



Land North of 21 Little Poulton Lane, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire

Archaeological Strip, Map and Record Report

May 2021


Client: Mr John Brown

Issue No: 2020-21/2097
OA Reference No: L11107
NGR: SD 3587 3967



Client Name: Mr John Brown
Document Title: Land north of 21 Little Poulton Lane, Poulton, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire
Document Type: Archaeological Strip, Map and Record Report
Report No.: 2019-20/2097
Grid Reference: SD 3587 3967
Site Code: LPL17
Invoice Code: L11107
Receiving Body: Lancashire County Museums Service

OA Document File Location: X:/Jamie/Projects/L11107_Little Poulton Lane/Report
OA Graphics File Location: X:/Jamie/Projects/L11107_Little Poulton Lane/CAD

Issue No: Final
Date: May 2021
Prepared by: Becky Wegiel (Project Officer); Jeremy Bradley (Project Officer)
Checked by: John Zant (Project Manager: Post-excavation)
Edited by: Rachel Newman (Senior Executive Officer: Research and Publication)
Approved for Issue by: Rachel Newman (Senior Executive Officer: Research and Publication)
Signature: 

Disclaimer:
This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the person/party by whom it was commissioned.

OA South
Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford
OX2 0ES
t. +44 (0)1865 263 800

OA East
15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridge
CB23 8SG
t. +44 (0)1223 850 500

OA North
Mill 3
Moor Lane Mills
Moor Lane
Lancaster
LA1 1QD
t. +44 (0)1524 541000

e. info@oxfordarchaeology.com
w. oxfordarchaeology.com
Oxford Archaeology is a registered Charity: No. 285627



Land North of 21 Little Poulton Lane, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire: Archaeological Strip, Map and Record Report

*Written by Becky Wegiel and Jeremy Bradley with
illustrations by Anne Stewardson*

Contents

Summary.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vii
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Scope of work and methodology	1
1.2 Location, topography and geology	2
1.3 Archaeological and historical background	2
2 RESULTS	6
3 DISCUSSION	11
4 BIBLIOGRAPHY	13
5 APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT LIST.....	13
6 FIGURES	13

List of Plates

Plate 1	Ditch 129 (segment 111), looking north	6
Plate 2	Section through terminal 137 of ditch 135 , looking south	7
Plate 3	Section through gully 133	8
Plate 4	Gully 132 , extending south from gully 133	8
Plate 5	Machine-cut trench on the northern part of the site	9
Plate 6	Gritty ware (left) and a glazed fabric (right) from ditch terminal 137	10

Summary

In January 2018, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned to undertake a programme of archaeological strip, map and record, in advance of the construction of two new residential properties (Plots 1 and 2) to the north of 21 Little Poulton Lane, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire (SD 3587 3967). An archaeological evaluation of the site, undertaken by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology in 2015, had revealed deposits of potential archaeological significance, and it was considered likely that other remains of archaeological interest, potentially at risk of disturbance by the proposed development, could survive on the site. In accordance with the methodology set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), prepared by OA North and agreed with Lancashire County Council's Archaeological Advisory Service, stripping was undertaken first in the southern plot (Plot 1), the intention being to strip Plot 2, to the north, only if it was clear that significant archaeological remains extended into, or were likely to survive within, this area.

In Plot 1, stripping was limited to the western half (approximately) of the plot, adjacent to Little Poulton Lane, since this was where the new house was to be built, and where archaeological features were at greatest risk from the excavation of foundation trenches and other groundworks. Most of this area was subject to controlled archaeological excavation. The eastern part of the plot was to be occupied by a garden at the rear of the house, where little disturbance was anticipated. Consequently, any archaeological remains in this area would be preserved *in situ*.

The archaeological remains recorded in Plot 1 consisted largely of linear features such as ditches and gullies, some of which may have defined a series of rectilinear plots or enclosures. Stratigraphically, at least two phases of activity were recorded, the earliest represented by a pair of roughly parallel, north/south-aligned ditches. At its southern end, the easternmost ditch may have turned east through 90°, but petered out in this direction. Though the two ditches had no direct stratigraphical or physical link, it is possible that they formed two sides of a rectangular enclosure or plot aligned roughly parallel to Little Poulton Lane (with the putative western return of the easternmost ditch possibly marking the southern perimeter).

Subsequently, the western ditch was cut by two narrower, east/west-aligned ditches or gullies. The northernmost was L-shaped, its eastern end turning north through c 90° before terminating abruptly. This ditch terminal yielded the only dating evidence recovered from the site, comprising two sherds of later medieval pottery, one a Gritty ware fragment, probably of the twelfth/early thirteenth century, the other a glazed sherd of uncertain date, but possibly of the thirteenth/fourteenth century. The eastern end of the southern gully turned south to extend beyond the area investigated, the two arms of this feature (north and east) possibly forming the north-east corner of a rectilinear plot, the greater part of which may have lain south-west of the

site. It is possible that the parallel gullies defined the edges of an east/west trackway on the north side of the enclosure, extending into the site from Little Poulton Lane, but this is uncertain. A possible opening or entrance on the north side of the putative track might, perhaps, have been the remains of a 'stock funnel', designed to control the movement of livestock from the track northwards, but again this interpretation is not certain.

On the northern part of the site, a narrow, machine-cut trench was dug, north to south, from the north side of Plot 1 into the centre of Plot 2. This established that the archaeological remains terminated at, and did not extend beyond, a natural east/west depression or 'dip', the lower part of which was filled with hillwash, the top having been deliberately infilled with modern material. Consequently, it was agreed that Plot 2 need not be subject to archaeological monitoring.

Acknowledgements

OA North would like to thank the developer, Mr John Brown, for commissioning the project and Peter Iles, of Lancashire County Council's Lancashire Archaeological Advisory Service, for advice and assistance.

For OA North, the archaeological investigation was undertaken by Becky Wegiel, assisted by Steve Clarke and Mikey Tennant, and was managed by Jamie Quartermaine. The report was written by Becky Wegiel and Jeremy Bradley and edited by John Zant, the illustrations being prepared by Anne Stewardson.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work and methodology

- 1.1.1 **Scope:** in January 2018, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned to undertake a programme of archaeological strip, map and record at a site to the north of 21 Little Poulton Lane, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire (SD 3587 3967; Fig 1), in advance of a proposed residential development comprising two housing plots (designated as Plots 1 and 2; Fig 2). The work followed on from an archaeological evaluation, undertaken by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology in 2015 (Wardell Armstrong Archaeology 2015), which had identified potentially significant archaeological remains on the site.
- 1.1.2 The strip, map, and record, which was undertaken from 24-30th January 2018, was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), prepared by OA North and agreed with Lancashire County Council's Archaeological Advisory Service, and with current professional and established industry best practice (CIfA 2014a; 2014b; 2014c; 2014d; Historic England 2015a). As stipulated in the WSI, the southernmost building plot (Plot 1) was stripped first, the intention being to strip Plot 2, to the north, only if it was clear that significant archaeological remains extended into, or were likely to survive within, this area, since the evaluation had recorded no archaeological features in this part of the site.
- 1.1.3 In Plot 1, stripping was limited to the western half (approximately) of the plot, adjacent to Little Poulton Lane (Fig 2), since this was where the new house was to be constructed, and where archaeological features were at greatest risk from the excavation of foundation trenches and other groundworks. The area to be stripped, most of which was subject to controlled archaeological excavation, was reduced slightly, from the 1030m² proposed in the WSI, to c 835m², in order to maintain a 15m-wide 'buffer' between the area investigated and a hedgerow on the south side of the site, which included a tree that was subject to a Tree Preservation Order. The eastern part of the plot was to be occupied by a garden at the rear of the house, where little disturbance was anticipated. Consequently, any archaeological remains in this area would be preserved *in situ*.
- 1.1.4 To investigate the possible survival of archaeological deposits in the northern part of the site, a narrow (2m-wide), north/south-aligned trench was mechanically excavated for 20m from the northern edge of Plot 1 to the centre of Plot 2. However, nothing of archaeological significance was recorded in this area (Section 2.6).
- 1.1.5 **Fieldwork methodology:** across the area subject to strip, map and record, topsoil was removed mechanically, under archaeological supervision, using a toothless ditching bucket, down onto the surface of the underlying drift geology, into which all archaeological features had been cut. This was cleaned by hand, using either hoes, shovel scraping, and/or trowels. The areas investigated were located by means of a differential Global Positioning System (dGPS) and altitude information was established with respect to Ordnance Survey (OS) Datum.

- 1.1.6 All features of archaeological interest were investigated and recorded in a stratigraphical manner using a system adapted from that used by the former Centre for Archaeology of English Heritage (now Historic England), including the use of *pro forma* context sheets with an accompanying pictorial record (plans, sections, and digital photographs). Primary records were available for inspection at all times.
- 1.1.7 **Archive:** a full professional archive will be compiled in accordance with current guidelines (ClfA 2014c; Historic England 2015a; 2015b). The archive will be deposited with Lancashire County Museums Service (accession number LANMS:2020.5) and a copy of this report lodged with the Lancashire Historic Environment Record (LHER).

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 Little Poulton is situated to the east of Poulton-le-Fylde, on the west bank of the River Wyre, approximately 20km north-west of Preston and c 5km north-east of Blackpool (Fig 1). The development site itself lies on the western edge of Little Poulton, bounded to the west by Little Poulton Lane, to the south by a track and to the north and east by fields that were under pasture at the time of the investigations. Little Poulton Hall stands on the west side of Little Poulton Lane, almost directly opposite the site (Fig 2). The land within the study area slopes gradually from north-east to south-west, from 10.3m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), in the north-east corner of the site, to 8.9m aOD, to the south-west.
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology comprises Permo-Triassic red mudstones, siltstones and sandstones, overlain by thick deposits of glacial and post-glacial till, with pockets of post-glacial peat occurring throughout the area (Countryside Commission 1998; Middleton *et al* 1995). The drift geology is in turn overlain by fine loamy soils, with some slowly permeating soils and subsoils, which create the potential for seasonal waterlogging (British Geological Survey 1983). The natural substrate observed during the 2018 investigations comprised a compact orange-brown clay silt, into which all the recorded archaeological features had been dug.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 **Prehistory (to AD 43):** the earliest evidence for a human presence in the vicinity of Poulton-le-Fylde comprises an elk skeleton associated with barbed bone points, which was found at High Furlong, to the south of the town (Hallam *et al* 1973). This find, one of the earliest in the North, demonstrates the presence of hunting groups in the area during the late Upper Palaeolithic period, c 13,500-11,500 BC, soon after the end of the last Ice Age. The only evidence for activity in the near vicinity of the site during the Mesolithic period (c 9000-4000 BC) is provided by the discovery of a possible Mesolithic stone-blade fragment from a site at Garstang Road East, less than 300m south of the site (Zant and Vannan in prep), which was residual in a Roman-period context. Two radiocarbon determinations providing date ranges in the Mesolithic period also came from charred materials at the same site, but again, the dated samples were residual in much later features.
- 1.3.2 South of Poulton, at Lytham Moss, evidence was found of an anthropogenic burnt layer, dated by radiocarbon assay to 7080-6800 cal BC (8390±150 BP; Hv-4343; Middleton *et al* 1995, 87), within the earlier part of the Mesolithic period, and flint

scatters from the surrounding area (*ibid*) are likely to date to the late Mesolithic (after c 6000 BC) or the early Neolithic period (c 4000-3500 BC). Pollen data from coring adjacent to Holts Lane, c 800m south-west of the Little Poulton site, suggest the proximity of mixed woodland and scrub-type vegetation during the late Mesolithic period (Rutherford in prep), whilst the presence of charcoal in some of the recorded deposits may indicate deliberate woodland clearance by burning, possibly in association with grazing. The coring evidence further suggests that a local marine transgression occurred in the sixth millennium BC, which may also have affected lower-lying areas closer to the estuary of the Wyre (*ibid*). Later, perhaps during the first half of the fourth millennium BC, the evidence indicates the development of local freshwater habitats, suggesting a possible reduction of sea level in the nearby estuary.

- 1.3.3 Remains dating to the Neolithic period (c 4000-2500 BC) and Bronze Age (c 2500-800 BC) are more common within the area than those of earlier periods, although the majority of finds are concentrated to the south of Poulton-le-Fylde, around Lytham Moss and Peel. These include stone and metal implements (Middleton *et al* 1995, 87), in addition to a human skull that was found to the south-west of the town (Wells and Hodgkinson 2001). It has also been suggested that prehistoric finds from along the line of the road known as Dane's Pad, approximately 2km to the south, indicate the presence of a possible prehistoric trackway (Middleton *et al* 1995, 90). The evidence as a whole implies that, whilst some areas were probably regularly frequented, local populations may have been quite mobile, and probably exploited several different landscape zones, such as coasts, mosses and areas of boulder clay (*op cit*, 205).
- 1.3.4 The Iron Age (c 800 BC-c AD 70) is notoriously under-represented in Lancashire (Hodgson and Brennand 2006, 51; Haselgrove 1996, 61), although this is probably the result of poor survival, a lack of a distinctive material culture, and the inherent difficulty in recognising potentially subtle regional site-types (Hodgson and Brennand 2006, 53; Cowell 2005, 75; Haselgrove 1996, 64), rather than low population density. Although there is little direct evidence for Iron Age activity in the Fylde, the palaeoecological record implies that there was extensive and permanent woodland clearance throughout the area during this period (Middleton *et al* 1995, 206). The pollen evidence from Holts Lane is also suggestive of woodland clearance, perhaps associated with cereal cultivation, during the earlier part of the Iron Age, which was followed by a period of peat formation (Rutherford in prep).
- 1.3.5 **Roman Activity (c AD 70-410):** writing at Alexandria around the middle of the second century AD, the Greek geographer Claudius Ptolemaeus (Ptolemy) made reference to the *Portus Setantiorum* ('harbour of the Setantii'), which appears to have been somewhere in north-west England (Shotton 2004, 6-7). There is a tradition that this site may have been at the mouth of the River Wyre (*ibid*), somewhere in the vicinity of modern Fleetwood, which, if correct, would place the Fylde within the territory of the Setantii tribe during the Roman period. However, it is equally likely that the *Portus Setantiorum* was elsewhere in the North West, possibly on the River Mersey, which appears to have been named by Ptolemy as *Seteia* (*ibid*), or to the north of Morecambe Bay, with the tribal lands of the Setantii lying in southern Cumbria. Notwithstanding these uncertainties, it is possible that the Setantii occupied a large part of north-western England, bounded to the east by the Pennines, to the south by

the Ordovices and Cornovii of north Wales and Cheshire, and to the north by the Carvetii of northern Cumbria (*op cit*, 4).

- 1.3.6 During the nineteenth century, it was postulated that a Roman road (Margary 1973, road 703) was constructed between the fort at Dowbridge, Kirkham (Howard-Davis and Buxton 2000), approximately 6km south of Poulton, and the putative *Portus Setantiorum* at the mouth of the Wyre (Middleton *et al* 1995, 99; Lancashire County Council 2005). It has also been suggested (Ratledge 2009) that a Roman fort might have been constructed at Poulton itself. However, there is currently no evidence for the existence of such a fort, whilst recent surveys have failed to locate the road in its suggested position to the west of the town (Middleton *et al* 1995, 99). Furthermore, the necessity for a road between Kirkham and a putative harbour on the Wyre might also be questioned, on the grounds that Kirkham lies close to the mouth of the River Ribble (Howard-Davis and Buxton 2000, 3), and probably lay even closer to the river in the Roman period, given the higher sea levels at that time. Consequently, it is conceivable that Kirkham itself could have been the elusive *Portus Setantiorum* (*op cit*, 2–3). Certainly, excavations indicate that three successive temporary camps were constructed there during the late first- and early second centuries AD, and that a small fortlet or signal station was built prior to the construction of a stone auxiliary fort in the early second century (*op cit*, 68–70). However, the later installation may have been in use for only a relatively short time, being abandoned around the middle of the second century (*op cit*, 76).
- 1.3.7 Until recently, evidence for Roman-period rural settlement in the area was restricted to a site at Burn Hill, Thornton-Cleveleys (LHER 26074), north-west of Poulton, but even this has not been extensively investigated. Additionally, two finds of Roman quern stones, an artefact type often associated with rural settlements, have been made in the area, one (LHER 351) at Staynall, north of the Wyre Estuary, and a second (LHER 2035) at Wharles, north of Kirkham. This lack of evidence had, in the past, been used to support the suggestion that the Fylde was not densely settled during the Roman period (Middleton *et al* 1995, 206–7). However, environmental evidence from the area, for example north of the Wyre estuary, and on the higher land to the east of Poulton, suggested, on the contrary, that there was continued, and even increased, woodland clearance during this period, which may well reflect settlement expansion (*ibid*). These data are now supported by the discovery of a number of Roman-period ‘native’ settlements in the area, most notably at Garstang Road East, less than 300m south of the Little Poulton site (Zant and Vannan in prep) and at Bluebell Way, to the east of Preston (OA North 2014). These sites are characterised by roundhouses associated with other occupation features and (in the case of Garstang Road East) with rectilinear ditched enclosures. Both yielded small quantities of ‘Romanised’ pottery, whilst scientific dating from Garstang Road East suggests that the settlement was occupied within the period from the late first century AD to the mid-third century (Zant and Vannan in prep).
- 1.3.8 **Earlier and later medieval activity (c 410-1540) and post-medieval activity (1540-1900):** the name Poulton derives from the Old English *pol* and *tun*, meaning a settlement beside a pool or stream (probably, in this case, the Skippool), and is first recorded in Domesday Book (Mills 1976, 122). The ‘le-Fylde’ element was, however, a

nineteenth-century addition, intended to distinguish the town from Poulton-le-Sands, which later became Morecambe (Lancashire County Council 2005). In late medieval documents, Poulton-le-Fylde was referred to as *Poulton Magna* or *Kirk Poulton*, implying that it was a parish centre (*ibid*), although there is little direct evidence for pre-Conquest settlement. Consequently, it is unclear when Poulton was first settled, but the regularity of the roads and plot sizes in the town suggest that it was probably deliberately planned, perhaps in the late eleventh century, when Roger de Poitou granted the estate to St Mary's Priory in Lancaster (Farrer and Brownbill 1908, 167).

- 1.3.9 The pattern of late medieval settlement and agriculture in the lands fringing wetland areas of the Fylde is illustrated by a plan of Lytham Moss, produced in 1532, which shows ploughed fields in the vicinity of dispersed farmsteads between small nucleated settlements (Middleton *et al* 1995, 101), and it is likely that the majority of settlements in the Fylde, in common with those in Lancashire in general, consisted of dispersed landholdings scattered throughout large estates (Newman 1996, 114). Historical references to the cultivation of grass and corn provide some evidence for the nature of some of the agricultural practices in the Fylde during this period (Middleton *et al* 1995, 100).
- 1.3.10 By the seventeenth century, the mosses of the Fylde were being reclaimed, and were used for a mixture of rough pasture and peat extraction (Middleton *et al* 1995, 107). However, during this period flooding, which may in part have resulted from the reduction of ground levels by peat digging, caused disruptions to these practices, and to the region's transport system (*ibid*). These ongoing problems led to the eventual construction of the Main Dyke in 1731, which channelled the outflow of Marton Mere westwards to the Lytham-Skipool valley and then to the Wyre (*ibid*). This drain, the course of which passed c 300m to the north-east of the Little Poulton site, also appears to have canalised a stream, named as the *Skippon fluvius* on maps produced by Saxton (1577) and Speed (1610), which probably formed part of Skipool Creek.

2 RESULTS

- 2.1 The following section provides a summary of the results of the strip, map, and record exercise. A listing of all contexts recorded is provided in *Appendix 1*.
- 2.2 The natural geology (**102**) comprised an orange-red sandy silt, with occasional patches of gravel, into which a series of archaeological features had been dug (Fig 3). These consisted largely of linear features such as ditches and gullies, some of which may have defined a series of rectilinear plots or enclosures. Stratigraphically, at least two phases of activity were recorded, the earliest represented by two roughly parallel, north/south-aligned ditches (**129**, to the east; **134**, on the west), set c 17m apart. These extended across the full width of the site (c 15m) but continued beyond the stripped area in both directions. To the north, however, they appear to have terminated, or petered out, adjacent to the southern edge of a natural hollow or depression (*Section 2.6*). As they survived, they were 1.35-1.45m wide and 0.3-0.55m deep, with broadly U-shaped profiles (Fig 4; Plate 1) and were filled with grey or grey-brown sandy-silt soils. At its southern end, **129** may have turned west through 90° (as **107**) but extended in this direction for only 1.75m before petering out. Though the ditches had no direct stratigraphic or physical link, it is possible that they formed two sides of a rectangular enclosure aligned north to south, roughly parallel to Little Poulton Lane, with **107** possibly marking its southern boundary.



Plate 1: Ditch 129 (segment 111), looking north (0.5m Scale)

- 2.3 Subsequently, the western ditch (**134**) was cut by two east/west-aligned features (**133**, **135**), set 2.5-3m apart (Fig 3), filled with grey silty deposits containing varying amounts of orange clay mottling. It is possible that these defined the edges of an east/west trackway extending into the site from the west (*Section 3.3*). The

northernmost ditch (**135**) was L-shaped, up to 1.3m wide and 0.4m deep, with a flat-bottomed, V-shaped profile. Extending into the site from the west for c 7m, its eastern end turned north through c 90° before terminating abruptly. This terminal (**137**; Plate 2) yielded the only dating evidence recovered from the site, comprising two sherds of medieval pottery (*Sections 2.7-8*). The southern feature (**133**; Plate 3) was more probably a gully, only 0.6m wide and 0.2m deep, and extended into the site for a little over 12m before turning south (as **131**), again through approximately 90°, being traced for a further 6.5m before continuing south of the stripped area. The two arms of this feature (north and east) possibly formed the north-east corner of a rectilinear plot, the greater part of which may have lain south-west of the site. The north-east corner of this putative enclosure may itself have been sub-divided into a small, rectangular feature, c 5.5 x 2.75m (Fig 3), by an L-shaped gully (**132**; Plate 4), 0.6m wide and 0.2m deep (Fig 4), that extended south from **133**.



*Plate 2: Section through terminal **137** of ditch **135**, looking south (0.5m scale)*



Plate 3: Section through gully 133 (1m Scale)



Plate 4: Gully 132, extending south from gully 133 (0.5m scale)

- 2.4 The only other feature recorded was a narrow, curving gully (**130**), 0.6m wide but only 40mm deep, with a shallow, U-shaped profile (Fig 4), located c 5m east of ditch **135** (Fig 3). This had no stratigraphic or physical link with any of the other recorded features, but more closely resembled the later gullies (**133**, **135**) than the larger, earlier ditches (**129**, **134**). Spatially, it is conceivable that it was associated with **135**,

- to the west, these possibly forming two sides of an 'entrance' or 'stock funnel' (Section 3.4).
- 2.5 Over most of the stripped area, both the natural geology and the archaeological features dug into it were directly overlain by modern topsoil. However, in the eastern part of the area investigated, it was sealed by a grey-brown silty soil (**101**), up to 0.6m thick, possibly a colluvial (hillwash) deposit, beneath the topsoil.
- 2.6 On the northern part of the site, a machine-cut trench, 2m wide and 20m long (Plate 5), was dug (under archaeological supervision), north to south, from the northern edge of Plot 1 into the centre of Plot 2 (Fig 2), through a thick deposit of earth and modern debris. This established that the archaeological remains in Plot 1 terminated at, and did not extend beyond, a natural east/west depression or 'dip', c 10m wide and over 1.5m deep, the lower part of which was filled with an accumulation of hillwash, the top 1m having been deliberately infilled with the modern material. Consequently, it was agreed that Plot 2 need not be subject to archaeological monitoring.



Plate 5: Machine-cut trench on the northern part of the site

- 2.7 **Finds:** the only artefacts recovered from the site were two small but seemingly unabraded sherds of medieval pottery (Plate 6), weighing 27g, which came from **137**, the terminal of ditch **135** (Section 2.3). The primary fill of this feature (**138**; Fig 4) yielded a glazed body sherd in a pale buff-pink fabric, with a reduced core containing abundant, poorly sorted quartz grains up to 2mm in size. The glaze is yellowish-olive green in colour. The other fragment, from secondary fill **139**, is a rim sherd in Northern Gritty ware. As the name implies, this reduced fabric is gritty in texture, containing

abundant well-sorted quartz-sand inclusions up to 1mm in size. The square, everted rim indicates that the sherd derives from a jar with a rim diameter of c 100mm.



Plate 6: Gritty ware (left) and glazed pottery (right) sherds from ditch terminus **137**

- 2.8 The glazed fragment, being a body sherd, is difficult to date, and close regional parallels for the fabric remain elusive, but it can probably be broadly dated to the thirteenth/fourteenth century. The gritty sherd, on the other hand, belongs to the widespread Northern Gritty-ware tradition that dominates twelfth- to early thirteenth-century ceramic assemblages from northern England and southern Scotland (Mainman and Jenner 2013, 1185). Two production sites associated with Gritty wares are known in the vicinity of Lancaster, at Ellel and Docker Moor, but the products of these kilns are usually in oxidised fabrics (White 1993; Gibbons 1986; Edwards 1967), unlike the reduced fabric of the sherd from **137**. Finer, typically thin-walled, straight-sided cooking jars with everted or flattened everted rims are attested from a site at Bluebell Way, on the east side of Preston (OA North 2014, 27-8), but the Little Poulton fragment derives from a thicker-walled vessel.

3 DISCUSSION

- 3.1 On the admittedly slender evidence of the two potsherds recovered from terminal **137** of ditch **135** (*Sections 2.7-8*), the archaeological features recorded during the investigations are tentatively assigned to the later medieval period, perhaps attesting to activity on the site sometime during the period from the twelfth- to the fourteenth century. Most of the features are, however, effectively undated; it is conceivable, therefore that some, including ditch **134**, which was cut by **135** (*Section 2.3*), are earlier. The lack of stratigraphic links only exacerbates the problem, though spatial evidence does suggest two broad phases of activity, the first represented by parallel ditches **129** and **134** (*Section 2.2*), the second by a complex of smaller ditches or gullies (**130**, **131**, **132**, **133**, **135** (*Sections 2.3-4*)).
- 3.2 The purpose of none of the features could be established with any certainty, but there is nothing to suggest that they had anything other than an agricultural function. Nothing can be said of the earliest phase of activity, other than to speculate that ditches **129** and **134** might have formed two sides (respectively east and west) of a rectangular enclosure c 17m wide, and at least 15m north to south, aligned broadly parallel with Little Poulton Lane. The south side of this may have been marked by ditch **107**, a western return of **129** at its southern end (*Section 2.2*), but this was too poorly preserved for certainty. To the north, there was no evidence that the putative enclosure extended beyond a natural hollow filled with colluvium and modern material (*Section 2.6*), in which case it may have measured no more than 16m north to south.
- 3.3 The second phase of activity appears to have included the creation of a rectilinear enclosure at the south-west corner of the area investigated, defined by gullies/ditches **131** and **133** on the east and north respectively (Fig 3), the greater part of which may have lain south-west of the stripped area. On the north side of this was a possible east/west-aligned track, c 2.5-3m wide, defined to the south by the north side of the enclosure (gully/ditch **133**), and on the north by L-shaped gully/ditch **135**. This interpretation is, however, based purely on the perceived spatial relationship between **133** and **135**; certainly, no evidence of a trackway surface was recorded. If it did exist, the track presumably extended east into the site from Little Poulton Lane itself, to which it had a broadly perpendicular alignment.
- 3.4 It is conceivable that the curving eastern end of ditch **135**, represented by terminal **137** (Fig 3; *Section 2.3*) was associated with curvilinear gully **130**, to the east, these features possibly forming (respectively) the western and eastern sides of some kind of 'entrance' or opening on the north side of the putative track. Superficially, this resembles the 'mouth' of a 'stock funnel', broadly V-shaped features designed to control the movement of livestock, examples of which are known in medieval rural contexts in Lancashire, for instance, at Leyland, south of Preston (Atkin 1985, 175), and at Hazelrigg, south of Lancaster (Zant *et al* 2016). Following this hypothesis, the mouth of the feature at Little Poulton, c 8m wide, would have been on the south, narrowing (to c 5m) to the north, perhaps being designed to funnel livestock northwards from the putative trackway. That such features continued in use into the post-medieval period is evidenced by Yates' map of Lancashire, published in 1786 (Yates 1786), which

clearly depicts such a feature in an agricultural enclosure at Longthwaite, to the north of Hazelrigg (Zant *et al* 2016, 35, fig 6).

- 3.5 Despite the limited nature of the archaeological investigations at Little Poulton, therefore, it is possible to suggest that the second phase of activity comprises elements of a later medieval agricultural landscape, perhaps associated with a contemporary settlement focus at Little Poulton itself, though there is no direct evidence for this. Whilst archaeological evidence for medieval rural settlement in Lancashire is scarce (Newman 1996), examples of similar landscape features are known from the county, most notably at Hazelrigg, near Lancaster, where a system comprising ditched enclosures/fields, trackways and possible stock funnels, similar in many respects to the remains investigated at Little Poulton, were dated by radiocarbon assay, supported by ceramic evidence, to the thirteenth century (Zant *et al* 2016, 32-3).

4 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cartographic Sources

British Geological Survey, 1983 *Soil survey of England and Wales 1:250 000 soil map*, Harpenden

Saxton, C, 1577 *Lancastriae Comitatus palatin vera et absoluta descripto Anno D'ni 1577*, scale 10 miles = 2 5/8", in C Saxton, c 1579 *Atlas of the Counties of England and Wales*, London

Speed, J, 1610 *The countie palatine of Lancaster described and divided into hundreds 1610*, repr in *A prospect of the most famous parts of the world*, London (LA DDP 144 /1) 10 miles: 2.5 inches

Yates, W, 1786 *The County Palatine of Lancaster*, London

Secondary Sources

Atkin, MA, 1985 Some settlement patterns in Lancashire, in D Hooke (ed), *Medieval villages*, Oxford Univ Cttee Archaeol Monog, 5, Oxford, 171-86

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), 2014a *Code of conduct*, Reading

CIfA, 2014b *Standard and guidance for archaeological evaluation*, Reading

CIfA, 2014c *Standard and guidance for the creation, preparation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*, Reading

CIfA, 2014d *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials*, Reading

Countryside Commission, 1998 *Countryside character: the character of England's natural and man-made landscape, 2: The North West*, Cheltenham

Cowell, RW, 2005 Late prehistoric lowland settlement in north-west England, in M Nevell and N Redhead (eds), *Mellor: living on the edge*, Manchester, 65-76

Edwards, BJN, 1967 The Docker Moor kiln site, in RAC Lowndes, *A medieval site at Millhouse, Trans Cumberland Westmorland Antiq Archaeol Soc*, n ser, 67, 48-50

Farrer, W, and Brownbill, J (eds), 1908 *A history of the county of Lancaster*, 2, London

Gibbons, P, 1986 Docker Moor pottery: work in progress, *Contrebis*, 12, 41-6

Hallam, JS, Edwards, BJN, Barnes, B, and Stuart, AJ, 1973 A late glacial elk with associated barbed points from High Furlong, Lancashire, *Proc Prehist Soc*, 39, 100-28

Haselgrove, C, 1996 The Iron Age, in R Newman (ed), *The archaeology of Lancashire: present state and future priorities*, Lancaster, 61-73

Historic England, 2015a *Management of research projects in the historic environment: the MoRPHE project manager's guide*, London

Historic England 2015b *Digital image capture and file storage: guidelines for best practice*, London

Hodgson, J, and Brennand, M, 2006 The prehistoric period resource assessment, in M Brennand (ed), *The archaeology of north-west England. An archaeological research*

framework for north-west England: volume 1, resource assessment, Archaeol North West, **8**, Manchester, 23-58

Howard-Davis, C, and Buxton, K, 2000 *Roman forts in the Fylde: excavations at Dowbridge, Kirkham*, Lancaster

Lancashire County Council, 2005 *Lancashire historic town survey programme: Poulton-le-Fylde historic town assessment report*, unpubl rep

Mainman, A, and Jenner, A, 2013 *Medieval pottery from York*, Archaeol York, **16**, York

Margary, ID, 1973 *Roman roads in Britain*, 3rd edn, London

Middleton, R, Wells, CE, and Huckerby, E, 1995 *The wetlands of north Lancashire*, Lancaster Imprints, **4**, Lancaster

Mills, D, 1976 *The place-names of Lancashire*, London

Newman, R, 1996 Medieval rural settlement, in R Newman (ed), *The archaeology of Lancashire: present state and future priorities*, Lancaster, 109-24

OA North, 2014 *Land off Bluebell Way, Preston East, Lancashire: archaeological post-excavation assessment report*, unpubl rep

Ratledge, D, 2009 *Roman roads in Lancashire* [Online] available at: www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/historichighways/roman4.asp (accessed 15th March 2020)

Rutherford, M, in prep The pollen, in Zant and Vannan in prep

Shotter, D, 2004 *Romans and Britons in north-west England*, 3rd edn, Lancaster

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology, 2015 *Land off Little Poulton Lane, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire: archaeological evaluation report*, unpubl rep

Wells, C, and Hodgkinson, D, 2001 A late Bronze Age human skull and associated worked wood from a Lancashire wetland, *Proc Prehist Soc*, **67**, 163-74

White, AJ, 1993 A medieval pottery kiln at Ellel, Lancashire, *Contrebis*, **18**, 5-18

Zant, J, Bradley, J, and Howard-Davis, C, 2016 An archaeological investigation at Hazelrigg, Lancaster, 2011-12, *Contrebis*, **34**, 24-39

Zant, J, and Vannan, A, in prep *A Roman-period rural settlement at Garstang Road East, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire*

5 APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT LIST

Context No	Group No	Context Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description
100		Layer	-	0.15	Topsoil
101		Layer	-	0.6	Subsoil/colluvium
102		Layer	-	-	Natural drift geology
103	130	Cut	0.42	0.03	Ditch segment
104	130	Deposit	0.42	0.03	Fill of 103
105	130	Cut	0.34	0.06	Ditch segment
106	130	Deposit	0.34	0.06	Fill of 105
107		Cut	0.9	0.2	Ditch
108		Deposit	0.9	0.2	Fill of 107
109	129	Cut	0.46	0.23	Ditch segment
110	129	Deposit	0.46	0.23	Fill of 109
111	129	Cut	1.3	0.31	Ditch segment
112	129	Deposit	1.3	0.31	Fill of 111
113	130	Cut	0.6	0.04	Ditch segment
114	130	Deposit	0.6	0.04	Fill of 113
115	133	Cut	0.58	0.14	Ditch segment
116	133	Deposit	0.58	0.14	Fill of 115
117	132	Cut	0.62	0.3	Ditch segment
118	132	Deposit	0.62	0.3	Fill of 117
119	131	Cut	1.00	0.25	Ditch segment
120	131	Deposit	1.00	0.25	Fill of 119
121	134	Cut	1.3	0.4	Ditch segment
122	134	Deposit	1.3	0.4	Fill of 121
123	133	Cut	0.24	0.07	Ditch segment
124	133	Deposit	0.24	0.07	Fill of 123
125	133	Cut	0.7	0.3	Ditch segment
126	133	Deposit	0.7	0.3	Fill of 125
127	133	Cut	0.6	0.19	Ditch segment
128	133	Deposit	0.6	0.19	Fill of 127
129	129	Group	-	-	Ditch
130	130	Group	-	-	Ditch
131	131	Group	-	-	Ditch
132	132	Group	-	-	Ditch
133	133	Group	-	-	Ditch
134	134	Group	-	-	Ditch
135	135	Group	-	-	Ditch
136	136	Group	-	-	Ditch
137	135	Cut	1.42	0.37	Ditch terminal
138	135	Deposit	1.05	0.37	Primary fill of 137
139	135	Deposit	0.3	0.1	Secondary fill of 137
140	135	Deposit	0.97	0.32	Tertiary fill of 137
141	134	Cut	1.4	0.55	Ditch segment
142	134	Deposit	1.1	0.2	Primary fill of 141
143	134	Deposit	0.5	0.18	Secondary fill of 141
144	134	Deposit	1.1	0.32	Tertiary fill of 141
145	135	Cut	0.7	0.28	Ditch segment
146	135	Deposit	0.7	0.28	Fill of 145
147	132	Cut	1.55	0.36	Ditch segment

Context No	Group No	Context Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description
148	132	Deposit	1.55	0.36	Fill of 147

6 List of Figures

- | | |
|-------|---------------------------------------|
| Fig 1 | Site location |
| Fig 2 | Areas of archaeological investigation |
| Fig 3 | Site plan |
| Fig 4 | Sections across selected features |

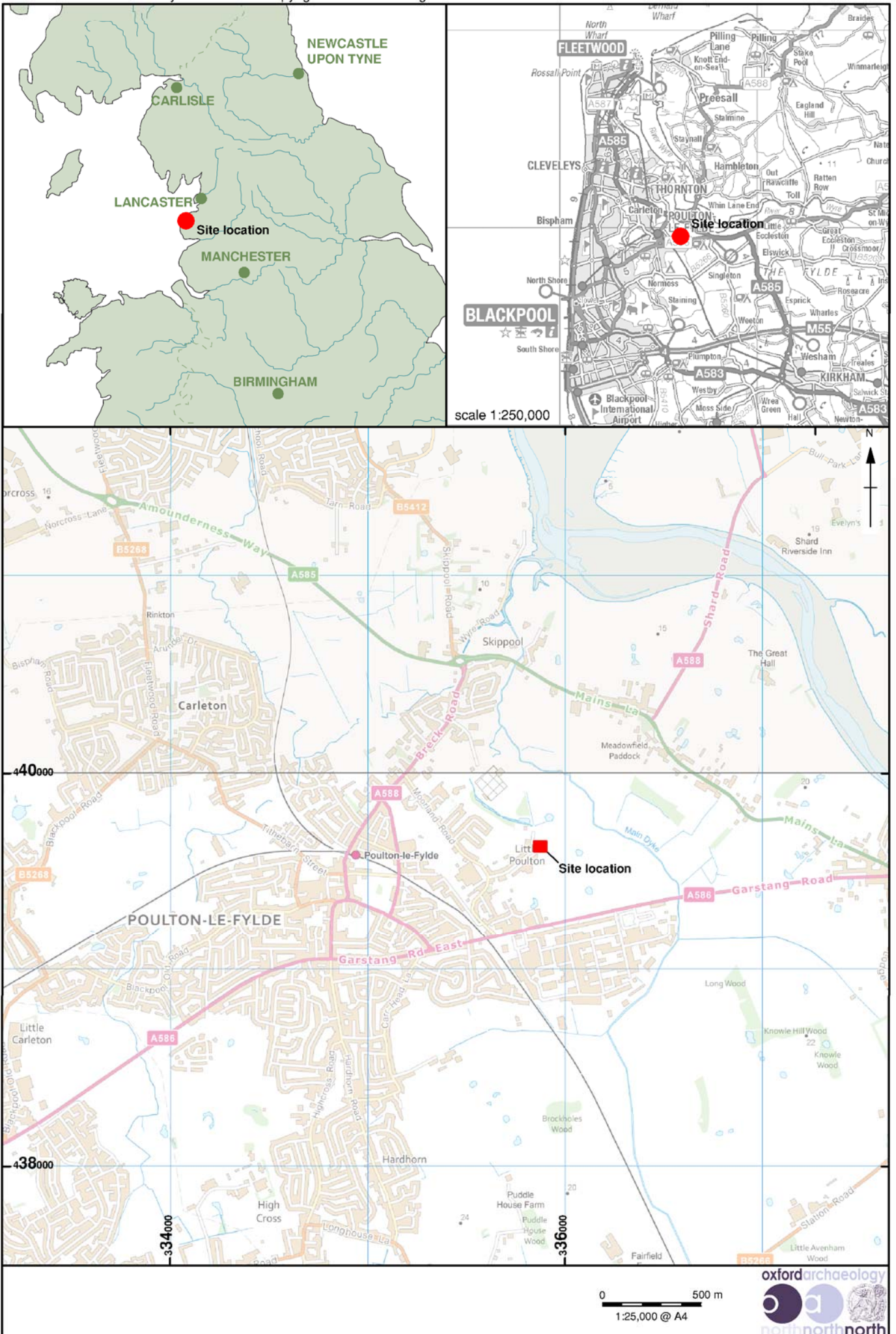


Figure 1: Site location

JQ*LI1107*AMS*310118

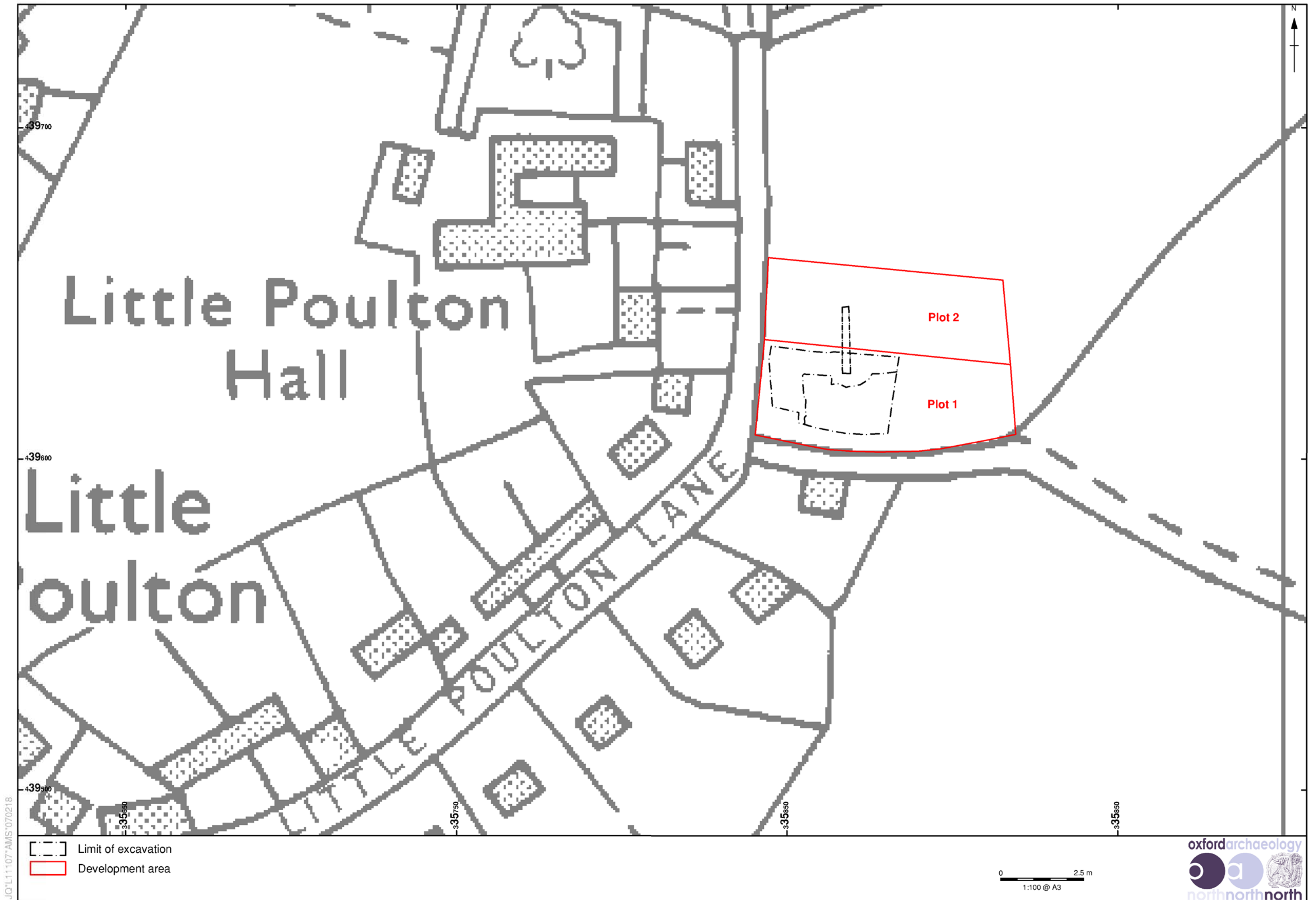


Figure 2: Location of Excavation Area

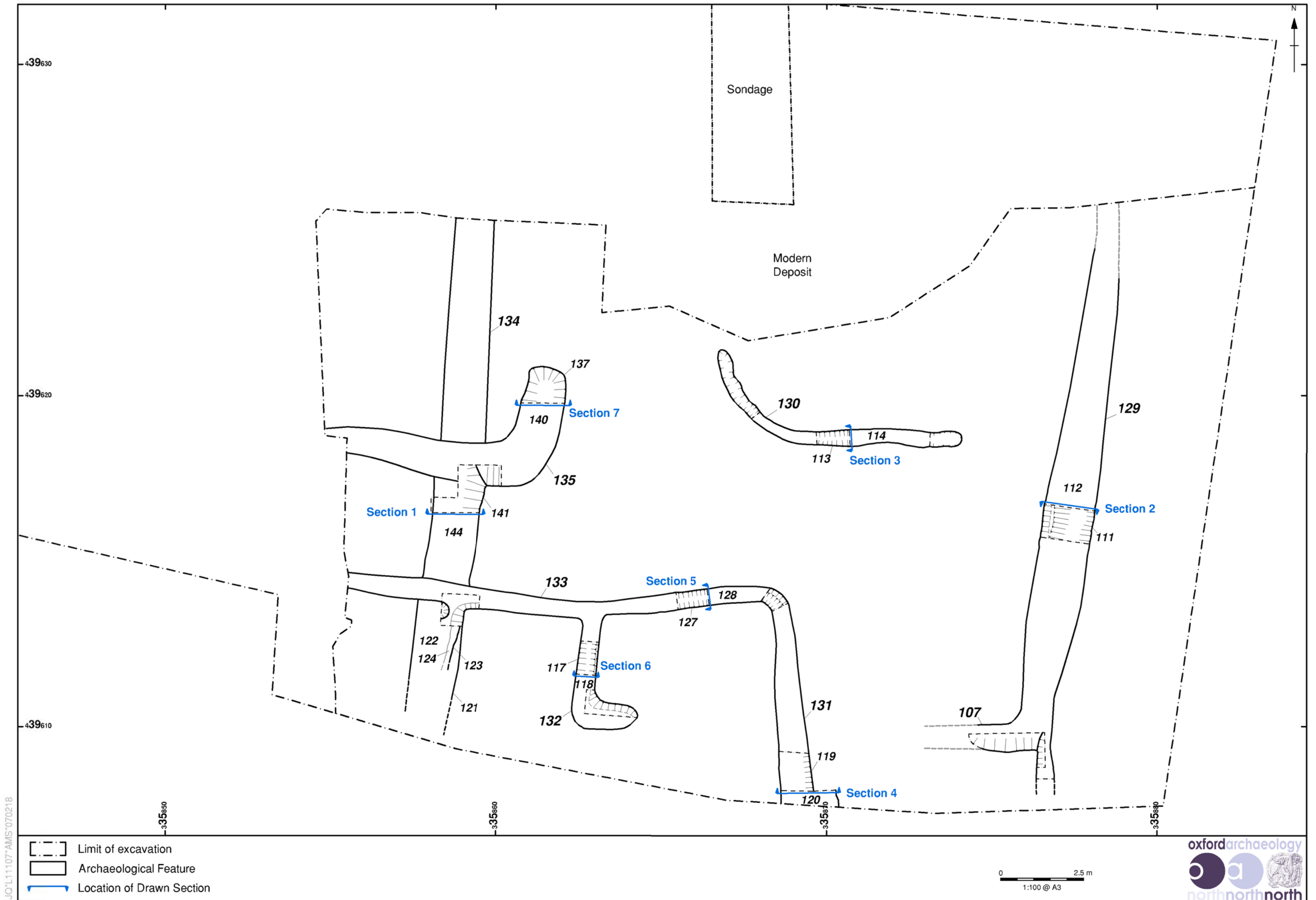


Figure 3: Excavation Plan, Showing Location of Drawn Sections

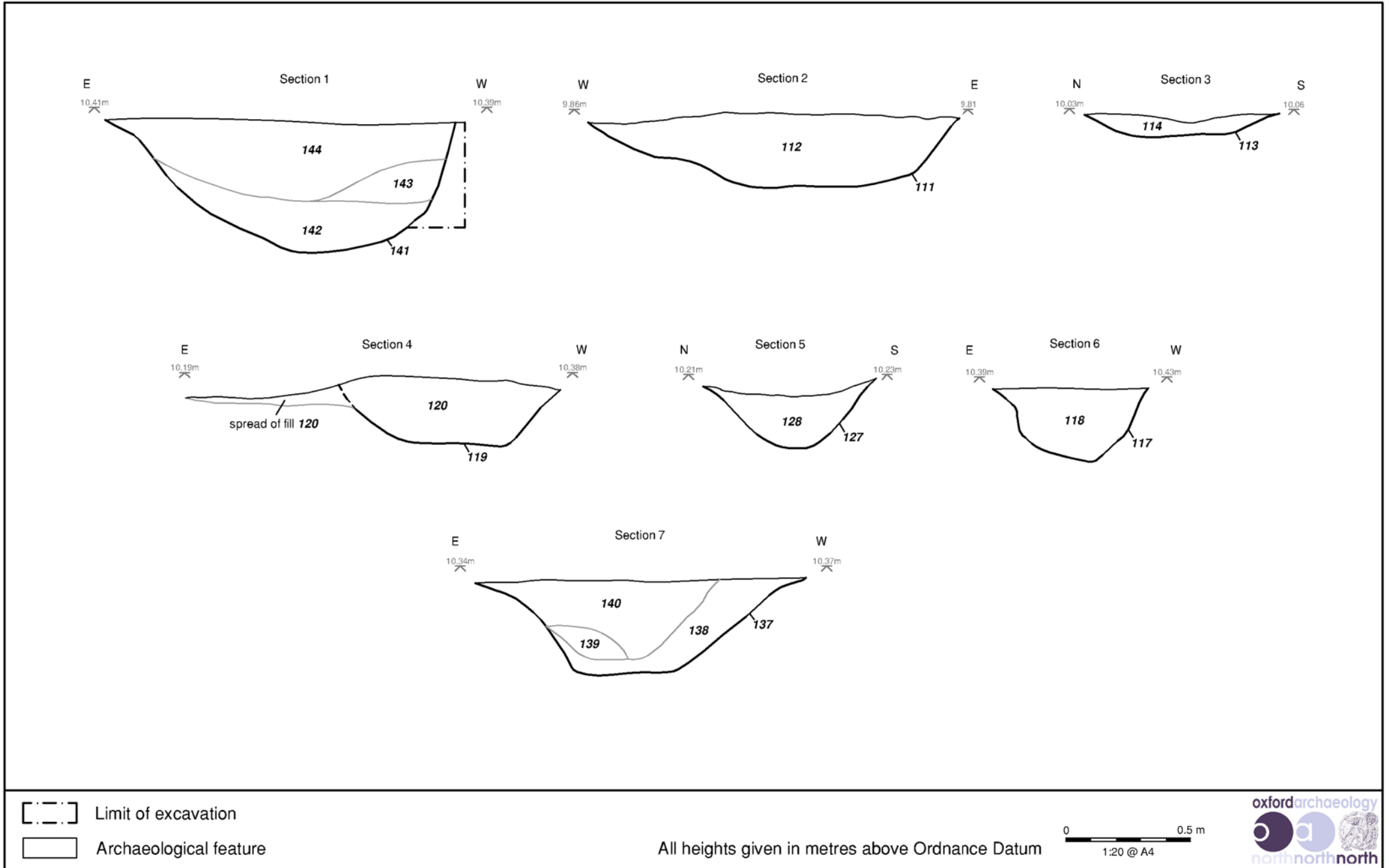


Figure 4: Selected Sections



**Head Office/Registered Office/
OA South**

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX20ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarchaeology.com
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1QD

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
e: [oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>



Director: Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MCIfA
*Oxford Archaeology Ltd is a
Private Limited Company, N^o: 1618597
and a Registered Charity, N^o: 285627*