

Wyndyke Furlong,  
Abingdon Business Park,  
Abingdon, Oxfordshire

NGR SU 4825 9772

Archaeological Evaluation



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

October 1994

**WYNDYKE FURLONG,  
ABINGDON BUSINESS PARK**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**NGR SU 4825 9772**

**12 October 1994**

## SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at the Wyndyke Furlong, Abingdon Business Park. In the SW of the site a continuation of the immediately adjacent site at Ashville Trading Estate was located and another focus of Romano-British activity some 300 m to the NE. Ditches which may represent enclosures associated with these settlements were also located.

### Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	3
TOPOGRAPHY	3
FIELD EVALUATION STRATEGY	3
RESULTS	4
Soils	
Archaeology	
Finds	
Environmental	
COMMENTS ON THE RESULTS	6
Reliability of field investigation	
Overall Interpretation	
Bibliography	
APPENDIX	7
Context list	
Illustrations	



## INTRODUCTION

In October 1994 an archaeological field evaluation was carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) on behalf of Standard Life Insurance Company, in respect of an re-application for planning permission for offices. The site lies to the W of Abingdon, at grid reference SU 4825 9772 (Fig.1).

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Fig.1)

The site lies in an area which has proved to be rich in archaeological remains. In particular there is evidence of extensive prehistoric, Roman and Saxon activity on the adjacent gravel terraces. There were no known sites within the proposed development although excavations have been carried out immediately to the W (see below).

A cropmark which is tentatively interpreted as a Neolithic *Cursus* lies to the S of the River Ock at Caldicott. Cropmark ring-ditches which may be the remains of Early Bronze Age burial mounds can be seen surrounding the site (Benson and Miles, 1974). Two ring-ditches were located at Ashville Trading Estate immediately to the SW of the site (Parrington, 1978).

Extensive and intensive Iron Age settlement which was superseded by Late Iron Age and Roman field systems has been located at Ashville Trading Estate (Parrington) and the MG works car parking area (Halpin excavations 1981-5). Work carried out by T G Allen has located further Roman field systems to the S of the site. Abingdon town centre to the E overlies a late Iron Age *oppidum* or defended market. The defensive bank and ditch of the settlement were slighted and a Roman villa was built on the E edge of the settlement. Roman material has also been found under Abingdon school to the W of the defences (T G Allen pers. comm.). A small Roman cemetery has been located 200 m S of Ashville Trading Estate.

Abingdon has Early Saxon cemeteries and settlements around it. Middle to late Saxon settlement is known from the town centre. Saxon cemeteries lie to the N and S of the River Ock.

## TOPOGRAPHY

The site lies on the N side of the Ock valley and is approximately 5.3 hectares at a height of 58 m O.D. The site is currently reasonably flat as a result of landscaping. The Larkhill Stream flows N-S to the E of the site to the River Ock. The natural geology across the site is a mix of gravel and Corralian sand with Kimmeridge clay.

## FIELD EVALUATION STRATEGY (Fig.2)

The field evaluation strategy was based on a 1% sample of the area. The sample was to have consisted of twelve 30 m long and 1.55 m wide trenches dug by a mechanical excavator (see Fig. 2). Several trenches were curtailed when modern

dumping associated with landscaping was found. The proportion of the 1% sample that these undug trenches represented was deployed to define the extent of the archaeological features which were located. In total 15 trenches were excavated.

The archaeological features encountered in the NE focus were sampled by hand to determine their nature and depth and to recover dating evidence. The features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and their sections drawn at a scale of 1:20.

The features located in Trench 11, next to Ashville Trading Estate, were not excavated because (after consultation with the County Archaeological Officer) it was decided that they were likely to form a continuation of the adjacent site. Therefore their potential was already established. This trench was also very deep with unstable sides so it would not have been safe to carry out further archaeological investigation.

## **RESULTS**

### **Soils**

The general soil type was a silt. The underlying natural geology was gravel with sand lenses.

### **Archaeology**

#### *Trench 11 (Fig. 3)*

The 1.5 m deep modern dumping over this trench was machined off to the top of the gravel which the dumping directly overlies. A patchy deposit of buried topsoil was also present. The trench contained eight postholes, two small gullies and a soilmark which probably represents a large ditch or sequence of recut ditches. Pottery recovered from the spoil machined from over the ditch (sequence) may indicate that the ditch is Roman. The postholes and small gullies probably represent structures (see also photo 2) [captions for photos are after table 1]. As the large ditch had postholes on either side of it the ditch may represent an internal site boundary rather than an edge to the settlement. The pottery recovered from monitoring the buried topsoil included 5 Iron Age and 8 Roman (late 1st- to 2nd-century) sherds indicating a similar date to the two previously excavated sites to the SW.

Trenches 13 and 14 (Fig. 2) were excavated to define the N extent of these archaeological features. Although no archaeological features were found the sequence of ploughsoils overlying the gravel were found not to have been truncated by landscaping. Archaeological features in this area would have survived landscaping.

#### *Trenches 1, 2, 6 and 15 (Fig. 4)*

Trench 1 contained three NE-SW ditches and one E-W ditch. There were also two postholes indicating structures. Few finds were recovered from either the features

or the topsoil. These few sherds were not closely dateable due to their small size, although the majority may be medieval. This may indicate that although there is density of features there may not be a corresponding amount of activity.

However, Trench 6 contained one ditch aligned WSW-ENE. The single section excavated through this ditch contained 17 sherds including a large part of a southern Gaulish samian bowl. These date the feature as 2nd-century AD. The sherds were not abraded and so lie close to their point of deposition.

Trenches 2 and 15 each contained a single ditch. That in Trench 15 was aligned NE-SW along the trench and the ditch in Trench 2 was aligned N-S. The ditch in Trench 15 was undated and that in Trench 2 was post medieval.

### *Trenches 3, 4, 5 and 12 (Fig. 2)*

These trenches showed that the ground level had been truncated by landscaping. One archaeological feature, a ditch, was present in Trench 12. This may be an enclosure ditch associated with the settlement(s). A modern ditch, aligned off the track (Fig. 2) was seen in Trenches 4 and 5. Ploughmarks were seen in all of these trenches.

### *Trenches 7, 8, 9 and 10*

These trenches showed substantial truncation of the natural subsoil and modern dumping. This may have been for carparking (see photo 1).

## **Finds**

In total 39 sherds of pottery were recovered. Spot dating was carried out but as the amount collected was fairly small little can be said of the assemblage. The material from Trench 11 is not inconsistent with that from the sites immediately to the SW. Most of the rest of the material is early Roman with later post medieval material from the ploughsoil.

## **Environmental**

Soil samples were not taken as there were no deposits which were deemed to be able to provide meaningful palaeoenvironmental data other than the features forming part of the Ashville Trading Estate site for which ample potential has already been established.

## **COMMENTS ON THE RESULTS**

### **Reliability of field investigation**

The sample size was sufficient to define and interpret the archaeology adequately.

### **Overall Interpretation**

The gravel or sand natural in Trenches 1 and 6, where it was not cut by archaeological features was overlain by an old ploughsoil. This layer also overlaid the archaeological features. To the NW this layer had been removed with the topsoil. Recent wheel ruts from lorries were evident across the site.

The features in Trench 1 were not closely dated but the proximity of a similar ditch in Trench 6 with its abundance of unabraded Roman pot sherds suggests an area of settlement activity. This may be a separate site from the complex around Ashville Trading Estate and so form a part of a larger landscape pattern.

The features located in Trench 11 are assumed to be a continuation (in a broad sense) of the site excavated at Ashville Trading Estate and the Former MG works carparking (see Fig. 1 and photo 2) [captions for photos are after table 1]. The presence of Roman material from Trench 11 is of particular interest as the Roman enclosures found on the Ashville Trading Estate site were on the extreme W ie around 180 away from Trench 11.

The two sites found during this evaluation may be both defined and joined by the undated ditches seen in Trenches 12 and 15 which may form field boundaries associated with the settlements and larger landscape use. It has been found that the amount of domestic material (usually pottery) found in enclosure ditches declines sharply in relation to the distance to human occupation.

### **Conclusions**

There were significant archaeological deposits forming settlement activity on the site in both the SW and NE. The area to the NW apparently contained enclosure ditches which may be associated with both settlements.

Mark Roberts MIFA  
22 October 1994

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Benson and Miles 1974 THE UPPER THAMES VALLEY an Archaeological survey of the River Gravels OAU

Halpin C, Interim reports on the excavations at the Former MG works 1981-5

Parrington M, 1978 The excavation of an Iron Age settlement, Bronze Age ring-ditches and Roman features at Ashville Trading Estate, Abingdon (Oxfordshire) 1974-6 OAU

## APPENDICES

**TABLE 1**  
**CONTEXTS AND FINDS**

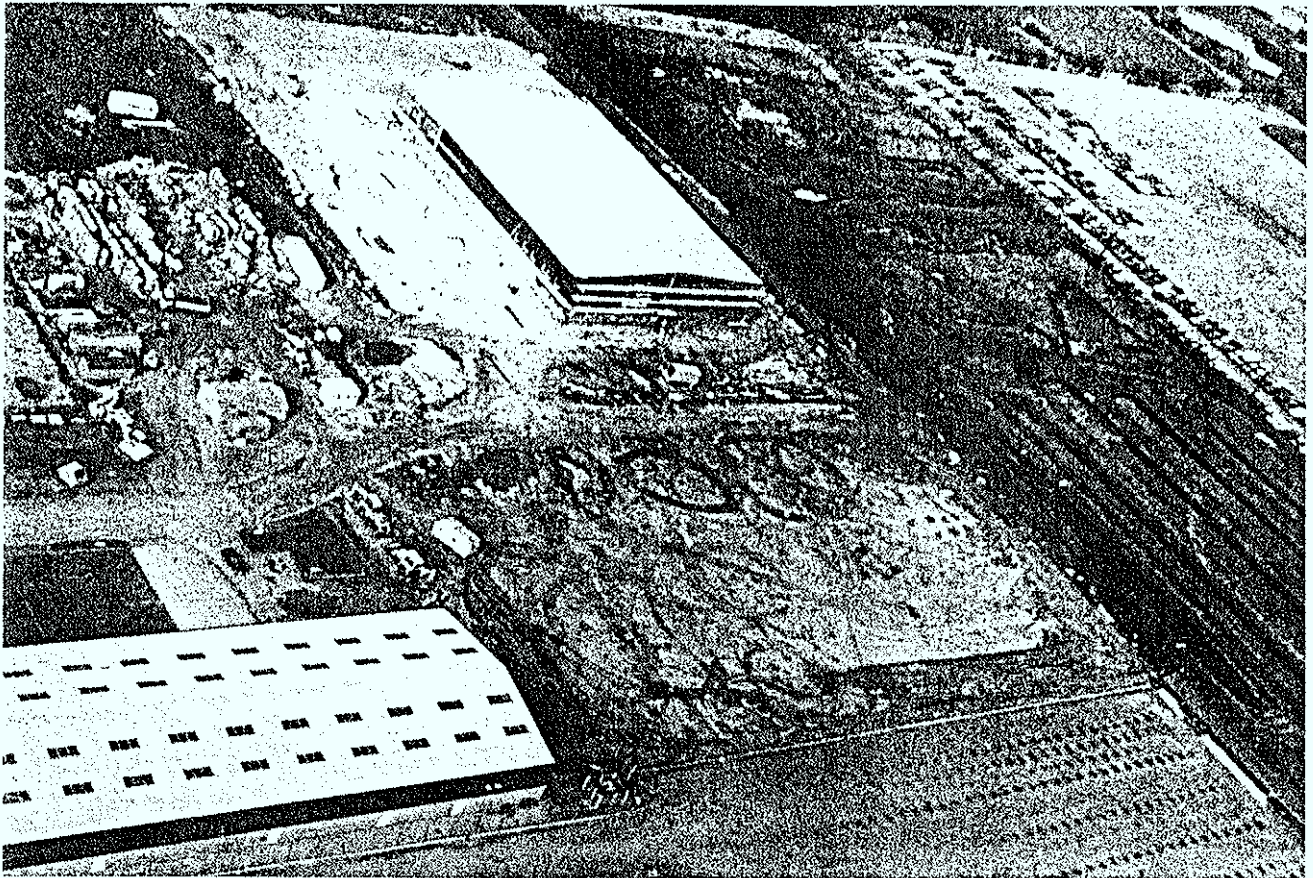
Trench	CTX	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comments and Finds date
1	100	topsoil		0.16	
1	101	ploughsoil		0.12	1 sherd Roman, 3 sherds medieval
1	102	old ploughsoil		0.15	1 sherd ?medieval
1	103	gravel		-	natural
1	104	fill of 108		0.07	
1	105	fill of 108		0.12	
1	106	fill of 108		0.16	
1	107	fill of 108		0.44	
1	108	cut for ditch	0.5	0.29	N-S ditch
1	109	fill of 110		0.11	
1	110	cut for posthole	0.45	0.11	posthole
1	111	fill of 112		0.11	
1	112	cut for posthole?	0.22	0.11	posthole?
1	113	fill of 114		0.25	
1	114	cut for ditch	1.4	0.25	N-S ditch
1	115	cut for ditch	0.75	0.2	N-S ditch



Trench	CTX	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comments and Finds date
1	116	fill of 119		0.1	
1	117	fill of 119		0.2	
1	118	fill of 119			
1	119	cut for ditch	1.7	0.28	ditch
1	120	fill of 119		0.3	
1	121	fill of 119		0.2	1 sherd ?uncertain
1	122	fill of 119		0.15	
1	123	fill of 119		0.15	
2	200	topsoil		0.17	
2	201	old ploughsoil		0.19	1 sherd post medieval
2	202	geological gravel		0.4	
2	203	fill of 204		0.4	
2	204	cut for ditch	1.4	0.4	N-S ditch
3	301	topsoil		0.25	
3	302	gravel		-	
3	303	geological		0.35	
3	304	geological		-	
3	305	geological		-	
4	401	topsoil		0.2	
4	402	'ploughsoil'		0.2	
4	403	gravel		-	
4	404	plough furrow		0.1	
4	405	fill of modern feature also seen in Trench 5		-	
5	501	topsoil		0.14	
5	502	?ploughsoil		0.18	

Trench	CTX	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comments and Finds date
5	503	fill of 504		0.06	1 sherd medieval, 1 sherd post medieval
5	504	cut for ?ditch	1.2	0.06	ditch aligned on track (see Fig. 2)
5	505	gravel		-	
6	600	topsoil		0.2	
6	601	?ploughsoil		0.1	
6	602	ditch	1.9	0.24	E-W ditch
6	603	surface cut by 602		-	
6	604	fill of 602		0.16	14 sherds Roman
6	605	fill of 602		0.09	2 sherds Roman
6	606	?fill of 602		0.05	
7	701	dump		1.4	
8	801	dump		0.8	
9	901	dump		1.2	
10	1001	dump		1.04	
11	1100	dump		>1.5	
11	1101	buried topsoil		patchy	5 sherds Iron Age, 8 sherds Roman
11	1102	gravel		-	
11	1103	fill of posthole		ne	
11	1104	fill of posthole		ne	
11	1105	fill of ditch(es)		ne	
11	1106	fill of posthole		ne	
11	1107	fill of posthole		ne	
11	1108	fill of posthole		ne	
11	1109	fill of posthole		ne	

Trench	CTX	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comments and Finds date
11	1110	fill of gully		ne	
11	1111	fill of posthole		ne	
11	1112	fill of gully		ne	
11	1113	fill of posthole		ne	
11	1114	fill of posthole		ne	
12	1201	topsoil		0.3	
12	1202	gravel		-	
12	1203	ditch	1.1	0.15	E-W ditch
12	1204	fill of 1203		0.15	
12	1205	plough furrow		0.1	
13	1301	dump		0.34	
13	1302	buried topsoil		0.1	
13	1303	old ploughsoil		0.23	
13	1304	silt over gravel		0.09	
13	1305	gravel			
14	1401	dump		0.46	
14	1402	buried topsoil		0.06	
14	1403	old ploughsoil		0.2	
14	1404	silt over gravel		0.02	
14	1405	gravel			
15	1501	topsoil		0.2	
15	1502	?ploughsoil		0.16	
15	1503	fill of 1504		0.16	
15	1504	ditch	-	0.16	SW-NE ditch
15	1505	gravel		-	

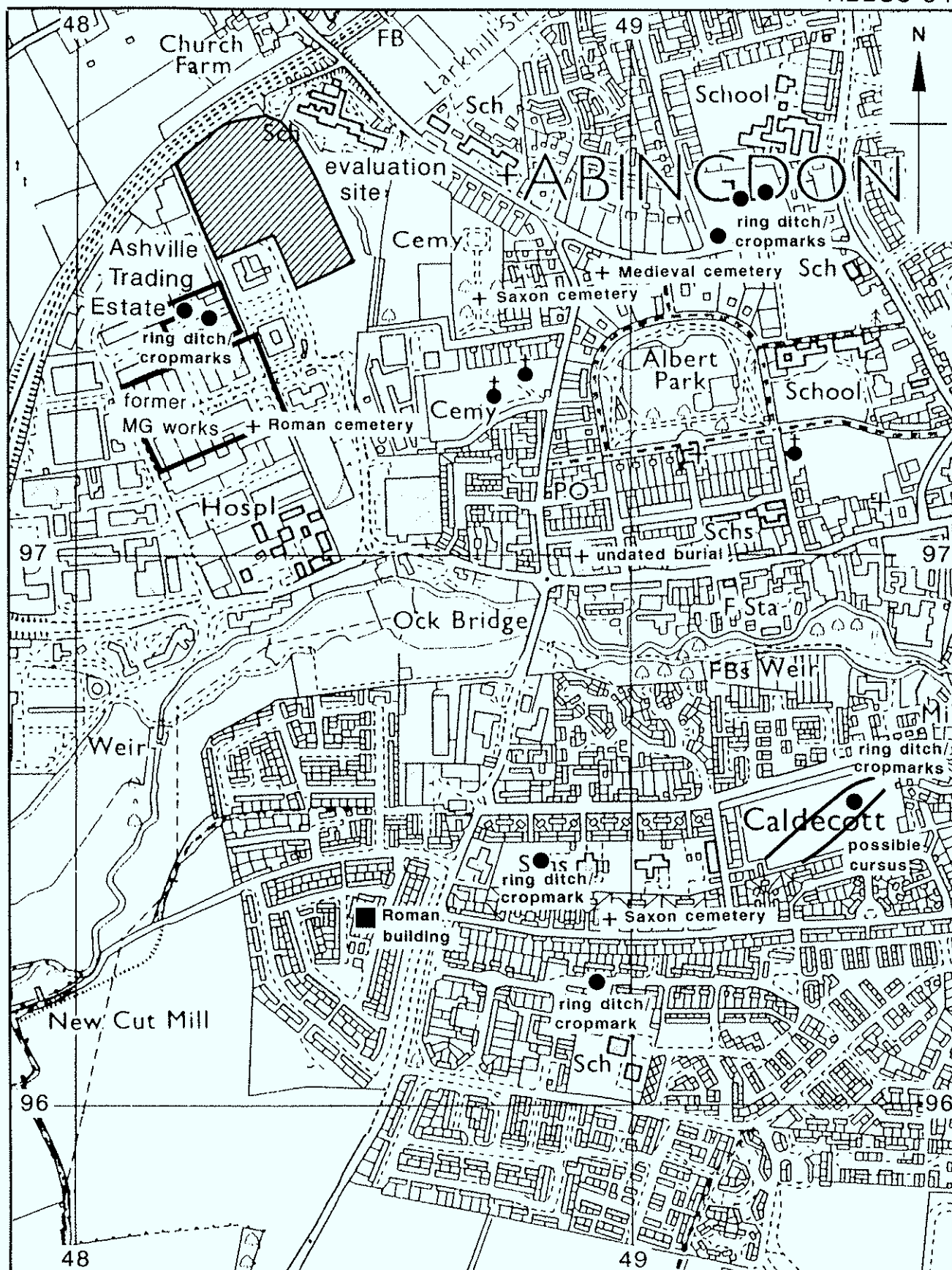


Aerial View of 1976 excavation site, showing soil marks of archaeological features cut into the natural gravel. *The current evaluation site can be seen in the top right of the photo. The dumping in the area of Trench 11 is visible to the right of the warehouse at the top of the picture. The carpark overlain by dump in the areas of Trenches 8, 9 and 10 is at the extreme right. (For location the Filter beds indicated to the S of the site in Fig. 2 are at the middle right of this photo.)*





View of ring ditch 460 from the east with Iron Age ditch 1035 and its internal post-hole structure. *This shows a larger extent of the type of archaeological features found in Trench 11.*



Based on the Ordnance Survey's 1:25000 map of 1992  
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scale 1:10000

site location

Figure 1



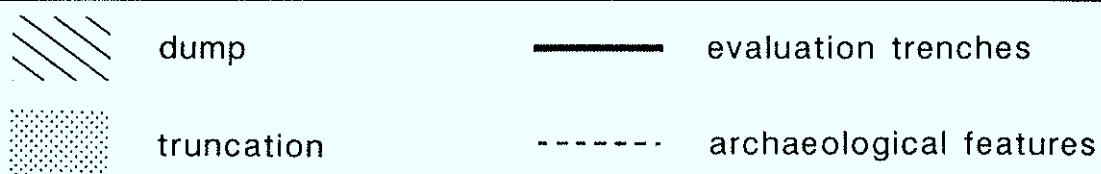
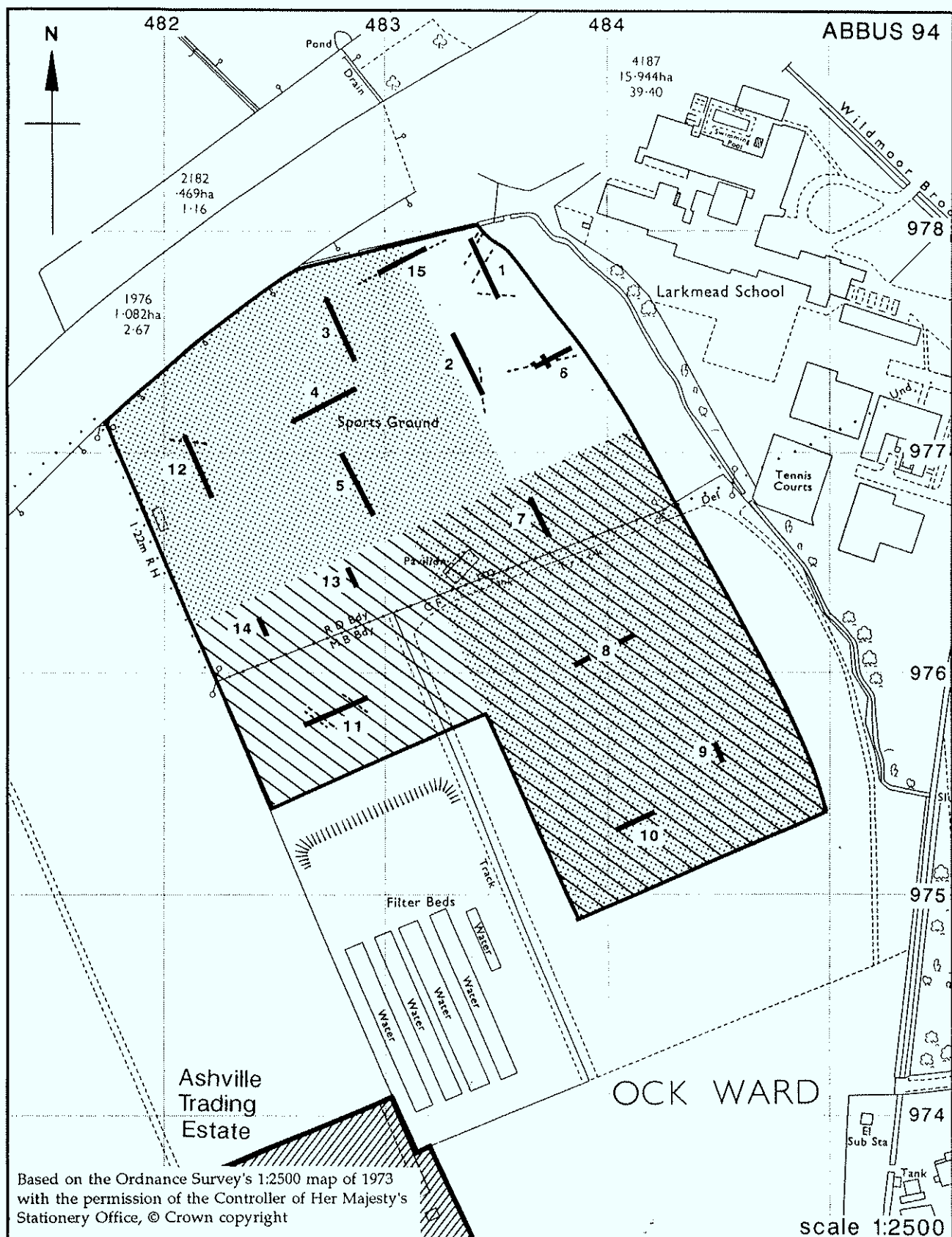
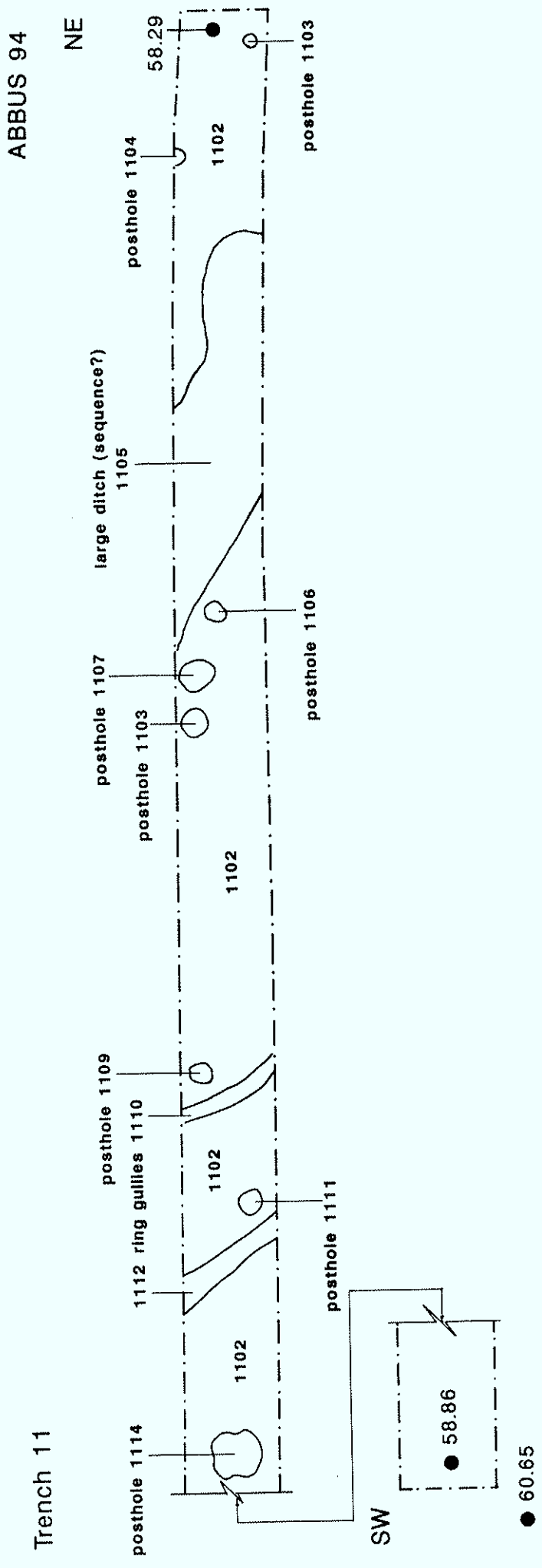


Figure 2 trench location



● level in metres O.D.

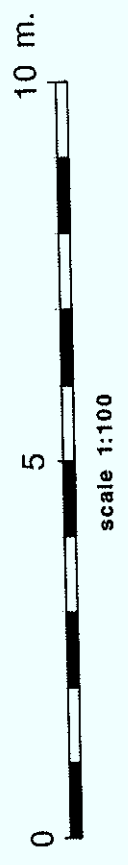


Figure 3



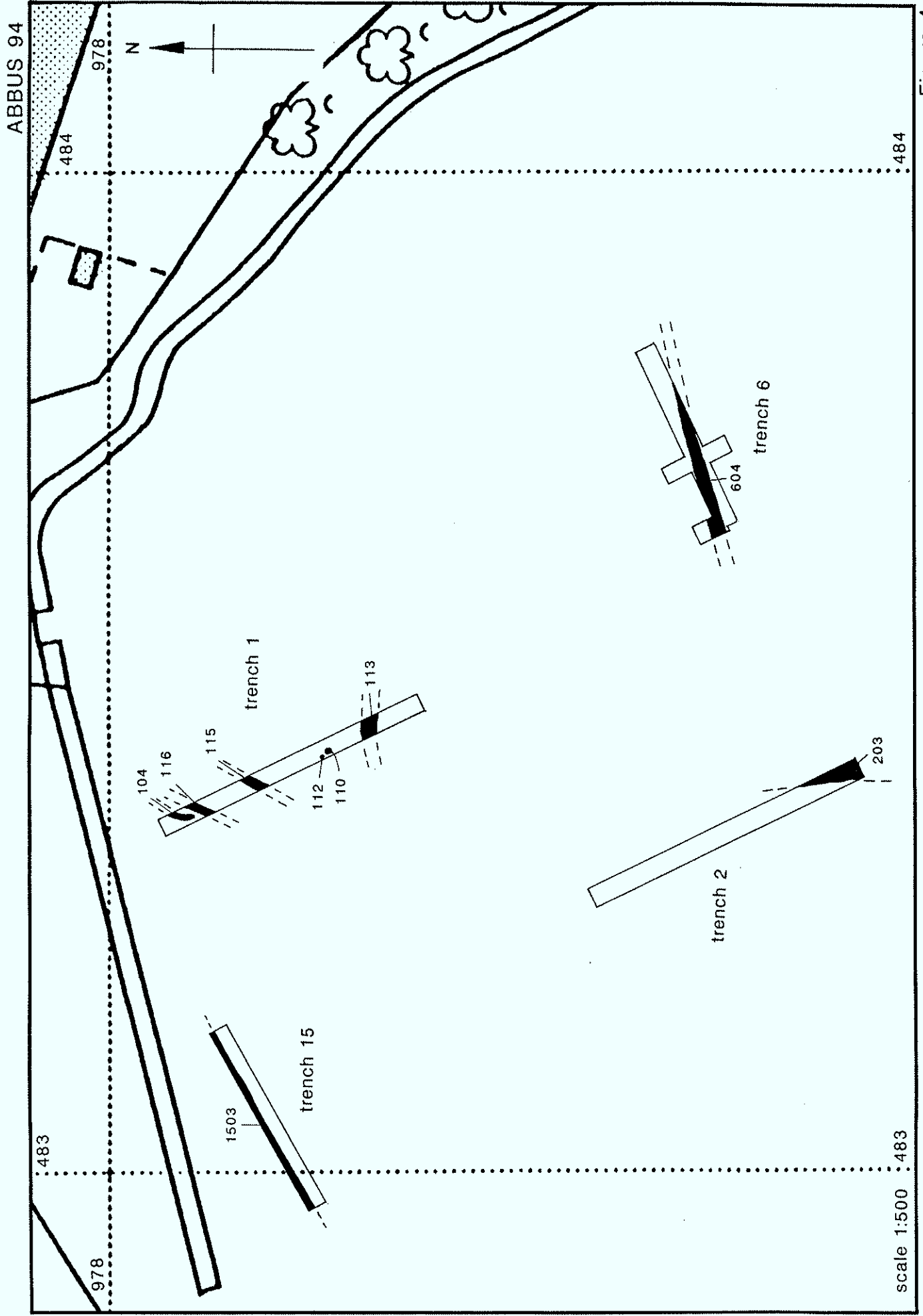


Figure 4

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