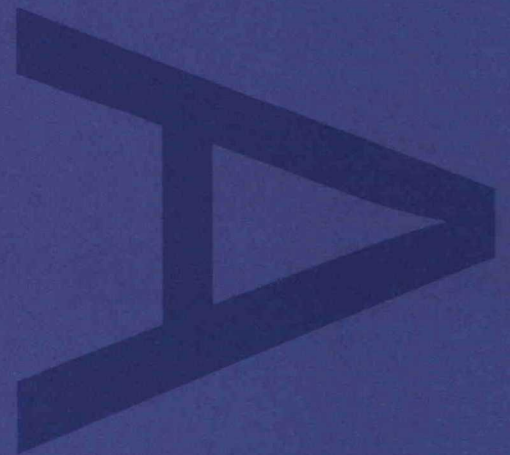
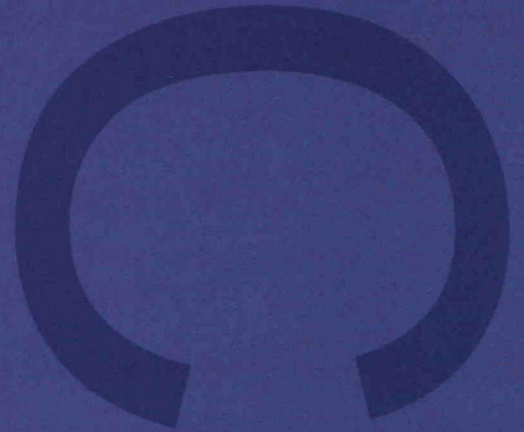


NYCC HER

SNY	9798
ENY	2038
CNY	2718
Parish	2011
Rec'd	17/3/04

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION ON
LAND TO THE REAR OF 26 MARKET PLACE,
BEDALE, NORTH YORKSHIRE



PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

Rec 17-3-4

E 2038

2011 parish

C 2718

S 9798

M 24305, M 24306

**An Archaeological Excavation on
Land to the Rear of 26 Market Place, Bedale, North Yorkshire**

Summary Report and Data Assessment

Site Central NGR: SE 265 881

Site Code: BED 03

Developer:
McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Limited

**McCARTHY
& STONE**
(Developments) Limited

NYCC	
SNY	9798
ENY	2038
CNY	2718
Parish	2011
Rec'd	17/03/04

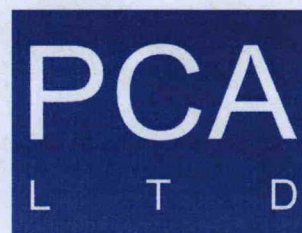
Commissioning Client:
CgMs Consulting
7th Floor
Newspaper House
8-16 Great New Street
London
EC4A 3BN

Tel: 0207 583 6767



Contractor:
Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
Northern Office
Unit 19a, TurSDale Business Park
TurSDale
Durham
DH6 5PG

Tel: 0191 377 1111



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March 2004**

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PART A: PROJECT SUMMARY

1. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological excavation undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology in advance of development on land to the rear of 26 Market Place, Bedale, North Yorkshire. The central National Grid Reference of the site is SE 265 881.
- 1.2 The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Limited. The archaeological investigations involved a programme of excavation, recording and sampling for palaeoenvironmental data. The fieldwork took place between the 24th September and 28th October 2003.
- 1.3 The fieldwork involved excavation, recording and environmental sampling within an irregularly shaped trench measuring a maximum of c. 64m x 22m, covering the footprint of the main building in the proposed development. An earlier evaluation of the site, undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology in April 2002, had identified the archaeological potential of this area.
- 1.4 The evaluation identified the presence of medieval deposits and features to the north-east of the proposed development footprint, along with the northern edge of a prehistoric wetland area. Further evaluation trenches, located to the south, also encountered deposits associated with the prehistoric wetland. Radiocarbon dating undertaken on samples of peat formations from the former wetland area suggested that the peat sequence accumulated during the Mesolithic period, between 4550 BC and 7300 BC. An evaluation trench in the south-western corner of the site encountered only natural boulder clay, suggesting that the southern margin of the prehistoric wetland area lay within the central portion of the site.
- 1.5 The archaeological excavations detailed in this report confirmed the findings of the earlier evaluation. Part of an edge to the prehistoric wetland area was encountered in the south-western corner of the trench. Substantial deposits – up to at least 1.20m thick - of laminated alluvial silts were recorded extending northwards from this edge, these representing lake-bed sediments. Part of a northern edge to the wetland area had been identified in the evaluation in the north-eastern part of the site.
- 1.6 During the excavation, an extensive programme of sampling for palaeoecological/bioarchaeological data was undertaken on the alluvial deposits and peat sequence. Column samples were taken from two sections, in the eastern and central parts of the trench. Analysis of these demonstrated that the deposits were organic silts and peats of early Holocene/Mesolithic date. The pollen assemblages recorded early Holocene vegetation changes, and evidence from the easternmost sample suggested a slightly earlier phase of landscape development (possibly as early as the Late-glacial). All of the plant and insect assemblages indicated aquatic deposition, although in some cases in a swamp environment rather than open water. The sequence of insect assemblages from the central section seems to show a change from open water to swamp, and this was supported by the pollen evidence.
- 1.7 Six radiocarbon dates were obtained from the column samples, one from a silt deposit and five from the sequence of peat deposits. The results ranged from cal BC 7970 to 6050, with the earliest peat deposit being dated to cal BC 7040 to 6670.

- 1.8 Some evidence of much later land-use was also recorded during the excavation. Ditches, evidently part of a long-lived rectilinear system of boundaries, were encountered. One of these produced medieval pottery dating to the 13th–14th century. Such ditches would have defined the boundaries of backlots to medieval burgage plots – these essentially remaining fossilised in the present day property boundaries – as well as creating sub-divisions within the narrow backlots. Bulk samples were taken from two of the ditch fills and the plant and invertebrate remains present indicate that these features held water. One of the samples contained evidence for human activity in the form of flax retting (soaking of the stems to soften the fibres).
- 1.9 Evidence for an episode of alluvial inundation, of probable medieval date, was recorded in the north-eastern part of the site, before there was some reinstatement of the existing plot boundaries and sub-divisions.
- 1.10 Cartographic evidence indicates that there was little development within the majority of the site until the late 19th or early 20th century, when cottages and a gas house were erected. Evidence of this activity was recorded during the excavation.
- 1.11 This Post-Excavation Assessment Report is divided into two parts. Part A, the Project Summary, includes an introduction to the site, its location, geology and topography, planning and archaeological background, and a full description of the archaeological methodology employed during the investigations. It concludes with an illustrated summary of the archaeological remains representing each of the main phases of occupation, and an overall discussion of the archaeological findings of the project. Part B, the Data Assessment, quantifies the written, graphic and photographic elements of the project archive and contains specialist assessments of the artefactual evidence, with recommendations for further analysis for each category of data.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 General Background

- 2.1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological excavation undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (hereafter PCA) on land to the rear of 26 Market Place, Bedale, North Yorkshire (Figure 1). The work was undertaken between the 24th September and 28th October 2003 in advance of a residential development. The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting (hereafter CgMs), on behalf of McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Limited (hereafter the Client).
- 2.1.2 The site comprises a roughly rectangular block of land, approximately 0.5 hectares in area (Figure 2). It is bounded to the north-east by the back yards and outbuilding of properties fronting onto Market Place, to the south-east by an access driveway servicing a property fronting onto Market Place, to the south-west by a lane to the rear of Beech Cottage and to the north-west by Wagon and Horses Yard. Prior to the fieldwork, the site was occupied by derelict buildings and areas of open yard and hardstanding.
- 2.1.3 The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken as a planning condition of Hambleton District Council (hereafter HDC), upon the recommendation of the Heritage Unit at North Yorkshire County Council (hereafter the Heritage Unit), in order to mitigate the impact of the development upon the archaeological resource.
- 2.1.4 The fieldwork involved excavation and recording within an area measuring c. 1,077m² within the footprint of the proposed development. The excavation area was identified as being of potential archaeological interest following a field evaluation undertaken by PCA in April 2002.¹
- 2.1.5 The excavation was undertaken under the direction Gavin Glover and project management of Robin Taylor-Wilson. A Specification for the archaeological excavation was prepared by Rob Bourn of CgMs.² The fieldwork was monitored by the Heritage Unit.
- 2.1.6 The format of this post-excavation assessment report follows the methodology outlined in 'Management of Archaeological Projects- 2nd edition' (hereafter MAP2).²
- 2.1.7 The completed project archive, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, as well as artefactual material, will be deposited with York Castle Museum, under the site code BED 03. The accession number is YORYM: 2003.274.

¹ PCA, 2003.

² Bourn, 2003.

³ English Heritage, 1991.

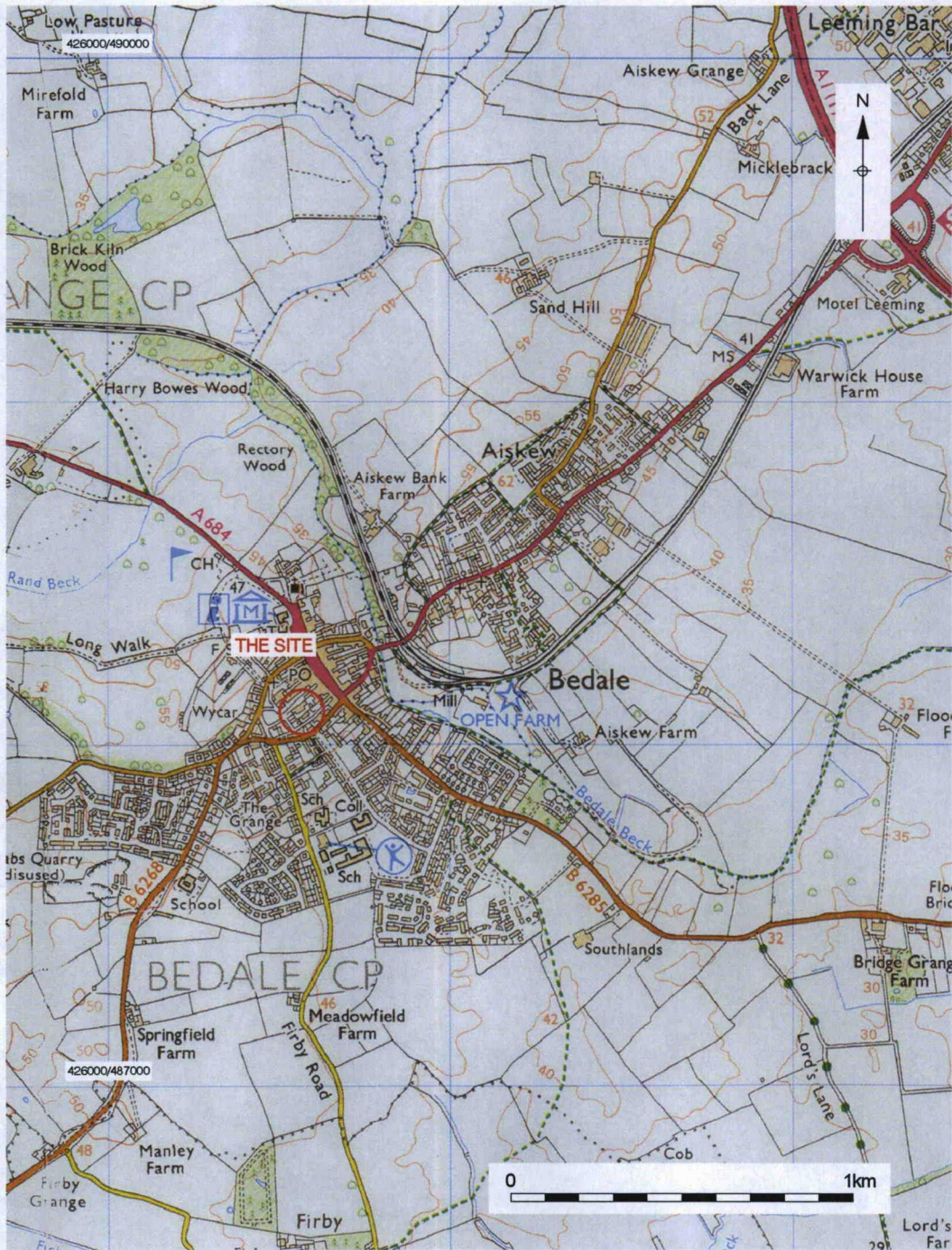


Figure 1. Site location
Scale 1:20,000

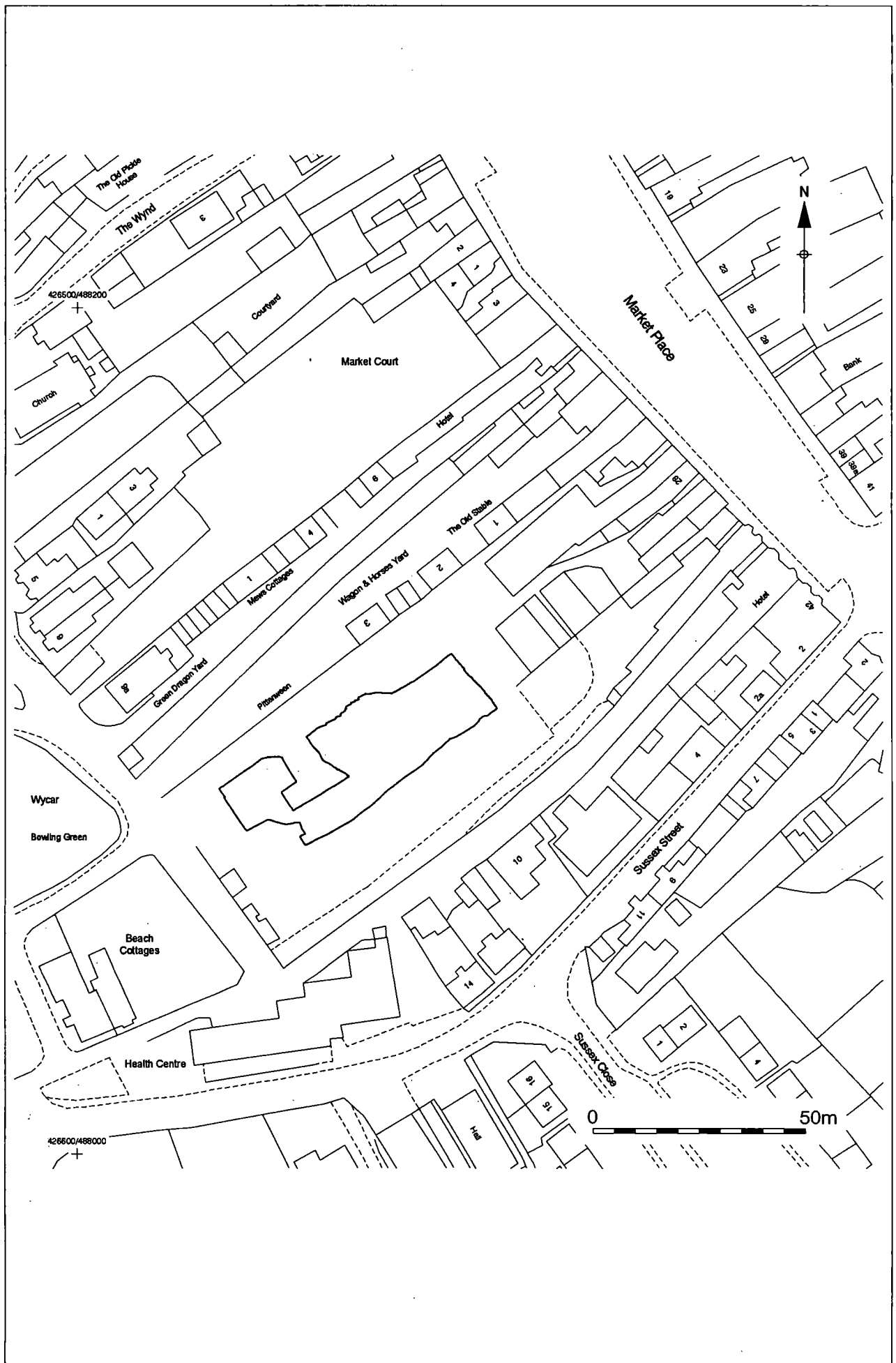


Figure 2. Trench location
Scale 1:1250

2.2 Planning Background

- 2.2.1 The need for early consultation in the planning process in order to determine the impact of development schemes upon the archaeological resource is identified in the document 'Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16)'.⁴ The Heritage Unit provides archaeological advice in relation to planning matters and advises all Local Planning Authorities in North Yorkshire on such matters.
- 2.2.2 Outline planning permission had been granted by HDC for the demolition of the existing structures at the site and the construction of a 2/3 storey residential development, car parking and landscaping. An archaeological evaluation conducted in April 2002 by PCA revealed the presence of a prehistoric wetland area and archaeological features and deposits dating from the medieval period.
- 2.2.3 Accordingly, the Heritage Unit recommended that archaeological investigations within the footprint of the proposed development should be undertaken, in order to mitigate the impact of the development upon the archaeological resource. Planning permission was granted with an archaeological condition attached requiring the excavation of medieval deposits within the eastern end of the site and further sampling of deposits associated with the prehistoric wetland.
- 2.2.4 The work described herein formed this latest stage of the overall mitigation scheme to record archaeological remains at this site.

2.3 Site Location and Description

- 2.3.1 The site lies in the centre of Bedale, directly to the west of Market Place, c. 250m to the west of Bedale Beck.
- 2.3.2 The site comprises a roughly rectangular area, aligned approximately NE-SW, and covers c. 0.5 hectares. The central National Grid Reference of the site is SE 265 881. It is bounded to the north-east by the back yards and outbuilding of properties fronting onto the Market Place (including 26 Market Place), to the south-east by an access driveway servicing a property fronting onto the Market Place, to the south-west by a lane to the rear of Beech Cottage and to the north-west by Wagon and Horses Yard. Prior to the fieldwork, the site was occupied by derelict buildings and areas of open yard and hardstanding.

2.3 Geology and Topography

- 2.3.1 At the time of the archaeological excavation herein described, there was a distinct step in ground level at the site. The north-western margin, parallel to Wagon and Horses Yard, stood at c. 41.30m OD, while to the south, ground level across the majority of the excavation area stood at c. 40.0m OD.

⁴ Department of the Environment, 1990.

2.3.2 The solid geology of the Bedale area consists of the Cadeby Formation (formerly Lower Magnesian Limestone). The local drift geology comprises laminated silt and boulder clay, interieaved in places with fluvioglacial sand and gravel.⁵

2.5 Archaeological and Historical Background

2.5.1 Bedale originated before the Nonnan Conquest. The church is mentioned in the Domesday Book survey, carried out in the area in 1085. A large church existed at this date, implying that the town was well established by this period, and indeed, stonework dating to the late 9th and early 10th centuries is preserved in the church. The town was not destroyed during the 'Devastation of the North', 1069-1071. The valuation of the parish was exceptionally low in the Domesday Book, far lower than one would expect for such a focal market town, but is still a higher value than before the Conquest, indicating the importance of the market, even surrounded by wastelands. The FitzAlan family retained the manor in the years after the Conquest, and close links were maintained with the Lords of Richmond.

2.5.2 Bedale became a prosperous settlement during the medieval period, mainly as a result of the wool trade, and the town was granted a market charter by Henry III in 1251. The town takes the form of a 'conidor village', a common style of medieval settlement, mainly seen in the land between the Tyne and the Tees, but which extends across the north of England. This type of town plan involves two facades of buildings, constructed to face one another, often with an area of 'green' between them. The rows of buildings are sub-divided into tenements which occupy narrow street frontages, with long thin backlots extending away from the dwellings, these containing features such as outbuildings, yards and middens.

2.5.3 For much of its later history, Bedale was a minor estate of the Earls of Arundel, whose manor stood at Bedale Hall. No trace of this manor remains, and a Georgian building occupies the site now. The Market Cross appears to date from the 14th century, but for the most part the fabric of the town is of Georgian or more modern construction. The town appears to have been fairly prosperous during the post-medieval period, supporting small industries of weaving, dyeing, fulling and tanning. However, as these industries declined, the town came to rely on the market for prosperity.

2.5.4 Several post-medieval buildings stood on the site prior to the development, these were presumably constructed during the 19th century, but are not detailed on the 1838 Tithe map.

2.5.5 The archaeological evaluation undertaken in April 2002 revealed the presence of prehistoric wetland deposits in the central portion of the site and archaeological remains of the medieval period towards the street frontage. Assessment of pollen recovered from peat within the wetland area suggested an ancient area of grass-sedge fen surrounded by willow, with birch woodland being the dominant terrestrial vegetation. Radiocarbon dating of the peat formations demonstrated that this material accumulated during the Mesolithic period. Medieval remains, including the possible foundation trench for a wall and associated deposits, were encountered in the north-eastern part of the site.

⁵ Powell et al., 1992.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The general objectives of the archaeological excavation were:

- to locate, sample, record and interpret any archaeological deposits exposed;
- to locate, recover, identify and conserve (as appropriate) any archaeological artefacts exposed;
- to prepare a report summarising the results of the work;
- to prepare and submit a suitable archive to an appropriate museum.

3.2 Particular objectives of the fieldwork were:

- to fully assess the environmental material in the prehistoric wetland area so as to be able to establish the environmental conditions surrounding the site;
- to establish whether there was any lakeside human activity or settlement in the area during prehistory;
- to establish the nature of the medieval activity within the site (*i.e.* presence/absence of industrial activity, subsidiary occupation, etc.) and how this related to the development and occupation of the Market Place.

4. FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

4.1 Fieldwork

- 4.1.1 The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the relevant standard and guidance document of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA). PCA is IFA-registered.
- 4.1.2 The area investigated comprised an irregular, but roughly rectangular, trench measuring a maximum of 64m x 22m, representing the footprint of the proposed development. Diesel contamination towards the southern end of the area limited the extent of detailed investigation. The extreme southernmost corner had been affected by severe truncation due to the location of the former gas house; this area was not exposed (Figure 2). The total area of investigation was thus 1,077m².
- 4.1.3 The removal of overburden and subsequent ground reduction was undertaken by a tracked 360° mechanical excavator employing a 1.80m wide toothless bucket. This work took place under the direct guidance of the supervising archaeologist. All undifferentiated topsoil or modern overburden was stripped down, in spits of approximately 100mm thickness, to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon.
- 4.1.4 The fieldwork was undertaken in two phases due to the need to retain spoil on site. Firstly, the north-eastern portion of the site was stripped and spoil was mounded to the south-west. Subsequently the south-western portion was investigated with the spoil being stored on part of the completed north-eastern area.
- 4.1.5 In an attempt to obtain a profile of the prehistoric wetland area, a NE-SW aligned sondage was machine excavated to a depth of 1.20m along the south-western limit of the excavation area. It was not possible to excavate to a greater depth due to the unstable nature of the deposits. Sondages were also hand excavated through the wetland deposits in the central part of the trench and adjacent to the north-eastern limit of excavation.
- 4.1.6 Four column samples (two parallel columns in each section) were taken through the wetland deposits in the central and north-eastern sondages. Steel Kubiena tins were utilised for this. Two bulk sediment samples were taken from the fills of medieval ditches. These samples were submitted to Palaeoecology Research Services (hereafter PRS), for an assessment of their palaeoecological/bioarchaeological potential.
- 4.1.7 Excavation and recording was carried out in accordance with recognised archaeological practice and following the methodology set out in both PCA's *Field Recording Manual*⁶ and the Specification. Following machine clearance, the sections and base of the trench were cleaned using hand tools. Excavated features and stratigraphic deposits were recorded in section and drawn at a scale of 1:10. Excavated features were recorded in plan at a scale of 1:20 relative to a site grid established within the excavation area and tied in to the Ordnance Survey grid using a Nikon Total Station EDM.

⁶ PCA, 1999.

4.1.8 Archaeological deposits and features were recorded using a 'single context planning' system. They were recorded on pro forma context record sheets.

4.1.9 A detailed photographic record of the investigations was compiled. This included black and white prints and colour transparencies (on 35mm film), illustrating the principal features and finds in detail and in general context. All photographs of this nature included a clearly visible graduated metric scale. The photographic record also included 'working shots' to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological investigations.

4.1.10 Two Temporary Bench Marks (TBMs) were established on the site from the Ordnance Survey Bench Mark located on the north-eastern side of the Market Place, close to the Market Cross, which had a value of 41.19m OD. The TBMs had values of 41.20m OD and 40.62m OD.

4.2 Post-excavation

4.2.1 This report is the culmination of a phase of post-excavation assessment of the findings of the archaeological excavation. It includes an assessment of the stratigraphic, artefactual and environmental data recovered, in accordance with the guidelines of English Heritage, as set out in MAP2.

4.2.2 The stratigraphic data from the site is represented by the written, drawn and photographic records. Post-excavation work involved checking and collating site records, grouping contexts, enhancing matrices, consulting with external specialists and phasing the stratigraphic data. A written summary of the archaeological sequence was then compiled, as described below in Section 5. The contents of the written, graphic and photographic archive are quantified in Section 7.

4.2.3 The artefactual material from the site comprised a small assemblage of pottery. In addition a small quantity of animal bone was recovered by hand. All material was washed, dried, marked, conserved and packaged, as appropriate, and according to relevant guidelines.⁷ Specialist assessment of the pottery and bone assemblages was undertaken, as described below in Sections 8 and 9. No other categories of inorganic or organic artefactual material were represented.

4.2.4 Survival of all materials recovered during or generated by archaeological projects depends upon suitable storage. The complete project archive, comprising written, graphic and photographic records (including all material generated electronically during post-excavation) and all recovered materials have been packaged for long term curation according to relevant guidelines.⁸ The depositional requirements of the receiving body, in this case York Castle Museum, will be met in full. The accession number is YORYM: 2003.274.

4.2.5 Data will be prepared for accession to the North Yorkshire County Sites and Monuments Record.

⁷ Watkinson and Neal, 1998; UKIC, 1983.

⁸ UKIC, 1990.

5. PHASED SUMMARY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

5.1 Phase i: Natural sub-stratum

5.1.1 The earliest natural deposit recorded at the site was glacial sand and gravel, [155], yellow in colour with brown and grey mottling. This was exposed over an area measuring c. 14.40m x 4.60m in the westernmost part of the site and was recorded at a maximum height of 40.10m OD (Figure 3). There was a gentle slope down from south to north across the exposed area. Much of this deposit had been contaminated by diesel, therefore, due to Health and Safety considerations, it was only possible to examine the northernmost c. 5m in detail.

5.1.2 The natural sand and gravel, [169], was also exposed at the base of a sondage in the north-eastern end of the trench (Section 17). This comprised dark bluish grey, coarse sand, fine gravel and clay. It was exposed over a 0.71m wide strip at the base of the sondage and the highest level at which it was recorded was 39.08m OD.

5.2 Phase ii: Prehistoric lake

5.2.1 The edge of a substantial feature, [156], truncated the natural sub-stratum in the south-western part of the site (Figure 3). It was recorded over a distance of 14.44m and at a maximum height of 40.10m OD. This feature is interpreted as part of the edge of a prehistoric wetland area, probably a lake. Two sections were hand excavated at the edge of the lake deposits in this area and these revealed a gently sloping profile (Figure 3 and Figure 10, Sections 14 and 15). The lake-bed was excavated for a distance of 3.30m in Section 15, and over this distance it dropped from a height of 39.96m OD to 39.14m OD.

5.2.2 At the north-eastern end of the trench, the natural sub-stratum was overlain by silt deposits (Figure 11, Section 17). The boundary between these deposits is also interpreted as the edge or base, [170], of the lake. This was encountered at a height of 39.08m OD.

5.3 Phase III: Prehistoric lake sediments

5.3.1 A deep sequence of alluvial silts, [6], [7], [9]-[14], [24], [25], [28]-[33], [41]-[45], [49]-[58], [63], [68]-[70], [72], [73], [105]-[114], [120]-[122], [152]-[154], [159]-[168] and [176], was recorded in sondages across the excavation area. These deposits were largely composed of fine silts and sands with occasional clay bands, varying from very light browns to dark browns with occasional blue and green hues. These silts are interpreted as water deposited lake-bed sediments. The profile of the alluvial sequence recorded along the NE-SW orientated limit of excavation gives a useful indication of the general profile of the underlying lake-bed (Figure 4, Section 1).

5.3.2 The highest level at which the alluvium was encountered was in the south-western corner of the site, where deposit [153] was recorded in plan at a height of 40.10m OD.

- 5.3.3 It was only possible to excavate the full thickness of the alluvial deposits at the margins of the lake. The deposits in Section 15 in the south-western part of the trench had a combined maximum thickness of 0.50m. In Section 17, in the north-eastern part of the trench, the combined thickness of the alluvial material was 0.70m, in this area the highest level at which alluvium was recorded was 39.77m OD.
- 5.3.4 The maximum excavated thickness of the alluvial deposits along the NE-SW orientated limit of excavation was 1.20m (Figure 4, Section 1), the deposits continued below the base of excavation. The highest level at which the alluvium was recorded in this section was 39.62m OD, at the northern end, sloping down to a level of 39.04m OD, at the southern end.
- 5.3.5 In the centre of the trench, and presumably towards the centre of the lake, the alluvium was encountered at a maximum height of 38.80m OD and excavated for a maximum thickness of 0.70m, continuing beyond the base of excavation. For reasons of Health and Safety it was not possible to fully excavate the alluvium and expose the base of the lake in this area.
- 5.3.6 A radiocarbon date of cal BC 7970 to 7650 was obtained from alluvial deposit [176] in Section 18 in the central part of the trench.

5.4 Phase IV: Prehistoric peat formation

- 5.4.1 A series of peat horizons overlay the alluvial silts across the majority of the site. The peat deposits, [8], [40], [48], [67], [71], [85], [86], [97], [127], [151], [158] and [171]-[175], generally comprised layers of friable peat, varying from dark brown to yellowish brown and orange brown in colour. The highest level at which peat was encountered was at 39.96m OD in the south-western part of the trench, context [151]. It extended across the entire excavation area for a distance of c. 64m x c. 22m. The maximum thickness of the peat was c. 1m in the central part of the trench (Figure 11, Section 18), thinning out towards the edges of the lake (Figure 10, Sections 14 and 15).
- 5.4.2 The peat is indicative of a former wetland area and detailed palaeoenvironmental information has been recovered from the deposits (see below). A series of radiocarbon dates were obtained from the peat sequence; the earliest peat layers dated to cal BC 7040 to 6670 and the latest to cal BC 6230 to 6050. This establishes the sequence of peat formation within a 1000 year period, within the Mesolithic period.

5.5 Phase V: Medieval activity

5.5.1 Phase V.1: Boundary ditches

- 5.5.1.1 Towards the north-eastern side of the trench, a NW-SE aligned ditch, [39], truncated the underlying peat deposit (Figure 3). This ditch recorded for a distance of 13.50m, being truncated to the north by a construction cut and meeting the limit of excavation to the south. The ditch was up to 1.80m wide x 0.93m deep and the highest recorded level at the top of the feature was 39.75m OD.

- 5.5.1.2 Three sections were recorded through this ditch and these revealed a consistent profile with steep sides and a concave base (Figure 4, Section 1 and Figure 9, Sections 12 and 13). The ditch fills in each of these sections were broadly comparable.
- 5.5.1.3 At the southernmost recorded extent of ditch [39], its fills comprised a sequence of silty deposits [34]-[38], comprising grey and brown silty sands, varying in thickness between 0.09m and 0.16m (Section 1). A similar sequence, [148-146], [139] and [38], was recorded in Section 13, c. 5m to the west. A third sondage, located a further 9m to the west, recorded a similar sequence of fills, [145-140] and [38], varying from 0.04m to 0.30m thick. The composition of the fills from each of the excavated portions suggest that the ditch silted-up rather than having been deliberately backfilled.
- 5.5.1.4 A second ditch, [18], was located c. 20m to the south-west of ditch [39], and running parallel to it (Figure 3). This ditch extended across the excavation area for a distance of 8.36m NW-SE, at which point it measured 0.90m wide x 0.73m deep. Its profile was similar to that of ditch [39], with steep sides and a concave base. The ditch bifurcated at right angles immediately adjacent to the limit of excavation. The NE-SW aligned portion extended for a distance of c. 19m. This feature was recorded as ditch [133] in Section 1.
- 5.5.1.5 Ditch [18] was filled with a sequence of organic silts and clays. Two sondages were excavated across the NW-SE aligned segment of the ditch (Figure 3 and Figure 5, Sections 2 and 4). The primary fill, [17], comprised dark brown silty clay up to 0.32m thick and this was overlain by fill [16], which comprised dark greyish brown silty clay, up to 0.52m thick. A similar sequence of silts and clays was recorded in Section 1, which the ditch, recorded as [133], met at an oblique angle. The primary fill, [5], comprised brownish grey silt, 0.27m thick, and this was sealed by a deposit of dark grey clay silt, [123], 0.15m thick. This in turn was overlain by a deposit of mid brown organic silty clay, recorded as [04] and [129], either side of a modern intrusion. The latest fills, [130] and [131], comprised organic silty clay deposits, 0.27m and 0.23m thick, respectively.
- 5.5.1.6 A single stakehole, [66], was recorded adjacent to ditch [18] on its eastern side. Sub-circular in shape, it measured 80mm x 70mm x 0.15m deep and had vertical sides and a pointed base. The tip of a sharpened wooden stake, [65], was recovered from the stakehole. It may have been related to ditch [18], but this is far from certain.
- 5.5.1.7 Ditches [39] and [18] are likely to have been broadly contemporary; they were similar in alignment, profile, dimensions and their fills were of a similar nature. The NE-SW alignment of one part of ditch [18] reflects the existing alignment of property boundaries on the west side of the Market Place - essentially the medieval burgage plot boundaries fossilised in the modern layout of the town. The NW-SE alignment of that ditch and the exposed portion of ditch [39] represent sub-division within the burgage plots:
- 5.5.1.8 One sherd of pottery dating from the 13th-14th century was recovered from the upper fill, [16], of ditch [18], along with a few fragments of animal bone. Fragments of animal bone, identified as cattle and sheep, were also recovered from upper fills, [139] and [140], of ditch [39].

- 5.5.1.9 Two bulk environmental samples were taken from fills [139] and [38] of ditch [39]. A full discussion of these appear later in this report, with a short summary below. The plant and invertebrate remains from these samples indicated that the features held water. The species of aquatic beetles and bugs indicated stagnant water and the most frequent remains in the plant assemblage also indicated standing water. This may suggest that the ditches also drained the land as well as delimiting plot boundaries and sub-divisions.
- 5.5.1.10 The presence of seeds, stem fragments and stem epidermis of cultivated flax in the sample from ditch fill [139] provided evidence for human activity, most probably flax retting.
- 5.5.1.11 The truncated base of another NE-SW aligned ditch, [134], was recorded in Section 11 (Figure 8). This was 0.41m wide x 0.34m deep and had very steep sides and a flat base. It had been horizontally truncated by a later feature, [2], and was only visible in section. The highest level at which it survived was 39.24m OD. The primary fill, [135], comprised dark brownish grey silty clay. No cultural material was recovered from ditch [134], but the general similarity with ditches [18] and [39] suggests that it originated from the medieval phase of activity at the site. This may suggest that the burgage plot may have been defined by a double ditch (ditches [18] and [134]).
- 5.5.2 *Phase V.2: Alluvial inundation*
- 5.5.2.1 A layer of soft bluish grey clay, [150], was encountered in the north-eastern half of the site at a maximum height of 39.86m OD. The deposit was recorded over an area measuring c. 5m x 6m, but it was noted that it was present across most of the north-eastern end of the site until removed during the machine stripping of the site. Surviving to a maximum thickness of 0.20m, it is probable that this material was deposited during an episode of flooding.
- 5.5.2.2 Two fragments of medieval pottery, dating from the 13th- 15th century, were recovered from deposit [150], along with a relatively large animal bone assemblage.
- 5.5.3 *Phase V.3: Boundary reinstatement*
- 5.5.3.1 The boundary delimited by ditch [18] appeared to have been reinstated on a number of occasions at a later date. Next in the stratigraphic sequence was another substantial ditch, [2], which closely followed the alignment of the earlier ditch, also turning at right angles, but evidently not bifurcating (Figure 3). It had steep sides and a slightly concave base and its maximum dimensions were 1.50m wide x 0.80m deep (Figure 4, Section 1, Figure 5, Section 2 and Figure 8, Section 11). The ditch measured c. 6.0m along its NW-SE length, c. 16m along its NE-SW length, and had been truncated at either end by modern activity.
- 5.5.3.2 The primary fill, [15], of ditch [2], recorded in Section 2, comprised soft, dark grey silty clay. This was overlain by fill [1], comprising greyish black silty clay. Both fills contained quantities of decayed organic material. The primary fill was also recorded as fills [3] and [135] in sondages excavated through the feature. Three sherds of pottery were recovered from the latest fill, [1], of ditch [2]. One was medieval, one was post-medieval (17th-18th century) and the other was modern. The later material is considered to have been introduced intrusively. A few fragments of cattle and dog bone were also recovered.

5.5.4 *Phase V.4: Boundary reinstatement*

5.5.4.1 The subsequent reinstatement of ditch [2], closely followed its alignment, but slightly to the south of its NE-SW element. This feature, [138], was traced for c. 12m in length x 0.45m wide x 0.20, deep (Figure 4, Section 1 and Figure 8, Section 11). Its fill, recorded as [132] and [137], comprised brownish grey clayey silt.

5.5.5 *Phase V.S: Boundary reinstatement*

5.5.5.1 The latest reinstatement of ditch [2] closely followed the same alignment (in the NE-SW element), but was a much less substantial feature. This feature, [119], was traced for c. 7.70m and was a maximum of 0.56 wide x 0.25m deep (Figure 3 and Figure 8, Section 11). Its fill, [118], comprised light grey clayey silt.

5.5.5.2 A similar feature, [91], truncated the upper fill of Phase V.1 ditch [39] (Figure 3 and Figure 9, Section 12). Also on a NW-SE alignment, this was traced for a distance of c. 6.0m and was 0.35m wide x 0.12m deep. It had irregular sides and base, a square terminal in the north and had been truncated to the south. The fill, [90], comprised soft, mid blue grey silty clay, from which no dating evidence was recovered. It is probable that this feature was a reinstatement of the boundary delimitation represented by the earlier, more substantial, ditch [39].

5.6 *Phase VI: Late post-medieval activity*

5.6.1 A sub-triangular feature, [75], probably the corner of a truncated feature, was recorded to the west of the corner of ditch [2] (Figure 3). The feature had moderately sloping sides and a flat base and had been truncated to the east. The fill, [74], comprised grey silty clay from which no dating evidence was recovered. It was not possible to ascertain the function or precise date of this feature and, on the basis of the excavated evidence, it has thus been tentatively assigned to Phase VI.

5.6.2 Towards the north-eastern end of the site, a large sub-rectangular cut, [82], truncated deposit [150] (Figure 3). It measured 2.0m x 2.80m x 0.45m deep and its fill, [81], comprised yellowish green silty clay. The function of this feature is uncertain as only a small area survived later truncation.

5.6.3 Fill [81] was truncated by a construction cut, [80], for a stone wall, [88] (Figure 3 and Figure 7, Sections 7 and 8). The construction cut measured 6.46m 2.0m x 0.40m deep and had steep sides and a flat base. Several fills were recorded, [83], [79], [84], [78], and [77], to a maximum thickness of 0.35m. It is probable that these fills were make-up deposits for the stone wall; the construction cut truncated the underlying peat, which would have been an unsuitable material upon which to construct a wall.

5.6.4 The wall, [88], was aligned NW-SE and was constructed with roughly-cut degraded limestone blocks and large cobbles, bonded with a sand and chalk mortar. It survived for a length of 5.46m long x 0.20m high and was 0.72m wide. There was a right-angled return at its northern end for a distance of 0.30m, beyond which it was truncated by modern demolition activity. Fragments of pottery dating from the 19th to early 20th century were recovered from fill [77] of the construction cut.

- 5.6.5 Two parallel features, [60] and [62], were located to the south-west of wall [88]. These are interpreted as the continuation of the construction cut for the building represented by wall [88].
- 5.6.6 A substantial rectilinear feature, [95], was recorded at the north-eastern end of the site (Figure 3). Its maximum NW-SE extent was 10.10m and the maximum depth was 0.40m. A variety of fills were recorded, [116], [117], [115], [94], [104] and [96]. The 1913 Ordnance Survey map indicates that this feature represents part of the construction cut for a short row of buildings of late post-medieval date.
- 5.6.7 A construction cut, [93], for a stone wall, [76], was recorded adjacent to the north-eastern limit of excavation (Figure 3 and Figure 6, Section 6). This structure can also be correlated with a boundary on the 1913 Ordnance Survey map.

5.7 Phase VII: Modern activity

- 5.7.1 A number of deposits and features of modern origin were encountered throughout the excavation area. However, these are considered to be of no archaeological significance and are therefore discussed in summary fashion below.
- 5.7.2 As discussed in Section 4 above, the intended southern corner of the trench could not be investigated due to the presence of structural remains from the gasometer, which formerly stood on the site.
- 5.7.3 Feature [103], recorded in section at the southern end of the site, was probably associated with the gasometer (Figure 4, Section 1).
- 5.7.4 Features [23], [27] and [119] and their fills [22], [26] and [118] respectively were all related to drainage activity associated with buildings formerly present on the site.
- 5.7.5 Two further features, [100] and [47], were modern but of uncertain function.

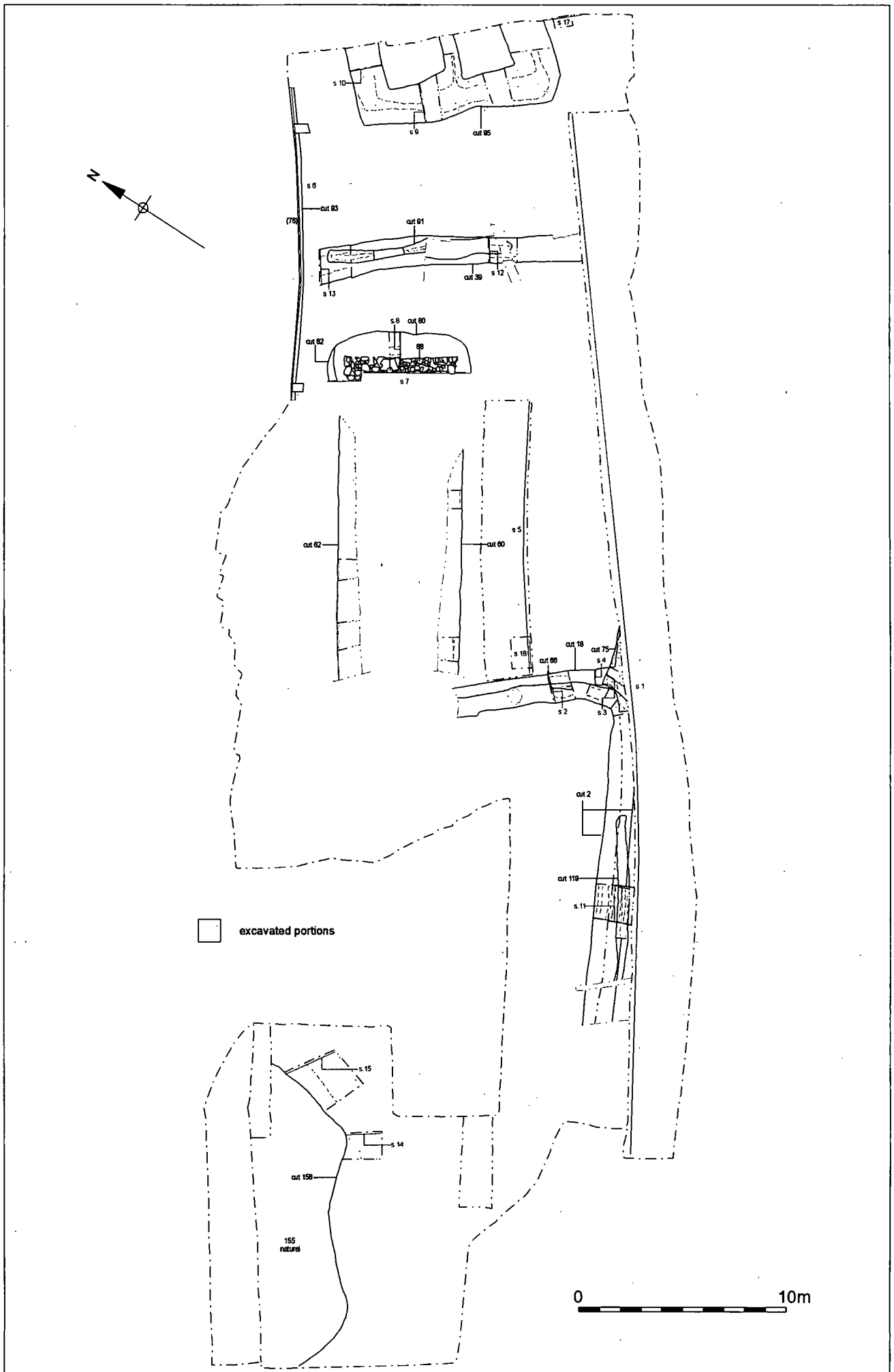
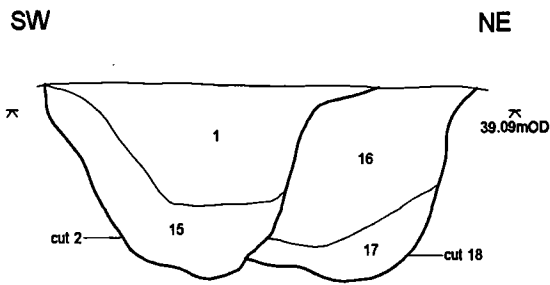


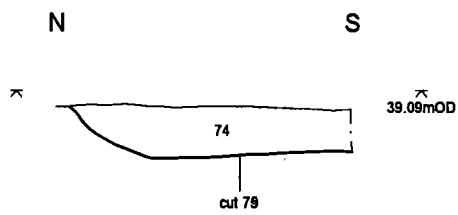
Figure 3. Trench plan
Scale 1:250



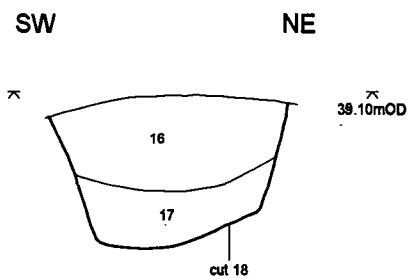
Figure 4. Section 1
Scale 1:75



Section 2. South-east facing.



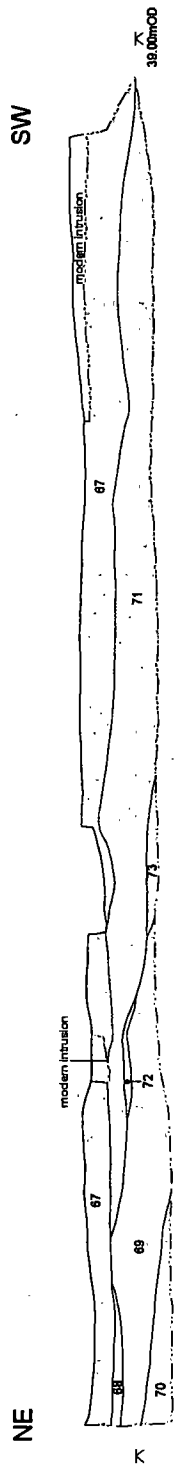
Section 3. West facing.



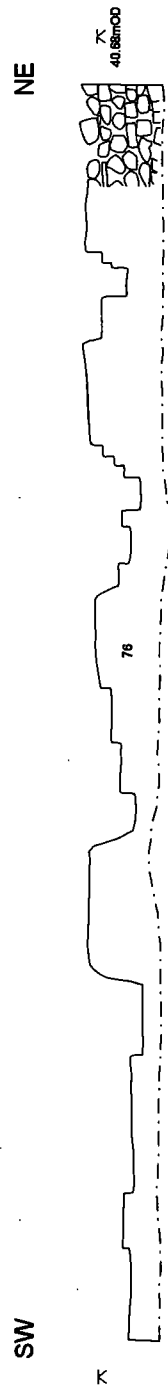
Section 4. South-east facing.



Figure 5. Sections 2, 3 and 4
Scale 1:25



Section 5. North-west facing.



Section 6. South-east facing elevation. Outline and representation of stone wall [76].

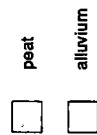
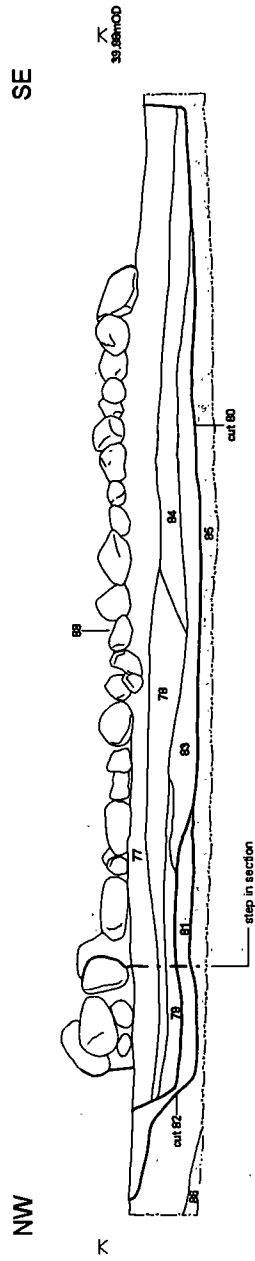
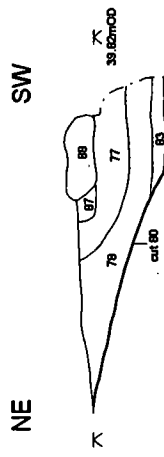


Figure 6. Sections 5 and 6
Scale 1:75



Section 7. South-west facing, showing stone wall [88].



Section 8. North-west facing.

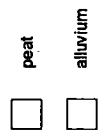
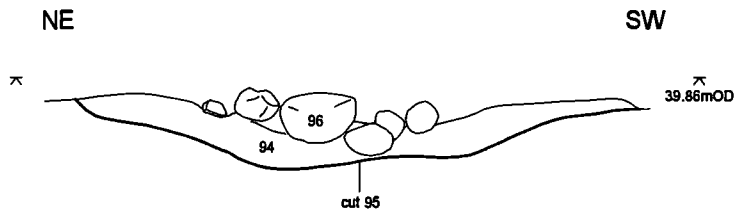
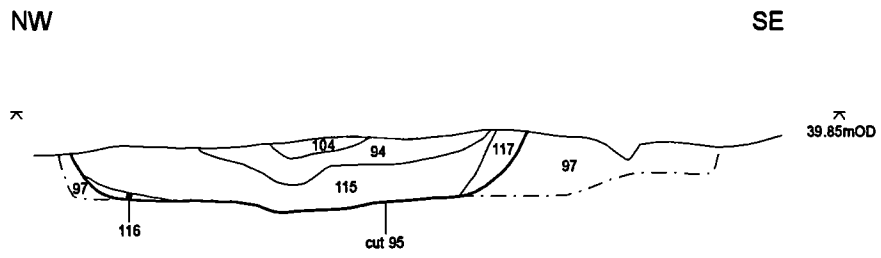


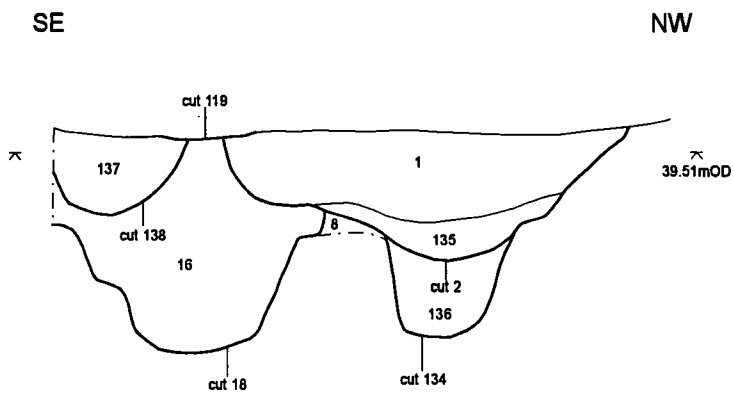
Figure 7. Sections 7 and 8
 Scale 1:50



Section 9. North-west facing.



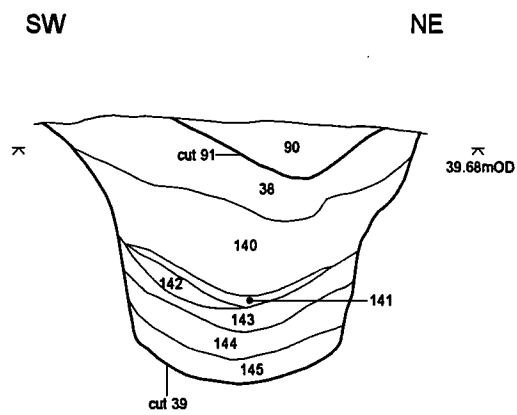
Section 10. South-west facing



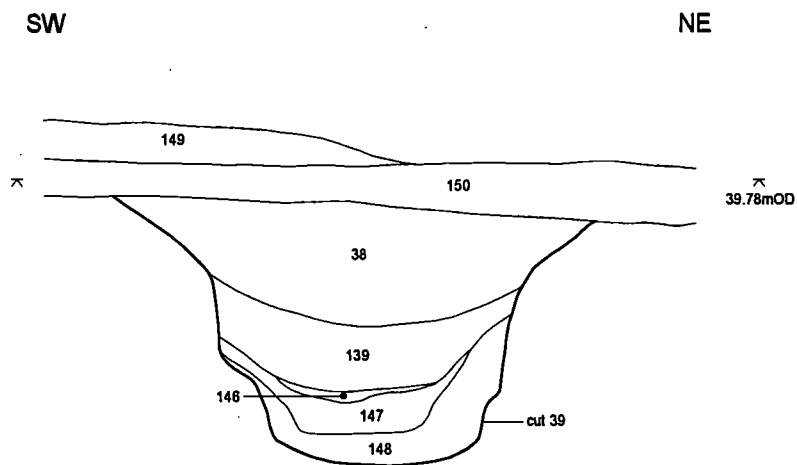
Section 11. North-east facing.



Figure 8. Sections 9, 10 and 11
Scale 1:25



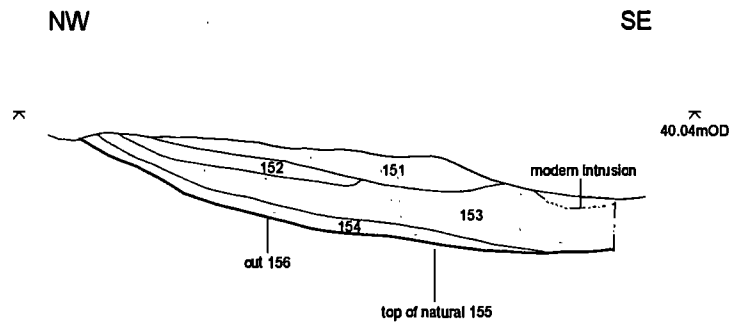
Section 12. South-east facing through ditch [39].



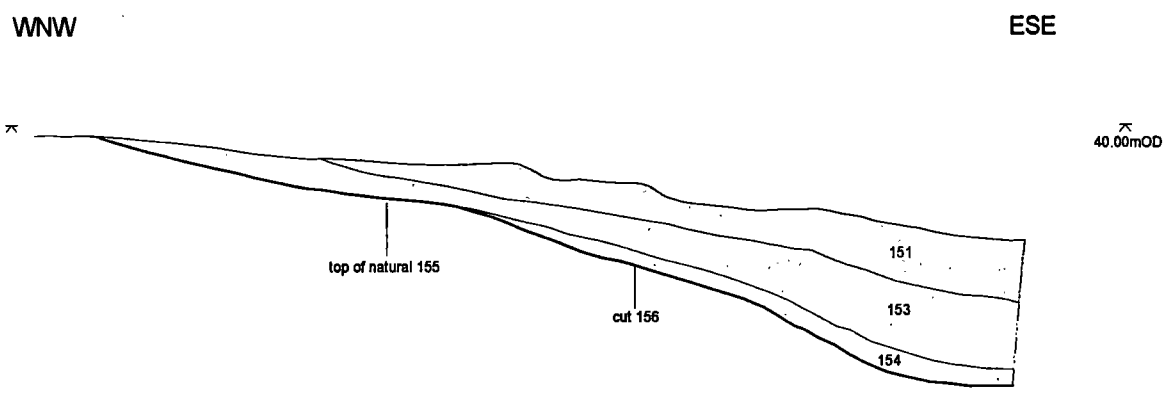
Section 13. South-east facing through ditch [39].



Figure 9. Sections 12 and 13
Scale 1:25



Section 14. South-west facing through lake deposits.

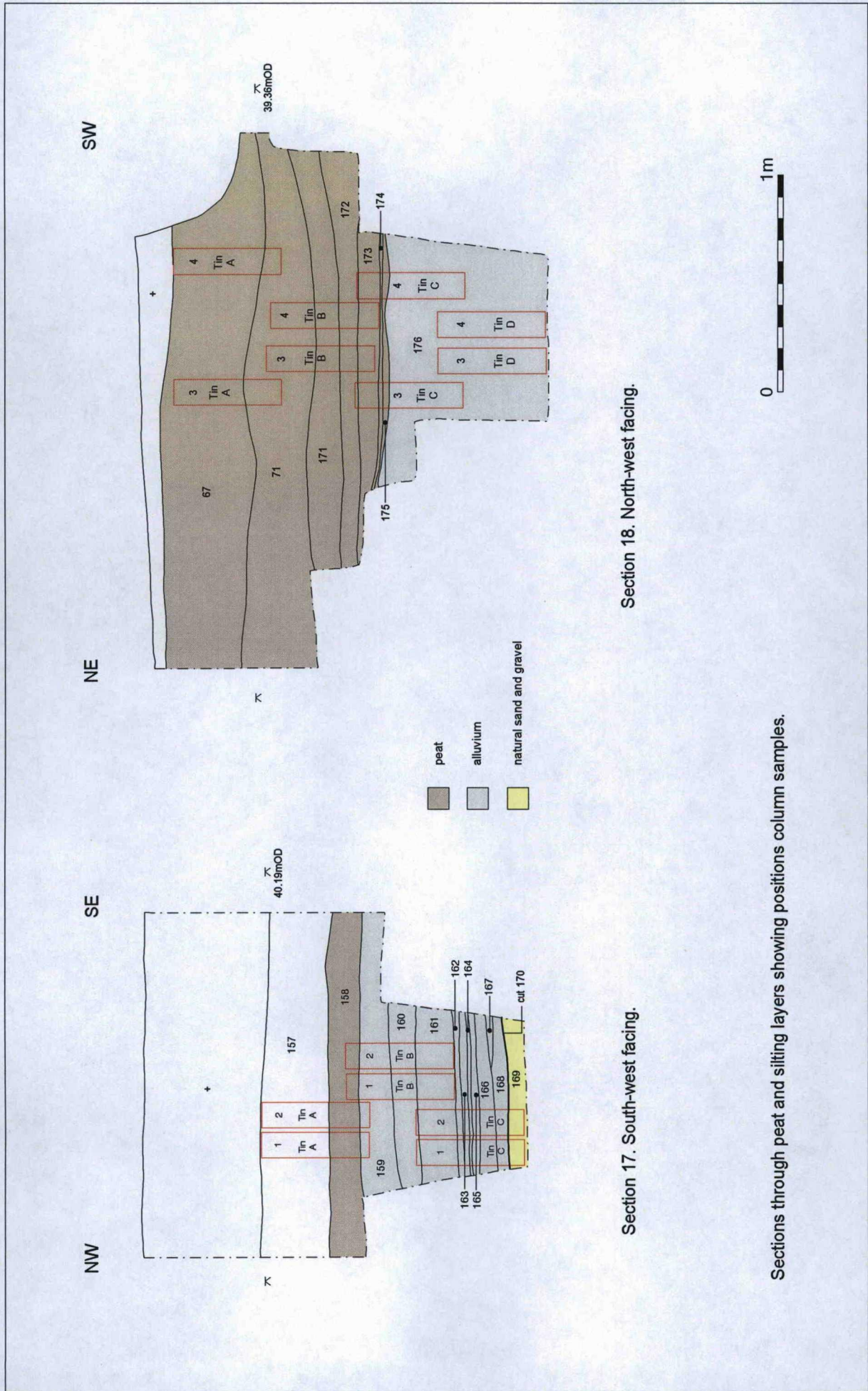


Section 15. South south-west facing through lake deposits.

peat
 alluvium



Figure 10. Sections 14 and 15
Scale 1:25



Section 18. North-west facing.

Section 17. South-west facing.

Sections through peat and silt layers showing positions column samples.

Figure 11. Sections 17 and 18
Scale 1:25

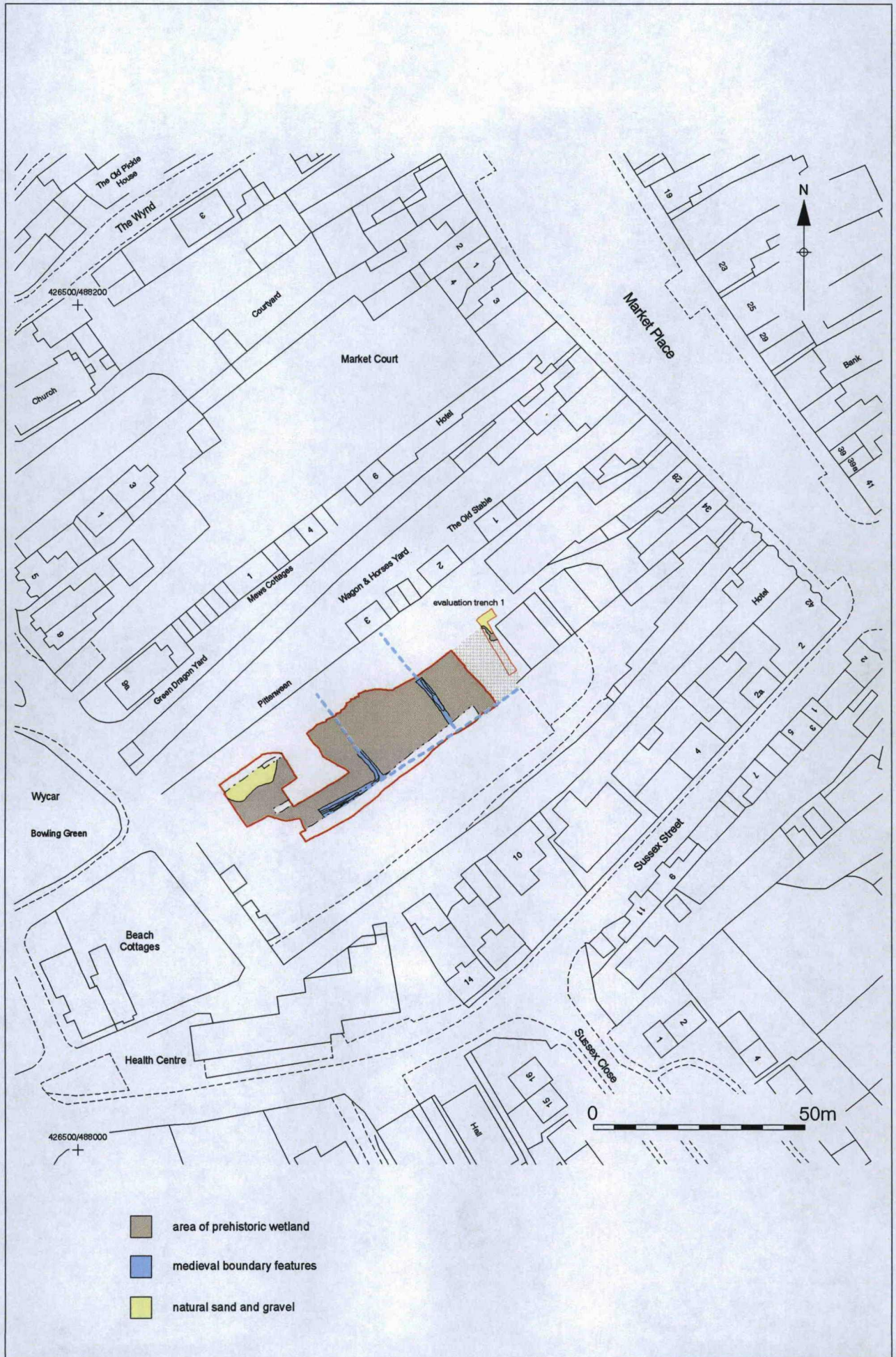


Figure 12. Interpretation plan
Scale 1:1250

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Prehistoric wetland

6.1.1 The archaeological excavation revealed the presence of important prehistoric wetland deposits at the site. To the south-west, part of the edge of a substantial feature, interpreted as a prehistoric lake, was encountered. Two sections were excavated across the margins of the lake-bed in the south-western part of the trench and these revealed a gently sloping profile. The northern edge of the prehistoric lake had been identified in the evaluation in the northern part of the site (Figure 12). The lake was filled with a deep sequence of silt deposits, interpreted as alluvially deposited lake-bed sediments. The recorded profile of these alluvial deposits reflected the underlying profile of the lake-bed; sloping down from both ends of the trench towards the centre. The maximum recorded thickness of these deposits was 1.20m, but it was not possible to determine their full thickness towards the centre of the lake, due to Health and Safety considerations.

6.1.2 A large extent of the alluvial deposition was overlain by a sequence of peat formations, which would have formed in the depression of the silted-up lake. The maximum recorded thickness of the peat was c. 1m in the central part of the trench, thinning out towards the edges of the lake. The maximum dimensions of the prehistoric wetland deposits recorded during the investigations at the site was c. 75m NE-SW x c. 22m NW-SE (including the evaluation).

6.1.3 A programme of sampling for palaeoecological/bioarchaeological data was undertaken on the alluvial deposits and peat sequence. Column samples were taken from two sections, in the eastern and central parts of the trench. Analysis of these demonstrated that the deposits were organic silts and peats of early Holocene/Mesolithic date. The pollen assemblages recorded early Holocene vegetation changes, and evidence from the easternmost sample suggested a slightly earlier phase of landscape development (possibly as early as the Late-glacial). All of the plant and insect assemblages indicated aquatic deposition, although in some cases in a swamp environment rather than open water. The sequence of insect assemblages from the central section seems to show a change from open water to swamp, and this was supported by the pollen evidence.

6.1.4 The earliest pollen assemblage from the central section recorded hazel dominated wood/scrub land, with some birch probably also present locally. Other trees, including oak and elm, were perhaps growing either as a small component of the local arboreal cover or at some distance from the site. The low percentages of herbaceous pollen indicate that the woodland was fairly dense with few open areas. A sizeable increase in sedges within the pollen assemblage was closely associated with a change from organic silt to peat and suggests that following basin infill, sedge communities became established on the site. There was also evidence for the local expansion of ferns. Hazel woodland probably remained dominant in the wider landscape, with the reduction in representation of this pollen type largely a result of its suppression by the abundance of sedges. The increase in pine was most likely a reflection of the increased local availability of suitable conditions for this tree as a result of peat growth.

- 6.1.5 The pollen assemblage showed a steady reduction in sedges and rise in birch higher up the peat sequence; this presumably reflected the continued accumulation of peat at the site leading to slightly drier conditions suitable for birch growth at the expense of sedge communities. By the close of the pollen sequence, similar processes connected to changes in soils on and around the site, and resulting from peat accumulation, probably account for the fall in birch and peak in Scots Pine. During this period there is little evidence for changes in the extent of the other tree species, although the rise in alder at the top of the sequence may be connected to the beginning of the local expansion of this tree.
- 6.1.6 The pollen assemblage from the eastern section also reflected the presence of birch scrub/woodland around the sampling site. Few other trees were present, aside possibly from some willow and limited extents of juniper. Some open grassland and sedge communities were indicated by the pollen assemblage. Herbs included mugwort rock rose, meadow rue and species of dock typical of 'open steppe' communities on disturbed, possibly skeletal soils. Further up the pollen sequence there was local expansion of ferns, possibly related to processes associated with the change from open water to semi-terrestrial conditions as the basin infilled. Pine also seems to have begun to expand locally at this time, possibly also as a result of the availability of suitable peaty soils around the basin.
- 6.1.7 Six radiocarbon dates were taken from the column samples, one from a silt deposit and five from the sequence of peat deposits. The results ranged from cal BC 7970 to 6050, with the earliest peat deposit being dated to cal BC 7040 to 6670. This demonstrated that the peat formed over a relatively short period of time, c. 1000 years, during the Mesolithic period.
- 6.1.8 The retreat of the ice left a landscape which contained many areas of open water; the lochs of Scotland and the lakes of the Lake District are the remnants of the last glaciation. Some of the smaller lowland lakes/tarns still survive today, but generally they have become overgrown with peat and are bogs, or were drained. These areas of open water, which were not always large, were numerous and provided a wide range of resources to the early Mesolithic population, c. 8000 BC.⁹ The ancient wetland area encountered during the excavation can, on the basis of the palaeoenvironmental evidence, be reasonably interpreted as such a lake.
- 6.1.9 There was no evidence for possible human activity in the column samples, with the exception of a small quantity of charred plant remains and chert recovered from context [158]. However, this deposit lay directly beneath a 19th century deposit and so contamination from this later deposit may account for the charred material. A small area of the lake margins was examined in the south of the site, but more extensive investigation was not possible due to diesel contamination. There was no evidence for any lakeside human prehistoric activity or settlement in the area investigated and no residual artefactual material, such as worked flint, was recovered during the investigations. This, along with the absence of evidence for human activity in the column samples, suggests that there was no Mesolithic exploitation of the lake and subsequent peat bog.

⁹ Bewley, 1994.

6.2 Medieval activity

- 6.2.1** The earliest evidence for human activity encountered at the site comprised a series of ditches, evidently part of a long-lived rectilinear system of boundaries. Such ditches would have defined the boundaries of backlots to medieval burgage plots – these essentially remaining fossilised in the present day property boundaries – as well as creating sub-divisions within the narrow backlots. A sequence of NE-SW aligned boundary features was recorded adjacent to the southern limit of excavation and these are interpreted as the remains of the burgage plot boundary presently occupied by 34 Market Place (Figure 12). NW-SE aligned boundary features evidently formed sub-divisions within this plot and defined an area measuring c. 20m NE-SW and at least c. 20m NW-SE.
- 6.2.2** Bulk samples were taken from two of the ditch fills and the plant and invertebrate remains present indicate that these features held water. The nature of the fills, which indicated that the ditches had silted-up, along with the evidence that they became water-logged and the fact that the ditches were cut through peat, probably explains the necessity to reinstate the boundaries on a number of occasions.
- 6.2.3** No physical evidence survived within the burgage plot to indicate what type of activity occurred in this area during the medieval period. However, one of the environmental samples taken from a ditch fill contained evidence for human activity in the form of flax retting (soaking of the stems to soften the fibres). These samples have good potential for reconstruction of local land-use and human activity and further work should therefore be carried out on the samples. Medieval pottery dating to the 13th –14th century was recovered from one of the ditch fills. A small quantity of animal bone was also recovered from deposits assigned to the medieval phase of activity at the site. This comprised cattle, sheep/goat, horse, dog and goose. Unfortunately the small size of the assemblage means that no firm conclusions can be drawn regarding economic conditions and husbandry practices.
- 6.2.4** Evidence for an episode of alluvial inundation, of probable medieval date, was recorded in the north-eastern part of the site, before there was some reinstatement of the existing plot boundaries and sub-divisions.

6.3 Post-medieval

- 6.3.1** Cartographic evidence indicates that there was little development within the majority of the site until the late 19th or early 20th century, when cottages and a gas house were erected. Evidence of this activity was recorded during the excavation.