

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT

GOSSWAY FIELDS,

KIRTLINGTON, OXFORDSHIRE.

SP 4985 1970

On behalf of

Major and Mrs Thorneloe

NOVEMBER 2005

REPORT FOR Major & Mrs Thorneloe
South Farm
Kirtlington
Oxford
OX5 3HF

PREPARED BY David Gilbert

FIELDWORK 6th-7th October 2005

REPORT ISSUED 2nd November 2005

ENQUIRES TO *John Moore Heritage Services*
Long White Cloud
Waterperry Road
Holton
Oxfordshire OX33 1PW
Tel/Fax 01865 876637

Site Code KTGF 05
JMHS Project No: 1583
Archive Location Oxfordshire County Museum Service
Accession number OXCMS 2005.115

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>SUMMARY</i>	1
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	1
3 STRATEGY	3
3.1 Research Design	3
3.2 Methodology	3
4 RESULTS	3
5 FINDS	9
5.1 Pottery	
6 DISCUSSION	10
7 CONCLUSIONS	11
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	12
APPENDIX	13
 FIGURES	
Figure 1 Site and trench location	2
Figure 2 Trench 1 Plan and Sections	5
Figure 3 Trenches 2 & 4 Plans and Sections	6
Figure 4 Trenches 5 & 6 Plans and Sections	8

Summary

An evaluation of this site was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services from 6th – 7th October 2005. Six trenches, totalling 172.5 metres in length, were excavated to reveal the underlying natural geology at a maximum height of 97.95m.

Two Saxon sunken featured buildings were recorded to the east of the site and may be the edge of a settlement centred further east. Pre-dating these, a series of Romano-British field boundary ditches were located, these may be associated with a settlement adjacent to the Roman road running from Akeman Street to north Oxford.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site is located in the south of Kirtlington, west of Bletchingdon Road between South Farm and Gossway Fields (NGR 4985 1970 centred). The site is currently agricultural open grassland. The underlying geology is Oxford Clay, although deposits of gravel were encountered, and the site lies at approximately 98m OD.

1.2 Planning Background

A planning application has been submitted to Cherwell District Council for outline permission for a residential development with the erection of 14 No. two-storey houses (05/01064/OUT). Due to the potential for remains of archaeological significance to be present on the site, an archaeological evaluation of the site has been required prior to the determination of the planning application. This is in line with PPG 16 and Local Plan Policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site of proposed development lies within an area of archaeological potential. To the west of the proposal site is an area of earthworks believed to represent the remains of a Shrunken Medieval Village. The extent of the medieval settlement at Kirtlington is unknown it was considered possible that it might continue into the area of the proposed development. A large rectangular enclosure lies west of South Farm adjacent to the road from Gibraltar to Kirtlington. This is situated on the east edge of a hill and would have overlooked the Roman road running south from Akeman Street to north Oxford. Akeman Street lies some 1.2km to the north.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.

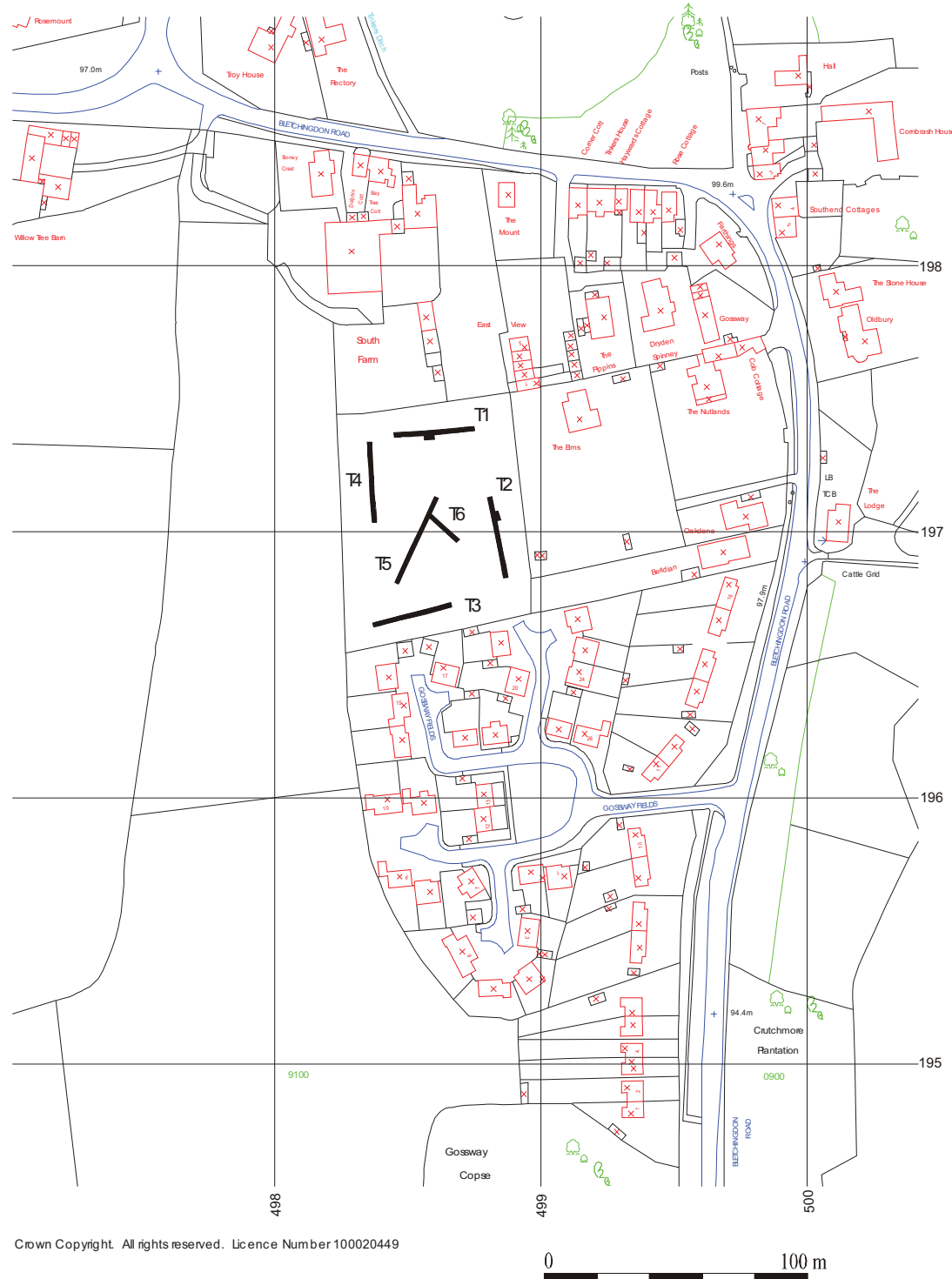


Figure 1. Site and trench location

- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

In particular

- To determine whether the medieval settlement extends into the proposal site.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

In response to a *Brief* issued by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service a scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed with the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services and the applicant. The work was carried out by JMHS and was to involve the excavation of a total of five trenches across the site (Fig. 1).

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

The trenching sample specified within the brief was to be achieved through the excavation of five 30.0m trenches. Due to the amount of archaeological remains present the central trench was extended to 37.5m trench and was joined by a 15.0m trench (Fig. 1). The four 30.0m trenches were aligned parallel to the fields boundary with the other two trenches placed diagonally across the centre of the field.

All trenches were 1.6 m wide and were excavated by a JCB excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The resultant surfaces were cleaned by hand prior to limited hand excavation of any identified archaeological deposits.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was produced. The trenches were backfilled after recording.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [] indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material.

The uppermost layer in all trenches was a grey-brown loam (1/01), (2/01), (3/01, (4/01), (5/01) and (6/01) that varied in depth from 0.15m to 0.3m across the site.

Below this in all trenches was a mid brown sandy loam (1/02), (2/02), (3/02), (4/02), (5/02) and (6/02) that was on average 0.2m thick. This lay over the natural orange-brown sand and gravel (1/03), (2/17), (3/03), (4/03), (5/03) and (6/03). Only these deposits were present within Trench 3, while the others also produced archaeological features.

Trench 1 (*Figure 2*)

Cut into the natural sand and gravel (1/03) were two ditches [1/04] & [1/08], and an irregular pit [1/11].

Ditch [1/04] was a flattened U-shape in section with a flat base. It was 0.25m deep and 1.6m wide. The lower fill (1/06) of this ditch was a brown sandy loam with gravel that was 0.05m thick. Above this was a 0.2m thick deposit of brown sandy loam (1/05), which contained four sherds of Romano-British pottery and animal bone.

This ditch was cut by a later linear ditch or gully [1/08]. This was 0.6m deep and approximately 1.0m wide. The lowest fill of this ditch was a brown sandy loam with gravel that was 0.05m thick (1/10). Overlying this was a deposit of mid brown sandy loam (1/09), 0.35m thick. On the west side of the ditch was a mounded deposit of loose gravel in a silty-sand matrix (1/07), it is possibly this is associated with cleaning of the ditch bottom. No datable material was associated with this feature.

In the east of Trench 1 an irregular pit [1/11] was located. The cut was very indistinct in places. This pit was approximately 1m in radius. It was filled with a light brown sand (1/12) which contained a single sherd of Romano-British pottery. The pit was only seen in sections at the end of the trench where the natural was sampled to a depth of 1.2m for engineering purposes.

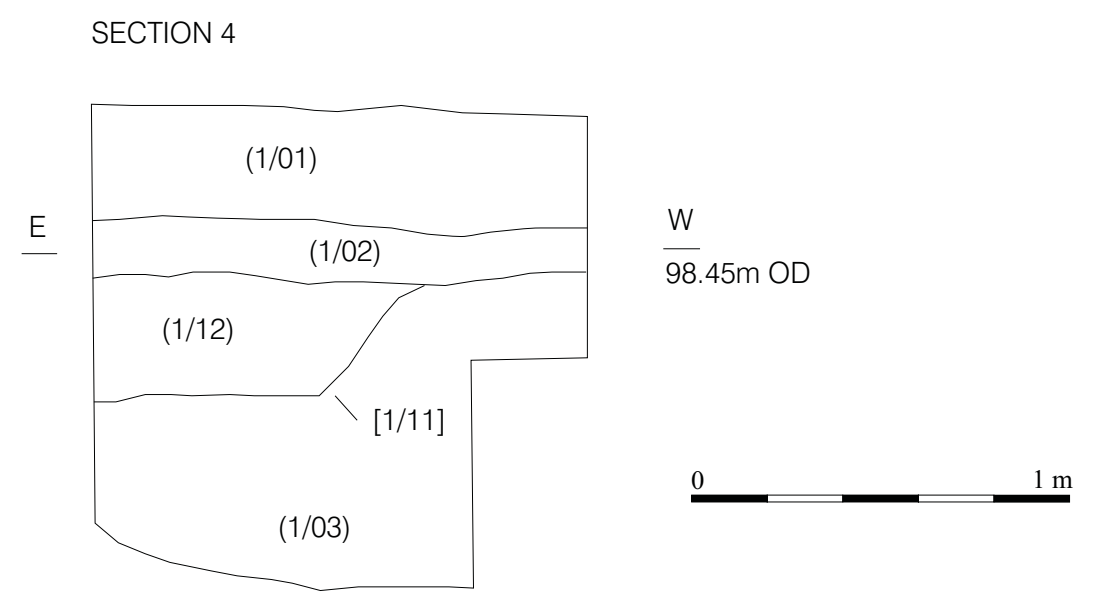
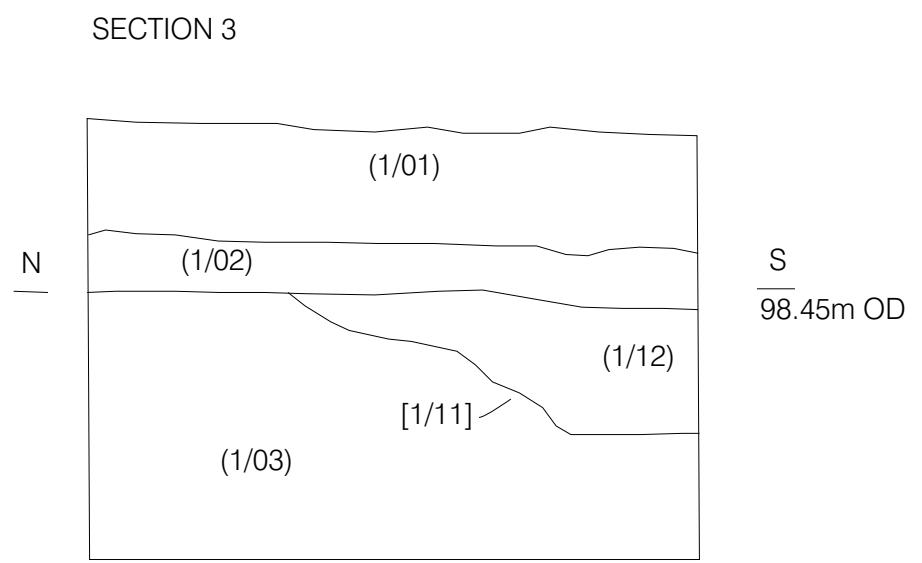
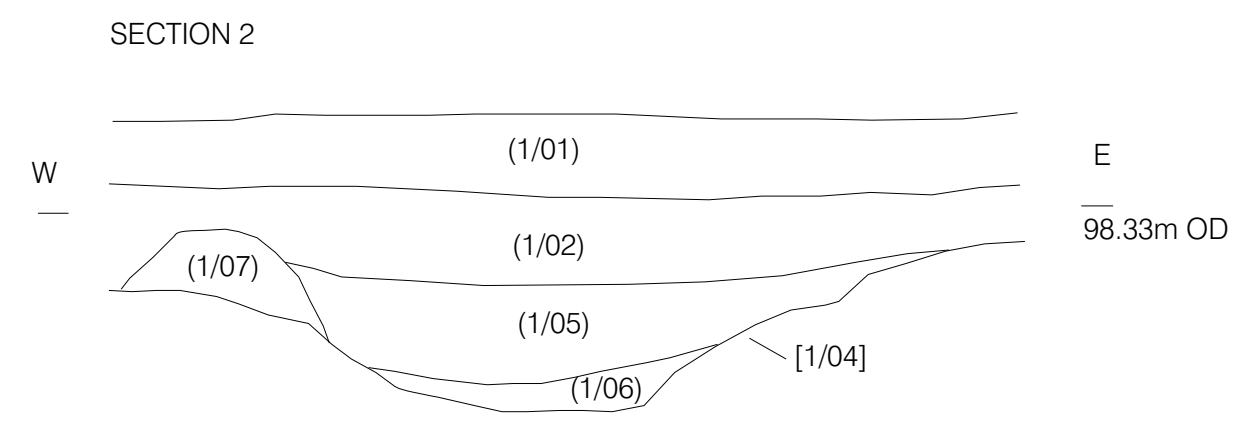
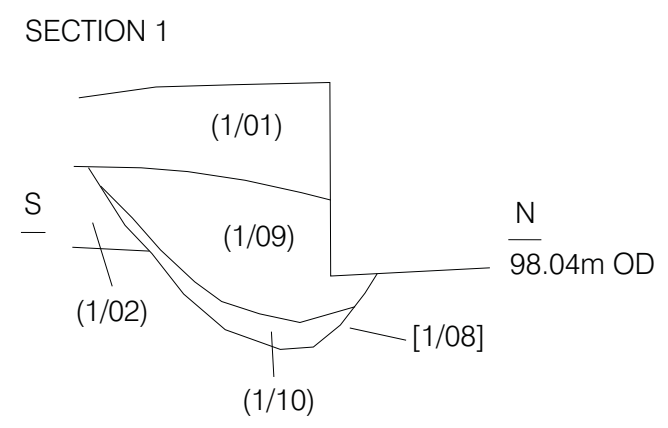
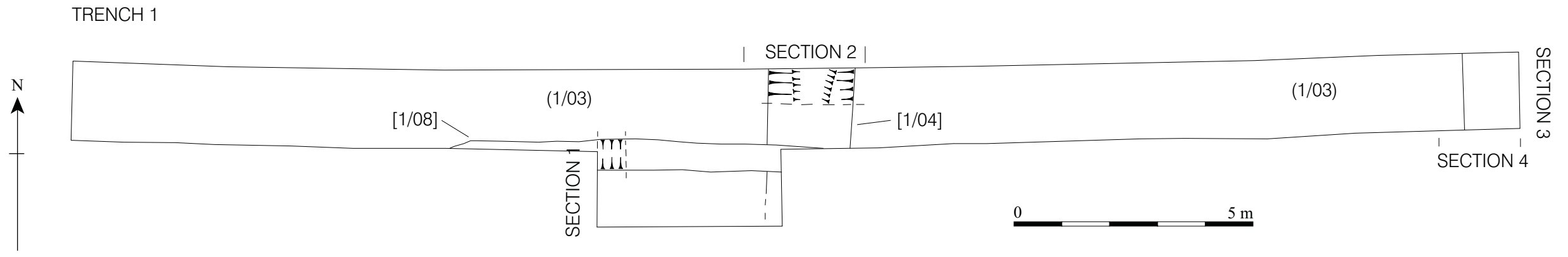
Trench 2 (*Figure 3*)

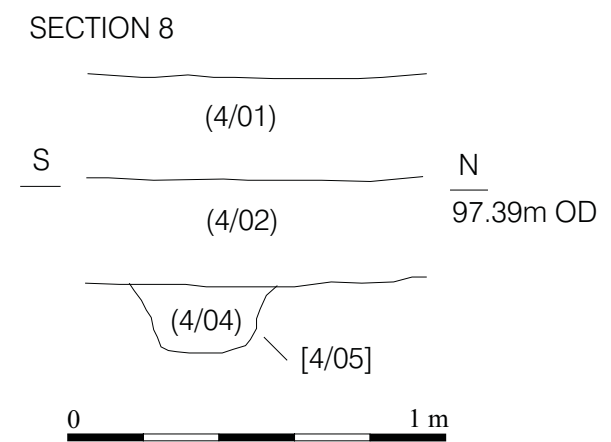
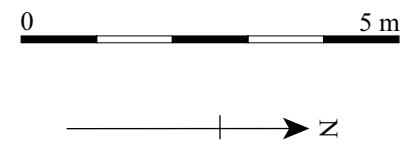
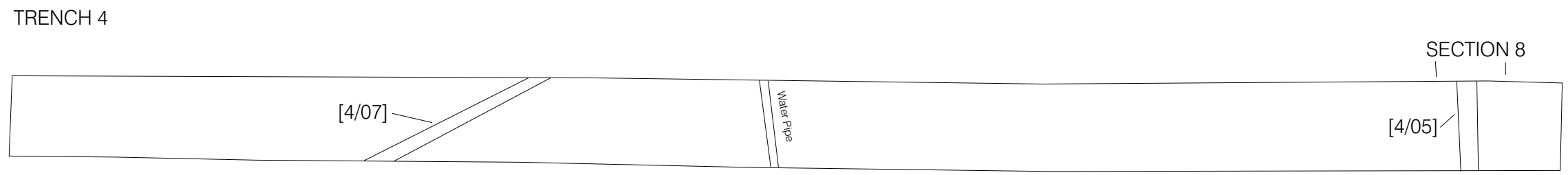
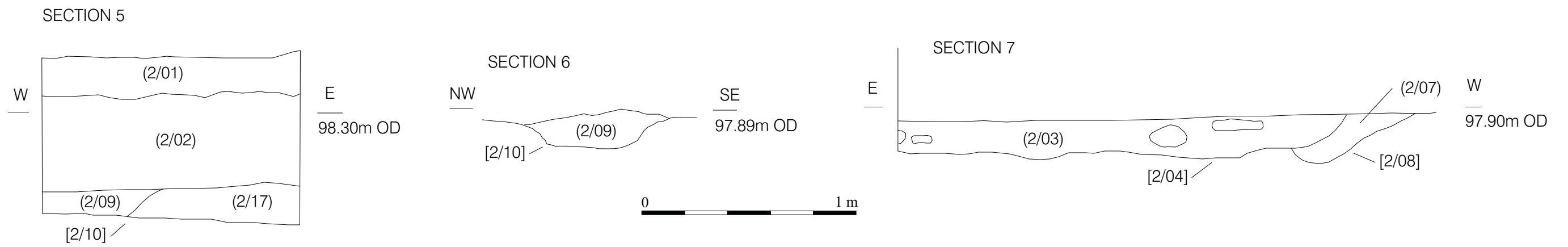
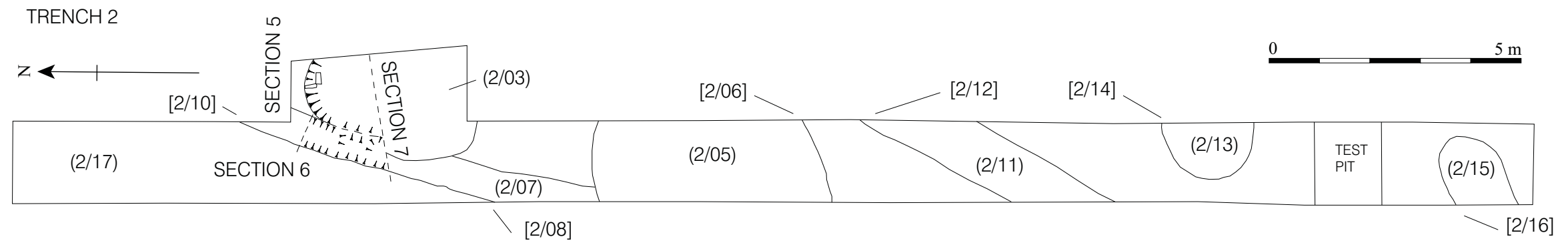
Trench 2 revealed three ditches [2/08], [2/10] & [2/12], a probable ditch terminal [2/16], a pit or possible ditch terminal [2/14] and two large 'pits' [2/04] and [2/06].

The ditches [2/08] and [2/10] may be the same feature, although there is some evidence that there were two terminals between them; the area has been later disturbed by the cut [2/04]. Aligned north-east to south-west both ditches are 0.6m wide on average, [2/08] is 0.17m deep while [2/10] is 0.2m deep. Both are filled with a similar grey-brown silty clay (2/07) and (2/09). No finds were associated with this feature(s).

Ditch [2/12] was unexcavated. It was seen in plan to be aligned north-east to south-west, 1.2m wide and crossed the trench for a length of 2.4m. It was filled with a grey-brown silty clay (2/11).

The probable ditch terminal [2/16] was located in the south end of the trench, and was unexcavated. It was seen in plan to be aligned roughly east to west with the terminal towards the east. It was filled with a grey-brown sandy clay (2/15), and was 1.4m wide and 1.45m long within the trench. A pit or possible ditch terminal [2/14] was also located. It was unexcavated, 1.2m wide and 1.8m long within the trench. The fill was a grey-brown sandy clay (2/13),





which produced 18 sherds of Romano-British pottery while the surface was being cleaned by hand.

The two large 'pits' [2/04] and [2/06] lie within 2.5m of each other. Pit [2/06] was unexcavated but recorded in plan as measuring 3.5m across north to south. It was filled with a grey-brown sandy clay (2/05) which when hand cleaned produced 7 sherds of Romano-British pottery. It also cut through the earlier ditch [2/08]. Pit [2/04] measured 2.15m by 3m and was sectioned. It was shallow only 0.35m deep, filled with a grey-brown loam and some large stones (2/03). The fill contained 106 sherds of Saxon pottery and a small quantity of animal bone. This pit also cut through the earlier ditches [2/08] and [2/10].

Trench 4 (*Figure 2*)

Apart from two modern services including [4/07] the only feature within Trench 4 was a small linear ditch or gully [4/05]. This ditch was aligned east to west and was only 0.13m deep and 0.29m wide. It was filled with a pale yellow-brown silty sand (4/04), which contained a single sherd of Romano-British pottery. It may have been the continuation of ditch 1/08 seen further east.

Trench 5 (*Figure 4*)

This trench produced a length of ditch and terminal [5/05] as well as several shallow features: two features [5/07] & [5/11] and two gullies [5/09] & [5/13].

The ditch [5/05] was unexcavated but was recorded in plan running for a length of 1.5m within the trench and being 0.65m wide. It was filled with a grey-brown silty sand (5/04) and produced no finds during cleaning.

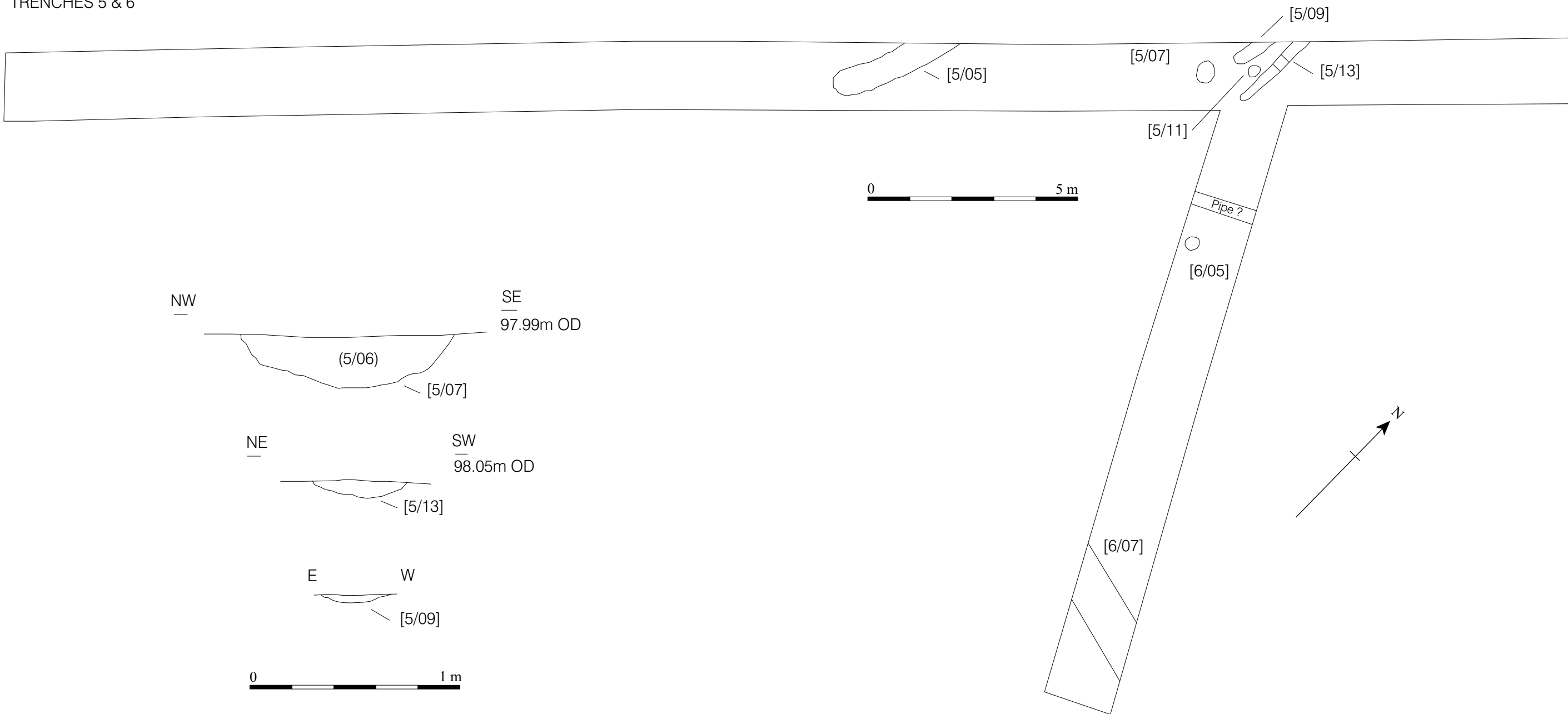
Two features [5/07] & [5/11] were excavated, both were small and shallow. Pit [5/07] was roughly circular in plan and 0.5m in diameter. It was 0.14m deep and filled with a grey-brown silty sand (5/06). The second smaller pit was 0.18m in diameter and only 0.02m deep, filled with a grey-brown silty sand (5/10). No finds were associated with either pit. Feature [5/07] is undoubtedly the truncated remains of a posthole while the other may have been a natural feature.

The two gullies [5/09] & [5/13] were aligned roughly north to south. Gully [5/09] was unexcavated; it measured 0.26m wide and was filled with a grey-brown silty sand (5/08). The other [5/13] was sample excavated. It measured 0.25m wide and only a maximum of 0.03m deep, it was filled with a grey-brown silty sand (5/12) and produced no finds. These may be plough furrows.

Trench 6 (*Figure 4*)

This trench extended from Trench 5 towards the south. Apart from services it also located a post hole [6/05] and a linear ditch [6/07].

TRENCHES 5 & 6



The post hole [6/05] was not excavated. Recorded in plan it was oval and measured 0.34m by 0.43m. It was filled with a grey-brown silty sand (6/04) similar to the fill of [5.07]. The linear ditch [6/07] was also unexcavated. It measured 0.7m wide and was aligned roughly north-west to south-east and was filled with a grey-brown silty sand (6/06). No finds were associated with either feature.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery (*By Paul Blinkhorn*)

The post-Roman pottery assemblage comprised 109 sherds with a total weight of 1,523g. It entirely consisted of early-middle Saxon hand-built wares, with a single decorated sherd of probable 6th century date present. Most of the assemblage came from a single feature, and appears to be the product of secondary deposition. It is exactly the sort of pottery assemblage one would expect to find in a domestic midden or a back-filled sunken-featured building of the period.

In addition, 30 sherds of Romano-British pottery were also present, mainly in contexts which did not produce any later material. This pottery was scanned by Paul Booth who concluded that the material was of late Roman date.

The following fabrics were noted:

F1: Quartz and Chaff. Rare to moderate sub-angular quartz up to 1mm, rare to sparse sub-rounded calcareous material up to 2mm, sparse to moderate organic voids up to 5mm, occasional silver mica platelets. 48 sherds, 696g.

F2: Ferruginous Sandstone. Sparse to moderate iron-rich sandstone fragments up to 3mm, sparse to moderate sub-angular free quartz grains up to 1mm, rare sub-angular red ironstone up to 2mm. The bulk of these sherds were well-finished and evenly burnished on the outer surface. 29 sherds, 444g.

F3: Quartz. Moderate to dense sub-angular quartz up to 1mm. Rare white flint up to 5mm. 15 sherds, 197g.

F4: Oolitic Limestone. Sparse to moderate limestone ooliths up to 1mm, angular limestone fragments up to 5mm, rare sub-rounded quartz up to 1mm, occasional silver mica platelets. 14 sherds, 257g.

F5: Chaff. Moderate to dense organic voids up to 5mm, rare to sparse sub-rounded quartz up to 1mm. 2 sherds, 29g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of fabrics is typical of early-middle Anglo-Saxon sites in the region.

The entire assemblage apart from two sherds came from a single context, (2/03). There was a total of 21 rimsherds, all bar two of which were from jars. One of the Jar rims had the remains of a 'Swallow's Nest' lug attached, and a second had the remains of an upright lug springing from the rim-top. A small, globular vessel had a

longitudinal pierced lug mounted on the body. A further small rim fragment had two horizontal incised lines and the remains of a stamp impression, suggesting a date of the 6th century (Myres 1977). This early Saxon date is further supported by the presence of a base-shoulder with an applied foot-ring, a technique which appears to have fallen from use by the middle Saxon period.

Both of the two non-jar forms were small bowls, one of which had a least one hole pierced through the body. It is likely that it is a type of well-known vessel with multiple piercing all over the body, perhaps used as a strainer or for carrying hot coals for fire-lighting.

All the feature sherds are typical of the type of pots known from numerous sites of the early-middle Anglo-Saxon period.

The assemblage from context (2/03) consisted almost entirely of non-joining sherds from different vessels. It is exactly the sort of assemblage which is typical of those found in the back-filled hollows of early Saxon sunken-featured buildings. Hamerow (1994) observed that such features were often used as rubbish dumps after abandonment, and the pottery assemblages from such deposits have all the characteristics of the one from context (2/03) at this site; it seems likely therefore that there is early Anglo-Saxon occupation within the immediate vicinity of these excavations, presumably a domestic settlement, as the pottery offers no indications of any other sort of activity.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Tr	Cntxt	RB		F1		F2		F3		F4		F5		Date
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
1	2			1	10									E/MS
1	5	4	21											RB
1	12	1	5											RB
2	1	2	8											RB
2	3			47	686	29	444	14	194	14	257	2	29	6thC
2	5	7	396											RB
2	13	18	347											RB
3	1	1	1											RB
3	2	2	6											RB
4	2	1	15					1	3					E/MS
4	4	1	8											RB
	Total	30	773	48	696	29	444	15	197	14	257	2	29	

6 DISCUSSION

In the Roman period the majority of fields in the region were defined by ditches that varied considerably in size (Henig and Booth 2000). A number of the ditches excavated appear to be of late Roman date [1/05], [2/13] and [4/04], others that produced no dating evidence are probably also of this period. With the absence of any associated structures it is most likely that these are field boundary ditches.

The Roman Road of Akeman Street lies approximately 700m to the north of the site (NGR 5020 2040). Around the town of Alchester 6km to the east, lies a substantial block of regularly laid out field systems to the north of this road, there is more limited evidence for a similar pattern on the south side of Akeman Street. There is no indication that this scheme was extended beyond the immediate vicinity of Alchester (Henig and Booth 2000).

A Roman road runs from Kings Sutton crossing Akeman Street (approximately 1.2km to the north of the site) and south onwards to north Oxford. The road is 100m east of the evaluation site and the field system may be associated with a small settlement/farmstead adjacent to the road or a larger unknown settlement near to the junction of this road with Akeman Street.

The ceramic evidence would suggest that feature [2/04] is a Saxon sunken-featured building (*Grubenhaus*) that has been back filled when it went out of use. It is possible that the unexcavated feature [2/06] is also the remains of a sunken-featured building. Often Roman pottery is found within such features and often collected from Roman sites some distance away (Moore 2001). At least one linear ditch [1/08] is later in date than another, and could belong to this phase of activity on the site or be a second phase of the Roman field system. The postholes may be of Roman date or be part of a Saxon timber hall or fence line.

Characteristically a scatter of sunken-featured buildings is interspersed with a smaller number of rectilinear structures. These settlements tend to be formless and haphazard in layout with a tendency to sprawl over large areas (Blair 1994). The lack of features of a demonstrably Saxon date in Trenches 3 and 4, and in the western end of Trench 5 suggest that activity of this period was confined to the eastern side of the site and likely continues into the adjacent property "*The Elms*".

The Roman field system does not appear to extend into the south west corner of the site.

No finds of a medieval date were located, despite the proximity of the Shrunken Medieval Village.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation was too small to accurately define the lay out of the fields in this area to compare them with the Alchester systems. Therefore it cannot be definitely stated if they do indeed belong to a similar large system or to a smaller rural settlement.

It is probably that the west edge of a Saxon settlement was located by the evaluation. However, due to their sprawling nature, tighter definition is required to state this with any certainty.

While any decision regarding the archaeological importance of the site rests with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services and Cherwell District Council, it is the view of John Moore Heritage Services that the nature and extent of the archaeological remains should not prevent any future development of the site. The Saxon remains appear to be relatively limited to part of the east side of the site and it is considered

that the bulk of the settlement lies to the east. The extent of the Saxon remains within the application site should be carefully stripped and a programme of archaeological excavation and recording could be carried out prior to development. The Roman field system could be properly sampled within this area and the wider extent of the field system could be recorded with limited sampling under a strip and record programme either prior to or during development.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Blair, J. 1994 *Anglo Saxon Oxfordshire* Stroud

Hamerow, HF, 1993 *Excavations at Mucking Volume 2: The Anglo-Saxon Settlement* English Heritage Archaeol Rep **22**

Henig, M. and Booth, P. 2000 *Roman Oxfordshire* Stroud

Institute of Field Archaeologists. 1994: *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*

Moore, J. 2001 Excavation at Oxford Science Park, Littlemore, Oxford. *Oxoniensia* LXVI

Myres, JNL, 1977 *A Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Pottery of the Pagan Period* 2 vols, Cambridge

APPENDIX – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Findings	Date
Trench 1			0.47	1.6	30		
1/01	Layer	Grey-Brown Soil	0.15 - 0.3	Tr.	Tr.	Pot	
1/02	Layer	Mid Brown sandy loam	0.2	Tr.	Tr.	Pot	
1/03	Natural	Orange-Brown sand & Gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	-
1/04	Cut	Linear Cut	0.25	1.6	Tr.	-	
1/05	Fill	Brown sandy loam	0.2	1.6	-	Pot, Bone	Romano-British
1/06	Fill	Brown sandy loam with gravel	0.05	-	-	-	Romano-British
1/07	Deposit	Gravel	0.15	0.2	-	-	
1/08	Cut	Linear Cut	0.4	1	Tr.	-	
1/09	Fill	Mid Brown sandy loam	0.35	1	-	Stone	
1/10	Fill	Brown sandy loam with gravel	0.05	-	-	-	
1/11	Cut	Irregular Cut	0.4	1	1	-	
1/12	Fill	Light Brown Sand	0.4	1	1	-	Romano-British
Trench 2			0.49	1.6	30		
2/01	Layer	Grey-Brown Soil	0.14	Tr.	Tr.	-	-
2/02	Layer	Mid Brown sandy loam	0.42	Tr.	Tr.	-	-
2/03	Fill	Grey-Brown loam	0.35	2.15	3	Pot, Bone	C6th
2/04	Cut	Rectangular cut	0.35	2.15	3	-	
2/05	Fill	Grey-Brown sandy clay	-	Tr.	3.5	Pot	Romano-British ?
2/06	Cut	Sub-circular cut	-	Tr.	3.5	-	
2/07	Fill	Grey-Brown silty clay	0.2	0.6	4.3	-	
2/08	Cut	Linear Cut	0.2	0.6	4.3	-	
2/09	Fill	Grey-Brown silty clay	0.17	0.6	1.52	-	
2/10	Cut	Linear Cut	0.17	0.6	1.52	-	
2/11	Fill	Grey-Brown silty clay	-	1.2	2.4		
2/12	Cut	Linear Cut	-	1.2	2.4		

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
2/13	Fill	Grey-Brown sandy clay	-	1.2	1.8	-	
2/14	Cut	Sub-circular cut	-	1.2	1.8	-	
2/15	Fill	Grey-Brown sandy clay	-	1.4	1.45	-	
2/16	Cut	Ditch Terminal	-	1.4	1.45	-	
2/17	Natural	Orange-Brown sand & Gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	Natural
Trench 3			0.5	1.6	30		
3/01	Layer	Grey-Brown Soil	0.3	Tr.	Tr.	-	-
3/02	Layer	Mid Brown sandy loam	0.2	Tr.	Tr.	-	-
3/03	Natural	Orange-Brown sand & Gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	Natural
Trench 4			0.5	1.6	30		
4/01	Layer	Grey-Brown Soil	0.3	Tr.	Tr.	-	-
4/02	Layer	Mid Brown sandy loam	0.2	Tr.	Tr.	Pot	-
4/03	Natural	Orange-Brown sand & Gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	Natural
4/04	Fill	Pale Yellow-Brown silty sand	0.13	0.29	1.6	Pot	Romano-British
4/05	Cut	Linear Cut	0.13	0.29	1.6	-	
4/06	Fill	Mid Brown sandy loam	-	0.3	5.5	-	Modern
4/07	Cut	Cut for water pipe	-	0.3	5.5	-	Modern

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
Trench 5				1.6	37.5		
5/01	Layer	Grey-Brown Soil	0.25 - 0.28	Tr.	Tr.	Pot	
5/02	Deposit	Mid Brown sandy loam	0.05	Tr.	5	Bone	
5/03	Natural	Orange-Brown sand & Gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	Natural
5/04	Fill	Grey-Brown silty sand	-	0.65	1.5	-	
5/05	Cut	Linear Cut	-	0.65	1.5	-	
5/06	Fill	Grey-Brown silty sand	0.14	0.5	0.5	-	
5/07	Cut	Sub-circular cut	0.14	0.5	0.5	-	
5/08	Fill	Grey-Brown silty sand	-	0.26		-	
5/09	Cut	Linear Cut	-	0.26			
5/10	Fill	Grey-Brown silty sand	0.02	0.18	0.18	-	
5/11	Cut	Circular cut	0.02	0.18	0.18	-	
5/12	Fill	Grey-Brown silty sand	0.01-0.03	0.25			
5/13	Cut	Linear Cut	0.01-0.03	0.25			
Trench 6				1.6	15		
6/01	Layer	Grey-Brown Soil	0.25-0.28	Tr.	Tr.	-	-
6/02	Layer	Mid Brown sandy loam	0.05	Tr.	3	-	-
6/03	Natural	Orange-Brown sand & Gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	Natural
6/04	Fill	Grey-Brown silty sand	-	0.34	0.43	-	
6/05	Cut	Linear Cut	-	0.34	0.43	-	
6/06	Fill	Grey-Brown silty sand	-	0.7	-	-	
6/07	Cut	Linear Cut	-	0.7	-	-	