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Archaeological Evaluation
at
Freeman's Land, Baston, Lincolnshire,
by
Heritage Lincolnshire

on behalf of
A.R.C. (Central),
during October - December 1991.

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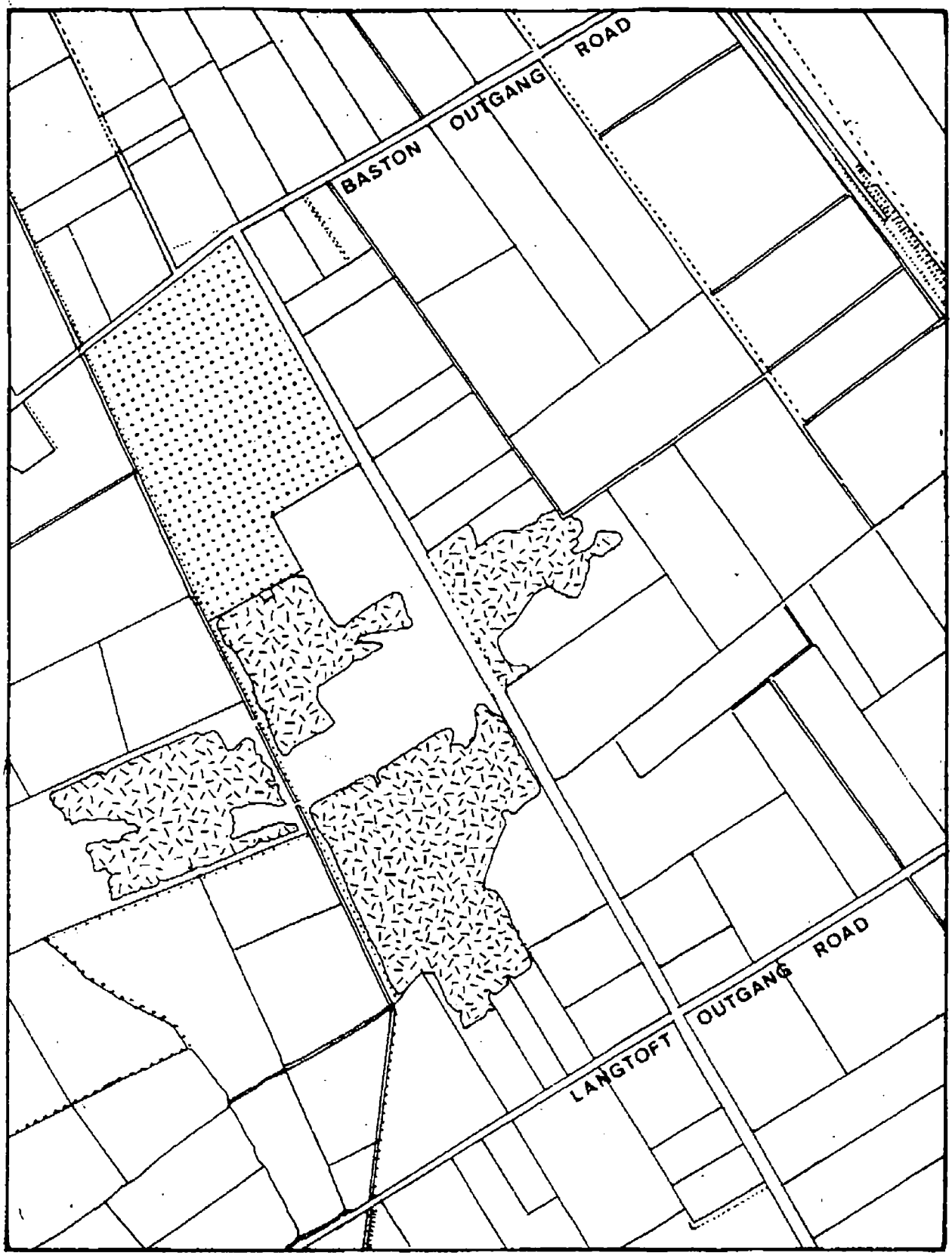
INTRODUCTION

Between the 7th October and the 6th November 1991 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Freeman's Land, Baston, Lincolnshire (N.G.R. TF 136154) [see fig. 1], by Heritage Lincolnshire on behalf of A.R.C. (Central), prior to the lodging of a planning application for the extraction of sand and gravel. The purpose of the work was to evaluate the significance and extent of any surviving archaeological remains, in order to determine the archaeological status of the site and the nature of any future archaeological investigations which may be required. The area evaluated is currently used for arable purposes. The site is situated on Pleistocene Fen and Valley gravels (Geological Survey of Great Britain [England and Wales] Drift edition, sheet 12, 1971).

Fig. 1

Location Plan



SITE

QUARRY

0 100 200 300 400m

N

KNOWN ARCHAEOLOGY

The results of previous survey work have shown that around the application area there is evidence for activity ranging from the Bronze Age to the Roman period which can be summed-up as follows: [see fig 2]

1). Vertebrae and antlers of *Cervus Megaceros* (Giant Elk).

2). Bronze Age looped bronze palstave.

3). Late Bronze Age - early Iron Age saltern (salt processing site).

4). Iron Age pits with Trent Valley pottery

5). Iron Age pottery, animal bones, Roman droveway, middle second century A.D. pottery.

6) Pits and Roman pottery.

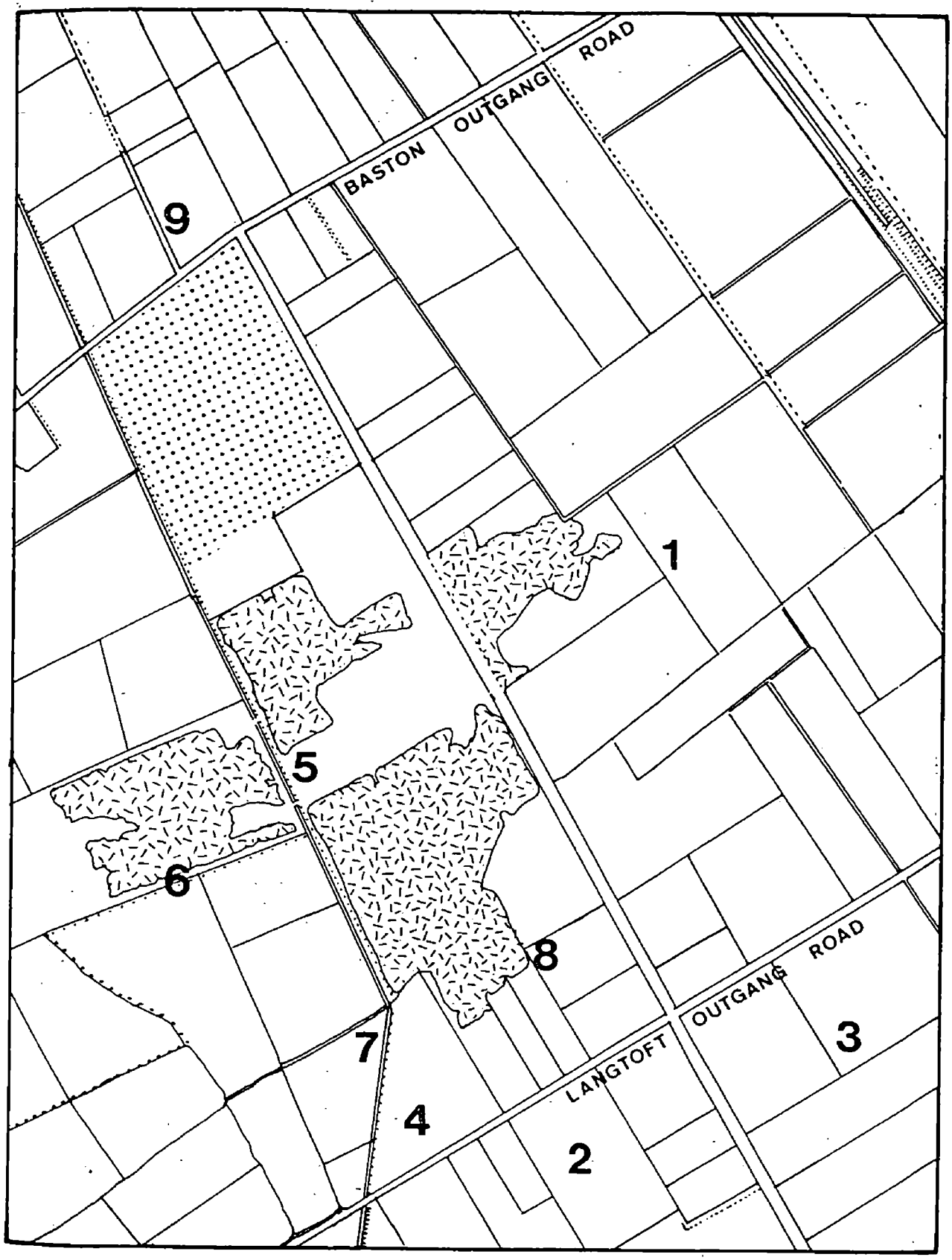
7) Roman Samian and coarse-ware pottery.

8) Roman Samian and coarse-ware pottery.

9) Cropmarks revealing a series of buried archaeological remains, suggesting structures of an unknown date and function.

A study of the aerial photographic evidence showed several features identified as buried archaeological remains. These can be seen in figure 3. A, B, E and F are visible as linear features, probably ditches. C and D are roughly square in shape and are likely to be some type of enclosures.

Fig. 2
Known Archaeology



SITE

QUARRY

0 100 200 300 400m

N

METHODOLOGY

Initially a survey grid was established on the land and was used for reference throughout the work, which was undertaken in three phases:

1). Fieldwalking Survey

The fieldwalking was done on the basis of ten metre grids. One side of each square was walked enabling artefacts recovered to be allocated a grid co-ordinate accurate to within ten metres. (Note that the survey did not cover the southern corner of the field as it was being used for pheasant cover).

2). Geophysical Survey (resistivity).

The areas chosen for geophysical survey were determined by a study of the aerial photographic evidence and preliminary fieldwalking results. A Geoscan Research RM 4 resistance meter was used. The survey grids measured 20m x 20m and readings were taken at 1m intervals. Five grids were selected for geophysical study. This survey enabled a more detailed study of the cropmarks to be made, and had the potential to highlight any smaller archaeological features not necessarily visible from the aerial photographs.

3). Excavation

Six trenches were investigated. Their locations were based on the results of the previous survey work, enabling each trench to be positioned over areas considered most likely to yield maximum information on the date, extent, significance and state of preservation of the buried archaeological remains. Each trench was cleared of ploughsoil (a subsoil was not present) and the archaeological features were identified and recorded. Sample excavation of each feature was undertaken. The recording of the archaeology took the form of a written description and unique reference number allocated to each archaeological 'context', plan drawings at 1:20 scale, section drawings at 1:10 scale and where appropriate, a photographic record. All depth measurements quoted in the text were measured from the top of the natural gravel and do not include the ploughsoil, which had a thickness of between 0.40m and 0.50m.

SURVEY RESULTS

Fieldwalking:

The fieldwalking survey produced a substantial number of artefacts. The majority were pottery fragments, which were concentrated in the southern half of the field. A few can be dated to the medieval period but the majority of the assemblage is post-medieval.

Located throughout the survey area were small, random concentrations of brick and tile fragments and, to a lesser extent, fragments of bottle and window glass. Numerous fragments of clay pipe were retrieved, most of which came from the southern half of the field.

Other isolated artefacts recovered included a small number of iron objects, a copper alloy buckle and two fragments of worked limestone.

Although the fieldwalking survey produced a reasonably large amount of physical evidence, subsequent analysis showed this evidence to be inconclusive with regards to the aim of the evaluation. No discernible concentrations of artefacts

(especially pottery fragments) could be identified which would indicate a focus of archaeological activity *in situ*.

It is likely therefore, that the distribution of artefacts is the result of the spreading of domestic refuse on the land for agricultural purposes.

Geophysical:

Grid 1: [fig. 4].

Grid 1 revealed a variety of resistivity anomalies. The main anomaly is in the bottom left hand corner of the grid where one edge of a linear feature has been identified associated with cropmark A. (See excavation results: trench A, feature [003]).

Grids 2, 3 and 4: [fig 5].

Geophysical grids 2, 3 and 4 were located to determine precisely the location of cropmarks C and D and any other buried archaeology associated with them. Grids 2 and 3 show a clear anomaly, probably a ditch, which is the northern side of cropmark D. Grid 4 did not show the location of cropmark E. However, it did reveal a feature located diagonally across the square, interpreted as a ditch, which may be part of a larger archaeological feature not visible on the aerial photographs.

Fig. 3
Crop Marks

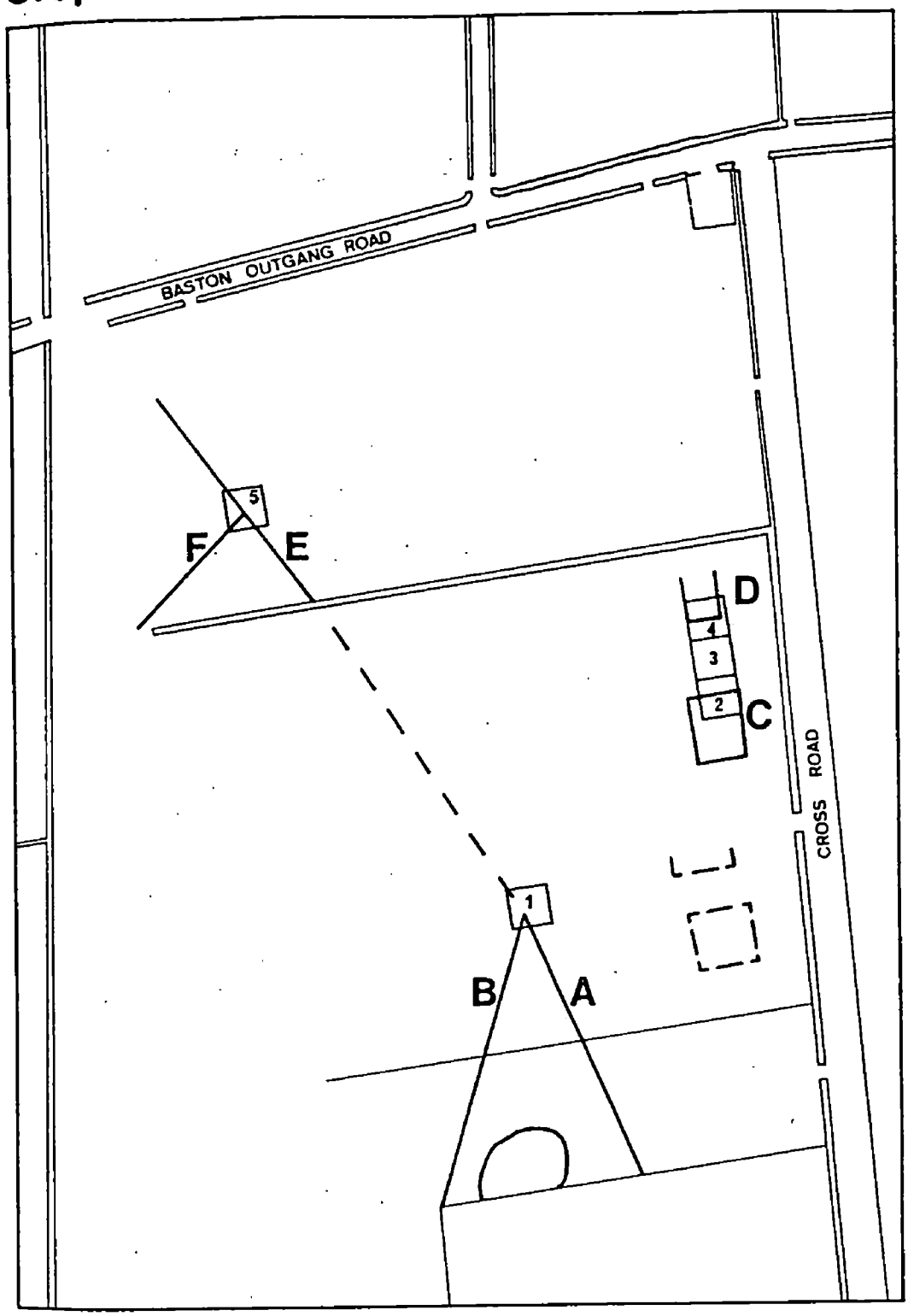
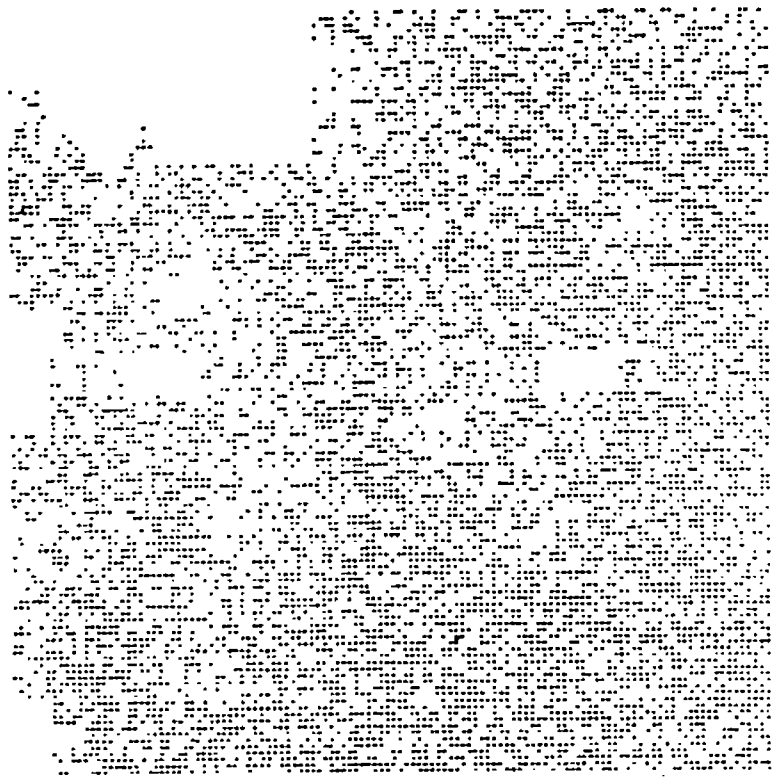


FIG.4
GEOPHYSICAL GRID 1



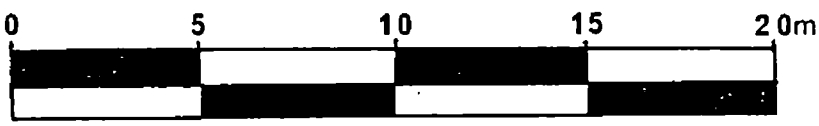
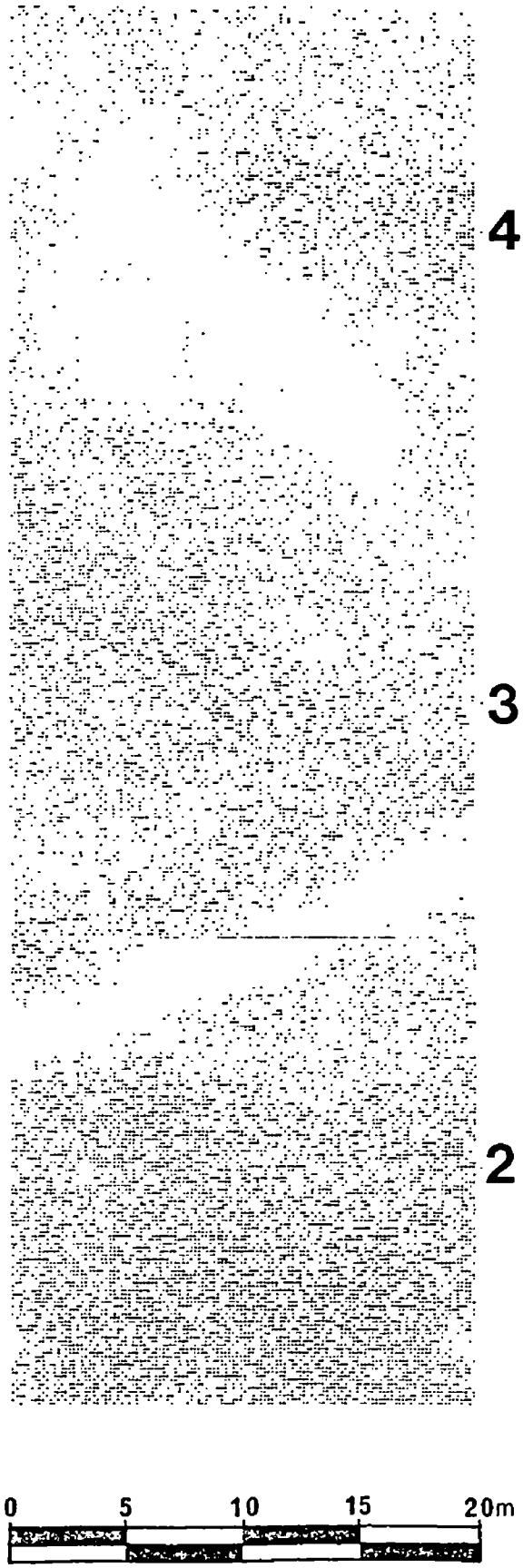


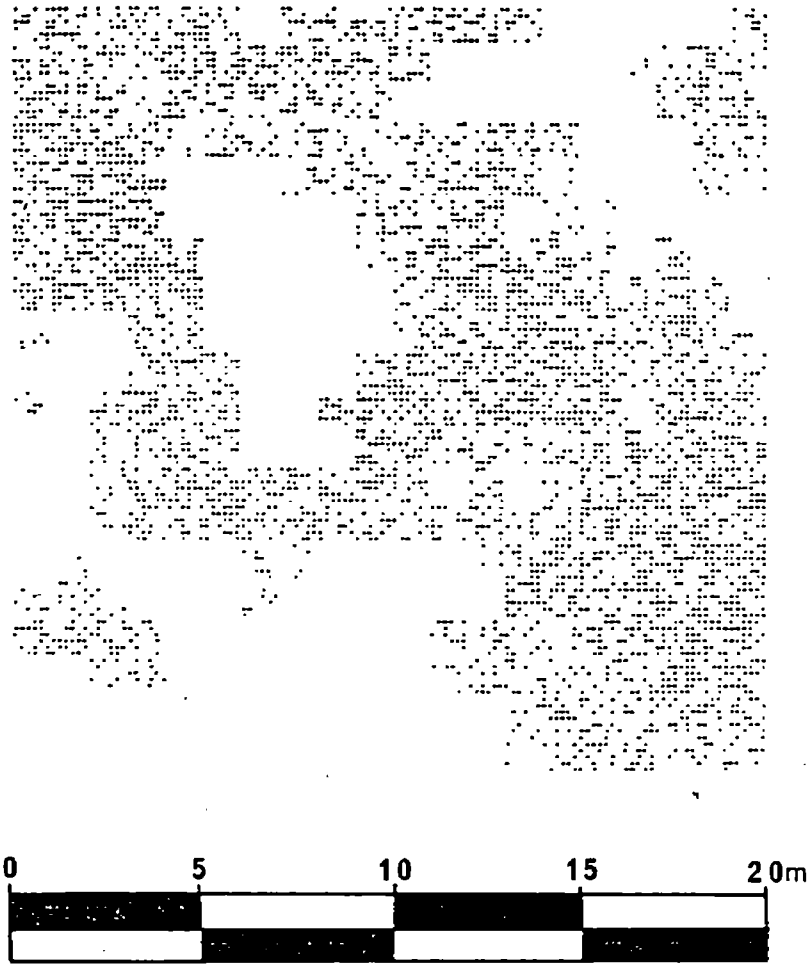
FIG. 5
GEOPHYSICAL GRIDS 2, 3 AND 4



Grid 5: [fig 6].

Grid 5 was located over the junction of cropmarks E and F. Although the junction cannot be clearly seen, the survey did identify concentrations of archaeological activity which were not visible on the aerial photographs, but which were investigated in trenches D and E.

FIG. 6
GEOPHYSICAL GRID 5



EXCAVATION [see fig. 7].

Trench A:

Three archaeological features were identified and recorded. These were [001], a linear, shallow ditch aligned NE - SW,(0.47m wide x 0.12m deep), which may be the remnants of a land drain. [002] was a small square cut for a post-hole, (0.26m wide x 0.23m deep) the post from which was probably removed as evidence for its survival in the form of a post-pipe was not apparent. SE of [001] and [002] was [003] a large V - shaped ditch aligned east - west (approximately 1.18m wide x 0.62m deep), (see fig. 8). This is certainly part of cropmark A and was probably a boundary ditch which fell into disuse and silted up naturally. V-shaped ditches are often indicative of Roman activity.

Trench B:

Three archaeological features were identified and recorded. One of the earliest was the continuation of the V-shaped ditch recorded in trench A ([003]). In this trench it was found to have been truncated at a later, unknown, date on its southern edge by a pit [004] (1.00m wide x 0.69m deep), which had become silted-up and subsequently re-cut ([005]

FIG.7
TRENCH LOCATIONS

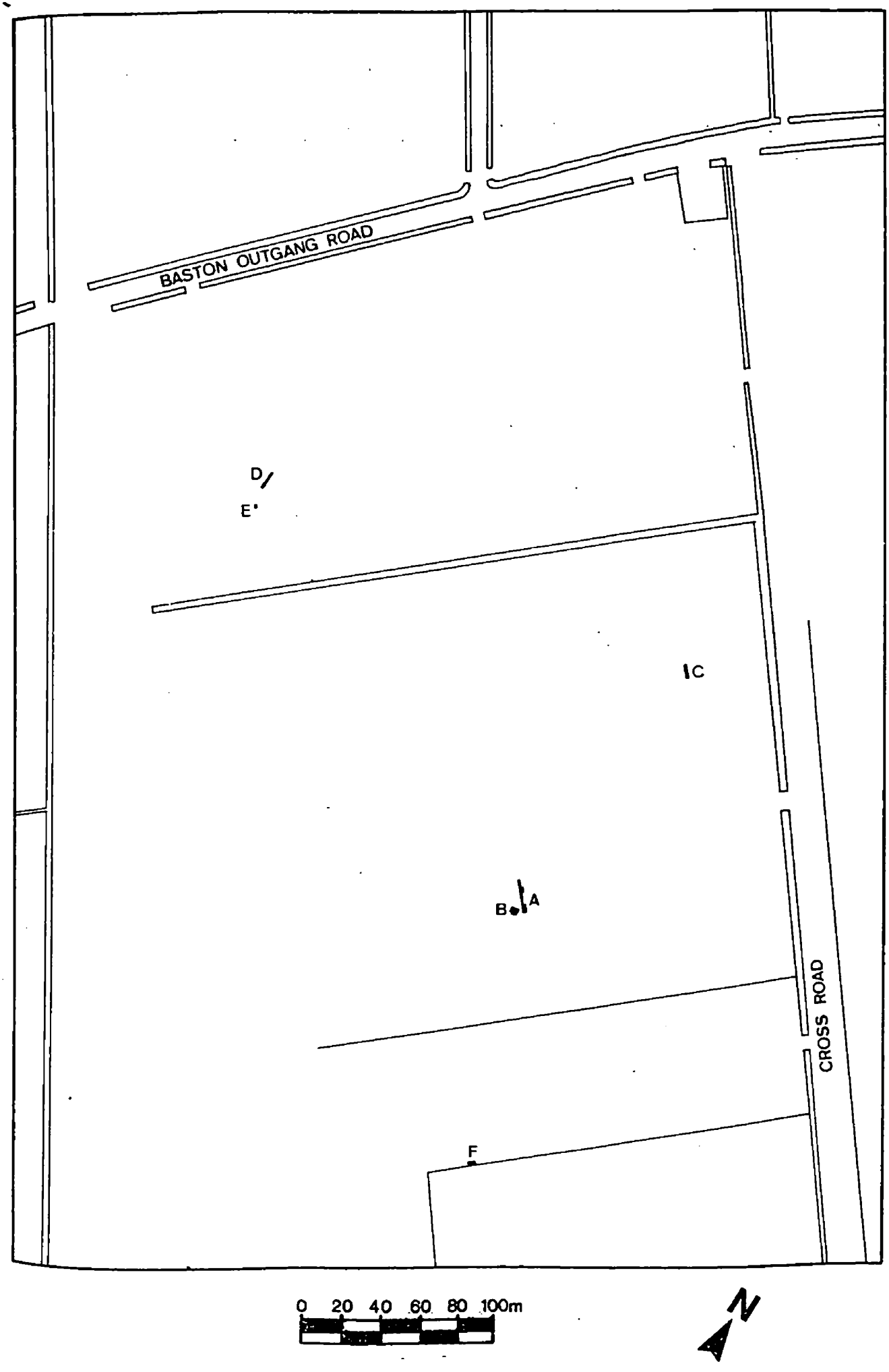
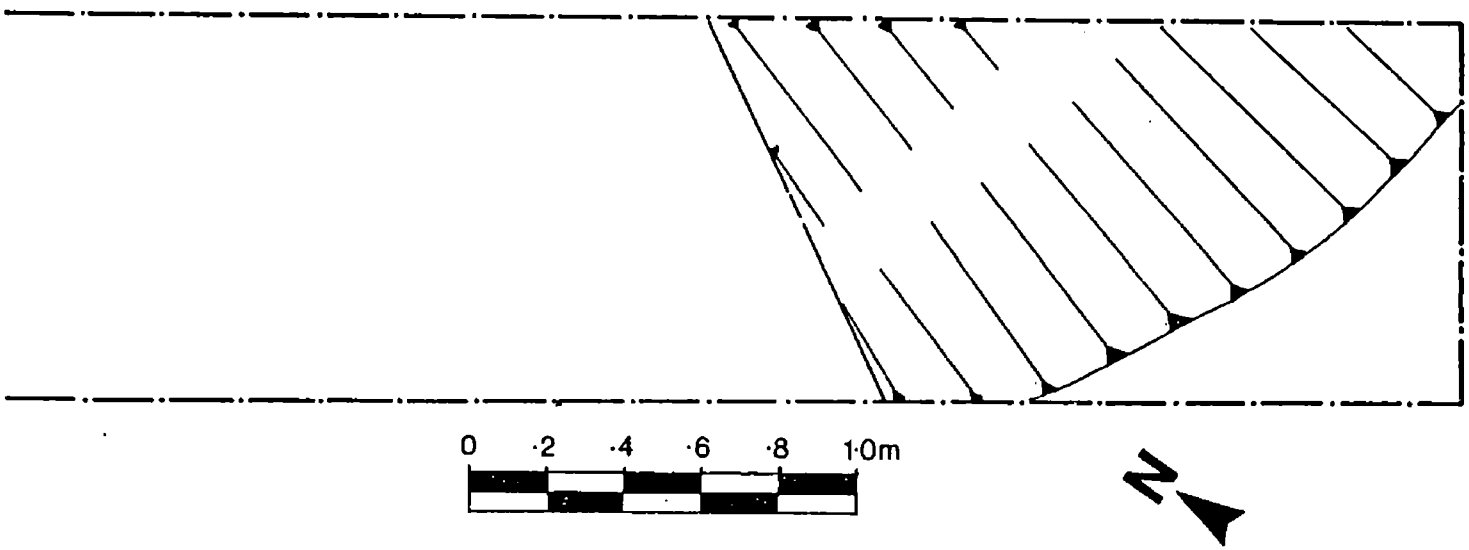


FIG.8
TRENCH A - DITCH 003



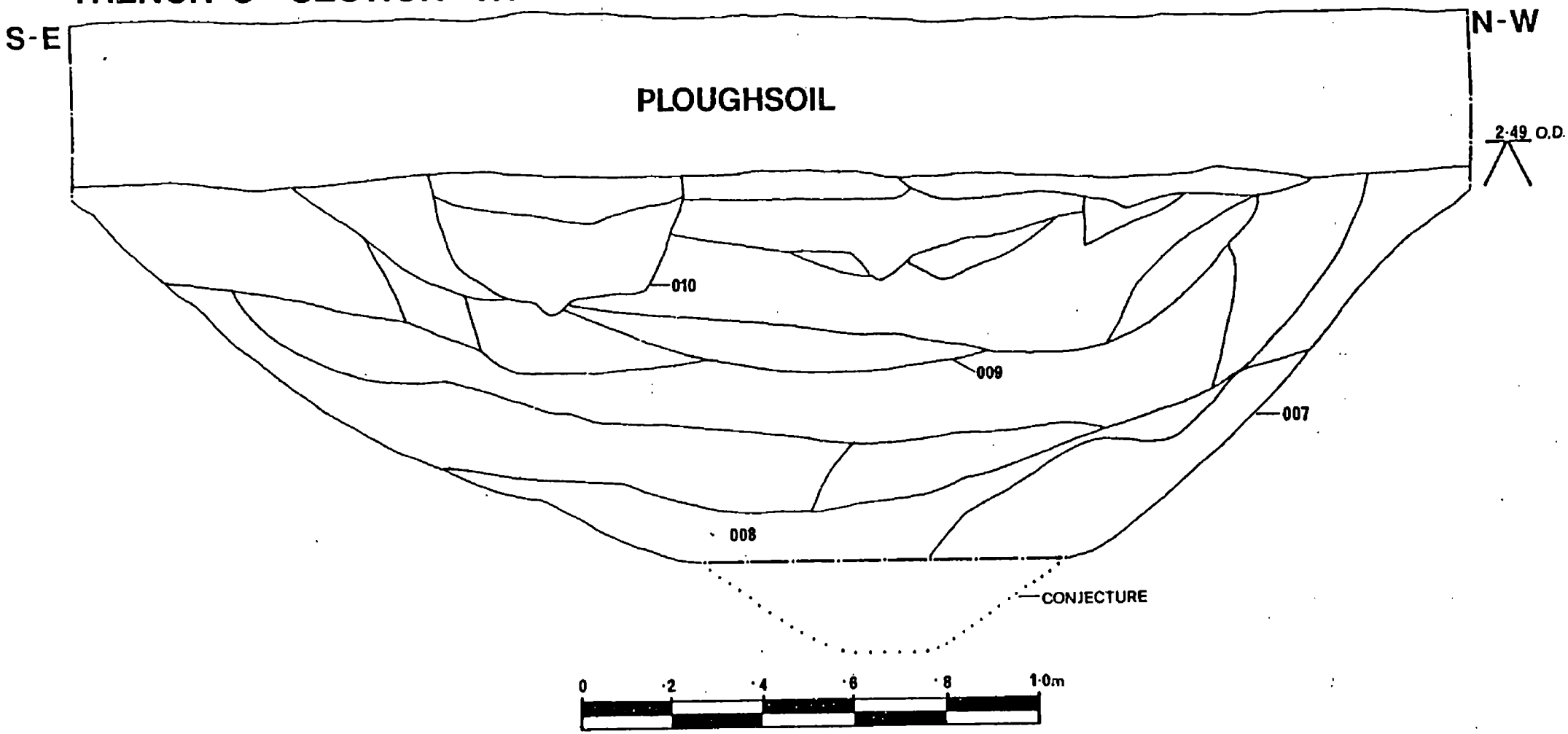
(0.59m wide x 0.43m deep)) for further use. To the south of [004] lay [006] a shallow cut feature, (0.94m wide x 0.30m deep), possibly a ditch, which continued beyond the limit of the trench.

Trench C:

The earliest feature recorded was [007] (3.10m wide x 0.85m deep) which can be identified as part of cropmark C (see fig. 9). The full depth of [007] could only be determined by augering and, therefore, the base of [007] on fig. 9 is shown as a conjectural line. One of the primary ditch fills ([008]) was situated just below the water-table and contained a large amount of organic remains in a very good state of preservation. At some time, the ditch underwent a period of abandonment during which it silted-up. At a later date, [009] (2.20m wide x 0.45m deep) was cut into the top of [007], either as a re-cut, implying that the line of the northern side of [007] was brought back into use, or it may be that [009] is a separate un-related feature, although this is unlikely. Cut into the top of [009] was a land drain [010] (0.78m wide x 0.33m deep), which had been dug and then immediately backfilled, so that it acted as a soak-away. To the NW of [010] was a shallow, irregular feature [011]

FIG. 9

TRENCH C - SECTION THROUGH 007



(0.65m NW - SE x 0.35m SW - NE x 0.17m deep), containing a burnt soil [012].

Trench D: (see fig. 10).

The largest feature excavated was [013] a broad bottomed ditch (1.45m wide x 0.49m deep), aligned east - west. To the north of [013] was a shallow gulley aligned east - west, [014] (0.68m wide x 0.40m deep), which curved to the north at its western end. North of [014] lay [015] (0.38m wide x 0.43m deep), a feature whose full extent and depth lay beyond the limit of the trench but which could be interpreted as either a post-hole or pit-cut. To the SW of [015] lay a post-hole [016] (0.62m wide x 0.44m deep).

Trench E: (see fig. 11).

At the north - western end of trench E was evidence for the junction of two ditch-cuts, [017] (0.62m wide x 0.16m deep) and [018] (only one side of which was located). [017] was aligned north - south and [018] east - west. It is likely that they are contemporary as each was filled by the same material - [019] and [020], the latter being the latest deposit. Alternatively, one ditch could have been redundant

FIG.10
TRENCH D

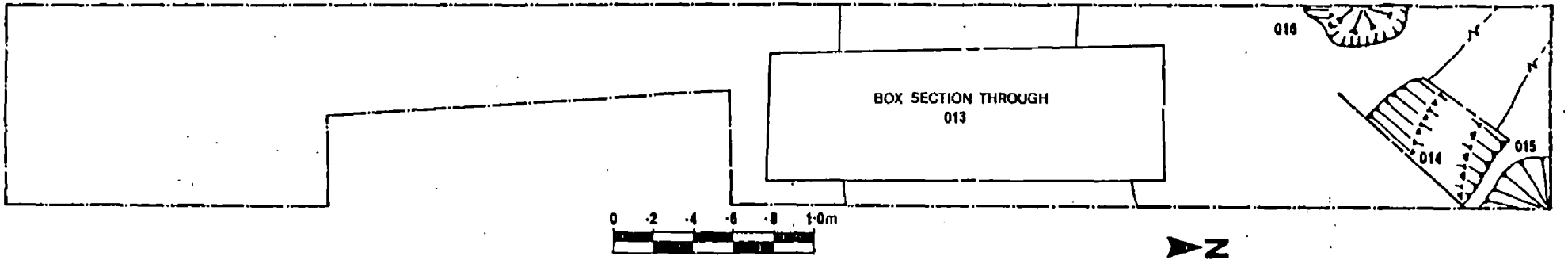
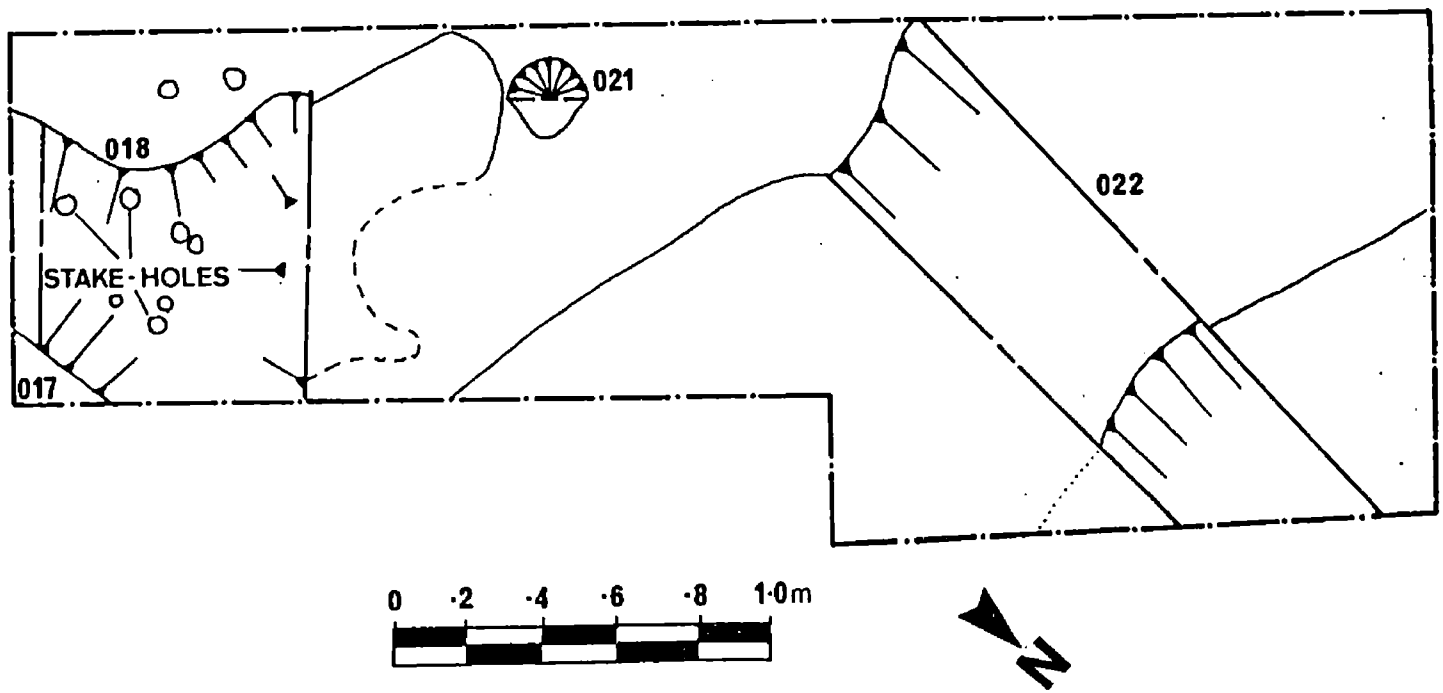


FIG.11
TRENCH E



when a later ditch was joined to it, resulting in the former being completely cleared of silt and brought back into use. At an unknown later date seven sharpened stakes had been inserted into [020] and two more were located adjacent to [018]. They varied from 40mm to 60mm in diameter by 0.12m to 0.17m deep. At least one of these stakes was deliberately removed whilst the remainder had been left to decay *in situ*. To the SE of the stakes was [021], a small sub-circular feature, (0.21m wide x 0.10m deep) of uncertain function, and [022] a shallow ditch (1.02m wide x 0.10m deep) aligned east - west.

Trench F

Exposed by trench F was [023], part of a sub-circular feature located at the southern edge of the field between cropmarks A and B (see fig.3) Excavation revealed that [023] is probably a geological phenomenon.

CONCLUSION

The aerial photographic evidence suggested that cropmarks A, B, E and F (see figure 3) served an agricultural function, possibly as field boundaries and that cropmarks C and D may have had a similar purpose i.e. as stockades for animals. There was also the possibility that C and D could have been used for human occupation.

The main purpose of the geophysical survey was to confirm the location of the cropmarks and to highlight the details of any small-scale archaeology. Cropmarks A and C were located precisely whilst B lay outside survey Grid 1 and D, E and F were obscured by 'noise' from other archaeological features.

Excavation revealed the nature of the archaeology indicated by the previous survey work. Cropmark A proved to be a type of ditch usually interpreted as a field boundary. Cropmark B was more difficult to locate, and it may be that feature [006] in trench B is its terminus although this is unlikely as one would expect a more substantial cut feature if it was constructed on the same scale as cropmark A.

Cropmark C proved to be too substantial (see excavation results: trench C [007]), for an animal enclosure and may have been associated with human occupation or related activity. Feature [011] which contained the burnt soil [012], may also be a product of such activity.

Trench D revealed several archaeological features of interest. Feature [013] is probably cropmark E which was not visible on the geophysical survey results. Feature [014] may be part of a large circular feature recorded in the geophysical results. Considering its dimensions, which are typical of a small gulley, it is possible that this feature is a ring-gulley typically found to surround round-houses of the later prehistoric period. This would imply that the post-hole/pit [015] relates to some activity associated with such a ring-gulley and that post-hole cut [016] (if it is contemporary with [014]) may be connected with some form of structure.

[017] and [018] in trench E are ditches which have probably been utilised to aid drainage of the area. The stakes present represent a later event whose exact function and date remain unclear.

[023] in trench F represents geological activity.

Five of the trenches investigated revealed archaeological features. In general it can be assumed from the form of the features encountered that they are of prehistoric or Roman origin and that they may be associated with cropmark 9 (see fig. 2), located immediately north of the application area.

One of the primary aims of the evaluation, to date the archaeological features, failed due to the lack of stratified artefacts. Only two stratified artefacts were retrieved during the excavation phase. The first was a small fragment of glass from the re-cut ditch [009] in trench C; the second was a tiny fragment of undiagnostic red ceramic material from one of the stake-holes in trench E. Neither of these artefacts are readily datable, but specialist advice will be sought on the fragment of glass.

Trench C was the only trench which contained waterlogged deposits. [008], one of the primary ditch fills of [007], was very rich in organic remains. These remains, when analysed, may yield data relevant to the interpretation of the environment at the time when the ditch [007] was in an early phase of silting-up.

It is interesting to note the lack of evidence for flooding. This has been recorded in previous survey work south of the application area. Such flooding would have masked the buried archaeological features with deposits of silt. This indicates that the area was situated on part of a natural gravel island which was unaffected by any marine incursions which have occurred during and since the prehistoric period.