

Report on an Archaeological Evaluation Excavation at Low Beck Mill, Norton.

Contents	Page No
Figure List	2
Introduction	4
Excavation Methods	6
Excavation Results: Trench 1	7
Trench 2	7
Discussion	13
Recommendations	14
Bibliography	15
Appendix 1 - Finds Catalogue	16
Appendix 2 - Context List	17
Appendix 3 - Archive Summary	18

Figure List	Page No
Figure 1 – Site Location	3
Figure 2 – Trench Location Plan	5
Figure 3 – Trench 1 Plans	8
Figure 4 – Trench 1 and 2 Sections	9
Figure 5 – Trench 2 Plans	10
Figure 6 – Trench 2 Sections	11



Figure 1.
Site Location Plan. Scale 1:25000

Introduction

This report sets out the results of an archaeological evaluation excavation conducted at the proposed development site at Low Beck Mill, Norton-on-Derwent, North Yorkshire, SE 79157095 (Fig. 1).

The site lies at the base of a west-facing gravel bluff overlooking the north-flowing Low Mill Beck, and occupies part of the valley floor of the beck. The drift geology consists of glacio-fluvial sands and gravels in Trench 1, with similar gravel and pockets of peaty silt in Trench 2. The accompanying soils are those of the coarse loamy Landbeach Association over Trench 1, with the influence of Fladbury 3 (stoneless, fine silty and loamy soils) in Trench 2 (SSEW 1983).

The site has a gentle downwards slope from c.20.5m AOD in the east, to c.19.5m AOD towards Low Mill Beck at the west.

The current land use of the site is represented by an overgrown nursery, with greenhouses and garages occupying the north of the area. Prior to this, the site existed as open farmland.

The evaluation was undertaken at the request of K W Linfoot Ltd., the site owners, who wished to pre-empt an Intensive Watching Brief to be conducted during the installation of the spinal road and sewers in Area 'F'. The Watching Brief had been put forward as a means of assessing the potential of any archaeological deposits on site, and hence to provide an indication as to the need for any future archaeological work in Area 'F', eg. archaeological area excavation, or further Watching Briefs (Lawton 1991, Campling 1993).

The site has no known archaeological targets, apart from the derelict mill buildings (Area 'B'). However, the site is situated c.100m west of Romano-British settlement and funerary activity on the top of the gravel ridge (Robinson 1978, nos. 305 and 312) and a similar distance east of other burials along Welham Road to the west (ibid. no.258).

The evaluation was conducted in March 1994, under the supervision of the writer, and with the assistance in the field of K Grieveson, who also drew the figures for this report.

All work was funded by K W Linfoot Ltd.

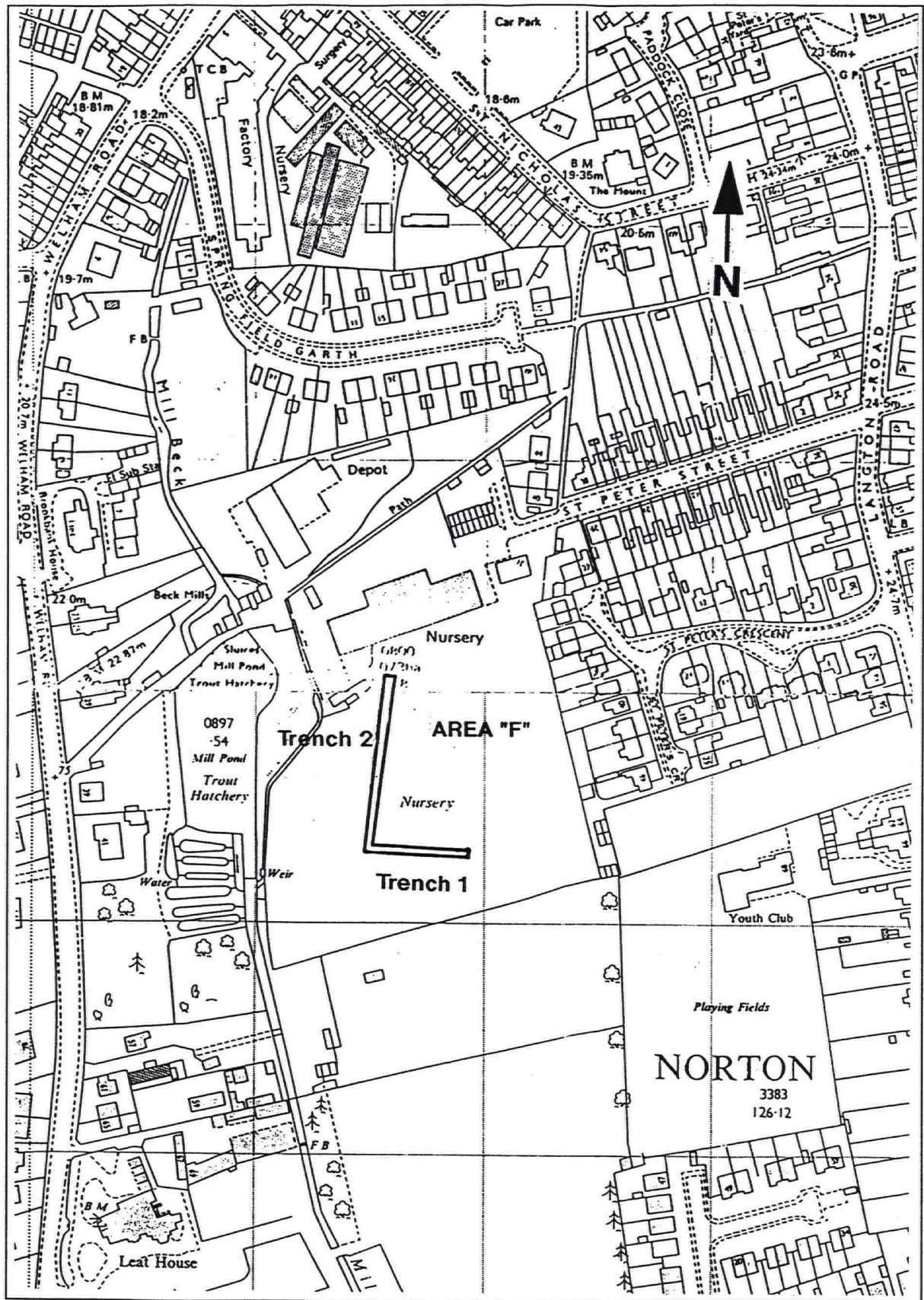


Figure 2.
Trench Location Plan. Scale 1:2500.

Excavation Methods

Two adjoining trenches were set out to coincide with an area of the planned roadways and service runs (Fig. 2). Trench 1 was also positioned to provide a transect down the gentle slope of the site, from the base of the gravel ridge to Low Mill Beck. Trench 2 examined a larger area of the valley floor. The position of the trenches was also dictated by the presence of greenhouses and garages over the northern part of Area 'F'.

Trench 1 was on an east-west alignment, 50m in length and 2m in width. Trench 2 ran northwards from the western end of Trench 1, and had a length of 80m and a width of 3.5-4m.

The modern topsoil (context 1) and 'hillwash' deposit (context 2) were removed using the rear-actor of a JCB excavator with toothless blade. The surface so revealed was then shovel-scraped, and trowelled where necessary, to clarify the form of the archaeological features. 1m wide segments were hand-excavated into the features in order to assess their character and date.

Plans and sections were drawn. A photographic record was taken in colour transparency and monochrome. A written record was maintained under the continuous context system.

Excavation Results

Trench 1

Two archaeological features were revealed, contexts 4 and 6, along with three more modern features, contexts 10, 12 and 14. Contexts 4 and 6 were on parallel ENE to WSW alignments, and cut into the natural chalk gravel.

Context 4 was the northernmost of the two archaeological features. The cut had a width of 1.5m, and the dished profile had a maximum depth of 0.18m. Context 3 was the fill, comprising a dark greyish-brown silty clay with some gravel inclusions. Context 3 contained two crumbs of samian pottery.

Context 6 was situated c.8m south of context 4, and had a width of 1.4m. The rounded-V profile gave a maximum depth of 0.38m. There were three fills, contexts 5, 7 and 8. Context 8 occupied the base of the cut, existing as a very dark grey silty clay with fine gravel inclusions. Context 7 was the intermediate fill, comprising very dark brown silty clay with some chalk gravel. Context 5 occupied the top of the cut, and comprised a gravelly, dark brown silty clay. There were no finds from these fills.

Context 5 was cut by a linear feature, **context 14**. 14 crossed the trench on an approximate north-south alignment. The fill, context 13, was unexcavated, but was isolated as a 0.85m broad deposit of moderately loose, dark yellowish brown sandy silt containing large amounts of limestone rubble.

Context 13, was cut in turn by a later field drain, **context 12**. The fill, context 11, contained a series of ceramic drain-pipes. A further modern field drain, **context 10**, was situated c.25m north of 14, on a similar ENE-WSW alignment.

Trench 2

The archaeological features in Trench 2 were represented by contexts 16, 19 and 22. Later features consisted of a probable drain cut, context 28, and two modern field drains, contexts 24 and 26.

Context 16 was cut into chalk gravel natural on a NNE-SSW alignment. This shallow feature was visible for a length of 15m, butting out before reaching context 19 at the northern end. 16 was 1.5m wide and had a maximum depth of 0.15m. The fill, context 15, was a very dark brown clay silt, which contained a small sherd of white earthenware, possibly intrusive as it was recovered from the top of the context.

The cut recorded as **context 19** was a linear feature with an east-west alignment. The width was c.2.4m and the maximum depth 0.38m. The profile was a broad-U. The upper fill, context 17, was a very dark brown, gravelly clay silt. The lower part

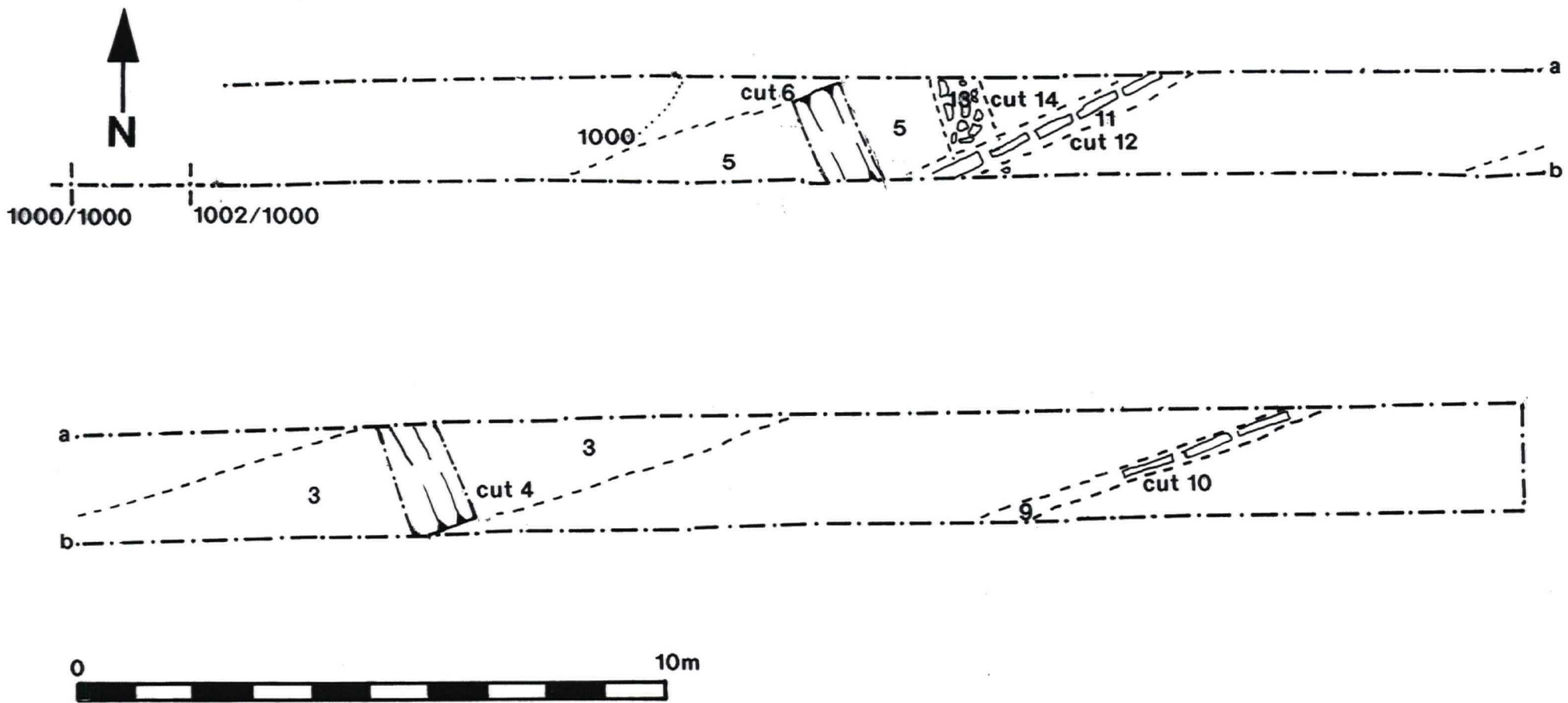


Figure 3. Trench 1 Plans.

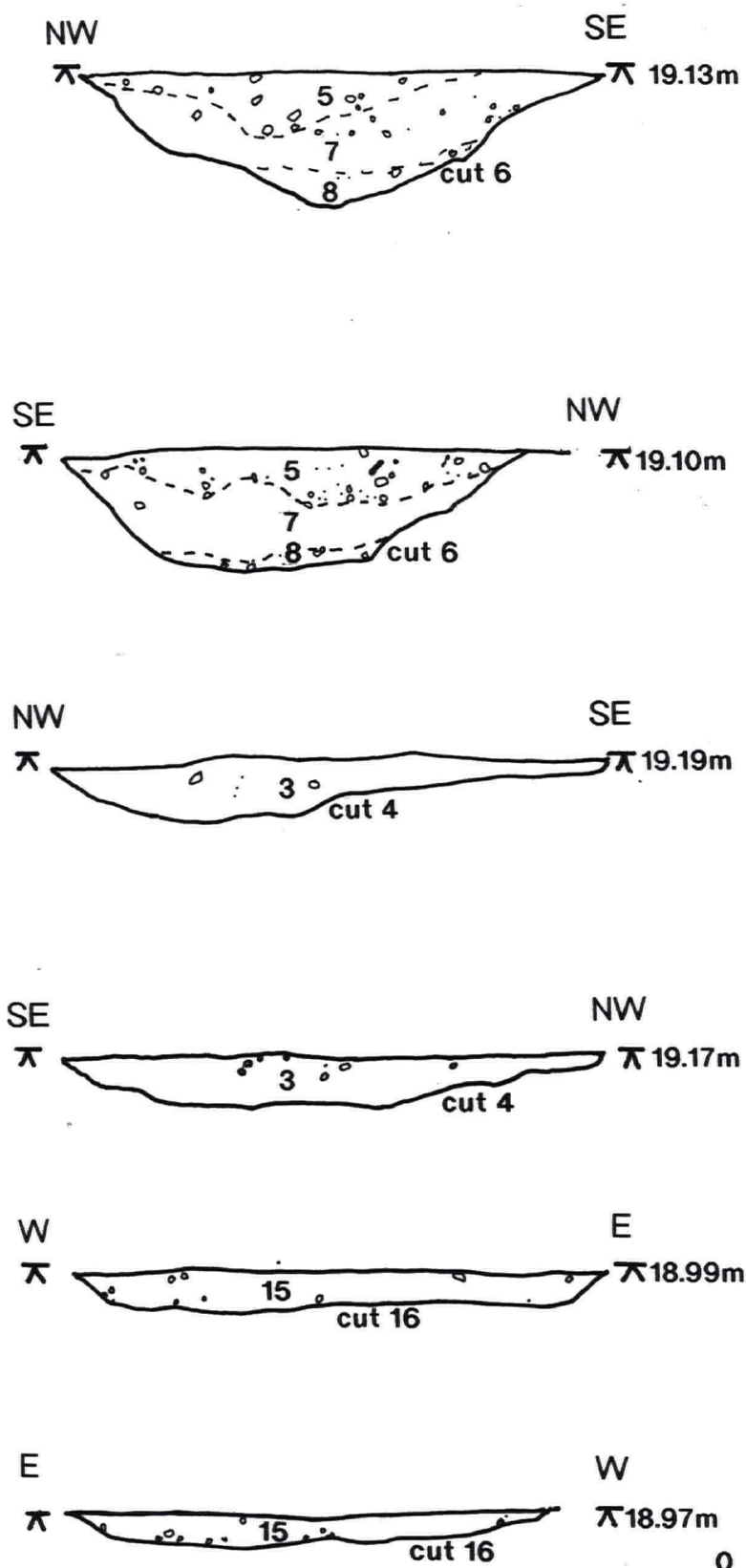


Figure 4. Trench 1 Sections.



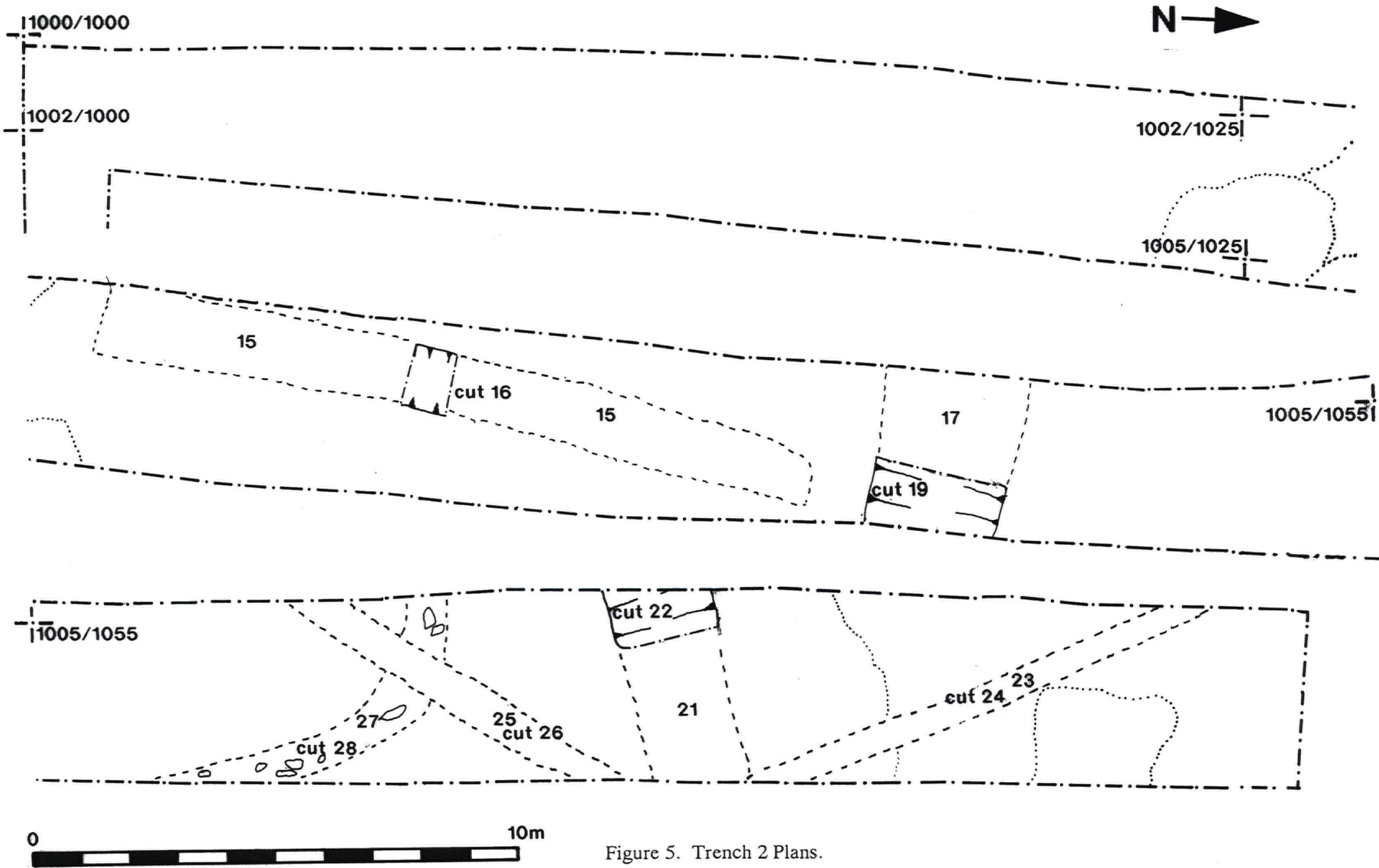


Figure 5. Trench 2 Plans.

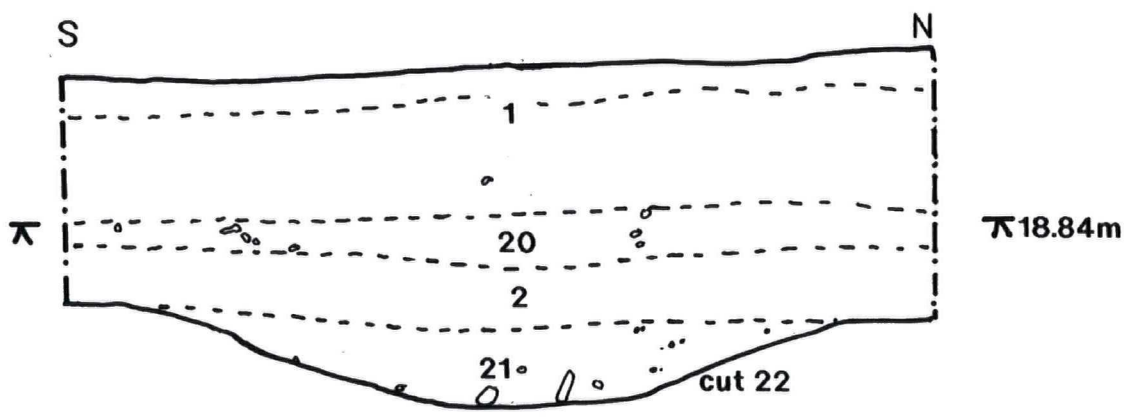
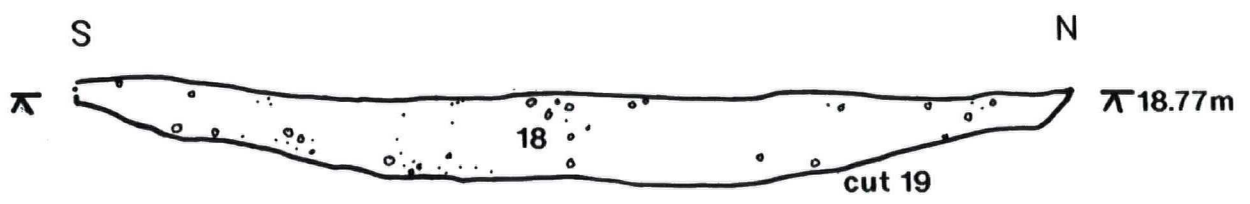
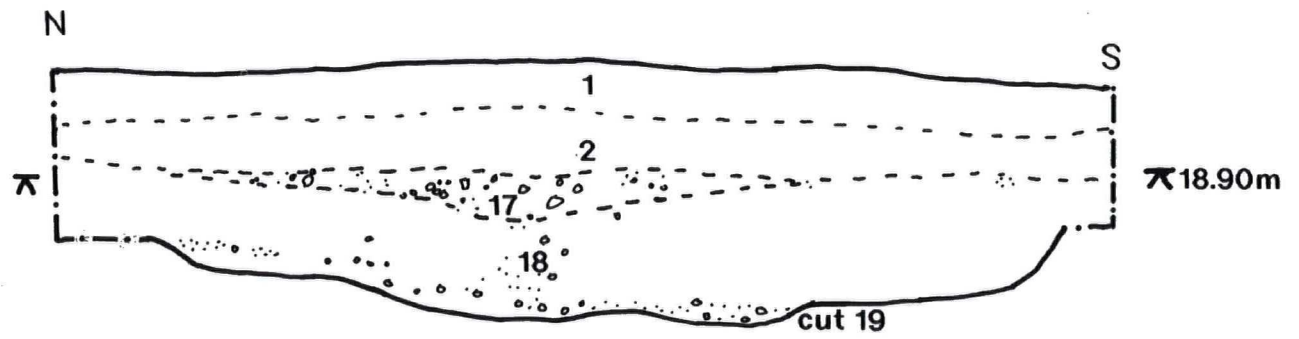


Figure 6. Trench 2 Sections.

of 19 was filled by context 18, a black silt, which contained two Romano-British Greyware sherds and animal bone fragments.

Context 22 was a cut situated c.19m north of 19, with a WSW-ENE alignment. The width was c. 2m and the maximum depth was 0.22m, with a dished profile. The fill, context 21, was a black silty clay. Inclusions consisted of chalk gravel and several pieces of limestone rubble. 21 contained animal bone fragments and two abraded Romano-British Greyware sherds.

Context 21 was cut by a recent NW-SE aligned field drain, **context 24**, which had a limestone gravel fill, context 23. A similar field drain (cut = **context 25**, fill = context 26) ran on a SW-NE alignment, c. 2m south of 24.

Context 26 cut into the fill (context 27) of a curvilinear ?drain cut, **context 28**. Context 28 would appear to be the continuation of context 14 observed in Trench 1.

Discussion

The only archaeological features present in the excavated trenches were the two parallel linear cuts in Trench 1 (contexts 4 and 6), and the three linear cuts in Trench 2 (contexts 16, 19 and 22).

Cuts 4 and 6 would appear to represent medieval ridge and furrow. To support this, the two features share the same alignment as ridge and furrow surviving as earthworks in the field immediately to the south of the site. In addition, similar features were found on the east bank of Low Mill Beck during an excavation at Springfield Garth, c. 150m north of the site (Stephens 1991). The greater depth of the northernmost feature in Trench 2 (context 6) could indicate that it formed a boundary to an area of ridge and furrow, for similar features on the same alignment (ie. shallow parallel linears) were not present north of its position in either trench.

The north-south cut in Trench 2 (context 16), was of similar form to the two presumed medieval furrows in Trench 1. However, as it was the only archaeological feature located by the evaluation to have a north-south alignment, it is not possible to ascribe it to a system of ridge and furrow. The lack of a relationship with cut 17 to the north also hampered 16's interpretation.

The two east-west linears in Trench 2, cuts 19 and 22, although of similar form to each other, were not precisely parallel. Obviously, the abraded Romano-British sherds from their fills means that the features are either Roman or later in date. The abrasion of the sherds suggests that they were deposited during cultivation, perhaps through manuring. The low number of sherds recovered further suggests that intensive Roman or medieval activity is not present in the vicinity. The relatively shallow depth of the features makes it possible that they have been truncated during later (?medieval) agricultural activity.

To summarise, the evaluation revealed a small number of linear features, those occurring in Trench 2 perhaps of Roman origin, and those in Trench 1 being of probable medieval date. Modern and recent field drains were also located. A general paucity of occupation material suggests a lack of settlement in the immediate vicinity of the trenches, and thus for Area 'F' as a whole. The archaeological features would appear to be of agricultural origin, with medieval ridge and furrow echoing a possible earlier Roman use of the area.

Recommendations

The archaeological evaluation excavation gave the opportunity to examine a large part of the area to be affected by the roads and sewers, and the development as a whole at Low Beck Mill, under controlled archaeological conditions and without placing any constraints in terms of delays to the developer and contractors.

The excavated trenches gave a transect of the gentle east-west slope existing on the site, and allowed the examination of an area of valley floor. Therefore, the trenches illustrated the archaeological potential of both topographical elements of the site.

The low grade of archaeological deposits revealed does not call for the examination of larger areas of Area 'F' by open area archaeological excavation, nor does it support the requirement for an intensive Watching Brief over the same area. Indeed, it is arguable whether further archaeological work is required over Area 'F'. It is unlikely that additional information regarding the form and alignment of the two possible Romano-British features (contexts 19 and 22) would be recovered during an Intensive Watching Brief on the installation of the roads and sewers. In addition, it is known that a considerable amount of earth movement has occurred over Area 'F', evidenced by the large spoil heaps on site; this may have affected archaeological remains in the area. However, if more archaeological fieldwork is required over Area 'F' it is suggested that a monitoring form of Watching Brief be conducted, whereby a professional archaeologist be given the opportunity to inspect groundworks on an ad hoc basis in order to record additional details of any archaeological features where necessary.

Recommendations for two other archaeologically sensitive areas, the site of the former mill (Area 'B') and the new access route in the vicinity of 41 Welham Road remain outstanding.

It is recommended that a number of trial trenches be excavated at the site of the former mill (Area 'B') when the design of the reconstructed building is formulated, and the extent of associated ground disturbances becomes known. The trial trenches should provide evidence for the date and survival of archaeological remains of the former mill (or mills), and ascertain whether waterlogged deposits exist, so that the future treatment of any such deposits can be considered either before or during the mill's reconstruction (respectively, more archaeological excavation or a Watching Brief).

It is further recommended that the new access in the vicinity of the present 41 Welham Road be the subject of a Watching Brief, whereby topsoil is stripped from the area of the road bed under controlled conditions, and any archaeological features and deposits properly recorded. The construction of the proposed house immediately to the north of the new access should also be the subject of a Watching Brief.

M R Stephens, MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd.

Bibliography

Campling N, 1993: *Lakeside Village. Schedule of Archaeological Works*. NYCC.

Lawton I, 1991: *Historical and Archaeological Evaluation of the site of Low Beck Mills, Norton, East Yorkshire*. York Survey and Research.

Robinson J A, 1978: *The Archaeology of Malton and Norton*.

SSEW, 1983: *Soils of England and Wales; Sheet 1, Northern England*. Soil Survey of England and Wales.

Stephens M R, 1991: *Excavations at Springfield Garth, Norton, North Yorkshire, January 1991*.

Appendix 1 - Finds Catalogue

Pottery

Context	Description	Wt.(kg)
3	2 crumbs of samian ware	-
15	1 body sherd modern white earthenware	-
18	1 base sherd Romano-British Greyware (abraded) 1 rim sherd Romano-British Greyware jar (abraded)	- -
21	2 body sherds of Romano-British Greyware (abraded)	-

Animal Bone

Context	Description	Wt. (kg.)
15	1 long bone frag.	0.05
18	4 frags.	0.21
21	18 frags. incl. 2 ox teeth	1.75

Appendix 2 – Context List

Context No	Trench	Description
1	1/2	Topsoil; 10 YR 3/2 silty clay
2	1/2	'Hillwash'; 10 YR 4/3 silty clay
3	1	Fill of 4; 10 YR 4/2 silty clay
4	1	Cut; ?medieval furrow
5	1	Fill of 6; 10YR 3/3 gravelly silty clay
6	1	Cut; ?medieval furrow
7	1	Fill of 6; 10 YR 3/2 silty clay
8	1	Fill of 6; 10 YR 3/1 silty clay
9	1	Fill of 10; 10 YR 3/2 silty clay
10	1	Cut of modern field drain
11	1	Fill of 12; 10 YR 3/2 silty clay
12	1	Cut of modern field drain
13	1	Fill of 14; 10 YR 4/6 sandy silt
14	1	Cut of modern ?drain
15	2	Fill of 16; 10 YR 2/2 clay silt
16	2	Linear cut
17	2	Fill of 19; 10 YR 2/2 clay silt
18	2	Fill of 19; 10 YR 2/1 silt
19	2	Linear cut
20	2	Layer/deposit; 10 YR 3/2 silty clay
21	2	Fill of 22; 10 YR 2/1 silty clay
22	2	Linear cut
23	2	Fill of 24; lst. gravel
24	2	Cut of modern field drain
25	2	Fill of 26; lst. gravel
26	2	Cut of modern field drain
27	2	Fill of 28; 10 YR 4/6 sandy silt
28	2	Cut of modern ?drain

Appendix 3 – Archive Summary

28 context sheets, completed and checked for consistency.

2 plans at 1:100 scale (1 A2 permatrace sheet).

9 sections at 1:10 scale (2 A4 permatrace sheets).

1 A3 plan with survey data.

1 A4 permatrace sheet with levelling calculations.

14 monochrome and 2 colour prints and negatives; 14 colour transparencies.

Washed, sorted, marked and bagged finds.