches were excavated by 360° excavator using a 2.20m wide toothless bucket. A 2% sample of the area was excavated initially with extra trenches opened up in the vicinity of archaeological deposits (fig 2). Hand excavation of features was carried out to establish their type, condition and date range.

#### Soils

The topsoil was a silty clay loam containing c. 10% flinty pebbles. Below this, in areas where the soils were in excess of 25cm thick above the Upper chalk and Reading Beds, was the remnants of a post-medieval ploughsoil containing many fragments of tile and the occasional potsherd.

Colluvial deposits (up to 1.70m deep) were found in the dry river valley (fig 3) while a slight hollow around Trenches 18, 19, 35 had also filled with colluvial deposits up to 35cm thick.

## Results

Roman Area. Trenches 13, 33, 34 (fig 4).

Trenches 33 and 34 lay on chalk on the edge of the dry valley while Trench 13 was comprised of colluvial deposits.

In Trench 13 a near circular pit (13/4) of diameter 60-65 cm and depth 19cm was found cut into the top of the colluvial deposits 70cm below modern ground surface (MGS). The pit contained a collection of early Roman sherds including sherds of a fine flint tempered jar and a sherd of greyware. Fifteen metres to the south in Trench 33 was another pit (33/4). This pit was 70cm in diameter and survived 12cm deep. The pit contained a flint flake and a small body sherd of a sandy fabric (? Roman). The top of the pit survived 53cm below MGS under the post-medieval ploughsoil.

The upper colluvium (13/3/1,33/5) that these pits were cut into contained a flint flake and a sherd of flint tempered ware (? Bronze Age). Two further flint flakes were recovered from the spoil heap while another was found in the post-medieval ploughsoil. The lower colluvium (13/5), under the occupation layer, was found to have three distinct horizons. The middle one (1.60m below MGS) contained noticeable quantities of charcoal and a two bucket sample produced a piece of burnt flint. The other two colluvial horizons contained occasional flecks of charcoal.

There was no archaeological evidence from Trench 34 where the topsoil directly overlay the natural chalk and clay.

Prehistoric Area. Trenches 18, 19, 35 (fig 5)

Within Trench 18 was a large flat bottomed pit of diameter 1.55-1.60m and depth 14cm. The silty clay loam fill contained a utilised flake and a piece of burnt flint. The pit (18/5) was cut into colluvial deposits infilling a natural hollow. Above the colluvial deposits was the post-medieval ploughsoil.

From Trench 19 came two sherds of flint tempered ware. One was recovered from the base of the post-medieval ploughsoil lying on the natural clay while the other, along with a utilised flake came from within this ploughsoil. A retouched flake was found in the modern topsoil and a further two flakes were recovered from the spoil heap.

Further deposits of colluvium existed in Trench 35 but there was no archaeological evidence.

The two body sherds from Trench 19 are very small but the fabric suggests that they may belong to the Bronze Age.

## Recent Activity. Trench 21

A hollow filled with hillwash deposits was found in the western 10m of Trench 21. The hollow was 2m deep below MGS. A quantity of animal bone in an excellent state of preservation was found at the bottom of the hollow. Some of it had been burnt. On the opposite side of the hedge from Trench 21 is a modern drainage sump (information from the farmer). This hollow may be an earlier one. The preservation of the bone suggests a recent date for the deposition.

## Topsoil Finds

Other than the post-medieval material one flint flake from Trench 8 was found during the machine excavation of the trenches.

The topsoil sampling produced many pieces of tile and other Post-Medieval finds (see Table 1). Several flint flakes and pieces of burnt flint were also recovered along with one prehistoric (? Bronze Age) sherd (fig 6).

## Colluvium finds

Several pieces of flintwork other than those mentioned above were found within the colluvium. There was a relatively even spread along the river valley (fig 7) with a concentration of perhaps knapping debris in Trench 2.

Two bucket samples were hand sorted in Trenches 2, 3, 5, 7, 9-11, 13. The samples in Trenches 10 and 11 each produced one flake while a piece of burnt flint came from the sample in Trench 13. The other samples failed to produce finds.

The depth (in cm) below MGS and depth within the colluvial deposits is listed below.

Trench	Below MGS	Below top of colluvium
2	80-90	30-40
3	60-70	0-10
7	120	50-60
10	90-110	35-55
11	80-90	35-45
13	140	40
15	115-125	45-55

There were no features found associated with the finds within the colluvial deposits other than those referred to above (see Roman area, Prehistoric area).

The flintwork found within these colluvial deposits is of a type generally found associated with Neolithic activity. All of this flintwork was flakes except for an end scraper from Trench 11.

## Access Road. Trenches 37-40. Fig 1

While no features were found, some flintwork was recovered. The topsoil of Trench 39 produced a flint flake and two flint chips while a flake was recovered from hillwash deposits in Trench 40 80cm below MGS.

### Reliability

The top of the Upper chalk was pocketed with silt and the clay of the Reading Beds had varying patches of silts and natural flints. However it is felt that features would have been seen if they had existed. While the ground was extremely dry it retained enough moisture and colour for features to be recognised immediately after exposure.

Features within the colluvium would have been difficult to identify unless the fill had contained many finds or higher concentrations of charcoal than the surrounding material. It is possible that features may not have been recognised.

### Summary

An area of early Roman activity was identified on the edge of the dry valley in the vicinity of Trenches 13 and 33.

Some form of prehistoric activity, perhaps belonging to the Bronze Age, occurred in a hollow in the area of Trenches 18, 19 and 35.

A general scatter of flintwork in the colluvial deposits filling the dry river valley suggests activity in the Neolithic period. The focus of this activity is unknown.

J. Moore  
OAU  
August 1989.

Table 1  
Topsoil sample. Post-Medieval Finds

Trench	North end	South end	East end	West end
1			Tile 4	
2		Tile 2		
3				
4				Tile 5
5			Tile 3	
6	Tile 8 Nail 1			
7				Tile 1
8	Tile 4 Glass 1	Tile 3		
9			Tile 4	Tile 6
10			Tile 3 Clay Pipe 1	Tile 3 Glass 1
11				
12				
13			Tile 5	Tile 1
14				Pot 1
15	Tile 3	Tile 1		
16	Tile 5 Nail 1	Tile 5		
17			Tile 1	Tile 3
18			Glass 1	Tile 3
19		Tile 2		
20			Tile 6 Glass 1	
21			Tile 4	Tile 2
22	Tile 2	Tile 3 Pot 1		
23	Tile 10	Tile 3		
24			Pot 1	Tile 2
25			Tile 11	Tile 3 Pot 1
26				Pot 1
27	Tile 4	Tile 1 Pot 1	Tile 1	Tile 1
28			Tile 8	Tile 2
29				Tile 1
30		Tile 2		
31				Tile 7 Pot 1
32	Tile 2	Tile 4		
33	Tile 4 Clay Pipe 1			
34				Tile 2
35	Tile 2			
36	Tile 3			
37				Tile 2
38		Tile 3		
39			Tile 4 Pot 1	Tile 2
40	Tile 3 Pot 1 Glass 1	Pot 1		

Appendix 1. Features

Trench	Type	Shape	Profile	Dia	Depth	Date
13/4	pit	oval	steep	0.60	0.19	Roman
18/5	pit	round	shallow	1.60	0.14	preh.
33/4	pit	round	bowl	0.70	0.12	?Roman

Appendix 2. Topsoil Finds

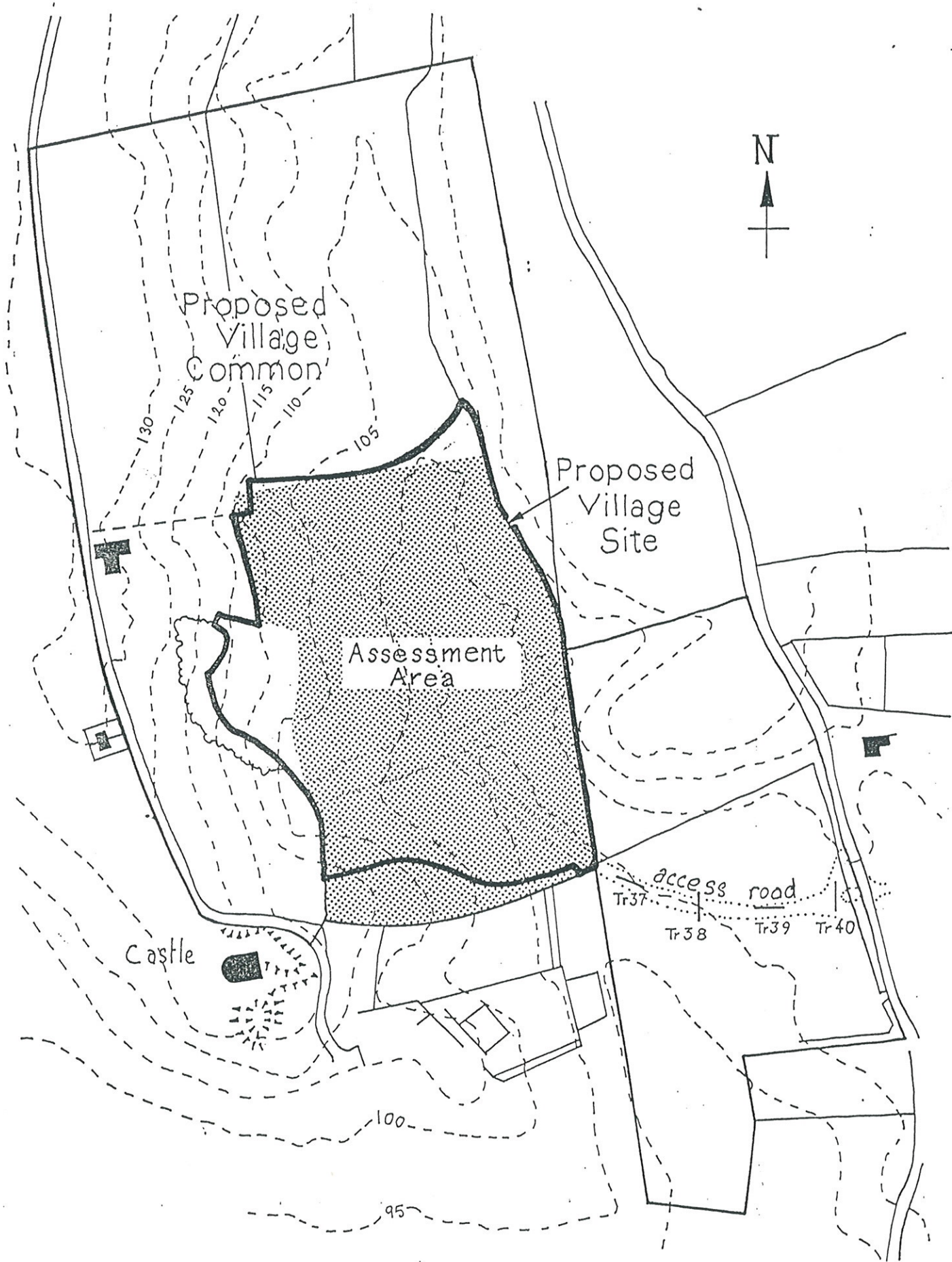
Trench	Material	Type	Amount	Date
5	Flint	Flake	1	-
	Flint	Burnt	1	-
8	Flint	Flake	1	-
	Flint	Burnt	1	-
9	Flint	Burnt	1	-
10	Flint	Burnt	1	-
11	Flint	Flake	1	-
	Flint	Burnt	4	-
13	Flint	Burnt	1	-
16	Flint	Flake	1	-
	Flint	Burnt	1	-
18	Flint	Flake	1	-
	Flint	Burnt	1	-
19	Flint	Flake	1	?BA
20	Flint	Burnt	1	-
21	"	"	1	-
22	"	"	3	-
23	"	"	1	-
24	"	"	1	-
26	"	"	1	-
28	"	"	1	-
31	Ceramic	Pottery	1	?BA
32	Flint	Scraper	1	Neolithic
33	"	Burnt	3	-
34	"	"	1	-
36	"	"	2	-
39	"	Flake	1	-
	"	Chip	2	-



## Appendix 3

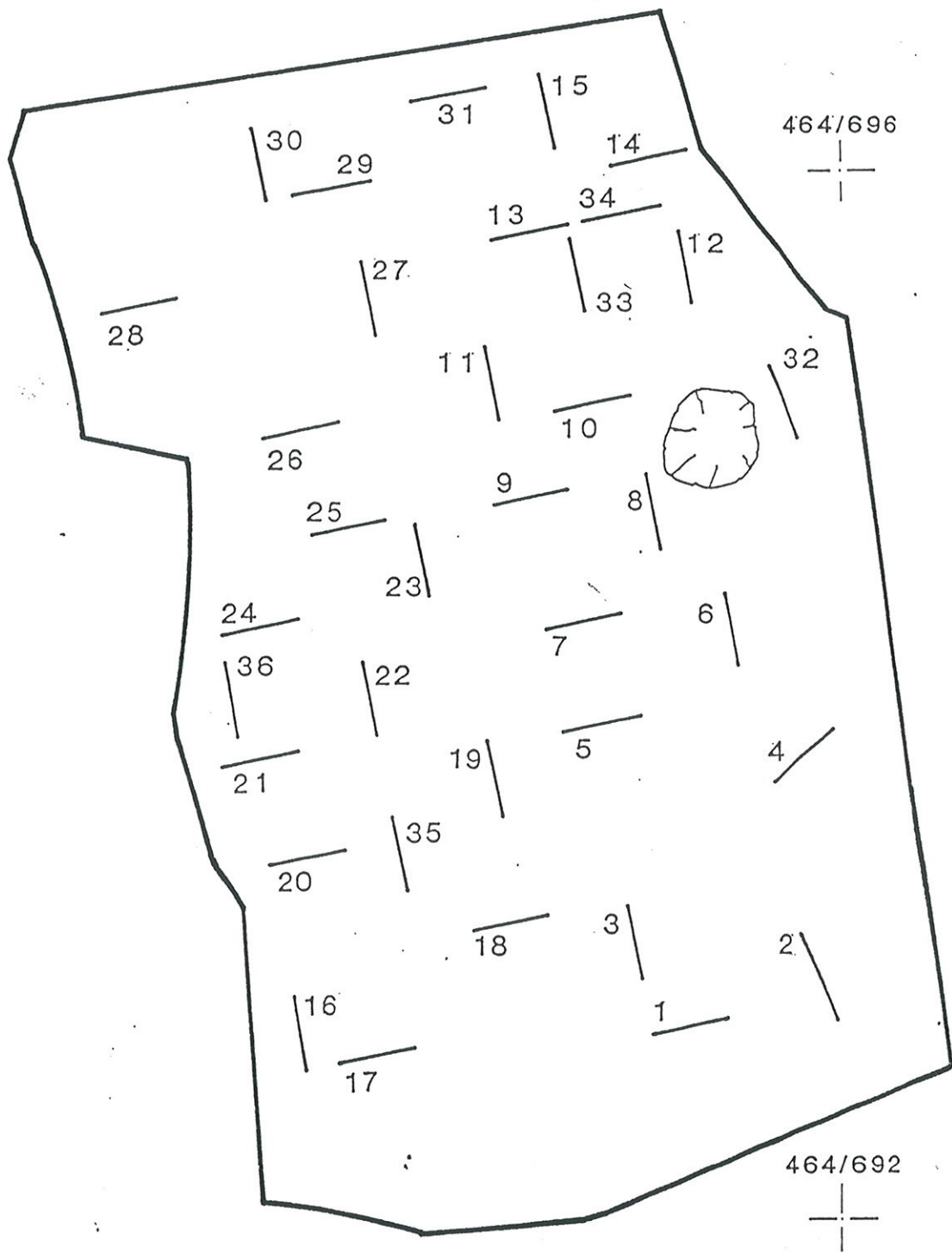
## Colluvium Finds.

Trench	Material	Type	Amount	Date
2	Flint	Flake	7	?Neolithic
	Flint	Ret. Flake	1	?Neolithic
	Flint	Scraper	1	Neolithic
3	"	Ut. Flake	1	?Neolithic
	"	Burnt	1	
7	Flint	Flake	2	?Neolithic
		Ut. Flake	1	
	Ceramic	Pot	1	
10	Flint	Flakes	1	
11	Flint	Flakes	2	
	Flint	Flake	1	?Neolithic
15	Flint	Flake	2	?Neolithic



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Fig. 1



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Scale: 1:2500

Fig. 2

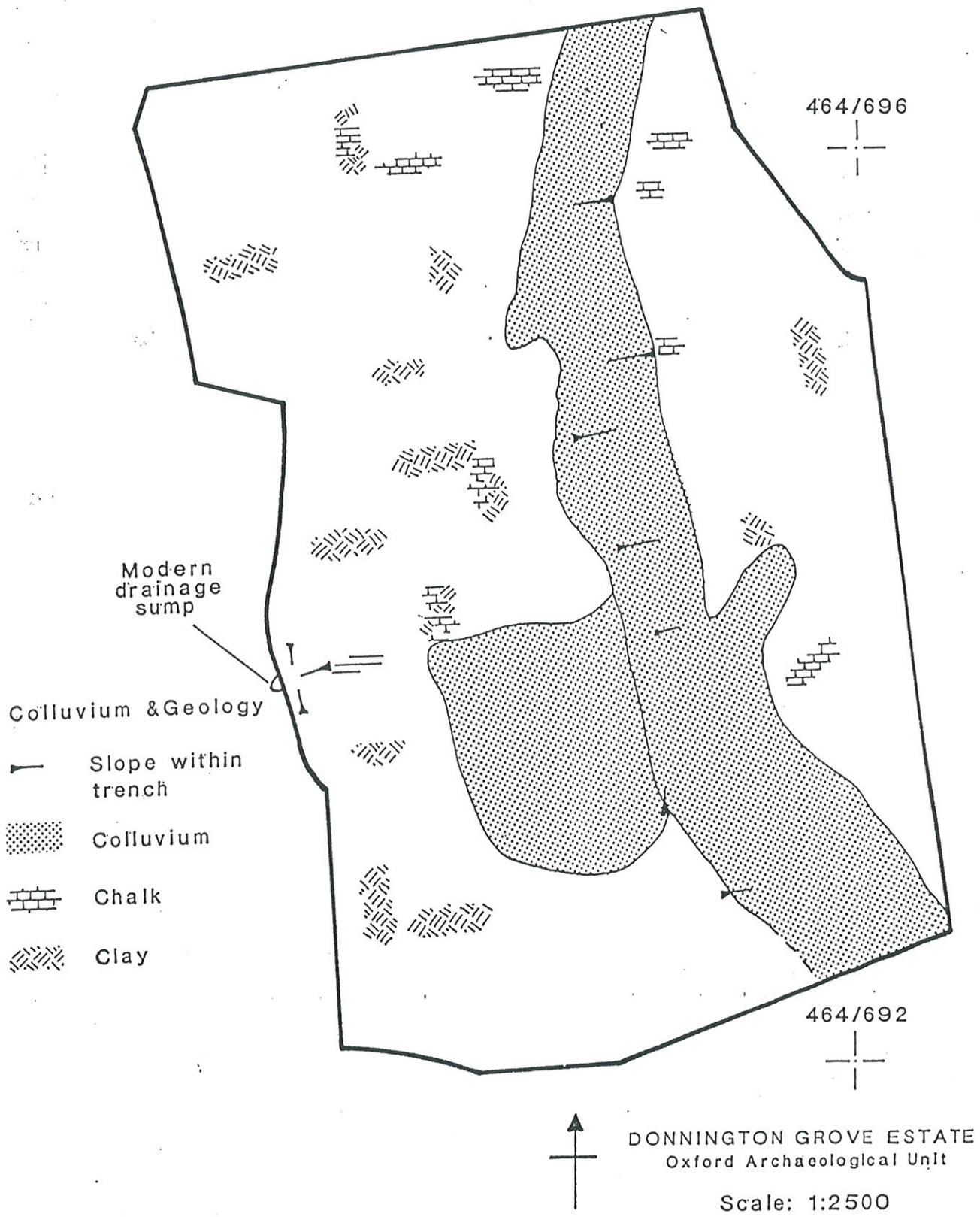


Fig. 3

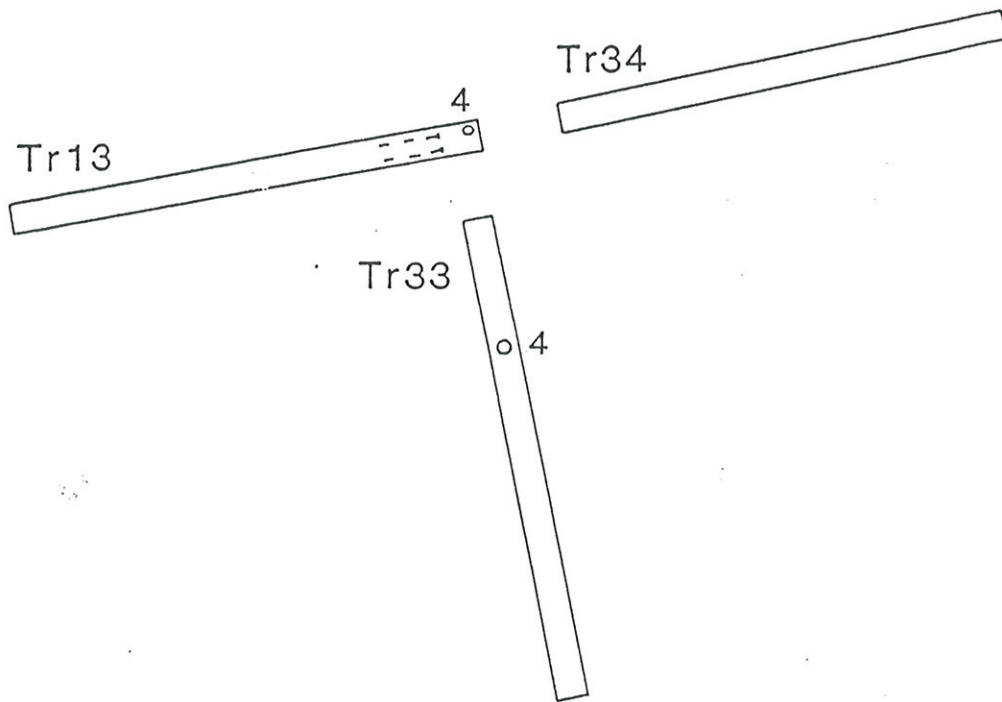
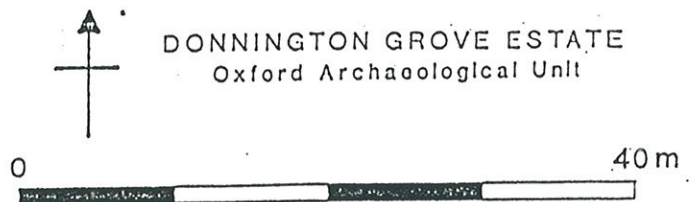
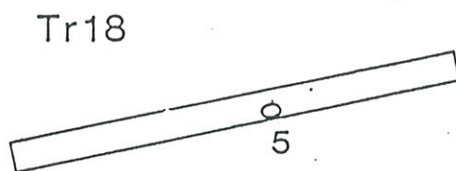
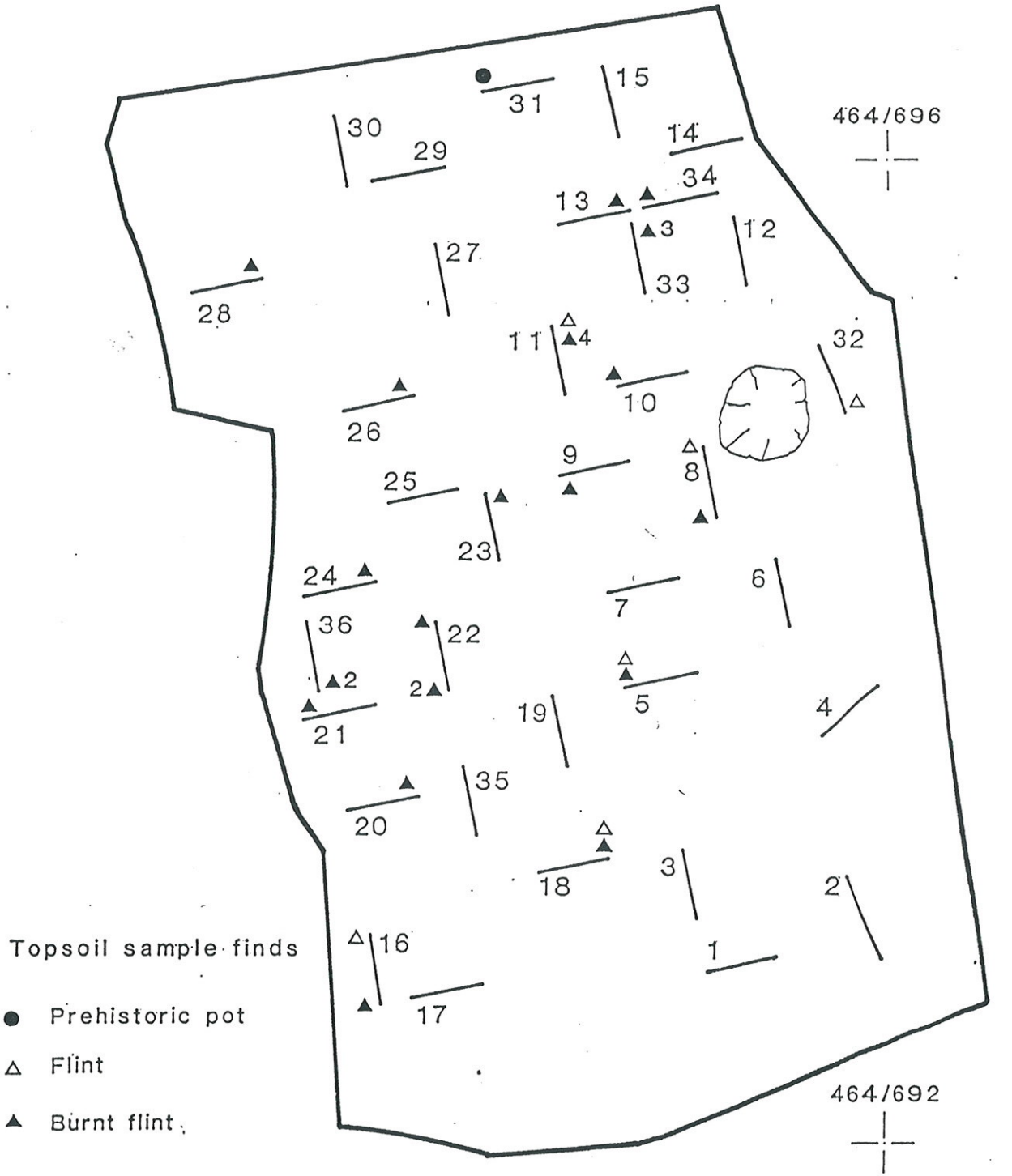


Fig. 4



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Fig. 5



Topsoil sample finds

- Prehistoric pot
- △ Flint
- ▲ Burnt flint



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Scale: 1:2500

Fig. 6

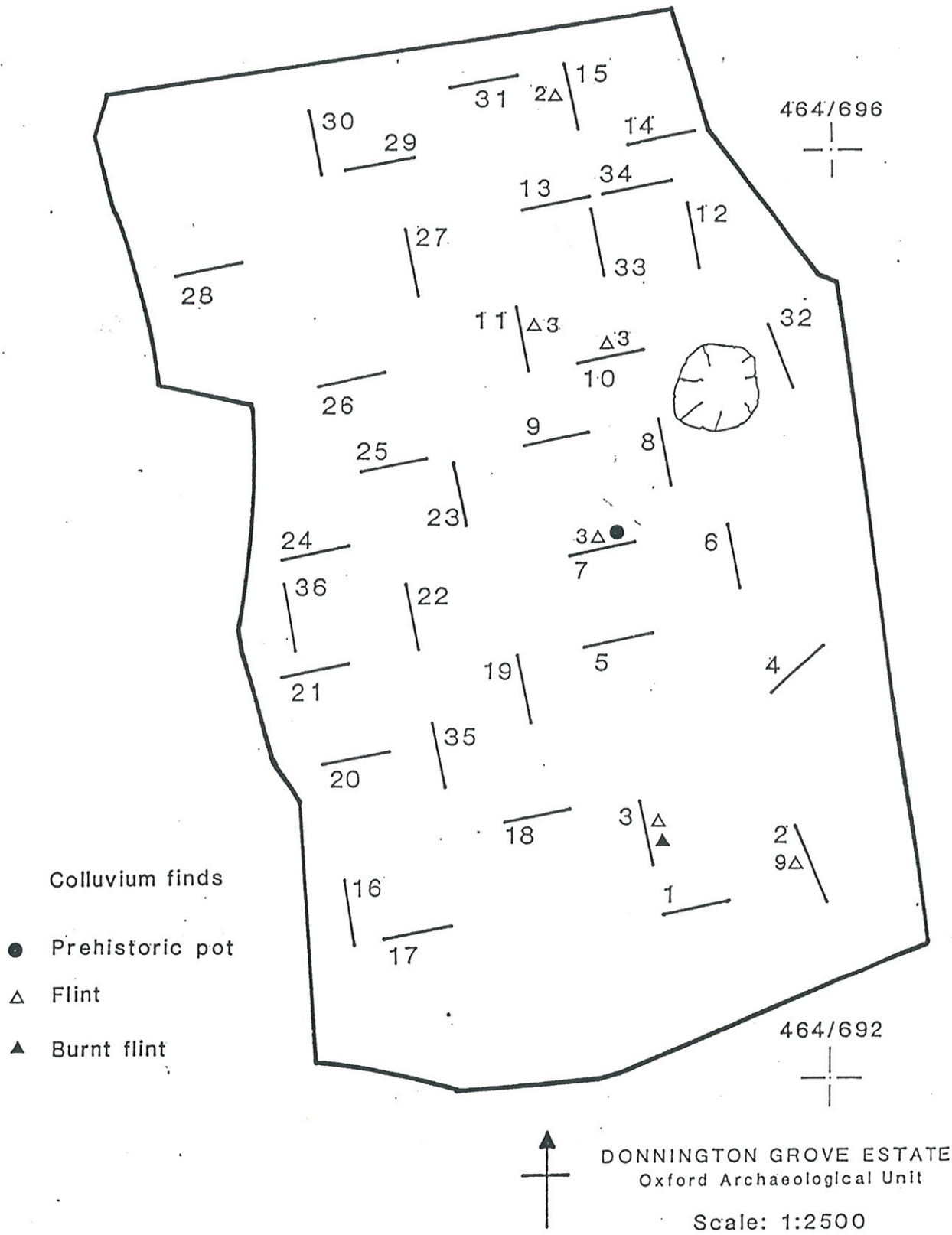
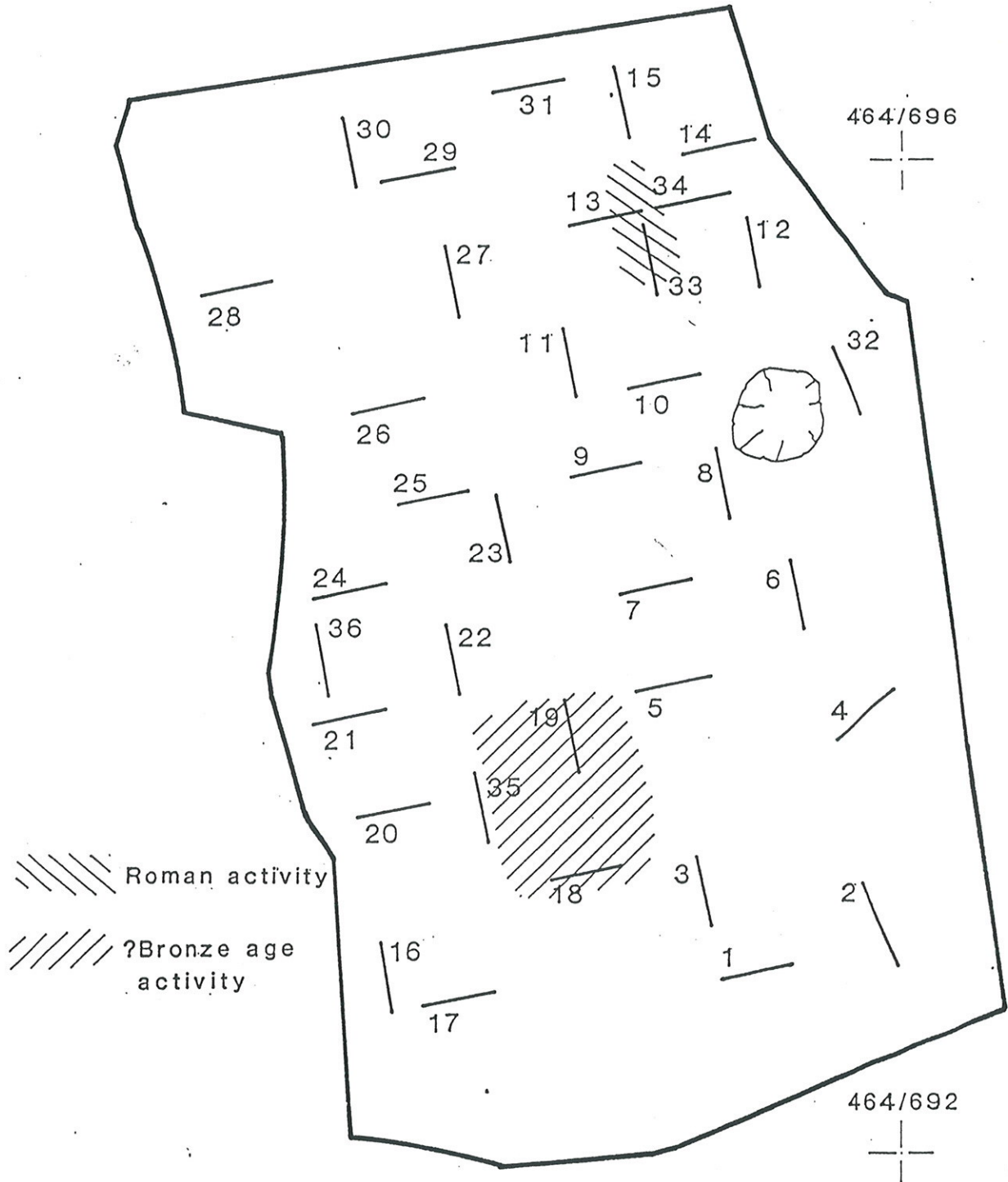


Fig. 7



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Scale: 1:2500

Fig. 8