

**REPORT ON A SECOND PHASE EXCAVATION
OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS ON LAND
OFF WOOD STREET, DONCASTER**

JUNE 1994

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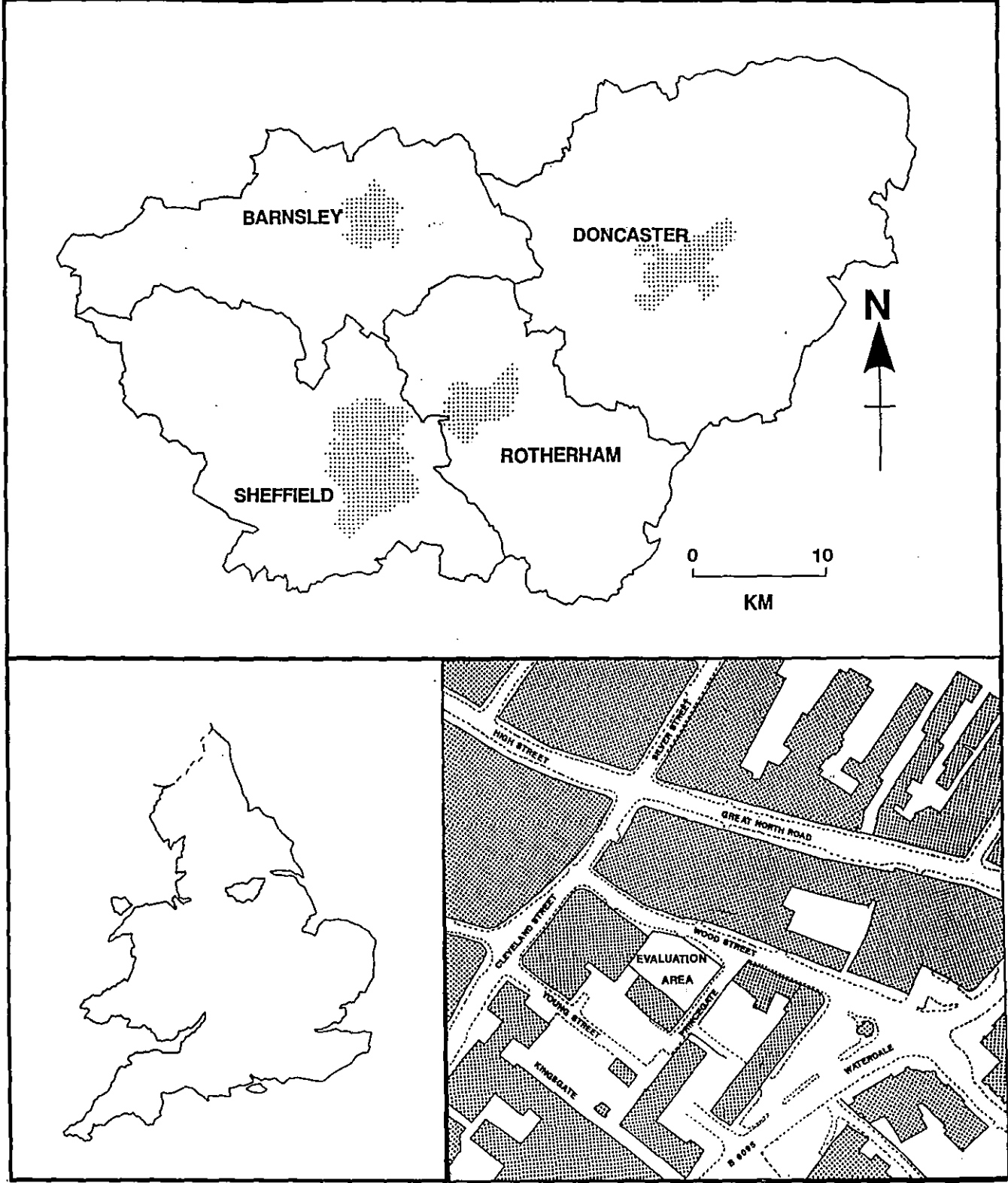
Illustrations by: Claire Coleman

Timing: Fieldwork
24th May 1994-1st June 1994

Report Preparation
2nd June 1994-9th June 1994

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1) Site Location

1) SUMMARY

A second phase archaeological investigation has been carried out on land off Wood Street, Doncaster. This was with the aim of investigated more fully a number of previously identified features of Roman date. This has led to the identification of what is believed to be part of a Romano-British settlement site of probably 2nd century date.

2) INTRODUCTION

The site at Wood Street (NGR SE 5766 0313) is located on the fringe of the town centre of Doncaster (Fig. 1). Following the demolition of the former Doncaster MBC education offices an application was submitted for the construction of a five storey office block on 0.42 ha of land (Planning Application no. 93/33/3671/FUL P). A scheme of this sort clearly involves a good deal of ground disturbance and so is liable to affect any archaeological remains which may exist.

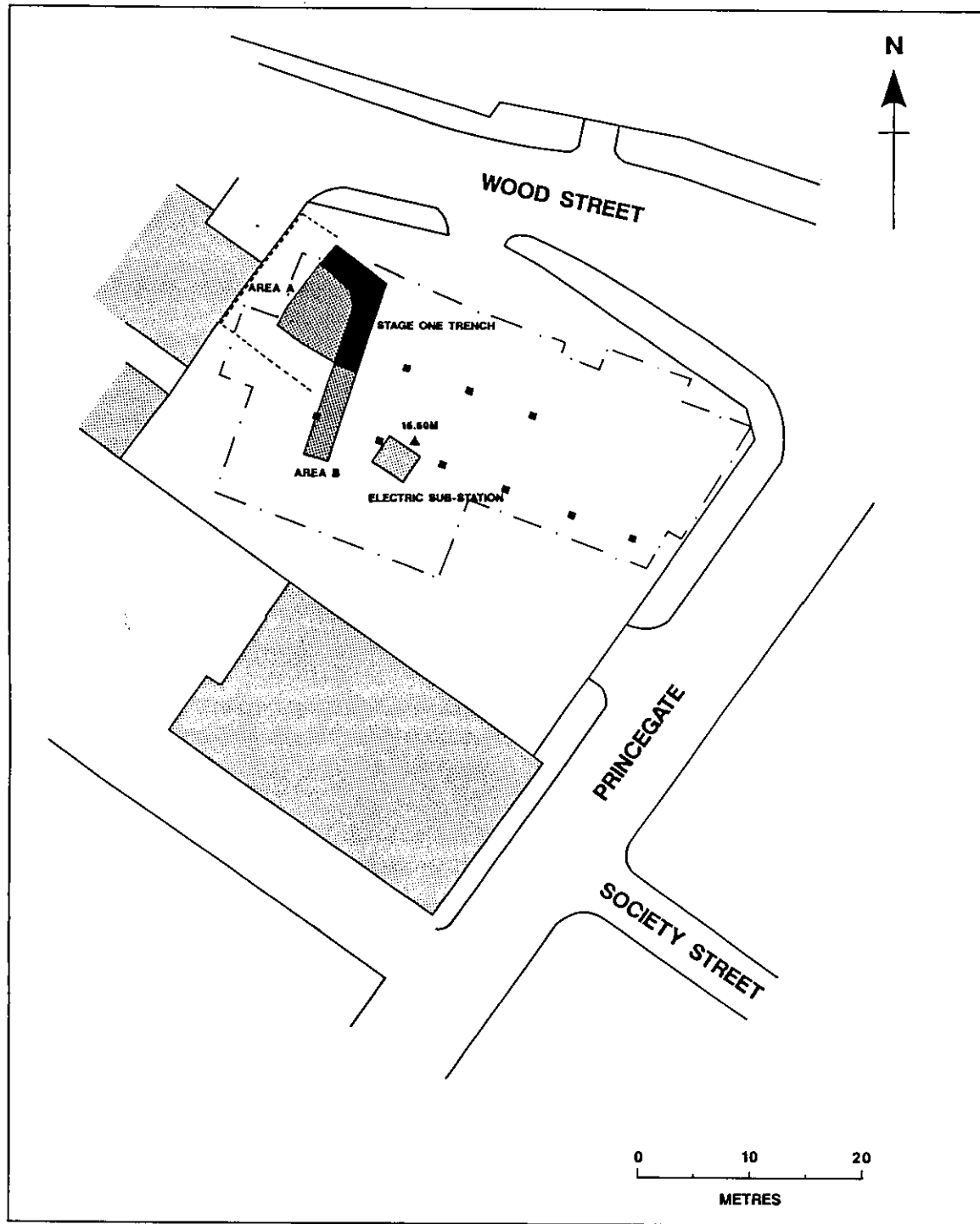
The site lies close to the medieval and Roman town of Doncaster. The medieval town ditch is known to have enclosed the area within a line now formed by Cleveland Street, Silver Street and Market Road. It is known that suburbs developed outside of this line and the site in question may have been involved in this. Also, at the time of the construction of the town ditch in the 12th century, the area around the site was part of an area used for agricultural purposes.

The main Roman road through Doncaster is known to have followed the line of High Street and Hall Gate. This led to Lincoln in the south and Castleford in the north. It was important to the development of the town as it was likely to have been the lowest crossing point of the river. It was also the highest navigable point for river traffic. This situation continued into the medieval period, when the Great North Road passed through Doncaster on the same route.

Given the scale of the proposed development and the location of the site a recommendation was made by South Yorkshire Archaeology Service that an archaeological evaluation be carried out prior to any development work. As a result of this the Monoghan Partnership, acting for the developers, contracted the South Yorkshire Archaeology Field and Research Unit (SYAFRU) to carry out the work.





3) PREVIOUS WORK

The field evaluation of the site took place at the end of March 1994, and a report of this work was produced in April (Atkinson 1994). A single, small trial trench was excavated by machine to the upper archaeological deposits. These were located at 1.2m.-1.5m. below the present ground surface. Three features of archaeological significance were identified and excavated. They included two ditches and a circular pit. One of the ditches could be seen to be cutting through, and therefore post-dating, the pit. Pottery recovered from the fills of these features was found to be Roman in date.



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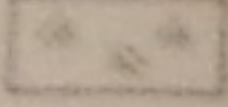
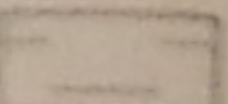
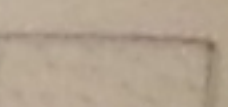
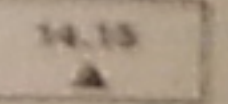
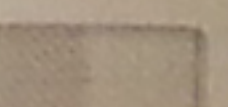
-  BUILDINGS
-  EXCAVATED AREA
-  PROPOSED BUILDING
-  PILING FOR PROPOSED BUILDING

TITLE
2) Trench Location

SITE
Doncaster, Wood Street

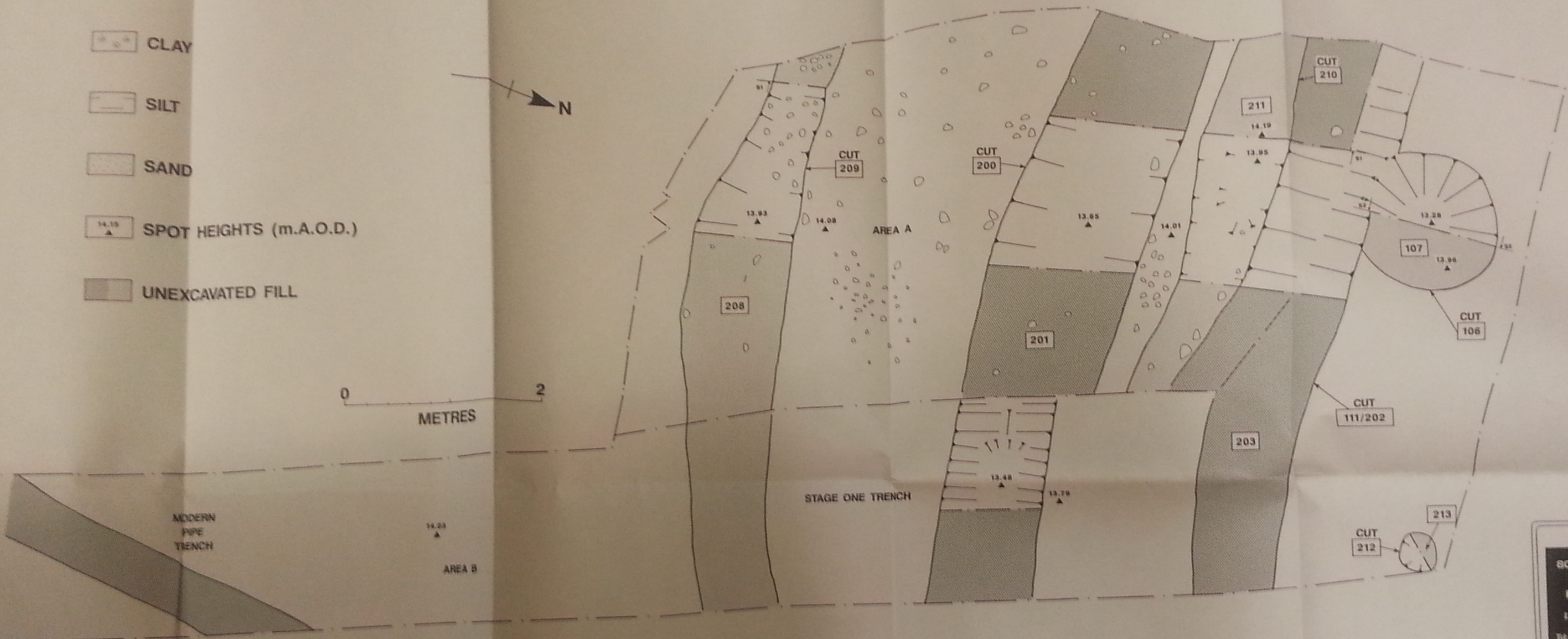
CODE	DATE
DWS 94	June 1994

SCALE	DRAWN
	GRH/CAC

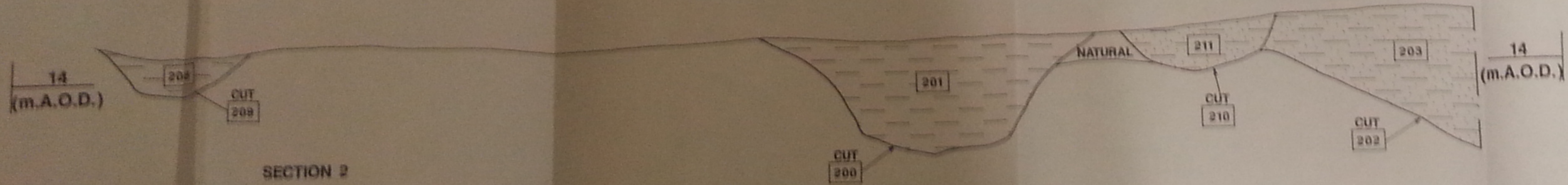
-  CLAY
-  SILT
-  SAND
-  SPOT HEIGHTS (m.A.O.D.)
-  UNEXCAVATED FILL



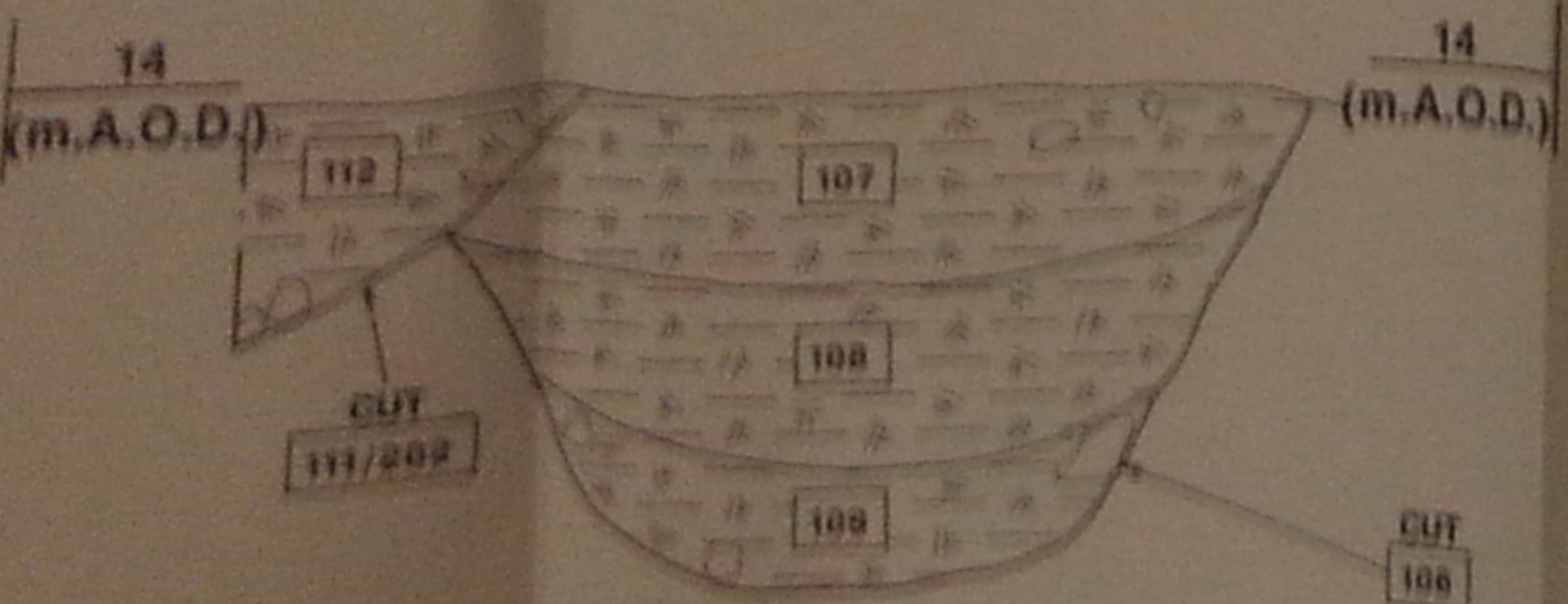
0 METRES 2



SECTION 1



SECTION 2



0 METRES 1

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TITLE	
3) TRENCH PLAN	
SITE	
DONCASTER, WOOD STREET	
CODE	DATE
DWS 94	JUNE 1994
SCALE	QUANTITY
1:20/1:10	CAC

As a result of these findings, in an area near to but outside of the known extent of the Roman civil settlement, the South Yorkshire Sites and Monuments Officer requested that a further investigation be undertaken. This was to be aimed at determining the full extent of the features, so far as possible, as well as attempting to identify their function.

4) METHODOLOGY

A research design was adopted in order to achieve the stated objectives within the confines of the prevailing site conditions. These tended to discourage the possibility of further investigation to the north and the east. This was because live electric cables are known to be present on these sides and excavation to the east would have restricted access to the site.

It was therefore decided to extend the excavation to the west, where it was known that the features would be found, and to the south in order to determine the extent of the archaeology (Fig. 2). A staged approach with four areas to be excavated in turn, as required, was devised. Area A was excavated first in order to provide an idea of the route and function of the known features. Area B was then excavated in order to determine the southern extent of the area of interest. No archaeological remains were located within this area which appeared to have been subject to more recent disturbance. It was therefore decided that it would serve no further purpose to excavate any further at this point.

The extension of the excavated area was completed by machine down to the upper archaeological deposits. The precise depth of this was known from the initial evaluation. All subsequent excavation was carried out by hand, by qualified staff of SYAFRU. Archaeological features can be recognised by a difference in soil texture or colour. Where this was noticed it was investigated by excavation, preferably by half-sectioning. All archaeological features were drawn to scale in both plan and section. These were levelled in metres above ordnance datum (metres A.O.D.). Artefactual remains were recovered for later analysis and a written record sheet was made for each individual cut and deposit. A full photographic record was kept throughout using both black and white print and colour slide film.

5) RESULTS

Following the excavation of area A the full extent of the excavated area measured approximately nine by six metres (Fig. 3). A clear pattern of archaeological features was visible throughout the full extent of this site. This consisted of four ditch/gullies located on a roughly NW-SE axis. Two of these (105/200 and 111/202) were larger in profile and so can be described as ditches, while the other two (208 and 210) were significantly smaller. Located against the northern edge of the excavated area were a circular pit (106) and a post-hole (212).

The ditches were all located on the same alignment and so can be grouped together with a good degree of confidence. Another general feature is that they all display a noticeable curve facing out to the south. This suggests that they represent successive, or in some cases contemporary, features of an enclosure. The interior of this would have been located to the north. It can be presumed that pit 106 and post-hole 212 were

internal to this enclosure.

The outermost of the ditches was 208 which measured only 0.63 metres in width and 0.15 metres in depth. It had a rounded base and a dark yellowish brown silt fill. No finds were recovered from this feature.

To the north of this was ditch 200, which was significantly larger with a width of 1.39 metres and a depth of 0.45 metres. It's profile showed sharp breaks of slope and steep sides leading to a flat base. A single fill to this ditch was identified and this consisted of dark yellowish brown silt. This contained a number of rounded pebbles with a diameter of up to 0.15 metres. A relatively large amount of pottery was recovered from this fill. It was provisionally identified on site as being 2nd century in character rather than any later (A. O'Connor pers. comm.).

Three of the features (210, 111/202 and 106) were found successively cutting each other and were therefore not directly contemporary. The latest of these (210) was the most southerly. It can be seen on section 1 that it cuts through the southern edge of ditch 111/202. It is a small feature in profile with a width of 0.8 metres and a depth of only 0.24 metres. The fill consisted of a yellowish brown silt sand material and contained no finds.

Ditch 202 was directly cut by 210 and so pre-dates it. It was approximately 1.5 metres wide at the surface and 0.56 metres deep. The profile showed gradual breaks of slope and a rounded base. The dark yellowish brown silt sand fill contained an amount of Roman pottery.

To the north of this ditch, and clearly pre-dating it, was pit 106. This feature had a surface diameter of 1.4 metres and a maximum recorded depth of 0.7 metres. It's profile shows a sharp break of slope and steep sides leading down to a flattened base. The debris found within the fill of this pit was taken to represent a domestic assemblage. This included pottery of Romano-British date as well as a hand held grinding stone (pestle) made of millstone grit.

The final feature located during the excavation was a single post-hole within the north-east corner of the excavation. This had a diameter of approximately 0.40 metres and a maximum depth of 0.30 metres. No finds were recovered from within the fill of this feature but it is presumed to be contemporary with the other features.

No features were found within trench B which was excavated running south from the excavated area. On the basis of this it was concluded that the extent of the area of archaeological interest did not include land to the south of ditch 208. In addition, a higher degree of modern disturbance was noted in this area. This took the form of disused water pipes which are thought to relate to the inspection chambers present in the southern part of the land. This suggests that the area has been more generally disturbed.

6) DISCUSSION

A description has been included of each of the features found during this investigation. As is typical of excavations of this type, the extent of the excavated area is limited by prevailing site conditions. This has a detrimental effect on the extent of any interpretation of what the archaeology on the site represents. However, given this

it is felt that the features identified and the pottery recovered are consistent with a domestic enclosure of around 2nd century in date.

Previous finds within Doncaster have provided some idea of the extent of the Roman settlement of the town. A series of three defensive ditches on a south-east axis have been identified within land bordered by St. Sepulchre Gate, Printing Office Street, Priory Place and High Street. It has been suggested that this defensive line turned a right angle and then followed the line of Scot Lane to include the site of the present market place. Only very scant structural remains of the buildings have been recovered from within this circuit though the find locations of Roman material is well concentrated within it. Another significant factor in the distribution of Roman finds is that they are strung out along the line of French Gate, High Street, and Hall Gate. This suggests that this was then the main street through the town, as it was during the medieval period.

The site at Wood Street is located outside of known extent of the civil settlement and is not directly adjacent to the course of the road. However, it can be seen that it was the southern extent of any enclosure which was found. As a result it cannot be said at what distance the enclosure was from the road at it's closing point. The only previous known find of Roman date from Wood Street was a complete small coarse ware jar found during the construction of the Y.M.C.A. in 1961. The discovery of this site is of interest in that it probably represents the presence of occupation in an area which was previously not thought to have held this type of activity. As such it should another useful piece of information in establishing the extent and nature of occupation of Doncaster during the Romano-British period.

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