

*BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY  
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT*

**An Archaeological Evaluation**

**of land off Stinting Lane**

**Shirebrook**

**Derbyshire**

**1998**

*B.U.F.A.U.*



Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
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**An Archaeological Evaluation  
of land off Stinting Lane, Shirebrook  
Derbyshire  
1998**

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## **1.0 Summary**

An archaeological evaluation was conducted by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit at land off Stinting Lane, Shirebrook, Derbyshire, in the period 24th - 26th February 1998. The evaluation was carried out in advance of the proposed development of the site for residential housing. Prior to this project no below-ground archaeological investigations had been conducted within the proposed development site or in its immediate environs. However, the County Sites and Monuments Record did contain two entries for the recovery of prehistoric flint artefacts from land surrounding the proposed development site. The evaluation comprised a study of available cartographic evidence, geophysical survey of three areas and the excavation of four trial trenches. Archaeological features were identified in Trench 3 only. These features, which survived at a depth of 0.30m below the present ground surface, may represent prehistoric settlement features, and may be affected by the proposed development.

## **2.0 Introduction**

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out at land off Stinting Lane, Shirebrook, Derbyshire. The work was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Haslam Homes, in advance of a planning application for residential building development of the site. The archaeological evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994), a Design Brief prepared by Derbyshire County Council (Barrett 1998), and a Specification prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (Mould 1998). This evaluation conformed to Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Department of Environment 1991).

A geophysical survey was undertaken by Geophysical Surveys of Bradford on behalf of BUFAU and in advance of trial-trenching. This survey is reported on separately (GSB 1998), however the results are incorporated in this report.

## **3.0 The Site and its Location (Figures 1 and 2)**

The site consists of approximately four hectares of rough pasture, including one field immediately to the west of Stinting Lane, and a narrow strip of land within the adjacent field (NGR SK 5182 6710).

The site is located within an area of known archaeological context. The County Sites and Monuments Record contains reference to the recovery of a small quantity of prehistoric flint waste flakes and the survival of associated burnt material from land surrounding the proposed development site (SMR 12534 and 12535). Together, these suggest some prehistoric activity, such as encampments or settlements, within the immediate environs of the proposed development site (Barrett 1998).

#### **4.0 Objectives**

The objective of the evaluation was to determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits within the proposed development site and to determine the age, character and state of preservation of any such remains. The evaluation also aimed to assess the impact of the proposed development on any surviving archaeological deposits and features (Mould 1988).

#### **5.0 Method (Figure 3)**

Four trial trenches were excavated. All four trenches were located to transect anomalies recorded by geophysical survey as potential archaeological deposits (GSB 1998). A JCB excavator was used to remove the modern topsoil overburden to the top of any significant archaeological features and deposits, or to the top of the subsoil.

All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present, and contextual information was supplemented by scale drawings, plans, sections and photographs which, together with recovered artifacts, form the site archive. This is presently housed at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

#### **6.0 Cartographic Study (Maps 1-3)**

An Enclosure map, dated 1748 (not illustrated), shows the site as lying within one large, open, elongated field which was bounded by Common Lane to the west and Stinting Lane to the east. The site was bounded by open fields to the north and south. A 'holy well' is mapped in one of the southern fields, adjacent to Stinting Lane.

A Plan of the Township of Shirebrook, dated 1841 (not illustrated), shows that the large field mapped in 1748, has been sub-divided into three smaller parcels of land. The site comprises an open field adjacent to Stinting Lane, and part of a second open field, immediately to the west. A pond is shown on the location of the 'holy well' mapped in 1748.

The Ordnance Survey maps of 1889 (Map 1), 1898 (Map 2) and 1921 (Map 3), show that the site and its boundaries remained unchanged from 1841 onwards. The two fields are shown as open, with no encroachment from the township of Shirebrook. The pond/'holy well' shown by the two earlier maps is also shown on Maps 1-3.

## **7.0 The Archaeological Results (Figures 3 and 4; Plates 1-4)**

A continuous numbering system was employed for both excavated and non-excavated features and deposits within each of the four trial trenches.

### Trench 1 (not illustrated)

(1.60m x 16m, aligned northeast - southwest, excavated to a maximum depth of 0.70m below present ground level).

Geophysical survey had identified two potential archaeological features, both giving strong responses. The response of the northeasterly was similar to that of a kiln.

The subsoil comprised red clay mottled with black grit coal (1002) and yellow-brown sand-clay subsoil, interspersed with gravel (1001). The gravel became more concentrated to the northeastern end of Trench 1. The subsoil was sealed by 0.30m of topsoil (1000). An irregular ovoid-shaped, steep-sided feature, with a shallow sloping base (F100) was recorded at the centre of Trench 1, corresponding with one of the geophysical anomalies. It was filled with a mottled, clean yellow-white clay with leached-out roots (1003). Towards the southwestern end of Trench 1 a layer of yellowy red-brown sand-clay (1004) was recorded, corresponding with the second geophysical anomaly. The layer increased in depth from 0.08m at its northeastern limit to 0.28m at its southwestern limit.

Brick fragments, charcoal lumps, metalworking slag and sandstone lumps were recovered from layer 1004.

### Trench 2

(1.60m x 23.70m, aligned northeast - southwest, excavated to a maximum depth of 0.80m below present ground level).

Two geophysical anomalies were recorded within the area transected by Trench 2.

The subsoil comprised red clay, overlain by a sub-rounded gravel sand-clay subsoil horizon (2001). It was recorded at 0.30m - 0.38m below the present ground level. The subsoil was sealed by 0.30m of topsoil (2000). No archaeological features were identified in this trench. The geophysical anomalies corresponded with varying concentrations of gravel within the subsoil.

### Trench 3

(1.60m x 17m, aligned north - south, excavated to a maximum depth of 0.80m).

Three geophysical anomalies were recorded, two of these corresponded with archaeological features (F300 and F302).

A red sand-clay and yellow, partially compacted, sandstone subsoil (3002 and 3009) was sealed by 0.25m of topsoil (3000). A total of four features was recorded in this trench; all of which were cut into the subsoil. At the southern end of Trench 3, an irregular, ovoid-shaped feature (F303), with gently sloping sides and an undulating base, was filled with red-brown

sand-clay (3006). Immediately to the north of F303, a northeast - southwest aligned linear feature (F302), which appeared to continue beyond the bounds of Trench 3, was recorded. The profile of F302 was gently-sloped on its southern side and steeper, less regular, on its northern side. The feature was filled with red-brown sand-clay (3005). At the centre of Trench 3, an irregular, oval scoop (F301) was cut into the subsoil (3002). The western profile of F301 was shallow, with a steeply-cut slot at the centre of the feature itself. The fill comprised a dark red-brown sand-clay inter-mixed with charcoal and orange-clay flecks (3004). The fourth feature in Trench 3 was recorded immediately to the north of F301, and comprised a linear feature (F300), aligned east-west, with a bowl-shaped profile. The feature appeared to continue beyond the bounds of Trench 3. It was filled with a red-brown sand-clay (3008) containing small roots.

A struck flint flake was recovered from the fill (3008) of feature F300.

#### Trench 4

(1.60m x 7.0m, aligned north - south, excavated to a maximum depth of 0.60m below present ground level).

Geophysical survey identified a number of weak responses which were similar to those given by variations within the subsoil.

The sub-soil comprised a yellow-brown sand-clay (4001). This was sealed by 0.30m of topsoil (4000). No archaeological features were identified in this trench.

## **8.0 The Artefacts**

### *8.1 Flint by Lynne Bevan*

One struck flint flake was found with possible retouch along one edge (3008). This small flake of re-corticated opaque cream/light grey flint is not diagnostic of any one prehistoric period.

## **9.0 Discussion and Assessment of the Archaeological Results**

Archaeological remains, which may be dated to the prehistoric period, were recorded in Trench 3 only. Of the four features recorded, two corresponded with anomalies recorded by geophysical survey. The features comprised two linear gullies (F300 and F302), a scoop with a possible post-hole at its base (F301) and a shallow pit (F303), which together may represent some form of settlement. All of the features were shallow and had weathered profiles. A struck flint flake which was recovered from gully F300 dates the fill of that feature to the prehistoric period, and the similarity of all four of the features in terms of form, fill and preservation, may suggest that they are contemporary.

The spatial extent of such prehistoric activity within the proposed development site is not known. However, geophysical survey suggested that the anomalies corresponding with



gullies F300 and F302 continued northeast and slightly southwest beyond Trench 3 (GSB 1998). Other associated archaeological features may correspond with the geophysical anomalies recorded to the southwest of Trench 3 (Figure 3). This more extensive survival could be supported by two records within the County SMR, documenting the recovery of prehistoric flake finds and associated burnt material from the immediate vicinity of the proposed development site (SMR 12534 and SMR 12535).

Although dating of the features in Trench 3 is reliant on the recovery of one artefact from the fill of gully F300, and the preservation of all four features is not good, the importance of these remains within the local and regional context is considered to be high. Locally, the record of a prehistoric landscape is limited, and therefore any remains dating to this period are of importance in terms of their potential to add detail to our understanding of the prehistoric landscape and subsequent historical development of Shirebrook. Regionally the remains are of importance within the context of Creswell Crags, and the known early occupation of sites in that area to the northeast of Shirebrook.

No evidence of Romano-British or medieval activity was recorded.

Two geophysical anomalies were recorded in Trench 1 (GSB 1998). An ovoid-shaped feature corresponded with one of the anomalies (F100). It was irregular in plan, was filled with a clean clay deposit containing leached-out roots, and is thought to be natural in origin. The location of a second geophysical anomaly, at the southwestern end of Trench 1, corresponded with that of a layer containing modern brick and slag from metalworking (1004).

Trenches 2 and 4 were also located to transect geophysical anomalies which may have been archaeological in nature. However, no corresponding archaeological deposits or features were recorded, the geophysical anomalies corresponded instead with variations in the subsoil.

## **10.0 Implications and Proposals**

### **10.1 Implications**

The preservation of four prehistoric features within Trench 3, in the southwestern corner of the proposed development site, suggests the potential for more extensive survival beyond the bounds of Trench 3. Two of these features corresponded with geophysical anomalies, and geophysical survey suggests the continuation of these features immediately to the northeast of Trench 3, with more extensive survival of these, and additional features to the southwest (GSB 1998). The fills of features F300-F303 were recorded within 0.30m of the present ground surface, and are likely to be affected by the construction of the residential houses and their associated services and access roads.

Further archaeological mitigation fieldwork may be needed to establish the extent of prehistoric activity within the proposed development site and to recover more extensive dating evidence.

## 10.2 Proposals

The proposals below provide an outline of the archaeological mitigation fieldwork which could be required if the proposed development is approved. The precise nature of such mitigation would need to be determined following the completion of a final location design and with the approval of Derbyshire County Council.

1. Provision should be made for further work to be carried out within the immediate area of Trench 3 in advance of the proposed development. It is proposed that an area measuring 20m north-south x 50m east-west be opened. This area would extend approximately 5m to the east of Trench 3, and 45m to the west, and would aim to establish the distribution and intensity of potential archaeological features, some of which have been recorded by geophysical survey. This open area excavation would aim to recover more extensive dating evidence for any such archaeological deposits and features.
2. Should significant archaeological remains be recorded during the mitigation fieldwork described in Point 1 above, it is proposed that further mitigation, in the form of a 50m extension to the west of the open area, be implemented.
3. On completion of such further works, it may be appropriate to prepare an assessment of the significance of the findings, in accordance with the recommendations of Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage 1991), with a view to further analysis and publication of the results in a local archaeological journal

## 11.0 References

Barrett, D. 1997 *Brief for an Archaeological Evaluation: Land Off Stinting Lane, Shirebrook.*

GSB Prospection 1998 *Shirebrook, Derbyshire. Geophysical Survey Report 98/19.*

Mould, C.A. 1998 *Archaeological Evaluation at Land Off Stinting Lane, Shirebrook, Derbyshire. Project Specification.*

## 12.0 Acknowledgments

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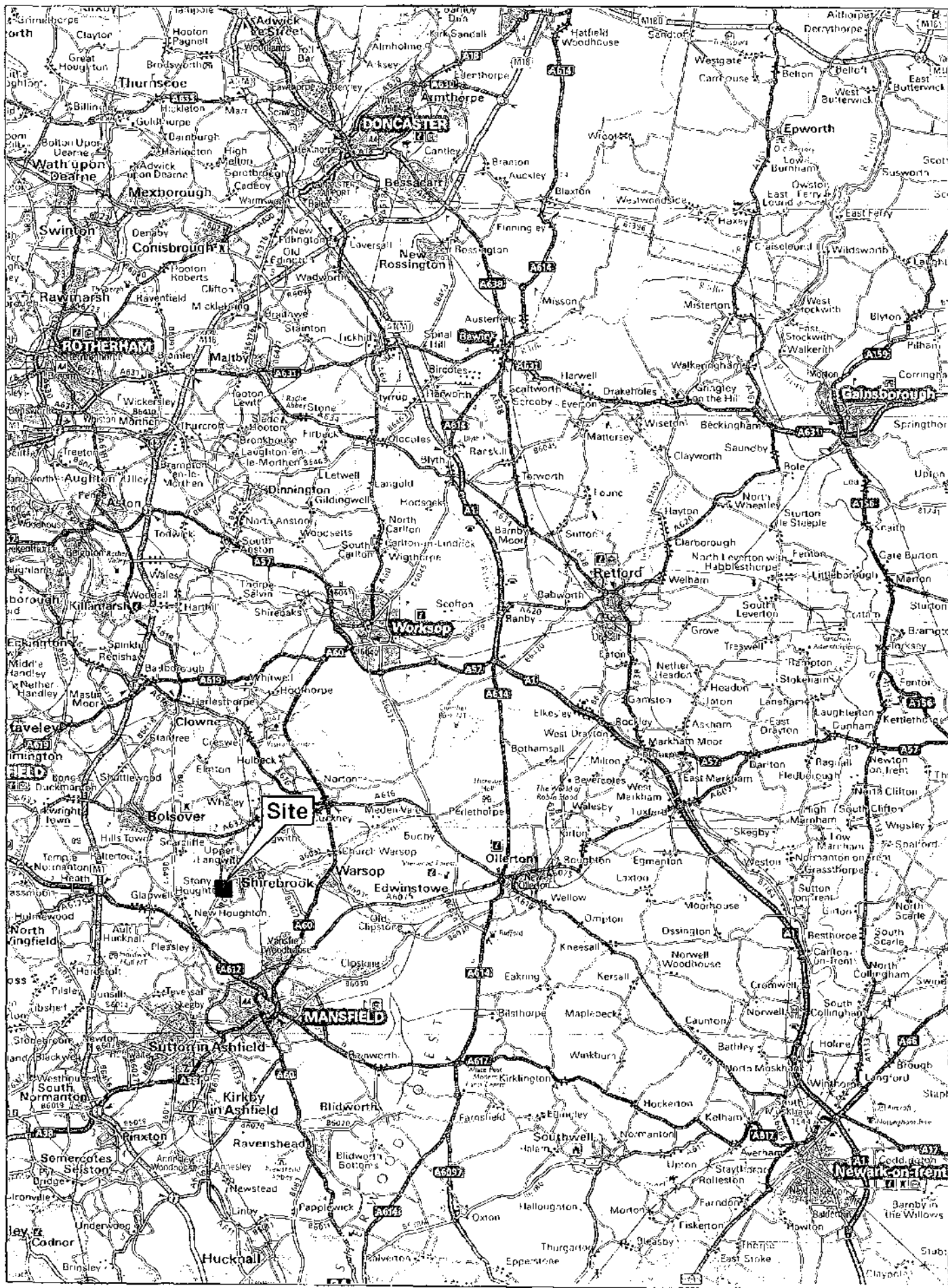


Fig.1



Fig.2

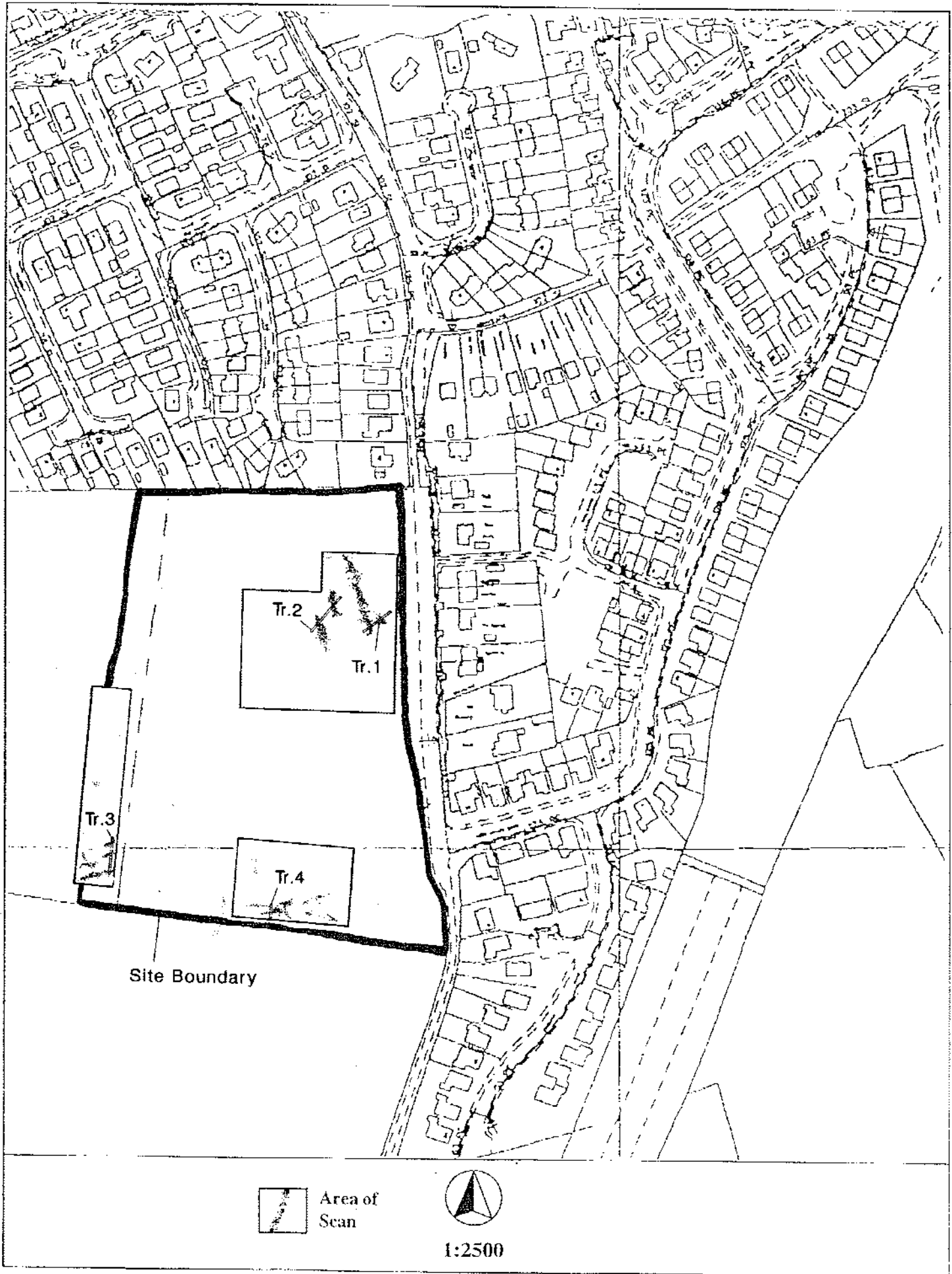


Fig.3

# Trench 3

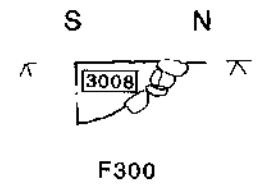
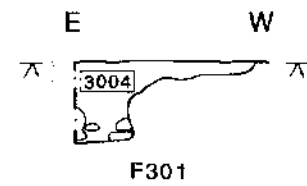
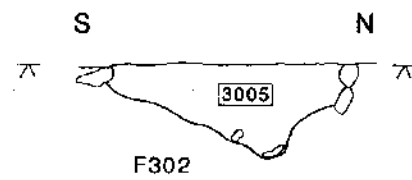
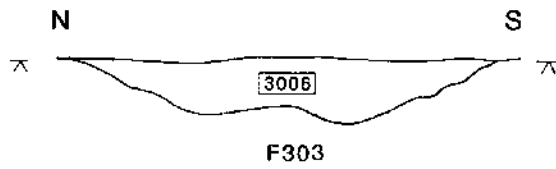
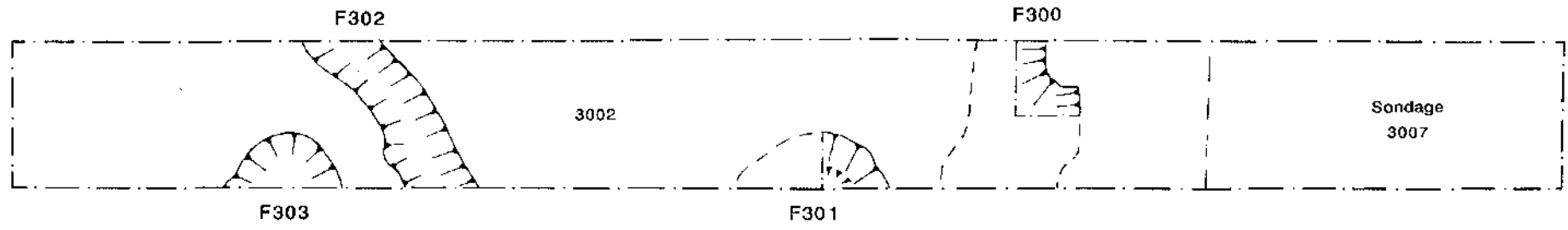
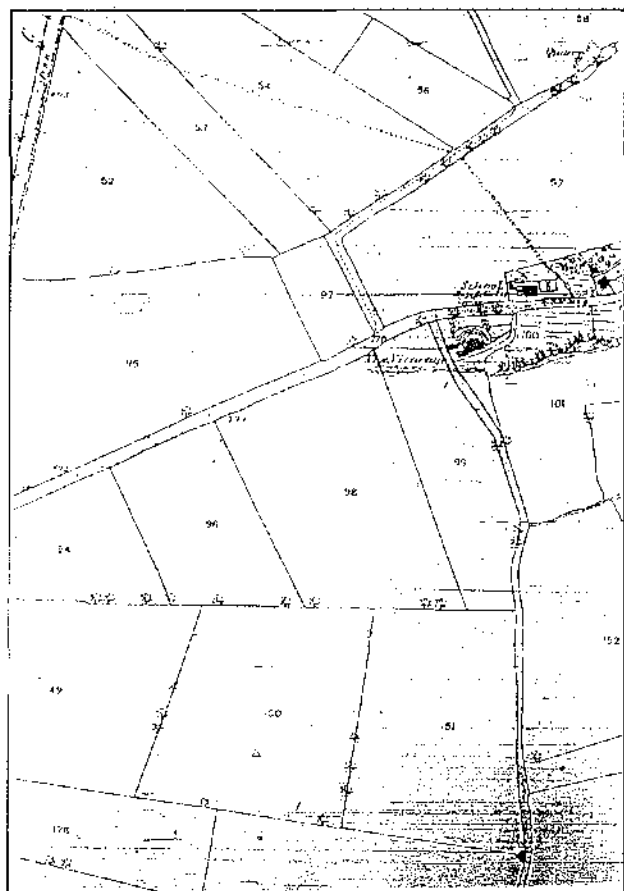
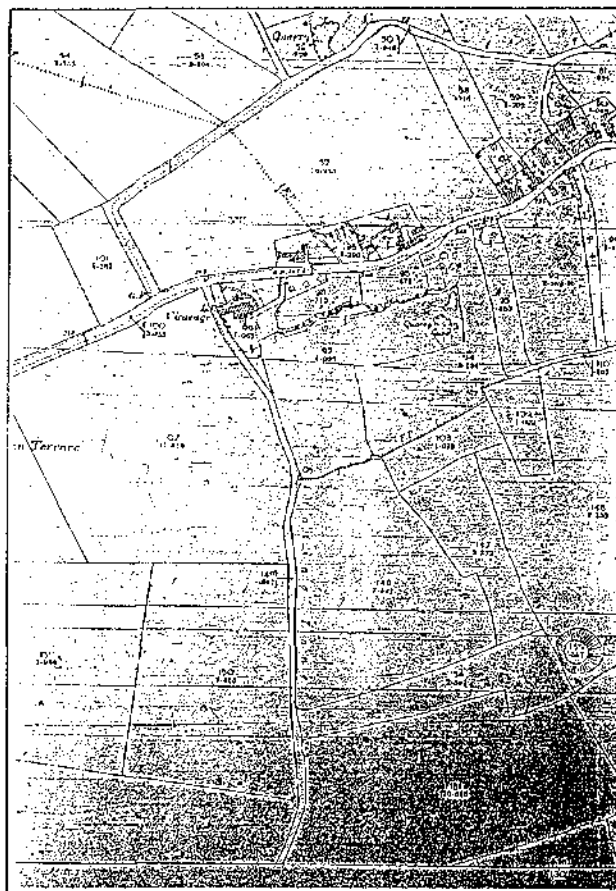


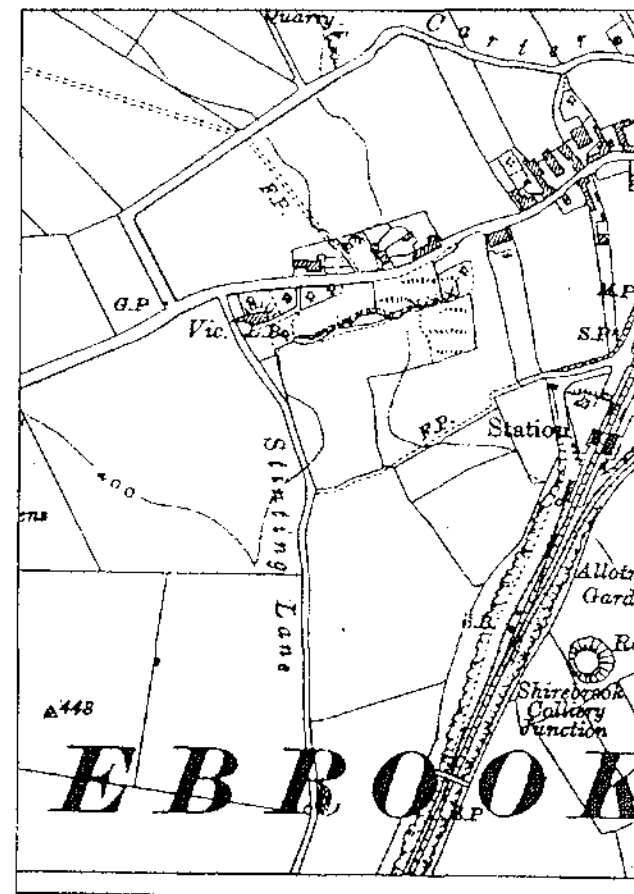
Fig.4



1889  
Map 1

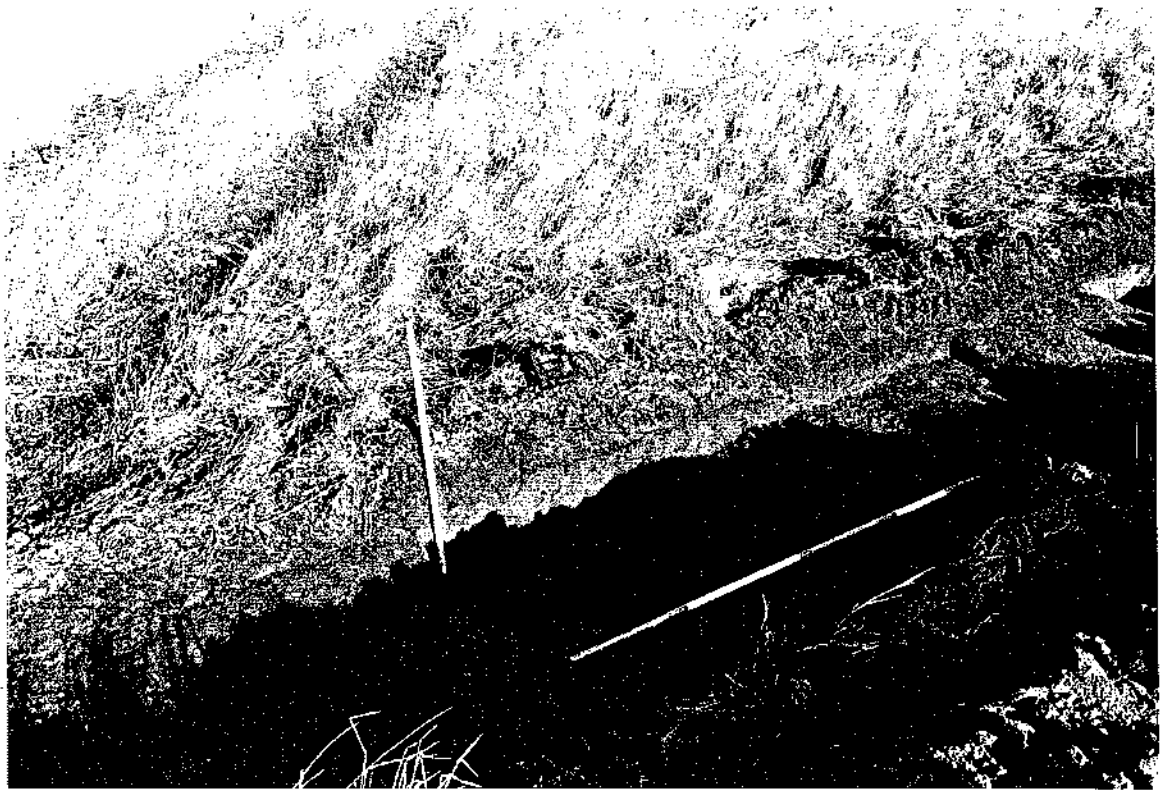


1898  
Map 2



1921  
Map 3



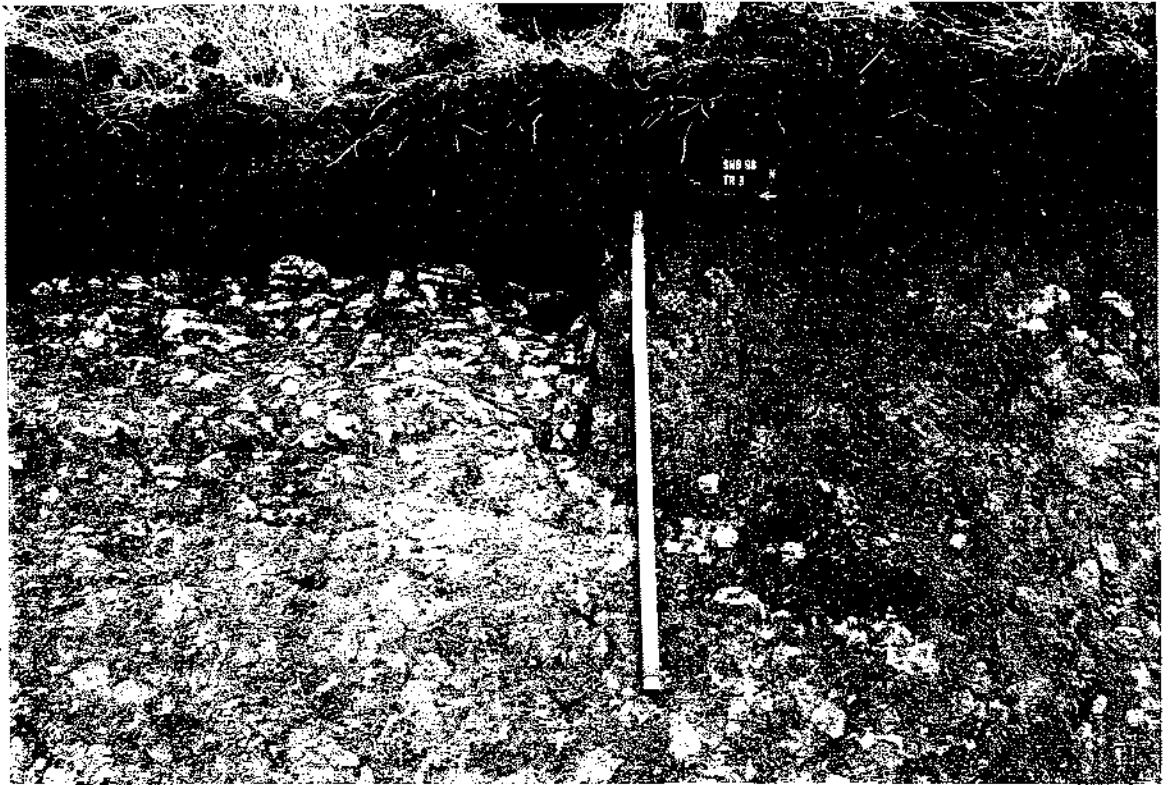


**Plate 1**



**Plate 2**





**Plate 3**



**Plate 4**