An Archaeological Watching Brief on Land at Rainford Tennis Club, Rainford, Merseyside
Site Code 150
Assessment Report

Prepared for Rainford Tennis Club

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Non-Technical Summary

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief conducted during the construction of new courts for Rainford Tennis Club.

The watching brief found a series of north-south and east-west aligned ditches, gullies, pits and trackways, most of which had been deliberately filled with large quantities of post-medieval pottery. The ditches and trackways formed part of the field systems shown on early 19th century mapping of the area, though some are not shown on the 1841 Tithe Map or 1850 OS map of the area which suggests that they had been filled in prior to the survey of the maps, perhaps in the 1830s. The gullies appear to have been intended to improve the site's drainage whilst the pits were probably excavated to extract sand.

The excavation recovered large quantities of post-medieval pottery and kiln waste dating to the 17th and 18th centuries (approximately 10000 sherds weighing 2 tonnes). Much of the pottery is badly distorted and unusable and clearly represents waste from production rather than the disposal of domestic waste. However, several near-complete vessels were recovered. The assemblage also contains clay tobacco pipes of a similar date range to the pottery, though most or all of these are probably discards from use rather than evidence of production.

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1. Introduction

This document is a report on an archaeological watching brief at Rainford Tennis Club produced on behalf of Rainford Tennis Club (hereafter the Client). The project is part of a scheme of archaeological mitigation required as part the planning condition imposed by St. Helens Council (Ref P/2011/0847).

The site is located in the core of the village of Rainford and is centred on National Grid Reference SD 4778 0065 (Fig. 1).

The project relates to the construction of new tennis courts to the west of the existing courts.

2. The Site

The site lay on the western edge of Rainford, adjacent to the western boundary of All Saints' Church, in an area occupied by sports fields (Figs 1 & 2).

The watching brief and selective excavation were undertaken between 20 March and 3 April 2013 in an area to the west of the tennis courts constructed in 1933.

The existing tennis club consists of three surfaced courts bounded by a fence. The south-western and south-eastern boundaries are formed by low (c. 0.5 to 1.0 m high) earthen banks. In places these have been eroded and occasional small fragments of 17th century ceramics are visible at the surface. These banks were formed using topsoil removed when the existing courts were created.

3. Solid and Drift Geology, and Soils

The underlying geology is composed of an outlier of Permo-Triassic Sherwood Sandstones, though the wider Rainford area is underlain by Carboniferous Westphalian Coal Measures. The drift geology is composed of Shirdley Hill Sands, coastal blown sands, possibly a coastal facies of the Seacombe Sand Formation, deposited at the end of the last Ice Age. The soils are typical gley-podzols of the Sollom series which develop over Shirdley Hill Sands (Beard et al 1987). Despite their dark colour these soils are relatively low in organic matter and were therefore often enriched by night-soiling in the 19th century. In many areas the white sands found beneath the B horizon have been removed for glass making.

4. Archaeological and Historical Background

The site lies in the historic core of Rainford, immediately adjacent to the western boundary of the Rainford Conservation Area (St. Helens MBC 2008).

There is little direct evidence for Prehistoric, Roman and early Medieval settlement from the area, though this is likely to be in large part due to the historic lack of fieldwork in the area and the likely nature of the sites which renders site location difficult. Prehistoric sites tend to

show a bias towards areas underlain by Shirdley Hill Sand, though these are known only from chance finds and fieldwalked evidence.

Rainford does not appear in the Domesday Survey of 1086 though the placename appears to be of Anglo-Saxon origin. The earliest refence to it is as 'Raineford' in 1198. There were a number of variations on the spelling of Rainford from the early 13th century until towards to the beginning of the 16th century for example Reineford 1202, Reinesford, 1246, Raynford 1246, 1354, Rayneford 1256, 1315, 1332, Reynford 1321 and Raynsford 1503 (Ekwall 1922). Ekwall suggests the name means 'the ford of Regna' (Ekwall 1922) though it has been suggested that 'the ford by a boundary strip' is an alternative (Mills 1976).

Little is known of the medieval layout of the village, though early mapping, such as Yates' Map of Lancashire (1786) shows a dispersed pattern of settlement focussed upon Church Road, Higher Lane and Scarisbrick Road.

From the 17th to 20th centuries, Rainford was at the heart of a thriving clay tobacco pipe and pottery industry. The earliest evidence for clay pipe production dates to 1610, and by 1630 the industry had taken off on a considerable scale. A significant amount of research has been carried out on the clay tobacco pipe industries of Rainford (for example Davey 1978, Davey et al 1982) though much remains unpublished and the area clearly has significant potential for further research.

For example, test-pitting at Church Road in 2011 found evidence of at least three phases of pottery dumping of discarded kiln wasters dating to the 17th century (Rowe 2012). These were very similar to the material uncovered at the Rainford tennis courts in 1980 (Higgins 1997). A separate dump of pottery contained a collection of late 16th-century dark-glazed (often called Cistercian-type) fineware vessels, consisting of a wide variety of vessel forms, and providing a significant number of complete profiles. This deposit probably forms the first Cistercian-ware kiln group discovered in the North West region, dating to the 16th century, making this the earliest evidence for pottery manufacture in Rainford.

However, of greatest relevance to the present project is a suite of fieldwork conducted in the late 1970s. In 1978 an excavation was carried out near Rainford parish church, by an extra-mural class from the University of Liverpool, led by Dr Peter Davey, as part of a study of the ceramics industries of south Lancashire (Higgins, 1997, 5). Here they uncovered the waste dump from a clay tobacco pipe kiln, which was operating from about 1630-1650 (Davey *et al* 1982, 192). They also uncovered a quantity of coarseware pottery which had been dumped with the pipe kiln waste including approximately 10000 clay pipe fragments (Fig. 3).

This led to further excavations in 1979 at the site of the tennis courts (Fig. 3). Initially a collection of pottery was located, which had been exposed during the digging of a foundation trench for the new changing rooms for the courts (Higgins 1997, 5; Fig. 3 A-D). The bank on which the changing rooms are situated was composed of top soil stripped from the site during the courts' construction in 1933. Due to the quantity of sherds discovered it was considered worthwhile to undertake a small excavation. This uncovered a significant amount of mid-17th century pottery wasters on the site, which had been dumped from a production site, the location of which is unknown but is likely to have been in the close vicinity. This led to further trenches being dug along the north-western side of the site after a magnetometer survey was carried out on the area in 1980 (Fig. 3, E-G).

The excavation demonstrated an extensive spread of mid 17th century pottery kiln waste in this area of the village, though no structures were identified. Due to the widespread and fragmentary evidence of the material, it is hard to establish whether parts of the dumping are earlier or later than others, though it seems clear the waste must have derived from a local pottery kiln, spanning a comparatively limited period of time, up to approximately 30 years or

so (Higgins 1997). The association of clay tobacco pipe with the pottery enabled the pottery to be dated to 1640-1680 (Higgins 1997), which provided valuable archaeological confirmation that pottery was being produced locally in Rainford by the mid-17th century, though the evidence from 87 Church Road now suggests that this began earlier (Rowe 2012).

A geophysical survey of the area north of the tennis courts detected two linear anomalies, one aligned east-west, the other north-west to south-east. A trench excavated over the east-west aligned anomaly located deposits interpreted as relating to a former field boundary. Elsewhere dumps of 17th century pottery were found.

Though over 10,000 sherds of pottery were uncovered on the site, the material is very fragmentary and very few complete vessel profiles exist. The majority of vessels were plain with little decoration present and the great number of coarseware vessels in the assemblage may indicate a focus on the production of utilitariany earthenwares for the local community rather than more delicate traded tablewares such as fineware cups and mugs, which may have been much less in demand (Ian Evans, in Higgins 1997).

5. Aims and Objectives

The aims of the project were:

• To provide information on the presence/absence, location and characteristics of archaeological remains at the site.

The specific objectives of the site works were:

• Monitor the removal of top soil and sub-soil across the areas of the site affected by the development in order to allow archaeological deposits to be excavated and recorded as required.

• To recover all artefacts and, where necessary, palaeo-environmental samples from deposits of potential significance.

• To analyse the site records, artefacts and ecofacts to produce a report on the archaeology of the site.

• To identify the significance of any archaeological remains to inform the planning process and design of the respective schemes.

• To submit an ordered archive to a suitable local repository.

6. Methodology

The detailed methodology is given in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Adams 2012) and is summarised here.

The topsoil was removed using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The top soil was excavated in spits to the top of the natural subsoil. This ensured that archaeological features were examined at different stages.

Following machine excavation areas of suspected archaeological deposits were cleaned by hand using either a garden hoe or trowel. The deposit was then excavated in section and recorded as detailed in the Written Scheme of Investigation.

7. Results of the Excavation

7.1 Removal of the Earthen Bank

The bank (Context 8) which formed the western boundary to the original tennis courts (Fig. 4) was c. 2 m wide and 1 m high above ground level (Plates 1 and 2). It was excavated by machine during the topsoil strip for the new courts. Although sherds of early post-medieval pottery were noted within this material it was generally present in much lower quantities and as smaller (< 100 mm) sherds than were present in the stratified deposits to the west. Given that the material in the bank was relatively sparse and effectively unstratified, resources were concentrated on excavating the deposits described below.

7.2 Excavation of Floodlight Pits and Cable Runs

Two pits for the foundations of new floodlights were excavated at the north-eastern and south-eastern corners of the original courts (Fig. 4, Plate 3). They were linked by a cable trench *c.* 200 mm wide and 200 mm deep running along the eastern edge of the courts. This was continued through the northern boundary of the courts. No archaeological deposits were observed in these areas and no finds were recovered. Other pits excavated for floodlights in the new courts were not monitored because those areas were cleared of archaeological deposits during the top soil strip described below.

7.3 Topsoil Strip for New Courts

Most of the area covered by the new courts was devoid of archaeological deposits. Top soil and turf (Contexts 1, 2 and 6) *c.* 300 mm deep was removed to a sharp interface with the underlying geological deposits which consisted of deposits of soft pale yellow sands with occasional small pockets of peat which lay in hollows in the upper surface sand. These deposits are the 'Shirdley Hill Sands' shown on geological mapping of the area. In the south-western corner of this area the yellow sands were overlain by a deposit of paler, almost white sands to a depth of *c.* 100-200 mm. The geology was slightly different in the north-western corner of the site, where the sands were firmer and stained dark reddish brown as a result of iron panning. The iron-panning seemed to coincide with an area of relatively poorly drained soils which at surface level showed as a slight change in the surface vegetation from grass to grass with occasional reeds. The archaeological deposits described below were largely confined to this area and appear mainly to be attempts to improve drainage

7.3.1 Un-Phased Deposits in the Central and Southern Areas

These are described separately to those in the north-western corner of the site. Although there were no stratigraphic relationships between these groups, they were probably of broadly the same date as those to the north-west (Fig. 5).

Context 3 was the fill of a possible east-west aligned ditch (Context 82) on the western edge of the new courts. The fill was a dark grey humic silty sand and the cut was 1.9 to 2.10 m wide and 0.20 m deep (Plate 4). However, the edges of the cut were very poorly defined and it was only traced for a length of *c.* 2 m, it was not observed in the area to the east. It is possible that this feature was in fact a shallow water course or area of slightly boggier ground. No features are shown in this area on the 1850 or 1893 OS maps (Figs 7 & 17) and it is perhaps more likely that it was a sands extraction pit similar to Context 17. Context 4 was situated *c.* 2 m to the south of context 3 but appeared to be of natural origin.

Context 9 was the fill of a shallow north-west to south-east aligned gully (Context 76) with a shallow U-shaped profile situated close to the centre of the excavation (Fig. 5, Plates 5 and

6). The cut was 0.55 m wide, 0.20 m deep and 4.80 m long. It terminated in a squarish end to the north-west but had probably continued for an uncertain distance to the south-east but had not been observed during machine excavation which suggests that it either terminated c. 1-2 m south-east of the point it was first observed at or that the fill had not been sufficiently distinctive to be distinguished. The fill (Context 9) exhibited some variation, consisted of a mass of redeposited clay blocks and lumps set within a matrix of black humic silty sands. In places up to 75% of fill of gully was dumped clay, further to the south the clay was perhaps 40% of the fill. The clay was laminated and contained large quantities of pottery, many large portions of pottery vessels, some full profiles and probably originally complete or nearly so. Many were damaged in rapid removal from the encasing clay in rapid excavation circumstances, and in one case a clay block broke open to reveal what strongly resembled an unfired earthenware dish.

Context 11 was the fill of context 13, a similar feature to Context 76. The fill was a soft, black, humic silty sand containing up to 20% of pottery by volume. The cut was *c*. 0.5 m wide and 1.7 m long but had been severely truncated on its southern side, the surviving section of the profile suggested that it was very similar to context 76. It had been cut through context 14, a 100 mm thick layer of dark grey humic silty sand containing small rounded pebbles and occasional fragments of pottery which probably represented a deposit of sub-soil. The surviving section was limited in extent measuring c. 1 x 2 m. Context 15 was a black peaty deposit c. 0.2-0.3 m wide and 100 mm deep which was noted in a band along the northern edge of context 13 after the removal of context 14. Although it contained occasional fragments of pottery it did not appear to fill a recognisable cut and its origin was unclear. It probably represented the accumulation of organic matter in a boggy hollow intended to be drained by the insertion of contexts 11 and 13.

Contexts 9 and 11 were probably land-drains inserted to improve drainage during the 19th century. The large quantities of pottery in the fills were presumably intended to improve the flow of surface water through the sub-soil, though the large lumps of clay in context 9 do not appear to be readily reconcilable with this interpretation. Both features were on broadly the same alignment as context 24 which might suggest that they were contemporary.

7.3.2 The North-Western Area

The north-western corner of the site contained a suite of stratified deposits which relate to field boundaries, trackways, sand extraction pits and drainage gullies. The upper fills of these features were generally identical which meant that in many instances it was difficult or impossible to establish clear stratigraphic relationships.

7.3.3 Phase 1 (Field Boundaries and Tracks)

This phase was represented by a large, north-south aligned field boundary (the cuts were contexts 72 and 73) and an east-west aligned trackway (the cuts were contexts 27 and 40; Fig. 5, Plate 7). These are aligned parallel to features shown on the 1841 Rainford Tithe Map and the 1850 OS map (Figs 6 and 7) and relate to post-medieval enclosure of the land around Rainford. However, context 72 is not shown on the Tithe Map, so it must have gone out of use prior to 1841 (This date also provides a *terminus ante quem* for the fills described below). The trackway represented by contexts 27 and 40 is shown on the 1850 map *c*.15 m north of the excavated sections and may therefore in fact be an in-filled field boundary. Unfortunately the fills of these features were identical so it was impossible to establish a stratigraphic relationship. However, if contexts 27 and 40 were indeed part of the trackway they should strictly be placed later than context 72. Due to machine disturbance the continuation of context 27 to the east was never satisfactorily determined, though it may equate to a deposit (context 77) observed in the west facing section in the north-eastern corner of the site.

Three sections were excavated across the boundary and two across the trackway, each of which appear to contain a separate suite of deposits (Fig. 5)

Context 40 was aligned roughly east to west and measured 4.15 m wide and 0.28 m deep below the top of the subsoil. The upper fill of an adjacent drainage gully (Context 24, Phase 5) was sealed by lower fill of this trackway. Although the two may have been in contemporary use, the infilling of the trackway occurred after the filling of the gully. Cobbles found in the base of the fill suggest an attempt to consolidate the base of the trackway, which was cut into the natural sand.

The lowest fill of this trackway (Context 45, not visible on Fig. 8, Plate 8) consisted of a soft, coarse yellowish brown sand of sand occurring as localised patches in the base of the cut. This deposit was very similar to the geological deposits on this part of the site but contained fragments of pottery and was probably material eroded from the sides of the cut during its use.

The function of a possible posthole (context 49, Fig. 8) in the base of this feature is unclear but may actually have related to the removal of a large stone.

Context 27 continued on the same alignment as context 40 and in the excavated section was 6.8 m wide and up to 0.6 m deep with a steep sided, flat bottomed profile (Fig. 9, Plate 9). Slight irregularities in its base may have represented wheel ruts. This feature appeared to become gradually shallower to the east because it became increasingly difficult to locate.

Cut 72 varied significantly in width and depth being *c*. 8 m wide at the centre and *c*. 5 m wide to the north and south and was up to 0.6 m deep (Fig. 10). It is possible that this too was a trackway rather than a conventional ditched boundary.

A further possible ditch running westwards from the western side of context 5 was noted in plan (contexts 21 and 22) but not excavated.

The cut for a north-south aligned boundary ditch in the south-east of the site (context 66) also belongs to this phase.

7.3.4 Phase 2 (First Filling/Stabilisation of North-South Boundary)

Deposits relating to this phase were only noted in the central section excavated across the north-south aligned field boundary (context 72) and in a section excavated across the eastern arm of the trackway (Figs 5, 8 & 10; Plates 12 and 14).

The primary fills in these areas consisted of soft silvery sands lensed with browner sands and more humic layers (contexts 55, 57, 67 and 74; context 74 was not seen in section). This material probably represented material washed into the eroding cut.

Context 28 was a *c*. 300 mm thick layer composed almost entirely of crushed pottery, kiln waste including sagger, brick (Context 28). At its western end it graded into a deposit of tumbled stone blocks up to 700 mm across (context 63) tipped in to the western edge of the cut. This material had clearly been deliberately deposited, probably as an attempt to stabilise an area of poorly drained land.

Context 28 was very similar to, and possibly the same layer as, context 56 under context 10 to the north (Fig. 12) and this appeared to lap into the trackway (context 40).

7.3.5 Phase 3 (Silting of Field Boundary and Trackway)

This phase was principally represented by a north-east to south-west aligned band of dark grey to black humic silty sand with occasional rounded pebbles (Context 5) which was *c*. 5 m wide at its southern end and 8 m wide at its northern end and filled the north-south aligned field boundary in Phase 1 (Contexts 72 and 73). Sections excavated across this deposit showed that it varied considerably in its nature. At the southern end context 5 was excavated to a depth of up to 0.60 m and filled a steep sided flat bottomed cut (Plate 10). The deposit was uniform throughout, apart from being slightly more humic, almost peaty in the lower 100-150 mm. It contained large fragments of post-medieval pottery through-out.

A section excavated across the central section of this feature (Fig. 5, Plates 11 and 12) found that Context 5 was shallower here at *c.* 200 mm thick and sealed context 36 which was slightly darker in colour but also up to 200 mm thick (Fig. 10). This deposit in turn sealed context 28 (Phase 2).

At the northern end the lower fill consisted of context 55, a deposit of lenses of fine off-white, beige and silvery sand lensed with dark grey silt *c*. 0.3 m thick which had probably accumulated as a result of erosion of the sides. This was sealed by context 54 which was identical to context 5 but only c. 100 mm thick (Plate 13).

Similar deposits were present in the east-west aligned trackway (context 27 in Phase 1) where Context 18 was the fill of the eastern branch (Fig. 9, Plate 9). It was seen as a broad *c*. 5 m wide band of darker, humic silty sand with occasional lenses of sand contrasting sharply with the dark reddish brown naturally deposited sands in this part of the site. In contrast with the fills of context 40 to the west context 18 appeared to be uniform throughout, though most of the pottery was concentrated in the lower 200 mm and may represent an attempt at stabilisation similar to Context 28. Context 16 was material collected from this area during cleaning following machine excavation and is probably derived from context 18 with some contamination from context 5.

Context 39 was the fill of the western branch of the trackway represented by context 40 in Phase 1 (Fig. 8, Plate 8). In general it was very similar to the fills to the east but there were also several large glacial cobbles and fragments of red sandstone at the base of the cut which appeared to have been deliberately deposited in an attempt to consolidate the underlying sands. This deposit was sealed by the clay layer (context 10) in Phase 5.

7.3.6 Phase 4 (Recut of North-south Boundary)

At the eastern end of the central section across Context 5 was a discrete cut (Context 42) filled by contexts 36 and 38 (Fig. 10, Plate 15). The cut was 2.7m wide and 0.57 m deep with a shallow, dish-shaped profile. Context 36 was very similar to context 5 and the relationship between these deposits was only observed in section. It is therefore likely that context 5 was contaminated with finds from 36 during excavation. Context 38 was slightly darker, browner and sandier than context 36 and contained less pottery.

7.3.7 Phase 5 (Sand Extraction Pits)

This phase consists of large pits, presumed to have been cut for the extraction of Shirdley Hill Sand which forms the natural subsoil under the ploughsoil. Those to the north appear to have been backfilled very shortly after excavation, the fills being uniform through out with a sharp interface against natural deposits. In contrast Context 65 contained a more complex sequence of fills with evidence of slumping of the exposed sides of the cut. This suggests that this feature had been allowed to fill with water and gradually silt up before being

deliberately filled. The upper fills of all of these features were very similar to the ditch fills and it is likely that others were masked by context 5 and remained unexcavated.

They are presumed to be later than the boundaries and trackways because they respect the orientation of the boundary ditches which suggests that there was a preference for extraction sand from the edges of fields. However, the upper fills were identical to each other and to the fills of the ditch and trackway and it is equally possible that some were contemporary with, or possibly even earlier than, Phase 2. However, Context 65 appeared to cut through context 5, because a dense layer of pottery (Context 35) which appeared to cut across context 5. Context 65 was also cut by context 29 in Phase 6. It is likely that they were broadly contemporary with Phase 4.

Two of the pits were originally seen as a linear area of material (context 17, Figs 11 and 12, Plates 7 and 16) running north from the northern edge of ditch context 18. As excavation progressed it became clear that this was in fact the upper fill of two discrete pits. Context 17 filled context 59 and contained at least two near complete facetted tygs and several other very large fragments of vessels in the infill. Many smaller fragments were also present including a spiral handle and an impressed yellow pad of clay with cross stamp.

Once the distinct nature of the pits was identified, their fills were separated, the northern fill was allocated context number 46, its cut was context 60, a sub-circular oval pit in plan, with a steep sided 'U-shaped' profile and measuring 1.50 m x 1.37 m east to west and 0.75 m deep.

Sections excavated across the northern and southern ends of these deposits were allocated context numbers 68, 69, 70, 71, 75, 78, 79 and 80. Because the relationships had already been seen in section rather more confidence can be placed in the integrity of the finds groups from these contexts than can be placed on those from context 17.

Cut 65 was a large sub-rectangular pit measuring 3 m x 2.7 m in plan and up to 0.72 m deep cut through the upper levels of context 5 (Fig. 11). The cut had a shallow slope on the northern and north-eastern edges, grading into steeper sides elsewhere which were almost vertical and the southern edge. The northern side of the cut was flat bottomed, though in the south there was a much deeper circular cut into the base (Fig. 13, Plate 17). This may have been an earlier cut truncated by context 65, though the arrangement of the fills strongly suggested that it was part of context 65. It is likely that it was also excavated for sand extraction.

The lower fills (contexts 47, 64 and 62) consisted of lenses of soft, grey silty sand, clay and black peat. Some of the sand lenses were white in colour and the deposits appear to represent gradual silting of the cut caused by slumping of its sides whilst it was partly filled with standing water. However, large fragments of pottery were also present so material was clearly being discarded into the open pit and context 47 contained fragments of building material, including a large sandstone roofing tile with nail hole.

These were sealed by a deposit of grey silty sand with frequent ash and cinders (contexts 41 and 44) which appeared to represent a deposit of domestic waste and were inter-lensed with the upper deposits (contexts 35, 37 and 48) which suggests that they accumulated at the same time. Context 35 is likely to be contaminated with finds from contexts 44 and 47, context 48 was the same as 35 but uncontaminated with finds from other contexts.

The upper fills appear to have been deliberately deposited. Context 35 was a 0.36 m thick lens composed almost entirely of large fragments of crushed pottery which had been tipped into the cut from the south in another attempt to stabilise an area of wet ground. It was

sealed by context 37 which was identical to context 5 and presumably represented the final silting of the pit. Context 44 was part of context 35 lensed with context 35.

7.3.8 Phase 6 (Land Drains)

The relationship between this phase and Phase 6 was largely determined by a layer of clay (Context 10) below the trackway fill context 39 which lapped over the upper fills of this feature and the fact that it was cut through the upper levels of context 5 in Phase 3.

Context 24 was an east-west aligned cut which ran for *c*. 8 m from the north-western corner of the trench (Figs 12, 15 and 16; Plates 18 and 19). A 2.20 m long stretch was excavated and had a vertical sided 'U' shaped profile with a dished base. It survived to a depth of 0.70 m and was 0.70 m wide. It contained a complex suite of fills, all of which contained large quantities of post-medieval ceramics.

The lowest fill (context 31) was a mixed deposit of lenses of light brown clay, pale sand and mid-grey brown sandy silt (Fig. 16, Plate). The clay appeared to have been deliberately dumped within the cut rather than having slumped in from the sides. This deposit contained several complete or near complete vessels including two yellow ware cups and a self-coloured ware candlestick (broken but both pieces present). There were also many large round pottery bases, three were found very close together.

The ceramic material, and possibly the clay, in context 31 was probably deposited in the cut as part of the efforts to improve drainage on this part of the site, the surrounding matrix probably accumulated as a result of gradual silting.

The upper fill (context 23) was a dark grey humic sandy silt identical in character to deposits such as contexts 5 and 18.

This sealed context 25 which consisted of large amounts of pottery waste amid lumps of light yellowish brown re-deposited Boulder Clay. Context 26 was sealed by context 25 but was very similar to context 23 which suggests that the clay of context 25 was deposited whilst the grey sandy silts of contexts 23 and 26 were accumulating.

In a second section excavated to the east, Context 23 (finds were assigned as context 43 to separate the sections) was overlain by the cobbles 20 (Fig. 14). The cobbles had been deposited over the in-filled ditch in an apparent attempt to consolidate the softer fills of the gully, on the northern edge of the trackway 40. A broadly similar sequence of fills to those in the western section were present (Contexts 43, 50, 51 and 52) though there appeared to be slightly less pottery in this area.

The apparent coincidence of alignment with of this feature with that of trackway 40 may be deliberate because the track runs alongside the ditch, and continued in use after the demise of the ditch.

Context 29 was the fill of a similar feature (Context 32) to the south-west, though the cuts' profile more closely resembled the un-phased land-drains to the south-west (Plate 20 and see section 7.3.1). The fill was identical to context 5 so a stratigraphic relationship with this feature could not be established and it has been placed in this phase because of its similar function to context 24.

7.3.9 Phase 7 (Consolidation layers)

These consisted of layers of clay and cobbles deposited in the north-western corner of the site and appear to represent a further attempt to stabilise an area of marshy or boggy ground and or in filling of a depression created by the settling of the fills of the trackway.

The earliest of these consisted of a single layer of rounded, waterworn cobbles with very occasional fragments of red sandstone (Context 20, Fig. 14) which ranged in size from 50 to 200 mm and covered an area of approximately 3.3 m east-west and 1.3 m north-south. These cobbles overlapped the northern edge of the trackway cut 40 and the clay layers contexts 10 and 34 (see below) overlapped the cobbles. Within the northern edge of the context 40 the cobbles became dominated by fragments of Carboniferous sandstone, with pottery trampled on the surface; they were interpreted as a consolidation of a soft patch on the edge of the trackway, where a path running along the large field ditch would meet it at right angles – but would also crossed the infilled gully 24.

Context 10 was a thin clay deposit which overlay the cobbled area (context 20) and may have been part of the same attempt to consolidate the ground (Fig. 14). This clay deposit was also recorded as context 34 where it overlay the western end of the Phase 3 filling of the east-west aligned trackway (Context 39). Context 19 was a thin layer of black silty sand of uncertain origin below context 10 but may represent silting into the upper surface of the cobbles in context 20.

Context 10 contained frequent sherds of pottery including mottled ware and a glass bottle rim of 18th century date.

7.3.10 Phase 8 (Silting and Soil Formation)

The topsoil (Context 1 in this area) sealed a soft deposit of grey to dark grey humic silty sand with occasional pebbles (Contexts 7, 30, 53 and 12). The true extent of this deposit is uncertain but its eastern edge broadly coincided with the eastern edge of context 5. It was approximately 100 mm thick and contained fragments of early post-medieval pottery, including several large fragments. A small section at the southern end was excavated by hand.

7.3.11 Phase 9 (Filling of South-Eastern Field Boundary)

A short section of ditch (Contexts 58, 61 and 66) was recorded in the south-eastern corner of site and presumably formed the eastern boundary of the same field. A section *c.* 1 m wide was cut across the fill (Context 58) which contained small quantities of post-medieval pottery. Its location and orientation coincide with a field boundary shown on the 1850 OS map (Fig. 7) which had been removed by the time the 1893 edition was surveyed (Fig. 17). This suggests that this feature was filled much later than the Phase 1 boundaries to the North-West. This feature would have continued across the area occupied by the old tennis courts and it is possible that at least some of the finds from Trench A of the 1979 excavation were from the continuation of this feature.

7.3.12 Voided Contexts

Context 33 was voided and is noted only in the archive.

7.3.13 Other Contexts

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Context 81 was assigned during post-excavation processing to account for a small quantity of finds from contexts 36, 37, 39, 43, 41, 45 and 50 accidentally mixed during finds processing.

8. Finds Evidence

The watching brief recovered large quantities of ceramic material currently estimated at approximately 2000 kg by weight and c. 9000 sherds. The comments below are based upon initial impressions gathered during excavation and the early stages of finds processing and it is likely that they will be significantly reviewed as work on the assemblage progresses. To date the assemblage has been washed and sorted by type and is currently being weighed and catalogued. A full report on the assemblage is likely to take 2-3 years to produce.

The bulk of the assemblage consists of Dark-glazed Wares though significant quantities of Yellow Ware and Saggar were also present (approximately 5-10% of the total). Smaller quantities of Creamware, Glazed Earthenware, tobacco pipe and brick (presumed to be derived from kiln structures). The forms present included tygs, bowls, cups, mugs, jars, pitchers and other vessels. Most or all of the assemblage dates to the mid-17th to mid-18th century.

Ceramic material was found in all contexts where it appears to have been deposited either as the fill of land-drains intended to improve soil conditions or as the back-fill of disused field boundaries, trackways and sand extraction pits. In some areas crushed pottery appears to have been used to stabilise areas of boggy ground (e.g. context 28). The vast majority of the ceramic material is clean and unabraded with many joining sherds in most contexts. In addition many are mis-fired and distorted and are clearly ‘wasters’ discarded after firing.

9. Conclusions

Although no structural features were present the excavation revealed a series of inter-cut ditches, trackways and pits which in places had been back-filled with large quantities of ceramics, most of which appears to be kiln waste and wasters produced by Rainford’s pottery industry. The primary interest in the results of this project therefore lies in the finds evidence which consists of groups of ceramic material in well defined contexts. The results also assist in the interpretation of the results of the excavations in 1979-80.

The orientation of the Phase 1 linear features respects field boundaries shown on the Tithe Map, the 1850 1st edition OS map and which were seen in aerial reconnaissance in 1990 (Figs 6, 7 and 17; Plate 21). However, the westernmost north-south boundary (contexts 72 and 73) is not shown so must have been filled in prior to 1841. The eastern boundary was filled in Phase 9 which is shown on the 1850 First Edition but had been filled by the time the 25 inch to the mile sheet was surveyed in 1892, providing a *terminus ante quem* for the infilling of that feature.

The excavated features are confined to plot no. 886 on the 1841 Tithe Map, which in the schedule is named as ‘Big Lyon’s Croft and Barn Hey’, owned Elizabeth and Jane Holden, lessees under the Earl of Derby, and occupied by John Fazackerley. The Holden’s lease can be traced to the 1780s, earlier in the 18th century (1726-43) it is likely that the site formed part of the leasehold estates of Thomas Grounds. During the late 17th century part of this estate appears to have been held by members of the Lyon family and their holding may date to at least 1615, though that interpretation is open to doubt (R. Dagnall, pers. comm.).

Plot 1137 to the east was listed as 'Smithy, Cottage, Garden and Smithy Field' occupied by Jane Hall and owned by the Earl of Derby. The Halls' had acquired this plot in 1823 following the death of the widow of the earlier holder, Robert Birchall, a prominent clay pipe maker and it is possible that the Birchalls had held this plot since the 1630s.

The other features appear to be sand extraction pits and land drains, both groups of features appear to respect the alignment of the Phase 1 field system and therefore probably date to the mid-19th century or earlier. Of all the deposits excavated these appear to be the least contaminated by material from other contexts. The deposits relating to the northern set of sand extraction pits (i.e. context 17 *et al)* were uniform throughout, being only distinguishable by the form of the different cuts so it is likely that there has been a considerable degree of cross contamination between these contexts.

The pottery ranges in date from the early 17th to the late 18th century and on superficial examination many contexts appear to contain material from a single source. The implication is that even in the mid-19th century, 17th-century kiln dumps still existed in a relatively undisturbed condition nearby to be quarried for use as landfill or for the infill of drains and field ditches. Some contexts, for example the lower fills of sand extraction pit context 65, appear more mixed and may be domestic rubbish disposed of in pits left open and containing standing water. The tobacco pipes were present in much smaller quantities and most or all of this element of the assemblage probably represents discard following use.

The material will require detailed recording and assessment prior to production of the full report though it is clear from the brief assessment conducted for this report that the assemblage is of regional significance. A full quantification of the assemblage has not been conducted, though it probably weighs *c*. 2 tonnes and consists of approximately 7000-10000 sherds.

The results of this project provide an opportunity to further reassess the results of the geophysical survey and excavation in 1979 and 1980 (Davey et al 1982; Higgins 1997). Both excavations found deposits similar to those observed in 2013, though these were difficult to interpret because of the limited extent of the trenches. Trenches A, B and C of the 1979 excavation were situated around the club house. Trench A was located east of the club house, close to the line of the service trench excavated in 2013 and found a similar sequence of deposits, i.e. redeposited material derived from the creation of the courts in 1933, deposited over the earlier land surface and the watching brief results support the suggestion that this area is largely devoid of archaeological deposits.

Trenches B and C were located to the west of the club house and found layers of brown earth *c.* 10 to 20 cm thick with dense concentrations of pottery. Although slightly thinner than the deposits observed to the east, their general character is similar to those seen in context 18 and their location suggests that it is likely that they were the fills of the continuation of the east-west aligned trackway. Trench D was excavated in the western corner of area monitored during the watching brief and found only top soil over sub-soil. In the light of the 2013 excavation it seems likely that the pottery excavated in 1980 was only one of a series of dumps of waste material in this area, albeit each one probably being sourced from a single pottery.

Trenches E, F and G were excavated in the plot of land to the north of the tennis courts and found deposits of sub-soil overlying peat. Those in Trench G were considered likely to relate to a boundary shown on the Tithe map and 1st edition OS map.

The character of the deposits and the assemblage is quite different to those described in Davey *et al* (1982). The trench was situated *c*. 100 m to the east of the tennis court extension where the deposits appear to consist of topsoil directly over Shirdley Hill Sand.

The top soil contained over 17000 fragments of mid-17th century tobacco pipe and 5000 fragments of pipe kiln with smaller quantities of domestic pottery, probably waste from a pipe kiln though it is not clear whether this was situated on or close to the excavated area or material discarded from elsewhere in Rainford. This suggests that the material described in this report was derived from a different source to that excavated by Davey.

10. Acknowledgements

The role of Rainford Tennis Club as project sponsors is gratefully acknowledged. Site staff consisted of Rob Philpott; Mark Adams, Clare Ahmad, Jeff Speakman, Helen Jones, Sam Rowe, Kerry Massheder and Liz Stewart with volunteers Michael Chapman and Roy Forshaw. Ron Dagnall provided valuable background information.

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12. Figures

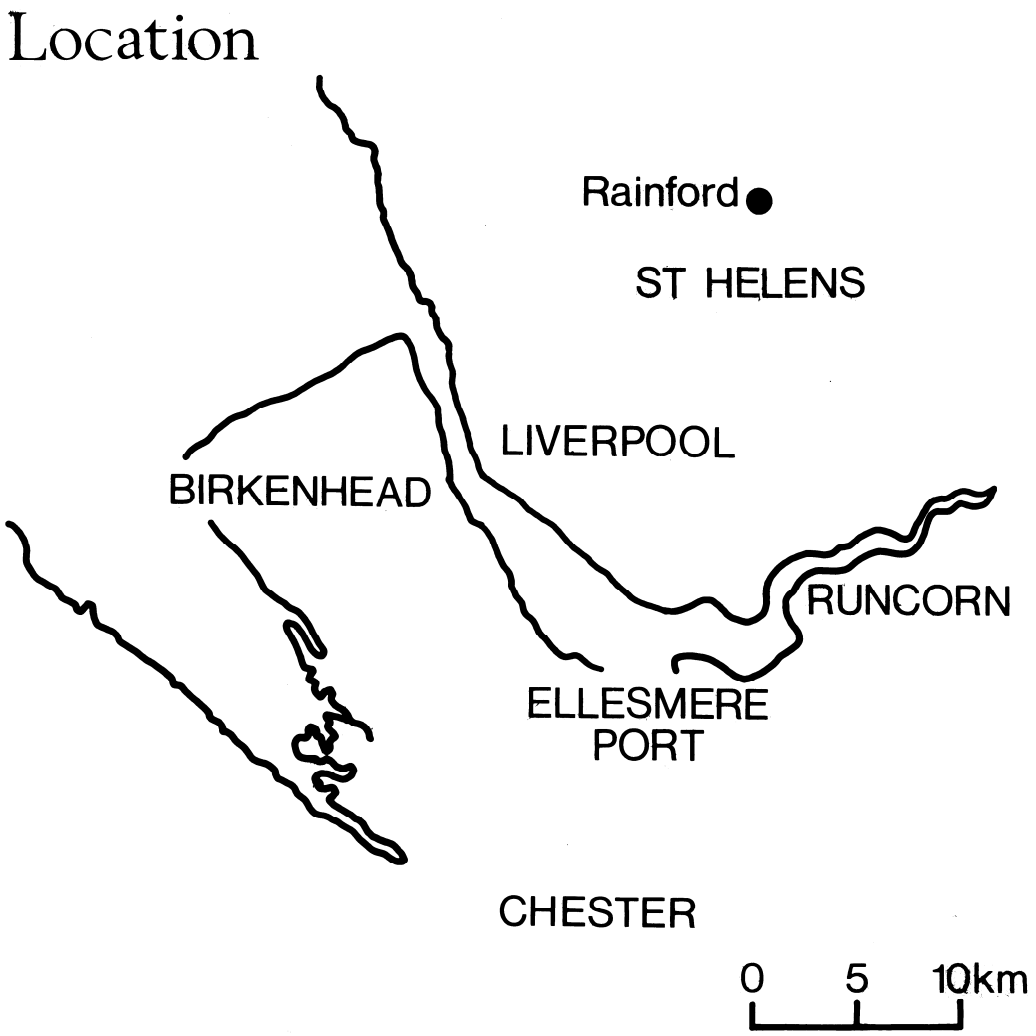

Fig. 1. Location of Rainford.

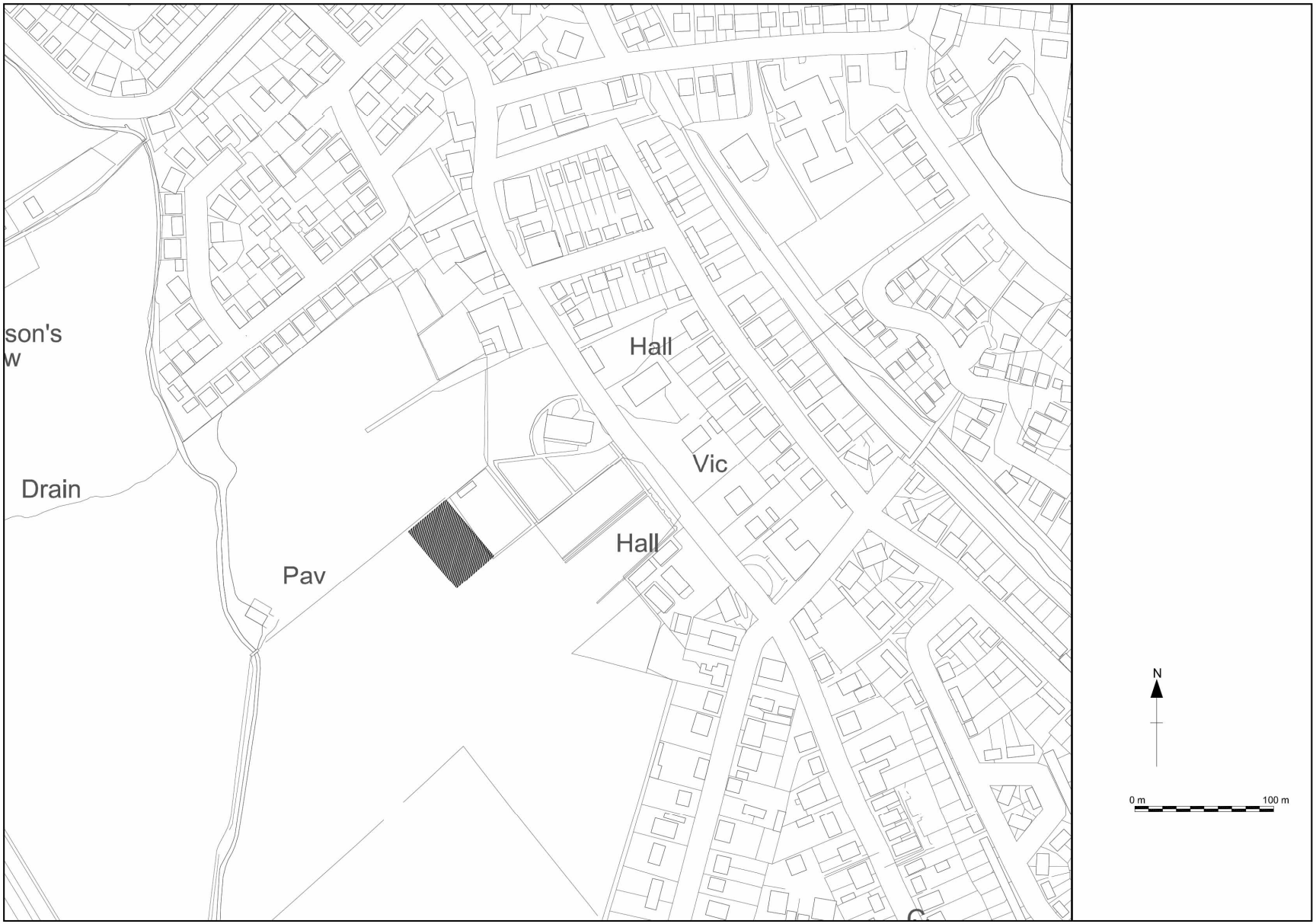

Fig. 2. Site location.

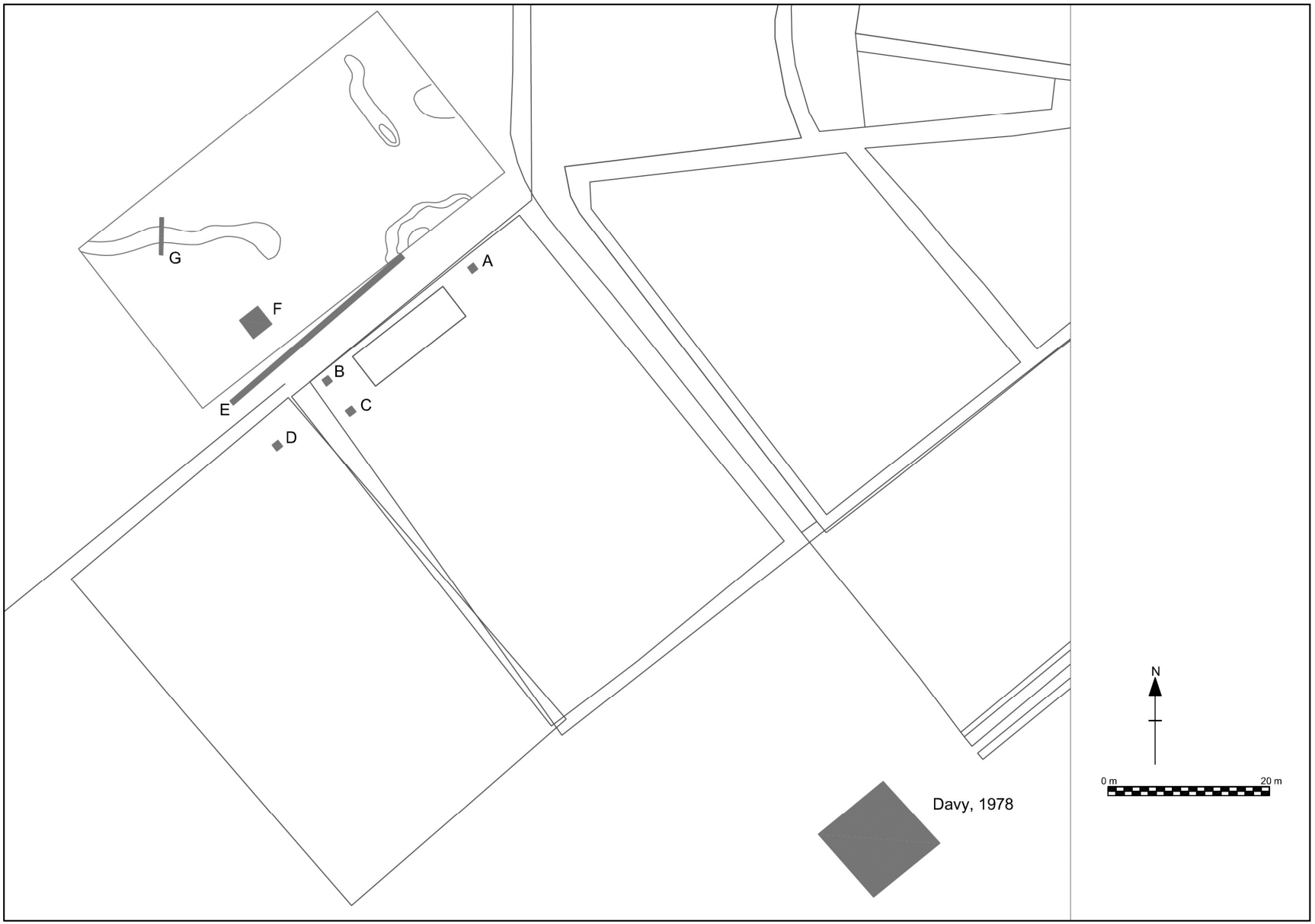

Fig. 3. Location of previous fieldwork

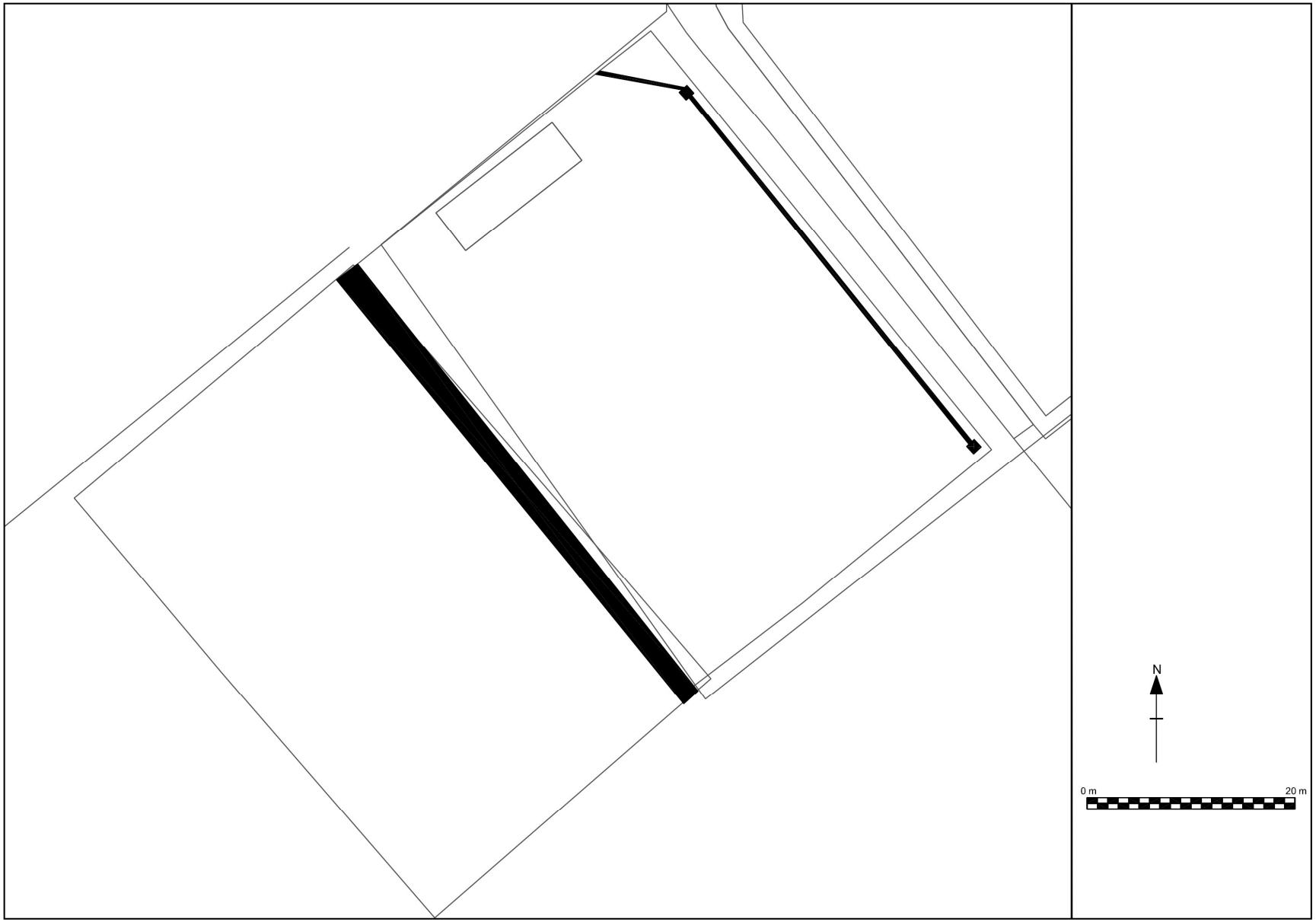

Fig. 4. Location of cable trench and bank to old courts.

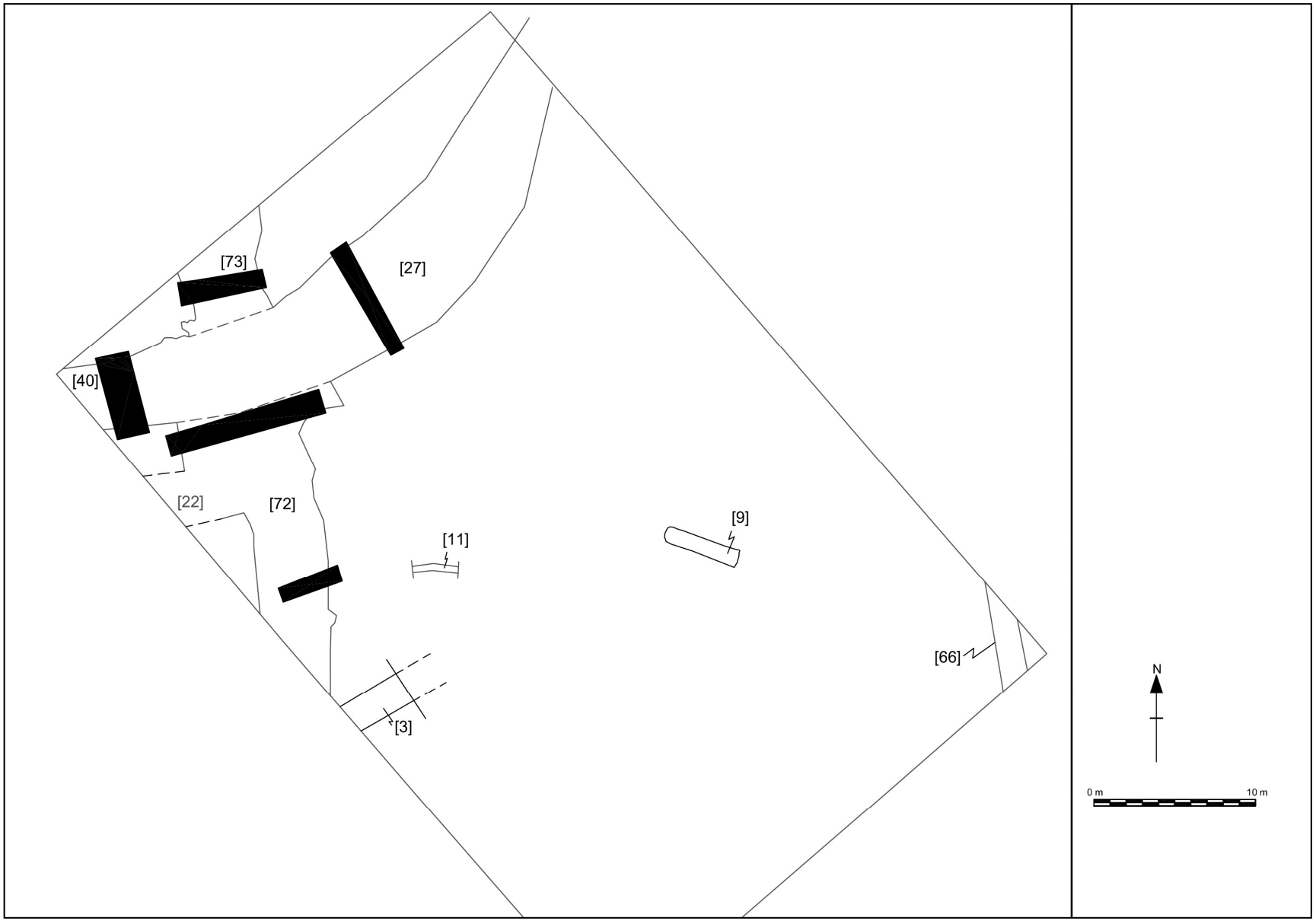

Fig. 5. Unphased and Phase 1 features.

Fig. 6. Phase 1 features superimposed on the Rainford Tithe Map of 1841 (Lancs RO DRL 1/66).

Fig. 7. Phase 1 features superimposed on the First Edition 6 inch to the mile survey sheet 100, surveyed 1845-7, published 1850.

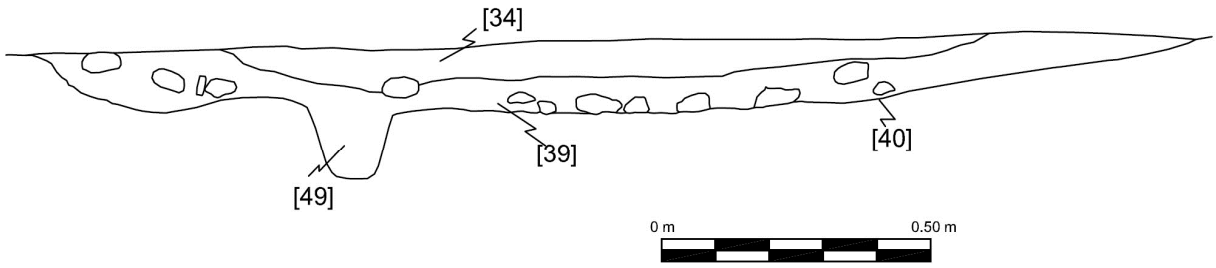

Fig. 8. South-east facing section across west end of east-west aligned trackway.

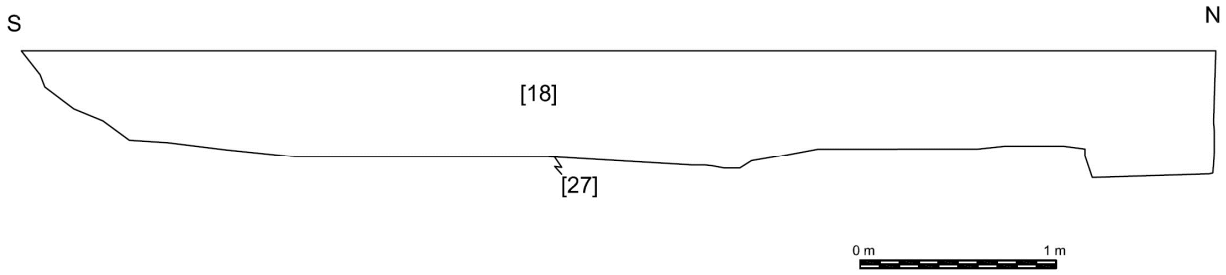

Fig. 9. East-facing section across west end of east-west aligned trackway.

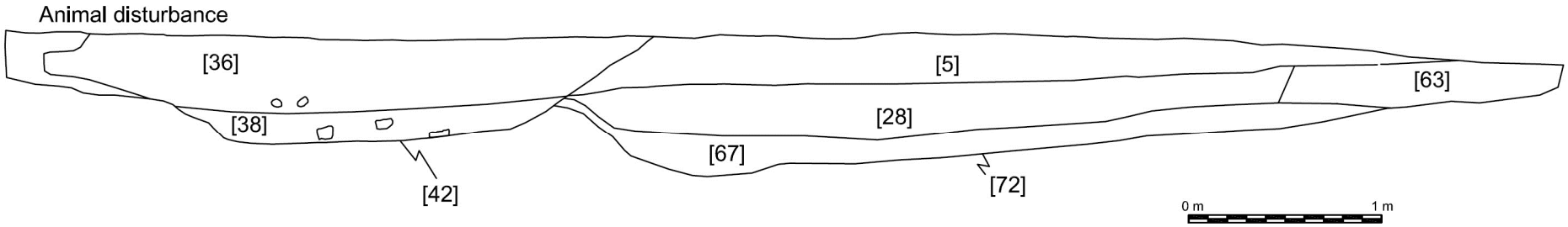

Fig. 10. North facing section across north-south aligned trackway.

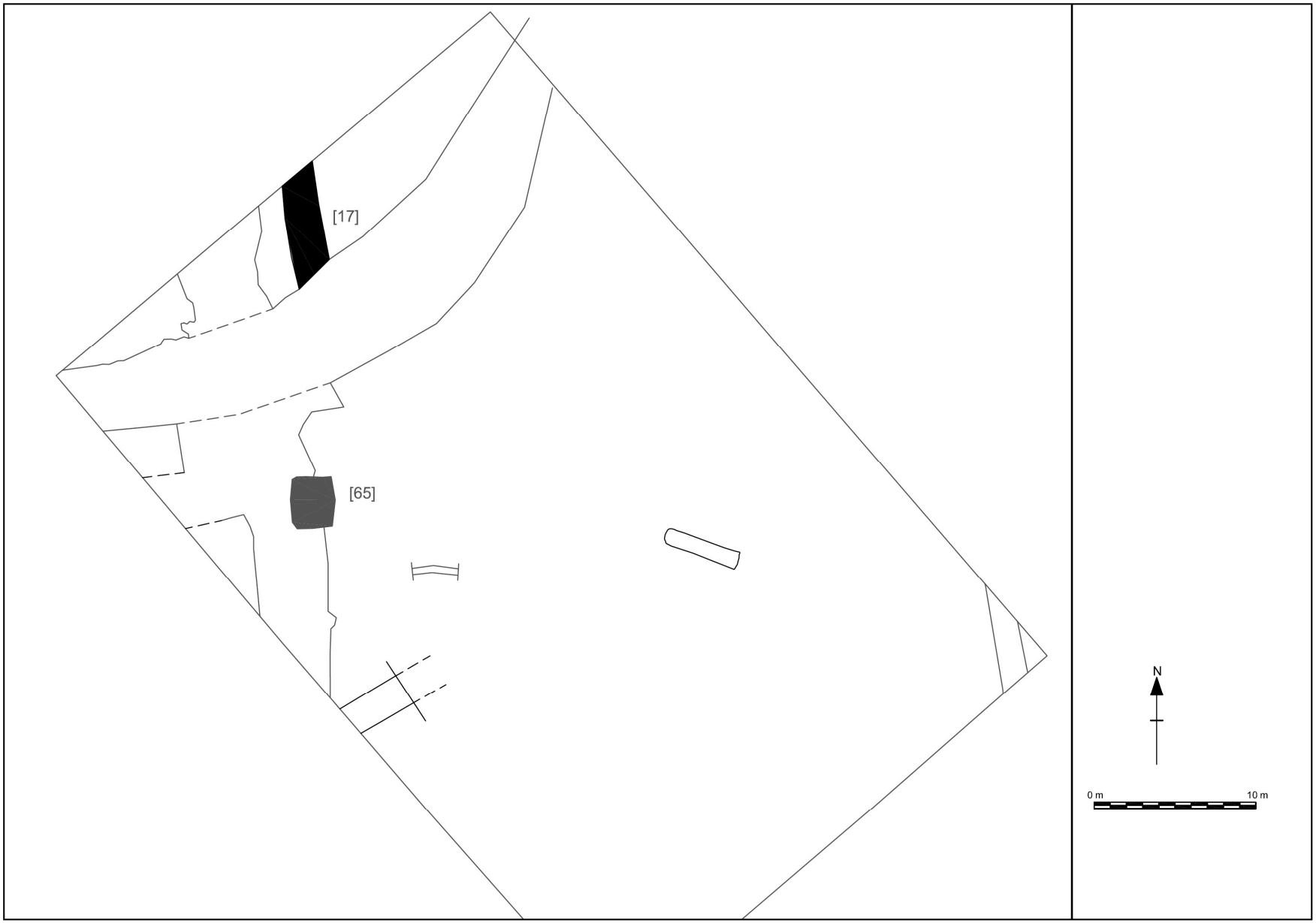

Fig. 11. Plan of features in Phase 5.

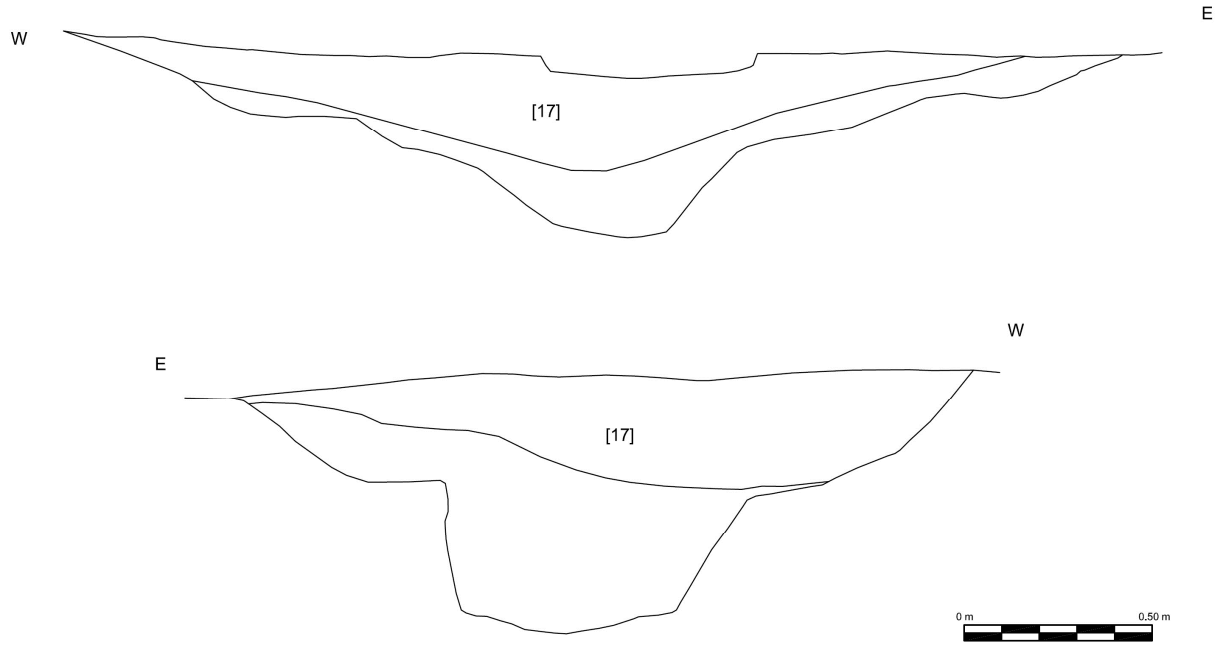

Fig. 12. South and North facing sections across context 17.

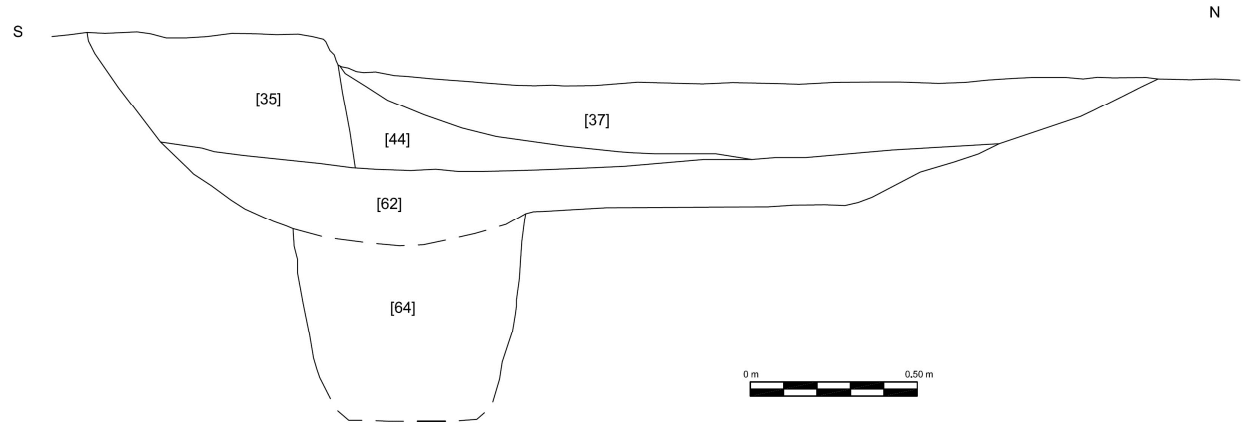

Fig. 13. East facing section across context 65.

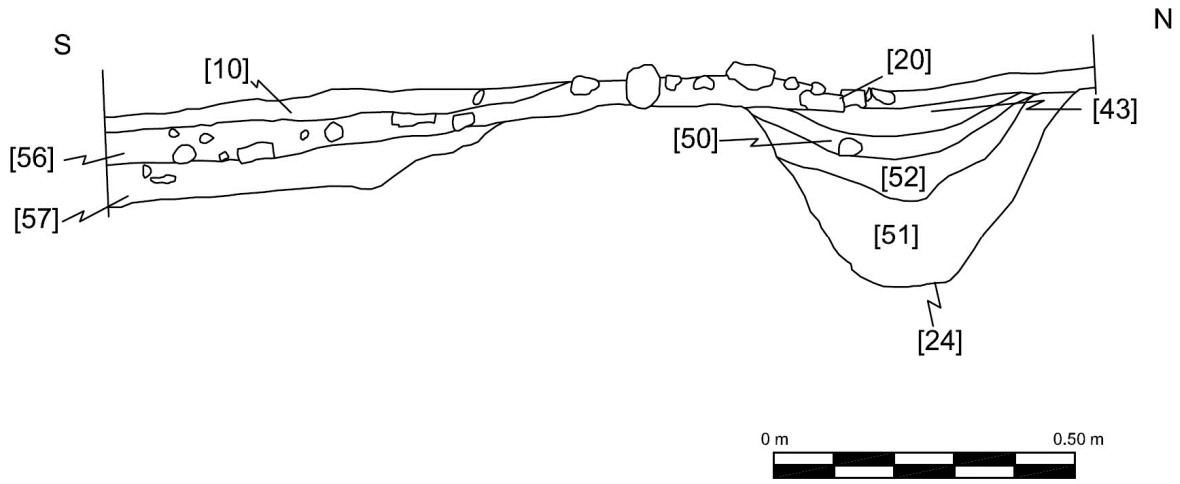

Fig. 14. East facing section across context 24.

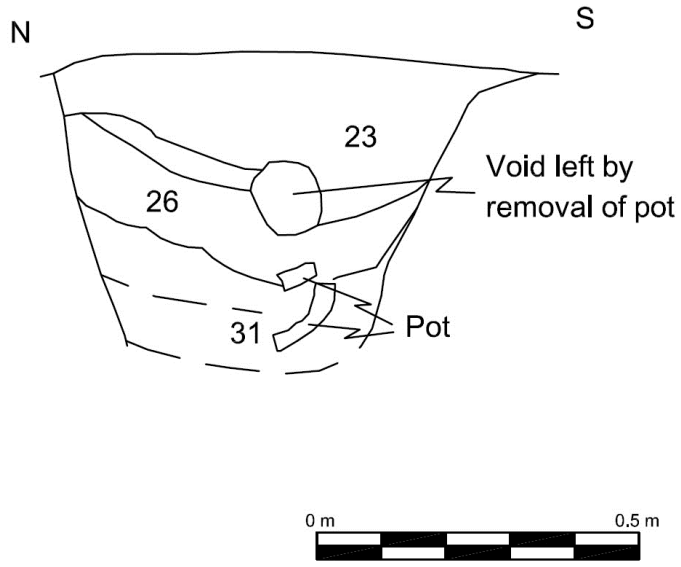

Fig 15. West facing section across context 24.

Fig. 16. Plan of features in Phase 6.

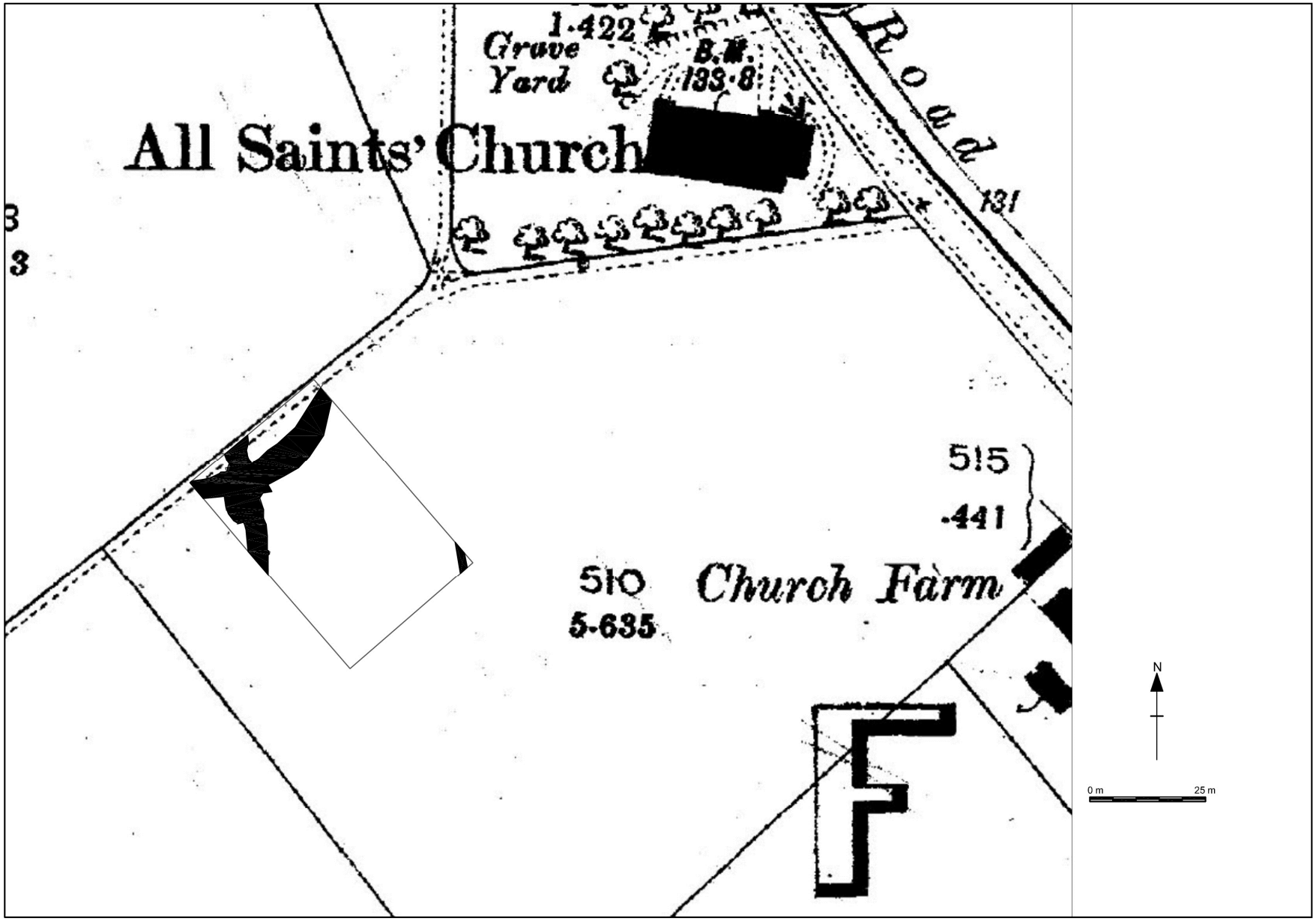

Fig. 17. Plan of excavated ditches in relation to the First edition 25 inch to the mile OS Sheet 100.3. Surveyed 1892, published 1893.

13. Plates

Plate 1. View looking south along the bank to the old tennis courts.

Plate 2. Section across the southern end of the bank to the old tennis courts looking south.

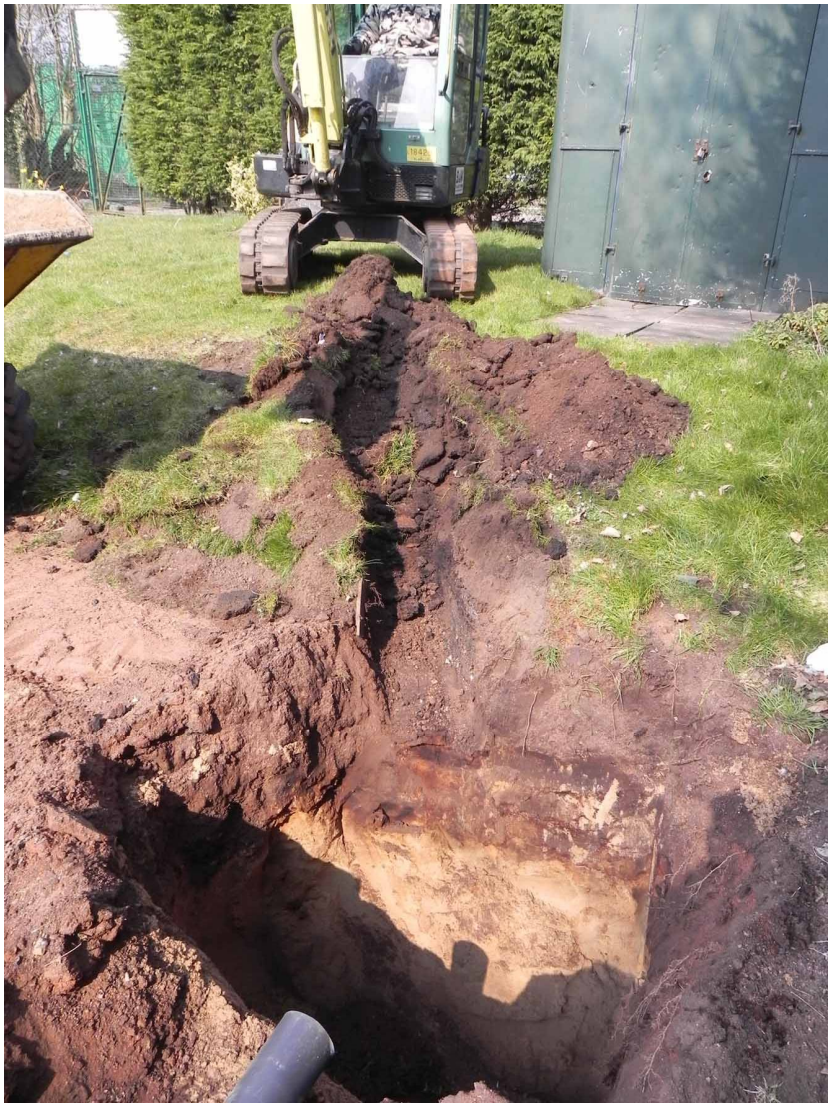

Plate 3. Excavation of cable trench and floodlight foundation in north-west corner of the old tennis courts. View looking north.

Plate 4. Section excavated across context 3. View looking west.

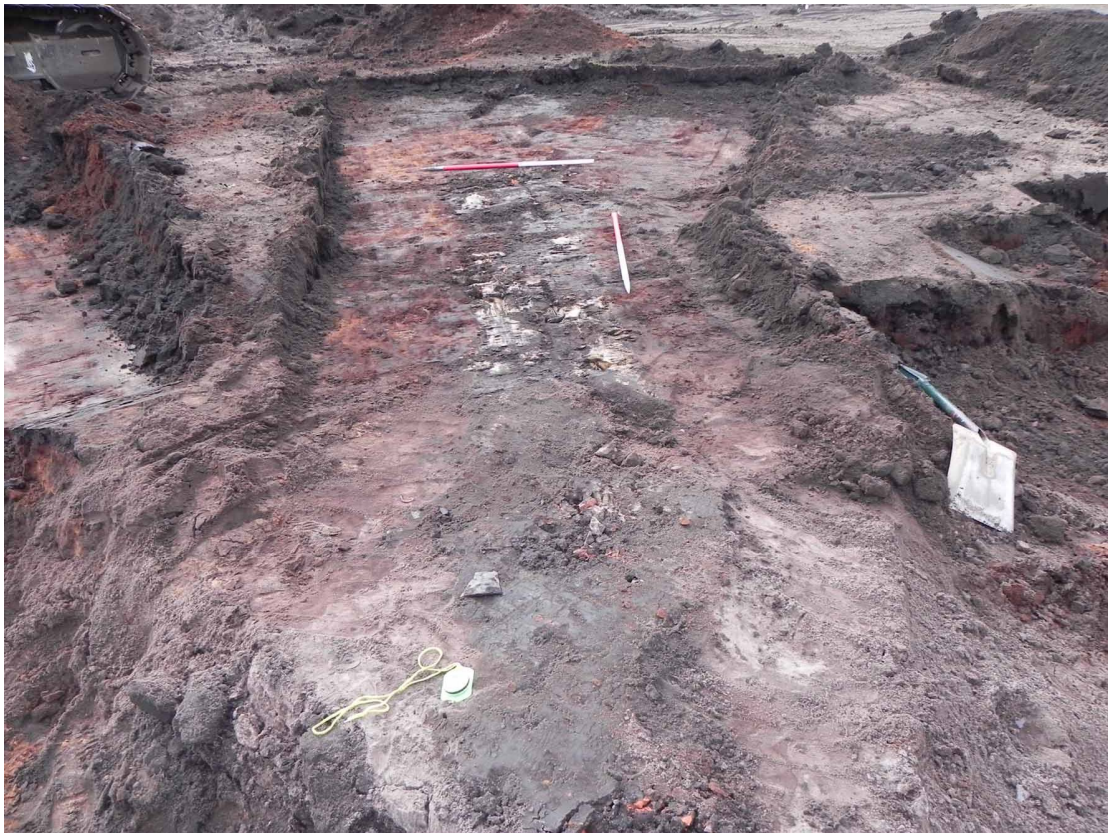

Plate 5. Context 9 prior to excavation. View looking north-west.

Plate 6. South-west facing section across context 9.

Plate 7. The north-west corner of the new courts following top-soil striping. View looking west. The scales are on context 18, context 17 to the left, context 5 in the rear ground.

Plate 8. Section across the western end of the east-west aligned trackway. View looking north-west.

Plate 9. Section across the eastern end of the trackway. View looking south-west.

Plate 10. Section across the southern end of the boundary. View looking south.

Plate 11. Section across central section of boundary. View looking east.

Plate 12. Detail of central section across the north-south aligned boundary. Context 28 is in the centre of the frame. View looking south.

Plate 13. Section across the northern end of the north-south boundary. View looking north.

Plate 14. Eastern end of the central section across the north-south aligned boundary showing context 63. View looking north.

Plate 15. Western end of the central section across the north-south aligned boundary showing the recut ditch. View looking South.

Plate 16. Post-excavation view of cuts filled by context 17, view looking east.

Plate 17. East facing section across pit context 65. View looking West.

Plate 18. West facing section across context 24. View looking East.

Plate 19. East facing section across context 24. View looking West.

Plate 20. West facing section across context 29. View looking South-East.

Plate 21. Aerial photograph taken in 1994 showing some of the excavated features as developed cropmarks. View looking north (R. Philpott Aerial Photography Collection, Liverpool Museum LM90.311).