

**Archaeological evaluation  
at land off  
Winchcombe Road,  
Sedgeberrow,  
Worcestershire**

Martin Cook BA MifA

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WSM 57536

The School House  
Church Lane  
Tardebigge  
Worcestershire  
B60 3AH

07850 918755

# **Archaeological evaluation at land off Winchcombe Road, Sedgeberrow, Worcestershire**

## **Introduction**

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at land off Winchcombe Road, Sedgeberrow, Worcestershire (SP 0261 3807; Fig 1) at the request of Michelle Young of Berry & Young Building Consultants & Surveyors. This work was undertaken in compliance with a brief from Mike Glyde of Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (dated 26th March 2014, planning ref W/13/2000) and according to a written scheme of investigation provided by Martin Cook BA MifA and approved by Mike Glyde of Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service.

The IfA defines an evaluation as:

The definition of archaeological field evaluation is a limited programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate.

The purpose of this was to gain information about the archaeological resource within a given area or site (including its presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality), in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context, leading to one or more of the following:

- the formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource
- the formulation of a strategy to mitigate a threat to the archaeological resource
- the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research

## **The documentary material**

### **Historic mapping**

The earliest available map was the Sedgeberrow inclosure map of 1813. At this time the area of the site was known as Churchill Field. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 shows that the evaluation site was once part of a roughly rectangular field which lay between the road between Sedgeberrow and Winchcombe and a brook (a tributary of the River Isbourne) to the east. At this time the nearest building lay more than 200m to the north. This was still the case in 1924 (this map cannot be reproduced for reasons of copyright). However, by the time of the Ordnance Survey map of 1938 (Fig 2.2) the field itself had been encroached upon by a single dwelling.

### **The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record**

Of primary interest is the evaluation report from John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS 2012) who conducted an archaeological evaluation in advance of new planning proposals on land to the rear of Main Road, Sedgeberrow, Worcestershire (centred upon SP 02312 38336; WSM 47415). The results of this evaluation formed the primary justification for the current evaluation (Glyde 2014):

*Extensive remains are known from land immediately to the north-west of the application area and the full extent of this site is not known.*

This archaeological evaluation followed a geophysical survey (Stratascan 2012) and metal detector survey of the site. Six trenches were excavated to the underlying natural geology or uppermost surface of the archaeology. The evaluation confirmed suspected archaeological anomalies in all of

the targeted trenches. The earliest dating evidence recovered from the evaluation was considered to be mid to late Romano-British pottery. The latest dating evidence were post-medieval finds within the backfill of boundary ditches uncovered in Trenches 4 and 5. A probable Romano-British building of unknown function was discovered within Trench 4. A well preserved Romano-British corn dryer, with collapsed flue roof and sides was discovered within Trench 3.

Enclosure ditches of Romano-British date were adjacent to a postulated trackway or road. A human skeleton and Roman roof tile were found within the backfill of the roadside ditch. This ditch was also traced on earlier excavations undertaken in 1999 to the immediate west of the site (Buteux, Hunt and Glyde 1999). Other ditches in Trenches 1, 2, 5 and 6 probably represent the remains of simple field boundaries associated with the Romano-British settlement. After the departure of the Romans the village of Sedgewerrow was then settled by new migrants during the Saxon period. However, no Saxon remains were apparent within the trenches.

The majority of the heritage assets recorded by the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record lie to the north and west of the site, at a distance of around 300m and more, although, closer to the site, unstratified finds have been reported at Lower Portway Farm, Sedgeway (WSM 34500). The greater number of these heritage assets are buildings. These date from the 11th century (Manor House; WSM 06993), include the church of St Mary the Virgin (14th century; WSM 06991), a number of 16th or 17th century timber framed buildings (eg WSM 38117, WSM 39364, WSM 39548, WSM 39550 and WSM 39936) and a considerable number of 18th, 19th and 20th century structures. The majority of these lie within the core of the village, to the north and north west.

The area has been subject to an historic landscape characterisation project and is designated as an area of parliamentary enclosure (HWR 260).

## **The fieldwork**

### **General**

Fieldwork took place between the 25th and 29th June 2014. It comprised the excavation of twelve, 25m long trenches 1.6m wide in the positions shown on Fig 3, with records (drawing, written description and photographs) made as appropriate. A full description of the contexts is given in Appendix 1; a summary being employed below.

### **Description: excavation**

The recorded deposits were generally consistent across the eastern part of the site. These comprised a topsoil which consisted of a dark grey-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stones (eg contexts 01, 06, 16, 33, etc) and a subsoil which comprised a mid orange sandy clay, sometimes a little darker (mid orange-brown) and with a varying amount of small angular stones (eg contexts 14, 22, 34, etc). The natural subsoil varied considerably, even within the same trench. Generally, it was an orange-brown sandy clay although there were extensive patches of green-blue tenacious clay and orange brown gravelly sand (eg contexts 05, 08, 11, 23, etc). The deposit sequence across most of the site is adequately represented by the sections of trenches 1, 4, 5 and 7 (Figs 4.2, 4.3 and 9).

Features in this area were limited. Most comprised land drains cut into the natural subsoil. These consisted of clay pipes approximately 0.3m long (Figs 4.5 and 8, contexts 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50 and 51). The only other feature of note in this area was a large, flat stone (Fig 4.5 trench 5, and 7; context 03). This was almost 0.5m across and nearly 0.2m thick. It appeared originally to have had at least three straight sides which could have made it a true rectangle. On its upper face it had clear evidence of tooling. The sub-rectangular feature near its centre appears to be natural.

Of greatest interest was the western part of the site, adjacent to the road. The sections at the western ends of trenches 10 and 12 (Fig 4.1, sections 1 and 2 and Figs 5 and 6) noticeably increased in depth although for the most part the deposits remained the same. The exception was section 1 which had a layer of large rounded stones (context 02) between the topsoil (context 01) and the subsoil (context 04).

## **Finds**

No stratified finds were recovered from the trenches and few were seen on the surface of the field.

## **Description: walk-over survey**

The whole field between the road to the west and the brook to the east was inspected for earthworks. It was possible to discern vestigial remains of ridge and furrow in the vicinity of trenches 8, 9, 10 and 11 and it was noticed that, adjacent to the brook, which was deeply incised, the slope of the field levelled off significantly.

## **Interpretation**

The site has produced little in the way of archaeological deposits, the greater number of these being a number of land drains running approximately south-west to north-east across the site. In various places about the site, but particularly in the vicinity of trenches 8, 9, 10 and 11, there is evidence for degraded ridge and furrow. It is believed that the increased depth of the west ends of trenches 10 and 12, and the flattening out of the slope of the field adjacent to the brook represent the remains of headlands associated with the ridge and furrow. It is possible, although it cannot be proved, that the large stone (context 03) is a boundary marker associated with the pre-enclosure use of the field.

## **Commentary**

The distinctive pattern of ridge and furrow, bounded by headlands is a characteristic and widely recognised feature of regular open-field systems (English Heritage 1998). Ridge and furrow is produced by the action of ploughing using a 'heavy plough', ie. one capable of turning over the earth. Ridge and furrow is produced by first ploughing a normal furrow across the field. On a return run, a furrow is cut closely parallel to the first and the sod turned inwards to meet that cut by the original furrow. The process is then continued back and forth across the field. A large proportion of surviving ridge and furrow takes the form of a reversed 'S' when viewed in plan. By ploughing in this manner, the plough team could begin by standing on a narrow headland at right angles to the line of ploughing. They would then move onto the ridge so that, on reaching the farthest limit, they would end at right angles to the ridge on another headland. In this way damage to adjacent strips could be minimised.

Headlands often survive long after the destruction of the ridges and furrow itself. These are typically long sinuous ridges which occur between the furlongs of open fields where the strips terminated and the ridges and furrows ran out. They appear in any length up to around 700m and range from 10 to 20m wide. They rarely survive to over 0.5m high and are generally considerably less. The width and height of the example at Sedgeberrow is consistent with these figures.

It is unknown when the damage to the ridge and furrow occurred but the character of the land drains suggest that it could have been during the 19th century when 'under-drainage' as it was then known was becoming popular (Scott 1908). It is felt that the paucity of archaeological deposits reflects the use to which the land has, historically, been put.

## **Significance**

The only significant archaeological features located during the evaluation were the fragmentary ridge and furrow and the associated headlands. There is no Monuments Protection Programme Class Description specifically for these elements of the landscape. However, they are recognised as components of regular open-field systems for which there is such a Class description (English Heritage 1998). This has been employed below in order to assess significance in this case.

### *Period (currency)*

Open field systems, and their components, are long-lived. Although difficult to date, examples are known from the pre-Norman period and from the 16th/17th centuries. The majority, however, were of early post-Conquest date.

### *Rarity*

Open field systems, and their components, are common. Although the precise number is difficult to establish, the total is somewhere in the range 250 to 2000. An estimated total of 1000 examples may

be suggested although it must be stressed this total refers to field systems rather than individual fields.

#### *Diversity (form)*

Open field systems, and their components, are very diverse. Four types exist within this group, determined both by date of origin and the extent of dispersal. Other variations exist in terms of regional diversity and the content of field systems, the range of individual components tending to depend more on environmental and topographic distinctions.

#### *Period (representativity)*

Open field systems, and their components, are not highly representative of the medieval period. Field systems are just one of a wide variety of monument classes known from this time.

In summary, the ridge and furrow and the associated headland found during the evaluation at Sedgeberrow can only achieve a very low significance.

### **Depositional and post-depositional processes**

The site is located just off the edge of the flood plain near the confluence of the Carrant Brook and the River Isbourne and has probably been under an agricultural regime at least since medieval times. The process of ploughing on a slope has resulted in the soil cover being comparatively shallow on the highest and sloping parts of the site and comparatively thick in the area adjacent to the road. Were a trench to be excavated adjacent to the brook on the opposite side of the field it would probably identify a similar build-up of material. The field is a considerable distance from the historic core of the village of Sedgeberrow and the paucity of archaeological deposits and material culture suggests that the site has long been a place to which people came to work but not to stay.

### **Summary**

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at land off Winchcombe Road, Sedgeberrow, Worcestershire. The project identified that there were no significant archaeological deposits present in the area of the proposed development but that there was some slight evidence for ridge and furrow agriculture, superseded in the 19th century by a more intensive agricultural regime which required the sub-surface draining of the land.

### **Bibliography**

Buteux, V, Hunt, C, and Glyde, M, 1999 *Salvage recording at Trebor, Main Street, Sedgeberrow. Archaeological Service - Worcestershire County Council*

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JMHS, 2012 *An archaeological field evaluation on land off Main Road, Sedgeberrow, Worcestershire*

Scott, J, 1908 *Draining and embanking: a practical treatise*

Stratascan 2012 *Geophysical Survey Report; Land off Main Street, Sedgeberrow, Worcestershire*; Ref: J3200

### **Acknowledgements**

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Archives and Archaeology Service for their kind cooperation. Assistance on site was provided by Suzanne MacLeod and Amos of Henson Plant Hire, Evesham.

## **Archive**

The physical archive consists of:

- 3 Context index sheets
- 51 Context sheets
- 1 Level sheet
- 4 Drawings
- 1 Hard copy of the report
- 1 Hard copy of the brief
- 1 Hard copy of the WSI

It has been deposited at Hartlebury Museum.

The digital archive consists of:

- 1 DVD-ROM
  - digital copy of the report
  - digital copy of the brief
  - digital copy of the WSI
  - digital copies of the report component files

It has been deposited with the Archaeology Data Service.

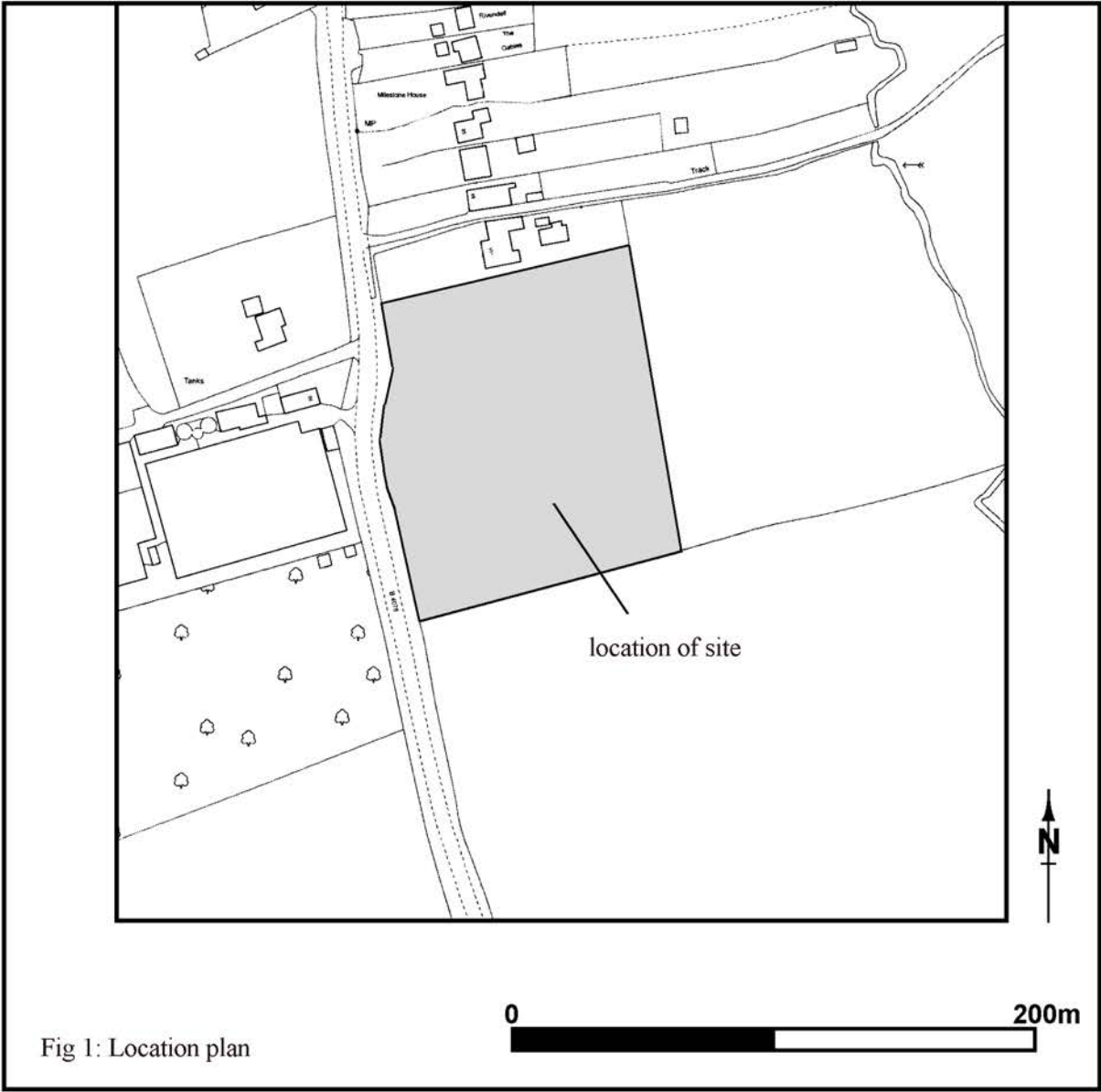
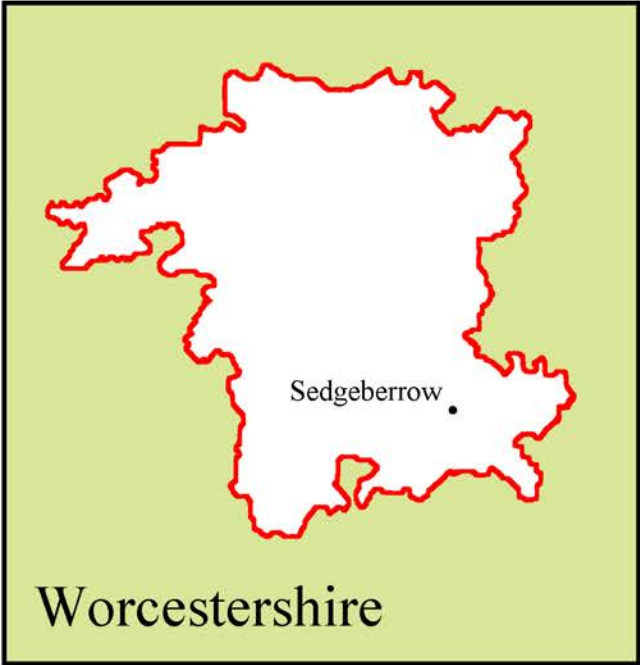


Fig 1: Location plan



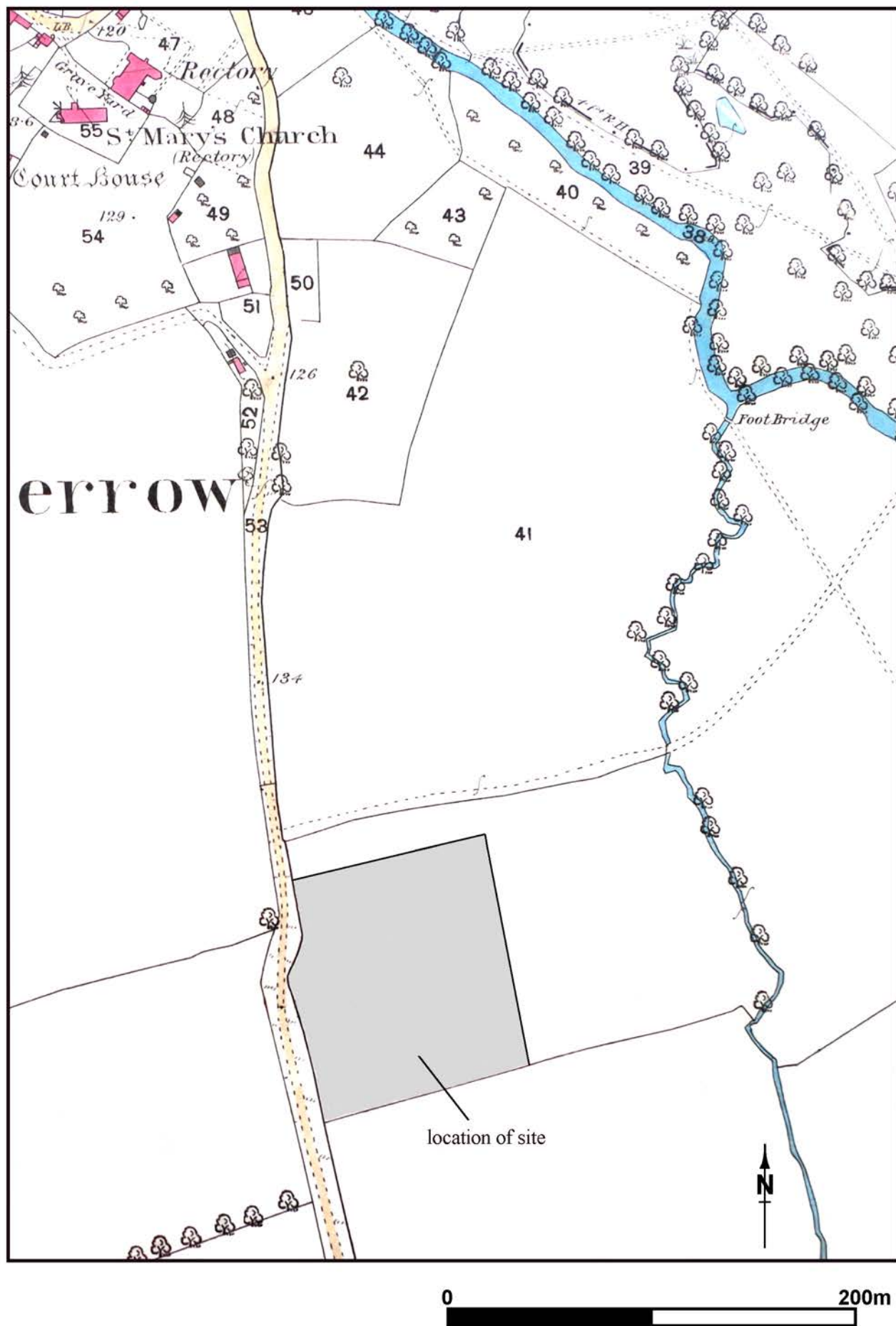


Fig 2.1: Historic mapping; Ordnance Survey map of 1885



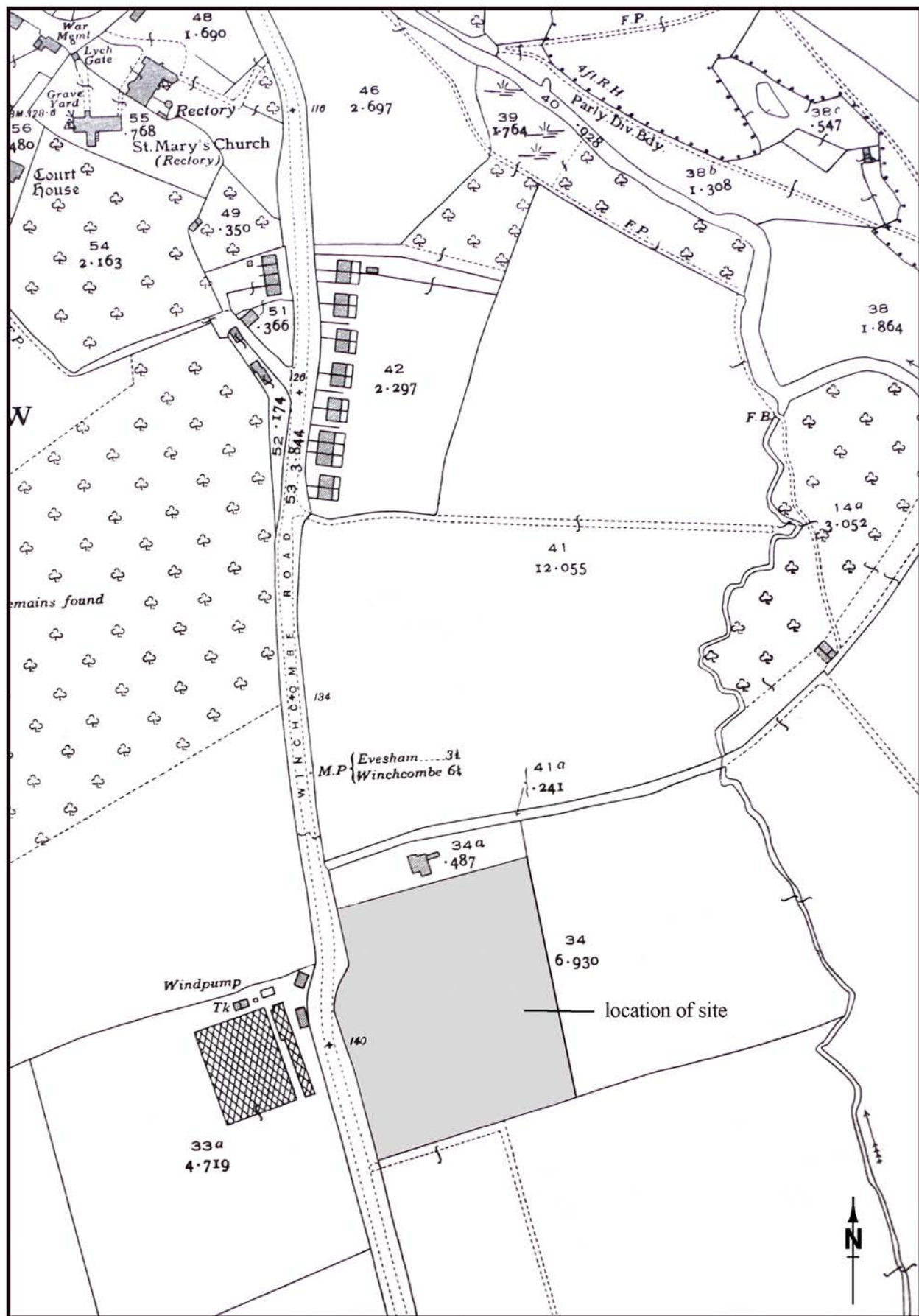
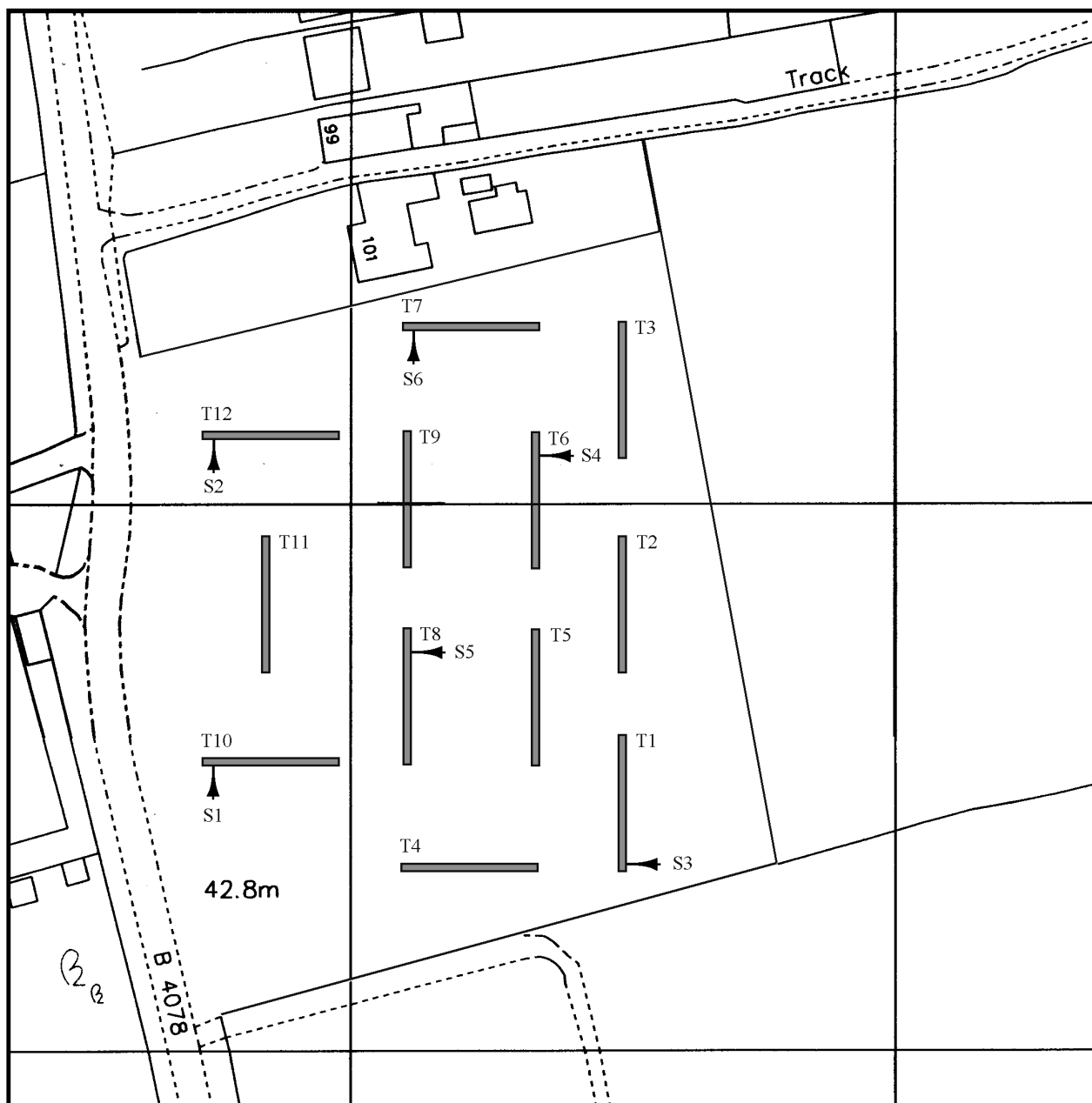


Fig 2.2: Historic mapping; Ordnance Survey map of 1938



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-  25m trench
- T1, T2....T8 etc Trench number
- S1, S2....S5 etc Section number

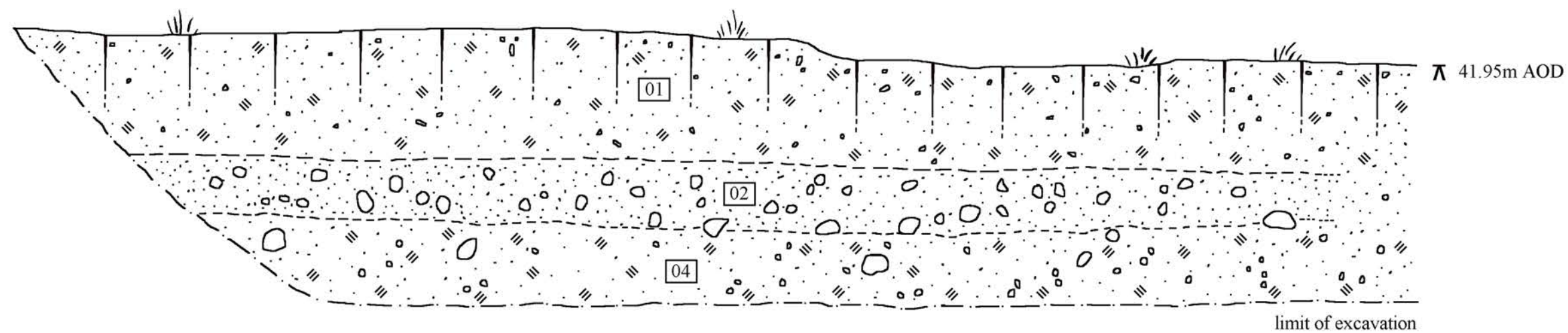


Fig 3: Location of trenches and sections

### Section 1

west

east



### Section 2

west

east

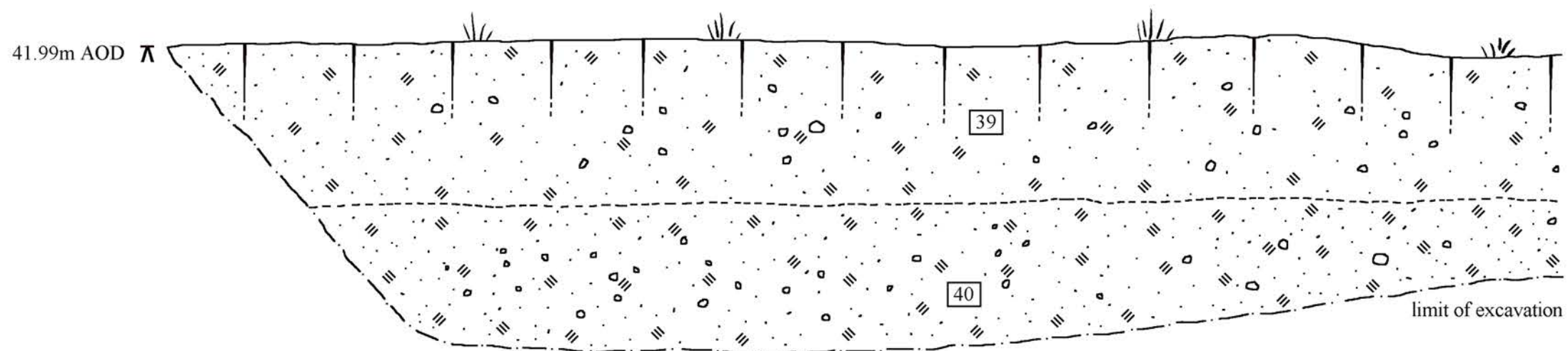
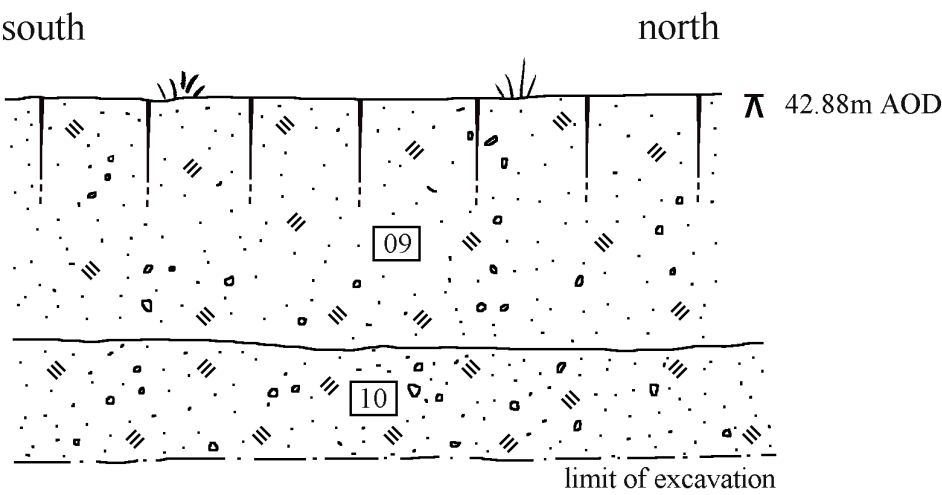


Fig 4.1: Sections 1 and 2

Section 3



Section 4

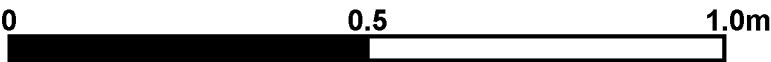
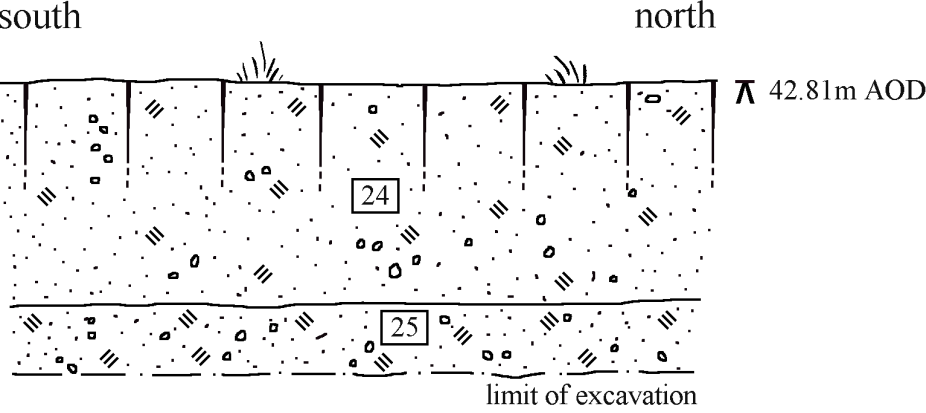
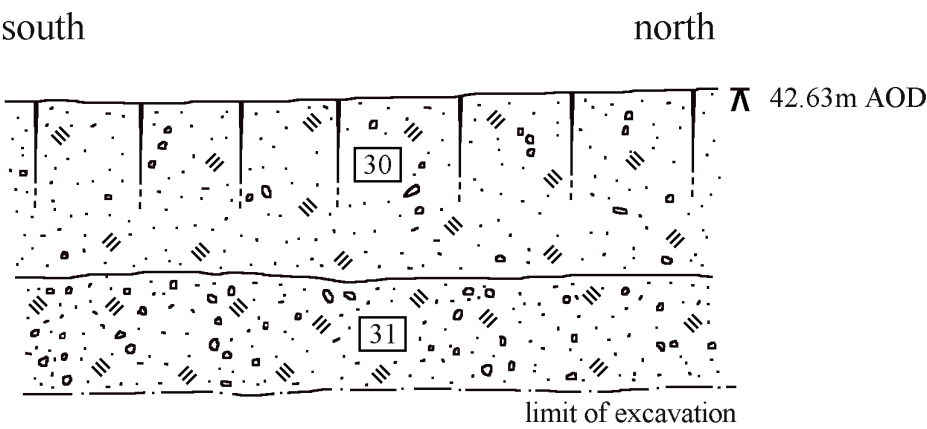


Fig 4.2: Sections 3 and 4

Section 5



Section 6

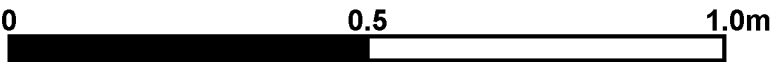
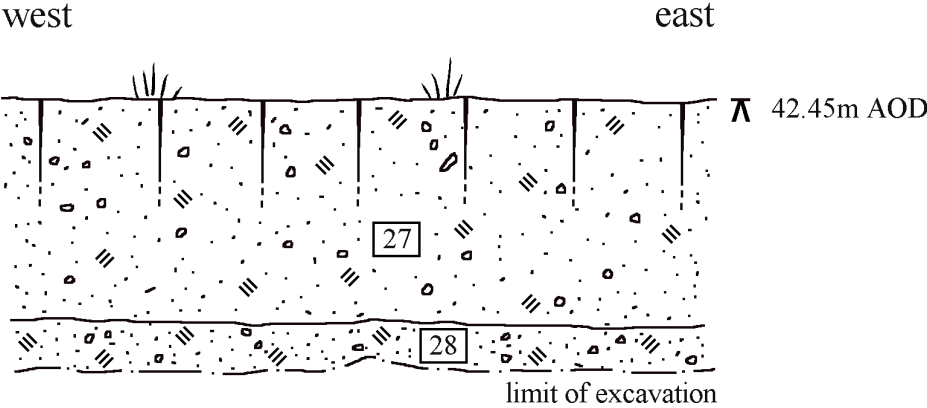


Fig 4.3: Sections 5 and 6









	loam and/or topsoil
	stones
	sand/gravel
	clay
	bricks
	ash and charcoal
	limit of excavation
	height above Ordnance Datum

Fig 4.4: Key to sections

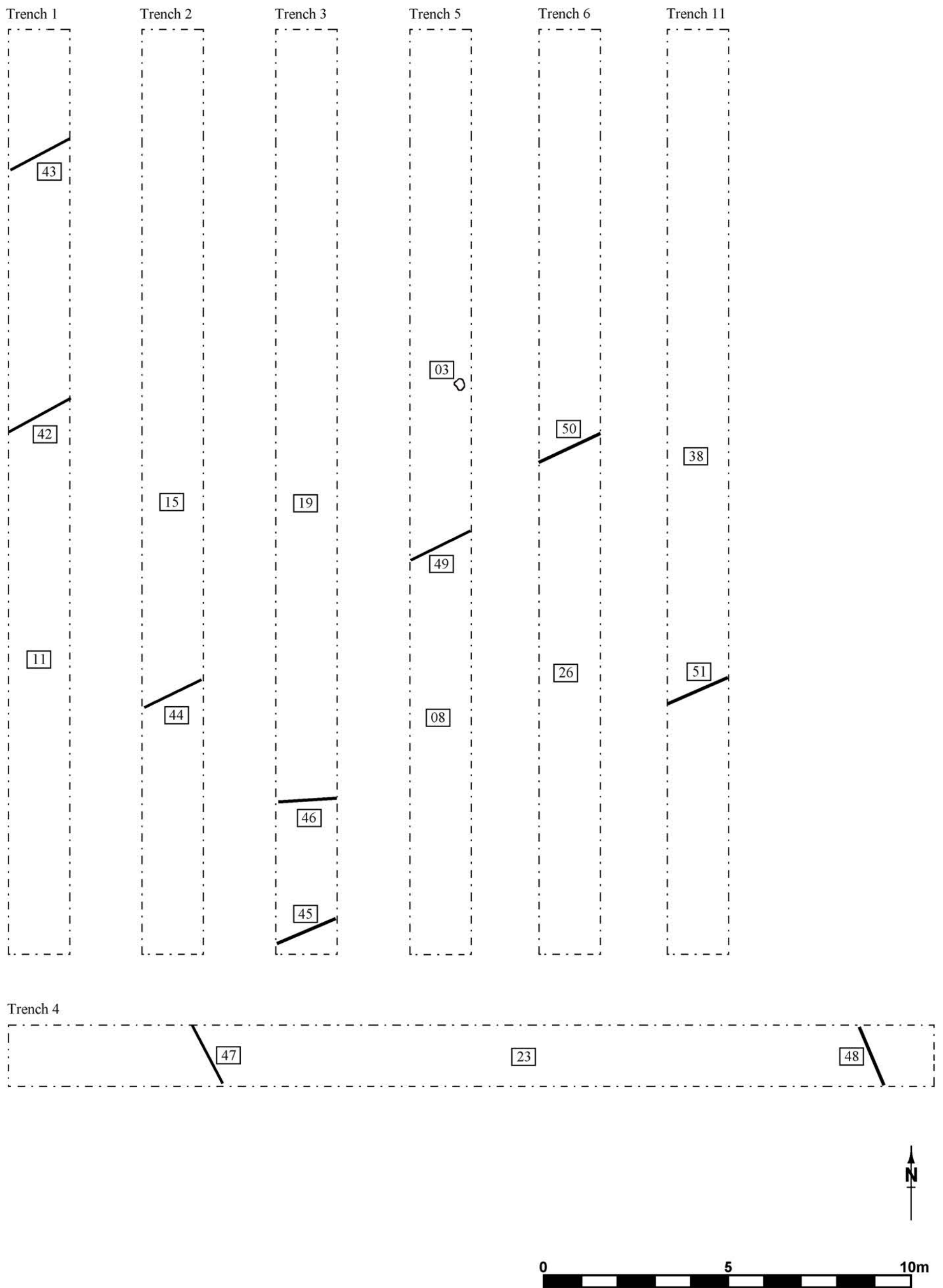


Fig 4.5: Land drains and large stone





Fig 5: Trench 10; section 1



Fig 6: Trench 12; section 2





Fig 7: Trench 5; context 03

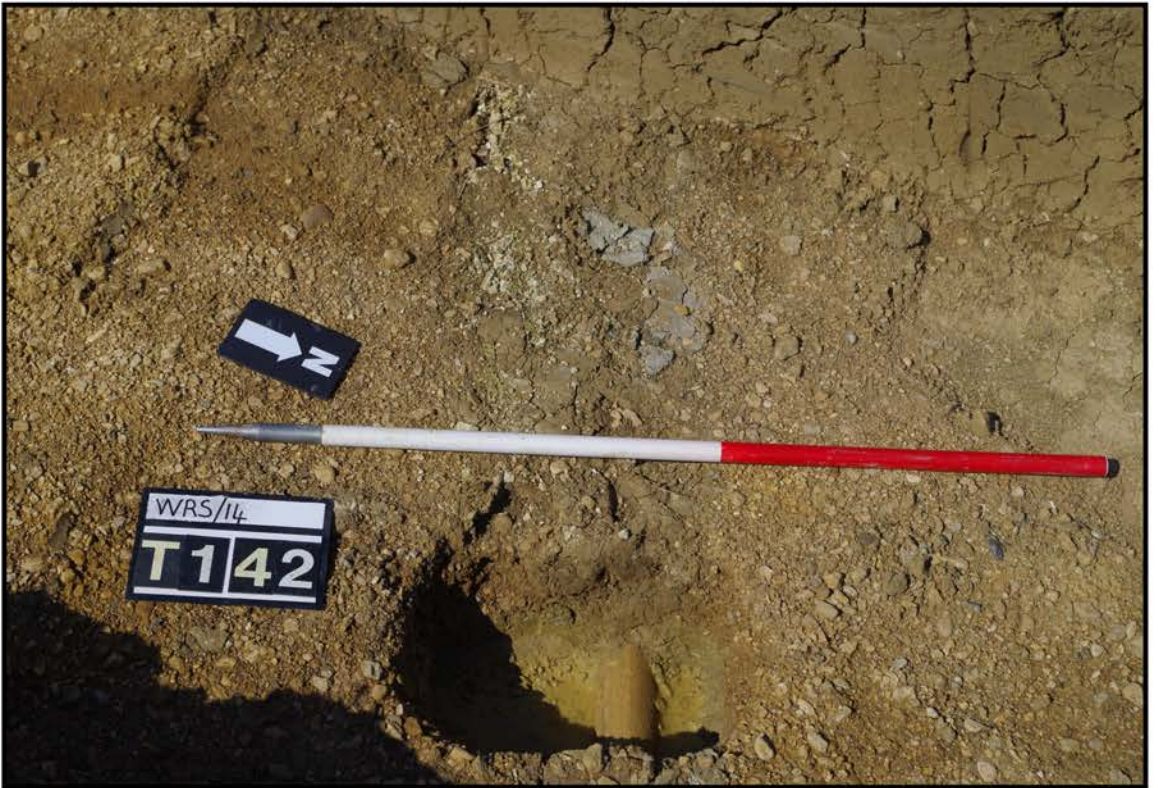


Fig 8: Trench 1; context 42





Fig 9: Typical section; example is Trench 5



Fig 10: General view of the site looking north-west

## Appendix 1: List of the contexts

Context number	Description	Interpretation
01	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Topsoil
02	Medium rounded pebbles/small cobbles in light, slightly clayey sand and gravel	Layer, origin and purpose unknown
03	Large, thick, flat stone with tooling on upper surface	Possible field boundary marker
04	Mid orange-brown sandy clay	Subsoil
05	Light orange sandy-clay with common small pebbles	Natural subsoil
06	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Topsoil
07	Mid orange sandy clay	Subsoil
08	Mid to dark-orange sandy-clay with occasional patches of sandy gravel	Natural subsoil
09	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Topsoil
10	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Subsoil
11	Orange-brown sandy gravel with blue-grey clay in patches	Natural subsoil
12	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Topsoil
13	Lens of light orange-brown sandy gravel	Discontinuous lens of gravel
14	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Subsoil
15	Orange-brown sandy gravel with blue-grey clay in patches	Natural subsoil
16	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Topsoil
17	Lens of light orange-brown sandy clay	Discontinuous lens
18	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Subsoil
19	Orange sandy clay interspersed with grey tenacious clay	Natural subsoil
20	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Topsoil
21	Thin, discontinuous lens of sandy gravel	Lens
22	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Subsoil
23	Orange-brown sandy clay with patches of blue clay	Natural subsoil
24	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Topsoil
25	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Subsoil
26	Mid to dark-orange sandy-clay with occasional patches of sandy gravel	Natural subsoil
27	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Topsoil
28	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with occasional small angular stone	Subsoil
29	Mid orange-brown sandy clay	Natural subsoil
30	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Topsoil
31	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Subsoil
32	Light orange sandy clay with common small pebbles	Natural subsoil
33	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Topsoil
34	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Subsoil
35	Light orange sandy clay with common small pebbles	Natural subsoil
36	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Topsoil
37	Mid orange-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Subsoil
38	Light orange sandy clay with common small pebbles	Natural subsoil

39	Dark grey-brown sandy clay with occasional to common small angular stone	Topsoil
40	Mid grey-brown-orange, more friable sandy clay with occasional very small angular stones	Subsoil
41	Light orange sandy clay with common small pebbles	Natural subsoil
42	Segmental clay pipe	Land drain
43	Segmental clay pipe	Land drain
44	Segmental clay pipe	Land drain
45	Segmental clay pipe	Land drain
46	Segmental clay pipe	Land drain
47	Segmental clay pipe	Land drain
48	Segmental clay pipe	Land drain
49	Segmental clay pipe	Land drain
50	Segmental clay pipe	Land drain
51	Segmental clay pipe	Land drain