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**An Archaeological Evaluation  
on Land at Abbey Fields,  
Faversham, Kent**

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## 1) Introduction

On the 8th September 2000 Canterbury Archaeological Trust were commissioned by Abbey Park Holdings Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation on the site of a proposed development between Graveney Road and Abbey Fields, approximately 1.2km north-east of Faversham (see Plan 1). The evaluation, which took the form of the supervised mechanical excavation of sixty-eight trial trenches, was undertaken in compliance with a condition issued by the Development Service Department of Swale Borough Council (Planning Application SW/99/1120), advised by Kent County Council Heritage Conservation Group. All the trial trenches were 30m x 2m, as outlined in the archaeological specification issued by CgMs Consulting (Hawkins, 2000), who also monitored the work on behalf of the Abbey Park Holdings and Cormarant Developments Ltd. These specifications were approved and fieldwork monitored by Kent County Council Heritage Conservation Group.

The trial trenches were situated in two areas. Area 1, centred on National Grid Reference TR 60371615, was located on a plateau presently used for cereal cultivation lying immediately south of the Kent Coast railway line, which intersects the proposed development site on a north-east alignment. Area 2, centred on TR 60331615, was located north of the railway, for the most part on a gentle south-facing slope. Fourteen trenches were excavated in Area 1 (approximately 8,500m<sup>2</sup>), within the proposed route of an access road for the new development. Fifty-four trenches were excavated in Area 2 (144,182m<sup>2</sup>), on the site of a proposed housing estate. Only ten trial trenches were excavated in the eastern part of Area 2 (58,199m<sup>2</sup>) which, as wasteland within a roughly rectilinear and deep-cut brickearth quarry, is considered to be of low archaeological potential (Ordnance Survey maps dated 1877 and 1906 show the quarry to have been established around the turn of the century). Forty-four trial trenches were excavated in the unquarried part of Area 2 (85,983m<sup>2</sup>), which is presently scrubland but is shown on Ordnance Survey and tithe maps to have been agricultural land until recently (Harris, 1996, 16). Both Evaluation Areas were probably part of the estate attached to St. Saviours Abbey until its dissolution in 1534 or a little after (Hasted, vol. vi, 329, 1798).

Detailed descriptions of the archaeological and historical backgrounds of the site are not included in this report as these can be found in the comprehensive desk-based assessment compiled by Lawson-Price Environmental (Harris, 1996).

## 2) Summary of results

A flint core, a struck flint flake and a scraper, all unpatinated, were recovered as surface finds from the brickearth quarry in the eastern part of Area 2. If in situ, these may be the earliest archaeological materials recovered from the site, with a Palaeolithic date being possible. However, a derived status and later date is more likely, as much dumping has taken place in the quarry since it was abandoned. The lack of patination on the flintwork argues strongly for the latter case as patination commonly occurs on flints contained for protracted periods in Brickearth. Similarly, the scraper was of Neolithic type.

A highly concentrated pattern of flint discard was evident in and around Trench 21. Here, large quantities of flint debitage were recovered, as were reworked tools, blades (some retouched) and scrapers. The unpatinated and extremely fresh condition of most of the assemblage, along with the presence of multiple refits, suggest that this was an occupation site on which intensive or protracted flint tool production took place. Much of the flint apparently derived from unweathered nodules, which had presumably been extracted from the underlying chalk. The majority of the flint

material was diagnostic and therefore datable to the Late Mesolithic/Neolithic. For example, a complete flint tranchet axehead in perfect condition and of Mesolithic/Early Neolithic type was recovered in good condition from the upper fill of an unexcavated archaeological feature (156), possibly a pit, in Trench 21. A high proportion of the flint material, along with the feature containing the axehead, was apparently associated with an ancient buried soil (palaeosol), which was also exposed in Trenches 19, 67 and 68, in the western part of Area 2.

Flint material dated to the Bronze Age was also recovered from Trench 21 and other trenches in the form of retouched scrapers, cores and flakes. For the most part, this material differed markedly in appearance from the early material, the pieces being generally smaller, more crudely worked, frequently made from Bullhead Flint or pebbles and showing clear signs of transport damage. However, re-occupation of the Late Mesolithic/Neolithic site as discussed above, along with renewed flint tool production cannot be precluded, and nearby Bronze Age occupation activity to the south is certainly suggested. This appeared to be confirmed by the presence of occupation remains in the form of a curvilinear gully (9) and two adjacent ditches (11 and 13) exposed in Trench 2, Area 1, which contained lithic and ceramic material of dated to the Bronze Age.

The presence in the western part of Area 2 of large quantities of flintwork in association with a buried soil and other archaeological features is important in suggesting the localised survival of a prehistoric landscape beneath a mantle of Brickearth colluvium. Flintwork production on and associated occupation of the site probably resulted from a ready source of flint nodules beneath the Brickearth, the lightness and fertility of the soil and, perhaps more importantly, the presence of a fresh water spring 40m to the west.

Moderate quantities of struck flint flakes and tools, along with small quantities of ceramic material, were recovered from seven trial trenches in evaluated areas to the west and south of Trench 21, or were collected as surface finds. The majority of these flints, which were of general Bronze Age appearance, had been subject to transport damage, were widely dispersed and were generally residual within linear features provisionally interpreted as ditches. Their presence suggested that the area was the focus of occupation activity throughout this period. One of the linear features (92) exposed in Trench 43, Area 2, was sealed by 25cms of redeposited Brickearth, suggesting that, like the palaeosol in the western part of Area 2, it had escaped truncation by subsequent ploughing because colluvium had migrated downhill at a greater rate than ploughshare erosion occurred. The linear features as a group were interpreted on the basis of their widespread nature as the remains of multiphase Neolithic, Bronze Age and later ditched field systems, the earliest of which may have been associated with the Neolithic flint working and occupation site exposed to the west.

Thirty-five sherds of flint-tempered pot were also recovered from deposits within Trenches 2, 8, 12, 17, 21, 28, 55 and 62, with three sherds considered to be compatible in fabric type and decoration with Early and Later Neolithic types. However, these sherds' small size and lack of other diagnostic indicators meant that this identification could only be provisional. The remainder were dated broadly from the Mid Bronze Age to the Mid Iron Age (c. 1,500 BC - c. 400 BC), with most of these seemingly associated with a probable ditch, an adjacent curvilinear feature and several smaller features, probably pits or postholes, exposed within the northward extension of Trench 21. All of these features were sealed by 15 - 25cms of redeposited Brickearth. Their relation with the buried soil could not be ascertained.

Also present within Trenches 19, 20, 21, 28, 34, 68 and 69 was a complex series of archaeological features including ditches, gullies, a chalk wall foundation, pits and postholes, dated by their associated ceramics to the late pre-Roman Iron Age and the Roman period (c. 50

BC - c. 400 AD). Of particular interest was a large storage bowl of either Late Iron Age or Early Roman date, which was exposed in situ in trench 21. It was set into the upper fill of a very large pit, a series of intercutting pits or a backfilled quarry. Although the exact nature of the most of the late pre-Roman Iron Age and Roman period features could not be ascertained within the narrow exposure of the evaluation trenches, it was clear that structural and other remains associated with protracted occupation were present in the western part of Area 2, again probably because of the proximity of the spring. Evidence of occupation activity post-dating the Roman period was absent in this area.

Also dating to the Roman period was part of a large pit (40) which was excavated in Trench 65, in the eastern part of Area 2, between the quarried area and the railway. This pit contained large quantities of burnt material along with frequent fragments of roof tile (*imbrices* and *tegulae*) and potsherds dated to the second, third and fourth centuries. The presence of this feature in this location suggested the probable survival of nearby Roman structural remains where quarrying has not taken place.

In Area 1, evidence for medieval occupation activity associated with an agricultural cottage or small farmstead was exposed in Trenches 4 and 5. In Trench 4, a 12cm thick humic soil underlying modern plough soil contained potsherds dating from the twelfth century to the fourteenth century. A gully, a circular pit (possibly a post pit) and a probable post pad, all underlay the humic soil, and were apparently associated with an adjacent roughly metalled surface or the opportunistic use of an existing flint raft (see 3 below). In trench 5, 15m to the north, a rubbish pit, a ditch and several small cut features of unknown function were also associated with the same flint layer and contained similarly-dated ceramic materials, suggesting that medieval occupation activity was relatively widespread in the area.

### 3) The geology

Each of the Evaluation Areas occupies a topographically and geologically distinct tract of land, the difference being reflected partly in their respective agricultural histories. Area 1, south of the railway line, is part of 'the grounds adjoining the upper parts of town', described by Hasted as 'mostly hop plantations but several of them have lately given place to those of fruit' (Hasted, 1798, 319). Indeed, the land immediately east of the field containing Area 1 is still occupied by hop gardens and orchards. Area 2 adjoins and, to the north, forms part of 'a fine extended level, the fields of considerable size, and mostly unencumbered with trees or hedgerows, the lands being perhaps as fertile and as highly cultivated as any within this county' (ibid). The observation regarding the soil's fertility is of probable significance in regard to the evidence for Neolithic and Bronze Age field systems in Area 2 (see 4 below).

The surface geology of both evaluation areas is described in the Geological Memoir as 3rd Stage Head Brickearth of Late Pleistocene/Flandrian origin (Holmes, 1981, 83). Area 1 is located on higher-lying Head Brickearth overlying fine-grained clayey sand of the Thanet Beds. Here, the Brickearth appears to be between 30 and 40cms thick but is distinguishable from the Thanet Beds material only by geological and archaeological inclusions post-dating the formation of the Thanet Beds. Gravels in the form of lenses, tongues and rafts also characterise the Brickearth where it overlies the Thanet Beds but, where basal flint layers are not present, the boundary between the two deposits is graduated, probably as a result of wind action, general weathering and protracted ploughing.

Area 2 is located for the most part on a gentle, north-facing slope on which Head Brickearth overlies chalk. Here, the Head is up to 4m thick, except where it has been quarried away to the east, and 'occupies valleys, mantles their slopes or forms a cover to gently undulating ground' (ibid). This assertion was confirmed by the presence of periglacially-reworked chalk outcrops exposed during trial trenching in the quarried area, for example, in Trenches 60 and 65 (see 4 below).

The 3rd Stage Head Brickearth of the Faversham area shares many characteristics with the loess of Central Europe, which is considered to be aeolian (wind-deposited) in origin (see, for example, Favis-Mortlock, Bell and Boardman, 1997, 80). However, this origin is not unanimously accepted for the North Kent 3rd Head Brickearth. An explanation of the loessic soils of Faversham, Pegwell Bay and elsewhere as frost-soil from solifluction deposits is proposed by Holmes (Holmes, 1981, 85), and a polygenic origin has been proposed by Murton (Murton, 1998, 26). Regardless of its origin, an important part has certainly been played in the topographic formation of the area by wind erosion and down-slope movement in a process of continual surface redeposition of the Brickearth.

The evidence for field systems (see 4 below), along with the presence within the redeposited Brickearth (Hillwash Head) of archaeological materials for the most part dating to the Bronze Age, suggest that these downslope processes were greatly intensified by cultivation, which has probably taken place on the site from the Neolithic onwards (see 4 a below). Indeed, deforestation and subsequent plough-based cultivation are now recognised as a frequent principal cause of such erosion (Favis-Mortlock, Bell and Boardman, 1997, 80). That this is the case on the Abbey Fields site is suggested by the presence in Area 2 of a buried land surface rich in flint debitage and artifacts dating to the Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic and underlying redeposited Brickearth containing derived materials largely of later date.

The same process of Brickearth redeposition is responsible for the preservation of the paleosol in the western part of Area 2 exposed in Trial Trenches 19, 21, 67 and 68. The presence of such a soil beneath redeposited Brickearth in the Faversham area has been noted by Holmes (Holmes, 1981, Plate 7, 1981), but to the present writers' knowledge, its presence in association with fresh lithic material of the Neolithic has not previously been observed.

Loessic soils have long been recognised as the soil of preference for Neolithic farmers, probably because of their fertility and because their lightness made them easy to work (Evans, 1971, 19; Darvill, 1995, 49). This may explain the substantial evidence for Neolithic activity on the site, and contrasts with the archaeological record of the London Clay-dominated terrain to the east, where clearance, settlement and cultivation appears to be a largely Late Bronze/ Early Iron Age phenomenon (Allen, forthcoming; Williams, 1999).

#### 4) The results of the evaluation

##### 4.1) The stratified deposits

###### The Mesolithic/Neolithic

Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic material was recorded principally in Trench 21, from a palaeosol [45] sealed beneath a colluvial accumulation [81]. This also appeared in Trenches 19, 67 and 68. The palaeosol was cut by all Roman and later prehistoric features in this trench ([154], [60], [156]). Machining was necessarily deeper in this trench than others in order to determine whether secure archaeological deposits lay beneath the colluvium. Examination of the trench sections later showed some Roman ditches ([54],[58],[46]) cut in from higher up. These may themselves have been sealed by subsequent episodes of colluvation, precise relationships being obscured by modern ploughing and bioturbation.

The palaeosol was cut by a number of diffuse, probably prehistoric features, the precise nature of which could not be determined in evaluation. The Mesolithic axe (FN 113) was recovered from the top surface of one such feature, [156] and was probably contained within it. This, together with an admixture of prehistoric pot from over ancient soil surface suggests that the palaeosol may be cut by other prehistoric features. This is also supported by the lithic analysis, which suggests the presence of a derived, probably Bronze Age element to the assemblage from Trench 21. Neolithic material may also be present as a surface scatter across site, perhaps associated with early prehistoric field systems. For instance, a Neolithic scraper (FN 243) was recovered from the quarried area.

###### The Bronze and Iron Age

Three potsherds broadly dating to the Bronze/Early Iron Age were recovered from a linear, ditch-like feature (13, Trench 2, Area 1). Also exposed in this trench was a similarly ditch-like feature (11), part of an elongated pit (5/7) and part of a curvilinear gully (9), the latter containing two struck flakes, a burnt flake and a retouched scraper of Bronze Age appearance. Overall, Bronze Age or Early Iron Age occupation activity, along with the remains of prehistoric field systems was suggested. An apparently linear feature (94) exposed in Trench 43 was conditionally interpreted as a prehistoric ditch on the basis of its Brickearth-rich fill although, as it cut down through a 25cm thick deposit of Hillwash Head, it was thought to date to the later part of that period, when cultivation had been long established (see 3 above).

Nineteen potsherds broadly dated to the Later Bronze/Early Iron Age (c. 1500 BC - c. 400 BC) were recovered from an interface and 'cleaning' layer (19, 82 and 99) in Trench 21, where they appeared to be associated with a curvilinear feature (154), interpreted conditionally as an eaves or drip gully, and therefore suggesting the possible presence of a roundhouse immediately north of the trench. However, this feature was not excavated, and its association with the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age ceramics was postulated rather than proven. It should be noted that protracted, multi-period occupation activity in the area of this trench dictated that much archaeological material was residual, redeposited or intrusive, making definitive dating of features difficult.

Linear features identified provisionally as ditches were also exposed in Trenches 11, 12, 13, 15, 25, 27 and 54. Potsherds dated to the eleventh or twelfth centuries recovered from a ditch-like feature in Trench 8 were probably associated with the evidence for medieval occupation exposed in Area 1 some 100m to the south (see below). When taken in conjunction with the above-



described evidence from Trenches 2 and 43, the linear features overall were considered to represent evidence for an extensive, multi-period field system having occupied the site, probably dating from the later Neolithic/Bronze Age.

### **The Late Pre-Roman Iron Age and Roman period**

The Roman archaeology occupied a clearly defined area, revealed in Trenches 18, 19, 20, 21, 27, 28, 68 and 69, along the western edge of the Area B, closest to the spring, where it was sealed by the ploughsoil and cut the colluvium (81) where present, as in Trench 21. Here it was clear after machining that some features were visible in section above the machined level.

The southern extent of Roman cut features within this area was revealed in Trench 18. The features in this trench were relatively narrow compared with others further down the slope (for instance, in Trench 21). The features cut clay-rich natural brickearth (73) and were truncated by the ploughsoil; reflecting the denudation across the hilltop in this area, and contrasting with the colluvial accumulation downslope. Two narrow gullies or ditches ran north-west across Trench 18, the easternmost [132] being 50cm in width. To the west, a gully [134] was orientated closer to an eastern alignment and was 40cm. wide. A substantial ditch junction (135) in the centre of the trench appeared to represent a relationship between a ditch running north and a gully running on an eastern alignment. Such features may well have extended to the south before either returning or being truncated by the post-medieval quarrying (119) in Trench 17.

The recutting and extension of linear features revealed in Trench 19 suggests that multiple phases of enclosure definition are present on the site, the evolution of which may reflect shifts in the focus of settlement. Four linear cuts ran across the trench on a north-east alignment. The easternmost feature [130] was separate from the others in plan but may well have been another recut, the relationship now destroyed by the plough. It was 1.27m in width and 55cm deep, and was the recut of an earlier feature (129) just visible in the base. The earliest cut of the series of features just west of [130] was [126], which butt-ended 2.00m from the northern edge of the trench. It was 14cm deep and cut away to the west by [124]. This gully [124] butt-ended 50cm from the northern edge of the trench. It was 17cm deep and cut away to the west by [122]. The latest cut in this sequence [122] ran across the width of the trench and was 14cm deep. It is likely that [130] represents the earliest cut in this trench, as the progression of recutting seemed to be towards the west, presumably redefining this boundary as it silted up.

Several linear features ran across Trench 20, broadly in parallel. All features in this trench were sealed beneath the ploughsoil and sub-soil, but cut a flint spread [160], the precise nature of which was not resolved. Most ditches in this trench ran broadly parallel, from east to west. Ditches [84] and [88] probably represent a cut and recut of the same feature, the precise relationship destroyed by ploughing. The butt end of a ditch [89] was apparent in the centre of the trench, and extended north-east across the trench and extension. The full width was not apparent, as it was cut to the north by [88]. This was a substantial linear feature, some 1.5m. in width and 80 cm. deep, which appeared to represent the extension of the earlier boundary or enclosure represented by [113]. This probably represents evidence for changing patterns of enclosure on this site.

Trench 21 was dominated at the western end by at least one [46] large, and possibly several, intercutting features, part-sectioned by machine and dated to the late third and fourth century on the basis of pottery retrieved. The extent of these features was not fully determined to the west, but extended 16.5 m. from the end of the trench and 20 m. to the north in a trench extension. They may represent a series of intercutting quarry pits. Some later pits were visible in the westernmost extension to Trench 21, where they cut into the surface [158]. Additionally, a chalk

foundation [159] was recorded running east-west across this trench extension, some 60cm in width.

The central section of the trench was dominated by several linear features, the latest of which [58] ran south-east across the trench and the trench extension. This was dated to the late first century and was some 50 cm in width. It was obscured to the north-west, where it ran into a curvilinear ditch [154]. The precise relationship between these features was not determined. A short length of a linear feature [60] extended across the area of the palaeosol and 40 cm in width. It was cut to the north-west by [58], the stratigraphically latest feature in the trench, which was dated to the late first century. [58] extended some 6.3 m. across the trench and easternmost extension, cutting all features. Additionally, in connection with earlier material across this area of the trench, a mixed pottery assemblage was retrieved which was dated to between 50 BC – 400 AD. The linear features probably connected with similar features recorded in Trench 68, forming a series of enclosures extending and evolving within this area.

The furthest extent of the Roman occupation to the east of this area was represented by two linear features running north-west across Trench 27. The north-easternmost of these features [113] was 1.71m in width and 73cm deep. The south-westernmost feature ran parallel to it and was 1.23m. wide and 47cm deep. Although this represented the eastern extent of Roman features observed in this area, clearly these features must terminate or return further to the east. Delimiting these features is therefore of paramount importance in defining the limits of enclosure in this area.

Trench 28 revealed three linear features aligned north-east. These probably relate to ditches recorded in Trench 21 and 69. The north-easternmost of the three [96] was some 1.10m wide by 55cm deep. A narrow gully [101] 60cm wide by 10cm deep ran across the centre of the trench, on an east-west alignment. To the east of this [103] ran south-west across the trench. This was 1.00m in width and 47cm deep. There was a pronounced v-shape in the base which suggested the presence of a recut.

In addition to this clear concentration of Roman activity, a large Roman pit [40] was exposed and excavated in Trench 65, apparently outside the area undergoing development. This was some 2.60 m. in diameter and contained a mixture of pot, dated to between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century. Archaeology in this area was again sealed by a substantial colluvial cover, which had accumulated further down the slope.

### **The medieval**

In Trench 4, five archaeological features (22, 30, 138, 139, 141) were exposed, containing significant quantities of ceramic material (69 potsherds) dating from the twelfth to the fourteenth century. The features, interpreted respectively as an old soil, a post setting, a ditch, a gully or beam slot and a pit, appeared to have escaped destruction through ploughing because they occupied a shallow hollow or dip. Consequently, the cut features were sealed by the humic soil (22), which underlay the modern plough soil. Underlying the humic soil and cut by the features described above was a layer of flints, which appeared to represent the medieval land surface. Whether the flint layer was an example of deliberate metalling in the form of a rough courtyard or similar, or a naturally-occurring flint raft as described in 3 above could not be determined.

The same flint layer appeared to extend as far as Trench 5, 15m to the north, in which a large pit (38), a post hole (30) and a linear feature (32), almost certainly a ditch, were also exposed. These and adjacent less well-defined features contained a total of 26 potsherds dated, as in the case of Trench 4, from the twelfth to the fourteenth century. The presence of a medieval settlement,

probably a single cottage or small farmstead, in and around the area of Trenches 4 and 5, was therefore indicated, with an associated field system suggested by the evidence from Trench 8.

## 4.2 The Lithic Assemblage

### 4.2.1 Factual Data

In the course of the evaluation, 291 lithic artefacts were recovered from Abbey fields, Faversham. The majority of these (180) were retrieved from Trench 21, from cut features ([53], [57]), colluvium and machine spoil ([19], Trench 21), and from surface cleaning of the buried soil [82]. Notably, this material included a tranchet axe/adze generally regarded as Mesolithic in date and two tranchet axe sharpening flakes. One hundred and eleven flints were recovered from across the rest of the site, the largest concentration after Trench 21 deriving from Trench 8 (32 artefacts). This pattern can broadly be taken to represent a continuous surface scatter of lithic debris with a marked concentration around Trench 21, probably relating both to intensity of occupation and post-depositional environment.

Several features of the assemblage from Trench 21 demanded that it be treated as an integrated assemblage, in contrast to material from across the site as a whole. Both technological and typological criteria indicate a Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic date for a large portion of the assemblage, as opposed to Bronze Age material from the rest of the site. Additionally, analytic contrasts could be drawn within this assemblage allowing a distinction to be made between derived and *in situ* material. Primarily, very fresh material was retrieved from the buried soil in Trench 21, including three refitting flakes (FN131 – 133, see fig 9). This contrasts with evidence of slight abrasion and damage to artefacts residual in features across site and derived from the colluvium/ machine spoil around Trench 21. As material from these contexts had necessarily been conflated during excavation, a condition-based analysis was undertaken in order to try and separate them and to determine whether this correlated with technological distinctions suggestive of different dates.

Distinctions have been drawn between later prehistoric industries on the basis of regularity of blade production (Pitts and Jacobi 1979; Ford *et al.* 1984). Dorsal scar count, pattern and butt type all provide evidence for this, as do flake dimensions and analysis of cores. Summarised briefly, there is a linear trend from the Late Mesolithic through to the Late Bronze Age (and indeed, Iron Age) away from narrow, parallel flakes or blades. These are reduced from unipolar or bipolar cores of high quality raw material, using careful core maintenance, platform preparation and indirect percussion. Later industries are characterised by broader, thicker flake production with larger platforms from multiplatform cores of less than optimum material (Edmonds 1995). Although such contrasts are obviously mitigated by local conditions and contexts of tool production, it remains a useful guide to dating lithic assemblages.

Comparisons between fresh and derived material from Trench 21 demonstrated that the technological characteristics of the fresh material can be described as broadly reflecting a greater element of blade production and associated techniques, whereas the derived material reflects more *ad hoc* flake production. This, together with the colluvium and buried soil observed during the evaluation (see section 3) suggests the presence of an *in situ* late Mesolithic/Neolithic landsurface sealed by colluvium containing derived Bronze Age material. This colluvial event could relate to the advent/intensification of agriculture in this area.

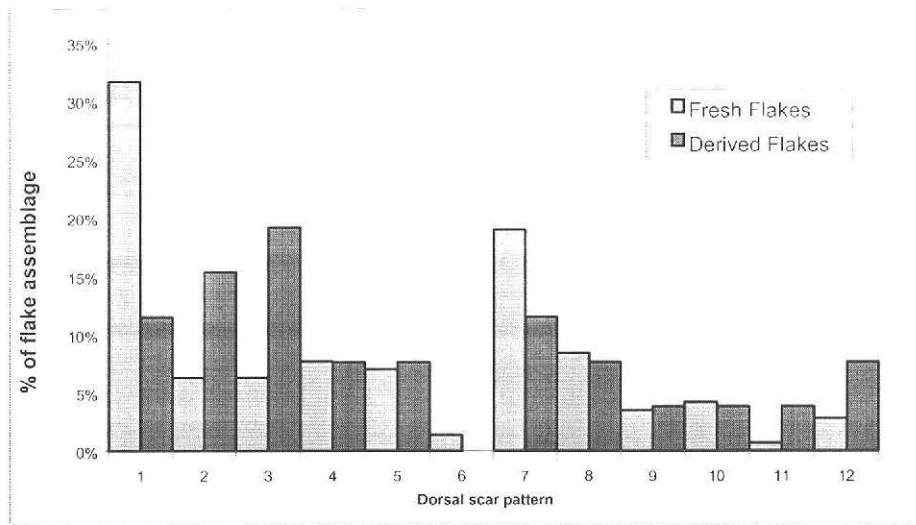


Fig.4 Comparison of dorsal scar pattern on fresh and derived flakes from trench 21

Dorsal scar pattern reflects dominant methods of core reduction; as can be seen from Fig. 4. Fresh material from trench 21 is dominated by types 1 and 7 (see Ashton and McNabb 1992), reflecting removals from either the proximal or proximal and distal ends respectively. This indicates unipolar and bipolar reduction strategies associated with blade production. In contrast, the derived material is dominated by types 2 and 3, indicating removals from the proximal and the right or both lateral edges. Such a pattern suggests the turning of a multiplatform core, arguably a Bronze Age rhythm of core reduction

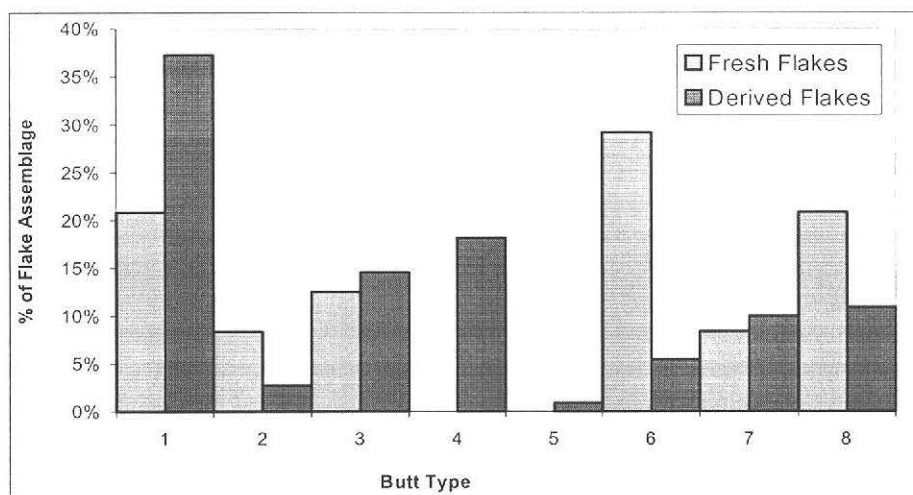
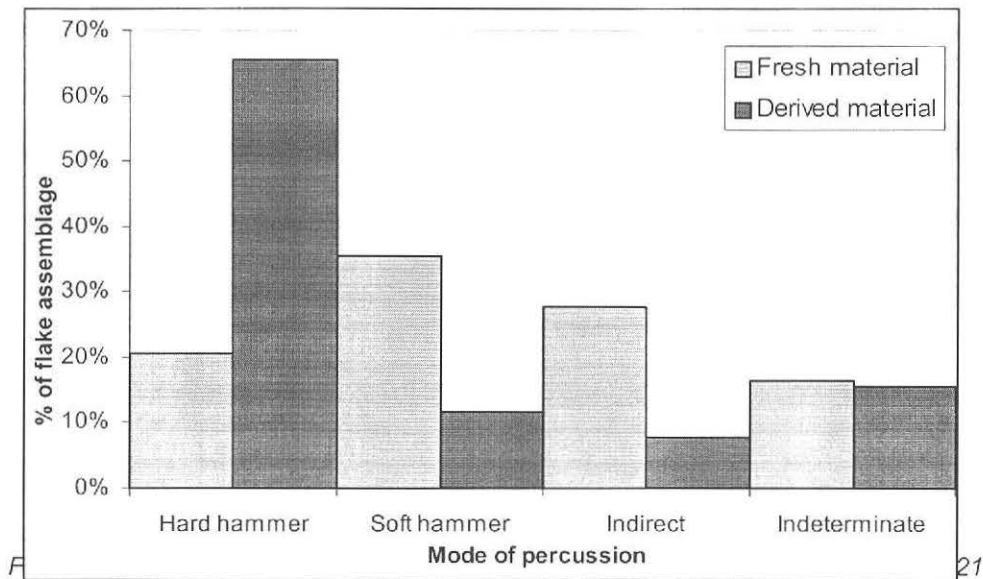


Fig. 5 Comparison of butt type on flakes from trench 21

Butt types on flakes provide valuable evidence of techniques used in core reduction, especially when considered together with mode of percussion. The derived material shows little specialised platform preparation (see fig. 5), with a predominance of deep butts typical of hard hammer percussion as well as many natural (but non-cortical) platforms, suggesting the use of naturally fractured river pebbles or frost fractured flint as raw material. In comparison with the fresh chalk flint predominantly used to produce the fresh blade debitage, this could be regarded as a less than ideal material. The fresh material from trench 21 exhibits high numbers of prepared platforms showing rubbing, trimming or faceting. This is significant as it relates to a high degree of control

over blade production, which together with bladelet and blade core rejuvenation flakes from the same context (FN 158,161, 207, 240) suggest an Early Neolithic date for this assemblage.

An important aspect of these results for fresh flakes from Trench 21 is the dominance of soft hammer type butts, which together with evidence for mode of percussion suggests that a large portion of the fresh assemblage represents the products of biface thinning. (see fig.6). This is particularly significant considering some of the typological aspects of the assemblage discussed below.



The most significant find from Trench 21 was a tranchet axe or adze (Fig. 7), generally regarded as typologically Mesolithic. Reduced from an elongated bullhead nodule, it exhibits a plano-convex profile and is formed through a combination of hard and soft hammer percussion. Eighteen removals were recorded from the ventral face and nineteen from the dorsal face, including two tranchet sharpening blows - the initial deep sharpening blow and a subsequent, smaller resharpening blow. The tip appears to be lightly trimmed after the removal of this blow, presumably to strengthen the edge. An additional interesting feature of the axe is the attempt to remove a step termination from the dorsal by trimming it, in a similar manner to the first stage of bladelet core reduction, and then attempting to strike a blow along this ridge from the distal end. This effort failed, the tiny platform shattering.

Two tranchet axe sharpening flakes were also recovered from this area (Fig.7); FN 49 is a resharpening flake of fine grey cherty flint recovered from a Roman ditch in Trench 21 and FN 269 a resharpening flake of bullhead flint. Both are the second such removal from their respective axes. Other retouched toolforms from Trench 21 can be taken as evidence for an earlier Neolithic date (see fig. 8); for instance, retouched blades (eg.FN 87, FN 119) and endscrapers made on blades (eg. FN 117) Although previously regarded as a Mesolithic type, tranchet axe manufacture clearly persists into the period categorised as Neolithic (Edmonds 1995). Other tranchet axe manufacturing sites from Kent are known at Cliffe (Ashton 1988) and Finglesham (Parfitt and Halliwell 1983). Finglesham, an embedded axe manufacture site, with which this assemblage shares a number of features, has been TL dated to 4660 ± 600BC (Parfitt and Halliwell 1988). Whilst this underlines the fact that Mesolithic/Neolithic distinctions are to a great extent an analytic construct, it also represents further evidence for a transitional date for the sealed Abbey Fields assemblage.

Material from across the rest of the site is less easy to classify, as numerically smaller assemblages cannot be reliably evaluated. The majority of this material is largely unpatinated and exhibits a combination of Neolithic/Bronze Age technological and typological traits – a mixture of blade and flake technologies, mixed raw material exploitation, and a wide variety retouched tools. A significant find is represented by an earlier Neolithic-type scraper from spoil in the quarried area (FN 243). 87% of the retouched tools from the site as a whole are made on flakes rather than blades, mainly modified flakes (48%) or notches (26%). Most retouch is invasive, with no particular preference for position. When considered with the flake-production dominated character of the assemblage over the site as a whole, this can be seen as evidence for later Neolithic/Bronze age activity spread widely over the area of the site, in contrast with the sealed Mesolithic/Neolithic assemblage from trench 21.

#### 4. 2 .2 Quantity and Present Location

	<i>No. of Artefacts</i>	<i>Cores</i>	<i>Whole Flakes</i>	<i>Retouched Flakes</i>	<i>Shatter</i>	<i>Other Artefacts</i>
<b>Total Assemblage</b>	291	8	230	43	50	3
<b>%</b>		3%	79%	15%	17%	1%
<b>Trench 21</b>	180	5	142	18	30	3
<b>%(n = 180)</b>		3%	79%	10%	17%	2%
<b>Trench 8</b>	32	1	26	3	3	0
<b>%(n = 32)</b>		3%	81%	9%	9%	0%
<b>All other trenches</b>	79	3	62	21	17	0
<b>%(n =79)</b>		4%	78%	27%	22%	0%

Table 1. Summary artefact totals from Abbey Fields, Faversham

The artefacts are currently stored at Canterbury Archaeological Trust offices, bagged and labelled according to context and position.

#### 4. 2. 3. State of the Archive

The variables detailed below were recorded for each artefact in Excel and comprise the Abbey Fields, Faversham lithic catalogue;

- Find reference number
- Context number
- Trench number
- Equivalent context numbers
- Mode of percussion
- Condition
- Cortex percentage
- Raw material
- Additional comments/typological identification

##### **Additional variables coded for flakes;**

- Dimensions ( mm.recorded using principle of minimum square)
- Dorsal scar pattern (Following Ashton 1992, modified in response to character of assemblage)
- Dorsal scar count

Relict core edges (Ashton 1992)  
Butt type (Following Ashton 1992, modified in response to character of assemblage)  
Presence/absence of retouch; position and nature

**Additional Variables coded for cores**

Number of separate core episodes  
Number of removals per episode  
Core episode type (Ashton and McNabb 1996)

**4. 2. 4. Potential**

A substantial assemblage of embedded Mesolithic/Neolithic material was collected from a relatively small area at Abbey Fields, Faversham, sealed beneath a colluvial deposit containing derived Bronze Age flints. If, as is suggested, the Bronze Age material overlies a preserved ancient landsurface also present in trenches 19, 67 and 68, this may represent a potentially extensive *in situ* axe manufacture site. Other such sites are known from Kent, at Finglesham (Parfitt and Halliwell 1983) and Cliffe (Ashton 1988) The examination of such a site would provide important information concerning the technology and dating of such industries in southern Britain, as well as detailed information concerning local settlement and resource exploitation, within-site behaviour and context-specific influences upon technology and rhythms of making. Such a study would shed valuable light upon the Mesolithic/Neolithic transition in this area. Detailed excavation and examination of the lithic material is necessary to realise the high potential of such a site, to which end the recommendations detailed below are made (see section 5).

**5) Conclusions and recommendations**

The evidence for a Late Mesolithic/Neolithic occupation/settlement site in the western part of Evaluation Area 2 is compelling in respect of the previously-discussed lithic assemblage, making this a site of high regional/national importance in relation to the Mesolithic/Neolithic transition. The potential is significantly increased by the survival of an associated buried palaeosol. Field systems to the south and west, which may be in part contemporary with the Bronze Age flintwork and associated archaeological features, can be used to place the site within its contemporary local landscape setting. Full scale excavation may link these later phases of prehistoric occupation with the Mesolithic/Neolithic activity. It is therefore recommended that the site be subject to a comprehensive programme of archaeological excavation in advance of development. It is also recommended that, because of the clear importance of the site and because of its stratigraphic complexity, a detailed excavation and recording methodology be established prior to the commencement of any further archaeological works.

Examination of the Mesolithic/Neolithic landsurface should be undertaken as a separate phase of excavation, to limit residuality and to allow the distinction of areas of buried soil unintersected by later features, as well as the delimitation of the lithic scatter. Ideally, the buried soil should be excavated by hand, with individual artefacts being plotted to allow refitting studies between areas. Soil should be sieved on site to retrieve small debitage and microliths if they are present. To this end, a lithic specialist should be present on site.

Burnt flints were recovered from the buried soil; and if large enough samples are recovered during excavation, these should undergo thermo-luminescence dating. This would allow better resolution of the archaeological and geomorphological sequence of the site, and contribute to recent revised dating of transitional industries in Southern Britain. A technological analysis should be undertaken on all lithic debitage from the site, aimed towards distinguishing manufacturing processes rather

categorising the products of reduction (Ashton 1988). This should be integrated with refitting studies, allowing the reconstruction of movement and action within site. As has been demonstrated above, refits are present on the site. Some attempt should be made to source raw materials, as this has implications for understanding local patterns of exploitation and extraction, relating to movements through the landscape. These should be related to known patterns from other local sites, in order to achieve a regional perspective.

Also in the western part of Area 2, the substantial archaeological remains include evidence for structures dated to the Bronze/Iron Age and the Late Iron Age and Roman period. This is of local/regional archaeological importance in terms of understanding settlement development following the Neolithic. This is also true of the evidence for Bronze Age settlement activity exposed in Trench 2, Area 1. Similarly, the later material in the western part of Area 2 provides an important indicator of the intensity of Late Iron Age/Roman-period occupation activity in the area. However, although the evaluation has demonstrated the date-range, extent and quality of these remains, the precise nature of the occupation activity has yet to be ascertained. Further archaeological work is therefore recommended on that basis.

The evidence for medieval settlement activity in Area 1 is of local importance, particularly given the emphasis in the Faversham area upon the farming heritage of Kent. Any information obtained concerning previous patterns of farming and life in the area is likely to be of interest to local historians and residents; especially when contrast with the better historical evidence from the Abbey itself. It is recommended that this area should be the subject of further, small-scale excavation.

In conclusion, the area under consideration for development at Abbey Fields, Faversham encompasses significant archaeological remains relating to a number of periods. Whilst evidence of Medieval and later prehistoric activity is sparsely scattered over the entire area, the most marked concentration of Late Iron Age/Roman and, notably, Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic material, focuses around the west side of Area 2, closest to the spring. This area should form the context for a detailed, two-phase excavation strategy, aimed initially at establishing the extent and development of Late Iron Age/Roman settlement and land use, as well as an overall geomorphological framework for the site as whole. It is recommended that specialist environmental input is sought at this stage. On the basis of this work, the context and extent of the Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic landsurface can be better established prior to the second phase of fieldwork and excavation targetted on the basis of this. Both in terms of archaeological importance and public interest, this site is potentially immensely important at many scales of resolution.



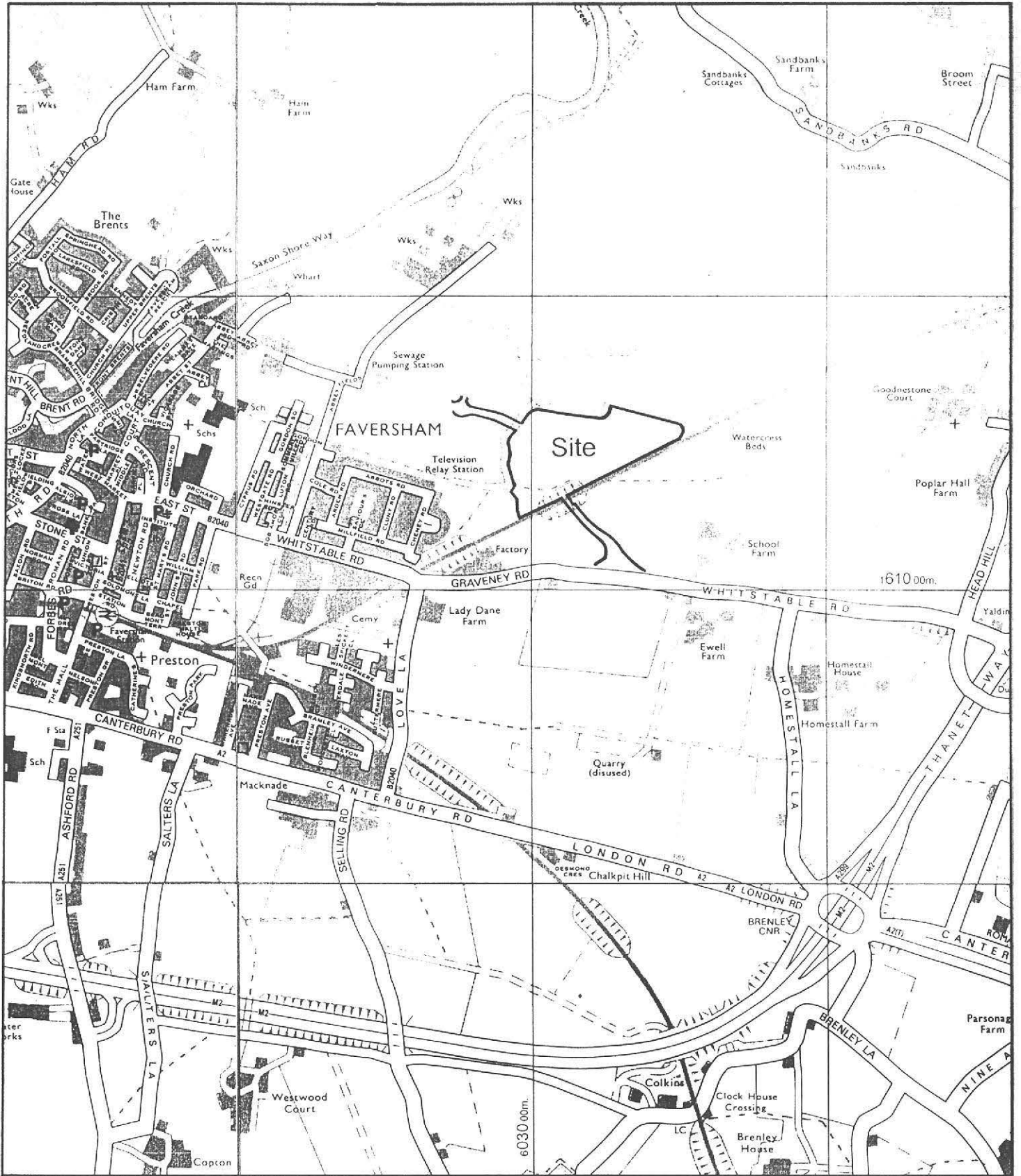
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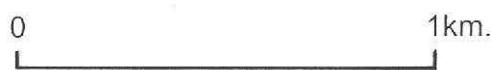
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Site location plan



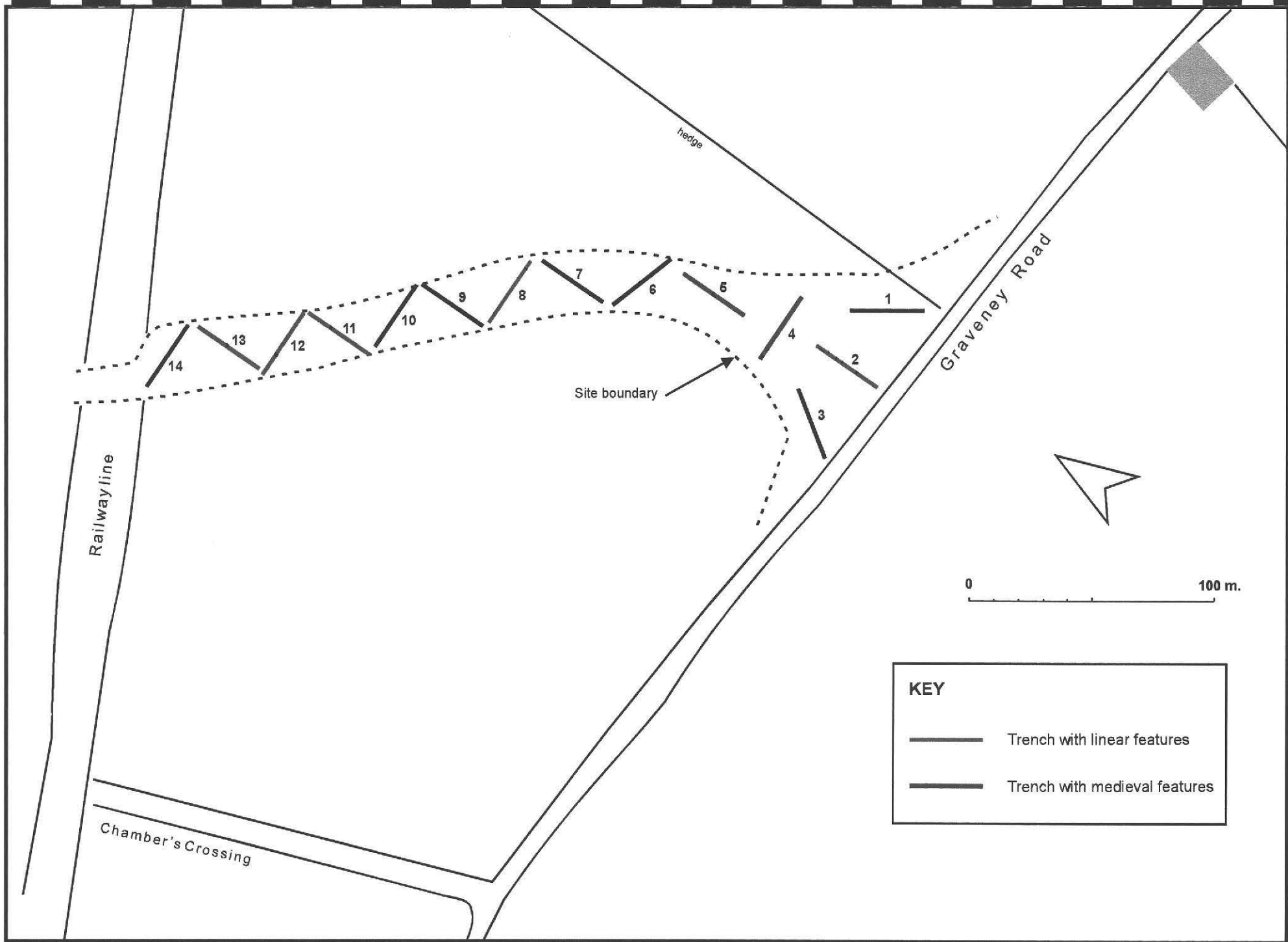


Fig 2: Abbey Park, Faversham - layout of trenches 1-14



Fig 3: Abbey Fields (Park), Faversham - layout of trenches 15-69

# Trench 2

Plan

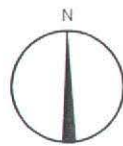
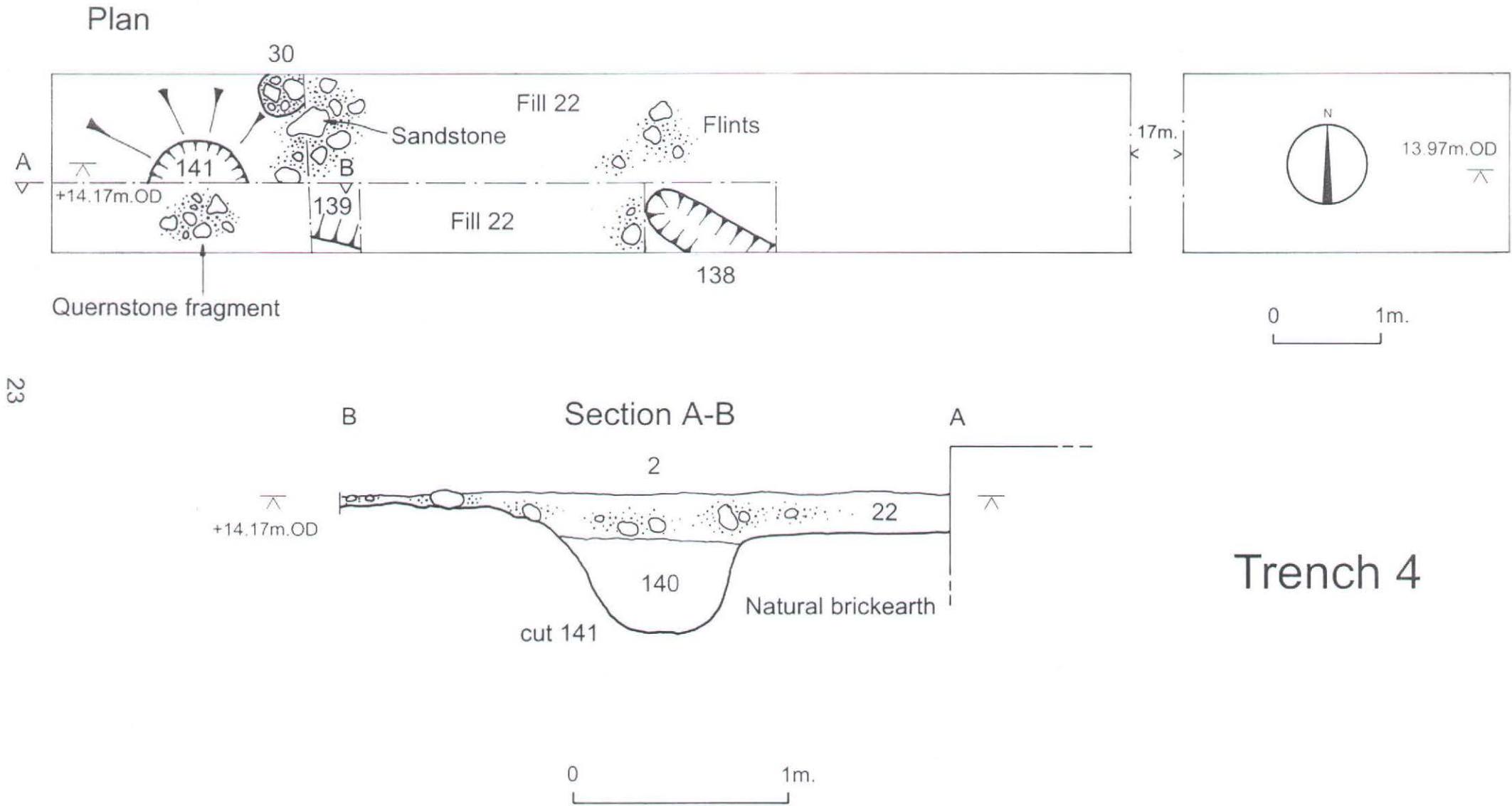


Fig.12 Plan of trench 2





Trench 4

23

Fig.13 Plan of trench 4 showing section across cut 141

# Trench 5

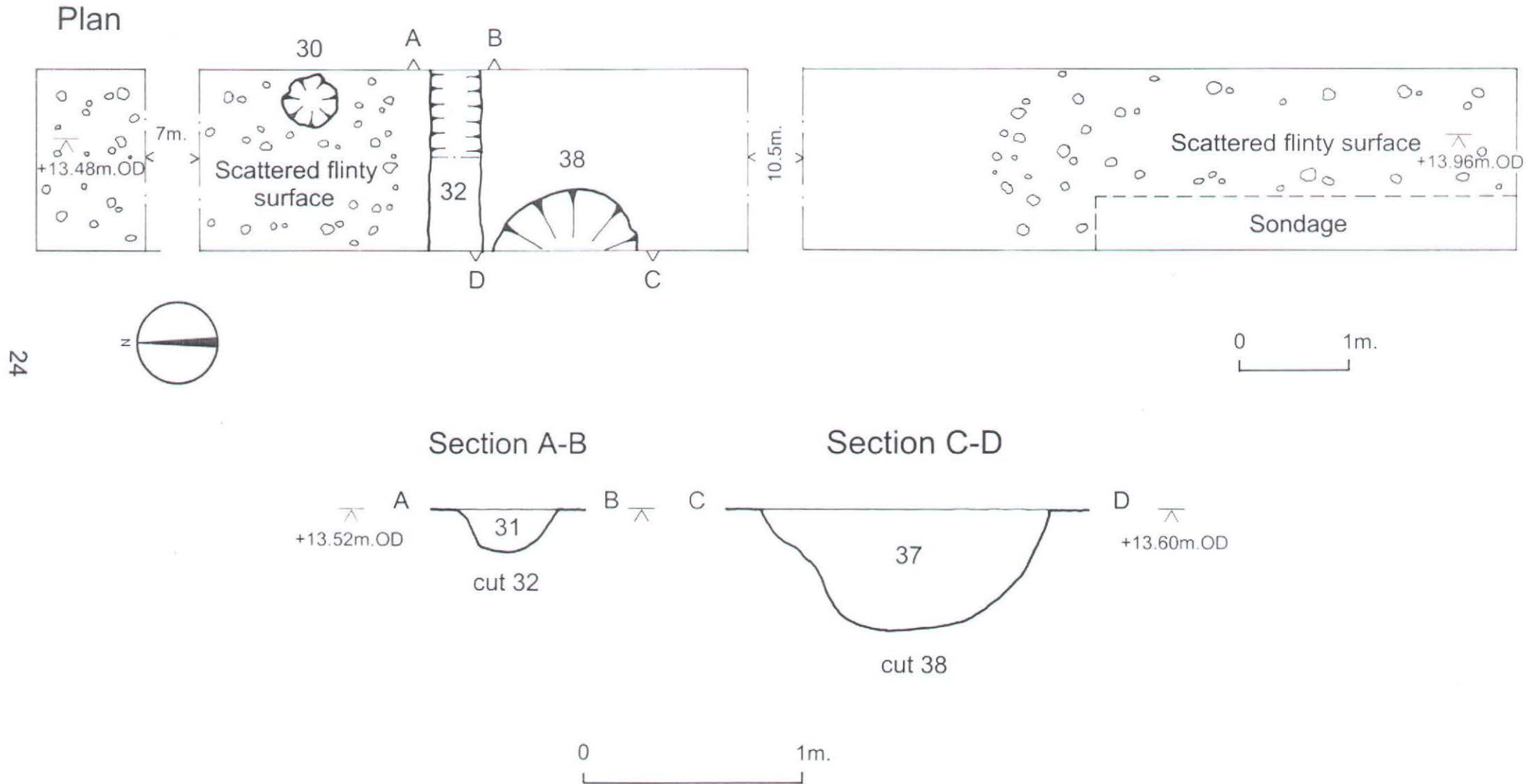
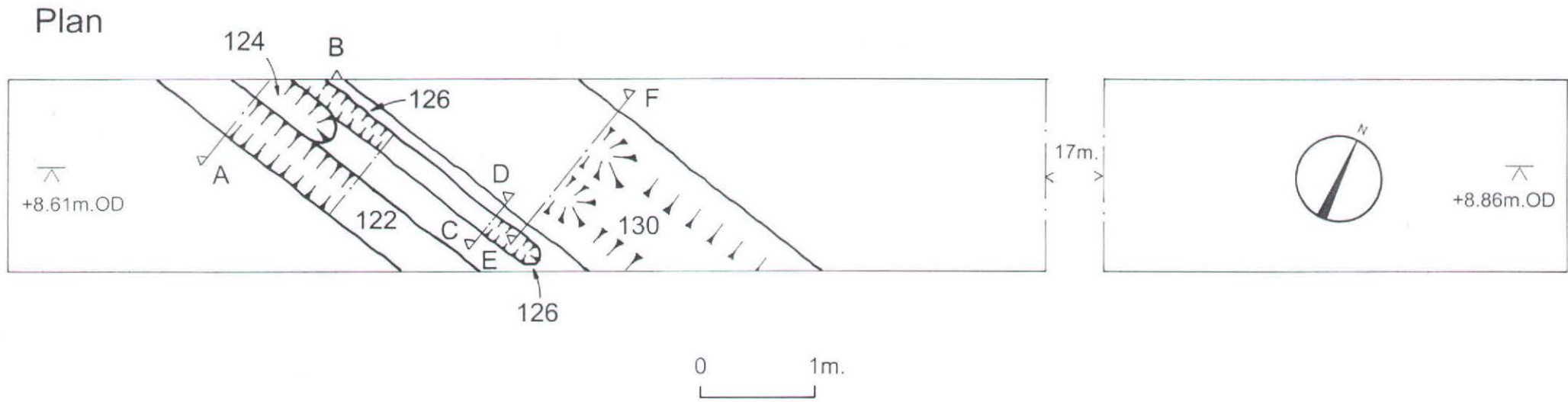


Fig.14 Plan of trench 5 showing sections across cuts 32 & 38



# Trench 19



25

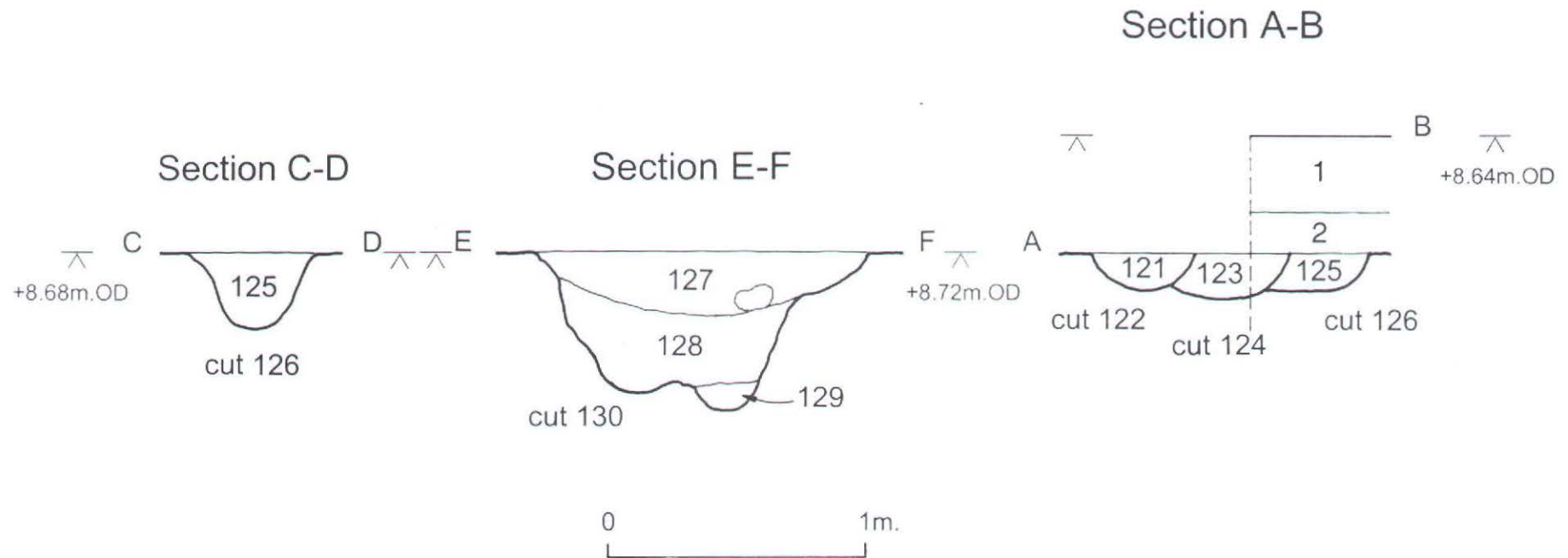


Fig.15 Plan of trench 19 showing sections across ditch/gully cuts 122, 124, 126 & 130

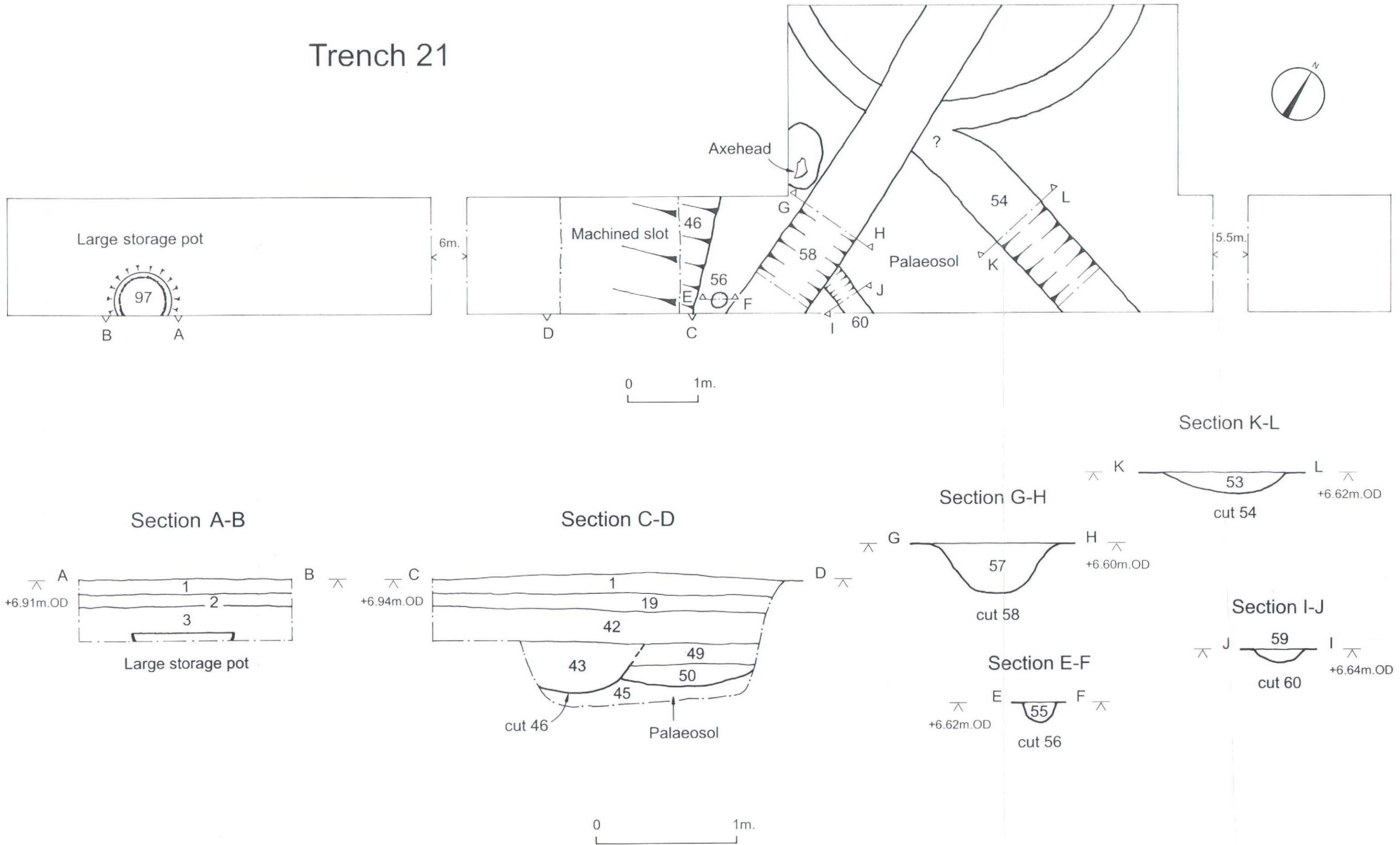


Fig.16 Plan of trench 21 showing sections across cuts 46,54,56,58 & 60

# Trench 21 extension

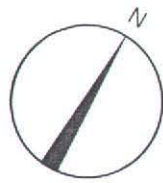
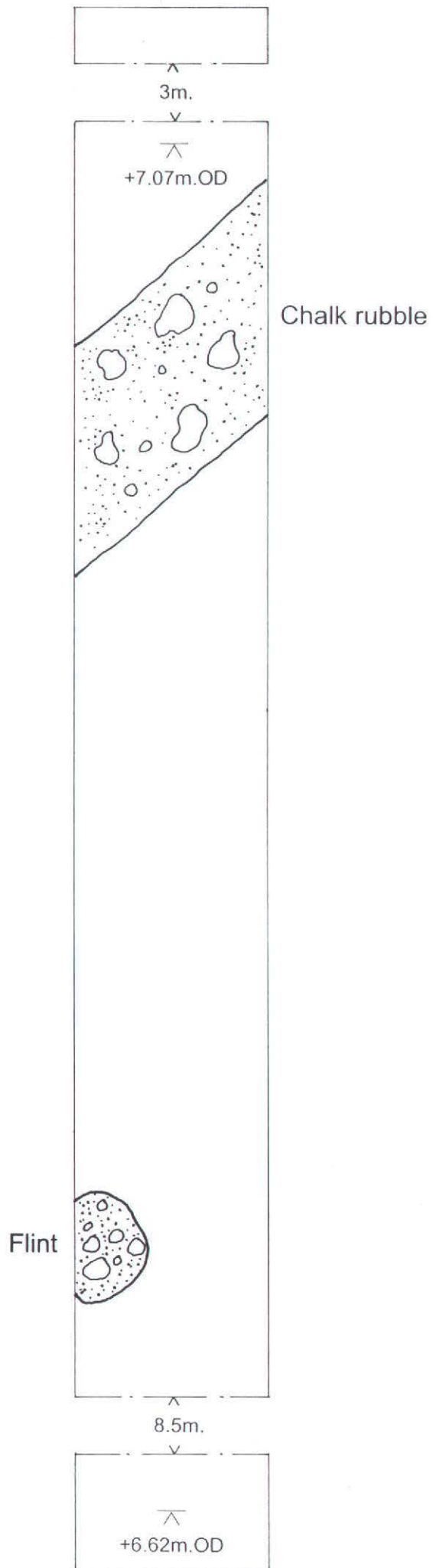
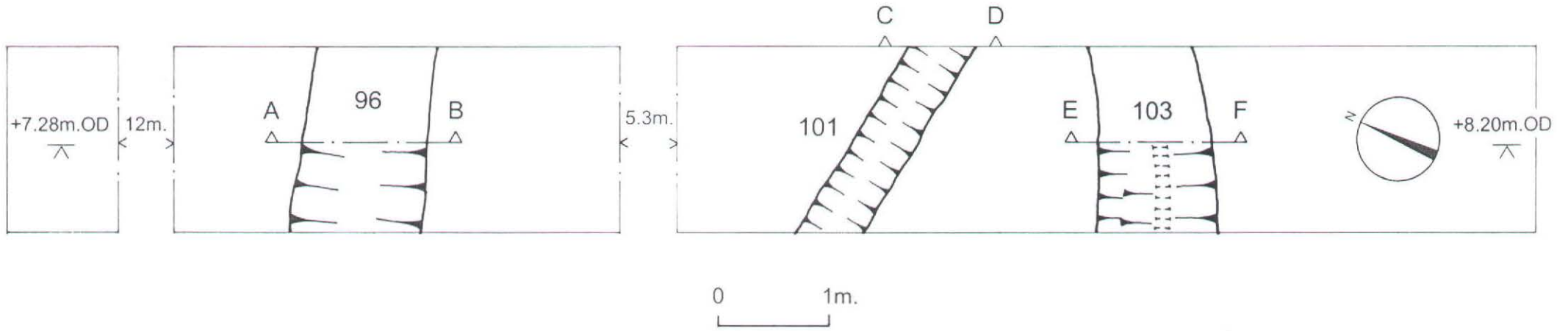


Fig.17 Plan of extension to trench 21



# Trench 28



28

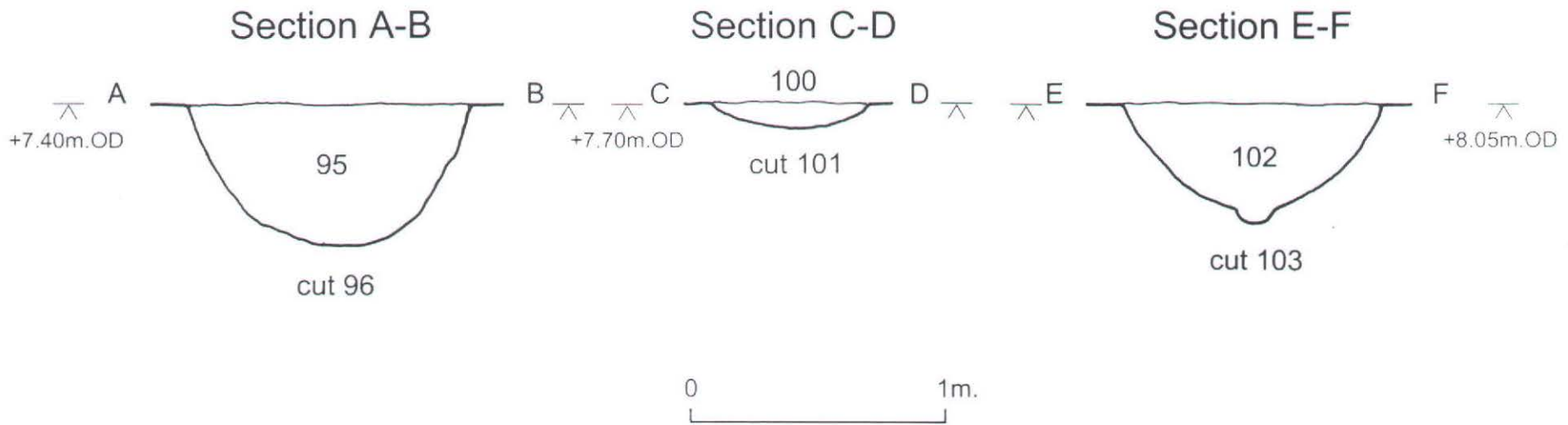
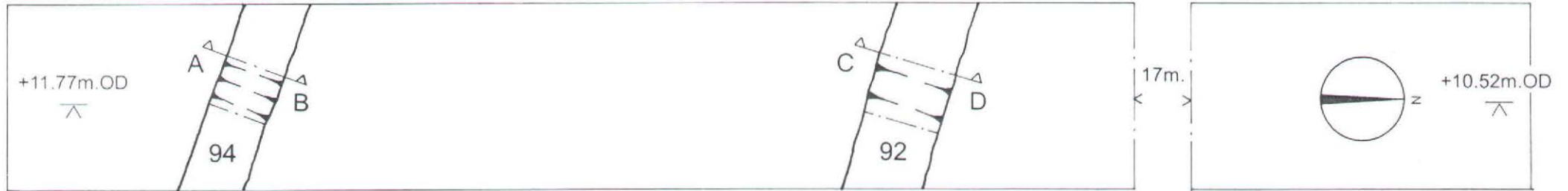


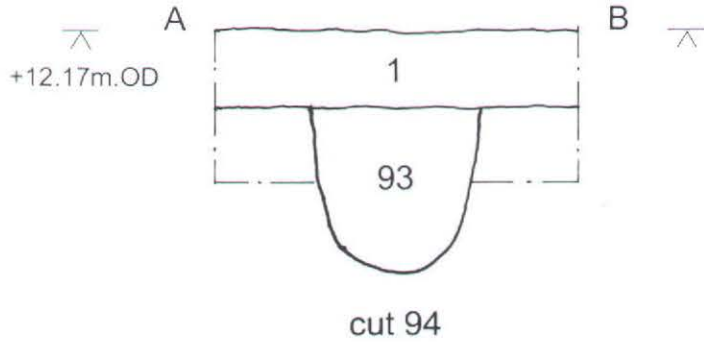
Fig.18 Plan of trench 28 showing sections across cuts 96, 101 & 103

# Trench 43



29

## Section A-B



## Section C-D

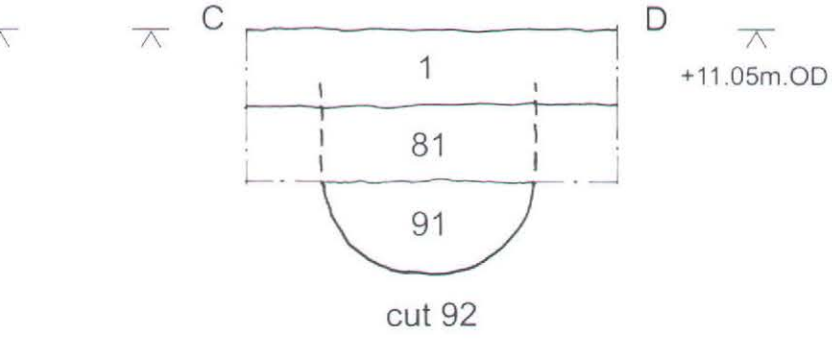
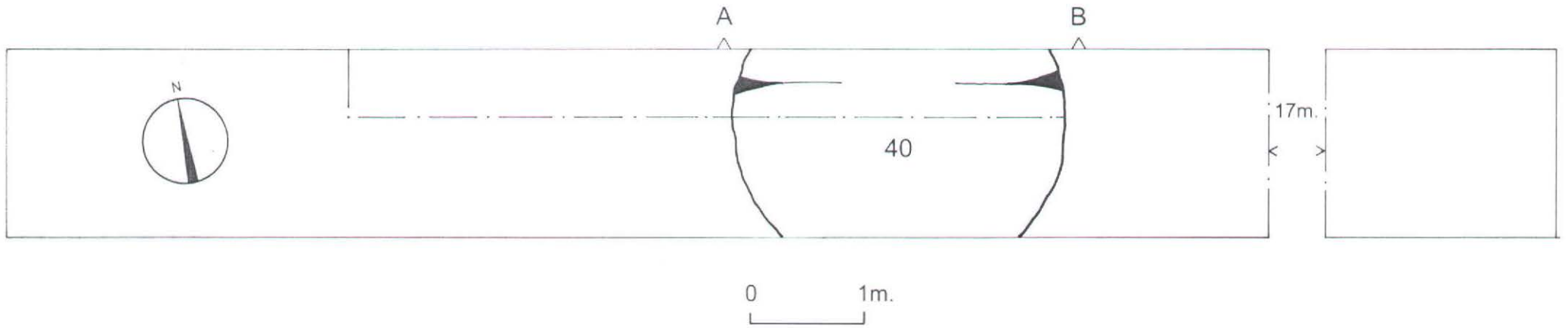


Fig.19 Plan of trench 43 showing sections across cuts 92 & 94

# Trench 65



30

## Section A-B

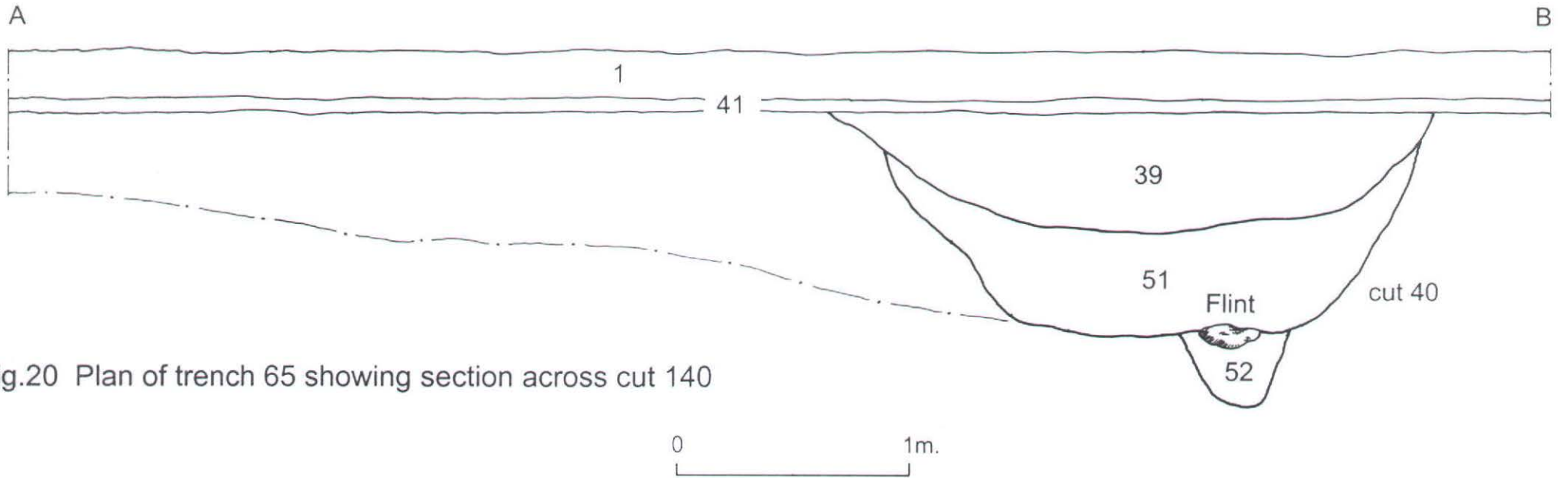


Fig.20 Plan of trench 65 showing section across cut 140



*Fig. 7 Mesolithic tranchet axe/adze and axe sharpening flakes from Trench 21*



*Fig. 8 Typologically Neolithic retouched blades and bladelet core*





*Fig. 9 Refitting flakes from Trench 21 (FN 131 – 133)*



Fig. 10 representative assemblage of Medieval pottery from Abbey Fields, Faversham

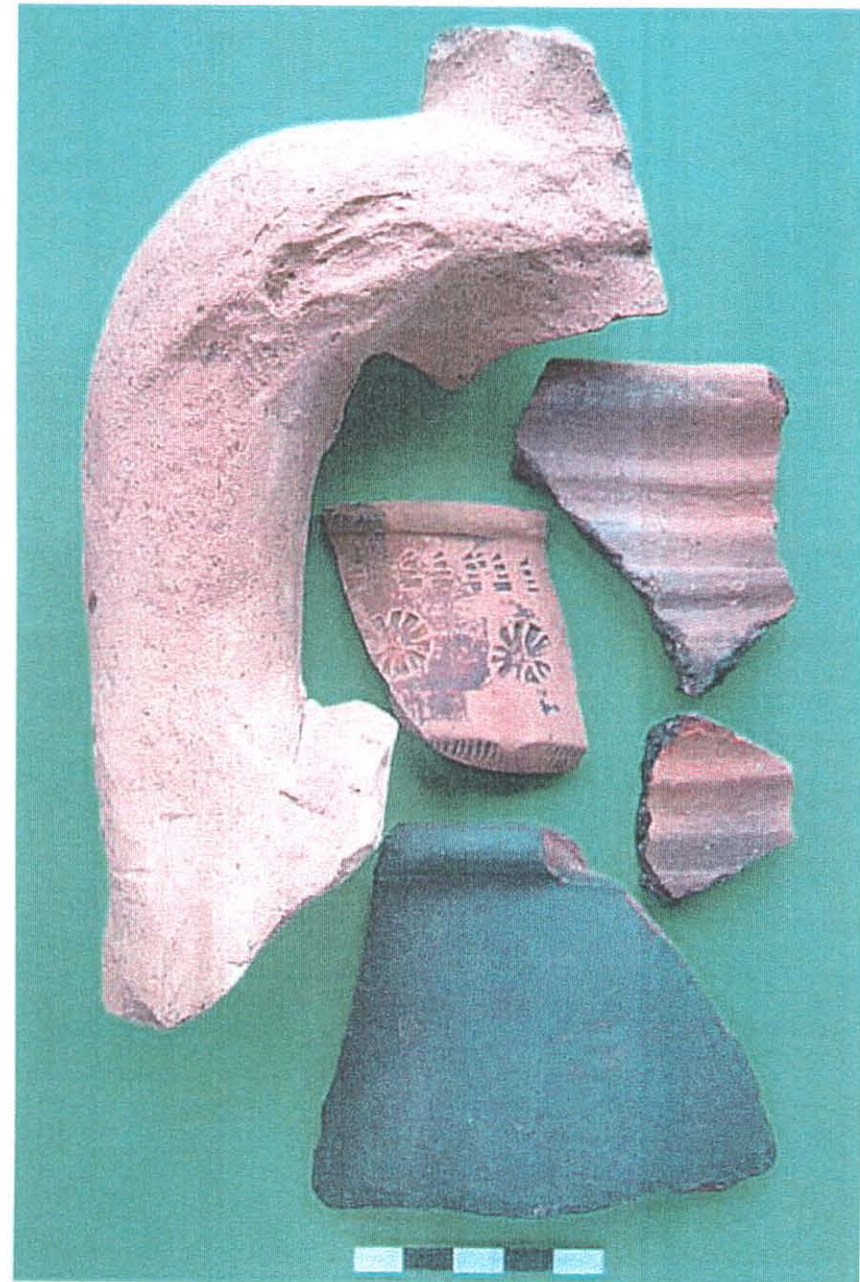


Fig. 11 Roman pottery from Abbey Fields, Faversham

# Trench 21

## North-west facing section

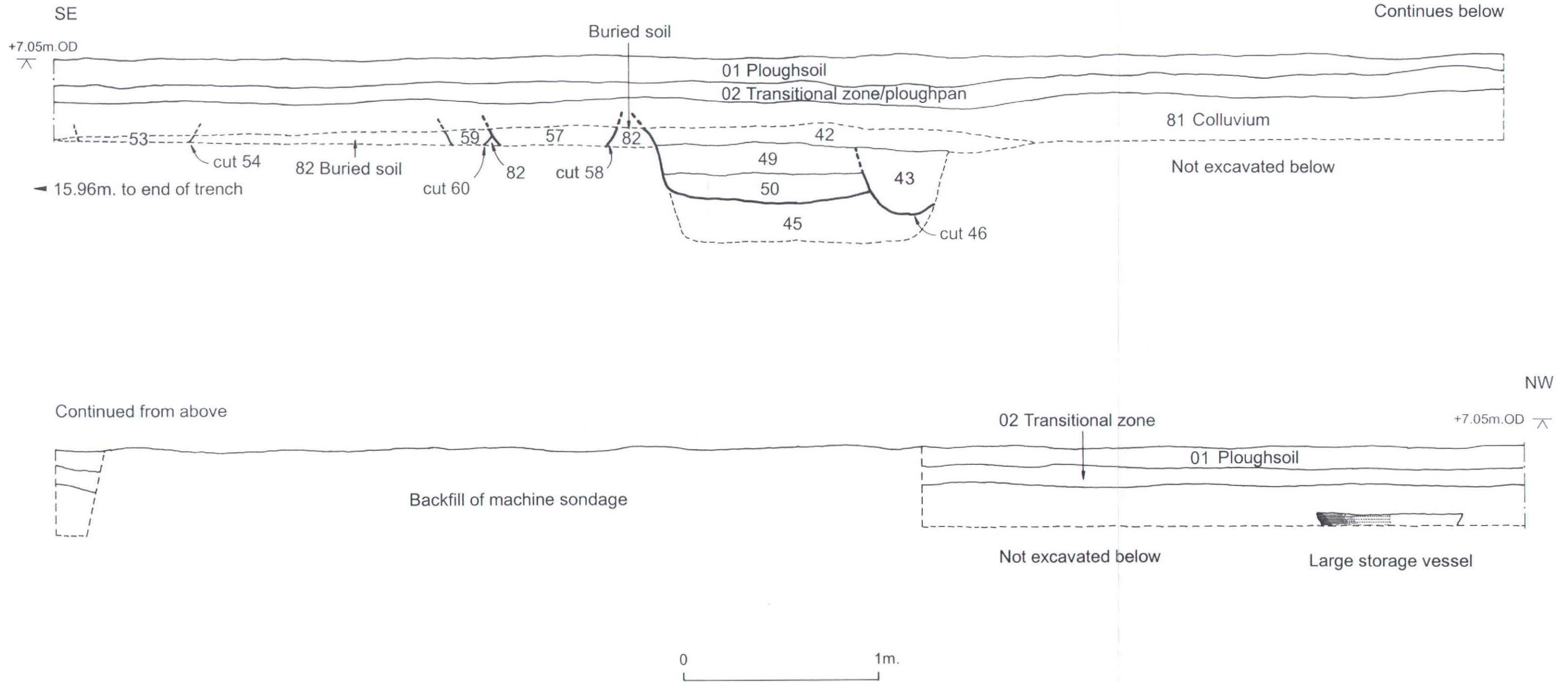


Fig.21 North-west facing section of trench 21