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An archaeological field evaluation was undertaken on land south of Station Road, Ruskington, Lincolnshire, in support of a detailed planning application for residential development.

Four trial excavation trenches were dug within the footprints of the proposed dwellings which form the principal impact of development. The trench closest to the frontage with Station Road contained a small gully which yielded a small quantity of animal bones and two sherds of Roman pottery.

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Archaeological Field Evaluation: 34 Station Road, Ruskington

NGR TF 0850 5075

Planning ref : N/52/497/99

Produced by

John Samuels Archaeological Consultants

on behalf of

Chanceoption Development Ltd

6D High Street South

Ruskington

Nr Sleaford

Lincs. NG34 9DT

JSAC /572/99/02
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Archaeological Field Evaluation:
34 Station Road, Ruskington

Summary

An archaeological field evaluation was undertaken on land south of Station Road, Ruskington, Lincolnshire, in support of a detailed planning application for residential development.

Four trial excavation trenches were dug within the footprints of the proposed dwellings which form the principal impact of development. The trench closest to the frontage with Station Road contained a small gully which yielded a small quantity of animal bone and two sherds of Roman pottery.

Two trenches at the rear of the site resulted in a single ditch being exposed running through them. This has been dated to the Middle-Late Saxon period (C8th-early C9th). The remaining trench, on the south west of the site, was archaeologically sterile.

The evaluation investigated 3% of the application area which is a large sample size given the national average of 2%. Only two archaeological features were exposed; both have been fully investigated and recorded and therefore are unlikely to yield any further significant information.

It is concluded that the site does not contain any significant archaeological deposits which would either preclude development or require further archaeological works before, or as a condition of, planning.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Chanceoption Developments Ltd have applied for detailed planning permission to construct four residential dwellings on land off Station Road (App. No: N/52/497/99). The local planning authority, NKDC, requested that a pre-determination field evaluation by trial trenching be undertaken. A project brief was prepared by the Heritage Officer for North Kesteven and in response Chanceoption commissioned *John Samuels Archaeological Consultants* to prepare a detailed project specification (JSAC 572/99/01). This was approved by the Heritage Officer in August 1999 prior to commencement of the works.
- 1.2 The application area is situated in the southeast of Ruskington, fronting Station Road. It comprises approximately 0.4ha of land centred on NGR TF 0850 5075 at an altitude of approximately 10.00m AOD. The site is bounded by hedges and is currently in use as a garden. The underlying geology is comprised of glacio-fluvial sand and gravel with marine alluvium and peat to the west; and Jurassic sand and clay to the south (Soil Surveys of England Wales, 1983).
- 1.3 As yet there is no agreed measurement of the importance of archaeological remains used nationally. Following the advice in PPG 16 (paragraph 8) there is a distinction drawn between nationally important archaeological remains, and those of lesser importance. An assessment of the importance of archaeological remains is achievable on the basis of their status in terms of national, regional, local or negligible importance:
- National:** Monuments that are scheduled and protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, those suitable for scheduling, or considered to be of national importance but not covered by the Secretary of State's criteria for scheduling.
- Regional:** Sites listed in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) or other sources which are of a reasonably well-defined extent, nature and date and significant examples in the regional context.
- Local:** Sites listed in the SMR or other sources which are either of very low potential or minor importance.
- Negligible:** Areas in which investigative techniques have produced negative or minimal evidence of antiquity, or where large-scale destruction of deposits has taken place (e.g. mineral extraction).
- 1.4 This document forms the report on the evaluation undertaken on behalf of Chanceoption Developments Ltd. in August 1999. It has been written by Simon Johnson, BA, AIFA, and edited by Nansi Rosenberg, BA, PIFA. Illustrations are by Simon Johnson and Mark Chambers, FSVA. It conforms to 'Archaeology and Planning' *Planning Policy Guidance*

Note 16, is in accordance with current best archaeological practice, and the appropriate national standards and guidelines, including:

Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage 1991);

Code of Conduct (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1997);

Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994);

Archaeological Handbook (Lincolnshire County Council, 1998)

2.0 Archaeological and historical background

- 2.1 Ruskington has a diverse and, in places, well preserved archaeological heritage. Finds from the prehistoric period onwards are represented throughout the parish, but of prime significance to the application area are the two early Bronze Age beaker inhumations discovered in 1994 during a watching brief approximately 100m north of the site (Palmer-Brown 1994b).
- 2.2 Other prehistoric finds are represented by the profusion of cropmarks on the west side of the village which include the remains of roundbarrows and later Iron Age/Romano-British field systems. Few of these have been subject to detailed field survey, but earlier evaluation of land off Westcliffe Road included the sectioning of an Iron Age enclosure ditch and investigation of a Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age pit (Palmer-Brown, 1994a). A recent watching brief undertaken further west, off Hollowbrook Drive, resulted in the recording of a multi-period complex of features. They included a pit containing a sherd of decorated Iron Age pottery which suggests that Ruskington may have been a settlement of some status during the late 1st millennium BC (*Albone in preperation*).
- 2.3 During gravel extraction in 1871, a rich Anglo-Saxon inhumation and cremation cemetery was uncovered which appears to date from the 5th/6th century AD. A total of 180 burials have been recorded since 1872, but the limits of the cemetery have yet to be established (Leahy 1993). Although the frequency of burials from the cemetery suggests, for the period, a sizable community; evidence for the focus of Saxon settlement is sparse and poorly understood. The watching brief conducted in 1994 which resulted in the recovery of the Bronze Age beakers also noted that they had been disturbed by a series of Saxon features including a possible palisade ditch which may be indicative that the principal focus of settlement had been established in the southwest of Ruskington by the Saxon period.

3.0 Methodology

- 3.1 The objectives of the fieldwork were to establish the nature, extent, date, function and spatial arrangement of any archaeological remains present within the site, and to identify how any archaeological features fitted into the pattern of occupation and land use of the surrounding landscape. These were detailed in a specification (*JSAC 572/99/01*) agreed with the County Archaeological Officer prior to the commencement of fieldwork.
- 3.2 Four trial trenches were excavated and recorded in August 1998. Topsoil and overburden were removed by 180° plant fitted with a smooth ditching bucket under continual archaeological supervision. The spoil generated during machining was mounded along the edges of the trial trenches with a safe working distance between spoil and the trench side. Mechanical excavation ceased at either undisturbed natural deposits or when archaeological features were identified. All subsequent excavation was by hand.
- 3.3 The sections and bases of each trench were cleaned by hand and discrete archaeological features sample excavated in order to determine (where possible) their date, extent, sequence and depth. Plans and sections of trenches are included in the report.
- 3.4 The recording system was based upon the Museum of London's *Archaeological Site Manual* (1994) with revisions to take account of the rural context. The system is centred upon scale drawing in both plan and section format supplemented with pro-forma context sheets for the description of discrete deposits. The location of the trenches were plotted according to the site boundaries and levels were related to Ordnance Datum.
- 3.5 Each trench was photographed prior to excavation of individual features in colour slide, black and white and colour print. Single features were photographed following half-sectioning.
- 3.6 All artefacts were treated in accordance with the UKIC guidelines, *'First Aid for Finds'* (1981). All finds were bagged and marked according to the deposit (context) where they were recovered. Following the completion of fieldwork, the finds were processed in-house and submitted for assessment.
- 3.7 All work was undertaken with respect to health and safety provision. No excavation was undertaken at a depth greater than 1.2m and spoil was kept at a safe distance from the trench. The trenches were backfilled as soon as possible after the completion of field work.
- 3.9 Copies of this report will be sent to the client, the Local Planning Authority, the County Sites and Monuments Record, and the North Kesteven Heritage Officer.
- 3.10 Following project completion, an ordered site archive will be prepared in accordance with *Conditions for the Acceptance of Archaeological Archives* (City & County Museum,

Lincoln). Once deposited, it may be accessed by quoting global accession no:

LCNCC RSR 175.99

- 3.11 Acceptance of this report by the Local Planning Authority and its deposition with the County Sites and Monuments Record will effectively place the results of the evaluation in the public domain. A short note, however, will be submitted to the county journal *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology* for inclusion in a future edition.

4.0 Results

4.1 The planning application which has been made to NKDC is for detailed permission for the construction of four detached houses with associated services and access. The principal impact upon any buried archaeological remains present within the site would be during soil stripping and foundation trenching connected with initial groundworks. Therefore, in accordance with the specification, four trenches were excavated to correspond to the foundation foot prints of the proposed dwellings.

4.2 Trench 1

4.2.1 Trench 1 comprised a standard 20.00m x 1.60m trench excavated along an east-west axis on the south side of the site. An existing concrete garden path which crossed the centre of the trench was left *in situ* forming a break in the trench of approximately 1.50m.

4.2.2 Excavation revealed a typical weathering profile comprised of:

Context	Interpretation	Depth	Description
(100)	Topsoil	0.15m	Undifferentiated dark brown sandy loam containing moderate gravel inclusions.
(101)	Subsoil	0.50m	Light-mid brown coarse sandy clay with frequent sub-angular to rounded calcareous gravel inclusions.
(102)	Natural	>0.5m	Well sorted calcareous gravel comprised of sub-angular to rounded gravels, c. 5-25mmØ, set within an iron-rich coarse sand matrix. Frequent pockets of sandy clay.

4.2.3 The trench contained an isolated archaeological feature, [104], at the east end which was exposed cutting the natural gravel (102). Comprised of a butt ended linear gully extending through the south section, it had near vertical sides and a flat base. It contained a single fill, (103), which was undistinguishable from the subsoil. Total excavation of the gully resulted two small fragments of animal bone from a cow scapula; and two small and abraded sherds of Romano-British grey ware.

4.3 Trench 2

4.3.1 Trench 2 was located in the southwest of the site and measured 10m x 3.10m. The stratigraphy exposed corresponded to the weathering profile detailed above and, with the exception of nineteenth inclusions, was archaeologically sterile.

4.4 *Trench 3*

- 4.4.1 Again, the typical weathering profile of topsoil sealing subsoil over natural gravels was exposed in Trench 3 which measured 10.00m x 3.10m. A thin lens of ash/charcoal was noted at the topsoil/subsoil interface and was interpreted as the remains of a fire which had entered the substratum through natural soil processes.
- 4.4.2 Removal of the subsoil exposed a broadly north-south aligned linear ditch [108] cutting the natural gravels. Although it was not fully exposed within the trench, the sample investigated was large enough to show that it had a bowl shaped profile with c. 45° sides. It contained a single homogenous fill (107) comprised of a mid grey/orange-brown coarse sandy clay with frequent gravel inclusions.
- 4.4.3 Three sherds of pottery were recovered from the feature: one a modern glazed earthenware; a sherd of Roman Nene Valley mortaria rim; and the third a Middle/Late Saxon rim of a small bowl. The modern pottery sherd was small and is considered to be intrusive and therefore out of context. The date of the feature is suggested as Middle/Late Saxon on the basis that the bowl rim was recovered from the base of the feature, implying that the mortaria rim is residual. This is supported by the fact that the Saxon sherd has relatively fresh breaks, despite a fragile fabric, and the Roman mortaria, having a well fired and robust fabric, being abraded.

4.5 *Trench 4*

- 4.5.1 This trench was positioned between trenches 2 and 3 and aligned east-west with finished dimensions of approximately 11.50 x 3.10m. A single archaeological feature [106] was exposed sealed below the subsoil. A linear feature, it was interpreted as being a continuation of ditch [108] first exposed in Trench 3. Its fill (105) was of the same texture and hue as (107) and yielded a single sherd of middle-late Saxon pottery, further supporting the suggested date of the feature given above.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 Despite the unusually large sample of the application area which was excavated, no evidence for either dense settlement or other associated industrial features was exposed.
- 5.2 Previous work suggests that the site is close to the focus of Saxon settlement. The sparse and fragmentary results presented here, however, suggests that the site is on the periphery of activities associated with the occupation of Ruskington between the eighth and early ninth centuries.
- 5.3 The evaluation has resulted in the exposure and recording of two archaeological features which are chronologically distinct: one a Roman gully and the other a Middle/Late Saxon ditch. Both these features have been fully sampled and dated. Within the framework for assessing the importance of remains given in section 1.3 above, it can be seen that these remains are of only negligible-local importance.
- 5.4 The minor significance of the remains should be taken as an indication that there are no archaeological grounds for the refusal of planning permission. Furthermore, the archaeological features which were exposed have all been dealt with in a comprehensive manner during the evaluation. It is unlikely, therefore, that the site will yield any further information to advance the current state of knowledge regarding the cultural development of Ruskington.
- 5.5 Although the decision regarding the desirability of further work rests with the local planning authority, it is recommended that no further works are undertaken on the site.

6.0 References

- Albone, J *in prep.* 'Hollowbrook Drive, Ruskington, Lincs.'
Archaeological Watching Brief Report
- Leahy, K in Vince, A (ed) 1993 *Pre-Viking Lindsey*
- Palmer-Brown, CPH 1994a 'Land off Westcliffe Road and Lincoln Road,
Ruskington, Lincolnshire' *Archaeological Field
Evaluation Report* (unpublished)
- 1994b '29 Station Road, Ruskington, Lincolnshire'
Archaeological Watching Brief Report
(unpublished)

7.0 Figures

Fig. 1: Site location

Fig. 2: Trench location

Fig. 3: Trench 1-3: Plans and Sections

Fig. 4: Trench 4: Plan and Section

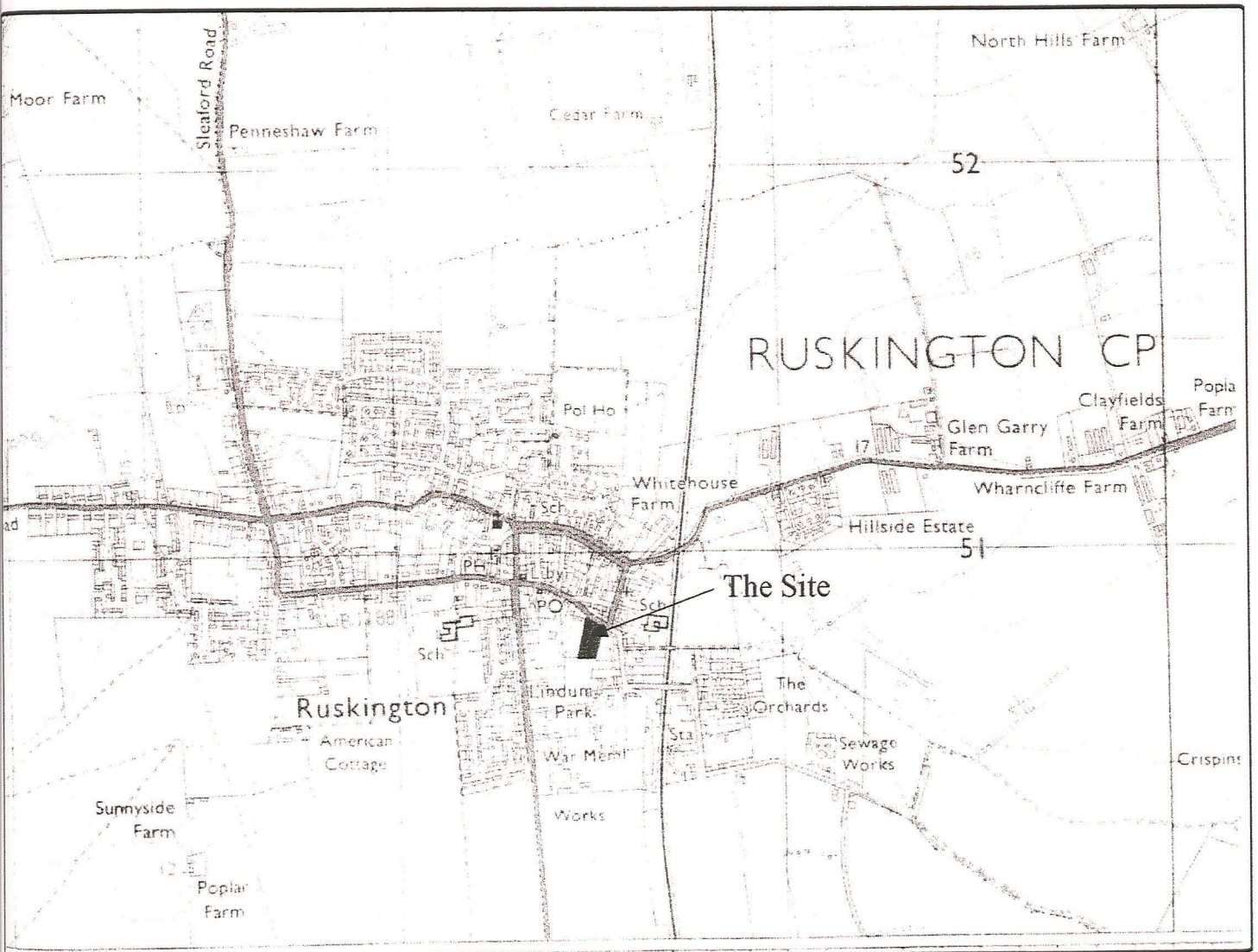


Figure 1: Site Location

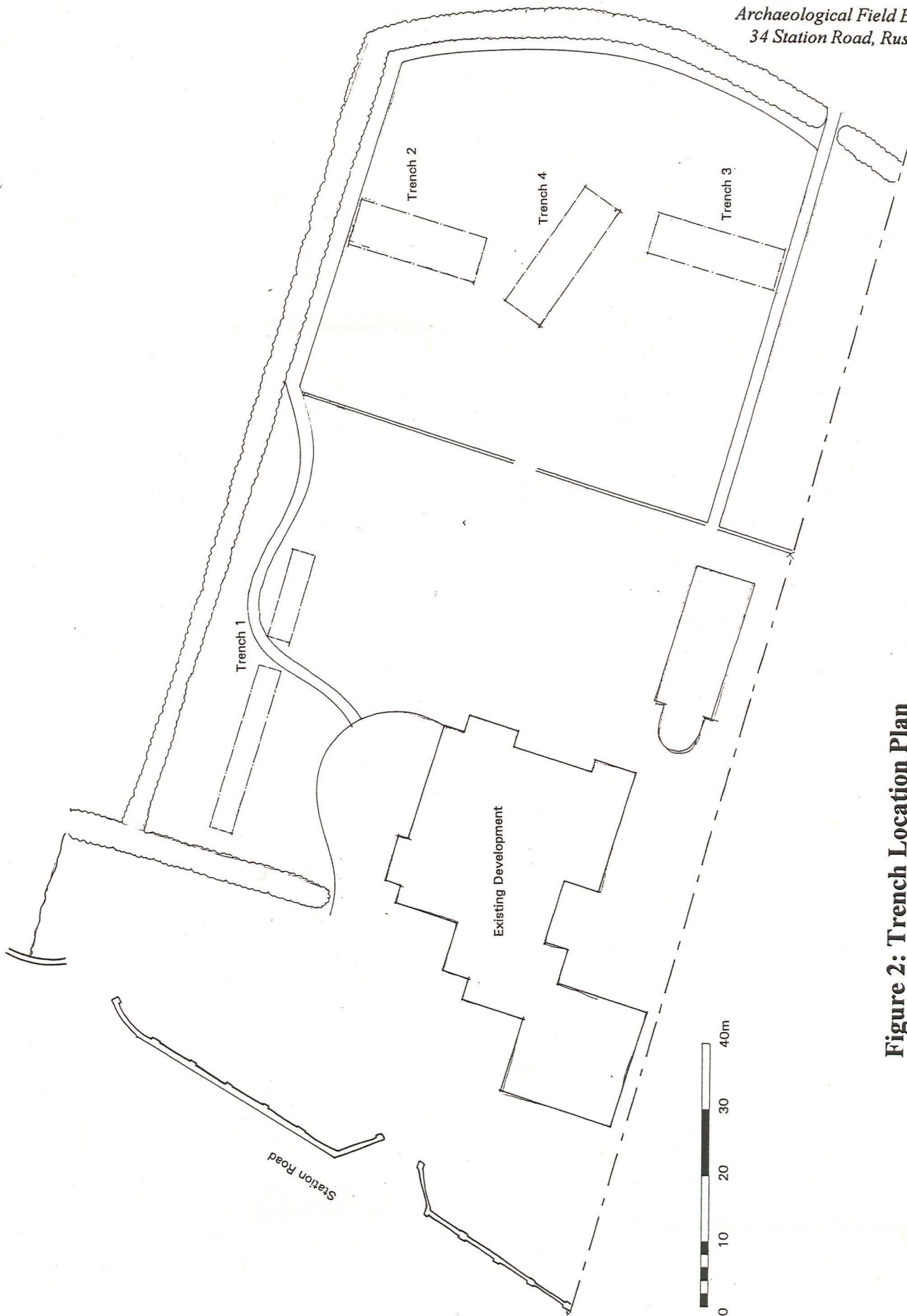
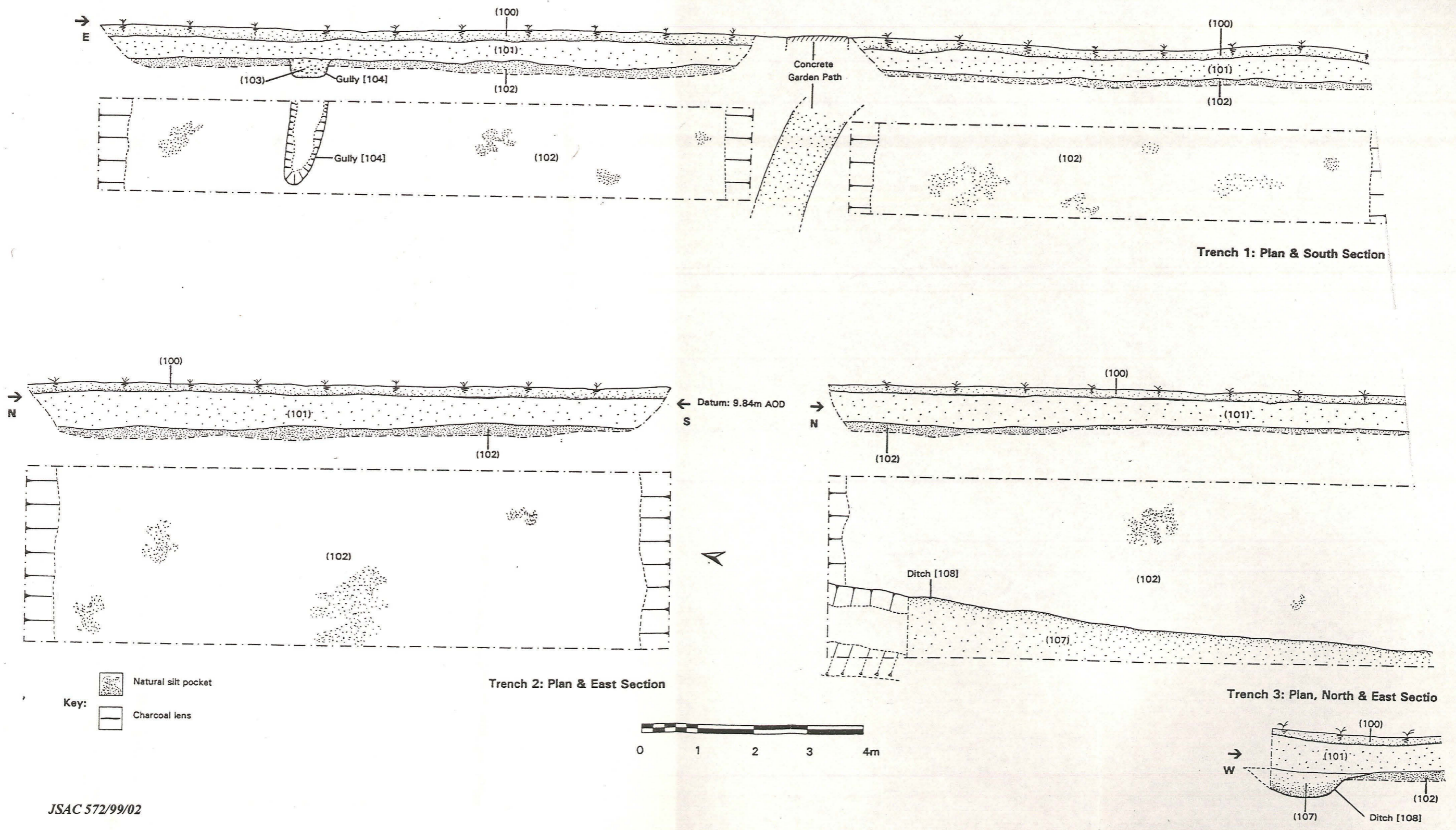


Figure 2: Trench Location Plan



JSAC 572/99/02

Figure 3: Trench 1-3; Plans and Sections

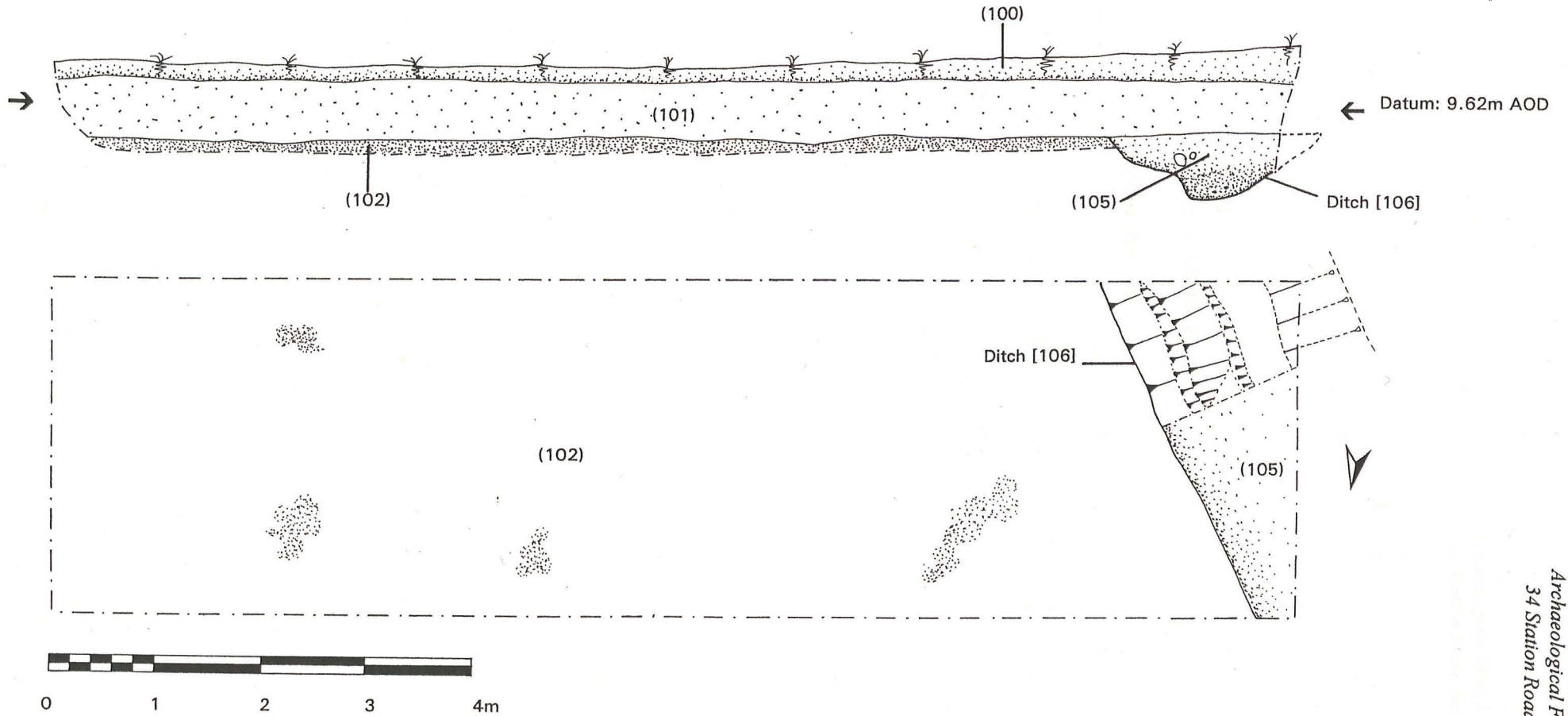


Figure 4: Plan and Section, Trench 4

*Archaeological Field Evaluation:
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Appendices

-Pottery Archive

-Bone Report

RSR 99 Pottery Archive

Jane Young and Simon Johnson

The evaluation produced a total of six pottery sherds including two rim fragments. The small gully, context (103), contained two small and abraded sherds of Romano-British Grey ware. This was sand tempered and difficult to date precisely given the small sample size; but a range of late C3rd-C4th. would be likely.

A second Roman sherd was recovered from the ditch fill (107), and comprises a fragment of a Nene Valley reeded rim mortaria from the C4th. It is in very abraded condition and is considered to be residual. It was found in association with a late C19th - C20th ?Staffordshire glazed earthenware; a small sherd which is probably intrusive and out of context with its associated material.

The remaining sherds, from contexts (105) and (107), both come from the same ditch ([106]/[108]) and date to the Saxon Period. A body sherd from (105) is of Southern Maxey Fabric and can be dated to the C8th-C9th. A rim sherd from (107) of LIM Fabric (Oolitic Limestone tempered) has an earlier range, C5th-early C9th, which gives a concise date for the feature of C8th-early C9th.

RSR99 Bone Report

Richard Moore

Two animal bones were recovered from the site. A cattle bone from context (107) came from the lower part of the right hind leg of the animal. The ends of the bone were missing, probably eroded away by chemical action in the soil. With just the shaft remaining, it is not possible to accurately estimate the size of the animal, but it appeared to be a very small individual. There has always been considerable variation in the size of cattle, but the medieval period was particularly characterised by small animals. This was probably related to the social organisation typical of the period, small animals being especially suited to domestic-scale husbandry.

The bone from context (103) was part of the shoulder-blade of a horse, from the point at which it forms the shoulder joint with the bone of the upper leg. Its size indicates that it came from a relatively large animal.

Bone List

Context	Animal	Bone	Side	Comments
103	Horse	Scapula	Left	Glenoid fragment, fairly large.
Weight (103): 50g				
107	Cattle	Metatarsal	Right	Shaft and part of proximal end, small.
Weight (107): 75g; Total weight: 125g				

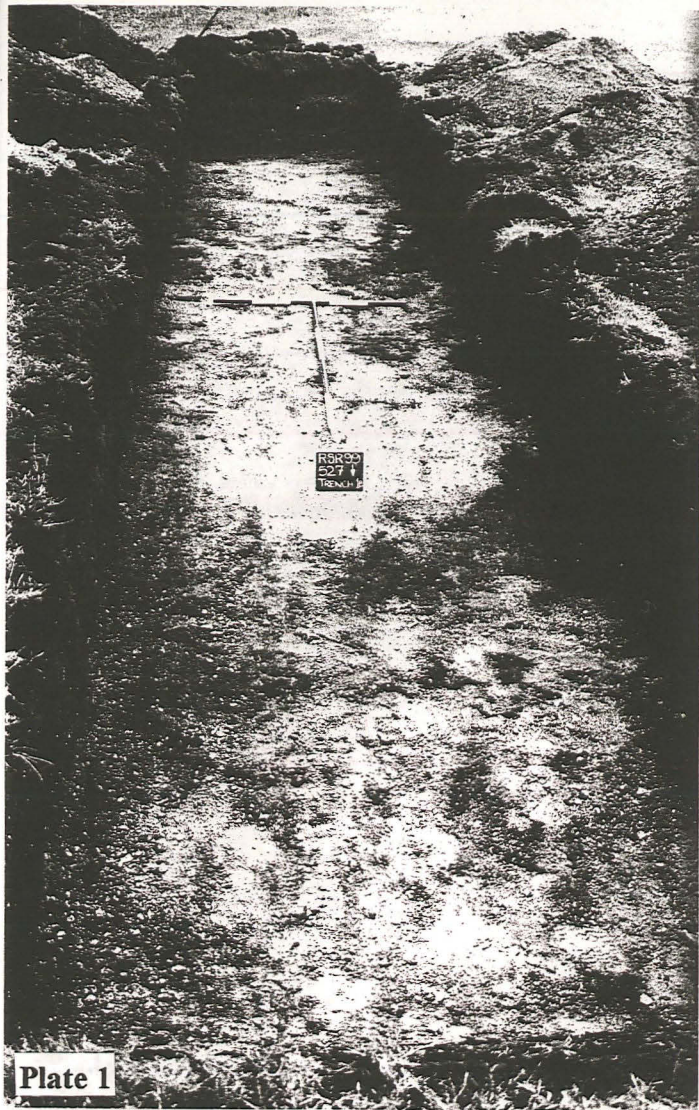


Plate 1



Plate 3

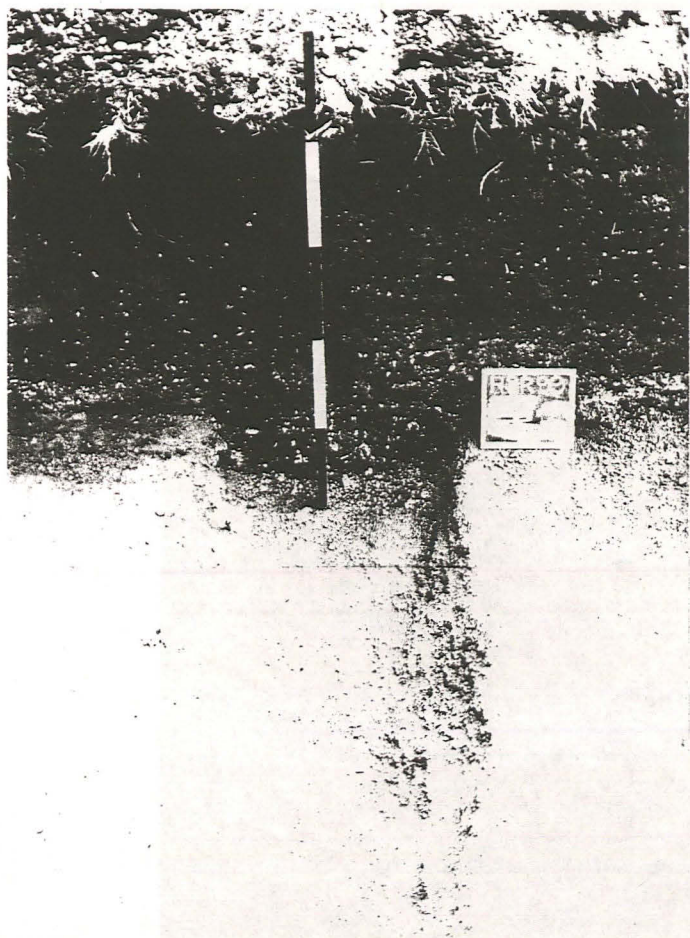


Plate 2

Plate 1: West end of Trench 1, looking west

Plate 2: East end of Trench 1, looking west

Plate 3: Trench 1 -Gully [104] looking south

Plate 4: Trench 2, looking south

Plate 5: Trench 4 -Ditch [106] looking south

Plate 6: Trench 3 -Ditch [108] looking north

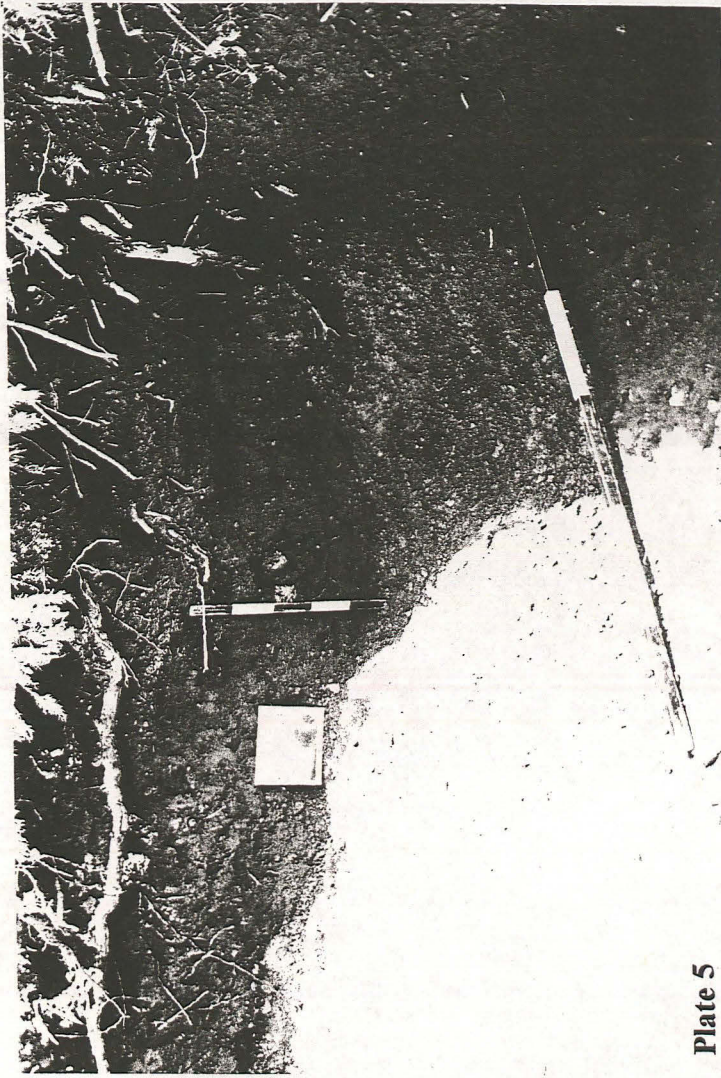


Plate 5



Plate 6

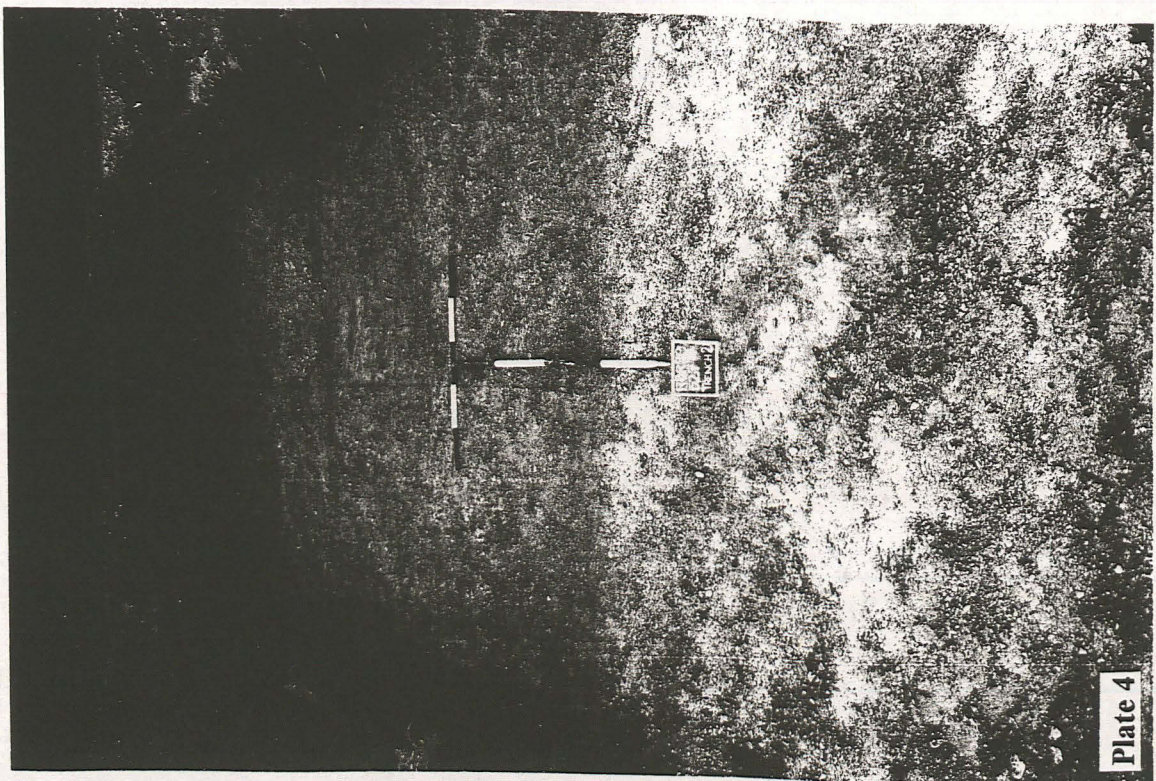


Plate 4