



Marden Court Farm, Marden HEREFORDSHIRE

NGR SO 5131847136

Archaeological Trenching and Monitoring



February 2006
SMR 43222

Hereford Archaeology Series 703

This report is produced by

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Cover picture

View from trench 2 of the Medieval earthwork (looking west) continuing round the church.

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Marden Court Farm, Herefordshire

Archaeological Trenching and Monitoring

Text and Site Work

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Marden Court Farm

Herefordshire

SO 5131847136

1. Summery

Archaeological Investigations Ltd. was commissioned by Mr Paul Dawes Esq. to undertake a program of archaeological monitoring and trial trenching at Marden Court Farm, Herefordshire. As a result of the work, a Medieval earthwork was recorded with evidence that the site had been fortified.

The site lies to the south-west of the village of Marden, on the east bank of the river Lugg. The proposed development lies within an area of archaeological earthworks, which, given their proximity to Marden church are considered to be at least Medieval in date.

The site is currently used as rough pasture and does not appear to have been extensively ploughed at any time.

Within the trench nearest the river a man-made bank of pale yellow gravel was uncovered, which utilised and increased the natural slope down to the river. Cut into and running parallel with the edge of this earthwork was a linear ditch and two rows of postholes. Although the fill contained very little in the way of finds to help date the feature it seems likely that the ditch is of a similar date to the gravel bank due to their corresponding alignments.

The trench excavated within the earthwork did not contain any archaeological features, but did produce several pieces of 13th-14th century pottery indicating that medieval activity was taking place near by.

2. Introduction

Archaeological Investigations Ltd. was commissioned by Mr Paul Dawes Esq. to undertake a program of archaeological monitoring and trial trenching at Marden Court Farm, Herefordshire. The farm lies to the south-west of the village of Marden, on the east bank of the river Lugg. The proposed barn site lies at the western end of Marden Court Farm. An existing barn bound the site to the east, the river Lugg to the north and west, Marden Church to the south west and the farm road to the south (Figure 1).

The new building directly affected a site of archaeological significance, specifically a section of Medieval earthworks. In line with Planning Policy Guidelines Note 16, section 30, the planning authority was advised that a program of archaeological work was required before development could take place. Work commenced on the development prior to such a scheme being designed.

The initial ground work consisted of the levelling and laying of hardcore on the site of the new building and the dumping of spoil to the west of the site, in an area of previously identified earthworks.

The site lies at NGR SO 51318 47136, at a height of approximately 57.8m OD and presently lies under rough grass and pasture. The underlying geology of the site is Old red sandstone. Archaeological monitoring and trenching at the site took place between the 25th and 31st of January 2006.

3. Background

No previous archaeological trenching or survey had taken place at the site of the proposed new building at Marden Court Farm. A length of archaeological earthworks (SMR8532) run across the site and given their close proximity to Marden Church they are believed to be at least Medieval in date (Figure 2).

There is a possibility the earthworks are in fact Saxon in date and are associated with King Offa of Mercia. This is supported by the Marden tithe map (figure 3) which shows the site lying on the south west edge of Offa's MeAdow and two fields to the west of Offa's field'

4. Aims and Objectives

The aims of the project were:

- ◆ To identify and record any archaeological features, deposits, or artefacts within the area affected by the proposed development.
- ◆ To assess the survival, quality, condition, depth and relative significance of any archaeological features, deposits, and structures within the study area.
- ◆ And to collect any environmental data where present.

5. Method

The archaeological work took place in three stages. The first stage was the monitoring of pits being dug by the developer in order to insert stanchions for the new building. Stage two consisted of the excavation of two trenches and stage three involved the removal of spoil from the west of the development and the survey of the remaining earthwork.

5.1 Stage 1- The Stanchion Pits

A total of thirty two stanchion pits were excavated by mechanical excavator using a 0.5m wide toothed bucket (figure 4). The depth and character of deposits within each stanchion pit were recorded and photographed using B&W negative and colour film (35mm).

5.2 Stage 2- Archaeological Trenches

Initially the trenches were excavated by machine using a toothless ditching bucket to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or natural (whichever was encountered first). Trench one and two were both excavated along the western side of the proposed new building. Trench one lay at the southern end, and trench two the northern end (figure 4) with the aim of producing a section through the remaining earthwork.

Originally a further trench was proposed but it lay in a position that proved impractical to excavate and so it was not perused.

Trenches were tied into the features shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 mapping using a Leica total station and a temporary bench mark was established from the nearest Ordnance Datum. A base line was established within the trenches containing archaeology for the purpose of planning.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded in plan at a scale of 1:50, in section at 1:20 and photographed using B&W negative and colour film (35mm). A system of context records were kept in accordance with Archaeological Investigations Ltd.'s Site manual. Registers was kept for context records, photographs, drawings, and samples on site. All pottery and bone artefacts were kept for further analysis. The site was given the SMR number 43222 and the accession number HMG 2006-5 These were used to identify all documents and finds associated with the site.

5.3 Stage 3- Removal of Spoil and Earthwork Survey

The spoil which had been dumped on the western side of the proposed new building was removed under strict archaeological supervision using a toothless ditching bucket. Once this had taken place the uncovered earthwork and all other parts of the archaeological earthwork remaining within the field were surveyed using a Leica total station.

6. Results

6.1 Stage 1- The stanchion Pits

The stanchion pits were excavated through the previously levelled platform for the new building. In all but two of the 32 stanchion pits excavated, natural deposits were uncovered directly below the hardcore (see table below).

Stanchion pit 1 (figure 4) contained a 0.23m depth of recently disturbed mid brown silty clay lying directly below 0.18m of hardcore and above the natural gravels. Natural was not encountered within Stanchion pit two which contained 0.15m of hardcore lying over a deposit of brown loam containing modern brick pieces which continued to the base of the pit.

No archaeological features or deposits were uncovered during the excavation of the stanchion pits.

Table of Results, Stanchion Pits

Stanchion Pit no.	Depth of hardcore (m)	Depth at which natural reached (m)	Type of natural	Other deposits
1	0.18	0.41	Pink orange loose gravel	Pale brown silty clay with brick flecks
2	0.15			Pale brown silty clay with brick flecks
3	0.23	0.23	Pink red clay	
4	0.28	0.28	Pink red clay	
5	0.33	0.33	Pink red clay	
6	0.24	0.24	Pink red clay with dirty yellow clay patches	
7	0.23	0.23	Pink red clay with dirty yellow clay patches	
8	0.20	0.20	Pink red clay	
9	0.28	0.28	Pink red clay over pale yellow sandstone	
10	0.25	0.25	Pink red clay over pale yellow sandstone	
11	0.27	0.27	Pink red clay over pale yellow sandstone	
12	0.23	0.23	Pink red clay over dark pink sandy clay over dirty yellow sandstone	
13	0.26	0.26	Dark pink sandy clay over dirty yellow sandstone	
14	0.18	0.18	Mixed pink and yellow sandy clay over pink red clay	
15	0.28	0.28	Mixed pink and yellow sandy clay over pink red clay	
16	0.18	0.18	Mixed pink and yellow sandy clay over pink red clay	
17	0.22	0.22	Pink red clay over pale yellow sandstone	

18	0.21	0.21	Pale yellow sand over pink red clay over stone
19	0.22	0.22	Pink red clay over pale yellow sandstone
20	0.20	0.20	Pale yellow sand over pink red clay over stone
21	0.20	0.20	Pale yellow sand over pink red clay over stone
22	0.23	0.23	Pink clay marl over pink red clay
23	0.25	0.25	Pink clay marl over pink red clay
24	0.27	0.27	Pink clay marl over pink red clay
25	0.29	0.29	Pink red clay
26	0.25	0.25	Dirty pink sands and gravel
27	0.24	0.24	Dirty pink sands and gravel
28	0.22	0.22	Dirty pink sands and gravel
29	0.24	0.24	Dirty pink sands and gravel
30	0.27	0.27	Dirty pink sands and gravel
31	0.22	0.22	Dirty pink sands and gravel
32	0.22	0.22	Dirty pink sands and gravel

6.2 Stage 2- Archaeological Trenches

Trench 1 (figure 5)

Trench one measured 20 by 3m and both deposits exposed covered the entire trench (see table below). Deposit 1000 was a dark brown loam containing modern pottery and brick pieces which represented the topsoil covering the whole field. The subsoil, 1001, contained only pottery dating to the mid Medieval period along with charcoal flecks and the skeleton of an animal.

Although the only pottery associated with the animal skeleton was Medieval, the date at which it was buried could not be ascertained and so the bones were not kept. However, quick examination of the remains led to the conclusion that it was the skeleton of a large hunting dog.

Table of results, trench 1

Context no.	Category	Type	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description and interpretation
100	layer	topsoil	20	3	0.2	Mid brown silty clay loam
1001	layer	subsoil	20	3	0.5	Pale brown silty clay with charcoal flecks

Trench 2 (figures 6&7)

Trench two measured 18m in length and varied in width so as not to damage the roots of a nearby tree (Figure 6). The natural gravels and marl were found to lie 0.5m below the present surface at the southern end of the trench, with a natural steep slope towards the river at the northern end of the trench. Lying directly over the natural marl was a man-made bank of pale yellow gravel (2007) which utilised and increased the natural slope (see section, Figure 7).

Cut into and running parallel with the edge of this earthwork was a linear feature (2004) with 45° sides and a concave base. Although the fill contained very little in the way of finds to help

date the feature it seems likely that the ditch is of a similar date to the gravel bank due to their corresponding alignments.

It is possible that the purpose of this feature was as a palisade trench to hold upright planks or posts to form a barrier or fence. This would be in turn be enforced by the two rows of possible postholes which run on the same alignment just to the north of the ditch. The two possible postholes nearest the ditch (2006 and 1009) are of slightly larger proportions than those (2011, 2013 and 1015) nearest the front of the earthwork. It is possible that the ditch and two rows of postholes were not contemporary but represent different phases of fortification or reinforcement.

Table of results, trench 2

Context no.	category	type	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description and interpretation
2000	layer	topsoil	20	3	0.1	Mid brown loam containing modern pottery and brick fragments
2001	layer	subsoil	20	3	0.3	Pale brown silty clay subsoil
2003	fill	ditch	1.5+	1	0.4	Soft pale brown silty clay ditch fill containing animal bone and pottery fragments
2004	cut	ditch	1.5+	1	0.4	Linear feature with 45° sides and a concave base
2005	fill	posthole	0.4	0.4	0.2	Pale brown silty clay fill
2006	cut	posthole	0.4	0.4	0.2	Round posthole cut with vertical sides and a flat base
2007	deposit	earthwork	1.5+	8	0.5	Pale yellow /orange compact gravel to form an earthwork
2008	fill	posthole	0.4	0.4	0.3	Pale brown silty clay fill
2009	cut	posthole	0.4	0.4	0.4	Round posthole
2010	fill	posthole	0.15	0.15	0.15	Pale brown silty clay fill
2011	cut	posthole	0.15	0.15	0.15	Cut of small posthole
2012	fill	posthole	0.15	0.15	0.15	Pale brown silty clay fill
2013	cut	posthole	0.15	0.15	0.15	Cut of small posthole
2014	fill	posthole	0.15	0.15	0.15	Pale brown silty clay fill
2015	cut	posthole	0.15	0.15	0.15	Cut of small posthole

6.3 Stage 3- Removal of Spoil and Earthwork Survey

The results of the earth work survey that took place after the removal of dumped spoil to the west of the development can be seen in figures 4 and 8. It can be seen from this survey that the archaeological earthwork follows a natural ridge running from the southwest to the north east of the field. Although a good proportion survives, around 50 to 60 metres of the earthwork was destroyed during the ground works for the proposed new building (Figure 8).

To the north east of the stripped area, the earthwork continues to the fence where it appears to turn southwards (Figure 8-A). Although the earthwork can not be seen beyond this point, it could be that the bank was returning to form the eastern side of the enclosure.

On the west side of the stripped area, the earthwork continues along the natural ridge for around 40m before terminating (Figure 8-B). It is possible that this was the original terminus of the earthwork, though due to the lack of previous archaeological work at the site it is impossible to know if its shape has been altered. This terminus could represent one side of an entranceway into the earthwork.

A flat topped linear earthwork begins in the western corner of the field (Figure 8-C) and continues west then south round St. Mary's church, following the shape of the river. This feature could represent a track along the river that lead up to the entrance of the earthwork.

7. Discussion

The man made gravel earthwork that was investigated in trench two was a solid structure with a possible fortification or fence running along its highest point. It is important to note that apart from two small un-dateable fragments found within the ditch fill 2003, no pottery sherds of any date were found within Trench 2. This is a stark contrast to the quantity of C13th - C14th pottery recovered from the subsoil in Trench 1. The pottery sherds were also in good condition indicating that medieval activity was taking place in the near vicinity.

The earthwork itself is interesting, as irregular banks are unusual on medieval sites. There is therefore the possibility that the earthwork pre-dates the medieval period. The finds of medieval pottery behind the bank do indicate a near by settlement and it is possible that people were living within the earthwork during the medieval period. St. Mary's church lies to the south west of the feature and it may be that the siting of the church respected the position of the earthwork, rather than the other way around.

At the moment it is not clear whether the original purpose of the earthwork and the structures on it was defensive or simply a land division. The position of the structure could be to control the trading route along the river Lugg and could have therefore just been a permanent marker on the landscape which people would have known to stop at.

Due to the extensive ploughing and lack of archaeological activity in the area it is not known how far this man made bank continued outside of the surveyed area. The Stanchion pits showed no indication of archaeological features, though as the hardcore lay directly over natural the only features that might have survived would have been very deep.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion the aim of the project was to investigate and assess the surviving archaeology surrounding the site of the proposed new building at Marden Court Farm.

The two trenches revealed in the area surrounding the proposed new building, a well preserved earthwork, probably medieval in date with a possible fortification along its summit. It is also likely that there was medieval activity near by.

The methodology was found appropriate in achieving the aims of the project.

9. Site Archive

This document

- 1 page of drawing register and 3 sheets of site drawings
- 1 page of context registers and 18 context sheets
- 4 pages of photographic registers
- 54 colour photographs and negatives
- 54 B&W photographs and negatives
- 5 photocopied pages from a site note book
- 12 bone fragments (1 bag)
- 35 sherds of pottery (2 bags)
- 4 tile fragments (2 bags)
- 1 metal (fe) object

Table: Summary of pottery and tile recovered from the site

Cont	Fab	Rim diam	Wt (g)	Date	Form	Decoration/Comment
1000	E6	30	120	18	panch	Panch/bowl, coarse yellow fab, int brown gl
1000	E6		12	18	Tank?	STMO. Int/ext mottled brown gl. Surfaces broken away
1000	E6		34	18	panch?	STRE. Coarse with internal black glaze
1000	E6		5	18	Tank?	STMO –mottled brown gl
1000	E6		2	18	?	Both ext surfaces broken away. Fab coarse
1000	E6		0.5	18	?	As above
1000	E6		0.5	18	Tank?	STMO. Int and ext mottled brn gl
1000	E6		5.5	18	bowl	White slip, trailed dark slip under clr gl
1000	E6		1	18	Bowl/dish	White slip, trailed dark slip under clr gl. Redder fab than above
1000	E6		6.5	18	Tank?	Handle in yell fab, clr slightly mottled gl. Hard fired
1000	A7B		1	13/15	?	Bodysherd. Form uncertain. Abraded but clr grn speckled gl. Oxidized type
1000	A4?		4	13/14	cookpot	=Ratkai 'siltmic'
1000	A4?		0.5	13/14	cookpot	As above
1000	?		1	?	?	Highly fired ?stoneware. dk green/brown mottled gl int, dark grn gl ext.
1000	?		31	Post-med		Tile. White chalky and quartz incls.
1001	B4		86	14/16	rooftile	No apparent surface treatment
1001	B4		40	14/16	rooftile	Prob ridgetile. Thin clr patchy gl
1001	B4		7	14/16	rooftile	No apparent surface treatment
1001	B4		1	14/17	?	Clr ext green speckled gl
1001	B4		2	14/17	?	Joins to above. New break
1001	A7B	12	13	13/15	jug	Ext patchy clr grn speckled gl. Pulled spout.
1001	A7B		20	13/15	jug	Ext clear green speckled gl
1001	A4	20	15	13/14	cookpot	
1001	A4		11	13/14	cookpot	
1001	A4		19	13/14	cookpot	

1001	A4		6	13/14	cookpot	
1001	A4		6	13/14	cookpot	
1001	A4		7	13/14	cookpot	
1001	A4		16	13/14	cookpot	Thin walled
1001	sandmic ?		23	13/14	Jug/trip	(fab desc Ratkai 1999) Underfired and soft. Olive gl. Mica glitters on int surface
1001	A4		28	13/14	cookpot	
1001	A4		10	13/14	cookpot	
1001	A4				cookpot	
1001	B1		3	12/14	cookpot	
1001	A4		0.5	13/14	cookpot	
1001	A4	23	8	13/14	cookpot	
1001	A4		11	13/14	cookpot	
1001	A4		1	13/14	cookpot	
1001	B1?		2	12/14	cookpot	
1001	sandmic ?		2	13/14	cookpot	Heavily sooted ext
1001	B1		1	12/14	cookpot	
1001	A4		0.5	13/14	cookpot	

A total of 42 sherds (563.5g) of pottery and ceramic rooftile was recovered from the site at Court Farm Marden. Of this total 4 pieces (164g) was rooftile. The pottery was examined microscopically and macroscopically and sorted according to Vince's classification (Vince 1985 and 2002) work by Stephanie Ratkai (1999) on ceramics from the Bridge Street site at Leominster was also used. The pottery from Court Farm is summarised in the Table above.

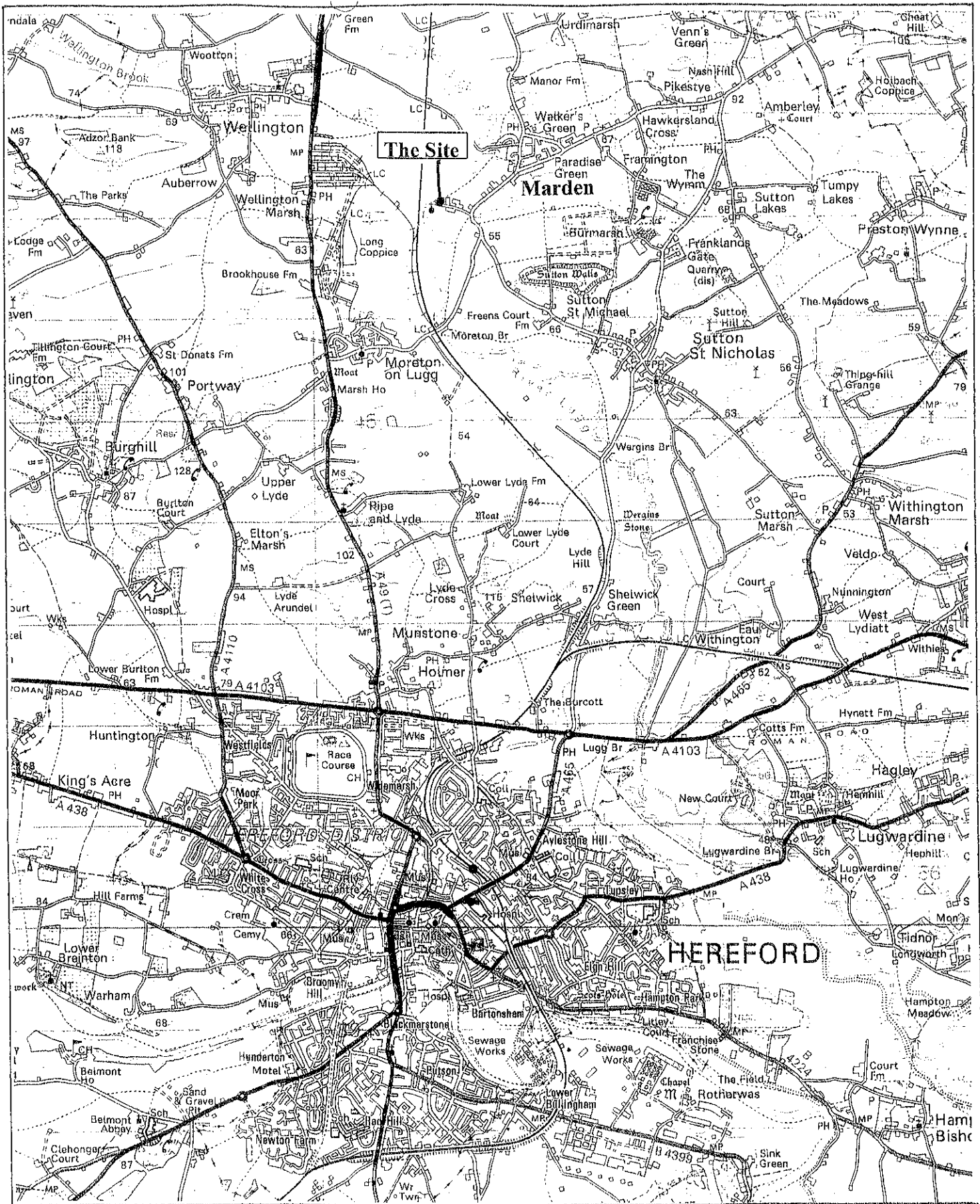
Material from the topsoil (1001) suggested a date in the 18th century, when wares from Staffordshire were the most commonly used in the county. The medieval cooking pot is likely to be residual in this context.

Pottery from the subsoil (1001) is dated to the end of the 13th or the 14th century. The fragments of rooftile suggest a similar date.

The pottery seems to show more similarity to material found in Leominster than in Hereford, though material commonly found in Hereford and known to have been made in or just outside the city was present. This is also found in later 13th and 14th century contexts in Leominster. There was less cooking pot of fabric B1, sourced in the Malvern area, than is usually found in Hereford with cooking pot mainly of fabric A4 or variants. This seems to show more similarity with Leominster (Ratkai 1999) than Hereford. However cooking pot in this fabric is found in Hereford. Malvernian fabric B4 (oxidised glazed wares) was found in 1001; this suggests a date in the 14th century though B4 is first found in Hereford in the later 13th century (Vince 2002).

Figures

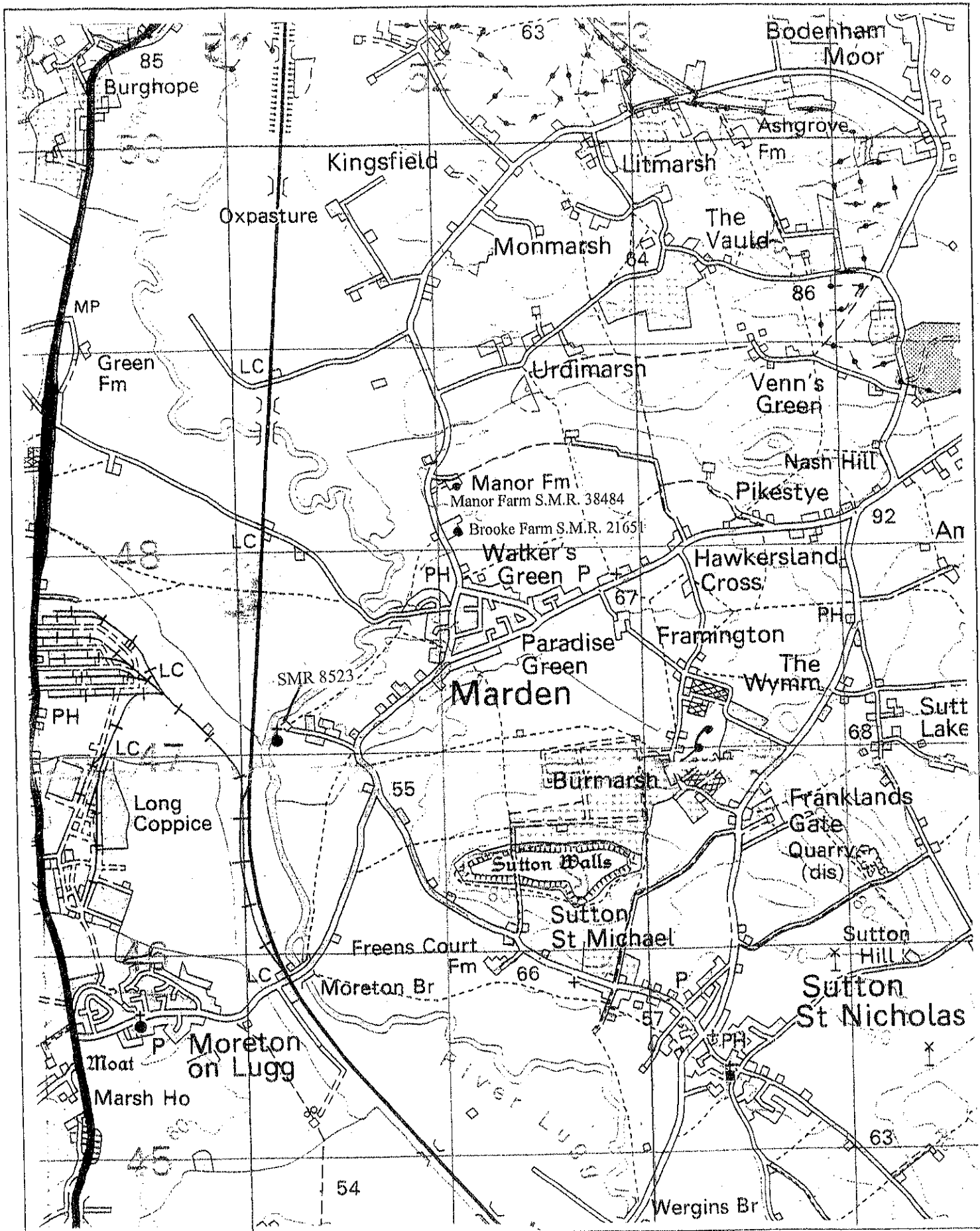
1. Site location map
2. SMR details
3. The Marden Tithe map
4. Earthwork Survey results showing the Stanchion pit and trench locations.
5. Plan and Section of Trench 1
6. Plan of Trench 2
7. East facing Section - Trench 2
8. Hachured Survey plan



Site Location Map

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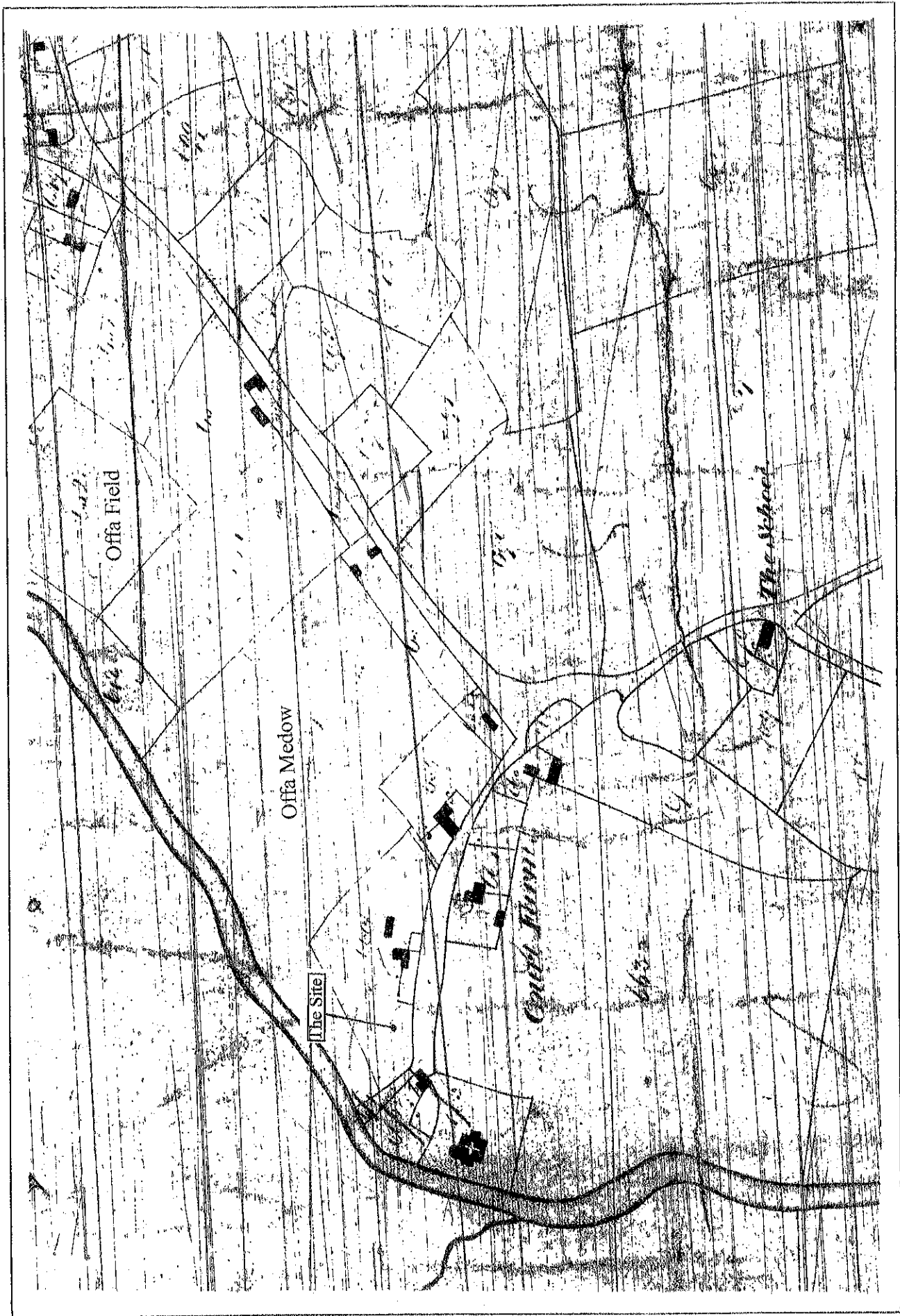
Figure 1.



SMR Details

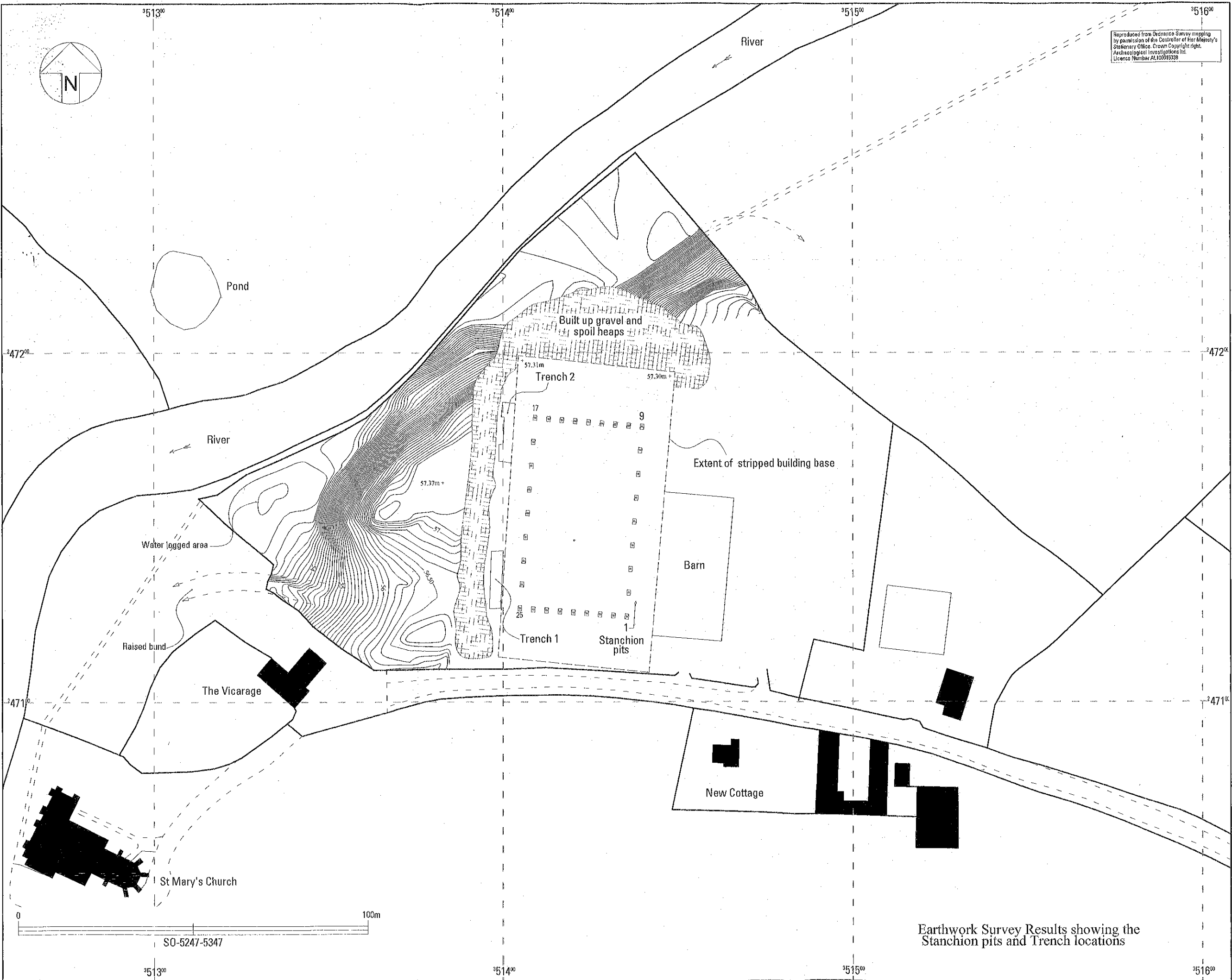
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Figure 2.



The Marden Tiffe map

Figure 3.

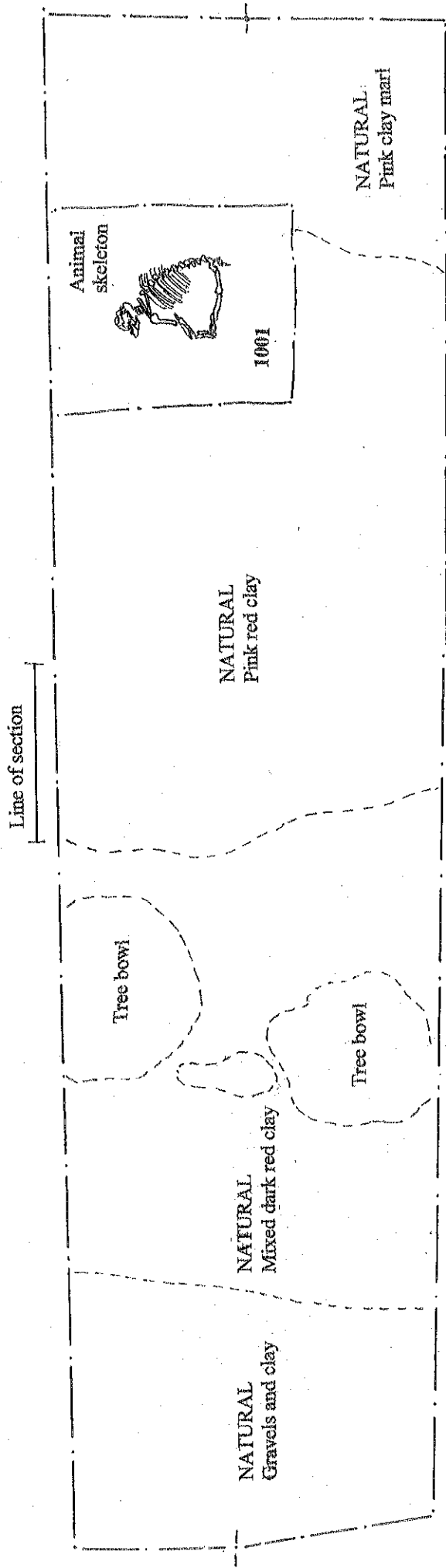


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Earthwork Survey Results showing the Stanchion pits and Trench locations

Figure 4

Plan of trench 1
Scale 1:50



East Facing section, trench 1
Scale 1:20

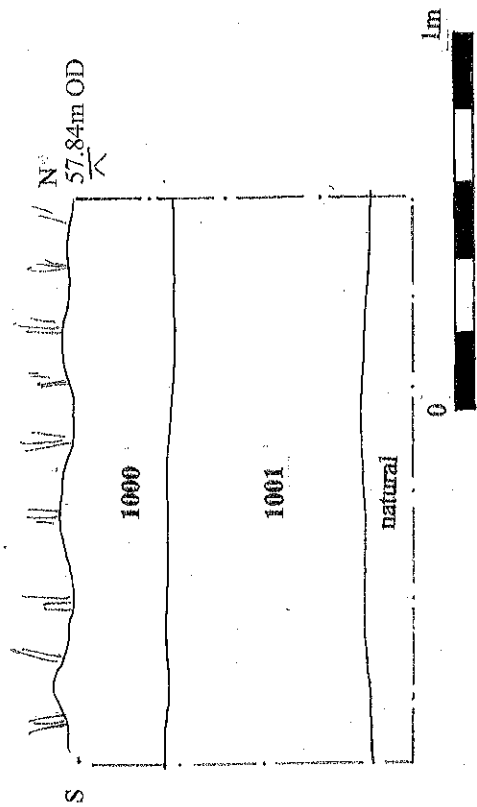


Figure 5.

Plan of trench 2
Scale 1:20

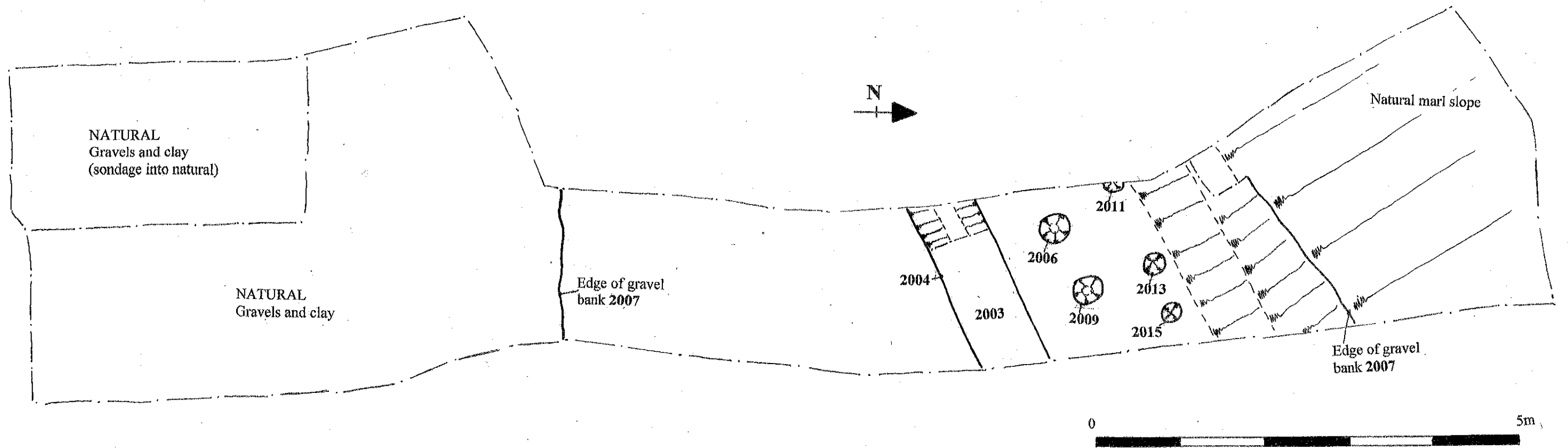


Figure 6.

East facing section, trench 2
Scale 1:20

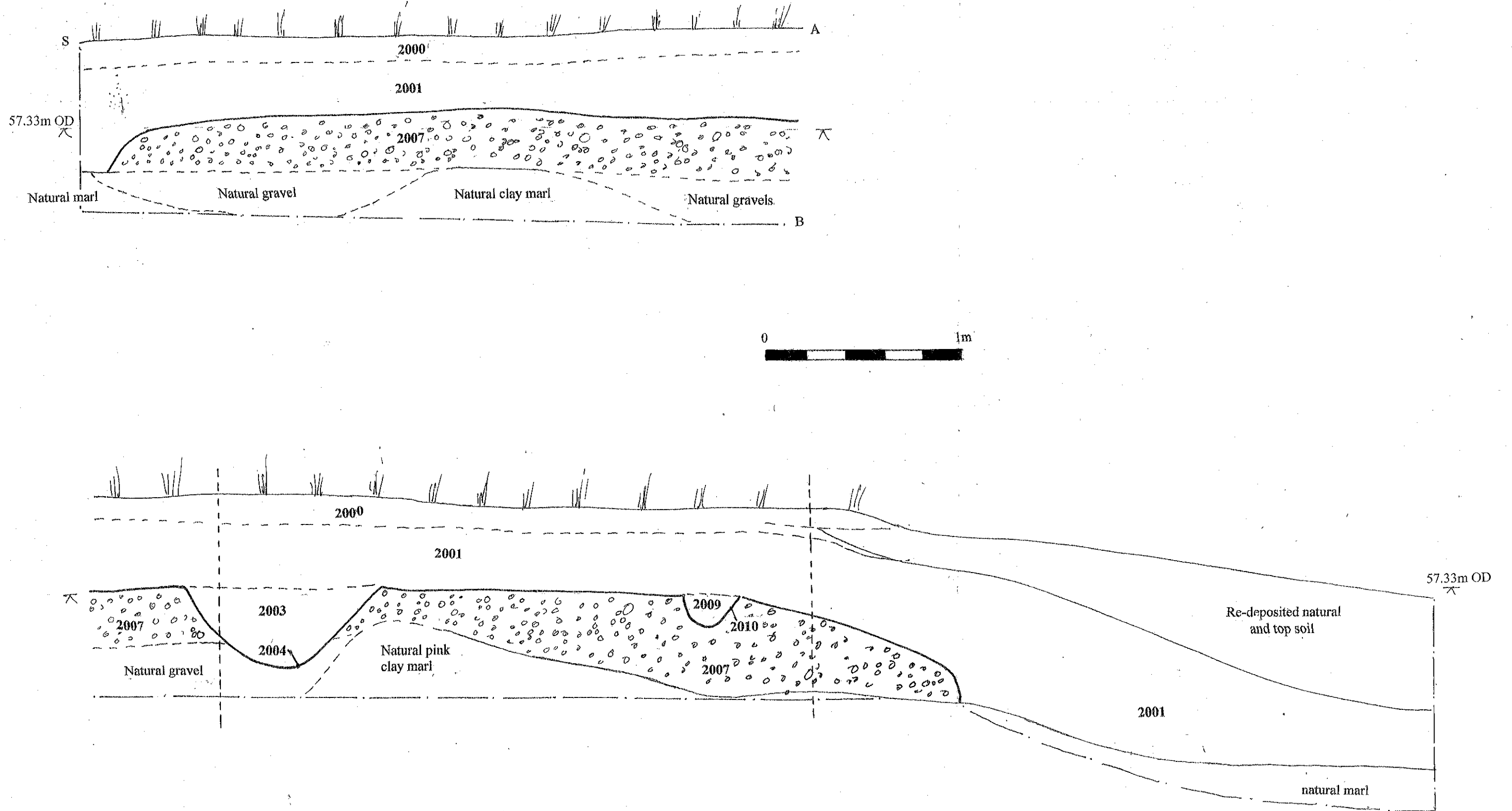


Figure 7.

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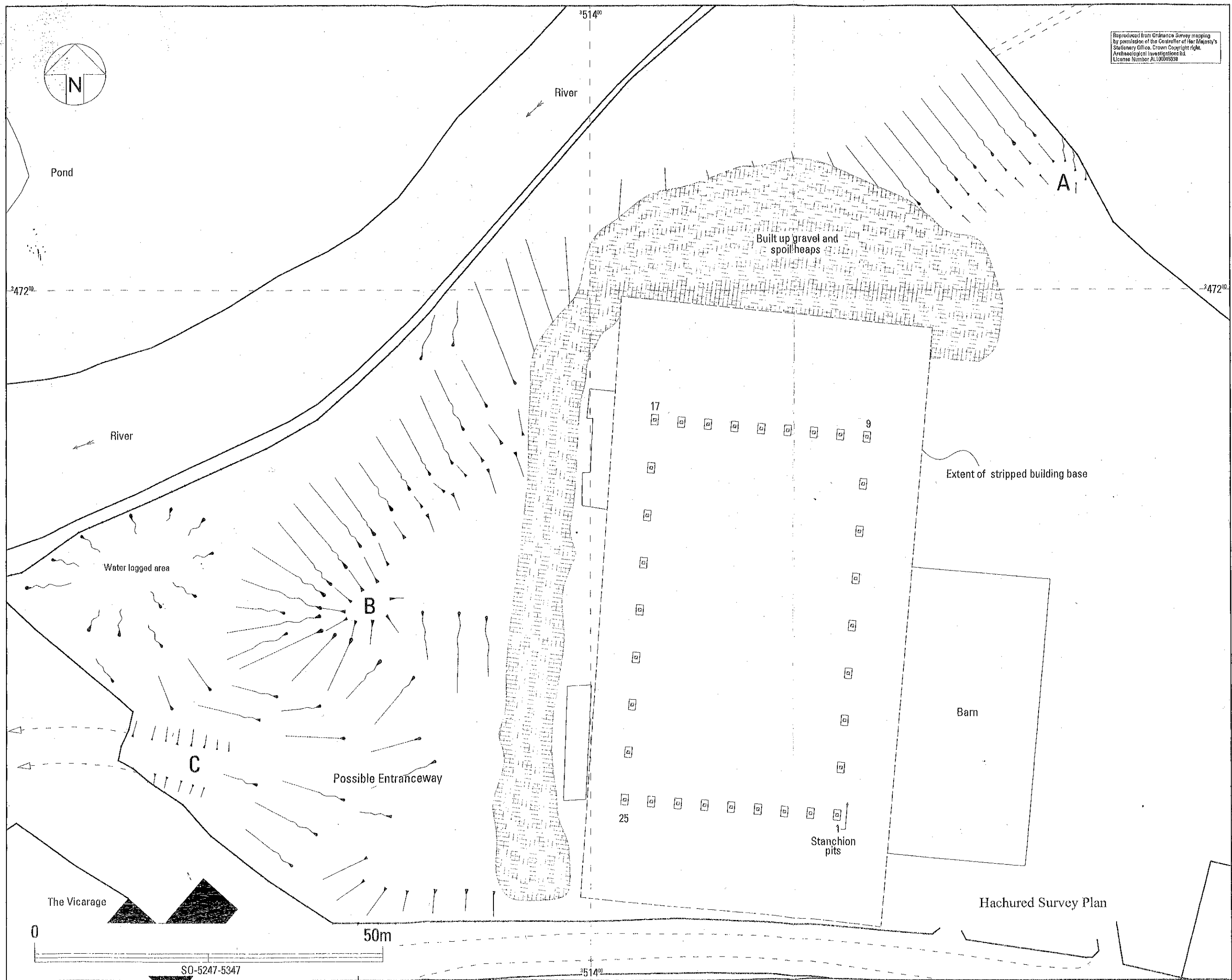


Figure 8.