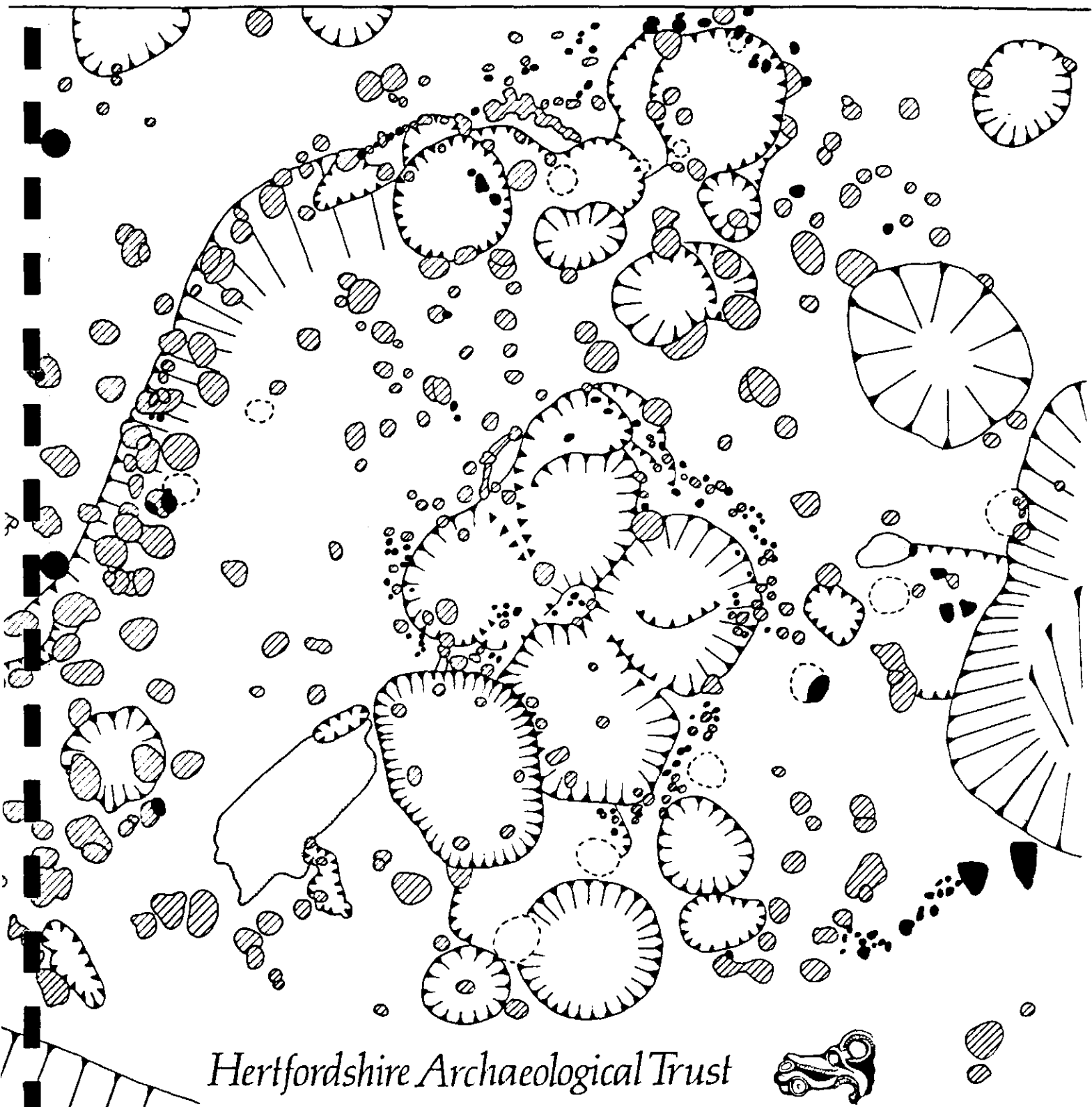


LAND ADJACENT TO THE PARISH CHURCH
MOOR END LANE, SHEPRETH

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



THE HERTFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST
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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

1 INTRODUCTION (Fig.1)

During August, 1995, the Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust (HAT) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land immediately west of the parish church, Moor End Lane, Shepreth, Cambridgeshire (TL 3925 4745). The work was commissioned in advance of a proposed new car park and a storage building. The land is currently in use as arable farmland.

2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The proposed site is located on flat low lying ground (15-20 m OD), which rises steadily southwards. The river Cam is 1.75 km to the north and west. The local geology comprises river terrace and chalky drift, with chalk to the east and west of the village.

Soils are of the Milton Association (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1:250,000), and comprise deep permeable calcareous fine loams, variably affected by groundwater, with some shallower well-drained soils over gravel in places. Complex soil patterns are known to occur locally. Immediately to the east and west of the village, the soils are of the Wantage 2 Association, described as well-drained calcareous silty soils and deep coarse loamy soils in places, over argillaceous chalk.

3 BACKGROUND

The proposed site is situated to the west of the medieval Church of All Saints (Cambridgeshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record (CCC SMR) No. 03061), and to the NW of a late 14th-15th century manor house (CCC SMR No.03188).

Evidence of prehistoric activity includes struck flint found locally. Iron Age and Roman occupation is also present in the area, although little evidence has been found in Shepreth itself. Anglo-Saxon remains have been found at Barwell, Orwell, Malton, Barrington, Harlton and Haslingfield.

The parish was held by the Abbey of Chatteris at the time of Domesday. By the 13th century, the parish had been divided into four estates, and moated sites to the east of the church most likely represent the remains of two of these manors.

Visits to the site in January 1995 by the CCC Archaeology Section produced post-medieval finds i.e. pottery, tile and glass, and occasional prehistoric struck flint.

A desk-based study has been undertaken by HAT (HAT Report No.130). The principal finding was the potential of the site for the preservation of early medieval remains associated with the church, and fronting onto the trackway of Moor End Lane.

4 METHOD OF WORK AND OBJECTIVES (Fig.2)

The evaluation was conducted according to a brief compiled by CCC Archaeology Section, and a specification prepared by HAT (the brief and specification will be deposited with the site archive).

The evaluation was designed to determine the location, extent, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains within the areas overlain by the new car park and storage building.

Two L-shaped trenches (Trenches 7 and 8, maximum lengths 15 m; widths 2 m) overlay the area of the proposed car park, and were cut close to the boundary with Moor End Lane.

Northwards, a third (Trench 6, length 10 m; width 2 m) examined the area of the proposed storage building.

The topsoil was mechanically excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil, and the exposed archaeological features were partially excavated so as to define and date them. During the early stages of the field work it was apparent that preservation was a viable option, therefore, the amount of hand-digging was reduced to a minimum.

Six test pits (two per trench) were hand-dug so as to sample the topsoil for finds. Forty five litres of soil from each test pit was sieved through a 10 mm mesh.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE (Fig.2)

In Trenches 7 and 8, 0.35 m of topsoil was removed by machine. Archaeological features cut the natural subsoil at a minimum depth of 18.15 m OD.

In Trench 6, 0.35 m of topsoil overlay a brown clayey loam layer (L110, 0.5 m thick). Both layers were removed by machine to reveal archaeological features cutting the natural subsoil at a depth of 0.85 m (18.00 m OD).

The natural subsoil comprises yellow-brown silty clay and chalk.

5.1 Prehistoric Finds

No prehistoric features were identified during the evaluation. Two struck flint flakes were recovered from the test-pit at the SW end of Trench 8, and the test pit at the NW end of Trench 6. A third was found during the excavation of Roman Ditch F102 (Trench 7).

5.2 Roman Features

Several features in Trenches 7 and 8 are tentatively assigned to the Roman period.

F100 is a substantial linear ditch (aligned NNW/SSE) which continued beyond the limits of Trench 8. It is 2.2 m wide, over 0.6 m deep, and backfilled with dark brownish-grey silty clay (L101). Fragments of clunch, brick and tile were found in the upper fill. Pottery from the ditch includes a rim derived from a 4th-century, straight-sided jar, and part of a base from a greyware bowl. Only seven sherds were found and some of the pottery is slightly abraded. Twenty-seven small fragments of animal bone were recovered, they possibly represent kitchen/table waste rather than butchers waste. Cow, sheep, horse and pig are present, although many of the fragments are too small to identify.

In Trench 7, two inter-cutting ditches (F115 and F102) are very substantial features, aligned almost at right-angles to Ditch F100. F102 (over 2 m wide) is the earlier ditch, and is truncated to the north by F115. Its fill comprises a backfilled deposit of dark yellowish-grey silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks and flint inclusions (L103). Nineteen sherds of Roman pottery (including a rim (shelly ware) and greyware sherds), large quantities of animal bone (150 fragments), and a small fragmentary iron object (unidentifiable) were recovered.

F 115 is parallel to F102 and truncates its northern side. No finds were recovered from the dark grey silty clay backfill (L116), but its alignment and proximity to F102 suggests it may represent a redigging or renewal of F102.

F104 is a short linear slot (length 2 m, depth 0.27 m) within Trench 8. It is slightly curving with rounded ends. Three Roman pottery sherds, including fragments of greyware, were recovered during the excavation of the silty clay backfill (L105).

Isolated Roman finds were also recovered during the sieving of the topsoil. A greyware rim was found in topsoil at the SW end of Trench 7, and a small piece of samian was found at the NE end. A sherd of shelly ware pottery was also retrieved from the NE end of Trench 8.

5.3 Post-Medieval Finds

Not surprisingly, post-medieval finds were recovered during the sieving of the topsoil. The finds include tile, brick, glass and a few abraded pottery sherds (Concordance of Finds).

5.4 Undated Features

F113, Trench 8, is a ditch (1.6 m wide), aligned N/S. It continues beyond the limits of the trench. It had been rapidly backfilled with dark grey clayey loam (L114). A small fragment of animal bone and a medieval rim sherd from a jar were the only finds.

F106, Trench 6, is a very shallow linear ditch, aligned NW/SE. Its fill (L107) contained no finds.

Two small post holes (F108 and F110) were found in the Trench 7. Both are shallow and c.0.25 m in diameter. No finds were recovered during their excavation, and the trench was not large enough to expose a building plan, if present.

Two small gullies (not numbered) were not investigated during the evaluation. A shallow gully in Trench 8, aligned E/W, was truncated by Ditch F100 and may be of natural origin. A second, more substantial, gully was revealed in Trench 7, immediately south of F108 and F110. It was comparable to F106, Trench 6.

6 DISCUSSION

The low density of struck flint recovered during the evaluation is probably not significant, and is probably not indicative of an adjacent site.

The most substantial features are the three Roman ditches in Trenches 7 and 8. The ditches, notably F100 and F102, are large and contain many finds. They likely represent enclosure ditches, such as might encircle a farmstead, as opposed to field boundary ditches. Finds of Roman pottery and large quantities of animal bone suggest domestic activity, and the presence of brick and tile indicate former buildings. Little direct evidence of structures was found, apart from two undated post holes and a small slot containing Roman pottery.

It is difficult to interpret the archaeological features contained within Trenches 7 and 8 because the trenches are little more than 'keyholes' on the underlying archaeological remains.

Saxon and medieval remains were not found despite the probability of their being present.

7 CONCLUSION

Substantial Roman remains exist below the topsoil in the area overlain by Trenches 7 and 8. The remains are 0.35 m below the present ground surface, at a depth of 18.15 m OD.

In the area overlain by Trench 6, less substantial archaeological remains occur 0.85 m below the present ground surface, at a depth of 18.00 m OD.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Trust is grateful Shepreth Parish Church Council for their cooperation and funding of the evaluation. In particular the Trust would like to thank Church Wardens, Messrs. Brian Clutterbuck and J R L Brashaw, for their assistance and support. The Trust would also like to thank Mr Tom Pepper for his co-operation.

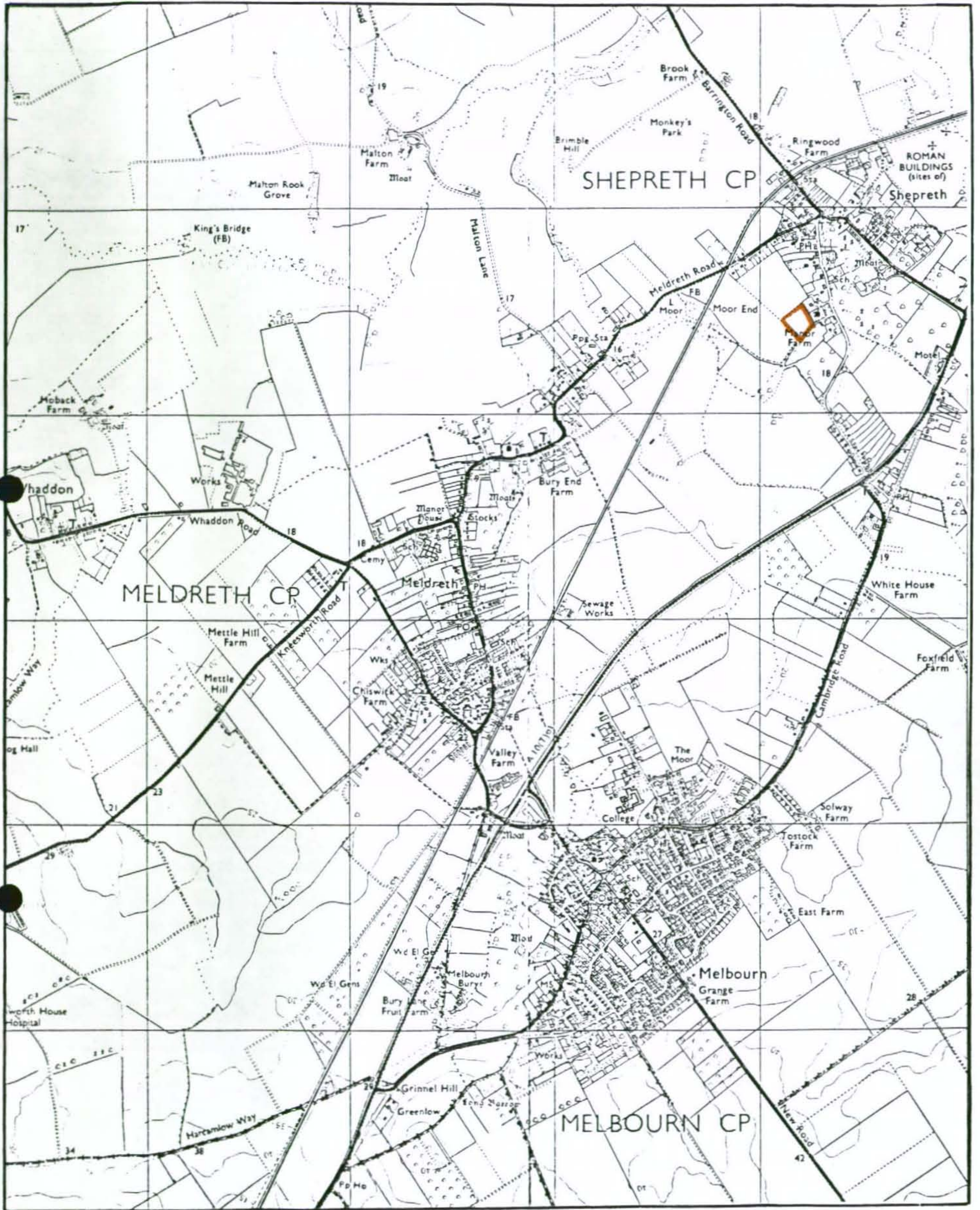
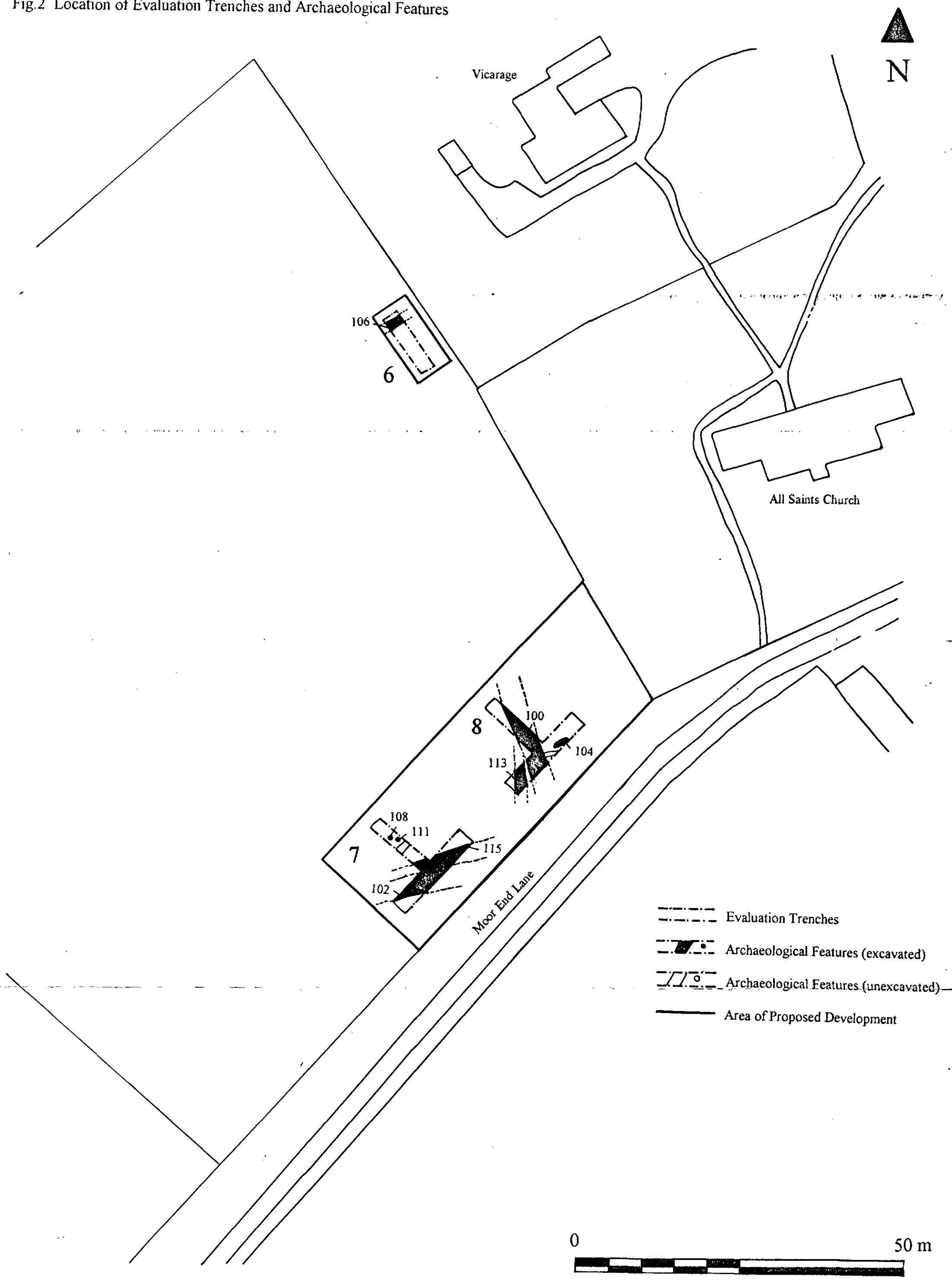


Fig.1 Site Location Plan

Fig.2 Location of Evaluation Trenches and Archaeological Features



- Evaluation Trenches
- /- Archaeological Features (excavated)
- /- Archaeological Features (unexcavated)
- Area of Proposed Development



LAND ADJACENT TO SHEPRETH PARISH CHURCH, CONCORDANCE OF FINDS

CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION	TR	SPOT DATE	POTTERY	BUILDING MATERIAL	FLINT	OTHER
South East	Test Pit	6		2 sherds (?post-med abraded)	2 small tile frags		
North West	Test Pit	6		1 sherd (post-med abraded)		1 flake	
North East	Test Pit	7		1 sherd 1 sherd samian	3 small brick/tile fragments		1 small strip of iron 1 glass fragment
South West	Test Pit	7		1 sherd (Roman abraded)			
North East	Test Pit	8		1 sherd (Roman abraded)	1 tile fragment		
South West	Test Pit	8			2 brick fragments	1 flake	
101	Fill of ditch 100	8	Roman ?3rd-4th century	7 sherds (some abraded)	2 tile fragments		27 bone fragments
103	Fill of ditch 102	7	Roman	19 sherds		1 flake	1 iron fragment 150 bone fragments
105	Fill of pit 104	8		3 sherds (Roman)			1 bone fragment
114	Fill of ditch 113	8		1 sherd (Med)			1 bone fragment