

# Northamptonshire Archaeology

Desk-Based Assessment  
and  
Archaeological Exploratory Works  
at  
19a Station Street, Chatteris  
Cambridgeshire



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December 2005  
Report 06/04

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**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**JANUARY 2006**

**ECB2125**

***NGR TL 3907 8603***

**DESK BASED ASSESSMENT  
AND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATORY WORKS  
AT  
19A STATION STREET, CHATTERIS  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
DECEMBER 2005**

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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project title	Chatteris, Station Street	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out desk-based assessment and archaeological evaluation on 0.35h of land proposed for housing in Chatteris, Cambridgeshire. The development site was shown to have been subdivided from a larger plot sometime after 1950. No archaeology was present. However the remains of mid – late 20 <sup>th</sup> century pits and trenches were observed.	
Project type (e.g. desk-based, field evaluation etc)	Desk-Based Assessment and Field Evaluation	
Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)	None	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown	
Monument type And period		
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Cambridgeshire	
Site address (including postcode)	19a Station Street, Chatteris	
Easting (use numerical 100km grid square no.)	53907	
Northing	28603	
Height OD	9.6m	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	OAA	
Project brief originator		
Project Design originator	NA	
Director/Supervisor	Adrian Burrow	
Project Manager	Mark Holmes	
Sponsor or funding body	Hearthstead Homes	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	December 2005	
End date	December 2005	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no. ECB2125)</b>	<b>Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)</b>
Physical		
Paper		
Digital		
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
Title		
Serial title & volume		
Author(s)		
Page numbers		
Date		

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**DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT  
AND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATORY WORKS  
AT  
19A STATION STREET, CHATTERIS  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
DECEMBER 2005**

*ABSTRACT*

*Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out desk-based assessment and archaeological exploratory works on 0.35h of land proposed for housing in Chatteris, Cambridgeshire. The development site was shown to have been subdivided from a larger plot sometime after 1950. No archaeology was present. However the remains of mid – late 20<sup>th</sup> century pits and trenches were observed.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out a desk-based assessment and archaeological exploratory works during December 2005 at 19A Station Street, Chatteris NGR TL 3907 8603 (Fig 1). Hearthstead Homes have been granted planning permission to develop c 0.35ha of land (planning application: F/YR04/0426/O, issued 21<sup>st</sup> July 2005). Prior to submission of a scheme of Archaeological Mitigatory Works in pursuance of Condition No. 14, the developers commissioned initial exploratory works the results of which are described below.

The archaeological exploratory works, which comprised four trial trenches totalling 175 sq. m, was undertaken in accordance with a specification prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology for Hearthstead Homes (NA 2005). The specification was prepared with reference to the “Brief for Archaeological Evaluation” proposed by the Principal Archaeologist for Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advise (issued 16<sup>th</sup> September 2005).

The purpose of the desk-based assessment and archaeological exploration works was to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development and to place the findings within their regional context.

## **2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

The site is situated in Station Street and covers an area of approximately 0.35ha. The topography of the site is flat, lying at an altitude of c 9.6m OD. It is located just outside the Conservation Area and approximately 200 m west of the town centre.

The site lies on the island of Chatteris, which is formed of an outcrop of Ampthill Clay with patches of March and terrace gravels, surrounded by Fen deposits. Geotechnical investigations nearby indicate that the underlying natural deposits in the immediate surrounding area consist of two distinct clays. The exploratory works confirmed the presence of natural gravel deposits on the site. Mapped by British Geological Survey (BGS 1995).

## **3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Historic Environment Record (Fig 2)**

A search was undertaken of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (HER) as the site lies within an area considered by the Principal Archaeologist for Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advise to be of high archaeological potential. There are no recorded archaeological remains from within the application site itself; however, there are a number of known finds spots in the surrounding area (Appendix 1).

The Historic Environment Record records that Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman features were discovered during an archaeological evaluation carried out on land north of Chatteris church (HER CB15323/ECB123). The site was in close proximity to previously recorded Bronze Age barrows and the archaeological evidence suggested the presence of further barrow remains. A large ditch containing sherds of unabraded pottery from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD may indicate a settlement site of this date nearby.

No medieval remains were found on the church site, however a number of medieval remains have been discovered elsewhere which may be related to the former Benedictine Abbey of the Blessed Virgin Mary (HER 03700). The Abbey which was situated 200m to the east of the development site was founded between 1006 – 1016 by Edroth, bishop of Dorchester and his sister Aelfwen. The buildings burnt down in a fire c 1306, but were rebuilt, as records show that in 1379 fourteen nuns were recorded as living there and thirteen in 1535-6. It was dissolved in 1538 (VCH 2002). A portion of the old wall of the abbey still exists and bounds parts of East Park Street and South Park Street (HER

03832). Stonework discovered in the rear of a garden in West Park Street is reputed to be the gateway of the abbey (HER CB15351). Building material, including pieces of tracery and foundations in a garden in Victoria Street are also believed to be related to the abbey (HER MCB15978).

A medieval drainage pipe was discovered just north of Park Street (HER 01508). The location of the former abbey was reconfirmed during the archaeological investigations in South Park Street. Possible structural features which may be within the precinct survived at the rear of the property, the frontage being truncated by 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century drains, cesspits and levelling.

A mansion was built on the site of the abbey in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but its remains and that of the abbey have mostly been destroyed, latterly by the construction of the Empress cinema in 1935.

In addition to the HER records, a search was made at Cambridgeshire County Records Office for documents relating to previous land use of the development site.

## **Maps**

### *Enclosure Award Map 1819*

The enclosure award map of 1819 shows a small scale plan of the town of Chatteris, surrounded by fields. The development site is situated in the west part of a single plot of land on the north side of Burns Field road (later renamed Station Street after the railway station was built in 1834). On the east side of the plot was a house with what appears to be outbuildings lining the east and north boundaries. It was owned, together with another plot of land to the east by Joseph Saberton. A windmill is situated in a plot of land someway to the west of the site.

### *Map of County of Cambridge & Isle of Ely, Baker, 1816 – 20*

The map of the county of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely was produced by surveyor R. G. Baker during the years 1816 – 1820. It shows a small scale map of the streets of Chatteris and gives an impression of the buildings lining those streets. Burns Field Road is shown as aligned east – west, with a windmill on the north side. The street names of the town are not included, although some of the drover's roads on the periphery of the town are named. The map is too small scale to give an accurate location for the site as no plot boundaries are marked, although there is the suggestion of a building where the site is located.



### **Ordnance Survey Map**

*1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey 25" to the mile map, part of town of Chatteris 1891*

The 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1891 (Fig 3) shows the site within the same plot of land as in the enclosure map. It details the building on the east side as being Ivy House, with outbuildings lining the east and north boundaries. The site is situated in the garden of Ivy House which is in Station Street. Chatteris Station is shown in a plot of land at the west end of Station Street. The windmill, which is now identified as a corn mill, is still recorded lying to the west of the site.

### **Aerial Photograph**

The aerial photograph index at the CRO was consulted and an aerial photograph of Chatteris (Aerofilms A31910) taken from the west was found to cover the area of the site. It was an oblique photograph taken during 1950 looking east across the area of Station Street. In the centre of the photograph can be seen the complete plot of land that the site lies in. The plot must then have been subdivided sometime after 1950, probably being sold off in the post war re-development phase.

### **Ownership of the Plot**

The plot of land that the development site lies within was owned in 1819 by Joseph Saberton, together with the plot to the east as shown on the Enclosure Award Map.

The earliest entry in Kelly's Directory of Cambridgeshire of ownership of Ivy House, Station Street, is for Arthur Ruston, a farmer in 1864. This ownership continues at least up to 1904, by which time it also includes a Bernard Ruston. As the entries give the occupation of those living at the house as farmers, it is probable that the house was originally a farm.

### **The Plot in Modern Times**

Local information suggests that latterly, the plot of land on which the site lies had been used for potato processing; groundworks were known to have been undertaken during this occupation. Concrete was laid at least as early as the 1970s, probably during a change in use of the site. Since then the buildings at the north of the plot have been used for chemical storage.

## **4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY**

Four trial trenches, two of 30m length and two of 15m length, totalling 175m<sup>2</sup> were

excavated using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket (Fig 4). Initial ground-works involved the breaking of the reinforced concrete yard surface with a pneumatic 'pecker' type breaker and the removal of the debris with a toothed bucket. All work was carried out under continuous archaeological supervision.

In all trenches mechanical excavation proceeded down to the level of the natural geology where it was not cut by modern features and deposits. Machine dug sondages were excavated at the end of each trench through modern deposits to examine their extent and to test for any surviving archaeological features beneath.

Samples of potential archaeological features were hand excavated. Standard Northamptonshire Archaeology recording procedures were employed. All works were carried out in accordance with the IFA *Code of Conduct* (rev 2002) and *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (rev 1999) and also *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 2003). Reference was also made to *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource Assessment and 2. Research Agenda and Strategy* (EAA 1997 and 2000). All procedures complied with the Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

## 5 RESULTS OF FIELDWORK

### General

No archaeological features were present in any of the trenches. Nor was any subsoil present, having been completely truncated by modern activity. All of the trenches contained thick deposits of 20<sup>th</sup> century depositional material, which truncated the natural gravels in a series of modern pits, ditches and trenches.

### Trench 1

The natural gravels (107) were encountered at a depth of 0.9m below modern ground surface (8.84mOD), along the northern side of the trench at its western end. Elsewhere the natural gravels had been truncated by a modern linear feature [106] running roughly east north east – west south west along the western half of the trench (Fig 5, Section 1, Plates 1 and 2). This deposit was both filled and overlain by a black sandy silt deposit (105), up to 0.8m thick containing 20<sup>th</sup> century brick, ceramic and other debris. This was overlain by a layer of rock, mortar and broken concrete (104), 0.2m thick which was either a hard

standing or bedding layer for the concrete above. Above this, a 0.10m thick layer of black tar-like material (103) was overlain by reddish/orange sand bedding layer (102), some 0.10m thick, for the yard surface above which comprised 0.2m of concrete reinforced with a steel lattice. An unexcavated baulk was left *in situ* mid trench where it crossed a drain outlet. A machine dug sondage, directly adjacent to this, rapidly filled with ground water, suggesting that the drain ran to a large soak-away pit in this part of the trench. No subsoil was present in the trench, having been truncated by the modern activity.

### **Trench 2**

The natural gravels (208) in this trench were encountered at a depth of 1.95m below modern ground surface (8.7mOD), above which was the same sequence of modern deposits (202 – 206) and concrete surface as found in Trench 1, where a number of smaller pits containing 20<sup>th</sup> century material truncated the natural gravels (Fig 5, Section 2, Plate 3).

### **Trench 3**

The natural gravels (306) in Trench 3 lay at a depth of 0.85m below the modern ground surface (8.92mOD) and had not been as heavily truncated as in Trenches 1 and 2. Overlying this on the western end of the trench was a mid-brown silty sand layer (305), 0.38m thick. This was truncated by [304], the edge of a large cut clearly visible in plan, delineating the southern extent of the modern disturbances (Fig 5, Section 3, Plate 4). It contained the same black silty deposit (303), present in all the trenches. At the west end of the trench a small irregular gully containing sand and gravel with modern ceramic material, was aligned roughly north-west to south east; this was probably a modern soak-drain. The concrete yard surface and its sand bedding layer overlaid this.

### **Trench 4**

The natural sand and gravels (405) lay at a minimum depth of 0.8m, below the modern ground surface (8.79mOD), overlain by a thick deposit of dark brown sandy silt (404), 0.6m deep. A thin layer of black sandy silt (403), 0.08m thick and containing frequent charcoal, ash and organic material overlay this deposit and was in turn covered by the sand and concrete layers, (402) and (401) respectively (Fig 5, Section 4).

## **6 DISCUSSION**

In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the area was altered from being a garden plot to an industrial site, which in at least one phase involved the digging of large pits and trenches (possibly for crop processing), which have removed the evidence for past land use. These features

were rapidly backfilled with waste material and debris, which formed a levelling layer across the site. This was sealed by a concrete yard surface which was laid down in the 1970s.

Although the development site lies within an area considered to be of considerable archaeological potential no archaeological remains were present. Any potential archaeological remains would have been removed by the extensive modern disturbance which was shown to have truncated the natural geology in every trench.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

BGS 1995 Sheet 172: March, Cambridgeshire 1995 Edition, British Geological Survey

EAA 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*

EAA 1997 & 2000 *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern counties 1. Resource Assessment and 2. Research Agenda and Strategy*

IFA 1999 *Code of Conduct, the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*

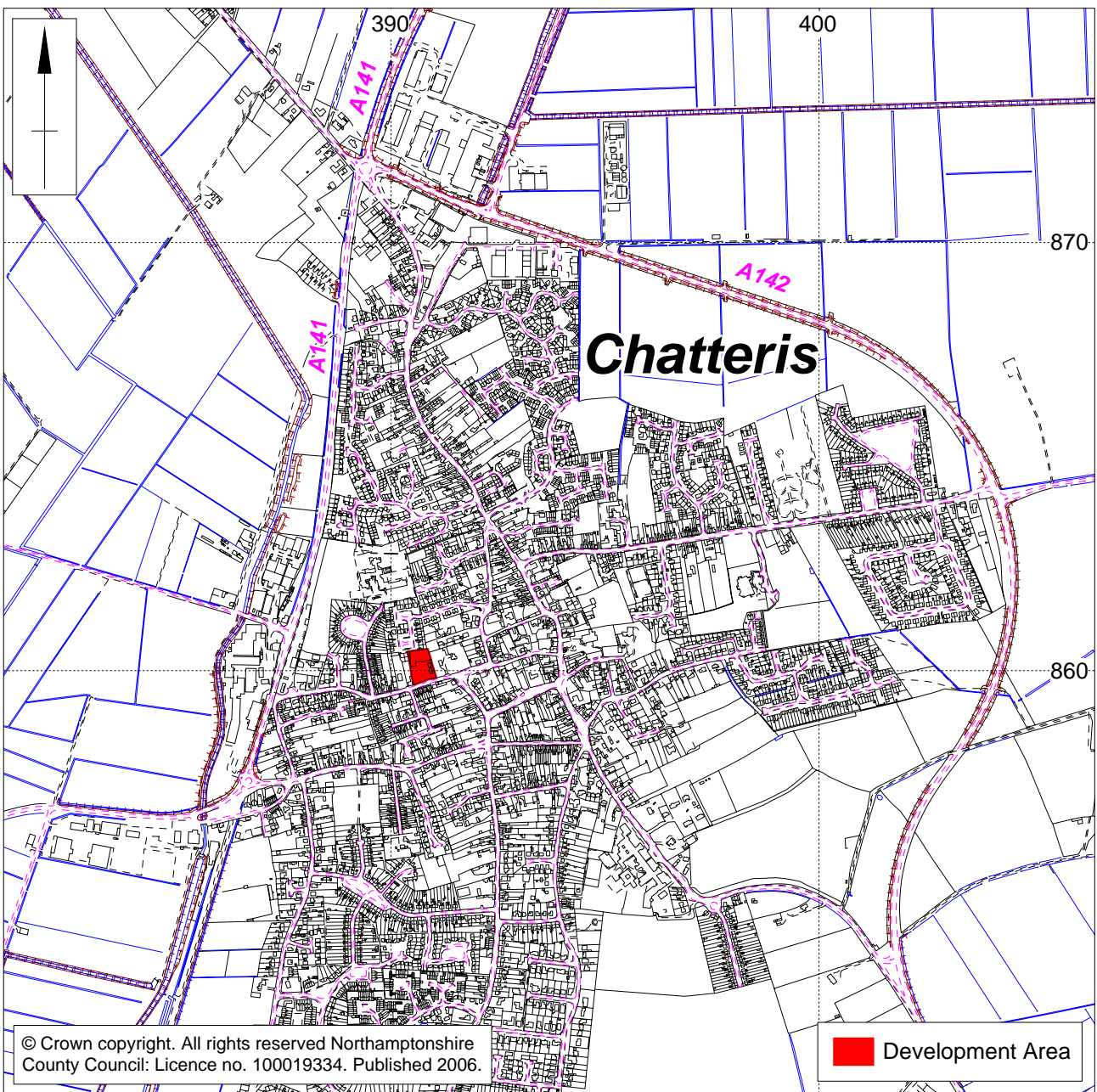
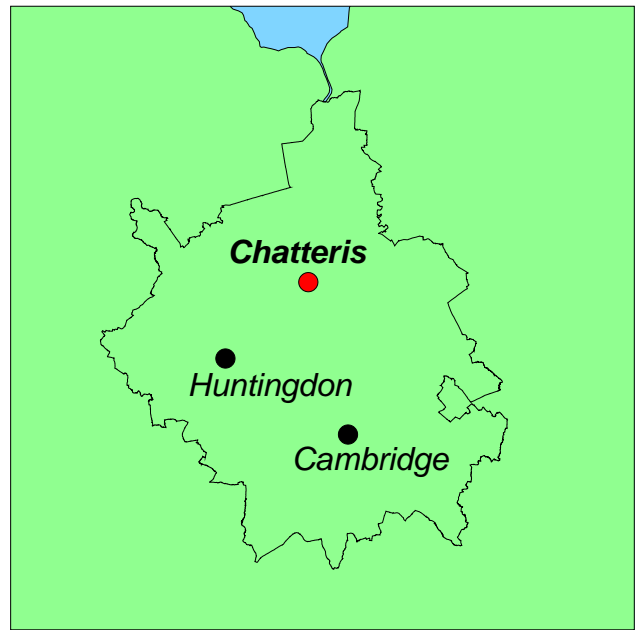
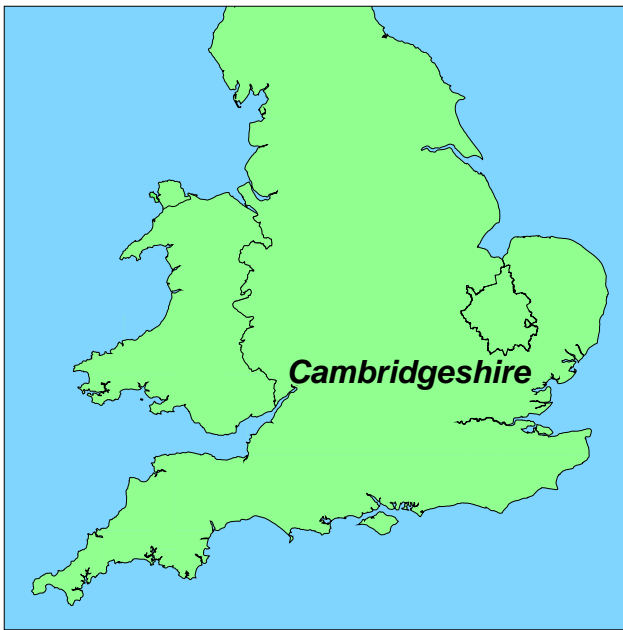
NA 2005 *Specification for Archaeological Exploratory Works (Trial Trenching)*, Northamptonshire Archaeology

NCC Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

VCH 2002 *A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely: Volume 4, 103 – 09*, The Victoria History of the County of Cambridgeshire

**APPENDIX A1: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD DATA**

SMR NO.	GRID REF.	DESCRIPTION
01508	TL39308598	Red brick drainage pipe, found in proximity to the site of the former St. Mary's Abbey
03683	TL3986	Neolithic Stone Axe (Dolomite) exact location unknown
03685	TL396856	Ice House, in good condition, grassed over, good brick entrance
03700	TL39318585	Site of the Abbey Of Chatteris, founded c 1006.
03701	TL394861	Church of St. Peter and St. Paul
03832	TL39318586	Wall of Chatteris Abbey (nunnery). Evaluation found possible medieval features survive at the rear of the property
12004	TL395858	Neolithic polished flint hand-axe
12046	TL397856	Manor House, grounds, ice house, drive, ponds and tree belts
12047	TL396860	Vicarage gardens, parkland with a few trees still surviving
CB14730	TL3937586311	Roman coin
CB14949	TL39398592	Emmanuel United Reformed Church
CB15323 ECB123	TL3950186147	Bronze Age and Roman features. Large sherds of late Bronze Age vessels, antler, loom weight, may indicate the remains of a barrow (others nearby). Large ditch contained large un-abraded 1 <sup>st</sup> century AD pottery sherds. No medieval features despite location in centre of medieval Chatteris
CB15351	TL3924985841	Medieval stonework in rear garden. Reputed to be the gateway to the nunnery
MCB15978	TL3933385802	Fragments of building material from 40 Victoria Street, Chatteris, included fired brick and three pieces of tracery, finder reported foundations seen in garden



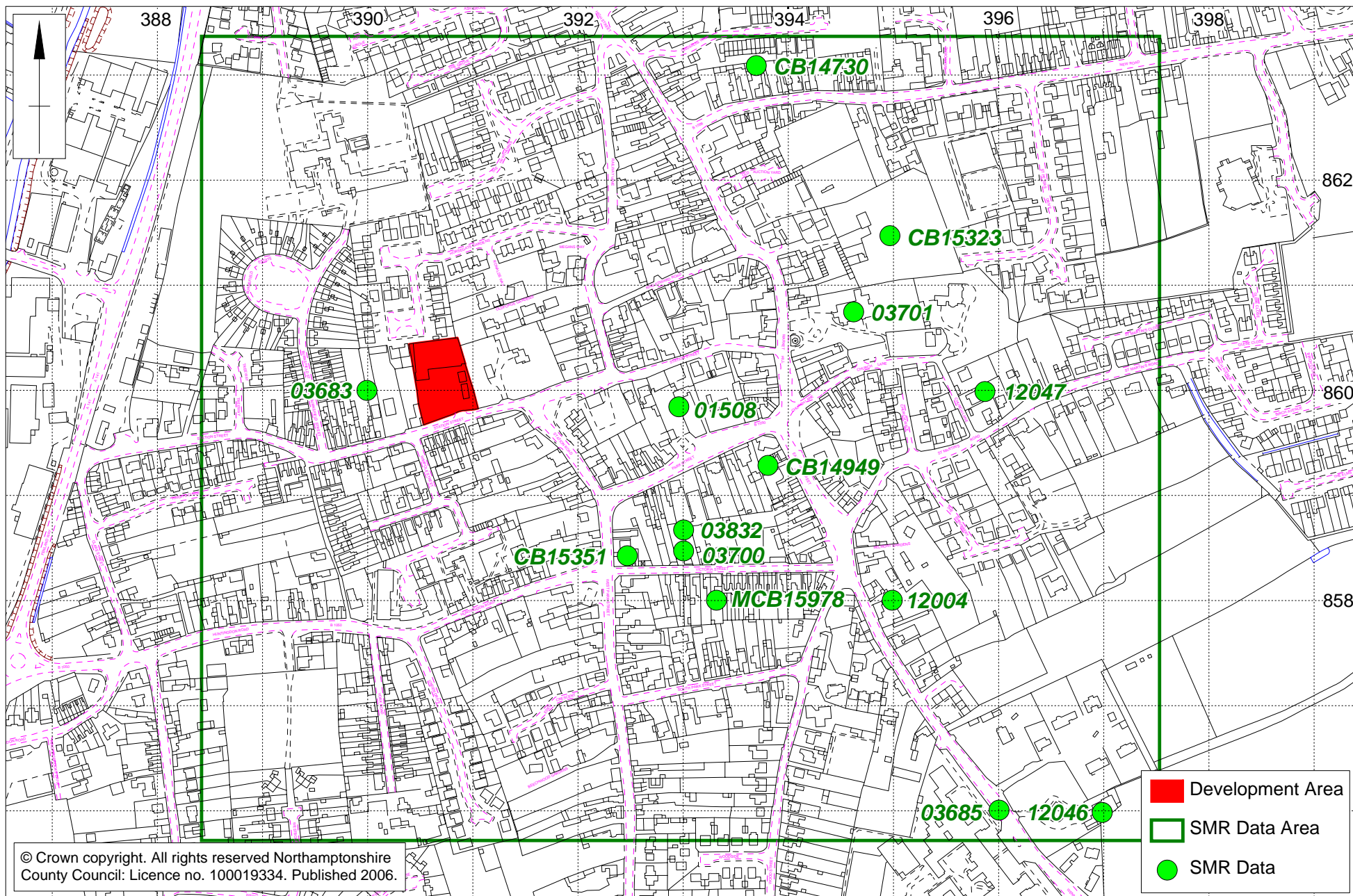
Scale 1:15,000

Fig. 1



Scale 1:5000

Fig. 2





Ordnance Survey Map 1st Edition 1891

Fig. 3



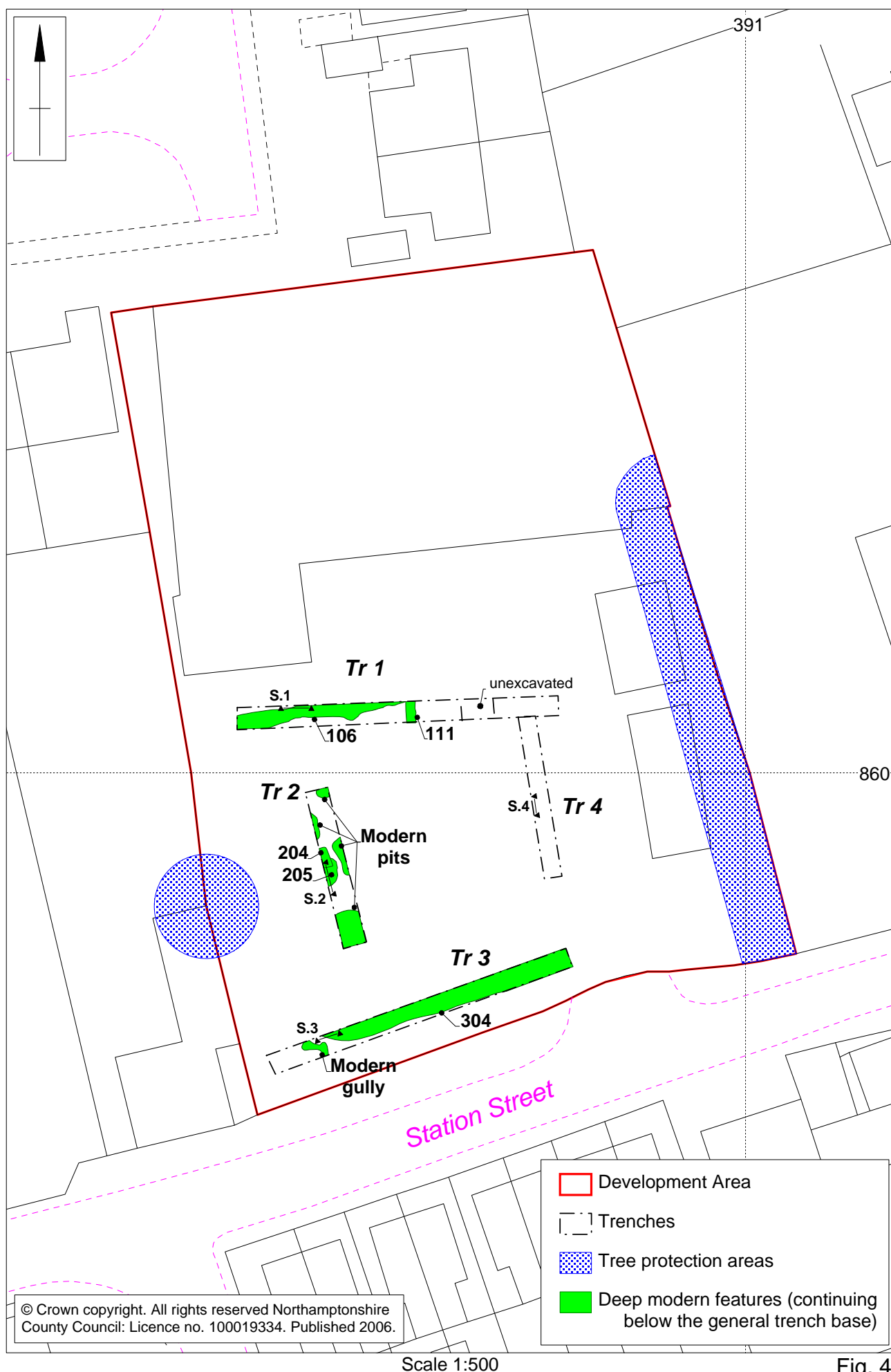
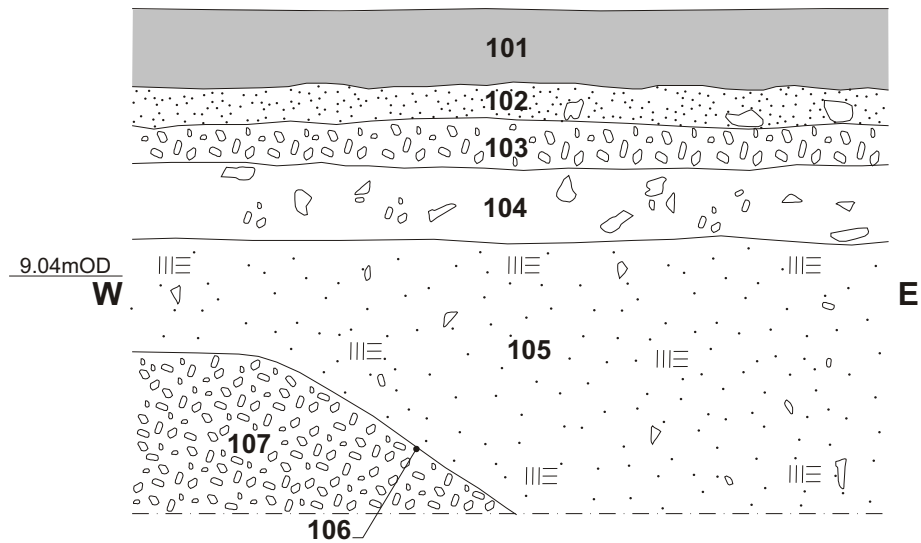
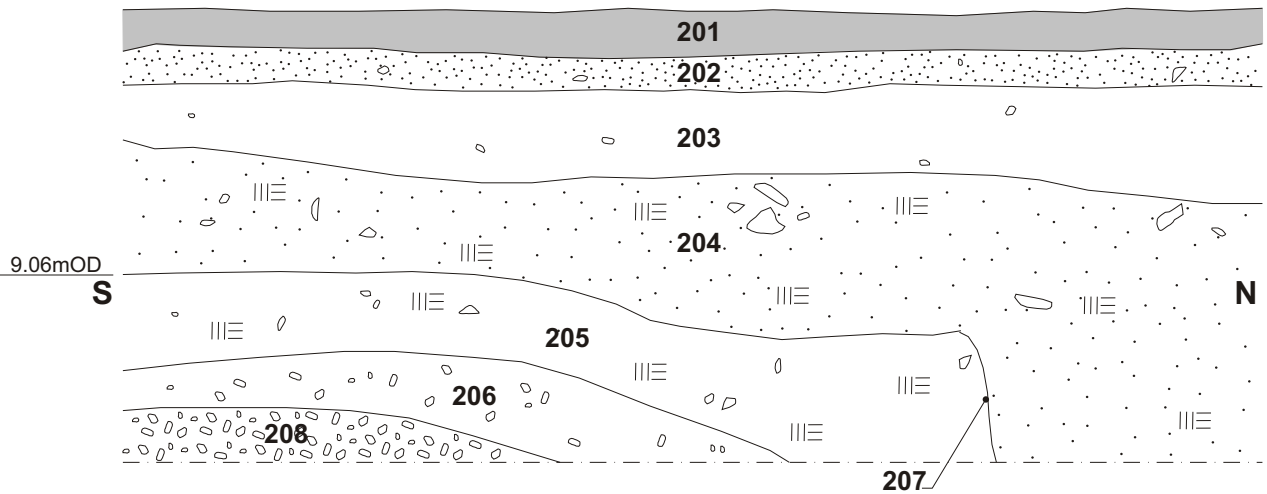


Fig. 4

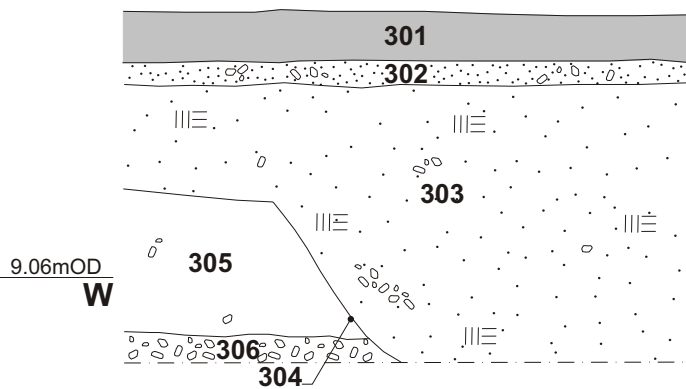
### Section 1 - Trench 1



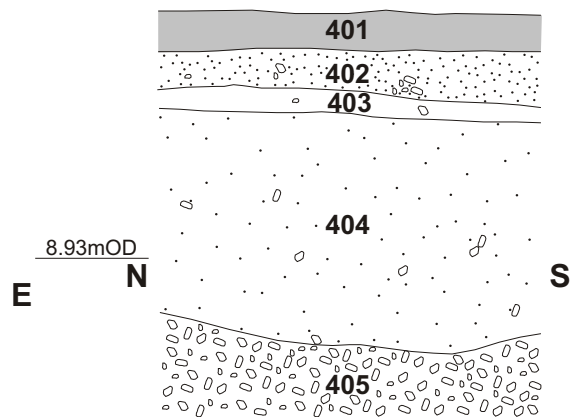
### Section 2 - Trench 2



### Section 3 - Trench 3



### Section 4 - Trench 4



III Clay  
 ■ Concrete

0 1m

Fig. 5





Plate 1

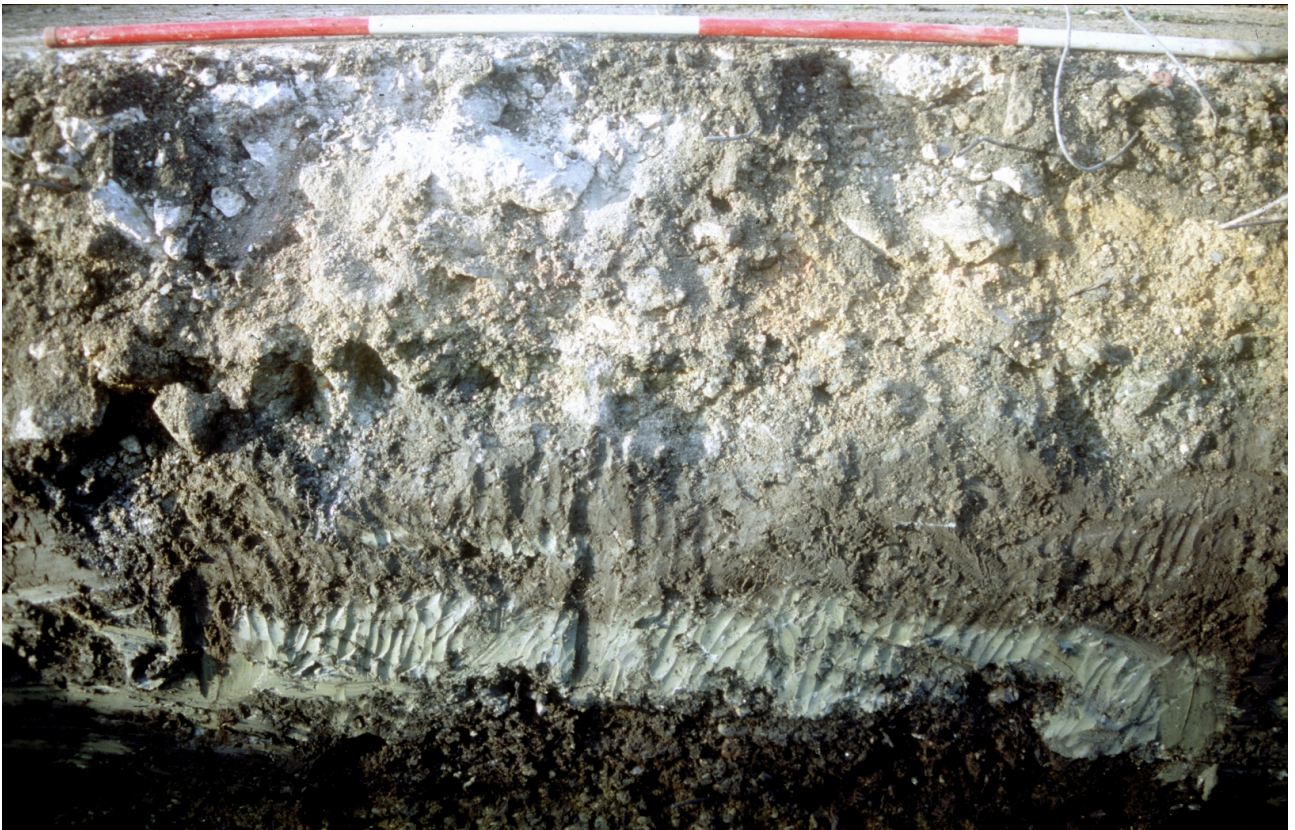


Plate 2



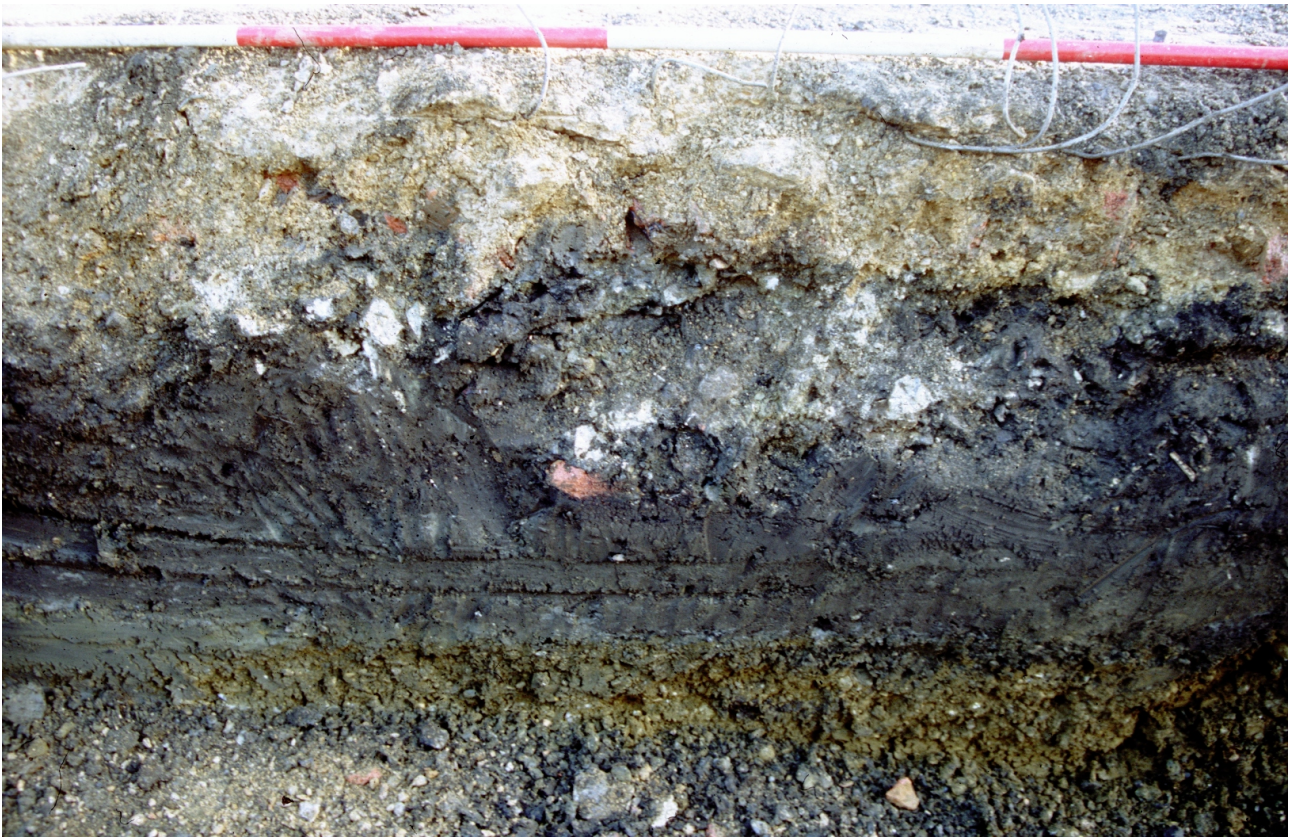


Plate 3



Plate 4