

**ROWBERROW TREATMENT WORKS
OUTFALL DRAIN
SHIPHAM, SOMERSET**

Report on the results of the Archaeological Evaluation

Report no. 44525.01

Prepared on behalf of:

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Bristol Water plc to carry out an archaeological evaluation in connection with the proposed route of a new outfall drain leading from the Rowberrow Treatment Works to the Towerhead Brook, near Shipham, Somerset (centred on ST 4418 5858). Due to the proximity of the proposed route to important archaeological remains (principally comprising Star Roman villa along with features of Iron Age date and a concentration of Mesolithic worked flint), an archaeological evaluation of the western part of the route was requested, with the remainder of the route subject to a watching brief during the construction of the new pipeline.

The archaeological evaluation comprised three elements: a preliminary topographic survey, six machine-excavated trenches and two hand-augered boreholes, all of which were undertaken in February 1998.

The topographic survey highlighted several features of potential interest including a possible hollow way leading towards the villa site. The trial trenches revealed features and finds of prehistoric, Romano-British and post-medieval date.

Several flint flakes of possible Neolithic – Bronze Age date were recovered, but possibly the earliest archaeological feature recorded was an east-facing arc-shaped arrangement of five small blocks of dolomitic conglomerate bedrock forming a ‘kerb’ approximately 3m across. Towards the centre of this arc were several smaller stones, possibly representing the remains of a cairn or a setting for a larger stone which has subsequently been removed. No dating evidence was found in association with these features, but it is suggested that they represented a small monument of probable Late Neolithic – Early Bronze Age date which was constructed adjacent to a spring and surrounding marshy area. A sequence of samples for pollen analysis has been taken from this marshy area, and this is of potential importance if pollen is preserved and if the sequence can be equated with the archaeological activity in the area.

The only Romano-British feature was a ditch dating to the 3rd - 4th century AD which is likely to have formed part of an enclosure boundary or field system associated with the nearby villa. This ditch produced a substantial quantity of finds including pottery, animal bone and some burnt stone. A soil sample taken from this feature was particularly rich in charred grain and chaff indicating that crop processing took place in the immediate vicinity. A small quantity of residual Romano-British pottery was recovered from elsewhere on the site.

Several stone filled drains (‘French drains’) were revealed at the western end of the evaluation area, towards the low-lying marshy area. None of these drains produced any clearly associated dating evidence, but it is suggested that they are most likely to have been of post-medieval date.

Acknowledgements

The evaluation was commissioned and financed by Bristol Water plc and Wessex Archaeology would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by the staff of Bristol Water plc, and in particular Mr Bob Bond. The collaborative role of the Department for the Environment, Somerset County Council and especially Mr Bob Croft, County Archaeologist, is also acknowledged.

The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Mick Rawlings, with the fieldwork carried out by Phil Andrews, Barry Hennessey and Steve Legg. Finds analysis was provided by Lorraine Mepham (Finds Manager), environmental analysis by Mike Allen (Environmental Manager), assisted by Sarah Wyles, and the pollen assessment was undertaken by Rob Scaife. John Lewis and Julie Gardiner have made useful comments and observations on the probable prehistoric remains. This report was compiled by Phil Andrews and the illustrations produced by Erica Hemming (Fig.1), Nick Cooke (Fig. 2) and S.E. James (Figs 3 and 4).

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Report on the results of the Archaeological Evaluation

Contents

Summary	i
Acknowledgements	ii
1 INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Project Background.....	1
1.2 Topography and Geology.....	1
1.3 Archaeological Background.....	1
2 METHODS	
2.1 Introduction	3
2.2 Aims	3
2.3 Fieldwork.....	3
3 TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY	
3.1 Introduction	5
3.2 Results	5
4 EVALUATION TRENCHES	
4.1 Introduction	6
4.2 Natural Base and Soil Sequence.....	6
4.3 Prehistoric.....	6
4.4 Romano-British	7
4.5 Post-medieval	8
5 THE FINDS EVIDENCE	
5.1 Introduction	9
5.2 Metalwork	9
5.3 Slag.....	9
5.4 Worked Flint and Burnt Flint	9
5.5 Stone.....	9
5.6 Pottery	9
5.7 Ceramic Building Material	10
5.8 Clay pipe.....	10

6	THE ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE	
6.1	Animal Bone.....	10
6.2	Charred Plant and Charcoal Remains.....	10
6.3	Pollen.....	11
7	DISCUSSION	
7.1	Prehistoric.....	11
7.2	Romano-British.....	12
7.3	Post-medieval.....	13
8	REFERENCES	13

TABLES

Table 1:	Finds totals by context.....	14
Table 2:	Charred plant and charcoal remains.....	14
Table 3:	Auger Hole A2 - Soil Sequence.....	14

APPENDICES

Appendix 1:	Trench Summaries.....	15
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FIGURES

Figure 1:	Site, topographic survey area and trench location plan
Figure 2:	Topographic survey
Figure 3:	Trench 2 plan and section
Figure 4:	Trench 4 plan and section and Trench 1 - 3 plans

ROWBERROW TREATMENT WORKS OUTFALL DRAIN SHIPHAM, SOMERSET

Report on the results of the Archaeological Evaluation

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Bristol Water plc to carry out an archaeological evaluation in connection with the proposed route of a new outfall drain leading from the Rowberrow Treatment Works to the Towerhead Brook near Shipham, Somerset (centred on ST 4418 5858).
- 1.1.2 The archaeological evaluation was to be undertaken prior to the acceptance of the western part of the proposed pipeline route (**Fig. 1**). The remainder of the route will be subject to an archaeological watching brief during construction.
- 1.1.3 The evaluation was commissioned to examine and record any archaeological remains that may exist within an area of defined potential. The potential for such remains had already been demonstrated by the discovery of a Roman villa and underlying Iron Age remains and Mesolithic worked flint immediately to the north of the pipeline route during an earlier archaeological excavation (Barton 1963-4).
- 1.1.4 The project design for archaeological evaluation (Wessex Archaeology 1998) was based on the guidance given in the document *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) and in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (1994), and the evaluation carried out to a standard acceptable to the County Archaeological Officer, Somerset County Council.

1.2 Topography and Geology

- 1.2.1 The area of the proposed pipeline lies in the valley of the Towerhead Brook, just to the north-west of the small village of Star, Somerset. The pipeline runs west from the existing Rowberrow Water Treatment Works (NGR ST 4418 5858) along the valley floor for a total distance of *c.* 700m. At the western end of the route the pipeline crosses an area of marshy ground (which marks the present origin of the Towerhead Brook) before discharging into the brook at NGR ST 4342 5858 (**Fig. 1**). The absolute height falls from *c.* 85m aOD at the Treatment Works to *c.* 62m aOD at the discharge point.

1.2.2 The route runs wholly through permanent pasture currently used for cattle and horse grazing, although at the western end the boggy ground is fenced off to form a separate unit of marsh or fen. The basal geology comprises Dolomitic Conglomerates of the Carboniferous Period. However, there may be head deposits of Quaternary date within the valley floor (British Geological Survey, 1:50,000 Solid and Drift Series, Sheet 280). During the site works, the Conglomerate bedrock was noted to be outcropping very close to the western end of the proposed route.

1.3 Archaeological Background

1.3.1 The pipeline route is located at the north-west tip of the Mendips, an area which contains a rich and varied range of archaeological sites. Evidence of earlier prehistoric occupation has been recovered from a number of caves in the upland area, including Rowberrow Cavern (Taylor 1926). Later prehistoric activity in the area is attested by the large number of round barrows located on the Mendips, including a few of 'Wessex culture' type (Aston and Burrow 1982).

1.3.2 The large Iron Age hillfort of Dolebury lies just to the east of Rowberrow Treatment Works, but it is the Roman period which provides the main focus of archaeological potential along the proposed pipeline route. The western end of this route passes just to the south of a Roman villa (Star villa) which was partially excavated in 1959-60 by the Axbridge Caving Group and Archaeological Society (Barton 1963-4. See **Fig. 1**). Earlier examination of this site took place *c.* 1826 but no records of this work are known.

1.3.3 Star villa was established in the latter part of the 1st century AD, although substantial redevelopment took place at the end of the 3rd century AD, and the buildings appear to have been burnt down and demolished after AD 353. The main building comprised a number of rooms with an external corridor along the west side. To the south was a possible bath-house, but this was only recorded in the sections of a recently re-cut ditch and was not further investigated. Sealed below the main villa building was evidence of Late Iron Age occupation including several post-holes, two possible hearths and a pit; finds included pottery, some ironworking slag and a fragment of crucible. At the base of the excavated sequence at the villa was a buried soil which contained worked flints of Mesolithic date; these were not associated with any features.

1.3.4 Further to the east the pipeline passes close to a number of linear earthworks, most of which are on the northern slopes of the valley. These are likely to represent the remains of former field boundaries or agricultural practices, probably of medieval and/or later date, although an earlier origin for some of these features cannot be ruled out.

2. METHODS

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The specification for the evaluation was provided by Wessex Archaeology (Wessex Archaeology 1998), and was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the County Archaeological Officer following a preliminary site meeting.
- 2.1.2 The fieldwork strategy comprised three separate elements:
- preliminary topographic survey within the two fields to the west of Mapleton Lane, to result in the production of plans which indicate the location and nature of any earthworks
 - a total of six machine-excavated trenches, each to measure 15m x 1.5m, within the proposed pipeline easement area in the same two fields
 - a total of two hand-augered boreholes located in the low-lying and waterlogged ground at the outfall end of the proposed pipeline route
- 2.1.3 A watching brief was to be maintained during subsequent groundworks along the remainder of the route.

2.2 Aims

- 2.2.1 The principal aim of the evaluation was to provide further information concerning the presence/absence, date, nature and extent of any buried archaeological remains within this part of the proposed pipeline easement route. This information will then be available to the County Archaeological Officer and to Bristol Water for use in the formulation of any further archaeological mitigation which may be required prior to the commencement of construction. The main aim of the watching brief is to record the presence/absence, date, nature and extent of any buried archaeological remains which are identified during the construction of the new pipeline.

2.3 Fieldwork

2.3.1 *Topographic survey*

- 2.3.1.1 The topographic survey was undertaken using a total station theodolite with built-in data recorder in order to enable the production of digitised maps, plans and 3D terrain models via Auto CAD and SURFER software packages. The level of detail recorded, and the number of readings taken were commensurate with that required to indicate clearly the location and extent of the earthworks within the survey area (**Figs. 1 and 2**). All survey work was carried out using a site grid directly tied into the Ordnance Survey national grid, and the heights (m aOD) calculated from an Ordnance Survey bench mark with a value of 90.15m AOD situated opposite the entrance to the Rowberrow Treatment Works on the A38 road.

2.3.2 *Evaluation trenches*

2.3.2.1 The six evaluation trenches (Trenches 1 – 6) were laid out within the 15m wide easement of the proposed new outfall drain as indicated on a plan provided by Bristol Water plc (Wessex Archaeology 1998, figure 1). The trenches were placed at arbitrary intervals across the two fields, with three trenches in each field (**Fig. 1**). It was originally proposed to align all the trenches approximately north/south across the width of the easement, but one trench (Trench 4) was subsequently realigned to run east/west and so cross the line of what appeared to be a hollow way.

2.3.2.2 The three trenches in the western field (Trenches 1 – 3) all lay across a gentle north-west facing scarp overlooking the area of low-lying marshy ground at the west end of the site. The discovery of potentially significant remains in Trench 2 led to a small extension (approximately 4.5m by 3.5m) to the east being opened following discussions with Bristol Water plc and the County Archaeological Officer.

2.3.2.3 The trenches were excavated under constant archaeological supervision by a wheeled 180° mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless bucket. Following the removal of the turf/topsoil, machine excavation continued to the top of either archaeological deposits or the underlying geological deposits, whichever was encountered first. Deeper sondages (to a maximum depth of 1.2m) were excavated in Trenches 1 – 4 in order to confirm that no archaeological horizons lay buried beneath colluvium, and also to examine the uppermost sequence of the geological deposits. The spoil from each trench was scanned for artefacts.

2.3.2.4 All archaeological remains were recorded and planned, using Wessex Archaeology *pro forma* record sheets, including a full photographic record. Hand-excavation of all features was carried out, with all artefacts retained.

2.3.2.5 Provision was made for bulk sampling from appropriate archaeological deposits for artefactual, economic and environmental data.

2.3.2.6 Following the investigation and recording of each trench, the trenches were backfilled with the excavated spoil. No further consolidation or reinstatement was undertaken.

2.3.2.7 The excavation fieldwork was carried out over five working days, from 9th – 13th February 1998.

2.3.3 *Augering*

2.3.3.1 The two boreholes (**Fig. 1**) were augered using a 25mm diameter hand-gouge. The gouge recovered undisturbed sample units of up to a maximum length of approximately 0.7m; preliminary augering (prior to sampling) indicated that this was the maximum depth of deposits present overlying bedrock within the

easement area. Two-centimetre long sub-samples at two centimetre intervals were extracted from the sample units for transport and analysis.

3. TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The results of the topographic survey are presented as a 3D terrain model (**Fig. 2**). This presentation, and the orientation of the figure, have been chosen as they best represents the earthwork features that were identified during the field survey. Contour and hachure plans have also been produced, but these are visually less informative and have been retained in the archive.

3.2 Results

3.2.1 The only feature identified in the eastern field was a very shallow linear depression, approximately 5m wide, extending from north to south across the middle of the field. This linear depression curves slightly to the west towards the northern edge of the field, and appears to run towards the site of the Roman villa approximately 75m to the north-west. This alignment takes it immediately to the west of the structural remains identified as the site of a possible bath-house (see **Fig. 1**). The most likely interpretation of this feature is that it represents a hollow way, an interpretation apparently supported by the excavated remains in Trench 4 (see below). This hollow way remains undated and whether it originated in the Roman period is unclear, although it does not coincide with any existing field boundaries or entrances to the field. However, it should be noted that the existing boundary between the two surveyed fields, at present marked by a hedge, also appears as a shallow linear depression on the topographic survey, and thus it is possible that the hollow way may represent a former field boundary.

3.2.2 Several features were identified in the western field. In the south-eastern corner were the demolished remains of at least one stone structure. This structure appears to have been triangular in plan, set in the corner of the field, and was probably an unroofed animal pen of post-medieval – modern date. The ground slopes away from this to a gentle scarp on the south-eastern edge of a low-lying hollow.

3.2.3 This low-lying hollow is likely to represent the former extent of an area of marshy ground, including a small pond, that marks the present origin of the Towerhead Brook which flows to the east (the ground in this area remains soft underfoot, the grass is more lush, and Trenches 1 – 3 revealed several stone-lined drains not found elsewhere on site; the water table was also encountered at shallow depth towards the north ends of these trenches).

3.2.4 There were very slight traces of two or three short channels on the edge of the hollow, and towards the north-east corner of the survey area was a much more pronounced V-shaped channel, probably of comparatively recent date, draining

towards the marshy area. Immediately to the north of this channel was a low ridge of higher ground running east to west from the edge of the field for approximately 40m. Romano-British structural remains might be expected on this ridge since the possible bath-house and other walls have been found on a similar ridge of higher ground running south-east/north-west less than 20m to the north.

4. EVALUATION TRENCHES

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The results set out in this report represent a synopsis of the principal excavated features. Full details of contexts are held in the excavation archive, currently held at Wessex Archaeology under the project code 44525, and will be deposited with Somerset County Museum Services in due course.

4.1.2 Features and deposits of archaeological interest were present in Trenches 1 – 4. No archaeological deposits or finds were recorded from Trenches 5 and 6.

4.2 Natural Base and Soil Sequence

4.2.1 The surface of the underlying Dolomitic Conglomerate was reached in a machine-dug sondage in one trench (Trench 3) at a depth of 1.15m. This was overlain by approximately 0.3m of brownish-red clay which in turn was sealed by up to 0.3m of brownish-yellow loamy clay characterised by frequent manganese ‘flecking’ throughout. This latter deposit probably represents the weathered surface of the underlying clay and was encountered at depths of between 0.5m and 0.65m in three machine-dug sondages in Trenches 2, 3 and 4. In Trench 1, the brownish-yellow loamy clay was mixed with what appears to have been the decayed surface of the Dolomitic Conglomerate, at a depth of c. 0.5m, and this probably reflects the rock lying nearer to the surface in this area (as was indicated during the augering 30m to the west).

4.2.2 The ‘natural’ deposits were overlain by up to 0.45m of reddish-brown silty loam subsoil through which the archaeological features had been cut. Several worked flints were recovered from near the base of this layer (e.g. layer 202 in Trench 2, see **Fig. 3**), but it is possible that these have been moved downwards through the soil profile as a result of intensive earthworm action.

4.2.3 Topsoil up to 0.2m thick overlay subsoil but was not clearly differentiated from it. It comprised a reddish-brown, slightly clayey, silty loam with abundant small roots present.

4.3 Prehistoric: Mesolithic–Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age (c. 10,000–1500 BC)

4.3.1 Several small pieces of worked flint were recovered from the subsoil (e.g. layer 202 in Trench 2, **Fig. 3**), often at or near to the interface with the underlying

APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARIES

Note:

All archaeological features/deposits in **BOLD**

n.f.e. - Not fully excavated

Trench No. 1	Co-ordinates: ST (N) 43520 58582; (S) 43521 58567 Ground Level (m aOD): (N) 64.21; (S) 64.85	Dimensions: 15 x 1.60m Max.depth: 0.48m
Context	Description	Depth
100	Topsoil (northern half of trench) – dark greyish-brown silty clay loam with frequent fine roots.	0 - 0.20
101	Topsoil (southern half of trench) – reddish-brown silty loam with frequent fine roots.	0 - 0.20
102	Subsoil (southern end of trench only) – reddish-brown loamy silt; occasional small stones. Cut by drain 111.	0.20 – 0.40
103	Subsoil – pale brown clayey silt with dark reddish-brown mottling; occasional small stones. Cut by drains 107 and 109.	0.20 – 0.48
104	Natural – reddish-brown sandy silt containing much decayed/degraded Dolomitic Conglomerate.	0.48 -
105	Fill of Drain 107 – ‘primary fill’ comprising irregularly shaped stones <0.35m in size filling rectangular-section cut.	0.25 – (n.f.e.)
106	Fill of drain 107 – ‘secondary fill’ comprising reddish-brown sandy silt overlying and filling interstices between stone fill 105.	0.25 -(n.f.e.)
107	Drain – comprising rectangular-section cut (0.6m wide by 0.25m + deep), aligned east/west, filled with 105 and 106. (Did not continue into Tr 2).	0.25 - (n.f.e.)
108	Fill of Drain 109 – ‘primary fill’ comprising irregularly shaped stones <0.35m in size filling rectangular-section cut.	0.2 - (n.f.e.)
109	Drain – comprising rectangular-section cut (0.5m wide by 0.20m + deep), aligned east-south-east/west-north-west, filled with 108 and 112. (Did not continue into Tr 2).	0.2 - (n.f.e.)
110	Fill of Drain 111 – ‘primary fill’ comprising irregularly shaped stones <0.35m in size filling rectangular-section cut.	0.2 - (n.f.e.)
111	Drain – comprising rectangular-section cut (0.45m +wide by 0.2m+ deep), aligned approximately north/south, filled with 110. (Exposed in south-west corner of trench only).	0.2 - (n.f.e.)
112	Fill of drain 111 – ‘secondary fill’ comprising reddish-brown silty clay loam overlying and filling interstices between stone fill 110	0.2m - (n.f.e.)

APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARY

Trench No. 2	Co-ordinates: ST (N) 43529 58583; (S) 43531 585678 Ground Level (m aOD): (N) 64.79; (S) 65.49	Dimensions: 15 x 1.60m, with 4 x 3.5m extension to east. Max.depth: 0.90m
Context	Description	Depth
200	Not used	
201	Topsoil – reddish-brown silty loam with frequent fine roots.	0 - 0.20
202	Subsoil – reddish-brown silty loam. Cut by drain 205; seals/surrounds 'stone kerb' 206 and 'stone setting' 207.	0.20 – 0.65
203	Natural - light yellowish-brown/brownish-yellow silty clay loam/loamy clay. Frequent manganese 'flecking'.	0.45 – 0.90m +
204	Fill of Drain 205 – 'primary fill' comprising roughly-squared stones <0.35m in size laid in rectangular-section cut; stones laid along sides, top and bottom so as to leave a small, rectangular-section channel along the centre of the drain. (More carefully constructed than the drains in Tr 1).	0.30 – (n.f.e.)
205	Drain – comprising rectangular-section cut (0.5m wide by 0.25m + deep), aligned north-east/south-west, filled with 204. (Continues into Tr 3; =306).	0.30 – (n.f.e.)
206	'Stone kerb' approximately 3m across and facing east. Arc-shaped arrangement of three large, sub-rectangular blocks (0.6 x 0.3 x 0.3m), and two smaller, rounded pieces (0.6 x 0.3 x 0.3m) of Dolomitic Conglomerate; set in foundation trench 208. 'Stone setting' 207 lies towards centre of arc. Sealed by 202.	0.30 – 0.60
207	'Stone setting' lying towards centre of 'stone kerb' 206 – comprises five pieces of Dolomitic Conglomerate and one of sandstone (<0.35m). No foundation trench; sealed by 202.	0.40 – 0.55m
208	Cut/fill of foundation trench for 'stone kerb' 206. Cut not visible due to earthworm action which has homogenised soil profile, but fragments of stone in fill clearly indicate its former position (0.8m wide x 0.2m deep).	0.40 – 0.60

Trench No. 3	Co-ordinates: ST (N) 43549 58585; (S) 43551 58570 Ground Level (m aOD): (N) 65.55; (S) 65.86	Dimensions: 15 x 1.60 Max.depth: 1.15m
Context	Description	Depth
300	Topsoil – reddish-brown silty loam with frequent fine roots.	0 - 0.35
301	Subsoil (upper) – dark reddish-brown silty loam with occasional small stones.	0.35 – 0.45
302	Subsoil (lower) – pale yellowish-brown clay loam/loamy clay	0.45 - 0.60
303	Natural – brownish-yellow loamy clay with manganese 'flecking' throughout.	0.60 – 0.88
304	Natural – brownish-red clay.	0.88 - 1.15
305	Natural – Dolomitic Conglomerate.	1.15 -
306	Drain – comprising rectangular-section cut (0.5m wide by 0.25m + deep), aligned north-east/south-west, filled with 307. (Continues into Tr 2; =205).	0.40 – (n.f.e.)
307	Fill of Drain 306 – 'primary fill' comprising roughly-squared stones <0.35m in size laid in rectangular-section cut; stones laid along sides, top and bottom so as to leave a small, rectangular-section channel along the centre of the drain. (More carefully constructed than the drains in Tr 1).	0.40 – (n.f.e.)

APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARY

Trench No. 4	Co-ordinates: ST (W) 43585 58578; (E) 43600 58579 Ground Level (m aOD): (W) 66.54; (E) 66.82	Dimensions: 15 x 1.60 Max.depth: 1.17m
Context	Description	Depth
400	Topsoil – brown silty loam frequent fine roots.	0 - 0.20
401	Subsoil – reddish-brown silty loam with occasional stones.	0.20 - 0.30
402	Fill of ditch 405 – upper fill comprising very dark greyish-brown silty clay loam with common charcoal flecking. Finds include R-B pottery, animal bone, iron and several fragments of burnt stone.	0.30 - 0.85
403	Fill of ditch 405 – lower fill comprising brown slightly loamy clayey silt (?weathered material from ditch sides). Finds include animal bone.	0.88 - 1.17
404	Fill of ditch 405 – middle fill comprising thin layer of black silty clay loam with abundant charcoal flecking. No finds.	0.85 - 0.88
405	Ditch – comprising V-section cut (1.4m wide by 0.87m deep), aligned north/south, filled with 402, 403 and 404. Sealed by 401.	0.30 - 1.17
406	Natural/subsoil – reddish-brown silt	0.30 - 0.50
407	Fill of gully 408 – greyish-brown silty loam.	0.30 - 0.53
408	Gully (? wheel-rut) – comprising U-section cut (0.45m wide by 0.23m deep), aligned north/south, filled with 407. Sealed by 401.	0.30 - 0.53
409	Natural – brownish-yellow loamy clay with manganese 'flecking' throughout.	0.50 - 1.17+

Trench No. 5	Co-ordinates: ST (N) 43619 585912; (S)43620 58576 Ground Level (m aOD): (N) 66.99; (S) 67.34	Dimensions: 15x 1.60m Max.depth: 0.20m
Context	Description	Depth
500	Topsoil - dark reddish- greyish-brown silty loam with occasional small stones.	0 - 0.20
501	Natural/subsoil – reddish-brown silt/silty clay loam	0.20 -

Trench No. 6	Co-ordinates: ST (N) 43649 58594; (S) 43650 58579 Ground Level (m aOD): (N) 67.63; (S) 67.92	Dimensions: 15 x 1.60m Max.depth: 0.20m
Context	Description	Depth
600	Topsoil – dark reddish- greyish-brown silty loam with occasional small stones.	0- 0.20
601	Natural/subsoil – reddish-brown silt/silty clay loam	0.20 -

brownish-yellow loamy clay. As has been noted above, it is possible that these flints have been moved downwards through the soil profile as a result of intensive earthworm action. The worked flint cannot be closely dated but a Neolithic – Early Bronze Age date is proposed.

- 4.3.2 One group of features (**206/207**), in Trench 2, has been tentatively assigned a prehistoric (Late Neolithic – Early Bronze Age) date, but no associated dating evidence was recovered and it is possible that this was of later date. This group of features lay at the top of a gentle scarp on the south-eastern edge of the hollow which marks the probable former extent of a marshy area surrounding a spring at the head of the Towerhead Brook (see **Figs 1 and 2**).
- 4.3.3 Initial excavation revealed what appeared to be a semi-circular arrangement of three blocks of Dolomitic Conglomerate (**206**) on the eastern edge of the trench, possibly forming part of a circle with an estimated diameter of *c.* 3.5m. Subsequent extension of this trench to the east revealed a total of five stones, all of Dolomitic Conglomerate, which formed a 3m wide east-facing arc rather than a semi-circle or circle (**Fig. 3; Cover photograph**).
- 4.3.4 The three larger stones forming the central section of the arc **206** were spaced 0.2 – 0.3m apart and measured *c.* 0.7m long, 0.3m wide and 0.35m high; all were sub-rectangular blocks of stone which had been placed upright on their sides. Two smaller, rounded stones *c.* 0.3m in diameter lay at either ends of the arc. All of these stones are likely to have projected no more than *c.* 0.15m above the contemporary ground surface, thus forming a low ‘kerb’. Limited excavation around two of the larger stones revealed evidence for a possible shallow foundation trench (**208**), approximately 0.8m wide, containing fragments of stone packing (**Fig. 3**). This foundation trench did not penetrate the surface of layer **203** and no cut could be clearly discerned within layer **202**, probably a result of intense earthworm activity which has homogenised the soil matrix.
- 4.3.5 A group of six smaller, more irregularly shaped stones (**207**), one of sandstone and the remainder of Dolomitic Conglomerate, lay towards the centre of arc **206** (**Fig. 3; Cover photograph**). Limited excavation within this central area revealed no evidence for any associated negative feature such as a post-hole or pit.

4.4 Romano-British (*c.* AD 43 – 410)

- 4.4.1 Only one Romano-British feature was found, although a very small quantity of pottery was recovered from topsoil and subsoil contexts. Ditch **405** in Trench 4 was aligned approximately north/south and was V-shaped in profile. It measured 1.4m wide and approximately 0.85m deep (**Fig. 4**). The primary fill (**403**) comprised a reddish-brown clayey silt probably derived mainly from weathering of the ditch sides; it contained sparse charcoal inclusions and the finds largely comprised fragments of animal bone. Above this was a thin layer of black charcoal-rich silty clay loam (**404**) that produced no finds, and an upper fill

(403) of very dark greyish-brown silty clay loam with common charcoal flecking.

- 4.4.2 Upper fill 403 produced pottery of 3rd – 4th century date, some animal bone, a fragment of an iron ox goad, a possible pot-lid of sandstone, and several fragments of Dolomitic Conglomerate and sandstone. This stone, some of which had been burnt or heat-affected, was concentrated at the sides and bottom of the layer, and included one piece with what appears to be melted glass adhering. (A fragment of clay pipe from the top of fill 403 came from an area of animal disturbance). A bulk soil sample of fill 403 produced a very large quantity of charred grain and chaff along with smaller amounts of charred peas/beans and weed seeds.

4.5 Post-medieval (c. AD 1500 – 1799)

- 4.5.1 The remains of four linear stone-lined or stone-filled drains ('French drains') were found, all in Trenches 1 – 3 towards the west end of the site on the gentle scarp (Figs 1 and 4). Groundwater rapidly filled Trench 1 and the lower parts of Trenches 2 and 3 following excavation. None of these drains produced any associated dating evidence other than a few small sherds of Romano-British pottery, presumed to be residual, and it was not clear from exactly what level they had been cut. Those in Trench 4 lay almost immediately below the turf-line and it is considered likely that they were post-medieval, although an earlier date cannot be ruled out.
- 4.5.2 One of these drains (205/306) ran north-east to south-west along the upper edge of the gentle scarp in Trenches 2 and 3 (Fig. 4), and was more well-constructed than the others. It was built in a 0.3m deep, rectangular-section trench cut into the subsoil, with small, flat pieces of stone used to line the sides and base and larger pieces placed over the top leaving an open channel down the middle.
- 4.5.3 Three drains were exposed in Trench 1. Drains 107 and 109 were aligned approximately east/west, although neither extended as far east as Trench 2, and 111, at the south end of the trench, ran approximately north/south (Fig. 4). These were of simpler construction than drain 205/306, and comprised similar though slightly smaller trenches filled with loose stones up to c. 0.15m in size.
- 4.5.4 A north/south aligned shallow gully (409) in Trench 4 (Fig. 4) lay towards the western edge of the slight hollow way indicated by the topographic survey (see Fig. 2), although there was no obvious evidence of any corresponding hollow in the surface of the subsoil at this point. Gully 409 was 0.45m wide, 0.23m deep, and was filled with a greyish-brown silt loam. It has been interpreted as a wheelrut, and produced a single, small sherd of possibly residual Romano-British pottery.

5. THE FINDS EVIDENCE

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 A small quantity of finds was recovered from the site; these have been cleaned and quantified by material type within each context. Quantified information is presented in **Table 1**. The finds have been briefly scanned in order to ascertain broad details of their nature, date range and condition. This information is summarised by material type below.

5.2 Metalwork

5.2.1 An iron ox goad in three fragments was found in the upper fill of Romano-British ditch **405**.

5.3 Slag

5.3.1 A small quantity of slag came from the upper fill of ditch **405**. This possibly derived from iron smithing, but was very light in weight and may have formed as a result of some other high temperature process.

5.4 Worked Flint and Burnt Flint

5.4.1 The worked flint consists of small waste flakes, all in relatively fresh condition and all except one unpatinated. None are chronologically distinctive, and a general Neolithic/Early Bronze Age date may be proposed. The burnt, unworked flint is similarly undatable.

5.5 Stone

5.5.1 Stone was recovered only from the upper fill of ditch **405**. Most of this stone was not obviously worked, although two fragments of ferruginous sandstone could derive from roof tile(s), one of which appears to have been subsequently shaped to form a pot lid. A third fragment looks to be a piece of heavily burnt sandstone with melted glass adhering to it, and it may be relevant to note that some of the stone which was not collected also showed evidence of having been burnt.

5.6 Pottery

5.6.1 All of the pottery recovered is of Romano-British date and, with the exception of a single sherd of samian, consists exclusively of sherds of coarse greywares which probably derive from a number of different sources. The only diagnostic forms occurred in the fill of ditch **405**; these comprise two everted rim, cavetto-necked jars and one straight-sided 'dog dish' (sherds join across upper and lower fills). The 'dog dish' has a wide date range, but the jars are of later Romano-British (3rd/4th century AD) type. Pottery from other contexts is not closely datable within the Romano-British period, except for the single sherd of samian (drain **111**) which is probably Central Gaulish (2nd century AD) in origin.

5.7 Ceramic Building Material

- 5.7.1 Ceramic building material was recovered from three contexts, and is all likely to be of Romano-British date although only one fragment, from ditch **405**, is diagnostic; this is a fragment with combing, possibly a flue tile.

5.8 Clay Pipe

- 5.8.1 One plain stem fragment was recovered from an area of animal disturbance in the upper fill of ditch **405**. This is of post-medieval date.

6. THE ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

6.1 Animal Bone

- 6.1.1 A small quantity of moderately well preserved, though fragmented animal bone was recovered, almost all from Romano-British ditch **405**; the remainder came from topsoil/subsoil contexts (see **Table 1**).

6.2 Charred Plant and Charcoal Remains

- 6.2.1 A single bulk sample of 15 litres was taken from the upper fill (**402**) of the Romano-British ditch **405** in Trench 4 in order to recover and assess the preservation and potential significance of the charred plant and charcoal remains.

- 6.2.2 The sample was processed by standard flotation methods; the flot retained on a 0.5mm mesh and the residue fractionated into 5.6mm, 2mm and 1mm fractions and dried. The coarse fraction (>5.6mm) was sorted, weighed and discarded.

- 6.2.3 The flot was scanned under a x10 - x30 stereo-binocular microscope and the presence of charred remains quantified (**Table 2**).

- 6.2.4 *Charred Plants* - the sample produced a large flot (average flot size for 10 litres is 60ml) with 10% rooty material and sparse numbers of uncharred weed seeds, which can be indicative of stratigraphic movement. Very large quantities of charred grain and charred chaff fragments were recorded, with high numbers of charred weed seeds and a few charred pea/bean fragments also present.

- 6.2.5 *Charcoal* - this was noted from the flot of the bulk sample and is recorded in **Table 2**. A high number of charcoal fragments of greater than 5.6mm was retrieved. The charcoal pieces were mainly large wood fragments.

- 6.2.6 The single sample from Romano-British ditch **405** was exceptionally rich in charred grain and chaff, and provides evidence of the discard of waste from some crop-processing activity, possibly in the immediate vicinity. Its disposal in the ditch is of interest; deposits of this richness from such features are relatively

uncommon: ditches usually provide background information. The single sample, therefore, has the potential to provide information about the activity related to the crops grown and and the crop-processing practices. The charred weed seeds can provide other, more specific information.

6.3 Pollen

- 6.3.1 Two hand-augered boreholes (Auger Holes A1 and A2; see Fig. 1) provided cores of *c.* 0.4m and 0.7m length respectively. Bedrock was encountered at the bottom of both boreholes (and at similar depths at other places tested) and suggests that the marshy area had developed as a result of a perched water table around the spring marking the source of the Tower Brook. The marshy area is *not* at the lowest point in the valley and the ground continues to fall away gently to the north.
- 6.3.2 A series of samples were selected from the core extracted from Auger Hole A2 for laboratory assessment of the pollen at the University of Southampton (**Table 3**); at present this analysis is ongoing. The sample sequence is potentially important if pollen is preserved, and if the sequence can be equated to archaeological activity in the vicinity comprising a prehistoric flint concentration, a probable prehistoric stone 'kerb' and associated 'setting', and a Roman villa. Although the sequence is relatively shallow (0.32m below topsoil), it should be noted that other similarly shallow sequences on the Isle of Wight have covered the entire early Holocene period , i.e. Mesolithic to Bronze Age/Roman (Rob Scaife pers. comm.).
- 6.3.3 Pollen sequences in this area of England are relatively rare, increasing the potential significance of this albeit shallow sequence.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 Prehistoric

- 7.1.1 The small quantity of worked flint recovered from Trenches 1 – 3 cannot be closely dated; it may be related to the concentration of Mesolithic material found beneath the Roman villa during excavations approximately 100m to the north (Barton 1963-4, 48), but a later (Neolithic – Bronze Age) date is considered more likely.
- 7.1.2 No finds were recovered which could be used to date stone 'kerb' **206** and associated stone 'setting' **207**. They could, therefore, be of any date, but a prehistoric (Late Neolithic – Early Bronze Age) date is considered most probable by analogy with similar monuments, predominantly found in western and northern Britain. It is possible that 'kerb' **206** partly surrounded a cairn represented by 'setting' **207**, but it is perhaps more likely that the east-facing arc of stones formed a 'kerb' around a boulder or small standing stone (which has subsequently been removed) with 'setting' **207** being used to 'chock' this in

place. Many stones cleared from the fields, and also probably robbed from the Roman villa, can be found around the existing field boundaries; these include several large blocks and slabs, some used today as gate posts.

- 7.1.3 Complex **206/207** may, therefore, represent a small prehistoric monument, possibly of Late Neolithic – Early Bronze Age date, and its location on a flat area on the edge of a gentle scarp adjacent to a spring marking the source of the Towerhead Brook and surrounding marshy area (**Figs 1 and 2**) may be significant in this suggested dating and interpretation. Also of possible significance in this respect is the presence of a large standing stone, the Wimblestone, approximately 200m to the south-west (see **Fig. 1**).
- 7.1.4 The results of the pollen analysis may provide important environmental information relating to prehistoric activity in the vicinity as well as later settlement associated with the Roman villa.
- 7.1.5 No features or finds of Iron Age date were identified, although evidence for Late Iron Age settlement including post-holes, possible hearths, a pit, pottery and some iron slag was found beneath the Roman villa during the earlier excavations (Barton 1963-4, 48-50).

7.2 Romano-British

- 7.2.1 Ditch **405**, of 3rd – 4th century date, probably marked an enclosure or field boundary associated with the nearby Roman villa complex. The ditch is of particular interest because of the quantity and range of finds present, and also because of the quality of environmental evidence recovered, the upper fill being especially rich in charred grain and chaff. Some environmental analysis was undertaken as part of the earlier excavations (Barton 1963-4, 89-90) and a grain dryer associated with a spread of burnt grain (barley) was found within the villa building (Barton 1963-4, 65), but the results from the 1998 evaluation, although only from a single sample, have the potential to add greatly to an understanding of the agricultural economy of the site.
- 7.2.2 Ditch **405** was located *c.* 150m to the south-east of the villa, a small corridor building of 1st – 4th century date, and less than 100m from building remains interpreted as a possible bath-house (**Fig. 1**). The possible bath-house was recorded in the sides of a drainage ditch and, if not a bath-house, may have been part of a barn or similar building which served an agricultural purpose; such buildings would be expected to be present as part of the villa complex. The burnt stone recovered from ditch **405**, including one fragment with what appears to be melted glass adhering, may derive from the destruction of nearby buildings, and evidence from the earlier excavations suggests that the villa was burnt down shortly after AD 350, although some form of subsequent occupation is suggested (Barton 1963-4, 67-68). Alternatively, but perhaps less likely, the burnt stone may derive from a demolished grain dryer or similar structure.

- 7.2.3 The shallow hollow way identified in the topographic survey approaches the villa site from the south-east and may have been contemporary with it. However, the single, small sherd of Romano-British pottery recovered could have been residual and the hollow way may have been a later feature, of medieval or post-medieval date, which possibly developed during the robbing and carting-away of stone from the site.
- 7.2.4 The east/west aligned ridge identified in the north-west corner of the topographic survey area may have structural remains present as these have been found on other raised areas of ground towards the valley bottom. These include the site of the villa building itself, and remains on a low ridge extending to the west of the possible bath-house (see **Fig. 1**).

7.3 Post-medieval

- 7.3.1 The stone-lined/stone-filled drains in Trenches 1 – 3 are undated, but are considered most likely to have been of post-medieval date. Stone drains of this type ('French drains') were a common method of construction in the post-medieval period. These examples seem clearly to have been built to intercept and channel groundwater flowing downslope from the south-east into or towards the marshy area occupying the hollow around the source of the Towerhead Brook, an area more extensive than exists today. The construction of these drains may have followed field clearance and boundary making which the earlier excavations suggested may have taken place in the 15th – 16th century (Barton 1963-4, 68-70), and the hollow way (see 7.2.3 above) might also have developed at this time.

8. REFERENCES

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- Taylor, H., 1926 'Fifth Report on Rowberrow Cavern,' *Proc. Bristol Spelaeol Soc.* **2**(3), 190-210
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Table 1: All finds by context

Context	Description	Animal Bone	Burnt Flint	CBM	Clay Pipe	Flint	Pottery	Slag	Stone	Iron
103	subsoil	1/1					1/1	2/17		
105	drain 107					1/1		1/2		
106	"	1/16								
108	drain 109					1/1	2/4			
110	drain 111						2/2			
202	subsoil	1/6		1/88		6/13	7/18			
307	drain 306		1/4	2/4			9/24	1/14		
400	topsoil	1/146								
401	subsoil		1/4							
402	ditch 405	72/114	12/476	15/66	1/2		35/232		3/876	1
403	"	86/450					19/182	4/26		
407	gully 408						1/4			
	TOTAL	162/733	8/484	18/158	1/2	8/15	76/477	7/59	4/1200	1

Table 2: Charred plant and charcoal remains

Feature type/ No	Context	Sample	size litres	Flot						Residue Charcoal >5.6mm		
				flot size ml	Grain	Chaff	Weed seeds uncharre	Charred	Charcoal >5.6mm		Other	
Ditch 405	402	1	15	225	22.5	A**	A**	c	A	A	p/beans (C)	1

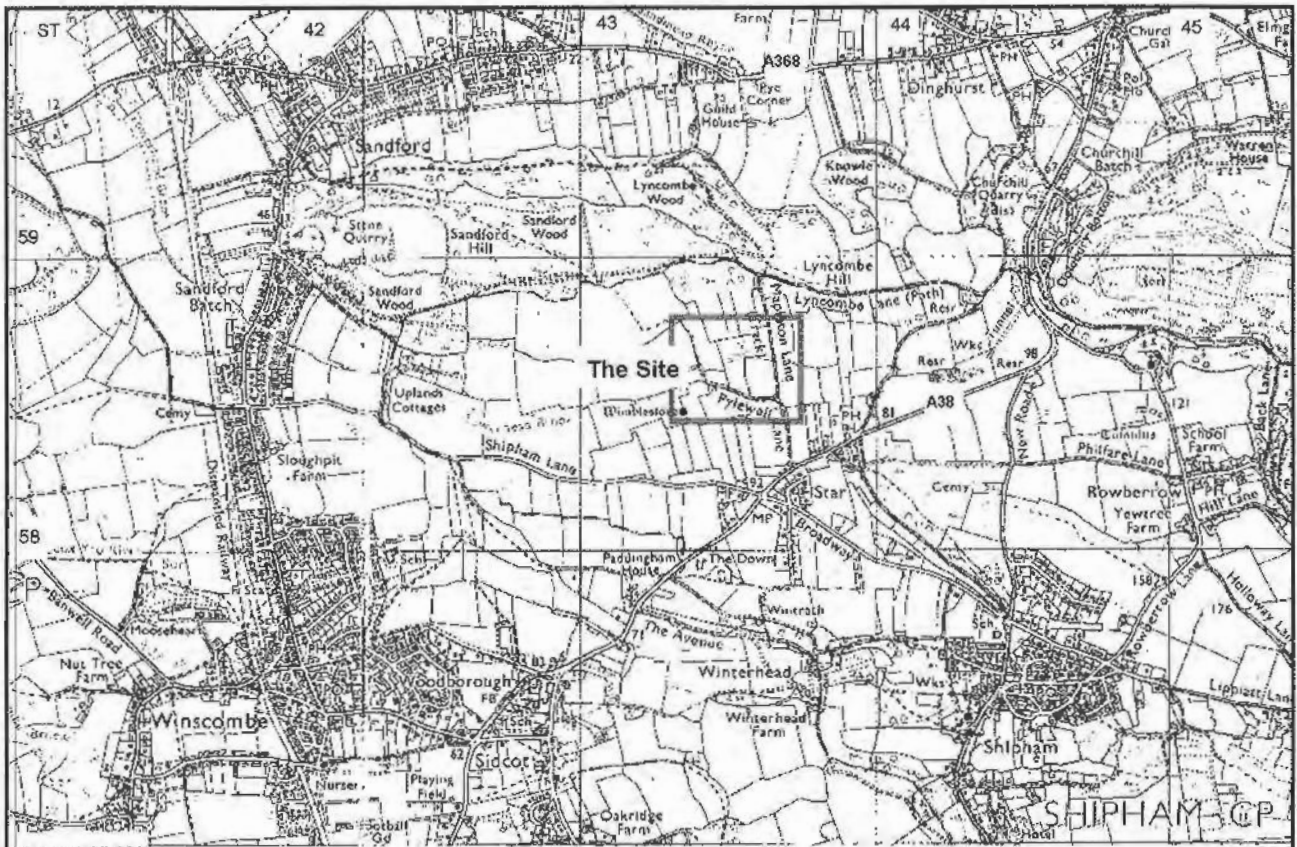
KEY: A** = exceptional, C = < 5 items, (h) = hazelnuts,

NOTE: ¹flot is total, but flot in superscript = ml of rooty material. ²unburnt seed in lower case to distinguish from charred remains

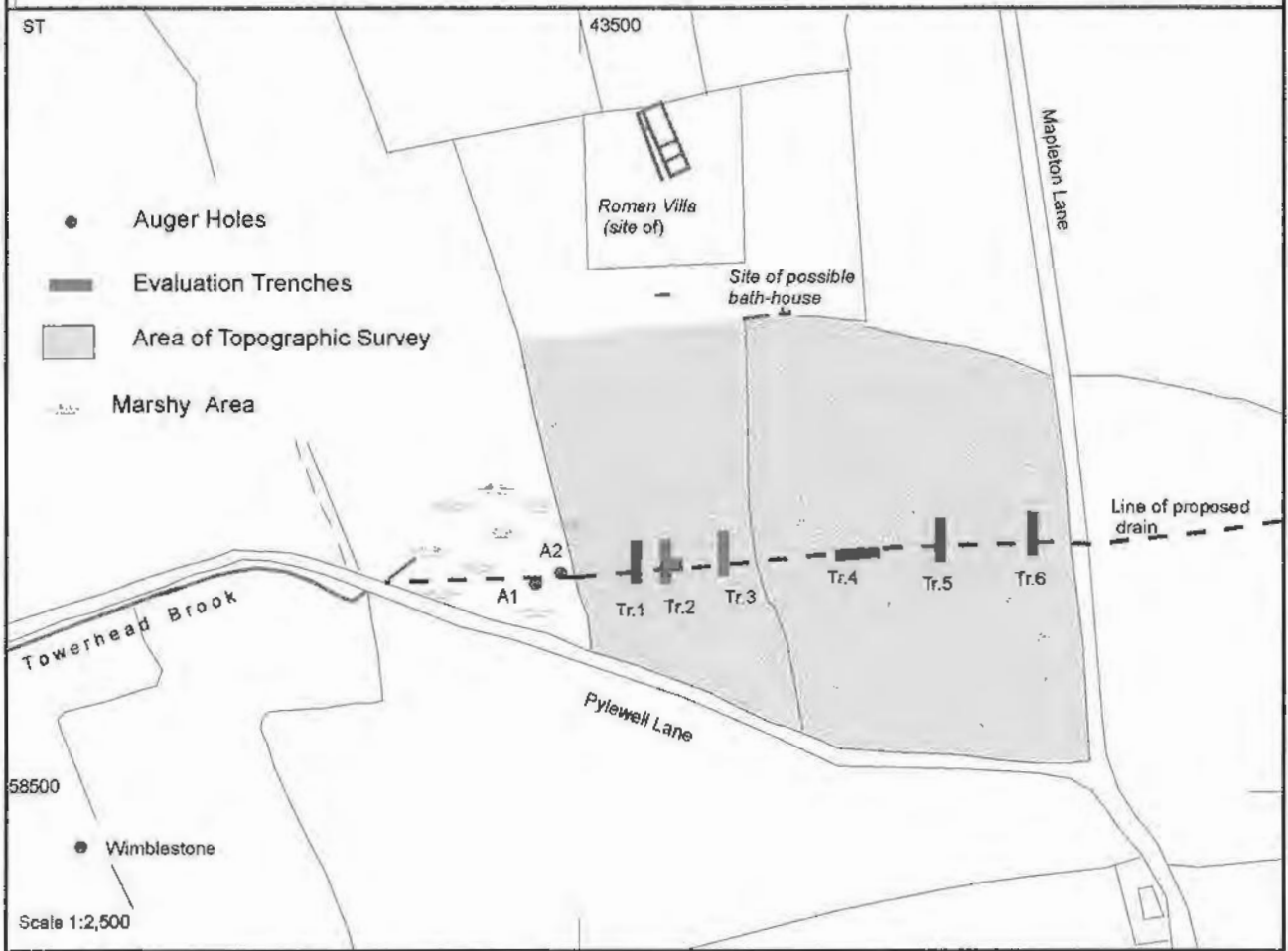
Table 3: Auger Hole A2 - soil sequence

Depth	Samples	Description
0 – 0.32m	8-10cm 10-12cm 16-18cm 20-22cm 24-26cm 28-30cm	Very dark greyish-brown silty clay loam. Organic deposits and soil.
0.32 – 0.48m	32-34cm 36-38cm 40-42cm 44-46cm	Grey clay containing organic (waterlogged) remains
0.48 – 0.52m	48-50cm	Grey and dark brown silty clay loam, mixture of grey clay/silt and dark brown loamy humic/organic matter
0.52 – 0.70m	52-54cm 56-58cm 60-62cm no soil retained beyond 62cm	Dark brown silty clay loam, humic organic
0.70m		Bedrock

NOTE: samples selected for pollen assessment are in bold



Scale 1:25,000



Scale 1:2,500

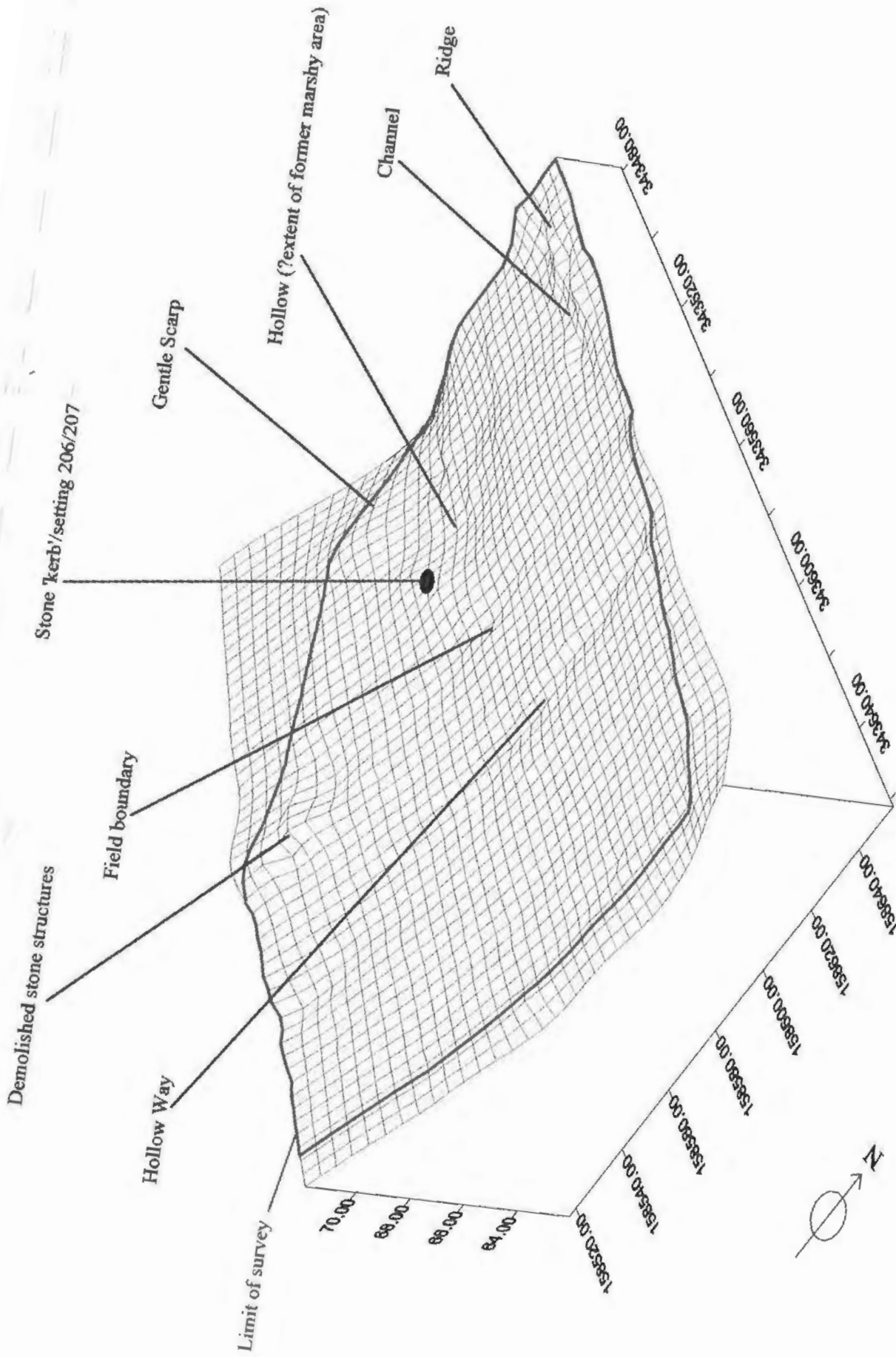


Figure 2

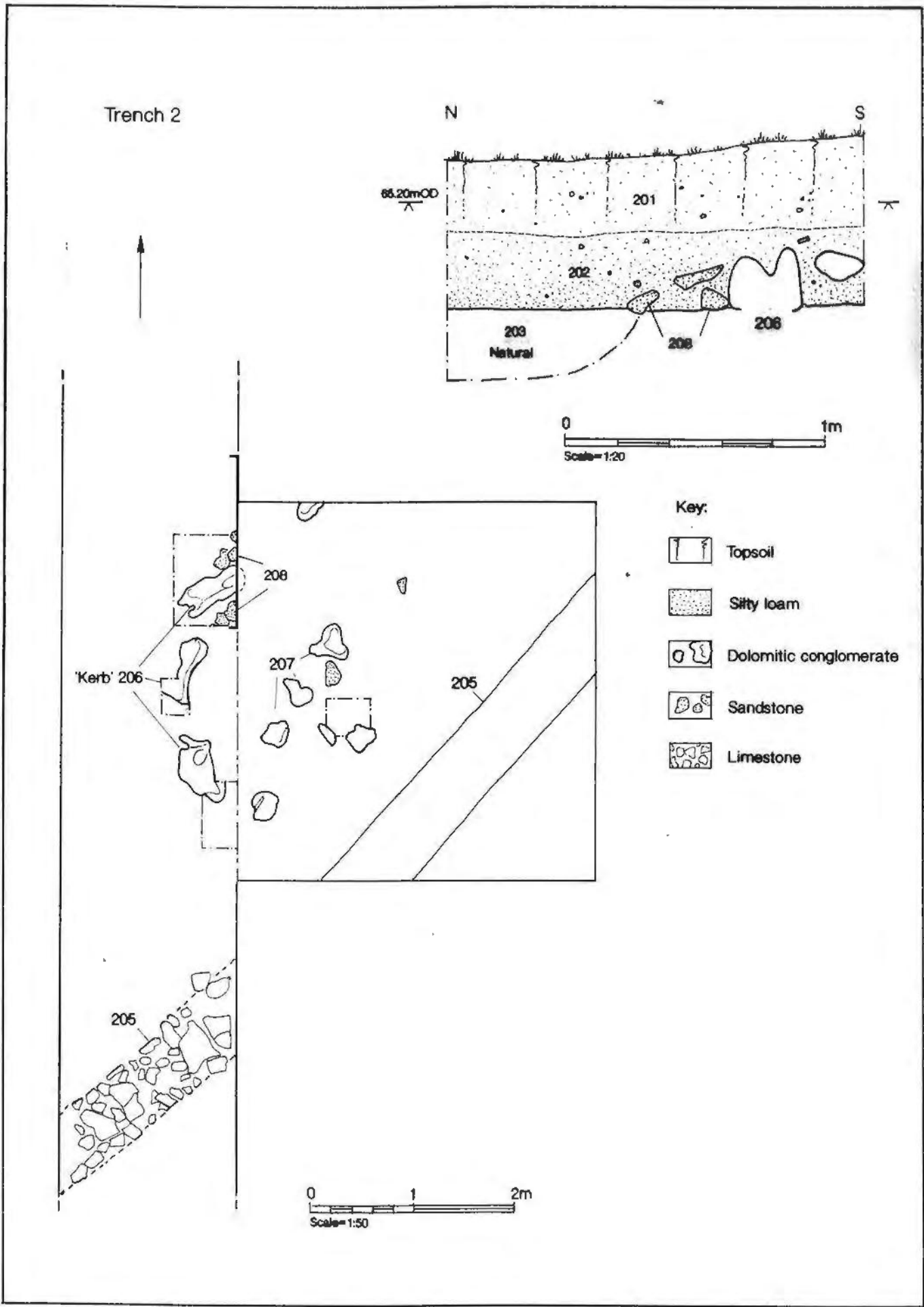


Figure 3

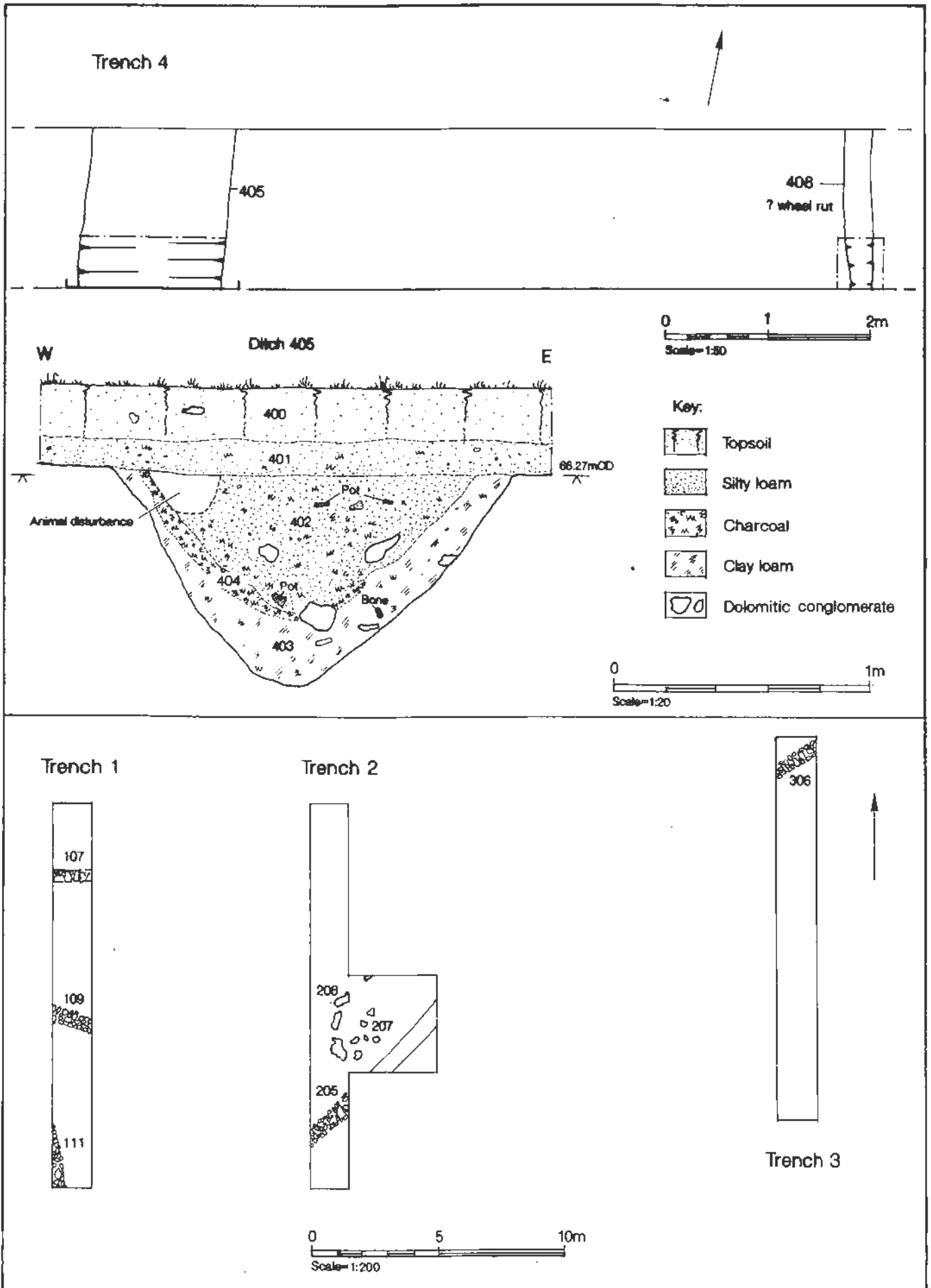


Figure 4