

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

*ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
TORKINGTON HOUSE, 38 ST PETERS STREET,
STAMFORD, LINCOLNSHIRE*

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
TORKINGTON HOUSE, 38 ST PETERS STREET,
STAMFORD, LINCOLNSHIRE**

Conservation
Services

19 APR 2002

Highways & Planning
Directorate

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
TORKINGTON HOUSE, 38 ST PETERS STREET,
STAMFORD, LINCOLNSHIRE**

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief at Torkington House, Stamford, Lincolnshire. The work was carried out in response to planning permission to convert and extend the existing coach house into a dwelling. An entrance or adit relating to late Saxon / early medieval limestone mining was observed and partially excavated. Further pits were noted which are likely to relate to the same activity.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology were commissioned in January 2002, by Wilson and Heath, Chartered Architects, to carry out an archaeological watching brief at Torkington House, 38 St Peters Street, Stamford, Lincolnshire, (Plate 1, Fig 1: NGR TF 0267 0705). The work was carried out in response to a brief for archaeological recording issued by South Kesteven District Council as a condition on planning permission to convert and extend the coach house into a dwelling (Application No. S00/1208/69). The work was undertaken to a project design approved by the SKDC Community Archaeologist. The watching brief involved observation and recording during the excavation of the footings for the extension and during the excavation of the associated service trenches.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies on the west side of Stamford within the limits of Speed's map of medieval Stamford made in AD1600. A number of sites of archaeological importance are located adjacent to Torkington House including a medieval school to the south west, Sempringham Hall on the north side of St Peter's

Street and a medieval monastery on the site of the existing parsonage of St Peter's to the east.

3 *WATCHING BRIEF*

The watching brief was carried out in January and February 2002, as a series of daily visits to view the removal of the overburden, the excavation of the foundation trenches and the excavation of the service trenches. The excavations were carried out using a small 360° excavator using an 800mm wide toothed bucket (Plate 2). All of the foundation and service trenches were cut into the underlying natural Lower Lincolnshire Limestone (Fig 2)

Foundation Trenches

In the area of the extension to the coach house, at the north end of the site the ground level was reduced by 50cm. The ground level here had previously been lowered when the garden to Torkington House was terraced. Over half of this area there was a layer of tarmac, beneath which was a cobbled surface, overlying a sub-base of sand and hardcore. This lay directly on the natural Lower Lincolnshire Limestone. Over the eastern half of the extension there was a layer of garden soil, retained by a stone wall, which was c.1m deep. The foundation trenches for the extension were cut into the limestone to a depth of c.50cm.

During the excavation of the southern foundation trench a small void appeared (Plate 4). A thin layer of lime and sand mix partially covered the void and a large area to the south. This layer, due to its extent, was possibly a surface associated with the garden to Torkington House, before it was terraced, as this area was below the garden soil at the east end of the extension.

The area around the void was cleaned and exposed. Excavation of the feature started by hand but the extent of the feature soon indicated that it would have to be enlarged by machine (Plate 3 & 5).

After the feature was enlarged it became clear that it was a man made rock cut tunnel within the natural limestone. The edges of the feature were cleaned up and a vertical section was cut through the fill to a depth of 2.3m. The void between the fill and the roof of the feature was measured to go back a further 2.5m (Fig 3). A full excavation of the feature was not possible due to health and safety constraints and due to the constraints of the foundations for the new extension (Plate 6 & 7).

The adit contained over fired pottery with burnt stones and slag. Bones, both burnt and un-burnt and Collyweston slates were also present. The earliest pottery from the feature is dated to the late Saxon / early medieval period although some later medieval sherds were present in the fill suggesting that the feature was backfilled in the 15th or 16th centuries.

The feature would appear to have been an adit for the mining of limestone either for building work or for burning.

The section at the north of the site where the ground level had been reduced exposed 4 pits. The pits were cut into limestone and had been effectively half sectioned when the garden to Torkington House had been terraced. Pit one (see Fig 3) contained pottery and animal bone. The pottery is dated to the 13th century or later, suggesting that the pit could be broadly contemporary with the adit.

A second cavity, which potentially may be a second adit, was exposed in the very edge of the northern foundation trench; an investigation of this cavity could not be carried out due to its proximity to the section.

Service Trenches

No archaeological features were noted in the service trenches, which were 0.8m wide, and at deepest 1m deep.

4 **FINDS**

Animal bone from Stamford

Method

A sample of animal bone (2447g) from a single large context was rapidly scanned to determine the species present, the state of preservation and any potential for further study.

Results

Preservation was good, fragmentation was average and surface abrasion was low. Canid gnawing was moderate. Seventeen indeterminate burnt fragments were observed. Most of the material was identifiable to species level. The low frequency of surface abrasion rendered butchery highly detectable.

The assemblage comprised horse (*Equus*), cattle (*Bos*), sheep/goat (*Ovicaprid*) and pig (*Sus*). The material is mostly from limb bones although some ribs, vertebra and teeth are present. Butchery was fairly frequent and was noted on limbs, ribs and vertebra. The marks were consistent with chopping probably occurred as a result of dismembering and jointing.

Although the species present are those expected for the Anglo-Saxon period, the lack of material precludes any statement on whether the assemblage is typical of the period.

Pottery

A total of 249 sherds of pottery were recovered, mainly from the backfill of the quarry entrance. All are regional or local types already known, and the date of infilling seems to be in the late 15th or early 16th centuries. Some of the pottery was already very old and it appears that a 10th-century Stamford Ware kiln or waster dump was disturbed to provide some of the infill material. References are to the established typologies by Kathy Kilmurry and their refinement into ceramic traditions by Christine Mahany. They were presented by Paul Miles and Howard Leach at a joint meeting of the Lincolnshire and

West Midlands Branches of the Medieval Pottery Research Group upon the demise of the Stamford Archaeological Unit in 1987. As such they are the latest specialist assessment of the state of research into Stamford pottery industry. The types present are as follows:

- ❖ Early Stamford wares having thin walls, red margins and surfaces with dark grey core – 11 sherds, 131g.
- ❖ Early Stamford Wares comprising unglazed jars in a creamy buff coarse fabric (Mahany Fabric A), everted rims, wire trimmed bases and knife-trimmed arris; some blackened kiln wasters - 193 sherds weighing 3,312g.
- ❖ Mainstream Stamford ware (Mahany Fabric B, Kilmurry Glaze type 1) - 2 sherds, 209g.
- ❖ Medium fine shelled, Lincoln shelly ware – 23 sherds, weighing 292g.
- ❖ Glapthorn-type (Oundle) late medieval redware – 20 sherds, 540g

A nearby pit (1) produced the following:

- ❖ Early Stamford Ware - 11/82g
- ❖ Lincoln Shelly Ware – 1/3g
- ❖ Potterhanworth-type ware 1/19g

This is probably to be dated to the 13th century or later

5 *CONCLUSION*

The only feature of interest on the site was the backfilled limestone mining adit. The adit had been backfilled with what may be late Saxon / early medieval kiln waste, which may suggest the presence of a kiln in the area as Stamford was a known centre of pottery production in that period.

The pits in the north section of the site suggest that when the garden of Torkington House was terraced, much of the archaeology in the lower terrace where the watching brief took place was truncated or destroyed, leaving the mining adit as an isolated feature.

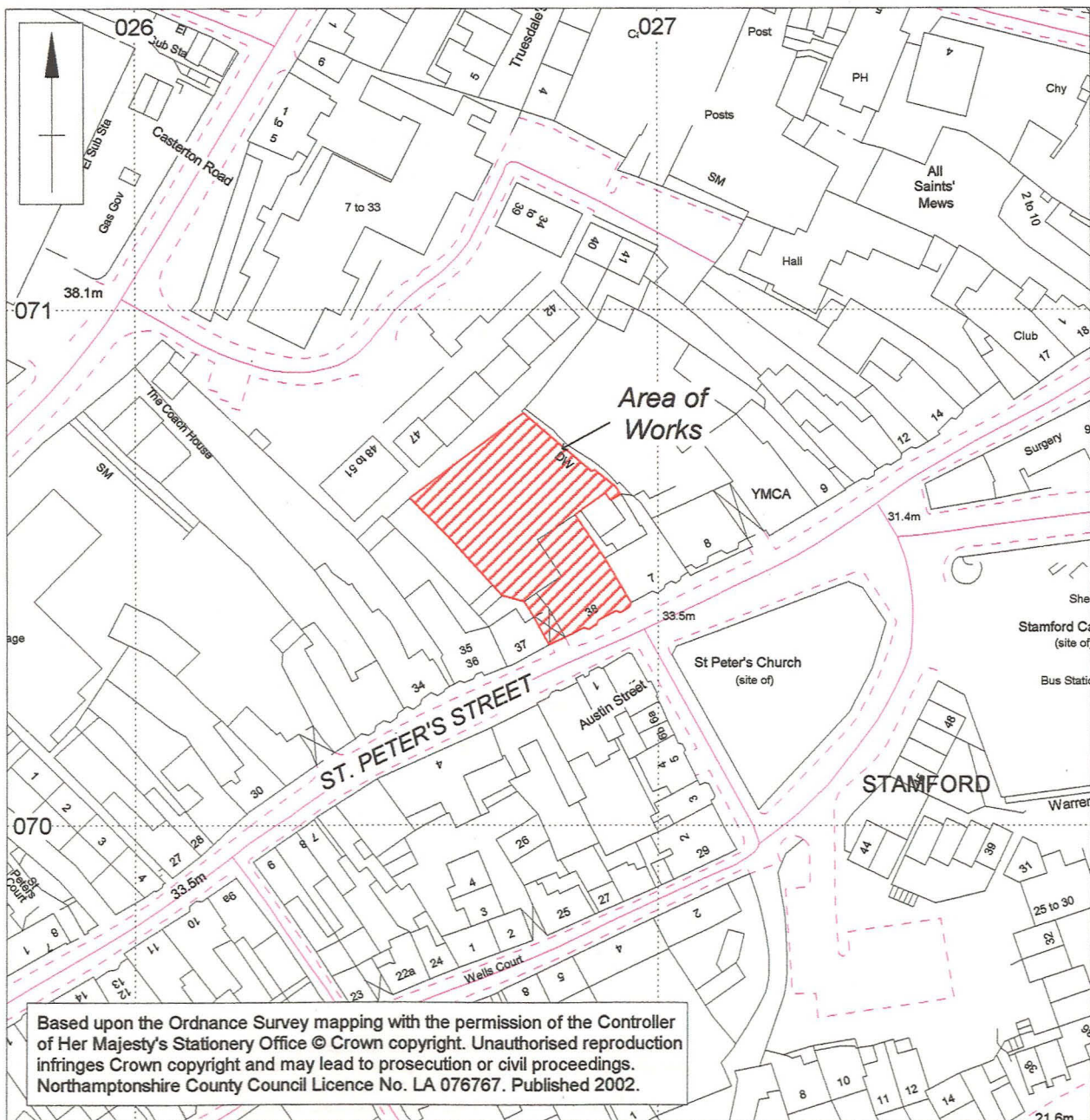
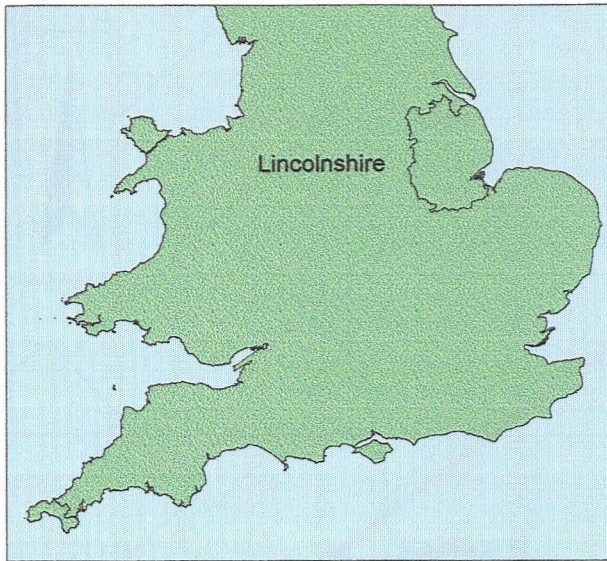
Stamford as a town has legends of tunnels connecting the various churches and religious houses, many of which after the dissolution were either destroyed or

blocked off. Having said this, there is no archaeological or historical evidence of tunnels in Stamford. The myth of tunnels in Stamford is perpetuated by arches in cellars and the filling of the end of a barrel vault giving the idea that it is a blocked tunnel. The toilet drain for St Leonard's Priory found during excavation gave rise to talk of a tunnel leading to the mythical monastery on the Burhgly estate as it entered a fissure to drain down to the river. (Smith, 1998)

It is possible that the finding of early limestone mining shafts may also have perpetuated the tunnel myth. Several features similar to that found at Torkington House have been found in the area. The machine driver mentioned a number of them to me as being found when the supermarket to the north of the site was built.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

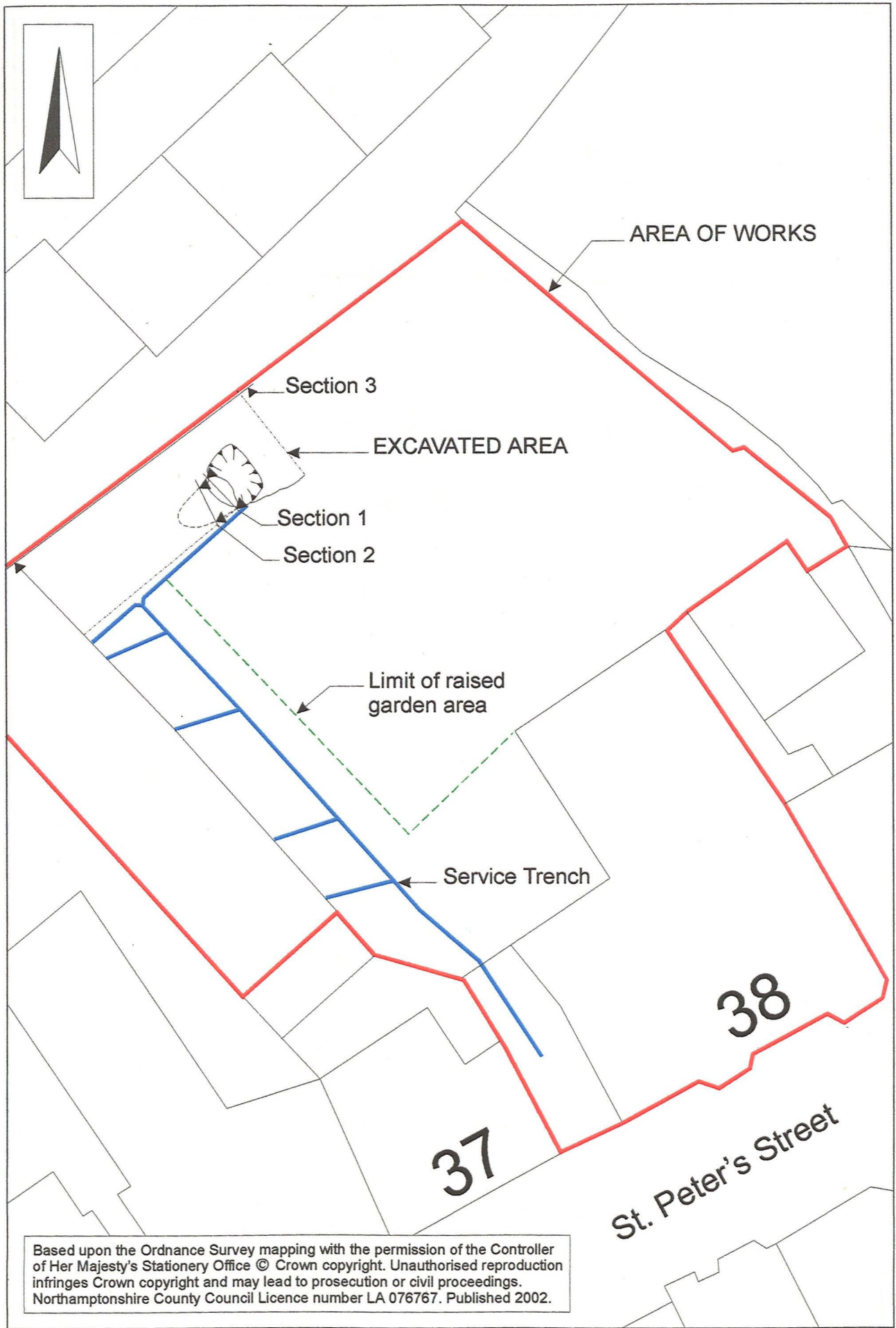
Smith, M. 1998 *Stamford Myths & Legends* Paul Watkins. Stamford



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Scale = 1:1250

Fig 1

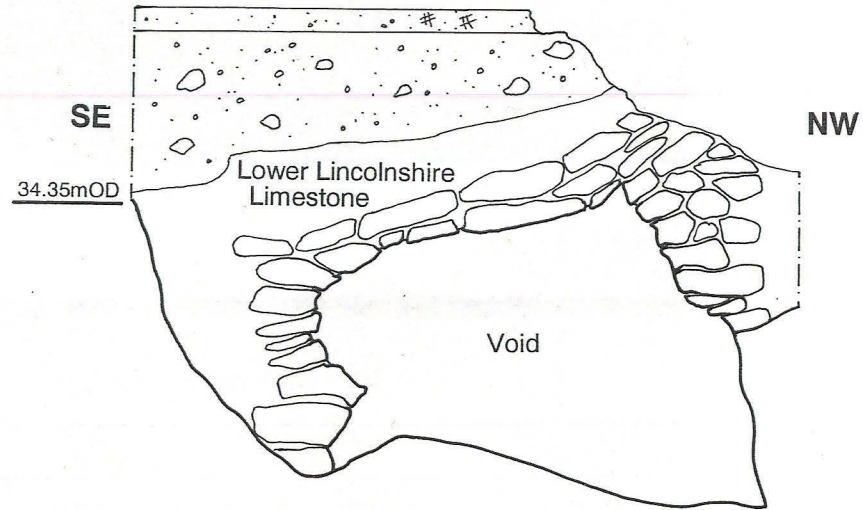


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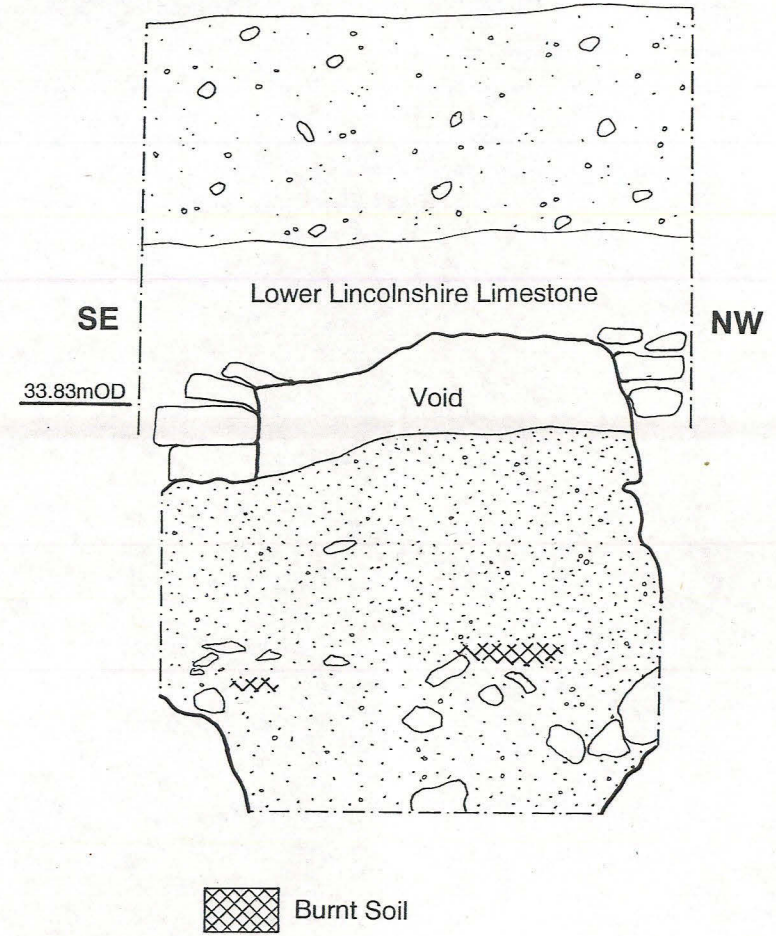
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Fig. 2

Section 1



Section 2



Section 3

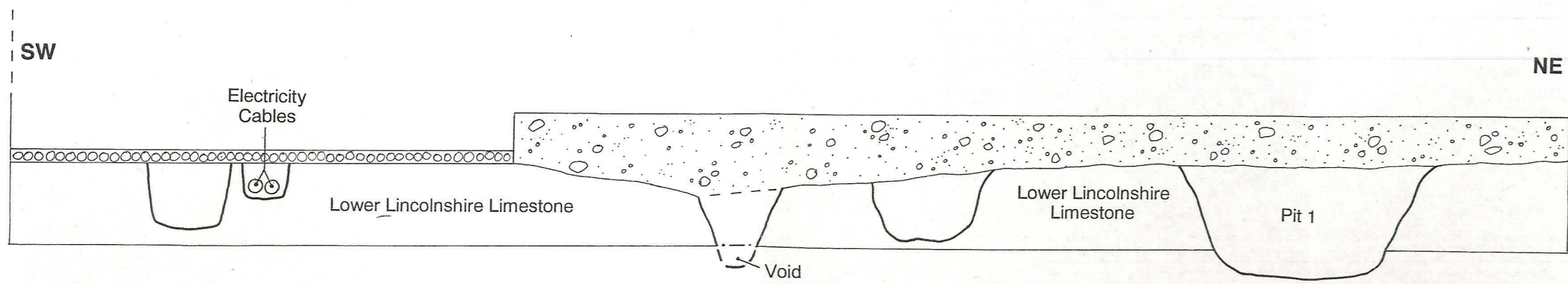


Fig. 3



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7

MB
LJ.



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Please ask for
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Our ref
02/334

Your ref

Date
17 April 2002

Dear Mr Bennett

WATCHING BRIEF AT TORKINGTON HOUSE, STAMFORD

Please find enclosed a copy of the above report for inclusion in the SMR. If you require further copies or have any queries please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

Tim Upson-Smith

For Head of Northamptonshire Archaeology

Conservation
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19 APR 2002

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