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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

**Land at New Park Farm, Tattershall Thorpe:**

**Archaeological Monitoring of Topsoil Stripping  
Phase 2-3 of the Tattershall Quarry Extension**

NGR: TF 218 611

Site Code: TQB 97

LCNCC Museum Accn. No. 205.97

Planning Application No. (E)S.176/2058/94

Report prepared for  
Butterley Aggregates Limited

October 1997

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**Summary**

*An intensive archaeological watching brief was maintained during topsoil stripping for the second and third phase of a quarry extension scheme. Several drainage features were excavated which were related to the airfield and a series of ditches were found which pre-dated the airfield but there is no evidence that these features were archaeologically significant.*

**Introduction**

Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) was commissioned by Oxford Archaeological Associates Ltd. (acting on behalf of Butterley Aggregates Ltd.) to conduct an archaeological watching brief during topsoil stripping of arable land north of New Park Farm, Tattershall Thorpe (Figs. 1 and 2). The area was designated in the scheme of works (Ready Mixed Concrete Ltd. Planning Department drawing number P1/1236/19/3) as Phases 2 and 3 of the earth moving programme (Fig. 3) this stripping also included the southernmost portion of Phase 1 which was carried over from 1996 (Tann 1996). The area lay within the site of the former RAF Woodhall wartime airfield (Griffiths and Colcutt 1994; Taylor 1996).

Archaeological monitoring began on August 28th and was concluded on September 19th 1997.

**Planning and Archaeological Background**

Sand and gravel has been extracted from a large part in the NE of the former airfield. The present Tattershall Thorpe Quarry is operated by Butterley Aggregates Ltd., part of Ready Mixed Concrete (UK) Ltd (RMC). An application (No. (E)S.176/2058/94) to extend the area of extraction across land in the southern half of the airfield was approved by Lincolnshire County Council in August 1996.

In support of this application, RMC had commissioned Oxford Archaeological Associates (OAA) (acting as archaeological consultants to RMC (UK) Ltd) to prepare a documentary assessment of the archaeological implications of the proposal (Griffiths and Colcutt 1994). Air photographs indicated a possible Iron Age enclosure within the Phase 1 area. The assessment report noted a possible Roman site reported in 1929 close to the New Park Farm buildings (since developed as barrack buildings) and within the present area, since extensively disturbed by construction of the airbase. Numerous casual finds of prehistoric flint artefacts and Roman coins have been found at quarries



elsewhere in Tattershall Thorpe and archaeological excavations of important Iron Age and Neolithic sites have been carried out nearby.

A fieldwalking survey was subsequently commissioned by OAA on behalf of RMC, this survey was conducted by Lindsey Archaeological Services in early February 1996 (Taylor 1996). Of the total planning application, an area of 49ha was examined and archaeological finds from the exposed field surfaces were plotted. Only Neolithic/Bronze Age flint artefacts were recovered, mostly in Areas 8, 5 and 1 to the west and SW of the New Park Farm buildings (Fig. 2). Area 2 produced no archaeologically significant material and Area 3 produced a very low density of flints (1.29 per hectare) but no other finds.

Lincolnshire County Council placed an archaeological condition on the Planning Consent:

*Condition 11:*

*No development shall take place on the site until the developer has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme on investigation which has been submitted to, and approved in writing, by the Director of Environmental Services.*

*Reason: To ensure adequate opportunities are afforded for the investigation and protection of the archaeological interests of the site.*

This condition has resulted in provision for an intensive watching brief, the first phase of which was undertaken by LAS to the north of the present study area in 1996. This produced a single unstratified worked flint and a possible enclosure of either medieval or later date (Tann 1996).

### **The Watching Brief**

#### *Topsoil Stripping*

Topsoil was stripped by between one and three machines working at any one time, each using a 360° back actor with toothless bucket (Pls. 2-5).

The contractors agreed, after discussion, to operate all their equipment and vehicles on topsoil rather than moving on the stripped surface. It was impossible to devise another working method which left the stripped surface undamaged by tracks or wheel marks that would result in obscuring any colour variations. As soon as the stripping had progressed far enough, ground was released by the monitoring archaeologist for vehicle movements if required, but in practice vehicles seldom needed to cross the lower surface.

The proximity of power cables in the Phase 1 area meant that a bulldozer had to be used to remove the topsoil, although the ground was extensively disturbed by the tracks of the vehicle it was still possible to observe variations in colour and texture of the natural (Pl. 5).

#### *Archaeological Monitoring*

Topsoil removal was watched by two experienced archaeologists during most of the working day. It had been agreed that machining could continue for longer hours in the archaeologists' absence, and these areas were inspected



the next day where possible. One archaeologist observed the machining from immediately beyond the range of the jib, indicating the desired stripping depth when necessary.

When features of possible archaeological interest were observed the second monitor cleaned, defined their extent, and investigated them where appropriate, after the machine had moved forward sufficiently to cause no risk. This method ensured that the archaeologist closest to the working machine was never kneeling or otherwise distracted.

Modern features were plotted onto a plan at 1:2500 scale, sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20.

Photographic recording was affected by the need to photograph features promptly despite prevailing light or wind conditions. Wind-borne sand presented a major problem for both monitoring and recording, with excavated features filling with sand within minutes of preparation for photography.

Context numbers were assigned to each feature plotted or described. A summary list is appended (Appendix 1).

## **Results**

### *Natural Deposits*

The natural in the area was a series of sands and gravels which varied in colour from white through yellow to brown (Fig. 4). Numerous depressions in the natural sand were observed and many were investigated but none indicated human agency. Many tree boles were located with associated discoloration of the natural due to mineral leaching. The impact of the tree boles was more intensive in the south-east and eastern parts of the area which may have at one time been a continuation of the wood observed beyond the site boundary.

### *The Ditches*

In the northern part of the site where the remainder of Phase 1 was stripped a number of features was uncovered. A large drainage ditch was found running 10m north and parallel to the ENE to WSW runway. The ditch [121] was 1.19m wide and 0.25m deep it had a shallow rounded profile and contained a dark grey brown silty sand (see Pl. 7). Brick access points were located periodically along the drain. Local information indicates that the runway was substantially larger during the war and ditch may have originally been its perimeter drainage ditch.

Two ditches were located running north-east south-west across the site. These were approximately 100m apart and had similar profiles. The westernmost ditch [113] (Fig. 4a) was a shallow rounded asymmetrical cut with a steeper NW side. It contained a dark grey brown silty sand deposit (112), and was cut through by a field drain [114] on its north-west side.



The eastern ditch [124] (Fig. 4b and Pl. 8) was straight and very regular in plan, in section it had a widely rounded profile, 1.19m wide and 0.25m deep. This feature contained a dark grey brown silty sand (123). A field drain cut the southern side of this feature.

A single curvilinear feature [144] was observed in the extreme northern part of Area 3 between concrete staging areas to the north and the south. It was filled with a dark grey brown silty clay (145) and had very regular edges. It was shallow and rounded, as were the other drainage features but failed to respect the extant concrete areas and may belong to an earlier phase of activity.

A concentration of drainage features was observed south of ditch [144], three of them [101], [104] and [139], forming 3 sides of a rectangle. Ditch [101] (Fig. 4c and Pl. 9) was aligned NNE-SSW and extended below the concrete turning circle. It had a rounded base and contained a 0.06m deep deposit of light grey silty sand (113) overlain by a dark grey brown sandy silt (112). Ditches [104] (Fig. 5a and Pl. 10) and [139] extended at right angles from each end of [101], both of the ditches extended beyond the area of this phase of works. A brick drain [147] was observed running NW-SE in area 3 and truncating [139] (Pl. 14). A functioning 6 inch water pipe was also observed running NE SW through this area.

The field drains in this area were densely packed, sometimes less than 2m apart and of different phases. This area was extremely wet and the successive drainage programmes appear to have been in response to this.

Three large drains which appeared on the surveyor's plan were observed. One ran from south-west of the site and extended northwards to the limit of the excavated area. This drain was 1.25m wide by 0.36m deep and contained [134] a dark brown clay-silty sand. A second large drain [118] (Fig. 5b) was observed running ENE-WSW across the site. This was 1.25m wide and 0.30m deep containing a dark brown clay silt (117). Both of these features contained a large ceramic pipe which had been ploughed over most of the length of the ditch and only exposed in certain sections. A third large [142] drain was observed running ENE-WSW across the northern part of the site.

#### *Airfield Drainage Features*

A number of drains were observed that were directly related to the concrete airfield staging areas. These varied in form from circular field drains around the turning circles to large ditches along the main runway. Ditch [106] (Pl. 10) was excavated in the south-western part of the site where the length of runway and turning circle had been removed prior to commencement of this phase. The ditch consisted of a steep sided feature which tapered to a field drain at the base.

#### *Pits*

A number of pits were observed on the site, the largest of which was a bomb crater approximately 35m x 15m which had been backfilled with refuse



material, probably from the airbase. This material included a pottery, glass ware and tyres ( Pl. 11).

Several animal burials were located in pits lined with lime. These were left unexcavated (Pls. 12 and 13). A single burial, that of a pig, was located which was not lined with quicklime, probably associated with the nearby pig farm. The well-preserved nature of the bone in this free draining environment suggested that the burial was recent.

An irregular-shaped pit [122] with steep sides and a flat bottom was excavated adjacent to [124] in Area 1. Its fill was a dark grey brown silty sand, was very similar to the fills of the drainage features and therefore probably contemporary. There is nothing to suggest that this feature was of any antiquity.

Pit [126] was located adjacent to [130] with a very shallow profile and containing a dark grey brown sandy silt (127). Again the fill was very similar to the other drainage features.

Another pit feature [132] 1.6m x 1.10m and 0.77m deep was excavated which was an irregular oval shaped feature with steep conical sides. It contained a pale silty sand approximately 0.37m deep which was overlain by a dark grey brown silty clay. The fill was very similar to the drainage features and no artefacts were recovered.

#### *Removal of Existing Bund*

A large deposit of soil was located at the south eastern end of the site immediately beyond the limit of the concrete runways. The most likely interpretation for this soil bund is that it was the soil removed for the construction of the runway. The soil was removed during the topsoil stripping. This mound was investigated frequently during its removal on the basis that if archaeological remains were disturbed during the construction of the runway artefacts may have been incorporated into the soil mound.

No artefacts of archaeological significance were located during this exercise, although many spent shells were located indicating that this was perhaps used as a dump from the airforce base. Modern pottery and glassware were also found.

#### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The watching brief uncovered evidence of extensive drainage programmes associated with the airbase, although in some cases the ditches were demonstrably earlier. The nature of the ditches and the similarity of their fills to the topsoil suggest that they were filled with the same ploughsoil and therefore relatively recent. Also located were cable ducts and water pipes probably associated with the airbase.

The animal burials were concentrated in the south western part of the site and are likely to be connected to the pig farm currently at New Park Farm.

The numerous soil discolourations noted across the site, which have not been accounted for as modern features, are considered to be natural in origin.

### **Acknowledgements**

LAS was grateful to the quarry manager and other staff at the Tattershall Quarry (Butterley Aggregates) for their help and interest. Simon Colcutt and Dave Griffiths (Oxford Archaeological Associates, archaeological consultants to RMC) helped with liaison and supplied advice and comment. Steve Catney (County Archaeological Officer), and the staff of the SMR provided information and advice. Groundworks for the quarry extensions were undertaken by Butterley Aggregates' contractors, Rotel. The forbearance of their Agents, machine operators and dumper drivers was gratefully appreciated. The watching brief and site recording was conducted by the author assisted by Jon Hall, Liz Davis and Mick McDaid. The report was produced and collated by Jane Frost.

Mark Williams  
Lindsey Archaeological Service  
22nd October 1997



## References

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- OS 1891 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:10,560 map, Sheets 81SW, 88NE and 89 NW (surveyed 1887).
- Tann, G. 1996 *Land at New Park Farm, Tattershall Thorpe: Archaeological Monitoring of Topsoil Stripping Phase 1b of the Tattershall Quarry Extension* (unpublished report for Butterley Aggregates prepared by LAS)
- Taylor, C. 1996 *Proposal for Gravel Extraction, New Park Farm Tattershall Thorpe: Fieldwalking Survey* (unpublished report for Butterley Aggregates prepared by LAS).

## Archive Summary

38 colour photographs Nos. 97/72/6-25 97/68/0-19  
46 Context Sheets  
1 Context register  
9 Sections at 1:20  
1 plan at 1:20  
1 plan at 1:100  
1 plan at 1:500  
1 Plan at 1:2500  
correspondence

## Appendix 1: Tattershall Thorpe Context Summary

101	cut	2-3	drainage ditch
102	dark grey silty clay	2-3	fill of 101
103	light grey silt sand	2-3	fill of 101
104	cut	2-3	drainage ditch
105	black humic silt sand	2-3	fill of 104
106	cut	2-3	field drain
107	black humic silt sand	2-3	fill of 106
108	dark brown silty sand	2-3	fill of 106
109	mid grey sand	2-3	fill of 104
110	various sands and gravels	all	natural
111	dark brown humic silty sand	all	topsoil
112	dark grey brown slightly silty sand	1	fill of 113
113	cut	1	ditch
114	cut	1	field drain
115	dark grey brown clay sand	1	fill of 114
116	yellow orange sand	1	natural
117	dark grey brown sandy loam	2-3	fill of 118
118	cut	2-3	drainage ditch
119	pale blue clay sand	3	fill of 120
120	cut	3	possible feature
121	cut	1	drainage ditch
122	cut	1	irregular feature
123	dark grey brown sandy silt	1	fill of 124
124	cut	1	drainage ditch
125	dark grey brown silty sand	1	fill of 124
126	cut	3	irregular pit
127	dark grey brown silty sand	2	fill of 126
128	dark grey brown silty sand	2	fill of 129
129	cut	2	pit
130	cut	3	drainage ditch
131	clayey sand	2	fill of 132
132	cut	2	pit
133	pale grey sand	2	fill of 132
134	dark brown clay silt sand	2	fill of 130
135	grey blue vesicular stone	2	fill 130
136	dark brown sandy loam	2	fill of 138
137	animal burial (pig)	2	fill of 138
138	cut	3	pit
139	cut	2	drainage ditch
140	mid grey silty sand	2	fill of 139
141	dark grey silty sand	2	fill of 139
142	cut	2-3	drainage ditch
143	grey brown silty sand	2-3	fill of 142
144	cut	3	drainage ditch
145	very dark brown silty clay	3	fill of 144
146	mid brown silty sand	3	bomb crater
147	Brick structure	3	drain



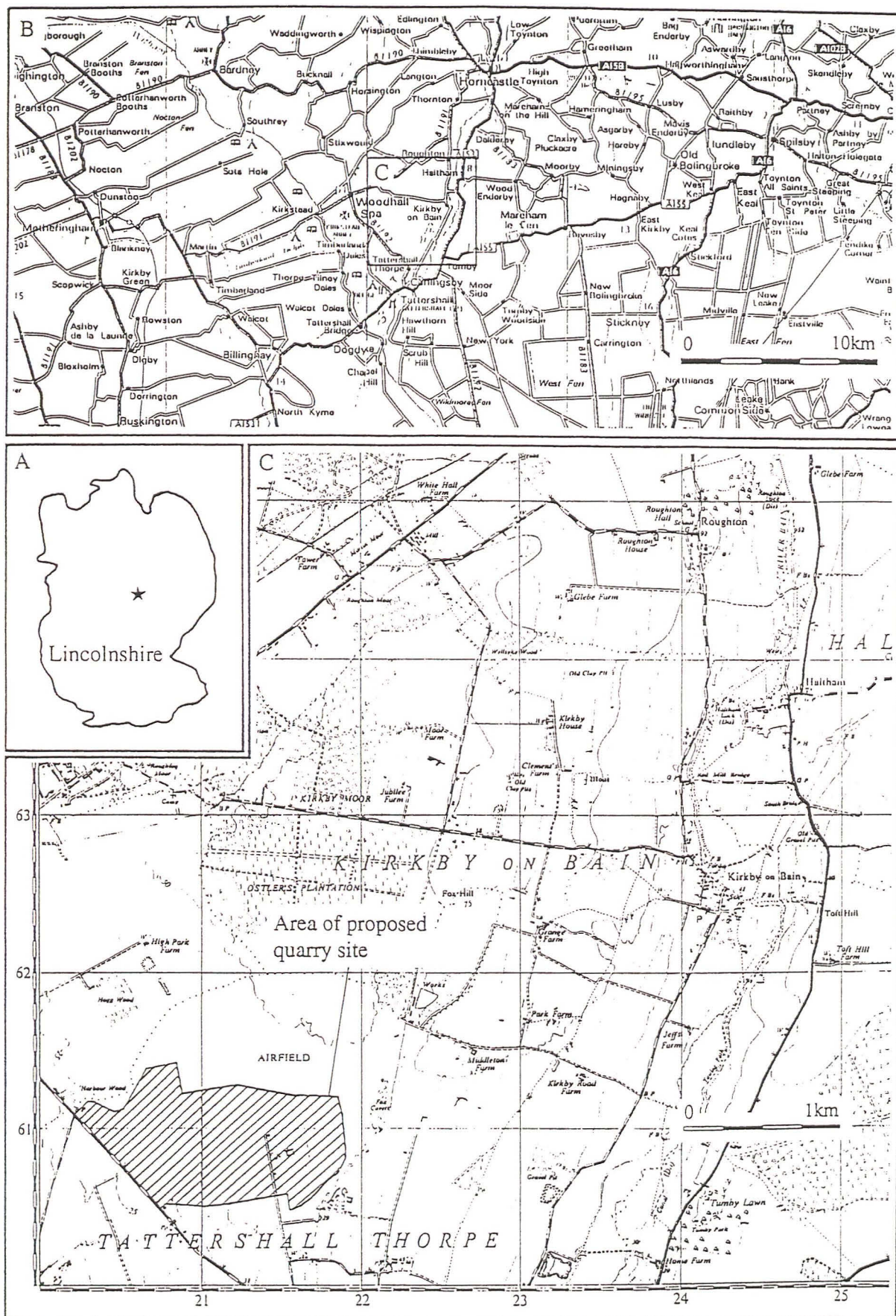


Fig 1 : Location of proposed quarry site. (Inset C based on O.S. 1:25,000, Sheet TF 26. Crown Copyright 1953. Reproduced with the permission of the controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 50424A).



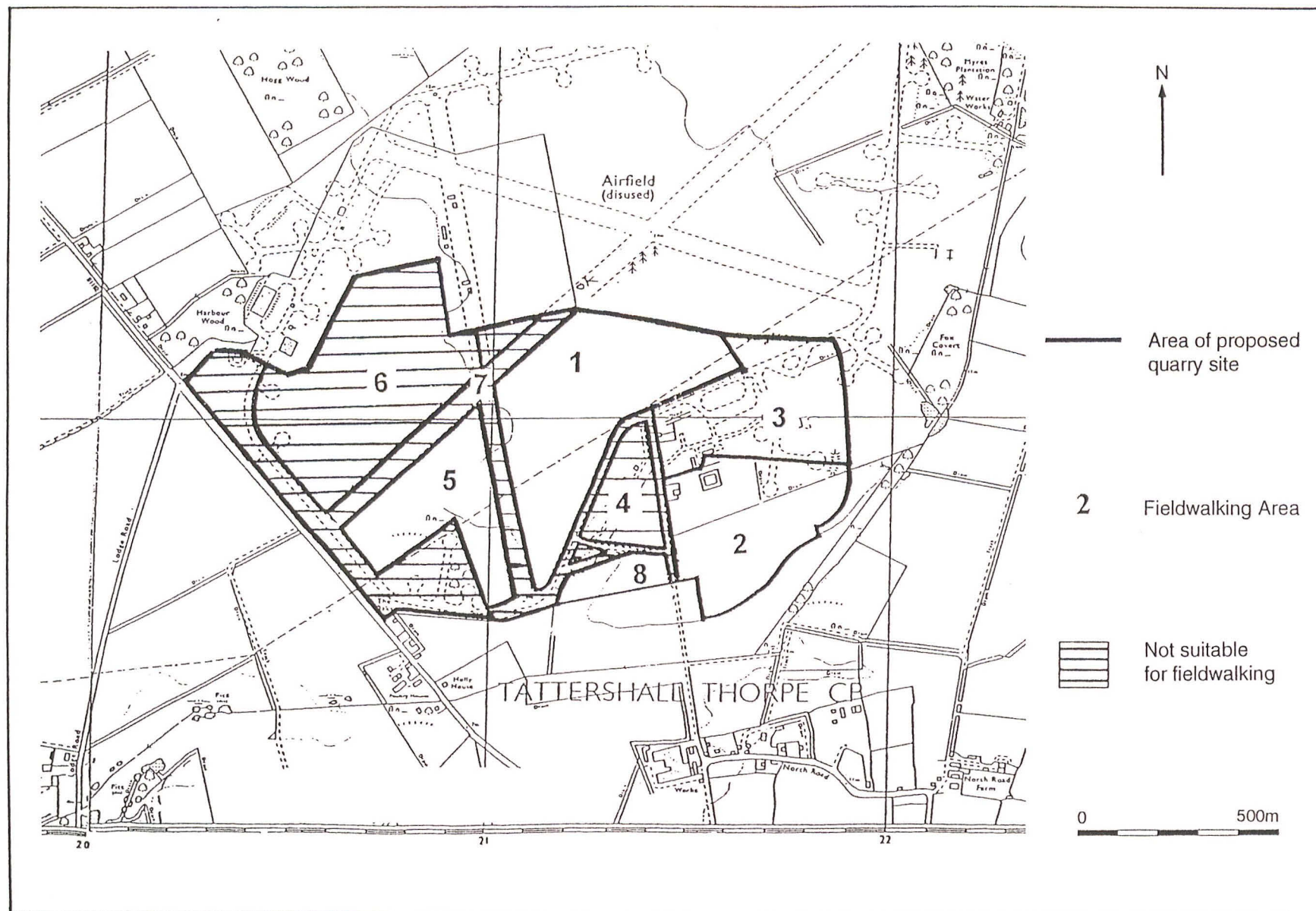


Fig 2 : Fieldwalking Areas 1-8 (based on plan from Oxford Archaeological Associates Ltd)

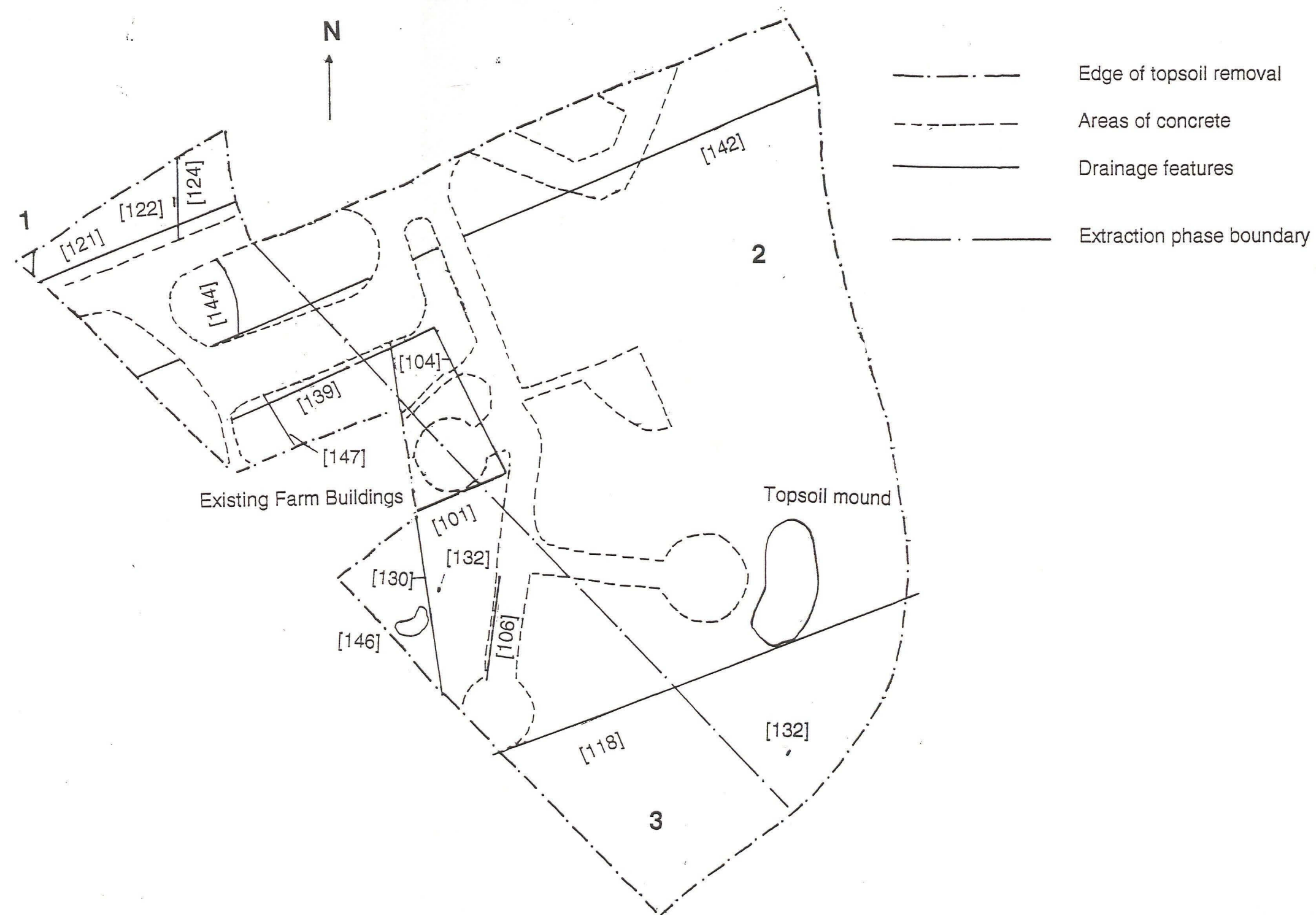


Fig 3 :Plan of area stripped showing archaeological features

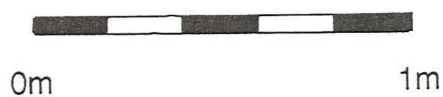
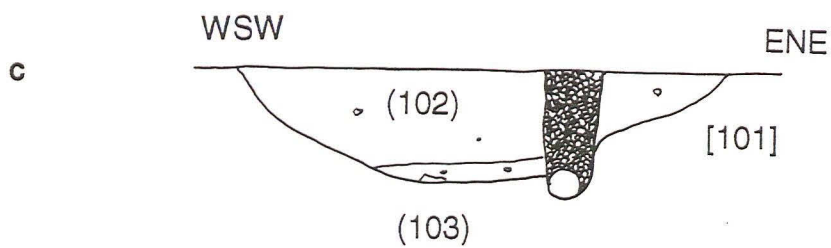
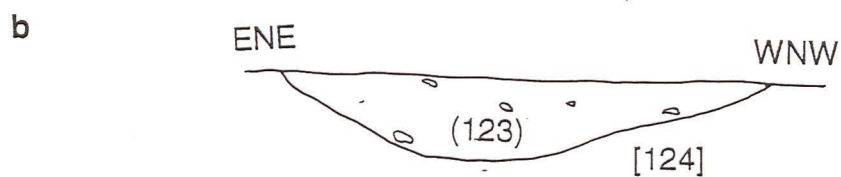
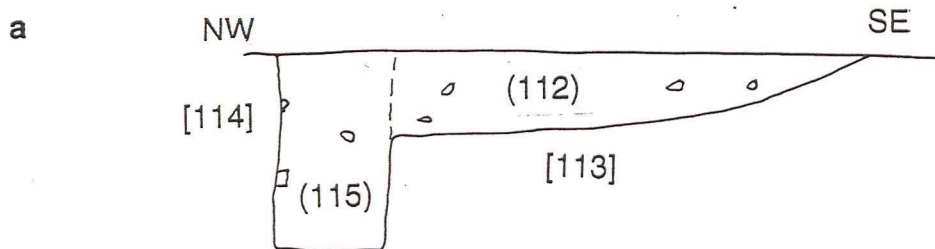
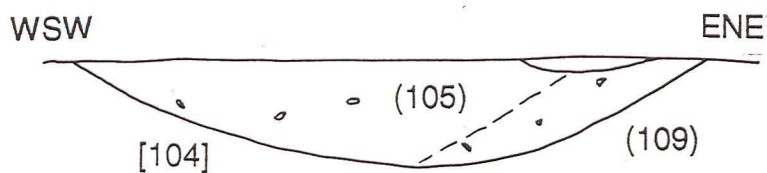


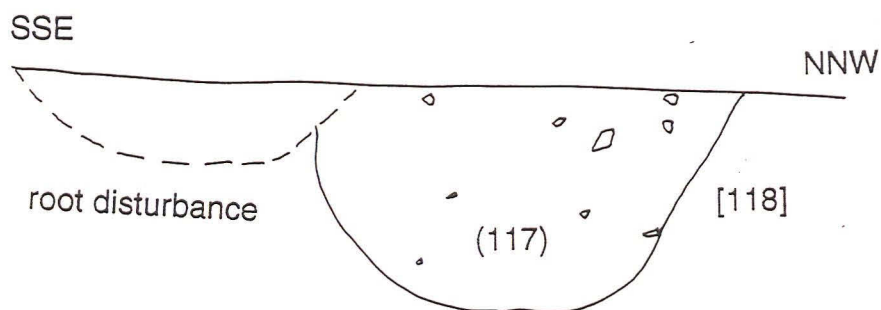
Fig 4: Sections of features a) [113], b) [124] and c) [101]



a



b



c

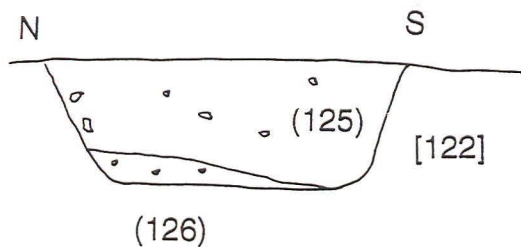


Fig 5: Sections of features a) [104], b) [118] and c) [122].

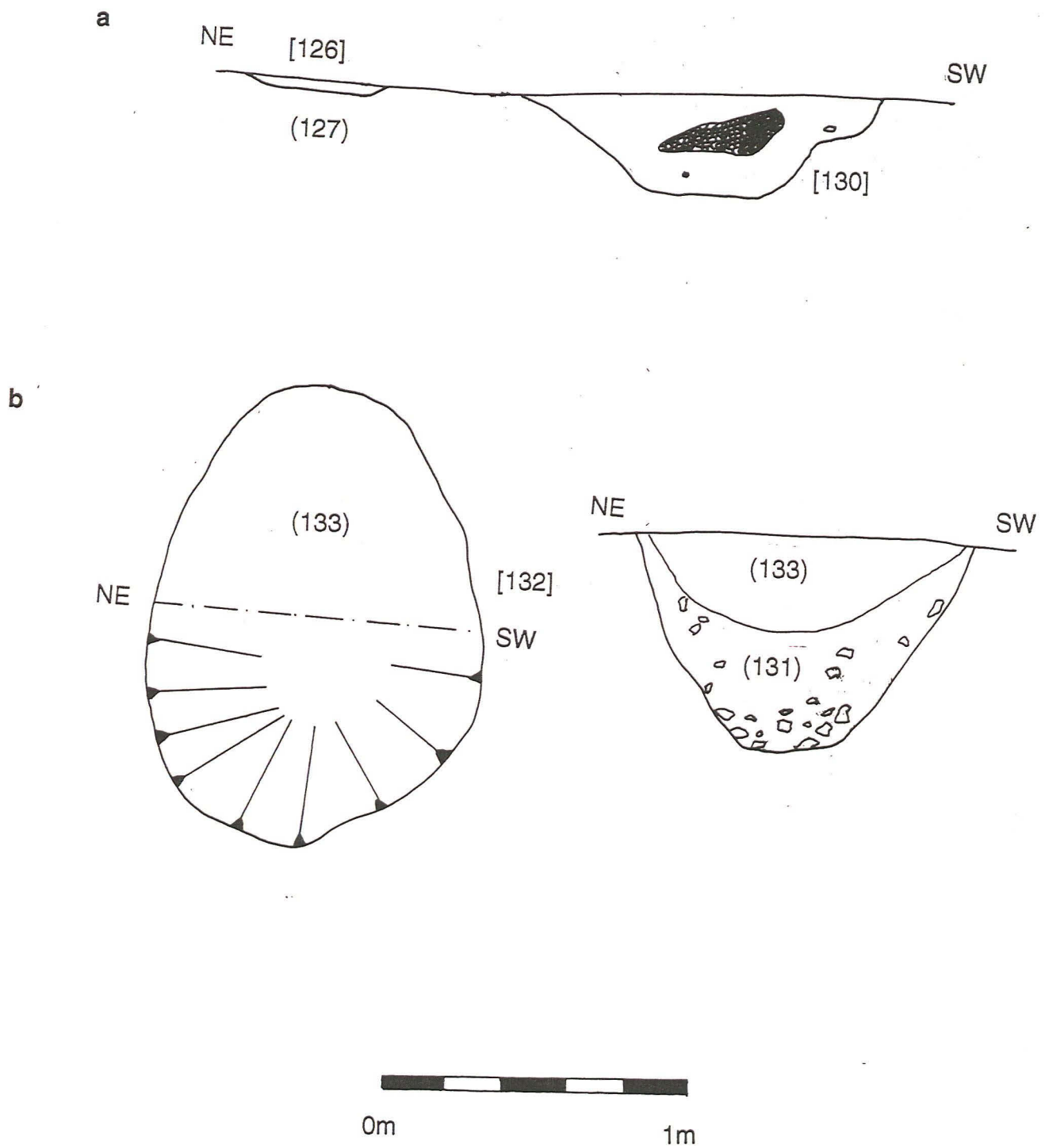


Fig 6: Section of feature a) [126] and [130], plan and section of b) [132]





Pl.1 Early stages of topsoil stripping, looking south

Pl. 2 Early stages of topsoil stripping looking south







**Pl. 3 Late stages of topsoil stripping looking east**

**Pl. 4 Late stages of topsoil stripping looking south**







Pl. 5 Part of area 1 stripped by bulldozer.



Pl. 6 Drainage ditch [121] looking east





Pl. 7 Drainage ditch [124] looking north-east

Pl. 8 Drainage ditch [101] looking east

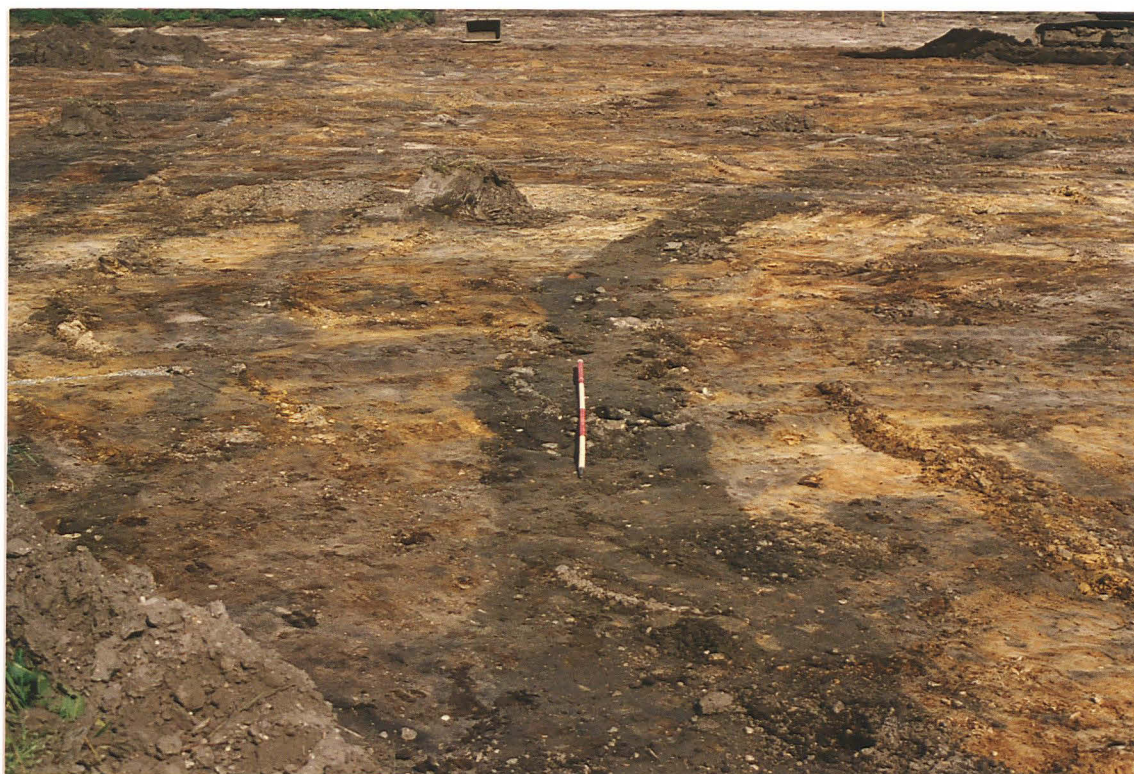






Pl.9 Drainage ditch [106] looking south

Pl.10 Curved field drain in western part of site







Pl.11 Pit [146] the bomb crater looking east

Pl. 12 Pit [129] lime lined animal burial







Pl. 13 Pit [137] modern animal burial