

**REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
OF LAND OFF WARNING TONGUE LANE,
BESSACAR, DONCASTER,
SOUTH YORKSHIRE.**

MAY 1994

**S. ATKINSON
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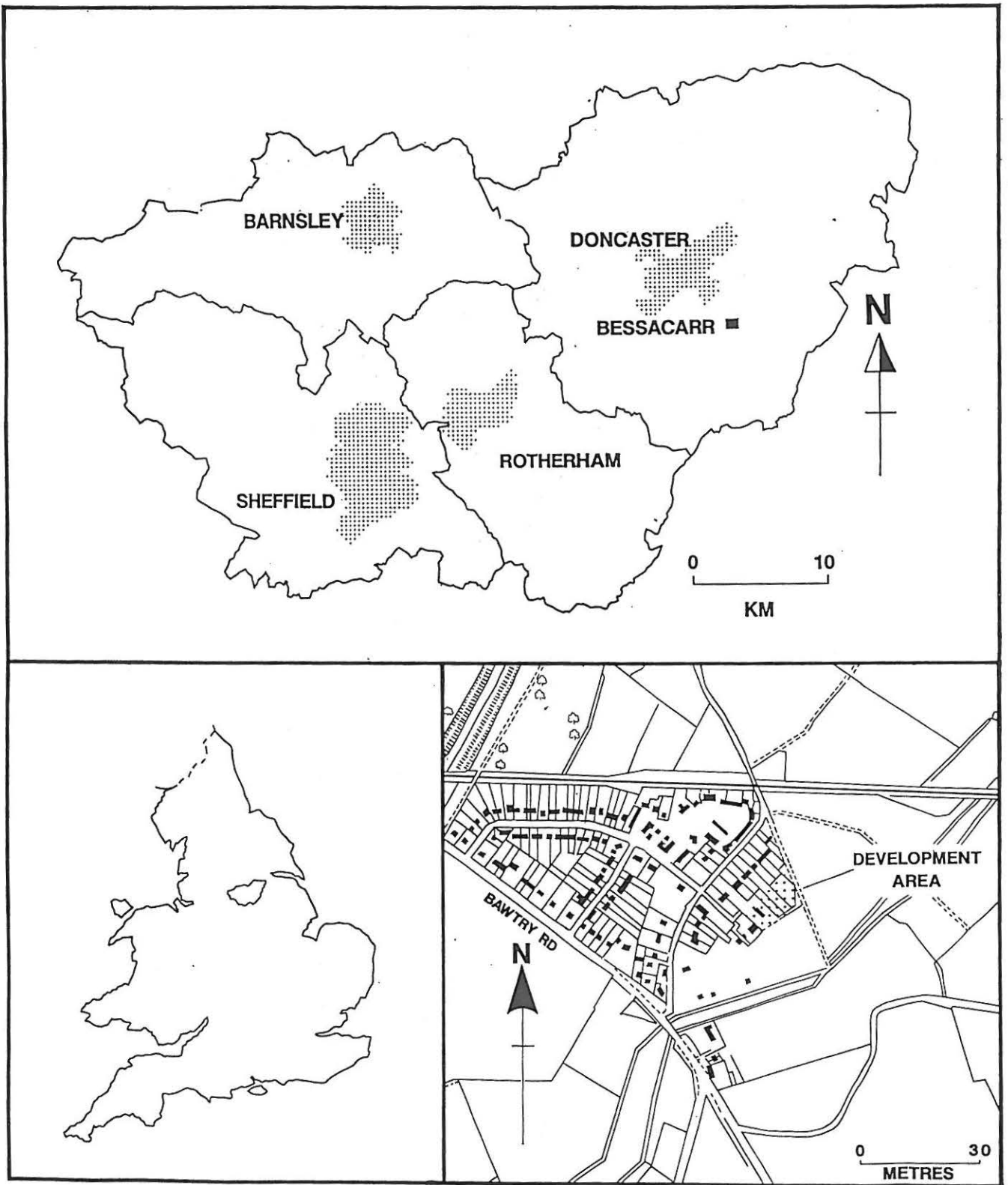


Fig. 1 Site Location

1) INTRODUCTION

1.1) Site Description

The site consists of 1.46 hectares of land behind houses on Warning Tongue Lane, Bessacarr (fig. 1). It is bordered to the north by the gardens of Warning Tongue Lane. To the south and east there is grassland which has been incorporated into the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Rossington Bridge (SY 1108).

The site can be divided into two distinct areas. On the western side is the land which is part of the property of 28 Warning Tongue Lane. This has been used for a relatively long period of time as a builders yard and this shows on the ground, with a significant amount of ground disturbance and dumping. The area is also lightly wooded. The remainder of the site consists of open, level grassed land with no obvious ground disturbance, other than that caused by rabbits. The only obstacle in this area is the presence of a number of bonfires.

The elevation of the site is at between 10 and 15 metres AOD, and the underlying geology is of bunter sandstone. This supports a typical brown sand with gravel. There is a noticeable rise in the centre of the site with the highest point on the eastern edge of the property 28 Warning Tongue Lane.

1.2) Reasons for the evaluation

A successful planning application has been made by the Exors of H. S. Wallis to use the site for a residential development (planning application number 90/21/1725/OTL P). This will involve the construction of 19 dwelling houses with associated garages. The access road will enter into the centre of the site through what is now the property of 28 Warning Tongue Lane. The development will inevitably cause the destruction of any archaeological remains on the site. This will be as a result of the construction of the access road, excavation of foundation trenches and the use of heavy machinery on site.

The site is within an area of known archaeological importance (fig. 2), particularly in terms of the Roman occupation of Doncaster and the surrounding area (see next section). As a result of this a condition of the planning permission was that provision be made for the archaeological investigation of the site prior to the start of the development work. The developers involved in the site (G. A. Mell Builders) agreed to fund an initial archaeological evaluation of the site as a fulfilment of this condition.

2) PREVIOUS WORK

The area around Rossington Bridge is of well established archaeological significance. Central to this is the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SY 1108) located immediately east of the development site, and bordered to the south by Mother Drain. This is the location of a complex of Roman pottery kilns dated to the 2nd century onwards. Together with other kilns located at Cantley, Auckley and Blaxton they form one of

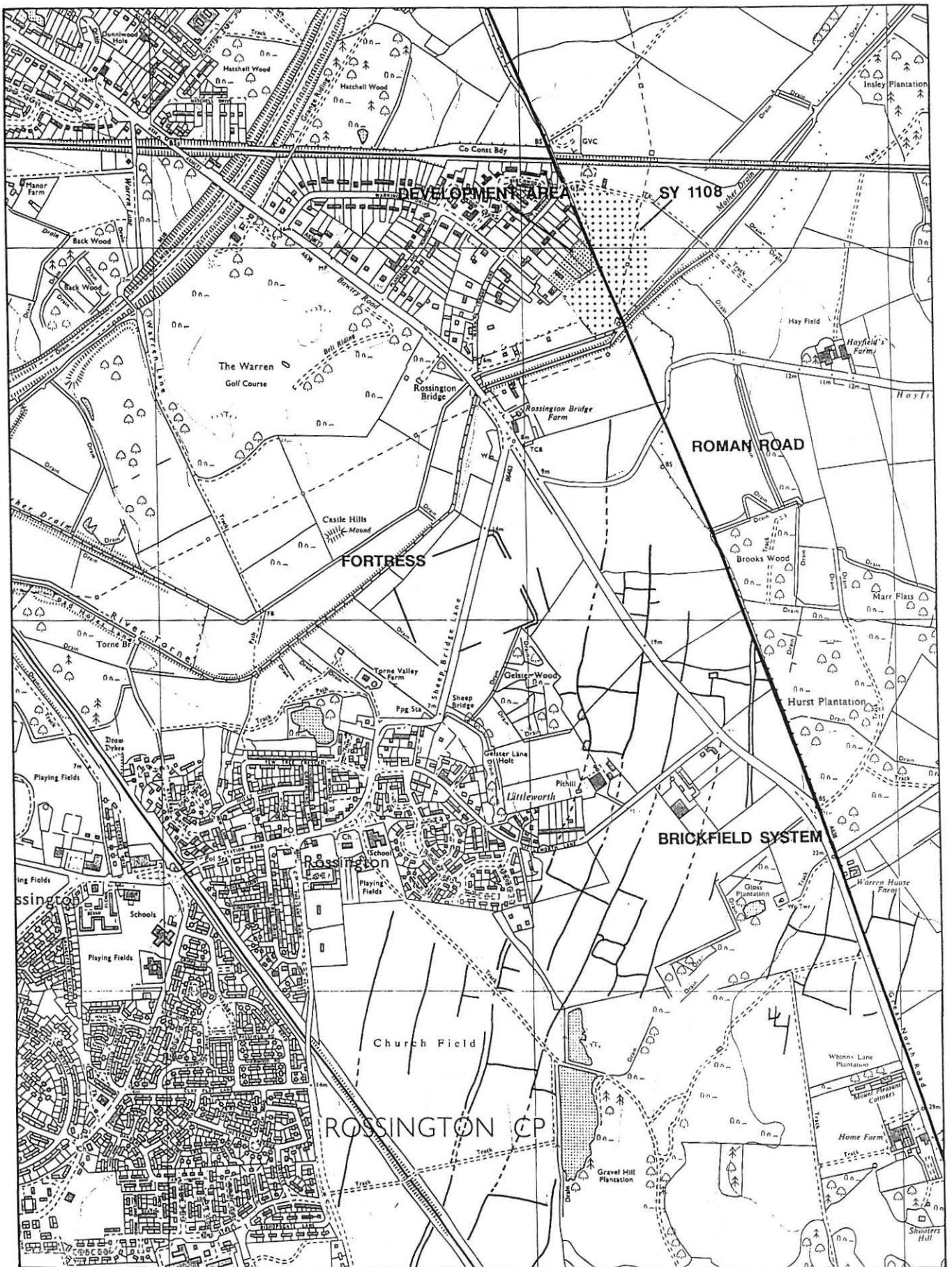


Fig. 2 Surrounding Archaeology

the largest concentrations of Roman pottery kilns known in the country. The Rossington Bridge site is of particular importance because of the nature of the deposits in the vicinity of Mother Drain and the River Torne. These are waterlogged (though some desiccation has taken place in recent years) and this has led to the preservation of organic remains. The Roman Road into Doncaster from Lincoln also passes through the area. It followed the route of the present Great North Road (A638) up to Hurst Plantation where it continued in a straight line rather than diverting to the west as the present road does. The Roman Road passes between the Scheduled site and the area of concern for this evaluation. It may be that the accessibility of the area, on the junction of the road and the River Torne made it suitable for the development of Roman industry.

To the south of Rossington there is an extensive landscape of known archaeology. This has been identified by aerial photography (D.N. Riley 1980). An area of brickfield ancient field system exists in the area of Littleworth and Gelster Wood. These have not been dated accurately but are believed to be Iron Age/Romano-British. They represent the organised use of the landscape for agricultural purposes. The site of a pre-Flavian vexillation fortress of the 1st century AD has also been identified in this area, straddling the present Sheep Bridge Lane (B6463). The demands of the troops which would have been stationed there may also have contributed to the development of a pottery industry in the area.

2.1) Archaeological evaluation at Warning Tongue Lane

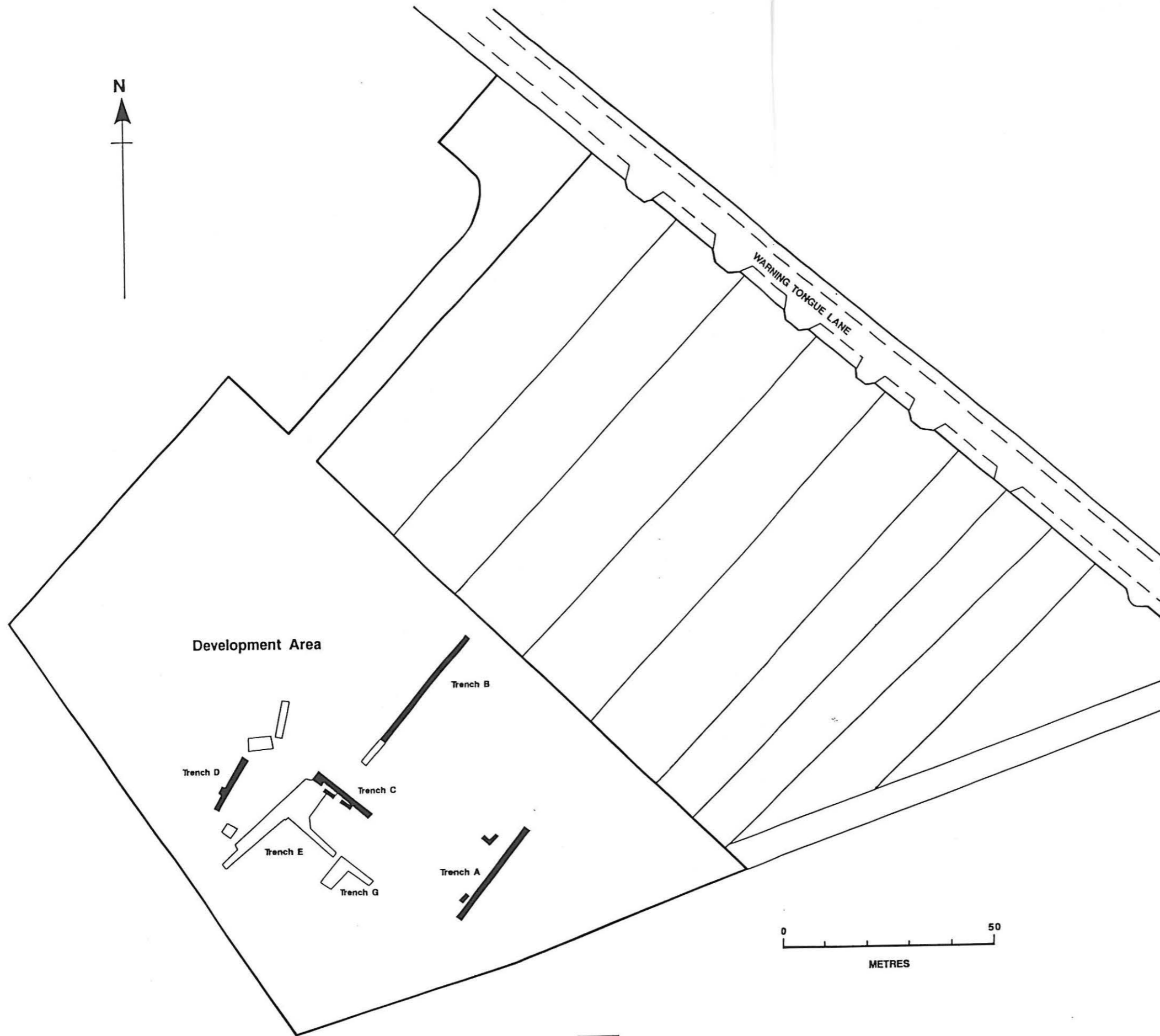
As a result of the condition provided in the planning permission, the South Yorkshire Archaeology Field and Research Unit were commissioned by the developers to carry out an archaeological field evaluation. This was to be conducted in accordance with a brief supplied by the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service. The brief required an initial geophysical survey to be followed by a programme of trial trenching based on the results of this (S. Atkinson 1994)(fig. 3).



The geophysical survey revealed a limited number of potential archaeological anomalies and so a programme of trial trenching was agreed. Given the limited amount of information provided by the survey it was felt that four trial trenches were sufficient to investigate the possible anomalies and to provide some coverage of areas where the survey could not be carried out.

The excavation of these trenches revealed the location of a number of archaeological features. A total of four ditches were located and investigated. The evidence available suggested that they were constructed in the Romano-British period. One of them appeared to be running parallel with the Roman Road, situated to the east of the site. Another contained sherds of locally produced Roman pottery. The main focus of interest became the area of the slight rise in ground level mentioned in section 1.1. Ditches were located on either side of this rise, and the similar nature of their fills suggested that they were related. This raised the possibility that the higher ground had formed the focus for a Romano-British enclosure. In support of this was the presence of a number of smaller features from within what would have been the interior. In order to determine whether or not this was the case, further fieldwork was required. The developers were able to co-operate in this.

3) RESEARCH DESIGN

It was agreed that a further programme of fieldwork would be conducted in order to answer a number of specific questions relating to the area of interest. The work was



-  PHASE 1 TRENCHES
-  PHASE 2 TRENCHES

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TITLE
3) Trench Location

SITE
Warning Tongue Lane

CODE	DATE
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SCALE	DRAWN
	STA/GRH

therefore planned with the following aims:

- a) To determine whether or not the ditches found did represent an enclosure.
- b) To collect more dating evidence for the site.
- c) To determine the extent of the possible enclosure.
- d) To identify the presence and nature of any internal features. It was hoped that this would suggest a function for the site.
- e) If possible, to relate the site to the surrounding archaeology of the area.

4) METHODOLOGY

As an initial stage of this investigation, it was decided to excavate trenches leading from the centre of the putative enclosure to the south-east and the south-west. In addition, trench B was extended towards the enclosure. It was hoped that this would identify the course of an enclosure ditch. Once this had been completed a small open area was excavated in order to examine the interior of the enclosure (fig. 3).

All trenches were machine excavated down to the upper archaeological deposits. All subsequent excavation was carried out by hand. Once the trenches had been opened the location of potential archaeological features were identified based on the appearance of the sand at the base of the trenches. Archaeological features appeared as dark areas against the lighter orange/brown of the natural sand.

Once identified, all features were investigated, by half-sectioning where possible and full excavation where not. All artefacts were retained according to which context they were from. This was to allow dating of the features in the event that the artefacts were identifiable. Each separate deposit and cut was assigned a context number with a full written context sheet. All archaeological features were drawn to scale in plan and section. In addition, a full photographic record was kept, using both black and white print and colour slide film.

On completion of the excavation a survey was carried out to locate onto plan the position of the trial trenches and the features located within them.

5) RESULTS

The results of the work established to a reasonable degree of satisfaction that the remains found do represent the presence of an enclosure of Romano-British date. There was also some indication of the sort of activity that took place there. The results of this work will be presented here, with each component of the archaeological remains being discussed in turn.

5.1) Main Enclosure Ditch

Two sections of this ditch were excavated during the 1st stage of trial trenching. The nature of the fills of these sections, and in particular the similarity between them led to the belief that they may have been part of a single enclosure ditch. Further investigation established the location of this ditch at a number of further points and confirmed the extent of the enclosure. In total, this feature has been excavated at four points and its presence identified at a further four (fig. 9).

12.20M
(A.O.D.)

512

511

11.91

503

11.50

S/W 11.50M
(A.O.D.)

504

506

505

507

509

508

11.50M
(A.O.D.) N/E

513

11.50M
(A.O.D.) S/W

514

516

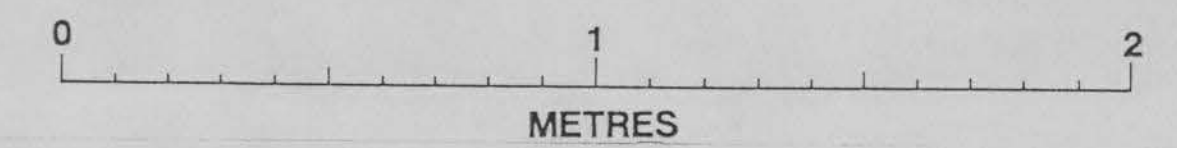
515

517

510

SAND

CLAY



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TITLE 4) Section 30	
SITE Warning Tongue Lane	
CODE DWTL 94(2)	DATE May 1994
SCALE	DRAWN GRH

The sections excavated during the second stage of trenching were located to the north-east and south-west of the centre of the enclosure. To the south-west the ditch (508) was found to have a width at the surface of 3.75 metres and a maximum depth of 1.05 metres (fig. 4). Six separate deposits were identified within the fill of this ditch. The upper three of these (503, 504 and 505) all consisted of sand with a very few small rounded pebbles. They were distinguishable almost entirely by virtue of slight differences in colour. Underlying these was a light grey clay layer (506) found to contain some sand and a little charcoal (less than 5% inclusions). This was overlying the main fill of the feature which consisted of mottled coloured sands which ranged from grey to orange. The final, basal deposit within the ditch at this point (509) was also sand, but a very dark grey in colour. This is consistent with what is normally found at the base of a ditch. The lowest fill is normally dark, containing a higher proportion of humic material as a result of the growth of plants within the damp base of a ditch.

The distribution of the separate deposits within the ditch section strongly suggests that infilling has taken place from the north-eastern edge, ie from within what is believed to have been the interior of the enclosure. This strongly connects this section from the previously excavated sections of the putative enclosure ditch. The nature of the fills also strongly presents a similarity. This is particularly marked in the presence of a clay layer within an area where clay does not appear naturally.

Another section of this ditch was excavated within the extension of Trench B (602). The examination of this ditch was complicated at this point by the presence of a later ditch (608) cutting through on a different alignment (figs. 5 and 6). The enclosure ditch was found cutting through this trench at an oblique angle and so a true representation of the ditch profile was not obtained. However, it could be seen at this point that the ditch had a maximum width of approximately 3 metres and a depth of a little under 1 metre.

A brown sand deposit (603) was identified immediately underlying the subsoil at this point. It was far from clear from the confines of the excavated area to which this cut this deposit belonged. This problem was greatly exacerbated by the generally homogeneous nature of the deposits in the upper 0.7 to 0.8 metres of the excavated material. 603 may be the upper fill of the main enclosure ditch (602 at this point), but it seems more likely from the distribution of the deposits that it represents a later deposition possibly following the truncation of the upper part of the fill of 602.

It is clear from the sections that deposits 604 to 607 are all fills of the ditch 602. They were differentiated in terms of colour and texture, with silt sand as well as pure sand deposits. The ditch profile was of evenly sloping sides with a rounded base. Given the restrictions of the excavated area it was not possible to identify the breaks of slope at the surface of the ditch. It seems clear though, that this is a section of the main enclosure ditch.

The presence of the ditch was also noted in a number of other excavated areas. The restrictions of time meant that it was not possible to obtain a fully excavated section at each of these points but their identification is sufficient to help trace the course of the ditch.

5.2) Outer Ditch

At the south-west end of trench E (figs. 4 and 9) an outer ditch (510) was identified

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TITLE 5) Plan and section,
cuts 602 and 608

SITE
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DATE
May 1994

SCALE

DRAWN
GRH

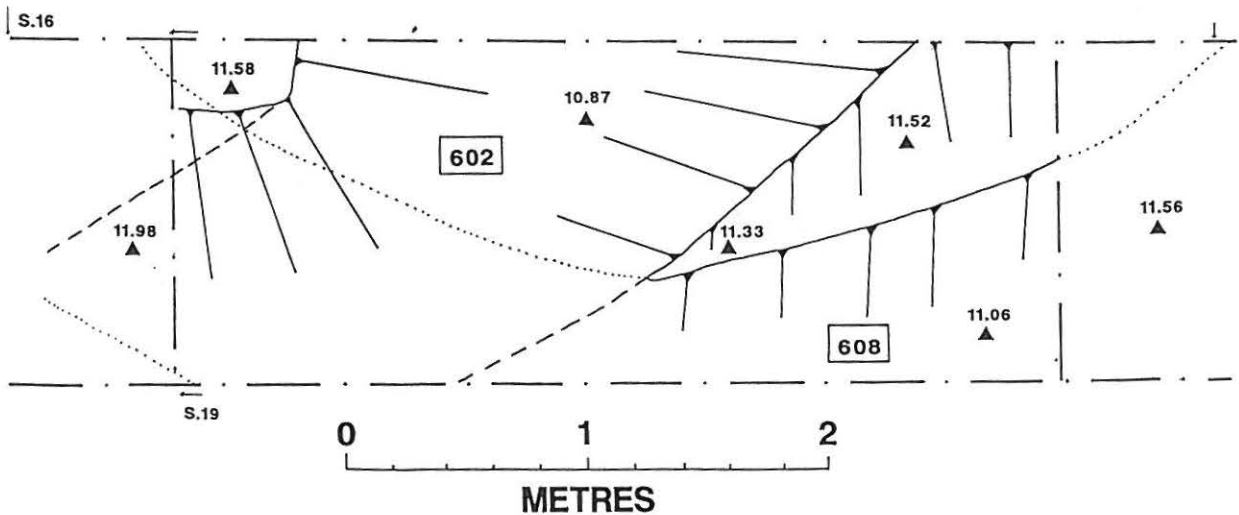
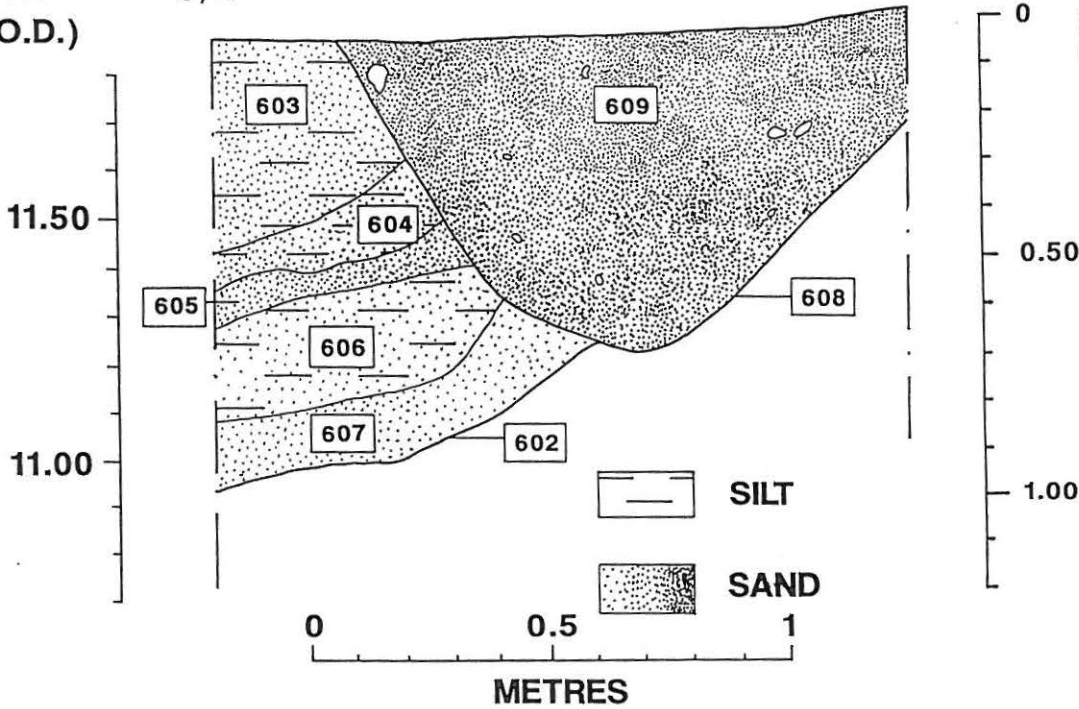
METRES
(A.O.D.)

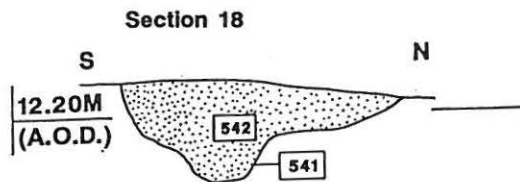
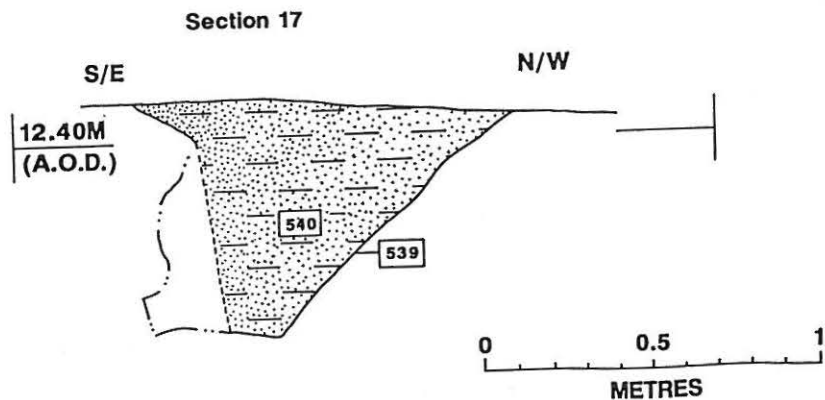
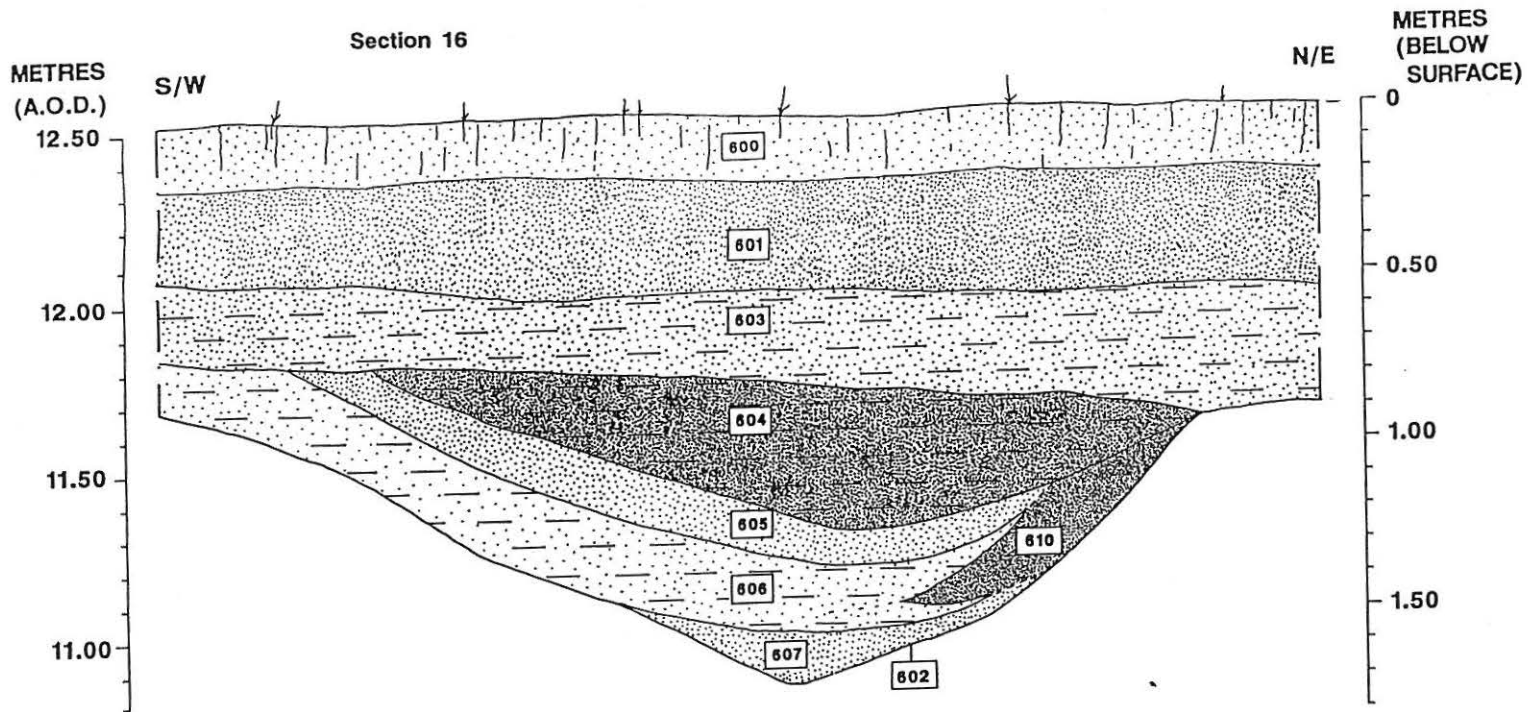
S/E

SECTION 19

N/W

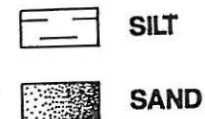
METRES
(BELOW
SURFACE)





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TITLE
6) Sections 16, 17 and 18

SITE
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CODE DWTL 94(2)	DATE May 1994
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SCALE	DRAWN GRH
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about 1.5 metres beyond the main ditch (508). It was a little smaller than the main ditch, having a width at the surface of 3 metres and a maximum depth of 0.6 metres. The profile of the ditch was slightly unbalanced, with a steeper edge on the south-western edge.

Four deposits were recorded from within the fill of this ditch (514, 515, 516 and 517). With the exception of deposit 516 all of this material was sand of various shades of brown. Deposit 516 consisted of clay sand with clay patches. The presence of clay deposits within the ditches has already been noted from elsewhere on this site. It has also been noted that clay does not naturally occur in the immediate vicinity of the site and so must have arrived by some means, presumably being transported by man. The pattern of infilling appears to make it clear that this ditch was filled largely from within the enclosure.

5.3) Internal Features

A series of cut features were identified within the boundaries of the enclosure. These can be sub-divided into three distinct feature types; linear features, post/stake holes and pit type features. There was also a large area of modern disturbance in the north-western part of the excavated area (530).

5.31) Linear features

Cut 511 (figs. 4 and 9) was a small shallow ditch adjacent to and parallel with the main enclosure ditch, identified within trench E. It had a width of 0.80 metres at the surface and a maximum depth of 0.20 metres. No finds were recovered from within the sand fill of this feature.

To the south of the open area (figs. 6 and 9) a length of ditch was located (541), on an east-west axis. It had a maximum width of 0.80 metres and a depth of 0.30 metres. This depth included a small gully at the base of the ditch measuring 0.25 metres width by 0.10 metres depth.

An unexcavated length of ditch was also identified to the south-west of the main enclosure ditch (fig. 9). This measured 0.80 metres in width and had clearly been truncated by the enclosure ditch. This dates the smaller feature to an earlier phase of the occupation of the site.

From an examination of the main plan (fig. 9) it is clear that ditch 541 is the same feature as one of the other ditches mentioned above. However, they are all of similar size and it is not clear exactly how they relate to each other. The spoil heap was located in the intervening space and so it was not possible to extend the excavation in order to determine this question.

There were also a number of narrower linear features which may represent the presence of a number of structures within the interior of the enclosure. These include cuts 520, 522 and 524 (sections 21, 22, and 24, fig. 7) which closely resemble features 311, 313 and 325 from the first phase of excavation. Although these features do not appear as perfectly straight on the plan it is thought that this is due more to later disturbance of the sand deposits than their original cut lines. They had a width of 0.35 metres and a depth of up to 0.25 metres. At one point a post or stake hole (526) was found at the base of cut 524. This extended to a total depth of 0.35 metres below the top of the cut.

The similar features located during the first phase of the excavation were interpreted as possibly being beam slots for a building. This new information fully supports this view. The regular pattern of the slots suggests the presence of at least two rectangular structures represented by 520, 522 and 524 as well as a further structure to the north-east of 524.

5.32) Post/Stake Holes

A number of small post holes were found within the open area of the enclosure. Two of these (531 and 528) were immediately adjacent to the linear cut 524 and are presumed to be related to the putative structure.

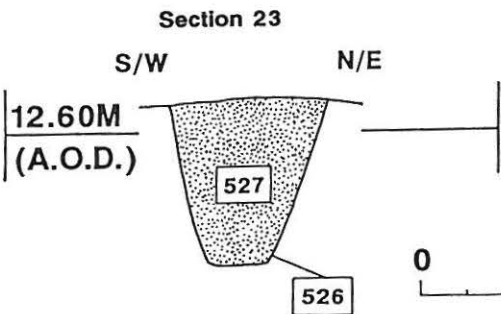
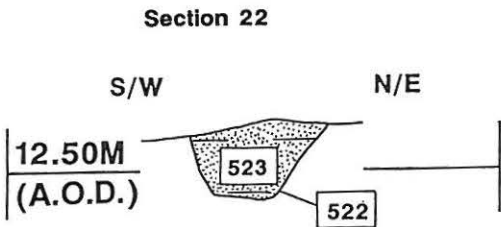
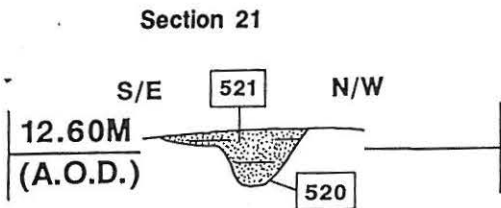
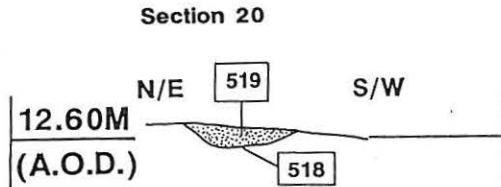
5.33) Pit Type Features

Two pits (539 and 543) were found within the south-eastern part of the excavated area, both of which were investigated (figs 6 and 9). They were of a similar oval shape but 539 was the larger, with a length of 0.95 metres compared to 0.85 metres for 543. No finds were recovered from either of these features. Their true dimensions below the surface were difficult to determine as a result of severe disturbance by tree roots, rabbits or a mixture of both.

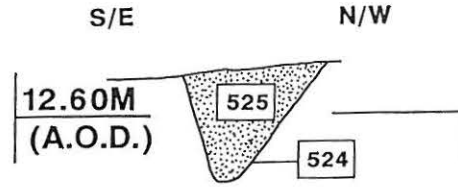
Immediately to the north-west of these pits (figs. 8 and 9) was an oval feature (533) on an east-west axis with a shallow extension to the north. It had length of 2 metres and a width of 1 metre for the main body of the pit. The shallow extension had a length of 1 metre and a width of 0.60 metres. The main part of the pit was 0.50 metres deep with a flat base and steep sides. Three fills were identified within this feature. The upper fill (534) consisted of sandy clay with a light yellowish brown colour. It only covered the central part of the feature, having a length of 1 metre. The main body of the fill (535) was of a dark yellowish brown sand silt. This was directly overlying the very dark brown basal fill which also contained a low proportion of charcoal flecks.

There are a number of unusual aspects to this pit which may hint at some specialised function. The shallow extension is curious, as is the clay capping over the central part of the main pit fill. Also of note are a number of post/stake holes both within and adjacent to this feature. One post hole and three stake holes can be seen on the plan cutting into the base of the pit. Another post hole is positioned to the north-west. No corresponding post hole was found on the other side the feature. Without a clear distribution pattern apparent it is difficult to determine if the post/stake holes have a central function to the pit or whether they should be considered as more incidental. Without being able to be certain about this identifying the function of the feature as a whole.

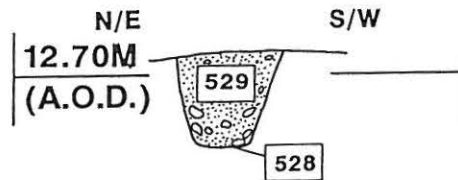
The closest comparison that the author has been able to find is from a feature interpreted as a surface built kiln of Romano-British date excavated at Blaxton, approximately 3km NEE of the Warning Tongue Lane site (P.C. Buckland and M.J. Dolby 1980). This had a similar general structure, including the presence of post/stake holes at the base of the deeper part of the pit. There were also a number of noteworthy dissimilarities. The feature at Blaxton was about twice the size and contained layers of burnt clay, which was notably absent from feature 533 at Warning Tongue Lane. Despite these differences, the similarities in construction and regional link make it impossible to ignore the suggestion that feature 533 represents the remains of a small surface built kiln. In the light of this, the fact that many of the



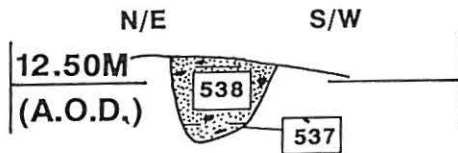
Section 24



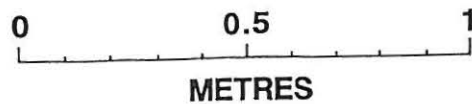
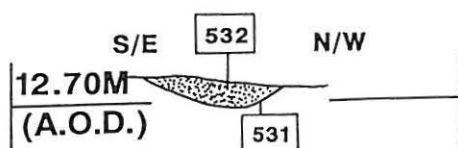
Section 25



Section 26







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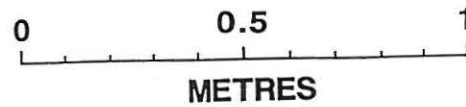
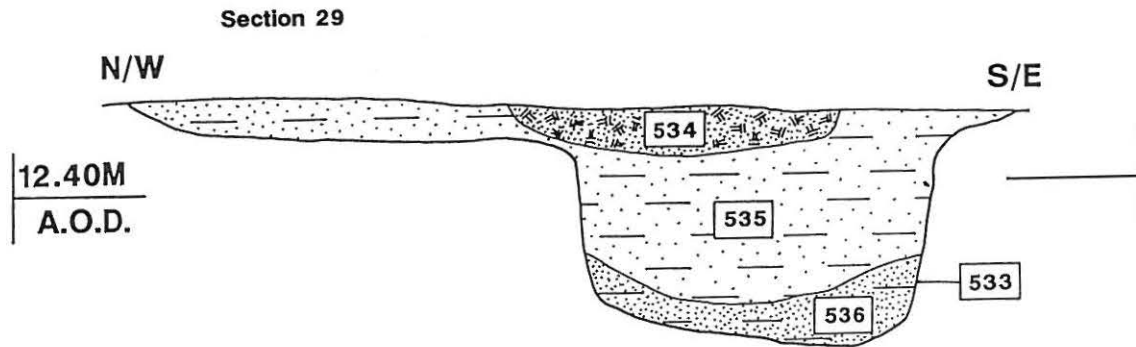
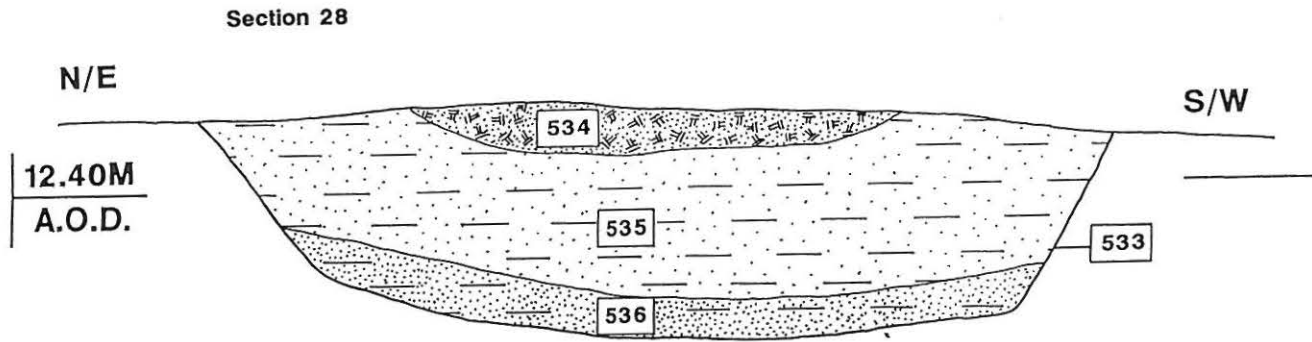
-  SILT
-  SAND
-  STONES
-  DAUB

TITLE
7) Sections 20-27

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Warning Tongue Lane

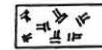
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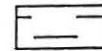


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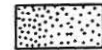
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CLAY



SILT



SAND

TITLE
8) Sections 28 and 29

SITE
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SCALE	DRAWN GRH
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pottery sherds (13 out of 31) found during the excavation came from the fill of this feature appears more significant.

6) DISCUSSION

The fieldwork carried out on this site has allowed the identification of this previously unknown site within the Romano-British landscape of the area. The amount of information obtained has been limited by the incomplete nature of the excavation. Other important limiting factors are the level of later disturbance caused by human, rabbit and tree root disturbance. The effects of each of these were observed during the fieldwork. Despite this it has been possible to identify a number of recognisable and datable features allowing some interpretation of the site.

6.1) Cropmark Evidence

The point has already been made that this site lies within a known archaeological landscape (fig. 2). Much of this has been discovered through the use of aerial photography (D.N. Riley 1980). The presence of sub-surface remains, including boundary ditches and enclosures, can be identified in this way. The different ground conditions caused by these features affects drainage of the land and so leads to variable growth, particularly during times of stress brought on by a rainfall shortage. Cropmarks are most clear in areas dominated by a monoculture and so the large modern fields that cover much of the area have been very suitable for this type of study. This was clearly not the case for the site in question here as well as land in the immediate vicinity. The local land use consists of a mixture of grassland, light woods and residential occupation. It appears to be as a result of this that no cropmark evidence is available.

However, the evidence that we do have for the surrounding area is extremely useful in viewing the site within the wider context. Excavations of known cropmarks have produced pottery of a Romano-British date. This, together with other evidence, has suggested a late Iron Age/Romano-British date for the use of the field systems. The pottery found at Warning Tongue Lane is of a similar date and so this site can be viewed as a contemporary feature. An examination of the cropmark sites show a great number of similarly sized enclosures within the region.

A shortage of fully excavated sites of this type makes a clear interpretation of the enclosures rather problematic. In all likelihood, they had various functions dependant on their location and size. Some may have been used for animal stocking while others would have been centres of occupation. It is clear from a comparison of aerial photographs and the excavated sites that the presence of internal features are extremely unlikely to show in cropmarks. This makes a differentiation between settlement and agricultural enclosures possible only on the basis of excavation.

However, a general picture of settlement in this region has been suggested to fit with what is known (P.C. Buckland 1986). The extensive field systems demonstrate the existence of a well-ordered landscape, with wide areas being organised for the benefit of agriculture. Settlement was located on small self-contained farmsteads scattered across the countryside, with perhaps around 1km between each one. A number of these have been excavated within South Yorkshire and the surrounding area (G.A.

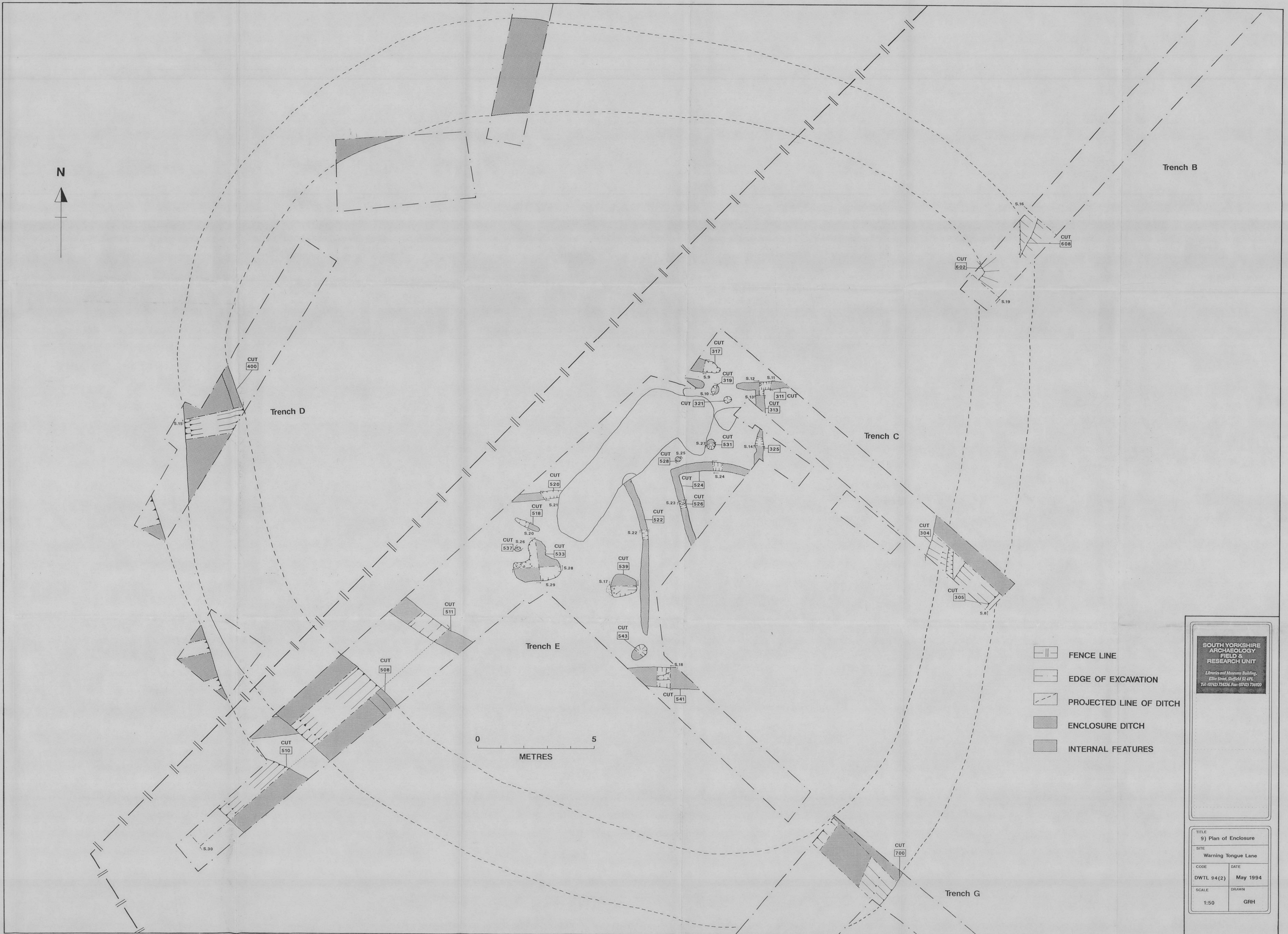
Makepeace 1985, J.R. Magilton 1978, J.R. Samuels and P. C. Buckland 1978) .This landscape was established during the Iron Age and appears to have changed little during the Roman occupation, the major influence of which would have been restricted to military and urban sites.

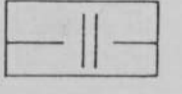
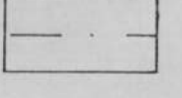
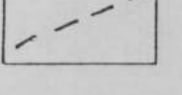


6.2) Site Interpretation

The incomplete nature of the archaeological record of this site must limit the level of detail possible in the interpretation. This is exacerbated by the lack of full and detailed excavations of similar sites in the local region to form the basis for a comparison. However, there remains an obligation to attempt to make something of what has been found. Clearly the enclosure was occupied, as shown by the beam slots representing at least two wooden structures. It is the nature of this occupation which must be questioned. The presence of the clay within the enclosure ditches despite the lack of any local natural clay was noted at an early stage of the excavation. Given the proximity of the site to a major Romano-British pottery production centre it was natural to consider the possibility that this was the function of the site. An interpretation of feature 533 as a surface-built kiln or clamp supports this to some extent. The relative small size of this feature, and lack of any similar features on the site tends to suggest, though, that this was not the major function of the settlement. A pottery production centre would also be expected to produce a far greater quantity of ceramic evidence , as well as waste material. It seems more likely that the site had a predominantly agricultural function, probably as a farmstead. The pottery production may have been an adjunct to this. If this is the case then it could be seen to represent a continuation of the pre-existing Iron Age pattern of production rather than the operation of a market economy. The generally small amount of pottery (and lack of any high status material) is also worth noting. It may also represent continuity of occupation and, together with the lack of any stone structures suggests that it was not a rich site.

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-  FENCE LINE
-  EDGE OF EXCAVATION
-  PROJECTED LINE OF DITCH
-  ENCLOSURE DITCH
-  INTERNAL FEATURES

0 5
METRES

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TITLE 9) Plan of Enclosure	
SITE Warning Tongue Lane	
CODE DWTL 94(2)	DATE May 1994
SCALE 1:50	DRAWN GRH