

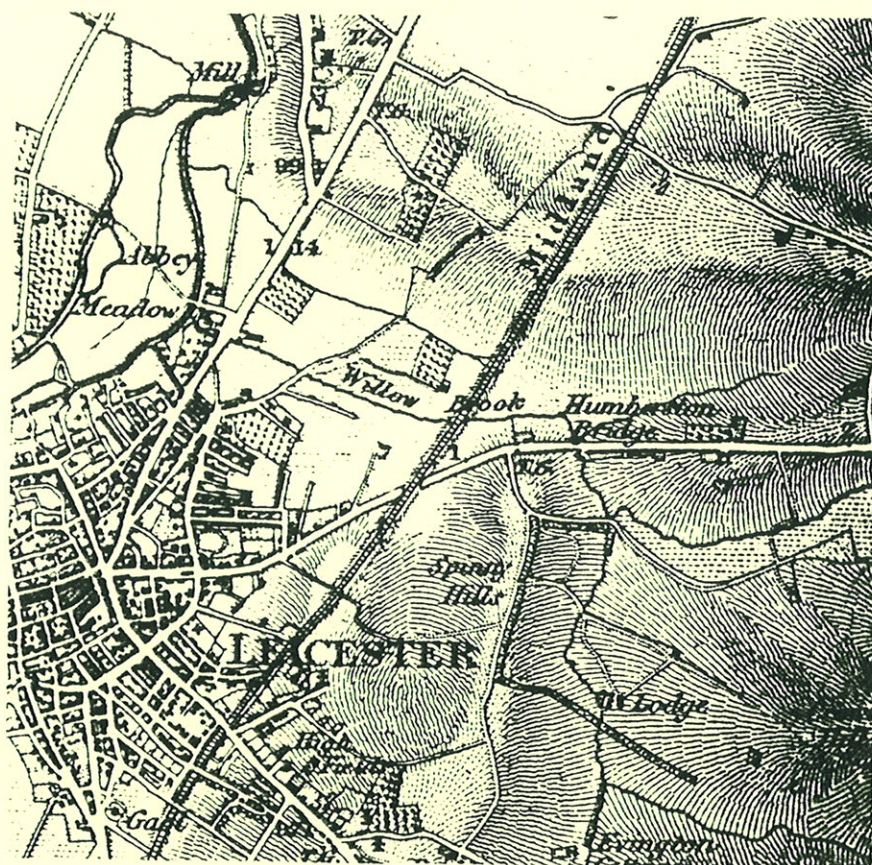
Tesco Stores Limited

PROPOSED TESCO STORE, HAMILTON, LEICESTER

EVALUATION REPORT: AREA A

NGR. SK 630 065

Planning ref. 97/0216



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

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Prepared by: <i>SA</i>
Date: <i>28/5/98</i>
Checked by: <i>DR Smith</i>
Date: <i>28th May 98</i>
Approved by: <i>R Williams</i>
Date: <i>15/6/1998</i> <small>HEAD OF FIELDWORK</small>

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

May 1998

PROPOSED TESCO STORE, HAMILTON, LEICESTER

STAGE 2 EVALUATION REPORT: AREA A

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SUMMARY

In April 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a second stage of field evaluation at the proposed site of a Tesco development at Hamilton, Leicester, on behalf of Tesco Stores Limited. The Stage 2 evaluation, which investigated the western part of the development site (Fig. 1, Area A), consisted of six trenches, which were additional to nineteen trenches excavated during the Stage 1 evaluation (OAU, September 1997). The evaluation was carried out concurrently with the open area excavation of a middle to late Iron Age settlement site discovered during the Stage 1 evaluation (Fig. 2, Area B).

The evaluation revealed a small number of middle to late Iron Age (c.300BC - 50AD) features in Trenches 21 and 23. The features in this area included curvilinear gullies and a single pit. Significant quantities of pottery and iron working slag were also recovered. The pottery associated with these features is similar to the assemblage from the previous evaluation, being dominated by East Midlands Scored Ware. The remaining four trenches contained no significant archaeological deposits.

A seventh trench (Trench 26) was subsequently excavated to determine the southern extent and significance of the features in Trench 23. This revealed a group of Iron Age linear features.

It seems likely that the Iron Age deposits discovered in Area A represent peripheral activity associated with the Iron Age settlement currently under excavation to the east, rather than a separate settlement focus. However further work is required to determine whether this is the case. Further excavation in this area could shed light on the organisation of the site by identifying field and enclosure boundaries and possibly areas of activity on the periphery of the settlement.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a second stage of field evaluation at Hamilton, to the east of Leicester (SK630065), between 9th and 15th of April 1998. The evaluation was conducted on behalf of Tesco Stores Limited in fulfilment of a planning condition imposed by Leicester City Council on the development of a retail food store with car parking and petrol station (Planning Application 97/0216). The work was carried out in accordance with a brief prepared by the Leicester City Archaeologist, and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by the OAU. The site is located to the north of Keyham Lane at Elms Farm. Maidenwell Avenue runs along the south-eastern and eastern boundary, and the new A46/A47 Link road will form the western boundary.

The Stage 1 evaluation covered the eastern part of the site (Area B). The Stage 2 evaluation covers the western part of the site (Area A), which remained in the ownership of Leicester City Council until recently and was therefore not available for evaluation during Stage 1.

1.2 Geology and topography

The site lies at 101 m above Ordnance Datum (OD) on a hilltop and is presently under rough pasture. The total area of the development site is 7.9 ha, 2.3 ha of which was investigated during the Stage 2 evaluation. A large sewer trench recorded following the western site boundary was seen in three of the evaluation trenches. The geology is Boulder Clay.

1.3 Archaeological background

The archaeological background to the project is detailed in the Stage 1 evaluation report (OAU 1997), which includes a survey of data from the Leicestershire Sites and Monuments Record (LSMR). The results are summarised briefly below.

The LSMR records show the area north of the site to have produced finds from a number of periods (Fig. 2). The concentration of archaeological finds in this area, reflects work carried out by Peter Liddle of Leicestershire County Council, to provide archaeological data in advance of the development of the Hamilton Northern Housing Area (Liddle 1994).

Prehistoric flint

All eleven of the fields surveyed produced prehistoric flint, although it is not certain whether these relate to below ground features. The large number of flint cores recovered indicate significant early prehistoric activity.

Iron Age and Bronze Age

A small quantity of Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery has been found in the area during fieldwalking.

Roman

Roman pottery concentrations have been identified at a Roman farmstead to the north of the site and lesser scatters probably reflect material carried into the fields by manuring.

Saxon

A single sherd of early/middle Saxon pottery was recovered during the fieldwalking.

Medieval

The medieval pottery was scattered generally throughout the fieldwalking survey area. It probably reflects pottery carried into the fields by manuring. Ridge and furrow, which is a common feature of fields in the area, occurs on the site and is found throughout the area immediately to the north. It is not so obvious in Area A although furrows were noted in the excavated trenches.

"Windmill" Mound

Archaeological features known within the development site before the present work included a small mound measuring c.15 m across. The results of the Stage 1 evaluation indicate that the feature is a windmill mound, probably of early post-medieval date.

Stage 1 Evaluation (Area B)

Nineteen trenches were excavated to investigate the eastern part of the site (5.6 ha). Archaeological features, mainly ditches, were concentrated in particular in the area defined by Trenches 4, 6, 7 and 19. A substantial assemblage of middle to late Iron Age pottery and animal bone was recovered, concentrated in Trench 19, suggesting the presence of a significant middle to late Iron Age settlement site. A few linear features were identified outside the main settlement focus.

Open Area Excavation (Area B)

The Stage 1 evaluation was followed by an open area excavation, 1 ha in extent, to investigate and record the Iron Age settlement (in progress at the time of writing). This has revealed a middle to late Iron Age settlement site with at least three recognisable phases.

The site, which is considered to be of regional importance, includes a complex of overlapping enclosures and penannular ditches. The earliest phase includes a large, north-west to south-east aligned rectangular enclosure, which is cut by several later penannular ditches. Some of the latter are likely to be roundhouse drainage and foundation gullies, while the more irregular enclosures without internal features are more likely to be stock pens. The scale of the settlement is not clear at present, as the houses and enclosures seem, in several cases, to be successive rebuilds rather than contemporary structures. The settlement seems to have been unenclosed in its later phases.

The finds to date include significant quantities of middle to late Iron Age 'Scored Ware' pottery, thought to date from c. 3rd to the 1st century BC, and moderate quantities of animal bone. Notable artefacts include a complete saddle quern, a bronze pin or awl and a pair of bronze tweezers. No Roman pottery has been found, suggesting that the settlement fell out of use before the mid-1st century AD.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

2.1 Original aims

- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains in Area A.
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features in Area A.
- To make available the results of the investigation.
- To establish the western limits of the Iron Age settlement focus centred in Area B.

2.2 Further evaluation aims

- To better characterise the archaeological remains identified in the north-west corner of Area A during the Stage 2 evaluation
- To determine the southerly extent of the area of archaeological interest.
- To establish the likely impact of the proposed Tesco Store service yard and staff parking on archaeological deposits in Area A.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample size and trench locations

The evaluation comprised a series of seven 30 m x 1.6 m trenches, excavated by machine to archaeological levels and supplemented by hand investigation of archaeological deposits. The trenches represent a sample of c. 2% of the area (Fig. 2). Trench 26 was an additional trench placed to further investigate a group of Iron Age features identified in the north-west corner of Area A.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

The topsoil and subsoil layers were removed by JCB mechanical excavator to the top of archaeological deposits. These were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned at 1:50 or 1:20. Excavated sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. 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).

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

The general soil type was a sandy clay. Ground conditions were wet but no waterlogged deposits were encountered.

The archaeological features were predominantly ditches, filled with a dark grey silty to sandy clay fill. The stratified pottery is similar in character to that recovered during the Stage 1 evaluation and the current excavations in Area B, and is of middle to late Iron Age date. The density of features suggests that part of the Iron Age settlement extends into Area A. The features are more likely to represent outlying enclosures and buildings associated with the settlement in Area B than a separate settlement focus.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Distribution of archaeological deposits

- 5.1.1 Archaeological features were identified in three trenches (21, 23 and 26). The later fills of the Iron Age features were typically dark grey silty clay which produced significant amounts of Iron Age pottery, bone and iron working slag.

5.2 Trench descriptions

5.2.1 *Trenches 20, 22, 24, 25 (Fig. 2)*

No significant archaeological features were identified in these trenches.

Trench 25 was entirely, and Trench 24 partly, within the area disturbed by the sewer easement along the western site boundary. Trench 20 was excavated to natural clay but contained no archaeological features.

5.2.2 *Trench 21 (Fig. 3)*

Two intercutting features were identified (ditch 2106, gully 2109).

The earlier feature (2109) was a north-east to south-west aligned gully with a U-shaped profile (0.5 m wide, 0.18 m deep). The two light yellowish-grey clayey silt fills (2107, 2108) produced a total of 8 sherds of middle-late Iron Age pottery.

Ditch 2106 was partly outside the trench and was therefore of uncertain plan. It is most likely to be a north-south aligned ditch, but could be a large pit. The feature had two fills; a light yellowish-grey clayey silt primary fill (2105), and a dark grey upper fill (2105). The fills produced a total of 13 sherds of middle-late Iron Age pottery.

5.2.3 *Trench 23 (Fig. 3)*

Six features were recognised, including five ditches (2306, 2308, 2312, 2316, 2318) and a pit (2310). All of the ditches are likely to be of Iron Age date, although only ditches 2306, 2308 and 2316 produced pottery. Ditch 2316 produced fragments of iron working

slag (context 2313). It is noteworthy that features 2316 and 2318 were sealed by layer 2302, and are therefore likely to be earlier in date than the other features in the trench, which apparently cut it.

Ditch 2306 was a NNW-SSE aligned linear feature with a V-shaped profile and two clayey silt fills (2304, 2305).

Ditch 2308 was a north-south aligned linear feature with moderately sloping sides, a concave base and a single silty clay fill.

Pit 2310 was a circular feature partly outside the trench. It was c. 1.8 m in diameter and 0.4 m deep with steep sides. The only recognised fill (2309) produced no finds.

Ditch 2312 was a north-south aligned ditch with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. The fill was a silty clay which produced no finds.

Feature 2316 was a linear ditch with steep sides, a concave base and two fills (2313, 2315). A discreet deposit of animal bone within fill 2315 was assigned context number 2314 (section 7.1). The ditch was cut through the subsoil layer 2302, which suggests that the subsoil may be a buried prehistoric ploughsoil. The fill of this feature produced a total of nine sherds of pottery, of which eight are middle to late Iron Age and one is medieval (probably intrusive).

5.2.4 Trench 26 (Fig. 4)

Trench 26 was excavated to further investigate the area of Iron Age activity indicated by the features in Trench 23.

Four linear features were identified (2605, 2607, 2609, 2611). Context 2604 (only fill of ditch 2605), produced five sherds of middle to late Iron Age pottery. The other features were undated but had similar greyish-brown silty clay fills and are most likely to be of Iron Age date.

Ditch 2605 is interpreted as a section of a circular or pennanular ditch, probably similar to those excavated in Area B. The feature was 0.5 m deep and 1.1 m wide and was filled by a greyish-brown silty clay (2604).

Ditch 2607 was a linear feature on a south-east to north-west alignment (0.3 m wide, 0.2 m deep), filled with a greyish-brown silty clay. It was on a parallel alignment with ditch 2609 (0.3 m wide, 0.2 m deep), with which it may be associated.

Gully 2611 was an undated, broad, shallow feature on an east-west alignment (0.5 m wide, 0.3 m deep), filled with greyish-brown silty clay (2610).

6 FINDS

The Stage 2 evaluation produced 44 sherds (487 g) of Iron Age pottery and one sherd which may be medieval. Iron Age pottery was recovered from Trenches 21, 23 and 26. The single medieval sherd is probably an intrusion from the ploughsoil, as it derived from the upper fill of a ditch otherwise dated by eight sherds of Iron Age pottery.

6.1 Iron Age pottery by Paul Booth

The material was in moderate condition. The pottery was scanned by context and divided by fabric type. The material was quantified by sherd count and weight.

The small assemblage of Iron Age pottery from the Stage 2 (Area A) evaluation is very similar in character to the material recovered from Area B (OAU September 1997). The same general comments therefore apply: The assemblage as a whole indicates a relatively restricted chronological range for the prehistoric activity on the site, which can be assigned to the Middle Iron Age. The fabrics, vessel forms and characteristic surface treatment are all typical of that period within the region, but closer dating within the overall range for scored wares is not possible. This style is thought not to be common before the mid 3rd century BC, and may have continued into the 1st century AD in the Trent, Soar and lower Nene Valleys (Elsdon 1992, 89).

6.2 Medieval pottery

The single small sherd of medieval pottery is likely to be intrusive in the upper fill (2315) of an Iron Age ditch (2316). The lower fills of the feature produced a total of eight sherds of Iron Age pottery.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL

7.1 Animal Bones by Nicky Scott

A total of 139 bone fragments were recovered. The bones were rapidly scanned to assess species and anatomical part. Rib and vertebrae were not identified. 32% of the fragments were identified to species and show that cow was predominant, although pig, horse and possibly red deer were also present.

The discreet deposit of animal bone recovered from ditch 2315 (context 2314), consisted of eight identifiable cattle bones including a humerus, a scapula (cow or red deer), a tibia and five pelvis fragments.

7.2 Environmental samples

No environmental samples were taken during the Stage 2 evaluation as the environmental potential of the site has been effectively established by the work in Area B.

8 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

8.1 Summary of results

The evaluation identified a group of middle to late Iron Age features concentrated in the north-western corner of the site (Trenches 23 and 26). Two ditches were also identified in trench 21. With the exception of a single pit, all of the features are linear ditches and gullies, including one probable penannular ditch.

Forty-four sherds (487 g) of middle to late Iron Age pottery and a single intrusive medieval sherd, were recovered during the Stage 2 evaluation. Animal bone and iron working slag were also present in significant quantities.

8.2 Reliability of investigation

The medieval ridge and furrow has truncated some of the Iron Age features, but the preservation of the site is generally good. There were some clay field drains disturbing the Iron Age features.

The composition of the pottery assemblage from the Stage 2 evaluation is similar to that recovered from Area B during Stage 1. However, the assemblage is small and is not closely dateable, and it is therefore impossible at present to draw any chronological comparisons between the two areas.

8.3 Significance

The northern, eastern and southern extents of the Iron Age settlement have been effectively established by the Stage 1 evaluation and by the excavations in Area B. The present evaluation, which particularly aimed to identify the western extent of the known settlement, has identified a second area of Iron Age activity. Further work is required to determine the nature and density of this activity, and its relationship to the known settlement focus in Area B.

The density of features in the north-western part of the site suggests an intensity of Iron Age activity comparable with that seen in Area B. At least one penannular gully has been identified, suggesting the presence of a house or enclosure gully similar to those found in Area B.

The absence of features in Trenches 20 and 22, and the comparatively low density of features at the western end of Area B, suggests that there may be a gap between the two areas of occupation. It is possible that the features in Area A are on the edge of a second settlement focus extending beyond the western edge of the development area. However, it is perhaps more likely that they represent an area of peripheral activity associated with the known settlement site in Area B.

The presence of iron-working slag in context 2313 does not necessarily indicate industrial activity in this area, as slag has also been identified in a number of features in Area B. However, it does suggest that iron working took place on or close to the site in the Iron Age.

Animal bone is present in significant quantities and is generally well preserved. Although no samples were taken during the present evaluation, initial assessment of environmental samples from the ongoing excavations in Area B shows that carbonised plant remains are widespread on the site, with a small number of notably rich deposits.

8.4 Impact of the development on Area A

Iron Age deposits in Area A are concentrated in the north-west corner of the development area. The development plans indicate that this part of the site will be partly retained as grassland and partly developed as staff car parking and a service yard.

The archaeological deposits identified in Area A are buried immediately below the topsoil and are likely to be affected by any mechanical stripping in this area. The development will therefore result in serious disturbance to the archaeological deposits over most of Area A, with the possible exception of the retained grassland.

8.5 Recommendations

Preservation *in situ* should be considered as an option in the area to be retained as grassland. However, active management would be required to ensure that future changes of use do not result in the destruction of the deposits. Given the probably peripheral nature of the archaeological features identified in this area, and the risk of damage in the future, it is considered preferable to carry out an excavation at this stage, in order to ensure the preservation of these deposits by record.

Those parts of Area A which will be affected by the construction of the service yard and car park should be excavated to ensure the preservation by record of the archaeological features present.

The principal aims of mitigation work in Area A should be as follows:

To determine the nature and extent of Iron Age occupation in Area A and compare the findings directly with the ongoing Area B excavations. Specific aims should be to establish the western extent of the Iron Age settlement identified in Area B, and to determine whether the Iron Age features identified represent peripheral features associated with the known settlement, or a chronologically or spatially distinct second focus.

The work in Area A should be fully integrated with previous and ongoing investigations in Area B. In particular, the environmental sampling strategy should be carried out to the same specification as that for Area B.

S. Foreman
OAU
May 1998

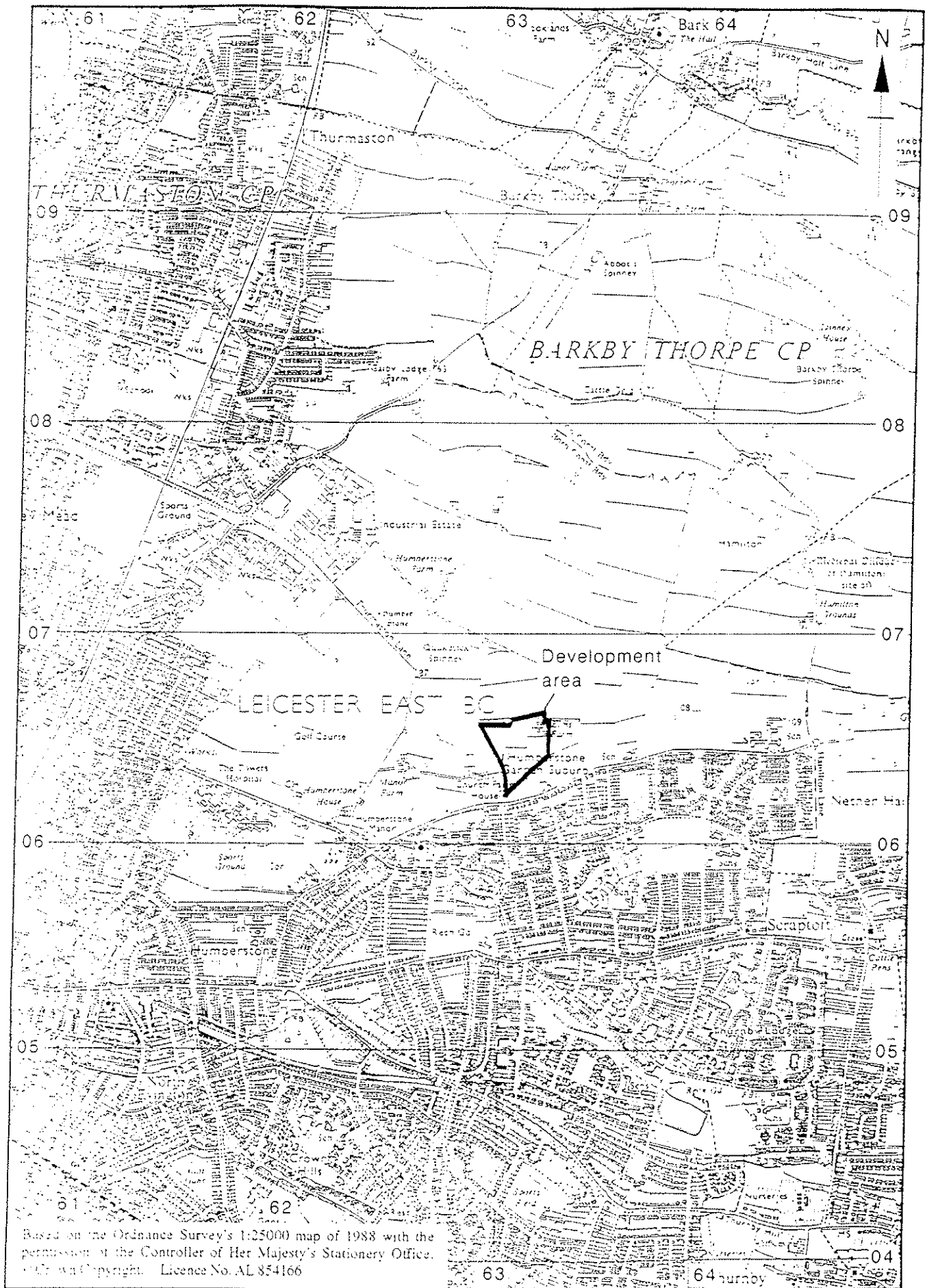
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Appendix 1: Archaeological context inventory

Trench	Ctxt	Type	Width	Thick (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
TRENCH 20								
	2001	Layer		0.33	Topsoil			
	2002	Layer		0.22	Earlier ploughsoil			
	2003	Nat		-	Natural clay			
TRENCH 21								
	2101	Layer		0.32	Topsoil			
	2102	Layer		0.20	Earlier ploughsoil			
	2103	Nat		-	Natural			
	2104	Fill		0.24	Fill of 2106	Pottery	13	IA
	2105	Fill		0.78	Fill of 2106			
	2106	Cut		0.40	Ditch cut			
	2107	Fill		0.12	Fill of Gully 2109	Pottery	8	IA
	2108	Fill		0.06	Fill of Gully 2109			
	2109	Cut	0.50	0.18	Gully cut			
TRENCH 22								
	2201	Layer		0.34	Topsoil			
	2202	Layer		0.20	Earlier ploughsoil			
	2203	Nat		-	Natural clay			
TRENCH 23								
	2301	Layer		0.30	Topsoil			
	2302	Layer		0.15	Earlier ploughsoil			
	2303	Nat		-	Natural clay			
	2304	Fill		0.15	Fill of 2306			
	2305	Fill		0.35	Fill of 2306	Pottery	8	IA
	2306	Cut	0.65	0.45	Ditch cut			
	2307	Fill		0.24	Fill of 2308	Pottery	1	IA
	2308	Cut	1.02	0.24	Ditch cut			
	2309	Fill		0.25	Fill of 2308			
	2310	Cut	1.80	0.40	Pit cut			
	2311	Fill		0.27	Fill of 2312			

Trench	Ctxt	Type	Width	Thick (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
	2312	Cut	1.20	0.27	Ditch cut			
	2313	Fill		0.25	Fill of 2316	Pottery	6	IA
	2314	Fill		0.15	Fill of 2316	Pottery	2	IA
	2315	Fill		0.35	Fill of 2316	Pottery	1	Med?
	2316	Cut	1.50	0.80	Ditch cut			
	2317	Fill		0.20	Fill of 2318			
	2318	Cut	0.70	0.20	Ditch or pit			
TRENCH 24								
	2400	Layer		0.25	Topsoil			
	2401	Fill		>0.8	Fill of 2402			
	2402	Cut	20.0	>0.8	Sewer pipe trench			
	2403	Layer		0.45	Subsoil			
	2404	Layer		-	Natural			
TRENCH 25								
	2501	Layer		0.20	Topsoil			
	2502	Layer		0.20	Fill of sewer trench			
TRENCH 26								
	2601	Layer		0.22	Topsoil			
	2602	Layer		0.20	Subsoil			
	2603	Layer		-	Natural clay			
	2604	Fill		0.55	Fill of 2605			
	2605	Cut		0.55	Ditch cut (curving)			
	2606	Fill		0.20	Fill of 2607			
	2607	Cut	0.30	0.20	Gully cut			
	2608	Fill		0.20	Fill of 2609			
	2609	Cut	0.30	0.20	Gully cut			
	2610	Fill		0.30	Fill of 2611			
	2611	Cut	0.50	0.30	Gully cut			
IA = Iron Age Med. = Medieval								



Site location

scale 1:25000

Figure 1

scale 1:2500

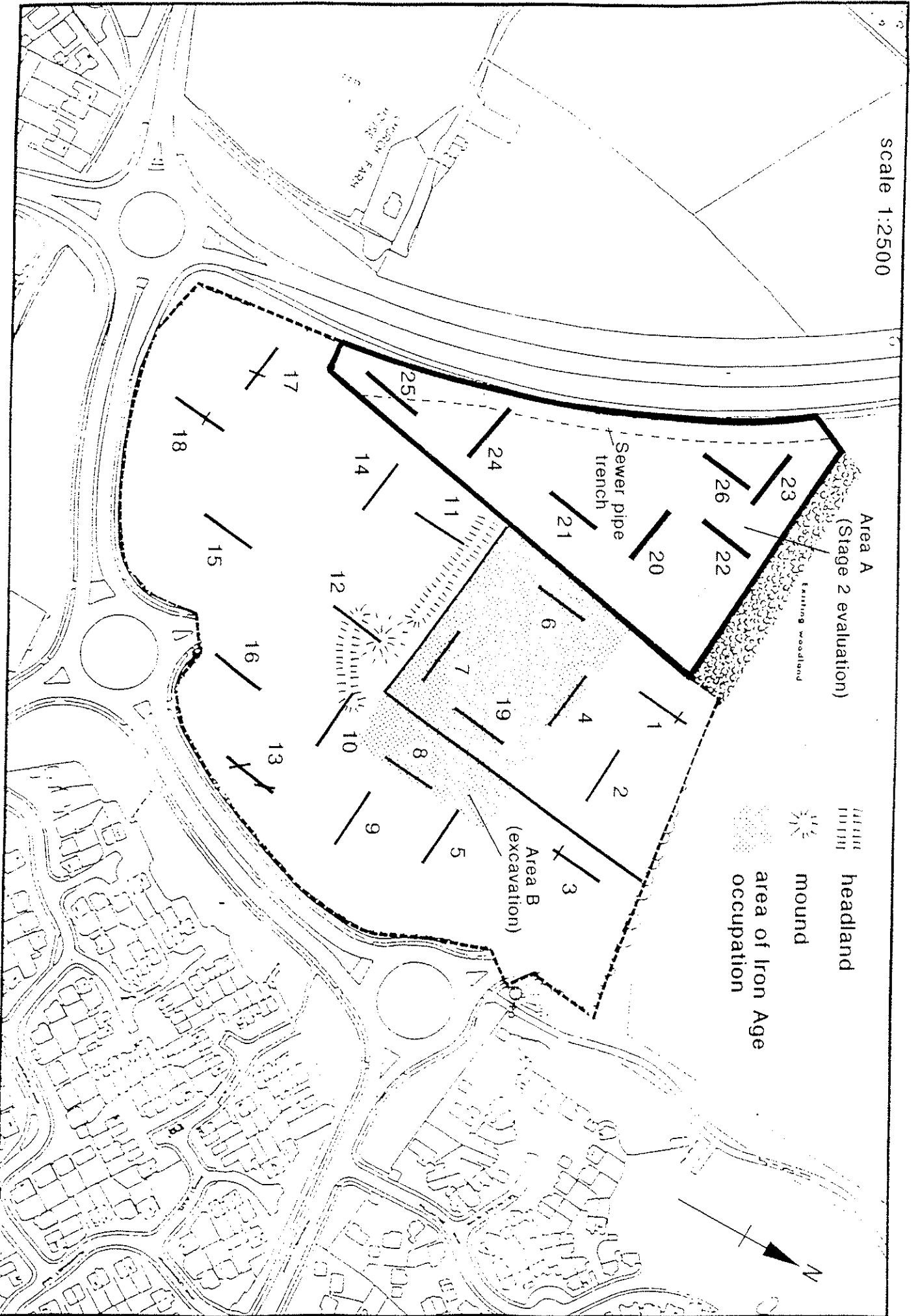


Figure 2

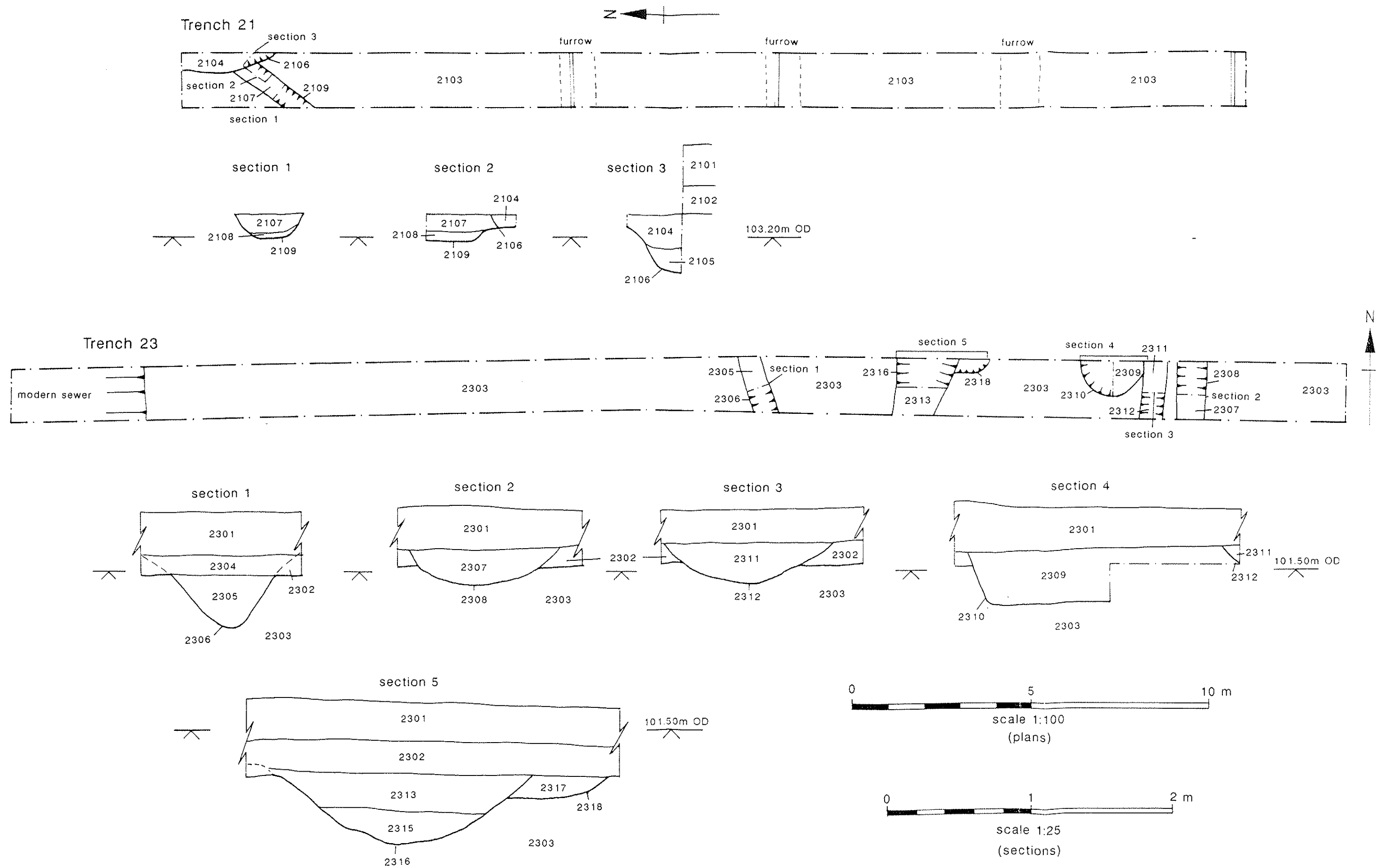


Figure 3

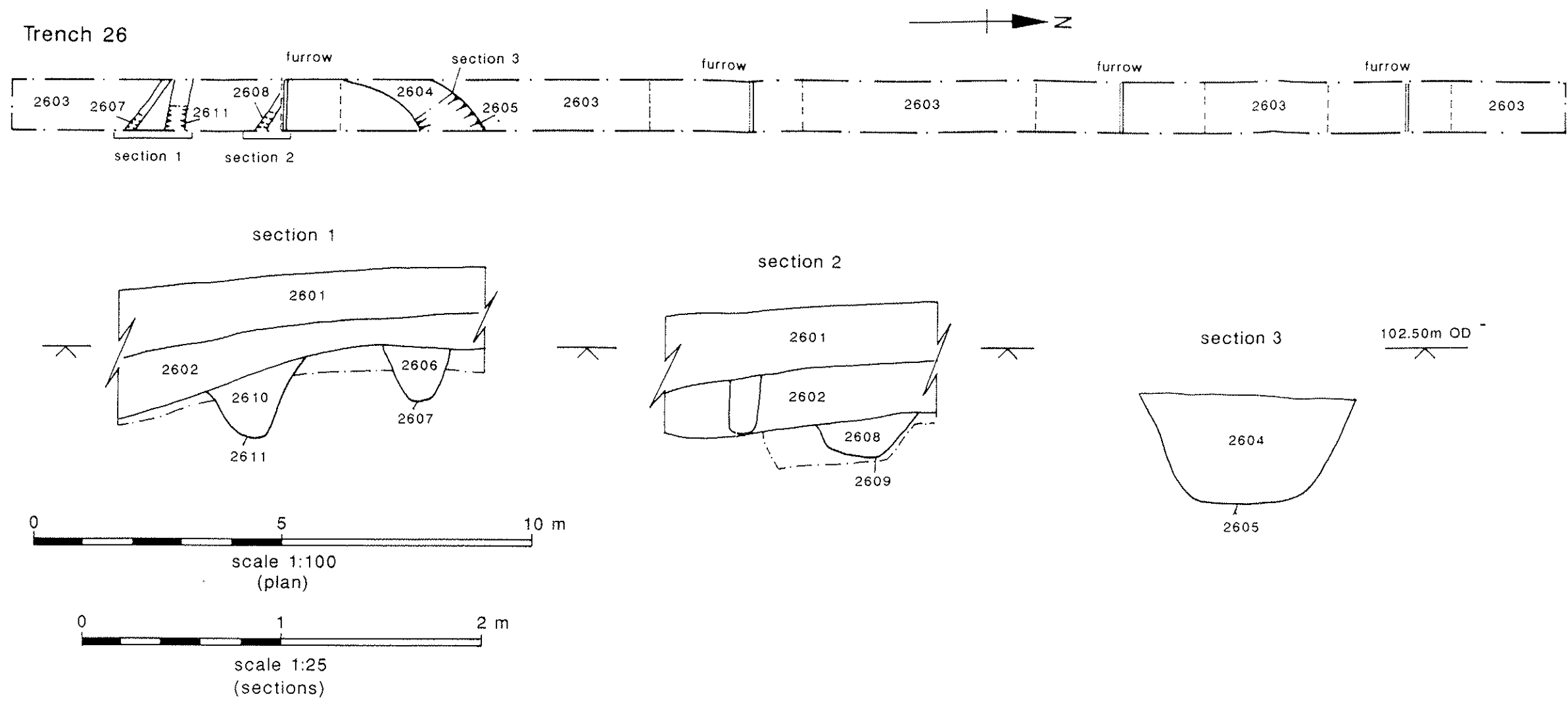


Figure 4



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES

Tel: 01865 263800 Fax: 01865 793496

email: oau-oxford.demon.co.uk



Director: David Miles B.A., F.S.A., M.I.F.A. Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited.
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Registered Office: Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES