

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

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**MARSHALL'S GARAGE, BOONGATE, PETERBOROUGH.
An Archaeological Evaluation 1995**

by

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1.0: SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit during the construction of two car showrooms at Boongate, Peterborough (hereinafter 'the study area', Fig. 1C).

The evaluation, which involved the evaluation of four trial-trenches, identified a sequence of alluvial deposits and examined a number of prehistoric features, possibly Neolithic to early Bronze Age in origin.

2.0: INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out in connection with the construction of two car showrooms at Boongate, Peterborough (Fig. 1B). The recommendation for an archaeological excavation was made by the County Archaeology Office, Cambridgeshire County Council, in accordance with guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (November 1990). Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned to undertake the archaeological assessment by Lawson Price Environmental on behalf of Tim Martindale Associates Limited.

The study area is located approximately 1km. to the west of Flag Fen (Bronze Age settlement) and to the east of Peterborough town centre (N.G.R. TL 210 988, Figs. 1A and 1B) on land previously used as hard standing. The evaluation was undertaken by staff of Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit over three days, between the 20th and the 22nd of March 1994. This also involved monitoring the excavation of nearby construction and service trenches during the contractor's groundworks.

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains which were located within the area of development.

3.0: METHODOLOGY

A total of four trial trenches (Fig.1C) were located inside the area of the new buildings. In each trench the overburden, comprising shale and limestone hard-core was removed to a depth of 0.25m by mechanical excavator using a toothed bucket. The remainder of the overburden was removed using a toothless ditching bucket to expose any archaeological deposits at their uppermost horizons. The removal of all overburden was carried out under archaeological control.

In each trench the machined horizon was hand cleaned in an attempt to define any features present. A sample of the features present were selectively hand excavated to define their form and preservation, and to provide datable artifacts and samples for environmental analysis. Recording was by means of printed pro-forma recording sheets, supplemented by plans, sections and photographs, held in the archive.

4.0: SUMMARY OF RESULTS (Fig.2)

Trench 1

Trench 1 measured 28m in length and was aligned approximately north-south. The southernmost 8m of Trench 1 were machined to the upper horizon of the natural sand and gravel subsoil (1004), which was sealed by a dark orange silt-sand layer (1003) measuring approximately 0.33m deep. The remainder of Trench 1 was machined to expose this upper horizon. Hand cleaning exposed a concentration of archaeological features (F100 to F108) cut into the dark orange silt-sand (1003).

At the northern end of the trench was a large circular pit (F100) measuring approximately 1.6m in diameter and 0.7m deep. The western extent of the pit lay beyond the west baulk and the southern extent had been truncated by a modern service trench (F110). With steep sides and a flat base, the pit (F100) was filled by a brown sandy silt (1005) which contained one worked flint blade. A 20 litre sample of this deposit was collected for environmental analysis.

To the south of feature F100 was a post-hole (F104), pear-shaped in plan, with steep sides and a flat base. Measuring 0.6m in width and 0.21m deep this feature was filled by an orange-brown sandy-silt (1010) which contained no datable artifacts. Immediately to the west of feature F104 was a possible post-pit, or the terminus of a small gully (F105). Measuring 0.66m in width and 0.11m deep, the western extent of this feature lay beyond the western baulk. Filled by an orange-brown sandy-silt (1007), this feature contained no datable artifacts.

Also cutting layer 1003 were two parallel gullies (F101 and F106) aligned northeast-southwest. The northern most gully measured approximately 0.29m in width and 0.29m in depth, and extended beyond the eastern baulk. The gully to the south (F106) was slightly smaller, measuring approximately 0.15m wide and 0.06m deep. These features (F101 and F106) were cut with gently sloping sides and a rounded base. Neither ditch contained any datable artifacts within their orange-brown sandy-silt fills (1011 and 1013).

To the west of gully F106 was the terminus of another gully (F103) aligned northeast-southwest. Measuring 0.55m in length and 0.17m in depth, the full extent of F103 lay beyond the western baulk. Its orange-brown sandy silt fill (1009) contained one fragment of pottery and one worked flint dating to the Neolithic or early Bronze Age. A 20 litre sample of this deposit was collected for environmental analysis.

Further to the south of these gullies were two small circular features (F107 and F108). Feature F107, measuring 0.20m in diameter and 0.2m in depth, possibly represents a stake-hole. Filled by a grey-brown silt-clay (1012), this feature contained no datable artifacts. Immediately to the east, feature F108 measured 0.50m across and 0.20m in depth; it partly lay beyond the eastern baulk. With gently sloping sides and a flat base this feature (F108) was filled by a brown sandy-silt (1014) which contained no datable artifacts.

To the south of these circular features (F107 and F108) was a pit or gully terminus (F102), ovoid in plan and aligned northeast-southwest. Cut with vertical sides and a flat base the pit (F102) measured approximately 0.65m across and 0.37m in depth. A 20 litre sample of the fill, a brown sandy-silt (1006), was collected for environmental analysis.

All of these features were sealed by a brown-orange silt with some clay and gravel (layer 1002, very similar in matrix to the fill of the above features) measuring approximately 0.25m deep. Layer 1002 was in turn sealed by a thin band of dark-grey

clay-silt (1001) to a depth of 0.05m. The upper horizon of modern hard-core (1000) measured 0.25m deep and was cut by two service trenches (F109 and F110).

Trench 2 (not illustrated)

Trench 2 measured 4m in length and was aligned east-west, perpendicular to Trench 1, with the intention of identifying any linear features which were not likely to intersect Trench 1. The natural sand and gravel sub-soil (2004) was sealed by a layer of dark orange silt sand (2003) measuring approximately 0.34m deep. This layer was in turn overlain by a brown-orange silt with clay and gravel (2002) measuring approximately 0.24m deep, itself sealed by a thin band of dark grey clay-silt (2001) to a depth of 0.05m.

The modern hard-core (2000) was cut by a service trench (F110) measuring approximately 0.50m wide. This was orientated along the same alignment as Trench 2. No features or deposits of archaeological significance were identified in Trench 2, nor were any artifacts recovered.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was effectively a westward continuation of Trench 2; an area between the two was not machined due to the recent machining and filling of concrete footings. Measuring 15.5m in length, and orientated approximately east-west, Trench 3 was machined to expose an orange silt-sand sub-soil (3003). After manual cleaning two features of possible archaeological interest were identified in Trench 3.

At the extreme southwest end of Trench 3 was a shallow feature (F300), circular in plan with gradually sloping sides and a flat base. Measuring 1.50m wide, the southern extent of the feature lay beyond the southern bank. Filled by an orange-brown sandy-silt (3005) to a depth of 0.12m, the feature contained no datable artifacts and may be natural in origin.

Further to the east was a large ovoid (or possibly linear) feature (F301) aligned north-south. With gently sloping sides and a flat base, the feature measured 1.80m in width and 0.23m in depth. Its orange-brown sandy-silt fill (3004) contained no datable artifacts.

Both features were sealed by a brown-orange silt (3002), measuring approximately 0.20m in depth, which was in turn sealed by a thin band of dark grey clay-silt (layer 3001) measuring approximately 0.05m in depth. This layer lay below the modern shale and limestone hard-core (3000).

Trench 4 (not illustrated)

Trench 4 measured 10m in length and was aligned north-south. The natural sand and gravel sub-soil (4004) was sealed by a deep layer of dark brown-orange silt-sand (4003), measuring approximately 0.36m in depth. Overlying layer (4002) was a layer of orange-brown silt with clay (4002), measuring approximately 0.21m deep, which was sealed by a layer of dark grey clay-silt (4001) measuring 0.05m deep.

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were identified in Trench 4, nor were any artifacts recovered.

Construction and service trenches

Feature definition (particularly within vertical sections) was not good. Examination of the construction and service trenches during contractors groundworks failed to reveal any features or deposits of archaeological significance.

5.0: THE FINDS

5.1: Flint by Lynne Bevan

One complete backed blade in dark grey-brown flint with serration along one edge and traces of utilization along the other was recovered from feature F100, and a flint flake from feature F103. The blade might have been used as a sickle or reaping knife, and dates from the Neolithic or Bronze Age.

5.2: Prehistoric pottery by Ann Woodward

One abraded fragment of pottery was recovered from feature F103. The fabric would suggest that it was prehistoric, probably Bronze Age, possibly early Bronze Age.

6.0: THE ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE by Lisa Moffett

Twenty litre soil samples from features F100, F101, F102 and F301, and a seven litre sample from F103 were rapidly floated through a 700 micron sieve to recover any charred plant remains present. The flot was briefly scanned under magnification (x12).

The flots were all small being 10 litres or less in volume. Only one sample contained charred plant remains; a single barley grain (*Hordeum Vulgare*), found in the sample from F102.

7.0: DISCUSSION

Trench 1

Concentrated within the northern end of Trench 1, features F100 to F108 appear to be cut from a similar horizon, which could suggest they are all of a contemporary date. The presence of post-holes and a stake-hole (features F104, F105 and F107), suggests that the study area may be the site of a settlement. The shape of post-hole F104 may possibly be associated with the demolition of a structure and the extraction of a timber post from its setting. Gullies F101, F106 and F103 may be associated with structures relating to the post-holes mentioned above. As isolated features, little regarding their function and nature can be determined from the information provided by trial-trenching.

With the exception of feature F107 all of the fills appear very similar in character to the overlying alluvium (1002). The finds evidence tentatively suggests that the features date to the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age, although more work within the study area would need to be undertaken to establish this.

Trench 2

Any archaeological deposits within Trench 2 are likely to have been truncated by the modern service trench (F109).

Trench 3

No finds were recovered from the two features identified in Trench 3. The shape of feature F300 was very irregular and the feature may be natural in origin. Feature F301 may represent the base of a shallow pit.

Trench 4

No features or deposits of archaeological significance could be identified within trench 4.

8.0: IMPLICATIONS

Despite the former use of this area for gravel workings, the use of the study area more recently as a car park has facilitated a relatively good preservation of archaeological deposits.

This project has monitored the construction of foundation trenches and pad foundation-trenches by a watching brief carried out during the programme of trial-trenching. Additionally, the trial-trenching examined a sample of the footprint of the development. The features located are sealed beneath various depths of made-ground and no further impacts by the development are anticipated. Therefore, no further archaeological fieldwork is recommended.

9.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by Lawson Price Environmental on behalf of Tim Martindale Associates Limited. The field work was monitored by Alex Jones (for B.U.F.A.U.) and supervised by Richard Cuttler with the assistance of Mark Allen and Tony Hanna. Analysis and finds research was by Lynne Bevan and Ann Woodward. The environmental report was prepared by Lisa Moffett. The report was edited by Simon Buteux and the drawings were prepared by Mark Breedon. The project was monitored for Tim Martindale Associates Limited by Paul Chadwick (Lawson Price Environmental) and for Cambridgeshire County Council by Bob Sydes.

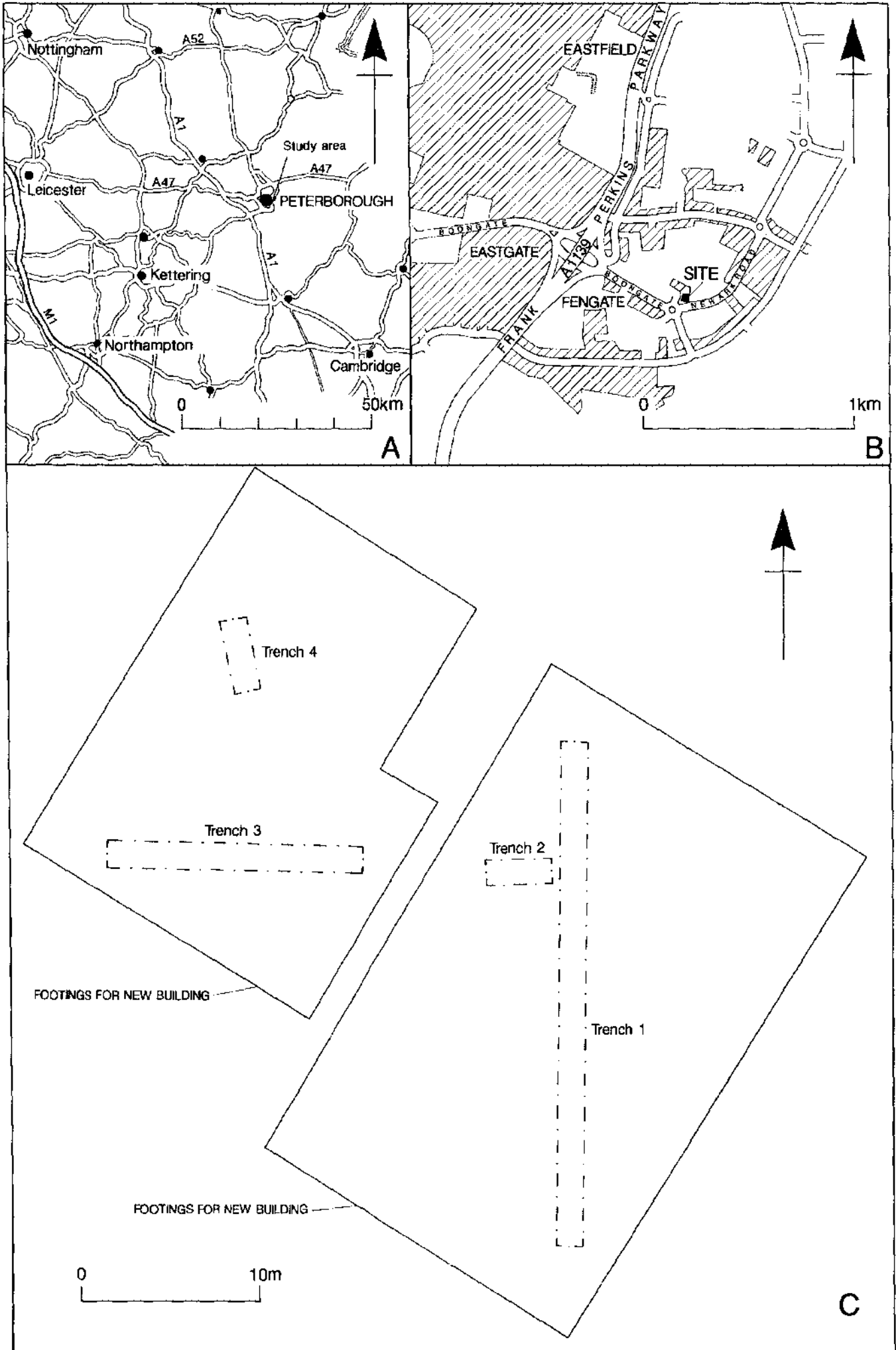
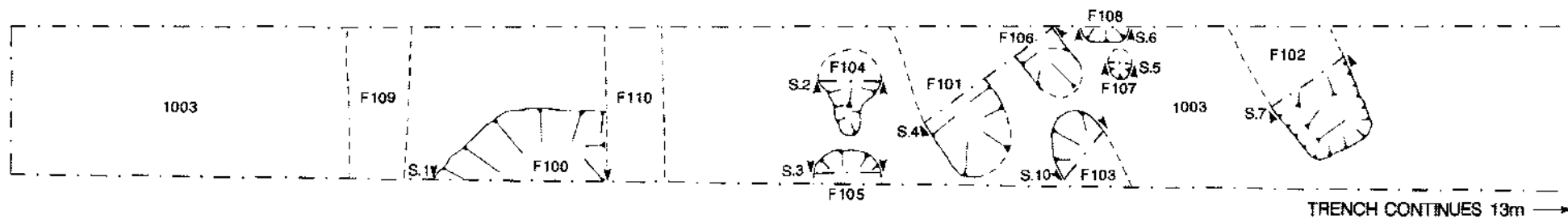
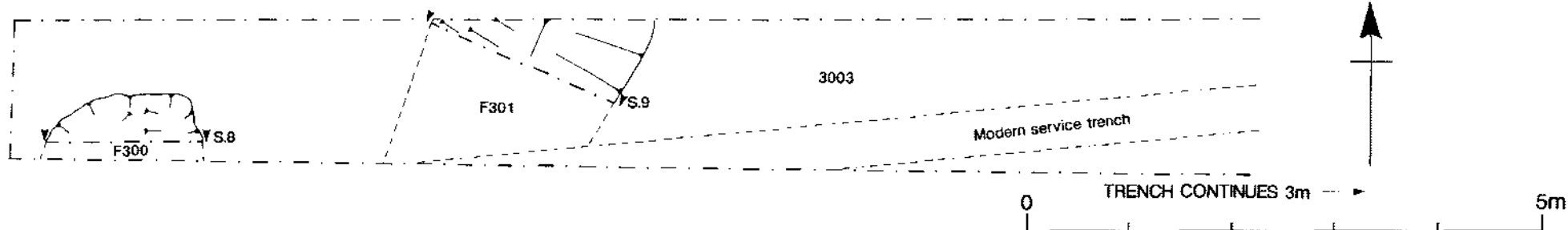


Figure 1

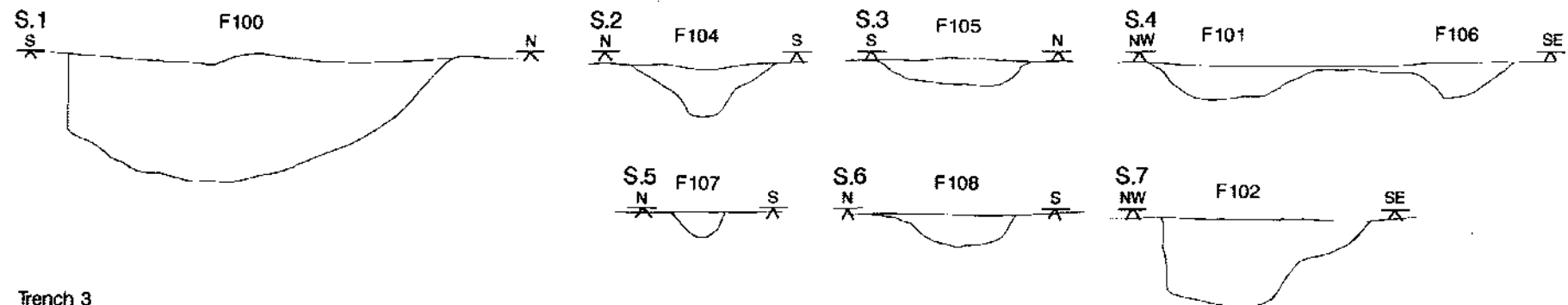
Trench 1



Trench 3



Trench 1



Trench 3



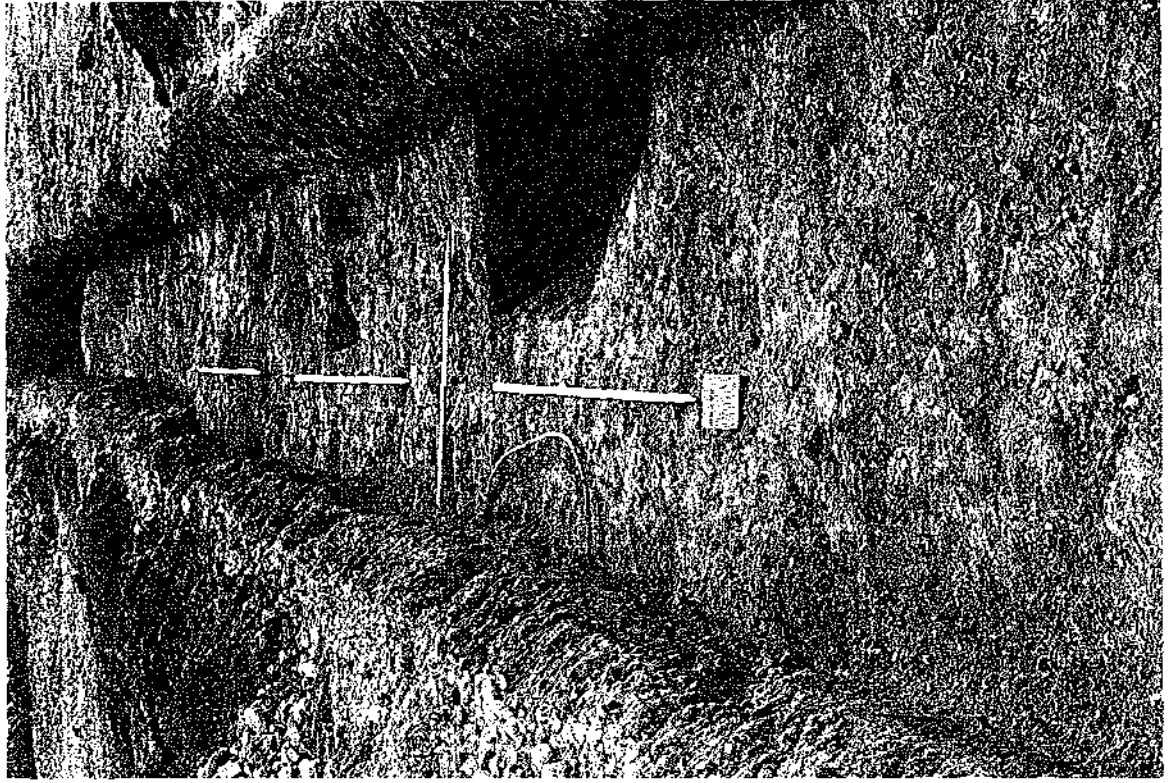


Plate 1

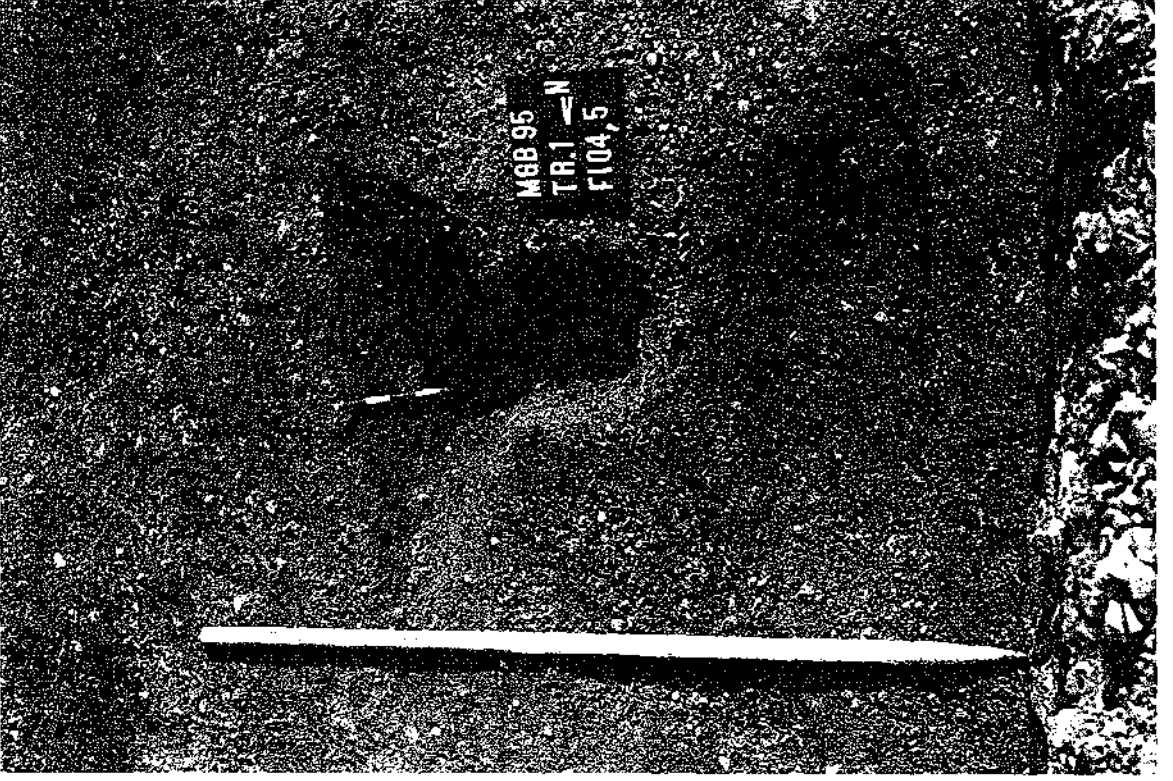


Plate 2