

**THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF LAND AT MANOR
FARM HOUSE, PORTESHAM, DORSET (SY 6035 8596)**
Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

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THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF LAND AT MANOR FARM HOUSE, PORTESHAM, DORSET (SY6035 8596)

Results of archaeological trench evaluation

Summary

An archaeological field evaluation of proposed housing development on land surrounding Manor Farm House, Portesham, was carried out by AC archaeology during late August and early September 1999. The site is situated at the base of a prominent south-facing slope on land covering approximately 0.75 hectares. The general topography is gently sloping down to the south with generally level areas along the northern and southern boundaries. The site is of various land usage including small paddocks, grass fields, farm and outbuildings. There are no previously recorded archaeological sites or monuments within the development area, but immediately to the north of the current site a recent evaluation carried out by AC archaeology identified occupation layers and cut features of Romano-British date below deep colluvial and medieval lynchet soils. Also, two Romano-British inhumation burials were also discovered approximately 25m to the east of the current site and two further undated burials were identified immediately to the SE of the site at 13 Front Street.

This evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of eight trenches all located in areas likely to be affected by proposed development. Extensive evidence for archaeological activity was identified in all trenches comprising cut features including pits, ditches, postholes and graves, with four different periods represented. The earliest (Phase 1) was early Iron Age activity identified within cut features in Trenches 9 and 10, towards the southern end of the site. Very limited quantities of pottery of this date was also found in a pit in Trench 7, but later material was also present. Middle to late Iron Age activity (Phase 2) represents the most extensive settlement on the site, with evidence for finds and features of this period in Plots A and C. It is likely that many of the large circular pits recorded, but not excavated are of this period, and presumably, a large number of adjacent unexcavated features. Romano-British (Phase 3) activity comprises two distinct elements; first, what appears to be funerary evidence in Plot A in the northern portion of the site; and secondly, structural components towards the northern end of Trench 7. The burials were only partly investigated to confirm their presence, but both are on identical alignments - approximately north to south - and both contain grave goods. Two stone structures present in Trench 7 are likely to represent stone post-pads, or more likely, wall remnants. The associated pottery evidence for all these features indicates an AD 2nd century date. The final phase of activity (Phase 4) is medieval. Evidence for activity of this period is located in Trench 5, Plot B, where limited excavation revealed a cut feature - possibly a ditch - of late 13th century date. It is not certain whether this feature indicates settlement activity of this date on the site or, simply a ditch associated with agricultural practices.

The investigation has established the potential for archaeological activity extending into all parts of the site, even those not covered by trench evaluation. However, although four phases have been identified on the current site, it is considered unlikely that the recorded remains represent continuity of settlement over an extended timescale. The archaeological features recorded on the site were generally present below a soil cover of around 500mm. Consequently, the condition and survival of archaeological remains on the site was generally good, with little evidence for damage by ploughing or truncation by subsequent development.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report presents the results from an archaeological field evaluation of the proposed development of land adjacent to Manor Farm House, Front Street, Portesham (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Tower Gate Homes PLC and carried out by AC *archaeology* during late August and early September 1999.

1.2 The evaluation has been requested by the County Archaeological Officer, Dorset County Council, in order to assess the archaeological potential of the proposed development area in support of a application for four new houses and the conversion of existing farm buildings into six new dwellings.

1.3 The proposed development area is situated at the base of a prominent south-facing slope on land covering approximately 0.75 hectares. The general topography is gently sloping down to the south with generally level areas along the northern and southern boundaries. The site is of various land usage including, small paddocks, grass fields, farm and outbuildings. Four plots are likely to be affected by development (Plots A to D on Fig. 2). Plots A and B lie between Manor Farm House to the south and Back Street to the north. Plot A is currently overgrown, with some fruit trees present. Plot B is an overgrown former orchard. Plot C and D lie immediately to the south of Manor Farm House. Plot C is currently a loose stone covered courtyard. Plot D is a grassed area with adjacent access track.

1.4 The site lies at around 80mOD, the underlying geology consisting of chalk.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 There are no previously recorded archaeological sites or monuments within the development area. However there have been a number of recent discoveries close by, indicating that this is an area of archaeological potential.

2.2 Immediately to the north of the current site a recent evaluation carried out by AC *archaeology* (Valentin 1996) identified occupation layers and cut features of Romano-British date below deep colluvial and medieval lynchet soils.

2.3 Two Romano-British inhumation burials were also discovered approximately 25m to the east of the current site in 1975 (Dorset SMR, Portesham 80). Two further undated burials were identified immediately to the SE of the site at 13 Front Street (Dorset SMR, Portesham 91).

2.4 Manor Farm House, located in the centre of the site, is a stone building of early 19th century date and is Grade II listed (ref.11/181).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Project Design (ref. 4499/1/0) submitted to and approved prior to commencement, by the County Archaeological Officer, Dorset County Council. The work comprised the excavation of a total of eight trenches, their positions shown on Fig. 2. There were minor on-site amendments to the submitted trench layout, including shortening Trenches 1 and 2 due to problems with machine access. Trench 9 was lengthened accordingly to maintain the same percentage sample. All trenches were machine excavated with the exception of a single hand-dug trench (no. 5) in Plot B where machine access was not possible. Due to the abundance of archaeological features visible in

the early stages of the evaluation, two proposed trenches in Plot B (Trenches 4 and 6), were not excavated, which was agreed following consultation with the representative of Dorset County Council Archaeology Section. The total trench length was 94m amounting to an approximate 2% sample of the total site area.

3.2 Topsoil and overburden considered to be of modern date was generally removed by mechanical excavator under constant archaeological supervision, onto the top of the natural subsoil or intact archaeological deposits. In Trench 5 topsoil and overburden was removed by hand. Clarity of features, where present, was generally good, necessitating only limited hand cleaning of the trench bases.

3.3 The site was recorded in accordance with AC *archaeology's* standard recording system. Trench plans were produced at 1:50, with sections of features and trenches drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 dependant on the level of detail required. A colour transparency and monochrome photographic record was also taken. All levels relate to a temporary bench mark (TBM) located on a metal spot height on the drive immediately to the north of Plot C. It has been allocated the nominal value of 100m.

3.4 The archive has been prepared using the site code AC 559.

4. RESULTS

Detailed plans showing each trench are included on Figs. 3,4 and 5 and sections of excavated features are included on Fig. 6a to 6l.

4.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

This trench had plan dimensions of 12m x 1.50m and was orientated on an approximate NE-SW axis positioned at the western end of plot A on gently south-sloping ground. Machine-excavation removed up to 300mm of various modern gravel hardcore deposits and 400mm of subsoil. These comprised various lenses of angular flint gravel (101) overlying a dark greyish-brown silt loam (102) containing abundant small flint fragments, moderate quantities of larger flint nodules and common chalk flecks. Natural subsoil (103) comprised a pale yellowish-brown silty clay with abundant small chalk fragments and moderate quantities of natural flint fragments. Twelve subsoil features were identified within Trench 1. Although only a limited number was excavated, it is considered that the remaining are of archaeological origin. An area of deeper overburden, which may represent a modern ditch, was present at the SW end of the trench (overlying 107 on Fig. 3).

Four discrete features were excavated and are described below:

F118 below subsoil (102) was a sub-rectangular feature situated in the north-eastern half of the trench and continued beyond the SE trench edge. It had an exposed length of 600mm and a width of 680mm. Limited excavation of this feature removed part of a dark yellowish-brown silty clay loam fill (112) to reveal the skull and probable upper arm of an inhumation (117). The skeleton was aligned with the head to the north and was lying on the left side. A number of unidentified bones were positioned to the north of the skull. The complete rim of a pottery vessel (see Section 5.1 and plate 1) was visible in plan 200mm to the west of the skull. Adjacent and immediately to the north of this was a rim fragment from a possible second vessel. A copper-alloy object - possibly a clasp or brooch - was present amongst the bones of the exposed upper arm. The burial and all associated artefacts were left *in situ*. This feature probably represents a burial of late Iron Age or Romano-British date, with preliminary indications suggesting that it may be in a crouched position.

F119 (Fig. 6b) below subsoil (102) was a circular feature situated in the north-eastern half of the trench. It had a diameter of 550mm. The profile showed a steep straight S edge and an irregular rounded base at a depth of 170mm. A large limestone block seems to form the northern boundary of this feature. It contained a single fill (113) of mid greyish-brown silty clay loam with rare small angular flint fragments and occasional chalk flecks. This feature probably represents a post hole associated with a similar feature *F120* to the north. No artefacts were recovered.

F120 (Fig. 6b) below subsoil (102) was a circular feature situated in the north-eastern half of the trench. It had a diameter of 200mm. The profile showed a steep straight N edge and an irregular rounded base at a depth of 170mm. A large limestone block seems to form the southern boundary of this feature. It contained a single fill (121) of light greyish-brown silty clay loam with rare small angular flint fragments and occasional chalk flecks. This feature probably represents a post hole associated with a similar feature *F119* immediately to the south. No artefacts were recovered.

F122 (Fig. 6a) below subsoil (102) was a circular feature situated in the north-eastern half of the trench. It had a diameter of 220mm. The profile showed a steep straight edges and a rounded base at a depth of 170mm. It contained a single fill (114) of mid greyish-brown silty clay loam with rare small sub rounded flint fragments and occasional chalk flecks. This feature probably represents a former post hole and no artefacts were recovered.

Five remaining discrete features were not excavated. They are likely to represent the following:

Three small postholes (*110, 116 and 123*), circular in plan and showing fills of mid greyish-brown or dark yellowish-brown silt loam with varying quantities of small to medium flint fragments and occasional chalk flecks.

Two circular pits (*107*) and (*108*) with estimated diameters of 1.00m and 1.20m respectively showing similar fills of dark greyish-brown silt loam with rare coarse components of flint or limestone fragments and occasional chalk flecks. Both features are truncated by a modern, probable ditch (see Fig. 3).

A further three unexcavated brown silty clay loam deposits (*109*), (*111*) and (*115*) were located along the SE trench edge and may represent either remnant soil accumulations above the natural subsoil (102) or the fills of poorly defined cut features.

4.2 Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

This trench had plan dimensions of 7m x 1.50m and was orientated on an approximate NW-SE axis positioned toward the centre of plot A on gently sloping ground down to the south-east. Machine-excavation removed up to 230mm of topsoil and 230mm of garden subsoil. These comprised a friable, dark greyish-brown loam (201) with moderate quantities of small angular flint and sparse chalk flecks, overlying a dark greyish-brown silt loam (202), containing abundant small sub-angular flint fragments, occasional small flint pebbles and common chalk flecks. Natural subsoil (203) comprised a pale yellowish-brown silty clay with abundant small chalk fragments and common small natural flint fragments. Five subsoil features were identified within Trench 2. Although none were excavated, it is considered that all are of archaeological origin. They are described in plan as follows;

One unexcavated linear feature (*205*) present at the north end of the trench may represent a gully or small ditch. It was NW-SE aligned with a width of 480mm and visible length of 1.90m and showed a fill of mid greyish-brown silty clay loam with coarse components of chalk and flint fragments.

Two unexcavated discrete features were present toward the SW end of the trench and may represent the following:

One probable post-hole (*207*) with a length of 900mm and width of 320mm and showing a fill of mid yellowish-brown silt loam with occasional medium to large sub-angular flint and limestone fragments.

One possible pit (*209*) continuing beyond three trench sections with a visible width of 1.60m and showing a fill of mid greyish-brown with common medium flint fragments and sparse chalk fragments.

A further two unexcavated reddish-brown clay loam deposits (*206*) and (*208*), present in this trench may represent either remnant soil accumulations above the natural subsoil (202) or the fills of indistinct cut features.

4.3 Trench 3 (Fig. 3)

This trench had plan dimensions of 14m x 1.50m and was orientated on an approximate NE-SW axis positioned towards the centre of plot A on ground gently sloping down to the south. Machine-excavation removed up to 300mm of topsoil and 230mm of garden subsoil. These comprised a friable, mid greyish-brown loam (301) with moderate quantities of small angular flint and occasional small flint pebbles, overlying a mid yellowish-brown silty loam (302), containing abundant small chalk fragments and common small flint fragments. Natural subsoil (303) comprised a pale yellowish-brown silty clay with abundant small chalk fragments and moderate quantities of natural flint fragments. Eleven subsoil features were identified within Trench 3. Although only a limited number was excavated, it is considered that the remaining are of archaeological origin.

Two discrete features were excavated and are described below:

F315 (Fig. 6c and Plate 2) below subsoil (302) was a sub-rectangular feature situated toward the south-western end of the trench and continued beyond the SE and NW trench edges. It had an exposed length of 1.75m and a width of 950mm. It contained an upper fill of pale yellowish-brown silty clay loam (307) with moderate quantities of chalk fragments common medium flint fragments. Below this was a central fill (316) of mid greyish-brown clay loam with occasional small flint and chalk fragments. This was overlying two primary fills (317) and (318) lying against the W and E edges of the feature respectively. They both comprised mid greyish-brown silty clay loams with rare coarse components of small flint and chalk fragments. Limited excavation of fills (316) and (318) exposed the pelvis, upper legs and lower vertebrae of inhumation (319). The skeleton was articulated and appeared to be lying in an extended supine position with the head to the south. Artefacts associated with the inhumation included; the right side of an animal skull, visible against the W edge of the grave cut within primary fill (317); a small copper-alloy object lying 250mm to the east of the left femur; an iron object from primary fill (318), and a number of small iron nails present within the vicinity of the skeleton. With the exception of the iron object, the burial and all associated artefacts were left *in situ*. This feature represents a grave of probable Romano-British date.

F321 (Fig. 6d) below subsoil (302) was a circular feature situated towards the centre of the trench. It had a diameter of 1.24m. The profile showed a vertical straight W edge, a moderately sloping straight E edge and a wide flattish base at a depth of 150mm. It contained an upper fill (310) of dark greyish-brown silt loam with rare small angular flint fragments, sparse large limestone fragments and occasional chalk flecks. Below this was a dark greyish-brown silty loam containing abundant 'concreted' chalk and flint gravel. This feature appears to represent a shallow circular hollow, the pottery evidence indicating a middle Iron Age date.

Seven remaining discrete features were not excavated. They are likely to represent the following;

Three postholes (309,313,322) with diameters of between 300mm and 400mm showing fills of mid to dark brown silt loam or clay loam with varying quantities of flint and limestone fragments.

Three circular pits or hollows (305,306,314) with diameters of between 1.00m and 2.00m showing fills of mid to dark brown silt loam or clay loam with varying quantities of medium to large flint and limestone fragments.

One sub-rectangular pit or possibly a grave (312) containing a fill of dark greyish-brown silt loam with common flint fragments and occasional chalk flecks.

A further two unexcavated deposits (308) and (311) were identified within this trench and may represent either localised soil accumulations above the natural subsoil (302) or the fills of indistinct cut features.

4.4 Trench 4

The excavation of this trench ceased before full removal of overburden following consultation with Steven Wallis of Dorset Archaeology Section. It is not shown on Fig. 2.

4.5 Trench 5 (Fig. 4)

This trench had plan dimensions of 2m x 1.50m and was orientated on an approximate E-W axis positioned halfway along the western boundary within Plot B on ground gently sloping to the south. Hand-excavation removed up to 190mm of topsoil and 300mm of garden subsoil. These comprised a friable, dark greyish-brown loam (501) with moderate quantities of small flint and limestone fragments, overlying a mid greyish-brown silty clay loam (502), containing moderate quantities of small flint and limestone fragments and smaller flint gravel. Natural subsoil (508) comprised a pale yellowish-brown silty clay with abundant small chalk fragments and moderate quantities of natural flint fragments.

A single cut feature was identified in Trench 5. Health and safety considerations limited excavation within the trench to a depth of 1.20m and consequently this feature was not bottomed.

F506 (Fig. 6e) below subsoil (502) was an indeterminate feature with only part of a N-S aligned western edge visible within the trench. It had a minimum width of 1.60m. The profile showed a moderately sloping irregular W edge to an excavated depth of 900mm. It contained an upper fill (503) of mid greyish-brown silty clay loam with moderate quantities of flint and limestone fragments. Below this was a mid to dark greyish-brown silty clay loam fill (504) containing moderate quantities of small flint

fragments and occasional limestone fragments. This was overlying a mid brownish-grey silty clay fill (505) containing occasional flint and limestone fragments. Excavation of this fill was ceased at an arbitrary level within this deposit. Located against the western edge of this feature was a structural element (507) aligned N-S and positioned on a step in the natural chalk. The structure had a visible length of 700mm, a maximum width of 200mm and was one course wide and three courses deep. It comprised irregular, unmortared limestone and flint fragments with an average length of 150mm. This feature appears to represent a large pit with a rough stone lining. Pottery of medieval date was recovered.

4.6 Trench 6

The excavation of this trench ceased before full removal of overburden following consultation with Steven Wallis of Dorset Archaeology Section. It is not shown on Fig. 2.

4.7 Trench 7 (Fig. 4)

This trench had plan dimensions of 24m x 1.50m and was orientated on an approximate N-S axis positioned toward the centre of plot C on ground gently sloping down to the south. Machine-excavation removed up to 100mm of topsoil and 120mm of disturbed subsoil. These comprised a friable, dark greyish-brown loam (701) with moderate quantities of small angular flint and occasional large limestone fragments, overlying a mid reddish-brown silty clay (702), containing sparse small flint fragments. Natural subsoil (703) comprised a pale yellowish-brown silty clay with abundant small chalk fragments and moderate quantities of natural flint fragments. Thirteen subsoil features were identified within Trench 7. Although only a limited number was excavated, it is considered that the remaining are of archaeological origin. The siting of a modern foul drainage inspection shaft at the southern end of the trench resulted in no archaeological remains surviving in this area.

Four discrete features were excavated and are described below:

F721 (Fig. 6f) below subsoil (702) was a large sub-rectangular feature situated towards the centre of the trench. It had a length of 2.25m and a visible width of 1.20m. The profile showed a steep straight edges and a gently sloping base at a depth of between 350mm and 600mm. It contained an upper fill of dark greyish-brown silty clay loam (710) with abundant large tabular limestone fragments and common large flint fragments throughout. Below this, and present only as a thin layer along the base of the feature, was a clean mid greenish-brown silty clay fill (720) with very rare chalk flecks. This feature appears to represent a former pit and contained pottery of early and middle Iron Age date.

F722 (Fig. 6g) below subsoil (702) was a circular feature situated towards the northern end of the trench. It had a diameter of 520mm. The profile showed a near vertical straight S edge, a steep straight N edge and a gently sloping base at a depth of 280mm. It contained a single fill (708) of dark greyish-brown silty clay loam with sparse large limestone fragments and sparse small flint fragments. This feature probably represents a former post hole but its date is unknown.

F724 (Fig. 6h) below subsoil (702) was a feature situated towards the northern end of the trench. It had a diameter of 940mm. Limited excavation revealed the upper part of a vertically sided feature. It contained an upper fill of mid greyish-brown silty clay loam (707) with abundant small chalk fragment and rare small flint fragments. Below this was a compact dark brownish-grey silty clay fill (723) with rare flint fragments. This fill contained common dark red burnt stone fragments and a high proportion of iron slag. This layer was overlying a compact mid yellowish-brown silty clay fill (725) with common small chalk fragments and rare small flint fragments. The upper surface of this fill showed a red discoloration possible as a result of exposure to heat. This feature appeared to represent a construction cut and fill for structure 706 (see below).

F726 (Fig. 6i) below subsoil (702) was a circular feature situated towards the centre of the trench. It had a diameter of 670mm. The profile showed shallow rounded edges and an irregular rounded base at a depth of 80mm. It contained an upper fill of mid greyish-brown silty clay (712) with rare medium flint fragments. Below this was a thin greenish-grey clay fill (712) containing rare medium to large flint fragments. A small quantity of burnt flint was recovered from this fill. A circular area of staining visible in plan, surrounded the W edge of *F724* and may be associated with it. This feature appears to represent a shallow hollow, possibly with a clay lining but its date and function are unknown.

Two linear features were not excavated. They are likely to represent an E-W aligned ditch or gully (719) and narrow N-S aligned gully (714) both contained fills of greyish-brown silty clay loams with varying coarse components of flint, limestone and chalk fragments.

Five remaining discrete features were not excavated. They are likely to represent the following:

Three postholes (716, 717, 718) all located towards the centre of the trench in a loose cluster. All had diameters of between 100mm and 200mm and showed similar fills of greyish-brown silty clays with varying quantities of small flint fragments and chalk flecks. No artefacts were recovered.

One circular pit or hollow (715) with a diameter of 620mm and containing a mid yellowish-brown silty clay loam fill with common small flint fragments and moderate chalk flecks. No artefacts were recovered.

One sub-rectangular feature (709) continuing beyond the E trench edge and containing a mid-brown silty clay loam fill with abundant small to medium flint fragments and rare large limestone fragments. No artefacts were recovered.

Two structural features (705 and 706) were recorded in plan but not excavated. They may represent stone post-pads, wall remnants or part of a paved surface. Both features were positioned at the northern end of the trench 1.50m apart. Each comprised a number of large flat limestone slabs set into pale yellowish-brown mortar appearing as two flat rectangular platforms along the western edge of the trench. Limited excavation was carried out to establish a relationship between 706 and adjacent pit F724 (see above), which exposed a pale yellow mortar layer below one of the limestone slabs, and that F724 may represent a construction trench for this structure.

4.8 Trench 8 (Fig. 4)

This trench had plan dimensions of 10m x 1.50m and was orientated on an approximate E-W axis positioned towards the centre of plot C on ground gently sloping down to the south. Machine-excavation removed up to 100mm of topsoil and 120mm of disturbed subsoil. These comprised a friable, dark greyish-brown loam (801) with moderate quantities of small angular flint and occasional large limestone fragments, overlying a mid reddish-brown silty clay (802), containing sparse small flint fragments. Natural subsoil (803) comprised a pale yellowish-brown silty clay with abundant small chalk fragments and moderate quantities of natural flint fragments. Thirteen subsoil features were identified within Trench 8. Although only a limited number was excavated, it is considered that the remaining are of archaeological origin. A pipe trench, aligned N-S and containing a ceramic drainage pipe, was considered to be modern. An orange-brown clay deposit (805), located in the western half of the trench probably represents a naturally-derived periglacial soil.

A total of four discrete features were excavated. They comprised a large circular pit F820 with its fill cut by three later features F822, F823, F824. They are described as follows:

F820 (Fig. 6j) below subsoil (802) was a circular feature situated towards the centre of the trench with a diameter of 1.70m. The profile showed a slightly undercut concave W edge, a steep straight E edge and a wide rounded base at a depth of 1.05m. It contained a dark greenish-grey silty clay loam with rare small to medium flint and limestone fragments and rare chalk flecks (817). Below this and restricted to the eastern side of the feature was a mid greyish-brown silty clay loam fill (818) containing abundant small chalk fragments and rare flint and limestone fragments. This fill had a distinct vertical boundary and may represent packing material for a post or other structure. Below this was a dark greyish-brown silty clay loam with rare medium to large flint and limestone fragments and common small limestone fragments. This fill contained a very large tabular limestone fragment 340mm in length lying against the E edge of the feature. At the base of this feature lying below fill (817) was a compact pale yellowish-brown silt fill (819) containing moderate quantities of small to medium flint and rare limestone fragments. This feature appears to represent a large pit, possible used for storage and of middle to late Iron Age date.

F822 (Fig. 6j) was confined within earlier pit F820. It had a visible width of 860mm. The profile showed steep straight edges and a wide flattish base at a depth of 300mm. It contained a dark greenish-grey silty clay loam fill (816) with common large flint fragments, moderate quantities of large tabular limestone fragments and rare chalk flecks. Pottery of mid to late Iron Age date was recovered. This feature appears to represent a shallow pit of unknown function, cut into the fill of earlier pit F820.

F823 (Fig. 6j) was contained within earlier pit F820. It had a visible width of approximately 400mm. The profile showed steep W edge, a moderately sloping E edge and an irregular base at a depth of 400mm. It contained a dark greenish-grey silty clay loam fill (815) with common large flint fragments, moderate quantities of large tabular limestone fragments and rare chalk flecks. Pottery of middle to late Iron Age date was recovered. This feature appears to represent a shallow pit of unknown function cut into the fill of earlier pit F820.

F824 (Fig. 6j) was confined within earlier pit *F820*. It had a visible width of approximately 1.50m. The profile showed shallow irregular E edge, a moderately sloping W edge and an irregular base at a depth of 250mm. It contained a mid greyish-brown silty loam fill (814) with rare medium flint fragments. Pottery of middle to late Iron Age date was recovered. This feature appears to represent a shallow hollow cut into the top of pit *F823*.

Nine remaining discrete features were not excavated. They are likely to represent the following:

Three postholes (806, 811, 812) of varying dimensions containing greyish-brown silty clay fills with varying quantities of small flint and chalk fragments. Burnt limestone or charcoal was visible in the fills of these features.

Six pits or hollows (804, 807, 808, 809, 810, 813) of varying dimensions showing fills of greyish brown silty clay or loam with coarse components including flint, limestone and chalk fragments. Burnt limestone and charcoal was visible in the fills of some of these features. 807 may represent two intercutting pits.

4.9 Trench 9 (Fig. 5)

This trench had plan dimensions of 14m x 1.50m and was orientated on an approximate E-W axis positioned in the SW corner of plot C on level ground. Machine-excavation removed up to 150mm of dark greyish-brown loam topsoil (901) with moderate quantities of medium sub-rounded flint fragments. Below this was up to 250mm of remnant farmyard surface (902) comprising mainly sub-rounded flint fragments up to 100mm in width in a loose dark greyish-brown loam. Below this was up to 120mm of dark reddish-brown silty clay subsoil (903) containing moderate quantities of small to medium flint fragments. Natural subsoil (904) comprised a pale yellowish-brown silty clay with abundant small chalk fragments and sparse natural flint fragments. A minimum of seven potential subsoil features was identified within Trench 9. Although only a limited number was excavated, the presence of charcoal and other components visible in the fills of many of these features suggest that the majority are of archaeological origin. Three N-S aligned linear soil marks (919)(920)(921) located in the western half of this trench and comprising similar reddish brown clays with sparse flint fragments were considered to be periglacial soil deposits infilling hollows in the chalk. One of these deposits (920) was investigated.

Two linear features were excavated and are described below:

F922 (Fig. 6l) below subsoil (903) was an approximate N-S aligned linear feature situated towards the centre of the trench and continuing beyond both the N and S trench edges. It had a visible length of 1.60m and a width of 4.80m. The profile comprised a moderately sloping, straight W edge, a steep, straight E edge and a flat base at a depth of 240mm. It contained a single fill (916) of dark brownish-grey silty clay with moderate quantities of small to medium flint fragments and limestone fragments. This fill showed a dark staining throughout. This feature probably represents a former ditch of Romano-British date.

F924 (Fig. 6k) below subsoil (903) was an approximate NW-SE aligned linear feature situated towards the centre of the trench. It had a maximum width of 540mm. The profile comprised a steep, straight SW edge, a moderately sloping NE edge and a sloping narrow base at a depth of 250mm. It contained a single fill (923) of mid orange-brown clay with common small to medium flint fragments and rare chalk flecks. This feature appears to be a shallow ditch or gully and clearly post-dates ditch *F922* immediately to the east. Worked and burnt flint was recovered.

Five discrete features were identified but not excavated. They are likely to represent the following;

Four postholes (913, 914, 915, 918) of uncertain date with diameters of between 500mm and 600mm containing fills of brownish-grey silty clay to silt loam with varying quantities of flint and limestone fragments.

One irregular shaped pit or hollow 906 with a length of 800mm and a maximum width of 500mm containing a dark orange-brown silty clay fill with moderate quantities of small to medium flint fragments.

An additional five unexcavated deposits (907, 908, 909, 910, 911) at the eastern end of the trench may represent the exposed fills of an undetermined number and date of intercutting discrete features.

One remaining unexcavated mid orange-brown clay deposit (912) with moderate quantities of flint and occasional chalk flecks was identified. Limited investigation failed to reveal any artefacts.

4.8 Trench 10 (Fig. 5)

This trench had plan dimensions of 10m x 1.50m and was orientated on an approximate N-S axis positioned towards the centre of plot D on ground moderately sloping to the south. Machine-excavation removed up to 100mm of modern gravel surface make-up deposits and 120mm of disturbed subsoil. These comprised various lenses of angular flint gravel (1001) overlying a dark greyish-brown silty clay loam (1002), containing sparse small flint and chalk fragments. Natural subsoil (1003) comprised a pale yellowish-brown silty clay with abundant small chalk fragments and moderate quantities of natural flint fragments. Fourteen subsoil features were identified within Trench 10. Although only two were excavated, it is considered that the remaining are of archaeological origin. An E-W aligned linear feature *F1005* situated at the southern end of the trench was identified during machine excavation and probably represents a large ditch of modern date.

Two discrete features were excavated. They comprised a shallow circular posthole or hollow *F1020* with its fill cut by a later smaller circular feature *F1021*. They are described as follows:

F1021 (Fig. 6m) below subsoil (1002) was a circular feature situated at the northern end of the trench. It had a diameter of 1.30m. The profile showed a moderately sloping S edge, a shallower and longer N edge and a rounded base at a depth of 200mm. It contained an upper fill (1008) of orange-brown silty clay with rare small flint fragments and moderate chalk flecks and a lower fill (1022) of very light yellowish-brown chalky silt. This feature appears to represent a shallow pit of possibly early Iron Age date.

F1020 (Fig. 6m) was confined within earlier pit *F1021*. It had a diameter of 650mm. The profile showed a moderately sloping S edge, a shallower and longer N edge and a rounded base at a depth of 100mm. It contained a single fill (1009) of dark greyish-brown silty clay with sparse large limestone fragments. This feature appears to represent a shallow hollow or post hole remnant of uncertain date.

Thirteen remaining discrete features were not excavated. They are likely to represent the following:

Eight postholes (*1006*, *1010*, *1019*) in the north half of the trench and (*1014*, *1015*, *1016*, *1017*, *1018*) in a loose cluster toward the southern end of the trench. They were of varying dimensions and contained brown silty clay fills with varying quantities of coarse components including flint, limestone and chalk fragments. Post holes in the southern end of the trench were truncated by later linear feature *F1005*.

Three pits or hollows (*1011*, *1012*, *1013*) toward the centre of the trench with varying dimensions and containing brown silty clay fills with varying quantities of coarse components including flint, limestone and chalk fragments.

An additional unexcavated orange-brown silty clay deposit (1007) was largely obscured beneath the northern trench section but may represent the fill of an unclarified feature.

5. THE FINDS

A quantification of all finds is included in Table 1.

5.1 The Pottery by J.W. Hawkes

Pottery recovered from the fills of pits, graves and ditches together with unstratified material from spoilheaps and clearance layers was collected. These finds were scanned to provide an indication of the types and date range present, and the sherds quantified by number and weight (see Table 1).

Post-medieval and modern pottery was confined to topsoil and other unstratified contexts. Included amongst this collection were lead-glazed earthenwares and 19th- to 20th-century traded wares. These finds are not considered further.

The remaining assemblage was assigned to broad chronological periods largely on the basis of fabric, diagnostic vessel forms being rare. As set out in Table 1, these groups comprise:

Early Iron Age: A single sherd from context 909 in a coarse sandy fabric with sparse chalk inclusions is the rim sherd from a probable bipartite or tripartite jar of Early Iron Age date. Sherds in an identical fabric (very possibly from the same vessel) occur in contexts 913 and 710. A haematite-coated sherd either from a jar or a thick-walled bowl was recovered from context 1008.

Middle to Late Iron Age: The bulk of the remaining pottery is considered to lie within the date range of Middle to Late Iron Age. Fabrics are generally quartz sand tempered, sometimes with additional sparse chalk. Much of the pottery is badly abraded, but a small proportion of the sherds (less than 10%) shows signs of an external burnish. Very few forms can be recognised, although there are rim sherds from one or more globular vessels with proto-bead rims from contexts 814 and 817, and on present evidence it is not possible to determine a more precise date.

Romano-British: Sherds of evidently Romano-British date were present in small quantities, but were largely absent from the pits. Grave fills 307 and 316 both contained small sherds of probable Black Burnished Ware with traces of lattice decoration, and similar fabrics together with a burnished greyware were also recovered from context 916 and context 707 (greyware only). A Black Burnished Ware drop-flange bowl of AD 2nd-century date together with other Black Burnished Ware sherds was associated with finds of later (medieval) date in context 503. A significant proportion of the stratified finds of this date were recovered from grave fills which were only part-excavated so as to leave the human remains undisturbed. Grave 118 was seen to contain a large sherd of a red colour coated fabric and an apparently whole bead-rim, globular vessel in a black fabric, neither of which were removed from their context.

Medieval: Medieval pottery was present in topsoil and spoilheap contexts, where glazed and unglazed sherds of 13th- to 14th-century and later date were recovered. Stratified finds were limited to Trench 5, where orange sandy wares with occasional sparse chalk inclusions, some with traces of glaze, were recovered from the subsoil context 502 and pit fill contexts 503, 504 and 505. No diagnostic forms were present, but the stratified sherds would be compatible with a later 13th-century date.

5.2 Worked Flint

Totals of worked flint are given in Table 1. The material has been assessed on the basis of raw material, technology and distribution. Diagnostic tool types have been allocated unique special find numbers.

Condition

Most pieces are patinated, although some are reasonably fresh in appearance and show edge damage, possibly resulting from early ploughing on the site.

Raw Material

All the material is chalk derived and has most likely been utilised directly from a source on the site or its immediate surroundings. Most of the assemblage is comparatively of poor quality and generally grey or mottled brown in colour. It is likely, in most cases, that selection of flints for secondary working was made on the basis of surface availability, rather than by more systematic excavation of flint seams, as much of the raw material used appears to have undergone surface weathering preceding working.

Technology

All the material recovered shows affinities with a flake rather than an earlier blade industry. The waste material generally consists of broad, heavy flakes, with pieces categorised as 'retouched flakes' appearing crudely struck showing little initial preparation.

Tool Types

Only three diagnostic tools are present; two are scrapers and one may represent a hammerstone. Both scrapers are produced from flakes, but are not typical forms. Each, however, contains steep, irregular side and end retouch. These are from contexts 317 (SF1) and 1000 (SF2). The hammerstone (SF3 from context 814, Trench 8) is a large oval flint nodule, damaged on one edge. Two further pieces show no diagnostic affinities and are characterised as 'retouched flakes'. These are likely to be scraper type implements.

Chronology

The diagnostic elements within the assemblage are characteristic of later prehistoric flint production. The scrapers are likely to derive from the Bronze Age or later.

A large proportion of the remaining waste flakes and retouched flakes show little preparation and consists of what appears to be weathered, poor quality surface flint, and could conceivably be Iron Age in date.

5.3 Burnt Flint

Small quantities of burnt flint were recovered from the site. The presence of burnt flint - in both overburden and sub-surface contexts - is usually a good indicator of later prehistoric settlement; it is considered they were burnt deliberately and, whilst still hot, used to heat water as 'pot boilers'.

5.4 Animal Bone

Animal bone was recovered in significant quantities from many of the excavated features and from overburden and clearance contexts. These are itemised in Table 1, with the group containing many different species, principally cattle, sheep/goat and pig. However, the most interesting occurrence was in grave fill 307 in Trench 3, where the cranium/ lower jaw of a probable horse was present. Although this was only partially exposed, it appeared to have been deliberately cut in half and placed within the grave. Pottery of middle to late Iron Age date was also present within the fill. The horse skull was not removed.

5.5 Fe Objects

Iron objects comprise two nails from the grave in Trench 3, although they are too large to represent evidence for a coffin, and an iron hoop-like fitting from the same feature.

5.6 Other Finds

Other objects recovered include small quantities of modern glass, oyster shell and modern ceramic tile, all deriving from later, overburden contexts. These are itemised in Table 1. Quantities of iron rich clay were recovered from construction trench fill 723 in Trench 7.

6 SITE PHASING

6.1 It is possible, based on the pottery evidence, to identify four distinct phases of activity, which are summarised below. Similarly, there are zones on the site, where archaeological activity of each particular phase dominates. However, not all features within any particular trench were investigated, and it is probable, particularly where intercutting features have been identified, that activity of more than one period is represented in any particular trench.

Phase 1 : Early Iron Age

Early Iron Age activity was identified within cut features in Trenches 9 and 10, towards the southern end of the site. Very limited quantities of pottery of this date was also found in a pit in Trench 7, but later material was also present.

Phase 2 : Middle to late Iron Age

This phase probably represents the most likely date of settlement on the site, with evidence for finds and features of this period in Plots A and C. It is likely that many of the large circular pits identified are of this period, and by association, a large number of adjacent features.

Phase 3 : Romano-British

This phase of activity comprises two distinct elements; first, what appears to be funerary evidence in Plot A in the northern portion of the site; and secondly, structural components towards the northern end of Trench 7. The burials were only partly investigated to confirm their presence (Plates 1 and 2), but both are on identical alignments - approximately north to south - and both contain grave goods. The alignments and presence of objects confirm that both are non-Christian burials, the pottery evidence indicating a AD 2nd century date. The two structures are likely to represent stone post-pads, or more likely wall. Pottery of Romano-British date was recovered from the construction trench fill of one example.

Phase 4 : Medieval

Evidence for activity of this period is located in Trench 5, Plot B, where limited excavation revealed a cut feature - possibly a ditch - of late 13th century date. It is not certain whether this feature indicates settlement activity of this date on the site or, the ditch may be associated with agricultural practices.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The evaluation has confirmed the presence of extensive archaeological activity on the site with four different periods represented. The earliest evidence dates to the early Iron Age (c. 7th Century BC) through to the medieval period (late 13th century AD). The investigation has therefore established the likelihood that archaeological activity is likely to extend into all parts of the site, even those not covered by trench evaluation. This confirming evidence from previous investigations close by, where archaeological activity has been found comprising occupation layers and cut features of Romano-British date (immediately to the north of the present site) and two Romano-British inhumation burials (25m to the east). However, although four phases have been identified on the current site, it is considered unlikely that the recorded remains represent continuity of settlement over such an extended timescale.

7.2 The high density of features recorded and the high proportion of pottery of middle to late Iron Age date recovered, suggests that it is probable that a settlement of this date is present on the site. The feature types recorded, comprising large pits, postholes and gullies are characteristic of settlement type activity. It is not possible to suggest a closer attribution of date, as there was an absence of diagnostic sherds. The forms represented appear to indicate a date range of c. 500BC through to 100BC.

7.3 Although only limited quantities of pottery are present, the balance of probability would be that the burials are of Roman date. The presence of lattice decoration and a (effectively unstratified) drop flange bowl suggests that the burials and other features might be of AD

2nd-century date, but given the presence red colour-coat sherd from the grave 118, it is possible that the activity may extend later. Structural remains of this date were restricted to the northern end of trench 7, c. 60m from the two recorded burials, comprising two tabular limestone platforms or wall bases. It is not certain, based on limited evidence, whether these represent a building of this date on the site.

7.4 Medieval activity was also some distance from the principal areas of prehistoric features, being located in the eastern portion of the site in Plot B. Residual Romano-British pottery was also present, suggesting activity of this date is also present close by.

7.5 The archaeological features recorded on the site were generally present below a soil cover of around 500mm. Consequently, the condition and survival of archaeological remains on the site was generally good, with little evidence for damage by ploughing or truncation by development. Similarly, the two human skeletons were also articulated and in good condition.

8. REFERENCES

Valentin, J., 1996, *An archaeological evaluation of a proposed housing development at Front Street, Portesham, Dorset*, unpublished AC archaeology report for client and Dorset County Council

Trench	Context	Context type	early Iron Age pottery		mid to late Iron Age pottery		Romano-British pottery		Medieval pottery		post-medieval/modern pottery		Ceramic Building material		Worked flint		Burnt flint		Animal Bone		Iron objects		Fired clay	
			No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.
1	100	spoilheap	0	0	1	4	6	80	0	0	5	76	3	122	0	0	0	0	6	82	0	0	0	0
	104	clearance	0	0	0	0	1	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	112	grave fill	0	0	0	0	2	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	200	spoilheap	2	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	164	3	46	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0
	204	clearance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	22	1	22	0	0	0	0	0	0
	205	ditch fill	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	38	0	0	0	0
3	300	spoilheap	0	0	7	84	3	6	0	0	5	72	0	0	1	14	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0
	307	grave fill	0	0	3	30	3	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	68	1	10	0	0
	310	pit fill	0	0	7	102	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	96	0	0	0	0
	312	ditch fill	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	12	0	0	0	0
	314	pit fill	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	26	0	0	0	0
	316	grave fill	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	62	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
	317	grave fill	0	0	6	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	40	0	0	5	14	0	0	0	0
	318	grave fill	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	126	0	0
	320	pit fill	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	401	topsoil	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	14	0	0	0	0
	400	spoilheap	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	2	15	182	0	0	1	12	0	0	30	198	3	62	0	0
5	501	topsoil	0	0	1	8	0	0	5	42	5	26	4	82	0	0	0	0	12	372	1	10	0	0
	502	subsoil	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	150	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	35	9	216	0	0	0	0
	503	pit fill	0	0	0	0	4	36	14	84	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	18	0	0	0	0
	504	pit fill	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	122	0	0	0	0
	505	pit fill	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	28	0	0	0	0
7	700	spoilheap	0	0	1	18	0	0	0	0	5	270	0	0	1	6	2	168	1	12	0	0	0	0
	707	fill	0	0	0	0	1	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	710	pit fill	1	8	5	46	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	16	0	0	9	146	0	0	0	0
	712	pit fill	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
	723	pit fill	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	370
8	800	spoilheap	0	0	2	12	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	6	0	0	0	0
	814	pit fill	0	0	4	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	454	0	0	5	364	0	0	0	0
	815	pit fill	0	0	6	67	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	16	0	0	0	0
	816	pit fill	0	0	11	132	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	100	0	0	0	0
	817	pit fill	0	0	22	226	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	48	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	819	pit fill	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	150	0	0	0	0
9	909	pit fill	1	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	913	pit fill	1	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	916	ditch fill	0	0	0	0	2	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	18	0	0	1	12	0	0	0	0
	918	posthole fill	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	44	0	0	0	0
	923	ditch fill	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	26	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	1000	spoilheap	0	0	0	0	2	62	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	46	1	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1008	pit fill	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1012	pit fill	1	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS			7	104	78	809	26	288	45	348	40	790	10	250	21	744	7	269	176	2166	7	209	30	370

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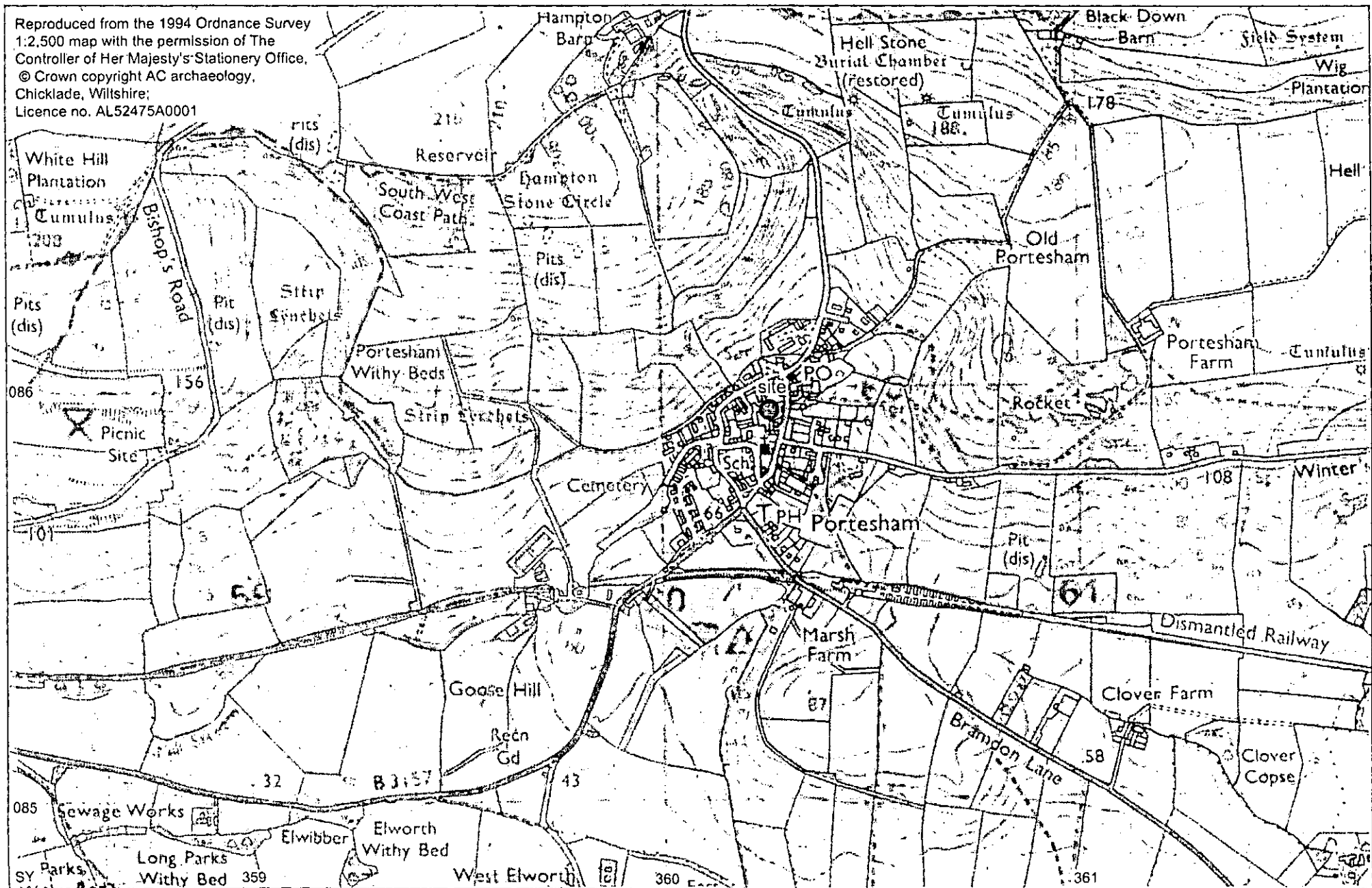


Fig. 1: Site location

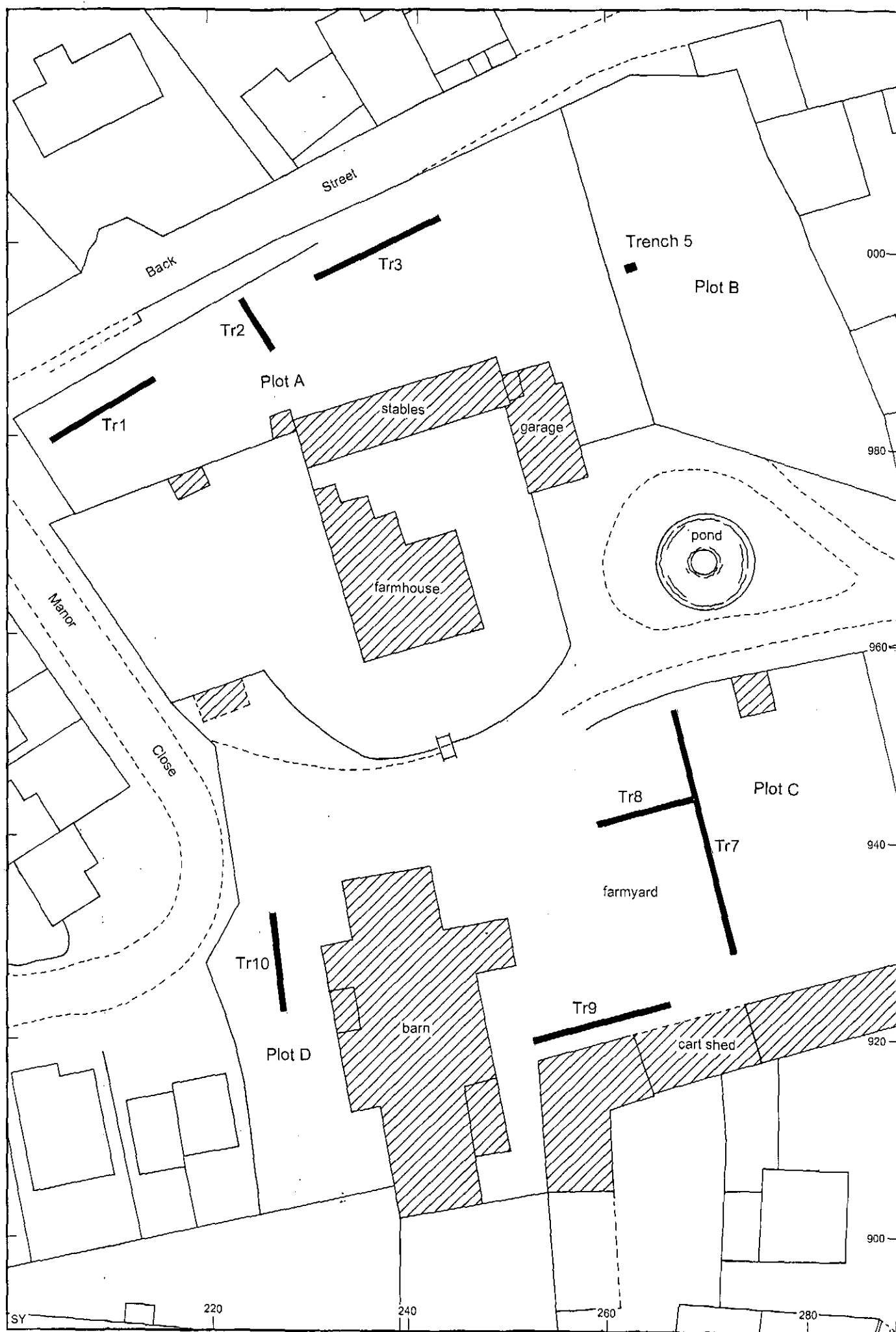


Fig 2 : Trench location plan

Scale 1:500

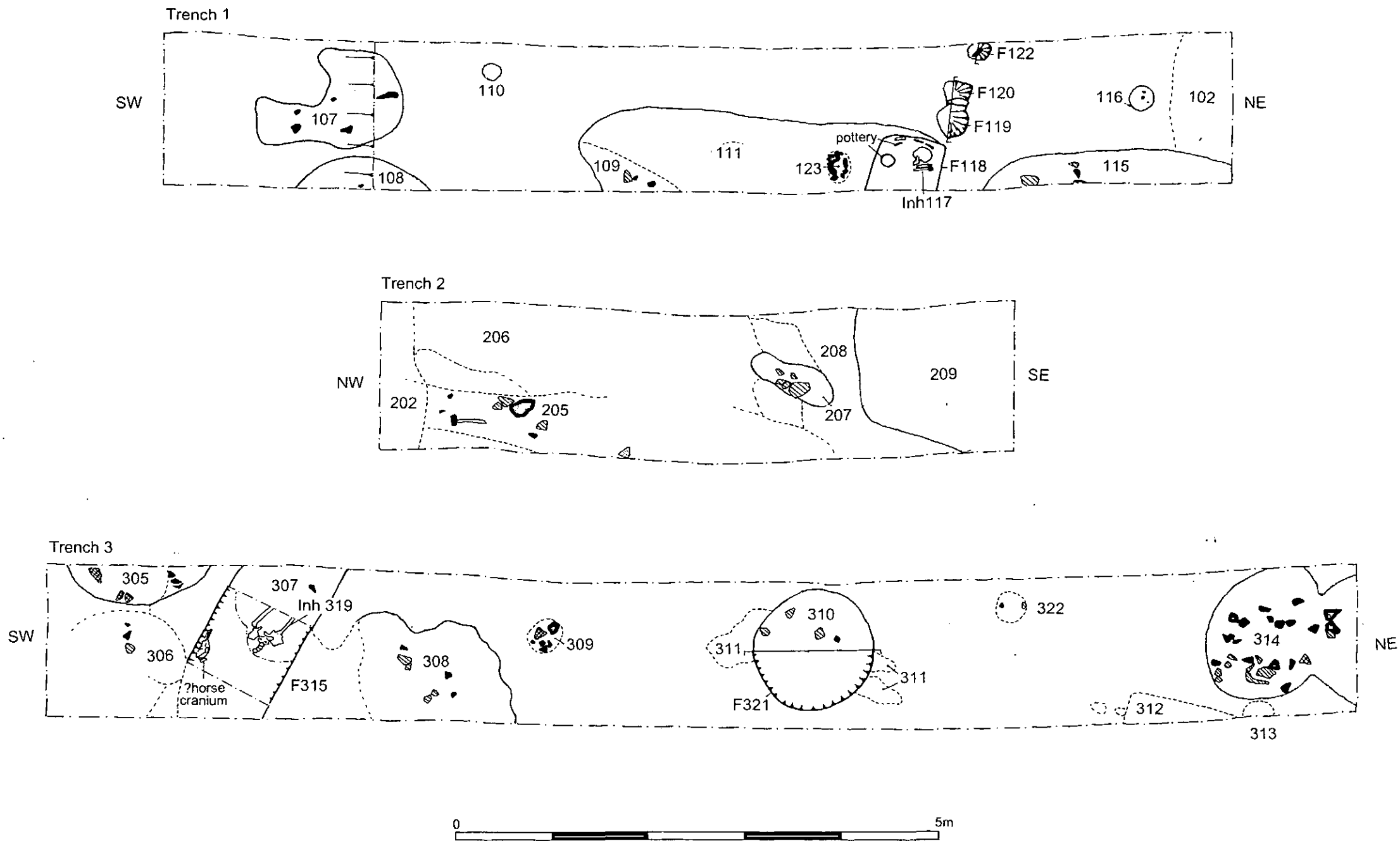


Fig.3 : Plans of Trenches 1 -3

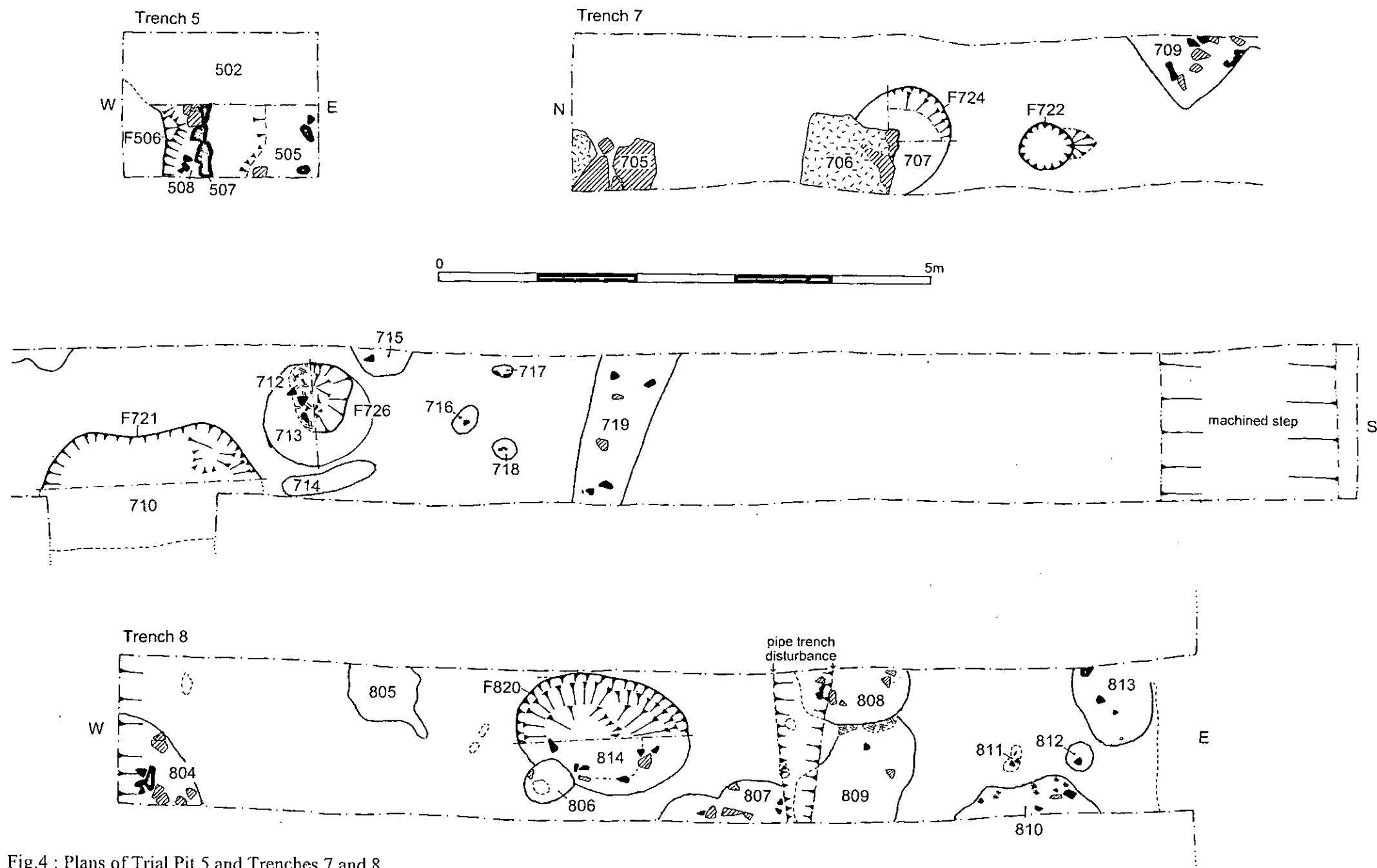


Fig.4 : Plans of Trial Pit 5 and Trenches 7 and 8

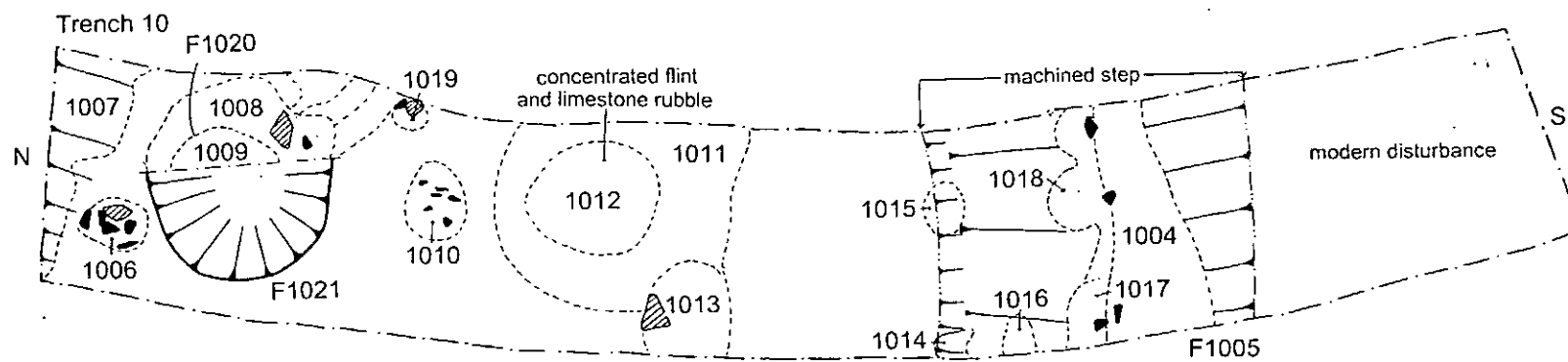
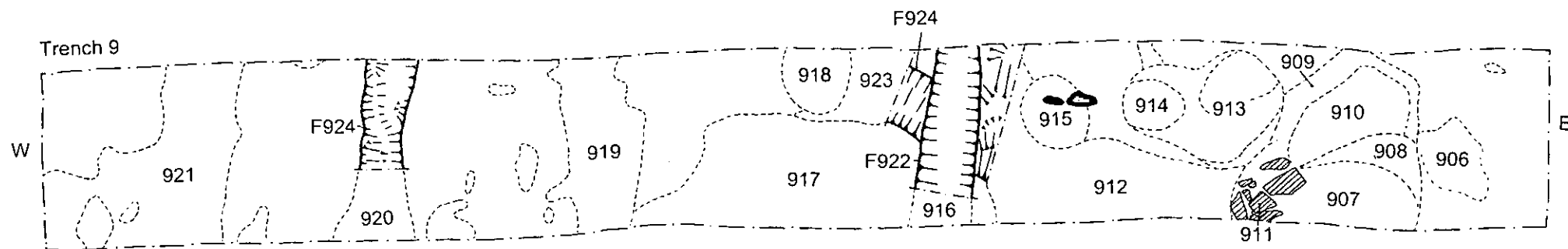


Fig.5 : Plans of Trenches 9 and 10

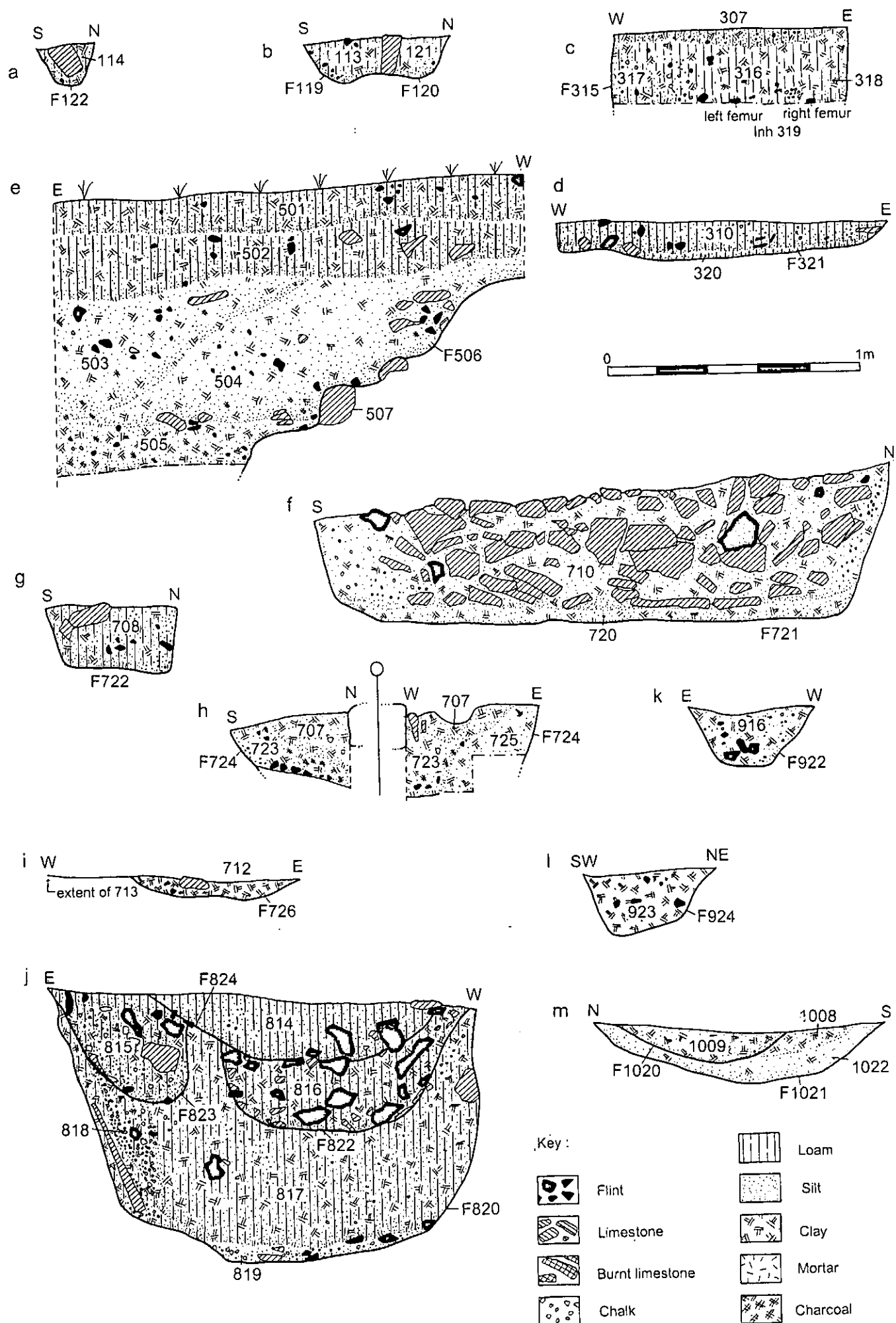


Fig.6a - m : Sections of excavated features



Plate 1 : Skull of Inhumation 117, Trench 1,
rim of complete pottery vessel in foreground

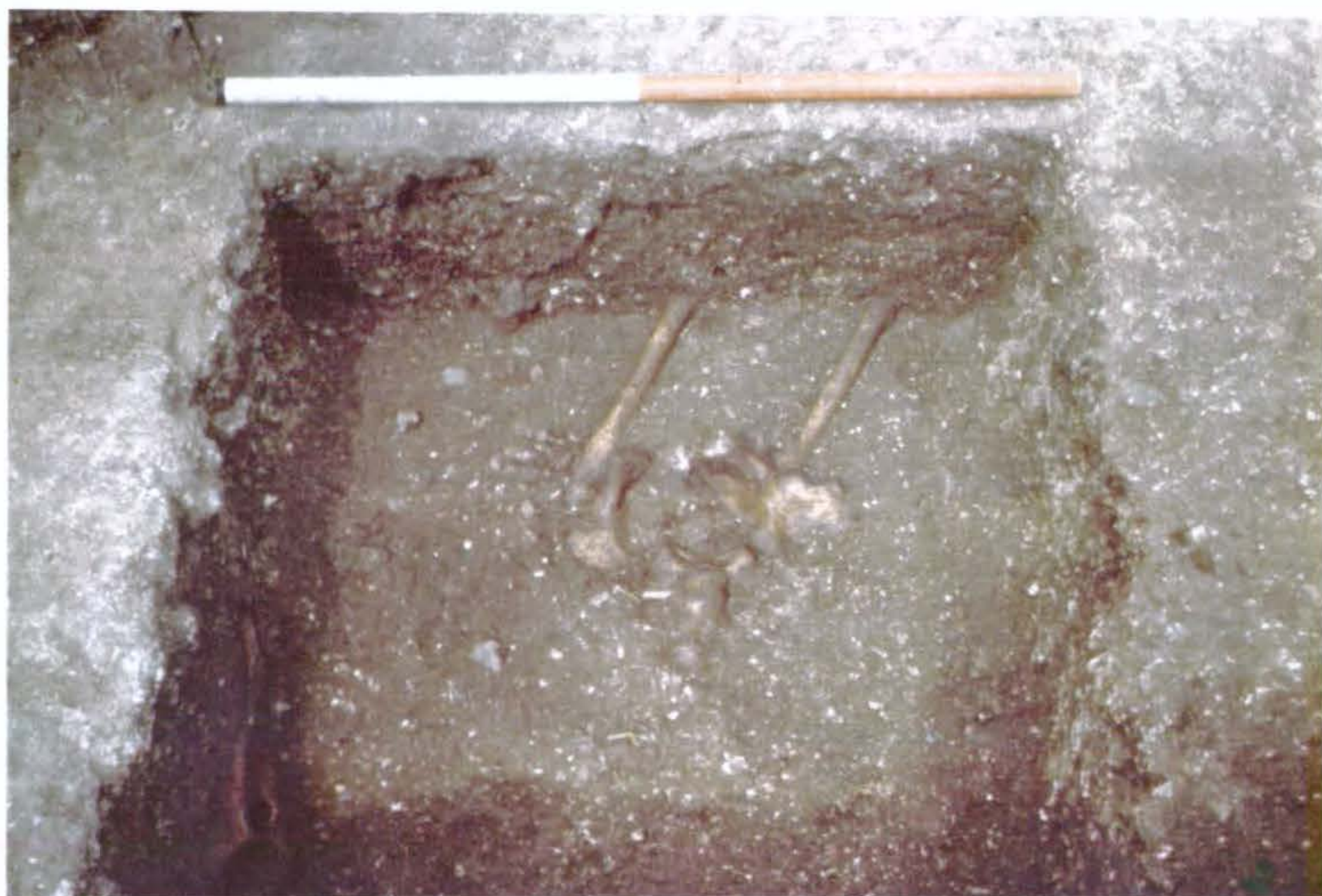


Plate 2 : Detail of Inhumation 319, Trench 3,
sliced skull of horse in section left foreground