

# Liverpool Airport Development, Speke, Merseyside

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## An Archaeological Evaluation

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November 1999 (61)



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# Summary

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The University of Manchester Archaeological Unit (UMAU) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land to the west of the main terminal at Liverpool Airport, Speke, Merseyside (centred NGR SJ 425 824). The work was carried out on behalf of Peel Holdings Limited prior to site re-development. The evaluation took the form of ten machine stripped trenches located throughout the study area.

All the evaluation trenches were excavated down to the top of the underlying drift geology by machine. Of the ten evaluation trenches one revealed evidence for the in-situ remains of possible Romano-British archaeology whereas the other nine revealed late post-medieval archaeology. All finds from the evaluation trenches were retained for study. This report represents the detailed account of the findings from this evaluation.

## *Acknowledgements*

*This report was written by Peter A. Connelly. Except section 2.3 which was largely derived from an earlier archaeological assessment written by Dr. P. Arrowsmith. Illustrations by Stuart Holden and P.A. Connelly.*

*The fieldwork was undertaken by: Peter A. Connelly, Graham Mottershead, Stuart Holden and Peter Peers.*

*Thanks to Sarah-Jane Farr (County Archaeologist), Bovis, and Liverpool Airport Authority.*

# 1. Introduction

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UMAU were contracted by Peel Holdings Limited to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land to the West of the Main terminal at Liverpool Airport, Speke, Merseyside prior to site re-development (Figure 1). This evaluation was carried from 6 to 20 August 1999. The work was undertaken in respect to the brief supplied by the Merseyside Archaeological Officer.

The aim of the evaluation was to record any features and finds of archaeological significance relating to the history and archaeology of the area. This involved the machine stripping of 10 trenches down to the top of any distinguishable archaeology or the top of the underlying drift geology and then excavation by hand of all but the largest of archaeological features.

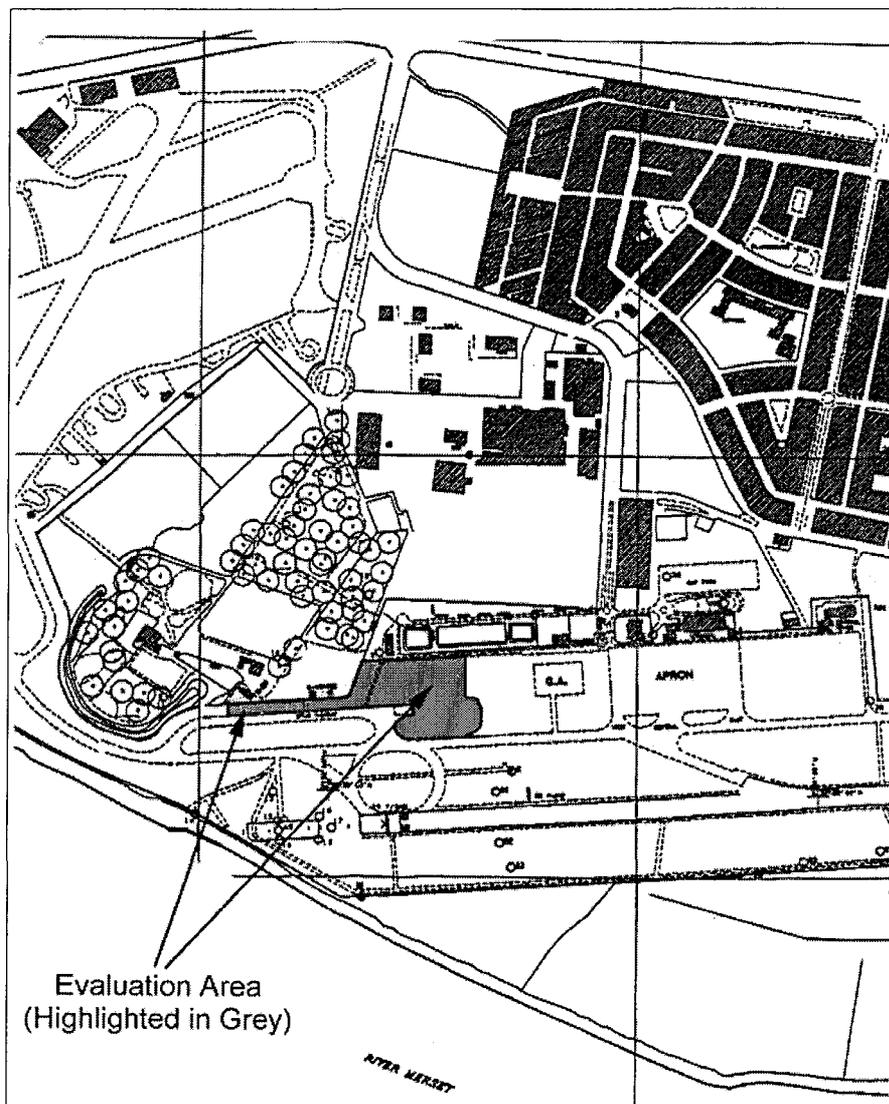


Figure 1: Site Location (Scale approx 1:10 000)

## ***2. The Archaeological Setting***

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### **2.1 Topography and Present Land Use**

The evaluation area is situated on a relatively flat parcel of land with a very gentle incline which rises from the Mersey estuary, in the south, northwards to and past the present town of Speke. This topography stretches north-west towards Liverpool and south-east towards Runcorn thus creating the Mersey Coastal Plain.

The evaluation area is part of the Liverpool Airport complex (Figure 1) and consists of well maintained wide grass verges separating the access to the main runways from the airport boundaries and the holding area for light aircraft from the airport terminal. Throughout the evaluation a large spoil heap was situated upon a large part of the area highlighted for evaluation and was therefore not evaluated.

### **2.2 Geology**

The solid geology for the evaluation area, as referenced by the OS Geological Survey, comprises Permo-Triassic Pebble Beds. This solid geology is overlain by a drift geology of boulder clay which is in itself overlain by Shirdley Hill windblown sands. Boulder Clay was recorded as context (1000) and windblown sands as (999) for the purposes of this report.

### **2.3 Archaeological and Historical Background**

#### **2.3.1 Prehistoric**

Although much of Speke is covered by modern development, evidence for early (prehistoric and Romano-British) activity has been provided by chance finds and in recent years by field walking and excavation. This cumulative evidence points to the Speke area as being a favoured locality for early activity and settlement. Proximity to the river Mersey provided a communications route as well as a food resource. The natural geology, ie the Shirdley Hill Sands, also provided favourable conditions. Regional evidence points to early settlement being found on sands and gravels rather than the heavier, more poorly drained and probably more densely wooded boulder clays.

The fullest evidence for prehistoric activity in Speke has been provided by flints recovered by

walking the fields in the vicinity of Oglet Lane further to the east of the present evaluation area. Others have been found immediately south of Oglet Lane and to the north of that road (MSMR 4381116, 4481/6).

The flints from Oglet include some which by their typology may be Mesolithic in date (8th-4th millennium BC). One concentration may indicate a settlement site, lying on the eastern slope of a former stream flowing into the estuary. Flints of possibly a later date from Oglet may indicate that exploitation of this stretch of the Mersey shore continued, perhaps on a reduced scale, into the Neolithic and early Bronze Age (Cowell 1983, 58).

The only known possible evidence of prehistoric activity from the coastal zone to the south of the present evaluation area is provided by a cooking pit. It was discovered eroding from the cliff face in 1997 when it was recorded as part of an archaeological watching brief for a pipeline across the Northern Airfield. A prehistoric date for this feature has not yet been confirmed but seems likely.

In 1997 extensive archaeological evaluation was carried out across the north-east of the Northern Airfield. This produced only four pieces of flint, of which only one may have been worked. It is possible that the apparently low level of prehistoric activity in that area was a consequence of the relatively unfavourable geological conditions, the dominant drift cover being the boulder clay. By contrast, field walking in 1997 on fields to the north and east of the Home Farm at Speke Hall, within the band of Shirdley Hill Sands, produced struck flints with a proposed date range from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age (Lewis 1997). The same programme of walking also retrieved a smaller quantity of struck flint from a field to the west of the hall.

As well as the lithic evidence and recently discovered cooking pit, evidence for prehistoric activity in Speke is provided by a Late Bronze Age looped and socketed axe found in 1946 on the site of the roundabout on Speke Boulevard (MSMR 428411). A stone head at Speke Hall is possibly 'Celtic', ie Iron Age or Romano-British (MSMR 818215), but its provenance has not been ascertained.

### **2.3.2 Romano-British**

No finds of the Romano-British period are known from the evaluation area, but others are reported from the surrounding landscape. In the Oglet Lane area a Roman fibula, or brooch, has been found by a metal detector in a ploughed field to the north of Oglet (MSMR 8381119), and a denarius of Septimus Severus is reported to have been found two fields to the north of the same farm, ie in the same general location (MSMR 4381/21).

19th-century reports of the finding of buried road surfaces to the north-west of Speke provide tentative evidence for a Roman road running along the north of Mersey. If this road has been correctly identified, its projected course would lead through the southern pad of Speke (Cowell 1983, 14, 58). Other evidence for activity in this period is provided by the chance finding of Roman coins in the area of the Speke housing estate (Lewis 1997), and by the discovery of a sherd of probable Romano-British pottery during the evaluation of the north-east of the Northern Airfield in 1997 (Connelly 1997, 16).

In 1997 field walking in the field between Speke Home Farm and Liverpool Airport recovered 26 sherds of certain Roman pottery and 26 sherds of probable Roman. This represents one of the largest number of sherds of this period recovered to date by field walking on any site in Merseyside and almost certainly indicates the presence of a settlement site in that location (Lewis 1997).

### **2.3.3 Medieval - Post-Medieval**

Historically the evaluation area effectively lay within the township of Speke. On the west Speke was bounded by the township of Garston, on the east by that of Hale. In 1343 the boundary between Speke and Garston was described as following a stream but such a watercourse is not shown on any maps (Nicholson 1983, 2 boundary stones marking the division between Speke and Garston are shown on an OS map of 1905). To the east, the medieval boundary between Speke and Hale may also have been a watercourse, the 'Brokwallebrok', documented in 1334. The line of this boundary at a later date followed Dungeon Lane, where a boundary stone delineating the land of the Watts, the owners of Speke Hall, from that of the Blackburnes, the owners of the Dungeon salt works site, also seems to have stood on this township boundary.

The place-name Speke is derived from the Old English 'spec', meaning 'a small branch' or 'brushwood' (Milis 1976, 135). The basis for that name is uncertain, but it has been suggested that the reference may be to a wooden causeway across an area of mossland. Field-names provide evidence of a former moss to the north of Speke Hall (Liverpool Museum rid, 4). The Domesday survey shows that a manor of 'Spec' was in existence by 1066.

Speke Hall is documented in 1314, and excavation to the north-east of the hall has revealed the remains of a building with associated dating material suggesting a date in the 14th century. This documentary and archaeological evidence is consistent with the presence of a surrounding moat, the heyday for the construction of such features being from the mid-13th to the 14th century. The present timber-framed buildings, arranged around a courtyard, were constructed in several phases between c 1530 and the close of the 16th century (Milln & Woodside 1996, 6-7).

The earliest large-scale map of the township of Speke is that drawn by Thomas Addison in the late 18th century. The survey was commissioned in 1774 and completed in 1781. This shows the evaluation area to have lay within the Speke demesne, ie the land farmed directly by the manorial lord.

## ***3. Methodology***

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### **3.1 Excavation Methodology**

All trenches were excavated to the point where archaeological deposits were discovered or to the top of the drift geology using a caterpillar tracked excavator fitted with a 1.5 m wide toothless bucket. The machine stripping of all trenches was observed and supervised by a professional archaeologist at all times.

All but the largest of archaeological features located in each trench were excavated by hand. All hand excavated features were recorded using standard archaeological techniques and practices. Features over 2 m in width were partially excavated by machine to recover the relevant information as efficiently as possible. Machine excavated features were also recorded using standard archaeological techniques except where health and safety regulations could not allow for this to be carried out.

All trenches were accurately surveyed using a total station EDM.

### **3.2 Artefact Methodology**

During machine stripping of all the trenches the archaeologist supervising the operation retained all archaeological artefacts to either topsoil, context (1), or subsoil, context (2). All artefacts from archaeological features were retrieved and retained to context. All spoil heaps were walked for artefact retrieval and artefacts were retained to an unstratified context.

## 4. Evaluation Results

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This section outlines the fieldwork results for each of the 10 evaluation trenches as well as the segments that could not be surveyed due to mitigating circumstances (Figure 3). This section entails a detailed description of each trench and all the features encountered in each trench that were intensely investigated.

### 4.1 Trench I (Figure 4)

Located in the western segment of the evaluation area and oriented west-east Trench I was excavated to a length of 109 m. Greyish white windblown sands were revealed throughout the entire trench at a depth of 0.38 - 0.7 m. Seven features of archaeological interest were observed and excavated in Tr. I. These shall be dealt with below from west to east.

#### ■ Feature (31)/[32] (Figure 2)

Located on the very western limits of Tr. I this feature was recognised as a wide spread of dark grey sandy silt with it's eastern edge sharply defined by the greyish white windblown sands. The full extent of this feature was not recovered due to the limitations in the size of the trench. With a recorded width of 3.5 m west - east and at least 1.5 m north - south (the width of the trench) a machine section was excavated through this feature to reveal it's depth and shape. As revealed cut [32] showed a profile with a clearly defined sharp break of slope at the top of the cut with it's sides slopping at approximately 45°. The base of this feature was not revealed as at a depth of 0.85 m water started to seep in to the section and made further excavation unsafe.

The section through this feature also revealed reddish yellow boulder clay at a depth of 0.3 - 0.5 m below the windblown sands.

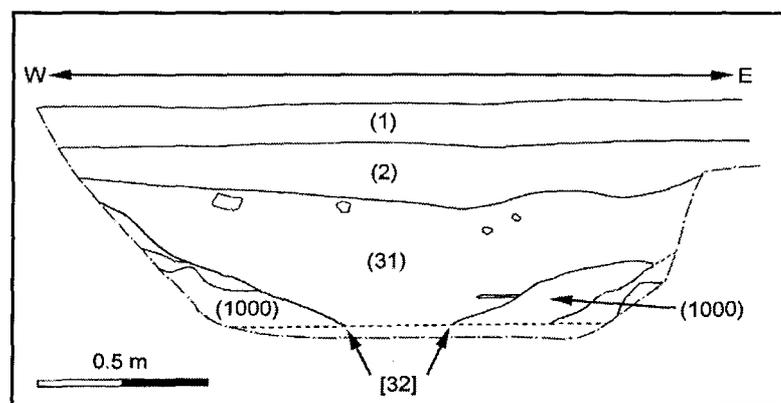


Figure 2: South Facing Section of Feature (31)/[32]

- **Feature [3]/(4)/(5)**

Located in the west of Tr. I this was a rectangular feature which contained two fills (4) and (5) within cut [3]. The full extents of the cut measured 0.5 m nw-se by 0.4 m ne-sw and 0.41 m deep with fill (4), a loose dark reddish brown sandy loam, making up the upper 0.3 m and fill (5), a loose light reddish brown sandy silt, the bottom 0.11 m. This feature was clearly defined with vertical sides and a flat base.

- **Feature (11)/[12]**

A sub-circular feature located in the western part of Tr. I. The profile for Cut [12] consisted of gradual breaks of slope top and bottom with at approximately 45° and a slightly concave base. The cut measured 1.06 m nw-se by 0.54 m ne-sw with a depth of 0.37 m of which (11), a darkish brown sandy silt, filled the full extents of the cut.

- **Feature (14)/(15)/[16]**

Located in the western part of Tr. I this feature was a sharply defined rectangular feature surrounded by windblown sands. Full excavation of this feature revealed the profile of [16] with sharp breaks of slope top and bottom, almost vertical sides and a flat base. The cut measured 0.80 m ne-sw by 0.74 m nw-se with a depth of 0.31 m. Fill (14), a soft dark greyish brown sandy loam, almost covered the full extents of this feature except in certain areas where fill (15), a hard coarse grey sand was encountered.

- **Feature (9)/[10]**

Located in the western part of Tr. I feature (9)/[10] was a small sharply defined sub-square feature surrounded by windblown sands. The dimensions for both fill and cut were 0.35 m ne-sw by 0.31 m nw-se with a depth of 0.21 m. Fill (9), a compact brownish grey sandy loam, was contained by cut [10] which had a profile consisting of sharp breaks of slope top and bottom, near vertical sides and a flat base.

- **Feature (6)/(7)/[8]**

Situated in the western part of Tr. I this feature was a sharply defined linear feature oriented ne-sw observed as a dark brownish grey fill (6) surrounded by windblown sands. Fill (6) was the only fill contained by cut [8] and the dimensions for both were 1.76 m ne-sw by 0.35 m nw-se and 0.35 m deep. The full length of this feature was not observed due to the limitations in the

width of the trench. The profile of cut consisted of sharp breaks of slope top and bottom, vertical sides and a flat base.

Following the same orientation as the cut and located along the base of the feature was a 35 mm diameter eroded iron pipe (7).

#### ■ **Feature (13)/[61]**

Context (13) was defined as a large spread of friable dark brown sandy silt surrounded by the windblown sands to the west and east and truncated on the northern and southern edges by the limits of the trench. Within these confines this feature measured approximately 3.50 m west-east by 1.5 m north-south. A section 2.1 m deep was excavated through (13) which revealed it's overall depth to be 1.9 , deep. This partially revealed the profile of cut [61] which had been cut into greyish white windblown sands. Fill (13) appeared to be homogenous throughout the entire depth of the feature and the partial profile of cut [61] revealed a gradual slopping edge with a non-perceptible break of slope bottoming out in a possible concave base.

#### ■ **Other noted features**

Two features were noted in the eastern end of Tr. I which did not warrant further investigation. The first was a clinker filled field drain which contained a ceramic pipe and the other feature was a large mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century concrete block.

### **4.2 Trench II (Figure 4)**

Situated to the east of Tr. I and still within the western part of the assessment area Tr. II was opened to a length of 27.60 m on a west - east alignment. Greyish white windblown sands were revealed at a depth of 0.53 m.

Except for approximately the first 6 m of Tr. II, which revealed windblown sands, the rest of the trench was very badly disturbed with 20<sup>th</sup> century debris and refuse. This material covered 21.90 m of the trench and was excavated down to depths of between 0.5 m and 1.7 m which revealed no edges or defining features. This material was homogenous throughout it's revealed length. This influenced the decision to curtail the length of Tr. II as this area was deemed to be very badly disturbed in which no earlier archaeology would be likely to survive.

### 4.3 Trench III (Figure 5)

Located to the east of Tr. II towards the central section of the evaluation area Tr. III was excavated to a length of 45.20 m on a west-east orientation. Windblown sands ranging from greyish white to brownish yellow with reddish brown mottling were located throughout the extents of the trench at a depth of 0.52 m to 0.72 m. Occasional very dark brown/black humic spreads representing the remains of tree boles were also observed along the base of the trench.

One archaeological feature was located within Tr. III. Identified as a linear feature oriented ne-sw the full length of this feature could not be determined due to the limits of excavation. Sharply defined on the surface by fill (28) this feature was half sectioned by hand. Fill (28) represented a soft mixed brownish yellow sand containing occasional darker sandy loam mottling which measured 1.72 m ne-sw by 0.80 m nw-se by 0.77 m deep. Below (28) was located fill (29) which consisted of a soft dark brown sandy loam which measured at least 1 m ne-sw by 0.4 m nw-se by at least 70 mm deep. The full depth of (29) was not discovered because at a depth of 0.84 m water started to seep into this feature and made further excavation hazardous. Therefore the dimensions for cut [30] were 1.72 m ne-sw by 0.8 m nw-se by at least 0.84 m deep as the full depth of the cut was not revealed. The profile for cut [30] as revealed through the half section consisted of a sharp break of slope top with very steep sides becoming almost vertical after approximately 0.6 m deep.

The fills of this feature obviously represented a very short period of time from being excavated to being backfilled as (29) appears to be very similar to the top soils and fill (28) is very similar to mixed natural. The tip lines in the section showed that this feature had been backfilled from the east.

### 4.4 Trench IV (Figure 5)

Situated in the central section of the evaluation area Trench IV was opened to a length of 44 m on south-north alignment. Greyish white to light brownish windblown sands containing discrete areas of mineral staining and iron panning were located at an average depth of 0.62 m. Four features of archaeological potential were revealed in Tr. IV. These are outlined below from south to north.

A 3 m long machine section was excavated through the windblown sands at the northern limits of this trench to ascertain whether the windblown sands were masking any archaeological features. This section was excavated to a depth of 1.5 m throughout which was revealed sterile windblown deposits containing no archaeological deposits.

■ **Feature [17]/(18)**

Located in the southern half of Tr. IV this feature was a sharply defined linear feature with a very slight curve orientated sw-ne. Full excavation of this feature revealed a shallow cut with sharp breaks of slope top and bottom, almost vertical sides and a flat base. The cut contained one fill (18) which was moderately compacted dark brown clayey sand. Together both (18) and [17] measured 10.14 m sw-ne by 0.53 m nw-se by 0.11 m deep. The full length of this feature was not defined due to the limits of excavation.

This feature was cut by cut [21] of the feature to the north of it.

■ **[19]/(20) and [21]/(22)/(23)**

Located to the north and cutting [17]/(18) this feature was revealed as a sharply defined linear feature oriented west-east. Sectioning of this feature revealed a sharply defined cut [21] with sharp breaks of slope top and bottom, vertical sides and a flat base. [21] measured 1.5 m west-east by 0.35 m north-south by 0.94 m deep.

[21] contained two rows of roughly hewn red sandstone slabs set on edge on the same orientation as the cut and capped by another set of red sandstone slabs. The red sandstone slabs were bonded together with a blueish grey clay. This construct recorded as (23) measured 1.5 m west-east by 0.35 m north-south by 0.28 m deep. Surrounding (23) was fill (22) a fine light yellow sand which became more compact where it was in close proximity to the sandstone structure. (22) measured 1.5 m w-e by 0.35 m n-s by 0.54 m deep.

Cut into the top of (22) was a re-cut. Recorded as [19] this re-cut had an irregular V-shaped profile which containing one fill (20) a fine light yellowish brown sand both of which measured 1.5 m w-e by 0.5 m n-s by 0.38 m deep.

The full length of this feature could not be determined due to the limits of excavation.

■ **Feature [24]/(25)/(35)**

Very similar in nature and situated to the north of [21] this was a sharply defined linear feature on a sw-ne orientation. Sectioning of this feature revealed an almost identical construct to [21]/(22)/(23). Cut [24] had a very sharply defined profile of sharp breaks of slope top and bottom, vertical sides and a flat base. The recordable extents of this cut measured 8.7 m sw-ne by 0.56 m nw-se by 0.85 m deep. [24] contained (35) a red sandstone slab construct very similar to (23) which measuring at least 1.5 m sw-ne (limits of excavated section) by 0.38 m nw-se by

0.31 m deep. Construct (35) was sealed by fill (25) a fine light yellow sand which became more compact in close proximity to the red sandstone construct. Fill (25) had the same dimensions as the cut.

No re-cut was observed with this feature.

■ **Feature [26]/(27)/(36)**

Positioned to the north of [24] this feature was a sharply defined linear feature oriented east-west very similar in nature to [24] and [21]. A half section of this feature revealed a very similar construct to the two previous features. Cut [26] was exactly the same in profile as [24] and [21] the recordable dimensions of which measured 1.5 m w-e by 0.58 m n-s by 0.86 m deep. It contained sandstone construct (36) exactly the same as (23) and (35). This construct measured 1.5 m e-w by 0.37 m n-s by 0.38 m deep and was sealed by fill (27) which was of exactly the same nature as (22) and (25) and had the same dimensions as [26].

#### **4.5 Trench IV A (Figure 6)**

This trench was opened as a west-east oriented spur running from Tr. IV to the east. It was opened to a length of 18 m and to a depth of between 0.25 m and 0.47 m. This revealed greyish white to brown windblown sands throughout the base of the trench. No archaeological features were located in this trench.

#### **4.6 Trench V (Figure 6)**

Located in the eastern segment of the evaluation area Trench V was opened to a length of 70 m on a west-east orientation. The trench was opened to depths varying between 0.41 m and 0.64 m which revealed greyish white to light brownish yellow windblown sands throughout the entirety of the trench. Two archaeological features were located within this trench. These are dealt with below from west to east.

■ **Feature (57)/[58]**

Discovered in the western part of trench V this was a broad and sharply defined feature on a ne-sw orientation. Half sectioning of this feature revealed a well defined cut [58] with a sharp break of slope top and steep sides. However the base of the feature was not located because at a depth of 0.77 m water started to seep in to the feature and the ground became waterlogged which made

further excavation impossible without pumping the water out. [58] contained one fill (57) a soft dark brown loamy sand with large fragments of dark brown loam. The recordable dimensions of both fill and cut were 1.50 m n-s by 2.84 m e-w by 0.77 m deep.

Closer inspection of the section of the trench revealed that this feature was cut from the topsoil and through the subsoil.

#### ■ **Feature (59)/[60]**

Revealed in the eastern part of Tr. V this was a well defined linear feature on a nw-se orientation. A section excavated through this feature revealed cut [60] which had a sharp break of slope top with steep sides. However the base of this feature was not revealed because at a depth of 0.75 m the feature became waterlogged and excavation stopped. [60] contained one fill (59) a compact mottled yellowish brown mixed loamy sand. The recordable dimensions of both (59) and [60] were 3.50 m nw-se by 0.51 m ne-sw by 0.75 m deep. This feature was very reminiscent of feature (28)/[29] in Tr. III.

### **4.7 Trench VI (Figure 7)**

Located in the in the eastern part of the assessment area Tr. VI was opened to a length of 56 m on a north-south alignment. The trench was opened to an average depth of 0.35 m which revealed greyish white windblown sands through out the entirety of the trench. One archaeological feature was discovered in this trench.

A deep sounding was excavated by machine in the northern terminus of Tr. VI to try to locate the full depth of the windblown sands at this point and also to make certain that the windblown sands were not masking any archaeological deposits. The machine cut section measured 3 m north-south by 1.5 m west-east by approximately 2.50 m deep. The windblown sands revealed no archaeological deposits however at a depth of 2.10 m a waterlogged very dark humic deposit was encountered approximately 0.10 m thick. This deposit (62) had a very high organic content and an environmental sample of this material was taken for further study. Directly below (62) pale blue sterile clays were revealed. A sample of the clay was also taken. Upon revealing the clays to the atmosphere they slowly oxidised from pale blue to grey.

#### ■ **Feature (37)/(38)/[39]**

This was a well defined linear feature with a nw-se orientation in the southern part of the trench. A section across this feature revealed cut [39] with a very distinct profile of sharp breaks of slope

top and bottom with a flat base. However, the northern edge of [39] was steep at about 70° to the horizontal whereas the southern edge of the [39] was considerably more gradual at 30° to the horizontal. Close to the base of [39] were roughly hewn red sandstone slabs (37) similar to those found in Tr. IV. However these slabs were in no apparent alignment and they appeared to have collapsed from an original setting as witnessed within the similar constructed features in Tr. IV. No dimensions for the sandstone construct were discernable. Surrounding (37) the only fill discernable within [39] was fill (38) which was a loose reddish brown loamy sand. The recordable dimensions of (38) and [39] were 1.80 m nw-se by 1.50 m ne-sw by 0.6 m deep.

#### **4.8 Trench VII (Figure 7)**

Situated to the south of Tr VI in the eastern section of the assessment area Tr. VII was opened to a length of 21 m on an east - west orientation. This trench was opened to depths varying between 0.3 m and 0.5 m. Greyish white windblown sands were revealed throughout the base of the trench containing occasional amorphous very dark brown/black humic spreads which represent the remains of tree boles. One feature warranting further archaeological investigation along with the modern remains of a concrete plinth were discovered in this trench.

##### **■ Feature (33)/[34]**

Sharply defined as linear feature on a nw-se orientation this feature was sectioned to reveal the full extents of cut [34] and fill (33). The section revealed cut [34] to have a profile consisting of a sharp to perceptible break of slope top and bottom steep to gentle sloping sides and a regular but concave base. [34] contained one fill (33) a slightly compact dark brown sandy silt. The recordable dimensions of this feature were 3.58 m nw-se by 0.4 m ne-sw by 0.3 m deep.

#### **4.9 Trench VIII (Figure 8)**

Excavated in the eastern segment of the assessment area to the north-west of Tr. VII this trench was opened to a length of 10 m on a north-south orientation. No natural was revealed in the base of this trench. This was due to the uncovering of a very hard concrete plinth along the full length of the trench. The plinth was located at a depth of between 0.3 m to 0.66 m. No other archaeological features were discovered in this trench.

#### **4.10 Trench IX (Figure 8)**

Situated to the south of Tr. I in the western part of the assessment area trench IX was opened to a length of 32.50 m on a west-east alignment. Greyish white windblown sands were revealed throughout the base of the trench at depths of between 0.42 m and 0.60 m. Apart from one large archaeological feature (40)/(41)/(42)/[43], which was further investigated, the very ephemeral remains of plough scars were the only other archaeological features in the trench. These were located very close to the western edge of the trench on a nw-se orientation.

##### **■ Feature (40)/(41)/(42)/[43]**

This feature was located in the eastern end of the Tr. IX. Sharply defined as context (40) a 3 m long spread of soft dark brown loam (40) against the greyish white sands to the west and truncated by the edges of the trench on the other three sides. This feature was sectioned by machine. The section revealed a cut [43] which was 2.3 m deep. [43] contained three distinct fills of which (40) was the upper fill, (41) a soft dark brown sandy loam was the middle fill and (42) a soft light greyish brown loamy sand was the lowest fill revealed. The section revealed [43] to have a partial profile cut into the surrounding sands consisting of a non-perceptible break of slope top, gradual sloping sides and what appeared to be the beginnings a non-perceptible break of slope bottom. The base of this feature and the full extents of the break of slope bottom were not revealed because at the recovered depth of 2.3 m water started to rapidly pour into the base of the feature.

#### **4.11 Trench X (Figure 9)**

Situated to the east of Tr. IX and to the south of Tr. II in the western segment of the evaluation area this trench was opened to a length of 23 m on a west-east alignment. Greyish white windblown sands were revealed throughout the base of this trench at an average depth of 0.5 m. No other archaeological features other than four field drains were located within Tr. X. Three of the field drains were filled with ceramic pipes while the fourth was clinker filled. Two of the ceramic pipe field drains were intensely recorded one as (49)/[50] and the second as (51)/[52]/(53)/(54)/(55)/[56] which showed signs of a re-cut. These field drains were comparable to other field drains found within the previous nine trenches.

#### **4.12 Areas Not Covered By This Evaluation (Figure 3)**

A number of segments of the evaluation area were not available for evaluation due to various

mitigating circumstances. These are as follows:

- Throughout the period of the evaluation a large spoil heap of top soil and plough soil, stripped from various areas of the construction site, was situated in the central area highlighted for archaeological evaluation. This area was not evaluated.
- Construction work had already begun on the eastern edges of the archaeological evaluation area. Therefore it was not possible to evaluate this area and this area has been lost for the purposes of archaeological evaluation.
- Accommodation for flight schools and an area used for storage of various goods was situated in the central segment of the evaluation area. This area was not available for evaluation during the work carried out.
- In the western segment of the evaluation area two areas were lost for the purposes of archaeological evaluation. The first was where a electricity sub-station and high voltage cable was situated. This area will not be surveyed for health and safety reasons. The second area further to the west was not evaluated as access to a perimeter gate had to be maintained at all times. This area was not available for evaluation.

## ***5. Artefact Discussion***

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The large majority of the artefacts recovered from this evaluation date from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century through to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Of these the majority of which were recovered from the topsoil (1), the subsoil (2) recovered during the opening of the trenches and unstratified finds recovered during spoil heap survey. The majority of closely investigated features revealed in the assessment trenches also produced 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century artefacts. All together this assemblage of material predominantly consisted of pottery sherds with a small percentage of artefacts from other categories.

Artefacts from all other periods of were very sparsely represented or not represented at all. Organic material was also very poorly represented in the assemblage recovered from this evaluation probably due to the acidic qualities of the soil.

### **5.1 Prehistoric Artefacts**

One small caramel coloured Mesolithic waste flake was recovered from the spoil heap of Tr. III. This was the only Prehistoric artefact recovered from the evaluation.

### **5.2 Romano-British Artefacts**

Two very small and badly abraded undiagnostic sherds of possible Romano-British pottery were recovered from fill (18) in Tr. IV. Although very similar in nature to the late post-Medieval badly abraded brick fragments recovered elsewhere during the evaluation the two fragments from fill (18) are softer in composition which suggests a possible RB date with comparisons to Cheshire Plains Orange Ware. Theses two artefacts were the only artefacts recovered from fill (18) the only fill within the linear feature with [17].

### **5.3 Post-Roman Artefacts**

No Post-Roman Artefacts were recovered from this evaluation.

### **5.4 Medieval Artefacts**

No Medieval artefacts were recovered from this evaluation

## 5.5 Post-Medieval Artefacts

Any omissions of trenches and fills in the section **5.5.2 Stratified Objects** implies that there were no post-Medieval artefacts recovered from those relevant trenches and fills.

### 5.5.1 Artefacts from (1) and (2)

The large majority of all artefacts recovered from contexts (1) and (2) during the opening of each trench consisted of mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery fragments. This pottery assemblage included unglazed earthen wares, dark glazed earthen wares, glazed white earthen wares, pearl wares, cream wares, transfer printed wares, stone wares, marmalade jar and decorated and glazed earthen wares?

Other categories of artefacts included brick, tile, the corroded remains of the blade of a hand sickle, a large horse shoe, an unworked flint cobble and clay pipe stems. The clay pipe stems have been dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries although there may be a very small number of late 18<sup>th</sup> century stems in this assemblage. None of the stems were decorated or stamped.

No context (1) or (2) artefacts were recovered during the opening of Trenches III and VIII.

### 5.5.2 Stratified Artefacts

#### ■ Trench I

(4): Three fragments of late post-Medieval brick were recovered from fill (4).

(11): Two transfer printed sherds and one un-decorated sherd of pearl ware, 2 fragments of brick and 2 undiagnostic iron objects were recovered from fill (11).

(14): Four sherds of transfer printed pearl ware, one fragment of brick, one fragment of industrial waste, one fragment of unglazed earthen ware, 2 fragments of mid/late 19<sup>th</sup> century clay pipe stem and one copper alloy handle were recovered from fill (14).

(15): One sherd of transfer printed pearl ware, one fragment of industrial waste, one fragment of mid/late 19<sup>th</sup> century clay pipe stem and the right and left femur and tibia of a large bos (cow/bull).

(9): One fragment of late post-Medieval brick and 1 fragment of coal were recovered

from fill (9).

(6): One sherd of cream ware, 1 fragment of late post-Medieval brick and one fragment of late 19<sup>th</sup> century clay pipe stem were recovered from fill (6).

■ **Trench III**

(29): two sherds of transfer printed pearl ware, 1 fragment of brick and 2 fragments of late 19<sup>th</sup> century clay pipe stem were recovered from fill (29).

■ **Trench IV**

(22): One fragment of glazed white earthen ware was recovered from fill (22).

■ **Trench V**

(58): Three sherds of transfer printed ware, 1 sherd of pearl ware, 1 sherd of cream ware, 1 sherd of salt glazed ceramic, 1 sherd of dark glazed earthen ware, 1 fragment of glass and 2 fragments of late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century clay pipe were recovered from fill (58). One fragment of clay pipe had the remains of a partial stamp read as “pool”. This can probably be reconstructed to “Liverpool” the local and most likely production centre for this clay pipe.

■ **Trench VI**

(38): two sherds of transfer printed ware, 1 sherd of pearl ware, 1 sherd of dark glazed earthen ware, 1 fragment of glass and 1 fragment of clay pipe stem were recovered from fill (38).

■ **Trench IX**

(40): Three sherds of marmalade jar, 1 sherd of transfer printed ware, 3 sherds of glazed white earthen ware, 1 large sherd of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century stone ware jar were all recovered from fill (40).

(42): One sherd of burnt transfer printed ware and 1 sherd of glazed white earthen ware were recovered from fill (42).

## ■ Trench X

(49): One sherd of cream ware, 1 sherd of transfer printed ware and 1 sherd of glazed white earthen ware were recovered from fill (49).

### 5.5.3 Unstratified Artefacts

Only three sherds of pottery recovered from the spoil heap survey of the trenches pre-date the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The walk over survey of the spoil heap of Tr. I recovered two sherds, including one rim sherd, of 18<sup>th</sup> century dark glazed ware. Both of these sherds belonged to the same vessel. One body sherd of late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century stone ware was recovered from the spoil heap survey of Tr. VI.

The large majority of all other unstratified artefacts recovered from the spoil heap survey consisted of mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery fragments which mirrored the assemblage recovered from contexts (1) and (2). This pottery assemblage included dark glazed earthen wares, glazed white earthen wares, pearl wares, cream wares, transfer printed wares, stone wares and decorated and glazed earthen wares.

Other categories of artefacts from the spoil heap survey included brick, oyster shell, fragments of unworked flint similar in nature and colour to the flake recovered from the spoil heap of Tr. III and clay pipe. The large majority of the clay pipe has been dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, however there appears to be a very small number of late 18<sup>th</sup> century stems within the clay pipe assemblage. No marked clay pipe stems were recovered and no complete bowls were recovered.

No artefacts were recovered from the spoil heap surveys of Trenches VIII and X.

## ***6. Interpretation***

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The paucity of artefacts from all periods excluding the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries coupled with the relative dearth of archaeological features witnessed in the trenches makes an interpretation of any periods other than the very late post-medieval period difficult to obtain. The interpretations and observations for the periods highlighted below, other than the very late post-Medieval, are made in conjunction with other excavations carried out in the immediate vicinity of Speke.

### **6.1 Prehistoric Period**

The single Mesolithic waste flake retrieved from the spoil heap of Tr. III would appear to fall into the pattern of a low density spread of evidence for Mesolithic activity already defined for this part of the Mersey coastal plain. Field work carried out by Liverpool University and excavations carried out by Liverpool Museum Field Archaeology Section (LMFAS) on land immediately to the north of the evaluation area have recovered similar small caramel coloured waste flakes and other flints dating to the Mesolithic as well as Neolithic and Bronze Age.

This low density spread of Mesolithic flint may be indicative of intermittent hunter gatherer exploitation of this part of the Mersey coastal plain with the possibility of a more permanent settlement along the coast to the south-east at Oglet.

### **6.2 Romano-British Period**

Interpreted as isolated artefacts within their own context and also due to their very abraded nature it is difficult to prescribe any great importance to the two possible sherds of Romano-British pottery recovered from the linear feature (18)/[17] in Tr. IV. However, viewed in light of evidence recovered from land in the immediate vicinity of the evaluation area these sherds and therefore the feature from which they were recovered add to the growing corpus of evidence that there was a settlement somewhere close to this locale during the Romano-British period.

The 52 sherds of certain/probable Romano-British pottery recovered from the field immediately to the north of the evaluation area along with the probable sherd of Romano-British pottery from the Northern Airfield evaluation suggests a high probability for a settlement in the area. The fact that the two probable sherds from this evaluation were recovered from a stratified context close to the high density recovery from the field to the north would appear to suggest that they possibly lie on the very edge of the Romano-British settlement. The nucleus of this settlement that may

lie to the east and to the north of Tr. IV.

### **6.3 Post-Roman Period**

The lack of Post-Roman artefacts, or the identification of Post-Roman artefacts, is not an unusual occurrence from evaluations and excavations carried out in the Mersey basin. This may be due to a virtually a-ceramic society that, following the collapse of the Roman economic system with the withdrawal of the Roman Military from the area, replaces the preceding society and culture.

Thus virtually no pottery from this period is present to be recovered through limited archaeological evaluations, organic materials do not survive particularly well in the surrounding acidic soils and the effect of this is to make the identification of Post-Roman settlements very difficult. Therefore no interpretation and conclusion for the Post-Roman period can be drawn from this evaluation.

### **6.4 Medieval Period**

The lack of any material easily dated to the Medieval period from this evaluation would appear to suggest a lack of any settlement or even Medieval activity in this area. This may be surprising considering the close proximity of Speke Hall to the evaluation area. However this parcel of land may have been lightly wooded throughout the Medieval period, as witnessed by the tree boles revealed in the bottom of a number of the trenches. The Northern Airfield evaluation carried out by LMFAS in the autumn 1997 recovered a small number of Medieval and early Post-Medieval sherds which may suggest the possibility of open fields or pasture land being situated to the North and West of Speke Hall closer to the Medieval village of Speke and not in the location of the evaluated area.

### **6.5. Post-Medieval Period**

The of lack easily datable Post-Medieval material up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century from this evaluation may show a continuation of the possible woodland from the Medieval period. It is evident from the earliest large scale cartographic evidence that the land on which the present evaluation was carried out had become a system of purposefully laid out fields by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 10). The few sherds of late 18<sup>th</sup> century pottery may represent accidental accumulation of material through manuring of the fields. This form of accumulation happens with material thrown onto rubbish heaps containing organic waste and manure which is subsequently spread on the fields

as fertiliser thus transporting the non-organic waste on to the fields as a by product. Much of the unstratified 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century material has probably been transported into the area in much the same way.

### **6.5.1 Field Boundaries (Figures 3 and 10)**

Of the features associated with the late post-Medieval period (31)/[32] and (13)/[61] from Tr. I and (40)/(41)/(42)/[43] from Tr. IX appear to represent part of the complex of field boundaries as witnessed on the cartographic evidence. (13)/[61] and (40)/(41)/(42)/[43] are in fact part of the same field boundary on a sw-ne trajectory which is still visible in the land to the north of the evaluation area. Figure 10 clearly shows that the western segment of the evaluation area overlaps an intersection between two field boundaries. It would appear from this evidence that [61]/[43] is the sw-ne oriented field boundary that appears on this map. From this it may be extrapolated that (31)/[32] is a section over the nw-se field boundary.

It is possible that as the progress for more efficient forms of farming continued through the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century field boundaries were removed or backfilled to create larger fields. This factor may explain the backfilling of (31)/[32] but the considerably larger field boundary [43]/[61] was probably backfilled during the creation of the modern airfield. As witnessed by the relatively recent pottery recovered from it's upper fill (40).

### **6.5.2 Field Drains**

The features with cuts [19]/[21], [24] and [26] all from Tr. IV, [39] from Tr. VI and [50] and [52]/[56] from Tr. X have all been interpreted as field drains. This is interesting considering that the perceived to be easy draining windblown sands were revealed in all of the trenches.

It may be possible that by the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century the fields were not as fast draining and dry as they needed to be to accommodate the rising intensity of the agricultural activity on the land. Therefore a series of field drains were cut through the fields to accommodate the draining of the land. It would appear from the technology and materials involved in the construction of these field drains that the three sandstone built field drains in Tr. IV and the collapsed sandstone field drain in Tr. VI are the earliest in the series of field drains. The ceramic pipe and clinker filled drains appear to be later constructs.

Features [30] in Tr. III, [60] in Tr. V and [34] in Tr. VII may all be field drains as well as they appear similar in nature to the other series of field drains but due to limitations inherent in this evaluation no obvious drain construct was found. All of these features were also late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century in date.

### 6.5.3 Late Post-Medieval Pits

Four late 19<sup>th</sup> century pits, (4)/(5)/[3], (11)/[12], (14)/(15)/[16] and (9)/(10), were located within the western end of Tr. I. They appear to represent slightly more intense activity in this area during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century than throughout the rest of the evaluated area although there is no strong evidence to suggest their purpose.

The right and left femur and tibia of a bos from pit (14)/(15)/[16] are of some interest. These bones were obviously articulated when they were buried and the reason why fill (15) was only found around the bones may be due to the decomposition of the flesh still attached to the bones after burial. Comparisons with average sized bos bones of both a cow and a buffalo have shown that the bones recovered from [16] are well above the average size for a large bull and may represent the remains of a particularly large and sturdy bull. The remains may have belonged to a bull specifically bred for show and for stud as can be seen in numerous paintings of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. These bulls were generally bred for their impressive size and as can be seen in the paintings of the time the bull usually dwarfed the person leading it. The reason for their burial in this way and in this situation is enigmatic.

### 6.6 20<sup>th</sup> Century Features

20<sup>th</sup> century features were encountered in Tr. I (6)/(7)/[8] which was a pipe trench and Tr. V (57)/[58] which appears to possibly be a large pipe trench. Both of these features would appear to be associated with the construction of the present airfield.

## *7. Conclusion*

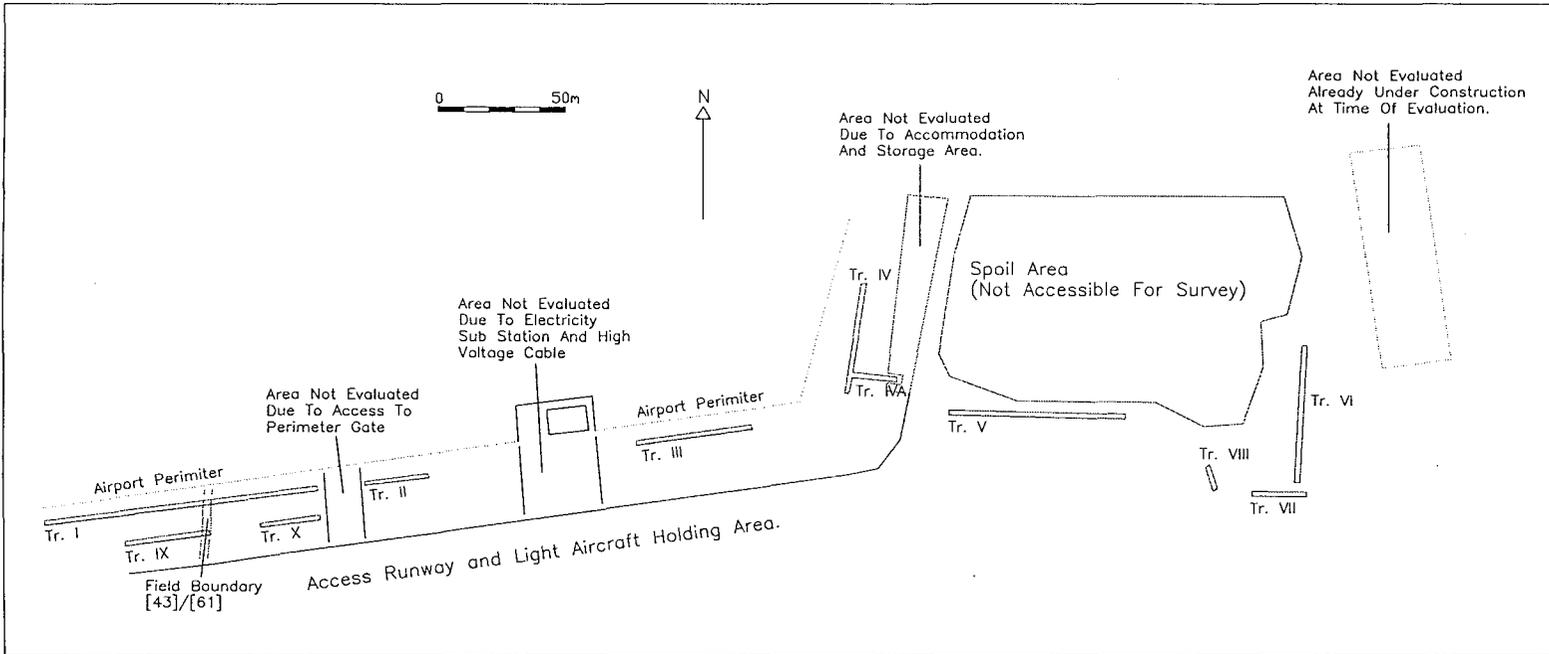
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The relative dearth of finds from all periods, except the very late Post-Medieval period, suggests very little or no settlement or focussed human habitation in the landscape covered by this evaluation up to the very late Post-Medieval period.

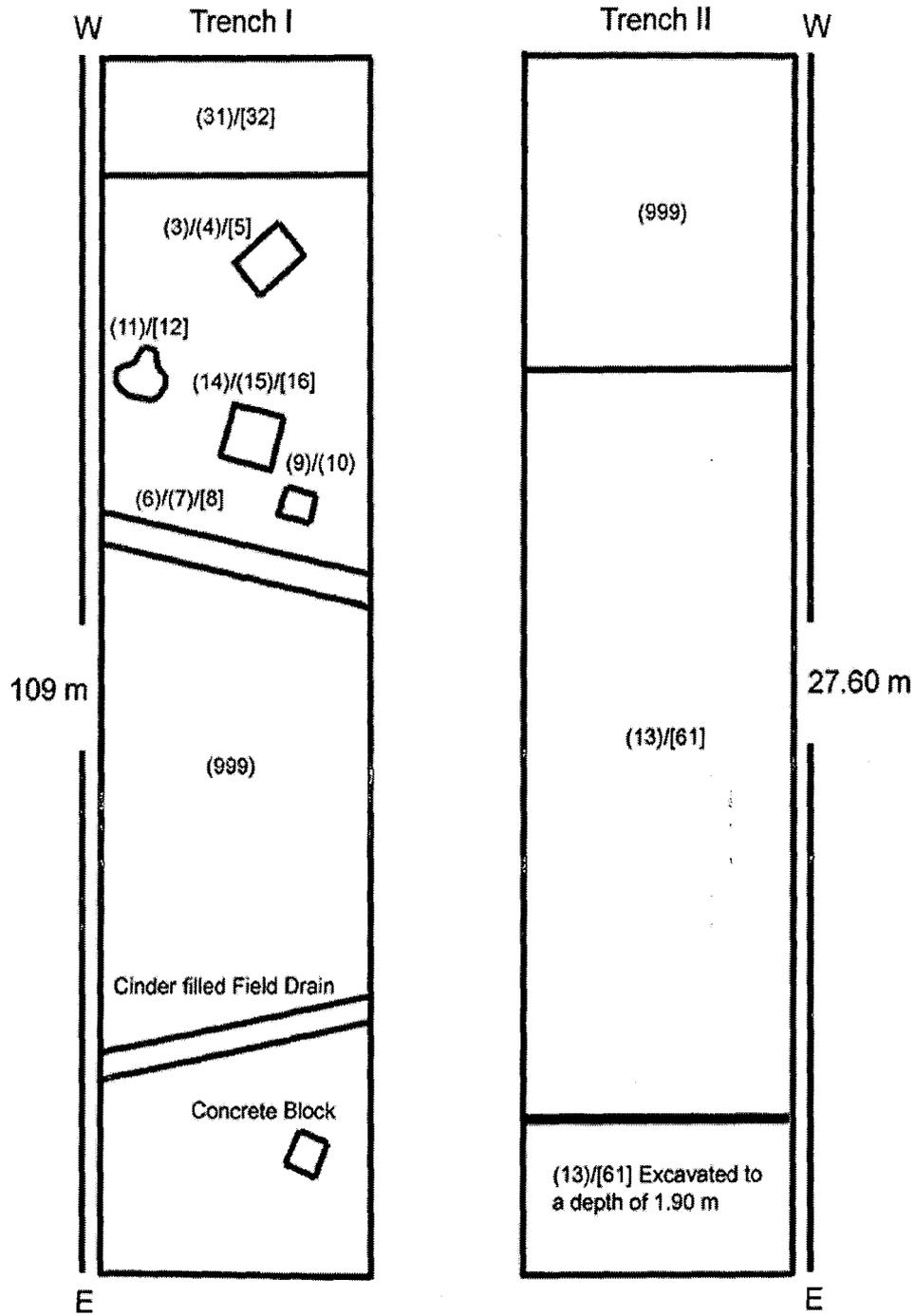
However, the two possible sherds of Romano-British pottery recovered from a stratified context in Tr. IV viewed in conjunction with the larger amount of Romano-British pottery retrieved from field walking directly to the north of the evaluation area may suggest that the nucleus of a Romano-British settlement of some type lies to the east and north of Tr. IV.

The large group of late Post-Medieval features and assemblage of artefacts can all be assigned to the instigation and continuation of the formal field structure in this area possibly laid out some time during in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This continued throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century in changing forms and was replaced by the present airfield in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Figure 3: Trench Locations**

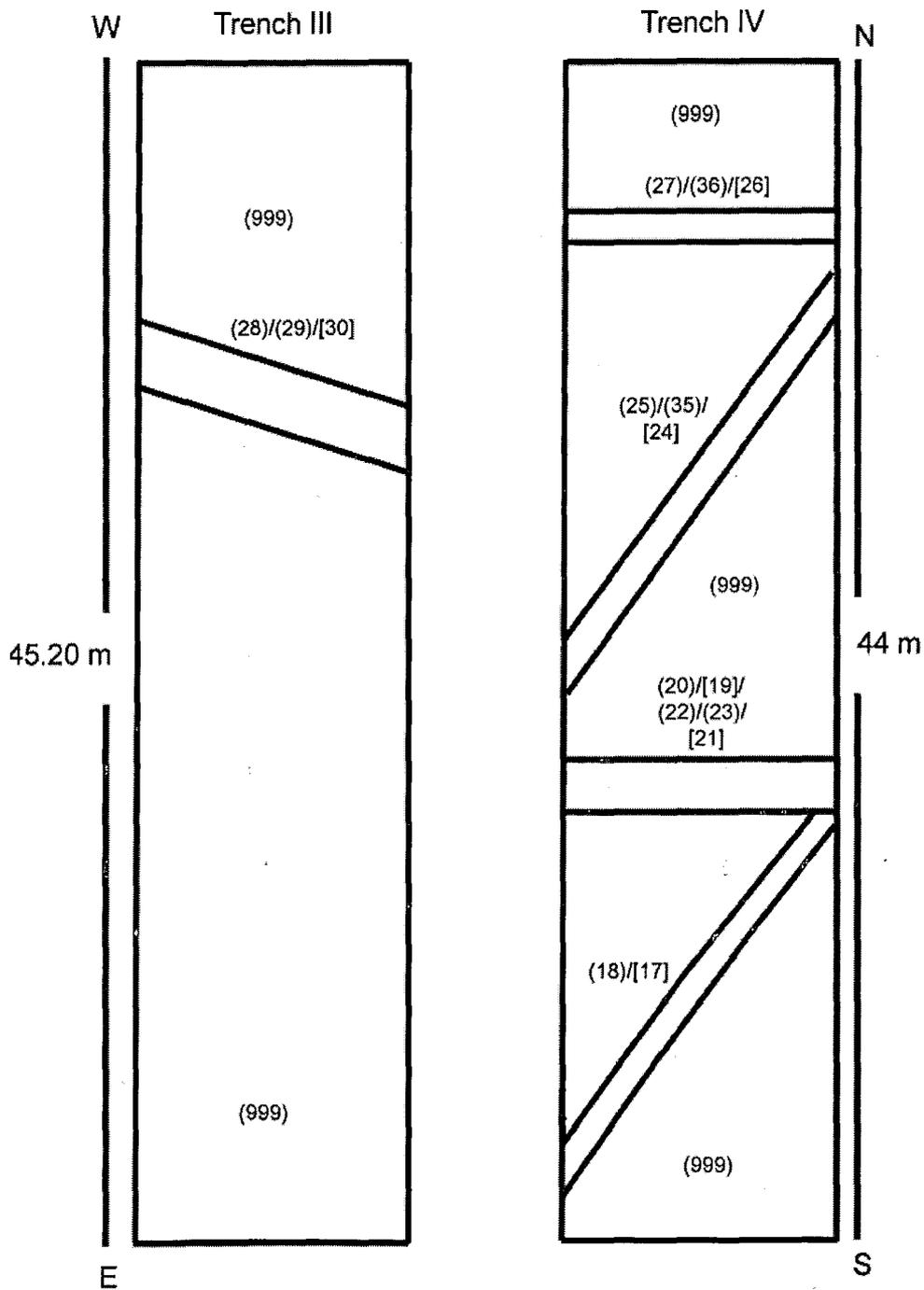


*Figure 4: Trenches I and II*



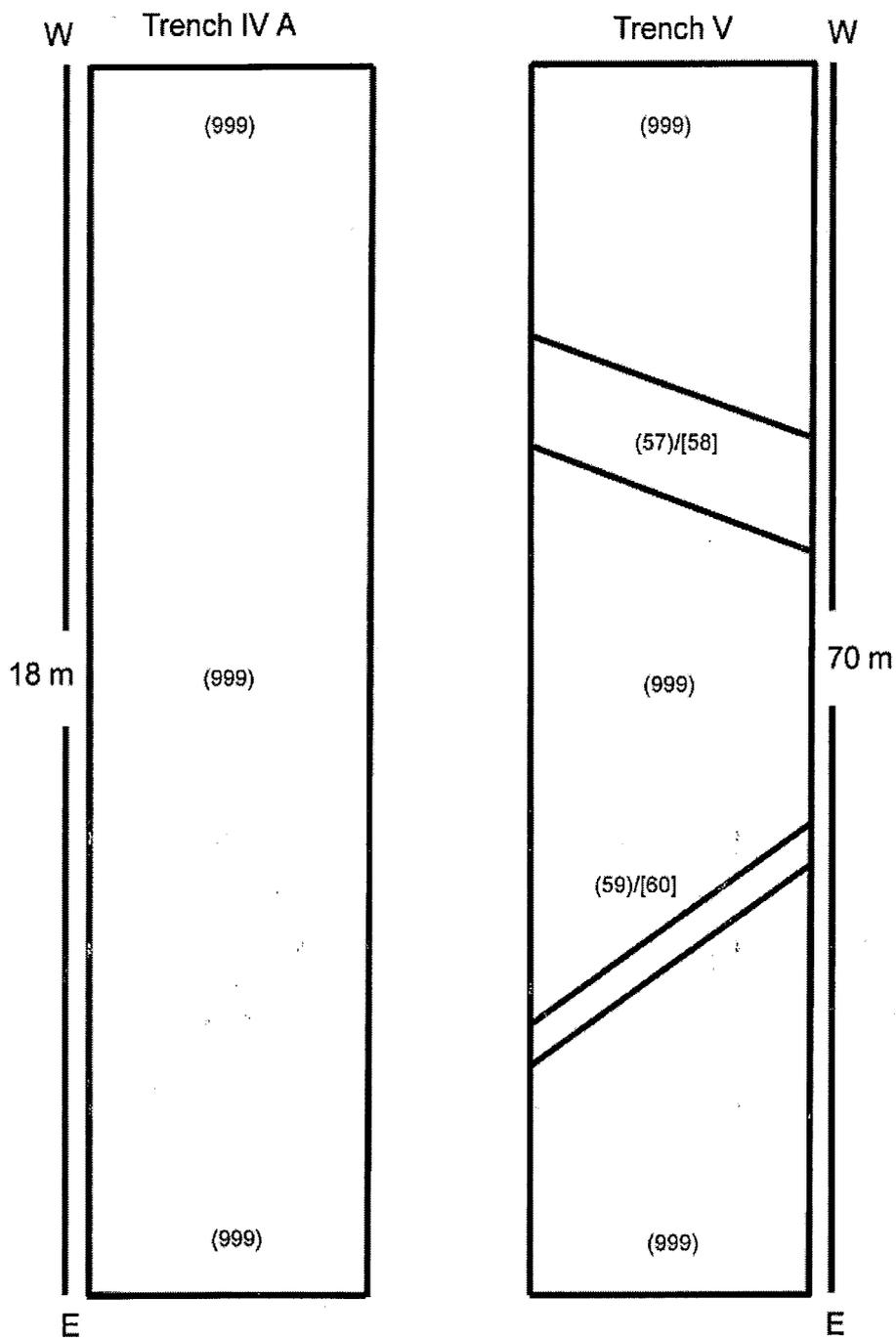
Not To Scale

**Figure 5: Trenches III and IV**



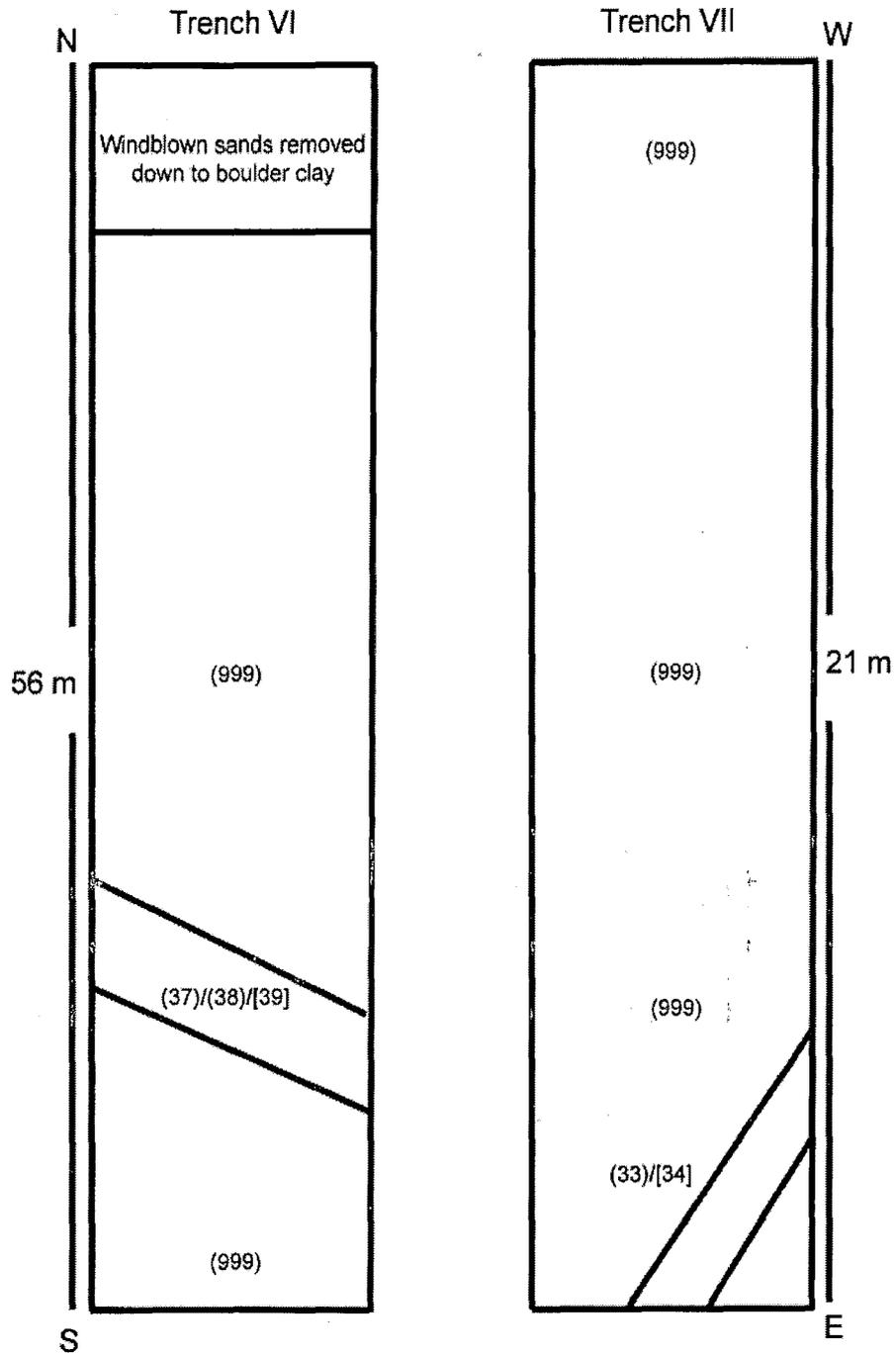
Not To Scale

*Figure 6: Trenches IV A and V*



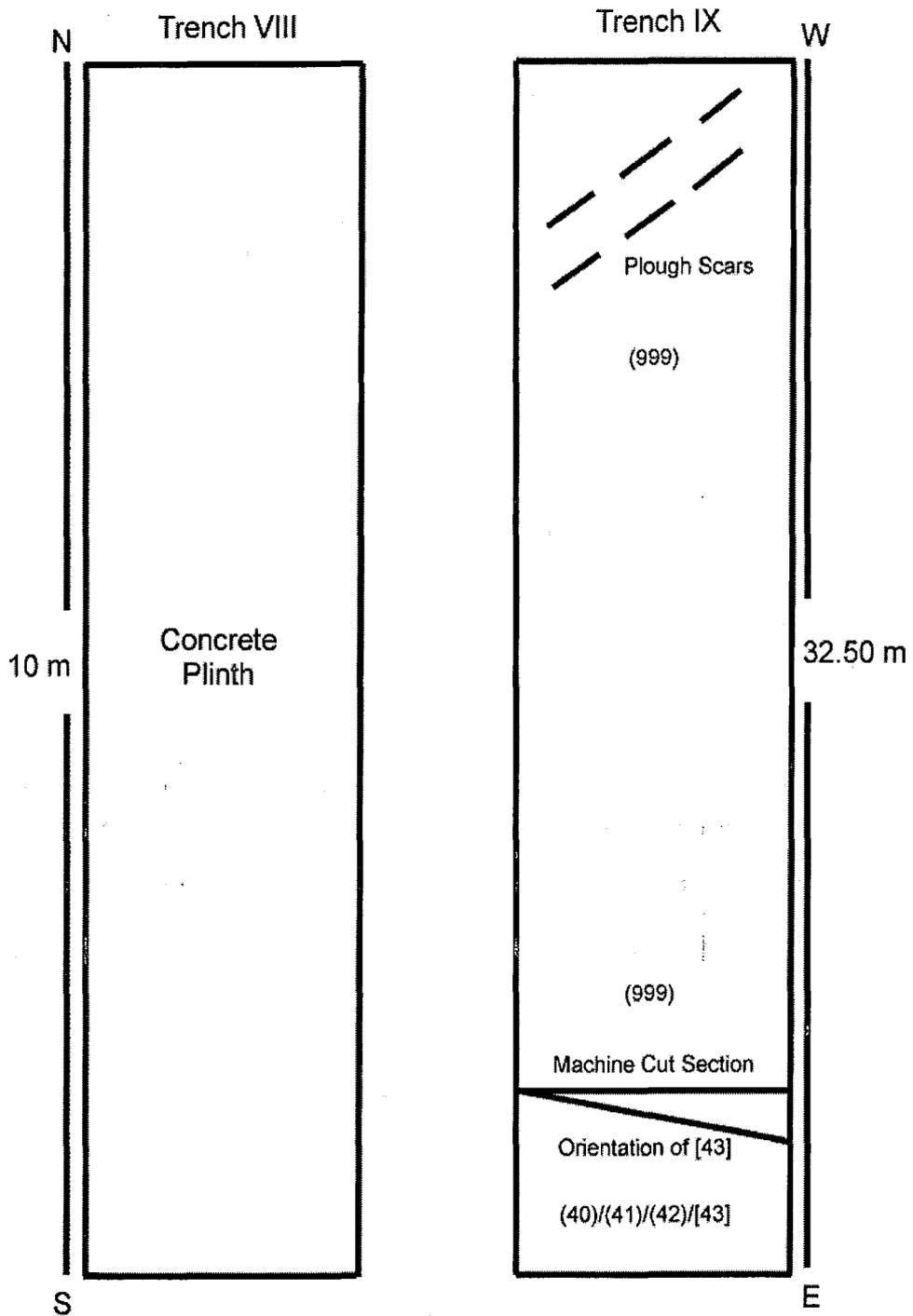
Not To Scale

*Figure 7: Trenches VI and VII*



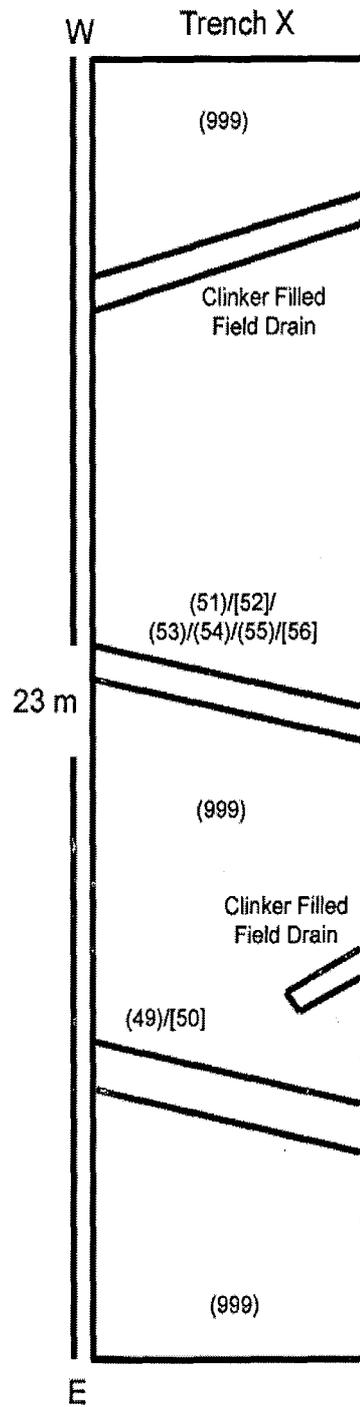
Not To Scale

*Figure 8: Trenches VIII and IX*



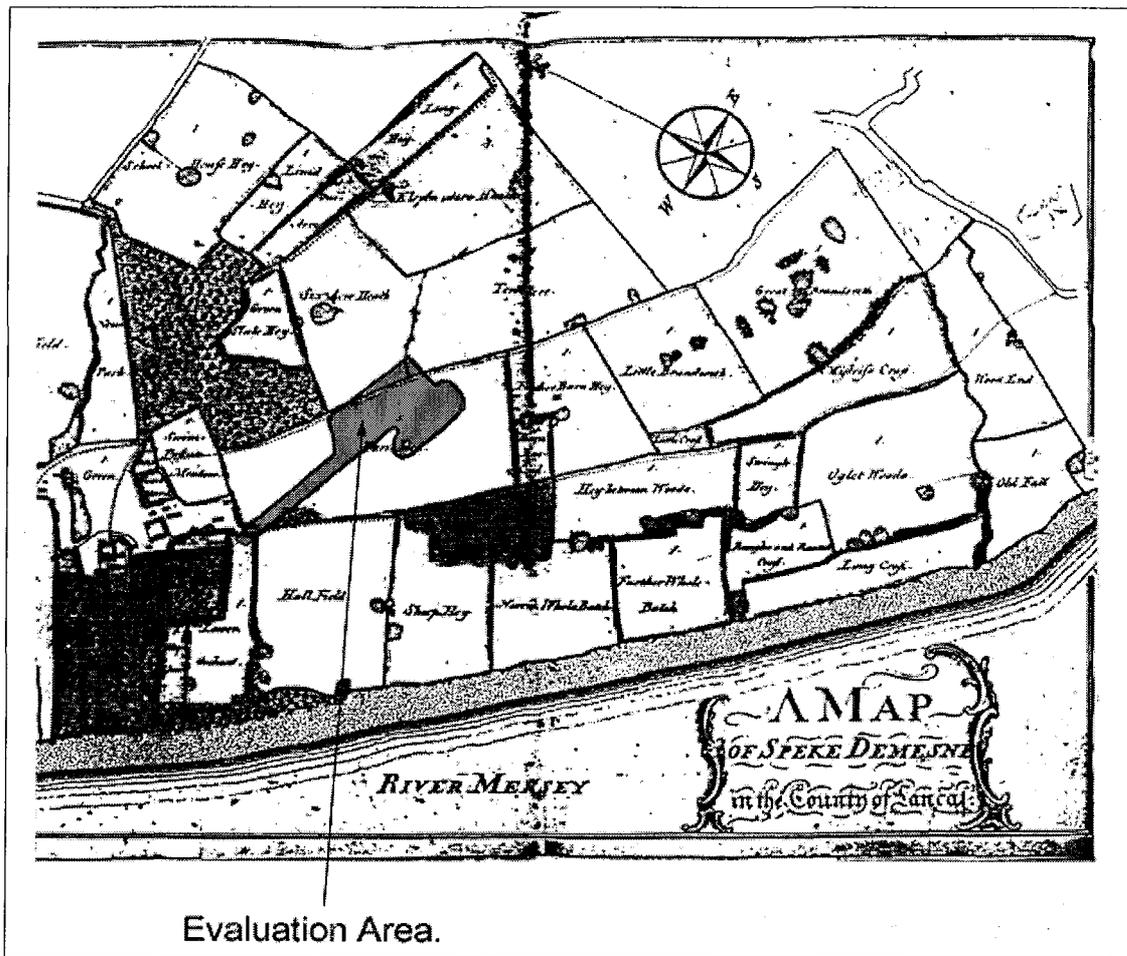
Not To Scale

# Figure 9: Trench X



Not To Scale

# Figure 10: Addison's Map With Overlay



Evaluation Area overlain on to Addison's map of 1781 (Scale approx 1:10 000)