Top Farm, Hubbert's Bridge
Excavation 1994

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PROJECT
SERVICES

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS ON LAND AT TOP FARM, HUBBERT'S BRIDGE, BOSTON, LINCOLNSHIRE

Work Undertaken For
Virgin Radio

Report Compiled By
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April 1994

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## 1. SUMMARY

*An excavation was undertaken on land at Top Farm, Hubbert's Bridge, Lincolnshire (TF260448). This was in response to a proposal, by Virgin Radio, for the construction of a radio transmission mast and associated facilities. The proximity to known archaeological sites was such that the foundations were excavated to test for the presence and survival of archaeological deposits.*

*A single pot sherd of Roman date was recovered from the topsoil. This supports earlier evidence for Roman occupation in the area.*

*Post-Medieval pottery, tile and brick fragments were recovered from most trenches.*

*Modern activity on the site was limited to field drainage systems.*

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Background

An archaeological excavation was undertaken on farmland to the northwest of Hubbert's Bridge, 300m from Kirton Drove (Grid Reference TF260448). This archaeological investigation was in response to a proposal, by Virgin Radio, for the construction of a radio transmission mast and associated facilities including a cabin and aerial tuner. The work was undertaken by Archaeological Project Services, between the 5th and the 11th of April 1994, in accordance with a brief set by the Community Archaeologist for Boston Borough Council.

### 2.2 Topography and Geology

Hubbert's Bridge is located 7km west of Boston, Lincolnshire (Fig. 1). Situated 1.5km northwest of Hubbert's Bridge, the site lies in the eastern corner of a field lying 300m south of Kirton Drove, along an unfenced track, in the civil parish of Kirton, Boston District (Fig. 2).

Local soil type is pelo-alluvial gleys (Wallasea Associates) overlying marine silts (Hodge *et al.* 1984, 338). The terrain of the area is flat, lying at about 3m OD. Present land use is arable, the area of investigation having just been drilled for sugar beet.

### 2.3 Archaeological Setting

The site lies within an area of intensive Romano-British occupation. Deep ploughing in the 1950s and early 1960s exposed pottery scatters to the northeast (Lincs SMR No 12535 and Boston Community Archaeologists No B07/014) and to the southeast (SMR 12536, B07/011, B07/012 and B07/013). These scatters consist mainly of greyware, with the inclusion of some colour coated and other vessel types.

From the available evidence, occupation appears to date from the 2nd to 4th centuries and consists of isolated farmsteads enclosed by boundary ditches. Additionally, evidence of a possible earthwork may represent the remnants of field systems associated with these farmsteads.

## 3. AIMS

The aims of the evaluation were to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability, documentation and quality of setting.

## 4. METHODS

Seven trenches were located to correspond with the areas that are to be disturbed by the proposed development (Fig. 3). The size of these trenches was dictated by the foundations and all deposits, archaeological and natural, were recorded as the work progressed. Where archaeological features exceeded these limits, test sections were excavated to obtain the maximum information.

## 5. ANALYSIS

Records of the deposits and features identified during the excavation were examined. Phasing was assigned based on the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them. A total of four phases was identified.

Phase 1 - Natural deposits
Phase 2 - Undated archaeological deposits
Phase 3 - Post-medieval deposits
Phase 4 - Modern deposits

### Phase 1 Natural deposits

Natural deposits of blue and brown clay overlying silt and fine sand deposits were encountered in all but one of the seven trenches (Fig 4 and 5). The blue and brown clay layers were seen to terminate 12.60m east along trench 7 (Fig. 7) and no trace of them was found in trench 5. This may suggest the possible 'shoreline' of a sand island.

The clayey-sand deposit (028), recorded in trench 5, may represent a natural channel. Alternatively, the deposit may constitute a feature fill, slumping of the natural having obscured the features edges.

Ground water was encountered 1.30m below present ground level.

### Phase 2 Undated archaeological deposits

A sub-rectangular cut, was recorded in trench 5. Measuring 0.4m by 0.2m, with a fine sand fill, this represents the truncated remains of a posthole (030, 031; Fig. 6). No pottery was recovered from this fill.

### Phase 3 Post-medieval deposits

One side of a cut feature (035), *c.* 1.10m deep, was recorded in trench 1 (Fig. 4). Evidence recorded in section suggests that this feature may have been recut (004) after a period of silting (006). Possibly representing a ditch, the exposed side of this cut was aligned northeast-southwest, a similar orientation to the trackway to the south.

A similar feature was observed in trench 5 (Fig. 6). One side of a cut was recorded along the southeastern side (027). Measuring 0.12m deep, it is aligned northeast to southwest, therefore corresponding with (035), and is again parallel to the trackway.

### Phase 4 Modern deposits

Three linear features were observed, two running east-west (048, 050) and one north-south (Fig.7). Generally narrow and deep, these contained modern debris and represent land drains, although no pipes were recovered. Ploughsoil constituted the present ground surface.

## 6. DISCUSSION

Natural deposits (phase 1) of clay overlying marine sand/silt deposits occur

directly below ploughsoil across the entire area of the site. Disappearance of the clay layers may indicate the presence of a sand island to the northeast. Sand islands were sought after for occupation as they were less prone to flooding than the surrounding low lying areas.

In trench 5, the truncated remains of a shallow posthole (phase 2) were recorded. No finds were recovered. Two other cuts possibly represent the location of a dyke or field boundary (phase 3). This feature paralleled the trackway, which may suggest that the track and dyke are contemporary.

Modern activity (phase 4) is restricted to drainage features and the ploughsoil. All finds were recovered from the ploughsoil.

## 7. ASSESSMENT

For assessment of significance the *Secretary of State's criteria for scheduling ancient monuments* has been used (DoE 1990, Annex 4; see appendix 3).

**Period**
No clear period can be ascertained from the available information gathered.

**Rarity**
Individual elements recorded during this excavation are not in themselves rare. The single sherd of Roman pottery is not uncommon.

**Documentation**
Previous archaeological study of this area has been limited to documentation of stray finds of artefacts discovered during agricultural activities. Records of these are kept in the Lincolnshire County Sites and Monuments Record and in the relevant parish file of the Boston Community Archaeologist.

There are no appropriate historical surveys of the Hubbert's Bridge area.

**Group value**
The Roman pottery recovered from the ploughsoil relates to adjacent sites of this period. However, as unstratified artefacts with no clear association to archaeological deposits or features, their group value is low.

**Survival/Condition**
Archaeological deposits, where encountered, are largely undamaged by later disturbance. No evidence for the survival of environmental remains, either by waterlogging or charring, was obtained.

**Fragility/Vulnerability**
As total excavation took place in all areas of imminent disturbance, no further threat to archaeological features is likely.

**Diversity**
Both functional and period diversity were restricted. The evidence recovered suggests Roman and later occupation to be located elsewhere.

**Potential**
Potential for further recoveries, in the general area remains high. Evidence from previous discoveries suggest Romano-British occupation in the immediate vicinity, but largely absent from the site of development.

## 8. EFFECTIVENESS OF TECHNIQUES

The methods and strategies employed in the excavation of the site proved effective. Recording of geological and archaeological features was undertaken that will increase present knowledge of the area. The form and functions of some features recorded

was not apparent, and dateable evidence from features was not forthcoming.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

This excavation identified deposits of unknown and post-medieval date. Natural deposits were also recorded and have shown the presence of a sand island to the northeast. This higher ground would be desirable for occupation and consistent with the archaeological evidence previously obtained from the area. Post-medieval and recent features were all of an agricultural nature.

## 10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services would like to thank Anthony Keen, agent for Virgin Radio Limited for funding the excavation and post - fieldwork analysis. Steve Haynes coordinated the work and this report was edited by Dave Start and Gary Taylor. Advice on the environmental potential of the site was made by Dr Helen C.M. Keeley, whose report appears at appendix 1. Advice on finds was given by Hilary Healey. Examination of information held in the relevant parish files was permitted by Jim Bonnor, the Community Archaeologist for Boston District. Information from the County Sites and Monuments Record was provided by Mark Bennet of Lincolnshire County Council Archaeology Section.

## 11. PERSONNEL

Project Manager: Steve Haynes
Supervisor: Paul Cope-Faulkner
Site Assistants: Aaron Chapman, Chris Moulis
Finds Processing: Denise Buckley
Illustration: Paul Cope-Faulkner
Post-excavation Analyst: Paul Cope-Faulkner

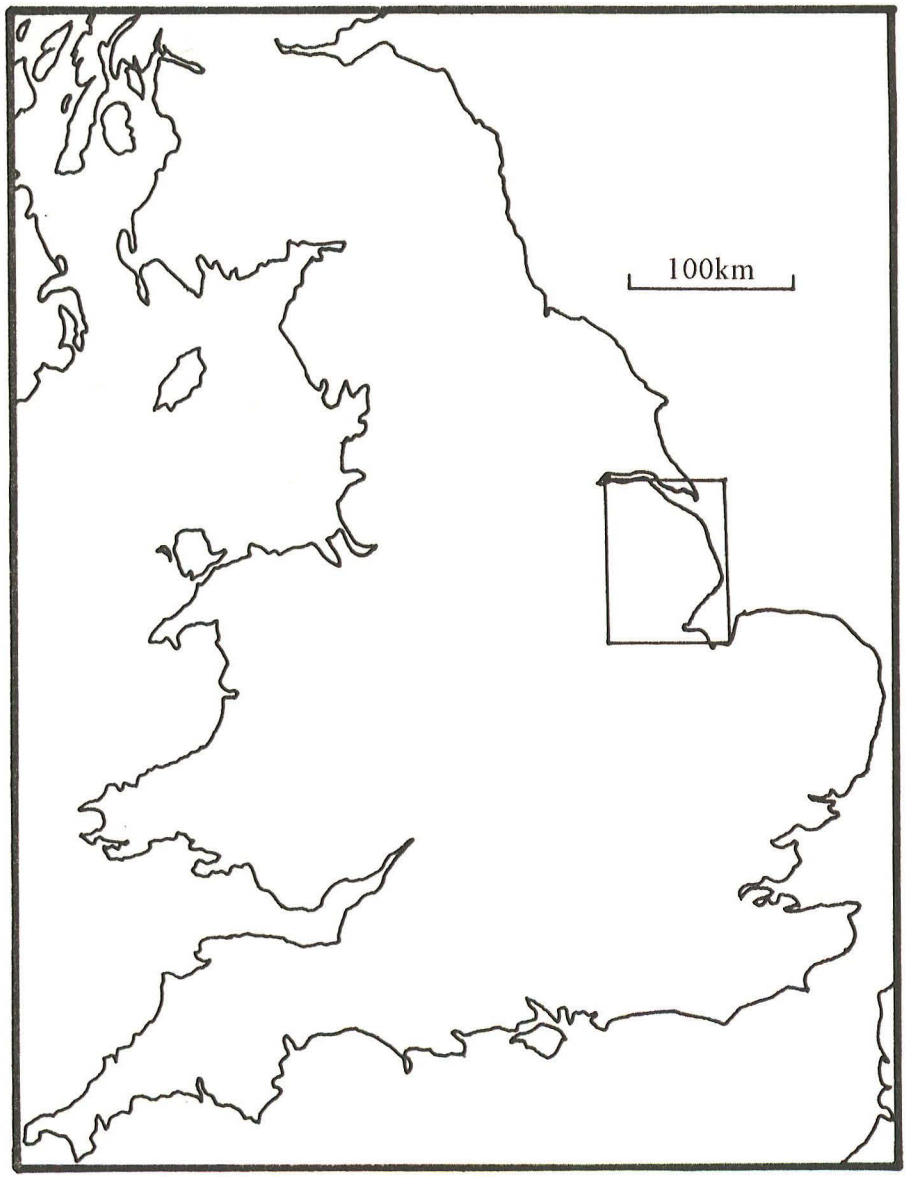
## 12. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hodge, C A H, Burton, R G O, Corbett, W M, Evans, and Seale, R S, 1984 *Soils and their Use in Eastern England*, Soil Survey of England and Wales **13** (Harpenden)

## 13. ABBREVIATIONS

Numbers prefixed with 'SMR' are the primary reference numbers used by the Lincolnshire County Sites and Monuments Record.

Numbers prefixed by 'B' are the reference numbers used by the Boston District Community Archaeologist.



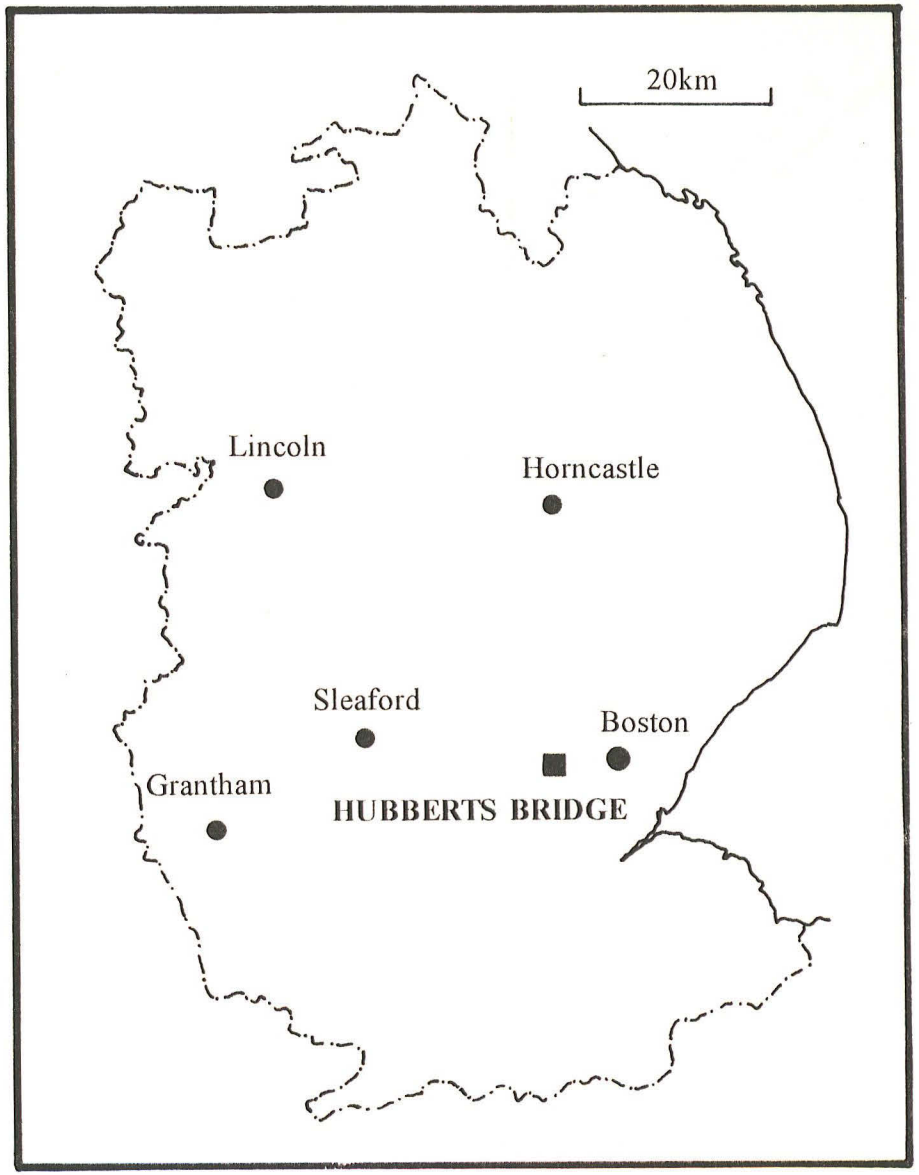
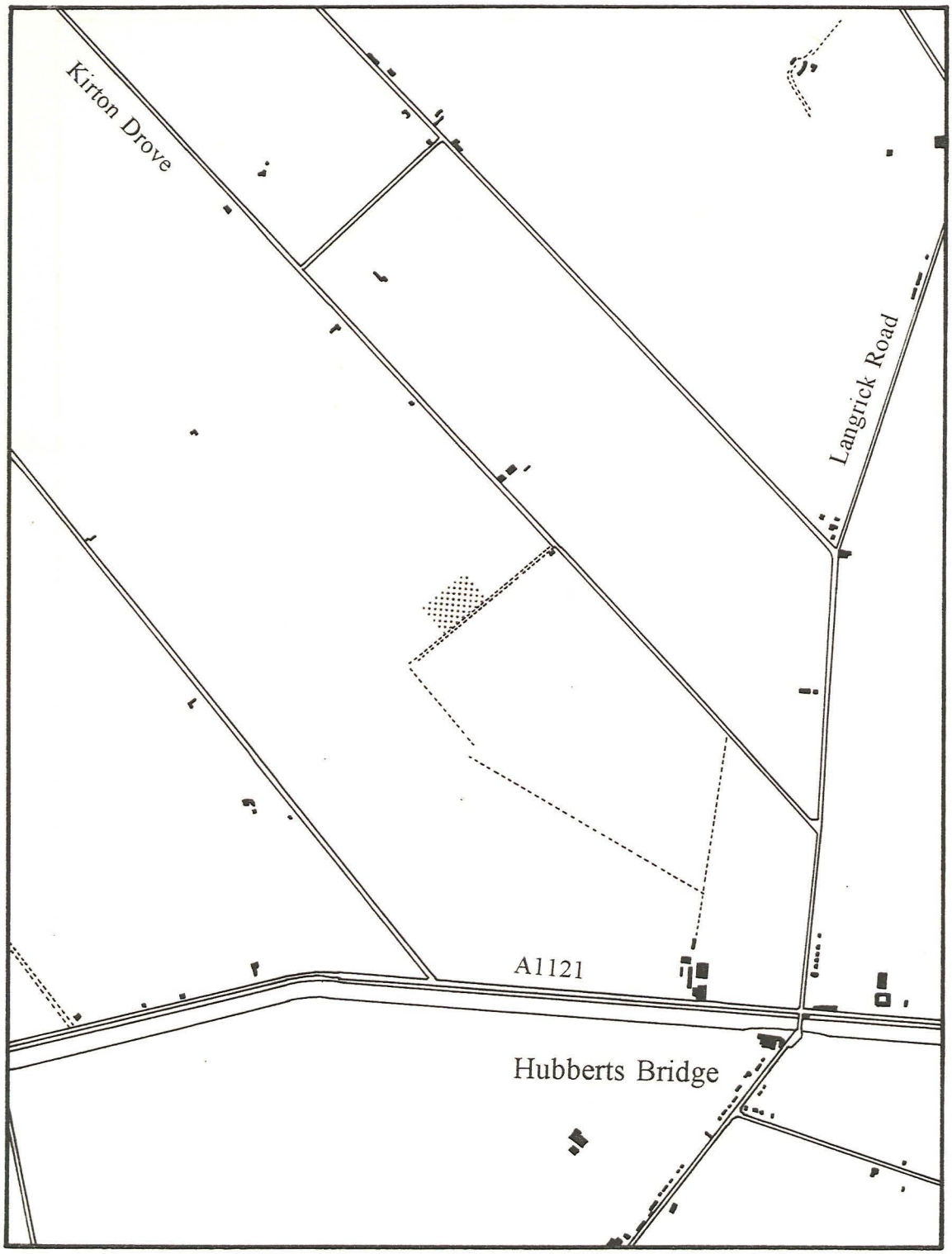




Fig. 1 GENERAL LOCATION PLAN

# Fig 2. Site Location Plan

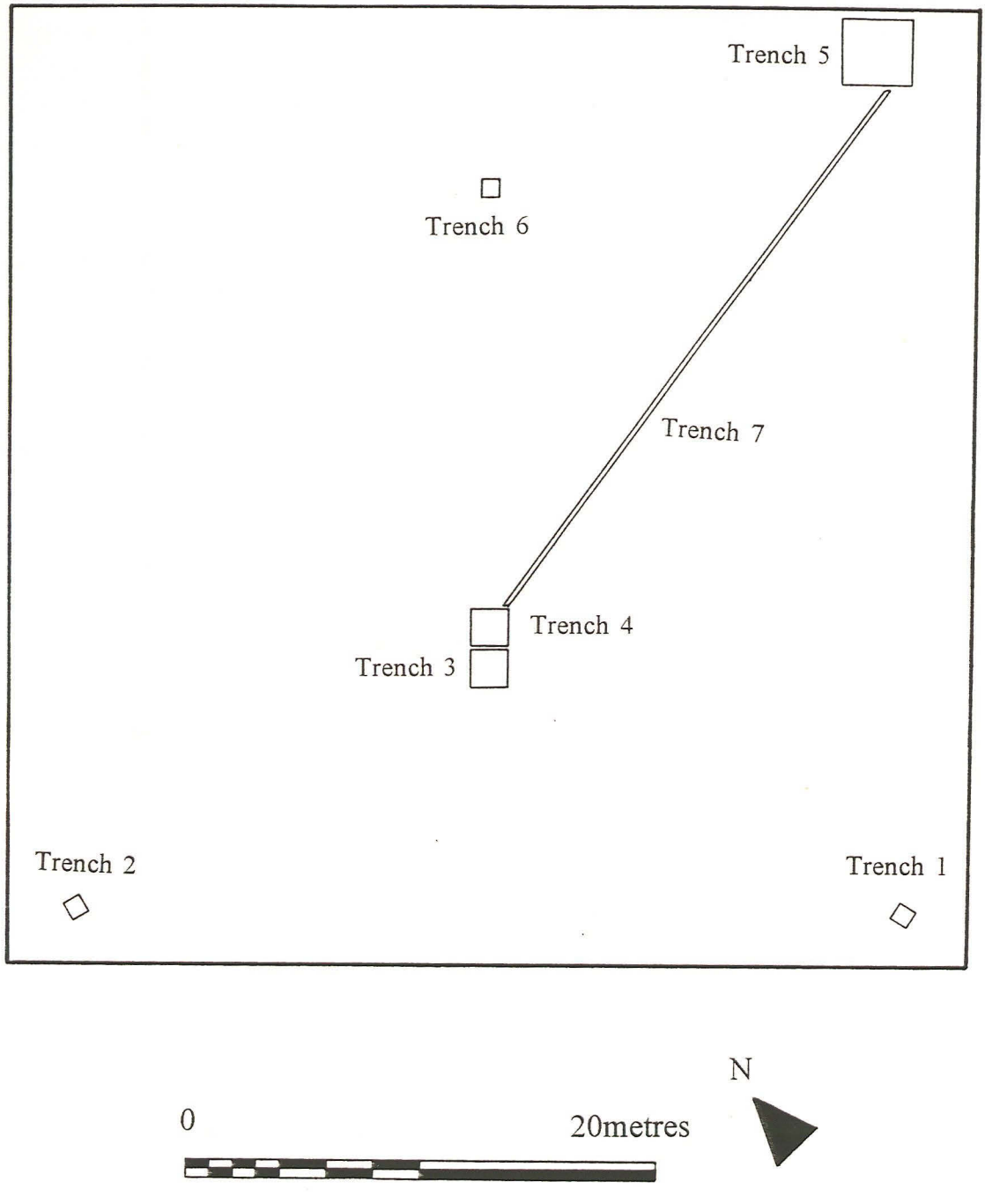



0 2km

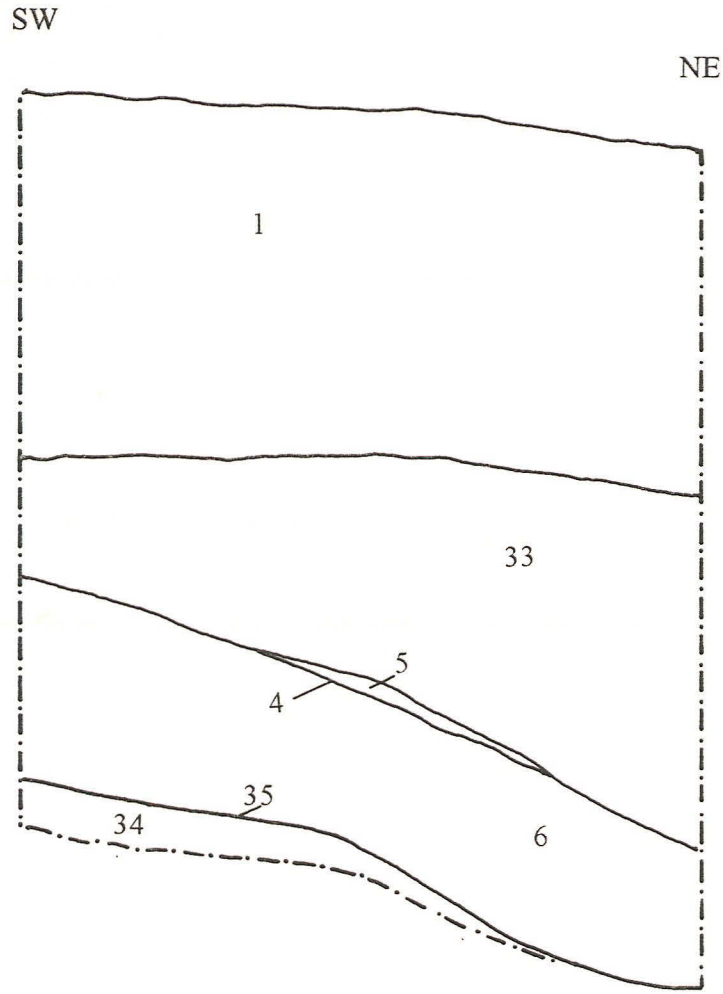
N

Area of Development

# Fig 3. Trench Location Plan

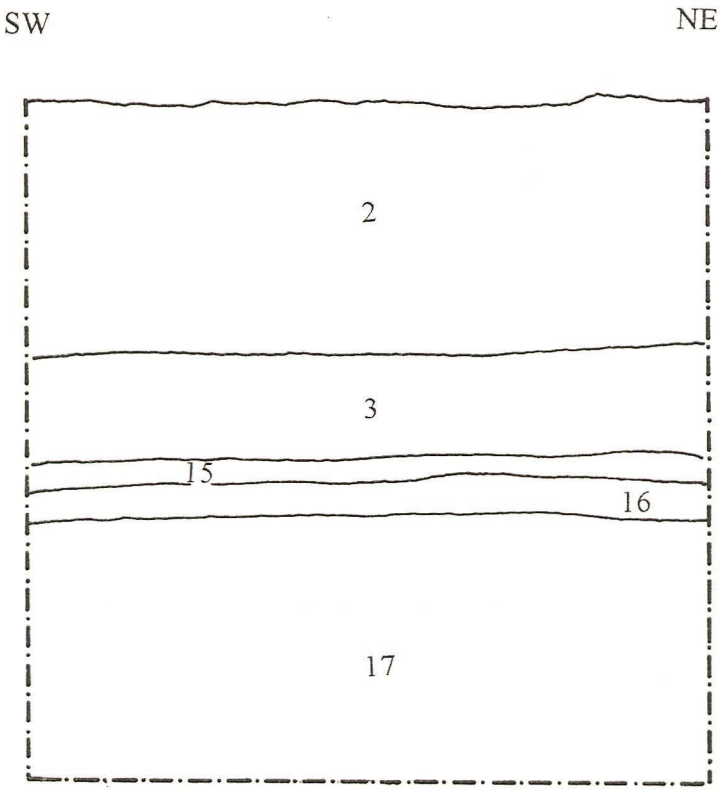


# Fig 4. Sections 1 and 4




Section 4, Trench 1

1.29m o.d.




Section 1, Trench 2

1.18m o.d.

0 50cm

# Fig 5. Section 3

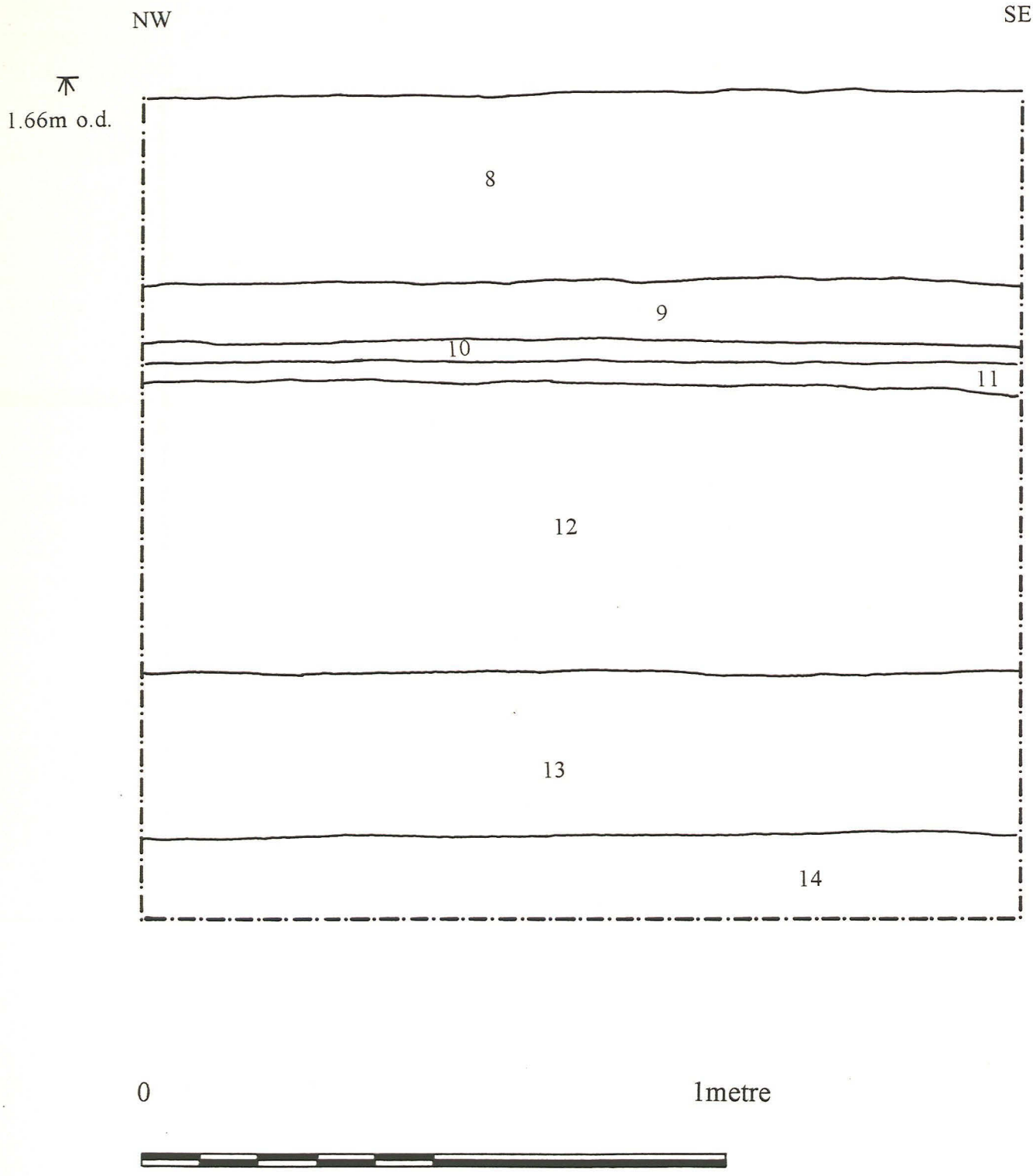
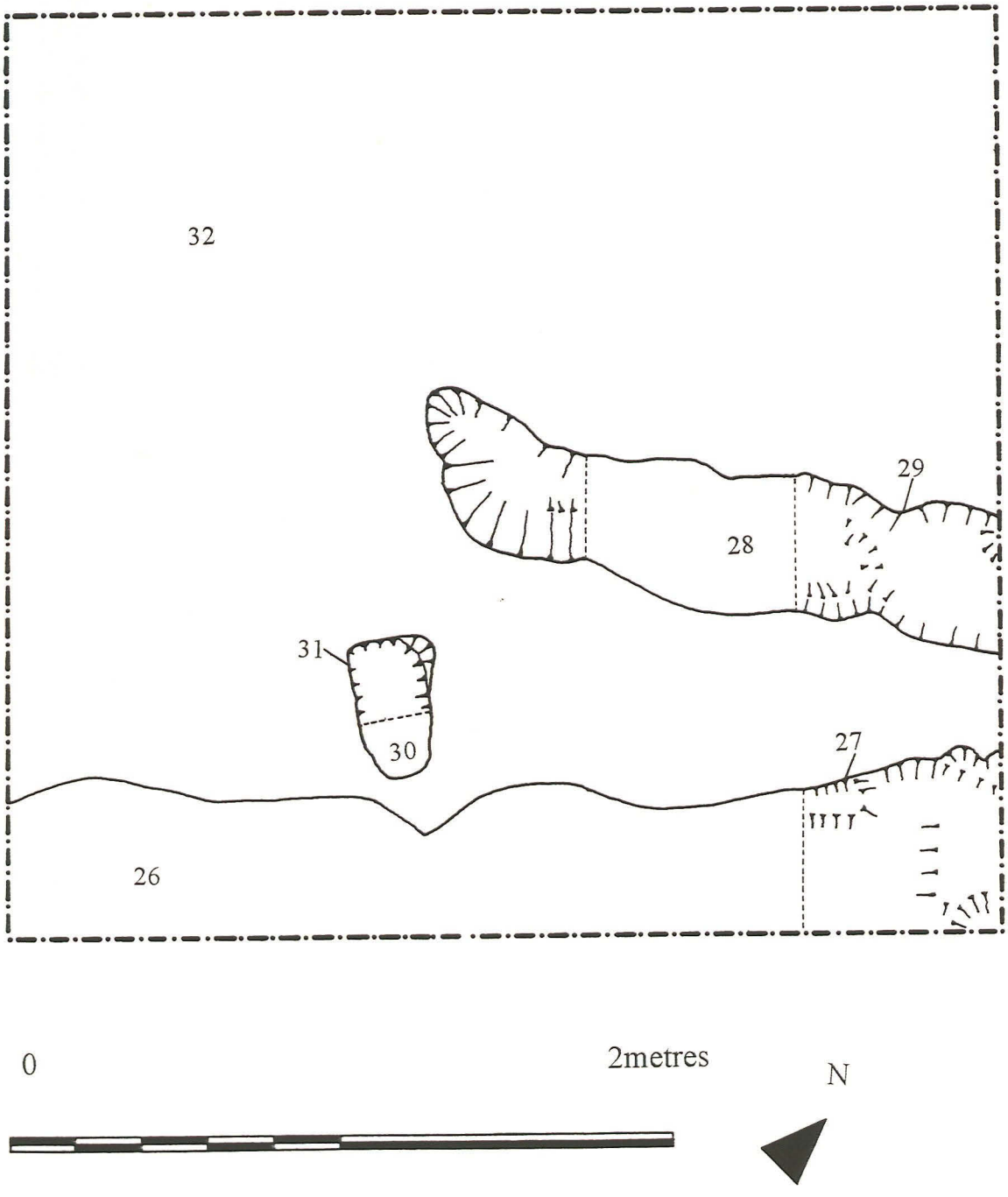


Fig 6. Plan, Trench 5



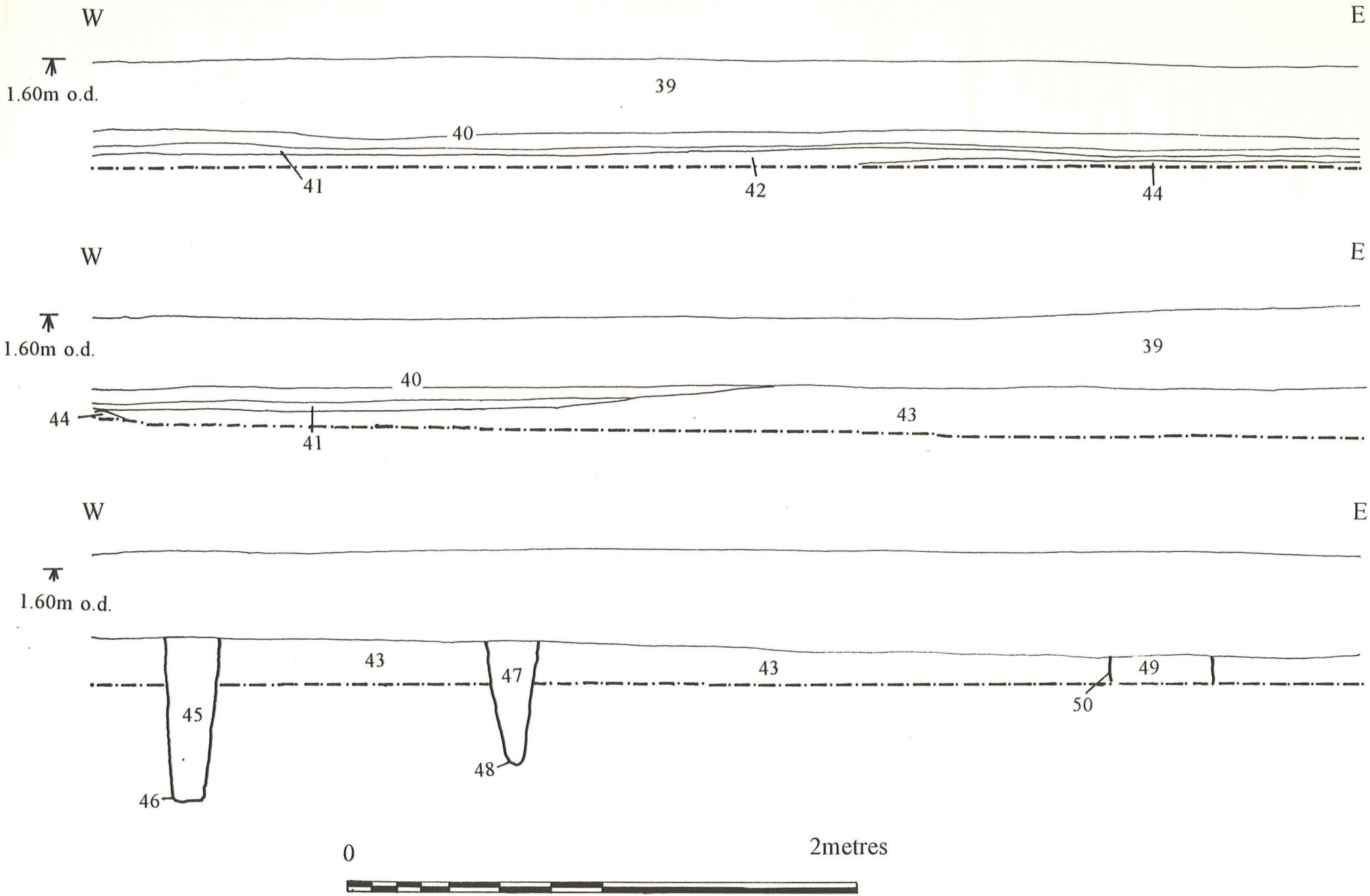



Fig 7. Section 11

## APPENDIX 1

Report on visit to Excavations at Top Farm, Hubberts Bridge, Lincs.
*Dr Helen C.M. Keeley.*

A number of trial trenches were examined. These were being excavated by Archaeological Project Services as part of an archaeological evaluation of the site in advance of the construction of a radio mast.

The soils in this area have been mapped by the Soil Survey (Hodge *et al.*, 1984) at 1:250,000 as Wisbech Association and Wallasea 2 Association, *i.e.* silty soils developed on marine alluvium. The soils at the site varied considerably from humic medium sandy silt loam overlying medium sandy loam at the highest elevations to poorly drained silt/silty clay in the low-lying areas of the fields.

There were 3 features of note in Trench 5,

1) in the corner was the edge of a post-medieval dyke associated with the road,
2) a shallow, irregular-shaped cut with a more clayey fill than the surrounding deposits, which may be a natural feature,
3) a square posthole. The soil profile comprised a dark greyish brown humic medium sandy silt loam topsoil overlying yellowish brown medium sandy loam.

In Trench 3 a layer of blue-grey clay occurred at the base of the dark topsoil, overlying layers of silty sand and clay. At about 110cms. below the surface, ground water had caused the subsoil to collapse, suggesting a change to a more sandy deposit.

In Trench 2 the blue-grey clay layer occurred in the upper subsoil, below a layer of light brown sandy loam and overlying sandy silt/silty clay deposits.

Trench 1 revealed a section through the old dyke side next to the road and here the blue-grey layer was absent. In the long trench (Trench 7) the blue-grey layer petered out as the ground rose slightly approaching Trench 5. In Trench 6 it was present but much fainter and mixed with sandy material - this soil was drier and there was much evidence of earthworm activity, not noticeable in the other pits.

General comments:

The excavations appeared to have revealed the edge of a sand island, as evidenced by the better drained sandy textured soils, against which floodwaters would have lapped - the blue-grey clay layer is likely to represent one of these events. This is consistent with the location of a concentration of Roman pottery, recorded in the SMR, on slightly higher ground adjacent to the site. The sand island would have been significantly higher at that time - subsequent erosion by ploughing has spread the sandy material over a large surrounding area.

Ref: Hodge, CAH, Burton, RGO, Corbett, WM, Evans, R and Seale, RS 1984 *Soils and Their Use in Eastern England.* Soil Survey of England and Wales, Bulletin No, **13** (Harpenden)

**APPENDIX 2**
Context Summary

| Context number | Description | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| 1, 2, 8, 22, 38, 39 | Mid to dark brown humic clayey silt | Ploughsoil |
| 3, 9, 19, 23, 40 | Mid brown clay | Natural deposit |
| 10, 15, 20, 24, 41 | Blue grey clay | Natural deposit |
| 11, 16, 25, 42 | Mid reddish brown clay | Natural deposit |
| 44 | Light grey blue silty clay | Natural deposit |
| 12, 17, 21 | Light brown silt/fine sand with clay laminations | Natural deposit |
| 13, 14, 32, 34, 43 | Yellow brown fine sand | Natural deposit |
| 26 | Grey brown silty sand | Fill of cut 27 |
| 27 | Linear cut, one side exposed (0.27m x 0.5m x 0.12m ) | Possible ditch cut |
| 28 | Grey brown clayey silt with fine sand | Fill of cut 29 |
| 29 | Irregular cut (1.70m x 0. 4m x 90mm) | Possible natural feature |
| 30 | Mid brown fine sand | Fill of cut 31 |
| 31 | Sub-rectangular cut (0.42m 0.23m x 0.11m) | Posthole |
| 45, 47, 49 | Light brown silty sand | Fills of drainage cuts |
| 46, 48, 50 | Deep and narrow linear cuts | Recent drainage cuts |
| 5, 6, 33, 36, 37 | Mixed fills, predominantly clayey silts | Fill of cut 35 |
| 35 | Linear cut, one side exposed (0.70m x 1.12m) | Possible ditch cut |

## APPENDIX 3

**Secretary of State's criteria for scheduling Ancient Monuments - Extract from *Archaeology and Planning* DoE Planning Policy Guidance note 16, November 1990**

The following criteria (which are not in any order of ranking), are used for assessing the national importance of an ancient monument and considering whether scheduling is appropriate. The criteria should not however be regarded as definitive; rather they are indicators which contribute to a wider judgement based on the individual circumstances of a case.

i *Period*: all types of monuments that characterise a category or period should be considered for preservation.

ii *Rarity*: there are some monument categories which in certain periods are so scarce that all surviving examples which retain some archaeological potential should be preserved. In general, however, a selection must be made which portrays the typical and commonplace as well as the rare. This process should take account of all aspects of the distribution of a particular class of monument, both in a national and regional context.

iii *Documentation*: the significance of a monument may be enhanced by the existence of records of previous investigation or, in the case of more recent monuments, by the supporting evidence of contemporary written records.

iv *Group value*: the value of a single monument (such as a field system) may be greatly enhanced by its association with related contemporary monuments (such as a settlement or cemetery) or with monuments of different periods. In some cases, it is preferable to protect the complete group of monuments, including associated and adjacent land, rather than to protect isolated monuments within the group.

v *Survival/Condition*: the survival of a monument's archaeological potential both above and below ground is a particularly important consideration and should be assessed in relation to its present condition and surviving features.

vi *Fragility/Vulnerability*: highly important archaeological evidence from some field monuments can be destroyed by a single ploughing or unsympathetic treatment; vulnerable monuments of this nature would particularly benefit from the statutory protection that scheduling confers. There are also existing standing structures of particular form or complexity whose value can again be severely reduced by neglect or careless treatment and which are similarly well suited by scheduled monument protection, even if these structures are already listed buildings.

vii *Diversity*: some monuments may be selected for scheduling because they possess a combination of high quality features, others because of a single important attribute.

viii *Potential*: on occasion, the nature of the evidence cannot be specified precisely but it may still be possible to document reasons anticipating its existence and importance and so to demonstrate the justification for scheduling. This is usually confined to sites rather than upstanding monuments.

## APPENDIX 4
## The Archive

The archive consists of:

| | |
|---|---|
| 50 | Context record |
| 4 | Photographic records |
| 12 | Scale drawings |
| 1 | Box of finds |
| 1 | Stratigraphic matrix |

All primary records and finds are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services
The Old School
Cameron Street
Heckington
Sleaford
Lincolnshire
NG34 9RW

City and County Museum, Lincoln Accession Number: 50.94

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## APPENDIX 4
## The Archive

The archive consists of:

| | |
|---|---|
| 162 | Context records |
| 10 | Photographic records |
| 25 | Scale drawings |
| 1 | Box of finds |
| 1 | Stratigraphic matrix |

All primary records and finds are currently kept at:

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NG34 9RW

City and County Museum, Lincoln Accession Number: 56.93