

LAND ADJACENT TO PETROL STATION, GUILD STREET,

STRATFORD-ON-AVON

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

(planning number S92/1442)

SP 20105500

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SUMMARY

A field evaluation was carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) at the rear of 7-8 Henley Street, Stratford-on-Avon on behalf of Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council. There was one 12th or 13th century posthole located in trench 3 and disturbance associated with 19th-century and modern use of the site in the other trenches.

INTRODUCTION

In July 1993 a field evaluation was carried out by the OAU on behalf of Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council in respect of an application for planning permission for offices and parking (planning number S92/1442). The site was in the N of the 12th-century planned town of Stratford-on-Avon adjacent to William Shakespeare's birthplace at grid reference SP 20105500 (Fig.1).

BACKGROUND

Known archaeology

- i) This part of Stratford-on-Avon is a planned medieval development. Medieval boundaries (ditches and walls) survive in the fabric of the town (Cracknell, 1991-2 and forthcoming). The burgage plots laid out in AD 1196 by the Bishop of Worcester are 18x60 m.
- ii) A medieval well was found in 1991 at the rear of 8 Henley Street, immediately to the S of the site. There were no remains of medieval buildings (report held by Warcs SMR, 1991).
- iii) The remains of a medieval market cross lie to the W along Guild Street behind Shakespeare's Birthplace. (Fig. 1, SMR 1057)
- iv) The area to the N of Guild Street was unenclosed until 1775 (VCH).
- v) The site is 21x48 m and may be the rear of a burgage plot of which the end fronting onto Henley Street has been subdivided into 7, 8 and 9 Henley Street. This burgage plot may have been the fourth W from Union Street. These burgage plots may have been aligned from older field boundaries.

Topography and recent buildings (see Fig. 2)

- vi) The W side of the site has been built on in the 19th century (1851, 1885, 1886 and 1905 OS map). The rear of the properties was moved when Guild Street was realigned between 1851 and 1885 (Fig. 2). There are concrete slabs from recently demolished buildings. There were no obvious surviving walls from these buildings.
- vii) From the cartographic evidence and the site visit it would appear that much of the E of the site was recently used as yard and access.
- viii) The S of the site is flat (at about the same level as the Henley Street 40 m OD) but the N half of the site slopes down about 2 m to the road. This difference in levels is noticeable as a 'dip' in the surrounding area which

slopes towards the Avon. This may be the re-entrant for an old stream course on the edge of the second gravel terrace.

Documentary research

Documentary research was carried out at The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Record Office.

- i) No documents which relate to these properties have been identified before the late 16th century (6 Henley St. 1629, 7 Henley St. 1563, 8/9 Henley St. 1563 and 10 Henley St. 1615). (Birthplace Trust records)
- ii) The properties were used by tanners and associated trades (7 Henley St. 1602- lease to a skinner, 1615- skinner in occupation. 8/9 Henley St. Miller in residence in 1590 and a Whittawer (curer of white skins for gloves) in occupation in 1630). This is similar to other residents (John Shakespeare (father of William) was Bailiff of Stratford and was a Freeman of the Mystery of Glovers Whittawers and Collarmakers as well as dealing in barley, timber and wool. His neighbours were a Blacksmith and a Tailor) (Schoenbaum 1970, 18).
- iii) The documents show the division of the site into two before 1563.
- iv) The guild pits are on the line of the borough boundary and the name derives from Gwll pits or rubbish pits. By the 16th century the pits are used for tanning. There are tanning pits to the rear of Shakespeare's Birthplace.
- v) The property of 7 Henley Street is a tenement in 1684 with a width of 22' at the front and 26' 6" at the rear. In 1817 a warehouse, storehouse and malthouse are mentioned. By 1822 a newly erected dwelling had a large adjoining warehouse, both of which fronted onto Henley Street, with a yard and a large garden. In 1861 there was a house with a brewhouse and a cellar. Attached to this were two large workshops, a deal shed, a stable, a timber yard and out buildings. (see Fig. 2 for 1851 and 1886 maps)
- vi) In 1563 8/9 Henley Street was a tenement with a garden in Henley Lane. A backside and garden mentioned in 1614. In 1630 the property was 35' 2" wide at the Henley Street frontage and 30' 5" at the rear. In 1733 the rear width was 35' 2". In 1776/7 the messuages were rebuilt. In 1865 the property was recorded as having been dealing in 'Ale and Porter' for some time. (see Fig. 2 for 1851 and 1886 maps)
- vii) The combined width of the properties is 35' 2" plus 22' which equals 55' 2" which is 17.27 m.
- viii) Guild Street was realigned between 1851 and 1886 (see Fig. 2). In 1825 Guild Street was referred to as the 'Great Turnpike'.
- ix) The Birthplace Trust holds photographs of the rear of 8 Henley St. taken around 1897. These show the sheds at the rear of the properties seen on the maps.

ASSESSMENT STRATEGY (Fig.2)

The assessment strategy was based on a 2.4% sample of the area. The sample consisted of four 3 m long and 2 m wide trenches dug by a JCB mechanical excavator (see Fig. 1).

The archaeological features encountered were sampled by hand to determine their nature and depth and to recover dating evidence. The features were planned and their sections drawn at scales of 1:20.

Trenches 1 and 4 were placed underneath the building footprint and trenches 2 and 3 were placed as near to the Henley Street as was practicable given the adjacent standing buildings.

- Trench 1 was placed to locate medieval activity to the rear of 8/9 Henley Street and perhaps to locate the property boundary.
- Trench 2 was placed to locate the property boundary between 8/7 Henley Street and any medieval activity extending to the N end of the flat part of the site.
- Trench 4 was placed at the N of the site next to Guild Street in order to locate medieval activity on the road frontage and to see if any evidence for the nature of the 'dip' can be revealed. The realignment of guild Street between 1851 and 1885 would also be noted.
- Trench 3 was placed to locate medieval activity to the rear of 7 Henley Street and perhaps locate the medieval boundary between 7/6 Henley Street.

RESULTS

Soils

The general soil type was a slightly sandy silt. The underlying subsoil was gravel.

Archaeology

Trench 1

This trench was extended to 4.5x2 m and was 0.8 m deep. There was an old subsoil on top of the gravel. Four postholes may be related to the structures seen on the 1886 1:500 O.S. map (Fig. 2). Two shallow pits were present and may be 19th century, as they were filled by a very similar soil to the gardensoil. A 19th century wall with an internal tarmac surface was present. It is likely that this wall and surface are from the late 19th-century building seen on the 1905 1:1250 O.S map (not illustrated). A wall is shown on mid-19th century maps (Fig. 2) so it seems likely that earlier boundaries must have been removed. There were modern pits and a drain.

Trench 2

This trench was excavated to a depth of 1.2 m over 3.2x2.3 m. There was a remnant of old subsoil over the gravel at the E of the trench. Large modern pits were found could confidently be expected to have removed any medieval remains surviving below the surface of the gravel. Postholes cut into the top of these pits and the subsoil may be from wooden lean-to buildings seen on the 1:500 1886 O.S.

map (Fig. 2) and on 1897 photographs of the rear of 8/9 Henley Street held in The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. There were two residual sherds of 13th-century pottery one from a dump on top of the pit fills (209) and one from a pit fill (200) which also yielded 19th century tile.

Trench 3

The trench was 2.75x2 m and was 0.85 m deep to the gravel. This trench revealed the only medieval feature which was a 12th or 13th century posthole (308/309). There were two other undated postholes but these had fills very similar to the 19th century gardensoil and so these features may not be related to 308/309. These features were overlain by 19th century gardensoil and other later activity. A large linear feature contained two residual sherds, one was 13th century and the other was 15th century. A brick pier and surface may be evidence of buildings seen on 19th-century maps (see Fig. 2).

Trench 4

This trench was 1.2 m deep to the gravel and 3.1x3.75 m long. It showed no deposits earlier than the 19th century.

Finds By C Underwood-Keevill

A total of 32 sherds were recovered from 10 contexts. The earliest context was 309, with one sherd of medieval oxidised sandy ware with a thin green glaze, similar to fabric type 1 from Alcester (Cracknell and Jones, 1989) and dated to the 12th or 13th century. Other medieval sherds were present in contexts 200, 209 and 307. The majority of these consisted of medieval white ware, a gritty quartz tempered white ware with green glaze similar to fabric types A and B at Nuneaton (Mayes and Scott 1984) and dated to the 13th century. The majority of the other contexts could be dated by the pottery to the late 17th and 18th century and contained Midlands Purple tyg and tankard sherds, Staffordshire slipware dish fragments and butter pot sherds.

Environmental

Soil samples were not taken as there were no deposits which were suitable.

COMMENTS ON THE RESULTS

Reliability of field investigation

The sample size should be sufficient to define the archaeology. The gravel and subsoil was examined in all of the trenches.

Overall Interpretation

There was only one medieval feature located in the evaluation; a posthole in trench 3. The other trenches showed 19th-century activity. There were large pits in trench 2. A brick wall and ?internal surface were in trench 1 with postholes from late 19th century buildings underneath the ?internal surface. Trench 4, by the Guild Street frontage, showed only very recent deposits.

The presence of untruncated subsoil over the gravels in trench 1 and 2 may indicate that archaeological features would survive if they are present.

The virtual absence of residual medieval pottery from any of the trenches (apart from 3 sherds) may show that the rear of the medieval plots was not used for domestic activity or rubbish dumping. The sherds which were recovered were of 12th- to 13th-century date and are not inconsistent with the documented foundation of this part of Stratford-on-Avon. There was only one other sherd not of 17th-century or later date; a 15th-century sherd from the large linear feature in Trench 3.

The 12th- or 13th-century posthole in trench 3 is of uncertain significance. It may have other postholes from the same structure surviving (for example the undated features). However, it was truncated by the 19th century gardensoil and other postholes may not survive. It was not clear how far the truncation of the gravel extended.

APPENDICES

Bibliography

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Mayes P, and Scott K, 1984. Pottery kilns at Chilvers Coton, Nuneaton. Society for medieval Archaeology Monograph Series, 10

Slater T R and Wilson C, 1977, Archaeology and Development in Stratford-upon-Avon, Birmingham

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Maps

1851 Board of Health Map (Drawn by the O.S.) (see Fig.3)

1885 O.S. map (see cover)

1886 1:500 O.S. map (see Fig.3)

1905 1:2500 O.S. map

Current 1:1250 O.S. map (Fig. 2)

Trench description

Trench 1

The natural gravel was overlain by a layer of silty sand (116). This layer was cut by several modern features; four postholes (119, 120, 121 and 125), four pits (118, 122, 123 and 126), a wall (112, 113 and 114 with 115), and a modern ceramic drain (105). The wall, drain and two of the pits also cut a layer of modern garden soil (103) which sealed 116. These layers were sealed by modern tarmac surfaces with make-up layers (100, 101 and 102). The earlier tarmac surface (102) may have been an internal floor associated with the wall (112-5).

Trench 2

The natural gravel was cut by an undated feature (215) and two large modern pits (220 and 221). These were filled with black and ashy tip layers and had much bone material present in them (see table 1). These pits were cut by a posthole (202) and all of the deposits were overlain by modern dump layers.

Trench 3

The natural gravel was cut by a medieval posthole (309) and two modern features. These were overlain by a garden soil (305). There was a large linear feature (306) cut into the garden soil which had more recent features (314 and 316) cutting it. This was overlain by modern garden soil (304) which was sealed beneath a brick surface (301/320) which was associated with a brick pier (302). This was sealed beneath a very thin layer of modern soil (301).

Trench 4

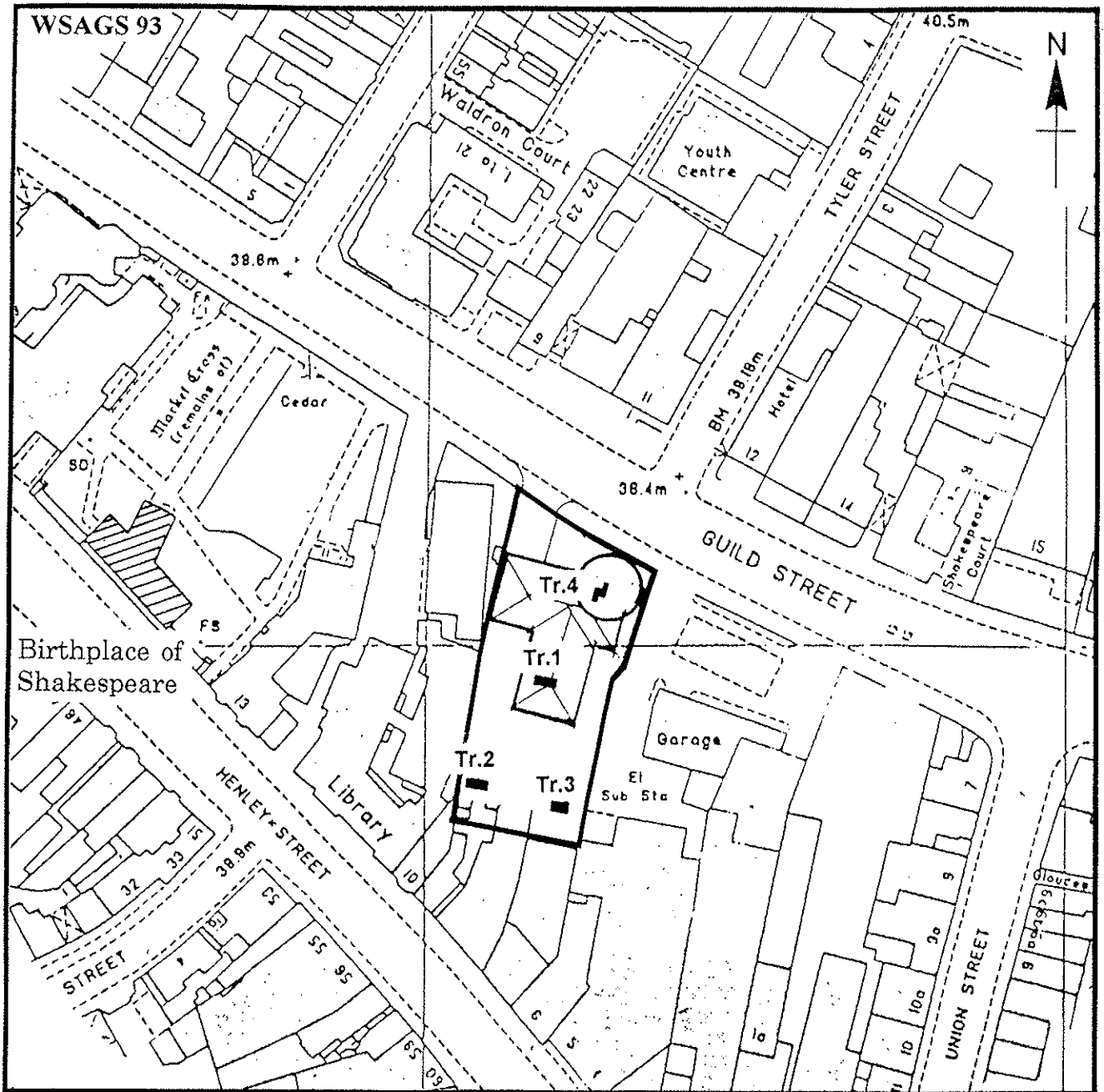
The gravel was cut by two modern pits (405 and 407), one of which contained a plastic bag. These were sealed by a layer of modern mortar (404) which was cut by a modern service trench (403). This was sealed by a layer of modern dump (402). This was sealed by modern tarmac of the current entrance (401) and the concrete pad for recent buildings. These were under modern demolition debris (400).

**TABLE 1
CONTEXTS AND FINDS**

CTX	TRENCH TYPE	WIDTH	DEPTH	POTTERY DATE	
100	1	tarmac		0.21	
101	1	make-up		0.13	
102	1	tarmac		0.07	
103	1	garden soil		0.27	17th-19th
104	1	fill of drain			
105	1	cut for drain	0.30	0.23	
106	1	fill of posthole 119			
107	1	fill of posthole 120			17th-18th
108	1	fill of posthole 121			tile
109	1	fill of pit 122			
110	1	fill of pit 123			
111	1	=116 natural subsoil			
112	1	construction trench for wall	0.7	0.2	
113	1	concrete footing			
114	1	1 course of brick wall			
115	1	gap in wall 114			
116	1	natural subsoil	-	0.03	
117	1	fill of pit 118			
118	1	cut for pit	0.6	0.3	
119	1	cut for posthole (fill 106)	0.22 x0.46	0.16	
120	1	cut for posthole (fill 107)	0.3	0.11	
121	1	cut for posthole (fill 108)	0.22	0.05	
122	1	cut for shallow pit (fill 109)	1.07 x0.86	?0.04	
123	1	cut for shallow pit (fill 110)	0.7 x0.7	?0.1	
124	1	fill of posthole 125			
125	1	cut for posthole (fill 124)	0.18 x0.2	0.03	
126	1	unexcavated fill of pit	0.7 x0.7		bricks
200	2	fill of pit 220		0.22	13th and 19th, tile
201	2	fill of pit 220		0.01-7	
202	2	fill of cut 203		0.46	
203	2	circular cut (fill 202)	unexc	0.46	
204	2	layer fill of pit 220		0.22	17th
205	2	?subsoil in E of trench			
206	2	?subsoil over gravel			

207	2	fill of posthole 208		0.11	tile
208	2	cut for posthole	0.3		
209	2	dump in N of trench			13th
210	2	dump in N section			
211	2	dump			
212	2	dump			
213	2	top fill of pit 220		<0.2	
214	2	fill of pit 221			
215	2	cut for linear feature	L0.64	>0.14	
216	2	dump fill of pit 220		0.2	
217	2	fill of pit 220 over 218		0.1	
218	2	lower fill of pit 220 under 217		<0.06	
219	2	fill of cut 215			
220	2	cut for large pit	L>2.6 x2.2	>0.7	
221	2	cut for pit (fill 214) (cuts 213, 204)	>0.7	0.3	
222	2	fill of posthole 223			
223	2	cut for posthole	0.18		
224	2	seen in trench section			
300	3	rubble gravel etc.		0.08	
301	3	brick floor		0.08	19th
302	3	brick pier	0.65	0.7	
303	3	make-up for floor 301			
304	3	layer over 317 under 303		0.2	
305	3	layer similar to 304 under 317			
306	3	E-W linear cut (fill 307) (under 305)	2.7	0.85	
307	3	fill of linear cut 306			13th, 15th, 17th-18th
308	3	cut for posthole (fill 309)	0.35 x0.3	0.09	
309	3	fill of posthole 308			12th or 13th
310	3	square cut (fill 311) associated with 302	0.5	0.14	
311	3	fill of cut 310			tile
312	3	cut for ?posthole (fill 313)	0.4 x0.15	0.15	
313	3	fill of posthole 312			
314	3	cut for large ?posthole cut into 307	0.6 x0.2		
315	3	fill of ?posthole 314			
316	3	cut for pit (fill 317) cuts 305	1.1 x0.4		
317	3	fill of pit 316			
318	3	fill of pit 306		<0.19	
319	3	layer on N side of trench		<0.25	

320	3	2 course brick surface associated with 301/302			
321	3	layer under 318	unexc		
400	4	present rubble ground surface		0.29	
401	4	tarmac		0.11	
402	4	layer under 401		0.49	
403	4	service trench	0.35	-	
404	4	mortar layer cut by 403		0.02	
405	4	fill of linear feature			17th-19th
406	4	natural gravel			
407	4	fill of pit			plastic bag



Scale 1:1000

figure 1



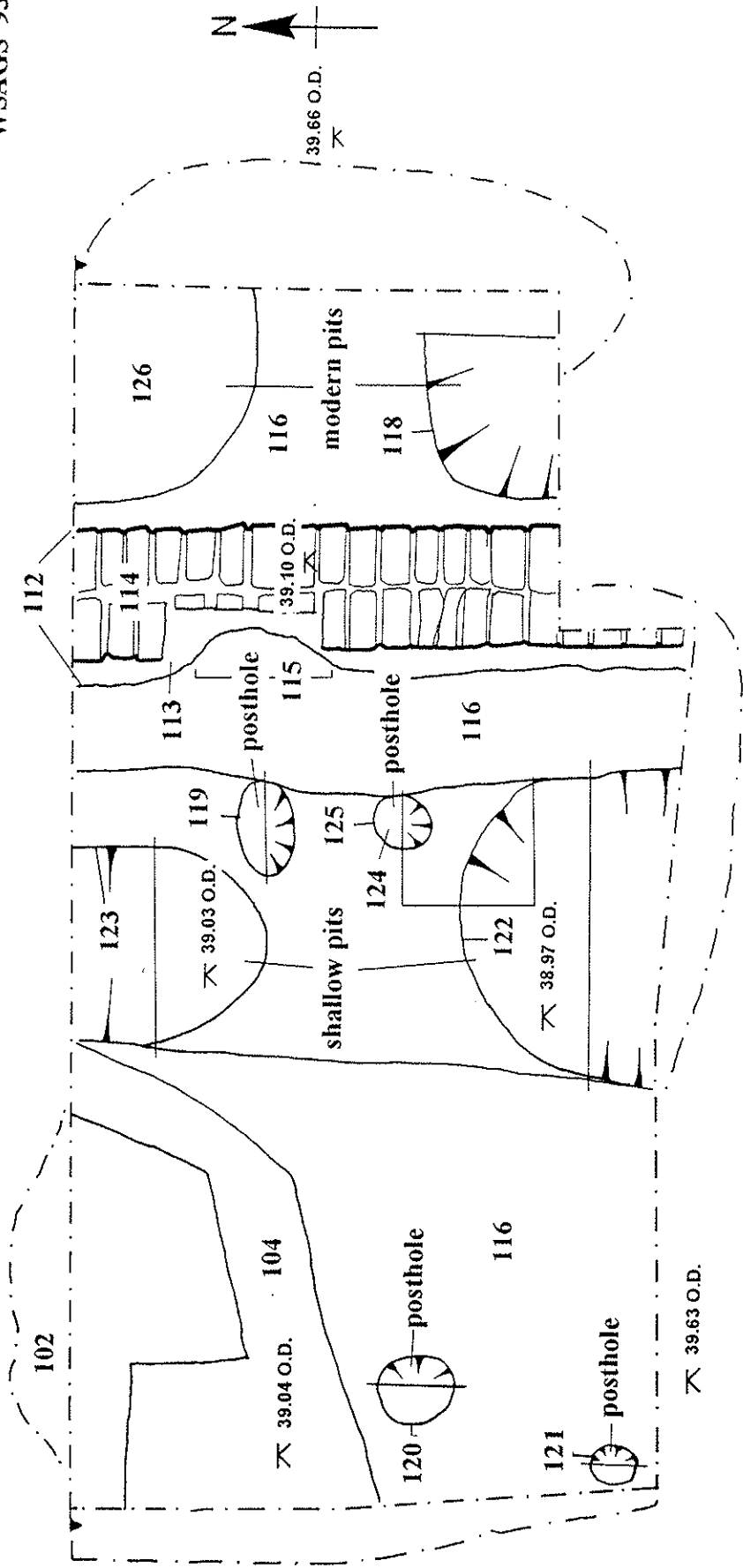
Based on O.S. Board of Health map of 1851
Scale approx 1:500

Based on O.S. map of 1886
Scale approx 1:500

figure 2

Trench I

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Scale 1:25

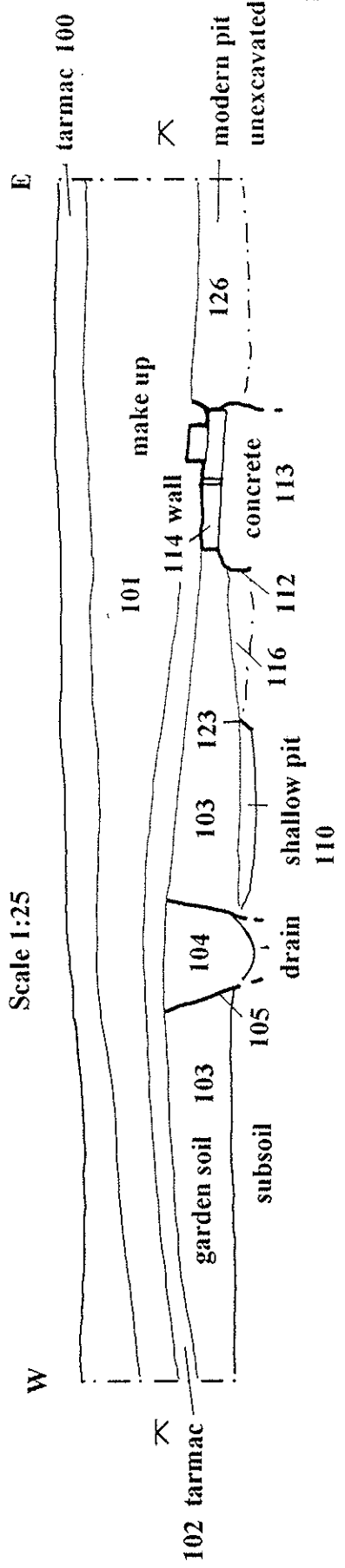


figure 3

Trench 2

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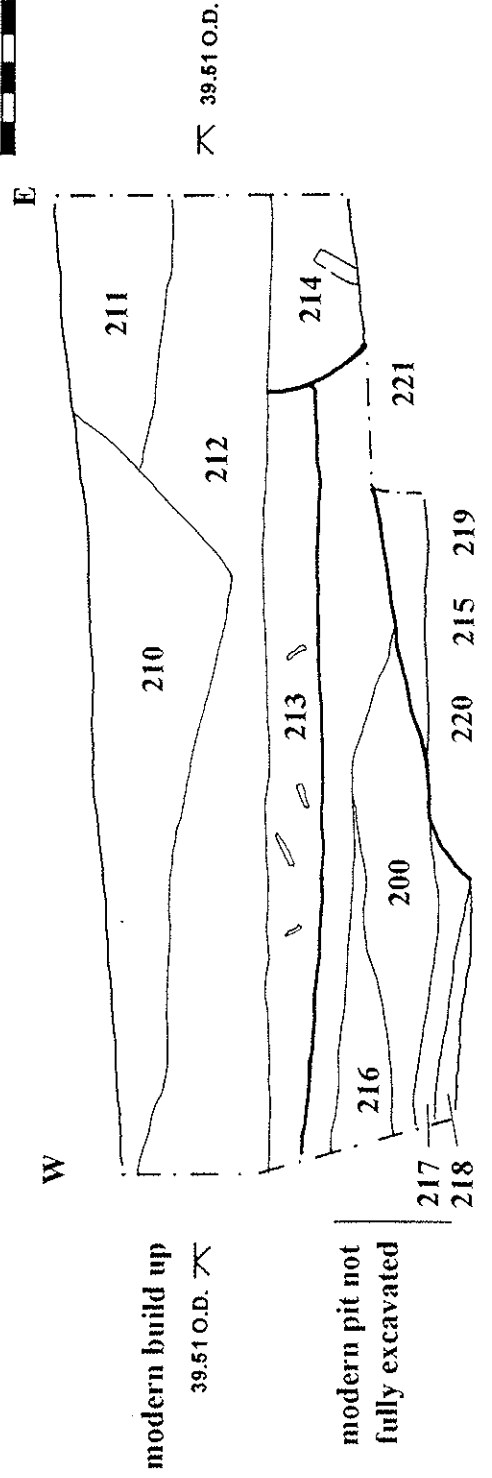
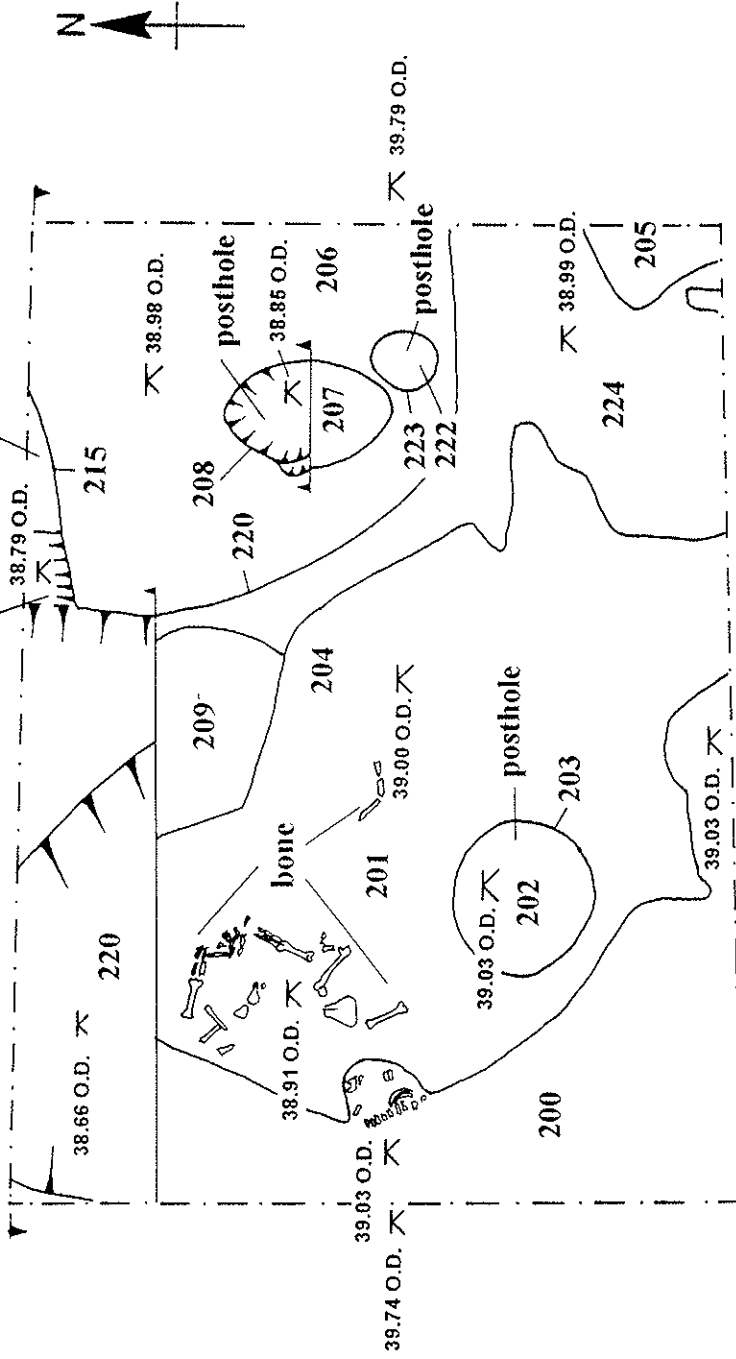
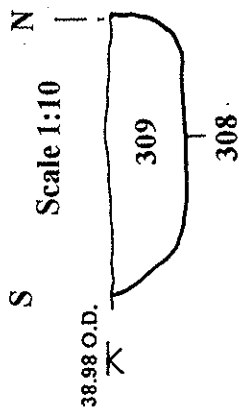
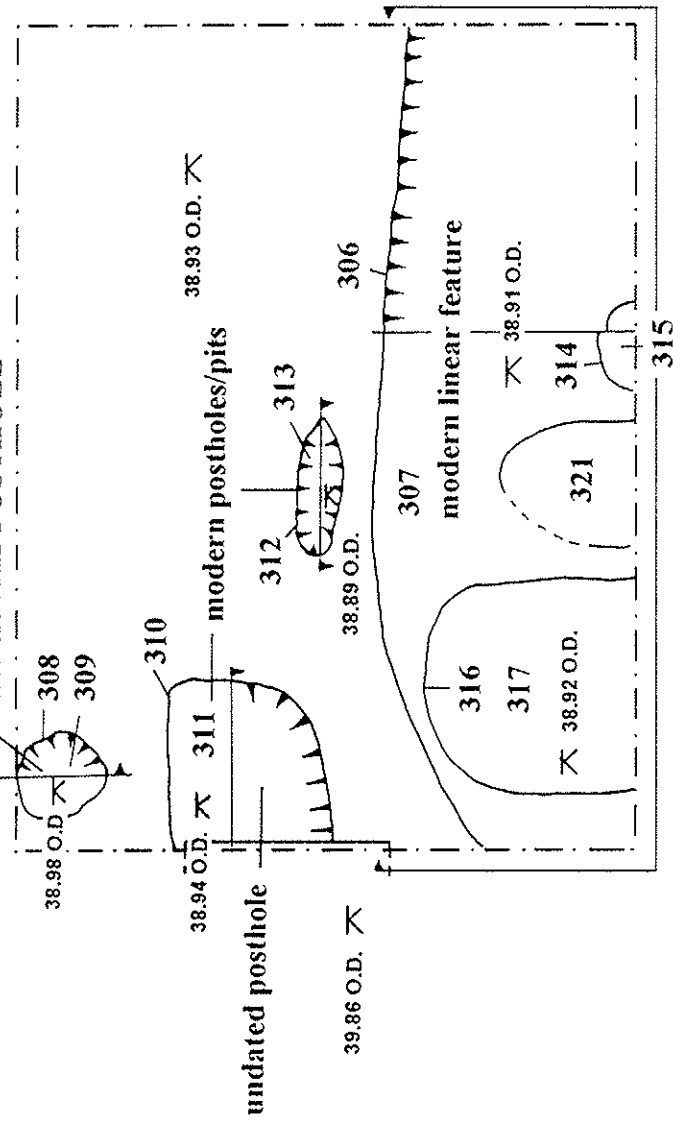


figure 4

Trench 3

MEDIEVAL POSTHOLE

WSAGS 93



boundary wall

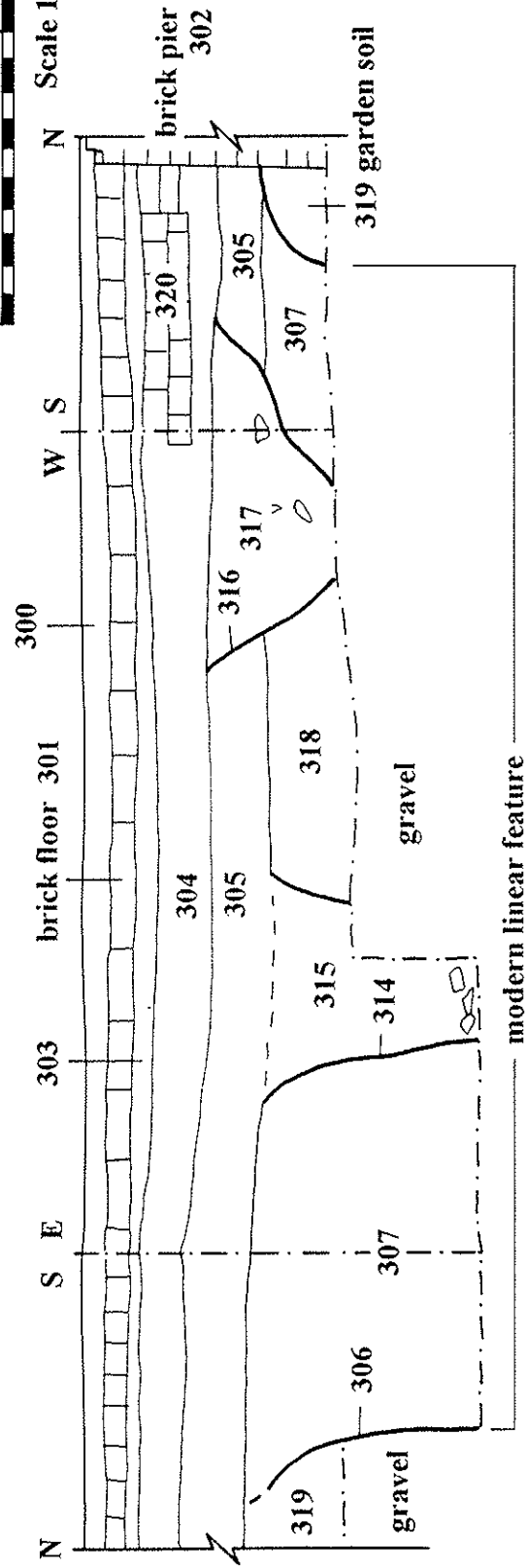
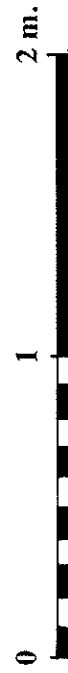


figure 5

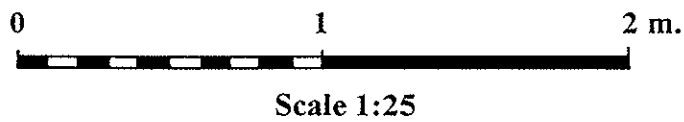
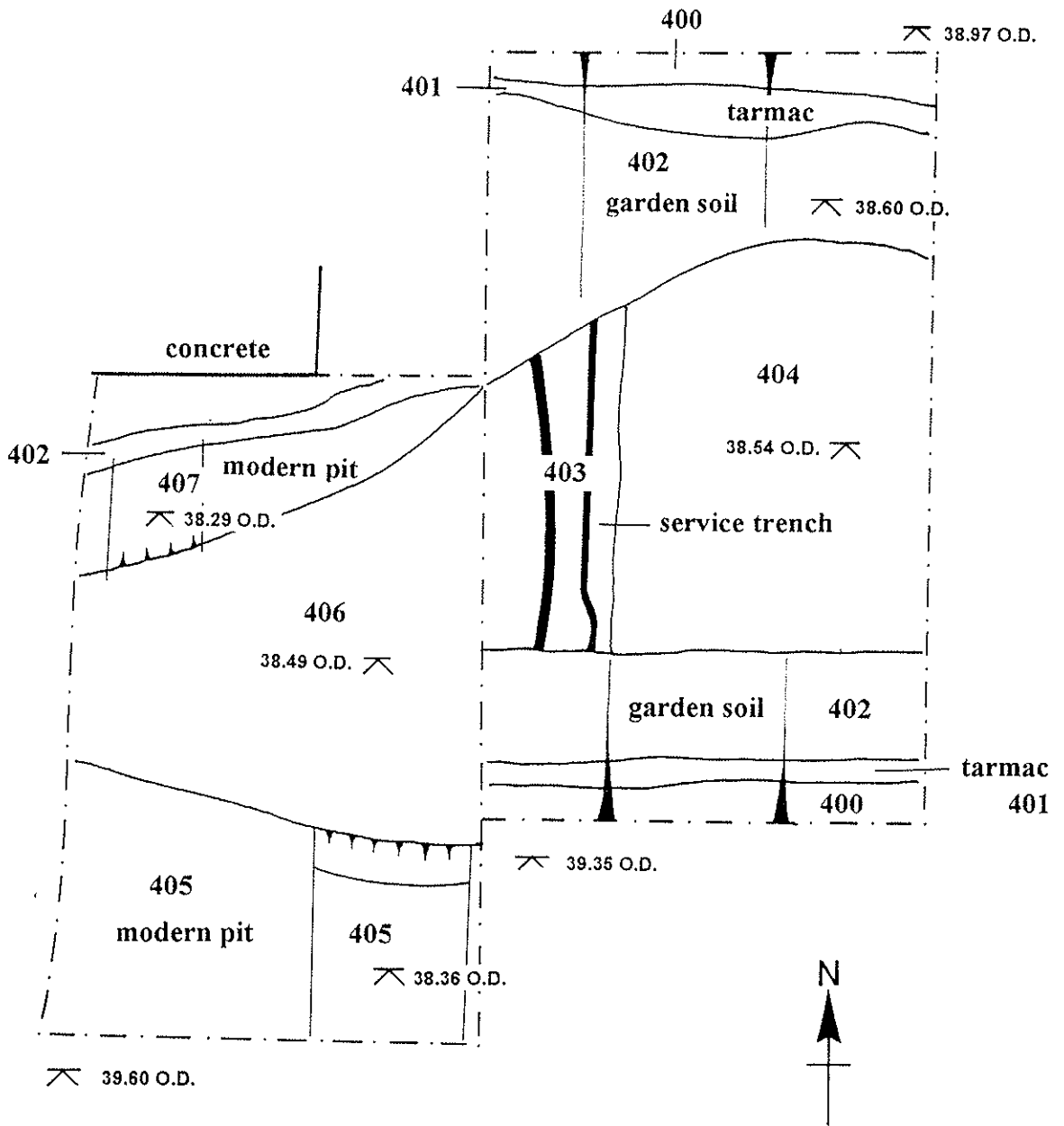


figure 6