

LAND OPPOSITE LILAC COTTAGE, STOKE LYNE, OXON.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

AUGUST 1993

LAND OPPOSITE LILAC COTTAGE, STOKE LYNE, OXON.
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION, AUGUST 2 1993.

SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a field evaluation of land opposite Lilac Cottage, Stoke Lyne, on 2 August 1993. Two trenches were excavated (Figs 1 and 2). Trench 1 contained a post-medieval cobbled floor or yard surface with associated postholes etc, and a deep feature of medieval date. This may have been a backfilled well. Trench 2 only contained one possible feature.

INTRODUCTION

The village of Stoke Lyne lies at the centre of its large parish, approximately four miles NW of Bicester. The parish mostly lies on Great Oolite beds, with small areas of cornbrash. The name Stoke comes from the Old English *Stoc*, meaning 'cattle-farm'. The village was called Stoke Insula or Stoke de Lisle in the medieval period, acquiring the Lyne suffix when the Lynde or Lyne family became lords of the manor in the 15th century. The village was probably larger in the 14th century than in the 17th, when the 1665 Hearth Tax listed the manor house with ten hearths, two other large houses with seven and eight hearths, five small farmhouses, and numerous one-hearth dwellings. There were forty or more houses in the village by the middle of the 18th century. A fire in 1851 destroyed about 25 thatched cottages.¹ Richard Davis's county map, surveyed in 1793-4 and published in 1797,² shows that the village had developed predominantly to the N and E of the parish church of St Peter (see Fig. 3). The manor house, probably built in the 15th century, lay to the S of the church and was ruinous by 1808. Traces of it could still be seen later in the 19th century. Davis's map only shows one L-shaped building S of the church, but this is also depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1833.³

The evaluation site, of some 360 m², lies within the historic core of the village, at a road junction adjacent to the parish church of St. Peter. It was therefore expected to have a high archaeological potential. In recent years the site has been a garden belonging to the owners of nearby Lilac Cottage, and most recently an open space for car parking.

An application has been made to Oxfordshire County Council to build a house on the land. A condition was imposed, requiring that an archaeological evaluation of the site should

¹ Information from The Victoria County History, *A History of the County of Oxford, Vol. VI, Ploughley Hundred*

² Richard Davis 1797, *A New Map of the County of Oxford, from an Actual Survey*.

³ 1", sheet 45. Based on field drawing surveyed in 1811.

be undertaken in order to assess the nature, date, extent and condition of any archaeological deposits. A brief for the work was set by the County Archaeological Officer (CAO). Mr Paul Metcalfe commissioned the OAU to undertake the evaluation. A specification of works was prepared by the OAU and approved by the CAO. The fieldwork took place on 2 August 1993.

METHODOLOGY

Two 5 m x 1.55 m trenches were excavated, representing an approximate 4% sample of the development area. The trenches were sited to maximise the potential for locating archaeological deposits. Trench 1 ran back from the road on the N side of the site, while Trench 2 ran back from the road on the E side of the site. Both trenches were set back slightly from the road edge to avoid modern services.

Topsoil and other deposits which had no archaeological significance were removed by a JCB mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. Archaeological deposits were cleaned and recorded by hand. These deposits were sampled by hand in order to characterise their nature, date etc in accordance with the project brief and specification.

RESULTS

Trench 1.

The 0.30 m deep turf/topsoil (100) overlay a greyish brown silty clay layer (101) averaging 0.20m deep. This overlay a similar silty clay (102) at the S end of the trench. Layer 102 contained 30% small limestone rubble.

Layer 102 sealed a cobbled surface (103) extending to within 0.50 m of the N end of the trench and comprising small limestone pieces in a grey brown silty clay matrix. The surface was overlaid by a sporadic patching of a slightly coarser grade of limestone cobbling. There was no accumulation of soil between the two layers of cobbling. A small area of this layer was excavated in the SW corner of the trench, producing a few finds suggesting a post-medieval date. The cobbling was up to 0.10 m deep in this exposure, and directly overlay the natural subsoil (110). The latter was a compact orangey yellow clay and limestone mixture.

The cobbles were overlain by layer 109, a rectangular area of medium-sized flat limestone pieces laid directly onto the cobbled surface, oriented W-E, and extending approximately 1.00 m into the trench from the W balk. Layer 109 was cut by posthole 107, which was in turn cut by posthole 105. A further posthole 114 cut the cobbled surface 0.30 m N of 105.

Feature 113 was a gully extending W-E across the N end of the trench. A section through the W side of the gully produced two sherds of late medieval pottery from the lower fill, 112. The upper fill (111), however, extended beyond the S edge of the feature and lipped over the top of the cobbled surface. 111 contained a small assemblage of mostly post-

medieval wares.

Gully 113 became more shallow to the E as it cut across the top of a much deeper, steep-sided feature (116). This continued beyond the trench to the N and E, but the exposed part suggested that the feature was circular. Its fill (117) was a loose mix of brown sandy silt and limestone rubble. 12th-14th century pottery was recovered from the fill. Excavation of the feature stopped at a depth of 0.70 m, there being no sign of its bottom. A few flat limestone slabs lay around the edges of features 113 and 116.

Trench 2

The 0.40 m deep turf/topsoil (201) sealed a mixed layer (202) of medium brown silty clay and grey silty loam with 10% small limestone rubble, charcoal flecks and gravel. The depth of this layer ranged from 0.26 m at the E end of the trench to 0.35 m at the W end. 18th - 19th century pottery was recovered. At the W end of the trench, this layer overlay 204, which although not clear in plan showed in section as a shallow cut, filled with a mid grey brown silty clay (203). A small fragment of brick or tile was recovered from this fill. 204 cut the natural subsoil, a compact matrix of sandy clay and limestone with lenses of orangey sandy silt.

FINDS, by Cathy Underwood-Keevill

A copper alloy button (SF 1) and an iron blade (SF 2) were recovered from the cobbled surface (103) in Trench 1. The button is post-medieval in date; the blade is probably also of that date. Fill 112 of gully 113 contained a copper alloy ?belt hasp (SF3). A similar example from Winchester occurred in a 14th - 15th century context.⁴

Sixty seven sherds (493 g) of pottery were recovered from excavated contexts. The assemblage was dominated by late post-medieval and Victorian wares. Two contexts, 112 (the lower fill of gully 113) and 117 (the fill of feature 116), contained only medieval pottery in a variety of typical Oxfordshire fabrics.⁵ A full list of the pottery is provided in Appendix B.

Other finds comprised animal bone (contexts 102, 103, 111), building materials (100, 102, 103, 106, 111, 112, 203), iron nails (100, 108, 112), slag (102), glass (102, 108, 111) and clay pipe (102, 108, 202). All listed examples represented one bag only per context per material.

⁴ D. A. Hinton 1990, 'Belt-Hasps and Other Belt-Fittings', in M. Biddle, *Object and Economy in Medieval Winchester*, ii, Fig. 143, no. 1355; catalogue entry, 542

⁵ R. Haldon with a contribution by M. Mellor 1977, 'Late Saxon and medieval pottery', 111-39, in B. Durham, 'Archaeological Investigations in St. Aldate's, Oxford', *Oxoniensia* XLII, 83-203.

CONFIDENCE RATING

Weather conditions were adequate to good while the fieldwork was in progress. Archaeological deposits were distinguished quite easily. There is therefore a high degree of confidence in the evaluation results.

There was a marked contrast in the incidence of archaeological deposits between Trenches 1 and 2. The former contained evidence for medieval and post-medieval features and surfaces. Trench 2 contained only one archaeological feature, of unclear definition and character.

INTERPRETATION

The cobbling (103) appeared to represent an exterior yard surface, dating to the late 17th century at the earliest. The rectangular area of stone (109) lying on the surface may represent nothing more than a later surface surviving locally, but its regularity was notable. There was little reason, however, to suppose that 109 was structural. It was cut by posthole 107, which was in turn cut by posthole 105. Either of these could have been associated with posthole 114. Fill 106 of posthole 107 contained three small sherds of 18th - 19th century pottery.

Gully 113 may have been cut in the medieval period. its primary fill (112) contained two sherds of 13th - 14th century pottery. Its upper fill (111), however, contained a mixed assemblage suggesting a deposition date in the 18th century; this deposit also lipped out of the gully and sealed the N end of cobbled surface 103. It is conceivable that 111 represents disturbed material from the cobbling. It is also possible that it represents deliberate consolidation of a hollow in the cobbled surface caused by subsidence of the backfill of the gully.

Feature 116, is difficult to interpret because it was only partially exposed in the trench. It was cut by, and therefore predates, gully 113. The pottery from the gully is entirely consistent with this. The nature of the construction and backfill (117) suggests that the feature was a well. It was cut into a reasonably solid limestone and clay matrix, so that lining would have been unnecessary in the upper portions of the feature.

Trench 2 only contained one possible archaeological feature. All finds from the trench were of 18th and 19th century date.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation showed that a limited quantity of medieval archaeology was present on the site, largely confined to the N half of the area (ie Trench 1 contained virtually all of the archaeology). A gully and a possible well contained 12th - 14th century pottery. These features appear to be too early to belong to the manor house, if that ever stood on this site. The later documentary evidence is inconclusive on this point.

There may have been a break in activity towards the end of the medieval period, as no 15th century material was identified. Most archaeological deposits belonged to the late post-medieval and/or early modern periods. The cobbled surface and associated/later features suggest that the N half of the site was an exterior yard at this time. Documentary sources and maps confirm that the later development of Stoke Lyne occurred to the N and E of the church rather than in or around the evaluation site.

Alan Hardy and Graham Keevill
Oxford Archaeological Unit
13 August 1993

APPENDIX A: TABLE OF CONTEXTS, LAND OPPOSITE LILAC COTTAGE, STOKE LYNE, OXON.

Trench 1

CXT	TYPE	WIDTH m	DEPTH m	DATE
100	LAYER	-	0.30	MODERN
101	LAYER	-	0.20	MODERN
102	LAYER	>3.00 N-S	<0.15	MODERN
103	SURFACE	>4.50 N-S	<0.15	POST-MED
104	FILL	0.30	0.06	POST-MED
105	POSTHOLE	0.30	0.06	POST-MED
106	FILL	0.30	0.15	POST-MED
107	POSTHOLE	0.30	0.15	POST-MED
108	INTERFACE	-	-	POST-MED /MODERN
109	WALL	0.45	0.05	POST-MED
110	NATURAL			
111	LAYER	1.20	<0.25	POST-MED
112	FILL	-	<0.20	POST-MED
113	GULLY	-	0.45	POST-MED
114	POSTHOLE	0.30	0.20	POST-MED
115	FILL	0.30	0.20	POST-MED
116	FEATURE	>0.60	>0.70	MEDIEVAL
117	FILL	>0.60	>0.70	MEDIEVAL

Trench 2

CXT	TYPE	WIDTH m	DEPTH m	DATE
201	LAYER	-	0.40	MODERN
202	LAYER	-	<0.35	MODERN
203	FILL	0.70	0.08	POST-MED
204	FEATURE	0.70	0.08	POST-MED
205	NATURAL			

APPENDIX B: POTTERY SUMMARY, LAND OPPOSITE LILAC COTTAGE, STOKE LYNE, OXON.

CXT	FABRIC	NO	WT	DATE	COMMENTS
100	GREW	1	2	late C17 - C19	
102	Staffs	2	35	C18	Slipware - with rouletted edge dish
	Brown ware	4	43	mid C18	
	GREW	7	94	C18 - C19	
	BRILL PM	1	7	C16 - C17	
	GREW	2	17		Brown slip traces and yellow under glaze, Staffs local copies
	TNG	3	7	C18	English copies of late Delft?
	TPW	5	25		Transfer printed ware and C19 white wares
	WHSB	1	3		Staffs white salt glaze
	PEAR	1	2		Pearlware
103	OXAM	1	3	C13 - C14	Highly decorated, applied red slip decoration
	Brown ware	2	12	Late C17	Cistercian type
106	CREA	1	3	C18 - C19	Lid, moulded bead edge
	PMWW	2	4	C18 - C19	Post medieval white wares
	Brown ware	1	21		Pancheon/dish sherd glaze interior and exterior
108	GREW	4	48		Slip and brown specks: - Staffs copy
	BRILL PM	1	1	C16 - C17	Yellow glazed jug/? glazed interior and exterior
	CREA	1	1		
	NOTTS ST	1	1	Mid/late C18	Notts stoneware - dark brown
	TNG	1	1		Late painted ware
	REW	1	5		
111	GREW	6	23	C17 - C18	
	OXAM	2	8	C13 - C14	Glazed/1 plain B/S
	BRILL PM	1	11	C16 - C17	Yellow glazed jug/? glazed interior and exterior
112	OXAM	2	10	C13 - C14	
117	OXY	3	16	C12 - C14	Cooking pot sherds
	OXAM	1	4	C13 - C14	
	OXBK	1	13	C12 - C14	Tetsworth bowl fabric
	OXAQ	3	20	C12 - C14	
201	REW	1	10	C18 - C19	
	TPW	1	11	Mid C19	
202	PEAR	2	6	C18 - C19	
	PMWW	1	26	C19	Post-medieval white ware

**Stoke Lyne
Lilac Cottage
Trench Location Plan**

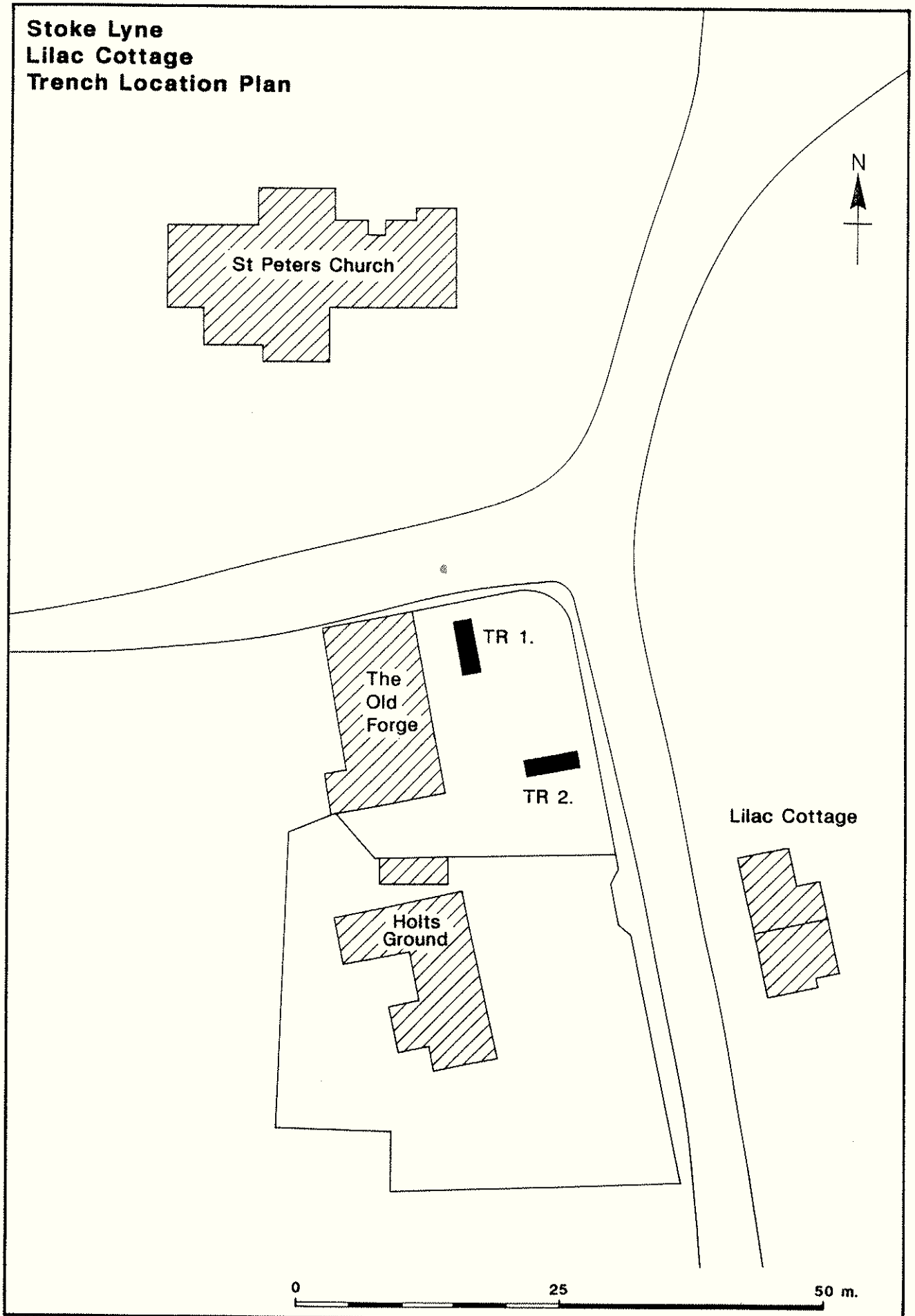
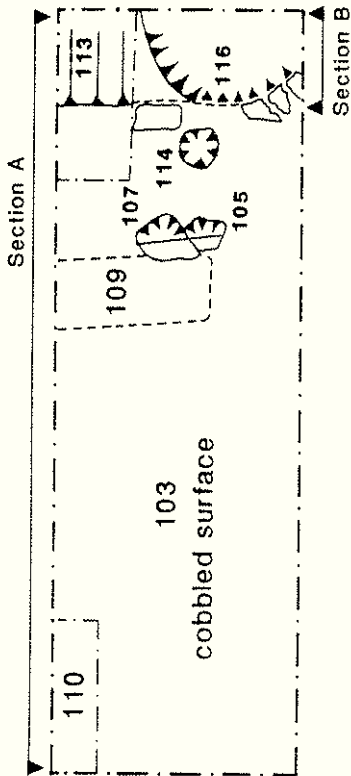


Figure 1.

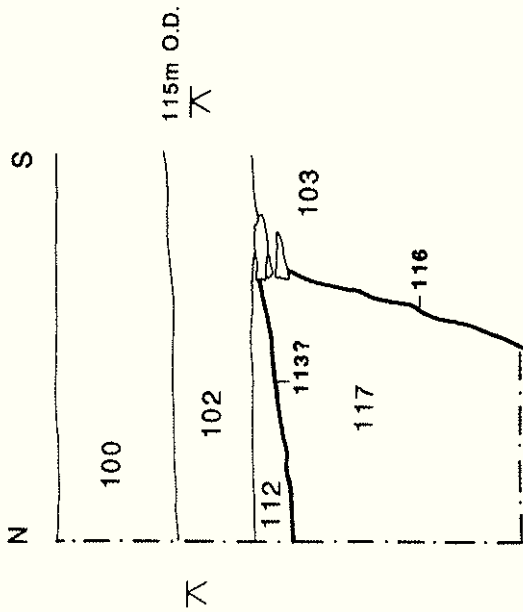
Trench 1 Plan

Scale : 1:50



Section B

Scale 1:20



Section A

Scale 1:20

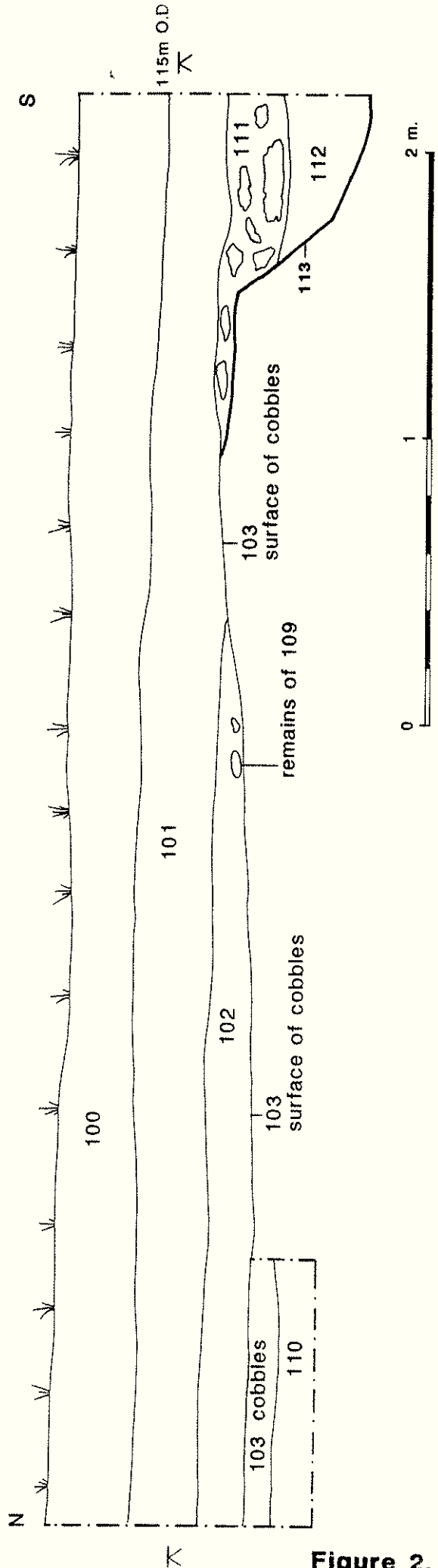
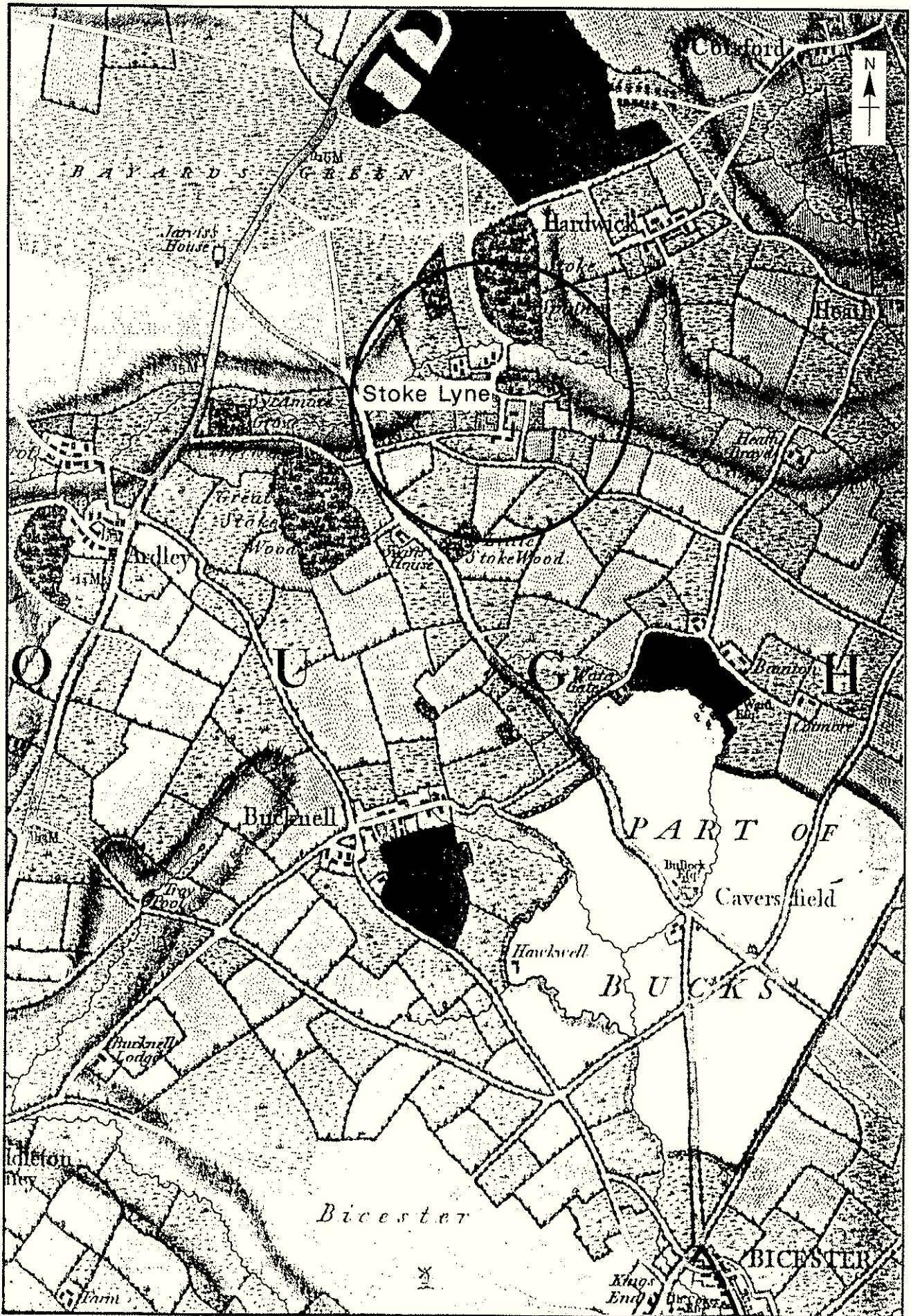


Figure 2.



Reproduced from Davis's map of : 1793-4

Figure 3.

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