REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF CONDUCTED AT RAMPTON NORTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

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REPORT ON THE WATCHING BRIEF CONDUCTED AT RAMPTON, NORTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE MARCH - JULY 1996

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Results of an Archaeological Watching Brief during the removal of Overburden and Topsoil at Rampton Quarry on behalf of Redland Quarries Ltd.

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SUMMARY

* From March to July 1996 Trent & Peak Archaeological Trust (T&PAT) undertook a watching brief during the removal of topsoil and overburden at Rampton Quarry, Nottinghamshire, on behalf of Redland Aggregates Ltd.

* The area under study is known to contain important settlement evidence of the later Iron Age and Roman - British periods.

* A ditch profile was exposed in the section during the watching brief. This lay outside the immediate area of archaeological activity as indicated by cropmark evidence. The presence of the feature which lay under alluvial deposits which inhibit cropmark formation - suggests that archaeological features, with a high potential for preservation, may be more widespread than expected at Rampton.

* No datable material was retrieved during the watching brief.

1 INTRODUCTION

Trent & Peak Archaeological Trust (T&PAT) undertook, from March to July 1996, a watching brief during the removal of topsoil and overburden at Rampton quarry in Nottinghamshire on behalf of Redland Aggregates Ltd to fulfill planning conditions.

The site is centred on SK 820727, and lies between 3.7m and 4.5m OD, adjacent to the modern river Trent (figure 1). Aerial photography has shown cropmarks of linear features and possible enclosures in fields nos 0067 and 0867 (Notts SMR 4698). This evidence is limited to the sands and gravels and evidence for the presence of features under the alluvium which covers the present quarry site is limited (figure 2). Excavations in the 1960s and in 1990 have revealed post built structures, ditches and evidence of metalworking dating from the first century BC to the 2nd century AD, with some evidence of later activity (Challis, 1990; Ponsford, 1992).

The watching brief was carried out by Doug Gilbert of the Trust from March to July 1996.

2 METHODOLOGY

360 degree excavators, under contractors supervision, were in use throughout to remove first the topsoil and then the overburden. The material was removed in stages, with the overburden being used to restore previous workings.

The topsoiled surface and exposed sections were examined for any evidence of archaeological and/or organic material suitable for environmental reconstruction eg peats or silts; a photographic, and where appropriate, drawn record was made of any such features. The site foreman was consulted regularly for any relevant information of archaeological import.

3 STRATIGRAPHY

The site is located on a low gravel island within the floodplain of the River Trent, surrounded by fine grained riverine deposits laid down by overbank flooding of the river, with a relict water channel to the west (Challis, 1990). The quarry site centres on these deposits to the east of the gravel 'island' (figure 2).

The thickness of the overburden varied across the site; from 4.5m at the north western corner to 1.5m at the western edge. At its thickest the overburden comprises a sequence of alluvial deposits which appear to bifurcate around the edges of the gravel 'island'. A recorded section from the north east corner of the site (Figure 3) revealed peripheral channel deposits - grey silty sands with wood fragments over dark grey/black silt. This suggests the presence of a relict water channel to the east of the gravel 'island'.

The alluvial deposits, primarily brown and grey silty clays, thin out towards the 'island' at the western edge of the site. A single covering deposit; a stiff brown sandy clay 0.50m - 0.80m thick (A in Figure 3), is interpreted as a final 'blanket' alluvial phase covering the entire site. Such deposits present good potential for buried archaeological or environmental remains.

4 RESULTS

The topsoil stripped area was inspected for the presence or absence of archaeological features or finds. However, the (alluvial) brown sandy clay covering deposit soon became covered in spoil and vehicle tracks which served to restrict examination. No features or finds were observed in the topsoil removal operation.

Inspection of the exposed sections revealed a feature in the west facing section (point A in figure 2). The feature which was recorded in detail (figure 4)was a symmetrical, flat bottomed ditch 1.8m wide and 0.40m deep. The line of the ditch appeared to be orthogonal to the section, but no evidence was found in the opposite sections. The ditch contained a dark grey silty basal fill, with a clean light sandy upper fill finely feathered with edges of grey silt. The feature is interleaved within periods of alluvial activity; cutting the fine grained alluvium, and sealed by a later alluvial deposit. In addition it has been truncated

at its northern edge by a channel containing a mix of silty sands. The silty basal fill and upper mixed clean sands and silts suggests a feature cut within the floodplain and filled by periodic flooding, eventually burying the feature, this sequence was then later truncated.

No dating material was recovered from the ditch, no other features of archaeological import were discovered during the watching brief.

5 COMMENTS

This watching brief has shown that archaeological features are present within the quarry area. Furthermore, the location of a preserved feature under the alluvium points to the presence of a site extending away from the cropmark enclosures interpreted as the foci of settlement at Rampton. Interleaved within phases of alluviation, the feature suggests settlement extended onto the floodplain, increasing the potential for further previously unrecorded buried features within the alluvium at Rampton The lack of finds prohibits conclusive dating for the feature or alluviation, however partial burial beneath flood deposits of Romano -British and earlier sites on the edges of gravel islands is known elsewhere in the Trent valley (Knight and Howard, 1995, 77). The presence of the feature at Rampton suggests the utilisation of more marginal, wetter, lower lying areas of land, perhaps on a seasonal basis.

Clearly the cropmark evidence does not present much of a full picture of the archaeology at Rampton, the alluvial coverage of the quarry site inhibits cropmark formation. Such a conclusion reinforces the need for watching brief where the archaeological evidence for previous human activity may exist in a good state of preservation and yet is not fully represented by the cropmark evidence.

6 REFERENCES

Challis, K. 1990 *Rampton Quarry Site. Excavations Summer 1990.* T&PAT, Nottingham.

Knight, D. and Howard, A J. 1995 *Archaeology and Alluvium in the Valley.* T&PAT, Nottingham.

Ponsford, M.W. 1992 *A Late Iron Age settlement at Rampton, Nottinghamshire.* Transactions of the Thoroton Society, Nottinghamshire 96, 91 - 122.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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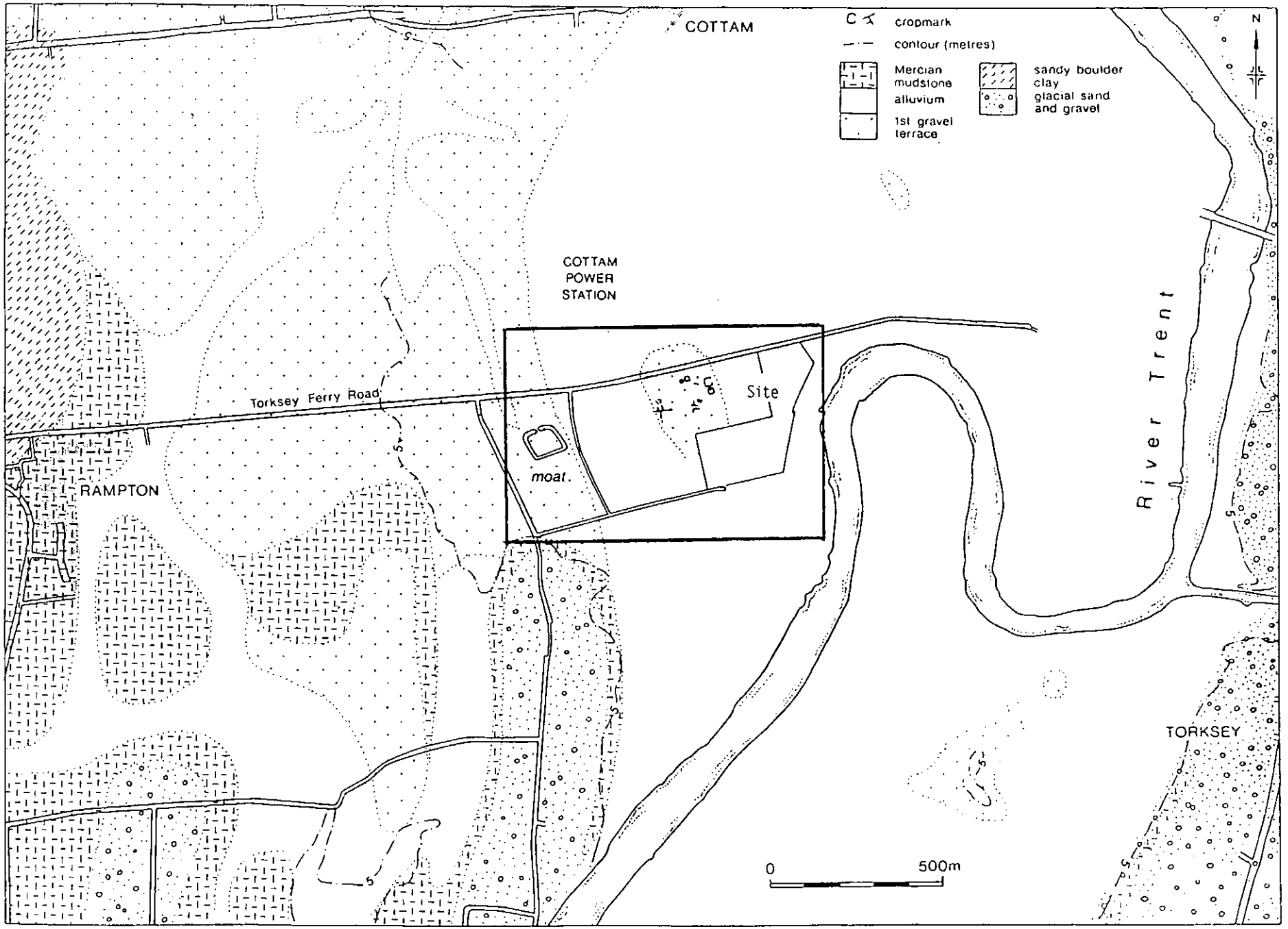

Fig. 1: Rampton Quarry, Location map.

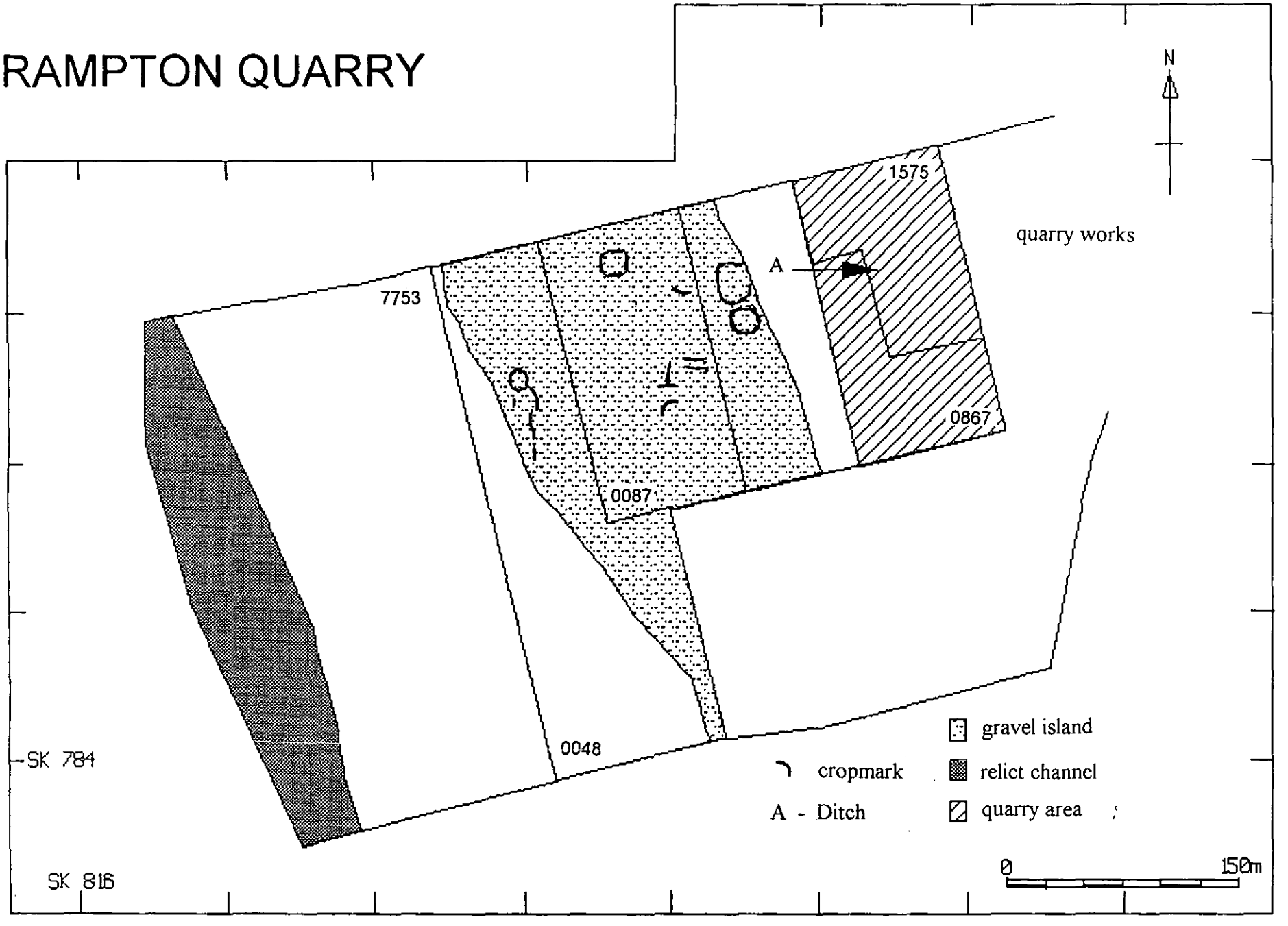

Fig. 2: Rampton quarry site, cropmarks, ditch, and gravel island

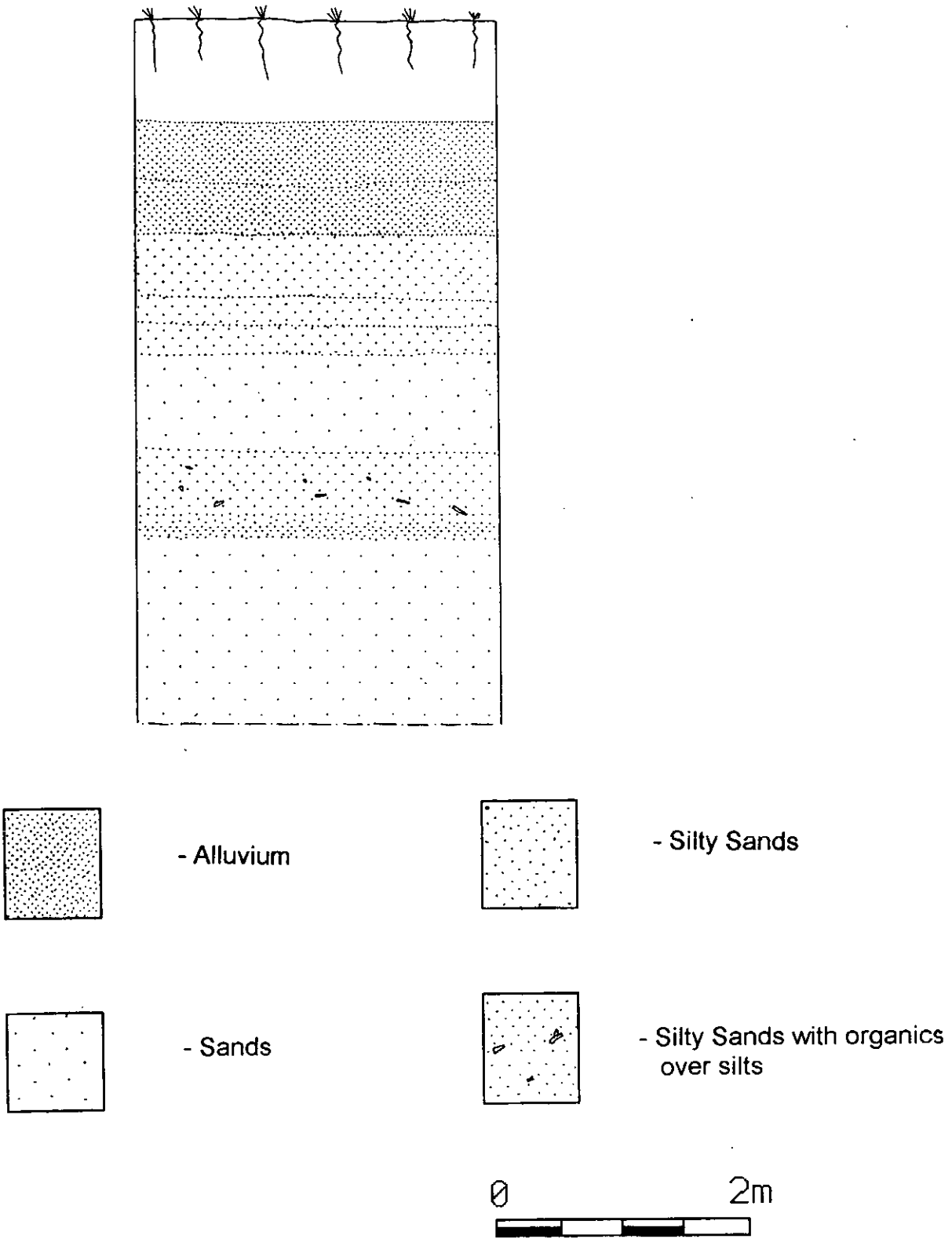

Fig. 3: Recorded section from north - east edge of site, 1:50

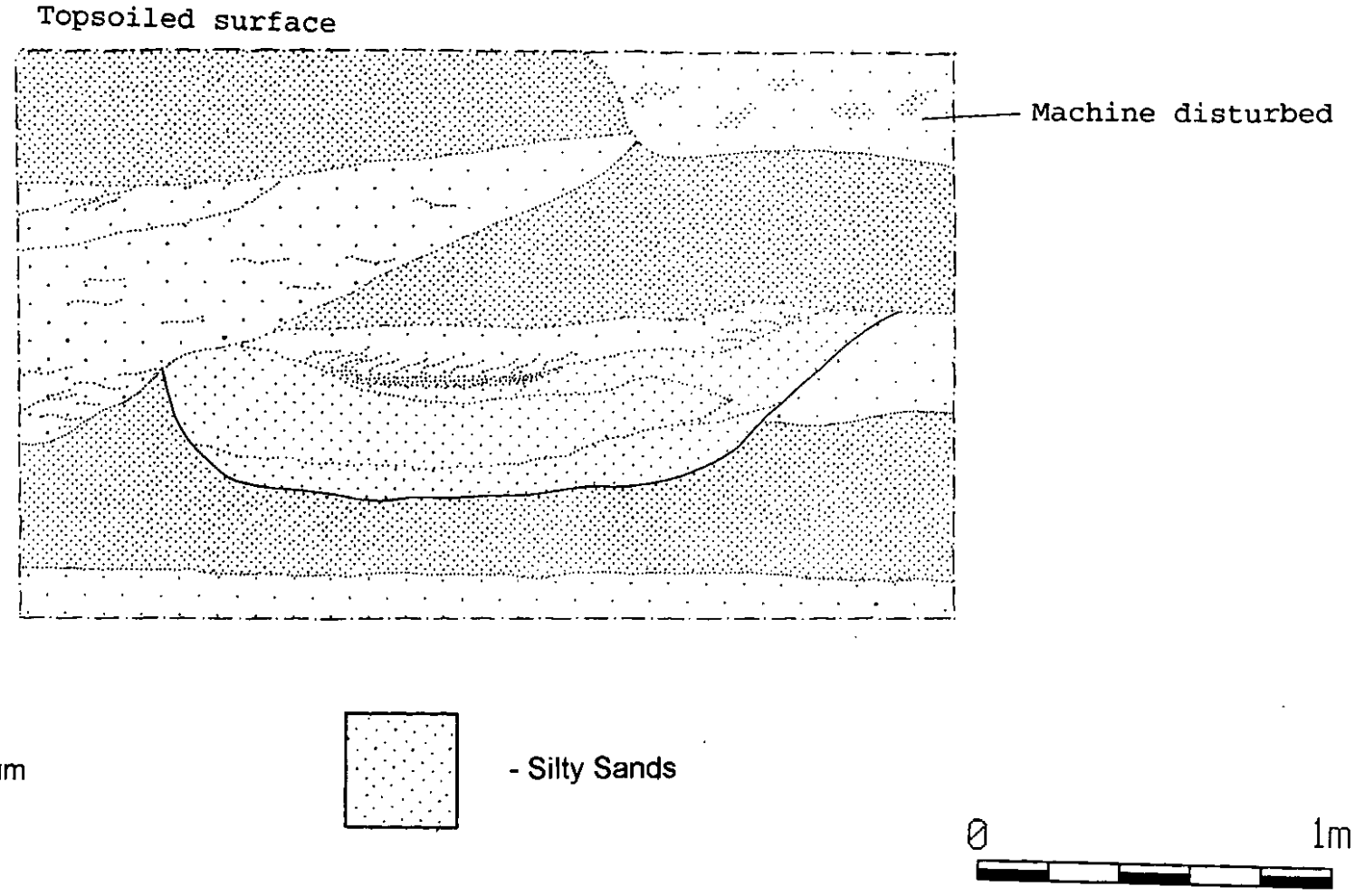

Fig. 4: Recorded ditch A, 1:20