

**Archaeological Trial Trenching at  
Knowsley Cemetery, Fox's Bank Lane,  
Whiston, Knowsley, Merseyside.  
Site Code 146  
Final Report**

**Planning Ref 11/00710/KMBC1**

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## **Non-Technical Summary**

This report describes the results of a program of archaeological trial trenching conducted for an extension to Knowsley Cemetery, Whiston.

It was undertaken following a geophysical survey which identified possible archaeological features.

Eight trenches were excavated using a combination of mechanical plant and hand digging. The only archaeological deposits found were two ditches which were probably dug and in filled in the late 1700s to 1800s AD.

No other archaeological deposits were located and the report recommends that no further mitigation is required.

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# **Archaeological Trial Trenching at Knowsley Cemetery, Fox's Bank Lane, Whiston, Knowsley, Merseyside. Site Code 146 Final Report**

## **1. Introduction**

This report describes the results of a programme of archaeological trial trenching conducted at Knowsley Cemetery, Fox's Bank Lane, Whiston, Knowsley, Merseyside. The project was conducted on behalf of Knowsley 2020 (hereafter the Client). The project is part of a scheme of archaeological mitigation required as part the planning condition imposed by Knowsley Council (Planning Ref 11/00710/KMBC1).

The site is located south of Whiston, near Knowsley, Liverpool at OS NGR ref. SJ 477 905 (Fig. 1). The Client proposes to extend the existing cemetery.

The site comprises approximately 0.56ha of relatively flat agricultural land currently used for pasture. The site is bound to the north by Lickers Lane and to the east by the current Knowsley Cemetery.

## **2. Methodology**

Fieldwork was undertaken between Monday 15 and Thursday 18 October 2012 by Dr. M. Adams and Clare Ahmad.

All excavation was undertaken as specified in the project design (Adams 2012).

## **3. Archaeological and Historical Background**

No desk-study has been conducted for this project. The following summary was compiled from documents supplied by the client and internal NMLFAU documents.

There is little direct evidence of Prehistoric, Roman or Early Medieval settlement from Whiston though this is likely to be largely the result of the historic lack of archaeological fieldwork in the area and the relatively ephemeral nature of any deposits rather than the absence of a human population. Excavation and fieldwork in the wider area (e.g. Cowell & Philpott 2000, Adams & Philpott in prep) since c. 1990 have shown that at least some areas of Knowsley contain evidence of settlement dating to each of these periods. However, the location and identification of settlement sites of these periods remains problematic.

The earliest reference to Whiston is contained in a survey of 1212 (Farrer & Brownbill 1907) and the site lies on the eastern fringes of Halsnead Park which is first mentioned in 1246, when William, son of William Assolfi, and William, Adam, and John, his sons, with others, were convicted of having dispossessed Siward de Derwent and Cecily his wife of an acre belonging to the fourth part of Halsnead.

The estate passed through several families in the Medieval period and in 1684 was purchased by Thomas Willis, a Liverpool merchant and stayed in the family until the early 20th century (*ibid*).

Historic mapping of the site supplied by the client shows no structures in the evaluation area but only covers the period c. 1840 to present.

A geophysical survey has been conducted using detailed magnetic gradiometry and earth resistance (Stratascan 2012). This detected the presence of several sub-surface features considered likely to relate to buried archaeological deposits (Fig. 2).

## **4. Results of the Excavation**

The locations of Trenches are given in Fig. 3. Given the general nature and date of the deposits they are described in summary only. Fuller descriptions are in the site archive.

### **4.1 Trench I**

Context 1, a mid-reddish brown silty clayey humic topsoil 0.30-0.35 m deep was excavated to a sharp interface with the underlying geological deposits which consisted of reddish brown Boulder Clay with occasional lenses of pale reddish brown gritty sand (Plate 1).

Three north-south aligned features (contexts 2, 3 and 4) each c. 0.5 m across were seen in the centre of the trench and were excavated. The fill of each was no more than 15 mm deep and there was no evidence of a deliberate cut into the underlying geological deposits.

### **4.2 Trench II**

The deposits in this trench were identical to those in Trench I (Plate 2). After hand – cleaning contexts 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 were seen as c. 0.5 m wide bands of darker soil contrasting crisply with geological deposits. These were on the same north-south alignment as contexts 2, 3 & 4 in Trench I and when sampled were identical in character (Plate 3).

### **4.3 Trench III**

Context 5 was a mid-reddish brown silty clayey humic topsoil 0.30-0.35 m deep was excavated to a sharp interface with the underlying geological deposits which at the northern end of the trench were mid-yellowish brown clays with frequent lenses of gravel. These graded into pale yellowish brown clay with occasional pebbles and cobbles at the southern end of the trench.

The only archaeological deposit was context 6, a 2.90 m wide strip of mid-reddish brown clayey silty sandy loam with occasional rounded pebbles and cobbles up to 150 mm across. Context 29 also contained small fragments of coal, 19th century brick and pottery. This filled context 15, a 0.35m m deep cut into geological deposits (Figs 4 & 5, Plate 4). Only the northern edge and base of this cut were within the trench but this suggests that it was part of an east-west aligned ditch c. 3.5 m across.

#### **4.4 Trench IV**

The only deposits in this trench were topsoil identical to that in other trenches and geological deposits which consisted of mottled grey-brown gravelly clays (Plates 5 & 6).

#### **4.5 Trench V**

Topsoil (context 29) identical to that in other trenches was excavated to geological deposits consisting of reddish yellow sandy silty clay with occasional rounded pebbles and cobbles.

The only archaeological deposit was context 28, a north-west to south-east aligned strip of gingery red silty sandy loam with occasional small fragments of coal, rounded pebbles and cobbles up to 150 mm across. This deposit filled a north-west to south-east aligned 2.6 m wide and 0.5 m deep cut (context 30) into geological deposits which had a flat base and sides sloping evenly at c. 30-40 degrees (Figs 4 & 5, Plate 7).

#### **4.6 Trench VI**

The only deposits in this trench were topsoil identical to that in other trenches and geological deposits which at the western end of the trench consisted of red clay grading eastwards into yellowish red sandy silts with rounded pebbles and cobbles (Plate 8).

Context 27 was a north-south aligned strip of slightly deeper topsoil identical to those seen in Trenches I and II.

#### **4.7 Trench VII**

The deposits in this trench were identical to those in Trench I. After hand –cleaning contexts 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 were seen as c. 0.5 m wide bands of darker soil contrasting crisply with geological deposits. These were on the same north-south alignment as contexts 2, 3 & 4 in Trench I and when sampled were identical in character (Plate 9).

#### **4.8 Trench VIII**

The only deposits in this trench were topsoil identical to that in other trenches and geological deposits which consisted of yellowish red sandy silts with rounded pebbles and cobbles. There were also some small (<0.2 m across) lenses of yellow fine sand (Plate 10).

Context 17 was a north-south aligned strip of slightly deeper topsoil identical to those seen in Trenches I and II.

### **5. Finds Evidence**

Most of the finds from the site consisted of 19th and 20th century ceramics and glass from top soil. The general nature of this material is characteristic of the disposal of domestic rubbish on rural sites on Merseyside and will not be reported upon in detail here.

The only exception was SF24 from context 6, Trench III. This was a sherd of 13th to 14th century pottery, though the 19th century ceramics also found in this context show that this was residual. SF 14 was two joining fragments of red sandstone building material also found in context 6 and which may be of similar date to the medieval pottery but perhaps are more likely to be contemporary with the 18th-19th century brick found in the same context.

## **6. Conclusions**

No evidence for the features identified by the geophysical survey was located by the trial trenches. The only archaeological features identified were east-west and north-west to south-east aligned ditches in Trenches III and V. The fills of both contained late 19th century ceramics which shows that they were in-filled during the late 19th or early 20th century. Both features were probably post-medieval field boundaries though no boundaries are shown at either location on the available historic mapping which commences c. 1845. It is possible that the ditch in Trench III relates to a line of trees shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition 6 inch and 25 inch maps (Figs 6 & 7) which may be preserving the line of an earlier boundary. The ditch in Trench V could not be related to any features depicted on historic mapping. It is also possible that both relate to the nursery shown on the 1936-9 OS map (Fig. 8).

The shallow north-south aligned features filled with topsoil observed in most of the trenches are the result of late 19th or 20th century agricultural activity and may relate to the nursery depicted on mid 20th century OS mapping.

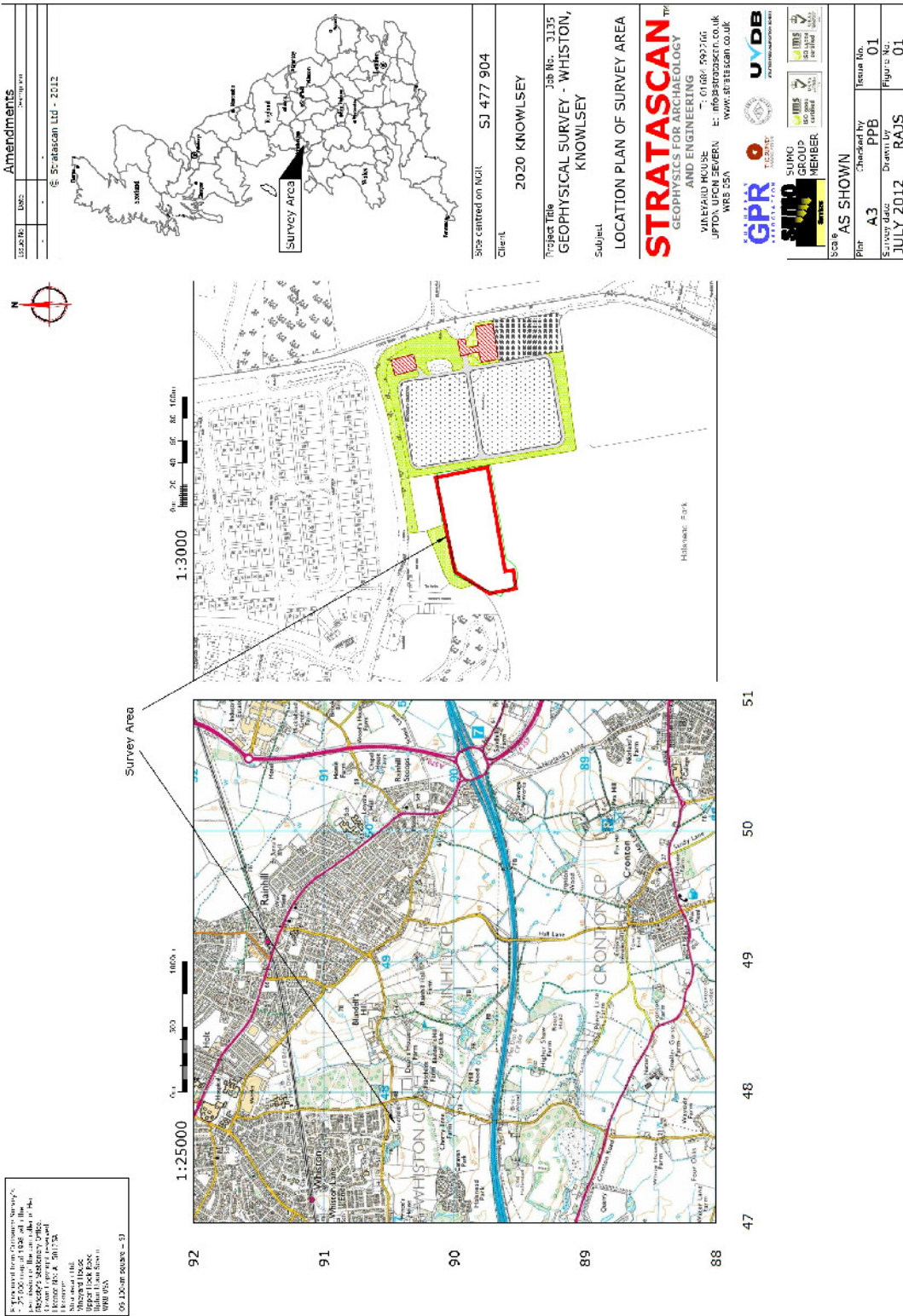
The medieval pottery found in the ditch fill in Trench III was in association with 19th century material and is therefore residual and more likely to relate to the dispersal of domestic rubbish via manuring rather than actual occupation in the area of the cemetery extension. It is however, a useful indicator of medieval activity in the wider area though this is more likely to relate to settlement along Lickers Lane to the north, perhaps in the area now occupied by Sandfield House.

Neither of the ditches described above were detected by the geophysical survey despite their being clear and well defined and none of the features identified as archaeological by the survey could be related to below ground deposits. This reflects a broader pattern on Boulder Clay sites in South Lancashire, Merseyside and Cheshire where geophysical survey often identifies spurious archaeological deposits and has also been known to miss archaeological deposits. This appears to be a consequence of the geology of the Boulder Clay in this region which in its upper levels consists of a complex of inter-lensed deposits of clays, sands and gravels which can both mimic archaeological deposits and obscure genuine features and it was noticeable that the present site exhibited such complex geology.

## **7. Recommendations for Further Mitigation**

No further mitigation is required on this site and construction can proceed with no further archaeological requirements.

### 8. Figures





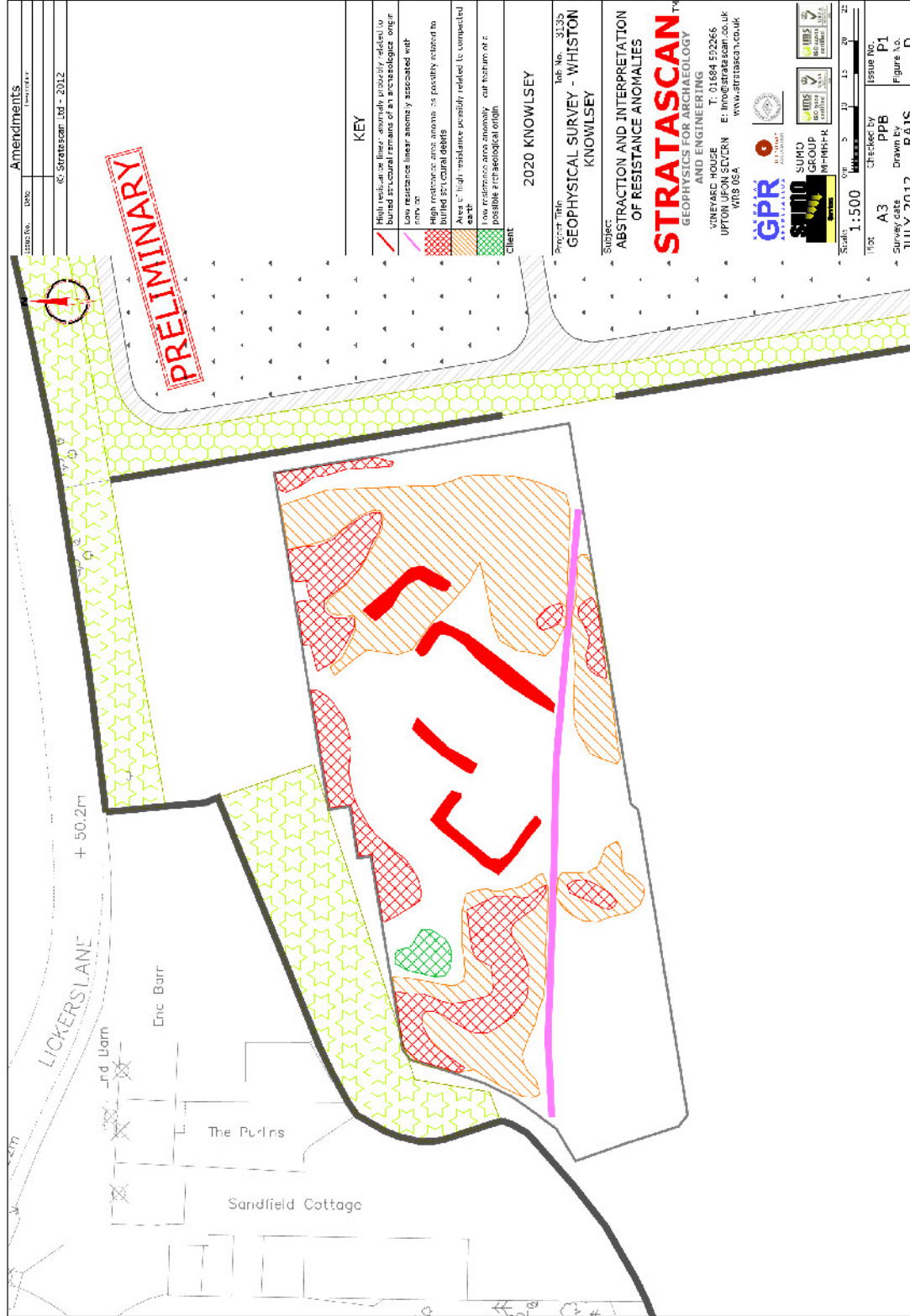


Fig. 2. Geophysical anomalies (Stratascan 2012)



Fig. 3 Trench locations.

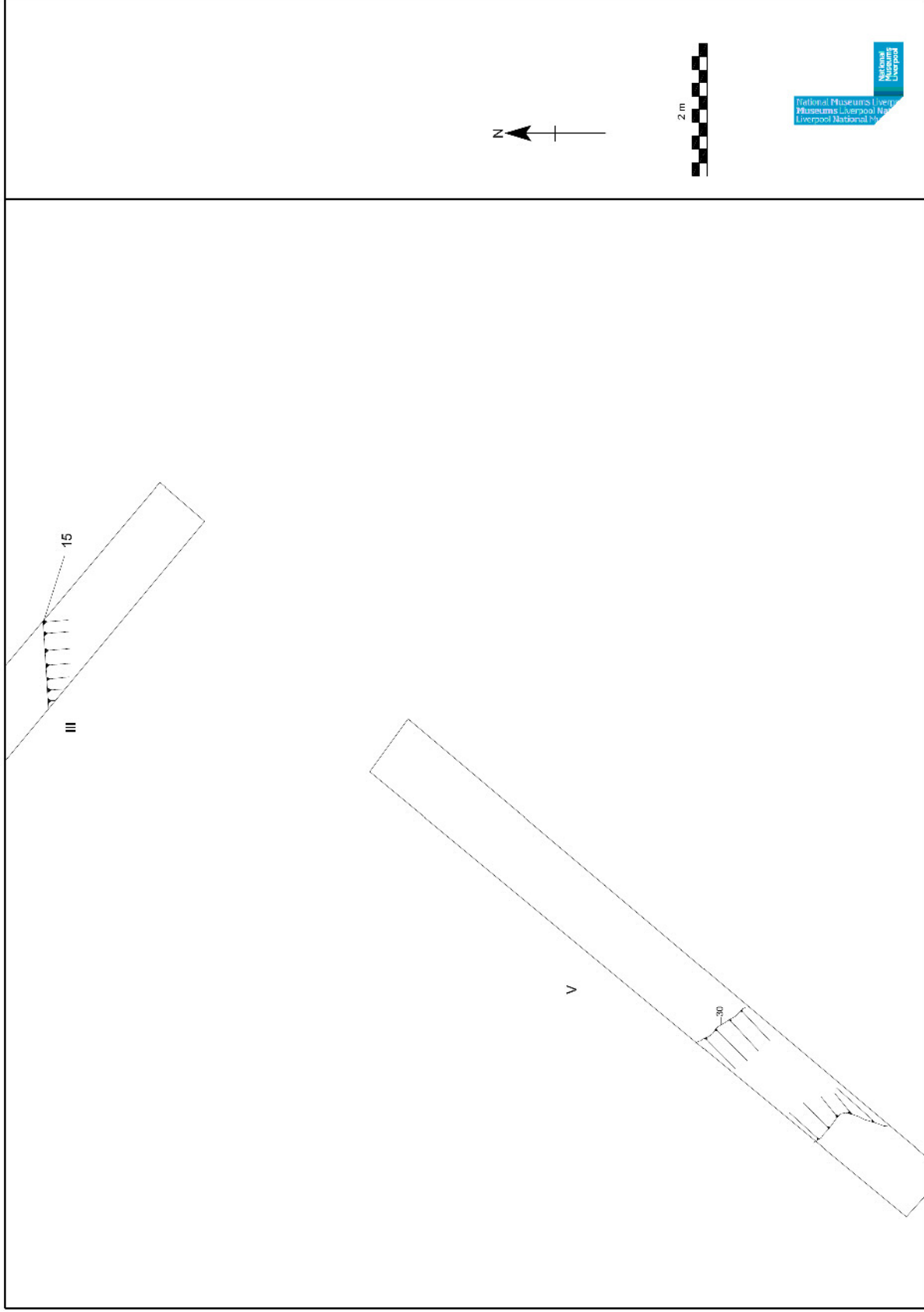


Fig. 4. Plan of ditches in Trenches III and V.

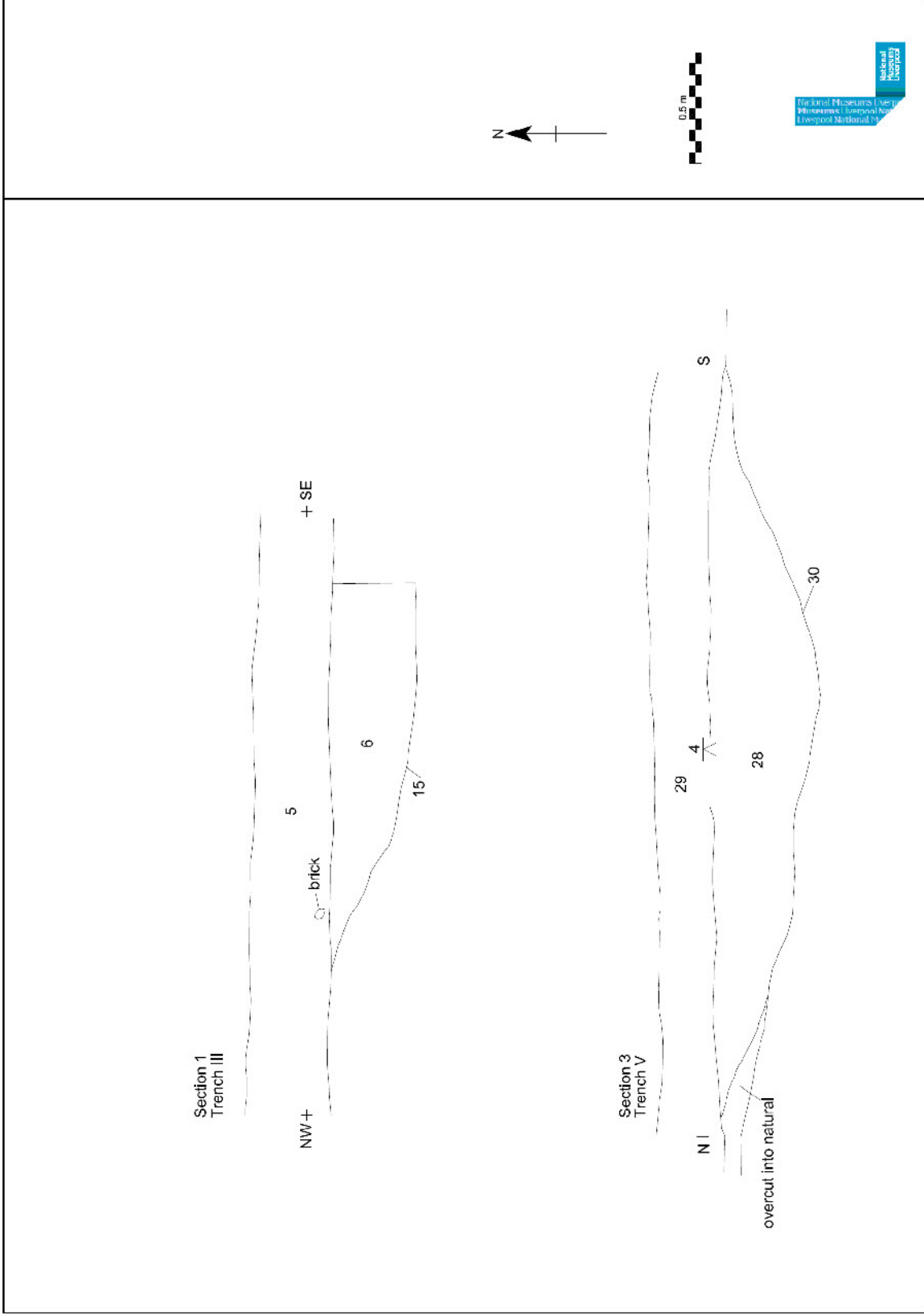


Fig. 5. Sections across ditches in Trenches III & V.



Fig. 6. 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 6 in to the mile OS map c. 1845. Data from client.

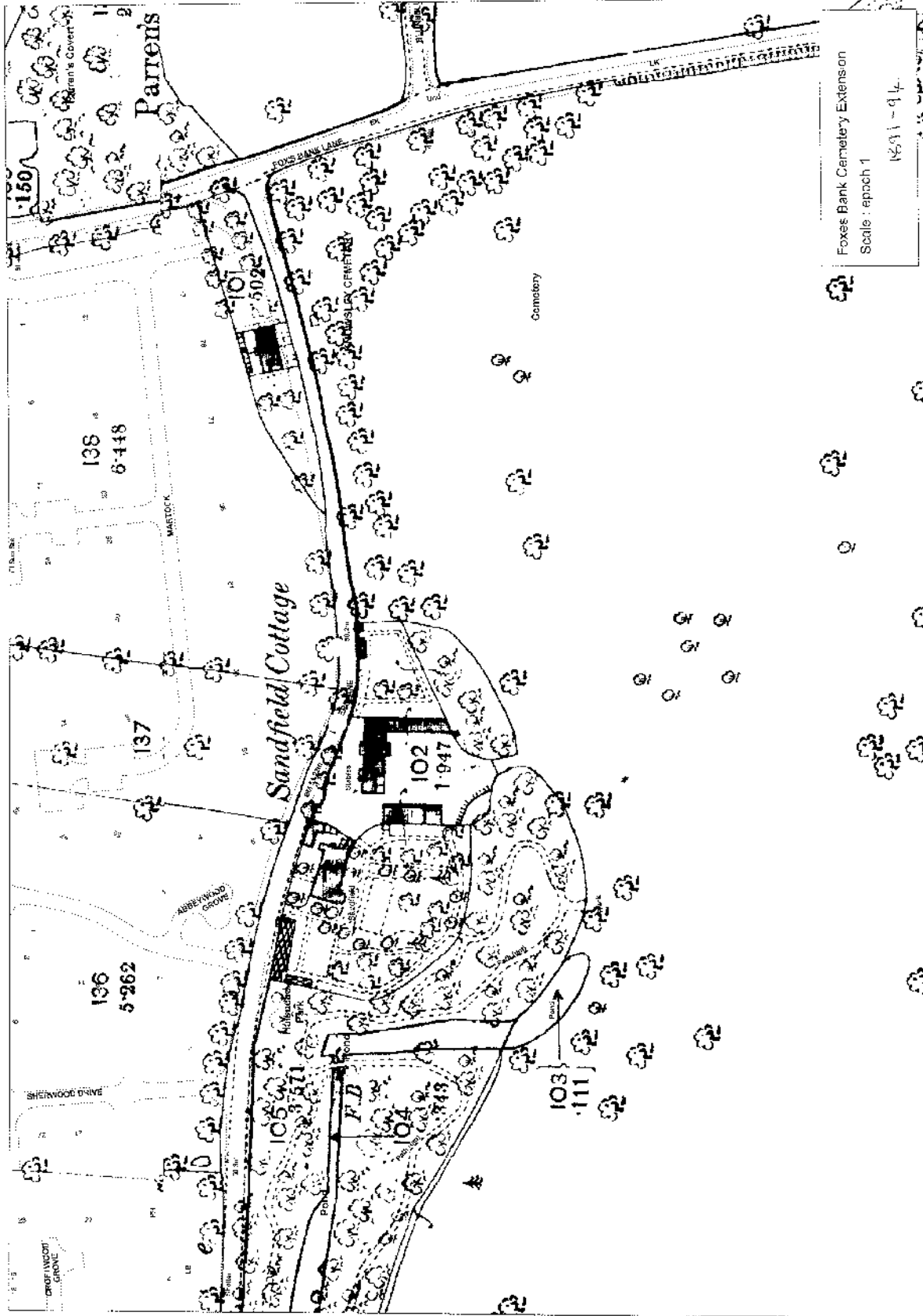


Fig. 7. 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 25 in to the mile OS map c. 1891. Data from client.

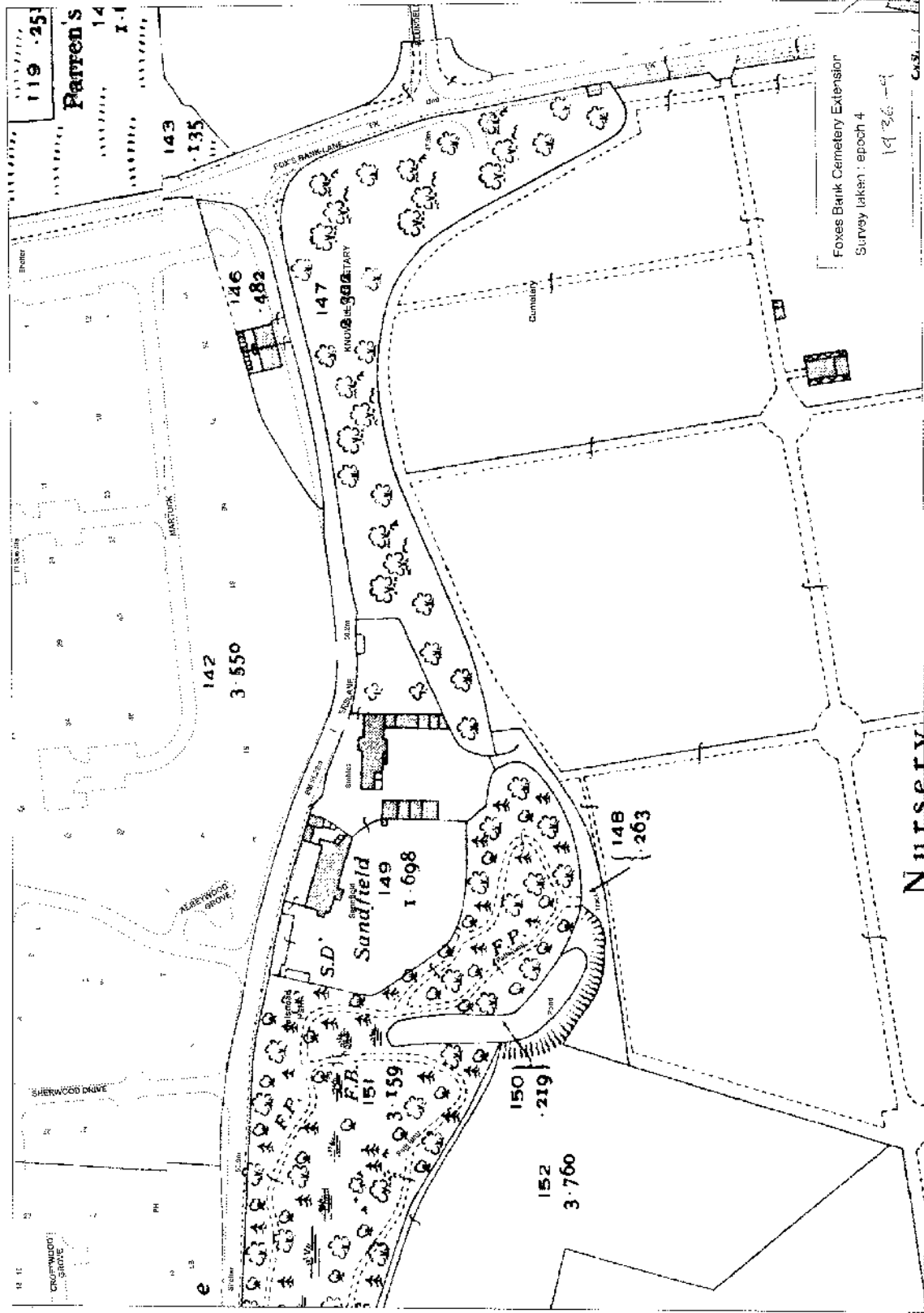


Fig. 8. 25 in to the mile OS map c. 1936-7. Data from client.

## **9. Plates**





Plate 1. Trench I after hand-cleaning.



Plate 2. Trench II after hand-cleaning. View looking north-west.



Plate 3. Trench II, sections across shallow top-soil filled features resulting from recent agricultural activity. View looking south.



Plate 4. Trench III. Section across ditch fill context 6 and cut Context 15. View looking north-east.



Plate 5. Trench IV after hand-cleaning. View looking north-west.



Plate 6. Trench IV after hand-cleaning. View looking north-east.



Plate 7. Trench V, section across ditch fill context 28 and cut context 30. View looking north-east.



Plate 8. Trench VI after hand-cleaning. View looking south-west.



Plate 9. Trench VII, Sections excavated across contexts 22, 23 and 24.



Plate 10. Trench VIII after hand-cleaning. View looking south-west.

## **10. Bibliography**

Adams M. 2012 *Project Design for an Archaeological Evaluation at Knowsley Cemetery Extension, Fox's Bank Lane, Whiston, Knowsley. (Planning Ref 11/00710/KMBC1)* Prepared for Knowsley 20/20

Cowell R. W. & Philpott R. A. 2000 *Prehistoric, Romano-British and Medieval Settlement in Lowland North West England: Archaeological excavations along the A5300 road corridor in Merseyside*, NMGM (Liverpool, 2000).

Farrer W. & Brownbill J. (eds) 1907 *The Victoria History of the County of Lancashire County, 3*

Institute For Archaeologists 2008a *Standard And Guidance for archaeological field evaluation*

Institute For Archaeologists 2008b *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

Philpott R.A. & Adams M. 2010 *Excavations at a Bronze Age, Iron Age, Romano-British and Medieval Settlement at Irby, Wirral, 1987-1996*. NMGM Monograph.

Stratascan 2012 Geophysical Survey Report Whiston, Knowsley, Liverpool. Unpublished Client Report

## 11. Archive Catalogue

The archive is retained and curated at National Museums Liverpool

### 11.1 Finds

SFNO	Trench	Context	Material	Type	Class	Description	Period
1	I	1	CER	BRK		Brick fragment	Post-Medieval
2	I	1	POT	UNG	UFP	Unglazed flowerpot	Post-Medieval
3	I	1	POT	DKW	DCL	Late darkware	Post-Medieval
4	III	5	POT	UNG	UFP	Unglazed flowerpot	Post-Medieval
5	III	5	POT	STW		Stoneware	Post-Medieval
6	III	5	POT	MOT		Mottled ware	Post-Medieval
7	III	5	STO			Stone fragment	Post-Medieval
8	II	9	POT	CHN		Very small china sherd	Post-Medieval
9	II	8	POT	CHN		China	Post-Medieval
10	VIII	16	POT	STW		Stoneware	Post-Medieval
11	VIII	16	POT	CHN		China	Post-Medieval
12	V	28	POT	STW	WST	White stoneware plate sherds	Post-Medieval



SFNO	Trench	Context	Material	Type	Class	Description	Period
13	V	28	POT	?BSC		Small sherd of ?porcelain biscuitware	Post-Medieval
14	II	7	POT	DKW	DCL	Late darkware	Post-Medieval
15	II	7	POT	UNG	UFP	Unglazed flowerpot	Post-Medieval
16	II	7	POT	SCO		19th century self-coloured ware rim sherd with ?overfired bubbled glaze	Post-Medieval
17	II	7	POT	BSC		Lid sherd of porcelain biscuitware	Post-Medieval
18	III	6	STO	SST		Sandstone fragments - 2 x worked	Post-Medieval
19	III	6	COL			Coal fragment	Post-Medieval
20	III	6	CER	BRK		Overfired handmade brick half fragment	Post-Medieval
21	III	6	CER	FCL		Fired clay fragment	Post-Medieval
22	III	6	CER	PIP	STE	Tobacco pipe clay stem fragment	Post-Medieval
23	III	6	CER	PIP	BOW	Tobacco pipe clay bowl fragment	Post-Medieval
24	III	6	POT	MED		13th/14th century medieval body sherd (possible base sherd?)	Medieval

## 11.2 Photographic Catalogue

CAT. No.	FILM	TRENCH	DESCRIPTION	DIRECTION	TAKEN BY	DATE
1	Digital	I	Pre-excavation view looking south showing cut features to rear of cottage		MA	03/08/2012
2	Digital	I	Pre-excavation view looking north showing cut features to rear of cottage		MA	03/08/2012
3	Digital	I	Pre-excavation view looking north showing cut features to rear of cottage		MA	03/08/2012
4	Digital	I	Pre-excavation view looking north showing cut features to rear of cottage		MA	03/08/2012
5	Digital	I	Pre-excavation view of garden looking north		MA	03/08/2012
6	Digital	I	Pre-excavation view of garden looking north-west		MA	03/08/2012
7	Digital	I	Working shot looking north		MA	03/08/2012
8	Digital	I	Working shot		MA	03/08/2012
9	Digital	I	Working shot		MA	03/08/2012
10	Digital	I	Working shot		MA	03/08/2012
11	Digital	I	Working shot		MA	03/08/2012
12	Digital	I	Working shot		MA	03/08/2012
13	Digital	I	Working shot		MA	03/08/2012
14	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking north		MA	03/08/2012
15	Digital	I	Rear wall of cottage, shot used in 123D Catch		MA	03/08/2012
16	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking north		MA	03/08/2012
17	Digital	I	Rear wall of cottage, shot used in 123D Catch		MA	03/08/2012
18	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking north-west		MA	03/08/2012
19	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking north-west		MA	03/08/2012

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CAT. No.	FILM	TRENCH	DESCRIPTION	DIRECTION	TAKEN BY	DATE
20	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking north-west		MA	03/08/2012
21	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking north-west		MA	03/08/2012
22	Digital	I	Rear wall of cottage, shot used in 123D Catch		MA	03/08/2012
23	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking west		MA	03/08/2012
24	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking west		MA	03/08/2012
25	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking west		MA	03/08/2012
26	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking west		MA	03/08/2012
27	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking west		MA	03/08/2012
28	Digital	I	Rear wall of cottage, shot used in 123D Catch		MA	03/08/2012
29	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking south-west		MA	03/08/2012
30	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking south-west		MA	03/08/2012
31	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking south-west		MA	03/08/2012
32	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking south-west		MA	03/08/2012
33	Digital	I	Rear wall of cottage, shot used in 123D Catch		MA	03/08/2012
34	Digital	I	Rear wall of cottage, shot used in 123D Catch		MA	03/08/2012
35	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking north-east		MA	03/08/2012
36	Digital	I	Trench after cleaning looking north-east		MA	03/08/2012
37	Digital	I	Low angle oblique shot used in 123D Catch		MA	03/08/2012
38	Digital	I	Low angle oblique shot used in 123D Catch		MA	03/08/2012
39	Digital	I	Low angle oblique shot used in 123D Catch		MA	03/08/2012
40	Digital	I	Low angle oblique shot used in 123D Catch		MA	03/08/2012
41	Digital	I	Low angle oblique shot used in 123D Catch		MA	03/08/2012
42	Digital	I	Notebook record shot		MA	03/08/2012

CAT. No.	FILM	TRENCH	DESCRIPTION	DIRECTION	TAKEN BY	DATE
43	Digital I		Pre-excavation view of possible cut feature		MA	03/08/2012
44	Digital I		Pre-excavation view of possible cut feature		MA	03/08/2012
45	Digital I		Post-ex view of possible cut feature.		MA	03/08/2012

### 11.3 Context Listing

Context	Trench	Description	Rec By	Date
1 I	Topsoil		Mark Adams	15/10/2012
2 I	Dark area of subsoil		Mark Adams	15/10/2012
3 I	Dark area of subsoil		Mark Adams	15/10/2012
4 I	Dark area of subsoil		Mark Adams	15/10/2012
5 III	Topsoil		Mark Adams	16/10/2012
6 III	Subsoil within [15]c		Mark Adams	16/10/2012
7 II	Topsoil		Clare Ahmad	16/10/2012
8 II	Dark linear spread of subsoil running diagonally across eastern end of trench		Clare Ahmad	16/10/2012
9 II	Dark linear spread of subsoil running diagonally across eastern end of trench (no sheet, same as [8])		Clare Ahmad	16/10/2012
10 II	Semi-circular dark spread of subsoil (no sheet, same as [8])		Clare Ahmad	16/10/2012
11 II	Terminal of dark linear spread of subsoil (no sheet, same as [8])		Clare Ahmad	16/10/2012
12 II	Semi-circular dark spread of subsoil (no sheet, same as [8])		Clare Ahmad	16/10/2012
13 II	Semi-circular dark spread of subsoil (no sheet, same as [8])		Clare Ahmad	16/10/2012
14 II	Dark linear spread of subsoil at far western end of trench (no sheet, same as [8])		Clare Ahmad	16/10/2012
15 III	Cut containing [6]		Mark Adams	16/10/2012
16 VIII	Topsoil (no sheet, same as [1])		Mark Adams	17/10/2012
17 VIII	Dark area at north-west end of trench		Mark Adams	17/10/2012
18 VIII	Dark area at north-west end of trench		Mark Adams	17/10/2012

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Context	Trench	Description	Rec By	Date
19	VII	Dark area running across trench	Mark Adams	17/10/2012
20	VII	Dark area running across trench	Mark Adams	17/10/2012
21	VII	Dark area running across trench	Mark Adams	17/10/2012
22	VII	Dark area running across trench	Mark Adams	17/10/2012
23	VII	Dark area running across trench	Mark Adams	17/10/2012
24	VII	Dark area running across trench	Mark Adams	17/10/2012
25	VII	Dark area running across trench	Mark Adams	17/10/2012
26	VI	Topsoil (no sheet, same as [1])	Clare Ahmad	17/10/2012
27	VI	Dark linear spread at western end of trench (no sheet, same as [8])	Clare Ahmad	17/10/2012
28	V	'Clean' gingerish brown linear spread at southern end of trench, within [30]c	Clare Ahmad	17/10/2012
29	V	Topsoil (no sheet, same as [1])	Clare Ahmad	17/10/2012
30	V	Cut containing [28]	Clare Ahmad	18/10/2012