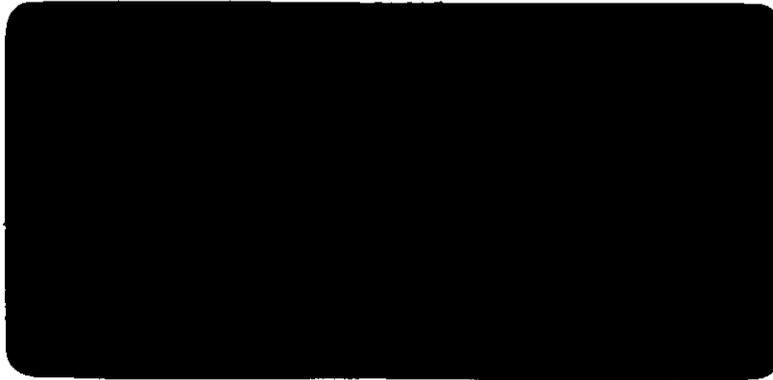


Exeter Archaeology





© Exeter City Council

Economy and Development Directorate

Exeter Archaeology  
Bradninch Place  
Gandy Street  
Exeter EX4 3LS

Tel: 01392 - 265521/2

Fax: 01392 - 425080

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING  
AT SEATON'S GARAGE,  
YEOVIL, SOMERSET**

**by**

**S.J. Reed**

**DRAFT REPORT**

**Exeter Archaeology**

**Report No. 00.45**

**July 2000**

## Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 The site	1
1.2 Background	1
2. Archaeological recording	1
2.1 Method	1
2.2 Results	2
2.3 Finds	3
3. Conclusions	3
3.1 Areas A and B	3
3.2 The southern part of the site	4
Acknowledgements	4
Sources consulted	4
Appendix 1: Finds list	5
Appendix 2: Faunal remains	5

## List of illustrations

Fig. 1 Site location.

Fig. 2 Location of trenches 1-8 and profile.

Fig. 3 Possible extent of Roman 'small town'.

Fig. 4 Plan and section drawings of trenches 2, 3 and 7. Profile.

Plate 1 Roman pit (506) in trench 2. Looking south-east. Scale 2m.

Plate 2 Trench 3 showing ditch 512 and rubble infill 513. Looking north-east. Scale 2m.

Plate 3 View of trench 3 with Scheduled Ancient Monument in background (top left).  
Looking north-east.

Plate 4 Trench 7 showing northernmost ditch 514 and stone layer 519. Looking north-east.  
Scale 0.25m.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of the archaeological monitoring of geotechnical test pits excavated on the site of a proposed development at Seaton's Garage, West Hendford, Yeovil, Somerset (ST 5490 1564) between the 19-21 July 2000. The archaeological work was commissioned by WSP Ltd on behalf of Abbey Manor in advance of the submission of a planning application.

### 1.1 The site (ST 5490 1564)

The site lies within the modern town of Yeovil and is currently occupied by a Ford car dealership. The southern part of the site consists of a garage forecourt, with associated buildings such as workshops occupying the middle part of the site. The northern part of the site is currently being used as a carpark for the storage of new cars and vans; the surface of the carpark comprises compacted stone chippings.

### 1.2 Background

An archaeological assessment of the development area was undertaken by Exeter Archaeology at the request of WSP Ltd in June 2000; this summarised the archaeological background as follows. Adjoining the garage site to the north is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (No. 507), which has been interpreted as a possible small Roman town connected to the Ilchester-Dorchester Roman road (to the west) by a grid of streets. This site was subject to archaeological excavations in 1925 and 1927-8, with further small-scale excavations undertaken in the 1980s. The archaeological deposits encountered consisted of four Roman houses aligned along separate streets. Although the full extent of the town has not been determined, it has been suggested that it covers an area measuring 300m NW-SE by 600m NE-SW, extending into the proposed development site and northward across the residential areas on either side of Westland Road (Fig. 3). Excavations to the south of the proposed development site, and in Horsey Lane to the south-east, have not exposed any Roman deposits.

Evidence of earlier Iron Age activity in the immediate area is represented by the chance find of a gold torc at Hendford Hill, which lies to the east, and the presence of three iron arrowheads associated with a stone hearth sealed beneath the Roman deposits within the Scheduled area itself.

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

### 2.1 Method

Eight trenches were excavated within the carpark area at the north end of the garage site to determine the nature of the underlying subsoil and its suitability for construction. The location of trenches 1-6 was determined by the operators, WSP Environmental, and of trenches 7-8 by Exeter Archaeology. The trenches were dug using a wheeled excavator utilising a 0.6m wide toothless bucket. They were excavated through the overburden of stone hardcore laid for the carpark and to a maximum depth of 2.8m. All the trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision, with the upper layers of stratigraphy being removed in spits of 5cm until archaeological deposits or sterile *in situ* natural subsoil was encountered. Once *in situ* natural ground was encountered, the trenches were excavated to the surface of the underlying weathering bedrock, Mercia Mudstone, which was found to lie at a depth of between 2.1m and 2.8m.

Stratigraphic information was recorded on standard Exeter Archaeology context record sheets and features were drawn in plan and section at scales of 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate. A photographic record was also compiled consisting of black-and-white prints and colour transparencies. Finds were bagged and labelled according to context.

## 2.2 Results

### *Trench 1*

Excavation of this trench revealed that the stone hardcore had been laid directly onto the existing topsoil, a compacted black clayey silt (501) containing 19th-century pottery. This soil horizon was also encountered in trenches 2, 3, 7 and 8. Beneath this layer, at a depth of 0.5m, was the yellowish-brown clay weathered *in situ* subsoil. Mercia Mudstone bedrock was encountered at 2.1m below ground level. No archaeological features were encountered within this trench.

### *Trench 2* (Fig. 4, Plate 1)

Excavation of this trench revealed 0.25m of stone hardcore over 0.25m of black clayey silt (503), similar to the soil horizon observed in trench 1 and dated by pottery to the 19th century. Sealed beneath this soil was a lower soil horizon (505), which consisted of a grey clayey silt with brown mottling. This in turn sealed an infilled pit (506), which contained large sandstone blocks up to 0.3m in diameter. The pit had been cut 0.55m into the clay subsoil and measured 1.6m wide east-west. However its full extent could not be determined within the scope of these excavations. The base of the pit lay 1.5m below the surface of the carpark. On the south side of the trench the base of the pit rose up, suggesting its southern edge lay just outside the excavations. The pit fill (504) consisted of a dark grey-black silty clay containing sherds of Roman pottery dating from the late 3rd/early 4th centuries AD. Butchered bone fragments were also recovered (see Appendix 2).

The soil horizon 505 and the underlying pit fill 504 had been disturbed by a land drain, cutting from the surface of 505 and running north-west to south-east. The fill of this drain (508) consisted of a mixture of contexts 505 and 504.

### *Trench 3* (Fig. 4; Plates 2–3)

Excavations revealed the presence of a ditch (512) cut into the clay subsoil, measuring 0.9-1m wide, 0.38-0.5m deep and oriented north-east to south-west. It contained pottery dating from the late 3rd/early 4th centuries AD. The ditch itself had been deliberately partially infilled by the dumping of sandstone blocks (513), which appeared to have been pushed into the ditch from the north side. These blocks were up to 0.5m in length but generally less than 4cm thick. The infilled ditch was sealed by a post-Roman soil horizon (511), which overlay the clay subsoil on either side of the ditch cut. This in turn lay beneath a compacted topsoil similar to that observed in trenches 1, 2, 7, and 8.

### *Trench 4*

The excavations revealed 0.47m of stone hardcore for the carpark directly overlying weathered *in situ* clay subsoil; Mercia Mudstone was encountered at 2.1m below ground level. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were encountered.

**Trench 5**

In this trench the stone hardcore directly overlay *in situ* clay subsoil at a depth of 0.6m below ground level. No archaeological features or artefacts were encountered.

**Trench 6**

This was located 3m from the northern boundary of the proposed site, and the Scheduled Ancient Monument. The stone hardcore directly overlay *in situ* clay subsoil at a depth of 0.46m. No archaeological features or artefacts were encountered.

**Trench 7 (Fig. 4; Plate 4)**

This trench was located 34m to the west of trench 6, and 2m from the northern boundary of the site. Here, archaeological deposits survived in the form of two ditches (514 and 516) cut into the clay subsoil. The northernmost ditch (514) measured 0.85m wide and 0.38m deep. Its fill (515) contained a fragment of Roman roof tile and a possible Neolithic flint blade. Another ditch (516) ran parallel to 514, some 0.4m to the south, but contained no finds.

To the north of ditch 514 a layer of stones (519), similar in character to those encountered in trench 3, was exposed. There did not appear to be any structure to the stones within the somewhat limited exposure afforded by the excavation.

All these features were sealed by a dark grey-black compact clay layer (518), 0.4m thick, probably representing the 19th century soil recorded in trenches 1, 2, 3 and 8. However, there was no evidence of the post-Roman soil development observed in trenches 2 and 3.

**Trench 8**

Excavations revealed similar deposits to those exposed in trench 1 to the west. About 0.4m of stone hardcore lay over a compacted black clayey silt (with a strong oil/petrol odour). *In situ* clay subsoil was encountered at 0.7m below ground level. No archaeological features or artefacts were present.

**2.3 Finds (see Appendix 1)**

A total of 66 pottery sherds were recovered from the test trenches. With the exception of those from contexts 501 and 503, all dated from between the late 3rd and early 4th centuries AD. Two struck lithics were recovered during the excavations, including a possible Neolithic blade (3500-2000BC) from ditch 514.

**3. CONCLUSIONS**

Archaeological recording has demonstrated the survival of some Roman deposits within the site. The initial indications from this exercise are that the level of preservation is highest in the north-west corner of the site, with some features in the northern part of the site. There seems to be a decrease in activity southwards, away from the known focus of the site. It is possible therefore that we are looking at remains on the fringe of the Roman settlement. The evidence from the present investigation is indicative of domestic occupation in the later Roman period, although no structural evidence was found within the areas examined.

**3.1 Preservation of deposits: Areas A and B (Fig. 2)**

Based on observations of the test pits 1-8, the northern part of the proposed development site can be divided into two areas of archaeological potential, Areas A and B.

**Area A**

Occupying the north-eastern corner of the site, trenches 1-3 and 8 have shown the survival of a 19th/20th-century soil upon which the carpark has been constructed. The presence of this soil horizon indicates that the area has been subjected to minimal disturbance in the form of terracing or levelling for the carpark, and this is confirmed by the survival of a post-Roman soil development over the features. The potential for the survival of stratified *in situ* archaeological deposits and features within this area must therefore be regarded as high, as demonstrated in trenches 2, 3 and 7.

**Area B**

Occupying the northern part of the carpark area, trenches 4, 5 and 6 have indicated some degree of terracing to produce a level area for the carpark (see profile on Fig. 4). The *in situ* topsoil and the underlying post-Roman soil have been removed prior to the construction of the carpark. The stone hardcore in each of these trenches has been laid directly onto the clay subsoil, and no overburden of residual topsoil survived in any of these trenches. However, given the presence of cut features in trenches 2, 3 and 7 there is still the potential for the survival of, albeit truncated, features such as pits, ditches and wall foundation trenches within this area.

**3.2 The southern part of the site**

No archaeological investigations were undertaken across the southern part of the site (south of the main carpark to the rear of Seaton's Garage). As such, the potential for the survival of archaeological deposits in this area cannot be assessed within the scope of this report. However, while these areas have been subjected to disturbance through construction of the workshops and showrooms (the construction of building foundations, excavation for inspection pits, services etc.) it is possible that archaeological features may survive within this area, especially cut features such as pits, ditches and wall foundations. It is, as noted above, anticipated that there would be a diminution of activity southwards towards the main road frontage.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The project was commissioned by WSP Ltd (Exeter) on behalf of Abbey Manor, with the assistance of I. Awcock and D. Mitchell. Thanks are due to C. Buchanan and C. Meek of WSP Environmental for their assistance during the fieldwork. The fieldwork was undertaken by the S.J. Reed, O.J. Bayer and E. Jones. The illustrations were prepared by J. Read. Thanks are also due to L. Higbee for commenting on the faunal remains.

**SOURCES CONSULTED**

Weddell, P.J. 2000 *Archaeological assessment of a proposed redevelopment site at Seaton's Garage, Yeovil, Somerset*, Exeter Archaeology Rep. 00.30.

## APPENDIX 1: FINDS LIST

Site code: SYSG 00

Context	Date	No. of Sherds	Contents/comments
501	19th/20th century	4	2 sherds English China (post 1780), 1 sherd South Somerset coarseware (17C/18C), 1 sherd unclassified coarseware (post 1700), glass bottle fragment (19C/20C).
503	19th century	4	3 sherds English China (19C), 1 sherd Roman residual coarseware.
504	Roman (late 3rd/4th century)	21	Black-burnished ware (cooking pot, L3C/4C, flanged bowl L3C+, plain rimmed dish, L3C/4C), oxidised flagon fabric, mortaria fragment, 1 sherd unclassified coarseware (?Roman/Medieval), Roman tile, ?struck lithic, faunal bone.
509	Roman	37	Black-burnished ware (cooking pot with acute lattice, L3C/4C), amphora/flagon fabric, Roman tile, faunal bone, struck lithic.
515	Roman	-	Roman roof tile fragment, struck lithic.

## APPENDIX 2: FAUNAL REMAINS

Context no.	Description	Comments
504	fragment of calcined indeterminate long bone cattle skull fragment fragments of cattle pelvis cattle teeth and jaw fragments calf metapodial dog humerus and tibia  horse metacarpals sheep metatarsal and tibia  sheep	burnt bone      size of bones suggest a small-sized dog, also shows evidence of rickets butchery marks present unfused bone suggests lamb rather than adult sheep adult long bone fragment
509	cattle tibia horse molar dog canine tooth	butchery marks present

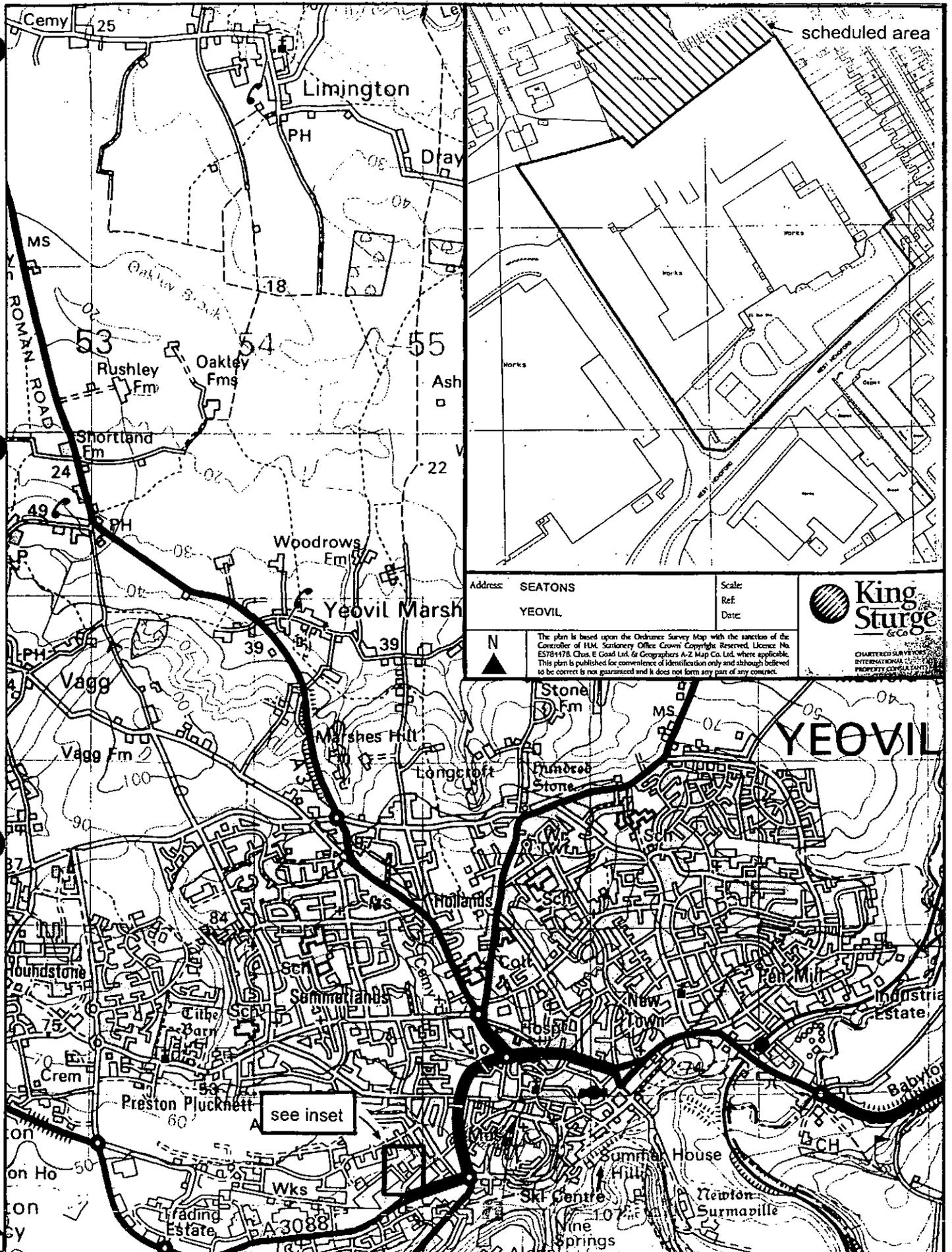
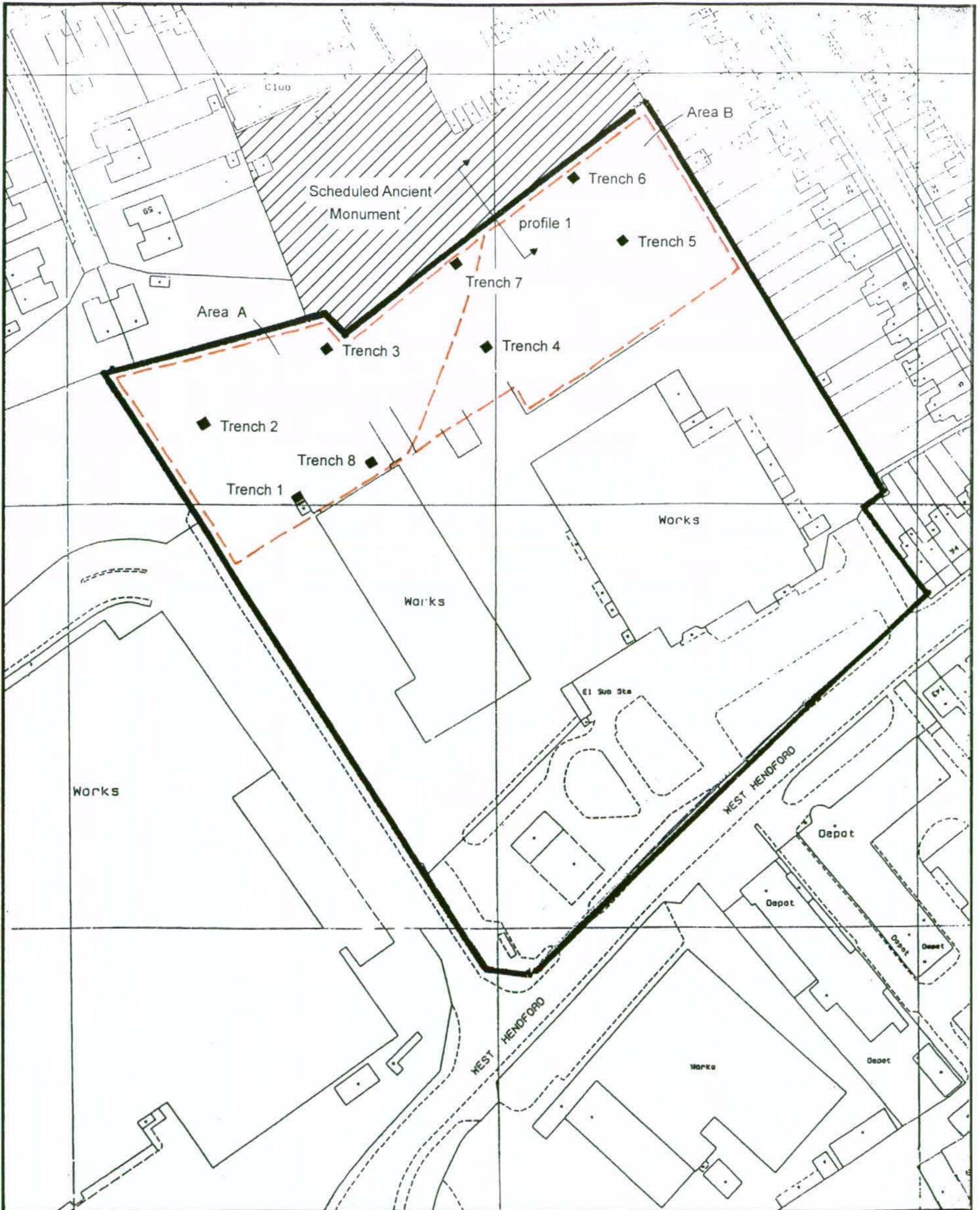


Fig. 1 Site location. Based on 1994 OS 1:50,000 map sheet 183 with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, ©Crown copyright. Licence No. AL 52533A/0001.



Address: SEATONS  
YEOVIL

Scale: 1:1250  
Ref:  
Date:



**King  
Sturge**  
& Co



The plan is based upon the Ordnance Survey Map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office Crown Copyright Reserved, Licence No. ES784478. Chas. E Goad Ltd. & Geographers A-Z Map Co. Ltd. where applicable. This plan is published for convenience of identification only and although believed to be correct is not guaranteed and it does not form any part of any contract.

CHARTERED SURVEYORS  
INTERNATIONAL  
PROPERTY CONSULTANTS

Fig. 2 Location of trenches 1-8 and profile.

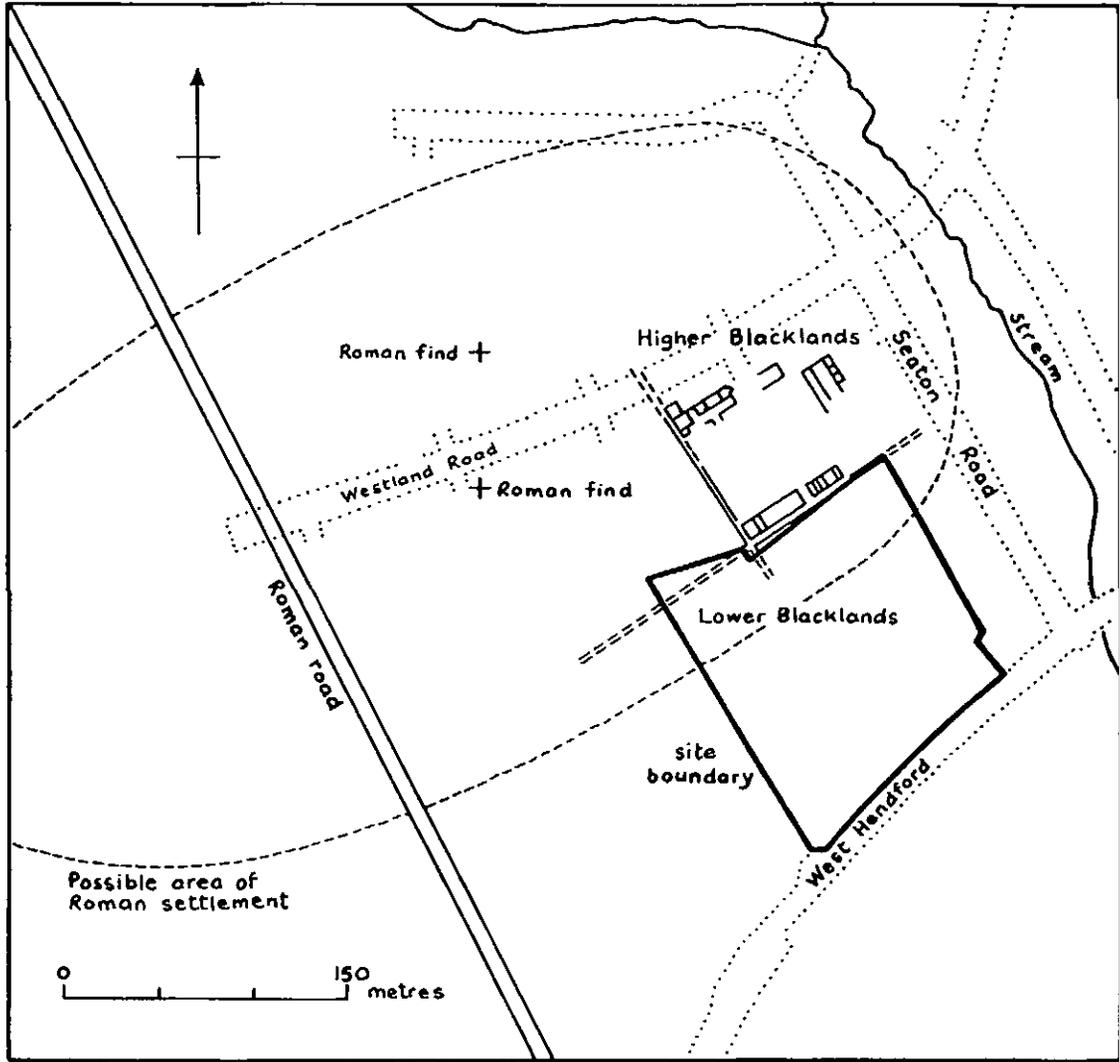


Fig. 3 Possible extent of Roman 'small town' (after Aston 1982).

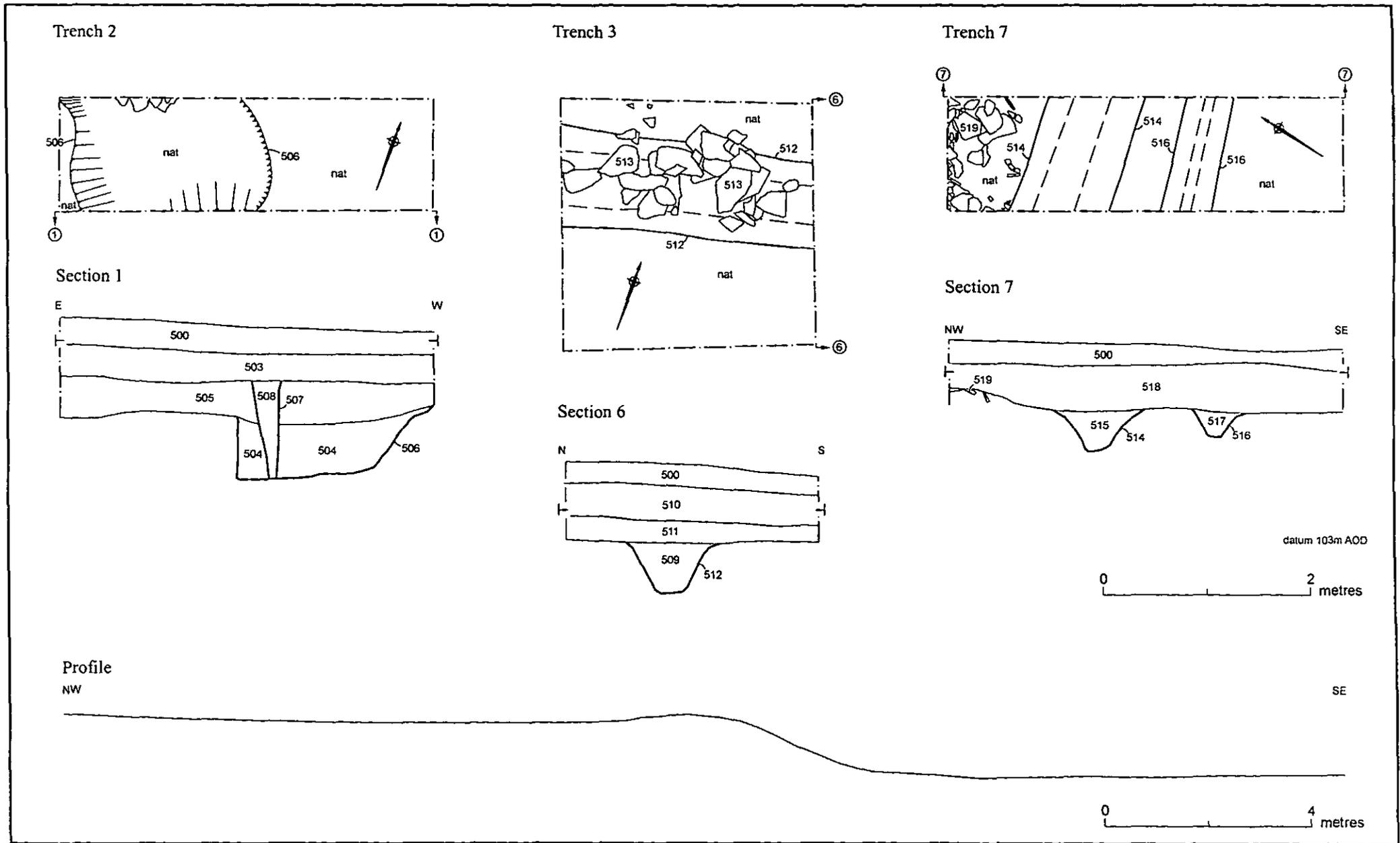


Fig. 4 Plan and section drawings of trenches 2, 3, and 7. Profile.



Plate 1 Roman pit (506) in trench 2. Looking south-east. Scale 2m.



Plate 2 Trench 3 showing ditch 512 and rubble infill 513. Looking north-east. Scale 2m.

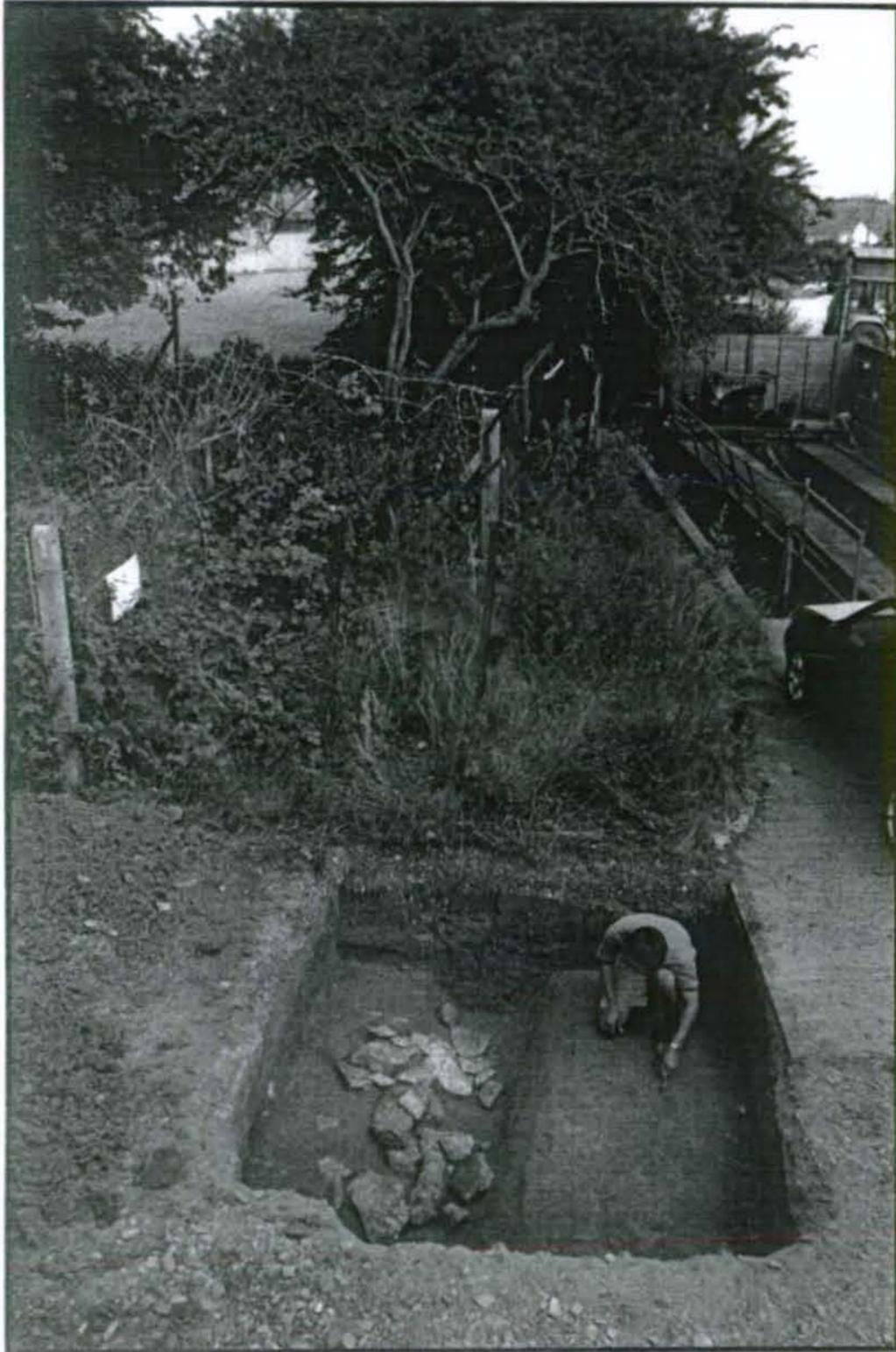


Plate 3 View of trench 3 with Scheduled Ancient Monument in background (top left). Looking north-east.



Plate 4 Trench 7 showing northernmost ditch 514 and stone layer 519. Looking north-east. Scale 0.25m.