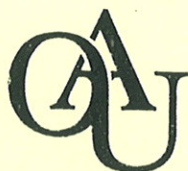
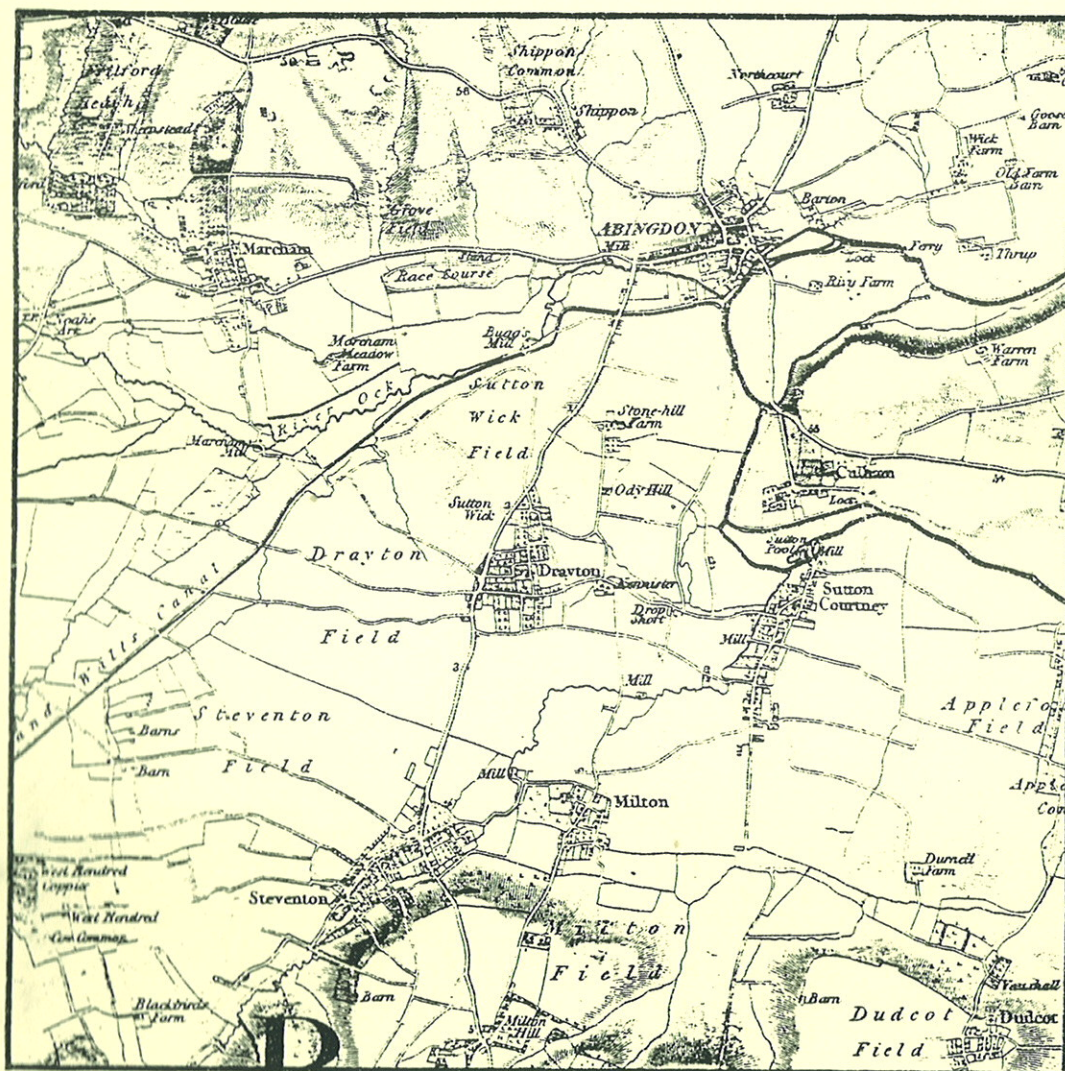


CORPORATION FARM ABINGDON, OXON

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
FEBRUARY 1993





Archaeological Evaluation

Corporation Farm, Wilsham Road, Abingdon

SU 495960

**Oxford Archaeological Unit
February 1993**

Corporation Farm, Wilsham Road, Abingdon, Oxon.

Archaeological Evaluation

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at Corporation Farm, Abingdon (figures 1 & 2) during January/February 1993, on behalf of the Orbit Housing Association. As part of the consideration of the planning application to develop the site, the Deputy County Archaeological Officer requested an archaeological evaluation.

The site is located on the south side of Abingdon and lies some 100 metres to the west of the River Thames on the first gravel terrace.

Summary of Results

The most significant archaeological feature located was a large, sharply curving ditch uncovered in trench 4 (figure 3). The ditch, some 2.5m wide and 0.95m deep survives at a depth of 0.86m below the present ground surface and is sealed by an old ploughsoil. It is likely that this is the eastern part of a ring ditch. There were also a small number of features in trenches 1 and 6, none of which produced any datable finds. They were also sealed by the old ploughsoil.

Archaeological and Historical Background

The site is located on the south side of Abingdon and lies some 100 metres to the west of the River Thames on the first gravel terrace. The site has at times been disturbed by building development and several structures and concrete plinths occupy the area.

Aerial photography and limited archaeological recording has shown that the area centred on Corporation Farm is of considerable archaeological importance. Most of the features appear to be of Bronze Age origin. There are at least twenty recognisable ring ditches making up a large and significant round barrow cemetery (SMR no. 14278). Several of these have been investigated in advance of gravel extraction. In addition, a henge and a mid to late Bronze Age settlement have been excavated. There are also various enclosures and linear features, the origin of which is unclear, but are probably prehistoric. The aim of the evaluation was to locate any significant archaeological deposits if present, and to define their extent, character, date and state of preservation.

Strategy

A total of eight trenches, each one 1.5m wide x 15m long, forming a 2.67% sample of the application area, were machine excavated down to natural deposits (figure 2). The position of the trenches was dictated by the two areas of concrete slabs.

All features were sampled by hand excavation.

Results

The topsoil was generally a dark grey brown clay loam, and the ploughsoil a mid-dark reddish brown clay silt. These were overlying the natural gravels.

Trench 1

15m x 1.6m; Aligned E-W; Max. depth 0.64m

Topsoil (1/1) sealed mid dark reddish brown silty clay with some gravel content which was interpreted as a former ploughsoil (1/2). This overlay natural gravel, (1/3).

Two modern service trenches (1/4) and (1/5) were located at the east end of the trench, both sealed by topsoil and cut through the ploughsoil (1/2). Two features were located; an irregular shaped shallow tree hole (1/7) beneath the ploughsoil, and a possible posthole (1/6). Neither feature produced any finds.

Trench 2

15m x 1.60m; Aligned N-S; Max. depth 0.55m

Beneath the topsoil (2/1), was a deposit of charcoal, 0.05m thick, over the ploughsoil (2/2). This in turn sealed the natural gravel. No features were located.

Trench 3

15m x 1.60m; Aligned E-W; Max. depth 0.48m

Soils are as described in Trench 1.

The features located in this trench were all modern and included two Victorian (or later) rubbish pits (3/4 & 3/5) and a modern pipe trench (3/6) aligned NE-SW. All three were sealed by topsoil. A tree hole (3/7) appeared to be cut by a modern pit (3/5) and produced no finds. At the north end of the trench beneath the topsoil was a modern pit (3/5). No finds were located.

Ploughsoil was only located in the eastern half of the trench, and was c. 0.18m thick.

Trench 4

15m x 1.60m; Aligned N-S; Max. depth 0.42m

The topsoil in this trench was much disturbed by modern landuse to a depth of 0.20m and consisted of mostly brick, glass, gravel and stones in a matrix of dark ashy loam. This overlay the ploughsoil which in turn sealed the natural gravel. To the north end of the trench was a modern pit (4/5), sealed by the topsoil. To the south end of the trench lay a large curving ditch (4/6) which was excavated to a depth of 0.95m and was sealed by the ploughsoil. This ditch was 2.5m wide and filled with dark clay loam deposits, the upper fill producing some flint flakes and animal bone. A modern pipe trench (4/4) ran the length of the trench and cut the ditch.

Trench 5

15m x 1.60m; Aligned E-W; Max depth 0.67m

The topsoil (5/1) contained much modern debris (brick, tile, glass etc.) to a depth of 0.30m, and overlay the ploughsoil (5/2). This in turn sealed the natural gravel. No features were identified.

Trench 6

15m x 1.60m; Aligned N-S; Max. depth 0.68m

The topsoil contained much modern debris, to a depth of 0.25m, which overlay a ploughsoil (6/2) 0.45m deep.

Four pits were located (6/6, 6/7, 6/8 & 6/9) varying from 0.35-0.80m wide and 0.10-0.22m deep. All except 6/9 contained animal remains, which, from the quality of the bone, appeared to be relatively modern. However, pit 6/7 was partially seen in the section of the trench, and the limited evidence suggests that the pits were sealed by the ploughsoil, suggesting it is of earlier date.

To the north end of the trench, a well defined posthole (6/5) c. 0.22m deep was located, but contained no finds. A very dubious posthole (6/4) was located at the north end of the trench.

Trench 7

15m x 1.60m; Aligned N-S; Max depth 0.90m.

The topsoil again contained substantial rubble deposits and a lens of charcoal (7/2) to a depth of c.0.20m and overlay a possible turfline (7/3), which in turn sealed the ploughsoil (7/4). Beneath this lay the natural gravel. A pit (7/6) was seen to cut the ploughsoil, as did two modern service pipes, both aligned east-west. No other features were observed.

Trench 8

15m x 1.60m; Aligned N-S; Max. depth 0.68m.

Under a thin topsoil lay a thick modern rubble layer (8/2) up to 0.31m thick. This overlay the ploughsoil, which sealed the natural. No features were present.

Confidence rating of results

A 2.67% sample is not guaranteed to locate low concentrations of features such as pits, postholes and burials which would be associated with an area of prehistoric activity such as this. The location of the probable ring ditch (internal diameter c. 10m?) indicates the reliability of the evaluation and the archaeological potential of the site. However, it is quite possible that there are other monuments in the areas that were not sampled due to the presence of concrete slabs and access tracks. Although the ploughsoil, underlying the topsoil, was undated, it is not of recent origin as evidenced by the pits in trenches 1, 4 and 7 cutting the ploughsoil. The ploughsoil could be of medieval date or earlier.

Conclusion

The results indicate an area of high archaeological potential which is probably associated with the barrow cemetery. It is likely that discrete features associated with the ring ditch were not located by the trenches. Other monuments may exist within the areas covered by the concrete slabs.

John Hiller
Rachel Morse

Trench 6

15m x 1.60m; Aligned N-S; Max. depth 0.68m

The topsoil contained much modern debris, to a depth of 0.25m, which overlay a ploughsoil (6/2) 0.45m deep.

Four pits were located (6/6, 6/7, 6/8 & 6/9) varying from 0.35-0.80m wide and 0.10-0.22m deep. All except 6/9 contained animal remains, which, from the quality of the bone, appeared to be relatively modern. However, pit 6/7 was partially seen in the section of the trench, and the limited evidence suggests that the pits were sealed by the ploughsoil, suggesting it is of earlier date.

To the north end of the trench, a well defined posthole (6/5) c. 0.22m deep was located, but contained no finds. A very dubious posthole (6/4) was located at the north end of the trench.

Trench 7

15m x 1.60m; Aligned N-S; Max depth 0.90m.

The topsoil again contained substantial rubble deposits and a lens of charcoal (7/2) to a depth of c.0.20m and overlay a possible turfline (7/3), which in turn sealed the ploughsoil (7/4). Beneath this lay the natural gravel. A pit (7/6) was seen to cut the ploughsoil, as did two modern service pipes, both aligned east-west. No other features were observed.

Trench 8

15m x 1.60m; Aligned N-S; Max. depth 0.68m.

Under a thin topsoil lay a thick modern rubble layer (8/2) up to 0.31m thick. This overlay the ploughsoil, which sealed the natural. No features were present.

Confidence rating of results

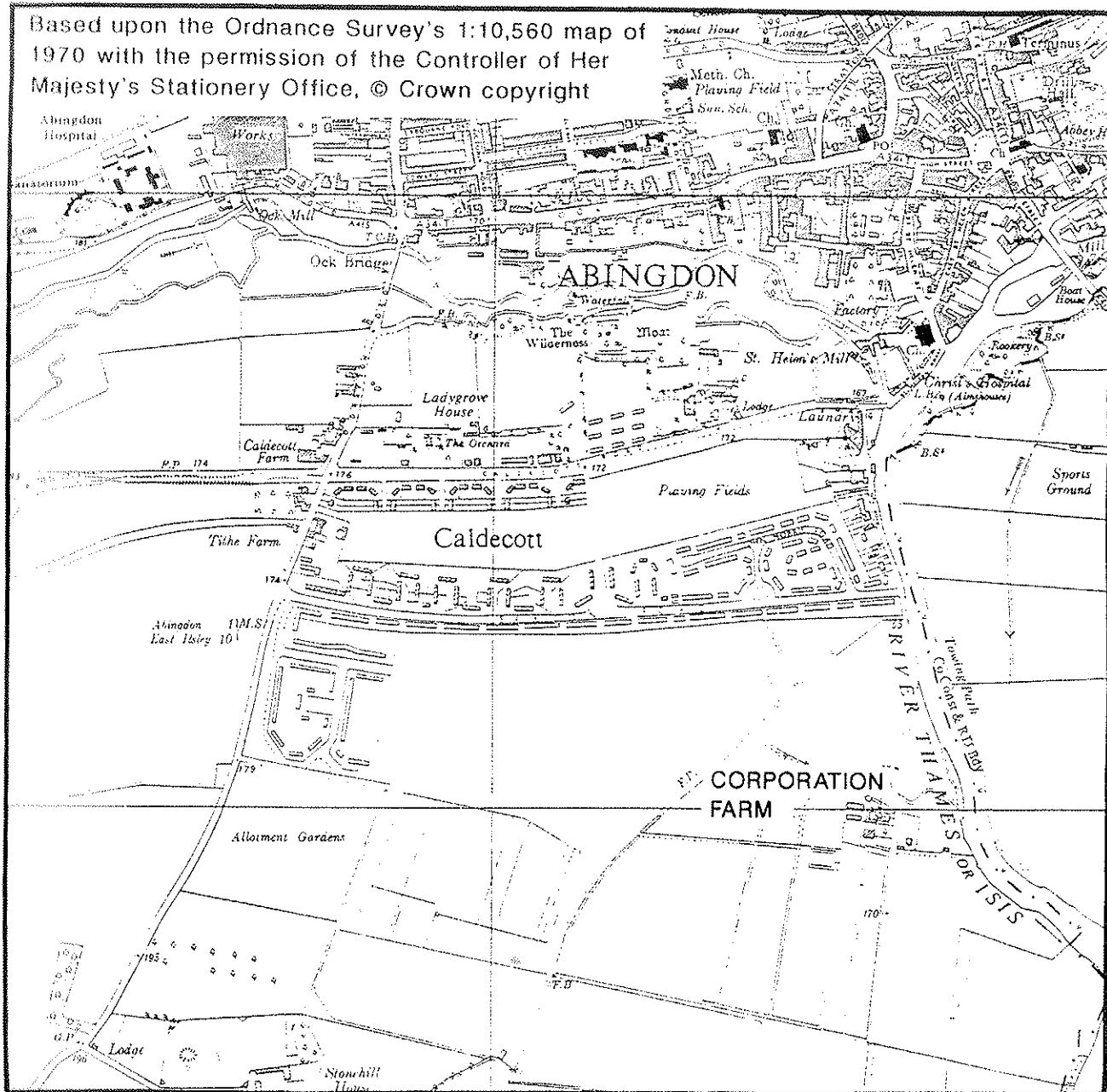
A 2.67% sample is not guaranteed to locate low concentrations of features such as pits, postholes and burials which would be associated with an area of prehistoric activity such as this. The location of the probable ring ditch (internal diameter c. 10m?) indicates the reliability of the evaluation and the archaeological potential of the site. However, it is quite possible that there are other monuments in the areas that were not sampled due to the presence of concrete slabs and access tracks. Although the ploughsoil, underlying the topsoil, was undated, it is not of recent origin as evidenced by the pits in trenches 1, 4 and 7 cutting the ploughsoil. The ploughsoil could be of medieval date or earlier.

Conclusion

The results indicate an area of high archaeological potential which is probably associated with the barrow cemetery. It is likely that discrete features associated with the ring ditch were not located by the trenches. Other monuments may exist within the areas covered by the concrete slabs.

John Hiller
Rachel Morse
February 1992

Based upon the Ordnance Survey's 1:10,560 map of 1970 with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown copyright



LOCATION OF CORPORATION FARM

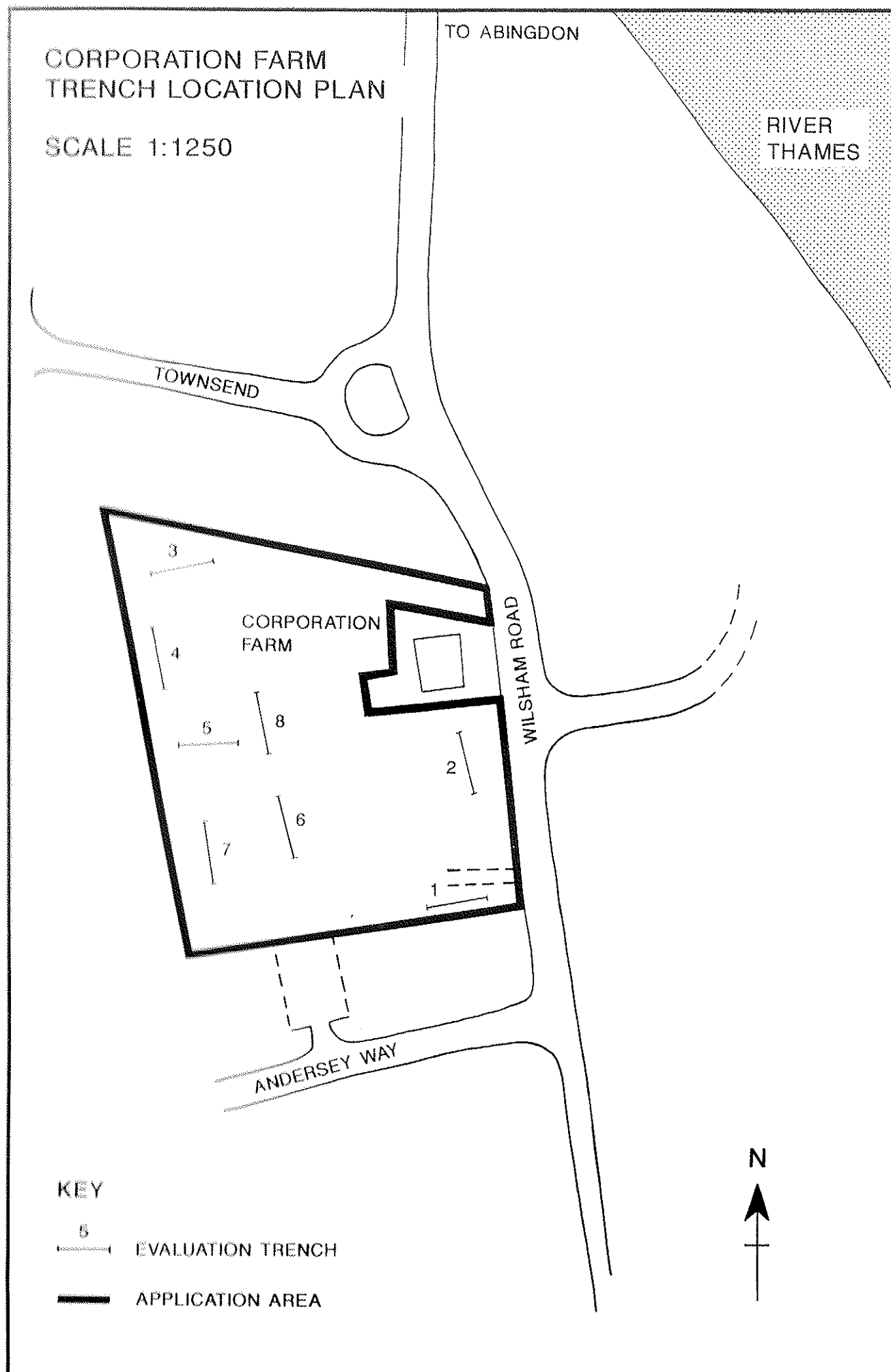
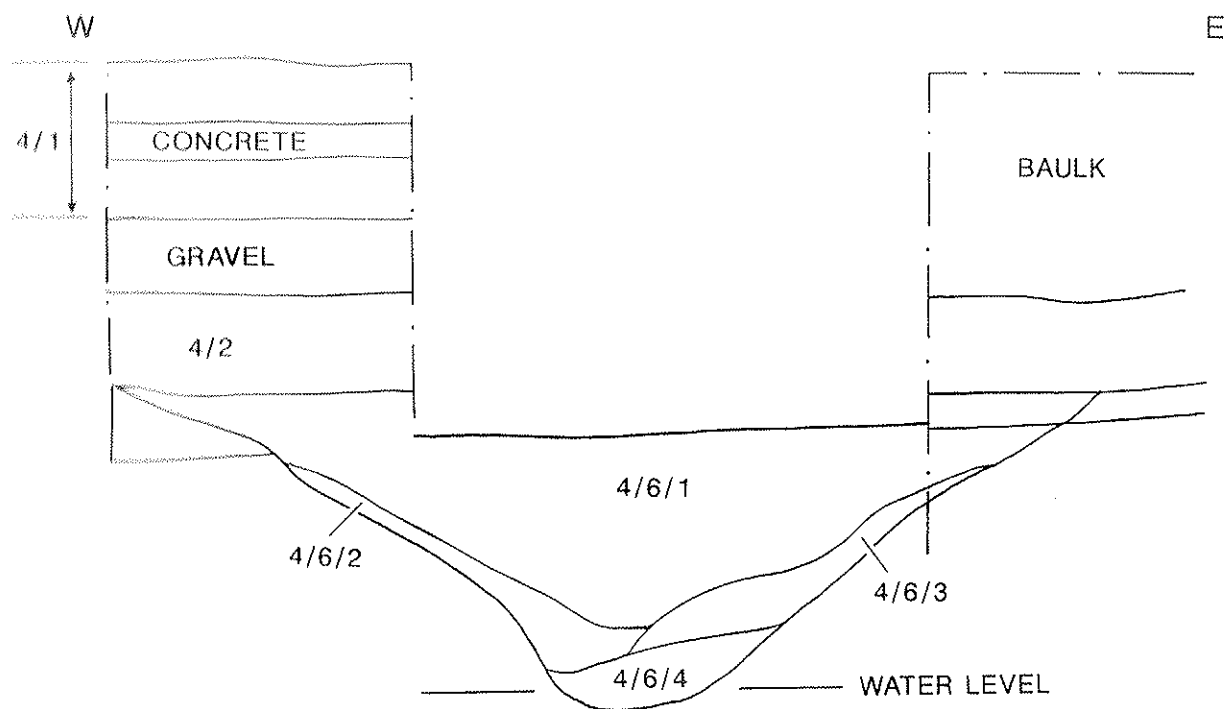


FIGURE 2

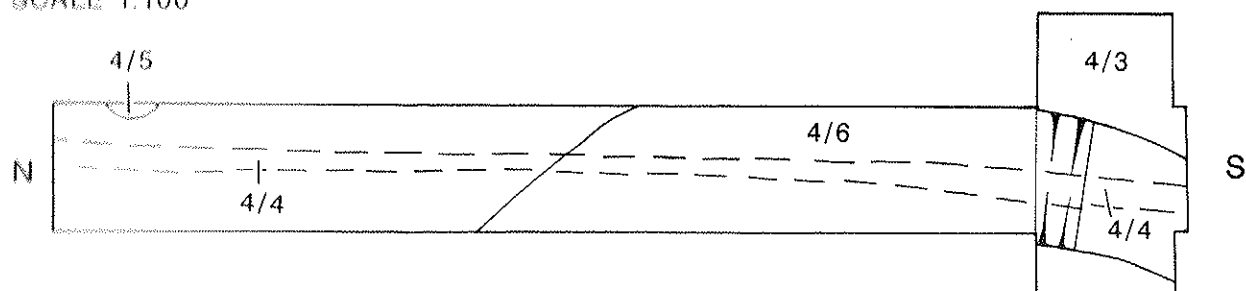
SECTION OF 4/6 DITCH

SCALE 1:20



PLAN OF TRENCH 4

SCALE 1:100



PLAN OF TRENCH 6

SCALE 1:100

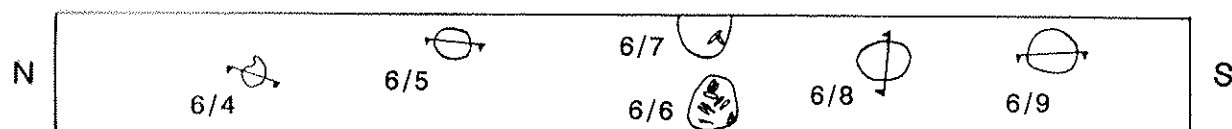


FIGURE 3



The Oxford Archaeological Unit

46 Hythe Bridge Street

Oxford OX1 2EP

tel. (0865) 243888 fax. (0865) 793496