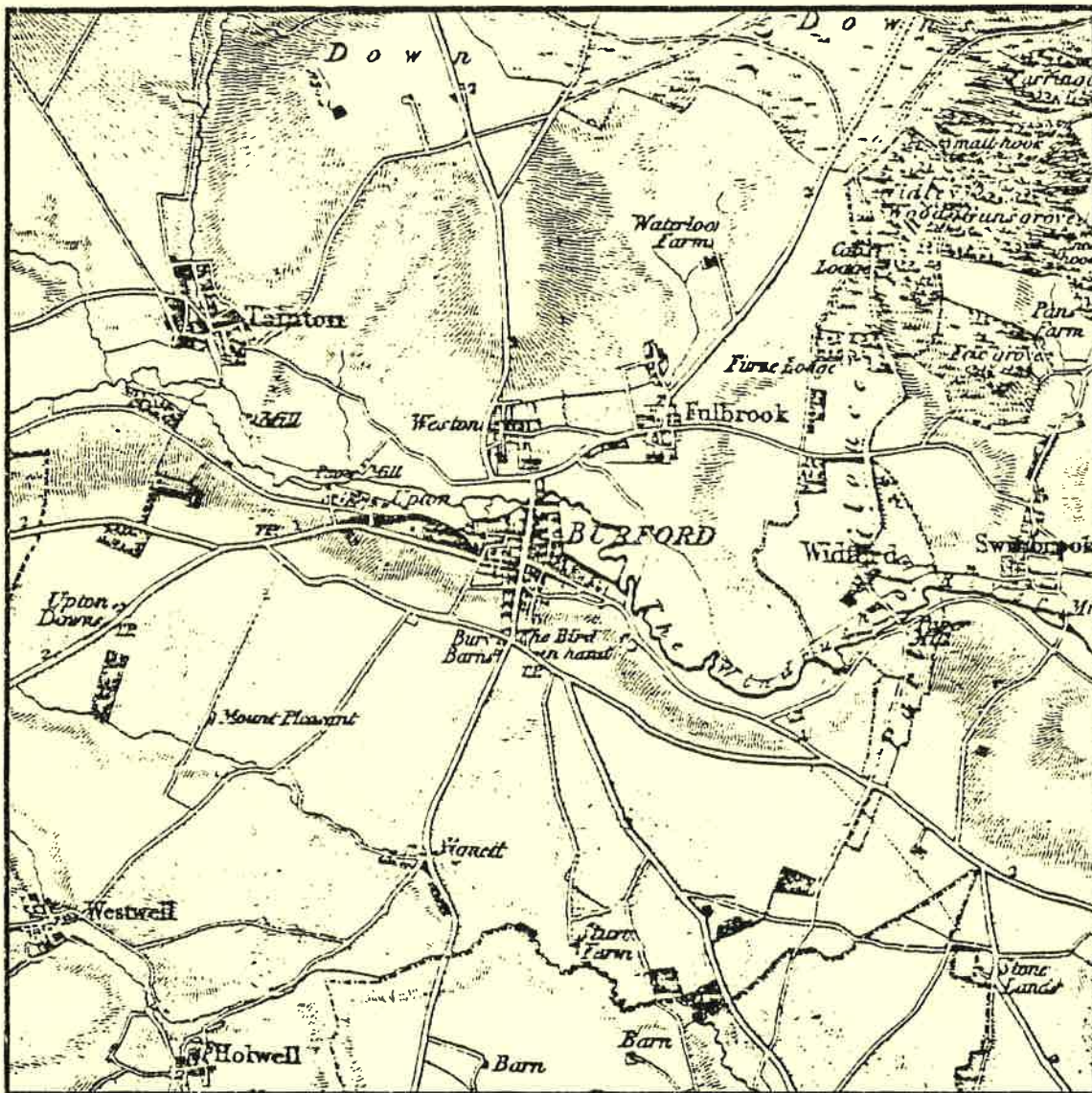


LAND ADJACENT TO WYCHWOLD FULBROOK

Archaeological evaluation
FULWY 93



October 1993

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

LAND ADJACENT TO WYCHWOLD, FULBROOK, OXON ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



INTRODUCTION

The area proposed for a housing redevelopment (fig.1) lies to the north of Fulbrook (NGR 2595 1325) and is situated on the side of a small valley. As the development is to comprise an earth sheltered dwelling with garages and services set well below ground level, an evaluation was deemed necessary. This was duly carried out in October 1993.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies 50 m due east of a series of earthworks (PRN 5019) that have been interpreted as house platforms and holloways denoting an area of historical settlement. A recent aerial photograph taken by the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments (SP 2513/23) also suggests that significant archaeological deposits survive in the area. Due west of the site are a series of earthworks (PRN 5019) which have been identified as the medieval settlement of Fulbrook. The village church dates to the Norman period.

TOPOGRAPHY

The site comprises a small field to the immediate south of Wychwold cottage which slopes quite steeply N-S, to meet the current road. There had been an orchard in recent times and local knowledge testified to the presence of small livestock buildings.

GEOLOGY

The geology was predominately limestone although a deposit of clay was located in one of the trenches.

STRATEGY

Two trenches, each 10 x 1.55 m, were opened (fig.2) and the results are discussed below.

RESULTS (fig.3)

Beneath the topsoil (100) in trench 1 lay a deposit of greyish-brown clay loam (101) which was notable for the large quantity of pot sherds and bone fragments recovered during hand excavation. This deposit overlay a shallow layer of compact reddish-brown clay silt (102), which survived only in patches over the natural cornbrash limestone. A small feature (104) seen to be cut into the natural and circular in shape was excavated to a depth of 0.15 m. The fill of this feature was however indistinguishable from layer 101, thus it is unclear as to what level the feature was cut from.

Immediately below the topsoil (200) in trench 2 lay a number of large limestone blocks (201) but these were only visible in the west section of the trench. The limestones appeared to lie flat upon a stoney grey clay loam (205) which was visible throughout the length of the trench. This deposit overlay a thick (up to 0.50 m) layer of grey brown sticky clay (206) which in turn sealed the cornbrash (207). Only one cut feature was observed in the trench. Pit 204 seemed to cut the stoney layer 205 and its upper fill appeared to be sealed by the modern topsoil. The base fill of the pit (208) was a dark grey clay with frequent charcoal inclusions, sealed by an apparently deliberate placing of limestone blocks (203) which lay flat. The pit's upper fill (202) was a mixed deposit of loose grey clay, limestone pieces, sand, mortar, and some pot and bone. The pit had a flat base and its untruncated depth was 0.75 m.

THE POTTERY by Sheila Raven and Paul Booth.

A total of 192 sherds was recovered from all the excavated contexts. The majority of these (185 sherds) date to the early Medieval Period, probably falling within the date range of late 10th- late 12th century. Most of the sherds were recovered from context 101, a layer beneath topsoil in trench 1, and a few were from the fill of a possible post hole 104. The remaining eight sherds are of Roman date and are discussed by Paul Booth below.

The earliest types found in the Early Medieval sherds are the Shelly-Limestone late Saxon wares (six in total). Four of these are probably Oxford shelly fabric C (date range 9th-10th century), the other two are of the St Neots-type fabric R (date range 10th and 11th century). The vast majority of the pottery from 101 and the sherds from the post hole fill 105 are of the oolitic limestone tempered fabrics prevalent in the early Medieval period. Most of the sherds are either Oxford Early Medieval Ware AC, predominant in the region in the 11th and 12th centuries, or fabric BR, of similar date. Two other oolitic limestone fabrics are also represented: one is an 11th century fabric BP, the other may be Abingdon fabric AJ which dates from the 12th to 15th centuries. Given the preponderance of earlier material, the former date is suggested.

Of the non-limestone tempered sherds, two are a flint gritted fabric probably BF or Abingdon type (10th-12th century) and one is of a fine quartz tempered fabric of 11th century date.

Most of the Early Medieval sherds are hand-made and/or slow wheel finished. Thirteen rims and fifteen base sherds were found, mostly from wide-mouthed cooking or storage pots. Two of this group are the distinctive straight-sided cooking pots commonly found in the local AC fabric from the mid 11th to late 12th century. A small number of rims probably come from bowls or dishes.

Seven Romano-British sherds were recovered from two contexts, four from the Medieval deposit 101 which are therefore residual, and three from context 202, the upper fill of pit 204 in trench 2. All of the material is probably of 1st-2nd century in date. It includes a grog tempered sherd in the Late Iron Age-early Roman tradition, and four sherds in fairly fine sandy reduced coarse wares. The sources of these are not certain, but may be of local origin. One of the sherds incorporates flint in the fabric, an unusual characteristic in this period and area.

The other two sherds, both from pit fill 202, are from tankards and are both in oxidised fabrics. A distinctive base sherd of a 1st-2nd century tankard is in a Severn Valley fabric. The other sherd, a rim in a sandy fabric, may also be a Severn Valley product but would also come from the North Wiltshire industries which also supplied the area.

DISCUSSION

The finds from trench 1, specifically those from layer 101 and post hole fill 105, date these deposits to the Early Medieval period. However, the post hole excepted, no other features were found in the trench. It must therefore be assumed that either layer 101 represents a ground level in the Medieval period, possibly an area of waste ground where local refuse was dumped, or as was postulated at the time of the evaluation, 101 represents an attempt to terrace the hillside, possibly to counteract the effects of soil erosion. In this case the soil would be redeposited and brought in from elsewhere in the locality. Observation of further groundworks in order to create an entrance for the new development showed that layer 101 was still present near the current road. A comparable deposit to 101 was not observed in trench 2, further upslope, nor was any Medieval pottery recovered from any of the deposits within trench 2. Post hole 104 may represent an attempt torevet the slope of the hill; it may be that other postholes lie outside the confines of the trench.

Of the features in trench 2, it seems that pit 204 may be of Roman date given the presence of clearly stratified pot sherds and the absence of later material. It is possible that other features lie outside the extent of the trench. As 204 was felt to have cut the stoney deposit 205 just below the topsoil 200, this means that there is a possibility that the limestone blocks (201) may date to the Roman period.

The depositional sequences in both trenches are different, and it seems likely that if soil erosion is a factor here, then the terracing theory is the most likely explanation for the preponderance of Medieval pottery found downslope, where erosion was greater. Further uphill the slope is rather less steep and would perhaps not experience such a high level of erosion.

CONCLUSION

The Medieval deposits are as discussed above and are exclusively in trench 1. The presence of a probable Roman feature in an otherwise archaeologically sterile trench should be noted. These results lead to the conclusion that further archaeological features may be present on the site.

ARCHIVE

The site archive, comprising the trench records and artefacts has been deposited with the Oxfordshire Museum Service.

Jonathan Hiller
Oxford Archaeological Unit
November 1993

APPENDIX:TABLE OF CONTEXTS IN TRENCH ORDER

CONTEXT	TYPE	DEPTH	WIDTH	LENGTH	COMMENTS
100	Layer	0.30m	-	-	Topsoil (Modern)
101	Layer	0.40m	-	-	?Redeposited soil (Medieval)
102	Layer	0.07m	-	-	Former soil (Undated)
103	Layer	-	-	-	Natural cornbrash
104	Cut	0.15m	0.22m	-	?Posthole
105	Fill	0.15m	0.22m	-	Fill of 104 (Medieval)
200	Layer	0.29m	-	-	Topsoil (Modern)
201	Layer	0.19m	1.38m	-	Stone pathway? (Undated)
202	Fill	0.65m	0.89m	-	Upper fill of 204 (Roman)
203	Fill	0.11m	0.84m	-	Limestones in 204
204	Cut	0.78m	0.74m	1.10m	Pit of Roman date
205	Layer	0.08m	-	-	Stoney layer derived from worm sorting of topsoil 200
206	Layer	0.40m+	-	-	Natural clay
207	Layer	-	-	-	Natural cornbrash limestone
208	Fill	0.04m	1.10m	-	Base fill of pit 204

APPENDIX:TABLE OF POT SHERD NUMBERS BY PERIOD

Context	Type	Date	Sherd count	Comments
101	Layer	Roman	4	Residual
101	Layer	Early Medieval	182	Stratified
105	Fill	Early Medieval	3	Stratified
202	Fill	Roman	3	Stratified

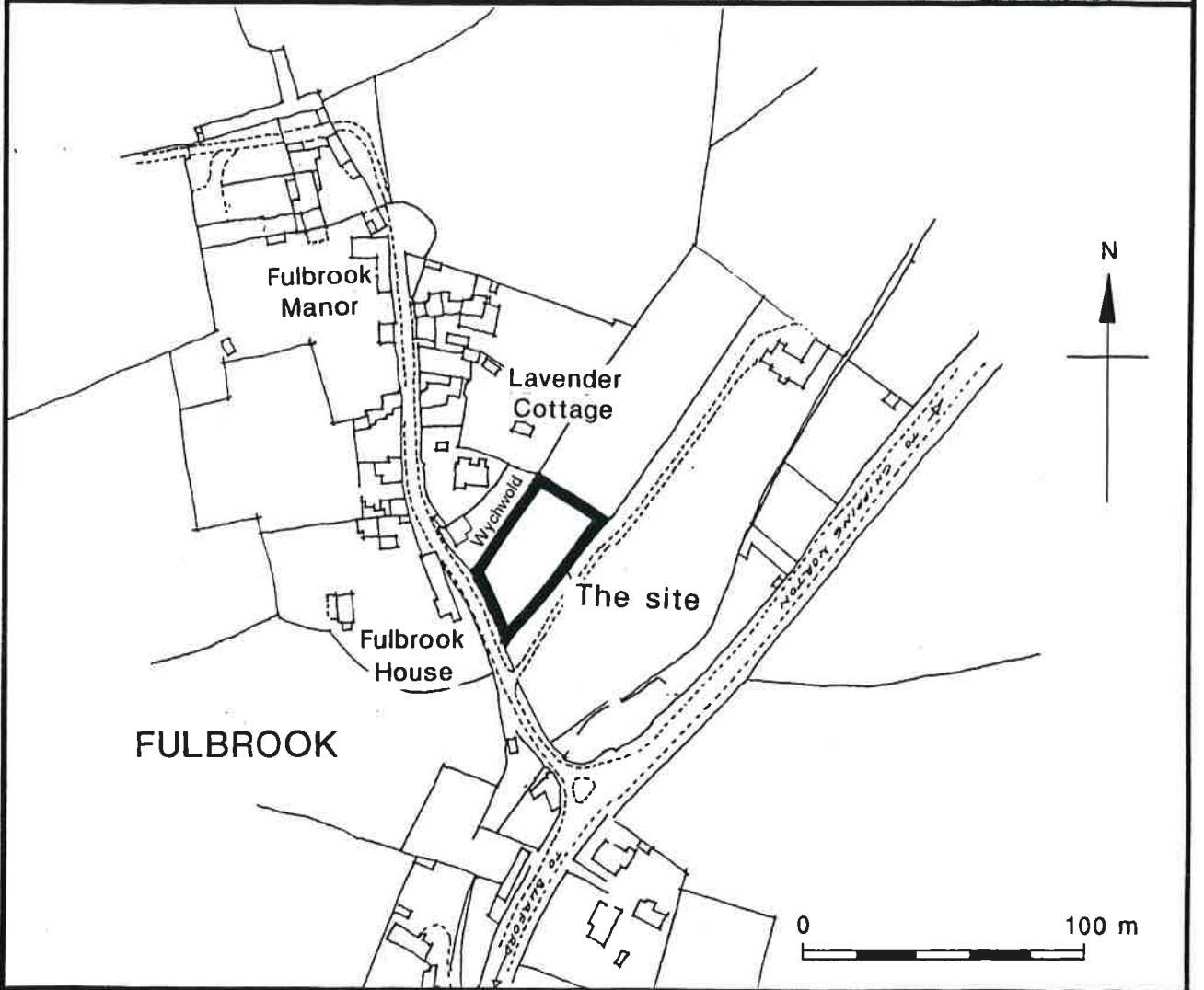
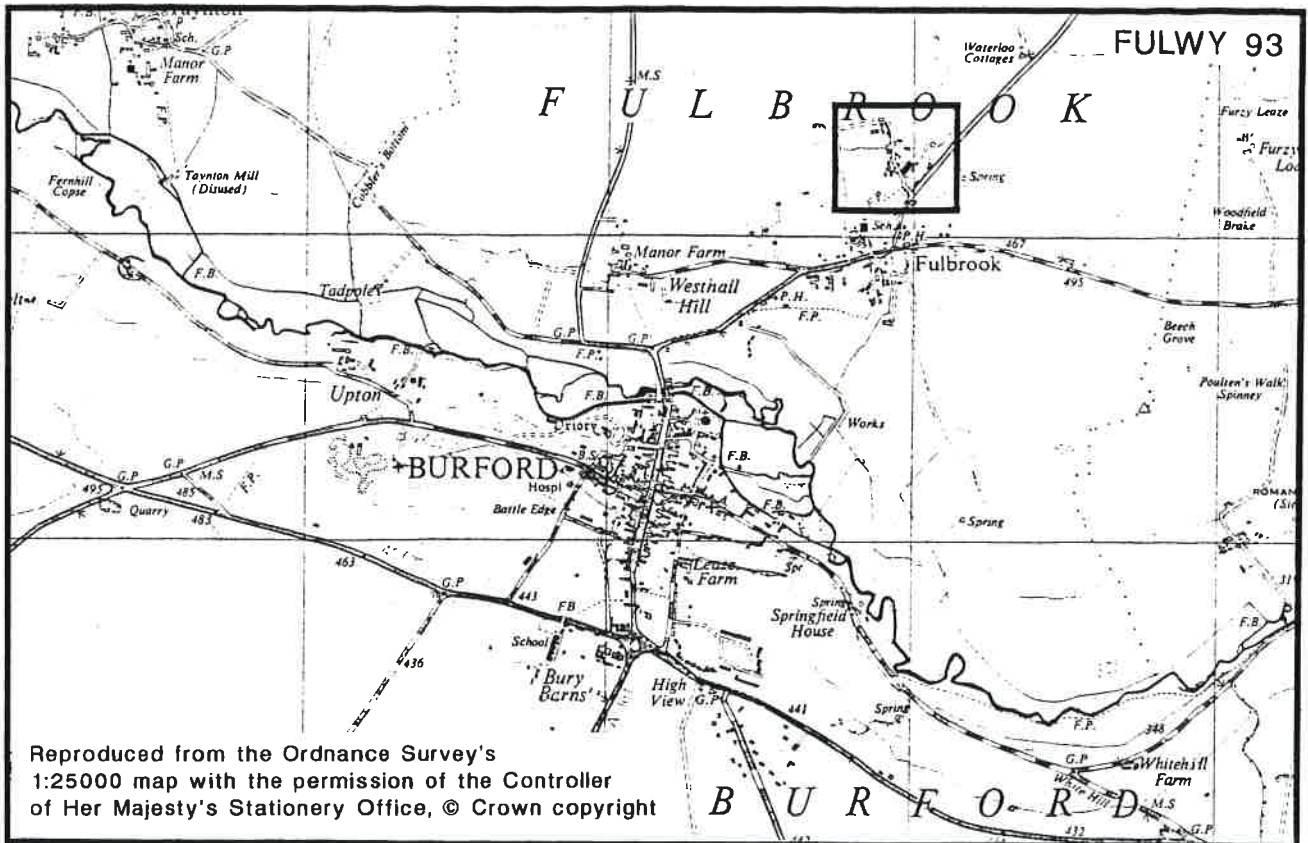


Figure 1

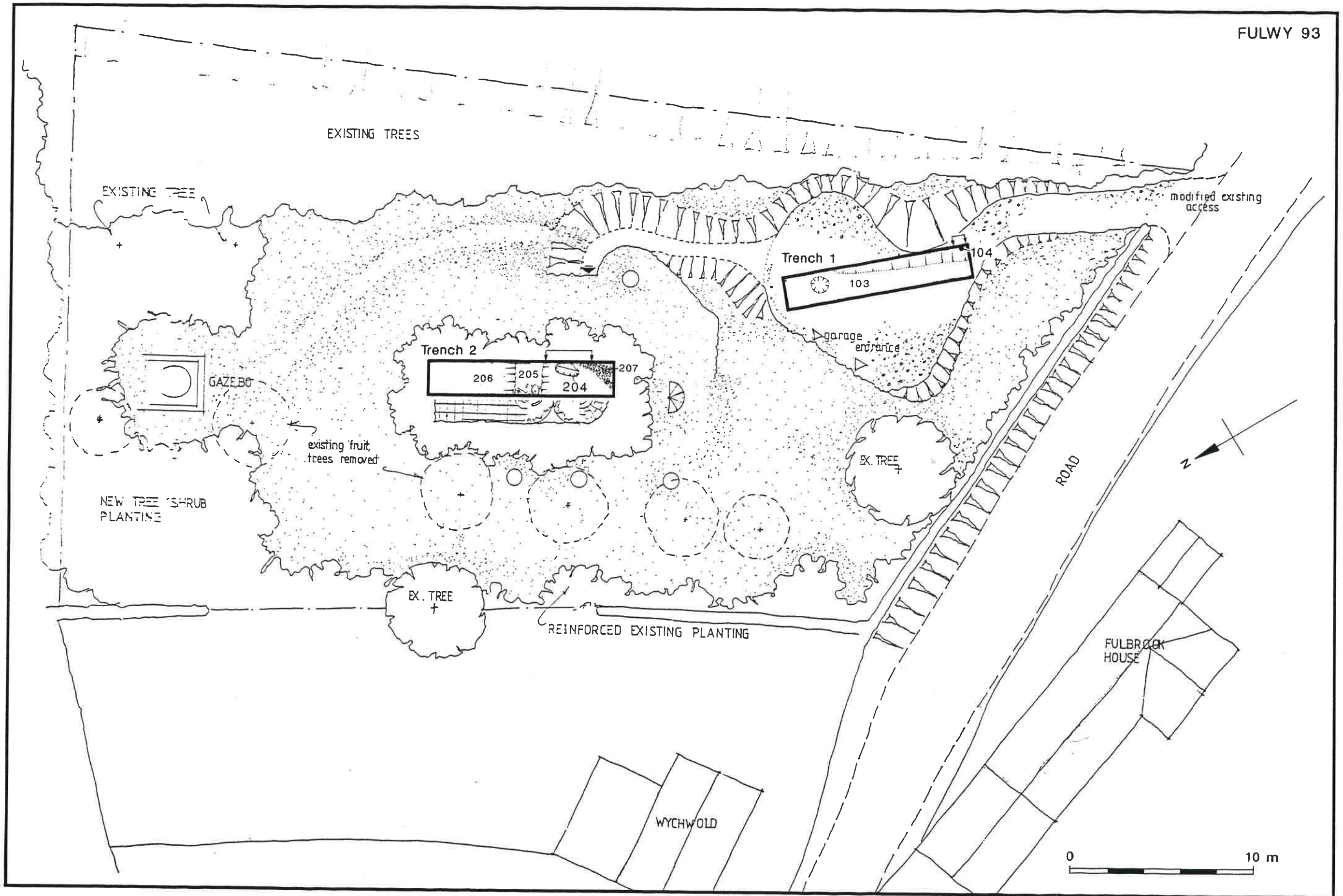
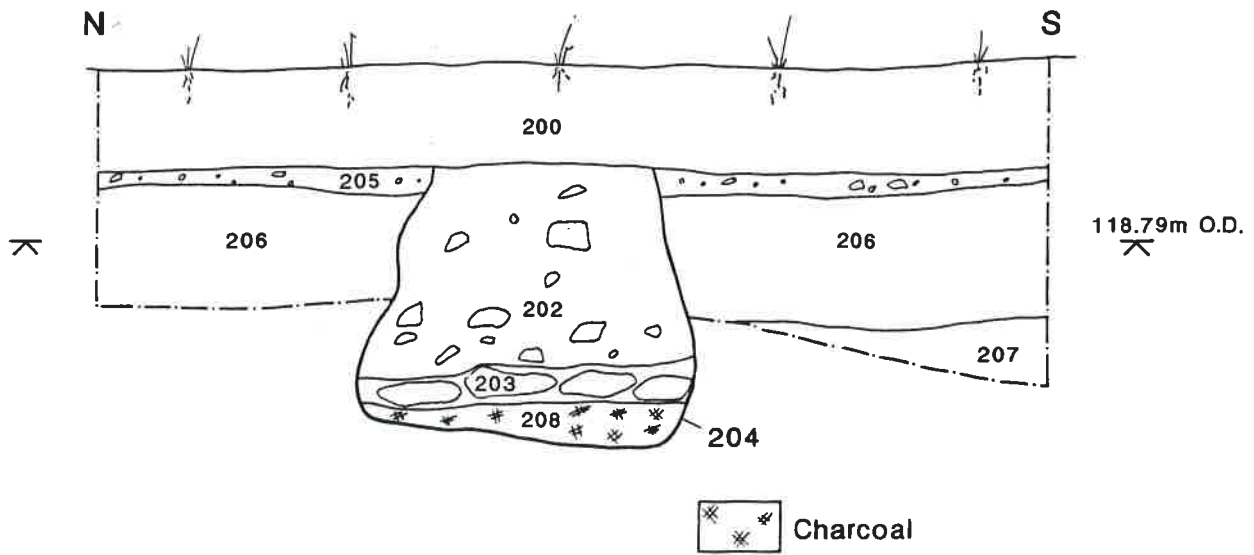


Figure 2

Trench 2

Section 2



Trench 1

Section 3

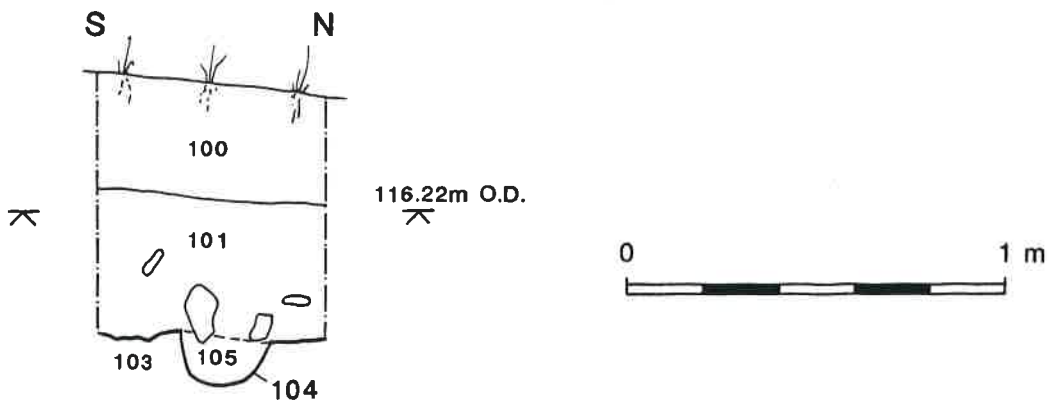


Figure 3

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