LOXLEY ROAD, STRATFORD-UPON-AVON
ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

Compiled by

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of

Cotswold Archaeological Trust Ltd

on behalf of

Mr.R.Stokes

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY

An evaluation programme was carried out by Cotswold Archaeological Trust Ltd on land to the rear of 43 Loxley Road, Stratford-upon-Avon during May 1992. The study area lies in close proximity to several areas of archaeological interest. The evaluation was commissioned by Mr.R.Stokes and was designed to identify the nature, date, extent and survival of any archaeological deposits encountered within the study area, prior to determination of a planning application for residential development on the site.

Fourteen trial-pits, each one metre square, were hand excavated across the study area to determine the artefactual content of the topsoil. This first stage identified the presence of a small quantity of struck flint of possible Mesolithic and Neolithic date and several abraded sherds of pottery of Romano-British and possible Iron-Age and medieval dates.

The second stage of evaluation involved the machine-excavation of six linear trenches across the site. Topsoil was gradually planed by mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching-bucket in 0.10 - 0.15 m spits to the top of archaeological features or, in their absence, to the natural geological stratum.

Within four of the six trenches archaeological features were encountered, comprised of pits, gullies and postholes. Artefactual material from the fills of these features was scant but a fragment of Roman samian ware was recovered from the fill of a gully, and a Romano-British sherd and single daub fragment was found within a pit fill.

The evidence recovered confirms Romano-British occupation within the study area, although the focus and limits of settlement remain unclear. The archaeological deposits may form part of an extensive Romano-British farmstead occupying the gravel terraces of the Avon valley. It is unclear as to what extent the occupation evidence on the plot may have been encroached upon and degraded by nearby gravel extraction works, or by cultivation. The shallowness of some of the features excavated would suggest some degree of truncation.

Depending on the extent, form and depth of groundworks associated with proposed future development it is suggested that the features encountered need not preclude development, providing the archaeological resource is safeguarded through an adequate mitigation strategy. The core of such a response could be a programme of archaeological 'strip and record' within the footprint of development. This would entail the supervised gradual stripping of topsoil within all house footings and the subsequent full excavation of any archaeological deposits encountered.

GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS

Archaeology

For the purposes of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains, from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, although AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

Context

The simplest level of excavated archaeological data, i.e. a context could be the cut of a ditch (shown as - [1]), or its fill (shown as (2)).

Daub

Mud or clay mixed with dung, hair, etc, often used to weather-proof wattle panels of buildings, or build structures such as ovens.

Iron Age

The first period in Britain in which iron was the predominant metal. In Britain it is dated from c.800/700 BC to the Roman conquest.

Medieval

Taken here as the period from the Norman invasion in AD 1066 to approximately AD 1500.

Mesolithic

A chronological division within the post-Glacial prehistoric period in which hunter-gathering formed the basis of economy. Settlement patterns are not well understood but may have taken the form of intermittently occupied, perhaps seasonal, camping sites. The material culture is represented by a range of flint-work, particularly microliths, bone and antler work and organic materials. The period is dated between c.10,000 BC and 3500 BC.

Microliths

Very small worked flint flakes and blades, commonly used throughout the Mesolithic period.

Natural

Defined in archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site, e.g. Oxford Clay, river terrace gravels, etc.

Neolithic

A chronological division of the prehistoric period during which agriculture and domesticated animals are introduced to Britain. It is dated between c.4500 BC - 2000 BC.

NGR

National Grid Reference given from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

O.D

Ordnance Datum; used in the text to express a given height above mean sea level.

PRN

Principal Record No. (used for entries on the County SMR).

Romano-British

Term used to describe a fusion of indigenous late Iron Age traditions with Roman culture, often abbreviated as 'R-B'. The period is dated between c. AD 43-400.

Settlement

An area of habitation, perhaps surrounded by associated closes, paddocks, approach ways and other features which together constitute a complex of earthworks or cropmarks distinct from fields.

SMR

Sites and Monument Register (held at Warwickshire County Council).

LIST OF FIGURES

1 INTRODUCTION, BRIEF AND REPORT STRUCTURE

1.1 Brief, scope and definitions

This report presents the results of a field evaluation carried out on land to the rear of 43 Loxley Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire (Figs.1-3). Initial archaeological appraisal by Countryside Planning and Management (CPM 1991) had identified a potential archaeological dimension to the site and a specification for field evaluation was subsequently formulated by CPM and agreed with minor amendments by the County Field Archaeologist for Warwickshire on 13th May 1992.

The evaluation forms the basis of a 'unilateral undertaking' according to the terms of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991. The evaluation was recommended to obtain further information on which an informed decision on consent could be based, in line with advice set out within the DoE Planning Policy Guidance note on Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16).

Cotswold Archaeological Trust Ltd was subsequently commissioned by Mr.R.Stokes to carry out a programme of archaeological investigation. Fieldwork was undertaken between the 14th May and 29th May.

Fourteen one metre square trial-pits were hand excavated within the study area (Fig.3) in positions determined by the evaluation specification with minor amendments to the location of trial-pits and subsequent trenches agreed by the County Field Archaeologist for Warwickshire.

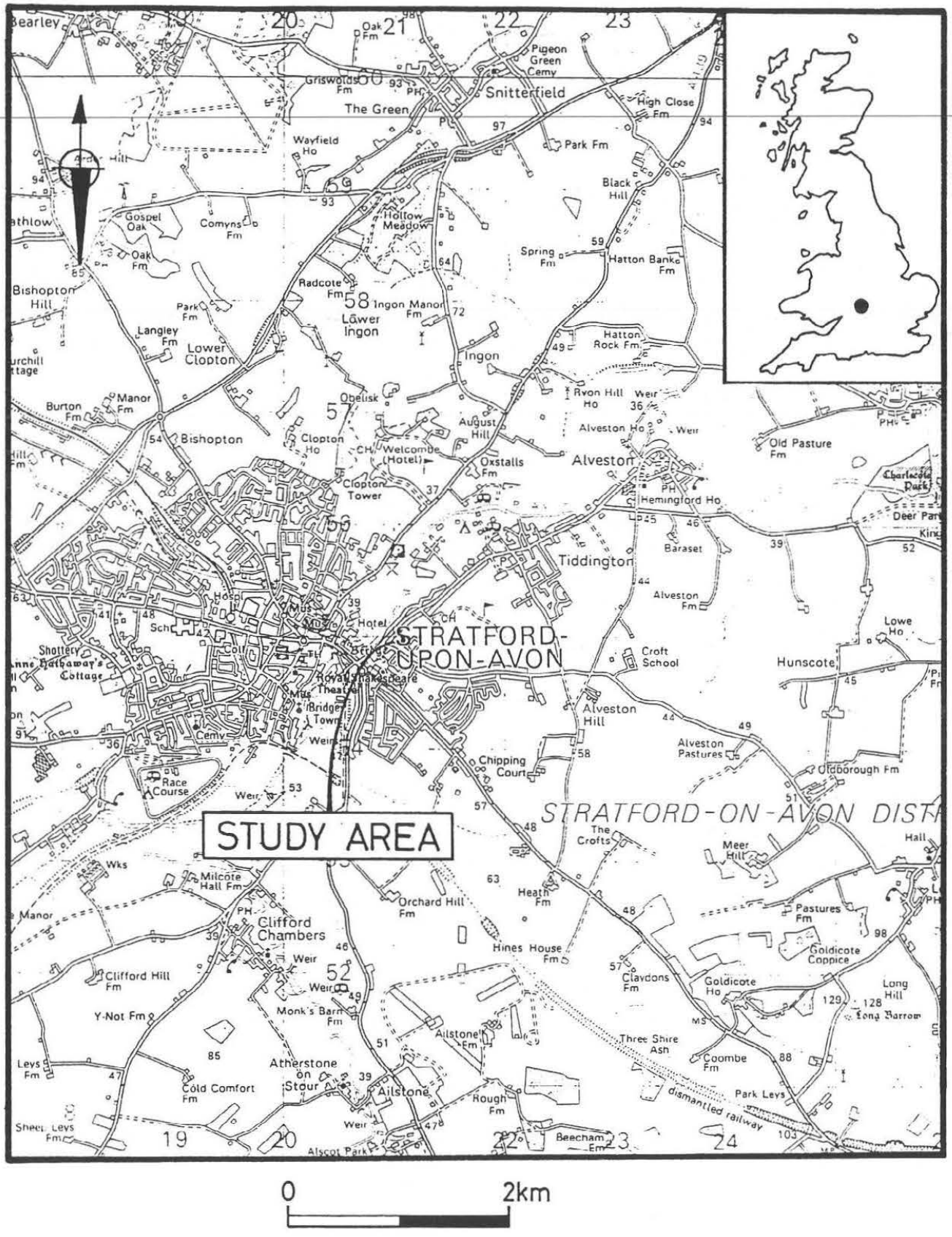
Following the trial-pitting a series of linear trenches were positioned to provide widespread coverage of the site. The general objectives of the evaluation programme were to determine the principal physical characteristics of any archaeological deposits, their quality, extent, survival, condition, potential and fragility.

Reinstatement of the site was carried out over two days at the end of the evaluation, being completed on 1st June 1992.

1.2 Report structure

The report begins with background information on the study area and its immediate environs and continues with the aims and methodology employed during the evaluation programme.

Descriptions are given by trench of the nature, extent, date (where established) and condition of the archaeological deposits



LOCATION MAP

FIG 1

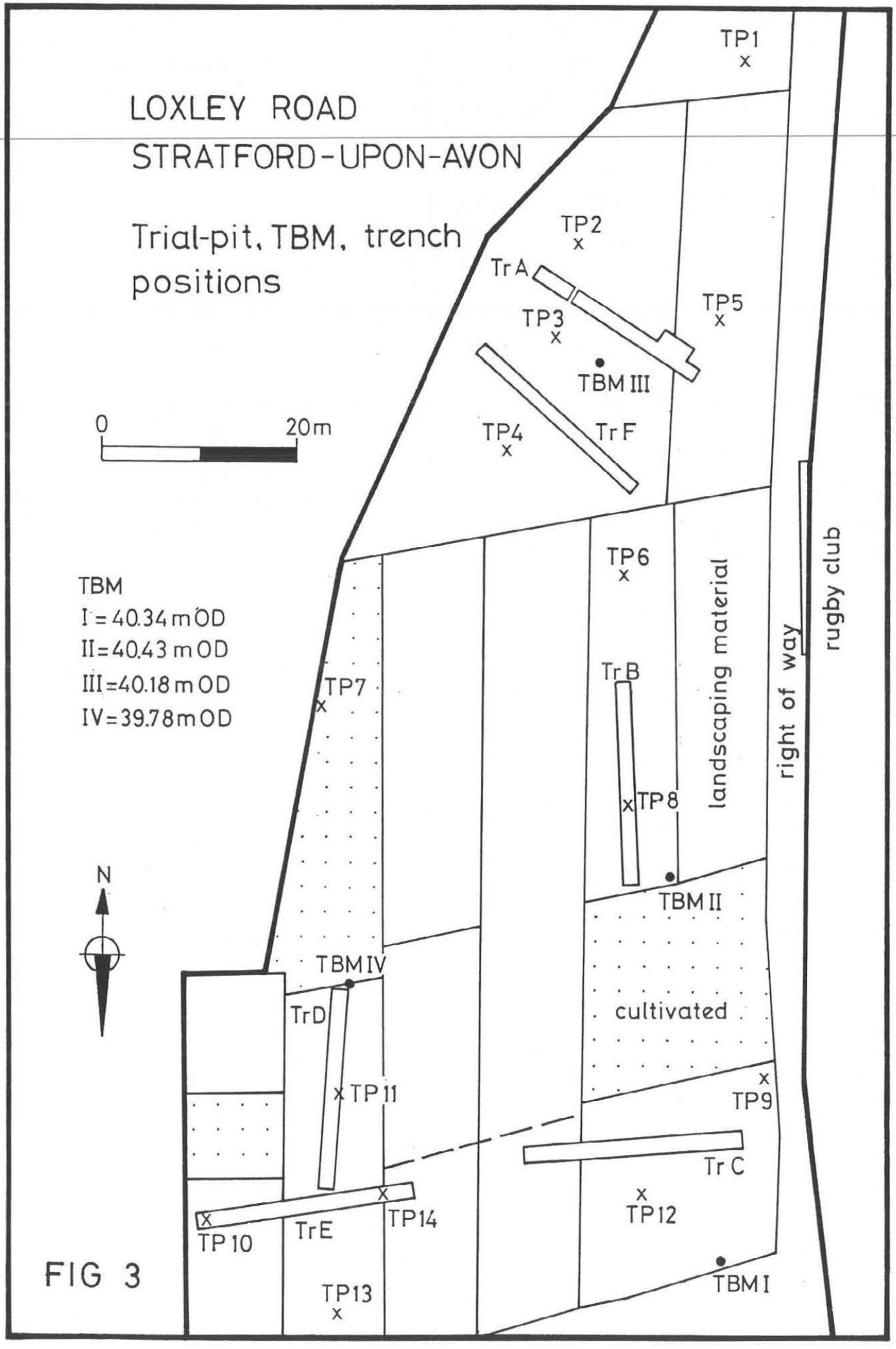

LOXLEY ROAD
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON
Trial-pit, TBM, trench positions
0
20m
TBM
I = 40.34 m OD
II = 40.43 m OD
III = 40.18 m OD
IV = 39.78 m OD
N
TP1
TP2
TrA
TP3
TP5
TBM III
TP4
TrF
TP6
TrB
TP7
TP8
landscaping material
right of way
rugby club
TBM II
TBM IV
TrD
cultivated
TP11
TP9
TrC
TP12
TP10
TrE
TP14
TP13
TBM I

FIG 3

encountered. Plans and sections illustrating the trenches are included in this section. Trench descriptions provide a narrative account of the stratigraphy encountered and are essentially a discussion of what was encountered with interpretive comments clearly distinguished from narrative statements. Consideration is given to the anticipated degree of survival of archaeological deposits across the site.

Within Appendix A information is given on average thicknesses of important levels, from the present ground surface to the natural substrate, along with actual spot heights expressed in metres above Ordnance Datum.

A brief description of the small artefact assemblage recovered during the trial-pit and trench excavations is provided in Appendix B. The material is predominantly of early-modern date and mainly recovered from high within the well-mixed topsoil and subsoils. A limited quantity of prehistoric flint and medieval and earlier ceramics were recovered, and these finds are also listed and discussed within this section.

The report concludes with a general summary of the important elements drawn from the evaluation programme.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Study Area

The study area lies to the south-east of the centre of Stratford-upon-Avon, on the east bank of the river at a level of approximately 40 m O.D. The site, centred on NGR SP210549, lies within Stratford parish although it has previously been administered as part of Alveston parish. The site occupies approximately 0.7 ha and has been extensively cultivated in recent years with current land-use being a combination of cultivated plots and orchard, dense scrub and waste ground (Fig.3).

Adjacent land-use comprises residential development to the north, west and south of the plot with an undeveloped area immediately to the east utilised as Rugby club playing fields. The area to the west of the plot has been extensively quarried for gravel extraction before and during the 1920s. Section 2.3 lists a number of important archaeological discoveries made in these surrounding areas.

2.2 Geology and soils

The study area lies on second terrace alluvial gravels and the evaluation has confirmed a series of alternating and interleaved bands of grey-brown sub-rounded gravels and sands with clean reddish-brown and yellow sands. The soil profile above these river-borne deposits consisted of fine, humic dark-brown to black sandy-loam topsoils overlying a poorly-structured, well-mixed dark-brown sandy clay-loam subsoil.

2.3 Archaeological Background

No archaeological sites or findspots within the study area are listed on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for the county of Warwickshire, and no previous archaeological investigation on the site is known. However, as stated within the Archaeological Appraisal document (CPM 1991) a considerable number of artefact findspots and single monument classes have been recognised nearby. These are registered on the County SMR as;-

PRN 891: A Mesolithic flint assemblage of three possible microlith cores, six possible microliths and 38 flint flakes recovered from a gravel quarry approximately 50m north of the site, centred on NGR:SP21095505.

PRN 1065: An assemblage of Neolithic/Bronze Age flintwork including scrapers and cores scattered over a large

area to the south-west of the site. Material was recovered during the excavation of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery.

PRN 1418: An unaccompanied find of a coin of Antoninus Pius, dated AD 139, recovered from a garden to the south-east of the study area.

PRN 4623: Iron Age pottery and 'pot boilers' recovered during gravel extraction in the 1920's from the quarry 50m north of the study area.

PRN 4706: Flint find from the same location as PRN 891. No details given.

PRN 4764: Roman road overlain by the turnpike road PRN 4815. The road is thought likely to link Tiddington to Chesterton.

PRN 4756: Roman road linking Alcester and Lower Lea.

PRN 4815: Turnpike road.

The study area clearly lies within an area of considerable archaeological interest, with potential Iron Age occupation and a possible Mesolithic site both to the west of the plot. Neolithic and Bronze Age artefacts found nearby also suggested the possibility of archaeological remains on the site. As the appraisal document notes, Roman occupation to the north-east of the study area is plentiful but rather sparse in the immediate vicinity of the site. No traces of Anglo-Saxon or medieval occupation evidence are recorded as having been encountered during gravel quarrying.

2.4 Archaeological Strategy

Given the proximity of the study area to potential Mesolithic, Iron Age and Roman settlement a two part programme of archaeological evaluation was devised and agreed between parties. Initial trial-pitting would seek to investigate the level and nature of artefact content within the topsoil across the site, with subsequent extensive trenching to examine the presence or absence of archaeological features.

3 EVALUATION METHODS, DATA RETRIEVAL AND RECORDING

3.1 Aims

The general aims of the archaeological evaluation were to provide high quality archaeological data from direct observation of the deposits, to complement the information already available in the Stage 1 Archaeological Appraisal with a view to having sufficient data to enable:-

a) modifications to the design, construction methods, and/or layout of the proposed development which might enhance the preservation of archaeological deposits to be made at the earliest opportunity.

b) the design, planning and costing of the most appropriate archaeological response to be prepared in good time.

These general aims would be achieved through a programme of fieldwork involving the digging of trial pits and trenches in those areas of archaeological interest identified during the archaeological appraisal. The specific archaeological objectives of the evaluation were to;-

a) Determine the thickness, depth and depositional history of the archaeological deposits, paying particular attention to the presence or absence of deposits relating to each of the main phases of occupation discussed in the assessment,

b) Characterise the main stratigraphic units encountered in terms of their physical composition (stone, sand, gravel, humic etc) and their archaeological formation (primary deposit, secondary deposit etc).

c) Assess the overall presence and survival of structural remains relating to each of the main periods of occupation revealed, and the potential for the recovery of additional structural information given the nature of the deposits encountered (e.g. extent of later disturbance etc).

d) Assess the overall presence and survival of the main kinds of artefactual evidence (including pottery, brick, tile, stone, glass, metal, bone, small finds, industrial residues etc.), its condition and its potential given the nature of the deposits encountered.

e) Assess the overall presence and survival of the main kinds of ecofactual evidence (including animal bones, human bones, plant remains etc), its condition and its potential given the nature of the deposits encountered.

f) Assess the overall presence and survival of the main kinds of environmental evidence (including charcoal, pollen, mollusca, soil structure etc), its condition and its potential given the nature of the deposits encountered.

g) Appraise the relative value of the main stratigraphic units revealed in terms of their importance for preservation and conservation.

3.2 Evaluation Methods

Fourteen trial pits were hand excavated in the positions shown on Figure 3. Their distribution, set out within the evaluation specification, was designed to provide extensive sampling coverage of the study area. Minor adjustments to the location of several trial-pits (and subsequent trenches) were made to avoid cultivated areas and obstacles on the ground such as trees, rubble, etc.

The process of hand excavation of the trial-pits involved the removal of overlying turf and the subsequent excavation by 0.10m spits of topsoil and subsoil. Within each trial-pit an artefact sampling procedure was conducted whereby 50% of all soil was put through 5mm-mesh sieves, with alternating sieving of opposing quadrants carried out at each new spit depth. Trial-pits were excavated to the top of the natural stratum. With the recovery of a limited number of flint and pots finds from within the uppermost gravel horizon this band was generally excavated to the underlying clean red-brown or yellow sands of certain alluvial nature. The relatively uniform nature of the stratigraphy across both E-W and N-S axes is illustrated through Figure 4, which shows selected trial-pit sections.

Following the completion of the trial-pits and after consultation with the County Field Archaeologist a series of linear trenches were excavated across the site. All trenches were carefully opened under full archaeological supervision using a MF 50HX-T wheeled digger equipped with a 1.75 m wide toothless ditching-bucket. A machine-operator experienced in the requirements and practice of archaeological evaluation work was used throughout the project.

Turf and topsoil were removed by light machining with the digger and the underlying subsoil was then removed through a 'planum' system whereby 0.10 - 0.15 m spits of soil were gradually excavated across the entire length of the trench, with hand cleaning of the trench base as necessary. Preliminary trial pits had shown the presence of variable but generally surprisingly deep accumulations of clean and well-mixed subsoils across the site, and this information assisted the process of subsequent

excavation. Conditions during machining were dry and the work was cleanly executed. Archaeological features were generally found to show up clearly against the gravels they were cut into but trench bases were subsequently trowelled to reclean features and to check for further deposits.

Trenches were all excavated to the depth of the archaeologically sterile geology consisting of second terrace gravel deposits. The presence of limited quantities of flint and pottery recovered from within the top 0.10 m of the uppermost grey-brown gravels initially suggested that this band could be an introduced layer masking archaeological features beneath or a disturbed natural deposit. Once satisfied that no archaeological features were cut into this layer this was machine stripped within trenches A, B and C to reveal an undoubtedly uncontaminated natural alluvial sand deposit.

The localised geological sequence was tested within trench D where the interleaving of sands and gravels confirmed that the uppermost gravels were naturally deposited but that occasional artefacts within it had most likely been introduced through either root or animal-burrowing action. Subsequently trenches E and F were taken only to the surface of this layer, any features cut into the gravels recorded and investigated and excavation taken no deeper.

All Ordance Datum spot-heights were taken with a Sokkisha C40 level. A benchmark located on a section of brick-walling adjacent to the gateway of 19 Loxley Road was utilised (value 39.39 m A.O.D). Four on-site temporary benchmarks were established, their positions and values are illustrated on Figure 3.

Reinstatement of the trial pits and trenches was spread over several days and completed on Monday 1st June 1992.

3.3 Data retrieval and recording

All recording of sub-surface deposits was by use of the standard CAT system.

All definable archaeological levels, i.e. a layer of soil, a road surface, etc. are assigned a unique number called a **context** number (shown in round brackets). A number of contexts such as the different layers of silting that make up the fill of a ditch can be combined to create a **feature** which also receives its own unique number, [shown in square brackets]. A feature may be positive (i.e. upstanding like a wall or trackway) or negative (i.e. cut into the ground like a ditch). All context and feature numbers are prefixed by the trial-pit or trench number followed by consecutive numbers running from 01 for the turfline or uppermost layer. For example the subsoil band within trench 7 receive a unique site number (702). All the relevant attributes and definitions of a context are entered onto a standard recording form thus allowing for the identification of a context within the spatial and temporal framework of the site.

In addition to the context and feature records, a recorded finds index locates important artefacts to their context of origin, and a drawings index, levels index and photographic index supplement the basic written record while also providing a cross-check on relationships. All drawings were made at a scale of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate and both black and white print as well as colour slide films were used to record the trenches.

Soil samples were taken from the trenches for environmental analysis as appropriate with notes otherwise taken on the potential for survival. In the event none were deemed worthy of further analysis and they have now been disposed of.

All artefacts recovered during the course of the excavation were labelled, coded and sealed in plastic bags. The records and finds will be deposited with Warwickshire County Museum.

4 DETAILS OF TRENCH STRATIGRAPHY

4.1 General.

In this section a summary of the results from the evaluation is given in the table below. This details the presence or absence of archaeological deposits within individual trenches. The following sections describe by trench the form, date and condition of archaeological features or stratigraphy encountered. These sections are essentially narrative descriptions of what was found within each trench, but interpretive comments are highlighted where they are made.

Trench Code.	Archaeology?	Description
A	YES	Pit
B	NO	-
C	YES	Pits
D	NO	-
E	YES	Gully, posthole & pit.
F	YES	Gully, postholes & pits.

4.2 Trench F

Dimensions: 22.0 m x 1.70 m.
Orientation: NE-SW.
Figure Ref: 3, 5.

Excavation of trench F revealed the greatest concentration of archaeological features encountered during the evaluation. Throughout the trench alluvial gravels (2003) were encountered at a depths of c.39.25 m O.D, overlain by a thick band of sandy clay-loam subsoil (2002) and a humic loam topsoil (2001). Cut into the natural stratum were a series of uncontaminated and reasonably well-preserved negative features representing structural and occupation evidence.

At the western end of the trench a feature [2004] was found. As seen within the trench the feature, some 0.40 m deep, possessed a curving edge and gently sloping profile and is interpreted as a pit. The relative shallowness of the feature suggests some level of truncation to its upper level may have occurred. Its single fill was a dark brown to black, strongly charcoal-

flecked sandy-loam soil.

Two artefacts were recovered from this fill. A small, abraded orange-ware sherd of probable Romano-British pottery was found along with a single, small fragment of daub. The feature seems likely to represent the burial of an ash/soil mixture from a domestic fire. The daub fragment may be derived from an oven or similar hearth structure, or from a wattle and daub structure.

Immediately adjacent to the pit [2004] two shallow, disturbed features interpreted as postholes were noted. Both [2007] and [2009] were some 0.35 x 0.20 m in size, and cut into the gravels to a depth of 0.13 and 0.11 m. Both postholes were filled with clean, uniformly dark brown gravelly sandy-loam soils. No artefacts were recovered. Their proximity to the probable Romano-British pit would suggest they are elements of the same episodes of on-site activity/occupation.

One metre east of postholes [2007] and [2009] a 0.80 m section of a 0.70 m wide linear feature [2011] was noted. It consisted of a shallow scoop in the alluvial gravels, approximately 0.08 m deep, with poorly pronounce, gently sloping edges. The orientation and nature of the feature could not clearly be established, and it remains unclear whether it is a curving section of [2015] described below, or a separate feature of unknown function.

East of the two postholes and ?pit feature [2011] another shallow curvilinear feature [2015], some 1.50 m long, 0.35 - 0.50 m wide and 0.05 m deep was encountered. The feature came to an abrupt end within the trench and appears to represent the terminal of a shallow or truncated gully. The fill (2014) was found to be identical to the others within the trench, consisting of a dark brown gravelly sandy-loam. No artefacts were recovered by which this feature could be dated.

An isolated feature was discovered at the eastern end of the trench, consisting of a well-defined circular posthole some 0.55m in diameter and 0.23 m deep with near vertical sides. No finds were recovered from the sandy-loam fill.

The features represent a range of occupation evidence, comprising domestic pits, postholes and gullies. Whilst only pit [2004] yielded dating evidence the close association and similarity of the features/fills within trench E suggest they are all of Romano-British date. The discrete nature of each feature meant that no cross-relationships between features could be established and it remains unclear whether the structural remains represent more than one phase of activity.

4.3 Trench E

Dimensions: 22.50 m x 1.75 m.
Orientation: ENE-WSW.
Figure Ref: 3, 6.

Excavation of trench E revealed a second cluster of negative features cut into the natural alluvial gravels (1903) and again of Romano-British date. The features were all overlain by a clean dark-brown loam subsoil (1902) and topsoil (1903).

Within the western half of the trench a narrow linear gully [1904] with a V-shaped profile was encountered, on a NNE-SSW alignment. The feature ran for a length of 1.85 m within the trench and varied in width from 0.45 to 0.55 m. The gully was relatively shallow, approximately 0.12 m deep with quite sharply sloping edges and a broadly flat base. The fill (1905) consisted of a homogeneous, uncontaminated dark brown sandy-loam with a light gravel content (less than 10%). A single, abraded fragment of Roman samian-ware was recovered from the fill, dating to the C2nd or early C3rd.

Some 2.50 m away from gully [1904] a posthole [1907] was found, filled with a gravelly sandy-loam soil (1906) and devoid of artefactual material. The posthole was of a slightly ovoid shape, some 0.45 m long and 0.20 m wide, and cut into the natural gravels to a depth of 0.20 m. Sectioning of its fill revealed no trace of a post-socket and the apparently 'stretched' shape of the feature may have resulted from leverage of the post during its removal. No further postholes were encountered within the trench, and the spacing and patterning of postholes on the site remains unclear.

Within the eastern half of the trench a large pit [1908] was found to lie partially within the trench. The feature possessed a gently curving northern edge, turning more abruptly at its eastern side, and had sharply sides dropping to a depth of some 0.67 m beneath the top of the alluvial gravels. No cut could be discerned beyond the height of these gravels, the feature being sealed by the overlying subsoil (1902).

The pit was half-sectioned to reveal a single, homogeneous fill (1909) of dark-brown sandy clay-loam soil with occasional gravels (less than 15%). No artefactual material was found to suggest a date or clear function. This feature was rather dissimilar to the pits noted in trench F which were both considerably shallower and generally contained charcoal flecking.

4.4 Trench A

Dimensions: 20.00 m x 1.75 m plus 5.20 m x 1.60 m.
Orientation: NE-SW.
Figure Refs: 3, 7.

Alluvial deposits were encountered at a depth of approximately 39.30 m O.D and consisted of grey-brown dirty sub-rounded gravels with sands (1503/1504). A narrow alluvial channel [1507] was noted running on a broadly N-S alignment and subsequently filled with a series of interleaved sands and gravels (1508).

The natural stratum was subsequently cut by a pit [1505] an irregularly shaped pit with sharply-sloping sides. The pit was approximately 3.20 m in length and 1.60 m wide and cut into the alluvial gravels (1503) to a depth of 0.75 m. It contained a dark brown gravelly sandy-loam fill. Artefactual material was limited to a small quantity of struck flint and several fragments of animal bone. Two lumps of heavily stained or mineralised purple-brown sand were noted at the edge of the pit toward its base, and recorded in-situ, their shape and location shown on Figure 7.

These may represent either natural accretions of iron-panned sands or the wholly decayed remains of an iron object, with any metal having been since replaced by a friable, loose mineralised sand. The deteriorated condition of the material prevented its lifting as integral objects and conservation was not possible. No metalwork or bone material was found during the evaluation at the level of the alluvial gravels, and it is thought that the gravel geology may be generally unfavourable to their survival.

The alluvial gravels (1503) and pit [1505] were subsequently sealed by a thick accumulation of dark brown sandy-loam subsoil (1502) and a thin covering of topsoil (1501).

4.5 Trench C

Dimensions: 22.50 m x 1.75 m.
Orientation: E-W.
Figure Ref: 3, 8.

Natural alluvial gravels (1703) were cut by two broadly circular pits which were in turn sealed by an accumulation of dark-brown sandy clay-loam subsoil (1702) and humic-loam topsoil (1701). Pits [1704] and [1707] possessed sharply-sloping sides and concave bases. They lay in close proximity to each other and no further features were encountered within the trench.

Pit [1704] had a diameter of some 2.20 m and was cut into the natural gravels to a depth of 0.80 m. Pit [1707] was immediately adjacent, but was slightly smaller with a diameter of approximately 1.20 m, and depth of 0.75 m. The fills of the two features were identical, consisting of charcoal-flecked dark-brown very-gravelly sandy-loam soils. No artefacts were recovered and their dating remains uncertain.

4.6 Trench B

Dimensions: 20.90 m x 1.75 m.
Orientation: N-S.
Figure Ref: 3, 9.

Alluvial gravels (1603) were found at a depth of approximately 39.30 m O.D. These were sealed by a thick band of dark brown sandy-loam subsoil (1602) overlain in turn by a layer of humic sandy-loam topsoil (1601). No archaeological features were encountered within the trench and no finds were made during the machining and associated hand cleaning of the trench and sections.

4.7 Trench D

Dimensions: 20.10 m x 1.75 m.
Orientation: NNE-SSW.
Figure Ref: 3, 9.

No archaeological features were found within trench D and the stratigraphy was found to consist of an uppermost natural alluvial gravel band (1803) overlain by a relatively thin sandy-loam subsoil (1802) and humic-loam topsoil (1801). One narrow negative feature [1807] was noted, a natural feature resultant from the decay of a tree-root.

Within trench D the natural strata was investigated to ascertain whether the uppermost gravel deposits encountered during trial-pitting and trench-cutting might seal earlier archaeological deposits. Although earlier trial-pitting showed this gravel layer to be disturbed at several points around the site, with artefactual material from its upper levels, it was proven from excavation within trench D that the surface gravels represent the uppermost episode of deposition of a whole series of thin, dirty gravel bands interleaved with layers of clean, fine red-brown and yellow alluvial sands.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Trial-pit excavations.

The excavation of the fourteen trial pits has provided extensive coverage of the study area, providing preliminary information on the nature and depths of stratigraphy across the site and determining the artefact concentration of the topsoil.

The trial-pits revealed a remarkably uniform stratigraphy across the site (Fig.4); consisting of alluvial gravels over sands, overlain by a variable depth of homogeneous sandy clay-loam subsoil and a thin covering of fine, humic loam topsoil. The topsoil and subsoils were well mixed with little or no structuring, reflecting a long period of cultivation on at least parts of the site.

As anticipated for a site with a long history of cultivation the topsoils contained small quantities of post-medieval/early modern artefacts. These comprised heavily abraded earthenware tile and brick fragments, predominantly nineteenth to twentieth century unglazed earthenwares and china, and glass and occasional iron nails, etc. Some of this material had worked its way quite deep into the soil profile but the lower subsoil was nevertheless relatively free of late, intrusive finds. Two fragments of C15/16th pottery were recovered from topsoil (601).

Of greater interest the trial-pitting revealed a small quantity of medieval and earlier artefacts. The small and heavily abraded condition of much of the pottery, without diagnostic sherds, made dating difficult with several fragments dating either to the Roman or to the medieval period. The few sherds of more clearly medieval ceramics, such as a single sherd of probable C12/13th pottery from (201), most probably reflect no more than introduction onto the site from further afield. It is not known if the site has previously been ploughed and whether such material has been introduced through manuring.

The few pottery sherds of possible Iron Age or sub-Roman date and certain Romano-British date recovered from the subsoil and gravels were more interesting. These fragments were also initially thought to reflect material coming onto the site from a settlement some distance away from the study area, tying in perhaps with reported finds of Iron Age pottery during gravel quarrying to the west. However with the subsequent identification of several discrete areas of Romano-British occupation on the plot, the trial-pit finds can now be seen as deriving from underlying archaeological contexts.

This is seen at trial pits 3 and 4 where unstratified sherds of C2nd + AD date found within the subsoil lie close to and above the structures found in trench F. Within trial-pit 12 two abraded sherds of possible Middle-Late Iron-Age or alternately sub-Roman (C5/6th) pottery were recovered from the top of the gravels, a short distance from the two pit features found in trench C. If the sherds of R-B pottery, all dating to the second century AD or later, recovered from the subsoil do lie close to their original context of deposition, the single R-B sherd from trial-pit 8 may suggest more structural evidence may lie mid-way up the plot, near to trench B. Given the relatively dispersed disposition of the postholes, gullies and pits it appears possible that several of the evaluation trenches, devoid of archaeological features, may simply lie within or between structures.

In addition to the Romano-British pottery the trial pitting also identified the presence within the subsoil of small quantities of worked flint. Most of the flint appears to be derived from the abundant underlying natural gravel pebbles, although some finer quality flint was found. Although many of the fragments were undiagnostic, several pieces are thought to date to the late Neolithic and possibly the Mesolithic period. The most interesting find was a broken retouched flake from trial-pit 9 and thought to be a petit-tranchet derivative of late Neolithic date, but even more important if associated with Mesolithic material.

The flintwork found during the evaluation certainly suggests a reasonably high intensity of prehistoric activity within the area, perhaps with the main focus of any settlement or working zones lying further to the west. As described in section 2 considerable numbers of worked flint of probable Mesolithic date were recovered during gravel quarrying earlier this century.

The variable thicknesses of soils encountered, generally exceeding anticipated depths, may represent disposal of soil from adjacent ground onto the site. The stripping of topsoil is likely to have occurred prior to both the extraction of gravel immediately to the west of the plot and during landscaping for the creation of the Rugby Football ground to the east.

5.2 Trench excavations.

Following on from the initial trial-pitting, the combination of machine-trenching and hand excavation of potential features has successfully identified the presence of areas of archaeological deposits within the plot (Figures 5-8).

The key elements established through the second stage of the evaluation programme are that structural evidence survives in the

form of relatively well preserved negative features, cut into the alluvial gravels. These features have been identified both within the northern and southern halves of the site and were also found to be well dispersed along the west-east axis of the site as well.

The pits, gullies and postholes are all thought to be of a similar date, given the similarity of their fills and their close proximity with each other. All three of the gullies were running on broadly N-S alignments and no features were noted to indicate more than one phase of activity.

Two of the excavated features yielded abraded Romano-British pottery and the evidence as a whole suggests elements of a farmstead established on the Avon valley gravel terraces. The features encountered during the evaluation are generally indicative of dispersed timber-built structures with associated gullies. The absence of finds of stone during the evaluation suggests there is no evidence for higher status activity.

The features found within the evaluation trenches may be only a small part of a complex and extensive settlement. It remains unclear however to what degree encroachment by quarrying at the western boundary of the plot may have denigrated or entirely removed sections of the archaeological resource, and where its focus and limits lie. Several areas of the site remain unevaluated, principally those areas currently under dense scrub and tree cover, landscaping material or allotments. Given the relatively dispersed nature of the features located it is possible some evaluation trenches may lie partially within or between structures, and that the spread and patterning of features is currently largely indeterminable.

5.3 Conclusions

The evaluation programme has demonstrated the presence of in-situ archaeological deposits within the study area, dating to the Romano-British period. No deposits dating to the post-Roman period were encountered. The features noted are indicative of rural settlement and survive in a moderate state of preservation, with reasonably well-preserved and uncontaminated fills yielding a limited amount of datable artefactual material. Some degree of truncation is suggested by the shallowness of several of the pits and gullies. The structural remains survive at depths of approximately 0.80 m to 1.20 m below existing ground level.

As reported within the preceding Interim Statement any future development plans for the site should ideally explore the feasibility of shallow foundations so that the archaeological features would be left intact beneath the new structures. If due to the

relatively shallow depth of the archaeological remains preservation in-situ cannot be accommodated within the development proposal it is suggested that the remains are not of sufficient importance to preclude development. Rather the impact of any development should be mitigated through a programme of prior archaeological recording.

It is suggested that mitigation strategy should involve a process of 'strip and record' during the excavation of all footings and services on the site, where archaeologically-supervised machine-stripping of topsoil would be followed by the recording and excavation of all archaeological features within the footprint of development.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Gerrard, C.M 1991 **Loxley Road, Stratford-upon-Avon. Archaeological Evaluation and Specification.** (includes Appx.CPM 1 Desk-based Archaeological Appraisal and Warwickshire Museum Specification for Archaeological Field Evaluation).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cotswold Archaeological Trust Ltd would like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their assistance, advice and/or services during the evaluation programme;-

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Dr.Jane Timby, Archaeological consultant.

Mainfleet Ltd, Stratford-upon-Avon.
Forum Tool Hire, Cirencester.

CAT staff involvement:

Fieldwork: Alistair Barber, Paul Chislett, Mike Ings, Richard Morton, Paul Smith.

Text: Alistair Barber.
Illustrations: Alejandra Gutierrez.

APPENDIX A.

SUMMARY OF RECORDED INFORMATION.

	O.D height (metres)			
TRIAL-PIT NO.	1	2	3	4
Existing ground level:	40.10	40.01	39.78	40.10
Subsoil (top):	39.86	39.62	39.46	39.74
Alluvial gravels (top):	39.44	39.24	39.08	39.22
Alluvial sands (top):	38.90	39.06	38.88	38.74
Excavated depth:	38.76	39.06	38.88	38.24

TRIAL-PIT NO.	5	6	7	8
Existing ground level:	39.92	40.14	39.69	40.15
Subsoil (top):	39.66	39.74	39.29	39.81
Alluvial gravels (top):	39.28	39.24	39.01	39.33
Alluvial sands (top):	38.84	38.79	38.77	39.09
Excavated depth:	38.84	38.79	38.63	38.99

	O.D height (metres)			
TRIAL-PIT NO.	9	10	11	12
Existing ground level:	40.41	39.47	39.65	40.07
Subsoil (top):	40.15	39.21	39.25	39.68
Alluvial gravels (top):	39.65	38.98	39.03	39.36
Alluvial sands (top):	39.30	38.74	38.75	38.87
Excavated depth:	39.27	38.64	38.53	38.81

TRIAL-PIT NO.	13	14
Existing ground level:	39.69	39.51
Subsoil (top):	39.41	39.23
Alluvial gravels (top):	39.23	39.05
Alluvial sands (top):	38.93	38.76
Excavated depth:	38.45	38.64

TRENCH A

	O.D height (metres)
Existing ground level:	39.90 - 39.95.
Subsoil (top):	39.54 - 39.75.
Alluvial gravels (top):	39.10 - 39.30.
Alluvial sands (top):	38.80 - 39.00.
Excavated depth:	38.65 - 38.90.

Pit [1505] (top):	39.26.
" " (base):	38.56.

TRENCH B

Existing ground level:	39.97 - 40.12.
Subsoil (top):	39.72 - 39.77.
Alluvial gravels (top):	39.22 - 39.37.
Alluvial sands (top):	39.10 - 39.12.
Excavated depth:	39.10 - 39.12.

No archaeological features present.

TRENCH C

	O.D height (metres)
Existing ground level:	40.24 - 40.33
Subsoil (top):	39.94 - 40.04
Alluvial gravels (top):	39.79 - 39.94
Alluvial sands (top):	39.34 - 39.69
Excavated depth:	39.04 - 39.09
Pit [1704] (top):	39.74
" " (base):	38.94
Pit [1707] (top):	39.67
" " (base):	38.98

TRENCH D

Existing ground level:	39.55 - 39.63.
Subsoil (top):	39.25 - 39.35.
Alluvial gravels (top):	38.95 - 39.15.
Alluvial sands (top):	38.65 - 38.70.
Excavated depth:	38.25.

No archaeological features present.

TRENCH E

	O.D height (metres)
Existing ground level:	39.27 - 39.42.
Subsoil (top):	38.97 - 39.12.
Alluvial gravels (top):	38.87 - 38.95.
Excavated depth:	38.87 - 38.95.
Pit [1908] (top):	39.17.
" " (base):	38.12.
Gully [1904] (top):	38.84.
" " (base):	38.73.
Posthole [1907] (top):	38.91.
" " (base):	38.71.

TRENCH F

	O.D height (metres)
Existing ground level:	39.75 - 39.78.
Subsoil (top):	39.25 - 39.28.
Alluvial gravels (top):	38.56 - 38.94.
Excavated depth:	38.56 - 38.94.
Pit [2004] (top):	38.56.
" " (base):	38.15.
Posthole [2007] (top):	38.88.
" " (base):	38.75.
Posthole [2009] (top):	38.88.
" " (base):	38.77.
? Gully [2011] (top):	38.88.
" " " (base):	38.80.
? Gully [2015] (top):	38.85.
" " " (base):	38.80.
Posthole [2013] (top):	38.94.
" " (base):	38.71.

APPENDIX B

FINDS REGISTER

FLINT

Analysis by G.T.Walker.

Context No.	Description/date where known.	
(302)	1 x broken cortical flake, possibly struck from a blade core. (Gravel pebble origin).	?Mesolithic.
	1 x burnt flake.	No date.
	1 x broken flake on impure flint, utilised on RHS proximal end.	" "
(502)	1 x thick cortical flake, utilised as blade core.	? Mesolithic.
	1 x cortical flake. ?natural. (All gravel pebble origins).	
(602)	4 x burnt flakes.	No date
	1 x unretouched flake.	" "
	2 x misc.lump. (All prob.gravel pebble origin).	" "
(802)	1 x burnt lump.	No date
	1 x misc.lump.	" "
	1 x ?natural flake.	" "
(902)	1 x broken retouched flake, possible petit-tranchet derivative.	?Late Neolithic.
(903)	1 x natural flake.	
(1202)	1 x unretouched flake.	No date.
	2 x natural flake.	
	1 x burnt natural flake. (Gravel pebble origins).	No date.
(1301)	1 x burnt lump.	No date.

POTTERY — Analysis by Dr.J.Timby

Context No.	Fabric description/date-range.
(201)	Iron-glazed earthenware. Post-med. x1 unglazed fine earthenware. C19/20th. x1 hm black sandy ware. ? med C12/13th. x1 grey, red-brown core. Roman or med.
(302)	x1 rimsherd of jar/beaker. Similar fabric as from (801). Roman. C2nd +.
(401)	x1 Severn Valley ware. } All in poor, worn condition. x1 Malvernian type. } condition. x1 oxidised sandy. } C2nd + .
(501)	x1 refined earthenware (china). C19/20th.
(502)	unglazed earthenware. C20th. clay pipe.
(601)	Fe glazed wares. refined earthenwares. yellow glazed wares. ? Cistercian handle. ? C15/16th. x1 orange sandy ware with mottled greenglaze. C15/16th.
(801)	refined earthenware (china). C19/20th. rimsherd, flat rim bowl. Grey sandy ware. Roman, probably C2nd + .
(802)	Fe glazed ware. refined earthenwares. } C19/20th. flowerpot.
(1001)	clay pipe. English stoneware. refined earthenware. tinglazed wares. x1 partial glazed cream hd sandy. ? late med. x1 orange ware with grey core. ? Roman.
(1203)	x3=1 hm sherd with sandy texture and rare

large sub-angular quartz and veget.inclusions.
May be either sub-Roman (i.e C5/6th) or pre-Roman (M-LIA).

(1302) unglazed earthenware.
Fe glazed wares. } All C19/20th.
refined earthenwares (china).
?proto-stoneware.

(1905) Samian fragment; probably C2nd/early C3rd.
Tr.E

(2002) x1 orange ware. ? med or Roman.
Tr.F x1 lump, fired-clay/daub.

OTHER FINDS CATEGORIES.

GLASS.

Context No.	No./Type.
(501)	2 x PM window-glass frags.
(801)	2 x PM vessel glass frags.
(802)	2 x PM vessel glass frags.
(1301)	1 x PM vessel glass frags.

BRICK/TILE.

Context No.	No./Type.
(202)	3 x PM brick frags. 2 x PM tile frags. 1 x PM drain frag.
(501)	1 x unid.frag. 2 x PM tile frags.
(502)	8 x PM tile frags.
(601)	7 x PM tile frags.
(602)	1 x PM tile frags.
(701)	1 x PM tile frag.
(801)	1 x PM brick frags.
(802)	1 x PM brick frag.
(902)	1 x PM tile frag.
(1001)	4 x PM tile frags.
(1201)	1 x unid.frag.
(1301)	4 x PM brick frags. 2 x PM tile frags. 1 x PM drain frag.

BONE.

Context No.	No./type
(501)	1 x bone frag.
(502)	1 x tooth frag.
(801)	1 x bone frag.
(1505)	3 x bone frags.

METAL.

Context No.	No./Type.
(501)	1 x Cu buckle frag.
(502)	2 x Fe nails.
(602)	1 x Fe nail. 1 x unid.Fe frag.
(802)	1 x Fe nail. 1 x unid.Fe frag.
(902)	1 x Fe nail.
(1001)	1 x Fe nail.
(1302)	4 x Fe nails. 1 x unid.Fe frag.

COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

CONTEXT RECORD.

01. Site Code:	02. Site Sub-division.	03. Context Number.

04. Interpretation.

05. Grid Reference. E. N.	06. Length.	07. Width.	08. Diameter	09. Height/ Depth.

Description.

10. Colour.

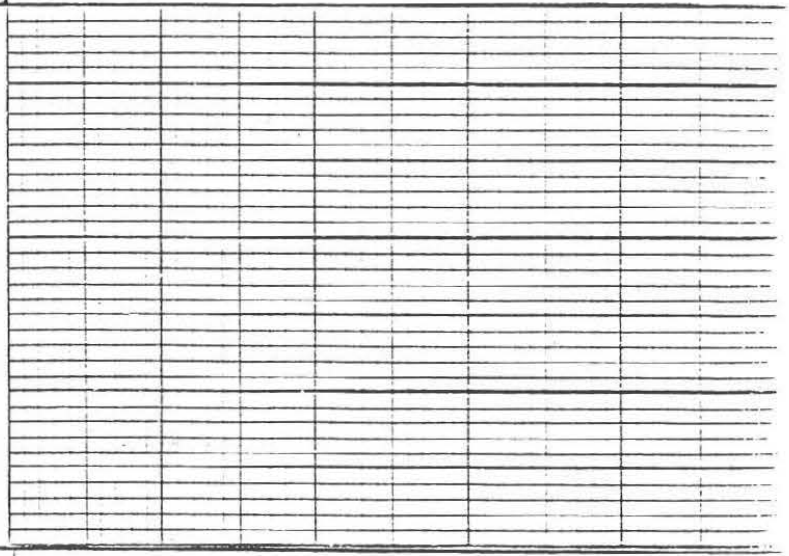
11. Texture.

12. Consistency.

13. Course Components.

Relationships: Associated Contexts.	Associated Features.
14. Overlaid by:	20. Component/Fill of:
15. Overlies:	21. Cut by:
16. Equivalent to:	22. Cuts:
17. Abutts:	23. Seals:
18. Bonded to:	24. Abutts:
19. Contains:	25. Uncertain:

26. Description and Sketch:



Records.	Photographs.
27. Plan:	30. Monochrome:
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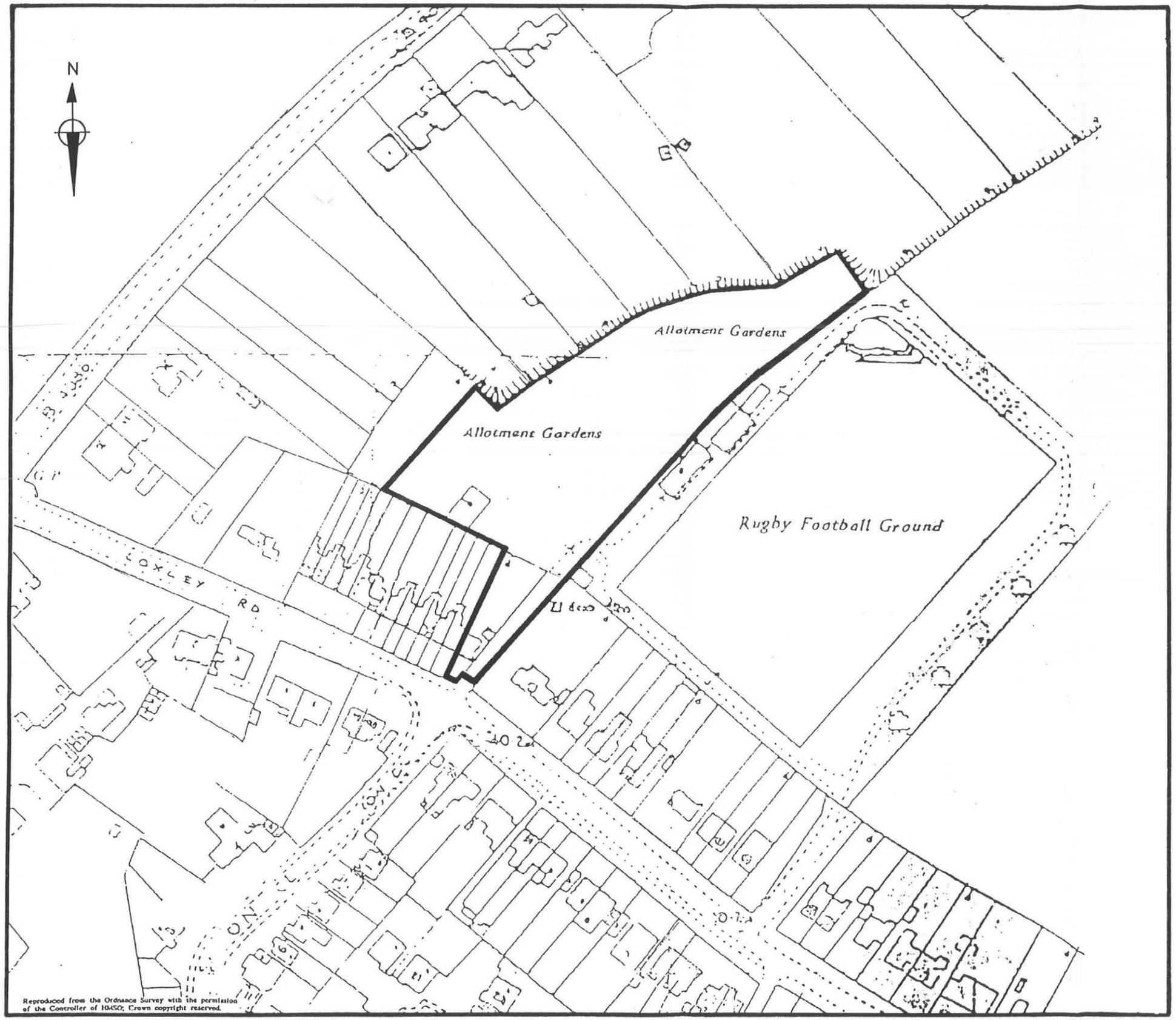
29. Notebook:	32. Infa Red:

Recorder	Interpretation.
33. Name:	35. Phase.
34. Date:	



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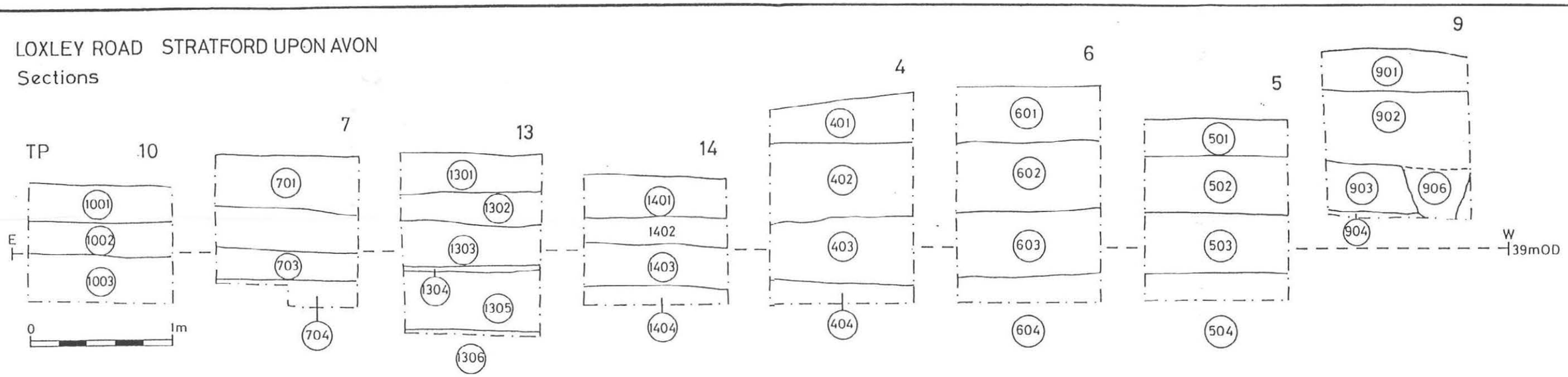
43 LOXLEY ROAD
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

FIG 2

LOXLEY ROAD STRATFORD UPON AVON

Sections



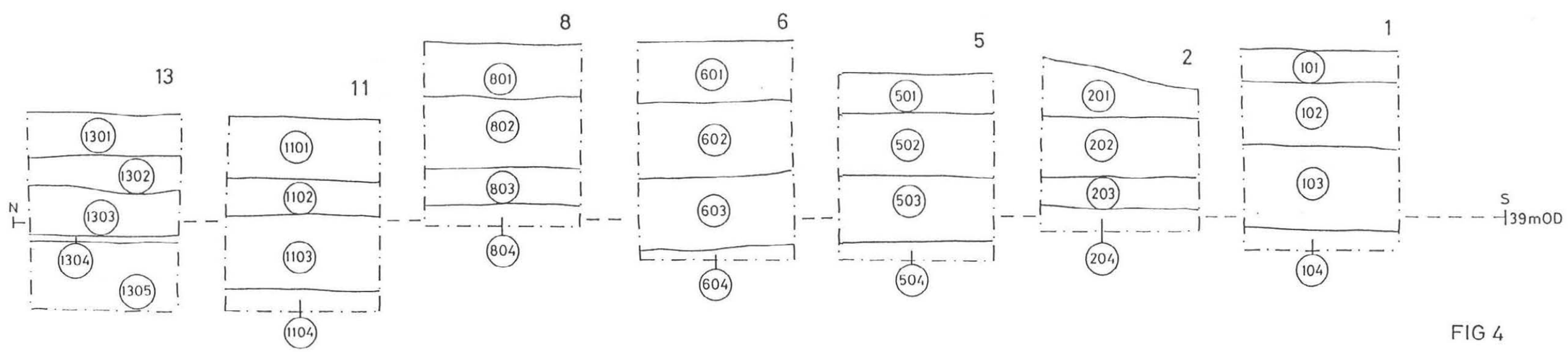
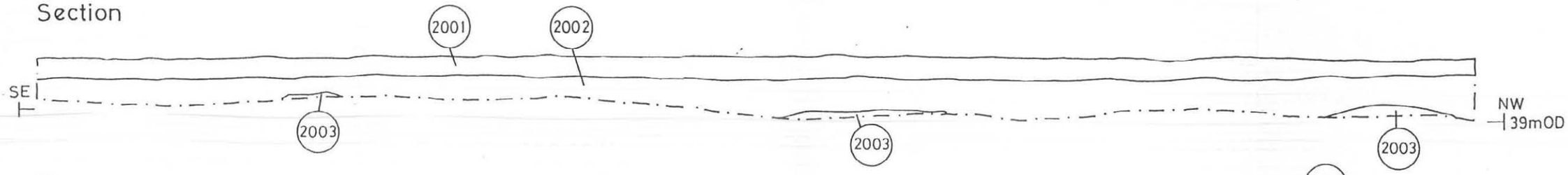


FIG 4

LOXLEY ROAD STRATFORD UPON

Trench F

Section



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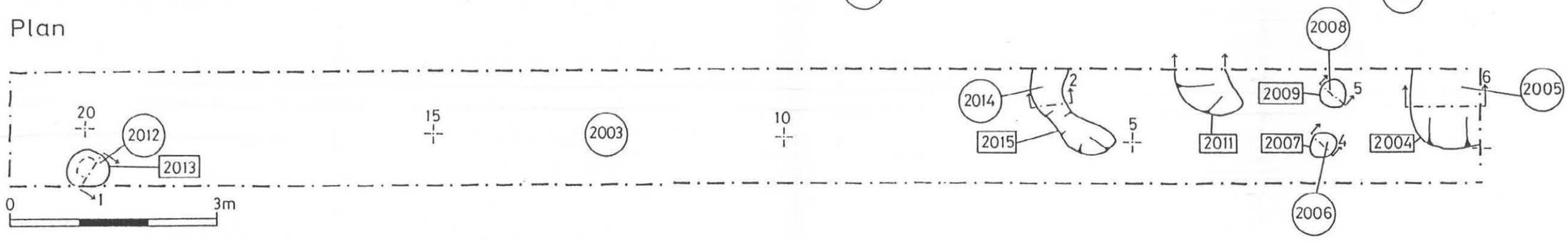

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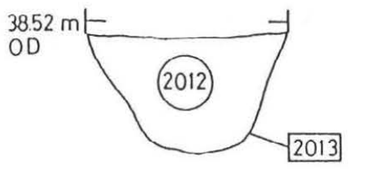

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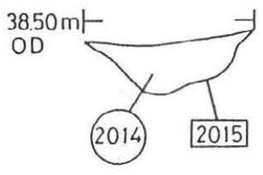

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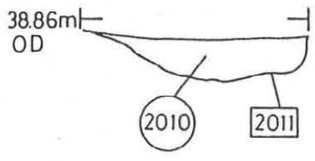

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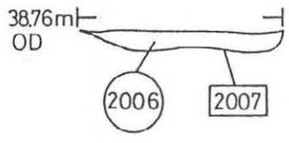

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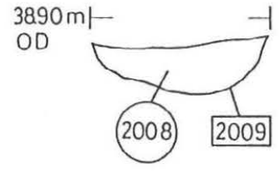

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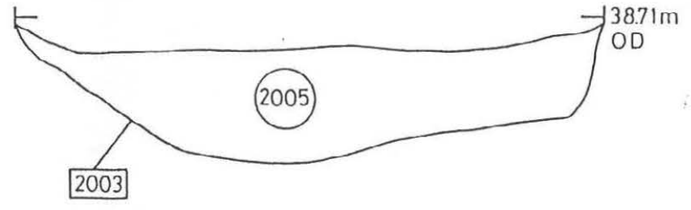
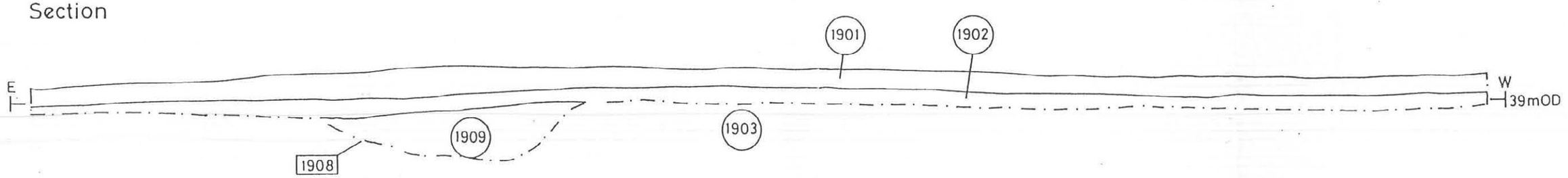


FIG 5

LOXLEY ROAD, STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

Trench E

Section



Plan

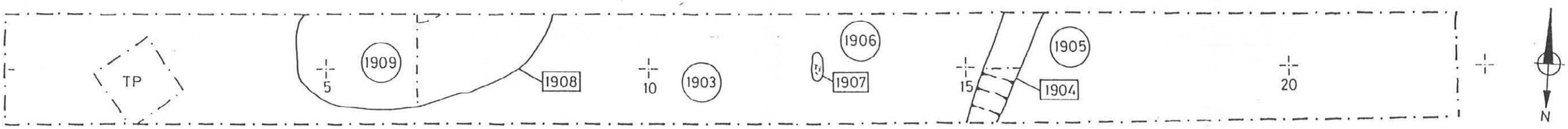


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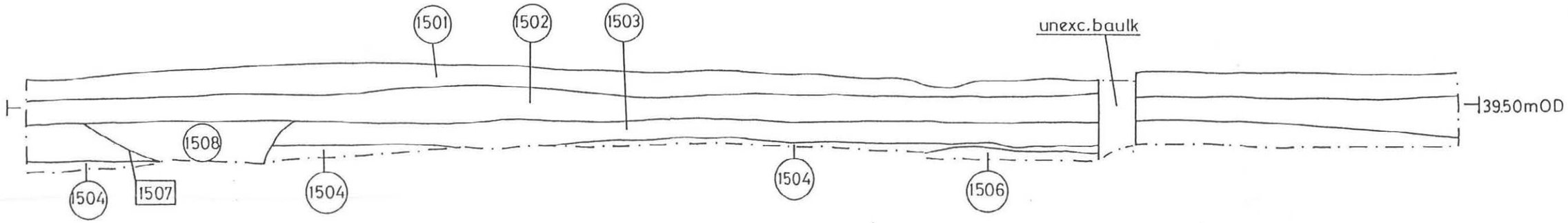
FIG 6

LOXLEY ROAD, STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

Trench A. Section



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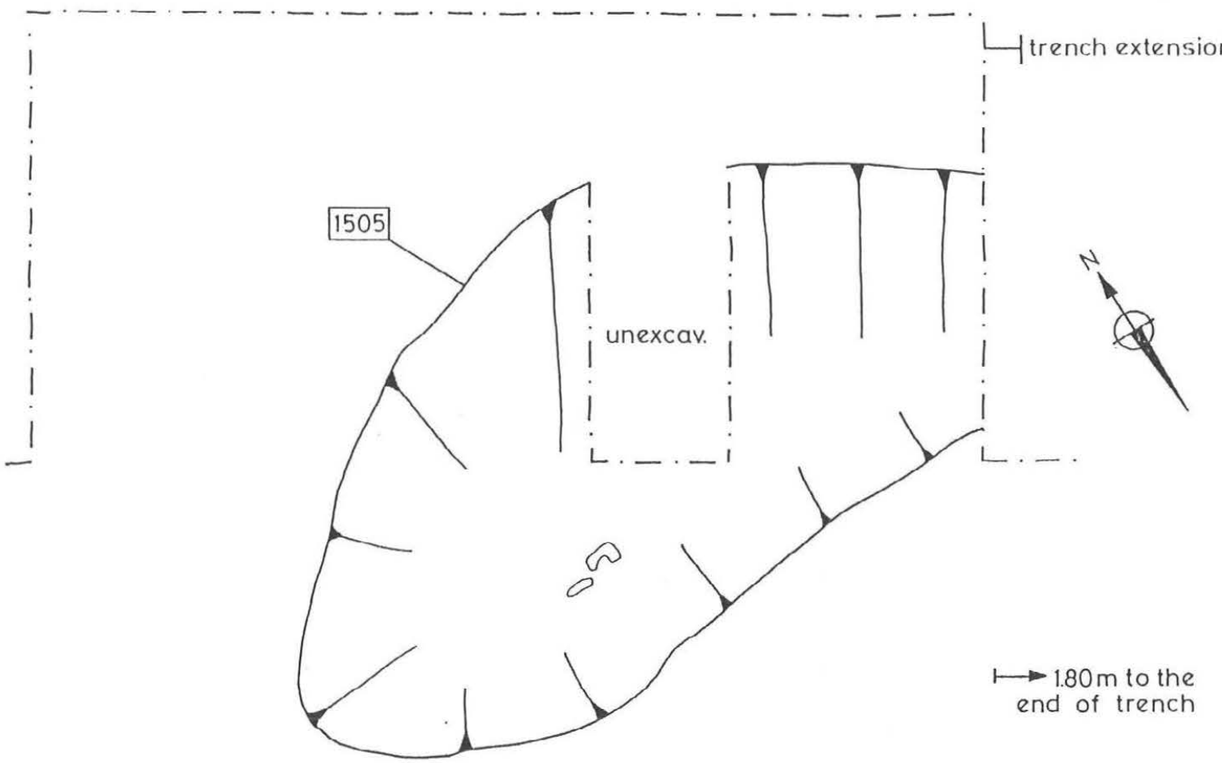

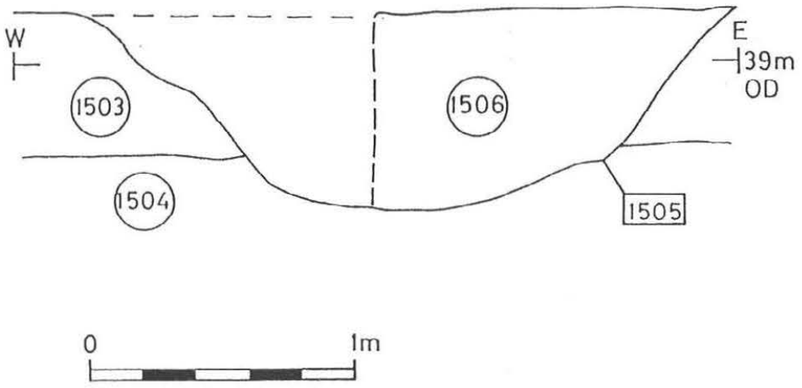

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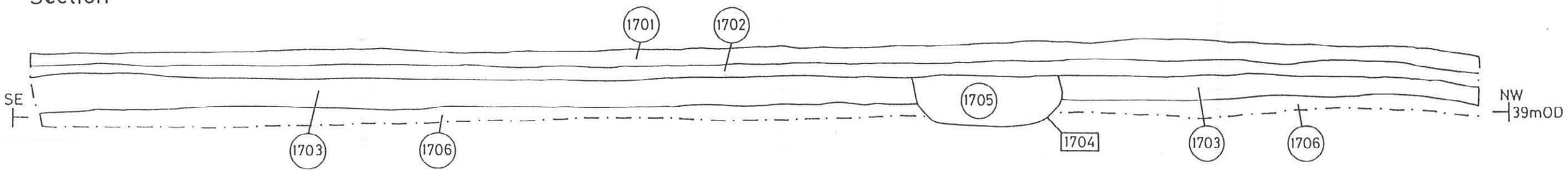
FIG 7

LOXLEY ROAD STRATFORD UPON AVON
Trench C

Section



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Plan

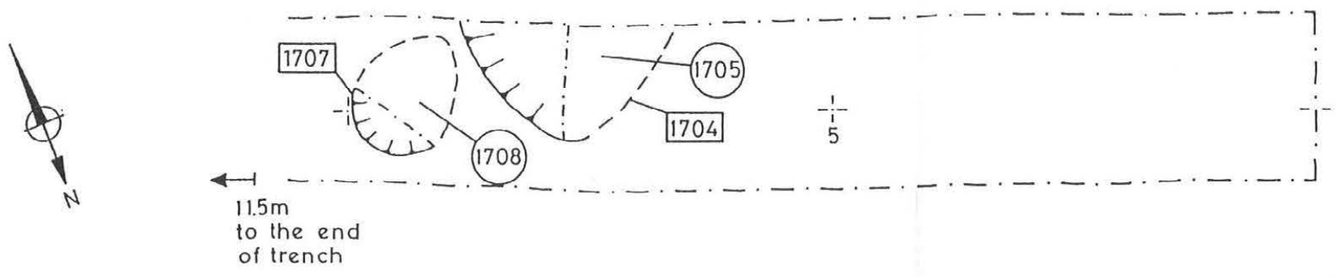
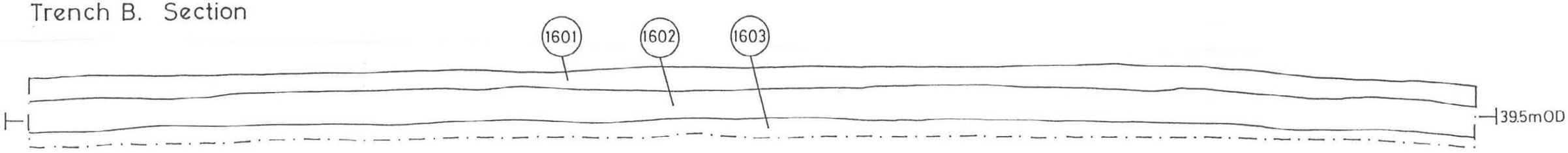


FIG 8

LOXLEY ROAD STRATFORD UPON AVON

Trench B. Section



Trench D. Section

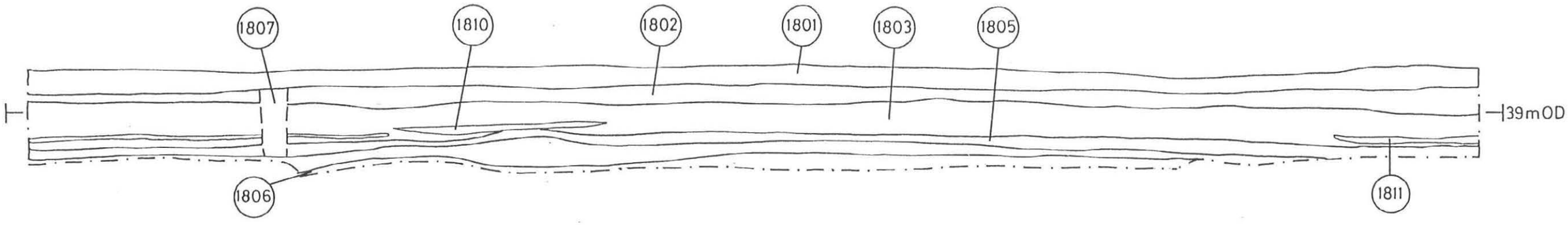


FIG 9