

**Archaeological Evaluation
of Land off Northfield
Avenue, Rocester,
Staffordshire**

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**Archaeological Evaluation of
Land off Northfield Avenue, Rocester, Staffs.**

by
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Archaeological Evaluation of Land off Northfield Avenue, Rocester, Staffs.

1.0 Summary

An evaluation of land off Northfield Avenue, Rocester, Staffordshire (NGR SK 1115 3970) was undertaken on behalf of Trent and Peak Archaeological Unit for Michael Goodall Quality Homes Limited by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) in October 2001. A number of earthworks of unknown date was visible on the site and a total of seven trial trenches was excavated in an attempt to date the earthworks and assess the presence and below-ground preservation of archaeological remains. Archaeological preservation was found to be good across the whole site, except for an area in the northwest corner which had been affected by a railway cutting. The remainder of the area due for redevelopment was transected by a large number of archaeological features dating variously to the Roman, Medieval and Post-Medieval periods. As well as the presence of extensive linear features running across the site there was also evidence for discrete features and a general complexity of archaeological deposits here. It was not possible, however, to establish a direct correlation between the earthworks and negative features uncovered during the trial trenching programme. Although some truncation of the early features had occurred, possibly by ploughing in the Medieval period, a layer of colluvium had built up sealing and protecting these deposits subsequently. Later features had then been cut through this layer which was sandwiched between the natural subsoil and the topsoil.

2.0 Introduction

This report outlines the results of an archaeological evaluation of land on the north fringes of the village of Rocester, Staffordshire. The work was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) on behalf of Trent and Peak Archaeological Unit for Michael Goodall Quality Homes Limited, to provide archaeological information in advance of proposed redevelopment of the site. The work followed a site inspection on 2nd August by Iain Ferris (BUFAU) and Daryl Garton (Trent and Peak Archaeological Unit). The archaeological evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994), and a specification prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (Ferris 2001). This evaluation conformed to Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoF 1991).

3.0 The Site and its Setting

The site is centred on NGR SK11153970 and lies off Northfield Avenue, Rocester (Fig.2). The field is presently under grass and rough, scrub vegetation. The underlying geology comprises river terrace sand-gravel. A number of earthworks of unknown date is visible across the site; these earthworks were previously noted during a field inspection by BUFAU staff in November 1990. In the field to the north can be noted ridge and furrow earthworks and a WW2 pillbox. Previous archaeological discoveries

made during the original construction of Northfield Avenue, in close proximity to the southern field boundary, suggested the potential for encountering archaeological deposits here.

4.0 Aims

The primary aims of the evaluation were to provide a record of the earthwork features within the site, and to establish, through trial trenching, the presence or absence of archaeological deposits. Secondly, should archaeology be present, to determine the location, extent, date and character of the deposits and to assess the significance and quality of the remains. The overall objective of the trial trenching was to produce evidence which would provide the basis for possible mitigation strategies within the area of development. The purpose of recording was to provide an appropriate record of the remains uncovered by trial trenching.

5.0 Methodology

A total of five trenches was specified for the programme of trial trenching (Fig. 3). The topsoil was removed mechanically using a JCB excavator, with a toothless ditching bucket, under direct archaeological supervision to expose any undisturbed archaeological deposits or the natural subsoil. The trenches were recorded and samples of the archaeological deposits were excavated by hand to characterise and date them. The site was recorded using BUFAU pro-forma record sheets, complemented with scale drawings. A complete photographic record was maintained and all finds were kept and processed.

All trenches were 1.8m wide. Trenches 1 and 2 were 40m and 20m long respectively, and ran parallel to the southern boundary of the site. These trenches were positioned in order to locate any features extending into the site from the zones of known archaeology to the south. Trench 3 was 14m in length, and was positioned to transect the principle north-south linear earthwork on the eastern side of the site. Trench 4 was 15m long and was positioned to test two east-west aligned earthworks. Trench 5 was 20m in length and positioned to test the extent of the archaeology in the north-western part of the site.

Following completion of the initial trial trenching a decision was made to further investigate areas around Trench 1 and Trench 4, and consequently two more trenches were excavated (Fig. 3). Trench 6 ran parallel to, and east of, Trench 4, extending 28m in length, and Trench 7 was 34m long and ran parallel to Trench 1. These trenches were located to determine whether complex features and deposits observed in the primary trenching programme extended across the site.

6.0 Results

Trench 1 (Fig. 4)

Trench 1 was orientated east-west. The natural subsoil (1002), a red-orange sand and gravel, was seen at a height of 88.79m AOD. It had been truncated by a large number of cut features along the entire length of the trench, features which were visible after removal of the topsoil. At the western end of the trench a V-shaped ditch (F100), c.1.5m wide and 0.3m deep, was excavated. The infill (1003) contained eight pieces of Roman pottery and four sherds which were Medieval in date. The ditch was orientated north-south, and may be the same ditch as that observed at the western end of Trench 7 (F704, see below). Approximately 2m to the west of F100, a north-south aligned linear feature (F104), was uncovered. This unexcavated feature was 1.60m wide and contained pieces of Post-Medieval pottery, brick and tile within its matrix.

A cluster of features was uncovered towards the centre of the trench. A possible ditch (F115) was partially sectioned. However, the orientation of F115 could not be determined due to truncation by a possible hearth (F113). F115 was steep sided, a minimum of 0.8m deep and contained fills which produced significant quantities of Roman pottery. The most productive of the fills (1019) was a very dark grey sandy clay-silt which contained 42 sherds, including white wares, colour coated wares, Samian, and grey wares. The hearth (F113) was a shallow feature (only 0.05m in depth), sub-circular in plan, with a flat-bottomed profile. It was encircled by a series of possible postholes containing post packing material (F105, F107, F112). An earlier, smaller posthole (F106) had been cut by F112. During cleaning of the base of the layer (1001) which overlay F106, a barbed and tanged arrowhead was recovered, though this could have been derived from the upper fill of F106. The postholes ranged between 0.5 and 0.7m in diameter and were between 0.4 and 0.7m deep. Posthole F105 contained 14 sherds of Roman pottery which included Samian, Black Burnished ware, and white wares within its dark grey sandy clay-silt (1004).

Towards the eastern half of the trench was a series of intercutting features. The natural subsoil had been cut by a very heavily truncated feature (F110-not on plan) which contained animal bone and three sherds of Roman pottery, including a fragment of amphora. Overlying this feature was the remains of a cobbled surface (F111) which contained fragments of Post-Medieval pottery, brick, tile and Roman pottery embedded within its matrix. This surface, and the earlier F110, was cut by ditches F108 and F103. Linear ditch (F108) was orientated southwest-northeast. Its fill (1007) contained two sherds of green glazed Medieval pottery and a sherd of Roman white ware. The southern edge of ditch F108 was cut by posthole F109, the ditch also being truncated by a later ditch (F103) which was on a north-south alignment. This later ditch was 0.8m wide and 1.5m in depth. The ditch contained a heterogeneous mixture of fills (1009) and contained a number of Post-Medieval sherds of pottery and bricks, as well as residual Roman material. Two Post-Medieval features (F101 and F102) were observed on a north-south alignment and have been interpreted as capped drainage ditches. The series of features in Trench 1 was overlain by an uneven layer of silt clay (1001), between 0.17 and 0.30m deep, which underlay a layer of topsoil (1000) ranging between 0.12 and 0.22m deep.

Trench 2 (Fig. 4)

Trench 2 was orientated east-west. The natural subsoil (2006) was exposed at the western end at a height of 88.76m AOD. At the eastern end of the trench a curvilinear feature (F200), aligned northeast-southwest, was observed. Though the northern edge of this feature was visible, it continued beyond the southern edge of excavation. It was filled with a dark brown sandy clay-silt (2002) which was 0.15m deep and contained a number of sherds of Medieval pottery and some residual Roman material. This feature had been sealed by a layer of colluvium (2007), approximately 0.35m in depth, which was overlain by 0.24m of topsoil (2000).

Trench 3 (Fig.4)

Trench 3 was orientated east-west. The natural reddish sand (3009) was located at a height of 88.86m AOD at the eastern end of the trench, and 89.09m AOD at the western end. The natural subsoil was truncated by a series of linear ditches aligned north-south. Two of the linear features were sampled (F301 and F302), the former being filled by a reddish brown silty clay-sand (3004), 0.4m in depth, which contained pieces of fired clay. It was overlain by a dark grey silty clay-sand (3003) which was 0.1m deep and contained a number of Roman pottery sherds and two pieces of worked flint. Linear ditch F301 was 0.5m in depth and had been truncated to the east by F302. F302 was a U-shaped ditch, approximately 0.52m in depth and 0.6m wide. It was filled with a grey-brown silty sandy clay (3002) which contained a small number of green-glazed Medieval pottery sherds. The western edge of F301 had been truncated by a posthole (F303) which extended beyond the southern edge of excavation. The 0.42m-deep posthole was filled by a dark grey-brown silty clay-sand (3006) which included large stones which have been identified as post packing.

A further unexcavated linear feature (F304), aligned north-south and approximately 1.9m wide, was observed and recorded towards the western end of the trench. Similarly a curvilinear feature (F305), comprised of a dark grey silty sandy-clay, was recorded at the eastern end of the trench. At the western end of the trench a circular posthole (F300) was excavated, and contained a very dark silty clay-sand fill. It was 0.4m deep with frequent flecks of charcoal but contained no datable finds. The natural subsoil was overlain by an uneven, c 0.15m-deep, colluvial layer of silty clay-sand (3008). Layer 3008 underlay a reddish brown silty clay-sand layer (3001) which, in turn, was 0.32m deep and sealed by a 0.18m-thick layer of topsoil.

Trench 4 (Fig. 5)

Trench 4 was aligned north-south. The natural red sands and gravels (4003) were uncovered at a height of 88.37m AOD. The subsoil had been truncated towards the centre of the trench by a linear ditch (F403). The ditch was aligned east-west, and was approximately 1.5m wide and 0.64m in depth. The U-shaped ditch had been infilled with three distinct contexts (4008, 4009, 4010), all of which contained Roman pottery. It was assumed to be equivalent to linear ditch F600 in Trench 6. A series of three possible postholes containing post packing material (F400, F401, F402) were observed and recorded to the north of F403. The alignment appeared to extend beyond the eastern edge of the trench. The natural subsoil was overlain by a layer of colluvium (4002), which was approximately 0.12m deep and was sealed by a reddish brown silty clay-sand layer (4001). This later layer was 0.25m deep, and overlain by a 0.15m-deep layer of topsoil. A compacted layer of stones (4011), which has been interpreted as the remains of a trackway across the site, was observed at the southern

end of the trench. This may be equivalent to the compacted layer of large and small stones (6006) which was recorded at the southern end of Trench 6. It was a minimum of 5m wide and had a small number of Roman pottery sherds compacted into its matrix.

Trench 5 (Not illustrated)

Trench 5 was orientated east-west. The natural red sand (5004) was revealed at a height of 88.77m AOD at the eastern end of the trench. This had been overlain by a medium brown stoney layer (5003) which had been truncated. The ditch for the nearby railway cutting (F500) was excavated to a depth of 88.57m AOD where it became evident that any potential archaeological deposits would have been destroyed during the excavation required for the railway line. Thus excavation within this area was stopped.

Trench 6 (Fig. 5)

Trench 6 was aligned north-south. The natural subsoil (6003) was exposed at a height of 88.19m AOD. A U-shaped linear ditch (F600), aligned east-west and approximately 1.5m wide and 0.44m deep, was excavated towards the northern end of the trench. It had been infilled with a dark grey silty sand-clay containing Roman pottery and appeared to represent the continuation of linear ditch F403 in Trench 4. The ditch was sealed by a stoney colluvial layer of dark grey silty clay-sand (6002) which was 0.2m deep and was overlain by a 0.22m-deep layer of grey-brown silty clay-sand (6001) and 0.12m of topsoil (6000). Another probable ditch (F601), aligned east-west, was approximately 2m wide and was recorded but not excavated. At the southern end of the trench a compacted layer of stones was observed (6006) and may have been the continuation of the trackway (4011) from Trench 4 into this trench.

Trench 7 (Fig. 5)

Trench 7 was orientated east-west. The natural subsoil (7001) was observed at a height of 88.58m AOD and had been truncated by a curvilinear ditch (F700) which was aligned east-west. The ditch continued beyond the southern edge of excavation, extending to a depth of 0.38m, and contained Roman pottery, including Black Burnished Ware from fill 7002. This ditch was truncated by a c.0.18m-deep, later gully (F702), which had a U-shaped profile and was aligned north-south. A small posthole (F703) also cut through the ditch, and a small stakehole was observed along the western edge of F702. A concentration of large stones towards the eastern end of the trench may have been the infill of a large pit. A possible ditch (F704) was recorded towards the western end of the trench. The ditch was c.1.8m wide and was aligned north-south and appeared to be the continuation of linear F100 which was excavated in Trench 1. The natural subsoil was overlain by 0.38m of grey-brown silty clay-sand which was sealed by 0.3m of topsoil (7000).

7.0 The Finds

by Lynne Bevan

Prehistoric Worked Flint

A total of 52 items of humanly-worked flint was recovered, comprising a barbed and tanged arrowhead (Trench 1), a scraper (Trench 2), a blade (Trench 2), two cores (Trench 1) and 47 unretouched flakes.

The majority of the flint was recovered from Trenches 1 and 6. Derived from secondary pebble sources, the light grey raw material tended to be of good quality with a fresh appearance. The only datable item was the barbed and tanged arrowhead which dates to the Beaker/Early Bronze Age period. Since all of the flint was unstratified, contemporaneity cannot be assumed between any of the items, although a group of eleven flakes from Trench 6 and the two cores from Trench 1 might be suggestive of a flintworking episode. This small assemblage could usefully be compared with other prehistoric flint assemblages from the region, including the flint recovered from the New Cemetery site at Rocester (Barfield and Kalali 1996).

Trench Number	Tool	Flake	Totals:
Trench 1	1 arrowhead, 2 cores	22	25
Trench 2	1 scraper, 1 blade	2	4
Trench 3	-	3	3
Trench 4		2	2
Trench 6	-	13	13

Table 1: Incidence of Flint Finds by Trench.

Pottery

The pottery assemblage comprised 459 sherds of Roman pottery, 66 sherds of Medieval pottery and 209 sherds of Post-Medieval pottery and four sherds of shell-tempered pottery, three of which might also be of Roman date and one of which is possibly prehistoric. A second potentially prehistoric sherd, from a hand-made quartz-tempered vessel, was also recovered. Both sherds were unstratified finds from Trench 1. Six other sherds were too small for reliable dating and might be of Roman or Medieval date.

The Roman Pottery

The size of sherds and standard of preservation of the Roman pottery, which was generally small and frequently abraded, contrasts markedly with that of previous Rocester assemblages from the New Cemetery site (Esmonde Cleary and Ferris 1996) and Ortons Pasture (Ferris, Bevan and Cuttler 2000). Both previous assemblages featured complete pots and large vessel fragments, as did the recently-excavated assemblage from the Mill Street *vicus* site (Bevan forthcoming).

Context	Grey- wares	Black Wares	Oxid- ised	White Wares	Colour Coats	Derby- shire	Samian	Mort/ Amph	Shell
1000		1							
1001	6	4	5	4		1	2	1	
1003	3		3	2					
1004		5	3			2	1		
1005					2		4		
1006	1					2			
1007				1					
1009		2	2	1				1	
1012	18	1					5		
1013				2				/1	
1016	8		2	2			2		
1017	14		1	4	3		2		
1018	2		2	1					
1019	21		7	9	2		3		
T1, u/s	35	7	21	13		2	6	2/1	
2000	1								
2001	1			1					
2002		1		4					
2007	1		1						
T2, u/s	2		3						
3001	1								
3003	4	1	1			1	2		
F300						1			
F302	1	1					1		
T3, u/s	6	2					2	1	
4002				1	3		1	1	
4003	2			1	1		1		
4005				1					
4008	2			1			1		
4009	5	1		2					
T4, u/s	25	10	11	6	1	4	4	1	1
5003	1		1						
T5, u/s	10		4	1		1	1		1
6002						1	1		
6004			9	2					
6005	2								
T6, u/s	4		1	3	1	3	4		
7002		3		2					
T7, u/s	11		3		3		1		
Total:	187	39	80	64	16	18	44	7/2	2

Table 2: Summary of Roman Pottery by Context

However, the relative percentages of fabric types in this small collection (Table 2) are similar to those from previous Rocester assemblages (Leary 1996, Bevan 2000), featuring a predominance of coarsewares, principally greywares, which account for

over 40% of the pottery. Oxidised wares account for nearly 17% of the assemblage, followed by assorted whitewares at 15%, samian at over 9% and blackwares (comprising both BB1 and the locally-produced BB1 variant) at over 8%. Other fabrics consist of Derbyshire Ware at nearly 4% and colour coats at 3%, with small quantities of mortaria and amphorac. While the samian was fairly small and abraded, in common with the majority of the assemblage, it included several datable forms and decorated sherds. Despite the lack of form sherds among the coarsewares the relative paucity of BB1 and Derbyshire Ware is suggestive of a late 1st century to early 2nd century date for the assemblage, certainly no later than A.D.120. Again, in the case of the BB1 sherds there was also an absence of later 2nd century typical forms such as bowls with flat grooved rims and jars with right-angle cross hatched decoration, which perhaps confirms the other dating criteria.

Post-Roman Pottery

Medieval pottery consisted of fragments from coarse cooking vessels and several green-glazed sherds, including a handle from a 13th century jug (Trench 1). One potentially Saxon sherd was identified (Trench 1). The majority of the Post-Medieval pottery consisted of brown-glazed wares of 16th-18th century date and some yellow and brown 17th century slipwares. Over 80% of the Post-Roman pottery came from Trench 1 (Table 3).

Trench No.	Prehistoric	Medieval	Post-Medieval	Uncertain
Trench 1	2	41	180	
Trench 2		18	22	
Trench 3		3		
Trench 4		3		3
Trench 5		1	6	
Trench 6			1	3
Totals:	2	66	209	6

Table 3: Summary of Other Pottery by Trench

Other Ceramics

One Roman *tegula* fragment (1000) and three Medieval tile fragments (1007 and Trench 1, unstratified) were recovered. In addition, a number of fragments of undiagnostic brick and tile came from Trenches 1 (17), 3 (2), 4 (4), 5 (6), and 6 (3) and small quantities of fired clay were recovered from Trenches 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7.

Metals

Copper alloy finds consisted of a potentially Roman circular boss and an unidentified fragment (Trench 1, unstratified). Iron finds comprised a hinge plate (5000) and eight nails (Trench 1 x 5, Trench 4 x 1, 7002). Three fragments of slag (2002, Trench 4, trench 5) and a small strip of lead were also recovered (Trench 1).

Glass

Potentially Roman glass consisted of two small fragments from fine vessels (Trench 1, unstratified). Modern glass finds comprised a marble (1000), a clear vessel fragment (5000), and two bottle fragments (Trenches 1 and 2, unstratified).

Animal Bone

Small quantities of fragmentary, often calcined, animal bone were recovered from Trenches 1 and 4.

8.0 The charred plant remains

by *Marina Ciaraldi*

Two soil samples, F403/4009 and F115/1019, were assessed from the evaluation excavation at Rocester. The charred plant remains recovered from the two samples were assessed in order to establish:

- the preservation of organic remains
- the potential of the plant assemblage for understanding the site economy and its surrounding palaeoenvironment

Both of the samples were taken from ditch fills and were dated to the Roman period by the associated pottery. The sediment consisted of a dark, silty loam and sample F115/1019 was particularly charcoal-rich. Ten litres of soil samples were processed by manual flotation. The flots were recovered on 0.5 mesh and were dried in the oven at 40^o degrees before being scanned under a microscope. The residue was recovered on a 1 mm mesh and quickly sorted by eye.

Sample F403/4009 produced a very small quantity of flot which contained a few charred remains of barley (*Hordeum sativum* L.), bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum* s.l.), wheat (*Triticum* sp.) and pulses (*Vicia/Lathyrus*), quite well preserved. Sample F115/1019 produced a very abundant flot (170 ml), with numerous fragments of charcoal. Several grains of barley (*Hordeum vulgare* L.) were observed in the flot, together with some grains of wheat (*Triticum* sp.) and of Gramineae. A few, badly preserved, fragments of bones were recovered from the residue. The plant and bone assemblages suggest that the deposit might have derived from charred kitchen waste.

The charred plant remains present in the two samples suggest that these are preserved in the archaeological deposit. On the basis of the plant assemblage from the two samples, it would seem that these can only provide a limited contribution to the reconstruction of the site economy. This, however, could reflect the fact that only two samples were assessed and that they were both collected from ditches. It is recommended, therefore, that any future sampling strategies will target a larger variety of contexts.

9.0 Discussion

The evaluation recovered evidence that the site had seen use in the prehistoric, Roman, Medieval, Post-Medieval and modern periods. An attempt will now be made to discuss the significance of the archaeological features and deposits by each period in turn.

Leaving aside a single sherd of possibly prehistoric pottery from Trench 1, the finds from the site of a prehistoric date consisted almost exclusively of prehistoric struck flint, which numbered over 50 items, and which was recovered principally from Trenches 1 and 6. However, no clear spatial distribution could be identified within the trenches themselves.

Cropmarks of two ring ditches are recorded to the south of the village, down towards the confluence of the rivers Churnett and Dove. Fieldwalking there a number of years ago by a local amateur archaeologist recovered worked flints (Pat Drayton pers. comm.). Scatters of prehistoric material have also been found at a number of excavation locations around the village: Late Neolithic and Late Iron Age pottery, and Mesolithic and Neolithic flints were found at the New Cemetery site (Esmonde Cleary and Ferris 196, 39, 182-183); Mesolithic and Neolithic flints at Dove First School (unpublished 1986); and Mesolithic and Neolithic flints at Orton's Pasture (Ferris, Bevan and Cuttler 2000, 53). It is noted that a prehistoric bronze axe was found at Arkwright's Mill in the eighteenth century (Gunstone 1964, 32) but more significantly there is a recorded nearby find of prehistoric material, comprising a complete beaker, uncovered in the 1930s during the construction of Northfield Avenue itself (Fowler 1955, Clarke 1970).

The discovery during the Northfield Avenue evaluation of a barbed and tanged arrowhead dating to the Beaker/Early Bronze Age period is intriguing. It underlines the potential for uncovering further evidence for the prehistoric period which is contemporary with the arrowhead and the beaker. This would be of considerable significance on a local and regional basis.

The site is the fourth area of interest to be investigated around the Roman fort complexes whose centre lies approximately in Abbey Field to the south. Along with Wall and Holditch, Rocester represents one of the best studied Roman sites in the county. Linear features, cobble surfacing, 'occupation' deposits and postholes found during the Northfield Avenue evaluation indicate extended activity here associated with a building or buildings, the Roman activity principally being located in and around Trenches 1, 4, 6 and 7. The Romano-British pottery assemblage from the evaluation revealed a relative paucity of Derbyshire and Black Burnished wares, and suggests, therefore, a date in the 1st century to the early 2nd century for Roman activity here. The material is therefore contemporary with the occupation of at least one of the Roman forts which was situated to the south. There was no direct evidence indicating a compound within the area evaluated, although the ditch represented by F403 in Trench 4 and F600 in Trench 6 might be an enclosure ditch, and it is therefore at present impossible to know whether the site is located within a formal military annexe or whether it represents *vicus* activity. There were no finds of military character, such as weaponry or military fittings, from any of the trenches. The functional make-up of the pottery assemblage was inconclusive in providing much

evidence concerning the nature or function of the site, though the quantity of pottery and the nature of the material collected by the environmental sampling programme suggests settlement activity. Three postholes or postpads in Trench 4 may represent part of a timber-framed structure, while an undated cobbled surface in Trench 1 may be a floor or yard surface, although it may equally be post-Roman in date. There was not encountered any evidence for the disposal of artefactual and environmental material by pit digging on the site, as was encountered in such a striking form in particular at Orton's Pasture and, to a lesser extent, on the Mill Street *vicus* site.

Three overlying but overlapping Roman forts were sited at Rocester, dating from the later first century to c. 200 A.D.. Excavations at Mill Field to the east of the fort complex in 1986 (unpublished) found evidence of a banked enclosure contemporary with the military presence. To the south of the forts, in the area of Orton's Pasture, lay two enclosures, one of which was associated with a small shrine building, again contemporary with part of the period of the military occupation. A *vicus* lay to the west of the forts (Ferris and Bevan Forthcoming). It is not known where the northern limits of the three forts are situated, nor whether enclosures lay outside, beyond those limits. The location of the military cemetery is presently unknown but this could lie to the north of the forts, though evidence for its lying within the bounds of the Northfield Avenue site was not found.

A civilian settlement grew up following abandonment of the last fort at Rocester and this was later enclosed by a substantial clay rampart. This phase of Roman activity at Rocester is poorly understood, both spatially and in terms of chronology, though it is likely that the settlement did not extend much further north than the area of the New Cemetery where the northern arm of the enclosing clay bank was located by excavation. This would appear to perhaps be confirmed by the results of the work at Northfield Avenue where no Roman material apparently later than the 2nd century was recovered.

The Northfield Avenue site is situated on the fringes of the Medieval village and the evaluation uncovered evidence of low-level Medieval activity here, illustrated by buried features and ridge and furrow observed in the adjacent field. The interesting pottery assemblage implied a link with agricultural activity on site, and the presence of over 60 sherds of Medieval pottery may be related to the process of manuring the field during the Medieval period rather than to the presence of actual settlement features here. Linear features containing Medieval pottery may be field boundaries. However, there was a particular concentration of Medieval finds in Trench 1, while the suggested rough trackway located in Trenches 4 and 6, although undated in the evaluation, is almost identical in its make-up to a Medieval road surface excavated at the Dove First School site in 1985/1986 (I.Ferris pers. comm.). This surface was not removed, and therefore could either be earlier than the Medieval period in date or overlie earlier, Romano-British features or deposits.

Post-Medieval finds, principally pottery again, were also concentrated in Trench 1 and indicated that there was some form of use of the site, again probably for agricultural purposes in the 17th and 18th centuries. Modern activity is represented here by the earthworks and dumped spoil associated with the former railway line that cut across one corner of the site.

The evaluation demonstrates the good survival of archaeological features and deposits across most of the proposed development site, though the uppermost level of surviving archaeology does vary in height across the site from area to area. Archaeological remains of a number of periods were encountered. Experience of evaluation of sites by trial trenching at Rocester over a period of fifteen years has shown that while trenching is the most efficient and effective method for locating archaeological features and plotting their spatial density, where areas of complex stratigraphy are encountered interpretation becomes difficult and little more can be done at this stage than to map the areas of the greatest complexity. Understanding what is happening on such sites may only come through examination of larger areas in plan. Some of the trenches at Northfield Avenue displayed the presence of areas of complex stratigraphy, in particular in Trenches 1, 3, 4 and 7. With the exception of Trench 5, the remainder of the site was characterised by areas of relatively discrete negative features cut into the natural subsoil, which nevertheless provided significant quantities of dating material. In consultation with the Staffordshire County Council Archaeological Officer a mitigation scheme will need to be designed for the site which takes account of the importance and significance of the archaeological deposits demonstrated to be present here, and it is likely that this will involve 'preservation *in situ*' through design solutions, 'preservation by record' in the form of area excavation and watching brief work, or, more likely, a mixture of these strategies.

10.0 Acknowledgements

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Fig. 1

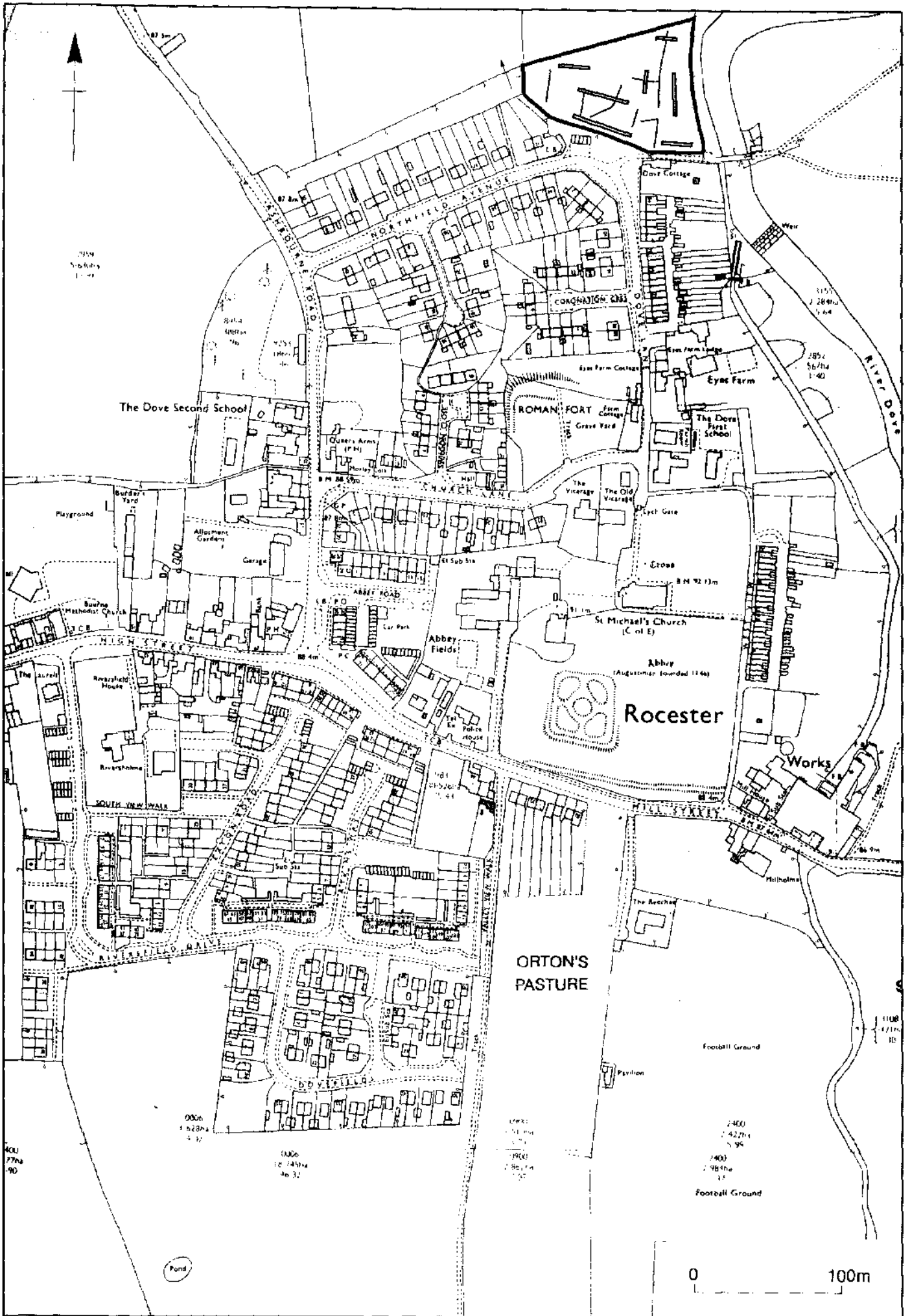


Fig.2

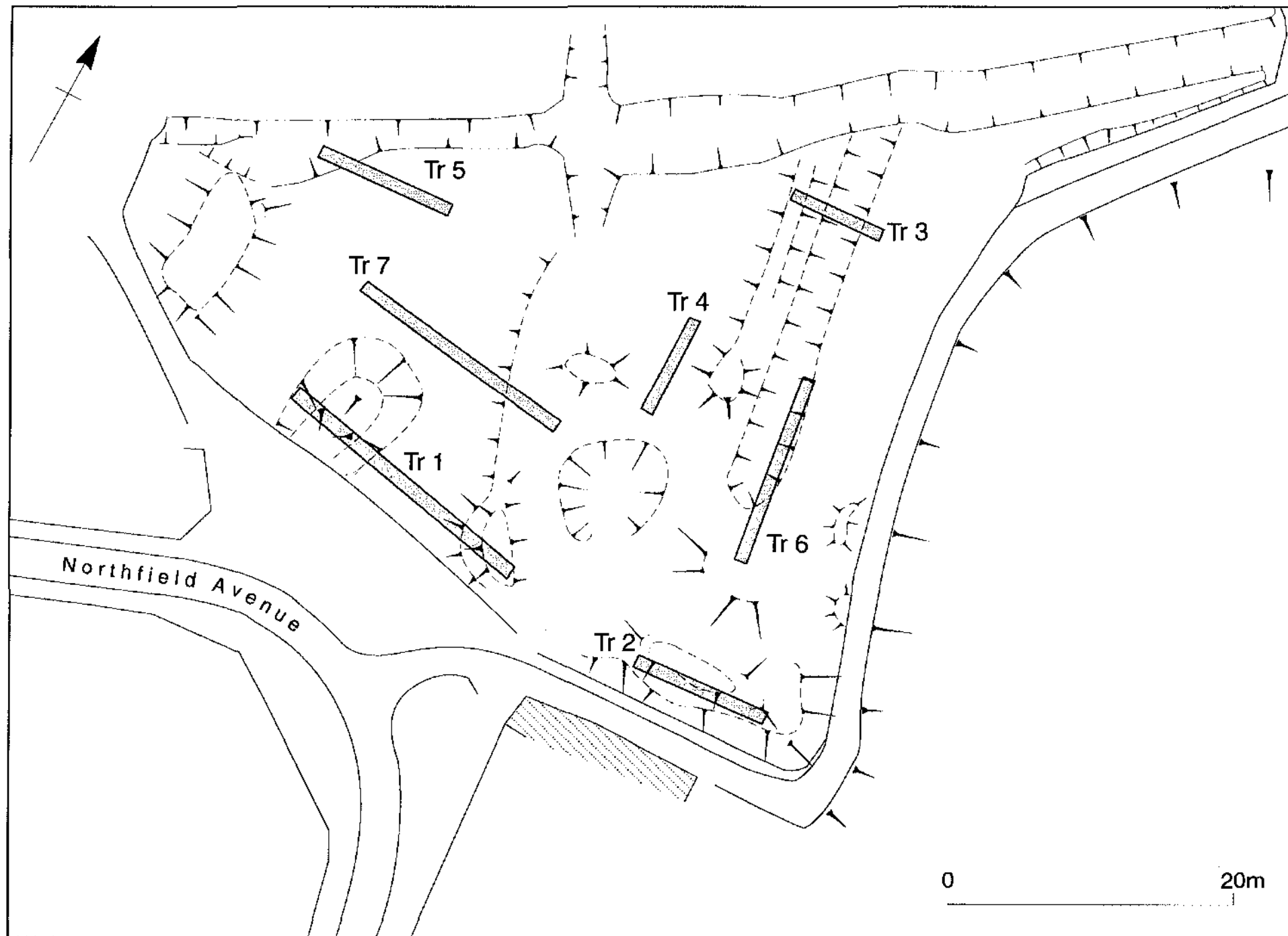


Fig.3

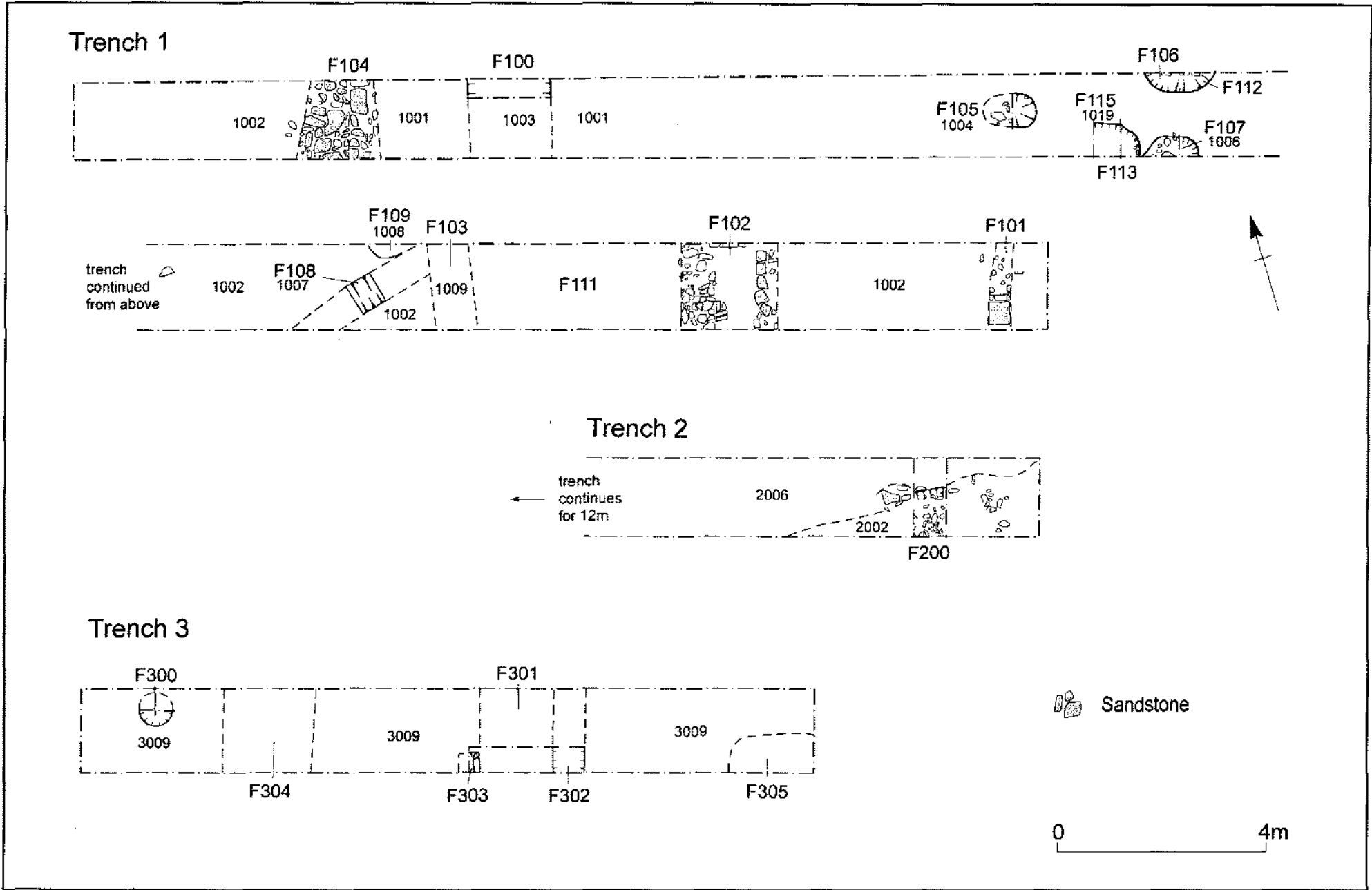


Fig.4

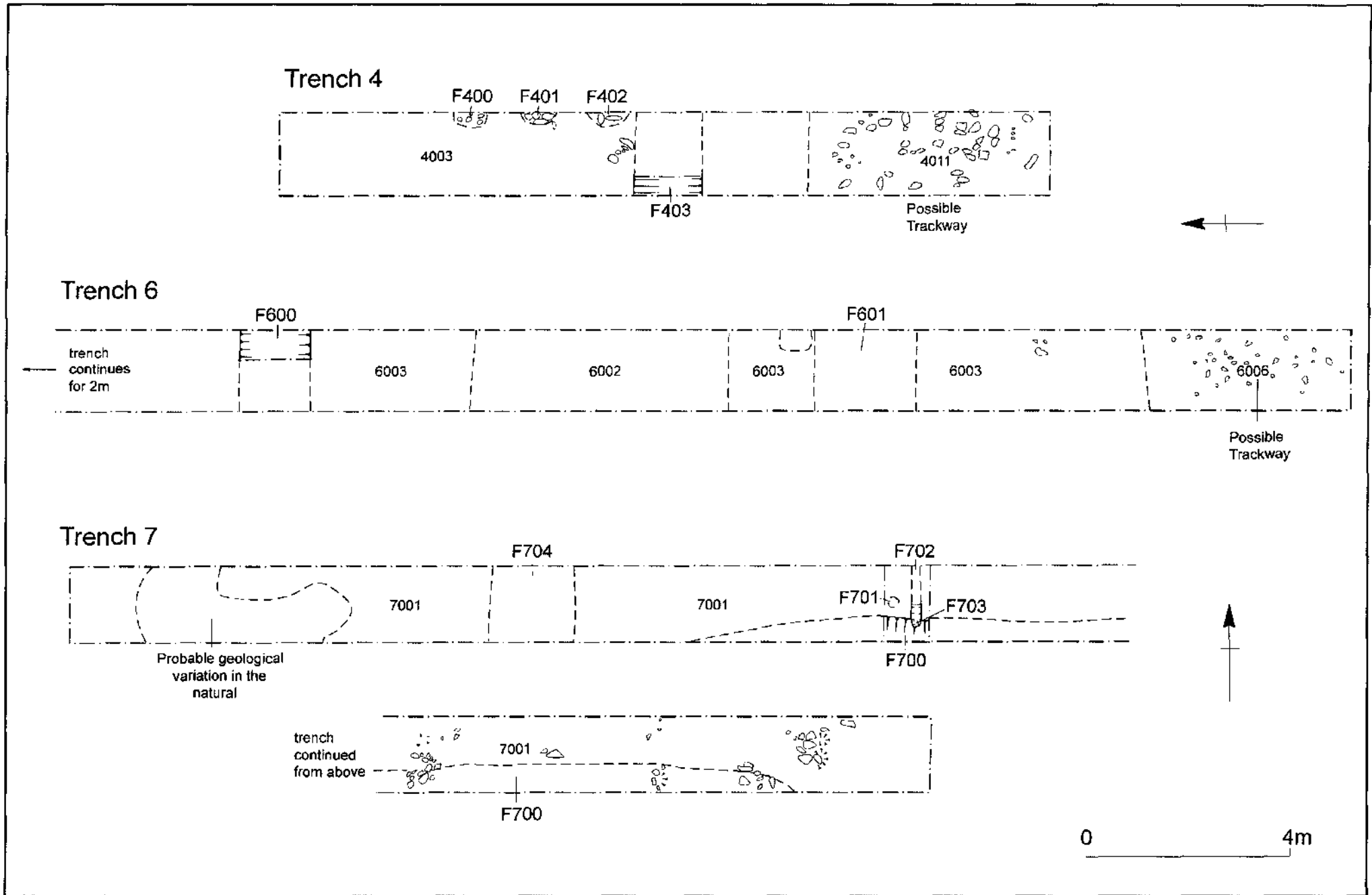


Fig.5