

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

**Report No. 294**

March 1994

**A40 Longford to M50 (Gorsley) Improvement  
Archaeological Survey Phase II:  
Alms House Green, Malswick**

prepared for Parkman Consulting Engineers  
on behalf of the Department of Transport

by

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## **A40 LONGFORD TO M50 (GORSLEY) IMPROVEMENT**

### **Archaeological Survey Phase II; Alms House Green, Malswick**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

The field evaluation documented in this report was undertaken by the Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit at the commission of Parkman Consulting Engineers, Bristol, on behalf of the Department of Transport. This arose as the result of a variation to the original Preferred Route as surveyed in 1991; the Published Route (1993) now affecting two further sites of archaeological potential. The sites (AR 92 and AR 94) were originally identified in the Phase I survey (Borthwick 1990), and now lie directly in the path of the Published Route.

#### **2.0 The Sites**

The sites AR92 and AR94 lie on either side of Hookes Lane, Malswick, just to the east of the Newent East Junction between Chainage 7200 and 7400, and centred on NGR SO 738256. The first site lies within the field west of Hookes Lane (FN 139), an area of pasture retaining traces of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation earthworks, and a rectangular sunken area, formerly an orchard, along most of its frontage with the lane. The second (AR94) is now occupied by a rugby football pitch to the east of Hookes Lane and behind cottages fronting onto the B4215 road to the south (Fig.1).

Documentary evidence relating to these sites is limited to earlier map depictions, linking them as the site of an almshouse and its green, and possibly other buildings. The earliest is Isaac Taylor's map of 1777, which marks Almshouse Green apparently lying on either side of a lane leading towards Brass Mill (Hookes Lane), formerly Brass Mill Lane. The first OS map of 1811 shows more detail, including a large un-named building to the east (AR94) which may have been the almshouse. By 1840 this building seems to have disappeared, although the name 'Alms House Meadow' survived. 'Almshouse Green' is recorded on the OS. first edition 6" map (1881), along with cottages still surviving in the vicinity today, but no indication of the almshouse site. From this evidence it would appear that an almshouse of pre-1777 foundation and its green, were the focus of a small hamlet, remnants of which still survive as cottages in the locality today. The almshouse building had apparently disappeared by 1840, and the green and several other properties have gone since then.

#### **3.0 Method**

A preliminary 'desk top' search of documentary sources was the basis for the cartographic information outlined above, but revealed no further details of the origin or history of the almshouse at Malswick. As a means of further evaluating the archaeological potential of this site, a series of trial excavation trenches were cut, and a measured survey was made of surviving earthworks in March 1994. The latter were recorded in the field west of Hookes Lane - FN139, also known as 'Field Barn Ground'- corresponding to AR92, using a Sokkisha Set 3 Total Station EDM. Four trenches were cut using a mechanical excavator to remove topsoil overburden, prior to

cleaning, excavation and recording of their content by hand. Two trenches sampled the earthworks in FN139, and two were cut just outside the football pitch in FN148 (Alms House Meadow) to sample AR94 (Fig.1). An archive of this survey, including finds and site records, is deposited with the archive created during the earlier Phase II archaeological survey of the whole route.

#### 4.0 The Evaluation

4.1 The measured topographic survey undertaken in FN139 plotted two significant earthwork features, and traces of others were noted but not recorded in detail (Fig.2). In the south east corner of the field was a pronounced, sub-rectangular, flat-bottomed depression occupied by the remnants of an orchard, and bounded to the east by Hookes Lane. To the south at a higher level, a platform with a small copse at the junction of the lane with the B4215 road, retained evidence of building demolition rubble. To the north west, a shallow but well defined hollow-way took a rather sinuous course from the corner of the sunken orchard, skirting a cottage to the east. West of the hollow-way and sunken orchard, where the field slopes uphill, indistinct ridge and furrow earthworks aligned approximately north-south were observed but not surveyed.

4.2 AR94, (FN148): Trench 1 (9 x 1.6m), orientated approximately southeast-northwest, was positioned near the south west corner of the football field. Removal of over 0.30m of topsoil revealed five features of archaeological significance for excavation and recording. Part of a 1.75m wide shallow linear feature (F2) contained several sherds of a 12th/13th-century 'Malvernian Ware' jug and a heavily abraded sherd of Roman Samian ware. Two narrow features (F3 & F4) on a similar N-S alignment, cut into F2 and contained sherds of 14th/15th-century 'Malvernian' pottery. Another broad and shallow ditch? (F6) to the east lay parallel with the ditch F2 and also contained a sherd of medieval pottery. Nearby, a small sub-circular feature (F5) could have been a post hole, but contained no datable finds. All these features were cut into the underlying Keuper Marl and appear to have been truncated from above by the levelling of the football pitch.

Trench 2 was cut parallel to Hookes Lane (9 x 1.6m) and aligned approximately northeast-southwest. Up to 0.45m of topsoil and subsoil was removed by machine to expose a layer of clay silt 0.25m thick. This was removed by hand to expose the underlying natural marl. No archaeological features were identified in this trench but two medieval sherds of 'Malvernian' type were recovered from the clay silt. Fragments of vitreous waste and a piece of iron slag from this trench probably originate from levelling of the nearby railway embankment.

4.3 AR92, FN139: Two linked trenches were cut in the field west of Hookes Lane to sample some of the earthwork features there (Fig. 2).

Trench 3 was orientated approximately south east-north west (36x1.6m), and cut the embankment east of the sunken orchard and then eastwards across it towards the Hookes Lane frontage (Fig. 3). The principal feature was an embankment of mottled and gleyed clay (F1) beneath the steep break of slope to the west. This had probably been created by the removal of a clay layer from over the sunken orchard, where only a thin, truncated topsoil profile survived above the natural marl. The profile of this bank had been obscured and overwhelmed from the west by progressive hillwash deposits accumulating upslope against it. Above the bank and extending down its eastern slope into the sunken area, was an extensive spread of brick rubble. Further hand-dug sondages on either side of Trench 3 demonstrated that this thin layer extended for at

least 4m. southwards, but there was no sign of any adjacent and associated construction feature. The hand-made character of the bricks suggest an 18th-century or earlier date of manufacture.

Trench 4 was cut at almost 90 deg. south westwards from Trench 3 (12x1.6m), across the bottom of the sunken area towards its southern slope. The surface of natural marl was exposed below 0.30m of topsoil. Several irregular disturbances at this level contained fragments of 19th-century or later pottery. Their character and fill suggest trees or bushes removed relatively recently, probably in the course of clearing the orchard. No other features of archaeological interest were recorded here.

## 5.0 Interpretation

Field survey and trial trenching of the earthworks surviving in FN 139 (AR92) west of Hookes Lane did not give any clear indication of their date or relationship with the almshouse documented in this area. The function of the sunken area is unclear, although fragments of brick within the original clay bank to the west suggest that it was a post-medieval creation, possibly demarcating the almshouse green or a garden. The presence of building demolition material in the copse occupying the south corner of the field, evidently marks the site of a property marked on the 1881 OS 6" first edition map. Debris from its demolition may account for the spread of brick rubble over the bank (F1) located in Trench 3. The sunken area appears to interrupt the course of the hollow way from the north, which continues again for a short distance to the south before joining the main road. This holloway is probably of medieval origin, the original route linking Oakle Pitcher (Oaklebrook) Mill with Malswick. It will also have marked the boundary of a medieval field to the north west, traces of which are visible as ridge and furrow earthworks. The remains of a more recent and direct route linking the mill to the main B4215 road lie along the western boundary of the field FN139.

Trial trenching east of Hookes Lane in FN 148 (AR94) was limited by the presence of the rugby football ground in current use. It was evident that the creation of its pitch had resulted in some truncation of original ground levels; however, features of medieval date do still survive here. Although not easily interpreted in themselves, they are good evidence of the antiquity of settlement at Alms House Green, and indeed of the dispersed hamlet of Malswick itself. The surviving remains probably relate to one or more medieval farmsteads in this locality, forerunners of the later settlement. Another early farm site was recognised during the 1991 evaluation of AR20 at the west end of Malswick (BUFAU Report no.195, revised 1993). Roman pottery found there and in a secondary context at Alms House Green, suggests the possibility of earlier land use and occupation in the locality. There was no evidence for the site or any survival of the almshouse buildings, whose former location was suggested from map evidence to have been on this eastern side of Hookes Lane. In view of the survival of medieval evidence, and the inability to trial trench areas in current use by the football ground, the possibility of surviving remains here cannot be ruled out.

## 6.0 Recommendations

**AR92:** It is recommended that an archaeological watching brief and salvage recording is undertaken at the time of soil stripping and destruction of the earthworks.

**AR94:** It is recommended that an archaeological excavation take place over the area of the rugby football ground pitch to be affected by road construction. A maximum of three weeks should be allowed to mechanically remove the topsoil overburden and to locate, excavate and record any surviving archaeological features. Subject to the contractor's timetable, this should be scheduled at an early stage following possession of the land by the Department of Transport, or immediately prior to it.

## 7.0 Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Mr Heywood (AR92) and to Mr Bassett, Newent RFC. (AR94) for permission and access to carry out the evaluation; to the Gloucestershire County Record Office for access to documentary and map sources; and to Steve Reay (Parkman Consulting Engineers) for liason. The field project was undertaken by Marianne Ridgeway, Tony Hanna and Derek Moscrop, and supervised by Edward Newton. The report was illustrated by Nigel Dodds and produced by Simon Buteux.

## 8.0 References

Borthwick, Alison, 1990 *A40 Longford to M50 (Gorsley) Improvement Archaeological Survey (Phase I)*

BUFAU 1993 *A40 Longford to M50(Gorsley) Improvement Archaeological Survey Phase II: Field Evaluation Report no.195, revised 1993*

### Map Sources

Isaac Taylor's Map of Gloucestershire, 1777

Ordnance Survey surveyors field drawings, 2" to 1 mile, 1811

Newent Tithe Award map, 1840

Ordnance Survey 1st. edition 6" to 1 mile, 1881

# MALSWICK 1994

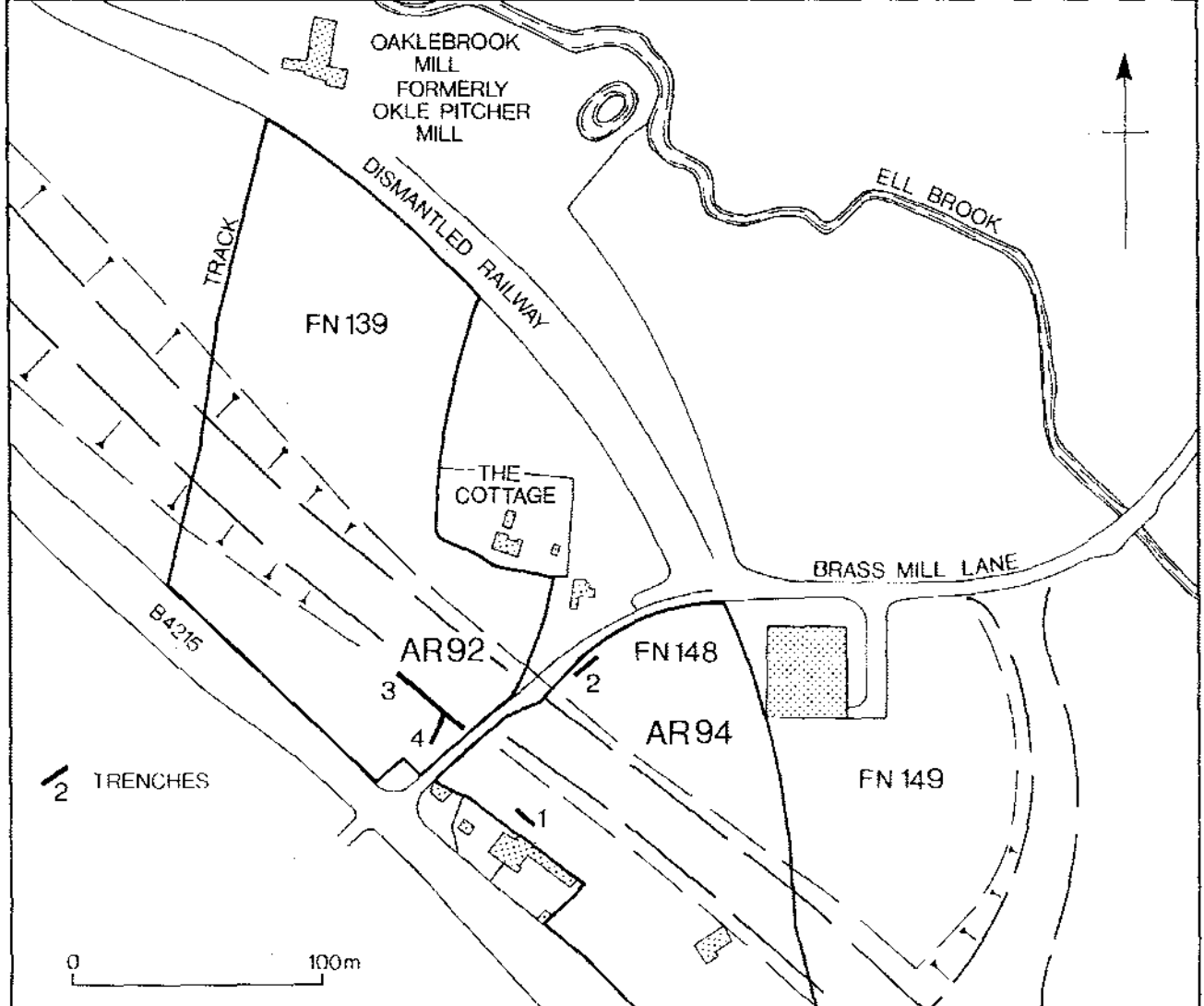
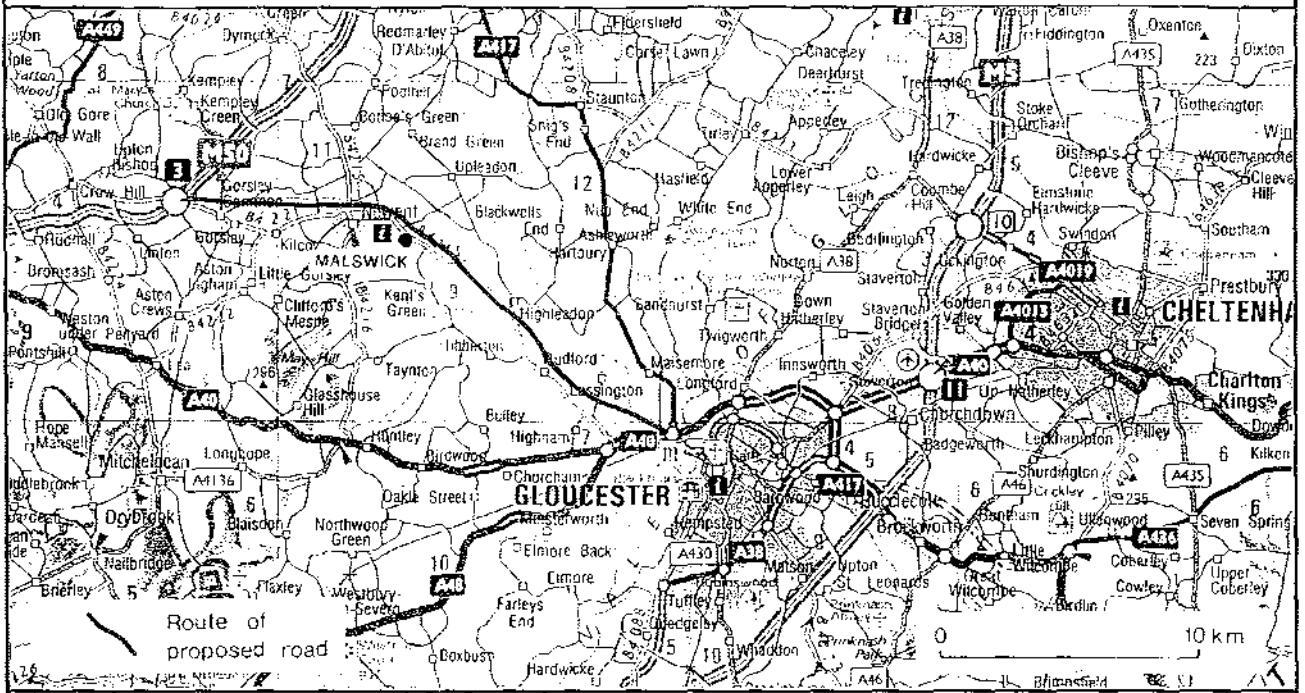


Figure 1

'ALMS HOUSE GREEN' (FN 139)

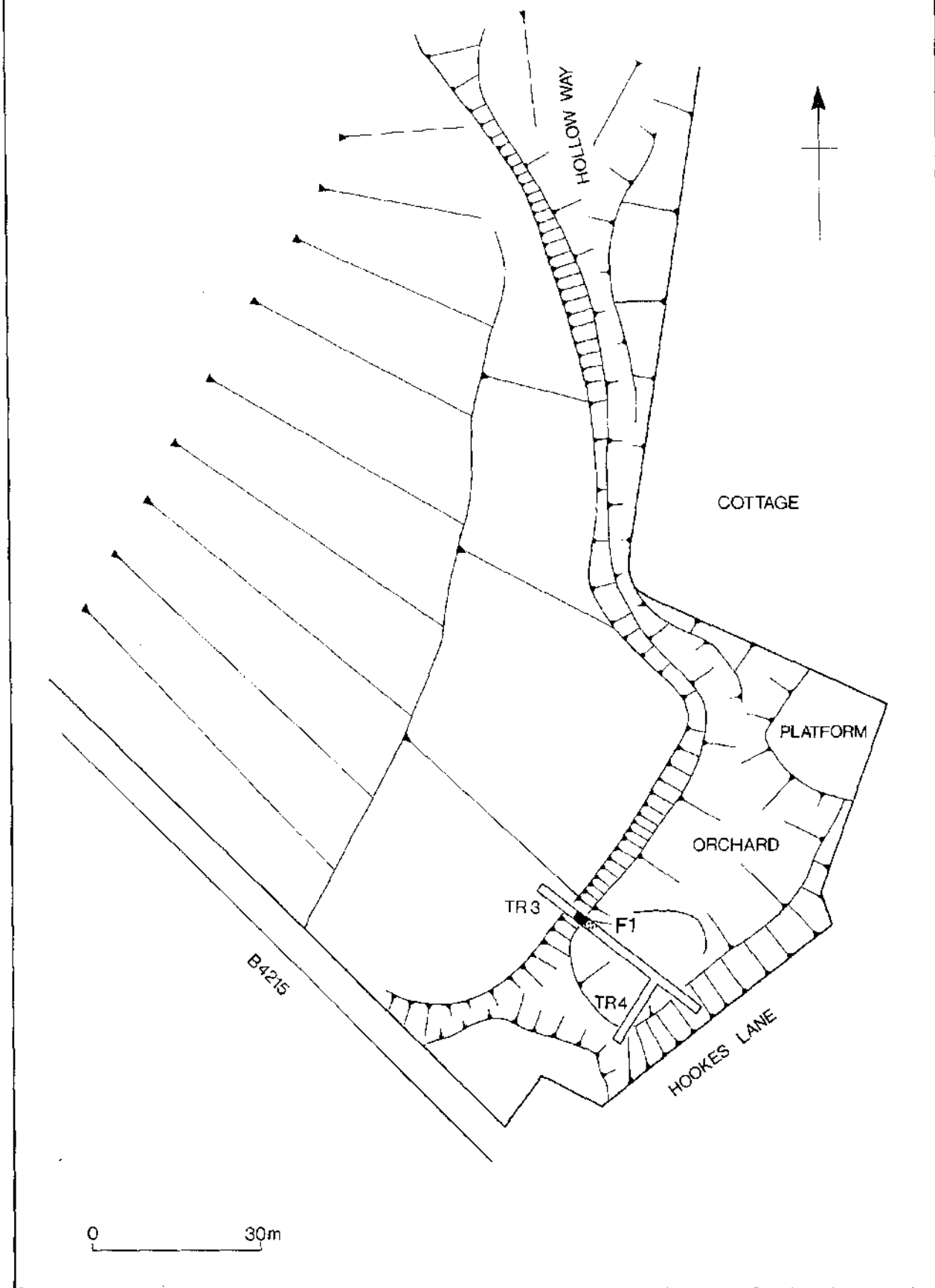


Figure 2

# TRENCH 3 South facing section

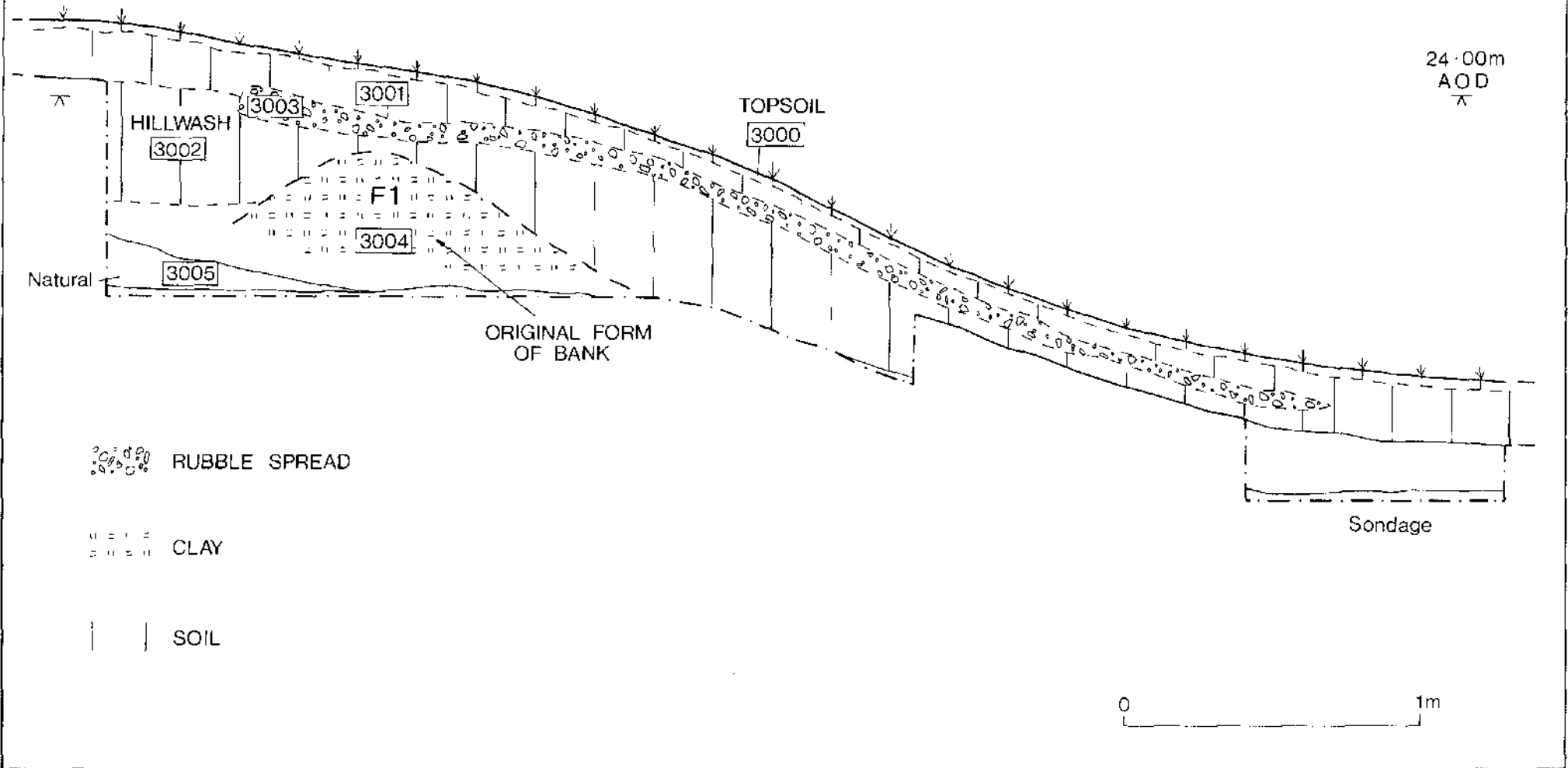


Figure 3