

Fringford Lodge, Fringford, near Bicester, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief

Oxford Archaeological Unit

1994

Fringford Lodge, Fringford, near Bicester, Oxfordshire: Evaluation and Watching Brief, 1994

Introduction

A small scale evaluation was carried out at Fringford Lodge (c SP59602585), some 3.5 km N of the centre of Bicester, in advance of the determination of an application to build a new driveway, turning area and garage for the existing house (application CHF 553/93). The work was commissioned by the Anthony Rickett Partnership, Chartered Architects, on behalf of the owner, Mr Clive Collison and was funded jointly by Mr Collison and the Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Services Section. A 19th century account described the discovery of a Roman site here, including a building with a mosaic pavement and large quantities of coins from an adjacent area, but the precise location of these finds appeared to be uncertain (VCH 1939, 320). The evaluation identified Roman deposits and probable structural features and allowed a mitigation strategy to minimise the affect of the proposed development to be drawn up. A watching brief was maintained while construction work was in progress. In the course of this, topsoil finds were collected but no significant Roman features were noted.

Physical setting and archaeological background

Fringford Lodge is situated at about 88 m OD on ground which rises very gently to the N but has a slightly steeper slope down to the S and SE, where its southern boundary is marked by a small stream running c WNW-ESE which forms the parish boundary (Fig 1). The underlying geology is Cornbrash limestone, which hereabouts is very close to the modern ground surface (and in recent times has been quarried less than 1 km to the E). The site lies c 100 m W of the line of the Roman road from Alchester to Towcester some 7 km N of the major 'small town' of Alchester. It is situated in an area not particularly well known for Roman settlement, though a major site at South Farm, in the northern part of Bicester and barely 2 km S of Fringford Lodge was destroyed almost without record by housing development in the late 1980s (Chambers 1989) and a further site, of uncertain nature, has been partly examined by excavation within Fringford village c 3 km to the N (Moore and Parkinson 1993). The 19th century finds at the present site included "several remains of tessellated pavement... an underground chamber close by the pavement, with two or three steps leading down to it" (Blomfield 1882, 17). In the adjoining field large numbers of coin finds were also noted. It is unclear exactly which field was meant by this, and the relationship between the coin finds and the structural remains is also unclear. Before the recent work the remains were interpreted as belonging to a villa or perhaps to a temple/shrine, but this was speculative. A watching brief carried out in 1993 on a site immediately to the NW of the present house failed to produce any evidence of Roman activity (Roberts 1993).

The evaluation

The evaluation of the site had two principal components (Fig 2). The excavation of a number of 2 m square trenches (test pits) was preceded by a geophysical survey, carried out in the hope of defining major concentrations of features and perhaps Roman structural elements which would inform the location and findings of the trenches.

Geophysical Survey

The survey was carried out by Alister Bartlett of the Bartlett-Clark Consultancy. His report is presented in full in appendix 2 below and the results are only briefly summarised here. Resistivity surveying was supplemented by a magnetic susceptibility survey and a magnetometer survey of an unobstructed area on the lawn, giving the results as shown on appendix plans 1 and 2. Several resistivity anomalies and areas of high readings were visible in the survey, the strongest of which are labelled A and B on the plot of the initial resistivity data 1(ii). These may form part of an irregular enclosure-like pattern, but the plan was not sufficiently rectilinear for this clearly to be the outline of a building. Other resistivity anomalies are labelled C-F on plot 1(ii), but these again do not appear to form any very clear linear patterns. The magnetometer survey (plan 2(ii)) shows ditch-like anomalies (arrowed) which align with the resistivity anomalies A and B, and also confirms that this area is

relatively free of intrusive modern disturbances. Overall, the resistivity survey detected a number of features which proved to be archaeologically significant when examined by trial excavation, but it failed to provide any very clear overall plan of the structural remains. This could mean that the main features of the site lie outside the area examined, or it could be that the surviving wall footings are relatively slight, and do not stand to any great height above the bedrock. Resistivity contrasts are also likely to be weaker in winter when the ground is uniformly wet than they would be at dryer times of the year. The survey may also in places have detected the Cornbrash bedrock, which was located at a number of points in the excavation. Variations in the depth of the bedrock could perhaps account for some of the larger and less regular features seen in the survey.

Trenches

Seven trenches 2 m square were excavated. Trenches 1-5 were situated on or close to the line of the originally proposed driveway. Trench 6 was excavated away from this line in an attempt to define the easterly extent of deposits located in trenches 3 and 4, and trench 7 was excavated after the others to confirm that Roman features were present at the point where the proposed driveway was to diverge from the existing line. Only trenches 1 and 6 were excavated to natural subsoil. In the other trenches excavation either halted at the top of identifiable Roman deposits, or these were partly sampled in limited areas of the trenches, to allow some characterisation of deposits but with minimal damage to the archaeological resource. In the following description all orientations are in relation to true N, but in the site records they are in relation to site N, which corresponds to true NE. It should be noted that in the absence of an Ordnance Survey benchmark in the vicinity all levels are calculated in relation to a notional value of 10.00 m, the same as that used in the architect's site survey. Level values on plans and section drawings are all in this form.

Trench 1 (Fig 3)

This was situated close to the NE end of the house within the area of the proposed garage. Cornbrash bedrock (107) lay no more than 0.35 m beneath the modern lawn surface. A reddish brown clay layer (106) above this had been cut by a NW-SE aligned ditch (103), c 1.50 m wide and perhaps some 0.40 m deep with a rather irregular profile and a flat bottom. The fill of this feature was not readily distinguishable from an overlying layer (102) which had suffered slight post-medieval contamination. Single sherds of post-medieval and medieval pottery, and fragments of tile possibly of post-medieval date, almost certainly came from this layer rather than from the fill of the ditch (also numbered 102), which is considered to be a Roman feature. Roman finds from 102 consisted of tile fragments and four pottery sherds.

In the W corner of the trench a small feature (104) appeared in section to cut the layer/fill 102 and the underlying layer 106. This feature was not seen in plan and may only have extended a little way into the trench. It produced no finds, but is assumed to be of post-medieval date.

Layer 102 was directly beneath the modern turf and garden topsoil layer (101) which here was c 0.22 m thick.

Trench 2 (Fig 4)

This trench lay to the SE of trench 1. The principal feature was a possible foundation, aligned N-S, of pitched limestone blocks in a matrix of clay (206). This was c 0.70-0.80 m wide, but at its northern end appeared to taper considerably. Adjacent to 206 to the E was a similar deposit (205), distinguished principally by the fact that the limestone pieces were flat and less tightly packed. W of 206 and possibly overlying it was a layer of brown clay loam with more small limestone fragments and also mortar. The relationship between 206 and 205 was unclear. All these deposits were sealed by 204, a layer of brown sandy loam 0.15 m thick. This mixed deposit also contained limestone fragments, mortar, charcoal and other burnt fragments as well as Roman pottery and post-medieval pottery and glass. It is unclear

whether the entire layer was of post-medieval origin or if it was cut by a post-medieval feature which was not detected in plan.

Above 204 was a layer (202), similar in composition but with rather more clay, c 0.14-0.18 m thick. Finds from this layer were almost entirely Roman and included a piece of human bone. A hollow in the top of this layer in the centre of the trench was filled with 203, and both were overlaid by 201 and 200, modern topsoil layers with a combined depth of 0.20 m.

Trench 3 (Fig 5)

This trench was situated E of the originally proposed line for the new driveway. The location here of structural features was crucial in prompting the rerouting of the driveway. Removal of topsoil layers revealed a mass of limestone blocks with some mortar. The stonework was not excavated, but careful cleaning suggested the following sequence. A layer of small flat limestone blocks (306) was located in the E corner of the trench. The extent of this layer is unknown. It was overlaid by a layer of yellow-brown mortar (305), possibly a floor layer, which was fairly extensive along the NE side of the trench. This in turn was sealed by the principal layer (304), of limestone blocks mostly lying flat, one or two deep. The stones were irregular, up to c 0.20 x 0.20 x 0.15 m. The upper surface of the layer was noticeably unworn, so the stones had not formed part of a yard or floor surface. They are interpreted as collapsed (and perhaps levelled) building material.

Above the stones was a layer of silty loam (303) generally c 0.10 m deep but up to c 0.18 m in the NE part of the trench where the stones 304 did not extend. Topsoil layers (301 and 302) above 303 were from 0.18-0.22 m deep. All the finds in trench 3 came from layers 301-303. These consisted of thirteen Roman pottery sherds and Roman tile fragments as well as two post-medieval sherds and a plastic tag.

Trench 4 (Fig 6)

This trench lay SW of trench 3. Removal of the topsoil revealed a stone spread of rather different character from that seen in trench 3. This was sectioned against the NW baulk of the trench. The earliest deposit seen in the section was a layer (408) of brown loam with small limestone fragments at least 0.15 m thick. This may have been a natural deposit above the Cornbrash bedrock. 408 was overlaid by 407, a layer of dark brown loamy clay up to c 0.12 m deep and containing significantly more and larger limestone fragments. Above 407 was a stone free dark brown loam deposit of similar depth (406) which in turn was sealed by the principal stone layer (403) composed of flattish limestone fragments up to c 0.14 x 0.10 m. Many of the stones appeared to tip slightly down from NE to SW. The layer, which produced tile fragments and seven Roman sherds, was presumably a surface. It was cut in the NE side of the trench by a ?linear feature (405) at least 0.60 m wide and c 0.18 m deep with a rounded profile. This feature stopped short of the E corner of the trench, its surviving length was thus c 1.50 m. Its fill (404) of loamy clay contained a single Roman sherd and two tile fragments.

The stone layer 403 and feature fill 404 were overlaid by a clay loam layer 402 c 0.10-0.12 m thick. This produced only Roman finds, though it was probably of post-Roman date. The modern turf and topsoil (401), up to 0.19 m deep, contained 19th-20th century material (slate, glass, plastic etc) and a fragment of Roman tile.

Trench 5 (Fig 7)

Topsoil and general layers were removed in this trench to reveal a potentially complex group of deposits assumed to be of Roman date. These were recorded in plan only, so not all their interrelationships are clear.

The principal deposit seems to have been a layer of small limestone fragments (506) in a matrix of dark brown sandy silt. On the NW side the stones were slightly larger than elsewhere; in the middle of the trench, however, many were no more than c 0.03 m long. Here also, in particular, they were set on edge. This characteristic was particularly noticeable along the SE side of a possible slot or gully (fill 508) 0.25 wide which terminated short of the NE baulk of the trench but ran under the SW baulk, with a minimum length of 1.70 m. This feature was not examined. It could have cut 506; alternatively 506 could have been laid around a horizontal timber laid in the position of 508.

In the eastern part of the trench were further deposits: 507, a brown sandy silt located in the extreme E corner, may have been the fill of a feature cut through 506. A more extensive (at least 1 m across) ovoid spread of similar material containing small limestone fragments and a significant component of decayed yellow sandy mortar (505) lay just E of the possible slot 508. It may have been a dump layer or possibly the poorly-preserved remnants of a mortar surface.

All these deposits were overlaid by a sequence of layers (501-504) with a total depth of 0.38-0.45 m. These produced a late 3rd century coin, 42 sherds of Roman pottery and a large number of (mostly small) tile fragments. Post-medieval finds were confined to the upper layers (501 and 502).

Trench 6 (Fig 7)

This trench was sited SE of trench 3 to determine if the Roman stone spreads identified in that trench extended much beyond that point. Two silty loam topsoil layers (601 and 602), with a total depth of c 0.40 m, directly overlaid the Cornbrash bedrock and no Roman features were seen. 601 produced a fragment of post-medieval tile and 602 a single Roman greyware sherd.

Trench 7 (Fig 8)

This, the most south and westerly located of all the trenches, was sited in the light of the findings in trenches 4 and 5 to identify and examine the character of any Roman deposits at a relatively low lying point close to the point of divergence of the proposed driveway from the existing one. It was felt that archaeological deposits here might be particularly susceptible to damage during the earthmoving process.

Removal of topsoil revealed a pathway of recent date (702) in the SE part of the trench. A test excavation was then carried out in the W quarter of the trench adjacent to the path. At a depth of c 0.36 m below the modern ground surface this exposed the W edge of a N-S alignment of irregular limestone blocks with mortar (706). This alignment, presumably part of a wall foundation or a possibly a robber trench, was at least 0.65 m wide. A clay loam layer (707), adjacent to the W, may have butted or have been cut through by 706. The latter is perhaps more likely. Overlying both 706 and 707 was a layer of small (up to 0.10-0.15 m) irregular limestone rubble (705) up to 0.12 m thick. Above 705 a compacted sandy loam layer up to 0.10 m thick (704) contained one fragment each of post-medieval pottery and glass, and the layer above (703) was sealed by both the garden path layer (702, principally composed of limestone fragments) and the modern turf and topsoil (701), here only c 0.10 m deep.

Summary of the evaluation trenches

The excavation demonstrated the presence of Roman deposits or features in every trench except 6. Stone structural elements aligned c N-S appeared to be represented in trenches 2 and 7, and stonework in trench 3 probably also derived from a building and may have overlaid a mortar floor. The deposits in trenches 4 and 5 are less easily interpreted, though they suggest respectively external yard surfaces and (perhaps) ancillary timber buildings. In the light of these results the line of the proposed driveway was moved where feasible a few metres to SE and NE, giving as wide a berth as possible to the apparent focus of archaeological features, around the front lawn of the house. It was not possible

however, to alter the location of the start and finish points of the new line. Consequently a watching brief was maintained while earthmoving operations were in progress.

The watching brief

A 3 m wide strip of topsoil (801) and a former topsoil/possible ploughsoil (802) were removed by JCB to a depth of 0.22 m forming the route of the new driveway. Stratigraphically below 802 lay an NW-SE aligned layer of gravel and limestone pieces (806) c 3 m wide, probably a former trackway leading to the Lodge. This would have passed immediately on the NE side of trench 4. Further N and also below 801 lay a NE-SW aligned stone spread (807), representing a collapsed former wall of relatively recent build. The exact width of the wall was not established. Limestone blocks and red bricks were used in the construction, bonded with sandy mortar. Both trackway 806 and wall 807 overlaid a mixed deposit of reddish brown loam (803) containing frequent pieces of limestone. A number of finds of Roman pottery and tile came from the interface between 803 and layer 802 above, particularly in the SE part of the site in the vicinity of trench 5. Layer 803 directly overlaid a clean red-brown clay silt, interpreted as natural subsoil.

The foundation trenches for the new garage were c 0.75-1.00 m wide and were dug to a depth of 0.90 m. They cut into the Cornbrash and a layer of reddish brown clay silt (808) overlying it, which was thought to be a natural deposit. Above 808 a brown sandy loam deposit (812) c 0.20 m thick was cut in the trench for the NW wall of the garage by a possible gully (811 - seen only in section) c 0.87 m wide and 0.30 m deep filled with greyish-brown silty loam (810). This produced a single Roman sherd and may have been of Roman date, though the feature lay directly beneath a recent (19th-20th century) stone pathway, ie it was stratigraphically rather higher than the ditch 103 in trench 1 only 4 m distant to the SE. The alignments of 811 and 103 are very similar, and it is possible that they were the same feature, though the differences in size, character of fill and apparent stratigraphic position make this unlikely. There was no obvious trace of 103 in the foundation trench at the E corner of the garage, but conditions in the foundation trench, and its restricted size at this point were not ideal for archaeological observation.

Apart from the sherd already mentioned, the only finds recovered from the watching brief were pottery and tile, mostly of Roman date, from layers 801 and 802-803 (see above), mainly at the southern end of the driveway line.

The finds

The principal finds from the evaluation trenches and the watching brief consisted of pottery and tile, largely of Roman date. Apart from a single sherd from layer/fill 102 possibly of medieval date all the non-Roman material (12 pottery sherds, plus brick and tile fragments, slate, glass and plastic etc) was of post-medieval and confined to the 19th-20th centuries. Only the Roman material is commented on here.

Pottery

Some 123 sherds of Roman pottery were noted, nine of which were found during the watching brief. The sherds are generally fairly small and many are abraded. This reflects both the relatively erosive character of the soils of this region and also the fact that the majority of the finds were from layers above the stratified Roman deposits and may have become worn by successive redeposition processes (such as ploughing) after the Roman period.

The breakdown of the pottery by major ware classes is as follows

Samian ware	2 sherds
Fine wares	4 sherds (3 Oxfordshire colour-coated ware)

Mortaria	2 sherds (Oxfordshire colour-coated ware)
White wares	5 sherds
Oxidised coarse wares	40 sherds (6 pink grogged ware)
Reduced coarse wares	49 sherds
Black-burnished wares	8 sherds (6 probably local imitations)
Shell-tempered wares	13 sherds

The range of material is typical for the region. The two (small) samian sherds are the only imported pieces. The Oxford industry was a the major source for fine wares, mortaria and white wares and may have supplied the bulk of the oxidised and reduced coarse wares as well, though this is much less certain as the fabrics are insufficiently diagnostic to allow confident attribution to a specific source. The only exception to this is the pink grogged ware, a distinctive product from an unknown source somewhere to the E of the Bicester area. This source was also responsible for some of the tiles from the site (see below). The shell-tempered sherds may also have derived from sources to the E (Northamptonshire/Bedfordshire) but some may have been more locally produced. Black-burnished ware sherds were the furthest traded within Britain, originating in the Isle of Purbeck (Dorset), but only two of the Fringford sherds are likely to have been from this source.

Very few vessels were represented by rims or other diagnostic fragments. The range present (principally jars and dishes) is, like the fabrics, characteristic of an assemblage with its chronological emphasis in the 3rd and 4th centuries. Some sherds could have been of 2nd century date (the samian ware, for example) but most were probably later. There was no 1st century material in the present group.

Tile

Some 215 fragments of brick and tile were recovered, of which 34 came from the watching brief. Eleven pieces were considered to be certainly of post-medieval date. A little more than half of the remainder were thought to be probably of Roman date, with the rest assigned to an uncertain category. Many of these were small pieces usually in sandy fabrics which are not particularly characteristic of Roman tile. Nevertheless, it seems from the material which occurred in diagnostically Roman forms that some sandy fabrics were used for Roman tiles on this site. On this basis, therefore, many of the 'uncertain' pieces may have been Roman.

In addition to the sandy fabrics Roman tiles also occurred in 'typical' fairly fine, slightly sandy fabrics and in the 'pink grogged' fabric also used for pottery. Occasional fragments of shell tempered tiles were also noted.

The size of most of the fragments made attribution to tile types impossible in the majority of cases. It is clear, however, that in addition to tegulae and imbrices, box flue tiles were also present - characteristic fragments with combing occurring in a number of different fabrics. An unusual piece was a relatively large fragment of a flat tile with a rounded nail hole in it. This, from layer 504, just above the Roman deposits in trench 5, may have been a post-medieval piece, but no other non-Roman finds were noted from this context.

Other finds

The only Roman metal find of note was a copper alloy coin. This was a fragmentary (and probably barbarous) radiate, of later 3rd century date.

Discussion and conclusions

The need to avoid unnecessary disturbance of the Roman deposits means that detailed interpretation

of the results of the evaluation is difficult. The excavated remains suggest, however, the probable existence of at least two buildings with stone foundations, both on a common N-S alignment. The distance between the two walls (in trenches 2 and 7) makes it unlikely that they belonged to the same structure, unless this was a very large one. Stone rubble and a probable mortar floor in trench 3, SE of the wall in trench 2, could have been part of that structure. Ceramic building material was quite common across the site and indicated the presence of at least one building with a heated room or rooms, which is consistent with the 19th century record. Enigmatic structural traces in trench 5 are very difficult to interpret but may indicate a timber ancillary structure.

The geophysical survey was inconclusive but generalised anomalies suggested a rectilinear arrangement on the same N-S alignment as the foundations. The significance of the apparently blank area in the central part of the geophysical survey, largely corresponding to the present front lawn, is unclear.

Pottery evidence suggests that the site dates primarily to the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. A little 2nd century material was present, but the assemblage is basically a late Roman one.

Despite the apparent vagueness of the record of the 19th century work in the VCH, the account of the original discoveries in about 1860 makes it clear that the structural elements were located close to the present house (Blomfield 1882, 17, given in full in Appendix 1 below) and they must have lain largely if not entirely within the area of the present front garden of Fringford Lodge. The 1:10560 OS map locates the finds here, and this is consistent with the evidence of the recent work, particularly insofar as this suggested a clear limit to the site on the SE side and a reduction in the density of Roman deposits to the N, leaving the present lawn area as a likely focus of Roman features. Some Roman deposits almost certainly survive beneath the lawn, as the 19th century account makes it clear that features were not entirely excavated (ibid).

The character of the site remains uncertain. The recent work has added little to the 19th century account in this respect. A villa may be the most likely interpretation, and a possible explanation for the absence of geophysical anomalies in the lawn area is that this corresponded with the central open area of a villa of courtyard plan. Villa sites are not often situated as close to major Roman roads as is Fringford Lodge. It should be noted, however, that the position of this site in relation to the Roman road is almost identical to that at South Farm, Bicester, a site which was interpreted as a villa complex. The 19th century record of frequent coin finds in an adjacent field might hint at the presence of a temple or shrine, in which such finds could be very common, but the apparent absence of associated structural remains might argue against this interpretation. Another possible explanation is that the coins represent a hoard, originally associated with the possible villa of Fringford Lodge itself, which had become dispersed by agricultural activity. A summary inspection of the field immediately N of Fringford Lodge, recently ploughed, failed to produce any Roman finds, but it was clear that this ploughing was disturbing the Cornbrash bedrock and any Roman deposits above this layer would have been extensively disturbed if not completely destroyed.

Paul Booth (April 1994)

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Appendix 1: Extract from Blomfield 1882, 17-18

"A villa of considerable importance was built on the rising ground, to the left of the road leading to Lactodorum, where a dry soil, and a full spring in the adjoining brook, and a wide expanse of scenery afforded an attractive site. When the ground was disturbed here about 1860, two human skeletons were found at a depth of two feet below the surface, the skulls being quite perfect; and several remains of tessellated pavement were laid bare, some tesserae being large and coarse, and others smaller and of different colours, red, blue, and white, the latter probably forming the floor of the hall or other chief room of the house (1). An underground chamber close by the pavement, with two or three steps leading down to it, was also discovered, which looked as if it might have been the site of the hypocaust (warming apparatus) or a bath (2); and broken pottery abounds. There are also evident signs of an embankment at a short distance in front of the house, over which the present road now runs, (3) and in the adjoining field small coins, mostly copper, have been constantly turned up in such numbers as if the ground had been sown broadcast with them. Hence we may conclude that a dwelling-house of more than ordinary taste and size stood on this spot, and that the owners of it were wealthy"

Notes (lettered in original text)

(1). Some of these are still preserved by the Rev. E. Withington, the present owner of this property. No doubt much more of the pavement might be found under the raised banks in front of the present house, where the surface-soil was not disturbed at the time the tesserae were laid bare by taking away earth to form these banks.

(2). This chamber was not disturbed, but only filled-in with earth, and the site of it is still traceable in a small hollow in front of the house.

(3). The public road is here raised above the level of the surrounding ground, and falls abruptly at the two ends.

Appendix 2: Report on Archaeogeophysical Survey at Fringford Lodge, 1994

Introduction

This survey was commissioned by the Oxford Archaeological Unit as part of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Fringford Lodge, where significant Romano-British finds were discovered during the making of the garden in the 1860s. The 19th C findings, as summarised in a brief for the work supplied by the County Archaeological Officer, included a tessellated pavement and an underground chamber which may have been part of a hypocaust or cellar. There were also burials and numerous coins, suggesting in total that this was the site of a substantial building which could have been a villa, or may possibly have had a religious function.

The survey was carried out in January 1994, and an interim summary of the results was supplied for use during the trial excavation which followed shortly afterwards. Some of the main excavation findings as reported to us by OAU are noted for comparison with the survey results in the description which follows below.

Survey Procedure

The location and extent of the survey is indicated on plan 1(i), where the survey is outlined on a copy of the architects' drawing showing the proposed new garage and drive. Geophysical results from the narrow strip along the drive alone would be difficult to interpret, and so a larger area was covered to determine whether any recognisable plan of features or structures could be obtained. Details of measurements taken to the house and fences to locate the survey can be supplied on request. The archaeological test pits, which are numbered 1-7, are also outlined on this plan.

The standard geophysical technique for locating buried stone wall footings is resistivity surveying, which here was supplemented by a magnetic susceptibility survey, and a magnetometer survey of an unobstructed area on the lawn, giving the results as shown on plans 1 and 2. The resistivity survey followed the standard procedure for an area survey of this kind (using a Geoscan RM4 meter with probes in the twin electrode configuration at 0.5m separation), with readings recorded on a 1m grid. The purpose of the magnetic susceptibility survey was to test for areas of enhancement which can indicate the presence of burnt materials in the topsoil, and which are likely to be associated with former occupation of the site. A magnetometer survey does not usually respond directly to masonry, but on a site of this kind it can show whether there has been any intensive modern disturbance of the ground which needs to be allowed for in interpreting the resistivity findings.

Results

Several resistivity anomalies and areas of high readings are visible in the survey, the strongest of which are labelled A and B on the plot of the initial resistivity data 1(ii). These may form part of an irregular enclosure-like pattern, but the plan (as seen also in the half tone plots iii and iv) is not sufficiently rectilinear for this clearly to be the outline of a building. Features A and B will not be affected by the proposed driveway, and so were not excavated.

Plot 1(iii) shows the results after filtering, in which a locally derived mean value is subtracted from each reading to remove background variations and emphasise the narrower features which may be archaeologically significant. Plot 1(iv) is an alternative representation of the filtered data, in which readings are assigned to a restricted number of display levels to produce contour-like steps in the grey scale. This emphasises the apparent linearity of some of the detected features.

Other resistivity anomalies are labelled C-F on plot 1(ii), but these again do not appear to form any very clear linear patterns, except to a limited extent in plot 1(iv). Test pits were located to examine several of these features. Anomaly C was found (in test pit 1) to lie on the line of a ditch, although

this cannot be traced for any distance in the survey. Anomaly D, which forms part of a weak lateral linear feature seen in plot 1(iv) corresponds to a probable stone wall foundation found in pit 2, although this was not very well defined and the top of the wall is some 40-50 cm deep. Stonework and rubble, which could lie within a building, were seen at 25-30 cm depth in pit 3 (near to anomaly E), and there was also a stone surface near F (pit 4), together with a quantity of small stones in pit 5 (near to anomaly G). The possible remains of a wall were seen in pit 7, where there was only a weak anomaly in the survey. The strong resistivity anomaly at H, which lies near to and may be an effect of the existing drive, was not excavated. The linear anomaly arrowed at J is probably an effect of the existing garden wall and beds, and was not investigated.

Magnetic susceptibility readings were collected at 3m intervals using a Bartington meter and field coil, to give the results as shown on plot 2(i). Readings from the lawn in the vicinity of anomalies A and B are uniformly low, but there are quite strong variations from around the edges of the survey where walls and other features were excavated. This may indicate that the resistivity features A and B are not necessarily archaeological, or it could mean that the lawn has been less subjected to modern disturbances which may have affected the susceptibility readings elsewhere.

The magnetometer survey (plan 2(ii)) shows ditch-like anomalies (arrowed) which align with the resistivity anomalies A and B, and also confirms that this area is relatively free of intrusive modern disturbances.

Conclusions

The resistivity survey has detected a number of features which proved to be archaeologically significant when examined by trial excavation, but it has failed to provide any very clear overall plan of the structural remains which the excavation has confirmed are present. This could mean that the main features of the site lie outside the area examined, or it could be that the surviving wall footings are relatively slight, and do not stand to any great height above the bedrock.

Resistivity contrasts are also likely to be weaker in winter when the ground is uniformly wet than they would be at dryer times of the year. The survey may also in places have detected the Cornbrash bedrock, which was found at only 35-40 cm depth in pit 6 (which lies outside plan 1(i) below pit 3). Variations in the depth of the bedrock could perhaps account for some of the larger and less regular features seen in the survey, although it remains uncertain whether or not the strong resistivity anomalies at A, B and H are archaeologically significant.

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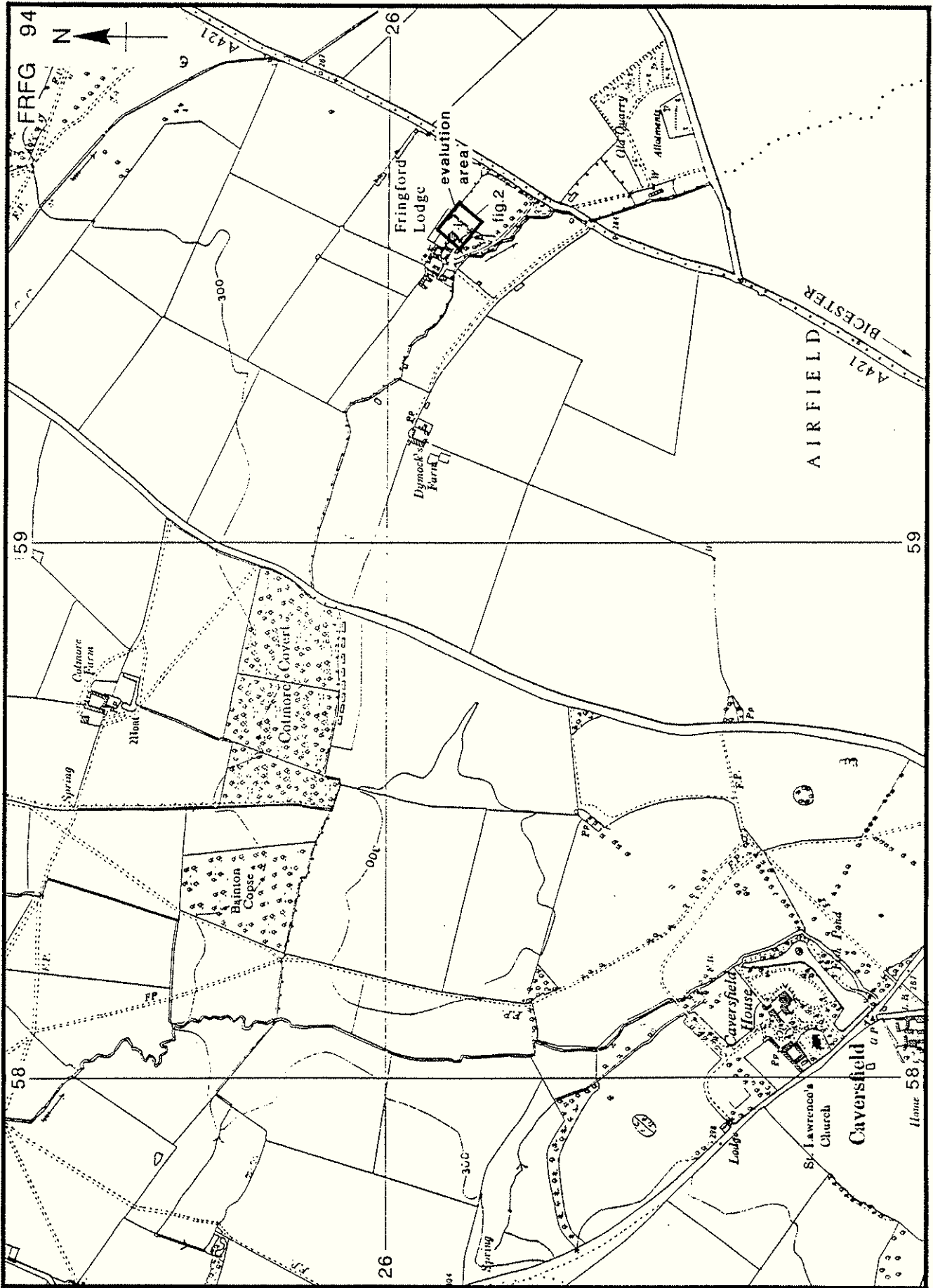
B.Y. Turton MA carried out much of the fieldwork for this survey.

Appendix 3: Summary table of contexts

CONTEXT	TYPE	WIDTH	DEPTH	FINDS	DATE	COMMENTS
Trench 1						
101	Layer	2 m	0.22	1 ?RB sherd; 3 frags tile, glass, slate	Modern	Turf & topsoil
102	Layer/fill	1.50	0.45	4 RB sherds, 1 ?Med sherd, 1 PM sherd; 15 frags tile	?Roman	Layer over & fill of ditch 103. Contaminated
103	Cut	1.50 +	c 0.40	-	Roman	NW-SE ditch
104	Cut	0.50 +	0.12	-	?Modern	?Gully or pit
105	Fill	0.50	0.12	none	?Modern	Fill of 104
106	Layer	0.10 +	0.10	none		?Natural, limited survival
107	Layer	2 m	-	none		Cornbrash bedrock
Trench 2						
200	Layer	2 m	0.10	none	Modern	Turf & topsoil
201	Layer	2 m	0.10	6 RB sherds; 2 frags tile, glass, slate	Modern	Topsoil
202	Layer	2 m	0.18	14 RB sherds; 14 tile frags, slate, human bone frag	?Modern	Most finds Roman
203	Layer	0.70	0.14	3 RB sherds	Modern	Disturbance above 202
204	Layer	2 m	0.15	14 RB sherds, 3 PM sherds; 14 tile frags, glass, shell	?Modern	Mixed. Possibly a contaminated Roman layer
205	Layer	c 1 m +	?	none	Roman	Not excavated
206	?Wall	c 0.70	c 0.12	1 tile frag (RB)	Roman	Probable N-S wall foundation
207	Layer	0.50 +	?	none	Roman	Mortary layer ?partly over 206. Not excavated
208	Layer	c 0.30 +	?	none	Roman	Beneath 206. Possibly natural?
Trench 3						
301	Layer	c 0.75	0.10	none	Modern	Modern dump deposit
302	Layer	2 m	0.22	1 RB sherd, 2 PM sherds; 3 tile frags, plastic, shell	Modern	Topsoil
303	Layer	2 m	0.10	12 RB sherds; 35 tile frags, bone	?Modern	Above Roman deposits
304	Layer	1.90	c 0.20	none	Roman	Compacted building rubble
305	Layer	c 1 m +	c 0.03	none	Roman	Mortar ?floor
306	Layer	0.65 +	?	none	Roman	Small rubble, not excavated
Trench 4						
401	Layer	2 m	0.19	1 PM sherd; 1 tile frag, slate, glass, plastic, bone	Modern	Topsoil

402	Layer	2 m	0.12	5 RB sherds; 12 tile frags, bone	Modern	
403	Layer	2 m	0.15	7 RB sherds; 16 tile frags, bone	Roman	Stone surface
404	Fill	0.60	0.18	1 RB sherd; 2 tile frags, bone	?Roman	Fill of 405
405	Cut	0.60 +	0.18	-	?Roman	NW-SE aligned gully 1.70 m + long. Cuts 403
406	Layer	1.60 +	0.12	none	Roman	Beneath 403
407	Layer	1.65 +	0.12	none	Roman	Stony layer beneath 406
408	Layer	0.70 +	0.15 +	none	?	Possibly natural deposit
Trench 5						
501	Layer	2 m	0.17	6 tile frags, Fe object, asbestos, bone	Modern	Topsoil
502	Layer	2 m	0.13	10 RB sherds, 1 PM sherd; 21 tile frags, slag, bone	Modern	
503	Layer	2 m	0.12	22 RB sherds; 28 tile frags, 3C coin, Fe object, shell, bone	Poss. Medieval	Layer above Roman features - possible ploughsoil
504	Layer	2 m	0.07	11 RB sherds; 14 tile frags, shell, bone	?Roman	Layer above Roman features
505	Layer	1 m +	?	none	Roman	?Dump layer not excavated
506	Layer	2 m	?	none	Roman	?Surface of finely pitched stone frags
507	?Fill	0.65 +	?	none	?Roman	Fill of feature cutting 506?, not excavated
508	?Fill	0.24	?	none	Roman	Fill of slot or gully in 506
Trench 6						
601	Layer	2 m	0.16	1 PM sherd	Modern	Topsoil
602	Layer	2 m	0.24	1 RB sherd	?Modern	
603	Layer			none		Cornbrash bedrock
Trench 7						
701	Layer	2 m	0.11	1 PM sherd; 1 tile frag, glass	Modern	Turf and topsoil
702	Layer	0.60 +	?	none	Modern	NE-SW aligned garden path, not excavated
703	Layer	2 m	0.10	none	Modern	Partly beneath 702
704	Layer	0.80 +	0.10	1 RB sherd, 1 PM sherd; glass	Modern	
705	Layer	0.80 +	0.12	1 RB sherd; 3 tile frags	Roman	Stony ?demolition layer
706	?Wall	0.65 +	?	none	Roman	N-S aligned wall foundation or robbing debris
707	Layer	0.55 +	?	none	Roman	?Cut by 706. Not excavated

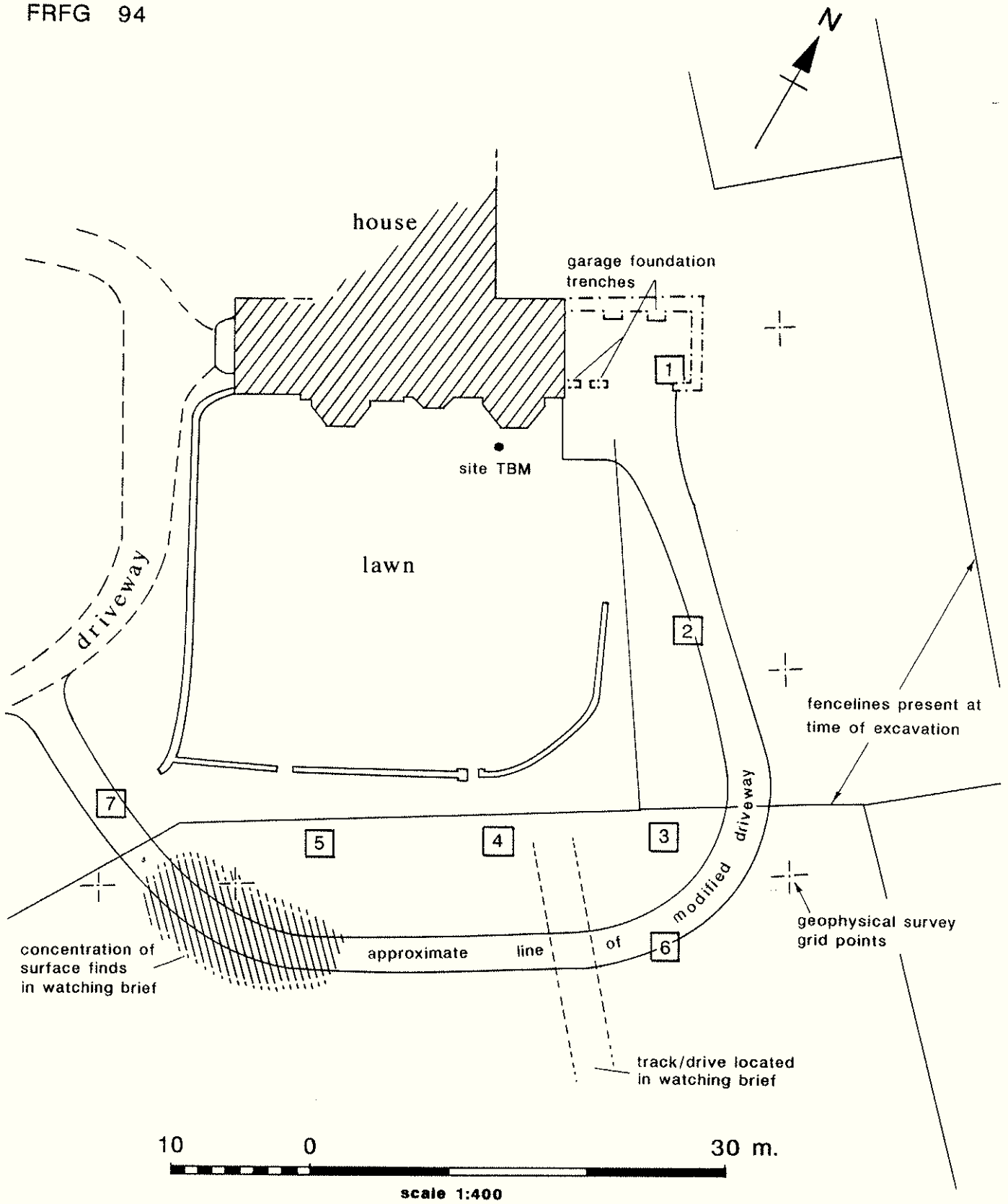
Watching brief: Driveway						
801	Layer	-	0.09	3 RB sherds, 1 PM sherd; 15 tile frags, glass	Modern	Topsoil over all of drive area
802	Layer	-	0.16	5 RB sherds; 19 tile frags, Fe object and nail	Modern	Layer over all of drive area
803	Layer	-	?	none	?Roman	General layer in drive area beneath 802
804	Layer	?	0.08	none	Modern	Hardcore for existing drive 805
805	Layer	?	?	none	Modern	Existing drive surface
806	Layer	3 m	c 0.10	none	Modern	Probable 19C stone driveway c SE-NW
807	Layer	2.50	?	none	Modern	Demolished brick and stone wall
Watching brief: Garage area						
808	Layer	-	0.25	none	?	Probable natural deposit in garage area
809	Layer	-	-	none	-	Cornbrash bedrock
810	Fill	0.90	0.30	1 RB sherd	?Roman	Fill of ?ditch 811
811	Cut	0.90	0.30	-	?Roman	?NW-SW aligned ?ditch, possibly = 103
812	Layer	?	0.23	none	?	Undated. Cut by 811
813	Layer	?	?	none	Modern	Concrete path
814	?Fill	c 0.75	0.22	none	?Modern	Fill of possible animal disturbance later than 810



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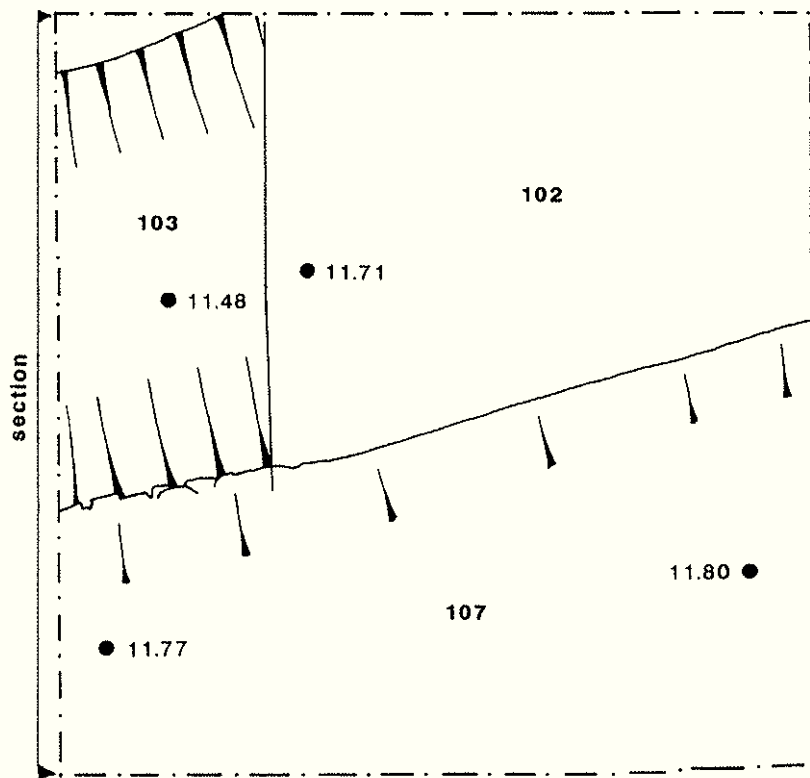
Site location

figure 1

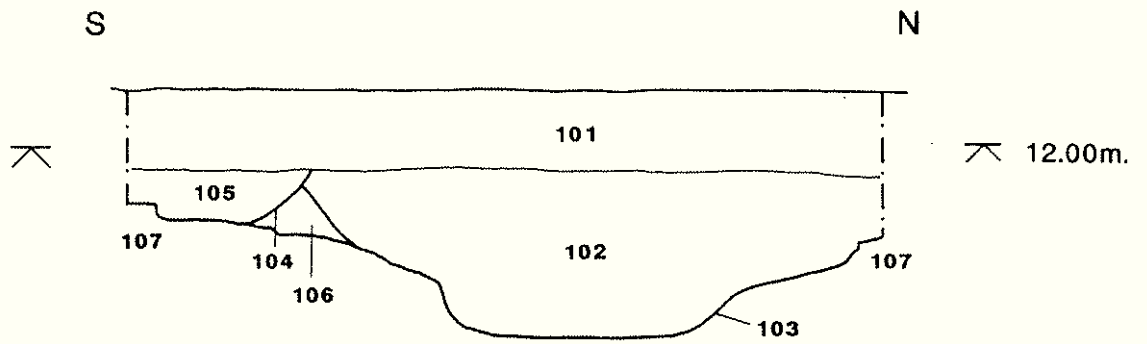


trench location

figure 2

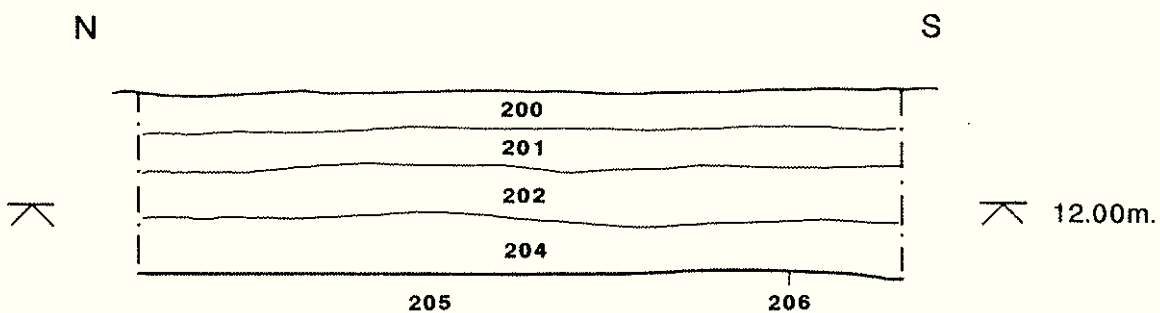
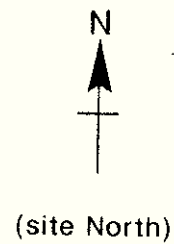
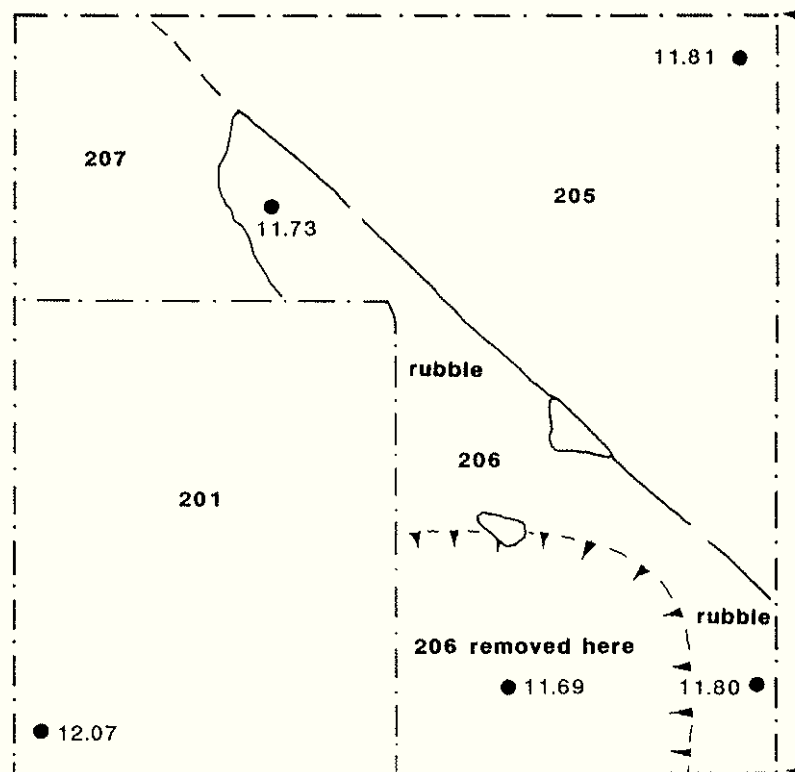


● 11.77 site levels



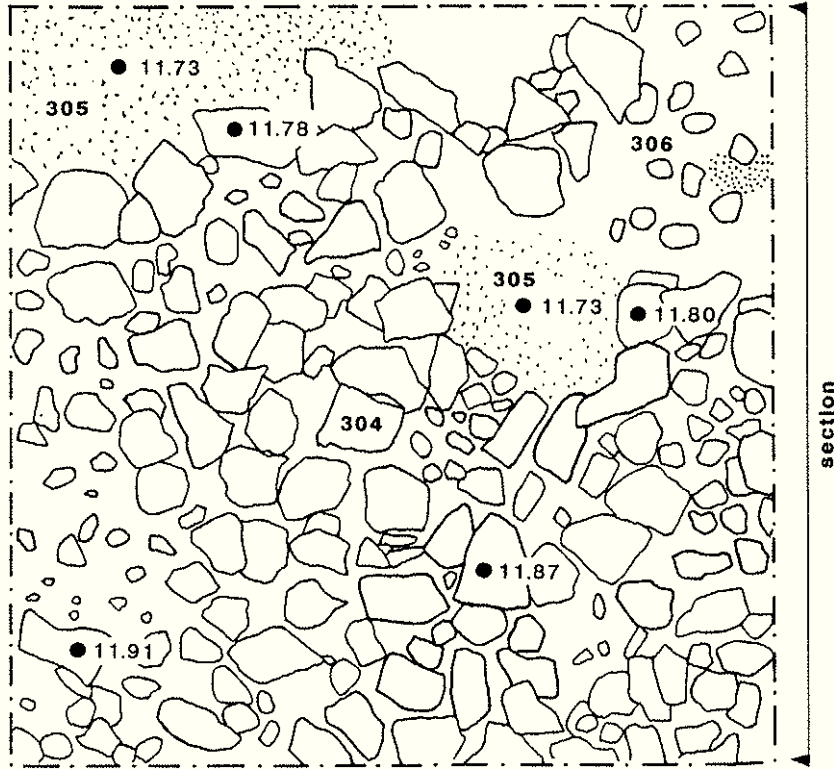
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figure 3

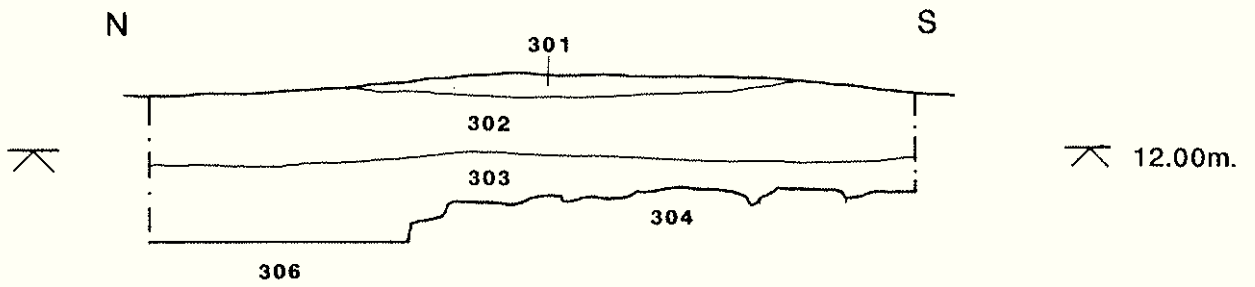


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figure 4

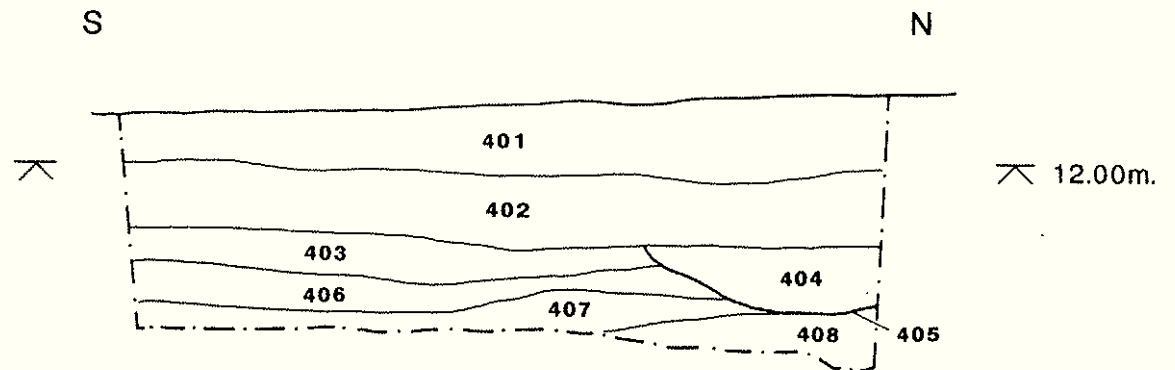
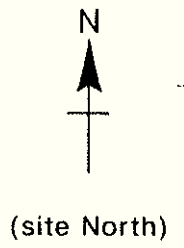
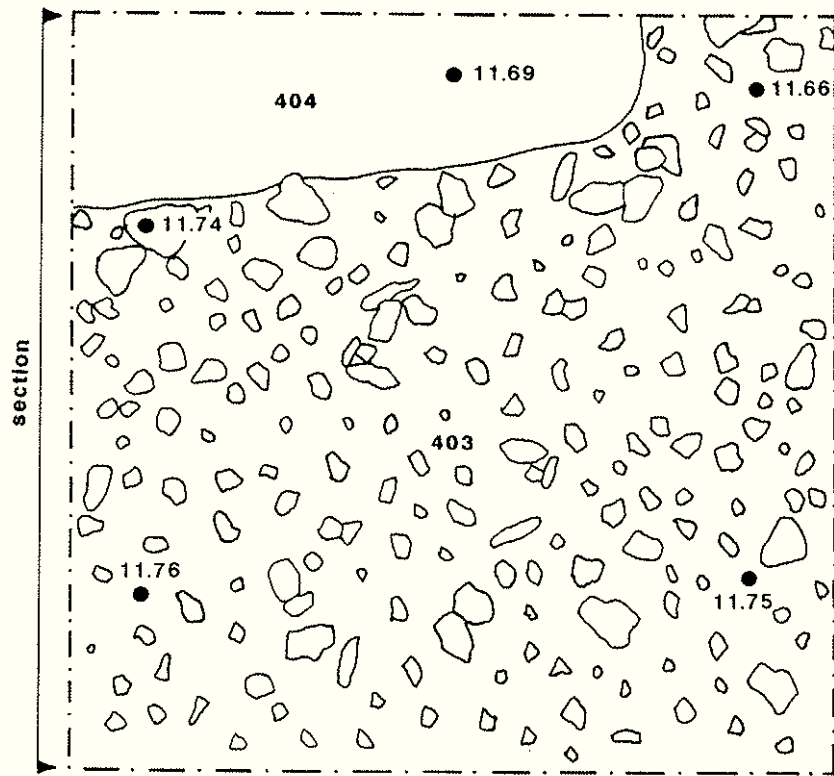


(site North)



scale 1:20

figure 5

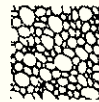
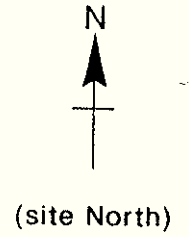
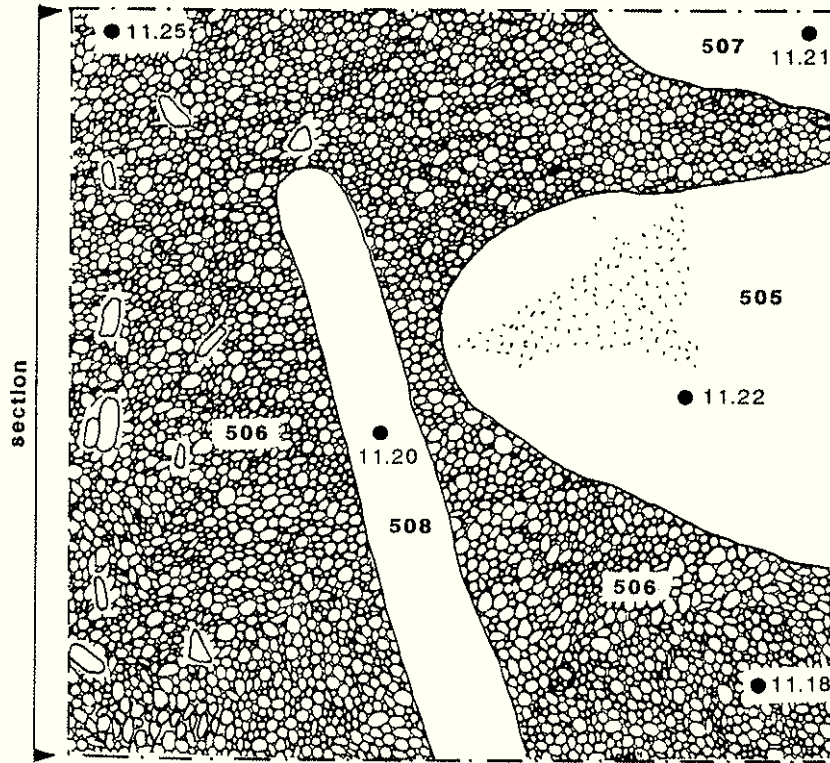


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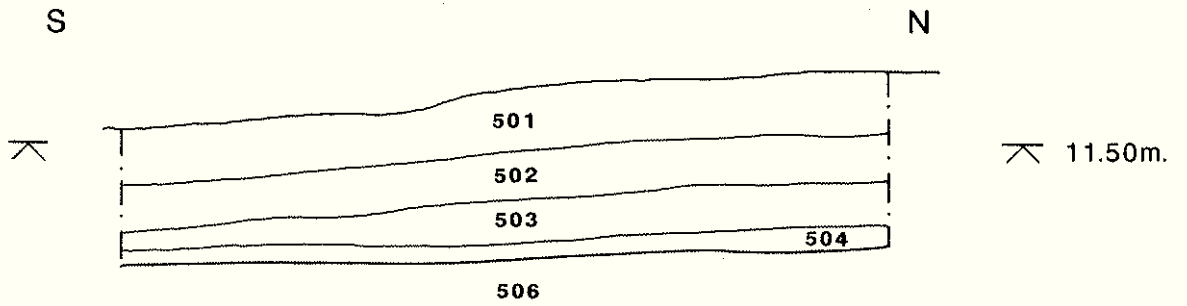
figure 6

Trench 5

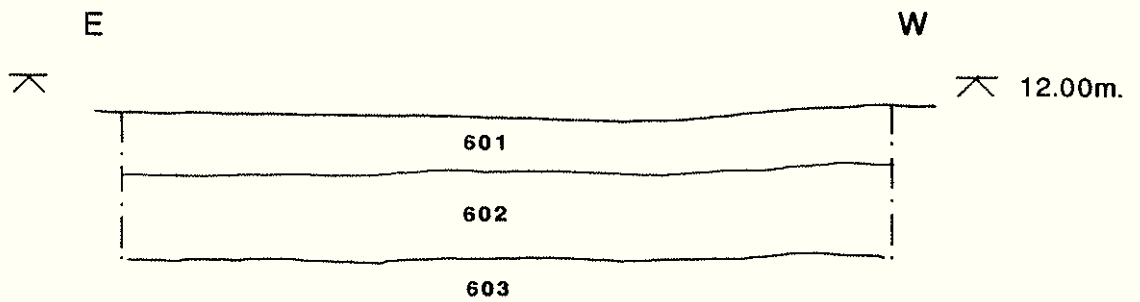
FRFG 94



pitched stone



Trench 6

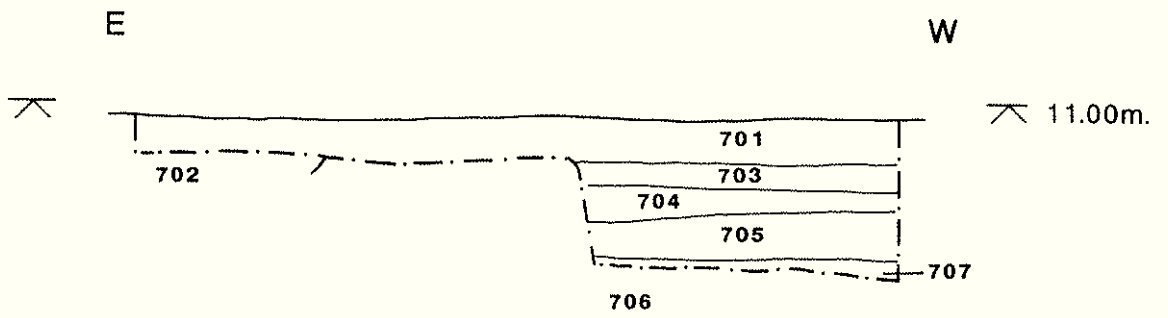
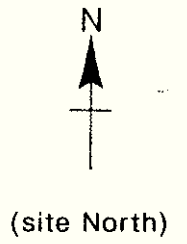
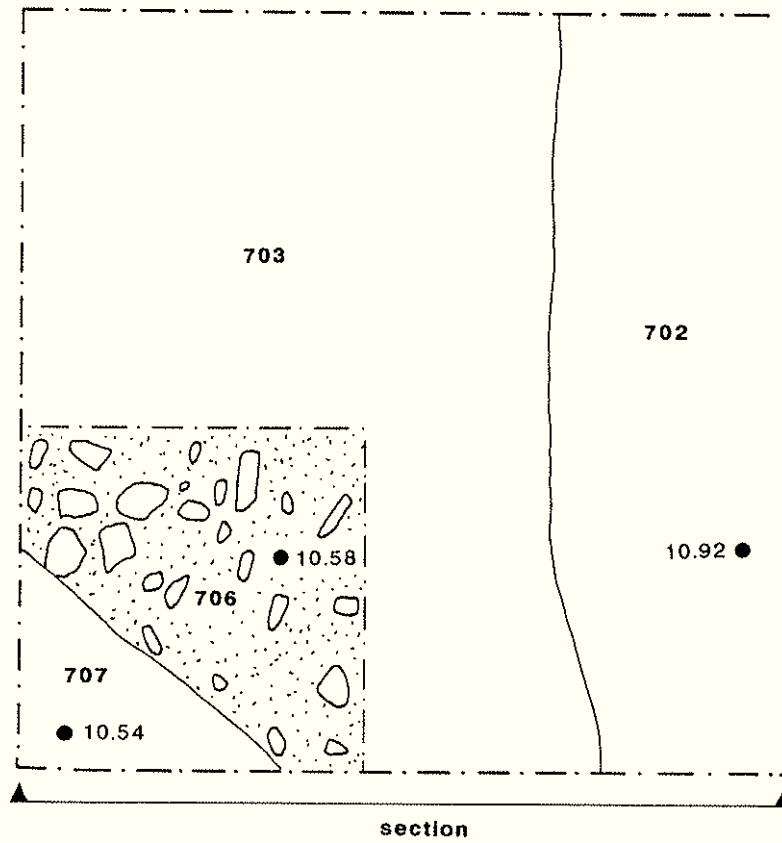


scale 1:20

figure 7

Trench 7

FRFG 94



scale 1:20

figure 8