

Mr L McDonagh

Land adjoining the Carpenter's Arms, Appleford Oxon.

NGR SU 525 935

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Planning Ref. No. 95/00113/FUL

Oxford Archaeological Unit

February 1998

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Planning Ref. No. 95/00113/FUL

Prepared by:

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12/3/98

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25/3/98

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HEAD OF FIELDWORK

Date:

9/4/1998

Oxford Archaeological Unit

February 1998

Summary

In March/April 1997 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief on land adjoining the Carpenter's Arms Public House, Appleford, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 525 935), during the excavation of footings and drainage channels for two new houses (Vale of White Horse Planning Reference 95/00113/FUL). Four cut features were identified, sealed by the subsoil and the topsoil, all of which were modern rubbish pits. Nothing further was seen.

1 Introduction (Fig. 1)

The watching brief was carried out on behalf of the landowner, Mr L McDonagh of St John's Barn, Long Wittenham, Oxfordshire. The work was undertaken on the advice of the County Archaeological Officer, as there are known sites of some importance in the immediate vicinity. The area of development lies on the east side of Main Road, Appleford at NGR SU 525 935. The site is located on the first gravel terrace of the River Thames at approximately 50 m OD. The land presently forms part of the gardens attached to the Carpenter's Arms Public House, with further houses and gardens to the north and south.

2 Background

The site lies within an area of considerable archaeological interest. Extensive cropmark complexes are known on the gravels to the east and west of the village. These indicate activity from both the prehistoric and Roman periods; a little further to the west there is a considerable Saxon settlement at Sutton Courtenay. Much of the cropmark area to the east of the village is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (County SAM 243). The cropmarks to the west of the village were excavated in advance of gravel extraction, revealing a Roman settlement. A hoard of Roman pewter was found in this area; and, just to the west of the site, human burials of uncertain date have been recorded. The Roman villa site of Penn Copse lies approximately 1 km to the north-west of the site, and at Appleford Sidings, a similar distance to the south-west, a regular rectilinear field system of Roman date is associated with a potentially high status early Roman enclosure. This site is the subject of ongoing work by the OAU.

3 Aims

The preservation by record of any archaeological remains, the presence and nature of which could not be established in advance of the works, to established standards (Wilkinson 1992).

4 Methodology

Six separate inspection visits were made to the site during the course of machining for the footings and drainage channels of plots 1 and 2, this work being undertaken by

Buckle and Davies Construction Limited. Within the constraints imposed by Health and Safety considerations the deposits and features exposed in section and plan were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and black and white print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets.

5 Results (Figs 2 - 3)

Plot 1

The foundation trenches and drainage channels for plot 1 were cut through both the tarmac surface of the car park and made-up ground to the south of the public house. Typically, the machined depths were 0.90 m below the tarmac surface and 1.20 m below the surface of the made-up ground, this surface being some 0.30 m higher than the surface of the car park. Where the trenches encountered the fill of the rubbish pits this material was removed to a depth of typically 2 m, going into natural to ensure the complete removal of unstable material.

The earliest deposit encountered was (4), the natural; it comprised a friable yellow/orange silty sand with 2% medium gravels and 30% silt. Cut into this were [5] and [7], the rubbish pits; their shape in plan could not be defined with any certainty. However, based on their profiles as seen in the sections they both appear roughly to be subcircular; with irregularly flat bases, sides sloping upwards at 80-90 degrees to a sharp break of slope at their upper horizons. They were filled by (6) and (8), a loose, mottled mid gray/brown clay loam containing high proportions of brick, tile, glass and metal. This material appeared to be confined to the cuts, i.e. there was no general spread of dumping, and it was 1.70 m thick at its deepest point. (8), [7], (6), [5] and (4) were all sealed by (3), a tenacious mid brown silty clay with 10% silt and 30% medium gravels, which measured a constant 0.12m thick. (3) was sealed by (2), a friable mid gray silty clay loam with 2% silt and pea gravel, measuring a fairly constant 0.60 m. This was sealed by (1), the tarmac surface of the car park.

Plot 2

The foundation trenches and drainage channels for plot 2 were cut through the garden area immediately to the north of the public house, clear of the tarmac car park surface. The earliest deposit seen in plot 2 was again the natural, identical to that seen in plot 1, and numbered here as (202). Cut into this were a further two rubbish pits [203] and [205] with very similar appearances both in plan and section. [203] was filled by (204) a very loose mottled mid gray brown clay loam containing high proportions of brick, tile, glass and metal. [205] was filled by (206), which was identical in every respect to (204). This material was confined to the cuts, and was 1.80 m thick at its deepest point. (206), [205], (204), [203] and (202) were all sealed by (201), a tenacious mid brown silty clay with 10% silt and 30% medium gravels, which measured a constant 0.12 m thick. (201) was sealed by (200), a friable mid gray/brown silty clay loam with 2% silt and pea gravel, which measured a fairly constant 0.60 m thick.

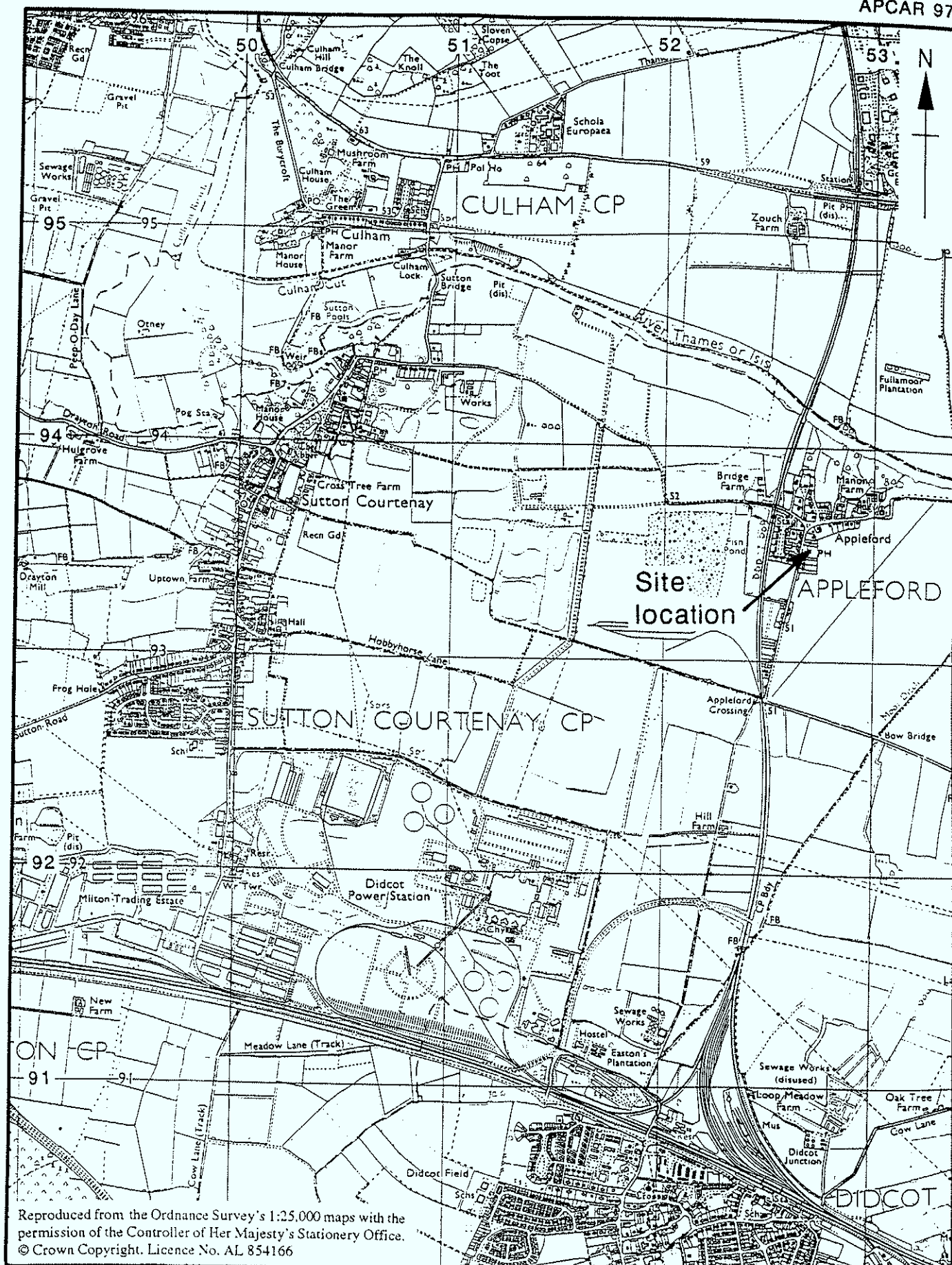
6 Discussion

The only cut features seen on site were the rubbish pits described above. No artefactual material was retrieved from these deposits due both to the depth and to the precarious nature of the sections. However, material observed on the spoilheaps and *in situ* from the top of the section appeared uniformly to be 19th - 20th century in date. The pits in both plots were sealed by a solid band of gravelly, silty clay. It is thought probable that this represents an importation of material from elsewhere, which has been dumped and spread over the general area, possibly specifically to seal the rubbish pits prior to the reuse of the land. The unusual thickness of the topsoil, and the lack of any domestic debris from within it, may point to a similar origin for this material. If there were any Roman or prehistoric artefacts/deposits within the site then they have been removed by more recent activity.

John Dalton
OAU
February 1998.

References

Wilkinson D (ed.) 1992 Fieldwork Manual, First Edition



scale 1:25,000

Figure 1

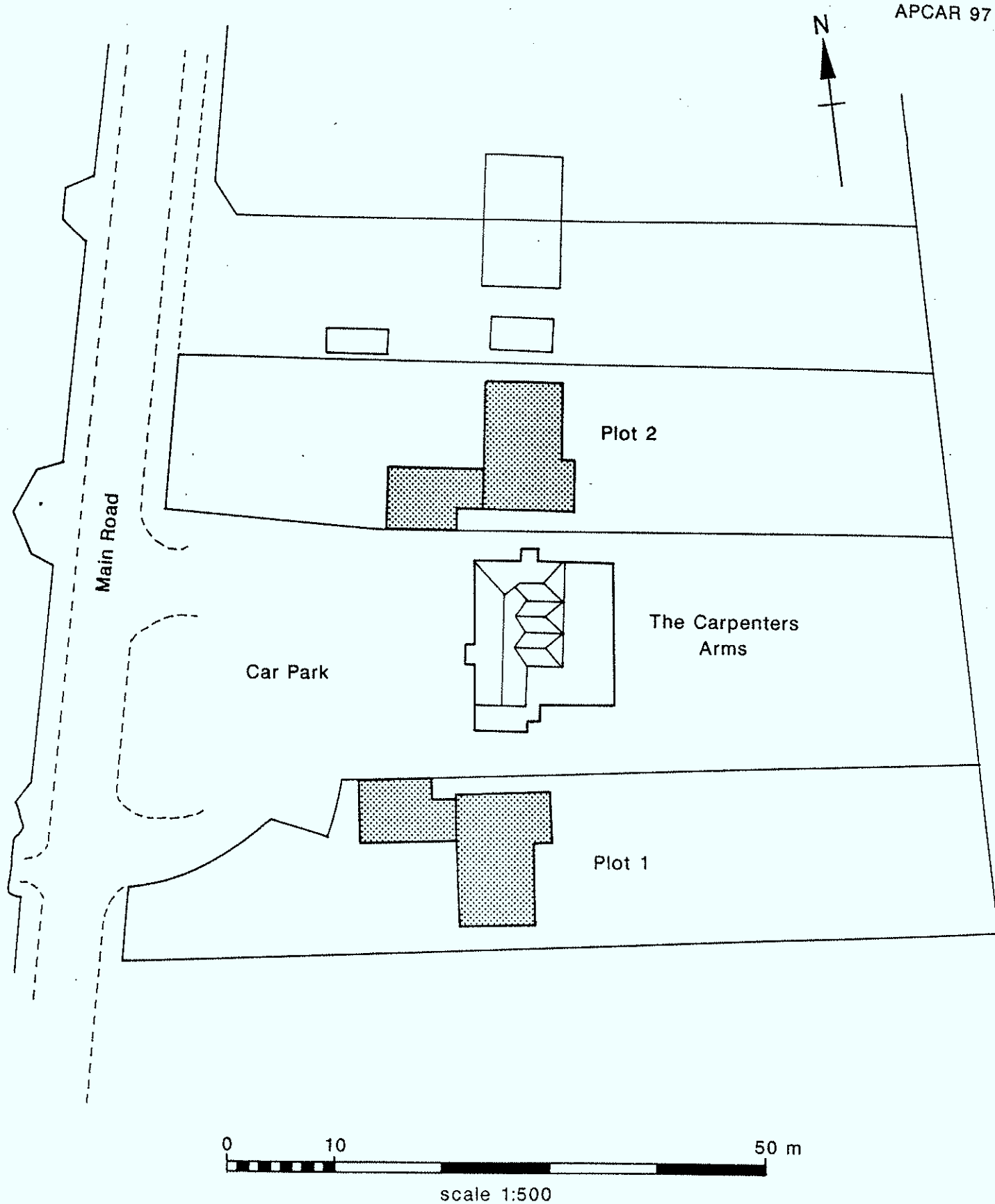


Figure 2

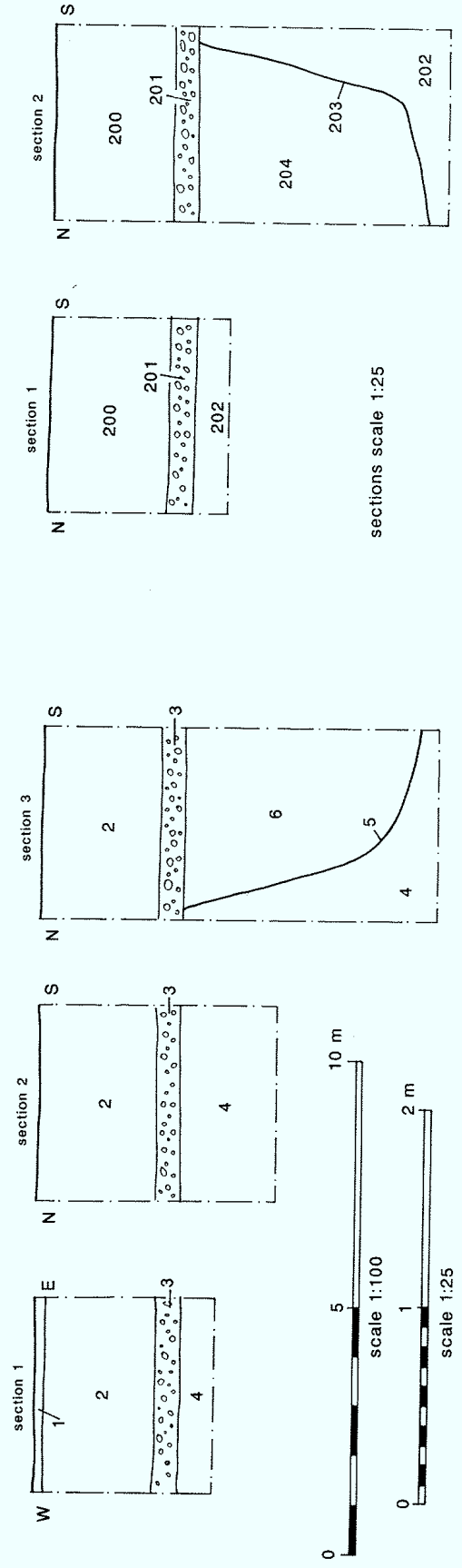
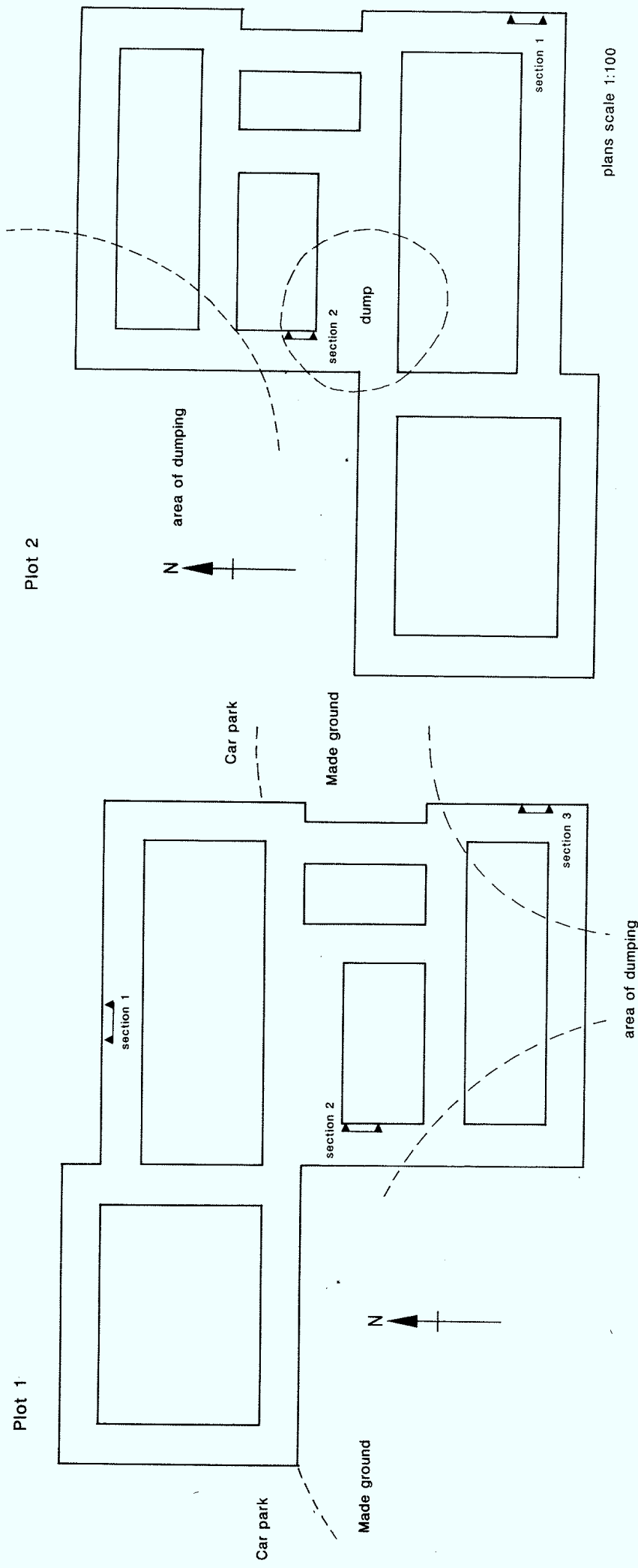


Figure 3

