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ARCHAEOLOGICAL
TRUST

**NEW SCHOOL,
PRIEST LANE,
RIPON,
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

**ASSESSMENT REPORT ON AN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EXCAVATION**



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CONTENTS

- ABSTRACT
1. INTRODUCTION
 2. METHODOLOGY
 3. LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY
 4. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND BACKGROUND
 5. EXCAVATION RESULTS
 6. CONCLUSIONS
 7. ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS
 8. ASSESSMENT OF POTTERY
 9. ASSESSMENT OF SMALL FINDS
 10. CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIALS
 11. CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT REPORT
 12. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
 13. BIBLIOGRAPHY
 14. LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

List of Illustrations

- Figure 1 Site location plan
- Figure 2 Excavation area and previous trenches on site
- Figure 3 Areas of excavation and location of principal sections illustrated in the report
- Figure 4 Height of natural deposits, including information from the earlier trial trenches
- Figure 5 Plan of cut features in Groups 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 11
- Figure 6 Cross-sections through Group 3 features
- Figure 7 Cross-sections through Group 4 features
- Figure 8 Cross-sections through Group 5 features
- Figure 9 Plan of cut features in groups 7-10
- Figure 10 Plan of cut features and structures in groups 12-14 and 16-17
- Figure 11 Thomas Langdale's Plan of Ripon 1818
- Figure 12 Section 4 North-west facing section in Area 1
- Figure 13 Section 6 North-west facing section in Area 1
- Figure 14 Section 14 South-east facing section in Area 2
- Figure 15 Section 15 North-west facing section in Area 2/3
- Figure 16 Section 17 South-east facing section in Area 1
- Figure 17 Section 20 North-east facing section in Area 2
- Figure 18 Section 67 North-west facing section in Area 3

List of Plates

- Plate 1 General view of the site looking west
- Plate 2 General view of the site looking east from Ripon Cathedral tower
- Plate 3 Context 3085/3095
- Plate 4 General view of the site showing some Group 3 post holes, to the left, and Group 5 ditches 3053/3112/3082/3057/3104, to the right of the photographic scale.
- Plate 5 General view of the southern portion of 13th century ditch 1021/1051 (on the right) and 19th century ditch 1025 (on the left).

ABSTRACT

In August and September 2000 York Archaeological Trust carried out a programme of archaeological excavation and recording on a site adjacent to Priest Lane, Ripon, in advance of the development of the site for a new school. The work revealed a number of archaeological features and deposits dating from the 11th-14th and 17th -20th centuries. Most of the medieval features were field boundaries, with occasional rubbish pits, and build up deposits typical of open ground. No features of 15-16th century date were recovered implying that the area was open ground during this period. From the 17th century onwards the area seems to have been used for gravel extraction and for dumping. The only structures of this date were two brick walls of 17th and 18th century date, and a 19th century boundary ditch and wall.

1. INTRODUCTION

Between 7th August and 22nd September 2000 York Archaeological Trust (YAT) conducted an archaeological excavation on a site adjacent to Priest Lane, Ripon, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 3165 7121). The site (Figure 2) is bordered by Priest Lane to the east, Residence Lane to the north, Cathedral Close to the west and Ailcy Hill to the south and covers an area of approximately 1900 square metres. The work was carried out on behalf of Accord Plc. as a planning condition imposed by Harrogate Borough Council prior to the development of the site as a new school. The excavation was carried out to a specification provided by The Heritage Unit, North Yorkshire County Council. The excavation followed on from a staged programme of works which had included a geophysical survey, an archaeological evaluation (Johnson 1998) and the observation of a number of test pits excavated for engineering purposes (Johnson 2000).

2. METHODOLOGY

The strategy for the archaeological work was firstly to monitor, by close archaeological supervision, the machine stripping of the whole site. This was carried out by means of a JCB with a smooth edged bucket to specific predetermined depths of construction formation or to the top of naturally occurring deposits, whichever was at a higher level Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). Large areas were then cleaned by hand and the archaeological features revealed were recorded. Sections through the stripped material were also recorded. Three recording areas were designated (Figure 3). The first consisted of the proposed school car park (Area 1) which was stripped to the top of the naturally occurring deposits, located between c.0.30m and c.1.00m below the present ground surface. The second area (Area 2) consisted of a number of 1.00m wide trenches, between 0.10m and 1.15m deep, which followed the outline of selected portions of the proposed school buildings. The third area consisted of stripping the eastern wing of the proposed school to formation level or the top of naturally occurring deposits, whichever was higher; this was at between 0.40m and 0.90m below present ground level. Areas 1 and 3 in effect formed one large open area excavation. Areas 1 and 3 were found to contain large numbers of largely undated features cutting directly into the natural deposits, with almost no direct stratigraphic links between the features. Naturally occurring deposits were not reached in Area 2, where the majority of features recovered were of post-medieval date.

All archaeological deposits were recorded at a scale of 1:20 using a single context planning system, and recorded following the procedures in the York Archaeological Trust Context Recording Manual (1996). In addition a 1:50 plan was drawn of Area 3. All cut features, and various cross-sections through the site were recorded in section at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20 and relevant features were photographed using colour print film. A programme of systematic soil sampling was implemented to recover environmental evidence, though it must be noted that the majority of features on site were backfilled with redeposited natural sub-soil and did not merit sampling. All finds and site records are currently stored with York Archaeological Trust under the Harrogate Museum accession code HARGM:10330.



Plate 1 **General view of the site facing west**

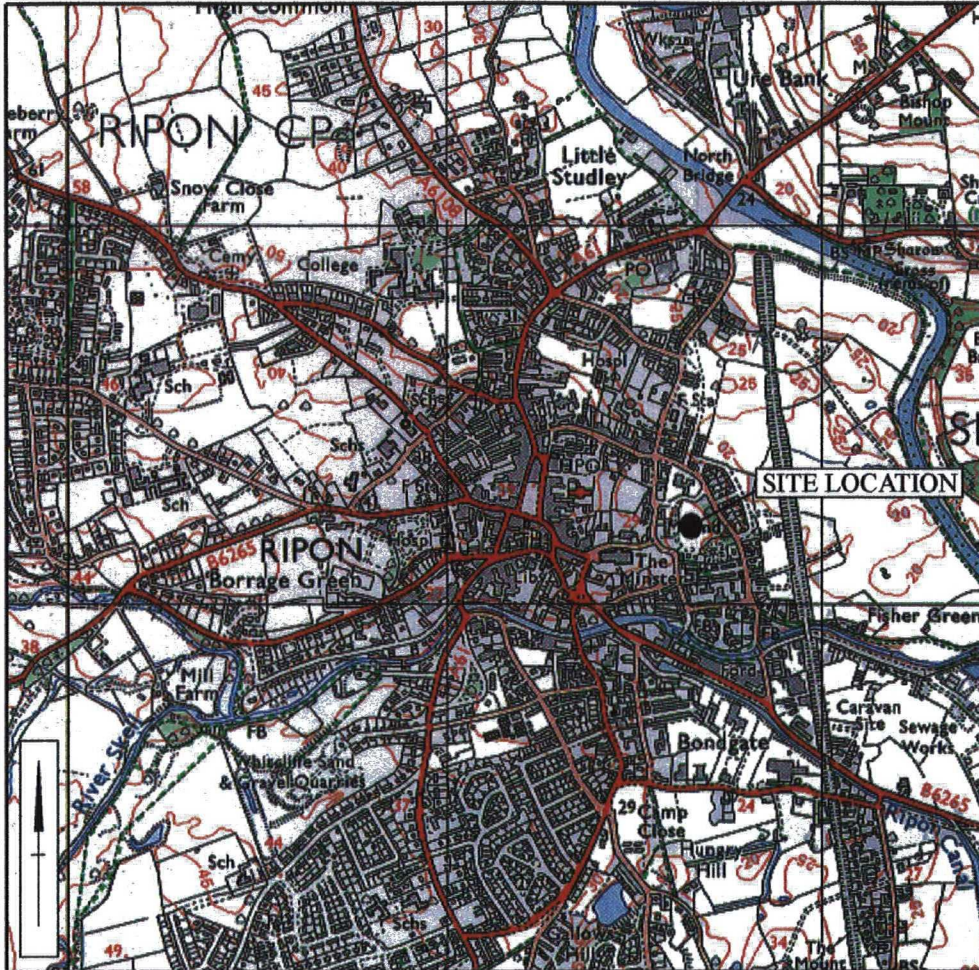


Figure 1 Site location plan

0 1000 metres

BASED UPON ORDNANCE SURVEY 1:25000 MAP DATA WITH PERMISSION OF THE CONTROLLER OF HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE, CROWN COPYRIGHT, YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST CROMWELL HOUSE, 13 OGLEFORTH, YORK. YO17FG. LICENCE NUMBER AL100018343



KEY:



1998 evaluation trenches



2000 watching brief



2000 excavation

0 50 metres

Figure 2 Excavation area and previous trenches on site.

3. LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The New School site is located on an undulating field c.250m to the north-east of Ripon Cathedral. The natural topography of the site slopes downwards both from north to south and from east to west. At the eastern edge of the site there is a vertical drop of 1.50m to Priest Lane.

The underlying solid geology of Ripon is an outcrop of Magnesian Limestone and Permian mudstone, which extends in a north-south direction between the Pennines and the Vale of York (Geological Survey 1979). Overlying this solid geology is a series of glacially deposited sands and gravels, which formed a number of mounds and ridges (kames) in the area. These are illustrated on Thomas Jefferys's plan of 1771 and Thomas Langdale's plan of Ripon (1818). The kames include Allhallows Hill, c.300m to the north-west of the site, and Ailcy Hill to the immediate south of the site. A third mound probably existed to the immediate north of the site at Scott's Monument Yard (Hall and Whyman 1996, 137), while the ridge around the northern and eastern edges of the site may mark the site of another glacially deposited feature.

It is known that gravel quarrying took place on all of the mounds listed above during the post-medieval period, greatly altering their appearance. It is unclear whether this quarrying also affected the topography of the New School site although some evidence for this was found in the evaluation trenches (Johnson 1998).



Plate 2 **General view of the site looking north-east from Ripon Cathedral tower**



Figure 3 Areas of excavation and location of principal sections illustrated in the report.

KEY: Area 1 Area 2 Area 3

0 50 metres

4. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

While there is significant archaeological evidence of prehistoric and Roman activity in the vicinity of Ripon, to date, no archaeological evidence from these periods has been discovered within the city except for some sherds of residual Roman pottery from excavations in the Deanery Gardens and some unstratified Roman coins which may be later importations.

The earliest archaeological and documentary evidence for settlement at Ripon dates to the mid 7th century monastic site. The documentary evidence for the monastery comes from Stephen of Ripon's *'Life of Wilfrid'* written c.AD 709/10, and from Bede's *'History of the English Church and People'* written c.AD 730. This evidence records that King Alhfrith of Deira donated land to Abbot Eata of Melrose in the 7th century, and that the monastery was subsequently reallocated to Wilfrid following the adoption of Roman rites. Local tradition places Eata's monastery at Scots Monument Yard, immediately to the north of the New School site (Hall and Whyman 1996, 140), while Wilfrid's church (of which the crypt survives), was on the site of the present Minster. Some time before the Conquest the monastery had become a minster church with a college of canons.

A number of excavated remains and finds provide evidence of pre-conquest monastic activity in the area. The crypt of the present minster church is accepted as the crypt of St Wilfrid's church (Taylor and Taylor 1980, 516-518). A two celled church called Ladykirk with associated burials was excavated in 1955; this cemetery was located partially beneath the later street of St Marygate, and is interpreted as being of 8-10th century date (Hall and Whyman, 1996). A gold and cloisonne roundel of 7th century date known as the Ripon Jewel was found in excavations at the Deanery Gardens site. Secular settlement is evidenced by a cemetery of 6/7th century date at Ailcy Hill, which was replaced by a cemetery of male burials, interpreted as a monastic burial ground, of 9th century date (Hall and Whyman 1996). In addition a hoard of coins dating to the 860's was found at Ailcy Hill in 1695. It is not known for certain whether the New School site was in ecclesiastical ownership during this early period, however, it has been suggested the site lay within a monastic enclosure the eastern boundary of which was Priest Lane (Hall and Whyman 1997, 140). In addition on recent excavations at The Arcade, Ripon, an 11th-century rubbish pit, together with residual 10th to 11th-century pottery, imply occupation of the area (Finlayson 2000, 50).

During the post-conquest period Ripon Minster remained closely associated with the Archbishops of York and remained a significant ecclesiastical centre throughout the medieval period. Rebuilding of the church began in the later 12th century. The hospital chapels of St Mary Magdalen and St John date from this same period and the Maison de Dieu and St Anne's chapel may also have been founded in the 12th century. A charter of 1228, which defines the privileges of the church, states that church lands were bounded by Ailcy Hill, Allhallows Hill and 'Prestelay', almost certainly Priest Lane.

Less is known of the medieval secular settlement, but it seems to have expanded during the 12th century, probably as a result of a market being legally established (Whyman 1997). Assessment of the site archives for 1970's archaeological excavations at Low Saint Agnesgate and the Deanery Gardens revealed activity of 11th-century date onwards (Whyman 1997, 121). These excavations hinted at a major reorganisation of the town's street plan during the 12th or early 13th century. By 1194, Ripon is referred to as a borough and there is evidence of burgesses living in the town. The process of expansion seems to have continued throughout the medieval period.

Excavations at The Arcade, Ripon revealed a number of structural features and rubbish pits typical of burgrave plots dating from the 12th –14th centuries (Finlayson 2000, 50). It must be stressed, however, that relatively little excavation has taken place in the town centre to confirm the pattern of secular development

5. EXCAVATION RESULTS

The results from all three recording areas have been synthesized into a single narrative. The area was machine cleared to formation level or to the top of naturally occurring deposits, whichever was at a higher level AOD. The site was then cleaned and all features were excavated by hand. In the case of linear features a number of 1.00m wide cross-sections were excavated along the length of each. Very few of the features excavated were linked stratigraphically, and many were undated, making interpretation difficult. The features are discussed here in groupings, which have been made on the basis of the character of the deposits and features, and the dating evidence recovered.

5.1 Group 1 - Natural deposits

Contexts 1017, 2040, 2043, 2057, 2105, 3004, 1029, 1032, 1039, 1049, 1055.

1017, 2040, 2043, 2057, 2105, 3004. Mixed gravel, cobbles and sandy-clays.

1029. Linear edge, with irregular sides and an uneven base, a natural feature which lies largely outside the area of excavation.

1032, 1039, 1049, 1055. Loosely compacted light brown-yellow sand.

Contexts 1017, 2040, 2043, 2057, 2105 and 3004 were clearly natural deposits of mixed glacial sand, gravel and cobbles. Context 1029 was initially interpreted as a cut feature, but on excavation it seemed more likely to be an undulation in the upper surface of the natural deposits.

The ridge of natural deposits adjacent to Priest Lane and Residence Lane ranged in height from 26.04m AOD at the south-eastern end of Area 1 to 27.58m AOD at the extreme north-eastern corner of the site and 26.71m AOD at the northern end of Area 3. From these higher points the natural deposits sloped markedly downwards from both east to west and north to south. In the south-western corner of Trench 3 the top of natural was at 24.33m AOD, while the top of natural seen in trench 2 was at 22.78m AOD. Although natural deposits were not reached in the western portions of Area 2, they were found in this area in the earlier trial trench 7 at 22.07m AOD (Johnson 1998, 20) and also in trial trench 6 at 21.80m AOD (Johnson 1998, 17).

The natural deposits were sealed in places by thin layers of sand (contexts 1032, 1039, 1049 and 1055), which equated to deposits seen in the earlier evaluation work on the site (Johnson 1998, 10, context 2012). These sands may represent either buried subsoil, which has been largely removed elsewhere on the site, or naturally occurring pockets of sand within the glacial deposits. If the sands do indeed represent a partially removed subsoil, something must have been responsible for its removal. The most likely explanation would be that ploughing at some stage disturbed the area, but there was no clear evidence for linear plough scores on the upper surface of the natural deposits.

The height of the upper surface of the natural deposits across the site is illustrated on Figure 4.

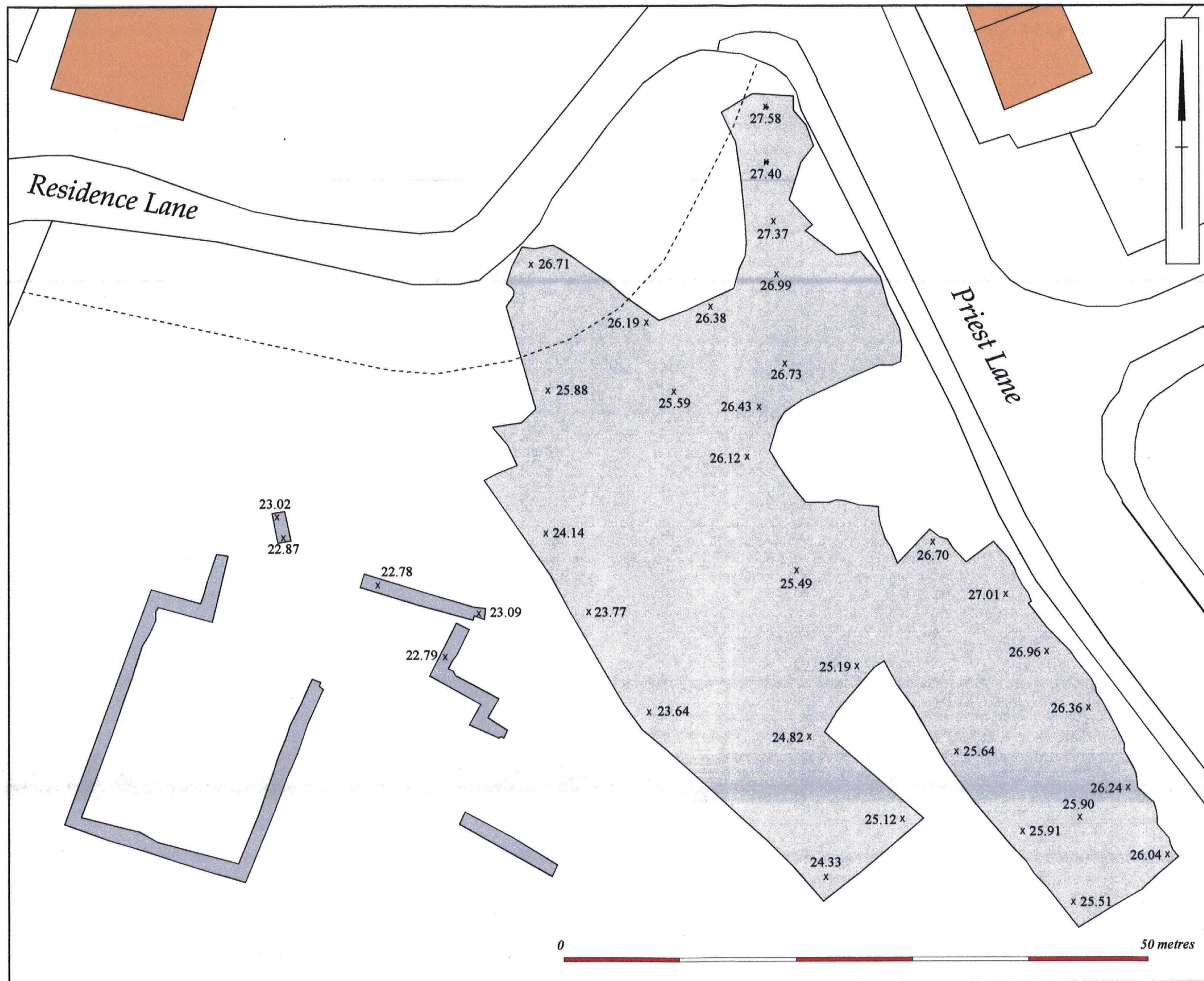


Figure 4 Height of natural deposits across site, (in metres (Above Ordnance Survey) including information from earlier trial trenches.

5.2 Group 2 – Horticultural soil, post-holes and pits - 8th to 11/12th century date

Contexts 2058, 2048, 2047, 3012, 3013, 3120, 3121, 3045, 3046, 1009, 1010, 1004, 1005, 1016, 1015, 2104, 2103, 3118, 3119, 3077, 3078, 3125, 3124, 3086/3093, 3085, 3092, 3094, 3129, 3128.

2058 Medium brown silty clay with moderate pebbles ranging from 2-20cm in size.

2048 Circular cut which lay partially outside the area of excavation. Not fully excavated because below depth limits required.

2047 Moderately compacted dark brown silty clay with frequent pebbles and occasional mortar, backfill of cut 2048.

3012 Pit cut, sub-rectangular in plan, 1.50m x 1.40m and 0.48m deep, with a gentle break of slope at the surface, very steep sides and a concave but slightly irregular base.

3013 Loosely compacted dark grey brown silty sand with concentrations of cobbles 5-15 cm in size on the eastern side, backfill of 3013.

3120 Sub-circular cut 0.78m x 0.50m in size and 0.14m deep with a gradual break of slope on the east/south sides and in irregular break of slope on the remaining sides. The sides and base were concave.

3121 Friable dark grey brown clayey silt with frequent rounded and angular pebbles, badly disturbed by tree roots, backfill of 3121.

3045 Irregularly shaped cut, 0.60m x 0.46m in size and 0.15m deep, with a steep break of slope at the surface, straight sides with a gradual break of slope at the base and a concave base.

3046 Loosely compacted dark grey black silty clay with moderate cobbles and charcoal flecks with 11th-century pottery, backfill of 3046.

1009 Irregularly shaped cut 0.58m x 0.58m in size and 0.12m deep, with a deeper section to the north with steep sides and a rounded base.

1010 A shallow circular cut, 0.58m in diameter and 0.30m deep with a shallow U-shaped profile.

1004 and 1005 Green-yellow firmly compacted clay with some pebbles 5-10 cm in size, backfills of 1009 and 1010 respectively.

1016 Sub-rectangular pit cut 1.80 x 2.00m in size and 0.30m deep. Shallow break of slope at the top of the cut, with sides at 45 degrees. Very uneven base with stones protruding upwards.

1015 Dark grey compacted silty-clay with frequent stones and cobbles ranging from 2-15cm in size, and occasional patches of sand, backfill of cut 1015.

2104 Sub-oval cut, 1.60x0.80m in size and 0.40m deep, with a sharp break of slope at the top, steep sides and a rounded base.

2103 Firmly compacted dark brown silt with occasional pebbles and frequent medium sized cobbles, backfill of cut 2104.

3118 Shallow cut 1.70m x 0.70m in size and 0.18m deep, with a sharp break of slope at the top, irregular sides at roughly 45 degrees from vertical, and an irregular slightly concave base.

3119 Friable dark grey brown silty clay with occasional rounded and angular pebbles up to 20cm in size which formed 30% of the volume of the deposit. There was a great deal of root disturbance, backfill of cut 3118.

3077 Pit cut, sub-circular in plan, 1.30m x 1.20m in size and 0.60m deep, with a sharp break of slope at the top, steep straight sides, a sharp break of slope at the base and flat base.

3078 Loosely compacted light grey brown clayey sandy silt with frequent cobbles from 5-15cm in size, backfill of cut 3077.

3125 A rectilinear pit cut 1.08m x 0.76m in size and 0.66m deep, with a gentle break of slope from the surface, almost vertical sides, a rounded break of slope at the base and a flat base.

3124 Dark brown gritty slightly silty clayey sand with frequent small pebbles and occasional charcoal flecks, backfill of cut 3125.

3085/3093 Oval pit cut, 1.10m x 1.60m x 0.40m deep, with a sharp break of slope at the top, steep almost vertical sides, an imperceptible break of slope at the base, and a concave base. A circular post-hole 0.20m in diameter and 0.19m deep, with straight steep sides and concave base, was located at each end of the pit.

3094 Loosely compacted light brown-grey slightly clayey silt with occasional cobbles 5-10cm in size, backfill of cut 3093.

3086 Moderately compacted medium grey-brown silty clay with moderate cobbles from 5-10cm in size and moderate charcoal flecks, backfill of cut 3085.

3092 Loosely compacted medium orange brown sandy silt with occasional cobbles, backfill of cut 3085.

3129 Sub-circular cut, partly outside area of excavation. Sharp break of slope at the surface, regular sides at 45 degrees, gradual break of slope at base, base concave.

3128 Friable dark grey brown silty clay with moderate rounded and angular pebbles 2-2.5cm in size. The pebbles were more frequent in the centre of the context. Backfill of cut 3129.



Plate 3 **Context 3085/3095**

Group 2 consisted of a number of features scattered across the excavated area, linked together purely on the basis of their date, which was 8th to 11th or 11th/12th century. The Group 2 cut features are shown in dark blue on Figure 5, except for context 2048, which is not illustrated. Context 2048 was located in the northernmost dog-leg of the westernmost trench in Area 2.

Group 2 included a build up of horticultural soil in Area 2 (context 2058). There were also four post-holes, two of which were isolated (contexts 2048 and 3045) but two were clearly related (contexts 1009 and 1010). It is difficult to interpret so few post-holes; they could be all that

remains of boundary fences or even buildings, or they could have been isolated posts (e.g. for the tethering of animals). These posts were subsequently backfilled (contexts 2047, 3046 1004 and 1005). In addition there were a number of pits (contexts 1016, 2104, 3012, 3085/3093 3118, 3120 and 3128) which were subsequently infilled (contexts 1015, 2103, 3013, 3086, 3092, 3094, 3119, 3121 and 3128). All of the pit fills listed above were dated by pottery to the 11/12th centuries, except for 3013 and 3121 which contained 11th century pottery and 3086 and 3128 which contained fragments of lava querns of 8th-12th century date. In addition a number of undated pits and associated fills were included because they were clearly re-cuts of the pits already described (contexts 3077, 3078, 3125 and 3124).

The Group 2 features thus represent the potential pre-conquest activity in the area. However, it must be stressed that there is a high degree of residuality across the site, so it is possible that some of these features could be of later date. In addition, the features dated 11th/12th century may well post-date the Norman Conquest. The only one of these features which is of particular interest is the shallow pit 3085/3093, which had a deep circular post-hole at either end (Plate 3). This single feature resembled the sunken features buildings typical of Anglo-Saxon sites, but at 1.10m x 1.60m would have been smaller than typical examples (Wilson 1976, 75).

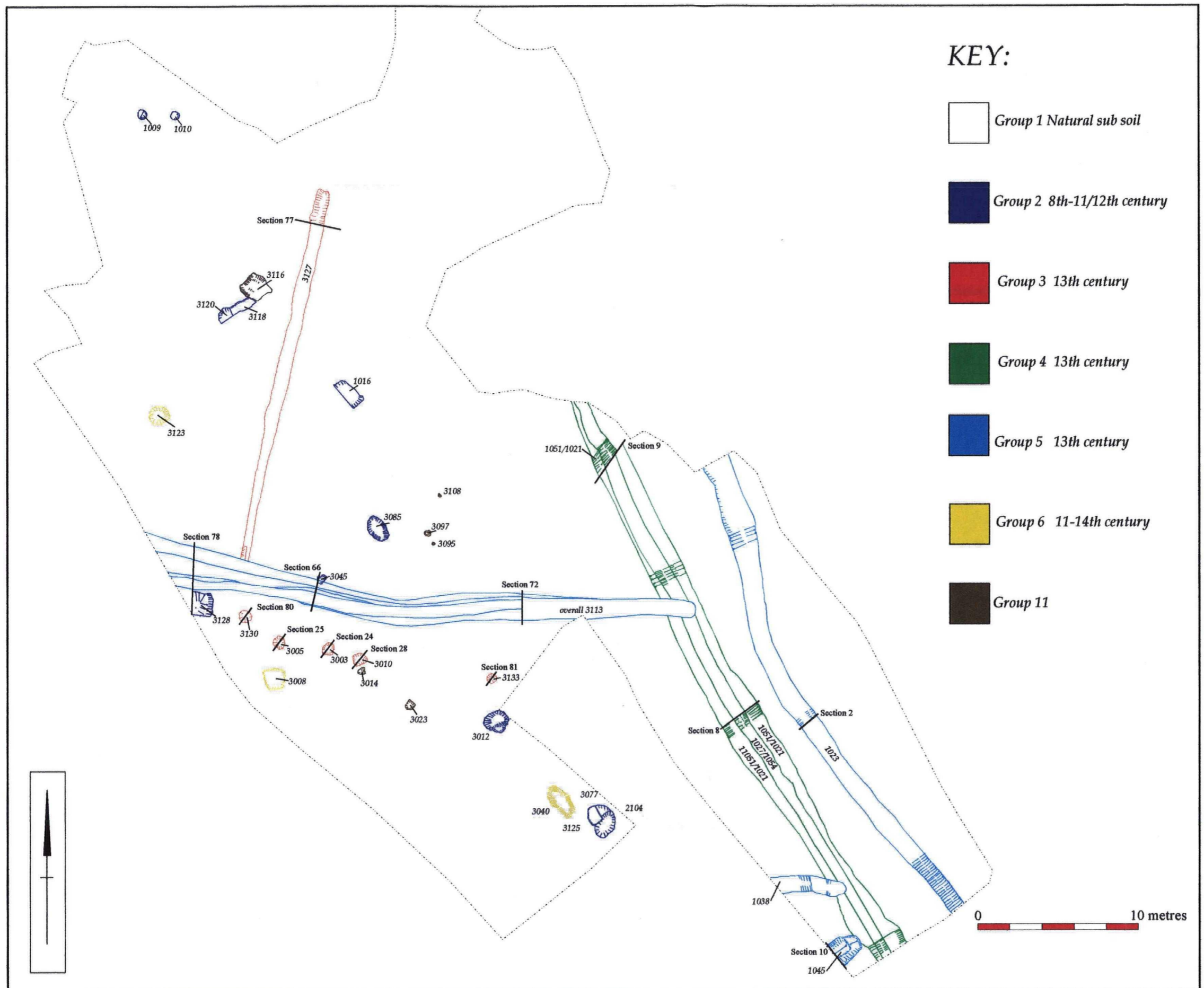


Figure 5 Plan of cut features in Groups 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 11.

5.3 Group 3 - 'L' shaped property boundary - 13th century

Contexts 3130, 3003, 3005, 3010, 3133, 3127/1014, 3131, 3002, 3006, 3011, 3132, 1013/3126.

3130 A sub-circular cut, 1.20m x 0.80m and up to 0.32m deep, with a sharp break of slope at the surface, irregular sides, gradual break of slope at the base and a concave base.

3003 A shallow cut, 0.80m x 0.76m and up to 12cm deep, almost square in plan, with sharp break of slope at surface, gently sloping sides, gradual break of slope at the base and flat base.

3005 A shallow circular cut 0.76m x 0.74m in size and up to 20cm deep, with a sharp break of slope at surface and concave sides and base.

3010 A shallow cut 0.80m x 0.88m and 0.26m deep, with a sharp break of slope at the surface, steep sides, a gradual break of slope at the base and a concave base.

3133 A circular cut 0.48m in diameter and 0.23m in depth, with U-shaped profile.

3127/1014 A linear cut, aligned north-east to south-west, 23.00m long, 0.50m wide, and 0.50m deep, with a butt end to the north. The cut had a sharp break of slope on the south side, but slightly more gradual on the north side, with sides at 45 degrees from vertical, a gradual break of slope at the base and a rounded base.

3131 Friable dark grey brown silty clay with occasional small rounded pebbles 0.5-3cm in size and 11th-century pottery, backfill of cut 3130.

3002 Compact dark brown silty clay with moderate small pebbles and 11/12th-century pottery, backfill of cut 3003.

3006 Moderately compacted mid brown to grey silty clay with moderate pebbles/cobbles, backfill of cut 3005.

3011 Firmly compacted medium grey-brown silty clay with frequent charcoal flecks and moderate cobbles 5-20 cm in size, backfill of cut 3010.

3132 Moderately compacted mid brown clayey silt with frequent gravel, small to large pebbles, and cobbles, backfill of cut 3133.

1013/3126 Dark grey compacted silty-clay with frequent stones and cobbles ranging from 2-15cm in size, and occasional patches of sand, which contained 11/12th-century pottery, backfill of cut 3127/1014.

Group 3 consists of an alignment of post-holes and a ditch cut which were at 90 degrees to one another and seemed to form related property boundaries (shown in red on Figure 5 and in section on Figure 6). The post-holes were aligned north-west to south-east (contexts 3130, 3005, 3003, 3010 and 3133). The westernmost four were fairly regularly spaced at 2.50m to 3.00m intervals, while the eastern post was roughly 6.50m away. Disturbance by a later pit (context 3020) was almost certainly responsible for removing a post-hole within the 6.50m wide gap. The westernmost post-hole (context 3130) was larger than of all of the others in the alignment, and it is possible this may have represented the corner of the property boundary, which therefore needed to be more substantial. No evidence of any other post holes to the west of context 3130 were found, despite repeated re-cleaning of the area. This implies that the post-hole alignment terminated at context 3130.

The related ditch cut (context 3127 and 1014) was aligned north-east to south-west. The ditch was 23.00m long, 0.50m wide, and 0.50m deep, with a butt end at the north. The ditch cut was truncated at the southern end by a later feature, but had originally terminated to the north of the western end of the post-hole alignment.

The post-holes and ditch were infilled with a variety of silty clays with varying quantities of pebbles (contexts 3131, 3002, 3006, 3011, 3132, 1013 and 3126). The dating evidence recovered consisted of 11th-century pottery from context 3131, 11/12th-century pottery from context 3002, 11th/12th- and 12th-century pottery from ditch fill 1013/3126, and context 3126 contained a horseshoe nail of 13th-14th century date. Overall a 13th-century date seems likely, most of the pottery being residual.

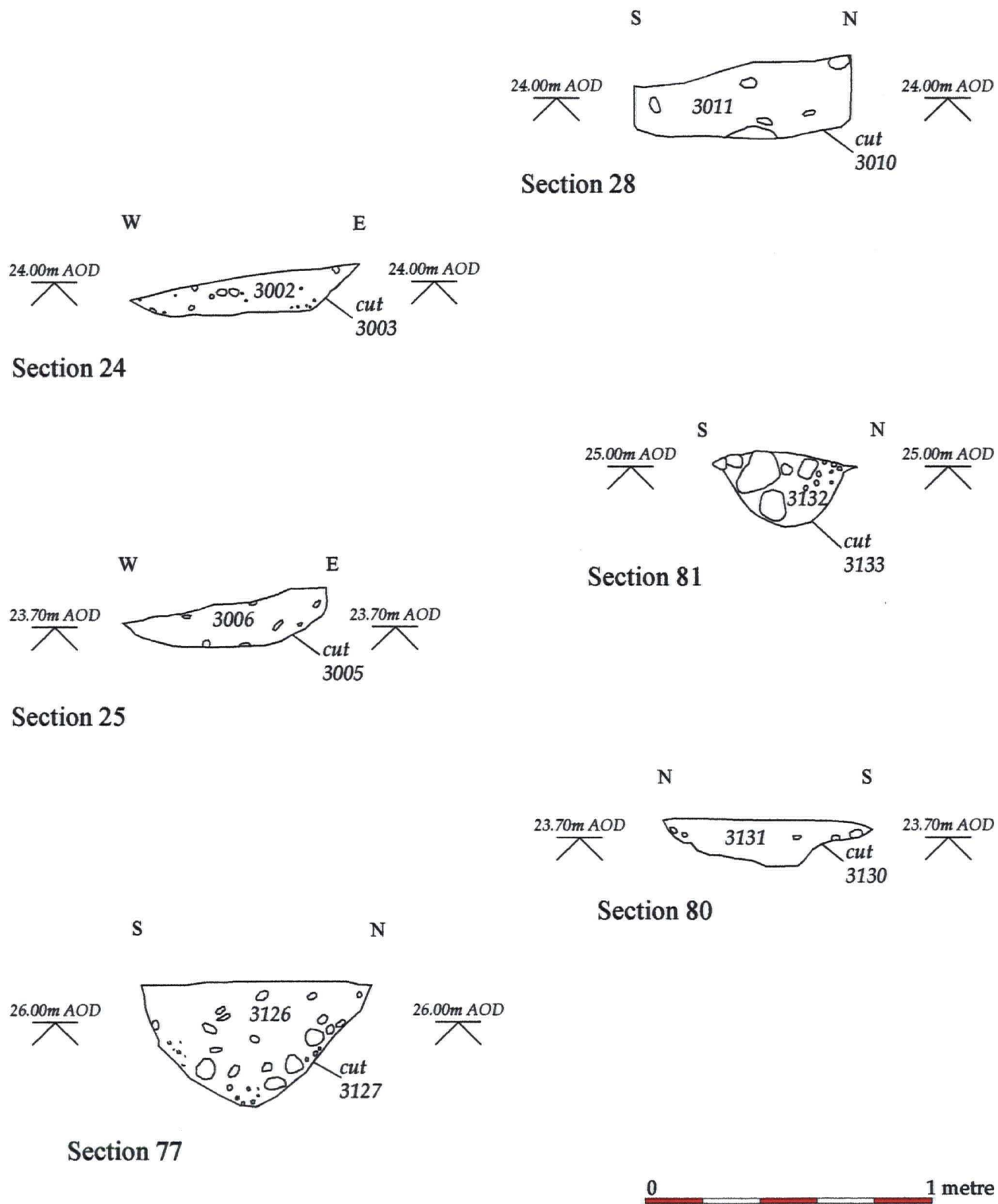


Figure 6 Cross sections through Group 3 features.

5.4 Group 4 – Ditch cut parallel to Priest Lane - 13th century

Contexts 1021/1051, 1042, 1041, 1056, 1040, 1020/1050, 1027/1054, 1026/1053

1021/1051 A linear north-south aligned cut up to 2.66m wide, over 40m in length and 0.75m deep. The cut had a gentle break of slope at the top eastern side, but a sharp break of slope at the top west side; the sides were at 45-60 degrees and the base uneven but slightly concave.

1042 A circular post-hole, 0.28m in diameter and 0.26m deep, with a vertical western side and gently sloping eastern side; the break of slope at base was rounded and the base flat.

1041 Mid brown firmly compacted clayey sand with frequent cobbles 2x4cm to 10x10cm in size which make up 50% of the volume of the deposit, backfill of cut 1042.

1056 Pink-grey loosely compacted gravel with small patches of coarse sand and medium sized cobbles, backfill of cut 1021/1051.

1040 Firmly compacted pink-brown clayey sand with frequent gravel particles making up 95% of the context, backfill of cut 1021/1051.

1020/1050 Compact light reddish brown sandy clay, with occasional inclusions of charcoal, pebbles and cobbles, backfill of cut 1021/1051.

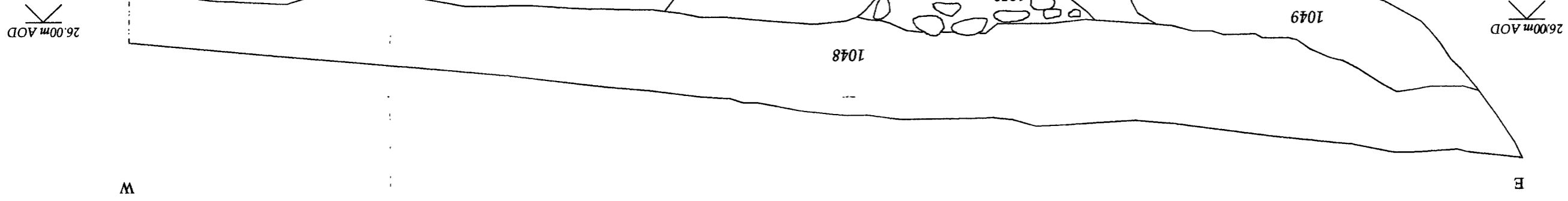
1027/1054 North-south aligned linear cut over 40m long, up to 0.80m wide and 0.45m deep, with a sharp break of slope at the top, steep sides at 60 degrees, and a pointed base. Overall a V-shaped profile.

1026/1053 Firmly to moderately compacted mid brown clayey silt with occasional flecks of charcoal and frequent cobbles and pebbles, backfill of cut 1026/1053.

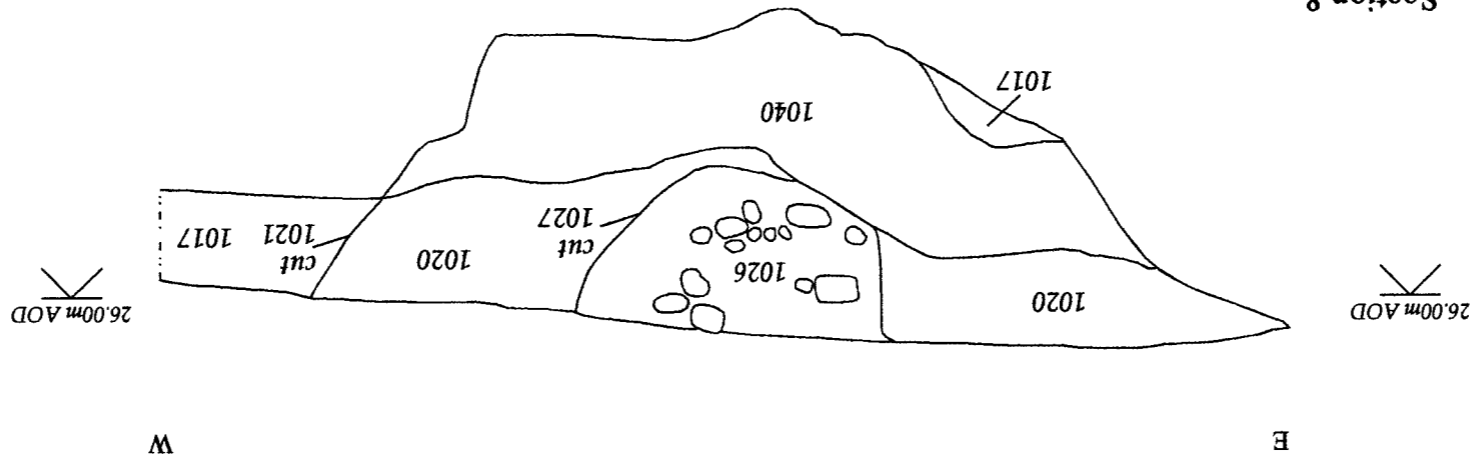
Group 4 consisted of a ditch cut aligned almost north-south, parallel to Priest Lane (contexts 1021 and 1051). This clearly equated to an undated ditch found in the earlier trial trench work (Johnson 1998, 11, context 2005). The ditch was not fully excavated, but a series of 1.00m wide sections were cut through it. In the base of one of these cross-sections a post-hole was located (context 1042), which suggests that the ditch originally contained a boundary fence of some kind. The post-hole was infilled (context 1041), and subsequently the sides of the ditch seem to have collapsed (contexts 1040 and 1056), probably due to the unstable nature of the natural subsoil into which the ditch was cut. The ditch was then infilled (context 1020/1050), and re-cut on exactly the same line (context 1027/1054). The re-cut was itself later infilled (context 1026/1053).

The initial cut of the ditch contained material cumulatively suggesting a 13th-century date (a horseshoe nail of 13th-14th-century date, a horseshoe of 11-13th-century date and 13-16th-century tile), together with a residual Anglo-Scandinavian dress pin. The re-cut was undated except for a single sherd of 19/20th-century pottery found in context 1053, which almost certainly represents contamination from later features. This ditch could be contemporary with the features described in Group 3 above.

The Group 4 features are shown in green on Figure 5, and cross-sections are illustrated on Figures 7, 11 and 14.

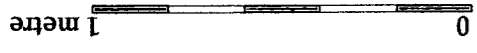


Section 9



Section 8

Figure 7 Cross sections 8 and 9 through Group 4 features.



5.5 Group 5 – East-west aligned ditches and associated backfills - 13th century

Contexts 1023, 1022, 3016/3053, 3105/3052, 3082, 3081, 3057/3104, 3058/3013, 3112/3102, 3111/3101, 3113, 3088, 1044, 1038, 1045, 1037

1023 Linear cut 40m long, 1.26m wide and 0.50m deep, with an almost V-shaped profile.

1022 Compacted medium brown silty-clay with frequent cobbles 5-20cm in size and moderate pebbles 1-5cm in size, backfill of 1023.

3106/3053 Linear cut, 1.20m wide, 0.90m deep, aligned roughly east-west with a sharp break of slope at the top, steep sides at 50-60 degrees from vertical, becoming vertical near the base.

3105/3054 Firmly compacted medium brown clayey silt with occasional charcoal, large cobbles and limestone fragments and frequent small to medium cobbles, backfill of cut 3106/3053.

3082 A linear cut 1.10m wide and 0.43m deep largely truncated by a later cut 3057, so only the eastern side and part of the base was visible. The eastern side had a sharp break of slope from the top, a steep straight edge, a sharp break of slope at the base and a base which sloped down gently westwards.

3081 Moderately compacted medium grey brown slightly silty clay with frequent cobbles and charcoal flecks, backfill of cut 3082.

3057/3104 A linear cut up to 0.70m wide and 0.60m deep with a sharp break of slope at the surface, steep slightly concave sides, a sharp break of slope at the base and a flat base.

3058/3103 Firmly compacted medium brown to grey slightly sandy clay with moderate cobbles and charcoal flecks, some suggestion of a layer of limestone cobbles at the base of the deposit. 3103 contained 11th-century pottery and a possibly medieval stone roof tile, backfill of cut 3057/3104.

3112/3102 A linear cut 0.50m wide and 0.20m deep, with a sharp break of slope at the top, straight sides at 45 degrees to vertical, an imperceptible break of slope at the base, and a rounded base.

3111/3101 Firmly compacted light to dark brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks and medium sized cobbles, backfill of 3112/3102.

3113 A number allocated for planning purposes for cuts 3053/3112/3082/3057/3104 at the eastern end.

3088 A number allocated for planning purposes for fills 3054/3105/3101/3081/3058/3103 at the eastern end.

1045 An east-west aligned linear cut, 2.00m wide, 0.80m deep and over 1.80m long, with a butt end at the east. The sides broke gently from the surface and fell steeply on the north, while the southern side had a series of irregular steps to a vertical edge. The bottom edge of the cut was rounded, leading to an uneven base.

1038 Linear north-east to south-west aligned cut over 4.60m long, 0.94m wide and 0.85m deep, with gentle break of slope at surface, steep almost vertical sides, a rounded break of slope at base and a flat uneven base.

1044 Two differing fills numbered collectively. The lower fill consisted of bands of redeposited natural which possibly formed from the collapse of the original sides of the cut, or material washing into the cut. The upper fill consisted of pale to mid grey brown, soft silty fine grained sand with frequent inclusions of small pebbles, occasional large pebbles, slag, charcoal flecks and grey sandy silt, backfill of cut 1045.

1037 Friable mid to dark reddish brown silty clay, moderate small to medium cobbles and occasional charcoal, limestone fragments and large cobbles, with 10/11th-century pottery, backfill of cut 1038.

Group 5 consists of a number of ditch cuts (shown in pale blue on Figure 5 and in section on Figures 8, 11 and 14), which seemed to form a north-south boundary with three associated boundaries aligned roughly east-west, one of which had been recut three times. Ditch 1023 was roughly parallel to Priest Lane and was located to the east of the Group 4 ditches described above. The southernmost 10.00m of this ditch was excavated fully and in addition three 1.00m wide cross-sections were also excavated across the ditch. The ditch fills contained a number of finds including 13th-century pottery, an 11th-13th-century horse-shoe nail, a 13th-14th-century horse-shoe nail and 13th-16th-century tile. Overall a 13th-century date is suggested. The ditch was located in the earlier trial trench work (Johnson 1998, 11, contexts 2002/2003).

The remaining three ditches (contexts 3106/3053, 1045 and 1038) shared the following characteristics; all were aligned roughly east-west, all had butt ends at the eastern end and terminated to the west of ditch 1023, and all cut the earlier ditches of Group 4. The northernmost ditch of these three east-west ditches (context 3106/3053) was infilled (context 3105/3054) and was subsequently recut at least three times (contexts 3082, 3057/3104 and 3112/3102 and associated backfills 3081, 3103/3058, 3111/3101). This sequence of re-cuts contained dating evidence of interest. The earliest ditch fill (context 3105/3052) was dated as 12th/13th-century, while two of the later re-cuts (context 3103 and 3111) contained 11th-century and 11th/12th-century pottery respectively. Since all of these ditches post-dated 13th-century ditches in Group 4 there is clearly a high degree of residuality for the pottery on the site.



Plate 4. General view of the site showing some Group 3 post holes to the left and Group 5 ditches 3053/3112/3082/3057/3104 to the right of the photographic scale.

Figure 8 Cross sections through Group 5 features.

