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**Coventry outer ring main pipeline:
an archaeological watching brief 2002**

By

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1.0 Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) at three sites, during the construction of the Coventry outer ring main pipeline. The work was commissioned by Severn Trent Water Limited and the fieldwork was carried out between April and October 2002.

The watching brief followed a previous archaeological desk-based assessment of the route of the pipeline by BUFAU. The desk-based assessment identified three sites, along the route of the pipeline where there was potential for the existence of archaeological remains and recommended that an archaeological watching brief should be carried out at these sites. The watching brief was undertaken at the sites during groundworks for the construction of the pipeline.

At one site (Area 1, NGR SP 3852 7724), adjacent to the A46 Coventry bypass road and southeast of Binley Industrial Estate, a Romano-British pottery scatter and an adjacent cropmarked enclosure of possible Iron Age date were recorded, in the desk-based assessment, close to the route of the pipeline. Three archaeological features, all of which were of probable Romano-British date, were revealed here during the watching brief. The features consisted of a linear gully, a small pit and another possible linear feature. Two of these features contained sherds of Romano-British pottery. The topsoil also contained sherds of Romano-British pottery, which is probably the artefact scatter recorded previously during the construction of the A46 Coventry bypass road (Sites and Monuments Record nos. C3945/ W8279). No significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered at the other two sites.

2.0 Introduction

This report outlines the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out during groundworks for the construction of a water pipeline, which is part of Coventry outer ring main scheme. Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) was commissioned to carry out the watching brief by Severn Trent Water Limited following recommendations made as part of an archaeological desk-based assessment of the pipeline route (Ramsey 2001). The work was carried out between April and October 2002 and was in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by BUFAU (BUFAU 2001) and followed the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001).

3.0 Site location and description

The route of the pipeline lies to the southeast of Coventry and is approximately 4.4 km in length (Fig. 1). The northeastern end of the pipeline joins to an existing service at Brandon Road, Binley Woods (NGR SP 3880 7765) adjacent to the A46/ A428

roundabout. From this point the route of the pipeline runs to the southwest through open countryside parallel with the A46 road for one kilometre, its course then turns to the south, towards the London -Birmingham railway line. Between the railway line and the A45 road, the pipeline is laid within the roadway of Brandon Lane. The pipeline runs from the A45 through a field to a new pumping station at Siskin Drive (NGR SP3655 7525), near to Coventry Airport. The three sites where the watching brief was carried out were: Area 1, adjacent to the A46 Coventry bypass road and southeast of Binley Industrial Estate (centred on NGR SP 3852 7724); Area 2, west of Piles Coppice (centred on NGR SP 3830 7680) and Area 3, between the A45 and Siskin Drive (centred on NGR SP 3665 7585). All the sites were grassed fields at the time the fieldwork took place. The underlying geology of the pipeline route is mainly Mercia Mudstone and river gravels.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

The desk-based assessment (Ramsey 2001) carried out prior to the watching brief gives the detailed archaeological and historical background and only a summary is provided here. The desk-based assessment indicated there was potential for significant archaeological remains to exist along the pipeline route, at three sites in particular (Fig. 2, Areas 1-3). Area 1 is adjacent to the location of a Romano-British pottery scatter (Sites and Monuments Record nos. C3945 and W8279) identified during the construction of the A46 Coventry bypass road. Also near to Area 1 is the site of a cropmarked enclosure of probable Iron Age date (Sites and Monuments Record no. W7179), located north of Piles Coppice. This enclosure lies to the south of the pipeline route, however, features associated with it were thought likely to extend into the pipeline route. Area 2 is close to an earthwork (Sites and Monuments Record no. W8763) of possible medieval, or earlier, date surrounding Piles Coppice, which is possibly of Anglo-Saxon origin. Area 3 is situated in a field where earthworks were identified during the walkover survey, carried out as part of the desk-based assessment, which may relate to the medieval mill at Finford Mill (Sites and Monuments Record no. C9375).

5.0 Aims and methodology

The watching brief was carried out at Areas 1-3 (Fig. 2), along the route of the pipeline, which were highlighted as areas of archaeological potential. The objective of the monitoring was to identify and record archaeological features or deposits revealed during groundworks at these sites. The watching brief was maintained during topsoil stripping along the pipeline corridor, which was approximately 10m wide, and during the excavation of the pipe trench, approximately 1m wide and 1.5-1.7m deep, at the locations mentioned above. Excavation was carried out using a tracked 360 degree excavator.

Subsequent hand excavation was carried out where archaeological deposits were encountered or suspected. A full record of stratigraphic sequences, supplemented by scale drawings and photographs, was made. Contexts and features were recorded using *pro-forma* context and feature record cards; these records together with the recovered artefacts, form the site archive which is currently stored at BUFAU. Subject

to the approval of the landowner the site archive will be deposited with an appropriate repository within a reasonable time, after the completion of the project.

6.0 Results (Fig. 2)

6.1 Area 1 (Fig. 3)

The natural subsoil was a red-brown compact sand (1003), 0.45m below the modern ground surface. This was overlain, in places, by a layer of natural clayey red-brown sandy silt (1002), 0.05m deep. Layer 1002 was sealed by a yellow-brown clayey sandy silt (1001), 0.20m deep, possibly an alluvial deposit.

Three negative features cut the subsoil layer 1001. An irregular pit (F100; Fig. 4, Plate 2), extended beyond the edge of excavation on the east side of the site. Its entire shape, in plan, was not fully visible. Pit F100 was at least 0.50m wide and 0.25m deep, with a 'V' -shaped profile which was often very irregular and undercut in places. It was filled with a grey-brown sandy silt with occasional lenses of red clay (1005) and some charcoal flecks and contained sherds of Romano-British pottery. A shallow linear gully (F101; Fig. 4, Plate 3), aligned approximately east-west, appeared to be cut by pit F100. F101 was at least 1.20m long, 0.20m wide and 0.06m deep, with a bowl shaped profile. It was filled with a grey-brown sandy silt (1006) which contained a fragment of worked stone. The relationship between F101 and F100 was not clear, although F100 probably cut F101. Several sherds of Romano-British pottery and a piece of undated tile were recovered during manual cleaning of the interface (1004) between the 1005 and 1006 and the overlying topsoil (1000).

A possible northeast-southwest orientated linear feature (F102, Plate 4) was located close to F100 and F101. The dimensions and shape of this feature are unclear as it was only seen during the excavation of the pipe trench. It was visible in section only and its full profile was not ascertained. F102 was probably 2-3m wide and at least 0.60m deep and was filled with a grey-brown pebbly sandy silt (1007) which contained one sherd of Romano-British pottery.

The northern 350m of Area 1 was heavily disturbed. The natural subsoil was not reached and the earliest layer recorded was a mixed layer of sand and clay (1008, Plate 1), at least 1.40m deep, extending beyond the limit of excavation. Information from local sources suggests that this part of the field was quarried for material which was used to build an embankment for the adjacent A46 dual carriageway in the early 1990's. Overlying layers 1001 and 1008 was the topsoil (1000), 0.20m deep, containing worked flints, sherds of Romano-British and post-medieval pottery, ceramic tile, glass, a copper alloy disc and a fragment of possible worked stone.

6.2 Area 2

The natural subsoil was not reached in Area 2. The earliest layer encountered was a very mixed black silty matrix containing, amongst other materials, building rubble, plastic, car parts, clothing and occasional lenses of clean sand or clay (2001), located 0.5m below the modern ground surface. Layer 2001 extended beyond the limit of excavation and was overlain by the topsoil (2000), 0.5m deep.

This area appeared to have been heavily disturbed and backfilled recently and consequently no archaeological features were revealed here.

6.3 Area 3

The earliest natural layer (3003) consisted of a light brown silty sand and gravel, 1.10m below the modern ground surface, which extended beyond the limit of excavation. This was overlain by another natural subsoil layer of grey-brown clayey silty sand and gravel (3002), 0.10m deep. Layer 3002 was sealed by the latest natural subsoil layer, an orange-brown clayey silty gravel layer (3001), 0.50m deep. Layer 3001 was sealed by topsoil (3000), 0.50m deep. No archaeological features were visible.

7.0 The Finds

7.1 *Flint* by Lynne Bevan

Finds of humanly-struck flint comprised three flakes and three struck chunks, all of which were made from a grey to brown pebble flint from a secondary source, probably local river gravels. None of this material was chronologically diagnostic, beyond a generally later prehistoric, probable Bronze Age, date.

7.2 *Pottery* by Annette Hancocks

All the finds were recovered from Area 1. A total of fifteen Severn Valley reduced ware body sherds (62g) of 2nd to 4th century AD date were recovered from the fill of F100 (1005). A single sherd of Severn Valley reduced ware of 2nd to 4th century AD date was recovered from the fill of F102 (1007). The pottery recovered from manual cleaning over F100 and F101 (1004) comprised mainly of reduced Severn Valley greywares dating from the 2nd to 4th centuries AD and a small quantity of whitewares and oxidised wares.

Twenty-three sherds (185g) of Romano-British pottery was recovered from the topsoil (1000) dating from the 2nd to 4th centuries AD. The material included reduced and oxidised Severn Valley wares, a rim from a BB1 storage jar and three oxidised body sherds. In addition, four sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from the topsoil (1000). This material included a small base angle and an undiagnostic rim form and is of 18th or 19th century date. It is probably consistent with manuring scatters.

7.3 *Other finds*

The other finds comprised of post-medieval vessel glass, two fragments of post-medieval tile, an undated fragment of tile, an undated copper alloy disc and two fragments of worked stone. All of these finds were recovered from the topsoil (1000) or a cleaning layer with the exception of a fragment of millstone grit stone from 1006 (F101), which is probably part of a quernstone.

Table 1: finds quantification

Context	1000	1004	1005	1006	1007	total
Feature			F 100	F 101	F 102	
Romano-British pottery	23 (185g)	36 (370g)	15 (62g)	-	1 (3g)	75 (620g)
Post-medieval pottery	4 (44g)	-	-	-	-	4 (44g)
Worked stone	1 (174g)	-	-	1 (223g)	-	2 (397g)
Flint	7 (134g)	-	-	-	-	7 (134g)
Ceramic tile	2 (11g)	1 (1g)	-	-	-	3 (12g)
Copper alloy	1 (1g)	-	-	-	-	1 (1g)
Vessel glass	2 (41g)	-	-	-	-	2 (41g)

8.0 Discussion

The only significant archaeological features or deposits recorded during the watching brief were located in Area 1. The majority of the north part of the site had been disturbed, probably by recent quarrying, to a depth of at least 1.4m. The natural subsoil, in the undisturbed south part of Area 1, was overlain by a silty deposit (1001) which may be alluvial in origin. Three shallow negative features (F100-F102) probably dating from the second to fourth centuries AD were located in the undisturbed south part of Area 1, cutting layer 1001. The function of these features is unclear, however their presence suggests further Romano-British features may survive at this location, associated with the Romano-British pottery scatter (Sites and Monuments Record nos. C3945 and W8279) which was recorded previously during the construction of the A46 Coventry bypass. Evidence of this pottery scatter was found in the undisturbed south part of Area 1, where the topsoil contained a relatively large amount of Roman-British pottery, dating from the second to fourth centuries AD. The pottery scatter appears to be associated with the archaeological features below the topsoil, which may have been disturbed by previous ploughing of the site. No evidence of features or deposits associated with the cropmarked enclosure of probable Iron Age date (Sites and Monuments Record no. W7179), located north of Piles Coppice, was found. The enclosure is outside the pipeline route, and it is possible that associated features do not extend into the pipeline route.

In Area 2 the natural subsoil was not encountered and the nature of the deposits here indicate the site had been used as a rubbish disposal site until very recently. No archaeological features or deposits associated with the possible medieval earthwork (Sites and Monuments Record no. W8763), surrounding Piles Coppice, were recorded.

No archaeological features or deposits were observed in Area 3 and no remains relating to the medieval mill at Finford Mill were observed. The mill site is approximately 200m to the east of the pipeline and features relating to it may not have extended into the pipeline route.

9.0 Acknowledgements

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10.0 References

- BUFAU 2001 *Written Scheme of Investigation, Archaeological Desk-based Assessment and Watching Brief, Coventry Outer Ring Main*
- Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief*. Institute of Field Archaeologists
- Ramsey E. 2001 *Coventry Outer Ring Main, West Midlands: Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment*. BUFAU Report 861

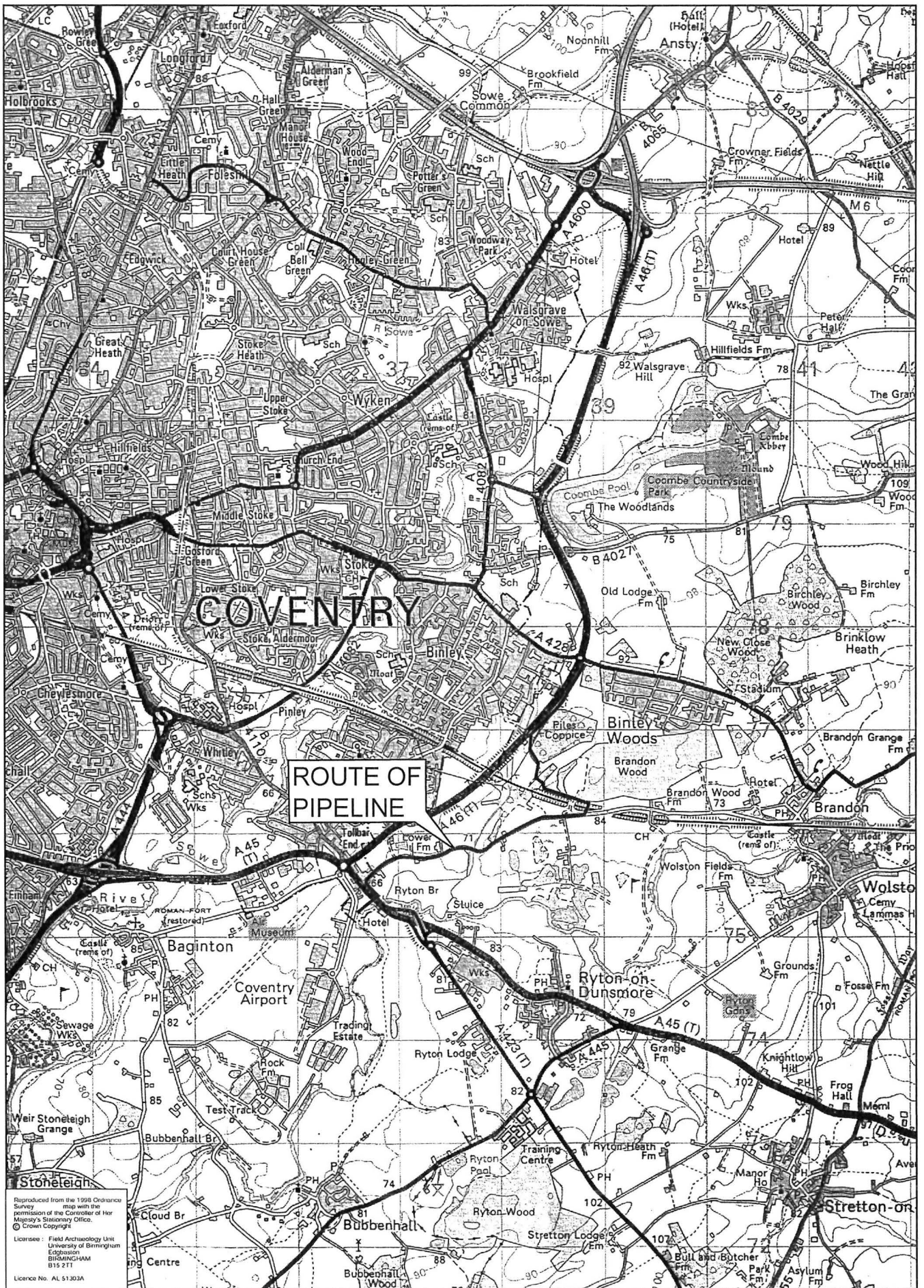


Figure 1

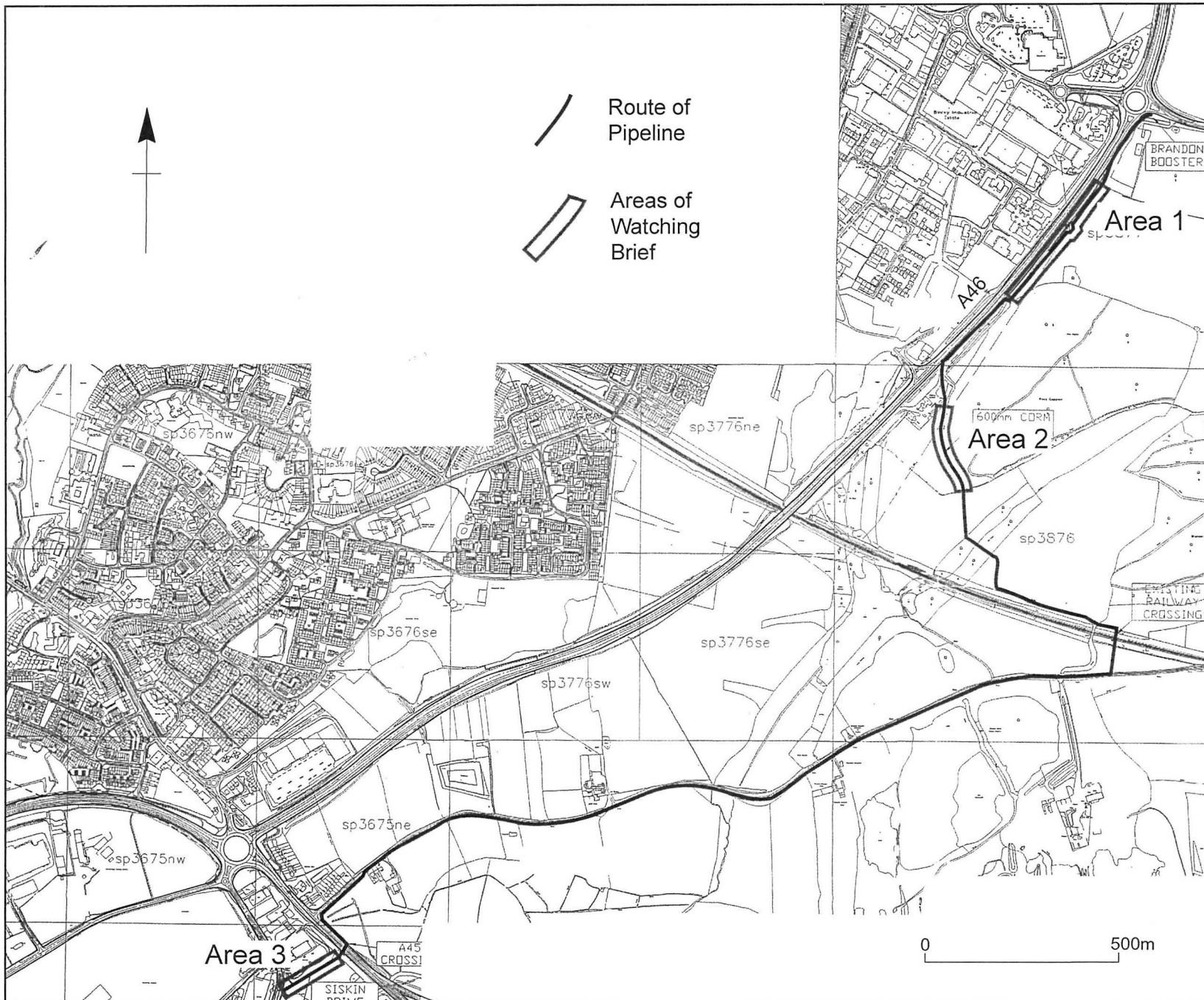


Figure 2

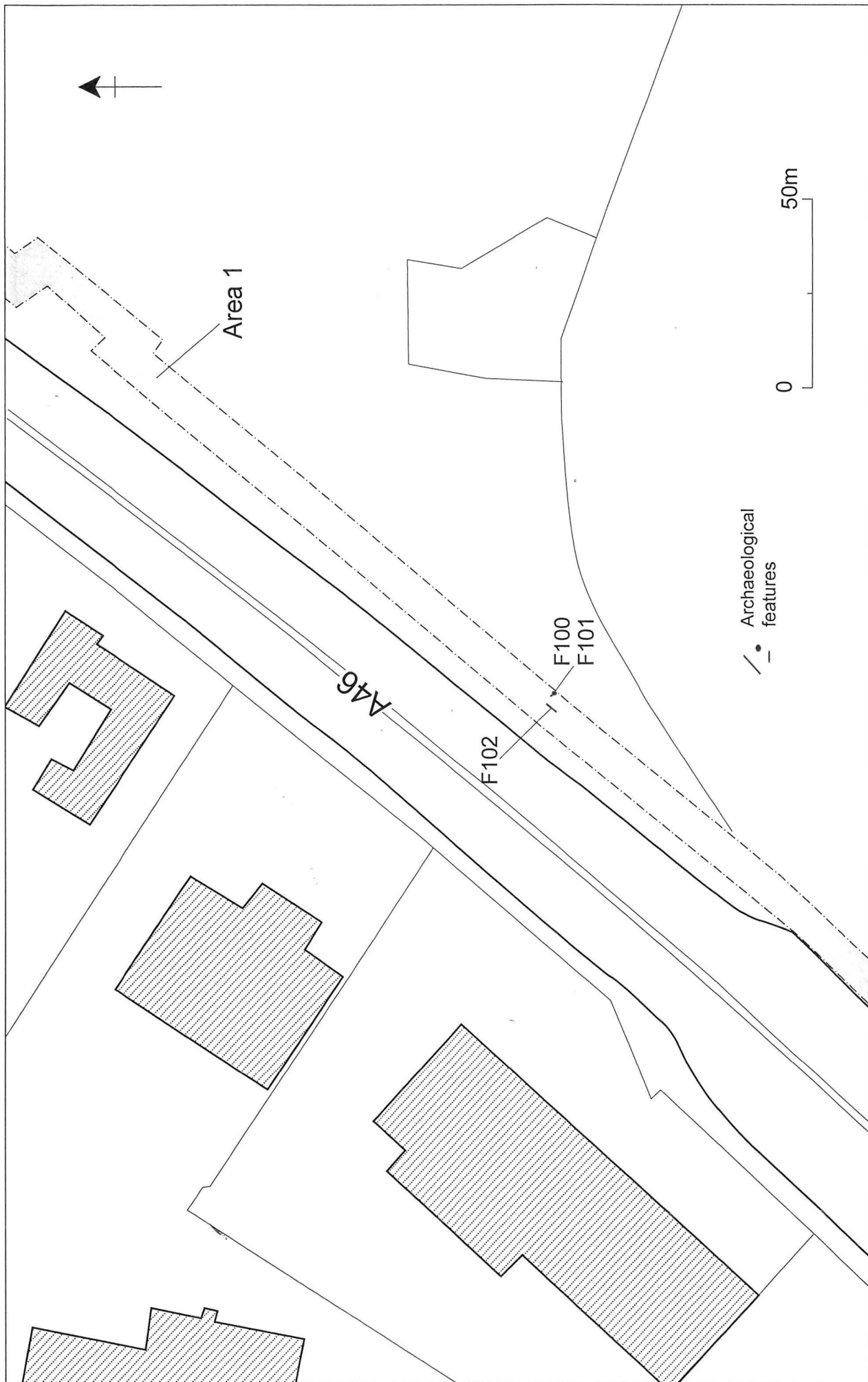


Figure 3

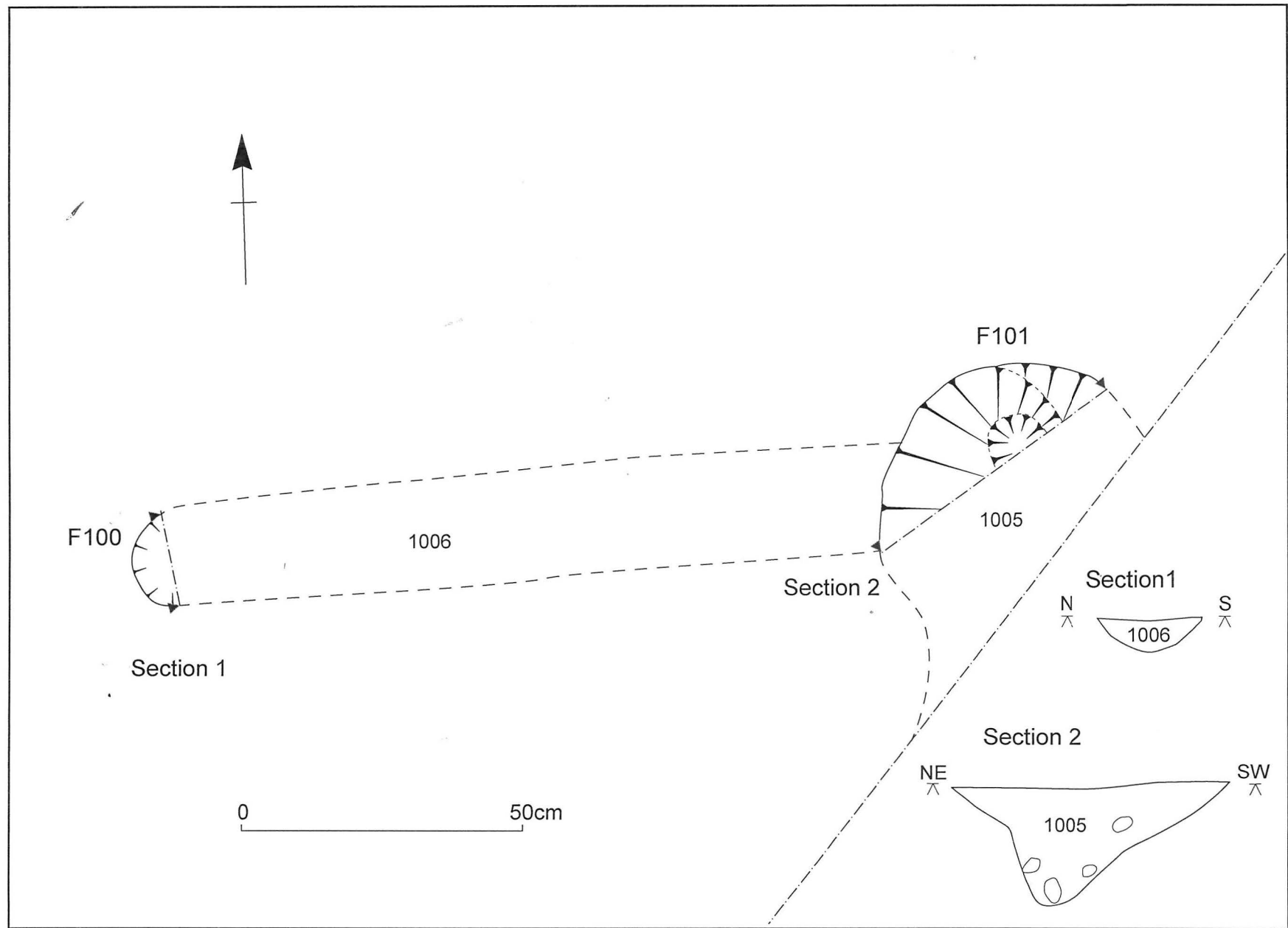


Figure 4



Plate 1

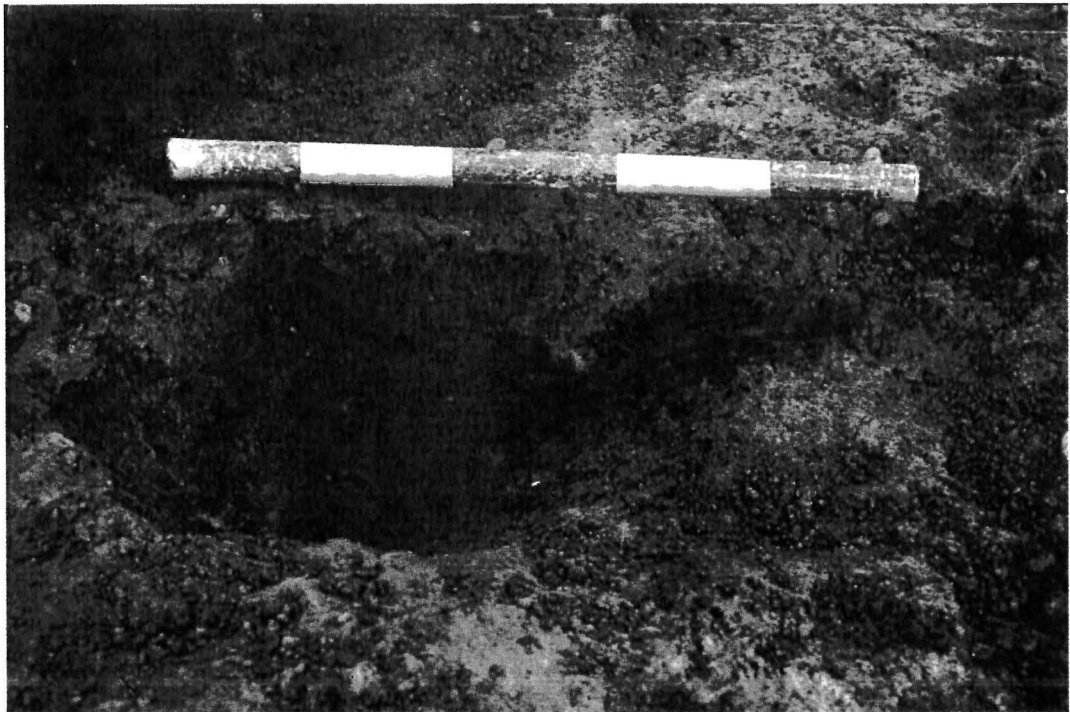


Plate 2

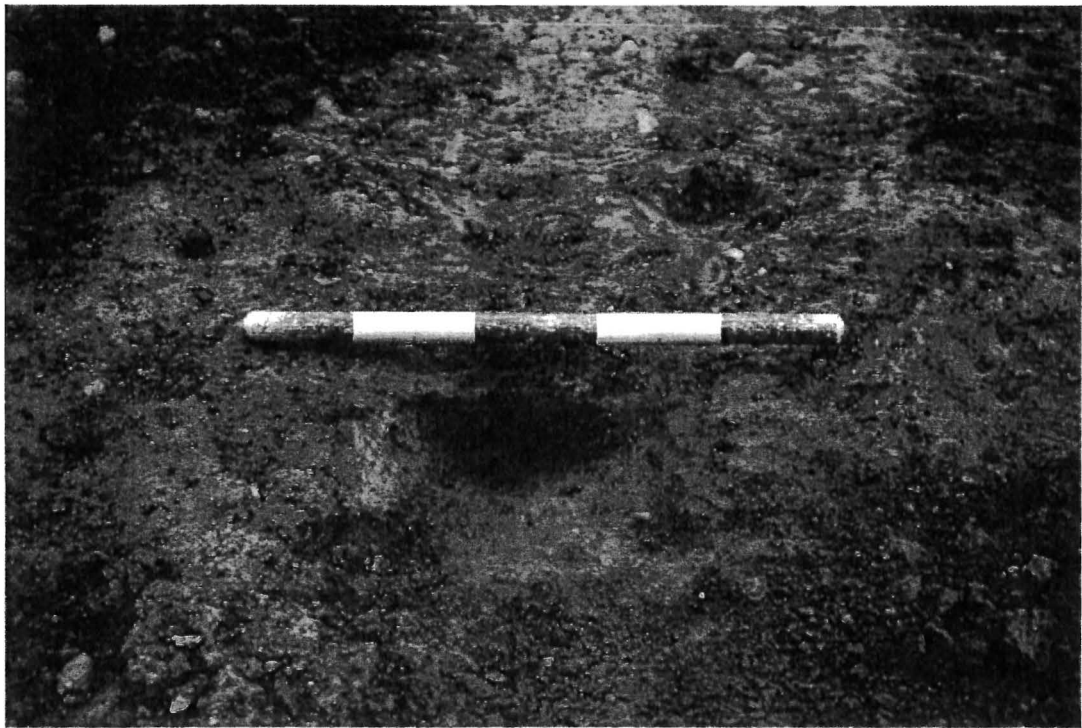


Plate 3

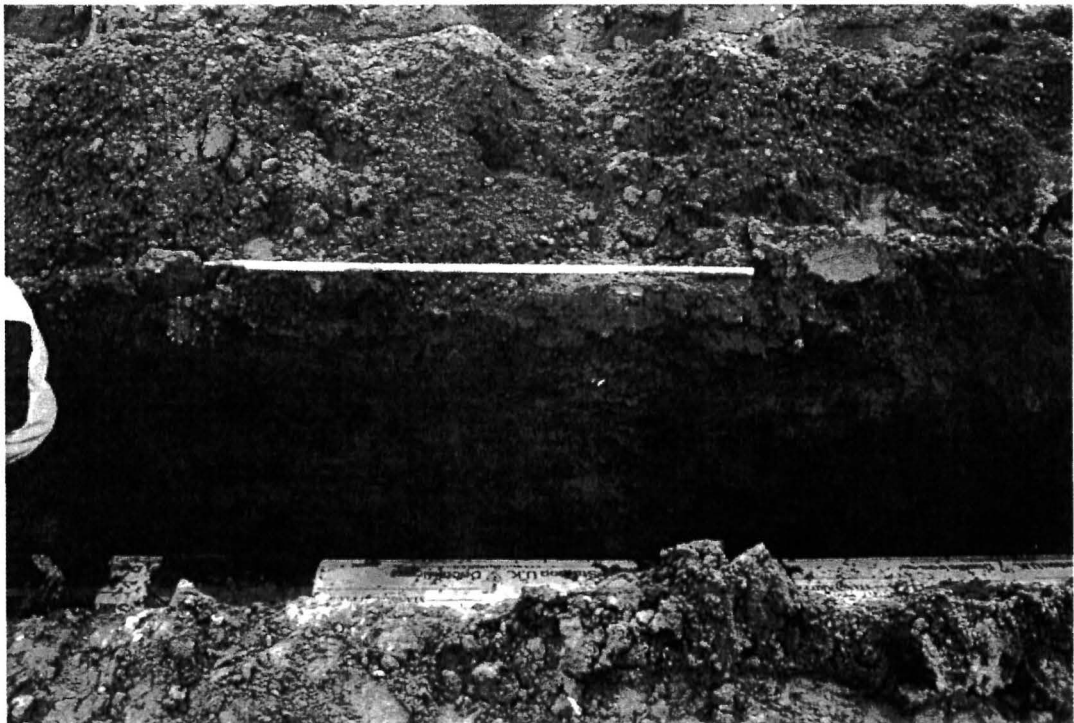


Plate 4