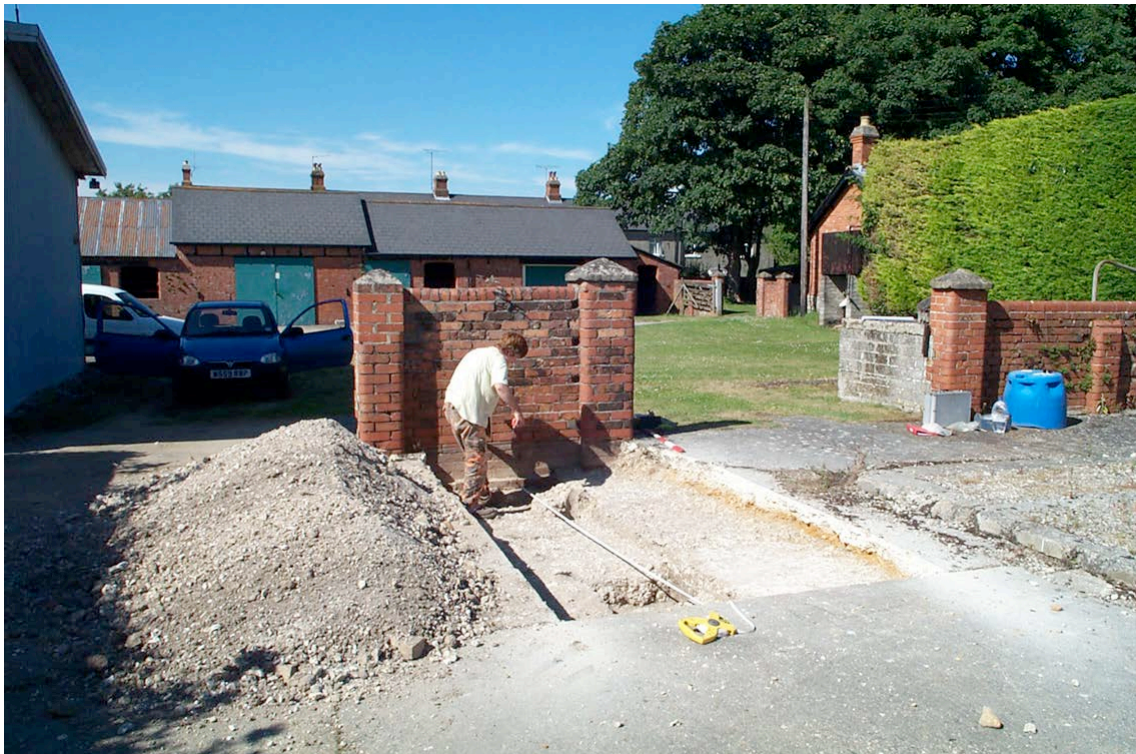


**FORDINGTON FARM, ALINGTON AVENUE,
DORCHESTER, DORSET
Archaeological Evaluation**



Report No. 53197/2/1

July 2005

Fordington Farm, Alington Avenue, Dorchester, Dorset

Archaeological Evaluation, July 2005

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SUMMARY

In July 2005, Terrain Archaeology carried out an evaluation of land at Fordington Farm, Alington Avenue, Dorchester (NGR SY70058976) proposed for new development. A single small trench in the disused farmyard was excavated. This revealed a buried post-medieval soil layer above the natural chalk, sealed beneath a flint cobbled yard surface, which, in turn, was sealed by the existing concrete yard surface. The only features revealed were a modern drain pipe trench and a modern posthole. A small quantity of residual prehistoric flint and Roman, medieval and post-medieval pottery was recovered.

INTRODUCTION

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by J W Finding, through his agent David Wren, to undertake an archaeological evaluation of the farmyard of Fordington Farm, Alington Avenue, Dorchester. The site is subject to Planning Application 1/E/2005/1040 for the erection of three new dwellings.

This archaeological evaluation was requested following advice from Steven Wallis, Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council, in line with Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Archaeology and Planning).

An archaeological evaluation is a limited programme of intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site. If such archaeological remains are present, field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context, as appropriate.

The site lies within the farmyard of Fordington Farm (Figure 2). The present farmyard is much reduced and is covered in concrete. Fordington Farm lies on the southeastern outskirts of Dorchester (at Ordnance Survey NGR SY70058976), on a gently rounded ridge of Upper Chalk at a height of about 68.5 m above OD (Figure 1).

The fieldwork was carried out on 14th July 2005 by Peter Bellamy and Rebecca Montague.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge Steve Wallis (Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council), Mr David Wren, Mr John Finding and Jo Draper for their help and cooperation during this project. In particular, we wish to thank Mr Finding for providing water and ice-cream during a very hot day!

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies on an E–W ridge which has been the focus for much prehistoric activity and there have been a number of major excavations in the vicinity. Immediately to the east of Fordington Farm, a large site at Alington Avenue was excavated by Wessex Archaeology in 1985 (Davies *et al.* 2002) and further to the east, there was another major excavation by Wessex Archaeology at ‘Flagstones’, in advance of the construction of the by-pass (Smith *et al.* 1997). Just to the southwest of the site, the Fordington Farm round barrow was excavated in 1988 (Bellamy 1991).

The earliest evidence for activity on the ridge is dated about 3300–3000 BC, when a large circular interrupted ditch enclosure was constructed at Flagstones and a long barrow was built at Alington Avenue. About 400 years later, there was another period of major monument construction along the ridge, with the first phase of the Mount Pleasant henge at the east end and the Maumbury henge at the west end (Wainwright 1979, Bradley 1976). By the end of the third millennium BC, a linear round barrow cemetery was established along the ridge and this was enlarged and elaborated over the succeeding centuries. The cemetery included, from east to west, Conquer Barrow, a round barrow constructed in the centre of the Flagstones enclosure (Smith *et al.* 1997), a double barrow at Alington Avenue (Davies *et al.* 2002), and the 'Two Barrows' (including the Fordington Farm round barrow) to the west of Fordington Farm (Bellamy 1991, Green 1979, Sparey-Green 1994).

There has been very little evidence recovered for contemporary settlement, during the period of monument building in the third and fourth millennia BC. Most of the monuments appear to have been set in a largely pastoral landscape, but during the early second millennium BC, there appears to have been an increase in arable agriculture along the ridge. No evidence of Early or Middle Iron Age settlement has been found but two Middle-Late Iron Age burials have been found at Alington Avenue.

Traces of a Late Iron Age settlement have been uncovered at Flagstones (Smith *et al.* 1997) and at the Trumpet Major (RCHME 1970, 575), associated with a field system, parts of which have been excavated at Flagstones and Alington Avenue. This change in settlement pattern associated with the establishment of formal fields was accompanied by changes in the agricultural pattern, with some arable areas reverting to grassland and other pasture areas ploughed up.

During the late 1st or early 2nd century AD, a small rural Roman farmstead within a large D-shaped enclosure was established at Alington Avenue with a ditched driveway running along the ridge, passing close to the edge of the Fordington Farm round barrow. At the end of the 2nd century AD, the D-shaped enclosure was enlarged and a Roman cemetery was established within it. By the 4th century AD, the Alington Avenue settlement had reduced in size and there were some changes in the field pattern.

In the post-Roman and Saxon period, perhaps dating to the 7th century AD, there was a small settlement at Alington Avenue and a contemporary cemetery at the Trumpet Major (Green 1984). During the medieval period the whole of this area was incorporated into the strips of the open fields of Fordington. The open fields were not enclosed until the 1870s and four new farms were created by the Duchy of Cornwall, including Fordington Farm. The present farmyard is much reduced in size and many of the original buildings have been demolished.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of the archaeological works was to evaluate the archaeological potential of the site, that is, to appraise the nature, extent, level of preservation, and importance of any archaeological deposits.

The evaluation aimed to record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the works in order to provide sufficient data to assess the archaeological significance of the site.

In particular, the evaluation aimed to establish whether the natural chalk had been disturbed and terraced during the construction of the concrete farmyard in the 1930s.

METHODS

The archaeological works were undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation*. No formal written brief

was produced for this evaluation, but the scope of the works and the location of the trench were outlined in a letter from Steven Wallis to David Wren, dated 6 July 2005 (copy in archive). A single evaluation trench measuring 4 m by 1.2 m across was to be excavated in the northern end of the yard immediately south of a low brick wall.

The evaluation comprised intrusive investigation in the form of a single machine-excavated trial trench (Trench 1), in the northern end of the concrete yard (Figure 2; Plates 1 & 2). Prior to the evaluation, the concrete surface of the yard was removed by the Client, over an area of 3.9 m by 2.1 m in the proposed location of the evaluation trench, leaving the underlying hardcore base *in situ* below.

The hardcore base of the yard was removed by hand over the whole area of concrete removal (Plate 3), then a trench 3.9 m by 1.1 m was excavated by hand down on to the top of the natural chalk (Plate 4).

All archaeological deposits and features exposed during the works were cleaned by hand, then planned and recorded. Excavation of archaeological deposits and features was limited to resolving questions relating to their date, nature, extent and condition.

All deposits revealed, irrespective of their apparent archaeological significance, were recorded using components of the Terrain Archaeology recording system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records.

The records have been compiled in a stable, cross-referenced and fully indexed archive in accordance with current UKIC guidelines and the requirements of the receiving museum, Dorset County Museum, Dorchester.

RESULTS

Natural Deposits

Natural chalk bedrock (115) was exposed at the base of the trench at a height of about 68.25 m above OD, between 0.35–0.45 m below the present concrete yard surface (Figure 3).

Agricultural Soils

The natural chalk was sealed beneath a 0.15–0.25 m thick layer of greyish-brown silty clay loam soil with occasional small chalk pieces and flint pieces (104). This layer became thicker towards the north. Parts of this soil layer were chalkier and were numbered 105. A small irregularity in the underlying chalk surface (113) was found in the northern part of the trench, filled with a very similar material (114) to the main part of the soil layer 104/105. A small quantity of finds was recovered from this layer, including medieval and 19th century pottery, clay tobacco pipe stem fragments, brick and slate fragments, and some residual prehistoric flint (Table 1).

Yard surfaces and modern features

Cutting through soil layer 104/105 into the natural chalk, was a drain trench (111), running east to west, containing a salt-glazed ceramic drain pipe and filled with dark brown silty clay loam soil with moderate chalk pieces (112). This feature was not completely excavated (Figure 3; Plate 4). It produced a single sherd of residual Roman pottery.

In the southern end of Trench 1, the drain trench 111 and soil layer 104/105 was sealed by a thin layer of hard-packed chalk (106), which appeared to be the remnants of a surface. Immediately above this hard-packed chalk layer in the central part of Trench 1, was a hard surface of small flint nodules (103) (Figure 3; Plate 3). These two surfaces may be the remains of the original late 19th century farm yard.

The two surfaces 103 and 106 survived immediately below the hardcore base (102) for the existing concrete yard surface (101).

Finds

The finds recovered from the excavation are presented in Table 1.

context	Roman pot		Med pot		Post-med pot		Clay pipe		CBM		Slate		Flint		Glass		Iron No.	Animal bone	
	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)		No.	Wt (g)
103							1	2	2	145			1	8					
104			2	3	11	64	4	12	2	15	2	34	4	253	2	2	1	3	2
106					1	1			1	8									
112	1	7							1	3	4	21	1	3				3	7
110																	1		
<i>Total</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>171</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>256</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>9</i>

Table 1: Finds assemblage by context.

Pottery

The fifteen sherds (75 g) of pottery recovered from the evaluation were a small mixed assemblage of mainly small abraded sherds dating from the Roman to the post-medieval periods. The Roman pottery consisted of a single Black-Burnished ware base sherd from context 112. Two medieval sherds were recovered from context 104: one is a small fragment of a strip jug and the other is a thin late medieval coarseware sherd. The remainder of the assemblage comprised small coarseware sherds, with one small sherd of 19th century industrial whiteware from context 104.

It is likely that most of this pottery was derived from manuring of the fields, prior to the construction of Fordington Farm.

Other finds

Five stem fragments of clay tobacco pipe were recovered from contexts 103 and 104. None were closely datable.

Six pieces of ceramic building material (CBM) were recovered, consisting of four small brick fragments and two fragments of salt glazed drain pipe (from context 103). Six small fragments of roofing slates were found in context 104 and 112.

Six pieces of worked flint were recovered. These comprised four heavily patinated flakes of Bronze Age character, an undiagnostic lightly patinated flake, and an unpatinated rough core tool (from context 104). These flints were all residual.

Two pieces of window glass were found in context 104.

The iron objects comprised one nail from context 104 and a hacksaw blade from context 110.

CONCLUSIONS

The site lies in an area rich in archaeological remains. Immediately to the east of Fordington Farm lies the multiperiod site of Alington Avenue (Davies *et al.* 2002), but the density of archaeological remains appears to decrease to the west of the Alington Avenue site (Figure 1). For example, evaluation of the area of the present Sandringham Sports Field, just to the east of Fordington Farm, revealed very little *in situ* archaeology (Woodward *et al.* 1986). The lack of any prehistoric or Roman features (and only a small quantity of residual prehistoric flint and Roman pottery) found during the present evaluation appears to confirm this trend.

However, the small size of the trench means that this has not been conclusively proved and the negative results of the evaluation do not preclude the existence of archaeological features elsewhere on the proposed development site. The trench revealed that the natural chalk survived beneath a post-medieval ploughsoil, upon which the 19th century farm yard was constructed. Therefore, the construction of the farm yard had not disturbed the upper part of the chalk, so potentially it is possible that archaeological features could still survive intact in this area. It is unclear whether the same stratigraphic sequence survives across the whole area of the yard, as there is some suggestion that the yard has been terraced into the slope. The topography of this area slopes down slightly to the north but the concrete yard surface is level. The northern end of the yard is at a slightly higher level than the surrounding ground surface, suggesting it has been built up here and, conversely, to the south, it may have been slightly cut into the chalk. However, this terracing appears to have been very slight and it is unlikely to have completely destroyed any potential archaeological features.

The present concrete yard surface is constructed on top of the 19th century yard.

PROJECT ARCHIVE

The archive (Terrain Archaeology Project No. 53197) will be deposited with Dorset County Museum, which has agreed in principle to accept the archive, subject to fulfilment of the Museum's requirements of the preparation of archaeological archives. A copy of the microfilmed archive will be deposited with the National Monuments Record.

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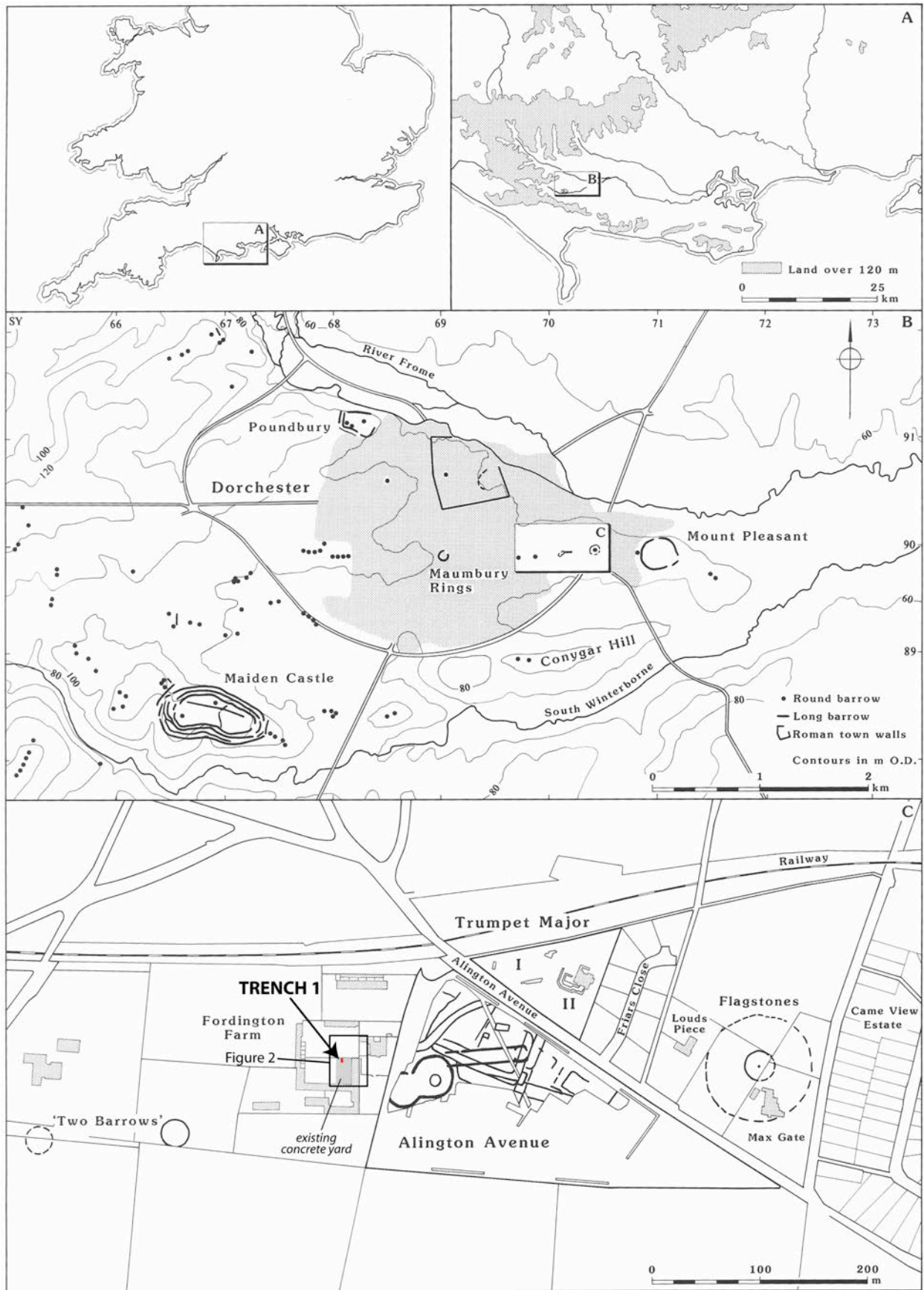


Figure 1: Location Map (adapted from Davies et al. 2002)

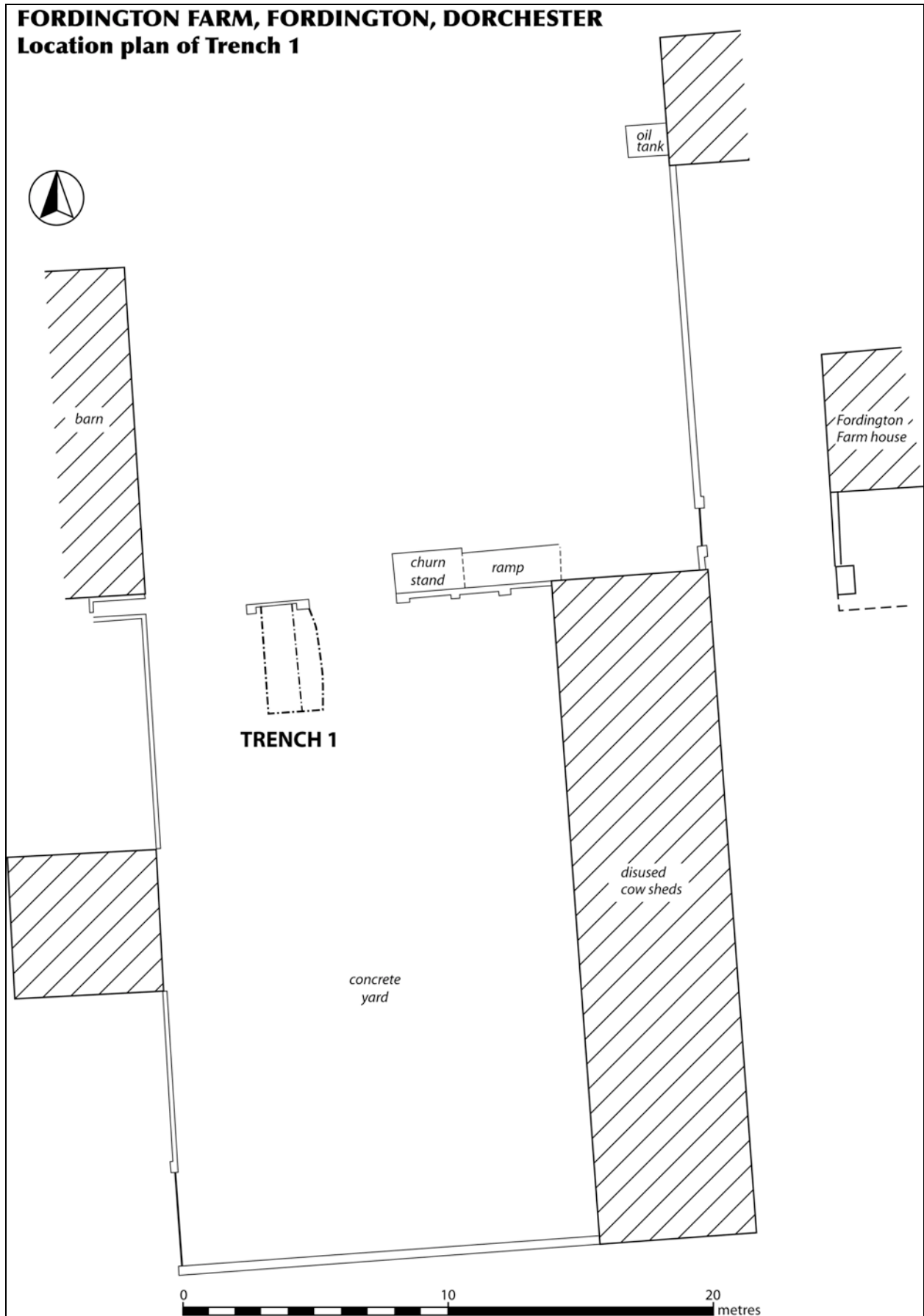
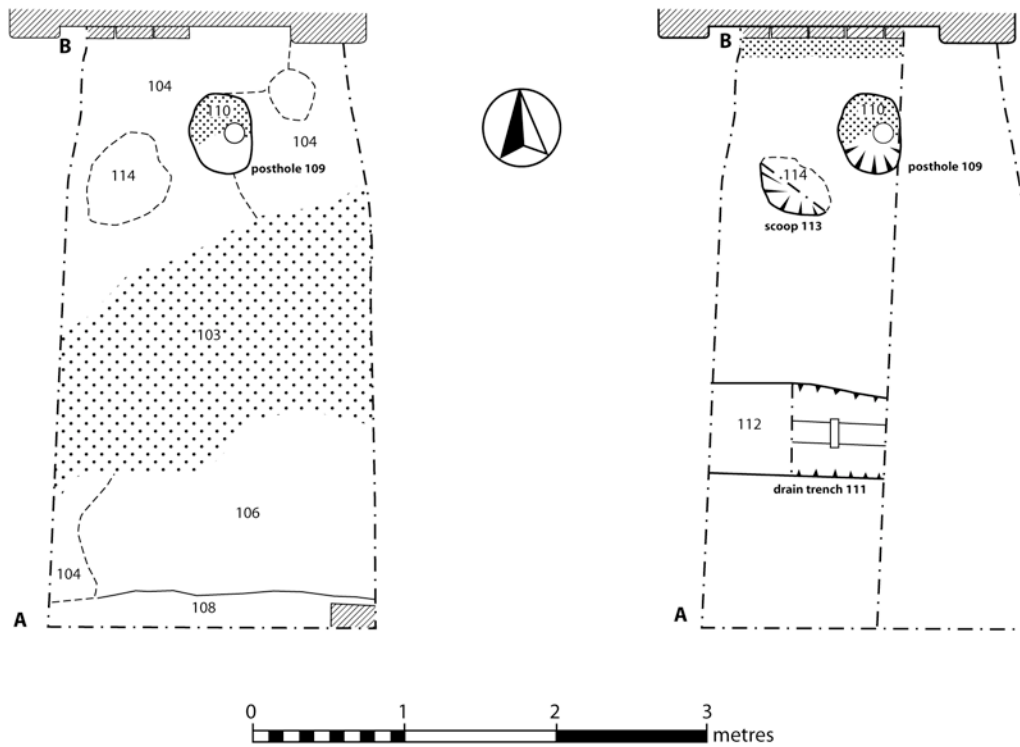


Figure 2: Plan of site (based on a survey provided by the client)

FORDINGTON FARM, DORCHESTER

Plan of Trench 1 after removal of hardcore

Plan of Trench 1 after excavation



East-facing section of Trench 1

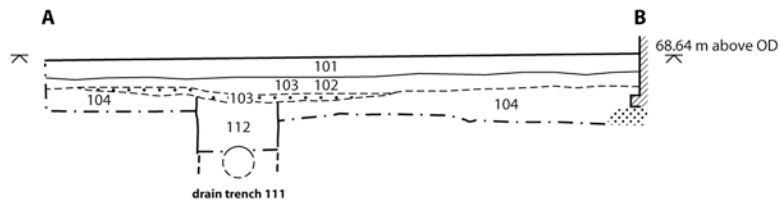


Figure 3: Plans and section of Trench 1.



Plate 1: General view of farm yard with Trench 1 behind the short length of brick wall to the right. Viewed from northeast.



Plate 2: General view of Trench 1 from the south.



Plate 3: Trench 1 after removal of concrete and hardcore, showing flint surface 103. Viewed from north.



Plate 4: Trench 1 after excavation. Viewed from north.



Plate 5: Trench 1 after excavation, showing east-facing section. Viewed from east.