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Archaeological Evaluation
at
Land off Uffington Road, Stamford,
by Heritage Lincolnshire
for
F. H. Gilman & Co.
May 1991.

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INTRODUCTION

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Archaeology (now part of heritage (archaeological) undertaken an archaeological
evaluation prior to development of land off
0042 (2777), on behalf of the developers P.M. Gilman & Co. (see Fig. 1)

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INTRODUCTION

From the 18th to the 22nd of March 1991, the Trust for Lincolnshire Archaeology (now part of Heritage Lincolnshire) undertook an archaeological evaluation prior to development of land off Uffington Road, Stamford (TF 0042 0077), on behalf of the developers F.H. Gilman & Co. (see fig. 1).

The land to be developed was located near to the site of an Anglo-Saxon cremation cemetery discovered during the cutting of the Essendine - Stamford railway in 1854 (The town of Stamford RCHME 1977 p.2). The full extent of this cemetery is unknown, therefore, the purpose of the evaluation was to investigate whether the site was related to this cemetery in any way; namely:

1. If the site fell at all within the limits of the cemetery,
2. If the site contained any peripheral burials which may have been located around the cemetery.
3. If any associated settlements were located in this area.

The land to be developed had previously been part of an undisturbed wasteland to the north of an industrial complex.

The entire area of the proposed development could not be investigated as approximately half of the site was covered in up to 3.00m of used casting sand.

METHODOLOGY

As the entire site was to be affected by the development, trenches were excavated in order to sample the area available.

Five trenches were positioned across the site, all aligned east-west. The trenches were all approximately 1.50 metres wide and of varying lengths: Trench 1 was c. 34.50m long; trench 2 was c. 40.30m long; trench 3 was c. 37.2m long; trench 4 was c. 29.3m long; and trench 5 was c. 15.70m long.

The trenches were initially excavated by mechanical excavator in order to remove quickly the topsoil and modern overburden down to the level at which archaeological deposits were exposed. The trench bottoms were then cleaned by hoes to expose any archaeological features - features were then investigated by hand excavation.

Throughout the evaluation, records of each soil layer were made, comprising a written description, 1:20 scale plans, 1:10 scale section drawings and, where appropriate, photographs. Each archaeological layer or feature was allocated a unique record number.

EVALUATION RESULTS

The catalogue of features in each trench runs from the east end to the west.

TRENCH 1

Topsoil was removed by mechanical excavator to a depth of approximately 0.35m. At this depth a number of archaeological features were exposed.

3.40m from the eastern limit of excavation was [002], a small ditch or rectangular pit aligned N-S and running into the northern limit of excavation. The exposed portion of this feature was 1.40m long and 0.80m wide. It was extremely shallow - only 80mm deep - the ditch may have been truncated by later activity or even by the mechanical excavator.

The fill [001] of this ditch was a firmly compacted light red-brown gravelly-sand. No artefacts were present in this fill to give an indication of the date or purpose of the feature. It is possible that it was a natural feature, however, the regular width and flat base suggest that it was man-made.

3.0m to the west of [002] was a larger feature [004] cutting through the natural gravel, again aligned N-S and extending into both the northern and southern limits of excavation. Within the limits of the trench this ditch was 1.50m long and 2.50m wide, and varied between 0.60m and 0.85m deep.

The fill of [004] was a firmly compacted red-brown clay with infrequent gravel. No artefacts were recovered from this fill and thus it is not possible to date the feature. The cut of the ditch appears to show another feature either a large pit or a recut of the ditch itself. From the section (see Fig. 3) this second feature [031] appears as a recut to the eastern side of the ditch, perhaps to clear out debris from the bottom of the ditch, or to enlarge it.

2.0m to the west of [004] was another smaller feature [006] which may be interpreted as a ditch or pit. Feature [006] was also aligned N-S and extended into the northern limit of excavation. It was square or sub-rectangular in plan and was a uniform 0.70m wide. The sides sloped gently down to a flat base - again this ditch was very shallow (0.10m deep) indicating that it may have been truncated. The fill [005] was a moderately compacted mid red/brown silty clay-gravel. No artefacts were found in the fill which again makes dating difficult. However, as it is cutting through the red clay subsoil rather than natural gravel as with [002] and [004], it may be presumed to be later than these features.

After cleaning, a number of other 'features' were evident in this trench. However, upon investigation of a "sample" of these features they were found to be outcrops of the natural limestone and gravel extruding through the red-brown clay subsoil. 6.20m to the west of [006] was the only other archaeological feature in this trench interpreted as a man-made disturbance, consisting of a large patch of modern concrete. This may be connected with the industrial complex to the south and west of the area of excavation.

TRENCH 2

The topsoil was removed to a depth of approximately 0.30m. A number of features interpreted as being of natural origin were again discovered in this trench. The first feature caused by human disturbance [009] was located 8.0m from the eastern limit of excavation.

Context [009] was a ditch aligned N-S and extending into both the northern and southern limits of excavation. The ditch itself was 2.50m wide and 0.30m deep, with steeply sloping sides and a flat base. No evidence of a recut was apparent and a primary fill of rubble [008] was noted in the base of the ditch. This rubble fill was approximately 0.50m wide, and ran uniformly down the middle of the ditch.

The secondary fill of the ditch [007] was a moderately compacted mid red-brown silty-clay with very infrequent gravel. A small quantity of animal bone was found within this fill. From its dimensions and position within the trench it was presumed that ditch [009] was an extension of [004] in trench 1.

2.20m to the west of [009] was a large sub-circular pit [011], approximately 1.80m long and only partly revealed within the limit of excavation.

The fill of the pit was a loosely compacted reddish brown/grey gravel. No artefacts were found within this fill and, therefore, the function and date of this feature are difficult to establish. The pit had gently sloping sides and a flat base. The feature was only 0.30m deep, perhaps suggesting that it had been truncated.

The remaining 26.50m of this trench appeared to be devoid of any further archaeological remains. Other irregularities in the trench were interpreted as a natural unevenness in the gravels, or as glacial features.

TRENCH 3

The topsoil was removed by mechanical excavator to a depth of approximately 0.45m.

1.5m from the eastern limit of excavation a feature aligned NE-SW was located. This was initially presumed to be one side of a ditch [013] as it sloped down evenly and appeared to have a flat base. During excavation, however, the feature was found to be very irregular and after it had been excavated to a width of 3.00m, the feature was interpreted as of natural and excavation was abandoned. Its fill [012] was a loose light brown/red gravel - no artefacts were found within this fill. One interpretation of this feature could be the effect of tree-root disturbance.

4.50m to the west of [013] a ditch [015] was located, aligned approximately N-S and extending through both the northern and southern limits of excavation. Within the limits of excavation this ditch was 1.5m long and c. 2.00m wide varying between 0.30m and 1.00m deep. The fill [014] of this ditch was a moderately firm red/brown silty-clay with infrequent large pebbles. No artefacts were recovered from this fill.

The cut of the feature had steeply sloping sides and a rounded base. In the northern part of the ditch a large sub-circular feature c. 1.40m in diameter was found to be cutting through the fill and into the base. This may be a later pit cutting the ditch.

From its position in the trench and the similarity of the fills, it was presumed that [015] was an extension of [009] in trench 2 and [004] in trench 1.

1.4m to the west of ditch [015] was a small sub-circular feature [017], c. 0.30m in diameter and 0.15m deep. The fill [016] of this feature was a firmly compacted red/brown gravelly clay and the cut [017] had steep to vertical sides and an irregular base. This feature was thought to be a possible post-hole, although the purpose of such a feature in this context is unknown.

10m to the west of [017] was a small sub-circular pit approximately 0.5m in diameter and 0.10m deep. This pit had steep to vertical sides and a flat base, and contained a fill of firmly compacted red-brown gravelly clay. No artefacts were found within the fill to give an indication of the date and purpose of this pit.

No further archaeological features were revealed in this trench. All further features in trench 3 were interpreted as of natural origin.

TRENCH 4

The topsoil in this trench was removed by mechanical excavator to a depth of c. 0.60m. At this depth the following archaeological features were exposed.

3.60m from the eastern limit of excavation was a small ditch [021] aligned N-S and extending through both the northern and southern limits of excavation. This ditch was approximately 1.40m wide with gently sloping sides and a flat base. It contained a fill [020] of moderately compacted red/brown gravelly-clay. No artefacts were recovered from this fill, making it difficult to interpret the date and purpose of this feature - it is probable, however, that this ditch was used for drainage.

3.40m from [021] was a small pit [026], extending through the southern limit of excavation. This feature was 0.50m wide and 0.70m long within the limit of excavation, with steep to vertical sides and an irregular base. The fill of mid red/brown gravelly clay again contained no artefacts.

Feature [026] was in part truncated by a large ditch [024], aligned N-S and extending into the northern and southern limits of excavation. The ditch had moderately sloping sides and a flat base. From the fills within it, it appears to have been recut. Layer [023] was the primary fill of the ditch, consisting of a firmly-compacted mid red/brown clay. Pottery found within

this layer dates it to the medieval period. This layer appears to have been mostly cut away with fill [022] lying over [023] and filling most of the ditch (see fig. 3).

Feature [024] can be interpreted as an extension of ditch [004] in trench 1, ditch [009] in trench 2; and ditch [015] in trench 3; although it does seem to be much deeper than those recorded previously, with a depth of 1.35m.

Further features within this trench were investigated and were interpreted as of natural origin.

TRENCH 5

The archaeological deposits in trench 5 were beneath a greater amount of topsoil and overburden than in the previous four trenches: topsoil was removed by mechanical excavator to a depth of approximately 1.00m before archaeological deposits were exposed.

9.00m from the eastern limit of excavation a small sub-circular feature [028] was located, approximately 0.40m in diameter. This feature had gently sloping sides and a rounded base and a fill of moderately compacted red/brown clayey-gravel. No artefacts were found within this fill, and the purpose of the feature is unclear - it has been interpreted as a posthole although it may be a natural feature.

CONCLUSIONS

In the course of this evaluation several archaeological features were excavated. From the evidence as a whole, the site can be interpreted as a low activity rural area, although there is some evidence for more than one phase of use.

The major feature of the site was a large ditch aligned N-S, extended through all five evaluation trenches [003/009/015/024/030]. This ditch was a fairly substantial feature, ranging from 2.0m to 2.75m wide and from 0.30 to 1.00m deep (see fig. 3). In two sections of the ditch, a recut was evident (either to remove debris and/or silty deposits from the ditch bottom, or to enlarge the ditch), suggesting that it had been in use for some time, and also that it had been managed and maintained.

Pottery in one of the earlier fills ([023] trench 4) suggests a medieval date for this feature, although the evidence is extremely limited, as the pottery relates only to the fill in which it was found and not necessarily to the cutting of the ditch. This ditch may have been 'cleared out' a number of times prior to the deposition of this pottery.

The feature may be interpreted as either a medieval field-boundary ditch, or as a large drainage ditch. Either interpretation would be reasonable for the ditch, as the lack of evidence for activity in the area of excavation suggests that this feature formed part of a field system. The sheer size of parts of the ditch would seem to be excessive for drainage. A ditch of this size would perhaps be more likely to be used as a boundary marker.

Smaller ditches in trench 1 and 4 may be interpreted as drainage ditches although they do not seem to extend far beyond the limits of excavation as they do not appear in the other trenches. No dating evidence was found in the fills of any of these smaller ditches and therefore it is uncertain whether they are contemporary with the large ditch.

The purpose of the pits in trenches 2 and 4 is unclear: [011] in trench 2 may be a natural feature as it was extremely shallow with gently sloping sides. This may be the result of tree-root disturbance or the removal of a small tree. Pit [026], in trench 4, however, had steep to vertical sides and appeared to be a man-made feature. It may be a rubbish-pit. Similarly, the two postholes on the site, in trenches 3 and 5, have an uncertain purpose as they cannot be related to any of the other features on the site.

There appears to be more than one phase of use on this site as pit [026] in trench 4 was found to be truncated by a section of the large ditch. The stratigraphy implies that the large ditch was later than the pit, thus suggesting that the land was already in use before the large ditch was constructed. In trench 3, a large pit was found cutting into the fill and base of the possible boundary ditch, suggesting that the land was also in use after the ditch had become redundant and had been backfilled. However, with the lack of dating evidence it is impossible to give a firm date to these earlier and later features.

The area excavated poses many problems of dating and interpretation but from the evidence available it seems most likely that it represents a part of a field system. The pottery from trench 4 provides the only dating evidence for the site and suggests that the ditch may date to the medieval period. There is no evidence to link this site with the Anglo-Saxon cemetery nearby.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The area excavated has been interpreted as a part of a medieval field system.

There is no evidence to link this field system with the Anglo-Saxon nearby cemetery in any way - certainly no artefacts were recovered or features recorded that could be connected with a cemetery.

No further archaeological work will be necessary on this site.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SITE LOCATION

The Trust for Lincolnshire Archaeology (now Heritage Lincolnshire) would like to thank the following: F.H. GILMAN & CO. for funding the evaluation, and also for providing the site team with tool storage facilities, a mechanical excavator, and canteen facilities; and also the site team, who carried out the excavation.

SITE LOCATION

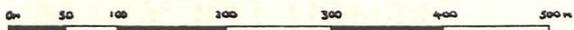
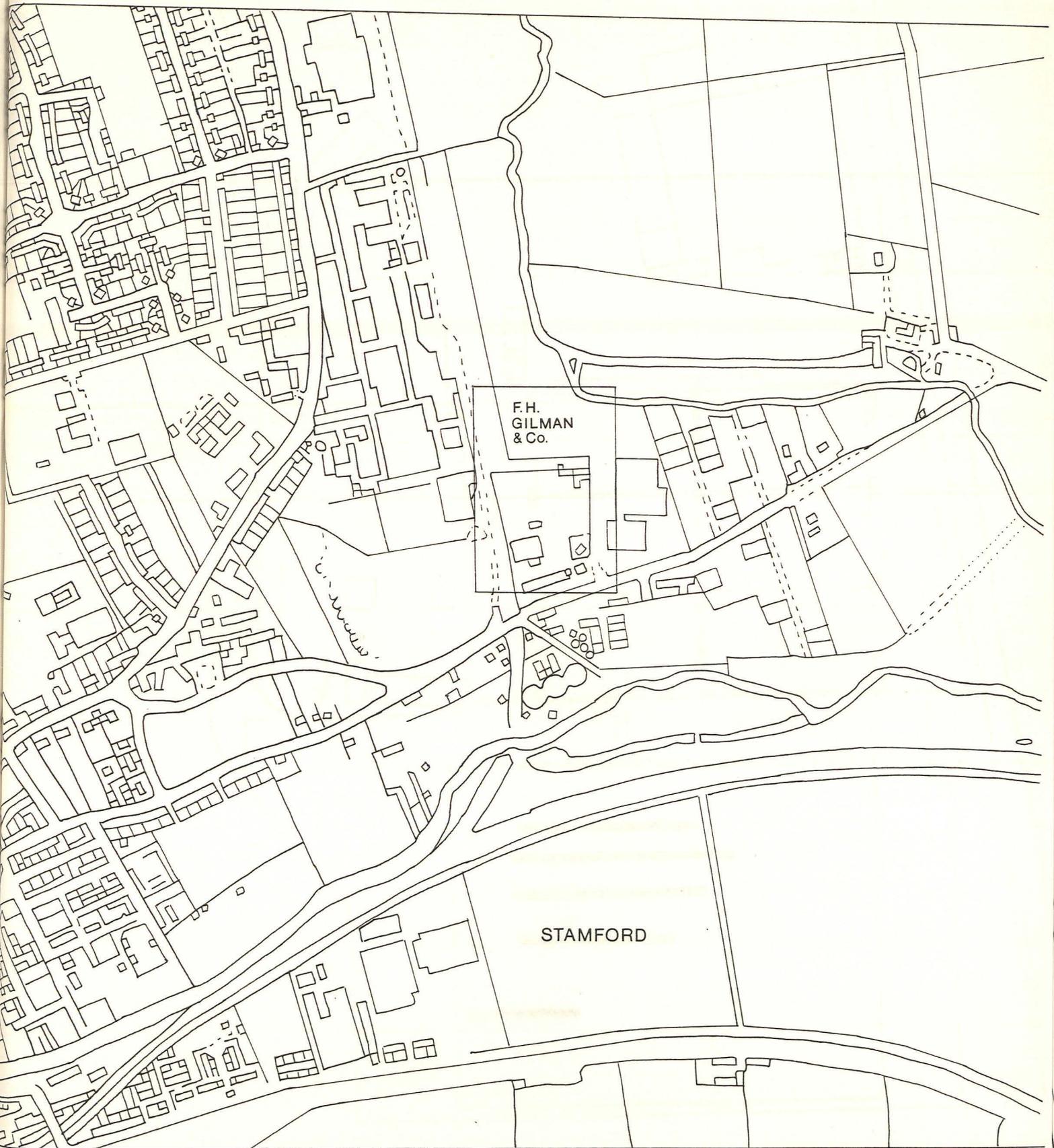


FIG. 1

TRENCH LOCATION

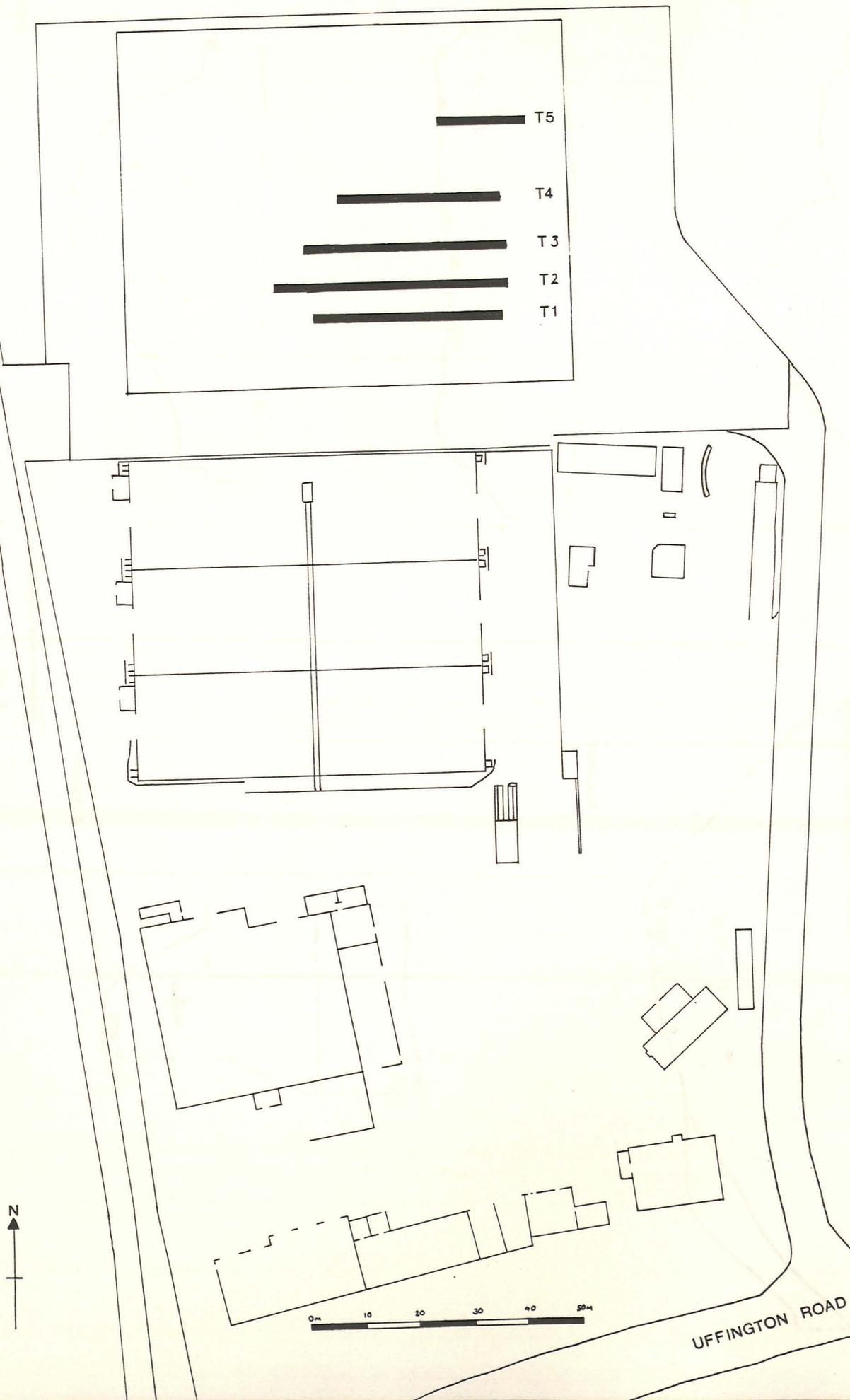


FIG. 2

COMPARATIVE SECTIONS OF BOUNDARY/DRAINAGE DITCH

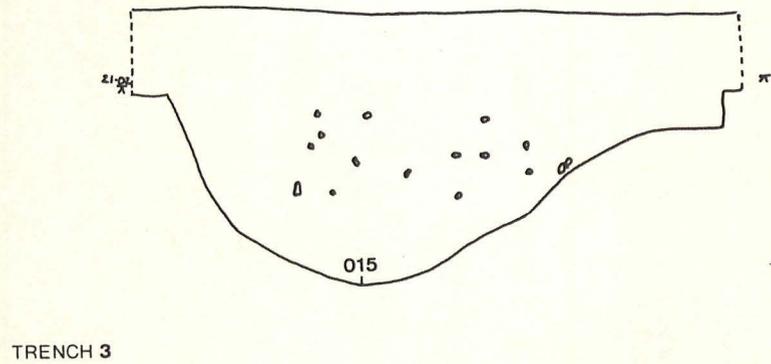
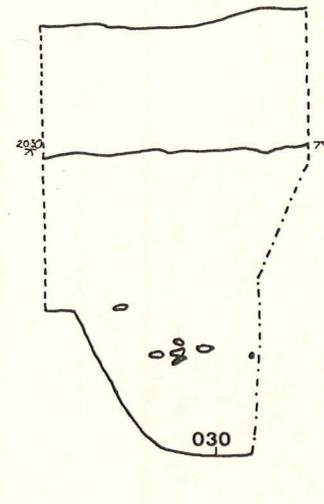
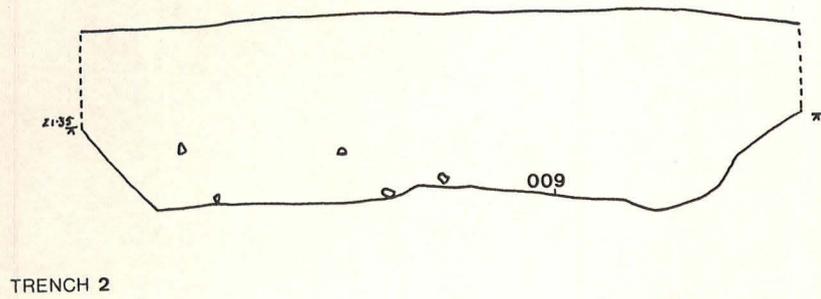
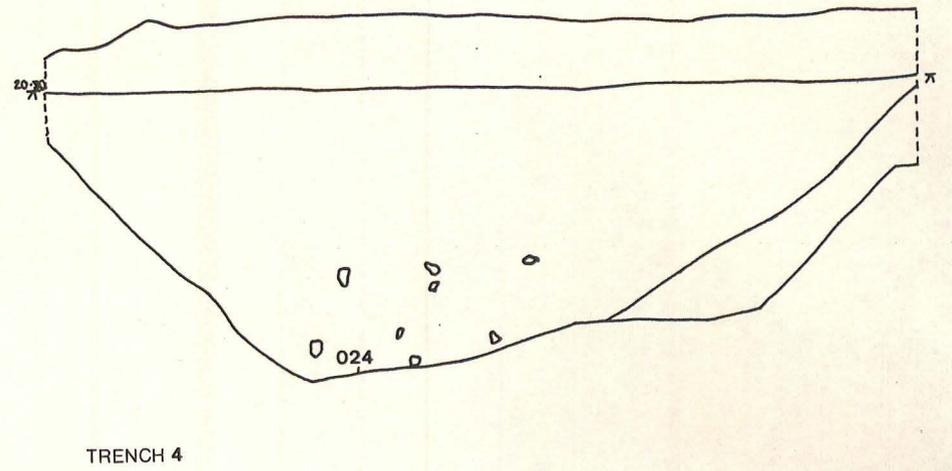
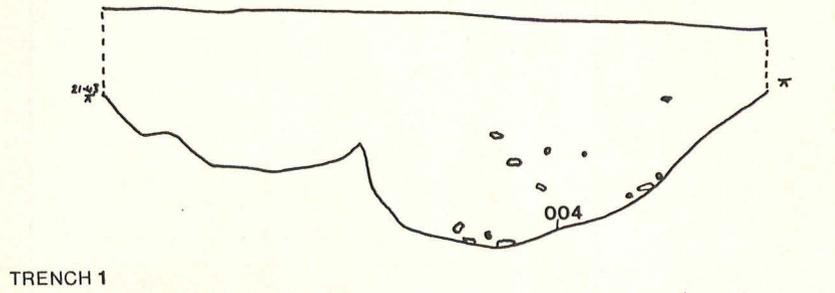


FIG. 3