

HURLEY (BR)

HUCH
128/94

Land adjacent to Church House Hurley, Berkshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

August 1994



LAND ADJACENT TO CHURCH HOUSE, HURLEY, BERKSHIRE

Archaeological Evaluation NGR SU 83868262

SUMMARY

An Archaeological Evaluation was undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (O.A.U.) at the above named site on behalf of Mr P.M. Silver in August 1994. The land at present is overgrown with dense thickets of blackberries and brambles. The three trenches all revealed slight evidence of medieval activity. A post-medieval cellar and well, probably associated with nearby buildings, were recorded. A demolition layer indicates that the site was cleared in the mid to late 18th century.

1 INTRODUCTION

A planning application has been submitted for redevelopment of the area of land, 47 x 34 m across, adjacent to Church House. The site lies immediately outside the precinct of Hurley Priory (Fig. 1), where excavations in the 1930s revealed quantities of Roman brick and tile incorporated into the monastic buildings. In addition a Roman floor was located within the dormitory block. For this reason an archaeological evaluation was required by the local planning authority to provide information on the presence/absence and significance of remains on the site. A detailed brief for the evaluation was provided by Babcote Public Services Division.

2 AIMS

- 2.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area.
- 2.2 To determine the extent, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- 2.3 To determine the environmental/ecofactual potential of any archaeological features or deposits.
- 2.4 In particular to establish whether the finds of Roman date extend into the application area.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The evaluation consisted of three machine-dug trenches (Fig. 2) orientated NW-SE so as to avoid the foundations of the listed building. The total length amounts to 75 m.
- 3.2 The trenches were dug using a JCB equipped with a 5 foot wide toothless ditching bucket. The trenches were dug to archaeologically significant horizons under direct archaeological supervision.
- 3.3 Once machined, the trenches were hand cleaned and sufficient features were investigated to achieve aim 2.2.
- 3.4 Context recording was in accordance with the OAU standard method (OAU Field manual ed. D.Wilkinson 1992).

4 RESULTS

Trench 1

This trench was 16 m long, and was excavated to a general depth of 0.95 m below existing ground level. A deeper 1.20 m sondage was excavated in the north-western end.

A large, 5 m+ wide, undated feature (1/9) was noted in the NW end of the trench. This had been cut by a small pit (1/7) which contained several large flint nodules and pieces of tile. Feature 1/9 was overlain by a thin 0.15 m layer of chalky rubble (1/5) which contained a large quantity of brick and tile. This layer was seen in all three trenches, and is associated with the destruction/demolition of buildings on the site.

Further south along the trench a chalk block lined well 1/12 was recorded but not excavated. Finds from the top infilling suggest it went out of use in the late 17th or early 18th centuries. Although the wells construction was not dated it is believed to be of post-medieval date.

Natural gravel/sand was encountered at a depth of 29.55 m OD.

Trench 2

This the longest of the three trenches, was 36.50 m long and was excavated to an average depth of 1.00 m below existing ground level.

Approximately 0.50 m below the modern topsoil, the chalky rubble (2/1), previously noted in Trench 1, overlay 2/2 a 0.25 m thick layer of mid brown silty loam. The latter contained a large quantity of pottery dating from the mid 13th to 19th centuries. A deposit of stamped (TD with a ?Tudor rose below the initials in a heart shape) clay pipe bowls and stems, dating to 1640-60 (Oswald 1975), had been disposed of within this soil horizon.

A linear feature 2/8, orientated NE/SW (parallel to the road 22 m to the north) was located in the middle of the trench. It was 2.20 m wide and 0.45 m deep and contained a quantity of 13th - early 14th century pottery.

Two modern soakaways were located and briefly recorded. No other archaeological features were seen. Natural gravel and sand were recorded at a level of 29.45 m OD.

Trench 3

This trench, which was the furthest west of the three excavated and nearest the street frontage, showed the same soil profile as Trenches 1 and 2. The modern 0.50 m thick topsoil, and an earlier ploughsoil were separated by the same chalky rubble (3/4) recorded elsewhere across the site. This deposit, which was 0.20 m thick, extended some 18 m southwards from the north-west end of the trench. It overlay the only feature present in this trench, an infilled cellar 3/5 (Fig. 3).

The cellar measured 5.0 m N-S and 2.50 m E-W as recorded within the limits of the trench. The E-W wall, constructed from chalk and flint with red brick corner joints, was 0.45 m wide and stood *in situ* to a height of 0.85 m. The N-S wall had been robbed away down on to the level of the cellar floor.

The cellar floor (3/8) was set with re-used 17th century bay window moulding bricks and bordered with red rectangular bricks, all set into a yellow sandy mortar. Close to the northern wall a small rectangular recess (3/10), measuring 0.70 x 0.55 m, was encountered 0.45 m deep below the floor level. It had been constructed from the same odd shaped bricks, stacked horizontally, as the floor with a roof tile base. It may originally have had a ? wooden 'lid' as the mortar around the top retained timber impressions. The recess contained a complete glass wine bottle (stamped IM) and several near complete unsmoked clay pipes. (dated c. 1690 -1730) and a small quantity of window glass and lead cames. The cellar, which was probably built in the 17th or early 18th century had been infilled with large quantity of brick, tile, chalk and flint (3/6). The finds recovered from this layer suggest an infilling date of late 18th to early 19th century.

No other features were recorded in this trench. Natural sand and gravel was encountered at a depth of 29.10 m OD.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 All trenches contained evidence of medieval activity but no Roman artefacts were recovered as had been expected (aim 2.4, above).
- 5.2 17th and 18th century buildings may have existed along the main village road, possibly overlying earlier medieval structures. The post-medieval buildings had been demolished and robbed in the mid to late 18th century, a date which corresponds with the infilling of the well 1/12 noted in Trench 1. No other activity seems to have taken place on the site, perhaps supporting a theory put forward by one of the villagers that "this area was a kitchen garden for the Priory". This would also explain the universal thickness of the topsoil over the site.

Bibliography

Oswald, A. 1975 *Clay pipes for the archaeologist*. Brit. Archaeol. Rep. 14 (Oxford).

Mick Parsons
Oxford Archaeological Unit
18/8/94

LAND ADJACENT TO CHURCH COTTAGE,
HURLEY, BERKSHIRE.

Archaeological Context Inventory

<i>Trench CTX</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Date</i>
1/1	Layer	0.50		Topsoil	
1/2	Layer	0.20		Garden soil	
1/3	Layer	0.12		? Plough soil	MED ?
1/4	Layer			Natural	
1/5	Layer	0.20	5.00	Demolition	18th
1/6	Fill	0.42		Fill of 1/7	
1/7	Cut	0.50	0.76	Pit	
1/8	Fill	0.42		Fill of 1/9	
1/9	Cut	0.65	5.00+	Pit	
1/10	Structure		0.60	Well lining	17th
1/11	Fill			Fill of 1/10	17-18th
1/12	Cut		2.90	Cut for well	17th
1/13	Fill	0.26		Fill of 1/15	
1/14	Fill	0.10		Fill of 1/15	
1/15	Cut	0.36	0.70	Pit	
2/1	Layer	0.50		Topsoil	
2/2	Layer	0.25		Garden soil	13-19th
2/3	Layer	0.25		? Plough soil	MED ?
2/4	Layer	0.24	17.00	Demolition	18th
2/5	Structure			Soak away	MODERN
2/6	Structure			Soak away	MODERN
2/7	Fill	0.45		Fill of 2/8	13-14th
2/8	Cut	0.45	2.20	Ditch	
2/9	Fill			Fill of 2/5	
2/10	Layer			Natural	
3/1	Layer	0.50		Topsoil	
3/2	Layer	0.30		? Plough soil	MED ?
3/3	Layer			Natural	
3/4	Layer	0.20	18.00	Demolition	18th
3/5	Cut				
3/6	Fill	0.70		Infill of cellar	18-19th
3/7	Wall	0.85	0.45	Cellar walls	17-18th
3/8	Floor			Floor to cellar	
3/9	Fill	0.25		Fill of 3/10	17-18th
3/10	Recess	0.45	0.55 x 0.77	Rectangular floor recess	

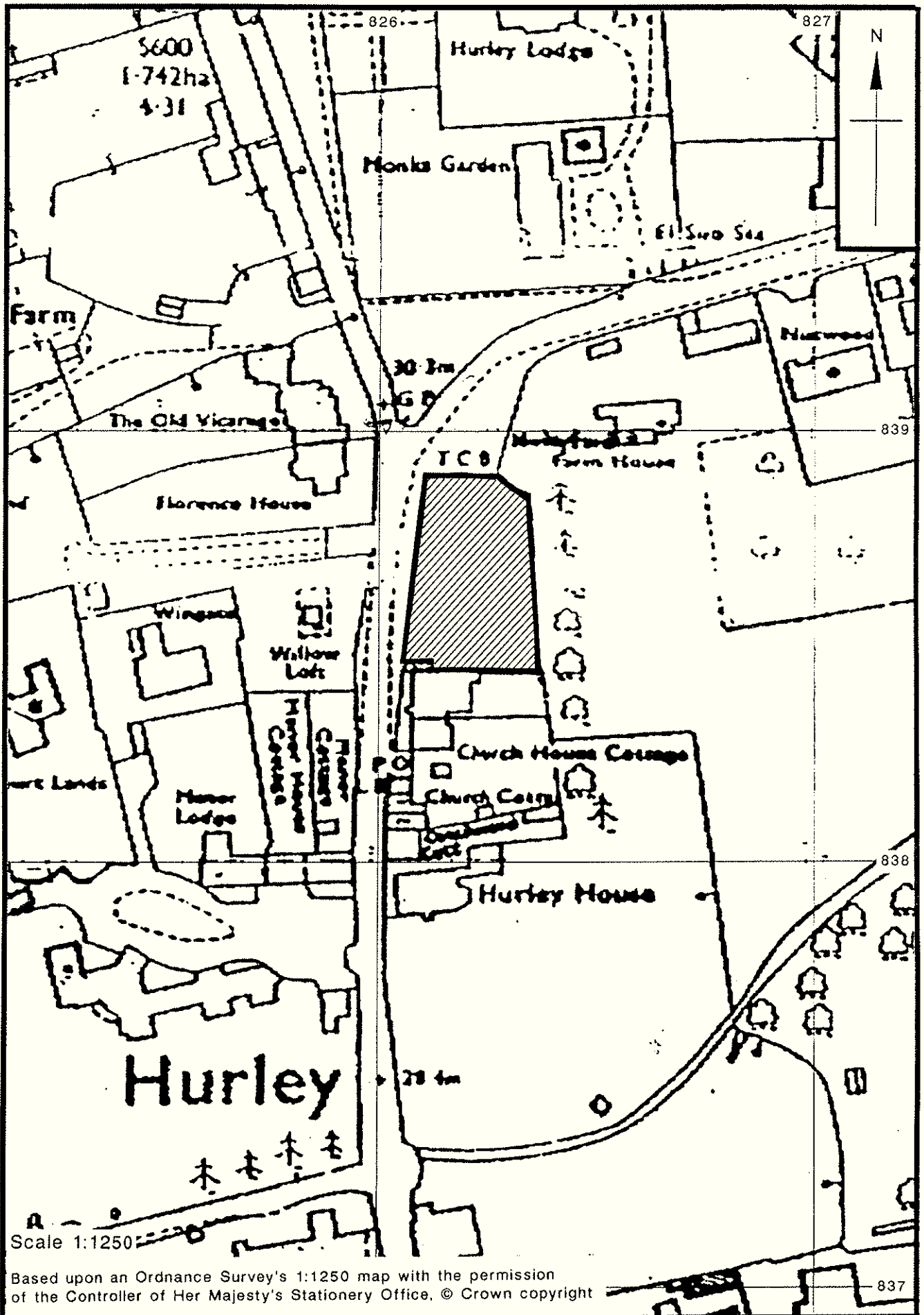


figure 1: Site location

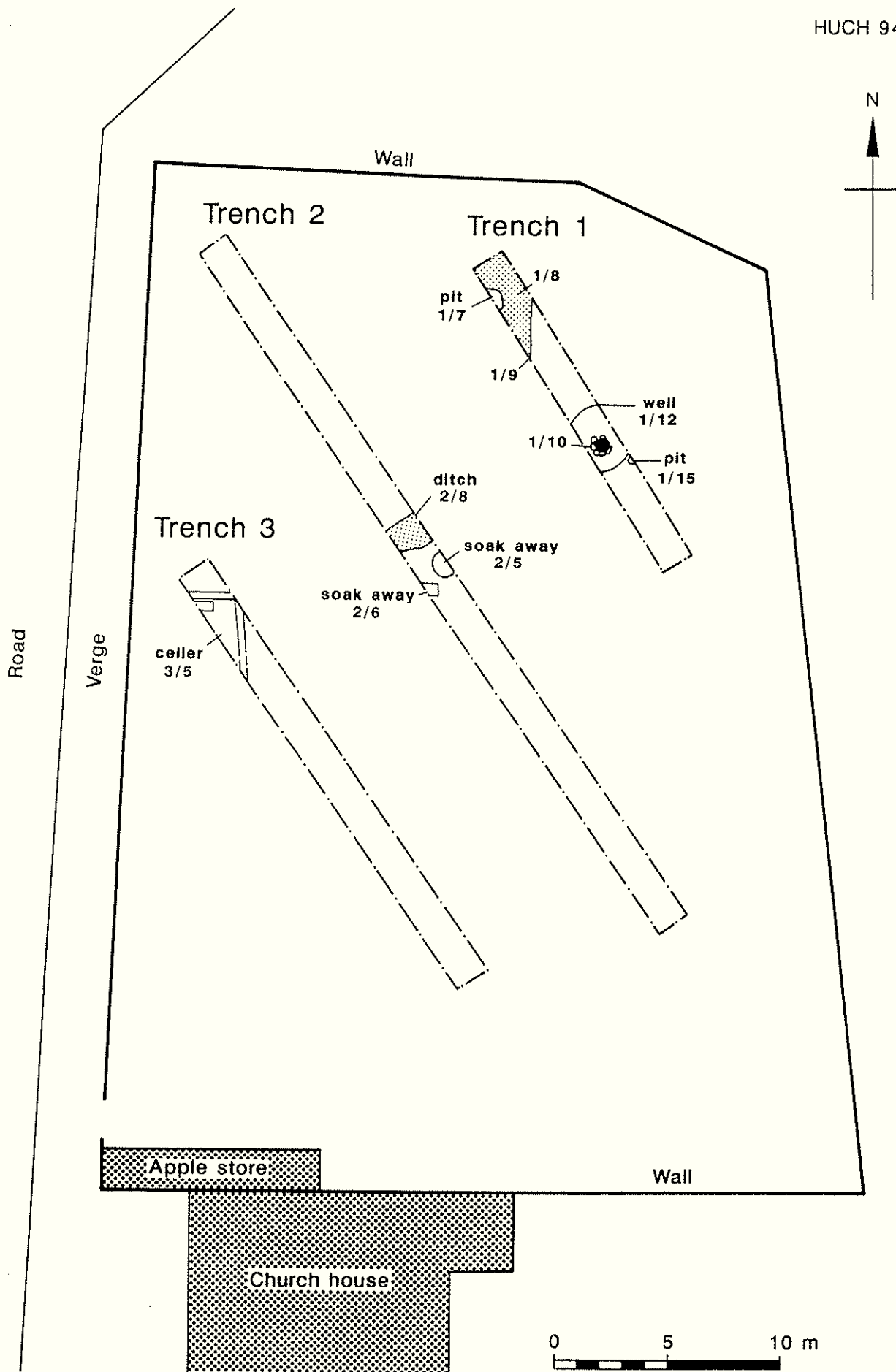
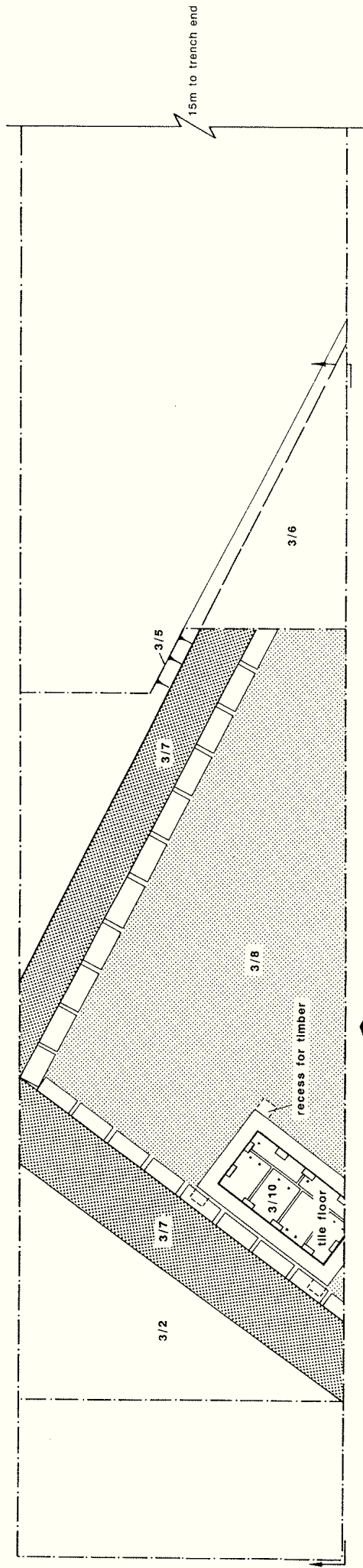


figure 2: Trench location

Trench 3

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17th century bay window moulding reused as cobbling



section reversed
NW

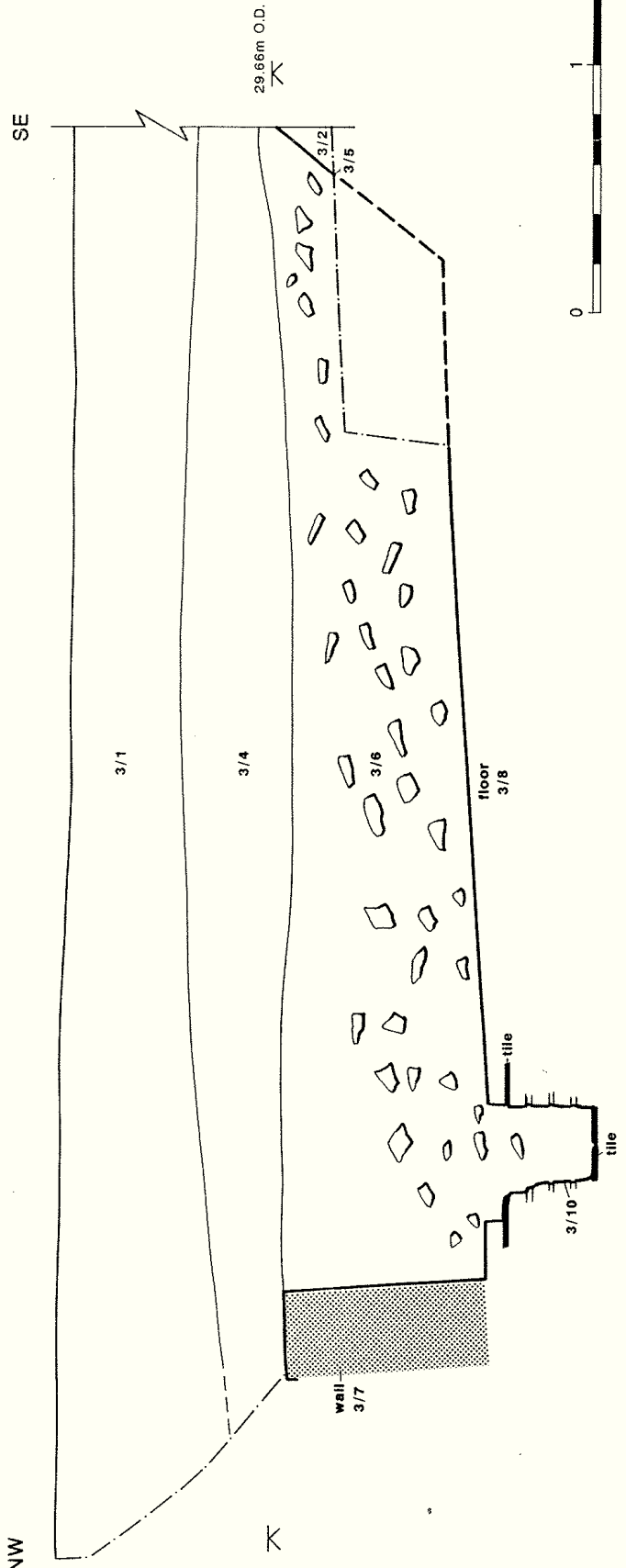


figure 3: Trench 3 plan & section

Oxford Archaeological Unit
46 Hythe Bridge Street
Oxford OX1 2EP



Tel: 0865 243888 Fax: 0865 793496

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