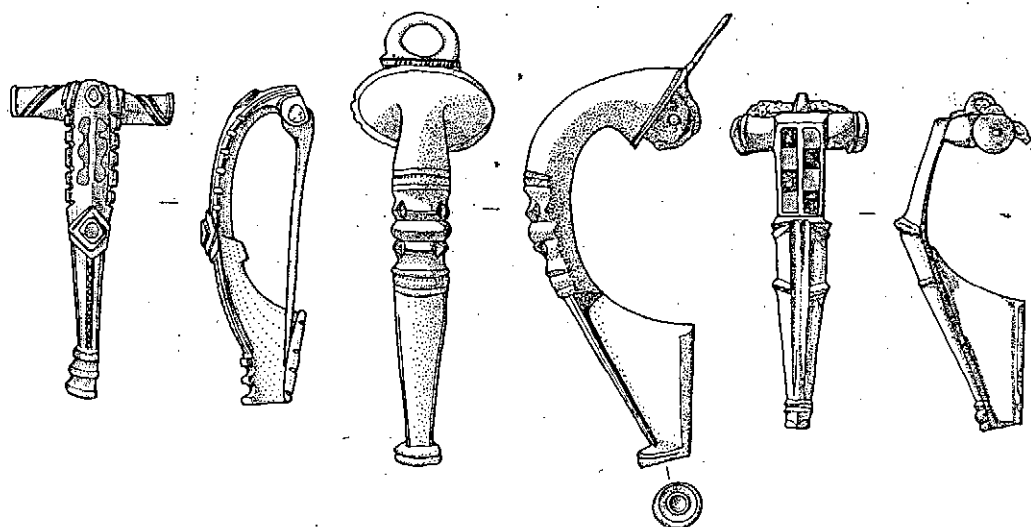


SWA 19552
EWA 7639
MWA 10262
FWA 5294

Archaeological recording at
117 Tiddington Road,
Stratford-upon-Avon,
Warwickshire



Report 0559

December 2005

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Report 0559
December 2005

Warwickshire Museum Field Services
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Summary

Archaeological excavations at 117 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, adjacent to the building plot excavated in 1988 in the centre of Tiddington Roman settlement, revealed a small number of mid/late 1st-century AD features to the north-west of the ditched 1st to 2nd-century enclosure sequence examined in 1988. The area appears to have remained undeveloped thereafter and no further trace of Anglo-Saxon activity was identified.

1. Introduction

1.1 Scheduled Monument Consent has been granted by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (HSD 9/2/6740 and HSD 9/2/1155PT6) and planning permission has been granted by Stratford-upon-Avon District Council (04/03523/FUL), for the erection of a new garage and stable block, conservatory and porch at 117 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon. The development site lies within a Romano-British settlement, parts of which are protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Warwickshire 184) under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979. It was a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent and Planning Permission that the applicant secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, in accordance with a brief prepared by the Planning Archaeologist, to be carried out in conjunction with the development.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of the excavation of the foundation trenches for the proposed garage and stable block and the observation of all other ground disturbance associated with the development was commissioned from the Warwickshire Museum Field Archaeology Projects Group and carried out in July 2005. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon under the site code TN05.

2. Location

17055736 2.1 The development site lies on the north side of the Tiddington Road, at national grid reference SP 1713 5710 in the parish of Stratford-upon-Avon. The River Avon flows from north-east to south-west some 400m to the north. The site was previously in use as an area of lawn to the rear of a house.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is First/Second Terrace River Gravels (British Geological Survey 1974).

3. Archaeological and historical background

3.1 The earliest evidence for human activity in the general area is a Palaeolithic hand axe found in about 1930 during the construction of 80 Tiddington Road (Warwickshire Sites and Monuments Record Ref WA 893). This is almost certainly a redeposited find in the gravel terrace and does not indicate a site of this period.

3.2 The most important remains in the vicinity are those of a Romano-British settlement (SMR WA 4469), covering an estimated 22ha on the south bank of the River Avon (Fig 1). It appears to have grown up where a road along the south side of the river, following the line of the modern Tiddington Road, met another running south-east to north-west down to a ford. The ford was probably at the place where Roman coins and brooches were dredged out of the river in 1982.

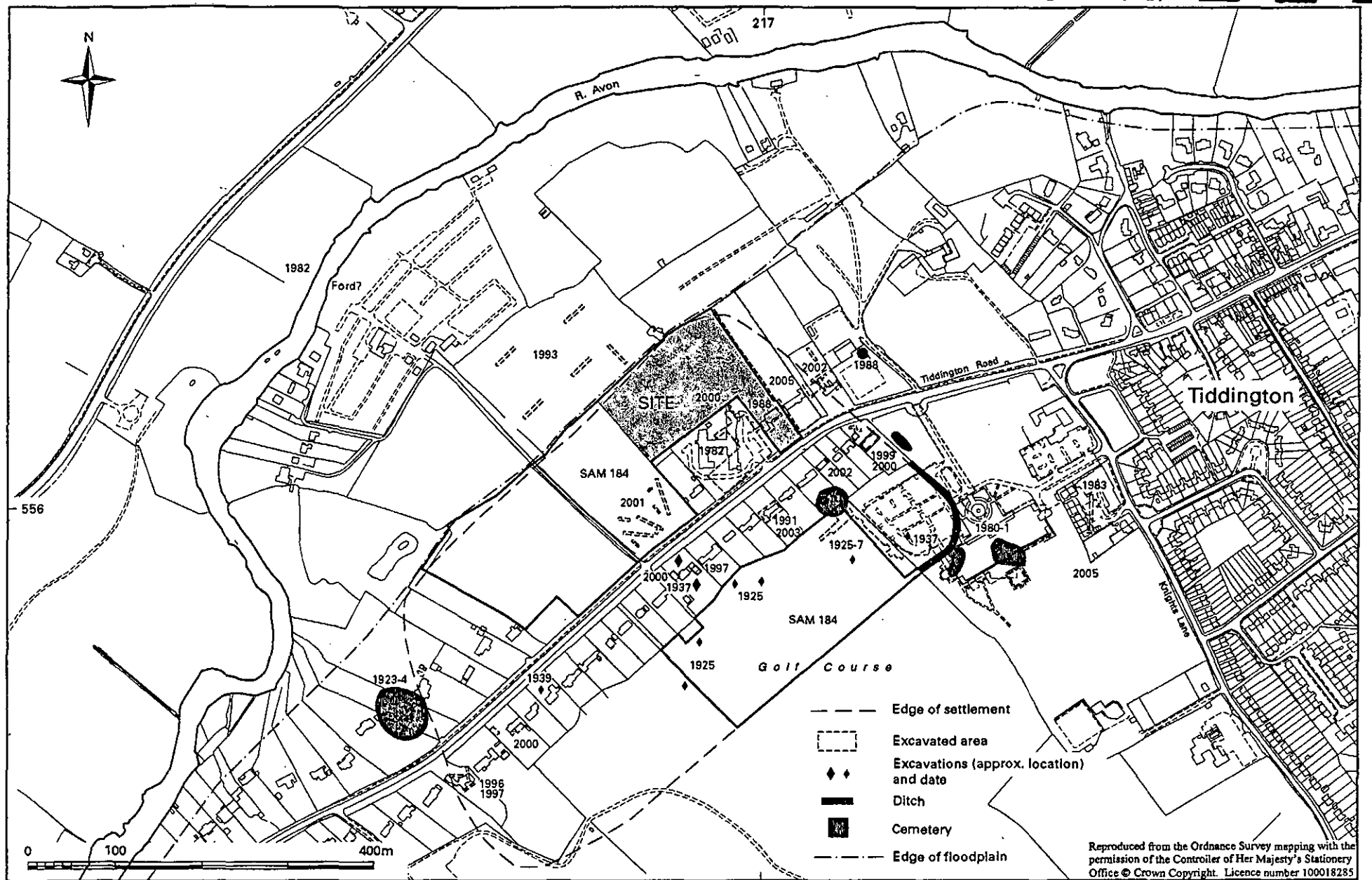


Fig 1: Tiddington Roman settlement and location of site

3.3 It seems likely that the village came into existence at the very end of the Iron Age, about AD 30-50, just before the arrival of the Roman army, but it is possible that it began a little later around a Roman fort set to dominate the river crossing. Whatever its origin it grew rapidly through the late 1st and 2nd centuries, serving as a market for the farms in the vicinity, clustered on the easily worked soils of the gravel terraces alongside the river. The village was itself linked by Roman roads to the main Roman towns in the area at Alcester and Chesterton-on-Fosse. The main road from the Fosse to Alcester by-passed Tiddington using another ford downstream by Clopton Bridge; and it seems to have been the rise in importance of this, the "Straet-ford", which led to the abandonment of the Tiddington site at the end of the Roman period and the development of modern Stratford in its current position.

3.4 The first modern indications of the existence of the settlement came in the 18th and 19th centuries when large numbers of Roman coins were collected from the fields at Tiddington. Systematic investigation began in the 1920s when housing development spreading along the Tiddington Road uncovered Roman remains. In 1923 a cemetery of 220 burials was encountered under 77 Tiddington Road (SMR WA 1014). These excavations also produced some Iron Age pottery (SMR WA 1064) [but the suggestion that there were also Anglo Saxon finds (SMR WA 6268) is unsubstantiated]. In 1925-7 the construction of the golf course revealed more Romano-British burials and the remains of buildings. Further excavation work was carried out in 1937-8 at 102 Tiddington Road and in 1939 at 84 (SMR WA 1072).

3.5 In 1980-1 a large scale excavation was carried out in advance of the construction of new offices for the NFU Mutual and Avon Insurance on a 4ha site on the east side of the settlement. This revealed dense Roman occupation from the 1st century AD to the 4th century when a large defensive ditch was dug round the settlement. The houses of the settlement were mostly of timber with thatched roofs, although one large stone house was also found. The plots also contained outbuildings, corn drying ovens, wells and rubbish pits, and there were streets paved with gravel. Outside the settlement, areas of cemetery, rubbish pits and field system were located. In 1983 a small excavation in advance of the construction of Tiddington Court on Knights Lane, adjacent to the NFUMAI site, traced further rubbish pits and a corndrying oven/malting kiln alongside a trackway running eastwards from the settlement.

3.6 In 1982 another large area, within the settlement to the north of the Tiddington Road, was excavated in advance of the building of the Reading Court sheltered housing. Here also dense Roman occupation dating from the 1st century AD to the mid-3rd century was found. The earliest buildings were timber roundhouses surrounded by animal enclosures. In the 2nd century paved roads were laid out accompanied by more timber buildings, now rectangular, of a more Romanised form. Two pottery kilns, one late 1st-century, the other early 2nd-century were also found. After the early 3rd century no further buildings were constructed, but the roads continued in use and some late (4th-century) burials were deposited alongside them.

3.7 As a result of the 1980-1983 excavations the importance of the site, both to the history of Stratford and Warwickshire, and as a well-preserved example of a little understood type of Romano-British settlement, was recognised and the undeveloped parts of the settlement were given legal protection as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Warwickshire No. 184). Since 1990 a number of observations and small excavations have been carried out on the settlement, mainly in advance of building work, and these have tended to confirm the conclusions of the earlier work.

3.8 In 1988 an area just larger than the footprint of the present house standing at 117 Tiddington Road was excavated revealing an assortment of Romano-British features including a ditched enclosure sequence dating to the 1st and early 2nd-century AD and two probably 4th-century AD inhumation burials. A possible early Anglo-Saxon

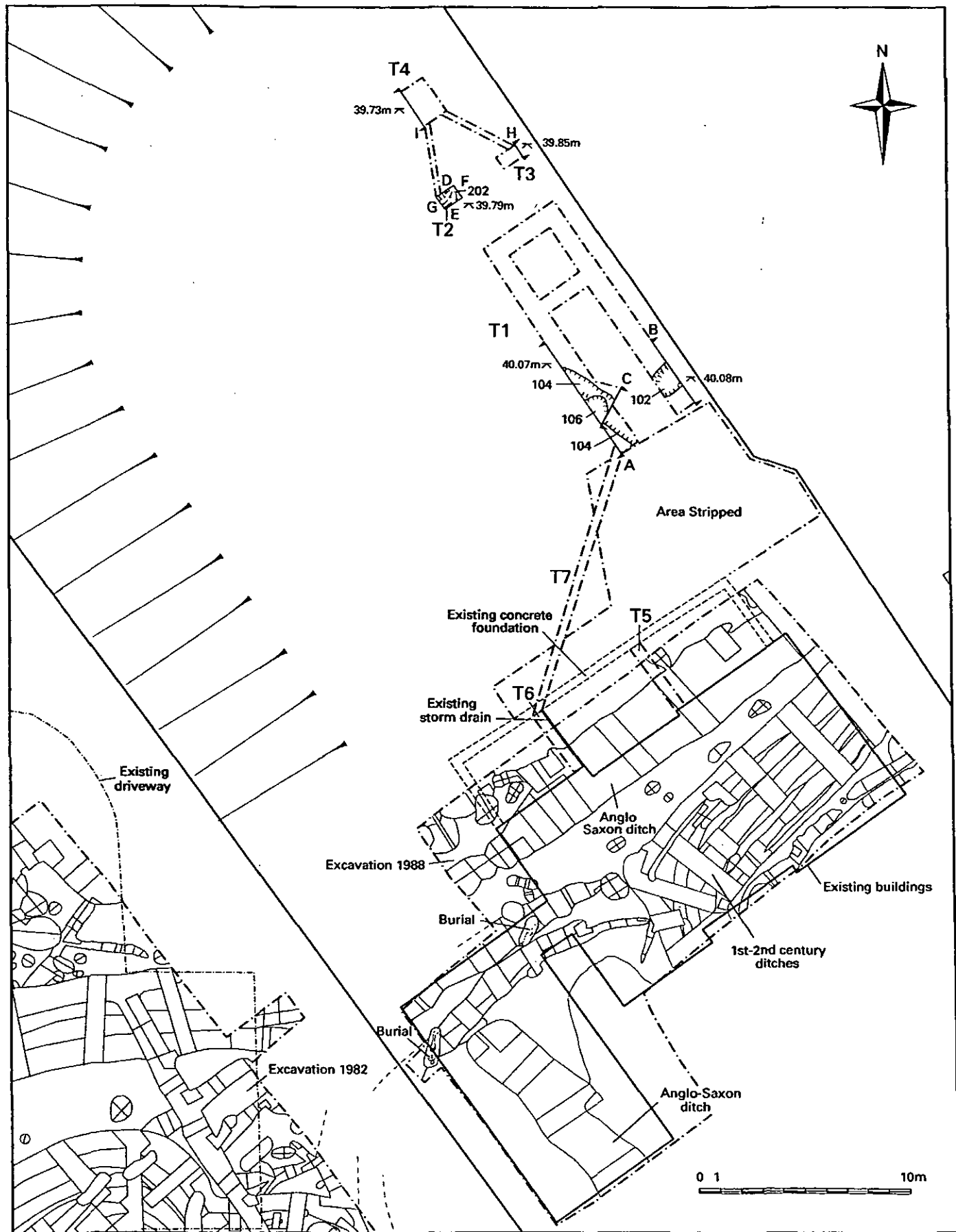


Fig 2: Trenches examined in 2005 along with 1982 and 1988 excavated areas

enclosure ditch aligned at right angles to the Tiddington Road was also recorded (Warwickshire Museum 1988). Further 1st-century ditches and the north-east corner of the Anglo-Saxon enclosure which therefore was c 75m across, were examined during excavations at 121 Tiddington Road in 2001-2 (Oxford Archaeology 2002).

3.9 In 2005 a small pit group and two more inhumation burials of Roman date were identified in an evaluation at 119 Tiddington Road (Palmer 2005).

4. Methods

4.1 The 1.0m wide foundation trenches for the new garage and stable block were dug to just above the level of the geological natural gravel using a mini-excavator with a 0.60m wide bucket. A further 0.05m was then hand excavated and the resultant surface cleaned by trowel. A total of three features were identified cutting the geological natural. The soil on the eastern side of the site was extremely dry and compact as the moisture content had been drawn off by the conifer tree line on the neighbouring side of the fence.

4.2 The two stanchion pits at the north end of the garage and stable block were initially dug by machine with a 0.60m wide bucket and then finished by hand. Stanchion pit 2 was 1.0m long by 0.70m wide and the geological natural 0.40m below the modern surface. Stanchion pit 3 was 1.15m long by 0.70m wide and the geological natural 0.56m below the modern surface.

4.3 The sump pit (T4) was machine excavated 2.0m long by 1.20m wide and 1.20m deep using a 0.60m wide bucket. The drainage trenches which extended from the stanchion pits to the sump were machine excavated 0.30m deep using a 0.2m wide bucket. Ground reduction to the base of the new floor levels c 0.30m below topsoil level was undertaken by machine using a ditching bucket after the concrete had been poured in the foundation trenches.

4.4 Paving slabs to the rear of the existing house were removed by hand and two north/south aligned foundation trenches (T5 & T6) were dug c 1.0m deep by machine using a 0.50m wide bucket. The trenches were particularly unstable and collapsed during excavation.

4.5 A service trench (T7) was machine excavated 0.6m wide by 0.90m deep between the house and the new garage, and an area of topsoil was machine excavated to a depth of 0.15m to the south of the new garage.

5. Results

GARAGE AND STABLE BLOCK, STANCHION PITS, SUMP PIT AND DRAINAGE TRENCHES

5.1 A profile of the uppermost strata of geological natural was seen in the sump pit excavated north of the garage and stable block (Fig 3, Section I). A thick deposit of well-sorted gravel was evident between 1.2m and 0.75m below the modern surface level, although it sloped down to the south. It was overlaid by a succession of narrow sand and then gravel bands which followed the same sloping contour to 0.40m below the modern surface level, the uppermost band being a relatively dense pebbly gravel that was evident in all the stanchion pits and foundation trenches.

5.2 A total of four features were identified cutting the geological natural gravel. Pit 202 in stanchion pit 2 was evident as a sloping cut 0.45m deep with the lateral dimensions all exceeding the width of the stanchion pit (Fig 3, Sections D-G). It was

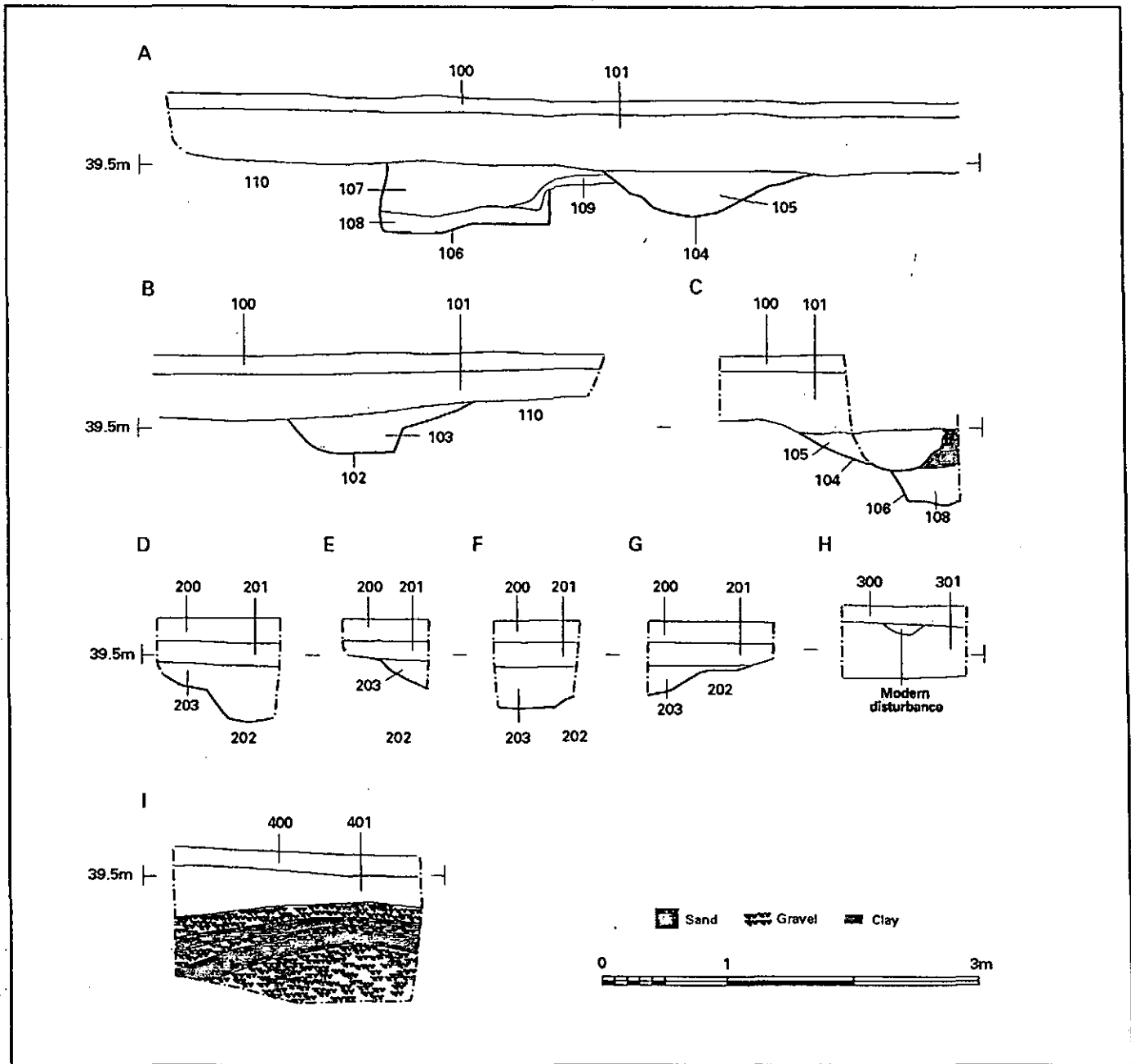


Fig 3: Sections A -I

filled with 203 yellowish-brown sandy loam with frequent gravel and contained five small sherds of mid/late 1st-century AD pottery.

5.3 Pit 102 was located in the southern end of the eastern foundation trench. It had irregular sloping sides 1.3m wide and a flattish base 0.40m deep (Fig 3, Section B). It was filled with 103 greyish-brown sandy loam with occasional gravel and very occasional charcoal flecks. Mid/late 1st-century AD pottery and animal bone was recovered from 103.

5.4 Pit 106 was located at the southern end of the western foundation trench. It had steep sloping sides at least 1.35m wide and a flat, albeit stepped base 0.58m deep (Fig 3, Sections A & C). The basal fill 108 very dark greyish-brown silty loam with frequent charcoal flecks contained mid/late-1st century pottery, fired clay and animal bone. It was overlaid on the northern lip of the pit by 109 yellowish-brown

clay loam with occasional clay patches. Both these layers were sealed by 107 greyish-brown sandy loam with small gravel inclusions and charcoal flecks. Several sherds and animal bone were recovered from this feature.

5.5 Pit 106 was cut by gully 104 which was aligned north-west/south-east. A 5m length was exposed and excavated, revealing sloping sides 0.75m wide and a rounded base 0.36m deep (Fig 3, Section C). It was filled with 105 greyish-brown sandy loam with occasional small gravel inclusions and charcoal flecks. Pottery and animal bone was recovered.

5.6 The archaeological features were sealed by a layer of plough soil (101, 201, 301, 401) which varied between 0.30m and 0.50m thick (Fig 3, Sections A-G). This layer is likely to represent the soils that developed during the medieval period when the area was in cultivation. The varying depth (eg Fig 3, Section I) can be related to former existence of ridge and furrow although it was not possible to determine its alignment within the confines of the exposed areas.

5.7 Topsoil across the site (100) was generally a uniform 0.30m thick which equates with the depth of the modern plough and represents the cultivation layer in the modern period before the Tiddington Road was developed for housing (Fig 3, Sections A-H).

CONSERVATORY, SERVICE TRENCH AND TOPSOIL STRIPPING

5.8 The majority of the lengths of the two foundation trenches (5 and 6) were excavated through the area examined in 1988 prior to the construction of the present house. Trench 5 was positioned in a previously excavated section of the Anglo-Saxon ditch sequence which had been backfilled with rubble and other modern building debris. It was also very wet and appeared to have been collecting groundwater for some time. Trench 6 was dug along the edge of a previously excavated section through the Anglo-Saxon ditch sequence. Unfortunately due to the presence of a storm drainage pipe this section was unstable and collapsed during excavation preventing the safe recording of the feature.

5.9 Trench 7 was machine excavated between the new conservatory and garage block. No significant deposits were revealed although three pottery sherds were recovered from the topsoil.

5.10 Approximately 0.15m of topsoil (100) was cleared by machine to the south-east of the new garage and to the north of the new conservatory. No finds were recovered.

6. Finds

(unillustrated)

FLINT

6.1 Blade in semi-translucent light brown flint with medial hinge fracture (pit fill 105)

POTTERY

6.2 The majority of the stratified pottery recovered was probably locally produced and dates from the mid/late 1st-century AD; pit contexts 103, 108, and 203 yielding



Fig 4: Trench 1 during excavation viewed from the south-east



Fig 5: Pit 106 after excavation viewed from the north-west



Fig 6: Gully 104 after excavation viewed from the north-west



Fig 7: Pit 102 after excavation viewed from the north-west

72, 14 and five sherds respectively. Gully fill 105 also produced three mid/late 1st-century sherds including one with incised chevron decoration.

6.3 Three sherds of 16th/17th-century pottery along with ten residual sherds of mid-late 1st-2nd century pottery were recovered from the medieval plough soil 101. Six 17th to 19th-century sherds along with 19 residual mid/late 1st- and three 2nd-century sherds came from topsoil 100 with a further three sherds from 700.

TILE

6.4 A total of twelve fragments of roof tile were recovered from two contexts: six each from the medieval plough soil 101 and topsoil 100.

FIRED CLAY

6.5 Some 19 fragments of fired clay weighing a total of 100g were recovered from pit fill 108. These small lumps were unshaped and probably derived from the superstructure of an oven.

ANIMAL BONE

6.6 Animal bone was recovered in small quantities from two stratified contexts. Pit fill 105 yielded a single ungulate tooth whilst 28 assorted fragments were recovered from pit fill 108.

7. Discussion

7.1 The work undertaken during 2005 was able to record a limited number of archaeological features although it is possible that other deposits may have been disturbed in the various interventions that were not recognised in the restricted area of trenching due to the homogeneity of the soils overlying the natural gravel.

7.2 Two pits in Trench 1, 106 and 102 are clearly of mid/late 1st-century AD date and seem likely to represent outliers to the features excavated in 1988. Determining their respective functions is not possible because in neither case was their full extent exposed or excavated. In any event small quantities of domestic detritus were incorporated into their fills as they silted up. Pit 202 in Trench 2, although of a similar date, remains completely ambiguous. Gully 104 was aligned perpendicular to the ditch sequence examined in 1988 and may therefore be expected to form the boundary of an adjacent enclosure or compound.

7.3 The adjacent site excavated in 1988 included a high density of 1st-2nd century features, including enclosure ditches, pits and an hearth. This new work clearly shows that settlement features also extended to the north during the 1st-century phase, although it seems that the area was abandoned soon thereafter, perhaps being incorporated into the agricultural system. No further evidence of any Anglo-Saxon activity was recorded.

Acknowledgements

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