

Manor Farm, Flecknoe,
Warwickshire
Archaeological Watching Brief

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

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MANOR FARM, FLECKNOE, WARWICKSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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MANOR FARM, FLECKNOE, WARWICKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

INTRODUCTION

In February 1994 a watching brief was undertaken by the OAU at Manor Farm, Flecknoe, while building work was in progress. The site lies at the eastern edge of the village at NGR SP 51716348 (see Fig 1).

An earlier archaeological evaluation of the development site was undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) in November and December 1992, when five evaluation trenches were excavated ('Manor Farm, Flecknoe Archaeological Evaluation' OAU evaluation report 1992). The archaeological features located were in Trench 3, where a number of ditches were revealed at the southern boundary of the site. The pottery although small in quantity suggested nearby Roman and early medieval activity.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Flecknoe is a shrunken medieval village, possibly Saxon in origin (Dugdale 1730, 304-7), parts of which are visible as upstanding earthworks. Aerial photographs show medieval ridge and furrow cultivation around Flecknoe, earthwork property boundaries and hollow ways inside the village (see fig. 1).

Reference:

Dugdale W, 1730, Antiquaries of Warwickshire (2nd edition).

For full archaeological background see 'Manor Farm, Flecknoe Archaeological Evaluation' OAU evaluation report 1992.

STRATEGY AND AIMS

The aims were to excavate and record any significant archaeological remains disturbed during construction work for the new dwelling and associated ground work. To recover artefacts to date and characterise the extent and nature of the archaeological remains.

RESULTS (see fig. 2 and 3)

The area within the house footprint (approx 8m x 18m) was stripped down to the natural Lower Lias clay subsoil and no archaeological features were located. There was no sign of a hollow way which was noted to the W in an evaluation of the adjacent property in June 1992 ('Plot adjacent to Manor Farmhouse, Flecknoe, Wolfhampcote, Warwickshire' OAU evaluation report 1992).

To the W of the house footings a number of deposits were located [606, 607, 608, 609]. Deposit 609 represents modern disturbance, the exact nature of the remaining deposits was unclear. Deposit 606 contained two sherds of 10th - 11th century pottery and one overfired sherd of 13th - 14th century date.

To the S of the house footings in the area of higher ground a number of ditches were located. This confirmed the location of the ditches seen in evaluation Trench 3 (OAU 1992) and revealed their further extent to the E and W. These ditches were situated in an area being stripped prior to the construction of an area of hard standing for car parking.

The present topsoil 601 overlaid an earlier ploughsoil 602, a mid-brown clay silt. This was only evident in the area W of ditch 619 suggesting better preservation of features in this area. To the E of ditch 619 where the ground sloped down to the E, the topsoil directly overlaid the features.

Although the dating evidence was mainly limited to the surface collection of pottery the ditches could be broadly classified into Roman and Medieval. For the purposes of the description the site can be divided into two areas E and W of ditch 619. Ditch 619 which was over 1.20m in depth contained 19th century pottery and identified in the evaluation as ditch 309. To the E of 619 ditches with predominantly finds of medieval pottery were located. To the W of 619 the ditches appear to be Roman in date.

ROMAN

The dating evidence from the ditches to the W was not conclusive, but rather inferred from the pottery and type of fill (features containing medieval pottery had a distinctly darker fill). Apart from the NE-SW ditch 626 the ditches were on a N-S or E-W alignment.

A section was hand dug at the junction of 626 and three E-W ditches 637, 634, and 631. The earliest ditch 631 was cut by 626 and 634 which was in turn cut by ditch 637. The only finds were from 604 (the latest fill of ditch 626). They included a Roman rim fragment of a lid seated jar, a pig mandible, one sheep tooth and three unidentified bone fragments. The NE-SW ditch 626 deepened towards the NE. (0.33m to 0.50m in depth within the length of the section).

To the E of ditch 619 the layout of any Roman features was unclear. Roman

features appear to exist in this area as pottery was recovered from features eg 622, which had a lighter coloured clay silt fill more typical of the ditches on the western side of the site. The features with lighter fills were mainly indistinct probably due to the slope in the ground down to the E, suggesting they have been truncated.

Roman pottery assessment: Paul Booth

Seven sherds of Roman pottery were recovered during the watching brief. The pottery is comparable with that from the earlier evaluation on the site.

The sherds were in reasonable condition and relatively unabraded. Six were in slightly sandy reduced ware fabrics and the seventh was a rim sherd in a hard coarsely tempered fabric (with sand, grog, organic and ?limestone inclusions). The rim was from a lid seated jar of a type particularly common in Northamptonshire but also found in Warwickshire, though more usually in organic or shell-tempered fabrics. The reduced ware sherds are consistent with products of a number of central Warwickshire kiln sites, of which Wappenbury is the largest and longest lived, and therefore perhaps the most likely source. Such products could date from the 2nd-4th centuries. The rim sherd is unlikely to be later than 2nd century in date. The evidence could therefore indicate a relatively brief period of Roman activity in the 2nd century, or something rather more extended.

Contexts 604, 611, 622 and 623 contained Roman sherds unassociated with later (medieval) material.

MEDIEVAL

A ditch 617 ran E-W along the southern boundary curving around to the S where it was cut by ditch 619 and at the eastern boundary it curved around to the N before it terminated. The dark clay silt fill 614 was particularly distinctive and the only other similar fill encountered on the site was 621 within ditch 638. Each of the ditches 617 and 638 contained one sherd of shell tempered 10th - 11th century pottery. In the evaluation ditch 617 (311) contained 12th century and 19th century pottery. It seems likely that, as suspected during the evaluation, the 19th century pottery was intrusive or due to contamination during excavation of ditch fill 610 (310).

In addition seven shell tempered pottery sherds of 12th-13th century date were recovered during machine stripping (Finds context 615). These were all recovered in the area of ditch 617 and 618 in the SE corner of the site.

Ditch 638 is probably contemporary with ditch 617, the similarity of fills and adjacent terminals would suggest they may form two enclosures or plots. The full plan is unclear as ditch 638 cannot be followed to the N where it peters out down a slope, adjacent to the existing gravel drive. The full plan of ditch 617 is not known as it extends beyond the bounds of the site to the S. The absence of any obvious medieval features to the W may infer the existence of a plot(s) extending N-S at about 11m in width.

No features were located to suggest any medieval structure.

A ditch 618 orientated E-W contained two pottery sherds of shell tempered ware of the 12th-13th century.

A group of features, context 616, probably represent a group of pits. The deep red glazed patterned pottery recovered is probably 14th - 15th century in date. A rather indistinct irregular feature 612, probably comprised a ditch and pits, had a similar fill to 616 although it produced two sherds of shell tempered pottery dated 10th - 12th century it is possibly contemporary with 616.

Medieval pottery assessment: Lucy Bown

A total of 25 sherds divide in to 15 Late Saxon St Neots Ware and 10 medieval St Neots Ware and Nuneaton Type Wares.

The earliest sherds are of 10th to late 11th century St Neots Ware. With the exception of one inturned rim bowl all 15 sherds are undiagnostic. (Contexts 603,612,613,614,615,621)

Within the medieval sherds two fabrics are unidentified. Three sherds are probably early medieval, of late 11th to early 13th century date, having the characteristics of early cooking pot sherds in a poorly fired, moderately quartz tempered fabric. (Context 605,606)

A fourth unidentified sherd is overfired and therefore difficult to attribute to a fabric type but is likely to be of 13th to 15th century date. (Context 606)

Two well fired shell tempered sherds belong to the medieval Developed St Neots Tradition dating from the 12th to 13th century. (Context 613,615)

Four sherds have all the characteristics of the Chilvers Coton medieval pottery industry at Nuneaton. Fabric types A, B, and C/D are all present ranging in date from jug sherds of 13th to 14th- century date, to purple glazed sherds more typical of the 14th to 15th-century production. (Contexts 603, 616)

Bibliography

Mayes, P. and Scott, K. 1984 Pottery Kilns at Chilvers Coton, Nuneaton. Soc Medieval Archaeology: Monograph 10 London

CONSIDERATIONS OF THE RESULTS

The conditions during the topsoil stripping within the footprint of the house were reasonably good for identifying the presence of archaeological deposits.

During the stripping of the area S of the new dwelling the conditions were not

ideal for identifying the archaeological remains. A covering of snow, later followed by continuous rain made ground conditions difficult. Movement of plant machinery within the restricted area quickly disturbed the natural clay subsoil. Ditches could not easily be located and planned. Due to the natural clay subsoil parts of the site were covered in standing water. The ground conditions, further ground work to move and install gas tanks and consolidate the area of hard standing site prevented any more archaeological investigation.

Consequently the strategy had to concentrate on cleaning and planning the area of exposed features and recovering pottery from the surface to give an indication of date range. A section across ditch intersections at the W end of the site provided a dug section and finds.

CONCLUSIONS

The area occupied by the new dwelling contained no archaeological features. The slope in the present ground level and the evidence for some features not continuing down the slope, eg ditch 638, suggest some features may have been badly truncated. Landscaping in the past would have been likely adjacent to Manor Farm and areas of post-medieval cobbling was noted during the 1992 evaluation.

Despite the adverse weather conditions and limited quantity of pottery the results indicated activity in the Roman and medieval period, notably late Saxon.

The ditches to the SW which are probably Roman did not contain enough pottery or the type of fill to suggest domestic occupation nearby. The type and layout of the ditches are more typical of a field/enclosure system, possibly only in existence for a short time in the 2nd century. The slightly higher ground to the SW area of the site had led to better preservation of negative features. The Roman ditches would have extended to the E but the drop in ground level and superimposed medieval features meant they were discontinuous, patchy and indistinct. Both Roman and Medieval features continued S beyond the limits of the development area.

The features identified as medieval were mostly located in the SE area of the site. The limited area exposed, quantity of pottery and possible residual deposition, means no firm conclusions can be drawn regarding the medieval development. The ditches almost certainly represent an element of the shrunken medieval village and so probably relate to the extant earthworks plotted to the S (see fig. 1). A consideration of the pottery with the layout shown in figure 3 means a tentative outline for three phases can be inferred:

1. A significant proportion, 60% (15) of the medieval sherds recovered were late Saxon 10th-11th century St Neots ware. This quantity of pottery would suggest domestic occupation nearby and the ditches functioning as plot/property boundaries. The two ditches which probably belong to the late Saxon phase were 617 and 638.

2. A second phase was suggested by the slightly later pottery of the Developed St Neots tradition of 12th-13th century, perhaps indicating a redefining of the boundaries by ditch 618.
3. The latest phase is probably represented by a number of pits, 616, which produced 14th-15th century pottery.

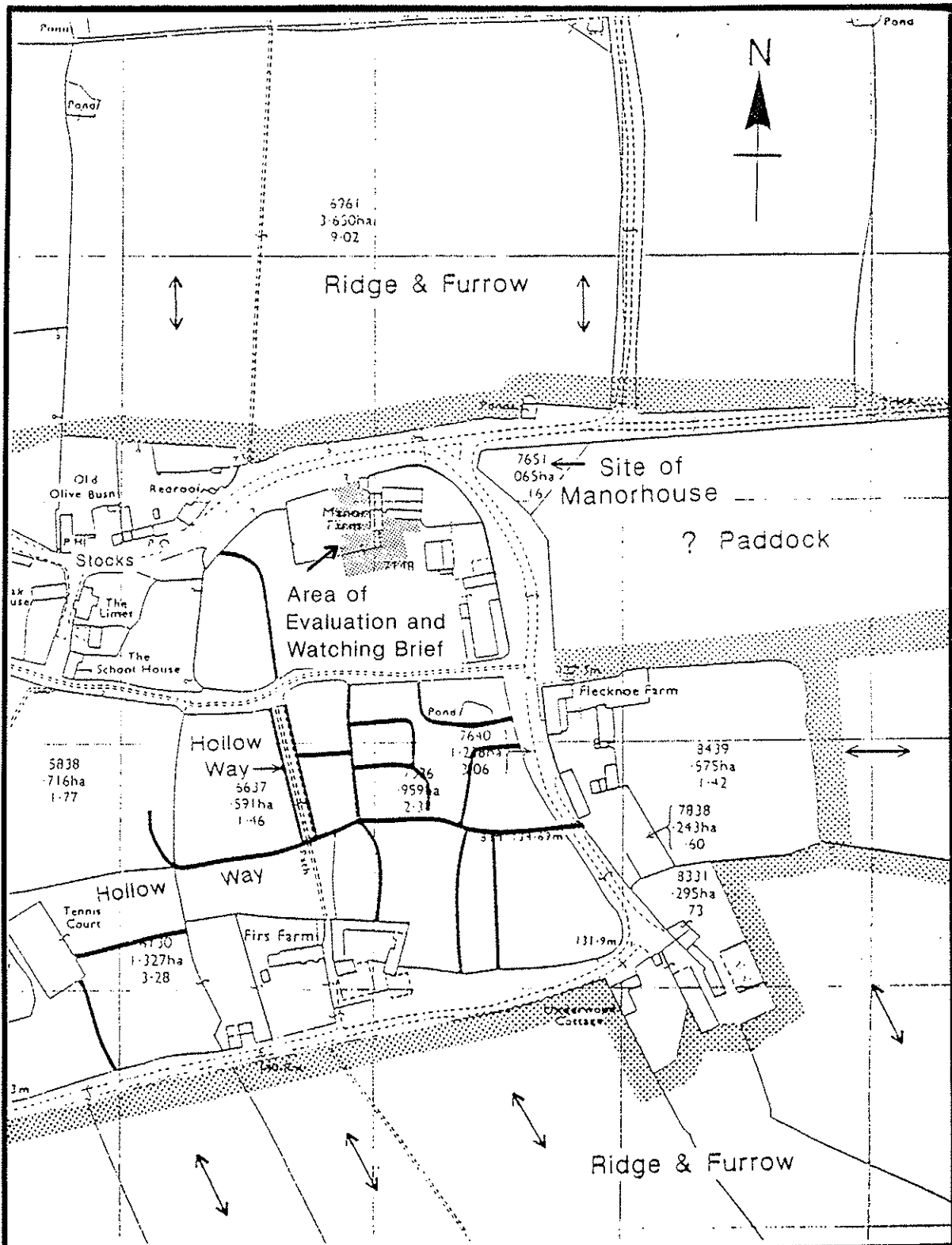
A. Parkinson
Oxford Archaeological Unit
Aug. 1994

FLECKNOE MANOR FARM (WFMF 94)						
WATCHING BRIEF						
CXT	TYPE	WIDTH (m)	DEPTH (m)	COMMENTS	FINDS	
601	Layer		0.25-0.30	Present topsoil		
602	Layer		0.20	Earlier ploughsoil		
603	Finds ref.	-		Unstratified finds	4 sherds of 10th-11th century pot St Neots ware 1 sherd of 13th-14th century pot 1 sherd of 14th-15th century pot 1 pot sherd Roman 1 pot sherd 713th century	
604	Fill			Fill of ditch 626	1 pot sherd rim Roman 1 pig jaw bone 1 sheep tooth 3 unidentified bone fragments	
605	Finds ref.	-	-		1 sherd 11th-12th century pot	
606	Fill?	-	-			
607	Fill?	-	-		2 sherds of 12th-early 13th century pot 1 sherd 13th-15th century	
608	Fill?	-	-			
609	Layer	-	-	Post-med. disturbance		
610	Fill	2.40		Fill of ditch 619. Same as fill 310 in evaluation trench 3		
611	Fill	1.05		Fill of ditch 620. Same as fill 307 seen in evaluation trench 3	1 pot sherd Roman greyware	
612	Fill?	-	-	Finds reference	2 pot sherds 10th- late 11th century St Neots ware	
613	Fill	0.90		Fill of ditch 618	1 pot sherd 12th-13th century St Neots ware (developed) 1 pot sherd 10th-11th century St Neots ware	

FLECKNOE MANOR FARM (WFMF 94)


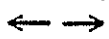

WATCHING BRIEF

CXT	TYPE	WIDTH (m)	DEPTH (m)	COMMENTS	FINDS
627	Fill		0.13	Fill of ditch 631	
628	Fill		0.31	Fill of ditch 631	
629	Fill		0.12	Fill of ditch 631	
630	Fill		0.04	Fill of ditch 631	
631	Ditch	0.79 +	0.51	Ditch orientated E-W	
632	Fill		0.18	Fill of ditch 634	
633	Fill		0.13	Fill of ditch 634	
634	Ditch	0.39 +	0.30	Ditch orientated E-W	
635	Fill		0.10	Fill of ditch 637	
636	Fill		0.25	Fill of ditch 637	
637	Ditch	0.82	0.34	Ditch orientated E-W	
638	Ditch	0.50		Ditch curving slightly and orientated N-S	



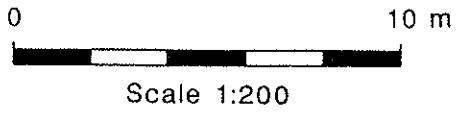
Manor Farm Flecknoe
 Site Location & Earthworks from aerial photographs

KEY

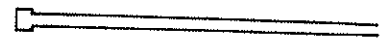
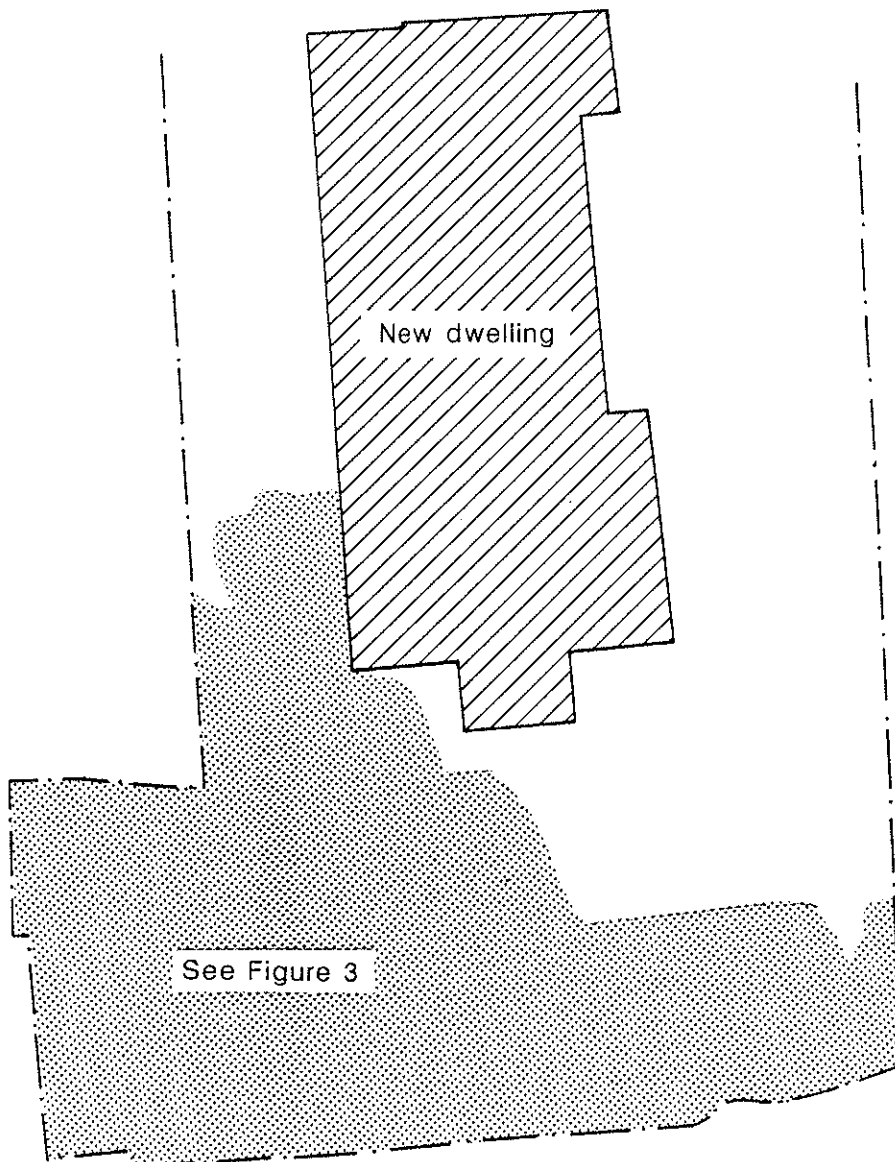
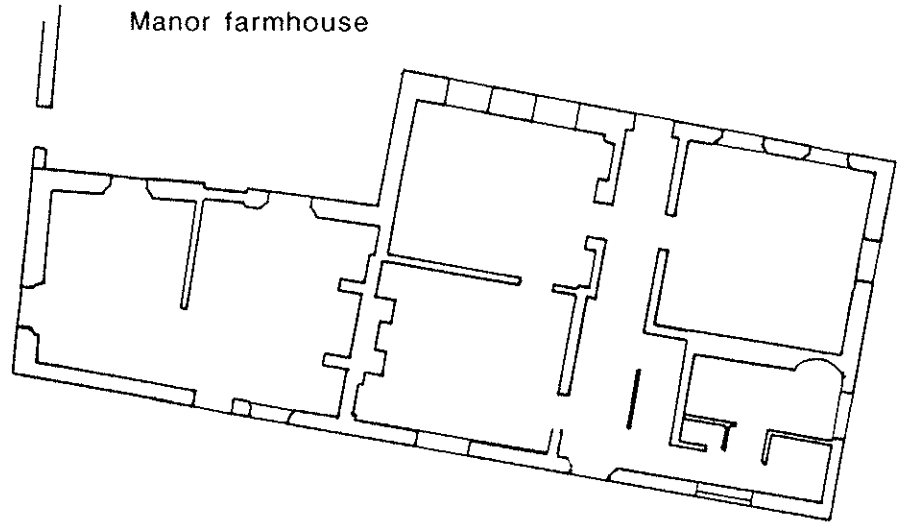
-  Areas of Ridge & Furrow
-  Direction of Ridge & Furrow
-  Earthworks

0 Scale 1:2500 100 200m.

Figure 1



--- Limit of area of watching brief



Driveway

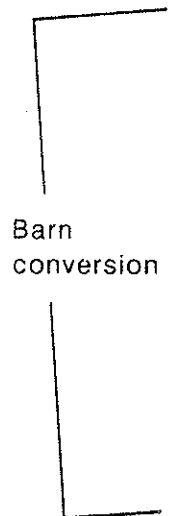
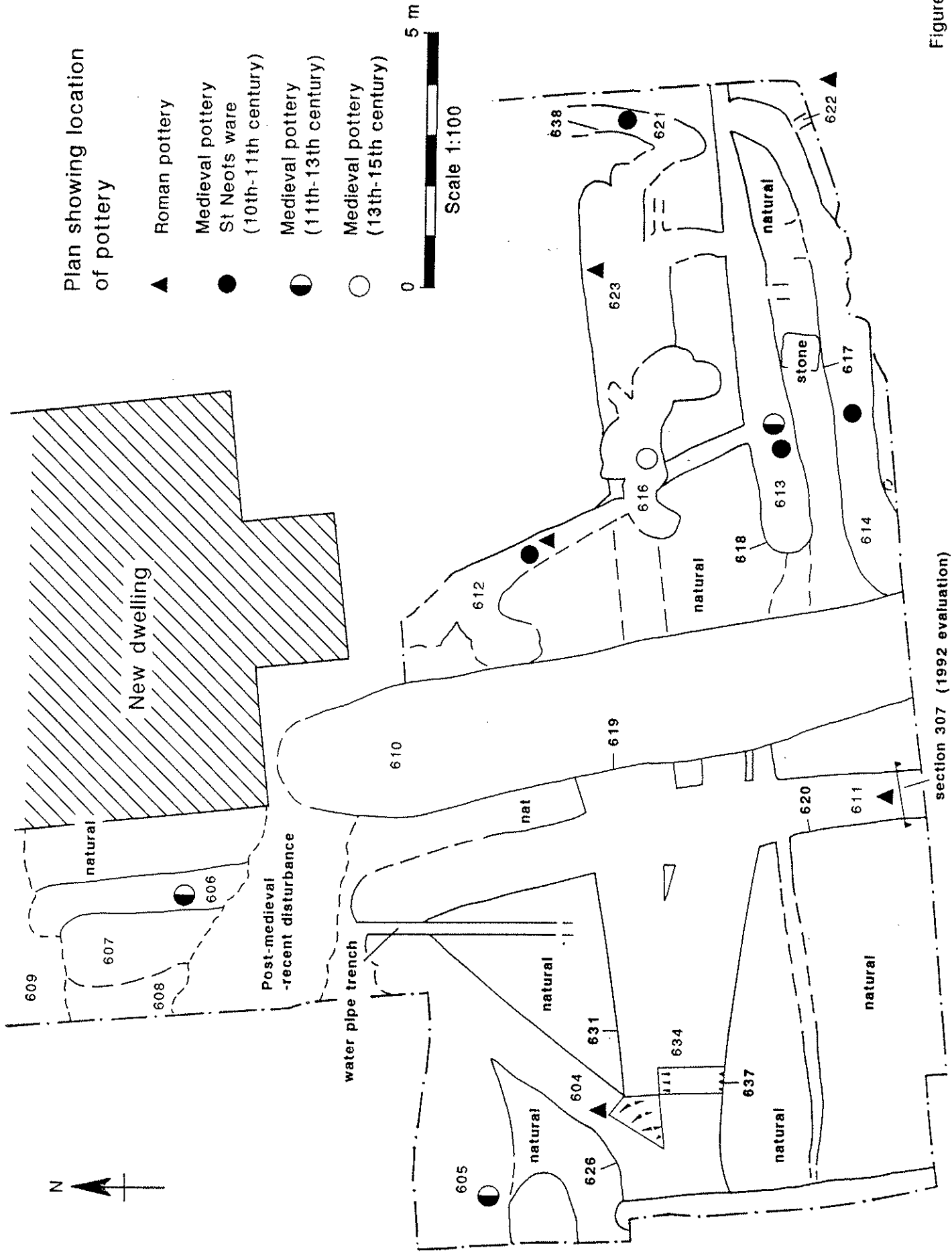


Figure 2



Plan showing location of pottery

- ▲ Roman pottery
- Medieval pottery St Neofs ware (10th-11th century)
- ◐ Medieval pottery (11th-13th century)
- Medieval pottery (13th-15th century)

0 5 m
Scale 1:100

Figure 3

section 307 (1992 evaluation)