

Archaeological Field Unit

Prehistoric and Post-Medieval Remains at Marshall's Garage, Peterborough: An Archaeological Evaluation

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**Prehistoric and Post-Medieval Remains at Marshall's Garage,
Peterborough: An Archaeological Evaluation**

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SUMMARY

On the 14th, 15th and 22nd of September 2000 the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council undertook an archaeological evaluation on the site of 'Marshall's Garage', Peterborough (TL 1900 9797). The work was carried out in connection with a proposed development of the site involving the construction of a number of dwellings.

Four trenches were excavated in order to ascertain the presence or absence of archaeological remains. The subsequent investigation of the trenches revealed a series of postholes and a single ditch. The only dating evidence was a piece of clay pipe stem from a posthole, and it is possible that these features therefore relate to fairground structures. Circumstantial evidence, however, suggests the ditch may be Prehistoric, and it is therefore possible that the postholes are also of early origin. A palaeochannel crosses part of the site and may also be connected with Prehistoric activity.

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**Prehistoric and Post Medieval Remains at Marshall's Garage, Peterborough.
An Archaeological Evaluation**

(TL 1900 9797)

1 INTRODUCTION

On the 14th, 15th and 22nd of September 2000 the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council undertook an archaeological evaluation on the site of 'Marshall's Garage', Peterborough (Fig. 1). The work was carried out to satisfy a planning condition in advance of development.

2 SITE BACKGROUND

Planning Background

The proposed development entails the construction of dwellings for residential purposes. The development area is approximately 1.6 hectares. (Planning Application No. 00/00468/OUT). The site is located on the south bank of the River Nene (TL 1900 9797), opposite the historic core of the city of Peterborough in an area of high archaeological potential (below), the possibility of there being remains within the application site determined the need for an archaeological evaluation.

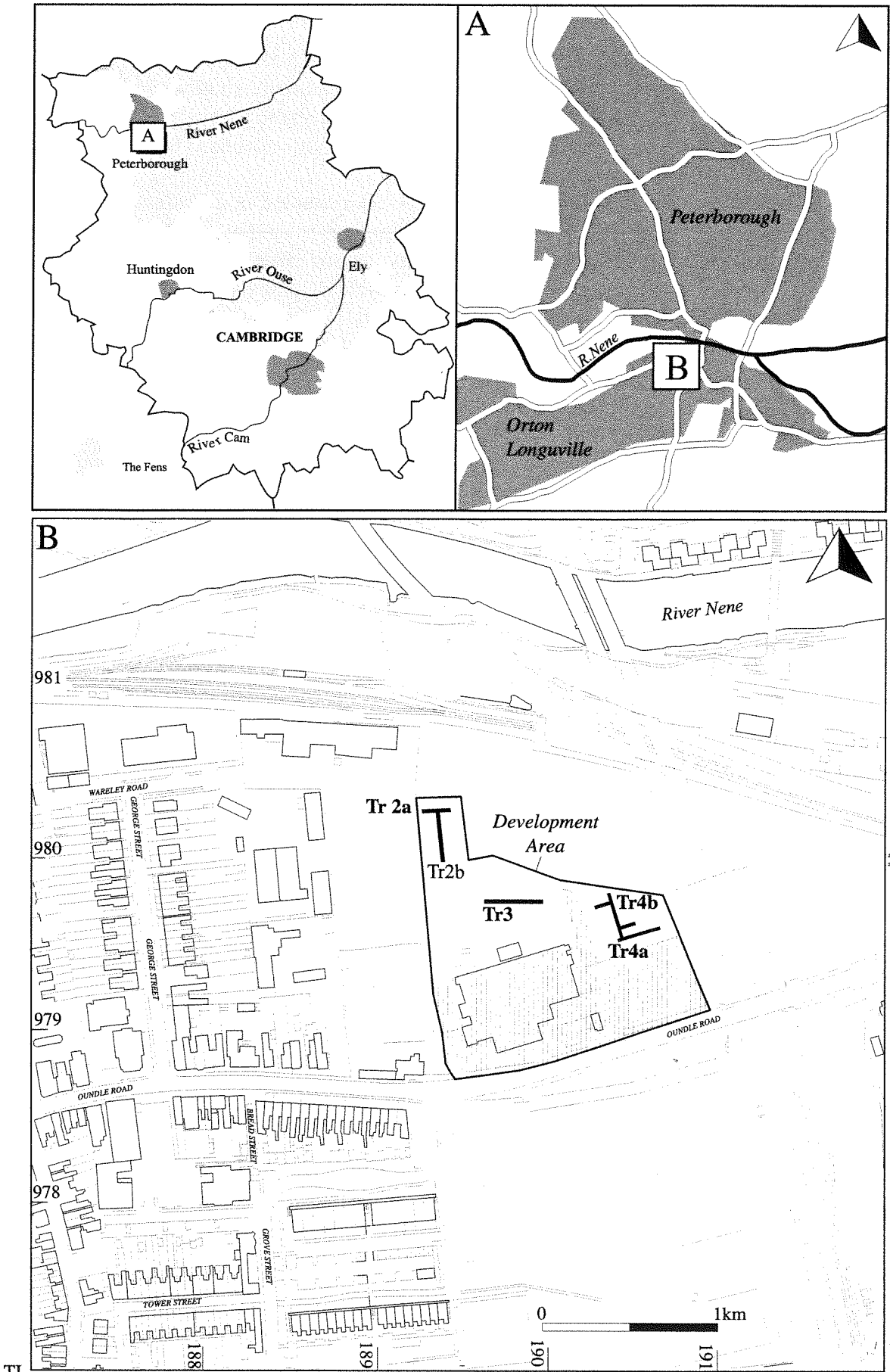
The work was carried out by staff of the AFU for Bidwells (Property Consultants), in accordance with a brief produced by Ben Robinson of Peterborough City Council Archaeological Services (PCCAS), Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery (Brief for Archaeological Evaluation, 07/08/99).

Geology

The local geology consists of 1st River Terrace Deposits (Sheet 158, British Geological Survey 1984).

Historical and Archaeological Background

Evidence of prehistoric activity in the immediate vicinity generally is confined to stray artefact finds, which include a single sherd of Late Bronze Age pottery, (PCCSMR 01665a) recovered from the river silts during the 1950 excavation of the probable Early Iron Age dug-out canoe (PCCSMR 01665). Other prehistoric finds include a Bronze Age palstave (PCCSMR 01640) and two Iron Age coins (PCCSMR 10479 and 10478). The presence of later prehistoric material together with Iron Age settlement evidence (PCCSMR 01711)



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Figure 1 Site Location Map (Hatched tone indicates areas unavailable for evaluation)

recovered from along the route of the River Nene, demonstrates its importance together with the prehistoric fen edge. The presence of Roman artefacts, which included coins, pottery and glass bottles (PCCSMR 08762) recovered in 1886 suggested occupation to the north of the River Nene.

An Anglo-Saxon cemetery (PCCSMR 01666) was located to the south of the River Nene, which was gradually uncovered between 1864 and 1920. Excavation revealed bodies adorned with personal objects that included brooches, spearheads, shield-bosses and knives dating from 550 AD. To the north of the cemetery an Anglo-Saxon gold ring was recovered from the river silts, which has been dated to c.800AD (PCCSMR 01668). Investigation of the ring found its design had a strong Merovingian influence.

The site fronts onto Oundle Road, the meandering course of which served the historic settlements of Yaxley, Farcet, Stanground, Fletton, Woodston, Botolph Bridge and Orton Longueville forming a loop within the two arms of the Nene, rejoining Ermine Street at Alwalton. Even though the Oundle Road connects many small settlements along its route, direct access to Peterborough from south of the Nene before the end of the 11th century (or maybe even later) could only be achieved by ferry (Fig. 2. Hart 1982).

During the sixteenth century 'The Bridge Fair' was held on 50 acres of land south of the River Nene, within the parish of Fletton (VCH 3), The site is still the location of the modern Peterborough Fairs, indicating continuity of usage over the centuries.

Archaeological remains in close proximity to the site consisted of ridge and furrow evidence (PCCSMR 01639) that has long since been removed as a result of modern development. Although the ridge and furrow evidence has now gone, its presence in the first place indicates that land close to the River Nene was not waterlogged during the medieval period.

3 METHODOLOGY

Three trenches with a total length of 150m were open by a 360° mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under the supervision of an archaeologist.

The trenches were hand cleaned, where necessary, photographed and base planned. Once identified, features were excavated, planned and recorded using the AFU's standard recording system. Sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and excavated features photographed

Two trenches positioned along the frontage of the present Marshall's garage and forecourt could not be excavated, at the present time, because the area is still in use. This has resulted in no investigation of this area and therefore trenches may

be required along the frontage of the site to determine the presence/absence of any archaeology at a later date.

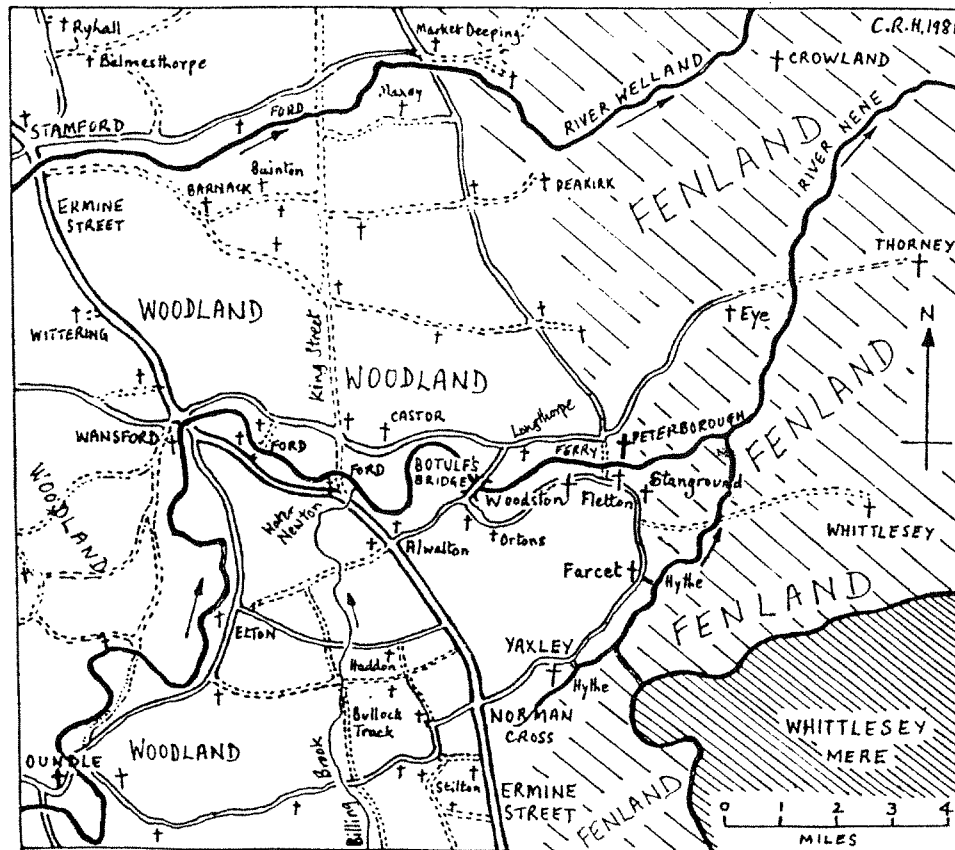


Figure 2 The Peterborough region in the late 10th century: a suggested reconstruction (After Hart, 1982)

4 RESULTS (Fig. 1)

Trenches 2A & 2B was arranged in a 'T' shape in order to obtain maximum coverage of a restricted area.

Trench 2A (17.5m x 1.60m), west-east oriented. It was located in the north-west corner of the site and excavated to a minimum depth of 0.95m (east end) and a maximum depth of 1.6m (west end). The removal of the hardcore surface 0.10m thick revealed the presence of foundation material consisting of brick and

concrete which was excavated to a depth of 0.35m. Removal of the foundation material revealed a layer of dark brown silty soil, probably re-deposited topsoil, 0.80m thick at the western end reducing to 0.30m at the eastern end. Removal of the topsoil revealed a layer of light brown silty clay 0.50m thick at the western end reducing to 0.10m at the eastern end. The natural geology was found to be a mixture of sandy silt and cornbrash.

Trench 2B (31.5m x 1.60m), north-south oriented. It was located at a right/angle to Trench 1A, and excavated to a minimum depth of 0.85m (north end) and a maximum depth of 1.25m (south end). The removal of the hardcore surface (0.10m thick) revealed the presence of foundation material consisting of brick and concrete, which was excavated to a depth of 0.45m. Beneath the foundation material was a layer of dark brown silty soil, probably re-deposited topsoil, 0.35m thick at the northern end increasing to 0.50m at the southern end. Removal of the topsoil revealed a layer of light brown silty clay 0.50m thick at the northern end reducing to 0.10m at the southern end. The natural geology was found to be a mixture of sandy silt, limestone blocks and areas of gravel.

Trench 3 (50mx1.6m) east/west orientated. It was located c. 25m to the north/east of the present Marshalls Garage, and excavated to a depth of 1.30m (north-eastern end) increasing to 1.60m at the mid-point of the trench and remaining at a depth of 1.60m at the (south-western end). The removal of the hardcore surface (0.10m thick) revealed the presence of foundation material consisting of brick and concrete, to a depth of c. 0.35m. Beneath the foundation material was a layer of dark brown silty soil, probably re-deposited topsoil 0.90m thick at the eastern end and remaining at approximately the same depth along the entire length of the trench. The re-deposited topsoil sealed the natural geology (gravel) at the south-western end of the trench gradually changing to a silty sand with patches of clay at the north-eastern end. Exposed at 31m from the north-eastern end of the trench was a large Victorian pit 8m in diameter which contained fragments of willow pattern pottery.

Trenches 4A & 4B was arranged in an 'L' shape to achieve maximum coverage of the area to be investigated.

Trench 4A (25.5mx1.60m), south-west/north-east oriented. It was located 25m to the north-east of the present 'Marshalls garage' and excavated to a maximum depth of 0.90m (north-east end) decreasing to 0.75m (south-west end). The removal of the hardcore surface 0.37m thick revealed the presence of a light brown clayey silt soil which was excavated to a depth of 0.38m at the western end increasing to 0.45m at the eastern end. The natural geology was found to be a mixture of light brown silts together with patches of gravel.

Trench 4B (23.8m x 1.60m), north-west/south-east orientated. The trench was positioned 1m in from the south-western edge of Trench 4A and excavated to a maximum depth of 0.65m (south-eastern end) increasing to 0.75m (north-western end). The removal of the hardcore surface 0.37m thick revealed the presence of a light brown clayey silt soil which was excavated to a depth of

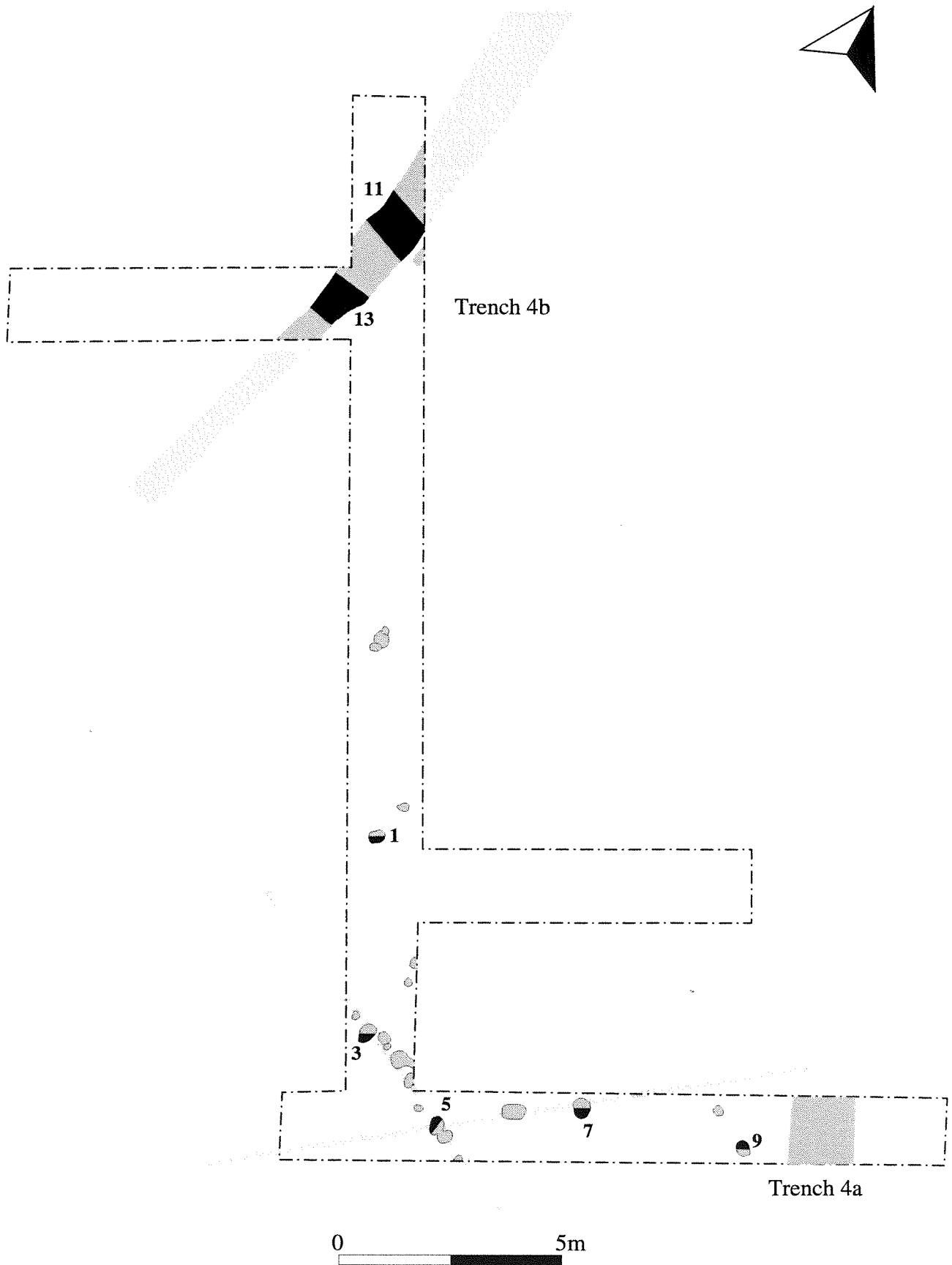


Figure 3 Plan of Trenches 4a and b. (Extrapolated courses of linear features and posthole alignments are shown in light tone).

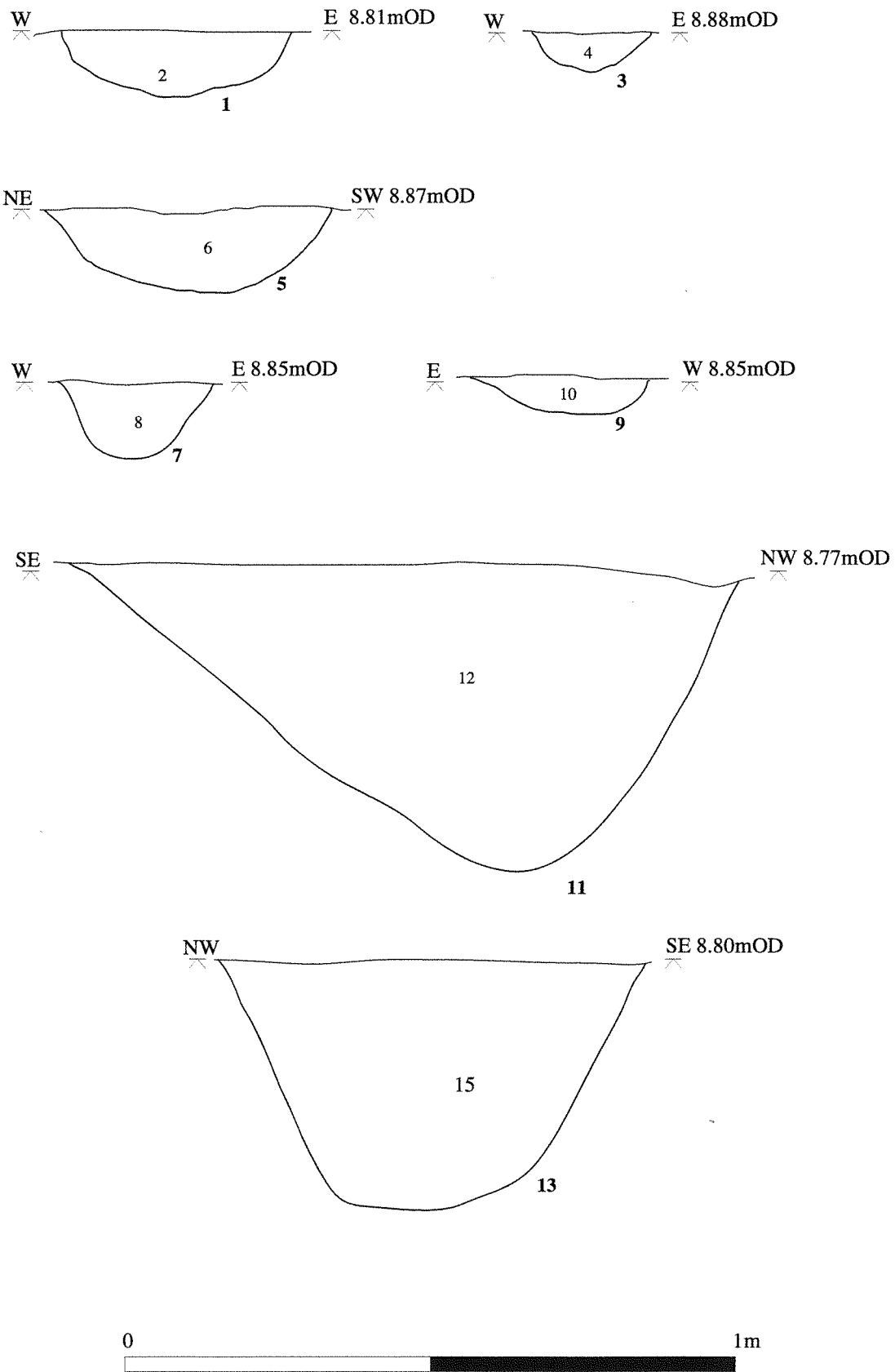


Figure 4 Sections

0.28m at the south-eastern end increasing to 0.40m at the north-western end. The natural geology was found to be a mixture of light brown silts together with patches of gravel.

Both Trenches 4A & 4B were found to contain archaeological features (Fig. 3 and 4), which are cut into the natural geology. These features consisted of postholes and a ditch.

Cut 1, 0.28m long, 0.30m wide, 0.07m deep, small circular shallow posthole, steep sides, contained one fill:

Fill 2, mid-grey/brown sandy silt soil, with occasional small pebble inclusions. Contained no artefactual remains.

Cut 3, 0.30m long, 0.30m wide, 0.10m deep, small circular posthole, gradual sides, contained one fill:

Fill 4, mid-grey/brown sandy silt soil, with occasional small pebble inclusions. Contained 3 fragments of clay pipe, 1 sherd of post-medieval Red Ware Pottery (1600-1800) and fragments of oyster shell.

Cut 5, 0.36m long, 0.30m wide, 0.10m deep, small circular posthole, gradual sides, contained one fill:

Fill 6, mid-grey/brown sandy silt soil, with occasional small pebble inclusions. Contained no artefactual remains.

Cut 7, 0.24m long, 0.28m wide, 0.12m deep, small circular posthole, steep sides, contained one fill:

Fill 8, mid-brown sandy silt soil, with occasional small pebble inclusions. Contained no artefactual remains.

Cut 9, 0.25m long, 0.22m wide, 0.05m deep, small circular shallow posthole, steep sides, contained one fill:

Fill 10, mid-grey/brown sandy silt soil, with occasional small pebble inclusions. Contained no artefactual remains.

Cut 11, 4.5m long, 1.1m wide, 0.051m deep, linear ditch with steep sides, orientated north-east/south-west, contained one fill:

Fill 12, mid-brown sandy silt soil, with occasional small pebble inclusions. Contained no artefactual remains.

Cut 13, 4.5m long, 0.70m wide, 0.042m deep, linear ditch with steep sides, orientated north-east/south-west, contained two fills:

Fill 14, mid-brown sandy silt soil, with occasional small pebble inclusions. Contained no artefactual remains.

Fill 15, brown sandy silt soil, with moderate small pebble inclusions. Contained no artefactual remains.

5 DISCUSSION

The area investigated by trenches 2 and 3 contained little apart from one large Victorian pit, which had been back-filled with debris (identified in Trench 3). Trenches 4A and 4B produced archaeological remains in the form of postholes, a single linear ditch and a palaeochannel (Fig. 3). The ditch may be related to the presence of this palaeochannel given the sites riverside location. Several of the postholes were excavated with only posthole 3 producing artefacts which can be dated to the post-medieval period (1600 to 1800), and may be associated to the 'fair'; a modern version of which still uses the site today.

In plan the distribution of the postholes do form significant patterns suggesting the location of walls or fence lines (Fig. 3). It is possible that any potential structures on the site are associated with the 'Fair'; and as a consequence temporary in their construction, but equally they could be of earlier date if the single fragment of clay pipe recovered from the posthole is interpreted as intrusive.

The linear ditch 11 discovered in Trench 4B and extension (Fig. 3) raises some questions as to the date of the feature and its function. Unfortunately, on excavation no artefacts were recovered and because of the limited nature of the investigation it was not possible to suggest a use to which the feature could be associated. The soil contained within the ditch appeared to be well leached, containing no organic material and this lack of organic material, together with the absence of artefacts, infers a prehistoric date for the ditch.

6 CONCLUSION

The objectives of the project were to establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within the site likely to be affected by ground disturbing development. The information was then to be used to allow an assessment to be made of the proposed development's implication and to inform an appropriate mitigation strategy.

The project has been partially successful in achieving its objectives. Archaeological remains were uncovered in only one area of the site, in and around Trench 4A and 4B. The precise extent of the remains here is still uncertain, but it seems that this trench revealed a possible prehistoric ditch, and a number of postholes. One of these has a single fragment of clay pipe and therefore may be associated to a travelling fair.

The lack of features elsewhere on the site might be attributed to later activity which includes a large Victorian pit filled with organic material identified in Trench 3. Also two concrete pipes uncovered cutting across Trench 2A and running in a north/south direction. The sections revealed in Trenches 2A, 2B

and 3, showed excessive landscaping had occurred when the car park was constructed

The evaluation at present only examined two thirds of the site. The remaining third which includes the street frontage has not been investigated during this evaluation, but may be required to be investigated at a later date.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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