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SNY	19033
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CNY	—
Parish	2138
Rec'd	30/11/1992 ?

**SOUTH OTTERINGTON
 PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
 WATCHING BRIEF**

ALISON CLARKE

NOVEMBER 1992

SOUTH OTTERINGTON WATCHING BRIEF

In the late summer of 1992 work was started on a new primary school at South Otterington on a site to the east of the parish church.

A planning condition was imposed on the development that an archaeological watching brief should be carried out to ascertain the presence or otherwise of settlement on the site from the medieval period onwards, especially alongside the road which runs eastward from the church to the main A167 road. The condition was imposed as a result of the discovery of several fragments of late medieval pottery from the site and its position between two areas of occupation within the village of South Otterington.

The watching brief was carried out between 14th August and 30th October 1992, and entailed watching topsoil stripping and foundation trench excavation by JCB machine, using a toothed bucket. Samples of pottery and other material were taken and any observable features of interest recorded.

GEOGRAPHY

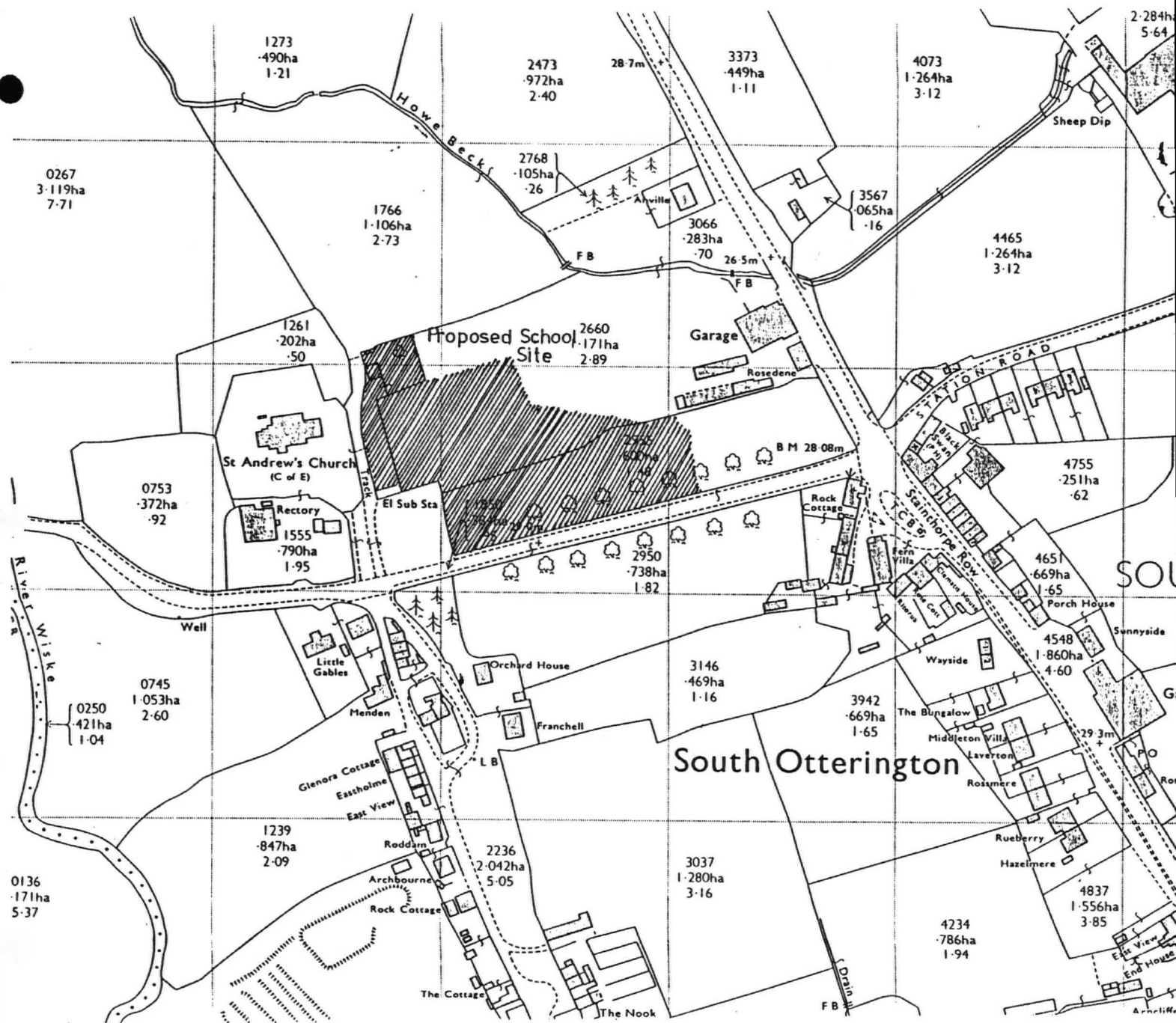
The village of South Otterington is situated about four miles south of the county town of Northallerton, in the Vale of York. The settlement is in two parts, one to the south of the parish church of St Andrew near to the River Wiske which runs north-south to the west of the village, and the other along the main road from Northallerton, the A167, which runs north-south to the east of the church.

The site of the new school (see Map 1) is immediately to the east of the church, on the other side of a lane which leads north from the village into fields. The land was crossed by several hedges, but was largely in the ownership of an agricultural machinery firm and had been used for storing machinery, rough grazing and some conifer planting. The westernmost part of the site was an allotment garden and small orchard, and also contained a small brick building with outbuildings and greenhouses.

The land, which lies at around 30 m OD, falls gently to the south and west of the site, beyond the church, towards the River Wiske, and more slightly to the east towards the A167 road. The geology is Keuper Marl with interleaved brown clay and yellow silty sand beneath a sandy topsoil.

MAP 1

PROPOSED SCHOOL SITE SOUTH OTTERINGTON



Scale: 1 : 10,000

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Preliminary research carried out before fieldwork got under way quickly revealed that the road from the church to the A 167 was not constructed on its present route until after 1842, probably in around 1846 at the same time as the church was rebuilt.

The maps which revealed this also showed the presence of buildings on part of the site, immediately to the east of the church, in an area used as gardens and allotment immediately prior to the development of the school.

This discovery altered the main bias of the watching brief away from the existing road edge to the western part of the main site, and fieldwork then proceeded on that basis.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

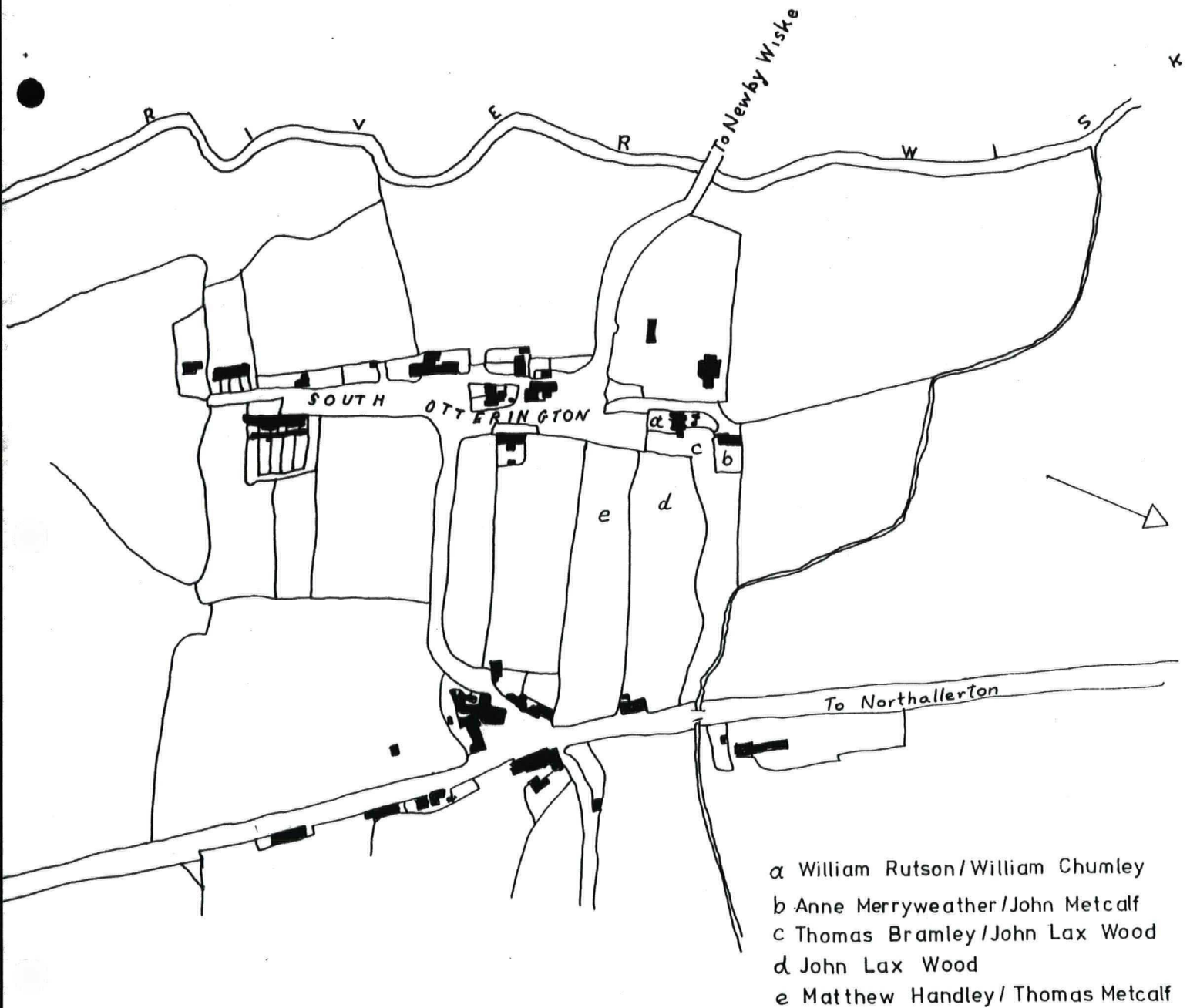
The earliest documentary evidence for the village of South Otterington is in the Domesday Book of 1086. The village then belonged to the king and was held by two people named Aegelfride and Halldarr, and was reckoned to be worth 20s for taxation purposes. Later in the 11th Century it was granted to Robert de Brus.

Part of the parish was granted to the Bishop of Durham in the 12th century, and another part was granted to the Abbot of Byland in 1242. Various tenants held land under these lordships until, in the early 17th century, they were combined in the hands of the Talbot family by which time manorial rights had lapsed.

The village grew up to the south of the parish church of St Andrew which itself dated back to the Norman period, and along the main road from Northallerton. It seems likely that the older part of the village is that near to the church and the river crossing of the River Wiske. The eastern part of the village on the main road may have developed partly in the 18th century when the Great North Road ran to Northallerton from Boroughbridge along this route.

The earliest detailed map of the village is the tithe map of 1842 (see Map 2). This shows all the parcels of land in the parish, and the location of all the buildings in the village, as well as recording who owned and lived in them. It is this map which shows that the road from Newby Wiske through South Otterington did not always run along its present route. Instead it turned south in front of the church to run through the village before turning east again to emerge on the main road further south than at present. This explains the arrangement of the buildings at the main road. The map also shows that the green opposite the road through the old village has been open space for

MAP 2



COPY OF TITHE MAP 1842

a long time, but that there were buildings to the east of the church within the area of the new school.

The land on which the new school stands was divided into a number of plots. A long narrow strip running from the main Northallerton road along the northern part of the site, and turning south to include part of the area of the school buildings, was owned by Thomas Bramley and held by John Lax Wood ("c" on Map 2), and was grassland. Two further strips running east-west across the site were also grassland, one owned by Matthew Handley and occupied by Thomas Metcalf ("e" on Map 2), and the other owned and farmed by John Lax Wood ("d" on Map 2).

At the western edge of the site alongside the lane which runs past the church to the fields beyond were two cottages with their gardens. The northern one, owned by Anne Merryweather and occupied by John Metcalf ("b" on Map 2), was situated on the same site as the small building which existed until the school was built. The surviving building had undergone alterations within its lifetime and may in part have dated back to the 19th century, although it was no longer functioning as a dwelling.

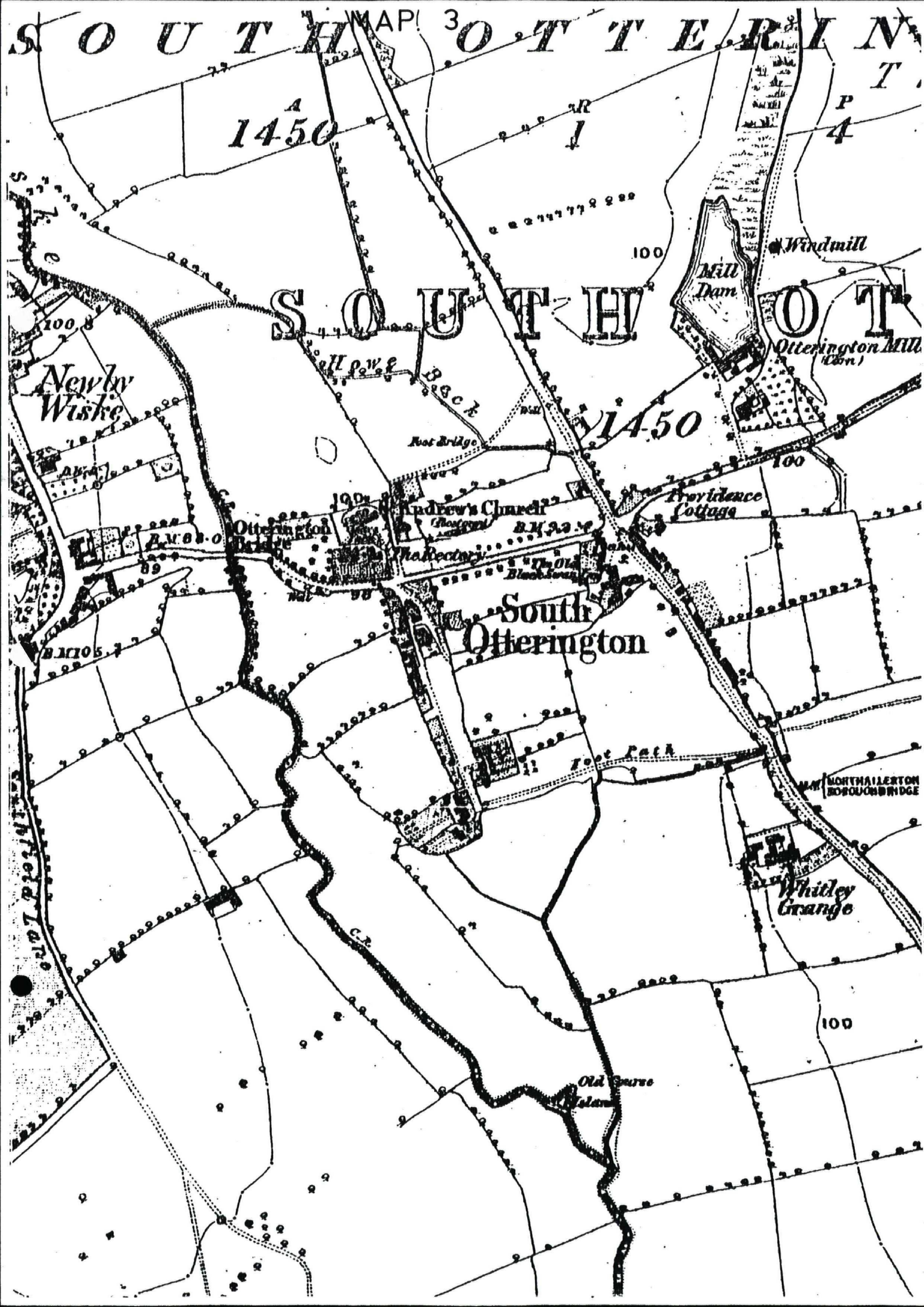
The other cottage marked on the tithe map was nearly opposite the church and was owned by William Rutson and occupied by William Chumley ("a" on Map 2). There was no trace of this house before development started on the school, and most of its site was an allotment.

In 1845-6 the old church at South Otterington was pulled down and rebuilt as it was in a dilapidated condition and inadequate in size. The new larger church, built in the Norman style, was on the same site as the previous one, with a churchyard enlarged to the north.

Some time between 1842 and 1856, probably not long after the church was rebuilt, a new road was cut through between the church and the main Northallerton road. This cut through land then owned by William Rutson, following an existing field boundary on its southern side.

The 1856 Ordnance Survey 6" map (see Map 3) of the village shows the new road as well as the two cottages which were on the tithe map, and also marks another building slightly further east and away from the church lane and the new road. This may have been a barn or shed or dwelling house, and had disappeared by 1913 when the OS 25" map was printed (see Map 4).

By 1913 the house opposite the church had also gone, leaving only the building to the north, which remained, with alterations, until 1992.



MAP 4

123
8-034

122
4-701

121
17-395

Mill Pond
120
3-124

113a
1-199

118
3-272

119
-180

113
8-430

114
2-751

121a
3-764

117
1-375

115
1-234

116
1-554

St. Andrew's Church
(Rectory)

112
-764

Rectory

111
-923

103a
-437

110
-496

103
1-501

Black Swan
(25)

97a
-431

97
3-845

102
1-869

104
-973

105
-409

101
1-194

109
3-096

South Otterington

108
2-038

107
1-080

60
2-308

66
5-663

137
4-317

Mansion
(Site of)

School

59
-555

61

1-716

58
-884

Whitley Grange

62
15-884

64
1-025

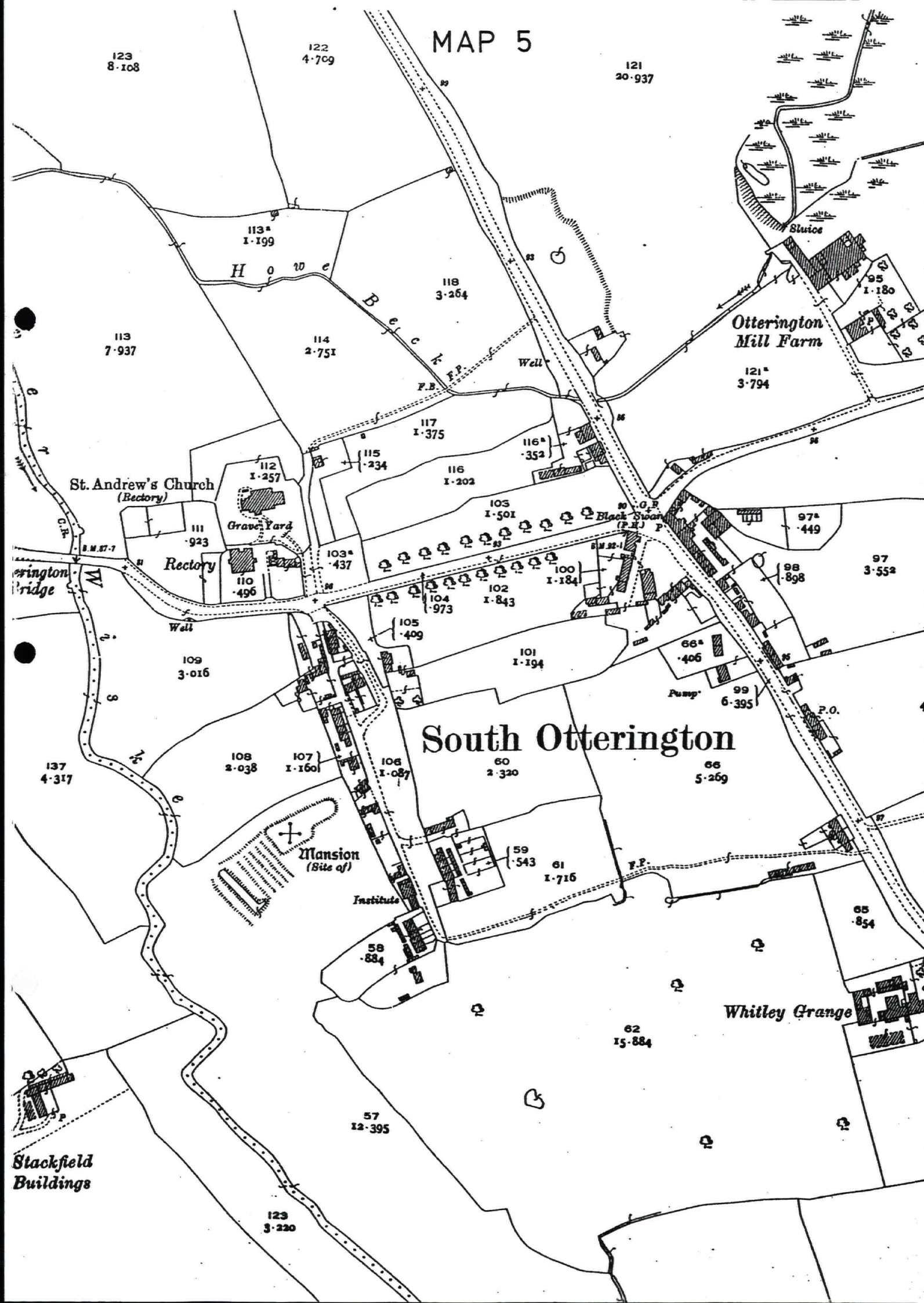
57
12-379

123
3-220

Stackfield
Buildings

Liable to Floods

MAP 5



THE WATCHING BRIEF

The watching brief undertaken in the autumn of 1992 consisted of observing machine topsoil stripping over a large part of the site, subsoil levelling in several areas, the machine cutting of a surface water drain and a trench for services, and the machine digging of foundation trenches in the north and west of the school building.

Those parts of the site which were the subject of the watching brief have been split into areas A to E, marked on Plan 1, for ease of identification.

Area A is the easternmost part of the site which was observed, and comprises the end of the access road and a car parking area to the east of the school building.

Area B is in the southwestern corner of the site, south of the original hedge which ran west-east from the northeast corner of the green, and comprises a playground area.

Area C is the northwestern corner of the site, north of the hedge which ran east-west to the south of the old building and enclosed the garden associated with it. This area contains the garden area and the northernmost part of the school building.

Area D is the westernmost part of the site to the west of the original north-south hedge which contained the allotment garden and comprises the western edge of the school building.

Area E is the central area bounded by the other four areas, comprising the greater part of the school building and its immediate surrounds.

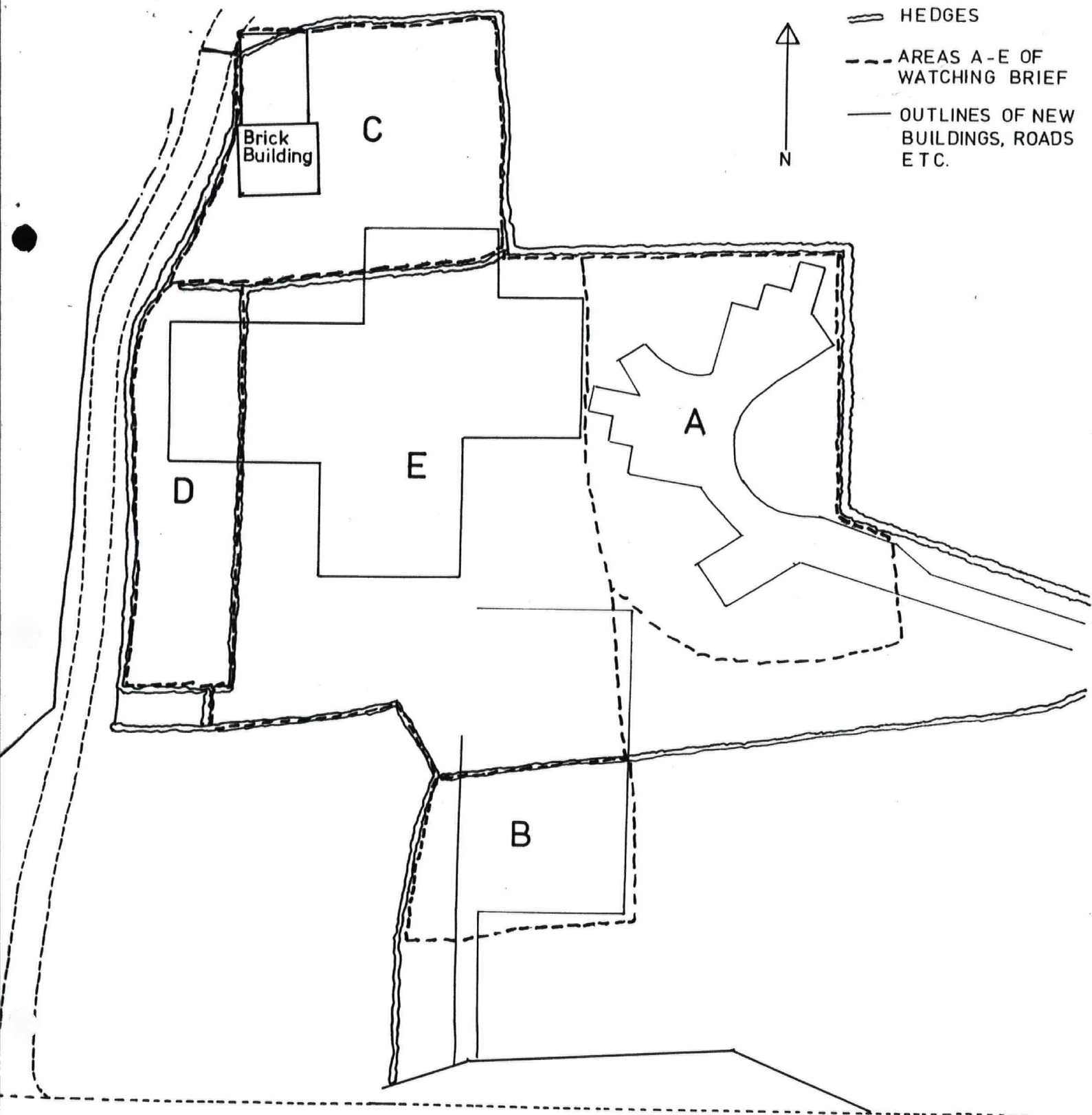
AREA A

Where the access road and car parking area were to be, east of the school buildings, the topsoil and subsoil were stripped to a depth of up to 1 m. below the surface. The topsoil was c. 50 cm thick, containing occasional concentrations of modern rubble, brick and rubbish, obviously dumped material. The subsoil was brown and orange clay with occasional patches of silty brownish-yellow sand. One land drain was observed at a depth of 60 cm below the surface.

AREA B

In this area the topsoil and subsoil was stripped to a depth of up to 80 cm below the surface to form the base of a playground

PLAN 1



PLAN OF SOUTH OTTERINGTON SITE
SHOWING AREAS OF WATCHING BRIEF

Scale: 1:500

(see Plan 2). The topsoil was 40 to 50 cm deep and in the northern part of the area contained large amounts of brick, rubble and other debris. This was concentrated along the east west hedgeline and in the northwestern corner of the area. The disturbed ground, which spread over several square metres, continued below the topsoil as concentrations of crushed tile overlying bricks and large cobbles, and contained pottery and bone.

In the south of the playground area was a line, 5 m long, of large cobbles running WSW to ENE at a depth of c. 40 cm below the surface, which appeared to turn SSE and run into the section at its southern end (see photographs 1 and 2). The stones were associated with a number of burnt patches, some of which could be interpreted as postholes. The surrounding natural was sticky pinky-brown clay with patches of orange-brown silty sand. Other irregular patches of burnt material occurred throughout this area.

In the central part of the area was a large oval feature, 4 m by 2 m, cut into the subsoil, consisting of disturbed, wet, greyish sandy silt. A square brick drain ran across the feature and continued to the south-west, getting deeper in that direction.

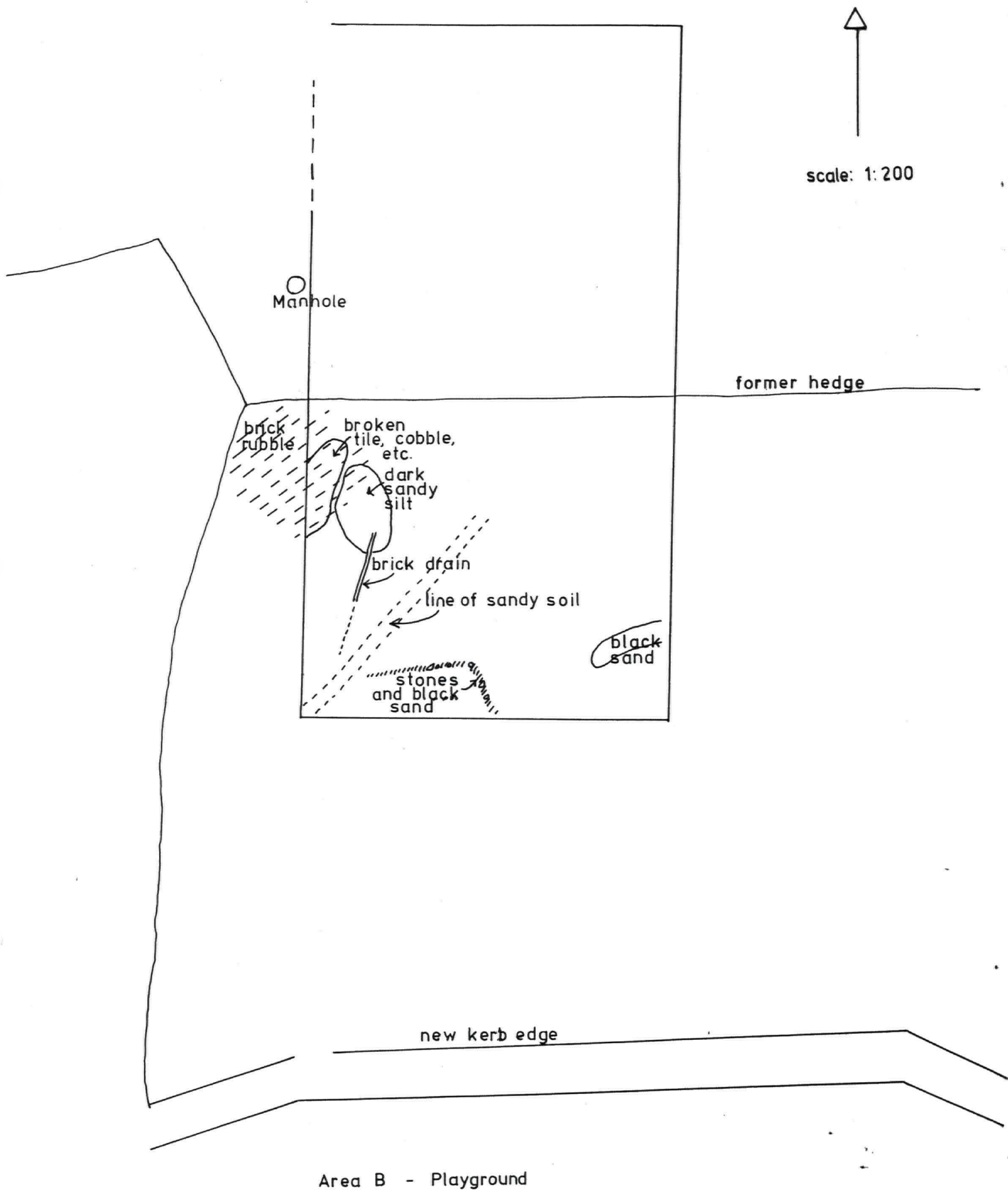
A line of orange-brown sand, c. 50 cm in width, ran north-east for about 11 m from the south-west corner of the playground area, to the south of the brick drain and possibly underlying it. It was visible c. 50 cm below the surface, but petered out to the north-east.

AREA C

This area contained a building and several fruit trees some of which have been retained. The building appeared to be largely nineteenth century in date, brick built with a pantile roof. It contained a large fireplace against its south wall, but no trace of a chimney, which suggests that the fireplace was imported for decorative purposes. The internal walls were thinly plastered over the brick and the floor was tiled. Outbuildings to the north were also built of brick with corrugated iron roofs, and were in a dilapidated condition. (See photographs 3 to 7).

Topsoil stripping took place in the southeast corner of Area C, revealing a deep black topsoil up to 50 cm deep. An east-west wall of the school runs across this area, and its foundations (foundation trench 1, plan 3) were excavated 1 m deep below the base of the topsoil. These revealed largely undisturbed brown clay above a layer of yellow-orange silty sand. 2 m from the west end of the foundations was a concentration of rounded stones, mostly small pebbles with some larger cobbles, just below the base of the topsoil.

PLAN 2



AREA D

This area was in use as an allotment garden prior to development, and the topsoil was a dark loamy soil up to 35 cm deep. Topsoil was stripped from the whole area revealing disturbed yellow-brown clay with occasional pockets of sand. The interface between topsoil and subsoil was level and clearly defined. The topsoil contained modern pottery and other rubbish including a group of three burnt spades and a dog skeleton associated with burnt nails. Set into the clay subsoil were occasional cobbles and bricks, with some areas of burning and patches of mortar (see Plan 3). There were, however, no clear features observable (photograph 8).

A north-south foundation trench in Area D (foundation trench 2, plan 3) showed that the disturbed clay reached c. 50 cm below the base of the topsoil in places, beneath which was the hard impacted undisturbed natural clay. The undisturbed clay reached the base of the topsoil in places, but no clear lines between the two were visible in the section observed.

AREA E

Topsoil was stripped over much of this area, which was also used for spoilheaps and storage of materials. The area immediately to the east of Area D was disturbed by tree roots and had also been used as a dumping ground for material presumably from the demolished buildings formerly on the site (see plan 3, photographs 9 and 10). There was no clear line between topsoil and subsoil, and in places there was barely any topsoil as such, but concentrations of rubble and other rubbish over 60 cm deep. In other places the undisturbed thick clay subsoil immediately underlay a thin layer of topsoil c. 30 cm deep. The disturbed levels contained brick, cobbles, tile and pottery most of which was 19th century in date, with some earlier pieces of the 18th century.

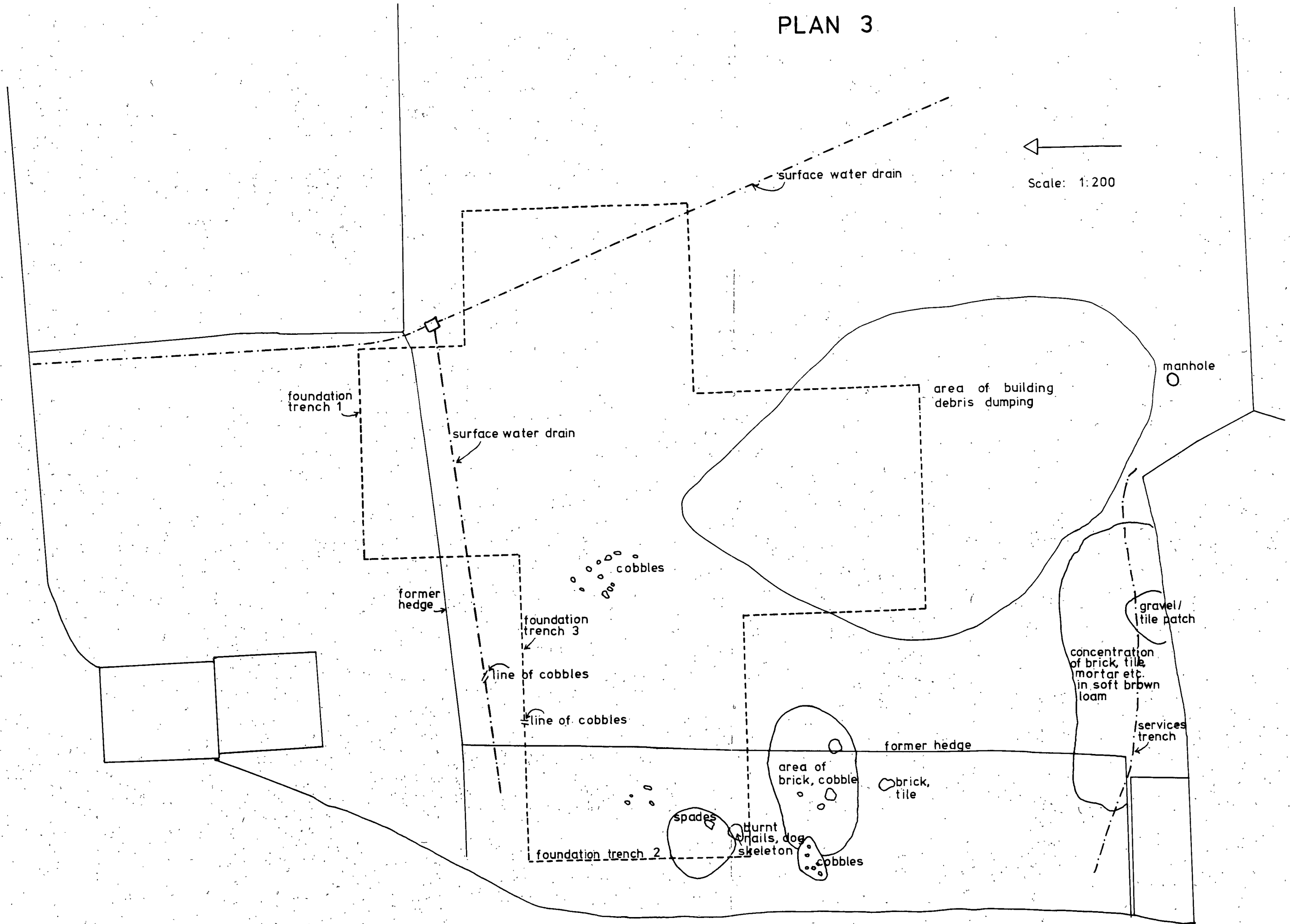
In the north of Area E the trench for a surface water drain was machine dug from north-east to south-west, to a depth of c. 160 cm. At 20 m from the manhole at the eastern end of the drain a concentration of large cobbles appeared in the north facing section and continued westward within the trench, disappearing into the south facing section 220 cm further west. The stones, up to 50 cm long, were quite tightly packed and there were fragments of bone and tile also present. The surrounding fill was sticky brown clayey loam. Underlying the disturbed levels were bands of natural brown clay and silty yellow sand.

A foundation trench (foundation trench 3, plan 3) was cut east-west immediately to the south of the drain, to a depth of 1 m below the base of the topsoil (Section 1). 8 m from its western end was a small concentration of stones and disturbed soil in a

PLAN 3



Scale: 1:200



AREAS C, D AND E showing positions of various features

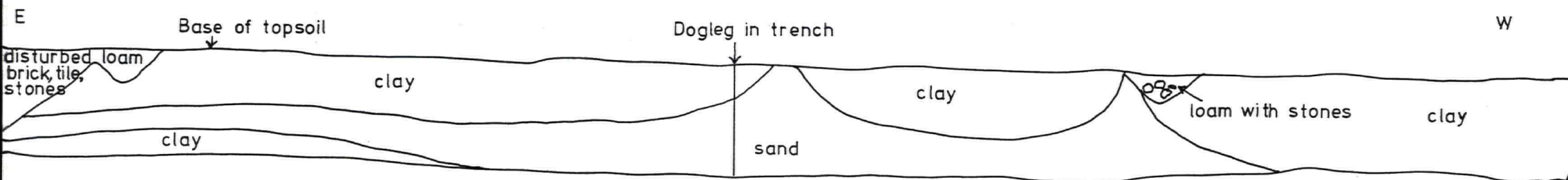
shallow V shaped ditch across the trench cut into the natural clay and sand. At the eastern end of the trench was a larger area of disturbance with stones, brick, tile and pottery in a brown loamy soil, apparently in a pit up to 80 cm below the base of the topsoil. This disturbed area extended south into a north-south foundation trench at the eastern end of the east-west trench. Two land drains were also observed in the section of the trench.

To the south of Area E was a concentration of broken tile, small stones, mortar etc, near to the hedge (see photographs 11 to 13). Here the topsoil was underlain by a soft loamy soil containing brick and tile fragments, mortar and pottery. Beneath this was an area of small stones and crushed tile forming a fairly level platform. Thick patches of mortar in intermittent lines also gave the appearance of features in situ. The pottery contained some which could be late medieval although the preponderance was from the 18th to 19th centuries. The hand made bricks were variable in size and width and could have come from a variety of periods. Tree roots disturbed the area from the hedge and from trees planted within the field.

A service trench for the site was machine dug across this area of interest, revealing that the disturbed deposits of brick, tile, mortar etc reached to a depth of c. 1 m below the original ground surface (see Section 2). Below a thin layer of crushed tile was a mixed layer of brown loam, mortar fragments, bricks, stones etc. The undisturbed subsoil was brown clay or yellow silty sand. The area of disturbance corresponded with that observed on the surface after topsoil stripping, but also occurred further west in a dense concentration of mortar, pottery, brick and stones in a line or narrow pit across the trench. The trench was backfilled almost immediately so only brief observations were possible, but the extent and concentration of material would suggest a building of some kind in the immediate vicinity.

N. Facing Section Foundation Trench 3

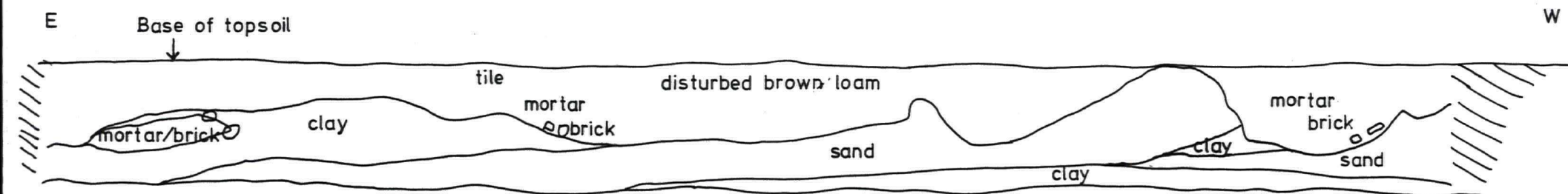
Scale: 1:50



SECTION 1

N. Facing Section Services Trench

Scale: 1:50



SECTION 2

CONCLUSIONS

Conditions on the site for the observation of archaeological remains were not ideal, as a toothed bucket was used throughout for soil stripping and for foundation digging. As a result, soil features were at best unclear or more often completely obliterated in plan. Recent disturbance in the form of tree roots also obscured ground conditions in a number of areas. However, certain conclusions can be reached about the history of the site, from a combination of the watching brief and the background research.

The earliest pottery from the site has been tentatively dated as late medieval. The pottery is coarseware and therefore could be later in this rural setting, but combined with other reported finds of late medieval pottery would seem to indicate late medieval occupation of the site. Whether this included building could not be established, as the traces they may have left might have been too ephemeral to be observed in the conditions. Certainly no sure evidence was visible on the site, and none of the pottery came from uncontaminated levels. It may be, therefore, that the medieval presence on the site was no more than occasional use, perhaps in an agricultural context.

There were considerable amounts of pottery right across the site, mainly in the topsoil. A representative sample was collected, and formed a largely late 18th to early 19th century assemblage, with a preponderance of coarse wares of the 19th century. Some earlier pieces of the early 18th century could have been survivals in use at a later date, and many of the fragments were of indeterminate date. In all, there was little to suggest intensive occupation of the site before the late 18th century, which is consistent with the evidence of the tithe and later maps.

Dwellings are known on the site from the mid 19th century, and building materials found during the watching brief are consistent with this. No definite structural remains were identified, although concentrations of debris and lines of cobbles, possibly foundations, were recorded in Area B and in the north and south of Area E. The cobbles in the north of Area E may relate to the buildings marked on the 1842 tithe map and the 1856 OS map. The concentrations of material in the south of Area E and the north-west of Area B may represent the remains of buildings unrecorded on any maps, either earlier than the tithe or between 1856 and 1913. The latter seems more likely for the concentration in Area B, but in the absence of definite foundations the existence of further buildings is speculative.

It would seem that, apart from the one building which remained until 1992, the dwellings recorded in the tithe and on the 1856 OS map were completely cleared some time between 1856 and 1913. The land returned to agricultural or horticultural use, and in

Area D very little remained even of building materials, which seem to have been deposited further to the east in what may have been a natural hollow in the centre of Area E. The locality of the easternmost building marked on the 1856 OS map was not investigated, but no trace of it remained above ground.

Modern material was localised near to hedge lines where it had presumably migrated from outside the site, and the north eastern part of the site in Area A, where dumped material was possibly associated with the agricultural machinery business which formerly owned the land. In the south-east corner of Area C a concentration of broken bottles in the hedge back were modern and associated with more recent use of the site. In this area, modern use included a row of dogs' graves dated to within the last 20 years, and the brick building, although not a full time dwelling, had obviously been in use until recently by the owner of the orchard and allotment garden.

In conclusion, most of the area of the new school has apparently never been built over, although in the 19th century and possibly earlier there were dwellings on the western part of the site, to the east of the parish church.