

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION ON THE SITE OF A
PROPOSED ALL-WEATHER HOCKEY PITCH, REDLANDS
SPORTS GROUND, WEYMOUTH, DORSET
(CENTRED ON SY672 823)**

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION ON THE SITE OF A PROPOSED ALL-WEATHER HOCKEY PITCH, REDLANDS SPORTS GROUND, WEYMOUTH, DORSET (CENTRED ON SY672 823)

1. SUMMARY

The archaeological evaluation of a proposed all-weather hockey pitch at Redlands Sports Ground, Weymouth was carried out during June 1997. Removal by mechanical excavator of on average 250mm of topsoil revealed the presence of well-preserved archaeological deposits of Romano-British date. These deposits comprised at least one stone built building, cut features, occupation and demolition deposits, a stone-lined drain and a single infant inhumation adjacent to a probable building. The high density of subsoil features meant only limited hand excavation, with investigation generally comprising cleaning, recording and the collection of artefacts from the exposed surface. Nevertheless, significant quantities were recovered, including local black-burnished coarseware, imported finewares, small quantities of roof tile, shale, ironwork, and flint tools used in the lathe manufacture of shale objects. The pottery evidence indicates a 1st or 2nd-century AD emphasis for the site, with little evidence for earlier or later activity. It can be shown that the site extends the full extent of the proposed development east to west, but, it was not possible to fully define its extent to the north and south. However, the last 15m at the northern end of Trench 2 was completely devoid of archaeological material. This does not preclude the possibility of an open space area between different areas of activity of this Romano-British settlement.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The following report presents the results of an archaeological field evaluation, carried out by AC archaeology during June 1997, on the site of a proposed all-weather hockey pitch at Redlands Sports Ground, Weymouth, Dorset (NGR SY 672 823).

2.2 The work was commissioned by Weymouth Hockey Clubs, at the request of Weymouth and Portland Borough Council, advised by the County Archaeological Officer, Dorset County Council. The aim of the evaluation was to determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits on the site, and if present to determine their nature, date and function.

2.3 The proposed development site is situated towards the southern end of the sports ground at around 75mOD. The northern zone is laid out as managed turf and the southern zone in an area of rough grass. The site is bounded to the east by a deep cutting of the Weymouth to Dorchester rail link, there are houses and gardens on the southern side, an electricity sub-station on the west side with football pitches to the north. The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1A. The underlying geology for the site comprises a mixture of Oxford Clay and Plateau Gravel.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 An archaeological assessment for the site was recently carried out by Bournemouth University (Hewitt 1997), which identified the potential for Romano-British deposits being present on the site. A drainage scheme in the northern zone of the site was monitored by a local archaeology group (BEAM) in 1978. Some of the trenches contained Romano-British locally made coarsewares and imported Roman pottery. Scatters of large stones were also identified, as was a possible metallated floor surface. It was conjectured that the site might possibly contain a building and other deposits of Romano-British date.

3.2 Any archaeological deposits present on the eastern side of the site may have been severely truncated during the excavation of a deep cutting for the construction of the Dorchester to Weymouth rail link during the 1850s.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The evaluation conformed to a specification provided by Dorset County Council Archaeology Section. It initially comprised the machine excavation of two trenches (Trenches 1 and 2), each 'L' shaped and 1.4m wide with a total length of 78m, amounting to a 2% sample of the southern side of the proposed development, south of the 1978 drainage scheme. Following the finding of what were considered significant archaeological remains in Trenches 1 and 2, a further four trenches were excavated, amounting to a sample of the total proposed development area of approximately 3.5%. The position of all trenches is shown on Fig. 1B.

4.2 Topsoil and turf was removed by 360° mini-digger, under constant archaeological supervision, until there was good clarity of archaeological subsoil features. There then followed selective hand-cleaning of all trenches in order to ascertain their nature, date and function. The opening of trenches revealed a high density of subsoil features; after consultation with Steven Wallis of Dorset County Council Archaeology Section, it was agreed that there should only be limited sampling by means of hand-excavation.

4.3 All documentation was undertaken using the *AC archaeology* pro forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records. All site levels relate to a temporary bench mark allocated the nominal value of 100m.

5. RESULTS

All trenches contained significant concentrations of archaeological deposits. Consequently, after consultation with Dorset County Council Archaeology Section it was agreed that investigation of features should be limited to resolving the function of a linear feature in Trench 5, located towards the western fringes of the proposed development, and a gully in Trench 6 towards its centre. All other recorded features were cleaned by hand, and artefacts, where present, were recovered from their exposed surface. The removal by machine of topsoil from Trench 3 disturbed an *in situ* infant

burial. As the integrity of the burial had now been disturbed, it was agreed to record and remove the skeleton. A feature summary plan for all trenches is included as Fig. 2 and detailed plans for each trench included as Figs. 3 and 4. All recorded features are described under trench headings, with those with a probable structural function described first.

5.1 Trench 1 (Fig 3) - 'L'-shaped trench in plan; dimensions E-W 28.5 x 1.4m, N-S 10 x 1.4m; excavated to maximum depth of 250mm.

F104 - north to south aligned linear structure with exposed width of 750mm, composed of limestone blocks and slabs (some burnt) and flint fragments, within a dark grey silty clay soil matrix. Possibly continuation of wall *F201* in Trench 2 (see below).

F110 - north to south aligned linear structure with exposed width of 350mm, composed of tightly packed limestone slabs and flint nodules and fragments. Interpreted as possible wall foundation. This feature continues into Trench 6 as *F607* (see below).

F105 - northeast to southwest aligned probable ditch with exposed width of 800mm. Composed of a dark greyish-brown silty clay, containing occasional limestone fragments (some burnt), charcoal and flint. Quantities of pottery including Romano-British native coarsewares and imported Roman finewares, lathe working flint tools and a large iron nail were recovered from surface cleaning. Ditch appears to continue into Trench 6 as *F606*.

F109 - north to south aligned probable ditch with exposed width of 800mm. Composed of a mid to dark brown, compact silty clay, containing occasional flint and gravel fragments and rare charcoal flecks. No artefacts were recovered from surface cleaning. This feature continues into Trench 6 as *F605*.

F111, F112, F113 - these deposits comprise a cluster of soil-filled features around possible wall *F104*. It is uncertain from limited investigation what these features are, although it is probable that they all represent linear deposits. Significant quantities of pottery, including Romano-British native coarsewares and imported Roman finewares, a fragment of tegula roof tile and a shale object (SF1) was recovered from surface cleaning.

F108 - north to south aligned probable ditch with exposed width of 500mm. Composed of a dark greyish-brown silty clay, containing occasional flint, gravel, limestone and charcoal fragments. Small quantities of Romano-British pottery and flint tools used in the process of shale lathe working were recovered from surface cleaning.

F103, F106 - two linear features at the eastern end of Trench 1 possibly forming two sides of a small rectangular enclosure. Both have widths of around 500mm and both contain similar silty clay fills. Pottery of Romano-British date was recovered from surface cleaning of *F103*.

F102 - possible pit seemingly cut by *F106*. Composed of a dark greyish-brown silty clay containing small quantities of gravel, limestone and flint. Artefacts recovered comprised a badly corroded Fe knife (SF2) and small quantities of Romano-British pottery.

F107 - located at the northern end of the trench, uncertain as to whether a true archaeological feature. No finds recovered.

5.2 Trench 2 (Fig. 3)- 'L'-shaped trench in plan; dimensions N-S 29 x 1.4m, E-W 11 x 1.4m; excavated to maximum depth of 250mm. The northern half and east to west portion of the trench did not contain any intact structures or other deposits associated with occupation.

F201 approximately north to south aligned probable wall foundation visible for a length of 10m at the southern end of the trench continuing in both directions beyond trench edges. This wall was solid in appearance with a width of 500mm. The wall was composed of roughly shaped angular limestone blocks and fragments and sub-angular flint nodules and fragments. There did not appear to be evidence within the wall for a mortar bonding. Only the uppermost surviving course of the wall was exposed in the trench. It is therefore uncertain as to the surviving height of the structure. However, layers *204* and *205*, either side of the structure, contained inclusions characteristic of demolition or collapsed deposits, which are likely to seal any intact occupation deposits. A possible east to west aligned associated wall (*F207*), running west from *F201* was evident within the trench, and is likely to represent an adjoining internal wall. The return for *F201* has been interpreted as *F203*, a probable wall or collapsed flint and limestone masonry running west further along the trench to the north.

F210 is a probable metalled surface located at the southern end of the trench, immediately to the east of wall *F201*. It was composed of compacted coarse sub-angular flint and gravel within a slight greyish brown silty clay soil matrix. No artefacts were recovered from surface cleaning.

F202 and *F209* are probably the same formal metalled surface, overlain slightly by a narrow band of redeposited clay (*206*). The surface was composed of compacted coarse sub-angular flint and gravel fragments, within a slight greyish-brown silty clay soil matrix. The surface was visible along the trench for approximately 6m, ending where possible wall *F203* crossed the trench.

Artefacts were recovered from most deposits mentioned above, comprising significant quantities of pottery, including Romano-British native coarsewares and imported Roman finewares, flint tools associated with lathe worked shale object production, animal bone and a single Kimmeridge shale fragment (SF3).

5.3 Trench 3 (Fig. 3) - Linear trench in plan; dimensions E-W 19.1 x 1.4m, excavated to maximum depth of 200mm. This trench contained the most densely concentrated archaeological deposits, located towards the eastern boundary of the playing fields, with adjacent deposits almost certainly removed during the construction of the railway cutting immediately to the east.

F310 and *F311* were located at the western end of the trench and comprised two distinct spreads of limestone slabs and flint nodules and fragments, within a dark greyish-brown silty clay sparse soil matrix, on an approximate north to south alignment. Within the general spread of *F311* was a shallow scoop (*F301*), which after the removal of topsoil by machine, was found to contain an infant burial (*303*). The skeleton had been heavily disturbed during machine removal of topsoil. It was therefore considered appropriate to record and remove the remainder of the skeleton, as its integrity had already been disturbed. The skeleton was in a prone position on an east to west alignment, its head being towards the west. A single, small abraded pottery fragment was the only artefact recovered from the fill of the scoop, the fabric consistent with a Romano-British date.

F305 was a north to south aligned, probable stone-lined drain with a width of 300mm. The lining was composed of pitched angular limestone slabs, up to 250mm and a few flint fragments. The covering was again limestone slabs, in this case horizontally bedded but generally collapsed into the drainage channel. No artefacts were recovered from the hand-cleaning of this feature.

F308 was a compacted yellow-brown redeposited clay with a pronounced camber which has been interpreted as a formal trackway. Its width was 1.2m and was flanked on either side by two probable ditches, *F307* and *F309*. Part of the clay matrix for this possible track was removed during machining, revealing the underlying possible foundation material (contexts 320 and 321). The two flanking ditches were both composed of dark greyish-brown silty clay containing frequent flint and gravel fragments and occasional charcoal flecks and limestone fragments. Artefacts recovered from the ditches comprised a single fragment of Romano-British pottery and a piece of worked flint possibly used in the lathe production of Kimmeridge shale objects. Immediately to the east of these features was a possible metallated surface *F313*. The surface was approximately 1m wide, composed of what appeared to be compacted gravel and flint fragments within a sparse mid brown silty clay soil matrix. No artefacts were recovered from surface cleaning of this probable surface.

F306 was an approximately northwest to southeast aligned concentration of stones, composed of sub-angular and rounded limestone blocks and slabs, some burnt, and flint nodules. The stones were surrounded by a sparse greyish-brown silty clay containing occasional charcoal flecking.

Contexts 312, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 322, 323 were also present within this trench, but are interpreted as occupation spreads rather than clearly defined cut features. With the exception of the removal of infant burial 303, no hand-excavation was undertaken in this trench, and there is therefore the possibility that some of these spreads may have resolved themselves as cut features if further investigated. Quantities of Romano-British pottery were recovered from surface cleaning of some of these deposits.

5.4 Trench 4 (Fig. 4) - Linear trench in plan; dimensions E-W 9 x 1.4m, excavated to maximum depth of 250mm.

Possible structure *F402* was a cluster of medium sized rounded and sub-angular limestone blocks upto 250mm, some of which were burnt. This feature was only present against the northern trench edge and it is therefore difficult to attempt to define its function. It did, however appear to cut a probable northwest to southeast aligned probable ditch *F403*. This ditch was 1m wide and composed of a greyish-brown silty clay containing occasional flint, gravel and limestone fragments. No artefacts were present.

At the western end of the trench, a segment of a curvilinear ditch or gully *F405* was present, which appeared to broaden out towards the west. The fill was composed of a mixed dark greyish-brown silty clay containing occasional limestone and flint fragments. Pottery recovered comprised locally made black-burnished coarseware.

The only other possible feature present in this trench was context 404, a soil spread composed of a light brown silty clay, containing occasional limestone and flint fragments.

5.5 Trench 5 (Fig. 4) - Linear trench in plan; dimensions E-W 3.7 x 1.4m, excavated to maximum depth of 250mm. Located at the southwest corner of the proposed development. This trench was the only one to contain a redeposited subsoil layer (context 503), composed of a mid to light brown compact silty clay with a depth of 150mm.

A single north to south aligned ditch (*F501*) was the only feature present in this short trench. A section was hand-excavated across this ditch, in order to determine its possible function. This revealed a width of 1.2m and depth of 400mm, with the profile showing as moderate to steep-sided onto a slightly rounded base. Its fill (context 502) was composed of a dark greyish-brown, compact silty clay, containing occasional flint and limestone fragments and rare charcoal flecks. Artefacts recovered from the ditch fill comprised large quantities of black-burnished coarseware fragments, representing probably no more than two vessels.

5.6 Trench 6 (Fig. 4) - Linear, slightly curving in plan, dimensions NE-SW 20 x 1.4m, excavated to maximum depth of 300mm. This final trench was excavated in order to clarify whether features and structures identified in other trenches continued into this area of the proposed development.

F609 was a narrow, fairly ephemeral north to south aligned wall 200mm wide. It was composed of relatively tightly packed rounded and sub-angular medium sized limestone blocks and sub-angular flint fragments and nodules. Given its size, it is likely to have been an internal partition wall. It contained a very sparse mid greyish-brown silty clay soil content. No artefacts were present on the exposed surface of this feature.

F602 comprised a cluster of medium sized rounded and sub-angular limestone blocks averaging 250mm, some of which were burnt, although there was a single sub-triangular large block present with a length of 600mm. They were within a sparse silty clay soil matrix, and only present against the southeast trench edge; consequently, it is difficult to define its function. Finds recovered from the cleaning of this possible structure include Romano-British pottery and animal bone fragments.

F607 was again a narrow, fairly ephemeral north to south aligned wall 200mm wide. It appeared identical in composition as *F609*. The wall continues into Trench 1 as *F110* (see above).

F605 north to south aligned probable ditch with exposed width of 800mm. Composed of a dark greyish-brown silty clay. Continues into Trench 1 as *F109* (see above).

F606 was an approximately northeast to southwest aligned possible ditch, only partly exposed, running along the southeast trench edge. It was composed of a very dark greyish-brown silty clay containing occasional small flint and limestone fragments. It is probable that this linear feature represents the continuation of *F105* from Trench 1 (see above). No artefacts were recovered.

F603 was a north to south aligned shallow gully, excavated in order to determine the characteristics of features within this area of the site. The gully was 250mm wide and excavated to a depth of 100mm. The sides showed as shallow sloping onto a slightly rounded base. It was filled with context 604, a very dark greyish-brown compacted silty clay containing occasional flint and limestone fragments. Small quantities of coarse Romano-British pottery and flint objects were recovered from the fill. Drainage appears to be the most obvious function for this gully.

F608 appeared as a northwest to southeast aligned probable gully located immediately northeast of possible structure F602. The gully was 450mm wide composed of dark greyish-brown silty clay, containing occasional flint and limestone fragments and rare charcoal flecks. This was immediately adjacent to context 610, a probable occupation spread of grey brown silty clay, containing occasional limestone, flint and gravel fragments.

6. THE FINDS

A summary of all finds is shown in Table 1 on page 10 of this report.

6.1 The Pottery by J.W. Hawkes

Given that only minimal intrusive excavation of features, spreads and other archaeological deposits was undertaken, the quantity of pottery recovered (see Table 1) was comparatively high. Much of the material was undiagnostic, however, the majority of sherds being small, abraded and undiagnostic body fragments in Black Burnished 1 fabric (BB1) and other coarse fabrics. Based on a rapid scanning of these finds, the following recognisable elements were present:

- Trench 1: BB1 material included some oxidised sherds and a flanged bowl of probable AD second-century type from context F113. Other C2nd material would probably include the late Samian sherds, relief decorated from context F105 and part of a pedestal-based bowl from context F103. No other diagnostic or datable elements were present.
- Trench 2: Topsoil context (200) included post-medieval pottery, sherds of an abraded colour-coated vessel of indeterminate form (probably New Forest), a New Forest beaker base and a BB1 dropped-flange bowl. These finds would be consistent with a C3 or later date. A fine, black cordoned bowl fragment, probably C1 BC / AD C1, was recovered from context F203.
- Trench 3: Upper cleaning levels - principally context 304 - produced a range of BB1 and other coarse ware vessels including fine bead rim jars or bowls and some late Samian fragments, all of which would be consistent with a C2 date. No diagnostic pieces were recovered from stratified deposits.
- Trench 4: Sherds of a burnished footring base from the gully context F405 are likely to be C1 BC / AD C1. No other diagnostic material recovered.
- Trench 5: Pottery from ditch fill (502) include a fine bead rim and a jar with a slightly cavetto-rim, probably late C1 or C2. Other BB1 sherds include some oxidised material.
- Trench 6: Only undiagnostic fragmentary pottery was recovered from this trench.

6.2 The Worked Stone

A total of 38 pieces of worked flint, and a single large, roughly worked limestone roof tile fragment was recovered from the evaluation. As with all artefacts from the site, the majority of material was recovered from the upper levels of unexcavated features. The flint varied in colour from bluey-grey, reddish-brown and black, and most of the flint appears to be consistent with material which could have been obtained from the plateau gravels present on the site. The majority of worked flint was typical of late Iron Age / Romano-British lathe tools used in the manufacture of Kimmeridge Shale

objects. These comprised characteristic 'kite' shaped pieces, retouched along the broken edge for hafting. A single probable scraper (SF6) with shallow, irregular side retouch was recovered from topsoil adjacent to Trench 2. It is probably of late-Neolithic or early Bronze Age date. The limestone roof tile is a flat slab with dimensions of 180 x 110 x 20mm, recovered from a probable demolition deposit adjacent to wall F201 in Trench 2. A peg hole was not apparent.

6.3 Other Finds

Other finds comprised three shale fragments (SF1, SF3, SF4), seemingly unworked and / or waste products. Metal objects comprised a large iron nail (SF5) and a badly corroded iron knife (SF2). Also recovered was a large lump of Fe slag.

Five pieces of ceramic building material were recovered, the only diagnostic element consisting of a small fragment of *tegula* roof tile.

The infant burial from Trench 3, and the few recovered animal bone fragments, have not been examined in any detail for the purposes of this report.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The evaluation has identified what appears to be a substantial Romano-British occupation site, containing the remains of at least one stone-built structure. Finds recovered from the surfaces of deposits suggests an emphasis on the late 1st or 2nd-centuries AD. The site extends across the full width (c. 85m) of the proposed pitch, and will have been truncated on the east side by the adjacent railway cutting. The limits of the development meant it was not possible to define its western or southern boundaries, but it is possible that the northern extent has been identified, as the final 15m of the northern end of Trench 2 did not contain any archaeological deposits, or any residual artefacts. However, the possibility that this is an open space within the settlement, and that further concentrations of archaeological deposits occur to the north, cannot be excluded.

7.2 Within the area of the evaluation trenches, all identified remains seem to be well preserved, with little evidence for ploughing or disturbance. This may not be the case further to the north, where ground disturbance associated with drainage for the playing fields is known to have taken place as recently as 1978.

7.3 As very little hand excavation was carried out, it is not possible to be precise about the nature or function of the site. The following general comments can however be made :

i) The evidence for industrial processes taking place on the site comprises flint lathe tools indicative of the working of Kimmeridge shale on the site and the finding of iron slag suggesting ironworking.

ii) Other than 3rd century or later finds from the topsoil, there was little artefact evidence to suggest that the lifespan for the site extended significantly beyond the 2nd-century AD. It is possible that some areas of the site may be deeply stratified, particularly those around the

wall structures in the central area of the site and in the area of Trench 3. Features towards the western end of the site (in Trenches 1, 4 and 5) generally appear to be ditches or other cut features through natural subsoil, normally associated with the margins of settlements rather than indicators of intense occupation.

iii) The presence of an infant burial in Trench 3 is also characteristic of sites of this date. It was common practice during the Roman occupation of Britain to bury infants, who died when less than 40 days old, in or adjacent to wall foundations and, particularly corners or doorways of buildings. This corresponds with its presence adjacent to a probable structure.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

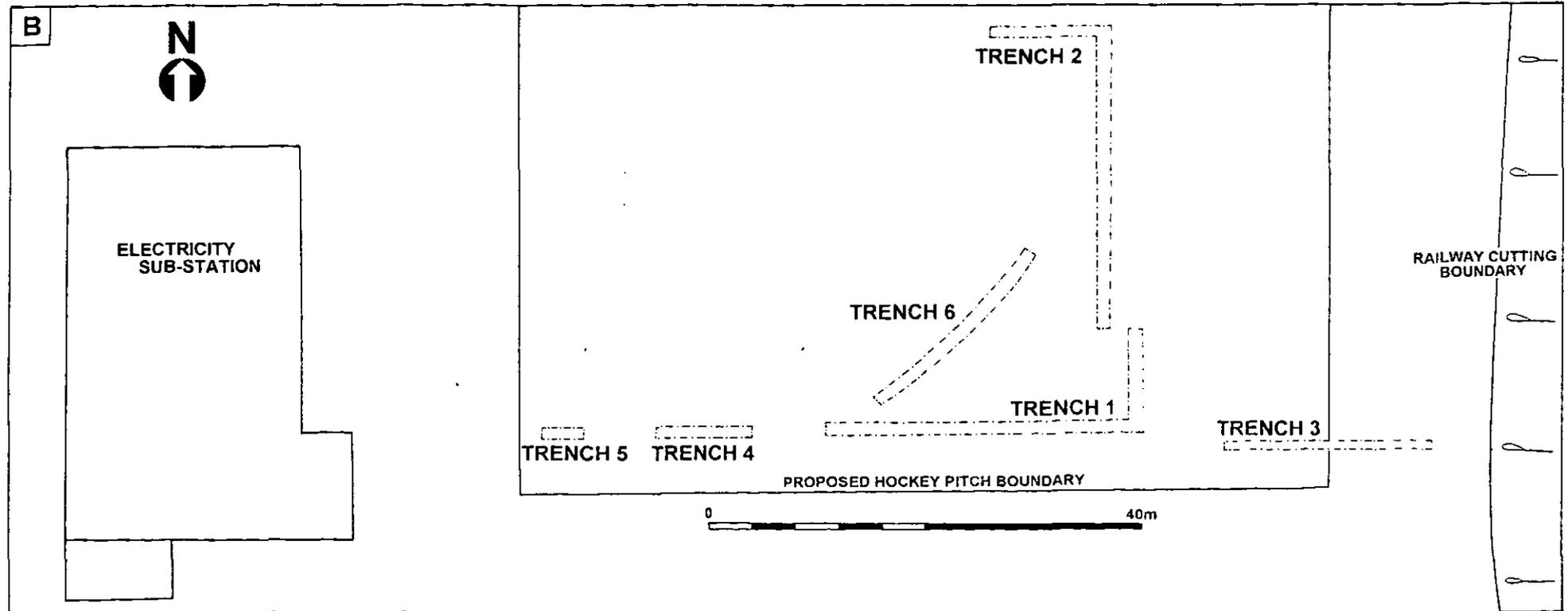
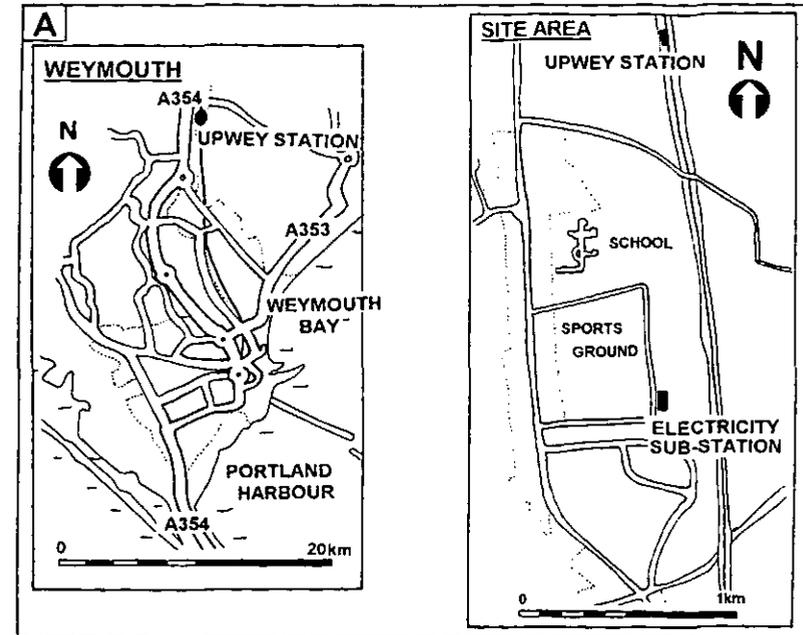
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Trench	Context No.	Context Type	Romano-British Pottery		Bone		Ceramic Building Material		Worked Flint		Kimmeridge Shale		Comments / Others
			No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	
1	102	Possible pit	7	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Fe knife (SF2) also recovered
	103	Linear deposit	15	96	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	105	Probable ditch	10	44	0	0	0	0	2	20	1	15	SF5 large Fe nail; SF4 Shale obj.
	108	Probable ditch	5	24	0	0	0	0	3	10	0	0	
	111	Demolition layer	15	178	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	113	Demolition layer	22	122	0	0	2	26	1	4	1	30	Shale obj. SF1; 1 large piece of iron slag; CBM includes tegula frag.
2	200	Topsoil	21	120	0	0	2	68	2	32	0	0	Flint includes SF6 scraper - Late Neo / Early BA; 1 frag of PM pot
	202	Metalled surface	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	0	
	203	Wall foundation	6	32	4	18	0	0	7	32	0	0	
	204	Demolition layer	24	74	0	0	0	0	9	40	1	8	Shale Obj. SF3; 1 large limestone roof tile
	205	Demolition layer	6	26	0	0	0	0	6	100	0	0	
3	303	Inhumation scoop	1	1	138	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	Bone is skeleton of infant
	304	hand cleaning	50	278	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	
	307	Probable ditch	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	309	Probable ditch	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	
	317	Occupation spread	5	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	318	Occupation spread	3	18	1	46	0	0	0	0	0	0	Animal bone
	319	Occupation spread	8	30	0	0	1	30	1	30	0	0	
4	405	Curvilinear gully	10	388	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
5	502	Excavated ditch	153	806	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
6	602	Stone cluster	9	16	8	42	0	0	1	10	0	0	Animal bone
	604	Excavated gully	9	14	0	0	0	0	3	16	0	0	
TOTALS			380	2,317	151	200	5	124	38	303	3	53	

TABLE 1 : All Finds by No. / Weight in grams

**FIGURE 1:A) GENERAL
LOCATION PLANS
B) TRENCH LOCATION
PLAN**



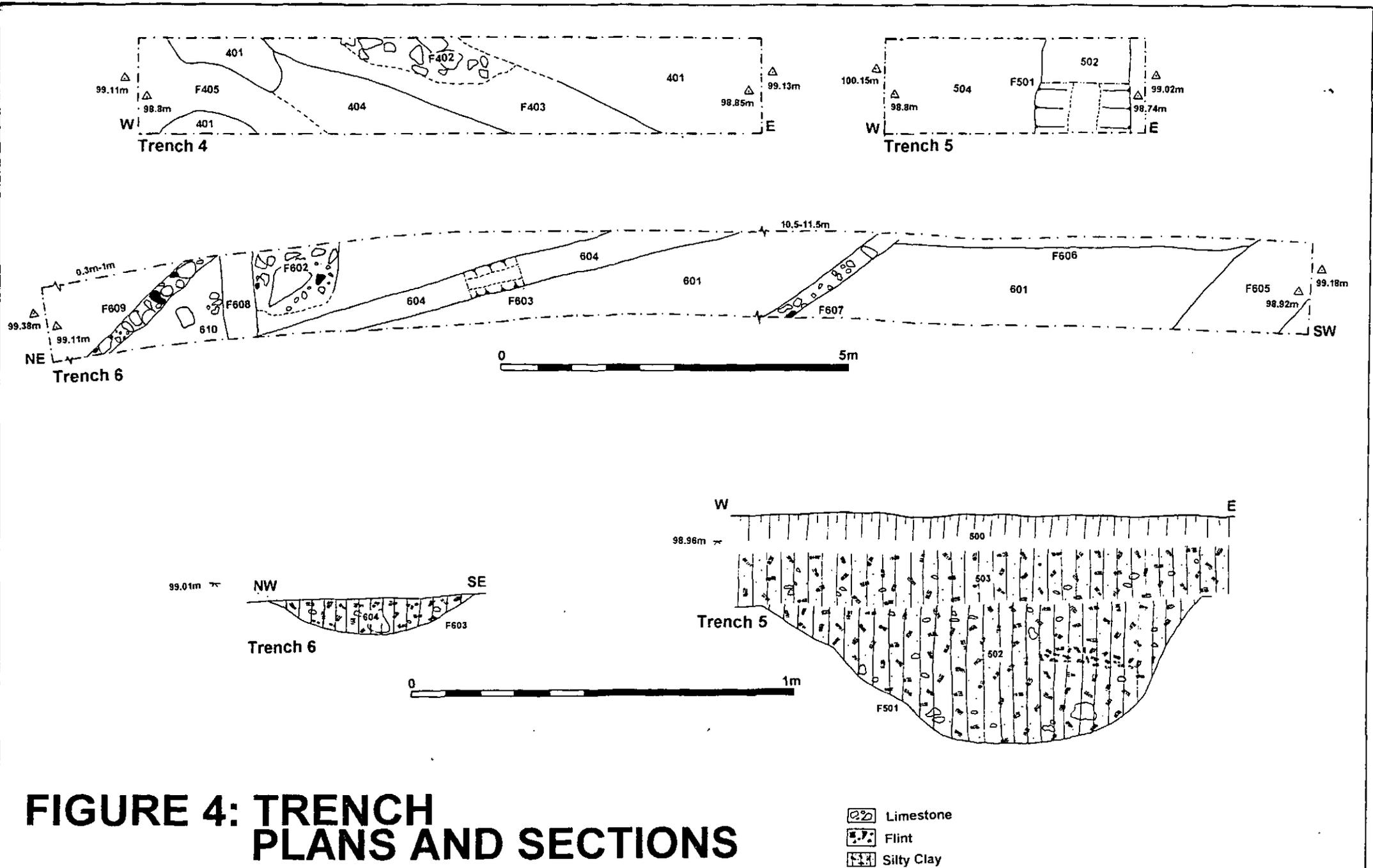


FIGURE 4: TRENCH PLANS AND SECTIONS

-  Limestone
-  Flint
-  Silty Clay

FIGURE 3: TRENCH PLANS

-  Limestone
-  Flint
-  Metalled Surface

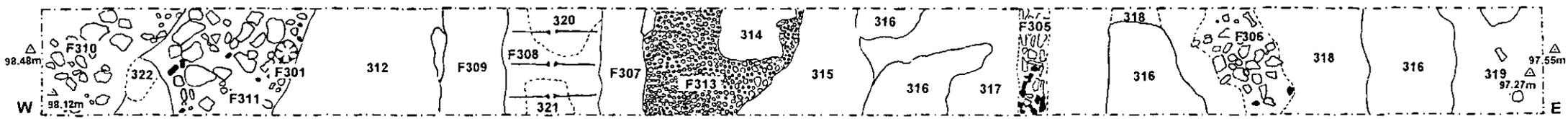
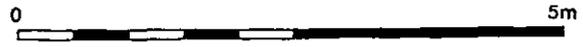
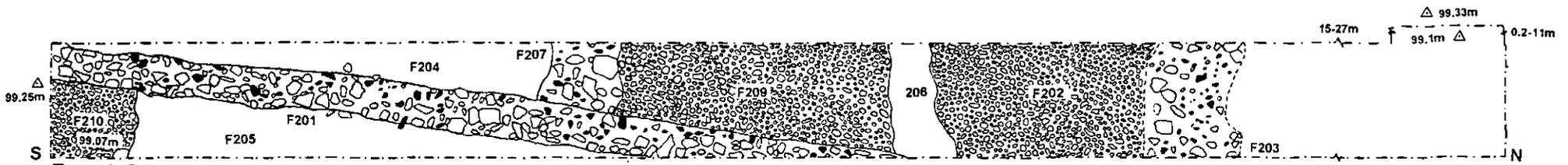
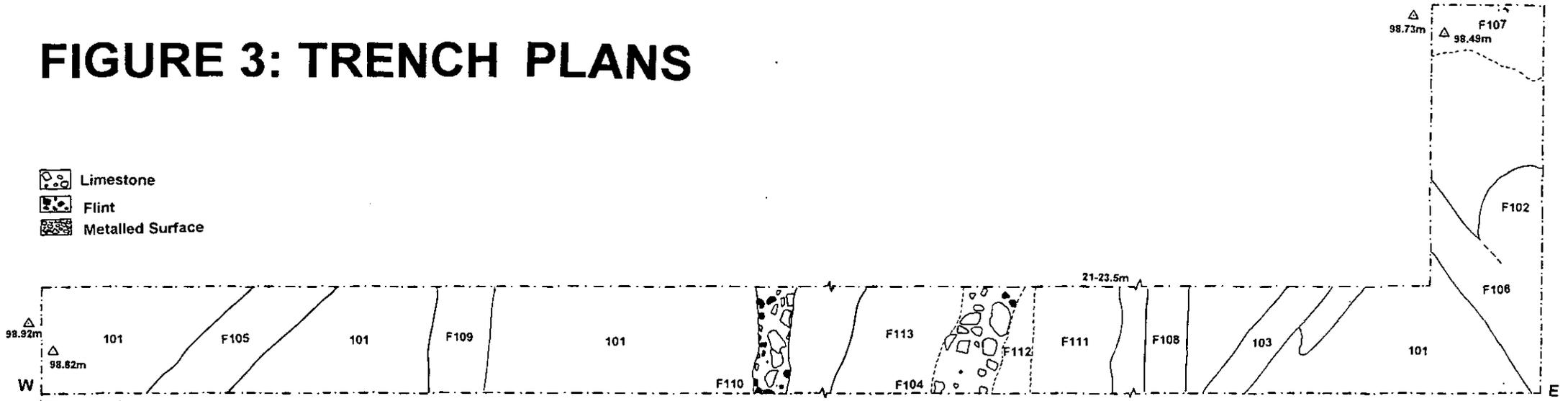


FIGURE 2: SUMMARY PLAN OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES

