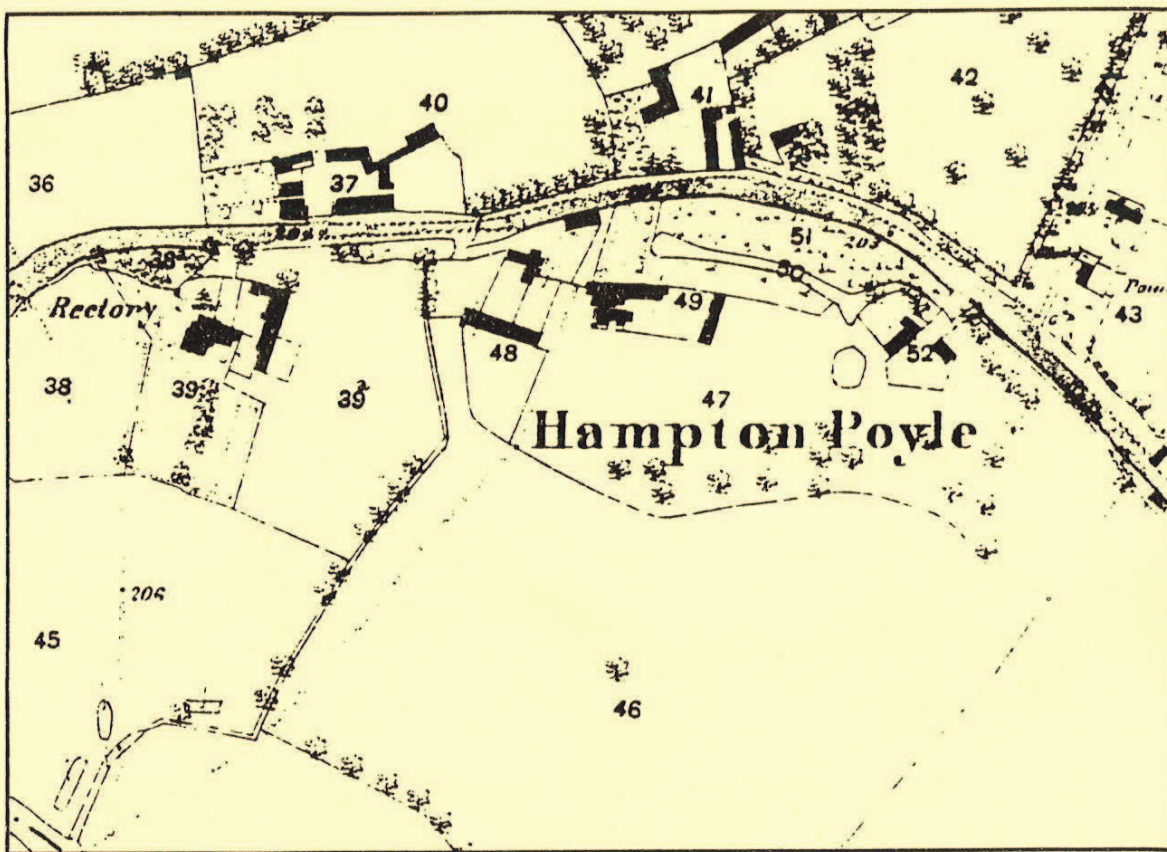


# OS Land Parcel 0062 and Barns to East of Home Farm, Church Lane, Hampton Poyle, Oxfordshire

NGR SP 501 155

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeological Unit

February 1997

**OS LAND PARCEL 0062 AND BARNES TO EAST OF HOME FARM,  
CHURCH LANE, HAMPTON POYLE, KIDLINGTON, OXFORDSHIRE  
NGR SP 500 156  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

**1 SUMMARY**

A ditch of medieval date and a further undated ditch were observed during the course of this watching brief in Hampton Poyle, Oxfordshire. Two possible pits of unknown date were also observed during construction work for a new building. The dated ditch may be associated with a property within the shrunken medieval village of Hampton Poyle, although no structural remains were observed.

**2 INTRODUCTION**

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a watching brief during construction work on land adjacent to Home Farm, Hampton Poyle, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1) throughout the latter part of 1996 and January 1997. The construction of a new dwelling and ancillary works was monitored as part of a condition attached to the planning consent granted by Cherwell District Council (Planning Reference 96/00091/F). A Watching Brief was recommended for this development by the County Archaeological Officer in accordance with PPG 16, as the development site lies within the historic medieval core of the village of Hampton Poyle. The construction of the new building and the excavation of drainage trenches was carried out by Yarnton Builders, Oxon., under plans devised by BBG Architects of Woodstock, Oxfordshire.

**3 SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

The village of Hampton Poyle is located 4.5 km to the north of Oxford. The development area is situated on the north side of Church Lane in the village, adjacent to Home Farm. Hampton Poyle was built on an area of river terrace drift on the east bank of the river Cherwell, and "unlike most of the villages in the Cherwell Valley, [the village] stands on alluvium and not gravel" (VCH 6, 160-168). The development site lies at a general level of 62 m OD, with the ground level rising gently from south to north.

The village of Hampton Poyle dates to the medieval period, and the village Church of St. Mary (PRN 5180) is of late thirteenth century date (Pevsner and Sherwood 1974, 630-631). Evidence of the original medieval village consists of earthworks in the vicinity of the church: to the north and north-east of the church is situated a large close bounded by a ditch (PRN 5259, SP 499 156; VCH 6, 159), which contains platforms of buildings and 'hollow ways'. To the south and south-east of the church further probable house sites are also present in an irregular shaped field. An earthwork platform centred at SP 4977 1547 represents the site of a water mill (PRN 5257; VCH 6, 160), probably also of medieval date.

To the immediate south of the development on the south side of Church lane is a large pond, which may at one time have been part of a larger water feature, perhaps a moat. The Old Manor House, just to the east of this pond, was formerly called Moat Farm - its moat is recorded in 1625 (VCH 6, 161). The adjacent cottage to the east of The Old Manor House is now, somewhat confusingly, called Moat Cottage.

The part of the site lying between the new building and Church Lane was partly occupied by the concrete slab of a previous building, while a similarly constructed building still stands just to the east. The construction of these had caused some disturbance to the upper part of the sequence in the southern half of the site, and further disturbance was caused by the breaking and removal of the redundant slab.

#### 4 STRATEGY AND METHODOLOGY

Visits were made to the site by OAU personnel during all stages of the construction of the new building, and all of the foundation and drainage trenches were monitored for the presence of features and finds. Three large soakaway pits excavated to the north of the new building were also monitored. Each soakaway pit and drainage trench was allocated a block of context numbers (for example Pit A, 100, 101 etc.). Initially each of the foundation trenches were numbered individually (numbers 1-22), but for the purposes of writing this report, the trenches were treated as a single excavation and were allocated a block of context numbers (600, 601 etc.).

Shallow drain runs leading to the deeper trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5 m and only impinged upon the topsoil and the top of the underlying layers; accordingly these trenches were not issued with specific blocks of numbers and were recorded in plan only. Site recording was carried out in accordance with standard procedures as defined in the OAU Fieldwork Manual (ed. Wilkinson, 1992). Sample sections of foundation and drainage trenches were drawn at a scale of 1:20, and a site plan based on the architect's plan was drawn at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2). General and specific photographs of the work were taken.

#### 5 RESULTS

The results are presented in three sections which describe the deposits seen in the soakaway pits, the foundation trenches and the drainage trenches.

##### 5.1 Soakaway Pits

The earliest deposit observed in the three soakaway pits (A, B, and C - Fig. 3) to the north of the new building was a thick layer of dark grey clay (104 = 204 = 304) which in turn was sealed by a layer of clean sandy gravel (103 = 203 = 303). The gravel appeared to thicken towards the west of the site: in Pit A the gravel was 0.1 m thick, in Pit B it was up to 0.2 m thick, whilst in Pit C it had deepened to be 0.64 m thick. The gravel horizon was sealed by a clean layer of reddish-brown sandy clay (102 = 202 = 302), which was 0.5 - 0.94 m thick. All of these deposits were interpreted as natural



horizons, with layer 102 etc. representing the natural subsoil. Above layer 102 in Pit A was a general layer of light grey-brown clay loam (101) which was 0.38-0.4m thick and contained occasional stones and limestone pieces. This layer was sealed by topsoil (100).

Above layer 202 in Pit B was a layer of grey-brown clay loam (201), which although similar to 101 in character, had a slightly concave lower profile suggestive of a feature fill, although no artefacts were recovered from this material (see feature 602 in section 5.2 below). ?Fill 201 was sealed by topsoil (200).

In Pit C, layer 302 was sealed by a layer of mixed layer of clay loam, topsoil and building debris and had been affected by machine activity. Topsoil (300) had become incorporated into this layer.

No finds were recovered from the excavated spoil from the layers in the soakaway pits - modern bricks etc. were not retained from the topsoil layers.

## 5.2 Foundation Trenches

The earliest deposits were observed in the foundation trenches which formed the south-west corner of the building (Fig. 4), and which were 1.9 m deep. At the base of the trench was a 0.58 m thick layer of grey clay (611) which contained a large limestone boulder and other limestone pieces. Snail shells were observed within this deposit. In the west section of the north-south foundation trench for the west wall of the house the top of this deposit appeared to be fairly level, but just east of the south-west corner of the foundation trench a discontinuity in this level was apparent. It had the appearance of a steep sided cut up to c 0.27 m deep in layer 611. Within the 'cut' was a thin (0.05 m) lens of reddish brown sand (610) and overlying 611 to the west was a further very similar sand layer 614 which was 0.18 m thick. These deposits were stratigraphically equivalent, both being sealed by a 0.36 m thick deposit of dark reddish-brown clay (609), though 614 was only partly overlaid by this deposit.

Towards the centre of the new building a linear cut feature (602, Fig. 2, 5) was observed in the sections of several of the foundation trenches. The feature, interpreted as a ditch, was c. 2.5 m wide, 0.9 m deep and had a east edge which sloped at an angle of 45°. The west edge of the feature was not fully exposed. The fill of the ditch (601) was a dark brown clay loam which contained several sherds of early medieval pottery, dated AD 1075-1200, and a single sherd of slightly later medieval pottery dated 1200-1400 (see section 6.1 below). Pieces of animal bone were also recovered. Ditch 602 appeared to line up with Soakaway Pit B, suggesting that the 'fill-like' deposit 201 towards the top of the sequence may indeed have been the continuation of this feature's fill.

Ditch 602 was thought to continue south-west, possibly curving onto a west-east alignment. Medieval pottery (dated AD 1075-1200) was recovered from layer 608 (over 609 located in the foundation trench in the south-west corner of the new building), and this deposit was thought to be a continuation of the fill of ditch 602.

Towards the north-west corner of the new building a possible cut feature (612, perhaps a pit) was identified in plan and in the sections of the foundation trenches, although the

edges of the feature were difficult to define. The feature was c. 0.8 m deep and had a diameter of c. 3 m. The outline of the feature was identified close to the surface of the topsoil, and the feature therefore may have been of modern date. A piece of animal bone was recovered from the fill of the feature (613), which consisted of a friable grey-brown clay loam with occasional limestone pieces. No datable finds were recovered from the fill of this feature.

### 5.3 Drainage Trenches

At the south side of the new building two deep trenches linked with two shallower trenches were excavated from the site of the new building to beneath Church lane prior to the installation of new drains and water pipes (see site plan, Fig. 2). The main (foul) drainage trench was issued with context numbers 500-503, and the water pipe trench with context numbers 400-410.

#### 5.3.1 Water Main Trench

This trench was generally 1.2 m deep (Fig. 6), and slightly deeper beneath Church Lane. The earliest deposit in the trench was a 0.5 m+ thick layer of natural gravel (402) which was sealed by 401, a mixed red-brown and grey brown sandy clay with gravel inclusions, which was 0.31-0.44 m thick. This layer was interpreted as the natural subsoil, and its mixed nature derived from roots and construction disturbance. A ?linear feature, perhaps a ditch (404) was observed cut into the top of layer 401. The feature was only observed obliquely in the sections of the trench, but was thought to be aligned north-east - south-west. The ditch was c. 2.6 m wide and at least 0.85 m deep, and was filled with a uniform deposit of grey clay loam (403) with occasional limestone pieces. No finds were recovered from fill 403. The ditch may have been associated with ditch 602 (and therefore perhaps of medieval date), observed in the area of the new building, although 404 was certainly not the same feature as 602.

South of 404 a further similarly poorly defined feature was observed in the sections of the trench. Feature 406, perhaps a pit, was c. 3 m in width and was 0.75 m+ deep, and was filled with a deposit of loose grey-brown loamy clay with limestone pieces. Occasional pieces of concrete in the fill of the pit might suggest that this feature was of relatively modern date, although the concrete material could have been pressed down from the working surface of the building site.

Also sealing layer 401 in the area of the present road was a 0.2 m thick layer of mixed limestone pieces (407) which probably represented the remains of the former road/track surface - although this surface was not datable. Beneath the modern road the construction trench for the modern water main was observed (cut 408 filled with water pipe 504, see below, and backfill 409). The trench was cut through the former track surface 407, and may also have cut the present topsoil layer (400), which sealed the fills of features 406 and 404, and also overlaid the mixed subsoil layer 401.

#### 5.3.2 Foul Drainage Trench

This trench was also 1.2 m deep, and was excavated slightly deeper beneath the modern

road. No features were observed within the trench, which revealed a similar sequence of deposits to those in the Water Main Trench. A 0.2-0.5 m+ thick layer of natural gravel (503) was sealed by a layer of reddish-brown sandy clay subsoil (502), which was 0.37 m thick. A 0.28 m thick layer of grey-brown loam (501), which in turn was overlaid by the topsoil. The Water main pipe (504) was seen c. 0.9 m beneath Church Lane, and this pipe was also noted in water main trench.

### 5.3.3 Other Trenches

Shallow 0.5 m deep trenches linking the two larger trenches to the new building were excavated through the topsoil and just into the underlying layer (probably 401 or 501). No features or finds were observed within these trenches.

## 6 THE FINDS

### 6.1 Medieval Pottery, by Paul Blinkhorn

No prehistoric or Roman material was recovered from the watching brief. The post-Roman pottery assemblage comprised 10 sherds, and has been classified into fabric types established by M. Mellor et al (1994).

Context	F200	F300	F352	Context date
U/S	2 (48)		1 (8)	U/S
601		5 (65)	1 (118)	1200-1400
608		1 (10)		12thC?
Total	2 (48)	6 (75)	2 (126)	

Two unstratified sherds of fabric F200 were recovered from the spoil heaps during the excavation of the foundation trenches. This fabric is a Cotswolds-type Oolitic ware, and is coded in the Oxford type-series as fabric OXAC. The date range for this fabric is AD 875-1200 (Mellor et al 1994).

Contexts 601 and 608 (fills of ditch 602) produced six sherds of fabric F300, an Oxford Sandy ware. This fabric is coded in the Oxford type-series as Oxford fabric OXY, with a given chronology of AD 1075-1200 (ibid).

One unstratified sherd of fabric F352, together with one sherd from context 601 were recovered. This fabric is known as Brill/Boarstall ware, with an Oxford fabric code OXAM. The production span of this fabric dates from c. AD 1200-1400 (ibid).

## 6.2 Other finds

Pieces of animal bone were recovered from contexts 608 and 613. Modern building material (bricks and stone) were not retained.

## 7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The earliest deposits observed at the south-west corner of the new house, which included a layer of clay with shell fragments, were undated but may have been substantially earlier than anything else seen on the site. There is no certainty that the possible cut in layer 611 was a man made feature.

Pottery recovered from ditch 602 dates the infilling of this feature to the 13th-14th centuries (or later), although the precise function of the feature was not clear. It is possible that the ditch formed part of an enclosure with ditch 404 (itself undated) - either for an animal pen, or more likely a house property. The pottery from the fills of ditch 602 would suggest domestic activity in the vicinity, but the overall quantities of material were small. A drainage function is also possible for the linear features. The undated pit features may have been associated with the ditches, although this is unclear owing to the lack of dating evidence from the pit fills. No evidence of structures associated with the medieval ditch was observed.

It is likely that the features observed during this watching brief relate to part of the shrunken medieval village of Hampton Poyle. It is noticeable, however, that the apparent north-east - south-west alignment of the main linear feature does not conform with the alignment of the present Church Lane, which seems likely to reflect the principal axis of the medieval village. The significance of this is uncertain, but the possible east-west return of the ditch might suggest that this was enclosing or draining an area set at some little distance from the lane and therefore not dependent on its layout. It is also possible that there was some relationship between these features and the probable moat to the south. While the exact location of the latter is uncertain, the substantial 'pond' immediately south of the site has some of the character of such a feature, though the location of the Old Manor House would suggest that the moat itself should have lain slightly further east.

The early-middle medieval date of the finds from ditch 602, and the total absence of later medieval and post-medieval material from the feature or elsewhere on the site might suggest some decline of the village from the 14th or 15th century.

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February 1997

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VCH 6 = Lobel, M.D. (ed) 1959, *A History of the County of Oxford, Volume 6, Ploughly Hundred*, London

Mellor, M. et al, 1994, A Synthesis of Middle and Late Saxon, Medieval and Early Post-medieval Pottery in the Oxford Region, *Oxoniensia* **LIX**, 1994, 17-217

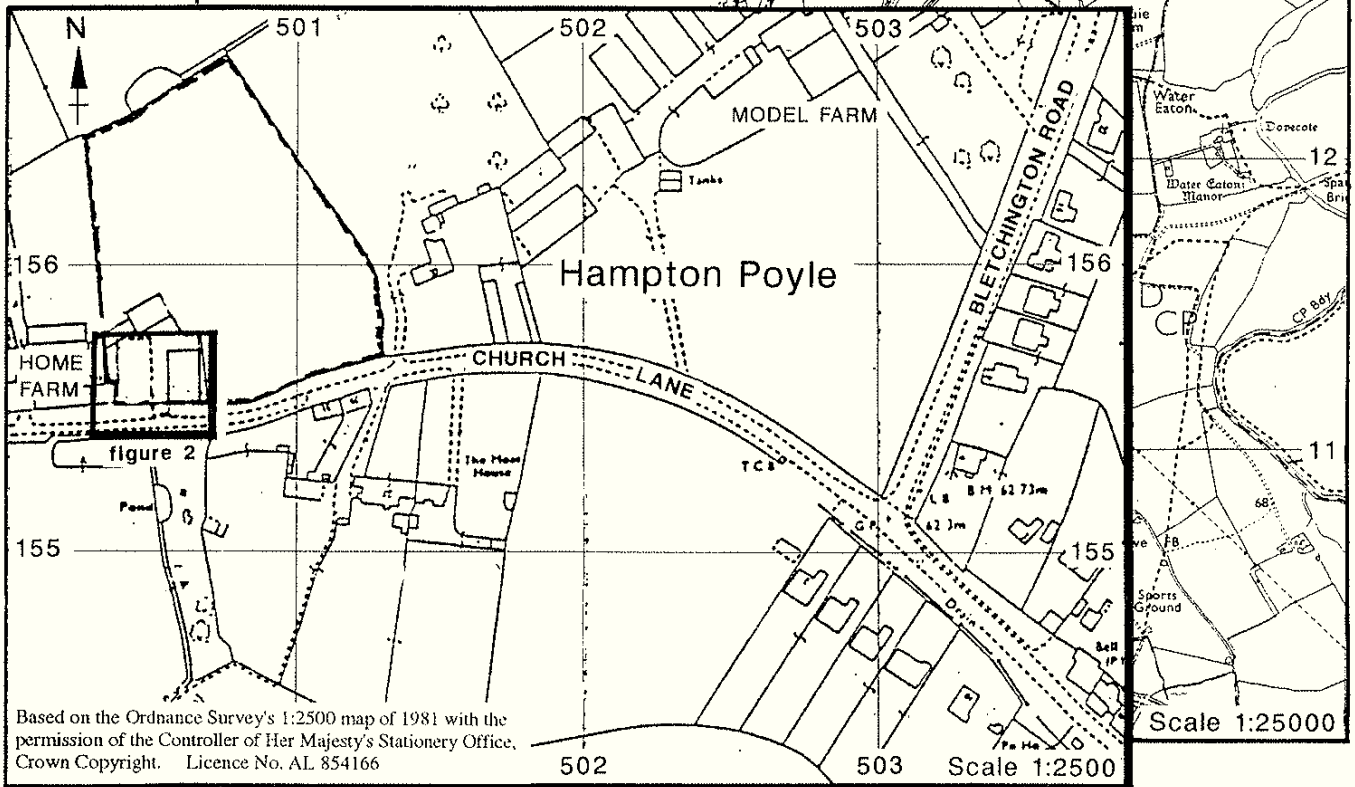
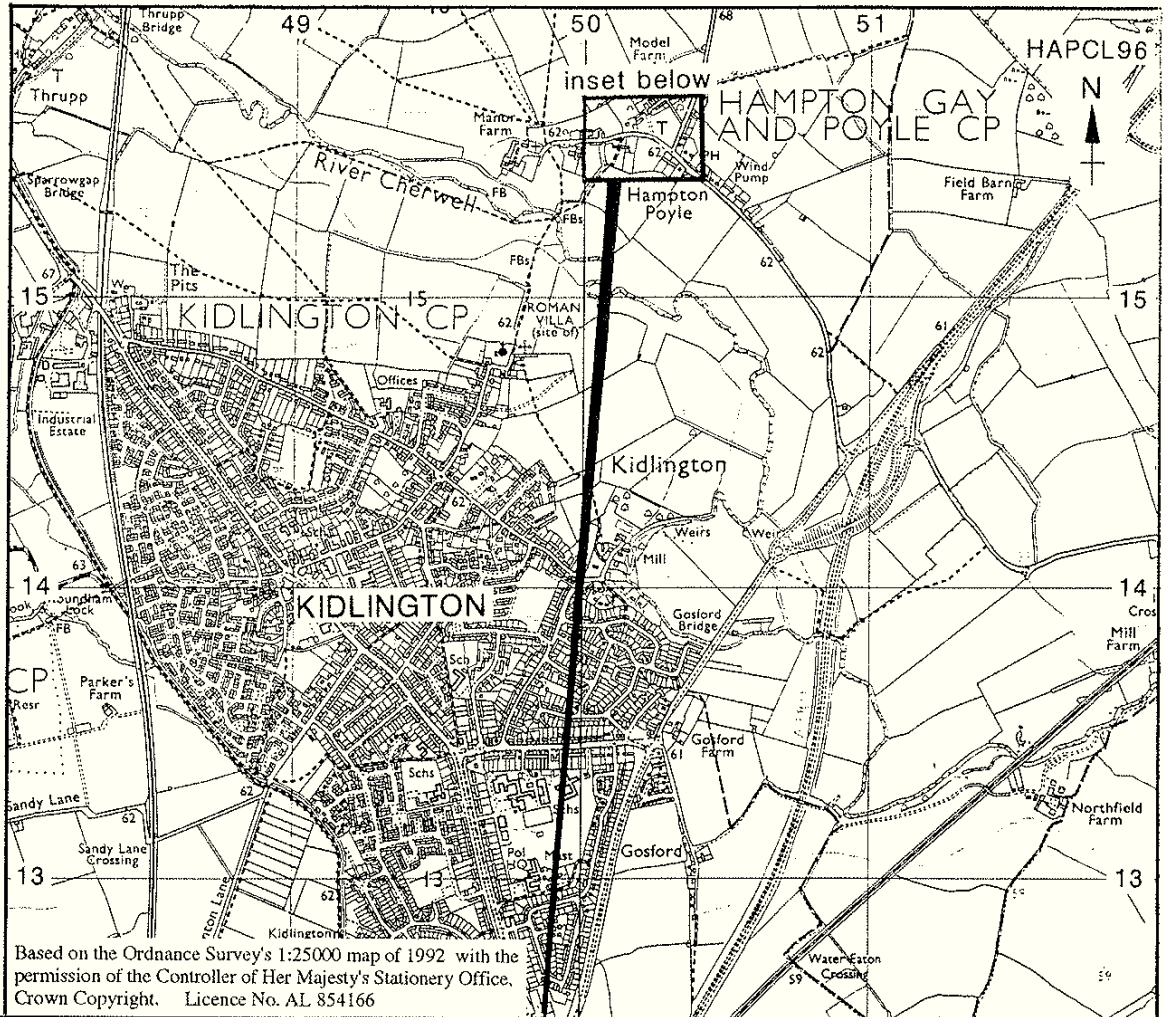
Pevsner, N. and Sherwood, J, 1974, *The Buildings of England, Oxfordshire*, London



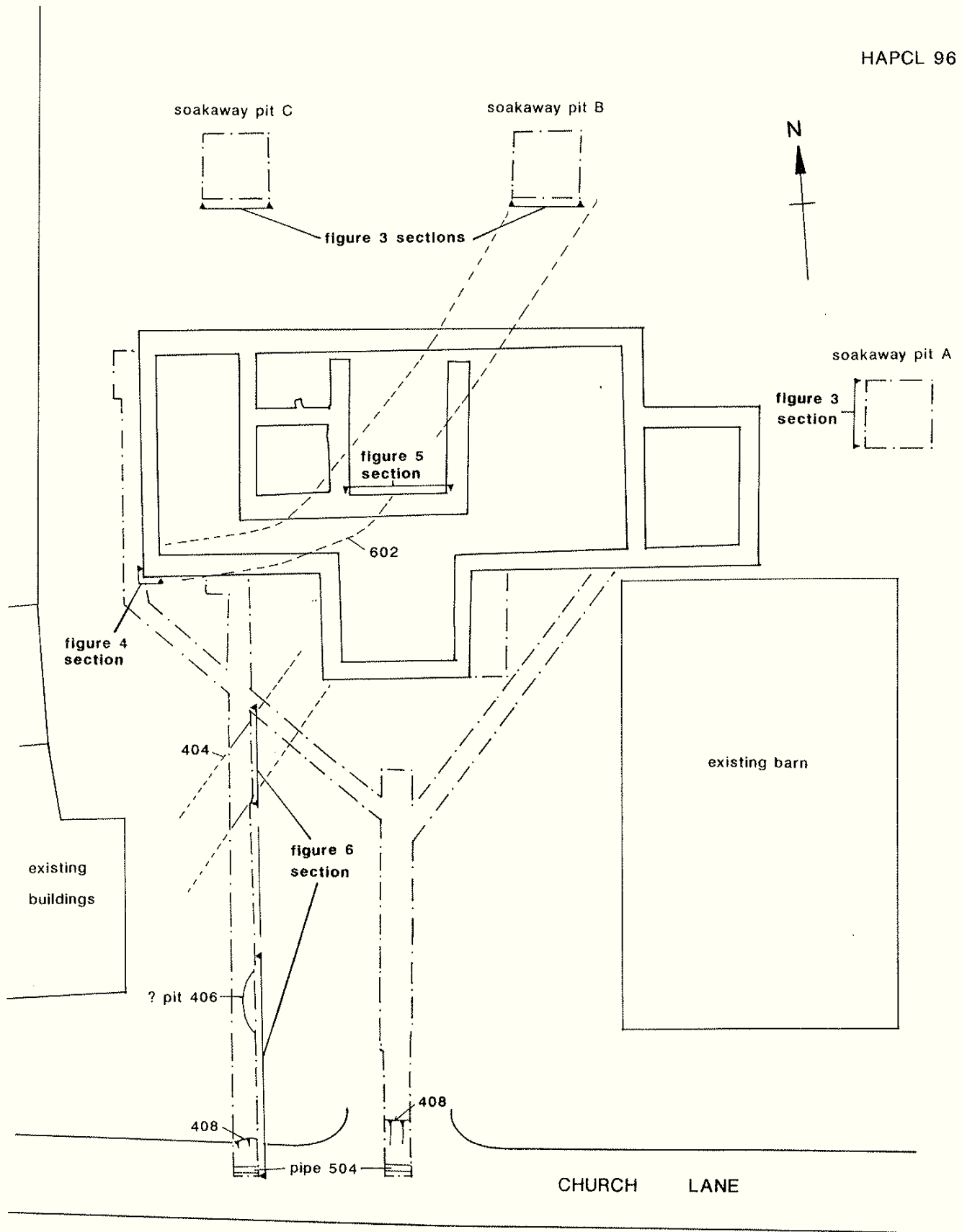
**TABLE OF CONTEXT INFORMATION**

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Comments
100	Layer	0.18-0.2m	-	Topsoil, soakaway pit A
101	Layer	0.38-0.4m	-	Soil layer, mixed with limestone
102	Layer	0.8 m	-	Natural subsoil layer
103	Layer	0.1 m	-	Lens of natural gravel
104	Layer	0.4 m+	-	Natural grey clay
200	Layer	0.2-0.22m	-	Topsoil, soakaway pit B
201	?Fill	0.18-0.32m	-	Fill, possibly fill of NE-SW aligned ditch 602
202	Layer	0.82-0.94m	-	Natural subsoil layer
203	Layer	0.12-0.2m	-	Natural gravel
204	Layer	0.42 m+	-	Natural clay
300	Layer	0.2 m	-	Topsoil, soakaway pit C
301	Layer	0.17-0.24m	-	Mixed layer of topsoil and underlying soil horizon
302	Layer	0.5 m	-	Natural subsoil
303	Layer	0.64 m	-	Natural gravel
304	Layer	0.5 m+	-	Natural clay
400	Layer	0.24-0.4m	-	Mixed topsoil, trial pit D
401	Layer	0.31-0.44m	-	Mixed subsoil layer, mixed with topsoil due to site works
402	Layer	0.5 m+	-	Natural gravel
403	Fill	0.81 m	2.7 m	Fill of ditch cut 404
404	Cut	0.81 m	2.7 m	Ditch cut, south of new building
405	Fill	0.75 m	-	Only fill of probable pit 406
406	Cut	0.75 m+	3 m	Undated, ?medieval pit
407	Layer	0.2 m	-	Former trackway surface below modern road
408	Cut	1.2 m	0.75 m+	Modern drainage trench filled by 409
409	Fill	1.2 m	0.75 m+	Fill of modern drainage trench
410	Surface	0.15 m	-	Modern road, tarmac surface
500	Layer	0.29 m	-	Topsoil in main drain trench south of new house

501	Layer	0.28 m	-	Soil horizon below topsoil
502	Layer	0.37 m	-	Natural subsoil horizon
503	Layer	0.2- 0.5 m+	-	Natural gravel
504	Service	0.8 m	0.14 m	Service pipe beneath Church Lane, ?water main
600	Layer	0.2-0.4m	-	Mixed topsoil layer in area of house foundations
601	Fill	0.88 m	2.5 m	Fill of ditch 602
602	Cut	0.88 m	2.5 m	Ditch aligned NE-SW, containing medieval pottery
603	Layer	0.9 m	-	Natural subsoil
604	Layer	0.2 m+	-	Natural sand and gravel mix at base of foundation trenches
605	Fill	0.29 m	0.3 m	Only fill of shallow feature 606, no finds
606	Cut	0.29 m	0.3 m	Small, shallow ?circular feature, to NW of ditch 602
607	Fill	0.36 m	-	Fill of ditch 602, pottery and bone from this deposit
608	Fill	0.45 m	-	Base fill of ditch 602
609	Layer	0.36 m	-	Natural clay, subsoil
610	Layer	0.08 m	-	Natural sand
611	Layer	0.58 m	-	?Natural grey clay - note shell inclusions - reason unclear
612	Cut	0.8 m	-	Cut feature in N area of foundation trenches
613	Fill	0.8 m+	-	Fill of cut/pit 612
614	Layer	0.18 m	-	Natural sand layer below 610



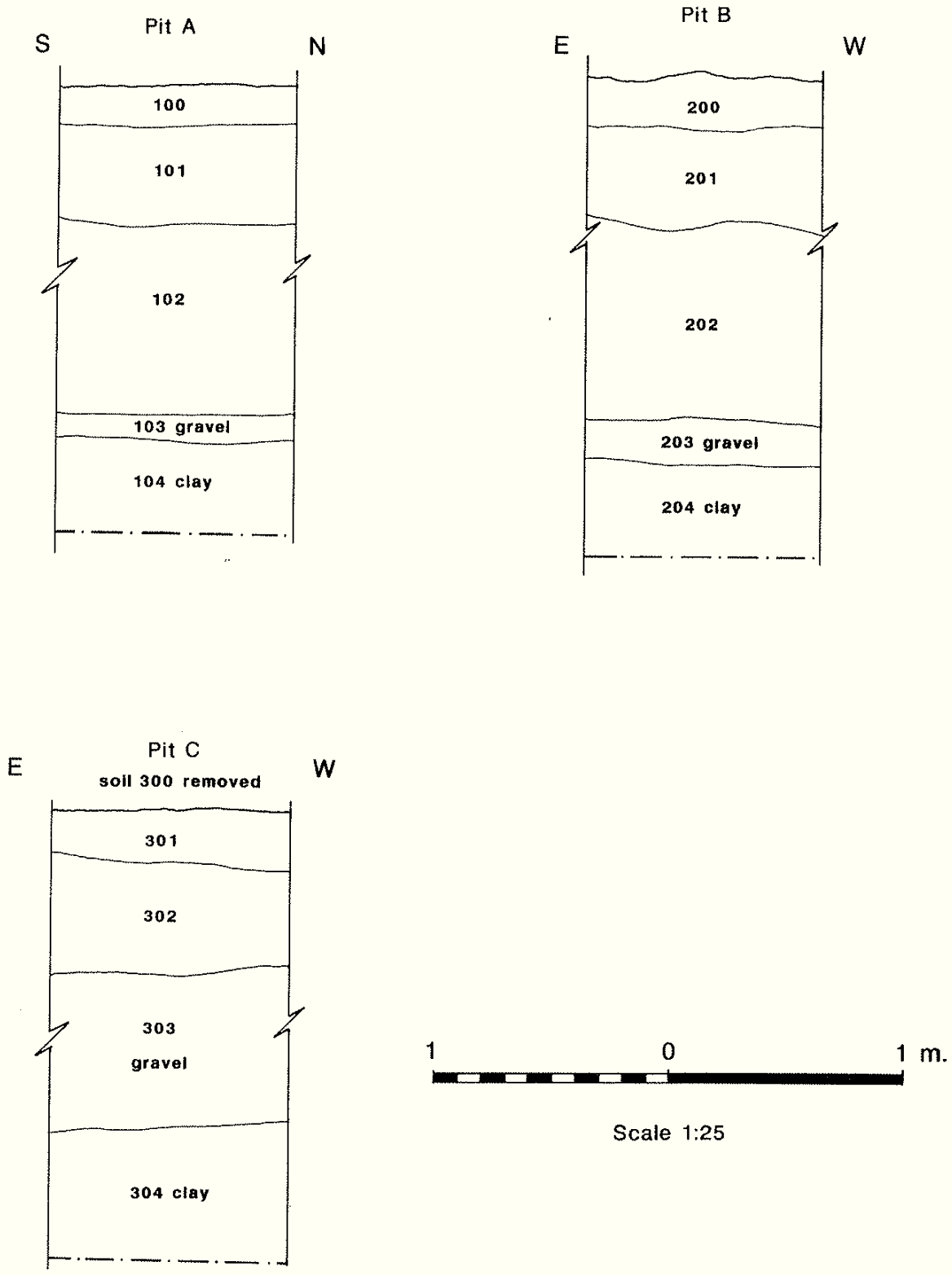
Site Location Figure 1



Scale 1:200

Foundation Plan and Drainage Trenches

Figure 2



Soakaway Pit Section Samples

Figure 3



Section 9

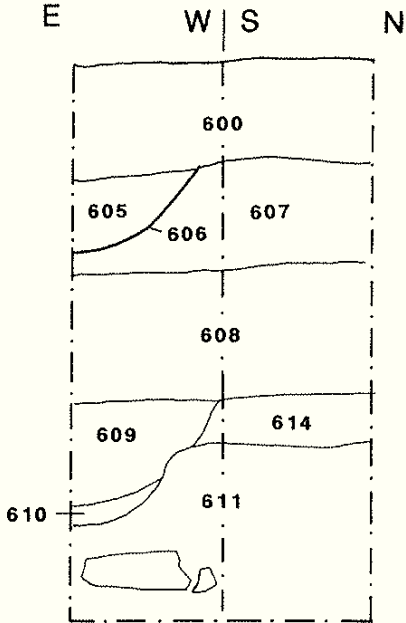


Figure 4

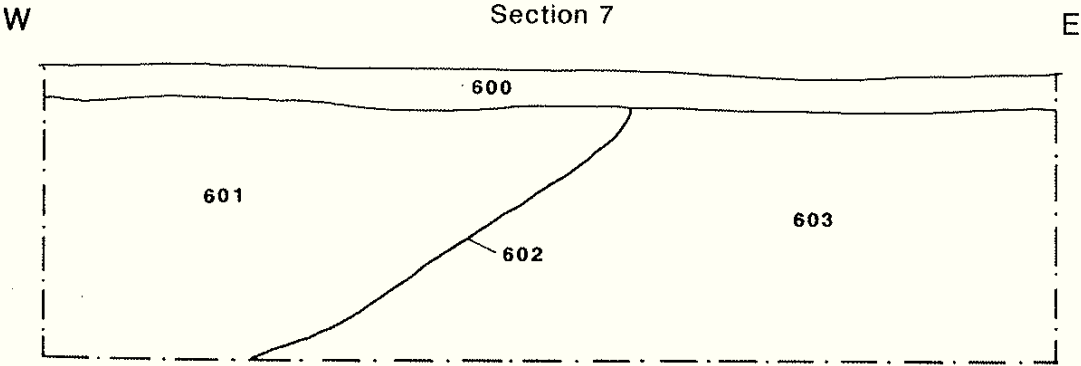
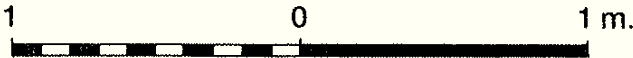


Figure 5



Scale 1:25

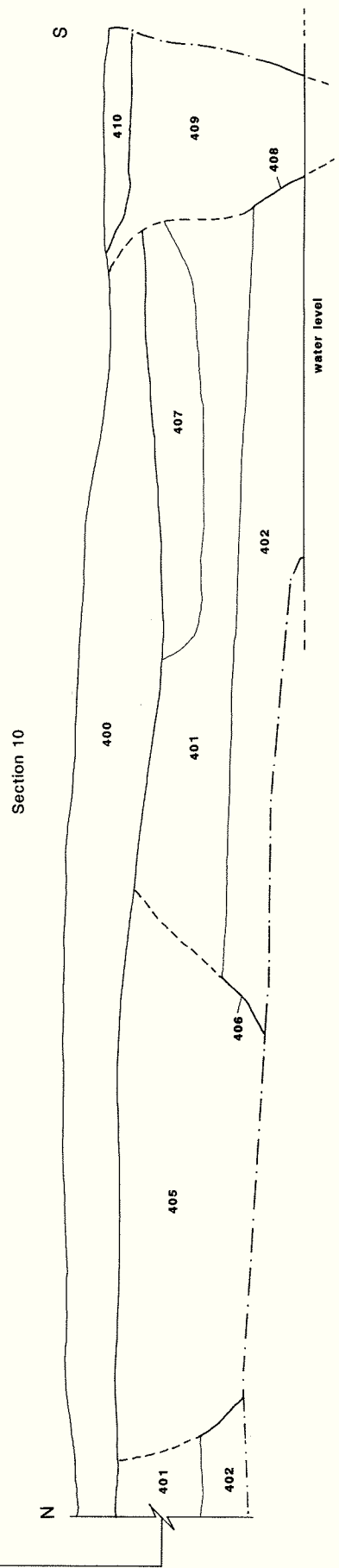
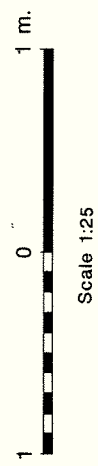
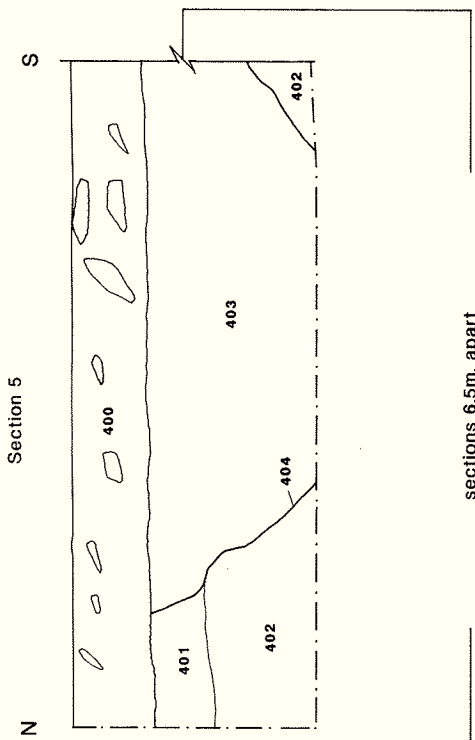


Figure 6



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