
Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Evaluation at Melton Road,
Burton Lazars, Leicestershire
June/July 2005



Adrian Burrow MA

July 2005

Accession No:X.A.141.2005

Report 05/106

Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton NN4 8BE

w. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk

t. 01604 700493/4

f. 01604 702822

e. sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk



**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
JULY 2005**

NGR SK 4767 3168

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT
MELTON ROAD, BURTON LAZARS,
LEICESTERSHIRE
JUNE-JULY 2005
REPORT 05/106**

LEICESTERSHIRE ACCESSION NO:

X.A.141.2005

STAFF

Project Manager Iain Soden BA
Fieldwork Adrian Burrow MA
 Scott Pannell BA
Text Adrian Burrow
Finds Paul Blinkhorn
Illustrations LeeAnne Whitelaw BSc

QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Tony Walsh		
Verified by	Simon Carlyle		
Approved by	Steve Parry		

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	Melton Road, Burton Lazars, Leicestershire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation of land on Melton Road, Burton Lazars prior to its development for housing. Although no previous archaeological work had been carried out, there was some potential for the presence of archaeological remains based on its proximity to other significant monuments. Ten features including pits, ditches and a quarry, most dating from between the 10th and 13 th centuries AD were present.	
Project type (e.g. desk-based, field evaluation etc)	Evaluation	
Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)	DBA, Entec UK ltd.	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	None	
Monument type And period	None	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	Bone pin-beater, 9 th century onwards	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Leicestershire	
Site address (including postcode)	Hartopp Court	
Easting (use numerical 100km grid square no.)	4767	
Northing	3168	
Height OD	109-116m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator		
Project Design originator	Entec UK Ltd	
Director/Supervisor	Adrian Burrow	
Project Manager	Iain Soden	
Sponsor or funding body	Bovis Homes	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	June 2005	
End date	July 2005	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.) X.A.141.2005	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper		
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Title		
Serial title & volume		
Author(s)		
Page numbers		
Date		

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT MELTON ROAD,
BURTON LAZARS, LEICESTERSHIRE
JUNE-JULY 2005**

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation of land on Melton Road, Burton Lazars, Leicestershire prior to its development for housing. Although no previous archaeological work had been carried out, there was some potential for the presence of archaeological remains based on its proximity to other significant monuments. Ten features including pits, ditches and a quarry, most dating from between the 10th and 13th centuries AD were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

Bovis Homes has purchased land on Melton Road, Burton Lazars, Leicestershire (NGR: SK 767 168), (Fig 1), for which they have a Certificate of Lawful Development for the construction of sixteen dwellings, originating from a planning permission granted in 1964.

Following a desk-based assessment carried out by Entec UK, which established some potential for the on-site presence of archaeological remains, Bovis Homes agreed to fund a programme of archaeological trial works in order to define the extent of the archaeological resource. There has been no previous archaeological work on the site.

Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation in June and July of 2005 with the aim of providing information as to the nature, extent, quality and date of any remains encountered as well as attempting to establish the extent of any ground disturbances across the site.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The known history and archaeology of the site has been recently collated and described in the desk-based assessment by Entec UK Ltd (Atkinson 2003). The following brief summary is provided chronologically.

Prehistoric

There is no evidence for prehistoric occupation in the vicinity of the site.

Roman

Evidence for Roman activity in the area is restricted to artefact scatters in fields around Burton Lazars. No Roman finds have been found within the area of the site or its immediate surrounds.

Medieval

Medieval activity appears to have been focused to the east of the site in the location of the current village, and to the west with the development of Burton Lazars Hospital in the 12th century. A deer park may have existed from the 14th century in the area to the south and it was considered possible that its extent may have included part of the current site. There was no previous archaeological evidence for medieval activity on the site.

Post medieval

The site continued to be outside of the focus of Burton Lazars in the post-medieval period. The western extent of the site and possibly the east has been subject to quarrying from at least this time. During the 19th century it was occupied by agricultural small holdings.

3 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The site covers an area of approximately 1.85 hectares. It lies on the south facing slope of the low ridge on which the village of Burton Lazars is located, at an elevation of between 109m and 116m above Ordnance Datum. There is a very high degree of tree and vegetation cover (Plates 1 and 2).

The drift geology of the area is mapped by the British Geological Survey as consisting of a spur of sand and alluvium within Boulder Clay and Morainic drift (www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm).

4 METHODOLOGY

A total of 150m of trenching was completed, comprising two 30m long and six 15m long trenches, representing a 2% sample of the site (Fig 2). The trenches were excavated using a JCB 3CX excavator with a 1.6m wide toothless bucket under continuous archaeological supervision.

The works were undertaken in accordance with IFA guidelines and standard Northamptonshire Archaeology procedures. Topsoil and subsoil were removed until archaeological deposits or clean natural horizons were revealed. All deposits were hand cleaned sufficiently to identify their nature. Recording was on Northamptonshire Archaeology *pro-forma* context sheets, supplemented by drawn plans at a scale of 1:50 and sections at 1:10 or 1:20. Levels were established in relation to Ordnance Datum and the trench positions recorded in relation to the national Ordnance Survey grid. A photographic record comprising colour slides, black and white negatives and digital colour photos was completed.

The alignment, length and maximum depth of each trench is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Trench Attributes

Trench no.	Alignment	Length (m)	Max depth (m)
1	NW-SE	15	0.61
2	NE-SW	15	0.77
3	NE-SW	30	0.82
4	N-S	15	0.60
5	N-S	15	0.93
6	E-W	15	0.88
7	N-S	30	0.83
8	NW-SE	15	0.85

5 RESULTS

5.1 General stratigraphy

The drift geology across the site comprised a reddish-orange sand and lay at an elevation varying from 110.2m OD in Trench 4 to 116.3m OD in Trench 7. The one area of exception was at the north end of Trench 5 where the quarry pit [505] was cut into yellow/orange clay (506) at 117.63m above OD.

All archaeological features were cut into this layer and were sealed by the subsoil, a firm

mid brown sandy silt with small pebble inclusions. This varied in thickness from 0.2m in Trench 1 to 0.85m in Trench 7.

Above the subsoil in Trenches 3, 4, 5 and 8 was a thin layer of 18th to 19th century demolition material comprising broken brick, pot, tile and general fired material below the topsoil over parts of their sections. Although these layers were of similar composition, their scattered nature across the site indicated that they represent separate events, in some cases, possibly levelling layers. There was no evidence for a buried topsoil below any of these deposits.

There were a number of modern drains and soak-ways present in several trenches, particularly Trench 4, located in a low lying area of the site. This trench also had a pocket of re-deposited yellow sand which represents modern efforts to improve drainage in this area.

The topsoil in all trenches was a dark brown sandy loam with moderate charcoal, small pebble inclusion and extensive organic material. It averaged 0.2m thick across the site.

5.2 Archaeological features

There were a total of 10 archaeological features on the site. These can be sub-divided into 3 categories; ditches, pits and quarry.

Ditches

There were five ditches present, in Trenches 2, 3 and 7. Within Trench 2 was a long and sinuous ditch [204] (Fig 3 and 4) which extended 10.7m along the trench on roughly a north-east to south-west alignment. It had a shallow, concave profile and measured 0.55m wide and 0.13m deep. It was filled by (203), a soft dark brown silty sand with occasional charcoal flecking.

Trench 3 contained two linear features. A small ditch terminal [305] (Fig 3 and 4) extended from the north baulk on a north west-south east alignment. With a narrow, steep sided profile, it measured 0.4m wide and 0.25m deep. It was filled by (304), a moderately compacted mid brown silty sand containing several small rounded pebbles. A second ditch [307] (Fig 3 and 4, Plate 3) was located 2.5m to the south-west of [305] and on the same

alignment. It had a wide, shallow profile and an irregular base and was 2.2m wide, with a maximum depth of 0.27m. The fill, (306) was the same composition as (304).and contained one Stamford ware and two Shelly Coarseware potsherds (Table 2).

There were two further ditches in Trench 7. Towards the south end was [704] (Fig 3 and 5, Plate 4), aligned east-west with a broad, shallow profile. It measured 1.80m wide and 0.42m deep. The slightly irregular, convex base suggested the possibility of this being a double ditch but there was no differentiation of fill visible within the cut. The fill (703) was a dark brown silty sand with moderate charcoal flecking.

At the northern end of the trench, ditch [710] (Fig 3 and 5, Plate 6) was aligned north-west to south-east and had a narrow, steep profile 0.95m wide and 0.43m deep. The sole fill (709) was a firm, dark brown sandy silt with frequent charcoal content and moderate quantities of small, sub-rounded pebbles. It contained a number of sherds from a Stamford ware pitcher, two Shelly Coarseware and one Potter's Marston sherds.

There was no obvious relationship or pattern discernible between any of the ditches. Those that were on similar alignments, such as [307] and [710], had very different profiles, although, broadly contemporary pottery types were present in both.

Pits

There was a total of four pits present, one in Trench 2 and three in Trench 7.

The sole pit in Trench 2 was [206] (Fig 3 and 4), a sub-square feature with shallow, steep sides and a flat base. It measured 1.3m wide and 0.2m deep. The fill (205) was a dark brown silt containing moderate charcoal inclusion.

Of the pits in Trench 7, the largest was [712] (Fig 3 and 5), located at the extreme north end (Plate 5). It was sub-circular in plan, with a shallow upper lip curving down to a steeper lower edge and a flat base. It measured 2.7m wide and 0.87m deep. Its sole fill was (711), a firm dark brown sandy silt with frequent charcoal flecks and moderate small limestone fragments. No dating evidence was recovered from this fill. The comparatively large size and somewhat irregular shape of this pit suggests it may have been a sand extraction pit.

In the mid section of the trench were two pits projecting from the east baulk. Pit [706] (Fig 3 and 5) was oval in plan. It had a somewhat irregular profile with steep north and west

edges and a shallower southern side leading to a curved base. It measured 1.9m wide and 0.45m deep. Its fill (705) was a moderately compacted mottled orange/dark grey sandy silt with occasional small pebble and charcoal fleck inclusion. Two Stamford ware potsherds were retrieved.

Two metres to the north, pit [708] (Fig 3 and 5) had a similar sub-oval plan and a concave profile, 1.78m in width and 0.45m deep. Its sole fill (707) was a moderately compacted mid orange/brown silty sand with charcoal inclusions.

Although no dating evidence was recovered from the fill of [708] it is likely that the two features are chronologically and functionally related. Pit [206] has a very different shape to the other pits, being semi-square in plan and very shallow. Like other features on site, assigning a date to this pit is hampered by the absence of dating evidence.

Quarry

Trench 5 contained what has been interpreted as an area of quarrying (Fig 3 and 5). A single edge [505] was visible, orientated roughly east-west at the north end of the trench (Plate 8). This corresponded to an earthwork scarp visible on the ground. Within this cut was (504), a very compact mid/dark brown sandy silt containing post medieval brick, tile and pottery fragments frequent charcoal flecking and small limestone fragments (Plate 9). Three potsherds of medieval date were also retrieved (see Table 2). A machine-dug sondage was excavated to a depth of 2.5m below the current surface but the base of the feature was not reached. A modern service pipe crossed the mid part of the trench.

There was no subsoil present in Trench 5, the quarry fill (504) was overlain by (503) and (502), both 19th century rubble layers that may have been used as levelling layers with the quarried area. The quarrying most likely dates to the post-medieval period, the medieval pottery present in fill (504) represents residual material in the backfill, although quarrying in the medieval period cannot be precluded. This trench corresponds closely with an area of extensive quarrying identified on the 1st Edition OS map (1886) some 15m directly to the west. It would seem that the quarrying activity extended further east than previously thought.

Stone scatter

In Trench 1 was a scatter of large rounded cobbles in a rough linear alignment (Plate 7). The stones were not set within a trench or cut, nor was one visible in section. The scatter

was *within* the subsoil layer. No finds were present.

6 THE FINDS

6.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 41 sherds with a total weight of 1,124g. It consisted in the main of medieval and post-medieval material, although one context produced sherds which are likely to be of late Saxon date. Overall, the range of pottery types suggest that there was activity at the site between the 10th and 13th centuries.

Fabric

The pottery was recorded using the conventions of the Leicestershire County type-series (Sawday 1994), as follows;

ST: Stamford ware, 900-1150. 19 sherds, 352g.

PM: Potter's Marston ware, 1100-1300. 2 sherds, 38g.

CC2: Chilvers Coton 'C' ware, 1200-1475. 1 sherd, 7g.

EA6: Post-medieval blackwares, late 17th century +. 9 sherds, 647g.

The following fabrics, not in the Leicester type-series, were also noted:

SHL: Shelly Coarseware, Northamptonshire/Bedfordshire types, AD1100-1400 (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 290-2). 4 sherds, 29g.

19th: Mass-produced 19th and 20th century earthenwares. 6 sherds, 51g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 2. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of fabric types is typical of contemporary sites in the region.

Chronology

The bulk of the pottery was of medieval date. The earliest was from context (705), which produced just two sherds of pottery, both Stamford ware, in an unglazed sandy fabric which is typical of the late Saxon products of the industry (Kilmurry 1981). Context (709) yielded a number of large sherds from a Stamford ware glazed pitcher. The vessel

is a type which was a staple of the later part of the tradition, and is a type which ceased to be made around AD1150. The fact that it occurred in association with other 12th century wares indicates that the pottery was deposited sometime between AD1100-1150. The large sherd size and the good, sharp condition of the sherds indicate that it is a primary deposit, and that there was contemporary activity in the immediate vicinity of these excavations. It would appear therefore that there was activity at the site starting in the late Saxon period, probably the 10th century, and continuing into the 13th century.

Table 2: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Context	ST		SHL		PM		CC2		EA6		19th		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
302									9	647	3	14	19thC
306	1	25	2	24									E12thC
503											3	37	19thC
504	1				1	27	1	7					13thC
705	2	32											10thC?
709	16	295	2	5	1	11							E12thC
Total	19	352	4	29	2	38	1	7	9	647	6	51	

6.2 Animal Bone

Animal bone was recovered from three contexts. A pig (*sus*) tibia with possible knife marks was recovered from (305), while a complete pig pre-molar was retrieved from (306). A fragment of cattle (*bos*) scapula was recovered from (504). It has traces of canid gnawing on one end (Karen Deighton *pers. comm*).

6.3 Other finds

A complete bone pin-beater, 90mm in length was recovered from (306). This example, a combined spatulate and point-ended tool has a sub-rectangular cross section, with one end tapered to a point and the other broadened to form a spatulate terminal. Both anterior and posterior surfaces are highly polished with use, with tissue vesicles visible on the spatulate end. It would most likely have been used in association with the vertical two-beam loom introduced in the 9th century. These were used during the weaving process to separate coarse threads that catch on each other when the shed is changed (Alex Thorne *pers. comm*).

7 DISCUSSION

The evaluation identified archaeological activity in Trenches 2, 3, 5 and 7, with a concentration to the south east and north of the site. Apart from profile similarities between ditches [305] and [704], there is no discernable pattern to the distribution of archaeological features on the site.

The pottery evidence suggests that the site was occupied primarily between the 10th and 13th centuries AD. This date range relates to the early development of Burton Lazars village, and in its later phases to the establishment of the Burton Lazars Hospital in the 12th century.

The archaeological features probably represent arable land use rather than a settlement focus. The ditches are suggestive of agricultural or plot boundaries although the presence of a partially intact Stamford ware pitcher and a bone pin-beater within ditch fills suggests proximity to a settlement.

There was a notable degree of homogeneity between most of the fills of features on the site. All features had only a single silty fill of very similar composition and inclusion, suggesting the same basic siltation processes operating across the site. Indeed, most fills were very similar to the subsoil

The evaluation confirmed quarrying in the post-medieval period on the western side of the site. Given its depth, this would have removed any archaeological features which may have existed there. Likewise, it is possible that quarrying activity took place on the west side of the site adjacent to Melton Road in the location of Trench 4. No evidence for ridge and furrow was present on the site.

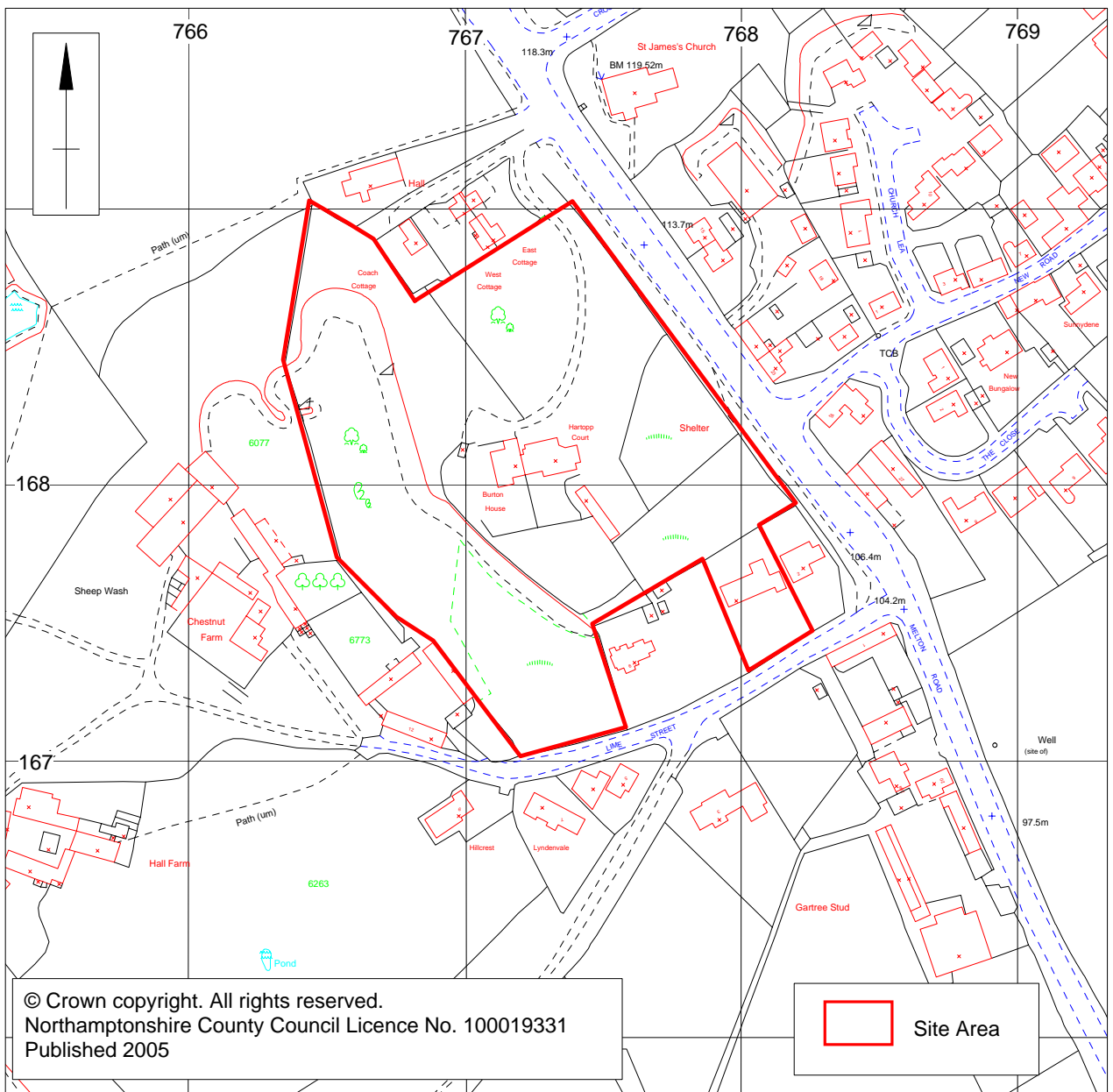
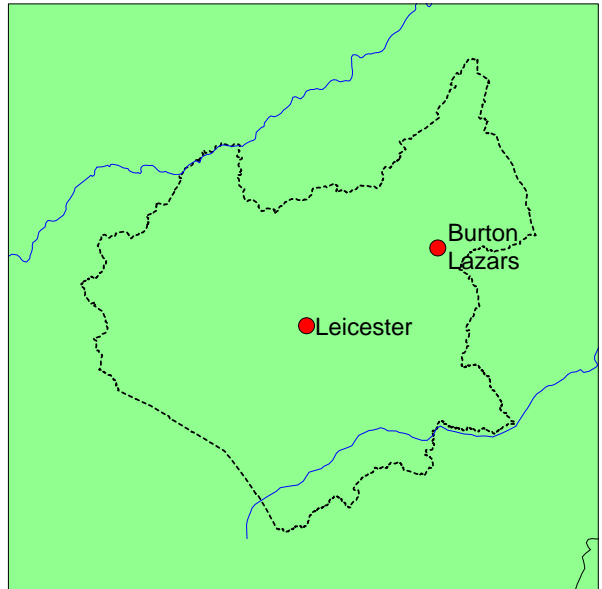
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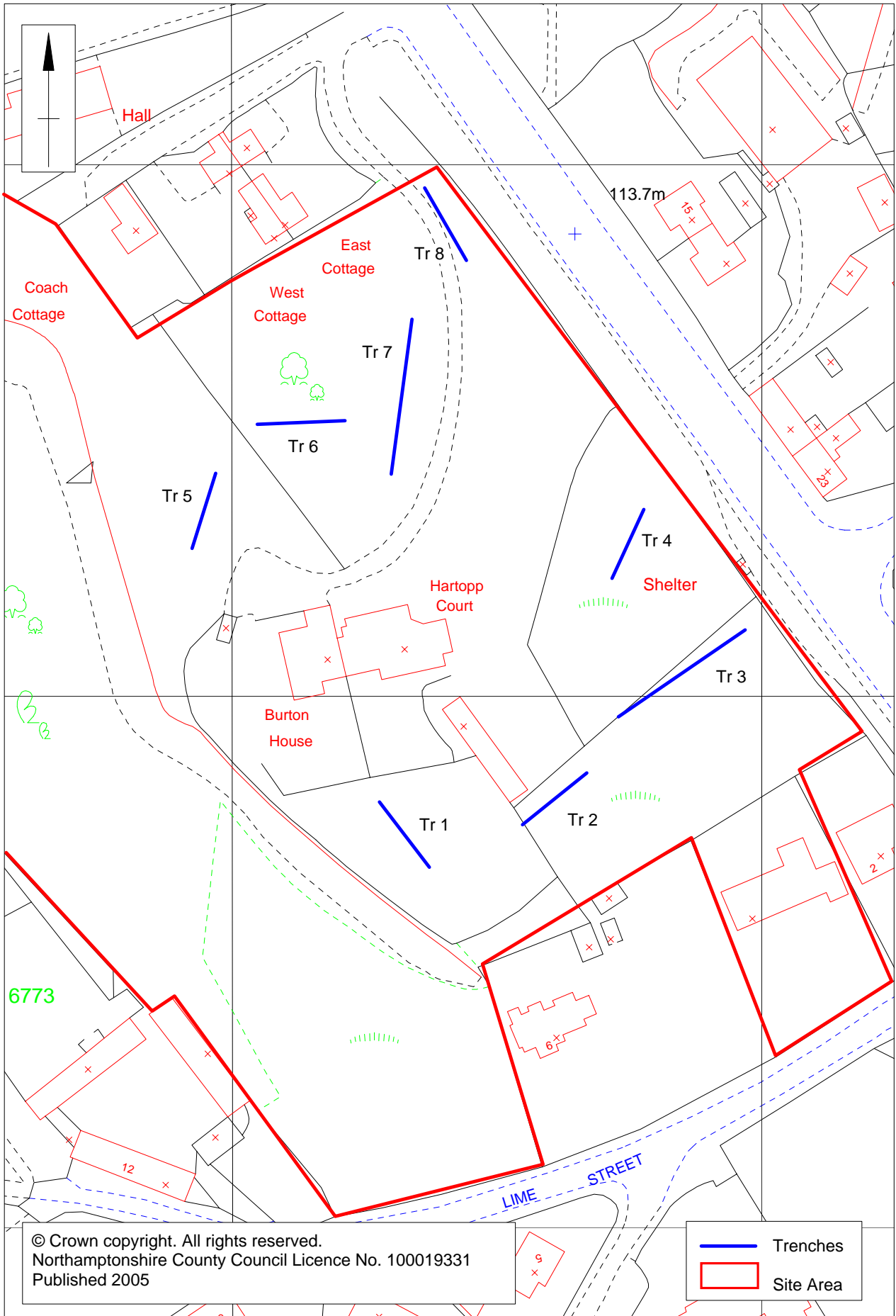
McCarthy, MR and Brooks, CM, 1988 *Medieval Pottery in Britain AD900-1600* Leicester University Press

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Scale 1: 2400

Fig 1



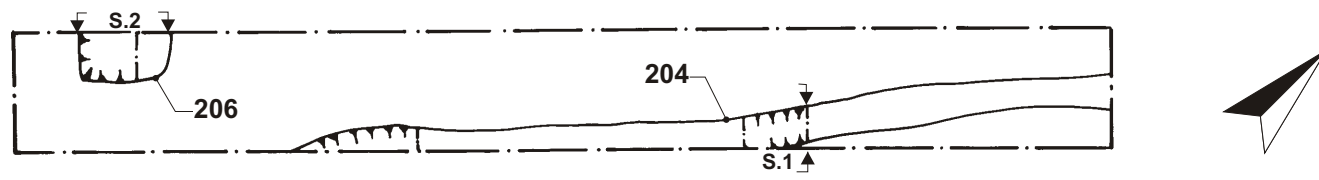
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— Trenches
 □ Site Area

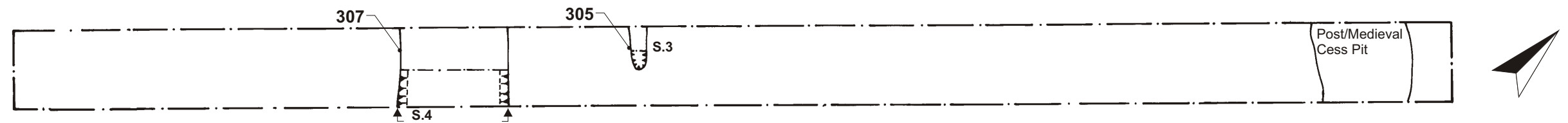
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Fig 2

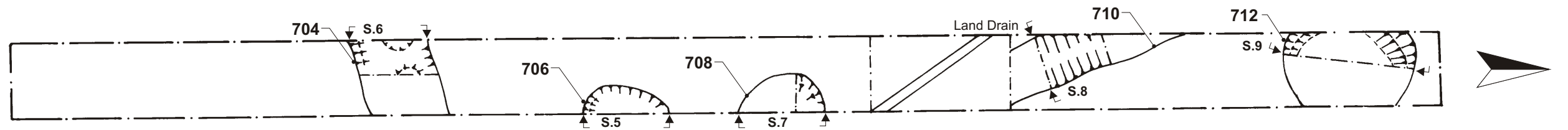
Trench 2



Trench 3



Trench 7



Trench 5

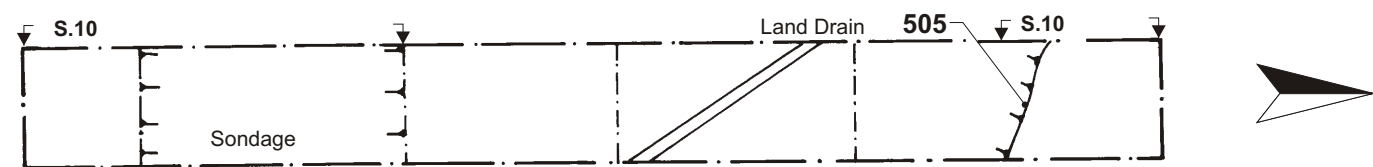
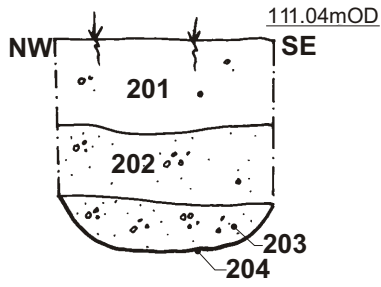
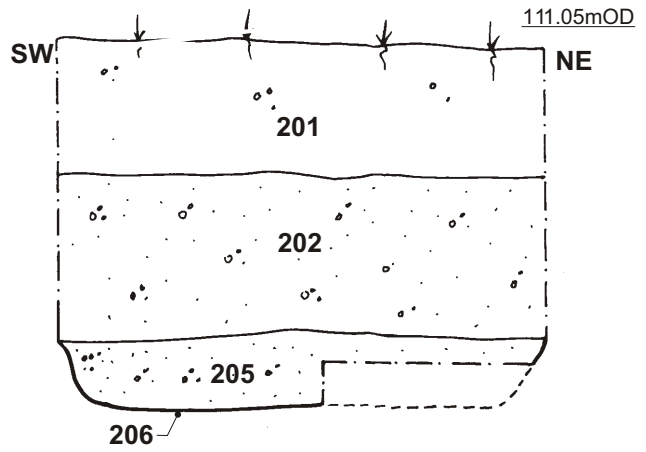


Fig. 3

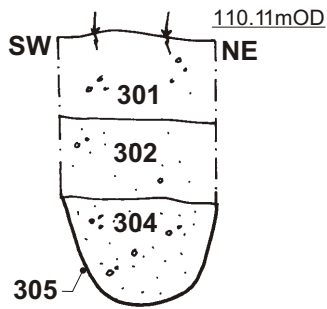
Section 1- Trench 2



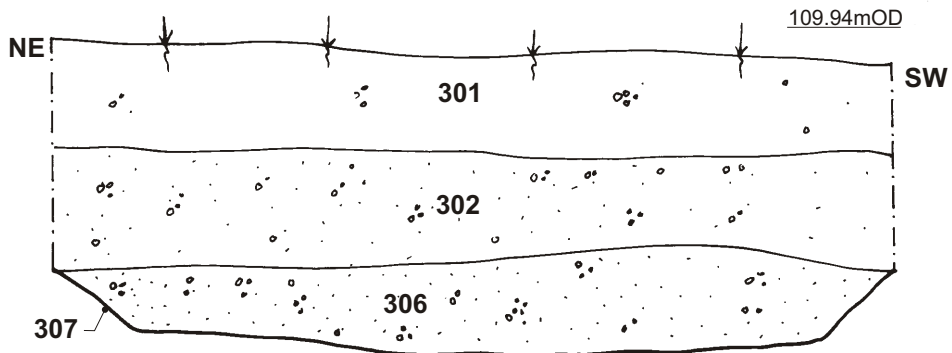
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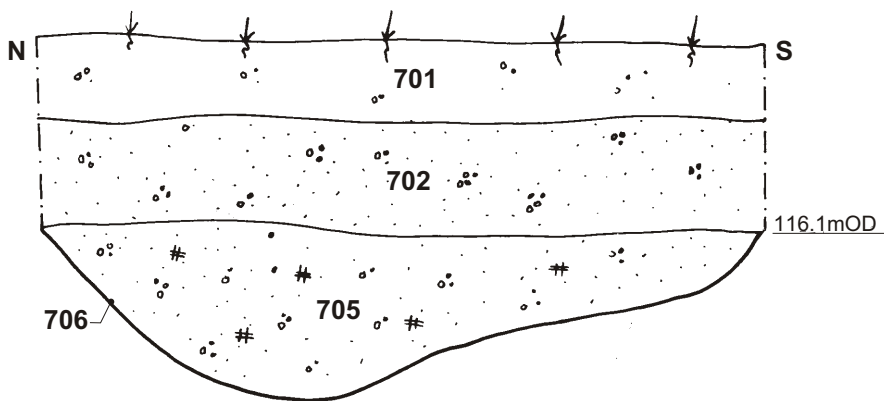
Section 3- Trench 3



Section 4- Trench 3



Section 5- Trench 7



Key



Charcoal



Silt

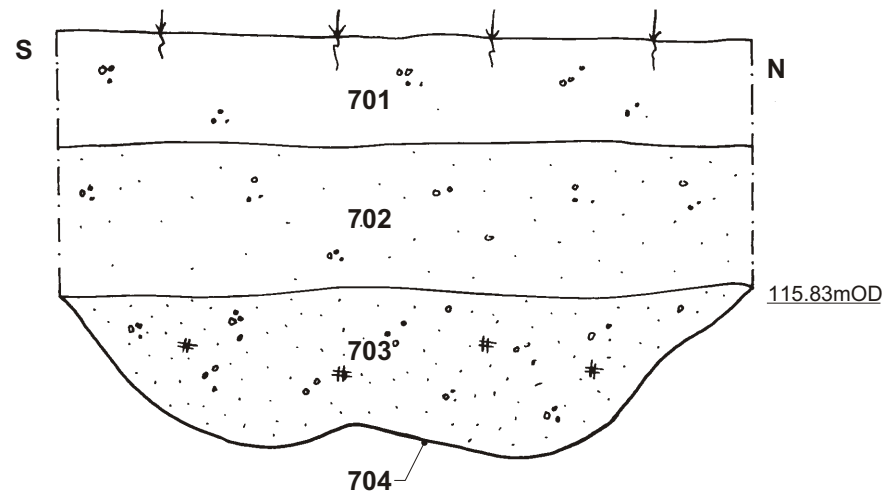


Limestone

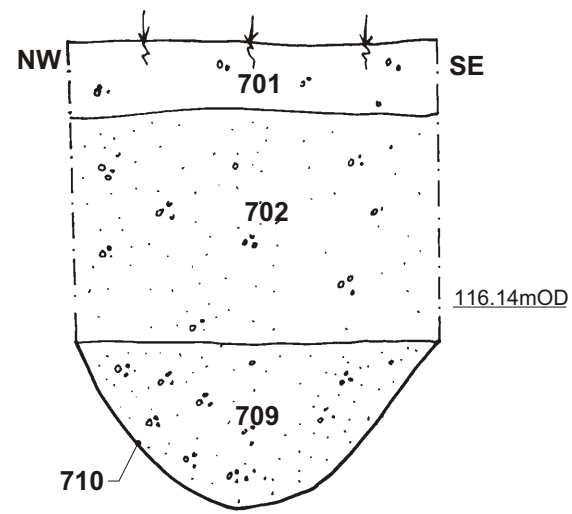


Fig. 4

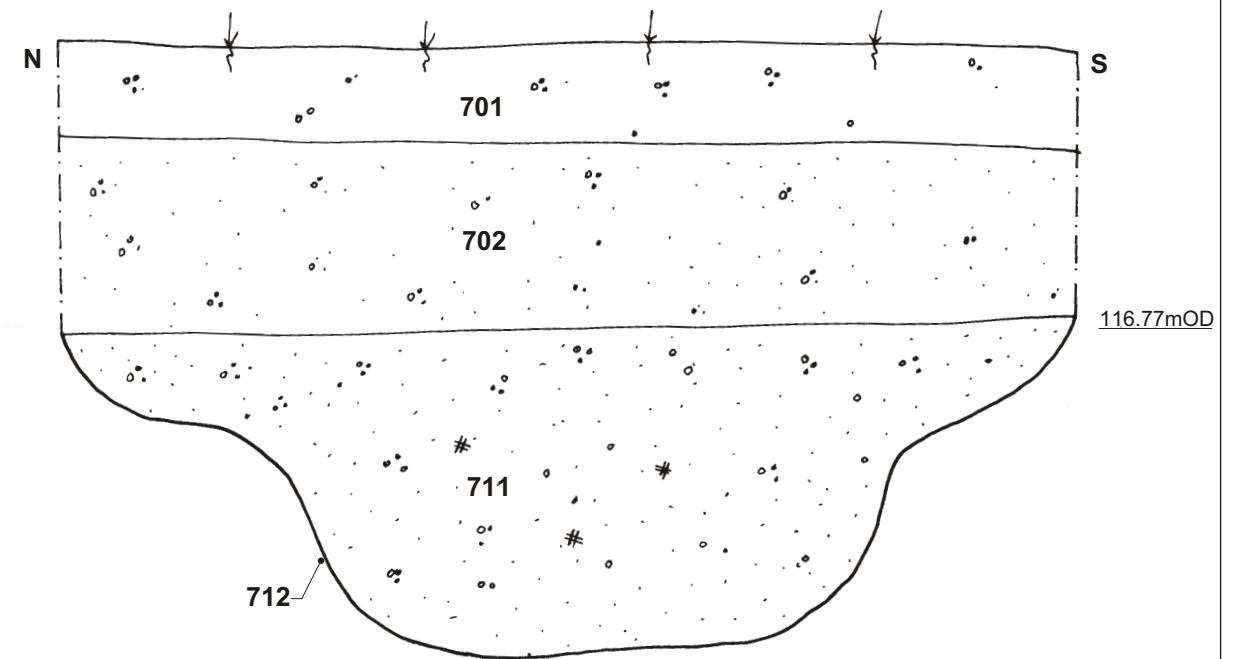
Section 6- Trench 7



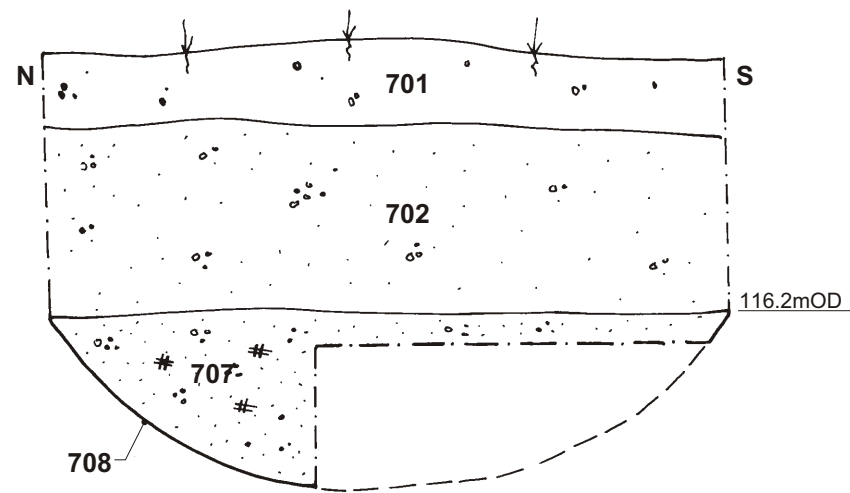
Section 8- Trench 7



Section 9- Trench 7



Section 7- Trench 3



Section 10 - Trench 5

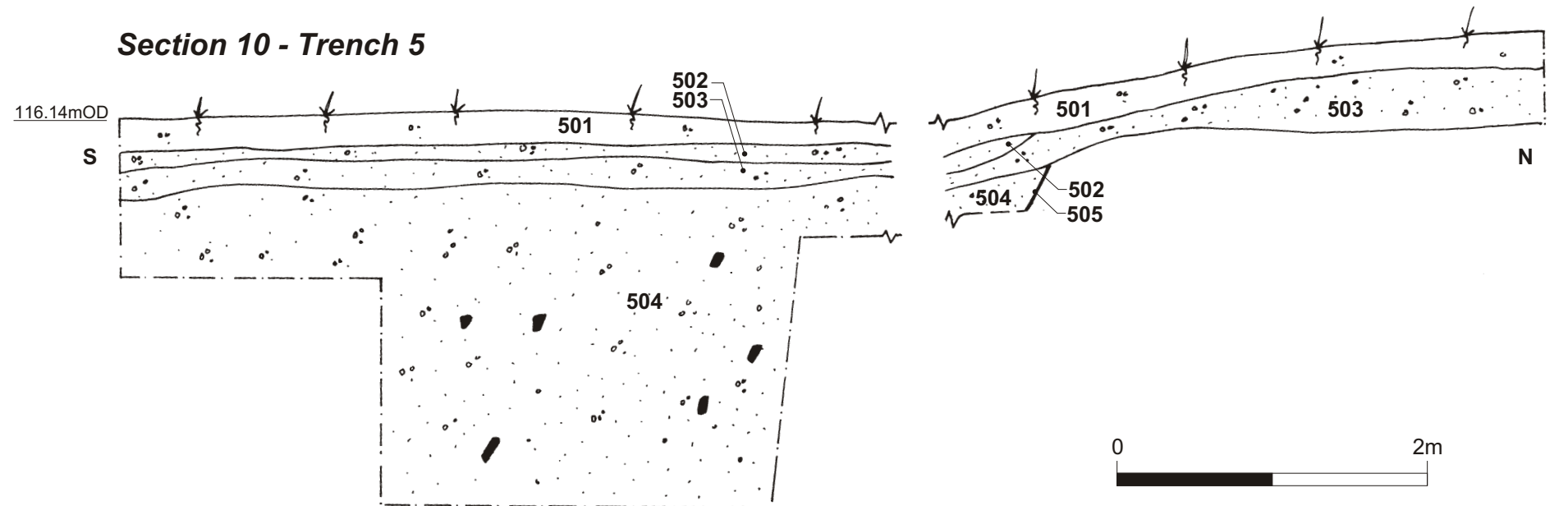


Fig. 5



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7



Plate 8



Plate 9