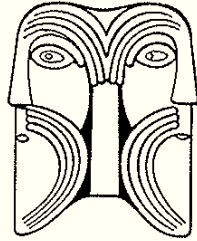


THE
OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT



MILTON: CANNON DEVELOPMENT
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

November 1990

MILTON: CANNON DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

In October 1990 an assessment was carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) on behalf of Messrs G C Cannon Ltd. The assessment had been requested by the County Archaeologist in advance of an application for planning permission. The site was in the NE of Milton village 400 m N of Milton Farm and just E of the High Street. The site lies on the Second Gravel Terrace (NGR SU 489924). At present the landuse is pasture.

SUMMARY

The only archaeological features located were under and protected by the depth of soil forming a headland. A set of linear ditches may represent the original delineation of this boundary. Three further ditches may form part of a series of Saxon enclosures. Two pits, one of which contained several sherds of Saxon pottery, were located next to these ditches. Another undated pit was also discovered. Outside the headland there was evidence that the top of the gravel had been truncated by up to 0.30 m.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Fig. 1)

One hundred metres to the N of the assessment area Saxon burials were discovered in 1832; two gold and bronze brooches and a spearhead were recovered (SMR nos. 2676 and 2678). Three more burials containing a spearhead and a Roman pot were discovered 500 m to the S and published in Oxoniensia in 1944 (Vol. 9, 197, note 13). Further to the N are a series of cropmarks which may represent Roman enclosures and Saxon settlement. There are similar cropmarks c 500 m to the E which are designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument (County Monument 250).

ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

The assessment strategy approved by the County Archaeologist was based on a 2% sample of the area. The sample consisted of seven machine-dug trenches 30 m long and 1.5 m wide. This was supplemented by a trench 11 m long (see Fig. 2 for trench layout).

Potential features were excavated by hand to determine their character, preservation and date.

SOILS AND PRESERVATION

The soil survey (Soil Survey of England & Wales Sheet 253) describes the soils as part of the Sutton series. Turf overlay a mid grey-brown slightly orange ploughsoil, between 0.35 and 1.0 m deep. This overlay an undisturbed layer of red-brown sandy silt loam, 0.15 m deep, which only survived under the headland. Where this layer had been ploughed away the ploughsoil directly overlay gravel. The gravel had been extensively disturbed by tree-throw holes.

There was no evidence for furrows associated with medieval ridge and furrow cultivation in the areas outside the headland. The top of the gravel under the headland was about 0.30 m higher than that elsewhere in the field. Trenches 4 and 5 were up to 0.7 m deep but showed no features except for tree holes. The only archaeological features located were under and protected by the depth of soil forming the headland in trenches 2, 7 and 8.

Trench 3 was cut through a large clay-filled depression 1.0 m deep which is probably of periglacial origin.

The features were filled with a soil very similar to the ploughsoil. The treeholes were filled with a very compact red-brown loamy sand.

FINDS

The ploughsoil contained a variety of finds, including flints, although modern pottery and tile predominated. Only four fragments of unabraded pottery were recovered from archaeological features (see table). The preservation of this pottery was good although the sherds were small and undiagnostic. Diagnosis was by fabric type rather than by form. Some Anglo-Saxon pottery fabrics are readily identifiable. The pot sherds retained carbonized residues of their contents. The preservation of bone appeared good, although no small pieces were recovered.

ARCHAEOLOGY (FIG.2)

TRENCHES 1,3,4,5, AND 6

These contained no archaeological features.

TRENCHES 2,7 AND 8.

There were three ditches in Trench 2 aligned N-S and one small charcoal-filled pit. The ditches may form the original boundary for the headland as they are aligned down the centre of the ridge. They had V-shaped profiles. The small charcoal-filled pit also contained pieces of slag from metalworking. Ditch 2/6 contained a sherd of Saxon or Iron Age pottery from its upper fill. Ditch 2/9 contained a 11th- 12th-century sherd.

Trench 7 contained one ditch aligned N-S and another aligned E-W. There were two pits just to the N of the N-S ditch with charcoal in their fills. One of the pits (7/5) contained one sherd of Saxon pottery. The two ditches did not carry on into Trench 8 but a ditch was observed turning from N-S to run E-W. This ditch was not excavated. The excavated ditches had vertical sides and flattish bases. The ditch (7/8) contained Saxon pottery.

These features may form part of a series of enclosures on an alignment similar to that of the headland but predating it. The enclosures are parallel to Milton High Street.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Soil samples were taken from the small pit in Trench 2 and the larger of the pits in Trench 7. The ditches did not contain any visible carbonized material.

TABLE 1

CONTEXTS AND FINDS

TRENCH	CTX	TYPE	WIDTH	DEPTH	FINDS DATE
2	1	PLOUGHSOIL			MODERN
2	3	PLOUGHSOIL			EARLY-MID SAXON
2	5	GULLY	0.38	0.10	
2	6	DITCH	0.92	0.38	SAXON
2	7	DITCH	0.38	0.18	
2	8	PIT	0.50	0.22	
2	9	DITCH	0.75	0.25	EARLY MEDIEVAL
4	1	PLOUGHSOIL			MODERN
4	2	PLOUGHSOIL			EARLY ROMAN
6	1	PLOUGHSOIL			NOT DIAGNOSTIC
7	2	PLOUGHSOIL			SAXON
7	5	PIT	0.50	0.15	SAXON (LATE?)
7	6	PIT	0.20	0.08	
7	7	DITCH	0.90	0.70	
7	8	DITCH	1.30	0.65	EARLY-MID SAXON

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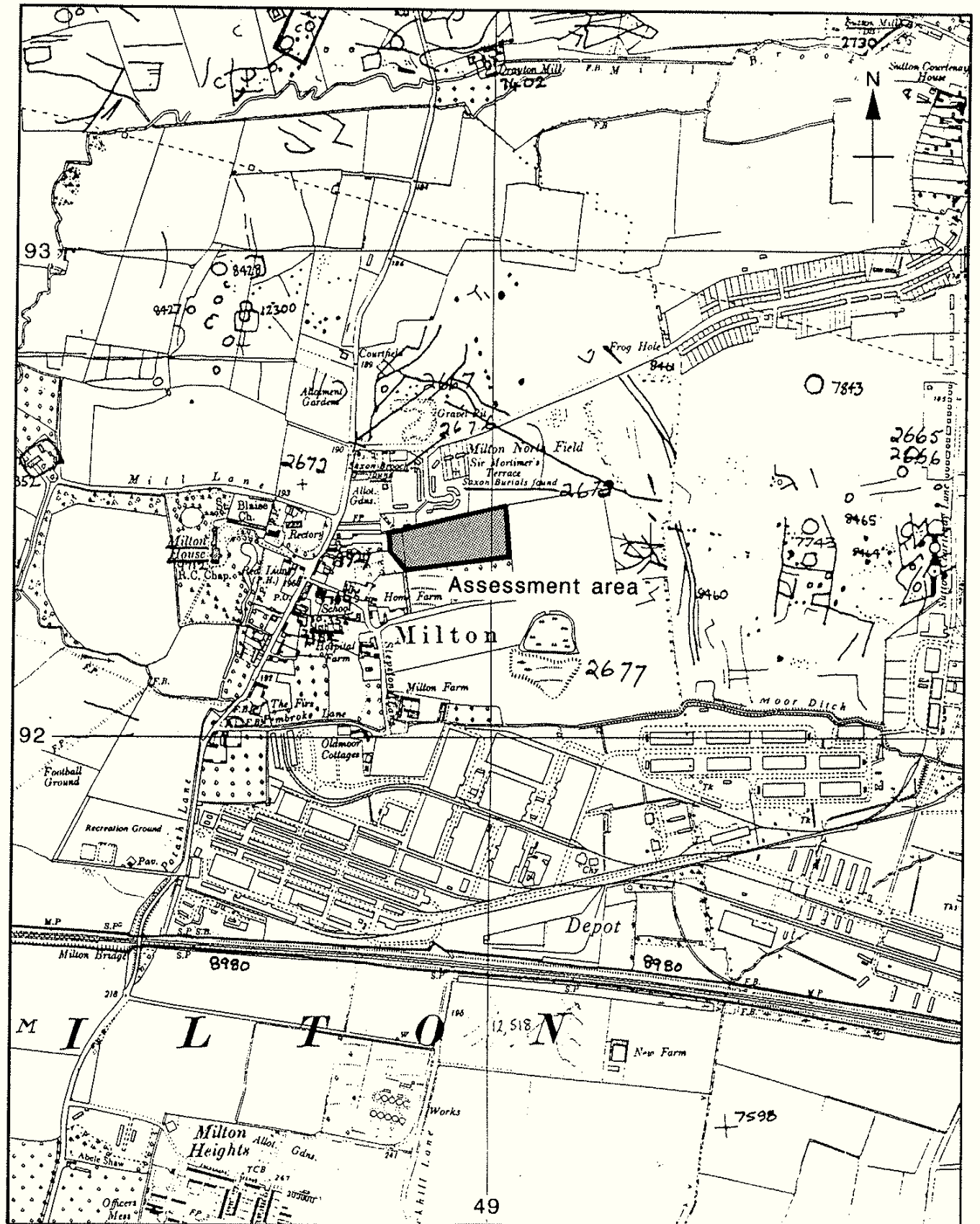


Fig 1

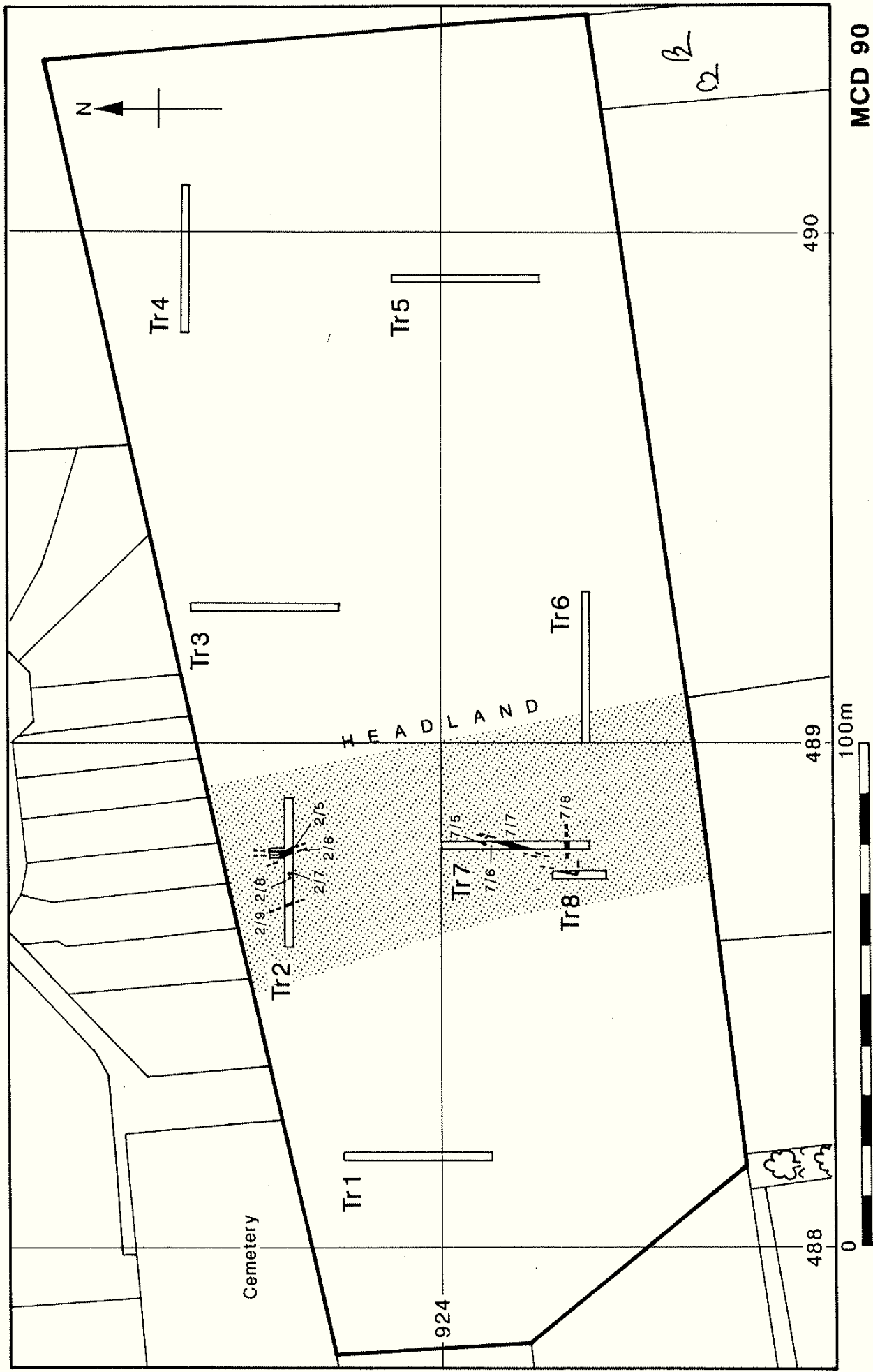


Fig 2



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