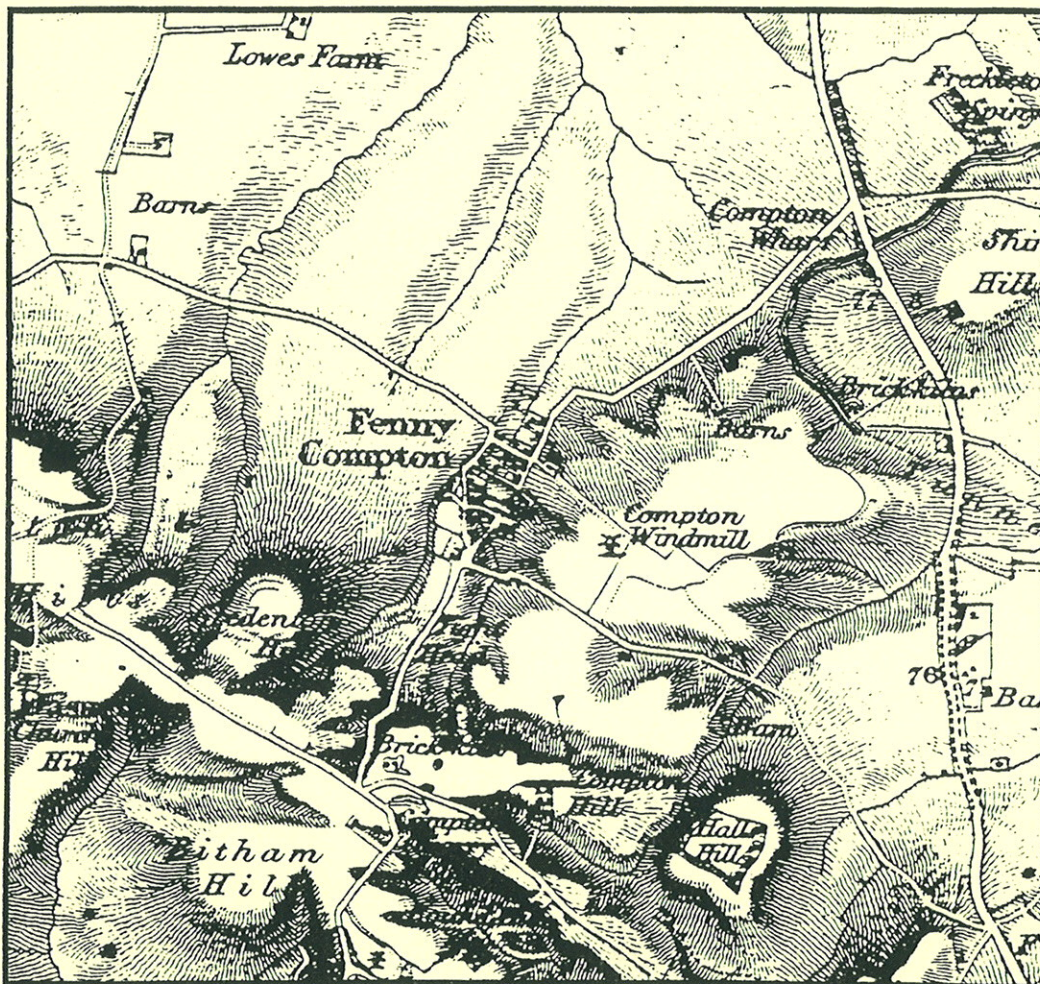


Land adjacent to 1, Church Street Fenny Compton Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief Report

NGR SP 4169 5216



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

November 1995

**LAND ADJACENT TO 1 CHURCH STREET,
FENNY COMPTON, WARWICKSHIRE
NGR SP 4169 5216
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

1 SUMMARY

Two phases of work at this site (Figs. 1 and 2) were monitored by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU), in advance of the construction of a new dwelling. A watching brief was carried out in February 1995 during preliminary groundwork, which involved the excavation by JCB of an access ramp onto the site. In the course of this part of the boundary wall of the site plot was demolished. Part of a stone and brick structure was observed set into the natural clay horizon. An evaluation trench was excavated by the OAU in November 1995. A stone-built Victorian structure, perhaps a property division, and a Victorian ditch were recorded within the evaluation trench. No medieval remains, features or finds, were observed. Topsoil stripping and the excavation of foundation trenches for the new dwelling were monitored after the evaluation: no further archaeological remains were observed.

2 INTRODUCTION AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Planning permission has been granted by Stratford on Avon Council for the construction of a new house next to 1 Church Street, Fenny Compton, Warwickshire (Ref S91/1636). The total area of this development comprises approximately 350 square metres of undulating ground sloping E-W, which lies at a general level of 116 m O.D. The underlying geology is Lower Lias clay. The groundwork for the development was carried out by C and A Sage Building Contractors of Berkswell, Coventry.

The development site lies within the area of the medieval settlement of Fenny Compton. Extant earthworks, perhaps of medieval date, lie 150 m to the NE of the site (PRN WA 667). Further earthworks lie c. 300 m to the N near the Manor House (PRN WA 668). In addition, structural remains of medieval date have been recovered in recent work carried out by Warwickshire Museum (PRN 6WA 646). A field evaluation was carried out by the OAU c. 1 km to the NW on the High Street in 1994, in advance of housing development. A low density of features containing medieval material of 13-14th century date was observed in the northern corner of the area examined. More recently an evaluation to the immediate S of this development was carried out by the OAU at land adjacent to 2 Church Street in August, 1995. Medieval pottery was recovered from deposits at the base of the evaluation trench, however no medieval features were identified.

The area of land proposed for development was formerly owned by Christchurch College, Oxford. In more recent times the development area belonged to the Duckett family who were involved in coffin making. A 'saw pit' was situated on the N part of the site where the wood for the coffins was worked. A large greenhouse is known to have stood on the site up until recently.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Phase 1: WATCHING BRIEF

The site was first visited on February 20, 1995. The excavation of an access ramp onto the site was monitored. A portion of a standing wall (1) was demolished in the course of the operation. The wall, which defined the plot of land, was constructed of Ironstone mixed with fragments of red-brick and other local stone (reportedly Claydon stone). The stone and brick were not mortared. The wall was set in a construction cut (3), seen to cut the natural lias clay (5). A bank of red-brown loam (2) formed a bank against the wall and fronted onto Church Street (Fig. 3). Red-brick fragments were present within this deposit.

Topsoil (4) within the plot comprised a dark grey clay silt loam, and was 0.32 m thick. Several sherds of Willow Pattern and white china were recovered from layer 4.

A base of a wall (6) aligned roughly N-S was observed within the stripped area. The stonework was set into the natural and sealed beneath layer 4. One 0.50 m wide course of Ironstone blocks mixed with red bricks was observed. The stonework was roughly constructed and not bonded with mortar.

3.2 Phase 2: EVALUATION AND WATCHING BRIEF

An evaluation trench (Fig. 4) aligned E-W and measuring 7 m by 2.50 m was excavated by JCB in the centre of the proposed area of the new house. Natural Lias clay (106) was observed at a depth of 0.40 m below the present ground level.

A linear cut feature (Fig. 5) aligned NNW-SSE was observed towards the E end of the trench. Cut 105 was 0.65 m wide and 0.22 m deep, and was filled with 104. This fill (104) was a loose, sticky grey clay silt which contained stone, brick, and a substantial quantity of Victorian (or later) patterned china and glass.

At the west end of the trench a substantial stone-built structure (103) was observed set into the natural clay. No construction trench was visible through the clay, and it is assumed that the stonework was set flush within a 'box' trench. Wall 103 was constructed of Ironstone blocks, and three visible courses survived. Wall 103 was 0.62 m wide and at least 0.33 m tall. Several standard sized red bricks of recent date were incorporated in the construction of the wall. The masonry was aligned NW-SE. Two offset courses of stone (107 and 108) were observed to the E and W of 103, and lay at approximate right angles to 103. Both 107 and 108 consisted of single courses of large angular Ironstone blocks. Stonework 107 was 0.77 m wide and 108 was 0.62 m wide. Both portions of masonry were bonded to wall 103, and were of contemporary build.

Wall 103 was abutted on both sides by a light grey sticky clay loam, 101, which directly overlaid 107 and 108. Layer 101 contained sherds of Victorian and possibly

later pottery. A Victorian penny with a date of 1868 was recovered from soil 101, where it butted the E face of 103. Layer 101 was overlaid by 102, a light brown clay loam containing fragments of clay pipe. Layer 102 was sealed by topsoil 100, from which a substantial quantity of Victorian/C20 pottery and glass was recovered.

The excavation of foundation trenches and removal of topsoil was monitored on 20.11.95, at the request of the contractors. The stone structure (103, 107 and 108) was removed in the course of the excavations. Linear feature 105 extended to the limits of the excavated area, although the upper fill was compacted by the on site machinery. The total observed length of feature 105 was 7.50 m. The development area was levelled to the top of the natural Lias clay. No further features were observed in the foundation trenches for the new house, or at the level of the topsoil strip. A photographic record was made of this last phase of groundwork.

4 DISCUSSION

The dry stone wall surrounding the plot appears to date to this century, or possibly the Victorian period. The bricks used in the construction of the wall were of recent origin. The sticky, damp nature of the ditch feature and its down-slope orientation might suggest that the ditch was used for drainage purposes. Pottery recovered from the topsoil and layers below the topsoil was of Victorian or later date. The topsoil was well worked and mixed, suggesting that it had been cultivated. The plot of land would appear to have been used as an allotment/garden. Several local people maintain that the plot of land next to 1 Church Street was well kept as a garden up until very recently.

Wall 103 would appear to be a continuation of wall 6 observed during the initial watching brief visit, and together with the offset structures 107 and 108, may represent Victorian boundary divisions on this plot of land.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Despite the location of this site within the area of the medieval village of Fenny Compton, no traces of medieval remains were observed. It is possible that Victorian and C20 gardening activity have removed medieval soil horizons, however, no medieval pottery was recovered from the excavated soil layers or the spoil heaps. No features/structures predating the Victorian period were observed cutting the natural clay.

J.Hiller
Oxford Archaeological Unit
November, 1995

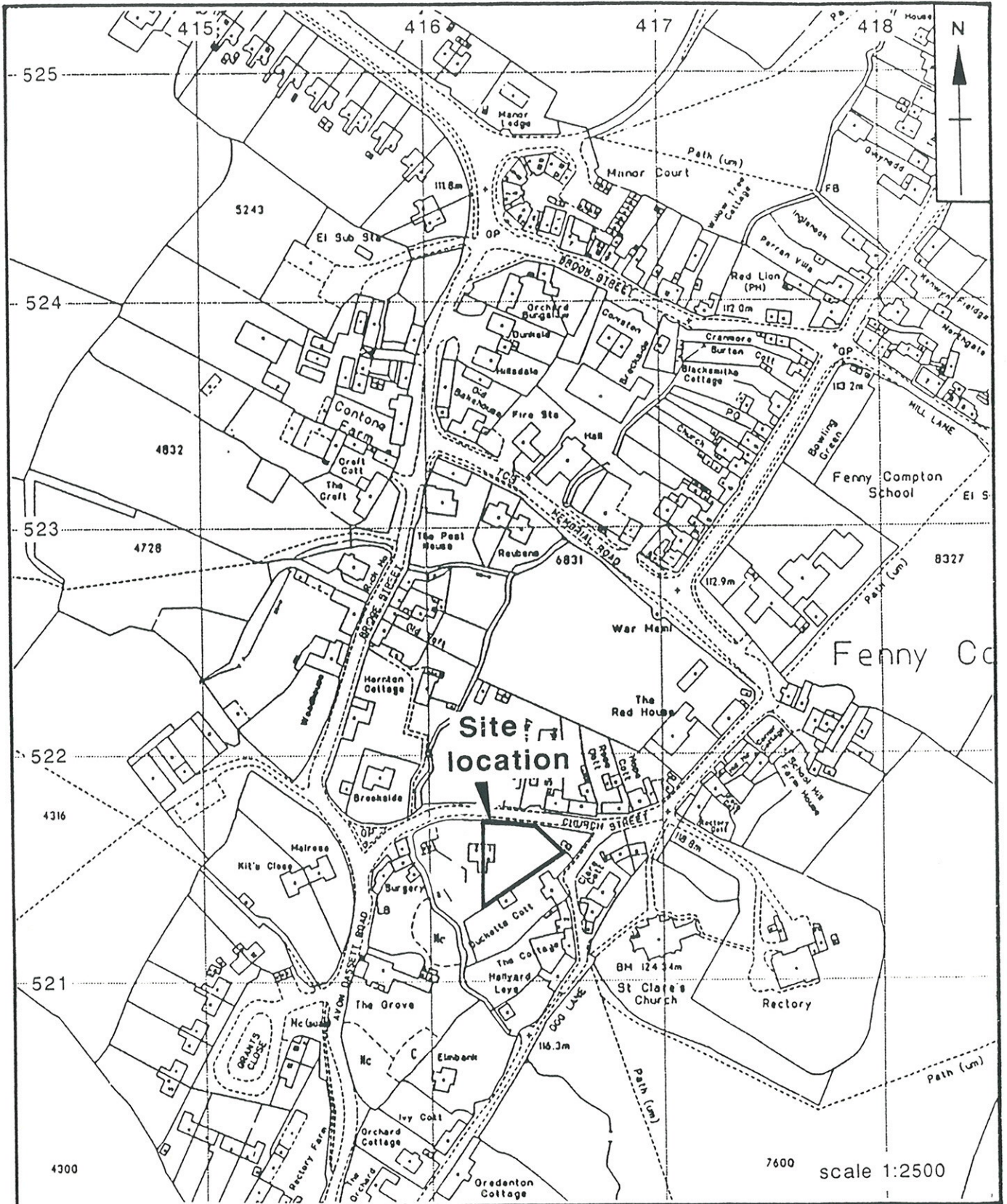
TABLES OF CONTEXT INFORMATION

TABLE 1: WATCHING BRIEF

CTX	Depth/Height	Width	Comments
1	1.80 m +	0.55 m	Boundary wall of plot
2	0.60 m	0.60 m	Earth bank against 1
3	-	0.65 m	Construction trench for 1
4	0.34 m	-	Current topsoil
5	0.32 m+	-	Natural Lias clay
6	-	0.50 m	Stone footing for C19-C20 wall = 103 from evaluation phase

TABLE 2: EVALUATION

CTX	TYPE	DEPTH	WIDTH	COMMENTS
100	layer	0.24 m	-	topsoil
101	layer	0.18 m	-	soil layer butting structure 103
102	layer	0.14 m	-	soil layer sealing ditch fill 104 and over layer 101
103	structure	0.33 m+	0.62 m	wall of garden/allotment building, Victorian
104	fill	0.22 m	-	fill of ditch 105, containing Victorian and later material
105	cut	0.22 m	0.65 m	ditch, boundary or drainage channel, total observed length 7.50 m
106	layer	0.22 m+	-	natural Lias clay
107	structure	0.04 m+	0.77 m	single course of stone offset from 103 to the W
108	structure	0.04 m+	0.60 m	single course of offset stone to the E of 103



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Figure 1

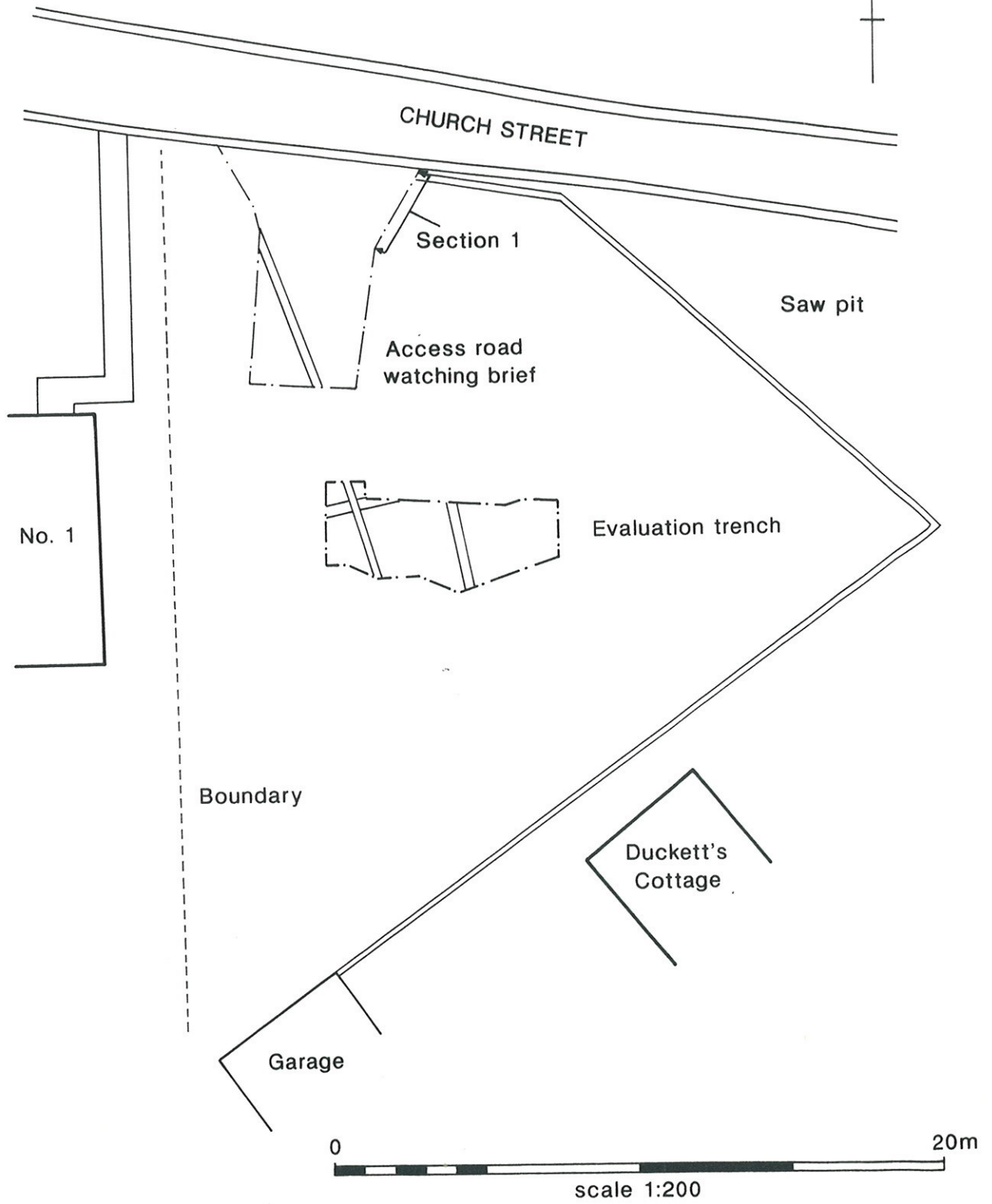


Figure 2

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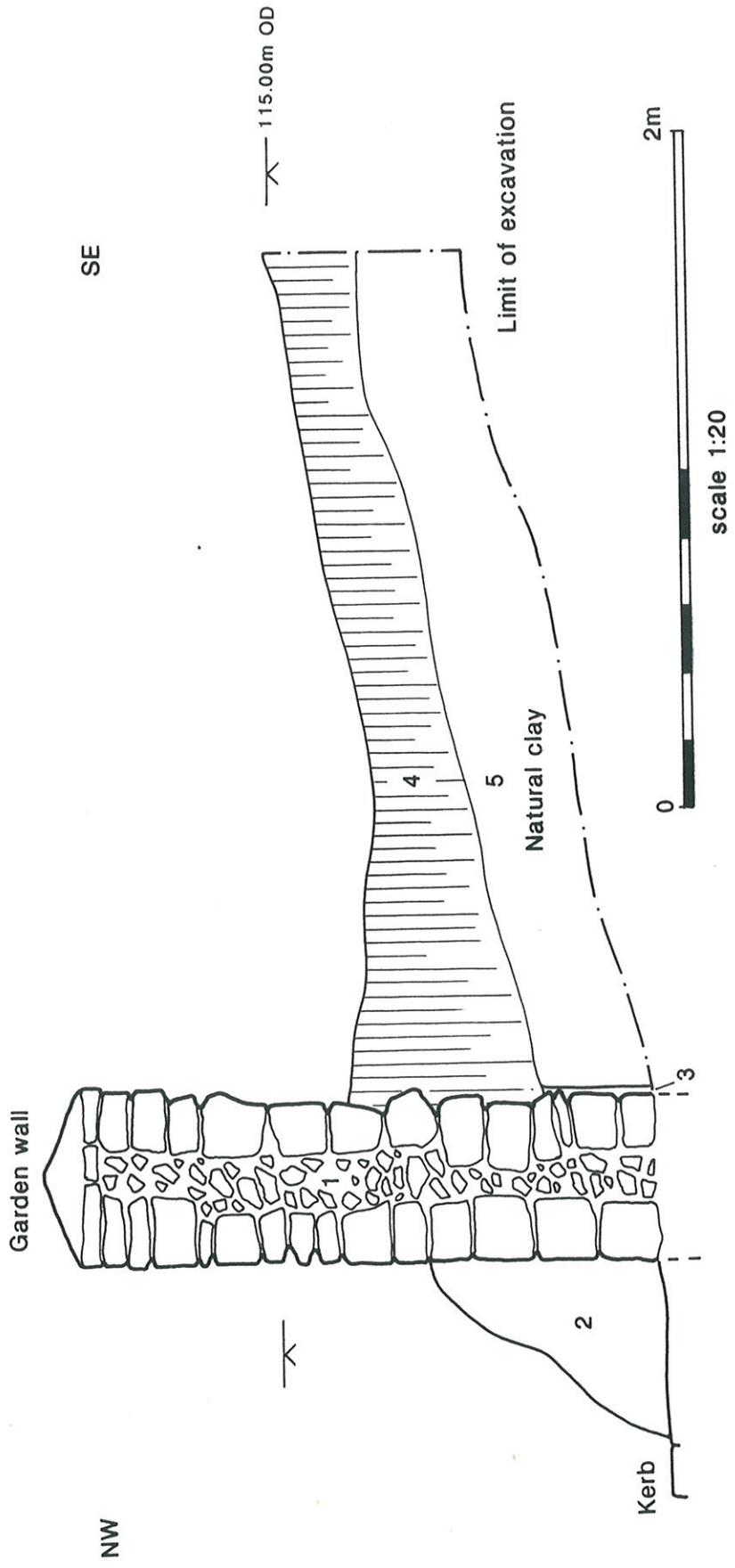


Figure 3

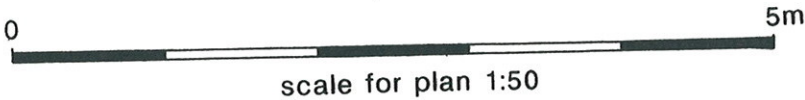
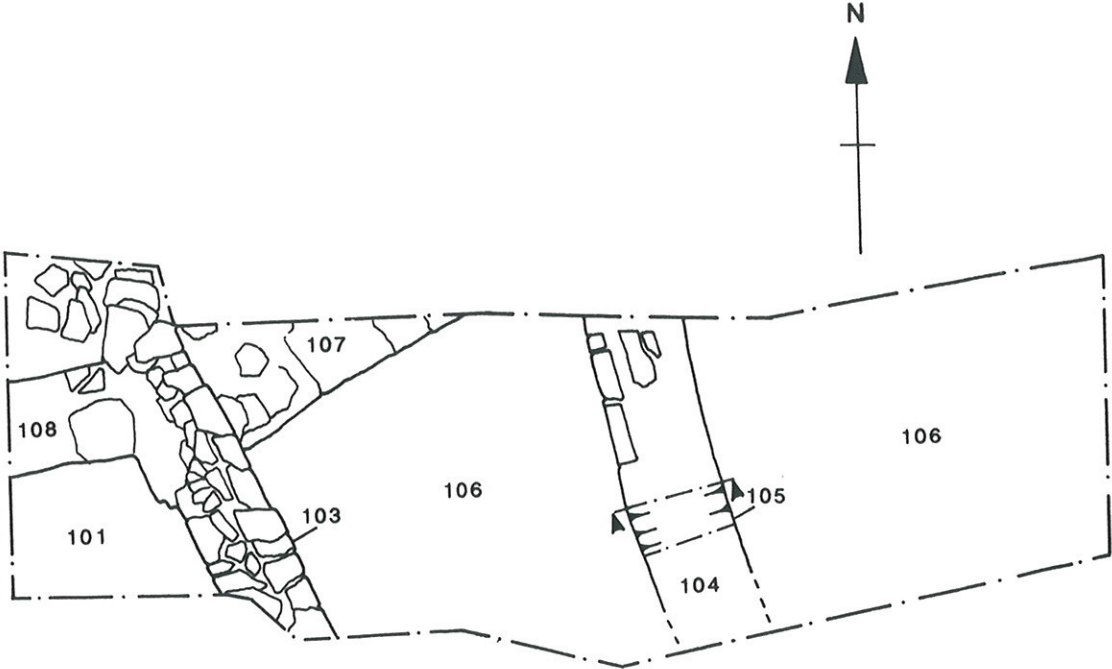


Figure 4

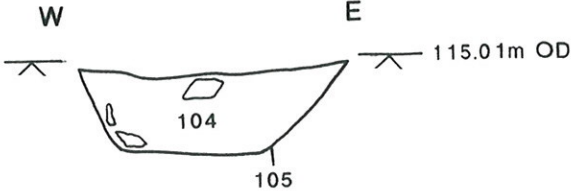
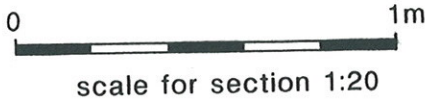


Figure 5



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