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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK AT
18-32 LONDON ROAD STAINES**

1998

SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL



Prehistory

residual pot & struck flint
Prob B.A.

residual flint tools of Mes &
Neo date

ditch

Roman

2 ditches
2 burials (human)

Medieval

3 ditches

3 pits (?) (12th + date)

ditches had pot, c3m
residual finds of earlier date

Waterhole.

Modern &

undated features



Pits & post holes

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK AT 18-32 LONDON ROAD STAINES

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INTRODUCTION

The site at 18-32 London Road, Staines (fig 1), has been the subject of two redevelopments during the middle to late 1990's, each of which was preceded by work carried out by the Surrey County Archaeological Unit (fig 2). A preliminary archaeological assessment of the site, prepared by the Unit in advance of the first redevelopment (Robertson 1994), established that it was of moderate to high archaeological potential as a considerable quantity of ancient material had been recovered from the immediate vicinity, and because Staines itself was an important town during the Roman and medieval periods. This resulted in a trial trench evaluation of the site (fig 2), which was at the time occupied by the derelict building of the former Greyhound public house, by a beer garden, scrub land, and loose gravel or broken tarmac areas used for parking. This was undertaken on behalf of Conoco Ltd prior to it becoming a petrol filling station with car wash. The evaluation, which is summarized below, produced some material that was of archaeological interest, mostly in Trench 2 which lay close to the southern limit of the development at the time, but not enough to warrant the formal excavation of the site; site monitoring during construction produced no additional information.

In 1998 the site became available for redevelopment again, and this time the area to the south of Trench 2 was included in the proposals (fig 2). The results of the 1994 evaluation were reconsidered and enabled recommendations to be made that the eastern part of this area be stripped to the level at which archaeological features would occur so that any remains discovered could be excavated; this duly took place between 6th April and 24th April. The western part of the area, which was known to have previously been disturbed by a large sewer outlet, was used as a spoil storage area (fig 2); a test pit dug within this area at the time of the excavation revealed no additional features. It was not possible to extend the excavation area northwards as the site was still being used as a filling station at the time of the investigation. The redevelopment of this area, and that to the west of the excavation was monitored during the initial stages of reconstruction and no further features were discovered, though it is considered unlikely that any but the most prominent remains would have been observed. Nonetheless, given the almost negative results of trial trenches 1,3 and 4, it is considered the area excavated provided a reasonable sample of that part of the site where features occurred and/or were most likely to have survived. The excavation was undertaken on behalf of Tasman House Developments Ltd, who will be constructing a three storey office building with basement car park on the site.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Unit is most grateful to Tasman House Developments Ltd for funding the excavation and work involved with the production of this report. In addition the author would like to thank Dr Tony Waldron for his forthcoming report concerning the human remains (this will be included in the finalised version of this report when it is prepared for publication in due course), and the following SCAU staff for their participation in this project: Rob Poulton for overseeing the work; Phil Jones for producing the pottery report; Nicola Hembrey for the small finds report; Giles Pattison for the illustrations; and, Mark Dover, Simon Hind, Alessandra Holly, Nick Marples and Jim Stevenson for their work on site and subsequently.

GEOLOGY

The natural geology encountered in the trial trenches was either gravel or calcareous or orange/yellow brickearth. That encountered during the excavation was entirely orange/yellow brickearth. The brickearth, which forms part of the River Terrace Deposits associated with the River Thames, overlay a shallow interface deposit of dark silty material between it and the gravel (see section 1, fig 4)

CONTEXT NUMBERS

The context numbers issued in 1994 and 1998 both began with 100. The 1994 contexts are distinguished below by the addition of the year number.

THE 1994 EVALUATION

The evaluation was achieved using a JCB mechanical excavator to open up four trial trenches in accessible areas adjacent to the standing building. Each of the trenches revealed a similar simple stratigraphy with some inconsequential variations occurring at different locations. This stratigraphy and the results of the evaluation have been described in more detail elsewhere (Hayman 1994) and are summarized here to introduce context numbers which appear below; the features discovered are considered with the others from the main excavation.

Trench 1

In this trench c0.30m of topsoil and root matter (100/94) overlay c0.45m of brown loam (101/94), over c0.25m of dark greeny-grey/black gravelly clay soil (102/94), over c0.22m of mixed yellow-brown brickearth (103/94), over natural orange brickearth or gravel. Modern

material and finds of medieval or Roman origin were recovered from 100/94 and 101/94, medieval (late 13th-early 14th century and earlier), Roman and prehistoric material was recovered from 102/94, and a single sherd of pottery and several pieces of struck flint (including a hammerstone) of prehistoric date were recovered from 103/94. The only feature encountered in this trench was a pit, 104/94, which was of 17th-18th century origin.

Trench 2

The stratigraphy here was variable along the length of this trench and consisted of between 0.05-0.88m of topsoil (with much rubble and domestic debris of late 19th century or later date where deepest - 105/94), over either c0.22m of redeposited gravel (106/94) or 0.20-0.25m of soil equivalent to 101/94 (107/94) or directly over feature 110/94, over c0.20m of dark clay soil equivalent to 102/94 (108/94), over c0.15m of soil equivalent to 103/94 (109/94). Modern material was recovered from 105/94 and 107/94, but not retained, two fragments of Roman tile and a sherd of late 12th-early 13th century pottery was recovered from the junction between 106/94 and 107/94, some Roman and medieval pottery was recovered from 108/94, and pieces of struck flint were recovered from 109/94.

Aside from 110/94, the excavation of which ceased once its late 18th or early 19th century origin had been established, four features were discovered in this trench - 117/94, 118/94, 119/94 and 120/94 (figs 2 and 5). Feature 117/94 was a large pit with a distinct deeper portion on the eastern side. It contained separate layers of grey clay (A), orange-grey clay (B), and grey silty clay (C), and may, in fact, have been two features (an earlier deeper pit cut by a later shallower one filled by 117A/94 - see fig 5). 117/94 cut layer 109/94 and feature 118/94, but it could not be determined in section whether it cut, or was sealed by, layer 108/94. The finds recovered from the fill layers of this feature consisted of twelve sherds of Roman pottery of late 3rd-4th century date, three small fragments of Roman brick/tile, and several pieces of bone.

Features 118/94 and 119/94 both appear to be ditches. 118/94 was cut by 117/94 and contained a single homogeneous fill of grey-brown clay loam, while 119 contained two distinct layers of fill. A single sherd of late 12th-early 13th century pottery and some fragments of bone were recovered from 118/94, five sherds of Roman and two sherds of medieval (late 13th century) pottery, a fragment of Roman tile and some pieces of bone were recovered from the upper fill (119A) of 119/94 and two sherds of Roman pottery and a fragment of Roman tile were recovered from 119B. Feature 120/94 was filled by dark sandy

clay and appeared to be a natural variation or disturbance (possibly a tree-bowl) rather than a man-made feature.

Trench 3

Here c0.45-0.70m of tarmac/rubble and topsoil (111/94), overlay c0.25-0.50m of light brown clay soil containing modern finds (112/94), over c0.20-0.40m of grey-brown clay loam (113/94), over c0.20-0.40m of silty grey clay (114/94), over natural orangey grey-brown brickearth. No features of archaeological interest were discovered in this trench, and the only finds of interest recovered from it were a fragment of medieval or post-medieval tile (probably the latter) from 113/94, and two fragments of Roman tile from the interface of 113/94 with 114/94.

Trench 4

Here 0.15m of topsoil (121/94), overlay 0.15m of rubble (122/94), over 0.25m of soil containing modern finds (123/94), over c0.28m of brown clay loam equivalent to 101/94 (124/94), over c0.10m of dark clay soil equivalent to 102/94 (125/94), over c0.12m of mixed yellow-brown brickearth equivalent to 103/94 (126/94), over natural gravel. No finds or features of archaeological interest were discovered during the excavation of this trench, though the presence of one large pit of late 19th or early 20th century origin was noted in the central part of the trench.

THE 1998 EXCAVATION

The excavation area was stripped using a Komatsu PC120 mechanical excavator with a 1.8m wide toothless bucket.

Stratigraphy

A variety of soil layers were encountered during the machining of the site and the origins of some were not immediately apparent as this was taking place. There was no opportunity for those deposits to be examined at the time, and the only practical option was to machine to the level at which features first became visible. The most significant layers are recorded in sections 1 and 2 (fig 4). Section 2 was typical of the majority of the site area, while section 1 was representative of deposits occurring in the north-eastern corner.

In both sections a layer of tarmac (100A) overlay concrete with a base of builders sand and gravel (100B), which in turn overlay a buried topsoil containing 20th century material (101). In section 2, fig 4, a layer of light-mid brown (102A) or mid grey-brown to reddish grey-brown clay soil (102B) was observed below 101, and beneath these a layer of light grey silty clay with frequent gravel pebbles (103), a layer of pale green-grey silty clay with iron panning (164) or the fills of features 147 or 149 were recorded. ^{and 137?} 103 overlay the pale yellow-grey clay of layer 104, which itself may have overlain the similarly pale, though perhaps marginally browner, fill of feature 161, and 164 overlay the mixed yellow clay and grey clay soil and gravel deposit 165. 102, 103 and 104 are probably equivalent to layers 101, 102 and 103¹⁰⁴ identified previously in Trial Trench 1 and elsewhere (see above), the discrepancies in the described colours probably being due to variations in the water content of the soils at each time. 165 occurred between features 137 and 149 in the southern half of the excavation area and appeared to be the result of a disturbance of the ground which predated 137, rather than a variation in the natural geology. The suggested disturbance might also have given rise to layer 164, though it is also possible that this deposit was a variation of 104. Layers 164 and 165 were removed by machine prior to the recognition of ditch 137, hence the truncated appearance of the south-eastern side of this feature which cut 165 and possibly cut 164. The various layers removed by machine below 101 produced a small number of finds of prehistoric, Roman and medieval origin which were attributed to a clearance context, 105.

Various lenses and layers were distinguished below 101 in section 1, fig 4. These were: 132, a discontinuous layer of brown or yellow/brown clay soil; 166, a lens of yellow to yellow-brown clay with quite frequent fire-blackened pebbles; 167, a deposit of firm brown clay; 168, a brown to grey-brown clay soil; 169, a discontinuous layer of grey-brown clay soil with quite frequent small pebbles (possibly equivalent to 103 described above); 170, a layer of grey-brown silty clay with quite frequent small pebbles - possibly a deposit within feature 128, or else a continuation of 169; 171, a layer of green-tinged brown clay soil appearing within the otherwise undifferentiated context 168; 173, a lens of dark grey charcoal-flecked silty clay possibly occurring within feature 128; 174, a layer of mid to dark grey silty clay; and, 175, a deposit of dark humic soil, slightly darker than 101, which probably filled a feature of relatively recent origin though the edges of this were not clearly defined. The features appearing in this section are described below. No finds were attributed to the layers identified through the detailed examination of this section, but feature 129, which cut layer 169, is

significant within the stratigraphic sequence recorded here as it was found to be of medieval origin.

Phase 1: Prehistoric

Prehistoric activity in the immediate vicinity of the site area was attested by the residual occurrence of sherds of pottery and pieces of struck flint in machine removed contexts and in the fills of later features; the pottery and most of the flintwork is probably of Bronze Age origin, and, in addition to this, individual flint tools of Mesolithic and Neolithic date have been identified amongst the assemblage. The only feature that can be reasonably securely attributed to this phase, however, was ditch 137. This feature cut layer 165 and probably cut layer 164 (see above for explanation of these layers which predate the ditch, and see section 2, fig 4), and was itself cut by ditch 124; no relationship was established between it and the somewhat dubious small feature 143. It was sampled by the excavation of five segments which showed it to contain a fill of mid-grey clay soil and to measure up to 1m in width by up to 0.35m in depth. Segments 138, 142 and 151 were all rapidly excavated and produced no finds other than occasional pieces of burnt flint, but 153 and 157 were dug much more carefully and produced several sherds of prehistoric pottery and quite frequent pieces of struck and burnt flint which suggest that the ditch is of Bronze Age origin. Regrettably the finds from 153 have since been lost.

137 ran roughly parallel to another ditch, 108, but the relationship of each feature to ditch 124 and marked differences between the fills of each and the finds recovered exclude any possibility that these ditches were contemporary. It seems likely that context 118/94 of Trial Trench 2 is a further part of ditch 137 despite the fact that the only diagnostic find recovered from this context was a sherd of pottery of late 12th or early 13th century origin. It was noted in the evaluation report that this sherd might have been intrusive, however, as the feature appeared to be cut by a Roman pit, and this now seems most likely to be the case.

Phase 2: Roman

Four features can be attributed to the Roman period with a reasonable degree of confidence, two of these were ditches and two were human inhumation burials.

The Ditches

Ditch 110 was discovered in the south-western corner of the excavation area where it was cut by the late 20th century feature 156. The limited excavation of this feature that was possible (segment 111) showed it to be approximately 0.85m deep and to contain an homogeneous fill of mid grey-brown clay soil which was removed as a single context. The fill produced five sherds of Roman greyware, some of which can be dated to the 3rd or 4th century AD and presumably indicate when the feature was infilling, unless present residually, and some fragments of bone.

Ditch 149 was a substantial feature which was cut by the late Roman to early medieval ditch 124 and by the medieval ditch 147, and was sampled by the excavation of two complete segments, 152 and 159, and two partial segments 155 and 163 (the latter was not bottomed). It is possible that this context was part of the same ditch as 110 or that both features met or crossed each other at right angles. Segments 152 and 159 showed the feature to vary between 0.94m (the former) and 1.14m in depth, and to contain a fill that was essentially a grey silty clay though some inconsistent localized areas of lighter or darker coloured soil were observed and are indicated on fig 4. The finds recovered from the various segments of 149 consist of three sherds of prehistoric pottery, fifteen sherds of Roman pottery, a small quantity of Roman brick/tile, some bone, a roundel made from a piece of Roman tile, and some slag (recovered in small quantities from each of the segments and including a piece of ? vitrified hearth). The Roman pottery indicates that the feature infilled during the 4th century AD.

The Inhumations

Grave 107 contained the skeletal remains of a body that had been buried in a supine position with hands placed across his/her (to be confirmed in the report by Waldron in due course) abdomen and pelvis (see fig 6 & fig 7; plate 2). The grave was quite long (2.30m) for the length of the body it contained, but was shallow (no more than 0.25m deep) and marginally inclined upwards towards the feet with a slight hollow just beyond these at its southern end. The grave fill was a mixture of grey clay soil and redeposited brickearth which was at first difficult to distinguish from the natural geology.

Grave 114, located approximately 3m to the north-west of 107, contained the skeletal remains of a body that had been buried in a crouched position with the arms somewhat awkwardly placed. The front of the skull faced the opposite direction to the bent knees and seems unlikely to be so-positioned entirely as a result of post depositional soil movements (ie

the head was probably, at least partially, facing this direction at the time of burial) - see fig 6 & fig 7 and plate 1. The grave was cut by the medieval ditch 106, and was a maximum of 0.30m deep with a fill that was generally darker in colour and more distinct than that described above for 107.

Few finds were recovered from the fills of either 107 or 114. The former produced four sherds of prehistoric (Bronze Age or later) pottery and a few pieces of struck flint, and the latter produced a single small Bronze Age sherd, and for a while it was thought that this material might date the inhumations. The excavation of the soil around the feet of 107 produced seventeen iron hobnails, however, and a further unidentified iron object was found beneath the right fibula. The hobnails have been identified as being of Roman origin and these provide the best evidence for the dating of 107. The dating of 114 is somewhat more ambiguous, but it seems likely to be of similar date to 107 by association, especially as both burials were orientated in a north-south direction.

Details concerning the age and sex of the burials, and other information which may even enable the cause of death to be suggested, will be available in due course.

Phase 3: Medieval

Seven features can be dated to the medieval period with a reasonable degree of confidence, three of these were ditches (106, 108, and 147), while a further three were most probably small pits (128, 129, and 135), and one (123) was probably a water hole. In addition, ditch 124 seems most likely to be of medieval date though its origin is less secure.

The Ditches

Ditch 106 clearly cut grave 114, and was sampled by the excavation of three segments which showed it to contain an essentially undifferentiated fill of grey-brown clay, or sandy clay, soil. The feature measured between 0.40m and 0.48m in depth where excavated and may have been recut at some stage, this being suggested by the appearance of the terminal in plan and profile, though no evidence to support this contention was visible in section. The finds recovered from the segments excavated consist of medieval pottery sherds, and a smaller number of residual sherds of prehistoric and Roman origin, a small quantity of brick/tile, a possible Roman coin (113), and part of a copper alloy bracelet (119). The finds recovered from 118 have been lost, but these included medieval whitewares of similar type to those recovered from

segment 113 which suggest that the ditch was probably infilling between the mid - late 13th century or just beyond.

Ditch 108 probably cut ditch 124 and ran along the eastern edge of the excavation area where it was sampled by the excavation of three partial segments. The shape and profile of segment 130 was quite variable, which might be indicative of more than one phase of ditch digging with a terminal possibly being present at this point at some stage. The ditch measured up to 0.35m deep and contained a fill of mid to dark grey or greenish grey-brown clay soil that contained quite frequent flecks of charcoal and baked clay; the presence of this material indicated that segment 112 of ditch 108 cut the deeper segment 139 of ditch 124. The excavated segments of 108 produced 25 sherds of pottery, three of which were residual sherds of prehistoric or Roman origin, while the remainder belong to the late 12th or early 13th century and provide the best indication of the date of the feature. In addition to this material a further eleven sherds were recovered from the surface of the unexcavated fill between segments 109 and 112, two of these were residual, while the majority of the remainder were of late 12th/early 13th century date, and two were of late 13th/early 14th century or later origin.

Ditch 147 could be seen to cut ditch 149 prior to its excavation and this relationship was clearly visible in each of the two sections which examined this feature (sections 2 & 3 fig 4). The ditch measured approximately 2.10m in width and was a maximum of 1.02m deep in the terminal segment 148 (segment 162 was not bottomed). Three distinct layers of fill were recognised within each segment: a light yellow/brown clay soil distinguished in each case by the letter A; a dark grey silty clay with orange panning, distinguished by the letter B; and, a primary deposit that was similar to the former but was marginally lighter in colour and was distinguished by the letter C. Thirty-five sherds of medieval pottery belonging to the period between the late 13th and late 14th centuries were recovered from segment 148 along with five residual sherds of prehistoric and Roman origin, and a single medieval sherd from within the same date range was recovered from the rapidly excavated segment 162. Several sherds of late 14th century pottery recovered from the primary fill near the base of segment 148 provide the best indication of the date of the ditch. Other finds recovered from the feature include, tile, two possible nails, some baked clay, a small quantity of slag, some animal bone (including a horse skull from 148B), and various fragments of snail and mussel shell.

The excavation of ditch 124 began with the removal of three spits, each measuring approximately 0.10m deep, from segment 116 at its western end. With the removal of the third spit, a spine of natural clay was revealed in the central part of the segment with areas of

fill, now numbered 120 and 121 (see fig 3), remaining to the north and south of it. It was clear that these areas of fill belonged to two separate ditches, one of which must have succeeded the other, though the sequence could not be determined by excavation due to the undifferentiated nature of the fill. A slight shelf on the southern side of 121 may have been evidence of another phase of recutting. The dual basal profile observed within 116 was less obvious towards the east and segments 154 and 158, and the partial segment 139, were all excavated as single contexts.

The only significant finds recovered from ditch 124 were pottery sherds and most of this material came from segment 116. Two Roman sherds and four medieval sherds were recovered from the surface of this segment prior to its excavation (numbered 116A), and two Bronze Age sherds, nine Roman sherds and six medieval sherds were recovered from the three spits (numbered 116B-D). Two sherds, tentatively identified as being Roman, were also recovered from 121 but were subsequently lost. A prehistoric sherd and a medieval sherd were also recovered from 158, but neither 139 or 154 produced any dateable finds. In addition to this ten further medieval sherds (and five residual Roman sherds) were recovered from the upper two of three 0.10m spits (122A-C) of unmachined soil that were removed to expose 158 - some of this material may have been present in the upper fill of the feature or else, whether contemporary or not, was within the soil deposits which sealed it. The medieval sherds from 116 have all been dated to the 12th century or later, with the exception of one sherd of late 13th or 14th century origin which was recovered from the surface of the fill and can be assumed to be intrusive within the assemblage, and the medieval sherds from 158 and 122 have all been dated to the late 11th/12th century or slightly later; the earlier material recovered must have been present residually. Given that ditch 124 cut the late Roman ditch 149, and that it was itself cut by ditch 108 and water hole 123 which appear to be of late 12th/early 13th century and mid 13th century or slightly later date respectively, there seems little doubt that the feature must have been infilling, and most probably originated, during the 12th century.

The Pits

It has been assumed for convenience that features 128 and 129 were small pits, but either or both of these could have been ditch terminals. The excavated fill of 128 was an homogeneous grey-brown silty clay which produced three sherds of pottery of 12th century or later date. It is possible that some of the machine removed deposits lying directly above this (layers 170 and

173 for example - see fig 4 may have been associated with the same feature, but these produced no finds. The fill of feature 129 was entirely removed during the machining of the site and was only recognised during the examination of the edge of site section (section 1, fig 4). The significance of feature 129 within the stratigraphic sequence has been noted above, it produced frequent sherds of pottery most of which emanated from a single vessel of early 13th century origin.

Feature 135 was a sub-rectangular pit approximately 0.40m deep with a fill of dark grey-brown clay soil with orange flecking. No relationship was established between features 135 and 134 which were intercutting. 135 produced a residual prehistoric sherd, and three sherds of medieval pottery which suggest that it may date to the 12th century.

The Water Hole

The large, irregularly-shaped feature 123, which measured approximately 3.20m across by 1.15m deep as excavated, seems most likely to have been used as a water hole. The original depth of the feature was at least 0.10m-0.15m deeper than this, but the upper fill, clearly visible due to the presence of fragments of baked clay, was removed during the machining of the site to the level at which the natural geology occurred. 123 clearly cut ditch 124, and contained five layers of fill: 123A, a mid grey-brown clay with baked clay fragments and charcoal flecks; 123B, a dark grey-brown clay with fragments of baked clay and lenses of charcoal; 123C, a light to mid grey silty clay with occasional gravel pebbles; 123D, a mottled orange-grey clay containing much redeposited or slumped natural; and, 123E, a light to mid grey silty clay. Layers 123A and 123B each produced frequent sherds of medieval pottery and a smaller quantity was also recovered from 123C and 123C/D - this material suggests a mid-13th century or slightly later date for the feature. The baked clay recovered from the feature was of limited interest, though a few fragments displayed flat surfaces, and few other finds were recovered.

Phase 4: Modern

A single modern feature, 156, was discovered within the site area. This vertically sided feature appeared to have been machine-dug and was probably a recent test pit. It cut the Roman ditch 110.

Undated Features

Fourteen features could not be satisfactorily dated as a result of their excavation, but the character of their fills suggested that all were probably of ancient origin. These features consisted of various small pits and post holes, 115, 125, 126, 127, 131, 134, 140, 141, 143, 146, 150, 151, 160 and 161. Two of the latter, 150 and 160, may have been no more than root or animal disturbances or localized variations in the natural geology, but, in the absence of conclusive evidence to the contrary, they have been included with the man-made features described below.

The Pits and Post Holes

It is not worth discussing the remaining undated features in separate groups as the information available for them all is extremely limited, and in some cases it was impossible to be certain whether the feature was a small pit or a post hole (150 for example). The majority of these features measured between 0.10 and 0.20m in depth, while 141, 143, 146 and 150 were all less than 0.10m deep, and 151 and 161 were 0.28m and 0.32m deep respectively; all contained single fills of grey-brown or orange-brown clay soil. No relationship could be determined between features 134, 143 and 161 and the features with which these contexts were intercutting.

None of these features produced any significant finds with the exception of 115 from which part of a copper alloy bracelet and two fragments of the same style of square-headed nail were recovered. It has been tentatively suggested in the small finds report that the nail fragments may be of early post-medieval date, but they could be of earlier origin (particularly in view of the absence of other material of this date from the site area), and the bracelet fragment was probably of Roman date. When first exposed it was thought that 115 may have been a grave similar to 107 and 114, despite the differences in orientation between these features, but the absence of bones indicates that it was not used for this function as there is no reason to suspect that their preservation here would not have been equivalent to those within 107 and 114 nearby.

As the only dateable Roman features discovered within the site area were ditches and graves, and given that some of the small pits discovered appear to be of medieval date (this assumes that 128 and 129 were not ditch terminals - see above), it is perhaps more likely that the majority, if not all, of the undated pits and post holes were also of medieval origin.

THE POTTERY by *Phil Jones* and *Rob Poulton*

All sherds included in the pottery assemblage from this site were carefully examined, and classified by fabric using a x20 binocular microscope as necessary. An archive listing was created, quantified by fabric, with details of the finish and forms, including sketches of rims, bases and other details, as appropriate. The results of this work are summarised in table 1, where the fabric classifications are based on those set out in Jones 1998a for the prehistoric pottery, Jones in prep for the Roman material and Jones 1998b for the medieval ceramics. Pottery recovered from the prehistoric site at Thorpe Lea Nurseries, Egham, the Roman town of Staines, and its medieval successor, have provided much of the material on which the classifications are based.

The pottery seems to belong to three distinct periods, if one sets aside the post-medieval material. This latter was only recovered during the trial trenching work, and is largely or wholly of 18th/19th century or later date. It is not considered further below.

The prehistoric pottery consisted mostly of small sherds. There was little that was closely diagnostic of date, but the flat bases recovered from contexts 108 and 155, together with the general character of the material, consisting of generally thick sherds, heavily tempered with calcined flint, suggests that a Bronze Age date may be appropriate.

All, or almost all, of the Roman pottery is of late Roman date. Context 111 could be of third century date, but the remainder of the Roman contexts are of later date.

The earliest medieval pottery belongs to the late 11th or early 12th century, and some contexts, including 122, 128 and 158, may well be of that date. Most of the pottery belongs to the period between the late 12th or early 13th century and the mid 14th century. None of the context assemblages need be later than the mid 14th century, with the possible exception of 148.

The pottery from this site is not of great intrinsic interest, but it does seem to demonstrate an interesting sequence, in which what is absent may be as significant as what is present. In particular, if it is assumed that the medieval and Roman occupation in this area was attracted to this site by the presence of the flourishing adjacent town of Staines, the absence of material dating to the earlier Roman period and to the later medieval period would appear to be significant. It may be suggested that the area was only periodically suitable for occupation, and the absence of late medieval pottery in particular, with an apparently abrupt end to the pottery sequence in or around the middle of the 14th century, may be especially relevant to this conclusion.

THE OTHER FINDS by *Nicola Hembrey* (with Worked flint by *NJ Marples*)

A catalogue of the finds is set out below, grouped by material. Where applicable, descriptions are followed by the small find (sf) number. All weights are referred to in grammes (g).

Abbreviations used are as follows:

l	length	th	thickness
w	width	int	internal
d	diameter	ret'd	retouched

Discussion

Prehistoric

66 worked flints were collected on site, mainly diagnostic of a later prehistoric date. The bulk of the assemblage is residual within later contexts; despite not being evidence of direct occupation on site, these flints are nonetheless a good indication of prehistoric presence in the area.

Roman

Prior to the excavation of this site, it had originally been thought that it would yield few Roman finds, due to its position so far east from the Thames bridgehead area. However, as in most excavations undertaken further to the west in Staines High Street, including the nearby Prudential and Percy Harrison's sites (excavated in 1988 and 1989), a large proportion of the site assemblage is of Roman date. We can therefore conclude that Roman occupation of Staines during the second century was as intensive at the east end of the town as at the west, near the bridgehead.

The assemblage of Roman finds would seem to be fairly standard for an urban site, although it can perhaps be interpreted as indicative of a site of relatively lowly status. Very few copper-alloy finds were collected (although the two bracelet fragments could be seen as imports of status to a town enjoying the process of Romanisation). In addition, there were no objects of lead, no worked bone, and no glass, and the building materials were found in fairly low quantities.

The quernstones and slag may indicate that some form of industrial processing was taking place on or near the site.

Medieval and later

Few finds of a medieval or later date were collected. The small find assemblage consists of a few miscellaneous small structural iron fittings, and two knife blade fragments. Only ten fragments of medieval and later tile were collected, all of standard type. Few post-medieval finds were recovered. Although few, these finds are of a personal and domestic nature, and so (unsurprisingly, being an urban site) extend the occupation date into the medieval period.

1994 evaluation

An evaluation on the site was undertaken in 1994, prior to the excavation. The finds recovered during the evaluation were generally a good match for those recovered during the excavation: twelve struck flints, including one core, a hammerstone, five flakes, a retouched flake, a retouched blade, and an end scraper. In addition were 53 fragments of Roman tile, mainly *tegulae* but also floor tiles, and nine fragments of medieval or later-dated tile. One piece of slag was collected, as well as 52 fragments of unworked animal bone. The only metalwork comprised two iron nails and a ?late medieval/early post-medieval object of copper alloy, possibly a lace chape.

Worked flint

66 pieces of humanly modified flint were recovered from seventeen contexts. Two thirds of these were flakes; only three blade forms and no blade cores were identified, suggesting a later prehistoric (probably Bronze Age) date range for most of the material.

However, a possible serrated blade manufactured from Bullhead Beds flint, from context 105, can be confidently attributed to the Neolithic period. In addition, a finely retouched bladelet (possibly an obliquely blunted point microlith) from context 157 is almost certainly of Mesolithic date.

The archive can be consulted for a full listing of flint by context, but the assemblage can be summarised thus:

Flakes	35
Utilised/retouched flakes	8
Burnt flake	1
Blades	1
Serrated blade	1
Ret'd bladelet/microlith	1

Flake/blade	1
Awl	4
Scraper	1
Cores and fragments	5
Miscellaneous waste	5
Miscellaneous burnt	3
Total	66

Calcined flint

64 fragments of calcined flint were recovered from just two (apparently prehistoric-dated) contexts.

137 15 fragments; 75g.

153 49 fragments; 563g.

Copper alloy objects

The copper-alloy assemblage is small, and is an indication of the fairly lowly status of the site. Only three objects were collected; fragments of two bracelets, and a coin. All are likely to be of Roman date; copper-alloy bracelets are generally associated with late Roman activity, and this fits in with the late Roman date of the bulk of the pottery assemblage, as well as the Roman occupation of Staines during the later Roman period. In addition, a post-medieval decorated brass button was collected from context 147 (sf 7).

115? Bracelet fragment, but very small in diameter, so possibly an earring, hair-ring, or a child's bracelet (adult-sized bracelets were occasionally cut down to fit a child's wrist, or adapted after breakage). Originally oval in shape, with D-shaped section, the bracelet is of plain, undecorated wire, and is incomplete. Int d 32mm x approx. 36mm.
(sf 3)

119 Small bracelet fragment, of D-shaped section, with transverse grooves interspaced with toothing. W of strip 3mm, l 24mm, th 1mm.
(sf 5)

113 ?Roman coin. Notched and slightly chipped at the edges. The surfaces are so corroded as to render the details illegible, but it is clear that one surface is struck off-centre. D 15mm.
(sf 2)

Iron objects

34 iron objects were collected on site. The assemblage was generally fragmentary and very concreted, so, in many places, definite identification has proved impossible. To this end, several objects have been classified with the phrase 'function unknown'; these are from contexts 149 (sf 12), 112C (sf 16), and 152C (sf 17). Only X-Radiography of the entire assemblage could establish certain identification, and, as most objects are by their size and shape assumed to be structural in nature, this has not been undertaken.

The only objects of particular interest are objects that can be referred to as personal in nature; fragments of two knife blades, and a collection of seventeen hobnails, found in association with the human skeleton from context 107.

Personal objects

- | | | |
|-------------|--|---------|
| 109 | Tanged knife blade, tip missing. L 123mm, max w 26mm. ?Medieval. | (sf 1) |
| 122B spit 2 | ?Knife blade, very concreted. | (sf 15) |
| 107 | Seventeen hobnails, found in association with a human skeleton. Roman. | (sf 19) |

Structural objects

- | | | |
|----------|---|---------|
| 115 | Two square-sectioned tapering headed nails; l 56mm and 41mm. Two fragments of the same style nail; l 31mm and 30mm. ?Early post-medieval. | (sf 4) |
| 148A | ?Nail. | (sf 8) |
| 147 surf | ?Nail. | (sf 9) |
| 148B | ?Nail. | (sf 10) |
| 152A | ?Nail fragment. | (sf 11) |
| 108 | Headed nail. | (sf 13) |
| 116 | ?Nail. | (sf 14) |
| 108 | ?Bolt fragment. | (sf 18) |
| 107 | ?Object; thick wire, concreted. | (sf 6) |

Ceramic objects

One probable ceramic object was collected. Manufactured from a Roman tile, this roundel has been cut into a roughly oval shape.

Roundels are not uncommon finds for the Roman period, and are known to have been produced from coarseware pottery fabric (including amphora) and tile. The function of these roundels is at present unclear. Crummy (1983, p93) states that they were most likely for domestic use; possibly as kitchen weights, or as lids for narrow-necked jars, or as mats on which to set hot cooking pots. They could equally have had uses as tally pieces, or have recreational uses, such as stacking toys, or as board game counters.

155 Tile roundel, of roughly oval shape, with edges unevenly cut and not smoothed. D 84mm x 75mm, th 20mm. Roman.

Quernstones

Fragments of only one (lava) quernstone were recovered, from context 162. The quernstone is of rotary type, with a maximum thickness of 44mm, and the six fragments weigh 665g.

Lava querns almost certainly were imported from the quarries of the Eifel Hills in the Mayen/Niedermendig region of the Rhine. Buckley and Major (in Crummy 1983) speak of these quarries trading saddle-querns from as early as the Neolithic period, and circular rotary querns from the late La Tene period. Trade with Britain was at its peak during the Roman period, and, apart from an apparent break in the early Anglo-Saxon period, it continued until the late Middle Ages.

Slag

69 fragments of slag, weighing 1407g, were collected from nine contexts on site. The presence of these fragments may not necessarily be an indication of ironworking on site, especially as the assemblage is not great in number and there is no further evidence for ironworking. It is possible that ironworking was taking place in the vicinity, and that the slag was brought onto the site for use as hard-core.

109 5 fragments; 115g.

116 1 fragment; 3g.

116 sp2 3 fragments; 18g.

148A 10 fragments; 69g.

152A 20 fragments; 225g.

154 2 fragments; 30g.

155 3 fragments; 680g.

159B 3 fragments; 78g.

Animal bone (unworked)

Animal bone detritus was present within 78% of contexts (please see archive for a full listing of the 31 contexts containing bone). Of particular interest amongst the assemblage was a horse skull, found within context 148B. This, apart, the remainder of the animal bone is of little or no archaeological value as it occurs in small quantities in each context, is generally small and fragmentary pieces, and could in many cases be revisited within the features it occurs in.

Shell

Shell is often collected from sites of medieval date, and was present here within just three contexts.

123A One fragment of oyster shell; 45g.

148B Many fragments of two snail shells; 11g.

148C Several fragments of mussel shell; 2g.

Charcoal

Only one fragment of charcoal was collected; from context 123A.

Baked clay

Baked clay was present within fifteen contexts; 92 pieces weighing 1121g (please see archive for list of contexts containing baked clay). All of the material was fragmentary; no large pieces survive intact.

The fragments are mostly within a colour range of buff-brown through to orange-red, with a couple of black (burnt) fragments. Most fragments have quartz sand grains and flint inclusions within the clay matrix; it is impossible to tell whether the flint was added or was present in the clay when dug.

A few of the fragments display flat surfaces, and one fragment, from context 148B, has a shallow groove along it, possibly a wattle impression.

Ceramic building materials

All brick and tile was collected on site. Most of the material was very fragmentary; very few even partially complete tiles were recovered. The fabric of the tiles was not studied in detail,

but most fragments conformed to a colour range of orange-red through to brown, with quartz sand grains in the clay matrix. The majority of the tile is of Roman date; less than 7% is of medieval date.

Roman 57 fragments were collected from 22 contexts (please see archive for full listing). All of the fragments were of common Roman types, namely *tegulae* and *imbrex*. None of the tiles were complete (only two *tegulae* fragments, from contexts 148B and 152C, displayed intact flanges), and many were rolled and degraded. A few of the *tegulae* fragments were scored with single or double-parallel straight lines, but, as none were complete, signatures or batch marks were impossible to determine.

Medieval and later Ten fragments of medieval/post-medieval tile, weighing 940g, were collected from five contexts (please see archive for full listing). As would be expected, these were of peg-hole type roof tile. The assemblage was generally very fragmentary; no complete tiles were collected.

Stone building materials

Only one possible fragment of worked stone was collected from site, found within context 152A. Weighing 359g, it is thought to be a fragment of tufa.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The excavation area was quite small, measuring approximately 24m by 12m, but despite this produced finds and revealed an interesting variety of features belonging to three principal phase. Similar material was recovered from the evaluation of the site in 1994. Most of the prehistoric material emanated from later contexts, but its presence, and the discovery of the Bronze Age ditch 137 which is probably loosely contemporary with the bulk of these artefacts, indicates that the area was utilized during this period and suggests that some settlement activity is likely within the immediate vicinity. The Sites and Monuments Record for Surrey currently lists just one entry of prehistoric origin in the immediate vicinity of the site, this being for a Neolithic pit and associated pottery discovered just 75m to the south-west. Recent work by the Surrey County Archaeological Unit at the site of the New Police Station, Kingston Road (Robertson 1997), at the site of the former Bus Garage, London Road (Dover 1996), at 42-54 London Road (Hayman, 1998), and at Staines House, all within a 200m radius of the

site, produced occasional finds of prehistoric origin, but no contemporary features, though a Bronze Age ditch was discovered by the Unit at Leacroft Close some 500m to the south-east (Dover 1998).

The Roman features discovered by the excavation are not indicative of habitation within the site area, and building materials are not well represented within the finds assemblage. Nevertheless Roman material does constitute a large proportion of the site assemblage, which, together with pit 117/94 suggests that there was some settlement in the close vicinity. With the possible exception of the two burials, which are of uncertain date within the Roman period, the features discovered here in 1994 and 1998 are all of late Roman origin. A similar situation was seen at Staines House where a number of Roman features, mostly ditches, were discovered and those that can be dated provisionally appear to be of late Roman date (Dover pers. comm.). It is also probably significant that a double inhumation, aligned north-south, and the remains of a single inhumation aligned east-west (most of this burial had been removed in antiquity by the digging of two Roman or medieval ditches) were discovered at this site, and it may be relevant that the Sites and Monuments Record lists the discovery of three Roman vessels, 'possibly indicative of a burial area', some 250m to the east of 18-32 London Road. There is currently little or no other evidence for Roman period burials from Staines or its outskirts.

It is uncertain at the time of writing of this report whether sufficient evidence was obtained from the excavation at Staines House to date the inhumations discovered there, but it could be that they, and their counterparts from 18-32 London Road, were relatively early burials in cemeteries or otherwise unoccupied ground on either side of the London to Silchester Roman Road, and that this ground was encroached upon due to expansion in the 3rd and 4th centuries which gave rise to the late Roman features discovered at the two sites. No Roman features were discovered immediately to the west at the New Police Station, or after the demolition of Richmond House (24-32 Kingston Road), however, but a gravel surface, possibly part of a roadway or yard surface, which appeared to be of Roman origin was discovered on the Bus Garage site. The positioning of the bones within 114 suggested that this burial may not have taken place with any degree of care, which could mean that the body was disposed of without ceremony, possibly that it belonged to an execution victim.

Relatively few finds of medieval or later date were recovered from the excavation, though medieval features were the most frequent amongst those that were dateable and included a reasonable variety of different types. It also seems likely that at least some of the

undated features belong to this period. The presence of at least three medieval pits and one probable water hole suggests that there was some contemporary occupation of the immediate vicinity, though the paucity of finds and limited discovery of material of this date at sites such as the New Police Station and 42-54 London Road suggest that this was of limited extent; features of similar date to those discovered here were found at the Staines House site. At 42-54 London Road a ditch with a dual basal profile was discovered on the same alignment as ditch 124. Both seem likely to be parts of the same feature, though a single sherd of late Roman pottery and a small fragment of (probably) Roman brick/tile were the only finds discovered at the neighbouring site. An early 13th century ditch and a second ditch possibly of similar date were also discovered there. Little can be said about the ditches discovered at 18-32 London Road without knowing more about their respective courses, but the size of feature 147 indicates that it was probably a significant boundary.

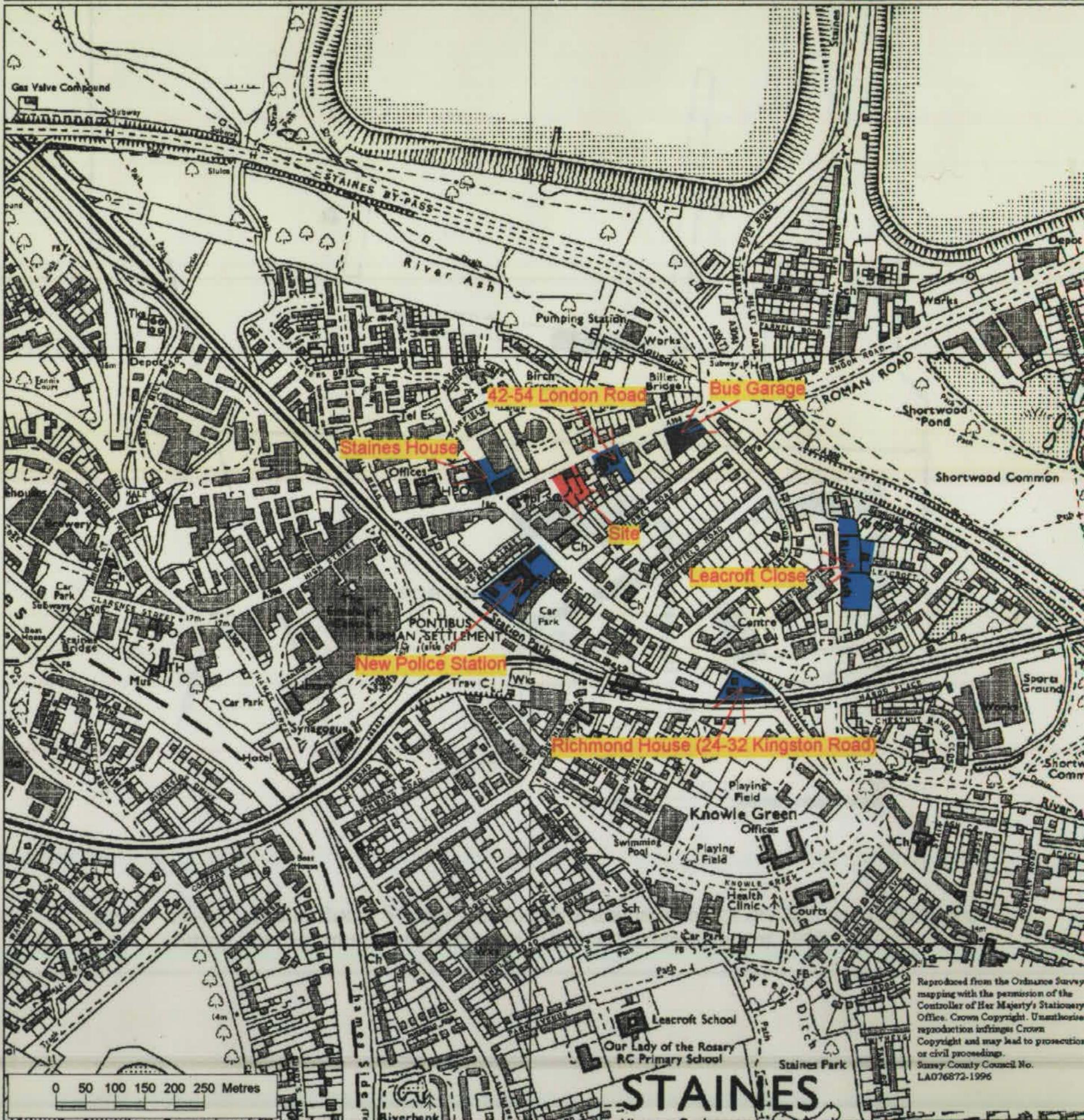
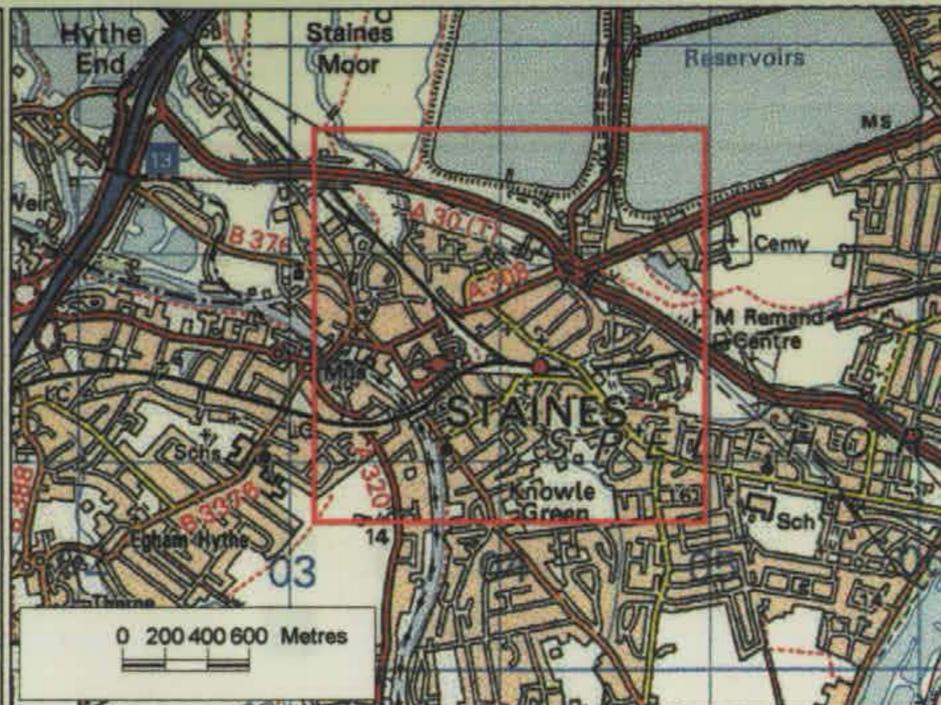
¹⁴⁷
¹⁴⁹ No features of late medieval or post medieval date were discovered during the 1994 evaluation or the subsequent excavation, and finds belonging to these periods were also conspicuous by their absence. The earliest post 14th century feature discovered within the area was the 17th or 18th century pit 104 found in trial trench I in 1994.

The distinctive sequence of occupation at this site is similar to that at nearby sites and a general explanation for the pattern may be suggested. The Roman town of Staines (named *Pontibus* meaning 'at the bridges') and its medieval successor were both sited on a small gravel island, raised just above the Thames floodplain (for basic details see Bird 1987, and Poulton 1987; Jones and Poulton forthcoming will provide a detailed review). The present site lies just beyond the intensively occupied town area, alongside the principal Roman road to the town (the London to Silchester road) whose route was followed by the main highway in the medieval and later periods. The present work, taken together with the results of other recent archaeological excavation in the vicinity noted above, suggests that from the later Roman period onwards settlement was attracted to this area by its propinquity to the town and highway. This can only have become possible as a result of improved conditions for settlement, with the area becoming less prone to flooding, for reasons that are not known. It may also be significant that late medieval features were not identified. This pattern was even more clearly shown at the Staines House site, and it may be suggested that regular occupation of the area ceased at about this time as a result of the onset of renewed flooding. This early end to medieval occupation may also help explain why there is no obvious documentation for it. The absence of occupation evidence in the Saxon period could also be explained by a

resumption in flooding, but is more probably the result of the low intensity of occupation within Staines itself rendering it unlikely that settlement would be attracted to the less suitable areas on its periphery.

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Fig 1. 18-32 London Road: The site location, (red) and other sites of archaeological interest in the immediate vicinity.

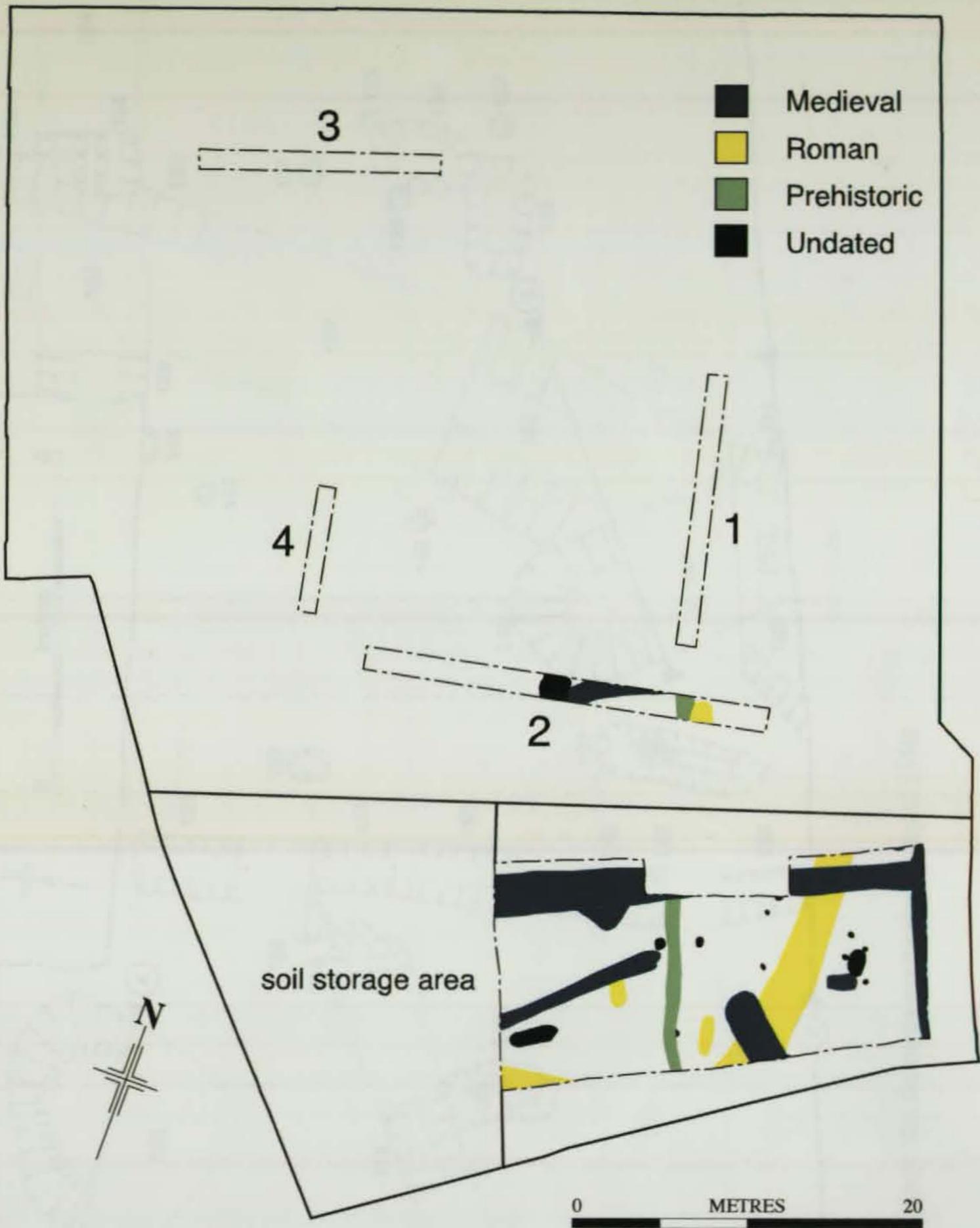


fig 2 18-32 London Road, Staines: the location and phasing of the features discovered during the trial trench evaluation in 1994 and excavations of 1998

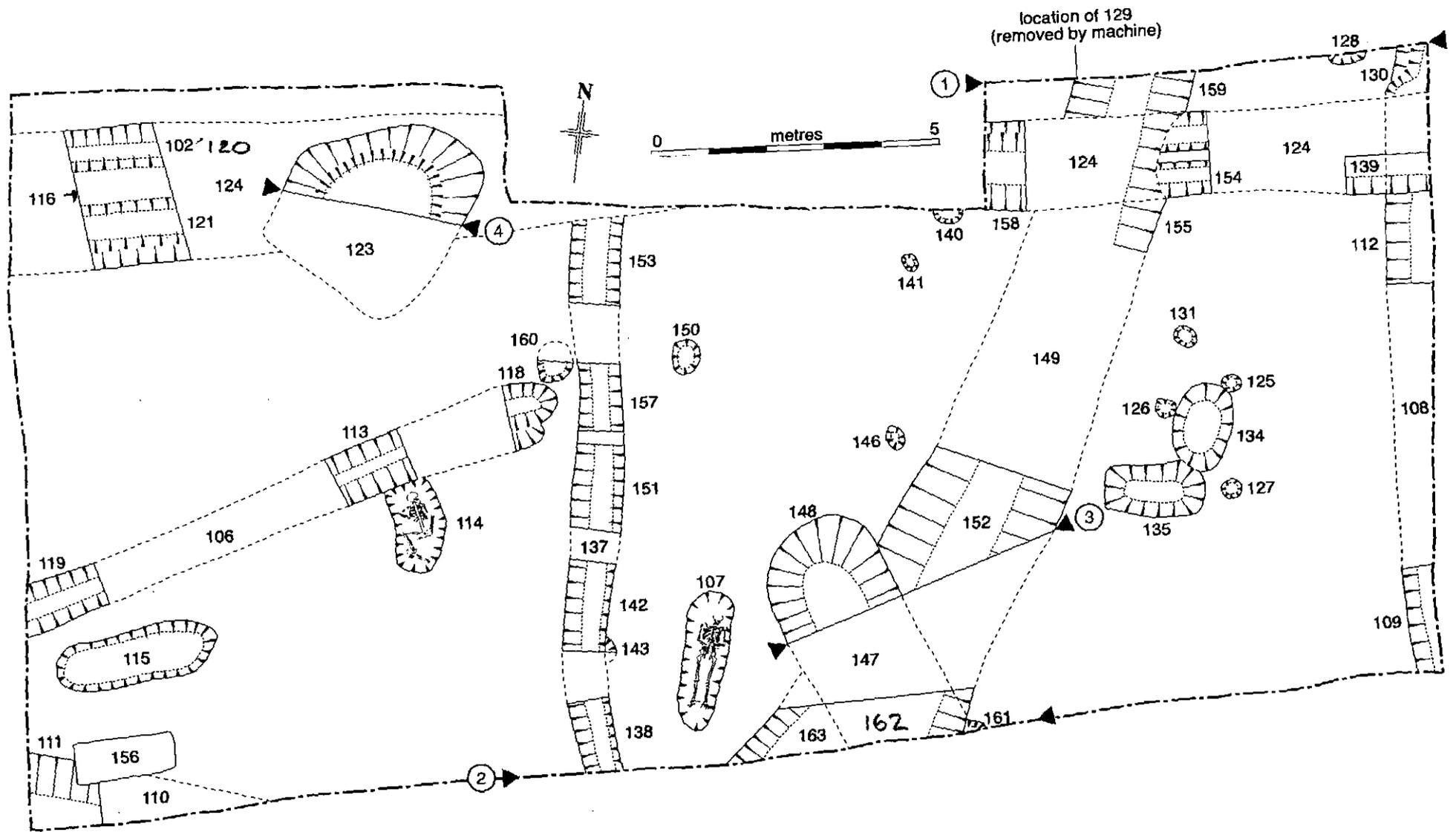


fig 3 18-32 London Road, Staines: the features excavated in April 1998

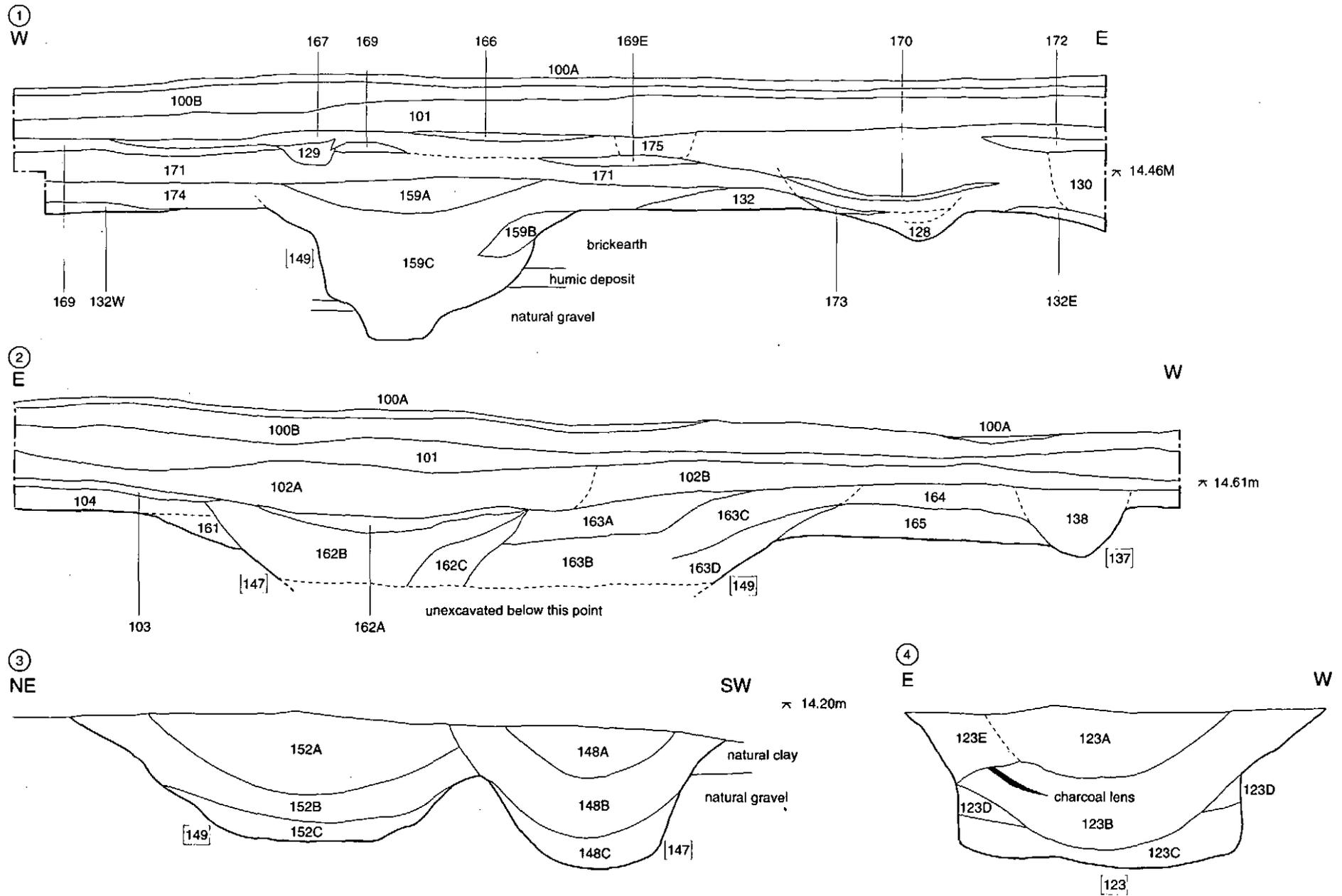


fig 4 18-32 London Road, Staines: drawings of sections 1-4 (see fig 3 for location)

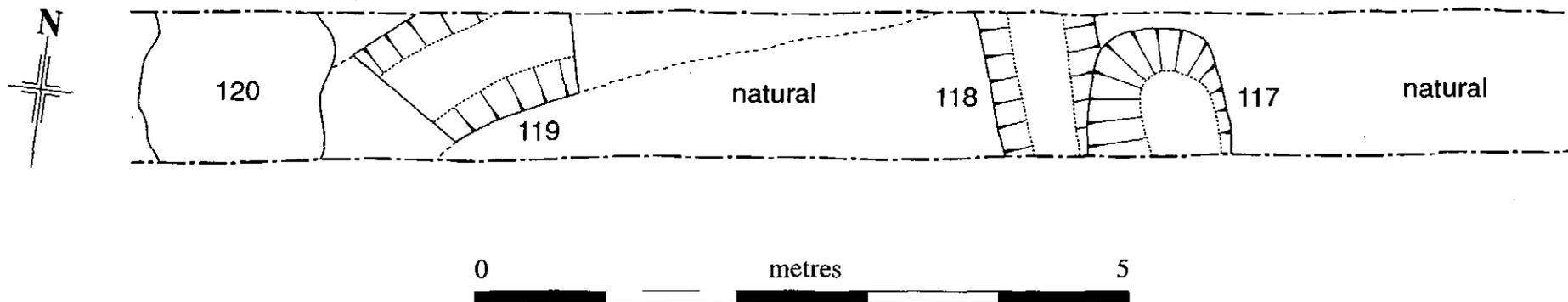


fig 5 18-32 London Road, Staines: features in trial trench 2

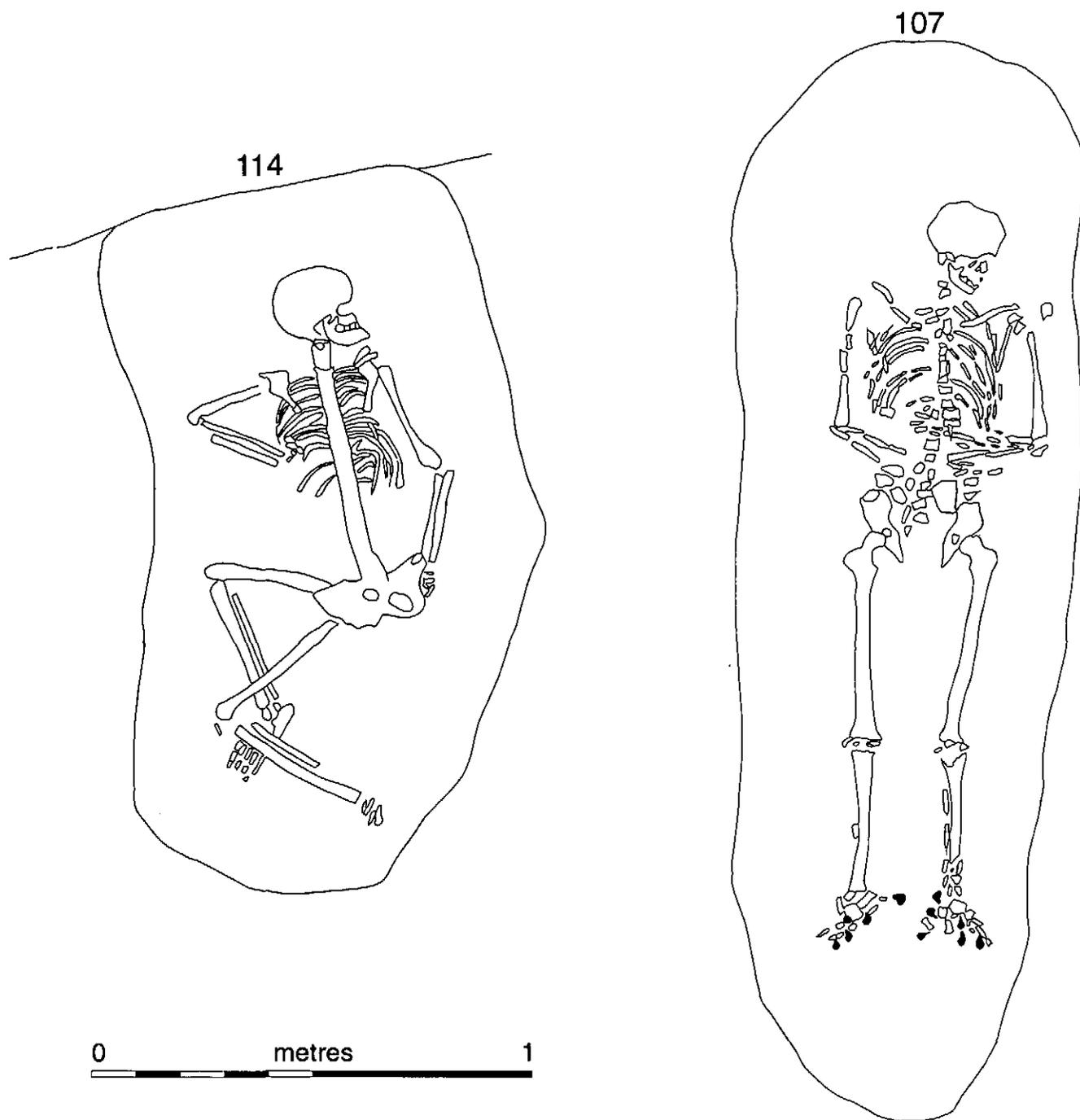


Fig.6 18-32 London Road, Staines: Roman burials discovered during the 1998 excavations (Hobnails in feature 107 are shaded black)



Plate 1



Plate 2

fig 7 18-32 London Road, Staines: the inhumation burials discovered in 1998