

SULGRAVE (NH)

SULMANB
243/98

Clews Architects

**Sulgrave Manor, Sulgrave
Northamptonshire**

NGR SP 5605 4558

Archaeological Assessment

**Oxford Archaeological Unit
March 1998**

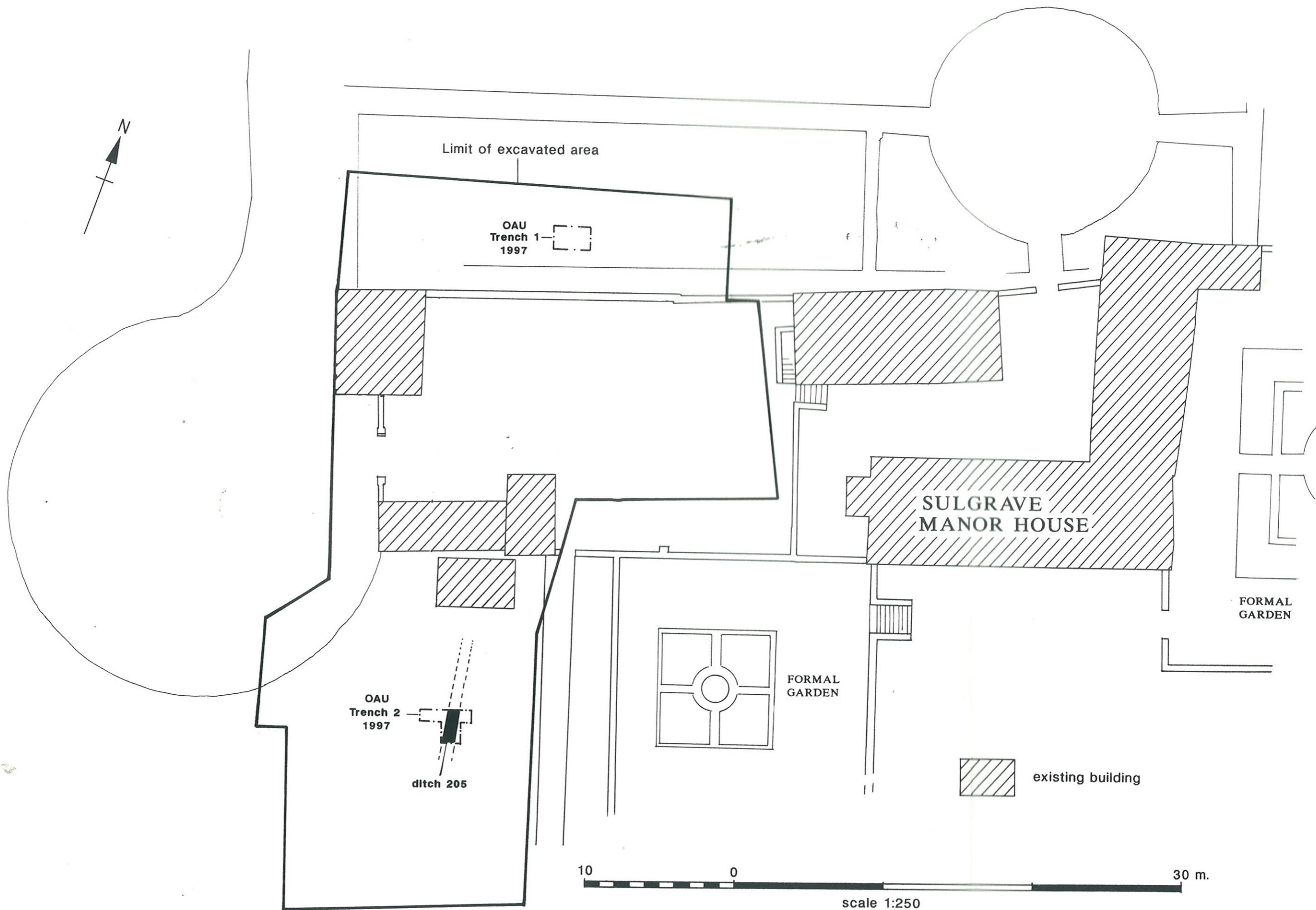


Figure 4

Clews Architects

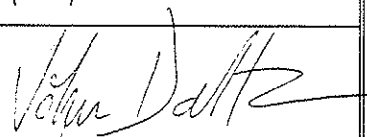
Sulgrave Manor, Sulgrave, Northamptonshire
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

NGR SP 5605 4558

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HEAD OF FIELDWORK

Date:

3/4/1998

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

March 1998

Summary

From February to March 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at Sulgrave Manor, Sulgrave, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 5605 4558). The watching brief identified a series of field ditches; a pond with a possible associated watercourse; structural evidence of buildings, a possible 19th century courtyard and a mid 17th century stone-lined drain.

1 Introduction

It was proposed to develop the courtyard of Sulgrave Manor with a shop, refreshment area, lavatories and an area for school parties. As a condition of funding by the Lottery Commission an archaeological watching brief was required; it was commissioned by Clews Architects on behalf of Sulgrave Manor and was undertaken by the OAU between the 24th of February and the 13th of March 1998.

2 Background

The site itself has produced limited archaeological evidence, however there are several archaeological sites adjacent to the development site:

There is a surviving ringwork at the south-west end of the village adjacent to St James' Church. The bank survives to a height of 3.6 m and has a flat top with traces of a surrounding ditch. This site was excavated between 1960 and 1976; its earliest structure probably dates to the 10th century and consists of a timber building which almost certainly was a hall. Subsequently it was 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. The nearby villages of Weston, Weedon and Culworth all have similar ringworks which may date from the same period.

Sulgrave 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 are original; the north wing was added in the time of Queen Anne. Much of the house was demolished in the 1780's and was not rebuilt until 1921 by Sir Reginald Bloomfield (Pevsner 1961). The 1890 OS survey shows a number of farm buildings to the west of the Manor, only one of which survives to the present day.

The Manor lies at the eastern end of the village at NGR SP 5605 4558, at approximately 140 m OD. The underlying geology is Upper Lias Clay.

This watching brief is further to a geophysical survey (Bartlett 1997) and an archaeological evaluation undertaken by the OAU on the site in 1997 (OAU 1997), the results of which are summarised below:

Two trenches were excavated. 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

south-west of the manor, revealed a sequence of medieval ditches, all aligned north-south, which appeared to have been recut at least twice. Pottery from the ditches suggested a 12th or 13th century date. 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 have been recorded in the field to the west of Sulgrave Manor.

3 Aims

The main aims of the watching brief were to identify the foundations of the 19th century farm buildings as shown on the 2nd edition OS map; to determine the eastern and western extent of the Manor and any previous buildings beyond the extent of the 1920's rebuilding. Also, to record any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works to established standards (Wilkinson, 1992), to secure the preservation by record of any archaeology, the presence and nature of which could not be established in advance.

4 Methodology

All excavation was carried out by a 360 mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, under the direct supervision of an archaeologist from the OAU. Site visits were made only when the archaeology was disturbed. Individual layers were exposed by the machine and examined in the first instance, in order to determine their potential significance. Sections were hand-dug when the nature of the deposit remained uncertain after inspection, or when structural features were encountered in the topsoil strip or in the digging of foundations.

Within the constraints imposed by Health and Safety considerations the deposits and features exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and monochrome print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets. Soil descriptions use *estimated* percentages based on the use of standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

5 Results and Interpretations

The site was machined according to the required depth of construction for the new building. The southern area of the site was excavated into natural clays, while the central and northern areas were stripped to the same level, encountering the majority of archaeological deposits and features. Deeper excavation was required for the footings of the new building, to a level of 99.34 m OD.

Initially, the southern area of the site was stripped to a level of 100.73 m OD, revealing two deposits of natural clay. A light blue clay (Layer 20) was encountered at 101.13 m OD, overlain by a yellow/brown clay (Layer 9) at 101.73 m OD. In certain areas these clays were seen to be banded, indicating the possible presence of Palaeochannels. Further to the north of the site Layer 9 was seen at a height of 100.44 m OD. The natural clay here is substantially lower, indicating a slope in the geology from south to north. The majority of the natural clay observed across the site comprised Layer 9.

Many of the earlier features seen were heavily truncated by later activity (principally gardening and modern features) and also by the depth of machining required for the new development.

Directly overlying Layer 9 in the north-east area of the site was a greenish-brown silty clay (Layer 16, Fig. 5) at 100.17 m OD. Layer 16 has a known extent of 12 m by 6 m and produced ceramics dating from the 12th century. Originally, this layer was interpreted as a levelling deposit as it was only seen in one area of the site. It is however possible that it extended further across the site and was removed during machine stripping of the site.

Cutting Layer 16 was a ditch (Cut 15, Fig. 5) at 100.04 m OD, aligned east-west across the north-east area of the site, an area highlighted by the geophysical report. A machine excavated section revealed the dimensions of Ditch 15 to be 1 m deep, approximately 2.30 m in width and with a known length of 12 m. Two fills were found within Ditch 15; the primary fill was a grey/brown silt (Fill 24) containing abundant humic material. The secondary fill was an orange/brown clayey silt (Fill 23). Neither deposit produced any finds from the section. An eastern limit to Ditch 15 was recorded in plan as a rounded terminus, with a gradual slope from the base to the top. The western terminus was truncated by machine excavation.

Cutting Ditch 15 was a ditch aligned east-west (Cut 21, Fig. 5). Its recorded dimensions were 9 m in length by 2 m in width by 0.40 m in depth, lying at a height of 100.04 m OD and aligned with Ditch 15. Ditch 21 was filled with an orange/brown clayey silt (Fill 22) which contained pottery dating from the early 13th century onwards. This pottery was heavily sooted and thought to be domestic.

A ditch aligned east-west across the centre of the site (Cut 34, Fig. 5) was observed at a height of 100.37 m OD, and was filled by a mid grey/brown silt (Fill 37). In section it measured 0.43 m in depth and produced no finds.

A subrectangular feature was identified to the west of, and possibly associated with, Ditch 34. It lay at a height of 100.16 m OD and was interpreted as a pond. Its western limits were not disturbed by the development, thus giving a known extent of 12 m in length by 6 m in width by 0.70 m in depth. A machine excavated section identified four different fills. The primary silt deposit (Fill 19, Fig. 5) was a blue/grey silty clay with occasional humic material. This deposit was overlain by a dark blue silty clay (Fill 30) which was found below a mid blue silty clay (Fill 31). Above Fill 31 was a mid grey silty clay (Fill 32). No datable material was recovered from any of these fills. There was no discernible difference between Fill 19 of Cut 29 and Fill 37 of east-west Ditch 34. It is possible that Ditch 34 once drained into Cut 29, or acted as a watercourse supplying it.

A small oval feature (Cut 27, Fig. 5), interpreted as a shallow rubbish pit, was seen near the eastern-central area of the site at 100.21 m OD. It was filled with a grey/brown clay silt (Fill 28) and contained pottery dating from the 13th century

onwards. Truncating this pit was another oval feature (Cut 38) measuring 1.70 m by 0.50 m by 0.14 m in depth. Cut 38 was filled by a light brown silty clay (Fill 25), which contained no pottery. Its function remains undetermined.

An east-west ditch (Cut 14, Fig. 5) filled with a mid-dark grey clay (Fill 13) at 99.47 m OD was identified running across the centre of the site. A small section across Ditch 14 (Fig. 7, Section 2) showed it to be 0.20 m in depth by 0.90 m in width. Fill 13 produced sherds from a Brill/Boarstall globular jug dating from the late 13th century (see Appendix 1). This ditch contained domestic waste and is directly aligned with the existing Manor House.

The excavation of the footings revealed a small pit or ditch (Fig. 7, Section 4, Cut 60), cutting into the natural geology at 100.48 m OD. Feature 60 measured 1.20 m in width by 0.25 m in depth and was filled by a grey/brown clayey silt (Fill 61). It was very similar to Ditch 14 and may represent a continuation of that feature. No pottery was recovered from its fill.

Located at the southern end of the site was a curved oval feature (Fig. 5, Cut 41) at 100.64 m OD. A hand excavated section showed it to be 2.90 m in length by 1.05 m in width by 0.38 m in depth and containing three separate fills. The primary deposit (Fill 65) was a mixed grey/brown silty clay, which was overlain by a dark brown silt containing a high percentage of charcoal, approximately 0.05 m thick (Fill 42). Above this was another mixed grey/brown silty clay (Fill 43). This possibly was a fire pit which silted up, or a burnt-out tree bowl. No finds were recovered from the section.

Further to the south of the site was a wide, shallow ditch (Cut 49) at 101.63 m OD. Seen in section it was 4.88 m in width and more than 0.60 m in depth. It was filled by two orange/brown silty clay deposits (Fills 50 and 51), interpreted as primary fills which probably existed as a single fill before truncation by another ditch (Cut 46).

Ditch Cut 46 (101.44 m OD) measured 1.34 m in width and had a depth of more than 0.80 m. The ditch was not fully excavated as the lower fills lay below impact level. Two different fills were seen in section, a mixed orange/brown silty clay (Fill 47) of which 0.35 m depth was machine excavated. Fill 47 was overlain by a mid green/brown silty clay (Fill 48, Fig. 5), which probably was associated with the final silting process of the ditch; no finds were retrieved from either of these fills. Cut 46 extended 2.20 m westwards, cutting the natural clays in a semi-circular shape, and probably representing its western terminus. Fill 48 was overlain by a mid brown clayey silt (Layer 52) at a height of 101.83 m OD, and was interpreted as a ploughsoil. Layer 52 varied in depth (0.20 m to 0.46 m) being of the greatest depth when directly overlying Ditch Cuts 46 and 49. This possibly was due to deeper ploughing into the softer ditch fills. Above layer 52 was a mid yellowish-brown clay silt (Layer 53) at a height of 102.23 m OD, also thought to be a ploughsoil. No finds were recovered from either layer 52 or 53.

A ditch (Cut 39, Fig. 5) aligned north-south through the centre of the site was seen to be more than 18 m in length and 2.5 m in width. To the south a semi-circular terminus

was noted, while to the north the ditch already had been truncated; it also was recorded branching off to the east. This probably was a separate ditch, perhaps contemporary with Ditch 39, and sharing the same upper sediments. Ditch 39 was filled by a mixed grey/brown silty clay (Fill 40) at a height of 100.54 m OD. Unfortunately, conditions prevented a section from being excavated across Ditch 39 to obtain a profile and depth; no pottery was recovered.

Truncating Ditch 37, Layer 16 and the natural clays was a small drainage channel (Cut 35, Fig. 5) at 100.41 m OD; it is aligned north-south for 6 m then turned east-west for a further 3 m. A small section was cut across it; it was both lined and capped with unworked limestone and filled with a mid greyish brown clay (Fill 36). It was 0.44 m in depth and contained no pottery. If interpreted as a field drain its alignment is unusual, suggesting that it may be associated with some form of light structure. Little evidence remains to support this theory, except for two possible limestone postpads (Structure 44) seen at a height of 100.27 m OD. The pads consist of a single course of limestone (stone dimensions 0.34 m by 0.30 m by 0.16 m) and possibly were used as a foundation to secure Fill 37 of Ditch 34. Both were ovoid, measuring 1.5 m by 0.80 m by 0.20 m (Fig. 7, Section 3). Any other postholes associated with this possible structure were not detected; potentially Drain Cut 35 and Postpads 44 were associated with a timber-framed building, perhaps a small stable or shed.

Overlying Layer 16 was a mid yellow/grey clay (Layer 10) at 100.50 m OD, seen in the north-east area of the site. This produced mid 17th century pottery. Cutting Layer 10 was a stone-lined drainage channel (Cut 5, Fig. 6) at 100.51 m OD. The channel was aligned east-west with a known extent of 4.0 m by 1.5 m, and truncated Ditch Cuts 21 and 15. It was lined with small limestone blocks, approximately 0.30 m by 0.30 m, set in random courses (Structure 4), and was capped by large limestone slabs (Structure 3), some of which had been disturbed and/or broken by machining. This feature registered as a strong signal on the resistivity plots, and was seen to be oriented towards the kitchen of the Manor House. It is unclear if it directly was associated with the kitchen as the resistivity plots become distorted near the Manor House. It was filled by three separate deposits of which a mid grey clay silt (Fill 8) was the primary fill. Overlying this was a grey clay silt (Fill 7) which contained mid 17th century pottery. This was sealed by another mid grey silty clay (Fill 6), 0.01 m thick; no finds were retrieved from this material. Overlying the capping stones and sealing Cut 5 was a mid grey clay (Deposit 2) at 100.76 m OD. This deposit was removed by machine and only survives in section, thus its full extent remains unknown. This material was apparently dumped after the construction of the drain, acting as a levelling deposit below the topsoil.

A rubbish pit was located at the north extreme of the site (Cut 12, Fig. 5) measuring 2.5 m by 2 m. This was filled with a dark grey ash and silt deposit (Fill 12) and contained no pottery.

To the east of the site was a small field drain cutting the natural clays (Cut 17, Fig. 5) oriented south-east/north-west extending 6 m by 0.4 m. It was filled by a dark brown clayey silt and contained small limestone pieces. It was not excavated, but was seen to continue in an easterly direction beyond the limits of the site.

Excavation of the footings for the new buildings revealed a wall foundation (Structure 62) and a limestone cobbled surface (Surface 59, Fig. 7, Section 4). The foundation truncated the natural clays (Cut 63) at 100.74 m OD, and was aligned east-west. The cut measured 1.9 m by 1 m by 0.60 m in depth. This was filled with a mixture of roughly-hewn large limestone blocks and broken brick, bonded with a compact sandy mortar. Broken tile, rotting timber, broken glass and reused brick were also present. No surviving wall was found either in section or in plan. Overlying Ditch Cut 60 and the natural clays was a limestone cobbled surface (59). Its full extent was not seen in plan due to later truncation, also it lay below impact level. Examination of the resistivity plot would appear to suggest some archaeological features exist in this area, but the extent of 59 remains unknown at this time. Overlying Surface 59 was a grey clayey silt, approximately 0.02 m thick (Layer 58). Possibly this was the final occupation layer associated with Surface 59, and was at a later date truncated by foundation Cut 63.

Aligned east-west across the centre of the site was a 19th century dividing garden wall (Cut 45, Fig. 5). The majority of the wall itself (Wall 26) was removed prior to the commencement of the watching brief. Examination of the remaining wall revealed that Cut 45 truncated deposit 10, and was constructed on a rubble and mortar foundation. The dimensions of the wall were 24 m in length by 2.5 m in height and approximately 0.36 m in width. It comprised limestone blocks measuring 0.20 m by 0.14 m by 0.07 m, roughly-hewn and bonded with a white lime mortar.

Running north-south and overlying Ditch Cut 39 was a soft dark brown silty material containing limestone pieces (Deposit 57). This probably was associated with the drainage of those buildings recently demolished on site, rather than an upper fill of Ditch Cut 39. The limestone pieces probably derived from the truncation of the limestone cobbled surface 59. Deposit 57 was seen to extend approximately 11 m by 1.50 m and contained no finds. This deposit was not excavated, and its exact nature remains undetermined at this time.

The rectangular cut (Cut 55) of a footing for a modern building (Structure 56) was located at the centre of the site, truncating Ditch Cut 39. It measured 1.65 m by 1.10m and contained modern housebrick and limestone pieces. Possibly this feature is associated with Deposit 57, and is relatively recent. No finds were retrieved from it.

Overlying the ploughsoil, Layer 53 was a dark greenish brown clay sand. The exact nature of this deposit remains unknown, but it could be related to a modern path running north-south at the eastern limits of the site. Various other modern service pipes truncated the centre of the site, and are recorded as modern features in Fig. 5.

Overlying the majority of the deposits to the north and east of the site was a dark brown silty loam (Layer 1). To the west of the development area, deposits were obscured by the recent deposition of a layer of hardcore in advance of the construction of the new car park. The centre of the site had been disturbed by the recent demolition of several structures, and by truncation due to machining.

8 Discussion

Artefactual evidence retrieved from the site was found to range in date from the 12th century onwards. The site has been heavily truncated by both ancient and modern activity, and therefore the dates suggested by the limited pottery sequence retrieved must be treated with due caution.

The resistivity survey was highly successful in locating a mid 17th century stone-lined drainage channel, Cut 5. The survey also located an early 13th century ditch alignment in the northern area of the site, Cut 21 and Cut 15. Further towards the centre of the site the survey was not so successful. Probably this was due to interference in the readings from the modern structures and services.

It can be demonstrated that an extensive system of drainage ditches or field boundaries were located at the southern end of the site, notably Ditches 39, 46 and 49. These ditches also showed as strong signals on the resistivity survey. Unfortunately, no pottery was retrieved from them, and it therefore is not possible to say if they were contemporary.

The central and eastern area of the site revealed possible postpads 44 and a right-angled drainage channel, Cut 35. This possibly could serve as an outside drain to the central farm building, as it follows the line of its known location. No foundation cuts were identified for this building, perhaps suggesting that it was of timber construction and built on postpads.

The only definite structural evidence located during the excavation of the footings was that of wall foundation 62, and Surface 59. Foundation 62 is thought to have cut 59. 62 is probably not a part of the original 19th century farm buildings, but rather a part of those buildings demolished prior to the commencement of works. This is because none of the 19th century farm buildings were located with deep foundations such as 62. Where there should have been evidence for them, as located on the 2nd edition OS map, none were seen in plan. Possibly the remaining area of Surface 59 was associated with a pathway or inner courtyard; this is pure speculation, however, as not all of this area was revealed in plan.

The majority of Pond 29 has been preserved *in situ*, as has Ditch 34. It is possible that the ditch acted as a watercourse supplying the pond, although a definitive interpretation is not possible.

The site produced a substantial amount of archaeological features and deposits, yielding information about the nature and function of Sulgrave Manor from potentially as early as the 12th century onwards. However, due to later intrusion many of those relationships which had survived remain unclear. The site of the 19th century farmhouses was not located either during the resistivity survey or during the watching brief. Possibly this was because the foundations were not substantial enough to survive later horticultural activity, and truncation by later construction.

References.

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Appendix 1:

Post-Roman Pottery from Sulgrave Manor, Northants (SULMAWB 97)

Paul Blinkhorn

The post-Roman pottery assemblage comprised 42 sherds with a total weight of 1,936g. The occurrence per context by number and weight of sherds per fabric type is shown in table 1. The fabric codes used are those of the Northamptonshire County Ceramic Type-Series, as follows:

F360: Sandy Coarseware, AD1100-1400

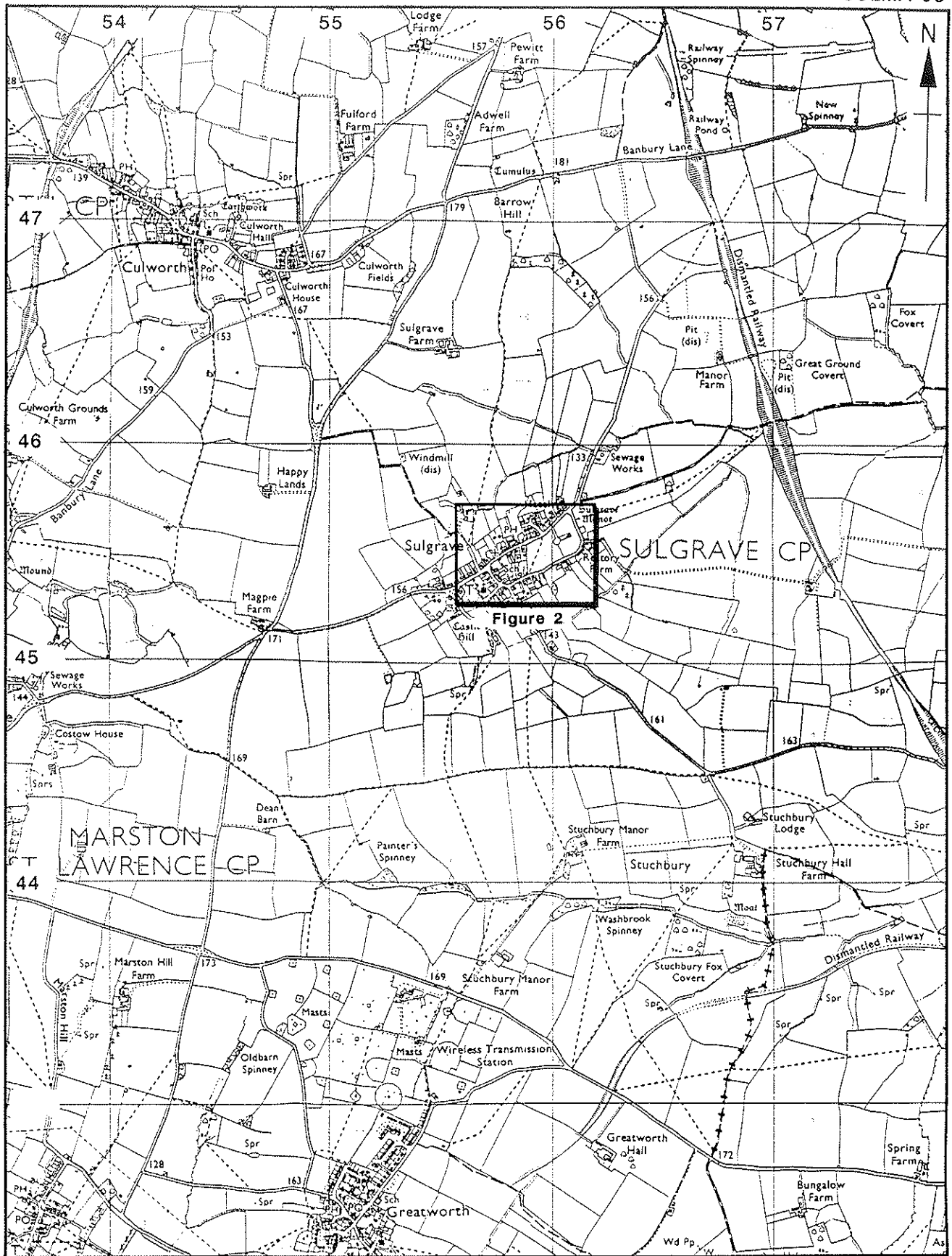
F324: Brill/Boarstall Ware, early 13th-16thC.

F329: Potterspury Ware, M/L 13th - 16thC

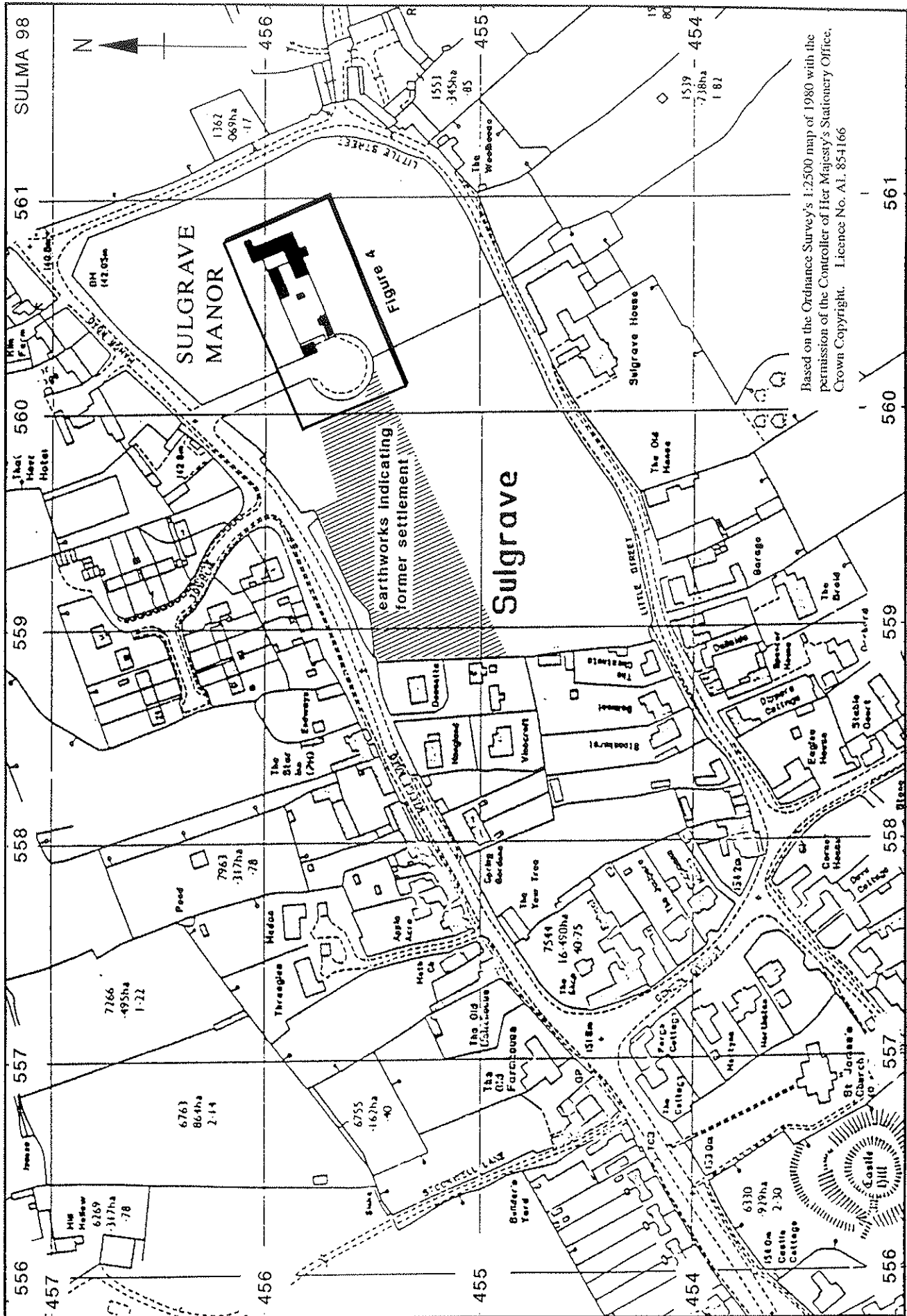
Table 1: Pottery occurrence per context by number and weight of sherds per fabric type

Context	F360	F324	F329	PMED	TPQ
7				1 (2)	M17thC+
10				2 (48)	M17thC+
11				6 (93)	M17thC+
13	1 (15)	5 (946)	16 (515)		M/L13thC+?
16	8 (139)				12thC?
22		1 (163)			E13thC+?
28		1 (8)	1 (6)		M/L13thC+?
Total	9 (154)	7 (1117)	17 (521)	9 (143)	

Context 13 produced sherds from the near-complete upper half of a Brill/Boarstall (F324) globular jug, base and body sherds from another similar vessel, and large base and rim fragments from at least three Potterspury ware (F329) bowls, with the size and condition of the sherds suggesting that they are part of a primary dump of refuse of L13th or, more probably, 14th century date. It is also worthy of comment that the jug base from context 22 is heavily sooted, indicating that at least some of the pottery is domestic refuse.



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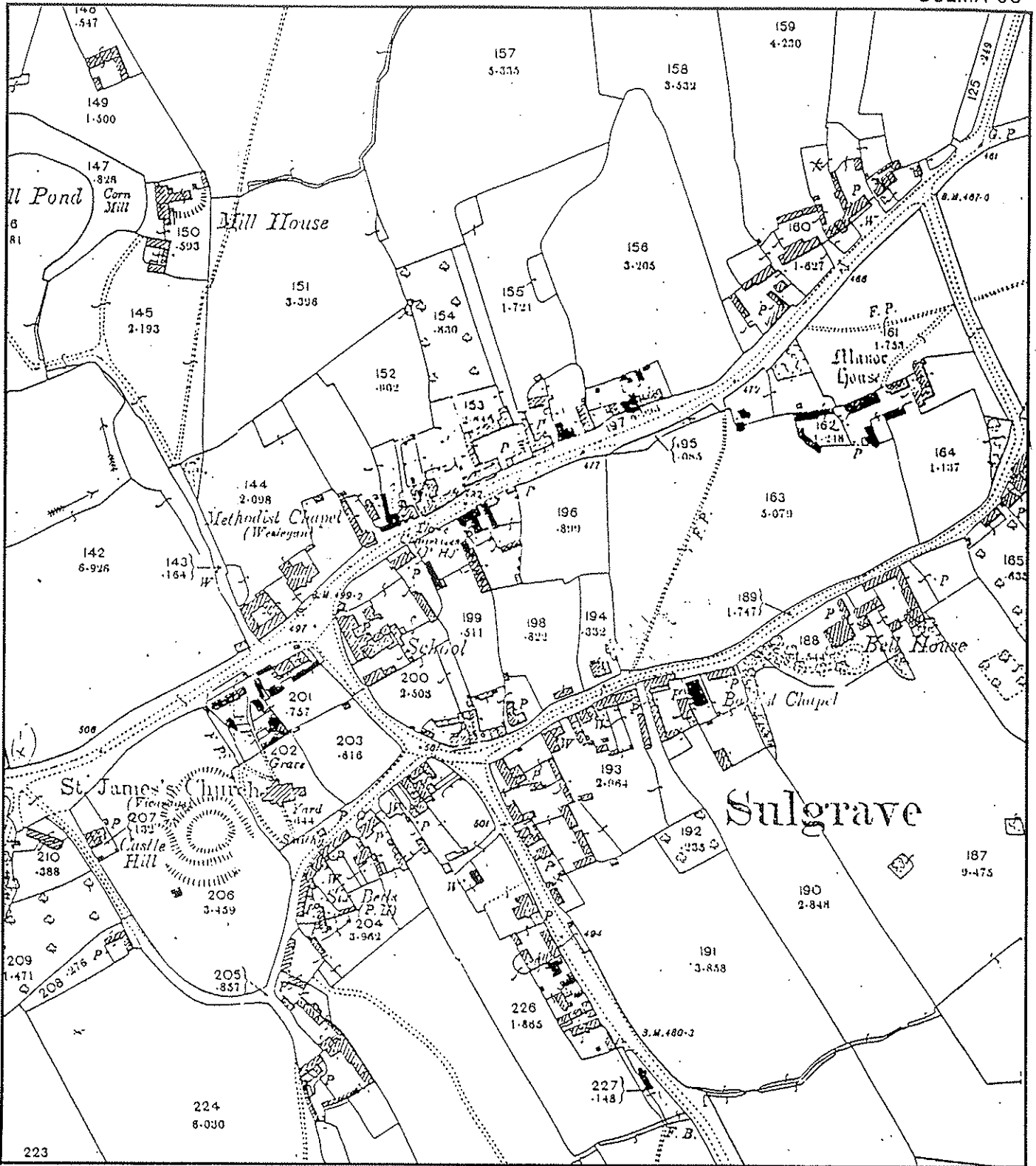


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Scale 1:2500

Site Location

Figure 2



OS Sheet 2nd Edition 1890

Figure 3

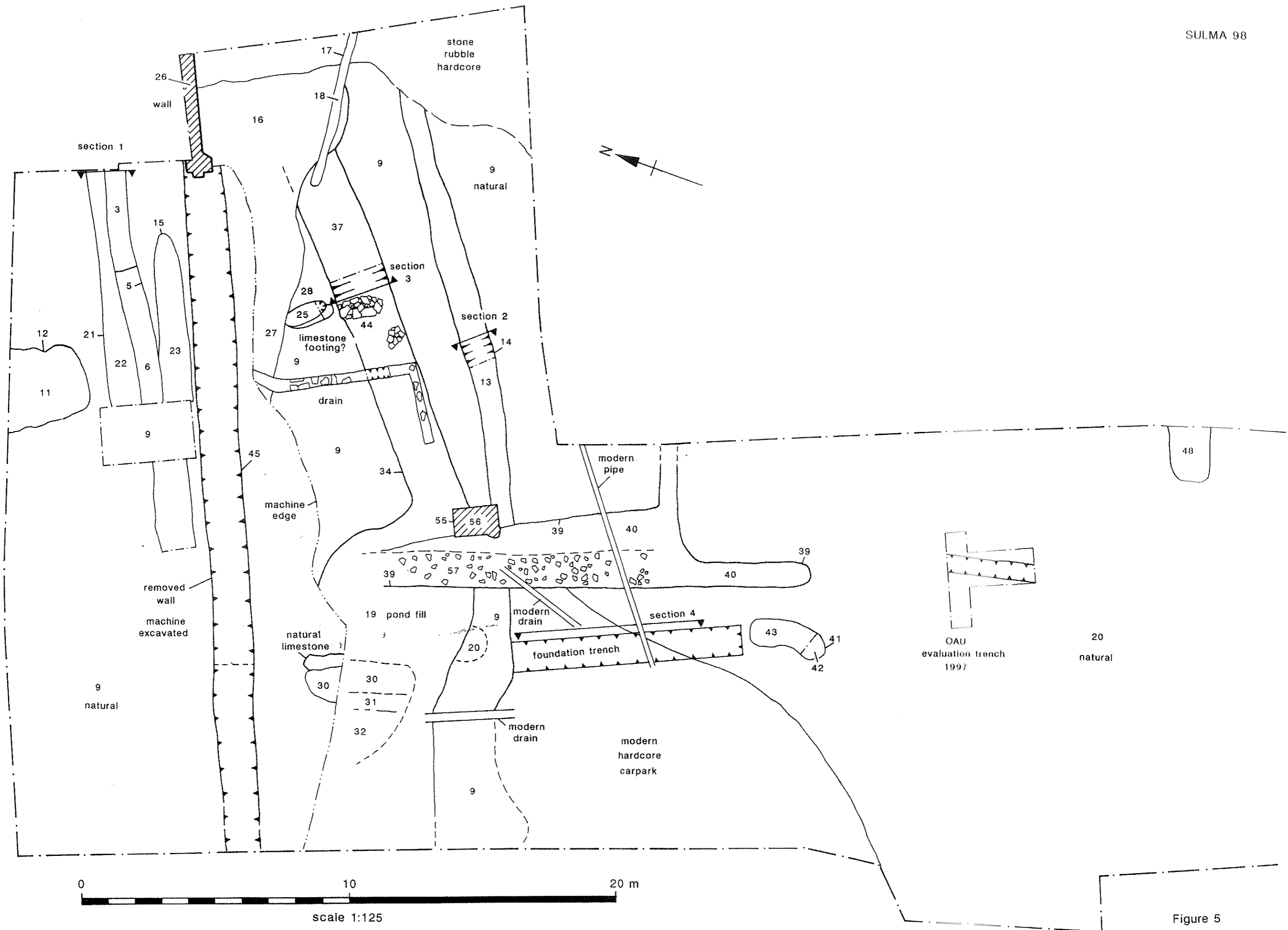


Figure 5

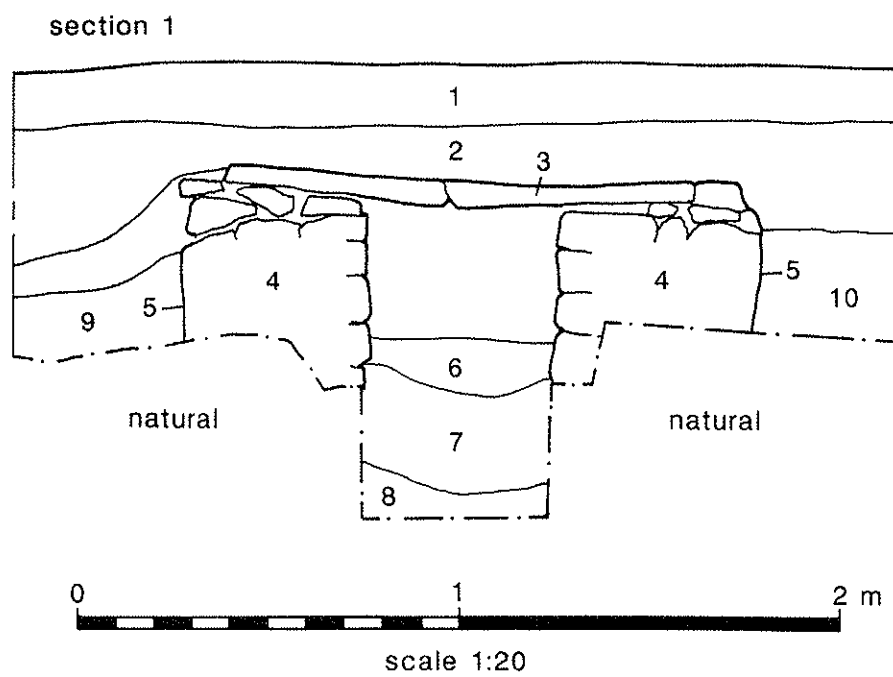
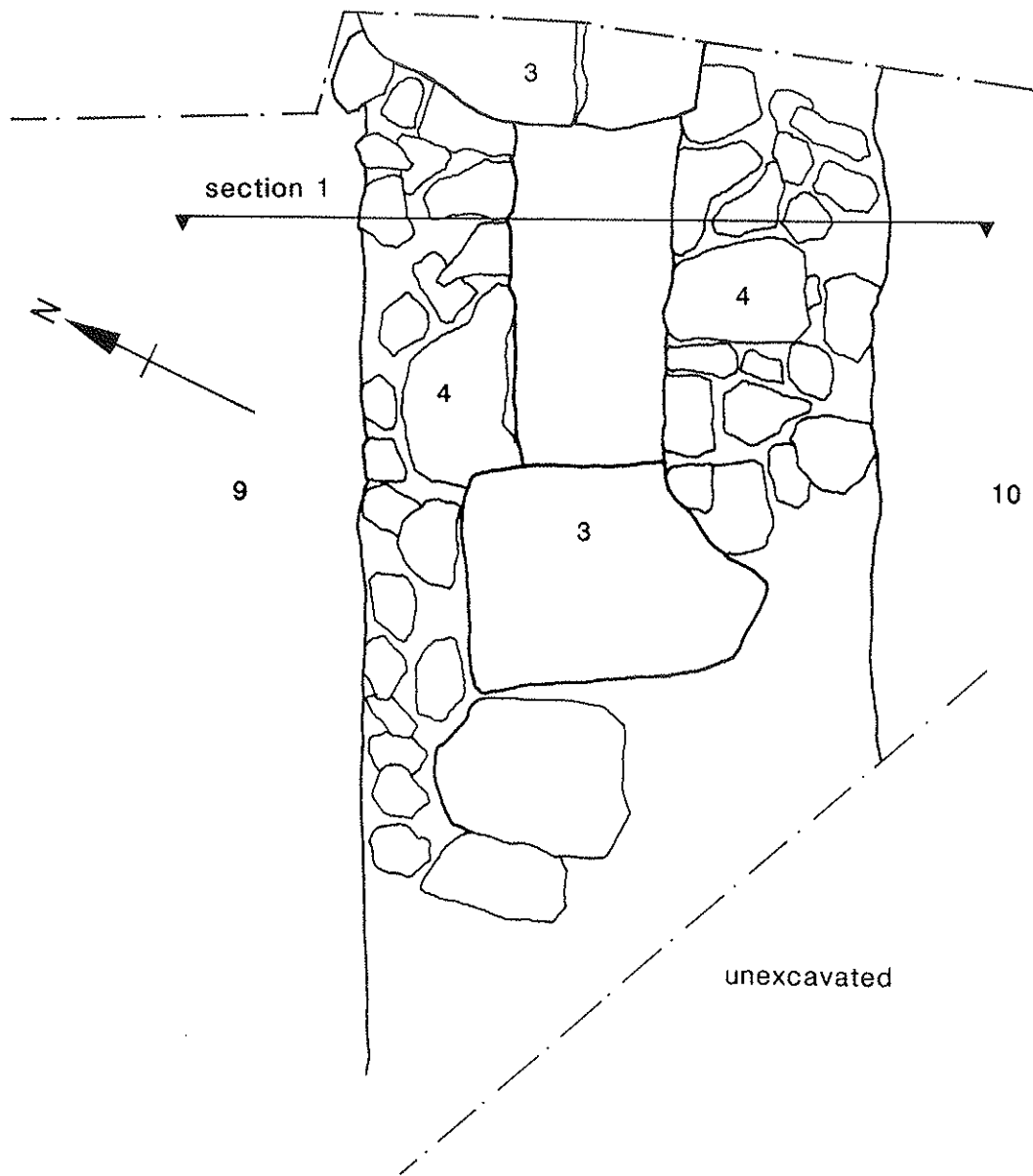


Figure 6

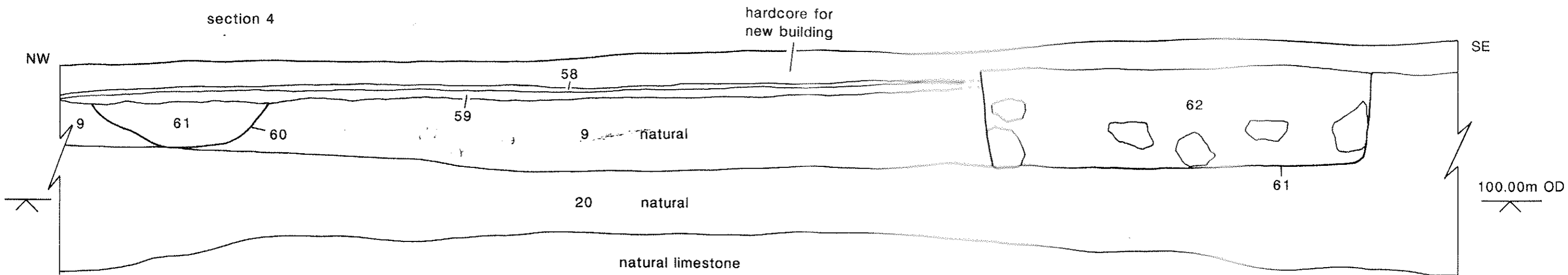
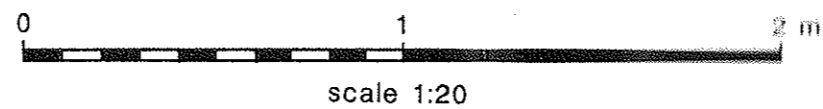
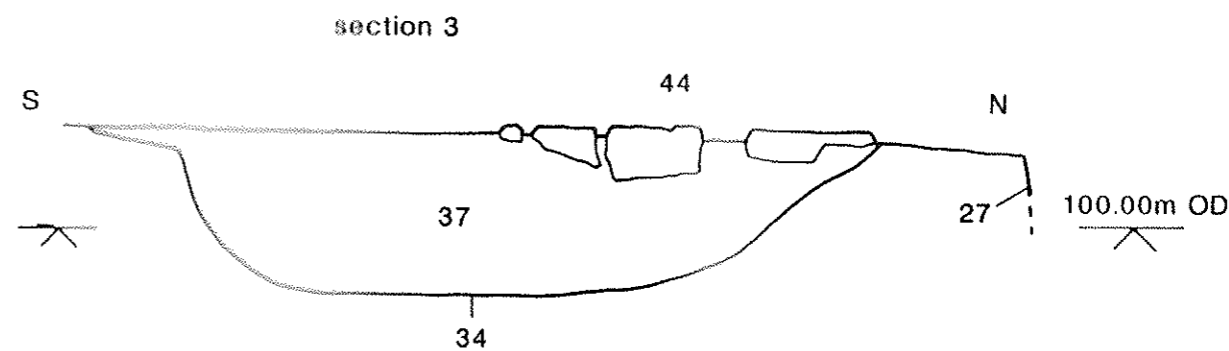
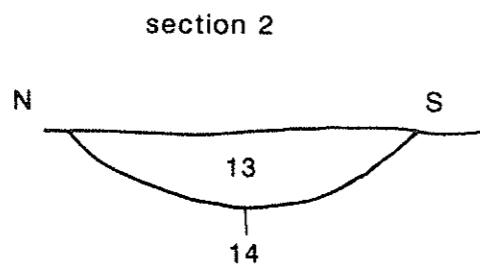


Figure 7