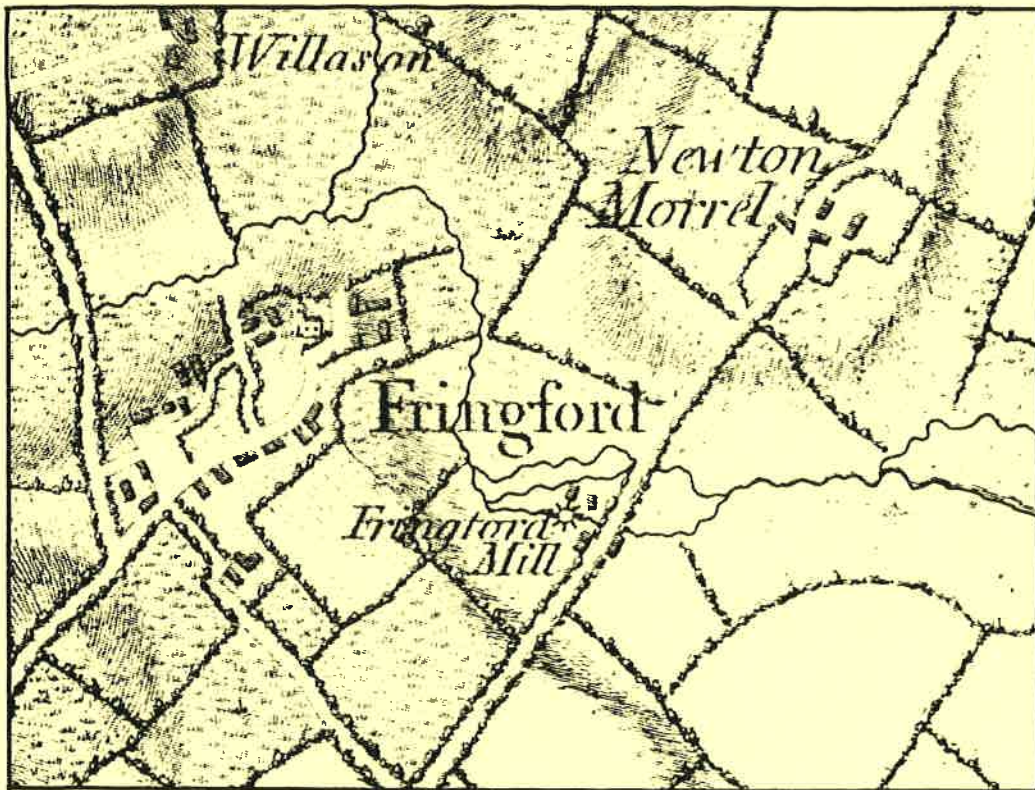


# The Paddock, Rectory Lane Fringford, Oxfordshire

NGR SP 604 289

## Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeological Unit

May 1997

**CALA Homes (Midlands) Limited**

**The Paddock, Rectory Lane, Fringford, Oxfordshire**

***ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT***

**SP 604 289**

**97/00348**

***May 1997***

***Rectory Lane, Fringford (FRPAD 97) Evaluation Report***

# The Paddock, Fringford, Oxfordshire

## *ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION*

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## Summary

The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a field evaluation at The Paddock, Rectory Lane, Fringford on behalf of CALA Homes (Midlands) Limited. The evaluation revealed three ditches possibly Roman in date and four medieval ditches, a bank and a possible floor or surface. The bank had a post-medieval trackway running parallel to it.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

In April 1997 the Oxford Archaeological Unit conducted a field evaluation at Fringford, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1) on behalf of CALA Homes (Midlands) Ltd. in respect of a planning application for housing development (Planning Application 97/00348). The work was implemented according to a brief set by and a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Officer. The area of proposed development is situated within a small field known as The Paddock lying between Rectory Lane and Main Street towards the centre of the village of Fringford.

### 1.2 Geology and Topography

The site lies at about 107 metres OD and covers an area of approximately 0.51 hectares. The natural geology consists of drift deposits of gravel, silt and sand with sandy loam topsoil. The present land use is rough pasture.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

The site lies within the historic medieval core of Fringford village in an area that may once have been part of a considerably larger village green.

As part of a mitigation strategy to preserve significant archaeological remains by record, an excavation was conducted in Fringford at Crosslands in 1993, in advance of a similar housing development to the one proposed at The Paddock. The 1993 excavation area lay immediately adjacent to the east side of The Paddock site and covered an area of about 1700 square metres. The excavations revealed a long-lived and complex sequence of occupation in this area from the late 1st/2nd centuries until the 4th century AD. A series of low status farming settlements were indicated, but the full extent of these could not be estimated as the remains clearly continued outside the boundaries of the development. Enclosure ditches dating to the 10th and 11th centuries were also detected.

During 1992 and 1993 an archaeological watching brief was conducted on land next to Rectory Lane during the excavation of house footings. This produced evidence of further Roman ditches and pits associated with Roman pottery. Medieval activity was also present.

The correlation of the evidence from the excavation and the watching brief appeared to confirm that the centre of the Romano-British settlement was towards the west end of the site suggesting the presence of further significant archaeological remains within the present proposal area of The Paddock. Accordingly a geophysical survey of the site was carried out and numerous anomalies were detected (Fig. 2).

## 2 EVALUATION AIMS

i) To determine the nature of the geophysical anomalies and so to establish the presence of archaeological remains within the proposal area.

ii) In a limited manner, to determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.

iii) To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.

iv) To make available the results of the investigation.

## 3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Sample size and scope of fieldwork

Four trenches totalling a length of 80 metres with an overall width of about 1.8 m wide, were excavated approximating to a three percent sample of the application area (Fig. 2).

### 3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

The trenches were excavated using a JCB with a 1.5 m wide, toothless bucket, down to the top of the first significant archaeological deposits, or in their absence to the top of the natural.

The trenches were cleaned by hand and the exposed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature and to retrieve finds. All archaeological features were planned and, where excavated, their sections drawn at a scale of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the OAU Fieldwork Manual (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

### 3.3 Finds

Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context.

### 3.4 Environmental data

No environmental sampling was carried out during the evaluation.

## 4 RESULTS: GENERAL

### 4.1 Soils and ground conditions

The site was located within an area of rough pasture, was relatively flat and had been used recently as a paddock. The ground consisted of an overall layer of dark topsoil covering a layer of yellowish brown subsoil. These layers were fairly deep within the centre of the application area whilst towards the periphery of the site their depth was considerably reduced with only a thin layer of topsoil in some places. The underlying natural subsoil where revealed consisted of gravel and a sandy clay.

Several earthworks survive on the site including a rectangular enclosure in the south west.

### 4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

Archaeological deposits were located in all four trenches (Fig. 2).

## 5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS (Fig. 3)

### 5.1 Description of deposits

#### 5.1.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was 10 m long and oriented north-west - south-east perpendicular to Main Street on the south-eastern side of the site. The natural subsoil, 100 was a dark orange to light greenish grey silty clay. It was overlain by 109, a yellow brown silty clay cultivated soil. The topsoil, 101 varied in thickness

from 0.4 m to 0.5 m and contained 45 sherds of pottery, giving the layer a terminus post quem of 1250.

Cut 104 orientated north-east - south-west was located in the southern corner of the trench. It cut the natural subsoil and was sealed by the old cultivation soil. The full profile was not revealed within the trench. It was not therefore possible to confidently identify what type of feature 104 was, although it is likely to have been a ditch. The western edge of the cut was gently undulating and generally concave, the base, where exposed was also concave. The feature was a maximum of 0.42 m deep. The basal fill, 105 was mid orange brown silty clay. It contained occasional flint and oolitic limestone pebbles. Larger oolitic limestone blocks measuring 0.33 m by 0.22 m by 0.09 m were also found within the fill. Twelve sherds of pottery were recovered from the fill TPQ later than 1200 AD. The upper fill of the feature, 106 was mid orange brown sandy loam. It contained large quantities of oolitic limestone, the average dimensions of which were, 0.18 m by 0.14 m by 0.05 m. This fill yielded 16 sherds of pottery with a terminus post quem of 1250 AD.

A shallow ditch, 102 was found at the northern extent of the trench. This was orientated north-west - south-east, although it possibly turned through ninety degrees to the north at the northern edge of the trench. The ditch had gently sloping concave sides and a slightly irregular base. It was 1.05 m wide and 0.07 m deep. The ditch fill, 103 was dark grey brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks. A single sherd of pottery was recovered from the fill, dated to later than 1100 AD.

A shallow irregular cut, 107 was found in the centre of the trench. This was irregular in plan, but roughly linear, with gently sloping concave sides and a flattish base. It was approximately 1.20 m wide and 0.12 m deep. The fill, 108 was mid orange brown silty clay. This contained occasional flint and oolitic limestone pebbles.

#### 5.1.2 Trench 2

This trench was 10 m long and oriented north-west - south-east. It was perpendicular to Rectory Lane to the north-west of the site. The natural subsoil, 202 was reddish brown silty clay. A cultivated soil consisting of brown clay silt n(201) between 0.05 and 0.12 m deep sealed 202. The topsoil 200, was mid brown clay silt with a maximum depth of 0.15 m.

Two deposits, 206 and 207 were investigated in the northern part of the trench. The cut for these deposits was not identified. It was at least 3 m wide and 2.5 m long and it extended outside of the trench. It was possibly a large ditch. Deposit 206 was mid brown clay silt with fairly large

quantities of stone measuring 0.23 m by 0.16 m by 0.05 m. Deposit 207 was found below 206 and was mid orange brown silty clay with occasional pebble inclusions.

Layer 203, described as a possible floor or surface was found in the centre of the trench, and comprised mid brown clay silt with some inclusions of rounded river gravels. It was a maximum of five metres wide; its length was not known because it extended outside of the trench. It is possible that this layer was cut by the feature in the northern part of the trench and by the possible north-east - south-west orientated wall, 208.

A possible wall, 208, was located approximately 2 m from the southern end of the trench. It was 0.50 m wide and it extended across the width of the trench.

Layer 204, found to the south of the possible wall 208, was the same as layer 203.

### 5.1.3 Trench 3

This trench was 'L-shaped'. One arm was oriented north-east - south-west and was 15 m long. The other arm was orientated north-west - south-east and was 30 m long. The natural subsoil, 305 was light yellow brown sandy clay with some gravel inclusions. This was overlain by layer 301, mid yellow brown clay silt cultivated soil, which was between 0.15 m and 0.2 m deep. The topsoil, 300 was mid grey brown clay silt, with a maximum depth of 0.2 m.

Three linear features were found within the 30 m long trench, all cut 305, the natural subsoil and were sealed by the cultivated soil.

Ditch 308 was found 11.5 m south of the northern end of the trench. It was orientated east-north-east - west-south-west and extended across the width of the trench. The ditch had gently sloping, slightly concave sides and a flattish base. It was approximately one metre wide and 0.10 m deep. The fill 303, was mid yellow brown silty clay.

Ditch 307 was located 7 m south of ditch 308. It was orientated east-north-east - west-south-west and it extended across the width of the trench. It was approximately two metres wide and 0.10 m deep. It had fairly gently sloping concave sides and a fairly flat base. The ditch fill, 302 was mid yellow grey brown silty clay. A small amount of animal bone was recovered from the fill.



Ditch 306 was encountered five metres south of ditch 307. It was orientated approximately north-south. The ditch was not fully excavated, it was 0.40 m wide and at least 0.30 m deep. It was filled with mid yellow grey brown silty clay, with frequent oolitic limestone fragments.

#### 5.1.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was a 15 m long and was oriented north-east - south-west on the south-western side of the site. The natural subsoil 406 was yellow orange clayey gravel. A gravel bank 402 was found at the centre of the trench. The bank was 0.35-0.4 m high and aligned north-east - south-west. It was approximately three metres wide with gently sloping, slightly concave sides.

Layer 405 comprised mid grey brown clay silt, and was between 0.10 m and 0.25 m deep. It abutted the gravel bank 402 towards the bottom rear of the slope and filled a small linear cut 407 parallel to and near the base of the gravel bank. Cut 407 was about 0.5 m wide and 0.1 m in depth. It cut the natural subsoil.

Layer 401 overlay 405 and abutted the southern slope of deposit 402. Layer 401 was mid to dark grey brown clay silt with large quantities of oolitic limestone inclusions. It was approximately 5.5 m wide and 0.25 m deep and was interpreted as a possible trackway.

In the northern end of the trench the gravel bank 402 levelled out and continued to the end of the trench. A layer of subsoil or earlier ploughsoil 403 comprising light to mid grey brown clay silt approximately 0.13 m deep. It was only present from the northern slope of the bank gradually thickening towards the north-east end of the trench. This was removed by machine in order to establish the presence of any hidden features; none were found. The slope was partially excavated and recorded at a height of 0.35-0.4m.

## 5.2 Finds

### 5.2.1 The medieval pottery

The pottery assemblage comprised 116 sherds with a total weight of 1470g. There were 7 sherds of undiagnostic Romano-British pottery were residual in medieval contexts. The remainder of the sherds were medieval. The pottery occurrence is shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Pottery Occurrence by number and weight of sherds (in g) by context**

Context	Cotswolds Oolitic	Banbury wares	Brill/Boarstal ware	Potters-pury ware	Midland Blackware	Red Earthen ware	Tin-Glazed Earthen ware	Total	Context TPQ
101	1 (38)	25 (260)	16 (212)	3 (21)				45 (531)	125 0+
103		1 (2)						1 (2)	110 0+
105		11 (101)	1 (10)					12 (111)	120 0+
106		6 (19)	8 (69)	2 (15)				16 (103)	125 0+
206	1 (15)							1 (15)	875 +
301	2 (16)							2 (16)	875 +
400			2 (14)	1 (18)	4 (46)	21 (395)	1 (36)	29 (509)	162 0+
401						2 (25)			145 0+
403			1 (44)						120 0+

Generally, with the exception of the Roman material, the ceramic assemblage from this site suggests that there were three main periods of activity, in the late 9th/10th, 13th, and 17th centuries. However, the assemblage is rather small for drawing any firm conclusions other than to say that there was activity at those periods.

Overall, the medieval pottery is typical of the south Northamptonshire/north Oxfordshire traditions, with the Banbury-type wares appearing to be the only coarseware in use at the site, as is the case at sites such as Brackley, Castle Lane. None of the Wiltshire types which occur on many Oxfordshire sites are present, and the Cotswolds types for a much smaller portion of the assemblage than would be expected for a more southerly site. From a ceramic point of view, further work at the site would be of value, as little is known about the medieval ceramics of the region around Bicester due mainly to the dearth of excavated evidence.

## 6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

### 6.1 Reliability of field investigation

The aim of the evaluation was firstly to determine whether the geophysical anomalies were archaeological features and secondly to characterise any deposits located. Trenches 1, 2 and 4 were positioned in areas with anomalies identified by a combination of the magnetometer and resistivity survey prior to the evaluation. Trench 3 was located near the central area of site where the anomalies identified by the geophysical survey were less apparent. The results of the survey suggested that all of the identified anomalies represent potential areas of significant archaeological remains (Fig. 3).

### 6.2 Overall interpretation

#### 6.2.1 *Summary of Results*

##### *Romano-British period*

No features were dated by pottery to this period. However, the alignment of the three ditches in Trench 3 (303, 302 and 304 - Fig.3) suggests that they are part of the enclosure system seen in the excavations at Crosslands in 1993 (Fig. 3).

##### *Medieval period*

The remaining ditches contained medieval pottery and they may be part of the later enclosure system (dated to the 10-11th centuries) which was seen at Crosslands. The two sherds of AD 875 or later date may support this conjecture although the majority of the pottery is of 13th-century date. The alignment of ditches is difficult to establish in narrow trenches but it is not inconceivable that 106, 206 and perhaps the bank 402 are on roughly the same north-south alignment seen in the late Saxon-early medieval ditches recorded at Crosslands.

##### *Post Medieval*

The trackway in Trench 4 may have led to either the rectangular earthwork or the 19th-century? schoolhouse at the east of the site.

### 6.2.2 Significance and conclusion

The site has well preserved archaeological features lying close to the surface across all of the site. While the evaluation was limited in its aims the work has established that there are on the site enclosure ditches, which may be of Romano-British and medieval date, and which are on alignments similar to those found in the excavation at Crosslands. The floor or surface in Trench 2 may represent a building next to Rectory Lane but due to the limited scope of the evaluation it was felt that it would be more appropriate to examine this in a further stage of excavation.

## Appendices:

### Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory

#### Trench 1

Trench	Ctx	Type	Width (m)	Thick. (m)	Comment	Find s	No.	Date (TPQ)
001	100	layer	-		natural subsoil	-	-	
	101	layer	-		topsoil	pot	45	modern
	102	cut			gully ?			
	103	fill			fill of [102]	pot	1	1100+
	104	cut			natural feature ?			
	105	fill			fill of [104]	pot	12	1200+
	106	fill			fill of [104]	pot	16	1250+
	107	cut						
	108	fill						
	109	layer			subsoil			

#### Trench 2

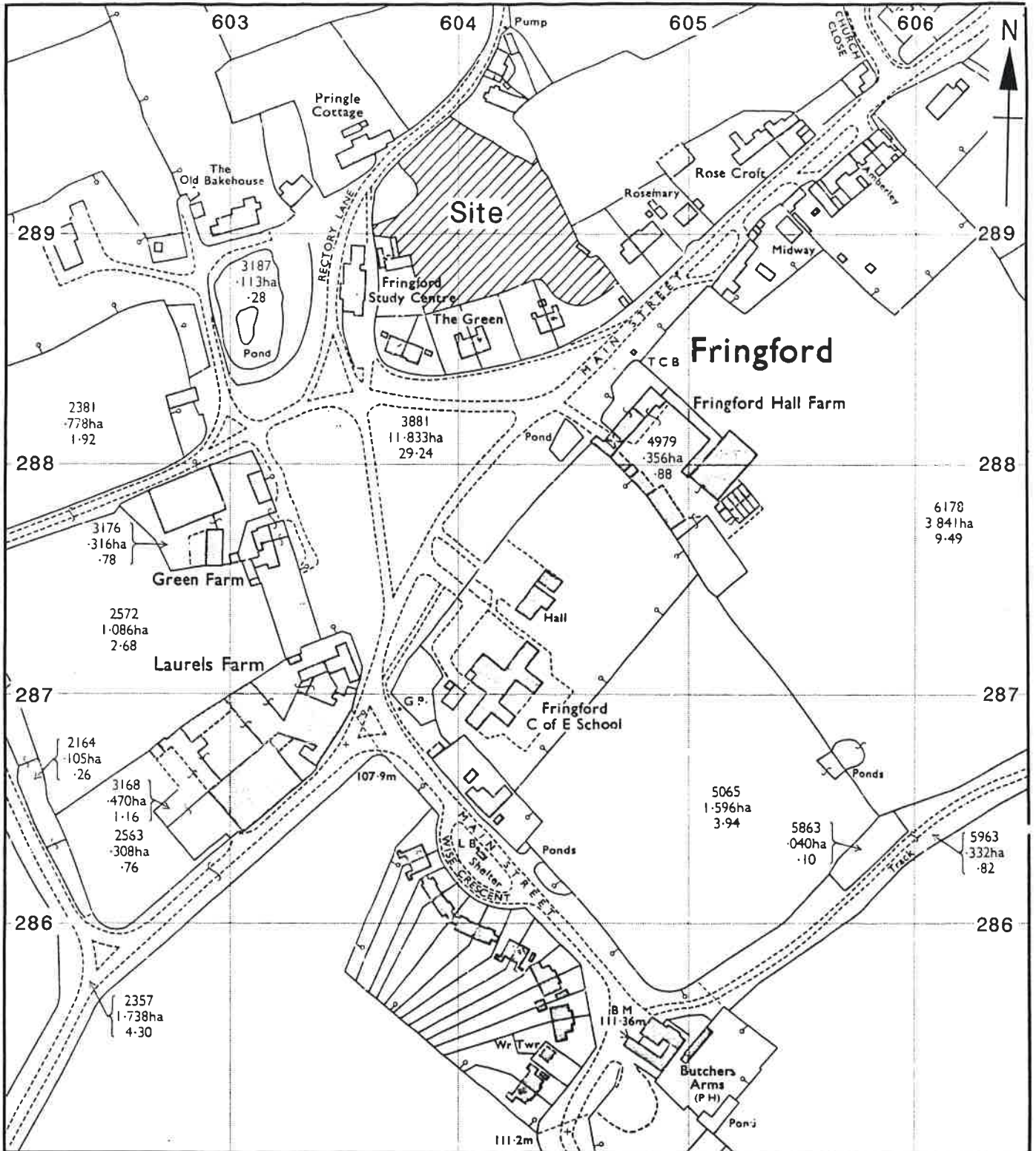
Trench	Ctx.	Type	Width (m)	Thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
002	200	topsoil	-	0.1				
	201	cultivat ion soil		0.1				
	202	natural	-	-				
	203	surface	3.9	1.75				
	204	rubble	-	-				
	205	rubble	-	-				
	206	rubble	-	-		pot	1	875+
	207	ditch fill	2.5	1.6				
	208	wall?	-	-				

### Trench 3

Trench	Ctx.	Type	Width (m)	Thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
003	300	layer	-	0.2m	topsoil	-	-	-
	301	layer	-	0.15-0.2m	earlier ploughsoil	pot	2	875+
	302	fill	2m	0.05-0.1m	fill of [307]			
	303	fill	1m	0.05-0.1m	fill of [308]			
	304	fill			fill of [306]			
	305	layer			natural subsoil	-	-	-
	306	cut			ditch/wall /			
	307	cut			gully/ditch ?			
	308	cut			gully/ditch ?			

### Trench 4

Trench	Ctx.	Type	Width (m)	Thick. (m)	Comment	Finds	No.	Date
004	400	layer	-	0.15m	topsoil	pot	29	1620 +
	401	layer	5.5m	0.2-0.25m	surface	pot	2	1450 +
	402	layer	3m	0.35m	linear bank	-	-	-
	403	layer	-	0.13m	earlier ploughsoil	pot	1	1200 +
	404	layer	-	-	-	-	-	-
	405	layer/fill		0.1-0.25m	fill of 407			
	406	layer	-	-	natural subsoil	-	-	-
	407	cut	0.5m	0.1m	gully-ditch ?			



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scale 1:2500

Figure 1

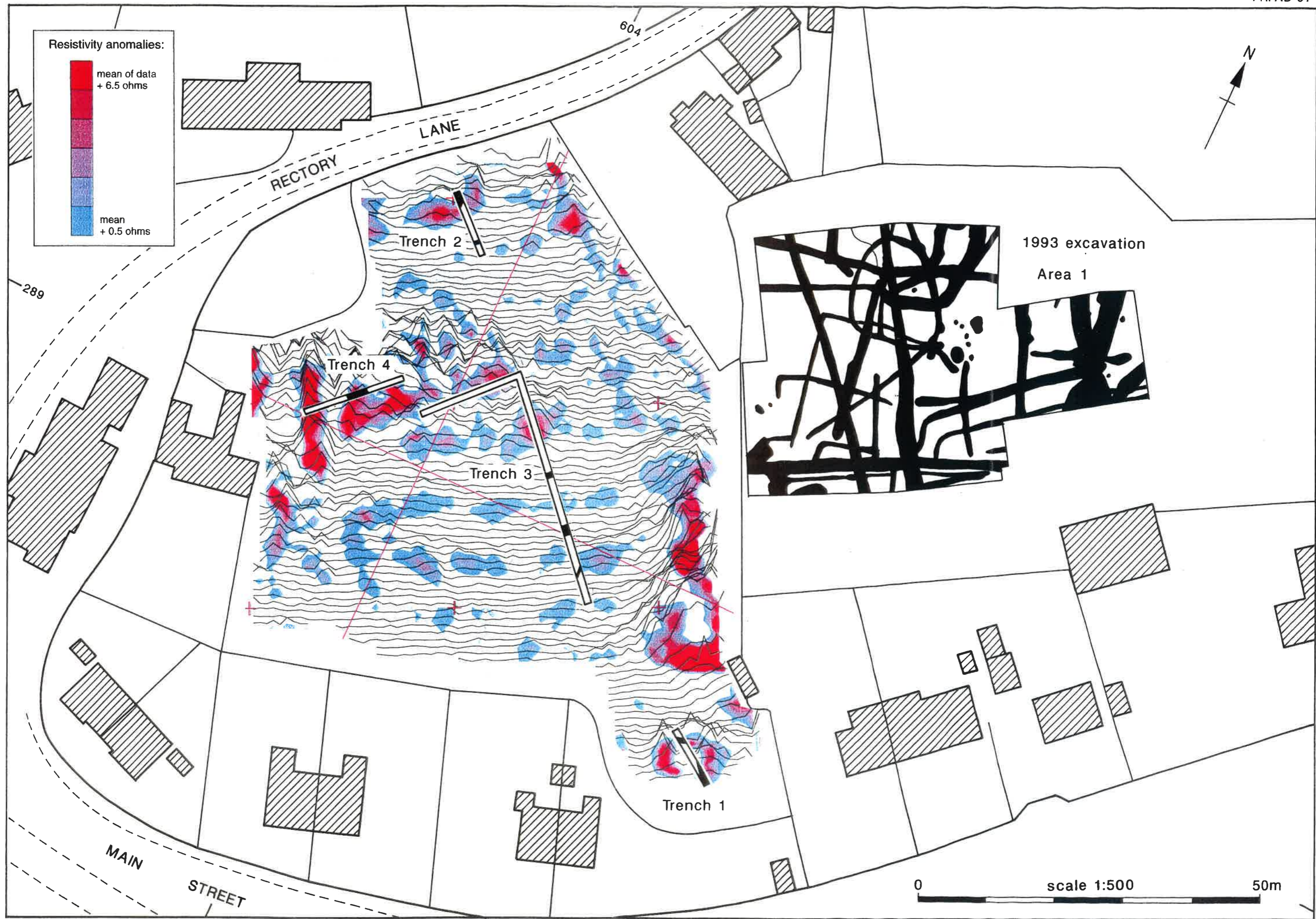


Figure 2



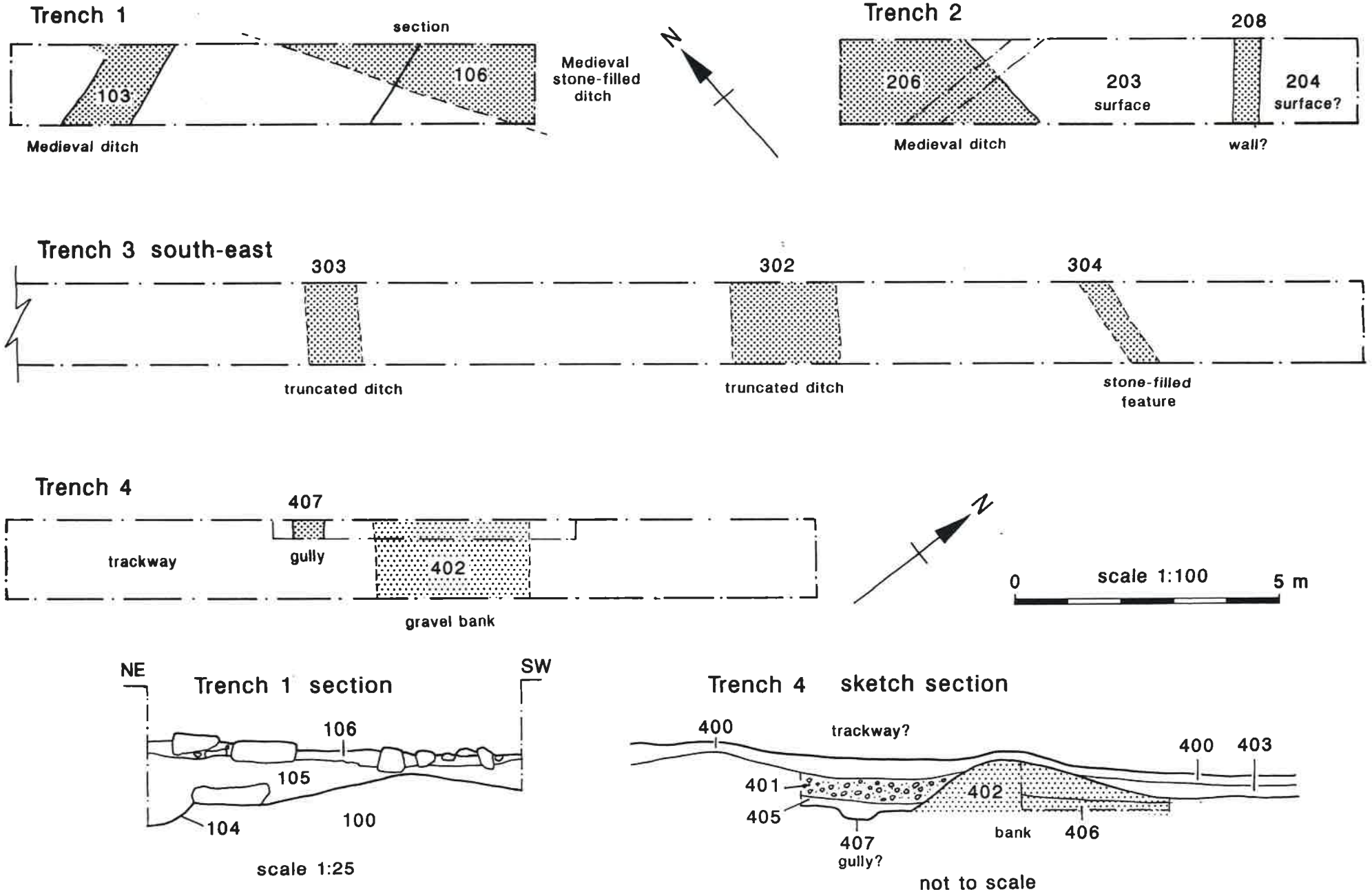


Figure 3



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