

Archaeological Field Unit

**PREHISTORIC ACTIVITY AT LAND WITHIN THE FORMER  
'BRITISH SUGAR' FACTORY SITE,  
OUNCLE ROAD, PETERBOROUGH:  
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION**

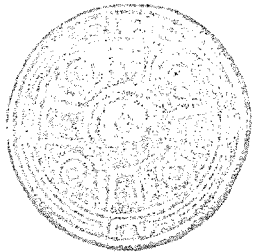
Rebecca Casa Hatton

2001

**Cambridgeshire County Council**

Report No. A194

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION**

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October 2001

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## **SUMMARY**

*Between the 1st and 2nd October 2001 staff of the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) conducted an archaeological evaluation at land within the former 'British Sugar' factory site, Oundle Road, Peterborough (TL 1785 9755). The work was carried out prior to the construction of a school complex.*

*Six trenches totalling some 199m<sup>2</sup> were mechanically excavated. Much of the site had been disturbed by modern activities linked to the former factory site (Trenches 1-3). Some parts in Trenches 4-6 had escaped damage. The removal of the undisturbed subsoil exposed archaeological features, consisting of a pit with semi-articulated bones of a small mammal and flint, postholes from two circular buildings and a substantial ditch.*

*No datable finds were retrieved from the excavated features. However, the results from the evaluation seem to be consistent with the known evidence for Iron Age activity in the area.*

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**PREHISTORIC ACTIVITY AT LAND WITHIN THE FORMER 'BRITISH  
SUGAR' FACTORY SITE,  
OUNDLE ROAD, PETERBOROUGH:  
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION  
(NGR TL 1785 9755)**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Between the 1st and 2nd October 2001 staff of the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an archaeological evaluation at land within the former 'British Sugar' factory site, Oundle Road, Peterborough (TL 1785 9755), prior to development (Fig. 1). The work followed earlier targeted evaluations undertaken by staff of the AFU in 1998 and 2000 in the areas to the south, east and west of the present development site.

**2 SITE BACKGROUND**

**2.1 Planning Background**

The proposed development entails the construction of a new school complex. Given the known archaeological background of the area under investigation (below), the Officer of Peterborough City Council Archaeological Services (PCCAS) made recommendations to the Planning Authority for an archaeological evaluation to be undertaken.

The work was carried out by the AFU at the request of Peterborough City Council (Stephen Domek), in accordance with a Project Specification produced by Stephen Macaulay of the AFU (Macaulay, Sep 149/01) who also managed the project.

The archaeological work was monitored by Mr Ben Robinson of PCCAS.

**2.2 Geology and Topography**

The development site is located to the south-west of Peterborough City Centre, within the former 'British Sugar' factory site, and is presently flanked by a new access road which branches off Oundle Road. It comprises a subrectangular area of c. 1.15 hectare on the southern margins of a new residential estate presently under development, at NGR TL 1785/9755 (Fig. 1).

According to aerial photographs and plans of the former 'British Sugar' complex (below) the proposed development site partly overlies the beet

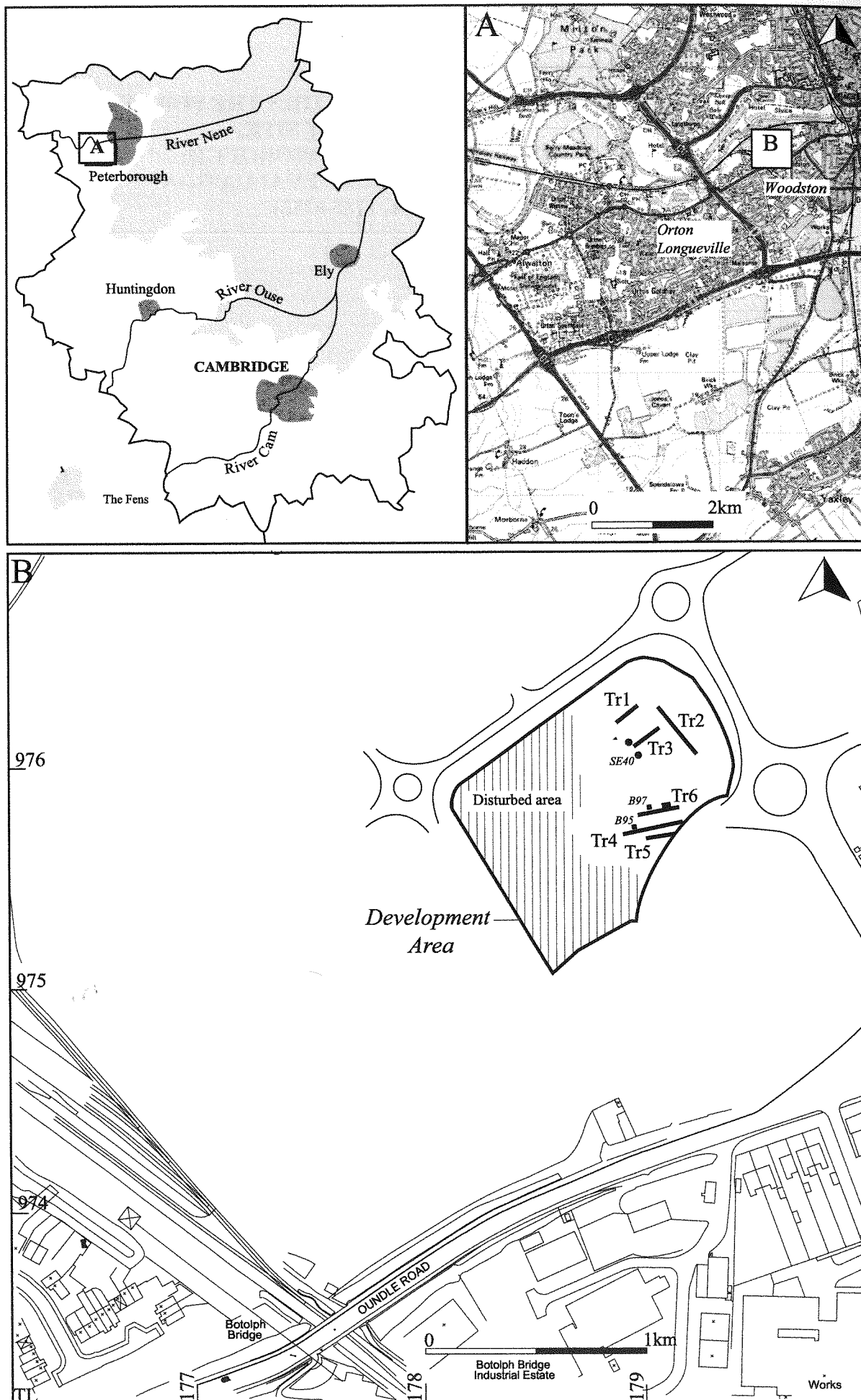


Figure 1 Site Location Plan

reception/washing area (including concrete channels and a conveyor) on the western side. It also overlies the former access road and recreational facilities on the eastern side.

At the time of the archaeological investigation the ground had been cleared of the former factory structures and levelled. The made ground consisted of mixed construction debris over in-fills of reworked natural clay, silt, sand and gravel deposits at artificial levels between 10.4m A.O.D. and 12.60m A.O.D. (DTS 7318, Volume II, 3).

The local geology consists of river terrace gravels underlain by the Jurassic 'solid formations'. These latter comprise Kellaways Beds (sands and clays), Cornbrash (Limestone), Blisworth Clay and Limestone, and Upper Estuarine series (DTS 7318, Volume II, 3).

### **3      ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1    General Background**

The content of this section has been drawn upon the background study produced for a previous evaluation at the 'British Sugar' factory site (Roberts in Kenny 1998). The general information has been integrated with the results from recent archaeological investigations in the area (Kenny 1998; Hatton 2000).

##### **Prehistoric**

It would appear from recorded finds that the Nene valley around Woodston was occupied during the Palaeolithic period. The bulk of remains are concentrated on the higher 2nd terrace gravels to the south of the river Nene.

Palaeolithic axes and a Palaeolithic occupation floor (SMR no. 1656a) were reportedly found in 1910 approximately 300m to the south east on the terrace gravels, at a height over approximately 12m OD.

Neolithic remains are more widespread than earlier prehistoric evidence, having been found on both sides of the River Nene (SMR no. 1403 and no. 1412). These occur mainly as isolated finds of flint tools. More substantial remains, in the form of burial mounds, have also been noted in the vicinity. No settlement evidence is recorded in the area around Woodston.

Burial mounds of possible Neolithic date (SMR nos. 1620, 1392) are recorded to the south-west of the site.



## **Bronze Age**

Bronze Age occupation in this area was concentrated close to the river. Remains have been noted to the west of the site, on the southern bank of the River Nene. Barrows or burial mounds (dated to the Neolithic/Bronze Age period) (SMR nos. 1392 and 1620) have been located on low-lying land to the north of Orton Longueville and a Bronze Age axe (SMR no. 1998) was found in the same area. Nearer to the site, but on the northern bank of the river a Middle Bronze Age palstave is recorded (SMR no. 7844)

## **Iron Age**

Other than the Iron Age settlement excavated on the development site (see below) there appear to be few Iron Age remains reported in the immediate vicinity. An Iron Age farm has been recorded close to the Roman fort at Longthorpe and Iron Age coins have been found on the northern bank of the River Nene, opposite the site (SMR nos. 10479 and 10478). An Iron Age boat is recorded to the east, adjacent to the present crossing place of the Nene (SMR 1665). Iron Age remains (SMR no. 4208) have been excavated on the south bank of the Nene, to the west of the site, in association with the earlier burial mounds mentioned above.

## **Roman**

Extensive Roman remains have been found in the Nene Valley and in the area surrounding the development site at Woodston. The well documented fort of Longthorpe (Scheduled Ancient Monument 135) with an associated Iron Age farm lies less than 1km to the west of the site, on the north bank of the Nene. Roman occupation remains have also been found just south of the river. A fording place (SMR no. 4321) is known adjacent to the fort.

Roman remains (mainly burials, coins and rubbish pits) have been found to the south of the site, particularly on the 2nd terrace gravels south of Oundle Road.

## **Anglo-Saxon**

Saxon occupation of the area around Woodston is well documented. There were settlements (SMR nos. 1631, 1656) on the 2nd terrace gravels to the south of the site and Anglo-Saxon buildings (SMR no. 1806) were excavated 1km to the south-west at Orton Longueville. Anglo-Saxon cemeteries have also been found in the vicinity (SMR nos. 1382 (in Longthorpe fort), 1045 and 1666). Far fewer Anglo-Saxon remains have been located to the north of the river Nene. An Anglo-Saxon monastery is recorded to the east of the site (SMR no. 1518), also on the south bank of the river. Anglo-Saxon burials from the site are discussed below.

## Medieval

Medieval development of Woodston was linked to trade and transport, together with an agricultural base. The village was able to benefit from a position close to the river and on a major east-west route, just south of the medieval town of Peterborough. The manor of Woodston was given by King Edgar (959-975) to Bishop Ethelwold of Winchester who then gave it to the Abbey of Thorney which held it until the Dissolution of the Monasteries (Page *et al.* 1974). Remains of the pre-Conquest church of St. Augustine (mentioned in the Domesday survey) have been incorporated into the present church at Woodston. The Domesday Survey in 1068 refers to the fact that Thorney Abbey held five hides (a measurement of agricultural land) at Woodston whilst the King held a further five hides at Bottolbridge (Hart 1968) to the south-west. The Deserted Medieval Village of Botolph Bridge (also known as Bottlebridge or Botuleuesbrige) has been located immediately to the south-west (SMR no. 1805). Excavations were conducted in the 1980's by Ian Meadows of the Nene Valley Research Committee and, more recently, by staff of the AFU (Kemp, forthcoming). Botolph Bridge formed a separate parish, with its parish church of St. Mary Botolphbridge (SMR no. 1804) to the west of the development site. A bridge spanned the river between Woodston and Orton Longueville (Hart 1966, 108), at Botolph Bridge and it is known that Botolph Bridge was an embargement point on the Nene for the transport of stone from quarries beyond Alwalton along the fen waterways to towns such as Cambridge. There is a record for the slating of Corpus Christi College Cambridge (during the 14th century) which mentions tollage at Bottlebridge (Butler, 1957, 89-100). The toll house, now demolished (SMR no 4323), was on Oundle Road to the west of the site.

Woodston was used as a landing place for goods coming by river from the west to Yaxley, thus avoiding tolls at Peterborough. In 1268 the Abbot of Thorney was granted a weekly market, on a Wednesday, and he obtained at much the same time the right to hold a fair. A windmill is mentioned in records of 1279 (Page *et al.* 1974) and a fishery was appurtenant to the manor of Woodston during the reign of Edward I.

The documentary evidence points to 'a considerable settlement which appears to have been concentrated along Oundle Road and northwards along the street (Wharf Road) towards the river, to the east of the site. Further settlement was centred at Botolph Bridge, to the west of the site. The presence of ridge and furrow agriculture is evident in the form of earthworks and cropmarks in the vicinity.

During the medieval period nearby Peterborough was a major town with dense medieval occupation to the north of the river. Activity was initially centred around the monastic settlement and market but grew considerably during the medieval period.

## **Post-medieval**

Eayre and Jeffrey's map of Northamptonshire in 1779 shows the small rural settlement of 'Woodstone' strung along the Oundle Road towards Overton Longville (now Orton Longueville) and continuing eastwards and northwards along a road leading to the river, to the east of the present site. The parish was inclosed under a local Act of Parliament in 1809 and the Inclosure map of 1811 shows the village concentrated along Wharf Road and its junction with Turnpike Road (Oundle Road). The road appears at this time to have followed a slightly different route just beyond the south-western corner of the development site.

The 1885/7 Ordnance Survey Map shows a similar settlement pattern with the bulk of the village lining Wharf Road, with allotments behind the houses to the east of the site, but with several houses and the Cross Keys public house along Oundle Road near Woodston Hill. The railway is also in place by this time. The number of properties along the road increases slowly, as can be seen on the Ordnance Survey maps of 1900, 1901, 1924 and 1926. This latter map shows the initial construction of the sugar factory, see below.

Modern land use in the area includes housing with their associated gardens and allotments along the major routes. By the late 19th/early 20th century the Nene Valley railway ran east-west, roughly parallel to the river, with a junction to the north of the DMV of Botolph Bridge and with a further line running along the western part of the site. Lime kilns and mineral extraction have also been widespread in the area and occurred on the subject site. The mid-20th century saw an expansion in industry and housing development to the south of the river and the former parish of Woodston has now been incorporated into the city of Peterborough.

## **3.2 Archaeology and History of the Development Site**

Finds from the area are mainly known from antiquarian observations during gravel extraction in the early part of the twentieth century. The gravel quarries are depicted on the Ordnance Survey Maps. Besides occasional chance discoveries of small finds, recent excavations have revealed the presence of features of possible Saxon and prehistoric date near the present development site. Very few archaeological remains seem to have escaped extensive damage caused by construction and demolition works within the former 'British Sugar' factory site.

### **Prehistoric**

During the early part of this century a shallow pit containing burnt human bone and ashes together with five unburnt beads of Kimmeridge shale and an inverted Bronze Age collard urn (SMR no. 1716a) were found within the later Anglo-Saxon cemetery north of Woodston Hill (below).

An Iron Age settlement (SMR no. 1711) was found during gravel extraction at the beginning of the 20th century. The remains consisted of a quantity of pottery together with burnt flint and animal bones found in a series of pits .

A recent evaluation to the east and south-west of the development area uncovered undated features beneath the former Sports Field (Kenny 1998). The features consisted of linear ditches which may have been part of a prehistoric (or Saxon?) system of field-enclosures. Later investigations near Oundle Road, revealed the presence of further undated features, namely timber buildings, gullies and pits, entailing prehistoric (or Saxon?) occupation (Hatton 2000).

### **Roman**

Pottery (SMR no. 1414) in the north-western part of the site was found before 1934 following dredging of the River Nene and included Nene Valley wares and Samian, and human and animal bone. A Roman building was excavated, in the late 1980s, in the vicinity of Botolph Bridge DMV church, and it is possible that Roman settlement in this area could extend eastwards onto the site. Roman coins (SMR no. 1415) have been recovered from the southern part of the site.

### **Saxon**

Excavations have been carried out on the site from the early nineteenth century onwards. Pagan Anglo-Saxon burials were discovered in 1828 during gravel digging but most of the finds from the Anglo-Saxon period were made after 1886. Controlled excavation took place in the south-western part of the site (SMR no. 1416 and 1716) in the 1920s by G. Wyman Abbot. These find spots, in former quarries, may represent an extensive cemetery. A further find of Anglo-Saxon skeletons to the south of the site (SMR no. 1045) might also be part of the same cemetery. A further cemetery is reported from Fletton and it is possible this could have extended onto the east of the development site, in the area of the present allotment gardens

No finds have been reported during construction work associated with the British Sugar factory site during the second part of the 20th century. Monitoring of the site was carried out by Peterborough Museum staff and members of the Nene Valley Research Committee.

### **Medieval and Post-medieval Land Use**

Medieval and post-medieval maps show an area of open land and allotments on the site. To the south-west of the site the area is occupied by the DMV (Botolph Bridge) between Woodston and Orton Longueville, close to the river – with a route running to a possible crossing place. It is possible that the medieval village extended onto the south-western part of the British Sugar site itself. Most of the area on the northern part of the site is low-lying, and liable

to flooding. This area was divided into small fields at the time of Inclosure in 1809. Settlement developed on the higher ground to the south, along Oundle Road, during the 19th and early 20th century.

### **Twentieth Century Land Use**

In the early part of the 20th century the western part of the site appears to have been in the hands of two owners, Mr G Martin and Alderman Hunting, and was parcelled into several fields to the rear of the houses along Oundle Road. It would appear that most of this land was used for agriculture.

Until the mid-19th/early 20th century much of the site was under an agricultural regime and the consequent survival of archaeological remains on the site appears to have been good. Preservation seems best on that part of the site which was not subject to flooding, i.e. that part on the higher land adjacent to Woodston Hill/Oundle Road. The effects of mineral extraction, and the building of railways and factory buildings has been considerable.

The Ordnance Survey Map of 1885/1887 shows the position of quarries and a lime kiln in the north-western part of the site. Deposits of 2nd Terrace gravel were extensively exploited in Woodston and are known to have been extracted from the site from the early part of the 19th century. The 1900 Ordnance Survey map shows sand and gravel pits on the site of the present sports field. The 1925/26 Ordnance Survey map shows a quarry to the north of Woodston Hill (the discovery site of Anglo-Saxon burials and other finds).

Considerable excavation for foundations, lime and settling pits has been carried out since the first 'British Sugar' factory was built on the site in 1925/6. The factory continued to expand with further groundwork in the early 1950s, 1970s and 1980s. The railway line with the Longueville junction was in place at this time and continued in use throughout the period when the British Sugar factory was in use. Sidings crossed the site to various factory buildings.

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

The archaeological evaluation of the site aimed to establish the presence/absence, nature and degree of preservation of archaeological features and deposits in the area most likely to be affected by the proposed development.

Six trenches (Trenches 1-6) were excavated using a mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket 1.6m wide. The length of trenching was 125m, totalling some 199m<sup>2</sup>, i.e. a 1.74% sample of 1.15 hectare. The trenches were located in the north-eastern part of the site in an area expected to be relatively unaffected by the presence of former factory buildings and structures, i.e. in correspondence of the former access road, between the recreation area to the east and the beet-washing area to the west (above).

The modern ground surface and subsoil (when present) were removed to a depth where the natural gravel deposits were exposed, between 0.51m and 0.82m below the present ground surface. Some areas of the investigated site were found to have been disturbed to depths where any archaeological remains would have been removed.

All trenches were hand-cleaned, planned and described giving details of topsoil, subsoil (when encountered) and geological deposits visible in the base of the trenches. Archaeological features and deposits were sample excavated and recorded.

A general plan of the site was also produced to show the location of the evaluation trenches within the development area. Finally, a photographic record was compiled which consisted of colour slides, colour and monochrome prints.

The recording system and the post-excavation procedures followed the standard AFU practice.

## **5 RESULTS**

### **Trench 1 (Fig. 1)**

Trench 1 (13m x 1.6m) was located in the north-eastern corner of the development area. It ran north-east to south-west, parallel to the north-western boundary of the site. The removal of a very thin layer of mixed topsoil to a depth of 0.17m (north-east end) and 0.05m (south-west end) exposed imported deposits of gravel and clay that appeared to have been artificially levelled. These were excavated to an average depth of 1.50m

Modern pits and service pipe trenches were visible in section.

Small areas of undisturbed geological sands and gravels were encountered at a depth of 1.0m. No archaeological features were uncovered, undoubtedly due to the high degree of disturbance linked with the former factory activities.

### **Trench 2 (Fig. 1)**

Trench 2 (27m x 1.6m) ran north-west to south-east parallel to the north-eastern boundary of the site. As in Trench 1 (above), the removal of a very thin layer of mixed topsoil to a depth of 0.15m at the north-west end exposed imported deposits of gravel and clay that appeared to have been artificially levelled. These were excavated to a depth of 0.82m. At the south-east end a large pit filled with brick and clay was excavated to a depth of 1.08m.

Modern pits and service pipe trenches were visible in section.

At the north-west end of the trench a very small area of undisturbed geological gravels was encountered at a depth of 0.80m. No archaeological features were uncovered, undoubtedly due to the high degree of disturbance linked with the former factory activities.

### **Trench 3 (Fig. 1)**

Trench 3 (15m x 1.6m) was located to the south of, and parallel to, Trench 1. It ran north-east to south-west. The removal of a very thin layer of mixed topsoil to a depth of 0.18m (north-east end) and 0.05m (south-west end) exposed imported deposits of gravel and clay that appeared to have been artificially levelled. These were excavated to a depth between 1.02m (north-east end) and 1.20m (south-west end).

Modern pits and service pipe trenches were visible in section.

No natural deposits nor archaeological features were uncovered, undoubtedly due to the high degree of disturbance linked with the former factory activities.

### **Trench 4 (Figs. 1 and 2)**

Trench 4 (30m x 1.6m) was located opposite the site access road through the eastern boundary. It ran east-north-east to west-south-west. The removal of a layer of mixed soil and demolition debris to a depth of 0.16m (east-north-east end) and 0.51m (west-south-west end) exposed a thick deposit of undisturbed subsoil between 0.52m (east-north-east end) and 0.31m thick (west-south-west end). The subsoil sealed archaeological features (a ditch and postholes) which had been cut through the natural gravel deposits visible at the base of the trench. The natural deposits were encountered at an average depth of 12.0m AOD.

**Ditch 15:** linear ditch with a 'V' shaped profile, on a north-west to south-east alignment, 1.40m wide (truncated width) and 1.20m deep from the present ground surface. It contained two fills, 13 (upper fill) and 14 (lower fill). Fill 13: light yellowish brown sandy silt, 0.35m thick. It produced no finds. Fill 14: mid yellowish brown silty sand with frequent small gravel inclusions, 0.38m thick. It produced no finds. The eastern side of the ditch had been partially truncated by modern service-pipe trenches.

**Posthole 17:** circular feature, 0.20m in diameter and 0.15m deep with a flat 'U' shaped profile. It contained one fill, 16, a light yellowish brown silt with occasional small gravel inclusions that produced no finds.

**Posthole 19:** oval feature, 0.28m in diameter and 0.33m deep with a 'U' shaped profile. It contained two fills, 18 (upper fill) and 37 (lower fill). Fill 18 was a light yellowish brown silt with occasional small gravel inclusions that

produced no finds. Fill 37 was a mid yellowish brown silt with frequent small gravel inclusions that produced no finds.

Posthole 21: circular feature, 0.27m in diameter and 0.20m deep with a flat 'U' shaped profile. It contained one fill, 20, a light yellowish brown silt with occasional small gravel inclusions that produced no finds.

Posthole 23: 'U' shaped circular feature, 0.30m in diameter and 0.15m deep. it contained one fill, 22, a light yellowish brown silt with occasional small gravel inclusions that produced no finds.

Posthole 25: oval feature on a north to south alignment, 0.52m long, 0.33m wide and 0.18m deep, with a flat 'U' shaped profile. It contained one fill, 24, a mid yellowish brown silt with frequent small gravel and occasional large stone inclusions that produced no finds.

Posthole 39: oval feature on a north-west to south-east alignment, 0.42m long, 0.34m wide and 0.19m deep, with a flat 'U' shaped profile. It contained one fill, 38, a light yellowish brown silt with frequent small gravel inclusions that produced no finds.

Posthole 41: oval feature on a north-west to south-east alignment, 0.44m long, 0.30m wide and 0.27m deep, with a flat 'U' shaped profile. It contained one fill, 40, a light yellowish brown silt with frequent small gravel inclusions that produced no finds.

Posthole 43 (not excavated): circular feature 0.35m in diameter. It was filled by 42, a light yellowish brown silt with frequent small gravel inclusions.

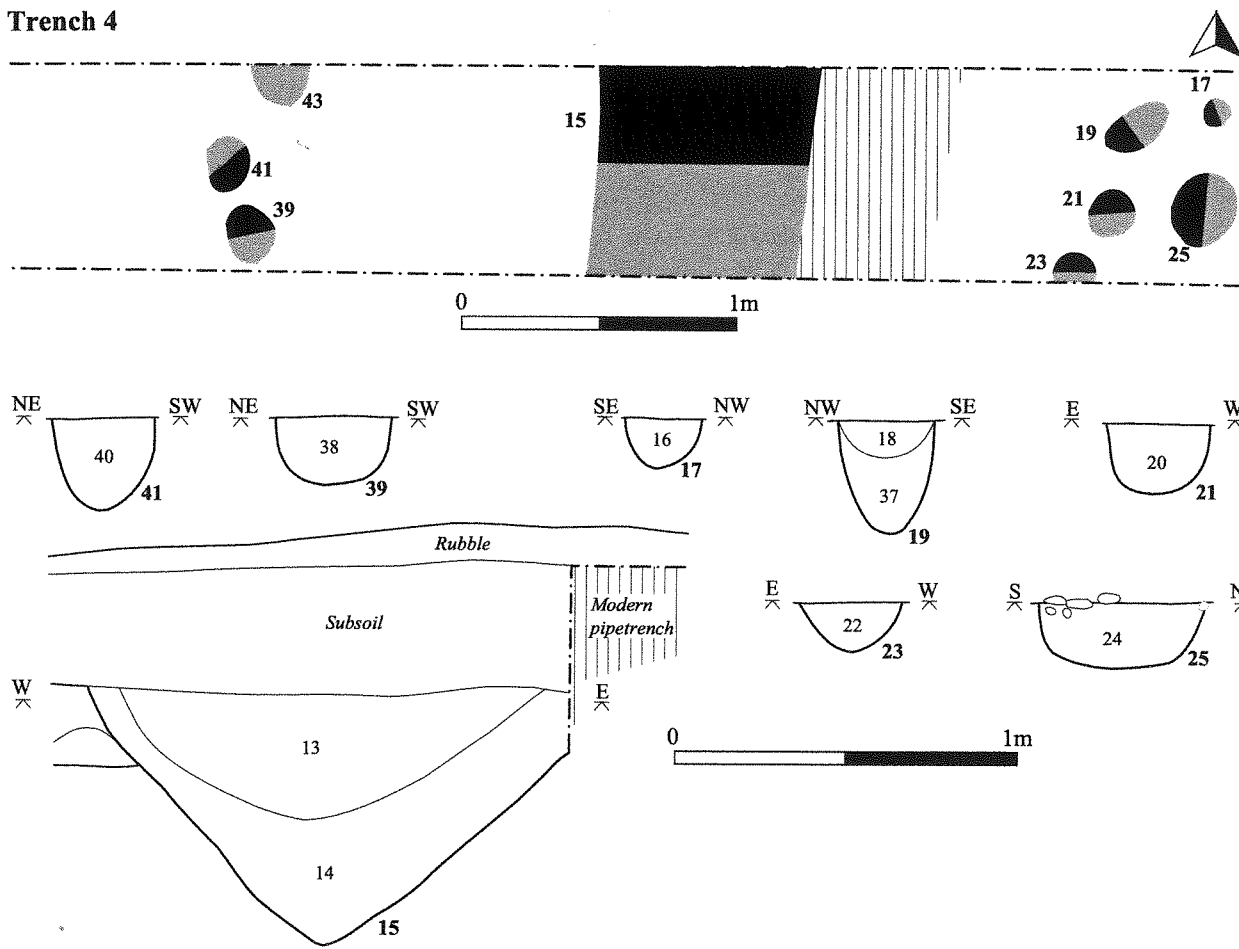
#### **Trench 5 (Figs 1 and 2)**

Trench 5 (15m x 1.6m) was located to the south of, and parallel to, Trench 4. The removal of a layer of mixed soil and demolition debris to a depth of 0.12m (east-north-east end) and 0.29m (west-south-west end) exposed a thick deposit of undisturbed subsoil between 0.54m (east-north-east end) and 0.29m thick (west-south-west end). The subsoil sealed archaeological features (a ditch and pit) which had been cut through the natural gravel deposits visible at the base of the trench. The natural deposits were encountered at an average depth of 12.0m AOD.

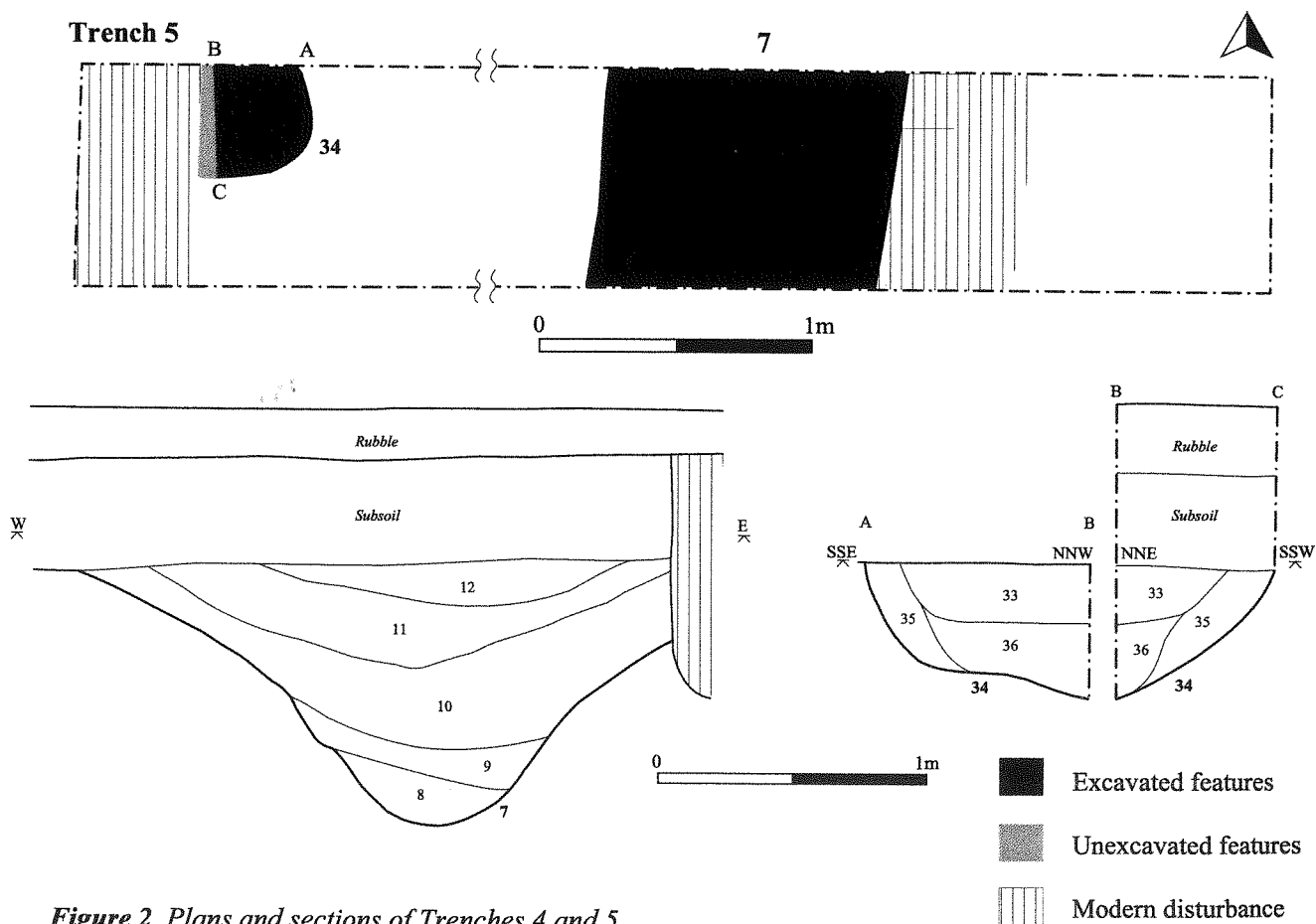
Ditch 07: linear ditch with a 'V' shaped profile, on a north-west to south-east alignment, 2.07m wide (partially truncated width) and 1.39m deep from the present ground surface. It contained three fills, 11/12 (upper fill), 10 (mid fill) and 8/9 (lower fill). Fill 11/12: light yellowish brown silt, 0.38m thick. It produced no finds. Fill 10: mid yellowish brown sandy silt with frequent small gravel inclusions, 0.30m thick. It produced no finds. Fill 8/9: mid yellowish brown sand with frequent gravel inclusions that produced no finds. The eastern side of the ditch had been partially truncated by modern service-pipe trenches. Ditch 28 represented the continuation of ditch 15 (Trench 4).



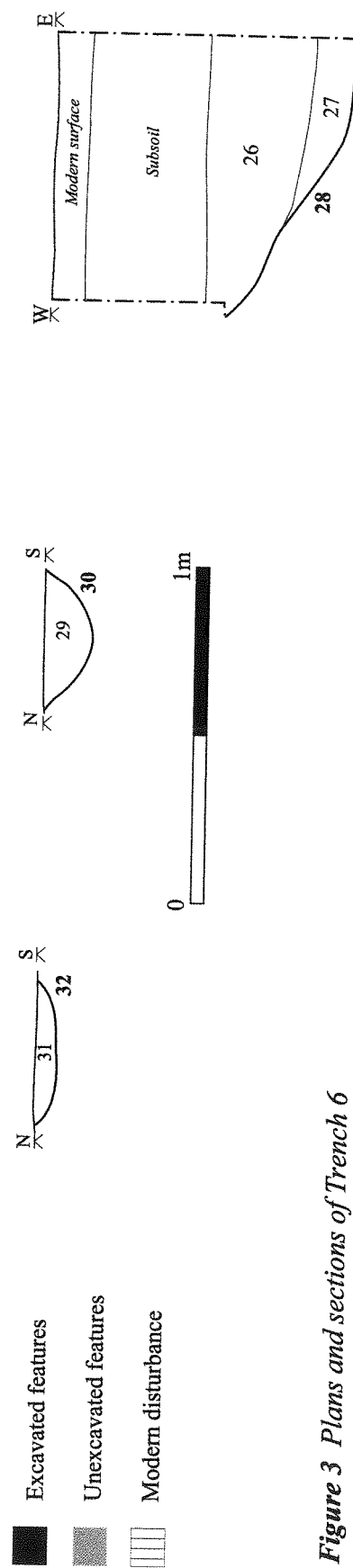
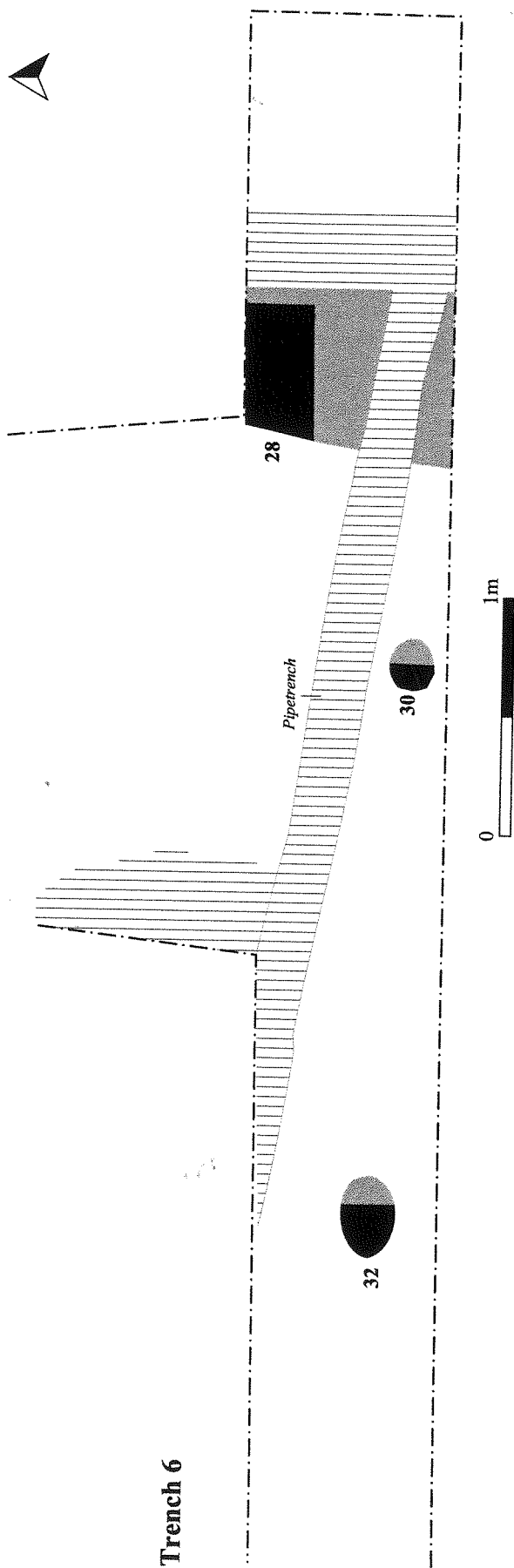
# **Trench 4**



# **Trench 5**



**Figure 2** Plans and sections of Trenches 4 and 5



- Excavated features
- Unexcavated features
- Modern disturbance

**Figure 3 Plans and sections of Trench 6**

**Pit 34:** circular(?) feature with a flat 'U' shaped profile, 0.84m wide (exposed width) and 1.10m deep from present ground surface. It contained three fills, 33 (upper fill), 35 (lower fill) and 36 (mid fill). Fill 33: mid yellowish brown silt with occasional large stones, 0.22m thick. It produced no finds. Fill 35: yellowish brown sandy silt with frequent gravel inclusions, visible along the edges of the pit-cut. it contained no finds. fill 36: dark grey silt with moderate gravel inclusions and frequent charcoal flecks, 0.27m thick. It produced semi-articulated long bones of a small mammal, and a late Bronze Age/Iron Age flint flake (Steve Kemp, *per. comm.*).

### **Trench 6 (Figs. 1 and 3)**

Trench 6 (19m x 1.6m) was located to the north of, and parallel to, Trench 4. The removal of a layer of mixed soil and demolition debris to a depth of 0.12m (east-north-east end) and 0.27m (west-south-west end) exposed a thick deposit of undisturbed subsoil between 0.39m (east-north-east end) and 0.26m thick (west-south-west end). The subsoil sealed archaeological features (namely, a ditch and postholes) which had been cut through the natural gravel deposits visible at the base of the trench. The natural deposits were encountered at an average depth of 12.0m AOD.

**Ditch 28:** linear ditch with a 'V' shaped profile, on a north-west to south-east alignment, 1.25m wide (truncated width) and 0.74m deep from the present ground surface. It contained two fills, 26 (upper fill) and 27 (lower fill). Fill 26: light yellowish brown silt, 0.32m thick. It produced no finds. Fill 27: mid yellowish brown sandy silt with occasional small gravel inclusions, 0.11m thick (only partially excavated). It produced no finds. The eastern side of the ditch had been severely truncated by modern service-pipe trenches. Ditch 28 represented the continuation of ditch 15 (Trench 4) and ditch 07 (Trench 5).

**Posthole 30:** circular feature, 0.39m in diameter and 0.14m deep with a 'U' shaped profile. It contained one fill, 29, a mid grey silty clay with occasional small gravel inclusions that produced no finds.

**Posthole 32:** circular feature, 0.40m in diameter and 0.10m deep with a 'U' shaped profile. It contained one fill, 30, a mid grey silty clay with occasional small gravel inclusions that produced no finds.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

No archaeological features were uncovered in Trenches 1-3, undoubtedly due to the high degree of disturbance associated with the former factory site. In particular, there was evidence for large pits (settling tanks?) that had been backfilled with clay and gravel. The pits were cut through deep deposits of dumped soil. The borehole survey by DTS (DTS 7318, 2000) in the evaluation

area confirmed the presence of layers of made ground to a depth of 3.0m. Closer to the eastern boundary of the site, in Trench 2, layers of fine gravel may have represented part of the make-up for the former access road to the factory.

Large portions of the remaining trenches (Trenches 4-6) had been obliterated by foundations of (demolished) buildings and trenches for service-pipes. As a result, only few features had escaped damage. All surviving features had been cut through well preserved geological gravel deposits, and were sealed by old subsoil. Two circular post-built structures were located in Trench 4 (Fig. 2). These consisted of series of small and shallow post-holes of consistent depth, filled by a silty deposit with gravel inclusions. Structure 1 comprised postholes 17-23. A further posthole, 25, may have been associated with the same structure, possibly representing the setting for an internal post. Based on the spacing between postholes, the diameter of the building was estimated to be c. 4.0m. Structure 2 consisted of postholes 39-43 and also seems to have been 4.0m in diameter.

The projected footing of Structure 2 would have encountered ditch 15. As this latter did not appear to have been cut by postholes, it may have represented a later feature. A later date for the ditch would also be consistent with its location between, and encroaching upon, the two timber structure. The function of the ditch is uncertain. It may have represented a substantial boundary on a north-west to south-east alignment. It was found to continue beyond the limits of Trench 4, in both Trench 6 (to the north) and Trench 5 (to the south), as 28 and 7, respectively (Figs. 2 and 3). Similarities between the fills of the postholes and the fills of the ditch in terms of colour and texture may suggest that, although belonging to separate phases, the timber structures and the boundary may have belonged to the same chronological horizon.

Two further postholes, 30 and 32, were located in Trench 6 (Fig 3). The postholes were on a west to east alignment, and shared similarities in terms of size and fill composition. Whether more postholes existed in the area is uncertain. uncertainty also rests on the function of 30 and 32 (a fence?). Their fills consisted of sandy clay with decomposed organic matter, and bore no resemblance with the deposits from the postholes in Trench 4.

Finally, a shallow pit, 34, of uncertain diameter was found in Trench 5 (Fig 2). It contained the remains of semi-articulated long bones of a small mammal, charcoal and a flint flake generically dated to the late Bronze Age/ Iron Age period. In relation to the postholes in Trench 4, the pit would have been located outside the timber structures. The semi-articulated bones appear to have been placed at the bottom of the pit with some degree of care. They may have represented the remains of a meal, as suggested by the presence of charcoal in the same fill, which had been disposed of in an orderly fashion. (butchery marks, gnawing?). The upper fill of the pit was similar to the deposits of the postholes in Trench 4, suggesting that the two sets of features may have been closely related from a chronological point of view.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

The objectives of the project were to establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within the site prior to development.

Notwithstanding the impact of industrial activity and gravel extraction from the early part of the nineteenth century, features were found preserved in three of the six excavated trenches.

The results from the archaeological investigation has produced evidence for occupation, as suggested by the presence of circular timber buildings, a boundary ditch and a pit with animal remains and a flint flake. Due to absence of dating evidence and direct stratigraphic relations, it is not possible to ascertain the date of the features exposed in the trenches, nor to establish phases of occupation.

Evaluations conducted to the east and south of the development site have produced evidence for land-use and occupation which may relate to the site uncovered during the present evaluation. In particular, a series of small and shallow ditches found under the former Sports Ground to the east of the development site were interpreted as representing ditched enclosures (Kenny 1998). The ditches were on north-east to south west and north-west to south-east alignments, i.e. parallel and perpendicular to ditch 15 in Trench 4. Further to the south, ditches and post-built structures of uncertain shape and date (Hatton 2000) show close similarities with the ditch and postholes in Trench 4 in terms of size and composition of the fills.

The remains from the present development site, together with the features found further to the east and south may belong to the same chronological period, although not necessarily to the same phase. It has been suggested that the post-built structures and ditches to the south may have belonged to either an Iron Age or Saxon settlement (Hatton 2000). Both Iron Age and Saxon activities have been identified on site through past antiquarian observations during gravel extraction (above). In particular, the presence of an Iron Age settlement immediately to the west of the present development site would be consistent with the finds from the recent evaluation. The Iron Age settlement recorded during gravel extraction consisted of sherds of pottery and pits with animal bone and flint. Absence of pottery from the present site may indicate peripheral settlement occupation consistent with the presence of field enclosures (for live-stock management/agricultural use?) further to the east (Kenny 1998).

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## MAPS

Ordnance Survey (OS) Map of 1885/1887  
OS Map of 1900  
OS Map of 1925/1926



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