

VILLAGE HOMES LIMITED

72-76 OLD CHURCH LANE, STANMORE, MIDDLESEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

TQ 1720 9140



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

AUGUST 1998

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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SUMMARY

In July 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at 72 - 76 Old Church Lane, Stanmore, Middlesex on behalf of Village Homes (south east) Limited. A single hand-excavated trench contained one archaeological feature. This shallow irregular cut, which is most likely to be of medieval date, was located at the eastern end of the trench. The fills contained a mixture of Saxon and medieval pottery and a small quantity of Roman brick/ tile. The feature was overlain by garden soil containing post-medieval finds, as well as very small quantities of residual prehistoric and medieval material.

The function of the single medieval feature is uncertain, but its irregular profile suggests that it may be of natural origin, perhaps a tree bole. The feature produced metal-working slag in sufficient quantity to suggest that it is not entirely residual. The single environmental sample from this feature produced a diverse and well-preserved assemblage of charred plant remains, but no other environmental/ economic indicators. Animal bones were recovered only from the post-medieval garden soils.

The mixture of prehistoric, Roman and Saxon material recovered from a single small trench, even in such small quantities, may indicate the presence of a multi-period settlement in the vicinity, although it is clear that all of the pre-medieval artefacts found are residual in later contexts.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

In July 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a field evaluation at 72 - 76 Old Church Lane, Stanmore (Fig. 1), in the London Borough of Harrow (Middlesex), on behalf of Village Homes Limited. The evaluation was commissioned in support of a planning application to construct a house on the site, in order to establish the archaeological potential. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by the OAU, and a Guidance Brief issued by English Heritage, London Region (EH, 1998).

The development site lies to the rear of 72-76 Old Church Lane (Fig. 2) centred at NGR TQ 1720 9740. Belmont Lane forms the south-east site boundary. The evaluation area is 196 m² in extent. The fieldwork took place between 20th and 23rd July 1998.

1.2 Geology and topography

The geology consists of clay and river gravels overlain by alluvial deposits. The site is currently a heavily overgrown back garden plot containing a number of mature trees. Hedges divide the property from Belmont Lane and the adjacent property to the west.

1.3 Archaeological background

The site lies within an Archaeological Priority Area defined by the London Borough of Harrow Urban Development Plan. The area covers the possible extent of the early medieval village of Great Stanmore. The village seems to have extended along Old Church Lane. A medieval moated manor house lay immediately to the north of the site, its moat fed by the Edgware Brook. The early medieval Church was located to the north of the manor house. Stanmore is listed in the Domesday Book, which shows that the village was well established in the 11th century and must have Saxon origins. The village shifted northwards in the late medieval period, moving to a new location on the east - west aligned road to Uxbridge. The old church and village fell into disuse and a new church was built to the north. When the present suburban houses were built, some record was made of the moated manor house site, but no systematic excavation took place. The full extent of the early medieval village, or of its Saxon predecessor is unknown.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

The aims of the evaluation are as follows:

- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area, and in particular to assess the site for the presence of Saxon or medieval activity
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present
- To determine the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features
- To make available the results of the investigation

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample size

The evaluation was based upon a 7% sample of the development area, and consisted of a single east - west aligned trench, measuring 7 m x 2 m (Fig. 2). The trench was entirely hand excavated to a maximum depth of 0.9 m. Some care was taken not to damage the root systems of trees or large bushes at the ends of this trench.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording was conducted in accordance with the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992) and English Heritage Guidelines AGP 3.

3.3 Finds

All deposits were monitored for finds during hand excavation of deposits and features.

3.4 Environmental data

Samples were taken of fill 105 of large pit/ tree bole (103) at the east end of the trench.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

The general soil type was a silty clay loam. Ground conditions were dry.

4.2 Distribution of Archaeological Deposits

The evaluation revealed a single large, irregular pit or tree bole at the east end of the trench (Fig. 3).

4.3 Presentation of Results

Features and deposits are briefly described in stratigraphic sequence, from the undisturbed natural geology to the present topsoil. This is followed by an assessment of the recovered finds and a discussion and interpretation of the results.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTION

5.1 Description of deposits

At the base of the trench was a layer of clayey gravel (108), at a maximum depth of 0.9m beneath the present ground level (49.38m OD). This was overlain by a tenacious orange-brown clay (107). These layers contained no finds and are thought to be natural alluvial deposits. A test pit was excavated by hand through layer 108 to a depth of 0.30 m to confirm this interpretation.

At the east end of the trench a large shallow feature (103) cuts through layer 107. This feature was only partially revealed within the evaluation trench. It was irregular in plan and profile, with poorly defined shallow, concave sides and a flat base. The dimensions of the feature, as excavated, were at least 2 m wide and 3.2 m long. The maximum surviving depth was 0.35 m. The primary fill (109) was a mid greyish brown silty clay, which was very similar to the surrounding natural (108). The upper fills consisted of a grey brown silty clays (105, 104). These contained slag, brick or tile fragments and sherds of Saxon and medieval pottery. Fill 105 also contained very frequent charcoal flecking. This deposit was sampled for environmental processing.

A layer of clayey gravel (102), containing charcoal and coal flecking, overlay the fills of feature 103 and also the cleaner probable natural clay (107), below. Layer 102 also contained occasional modern finds which may have been deposited by gardening activity from above.

A land-drainage system cut from the top of layer 102 was also recorded consisting of north - south and WNW to ESE drainage pipes at a depth of 0.6m beneath the present ground level (49.90 m OD).

Brown and dark grey - brown silty clay loam topsoil covered the site to a depth of 0.6m and represent former gardening levels. These were found to contain numerous modern finds.

5.2 The Finds by K. Atherton

Appendix 2 contains an assessment and quantification of the finds by context.

The fills of feature 103 (104 and 105) produced a small assemblage of pottery. The small group of diagnostic sherds included two medieval and three possible Anglo-Saxon sherds. Seven undiagnostic sherds are most likely to be of medieval date. Fragments of Roman brick or tile and metal-working slag were also recovered. Feature 103 is therefore likely to be medieval in date, but contains residual material from earlier periods, indicating Roman and Anglo-Saxon activity in the vicinity

Layer 102, which overlay feature 103, contained fifteen sherds of post-medieval pottery, as well as three sherds of residual medieval pottery and a single sherd from an early Bronze Age urn. This layer is likely to have been disturbed by modern gardening activity.

Layer 101 represents a lower garden soil. It contained medieval (one sherd) and post-medieval finds including quantities of post-medieval pottery, clay pipe and other finds.

5.3 Environmental data by G Campbell

5.3.1 *Carbonized plant remains and charcoal*

A single sample, comprising 20 litres from a charcoal-rich lense (105) in the irregular medieval pit/tree-bole (103), was floated and wet-sieved. Artefacts, slag, animal bones and charred plant remains were recovered for assessment. No molluscs or waterlogged remains were present.

The charred plant remains are rich and dominated by wood charcoal, much of it identifiable. Charred herbaceous plant remains were also rich, including about 200 grains (principally wheat and barley), with occasional large legumes (beans or peas), about 100 small weed seeds (possibly poppy and vetch or tare), and approximately 30 pieces of chaff. This sample has produced a varied and well-preserved assemblage, which would merit full analysis and publication, if the archaeological context was more clearly defined.

5.3.2 *Faunal remains*

Animal bones and snails were absent from the sieved sample. Animal bones and oyster shells were however recovered by hand from the post-medieval garden soils in some quantity. The bones, mainly from sheep and cattle, show signs of butchery.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

There is likely to have been some disturbance of the garden soils beneath the present topsoil, caused by gardening activity, root disturbance and the insertion of land drains. However, the fills of the single archaeological feature found (103), do not appear to have been disturbed by post-medieval activity.

The small scale of the development, and consequent small size of the trial trench, hampers interpretation of the findings. The quantity of finds recovered is very small, but this reflects the scale of the excavation rather than the possible density of medieval or earlier archaeology in the area.

6.2 Overall interpretation

6.2.1 *Summary of Results*

The excavated trench contained a single archaeological feature (103). This shallow irregular cut, which is most likely to be of medieval date, was located at the eastern end of the trench. The fills contained a mixture of Saxon and medieval pottery and a small quantity of Roman brick/ tile. The feature was overlain by garden soil (100 and 101) containing post-medieval finds, as well as very small quantities of residual prehistoric and medieval material.

The function of the single medieval feature is uncertain, but its irregular profile suggests that it may be of natural origin, perhaps a tree bole. The feature produced metal-working slag in sufficient quantity to suggest that it is not entirely residual. The single environmental sample from this feature produced a diverse and well-preserved assemblage of charred plant remains, but no other environmental/ economic indicators. Animal bones were recovered only from the post-medieval garden soils.

6.2.2 *Significance*

The mixture of prehistoric, Roman and Saxon material recovered from a single small trench, even in such small quantities, may indicate the presence of a multi-period settlement in the vicinity, although it is clear that all of the pre-medieval artefacts found are residual in later contexts.

The discovery of medieval artefacts is not unexpected, given the location of the site within the historic core of the village of Stanmore. However the recovery of three Saxon sherds from a trench of this size is potentially significant, and may indicate the survival of early Saxon deposits in the vicinity. The charcoal and slag found in the fills of feature 103, may indicate metal-working activity in the vicinity in the medieval period.

The evaluation suggests the presence of prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and medieval activity in the area, although there is no evidence for surviving pre-medieval deposits within the development area. The survival of the possible medieval tree bole (103), indicates that archaeological deposits may be expected to survive in pockets, where protected by layers of garden soil.

Bibliography and references

Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992, *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual*, (First edition, August 1992)

EH, 1992 *Archaeological Guidance Paper 2. Model brief for an archaeological evaluation*, 1992
English Heritage, London Region

EH, 1998 *Archaeological Investigation of Church Street Stanmore: Guidance Brief, July 1998*
English Heritage, London Region

Appendix 1: Context Inventory

Trench 1						
Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
100	Layer	Topsoil	0.35		Pot,Metal,Wood	Modern
101	Layer	Lower topsoil	0.3		Pot,Metal,Wood	Modern
102	Layer	Pebbly clay	0.32		Pot	Modern
103	Cut	Feature: Possible tree-bole?	0.35	3.20+		
104	Fill	Fill of 103	0.25		Pot,CBM,Slag	Medieval?
105	Fill	Fill of 103	0.1		Pot,CBM,Slag	Medieval?
106	Drain	Land-drain				Modern
107	Layer	Pebbly clay	0.35+	5.50+		
108	Layer	Pebble spreads	0.10+			
109	Fill	Primary fill of 103	0.21			

Appendix 2: The Finds

Table 1: Finds by context

Context	101	102	104	105
Early Bronze Age Urn		1		
Possible Anglo-Saxon pot			3	
Medieval pot	1	3	2	
Undiagnostic pot (med or earlier)				7
Post-medieval pot	2	15		
Glass (window and vessel)	1	4		
Claypipe (stems)	1	4		
Bone	10	18		
Iron (cog)		1		
Slag		1	7	1
Stone (burnt slate and stone)		2		
Oyster shell		1		
CMB (probably Roman)			6	2

The evaluation produced an assemblage of finds that is varied both in date and in type but is restricted to only four contexts. With the exception of the bone, which is relatively well preserved, the finds are mostly small and abraded. This is not surprising, considering that the majority of the finds are from garden topsoil (101) and its underlying subsoil (102).

Feature 103 (fills 104 and 105) contained no finds that date later than the medieval period. However, the sherds of pottery are too small and abraded to permit a closer date. There is some residual material, represented by three fragments from a Saxon vessel and six abraded pieces of brick or tile, which are more likely to be Roman than medieval. It is also possible that the iron slag is Roman. The garden deposits (101 and 102) contain a mixture of finds, ranging from an early Bronze Age urn sherd to clay pipes and an iron-toothed cog.

5) PERIODS REPRESENTED

Palaeolithic	Roman
Mesolithic	Saxon (pre-AD 1066)
Neolithic	Medieval (AD 1066-1485)
Bronze Age	Post-Medieval
Iron Age	Unknown

6) PERIOD SUMMARIES Use headings for each period (ROMAN; MEDIEVAL; etc.), and additional sheets if necessary.

- PREHISTORIC: Fragment of Bronze Age urn. Residual in post-medieval garden soil.
- ROMAN: Fragments of probable Roman brick/ tile. Residual in a medieval feature.
- SAXON: Three possible Saxon sherds, residual in a medieval feature.
- MEDIEVAL: Pottery sherds in a large, shallow, irregular pit or tree bole. The feature also produced residual Roman and Saxon material. Well-preserved and varied charred plant remains from a fill of the feature.
- POST-MEDIEVAL Layers of garden soil containing post-medieval and modern pottery, clay pipe, glass and small quantities of residual earlier pottery (prehistoric and medieval).

7) NATURAL (state if not observed; please DO NOT LEAVE BLANK)

Type: Silty clay alluvium with gravel

Height above Ordnance Datum: *c* 49 m OD

8) LOCATION OF ARCHIVES

a) Please indicate those categories still in your possession: All

<u>NOtes</u>	<u>PLans</u>	<u>PHotos</u>	<u>NGatives</u>
<u>SLides</u>	<u>COrrrespondence</u>	<u>Mscripts (unpub reports, etc)</u>	

b) all/some records have been/will be deposited in the following museum, records office etc:

Museum of London (when reopened)

c) Approximate year of transfer: pending reopening of MOL

d) Location of any copies: OAU and NMR

e) Has a security copy of the archive been made?: YES/NO (To be arranged)

If not, do you wish RCHME to consider microfilming?: YES/NO N/A

9) LOCATION OF FINDS

a) In your possession (delete as appropriate): ALL / SOME / NONE

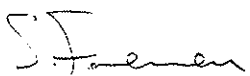
b) All/some finds have been/will be deposited with the following museum/other body:

Museum of London (when reopened)

c) Approximate year of transfer: Pending reopening of MOL

10) BIBLIOGRAPHY

OAU, 1998 72-76, Old Church Lane Stanmore, Middlesex. Archaeological evaluation report.
August 1998

SIGNED:  DATE: 6/8/98

NAME (Block capitals): S. B. FOREMAN

Please return the completed form to :

English Heritage, The Greater London Sites and Monuments Record,
Room 214, 23 Savile Row, London W1X 1AB
Tel 0171-973-3731/3779. Direct fax: 0171-973-3742/3792

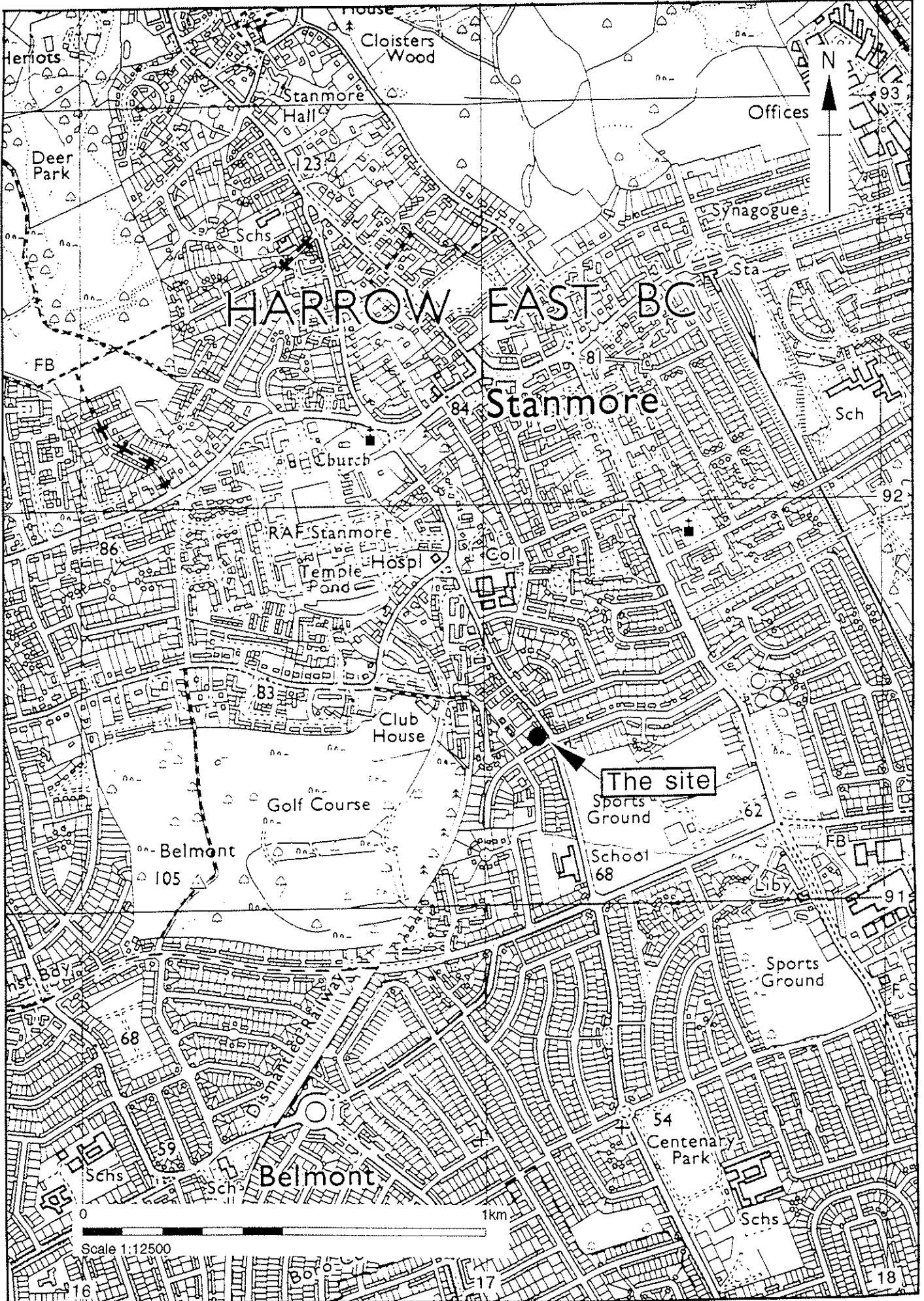


Figure 1: Site location plan

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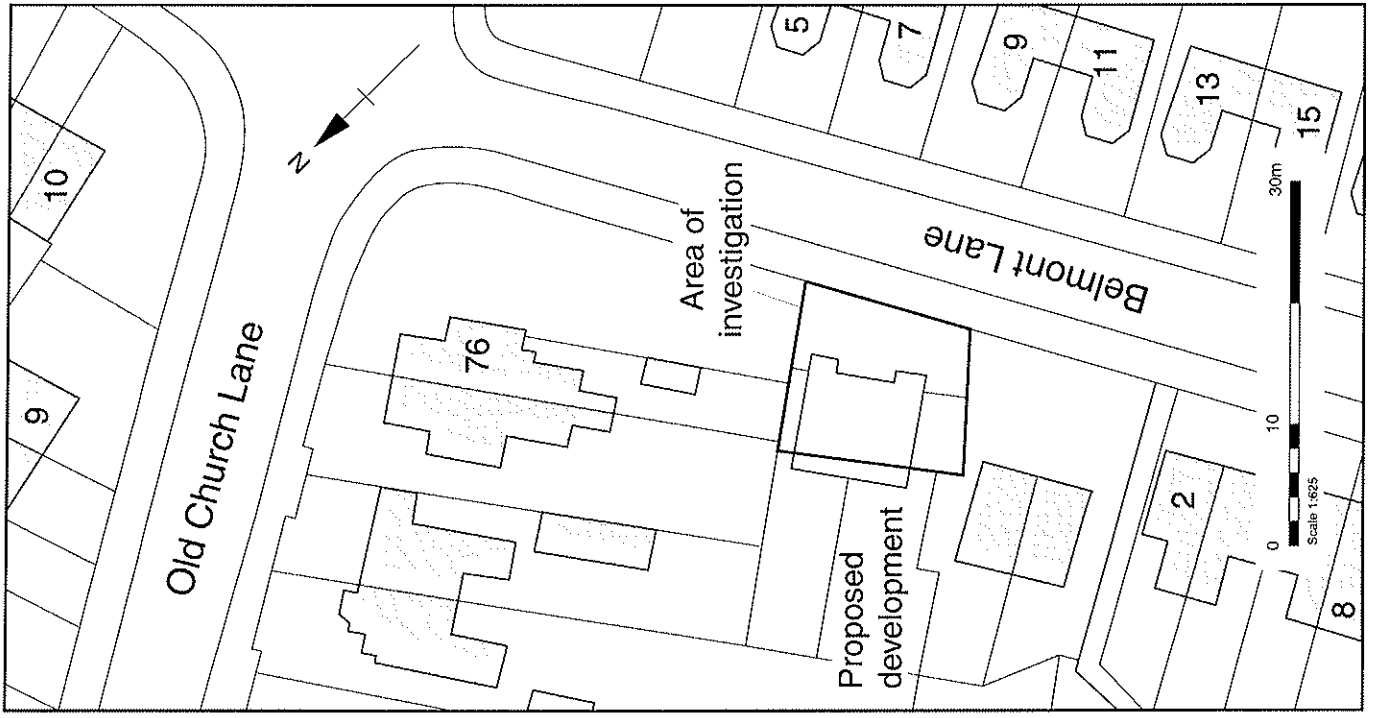
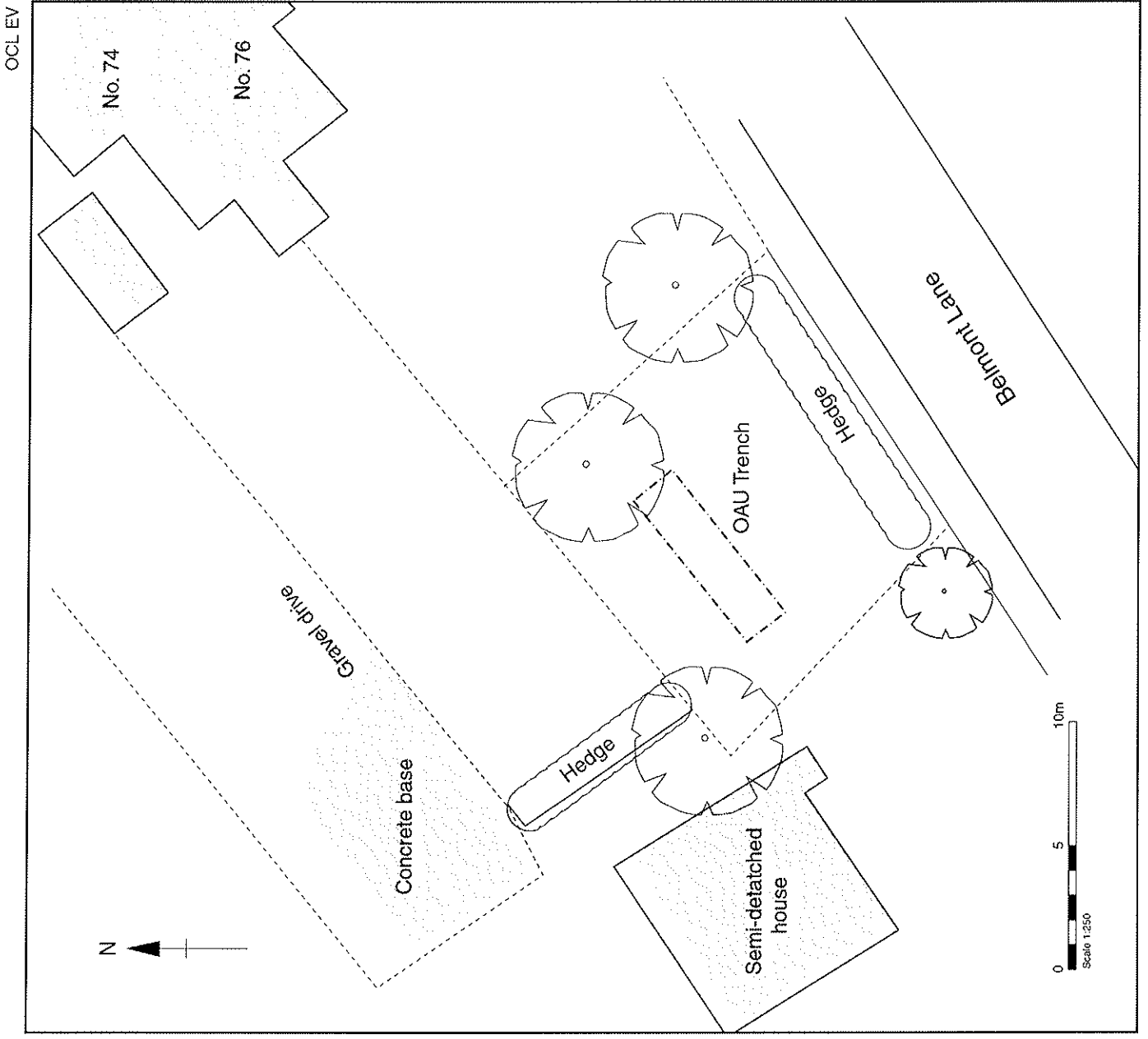


Figure 2: Trench location plan

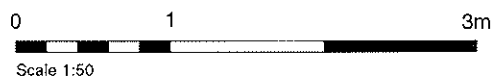
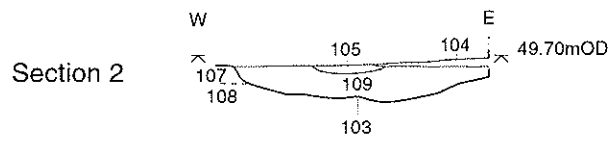
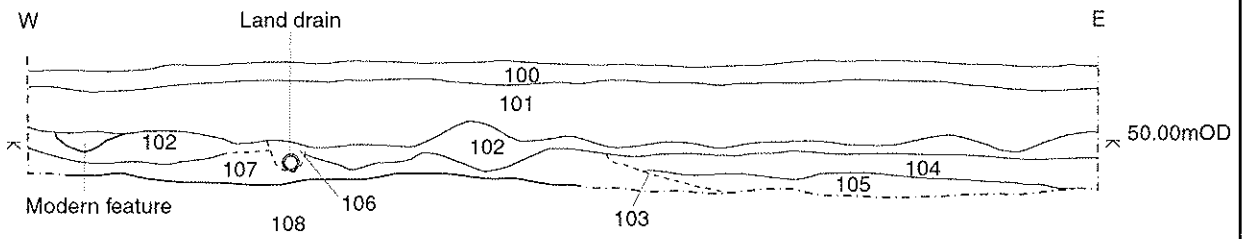
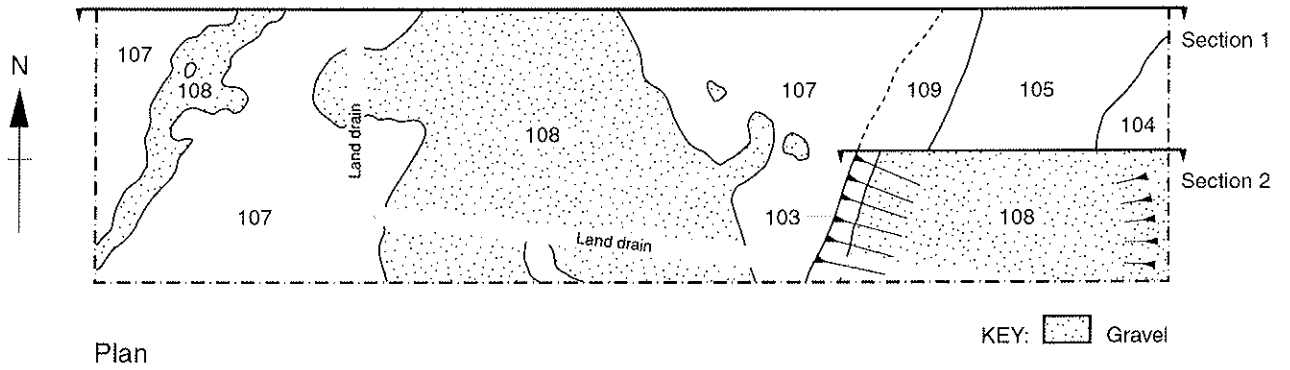


Figure 3: Trench plan and sections



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