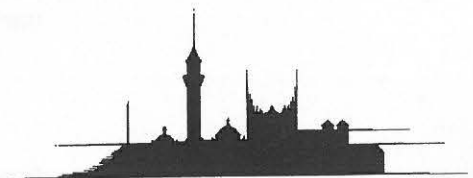


*BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY*  
*FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT*

**A1(M) Alconbury to Peterborough DBFO Scheme**

**An archaeological evaluation at Stilton golf course  
and further archaeological work at  
Tort Hill East.**

*B.U.F.A.U.*



Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
**Project No. 442**  
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**An archaeological evaluation at Stilton golf course  
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by  
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## **A1(M) Alconbury to Peterborough DBFO Scheme**

### **An archaeological evaluation at Stilton golf course and further archaeological work at Tort Hill East**

#### **Introduction**

The following report provides a preliminary statement on the results of two further archaeological investigations undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on areas which are to be affected by the A1(M) Alconbury to Peterborough road improvements. The work was commissioned by Chris Blandford associates (CBA) on behalf of Road Management Group (RMG) and was undertaken during August and September 1996. The work is in addition to the extensive excavations undertaken between February and May 1996 (BUFAU 1996).

Two sites were investigated. An evaluation was undertaken on approximately 20,000 sq m of land to be affected by a proposed borrow pit on the Stilton Golf Course (NGR TF 165885) and a further investigation was undertaken at Tort Hill East (NGR TL 172 849) following the establishment of a batching plant for the widening work on the A1(M). The full results of the two investigations will be incorporated into the final report and archive on the A1(M) excavations.

#### **Stilton Golf Course**

##### Background

The site lies to the west of the A1 and to the south of Stilton village (Fig. 1). It was thought possible that features associated with the Roman road (Ermine Street) may be found in the area threatened by the proposed borrow pit. At the time of the evaluation the land was under rough pasture and there was no evidence for any earthworks.

##### Objectives and method

The objective of the evaluation was to determine the location, extent, date, character, significance and quality of any archaeological features that might be affected by the proposed works. This was achieved by a series of eight trial trenches covering approximately 2% of the affected area (Fig. 2). Each of the trenches were 25m long and 1.8m wide. The topsoil and subsoil in each trench was removed by machine in spits of 0.2m to a depth of up to 1m to expose the natural clay. The surface of the natural clay was cleaned to define any archaeological features present. Test pits, up to 4m deep, were excavated in four of these trial trenches to investigate the depth of these natural clay deposits.

## Results

Trench A - A dark-grey clay natural (1003) was recorded in the test pit at a depth of 3m below the present ground surface.. This was overlain by 2.2m of brown clay (1002) and 0.4m of buff brown subsoil/clay (1001). No features were identified cutting any of these deposits. The subsoil was overlain by approximately 0.2m of topsoil (1000).

Trench B - The natural clay (1008) was exposed at a depth of 1m. This was cut by two features, a tree root bowl (F11) and a modern field drain (F12). No significant archaeological features were recorded.

Trench C - Only one feature, a modern land drain, was observed cutting the natural clays which was exposed at a depth of 0.8m.

Trench D - The natural clay was exposed at a depth of 0.8m. A shallow linear feature (F27), 1.2m wide and 0.2m deep was recorded at the eastern end of the trench. No finds were recovered from the excavated fill. It seems probable that this ditch is the remains of a former field boundary.

Trenches E-G - A sequence of natural clays similar to that recorded in Trench A was recorded in all of these trenches. The only features recorded were modern land drains in Trenches E and H.

## **Tort Hill East: Batching Plant**

### Background

The area around Tort Hill, Sawtry has produced considerable evidence for Roman and pre-Roman archaeology. The remains of a suspected Romano-British settlement were uncovered to the east of Sawtry village in 1939 during a previous phase of road improvements (Garood 1940 and 1947). Further surface finds have been collected during fieldwalking within the fields alongside the road to the north. Archaeological evaluations on either side of the road were undertaken by Cambridgeshire County Council in 1993 (Welsh 1994) and were followed by excavations by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in March and April 1996 (BUFAU 1996). Further archaeological features and deposits were identified during the removal of topsoil for the site of a batching plant for the widening works on the A1(M). Evidence was recorded at three locations approximately 200m to the south of the site of the excavation on the east side of the road (Fig 4). The design and siting of the batching plant was modified to take account of these archaeological features and the topsoil was replaced over the exposed archaeology. However, parts of these areas of archaeology were still threatened by the construction of a slip road for the proposed new junction

## Objectives and method

The principal aim of the investigation was to record a sample of those features threatened by the proposed road construction and to define and characterise those areas which will remain unaffected. Three trenches of varying lengths were excavated, one in each of the three areas defined during the original topsoil removal. The redeposited topsoil was removed by machine and the underlying clay surfaces were cleaned to define the areas and features of archaeological interest.

## Results

Trench A (Fig 5) - 8m long by 2.6m wide. Two features were recorded cutting the clay natural; a linear ditch orientated east-west (F800) and a pit (F801). The ditch was sectioned in three locations (A-C). There was evidence for a recut in the easternmost of these sections (Section C). The fills of the primary cut consisted of grey-orange, silty-clays (8011/8012). A bronze dagger and Romano-British pottery were recovered from the primary fill (8011). The silty fills of the recut (8001-2, 8005, 8007-10) were darker in colour and contained fragments of mid-late Antonine pottery (2nd century AD). The irregular-shaped pit (F801) was up to 1m across and 0.5m deep. It was filled by grey brown sandy-silt (8003-4) and also contained Romano-British pottery.

Trench B (Fig 6) - 50m long x 3m wide. A single feature was recorded; a linear alignment of stone and concrete blocks (F900), possibly the remains of a wall of Roman date. Although no cut for this feature could be identified, the blocks appeared to be bedded on a layer of sand and clay. A few fragments of Romano-British pottery and animal bone were recovered from the structure.

Trench C - 25m long x 3m wide. No features of archaeological interest were identified despite extensive cleaning. Several small, abraded fragments of Romano-British pottery and tile were recovered from the base of the topsoil.

## **Discussion**

No evidence of Roman activity was recorded during the evaluation at Stilton golf course. However, the archaeological features recorded at the Tort Hill East Batching Plant site will provide useful information to complement the results from the main area of excavation to the north. It seems possible that the substantial ditch recorded in Trench A may represent the boundary of a property fronting onto Ermine Street. Similar features, thought to be property boundaries were recorded in the main area of excavation (BUFAU 1996, 13-15). The possible structural remains in Trench B might relate to the very fragmentary remnants of a Roman building, although the evidence was by no means conclusive.

## Acknowledgements

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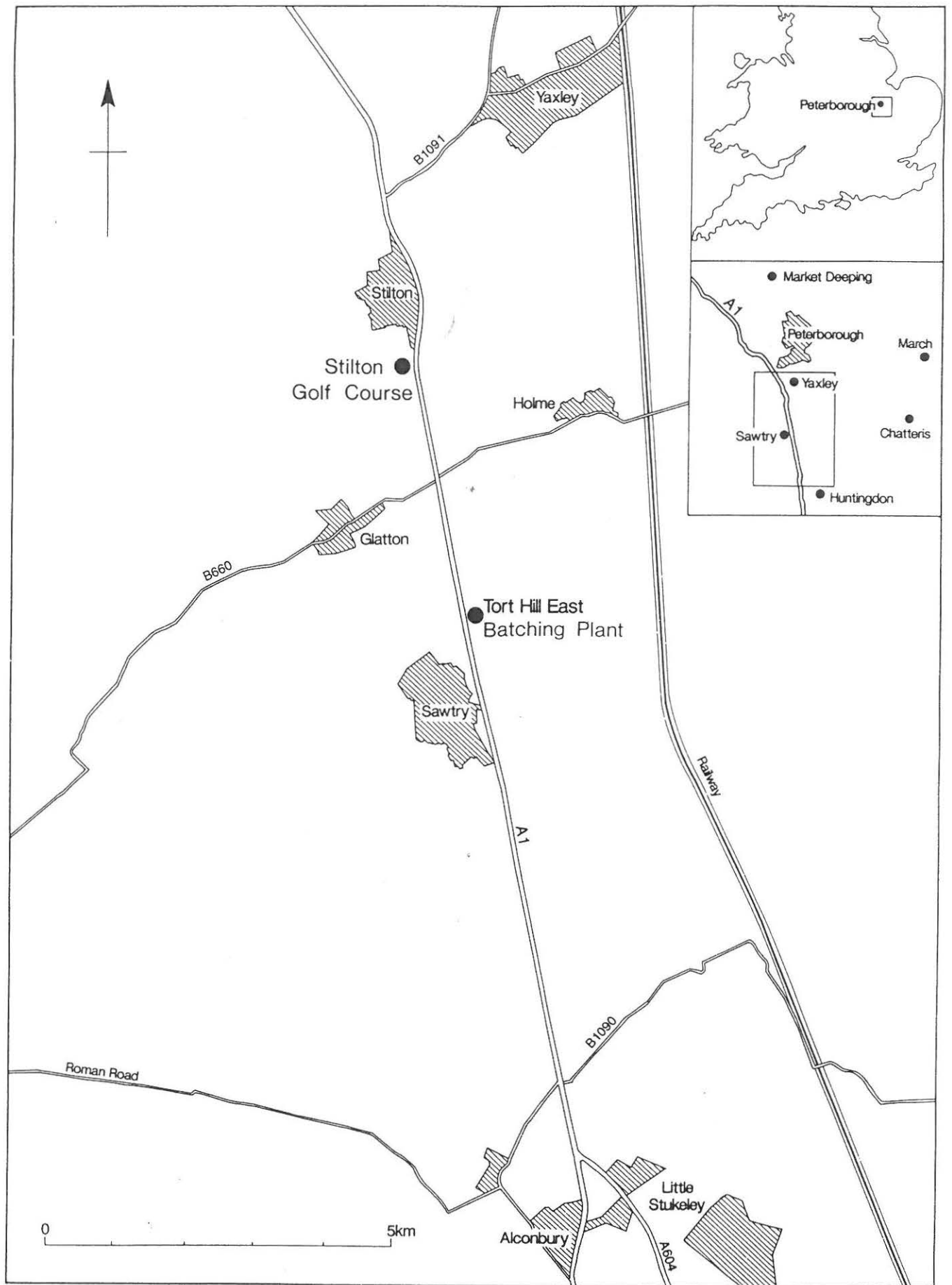


Fig.1

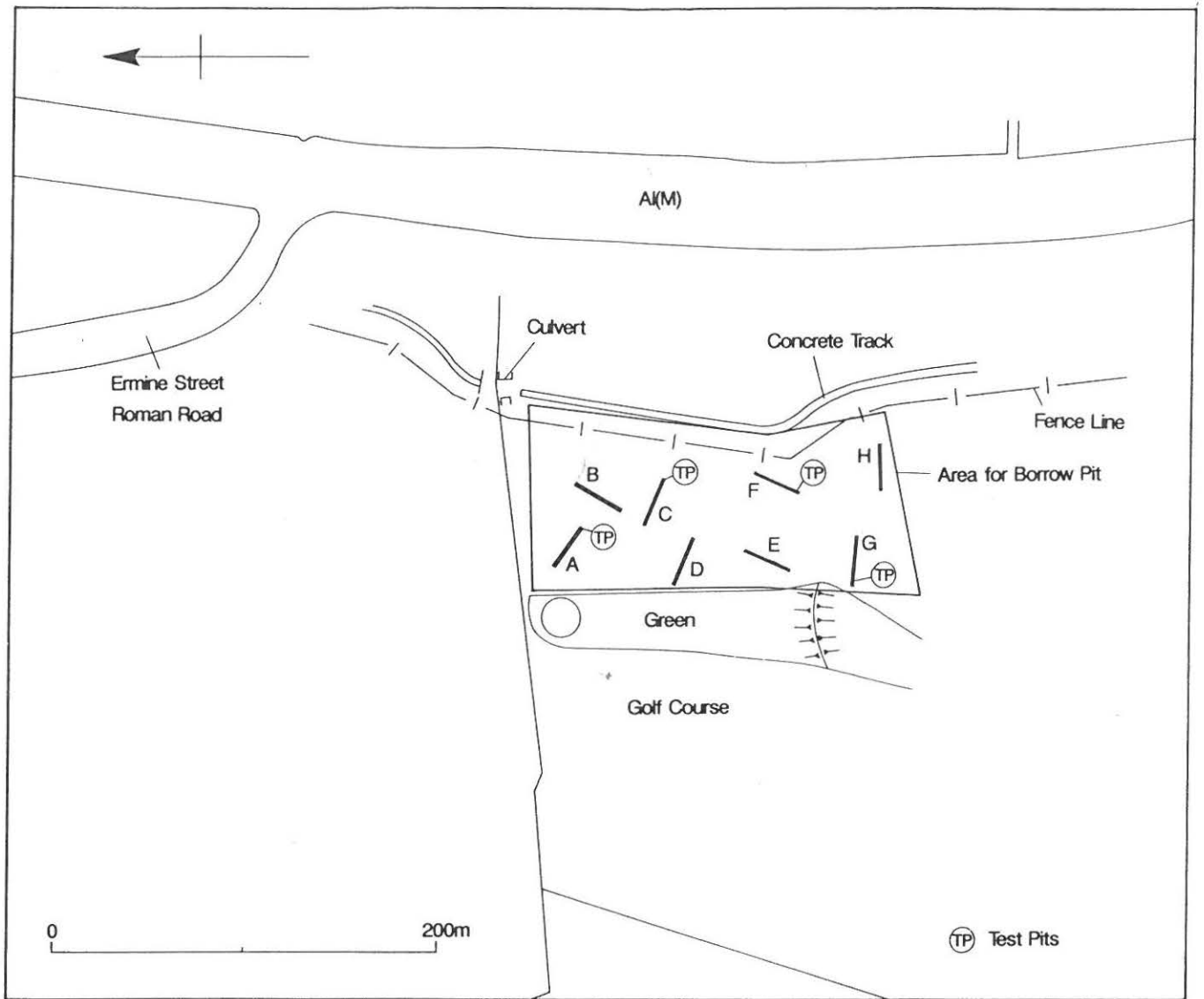


Fig. 2 Stilton Golf Course - trench location



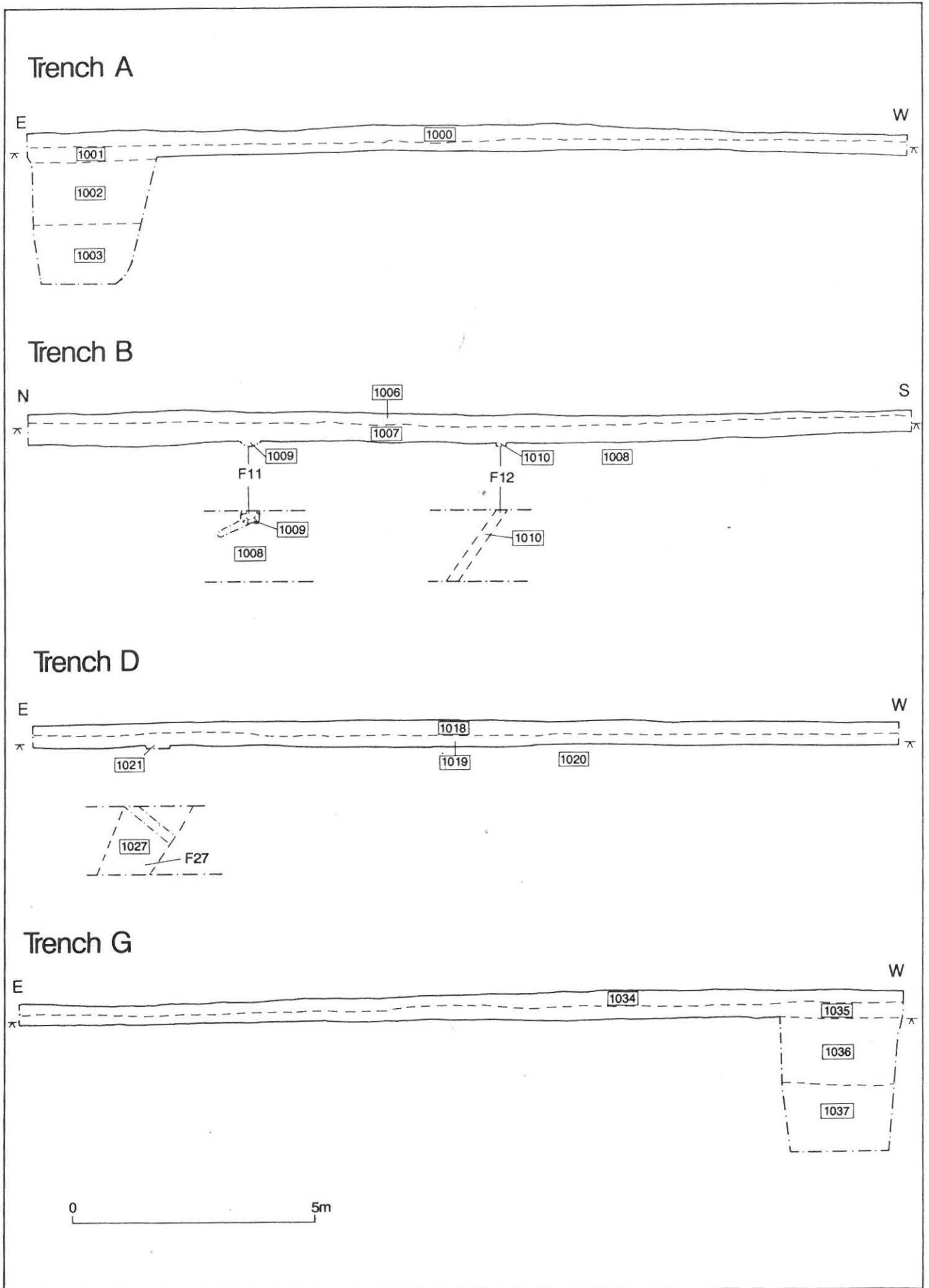


Fig. 3 Stilton Golf Course - sections

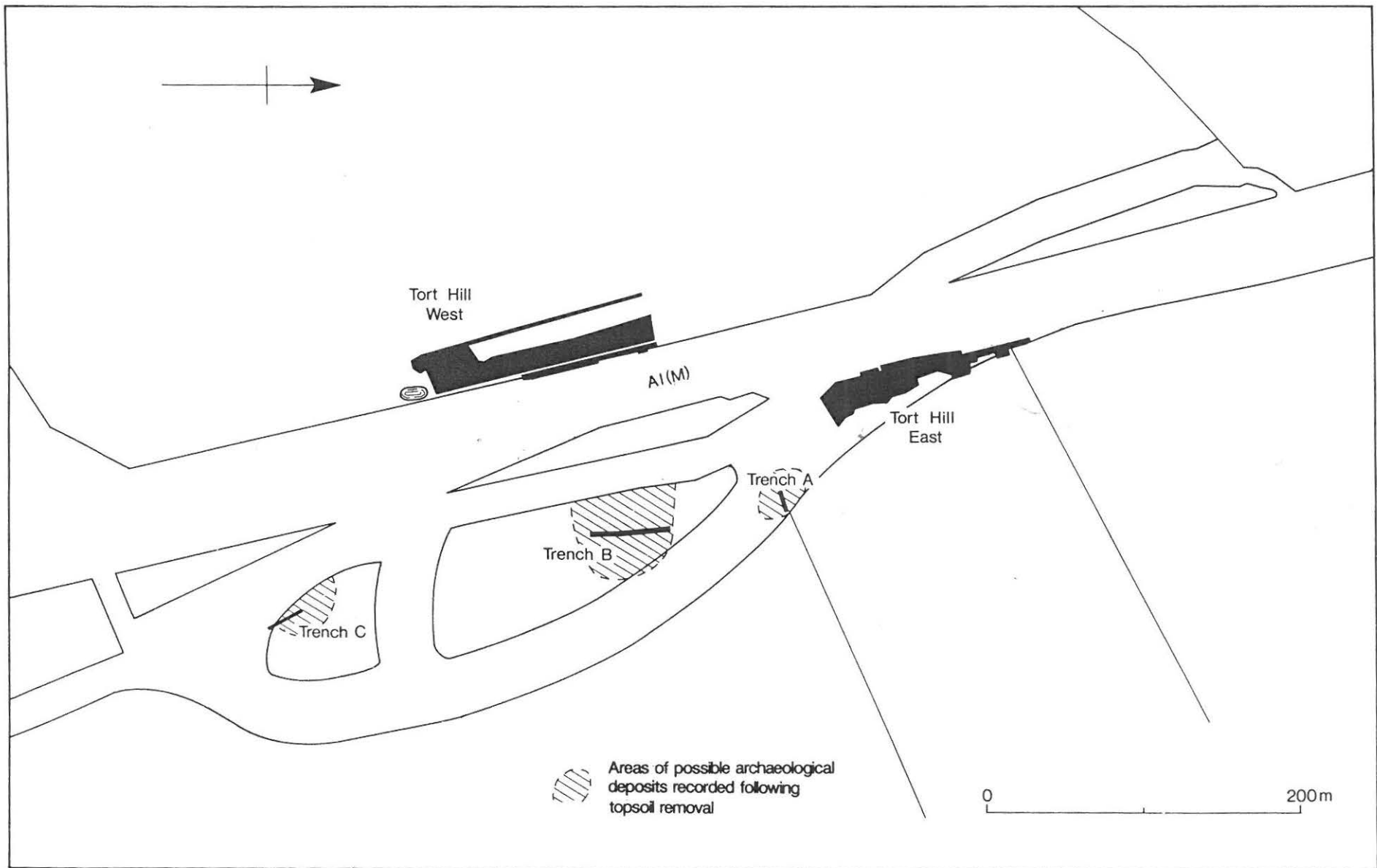


Fig. 4 Tort Hill East Batching Plant - trench locations

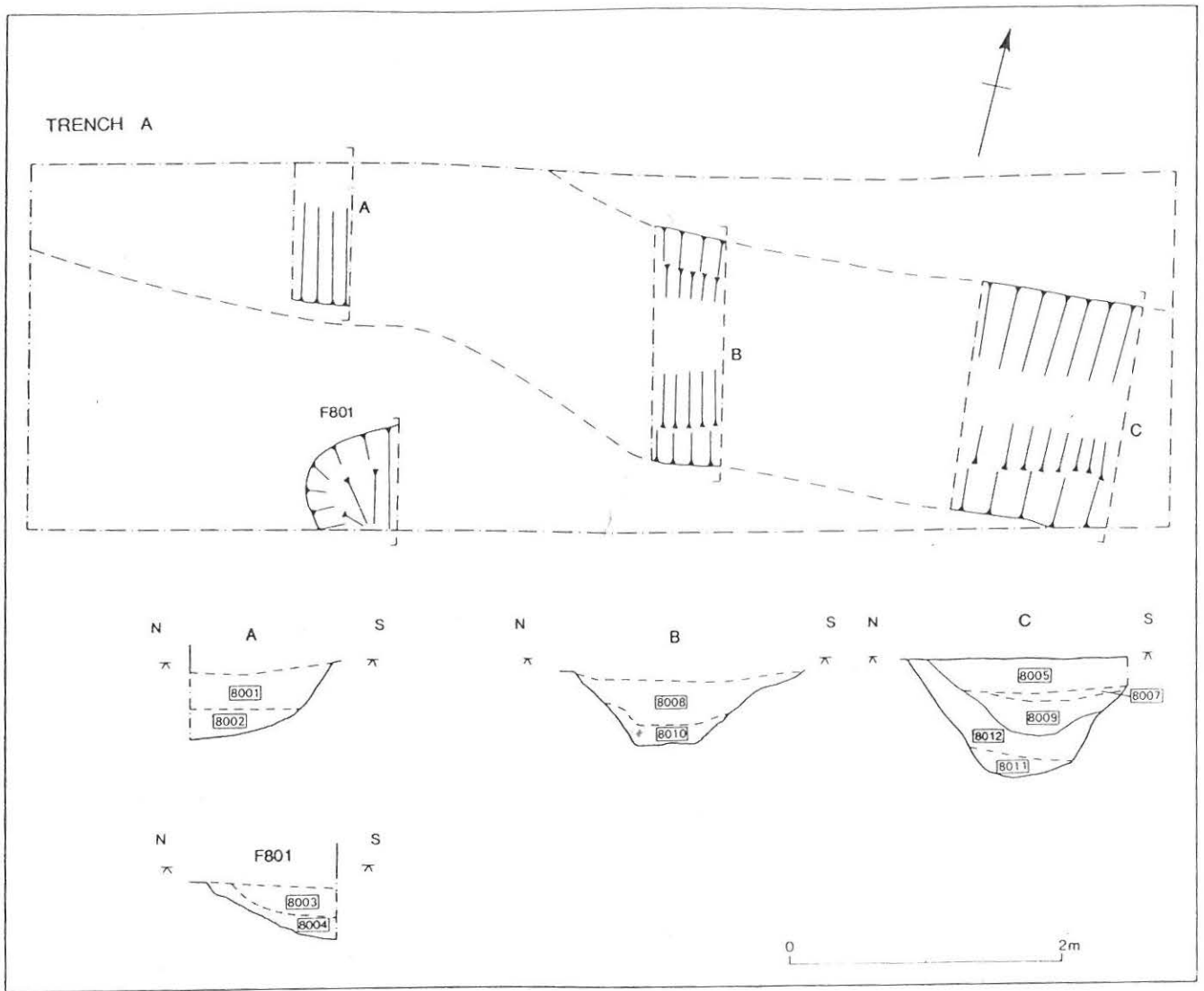


Fig. 5 Tort Hill East Batching Plant - Trench A

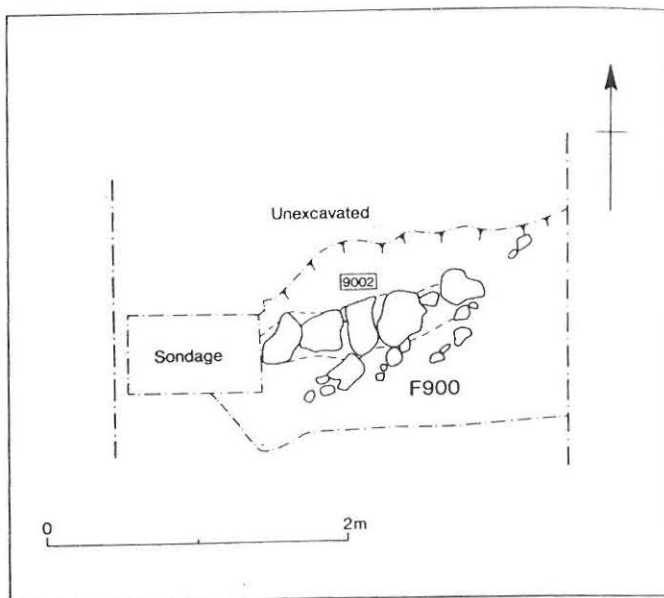


Fig. 6 Tort Hill East Batching Plant - part of Trench B