

Chase Midland PLC

MANSELL STREET, STRATFORD-UPON-AVON, WARWICKSHIRE

NGR SP 1980 5500

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Planning Ref. S00/0731/FUL

Oxford Archaeological Unit

July 2001

Chase Midland PLC

MANSELL STREET, STRATFORD-UPON-AVON, WARWICKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Prepared by: Robin Bashford

Date: July 2001

Checked by: *H. Williams*

Date: *30 07 01*

Approved by: *R. Williams* ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Date: *2/8/01*

Oxford Archaeological Unit

July 2001

Summary

In May, June and July 2001, Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook a watching brief at Mansell Street, Stratford-Upon-Avon, Warwickshire (SP 1980 5500). Although a degree of 20th-century truncation was evident from the deposit of demolition/construction debris which covered the site, four post-medieval pits were recorded, together with a stone lined well and associated culvert both of which were potentially 18th century in origin. Evidence of cellars associated with buildings that previously fronted Mansell Street was also observed.

1. Introduction

Permission has been granted by Stratford on Avon District Council for the demolition of existing buildings and a proposed development to include 3 two storey town houses adjacent to Mansell Street, and 11 apartments and associated car parking at Fox's Printers, Mansell Street, Stratford-upon-Avon (S00/01731/FUL). Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological deposits, provision has been made for an archaeological watching brief in accordance with the DOE Planning Policy Guidance (PPG16).

The site is located in the centre of Stratford-Upon-Avon (Fig. 1), to the north-east of the junction between the A4134 and the A422 (NGR SP 198 550). The underlying geology is second terrace river gravels.

2 Background

The development site lies within the planned medieval town of Stratford, laid out by John, Bishop of Worcester in 1196. The area had been identified by Warwickshire County Council Museum Field Services as being of high archaeological potential. Therefore, archaeological deposits associated with the medieval town or later town of Stratford were anticipated. The development will impact on the frontage of Mansell Street and land to the rear. Impact will also be made on the land to the rear of Greenhill Street (Fig. 2). As a result pits, ditches and structural remains were likely to be encountered.

3 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to identify any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works, and to record these to established OAU standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure their preservation by record.

4 Methodology

The watching brief was undertaken by means of separate inspection visits.

Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits 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 description utilised standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

5 Results (*Figs 2-7*)

The watching brief monitored the excavation of strip foundations for the proposed buildings and trenches for associated services. The results have been divided into two sections comprising the foundations for the apartment blocks to the south of the site (Area 1), and the foundations for the new town houses fronting Mansell Street and associated services and foundations for the garages (Area 2).

Area 1 (Site Plan, Fig.3; Sections 1-10, Figs 4-7)

General Stratigraphy (Sections 1, 5, 6 and 9, Figs 4-6)

The stratigraphic sequence comprised a mid red-brown clay natural (1) overlain by a deposit of river gravel (2) which varied in thickness from 1 m to the east of Area 1 (eg. Section 1) to 0.7 m to the west (eg. Section 5). The gravel was overlain by a sterile mid orange-brown sandy silt deposit (3) which also varied in thickness from 0.35 m to the east of Area 1 (eg. Section 1) to 0.9 m to the west (eg. section 5), although it was considerably thicker to the north-west (*c* 1.6 m). This was in turn overlain by a sterile mid reddish-brown silty clay (4) which was on average 0.4 m thick. The whole of Area 1 was overlain by a *c* 0.6 m thick deposit of construction / demolition debris (5) originating from the construction and subsequent demolition of Fox's Printers.

The strip foundations in the southern half of Area 1 were excavated to an average depth of 2.4 m below ground level (bgl) in order to provide a stable base on the clay natural (1) underlying the river gravel (2). This necessitated the installation of shoring throughout the southern half of Area 1 which created some difficulty in characterising some of the deposits observed.

The foundations to the north of Area 1 were shallower (avg. 1.2 m bgl) as the looser gravel deposit (2) was not present at this depth to the north of pit 16.

The characterisation of deposits 3 and 4 was problematic given the restrictive nature of the foundation trenches. However the sterile nature of both deposits, and the high concentration of silt, may suggest that they are alluvial in origin (see Discussion below).

Deposit 5 appeared to seal a number of archaeological features which cut through the underlying deposits:

Pit 6 (Site Plan - Fig. 3; Section 2 - Fig. 4)

Feature (6) was observed to the north-east of Pit 8. The feature was circular in plan and was 1.1 m in diameter and 0.9 m in depth. It contained a single fill composed of mid-brown clay silt (7) and was almost certainly a pit.

Perhaps most significantly, it appeared to be sealed by deposits 3 and 4 which suggests it was considerably earlier than Pit 8. The ?16th century pottery recovered from deposit 7 appeared to add weight to this suggestion.

Pit 8 (Site Plan - Fig. 3; Sections 3, 4 and 7 - Figs 4 and 6)

A large feature(s) was observed cutting through deposits 2, 3 and 4 to the south of Area 1. The feature measured 9.5 m x 6.5 m and was approximately 1.8 m in depth. Whilst it is feasible that the deposits observed represent the fills of a series of pits, the similarity of the deposits suggested a single large pit. The primary fill of the pit was a mid-dark grey clay-silt (9) approximately 0.25 m thick. The secondary fill was a 0.5 m thick deposit composed of mid red-brown clay-silt (10) which was possibly a re-deposition of deposit 4. The tertiary fill was similar in composition to deposit 9 but varied in depth from 0.1 m to 0.75 m (11). The upper fill was a mid orange-brown clay-silt (12) which was on average 0.75 m thick.

The feature was observed in section in three of the strip foundation trenches but was partially or completely obscured by shoring to the west of Section 3. However, before the installation of the shoring, the baulk to the east of Section 4 collapsed revealing the general stratigraphic sequence behind (described above) and establishing the eastern limit of the feature (see Plan 1).

Fill 11 of feature 8 produced pottery of a mid 17th-century date.

The Well and Culvert

A stone lined well, 5 m in depth and c 2m in diameter, was observed to the south-east of Pit 16. A stone capped, brick culvert to the south-east of the well (and presumably associated with it), was also sealed by deposit 5.

Whilst no secure date could be attributed to the well or the culvert, it is possible that the culvert had been truncated by Pit 14 (see Fig. 3) which would suggest that it is 19th century or earlier.

The foundation trenches to the north of 'Pit' 16 did not impact below deposit 3, and with the exception of a west-east aligned brick wall footing - probably associated with the demolished printing works - no other archaeological features were observed.

Pits 14 and 16 (Sections 8 and 10 - Figs 6 and 7)

Although pit 14 was observed in section in the westernmost strip foundation trench (Section 10), the exact dimensions are uncertain as the deposits were obscured by shoring. The exposed section contained a deposit of mid-dark grey silty clay (13) which produced pottery of a 19th century date. Deposit 13 was also observed in

Section 8 although it was considerably thinner (0.2 m) and may have represented the eastern limit of the feature.

Pit 16 was almost completely obscured by shoring and the precise dimensions and location are uncertain. However, the spoil contained 20th century demolition rubble which - whilst not securely stratified - would suggest that this feature may have originated during the construction of Fox's Printers, perhaps as a 'sump' or soakaway associated with the well to the south-east.

Area 2

General Stratigraphy

The stratigraphic sequence in Area 2 was similar to that observed to the south, although no impact was made below deposit 3. Deposit 3 was overlain by deposit 4 which was approximately 0.6 m thick. The demolition rubble (5) was not as concentrated in this part of the site and appeared to be no more than 0.1 m thick and occurred sporadically throughout Area 2.

Although the majority of the strip foundation trenches in Area 2 were excavated to a depth of approximately 1 m, some deeper excavation was required due to the presence of archaeological features:

The Cellars (Fig. 2)

A 1.50 m deep x c 5 m wide deposit of 20th century brick rubble and construction debris was observed within a clearly defined cut running west-east along the frontage of Mansell Street.

This deposit almost certainly represents the cellars of the houses which previously fronted Mansell Street. A section of north-south aligned brick wall footing was visible in one of the strip foundation trenches (Fig. 3) and may represent the wall of one of the cellars.

Pit 17 (Section 11 - Fig. 7)

A large pit was observed to the south of the infilled cellars. The pit was at least 3.3 m in diameter and 1.1 m deep. It was filled by a mid brownish-grey silty clay (18) which produced no datable finds.

6 Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 8 sherds with a total weight of 507 g. All the pottery was of a post-medieval date, and of types well-known in the region.

Fabrics

Cistercian Ware: *c* 1470-1650 (Ford and Baker, 1999). Hard, smooth fabric, usually brick-red, but can be paler or browner. Few visible inclusions, except for occasional quartz grains. Range of vessel forms somewhat specialised, but usually very thin-walled (*c* 2mm). Rare white slip decoration.

Staffordshire Blackware: Mid 17th - mid 18th century (Ford and Baker, 1999). A soft to hard-fired thrown earthenware, which varies from orange and red to dark red or purple. It is sometimes fired to a near stone hardness. The ware is usually glazed inside and out, the fine, good quality glaze varying in colour from a medium brown to a dark treacle brown or black. This lead glaze probably draws iron from the body, which gives the dark colour. Some vessels present a dark metallic glazed finish, which is the result of reduction during firing. Blackware is recognised in Staffordshire from deposits of the mid 17th century onwards. There is a decline in the production and use of blackwares in the mid 18th century.

English Yellow-glazed earthenwares: *c* 1785 - 1835. Hard, white, slightly sandy fabric with an applied thick yellow/lemon glaze. General range of utilitarian forms.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown on Table 1. Each date should be regarded a *terminus post quem*.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

<i>Context</i>	<i>Cistercian</i>		<i>Blackware</i>		<i>Yellow</i>		<i>Date</i>
	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	
7	1	82					16thC?
11			3	92			M17thC
13					4	333	19thC
Total	1	82	2	87	4	333	

Clay Pipe (initial examination by RJ Williams)

Among the unstratified finds was a fragment of clay pipe stem stamped WILLIAM LEGG. The Legg family were pipe makers based in Broseley, Shropshire, approximately 48 miles to the north-west of Stratford, and seem to have been in production from *c* 1621 to 1841 (Oswald, 1975). Although there is a William Legg listed in the parish registers, he died in 1714 and the style of the stem mark recovered from Mansell Street is more typical of the mid-late 17th century (possibly Broseley type no. 8a; *c* 1770-1800). It seems likely therefore that another William Legg was producing pipes after 1714 but is not listed in the parish registers.

7 Environmental results

Although full consideration was given to various sampling strategies, due to the absence of any suitable deposits and the tight constraints of the excavation, no environmental soil samples were taken.

8 Discussion

The features and deposits observed during the watching brief appear to have been exclusively post-medieval, ranging in date from the 16th century to modern demolition debris.

The topography of the site is potentially significant given the varying thickness of the gravel (2) and the overlying deposit (3). The reduced thickness of the gravel to the west and absence of gravel to the north suggests that the site originally dropped away to the north and west. This is significant when considering the characterisation of deposit 3 and 4 and their relationship with the features observed during the watching brief.

Feature 6 produced pottery with a date range of 1470-1650 and is likely to have been 16th century in origin. Significantly it appeared to be sealed by deposits 3 and 4.

Feature 8 produced mid 17th-century pottery and was cut through deposits 3 and 4.

If deposits 3 and 4 are alluvial in nature, the relationships between the deposits and features 6 and 8 would suggest that there was a period of alluviation in the early 17th century. This seems unlikely and an alternative suggestion is presented below:

The varying thickness of deposits 3 and 4, together with that of the underlying gravel (2), may suggest that the site has been made up with alluvial soils in the early post-medieval period. As the level of the upper limits of deposits 3 and 4 are fairly uniform across the site, whilst the base of deposit 3 varies according to the thickness of the underlying gravel, this would seem to suggest that the site has been subject to landfill during this period. Given the lack of evidence for medieval activity from the watching brief, this may suggest that the deposition of 3 and 4 coincides with the western expansion of the town in the early 17th century. This would also suggest that the medieval land surface has been incorporated into deposit 3 and is indistinguishable from the same.

This throws doubt on the reliability of the dating evidence from feature 6 and it is possible that the 16th century pottery recovered may have been intrusive, perhaps originating from the overlying deposits which were similar in composition.

Feature 14 appears to be somewhat later as it produced pottery likely to be 19th century in date. As it seems to have cut the stone capped brick culvert, this would suggest that the culvert originated in the late 18th century or earlier. As the well and culvert appear to be contemporary, a similar date could be applied to the well.

Features 6, 8 and 14 (together with undated feature 17 in Area 2) are likely to represent pits associated with the buildings which front(ed) Mansell Street and Greenhill Street in the post medieval period.

The well and culvert may also have been associated with these buildings. Alternatively they may have been associated with a structure which previously occupied the site of the present car park. The fact that both appeared to be cut through deposits 2, 3 and 4 but sealed by deposit 5 suggesting that they originated before the construction of Fox's Printers.

Feature 16 appears to have been 20th century in origin and may have been associated with the construction of Fox's Printers.

The cellars observed to the north of Area 2 are almost certainly those of the buildings demolished prior to the construction of Fox's printers (or the adjacent car park) and have been backfilled with construction debris from the same.

No evidence for the medieval occupation of the town was observed. Although medieval features may have been truncated, the absence of medieval pottery may suggest that the site was open ground during the medieval period.

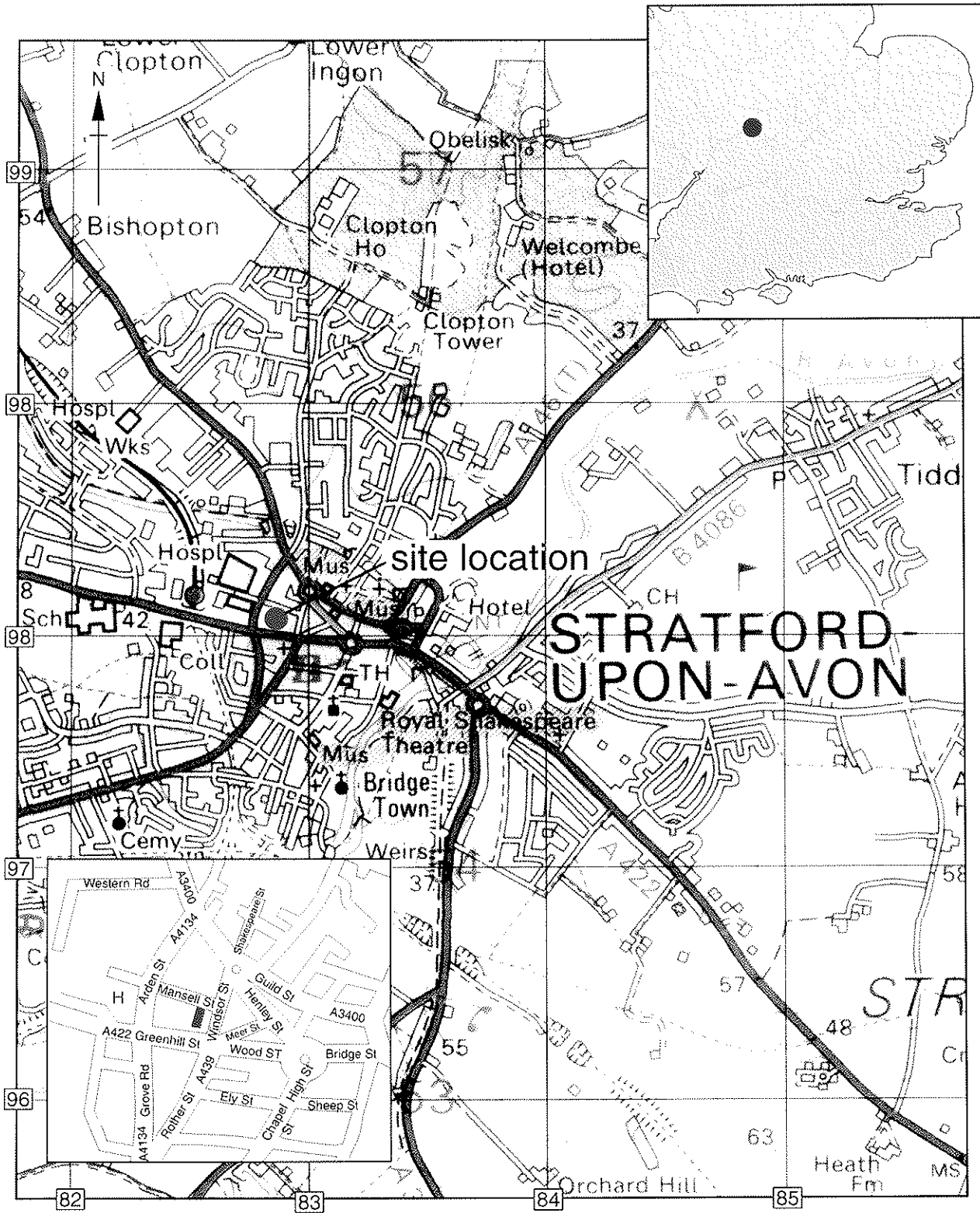
References.

Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual, (First edition, August 1992).

Oswald, Adrian Clay Pipes for the Archaeologist BAR 14 1975

Ford, D Information Sheets for the English Heritage
& Barker, D Post-Medieval Pottery Training Days March 1999

STMANSWB*Mansell Street, Stratford-Upon-Avon*RMS*20.07.01



Reproduced from the Landranger 1:25,000 scale by permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office
© Crown Copyright, 1984 All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 100005569

Figure 1: Site location.

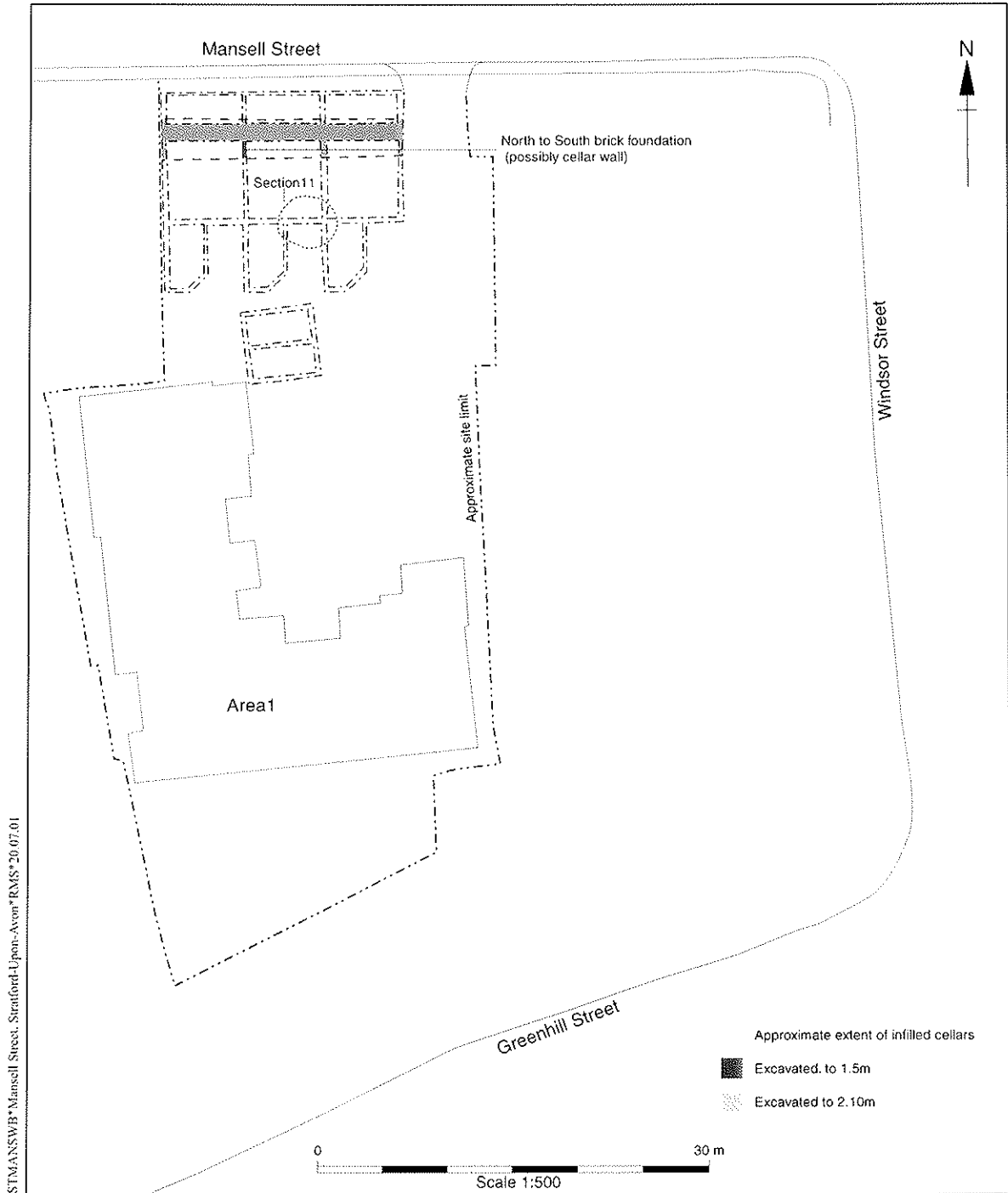


Figure 2 : Area 2 Site plan and location of Area 1.

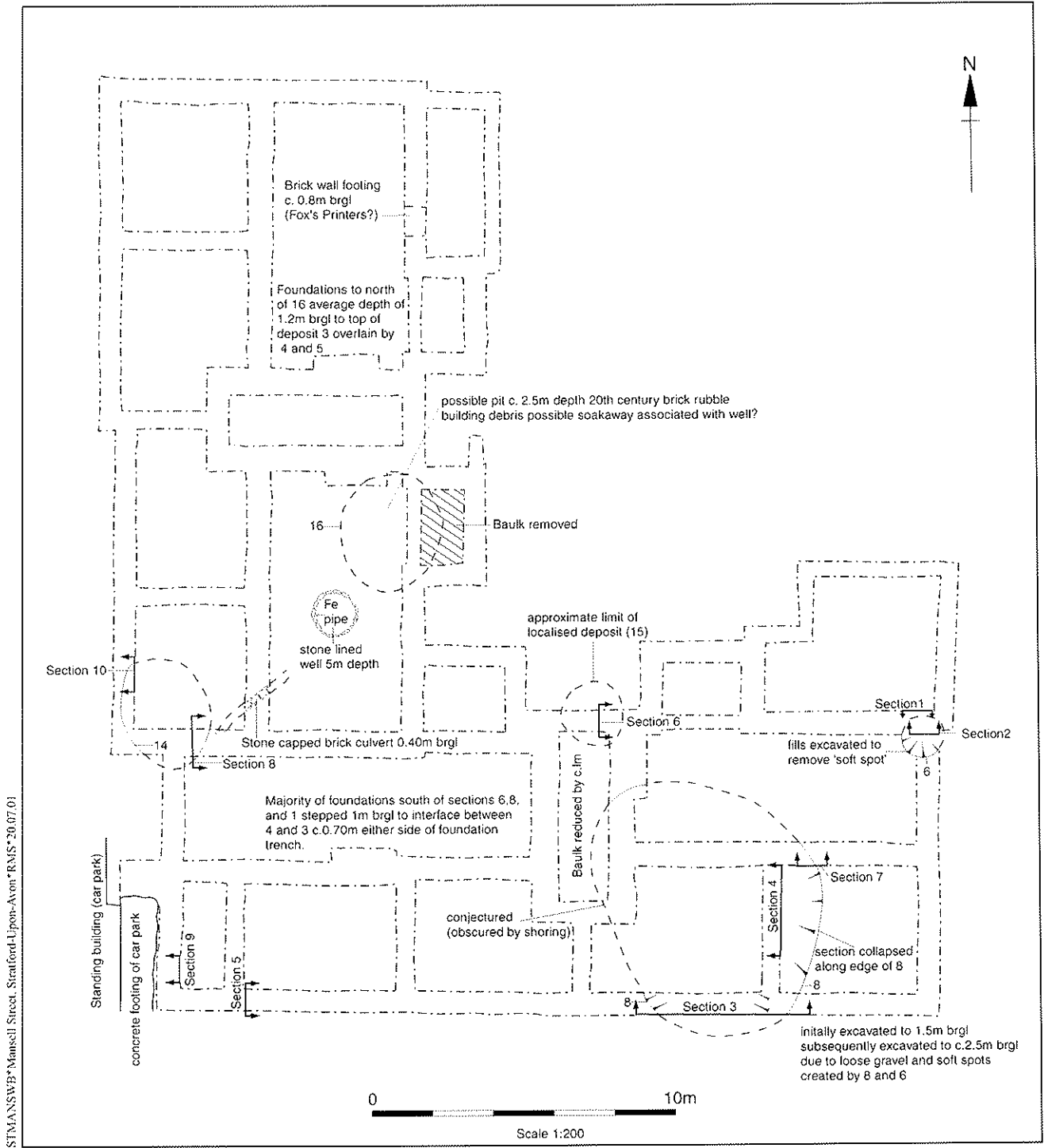
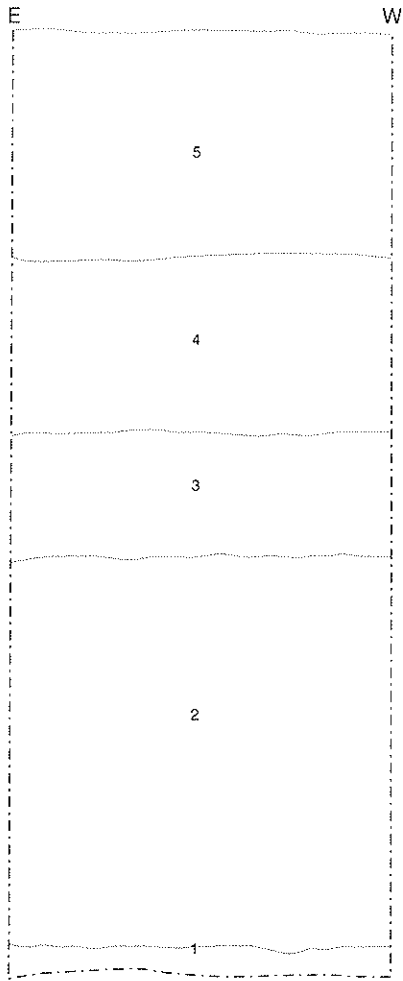
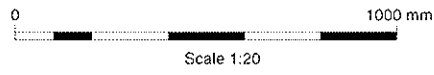
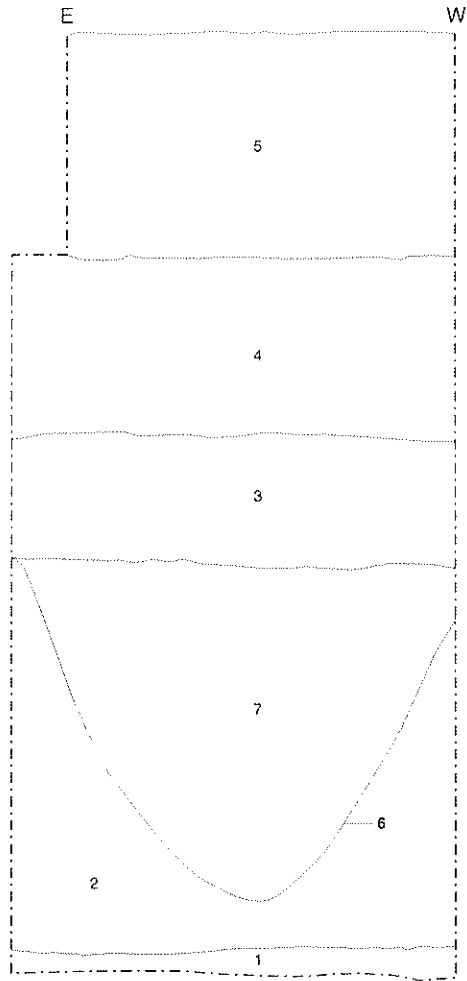


Figure 3 : Area 1-Site plan.

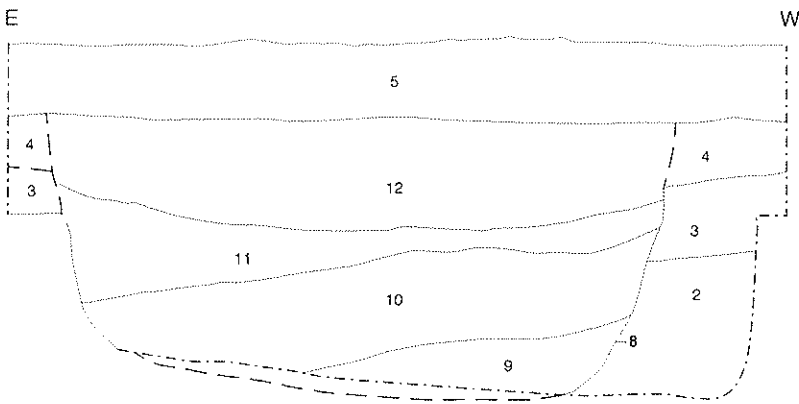
Section 1



Section 2



Section 3



Section 4

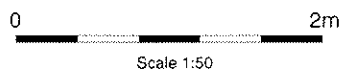
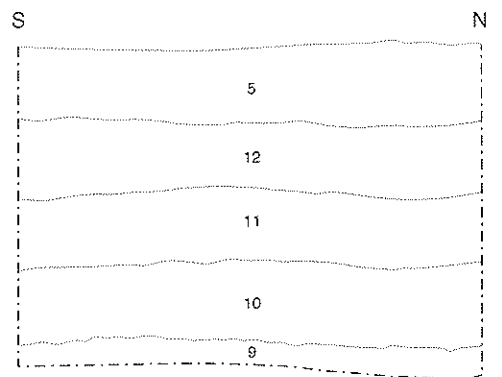


Figure 4 : Sections 1- 4.

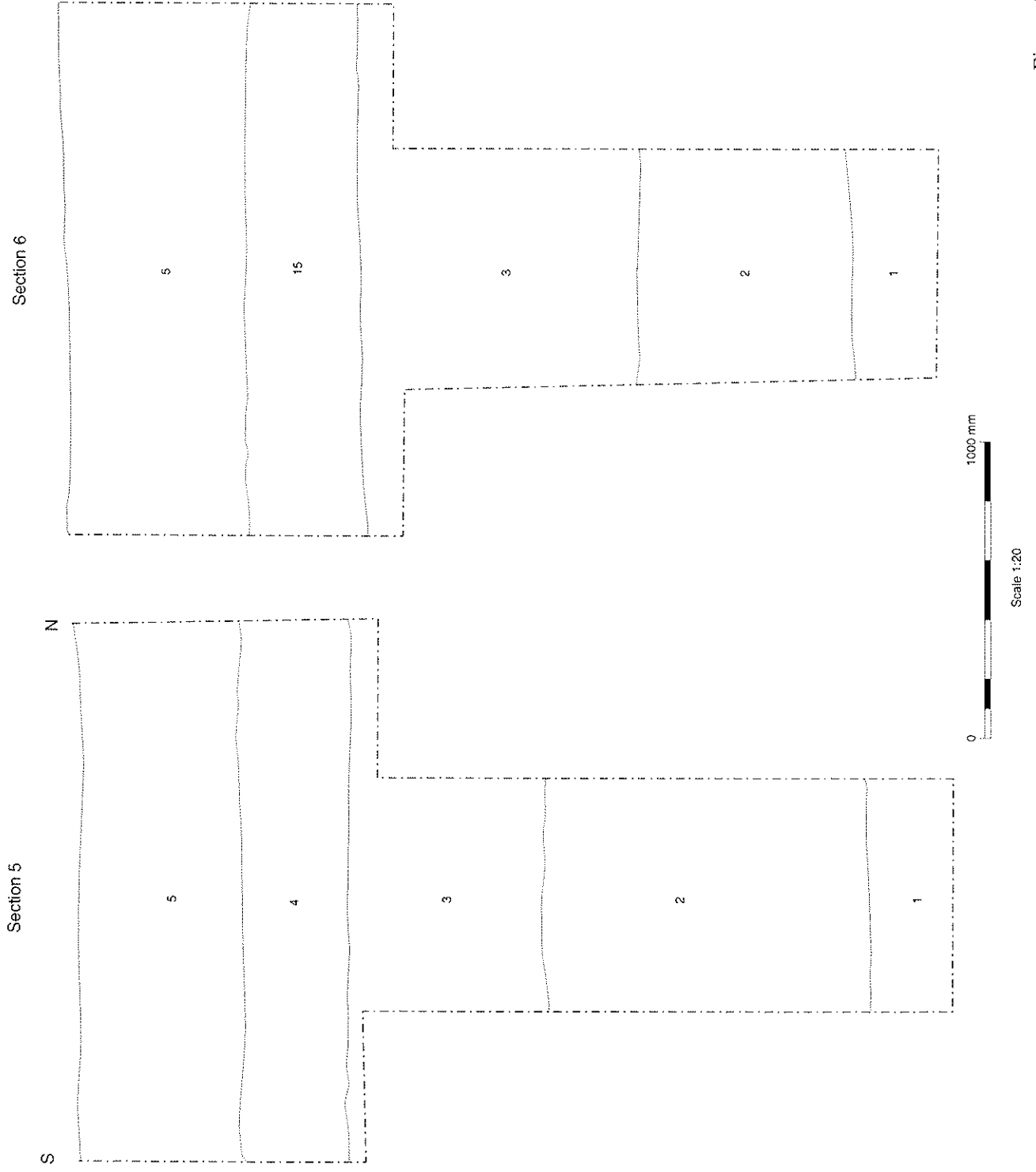
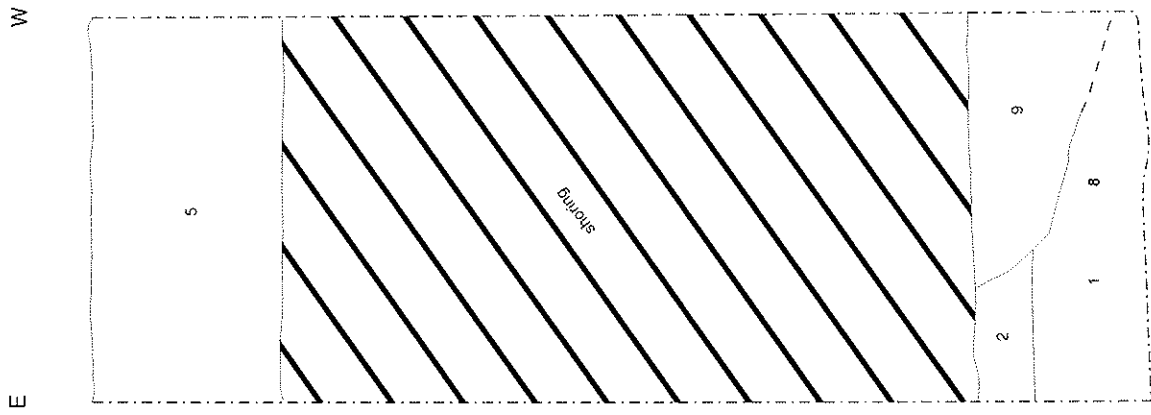
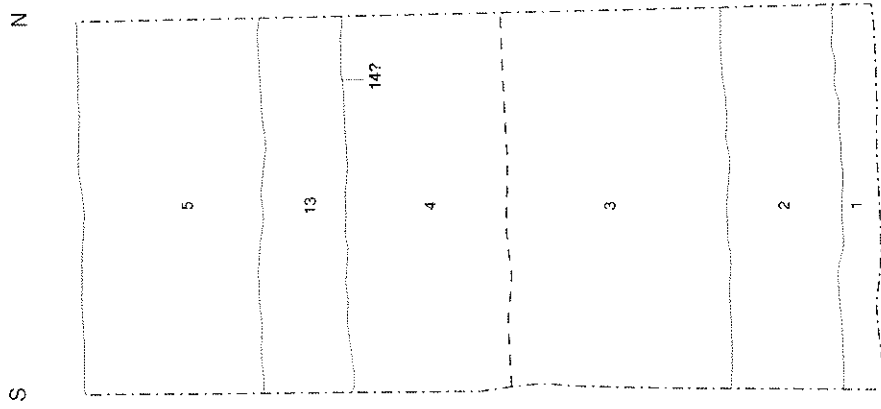


Figure 5 : Sections 5 and 6.

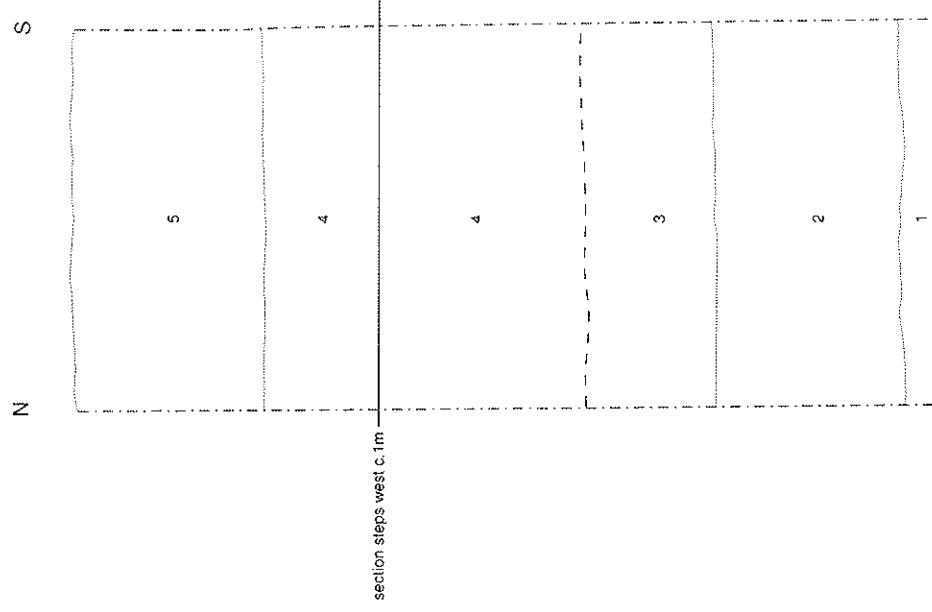
Section 7



Section 8



Section 9



Scale 1:20

Figure 6 : Sections 7 - 9.

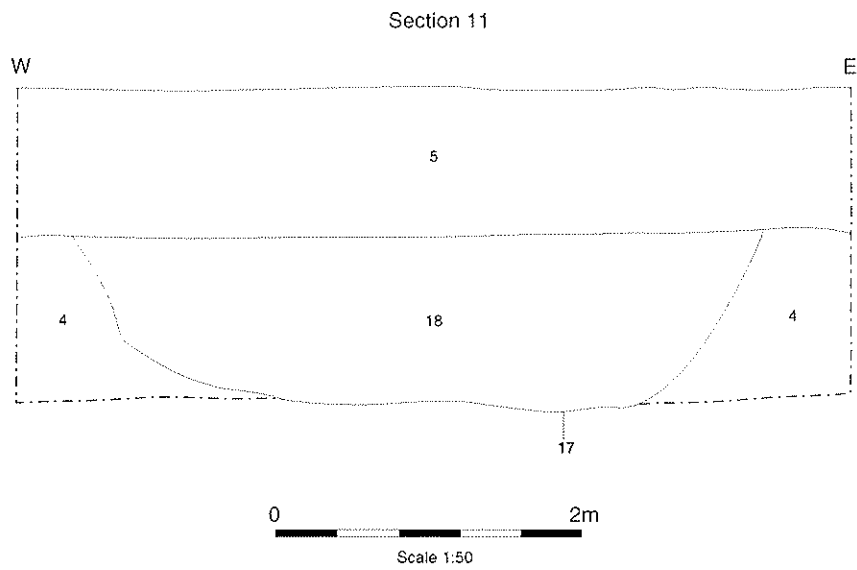
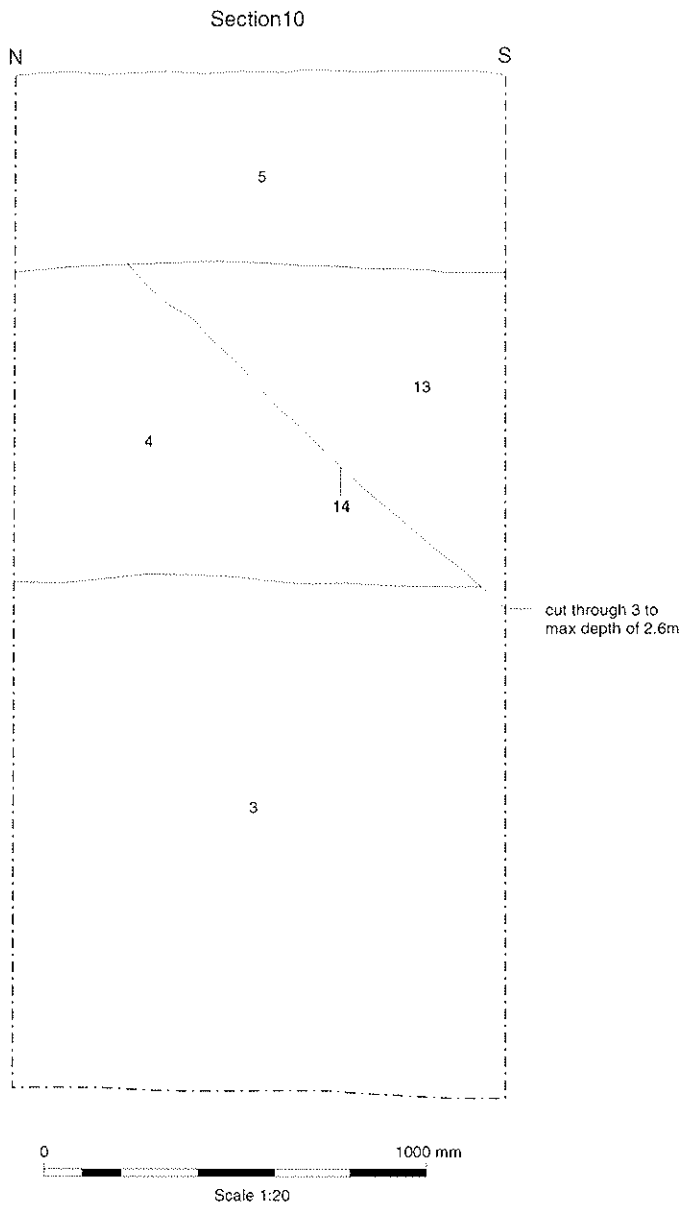


Figure 7 : Section10 and 11.



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES

Tel: 01865 263800 Fax: 01865 793496

email: postmaster@oau-oxford.com www.oau-oxford.com



Director and Chief Executive: David Jennings B.A., M.I.F.A. Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited.
Private Limited Company Number: 1618597 Registered Charity Number: 285627.
Registered Office: Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES