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**Ibstock Quarry,
Leicestershire.
Archaeological Evaluation
2001**

Planning Application Nos.
2001/0926/07 and 2001/0929/07

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit



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**Ibstock Quarry, Leicestershire,
An Archaeological Evaluation**

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Land at Ibstock Quarry, Leicestershire. An Archaeological Evaluation

1.0 Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at Ibstock Quarry, Leicestershire (centred on NGR 4260 1050), on land to be used as a clay stock piling area, adjacent to the present clay quarry, and along the route of a proposed haul road leading eastwards from this point to Whitehall Road, Ellistown. Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants to carry out the fieldwork in November 2001.

The trial trenches revealed no cut archaeological features. The remnants of medieval or post medieval plough furrows were encountered in most trenches. Several abraded sherds of grog-tempered Iron Age pottery were recovered from a root hole but were not found in association with any archaeological features.

2.0 Introduction

The following report details the results of an evaluation carried out on land adjoining Ibstock Quarry, Leicestershire in advance of a clay stock piling area and haul road. The proposed haul road extends eastwards from the clay stock piling area towards Whitehill Road, Ellistown (Fig. 2) for a distance of approximately 1.1km and at a width of 15m, with 4.5 m of the strip forming the roadway with passing bays. The route follows the southern edge of the now dismantled Ibstock Colliery Railway.

The evaluation followed on from a desk based assessment by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants (Samuels 2001). A programme of fieldwalking and geophysical survey carried out in the vicinity of the evaluation site during the 1990s proved largely negative (Rosenberg & Samuels 1997). It was considered unlikely that the current site would offer high archaeological potential.

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants on behalf of Ibstock Brick Ltd, to carry out a field evaluation in November 2001. The programme of trial trenching comprised the excavation of twenty three trial trenches, twelve located in the clay stock piling area and eleven along the route of the haul road (Fig. 3).

The archaeological evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999) and a specification by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (Cutler 2001) approved by the County Archaeologist. This evaluation conformed to Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Department of Environment 1990).

3.0 Site Location and Geology

The site is located to the south of Ellistown and to the northeast of Ibstock (centred on NGR 4260 1050), to the north of Pretoria Road (Fig 1). The clay stocking area (Application No. 2001/0929/07) comprises an area of approximately 16,500m² and the haul road (Application No. 2001/0926/07) comprises an area of approximately 19,500m².

Soils at the site are Whimble 3 Association (572f) comprising reddish fine loamy or silty over clayey soils overlying a geology of drift overpermo-triassic and carboniferous reddish mudstone (SSEW 1983). The site lies at an altitude between 163m AOD and 156m AOD.

4.0 Archaeological Background

A possible small Roman town (SMR 41.SW.E), with evidence for possible prehistoric and Saxon settlement has been excavated 1.5km to the northwest of the clay stocking area. The cropmark of a Roman road (SMR 41.SW.N) leads in a south-easterly direction from the settlement (Fig. 2), which if projected would cross through the middle of the clay stocking area (Samuels 2001). However, extensive inspections which were made of the quarry face in 1997, adjacent to the clay stocking area, failed to identify the Roman road thought to run across the site or any other cut of built features of archaeological significance (Rosenberg and Samuels 1997).

Evidence for another Roman settlement (SMR 41.SW.T), approximately 400m to the north of the site, was located during fieldwalking programmes in 1985 and 1990/91 (Fig. 2). This consisted of a total of 43 sherds of Roman pottery and tile along with two flint flakes and a number of late medieval sherds (Rosenberg and Samuels 1997).

The earliest reference to Ibstock occurs in the Domesday Book of AD1086 where it is recorded as arable land. No records exist for early medieval settlement at Ibstock or Ellistown (formerly Whitehill). A grange (SMR 41.SW.K) located approximately 600m to the south of the haul road is the nearest recorded archaeological site of medieval date (Fig. 2). This complex does not extend into or near the development site (Samuels 2001). Evidence of medieval or post-medieval agriculture in the form of ridge and furrow is recorded to the north and south of the haul road and within the clay stocking area.

A discussion of the post-medieval and Victorian background to the area may be found in the desk based assessment (Samuels 2001).

5.0 Aims

The general objectives of the archaeological fieldwork were to define the survival, nature, extent and significance of any archaeological deposits, so that appropriate mitigation strategies could be devised. Any mitigation strategy may include modification of the development to ensure *in situ* preservation of archaeological remains, or alternatively, preservation by record in advance of development.

6.0 Methodology

Field evaluation comprised the excavation of twelve trenches in the clay stocking area and eleven along the route of the haul road. All of the trenches, apart from Trench 17, were 1.5m in width and 20m in length, and located as a random sample across both areas (Fig.3). Trench 17 was extended to 50m in length with the aim of intersecting the projected line of the possible Roman road.

Topsoil was removed by a 360 degree tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket in order to expose the uppermost horizon of any significant archaeological deposits, or the surface of the natural subsoil, as appropriate. A subsoil, below the topsoil, was also removed to check that no archaeological features were masked by it. Trenches were cleaned and photographed and any anomalies subsequently excavated by hand. A full record of all stratigraphic sequences, supplemented by scale drawings, was made. Stratigraphy was recorded using *pro forma* context and feature record cards. Plans, sections and photographs, together with recovered artefacts, form the site archive and are currently stored at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

7.0 Archaeological Results

Trench 1: 1.5m x 20m, orientated west to east (Haul Road)

The natural subsoil consisting of a pale brown silty clay with random patches of silty gravel (1000) was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.3m. Two nineteenth or early twentieth century land drains ran at right angles across the trench. A certain amount of root disturbance was also observed. The topsoil/plough soil was a dark brown clayey silt (1001).

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Trench 2: 1.5m x 20m, orientated north-east to south-west (Haul Road)

The natural subsoil consisting of a pale brown silty clay with random patches of silty gravel (2000) was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.3m. Three

land drains packed with brick and tile, which were of probable nineteenth or early twentieth century date, were observed running diagonally across the trench at regular intervals. The topsoil/plough soil was a dark brown clayey silt (2001).

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Trench 3: 1.5m x 20m, orientated west to east (Haul Road)

The natural subsoil consisting of a red/brown clay (3000) was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.3m. A number of plough scrapes were observed cut into the subsoil. The topsoil/plough soil was a dark brown clayey silt (3001).

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Trench 4: 1.5 x 20m, orientated west to east (Haul Road)

The natural subsoil consisting of a red/brown clay (4000) was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.3m. A number of plough scrapes were observed cut into the subsoil. The topsoil/plough soil was a dark brown clayey silt (4001).

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Trench 5: 1.5m x 20 m, orientated west to east (Haul Road)

The natural subsoil consisting of a red/brown clay with pale green/brown mottling (5000) was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.3m. The topsoil/plough soil was a dark brown clayey silt (5001).

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Trench 6: 1.5m x 20m, orientated west to east (Haul Road)

The natural subsoil consisting of pale brown clay with red and green mottling (6000) was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.3m. The topsoil/plough soil was a dark brown clayey silt (6001).

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Trench 7: 1.5m x 20m, orientated west to east (Haul Road)

The natural subsoil consisting of a red/brown clay with pale green mottling (7000) was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.45m. A linear feature, measuring roughly 1.8m width, was aligned north to south and was cut to a depth of 0.09m. This was filled with material identical to the overlying subsoil (7001). This subsoil was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (7002) with a depth of approximately 0.15m. The topsoil/plough soil, approximately 0.3m in depth, was a dark brown clayey silt (7002).

No archaeological deposits were encountered. The linear aligned north to south was probably the remains of a plough furrow.

Trench 8: 1.5m x 20m, orientated west to east (Haul Road)

The natural subsoil, a red/brown clay (8000), was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.45m. Two linear features measuring, approximately 1.80m in width, ran north to south and were cut to a depth of 0.09m. They were filled with material identical to the overlying subsoil (8001). This subsoil was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (8001) with a depth of approximately 0.15m. The topsoil/plough soil, approximately 0.3m in depth, was a dark brown clayey silt (8002).

No archaeological deposits were encountered. The linears aligned north to south were probably the remains of plough furrows.

Trench 9: 1.5m x 20m, orientated west to east (Haul Road)

The natural subsoil, a red/brown clay (9000), was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.5m. The subsoil was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (9001) with a depth of approximately 0.2m. The topsoil/plough soil, approximately 0.3m in depth, was a dark brown clayey silt (9002).

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Trench 10: 1.5m x 20m, orientated west to east (Haul Road)

The natural subsoil, a red/brown clay (10000), was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.5m. The overlying subsoil was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (10001) with a depth of approximately 0.2m. The topsoil/plough soil, approximately 0.3m in depth, was a dark brown clayey silt (10002).

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Trench 11: 1.5m x 20m, orientated west to east (Haul Road)

The natural subsoil, a red/brown clay (11000), was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.5m. The overlying subsoil was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (11001) with a depth of approximately 0.2m. The topsoil/plough soil, approximately 0.3m in depth, was a dark brown clayey silt (11002).

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Trench 12: 1.5m x 20m, orientated west to east (Field 2)

The natural subsoil, a red/brown clay (12000), was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.5m. A linear feature measuring 1.8m width by 0.09m depth,

ran roughly north-west to south-east across the trench. The fill was identical in appearance to the overlying subsoil which was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (12001) with a depth of approximately 0.2m. The topsoil/plough soil, approximately 0.3m in depth, was a dark brown clayey silt (12002).

No archaeological deposits were encountered. The linear running north-west to south-east was probably the remains of a plough furrow.

Trench 13: 1.5m x 20m, orientated north to south (Field 2)

The natural subsoil, a red/brown clay with pale green mottling (13000), was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.55m. Two linear features, each measuring approximately 1.8m in width ran east to west and were cut to a depth of 0.09m. They were filled with material which was identical in appearance to the overlying subsoil (13001). A sub-circular feature, measuring approximately 0.3m x 0.25m was located midway along the trench. The overlying subsoil was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (13001) with a depth of approximately 0.3m. The topsoil/plough soil, approximately 0.25m in depth, was a dark brown clayey silt (13002).

No archaeological deposits were encountered. The linear features aligned east to west were probably the remains of plough furrows. The sub-circular feature was a tree bowl.

Trench 14: 1.5m x 20m, orientated north-west to south-east (Field 2)

The natural subsoil, a red/brown clay (14000), was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.6m. The subsoil was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (14001) with a depth of approximately 0.3m. The topsoil/plough soil, approximately 0.3m in depth, was a dark brown clayey silt (14002).

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Trench 15: 1.5m x 20m, orientated north to south (Field 2)

The natural subsoil, a red/brown clay (15000), was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.45m. The overlying subsoil was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (15001) with a depth of approximately 0.2m. The topsoil/plough soil was a dark brown clayey silt (15002).

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Trench 16: 1.5m x 20m, orientated north-east to south-west (Field 2)

The natural subsoil, a red/brown clay with pale green/yellow mottling (16000), was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.5m. A linear feature measuring approximately 1.2m in width was observed running roughly north-west to south-east and was cut to a depth of 0.09m. It was filled with a material which

appeared identical to the overlying subsoil (16001). The subsoil was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (16001) with a depth of approximately 0.2m. The topsoil/plough soil, approximately 0.3m in depth, was a dark brown clayey silt (16002).

No archaeological deposits were encountered. The linear aligned north-west to south-east was probably the remains of a plough furrow.

Trench 17: 1.5m x 50m, orientated north to south (Field 2)

The natural subsoil, a red brown clay with bands of pale green/yellow mottling (17000), was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.5m. Two linear features, both of approximately 1.6m in width, were aligned east to west, one midway along the trench and the other at its north-eastern end. Excavated sections showed both to be 0.09m in depth and filled with a material identical to the overlying subsoil (17001). Three narrow linears were aligned roughly north-west to south-east in the northern half of the trench. The overlying subsoil was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (17001) with a depth of approximately 0.25m. The topsoil/plough soil, approximately 0.3m in depth, was a dark brown clayey silt (17002).

No archaeological deposits were encountered. The two linears aligned east to west were probably the remains of plough furrows. The three linears aligned north-west to south-east were associated with land drainage.

Trench 18: 1.5m x 20m, orientated north-west to south-east (Field 2)

The natural subsoil, a pale yellow clay (18000), was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.55m. A linear feature, measuring approximately 0.8m wide and 0.10m deep, was visible at the western end of the trench. A further linear of similar dimensions was located at the eastern end of the trench. Both were filled with material identical in appearance to the overlying subsoil (18001). A sub-circular feature was observed at the western end of the trench. The feature, which was excavated to a depth of 0.15m, had an irregular base and measured approximately 0.25m x 0.3m (F1801), and produced some abraded sherds of Iron Age pottery. The overlying subsoil was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (18001) with a depth of approximately 0.3m. The topsoil/plough soil, approximately 0.25 in depth, was a dark brown clayey silt (18002).

Sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered from the fill (18004) of the sub-circular feature (F1801). Amongst the sherds was the flat base angle from a pot. The pottery was a reduced grog tempered ware (Hancox pers. comm). The pottery was not found in association with any archaeological feature.

The sub-circular feature (F1801) was most likely a tree bowl or animal burrow. The two linears were probably the remains of plough furrows.

Trench 19: 1.5m x 20m, orientated north-west to south-east (Field 1)

The natural subsoil, a red/brown clay (19000), was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.6m. The edge of a linear was aligned roughly north-west to south-east down the centre of the trench. The overlying subsoil was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (19001) with a depth of approximately 0.3m. The topsoil/plough soil, approximately 0.3m in depth, was a dark brown clayey silt (19002).

No archaeological deposits were encountered. The linear aligned north-west to south-east was probably the remains of a plough furrow.

Trench 20: 1.5m x 20m, orientated north-east to south-west (Field 1)

The natural subsoil, a red/brown clay (20000), was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.6m. The natural subsoil was over cut slightly to reveal the undulating section of ridge and furrow which ran roughly on an alignment north-west to south-east through the long section of the trench. The fill of the ridge and furrow could not be distinguished from the overlying subsoil (20001). The subsoil was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (20001) with a depth of approximately 0.45m to 0.50m. The topsoil/plough soil, approximately 0.45m in depth, was a dark brown clayey silt (20002).

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Trench 21: 1.5m x 20m, orientated north to south (Field 1)

The natural subsoil, a red/brown clay with pale green/brown mottling (21000), was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.85m. The overlying subsoil was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (21001) with a depth of approximately 0.55m. The topsoil/plough soil, approximately 0.3m in depth, was a dark brown clayey silt (21002).

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Trench 22: 1.5m x 20m, orientated north-west to south-east (Field 1)

The natural subsoil, a red/brown clay with pale green/brown mottling (22000), was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.80m. The overlying subsoil was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (22001) with a depth of approximately 0.45m. The topsoil/plough soil, approximately 0.35m in depth, was a dark brown clayey silt (22002).

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Trench 23: 1.5m x 20m, orientated north-east to south-west (Field 1)

The natural subsoil, a red/brown clay with pale green/brown mottling (23000), was encountered at a depth of approximately 0.85m. The overlying subsoil was a mid to light brown very clayey silt (23001) with a depth of approximately 0.45m. The topsoil/plough soil, approximately 0.4m in depth, was a dark brown clayey silt (23002).

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

8.0 Discussion

Throughout the evaluation area the natural subsoil was encountered at depths of between 0.3m and 0.5m. In Field 1, however, which contained Trenches 19 to 23, the natural subsoil was encountered at levels ranging from 0.6m to 0.85m. This was due to a process of soil wash down slope from north to south.

The Iron Age pottery retrieved from Trench 18 was not found in association with any archaeological features. It seems most likely that the pottery was deposited through root or animal activity. Its presence does, however, suggest Iron Age activity in the vicinity.

Trench 17 was located to intersect the projected line of a Roman road running in a south-easterly direction from a Roman settlement to the north-west of the clay stocking area. However, no evidence of such a feature was observed. This bears out the negative results of an examination of the workings of the quarry face (adjacent to the western edge of the clay stocking area) carried out in 1997 (Rosenberg and Samuels 1997). This does not necessarily indicate that the road did not exist, since any evidence may have been removed by medieval ploughing.

The subsoil appears to have resulted from medieval or post-medieval ploughing activity and was encountered in all trenches apart from Trenches 1 to 6. Here there was an abrupt change in stratigraphy with topsoil/plough soil directly overlying the natural subsoil. The absence of subsoil in this area may have implications for patterns of land use during the medieval or post-medieval periods. In Field 1 evidence of this earlier ploughing activity is still visible as ridge and furrow running north-west to south-east. The furrow fills, wherever they occurred, were indistinguishable from the overlying subsoil. Small pieces of slag were retrieved from the subsoil in a number of the trenches and charcoal flecking was present throughout which may have resulted from the proximity of the disused colliery track. In Trenches 7 to 18 the subsoil varied from 0.15m to 0.25m in depth, whilst in Trenches 19 to 23 it ranged from 0.3m up to 0.55m in depth. As mentioned above, this was most likely the result of colluvial build up.

The absence of archaeology observed during the current evaluation confirms the findings of fieldwalking and geophysical surveys carried out in the area of the present quarry during the 1990s.

9.0 Acknowledgements

The evaluation was carried out by James Taylor, Sally Radford and Phil Mann under the supervision of Helen Martin. The project was managed by Richard Cuttler. The report was written by Helen Martin and edited by Richard Cuttler and the illustrations were drawn by Nigel Dodds. The site was monitored by John Samuels of John Samuels Archaeological Consultants. The site was monitored on behalf of Leicestershire County Council by Lesley-Anne Mather and Anne Graf. Many thanks to the management and staff of Ibstock Quarry for their help and co-operation.

10.0 References

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Fig 1

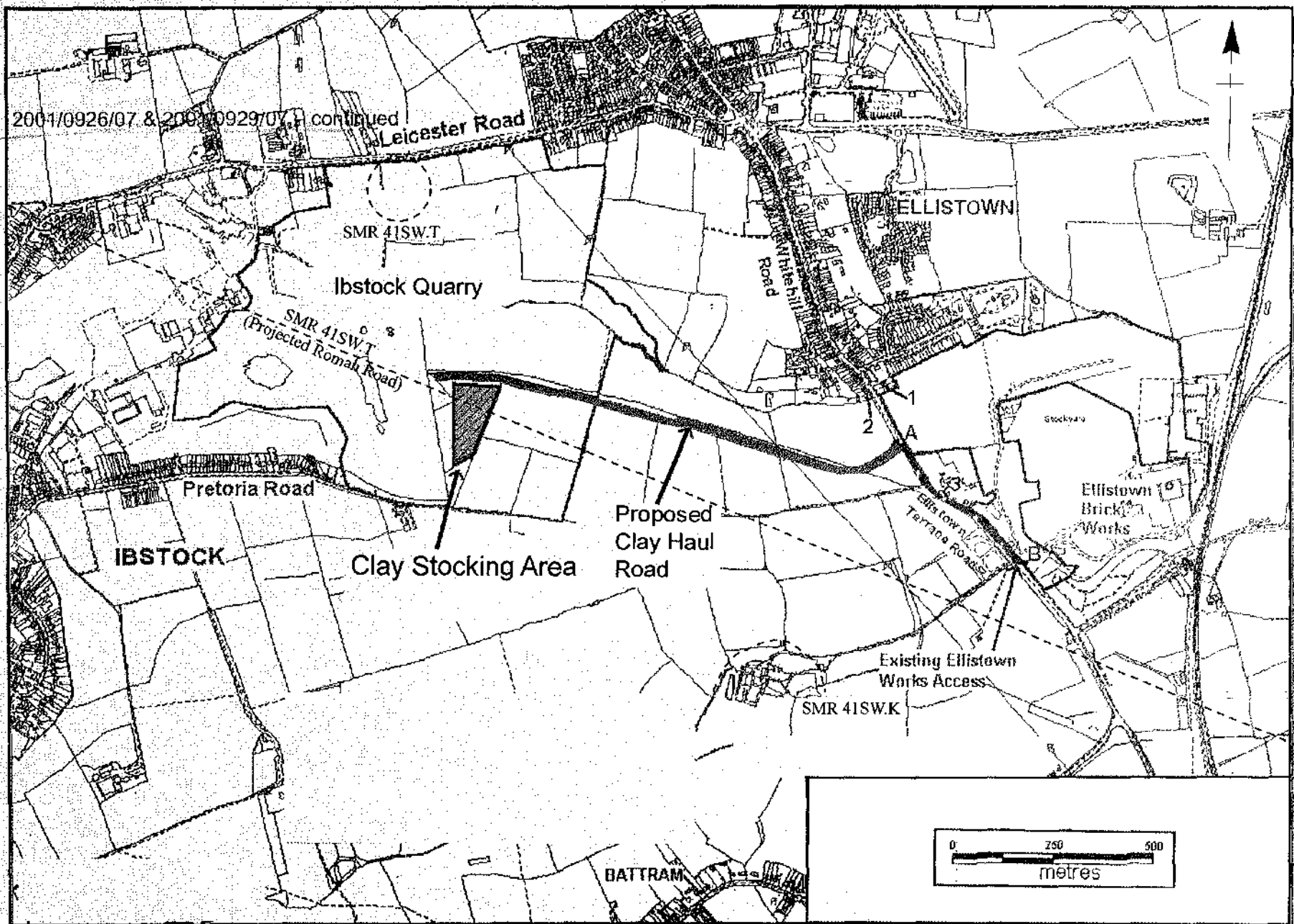


Fig.2

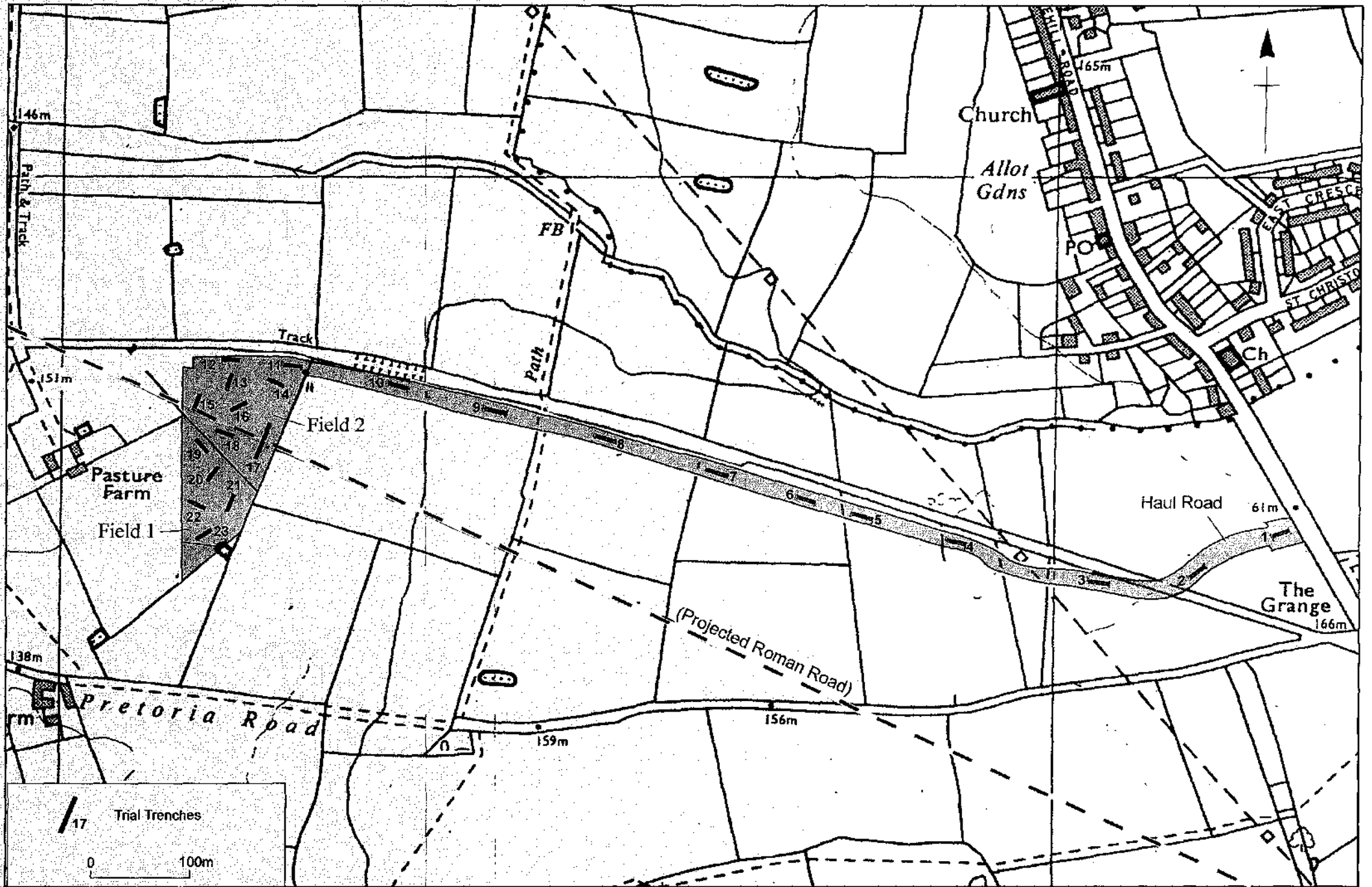


Fig.3