

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

Project No. 414

March 1996

DRAFT

**A1(M) Alconbury to Peterborough BDFO
Scheme: Archaeological evaluations
at Norman Cross, Vinegar Hill
and Alconbury Hill, February 1996**

by

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

For further information please contact:

Simon Buteux, Iain Ferris or Peter Leach (Directors)

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

The University of Birmingham

Edgbaston

Birmingham B15 2TT

Tel: 0121 414 5513

Fax: 0121 414 5516

E-Mail: BUFAU@bham.ac.uk

Web Address: <http://www.bham.ac.uk/BUFAU/>

A1(M) Alconbury to Peterborough BDFO Scheme: Archaeological evaluations at Norman Cross, Vinegar Hill and Alconbury Hill, February 1996

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

Summary

The evaluation of three areas of archaeological potential identified in previous work led to the recognition of two Romano-British sites at Norman Cross and Vinegar Hill. At Norman Cross ditches and pits sampled in an 8 x 4m area were sealed beneath a spread of 4th-century pottery comprising large unabraded sherds and including several reconstructable near complete pots. The evidence suggested that the source of this material lay nearby. At Vinegar Hill a ditch-marked enclosure was identified. Pottery of Romano-British date was recovered and the evaluation indicated the potential for the collection of an associated faunal assemblage. At Norman Cross no evidence was found of the suggested line of Ermine Street to the west of the A1. No archaeological features or deposits were identified at the third site; Alconbury Hill.

General introduction

The following report describes the results of archaeological evaluations undertaken at three sites, Norman Cross, Alconbury Hill and Vinegar Hill, which are to be affected by A1(M) Alconbury to Peterborough road improvements (Fig 1). The fieldwork was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in February 1996. The work was commissioned by Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) on behalf of Road Management Group (RMG). It was based on a draft archaeological project design prepared by CBA (CBA 1996) and considers the work undertaken by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (Kemp and Reynolds 1995). The general objective was to assess the nature, extent, date and quality of any subsurface archaeological features and to enable a correct mitigation strategy to be formulated for these sites (CBA 1996, 1).

Norman Cross

1 Introduction

1.1 Archaeological evaluation at Norman Cross (Fig 1) had been preceded by previous evaluation trenches (Kemp and Reynolds 1995, Appendix G), by a geophysical survey (ibid, Appendix P), and by small scale excavation to test the geophysical results (ibid, Appendix J, p 2, figs 3 and NA1). This work was accompanied by landscape and documentary studies (ibid, Appendix B figs 11 and 12; Appendix O).

1.2 A 2% sample of the area threatened by the road was made by means of 25 trenches numbered 1-25 (Fig 2; Table 1). Of these, 22 measured 25m by 1.8m and two larger trenches were specified to be cut alongside the present line of the A1 (CBA 1996, 20). In the event a third larger trench was opened to clarify the archaeology presented in these initial two larger trenches. In all cases the topsoil was excavated using 360 degree wheeled excavator. Siting of these trenches was based on the topography of the field, on the achievement of maximum coverage, and, for the areas examined by geophysical prospection, by the geophysical survey.

1.3 Trenches 1-12 and 16-21 were set out either to cut across ridge and furrow or to run down ridges or furrows. Trench 6 was cut across the northern field boundary shown on the Ordnance Survey map, and Trench 9 was laid out to coincide with geophysical anomalies from Survey Area A (Kemp and Reynolds 1995, Appendix J, fig 3). Trench 24 cut across the eastern arm of an L-shaped depression visible on the ground and lying partly within the western limit of the threatened area. The western end of a field boundary marked by a wide ditch between Trenches 10-12 and 16-18, and shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map, had been excavated by machine prior to the evaluation revealing a 20m east-west exposure and a 10m north-south exposure.

1.4 The majority of the trenches were excavated to the natural surface unmodified by human activity. At the south end of Trench 12 machine excavation was terminated at the level of an exposure of Romano-British pottery. The northern 15m were cut to the orange clay revealed elsewhere. The larger roadside trenches (Trenches 13-15) were accompanied by deeper transects intended to be cut to the natural surface and this was achieved in two of the three trenches.

1.5 The southern end of Trench 12 was widened by machine to an 8 x 4m area taken to the top of the archaeology and then hand excavated. Identified features were sampled and the underlying natural surface located in sondages. A feature in Trench 3 was hand excavated.

2 *Results*

2.1 The unmodified surface

The great majority of the evaluation trenches (Trenches 1, 2, 4-11, 16-25) revealed no archaeological evidence other than that relating to the formation of ridge and furrow and the nature of the field boundaries. They did, however, indicate that the unmodified natural surface was generally an orange-coloured clay. To the east in Trench 4 the clay was overlain by a layer of flint gravel in an orange sand matrix. The lowest level reached at the east end of Trench 13 comprised white flint gravel. A similar white gravel in Trench 15 was seen to overlie clay which continued west as the orange clay seen elsewhere, while a lower depth in Trench 14 than that reached in either Trench 13 or 15 was of yellow sandy clay. The evidence suggested that the rising ground to the east of the field toward the line of the A1 comprised a gravel capping which overlay the clay seen elsewhere.

2.2 Romano-British

2.2.1 Excavation at the south end of Trench 12 revealed Romano-British features (Fig 3). Two sondages showed that these were cut into a light brown clay layer, 1057, overlying a stiff orange/brown iron-stained natural clay. The layer was cut by at least one pit, F8, proven by excavation, while surface discolourations and the evidence from the sides of later features, suggested two further pits, F11 and F12. Pit F8 was a shallow scoop, 0.25m deep, with a lower fill of brown mixed clay with charcoal flecks and flint gravel, sealed beneath an upper fill, 1055, of mixed yellow and grey clays (Fig 3). A group of stones, F10, may have represented packing in a posthole, while a spread of flint gravel, F13, disturbed by animal burrows, may mark a further shallow scoop.

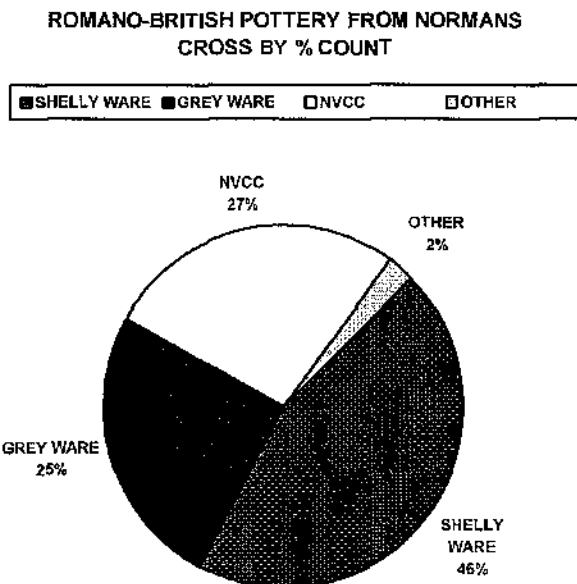
2.2.2 The pits were cut by two drainage features, F7 and F9, of which the latter was secondary having been cut across the partly-silted fill of F7. Drain F7 was 0.6m deep with steep sides and a flat base (Fig 3). Its base and sides were marked by cobbles and limestone blocks set in a brown silt with charcoal flecks. A secondary fill above comprised a thick layer of charcoal with further yellow brown silty clay completing the fill, 1054. Ditch F9 was 0.25m deep with a clay and flint fill in the sections examined, and again including much charcoal. To the north the fill was of flint gravel in a brown soil matrix while to the south the ditch line across the top of pit F8 was marked by brown clay with lumps of clean yellow clay.

2.2.3 Ditch F9 and the pits were sealed by a layer of sandy brown clay, 1050, which contained numerous large sherds of pottery including some near-complete vessels. The spread terminated northward less than 1m beyond F9, and westward and southward just short of the excavation limit. It continued eastward beyond the excavated area.

2.2.4 Layer 1057 overlying the natural surface and representing the contemporary subsoil was thus cut by a group of pits of which only one was examined. To their north a drain, F7, was subsequently cut and was then filled with debris. The cobbles and stones may have derived from buildings while the charcoal layer may represent burnt structural material. Ditch F9 was cut to join with F7 to the north, and downslope of the area of its stony fill. Ditch F9 was in turn filled with clay and stone. The area was then sealed by a spread of pottery, presumably representing rubbish lying where it was initially discarded and subsequently little disturbed. The source of the pottery may lie to the east of the trench. The junction of the two drains within the excavated area also suggests drainage from features lying to the east.

2.2.5 Approximately 10kg of pottery was recovered from these various deposits and features. The assemblage was relatively unabraded, not particularly fragmentary (average sherd weight 17.6g), and included a number of reconstructable vessels. This probably indicates a source close to the area investigated as well as relatively little post-depositional disturbance. The bulk of the assemblage comprised shelly wares, Nene Valley and probably more local grey wares, and Nene Valley colour coated wares. Other wares were represented in much smaller quantities: Black-Burnished

ware ((5 sherds), Mancetter-Hartshill mortaria (1 sherd), Samian (1 sherd) and miscellaneous red and white wares (5 and 2 sherds respectively). All the pottery was consistent with activity during the third century; perhaps towards the middle of the century. No residual material was apparent and little characteristically later material. The only Samian fragment was from a Dr 79 platter, a type first produced in the latter half of the second century but continuing in production into the third. The majority of Nene Valley colour coated beakers were of the funnel necked folded 'scale' variety produced from c A.D. 225, and the presence of small quantities of BB1 might also support this *TPQ*. Only one possible fourth century beaker type was noted; with rounded folds, rouletting and a lustrous colour coat. There were very few of the characteristically fourth century colour coated flanged bowls, plain dishes and wide mouthed jars; and very few shelly ware jars with the characteristically fourth century undercut rims. Oxfordshire colour coated wares, which might be expected in a late third or fourth century context in this area, were completely absent in the assemblage.



2.2.6 In addition to the pottery, two stone roofing slates were present as well as stone blocks. The flange of a tegula was found in the machine spoil as well as further stones possibly deriving from a building. The features at Norman Cross appeared to contain little animal bone. However, within the ditch sections exposed there were clear spreads of charred material and Mollusca. Samples have been collected for assessment.

2.2.7 A vertical-sided trench 0.32m wide and 0.42m deep with a flat base was recorded in Trench 3 and may have been a Romano-British feature. It was only traced for 1.2m and did not completely cross the trench. It lay at a depth of 0.5m below the ground surface and appeared to have been masked by a layer at the base of the subsoil raising the possibility of a layer of hillwash. No dating evidence was recovered.

2.2.8 Trenches 13-15 were cut alongside the A1 in the hope of locating further evidence of an alignment of Roman Ermine Street suggested by trenching 300m to the south (Kemp and Reynolds 1995, Appendix G, fig 1). No evidence for the Roman road was found, the post-medieval evidence is discussed below (Section 2.4).

2.3 Medieval

2.3.1 Ridge and furrow in the evaluated area runs east to west down slope to a stream to the west. Two field divisions marked by the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map divide the evaluated area into three sections. Furrow to furrow lengths are c 10m in the northern section. Trench 6 revealed a boundary ditch 4m wide and 0.7m deep which before clearance was a hedge line judging by the rooting revealed in the ditch. This boundary seems simply to have been formed within a furrow since ridge to ridge widths either side are 12m apart. Further furrow to furrow widths of 10m in the second section to the south suggest they belong to the same system. A further deep ditch divided this section from that to the south where furrow to furrow widths varied between 7 and 10m. The evidence suggested that this second division may have been of medieval date and may have divided two areas of differently formed ridge and furrow with narrower examples in the southern section.

2.3.2 Trench sections cut across the ridge and furrow (Trenches 1, 3, 6, 11, 12, 16, 17, 19 and 21) showed that the ridges did not comprise a deeper topsoil but that the furrows had been cut deeper into the underlying clay; the undulating surface of ridge and furrow was replicated in the natural surface. Trenches cut lengthways down ridges revealed a greater quantity of gravel in the underlying clay, but this mixed gravel and clay layer was absent in the furrows.

2.3.3 No medieval pottery was found. However, coins of medieval date have been found by metal detectorists in the past (information from a local detectorist club member).

2.4 Post-medieval

2.4.1 Trenches 13-15 alongside the A1 revealed an archaeological sequence of probable post-medieval date. A machine trench in Trench 13 was cut to a maximum depth of 1.4m revealing at the east end the layer of white flint gravel noted above (Section 2.1) as possibly the unmodified natural surface, with a more mixed flint gravel surface to the west (Fig 4). At the east end a 0.3m layer of orange flint gravel, 1010 and 1011, had been cut away to the west (F5). Six metres from the west end of the trench a north-south running ditch, F3, had been cut into the gravel and filled with silty dark grey clay, 1007. The ditch was sealed by a layer of dark grey claysoil with flint and chalk flecks, 1006, which lay in turn beneath layers of mixed orange clay with much flint gravel, 1003 and 1004, sealed by clay, 1002, and the topsoil, 1001.

2.4.2 In Trench 14 (Fig 4) the lowest level reached by the deeper machine trench was the sandy yellow clay, 1019, interpreted as the natural surface above (Section 2.1). To the west this was overlain by layers of brown and orange sandy clay, 1024 and 1025 respectively. To the east, layer 1019 lay beneath further bands of gravel, 1016 and 1017, sealed beneath a dark soil layer, 1015, containing flint gravel and larger flint nodules and also marked by mixed flecks of clay and chalk. As in Trench 13 these layers were cut away to the west. The cut, F5, lay beneath a layer of sandy flint gravel, 1014. A ditch, F2, running north-south was cut from the top of layers 1024 and 1019, and, like F3 in Trench 13, was filled with silty dark grey clays, 1022. This ditch was overlain by a spread of flint gravel (1021). This gravel spread lay beneath a layer of brown clay, 1018, with a sandy gravel content at the east end, which in turn lay beneath the topsoil, 1001. The trench had been cut diagonally across a modern service trench.

2.4.3 Excavation of a deeper trench in Trench 15 exposed the orange clay in the east part of the trench. It was overlain to the east by a layer of white flint gravel 0.6m thick, beneath which the clay was white/yellow rather than orange in colour. The flint gravel was overlain by a layer of orange clay and gravel which was in turn cut by a ditch, F4, which lay beneath the topsoil and subsoil.

2.4.4 Trenches 13 and 14 showed a similar stratigraphic sequence with a gravel bank to the east cut by F5 and with a ditch F2/F3 to its west. The position of ditch F2/F3 and of F5 at the same point west of the present road suggested they were linear features parallel to the road. The gravel bank to the east in Trench 14 was capped by a possible buried soil layer, 1006, not paralleled in Trench 13. The gravel layer, 1021, in Trench 14 was paralleled by the dark clay layer in Trench 13 although in the latter case there was little flint gravel.

2.4.5 The following sequence may be suggested. Gravel layers at the east end of Trenches 13 and 14 and possibly also in Trench 15 may represent a geological capping of gravel, or gravel redeposited and disturbed from earlier quarries. F5 would represent a quarry face and F2/F3 a ditch dividing an area of quarrying from agricultural fields to the west. Trench 15 was not taken deep enough to test whether F2/F3 continued south although a stratigraphically later ditch was recorded on an alignment closer to the A1. Layer 1015 in Trench 14 may represent a buried soil layer or a trampled quarry surface. Layer 1021 in Trench 14 and the dark soil, 1006, in Trench 13 may be an indication of spread material from repair and resurfacing of the Great North Road. The evidence could all mark the quarrying of the gravel capping for use in road making and repair. The abandonment and burial of the ditch boundary suggested by F2/F3 may mark the end of quarrying with subsequent layers part of road repairs perhaps in the last century.

2.4.6 No dating evidence was recovered from lower contexts. Post-medieval pottery and glass came from layers directly below the topsoil in Trench 15.

2.4.7 Elsewhere post-medieval evidence had already been recorded from the area east of Trench 16 (Kemp and Reynolds 1995, Appendix J)

Table 1 Summary of results from Norman Cross

Trench no	Features present surface	Natural	Results
1	-	orange clay	ridge and furrow sectioned
2	-	"	negative
3	F6	"	undated trench; ridge and furrow sectioned
4	-	orange gravel	negative
5	-	orange clay	ridge and furrow sectioned
6	-	"	field boundary ditch sectioned
7	-	"	negative
8	-	"	negative
9	-	"	geophysical anomalies not located
10	-	"	negative
11	-	"	ridge and furrow sectioned
12	see sections 2.2.1-2.2.5		
13	see sections 2.4.1-2.4.6		
14	"		
15	"		
16	-	orange clay	ridge and furrow sectioned
17	-	"	"
18	-	"	negative
19	-	"	ridge and furrow sectioned
20	-	"	negative
21	-	"	ridge and furrow sectioned
22	-	"	negative
23	F2	"	?modern trench not recorded
24	-	"	linear depression sectioned ?former quarry
25	-	"	negative

3 *Discussion*

3.1 Earlier work north of Stilton and south of the evaluated area had suggested that Ermine Street lay to the west of the present line of the Great North Road, now the A1 (Kemp and Reynolds 1995, Appendix G). Trenches 13-15 opened to test this alignment indicated gravel quarries to the west of the road cutting into possibly natural gravel layers which overlay the natural clay surface. The topography suggests other quarries with a large rectangular quarry some 100m to the south. Ridge and furrow in the evaluated area appears to be overlain by spoil from quarrying rather than to terminate at headlands at the top of the slope and it must be suspected that medieval ridge and furrow originally ran up to a medieval road on the line of Ermine Street.

3.2 The findings may be interpreted as indicating that the line of Ermine Street has been destroyed by post-medieval quarrying at the top of the hill. However they can also serve as the basis for a reconsideration of the evidence from the trial trenches excavated in November 1993 (Kemp and Reynolds 1995, Appendix G). The suggested Roman road surfaces there comprise gravel layers little more than 0.15m deep. They may represent, rather, a gravelled surface in the hollow way identified in preliminary fieldwork (Kemp and Reynolds 1995, Appendix B, fig 11, SMR no 09935). An association between this hollow way and the quarry to its north seems preferable to one with a Roman or medieval route. The bank to its west suggested as the Ermine Street agger seems more likely to be the easternmost surviving ridge of the north-south running ridge and furrow still present to the west. One final point is that the Roman road to the south and north of Norman Cross would have been sighted on the hilltop and is unlikely to have veered westward as suggested to run awkwardly along the hill slope.

3.3 The Romano-British features found in the evaluation suggest nearby settlement sited beside a stream c 100m west of Ermine Street. The evidence suggests occupation in the later 2nd and 3rd centuries and desertion within the Roman period. A small farmstead may be indicated, one of numerous examples in the region now indicated only by pottery scatters, some of which are recorded in Kemp and Reynolds 1995, Appendix B. The fragment of tegula, the stone blocks and the stone roofing slates possibly suggest a stone structure. No archaeological evidence was found in Trenches 10 and 11 or in the western end of Trench 12. The exposures of the natural surface in the sides of the ditch to the south were also free of pottery or features. Any evidence for settlement activity must lie within 20m to the east of Trench 12 or to the west, although the stream would serve as a boundary to occupation in that direction. The geophysical anomalies to the north might be associated. However, these were examined in Trench 9 with no ground evidence was apparent.

3.4 Although near Ermine Street, a functional or economic connection with the road need not be predicted. Roman roadside settlements comprised a limited range of types from towns and small towns to official staging posts and small roadside settlements. The latter may have had some official presence or have represented collection and distribution points for produce from large estates.

3.5 Ridge and furrow formation in the medieval period may have ploughed out upper levels of the destruction layers but the evidence of near complete pots found in layer 1050 suggests material undamaged by later activity. This is puzzling since furrows have cut into the natural surface across the field. Although it might be suggested that in the area of Trench 12 they cut into overlying demolition deposits, no evidence of spread Roman material was found in the spoil of nearby trenches.

3.6 In the post-medieval period, gravel and clay quarries are documented (Reynolds and Kemp 1995, Appendix O), and it may be argued that these are represented in part by the stratigraphic sequences from Trenches 13-15. The constant need to repair the major post-medieval routes is well documented elsewhere and the presence of gravel

at Norman Cross alongside the road would represent an attractive source of repair material.

Alconbury Hill

4 Introduction

4.1 A strip and record programme was undertaken at Alconbury Hill (Fig 1) following the Project Design (CBA 1996, 17). This was the first archaeological work undertaken although the potential of the area had been identified on the basis of nearby SMR recorded finds of Roman buildings and remains (Kemp and Reynolds 1995, Appendix B, fig 5). Roman pottery and burnt daub had been located 300m to the east (ibid, SMR no 00817). SMR no 00811 representing a group of rectangular Roman buildings excavated in 1940 lay 150m to the north (contra Kemp and Reynolds 1995, Appendix B, fig 5 which places them in the evaluated area).

4.2 Approximately two thirds of the threatened area was machine excavated to the natural surface (Fig 5). The sterility of the excavated area suggested no reason to complete a total coverage of the remaining unexamined area which lay beneath spoil heaps.

5 Results

5.1 No features of indisputable archaeological origin were recognised with the exception of a 5m wide service trench and two smaller pipe trenches. A few spreads of discoloured soil were not examined further, but are unlikely to have been of ancient origin.

5.2 A single sherd of Roman pottery was found in addition to post-medieval pottery.

Vinegar Hill

6 Introduction

6.1 Evaluation trenches were machine-excavated at Vinegar Hill (Fig 1; Table 2) to record a 2% sample (CBA 1996, 15). The work had been preceded by a magnetometer survey (Kemp and Reynolds 1995, Appendix N). As at Alconbury Hill to the east of Ermine Street, SMR entries of finds of Romano-British remains nearby suggested an archaeological potential (ibid, Appendix B, fig 4). These comprised a Romano-British pit and finds sited 150m to the south-west (SMR nos 00806a, 00808), and Iron Age and Roman pottery from two locations c 200m to the south (SMR 00809, 01724).

6.2 Six trenches measuring 20m by 1.6m (Trenches 1, 2, 4-7) and a seventh measuring 25m by 1.6m (Trench 3) were machine excavated to the natural unmodified surface (Fig 5). Archaeological features found in Trench 2 led to the excavation of Trench 3. Machine excavation here was carried down to a level slightly above the natural surface. The trenches were set out to cut anomalies recorded by the geophysical prospection.

6.3 Trenches 2 and 3 were sampled by hand excavation. The subsequent availability of the machine allowed key areas to be widened and ditch sections to be partially excavated.

6.4 All the trenches revealed a natural surface of orange clay beneath a 0.3m deep topsoil and subsoil layer.

7 Results

7.1 Romano-British

7.1.1 Three sections were cut across a ditch which the evidence suggested represented the northern corner of an enclosure (Fig 6). Ditch F7 to the west was filled with brown silt, 1011, and was cut to the south by a steep-sided feature, F5, filled with dark grey silt with a green tinge in its primary fill, 1010. F5 appeared to be a recutting of F7 but may have been a large pit. To the north-east the same ditch was excavated as F2. Here the profile resembled F7 and was filled with orange flecked silt beneath a brown silt with chalk flecks and flint. The upper fill was a dark grey (1003). A third ditch, F3, running at right angles to F7 and F2 was excavated to the east. A base fill of brown, orange-flecked silt, 1008, lay beneath a layer of brown clay, 1007. Above was a dark brown clay layer, 1006.

7.1.2 Within the area defined by the ditches, a shallow 0.2m deep scoop, F1, a possible posthole, F10, cutting the edge of F2 and a linear trench, F8, cut along the east edge of F3 may have been Romano-British features (Fig 6).

7.1.3 The ditches, F5/F7, F2 and F3 seem likely to coincide with the geophysical anomaly suggesting a circular enclosure, and to form the northern angle of a ditch-marked enclosure. There was no geophysical evidence to suggest that the ditches continued - F7 and F2 to the north-east, or F3 to the north-west. Within the enclosure there was no evidence of a surviving ground surface, with all features cut into the orange-coloured natural clay. F1 may represent the ploughed out remains of a pit. Romano-British deposits thus survived only in the ditch fills and in the layers formed above their settlement.

7.1.4 The evaluation produced a very small assemblage of 0.8kg, all of which was abraded and fragmentary (average sherd weight 8.6g) and included few datable forms. It produced a rather mixed assemblage, with more varieties of grey wares than from Norman cross, and more oxidised wares. It included two sherds of samian, but also characteristically later types such as Nene Valley colour coated beakers with white

decoration over the slip. It would therefore seem to represent a more disturbed assemblage, possibly deposited over a fairly long period of time. Tile was present in some quantity, including fragments of tegula. Tile was recorded from the lowest fills of both F2 and F3. Stone roofing slates were also recorded. An illegible, probably Roman, coin was found in F1.

7.1.5 The fills of the ditches from this site contained a quantity of well-preserved animal bone. At present, the majority of the bone material which was collected during the evaluation appeared to be that of mature cattle. Also included in these fills were the evident remains of a considerable molluscan fauna and considerable charred plant remains. Samples were collected for assessment. Both the animal bone and the charred plant remains have the potential to be informative about the nature and form of the farming economics on site. Particularly if the ditches involved did represent the remains of an enclosure. A further examination of the molluscan faunas would be informative as to some aspects of the surrounding landscape, particularly in the absence of water-logging within these ditches.

7.2 Post-medieval

7.2.1 Post-medieval linear features were excavated within the area defined by the ditches (Fig 6). These comprised F4, a sloping sided, flat-based trench 0.2m deep, which was also recorded cutting across the top of F2, and a vertical-sided, flat-based trench, F6, measuring 0.9m in width and 0.3m deep. A 3m wide linear feature, F9, with sharply defined parallel sides was not excavated. Three ceramic land drains were recorded.

7.2.2 There were no finds from any of the suggested post-medieval features, although post-medieval finds are present in the field and occurred in the spoil. F6 is similar to features located at South Farm, Upton, interpreted as post-medieval drainage trenches (Kemp and Reynolds 1995, Appendix K, fig 2, p 6). These linear features may have some relationship with those picked up by geophysical survey.

Table 2 Summary of results from Vinegar Hill

Trench	Features	natural	results
no		present surface	
1	-	orange clay	negative
2	see Sections 7.1 and 7.2		
3	"		
4	-	orange clay	negative
5	-	"	"
6	-	"	"
7	-	"	"

8 *Discussion*

The topography in the area of Trenches 2 and 3 suggests that the ditches were primarily intended to form an enclosure boundary rather than act as drainage ditches. The ground falls away to the west and north-west yet the ditches do not appear to continue in those directions. Although some possible Roman features survived, the contemporary ground surface has been removed by the plough. However, sinkage into the upper fills of the ditches has served to protect rubbish deposits with animal bone predominant, and this evidence may be associated with the enclosure.

Recommendations

9 *Norman Cross*

9.1 At Norman Cross the safety limits imposed on deeply-cut sections precluded the machine excavation of Trenches 13-15 to depths which would have established the sequence without doubt. However, if the interpretation outlined above (Section 3.6), that the archaeology is confined to gravel quarrying, is accepted, it would be expected that transects would reveal differing sections, as was the case.

9.2 It seems likely that the deposits encountered at the southern end of Trench 12 relate to nearby settlement activity, possibly associated with a small Romano-British farmstead. The pottery suggests a fairly tight lifespan for the settlement. The archaeological value of the site is enhanced by the possibility of establishing a reasonably close date for the initial settlement and for the description of the site. Although its contemporary context has been removed, the survival of the remains, sealed as they are by a scatter of large sherds, is likely to be good. Its position just beneath the topsoil/subsoil renders it highly vulnerable. However, no trace of this settlement was identified in any of the other evaluation trenches.

9.3 Although some protection may be afforded after consultation with the road constructors, it is suggested that further excavation should be undertaken in the area within the CPO focusing on the Romano-British deposits identified during the evaluation. It is suggested that an area approximately 20m by 16m should be examined extending from the western boundary of the CPO to midway between Trenches 12 and 11. The excavation of any archaeological features identified within this area should be carried out according to the guidelines outlined in the draft project design (CBA 1996, 6-8).

9.4 The absence of archaeology from other areas aside from Trenches 12-15 seems to have been thoroughly tested. Although the failure to locate the origin of the geophysical anomalies in Trench 9 and the finding of a single feature at some depth in Trench 3 raises the possibility that features lie masked beneath the orange clay assumed to be the natural surface, this possibility seems unrealistic.

10 *Alconbury Hill*

No significant archaeological deposits were encountered no further work is proposed.

11 *Vinegar Hill*

11.1 It seems likely that the ditches recorded in Trenches 2 and 3 are associated with a small enclosed farmstead. Here survival outside the ditches will almost certainly be limited to other deeply cut features. By the same token ditches and their contents will only be totally removed by extensive groundwork's to a depth of 1m or more. However it should be noted that the chief potential of the site is represented by material in its upper ditch fills.

11.2 The great majority of the site appears to lie outside the road line and will not be threatened. Although some protection may be afforded after consultation with the road constructors, it is suggested that further excavation should be undertaken in the area within the CPO containing the ditches (approximately 35m by 15m) according to the guidelines outlined in the draft project design (CBA 1996, 6-8).

11.3 On site sampling for both charred plant remains and molluscan faunas should be undertaken. Given the apparent lack of clear stratigraphy in these ditches this should consist of the recovery of a full sequence of sediment samples spaced at 10cm intervals down the ditch face at the present locations. Each sample should be approximately 20 litres in volume. If, however, clear contexts are encountered in subsequent excavations these should be sampled individually.

Acknowledgements

The report was prepared by Peter Ellis with comments on the pottery provided by Jane Evans and on the palaeo-environmental potential by Dr David Smith. The illustrations were prepared by Nigel Dodds and the report was edited by Gwilym Hughes. Special thanks to David Maynard (Project Archaeologist CBA) for all his assistance with the evaluations.

References

CBA, 1996 A1(M) Alconbury to Peterborough DBFO scheme: Archaeological project design, general strategy and methodology January 1996 - Chris Blandford Associates

Kemp, S, and Reynolds, T, 1995 Archaeology on the A1 between Alconbury and Fletton Parkway, Stage 3 assessment, Volume 2 - Cambridgeshire County Council Report 112

List of Figures

Fig 1 - Location of the evaluations

Fig 2 - Norman Cross: location of evaluation trenches and outline of geophysical survey areas

Fig 3 - Norman Cross: Trench 12 plan and eastern section

Fig 4 - Norman Cross: Northern sections of Trenches 13 and 14

Fig 5 - Alconbury Hill and Vinegar Hill: location of stripped areas, evaluation trenches and outline of geophysical survey area

Fig 6 - Vinegar Hill: plan of Trenches 2 and 3 and ditch sections

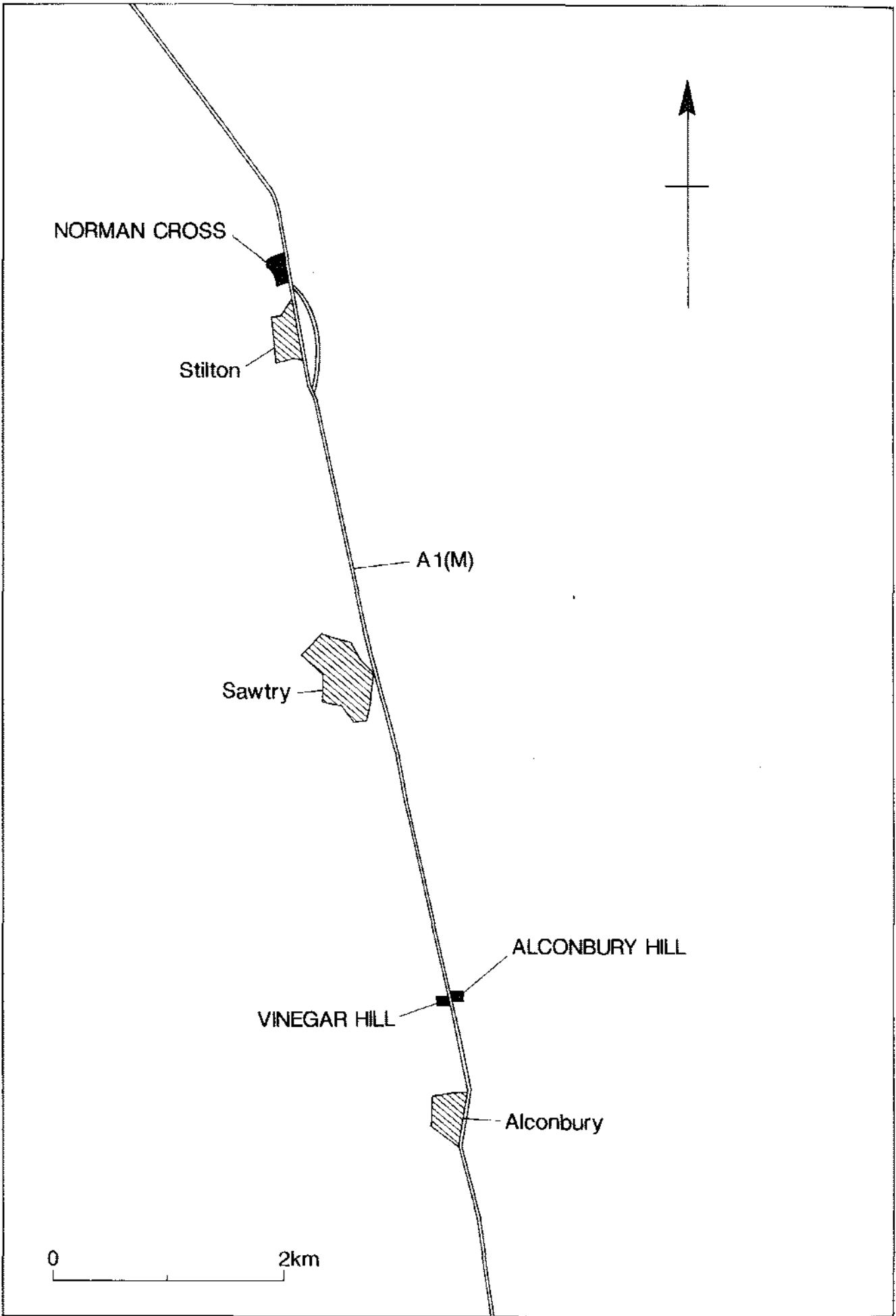


Fig.1

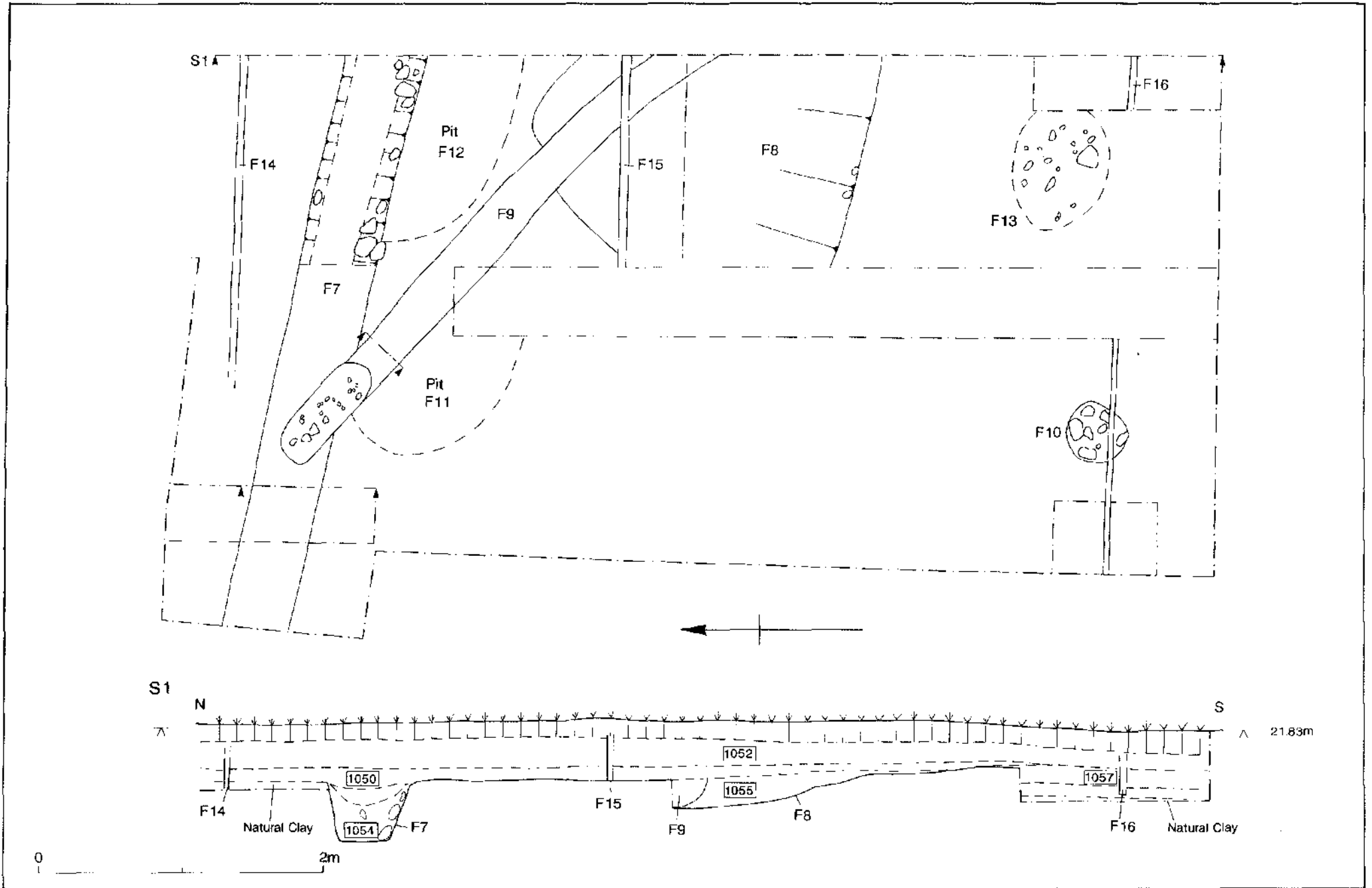


Fig.3

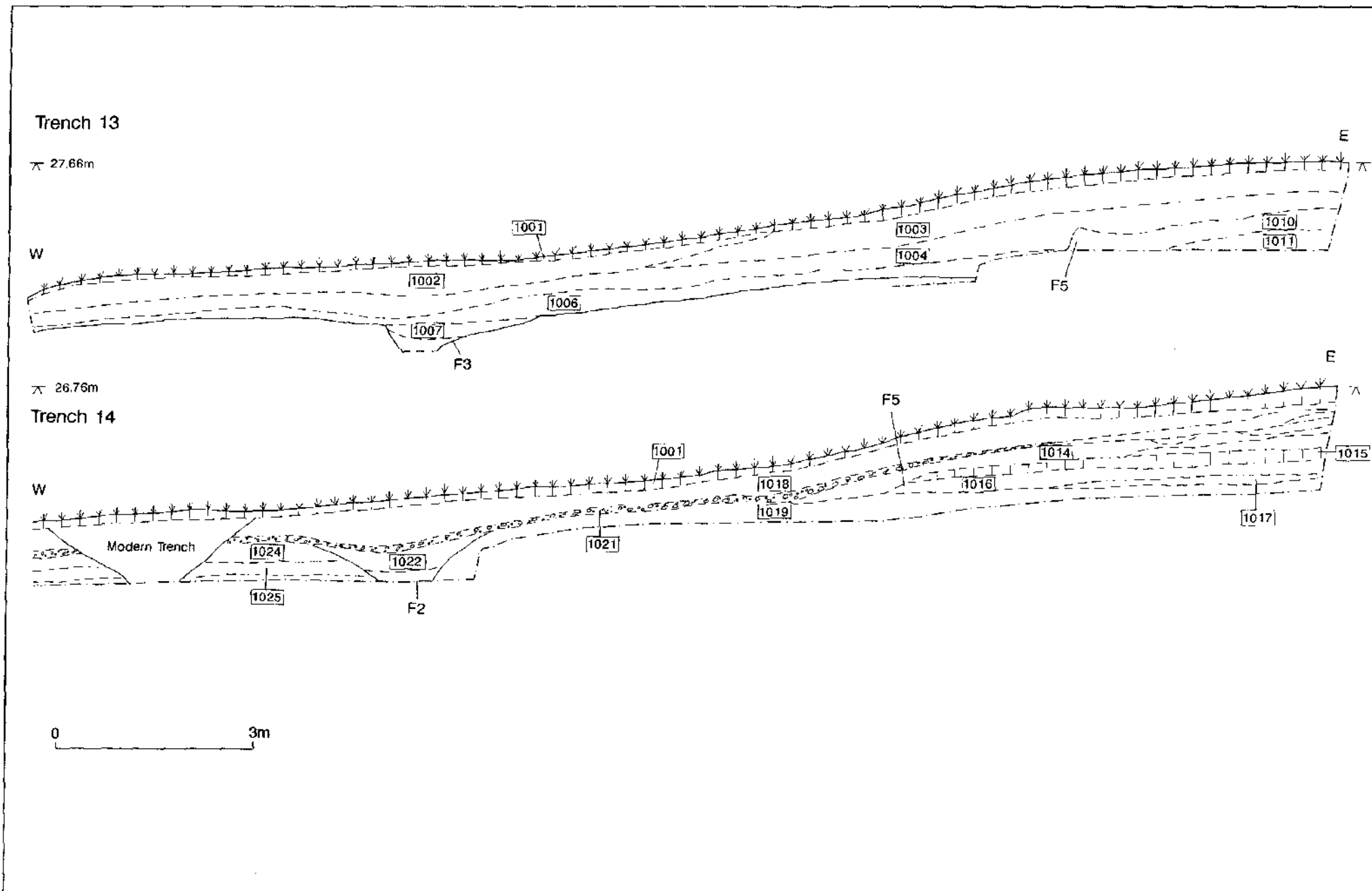


Fig.4

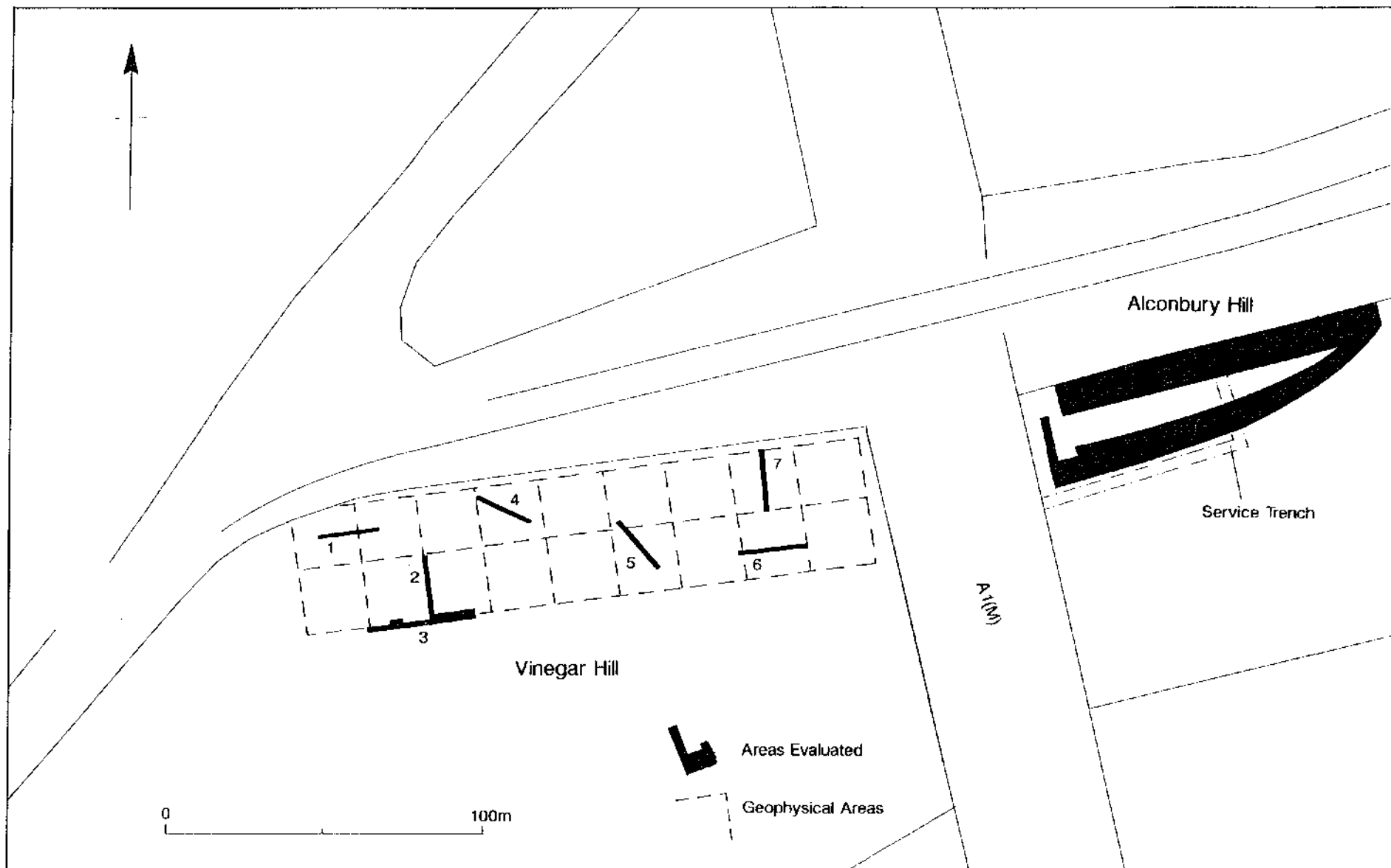


Fig.5

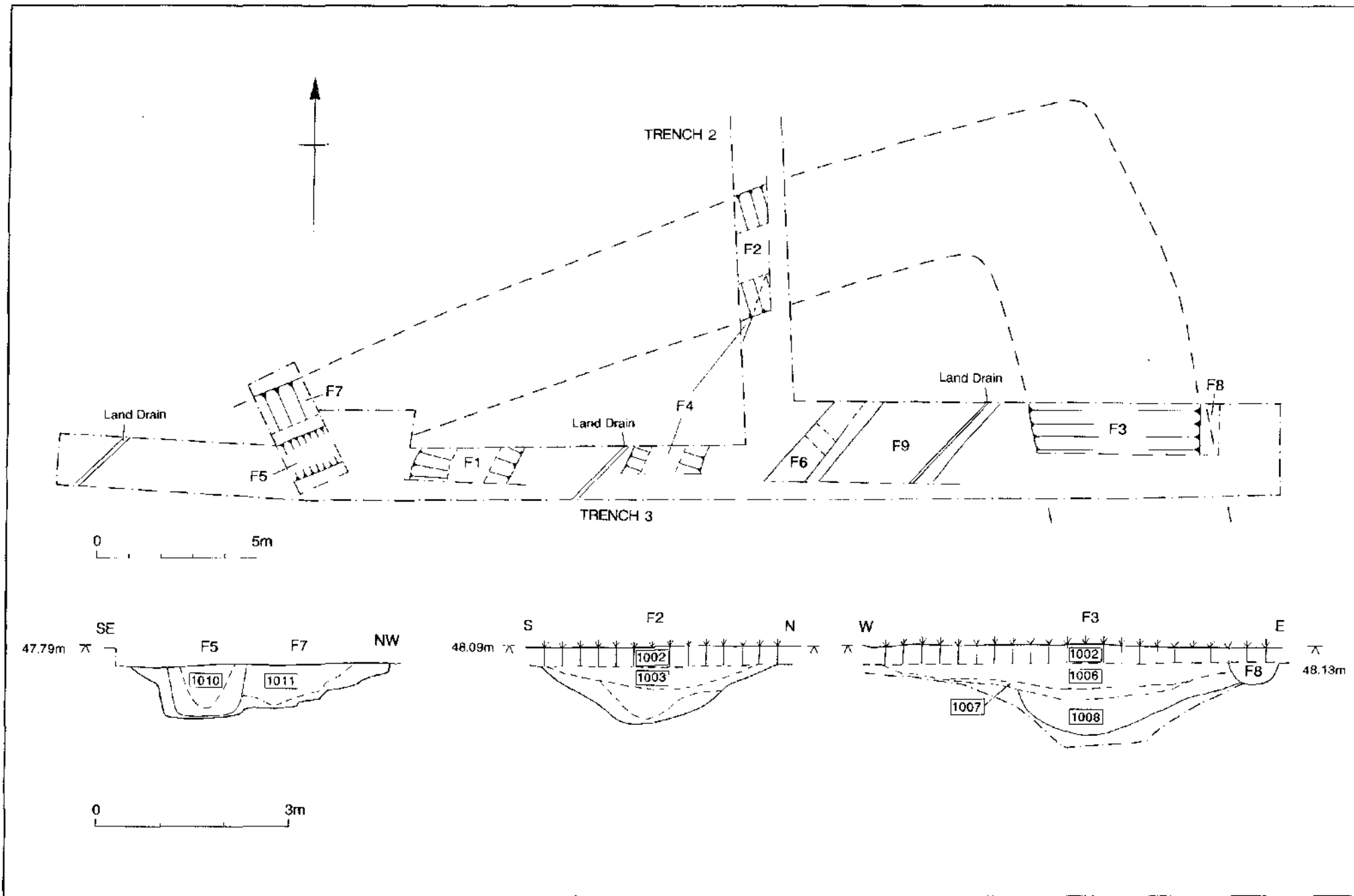


Fig.6