

Network Rail

Trent Valley

West Coast Mainline Upgrade

Staffordshire: Tamworth to Lichfield

Sites 43 to 46



Archaeological Evaluation Report



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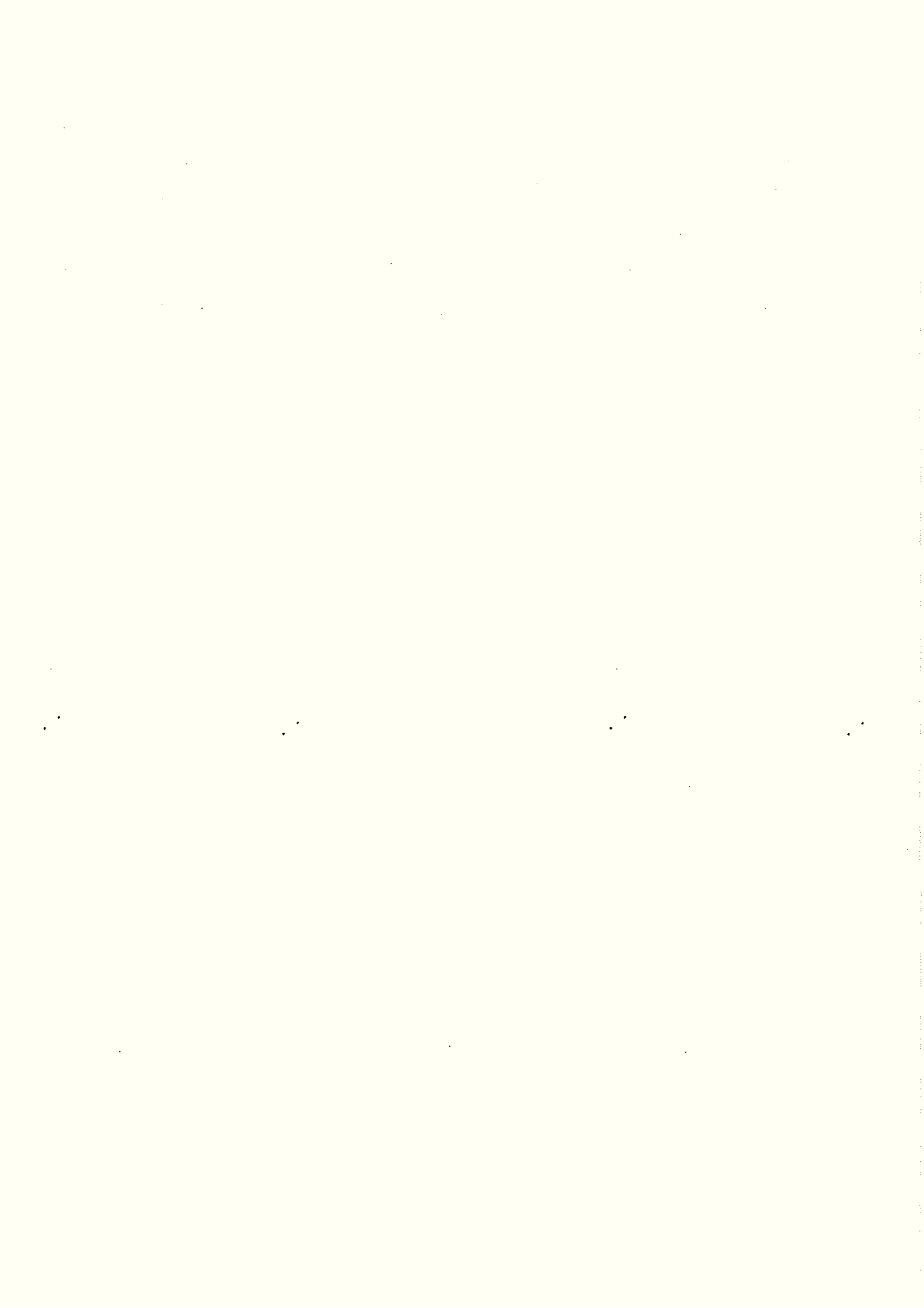
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**Network Rail, Trent Valley
West coast mainline Upgrade
Staffordshire: Tamworth to Lichfield
Sites 43-46, A38**

NGR: SK 142 095

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on sites 43, 44, 45 and 46 on behalf of Network Rail. The evaluation consisted of 21 trenches and revealed a single undated re-cut ditch, which ran roughly parallel to the northern side of the railway, and two separate undated and unrelated ditches to the south of the railway. The southern field, site 43, appears to have been previously stripped of topsoil and subsoil before a dark silty soil was deposited. This deposit post-dates the insertion of a series of land-drains and may be associated with the construction of the current railway.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 During the period from May 29th - June 9th 2006 OA carried out a field evaluation on areas 43, 44, 45 and 46 of the rail improvements scheme on behalf of Network Rail. The development site is situated at NGR SK 142 095 and is approximately 5.8 hectares in area.
- 1.1.2 The evaluation was carried out on behalf of Network Rail ahead of works for the construction of two new bridged crossings and associated link/access roads to and from the Fisherwick Road.
- 1.1.3 Discussions between Steve Dean, Archaeological Officer for Staffordshire County Council and OA, led to an agreement that in areas where there was the potential for damage to possible archaeological remains, due to temporary or permanent land-take disturbance, archaeological fieldwork would be carried out.
- 1.1.4 The construction of the haul road was subject to a separate archaeological watching brief (OA, client report). The mitigation of areas subject to temporary and permanent land take took the form of a trenched evaluation. An outline project proposal detailing how OA would implement the evaluation was agreed by all parties (see 1.3 below).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is between 65 m and 72 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) and overlays Keuper Sandstones (BGS Sheet 154). The evaluated areas lay immediately east and west of the A 38 where it crosses the West Coast Mainline railway (Fig. 2). To the north of the railway the ground is generally flat. To the south of the railway it gradually slopes down to the north, before rising more steeply to the northwest (in the area of Trenches 15 and 16). The land to the north of the track was under crop at the time of the evaluation, and the land to the south appeared to be fallow.

1.3 Previous work and project background

- 1.3.1 In 2002, an initial phase of field-walking was carried out by OA for *Railtrack* along the northern side of the railway between (approximately) Whittington and the Sewage works to the north-west of Tamworth.
- 1.3.2 The report for this work has not been issued, as the project did not continue once *Railtrack* as a company had ceased to exist. The results of the work, however, revealed post-medieval material throughout the study area in the vicinity of a former track-way. It was thought, nonetheless, that there would have been greater potential for archaeological finds along the walked route, owing to the number of crop marks within the vicinity of the track-way and in adjacent fields.
- 1.3.3 In 2002, when Network Rail Order 2 went to Public Inquiry, Staffordshire County Council requested that further and more detailed archaeological work should be undertaken on known crop-marks along the route and within fields with ancient field names depicted on Parish Tithe maps.
- 1.3.4 The Council also requested that an all-encompassing archaeological project design be produced to cover the construction works proposed under Order 2. This work (*West Coast Mainline Upgrade - Trent Valley. Outline Proposal for Phase 1 Works, OA 2004*) was undertaken by OA and included provision for both evaluation trenches and watching briefs.

1.4 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 1.4.1 The following background information is reproduced from the Heritage Impact Assessment produced by OA for Railtrack but never issued due to the collapse of the latter. The "study corridor" refers to a corridor 500m either side of the railway line which was the subject of the Impact Assessment

General

- 1.4.2 Between 1960 and 1976 JK St Joseph and later J Pickering carried out regular aerial reconnaissance of the central section of the study corridor, following the discovery of a large number of cropmarks on the Gravel Terrace within the Tame Valley. As a result of this research a number of archaeological 'rescue' excavations were carried out in the early 1970s in the Fisherwick area in response to gravel extraction, which threatened to destroy a number of cropmark sites within this area of seemingly high archaeological potential. The majority of these excavations were located *c.* 2 km to the north-east of the study corridor. One excavation was undertaken within the study corridor *c.* 300 m north-east of the line of the railway. The results of these excavations were published in a British Archaeological Reports volume in 1979 entitled *'Fisherwick: The Reconstruction of an Iron Age Landscape'* (Smith *et al.*, 1979).

- 1.4.3 In 1980, Christopher Smith published a summary of his doctoral thesis for the University of Nottingham on the historical development of the parishes of Alrewas, Fisherwick and Whittington, in *Transactions of the Southern Staffordshire Archaeological Society* Vol XIX. Smith's study area forms a broad north-south strip which encompasses the central section of the WCML study corridor between eastings SK 16 (Whittington) and SK 19 (River Tame). The study involved detailed examination of documentary and cartographic sources, air photographs, and also involved several fieldwalking surveys. The survey revealed concentrations of material from the prehistoric to post-medieval period at various locations within his study area. Smith attempted to reconstruct the landscape of his study area at four periods in time: the 1st millennium, AD200, c. AD1300 and the mid 18th century.

Prehistoric

- 1.4.4 Excavations on the Gravel Terrace at Fisherwick, c. 2 km to the north-east of the study corridor, prior to gravel extraction in 1968 and 1973-4, have revealed further evidence of prehistoric activity in the form of a possible Neolithic settlement and extensive Iron Age activity. The latter includes Iron Age settlements believed to have been agricultural in nature - small farmsteads surrounded by extensive field systems. It has been suggested (Smith 1977 quoted in Hodder 1982, 19) that the Tame Gravel Terrace was divided by a series of permanent ditched boundaries during the first millennium BC, as the result of population increase. Excavations at Fisherwick revealed that pre-medieval population levels within the Valley are likely to have been considerably greater than was previously supposed (Smith 1979, 103).

Roman

- 1.4.5 Excavations in 1968 prior to gravel extraction at Fisherwick, c. 2 km to the north-east of the study corridor, revealed a Romano-British farmstead consisting of four circular huts, pens and palisaded enclosures, adjacent to a drove-way. The farm, dated to the early 2nd century AD to the 3rd century AD, was believed to have specialised in stock-rearing. In addition, traces of Roman activity have been found within the historic core of Tamworth and it is possible that there may have been an earlier settlement here prior to the early medieval *burh* (Staffs SMR).

Medieval

- 1.4.6 There were a number of known medieval settlements within the study area, some of which later became deserted and which have left no trace. The settlements include Lichfield, Streethay, Whittington (all extant) and *Fisherwick* (deserted), located just outside the study corridor, and *Tamhorn*, *Horton*, *Fulfen* and *Morughale* (all deserted), located within the study corridor. These settlements would have provided a focus for the community within the parish. In addition, there were probably a number of smaller secondary settlements in the form of isolated farmsteads located away from the villages. The identification of these is less straightforward and is

primarily based on buildings shown on the earliest maps consulted and place-name evidence.

- 1.4.7 Fisherwick, although not mentioned in Domesday Book, is recorded as a manor in 1167 (VCH xiv, 239). The settlement no longer exists but is believed to lie outside the study corridor, *c.* 1.5 km to the north-east of the railway (Hurst 1967, 45 and VCH Staffs xiv, 239).
- 1.4.8 Tamhorn and Horton are both mentioned in Domesday and formed a township by the late 13th century, with Horton apparently more important (VCH Staffs xiv, 239). The township of Tamhorn and Horton is listed in a Subsidy Roll of 1327 when 12 people were assessed for subsidy. Smith (1980, 7) identified the possible location of the DMVs of Tamhorn and Horton through concentrations of medieval pottery and building material found during fieldwalking in the early 1970s. The spread of artefacts was too dense to be simply residual material within a manure scatter used to assist cultivation. It should however be noted that the VCH (XIV 1990, 240) suggests that the site of Horton village may also lie close to, or on, the present site of the small cluster of houses at Hademore, immediately to the south of the railway.

Fisherwick Park

- 1.4.9 The Railway line between Fisherwick Brook and Hademore cuts the southern edge of a formal post-medieval park called Fisherwick Park. The park is not listed in English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens. The park was created to provide a setting around a *'very proper brick house'* (possibly located on or near the site of the medieval manor) built by John Skelington in the late 16th century (VCH Staffs xiv, 243-4).
- 1.4.10 The park was enclosed by a park pale (boundary) intended to keep deer and rabbits out of the park grounds. The park was planted with a large number of trees and by the 1680s the trees had *'grown to a magnitude (in number) almost beyond belief'* (*ibid.*, 244). Two avenues led through the park to Fisherwick Hall (*c.* 1.5 km to the north-east of the railway) aligned on the Whittington and Tamhorn churches. The park increased in size in the later 18th century, evidently to the north-east (VCH Staffs xiv, 244), absorbing enclosed farmland adjacent (Smith 1980, 5). In 1747 the park covered an area of 450 acres; in 1760 this had grown to 571 acres. A map of the park dated 1760 shows a fence around the perimeter of the park and the broad avenue leading to Fisherwick Park from an entrance by Hademore Lodge. The map shows little detail, other than a depiction of land within the park boundary and the enclosed fields to the east.
- 1.4.11 Between *c.* 1766-79 Fisherwick Hall was demolished and rebuilt for Lord Donegall. This involved landscaping of the park by Lancelot (Capability) Brown, following an Act of 1766 stopping up all public roads through the park. The two avenues were removed and replaced with two new drives, which led to south to the lodge at

Hademore, and east to Stubby Leas (outside the study area). Brown planted 10,000 trees and created a boundary plantation enclosing a ride along the south and east sides of the park (VCH Staffs xiv, 244). A plan of the Estate of Lord Spencer Chichester dated to the late 18th century shows boundary plantations along the southern edge of the park at Hademore as well as a building marked 'Hedimore Lodge' at the southern entrance to the park. Also shown is the developing estate hamlet of 'Hedimore' immediately to the south, consisting of Hademore Farm, Holly Cottage and another cottage (now demolished). It had been intended to build a brick wall around the whole park, but only about a mile of it was completed, on the south-east side. This wall was evidently still standing in 1990 (*ibid.*, 244). Shortly after 1808 Fisherwick Hall was demolished. A large number of trees were felled and the park divided into fields. The OS 1" map (1834) shows the former park, with a clear boundary in the form of a line of screening trees along the southern edge. This is the earliest map which enables the southern line of the park to be placed in relation to the modern OS mapping with any accuracy. A Plan of the Township of Fisherwick (1842) and the OS 1st edition 6" map (1883-8) both show Hademore Lodge as still extant, the latter showing the lodge to have lain some 50 m north-east of the railway.

- 1.4.12 When the Trent Valley Railway was built in 1846-7, it cut across the extreme southern corner of the former Fisherwick Park, just to the south of the gate lodge. It is unclear whether the southern edge of the park as shown in 1834 represented the extent of the original 16th century park however. It is therefore possible that remains of the original park pale, in the form of a bank, ditch or fence (the latter is suggested by a map of 1760) may survive in the form of an earthwork, or that remains of a ditch may be preserved as a buried feature beneath and close to the railway. Whilst the site of the Fisherwick Hall is now occupied by a container company, and its grounds now lie under a former explosives depot and a field of crops, a pair of Grade II Listed gate piers dating to the early 19th century still survive at a point some 50 m north of the railway, flanking the former formal drive, which remains in use from this point northward. The course of the driveway southward from the gates has been abandoned following the construction of a later connecting road, although its alignment is still traceable as a double hedge line. This crosses the railway at a disused level-crossing to the west of Fogg Cottages, before passing behind Holly Cottage to emerge onto the public road behind a cast-iron telephone kiosk.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To determine the location, extent, date, character and state of preservation of any archaeological remains surviving on the site.
- 2.1.2 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the investigation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of twenty one trenches across three main areas (Fig. 2).

3.1.2 All trenches measured 30 m x 1.6 m, unless otherwise stated.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

3.2.1 The overburden was removed under archaeological supervision by a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.

3.2.2 Where appropriate trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features sampled to determine their extent, nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological trenches and features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20 or 1: 10. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3.3 Finds

3.3.1 Finds recovered by hand during the course of the excavation were bagged by context, unless of significance when they were given a unique small find number.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

3.4.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified.

3.5 Presentation of results

3.5.1 A description of the soils and ground conditions is given, together with a description of the general stratigraphic sequence and the distribution of archaeological deposits. This is followed by a description of trenches containing features and of the finds, and a discussion and interpretation of the results.

3.5.2 Empty trenches are noted but are not otherwise individually described. Further details of contexts are given in the Table of Contexts (Appendix 1).

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 The general stratigraphic sequence was similar across the evaluated area. The underlying natural was typically found at a depth of c 0.3 to 0.6 m beneath the current ground level. It typically consisted of pale orange silty sand with patches of orange or greyish brown sandy silt which contained pebbly sized stones. A probable change in the

underlying geology was seen within trenches to the eastern edge of the site where a patchy grey-brown clay was observed.

4.1.2 Within the south eastern field (Area 43), there were extensive spreads of blackish brown silty sand and loam directly overlying the natural. This deposit also fills or overlays the fills of a series of land-drains and a number of possible rut-marks, gullies or shallow drains within Trench 11. A plain, machine-made red brick was recovered from within this horizon within Trench 17, indicating a relatively modern date. The absence of any definable subsoil or soil build-up beneath these dark spreads indicates that they were deliberately deposited after the original topsoil/ subsoil had been stripped. It seems likely that they are associated with the construction of the railway and additional drainage works.

4.1.3 Where seen, these dark spreads were overlain by a relatively undifferentiated topsoil. Elsewhere, the natural was overlain by a shallow reddish brown loamy clay subsoil and the current topsoil.

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

4.2.1 Ditches or other linear features were found within trenches 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13 and 15. Probable modern features were also found within Trenches 12, 15 and 21. A plot of these features is shown on (Figs 3 and 4).

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

Empty trenches

5.1.1 Trenches 2, 4, 5, 9, 12, 16, 17, 18, and 19 contained no archaeological features. A description of the general stratigraphic sequence is given in *Soils and ground conditions* above. Further descriptions of contexts are given in the Table of Contexts, Appendix 1.

Trench 1

5.1.2 Trench 1 revealed two features, ditch (106) and a probable shallow land-drain (112) (Figs 3 and 5).

5.1.3 The underlying natural, observed at c 71.5 m aOD, within the trench and varied from an orange-brown silty sand to sandy clay ((107), (108), (109) (110) & (113)). At the northern end of the trench these deposits were cut or overlain by a poorly defined ditch (106).

5.1.4 The ditch (106) was not fully revealed within the trench, and as seen measured 0.76 m deep by at least 1.5m wide. The southern side of the ditch sloped at approximately 40° to meet a broad rounded base. The ditch contained a 0.06 m thick brown silty

clay primary fill (105), a 0.11 m thick reddish brown silty clay secondary fill (106) and up to 0.62 m of red-brown silty sand tertiary fill (103). The later fill also contained occasional coal fragments and small fragments of brick or tile.

- 5.1.5 Within the middle of the trench a shallow NE-SW aligned linear was excavated, revealing a 'U' shaped cut measuring 0.08 m deep by 0.41 m wide. It was filled by a red-brown silty sand (111).
- 5.1.6 Neither feature produced any dateable finds, but the presence of coal, brick and tile fragments within the main ditch fill (103) suggests that it is a relatively modern feature.

Trench 3

- 5.1.7 The mid yellow sand natural (313) was observed at between 69.07 and 69.61 m aOD. Trench 3 contained three main features: a broad ditch (311), which was re-cut later by ditch (306), and a smaller possible hedge-line (315) (Figs 3 and 5).
- 5.1.8 Ditches (311) and (306) were aligned WNW-ESE close to the southern end of the trench.
- 5.1.9 The shallow ditch (311), 0.86 m wide and 0.13 m deep, was truncated by the later ditch (306) and was filled by a dark grey sandy silt (309).
- 5.1.10 A small bank of up-cast grey silty loam (310) was seen slightly to the south of ditch (311). The northern side of the bank and ditch fill (309) were overlain by a thin layer of grey clayey silt (308) 0.16 m thick, and a band of yellow sand (313) overlay the southern side of the bank. Both layers were in turn overlain by a 0.25 m thick layer of reddish brown sandy clay subsoil (307) and up to 0.29 m of topsoil.
- 5.1.11 The subsoil (307) appeared to be cut by a broad 'U' shaped ditch (306), c 3.2 m wide and 0.86 m deep. The ditch was filled by a 0.06 m thick greyish yellow sandy clay primary fill (305), a 0.16m thick dark grey silty clay secondary fill (306), and two upper fills: dark grey clayey silt (303) and reddish brown clayey sand (302) 0.044 m thick.
- 5.1.12 A shallow, irregular cut (315), which appeared to have been disturbed by root action, ran NW-SE across the extreme south of the trench. This feature measured 0.36 m wide and 0.07 m deep and was filled by reddish brown pebbly sand (314). A single broken flint blade fragment was recovered from this fill. It is thought that this blade may date to the Mesolithic or Early Neolithic periods, but its interpretation is problematic as the fill was partially truncated by a modern land-drain (317) within this end of the trench and a single flint in such a shallow feature is of limited interpretative value.
- 5.1.13 The main excavated sections within this trench were subsequently extended and carefully inspected, but no further finds were recovered.

Trench 6

- 5.1.14 The mid yellow sand natural (313) was observed at between 69.07 and 69.61 m aOD
- 5.1.15 A WNW - ESE aligned ditch (607) cut the underlying natural pale brownish yellow sand natural (601) within the southern end of Trench 6, (Figs 3 and 5).
- 5.1.16 The ditch measured 0.65 m deep by 2.44 m wide and had fairly evenly sloping 45° sides which rounded to a broad flat base. The ditch contained a 0.22 m thick dark brownish grey silty clay fill (606), which was re-cut by a later ditch (608).
- 5.1.17 Ditch (608) is similar to, but slightly smaller than ditch (607), and measured 0.42 m deep by 2.1 m wide. Slippage deposits of greyish brown sandy silt (604) and (605) overlay the sides of the ditch and were overlain by a dark grey-brown silty sand main fill (603), which was 0.42 thick. The excavated sections were extended in an attempt to date these features but no finds were recovered.
- 5.1.18 The ditch fills were overlain by a 0.22 m thick dark orange brown sandy silt (602), which was overlain by the present topsoil (600).

Trench 7

- 5.1.19 In the middle of Trench 7, a shallow east - west aligned ditch (703) cut the underlying pale brownish orange silty sand natural, which was observed at between 69.72 and 69.59 m aOD (Fig. 4).
- 5.1.20 The ditch had short 45° sides and a broad flat base. It measured 0.24 m deep by 0.88 m wide and was filled by a dark orange brown sandy silt (704).
- 5.1.21 The ditch fill was overlain by 0.08 m of a pale orange brown sandy silt (702) and 0.27 m of topsoil (701).
- 5.1.22 No finds were recovered.

Trench 8

- 5.1.23 The underlying natural (803) a pale orange brown silty sand was observed at between 68.51 and 69.37 m aOD and was cut by a shallow, east-west aligned hedge-line (804) (Fig. 4).
- 5.1.24 Although this feature appeared clear in plan, its sides and base were difficult to define when excavated, and it seemed to have been heavily root disturbed. It measured approximately 0.6 m wide by only 0.11 m deep and was filled with a dark reddish brown silty sand (803). It was overlain by up to 0.12 m of reddish brown silty sand (801) and 0.3 m of topsoil (800).
- 5.1.25 No finds were recovered.

Trench 10

- 5.1.26 Within Trench 10 the underlying natural consisted of either a yellow or pale orange sand or a pebbly grey brown sandy loam observed at c 64.63 m aOD.
- 5.1.27 A single NW-SE ditch (1006) cut the natural within the northern end of the trench (Fig. 4).
- 5.1.28 The ditch had gently rounded sides and a flat base and measured 0.3 m by 1.1 m deep. It was filled with a mixed orange brown sandy silt with pockets of brown clay (1005). A single small shard of modern glass was recovered from within the fill.
- 5.1.29 Three land-drains ran N-S across the middle of the trench. They were all filled by dark brown sandy silt, similar to a layer of made-ground (1004) which overlay the features within the north of the trench. Layer (1004) was up to 0.38 m thick and contained bandings of brown silty clay, orange sand, pale yellow silty sand as well as twigs and other organic material. The presence of organic material indicates that this is likely to be a relatively recent "made-ground" deposit. It was overlain by 0.35 m of greyish brown silty loam topsoil.

Trench 11

- 5.1.30 Within Trench 11 the underlying natural (1111) consisted of a pale brownish yellow silty sand with patches of reddish brown sandy clay observed at between 64.94 and 65.2 m aOD (Figs 4 and 6).
- 5.1.31 Within the middle of the trench several small shallow linears ((1110), (1112), (1114), (1116) and (1119)) cut the underlying natural. These shallow linears were all aligned roughly north-south and were filled by dark reddish brown silty clay. They were typically either 'U' shaped or rounded in profile and measured between 0.08 m deep by 0.18 m wide and 0.18 m deep by 0.26 m wide. Within the middle of the trench, two of these features (1114) and (1116) were overlain by a broad shallow spread of dark greyish brown silty sand (1119), that was up to 0.13 m thick.
- 5.1.32 Spread (1119) and features (1110), (1112) and (1119) were overlain by up to 0.15 m of dark reddish brown silty sand (1111) and up to 0.35 m of dark greyish brown silty sand topsoil (1110). A single sherd of 17th-18th century black-glazed pottery was recovered from the topsoil.
- 5.1.33 No other finds were recovered from any of these deposits or features and it is thought likely that the dark spreads and shallow linears are associated with modern landscaping activity, as witnessed by similar dark spreads elsewhere.

Trench 13

- 5.1.34 Within trench 13 the underlying natural (1309) varied from greyish brown sandy gravels to grey brown clay and orange sand with depth and was observed at c 65.02 m aOD (Figs 4 and 6).
- 5.1.35 The natural appears to be truncated within the middle and western end of the trench by a broad concave cut (1310) that is at least 20 m wide. The eastern side of this cut sloped down at approximately 30°, its western side was shallower and sloped at approximately 5°. At its deepest point the cut was approximately 0.8 deep. A ceramic land-drain was revealed at the eastern side of the cut and appeared to be overlain by the fills of (1310): a 0.12 m thick layer of pale yellow sand (1307) and up to 0.54 m of dark brown sandy loam (1306).
- 5.1.36 Within the eastern end of the trench and away from cut (1310), a single ditch cut (1304) the natural from a depth of 0.46 m beneath the present topsoil. The ditch was 'U' shaped in profile and measured 0.6 m wide by 0.5 m deep. it was filled by a brown sandy silt (1301).
- 5.1.37 The fills of ditch (1304) and cut (1310) were overlain by a 0.28 thick layer of orange brown sandy loam subsoil (1301/1305), and 0.18 m of grey brown silty loam topsoil (1300).
- 5.1.38 Within the western end of the trench the topsoil was partially overlain by a brown clay loam, deposited as part of the present works on the site.

Trench 14

- 5.1.39 Trench 14 was not excavated due to the presence of a site compound.

Trench 15

- 5.1.40 The underlying natural within Trench 15 (1507) consisted of a pale orange yellow silty sand (1507) and was observed at between 65.92 and 67.54 m aOD (Figs 4 and 6).
- 5.1.41 A single east-west aligned ditch (1502) cut the natural at the northern end of the trench. The ditch had concave sides, a flat base and measured 0.4 m deep by 2.2 m wide. It was filled by a 0.28 m thick, dark greyish brown silty sand, primary fill (1503) which was overlain by a reddish brown silty sand (1504) 0.19m thick.
- 5.1.42 Within the middle and southern end of the trench several broad spreads of dark brown and greyish brown sandy silts (1505, 1506 and 1508) were investigated. These appeared to be somewhat erratic bandings of soil that have been disturbed by extensive rabbit burrowing. These spreads were seen for a distance of c 8 m along the length of the trench and at their thickest were 0.4 m thick. They are similar to, but more extensive than, other dark sandy silts seen as a similar horizon within other

trenches in the south-eastern field and it is likely that they are associated with a general modern disturbance within area 43.

- 5.1.43 The broad soil spreads and the fills of ditch (1502) were overlain by a 0.17 m thick pale brown silty sand subsoil (1501) and up to 0.27 m of reddish brown sandy silt topsoil (1500).
- 5.1.44 No finds were recovered and the ditch (1502) is undated.

Trench 21

- 5.1.45 The underlying natural within Trench 21 (2105) consisted of orange sand or orange grey sandy silt with irregular patches of pebbly stone and was observed at between 68.22 and 67.63 m aOD Fig. 4.
- 5.1.46 A possible feature (2104) was investigated within the eastern end of the trench. At the southern baulk this feature measured 0.76 m wide by 0.18 m deep, but it became narrower and less distinct as it curved towards the north east. Its fill, a pebbly brown silty sand (2103), became progressively stonier towards the northern side of the feature. No finds were recovered. Given its shape and the stoney nature of its fill, it seems likely that this is a natural feature.
- 5.1.47 A 0.25 m thick layer of dark brown sandy silt (2102) overlay the fill of feature (2104) and the underlying natural. This layer is associated with a general modern disturbance evidenced by similar deposits across the area. Within Trench 21 it was overlain up to 0.28 m of orange brown loamy sand (2101) and 0.35 m of dark greyish brown sandy loam topsoil (2100).

5.2 Finds

Pottery

- 5.2.1 A single sherd of post-medieval black glazed pottery was recovered from the topsoil (1101) within Trench 1. The piece appears to be part of a base and is thought to be 17th or 18th century origin.
- 5.2.2 A single sherd of modern white china was recovered from the topsoil (1001) within trench 10.

Flint By Rebecca Devaney (OA)

- 5.2.3 A single broken blade was recovered from context (314). The piece weighed 2 g. It was broken at both ends and had damage to the lateral sides. A single dorsal scar running parallel to the lateral sides implies it was produced with blade rather than flake technology, which may indicate a Mesolithic or earlier Neolithic date.

Worked stone by Fiona Roe

A cobble with probable working traces was recovered from the upper fill (302) of ditch (306] which appeared to cut the subsoil (307) and is not securely dated. The material is quartzite and the cobble could have been collected locally, either from Boulder Clay or from the gravels of the river Tame. The intention appears to have been to use it as a rubber for grinding corn on a saddle quern. The cobble measures 147 x 98 x 67 mm and weighs 1,550 g, an ideal size for a rubber. It has one flat surface, probably caused by an ancient break and this is covered with small pock marks, which may represent an attempt to prepare the surface for grinding. However the quartzite is too hard to be used effectively for this purpose, and so the cobble was probably abandoned. Its attempted use is likely to have been prehistoric in date, at some point between the Neolithic period and the middle Iron Age.

Other finds

- 5.2.4 A single small fragment of post-medieval roof-tile was recovered from the fill (316) of a land-drain within the southern end of Trench 13.
- 5.2.5 A shaped brick base section of land-drain was recovered from context (1701), a dark silty loam deposit, typical of a similar dark soil horizon across the south-eastern field.
- 5.2.6 A small shard of modern clear glass (weighing 1 g) was recovered from ditch fill (1005).

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 6.1.1 The underlying natural was tested by machined sondages across the site and appears to be fairly consistent. All possible features were investigated and carefully inspected for finds. Sections within Trenches 3 and 6 were enlarged in an attempt to date these features.

6.2 Overall interpretation

- 6.2.1 The main features located within the trenches are a possible hedge-line within Trenches 1, 3, 6, 7 and 8, to the north of the railway, a series of east-west aligned ditch cuts, and three apparently un-related ditches within Trenches 10, 13 and 15, to the south of the lines. Finds were scarce across the site, and despite careful inspection and excavation of these features, the only finds identified were fragmentary CBM and coal in ditch (106) of Trench 1. A single small flint blade fragment of possible Mesolithic or early Neolithic date and a prehistoric rubbing stone of the late Neolithic to middle Iron Age from within Trench 3. A single sherd of modern glass from within ditch (1006), Trench 10. The remaining ditches/features remain undated.

- 6.2.2 Ditches (306) and (311) within Trench 3, and ditches (607) and (608) within Trench 6 are on the same alignment and are probably continuations of the same re-cut ditches. A poorly defined, shallow linear (703)/(804) extending east-west across Trenches 7 and 8 was heavily root disturbed. It may be a continuation of a the ditches found within Trenches 3 and 6, but it was thought more likely to be a former hedge-line, such as that identified within the south of Trench 3, feature (315).
- 6.2.3 A single ditch, aligned east-west in the northern end of Trench 1, is too far away to be positively associated with ditches found within Trenches 3 and 6. Its fill contained coal fragments and flecks of ceramic building materials, indicating that it is of relatively modern origin.
- 6.2.4 A NW-SE aligned ditch (1006) within the north of Trench 10 appears to be modern, as a single small shard of modern glass was recovered from its fill (1005). This ditch may be related to a series of NE-SW aligned land-drains seen within the south of the trench.
- 6.2.5 Ditch (1304), within the eastern end of Trench 13, was undated, but it was clearly defined, with a deep 'U' shaped profile, and its fills were overlain by a distinct subsoil and topsoil, indicating that it is not associated with the modern features seen elsewhere in this area.
- 6.2.6 Ditch (1502) in the north of Trench 15, had a relatively broad, shallow cut. As this feature was undated it is difficult to interpret. It may be a single un-related ditch but it is also possible that is another feature associated with the general truncation and modern disturbance within the south-eastern field.
- 6.2.7 Consistent horizons of dark brown sandy silts or loam were seen within the trenches in the south-eastern field. These deposits are probably associated with the construction or modification of the railway and associated additional works, including the insertion of a series of ceramic land-drains, as they consistently overlies the pattern of land drains found. Within Trenches 13 and 15 these deposits filled broad cuts or shallow depressions. Within Trench 11 they overlay a series of shallow north-south aligned gullies or possible track marks, which are also likely to be associated with the adjacent rail embankment.

Summary of results

- 6.2.8 To the north of the railway, an east-west aligned ditch and re-cut were seen within Trenches 3 and 6. A shallow linear investigated within Trenches 7 and 8 may be a continuation of this ditch alignment, but as this feature was heavily root disturbed, it may well be a separate former hedge-line. A separate ditch investigated within the northern end of Trench 1 contained fragmentary CBM and coal, and is thought to be post-medieval in date.

6.2.9 A single north-south aligned ditch within the eastern end of Trench 13 and a broader, shallower ditch aligned east-west within the north of Trench 15 are the only likely archaeological features identified to the south of the railway. Both features were undated. A series of land-drains were uncovered within Trenches 10 and 12, together with a modern ditch, and a series of probable ruts within Trenches 11 are also thought to be modern. A very broad and fairly deep cutting within the west of trench 13 and shallower depressions within Trench 15 are filled by dark silty deposits, which form a fairly consistent horizon across the southern field. These post-date the land-drains and are probably associated with either the construction of the railway, or with additional associated works, and appear to have been deposited after the field had been stripped of its original topsoil and subsoil.

Significance

6.2.10 The relative scarcity of features and finds indicates that the site is of little archaeological significance.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Finds	Date
Trench 1						
101	Layer	Topsoil	0.26			
102	Layer	Subsoil	0.14			
103	Fill	Fill of 106	0.62			
104	Fill	Fill of 106	0.11			
105	Fill	Fill of 106	0.06			
106	Cut	Ditch	0.76	1.52		
107	Layer	Staining/leeching of natural	0.18			
108	Layer	Staining/leeching of natural	0.28			
109	Layer	Staining/leeching of natural	0.09			
110	Layer	Staining/leeching of natural	0.35			
111	Fill	Fill of	0.08			Modern
112	Cut	Land-drain?	0.08	0.41		Modern
113	Layer	Natural				
Trench 2						
201	Layer	Topsoil	0.37			
202	Layer	Subsoil	0.3			
203	Cut	Irregular natural feature				
204	Fill	Fill of 203	0.05			
205	Fill	Fill of 203	0.05			
206	Layer	Natural				
Trench 3						
301	Layer	Topsoil	0.29			
302	Fill	Fill of 306	0.44			
303	Fill	Fill of 306	0.29			
304	Fill	Fill of 306	0.16			
305	Fill	Fill of 306	0.06			
306	Cut	Ditch	0.86	3.2		
307	Layer	Subsoil	0.25			
308	Layer	Buried plough-soil	0.16			
309	Layer	Dark grey sandy silt	0.13			
310	Layer	Bank material?	0.16			
311	Fill	Fill of	0.13			
312	Layer	Disturbed soil	0.18			
313	Layer	Natural				
314	Fill	Fill of	0.07			
315	Cut	Probable hedge-line	0.07	0.36		
316	Fill	Fill of				Modern
317	Cut	Land-drain	0.16	0.11		Modern
Trench 4						
401	Layer	Topsoil	0.32			
402	Layer	Subsoil	0.21			
403	Layer	Made ground				

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Finds	Date
Trench 5						
500		Topsoil	0.31			
501	Layer	Subsoil	0.3			
502	Layer	Made ground				
Trench 6						
600	Layer	Topsoil	0.24			
601	Layer	Natural				
602	Layer	Subsoil	0.22			
603	Fill	fill of 608	0.43			
604	Fill	Slippage within 608	0.07			
605	Fill	Slippage within 608	0.1			
606	Fill	fill of 607	0.1			
607	Cut	Ditch	0.22	2.4		
608	Cut	Ditch	0.44	2.1		
Trench 7						
701	Layer	Topsoil	0.27			
702	Layer	Subsoil	0.16			
703	Cut	Ditch	0.24	0.88		
704	Layer	Natural				
Trench 8						
800	Layer	Topsoil	0.3			
801	Layer	Subsoil	0.12			
802	Layer	Made ground	0.14			
Trench 9						
901	Layer	Topsoil	0.32			
902	Layer	Subsoil	0.14			
903	Layer	Subsoil	0.11			
904	Layer	Natural				
Trench 10						
1000	Layer	Topsoil	0.35			
1001	Layer	Natural				
1002	Fill	Fill of				Modern
1003	Cut	Land-drain				Modern
1004	Layer	Made ground	0.35		Pottery	Modern
1005	Fill	Fill of 1006	0.3		Glass	Modern
1006	Cut	Ditch	0.3	1.1		
Trench 11						
1110	Layer	Topsoil	0.35			
1111	Layer	Subsoil	0.15			
1112	Cut	Shallow linear	0.18	0.26		
1113	Fill	Fill of 1112	0.18			
1114	Cut	Shallow linear	0.14	0.18		
1115	Fill	Fill of 1114	0.08			
1116	Cut	Shallow linear	0.19	1.7		
1117	Fill	Fill of 1116	0.16			
1118	Layer	Silty sand spread	0.1	3.3		
1119	Cut	Shallow linear	0.08	0.18		
1120	Fill	Fill of 1119	0.08			

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Finds	Date
1121	Layer	Natural				
1122	Layer	Blackish brown sandy silt	0.3			
1123	Cut	Shallow linear	0.15	0.5		
1124	Fill	Fill of 1122	0.15			
Trench 12						
1200	Layer	Topsoil	0.4			
1201	Layer	Blackish brown sandy loam	0.1			
1202	Layer	Natural				
Trench 13						
1300	Layer	Topsoil	0.18			
1301	Layer	Sandy loam	0.28			
1302	Layer	Made ground	0.18			
1303	Fill	Fill of 1304	0.5			
1304	Cut	N-S linear	0.5	0.6		
1305	Layer	Loamy sand	0.2			
1306	Layer	Dark brown sandy loam	0.54			
Trench 14 : Not excavated						
Trench 15						
1500	Layer	Topsoil	0.27			
1501	Layer	Subsoil	0.17			
1502	Cut	Ditch	0.45	2.2		
1503	Fill	Primary fill of 1502	0.28			
1504	Fill	Secondary fill of 1502	0.19			
1505	Layer	Blackish brown spread	0.18			
1506	Layer	Grey sandy silt above 1505	0.23			
1507	Layer	Natural				
1508	Layer	Dark brown spread	0.14			
Trench 16						
1600	Layer	Topsoil	0.3			
1601	Layer	Subsoil	0.1			
1602	Layer	Dark red/brown sand	0.15+			
1603	Layer	Natural				
Trench 17						
1700	Layer	Topsoil	0.36			
1701	Layer	Blackish brown silty loam	0.12		Brick	Modern
1702	Layer	Natural				
Trench 18						
1800	Layer	Topsoil	0.4			
1801	Layer	Blackish brown loam	0.1			
1802	Layer	Natural				
Trench 19						
1900	Layer	Topsoil	0.3			
1901	Layer	Blackish brown loam	0.04			
1902	Layer	Natural				
Trench 20						
2000	Layer	Topsoil	0.3			
2001	Layer	Blackish brown loam	0.08			
2002	Layer	orange-grey natural				

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Finds	Date
2003	Fill	Fill of 2004	0.1			
2004	Cut	Stone-filled land-drain	0.1	0.45		
Trench 21						
2100	Layer	Topsoil	0.35			
2101	Layer	Orange brown sandy loam	0.26			
2102	Layer	Dark brown sandy loam	0.25			
2103	Fill	Fill of 2104	0.18			
2104	Cut	Curving feature	0.18	< 0.77		
2105	Layer	Stoney natural				
2106	Layer	Orange sand - natural				
Trench 22						
2200	Layer	Topsoil	0.4			
2201	Layer	Dark brown loam	0.08			
2202	Layer	Stoney orange sand- natural				

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- OA 1992 OA Fieldwork Manual (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992)
- OA 2000 West Coast Mainline-Historical Impact Assessment -not issued. OA Internal report only.
- OA 2003 West Coast Mainline-Field-walking Report-not issued. OA Internal report only.
- OA 2004 West Coast Mainline Upgrade - Trent Valley. Outline Proposal for Phase 1 Works.
- OA 2005 Written Scheme of Investigation

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: West Coast Mainline. Areas 43 - 46.

Site code: WCMA 43 05

Grid reference:

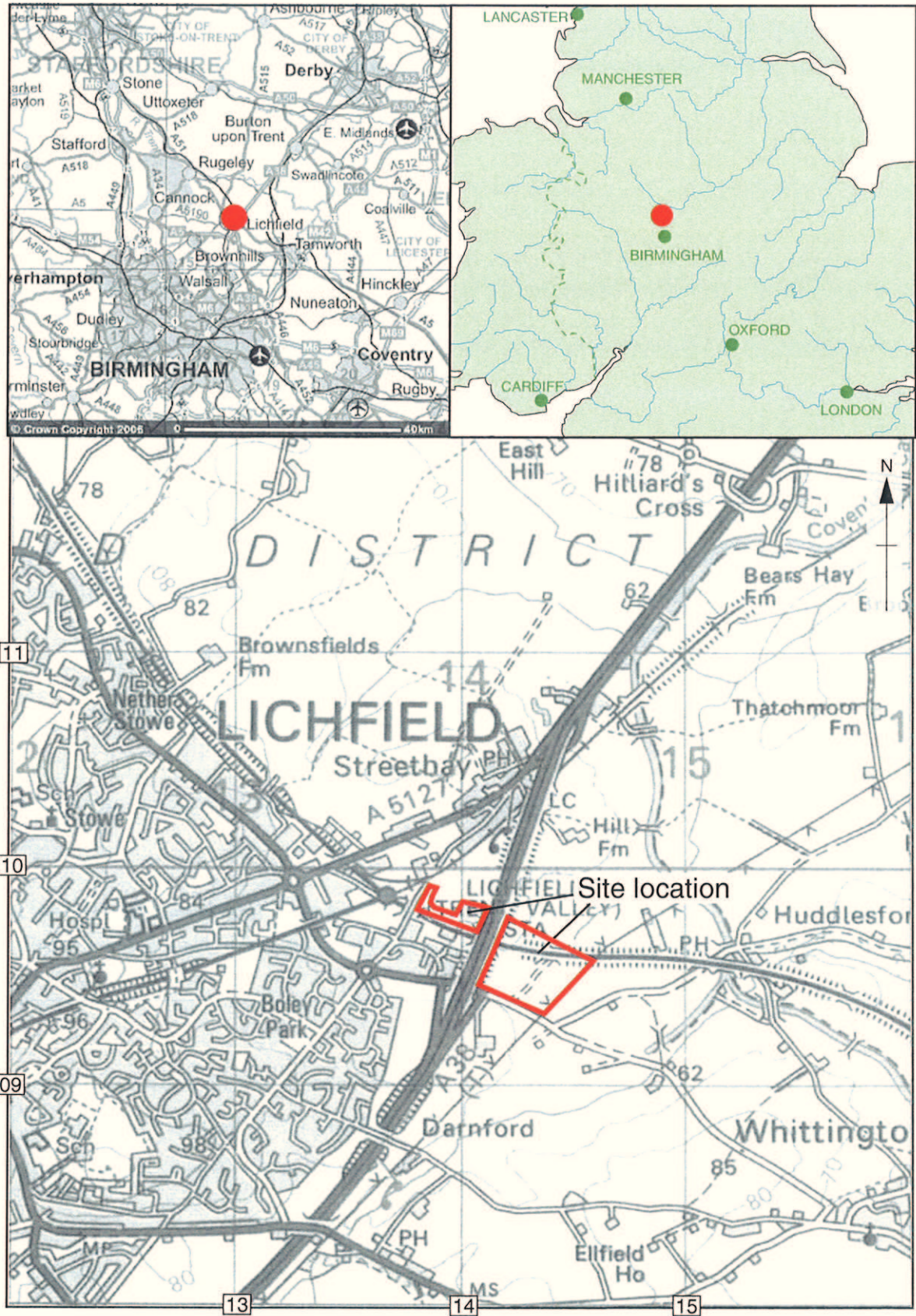
Type of evaluation: 21 trenches across 4 areas.

Date and duration of project: Two weeks. May 2006

Area of site: Approximately 5.8 ha

Summary of results: Several undated ditches near the present railway line. Extensive modern disturbance in Area 43 - which is immediately south of the rail line and east of the A 38.

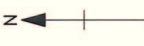
Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Potteries Museums and Art Gallery in due course, under accession number **2005.LH.14**



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Figure 1: Site location



- Key
- Archaeological feature
 - Trench location
 - Temporary landtake
 - Permanent landtake
 - OS basemap

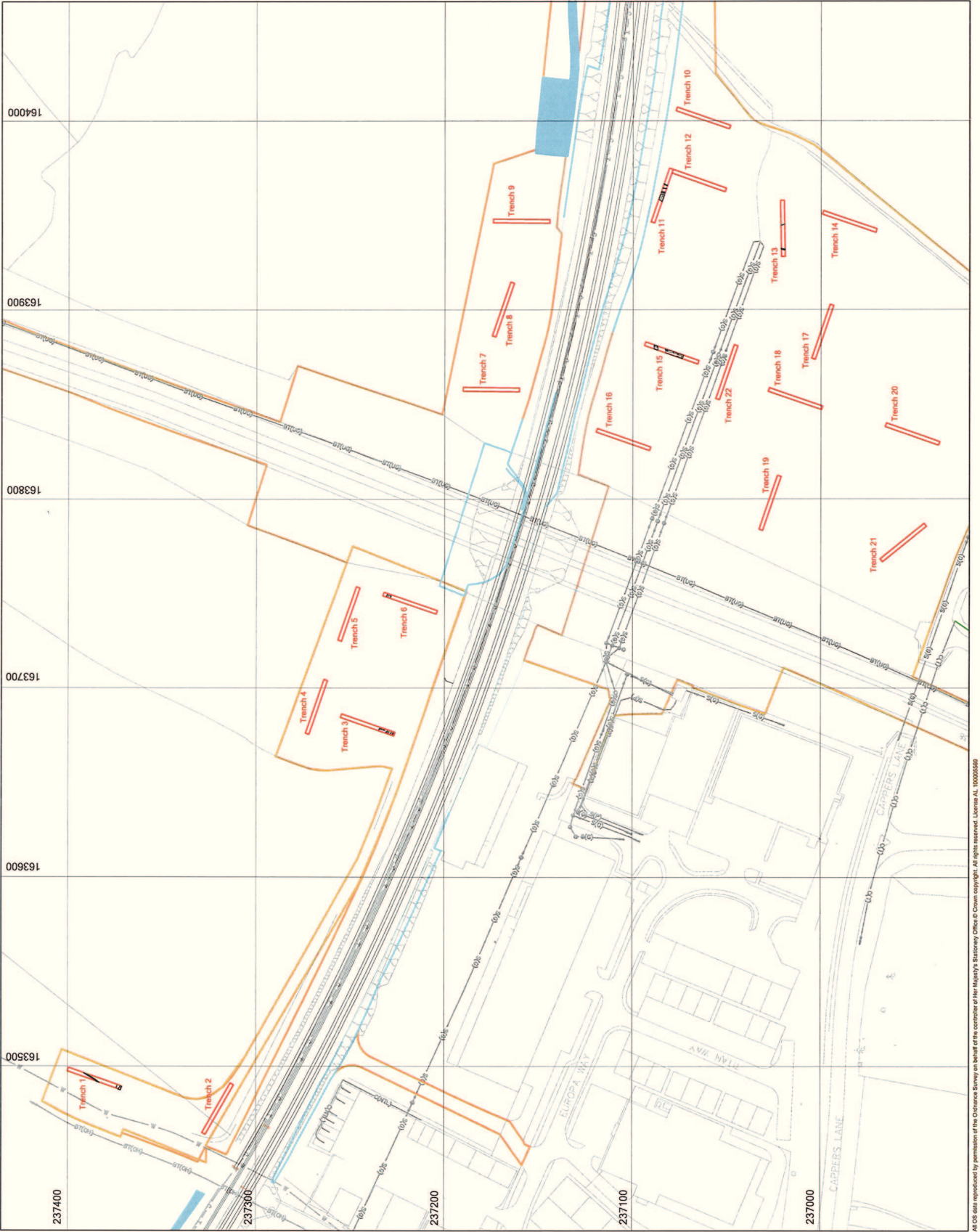
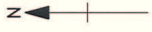


Figure 2: Trench locations



- Key
- Archaeological feature
 - Trench location
 - Temporary landtake
 - Permanent landtake
 - OS basemap

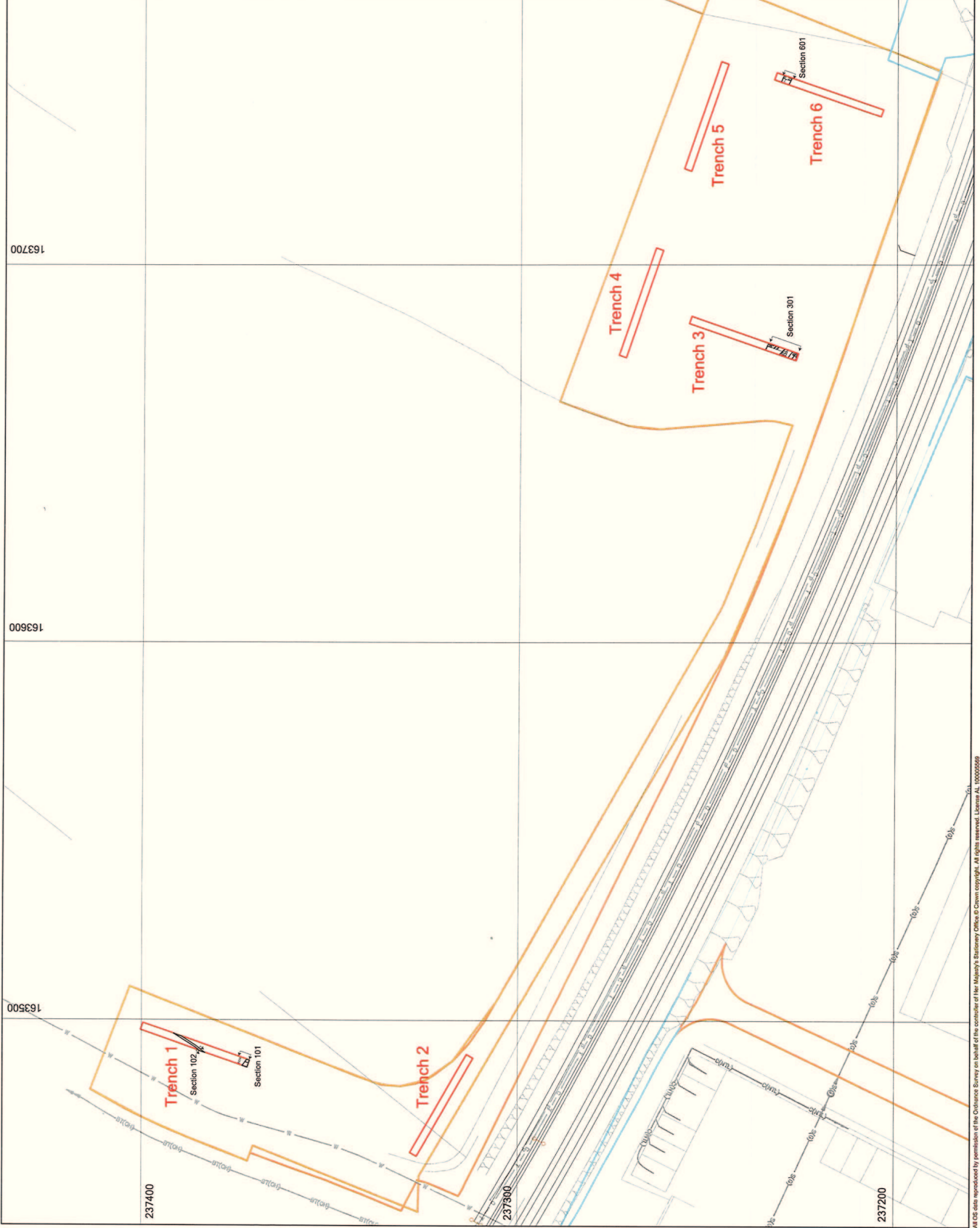


Figure 3: Northern area



Figure 4: Southern area

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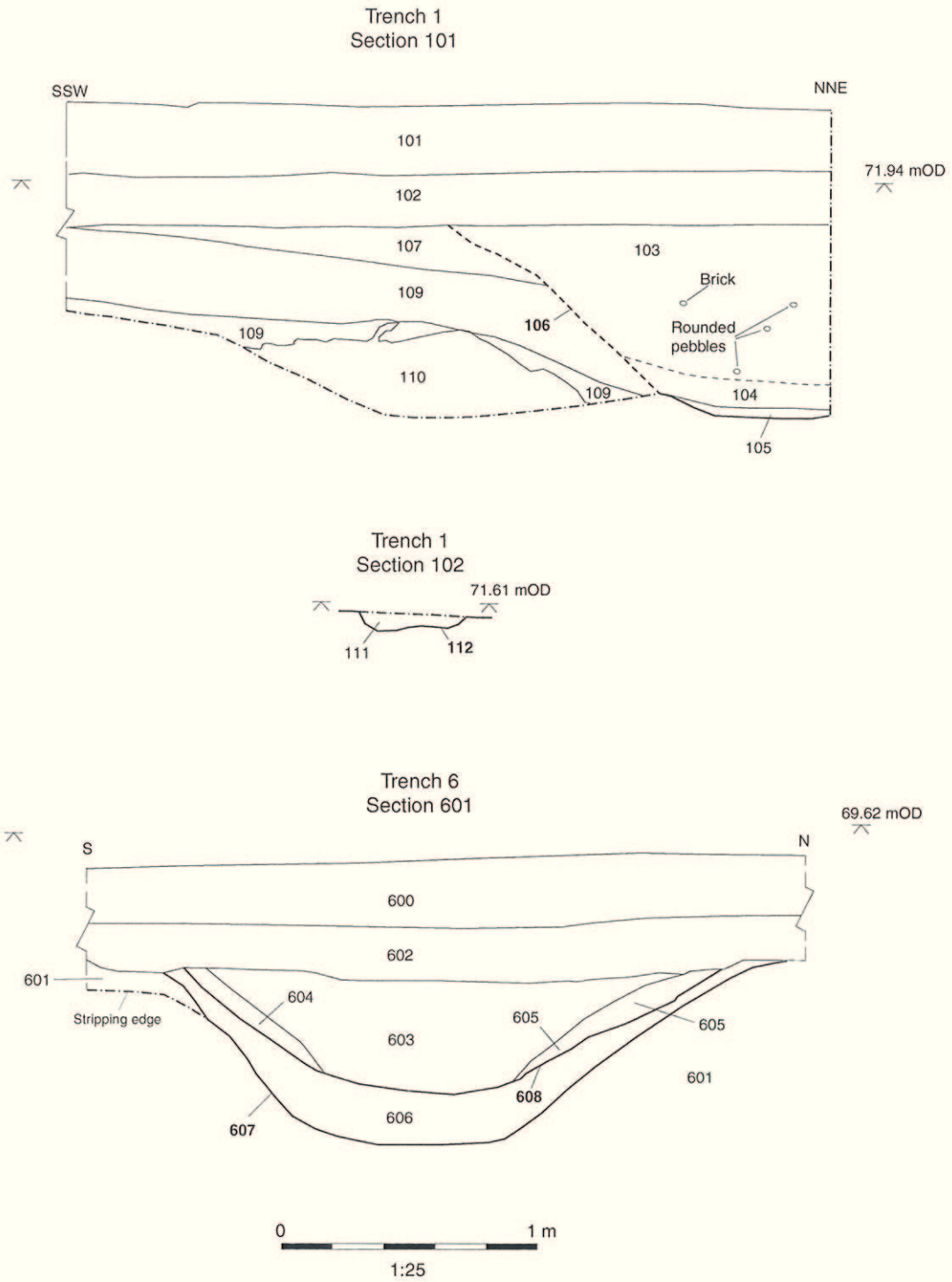
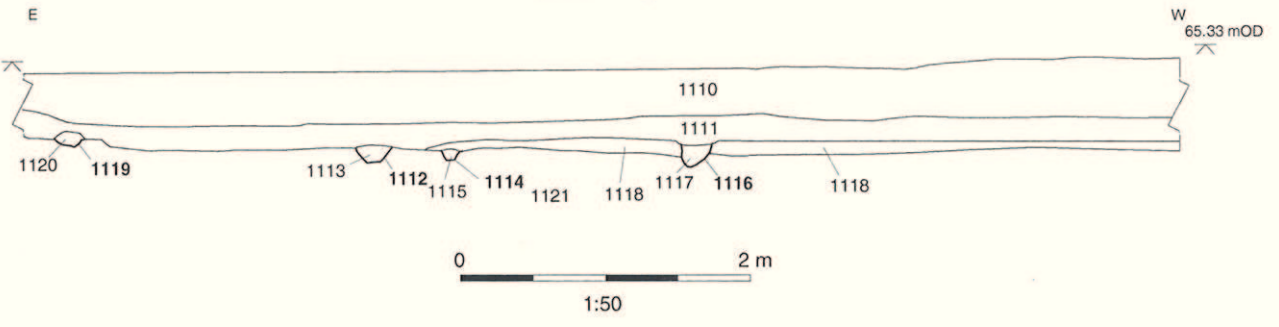
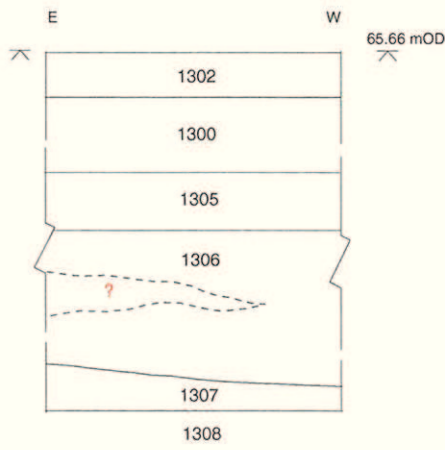


Figure 5: Trenches 1 and 6, selected sections

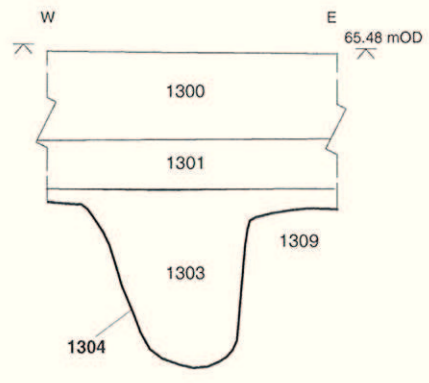
Trench 11 Section 1100



Trench 13 Section 1300



Trench 13 Section 1301



Trench 15 Section 1500

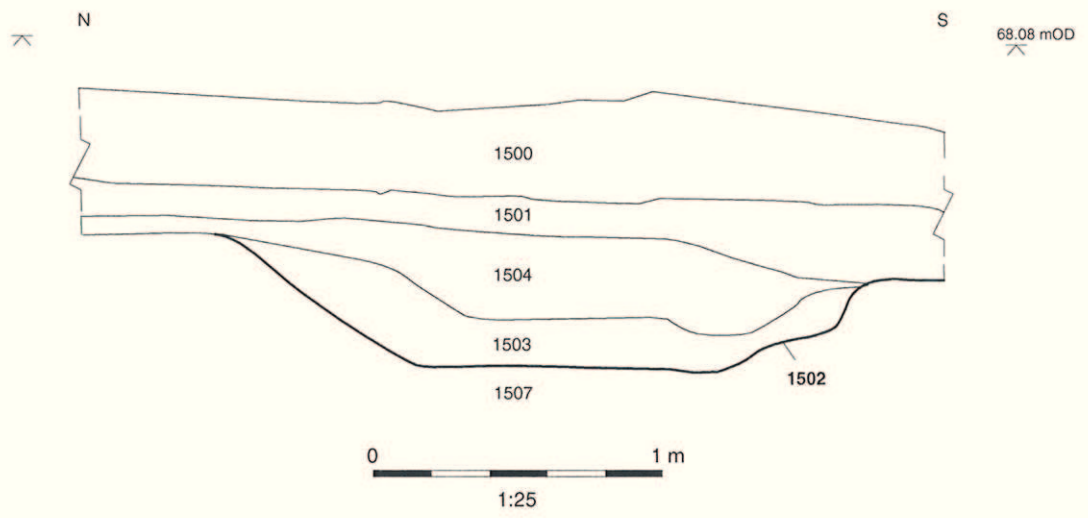


Figure 6: Trenches 15, 13 and 11, selected sections





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