

REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING-BRIEF ON THE LINE OF TWO
PIPELINES ACROSS THE LATE IRON-AGE AND
ROMANO-BRITISH SITE AT RAMPTON
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE MARCH-JUNE 1966

TRENT & PEAK
ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST



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AND ROMANO - BRITISH SITE AT RAMPTON,
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MARCH - JUNE 1996

Author: D.J. GILBERT (T&PAT)

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Trent & Peak Archaeological Trust
University Park
Nottingham NG7 2RD
Tel (0115) 9514821
Fax (0115) 9514824

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Results of an Archaeological Watching-Brief on the line of two pipelines across the late Iron Age and Romano-British site at Rampton, Nottinghamshire on behalf of Powergen Plc, March - June 1996.

SUMMARY

- * Trent & Peak Archaeological Trust were commissioned by Powergen at Cottam Power Station near Rampton, Nottinghamshire to conduct a watching brief on the machine-excavation of a series of pits dug to carry supporting anchor blocks for two slurry pipelines.
- * Both pipelines run through an archaeological site known to contain important settlement evidence of the later Iron Age and Romano-British periods.
- * Cleaning of the exposed surface in one of the machine-pits revealed the compressed remains of a single pottery vessel, together with a small number of sherds from different vessels, all of Romano-British date.
- * The large vessel is a pottery type current from the later Roman period, not previously found in any quantity on the site. Its large size suggests that it is from an undisturbed context, which in turn, suggests that the archaeological deposits could be relatively well preserved at this point.
- * Unstratified Romano-British pottery sherds were also found in three of the other machine-pits.
- * The machine-pits containing the pottery were all in areas outside the cropmark enclosures, as were the finds from the 1960s excavations, which demonstrates that the settlement is not just confined to within the enclosures, but lies outside them too.

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Results of an Archaeological Watching-Brief on the line of two pipelines across the late Iron Age and Romano-British site at Rampton, Nottinghamshire on behalf of Powergen Plc, March - June 1996.

INTRODUCTION

In April 1996 Trent & Peak Archaeological Trust were commissioned by Powergen at Cottam Power Station near Rampton, Nottinghamshire to conduct a watching brief on the machine-excavation of a series of pits dug to carry supporting anchor blocks for two slurry pipelines (SK820727 : Fig. 1). The objective of the watching brief was to allow the recording of any archaeological deposits uncovered during the groundworks.

The watching brief was carried out by Doug Gilbert for the Trust on the 29th April, 7th of May, and the 24th and 25th June 1996.

The pipelines both ran through a site known to contain important settlement evidence. Aerial photography has shown cropmarks of linear features and possible enclosures in field nos 0067 and 0867 (Notts SMR 4698). Excavations in the 1960s (Fig. 1) and in 1990 have revealed post-built structures, ditches and evidence of metalworking dating from the 1st century BC to the 2nd century AD, with some evidence of later activity (Challis 1990; Ponsford 1992).

TOPOGRAPHY AND PIPELINE ROUTE

The archaeological settlement is located on a low gravel platform within the floodplain of the River Trent. These sands and gravels form an 'island' surrounded by alluvial deposits, with a relict water channel to the west (Challis 1990). Pipeline A ran north - south along the gravel 'island', pipeline B ran east - west from the floodplain alluvium up onto the gravel 'island'. Both pipelines ran some 2m west and north of the current field boundaries (see Fig. 2).

METHODOLOGY

Both pipelines were supported on anchor blocks. Pipeline A called for the machine excavation of six pits for anchor blocks across the site with an additional two larger pits at either end of the pipeline. The six pits measured 2.20m x 1.60m. Those at each end to carry the thrust blocks were larger and trapezoid in shape, measuring less than 3.00m square. The pits were dug using a 2.20m ditching bucket to a depth of 0.30m and then cleaned manually by shovel.

Pipeline B necessitated the machine excavation of ten pits for anchor blocks across the site, dug to a depth of 0.60m by JCB

using a 0.50m toothed bucket, these pits measured 0.50m x 1.50m, with thrust blocks of similar proportions to those in pipeline A.

These pits are referred to as machine-pits in the following text to avoid any confusion with the term pit as used for an archaeological feature dug into the subsoil.

The base of each machine-pit was spade and trowel cleaned, photographed, and where appropriate recorded by drawing. The spoil from each excavation was also inspected for archaeological artefacts.

RESULTS

Pipeline A

Machining to a depth of 0.30m exposed the interface between the topsoil and a mid brown sandy subsoil. The base of each machine-pit was inspected closely for signs of any features cut into the subsoil, but no such evidence was found.

Cleaning of the exposed surface in machine-pit 3 revealed a number of sherds of pottery within the subsoil, concentrated towards the north - eastern corner of the machine-pit. Further investigation by trowelling, to a total depth of 0.40m, revealed this to be the compressed remains of a single large pottery vessel, together with a small number of sherds from different vessels (Appendix 1). The pot is shown *in situ* (in its position as found) in Plate 2.

Investigation of the spoil from the other machine-pits resulted in the collection of a number of unstratified pottery sherds from the excavated topsoil; two from machine-pit 1, and one each from machine-pits 4 and 6 (Fig. 2). See Appendix 1 and the report on the pottery by R.S. Leary.

Pipeline B

Excavation to a depth of 0.50m in the machine-pits to the east came down to the heavy alluvium, in the three westernmost machine-pits this alluvium gave way to lighter sandier deposits relating to the gravel 'island' on which the site is founded. No artefactual material was recovered during the excavations for pipeline B.

POTTERY REPORT by R.S. Leary

Machine-pit A3 contained 91 sherds of which 87 were probably part of a single Dales ware jar. This type appears at Lincoln in the third century and continued in use into the fourth century AD (Darling 1977). Swan has recently suggested that the form is unlikely to pre-date the second decade of the third century AD (Swan 1992, 8-9; Swan 1996, 577). The type was most common east of the river Trent but does occur regularly in small quantities on rural sites in north Nottinghamshire. Some other vessels were also found in this machine-pit comprising a grey ware cordoned vessel, two GTA10¹ bodysherds and a rim of a club-rimmed jar or bowl, and a GTA14² cup or bowl. Fabric GTA10¹ can be dated to the late 2nd to early third century on present evidence, while the GTA14² vessel belongs to a group of carinated, cordoned cups and bowls dating to the mid first century BC to first century AD.

Machine-pits A4 and A6 contained grey ware sherds of flat or out-turned rim dishes current from the second century, and machine-pit A1 contained a sherd of Parisian ware too abraded to date more closely than the first to third centuries AD.

¹ a medium greyware with sparse shell inclusions and clay pellets

² a fine brown-orange ware with fine, probably grog, inclusions

COMMENT

The large portion of the Dales ware vessel found immediately below the ploughsoil in machine-pit A3 was not associated with any recognisable feature, though the large size of the pottery strongly suggests that it actually was within a feature cut into the subsoil and had been protected from subsequent disturbance. This phenomena is common on archaeological sites where an apparently homogeneous layer immediately below the modern ploughsoil contains artefacts in such a state of survival to suggest that they are *in situ*. The usual explanation, particularly in sandy soils like those on the gravel 'island' at Rampton, is that biological processes have continued to form a soil after the use of features cut into the subsoil was discontinued. Alternatively, this layer may be an earlier ploughsoil as suggested by Ponsford (1992, 92), though the size of the vessel, and the friability of the fabric, would suggest that the pot would have been broken into small pieces and been dispersed if it was a ploughsoil. This suggests that the archaeological deposits could be relatively well preserved at this point on the gravel 'island', perhaps because of their proximity to the hedge-line where modern ploughing has been less destructive.

Dales ware is dated to the mid - late 3rd century AD and into the 4th century. This is rather later than most of the pottery from the features excavated in the 1960s just to the east of pipeline A (Fig. 1, SMR site 4698: Ponsford 1992, 104-6). 978 sherds were recovered from these excavations, but only 2 were identified as Dales ware (Turner in Ponsford 1992, 110). The Dales ware vessel from the machine-pit for the pipeline may suggest that activity continued on the site into the third and fourth centuries AD.

The location of the pottery, in machine-pits A3, A4 and A6, was all in areas outside the cropmark enclosures, as were the finds from the 1960s excavations. Often, these cropmark enclosures are interpreted as the foci of settlement, but in this instance we are reminded that settlement is not just confined to enclosures, but can lie well outside them too.

The recovery of the late Roman vessel from machine-pit A3 may also suggest some settlement shift across the site over time, since it lay to the south-west of the earlier focus of activity recorded in the 1960s excavations. Both this point, and the enclosures as settlement foci, are elements of the settlement plan which can be tested by future excavations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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report.

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APPENDIX 1 by R.S. Leary

<i>Find Code</i>	<i>Pipeline A Machine-pit</i>	<i>Part</i>	<i>Fabric Type</i>
AAA	3	BDX	DW
AAB	3	BDX	DW
AAC	3	RIM	DW
AAD	3	BDX	DW
AAE	3	BDX	DW
AAF	3	BDX	GTA10
AAG	3	BDX	GTA10?
AAH	3	BDX	GRB1
AAI	3	RIM	DW
AAJ	3	RIM	DW
AAK	3	BDX	DW
AAL	3	BDX	DW
AAM	3	BDX	DW
AAN	3	BDX	DW
AAO	3	BDX	DW
AAP	3	BDX	DW
AAQ	3	BDX	DW
AAR	3	BDX	GRB1
		with cordon	
AAS	3	BDX	DW
AAT	3	BDX	DW
AAU	3	RIM	DW
AAV	3	BDX	DW
AAW	3	BDX	DW
AAX	3	BDX	DW
AAZ	3	BDX	DW
ABA	3	BDX	DW
ABB	3	BDX	DW
ABC	3	BDX	DW
ABD	3	BDX	DW
ABE	3	BDX	DW
ABF	3	BDX	DW
ABG	3	BDX	DW
ABG	3	BDX	DW
ABH	3	BDX	DW
ABI	3	BDX	DW
ABJ	3	BDX	DW
ABK	3	BDX	DW
ABL	3	BDX	DW
ABM	3	BAS	DW
ABN	3	BDX	DW
ABO	3	BDX	DW
ABP	3	BDX	DW
ABQ	3	BDX	DW
ABR	3	BDX	DW
ABS	3	BDX	DW
ABT	3	BDX	DW
ABU	3	BDX	DW
ABV	3	BDX	DW
ABW	3	BAS	DW

<i>Find Code</i>	<i>Pipeline A Machine-pit</i>	<i>Part</i>	<i>Fabric Type</i>
ABX	3	BDX	DW
ABY	3	BAS	DW
ABZ	3	BDX	DW
ACA	3	BDX	DW
ACB	3	BDX	DW
ACC	3	BDX	DW
ACD	3	BDX	DW
ACE	3	BDX	DW
ACF	3	BDX	DW
ACG	3	BDX	DW
ACH	3	BDX	DW
ACI	3	BDX	DW
ACJ	3	BDX	DW
ACK	3	BDX	DW
ACL	3	BDX	DW
ACM	3	BDX	DW
ACN	3	BDX	DW
ACO	3	BDX	DW
ACP	3	BDX	DW
ACQ	3	BDX	DW
ACR	3	BDX	DW
ACS	3	BDX	DW
ACT	3	BDX	DW
ACU	3	BDX	DW
ACV	3	BDX	DW
ACW	3	BDX	DW
ACX	3	BDX	DW
ACY	3	BDX	DW
ACZ	3	BDX	DW
ADA	3	BDX	DW
ADB	3	BDX	DW
ADC	3	BDX	DW
ADD	3	BDX	DW
ADE	3	BDX	DW
ADF	3	BDX	DW
ADG	3	BDX	DW
ADH	3	RIM	DW
ADI	3	BDX	DW
ADJ	3	BDX	DW
ADK	3	RIM	GTA10
ADL	3	RIM	GTA14
		part of a	carinated/cordoned cup
ADM	4	RIM	GRB1 B3
ADN	6	RIM	GRB1 B3
ADO	1	BDX	GRA6
ADP	1	BDX	GRB1
ADQ	3	BDX	DW
ADR	3	BDX	DW
ADS	3	BDX	DW

KEY
Part

BDX = bodysherd
RIM = rim sherd
BAS = base sherd

Fabric type

DW = Dales ware (Loughlin 1977).
GRA6 = fine grey ware similar to
Parisian ware (Elsdon 1982).
GRB1 = large group of undifferentiated
grey wares with moderate quantities of
medium-sized quartz and sparse iron
oxide inclusions.
GTA10 = medium sandy grey ware with
sparse shell inclusions and grey clay
pellets.
GTA14 = fine brown-orange ware with
moderate fine brown-orange inclusions,
probably grog, and sparse fine quartz.

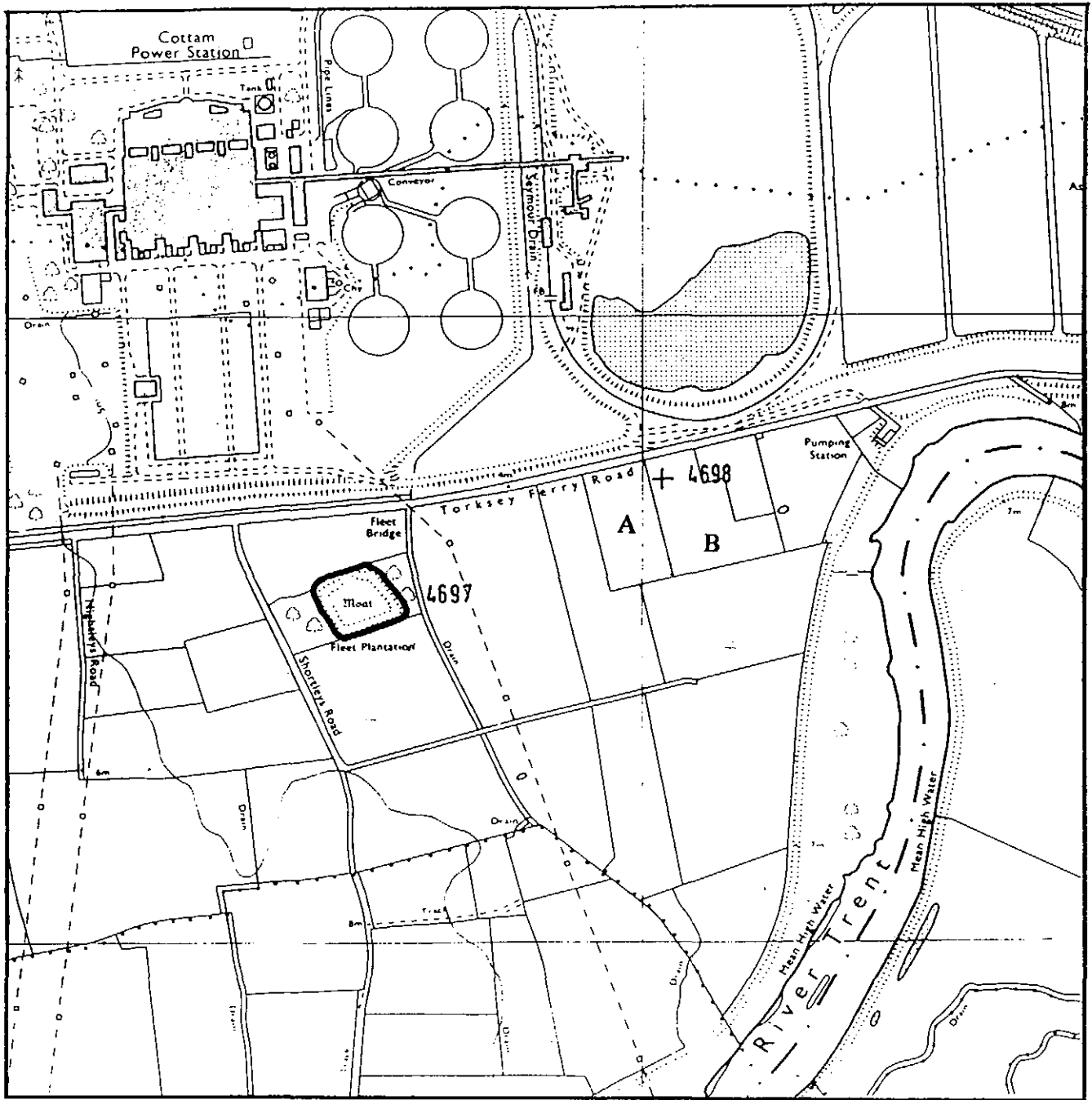


Figure 1: Location of pipelines A and B. The cross and SMR No. (4698) locate the 1960s excavations.
1:10 000.

COTTAM POWER STATION

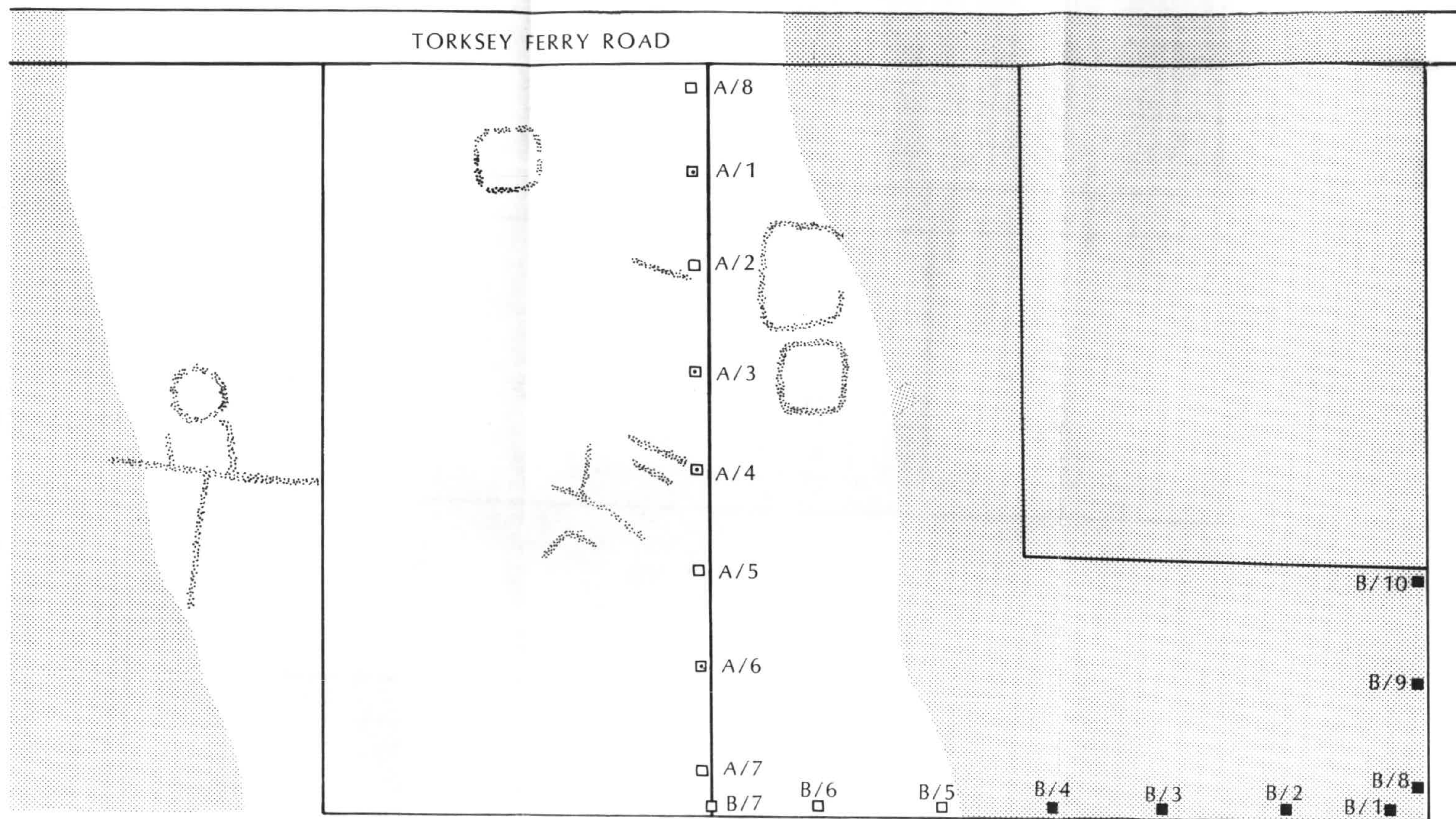


Figure 2: Location of machine-pits for pipelines A and B

- Machine-pit with sandy deposits at base
- ◻ Machine-pit with sandy deposits at base, artefactual material present
- Machine-pit with alluvial deposits
- ⋯ Cropmarks (after Challis 1990)
- ▨ Alluvium



Plate 1 Excavation in progress, Pipeline A



Plate 2 Pottery *in situ*, Pipeline A pit 3.