

**LAND AT ERMINE STREET, HUNTINGDON,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
TL 2344 7229**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
FIELD EVALUATION**

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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the Method Statement. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

This report has been prepared by Ian Turner (Archaeological Supervisor), Gary Edmondson (Project Manager) and Jackie Wells (Artefacts Officer). The archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Ian Turner assisted by Phil Henderson. All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager). Joan Lightning (CAD Technician) produced the figures.

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Structure of the Report

After the introductory Section 1, a summary of the evaluation results is presented in Section 2, followed by a brief conclusion (Section 3).

Key Terms

Throughout this project design the following terms or abbreviations are used:

CA	Cambridgeshire Archaeology (Planning and Countryside Advice)
Client	Exchange Developments Limited on behalf of Camvil (Developments) Ltd
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record for Cambridgeshire
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
Procedures Manual	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> , 2 nd edn, 2001 Albion Archaeology
The site	Proposed development site



Non-Technical Summary

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Exchange Developments Ltd on behalf of their client Camvil (Developments) Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation. This evaluation focused on the central area of a site excluded from an earlier investigation, undertaken by Albion in 2004. The investigation was undertaken in support of a planning application 03/02344, prior to the erection of dwellings at Ermine Street, Huntingdon. Situated to the north of the historic core of the town, the site is centred on National Grid Reference TL (5/2) 2344 7229. The site has an irregular form in plan, approximately 100m long north-east to south-west by up to 35m wide. The focus of this phase of investigation was on the central area occupied by vacant workshops associated with a former garage and an area of open ground to the north. The geology of the site consists of river gravels above grey mudstones of the Oxford Clay.

As part of the 2004 evaluation a desk-based assessment was undertaken in order to better understand the past landscape within which the site is located. The site is adjacent to the route of a Roman road known as Ermine Street, though the exact course is uncertain. The assessment also indicated that the site was probably part of unenclosed common land until the expansion of the town in recent centuries. In the 2004 evaluation two trenches were opened near the Ermine Street frontage with a third towards the south-western margin of the site. The central area could not be investigated as the workshops and associated yard were in use, whilst the area to north was used for storage. No trace of the Roman road was revealed. Most of the archaeological features and deposits were post-medieval to modern in date. An undated ditch aligned obliquely to the present course of Ermine Street was identified in the south-west corner of the site.

The current evaluation comprised three trenches. The sections of the vehicle inspection pits in the former garage workshops were examined and a trench was opened in the open ground to the north. The investigation indicated that disturbance associated with the erection of the standing buildings was minimal, with the pre-existing soil profile having been buried beneath deposits associated with construction of the buildings. The only possible archaeological feature was identified in this area and may be the southern edge of a post-medieval quarry pit. In the trench to the north of the buildings, below a thick modern gravel make-up deposit, the old soil profile survived. Below this, evidence of post-medieval quarry pits and a tree-throw, created by the deliberate removal of a tree were revealed. The 1886 Ordnance Survey map depicts trees in this area. All the soil was scanned for finds, though only post-medieval to modern artefacts were recovered.

The evaluation of the central area revealed that no features earlier than the post-medieval period were present. As construction of the standing buildings had resulted in minimal disturbance, the results of the evaluation provide a reliable indication of the likely survival of archaeological remains.

The site archive, which contains all records of the project (Project number ESH 1047) is currently stored at the offices of Albion Archaeology and will be transferred to the county store on completion of the project.

It is essential that the above summary is read in conjunction with the main body of the report



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Exchange Developments Ltd on behalf of their client Camvil (Developments) Ltd. to undertake an archaeological evaluation. This evaluation focused on the central area of a site excluded from an earlier investigation, undertaken by Albion in 2004. The investigation was undertaken in support of a planning application 03/02344, prior to the erection of dwellings at Ermine Street, Huntingdon. Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (CA) indicated that the site was in an archaeologically sensitive area and that insufficient information was available to determine the impact of the development, or to allow an appropriate mitigation strategy to be devised.

In order to obtain sufficient information to assess the potential impact of the development CA issued a *Brief* for an archaeological evaluation of the land¹. This required a scheme of trial excavation in order to characterise the location, extent, nature, date and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits. The initial evaluation was undertaken in 2004² in accordance with a project design which detailed the scope and methodology of the proposed project and assessed the archaeological potential of the vicinity of the site, based on previously published work³. However, in 2004 it was not possible to investigate the central area of the site. The current evaluation focused on the investigation of this central area. Following discussions with CA regarding this stage of the project, Albion produced a *Method Statement*⁴, outlining the scope, methodology and objectives of the project. The project methodology was approved by CA prior to the commencement of trial excavation.

1.2 Site Location and Description

Huntingdon is a small town situated on the north bank of the braided channel of the River Great Ouse, in the mid west of Cambridgeshire. Formerly the county town of Huntingdonshire, it was absorbed into Cambridgeshire in the re-organization of county boundaries in 1974. The principal axis of the town is formed by the A141 which has a roughly north-west to south-east orientation, following the route of the Roman road known as Ermine Street. Originally focused on the crossing of Ermine Street and the River Great Ouse, the town has expanded beyond its historic core to the north-east, the north and the north-west in the last two centuries.

The site is located to the north of the historic core on the western side of Ermine Street, centred on National Grid Reference TL (5/2) 2344 7229 (Figure 1). In

¹ Cambridgeshire County Council 2004, *Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation, 27 Ermine Street/16 Merritt Street, Huntingdon*, 16th July, 2004

² Albion Archaeology 2004, *Land at 27 Ermine Street/16 Merritt Street, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire: Archaeological Field Evaluation 04/105*

³ Albion Archaeology 2004, *Land at 27 Ermine Street/16 Merritt Street, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire: Archaeological Project Design and Desk-Based Assessment 04/93*

⁴ Albion Archaeology 2005 *Land at Ermine Street, Huntingdon (ESH 1047) Method Statement Archaeological Evaluation*



plan the site has an elongated irregular form, extending approximately 100m north-east to south-west by between 15-35m wide, covering an area of approximately 0.2 hectares (Figure 1). The eastern and south-eastern limits of the site are defined by Ermine Street and Merritt Street respectively, with the south-western limit defined by the rear boundary of houses fronting Merritt Street. The western extent is delimited by the railway line. The northern boundary with adjacent properties is irregular. The focus of this phase of investigation was the central area, occupied by vacant workshops associated with a former garage and an area of open ground to the north (Figure 3).

The British Geological Survey maps indicate that the site is situated within a sinuous band of terraced river gravels, orientated roughly north-west to south-east in the vicinity of the site. Below this are grey mudstones with infrequent stone bands, which are a component of the Oxford Clay.

Topographically the site is fairly flat, ranging in elevation from 11 to 13 metres above Ordnance Datum, with a slight slope down to the south-west corner. A stream known as Balm Brook flows roughly east-west just half a kilometre to the south.

The site is presently occupied by houses, gardens, car parking areas and yards with the central area containing the former garage and workshops. The main access route and the central car parking areas have been surfaced with tarmac. To the rear of the site the open areas are surfaced with rubble hardcore. Gardens are well established and enclosed by low walls, with only narrow access through gates. The garage and associated business premises are no longer trading.

1.3 Historical and Archaeological Background

For the 2004 evaluation a review of documentary evidence and historic maps was undertaken. Only a summary of the results are presented here. The site is situated next to the present course of Ermine Street (Figure 1), but the exact course of the Roman road is in doubt. The site is situated some distance to the north-west of the northern boundary of Saxon and medieval Huntingdon, and was probably part of unenclosed common land up to the post-medieval period. In the 19th century the site was developed as part of the general expansion of the town. The essential layout of the site shown on a 1:500 Ordnance Survey map of 1886 (Figure 2) survives virtually intact to this day.



2. RESULTS OF THE TRIAL EXCAVATION

2.1 Introduction

The investigation methodology consisting of two components was targeted on the area of proposed building. This strategy was approved by CA prior to the commencement of the investigation. The lining of the two vehicle inspection pits was removed and the sections examined (Trenches 4 and 5), whilst in the open area to the north of the buildings Trench 6 was opened (Figure 3). The evaluation was undertaken over a period of three days from 12th-14th December 2005.

2.2 Methodology

- 1 The location of Trench 6 was marked out on the ground in advance of machining. The other two trenches were pre-existing vehicle inspection pits;
- 2 Trench 6 was approximately 1.6m wide;
- 3 All machine excavation was supervised by an archaeologist;
- 4 For Trench 6, modern deposits and any underlying soils were stockpiled separately on either side of the open trench. These were stored as close to the trench edges as safety permitted;
- 5 Modern overburden was removed by machine down to the top of archaeological deposits, or undisturbed geological stratum, whichever was encountered first;
- 6 Sufficient of any archaeological features or deposits were excavated in order to provide the information required. To ensure the integrity of archaeological remains or features, the maximum possible pre-excavation recording was undertaken;
- 7 All excavated features and deposits were fully recorded in accordance with *Albion's Procedures Manual*;
- 8 Each trench was issued a unique block of numbers for recording purposes;
- 9 Spoil was scanned for artefacts by both eye and metal detector;
- 10 Artefacts, including those recovered from spoil heaps, were assigned to the relevant context number for the trench;
- 11 The trenches were only backfilled after investigation and recording had been completed to the satisfaction of the CA.

2.3 Results of the Trial Excavation

As there was a contrast between the two trenches within the former garage workshops (Trenches 4 and 5) and the trench in the open area to the north (Trench 6), these two areas will be differentiated in the following summary. K Gdaniec of CA visited the site on Tuesday 13th December 2005.

All archaeological and geological deposits (contexts) were assigned an individual number in a single sequence commencing at (400). Within this report context numbers issued to layers or deposits identified on site are expressed (**). Cuts for features are expressed [**].

Each trench was issued with a unique block of numbers. For example (406) identifies the concrete internal surface within the workshop in Trench 4 and [609] identifies the construction cut for a quarry pit in Trench 6. Details of all contexts are listed in Appendix 1.



2.3.1 Trenches 4 and 5 (Figure 3 and Figure 4: section 1).

Situated in the former garage workshops, the lining of one long and one short face as well as the base of each of the two inspection pits had carefully been removed by the groundworks contractor. Once this was completed archaeologists cleaned and recorded the deposits through which the pits had been cut. The features and deposits will be discussed sequentially from latest to earliest. No archaeological features were identified in Trench 5.

2.3.1.1 Garage floor

An internal surface of concrete (406) / (505) 0.10m thick overlay a 0.15m to 0.24m thick levelling layer, comprising rubble hardcore (405) / (504).

2.3.1.2 Buried ploughsoil

Below the hardcore a former ploughsoil (404) / (503) was revealed. It varied from grey brown sandy silt to grey black silty sand and ranged from 0.24m to 0.38m in thickness. Layer (503) contained frequent modern artefacts such as paint pots that were photographed but not retained. The northern extent of (404) had been truncated by a later pit (see 2.3.1.5 below).

2.3.1.3 Subsoil

The brown grey silty sand subsoil (403) / (502) varied from 0.28m to 0.38m thick. This deposit was sealed by the ploughsoil. Deposit (403) contained occasional post-medieval artefacts.

2.3.1.4 Geological stratum

The undisturbed geological stratum consisted of layers of sandy silt (400), (401), (402), (500) and (501) that ranged in colour from brown-orange to orange-grey and varied in thickness from 0.32m to 0.44m.

2.3.1.5 Shallow modern pit [407]

A pit was identified truncating the buried ploughsoil at the north-west end of Trench 4. In profile the pit had a vertical side with a flat base and contained grey black sandy silt (Figure 5: photograph 1). The pit may be connected with topsoil removal for a quarry pit identified in Trench 6.

2.3.2 Trench 6

Situated to the north of the garage workshops (Figure 3 and Figure 4: sections 2 and 3), the trench revealed a more complex sequence of features (Figure 5: photograph 2).

2.3.2.1 Modern external surface

An external surface, associated with the garage workshops consisting of a 0.40m thick layer of sand and rubble, hardcore (603) extended along the full length of the trench.

2.3.2.2 Buried ploughsoil

Grey black sandy silt (602) was up to 0.35m thick. Situated immediately below external surface (603), this deposit is interpreted as a former ploughsoil.



2.3.2.3 *Subsoil*

A brown grey silty sand subsoil (601) 0.20m thick, merged into the overlying ploughsoil.

2.3.2.4 *Archaeological features*

Quarry pit

A large pit [609] measuring 4.70m long by at least 1.7m wide was identified in the south of the trench. The pit was up to 0.60m deep with a steeper northern edge, a sloping base and a 30 degree sloping western edge (Figure 4: section 2). It contained a primary deposit of brown grey silty sand (610), a secondary deposit of brown orange sand (611) and an upper deposit of brown grey silty sand (612) (Figure 6: photograph 3). Deposits (610) and (612) contained post-medieval artefacts. The feature is interpreted as a quarry pit for the extraction of gravel.

Pit of uncertain function

An irregular shaped pit [604] with 45 degree sides and an uneven base, measuring 1.5m long, 1.4m wide and 0.5m deep was identified (Figure 4: section 3 and Figure 6: photograph 4). The pit contained brown grey sandy silt (605) and post-medieval artefacts. This pit may also be a smaller quarry pit or possibly a large tree-throw – the cavity created by the uprooting of a tree.

Tree-throws / Rooting

An irregular shaped tree-throw [606] with irregular sides and concave base, measured 2.9m long, 1.10m wide and 0.3m deep. The tree-throw contained two deposits of grey silty sand (607) / (608) and post-medieval artefacts.

2.3.2.5 *Geological Stratum*

The undisturbed geological stratum was yellow-orange silty sand and gravel (600) which was at least 0.14m thick.



2.4 Artefacts

The evaluation produced a small artefact assemblage comprising pottery, brick and tile, clay pipe, iron nails and animal bone (Table 1). The material was scanned to ascertain the nature, condition and, where possible, date range of the artefact types present.

Tr.	Feature	Type	Context	Spotdate*	Other finds
04	403	Subsoil	403	Modern	Pottery (61g)
06	604	Pit	605	Post-medieval	Pottery (4g), brick (68g), clinker (4g)
	606	Tree-throw	607	Post-medieval	Clay pipe (27g), animal bone (60g), iron nails (13g), brick and tile (38g)
	609	Quarry pit	610	Post-medieval	Brick frags (3g)
	609	Quarry pit	612	Post-medieval	Brick and tile (67g), coal (8g), iron nails (31g), clay pipe (6g), animal bone (36g)

* - Spotdate based on date of latest artefact in context

(sherd/frag count: weight in grammes)

Table 1: Artefact assemblage by trench and context

Three modern pottery sherds (transfer-printed ware, creamware and flower pot), weighing 61g, were recovered from subsoil (403), Trench 4. A single sherd (4g) of 17th-18th century Staffordshire slipware derived from the fill of quarry pit [604], Trench 6.

Eight stem fragments of post-medieval clay tobacco pipe derived from tree-throw [606] and the upper fill (612) of quarry pit [609]. These deposits also contained seven post-medieval brick and roof tile fragments (102g) in oxidised sand and gault clay fabrics, four incomplete iron nails, and four pieces of animal bone (96g). The latter are undiagnostic of species and are probably post-medieval or modern in date. The fills of quarry pit [604] and [609] respectively contained one and four abraded post-medieval brick fragments.



3. CONCLUSION

3.1 Overview

The investigation indicates that disturbance associated with the erection of the standing buildings was minimal, with the pre-existing soil profile having been buried beneath deposits associated with construction of the buildings. The only possible archaeological feature was identified near the northern limit of the northern workshop, and may be the southern edge of a post-medieval quarry pit.

In the trench to the north of the buildings, below a thick modern gravel make-up deposit, the old soil profile survived. Below this, evidence of post-medieval quarrying and a tree-throw, created by the deliberate removal of a tree, were revealed. The 1886 Ordnance Survey map depicts trees in this area. All the soil was scanned for finds, though only post-medieval to modern artefacts were recovered.

The evaluation of the central area revealed that no features earlier than the post-medieval period were present. As construction of the standing buildings had resulted in minimal disturbance, the results of the evaluation provide a reliable indication of the survival of archaeological remains.



4. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Cambridgeshire County Council 2004, *Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation, 27 Ermine Street/16 Merritt Street, Huntingdon, 16th July*



APPENDIX 1
TRENCH SUMMARY



Trench: 4

Max Dimensions: Length: 6.20 m. Width: 1.20 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.25 m. Max: m.

OS Co-ordinates: Ref. 1: TL2340672292 Ref. 2: TL2341172288

Reason: To investigate area of vehicle inspection pit in northern workshop.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
400	Natural	Loose mid yellow orange sandy silt frequent small-medium stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
401	Natural	Loose mid orange grey sandy silt frequent small-medium stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
402	Natural	Loose mid grey orange sandy silt moderate small-medium stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
403	Subsoil	Friable dark brown grey silty sand occasional small-medium stones containing post-medieval roof tile fragments and pottery. 0.34m thick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
404	Ploughsoil	Friable dark grey brown sandy silt A buried ploughsoil, 0.24m thick.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
405	Make up layer	Light brown grey sandy hardcore Sand and brick fragments. A make up layer beneath concrete surface (406). 0.15m thick.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
406	Internal surface	Concrete The modern concrete surface / floor of the garage workshop. 0.10m thick.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
407	Pit	Profile: near vertical base: flat dimensions: min breadth 0.12m, min depth 0.26m, min length 1.2m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
408	Fill	Friable dark grey black sandy silt moderate small-medium stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 5

Max Dimensions: Length: 4.75 m. Width: 1.20 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

OS Co-ordinates: Ref. 1: TL2341172271 Ref. 2: TL2341472274

Reason: To investigate area of vehicle inspection pit in western workshop.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
500	Natural	Loose mid orange grey sandy silt frequent small-medium stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
501	Natural	Firm mid brown orange sandy silt frequent small-medium stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
502	Subsoil	Friable light grey brown silty sand occasional small-medium stones 0.28m thick.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
503	Ploughsoil	Friable dark grey black silty sand with modern rubbish inclusions. A buried ploughsoil, 0.38m thick.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
504	Make up layer	Loose light brown grey sandy hardcore Sand and brick fragments. A make up layer beneath the modern concrete surface, 0.24m thick.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
505	Internal surface	Concrete The modern concrete surface / floor of the garage workshop. 0.10m thick.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 6

Max Dimensions: Length: 10.00 m. Width: 1.70 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.8 m. Max: 1.25 m.

OS Co-ordinates: Ref. 1: TL2340572298 Ref. 2: TL2341272305

Reason: To investigate area north of northern workshop.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
600	Natural	Loose light yellow orange sandy gravel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
601	Subsoil	Friable mid brown grey silty sand occasional flecks charcoal, moderate small-medium stones A buried subsoil, 0.20m thick.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
602	Ploughsoil	Friable dark grey black sandy silt moderate small-medium stones A buried ploughsoil, 0.35m thick.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
603	Make up layer	Loose mid yellow grey sandy hardcore A levelling layer 0.40m thick, composed of sand with brick fragments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
604	Pit	Irregular profile: 45 degrees base: uneven dimensions: min breadth 1.5m, min depth 0.5m, min length 1.4m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
605	Fill	Loose dark brown grey sandy silt containing post-medieval brick fragments, pottery and animal bone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
606	Treethrow	Irregular profile: irregular base: concave dimensions: min breadth 1.1m, min depth 0.3m, min length 2.9m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
607	Primary fill	Loose mid brown grey silty sand containing post-medieval brick fragments, clay pipe and animal bone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
608	Secondary fill	Loose dark grey silty sand moderate small stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
609	Quarry	Profile: concave base: flat dimensions: min breadth 1.7m, min depth 0.6m, min length 4.7m South-west side is concave, sloping at c. 45 degrees, north-east side is slightly concave sloping at c. 30 degrees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
610	Primary fill	Friable dark brown grey silty sand occasional small stones A thin lens of silty sand containing small post-medieval brick fragments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
611	Secondary fill	Loose mid brown orange sand frequent small-medium stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
612	Upper fill	Friable mid brown grey silty sand occasional small charcoal, occasional small-medium stones containing post-medieval brick fragments, Iron nails and animal bone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



FIGURES

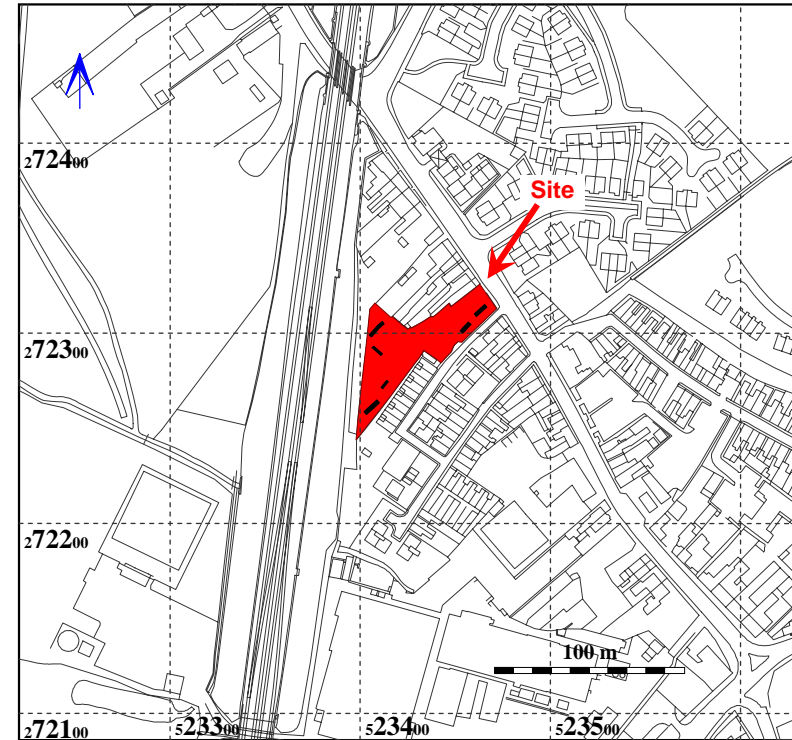
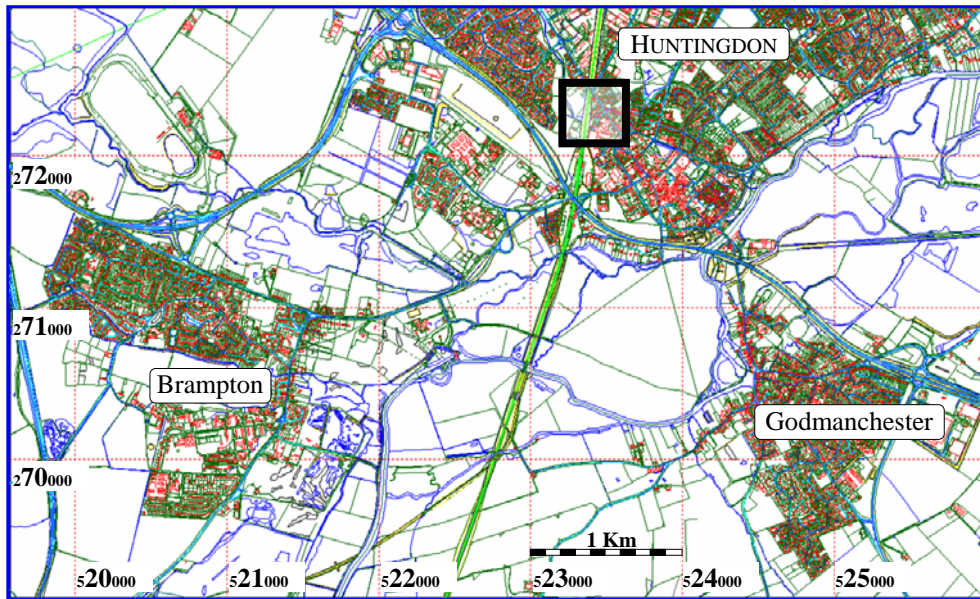
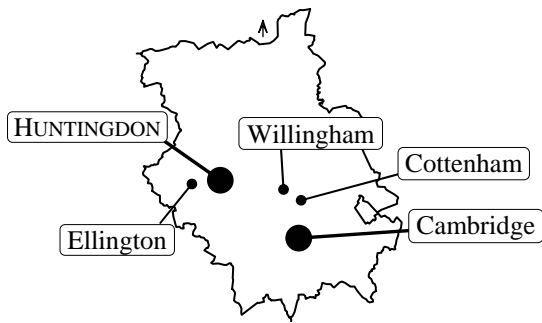


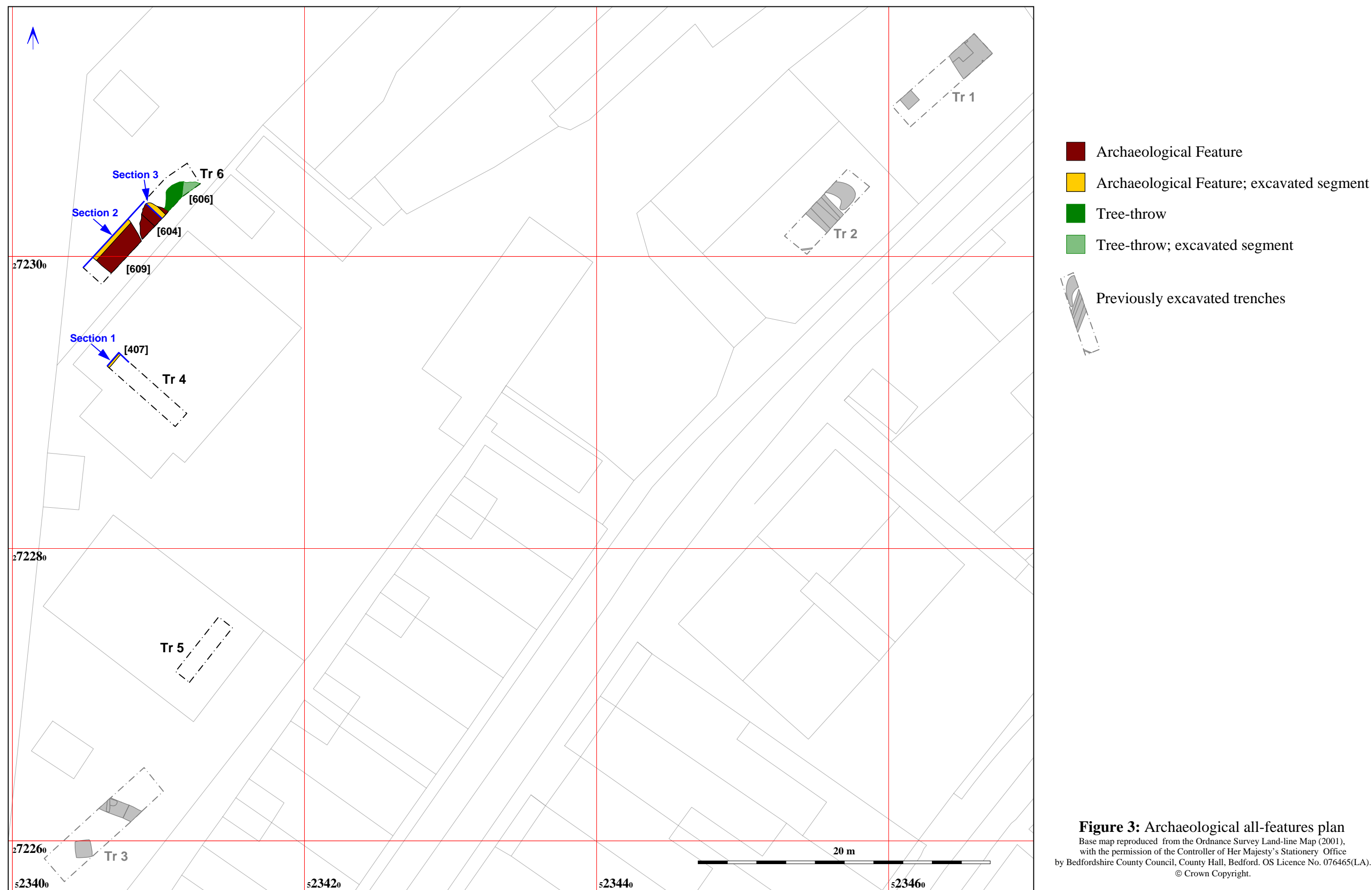
Figure 1: Site location plan

Base map reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Land-line Map (2001), with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, by Bedfordshire County Council, County Hall, Bedford. OS Licence No. 076465(LA). © Crown Copyright.



Figure 2: The 1886 Ordnance Survey 1:500 map

Land at Ermine Street, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire
Archaeological Field Evaluation



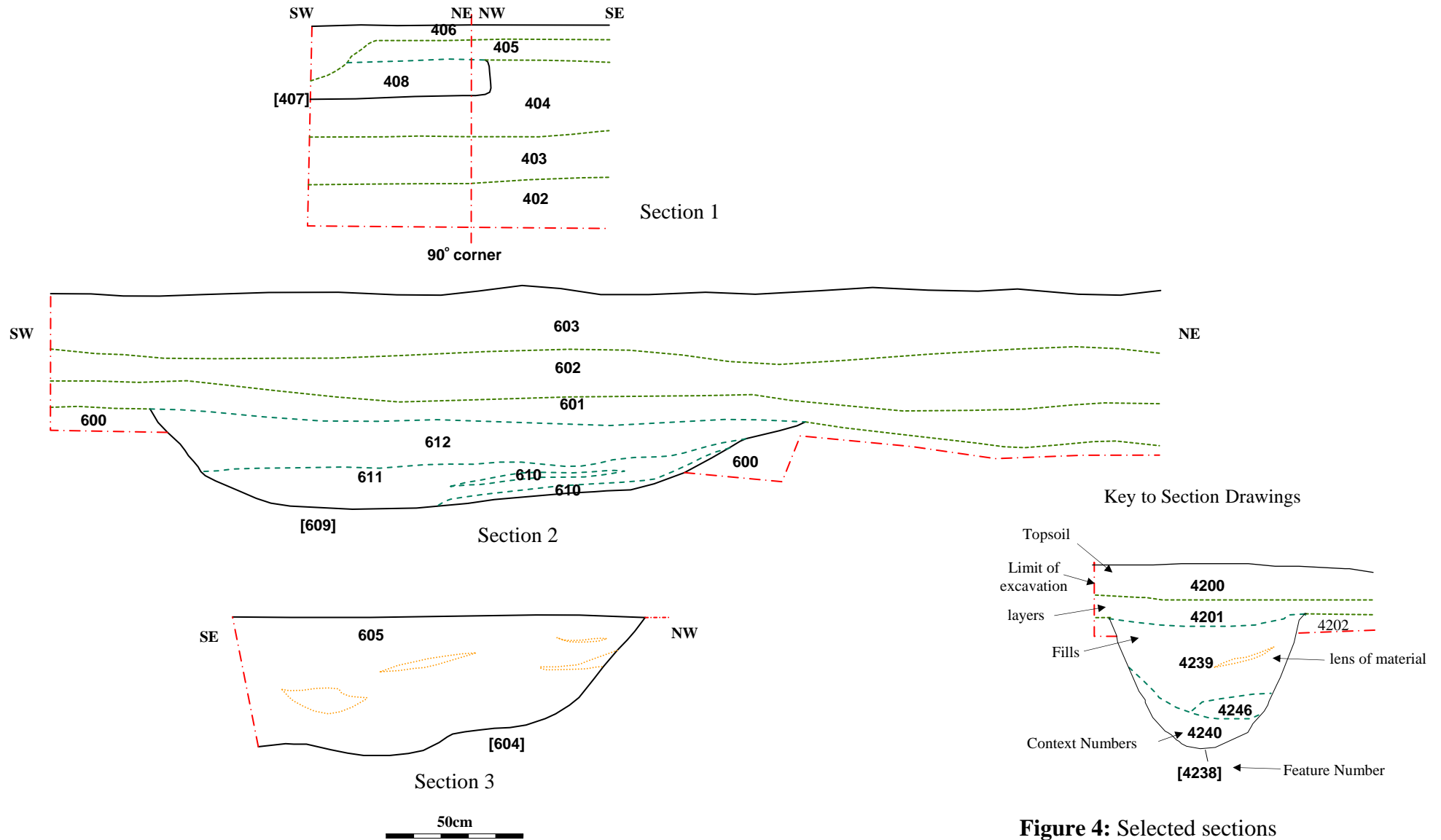


Figure 4: Selected sections



Photograph 1: Modern pit cut [407] in the North end of Trench 4

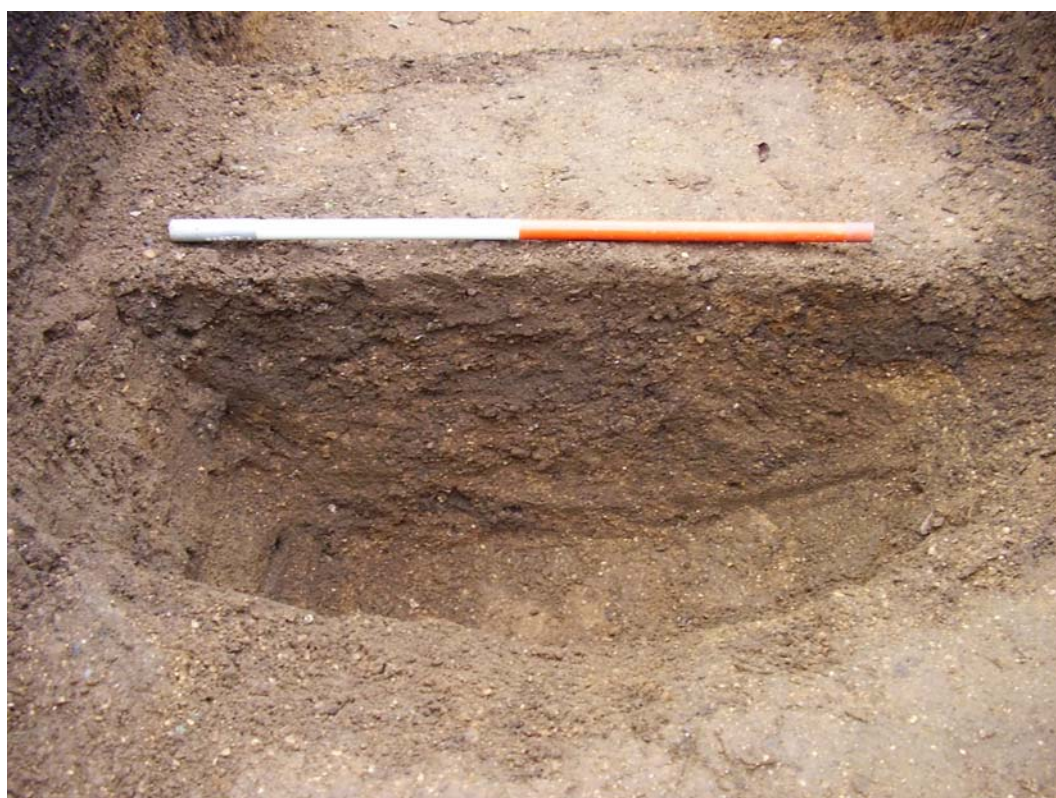


Photograph 2: General view of Trench 6 looking to south-west

Figure 5: Selected photographs 1 and 2



Photograph 3: Mosaic of photographs showing quarry pit [609].
Scale 2m in 0.5metre divisions



Photograph 4: Irregular pit of uncertain function [604].
Scale 1 metre in 0.5m divisions.

Figure 6: Selected photographs 3 and 4