No. 507

BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT

80 Station Road, Cropston, Leicestershire

An Archaeological Evaluation 1997

B.U.F.A.U.

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
Project No. 507
December 1997

80 Station Road, Cropston, Leicestershire
An Archaeological Evaluation

by
Rebecca Bridgman

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/

CONTENTS

FIGURES

80 STATION ROAD, CROPSTON, LEICESTERSHIRE

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION 1997

Rebecca Bridgman

1.0: Summary

The archaeological potential of land proposed for residential development at 80 Station Road, Cropston, Leicestershire was tested by an archaeological field evaluation, involving the excavation of four trial trenches, each 25m long and 1.6m wide. Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit undertook this evaluation in December 1997, having been commissioned by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants, acting as advisors to David Wilson Estates. The evaluation followed a desk-based assessment undertaken by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants, which indicated the potential archaeological interest of the site.

No features of archaeological significance had been identified within the site by the desk-based assessment, although numerous archaeological sites and find spots were recorded in the immediate vicinity. No features of archaeological significance were identified by trial trenching, with the exception of a ridge-and-furrow field system, also identified in adjacent areas.

2.0: Introduction

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation of approximately 1.07ha of land, located at 80 Station Road, Cropston, Leicestershire (centred on NGR SK 5564 1115). Currently a large house and garden stand on the site, which has until recently been used as a holiday home for the disabled. Proposed development by David Wilson Estates entails the demolition of present structures and the erection of residential dwellings. The specification for trial trenching at the site was prepared by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants (JSAC 320/97/02), following a desk-based assessment (JSAC 320/97/01), in accordance with a standard condition on the planning permission imposed by the Leicester County Planning Archaeologist (Planning Application No. P/96/00060/2) and conforms to the recommendations of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (November 1990).

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the nature, extent, date, function and spatial arrangement of any archaeological activity which may be affected by the re-development of the site.

3.0: The Site and its Setting

The area surrounding the site saw intense activity during the Roman period, with several occupation sites being present. There are also indications of lower levels of activity of other periods.

A major Roman road, the Fosse Way, is situated only 6 kilometres to the east of the site.

A Roman villa (Scheduled Ancient Monument 159) with related Saxon burials lies 1.5km to the north of the site, at Rothley. Approximately 1km from 80 Station Road is a site of late Iron Age and early Roman occupation: material from a kiln was found, along with late Iron Age and Roman pottery (51 SEBP). Only 0.5km from the proposed development site, finds of 1st and 2nd century Roman pottery and kiln bars, associated with Roman coins and other metalwork, have been discovered (51 SEDV).

In addition, metal detectorists have discovered three sites of Roman and later activity in the area. At the first of these sites Roman and Anglo-Saxon coins and medieval lead spindle whorls have been discovered (51 SECY). At the second site substantial numbers of finds suggesting Roman activity have been found (51 SECW), only approximately 900m from the proposed development area. It was thought possible that both the above sites could possibly extend into the study area (Slatcher, 1997). Other finds of Roman material discovered by metal detecting have been located in this area (51 SECU), although this site was not thought to extend into the proposed development area.

Fieldwalking in the area during the 1980s revealed a site producing Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon period finds (51 SEBV). The main concentration of finds dates to the Roman period and possibly represents a kiln site.

The site is surrounded by fields containing evidence of a ridge-and-furrow field system.

4.0: Methodology

In accordance with the specification prepared by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants and agreed with the County Archaeologist, 160 metres square of the site was excavated, in the form of four trenches, each measuring 1.6m wide and 25m long (Fig. 2).

In each trench, topsoil and overburden were removed by mechanical excavator (using a toothless ditching bucket) under archaeological control, to expose the uppermost horizon of the natural subsoil. A small sondage into the natural was excavated using the mechanical digger, in order to verify the natural level. The trench bases and sides were then cleaned and examined. A sample of the anthropogenic, or suspected anthropogenic, features was tested by hand excavation. Recording was by means of printed pro-forma recording sheets, supplemented by plans, sections and photographs. The site was monitored by JSAC and the County Archaeologist kept informed of progress.

The site archive is held by BUFAU and will be transferred to Leicestershire Museums in due course. It consists of plans, sections, pro forma context recording sheets and the finds which have been washed and marked.

5.0: Results (Fig.2)

5.1: Trench 1

Trench 1 was aligned roughly northeast-southwest in the western section of the site. This trench was located in an overgrown allotment. Natural orange-brown clay (1003) was recorded at a depth of between 0.45m and 0.60m below modern surface levels; this was overlain by a grey-brown layer of silty clay (1002). This in turn was overlain by a thick layer of topsoil (1001), approximately 0.30m in depth.

No anthropogenic features of archaeological significance could be identified in the base of the trench. However, in the section, the remnants of a ridge-and-furrow field system could be clearly seen. This system was represented by a series of peaks and troughs in the horizon between the natural clay (1003) and the silty layer (1002). The average peak separation of the ridge-and-furrow was approximately 9m.

On cleaning the section finds were recovered from the topsoil (1001). These comprised one small body sherd of post-medieval pottery and some modern metalwork.

5.2 Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

Trench 2 was also aligned roughly northeast-southwest; it was located in the central section of the site, within an area of garden lawn. The natural orange-brown clay was recorded at an average depth of 0.3m below the modern surface. This was overlain by a grey-brown layer of silty clay (2002) which was in turn overlain by a topsoil layer (2001). As in Trench 1 the ridge-and-furrow field system could clearly be seen in the horizon between the natural and silty clay, in the form of peaks and troughs. A series of 'V-shaped' grooves cut into the natural clay was interpreted as modern ploughing. F2203 was interpreted as a modern, shallow pit with a flat base, cut from topsoil levels; the fill (2006) was very similar to the layer of grey-brown silty clay (2002). F2205 was cut into the natural clay with a grey loam fill that contained sand and grit inclusions (2008); this was interpreted as a modern feature. No features of archaeological significance were exposed.

A small flint flake, a copper alloy coin with illegible surface and a body sherd of post-medieval pottery were recovered on cleaning the section.

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was aligned roughly northwest-southeast and was located in the southwestern section of the site. It was located within an area of garden lawn. The natural orange-brown clay (3004) was recorded at an average depth of 0.25 m. This was overlain by a layer of grey-brown silty clay which contained small stone inclusions (3003); this in turn was overlain by a thin topsoil layer (3001). At the westernmost end of this trench a brown-black layer with coal and small stone inclusions (3002) was visible beneath the topsoil (3001). This layer (3002) was modern and contained a clay pipe field drain.

The ridge-and-furrow field system was not visible in the section of this trench, probably because it ran parallel to the system, instead of at right angles to it, as in Trenches 1 and 2. No anthropogenic features of archaeological significance were identified in this trench. No finds were recovered.

5.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was aligned roughly northwest-southeast, in the southeastern section of the site. It was located within an area of garden lawn. The natural orange-brown clay (4003) was recorded at an average depth of 0.30m below modern surface levels. This was overlain by a layer of grey-brown silty clay which contained small stone inclusions (4002); this in turn was overlain by a thin topsoil layer (4001).

Again the ridge-and-furrow system was not visible in the section of this trench, probably for the same reasons as those stated above (5.3). No anthropogenic features of archaeological significance were identified in this trench. No finds were recovered.

6.0 Discussion

Trial trenching on the site revealed that the ridge-and-furrow field system which exists in adjacent fields clearly extended into the study area. However, no clearly stratified finds were recovered to date this system, although it is probably of medieval origin. It is likely that when the garden of the current house was landscaped, the ridge-and-furrow system was back-filled and levelled. No other anthropogenic features of archaeological significance were discovered on the site, despite its proximity to areas of Roman and other activity. No significant, well stratified finds were recovered.

7.0 Acknowledgements

The project was sponsored by David Wilson Estates and monitored by Dan Slatcher on behalf of John Samuels Archaeological Consultants. The fieldwork was supervised by Steve Linnane, assisted by John Hovey and Rebecca Bridgman. The illustrations were prepared by Nigel Dodds.

8.0 References and Sources

Slatcher, D. 1997: *A desk-based Archaeological Assessment of Land at Station Road, Cropston, Leicestershire*. John Samuels Archaeological Consultants, Nottinghamshire (JSAC 320/97/01).

Slatcher, D. 1997: *A Specification for Trial Trenching of Land at Station Road, Cropston, Leicestershire*. John Samuels Archaeological Consultants, Nottinghamshire (JSAC 320/97/02).

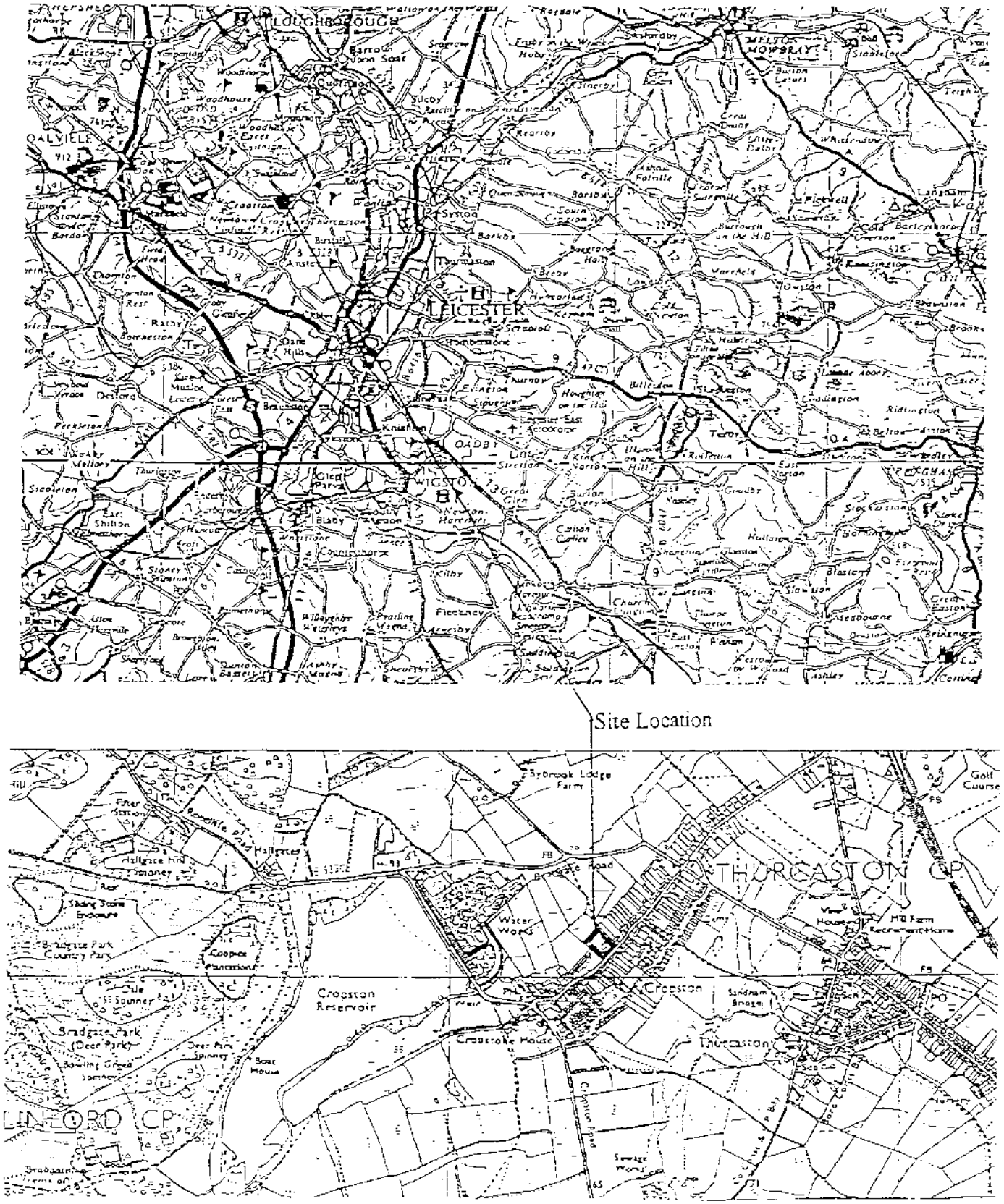

Figure 1 Site Location

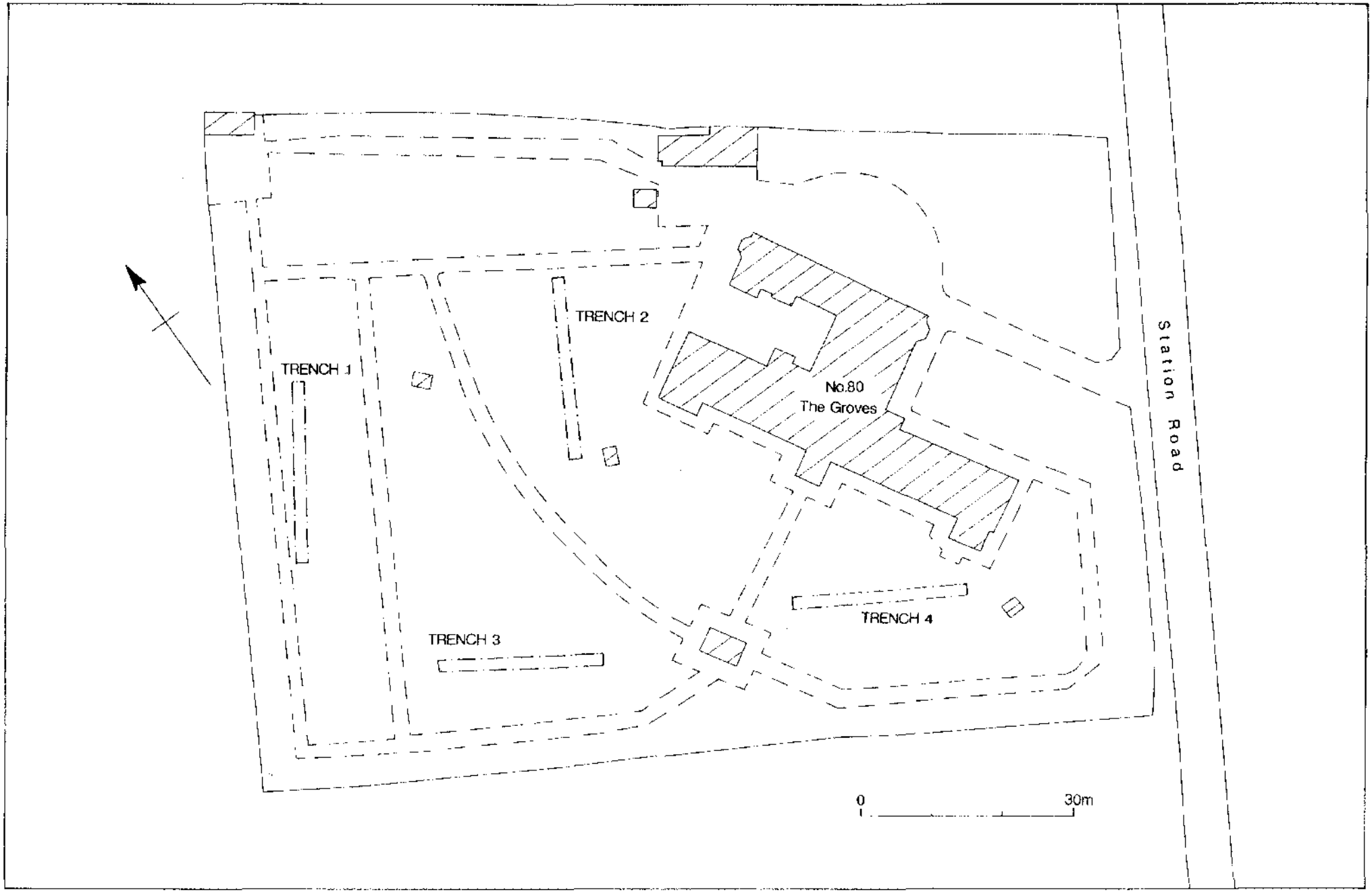
TRENCH 1
TRENCH 2
TRENCH 3
TRENCH 4
No.80
The Groves
Station Road
0
30m

Fig.2

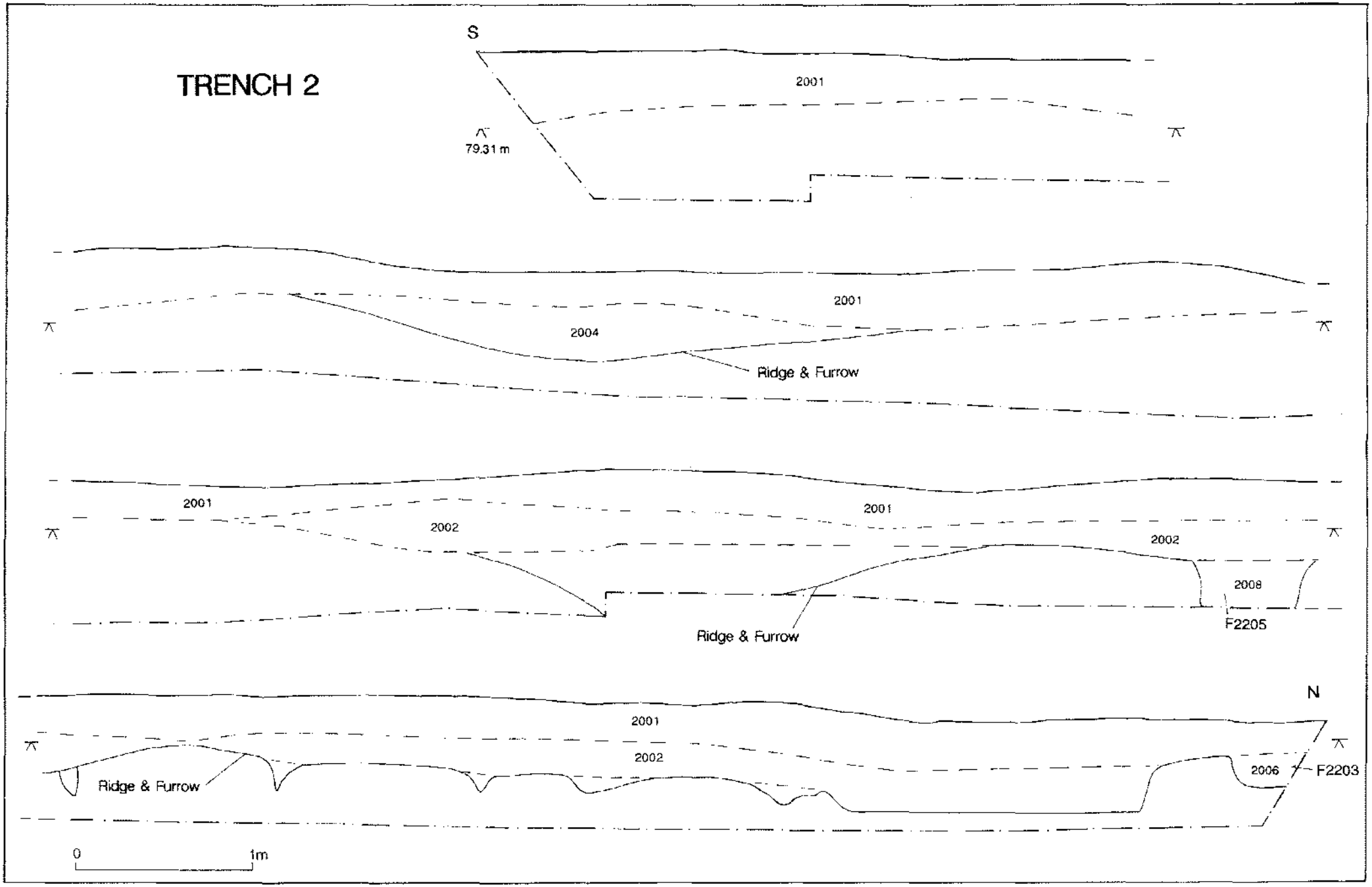
TRENCH 2
S
79.31 m
2001
2001
2004
Ridge & Furrow
2001
2001
2002
2002
2008
F2205
Ridge & Furrow
N
2001
2002
2006
F2203
Ridge & Furrow
0
1m

Fig.3