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An Archaeological Evaluation at

**Newlands Nursery,
Lagness, Pagham,
West Sussex**

P-98-053

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A planning application was submitted to Arun District Council (P/28/98) to develop an area of 7.02 hectares in a field adjacent to Newlands Nursery (formerly Forbridge Farm). As a pre-condition of the planning application being considered an archaeological evaluation was required, due to the possibility of extant Roman remains, to assess the impact of the scheme. This evaluation involved two phases as stipulated by Mills (1998): a preliminary resistivity survey and subsequent trial trenching in order to test certain anomalies revealed through the geophysics and also to examine a larger area. This field work was undertaken by Southern Archaeology (Chichester) Ltd..

Summary:

In total an area of 6000m² was prospected using geophysics and 250 metres of archaeological evaluation trenching was carried out between 14th - 26th August, 1998, at Newlands Nursery, Lagness (centred NGR SU 898015). It would appear that a possible villa site postulated as occurring in the immediate area may lie elsewhere, although further evidence of Roman activity was revealed through this archaeological evaluation.

Geology, Topography and Archaeological Background:

The site lies approximately two and a half kilometres to the north of Pagham and to the south east of Chichester. The topographic regime is dominated by a very gentle south facing slope, from 5 metres AOD to 4.5 metres AOD. A raised area of level ground, at 4.7 metres AOD, lay in the south east corner of the field. This was examined by placing Trench 3 along its length. Additionally, a large ovoid depression was clearly visible to the west of this area and the eastern end of Trench 2 was placed to inspect this anomaly. The underlying geology of the area is a calcareous silty drift (Hodgkinson, 1967, Geological Survey, Sheet 317), also known as 'brickearth'; this aeolian deposit represents a period of extreme desertification in the Devensian (c. 12,000 bp). Two distinct fertile soils have formed upon this parent material in the study area, these being of the Park Gate and the Hook Series. The area is presently used commercially for arable farming.

During ploughing, in the 1970's, finds of Roman pottery, tile and tesserae were made, and identified by Alec Down. Subsequently, the area was listed as a 'potential villa site' by Black (1987, 171) due to the presence of the high status finds.

Phase 1:

Methodology:

An area of 6000 m² was gridded into 20 m squares (15 squares in total), and traversed using a Geoscan Research RM15 resistance meter with PAI twin electrode array, at one metre traverse and sample intervals in accordance with the guidelines set out in Mills (1998, Section 4.2). This survey, which took two days, was completed on the 17th August.

Results:

The results of the survey were down-loaded at regular intervals using Geoscan's Geoplot 2.01 analytical and graphics software. These results were far from conclusive, but certainly did not reveal a villa, an area of high resistance was apparent in the northerly edge of the geophysics area; Trench 1 was placed to examine this pocket of high resistance (see below). The poor results were probably a reflection of the variable geology, compounded by the extended dry period experienced at the time. The absence of rainwater tends to minimise the variation in the soils resistance, and therefore the disparities which may exist may be more elusive than if it had rained at the time.

Phase II:

Methodology:

The trial trenches (see Figure 2) were machine excavated using a toothless bucket (1.5 metres wide) to expose the undisturbed 'brickearth' substrate. The depth of the topsoil varied from 0.19 to 0.25 metres. The substrate was subsequently cleaned to expose and/ or confirm any archaeology. The substrate and the archaeological features within exhibited evidence of bioturbation (from root, worm and rabbit disturbance) and plough marks were also visible, particularly in Trench 1. The weather during this fieldwork was favourable, rather than detrimental, to the identification of features as light showers enhanced the visibility of possible anomalies. To comply with the archaeological specification (Mills, 1998, Section 4.7) at least 50% of the total of the archaeological features recognised were to be partially excavated, but all the visible features should be recorded. In actual fact a greater percentage of the features was excavated (*c.* 80%).

All of the features were recorded using the single context recording system, planned at 1:20 and given a detailed soil description as outlined in the Museum of London's site manual (1990); all excavated features had sections drawn at 1:10. Due to the ephemeral nature of many of the features only those excavated were photographed (using both colour slide and black and white print films). Artefactual remains were hand collected, and the area was metal detected (archaeological metal objects were recovered).

Results:

The evaluation trenches revealed a number of features, with the area towards the south of the area investigated being the most active archaeologically (see Figure 3).

Three dominant features were recorded on the site, two were V-shaped ditches, being found in trenches 2 and 5. Both of these ditches were of a similar shape and depth (approximately 2.5 metres deep), although their widths were very different; ditch 8 being 3.5 metres wide whilst ditch 18 was 2.1 metres wide (see Figure 1).

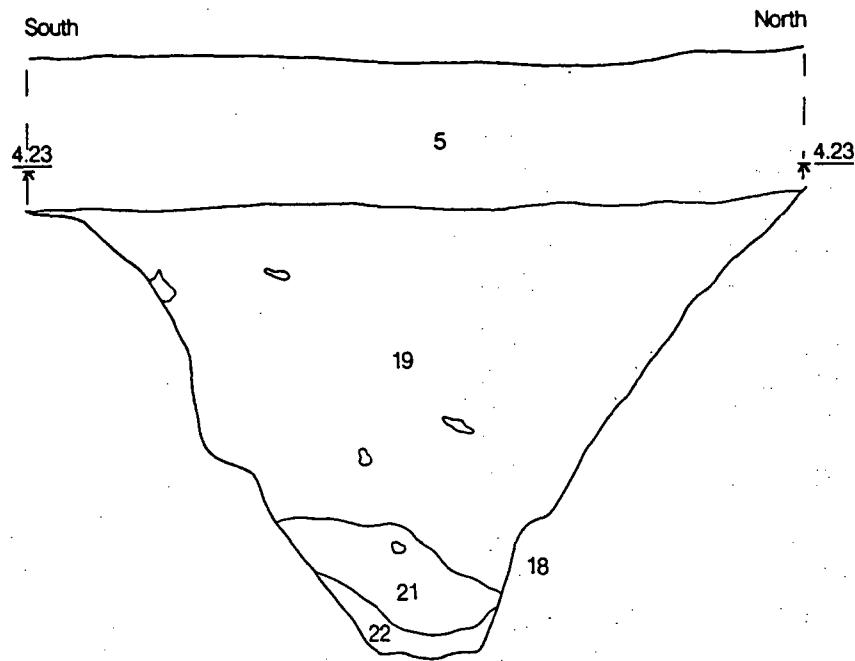


Figure 1: North West facing section through Ditch 18, scale 1: 20.

The other dominant feature at this site lay at the east end of Trench 2, this appears to be a large pond or a depression. The blue hue to the fill suggests that this sediment was laid down under anaerobic conditions, implying the presence of water, and whilst the absence of a fining-up sequence or a common orientation to the finds within the fill suggests that this body of water was either stagnant or at least very slow moving.

Additional features also identified were postholes, a possible pit (Feature 10, see below), linear features, tree boles and land drains. Most of these features did not produce dateable finds and as such it is difficult to attribute a date range, similarly very few stratigraphic relationships existed and therefore a relative chronology is equally elusive.

A stratigraphic matrix is not supplied with this report as most of the features simply underlie the topsoil, and overlie the natural. However, Feature 26 certainly truncates Feature 57, as does Feature 39 overlie Feature 12. Whilst, unsurprisingly, the gravel filled land drains 41 and 49 overlie Features 6 and 46 respectively.

It should be noted that no archaeology was found in Trench 1. This area was trenched in order to examine an area of high resistance highlighted in the geophysics. The high resistance and the absence of archaeology may be explained by the slightly thinner topsoil at this point, as endorsed by clearly visible plough marks in the substrate.

Discussion:

Prehistoric

One struck flake recovered during the excavation of Feature 6, was certainly residual, but it does hint at some activity in the locality during prehistory.

Roman

Several features on the site appear to be of Roman date; and although no villa was identified during the evaluation, fragments of fine wares, such as samian, and *tegula* (see Appendix II) suggest that a substantial, and by inference 'high status' building, lies in the vicinity, but not in the immediate area. Recovered from the top soil was the lower stone of a rotary quern (see Appendix II), this is almost certainly Roman. This artefact hints at the economic role of this nearby Roman activity, endorsing the view that this may be regarded as a villa, i.e. a significantly romanised farmstead.

As mentioned above two v-shaped ditches (e.g. Figure 1) were revealed during the evaluation. It has been suggested that these may have had a military role, but it is more likely that these represent field enclosure/ drainage ditches; being similar to those recorded at Brancaster in which their interpretation is more certain due to full excavation (Williams and Zeepvat, 1994, 77).

Additionally three postholes (Features 35, 37 and probably 39) are also dated to the Roman period; it is uncertain as to whether these features are associated with other features, or are a separate entity (see Figure 2). The slightly earlier dates of these features (see Appendix I) may be explained by the fact that the dating represents the post hole's construction, whilst the dating of the ditch fills represents their demise in use, thereby producing this apparent dichotomy. Some of these possible ditches, referred to as 'linear features' (see Appendix I) are of uncertain use, probably being deeper originally, these features are now considerably more ephemeral, probably due to ploughing.

One possible pit, Feature 10, was recorded in Trench 2 (see Figure 3), although it is possible that this feature may also be a ditch terminus.

Saxo-Norman

A sherd of Saxo-Norman was recovered from feature 17 (part of Feature 46 - see Appendix I and II), although this is almost certainly residual (see below), it implies the possibility of nearby activity of this date. The relatively large and unabraded condition of the pot suggests that this is not an accidental component to night soiling.

Post Medieval

The dominant large feature of the site was Feature 46, this pond or depression was probably responsible for the large depression visible in the field lying at towards the eastern end of Trench 2 (see above). As this feature contained one large unabraded sherd of lead glazed earthenware, found

towards the base of the fill it is almost certain that it is of approximately eighteenth century, and that the Roman and Saxo-Norman pottery (see Appendix II) is residual.

It should also be considered that this large feature which covered a large area of the Trench 2 has probably truncated and obscured earlier features, and that the areas lying beyond this feature may contain similar concentrations of Roman activity to those found in the west of this feature in Trench 2.

Additional post-medieval features were a series of land drains (Features 24, 41, 44 and 49). The undated linear features recorded in Trench 3 may also represent a modern drain; although no actual drain, or free draining material, was found on excavation. It does appear that the majority of the modern drainage ditches lie to the south of the area investigated, suggesting that this area requires drainage. In the past this has been pooled to form the pond, and perhaps in the Roman period the larger ditches were employed in drainage.

Confidence Rating of the Methodology and the Archive:

It is felt that the methodology employed has resulted in an accurate picture of the archaeology. The finds and archive, currently temporarily stored by Southern Archaeology, will ultimately be stored at Chichester District Museum.

Acknowledgements:

Southern Archaeology would like to express their thanks to Parigo Horticultural Company Ltd. for the provision of a work bench, dry storage and a mains supply which greatly aided the fieldwork component to this report, particularly the geophysics stage of the evaluation.

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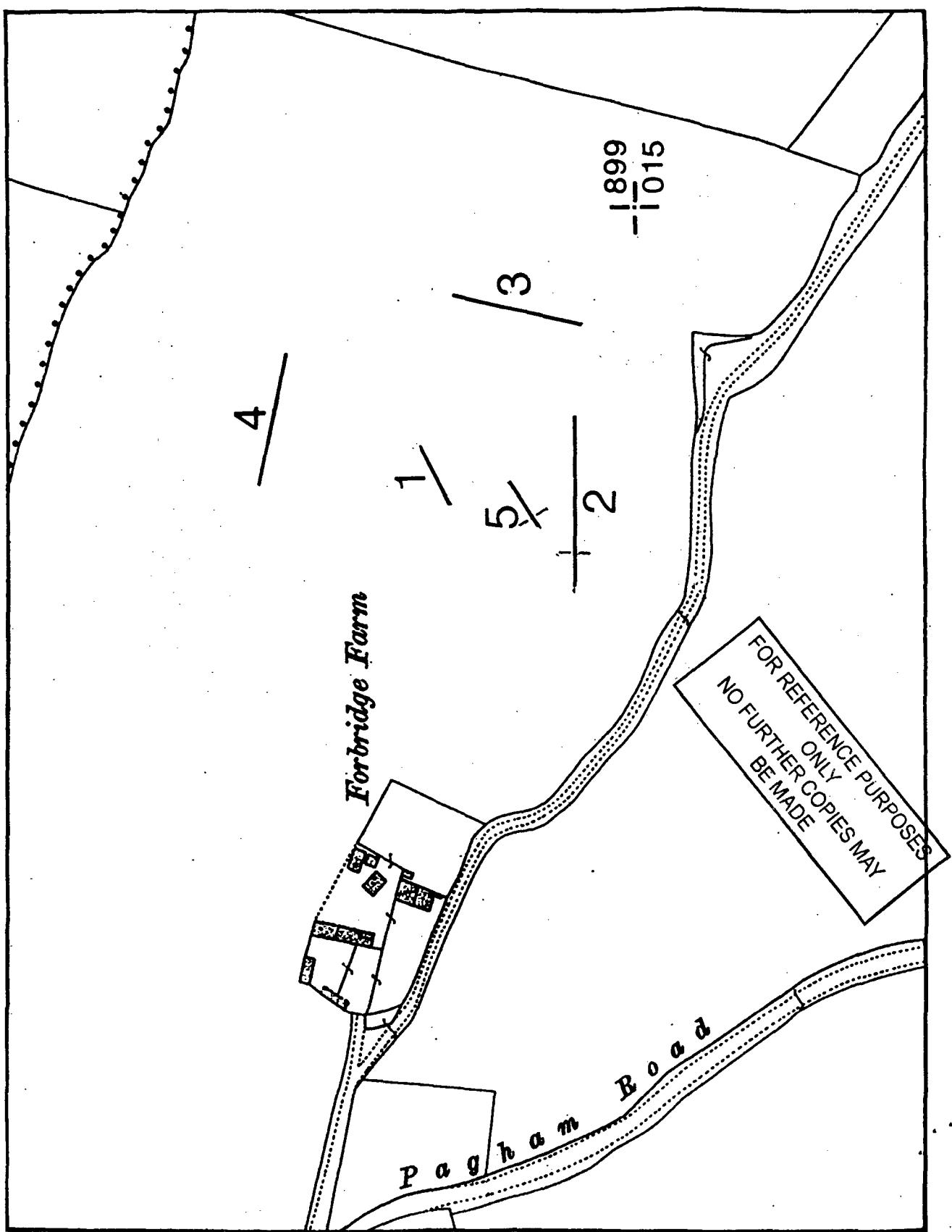


Figure 2: Location plan. 1:2500 scale.

Trench 2
West

8

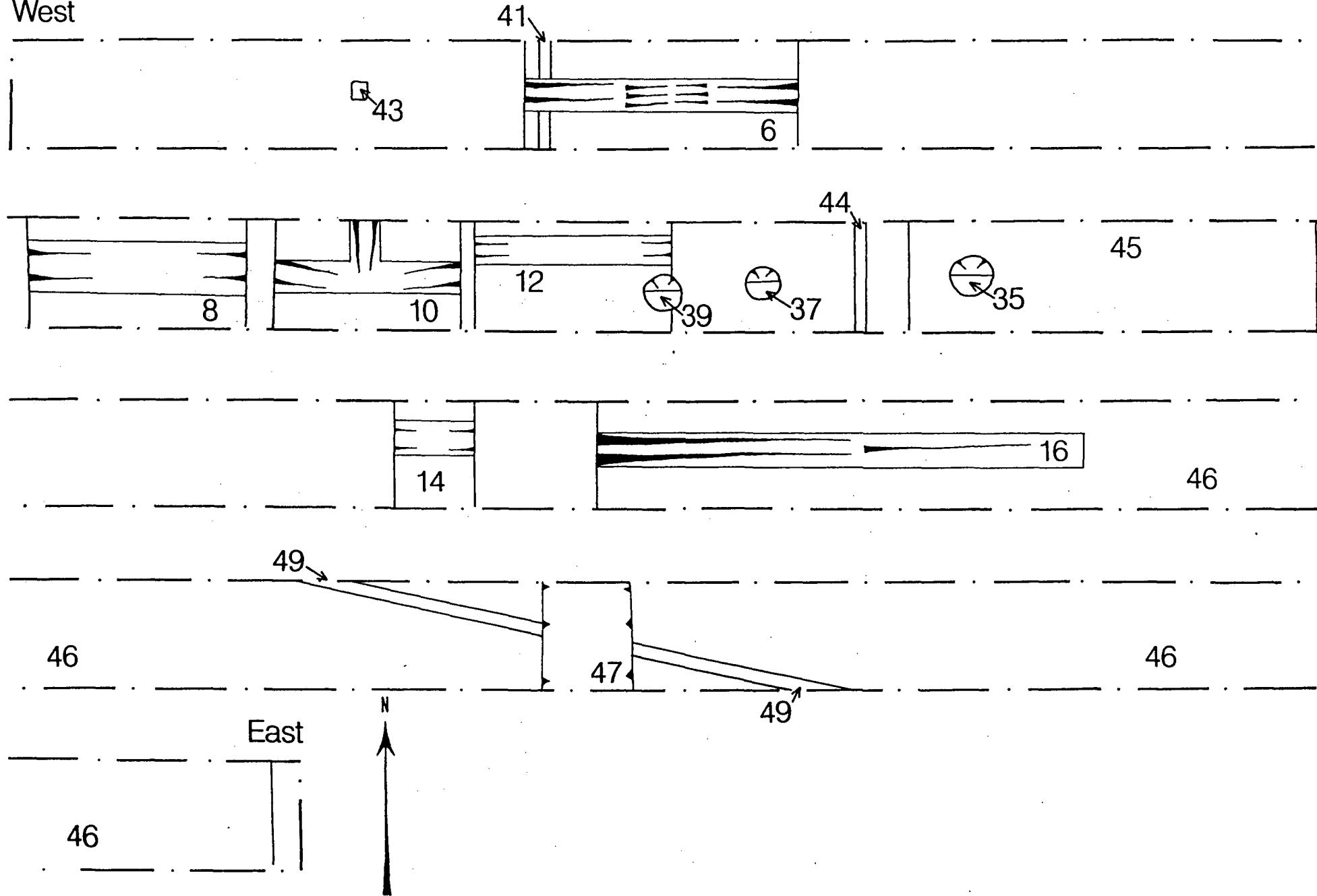


Figure 3: Trench 2, 1:100 scale.

Trench 3
South

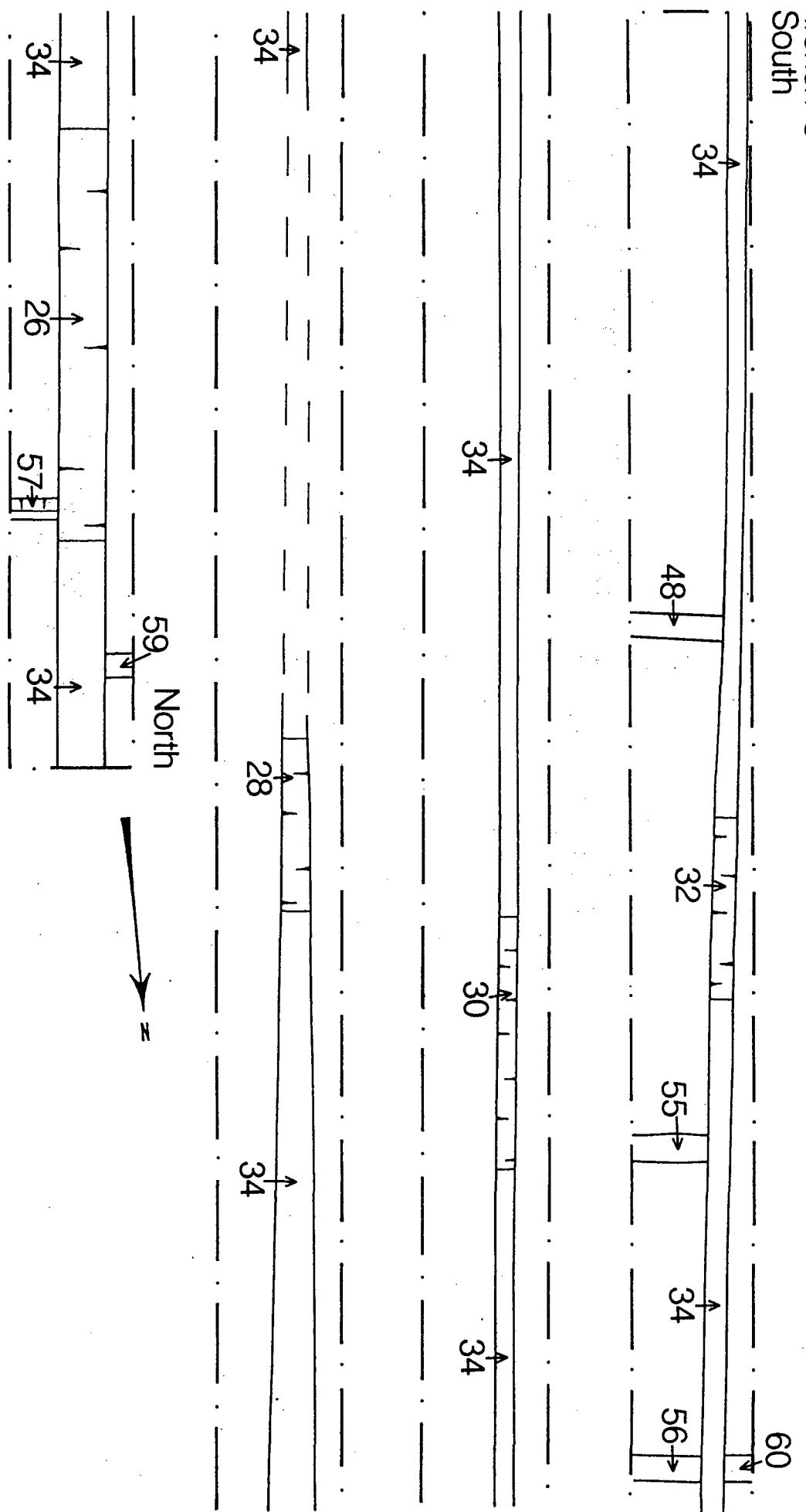


Figure 3 (contd.): Trench 3, 1:100 scale.

Trench 4
West

+33
metres
←

20

East

24

53

↓



Trench 5
South

North

18

50

52

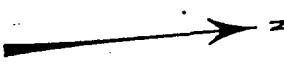
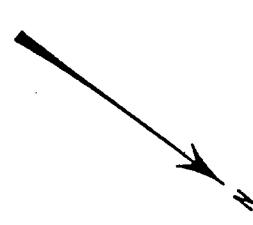


Figure 3 (contd.): Trench 4 and 5, 1:100 scale.

Appendix I: Context List and Approximate Dates.

Context No.	Feature type.	Approximate Date.
1	Topsoil to Trench 1.	Modern.
2	Topsoil to Trench 2.	Modern.
3	Topsoil to Trench 3.	Modern.
4	Topsoil to Trench 4.	Modern.
5	Topsoil to Trench 5.	Modern.
6	N-S V-Shaped Ditch.	
7	Fill of Ditch 6.	2 nd -3 rd Century.
8	N-S Linear Feature.	
9	Fill of Feature 8.	Roman.
10	Ditch terminus/Pit.	
11	Fill of Feature 10.	
12	N-S Linear Feature.	Roman.
13	Fill of Feature 12.	
14	N-S Linear Feature.	
15	Fill of Feature 14.	Roman.
16	Pond/ Depression, part of Feature 46.	
17	Secondary Fill of Feature 16.	18 th Century.
18	NWW-SEE V-Shaped Ditch.	
19	Upper Fill of Feature 18.	
20	Shallow N-S Linear Feature.	
21	Fill of Feature 20.	
22	Secondary Fill of Feature 18.	
23	Primary Fill of Feature 18.	
24	Land Drain.	
25	Fill of Land Drain 24.	
26	N-S Linear Feature, part of Feature 34.	
27	Fill of Feature 26.	
28	N-S Linear Feature, part of Feature 34.	
29	Fill of Feature 28.	
30	N-S Linear Feature, part of Feature 34.	
31	Fill of Feature 30.	
32	N-S Linear Feature, part of Feature 34.	
33	Fill of Feature 32.	
34	N-S Linear Feature, with perpendicular offshoots.	
35	Circular Posthole.	
36	Fill of Posthole 35.	Late 1 st - 2 nd Century.
37	Circular Posthole.	
38	Fill of Posthole 37.	2 nd - 3 rd Century.
39	Circular Posthole.	
40	Fill of Posthole 39.	
41	Land Drain.	
42	Fill of Land Drain.	
43	Square Posthole.	
44	Land Drain.	
45	Spread/ Ditch.	
46	Pond/ Depression.	
47	Pond/ Depression, part of Feature 46.	
48	E-W Linear Feature, adjacent to Feature 34.	
49	Land Drain.	
50	Tree Bole.	

51	Fill of Feature 50.	
52	Tree Bole.	
53	Spread/ Ditch.	
54	Primary Fill of Feature 16.	18 th Century.
55	E-W Linear Feature, adjacent to Feature 34.	
56	E-W Linear Feature, adjacent to Feature 34.	
57	E-W Linear Feature, adjacent to Feature 34.	
58	Fill of Feature 57.	
59	E-W Linear Feature, adjacent to Feature 34.	
60	E-W Linear Feature, adjacent to Feature 34.	

Appendix II: Artefactual Remains Recovered per Context.

Context No.	Roman Coarse Ware.	Roman Fine Ware.	Saxo-Norman Pot.	Post-Medieval Pot.	Quern Stone.	Tegula.	Green-sand.	Sand-stone.	Burnt Flint.	Struck Flint.	Bone.	Oyster.
Unstrat.												
15	20 (6)								40 (4)			
9	15 (3)								85 (2)			
36	20 (5)	195 (5)				5 (1)					25 (9)	
38	5 (2)								90 (2)			
13							5 (1)	5 (1)				
7	215 (21)	5 (2)	30 (1)	140 (1)				160 (1)	20 (2)	5 (1)	110 (2)	55 (1)
17	60 (10)	5 (1)							500 (8)		430 (1)	
22	125 (3)								195 (1)			
19	790 (31)	15 (3)				440 (3)	140 (1)				405 (65)	
11	200 (25)	15 (3)				265 (2)	1160 (2)	425 (3)	5 (1)		100 (1)	

