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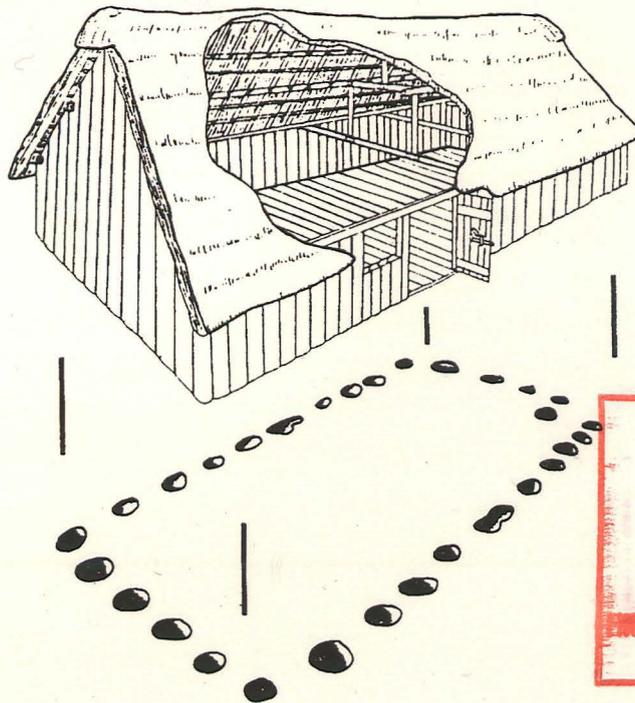
Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Evaluation at
Wharf Road, Stamford,
Lincolnshire.

TF 0325 0696
(NGR: ~~TF~~ 325 696)

Vicki Priest

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For JWA Architects Ltd.
Planning Application No: S00/1072/69

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University of Leicester
Archaeological Services

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An Archaeological Evaluation at Wharf Road, Stamford, Lincolnshire (NGR: TF 325 696)

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by ULAS, on behalf of JWA Architects Ltd. at Wharf Road Stamford, Lincolnshire in advance of a proposed residential development. The work comprised the excavation of four trial trenches within an industrial area on the riverfront. Machine dug trial pits found alluvium at a depth of approximately 2m overlain by redeposited natural perhaps to provide a solid, level surface. Above this lay up to 1.5m of late 19th and 20th century build-up.

Records will be deposited with Lincolnshire County Museum Service under the Site Code STW00 and Accession No. 2000.298

1. Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by JWA Architects Ltd. to carry out archaeological trial trenching on an industrial site at Wharf Road, Stamford, Lincolnshire (Figs 1 & 2). Given the location of the site close to the river and the archaeological potential of the area, Heritage Lincolnshire recommended that an archaeological evaluation be undertaken in order to establish the presence and scope of the archaeological remains on the site.

2. Geology and topography

The proposed development site lies north of the River Welland in Stamford, Lincolnshire (Figs 1 & 2). The site is 0.23 ha in size and is relatively flat, containing a number of redundant buildings (South Kesteven Community Archaeologist Comments). There are several manholes and gullies and a number of power cables on the site.

The site lies at a height of approximately 22m OD and the underlying geology consists of Lincolnshire Limestone.

3. Background

Stamford originated in the 9th and 10th centuries when an Anglo-Danish settlement was established immediately north of the River Welland followed by a Saxon burgh to the south. The town grew in importance during the Middle Ages due to its excellent communication and trade routes via the Great North Road and the River Welland. By the

13th century Stamford was one of the ten largest towns in England with a castle, fourteen churches, two monastic institutions and four friaries (Smith, M., 2000).

The proposed development site lies on the riverfront south of the site at Watergate and east of the remains of a tower in Wharf Road, both of which formed part of the 13th century walled defences which surrounded the northern part of the medieval town. Immediately east of the proposed development site is the location of a supposed late Saxon pottery kiln (excavated in 1969 and containing a quantity of pottery unique to that kiln). Stamford is known for its pottery industry, which began in the Anglo-Saxon period (it was one of the first towns to produce glazed wheel-thrown pottery after the departure of the Romans from Britain) and continued to grow through the Middle Ages. Kilns were often concentrated in one area, close to a water source and it is possible that there may be associated sites connected with the pottery industry of Stamford in this area (South Kesteven Community Archaeologist Comments).

The area around the site was first developed in 1845 when the Marquess of Exeter erected an Iron Foundry fronted with a monumental arch designed by Stamford architect Bryon Browning (the arch still remains although not in its original position). In 1858 the premises were taken over by John Marriott Blashfield (one of the most successful terracotta makers of the period) who erected several terracotta kilns (Smith, J.F., 2000). Terracotta was reintroduced in 19th century as a substitute for building stone which was becoming scarce and also expensive to carve. Victorian economy therefore saw in terracotta a cheap way of providing architectural detail. The terracotta is made from extremely fine clay from which all impurities have been sieved out and then poured into a mould, made into a hollow block and fired in a kiln to a very high temperature (at least 1000°C). One of the buildings that housed the terracotta kilns still survives to the north-east of the development site. The proposed development site was a yard in the 19th century and Blashfield kept his raw materials of clay and sand here. It was also the storage area for the plaster moulds in which he modelled his terracotta (digging in this area suggest that a large quantity of moulds are still present on the site). After liquidation of this company in 1875, several other firms were established here. Still standing to the south of the site is the generating station for the newly formed Stamford Electric Light Company built in 1902 which provided Stamford's electricity until nationalisation and was retained by the electricity board until recently (Smith, J.F., 2000). Part of a terracotta balustrade probably made by Blashfield ('Blashfield Stamford' is printed on one of the blocks) exists south of this fronting the river.

4. Aims and Objectives

The principal aims of the evaluation were:

- To identify possible areas of archaeological potential liable to be threatened by the proposed development.
- To establish the nature, extent, date, and significance for any archaeological deposits located.

- To define the quality and state of preservation of these deposits including the potential for the survival of environmental data.
- To assess the local, regional and national importance of any deposits.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

5. Excavations

The available area (approximately 0.23 ha) was sampled by four trial trenches of varying sizes. These were located to avoid the buildings and the numerous drains and power cables on the site (Fig. 3).

Methodology

The tarmac and modern overburden (up to 0.5m) was removed using a JCB 3X with a toothed bucket on the back actor. It had been intended to continue excavating using a flat bladed bucket on the back actor but the large amounts of brick and concrete rubble made this impossible. Instead the 0.6m toothed bucket was used to excavate the three viable trenches to a depth of 1.2m deep. The trenches were examined and recorded by notes, photographs and drawings. Three small box trenches were then excavated by machine to evaluate the depth of the natural deposits beneath the build-up. All of the trenches were located using an EDM and tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid and Ordnance Survey Datum.

Results

Trench 01

Trench 01 was located along the eastern edge of the site (Fig. 3), and was approximately 20m long. There were several old service trenches running east-west across the trench and an old drain running north-west – south-east. A large amount of brick and stone rubble along with metal debris (including several old gas meters) was revealed under the tarmac. At the base of the trench, approximately 1.2m deep, a layer (c. 0.2m thick) of black ash containing fragments of plaster and terracotta with patchy deposits of sand and yellow-grey clay mixed in was recorded ((08); Fig. 6, Plate 1). A small box trench was excavated at the north end of the trench down to approximately 2.5m below ground level. A medium brown silty clay was visible from c. 2m deep (Plate 3). Between this clay and the plaster and terracotta layer lay a redeposited compact stony layer similar to the fragmented natural limestone.

Trench 02

Trench 02 was located on a concrete surface close to the northernmost building (Fig. 3). This trench encountered large amounts of old electricity cables and a concrete slab just below the concrete and was abandoned.

Trench 03

Trench 03 was a 5m square trench situated in the corner of the old Stamford Electric Light Company building (Fig. 3). Immediately below the tarmac lay a brick platform 2 bricks thick. In the north-west corner of the trench the brick platform was thicker

(approximately 4 bricks thick) and disturbed at the top (Fig. 4, Plate 2). A brick wall and a concrete block ran north-south along the east side of the trench. Beneath the brick platform the stratigraphy comprised brick and stone rubble build-up down to 1.2m with an ash, plaster and terracotta layer (similar to that seen in Trench 01) at the base of the trench ((08); Fig. 4, Plate 2). A small test-pit (c. 1m x 1.5m) was dug through the base of the trench (Fig. 3). This revealed a similar compact fragmented stone deposit to that seen in Trench 01 overlying a disturbed slightly clayey layer with stone fragments and sand to the north above a cleaner orange stone and sand layer (Fig. 4, Plate 2). This appeared to be a slumped fragmented limestone bank with a dark grey slightly organic clay to the south probably representing the old course of the river.

Trench 04

Trench 04 lay in the north-west corner of the site (Fig. 3). A ceramic storm drain and an old electrical cable lay along the west side of the trench. Immediately below the tarmac lay several redeposited layers including patches of metal slag and a layer of bricks and mortar. At approximately 1m deep a layer of black ash, plaster and terracotta (08) similar to that seen in trenches 01 and 03 was recorded (Fig. 5). A small box trench was excavated at the north end of this trench but unfortunately ground water from the storm drain quickly flooded the excavations and it was only possible to record the presence of a silty brown clay at approximately 2m deep.

Finds

A number of 20th century pottery sherds, glass, metal and brick fragments were recorded from the upper metre of trenches 01 and 04. Trench 03 contained large amounts of brick, stone and concrete fragments. All three trenches contained degraded plaster and crushed terracotta from layer (08) at the base of the trenches. All of these finds were considered either modern or in too bad a state to keep and were discarded on site.

6. Discussion

There appears to be a silty brown clay alluvial layer at a depth of approximately 2m below ground level across the east and west of the site. Due to health and safety considerations (i.e. the depth and instability of the sections and flooding) it was not possible to observe this layer in detail, making it difficult to be certain of the nature of the depositional process. However, it was overlain by a deposit of fragmented limestone and clay in trenches 01 and 03, which, in the case of trench 03, lay just 16-17m from the existing edge of the river and probably represents the eroded line of the old river bank (Fig. 3). The dark grey clay contained small wood fragments (probably natural twigs), and is probably the edge of the old river either on a slightly different line or else much wider than it is now. It is possible therefore that the clay seen in trenches 01 and 04 might also be part of a bank.

Although samples were taken of the waterlogged deposits in trench 03, there are no contemporary archaeological deposits associated with them and they have low potential for providing palaeoenvironmental information.

Above the clay in Trenches 01 and 03 lay a compact stone layer similar to the natural limestone fragments recorded in Trench 03 but apparently redeposited. The terracotta,

ash and plaster layer (08) lay directly over the top of this. Closer inspection of the plaster fragments revealed them to be mouldings which have presumably come from Blashfield's terracotta factory (see Background, p. 2, para. 3). If this area was the storage yard, then the redeposited stone may have been used to form a level dry surface over the alluvium. The surface runs over the top of the old line of the river so the northern river edge had already moved southwards by the time the factory was built. As the factory closed down in 1875 this dates the rubble build up above the terracotta layer to the late 19th century onwards. This is borne out by the post medieval – modern pottery fragments and other debris. This means that over a metre of build-up has occurred since the late 19th century and it may be that this is a deliberate raising of the ground level perhaps due to flooding.

There has been considerable disturbance in the area from the buildings, trees and associated cabling and drainage. However, although no pre-19th century archaeological deposits were encountered, only a small fraction of the ground level below the terracotta layer was looked at. The large amount of build-up may well have preserved earlier archaeological deposits from disturbance by later industry.

7. Conclusions

The archaeological evaluations have shown that the proposed development site comprises approximately 1.2m of 20th century demolition layers, dumps and service trenches overlying an area of gravels (probably hard standing), and therefore contains no archaeological potential above a depth of c. 1.5m. Beneath this is a layer of brown silty clay (at a depth of approximately 2m across the site). Although it was not possible to establish the true nature of this clay it is likely to represent the edge of the old river bank either on a slightly different line or else much wider than it is now. In view of the fact that the clay deposit is probably alluvial in nature, it is conceivable that it could seal and preserve any archaeological deposits present at a much lower ground level, below the water table. However, in relation to the redevelopment proposals, these are unlikely to be affected by anything other than pile foundations. The majority of proposed disturbance from paving, strip foundations and services is likely to be accommodated within the 2m or more build-up of recent date.

8. Archive

The Archive consists of site notes, colour slides and monochrome prints and will be held by the Lincolnshire County Museum Service under the Site Code STW00 and Accession No. 2000.298

9. Publication

A version of the summary (above) will be published in an appropriate archaeological journal in due course.

10. Bibliography

- Brunskill, R. W., 1990, Brick Building In Britain. Victor Gollancz: London
- Smith, J. F., 2000 *Stamford Wharf Road, McArthur Gray/Electricity Board Site: History and Assessment.*
- Smith, M., 2000, ‘Martin Smith’s History of Stamford’ in
(<http://www.stamford.co.uk/tourism/smithist.htm>).

11. Acknowledgements

The work was carried out by Vicki Priest, Steve Jones and Barry Martin. The project was managed by Richard Buckley.

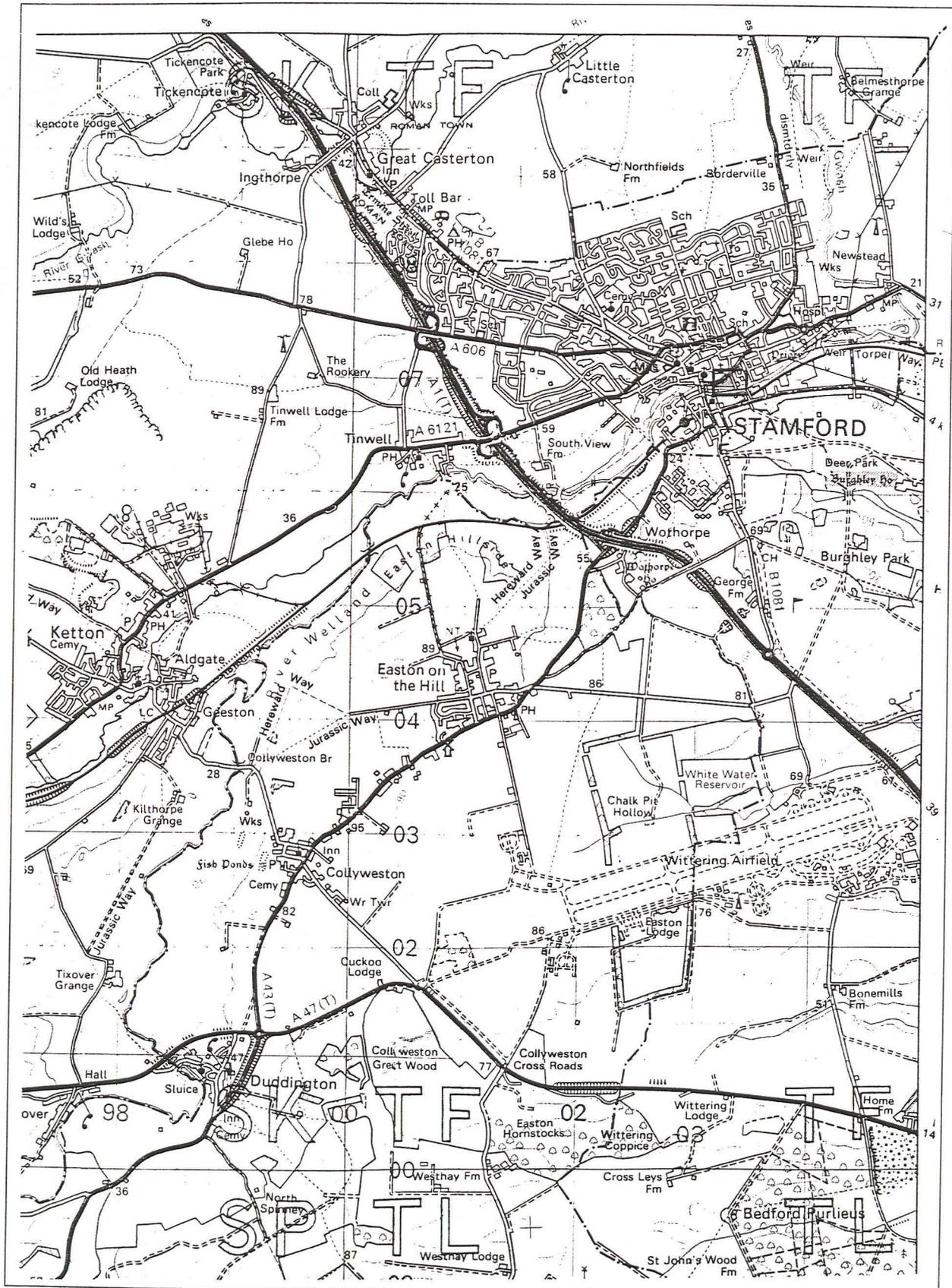


Figure 1 Location of site at Stamford. Scale 1:50 000

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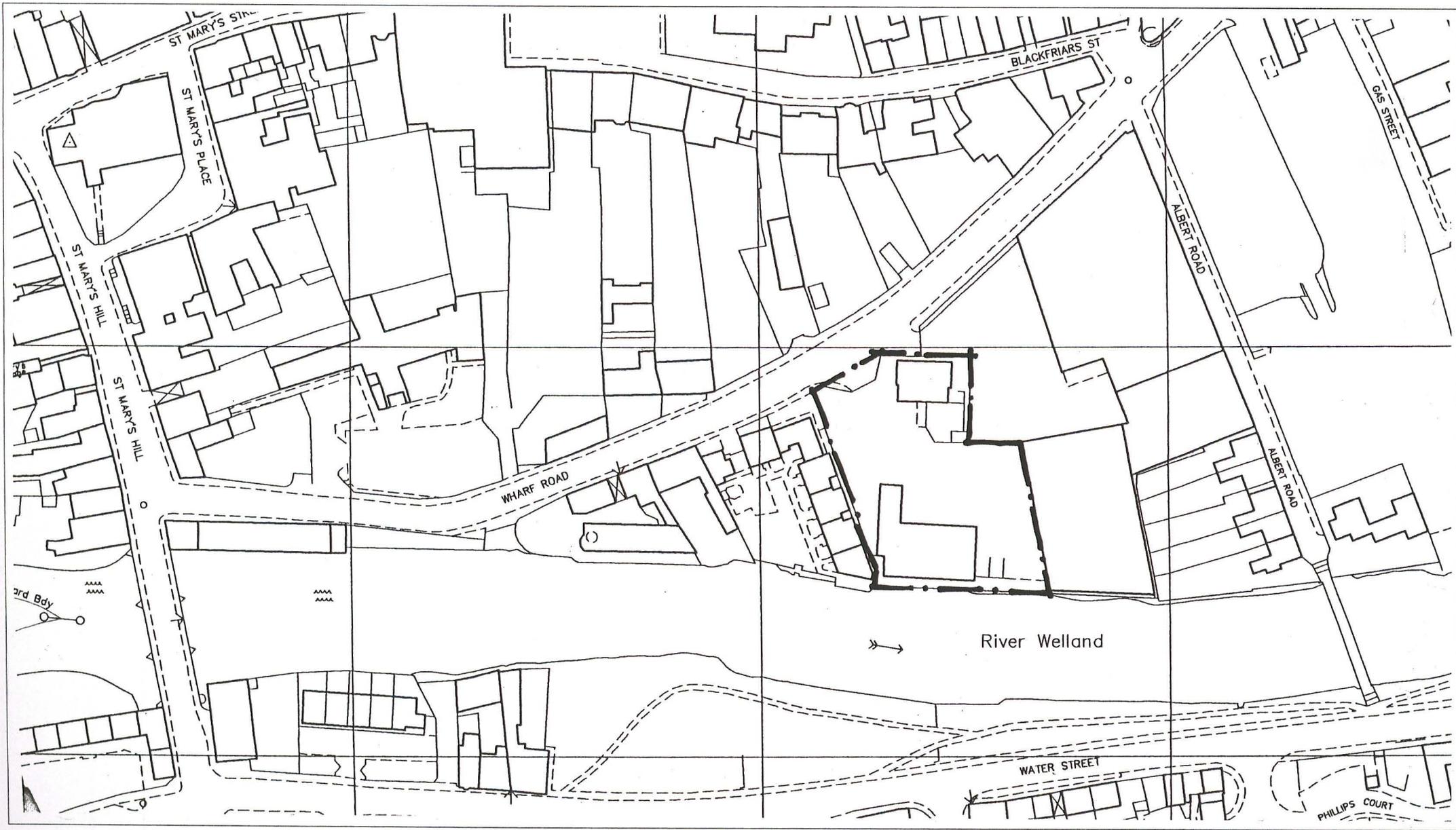


Figure 2 Location of site at Stamford (outlined). Scale 1:1250

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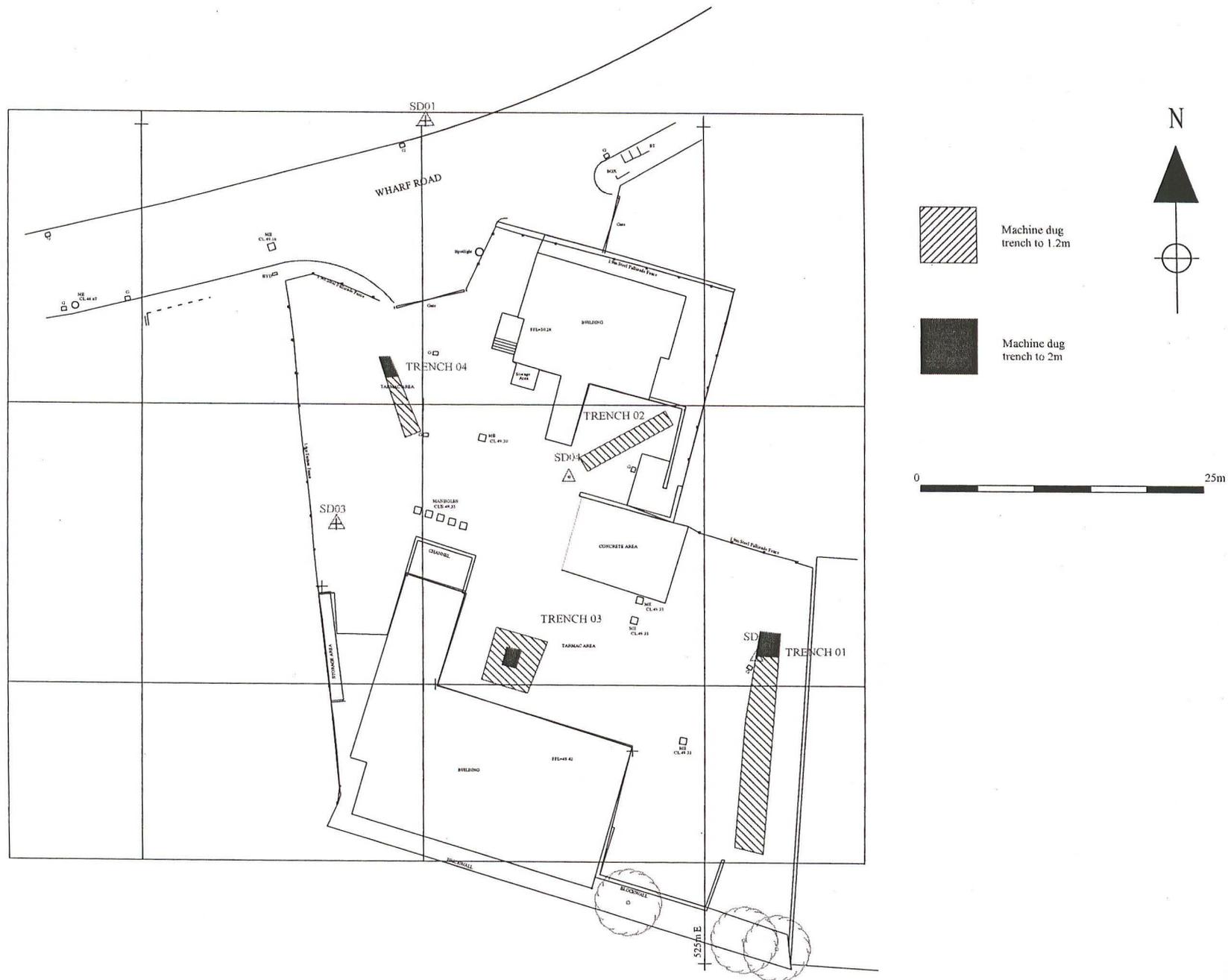


Figure 3 Location of the trial trenches (based on maps provided by JWA Architects). Scale 1:500

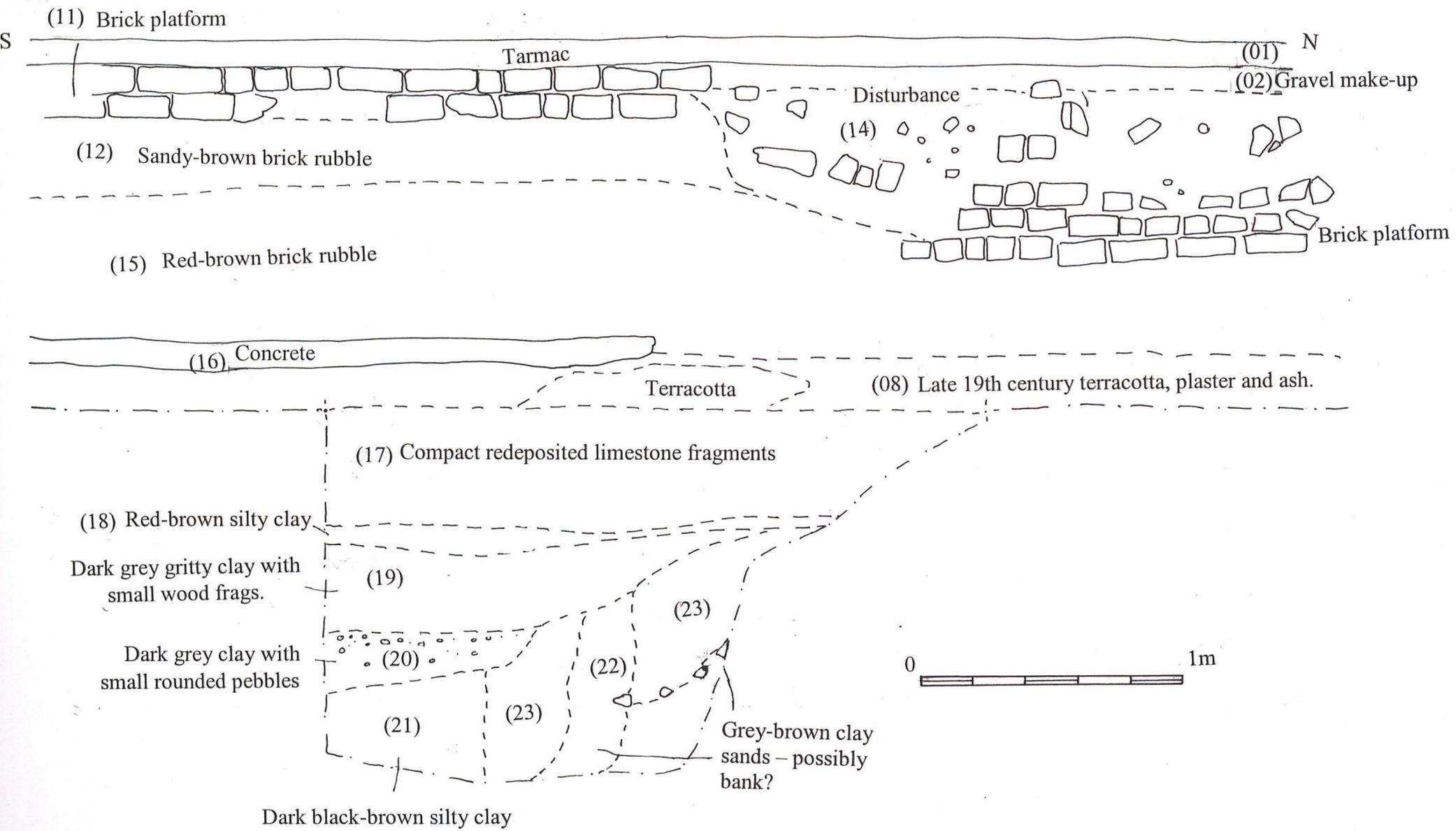


Figure 4 East facing composite section of Trench 03 (compiled from 2 sections). Scale 1:20

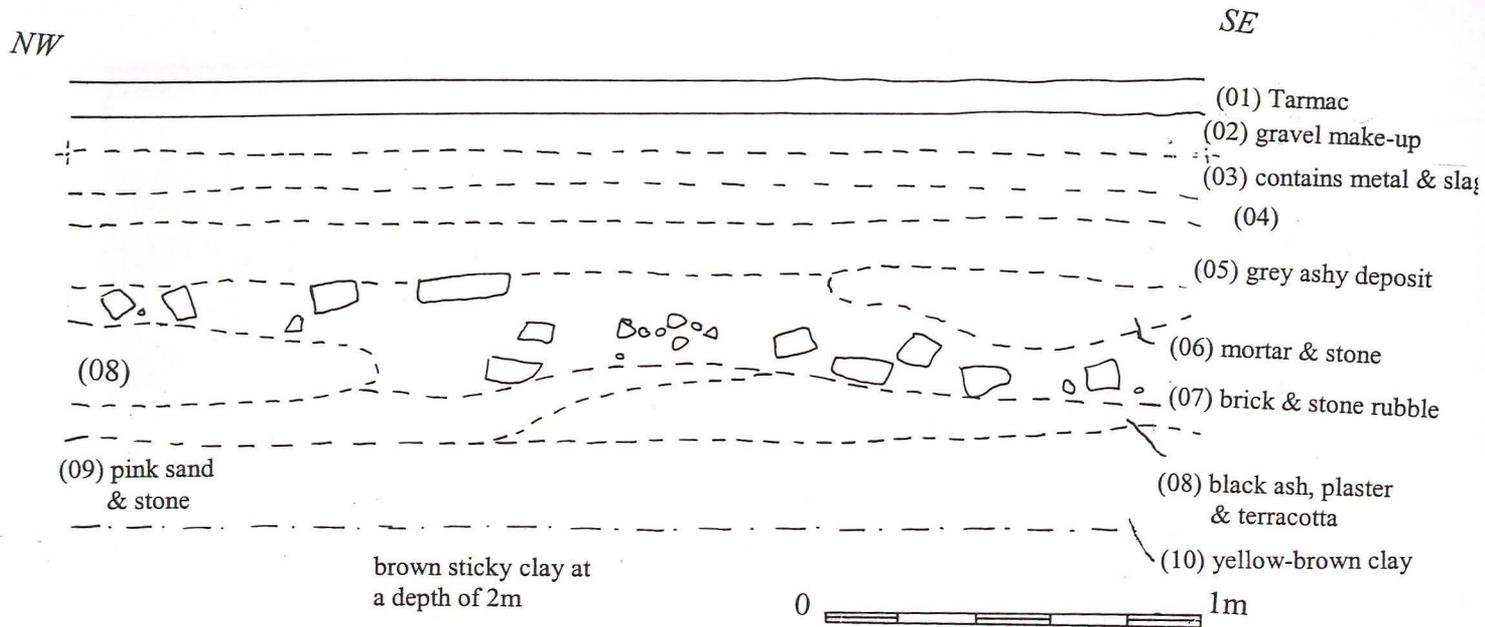


Figure 5 Trench 04: South-west facing section. Scale 1:20

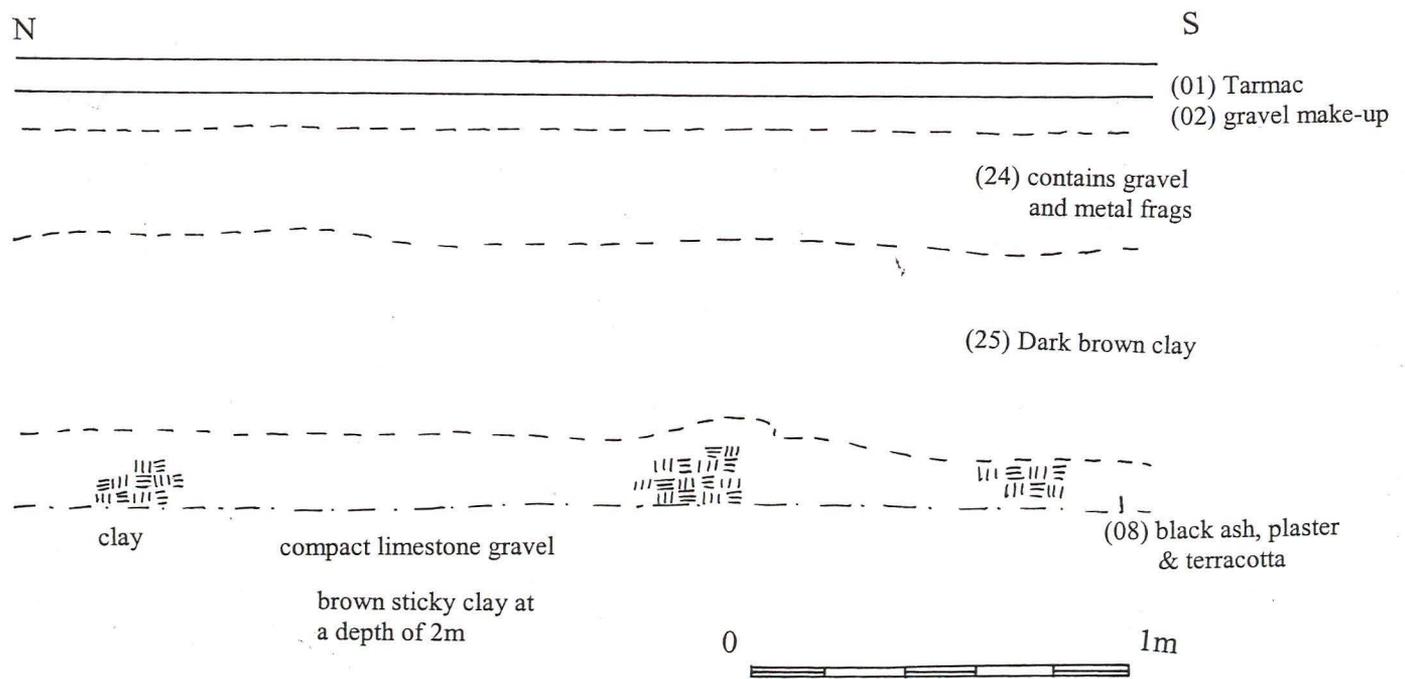


Figure 6 Trench 01: West facing section, Scale 1:20

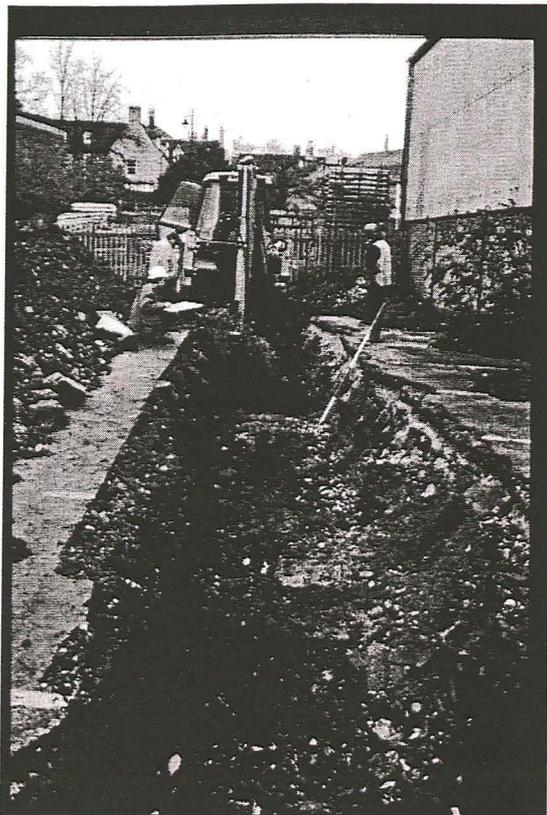


Plate 1 Trench 01 being excavated

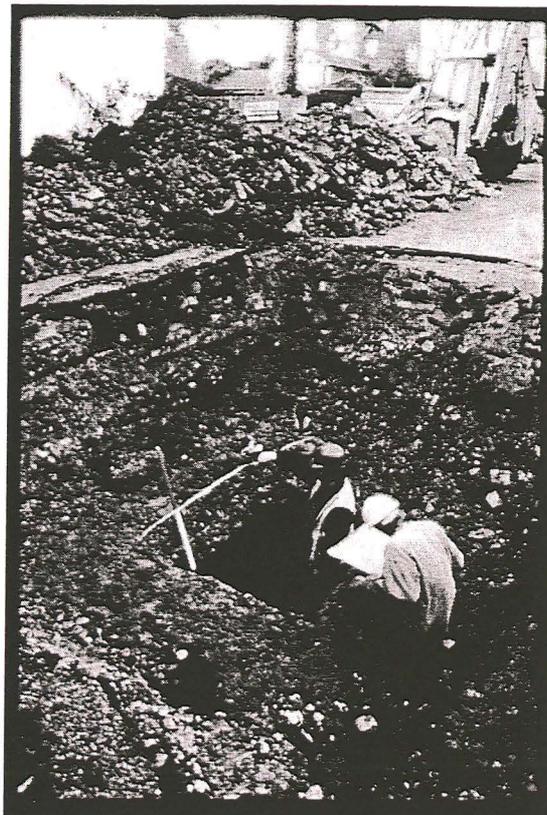


Plate 2 Trench 03 being excavated

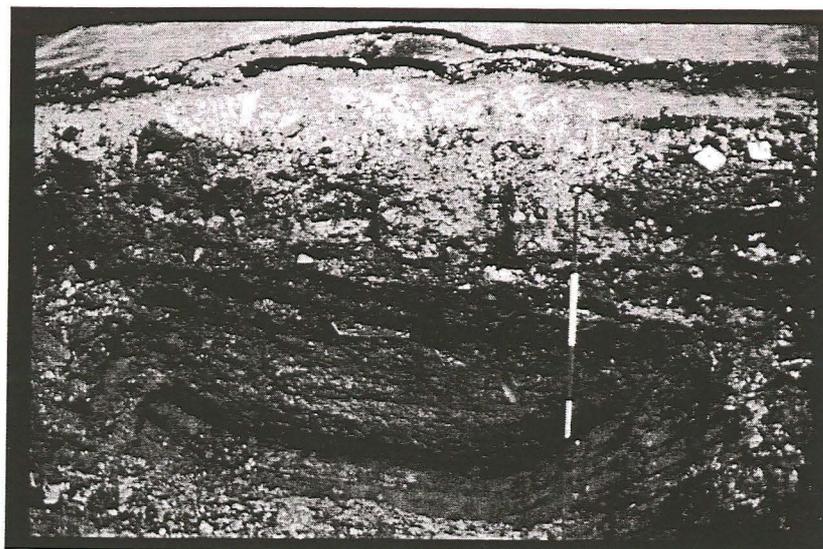


Plate 3 Trench 03 - Stratigraphy