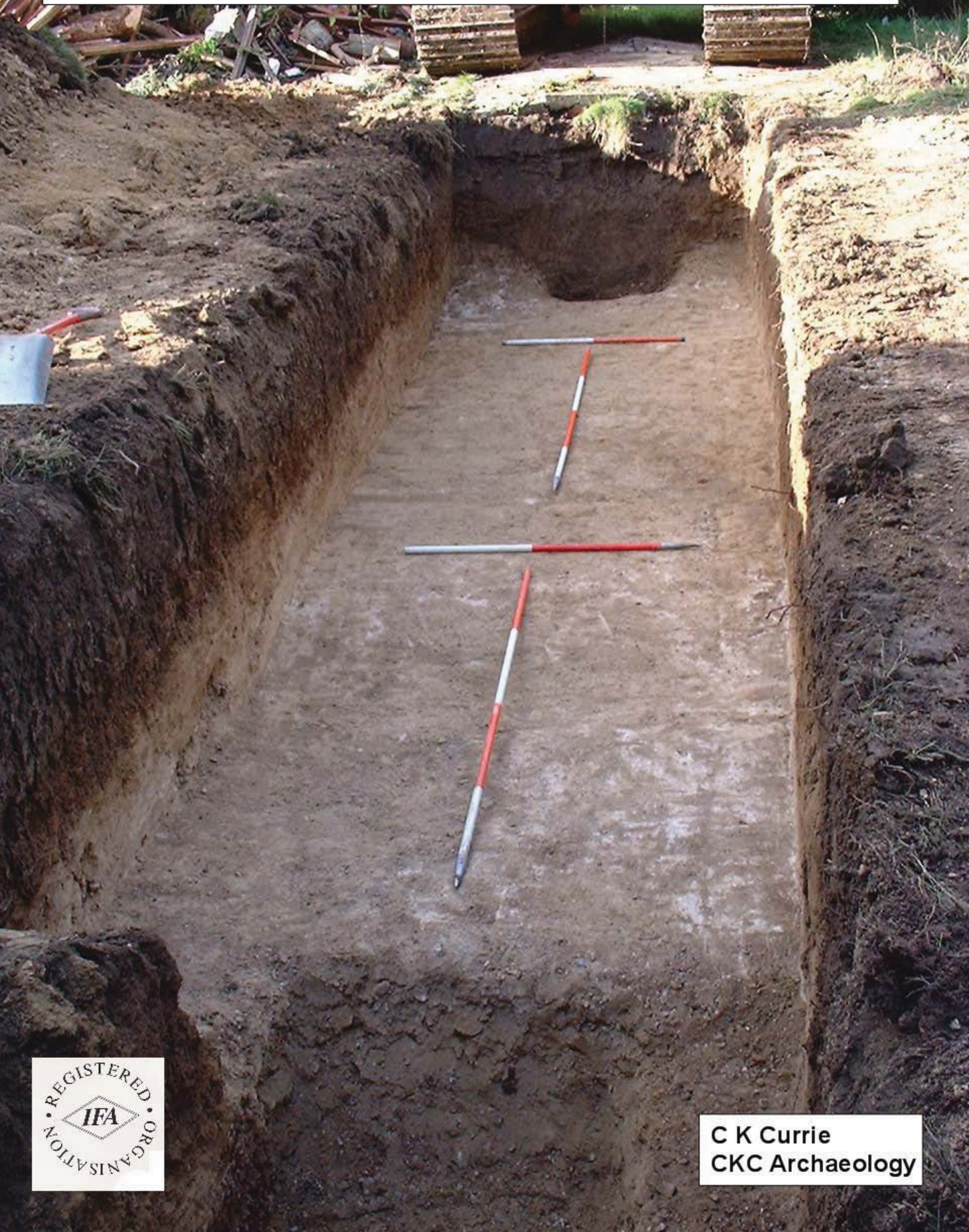


# An archaeological evaluation of 60 Lawn Close, Datchet, Berkshire



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CKC Archaeology

**Planning application no APP/T0355/A/03/1130516**

**An archaeological evaluation at 60 Lawn Close,  
Datchet, Berkshire**

**NGR: SU 9932 7703**

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**Report to Foundation Land Ltd**

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### **Summary statement**

It is proposed to redevelop 60 Lawn Close, Datchet, Berkshire, demolishing an existing bungalow and replacing it with a block of flats. An archaeological evaluation has been required by Windsor & Maidenhead Borough Council following a planning condition being imposed on the site (Planning application no APP/T0355/A/03/1130516). This condition is required to secure appropriate recording of the archaeological impact of the development. The work was carried out by C K Currie and N S Rushton of CKC Archaeology between 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> January 2005.

No significant archaeology was uncovered during the evaluation of this site. The only archaeological features found were two pits and a hollow from which a tree bole is thought to have been removed. These were all in Trench 3 adjacent to a post-medieval mound concealing a post-medieval brick subterranean chamber. Neither pit contained any convincing dating evidence, although both contained single brick/tile fragments that could have been residual. However, the proximity of the mound, and the clean stoneless soil in the western pit [context 19] suggests that it might have been a planting pit for a tree to shade the adjacent mound. This was not the case for pit 17, which contained a compacted gravel fill that would not have been suitable for planting.

Three pieces of Iron Age pottery were found in subsoil in Trench 3 and this might suggest contemporary presence nearby.

The sunken structure within the mound, together with the rest of the development site, had formerly been part of the pleasure grounds of a late 18<sup>th</sup>-century mansion known as The Lawn. The sunken structure is listed as an ice house, but this is thought to be incorrect. The structure has none of the characteristics of an ice house such as an ice pit/well and a staggered entrance. Instead it has a buried rectangular chamber in brick with a vaulted barrel roof. It is entered down a flight of six steps with an entrance facing east. It is thought to have been a cold store of some sort, but the exact nature of the produce stored can not be ascertained. To keep the chamber cool, it would have been necessary to provide dense shade over the mound. A Cedar of Lebanon tree to the east of the mound would have helped in this, and there is evidence for the removal of a tree bole in Trench 3 that seems to be overlain by brick rubble, possibly from the building of the present bungalow in the mid 1960s.

The archive for the project will be deposited with Reading Museum (Accession no REDMG: 2005.5).

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## **An archaeological evaluation at 60 Lawn Close, Datchet, Berkshire**

**NGR: SU 9932 7703**

This report has been written based on the format suggested by the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (Reading, 1999). The ordering of information follows the guidelines given in this document, although alterations may have been made to fit in with the particular requirements of the work. All work is carried out according to the *Code of Conduct* and By-laws of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, of which CKC Archaeology is an IFA-registered archaeological organisation (reference: RAO no. 1).

### **1.0 Introduction (Fig. 1)**

It is proposed to redevelop 60 Lawn Close, Datchet, Berkshire, demolishing an existing bungalow and replacing it with a block of flats. An archaeological evaluation has been required by Windsor & Maidenhead Borough Council following a planning condition being imposed on the site (Planning application no APP/T0355/A/03/1130516). This condition is required to secure appropriate recording of the archaeological impact of the development. The work was carried out by C K Currie and N S Rushton of CKC Archaeology<sup>1</sup> between 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> January 2005.

### **2.0 Historical & topographical background (Figs. 2-5)**

Lawn Close lies within an area of residential development east of the former village of Datchet on the north bank of the River Thames, between that river and the M4 motorway. There has been extensive gravel quarrying to the SE around Horton and Wraysbury. Prehistoric finds have been made during these works and it is suspected that Datchet falls within an area that may be of some interest. There is also an ice house-type structure on the site which shows that the property had been within a former designed landscape attached to a country house. The latter can be seen beyond the southern boundary of the site. It is a large brick mansion of late 18<sup>th</sup>-century date known as The Lawn. It is now a series of flats. The building on the development site is a 1960s suburban bungalow. It is presently unoccupied and it is proposed to demolish it and redevelop the site. In the front garden, as well as a listed ice house, is a large cedar tree which has a Tree Preservation Order attached to it.

The site lies within an area of former river gravels at a height of about 19m AOD. Map regression shows that The Lawn had been built on the edge of Datchet Common, and that the present property originally lay within the pleasure grounds of that house (Figs. 2-4). This remained the case until after the Second World War. Despite suburban housing spreading along Lawn Close soon after this, the present property remained excluded from this development until the 1960s, when the plot was sold off and the present bungalow built. The first map to show the existing bungalow is the 1968 OS 25" map (Fig. 5).

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### **3.0 Strategy**

The strategy for this project follows that given in the Project Design (Currie 2004), to which the reader is referred for further details. Three trenches were excavated on the south, west and north-west sides of the site. Locations were sited to avoid trees with Tree Preservation Orders (TPO).

### **4.0 Results (Figs. 6-8)**

#### **4.1 Trench 1 (Figs. 6-7)**

Trench 1 was located on the south side of the site, and aligned E-W (Fig. 6). It was 25m by 2m extending to a depth of 1.45m. No features were observed. Three layers were seen. Topsoil was about 400mm thick on average and comprised a sandy loam [context 01]. Below this was a gravel layer in a sandy clay loam matrix [context 02], up to 1m thick. Below this was undisturbed gravel [context 03].

#### **4.2 Trench 2 (Figs. 6-7)**

Trench 2 was located on the west side of the site, and aligned N-S. It was restricted northwards by the presence of the mound of a listed subterranean structure (Fig. 6). It was 22.5m by 2m in length and up to 1.3m deep. Topsoil [context 04] and its underlying gravel subsoil [context 05] were largely the same as in Trench 1. For most of the trench undisturbed gravel [context 06] appeared at around 1.3m, rising gradually northwards until it was about 1m below the present ground level. At the far north end of the trench undisturbed soil changed to a whitish sandy clay layer [context 11].

There were two modern features within this trench. One of these was a large flowerbed. This could be seen on the surface where it was surrounded by concrete slabs. This feature [context 07] was cut down between 500 and 800mm below the present ground level, and was 4.4m wide. At the north end the cut was lined with brick. The fill was a rich dark sandy loam [context 08]. In the east part of this flowerbed was another cut [context 09], filled with brick rubble [context 10]. This was in line with a downpipe from the adjoining bungalow, and was thought to be a modern soakaway. It looked as if the flowerbed cut through the top of the soakaway, thus post-dating it.

No earlier archaeological features or residual artefacts were observed.

#### **4.3 Trench 3 (Figs. 6, 8)**

This was a trench 10.8m by 2m near the NW corner of the bungalow. It was aligned E-W was sited between the north end of Trench 2 and the edge of the mound of the listed structure (Fig. 6). Undisturbed soils comprised a whitish sandy clay found at between 0.9m and 1m below the present ground surface [context 15]. Topsoil was a sandy loam [context 12]. On the north side of the trench was a layer of brick and mortar rubble [context 13] about 200mm thick. This did not extend to the east end or to the south side of the trench. Excavated was

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truncated at the east end of the trench by a live gas pipe crossing the excavation area diagonally. Underneath this pipe was an electric cable. Just beyond this was the start of the crown of a large Cedar of Lebanon, which it was forbidden to dig under because of a Tree Protection Order.

In the south facing section, it was noted that loamy gravel subsoil [context 14] was much deeper around the middle of the trench. This was thought to be the result of the removal of a former tree that would have helped to shade the structure under the adjacent earth mound. In the bottom of this hollow was a cut [context 21] that was thought to be an animal burrow extending from the mound southwards.

Two proper features were found at each end of the trench. At the east end was a roughly oval pit [context 17] about 1.35m E-W by 0.9m N-S. The full extent on the south side was not seen because the proximity of the live gas pipe prevented full excavation (Fig. 8). Over three-quarters of the pit was excavated. It extended to a depth of 1.6m below present ground level, cutting into undisturbed soil by about 600mm. It was filled by a compacted gravel [context 18], but contained no finds apart from a small piece of brick.

The pit at the extreme west end of the trench could not be fully excavated as there was a concrete base supporting a garden shed immediately above it. This cut into undisturbed soils by no more than 250mm, and, as seen, was about 1m in diameter. The fill was a sandy loam [context 20] with no stones within it. This was considered unusual as the surrounding soils contained abundant gravel. The only find was a single fragment of brick or tile. It was not possible to see how far the pit extended upwards in the stratigraphy above because of the similar soils above it. Although relatively deep (1.2m below present ground level) the clean nature of the fill suggested that it may have been a post-medieval planting pit for a tree to help shade the mound to the north.

The only other finds were three undecorated body sherds of reduced, flint-tempered, Iron Age pottery found together in context 14 in the middle of the north-facing section of the trench during cleaning. Such pottery is the commonest type of Iron Age pottery in south-central England.

#### **4.4 The listed structure in the earth mound (Fig. 6)**

This structure is listed as an ice house, but it is reasonably certain that this is an erroneous identification. The listing describes the structure as follows:

Listed building no: Datchet SU 9977 5/20

‘C18 brick, walls flemish bond, segmental roof. Brick paviours to floor. Circular single chamber, threshold below ground level reached by six irregular brick steps. Roof forms conical mound in ground above. Small flint and mortar retaining wall above entrance, to top of mound. The ice house may once have belonged to “The Lawn” (1/2).’

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The Lawn is a large brick mansion to the south of the development site. It is thought that the present housing estate was made out of the divided grounds of this house following the Second World War. It is therefore likely that the listed structure was an outbuilding to that mansion, but it has a number of characteristics that make the ice house label unlikely.

The chamber within the mound was made entirely of brick and was rectangular (not circular as described in the above listing), measuring 3.5m E-W by 2m N-S, with a vaulted barrel roof over. It was approached by six steps 2.2m in total length and 1.15m wide. The mound was measured as 10m wide from N-S and 8m from E-W. The entrance was in the middle of the east side.

## **5.0 Discussion**

Weather conditions were sunny and mild throughout the evaluation, giving optimum digging conditions. Confidence ratings in the assessment should therefore be considered high.

No features were found to suggest the presence of significant archaeology within the development area. The only evidence of ground disturbance was in the vicinity of the listed structure buried under a mound in the NW corner of the property. Two pits were found here [contexts 17 & 19] plus evidence in the south facing section of Trench 3 for a possible removed tree bole [context 20]. The presence of the large Cedar of Lebanon to the east of the mound suggests that it was planted there to help provide shade for the structure within the mound. The latter was thought to be a cold store, not an ice house as listed. If this interpretation is correct it would have been necessary to provide further shade on the other sides of the mound. Thus it was thought cut 20 was evidence for one such tree, probably removed when the present bungalow was built. This seems to be confirmed by a layer of building rubble [context 13] overlying the postulated tree bole.

Two pits found at either end of Trench 3 were largely undated. The pit at the west end of this trench was unusual in having a relatively stone-free fill, and this might suggest a planting pit associated with the mound. A small fragment of brick in the fill, although small enough to be residual, might indicate a post-medieval date. Likewise, a small fragment of brick or tile was the only find made in the fill of pit 17 at the east end of Trench 3. Although this might suggest a post-medieval date, the compacted gravel fill is unlikely to be for a planting pit, and this feature must remain a mystery.

Three fragments of Iron Age pottery in the subsoil of Trench 3 might suggest contemporary presence somewhere in the vicinity. However, the presence of the mound nearby might also indicate disturbed or introduced soils in this area. It was noted that there was no indication of archaeological activity or residual finds in the larger trenches (Trench 1 & 2) to the south.

With regard to the structure listed as an ice house, it should be noted that the listed building description is inaccurate. The chamber within the structure is not circular as described, but rectangular. Furthermore the overall design of the structure makes it unlikely that it was an ice house.

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There is no sign of an ice well, the deep masonry-lined pit necessary to hold ice. Instead the floor is lined with brick paviments and this appears to be part of the original structure. Another characteristic of ice houses is a staggered entrance or elongated entrance passage to prevent warm air from entering easily into the inner well room in the summer and melting the ice in the pit. The present structure has direct access to the outside through the door. Ice houses were also usually accessed directly into the mound from ground level because of the need to load the pits with heavy blocks of ice. The presence of six steps down into the chamber would be an unusual feature for an ice house, although not unknown in badly designed examples (Buxbaum 1992).

The misidentification of ice houses has been recorded. At Milnthorpe House in the suburbs of Winchester, Hants, a brick and flint structure partly buried within a mound was published as a 'possible ice house' (Morris 1987). This had no proper access, other than a narrow hole in the roof, and metal pipes were revealed by later excavation entering from above and leaving from the bottom of the structure. Internally the floor was made of perforated slates, with a coarse sand layer over. This feature turned out to be a sunken water cistern with a slow sand filter to provide cooled and purified drinking water to the house (Currie 1997). Thus it can be shown that there were other features buried in mounds that superficially appear to be ice houses but performed other functions.

The structure at 60 Lawn Close is neither ice house<sup>2</sup> nor underground cistern/reservoir, but its nature, buried beneath an earth mound, would suggest it was designed to keep items cool. The structure that comes immediately to mind is a game store, although there was no evidence for hooks for hanging game. Nevertheless the door frame suggests that there was a need to make the chamber secure, and this suggests a cold store of some sort, although the nature of the produce stored here may not be determinable. The structure is not shown on any historical OS map, whereas it was common to mark ice houses on 19<sup>th</sup>-century editions. The mound is possibly shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the OS 25" map, but this is not labelled, and the marking here can only tentatively be ascribed as a mound.

## 6.0 Conclusions

No significant archaeology was uncovered during the evaluation of this site. The only archaeological features found were two pits and a hollow from which a tree bole is thought to have been removed. These were all in Trench 3 adjacent to a post-medieval mound concealing a post-medieval brick subterranean chamber. Neither pit contained any convincing dating evidence, although both contained single brick/tile fragments that could have been residual. However, the proximity of the mound, and the clean stoneless soil in the western pit [context 19] suggests that it might have been a planting pit for a tree to shade the adjacent mound. This was not the case for pit 17, which contained a compacted gravel fill that would not have been suitable for planting.

Three pieces of Iron Age pottery were found in subsoil in Trench 3 and this might suggest contemporary presence nearby.

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<sup>2</sup> Unless the brick wall at the west end has been added later to block access to the ice pit, but this seems unlikely.

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The sunken structure within the mound, together with the rest of the development site, had formerly been part of the pleasure grounds of a late 18<sup>th</sup>-century mansion known as The Lawn. The sunken structure is listed as an ice house, but this is thought to be incorrect. The structure has none of the characteristics of an ice house such as an ice pit/well and a staggered entrance. Instead it has a buried rectangular chamber in brick with a vaulted barrel roof. It is entered down a flight of six steps with an entrance facing east. It is thought to have been a cold store of some sort, but the exact nature of the produce stored can not be ascertained. To keep the chamber cool, it would have been necessary to provide dense shade over the mound. A Cedar of Lebanon tree to the east of the mound would have helped in this, and there is evidence for the removal of a tree bole in Trench 3 that seems to be overlain by brick rubble, possibly from the building of the present bungalow in the mid 1960s.

## **7.0 Copyright**

C K Currie (trading as CKC Archaeology) shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports or other project documents written by himself or his agents, under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act* of 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client and the local planning authorities for the use of such documents by them in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the project design, as well as for *bona fide* research purposes.

## **8.0 Archive**

The archive for this work will be deposited with Reading Museum (Accession no REDMG: 2005.5). Copies of the report were lodged with the client, the Planning Authority, the Berkshire County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), and the National Monuments Record in Swindon, Wiltshire, the latter as microfiche.

## **9.0 Acknowledgements**

Thanks are given to all those involved with this project. Jeff Brown of Foundation Land Ltd provided plans and liaison with the groundworkers on site. The client also provided the excavating machinery and driver. The site was monitored by Fiona McDonald of Berkshire Archaeology, the archaeological section of Reading Borough Council, who advise the local planning authority. The fieldwork was carried out by C K Currie, assisted by Dr Neil Rushton.

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## 10.0 References

### 10.1 Original sources

OS 25" maps (1884, 1899, 1932, 1968 eds)  
OS 6" map (1964 ed)

### 10.2 Secondary sources

Buxbaum, T, 1992, *Icehouses*, Princes Risborough: Shire Album 278

Currie, C K, 1997, 'An archaeological assessment of a garden structure at Langton House, Milnthorpe Lane, Winchester, Hampshire', *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society*, **52**, 165-76

Currie, C K, 2004, *Project design for an archaeological evaluation at 60 Lawn Close, Datchet, Berkshire*, unpublished client report, copy in the project archive

English Heritage 1992, *The management of archaeological projects*, London, revised edition

Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999, *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation*, Reading

Morris, M, 1987, 'A possible icehouse at Milnethorpe [*sic*], Winchester, *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society*, **43**, 257-61

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**Appendix 1: list of contexts excavated**

Context	Description	Munsell Colour
01	sandy loam layer	10YR 3/2
02	sandy clay loam layer	10YR 4/6
03	sand & gravel layer	10YR 7/6
04	sandy loam layer	10YR 3/2
05	sandy clay loam layer	10YR 4/4
06	sand & gravel layer	10YR 7/4
07	rectangular cut	
08	sandy clay loam fill of 07	10YR 3/1
09	cut	
10	rubble fill of 09	10YR 3/3
11	sandy clay layer	10YR 7/3
12	sandy loam layer	10YR 3/1
13	sandy loam layer	10YR 6/3
14	sandy loam layer	10YR 4/6
15	loamy sandy clay layer	10YR 6/4
16	sandy clay layer	10YR 7/4
17	oval cut	
18	compact gravel fill of 17	10YR 4/4
19	cut	
20	sandy loam fill of 19	10YR 4/4
21	irregular cut	
22	sandy clay fill of 21	10YR 4/6

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## Appendix 2: catalogue of photographs taken

Photographs were taken in both colour slide and monochrome print. In the archive the colour slides are prefixed with the site code, followed by 'S' to indicate photograph type, eg (Site Code=B10)/S/\* (\* indicating the photograph number). Monochrome prints are numbered (Site Code=B10)/M/\*, following the same procedure as for slides.

Photo no	Description
1	Working shot of Trench 1 from N
2	Trench 1 completed from W
3	Trench 1 completed from E
4	Trench 1 south-facing section at west end of trench from N
5	Trench 1 north-facing section at east end of trench from S
6	Trench 2 completed from S
7	Trench 2 completed from N
8	Trench 2 east-facing section mid trench from W
9	Trench 3 cut 17 pre-ex in east-facing section from W
10	Trench 3 cut 19 pre-ex from E
11	Trench 3 cut 17 part-excavated in plan form from W
12	Trench 3 cut 19 half-sectioned from E
13	Trench 3 completed from E
14	Trench 3 completed from W
15	Trench 3 cut 17 north-facing section from W
16	listed structure, mound from SSW
17	listed structure, entrance to subterranean chamber from E
18	listed structure, interior from E
19	listed structure, interior from W

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### Appendix 3: glossary of archaeological terms

**Archaeology:** the study of man's past by means of the material relics he has left behind him. By material relics, this means both materials buried within the soil (artefacts and remains of structures), and those surviving above the surface such as buildings, structures (e.g. stone circles) and earthworks (e.g. hillforts, old field boundaries etc.). Even the study of old tree or shrub alignments, where they have been artificially planted in the past, can give vital information on past activity.

**Artefacts:** any object made by man that finds itself discarded (usually as a broken object) or lost in the soil. The most common finds are usually pottery sherds, or waste flint flakes from prehistoric stone tool making. Metal finds are generally rare except in specialist areas such as the site of an old forge. The absence of finds from the activity of metal detectorists is not usually given much credibility by archaeologists as a means of defining if archaeology is present

**Baulk:** an area of unexcavated soil on an archaeological site. It usually refers to the sides of the archaeological trench.

**Context:** a number given to a unit of archaeological recording. This can include a layer, a cut, a fill of a cut, a surface or a structure.

**Cut:** usually used to mean an excavation made in the past. The 'hole' or cut existed in time as a void, before later being backfilled with soil. Archaeologists give a context number to the empty hole, as well as the backfilled feature (called the 'fill').

**Evaluation:** a limited programme of intrusive fieldwork (mainly test-trenching) which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified land unit or area. If they are present, this will define their character, extent, and relative quality, and allow an assessment of their worth in local, regional and national terms.

**Munsell colour:** an objective method of defining soil colour using a specially designed colour chart for soils. The reading defines hue (an objective description of colour; eg YR means yellow-red), value (darkness or lightness of the colour) and chroma (the greyness or purity of the colour). For example 10YR 3/2 is a dark grey-brown.

**Natural [layer]:** in archaeological reports, this is a layer that has been formed by natural process, usually underlying man-made disturbance.

**Period:** time periods within British chronology are usually defined as Prehistoric (comprising the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age), Roman, Saxon, Medieval and Post-medieval. Although exact definitions are often challenged, the general date ranges are as given below.

**Prehistoric** c. 100,000 BC - AD 43. This is usually defined as the time before man began making written records of his activities.

Palaeolithic or Old Stone Age 100,000 - 8300 BC

Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age 8300 - 4000 BC

Neolithic or New Stone Age 4000 - 2500 BC

Bronze Age 2500 - 700 BC

Iron Age 700 BC - AD 43

**Roman** AD 43-410

**Saxon** AD 410-1066

**Medieval** AD 1066-1540

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**Post-medieval** AD 1540-present

**Pottery sherds:** small pieces of broken baked clay vessels that find their way into ancient soils. These can be common in all periods from the Neolithic onwards. They often find their way into the soil by being dumped on the settlement rubbish tip, when broken, and subsequently taken out and scattered in fields with farmyard manure.

**Project Design:** a written statement on the project's objectives, methods, timetable and resources set out in sufficient detail to be quantifiable, implemented and monitored.

**Settlement:** usually defined as a site where human habitation in the form of permanent or temporary buildings or shelters in wood, stone, brick or any other building material has existed in the past.

**Site:** usually defined as an area where human activity has taken place in the past. It does not require the remains of buildings to be present. A scatter of prehistoric flint-working debris can be defined as a 'site', with or without evidence for permanent or temporary habitation.

**Stratigraphy:** sequence of man-made soils overlying undisturbed soils; the lowest layers generally represent the oldest periods of man's past, with successive layers reaching forwards to the present. It is within these soils that archaeological information is obtained.

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**Fig. 1: location**

North is at the top of the page. Taken from 1999 OS 1:25000 and reduced. Scale: each grid square is 100m by 100m. Copied with permission. Crown Copyright. OS Licence AL10001 1999

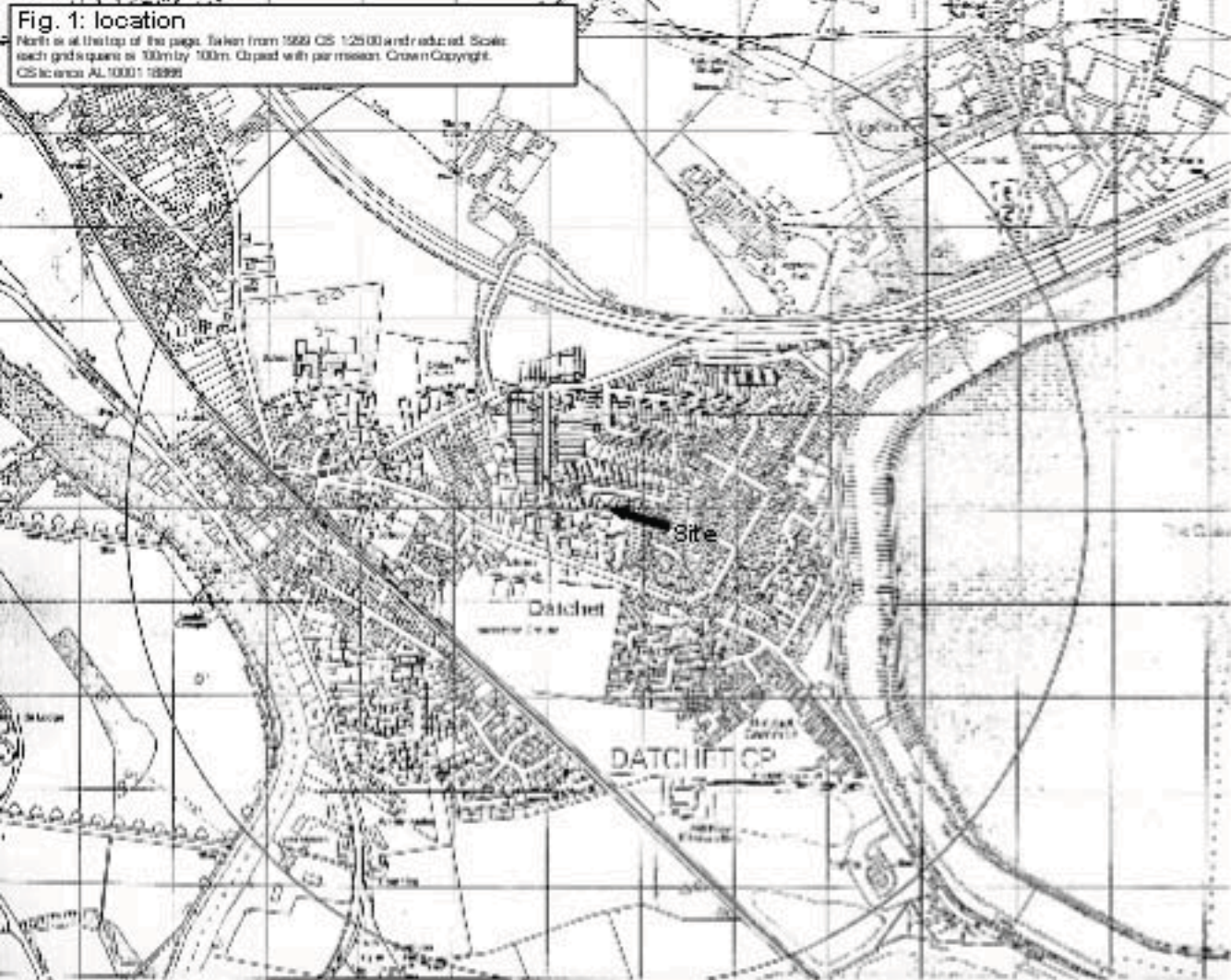
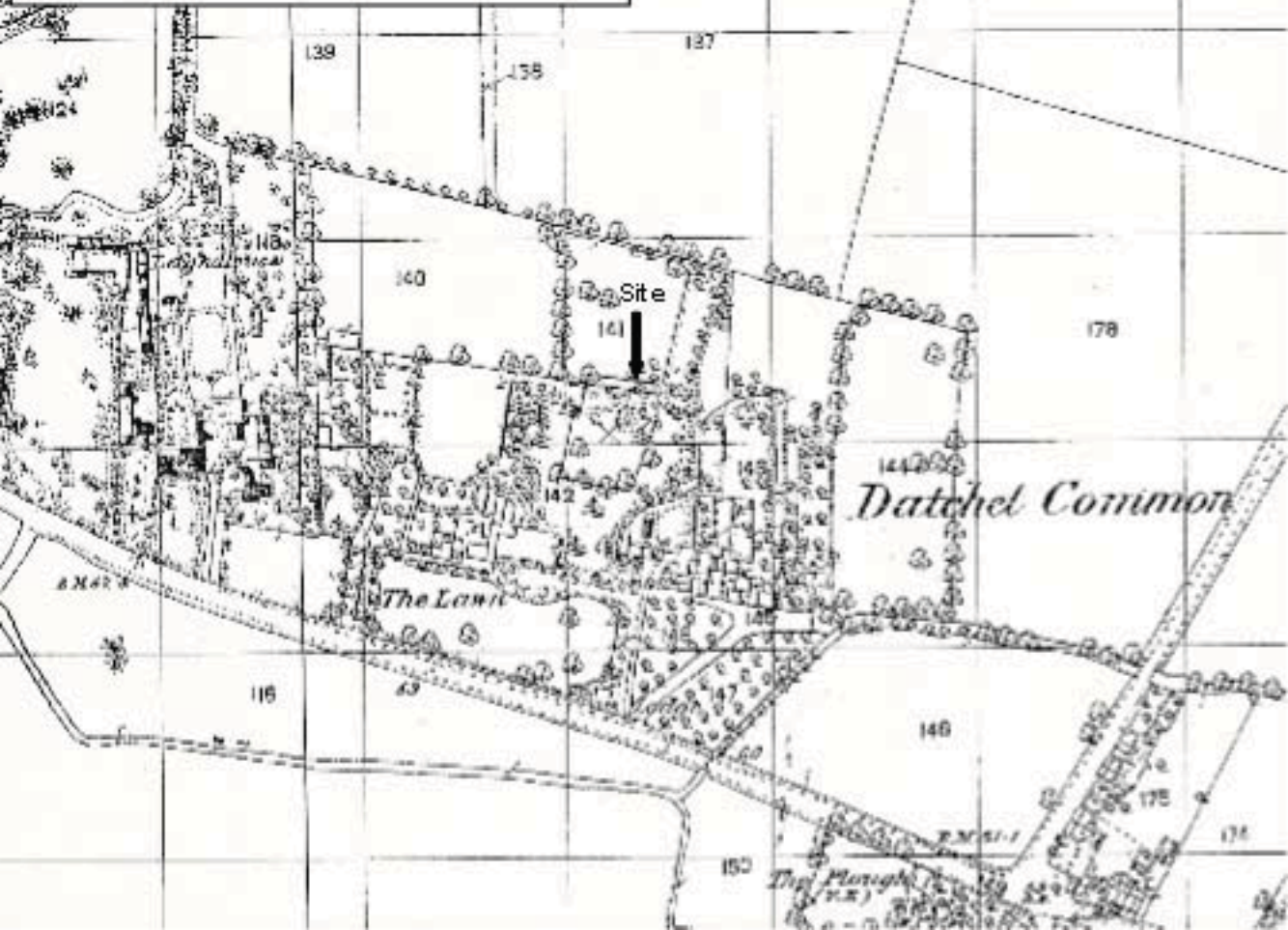


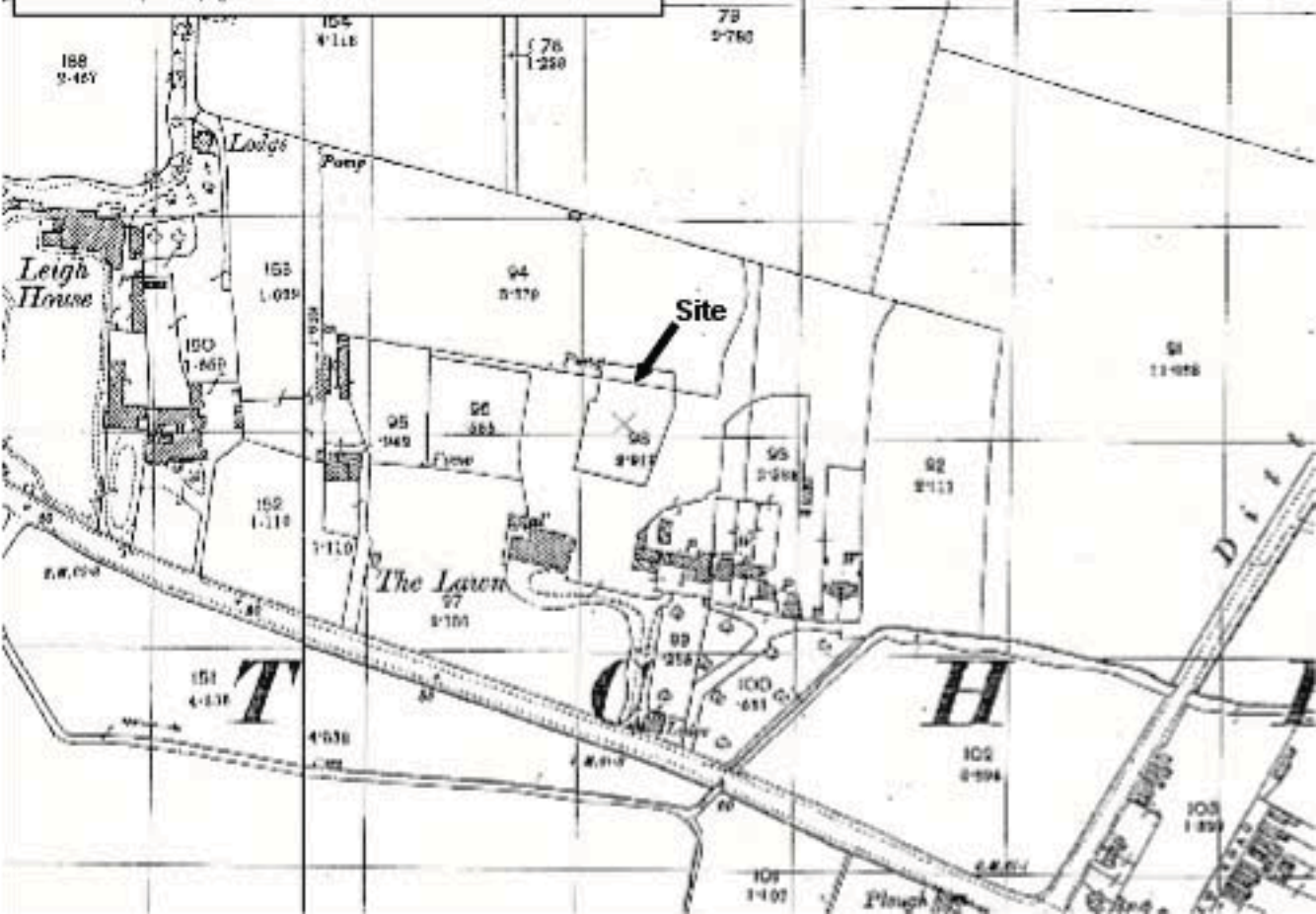


Fig. 2: development site from m 1884 OS 25" map  
Northward the top of this page.



**Fig. 3: development site from 1899 OS 25" map**

North is at the top of the page



**Fig. 4: development site from 1932 OS 25" map**  
North is at the top of the page.

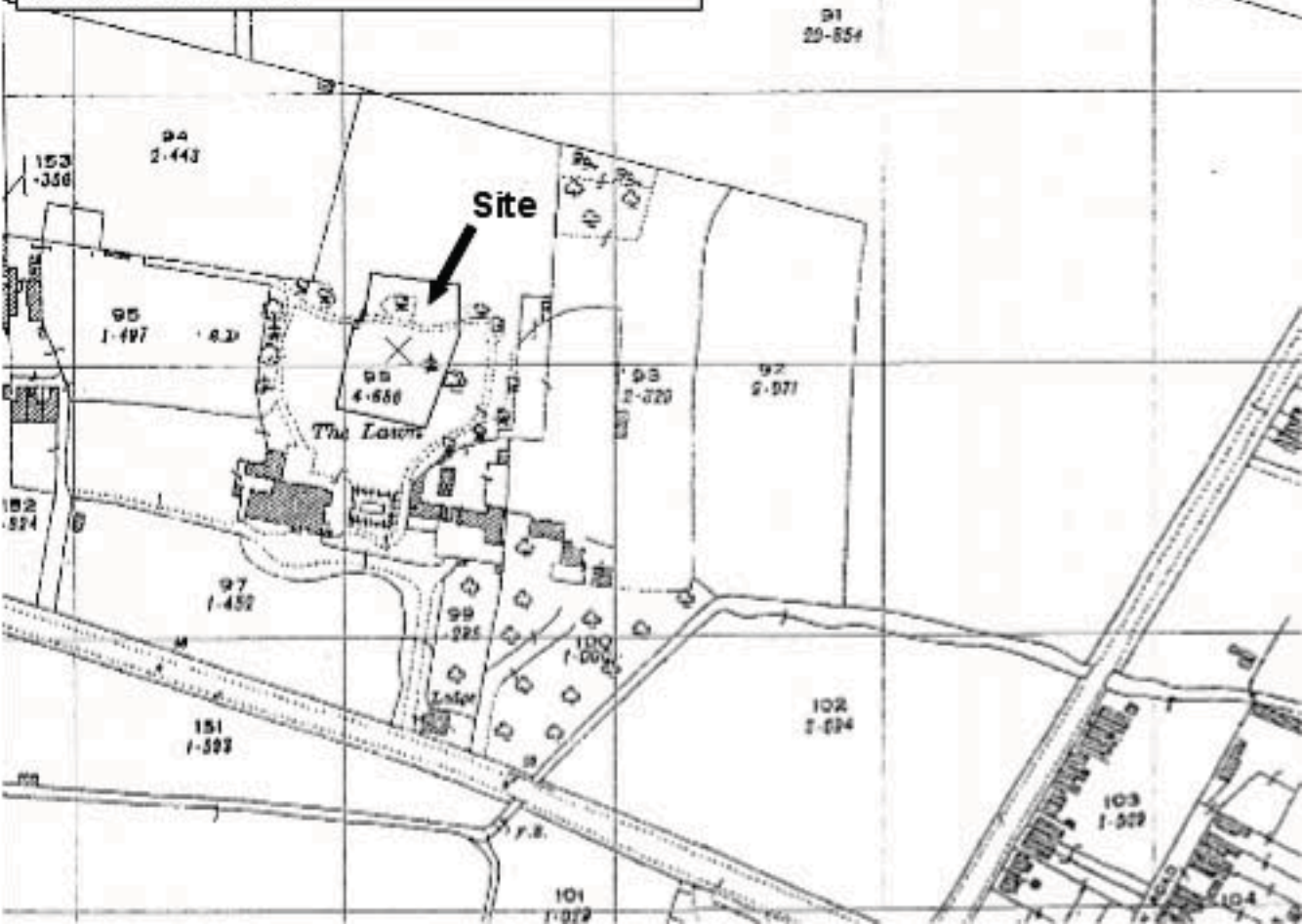


Fig. 5: development site from 1968 OS 25" map  
North is at the top of the page

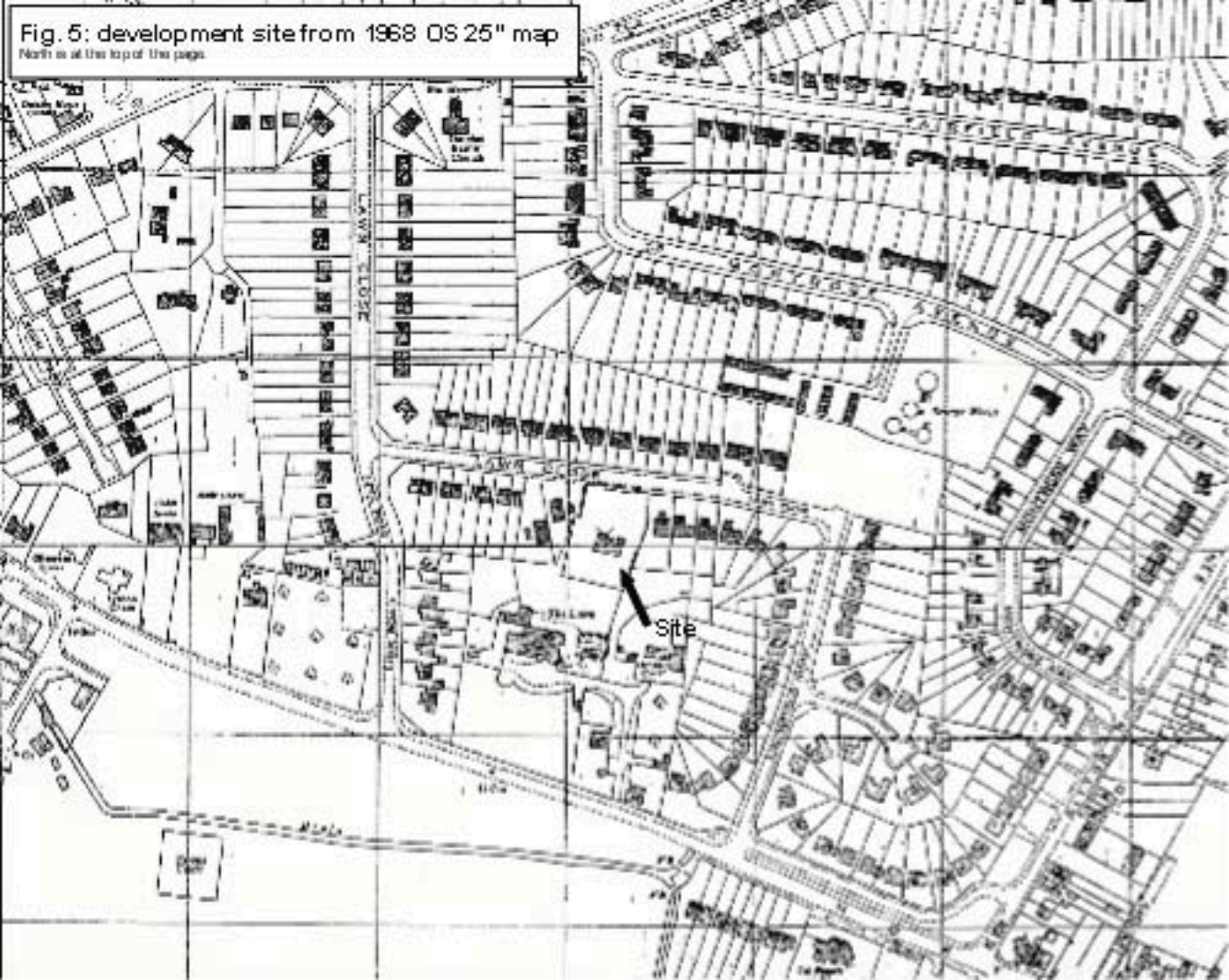


Fig. 6: trench location

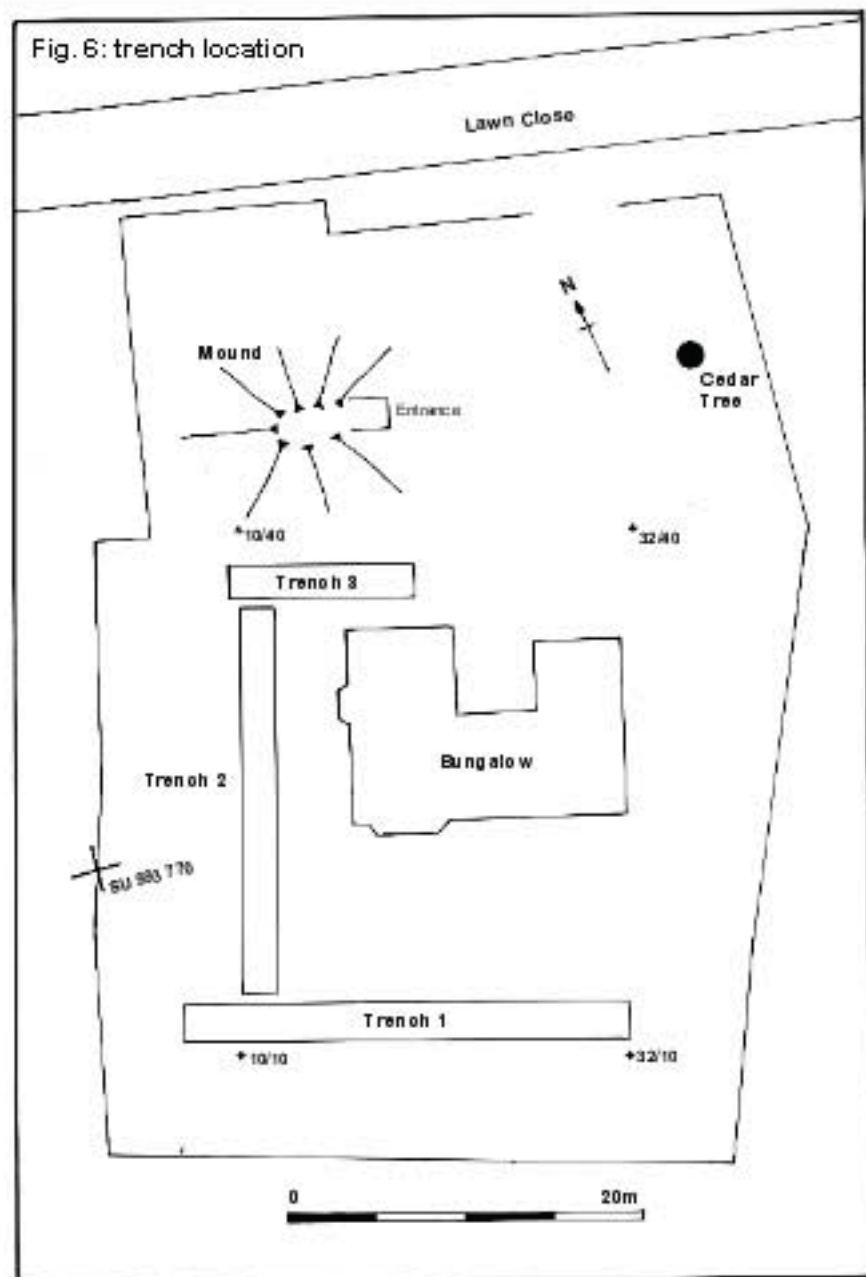
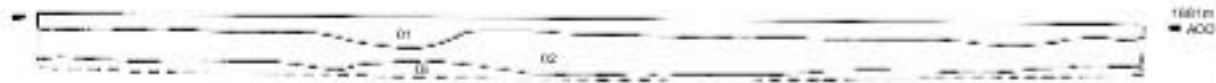


Fig. 7: Trench 1 & 2 sections

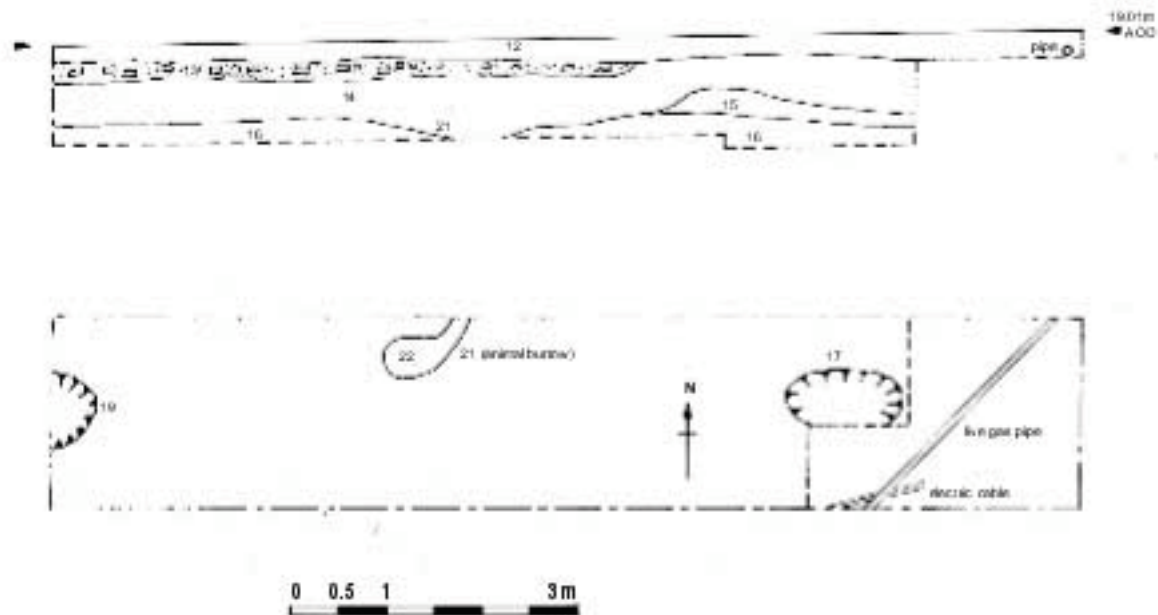
Trench 1, south going section



Trench 2, east going section



Fig. 8: Trench 3, plan & section





Front cover: Trench 3 completed from E showing undated pit 17 at west end.  
Back cover: sunken listed structure showing entrance in mound from E