Dale Lane Industrial Estate, South Elmsall

Archaeological Evaluation

March 1996

West Yorkshire
Archaeology Service

Dale Lane Industrial Estate, South Elmsall West Yorkshire (SE482121)

Archaeological Evaluation

Contents

1. Summary

Client
Commercial Development Projects Ltd, Huddersfield Road, Elland, West Yorkshire HX5 9BW.

Objectives
To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area and to determine the location, extent, date, condition and significance of any remains subsequently identified. To investigate the nature of the geophysical anomalies previously located by gradiometer survey (Noel, M.J., 1993).

Method
A total of 14 trial trenches were positioned to intersect the geophysical anomalies of possible archaeological character and were mechanically excavated down to the first archaeological horizon or the underlying geology, whichever was reached first. All possible archaeological features were then cleaned by hand and appropriately sized sections were excavated to reveal their nature. All recording was carried out in accordance with the WYAS standard method (WYAS Recording Manual, 1995, ed. A. Boucher).

Results
The geophysical survey results were found to have been mislocated in plan due to a rotational error in positioning. Fortunately the error was such that the majority of the targeted anomalies were located (Fig. 1). The possible enclosure previously identified in the north-east corner of the site was intersected by Trench N within which one of the enclosure ditches and a large internal pit were defined. Fragments of horse teeth and bone were recovered from both features and the pit also yielded one pottery sherd of native Iron Age/Romano-British type and fragments of iron slag material. The size and form of the features suggests domestic occupation having occured within and possibly around the enclosure. The long linear ditch to the south-west of the enclosure was identified and evaluated in Trench K as was an adjoining ditch within Trench I. The only archaeological feature identified from those trenches excavated in the western half of the site was a truncated circular post-hole within Trench D.

2. Introduction

West Yorkshire Archaeology Service was commisioned by Commercial Development Projects Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent and to the south-east of Dale Lane Industrial Estate, South Elmsall, West Yorkshire. The site is the proposed development area for the construction of commercial and industrial units.

3. Archaeological Background

The site lies within an extensive landscape of archaeological cropmarks of probable Iron Age/Romano-British date. Aerial reconnaissance has also identified a probable Roman building to the south-west and the recovery by metal detectorists of a large concentration of Roman metalwork in its vicinity suggests a high status structure. Any below-ground disturbance within this landscape had the potential for encountering archaeological deposits.

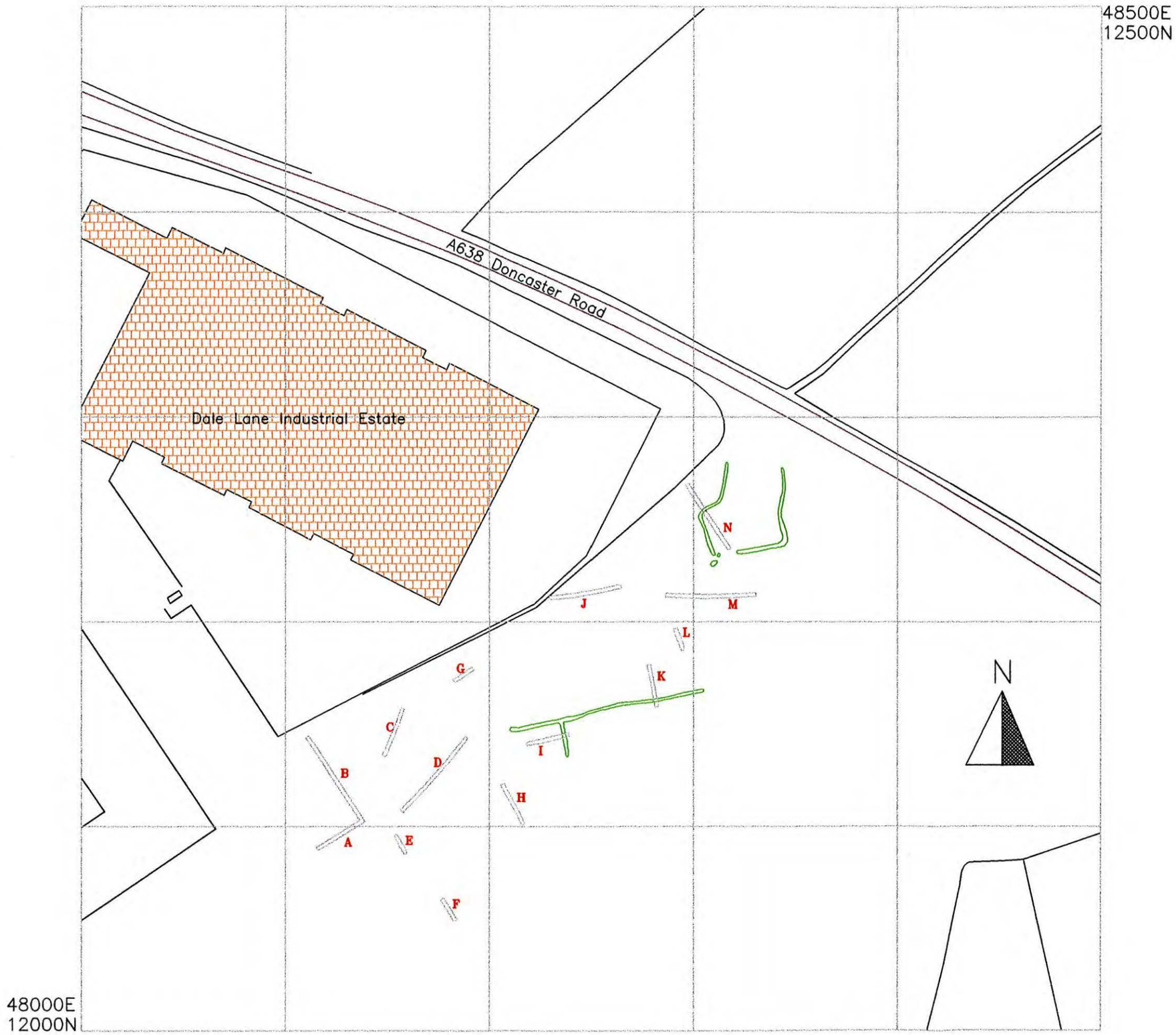

Fig. 1 Plan showing location of evaluation trenches and geophysical anomalies
Scale 1:2000

The West Yorkshire Sites and Monuments Record therefore advised the local planning authority that an archaeological evaluation on the site be requested in accordance with the guidelines set out in PPG16. The site was evaluated in the first instance by geophysical survey. A gradiometer survey was undertaken by *GeoQuest Associates* (Noel, M.J.,1993) and indicated the presence of a number of geophysical anomalies that were potentially archaeological in origin. The most significant of these being a sub-rectangular enclosure situated in the north-east corner of the proposed development area and two linear ditch features forming an elongated 'T-shape' central to the site. Furthermore a number of weaker anomalies located in the western half of the site were interpreted as possible archaeological features in the form of ring ditches and pits.

4. Site work

In accordance with the agreed scheme of investigation to determine the nature of the geophysical anomalies a total of 14 trial trenches were required to intersect those areas of suggested archaeological potential. The Ordnance Survey grid imposed upon the geophysical survey plots within the *Geoquest Associates* report (M.J.Noel, 1993) was used in conjunction with the Ordnance Survey 1:1250 map (SE4812SW - last revision 02/93) to locate the trenches to their desired location according to the agreed scheme of investigation. The trench positioning was set out using a Geotronics Geodimeter 600.

Four on-site archaeologists carried out the specified archaeological works between February 26th and March 6th 1996. The 14 trial trenches were machine excavated using a JCB3CX mechanical excavator with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket under direct archaeological supervision (Fig. 1). The topsoil and subsoil were removed in spits to expose the first significant archaeological horizon or the underlying natural geology, whichever was reached first. The resulting surface was then cleaned by hand and all possible archaeological features and deposits were investigated by means of appropriately sized hand excavated sections.

5. Results

The majority of the trenches investigated, and in particular those on the western side of the proposed development area, were devoid of positively identified archaeological deposits. The underlying geology on the site was such that undulations and channels within the natural limestone had subsequently created infilled pockets of subsoil resembling archaeological features in plan. It was only through meticulous hand excavation that these features could be proven natural. The natural features tended to be filled with a clean silty sand or loam fill with no inclusions.

5.1 *Trench D*

A small circular post-hole (F006) was located in the south-western half of the trench (Fig. 5). Measuring 0.35m in diameter the feature was badly truncated with a shallow depth of 0.09m. The fill (005) was composed of a mid brown silty sand and included small fragments of burnt bone.

5.2 *Trench I*

A north-south linear ditch (F026) was identified at the east end of the trench (Fig. 2 and 5). The cut had an abrupt break of slope and was steeply sided on the west side. The feature measured c1.10m in width and had a depth of 0.45m. The fill (027) was composed of a reddish brown silty clay loam and included within it were medium-sized limestone fragments. No dateable finds were recovered.

5.3 *Trench K*

An east-west oriented linear ditch feature (F021) was identified in the southern end of Trench K (Fig. 3 and 5) and measured 2.36m wide and 0.80m in depth. The ditch cut through the natural limestone with near vertical sides towards the flat base. Three fills of the ditch were identified. Fills 022 and 023 were very similar to one another and probably represent primary slumping into the ditch. The composition of both was an orange brown silty sand with inclusions of small limestone fragments. The upper fill (020) was made up of an orange brown sandy silt with inclusions of medium/large sized limestone fragments, charcoal flecks, snail shells and one fragment of heat-affected stone. No dateable finds were recovered from any of the fills.

5.4 *Trench N*

Part of an ovular shaped pit (F015) was half-sectioned in the southeastern half of the trench (Fig. 4 and 6). The pit measured 2.30m in length and had a depth of 0.92m with near vertical sides and a flat base cut through the natural limestone bedrock. Four identifiable fills were observed in section. The primary fill (019) was made up of a dark brown sandy silt with inclusions of small limestone fragments, charcoal flecks, fragments of burnt bone, iron slag and a pottery sherd of probable native Iron Age/Romano-British date. The secondary fill (018) was composed of a mid brown loam with a moderate amount of limestone fragments. Fill 017 was a pale white brown sandy loam with a large quantity of limestone fragment inclusions. The upper fill of the pit (016) was made up of a light brown sandy loam with moderate inclusions of small limestone fragments. Other than the finds from the primary fill no dateable artefacts were recovered from the pit.

To the northwest of the pit a ditch (F024) was located running obliquely across the trench and oriented northeast-southwest (Fig. 4 and 6). The excavated section through this ditch revealed the cut to have a width of c.2.00m and a depth of c.1.00m. The single fill (025) was composed of a reddish brown silty clay loam with fragments of limestone, heat-affected pebbles, charcoal flecks (predominantly from a charcoal lens) and a horse tooth included. No dateable finds were recovered.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The majority of the trenches excavated were observed to be devoid of archaeological deposits and were made up of a large number of infilled natural channels and hollows. The possible features indicated on the geophysical survey were in the main either found not to be archaeological in origin or were not identified during the evaluation.

However, the sub-rectangular enclosure in the north-east corner of the site and the pair of linear ditch features in the centre that were indicated on the geophysical survey were located and were proven to be archaeologically significant. The dimensions of the enclosure ditch (F015) was suggestive of it having a defensive purpose. The irregular shape of the ditches is atypical of enclosures found in the region and the internal pit feature (F024) and the finds recovered from it indicate the possible existence of domestic activity within the enclosed area. Furthermore the recovery of iron slag from the pit suggests a possible industrial component to the site.

The linearity of the ditches located and evaluated in Trenches I and K and the lack of finds from their respective fills plausibly suggests these to be field boundary ditches of an unknown date and function. However, the somewhat excessive dimensions of the east-west ditch (F021) may represent a more formal boundary ditch possibly relating to the probable Roman building to the southwest of the site.

Due to the rotational error in the geophysical survey results, the revised positioning, as shown in Fig. 1, is the perceived 'best fit' corresponding to the location of the identified archaeological features. However, caution should be aired and the true location will only be defined by further investigative work.

Bibliography

Noel, M.J., 1993, 'Geophysical survey of an area of land at South Elmsall, near Pontefract', *York Archaeological Trust and GeoQuest Associates*

Acknowledgments

Project management:	Colm Moloney BA MIFA FSA(Scot)
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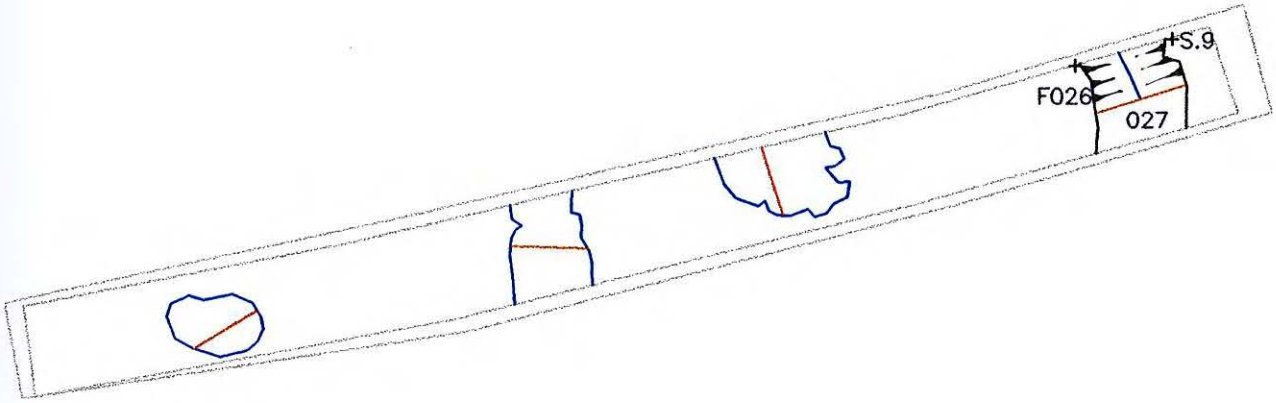
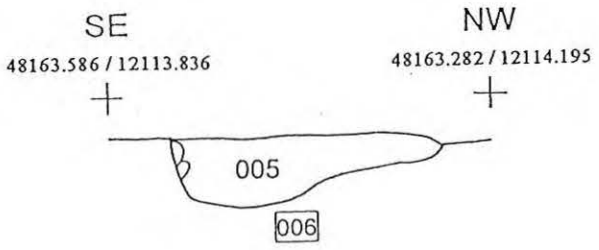


Fig. 2 Trench I Scale 1:125

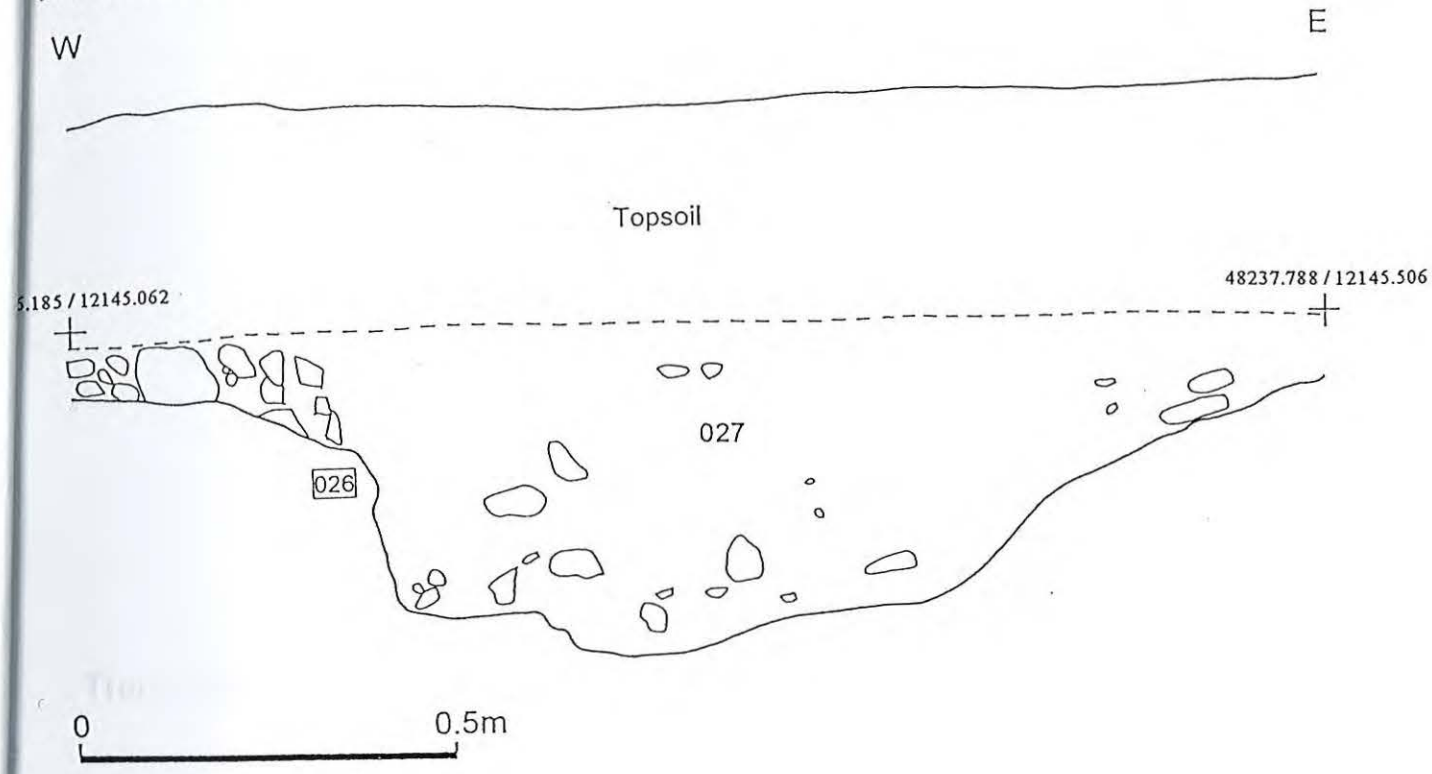
Fig. 3 Trench K Scale 1:125

Fig. 4 Trench N Scale 1:125

Trench D S.1



Trench I S.9



Trench K S.6

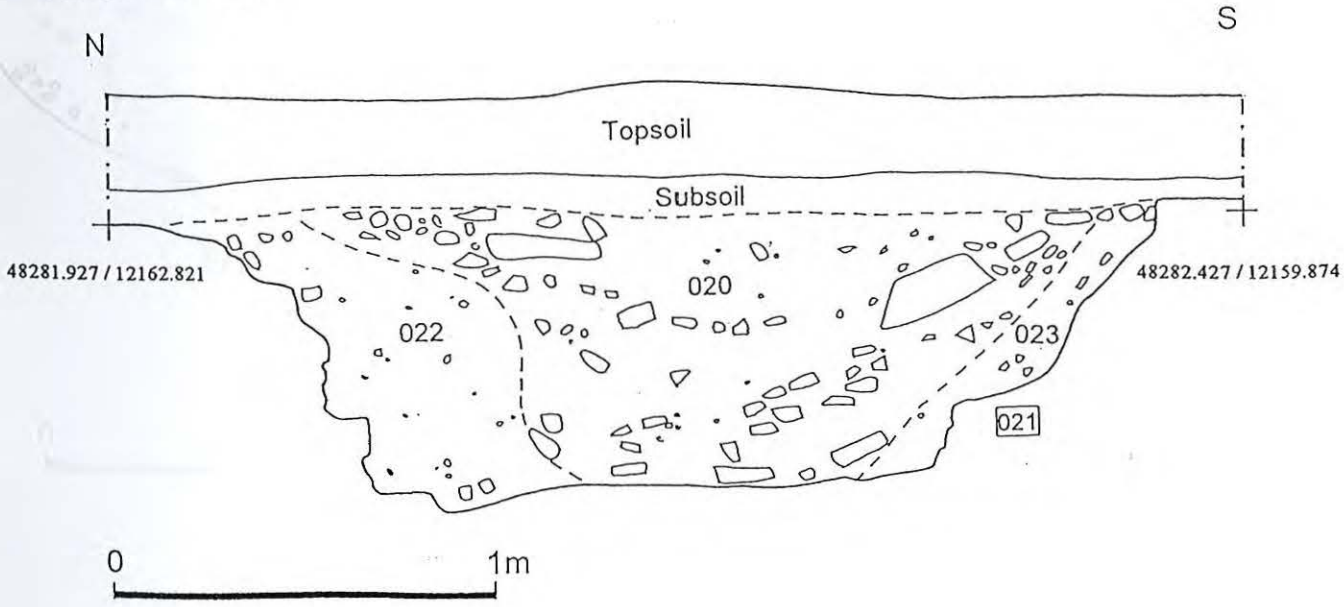
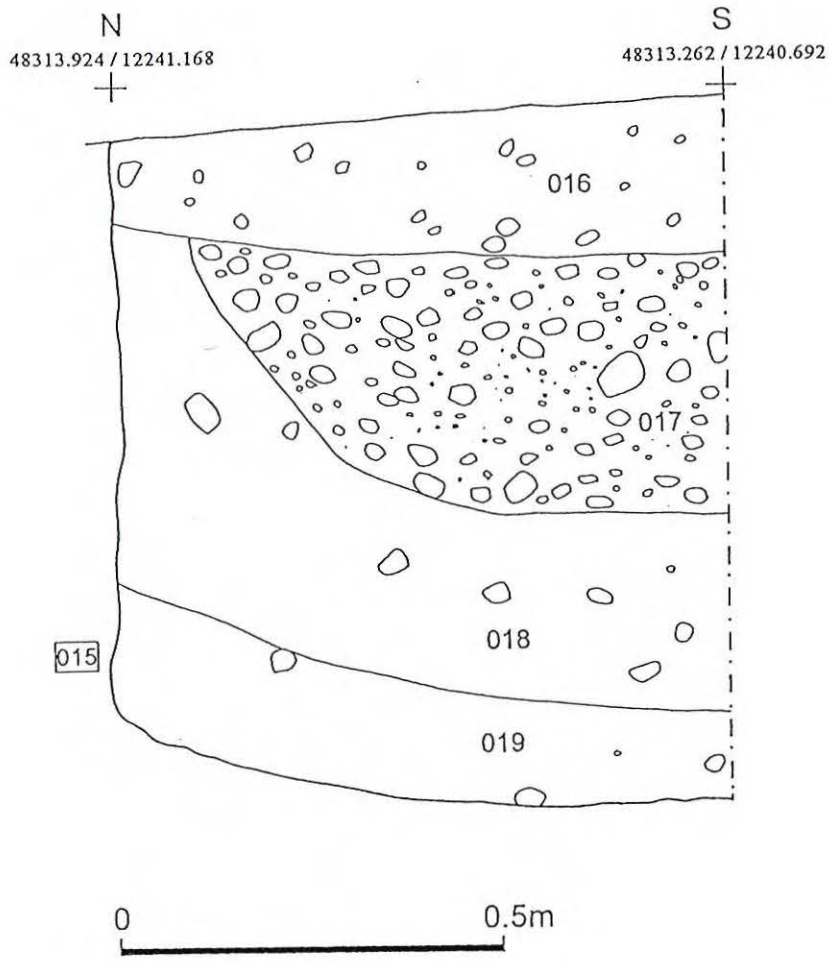


Fig. 5 Section drawing no.'s 1, 6 and 9

Trench N S.5



Trench N S.7

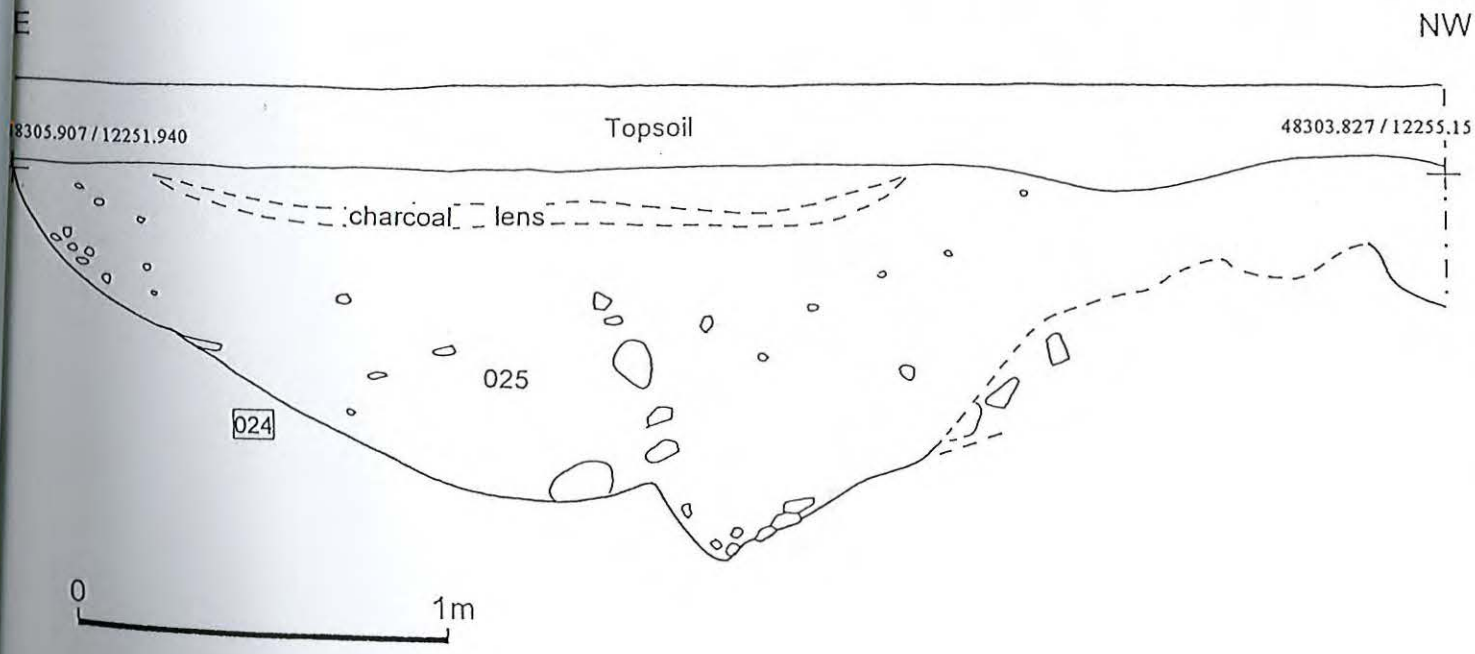


Fig. 6 Section drawing no.'s 5 and 7