



LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

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Highways & Planning
Directorate

The Old Blacksmith's Shop, Saxby, Lincs.

NGR:TF 0054 8606

Site Code: SOBS 03

LCNCC Museum Accn Code: 2003.89

WLDC Planning Application No.: M02/P/0645

Archaeological Watching Brief

Report prepared for Mr. B. Duke

by G. Tann and R. Pullen

LAS Report No. 663

December 2003

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PRN - S1430 - Medieval

S4899 - Post-medieval
smithy

S4900 - Post-medieval
features

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The Old Blacksmith's Shop, Saxby, Lincs. Archaeological Watching Brief

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief conducted during groundworks for a new house identified numerous ditches and pits in the northern part of the site, but no evidence for structures preceding the post-medieval blacksmith's shop. Three sherds of pottery could possibly date from the Iron Age, but could equally be of medieval date. No archaeological finds or features were identified in the southern half of the site, where excavations were shallower.

Introduction

Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) was commissioned in February 2003 by Mr. B. Duke to conduct an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for a new house on the site of The Old Blacksmith's Shop, Saxby, Lincs. (Figs. 1 and 2). The watching brief was required by the local planning authority to fulfil a condition on the planning permission. Groundworks for the house were monitored by Geoff Tann on 17th, 25th and 26th February 2003. Excavations on 4th August 2003 for the installation of a septic tank and associated pipe trenches were observed by Richard Pullen.

The Development Site

The site lies to the south of the small village, on the site of the former Old Blacksmith's Shop. The plot lies between a row of farm cottages and The Old Rectory. St Helen's Church is 70m NW of the development site.

Archaeological Background

Roman material, thought to indicate the possible remains of a small villa or farmstead, were discovered to the east of Saxby Parish Church early in the 20th century. The settlement of Saxby is mentioned in the *Domesday Survey* of 1086, and its name is derived from Old Danish elements indicating 'Saxi's farmstead' (Cameron 1998, 106). The monitored site lies 70m east of the parish church, and it was suspected that early settlement remains might be disturbed.

The Watching Brief (Fig. 3)

Excavation for the building foundations was undertaken by JCB equipped with a 0.6m wide, toothed bucket. Excavations for the septic tank and associated drainage were undertaken using a 0.5m wide ditching bucket. Context numbers were assigned by LAS for recording purposes, and these are used in bold in the text (Appendix 1).

The Smithy

The new house was built on the site of a small brick and stone building and lean-to outbuildings that had been demolished prior to the first monitoring visit. Part of a wall survived to the south, built of thin pieces of limestone, abutting the stone and brick wall between this and the adjoining property (Pl. 1). The boundary wall exhibited numerous phases of construction and repair, and its stratigraphy could not be identified. The boundary wall was dismantled along the footprint of the new house, in preparation for replacement with the eastern wall of the house. Brick foundations from an internal wall of the smithy contained bricks of dimensions 220mm x 110mm x 67mm.

A thin layer of topsoil across the plot was removed to about 5m south of the former buildings, revealing waste metal and modern burnt material. A small area of heavily fired ceramic surface was seen to the west of the former building, representing part of a hearth associated with the smithy (Pl. 2).

Foundations for the new house

For access reasons, the foundation trenches were excavated on two separate occasions. Some trenches were excavated and concreted without archaeological recording. Elsewhere, the instability of the sandy soil restricted the level of preparatory cleaning of the trench faces that could be done. The numerous intercutting features had produced a thick upper deposit, within which individual features could not be distinguished. There was little evidence of a topsoil (other than a very recent formation), and none of a subsoil.

The site was characterised by a series of ditches, crossing the northern half of the house site on a west-east alignment, and aligned NW-SE in the southern part. One of the southern ditches **13** appeared to turn, and return as **19**, but this may in fact have been a merging of two parallel ditch terminals, with **19** as the earlier. Each of these ditches was about 1.5m wide, and over 1m deep (Pl. 3). Ditch **19** contained a fragment of fired shelly clay, which may have formed part of a hearth (Appendix 2). Ditches to the north, **3** and **5**, to the north, were of similar dimensions, but **7** and **9** were smaller features (Pl. 5). Layer **24**, above the fill of ditch **7**, contained eighteen sherds of a local eleventh to twelfth century pottery ware, from two vessels. The underlying sand natural had obviously slumped during initial excavation of the ditches, and at stages in their use, producing irregular profiles and areas of mixed sand and fill.

Seven small pits or post-holes were identified in the foundation trenches. Two of these, **21** and **57**, were against the eastern boundary wall, and predated the existing feature. These could have contained posts for a previous boundary, or possibly saplings. Upper levels along this boundary had been disturbed by the backfilled construction trench **17** for the stone wall. All the pit-type features were filled with mixed dark brown loam, with some limestone inclusions, but had no notable characteristics. Above pit or ditch terminal **44** (in the NW corner), sherds of medieval, post-medieval and twentieth century pottery were collected. The lowest fill **43** contained three sherds of pottery which may have been any date from Iron Age to medieval.

Trial Pit

A 0.9m x 1.3m trial pit was excavated by machine to the SW of the new house site, to a depth of between 1.2m and 1.5m. This revealed part of the southern side of a broad NE-SW aligned ditch 2 (Pl. 5). No dating evidence was seen in its fill, but safety considerations prevented close inspection. This ditch could not be related to any of the other features seen on the house plot.

Septic Tank and Drainage

Two drainage trenches were excavated at c.45° to each other, linking up with pipes already installed during an earlier phase. The eastern trench held a single 0.1m diameter plastic soakaway pipe, whereas the western trench contained two pipes, one for use as a soakaway and the other as a foul pipe running from the building's sewerage system (Fig. 6). All three pipes ran to a septic tank installed in the SW corner of the garden. The trenches both had a depth of around 0.6m from the present ground surface. The stratigraphy of the southern portion of the building plot consisted of a dark grey/brown silt sand topsoil 100, approximately 0.35m in depth, sealing a mid grey/brown sandy silt subsoil 101 which was over 0.2m thick. The trenches were not of sufficient depth to reach undisturbed ground. No archaeological features were noted appearing in any of the trench sections, but several fragments of pottery dating from the eighteenth to 20th centuries were recovered from the topsoil.

The two drainage trenches ran into a large hole excavated for the septic tank, 2.5m wide and 2.7m deep. The stratigraphy in the septic tank pit was as in the drainage trenches, with a compact yellow/brown sand natural 102 appearing at 1.1m below the present ground surface. No archaeological features were noted, although several fragments of pottery dating from the nineteenth and 20th centuries were recovered from the topsoil.

A third trench was excavated running east from the septic tank pit, with an overall depth of 0.9m from the present ground surface.

Conclusion

There was no evidence of any structures on the plot prior to the construction of the smithy. The site is behind the farm, and may have remained part of the farmland to the south until the late post-medieval period. Before the smithy was built, this would have provided access to the fields, leading between the farm cottages (to the west) and The Old Rectory (to the SE). These other houses probably reflect development of the northern edge of the field after construction of the lane around the south of the farmyard.

As a small area of open land beside the edge of the village, the plot would have been convenient for waste disposal, and some of the pits may have been used to dispose of organic waste (although very little stratified rubbish was present). Others may have been excavated to obtain the sand that underlies this site.

Considering the extensive disturbance across the northern half of the site, evidenced by the pits and ditches, it is unlikely whether any traces of timber buildings from the Saxon period would remain visible. The twelfth century sherds may be the result of manuring, rather than indications of medieval occupation on the site.

The archaeological watching brief conducted during the installation of a septic tank and associated trenching failed to locate any features or finds in the southern half of the site. This lack of material is probably due to the relatively shallow depth and narrow dimensions of the excavations rather than a defined lack of past human activity in the area. Archaeological material may well exist at a deeper level below the present ground surface.

Acknowledgements

LAS is grateful for the co-operation received from Mr Duke, and from Dr Beryl Lott (Conservation Section, Lincolnshire County Council). Illustrations were prepared by Karen Dennis, Richard Pullen and Geoff Tann. The report was collated and produced by Naomi Field.

Geoff Tann and Richard Pullen MA PIFA
Lindsey Archaeological Services
10th December 2003

References

Cameron, K. 1998 *A Dictionary of Lincolnshire Place-Names*.

Archive Summary

Correspondence

Developer's plans

Field plans and section drawings

Photographs: LAS colour print film nos. 03/16/19-27; 03/24/8-22, 30-36; 03/83/17-36

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 1

Context Summary

Context No.	Area	Type	Relationships	Description	Finds
1	Trial Pit	layer		dark brown loam topsoil	
2	Trial Pit	ditch	filled by 67; cuts 11	west-east aligned, over 1.3m wide, over 0.5m deep	
3	House	ditch	filled by 4, 30; cuts 22, 29. Same as 45	west-east aligned, 1.5m wide, over 1m deep	
4	House	fill	fill of 3, below 30	dark brown loam	
5	House	ditch	filled by 6, cuts 8, 23, 30. Same as 53	west-east aligned, 1.5m wide, over 1m deep	
6	House	fill	fill of 5, below 24, cut by 7	dark brown loam, with lenses of ash and charcoal	
7	House	ditch	filled by 8, cuts 6, 15	west-east aligned, 0.8m wide, 0.6m deep	
8	House	fill	fill of 7; below 24	compact dark brown loam	
9	House	ditch	?same as 55; filled by 10, cuts 15	west-east aligned, 1.3m wide, over 0.5m deep	
10	House	fill	fill of 9, below 24	fine dark black loam	
11	House	natural	cut by 2, 25, 19, 27, 31	yellow/white sand	
12	House	fill	fill of 18, below 15	discoloured sand; possibly contaminated natural	
13	House	ditch	cuts 20, 26; filled by 14, 36, 39; ?same as 19	NW-SE ditch, c. 1.5m wide, over 1m deep	
14	House	fill	fill of 13, below 36	very dark brown loam	
15	House	fill	fill of 18, over 12, cut by 9	dark brown loam	
16	House	layer	over 24	topsoil and rubble from demolished stone wall	
17	House	construction trench	filled by 16, cuts 24	north-south aligned, along eastern boundary of site; 0.3m deep	
18	House	cut	filled by 15, 12; cuts 11	only seen along eastern boundary of site; 3.3m wide, 0.25m deep	

19	House	ditch	cuts 11, filled by 20; ?same as 13	SE-NW aligned, 1.5m wide, over 0.5m deep	
20	House	fill	fill of 19, cut by 13	very dark brown loam with pale sand mottling	1 fragment of shell-tempered material. ?from hearth
21	House	pit/post-hole	filled by 22, cuts 11	over 0.6m diam, over 0.6m deep	
22	House	fill	fill of 21, cut by 3	very dark brown sandy loam	
23	House	fill	fill of 31, cut by 5	mottled loam with sand	
24	House	layer	cut by 17, over 8, 10	light brown loam	18 sherds of 11/12thC North Lincs Fine-shelled ware pottery
25	House	ditch/pit	filled by 26, cuts 11	over 0.5m diam, 0.6m deep	
26	House	fill	fill of 25, cut by 13	dark brown loam	
27	House	?pit	filled by 28, cuts 11	over 0.4m diam, 0.7m deep	
28	House	fill	fill of 27, cut by 37	dark brown loam	
29	House	?fill/layer	cut by 3, over 11	dirty sandy loam	
30	House	fill	fill of 3, cut by 5, over 4	upper fill, brown loam	
31	House	cut	filled by 23, cuts 11	0.4m north-south, 0.25m deep, flat base	
32	House	layer	over 1	modern debris and demolition rubble	
33	House	construction trench	filled by 34, 35; cuts 14	0.7m west-east, 0.3m deep	
34	House	fill	fill of 33; contains 35	dark brown loam	
35	House	wall foundation	fill of 33, within 34	0.14m wide, 0.28m deep. Two courses wide, three deep.	
36	House	fill	fill of 13, below 39, over 14	stone rubble	
37	House	ditch/pit	filled by 38, cuts 28, 20	2.2m wide, 0.4m deep	
38	House	fill	fill of 37, below 1	very dark brown loam	
39	House	fill	fill of 13, below 32, over 36	dark brown loam	
40	House	layer	over 41	ash, stone, fine hardcore, tile debris	1 sherd 14-mid16thC Humberware jug
41	House	layer	below 40, over 42	black silt loam, with fine stone inclusions	1 sherd 12thC Lincs Early Medieval Shelly pot; 1 sherd 18th/19thC, 1 sherd 19th/20thC
42	House	fill	below 41, fill of 44, over 43	very dark brown silt loam	
43	House	fill	below 42, fill of 44	very dark brown loam	3 sherds Iron Age - medieval pottery
44	House	pit	filled by 42,43; cuts 11	over 1.25m wide at top, funneling to over 0.5m; extends 0.5m from trench face	
45	House	ditch	same as 3, filled by 46	1.1m wide, west-east aligned	
46	House	fill	fill of 45	dark brown loam, with small pieces of limestone	1 sherd late 12th-15thC pot
47	House	pit	filled by 48	over 2.2m diam	

48	House	fill	fill of 47	dark brown loam	
49	House	?pit/post-hole	filled by 50	0.6m west-east	
50	House	fill	fill of 49	dark brown loam	
51	House	pit/post-hole	filled by 52	1m west-east, over 0.4m north-south, 0.8m deep	
52	House	fill	fill of 51	dark brown loam	
53	House	ditch	Same as 5, filled by 54	west-east aligned, over 1.5m deep, over 1.5m wide	
54	House	fill	fill of 53	dark brown loam	
55	House	ditch	?same as 9, filled by 56	north-south aligned, 1.4m wide, 0.0.5m deep	
56	House	fill	fill of 55	dark black loam	
57	House	pit/post-hole	filled by 58	over 0.7m diam, 0.9m deep	
58	House	fill	fill of 57	dark brown loam	
59	House	pit	filled by 60	over 1m diam, over 1.1m deep	
60	House	fill	fill of 59	dark brown loam	
61	House	ditch	same as 19, 63, filled by 62	1.1m wide, NW-SE aligned	
62	House	fill	fill of 61	very dark brown loam, some sand mottling	
63	House	ditch	same as 19, 61, filled by 64	1m wide, NW-SE aligned	
64	House	fill	fill of 63	very dark brown loam, with sand mottling	
65	Trial Pit	layer	above 67, same as 1	dark brown loam topsoil	
66	Trial Pit	cut	same as 2, filled by 67	southern edge of west-east aligned ditch	
67	Trial Pit	fill	below 65, fill of 2, 66	grey/brown loam	
100	Septic Tank pit	layer	same as 1	dark grey/brown loam	14 sherds 18th-20thC pottery, 1 fragment animal bone
101	Septic Tank pit	layer	below 100, above 102	grey/brown loam	
102	Septic Tank pit	layer	below 101	yellow/brown sand	

APPENDIX 2

Pottery Archive SOBS03

Jane Young

context	cname	sub fabric	full name	form type	sherds	vessels	weight	part	description	date
020	MISC	fine-coarse shell & quartz	Unidentified types	?	1	1	132	upper surfa	comm fine-coarse shell abun quartz;shell poss natural in clay;soot on upper surface;poss hearth or similar surface	-
024	NLFS	+ quartz	North Lincolnshire Fine-Shelled ware	?	1	1	9	BS	taken for FTS;varient fabric ?;comm fine quartz & occ flint	11th to 12th
024	NLFS	+ quartz	North Lincolnshire Fine-Shelled ware	?	17	1	86	BS	sherd taken for FTS;varient fabric ?;comm fine quartz & occ flint	11th to 12th
040	HUM		Humberware	jug	1	1	56	base		14th to mid 16th
041	WHITE		Modern whiteware	plate	1	1	2	BS		late 18th to 19th
041	LEMS		Lincolnshire Early Medieval Shelly	?	1	1	2	BS	? ID	12th
041	LERTH		Late earthenwares	?	1	1	14	BS	possible tile	19th to 20th
043	MISC	coarse shell	Unidentified types	large vessel	3	1	4	BS	soot	Iron age to medieval
046	NLST		North Lincolnshire Shell-tempered	?	1	1	18	base	part leached surfaces	late 12th to 15th
100	BERTH		Brown glazed earthenware	large jar	1	1	111	base		18th to 19th
100	ENGS		Unspecified English Stoneware	large flagon	1	1	79	base		19th to 20th

context	cname	sub fabric	full name	form type	sherds	vessels	weight	part	description	date
100	WHITE		Modern whiteware	?	1	1	12	BS		19th
100	BERTH		Brown glazed earthenware	?	1	1	41	base		18th to 19th
100	BERTH		Brown glazed earthenware	large bowl ?	2	1	29	BS		18th to 19th
100	TPW		Transfer printed ware	jug ?	1	1	20	handle		19th to 20th
100	TPW		Transfer printed ware	plate	1	1	3	base		19th to 20th
100	TPW		Transfer printed ware	?	1	1	2	base		19th to 20th
100	TPW		Transfer printed ware	?	1	1	2	base		19th to 20th
100	TPW		Transfer printed ware	dish ?	1	1	3	BS		19th to 20th
100	WHITE		Modern whiteware	small bowl ?	1	1	13	base		19th to 20th
100	WHITE		Modern whiteware	?	1	1	2	rim		19th to 20th
100	ENGS		Unspecified English Stoneware	bowl	1	1	35	rim		19th to 20th

THE FIGURES

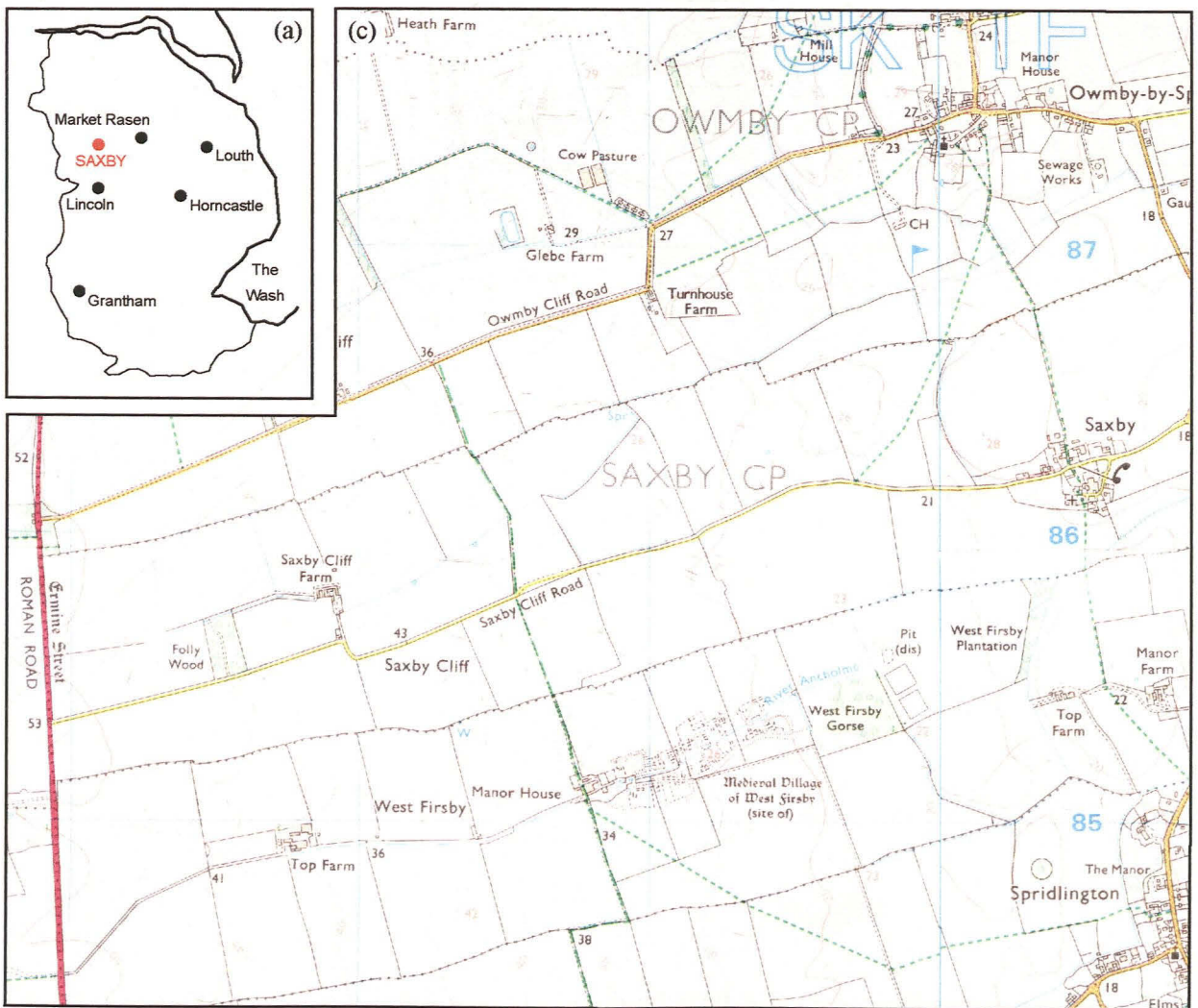
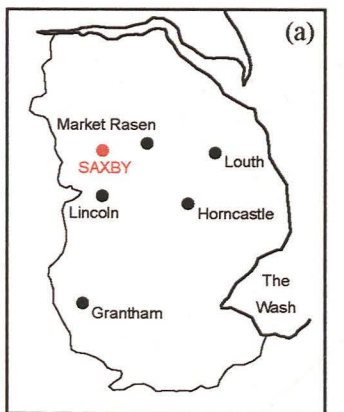
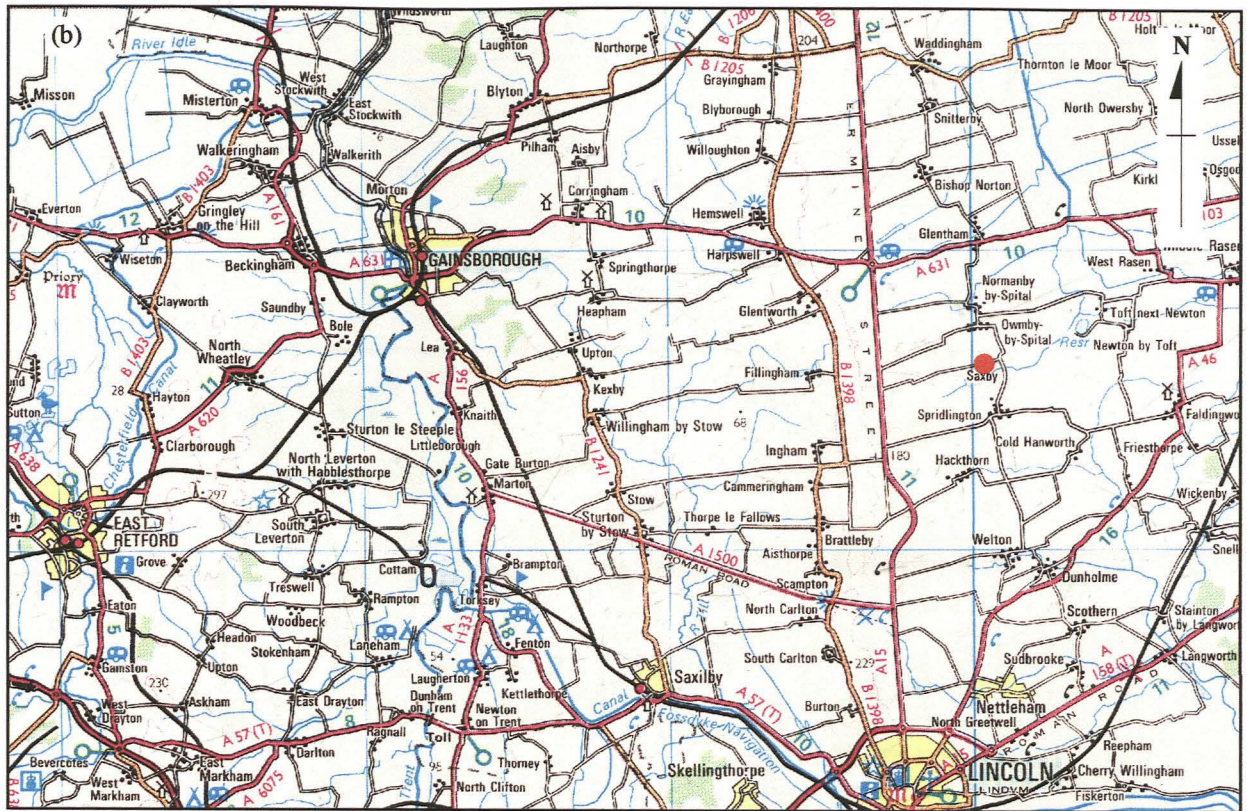


Fig. 1 Location of Saxby (c based on the 2000 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey Explorer map, Sheet 272. © Crown Copyright reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 100002165).

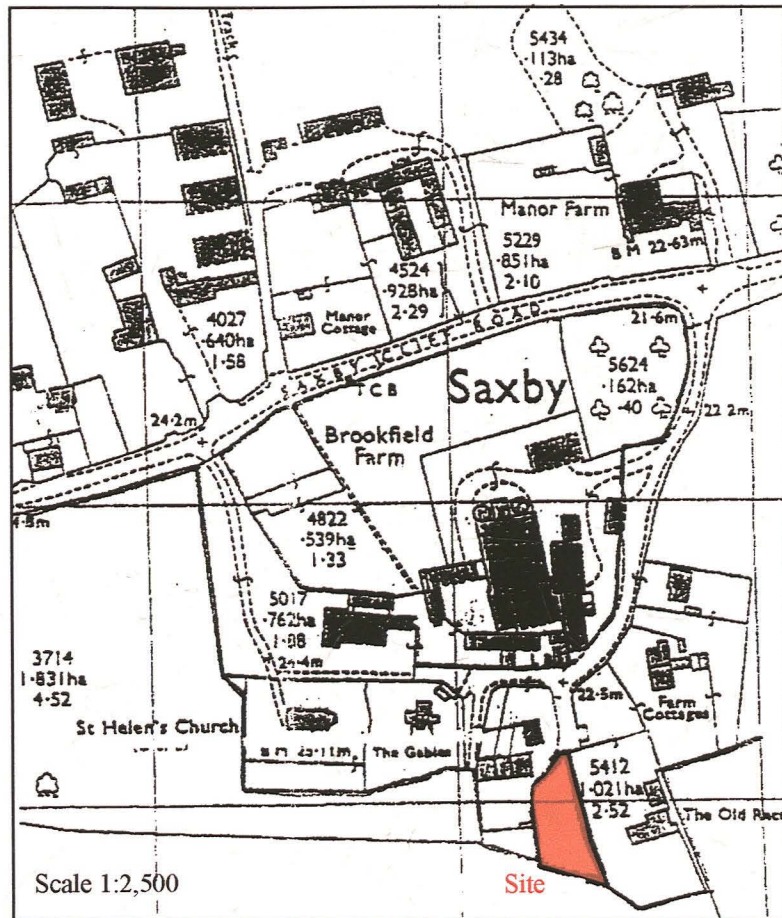


Fig 2. (a) Location of the monitored development (based on a plan supplied by the client. © Crown copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 100002165).

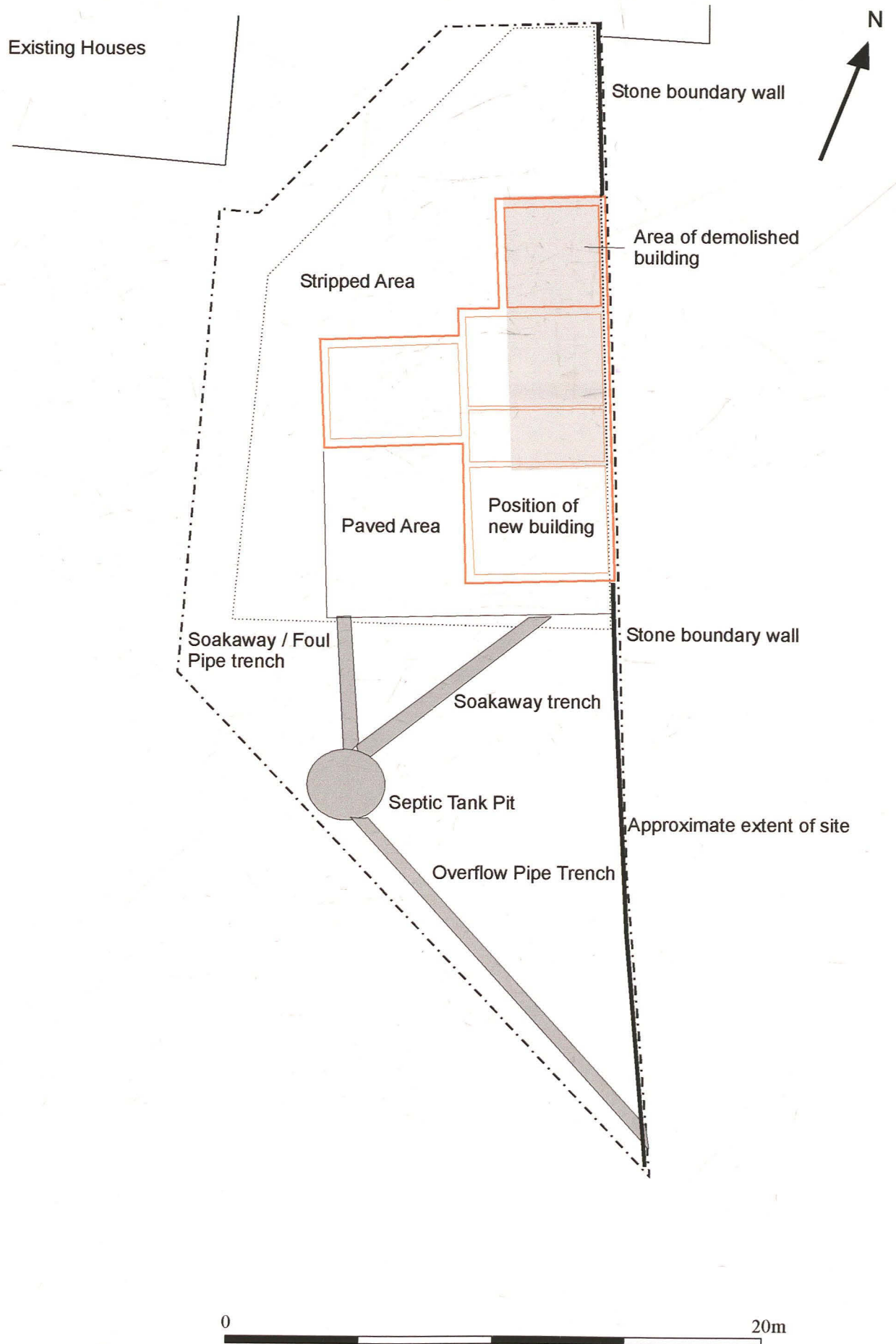


Fig. 2 (b) Layout of the site (Tann and Pullen, based on information from a plan supplied by the client.)

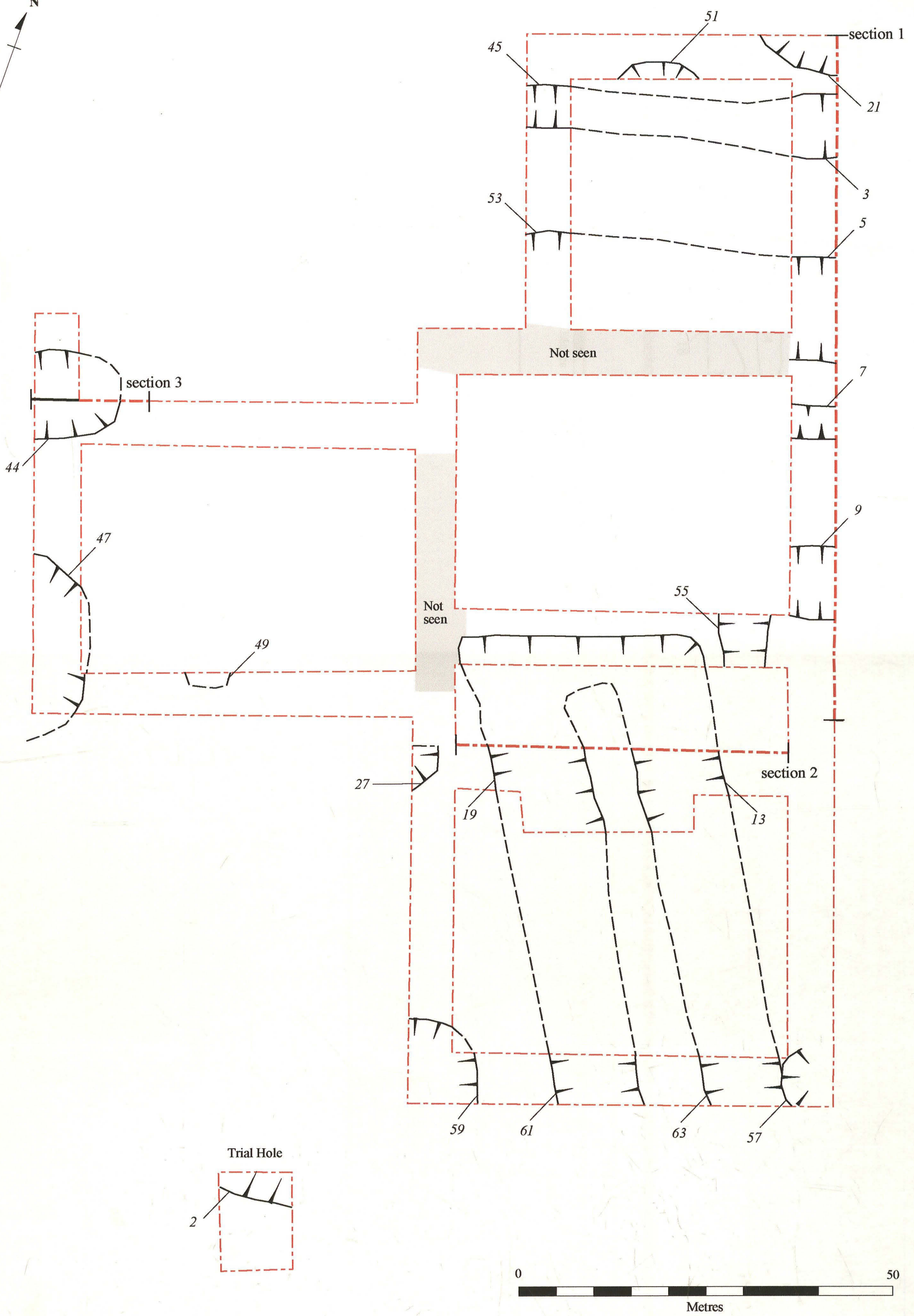


Fig. 3 Foundation plan of the new house, showing the positions of archaeological features (based on a plan supplied by the client).

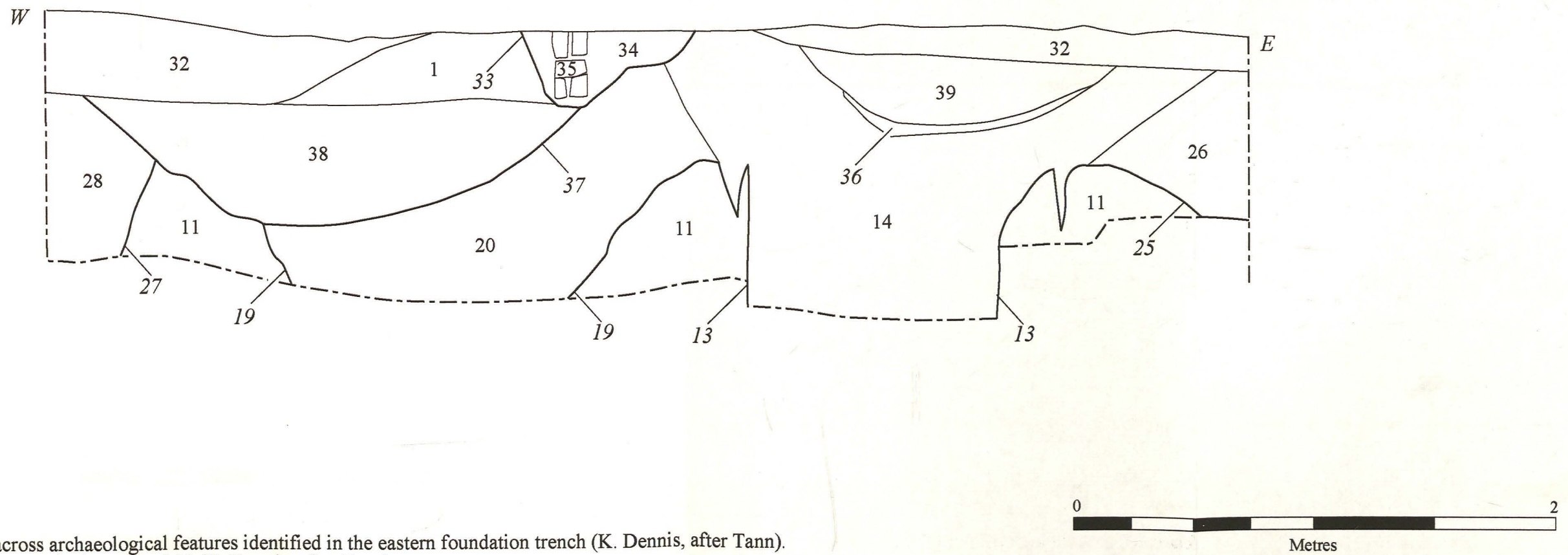
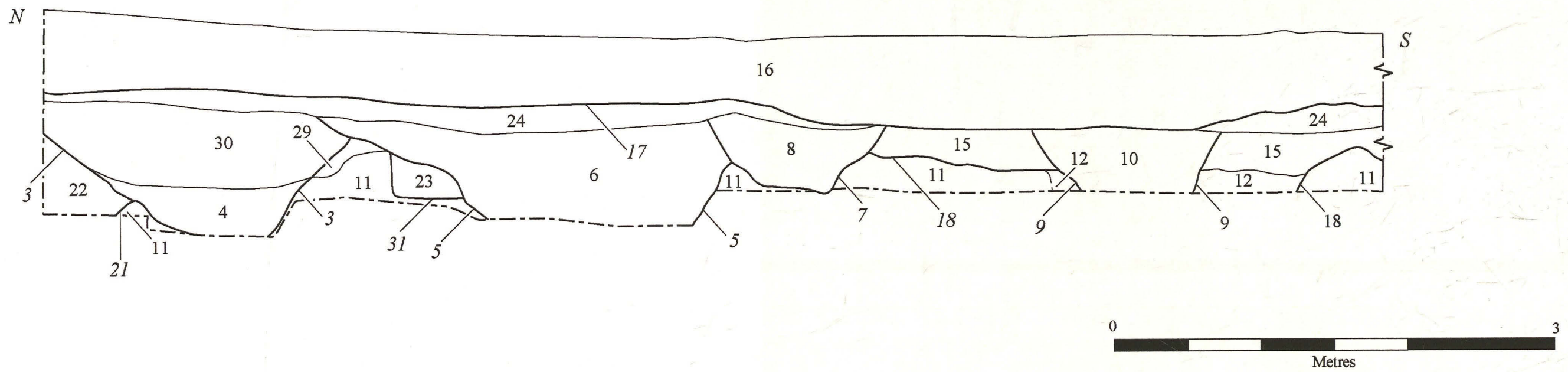
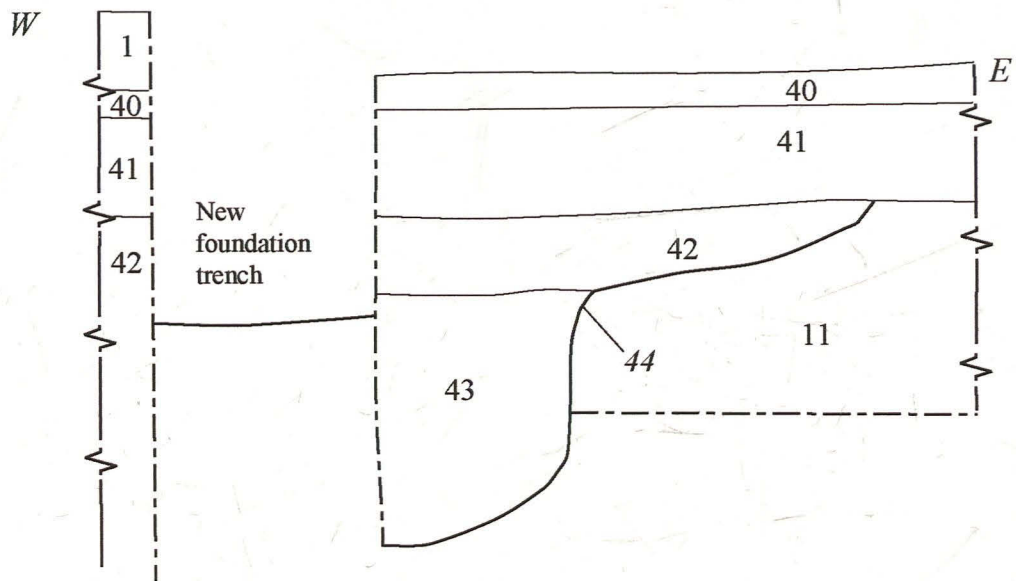


Fig 4. a) Section across archaeological features identified in the eastern foundation trench (K. Dennis, after Tann).
 b) Section across ditches 13 and 19 (K. Dennis, after Tann).

(a)



(b)

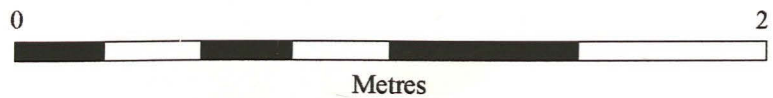
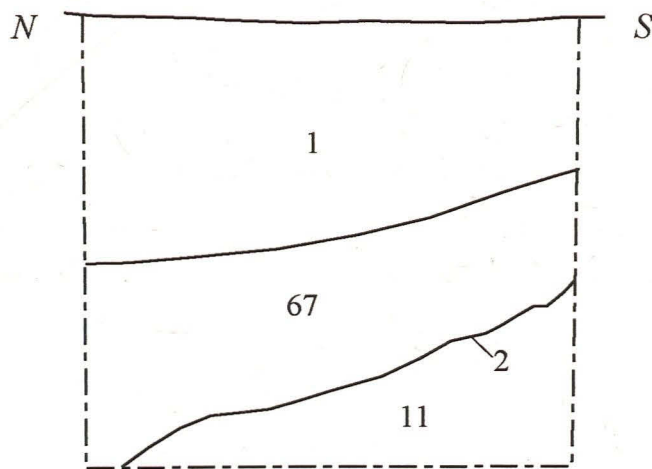


Fig. 5 a) Section across pit 44 (K. Dennis, after Tann).
b) Section across ditch 2, east face of the trail hole (K. Dennis, after Tann).

THE PLATES



Pl. 1 The building plot (looking south). Part of the southern wall of the Old Blacksmith's Shop remains, abutting the eastern boundary wall.



Pl. 2 Northern part of the building plot after turf removal, showing the smithy hearth area (left foreground). Looking north.



Pl. 3 Dark and sand-mottled fill of ditch 19, centre, separated by a small peak of sand from parallel ditch 13 (right). Looking NW.



Pl. 4 Eastern wall foundation trench of the new house (looking east). Soil and stone rubble from the boundary wall construction trench forms the upper part of the trench face, with the dark fills of ditches 21, 3, 31 and 5 visible against undisturbed natural sand near the trench base.



Pl. 5 Eastern face of the trial hole, showing backfilled ditch 2 cutting the natural sand.