

# **birmingham archaeology**

**GADLEY LANE  
RIVER'S VALE, BUXTON,  
DERBYSHIRE:  
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF 2004- 5**

**UNIVERSITY OF  
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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF 2004- 5**

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## **GADLEY LANE, RIVER'S VALE, BUXTON, DERBYSHIRE: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF 2004- 5**

### **SUMMARY**

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out at land off Gadley Lane, River's Vale, Buxton, Derbyshire (NGR SK 0470 7346), between March 2004 and October 2005. The work was undertaken by Birmingham Archaeology on behalf of McKay Building. The watching brief was required by the Development Control Archaeologist for High Peak Borough Council and was required as a condition of planning permission for the construction of four new buildings. The site was thought to have potential for the presence of archaeological remains and artefacts due to its close proximity to Mesolithic and Neolithic archaeological sites. It was also possible that Roman remains might be present, as Buxton (Aquae Arnemetiae) was an important spa town during this period.*

*No archaeological features, deposits or significant finds were recorded in the foundation trenches for the new buildings. This may indicate that either the site was not the focus of human activity, earlier than the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or disturbance caused by the previous use of the site as a depot had removed any evidence of earlier activity. Deep alluvial deposits were recorded during the watching brief and these may be associated with former watercourses or ponds.*

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by McKay Building to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with a residential development at Gadley Lane, River's Vale, Buxton, Derbyshire. This report outlines the results of the watching brief carried out between March 2004 and October 2005. The watching brief was requested by Dr. A. Myers, Development Control Archaeologist for High Peak Borough Council and was required as a condition of planning permission for the construction of four new dwellings (Planning Application Reference Number HPK 2003/1069). The watching brief follows guidelines laid down in the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (IFA 1994) and is in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE 1990). It conforms to a written scheme of investigation by Birmingham Archaeology (Birmingham Archaeology 2004) approved by the Development Control Archaeologist, prior to implementation.

### **2.0 SITE LOCATION**

The development site is located off Gadley Lane close to Brickyard Plantation, River's Vale, on the western fringe of Buxton (centred on NGR SK 0470 7346, hereafter referred to as 'the site', Figs. 1 and 2). The River Wye runs to the south of the site and a stream runs to the east of the site where it eventually flows into the Wye. The site is at approximately 305m AOD and covers an area of c.0.2ha. The site was formerly occupied by buildings, now demolished, and hard standing associated with a Severn Trent Water depot.

### 3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

No archaeological remains are known within the site itself, however 250m to the southwest archaeological investigations at Otterhole Farm, St. John's Road (Fig. 2) recorded evidence for human activity dating to the Late Mesolithic period. Two potential foci of flint/ chert working activity were identified (Cherrington and Jones 2003). A variety of tools were recovered, and the technology appears to have been geared toward bladelet production, probably in order to support the hunter-gatherer activities prevalent during this period.

Late Mesolithic and early Neolithic activity was recorded during excavations in the 1980s at Lismore Fields, 400m to the southeast of the site (Fig. 2). This comprised evidence of structures from both periods and artefacts including flints and a Neolithic Grimstone style bowl. A field to the north of the Lismore Fields site has also been scheduled by English Heritage (SAM DR 278). In addition, several prehistoric finds, including two Neolithic stone axes, a hammerstone and a number of flint flakes have been found in the vicinity of the site.

Buxton is well known as an urban centre during the Romano-British period. The site of a probable Roman baths complex and associated buildings is covered by later Georgian development in the town (Myers 2003), and it is possible that the settlement grew from a Romano-Celtic cult centred on natural hot and cold springs (Hart 1981). Entries in the Derbyshire Sites and Monuments Record suggest the existence of Roman roads, which converged on the Macclesfield Road and St. John's Road off Green Lane and Lismore Road.

Remains of ridge and furrow earthworks survive in the vicinity of the site, at nearby Burbage, suggesting the presence of medieval agriculture. The name Burbage derives from *Burh bece*, which is Saxon for a stream by a fortified place. Activity from the post-medieval period is represented, in the vicinity of Burbage, by a variety of quarrying and mining operations from the 17<sup>th</sup> century through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1880 shows three buildings on the site, which is surrounded by a wooded area. These buildings may be associated with 19<sup>th</sup> century brick-making, as the wooded area is known as Brickyard Plantation and contains several depressions, which may be former clay pits. The buildings shown on the First Edition map are not depicted on later OS map editions and a series of rectangular workshops or shed type buildings, are shown on these later editions. The current Ordnance Survey map shows three depot buildings on the site, occupying similar locations to those earlier buildings depicted on the First Edition map, and perhaps built on their foundations.

### 4.0 AIMS

The general aim of the archaeological watching brief is to provide a record of any archaeological deposits or features which might be revealed during groundworks and to provide an understanding of the history and the significance of the archaeology of the site as a whole. The specific aims of the watching brief are:

- to monitor all groundworks, including the excavation of foundation and service trenches,

- to record the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains affected by the development works,
- to preserve any archaeological deposits exposed 'by record', and conserve for future analysis all artefactual/ ecofactual material recovered from the site.

These aims were achieved through a programme of archaeological monitoring visits to the site during groundworks.

## 5.0 METHODOLOGY

The groundworks involved the machine stripping of concrete floor slab, followed by the machine excavation of foundation trenches, 0.9-1.3m wide and up to 1.8m deep, over the footprint of the four new buildings (Fig. 3). All groundworks were monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist to standards set out by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994). Salvage recording of any potential archaeological deposits and features revealed by contractors' groundworks was carried out. Stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. Contextual information was supplemented by scale drawings, plans, sections and photographs that form the site archive.

The site archive consists of all data recorded during the watching brief and is prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991), the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage* (Walker 1990) and *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections* (Museum and Art Galleries Commission 1992). The archive will be deposited with an appropriate repository within a reasonable time after the completion of the project. Advice will be taken from the Development Control Archaeologist.

## 6.0 RESULTS

### Plot 1 (Plate 1)

The earliest natural deposit revealed in the Plot 1 foundation trenches was a dark grey-brown sand- silt containing numerous pebbles (100 and 101), at least 0.60m deep, at a depth of 1.20m below the present ground surface. Sealing this was a layer (102), up to 0.55m deep, consisting of a yellow and orange mottled, coarse silt- sand with a small number of stones. Above this was a shallow layer of dark brown sand-silt (103), 0.10m deep. This was sealed by a layer of 'dirty' yellow brown clay(104) containing some rubble, 0.15m deep. Overlying this was a silty clay loam topsoil, up to 0.40m deep.

### Plot 2 (Fig. 4, Plates 2 and 3)

The earliest natural deposit recorded in the foundation trenches here was an orange sand and gravel with many large river cobbles (204), at least 0.25m deep, at a depth of 1.3m below the present ground surface. Overlying this was a bluish grey clay containing gritstone pebbles, larger river cobbles and boulders and lenses of peat (203), 0.5m deep. Above this was a greenish grey clay mottled with yellowish brown silty sand (202) containing small pebbles, 0.15- 0.30m deep. This was sealed by a dark grey loam (201) containing brick rubble, slate and ash, 0.30- 0.65m deep.

At the northeast corner of this plot was a deposit of sandy clay (205) containing mortar, ash and brick rubble, at least 1.6m deep.

#### Plot 3

The earliest natural deposit exposed was a bluish grey clay containing gritstone pebbles, larger river cobbles and boulders and lenses of sand (303), at least 0.6m deep, 1.3m below the present ground surface. Above this was a greenish grey clay (302) containing small pebbles, 0.40m deep. This was sealed by a dark grey-brown loam (301) containing brick rubble, slate and ash, up to 0.30m deep.

#### Plot 4 (Fig. 4)

The earliest natural deposit revealed was an orange- brown silty sand and gravel with many large river cobbles (404), at least 0.4m deep, at a depth of 1.3- 1.6m below the present ground surface. This layer was only recorded in the trench at the south part of the foundation trenches in Plot 4. Above this was a grey clay containing gritstone pebbles (403), at least 0.40m deep. Overlying this was a dark gray clay (402), 0.15- 0.70m deep, deepest at the east side of the plot. This was sealed by a dark brown loam (401) containing brick rubble, slate and ash, 0.70-1.05m deep, deepest at the west side of the plot.

Overlying these contexts, in places, was a layer of crushed brick and limestone rubble (200) and concrete floor slab or tarmac which was removed by machine (Plate 4) before the excavation of the foundation trenches.

### **7.0 FINDS**

The only finds recovered from the site were a few sherds of pottery of 19- 20<sup>th</sup> century date, associated with the layers 200, 301 and 401. These finds were all subsequently discarded.

### **8.0 DISCUSSION**

No significant archaeological features, deposits or finds were recorded in the foundation trenches for the new buildings. This may indicate that either the site was unlikely to have been a focus of human activity earlier than the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or that disturbance caused by the previous use of the site, as a depot, has removed any evidence of earlier activity. However, it is possible that any potential archaeological features which may exist within the site could have been located beyond the areas of the watching brief. The presence of deep alluvial deposits (100/102, 203/204, 303, and 403/404) recorded during the watching brief, at least 0.6- 0.8m deep, may be related to former watercourses or ponds, perhaps associated with the River Wye or a former tributary stream.

### **9.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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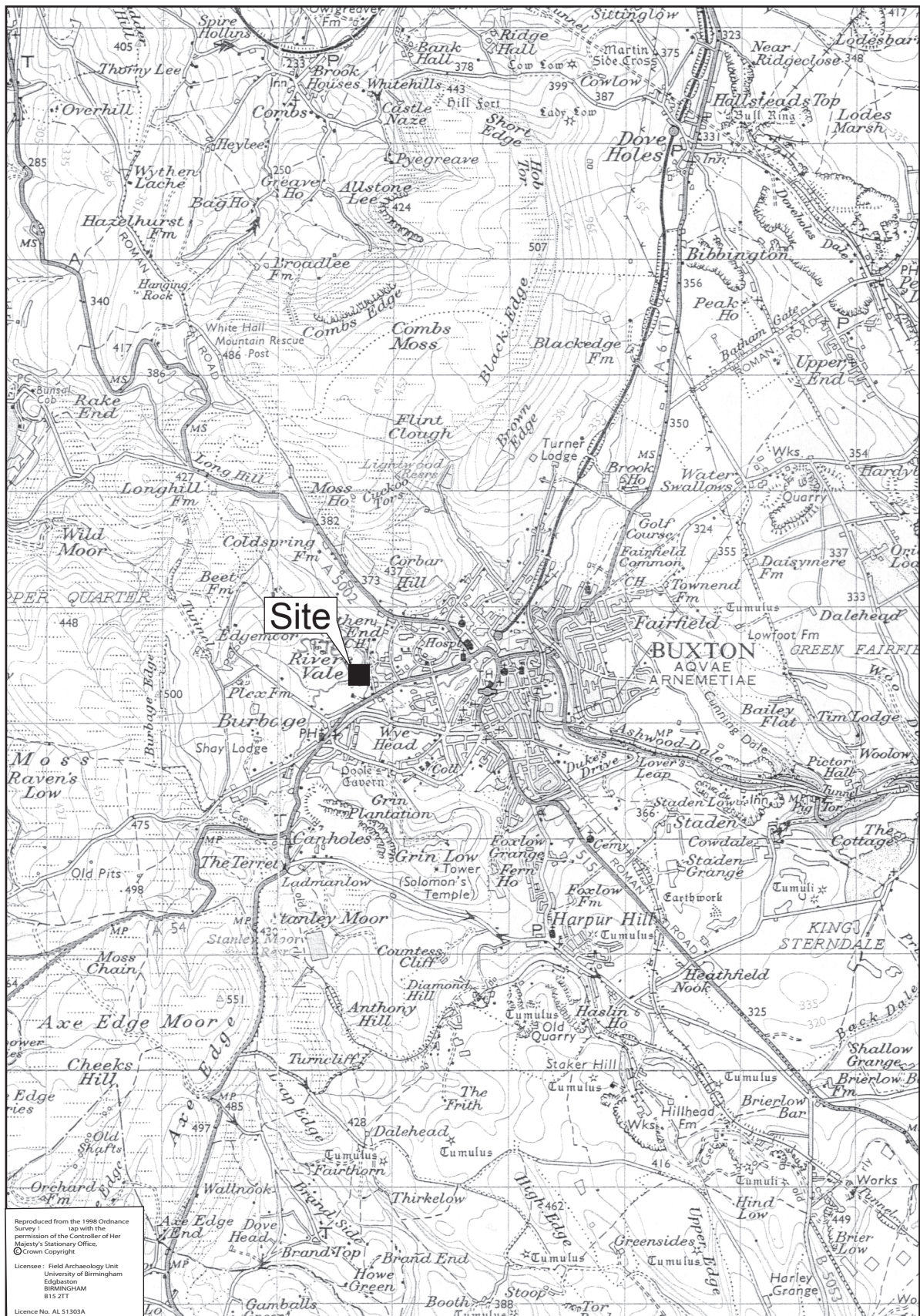


Fig.1

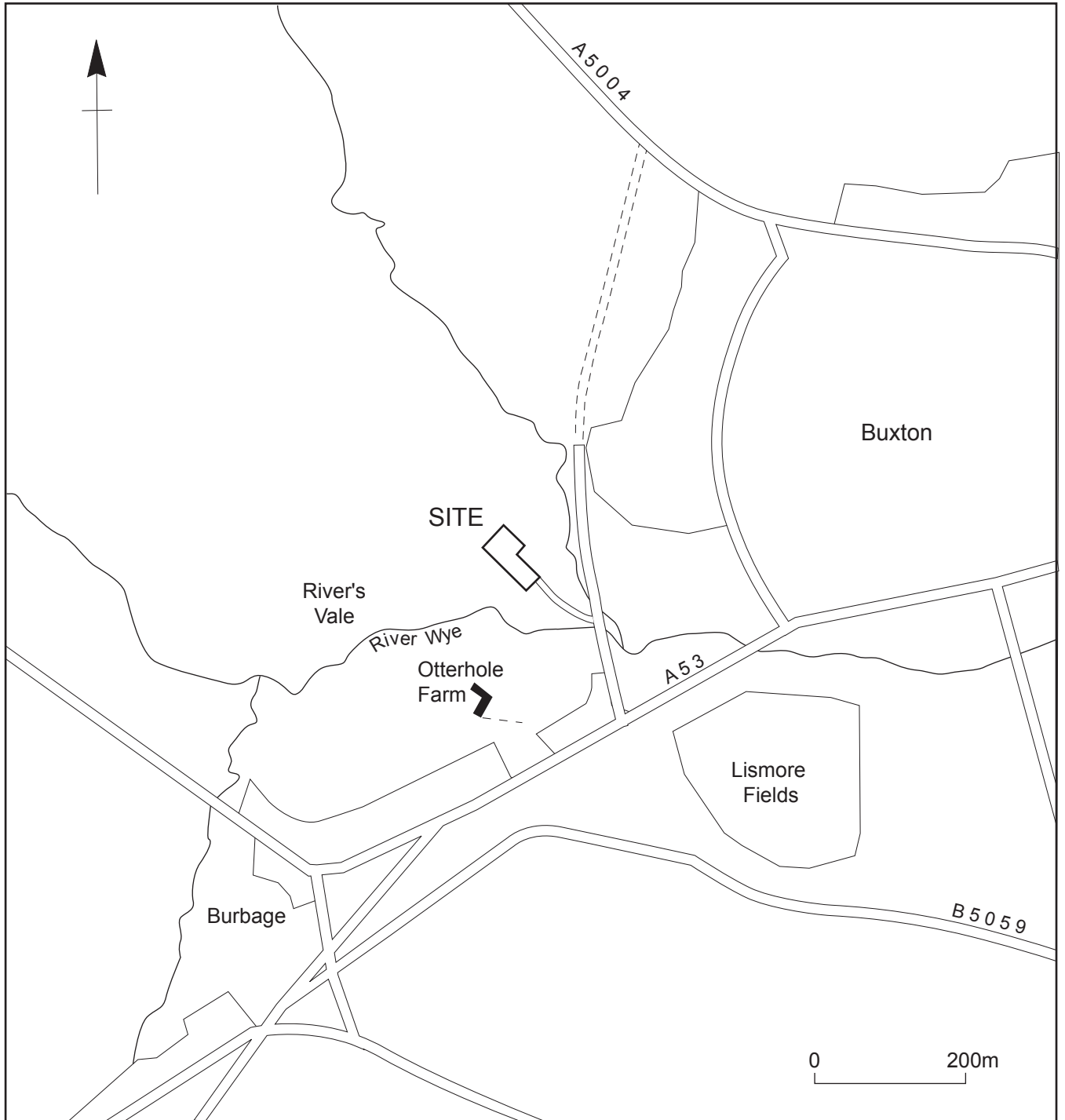


Fig.2

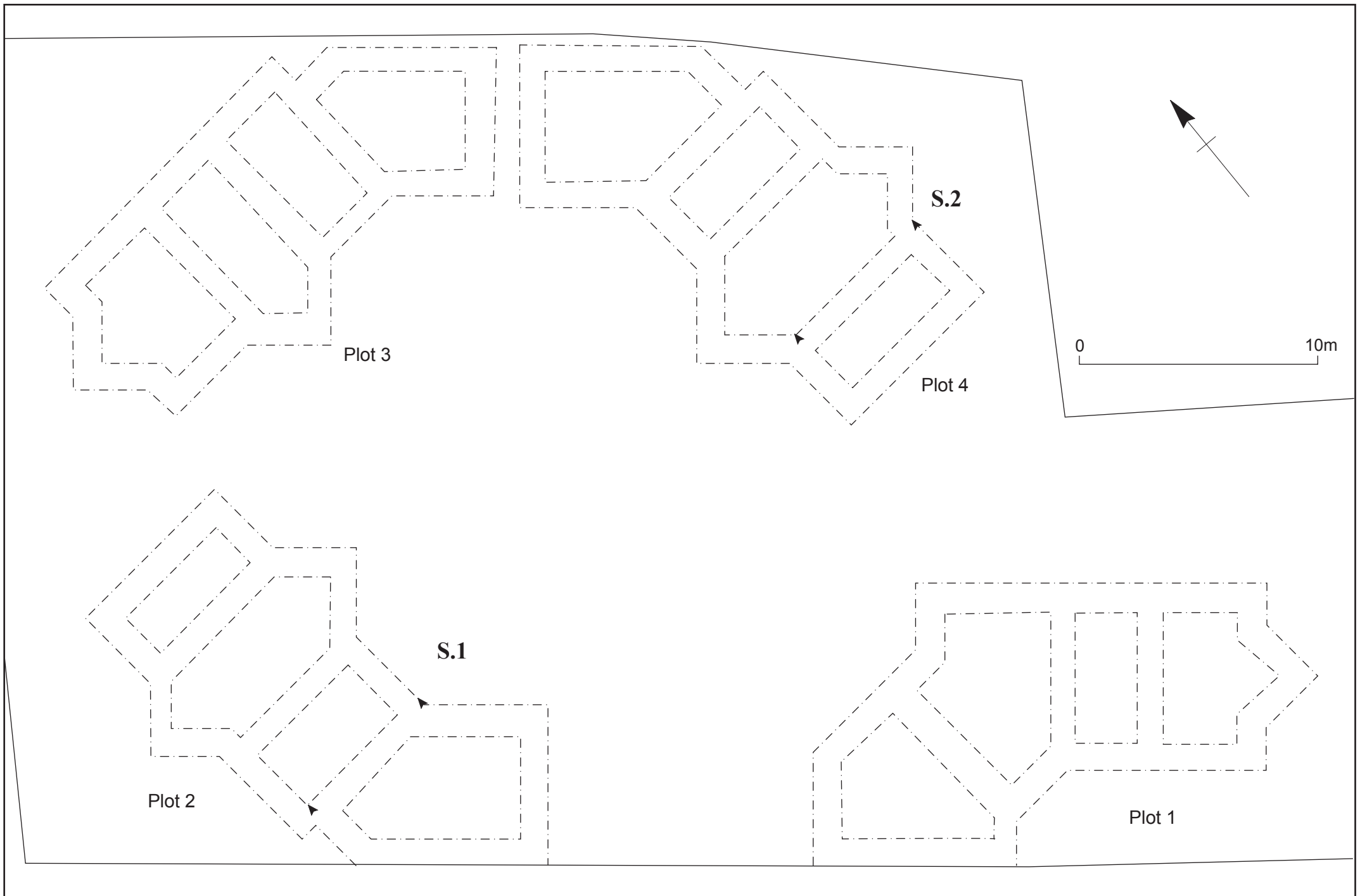
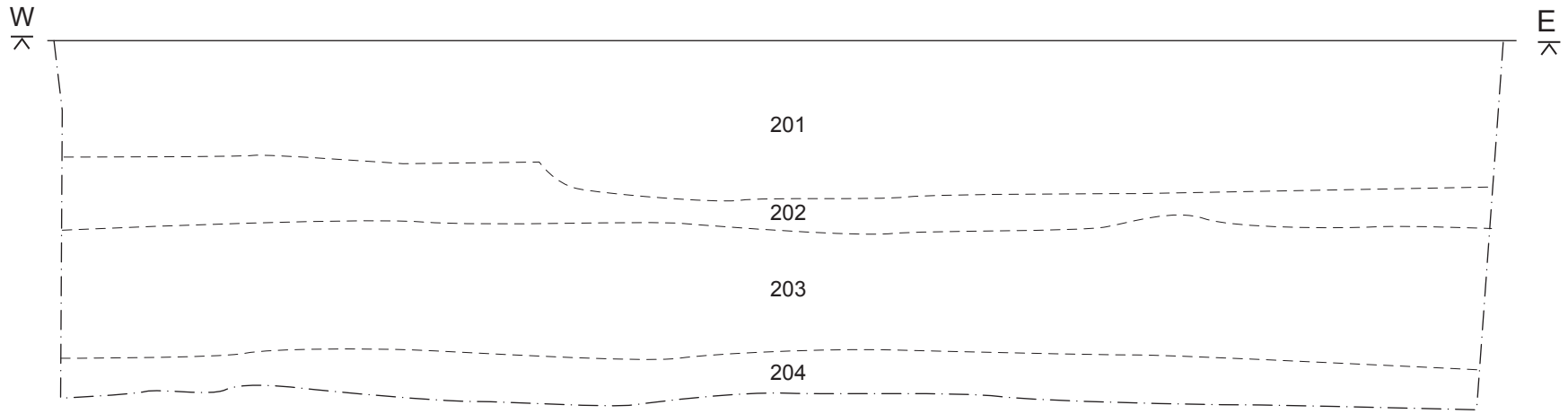


Fig.3

Plot 2 Section 1



Plot 4 Section 2

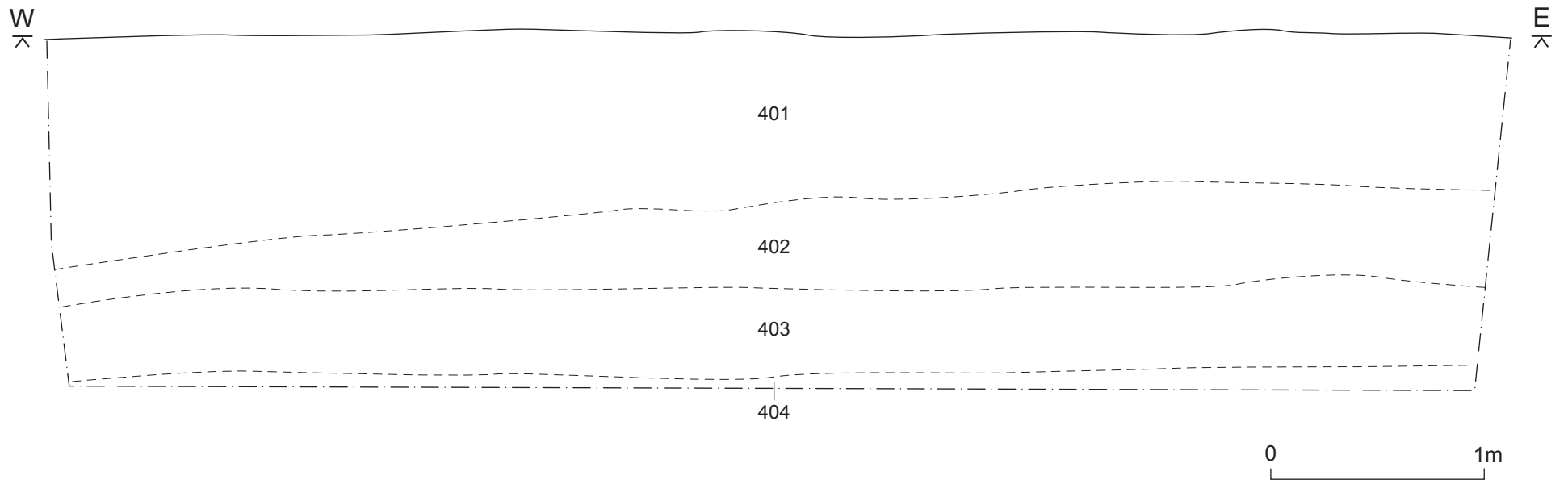


Fig.4



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4