

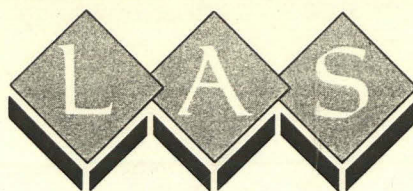
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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

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**CAISTOR GRAMMAR SCHOOL
VARLOW'S YARD, NORTH KELSEY ROAD.
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

September 24th 1993

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Introduction

Evaluation work at Varlow's Yard in September 1992, prior to building work, located archaeological remains immediately below the present ground surface. This established the need for an archaeological watching brief during construction work of the new science block which covered three stages of work:

1. Piling and trenching for concrete ground beams. (Ref: CGS1-93, M.Clark, 8/3/93).
2. Excavation of north-south service trench for gas, water and electricity. (Ref: CGS2-93, C.Palmer-Brown, 23/7/93).
3. Excavation of north-south drainage trench. (Ref: CGS3-93, M. Clark, 18/8/93).

The purpose of the watching briefs was to record further archaeological remains disturbed by the new building. The foundations of the new building were especially designed to minimise their impact on the archaeological deposits.

Numbers referred to in the report are context numbers used on site for describing archaeological remains and have no other significance (see Appendix 1 for descriptions).

Photographs may be found in the accompanying album and are referred to in the text with the prefix "P" (see Appendix 2 for descriptions).

Background

The excavations in September 1992 comprised a 9.30m x 2.00m trench at the south end of the plot, perpendicular to the assumed line of the Roman wall. It was discovered that the ground had been levelled, perhaps in the 18-19th century, and below the yard surfaces were pits dating to the 11th century and earlier. All later medieval remains had been removed. The pits had been dug into an earlier ditch, possibly of Roman origin, running parallel to the Roman wall and a minimum of 8.00m wide. Any building work could potentially disturb early archaeological remains elsewhere on the site, given their proximity to the present ground surface.

Site Description

Large areas of concrete, a minimum of 7cm thick, covered parts of the site, being the remains of later floors and yard belonging to the range of brick buildings shown on the 1970 O.S. map (Fig.1) but demolished some years ago. Their footings were partly exposed during the ground works (brick dimension sampling points are given the prefix: 'B' in Fig.2). An underground fuel tank was located in the central eastern part of the site. A brick building in this area had been demolished immediately prior to general site clearance.

Surface levels at the corners of the site are shown in Fig.3, giving overall falls from the SE corner as follows: to north 2.19m; to west 0.46m; to north-west of c.3.82m (taken from the road spot-height beyond the buildings obstructing this corner of the plot).

The retained higher levels of the neighbouring properties to the east and the south suggest that the site had been subjected to a separate levelling/ terracing process or processes. This took place prior to the construction of the recently demolished late 18th-19th century buildings on the plot. A wooden post and rail fence had been erected along the newly -created west boundary.

The southern retaining wall of rough stone blocks (28) had been partly obscured by the addition of brick buildings to the east and west ends of its north face. The time lapse between the stone and brick constructions is not known. The 1992 excavation showed only that the construction trench associated with stone wall 28 could be of late date (although re-levelling may have obscured the true relationship) and may simply indicate a re-facing.

Piling

Concrete piles c.4m long and 0.25m square section were machine-driven at the points (and approximate orientations) shown in Fig. 2 (at slightly exaggerated scale). The numbering 1-32, taken from the architect's plan, runs clockwise from the NW angle of the new building. P18 shows pile-driving operations at the SW angle. P19 and P23 show the relative depths of piles in this area. Pile heights in the central and eastern parts are shown in Ps 1,2,6,7,11,12. No obvious pattern was seen that might reflect the effect of large east-west ditches cut into bedrock, or the existence of large wall foundations (P1,2).

Trenching

This was to the minimum depth necessary to allow installation of the ground beams after the piles were trimmed to the required height (P7,11,12). The ground beam was to be set either on, or above, the chalk surface 201, which had already suffered severe truncation from a point about 10m north of the south boundary wall. (Excavation in 1992 showed that deposits below this level were 11th century and earlier.)

Features Later Than Chalk Surface 201

P3 shows the early trenching stage at the south-east angle. Here the north-south brick footings 203, 36cm wide, were revealed with the related floor surfaces to the east (P4,5). The uneven brick courses running west of 203 may have formed part of a thicker wall, directly overlying the rammed chalk surface 201. The construction trench to 203 appeared to cut 201 (see also the east-west wall 219, P17, which did likewise). Pit 204 (P8) cut chalk layer 201 near pile 19; 19th century pottery was retrieved from the fill surface. P9 shows the

backfilled 1992 excavation cutting through surface layers 205, mortar layer 206, dark soil and building debris layer 207, chalk 201 and yellowy clay 202 (P10 shows detail). Layer 207 may represent demolition of an earlier phase of buildings, sealed by the construction of a later yard to the second phase of buildings. Finds from 207 indicated a date not earlier than 18th century. 214 (P16) was similar and probably represents the same phase.

Immediately to the west, the section adjacent to piles 20 and 21 showed a dark soil fill 208 (P12). This may be the fill of the construction trench for the east wall of the southernmost building of the west range, existing in 1969.

North of pile 25 was a pit 213, c.0.20m deep (P14), cut from a level at least 0.4m above stone layer 209. The fill was of black burnt materials (mixed with clay?) butting a roughly vertical edge of loose, but level brick and stone pieces c. 25cm wide, which may represent the remains of a disturbed wall against which burnt or sooty material had lain or been backfilled. Staining continued from this feature through the underlying clay and into stone layer 209.

Rammed Chalk Layer 201

The approximate visible extent of 201 in the trenching was an area bounded by a line drawn between piles 16 and 18 east; 18 to 26 south; 26 to 6 west and 6 to 16 north-east. The 1992 excavation showed that the actual southern limit of 201 (1992 context: 3) was a tapered edge 1.50m north of retaining wall 28, sealing 10th century features and sealed by 18th and 19th century building layers. Wall face 28 appeared to be built in a trench cut from a higher level than 201 or even the layer which sealed the latter, i.e. 18th century or later.

201 was visible over much of the southern central area of the brick ranges and appeared to be the first layer post-dating truncation of the earlier features (but see 218 below). It varied from c. 5cm to 15cm in thickness, and was reasonably level across the site. Its precise relationship to the various brick footings (which were of two-phase construction according to the brick types and sizes), was not found, although it may have formed a yard or working surface immediately prior to the first phase of these buildings. However it was not proved to have existed exclusively extramurally, particularly as the full extent of brick structures on the site is unknown.

Between piles 26 and 33, a layer of large limestone lumps and blocks and chalk rubble 209 (whose surface is at the same level as 201 elsewhere) seems to be a continuation of 201 but in different materials (P13,14,15). Much of the stone may have been re-used from a structure. The trench stepping in P15 shows a depth of c. 15cm (including the depth removed, still visible in section). Larger irregular stones gave the layer a maximum depth of 30cm. P14 shows a mortar layer 15cm above 209

with an intervening deposit of brown clay flecked with chalk and occasional small brick fragments. The brick and stone feature 213 has been dug through the mortar layer and is later. The north-south extent of 209 is shown in Fig.2. Chalk layer 201 is again visible north of pile 33 but the junction of the two materials was disturbed by the drain and soakaway 211.

Deposits Earlier Than 201

The deep 18th century and 19th century disturbances and the shallow trenching presented little opportunity for examination of earlier layers. At the SE angle was a layer of dirty yellowish sticky clay 202, which yielded no finds (P3-8), but marking the level of one or more levelling operations between the 11th and 18th centuries.

Layers 201 and 209 were bedded on a layer of sand, 217, varying from a few centimetres (P15) to c.20cm depth (P16). The sand overlay a substantial clay deposit 218. The bottom of the trenching barely cut into this deposit but its depth was determined by augering at three points between Piles 26 and 6 (see Fig. 3). North of Pile 26 218 was found to be 0.30m deep. North of Pile 34 218 was c.0.90m deep, becoming wetter and sandier at a depth of 0.65m. Below 218, at 78.89m.OD was a layer of mustard-coloured clay and stones whose full depth is unknown. Next to Pile 6, 218 was 1.10m deep, suggesting that this deposit was the northward-inclined fill of a substantial feature, possibly a ditch. The surface of 218 seemed fairly level over the few metres observed (at c.79.96m OD) and may represent a phase of levelling earlier than that below chalk 201.

No layers identifiable with 217 or 218 were observed in the N-S service and drainage trenches.

West End of Site.

During machine trenching between piles 30 and 31, a deep deposit of dark blue-green wet clay 220 was revealed, having traces of dark, possibly burnt material at the centre. No further observations were made, because the hole was immediately backfilled (P21, top left).

South of pile 31, the section showed topsoil 225 over a thin red-brown clay layer 224 containing small stone lumps (P20). This sealed a greeny-brown sticky clay layer 221 containing animal bone and one sherd of early medieval pottery (P20,21). Immediately to the south were features 222, containing tile and bone; 226, a dark grey-brown area of soil, possibly agully running E-W and 229 which may have been part of 222. All these appeared to be later than 228, a pale brown sandy clay layer (P21,22). These features were ill-defined and it is uncertain which were layers and which were fills of features. The section at the change in trench level south of pile 32 revealed only a dark, mixed clayey soil and small stones continuing to Pile 1

and east to Pile 2, becoming darker and drier. A few fragments of 18th-19th century pottery and glass were found over the whole area of the north-west angle (P23).

The lower ground surface level from this point eastwards rendered trenching unnecessary for accommodation of the ground beams.

Service Trench (Fig.3,4) P24,25 (Colin Palmer-Brown)

A watching brief was maintained on service trenching between the new science block and the street frontage on July 23rd 1993. A JCB fitted with a 0.5m wide bucket removed the spoil to a depth of c.1m. At the north end the south edge of a pit or ditch 317 was exposed 1.40m south of the footpath. The fill was a greenish-brown, sticky silty clay, chalk flecks, charcoal and a moderate quantity of medium-sized limestone lumps. One clay tobacco pipe stem and a small bone fragment were recovered.

317 was dug through a yellow-orange mottled/banded silty clay interspersed with limestone lumps from at least 77.73m OD. Its south edge continued below the trench bottom at an angle of 50°. and the minimum depth seen in section was 0.50m.

The trench section generally showed evidence for deliberately made-up ground with very mixed bands of redeposited natural and lenses of dirtier material, similar to deposits encountered during the 1992 excavations.

At a point 15.30m north of the new block these deposits, which averaged c.0.50m in depth sloped up against the natural subsoil at an angle of c. 45°, over lenses of natural clay mixed with limestone lumps. It is possible that these deposits were filling a very large void such as quarry pit or large ditch. No evidence of revetment or terracing was found.

There was substantial disturbance adjacent to the north wall of the new block. A soft fill containing nineteenth century pottery was causing the trench sides to collapse, limiting investigation of the area.

Drainage Trench (figs.3,4, P26-36)

A drainage trench, east of the service trench and 0.70m wide, was machine dug from the NE angle of the new block, temporarily terminating in a box trench at a point c.5m south of the north entrance (P26).

The earliest layer, 305, was recorded at the box-trench. This was a yellowish clay with medium to large limestone lumps (P27,28). The top of this layer was at 77.82m OD.

Sealing 305 was a layer, apparently level, made up of several lenses, of green powdery sandstone c.10-15cm thick (P27,28). This was visible for a distance of c.5m southwards and again

briefly at 7m. 306 sealing 304 was similar to 305 but had fewer and smaller stone inclusions (P28,29,30).

Sealing 306 was a band of smooth greenish clay containing lumps of soft powdery chalk (P28-33). Its profile followed a very shallow rise and fall to the north, being visible for 9m in the west section and 6m in the east section. At about 10m south of the entrance, the west side was disturbed by an obsolete brick inspection chamber. Its continuation north of this point was not proved (P27).

In the east section, the southern end of 303 rose more steeply (P31,33) but at a point along the trench obliquely north to that on the west side, suggesting an edge to a large feature. The west side however, gave no indication of dropping sharply at this point and was not investigated below the required drain invert level (P32). A line drawn between the visible southern extremities of 303 east and west would be aligned E-W across the site, i.e. parallel with the wall 28.

Fill 307 on the west side, a pale yellowish mixed clay and fine stones may have contained discreet fills but nothing definite was observed. The equivalent fill on the east side, of similar characteristics contained fills 313 and 314, c.5cm thick, slightly darker and sandier than 307.

310 (west) and 311 (east) (P33,34) were pronounced north edges of dark brown soil fills, 311 having a distinctly clean upper limit; 310 merging with 308 at 301 (P32). 308 (west) was a yellowish mixed clay with small-medium stones. 309 (east)(P33,34) was slightly darker than 308, with less stone. Sealing 308 was a dark brown mixed soil, 302 (P35,36). No positive matching fill to 302 was found on the east side although this was at the junction with other trenches and previous disturbance (P35). The close proximity of trench spoil prevented examination of the uppermost layers.

Discussion

All layers in the service and drainage trenches fell to the south and although matching of fills to east and west was not entirely satisfactory as regards fill type and alignment, the fill lines indicate the northern or north-east edge of a very large void or ditch whose projected width must be at least c.12m.

The service trench to the west (Fig.4) showed a fill of limestone lumps, mixed sandy and natural clay 319, similar to 307 or 308 although there were no well-defined separate slip lines as in the drain trench. 318 was also interpreted as an edge to a void whose base was 0.20m above the trench bottom, cut into ?natural yellow-orange clay and limestone lumps 316. 316 most nearly matches 305, the lowest layer found in the drain trench north terminal, but at a considerably lower level of 77.82m O.D. Comparison to any other layers is difficult in

the absence of layers 303 and 304, neither of which were seen in the service trench which was less than 2m to the west.

Fig. 4 illustrates the relative positions and conjectural common SE-NW alignment of features 310,312,318 found in both trenches and showing the alternate alignment based on the fall of 303 alone. The uncertainty here is whether or not 303 itself constitutes a contemporary fill or edge as inferred by the east section or an earlier layer or fill cut by a later feature as inferred by 310 in the west section.

Fig. 5 shows the N-S site profile giving the relative locations and depths of the main features. The lack of northward inclined fills may be coincidental in the event of unidentified later cuttings but the 0.60m proximity of the sections and the similar slip angles make this less probable in the drainage trench than the more distant and disturbed fills of the southern end of the service trench.

Archaeological deposits in such confined areas are always difficult to interpret. The results of this watching brief suggest the presence of substantial features which may be Roman ditches associated with the walled town, and are additional to the large ditch found in September 1992. Their discovery is of great importance in the context of Caistor's status in the Roman period. Confirmation of their true function must await more extensive investigations elsewhere, but their presence has fully justified the need for specially tailored foundation specifications.

M.V.Clark, September 1993.

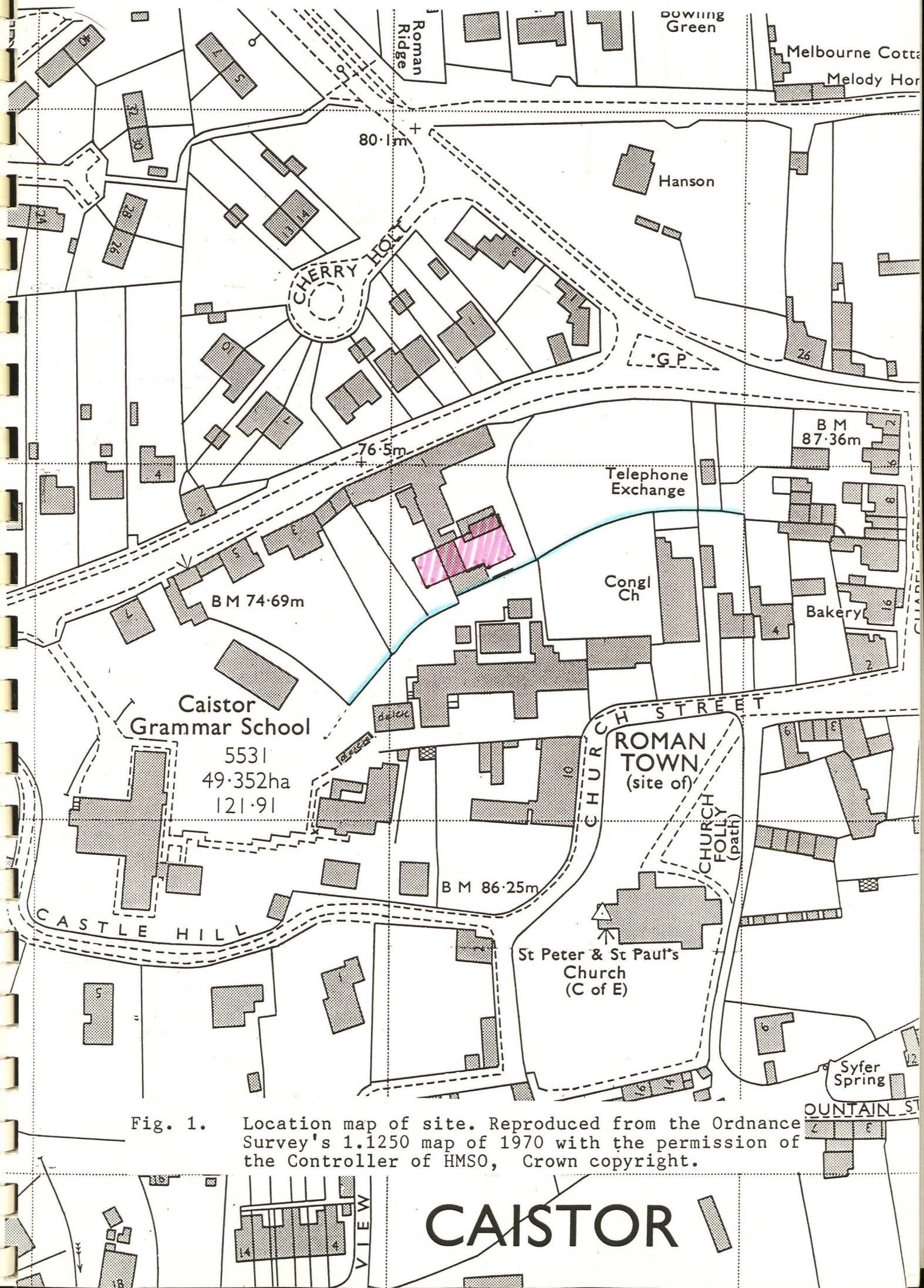
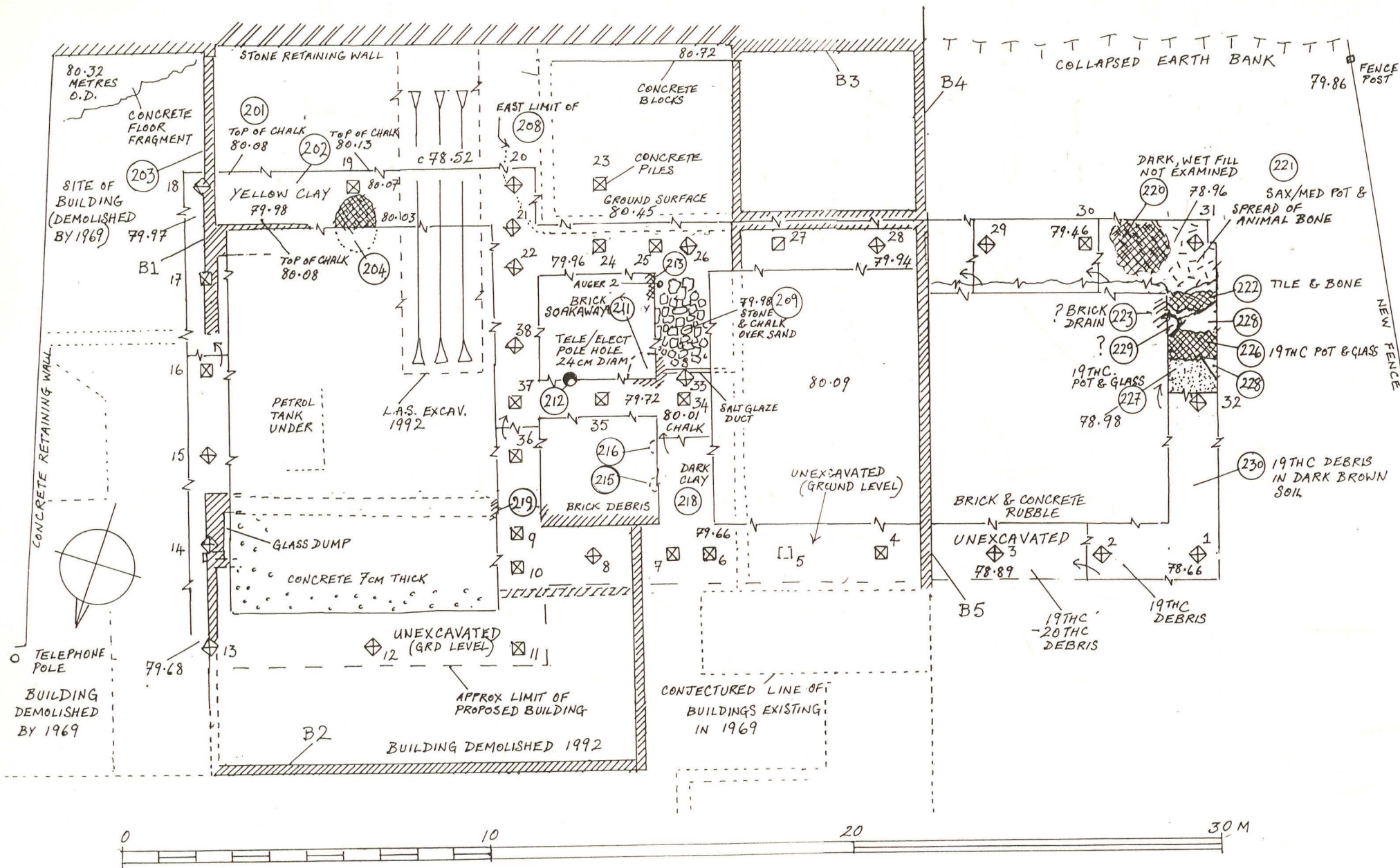


Fig. 1. Location map of site. Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey's 1:1250 map of 1970 with the permission of the Controller of HMSO, Crown copyright.



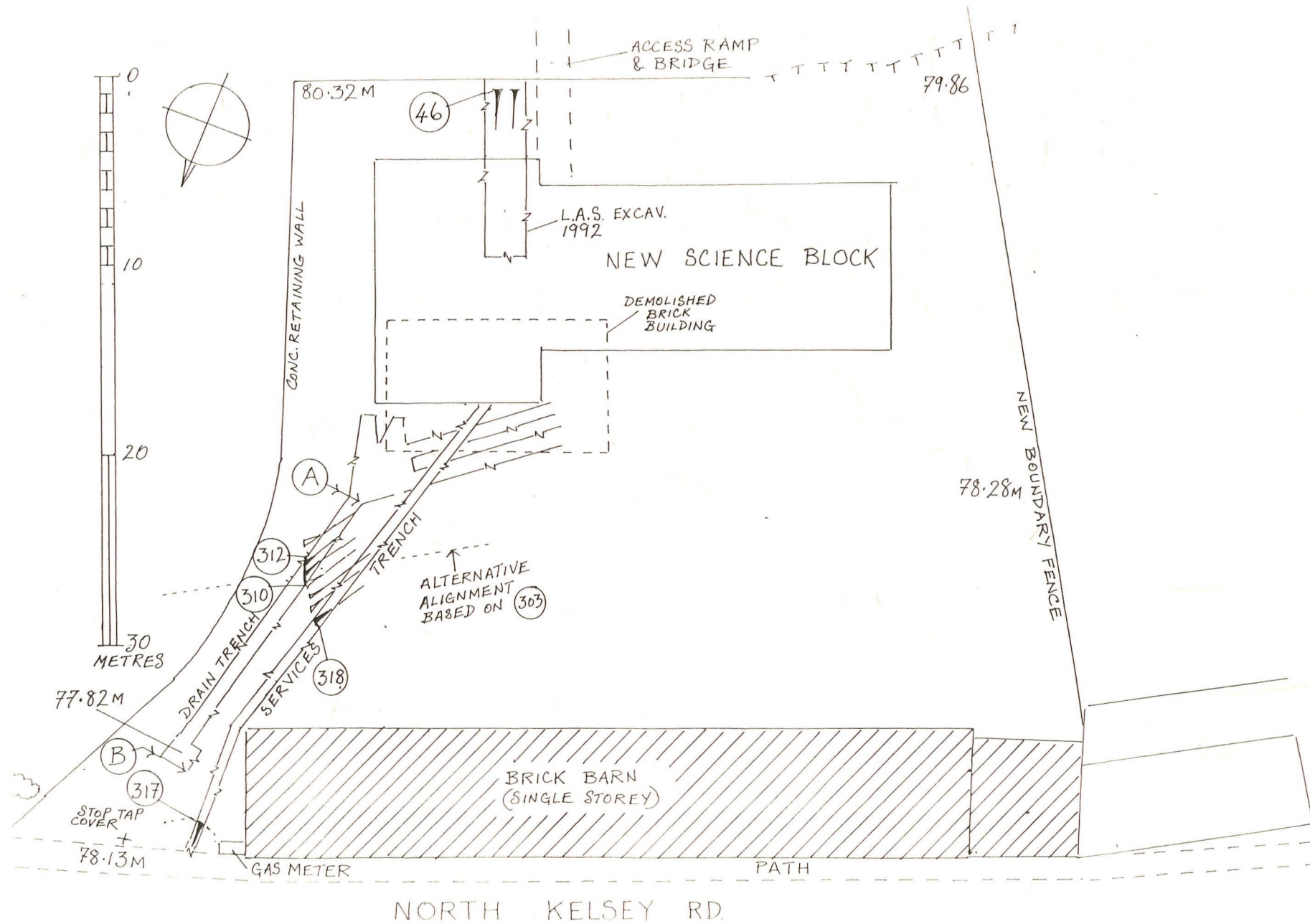


Fig. 3. Plan showing new block and route of service and drainage trenches.
 M.V. Clark 1993

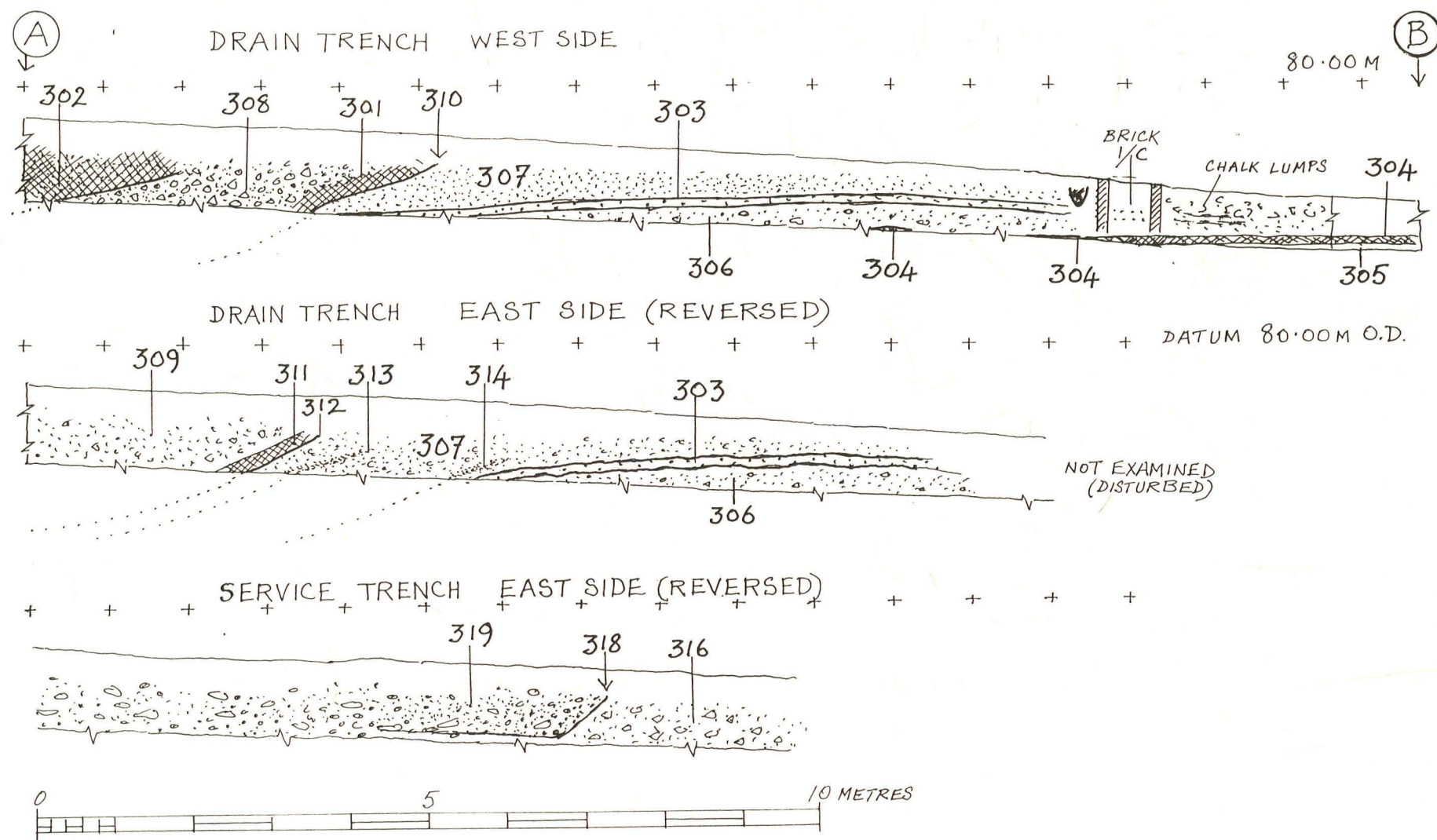


Fig. 4. Features exposed in sections of service and drainage trenches. M.V.Clark 1993

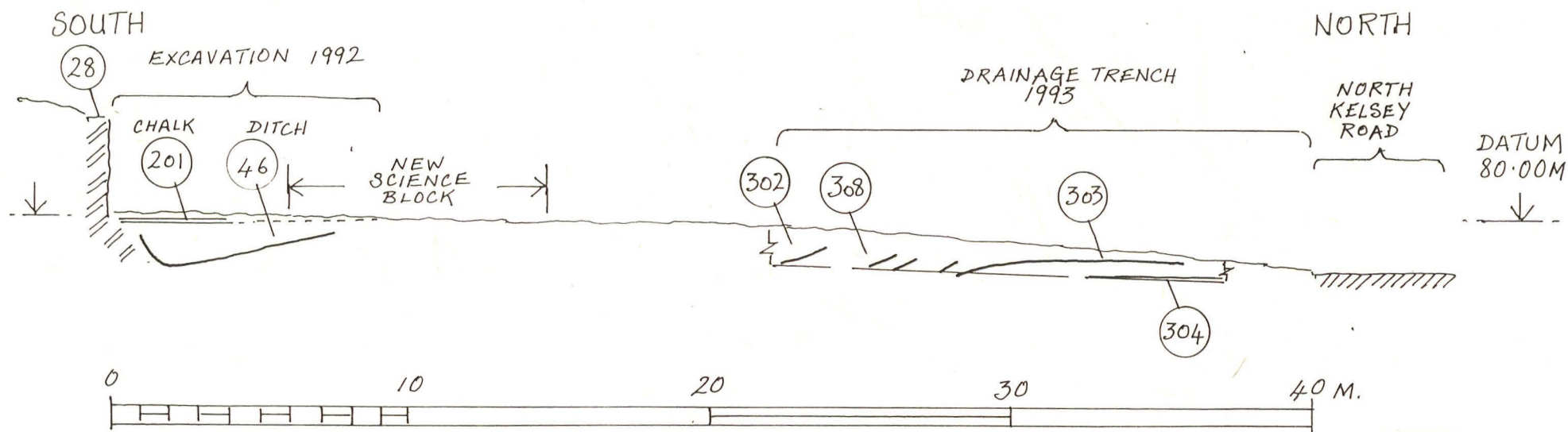


Fig. 5. Schematic north-south profile of site showing section through main features.

M.V.Clark 1993

Appendix 1

List of Photographs

- P1 View north-east. Trenching and piles for new block, from south-west.
- P2 View north-west. New block trenching and piles from south-east.
- P3 View north. Trenching (and truncated piles in foreground) from south-west.
- P4 View north. Detail of north-south footing 203 in section from south.
- P5 View north-east. Detail of north-south footing 203, from south-east.
- P6 View north. Eastern trench, north-south footings 203 removed (line of mortar still visible between first and third piles.)
- P7 View south. South-east angle of trenching, north-south brick footings 203 cutting clay 202. Pile trimming in background.
- P8 View north. Pit fill 204 cutting chalk 201. From south
- P9 View south. Southern east-west trench showing 1992 excavation fill in section. From north.
- P10 View south. Detail south side of southern east-west trench; surface layers 205, mortary layers 206, dark layer and debris 207, chalk 201, yellowy clay (under trowel) 202.
- P11 View north. Pile cutting. From south.
- P12 View south. Piles 20 and 21. Layers 205, 206, 207 and 208 cut by 1992 excavations. Dark mixed layers/fill to right of 208.
- P13 View east. Between piles 26 and 33. Area of stone and chalk 209 over sand 210. Pit 213 at right of section.
- P14 View east. Pit 213 over stone and chalk 209.
- P15 View south. Stone and chalk layer 209. Dark clay 218 in foreground. Piles 25 and 26 in the background.
- P16 View east. Dark topsoil over demolition debris 214 over rammed chalk 201 (filling postholes 215 and 216) over orange-brown sand 217 and brown sandy clay 218.
- P17 View east. South wall 219 of demolished outbuilding. (pile no 9 to left). ?cuts rammed chalk 201.
- P18 View west. Piling operations at south-west angle.
- P19 View north-east. General view of site showing differing pile heights. (pile No 24 in centre foreground).
- P20 View south. South-west angle of trenching. Detail of southern section showing 225 (topsoil), 224 and 221.
- P21 View south-east. South-west angle of trenching at pile no 31. 221 clay layer containing bone around pile.
- P22 View east. South-west angle of trenching between piles 31 and 32, showing 221 (far right); 222 (right); 223 brick ? drain; 226 (centre left); 227 (left); 228.
- P23 View south. North-west angle of trenching. Pile no 2 to left foreground, collapsed bank background right.
- P24 View south. Service trench.

- P25 View east. Service trench. Fill 319 (right), edge of fill 318, pale greeny brown with limestone lumps 316 (left).
- P26 View south. New science block and drain trench.
- P27 View south-west. North end of drain trench. Layers 304 and 305.
- P28 View south-west. North half of drain trench. Layers 304 and 305. 303 cut by old brick inspection chamber.
- P29 View south. New science block from north of drain trench. Shows curve of 303.
- P30 View north-west. West side of drain trench, layers 303 and 306.
- P31 View north. Drain trench east and west side. Layer 303 east and west.
- P32 View west. Drain trench, west side, fill 301.
- P33 View north-east. Drain trench, north end, east side. 311 relative to 303 east.
- P34 View east. Drain trench east side. 311, 307 and 309.
- P35 View south-west. Drain trench south end, at junction with other east-west trenches. Shows position of fill 302.
- P36 View west. Drain trench south end, west side. Fills 302 and 308.

APPENDIX 2

CAISTOR GRAMMAR SCHOOL (CGS93)

CONTEXT LIST

- 201 Layer of chalk lumps, rammed, 5-15cm thick. South east quarter of site only. Seals 202.
- 202 Dirty yellow clay below chalk 201.
- 203 Brick footings north-south, yellowy lime mortar. Cuts 202.
- 204 Sub circular pit, dark fill, 19th century, top not known. Cuts 201.
- 205 General mixed surface layers, south-east quarter only. c 5cm thick. Seals 206.
- 206 Chalky mixed layer, c 5cm thick, south-east quarter only Seals 207.
- 207 Dark mixed layer, soil, burnt material, brick and tile fragments, c 10-20cm thick. ?18th-19th century.
- 208 Area of mixed dark fill to west of piles 20 and 21. ? construction trench for earlier building (230).
- 209 Area of stone and chalk layer 209 (between piles 26 and 33), over sand layer 210. Up to c 30cm thick.
- 210 Layer of sand sealed by stones 209.
- 211 Brick filled soakaway between piles 33 and 35 (salt-glaze duct drains from west) extent and depth not known.
- 212 Post-pipe of dark soil, depth at least 1.00m from existing surface: Old electricity/telephone pole site, diameter c 24cm. ?Mid 20th century.
- 213 Vertical sided cut visible in west side of trench. Limited by east-west wall to north, south extent unknown. Dark burnt fill. Seals 209 depth c 35cm.
- 214 Layer of brown-green clay, tile and brick fragments. Similar to 207. Seals rammed chalk 201.
- 215 Remains of ?post hole. East-west gully filled by chalk 201.
- 216 ? Post hole to south of, and similar to, 215.
- 217 Layer of orange-brown sand. Sealed by 201. c 15-18cm thick.
- 218 Dark brown sandy clay. Sealed by 217. min thickness 10cm
- 219 Brick wall stub visible in east side of north-south trench, south of pile 9.
- 220 Undefined feature at south-west angle. (excavated by JCB and backfilled immediately). Dark wet mixed clay between piles 30 and 31.
- 221 Pale brown/green mixed sticky clay, ?fill. Containing animal bones and one sherd of ?early medieval. Around pile 31
- 222 Mixed brown soil and clay containing tile and bone. ? cuts 221.
- 223 Brick rubble at south-west angle. Remains of ?drain.
- 224 Brown clay layer containing small lumps of stone. Seals 221. South-west angle of trenching south of pile 31. Sealed by 225. Seals 221 c 5-10cm thick.
- 225 Dark clayey top soil and surface debris c 15-20cm thick. South-west angle of trenching, south of pile 31. Seals 224.

- 226 East-west feature, ill-defined to south. ?cuts 227. Dark grey/brown, clayey. Containing 19th century pot and glass.
- 227 Pale grey, with small stones, 19th century pot and glass. ?cut by 226.
- 228 Pale brown. ?cut by 222 and 226.
- 229 Sub circular feature c 30cm diameter. Dark grey/brown fill. Part of 222?.
- 301 (Drain trench west side). Dark brown mixed soil fill falling to south. c 20cm thick.
- 302 (Drain trench west side). Dark brown mixed soil fill falling to south. Not identified on east side.
- 303 (Drain trench west side). Band of smooth greenish clay and soft powdery chalk. Profile is a very shallow rise and fall to the north and south, visible over c 9cm of trench. c 5-10cm thick.
- 303 (East side) same band slightly different profile, visible over c 6m of trench c 5-15cm thick.
- 304 Layer (made up of several subtle layers?) of green powdery sandstone (?)
- 305 Fully visible only in 'box-terminal' excavation at north. Yellowish clay and ? limestone medium to large lumps (c 100mm).
- 306 Similar to 305 but few stones
- 307 Mixed pale yellowish clay and fine stones
- 308 Yellowish mixed clay and small to medium stones (merges into 301)
- 309 (East) opposite to 308, but less stone and darker.
- 310 -
- 311 (?Same as 301 to west) dark mixed soil fill layer falling to south, contained 2 fragments of bone. c 20cm thick.
- 312 North edge (cut?) of fill 311 (east side of trench)
- 313 Very faint fill line in 307. Slightly darker (east side) c 5cm
- 314 Very faint fill line in 307, c 5cm thick. Slightly darker to north of 313.
- 315 -
- 316 Service trench by CP Brown ? Redeposited natural orange/yellow silty clay interspersed with limestone.
- 317 (Service trench by CP Brown - north end). Pit?
- 318 (Service trench, CP Brown) Cut falling to south, (same as 310 and 312 in drain trench?)
- 319 Fill of 318 = mixed lenses of light brown/brown green sandy clay, liestone chunks, charcoal flecks, patches of natural yellow clay.