

Marches Archaeology

Barn at Hill Farm Wychnor Staffordshire

Report on an excavation and watching brief

May 2005

Marches Archaeology Series 381

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**Barn at Hill Farm
Wychnor
Staffordshire**

A report on an excavation and watching brief

NGR: SK 1762 1630 (site centre)

**Report by
Richard Stone**

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Summary

An excavation was carried out prior to conversion of a barn situated in a depression within the earthworks of a deserted medieval village. The work indicated that the landscape had been extensively remodelled, probably in the 17th century. A medieval ditch was identified forming a roadside field boundary. Several undated features were also present. By the 17th century the land around the barn had been lowered by at least 0.5m, losing the tops of earlier features. During the 18th and 19th centuries the area was drained and various agricultural structures were erected.

A watching brief on service trenches associated with the barn conversion revealed further evidence of field boundaries. One localised area had a layer which produced a large amount of medieval pottery, showing the potential of areas of the deserted medieval village for excellent preservation of high quality archaeology.

A pond north of the barn was shown to have been created after the medieval period and may have been part of the 17th century remodelling.

1 Introduction

There is a proposal to convert a barn at Hill Farm, Wychnor to residential use. The site is centred on NGR: SK 1762 1630 (Figs 1 and 2) and lies within the extensive earthworks of a deserted medieval village scheduled as SAM number 22436. An archaeological evaluation carried out by Marches Archaeology in February 2004 (Kenney, 2004) concluded that the site contains shallow archaeological remains of medieval and later date which would be removed by the proposed barn conversion. Scheduled Monument Consent (henceforth SMC) was granted for the conversion on the condition that appropriate archaeological works were carried out (ref. HSD 9/2/6530).

The project was overseen by Bob Meeson, archaeological consultant to Mercer Farming Ltd (the client), and approved by the Secretary of State advised by English Heritage.

The site work was carried out between 11th and 29th October 2004 inclusive with a further site visit by Bob Meeson on 5th May 2005. This report was issued on 6th May 2005.

2 Aims and scope of the project

The aim of this excavation was to preserve by record any below ground archaeological remains removed as part of the conversion of the barn.

The site work consisted of four elements:

1. excavation of 250 sq.m. east of the barn (enlarged from 150 sq.m)
2. watching brief on a north-south service trench (236m x 0.60m) close to the road east of the barn
3. watching brief on partial infilling of a pond north-east of the barn
4. watching brief on the partial infilling of a depression south of the barn, representing the position of a demolished steel framed barn, including removal of six concreted steel stanchion bases
5. watching brief on removal of soil from an area north of a ditch which had been cleaned without archaeological supervision

3 Methodology

All fieldwork

The recording system included written, drawn and photographic data. Context numbers were allocated and context record sheets completed. The photographic record was made using black and white negative and colour transparency film. Plans at a scale of 1:20 and sections at 1:10 or 1:20 were made of all features, with further plans and sections of features as appropriate. The trenches were located in relation to the site boundaries and the barn using a total station theodolite.

All artefactual material recovered from hand excavation was retained with the exception of fragments of ceramic building material (brick and tile).

Excavation

A single trench was excavated east of the barn using a tracked mini-digger fitted with a toothless bucket. The topsoil and an underlying cobbled surface were removed, which lay directly above natural subsoils. The area was cleaned by hoe and trowel and planned prior to excavation.

The water table of the site was known to be high and extensive rain during the course of the excavation led to standing water over up to one third of the site. The pre-excavation plan allowed areas containing features to be cleaned again in order to excavate relevant areas. No attempt was made to re-clean the entire area.

The new service trench was due to be dug through the eastern part of the excavation area during the second week of the excavation so this area was excavated first to allow this timetable to be met.

Watching brief

All groundworks were supervised by an archaeologist. Where ground breaking works were taking place appropriate recording was made of significant archaeological information. Where infilling or other soil movement was required this monitoring ensured that equipment and machinery was not used in conditions or in a manner likely to result in unauthorised ground disturbance.

Office work

On completion of fieldwork a site archive was prepared. The written, drawn and photographic data was catalogued and cross-referenced and a summary produced. The artefactual data was processed, catalogued and cross-referenced and summaries produced. The pottery was sent to Stephanie Rátkai for specialist analysis (see below).

4 Site description and the proposed development

The site is an area of pasture land, located at an altitude of between 61.5m and 63.0m OD, for the most part at approximately 62.25m. It is mainly situated on the western side of the lane leading down to St Leonard's Church, with the cleaned out ditch on the eastern side. The village of Wychnor is now little more than a hamlet of scattered houses to the south of the road leading from the A38 to Wychnor Park. It is situated on a gentle south facing slope on the northern edge of the flood plain of the River Trent (Figs 1 and 2). The underlying geology is Triassic mudstone overlaid by Quaternary river terrace deposits (Sabin 2003, 2).

5 Archaeological and historical background

The following summary is reproduced from the report on the evaluation, which includes additional detail on the earthworks around the barn.

Wychnor is an Old English name and the village is Saxon in origin. The manor of Wychnor was mentioned in the Domesday Book, and there is Norman masonry in the church of St Leonard, although it too may have Saxon origins. There were two substantial medieval houses, one a moated site on the flood plain to the south (now cut by the canal), the other visible as a sub-rectangular earthwork enclosure west of the church. A lane ran north from the eastern side of the enclosure, joining the east-west aligned main village street at the location of the present development site. A survey of the village earthworks carried out by the Department of Adult and Continuing Education at Keele University (Fig. 3) clearly shows these roads and some of the house platforms adjacent to them. A map of 1724 (Meeson 2004, plate 1) shows that the village street was still in use and many buildings were still standing in the early 18th century. The village declined in the late 17th and 18th centuries, but was still of considerable size in the early 19th century, with Enclosure probably causing its final abandonment.

6 The watching brief

The watching brief on the infilling of the pond north-east of the barn, the depression south of the barn and the removal of soil north of the ditch east of the lane ensured that there was no adverse effect to the archaeological resource. Removal of the topsoil just north-east of the barn was monitored by Bob Meeson on 5th May 2005. These elements did not add to an understanding of the site but ensured that the landscape can still be understood as readily as before the works (Fig. 2 – areas shown yellow).

The other element of the watching brief, the north-south service trench (Trench 7), provided useful information about the use of the landscape from the medieval period onwards.

Trench 7 (Fig 4)

Trench 7 measured approximately 236m by 0.60m and extended along the eastern side of the fields roughly parallel to the road.

The basic stratigraphy of the trench consisted of natural sands and gravels overlain by a brown slightly silty sand, with a reddish brown sand above and dark brown humic loam topsoil above this. There were minor changes in composition and colouration to these layers along the length of the trench but these are not considered significant.

The pond north-east of the barn was created by digging out a roughly circular pit and putting at least some of the upcast around the edge. This has resulted in the survival of a buried turfline, which was identified to the north of the pond. Below this turfline was a layer of silty sand [717], varying in colour from yellow brown to grey brown. This lay above the natural along the length of the trench north of the pond. This soil was of medieval origin and for the first ten metres north of the northern edge of the pond produced large amounts of pottery, which were allocated finds numbers [724] and [725]. The fragments were large and unabraded, which is typical of undisturbed dumping. The size and variety of the pottery assemblage strongly suggests that this area was within an area occupied during the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. The survival of this pottery indicates that this part of the site was not ploughed deeply. A small pit [720] and two possible stake holes were apparent below the medieval soil. Slightly further north were two discontinuities in the natural subsoil which have the appearance of pit bases. However, these were natural variations rather than man made features. The natural was at 62.3m in this area.

Directly overlying the medieval soil layer was a thin layer of brown silty sand with patches of yellow sand and iron panning [716]. This is probably the former ground surface, on which was dumped the upcast soil from the digging of the pond, which formed the topsoil in the eighteenth century.

At the north of the service trench run was an east – west metal water pipe. A further 3.5m south was an apparent posthole filled with a grey brown sandy loam [703]. This was noted only in the west section and directly to its south was a large fragment of white sandstone [702]. These two elements may form part of a building of unknown date. Further investigation would be required to provide a meaningful context. The natural was at 62.3m in this area.

A wide shallow feature was identified approximately 44m from the north end of the trench. The section suggests that it was some 4.5m wide and 0.4m deep. Within the silty fill [707] was a ‘horseshoe’ ceramic land drain which may be a later insertion. The feature produced eighteenth century pottery. This indicates the date of infilling of the feature, but not the date of its creation. It is possible that this deeper area of silt represents infilling of a vestigial furrow from a ridge and furrow system. No other furrows were noted along the trench so an alternative explanation is that it could have been a shallow boundary ditch. The natural was at 62.2m in this area.

To the south of the excavation the principal feature identified was a ditch, roughly parallel to the line of the existing lane. This was filled with grey brown silty sand. This was also seen in the main excavation and represents a field boundary. The only other feature identified south of the excavation was a small brick footing 1½ bricks wide and surviving four courses high. This was oriented parallel (or at right angles) to the road and was situated 43m south of the southern edge of the excavation. The natural was at 61.7m in this area.

7 The excavation

Trench 8 (Figs 5 and 6)

Trench 8 was roughly rectangular and measured approximately 17m by 14m and was located east of the barn. The natural soils were identified at approximately 61.5m ± 0.1m. The ground surface in the fields to the north and south are broadly consistent with natural found at 62.3m OD 30m to the north and 20m to the north-west (evaluation Trench 1), and 61.7m OD 30m to the south. The natural should be expected at approximately 62.0m OD in the area of the excavation. Its absence at this level reflects the use of this area in the medieval period, creating a depression. The construction of the barn to the west of the excavation during the seventeenth century, possibly included landscaping works further lowering the level of natural. It is therefore likely that the top 0.5m of natural deposits were lost during the medieval period and the seventeenth century. For this reason only deep features of medieval date are likely to survive.

Medieval

The only feature which contained material dating it to the medieval period was the bottom of a north – south running ditch [820] at the south-east of the trench. This was only 0.35m deep, but probably was originally much deeper, before the ground level was reduced. It was filled with several phases of silting, with some collapsing of the edges (fills [816-819] and [821]). Several features did not contain any dating evidence and are considered below. Some of these could be medieval.

Post-medieval

There was little evidence of the use of the area in the early part of this period. Several features are dated by the presence of fragments of brick and tile, which is not likely to be earlier than the seventeenth century in this area, and may well be later.

A linear feature [842], fill [843], is interpreted as a narrow drain, but could conceivably be a wheel rut. A much wider drain [815], fills [813] and [814], ran east – west and sealed the earlier drain [842]. Drain or wheel rut [848], fill [847] was parallel to [815] and may well be of similar date, though no dating evidence was found.

A wide ditch [804] cut drain [815]. This was filled with a grey brown silty sand including brick and tile fragments [803] and ran north-west – south-east across the north-eastern corner of the trench.

Two postholes [852] and [854] had surviving timbers. One of these cut drain [813] and both are likely to be of the later eighteenth century or later. They were filled respectively with [951] and [855]

The other features of this phase have no stratigraphic relationships and the dating evidence is too poor to define chronological succession. Two postholes [810] and [830] (fills [809] and [829]) are of similar size and may be related to the same structure. A number of small pits were identified: [806], [825], [832], [834] and [841] (fills [805], [824], [831], [833] and [839] and 840]. These are generally shallow and it is possible to argue that they could originally have been significantly deeper, and that the top parts were removed when the ground was lowered either in the medieval period or during the seventeenth century.

Nineteenth and twentieth centuries

There were two phases of drainage runs (not numbered). Both still functioned to some extent at the time of the excavation. The earlier phase led from a brick building to the south-west of the excavation to an inspection pit north-east of the excavation, which currently also takes rainwater from the barn. At the west of the trench this was covered by a rectangular area of ash and cinders [856]. A concentration of slag including a hearth bottom [853] indicates the position of a forge. The later phase of drainage included an inspection pit at the south east of the site. A cobbled surface 0.1m deep [802] became increasingly intermittent towards the east and may not have extended over the eastern quarter of the site. The topsoil [801] was a dark grey-brown sandy loam with few stones, and was up to 0.25m deep.

Undated

There were a number of undated features which it is not possible to assign readily to any specific phase. These consist of pits [808], fill 807; [823], fill [822]; [846], fills [844 and 845]; possible postholes [812], fill [811]; [835], fill [836]; and postholes [838], fill [837]; [827], with packing stones in the fill [826].

8 The Pottery by *Stephanie Rátkai*

Some 265 sherds were recovered in the course of excavation and watching briefs (Fig. 7). Twenty-eight of these sherds came from Trench 1 (see Appendix). By far the largest pottery group came from an undefined feature, fills 724 and 725, adjacent to a pond, probably of post-medieval date, possibly on the site of an earlier watercourse. A number of small scoops were detected in the vicinity of the pond and the fills of these, contexts 726-728, also produced pottery. Although most of the pottery could not be associated with medieval structures or features, it was felt that the pottery deserved some study. Firstly because there are still relatively few excavated and published medieval groups from this area of Staffordshire and secondly because the pottery from 724 and 725 was in exceptionally good condition, with several form sherds. The following report therefore concentrates on the pottery from these two contexts, with more general comment on the pottery from other feature fills and layers.

The medieval pottery was examined under x 20 magnification and divided into fabric types. The resultant fabric type series was matched to the type series used for Lichfield (Rátkai 2004a, Rátkai forthcoming a). The same fabric codes have been used in this report. Further comparanda was sought from sites lying in the Churnett Valley, Dovedale and the Trent Valley.

The pottery was quantified by sherd count and weight, minimum rim, base and handle count and by rim percentage (*eves*). Details of vessel form, glaze, decoration and sooting patterns were noted. All data were entered onto an Excel worksheet.

Context group (724) and (725).

Most of the pottery came from these two contexts (see Tables 1 and 2). The dominant fabric was gritty ware, a hard-fired, harsh-textured fabric with a markedly pimply surface. The colour of the clay body varies from buff to grey to orange and salmon pink. The firing is not very consistent, although completely oxidised orange pots are the most common and

presumably reflect the desired result. Most of the remaining pottery was made up of buff-white wares, which had a cream fabric with slightly yellowish surfaces. There were a number of cross-joins between the two contexts, and it seems reasonable to assume that (724) and (725) were originally part of a continuous deposit. The vessels present are therefore described as a single group in the following section.

Gritty ware vessel forms consisted primarily of cooking pots with rounded bodies. At least ten cooking pots were represented by minimum rim count. The cooking pots generally had simple everted slightly tapering rims. Of these, three vessels had rims decorated with a rather rough and ready incised wavy line. One vessel had a shorter stubbier rim than the others but also had a wavy line incised on the rim. Rim diameter was fairly consistent, ranging from 200mm to 250mm. Most of the vessels had rim diameters of 220mm or 230mm. In all, the gritty ware cooking pots presented a very uniform picture. Twelve base sherds were present, all of which had some, usually rather patchy, internal olive or tan glaze. The occasional internal (and external) glaze spot was noted on the cooking pot rims and it is therefore possible that the cooking pots had some internal glaze, particularly on the internal base to aid cleaning. There was nothing to suggest from the pottery recovered that these vessels had had handles, so as such they could not be classed as pipkins, although the evidence of glazing suggests that they might have been. The larger part of the gritty ware sherds was sooted. The sooting was often heavy and occasionally present on the interior of the vessel. In general sooting did not reach as high as the rim but occurred on the lower section of the vessels. Three vessels had an unsooted base and base angle with the sooting beginning in a distinct band above the base angle. This suggests that the vessels had either been sitting within another pot during the cooking process or had perhaps sat on a trivet or stand of some sort.

At least three buff-white ware vessels occurred in the group. Two vessels had upright flattened expanded rims, one with an incised wavy line and heavy sooting, the other, unsooted but with thin glaze spots and dribbles. The third cooking pot had a plain, slightly everted rim. The latter vessel was also patchily sooted on the exterior of the rim. There were eleven base sherds and the picture seemed to be much the same as for the gritty wares in that just under half of the base sherds had some internal glazing, most sherds were sooted, including one base sherd with a clean base and base angle with a band of sooting above the base angle, already seen amongst the gritty ware. Again it was difficult to be certain if the base sherds with internal glaze were from bowls, pipkins or cooking pots. Bowls with external soot are known from Lichfield and elsewhere and the use of this form for cooking seems to have been popular in North Warwickshire and South Staffordshire in the medieval period. Whether this just reflects consumer preference or indicates a peculiarity of the diet which demanded a particular type of cooking vessel is unknown, although might repay further study.

Other fabric types were poorly represented in this group and were for the most part fairly undiagnostic. Most of the pottery appeared to be roughly contemporary. A strap handle in fabric medg, with raised central rib, was one of the few sherds which appeared to be residual in this group. The large sherd size and substantial sections of vessel rims and sherds clearly from the same vessel would be in keeping with the pottery representing a dumped deposit. The pottery does not seem to have been subject to plough damage or trample but in the absence of any evidence relating the deposit to any structures other than the later pond it is not possible to ascertain the original nature of (724) and (725).

Further form sherds were found in 728, and 816. The fabric cpj1 rim sherd from 728 must represent one of the earliest sherds from the site. It is from a bowl with an in-turned, lightly

thumbed rim. There is no exact parallel for this form but a 12th century date would not be inconceivable. The second form sherd is from a gritty ware flange rim bowl. There is heavy sooting on the exterior of the rim. The fabric colour is predominantly buff with a salmon pink core

The post-medieval pottery consisted of very few sherds, dating to the 17th (most probably the later 17th century) or 18th centuries, with the exception of one 19th century industrial slipware sherd.

Discussion

Most of the fabrics could be paralleled in the Lichfield type series. A single small cooking pot sherd (fabric scp1) could not be matched although it closely resembled fabric medg. The sherd was so small that it is not impossible that it was from a glazed vessel originally. One or two sherds were clearly early, mainly on stylistic grounds. These were the bowl with an in-turned rim from 728 and the handle with a raised central rim from 725. In both cases the sherds could quite reasonably be dated to the 12th century. Most of the cooking pot sherds are not very closely datable and could be found in the 12th-14th centuries. Both the fabric and the forms of the buff-white wares suggest a mid 13th-14th century date. The gritty wares are more difficult to date but in this case a 14th century date is likely.

Wychnor lies close to the confluence of the River Tame and the River Trent. To the south of the Trent and to the west of the Tame, the dominant 13th-14th century pottery type was buff-white ware (Hodder 1986). Further excavation since Hodder's distribution map, particularly in Lichfield (Rátkai 2004, Rátkai forthcoming) confirms the dominance of buff-whitewares in this area. The whiteware cooking pot forms from Wychnor can be paralleled in Ford (1995 fig 14 78, 84) and are known from Drayton Bassett and Tamworth. However, overall buff white wares are a minor component of the pottery recovered from Wychnor and were only found in any quantity in contexts 724 and 725, with odd sherds present in (726) and (728).

The dominant fabric at Wychnor was gritty ware. A small number of examples of this ware are known from sites to the south of the River Trent such as Lichfield (Rátkai 2004, fabric cm1a, dating mainly to the 14th-15th centuries) and even as far south as Birmingham (Rátkai forthcoming b, fabric 'gritty ware', dating to the later medieval period), although only in very small quantities. The presence of gritty ware at Tamworth is not immediately apparent from the fabric descriptions given by Nailor (1992), although she describes some of the minor fabric groups as "...even gritty in character..." (Nailor *op cit* 113). However, none of the vessels illustrated by Nailor resembles the gritty ware forms from Wychnor. Likewise, in Ford's review of Staffordshire ceramics (1995) the Wychnor gritty ware vessel forms are not paralleled amongst the illustrated material. It may be significant that the greater number of illustrated vessels in Ford (1995) are from sites to the south of the Trent.

Gritty wares have been recorded in north-eastern Staffordshire. They have been found at Croxden (Rátkai 1997) Rocester (Rátkai 1996), Uttoxeter (Rátkai 2002), and Tutbury (Rátkai 2004b) and, nearer to Wychnor, they have been found at Catholme (Rátkai 2004a), all sites to the north of the Trent. At Burton Abbey, Burton-upon-Trent, the rather broad fabric descriptions (Drage 1979) make direct comparison with the Wychnor gritty wares difficult but the Burton group described as '*buff sandy ware*' whose colour varies from '*buff-white to orange to grey*' and where '*... quartz grit is occasionally used ...*' (Drage 1979, 21) sounds broadly similar. However, none of the illustrated vessels parallels the Wychnor gritty ware forms. The gritty ware tradition also extends into Derbyshire, where gritty wares appear

to have been in use from possibly as early as the 12th century through to the 15th century. Coincidentally there is also a Roman gritty ware tradition in this area, the surface texture of the pots being described as resembling goose-flesh (pers. comm. Dr Jeremy Evans). This suggests that the textural appearance of the gritty wares is an inherent attribute of the clays used, rather than being the result of deliberate tempering or preparation of the clays.

The pottery group from context 724 and 725 consisted of very basic utilitarian forms. Only one jug sherd could be identified, a handle (ill 13), which was almost certainly residual in the group. There was one other jug sherd in a buff gritty ware, which came from (726). A further four jug sherds came from Trench 1 (see Appendix). The medieval pottery consisted of cooking pots/jars or bowls and as such suggests that the ceramic repertoire was geared towards very basic needs of cooking and storage. The pottery would appear to have been of fairly local manufacture. The relative proportion of buff-white wares to gritty wares indicates that the Wychnor assemblage is more closely allied to sites to the north of the Trent, where the gritty ware tradition appears to have flourished. This demonstrates that the Trent formed not only a physical divide but also a 'cultural' divide between the buff-white ware tradition and the gritty ware tradition, so that the river systems of the Trent and Tame do not appear to have aided the transport of pottery from one area to the other but rather to have acted largely as a barrier to expansion. The importance of the Trent is, of course, obvious but the apparent lack of importance of both the Trent and Tame in this area of Staffordshire for the transport of pottery flies in the face of received wisdom that water transport is the most economic and the preferred system of transportation for pottery in the medieval period.

Illustrated vessels

1. (725), gritty ware cooking pot/jar, oxidised orange throughout, reddish external surface colour, two small internal glaze spots, internal abrasion, some external sooting
2. (725), gritty ware cooking pot/jar, oxidised orange throughout, incised wavy line on rim, two or three small internal glaze spots, some external sooting
3. (724) and (725), gritty ware cooking pot, pale orange-buff body and external surface, pale grey reduced internal surface, patches of soot on the rim exterior
4. (724) and (725), gritty ware cooking pot, incised wavy line on rim, pale orange-buff body, orange internal surface, grey-brown external surface, one or two internal glaze spots
5. (724), gritty ware cooking pot/jar, pale orange-buff fabric, orange surfaces
6. (724), gritty ware cooking pot jar, mainly reduced but with some patches of oxidation, mid grey internal surface, patchy, speckled grey-brown/pale orange external surface, irregular thin oxidised pale orange margins
7. (724). Gritty ware cooking pot/jar, incised wavy line on rim, pale orange-buff fabric, orange surfaces, abraded, external glaze spot.
8. (816), gritty ware, flange-rim bowl, buff-salmon pink fabric, buff internal surface, heavy external soot, external glaze spot
9. (725) buff-white ware cooking pot/jar (cf Ford 1995 fig 14, 78), cream fabric, yellowish to yellowish-grey external surface, internal and external glaze spots and 'dribbles'.
10. (725) buff-white ware cooking pot/jar (cf Ford 1995 fig 14, 84), cream fabric, yellowish surfaces, patches of external soot on rim
11. (724) buff-white ware cooking pot/jar (cf Ford 1995 fig 14, 77), incised wavy line on rim, cream fabric, light external soot, heavy soot on upper face of the rim
12. (728) fabric cpj1, bowl with in-turned, finger impressed rim, reduced dark grey fabric, thin oxidised patchy pale brown-orange 'skin' on surfaces, mostly abraded away on the interior
13. (725), fabric medg, strap handle with central rib, mid-grey reduced fabric, thin oxidised orange-brown skin on the surfaces, thin dull olive glaze, abraded

Fabric description	fabric	Fab	313	314	316	707	724	725	726	727	728	803	805	809	816	819	824	Total
Buff-white ware (coarse)	ww2	Bww					22	29			2							53
Buff-white ware (fine)	ww1	Bww2						4	2									6
Gritty ware	cm1a	Grw					37	53	11	3						2		106
Gritty ware (buff fabric)	cm1a	Grwb					4	7	1	1	1				1	2		17
Later medieval glazed redware	rw4	lmt1						1										1
Sandy cooking pot	cpj1	scp1					1	3	2	3	10				1			20
Cooking pot	(scp2)	scp2						1										1
Sandy cooking pot	cpj4	scp3					1				1							2
Cooking pot	cpj5	scp4								1								1
Later medieval glazed redware	rw1	sgw1						1										1
Medieval glazed ware	medg	sgw2						1										1
Blackware	blw	Blw	1	5	1													7
Coarseware	cw	Cw	1															1
Coarseware (buff fabric)	wb	Cwb	2	1		1						8						12
Trailed slipware	slpwtr	slpwtr										1	1				1	3
Yellow ware	yw	Yw	2															2
Industrial slipware	indslpw	indslpw													1			1
Ceramic building material	cbm	Cbm						1							1			2
	Total	Total	6	6		1	65	101	16	8	14	9	1	1	3	4	1	237

Table 1 Quantification of pottery by sherd count

Fabric description	fabric	Fab	313	314	316	707	724	725	726	727	728	803	805	809	816	819	824	Total
Buff-white ware (coarse)	ww2	bww					322	554			5							881
Buff-white ware (fine)	ww1	bww2						36	11									47
Gritty ware	cm1a	grtw					613	1133	208	44						5		2003
Gritty ware (buff fabric)	cm1a	grtwb					88	132	8	8	1				35	7		279
Later medieval glazed redware	rw4	lmt1						20										20
Sandy cooking pot	cpj1	scp1					5	35	30	44	154				1			269
Cooking pot	(scp2)	scp2						6										6
Sandy cooking pot	cpj4	scp3					26				2							28
Cooking pot	cpj5	scp4								5								5
Later medieval glazed redware	rw1	sgw1						16										16
Medieval glazed ware	medg	sgw2						37										37
Blackware	blw	blw	7	39	10													46
Coarseware	cw	cw	17															17
Coarseware (buff fabric)	cwb	cwb	11	16		388						281						696
Trailed slipware	slpwtr	slpwtr										7	7				2	16
Yellow ware	yw	yw	33															33
Industrial slipware	indslpw	indslpw												3				3
Ceramic building material	cbm	cbm						21							35			56
	Total	Total	68	55	10	388	1054	1990	257	101	162	288	7	3	71	12	2	237

Table 2 Quantification of pottery by sherd weight (g)

9 Discussion

The most significant information to come from this archaeological investigation came from the watching brief rather than the excavation. This is largely due to the reduction of the ground surface of the area of the excavation probably in the 17th century. The service trenches, on the other hand, crossed areas not reduced in level and provided a useful glimpse into the nature of the wider settlement.

It is of considerable interest that the earliest pottery is of the 12th century, as this suggests that some form of settlement had been established here by that time. However, this was very limited evidence and the concentration of pottery in soil layers north of the area of the excavation is dominated by 14th century material. This, together with a pit and two possible stakeholes of medieval date identified nearby, indicates that very close to this area there was intensive activity in the 14th century. The evidence points to domestic use at a low status level, perhaps a villein's dwelling.

Running along the lane throughout the field south of the excavation was a medieval ditch. This clearly represents a field boundary, suggesting that the present road line had been established by the 14th century at the latest.

Within the area of the excavation several undated pits and postholes may indicate use in the medieval period. However, the probable loss of the upper parts of these features obscures their chronological relationships and any or all could be post-medieval rather than medieval. There was no clear patterning in their layout to suggest contemporaneity.

The function of a feature in the field to the north was not clearly identifiable. It may have been the vestige of a furrow, suggesting the land here was agricultural, or it may have been a boundary ditch, which could suggest either agricultural use or a house plot. The absence of any other features in this area tends to suggest an agricultural use, but the earthworks survey (Fig. 3) suggests there may be dwellings in this area. Further north again a possible posthole and possible padstone may indicate a building of unknown date. Within the limited scope of the watching brief all that can be adduced from this area is that archaeological remains survive which could, if investigated over a wider area, help elucidate the nature of the land use in this area.

The lower level of the land on which the barn sits, and where the excavation was carried out, is a reflection of probable use during the medieval period and of a period of use around the 17th century as a result of which the ground surface became lowered by at least 0.5m. This removed critical information about the earlier land use. From this time on the area was probably a yard adjacent to the barn and close to a newly-created pond to the north.

By the 18th century drainage had become a major issue in the area of the excavation. Several drain runs were laid, and other linear features probably represent wheel ruts, reflecting the wet ground conditions. The drainage continued into the twentieth century, including runs serving the now-lost buildings south of the barn which are shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884.

A 19th or early early twentieth century post built lean-to at the south-east corner of the barn appears to have been a forge, to judge from the hearth bottom, iron waste and ash and cinders covering the area.

10 Conclusions and recommendations

The excavated area east of the barn did not produce a high level of certainty regarding the use of the area as the upper levels had been removed in antiquity and as the features were largely devoid of datable material. The archaeology within this area has now been entirely removed and no future works within the footprint of the area excavated require any archaeological intervention. The low areas around the barn are likely to have a similarly truncated archaeological record.

Other areas have potentially good survival of archaeology. Of particular interest is the area just north of the pond, where it is likely that good evidence survives of at least one house plot of the medieval village. Any further groundworks outside the lowered areas should be preceded by an assessment of the potential archaeology and the formulation of an appropriate mitigation strategy.

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12 Archive

The site code is HFWS04B. The archive has been amalgamated with that from the evaluation. In total the archive consists of (numbers in brackets split out evaluation/excavation):

78 (30/48)	context sheets
9 (6/3)	trench sheets
2 (1/1)	drawing index sheets
34 (11/23)	field drawings on 7 (3/4) sheets
2 (1/1)	levels sheets
2 (1/1)	sheets survey notes
20 (6/14)	finds record sheets
8 (4/4)	photo record sheets
4 (2/2)	film of black and white photographic negatives
4 (2/2)	film of colour photographic transparencies
1	box of finds

The archive is currently held by Marches Archaeology awaiting transfer to the Potteries Museum, Hanley under accession number 2004.LH.21.

Appendix

A small group of pottery was found in Trench 1 and a brief evaluation report was written. This material was not available for the final report but a brief summary of the Trench 1 pottery is appended here. The pottery was only quantified by sherd count and was not compared with the Lichfield type series.

The overall make-up of the pottery from Trench 1 is much the same as that recovered from the dumped deposit (724) and (725), described in the main report above, and of similar date.

The pottery was mainly abraded. Pit (103) which was below the ploughsoil contained pottery of mid 13th-14th century date. The absence of gritty ware in this pit fill is unusual and could suggest that the pit fill dates to the second half of the 13th century. The ploughsoil would seem to have been formed in the later medieval period.

102 Mid 17th-early 18th c (residual 13th-15th c pottery)

Post-medieval wares

1 x post-medieval coarseware bowl rim

1 x light-on-dark slip trailed bowl base

Whiteware

3 x whiteware cooking pot body sherds

1 x whiteware jug sherd, brownish glaze

1 x whiteware body sherd, yellowish-buff fabric

Gritty ware

1 x iron-poor, everted rim jar sherd. Coarse fabric with large quartz grits

2 x iron-poor, olive glazed, body sherds, same fabric as above.

3 x salmon pink, glazed body sherds, coarse grits and streaky fabric

1 x salmon pink, bowl sherd with internal glaze, same fabric as above

1 x salmon pink body sherd, same fabric as above.

Iron-rich sandy cooking pot

5 x iron-rich, cooking pot body sherds, brown surfaces, grey core (*probably the same as fabric cpj1 in the main report*)

Iron-rich sandy glazed ware

2 x iron-rich, olive glazed body sherds, fine powdery orange fabric, grey core.

1 x iron-rich, jug rim sherd, similar form to Ford (1995, Fig 12: 56), mainly reduced but with orange surfaces, same fabric to above.

(*These sherds may be the same as fabric medg in the main report*)

103 mid 13th-14th c

Whiteware

3 x whiteware sherds, comprising two rim sherds, paralleled by Ford (1995 fig 14: 78) and one body sherd from cooking pots.

Iron-rich sandy ware

1 x iron-rich, body sherd, reduced, orange surfaces (*possibly the same as fabric scp2 in the main report*)

1 x iron-rich, body sherd, oxidised orange throughout. (*possibly the same as fabric rw1 in the main report*)

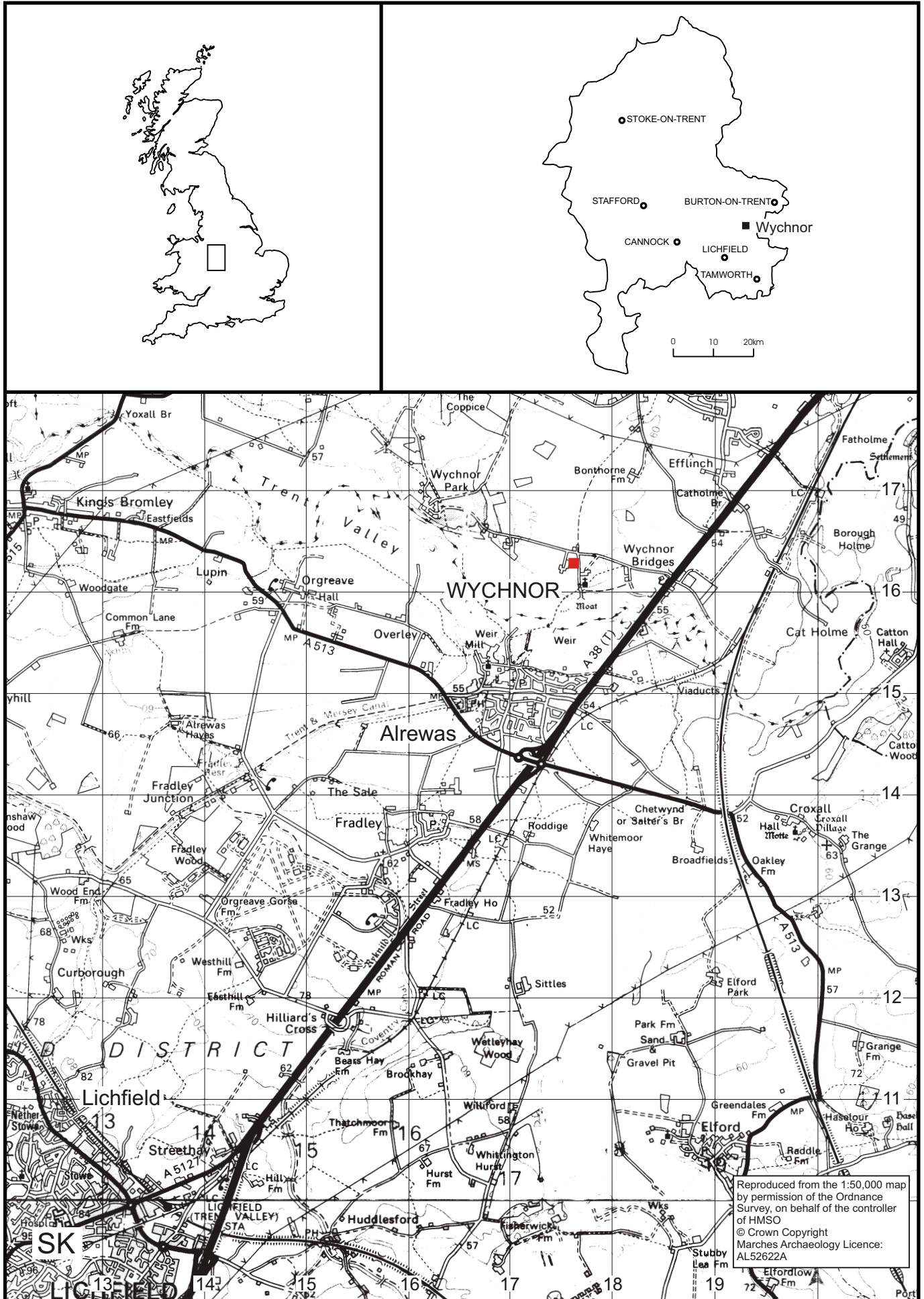
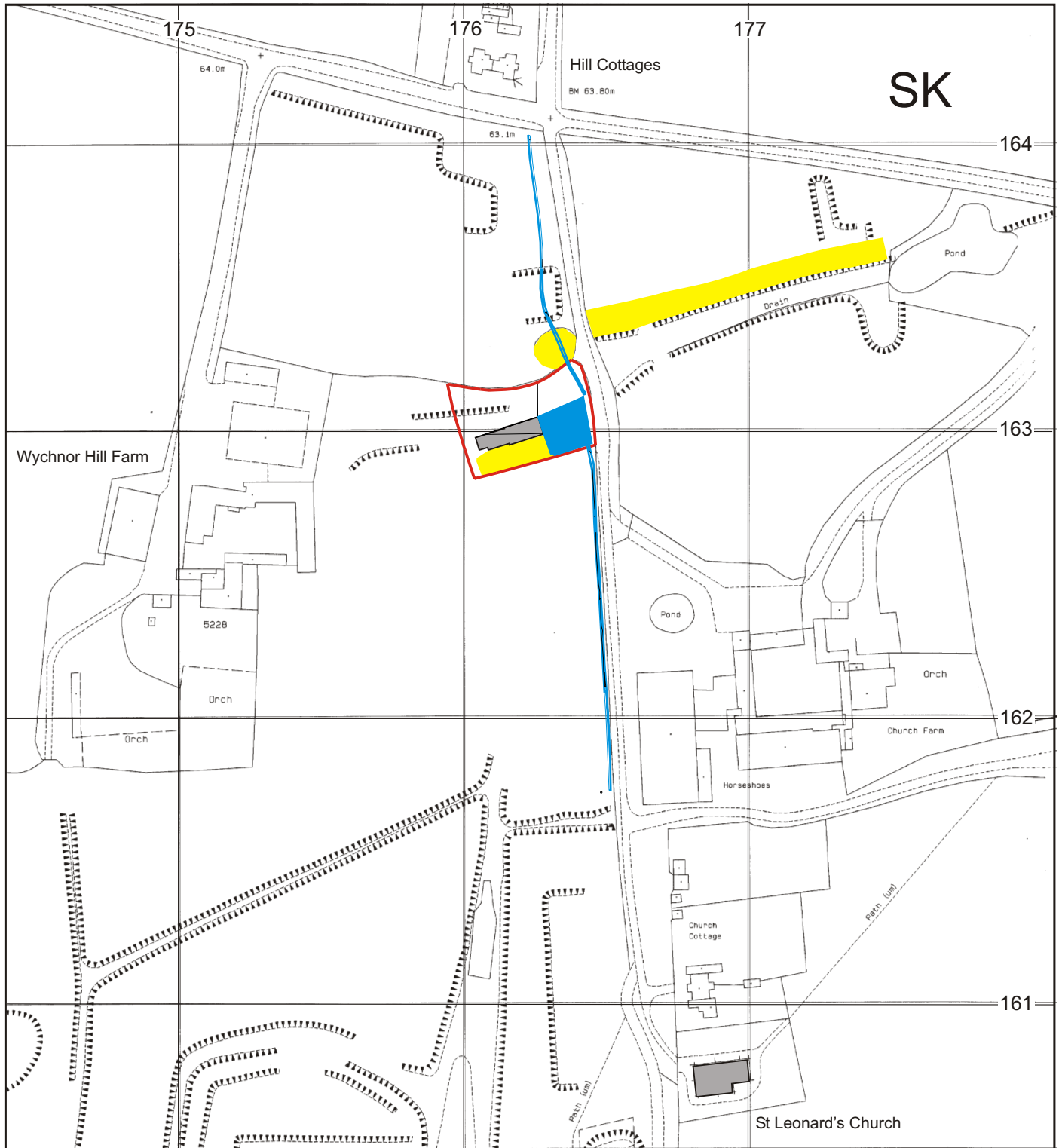


Fig. 1: Location of Wychnor
 (red square indicates site)



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Fig. 2: Site location within Wychnor (site boundary in red, Trenches 7 and 8 in blue, other areas observed in yellow)

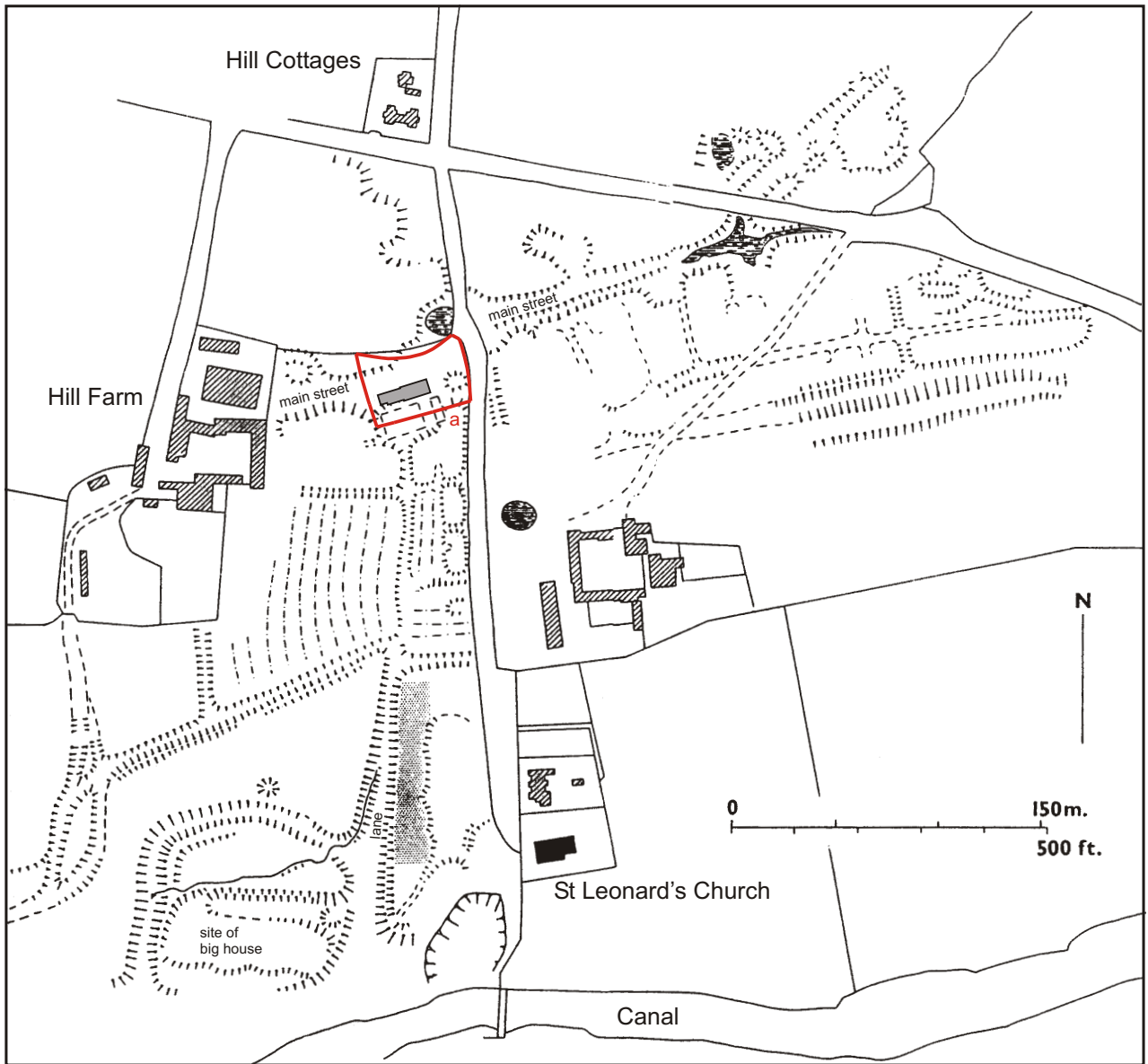


Fig. 3: Plan of earthworks surveyed by Keele University
Department of Adult and Continuing Education
(provided courtesy of Bob Meeson)

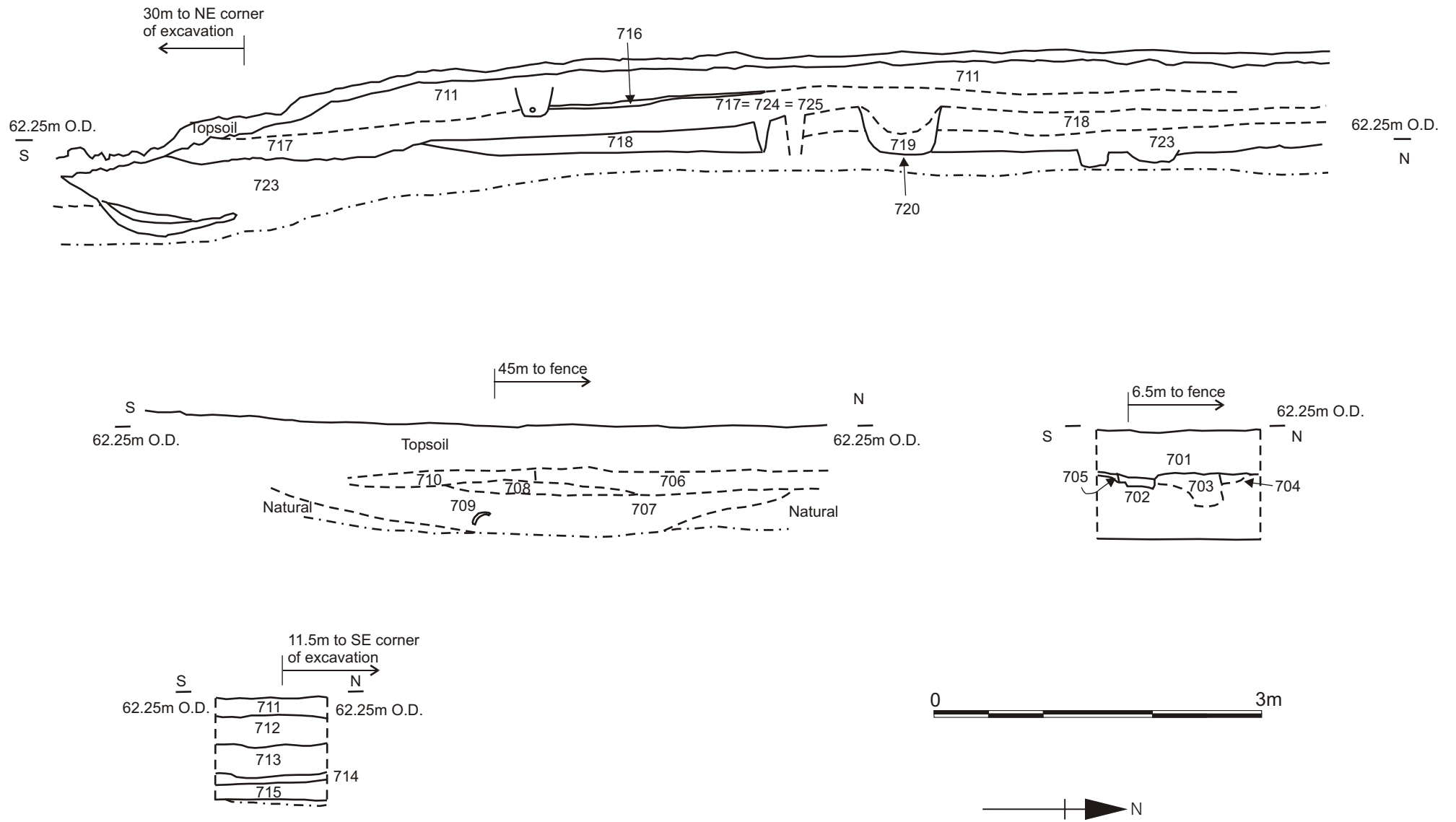


Fig. 4 Sections of Trench 7

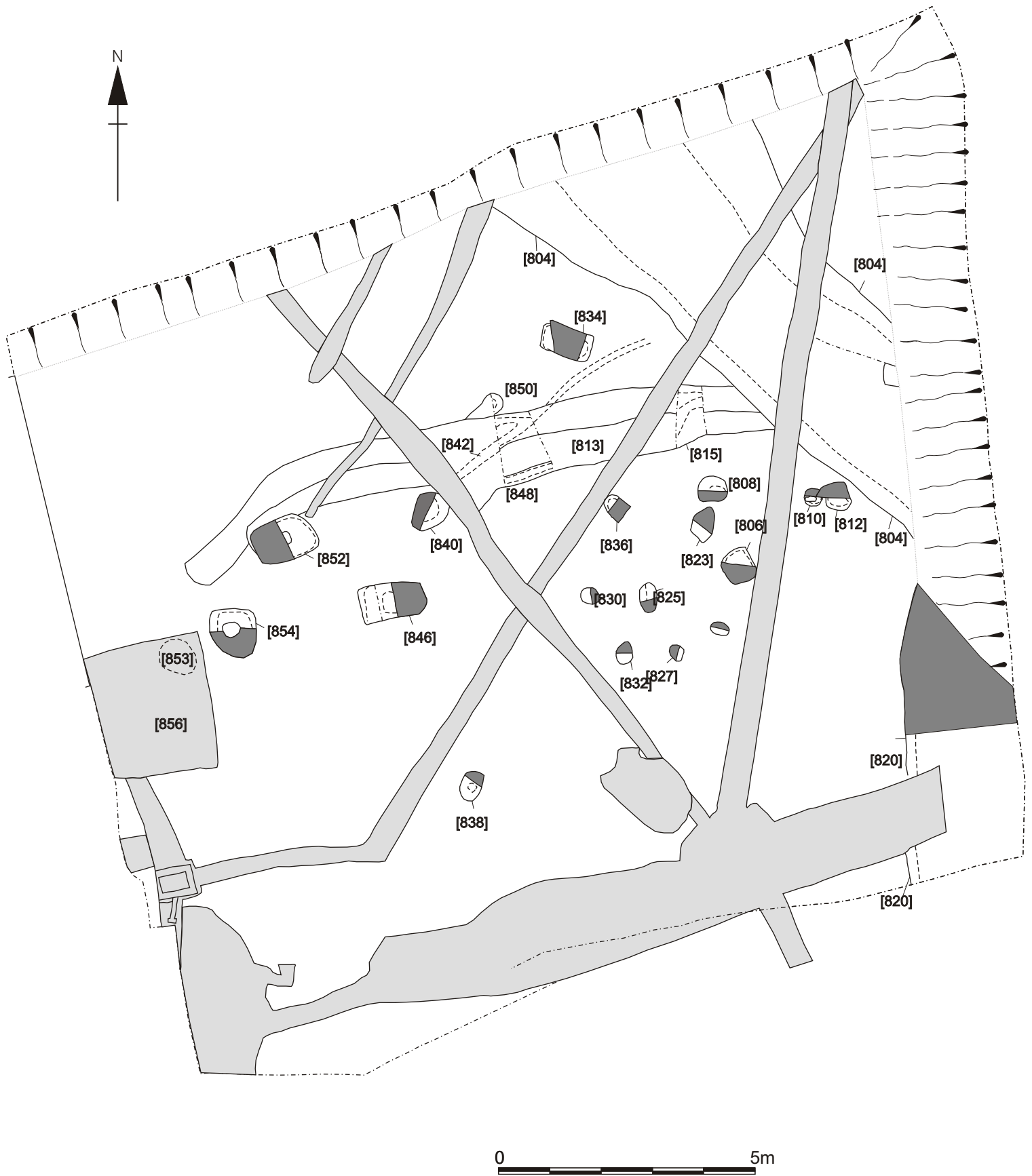


Fig. 5 Plan of Trench 8

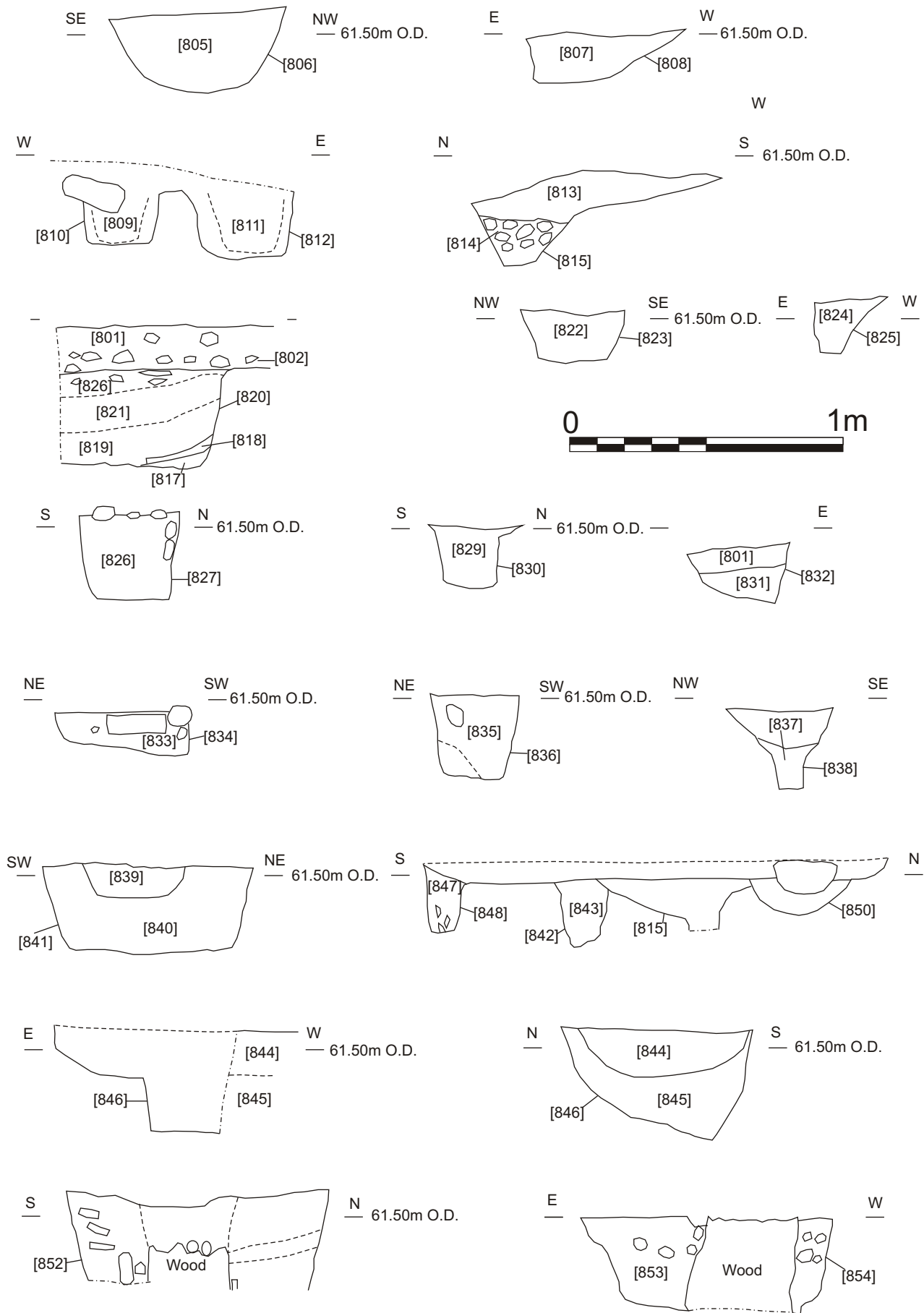


Fig. 6 Profiles of features in Trench 8

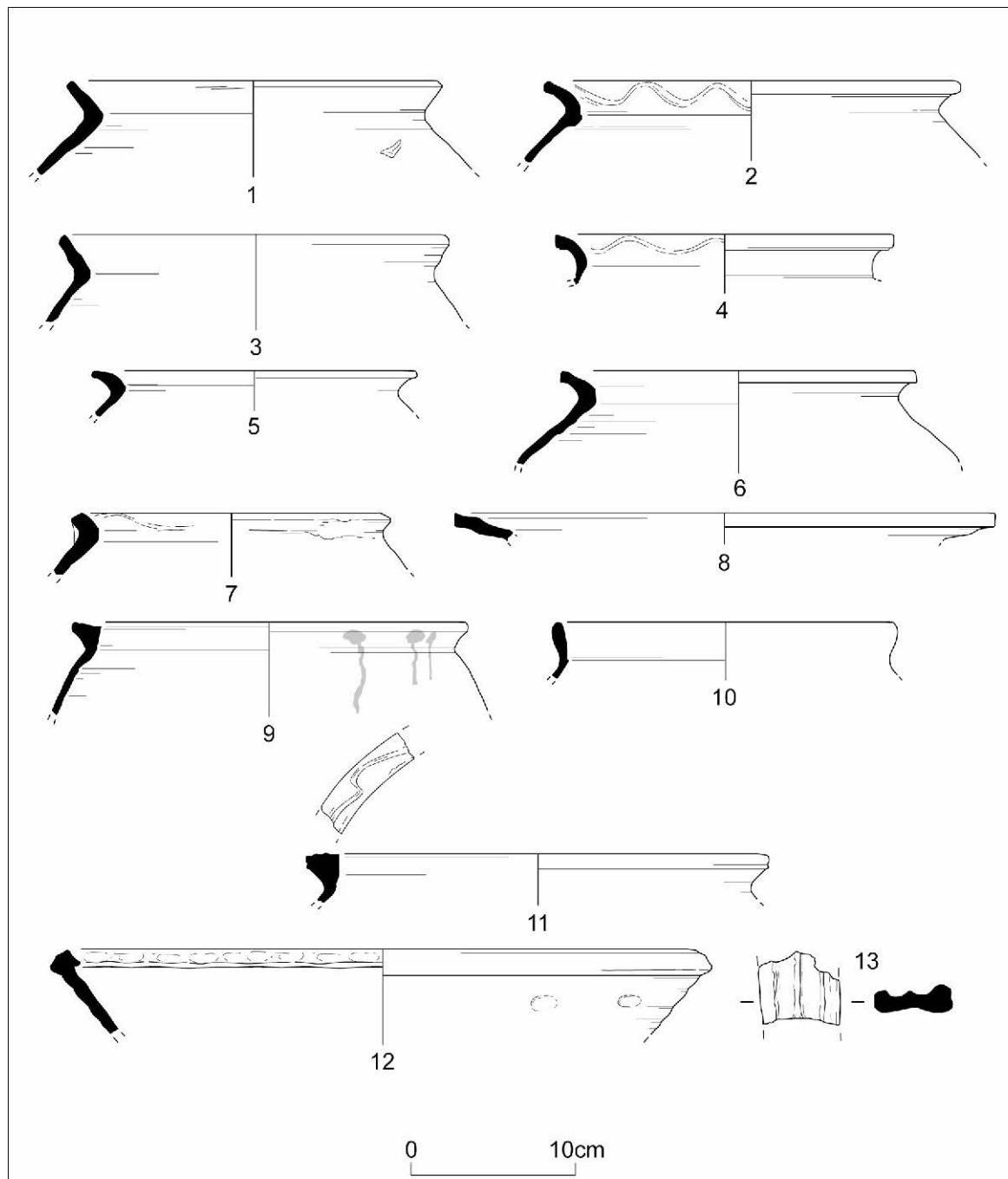


Fig. 7 Pottery from the investigation