

The Old Coach Works,
Ash close,
Brightwalton,
Berkshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for

Bewley Homes Plc

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The Old Coach Works, Brightwalton, Berkshire
Archaeological Evaluation

Project 94/51

by Steven Weaver and Steve Ford

INTRODUCTION

This report documents an evaluation of a 0.557ha. area of land lying on the south side of Brightwalton, Berkshire (Figs. 1 and 2). This work was commissioned by Mr. Graham Ambridge of Bewley Homes Plc, according to a brief prepared by the archaeological advisor for Berkshire County Council (Babtie, Shaw and Morton).

The site, is currently covered at the northern end by a 0.1 m. thickness of concrete hard standing, once the location of the coach depot. The rest of the evaluation area is rough ground, with trees present along the eastern and southern boundaries. The land has been granted planning permission for the development of housing. This permission is subject to a condition to carry out a field evaluation to assess the archaeological potential of the site as set out in *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16, 1990) prior to construction work.

The fieldwork took place in October 1994 and the site code is OCBW 94.

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The site lies along Ash Close, in the southern part of Brightwalton, Berkshire, centred on SU42757920, approximately 100 m. south east of All Saints church. The site slopes gently downwards from north to south, although the northern part of the site has been levelled for an area of hard standing. The site lies at a height of 185 m. above OD. (Fig. 2). It is located on an underlying geology of Clay-with-Flint, which locally can consist of patches of sandy clay.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The archaeological potential of the site is derived from documentary sources and the village is known to have been in existence from at least Late Saxon times (Richards 1978). There is little fieldwork derived information about the origins and development of the village, but due to its relatively central location adjoining the lane, it may contain archaeological deposits that will provide information about Medieval use of the street frontage.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the evaluation was to discover the location, date, nature, extent, and state of preservation of any archaeological sites or deposits within the area proposed for development.

The Archaeological Advisors' brief required a 4% (minimum) machine dug sample of the 0.557 ha. area. The trenches were to be located randomly but evenly across the site. After the topsoil and concrete hard standing were removed deposits were looked for and spoil heaps were to be monitored for finds.

RESULTS

On commencement of the evaluation it was found that certain areas under the hard standing located in the north west corner of the site had already been disturbed due to the presence of fuel tanks. It was not possible to evaluate some other areas due to the presence of existing concrete structures from the old coach works and to avoid damage to the root systems of fully grown trees. This caused an alteration in the location of the trenches, with a greater proportion located towards the southern end of the site than originally intended.

Eight trenches were excavated, with a total length of 114 m. They were

dug by a JCB-type machine fitted with a ditching bucket. The trenches were 1.6 m. wide, and of varying length, located as shown in Figure 3. They are detailed in appendix 1.

The topsoil in the trenches located on the disused rough ground varied in depth between 0.30-0.40 m. and overlay a 0.10 m. thickness of dark brown silty clay with pieces of flint. This subsoil overlay the Clay-with-Flints bedrock. Two trenches excavated in the concreted area (Fig 3., Tr 6 and Tr 7) consisted of a layer of made up ground over a buried topsoil which overlay the Clay-with-Flints bedrock. The third trench excavated in the concrete produced a layer of topsoil under the concrete (Tr 8). This old topsoil, which was impregnated with engine oil, overlay a gravel layer which then came down onto the Clay-with-Flints bedrock.

In the southern half of the development area a terrace ran east-west across the site (Fig. 3). To the west of the site the terrace had been levelled by a tennis court and was not visible in gardens beyond; to the east the terrace continued for another 15 m. and then perhaps intermittently through the gardens to the south of Fay corner (Fig. 3). This terrace was evaluated in Trenches 1, 4 and 5. Sections were excavated through the terrace in Trenches 1 and 4 and revealed the existence of a bank (F3 and F7) and ditch (F4, F8).

The bank (F3) consisted of a number of contexts (54 to 57) (Plate 2). The bank seems to have been produced by at least two episodes of dumping as two humic layers (56 and 54, old topsoils) are separated by a thin mixed brown clay deposit (55). A second phase of dumping, presumably a recut of the ditch, is represented by context 57 (Fig. 4).

The sequence is similar in Trench 4 with old buried soils (58 and 60) separated by a clayey layer (59).

There is a difference in height of the top of the bedrock on either side of the boundary (Fig.4) but the origin of this difference is not clear. It could repre-

sent either a natural break in slope or lynchet formation prior to the creation of the earthwork. Similarly, it could reflect erosion of the downhill side of the boundary due to ploughing or the passage of traffic.

A number of finds of Medieval pottery were recovered, mainly from Trench 1 including finds from the lower buried soil beneath the bank (context 56). The earthwork, therefore, is clearly of Medieval or later date.

There were no archaeological features or deposits observed in any of the other trenches.

THE FINDS

The pottery by Jane Timby

The evaluation produced a moderately small group of 64 sherds of pottery. The sherds were in relatively poor condition with abraded edges. The majority appear to date to the late 12th-14th Century. Eight main fabrics were present of which TF1-7 were of Medieval date and TF8 of possible Prehistoric date. Featured sherds comprised mainly cooking pots with everted rims, and in one case, a scalloped rim, and at least one thumbled base from a jug.

CONCLUSIONS AND AREAS OF POTENTIAL

Although the proposal area lies in a potentially archaeological significant location, the only find of significance was to show that the earthwork crossing the southern end of the site was a bank and ditch of Medieval date. The earthwork is recorded for a distance of at least 75 m., perhaps intermittently so for 125 m. The function of the earthwork is unclear but it possibly represents the boundary of the village at some point in Medieval times.

REFERENCES

- FAIRBROTHER, J.R. 1990: *Facombe, Netherton*, British Museum Occ. pap. 74. London.
- PPG16 1990: *Archaeology and Planning Department of the Environment Planning Guidance 16*. HMSO.
- RICHARDS, J.C. 1978: *The Archaeology of the Berkshire Downs*. Berks. Archaeol. Committee no.3 Reading.

APPENDIX 1- Trench details 0 m. at south or west end

Trench	Length (m.)	Depth (m.)	Comment
1	19	0.50	Bank and ditch (F4,F3).
2	19.5	0.46	
3	20	0.41	
4	18.5	0.48	Bank and ditch (F7,F8).
5	5	0.48	Bank (part) and ditch (F10).
6	15	0.50	Concrete, made ground, old topsoil, Clay-with-flints.
7	9	0.60	Concrete, made ground, old topsoil, Clay-with-flints.
8	8	0.6-1.1	Concrete, Oleaginous old topsoil(?), gravel, Clay-with-flints.

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APPENDIX 2 Feature details

Trench 1

F3 (54-57) Bank (of earthwork)
F4 (53) Ditch (of earthwork)

Trench 2

F5 Modern posthole/burrow
F6 Modern posthole/burrow

Trench 3

F9 Burrow/tree root

Trench 4

F7 (58-60) Bank (of earthwork, same as F3?)
F8 (50) Ditch (of earthwork, same as F4?)

Trench 5

F10 Ditch (of earthwork, same as F4?)

APPENDIX 3 Pottery catalogue

Trench 1

spoilheap 1 body sherd, TF5.
F3 U/S 5 body sherds, 1 cooking pot rim, TF1; 4 body sherds,
TF4; 1 body sherd, TF6.
F3 (56) 2 body sherds, TF1; 1 body sherd, TF4.
F3 (56/57) 3 body sherds, TF1; 1 body sherd, TF3; 4 body sherds,
TF4; 1 small rim fragment, TF8; 1 tile fragment.
F3 (57) 13 body sherds, 2 cooking pot rims, TF1; 4 body sherds,
1 cooking pot rim, 1 body sherd with internal thin glaze,
TF2; 2 body sherds, TF3; 9 body sherds, TF4; 1 tile
fragment.
F4 (53) 1 body sherd, TF1; 1 body sherd, TF7.

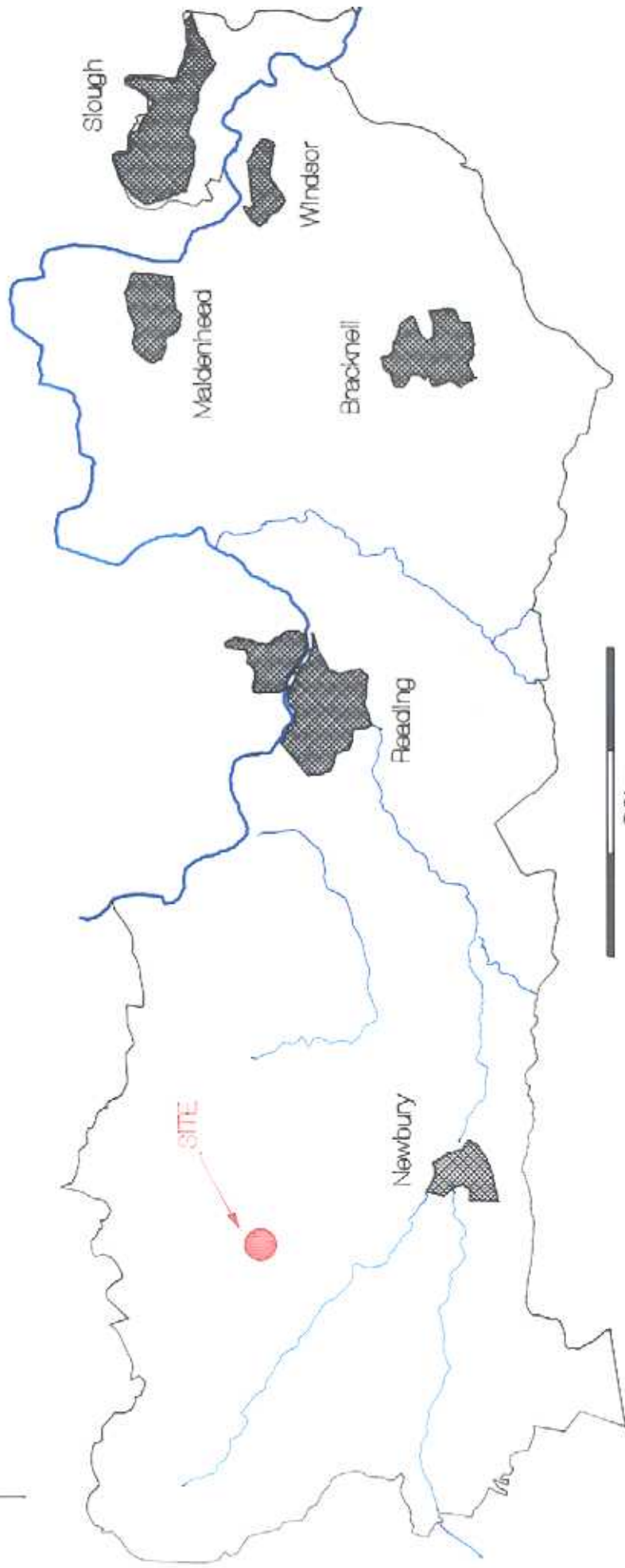
Trench 5*

spoilheap 1 body sherd, TF4.

Trench 8

spoilheap 4 body sherd, 1 thumbbed jug base, TF2.

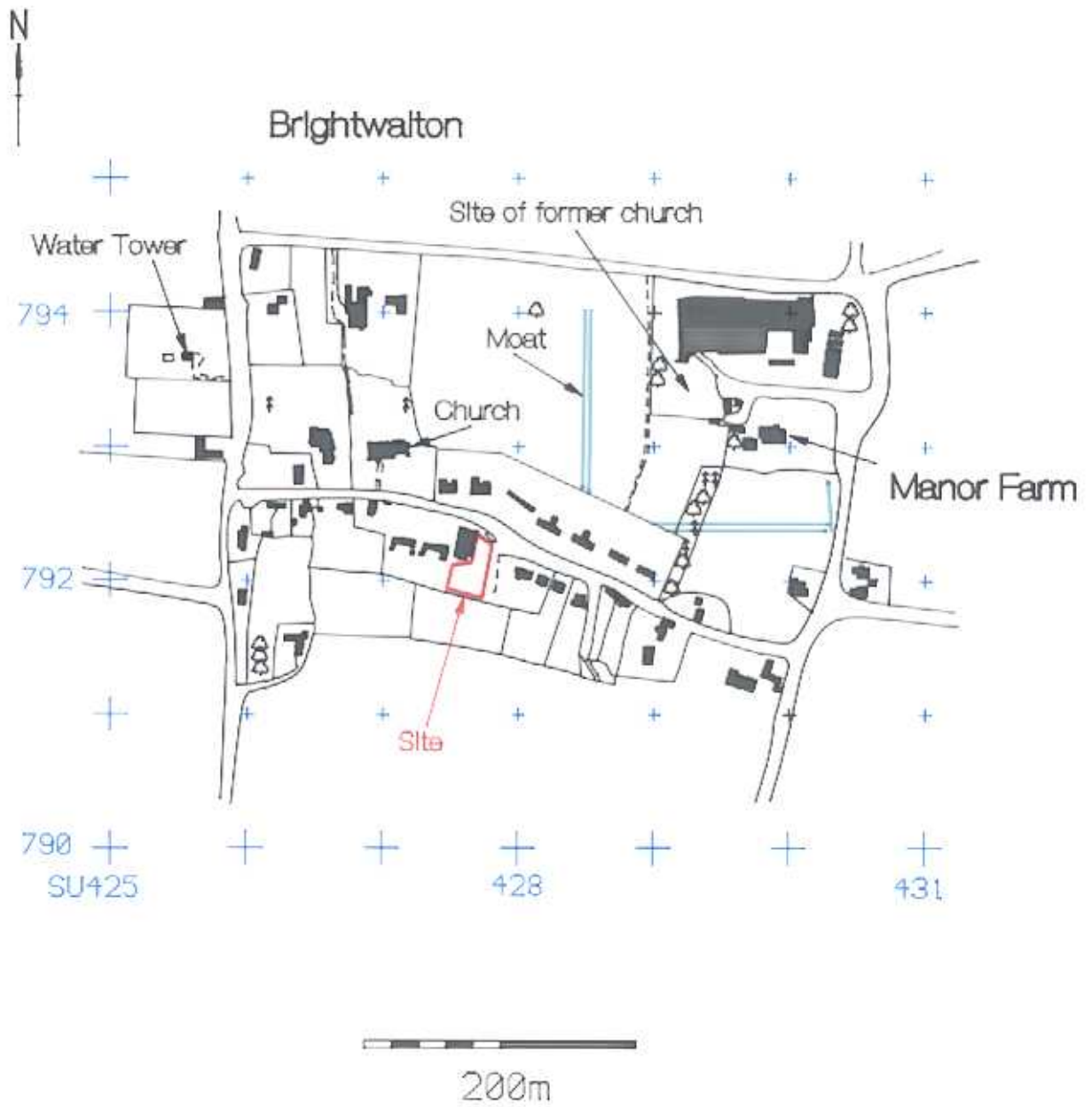
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Figure 1. Location of site within county.

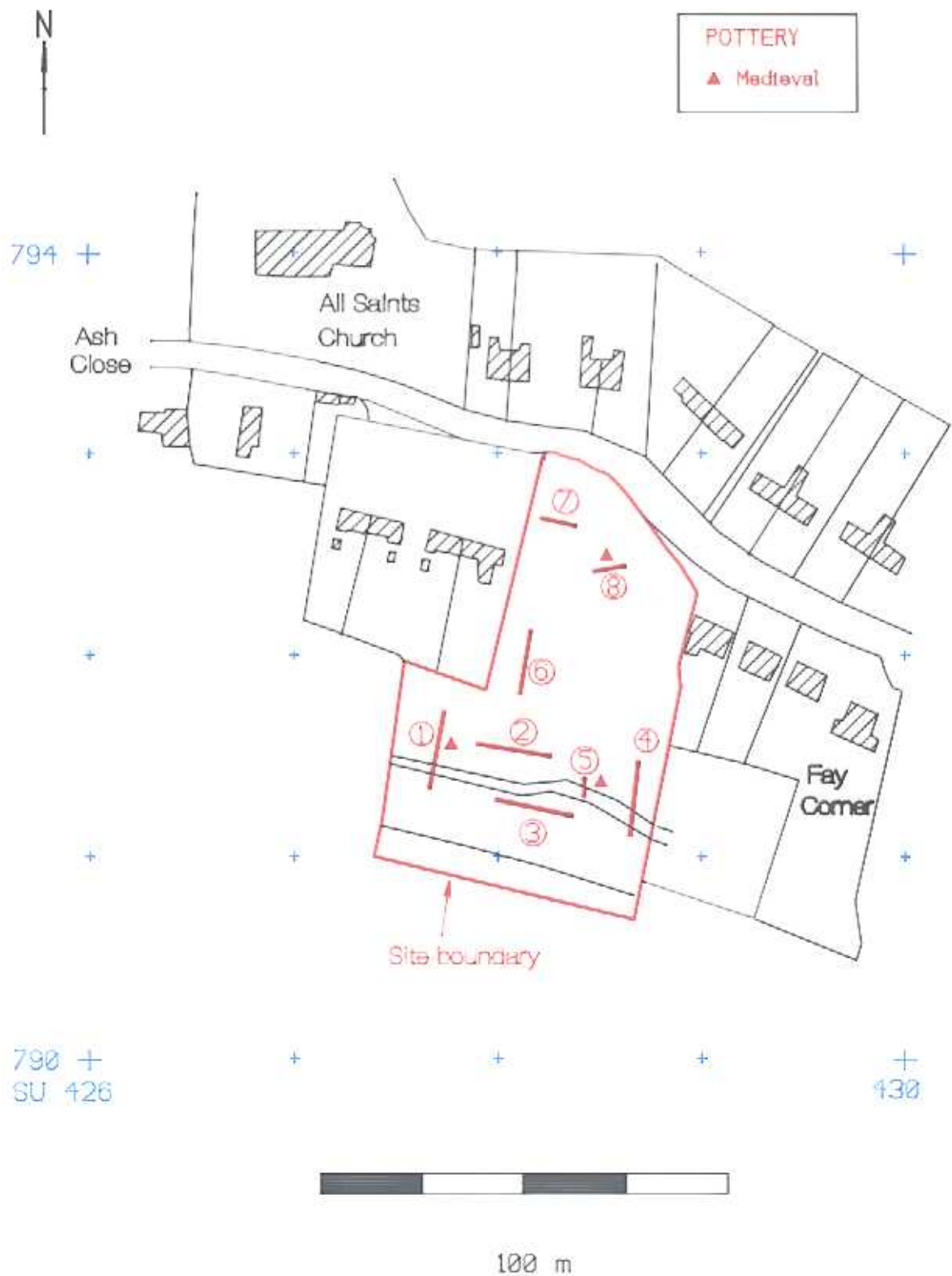
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Figure 2. Location of site in village.

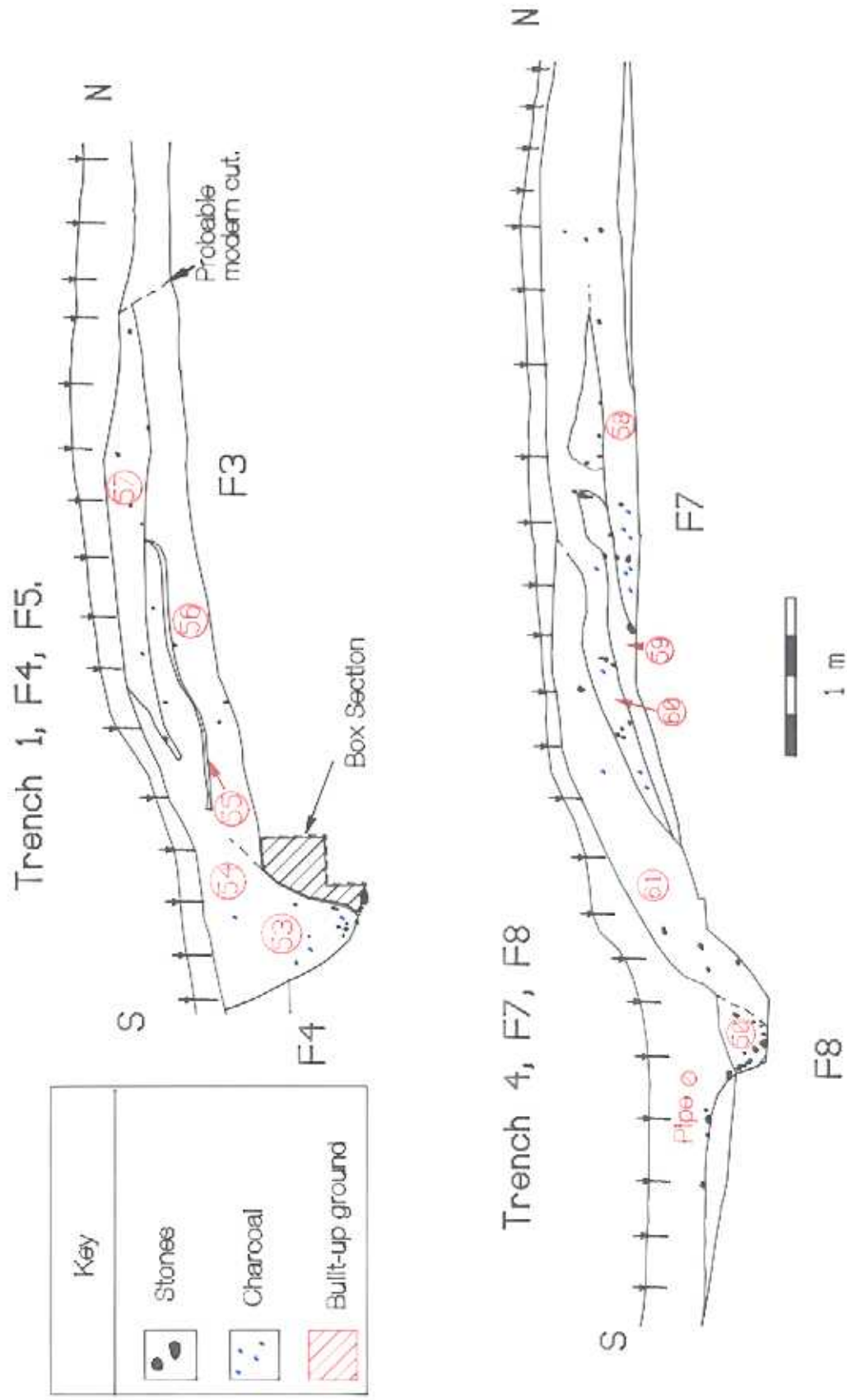
Old Coachworks, Brightwalton, 1994.



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Figure 3. Location of trenches and spoilheap.

Old Coachworks, Brightwalton, 1994



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Figure 4. Sections.



Plate 1

Old Coachworks, Brightwalton. Trench 3, looking west. Scale 2 m.



Plate 2

Old Coachworks, Brightwalton. Trench 1, Ditch F4 looking west. Vertical scale 0.5 m.



Plate 3

Old Coachworks, Brightwalton Trench 1. Bank F3 looking west.
Scale 2 m.



Plate 4

Old Coachworks, Brightwalton Trench 6. looking north. Scale 2 m.