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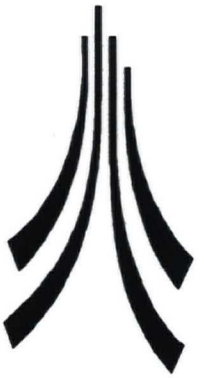

January 1997

OLD COAL YARD
CATTERICK
NORTH YORKSHIRE

Report on Archaeological Evaluation

Commissioned and funded by:

Harron Homes

Old Coal Yard
Catterick
North Yorkshire

Report on Archaeological Evaluation

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The work was undertaken by Jo Bell and James Wright, the site director, who wrote the report. Dick Danks prepared the illustrations and the finds report was written by Chris Howard-Davis. The project was managed, and the report edited, by David Cranstone.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 1996, Lancaster University Archaeological Unit performed a field evaluation on the site of Richardson's Coal Depot, Leeming Lane, Catterick, North Yorkshire (SE 241 974), in advance of a proposed development. No archaeological features were previously known from the site itself, but the surrounding area contains archaeological sites of Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon dates.

Six trenches were excavated, in a pattern designed to test all parts of the development area. Of these, only Trenches 1 and 2, in the north-east part of the area, revealed archaeological features. The features in Trench 1 consisted of gullies and postholes, while the features in Trench 2 consisted of a wide shallow scoop, areas of cobbling, and areas of laid stone that may have formed wall-plates or post-pads. An assemblage of animal bone was recovered, but there were no dateable artifacts.

Recommendations for mitigation are made.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 In December 1996, Harron Homes applied for planning permission to redevelop Richardson's coal depot, Leeming Lane, to the south of Catterick village (Fig. 1), and because of the proximity of Dere Street Roman road, a Roman villa with its field system and an associated cemetery, and the presence to the south of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery, the Heritage Unit of North Yorkshire County Council requested that an evaluation by trial trenching should be carried out in order to assess the archaeological impact of the proposed building works. Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU) prepared a project design, which was accepted, and fieldwork was undertaken on 16th and 17th December 1996. Six trenches were mechanically excavated, three in a field to the north of the former yard and three through the tarmac surface of the yard (Fig. 2).

1.2 Location and geology

1.2.1 The area investigated lay west of Leeming Lane and north of Per Ardua Way (NGR SE 241 974) at a height of 55m OD. It was approximately rectangular in shape, measuring *c*100m by *c*50m, and was surrounded by residential buildings. The southern part of the plot was covered by tarmac and contained concrete buildings, and the northern part was under grass. The ground was flat, apart from a modern bank topped with a line of conifers which divided the two portions.

1.2.2 The solid geology of the area is mapped as Carboniferous Millstone Grit and Permian Magnesian Limestone, overlain by the thick glacial drift of the Vale of Mowbray. This in turn is overlain by the late- and post-glacial gravel terraces of the river Swale, which formed the natural surface of the site, consisting of mixed sands and gravels. The soils are mapped as Wick 1 Series, typical brown earths (Jarvis *et al.* 1984, end map).

1.3 Historical background

1.3.1 The gravel terraces of the Vale of Mowbray retain extensive and important ritual monuments from the Neolithic and Bronze Ages (including a 35m diameter cairn at Catterick Racecourse), and widespread Iron Age domestic and agricultural settlement (Moloney 1996, 128-132). In the Roman period, the main north-south road (Dere Street) crossed the Swale at Catterick, where there was a fort, town, and amphitheatre. This road passes *c* 150m west-south-west of the site, and a Roman villa and field system are known in this area (Project Brief). Recent work immediately to the south has produced evidence of third century AD refuse dumping (York Archaeological Trust n.d.). The area has also produced considerable evidence of early Saxon settlement, including

cemeteries at Catterick Racecourse (Moloney 1996, 130-131) and to the south of the present site (Project Brief). At some period, the main road line changed from that of Dere Street to that of Leeming Lane (to the east of the site), passing through the Medieval and modern village of Catterick.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Overburden was removed, under supervision, in six trenches using a machine fitted with a toothless bucket. Tarmac and hardcore in Trenches 4, 5, and 6 were removed utilising a narrow bucket which was then replaced by a 1.7m wide bucket to remove further overburden to archaeological levels. The overburden was stored by the sides of the trenches. The trenches were manually cleaned and inspected for archaeological remains. A written, photographic, and drawn record was maintained of potential archaeological strata, and soil samples were taken where palaeo-environmental preservation was suspected. The recording methods employed by LUAU accord with those recommended by the Central Archaeology Service (CAS) of English Heritage. Recording was in the form of *pro forma* Trench Sheets for each trench, which recorded the orientation, length, and depth of machining, and described the nature of the topsoil, subsoil (where applicable), and geological deposits. Where potential features were observed they were manually sampled, and a full textual, drawn, and photographic record was maintained. Any finds recovered were bagged and recorded by either the trench number or, where appropriate, by the number of the context from which they were recovered.

2.2 Archive

2.2.1 A full archive has been produced to a professional standard in accordance with the current English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). The archive will be deposited with an agreed MGC-approved museum. The present report represents a summary of the archive; the trench descriptions are based on site context sheets and only relevant site drawings have been reproduced in this report. A contents list of the project archive is presented as **Appendix 1**.

2.3 Health and Safety

2.3.1 Both Lancaster University and LUAU maintain Safety Policies, the latter based on the SCAUM (Standing Conference of Unit Managers) *Health and Safety Manual* (1991). In keeping with current Health and Safety at Work Regulations, prior to commencing on-site work, a risk assessment for each activity was completed. Due regard was given to all Health and Safety considerations during all aspects of the project, with service information provided by the client. However, it is LUAU standard practice to scan the positions of all trenches for underground cables using a U-scan meter.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Trench 1

3.1.1 This trench was 11.80m long and 1.65m wide. Topsoil and subsoil were removed to a maximum depth of 0.55m exposing the terrace deposits of pale yellow fine sandy clay with patches of gravel and areas of brown sandy clay. Animal bone was recovered after machining, and although it was unstratified much of it was from the base of the subsoil, and *c*0.5m below the ground surface. In the north end of the trench a cluster of features, comprising two postholes and two gullies, was observed.

3.1.2 The gullies were adjacent and parallel, and although they overlapped it was not possible to establish a clear stratigraphic relationship between them. However, the similarity of profiles and positions may suggest their broad contemporaneity. Both ran in a north-west to south-east direction, and were intersected at *c*45° by the trench. A 0.75m long segment was excavated through both these features.

3.1.3 Gully [4], the northern of the two, could be seen for a length of 1.60m, a width of 0.40m, and a depth of 0.15m. It had a shallow U-shaped profile, with a clear break of slope on the northern side. Its fill [8] was a dark brown sandy silt loam containing occasional medium stones, and produced badly decayed fragments of bone. The relationship to posthole [5] was unclear; the posthole was identified at the base of the gully, but a patch of darker fill had been noted at this location, suggesting that the gully had been infilled before the post had rotted. This evidence also supports interpretation of both features as being part of a structure of post-in-trench construction.

3.1.4 Posthole [5] was oval-shaped and measured 0.35m by 0.40m; it was located in the base of gully [4]. Its base had been dug into a patch of brown fine sandy clay, which caused difficulties in defining its depth; it was excavated to a depth of 0.40m below the level of machining, and fragments of animal bone were recovered at a depth of 0.30m to 0.35m. The sides were nearly vertical and the base sloped slightly to the north. The fill [10] was a dark brown sandy silt loam which contained fragments of charcoal.

3.1.5 Gully [6] was 1.70m long, had a maximum width of 0.50m, and a depth of 0.23m. It was similar to gully [4] but was slightly larger, and had been dug through an area containing much gravel making more easy the identification of its limits. The only fill [9] was a dark brown sandy silt loam. It cut the fill of posthole [5], but its relationship to gully [4] was unclear.

3.1.6 Posthole [7] was circular with a diameter of *c*0.45m and a depth of 0.18m. It had a bowl-shaped profile, and its fill [11] was a dark brown sandy silt loam which contained fragments of charcoal and decayed bone. This posthole could be seen in the exposed section (fig. 3) to have cut the fill of posthole [5].

3.2 Trench 2

3.2.1 This trench was excavated for a length of 12.05m and a width of 1.8m. Topsoil and subsoil (a maximum depth of 0.65m) were mechanically removed, exposing geological deposits of silty clay loam the colour of which was pale yellow, with large pale brown patches, and which contained frequent large rounded stones. The presence of a number of stones, which were thought to be of archaeological origin, meant that in the south-western end of the trench less overburden was removed by machine, and to interpret this scatter of stones two sections at a right-angle to each other were excavated to the surface of natural gravel (Fig. 3).

3.2.2 In the south-western end of the trench was a scoop [1] which was exposed for the 1.80m width of the trench. This scoop had a shallow U-shaped profile, varied between 1.27m and 1.75m in width, and was 0.19m deep. Seen in plan it was curved, and concave to the west. The lower of the two fills [2], a brown silty loam, lined the base of the cut and contained a high proportion of charcoal fragments up to 15mm long. This fill had the appearance of being deposited soon after the scoop was abandoned. The fill above [3] was a brown silty loam with many rounded stones, and although it contained no charcoal much animal bone was recovered from it.

3.2.3 An intermittent area of cobbling [13] was exposed in both segments. It comprised medium-sized rounded stones pressed into the geological deposits, and it was only the thickness of one stone.

3.2.4 In the eastern section was a possible post-pad [15] formed by three flat stones set horizontally into the ground surface. This post-pad was not fully exposed, lying beyond the southern limit of the segment, but it was at least 0.30m by 0.44m in size.

3.2.5 The possible post-pad and cobbling were sealed by a scatter of large, mostly flat stones [12] which extended over an area measuring 2.80m by 1.23m. Some of the stones were pitched as if they had been stacked one on top of the other, and had then fallen over. The maximum thickness of this layer was 0.16m, the depth of three stones; it is therefore unlikely to have represented a stone wall but may have been a dwarf wall, receiving a wall-plate, wattle, or cob wall.

3.2.6 Approximately 1.5m south-west of post-pad [15] was an area of large rounded stones [16] possibly utilised for cobbling. This feature lay close to the edge of the trench, and could not be fully defined.

3.2.7 The stone features were embedded in a brown silty loam [14] which produced fragments of animal bone. This material merged laterally and upwards into the subsoil, the upper part of which sealed all the archaeological features.

3.3 Trenches 3 to 6

3.3.1 The four other trenches contained no cut features, and therefore only the dimensions, orientation, and depth of machining are briefly given below.

3.3.2 **Trench 3** was aligned north to south, and was 11.90m long and 1.70m wide. The topsoil was a 0.25m deep, dark brown, fine sandy loam whilst the subsoil was a pale brown silty clay loam. Geological deposits of pale yellow very fine sandy clay loam, containing many stony patches, were established at a depth of 0.56m. The fairly stony nature of these deposits meant that some darker areas in the trench had to be further investigated, but cleaning revealed that these dark patches were slight pockets of the subsoil.

3.3.3 **Trench 4** ran from north-west to south-east, and was close to the hedge dividing the area under investigation. It was 11.80m long, 1.50m wide, and a maximum of 0.55m deep. Tarmac and hard-core of 0.27m depth overlay a brown fine sandy loam relict topsoil of 0.27m depth. Below this were the geological deposits of pale yellow silty clay loam with gravel patches. In the northern end of the trench was a very disturbed material, probably the back-fill of a recently laid pipe or drain.

3.3.4 **Trench 5** was located in the south-western corner of the site. The presence of a drainage gully, and the difficulty of excavating through the tarmac, compelled a change from the project design, and the trench was aligned almost north to south. It was 9.90m long, 1.90m wide, and 0.73m deep. Tarmac and hard-core of 0.27m depth overlay a 0.30m deep, brown, sandy clay loam relict topsoil, and the geological deposit was a gravel comprising rounded large cobbles. Approximately in the centre of the trench, and intersected by it at a right-angle, was a modern drain.

3.3.5 **Trench 6** was near the eastern edge of the site. It was 9.30m long, 1.60m wide, and had a maximum depth of 0.82m. The tarmac and gravel hard-core were 0.23m deep whilst the brown sandy clay loam relict topsoil was 0.25m thick, and below was a *c*0.30m thick, pale brown, sandy clay loam subsoil. Geological deposits were a pale yellow fine sandy clay loam with many patches of gravel. A recently back-filled cut in the north end of the trench was on the same alignment as that seen in Trench 4, and is assumed to be the same pipe or drain.

4. FINDS

4.1 A total of 132 fragments, mostly bone, was recovered from the site. There were no finds from Trench 4, and most of the material from Trenches 1-3, 5, and 6 was recovered unstratified. The assemblage was largely undiagnostic and can add little or nothing to the interpretation of the site. A small amount of pottery was recovered from Trench 3, and is very late in date, late nineteenth or twentieth century, suggesting late activity in the vicinity. Roof tile fragments from Trenches 1 and 3 are very similar and may even derive from a single object.

4.2 The bone was generally in poor condition, soft and friable. That from Trench 1, with the exception of a single well preserved ?dog femur, was also cracked and laminated, with rootlets penetrating the surface of the bone, suggesting that it had lain close to the surface for some time. Only the small fragments from Trench 1, fill [10] were in good condition, suggesting somewhat different depositional circumstances. The group of bone from Trench 2, fill [3] was in marginally better condition and where the surface of individual fragments survived, evidence of gnawing by rodents was noted, and possibly some evidence for butchery, although this was less clear. The group comprised mainly fragments of bones from the lower limbs of horses and cows, and the jaws of cows and sheep. On occasion the bones had clearly been broken in antiquity, but as fitting fragments were recovered it does not seem likely that this was in the course of butchery, rather, as suggested by the evidence for gnawing, that individual bones had lain exposed at the surface for some time, and had been damaged, possibly by trampling, during that period. The composition of the assemblage does not suggest food refuse; it could suggest an origin as process waste from tanning or large-scale butchery, but the sample is too small for this to be suggested with any confidence.

4.3 Catalogue of finds from the site.

Context	Quantity	Description
Trench 1		
US	1	fragment of roof tile or, possibly, hand-made field drain.
	3	small, hard-fired, oxidised, undiagnostic fragments tile or brick.
	1	fragment industrial debris, possibly highly re-fired ceramic.
	33	fragments animal bone. Most are small and soft, with numerous rootlets penetrating the surfaces. Cow is present.
10	4	small fragments animal bone.
	1	small fragment charcoal.
11	1	small fragment bone.

Trench 2

3	51	small soft fragments of animal bone. Cow, horse, adult and juvenile sheep are represented.
	1	small fragment of ?burnt daub?
14	6	small, soft fragments of bone.

Trench 3

US	2	fragments stoneware vessels, late nineteenth century or later.
	1	fragment of roof tile or, possibly, hand-made field drain.
	*c*20	very small, soft fragments of bone

Trench 5

US	4	fragments of a single bone.

Trench 6

US	3	small, soft fragments of animal bone.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 All six trenches revealed a similar overall sequence, in which river terrace deposits of poorly-sorted gravels and loams were overlain by a 'subsoil' of homogeneous pale brown sandy loam containing relatively large quantities of animal bone, overlain in turn by modern topsoil (a former ploughsoil). The cut archaeological features were defined at the junction of subsoil with gravels, whereas some of the laid stone features occurred at a slightly higher level, within the base of the subsoil. The relatively thick overburden (averaging *c* 0.6m in total) over the gravel surface suggests a degree of accumulation, and in view of the flat terrain and the lack of evidence for any artificial deposition this is most probably due to alluviation by flooding from the river Swale.

5.2 On this interpretation, the 'subsoil' may well be the base of the soil/alluvium deposit, below the depth of modern ploughing. The survival of seemingly-undisturbed stone spreads within its base suggests that it has not been ploughed, and the occurrence of most of the bone at a similar level may suggest that the layer is worm-sorted from prolonged pasture or meadow land-use.

5.3 The archaeological features consist of gullies and postholes in Trench 1, and ill-defined stone surfaces or structures in Trench 2, with a shallow hollow or scoop adjacent. The features in Trench 1 may have formed part of an earthfast timber building or of an enclosure boundary. The features in Trench 2 may possibly have formed part of a timber frame building based on post-pads and wall-plates or cob construction. However both interpretations are tentative on present evidence.

5.4 None of the features produced any positive dating evidence, and the features may or may not all date from the same general period. The total absence of pottery (both from the features and from the subsoil, which was closely examined) does argue against a Roman or Medieval date, and the absence of worked flint argues against a Neolithic or Bronze Age date. By elimination, an Iron Age or Anglo-Saxon date is possible, although the dangers of dating from negative evidence, especially from a limited evaluation, are obvious. It may be noted that investigation of the adjacent site to the south produced a rather similar bone assemblage, with evidence of a Roman date (York Archaeological Trust, n.d.).

5.5 No archaeological features were recovered from Trenches 3-6, and modern disturbance associated with the coal yard was too shallow to have damaged features at the level of those recorded in Trenches 1 and 2 (except for localised service trenches). It would therefore appear that archaeological features are concentrated in the north-east part of the development area.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The evaluation has demonstrated that archaeological features, of uncertain date, are present in the north-east part of the proposed development area.

6.2 These features are not, on present evidence, of sufficient quality and importance to justify refusal of planning permission or a major re-design of the proposed development in order to allow their retention *in situ.*

6.3 However, the features are of sufficient importance to justify excavation in advance of destruction, in order to establish the plan, nature, and dating of the past activity.

6.4 We therefore recommend that the north-east part of the development area be subject to archaeological excavation, as mitigation of the proposed development.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

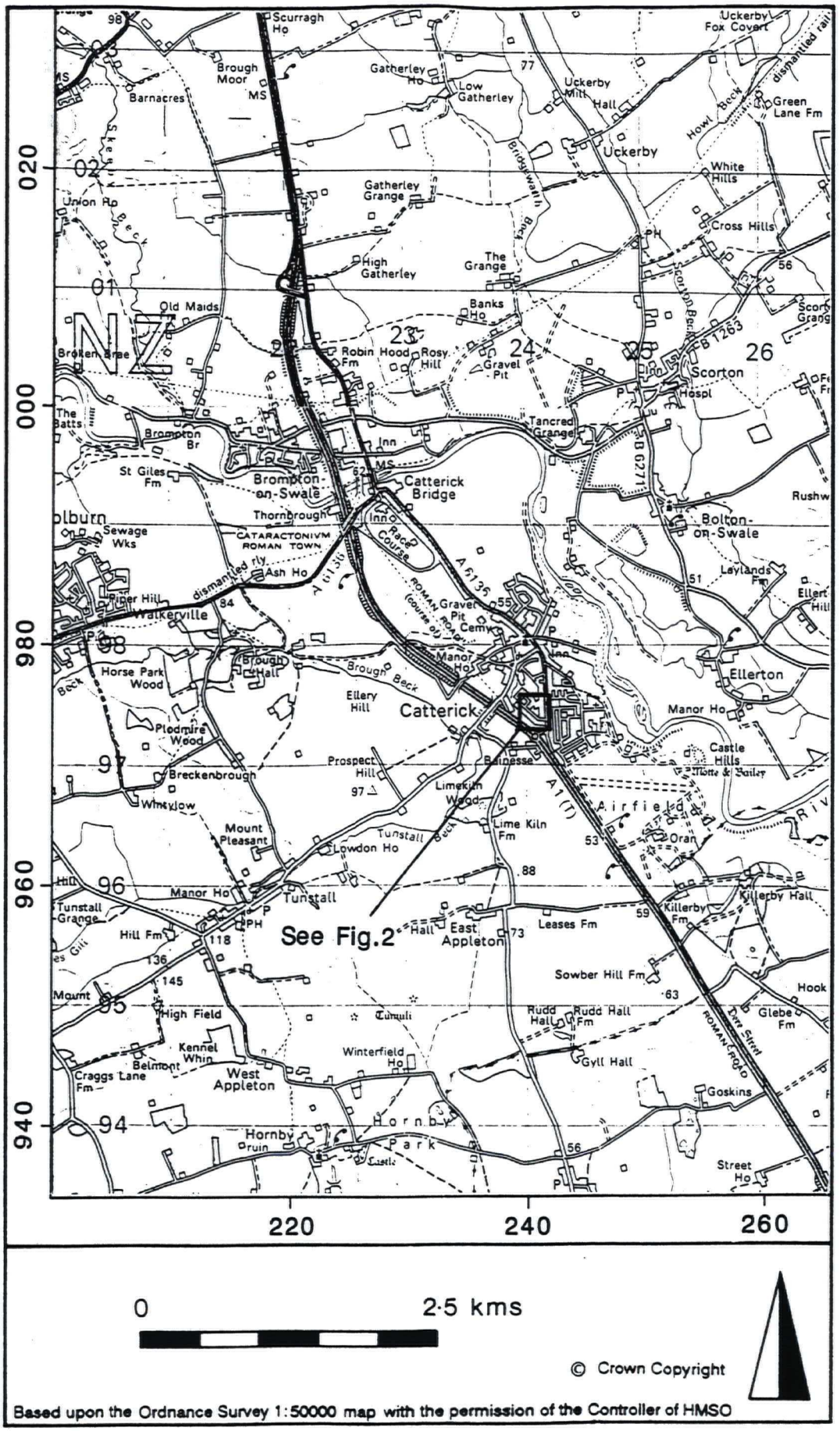

Fig.1 Site location map

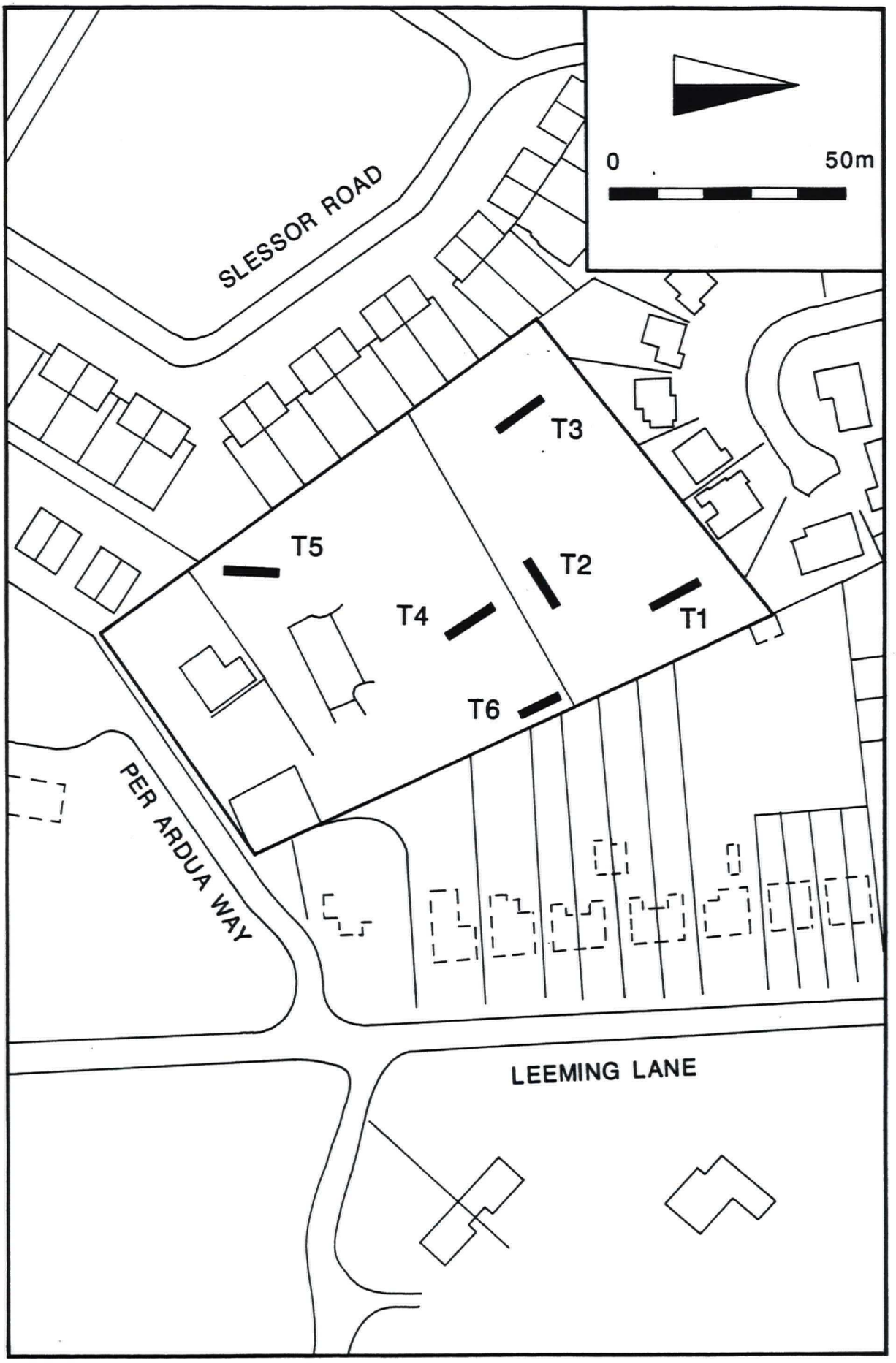

Fig.2 Trench location plan

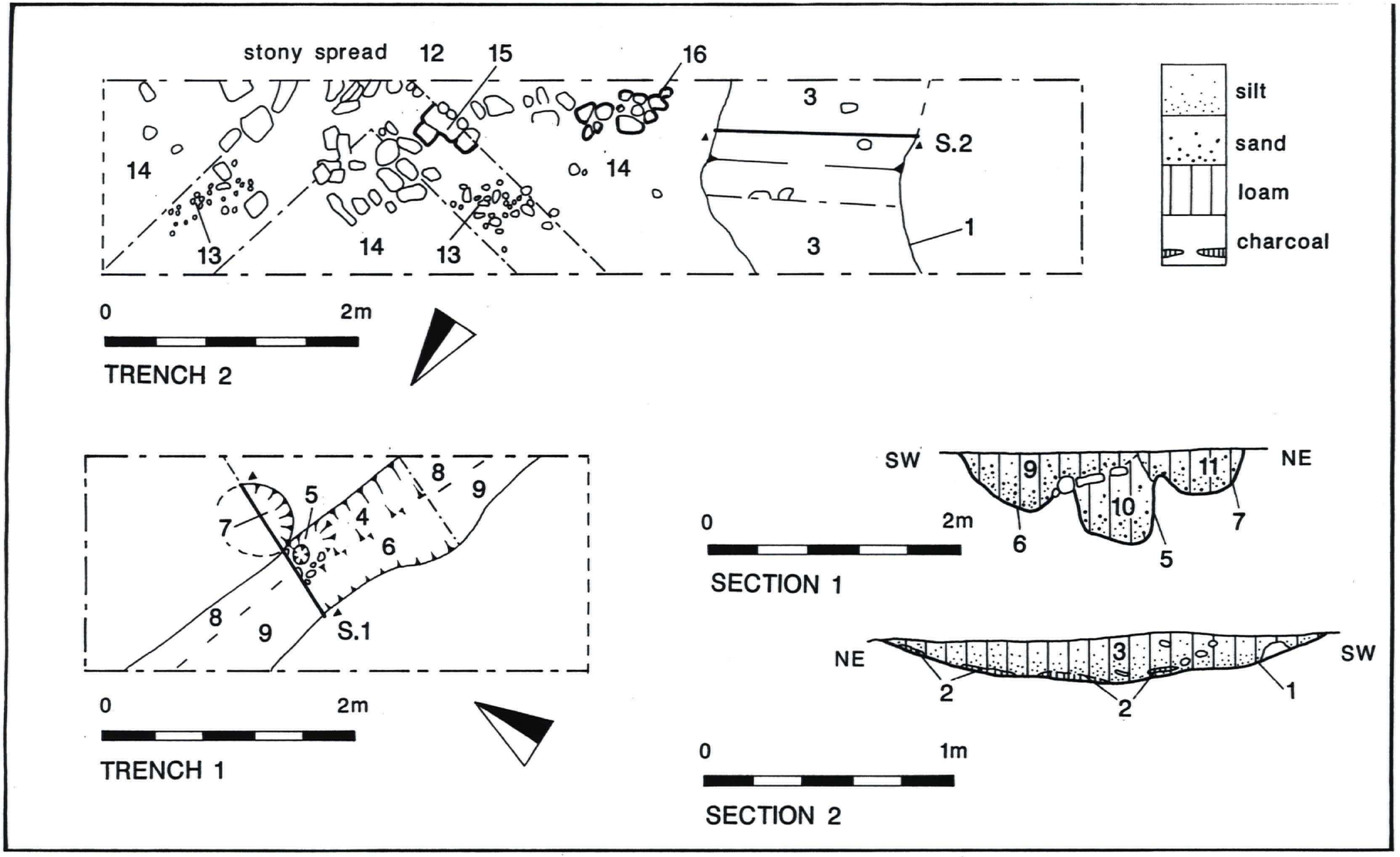

Fig.3 Trenches 1 and 2 and sections

APPENDIX 1: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE

The archive comprises a black lever-arch file marked CAT 96 containing

Project design and brief
Trench description sheets Trs 1 to 6
Context index and context sheets 1 to 15
Photographic forms, black and white negatives and prints, colour transparencies
Section and plan registers
Finds report
Risk assessment
Art-work for report, and copy of report
3½" disc with Word for Windows copy of report

Small box CAT96 containing finds