

Shefford House, East Shefford,  
Berkshire

SU 3890 7440

Archaeological Evaluation Report

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

November 1995

## **SUMMARY**

*The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook an archaeological evaluation of a proposed swimming pool site at Shefford House, East Shefford, Berkshire. A single 5 m-long trench was excavated on the site of the proposed swimming pool. No archaeology was encountered. Natural geology was overlain by a ploughsoil which was sealed by the modern topsoil.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook an archaeological evaluation of a proposed swimming pool site at Shefford House, East Shefford, Berkshire (Figs 1 and 2) on 6 November 1995. The work was commissioned by Nick Shipp Architect on behalf of the landowner, Mr Poole, following a request for archaeological information by Newbury District Council in respect of a proposed planning application. The evaluation had been recommended by the Berkshire County Archaeological Consultant. A single 5 m-long trench was excavated mechanically, and all deposits contained in the trench were recorded.

## **GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

The evaluation site occupies high ground on the west side of the valley of the river Lambourn (Fig 1). The Newbury Road runs along the lower slope of the valley. There are two accesses off the road to Shefford House: the first comprises a driveway to the front of the property, while the second is a rough track leading to a piggery south-west of the house. The main road surface is at 113.5 m OD where this access road joins it; the evaluation site, which is only 80 m back from the main road, lies at c. 125 m. The ground continues to rise south-westwards. A post-and-wire fence had been removed from the site by the building contractor before OAU began the evaluation. The evaluation area otherwise comprises open, rough ground. Geologically the site occupies a localised deposit of river/terrace gravel in an area dominated by chalk and clay-with-flints (Ordnance Survey *Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 267*).

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Shefford House lies in or close to the village of East Shefford. The latter was recorded in Domesday Book in 1086. The church of St Thomas, north of the Newbury Road, is probably 12th century in date. The limits of the medieval village are imperfectly understood, and the evaluation was recommended because of this.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The evaluation took the form of a single 5 m-long and 1.6 m-wide trench, representing an approximately 4 % sample of the development area. The trench was mechanically excavated using a JCB 3X to remove the topsoil and overburden onto the geology or the uppermost archaeological horizon, whichever should be reached first. The trench was then cleaned by hand in plan and section and full records were made. All on-site recording was undertaken in accordance with OAU standard requirements and practices

(D Wilkinson (ed) 1992, *OAU Field Manual*). Levels were related to Ordnance Datum survey points at the north-east end of the drive leading to the site.

The fieldwork was carried out on 7 November 1995. The Brief prepared by the Berkshire County Archaeological Consultant and the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by OAU allowed for a geophysical survey if archaeology was found in the trench. In the event such a survey was unnecessary.

## RESULTS

The natural geology (context 3) was a reddish brown flinty clay gravel. This was sealed by a 0.3 m-thick layer (context 2) of mid-brown silty loam with approximately 15 % small to medium angular flint gravel. This layer is interpreted as a ploughsoil. It lay directly below the modern topsoil (context 1), a dark brown silty loam with 5 % fine flint gravel. No artefacts were recovered from the ploughsoil or the topsoil. No archaeological features were seen.

## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

The weather was fine throughout the evaluation, and there were no problems of access or obstructions. The single trench was a valid means of assessing whether the site had any archaeological potential. It is unlikely that geophysical survey would have assisted in the execution of this project. The interpretation of the results is therefore considered to be valid and correct.

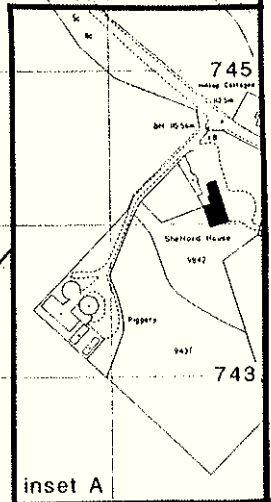
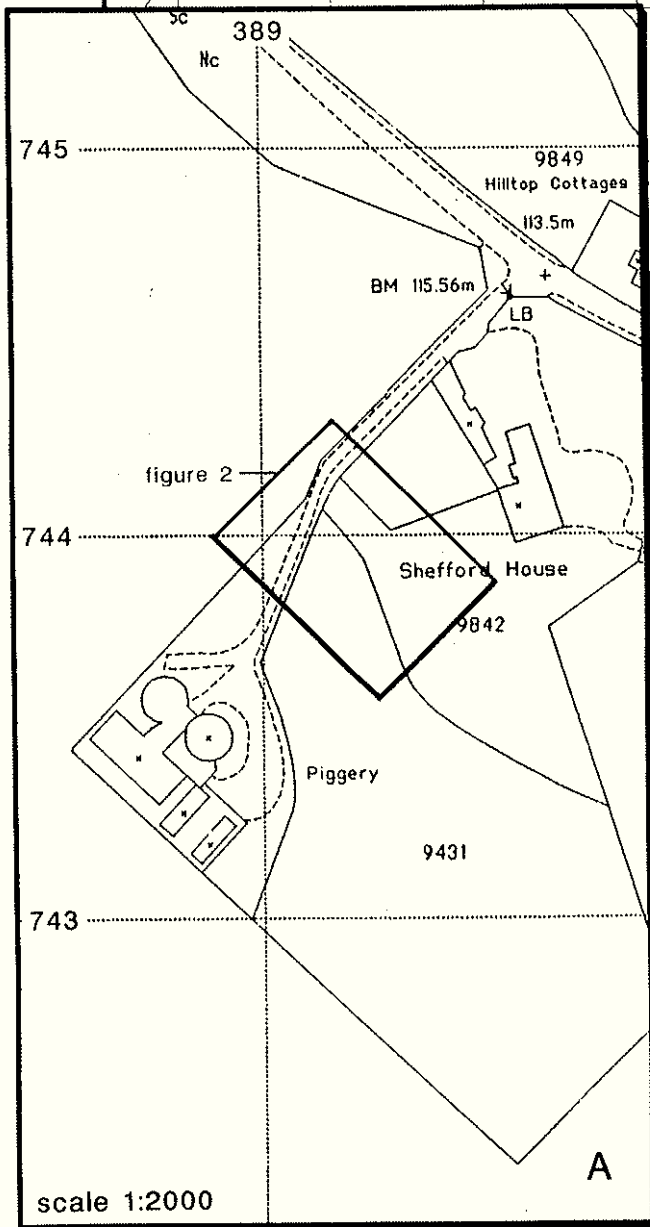
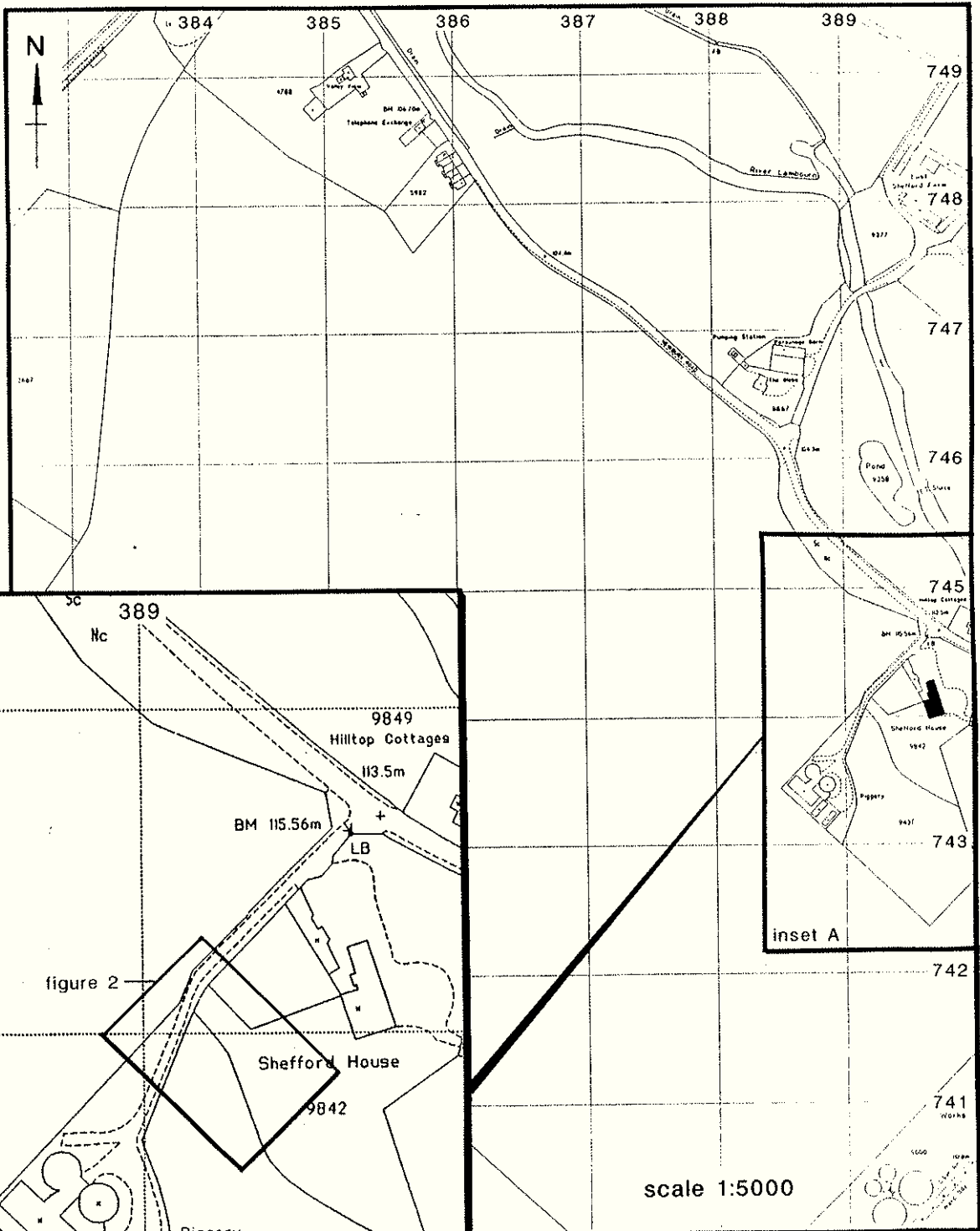
## CONCLUSION

The evaluation did not locate any archaeology. It seems likely that the site lies too far up the valley side to have been within the Domesday village. No further archaeological work appears to be needed.

Cxt	Type	Depth m	Comments	Date
1/1	Layer	0.05	Topsoil	Modern
1/2	Layer	0.30	Ploughsoil	?Medieval
1/3	Layer	0.10+	Natural	

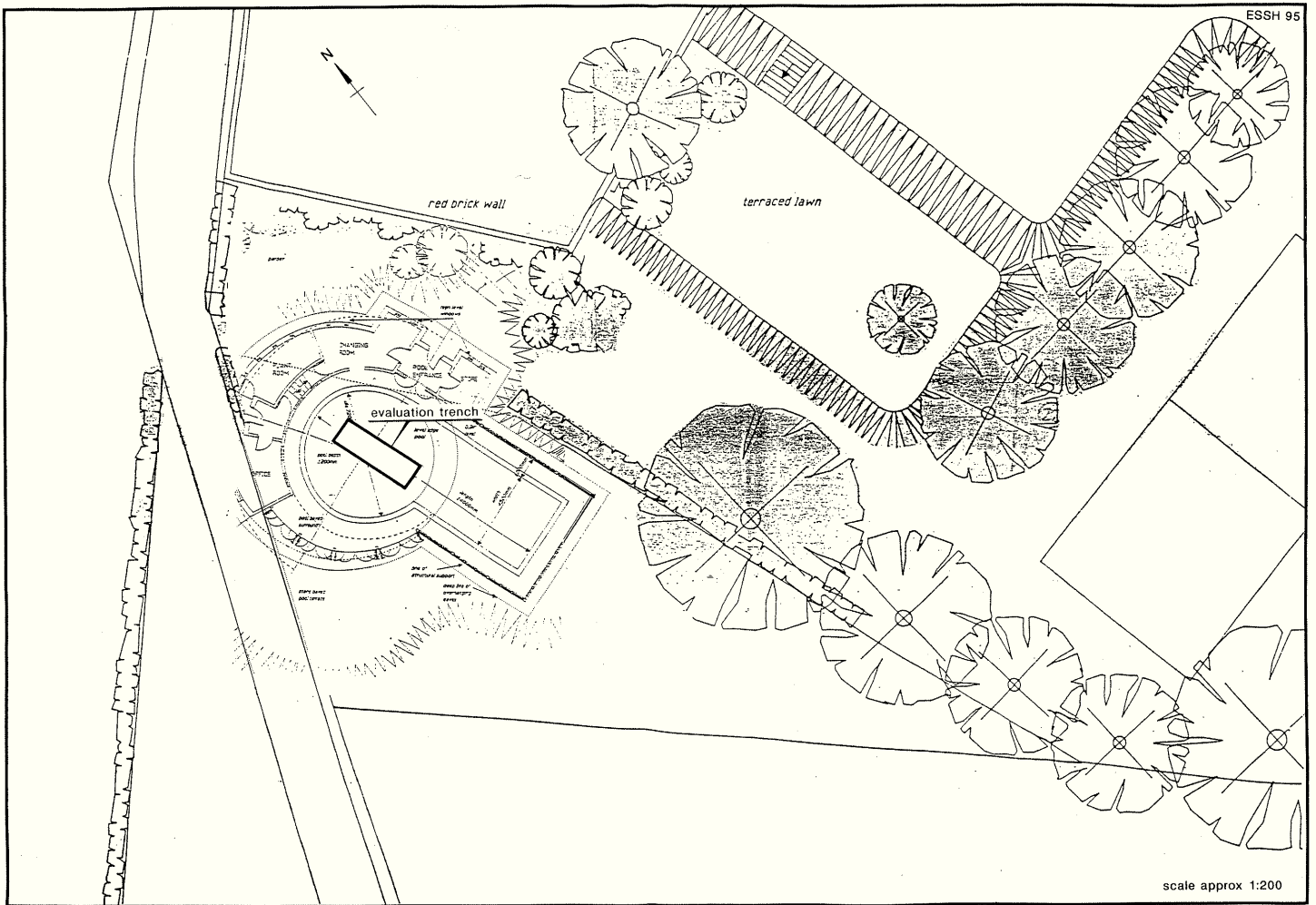
*Table 1: List of contexts*

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Oxford Archaeological Unit  
14 November 1995



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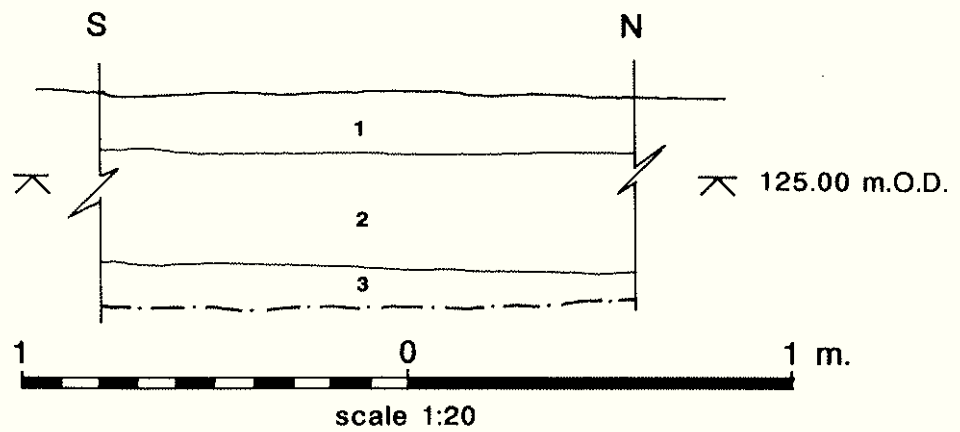
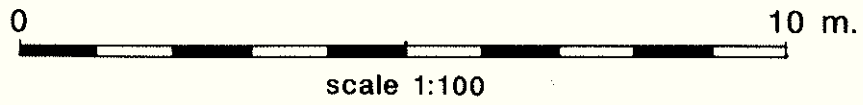
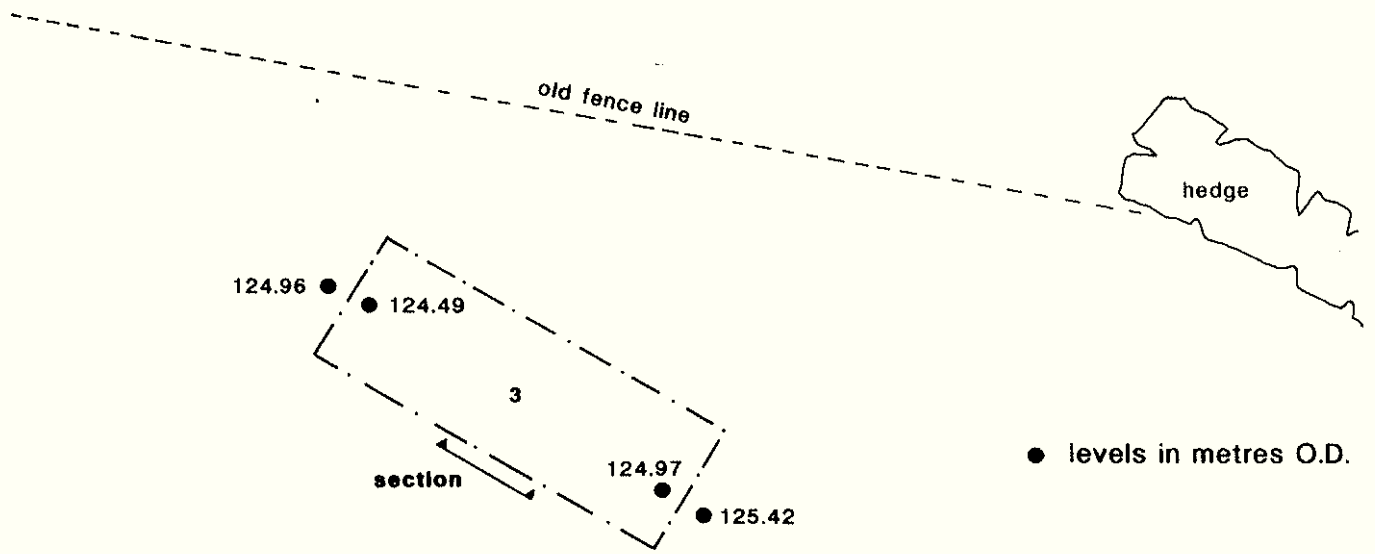
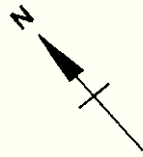
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scale approx 1:200

trench location plan in relation to proposed development

figure 2



trench plan and section detail

figure 3