

EVALUATION AT
CARRANT BROOK FARM,
ASHTON-UNDER-HILL

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HWCM 5503

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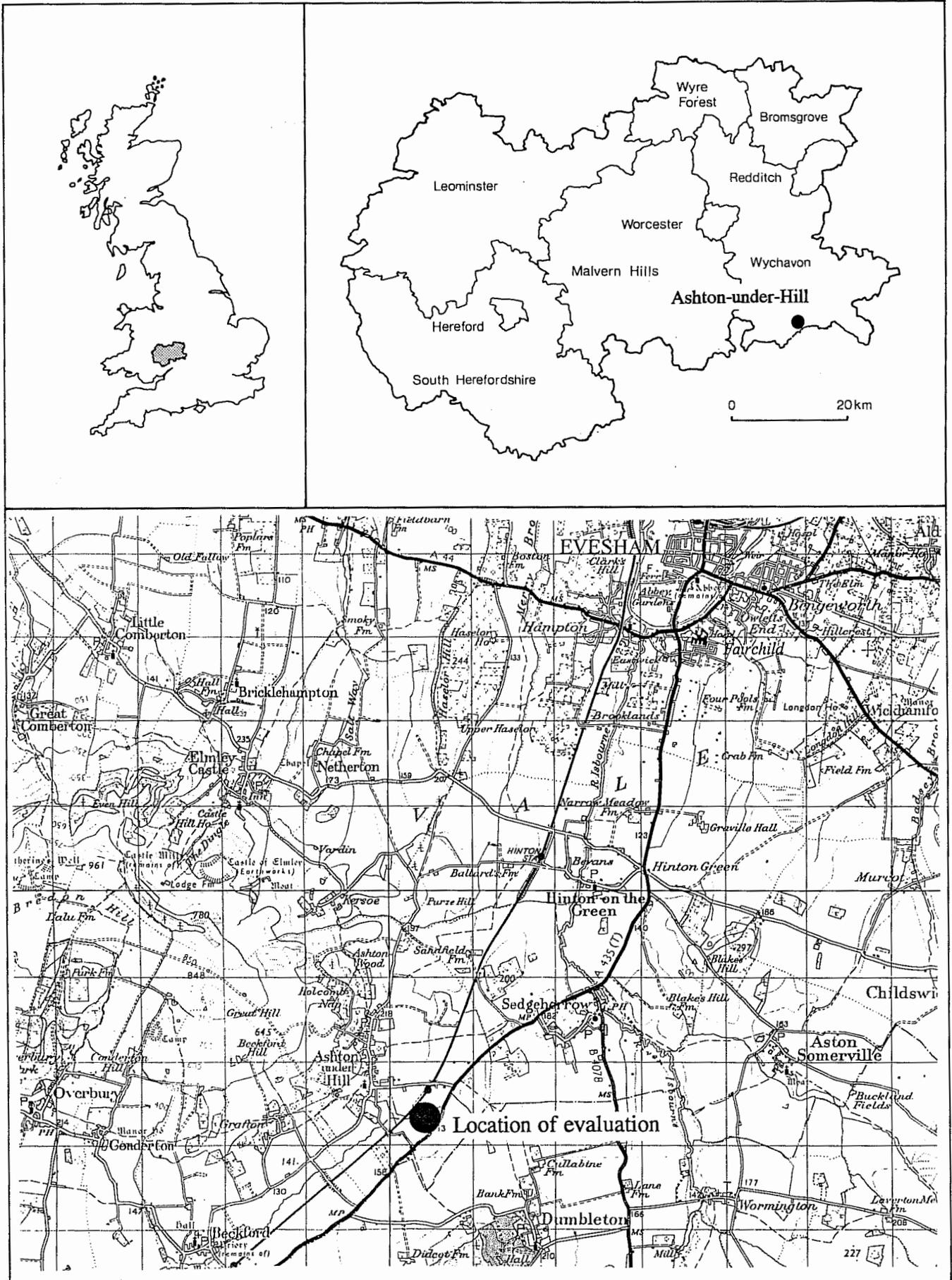
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Evaluation at Carrant Brook Farm, Ashton-under-Hill

Robin Jackson

1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Carrant Brook Farm, Ashton-under-Hill on behalf of Rombus Materials Limited to assess the archaeological potential of a site proposed for sand and gravel extraction. This lay within an area of considerable archaeological significance with a series of associated sites dating to the prehistoric and Roman periods. The evaluation identified the presence of medieval, Roman and prehistoric deposits in a good state of preservation. A significant area of the deposits had been well protected by overlying deposits of alluvial clay with metalled areas and ground surfaces remaining partly intact. In areas not protected by alluvial clays survival was also good.

Prehistoric deposits were located in two areas. To the south of the Carrant Brook structural activity, of an industrial nature was identified of a probable Iron Age date. The other area towards the north-west end of the evaluation revealed deposits relating to probable late Bronze Age settlement. Roman deposits were revealed to the west end of the evaluation area. These related to a Romano-British settlement which cropmarks immediately to the north suggest was fairly extensive. These cropmarks also relate to the prehistoric settlement. Medieval deposits were represented by ridge and furrow. Artefactual evidence was good as was environmental survival although the latter was rather patchy. Large quantities of pottery and bone provided evidence of domestic occupation and bone working. These along with the environmental remains indicate that the site has considerable potential for the study of domestic and economic activities and the surrounding environment in the prehistoric and Roman period.

These well preserved remains are of considerable importance to the understanding of early settlement. They clearly form part of the settlement immediately to the north. The prehistoric deposits south of the Carrant Brook represent a significant addition to our knowledge of the early settlement pattern in the valley since known early occupation sites had previously been limited to the north side of the brook. The significance of the deposits as a whole is increased by their association with the series of important sites which run along the north side of the Carrant Brook.

2 Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was recommended at Carrant Brook Farm, Ashton-under-Hill in response to a planning application submitted to the County Planning Authority (HWCC) by RMC Technical Services Limited. The initial application (application no. 407244; W 0585\90), proposing sand and gravel extraction, was refused but an evaluation was subsequently undertaken on behalf of Rombus Materials Limited with the agreement of the landholders Mr Archer and Mr Woodward. The results of the evaluation may form part of a future public enquiry.

The site, covering approximately 30 ha, is located at NGR SP 006377 and part of the site includes an area of known archaeological interest being recorded on the County Sites and Monument Record with the references HWCM 5503, HWCM 5509 and HWCM 7578. No previous survey, geophysical survey or excavation has taken place in the evaluation area however the surrounding area of the Carrant Brook is known to be archaeologically significant. It contains a series of cropmark sites and occasional finds recorded on the County Sites and Monuments

Record (HWCM 3622, HWCM 3623, HWCM 5433, HWCM 5503, HWCM 5509, HWCM 6036, HWCM 6042, HWCM 6043, HWCM 7578; Fig 2). These sites are situated along the north terrace of the brook, with the evaluation site lying at the east end of the series (Fig 2).

Cropmarks are a form of archaeological evidence most easily viewed from the air. They consist of marks in growing crops resulting from differential patterns of growth and ripening in the plants positioned above buried ditches, pits or walls. These marks are usually most apparent when the crops are almost ripe and are best recorded by means of aerial photography.

The cropmark sites along the Carrant Brook are largely enclosures with various forms represented (rectangular, sub-rectangular and irregular). Studies in other parts of the West Midlands and the Welsh border area (Whimster 1989; Dinn and Roseff, unpub) suggest that ditched enclosures such as these are common, and possibly are the typical form of early rural settlement in the region. They appear to represent single farmsteads and although dating evidence is at present limited it suggests that this type of site was current in both the Iron Age and Roman periods. One cropmark site (HWCM 3622; Fig 2) is recorded as an Anglo-Saxon cemetery with graves within a circular enclosure. Immediately to the north of the evaluation area a cropmark site (HWCM 5503; Fig 2 and 16) comprises a complex of small enclosures with some linear features and concentrations of pits. These cropmarks continue for a short distance into the proposed development area. Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano British finds are recorded from immediately north of the proposed development (HWCM 5509 and HWCM 7578; Fig 2).

The potential of the cropmark sites in the Carrant Brook area has been demonstrated by a series of excavations in the vicinity of Beckford, in advance of gravel extraction (HWCM 359, HWCM 497, HWCM 1056,

HWCM 5006, HWCM 5007, HWCM 5099 and HWCM 10864; Fig 2; Britnell 1975). Significant Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British occupation was identified, including an extensive mid to late Iron Age settlement (with enclosures, roundhouses, four-post structures and storage pits) and a scattered Romano-British cemetery.

Two significant sites lie on the higher ground of Bredon Hill to the north of the Carrant Brook. One, Conderton Camp, an Iron Age hillfort, is scheduled as an ancient monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (HWCM 2907, County Monument No Here and Worc 228; Fig 2). Excavations of the defences and the internal area revealed a univallate site dating from the second century BC, with a stone faced rampart added in the first century BC and extensive occupation within the defended area (Thomas 1959). The other site, (HWCM 5449 and HWCM 7342) is a Romano-British site identified through cropmarks, finds and limited excavation (1924-25). These suggest a large settlement of potentially high status.

The field systems of the Carrant Brook and their relationship to Saxon estates and parish boundaries have been the subject of recent unpublished documentary research (John Hemingway pers comm). The field systems along the length of the brook are distinct from those on the higher ground to the north and south of it, running broadly at right angles and parallel to the brook in a fairly regular pattern. Of particular relevance to the evaluation area are the field systems to the north-east, east and south-east of the site. It is noticeable (Fig 2) that these are either cut by the parish boundaries or that the boundaries in places respect them and step along them, with the east to west field alignments maintained. These boundaries date from the mid-8th century AD and the field system clearly pre-dates them. This is of considerable importance since it survives over a large area and relates to land use associated with early settlement along the Carrant Brook.

The soils on the evaluation site are of the Bishampton, Fladbury and Kearby series, the first two being brown soils and the last ground-water gley soils (Soils of England and Wales, 1:250,000, sheet 3, Soil Survey of England and Wales) with solid geology of Lower Lias (Morton-in-Marsh, 1:50,000, sheet 217, Institute of Geological Sciences). The evaluation area is currently under cultivation, being planted with cocktail onions, parsley and wheat.

3 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability, documentation, quality of setting and amenity value. The purpose of this was to establish their significance, since this would make it possible to recommend an appropriate treatment which may, if possible, then be integrated into any proposed development programme.

4 Method

An area of greater archaeological potential was identified at the south-west end of the proposed development area. This was based on the presence of cropmarks to the north and west of this part of that area and extending slightly into it.

Fieldwalking was undertaken across part of this area of greater potential (Fig 3). Transects approximately 7m apart followed tractor ruts to avoid damaging the young crop as much as possible. Finds were collected at 20m intervals along the transects and located with a reference number. The aim was to collect finds disturbed from underlying archaeological deposits by modern ploughing and to plot the varying densities of distribution encountered. This could then be used to help identify the extents of deposits and perhaps locate unknown sites.

Dense crop cover in the fields north of the road to Ashton-under-Hill prevented fieldwalking of that part of the proposed development area. The absence of cropmarks and the general pattern of settlement and land use along the Carrant Brook suggest that this part is less likely to contain early settlement sites although such a possibility cannot be totally ruled out.

Fieldwalking identified a significant concentration of finds in the north-west corner of the area covered (Fig 4). This concentration gradually reduced to the east but ran out fairly abruptly towards the Carrant Brook. One small concentration was observed near the brook in the north-west corner of the field (Fig 4). South of the Carrant Brook and in fields immediately adjacent to the walked field, a distinct absence of surface finds was noted.

Within the area of greater potential five trenches (trenches 1-5; Fig 3), 1.5-2.00m in width, were excavated. Approximately 490 square meters of trench was opened in total. The main trench (1) ran along the north side of the proposal area and was located to investigate the cropmarks running into the field from north of the disused railway line. Two extensions were added running south from it (Fig 3). These extensions and a separate trench (2), were aimed to establish the southern extent of features relating to the cropmarks. The line of trench 2 was continued south of the Carrant Brook (trench 4) to determine whether any archaeological deposits were located in that part of the proposed development. Trench 3 was located south of trench 1 near the Carrant Brook to investigate the south and east extent of deposits revealed in trenches 1 and 2. The line of this was continued south of the Carrant Brook (trench 5) to investigate whether deposits encountered in trench 4 extended to the east.

In each of these trenches the modern ploughsoil and subsoil were removed by machine, down to the interface with underlying archaeological deposits and/or

natural deposits. At various intervals along these trenches sondages were excavated by machine to investigate the alluvial deposits which overlay the natural sands and gravels. Selected deposits were then excavated by hand according to standard Archaeology Section recording practice (Archaeology Section Recording System as amended 1988) to determine their state of preservation, date, and type.

In the excavated trenches alluvial deposits were revealed in trenches 2 and 4 which sealed archaeological deposits. These had effectively protected deposits from damage by modern ploughing so fieldwalking had not detected them. As a result three auger transects were undertaken to establish the extents and depth of the alluvial deposits and note any potentially archaeological deposits buried within them (Fig 3). The results of this survey have been incorporated into the general text and form part of the archive.

5 Analysis

Six phases were identified together with a number of undated deposits.

Phase 1 Natural deposits

The natural deposits encountered on the site varied considerably and the processes of their deposition are not fully understood. In trench 1 features cut a yellowish brown, loamy sandy clay (110 and 144) which had some artefacts within it. This had no clearly defined depth but gradually became cleaner and more distinctly yellow (151) with no loam content or artefacts and increasing quantities of sand. Fragments of limestone and small quantities of gravel were present. The overall depth of this deposit varied from 0.20m to 1.20m. It was observed along the whole of trench 1 and in both extensions to the south of that trench. In one of the extensions it was overlain by an alluvial clay (168) which was cut by Roman features.

In trench 2 a similar yellowish brown sandy

deposit to that observed in trench 1 was observed in the base of some of the Roman features. It was overlain by layers of alluvial clay (211 and 219) which the Roman features cut. The auger transects suggested that north of the Carrant Brook this deposit was overlain across much of the survey area by alluvial clay (Fig 15).

The alluvial clay also was observed to vary considerably to the north and south of the brook. Broadly speaking it was deeper towards the brook though at the furthest extent of transect 3 from the brook it deepened sharply in one borehole. The deeper parts of the alluvial clay were bluish grey to grey in colour suggesting anaerobic conditions. In most places these deposits were also laminar suggesting that they had been deposited rapidly and were undisturbed. This was especially noted in trench 3 towards the Carrant Brook. In trench 4 close to the brook, approximately 1.20m below the modern ground-surface large slabs of limestone, roots and molluscs were noted within the anaerobic alluvial clay (Fig 7). All alluvial and sandy deposits overlaid the natural sands and gravels. In both trenches 2 and 4 alluvial clay was observed to overlay archaeological deposits (see below).

Phase 2 Prehistoric deposits

In trenches 1 and 4 deposits were revealed which artefactual, environmental and stratigraphic evidence suggest to be of a prehistoric date.

These features in trench 1 concentrated in two areas (Fig 6). The first of these comprised two linear features (143 and 148) and a large posthole (150). The westernmost linear feature (143; Fig 6) was 0.07m deep and 0.65m wide. It had sloping sides, a U-shaped profile and a sub-oval posthole (0.22m deep) in its base. The fill of this was indistinguishable from that of the linear cut and the two are considered to be part of one feature with one fill (142). The absence of pottery suggests that this was a prehistoric feature. To the east of this was a substantial

linear feature with a U-shaped profile (148; Fig 6). This ran north to south and was 2.00m wide and 0.62m deep. Its east side was steeply sloping whilst its west was stepped. Examination of the section through the fill (147) suggested an earlier shallower cut with a deeper re-cut slightly to the east. The width of the re-cut was 1.50m and the line of it has been postulated (Fig 6). This feature was partially truncated by a Roman ditch (146). The fill (147) was noted to be siltier and darker to the base of both the earlier cut and the re-cut. A single flint flake was recovered from it. To the east of this ditch was a large sub-oval posthole (150; Fig 6). This was steep sided with a flat level base and was 0.52m deep and was truncated to the west by a Roman ditch (146). The fill produced 35 sherds of prehistoric pottery of an unidentified fabric (similar to Hereford and Worcester County Pottery Fabric Series, fabric 4.3, but with organic tempering). A number of rim sherds (Fig 13) of this pottery were recovered and their form is similar to late Bronze Age to early Iron Age forms identified at Beckford (James Dinn pers comm).

Further to the east, there was a concentration of postholes (Fig 6; 133, 137, 601, 603, 605, 607 and 609). These varied in depth from 0.14m to 0.50m. The fills (132, 136, 600, 602, 604, 606 and 608) varied from silty clay to silty loam. Three of them contained prehistoric pottery (132, 600 and 606) and one (608) a charred prehistoric cereal seed (*triticum dicocum*, Appendix 5). Seven similar features and fifteen stakeholes were not excavated but due to the similarity of their fills with those of the dated features are considered to be contemporary.

Prehistoric deposits were also excavated in trench 4 (Fig 7). These were revealed within a 0.38m thick layer of alluvial clay (401) approximately 0.20m below its interface with the topsoil above (400/420). This alluvial clay was observed along the whole of the trench and no division was apparent within it except where features occurred and it was numbered separately (402). The features,

which lay approximately 0.50m below the modern ground surface, concentrated in one area of the trench. Four sub-round postholes (412, 414 and 419; Fig 7) were excavated (0.10-0.20m deep). The fills (413, 415 and 418) were flecked with charcoal and iron panning deposits. South of these a larger feature (406; Fig 7) extended beyond the trench limits but appeared to be sub-circular or sub-oval in plan with a depth of at least 0.30m. The fill (405) was abundantly flecked with charcoal and in its upper part contained burnt sandstone and limestone fragments.

A number of curvilinear features were also investigated. The most northerly of these (407; Fig 7) ran roughly from north to south across the trench. It comprised medium to large fragments of limestone and sandstone, some of which had been burnt, compacted into a silty clay matrix and occupying a shallow hollow. This deposit contained small fragments of daub and a small quantity of fuel-ash. South of this, and similarly aligned, was a linear feature (404; Fig 7) with a posthole in its base. This had a maximum depth of 0.50m and was 1.45m across. It was very poorly defined to the west possibly because the deposit was thinning out. Its fill (403) contained fragments of daub and fuel-ash.

The southernmost features in this trench were the most distinct and suggested several phases of activity in the area. These are shown in plan and in a composite section on Fig 7). A curvilinear gully (411) 1.00m across and 0.30m deep ran across the trench approximately west to east. It was filled with a silty clay (410) containing prehistoric pottery and daub. The fill of the gully was overlain with a 0.05m thick metallised layer (409) of compacted fuel-ash, burnt clay and burnt sandstone fragments in a silty clay matrix. A limestone roof-tile was also recovered from this deposit. The deposit extended beyond the limits of the gully below and was 2.00m across. This compacted material had partially subsided into the gully below and the resulting hollow had been filled with a greyish brown clay. This

contained fuel-ash and burnt sandstone but in lower quantities than in the layer below. Five small sherds of prehistoric pottery were recovered from this deposit.

No prehistoric features were observed in trenches 2, 3 and 5.

Phase 3 Roman deposits

Roman deposits were observed in trenches 1 and 2 and included ditches, gullies, postholes, and a large feature of indeterminate nature. In some places these features could be divided into two phases on the basis of stratigraphic evidence. These for convenience have been labelled earlier and later Roman. Where such a division was not possible Roman deposits are all considered in the earlier Roman sub-phase.

Earlier Roman deposits

At the west end of trench 1 there were three linear features, U-shaped in profile (Fig 8; 112, 122 and 163). These were equally spaced (1.70m apart), 1.05-1.10m wide and 0.40-0.50m deep. All had been partially truncated by medieval features and cut by later Roman features. They had charcoal flecked sandy clay loam fills (111, 121 and 162) with inclusions of pebbles and limestone fragments. All three contained Roman pottery (including fabrics 12, 22 and 43). One fill (111) was sampled for environmental analysis and was rich in charred cereal and chaff remains (Appendix 3).

In the central part of the trench a number of Roman deposits were excavated. The main one of these (Fig 8; 146) was part of a rectilinear ditch. This ran from the north limit of the trench, in a north to south line and then turned to the west extending beyond the west limit of the excavated area. It was 1.05m wide and 0.32m deep with sloping sides which were steeper to the east. The fill (145), a yellowish brown loamy clay contained burnt limestone and charcoal fleck. A single sherd of Roman pottery (fabric 22) was recovered along with a fragment of

worked stone and a flint scraper (Fig 13). To the south of this a number of features were partially excavated (Fig 8). Six were small fairly regular sub-oval features (153, 155, 157 and 170) the largest of which measured 0.38m across. One feature (155) and the three unexcavated features (157) were aligned east to west. Features varied in depth from 0.28-0.45m. The fills of these (152, 154, 156 and 169) were similar, one (152) contained four sherds of pottery two of which were Roman (fabric 12). The other three features in the area (159, 167 and 172) were irregular sided and based, and were 0.25-0.40m in depth. Their fills (158, 166 and 171) were similar and two (158 and 171) contained Roman pottery. One of this last group of features (167) cut an alluvial clay (168) which overlaid a natural deposit (151).

To the east of this group of features, a number of other deposits were excavated at intervals along trench 1. The first of these (Fig 9; 131) was a sub-oval posthole (1.60x1.00x0.40m) with steeply sloping sides except to the west. The fill (129) was darker to the east than to the west, and contained some charred seeds (Appendix 5) and bone fragments. Dating was provided by the presence of spelt, a Roman variety of wheat. Approximately 20m east of this was an irregular linear feature (Fig 9; 135). It had irregularly sloping sides and ran north to south across the trench. The maximum observed width of this was 2.80m and the maximum excavated depth was 0.37m. The sandy clay loam fill (134) contained Roman pottery (fabric 12) and fragments of bone. Further east along the trench an irregular deposit (164) was investigated. This possibly represented two features. A section was cut through part of it (Fig 9; 165), across an apparently curvilinear feature, revealing steeply sloping sides and a depth of 0.25m. A single sherd of Roman pottery (fabric 12) was recovered. Finally near the east end of the trench a ditch (Fig 9; 139) ran north-west to south-east across the trench. It was 1.90m across and 0.65m deep. The sides steepened to the base of the feature which had a V-shaped profile with a slightly flattened base.

The fill (138) was excavated as one but observed to be siltier and darker to the base. Aquatic snails were recovered from the lower part of the fill (Appendix 5). A single sherd of Roman pottery (fabric 12) dated the feature.

In trench 2 a number of features were truncated by a large Roman feature of a later date (206). Two of these (Fig 10; 216 and 218) were investigated. One (216) was a linear feature running west to east across the trench. It had steeply sloping sides and a U-shaped profile (0.60m wide and 0.40m deep). The fill (215) was a dark grey brown sandy silt with charcoal and burnt clay fleck, limestone fragments and five sherds of Roman pottery. The other (218) lay partly beyond the east limit of the trench. It appeared to be sub-oval in plan and was only partially excavated. A sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from the fill (217). The other features (Fig 10), below the later Roman feature (206), were not investigated but their fills were observed to be similar to those of the other features discussed in this paragraph and consequently they are considered to be of a Roman date.

At the southern end of trench 2 further Roman deposits were revealed below the later Roman layer 210 (see below, Later Roman deposits). Directly below it was a yellowish brown, slightly loamy clay (Fig 10; 212), 0.20m thick and sterile except for a few flecks of charcoal. Beneath this was a more loamy clay (Fig 10; 211) with heavier charcoal flecking than the overlying layer (212). It was cut by a posthole (Fig 10; 214) which was sub-oval (0.70m across and 0.30m deep) with a bluish grey, charcoal flecked loamy clay fill (213). Roman pottery (fabric 22) and hobnails were recovered from this feature which lay approximately 0.70m below the modern ground surface.

No Roman deposits were identified in trenches 3, 4 and 5.

Later Roman deposits

At the west end of trench 1 a posthole (Fig 9; 107) was partially excavated. This was 0.70m deep and had a dark greyish brown, fine sandy loam fill (106) with pebble and charcoal inclusions and three limestone slabs. It had been horizontally truncated by a medieval feature (104) and contained pottery of a Roman date (including fabrics 12, 22 and 43) and some bone. East of this were two linear features, U-shaped in profile (Fig 9; 120 and 161). One (161) ran east to west and was 0.40m wide and 0.20m deep with a sandy clay loam fill (160). It had been partially truncated by a medieval feature (109). The other (120) ran north to south and had also been horizontally truncated by a medieval feature (116). This was filled with a sandy clay loam (119) and contained Roman pottery. These features all cut earlier Roman features (see above: earlier Roman deposits).

In trench 2 two features (Fig 11; 206 and 208) and a layer of soil (210) were excavated and are considered to belong to the later Roman sub-phase since they cut earlier Roman deposits. The largest feature (206) was overlaid by an alluvial deposit (202, see Phase 4) and ran along the trench for approximately 15m. It extended beyond the north end of the trench and no east or west limits were revealed. To the south there was no clearly defined edge merely a gentle, variable slope down towards the north. The feature as observed was no deeper than 0.40m and was filled with a dark greyish brown sandy silt clay flecked with charcoal and included a moderate quantity of limestone some of which was burnt. This fill contained a large quantity of finds (Fig 14). Roman pottery (225 sherds) included a *mortaria* of local manufacture (fabric 34), imported Samian (fabric 43), and large quantities of mass produced domestic pottery (fabrics 12 and 22). Animal bone recovered included a significant quantity of primary butchery waste (see Appendix 4) and some frog bones (Appendix 5). A small number of roof tile fragments were also recovered including a large fragment of *tegula*. The top

part of this fill at the interface with the deposit above was numbered separately (203). This was rather more clay rich and compact than the fill below but was similarly rich in Roman finds.

Immediately south of this a shallow depression (Fig 11; 208) was partially excavated. Its fill, (207) was a grey brown clay loam and contained Roman pottery (including fabrics 12, 22 and 43) as well as a number (45) of small sherds of late Iron Age pottery (fabric 3) mostly from one vessel. In addition 65 small fragments of bone were recovered.

At the south end of trench 2 an alluvial deposit (209; see Phase 4) similar to that to the north (202) was removed in a small area and overlaid an irregular layer of charcoal flecked, greyish brown clay loam (Fig 11; 210). This varied in depth from 0.05 to 0.10m and contained Roman pottery.

Phase 4 Post-Roman deposits

In trench 2, below the topsoil a yellowish brown slightly loamy clay (Fig 11; 202 and 209) was observed. This layer was 0.25m deep towards the Carrant Brook but thinned to nothing at the north end of the trench. This layer sealed Roman deposits. It had few inclusions but contained some finds, mostly from the interfaces with the ploughsoil above and with the Roman deposits below. The top part of it was disturbed to a depth of 0.05 to 0.10m partly by deep ploughing but mostly through mole ploughing of the topsoil.

Phase 5 Medieval deposits

A number of features in trench 1 are interpreted as medieval on the basis of their form. These comprised a number of parallel linear features (Fig 12; 104, 109, 116 and 118) running north to south across the west end of the trench and two in the central part of the trench (Fig 12; 128 and 141). In the area between these a number of the unexcavated deposits probably represent similar features (see below: undated

deposits). The features were fairly broad and shallow, varying in width from 1.20 to 4.20m and in depth from 0.09 to 0.13m. These differences probably result from varying degrees of truncation by modern ploughing. The fills (103, 108, 115, 117, 127 and 140) were all sandy clay loam to clay loam in texture and were predominantly grey brown in colour. The main inclusions were charcoal fleck, limestone (some burnt) and sandstone. No finds of a medieval date were recovered but Roman pottery was found in all of them, those to the west containing larger quantities. This is all considered to be residual material disturbed from Roman deposits below. Between two of these and on the west limit of a third, on the same alignment, were three, shallow, narrow gullies (114 and west side 141, Fig 12). These were 0.20m wide and 0.07m deep and had similar fills to the larger features.

Although no medieval features clearly cut the alluvial clays discussed in Phase 4, the section in trench 1 suggested that alluvial deposits formed the base of the modern ploughsoil. Ploughing had disturbed them and obscured relationships, but it appeared that the medieval features cut that clay rich layer.

Phase 6 Post-medieval deposits

All archaeological deposits were sealed by a clay loam ploughsoil (100, 200 and 420) in the excavated trenches (1, 2 and 4). This was also observed in the other trenches (3 and 5), during fieldwalking and in the auger holes. The topsoil generally varied from 0.20-0.35m in depth but was deeper towards the Carrant Brook where it had a maximum observed depth of 0.50m. It was notable for the generally low quantity of inclusions, both north and south of the brook, and an obvious concentration of finds scattered in the north-west corner of the evaluation area. This corner was also observed to be dark grey brown in colour in contrast to the dark yellowish brown colour of the soil elsewhere. Towards the Carrant Brook there was a marked increase in stone content (largely

limestone) along both sides.

The fields in which the trenches were excavated were very flat with no more than a 0.60m rise from the lowest recorded point, the highest points being in the north corner of the main field and towards the brook. A slight depression was observed across the main field running approximately from the footbridge to the corner where the field narrowed (Fig 15). This may reflect the line of an earlier river channel and also coincides approximately with the extents of modern flooding. To improve drainage this soil had been mole ploughed in recent times and this along with the deeper furrows of conventional ploughing had partially disturbed (to a maximum depth of 0.10m) the deposits below it.

Undated deposits

Along the length of trench 1 many features overlaid by modern ploughsoil were not investigated however their extents were established and they were planned (Fig 5). At the west end, many of these appeared to represent linear features running north to south across the trench. Investigative sondages revealed most to have a depth of 0.20-0.30m. To the east the uninvestigated features were not as numerous but were more varied in form, suggesting postholes and pits as well as linear features. The fills of all of these uninvestigated features were noted to be darker than the colour of the topsoil above.

6 Discussion

Phase 1 Natural deposits

Variations in the natural deposits encountered suggested complex geological processes involving the deposition of eroded material from the surrounding limestone hills, periglacial erosion on the gravel terraces and regular deposition of alluvial clay on the floodplain of the Carrant Brook to produce great variation in the drift geology. Broadly speaking it would seem that the sandy

deposits encountered below much of the alluvial clay and along the north part of the evaluation area (110, 144 and 151) may derive from deposition of eroded material from surrounding hills since they contained quantities of fossiliferous limestone of the type forming the hilly outcrops. The alluvial deposits clearly have a long history underlying the archaeological deposits at depth and also overlying prehistoric and Roman deposits. These alluvial deposits relate to the flooding of the Carrant Brook which continues across much of the evaluation area to the present day. The laminar nature of the alluvial clay in places suggests that deposition was rapid at times.

In places where archaeological activity was identified cutting these deposits some disturbance of them had occurred (110 and 144) suggesting that these represent the remains of a ground-surface partially truncated by ploughing.

The area in trench 4 towards the Carrant Brook in which limestone slabs were found may represent part of an early bed of the brook. Molluscs within the deposit support this idea however no conclusive evidence was found and dating was not possible.

Phase 2 Prehistoric deposits

Features in trench 1, in this phase, were concentrated in the central and eastern parts of the trench (Fig 6). No prehistoric features were present in either of the other trenches north of the Carrant Brook. Features mostly were related to structures with the exception of one large ditch (148). This probably represents a major north to south boundary marking a field or settlement area. The fact that it has been re-cut and that both the original cut and the re-cut have silting in their bases suggest that this was quite an important boundary and was maintained for a considerable period of time. To the west of it another linear feature (143) has a less clear function. It may represent a fence line with the deeper part of supporting an upright post and the linear part hurdles between the posts.

To the east of these the large posthole (150) would have supported a large post but no associated structural features were present. One interpretation is that it may relate to the boundary represented by the ditch (148), being part of a substantial fence.

To the east of the group of features discussed above, was a concentration of structural features (postholes and stakeholes; 133, 137, 601, 603, 605, 607 and 609; Fig 6) and a number of unrecorded but clearly associated features. Although no structure can be clearly defined in the excavated area it is clear that a structure (or structures) was present.

Artefacts recovered from features in trench 1 suggest that activity was probably of a late Bronze Age date. Of particular interest was the organic tempered variant of fabric 4.3 which was recovered from two fills (132 and 149). One fill (147) produced a flint flake. This activity was largely restricted to the central part of trench 1. No prehistoric activity was detected in trench 3 to the south so clearly prehistoric settlement did not continue down as far as the north bank of the Carrant Brook on its current alignment.

Flint was also recovered from later deposits, in which it is considered to be residual, and from fieldwalking. In total nineteen flakes and four worked flints, two of which were scrapers, were recovered from the site. The majority of these came from the north side of the evaluation area. The two scrapers (Fig 13) are considered Neolithic and one flake (127; Fig 13) is considered Mesolithic. Some of this was local gravel flint but some was clearly imported. This, and the quantity and concentration of flint across the north side of the evaluation area, suggests activity, in the immediate vicinity, of an earlier date than any of the excavated features.

South of the Carrant Brook in trench 4 a group of features are considered to be prehistoric. These were sealed below alluvial clay and were approximately 0.50m below the modern ground surface. They are all considered to be structural with the two

compacted, curvilinear, stone and fuel-ash, deposits (407 and 409; Fig 7) reflecting a sub-circular structure at least 7.00m in diameter. The postholes (406, 412, 414 and 419; Fig 7) and the linear feature with a posthole in its base (404; Fig 7) are all considered to be structural. These may be part of the structure discussed above. The curvilinear gully (411; Fig 7) below one of the compacted deposits (409) may relate to an earlier structure, representing an eavesdrip gully or wall slot. However no continuation of this was observed to the north and this remains poorly understood.

Artefactual evidence from these features was sparse. A few small sherds (12) of prehistoric pottery were present in two deposits (408 and 410). The fabric of these was not positively identified but was probably late Iron Age in date. The most abundant material recovered was fuel-ash which occurred in a number of contexts (403, 407, 408 and 409). This along with quantities of burnt stone and fired clay suggests that industrial activity was taking place, possibly associated with iron working. The presence of a stone roof-tile in one deposit (409) indicates that fire was considered a danger and that the roof of any associated structure consequently had some stone tiles.

Prehistoric deposits were not encountered in trench 5 suggesting that activity south of the Carrant Brook was limited to the west end of the evaluation area.

Phase 3 Earlier Roman deposits

Three parallel gullies (112, 122 and 163; Fig 8) at the west end of trench 1 represented drainage features or enclosure ditches. They did not extend into trench 2 or had been truncated in that trench by a later Roman feature (206). One fill was sampled (111) and contained a large quantity of charred grain and chaff suggesting crop processing in the vicinity (Appendix 5). Pottery represented domestic table wares and cooking vessels.

In the central part of trench 1 the rectilinear

ditch (146) probably formed part of a ditched enclosure. Such enclosures are characteristic of Iron Age and Roman rural settlement in the area and from cropmark sites (see introduction) appear to be common along the Carrant Brook. South of this a number of postholes (Fig 8) probably related to structures although no individual structure can be defined. Four of them (155 and 157) formed an east to west line and may represent a wall line or fence. In this area of trench 1 where it extended to the south an alluvial clay deposit (168) was cut by a Roman feature and so is regarded as pre-Roman in date. No more precise dating of this deposit is possible.

To the east of these, were four further features of Roman date (Fig 9). One (131) was a posthole, robbed from its west side. No associated features were identified. East of this was an irregular linear feature for which no interpretation is offered. Further along an apparently curvilinear feature (165), butt-ending to the west may be part of an enclosure and a group of small stakeholes may relate to a structure. Finally near the east end of the trench was a north-west to south-east aligned boundary ditch.

Roman finds from these features were largely pottery and bone. Neither occurred in significant quantities in contrast to the fairly high quantities recovered from features to the west. This reduction reflects that observed in the fieldwalking and indicates that the deposits and features in the central and eastern parts of trench 1 are on the periphery of the Romano-British settlement.

In trench 2 earlier Roman deposits survived below later Roman ones (Fig 9). To the north end, one (216) is interpreted as a gully the others (218 and unexcavated features) as postholes. No structures could be clearly defined. At the southern end a layer of alluvial clay (212) lay below the later Roman ground surface (210). This probably resulted from flooding during the Roman period. Below this a single posthole containing Roman pottery and hobnails cut a further clay

rich deposit (211). This represents earlier Roman activity close to the brook. Due to the depth of the alluvium (0.20m) separating this from the later Roman deposits a considerable period of time must have elapsed between the digging of the posthole (214) and the formation of the later ground surface (210).

Roman features were not present in trench 3 indicating that settlement in the Roman period did not extend as far as the Carrant Brook except at the west end of the evaluation. There, they were encountered in trench 2 almost all the way down to the brook. A concentration of Roman finds in the east corner of the field was detected through fieldwalking. The nearest trench to this (trench 3) and another across the brook were archaeologically sterile. The augering survey revealed no buried deposits in the vicinity. These two factors, the small area covered and the proximity of the Carrant Brook suggest that these do not relate to a settlement area but represent an isolated scatter of rubbish. Roman deposits were not found south of the brook.

Later Roman

In trench 1, three features are considered later Roman on the basis of stratigraphic evidence. The two linear gullies (120 and 161; Fig 9) if projected to the south of the trench would meet at approximately right angles. They are also similar in form and probably represent part of a rectilinear feature. This may represent an enclosure ditch or slots for cill-beams forming the corner of a timber building. The large posthole (107) to their west has no clear associations but on the basis of its size must have contained a substantial timber.

In trench 2 the major feature (206) has no obvious function. It is clearly substantial with only a short length of the southern edge of it revealed in the excavated area. It does not appear in trench 1 to the north so it must have a limit to the east between the north end of trench 2 and the west end of trench 1. Beyond that its extents are unknown. For a

feature of its extent it had very shallowly sloping sides and was not very deep (0.40m max). The fill (205; Fig 10) contained a large assemblage of pottery and bone, with table wares, cooking pots and butchered bone providing clear evidence of domestic occupation. The discovery of a complete *mortarium*, broken upsidedown on the base of the feature, and many large sherds suggests that this material represents a primary rubbish dump. Frog bones (Appendix 5) suggest that the feature was waterlogged at one time although their presence could be due to other factors. Other material in the fill such as burnt stone slabs and tile may represent demolition debris.

Interpretation of this feature is difficult. One tentative suggestion is that it represents an old water channel or a broad ditch to limit flooding. This has subsequently been backfilled. However the presence of features below it does not support this interpretation.

South of this large feature a shallow hollow (208) formed part of this phase of activity. The excavated portion did not allow its form to be postulated but contained charcoal, probable bone working waste (small fragments many of them fairly regular in shape and showing many butchery or knife marks) and many small sherds of pottery indicating that the fill was a primarily a dump of rubbish.

Finally in this earlier Roman phase at the south end of trench 2 an irregular deposit of loamy clay (210; Fig 10), below the post-Roman alluvial clay, contained Romano-British pottery and sealed earlier Roman features. This probably was a trampled ground surface, its irregularity resulting from the churning of wet ground near the brook.

Phase 4 Post-Roman deposits

The alluvial clay (202 and 209; Fig 10) in trench 2 which sealed Roman features and increased in depth towards the Carrant Brook resulted from flooding. This probably followed abandonment of the Romano-British

settlement which extended as far as the modern line of the brook. It suggests that the brook had been cleaned out or flooding controlled in some other way during Roman occupation although no clear evidence of this was discovered.

Phase 5 Medieval deposits

The six broad linear features dated to the medieval period (104, 109, 116, 118, 128 and 141; Fig 11) represent ridge and furrow. Although only Roman pottery was recovered the regular spacing of the three broad features along with their shallow nature (0.09-0.13m) suggest that these represent furrows. The narrow linear features between them (114) and the shallow one on the west side of 141 may represent slots for hurdle fences dividing plots of land or deep medieval ploughmarks. The furrows are probably the features which show as cropmarks on the aerial photographs of the site (Fig 16). The ridges will have been wholly truncated by modern ploughing. Medieval furrows were not present in any of the trenches to the south, and on the aerial photographs they do not extend far across the field towards the Carrant Brook. This suggests that the medieval farmers were not ploughing the area regularly flooded by the brook. Such land would not only be poor arable land due its wetness, but the regular deposition of clays would make it very heavy to work. Roman deposits survived in the bases of the furrows.

Phase 6 Post-medieval deposits

These are represented by the modern ploughsoil (100, 200 and 400). Modern arable use of the land extends to the banks of the brook which has been cleaned out several times in the past 50 years (Mr Archer pers comm), including once by Italian prisoners of war. This has created a slight rise in the field towards the brook and a stonier strip of soil resulting from the upcast. Despite this, the brook regularly floods to the point where the field narrows. Although in the north part of the field modern ploughing, especially mole

ploughing for drainage improvement, has partially truncated archaeological deposits this damage does not affect those deposits covered by alluvium. Where damage has occurred it is superficial and even smaller features, such as post and stakeholes, have survived.

Undated deposits

A large number of features were not excavated though their extents were established and they were planned (Fig 5). The broad linear features to the west end of trench 1 probably mostly represent further medieval furrows. Their relatively regular spacing and their shallow nature strengthen this interpretation. However features of other dates are also probably represented in these broad linear features, since where one of them was excavated in the central part of the trench features of various dates were revealed (furrow 141, gullies and ditches 146, 143 and 148). Elsewhere furrows had earlier features surviving below them.

Several of the undated, narrower linear deposits to the west may represent gullies similar to those discussed in the Roman period (Phase 3 earlier Roman; 112, 122 and 163). Undated and unexcavated deposits to the east (Fig 5) largely appear to represent pits and postholes. There were also two linear features representing gullies or ditches.

7 Assessment of significance

The evaluation, at Carrant Brook farm identified areas of greater and lesser archaeological significance (Fig 15). The area of greater significance was rich in archaeological deposits relating to prehistoric and Roman settlement. To establish the significance of these deposits an assessment of the site has been made using the *Secretary of State's criteria for scheduling ancient monuments* (DoE 1990, Annex 4: Appendix 2). The criteria which are relevant to this site are discussed below.

Rarity

The presence of late Bronze Age settlement deposits in a good state of preservation is of considerable significance. Sites of this type and date are rare and are poorly understood at a national and local level.

This site, along with other sites along the Carrant Brook and those on the higher ground to the north have well preserved prehistoric settlement, both proven and potential, and as such can significantly contribute to our understanding of prehistoric settlement and land use. The relationship of prehistoric settlement to river valleys, watercourses and to the areas of higher ground beyond the valleys is considered essential to our understanding of prehistoric peoples and their environment.

Documentation

The evaluation site (HWCM 5503) is documented in this report. Other sites along the Carrant Brook and to the north are well documented (HWCM 2907, Thomas 1975; HWCM 5099 Oswald; HWCM 497, Britnell 1975). Additionally a report on major excavations at Beckford (HWCM 359) is in preparation (ed J Wills).

Group Value

The group value of the site is high. It is situated at the east end of a series of cropmarks running along the north side of the Carrant Brook. This series of sites must be considered as a whole. Where they have been investigated, as at Beckford (HWCM 359, HWCM 497, HWCM 509 and HWCM 10846), they include features dating to the late Bronze Age, the Iron Age and Roman periods and related to early settlement. Other cropmark sites in the series are believed to represent Iron Age and Roman settlement (HWCM 3623, HWCM 5503, HWCM 5433, HWCM 6036, HWCM 6042 and HWCM 6043) though none have yet been investigated. In addition a potential Saxon cemetery (HWCM 3622) has been identified

and also medieval field systems.

The whole area of the brook has a distinct pattern of fields which may represent ancient field systems. In addition a number of significant sites are situated on the higher ground to the north and south of the brook including a scheduled Iron Age hillfort (HWCM 2907, County Monument No Here and Worc 228).

The entire cropmark group is consequently of considerable importance and justifies consideration as a whole in order that the relationships of these sites, within any given period and through time, may be more fully understood. This not only applies to the sites along the brook but also to sites and land use on the higher ground. The evaluation site has produced evidence of both prehistoric and Roman settlement. It is clearly associated with the cropmark site immediately to the north of the dismantled railway and represents an important element of the whole group. As a part of the group which will demonstrate the relationship of early settlement with the Carrant Brook it is particularly sensitive.

Survival\Condition

Along much of trench 2 and in trench 4 gullies, postholes, and other structural features were sealed by deposits of alluvial clay up to 0.30m in depth. In addition a buried ground surface was observed in trench 2 sealed below an alluvial deposit. In these areas features were well preserved and had not been truncated except by other archaeological features. Where deposits were not protected by alluvial clays preservation was good although some truncation by ploughing had occurred.

The excavated features largely had not shown on the aerial photographs of the site, although a number of poorly defined cropmarks along the north side of the evaluation area appeared to correspond with the medieval furrows excavated in trench 1 (Fig 16). This absence is due to the shielding

effect of the alluvial clay overlying the deposits towards the Carrant Brook.

Artefactual remains were numerous with large quantities of pottery recovered, some bone and flint, and small quantities of other finds. Few metal objects were recovered. Preservation was good since most contexts were undisturbed, however chemical action had affected most of the finds, making much of the pottery appear abraded and making bone in some contexts spongy. Environmental survival was variable but quantities of charred cereal and other plant remains were recovered from over a third of sampled contexts. No organic remains were recovered despite the presence of anaerobic conditions near the Carrant Brook and the generally wet nature of the site. Their presence on the site as a whole should not be excluded.

The artefacts and environmental remains indicate that good evidence of the economy and environment of the settlement is preserved on the site and would contribute significantly to our understanding of early settlement along the Carrant Brook.

Fragility\Vulnerability

The proposed gravel extraction would remove all archaeological deposits surviving on the site. Any activity requiring stripping of the topsoil from areas of the site would damage archaeological deposits especially those not protected by alluvial clays. Those poorly protected areas would be susceptible to considerable damage if crossed regularly by heavy machinery. In addition any activity affecting the water table in the vicinity of the site, such as the proposed diversion of the Carrant Brook, would be detrimental to the preservation of organic remains such as seeds and bone. Continuing arable use of the site would not cause significant damage although extensive mole ploughing would be a problem.

Diversity

Large numbers of well preserved deposits (ditches, gullies, postholes, stakeholes and soil layers) representing enclosures, boundaries, structures and ground surfaces as well as features which could not be interpreted survived in trenches 1, 2 and 4. These dated to the late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods and contained a wide range of artefacts and good environmental evidence.

In summary the importance of the site lies in the survival of well preserved prehistoric and Roman settlement features and the associated artefactual and environmental assemblage. These have the potential to provide considerable information on prehistoric and Roman settlement, domestic life and the associated environment. This early settlement and its relationship to the field systems and the important and potentially important sites along the Carrant Brook are considered to be of considerable significance.

8 Conclusions

The evaluation identified the presence of deposits of late Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and medieval dates in a good state of preservation in part of the proposed development area. Deposits close to the Carrant Brook were especially well preserved since they were sealed below alluvial clays. Prehistoric deposits were identified on the north side of the evaluation area in the central part of trench 1. These were probably associated with late Bronze Age settlement and did not extend much to the south. To the south of the Carrant Brook prehistoric settlement was identified. This probably dated to the late Iron Age and related to industrial activity. This did not extend as far east as trench 5.

Roman deposits concentrated in the north-west corner of the proposal area and extended along its north side becoming increasingly infrequent to the east. Structural features,

ditches, gullies and a large poorly understood feature produced considerable quantities of Roman domestic rubbish. Medieval deposits represented ridge and furrow and were limited to the north side of the proposal area.

The good survival and condition of these deposits, their date range and diversity, their associated artefact assemblage and the environmental remains preserved on the site mean that it is of considerable importance. This importance is significantly increased by their association with early field systems, settlement and cropmark sites along the Carrant Brook, and on the higher ground on either side of the valley. This combination of factors makes the evaluation site and the whole area of the Carrant Brook of national importance.

9 Acknowledgements

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10 Personnel

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12 Abbreviations

Numbers prefixed with 'HWCM' are the primary reference numbers used by the Hereford and Worcester County Sites and Monuments Record.

HWCC - Hereford and Worcester County Council

Appendix 1 The archive

The archive consists of:

- 118 Context records AS1
- 9 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 5 Photographic records AS3
- 1 Drawing catalogue record AS4
- 5 Context number catalogue sheets AS5
- 48 Context finds records AS8
- 51 Sample records AS17
- 9 Level records AS19
- 18 Scale drawings
- 19 Borehole records
- 3 Fieldwalking record sheets
- 27 Fieldwalking finds sheets
- 2 Sheets of illustrated finds
- 5 Boxes of finds
- 1 Box environmental remains

All primary records and finds are kept at:

Archaeology Section
Hereford and Worcester County Council
Tetbury Drive
Warndon
Worcester WR4 9LS

Tel Worcester (0905) 58608

A security copy of the archive has been placed at:

Hereford and Worcester County Museum
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ

Tel Hartlebury (0299) 250416

Appendix 2

Secretary of State's criteria for scheduling Ancient Monuments - Extract from *Archaeology and Planning DoE Planning policy guidance 16, November 1990*

The following criteria (which are not in any order of ranking), are used for assessing the national importance of an ancient monument and considering whether scheduling is appropriate. The criteria should not however be regarded as definitive; rather they are indicators which contribute to a wider judgement based on the individual circumstances of a case.

- i *Period*: all types of monuments that characterise a category or period should be considered for preservation.
- ii *Rarity*: there are some monument categories which in certain periods are so scarce that all surviving examples which still retain some archaeological potential should be preserved. In general, however, a selection must be made which portrays the typical and commonplace as well as the rare. This process should take account of all aspects of the distribution of a particular class of monument, both in a national and a regional context.
- iii *Documentation*: the significance of a monument may be enhanced by the existence of records of previous investigation or, in the case of more recent monuments, by the supporting evidence of contemporary written records.
- iv *Group value*: the value of a single monument (such as a field system) may be greatly enhanced by its association with related contemporary monuments (such as a settlement and cemetery) or with monuments of different periods. In some cases, it is preferable to protect the complete group of monuments, including associated and adjacent land, rather than to protect isolated monuments within the group.

v *Survival/Condition*: the survival of a monument's archaeological potential both above and below ground is a particularly important consideration and should be assessed in relation to its present condition and surviving features.

vi *Fragility/Vulnerability*: highly important archaeological evidence from some field monuments can be destroyed by a single ploughing or unsympathetic treatment; vulnerable monuments of this nature would particularly benefit from the statutory protection which scheduling confers. There are also existing standing structures of particular form or complexity whose value can again be severely reduced by neglect or careless treatment and which are similarly well suited by scheduled monument protection, even if these structures are already listed buildings.

vii *Diversity*: some monuments may be selected for scheduling because they possess a combination of high quality features, others because of a single important attribute.

viii *Potential*: on occasion, the nature of the evidence cannot be specified precisely but it may still be possible to document reasons anticipating its existence and importance and so to demonstrate the justification for scheduling. This is usually confined to sites rather than upstanding monuments.

Appendix 3

The finds from Ashton-under-Hill, HWCM 5503, Robin Jackson, AIFA BA

Excavated finds were washed and marked and a brief assessment of all contexts was undertaken. Readily identifiable, commonly occurring pottery fabrics were identified using the Hereford and Worcester County Pottery Fabric Series. The remainder were recorded as unidentified and simply counted and approximately dated. The Samian (fabric 43) was rapidly assessed by Gary Taylor and his report is included in this appendix (see below). The animal bones were assessed by Clare de Rouffignac and her report is included below.

Finds recovered from fieldwalking were rapidly scanned and a count of all prehistoric and Roman artefacts was made. From these a distribution map was drawn (Fig 5).

The majority of the pottery recovered from the evaluation area was Roman with the majority being Severn Valley ware (fabric 12) or Black Burnished ware (fabric 22). A quantity of Iron Age pottery was recovered and some possibly late Bronze Age. Of particular note was the Bronze Age pottery dated from the comparison of rim sherds recovered with forms from Beckford.

A small quantity of Roman rooftile was recovered indicating the presence of substantial buildings in the vicinity.

HWCM 5503, Samian

Context 100

Footring of unidentifiable vessel.

Context 205

Dr 27?, 1st-mid 2nd century.

Dr 31 or 31R, mid 2nd century or later.

Dr 31R, stamped IN[-. Probably AD 160+.

Dr 33, 2nd century.

Dr 37, four separate vessels, including 3 decorated sherds. One probably late 1st-early 2nd century, others Antonine or later (AD 140+)

Dr 38, mid 2nd century or later.

One unidentified sherd, possible from a Dr 33.

The group is mid 2nd century or later.

Context 106

Dr 18/31 or 31, early-mid 2nd century.

Context 110

Dr 18/31, early 2nd century.

Context 111

?Dr 18/31

Context 173

Dr 18/31 or 31, early-mid 2nd century.

Appendix 4

The animal bones from Ashton-under-Hill (HWCM 5503), Clare de Rouffignac, MA GIBiol AIFA

100

1 pig molar
3 sheep molars
1 sheep rib fragment (burnt)

101

1 horse scapula fragment
1 cattle radius fragment
2 sheep molars
20 ungulate limb fragments (3 burnt)

103

1 cattle metapodial fragment (gnawed)
6 cattle limb fragments
8 ungulate limb fragments (2 burnt)

106

3 large ungulate limb fragments

108

1 sheep molar
2 ungulate limb fragments
Few small fragments in sample

111 Fill of gully

1 sheep radius fragment

115

1 unidentified fragment
Few small bone fragments in sample

117

Some bone fragments in sample

127

2 sheep molars
2 ungulate limb fragments (burnt)
Few bone fragments in sample

129

Few small fragments of bone in sample

132

4 ungulate limb fragments
Bone in sample including burnt fragments

134

4 ungulate limb fragments
Some bone fragments in sample

142

1 ungulate vertebra fragment
3 ungulate limb fragments

149

1 unidentified fragment
Few small fragments of bone in sample

152

1 large ungulate limb fragment
10 ungulate limb fragments (some burnt)
Bone fragments in sample - some burnt

158

12 ungulate limb fragments (abraded)

166

1 cattle horn core fragment
20 unidentified fragments

168

1 cattle limb fragment

173

1 cattle phalanx I
1 unidentified fragment

202

1 cattle phalanx II
1 pig molar
1 unidentified fragment

203

1 cattle radius fragment
12 ungulate limb fragments (1 butchered, 1 gnawed)

204

2 ungulate limb fragments

205

Includes primary butchery waste

2 horse tibia fragments
1 horse molar
3 cattle metapodial fragments (2 butchered)
2 cattle molars
6 cattle jaw fragments (all butchered)
1 cattle astragalus fragment (butchered)
1 cattle phalanx I (osteoarthritis from

?traction)
5 sheep molars
2 sheep metapodial fragments
1 radius fragment
1 dog humerus fragment
1 pig humerus fragment (juvenile)
Various other cow/sheep bones exhibiting
butchery and gnawing; some bones also burnt

207

Ungulate bones - many small fragments
suggesting waste from bone working
Many small fragments in sample

209

1 sheep molar
1 ungulate limb fragment (abraded)

213

2 cattle teeth
2 sheep teeth
2 small ungulate limb fragments

215

1 sheep tooth

217

1 sheep rib
1 sheep limb fragment
*1 cattle limb fragment and a few small
fragments of bone in sample*

408

1 sheep tooth
8 ungulate limb fragments (very abraded)

417

8 unidentified skull fragments
2 ungulate pelvis fragments

605

1 cattle jaw fragment

Appendix 5

The plant remains from Ashton-under-Hill (HWCM 5503), Clare de Rouffignac, AIFA MA GIBiol, Environmental Archaeologist

1 Summary

Some of the samples were found to contain charred seeds and chaff, and most contained small amounts of charcoal. A gully was particularly productive of charred cereal remains, probably waste from crop processing. Comparisons were made between the plant remains recovered from Ashton-under-Hill, and those from Beckford and Aston Mill.

2 Introduction

There have been few sites in the county of Worcestershire, particularly in rural areas, where archaeobotanical studies have been carried out. Two major exceptions are Aston Mill Farm (Ede 1990; de Rouffignac 1990) and Beckford (Greig and Colledge 1988; Colledge and Moffett unpub) where comprehensive work on plant macrofossil remains was carried out. Both these sites are within 7km of Ashton-under-Hill.

Sampling at both sites produced charred plant remains. Preservation of charred remains at Aston Mill was however rather variable. Evidence of cereal cultivation from Aston Mill included carbonised barley, wheat and possibly oats (Ede 1990, 54), but it appeared that the processing of the crops was not taking place in the direct vicinity of the excavations.

Carbonised seeds were very plentiful from the Beckford excavations. Cultivated cereal crops were of greatest interest, particularly from a roundhouse which had been intensively sampled. *Triticum dicoccum* (emmer) and *Triticum spelta* (spelt) were recovered from Iron Age and Romano-British features at Beckford (Colledge and Moffett unpub). Waterlogged plant material and a

good pollen sequence through prehistoric, Roman and Saxon deposits were also recovered at Beckford (Greig and Colledge 1988).

3 Aims

It was hoped that plant remains would be recovered in sufficient quantity to enable identification of:

- a) Charred cereal grains, particularly from Roman features;
- b) The stages of crop processing from which the charred remains came;
- c) Plants of the local habitat from the alluvium.

It was also hoped that comparisons could also be made between environmental remains from the excavations at Ashton-under-Hill, and previous excavations at Aston Mill and Beckford.

4 Method

The samples which were collected were between one and five litres in size.

The samples were sieved, floated and sorted. The samples from the alluvium consisted mainly of clay. These were soaked for two days in water with the addition of a proprietary water softener to enable breakdown of the clay. The remaining samples did not require preliminary treatment.

The mesh size used was 500 μ m for the flots from all the samples.

All the flots were then sorted to recover seeds and other plant remains, both charred and uncharred. The sorted plant remains were then examined under a low power EMT-1

light microscope to enable identification.

The seeds were identified as far as possible using the Archaeology Section comparative collection, a seed identification manual (Bergren 1981) and an illustrated site report (Griffin 1988). Comparative descriptions of charred cereal seeds and chaff were obtained from Jacomet (1987).

5 Results

A total of 53 samples were recovered from the excavations. Thirty-eight samples were examined for charred plant remains. A full list of the samples examined is given in Table 1. Of these, fifteen were found to contain charred seeds and chaff. The numbers of plant remains are shown in Table 2.

6 Discussion

The numbers of charred plant remains recovered from the samples was very variable and is related to the function of the features. Postholes and ditches tend not to contain primary deposits of charred plant remains, but residual material relating to waste disposal or destruction of structures. It was noticeable that samples collected from Roman and Iron Age postholes and ditches at Ashton-under-Hill contained few charred plant remains.

There were no waterlogged plant remains obtained from in the samples. Seeds were noted in the alluvial deposits during excavation (Robin Jackson pers comm). The lack of seeds recovered from the alluvium samples could be for various reasons.

Firstly, standing water hindered the recovery of soil samples below a depth of one metre on the site. The depth of actual archaeological deposits excavated was 700mm. Greig (1988, 3) noted that at Beckford there were waterlogged plant remains below a depth of 800mm. Above that level waterlogging of the deposits did not appear to be continuous due to seasonal fluctuations in the water table. The excavations at Beckford were not as close to the Carrant Brook as those at Ashton-under-Hill.

Seasonal changes in the water table probably also occurred at Ashton-under-Hill and as a result of this waterlogged plant remains did not survive. Due to the proximity of the Carrant Brook however deeper waterlogged deposits are likely to exist outside the sampled areas.

Secondly, there appeared to have been very corrosive chemical reactions in the alluvium which stripped the burnishing from the surface of pottery recovered during the excavations. It is possible that the seeds also were affected by exposure to these conditions and then to the proprietary water softener which was used to break down the samples. The seeds may have disintegrated totally as a result.

Greig (1988, 3) found that even normally robust pollen grains were affected by the clay content of the soils at Beckford. There is little hope, therefore, of more fragile plant macrofossil remains surviving in such a soil. On this basis, too, examination of pollen samples from the excavations does not appear to be a fruitful form of analysis, though local variation in soil chemistry may provide useful samples.

The lack of waterlogged plant remains from the alluvium meant that it not possible to identify plants of the contemporary natural habitat.

The presence of charred cereal remains from some of the deposits, however, gave some useful results. Charring of the crops may have occurred during parching or drying of the grains before milling. Both *Triticum spelta* (spelt) and *Triticum dicoccum* (emmer) are non-free-threshing wheats and require parching to free the grains from the husks to enable threshing to take place (Jones 1979, 104).

There were few deposits from the Roman period with substantial quantities of charred plant remains. This suggests that the processing of cereal crops was taking place some distance from the features which were sampled. Crop processing is a dirty, dusty practice with a bulky commodity which would probably have not taken place directly in the settlement area. This situation appears to have occurred at Aston Mill, where the area

of main crop processing activity during the Iron Age appears to have been away from the main area of excavation (Ede 1990, 54).

It was difficult to compare many of the results from the identification of charred plant remains from Beckford with those from Ashton-under-Hill. This was due to the specialised nature of the environmental sampling of the roundhouse at Beckford, where the entire area of the floor deposits were sampled for charred plant remains (Colledge and Moffett unpub).

Many of the cereal seeds at Ashton-under-Hill remained unidentified due to poor preservation. This was probably due to the largely residual nature of the deposits. There was little chaff which could be used to determine the different cereal species. The fill of a gulley (111) contained over 100 unidentified cereal seeds, but some chaff fragments were identified as *T spelta*. It can be assumed that many of the unidentified cereal seeds were of *T spelta*. This wheat was the commonest species cultivated during the Roman period (Lisa Moffett pers comm). This sample probably represents waste from the cleaning of a crop which was then used for fuel.

A single posthole (608) produced some remains of *Triticum dicoccum* (emmer). Its presence suggests that the feature is prehistoric in origin (Ede 1990, 54).

The weed seeds which were recovered were mainly of grasses and legumes. These are commonly encountered weeds of arable land but are of little use for identification of the type of soils being used for cultivation. The diversity of weed seeds was very low compared to the plant remains recovered from both Aston Mill and Beckford.

A further comment should be made on the presence of a number of land and aquatic snails. In the absence of other climatic and environmental indicators such as pollen and plant macrofossils, the identification of mollusca would be important.

7 Conclusions

The charred plant remains gave some indication of cereal processing at the settlement, but further details on the stages of

processing were difficult to identify. This is mainly due to the rarity of deposits closely associated with crop processing. However there were useful comparisons with the Aston Mill and Beckford sites.

Analysis of samples for other environmental evidence such as pollen, insects and mollusca would be important, particularly from waterlogged deposits.

Sampling of fills of ditches and postholes does not seem to be particularly productive for charred plant remains. It is probably not worthwhile to sample these types of features except when they form the only evidence on a site. Deposits associated with crop processing, where these exist, will yield significant results.

Table 1 Results from examination of samples

103 Fill of furrow

No charred plant remains or charcoal

106 Fill of posthole

No charred seeds or chaff; little charcoal

108 Fill of furrow

No charred plant remains or charcoal

110 Alluvium with trample

No charred seeds; little charcoal

111 Fill of gulley

Over 100 cereal seeds and 30 chaff fragments were recovered, together with some graminiae (grass) and leguminosae (pea/bean) seeds; charcoal also present

115 Fill of furrow

No charred plant remains or charcoal

117 Fill of furrow

Four unidentified cereal seeds and a single grass seed

127 Fill of gulley/furrow

No charred plant remains or charcoal

129 Fill of postpipe

Unidentified cereal seeds; *T spelta* (spelt wheat) glume base; some charcoal

132 Fill of posthole

Two *Hordeum vulgare* (barley) seeds; other cereal seeds and charcoal

136 Fill of posthole

No charred plant remains or charcoal

138A Fill of ditch

No charred remains but many snails including aquatic species

138B Silting of ditch

No charred remains but many snails including aquatic species

142 Fill of gulley

No charred plant remains; little charcoal

147 Fill of boundary ditch

No seeds or chaff in both samples

149 Fill of posthole

Only unidentified cereal grains; some charcoal

152 Fill of posthole

No charred plant remains, little charcoal

164 Fill of gulley

Only a single charred wheat seed; some charcoal

168 Alluvial clay

No charred plant remains or charcoal

205 Alluvial clay

Two charred seeds; little charcoal

207 Fill of cut (upper and lower)

Single seeds of *T spelta* from two samples; some charcoal present

209 Alluvial clay

No charred plant remains or charcoal

211 Alluvial clay

No charred plant remains or charcoal

212 Alluvial clay

No charred plant remains or charcoal

217 Fill of cut

Some charcoal and cereal seeds and weed seeds

401 Alluvial clay

No charred plant remains or charcoal

409 Smithing waste

little charcoal and a single graminiae seed

416 Alluvial clay

No charred plant remains or charcoal

417 Alluvial clay

No charred plant remains or charcoal

421 Alluvial clay

Many snails including aquatic species, but no charred seeds or charcoal

602 Fill of posthole

Three cereal seeds; also some charcoal

604 Fill of posthole

Two unidentified cereal seeds; some charcoal

606 Fill of posthole

Unidentified cereal seeds; also some charcoal

608 Fill of posthole

Chaff and a seed of *Triticum dicoccum* (emmer); also a number of other cereal seeds and some charcoal

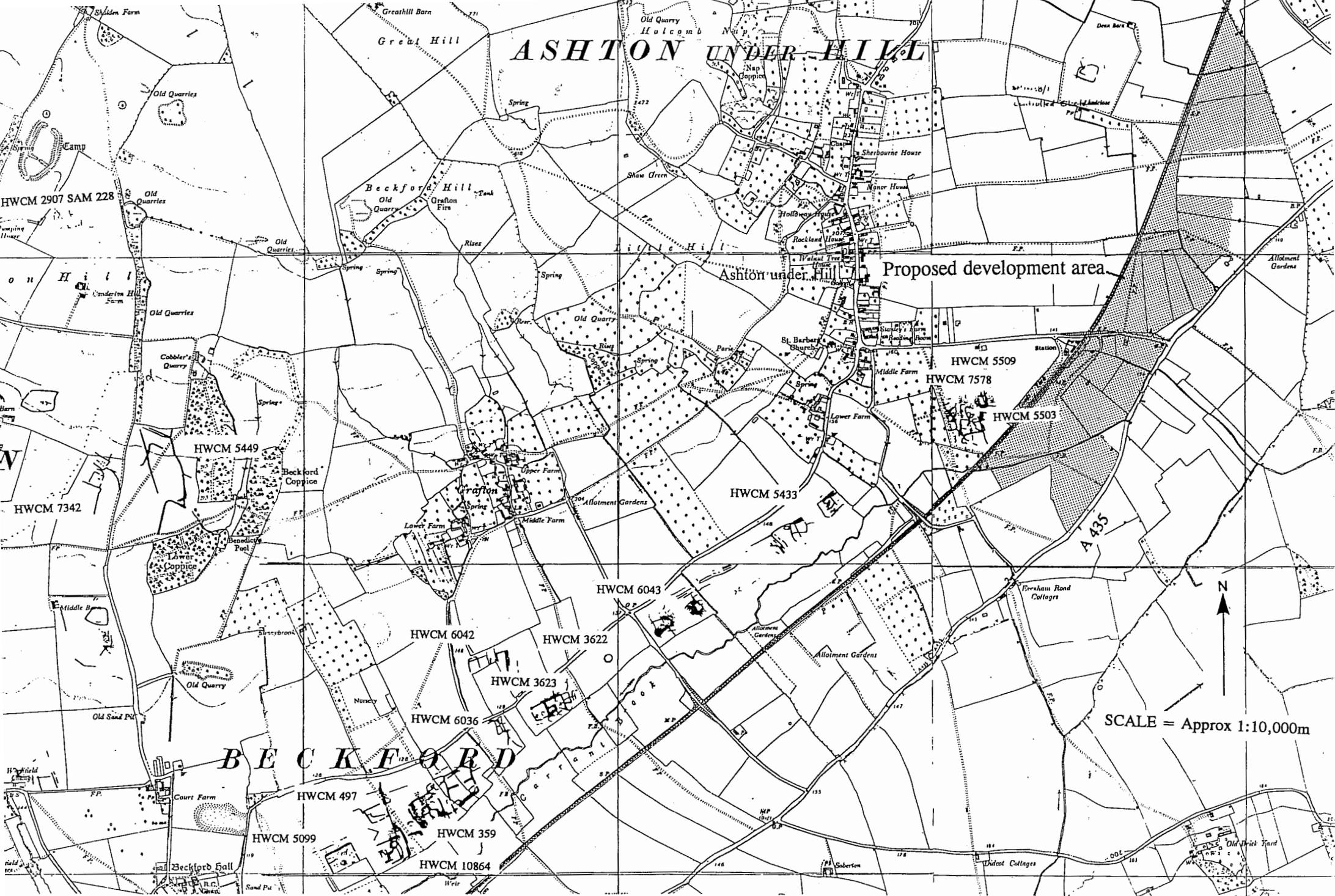
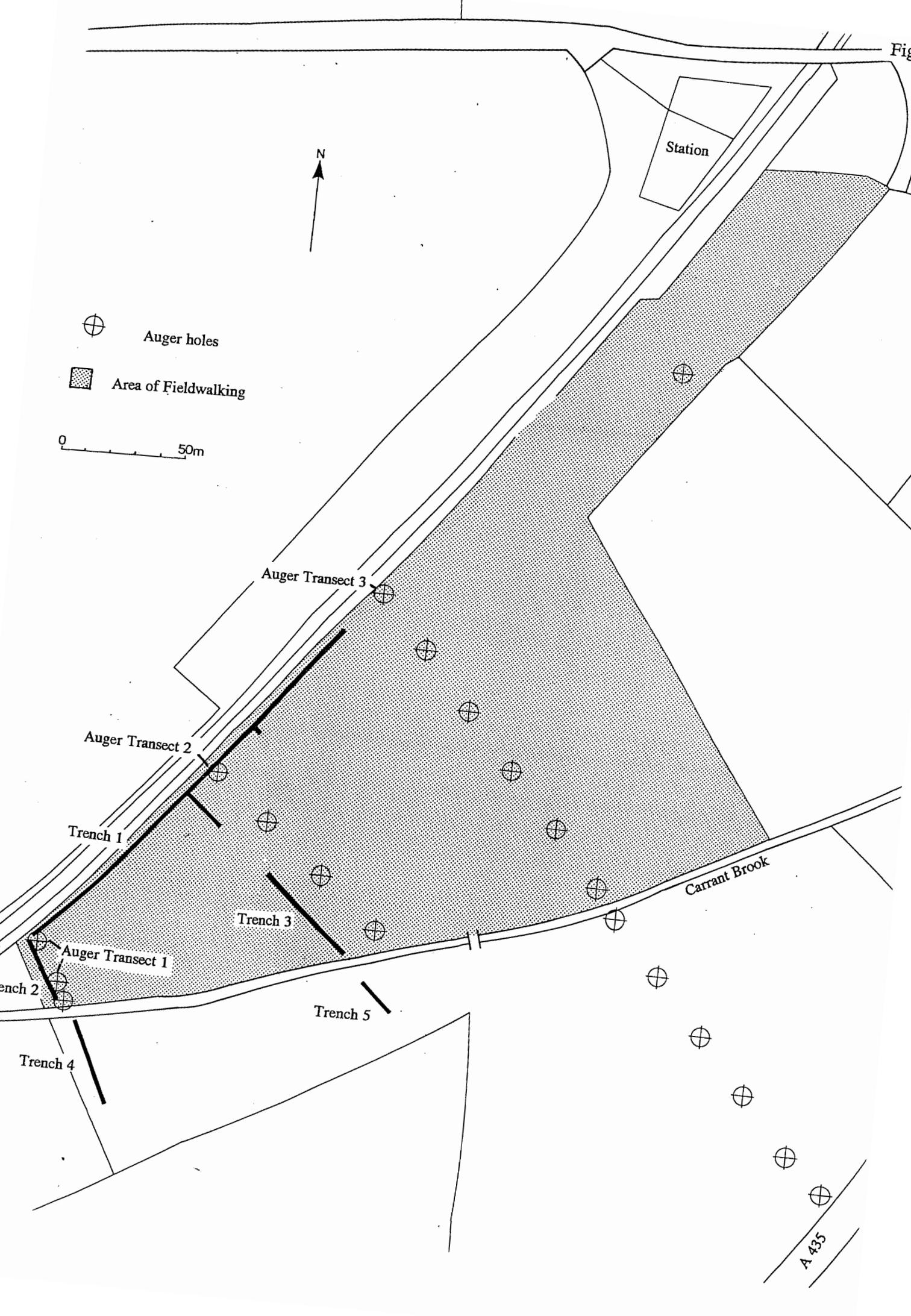


Figure 2



N

Station

Auger holes

Area of Fieldwalking

50m

Auger Transect 3

Auger Transect 2

Trench 1

Carrant Brook

Trench 3

Auger Transect 1

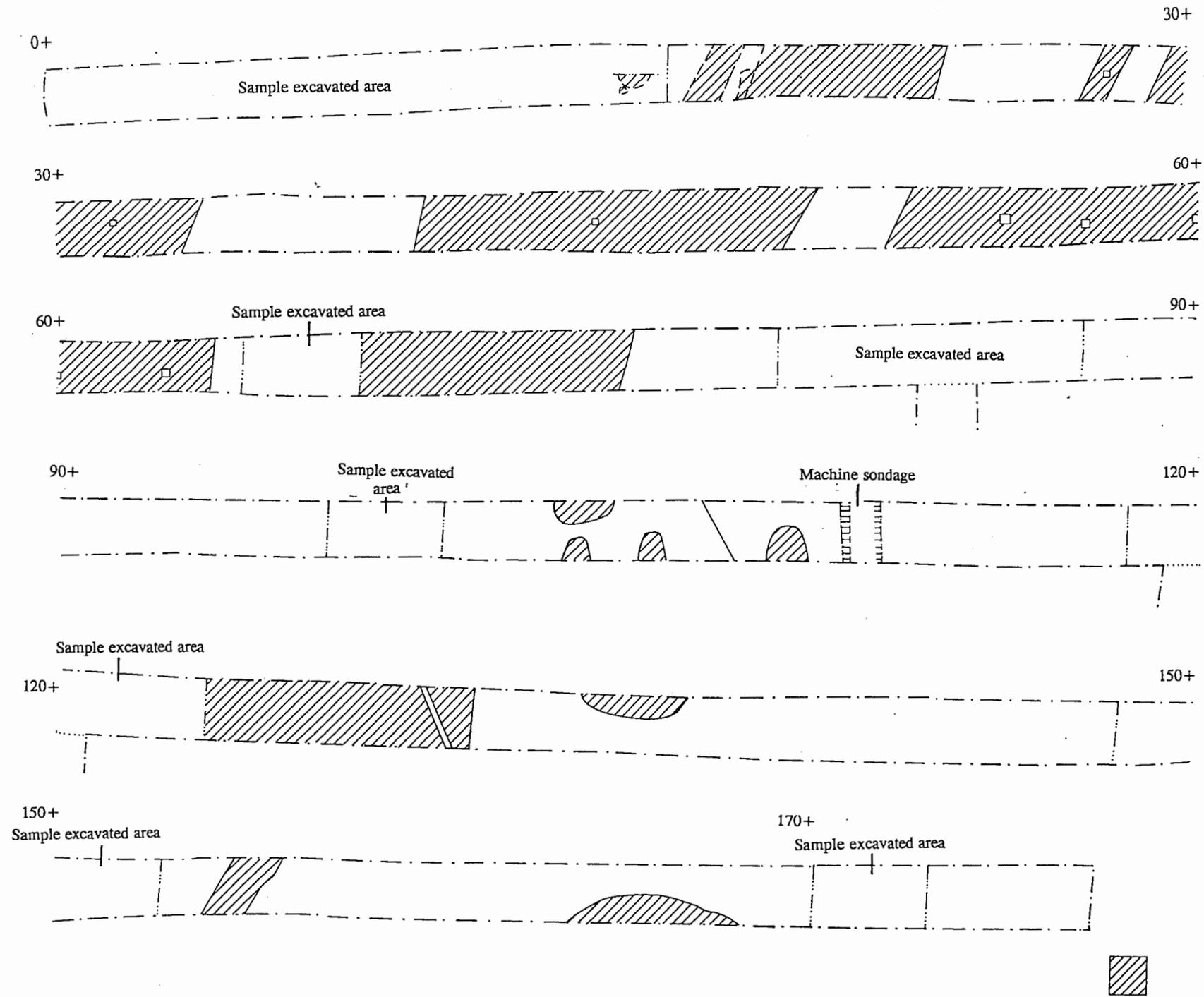
Trench 2

Trench 5

Trench 4

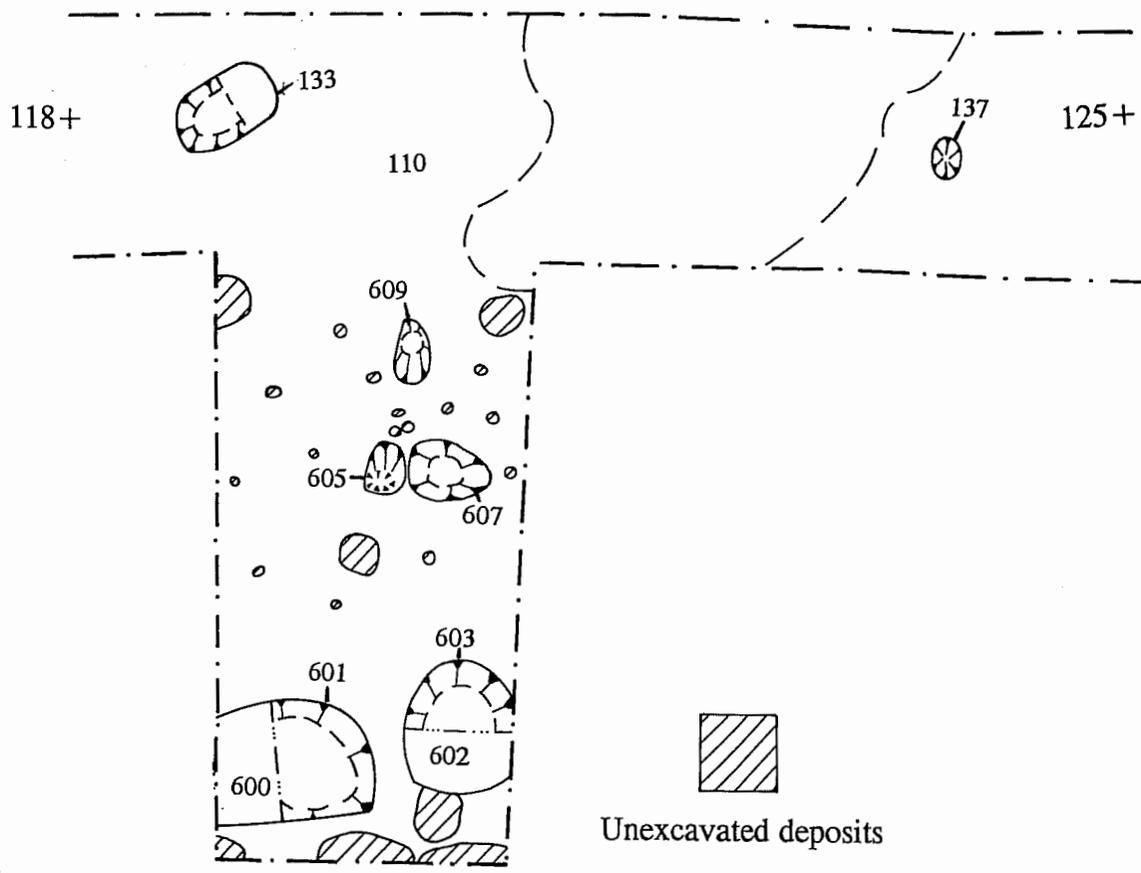
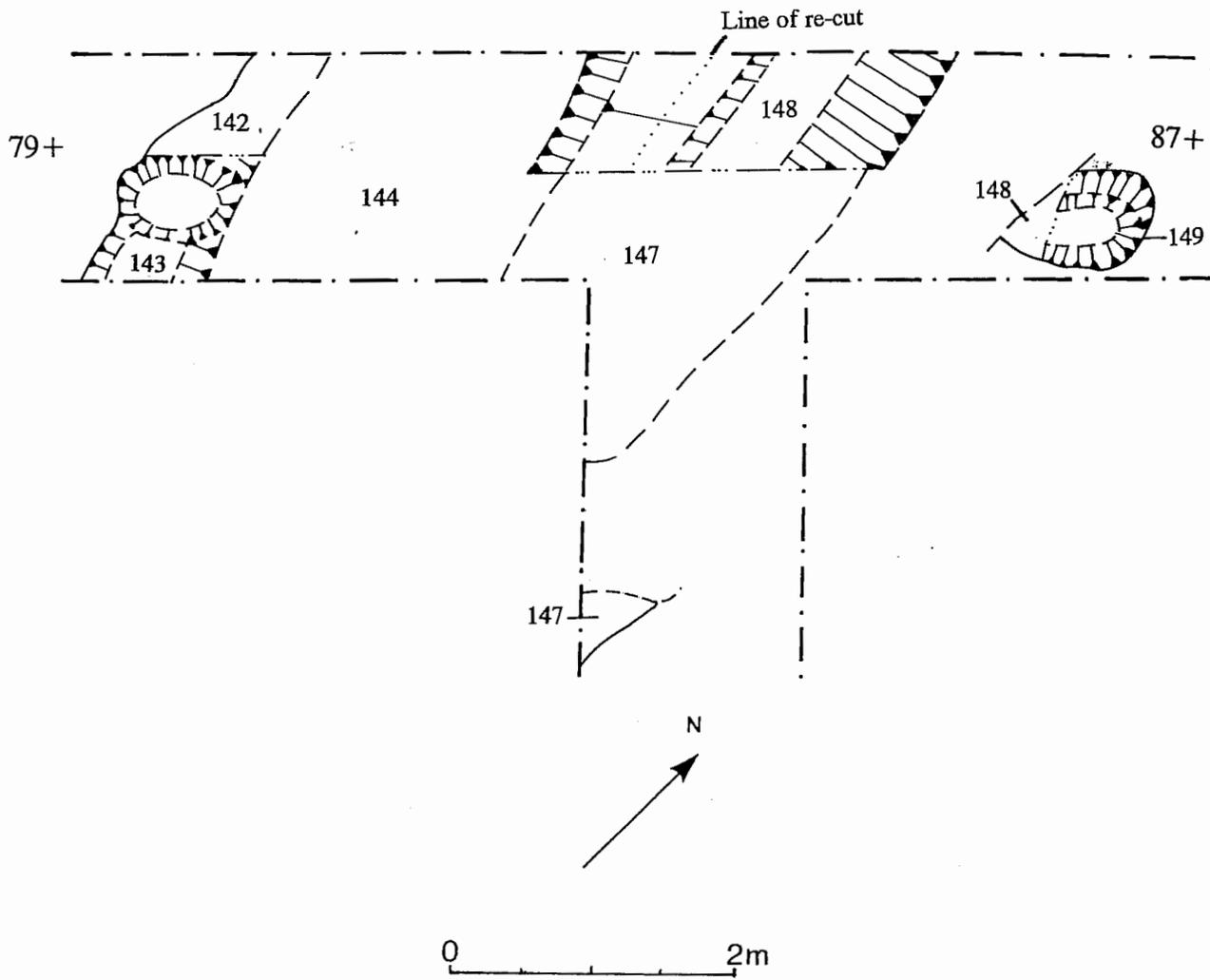
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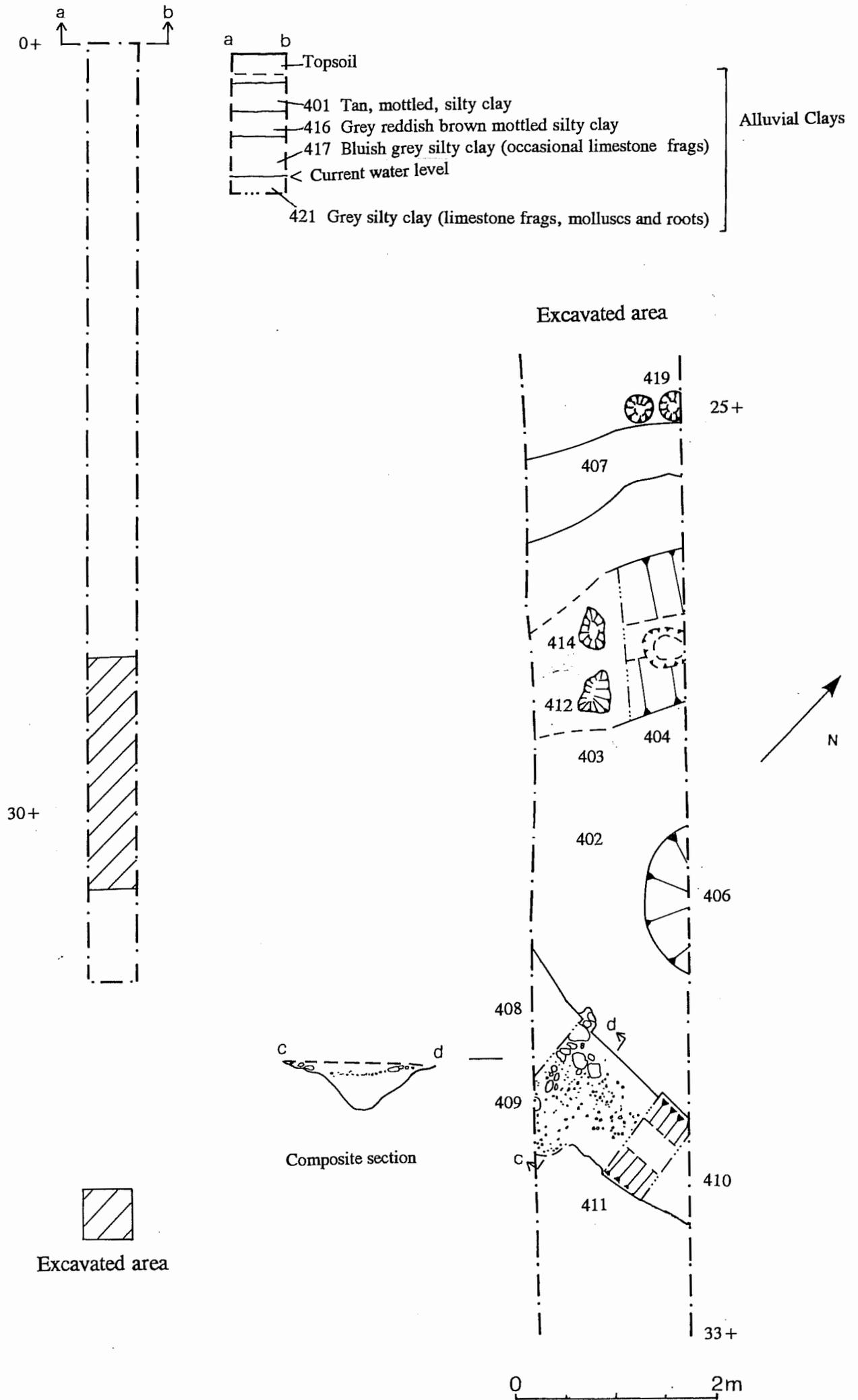


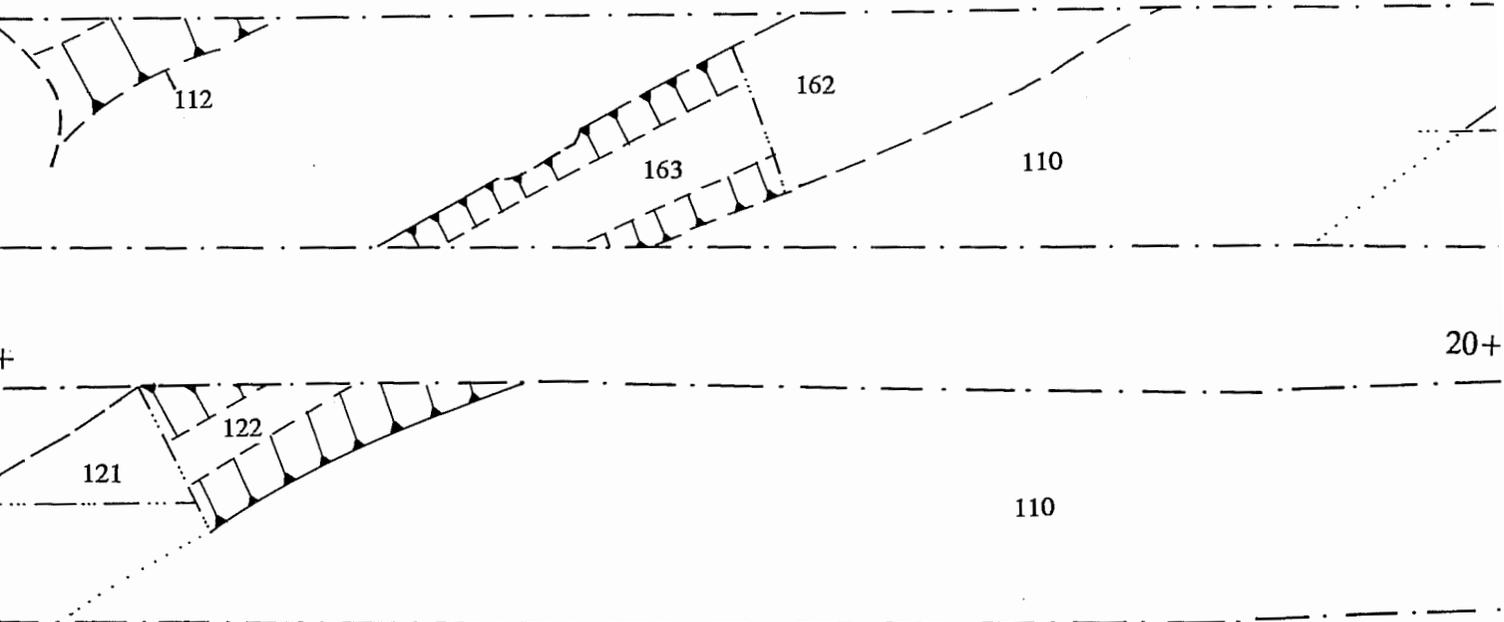


Trench 1: Location of excavated areas and unexcavated deposits

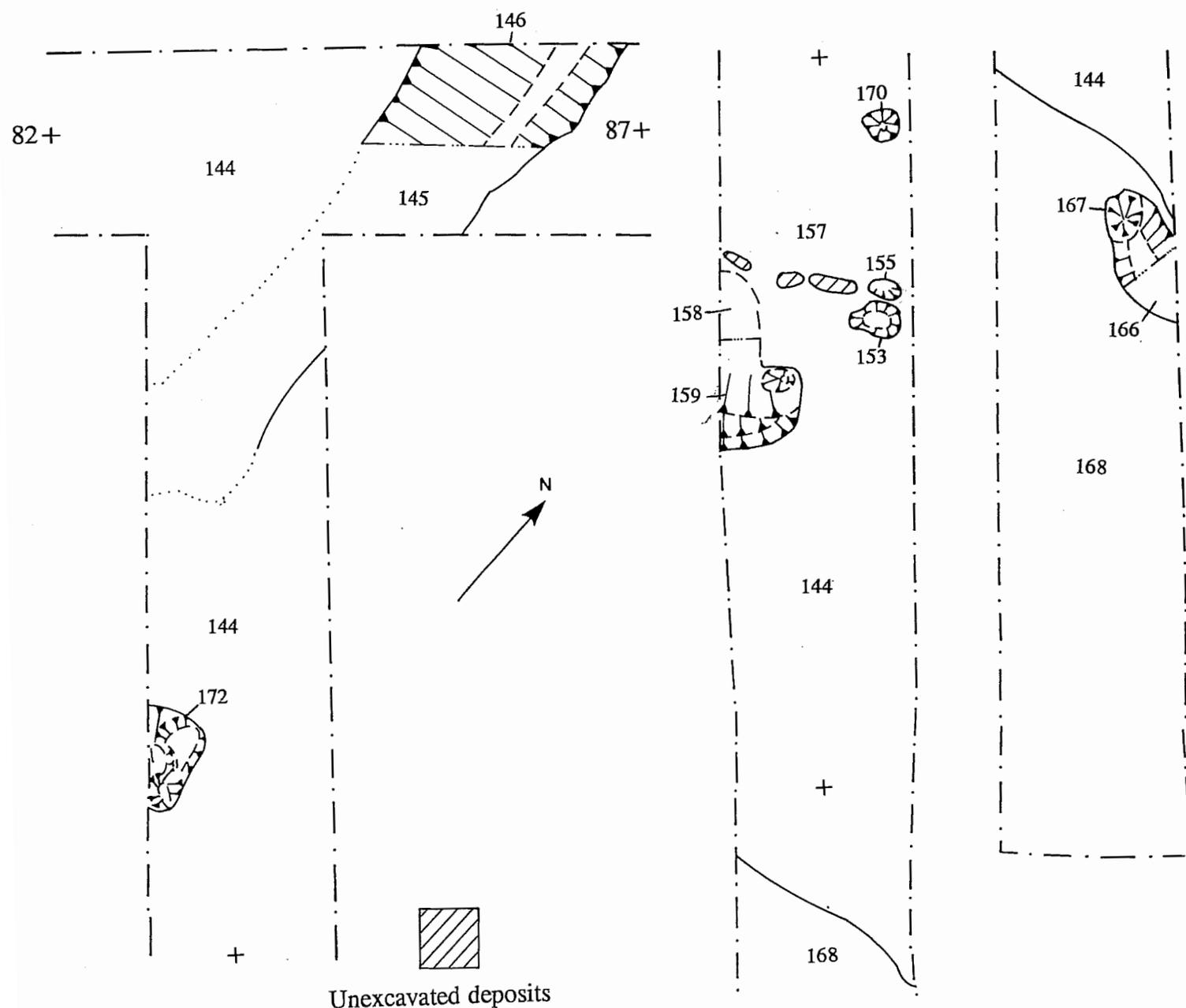
Figure 5



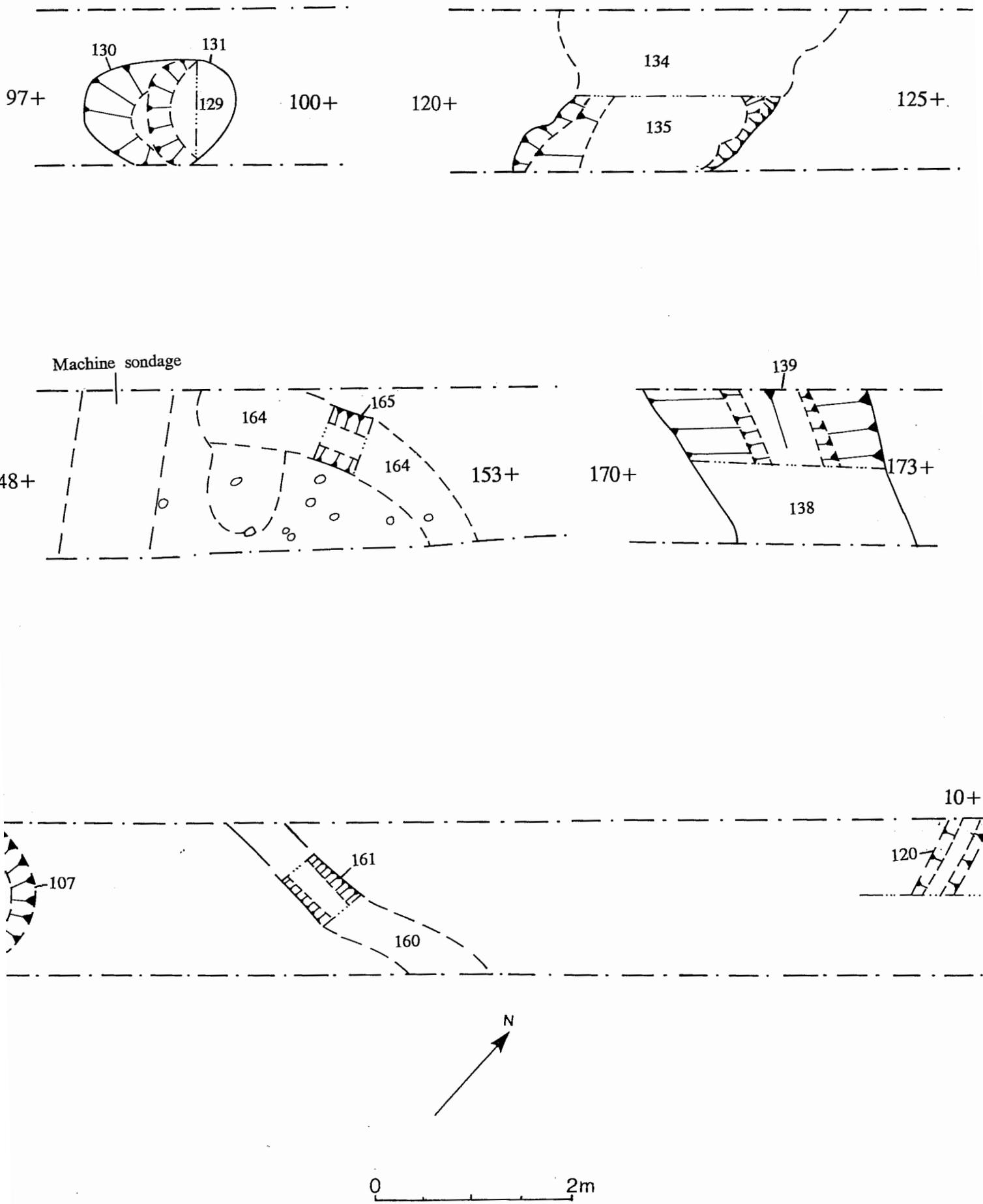


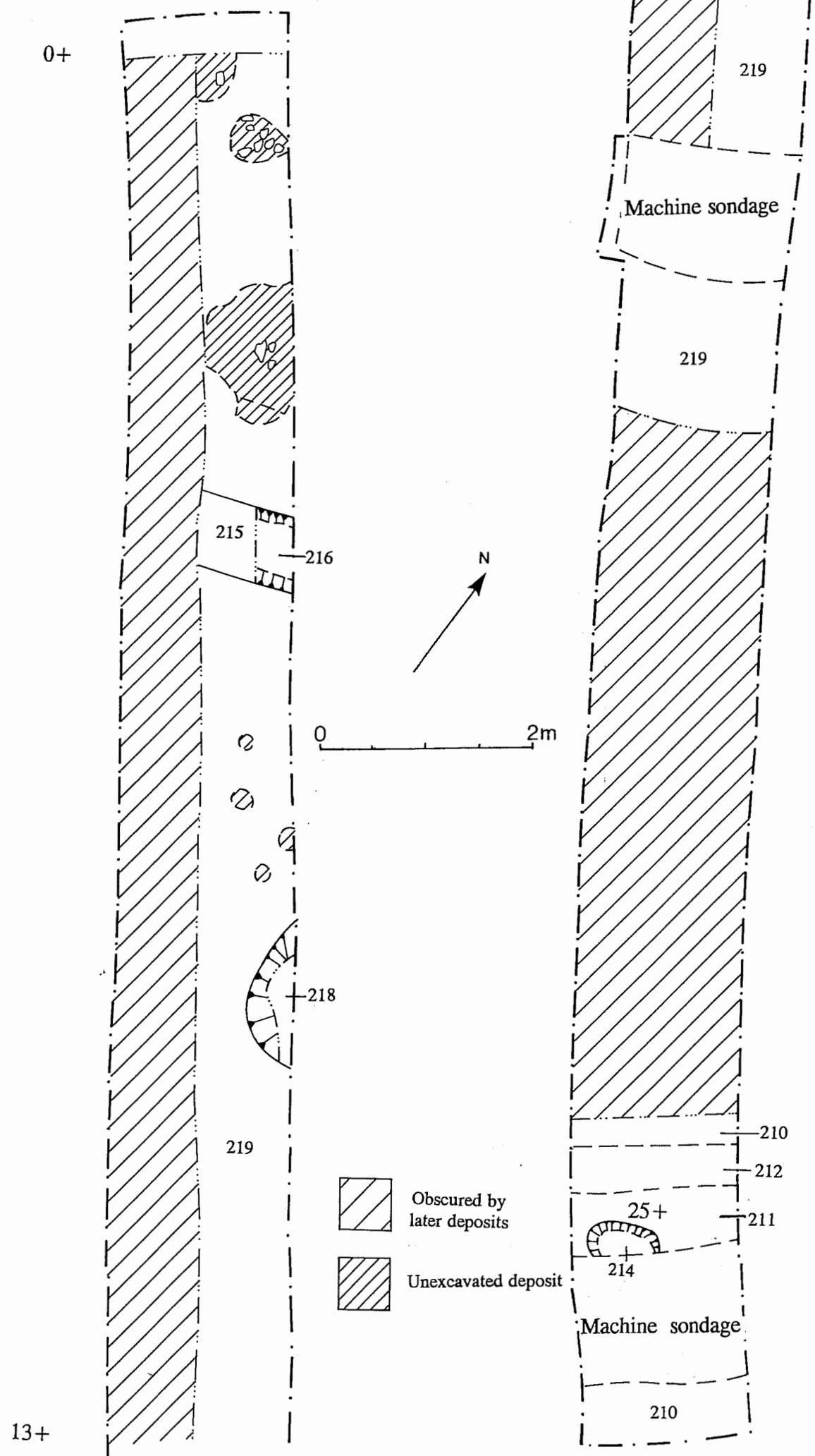


20+



Unexcavated deposits





0+

13+

219

Machine sondage

219

215

216

N

0 2m

218

219

210

212

211

25+

214

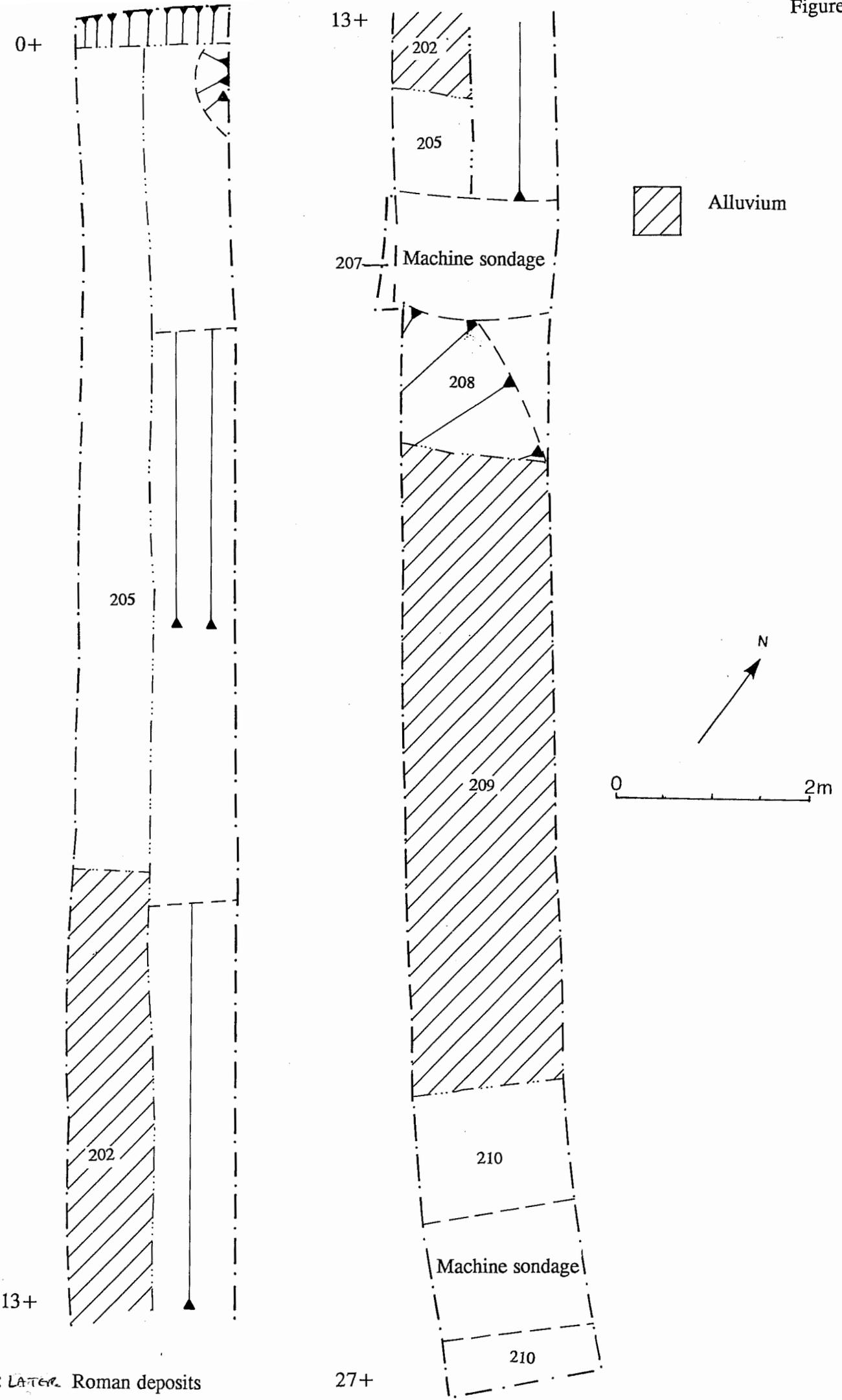
Machine sondage

210

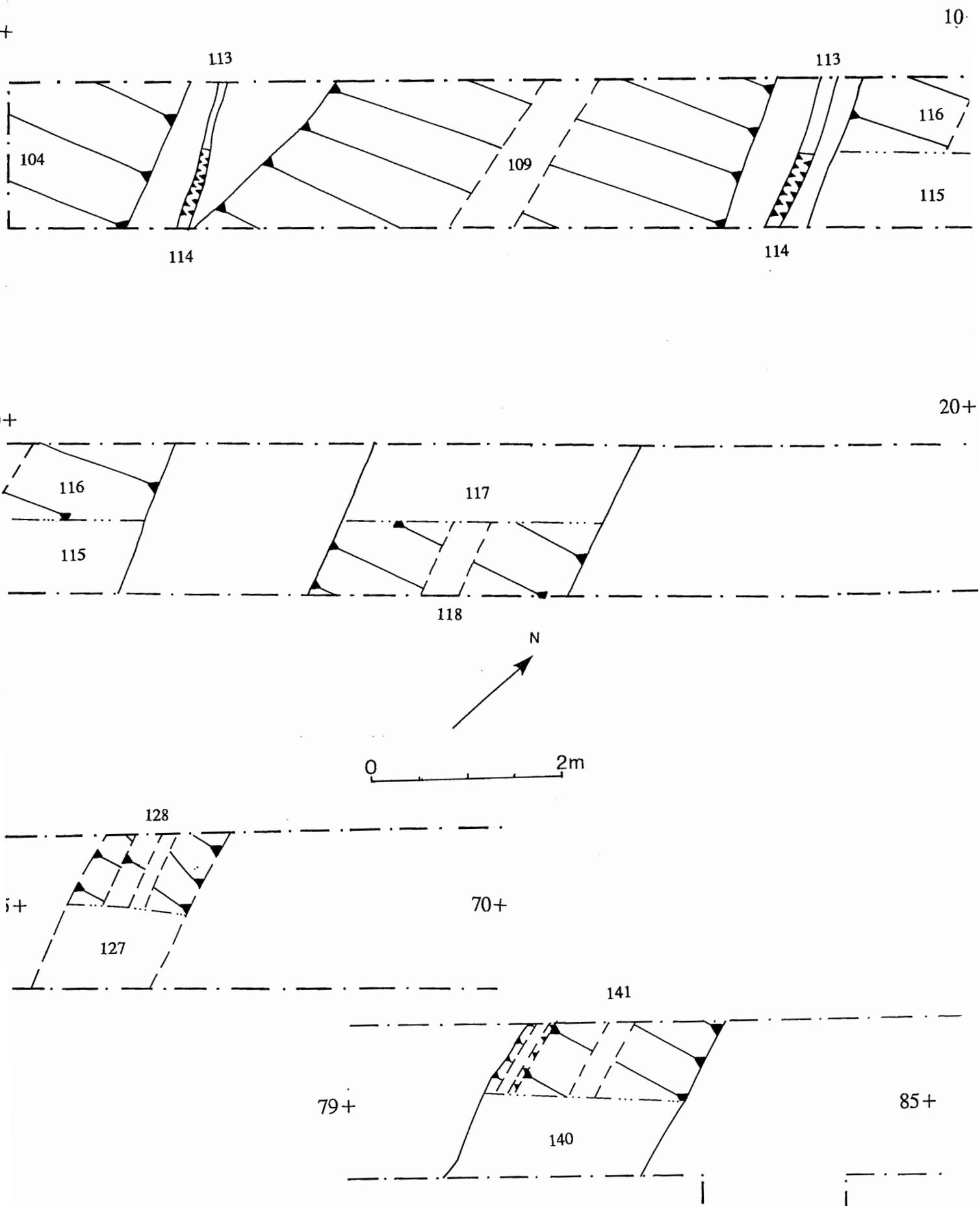
13+

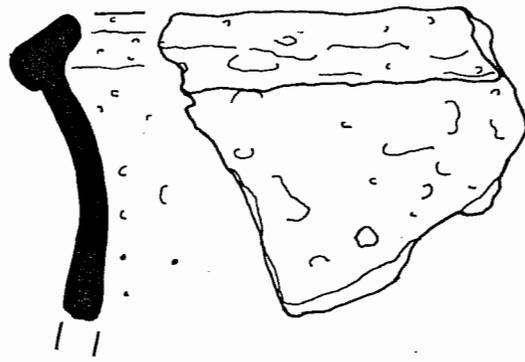
Obscured by later deposits

Unexcavated deposit



Trench 2: ~~LATER~~ Roman deposits

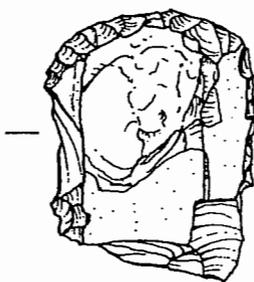




Scale 1:2

Context 149

Late Bronze Age rim sherd



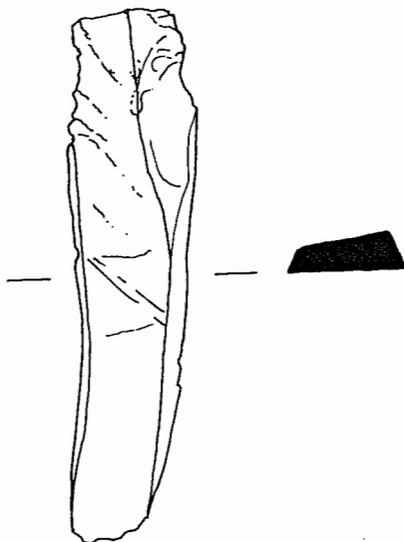
Context 100



Context 145



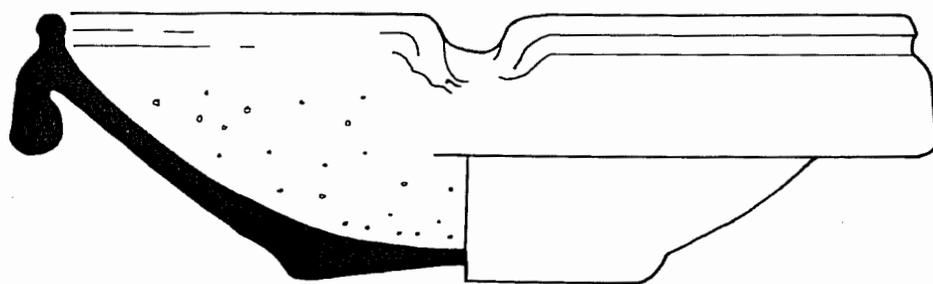
Flint scrapers



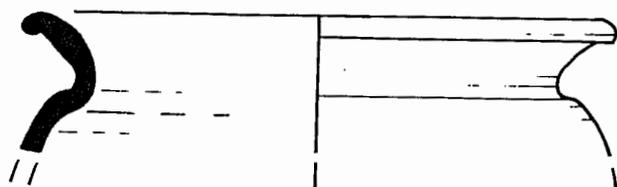
Context 127

Mesolithic flint flake

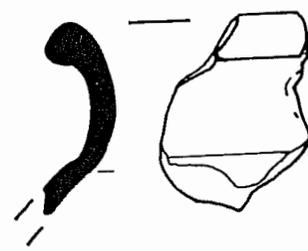
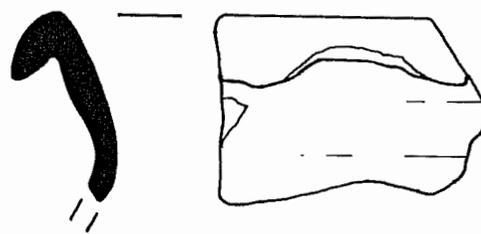
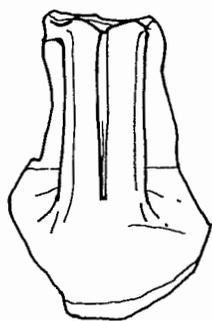
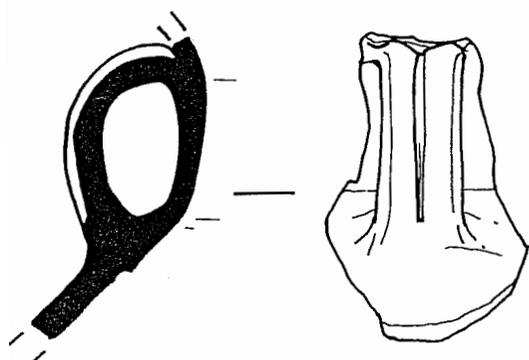
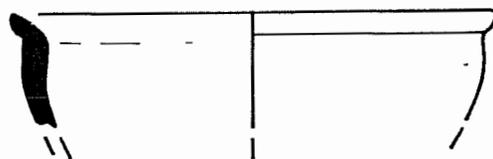
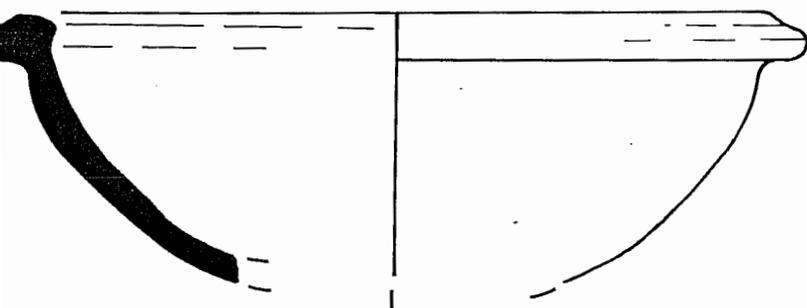
Scale 1:1



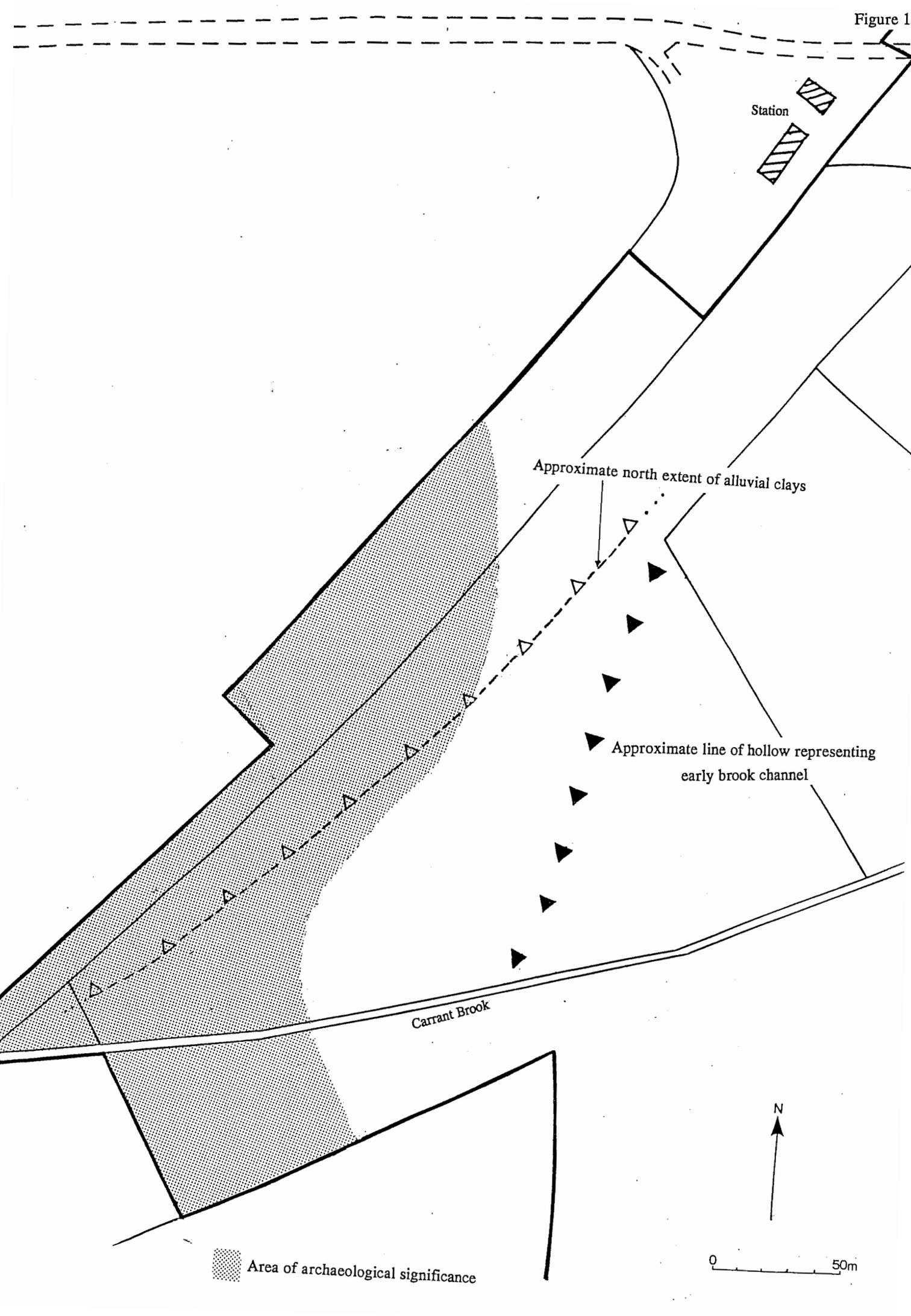
Fabric 34 Mortarium



Fabric 22 Black-burnished Ware



Fabric 12 Severn Valley Ware



Date 7.1984	Photo by JP	Civil parish Ashton Hill	NGR SP002376		Ref HW SP0037-
NMR ref s	Film ref 2582-12	SMR map SP03NW	Rec by HAW	Date 9 1990	SMR HWCM 5503 HWCM 5509 HWCM 7578 HWCM 10,117 HWCM

