

The Forge, The High Street

Odiham, Hants

Archaeological Watching Brief

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

September 1994

THE FORGE, HIGH STREET, ODIHAM, HAMPSHIRE. (ODTF 93)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT.

INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) conducted a watching brief on behalf of Beechcroft Homes Ltd, at The Forge, High St. Odiham (NGR 743511) during the excavation of a service trench and footings for a residential development, in accordance with the requirements of the Deputy County Archaeological Officer, Mr David Hopkins.

The settlement of Odiham is mentioned in Domesday, and the presence of a Royal Palace and a castle indicate that it was a settlement of some size and importance. The site lies E of the heart of the town, and S of the line of the High St. The High Street was part of the original town layout, implying that adjacent areas could contain significant Saxon and/or Medieval archaeological deposits.

During the period of development work, from November 1993 to September 1994, the site was visited on 6 occasions, initially to inspect the N-S service trench leading from the High St frontage, and subsequently to examine the deposits revealed in the footings (Area A).

Once the scarcity of the archaeological activity became apparent, authority was obtained from David Hopkins to reduce the frequency of the visits to a minimum while ensuring at least a sample inspection of the deposits in all areas of the remainder of the site (Area B).

The archaeological recording was by the standard OAU method (OAU Field Manual ed. D. Wilkinson 1992).

RESULTS

Service Trench Fig. 2 , 3.

Prior to the excavation of the footings, a 1 m wide x 1 m deep (approx) service trench was machine dug, extending from the High St frontage past the W side of the forge, to the main area of development. This was inspected along its entire length, and four sample sections were recorded of the deposits.

Natural mid-brown silty clay subsoil (3) was identified throughout the trench, overlaid, particularly in the area of sections 2 and 3, by successive dumped chalky deposits 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, to a maximum total depth of 0.55 m. These presumably represent phases of consolidation of the yard surface associated with the Forge.

Finds retrieved from these deposits suggest dates of no earlier than the 17th century.

The yard deposits extend approximately 50 m S from the High St frontage, coinciding with the extant W-E property boundaries on either side of the site.

The S end of the service trench extended well beyond this boundary, and Section 4 showed the natural subsoil (3) to be overlaid by a grey/brown silty clay buried cultivation soil (10), averaging 0.25 m deep and a silty loam topsoil (9), averaging 0.30 m deep.

Test Pits Fig. 1.

Prior to the excavation of the footings, 5 test pits were machine excavated, to a depth of approximately 6 m. These established that the subsoil (3) averaged 4-5 m in depth, overlying sand.

The Footings Fig. 1.

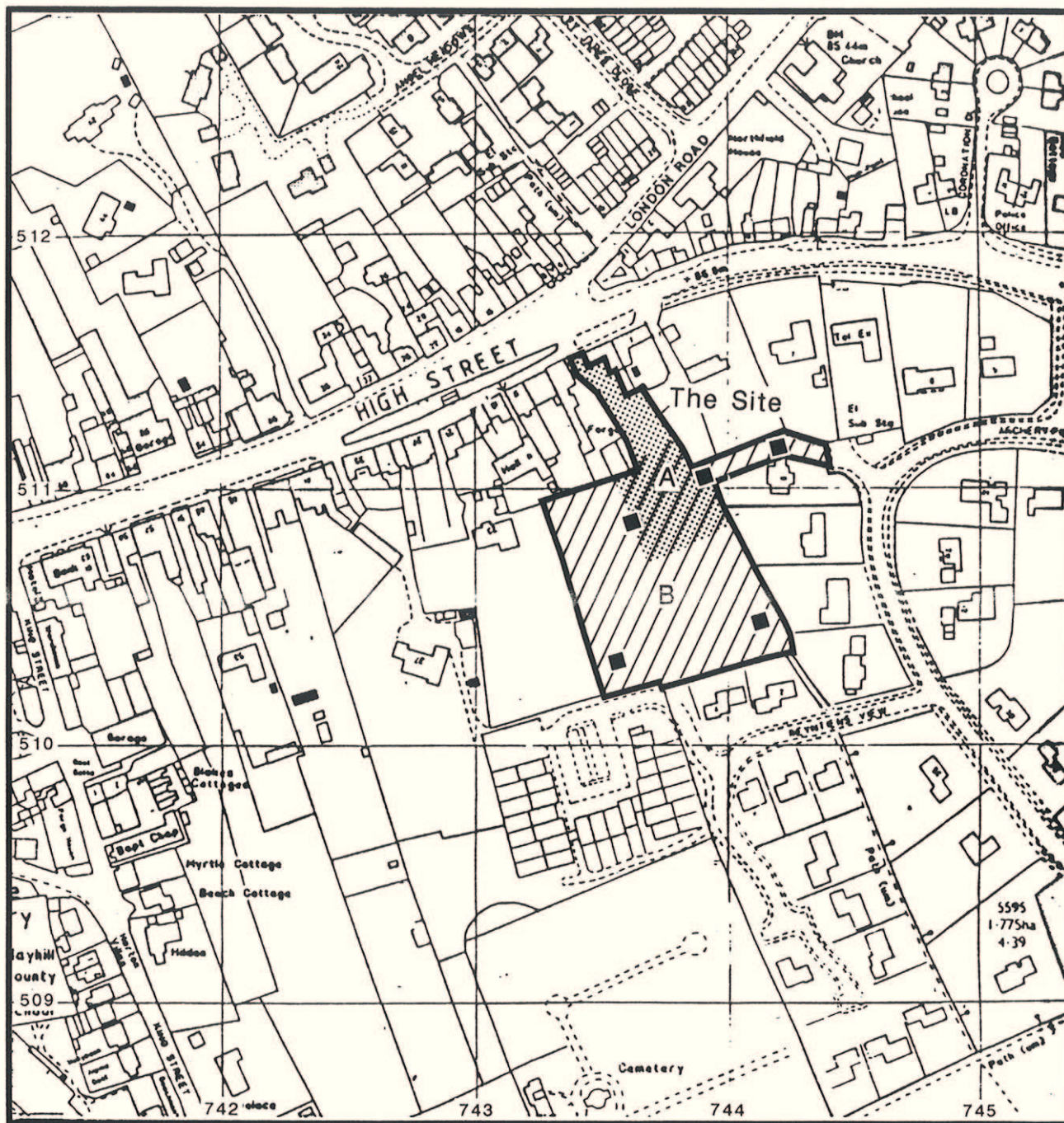
Periodic inspection of the excavated footings (approximately 0.60 m wide by 1.0 m deep) throughout the main area of the site showed very little difference in the character of the deposits from that seen in Section 4, apart from occasional small spreads of modern demolition material within the topsoil, and a few fragments of animal bone in the SW corner of the site.

CONCLUSION

The archaeological activity identified in the service trench suggests that the area of the site fronting High St has been in use, probably as a yard associated with the forge, since the 17th century. The absence of any evident activity of an earlier date indicates that the medieval settlement did not extend this far down the hill from the W. It would be reasonable to expect that the forge would be sited outside any already built-up area.

The lack of any evident activity in the main development area suggests that it has only ever served as gardens or orchards.

Alan Hardy
OAU
September 1994



Key



Service area



Footings area & intensive watching brief



Footings area

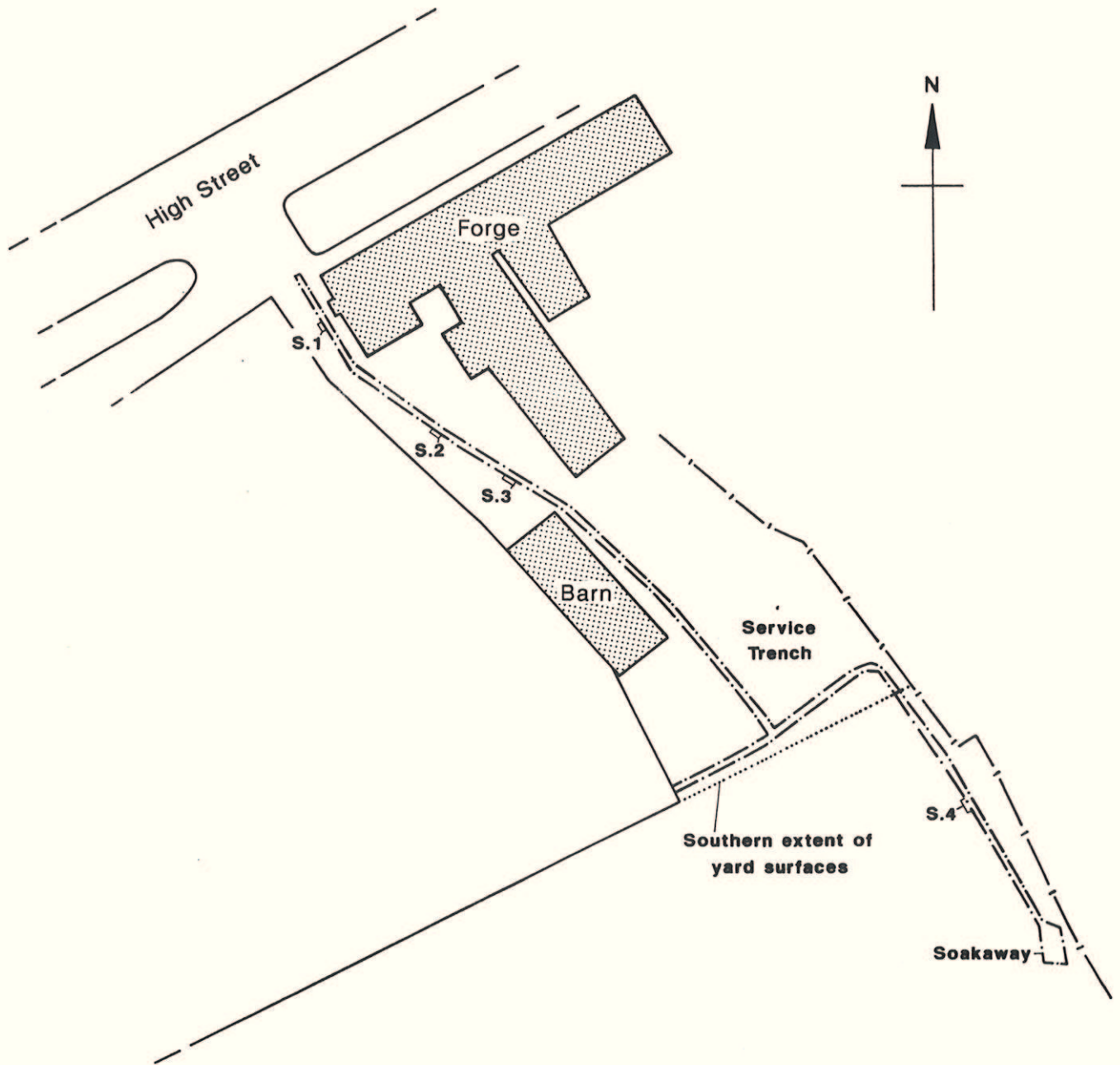


Location of test pit



Scale 1:2500

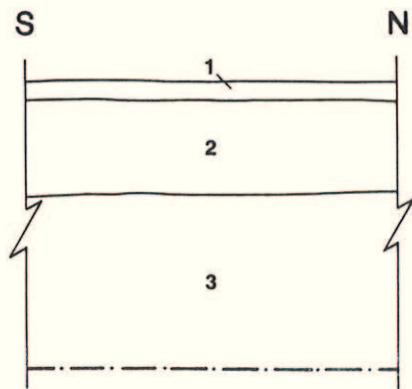
figure 1: Location of watching brief & test pits



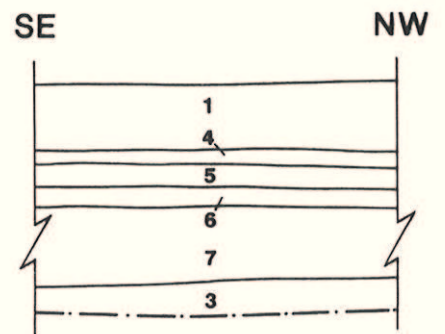
Scale 1:500

figure 2: Plan of service trench

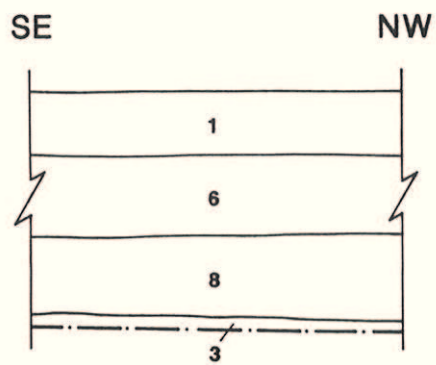
Section 1



Section 2



Section 3



Scale 1:20

Section 4

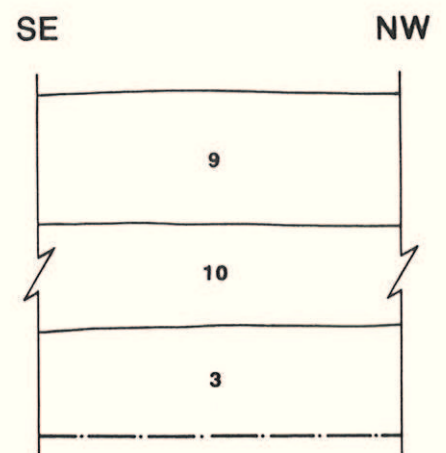


figure 3: Sections 1-4