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**JUNCTION OF  
BROOK STREET / GOWTHORPE  
SELBY  
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

**A Report on an  
Archaeological  
Watching Brief**

**By Gareth Dean**

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

by

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*Front cover illustration:*

Looking south-west through old school gates towards school buildings

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## *ABSTRACT*

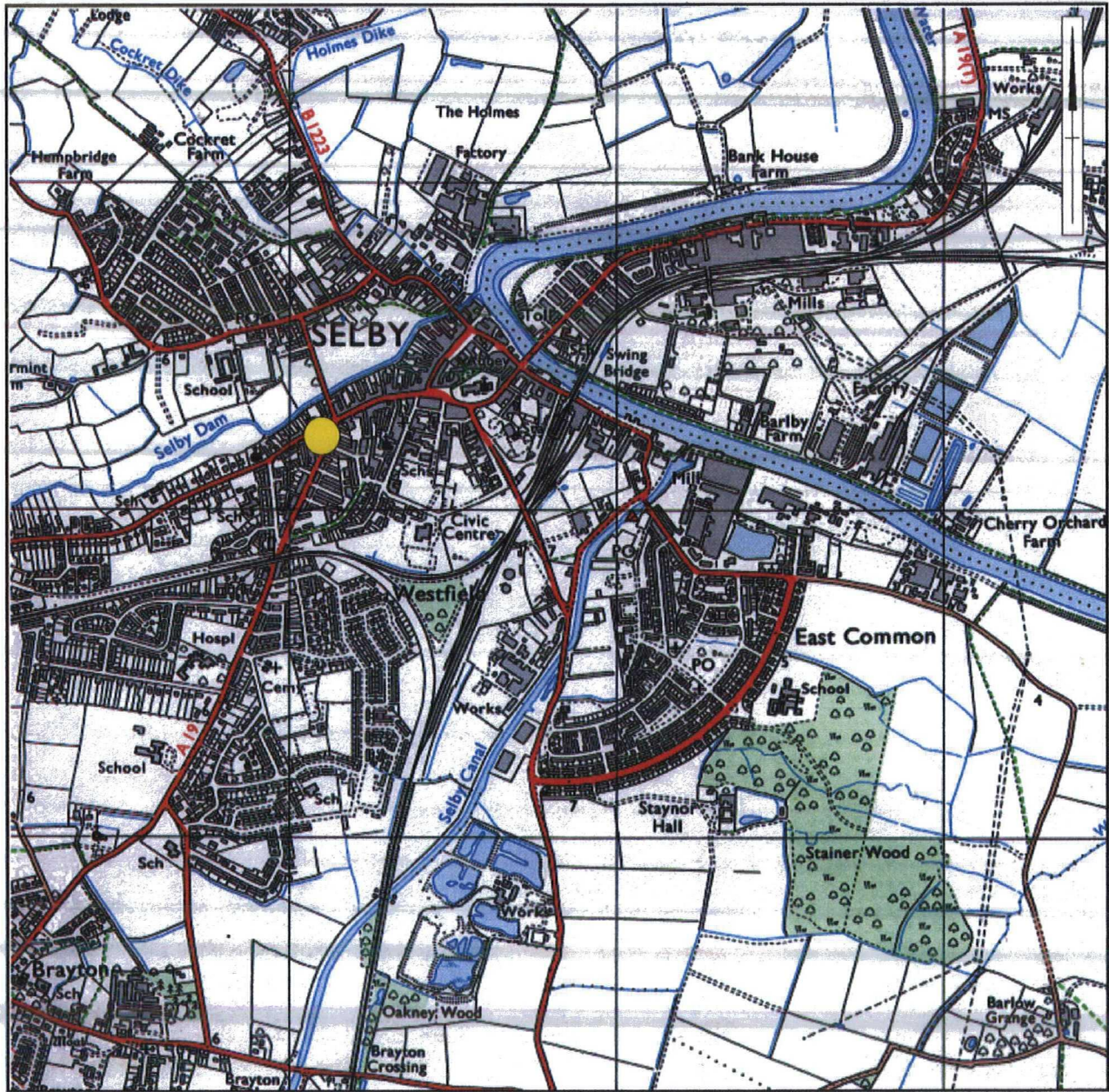
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## **List of Abbreviations**

BGL Below Ground Level



KEY: ● Location of site (see Fig. 3)

0 1000 metres

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Fig. 1 Site location

## **ABSTRACT**

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the excavation seven trial holes at the former Roman Catholic Church, Selby. The trial holes exposed a sequence of predominantly modern levelling deposits directly over the natural clay subsoil. A wall was observed in the section of the trench in Trial Hole 5 that may be associated with a building shown on the 1852 Ordnance Survey map.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

York Archaeological Trust monitored the excavation of seven trial holes at the former Catholic School at the junction of Gowthorpe and Brook Street, Selby (NGR SE 6106 3222; Fig 1) on the 28<sup>th</sup> July 2004.

The work was carried out for Andrew Seeger, Architect, with the contractors being ARP Geotechnical Ltd. All records are currently stored by the York Archaeological Trust.

### **2. METHOD STATEMENT**

Four of the trial holes were located on the south-west side of the development area and three located on the north-west side. The trial holes measured on average 2m x 1m, excavated to a depth of between 0.7m and 3.2m. Observation of the trial hole stopped once natural sub-soil was exposed.

Relevant plans and sections were drawn after the completion of the ground works, with sections drawn at 1:20. All the exposed archaeological deposits were described and a series of digital photographs were taken.

### **3. LOCATION AND GEOLOGY**

The former Roman Catholic School is located on the south side of the junction of Scott Road, Gowthorpe and Brook Street, Selby, in a narrow triangular piece of land (Fig 3). The underlying drift geology of the site is sand (Geological Survey 1973).

### **4. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

A watching brief was requested because the development area is close to the historic core of Selby and the following is a brief summary of the towns historic importance. The origins of Selby are unclear name is believed to be of Anglo-Scandinavian and Saxon origins. The Domesday Book mentions Selby briefly and an Abbot of Selby. It is uncertain if there was any pre-conquest monastic establishment at Selby, the present Selby Abbey originated in 1069 and by c.1100 the Abbey Church and associated buildings were under construction in stone. The abbey was eventually dissolved in 1539 after peacefully surrendering to the crown and virtually nothing now remains of the monastery except the Abbey Church (Evans 2002).



Fig. 2 A section of the 1852 Ordnance Survey plan of Selby (not to scale)

The dissolution of Selby Abbey seems to have little effect on Selby generally and the town continued to prosper. By the 17th century this prosperity was attracting the wealthy upper classes to the town although it also attracted the poor, some dwellings housed four or five families. In 1643, during the English Civil War, Selby was attacked by the Parliamentarians and many of the Royalists were forced to retreat to York, an action which culminated in the Siege of York in 1644. River trade was always important to Selby and the great increase in river trade during the 18th century prompted the construction of the Selby Canal from Haddlesley on the River Aire to Selby. The town received a boost in 1834 when the railway, later to become the Leeds to Hull line, first arrived in Selby. Certainly Selby was not in any serious decline since, as with many other mid 19th century towns. By the end of the 19th century Selby was quite affluent, shipbuilding being a major employer in the area and regular markets and fairs were still being held (ibid).

The 1852 Ordnance Survey (Fig 2) map shows that the area of the former school had already started to be developed by the mid-nineteenth century with a large building shown in the apex of the triangular plot of land formed by Gowthorpe and Brook Street, although the majority of the area was still open fields. It is possible that the two cottages adjacent to the school that form part of the development area are also shown in the map. These two cottages are probably part of the programme of building along Gowthorpe that started in the 1820s (<http://www.pastscape.org>). The 1852 Ordnance Survey map would also suggest that Brook Street is a 'new' street as it clearly cuts through property boundaries extending from Gowthorpe. Comparison with the modern Ordnance Survey map clearly shows how built up this area has become.

## **5. THE WATCHING BRIEF**

### **5.1 Trial Hole 1 (Figs 3-4)**

The only deposit observed within the trial hole was a loose, dark grey and brown sandy silt (1000) with a high concentration of brick rubble and hard white mortar to a depth of 0.7m. The trial hole was abandoned at this depth after a copper water pipe was broken.

### **5.2 Trial Hole 2 (Figs 3-5)**

#### **5.2.1 Natural**

The earliest deposit within the trial hole was the natural firm, grey orangey brown clay subsoil (2002) at 1.3m BGL.

#### **5.2.2 Modern?**

Overlying the clay sub-soil was a deposit of dark grey brown silty sand (2001) with occasional inclusions of brick rubble and mortar, 0.8m thick. Directly above this were two courses of brick (2000) 0.2m thick that had formed the floors to a rear portion of the cottages facing onto Gowthorpe, that had been demolished. The bricks measured 250mm x 120mm x 60mm and were bedded in a friable, light yellow brown sandy mortar.

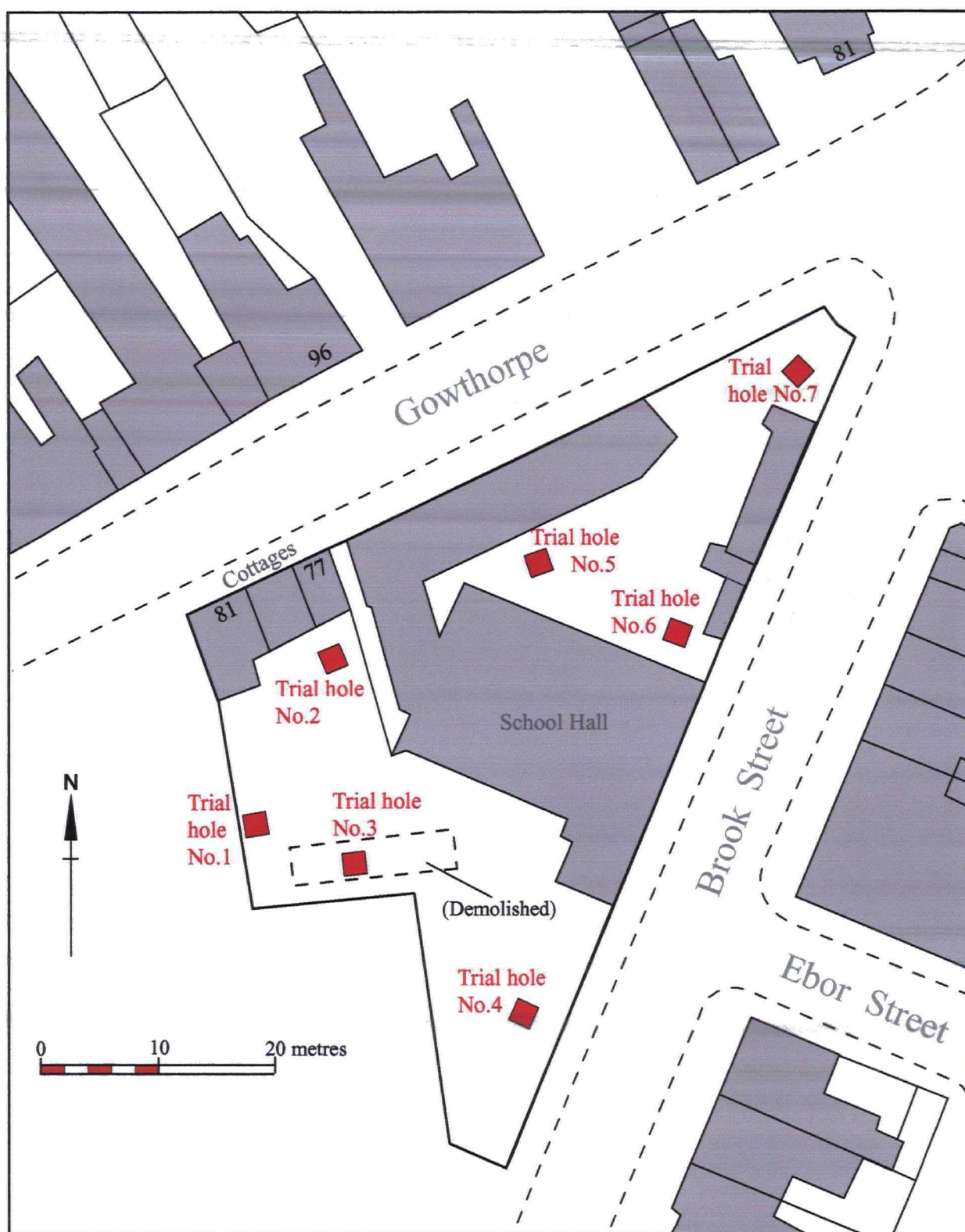


Fig. 3 Location of Trial holes



### **5.3 Trial Hole 3 (Figs 3-6)**

#### **5.3.1 Natural**

The natural subsoil was encountered 1.9m BGL and consisted of a firm orangey grey brown sandy clay (3003) with occasional sub rounded gravel inclusions.

#### **5.3.2 Modern?**

Overlying (3003) was a moist, firm orange brown silty sand 0.6m thick. Truncating this deposit was a poorly defined steep sided cut (3004) 0.4m wide and 0.6m deep filled with a deposit of firm dark grey brown silty sand (3005) with a high concentration of brick rubble and a strong smell of tar that may have been associated with the drains or soak away of the demolished garage. Above this was a 0.4m thick deposit of loose, dark grey sandy silt with inclusions of ash and brick rubble. Directly above this was a 0.55m thick deposit of loose dark grey silt sand with frequent inclusions of brick rubble and sandstone fragments. Overlying this was a 0.25m thick layer of loose, dark grey silty sand with frequent inclusions of brick rubble, concrete and sandstone fragments sealed by the 0.1m thick tarmac of the present ground surface.

### **5.4 Trial Hole 4 (Figs 3-7)**

#### **5.4.1 Natural**

The natural sub-soils (4005) were located at 1.2m BGL and consisted of moist orange brown clay sand that overlay a firm grey orange clay at 1.6m BGL.

#### **5.4.2 Modern**

Overlying the natural sub-soil was a deposit of loose dark grey brown sandy silt clay (4004) with occasional inclusions of brick rubble and small fragments of pottery, 0.4m thick. Directly above this was a wall stub (4002) surviving to a height of 0.5m and 0.4m wide. The bricks measured 200mm x 90mm x 80mm and were bonded in a hard off white gritty mortar. No foundation cut for the wall was observed. On the north-east side of the wall 4002 deposits consisted of loose clinker and brick rubble (4001). On the south-west side of wall 4002 the deposits consisted of loose, dark grey brown silty sand (4003) with occasional inclusions of mortar and sandstone fragments. Directly above these deposit was the 0.1m of tarmac (4000) of the present ground surface.

### **5.5 Trial Hole 5 (Figs 3-8)**

#### **5.5.1 Natural**

The firm natural clay sand and silty clay (5003) were observed between 1.3 and 1.6m BGL.

### **5.5.1 Modern**

Above the natural 5003 was a 1m thick deposit of loose, very dark grey brown silty sandy clay (5002). At the north-east side of the trench this deposit collapsed and exposed a section of wall approximately 10 courses high aligned with Gowthorpe. Overlying 5002 was a loose deposit of brick rubble and lime mortar (5001) 0.2m thick that acted as a bedding for the 0.1m thick tarmac (5000) of the present ground surface.

### **5.6 Trial Hole 6 (Figs 3-9)**

#### **5.6.1 Natural**

The firm, orange brown clay sand (6004) was recorded between 1.1m and 1.3m BGL.

#### **5.6.2 Modern**

Overlying (6004) was a 0.5m thick layer of firm, dark grey brown sandy clay (6003) with occasional inclusions of brick rubble. Above this was a firm very dark grey brown silty clay (6002) with frequent inclusions of brick rubble and mortar, 0.4m thick. Directly above this was a layer of brick rubble and mortar bedding for 0.1m of tarmac of the present ground surface.

### **5.7 Trial Hole 7 (Figs 3-10)**

#### **5.7.1 Natural**

The firm, orange brown sand (7003) was observed at 0.9m BGL.

#### **5.7.2 Modern**

Directly above this deposit was a 0.7m thick layer of firm, dark grey brown sandy clay (7002) with occasional inclusions of brick rubble and mortar. Overlying this was a deposit of loose brick rubble (7001) and occasional sandstone fragments that acted as bedding for the present 0.1m of tarmac (7000) of the present ground surface.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

The trial holes exposed deposits of limited archaeological interest but suggest a sequence of post-medieval development. It was clear from the trial holes that there had been extensive levelling across the area of the school site, consisting of dumps of brick rubble, clinker and ash. This is reflected in the change in ground level between the adjacent properties in Gowthorpe and Brook Street where the ground level is up to 0.5m lower. The section of walling exposed in the collapsed section of Trial Hole 5 may relate to the building shown on the 1852 Ordnance Survey map, at the apex of the triangle of land fronting onto the junction of Gowthorpe, Brook Street and Scott Road. It is not clear what the wall stub observed in Trial Hole 4 relates to. The type of deposits below the floor at the rear of the cottages facing onto Gowthorpe may be connected with this area apparently being open land prior to development in the 1820s.

**7. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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**8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Russell Marwood

Editor

Martin Stockwell

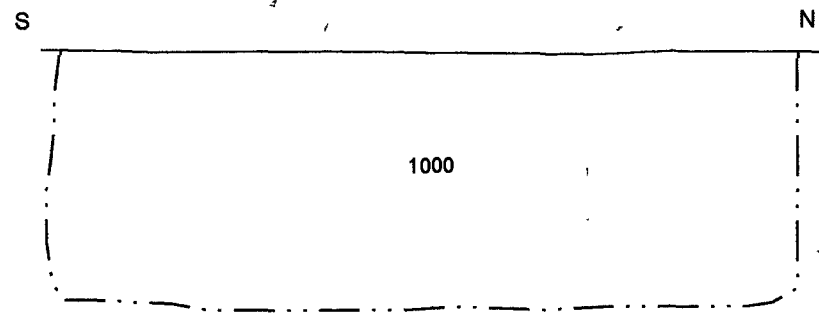


Fig 4. East facing section trial hole No.1

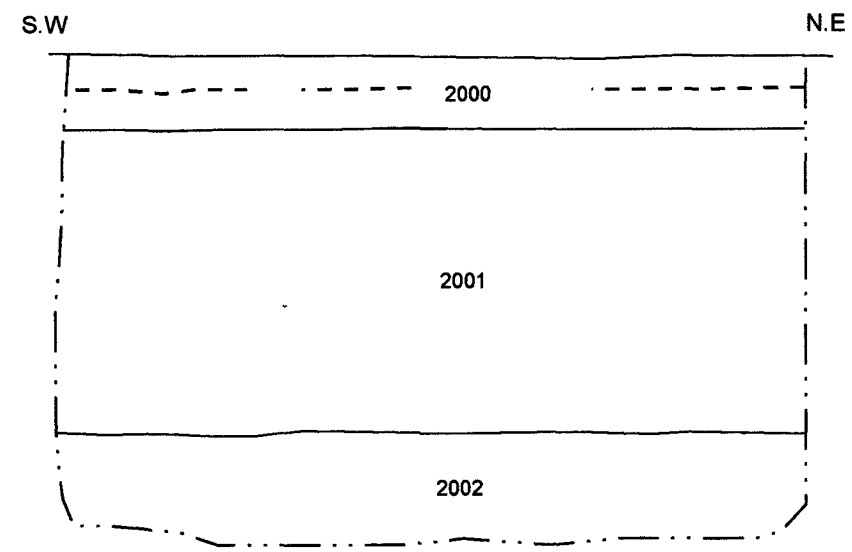


Fig 5. South-east facing section trial hole No.2

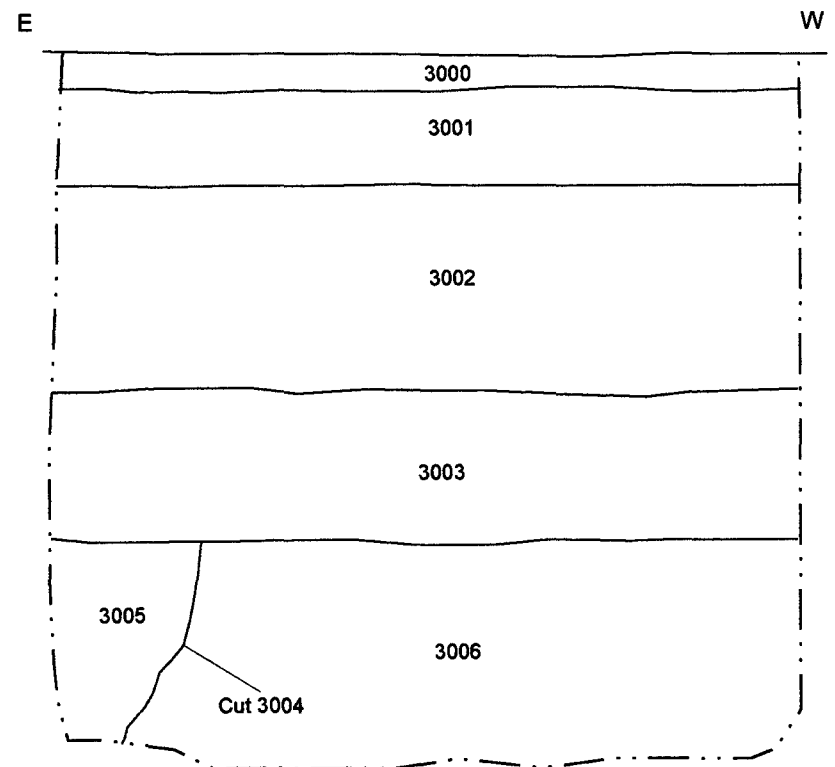


Fig 6. North facing section trial hole No.3

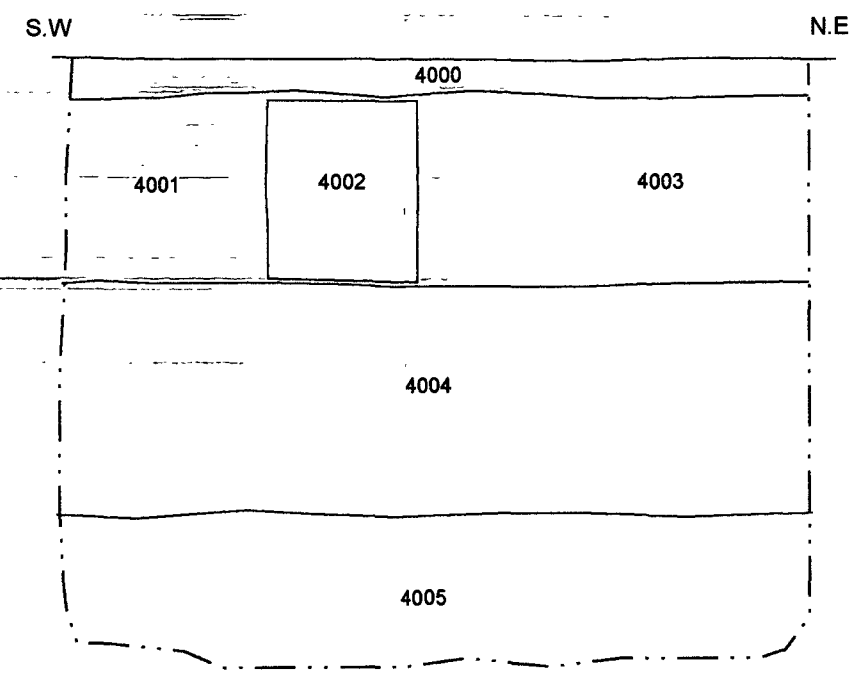


Fig 7. North-west facing section trial hole No.4

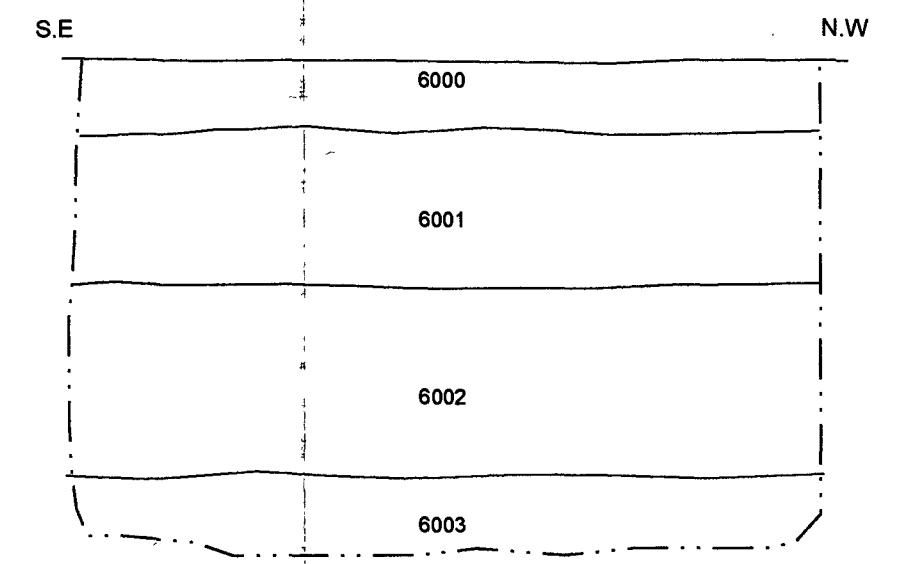


Fig 9. North-east facing section trial hole No.6

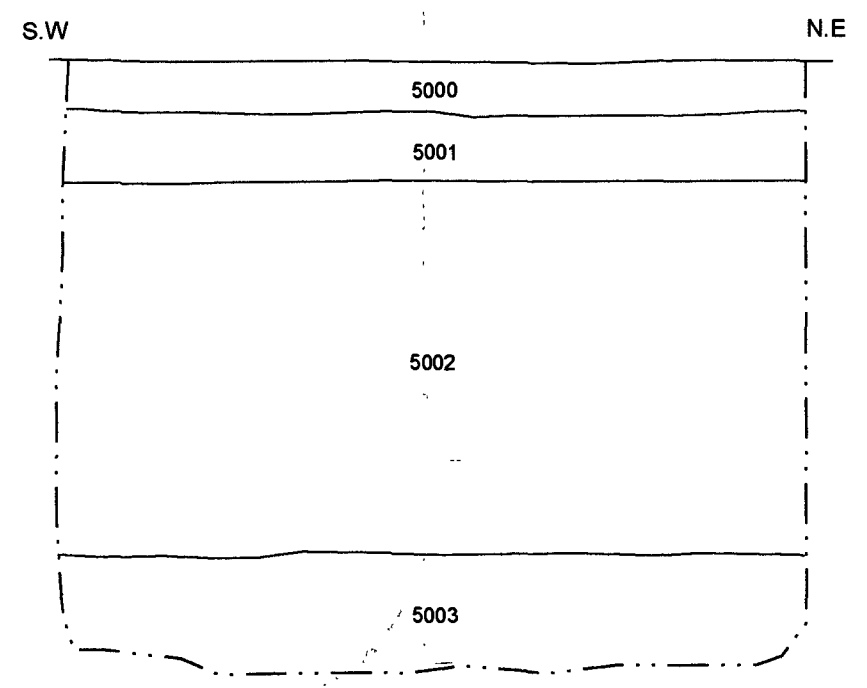


Fig 8. North-west facing section trial hole No.5

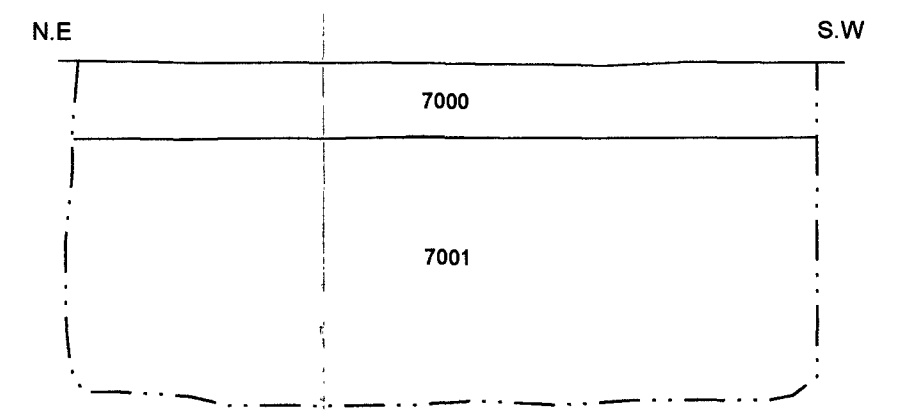


Fig 10. North-west facing section trial hole No.7

