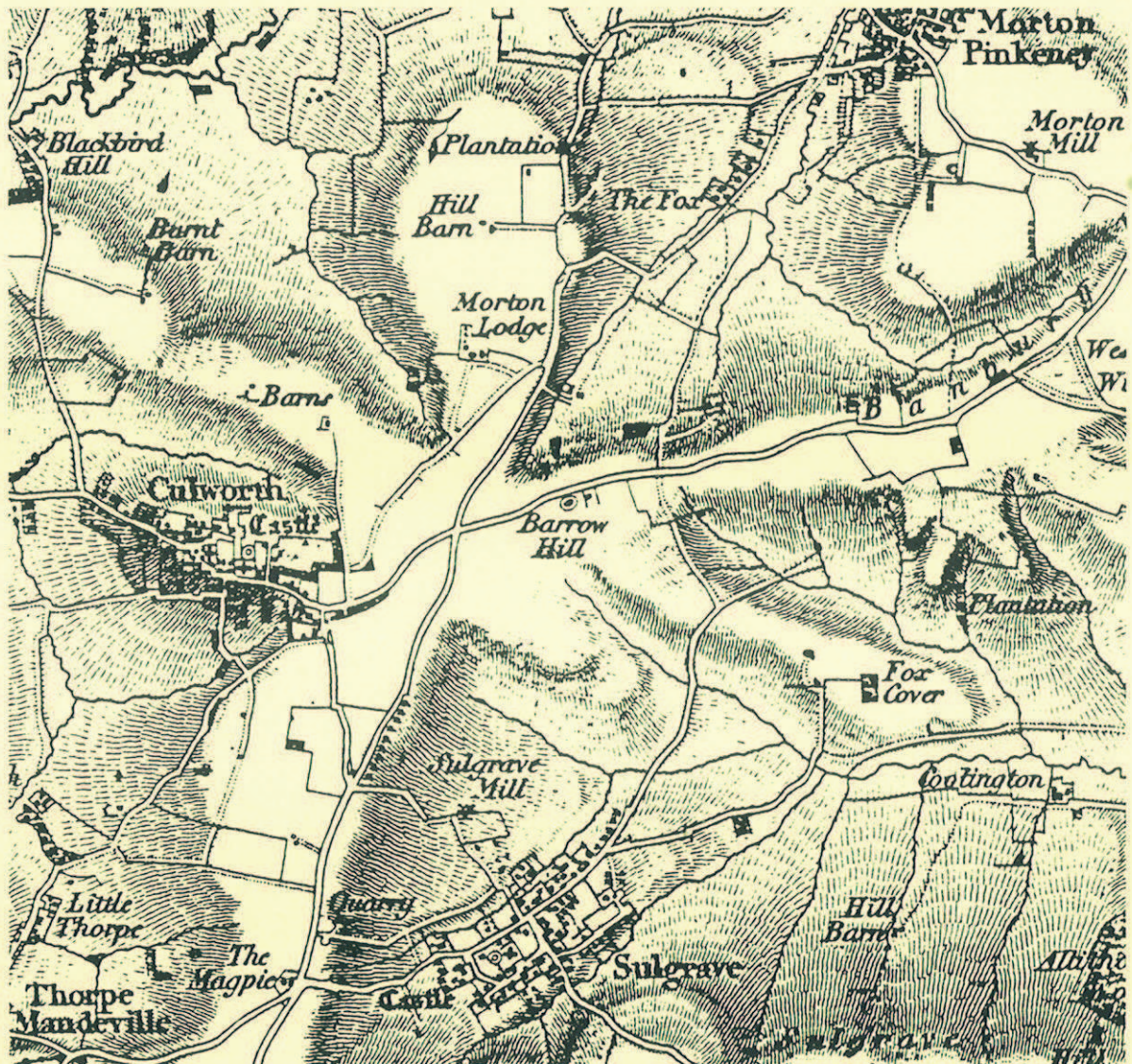


# Courtyard Development, Sulgrave Manor, Northamptonshire

NGR SP 5605 4558

## Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeological Unit

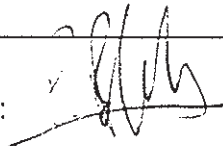
March 1997

Clews Architects

Sulgrave Manor, Sulgrave, Northamptonshire

*ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT*

SP 5605 4558

Prepared by: A Parkinson Date: 19th March 1997
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OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

March 1997

**SULGRAVE MANOR ,  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION  
NGR SP 5605 4558**

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MARCH 1997**

## 1. SUMMARY

*Two trenches were excavated by the Oxford Archaeological Unit at Sulgrave Manor. The trench near to the former site of the Washington Elm exposed a sequence of post-medieval deposits which ended with a limestone cobbled surface located directly below the present lawn. The other trench positioned southwest of the manor revealed a sequence of medieval ditches, all orientated north-south, which appeared to have been recut at least twice. The pottery from the ditches suggests a date in the 12th or early 13th century AD. A layer cut by one of the ditches contained burnt hearth material likely to have resulted from domestic occupation. These ditches may form a medieval plot boundary and be a continuation of the earthworks which are recorded in the field to the west of Sulgrave Manor.*

## 2. INTRODUCTION

An archaeological field evaluation was commissioned by Clews Architects on behalf of Sulgrave manor and undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit between the 25th and 27th February 1997. It is proposed to develop the courtyard of Sulgrave Manor with a shop, refreshment area, lavatories and an area for school parties.

## 3. LOCATION (Fig.1 & 2)

The manor is situated at the eastern end of the village (NGR 5605 4558) at about 140m above Ordnance Datum (OD). The underlying geology is Upper Lias Clay.

## 4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The manor was bought by Lawrence Washington in 1540 and stayed in the Washington family until 1659. The existing structure is later than 1558 (the arms of Queen Elizabeth are over the porch). Only the central bay and porch of the manor is original. The north wing was added at the time of Queen Anne. Much of the house was demolished in the 1780's and was not rebuilt until 1921 by Sir Reginald Blomfield (Pevsner 1961). The 1890 OS survey (Fig. 3) shows a number of farm buildings to the west of the manor, but only one survives to the present day.

There is a surviving ringwork at the opposite, south-west, end of the village adjacent to the St James's church (Fig 2 & 3). The bank survives up to a height of 3.6 metres and has a flat top and traces of a surrounding ditch. The site was excavated between 1960 and 1976, although the exact interpretation is still unclear. The earliest structure probably dates to the 10th century AD and consists of a timber building which was almost certainly a hall. It was subsequently rebuilt in

stone with a massive rampart. Part of the stone building is preserved within the earthwork. Later modifications of the ramparts probably culminated in the present ringwork which was subsequently heightened in the 12th century. The whole site was abandoned by the mid-12th century. The nearby villages of Weston, Weedon and Culworth have similar ringworks which may all date from the same period (RCHM IV 1982).

There are a number of areas of earthworks within the village, two of which are located at the south-west end of the village, to the north and south of the ringwork. More significantly, a third area of earthworks, situated immediately to the south-west of Sulgrave Manor (Fig. 2), are:

*'...fragmentary remains of sunken platforms and low scarps and banks bounded on the S side by a continuous scarp up to 1m high. These appear to be sites of houses which lay along the street.'*

RCHM IV, 1982, 141

## 5. AIMS

The main aims were to:

Identify the foundations of the 19th-century farm buildings shown on the 2nd Edition O.S. Map.

To determine the eastern and western extent of the Manor and any previous buildings beyond extent of the the 1920's rebuilding.

Determine whether there are any significant archaeological remains on the site and if so, to ascertain their character, date, extent and state of preservation.

To determine the palaeo-environmental potential of the site.

## 6. STRATEGY (Fig. 4)

Two trenches were excavated; Trench 1 was on the lawn to the west of the manor and on the north side of the manor gardens near to the former site of the Washington Elm. Trench 2 was west of the manor house and on the south side of two outbuildings. The trench dimensions were:

Trench 1 2.5m x 1.5m

Trench 2 2.5m x 3.4m at widest (T-shaped 1.5m at narrow width).

These represented a 1.5% sample of the area affected by the development. The trenches form a higher percentage of the area covered by the footprint of the proposed building and not already disturbed by buildings or modern landscaping. Trench 1 was hand dug due to access restrictions. Trench 2 was excavated down to

the first archaeological levels with a 360° mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. Further excavation was by hand.

An Archaeogeophysical Survey of the proposed development and the gardens surrounding the manor was also carried out and the results are outlined in *Sulgrave Manor, Northamptonshire, Report on Archaeogeophysical Survey, 1997* (Bartlett - Clark Consultancy).

## **7. RESULTS (For a summary of contexts see Appendix 1)**

### ***TRENCH 1 (Fig. 5 & 6)***

Trench 1 was up to 0.84m in depth; the natural clay subsoil was located at about 143.90m OD. This natural clay was overlain by a stratified sequence of clay and stony deposits (103, 105, 106, 107, 108). These all contained post-medieval pottery. A large number of animal bones was recovered from layer 105. The latest pottery from this layer was Midland Blackware which has a date range of AD1550-1700.

A ill-defined limestone feature, 104, ran along the southern edge of the trench. There were not enough stones to establish whether it was the bottom of a retaining wall or a dump of rubble. It rests on post-medieval deposits.

The final dump layer (103) was overlain by a cobbled surface, 102, which was directly below the present lawn turf.

### ***TRENCH 2 (Fig. 7 & 8)***

Trench 2 exposed a number of ditches which were orientated approximately north-south. Ditch 205 was identified in the trench and the trench was widened in order to determine the width of the ditch. This exposed a sequence of U-shaped ditch cuts, all apparently running north-south. Two shallower, earlier, ditch cuts, 207 and 209, were superseded by a larger ditch, 205 which measured 0.80 m in depth and 1.70 m in width. The fill was a fairly homogenous greenish-grey clay, with occasional small pieces of limestone. Pottery recovered from near the base of the ditch was given a date range of AD1100-1400. Layer 211 which contained burnt stone and charcoal lay to the east of Ditch 205 and was cut by it. Ditch 205 also cut a very 'clean' light brown clay, 221.

The ditches were sealed by layer 203 which was overlain by a layer of limestone and mortar 216. A posthole, 215, which contained medieval pottery (AD1100-1400 date range) cut layer 203.

## **8. POTTERY, Paul Blinkhorn**

The post-Roman pottery assemblage from Sulgrave Manor comprised 24 sherds with a total weight of 339g. The fabric occurrence was as shown in Appendix 2.

Whilst it is difficult to draw any solid conclusions from such a small pottery assemblage, it is highly likely that contexts 204, 209 and 214 date to the 12th or earlier 13th century, due to the fact that there were no glazed wares present in any of the features. It is also worthy of note that the medieval coarseware assemblage from Sulgrave is typical of those known from other sites in the southern part of the county. The Sulgrave sherds are all north Oxfordshire types, such as Banbury ware, and there are no shelly wares of the type found at more north-easterly sites in Northamptonshire.

## 9. ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

In order to assess the preservation of environmental indicators, two deposits were sampled, all from the ditch complex in Trench 2: the ashy dump 209 in ditch 210, and the possible old ground surface or house platform 211. The samples were processed by mechanical flotation, with the flots collected on 0.25 mm mesh. In both cases the volume processed was 10 litres.

These flots were assessed by Ruth Pelling of the English Heritage Environmental Archaeology Unit at the University Museum, Oxford. Both flots were small and the charred element was dominated by wood charcoal. The wood charcoal in deposit 211 was too small to be identifiable. The identifiable charcoal in ditch fill 209 was dominated by shrubs, mainly hawthorn type (*Pomoideae*), with some hazel or alder (*Corylus/Alnus*).

Charred grains and weeds were recovered from both samples, with a much larger assemblage from the ditch fill 209. The grain in both was dominated by free-threshing wheat (*Triticum* sp.) with barley (*Hordeum*, some hulled) and oat (*Avena*) making up the remainder. Edible pulses were also found in the ditch fill. Weeds characteristic of medieval agriculture such as grasses, *Galium* and *Anthemus cotula* were noted. Threshing debris was absent from both samples.

Overall the charred remains are typical of the medieval period, although neither of the recovered assemblages are large enough to make any clear interpretations.

Snails were recovered from both the samples; the snails from the deposit 211 are mainly dry-ground open-country species with some shade-dwellers. These include *Tritia hispida* which means the deposit was not aquatic. Well preserved bone was recovered from both trenches.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS

There were no significant archaeological features located in Trench 1. The majority of the deposits appeared to have been dumped in the post-medieval period. The pottery suggesting that the deposits in Trench 1 are dateable to the 16th century, although later dumping is also possible. They probably indicate a period of

landscaping or alterations which culminated in the laying of a cobbled limestone surface, 102, which was probably either a yard or path. The resistivity survey revealed anomalies within the area of Trench 1 which form the indistinct rectilinear pattern which can be seen on the magnetometer survey (Bartlett March 1997, 2, Plan 1 & 3). The results of the evaluation and geophysical survey may have indentified a garden layout with cobbled paths and the linear stone structure 104 which may be a possible a retaining wall. The plan of Sir Reginald Blomfield's garden layout in the 1930's does not show any paths in the area of Trench 1, although the lawn appears to have been much as it is today, with the Washington Elm still in place. The cobbled area is most likely to immediately pre-date the new layout of the 1920's.

Trench 2 in contrast contained a sequence of recut ditches containing pottery suggesting a 12th or early 13th century date. Generally the surrounding area is relatively undisturbed and the medieval features are well preserved at about 0.45m below the present ground surface. The plan of Sir Reginald Blomfield's garden layout of the 1930's names this area as 'Madam's Close' and shows it is not incorporated into the Manor gardens. The ditches probably form plot boundaries which are likely to be part of the earthwork remains which continue into the field immediately west of the Manor. The ditches, therefore, pre-date the existing Manor buildings. The burnt material in layer 211 is probably from a raked out hearth or oven and strongly suggests domestic occupation nearby. The evidence for domestic occupation is supported by the other environmental results from the ditch .

There was no evidence for the 19th-century buildings shown on the 1890 O.S. map. The stone and mortar layer 216 is clearly demolition debris. A limestone spread, 202, may have been the remains of a floor of the 19th century building, although it was too fragmentary and disturbed to be firmly identified as such. The probable extent of the stone spread 202 is identified in the Resistivity Survey and mostly corresponds to the location of the 19th century farm building (Bartlett 1997 Plan No. 1 & 3).

The results show that the greatest potential for archaeological remains within the the proposed development lies in the area of Trench 2, the proposed location of the school parties area and a terrace (Clews Architects, Proposed Plan, Alternative layout C, Drawing No. 034 Revision H). The medieval remains could contribute information about development of the village of Sulgrave as it presently unknown if the village grew outward or was planned. The environmental remains demonstrate some potential for understanding the village economy in the medieval period. The pottery suggests that occupation began following the abandonment of the ringwork in the mid 12th century.



## References

Bartlett A.D. H. March 1997, '*Sulgrave Manor, Northamptonshire, Report on Archaeogeophysical Survey, 1997*' (Bartlett - Clark Consultancy).

Pevsner N, 1961, *The buildings of England- Northamptonshire* 417-8.

RCHM, 1982, *An Inventory of Historical Monuments in the County of Northamptonshire* VOL IV 138-41.

## APPENDIX 1

## Summary of contexts and finds (for pottery see Appendix 2)

SULGRAVE MANOR (SULMA 97)					
Context	Type	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Comments
TRENCH 1					
101	Layer	0.10			Turf and topsoil
102	Layer	0.21			Cobbled surface - 2 bone
103	Layer	0.20			Dumped deposit, 4 oyster shells, 1 piece of glass
104	Stone	0.18	0.25+	2.40+	? Retaining wall ?rubble
105	Layer	0.15			Dumped post-med deposit - 42 pieces of bone
106	Layer	0.06			Dumped post-med. deposit - 1 piece of bone, 6 oyster shells
107	Layer	0.15			Dumped post-med. deposit
108	Layer	0.26			Disturbed natural subsoil - 6 pieces of bone
109	Layer				Natural subsoil
TRENCH 2					
201	Layer	0.30			Topsoil, 4 pieces of glass, coal
202	Layer	0.15			Stone spread
203	Layer	0.28			?post-med soil - 1 piece of bone
204	Fill	0.80			Fill of 205
205	Ditch	0.80	1.70		N/S Ditch
206	Fill	0.30			Fill of 207
207	Ditch	0.32	0.40+		N/S Ditch
208	Fill	0.20			Fill of 210
209	Fill	0.20			Fill of 210 - 2 pieces of bone
210	Cut	0.33			N/S Ditch
211	Layer	0.20			Possible occupation layer, 1 piece of glass ?intrusive
212	Cut	0.40	0.70+		?Pit
213	Fill	0.40			Fill of 212
214	Fill	0.80			Fill of 215
215	Cut	0.80	0.34		Posthole
216	Layer	0.28			Stone and mortar
217	Fill	0.60+			Fill of 218
218	Cut	0.40	0.19		Posthole
219	Layer				Natural subsoil
220	Fill	0.32			Fill of 221 - 1 piece of bone
221	Ditch	0.40			N-S Ditch

**APPENDIX 2:**

**Pottery occurrence per context by fabric type and number and weight (g) of sherds**

Context	F303	F360	F407	F411	F1000	Assemblage Date	Total
102			2 (3)			1450+	2 (3)
103			1 (15)			1450+	1 (15)
105	1 (9)		2 (16)	5 (156)		1550+	8 (181)
201	2 (17)				5 (38)	Modern	7 (55)
203	1 (29)					1100+	1 (29)
204	2 (5)	1 (5)				1100+	3 (10)
209	1 (26)					1100+	1 (26)
214	1 (20)					1100+	1 (20)
Total	8 (106)	1 (5)	5 (34)	5 (156)	5 (38)		24 (339)

The fabric codings used are those of the Northamptonshire County Ceramic Type-Series, as follows.

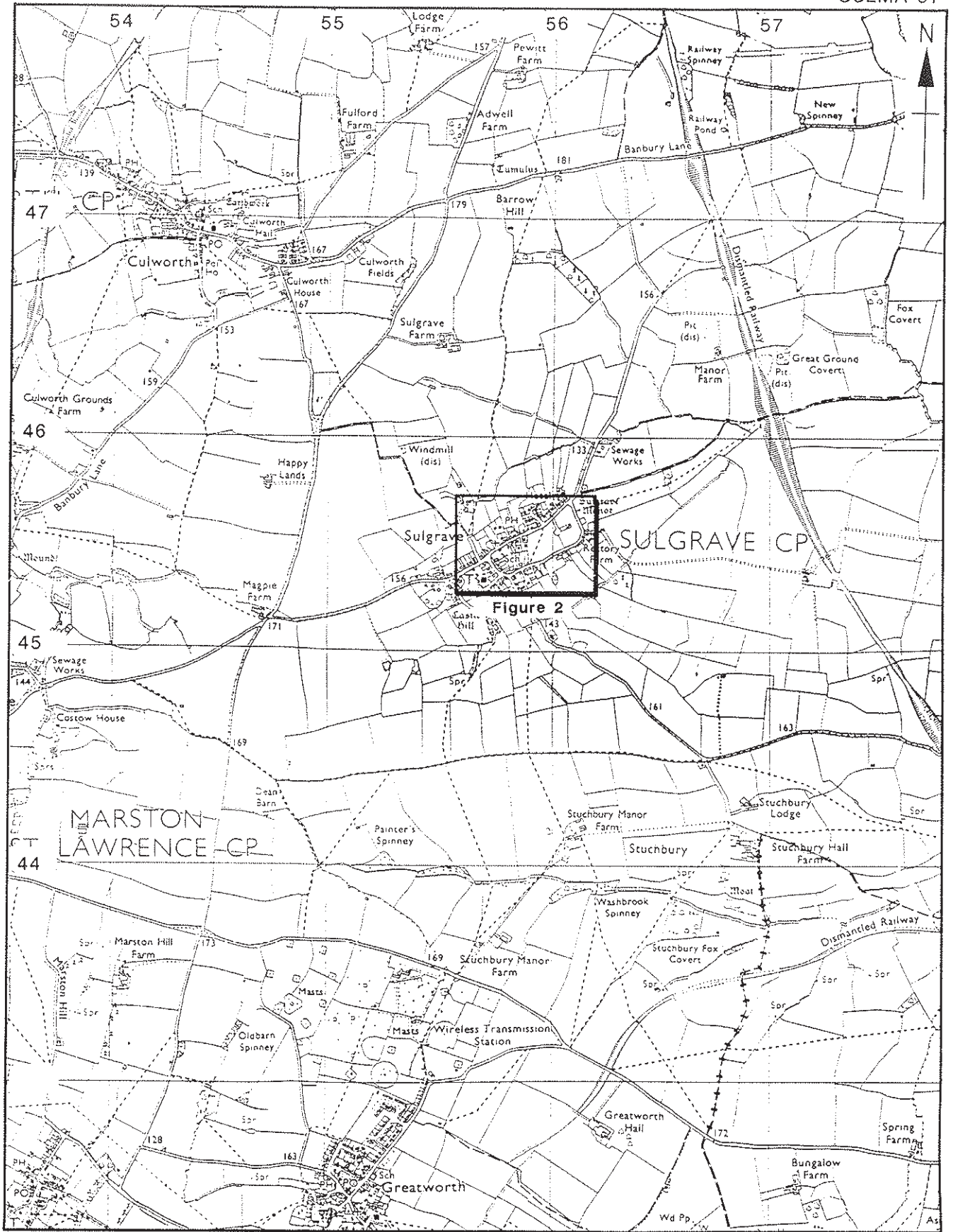
F303: Medieval sandy calcareous coarseware, c. 1100-1400

F360: Banbury ware, c. 1100-1400

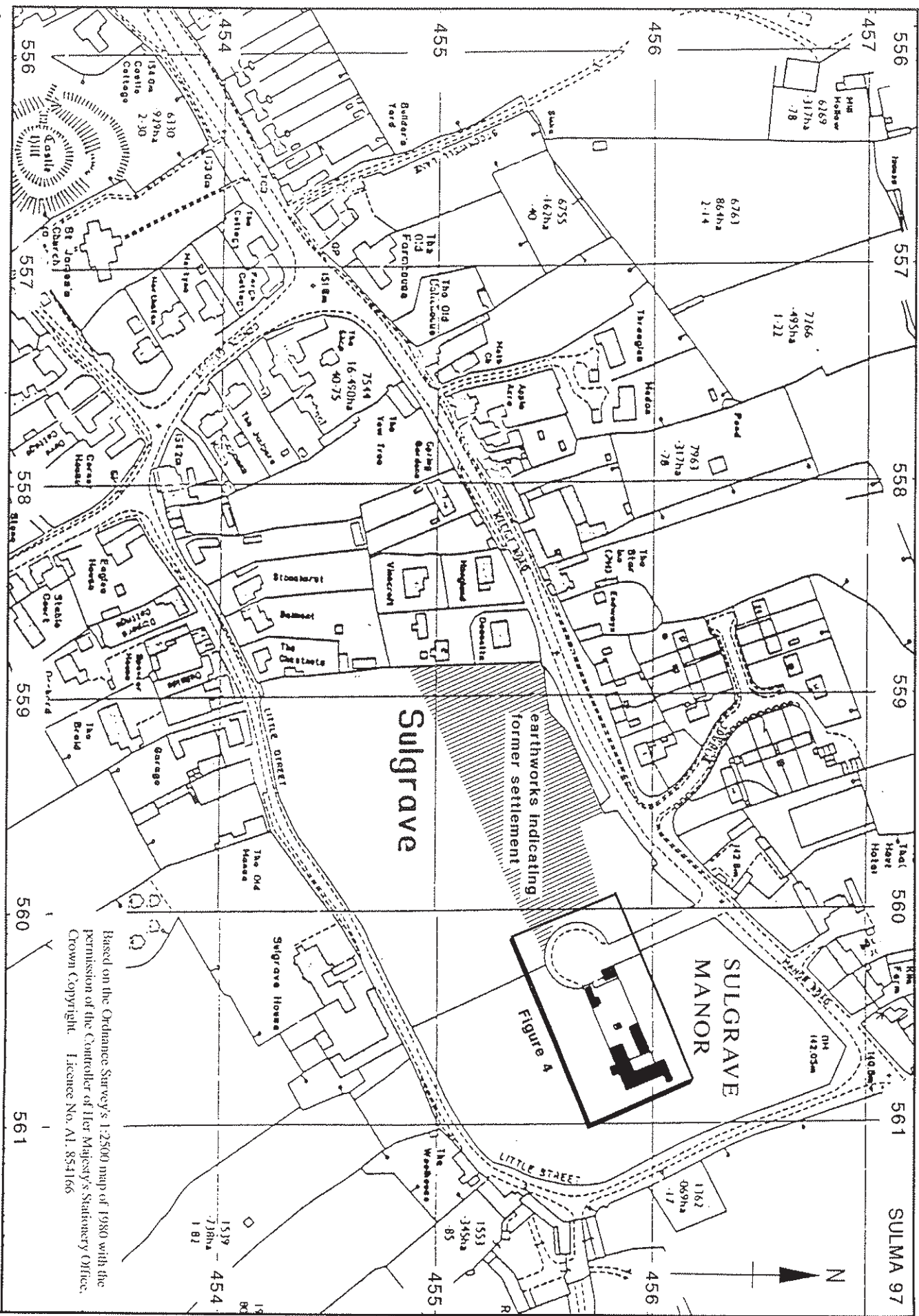
F407: Red Earthenwares, c. 1450-?1550

F411: Midland Blackware, c. 1550-1700

F1000: Miscellaneous modern wares.



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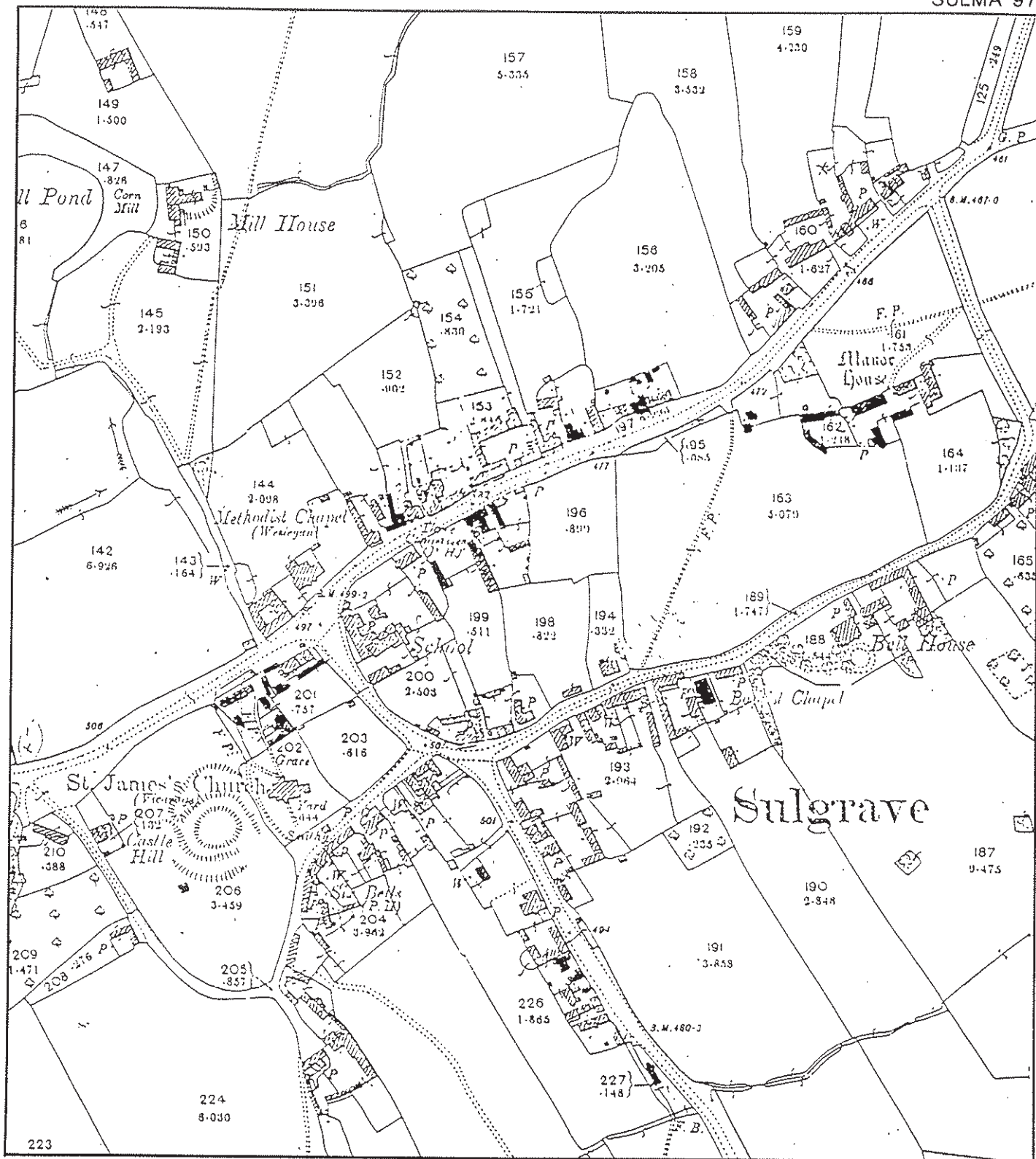


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Scale 1:2500

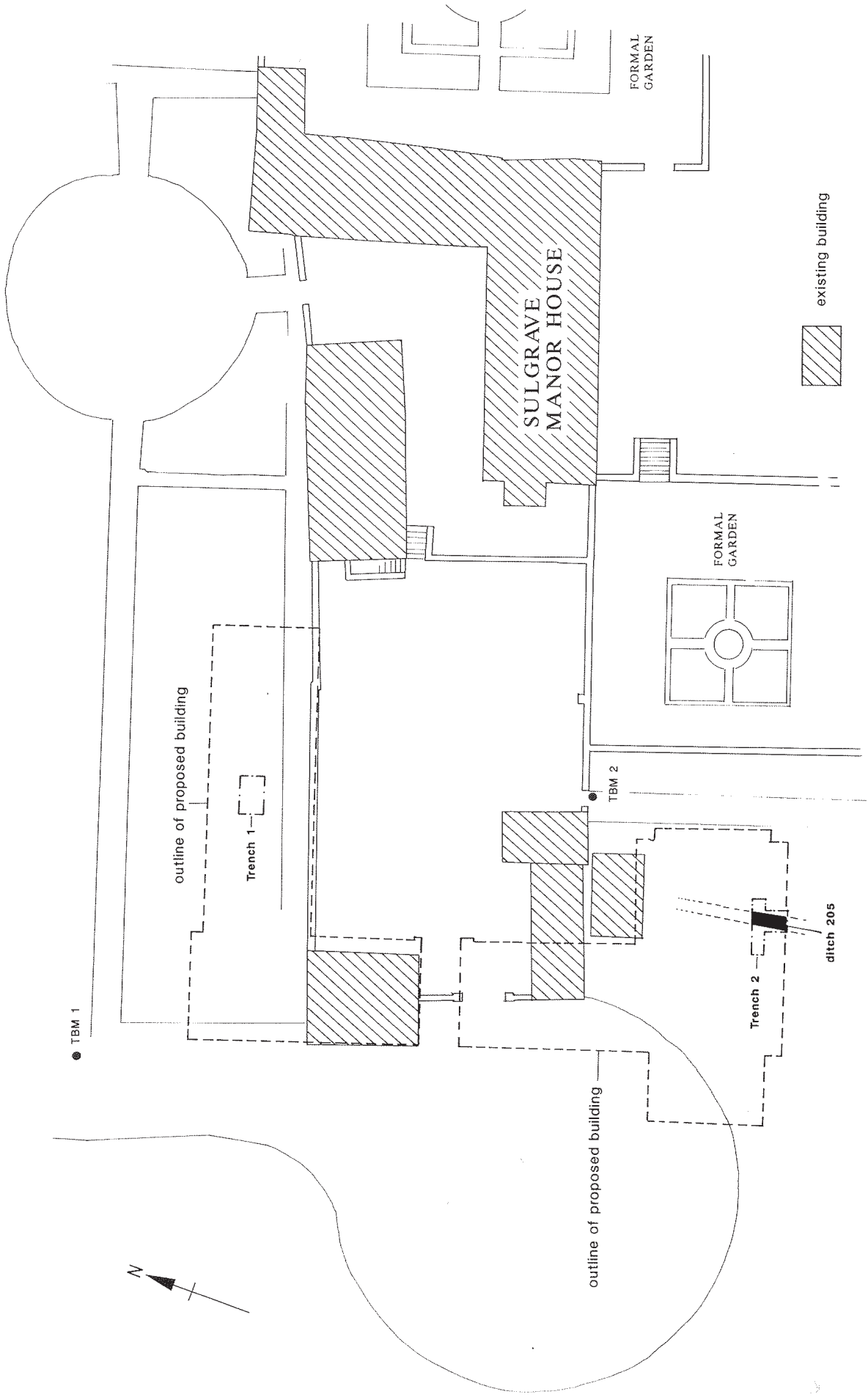
Site Location

Figure 2



OS Sheet 2nd Edition 1890

Figure 3

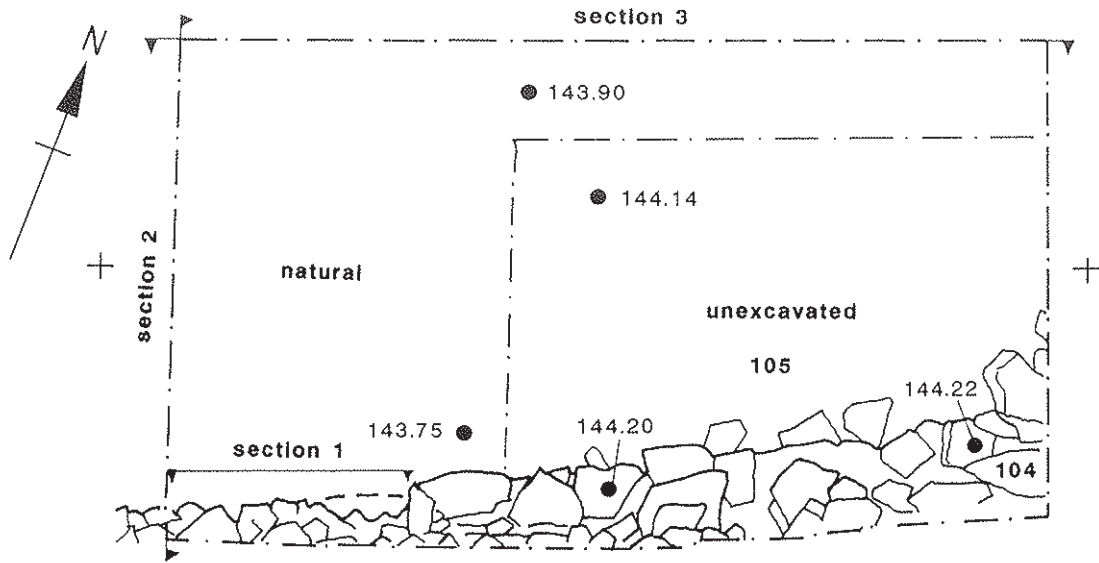


10 0 30 m.

scale 1:250

Figure 4

Trench 1 plan



scale 1:20

● levels in metres O.D.

Figure 5

Trench 1 sections

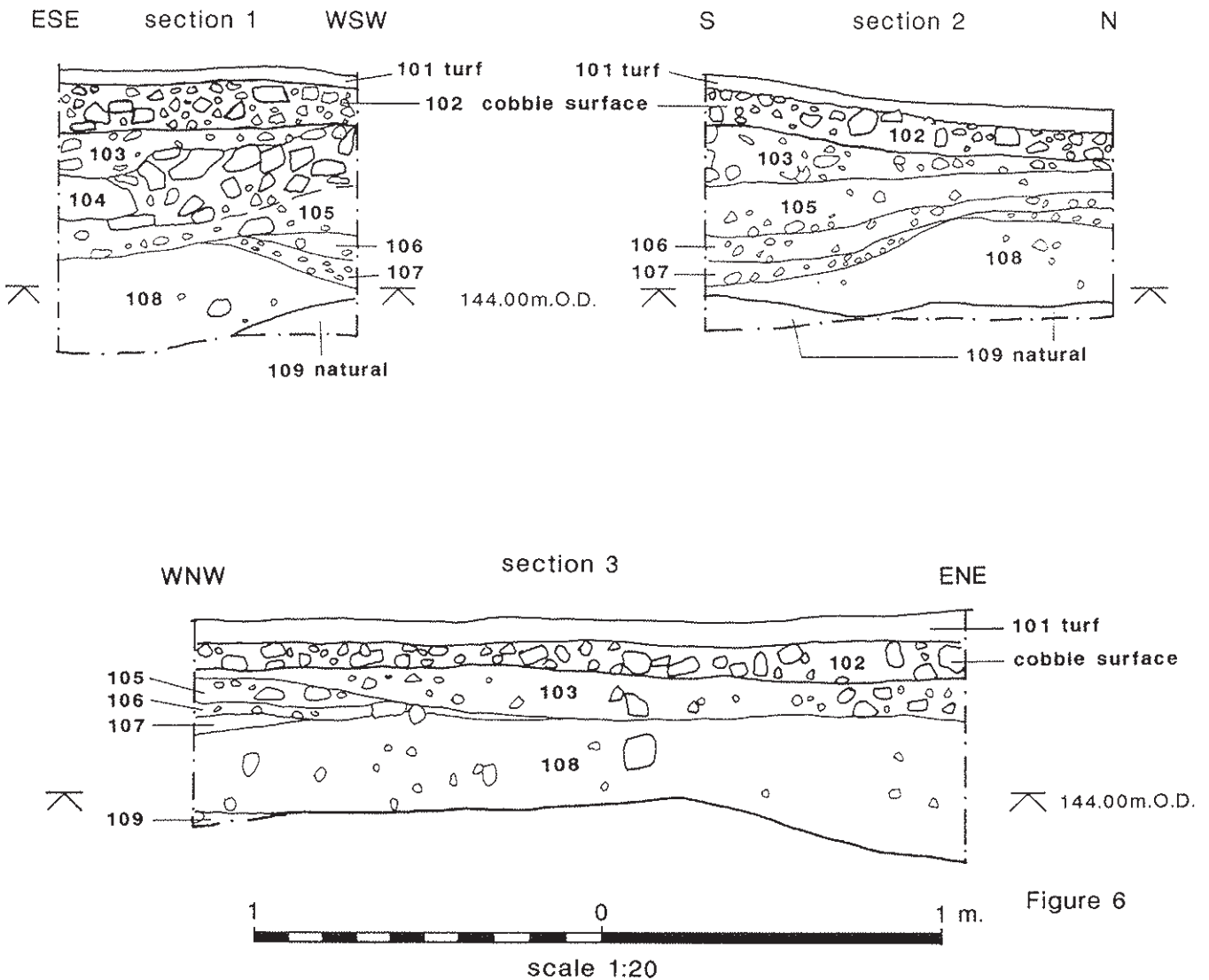


Figure 6



Trench 2 plan

SULMA 97

section

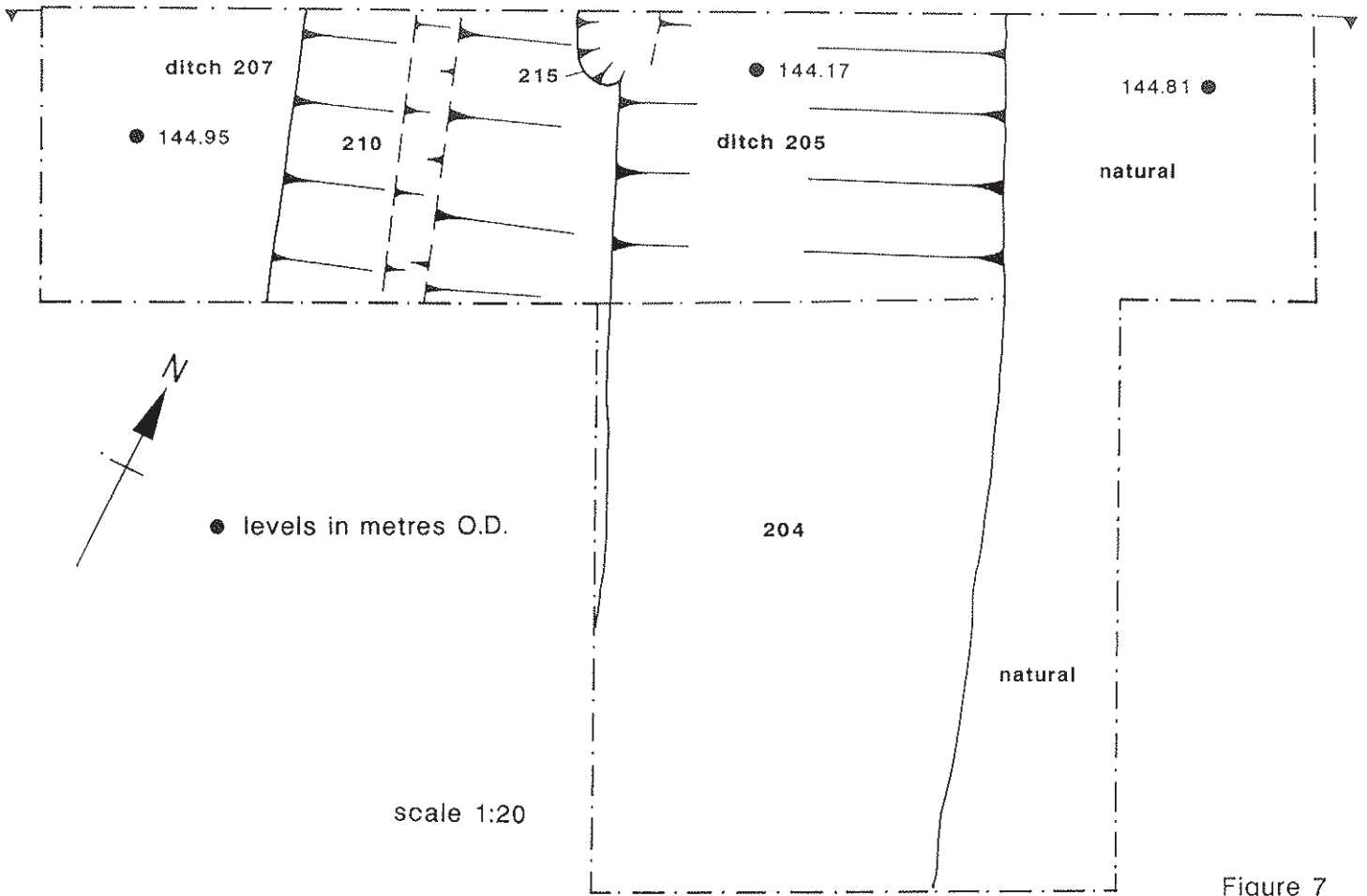


Figure 7

Trench 2 section

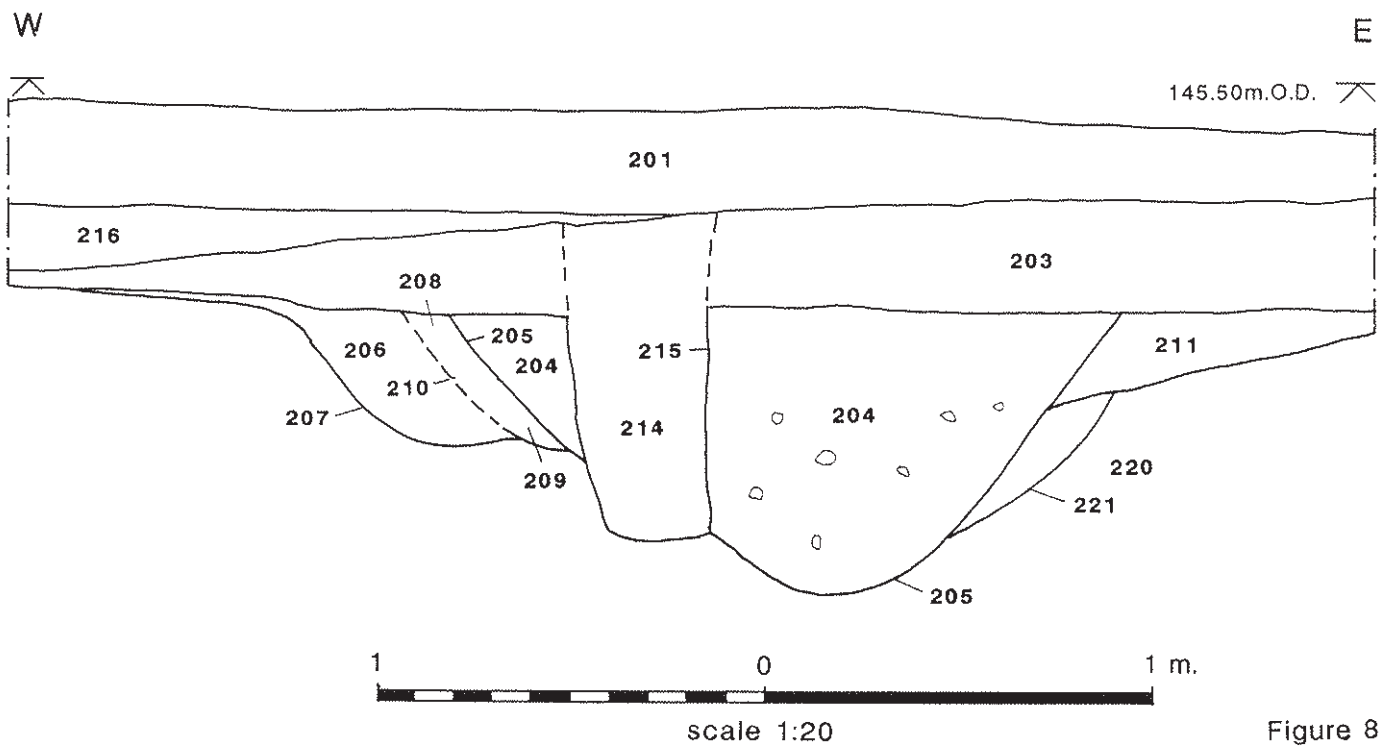


Figure 8



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