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**LAND AT RILLINGTON,
MALTON,
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

by Toby Kendall



**REPORT NUMBER: 2003/40
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

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REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

by
Toby Kendall

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Abbreviations used in this report

BGL	below ground level
SAM	Scheduled Ancient Monument

© York Archaeological Trust: A registered charity
Cromwell House, 13 Ogleforth, York, YO1 7FG
Tel. (01904) 663000 Fax. (01904) 663024
e-mail:enquiries@yorkarchaeology.co.uk

ABSTRACT

A watching brief was carried out during the excavation of geotechnical trial pits along the two route lines of the proposed bypass for Rillington, Malton, North Yorkshire. A total of twelve trial pits measuring 2.50m long and 0.50m wide were machine excavated to a depth of 3.0m. During the excavation of the trial pits no deposits of archaeological significance were encountered.

1. INTRODUCTION

The York Archaeological Trust undertook a watching brief over the 1st and 2nd of October 2003 on land at Rillington, Malton, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 856 738 figure 1). Work was carried out according to the North Yorkshire County Council standard watching brief specification.

The main contractor was Atkins Design Environment & Engineering.

2. METHODOLOGY

The watching brief involved the observation and recording of deposits revealed in twelve machine excavated trial pits (Figure 2). The trenches were all c.2.50m long, 0.50m wide and 3.00m deep. Sections were drawn of all deposits revealed, both archaeological and natural. Additional recording on site was by means of watching brief notebook and colour photography. All depths detailed below are in relation to modern ground level (BGL). For safety reasons it was not possible to stand within the trial pits during recording, so all measurements and photographs were completed from the surface.

3. LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The village of Rillington is located on flat even ground (c.34m AOD) 3miles to the south of the River Derwent and some 4 miles to the north-east of Malton. It is bisected by the A64 which runs north-east to south-west through the centre of the village. The area under investigation followed the two possible routes of a bypass for the A64 to the south of the village.

The local geology is made up of a ridge of Kimmeridge clay at the extreme south-east of the study area which is overlain by post-glacial sands and gravels which become deeper to the north.

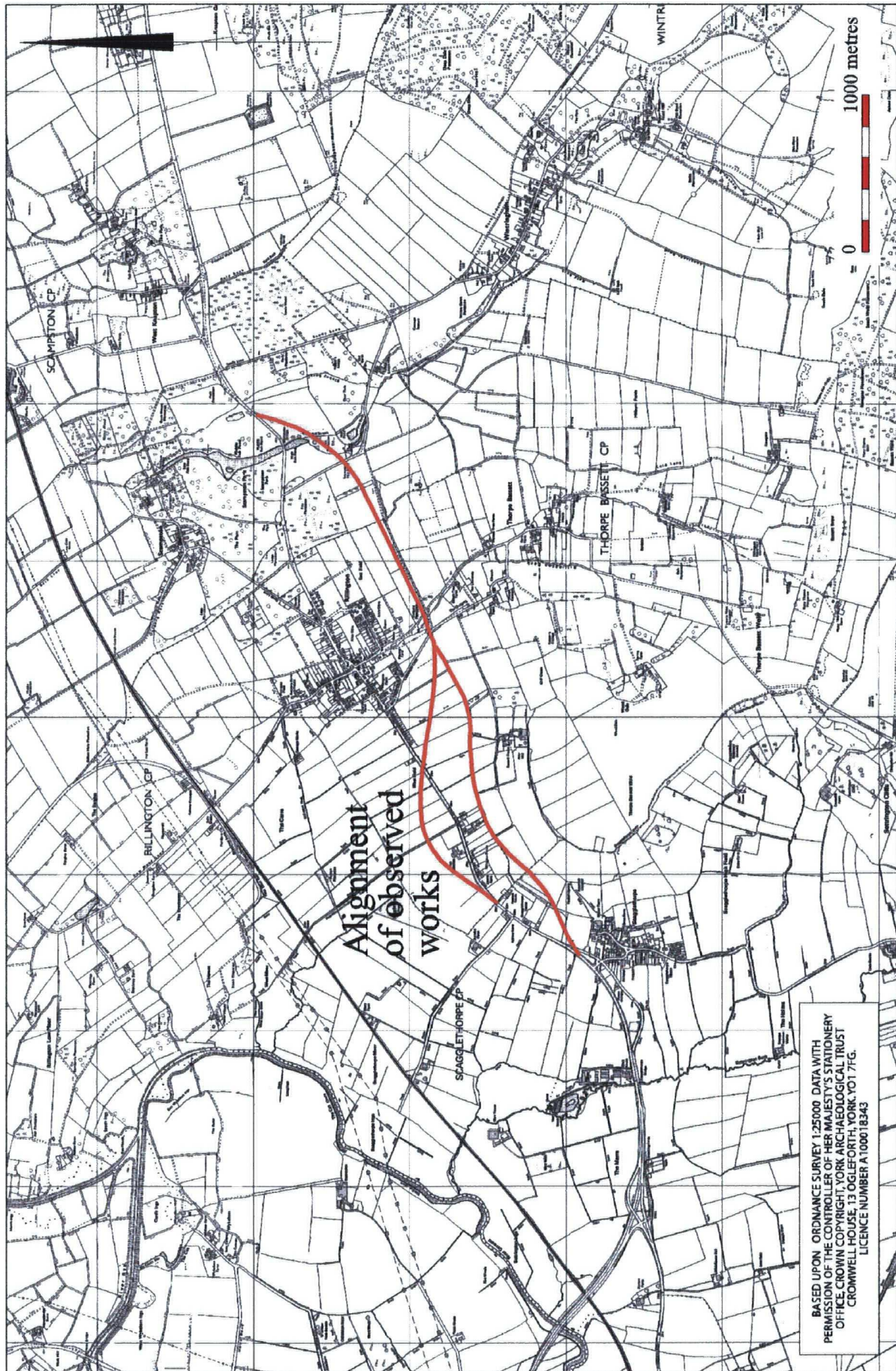


Figure 1 Location of works

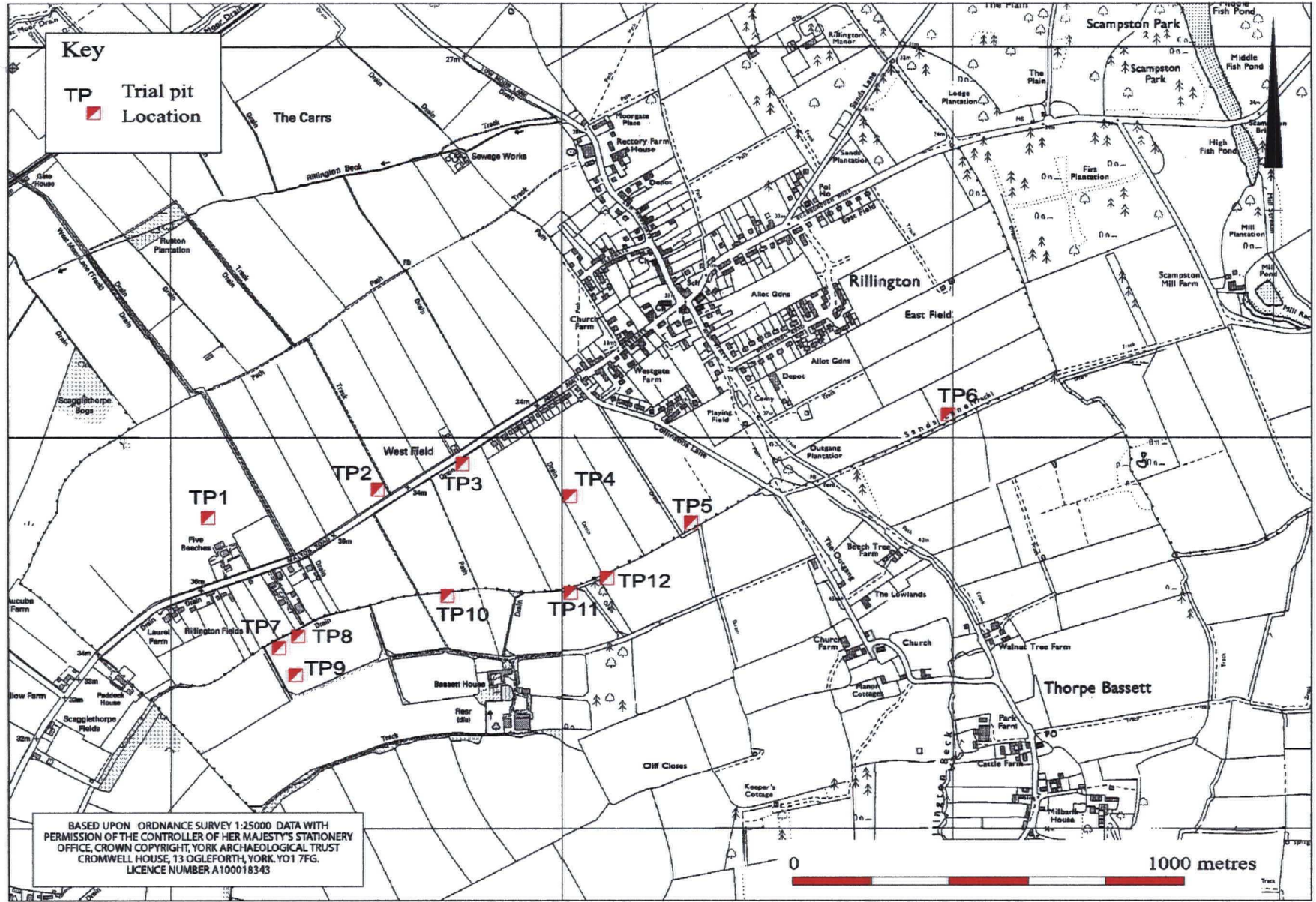


Figure 2 Trial pit location

4. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Rillington is located within a region which is known to be rich in archaeological remains from the prehistoric period onwards. Excavations closer to the village in 1980 found evidence of an Iron Age settlement with enclosure ditches, which corresponds to a major concentration of Iron Age cropmarks to the east of the village (SAM County No. 1117). More recent observations along the High Street in 1994 recorded features which suggest domestic structures from the Roman period. The church of St Andrew in the centre of the village is Norman in date though virtually all of the surrounding buildings are post-medieval.

The 1854 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 3) indicates that the study area was primarily used for agriculture, the one exception being a brick and tile yard in the locality of Trial Pit 8.

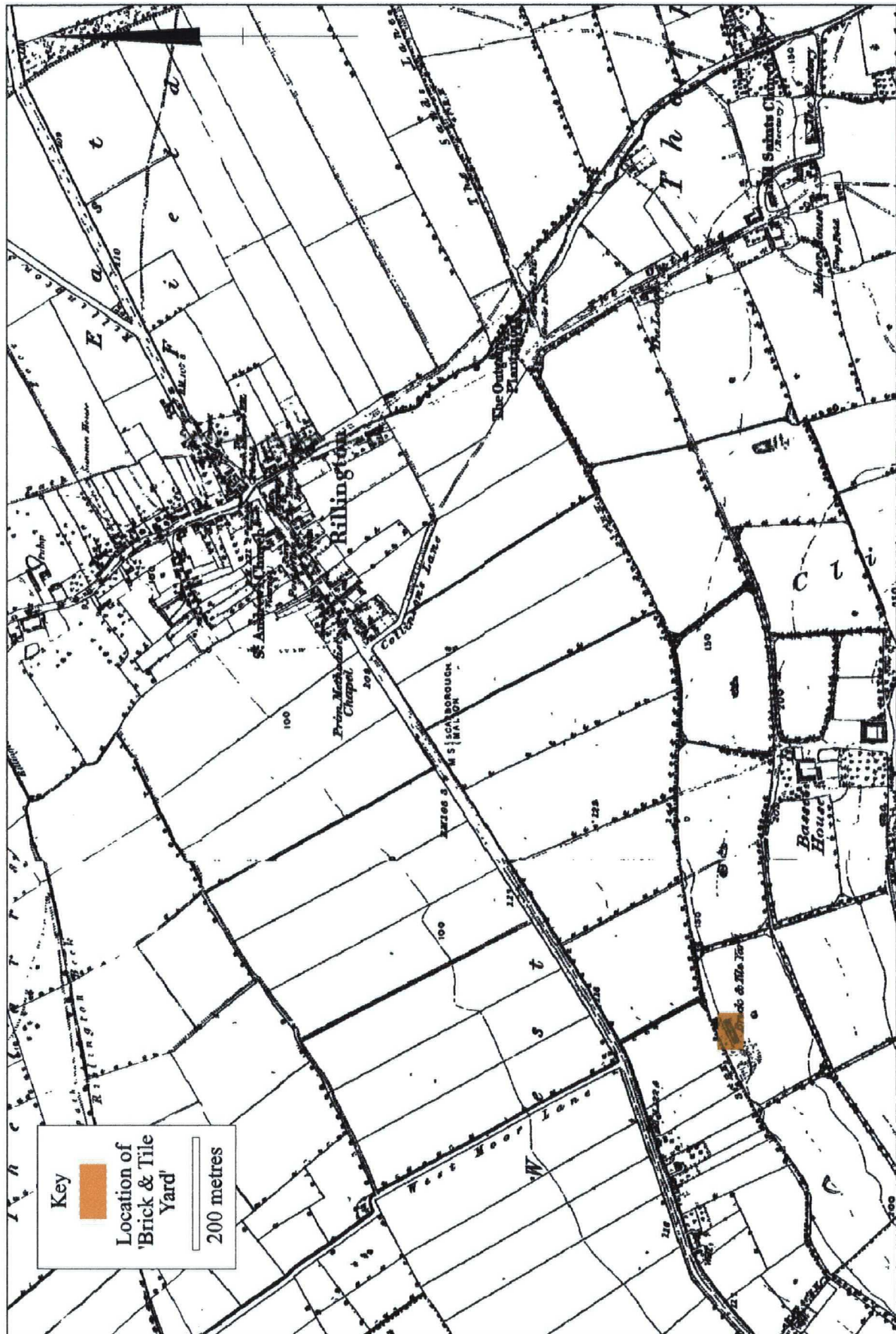


Figure 3 1854 Ordnance Survey map

5. WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

The trial pits were all c.2.05m long, 0.50m wide and 3.00m deep. The position and alignment of the trial pits was decided by the geotechnical engineer. All depths are given as below ground level (BGL).

Trial Pit 1 (aligned NNW-SSE) contained firm, brownish reddish orange sand up to a depth of 0.40m BGL which was interpreted as natural. Within this natural deposit was a 0.10m thick lens of gravelly sand at 0.60m BGL which was confirmed with the current tenant farmer as a common occurrence over this area of land. Natural was sealed by 0.10m of orangey greyish brown slightly silty sand subsoil, though the interface between the two deposits was poorly defined. The uppermost deposit was 0.30m of soft slightly greyish brown, slightly silty sand.

Trial Pit 2 (aligned WSW-ENE) revealed two different natural deposits. The soft, orange red sand lower natural continued up to a depth of 1.0m BGL and was sealed by 0.60m of loose, orangey chalk gravel. Between 0.40m and 0.15m BGL a layer of disturbed firm brownish orange sand was present, and was interpreted as buried topsoil/subsoil. The uppermost 0.15m of this trial pit contained compacted cobble and rubble hardcore in a matrix of brownish dark grey silty sand. The test pit was excavated through the rubble at the edge of an area of hard standing and thus the uppermost deposits were disturbed, and contained cobbles and other debris.

Trial Pit 3 (aligned WSW-ENE) was excavated to check for possible contamination of the ground from the petrol station on the opposite side of the A64. Natural firm brownish reddish orange sand deposits were located at 0.55m BGL from where it gradually changed to the firm, orangey greyish brown slightly silty sand subsoil which was present up to a depth of 0.30m BGL. The topsoil was a soft, slightly greyish dark brown silty sand.

Trial Pit 4 (aligned NNW-SSE) had natural deposits up to a depth of c.0.45m BGL. The lower deposit was a soft, brownish orange sand which continued to 0.90m BGL and was sealed by 0.45m of loose greyish yellow gravelly sand. The subsoil which covered the natural deposits was c.0.15m deep and a soft orangey brown slightly gravelly sand in nature. This was topped by 0.30m of soft slightly orangey brown sand with occasional gravel inclusions. The gravel inclusions in the topsoil are thought to be a result of the excavation / re-excavation of the drain to the west of the trench along the field boundary.

Trial Pit 5 (aligned NW-SE) revealed soft reddish and yellowy orange sands up to 0.35m BGL. This was overlain by 0.15m of soft slightly brownish orange subsoil and 0.20m of soft slightly orangey brown topsoil, which had been harrowed recently.

Trial Pit 6 (aligned WSW-ENE) contained soft light orange sand up to 0.90m BGL. This was overlain by 0.50m of soft, friable when disturbed, slightly brownish chalk and chert gravel in sand. Both of these deposits were interpreted as natural. The c.0.20m thick layer of soft, slightly brownish orange sand subsoil was sealed by 0.20m of soft slightly orangey brown, slightly silty sand topsoil, the surface of which had been disturbed recently by harrow.

Trial Pit 7 (aligned SW-NE) uncovered firm orangey yellowy light brown sand from 0.60m BGL to the limit of excavation. This was sealed by a 0.35m deep, firm, brownish orange slightly clayey sand with occasional charcoal flecks, the origin of which is uncertain but may be a slightly disturbed subsoil. In turn this was sealed by 0.15m of brick and tile fragments that had no evidence of mortar on them. The uppermost 0.10m was a shallow friable slightly orangey

brown silty sand. The shallow layer of brick and tile is interpreted as some sort of dumping or levelling, though it is interesting to note that the bricks were relatively recent in date and had no sign of mortar so had not been used in a wall or other bonded structure.

Trial Pit 8 (aligned NNW-SSE) contained natural firm orangey yellow clayey sand up to a depth of 0.50m BGL. Natural was sealed by a 0.30m deep layer of chalk and tile fragments in a firm greyish yellow sandy clay matrix with a higher percentage of rubble towards the surface. This was sealed by friable, slightly greyish light brown clay/sand topsoil for the top 0.20m. The layer of dumping/levelling is similar to that in Trial Pit 7 but again did not produce any structural elements for the 'brick and tile yard' visible on the 1854 Ordnance Survey map.

Trial Pit 9 (aligned NE-SW) was situated to investigate the top edge of a slip in the natural below, thus the south-western end of the trial pit had ground level at c.0.30m higher than the north-eastern end. For the following descriptions ground level relates to the north-eastern end of the trench. Understandably the natural deposits in this pit were slightly disturbed but the bottom 1.20m of the section showed hard, slightly blueish grey 'glimmerings' clay bedrock. This was overlain by a 0.15m thick lens of orange sand and then a yellowy grey clay which continued up to c.1.00m BGL, although it sloped downwards from the south-west to the north-east. This was covered by a further 0.60m of soft orange sand and then 0.20m of firm light brownish yellow clay. All of these deposits were interpreted as natural. The top 0.20m of the section was made up of firm, slightly orangey light brown slightly sandy clay topsoil/subsoil with occasional small chalk fragment inclusions.

Trial Pit 10 (aligned W-E) had some soft greyish clay at its very base that continued up to 2.60m BGL. Overlying the clay was a 1.10m thick deposit of soft, orange slightly clayey sand and together both were interpreted as natural. This was sealed by firm, slightly greenish grey sandy clay that was visible in section up to 0.95m BGL. The unusual colour and associated odour suggested that the deposit was a buried topsoil, and is further confirmed by the overlying compacted grey mixed sand and rubble with limestone, tarmac and sewer pipe inclusions. The uppermost 0.30m of the trial pit was made up of a firm mottled orange and brown silty sand topped by pasture. It is thought that the rubble in this trench is from a large area of dumped material. This was visible as an area of flat ground and is confirmed by the c.1.00m drop in ground level at the other side of the field boundary to the north.

Trial Pit 11 (aligned WSW-ENE) revealed a series of natural deposits, the lowest of which was a solid, slightly blueish grey 'Kimmeridge' clay bedrock visible from c.2.60m down to the limit of excavation at 3.00m. Overlying this was 0.80m of slightly mixed yellowy orange sand and brownish grey clay, which was in turn sealed by 0.40m of soft yellow sand and finally a compact (due to drying) light brownish orange sandy clay which was present up to 0.45m BGL. The 0.25m thick layer of firm, orangey light brown silt/sand subsoil was sealed by a 0.20m thick deposit of firm, greyish dark brown sandy silt topsoil, topped by pasture.

Trial Pit 12 (aligned WSW-ENE) contained at least three different layers of natural materials. The lowest continued up to c.2.5m BGL and was a soft brownish grey clay which was sealed by soft brownish orange slightly clayey sand up to c.1.30m BGL and finally firm brownish yellowy orange silty sand/clay to a depth of 0.35m BGL. Overlying natural was a 0.15m thick layer of firm slightly yellowy orange light brown silty sand/clay interpreted as subsoil. Finally this was sealed by 0.20m of firm slightly orangey brown silty sandy clay topsoil which was topped by pasture.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The watching brief revealed no deposits of archaeological significance. The trial pits which contained materials derived from human activity other than topsoil contained only relatively recent dumping and levelling deposits. Although no significant deposits were revealed during this watching brief this does not confirm that there are no archaeological deposits along the length of the bypass. Such a small sample of the area, as conducted here, would be fortunate to locate archaeological features and a more complete regime of geophysical survey and evaluation trenches would give a more accurate picture of any archaeology which may be under threat.

7. LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Watching brief	Toby Kendall BSc MA
Report text	Toby Kendall BSc MA
Illustrations	Russell Marwood & Toby Kendall BSc MA
Editor	Patrick Ottaway