

REPORT NO. 48
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A Watching Brief at The Lindens, 139 Lexden Road, Colchester (Phase 1)

for Lexden Restorations Ltd

NGR: TL 977 251

Introduction

In March 1999, Lexden Restorations Ltd commissioned the Colchester Archaeological Trust to maintain an archaeological watching brief on redevelopment at The Lindens, Lexden Road.

The redevelopment was carried out in two phases. This report covers Phase 1, which involved the construction of five houses on the southern half of the site.

Archaeological Background

The site lies approximately 2km west of Colchester town centre. A short distance to the south is the probable route of an east-west Roman road and in the vicinity are burials and earthworks dating to the late Iron Age and Roman periods.

Prior to the current fieldwork, the principal observation at The Lindens was made in 1946, when a trench for a drain revealed pits and a broad east-west ditch-like feature (EVT1165). From the description of its location the 1946 trench roughly coincides with the position of foundations for the east side of house plot 2, in which earlier stratigraphy was destroyed by a broad group of parallel service trenches. The services included a drain (perhaps the 1946 installation?), also later cable and gas lines. The approximate locations of the features are shown in Fig.1, where they are labelled "a", "b" and "c". Feature "a" is a shallow pit with which pottery dating to AD30-50 is associated. No finds were recovered from the other two features. Feature "b" was 4.1m wide and appeared to be an east-west orientated ditch. If it was a ditch (and assuming the location shown is moderately accurate), it may not continue west to any great extent, as no corresponding intrusions were apparent in the foundation trenches for house plot 1 and the western part of plot 2. Feature "c" was described as a U-shaped trench or channel, narrowing from 90cm wide in the west to 60cm wide in the east side of the trench section.

Other records refer to Colchester Museum's acquisition of a Roman red coated grey ware beaker, form 407, found in The Lindens garden in 1905 (EVT1174); also glass and Roman pottery from roadworks along the frontage of the property (EVT1168 and 1175).

Methods

The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the requirements detailed in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on Standards and Practices for Archaeological Fieldwork in*

the Borough of Colchester (1996a) and Guidelines on the Preparation and Transfer of Archaeological Archives to Colchester Museums (1996b).

House and garage foundations involved machine excavation of 45cm wide trenches dug to natural subsoil. Their machining was watched continuously as was trenching for the majority of boundary walls and major services.

Results

General Stratigraphy

Detailed soil descriptions may be found in the archived records. Overall, the soil sequence was consistent from trench to trench, and can be summarised as follows:

L1. Recently cultivated topsoil, in many places mixed with construction and demolition debris from the building that previously occupied the site. Modern.

L2. A dark greyish brown to mid brown sandy loam, becoming sandier with increasing depth and merging with the underlying L3. A long-term accumulation of soil above the natural subsoil.

L3. Reddish brown sand with varying amounts of clean gravel. The exposed surface of the natural sand was in places interrupted by pale to mid-greyish brown loamy sand with a slight silty content. These were noted, but are not shown in Figure 1 since they appear to be naturally formed irregularities. Natural.

Features

Figure 1 shows the locations of 26 features, brief descriptions of which are given below:

<i>F. No.</i>	<i>Description</i>
F1	A pit, 60cm deep. Brown loamy sand fill. Of indeterminate but possibly early date. No Finds.
F2	A pit, 80cm deep. Brown loamy sand fill. Of indeterminate but possibly early date. No finds.
F4	A pit, 60 cm in overall depth. Pale to mid-yellowish brown loamy sand fill. Possibly associated with F6. No finds.
F5	A pit (section: Fig.2) with a dark brown sandy loam fill with charcoal flecks and tip-lines.
F6	A large pit or group of pits, represented by a 7 metre wide irregular intrusion extending beyond the 1.05m overall depth of the trench (section: Fig.3). The main fill (F6/A) was a pale to mid-yellowish brown slightly loamy sand with darker sandy loam mottles. F4, which lies four metres to the west, was filled with a very similar soil, and may be part of the same feature.
F7	A north-south ditch (section: Fig.2) with a main fill (F7/A) of greyish brown sandy loam with occasional charcoal flecks and rare burnt clay. A thin silt layer of greyish brown loamy sand (F7/B) lined the bottom of the feature. A further short stretch of this ditch (F22) was later revealed in an adjoining service trench.
F8	A pit, 45cm deep, filled by a greyish brown sandy loam with occasional small charcoal flecks.
F9	A large pit (plan and section: Fig.4). The material labelled F9/A was localised and is possibly a later intrusion. The main fill consisted of a mid-brown sandy loam

- with a scatter of small charcoal flecks (F9/B) above a mixed deposit of mid-brown sandy loam and yellowish brown loamy sand with rarer charcoal flecks (F9/C). A small patch of mid-brown sandy loam with common 1 to 1.5cm fragments of charcoal was exposed at the bottom of the trench (F9/E). The northern profile was indistinct: it was not clear whether a pale yellowish brown sand with darker sandy loam mottles (F9/D) was part of the fill or the result of worm action.
- F10 A pit (plan and section: Fig.5). All finds were recovered from the main fill (F10/A), a mid-brown sandy loam with occasional minute charcoal flecks. The eastern side of the feature was poorly defined: F10/B was a pale greyish brown sand, possibly a spill or variation in the natural sand.
- F11 A pit, 45cm deep, with a more or less flat bottom. The fill consisted of dark brown sandy loam with rare charcoal flecks (F11/A) with a thin silty deposit of sand lining the bottom of the feature.
- F13 A pit, 95cm deep overall, with a mid-brown sandy loam fill. Possibly associated with the nearby F6, although the fill differs and the absence of finds and any clear relationship to L2 place it in the indeterminate date category.
- F14 A pit (plan and section: Fig.6) with brown to greyish brown sandy loam fill including occasional flecks of charcoal.
- F17 A pit of unknown depth. The top of the feature was exposed and part of the greyish brown sandy loam fill removed by machine with possible finds contamination.
- F18 A pit of unknown depth. The upper fill was a mid-brown loamy sand.
- F19 A pit with greyish brown sandy loam fill. Only part of the eastern side was exposed and the depth is unknown. Possibly associated with F24, which was revealed by a later phase of trenching.
- F20 A pit (section: Fig.7) with a mid brown sandy loam fill containing rare small charcoal flecks.
- F21 A pit of unknown depth . Excavation ceased at an overall depth of 1.5m. The exposed fill was a dark brown sandy loam with lenses of grey silt loam containing small fragments of charcoal.
- F22 A north-south ditch, the southern continuation of F7.
- F23 A pit (section :Fig.8) with a main fill (F23/A) of mid-brown sandy loam with rare small flecks of charcoal. At the western side of the feature the main fill rested against a layer of pale brown sandy silt loam (F23/B).
- F24 A pitted area (plan and section: Fig.9) at least 9m in width. For the most part, the intrusion(s) extended beyond the bottom of the trench, leaving small islands of undisturbed natural sand at intervals. The fill at the lowest exposed level was a very pale brown sandy silt loam. F19, which was previously exposed in a drain trench, may represent the eastern extent of F24.
- F25 A pit with a fill of dark brown sandy loam which continued beyond the 95cm overall depth of the trench.
- F26 A pit (section :Fig.8) with a mid to dark brown sandy loam fill which extended beyond the 1m overall depth of the trench.
- F27 A pit, 85cm in overall depth, with a fill of mid-brown loamy sand.
- F28 A pit with a pale to mid-brown loamy sand fill which extended beyond the 1m overall depth of the trench.
- F29 A pit with a mid-brown loamy sand fill which extended beyond the 1.1m overall depth of the trench. No finds.
- F30 A pit, 90cm in overall depth, with shallow sloping sides and a fairly flat bottom. The fill was a mid-brown loamy sand.

More detailed records of the features may be found in the site archive.

None of the features were revealed in their entirety and in many instances the interpretations should be regarded as tentative due to the restricted scale of observation.

Finds

Late Iron Age and Roman pottery

by Stephen Benfield

There is approximately 12 kg. of late Iron age and early Roman pottery from the site of which almost all was from, or can be associated with, 21 numbered features, though a small amount was collected as unstratified material. This material is listed in Table 1 by total weight for each fabric group (as per CAR 10).

Table 1: Pottery fabric groups by weight

Fabric groups	weight in grms.
<i>amphora:</i>	
Dressel 20 amphora AJ	880
other amphora AA	210
<i>mortaria:</i>	
Colchester or imported mortaria TZ	80
<i>samian:</i>	
South Gaulish plain samian BA (SG)	83
Other plain samian BA (?poss. 2nd century)	10
<i>other fine wares:</i>	
<i>Terra Nigra type wares:</i>	
Terra Rubra UR (TR)	5
Terra Nigra UR (TN)	30
fine oxidised wares DZ	86
<i>other coarse wares:</i>	
coarse oxidised wares DJ	82
other coarse mostly local grey wares GX	4283
heavily tempered storage jar fabric HZ	6030
<i>post-Medieval</i> (fabric 40)	10
Total weight in grms	11789

Discussion

With the possible exception of the two samian sherds from the same vessel (Dragendorf form 27) associated with Feature 17 (Table 2, 17, though these are not positively identified as 2nd century and could possibly be earlier), all of the pottery from, or associated with, the numbered features can be dated to the late Iron age - early Roman period. The forms identified can all be paralleled in the large pottery assemblages from excavations at the nearby Sheepen site where the main period of occupation is dated circa 5 AD - 60 AD (Hawkes & Hull 1947 and Niblett 1984). Excluding the single unstratified samian sherd (Table 3, find number 4) which is almost certainly of 2nd century date, and a post-Medieval sherd (Table 3, find 18) this date range can probably be extended to all of the pottery from the site, though the presence of at least one sherd of 2nd century samian should be noted in relation to less closely datable coarse wares. While immediately pre- and post-conquest material can be difficult to separate with certainty, some of the pottery is, or is likely to be, of late Iron age date, especially the butt beaker(s) of form CAM 115 (7, Table 2), probably the white coated Gallo-Belgic sherd (CAM 114) from the same context and the closed vessel in Terra Rubra (17, Table 2) (CAR 10 p.489, although CAM 114 is recorded from burial groups attributed to the post-conquest period at King Harry Lane, Verulamium, Stead & Rigby 1989 p.134 & Fig 72). However all of the features which produced more than a few sherds contain at least some material which can be dated to the post-conquest period. While the date range of many of these vessel forms extends into the earlier 2nd century there are no vessels or

fabrics present which would indicate a date necessarily later than the Claudio-Neronian period, and an overall date for the pottery can be suggested as comparable with that for the Sheepen site of circa 5 AD - 60 AD. It can be noted that this date range contrasts with some of the pottery from a group of late Iron age - early Roman pits at the nearby Maternity Hospital site where a small amount the pottery can be dated to the Flavian period (CAT Report 46).

Table 2: late Iron age and Roman pottery associated with features by feature and finds number

F no.	find no.	fabric group	weight grms	comments	date range
5	7	GX	10	unclassified rim and body sherd	Roman
	7	HZ	100	body sherds from storage jars	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
6	1	GX	20	body sherd in soft 'romanising' grey ware	probably early Roman, 1st cent.
	2	GX	5	body sherd in slightly sandy 'romanising grey ware	probably early Roman
7	9	DZ	55	base and sherds from a butt beaker CAM 115 (LIA), imported, also a white colour coat sherd with ?herring bone barbotine decoration from a beaker CAM 114 (LIA - ?Claudio-Neronian), imported.	(LIA - ?Claudio-Neronian) ?LIA
		GX	230	sherds from several vessels, most of a small bowl form CAM 217, rim sherd from small jar CAM 260	LIA - Neronian
		HZ	1400	sherds from at least two storage jars, rim and shoulder of CAM 271, combed body sherds from second unclassified vessel	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
	10	GX	25	rim sherd of carinated bowl CAM 241/242	Claudian - late 1st/early 2nd
		HZ	200	more than one vessel present, part of CAM 271 prob. same as find 9 above.	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
	11	AA	30	neck/body join of amphora prob. CAM 182 (Dressel 2-4), import.	1st - 2nd
		GX	25	two LIA/early Roman sherds and one prob.Roman	Roman
	12	AA	90	sherds in same fabric as find 11 above, almost certainly from same vessel	1st - 2nd
		HZ	110	body sherd	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
8	13	GX	5	Roman sandy grey ware sherd	Roman
		HZ	5	thin heavily tempered sherd	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
	14	GX	1	small sherd	LIA - early Roman (prob 1st)
		HZ	300	sherds from more than one vessel, fragmented rim sherds from CAM 270 poss. same as vessel find no. 9 & 10 above.	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
9	15	BA (SG)	4	rim of samian dish Dargendorf form 15/17, probably south Gaulish, import.	mid - late 1st
		TZ	80	rim of CAM 191 in cream fabric	pre-Flavian
		DJ	2	small sherd possibly from a flagon	LIA - Roman
		GX	90	several sherds, one a vessel base	Roman, ?earlier Roman
		HZ	325	body sherds from storage jars	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
	16	GX	100	body sherds including one lattice decorated	Roman, prob early Roman, ?1st - earlier 2nd
		HZ	220	sherds from storage jars	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
10	19	DJ	10	rim with slight lid seating, possibly a 'honey jar'	Claudio-Neronian - 1st-early 2nd cent.
		GX	20	sherds include comb decorated jar CAM 108	CAM 108 - Claudian - early 2nd, other Roman prob earlier Roman
		HZ	70	body sherds	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
	23	GX	20	3 body sherds range poss LIA - Roman	Roman, poss. earlier Roman
11	20	GX	20	body sherd	LIA - early Roman
14	25	DZ	5	2 body sherds prob. from a butt beaker	LIA - Neronian-early Flavian

		HZ	180	rim CAM 270	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
17	29	BA	15	samian sherds from cup Dragendorf form 27 (?central Gaul) and dish probably drag. from 18 (South Gaul), imports.	f.18 is 1st century, f.27 poss. 2nd century
		AJ	130	sherds from Dressel 20 amphora, import	1st - early 3rd
		UR (TR)	5	2 joining sherds in Terra Rubra, dull red slip on outside of sherds in fine micaceous fabric, probably part of a closed vessel, probably a flagon	LIA - Claudian
		DZ	1	sherd poss. from a butt beaker	LIA - Claudio-Neronian
		DJ	5	part of a flagon handle in whitish fabric	LIA - Roman
		GX	300	mostly body sherds from jars/bowls, rim poss. CAM 266 jar	?LIA - Roman
18	30	AJ	25	Dressel 20 amphora sherds, import.	1st - early 3rd
		GX	40	1 sherd LIA/Roman, other Roman	prob. earlier Roman
19	31	AJ	400	2 sherds Dressel 20, import	1st - early 3rd
		DJ	20	poss. thin walled amphorae or flagon	Roman
		GX	2	Roman grey ware	Roman
		HZ	370	sherds from storage jars	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
20	32	GX	90	LIA-Roman and Roman undiagnostic grey ware sherds	Roman, poss. earlier Roman
21	34	AA	90	prob. an amphorae sherd, import	prob 1st - 2nd
		GX	180	forms CAM 108 (Claudian - early 2nd), poss. CAM 218 (LIA - Claudio-Neronian-2nd) & CAM 221 (LIA - early 2nd)	Roman, 1st - early 2nd
		HZ	150	2 sherds	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
	35	GX	150	forms prob. CAM 241/242 (Claudian - early 2nd) and rim & shoulder of large funnel necked form (unclassified) lightly burnished on exterior	Roman, ?1st - 2nd
		HZ	330	body sherds	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
22	36	HZ	20	1 slightly abraded sherd	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
23	37	GX	50	sherd of large storage jar form	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent. poss. LIA - earlier Roman
24	39	GX	200	body sherds in LIA - early Roman fabric	Roman (LIA - early Roman)
		HZ	110	3 joining sherds	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
	40	UR (TN)	30	dish form CAM 14 and one other sherd, imported	LIA - pre-Flavian
		GX	370	rims present from jar CAM 218 (1st - early 2nd) and flask CAM 231/232 (1st - 2nd)	(LIA - Roman) Roman ?1st
		HZ	450	storage jar CAM 270	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
	41	GX	45	3 body sherds	Roman
25	42	GX	200	includes rim/shoulder of CAM 241/242	Claudian - early 2nd
		HZ	70	body sherd	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
26	38	GX	50	body sherds	Roman
		HZ	55	body sherd	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
27	44	DJ	5	small reddish oxidised sherd, fabric/date uncertain though possibly 1st-early 2nd century Roman oxidised ware.	?Roman 1st - 2nd century
		HZ	125	body sherds	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
28	45	HZ	90	2 body sherds	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
30	46	BA (SG)	20	dish prob. Dragendorf form 18, prob. south Gaulish, imported	1st cent.
		AJ	325	Dressel 20 amphora sherds, imported	1st - early 3rd
		DZ	5	rim of butt beaker CAM 113, imported	LIA - Neronian/early Flavian
		DJ	40	CAM 326/331	Claudio-Neronian - late 1st/early 2nd cent.
		GX	1900	sherds include identified forms CAM 218, CAM ?266, CAM ?241/242, & CAM ?331(unusual for this form in Grey ware, may be mis identified)	(?LIA - early Roman) Claudian - late 1st/early 2nd
		HZ	1100	at least two vessels present both storage jar form CAM 270	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.

Table 2: late Iron Age, Roman and later pottery from other contexts

source	find no.	fabric group	weight grms.	comments	date range
L2/F6A interface	3	BA	2	samian dish ?Dragendorf form 18, ?south Gaulish, import	prob. 1st century
unstrat.	4	BA (CG)	2	samian cup Dragendorf form 33, concave body with central groove, ?central Gaulish, import	prob. 2nd century
unstrat.	5	GX	30	3 sherds	Roman (?earlier Roman)
L2	18	fabric 40	10	Glazed red earthen ware	post-Medieval - modern
L1	24	HZ	100	fragmented rim & body sherds	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
L2	26	GX	5	rim sherd probably part of a lid, fabric suggests LIA - early Roman	LIA - early Roman
L1	27	BA (SG)	50	samian cup Dragendorf form 27g, stamped but too abraded to be read, south Gaulish, import	1st century
L2	28	GX	10	sherd	LIA - early Roman
unstrat.	33	DZ	20	rim from barrel or butt beaker, CAM ?115, poss. same vessel as from F7 (Table 2)	?LIA
		GX	60	rim & body sherds	Roman ?1st - early 2nd
		HZ	150	3 sherds	LIA - 2nd/3rd cent.
L1	43	GX	30	1 sherd	Roman

Roman brick and tile

Two features contained Roman building material:

Find No.	F/L No.	Description	Weight
7	F5	2 Roman brick fragments, each burnt on one face.	395g, 635g
45	F28	imbrex fragment	65g

Flint

Two flints were recovered, both from soil stripping in the region of plot1:

Find No.	F/L No.	Description
21	L1	a utilised blade fragment
22	L2	flake

Animal Bone

by Alec. Wade

The watching brief recovered eleven pieces of animal bone from a late Iron Age or early Romano-British ditch (F7) and pit (F30).

The bone was in poor condition and the material from F7 was slightly brittle. The possible tibia fragment from that context appeared to have been burnt and was charred a whitish grey colour.

Finds by Feature:

F7 find no.10 Seven badly damaged bone fragments including the proximal end of a large mammal tibia (?) which had been dog gnawed. It appeared to have been burnt

and was slightly distorted. The Six other fragments were unidentifiable with two pieces being reduced to amorphous bone lumps.

F30 find no.46 Four fragments of large mammal bone, perhaps horse or cattle. Two are joining pieces of what may have been a femur shaft.

Discussion

The finds evidence and discernible stratigraphic relationships suggest that the majority of the features plotted on Figure 1 belong satisfactorily within the late Iron Age - early Roman period. Exceptions are F1 (no finds), F2 (no finds), F29 (no finds) and F13 (no finds, but possibly associated with F6): these are included in Figure 1 but fall into the category of features of indeterminate but possibly early date. Only one feature, the nne-ssw ditch F7/F22, displayed any linearity but its extent could not be established beyond the two observations at the southern frontage of plot 4. The others, from their fragmentary outlines, appear to be pits of various sizes including extensive intrusions represented by F6, F24 and F9. Whether the pits were originally dug for waste disposal or for some other purpose such as small-scale sand extraction, is uncertain.

Archive

The fieldwork archive, consisting of site records and processing data (2 indexed binders), plans, colour transparencies, and finds (3 boxes) will be deposited with Colchester Museum for permanent retention under cover of museum accession code 1999-46.

Acknowledgements

The Trust is grateful to the site developer, Lexden Restorations Ltd (Mr J.Frank) and contractor, Vaughan and Blyth Ltd (Mr K.Wareham, Mr S.Rouse and Mr G.Page) for their interest and co-operation in the course of the fieldwork. Thanks are also due to Colchester Museum (Mr D. Radford) for providing archival details relating to past discoveries at The Lindens.

Abbreviations

CAR 10 Robin Symonds and Sue Wade, Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971 - 86

CAT Report 46. A watching brief and excavation at Sovereign Crescent, Colchester.

EVT Urban Archaeological Database entry.

References

Hawkes, C F C, & Hull, M R, 1947 Camulodunum, first report on the excavations at Colchester 1930 - 39 RRCSAL 14

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Stead, I M, & Rigby, V, Verulamium, The King Harry Lane site, English Heritage Archaeological Report 12

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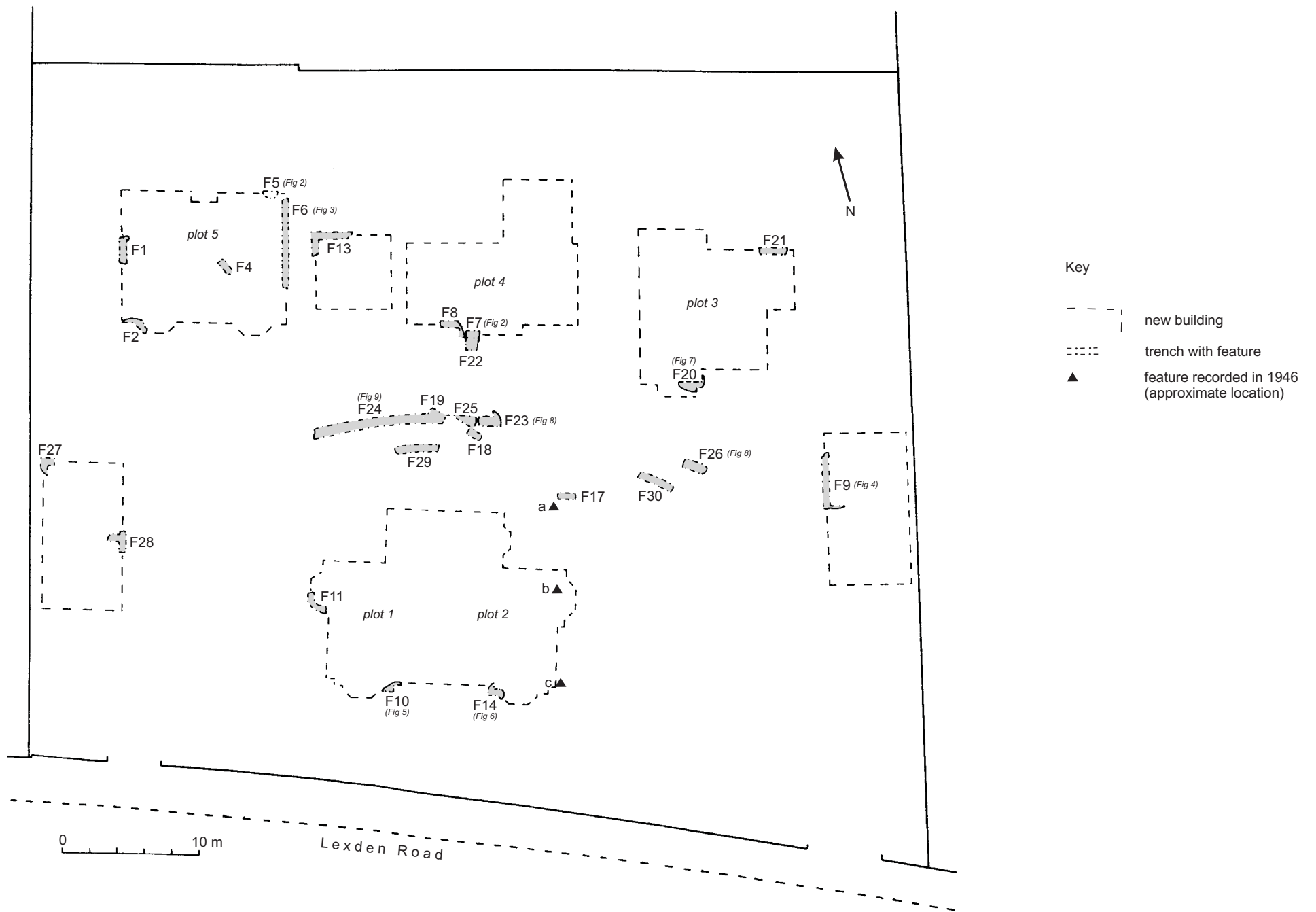
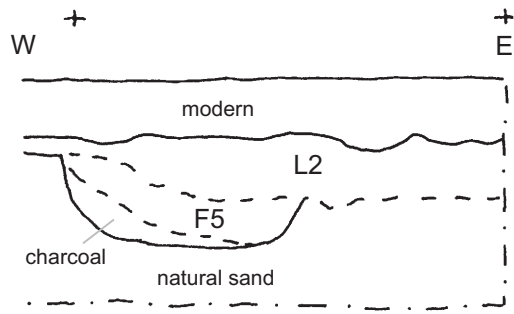
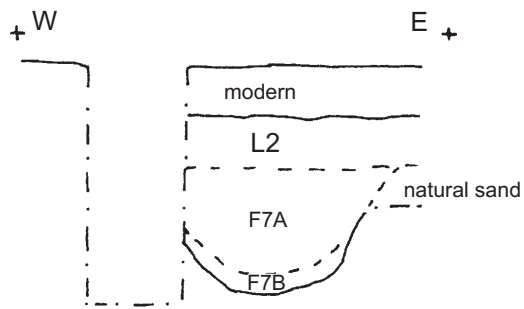


Fig 1 The Lindens, Phase 1: site plan.



F5 section



F7 section

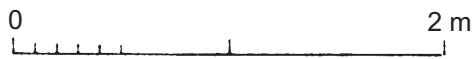


Fig 2 Feature 5 and Feature 7.

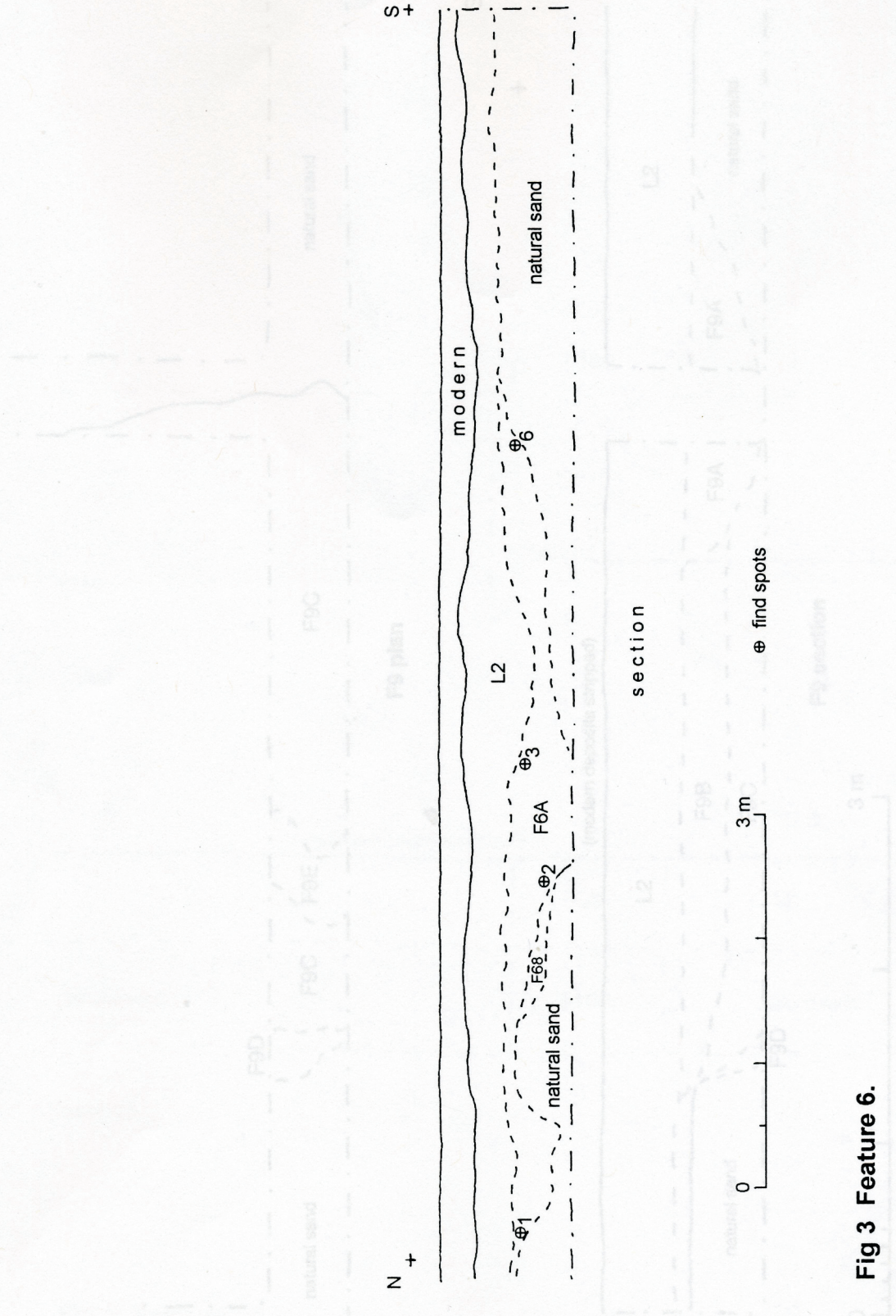
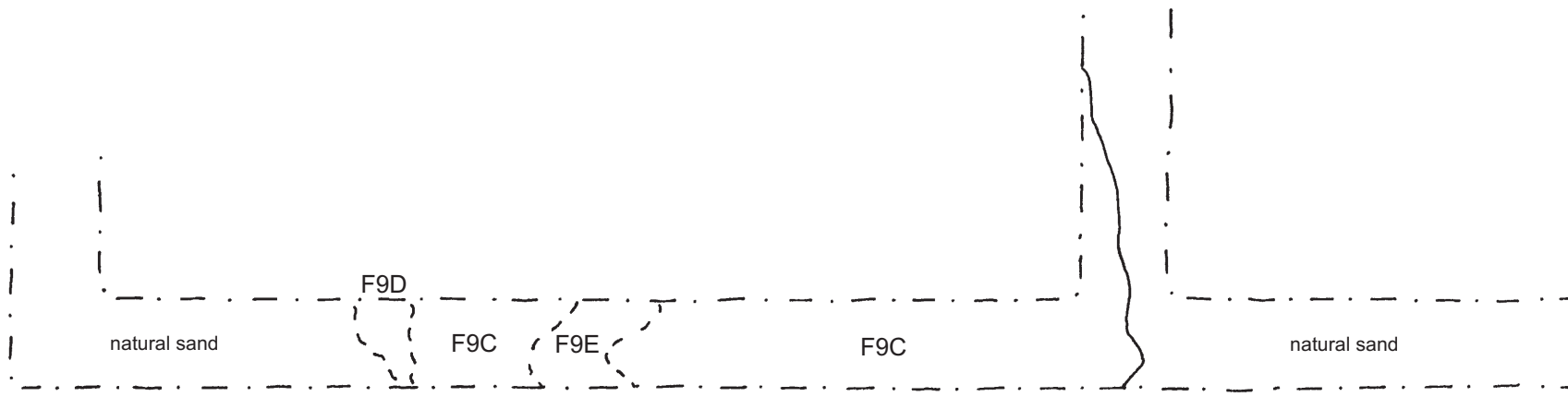
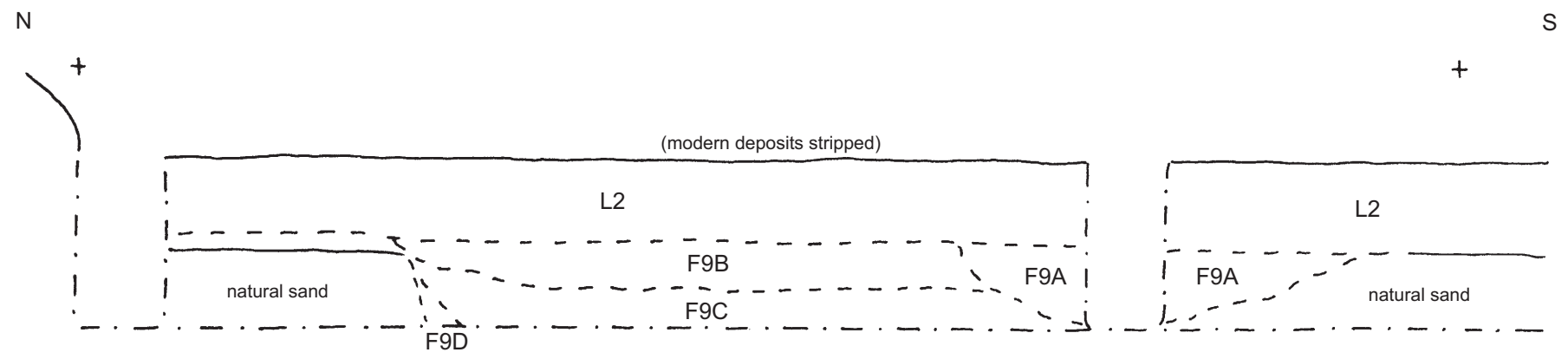


Fig 3 Feature 6.

Feature 3.



F9 plan



F9 section



Fig 4 Feature 9.

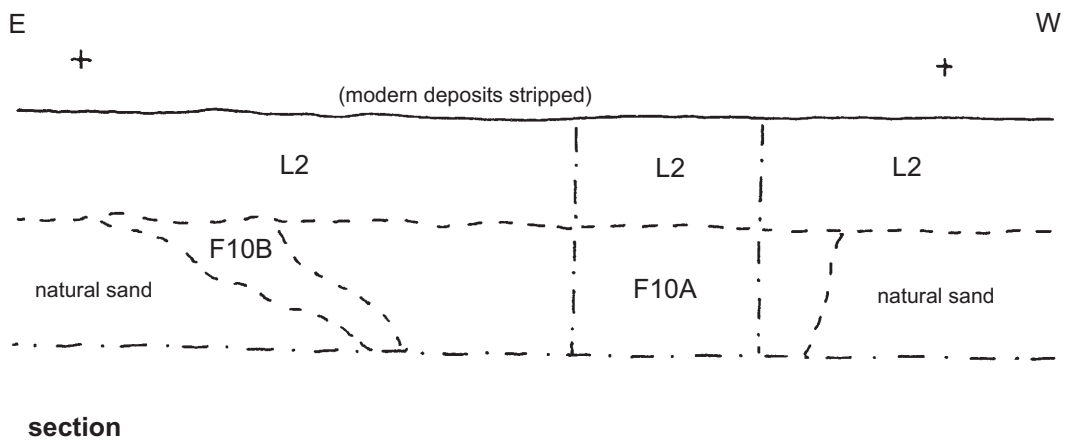
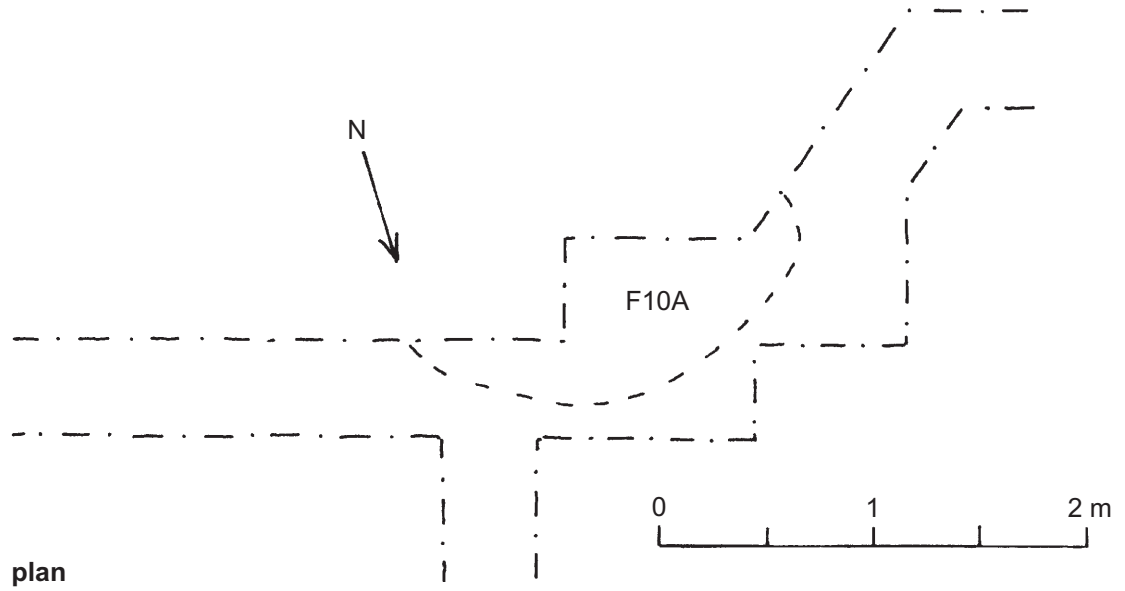
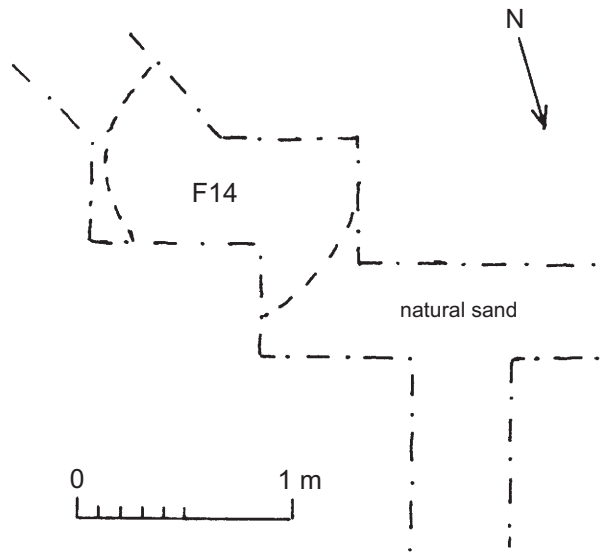
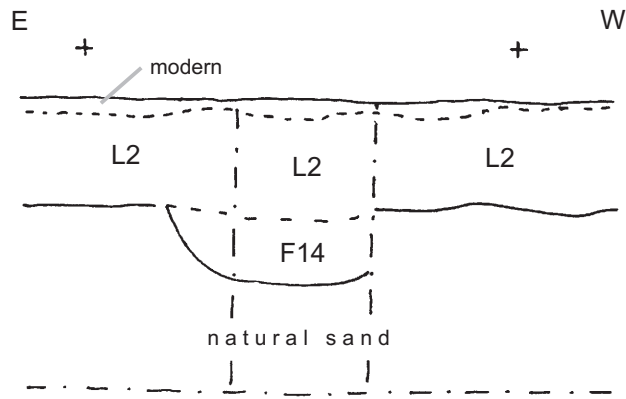


Fig 5 Feature 10.

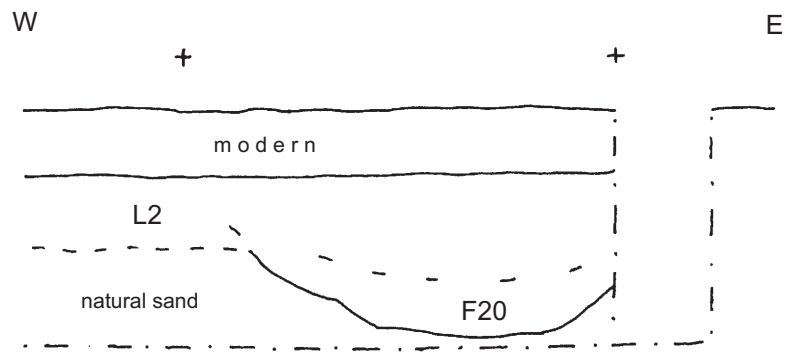


F14 plan



F14 section

Fig 6 Feature 14.



F20 section

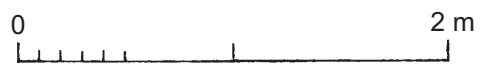


Fig 7 Feature 20.

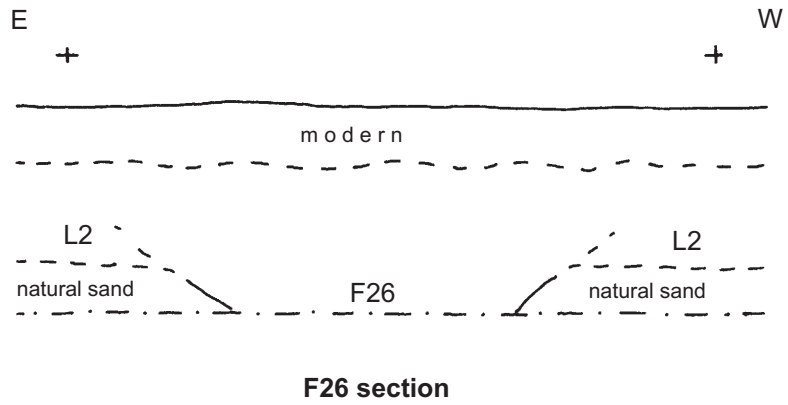
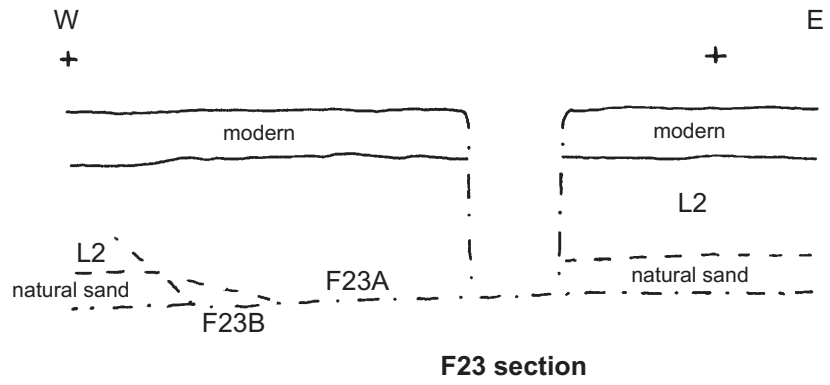


Fig 8 Feature 23 and Feature 26.

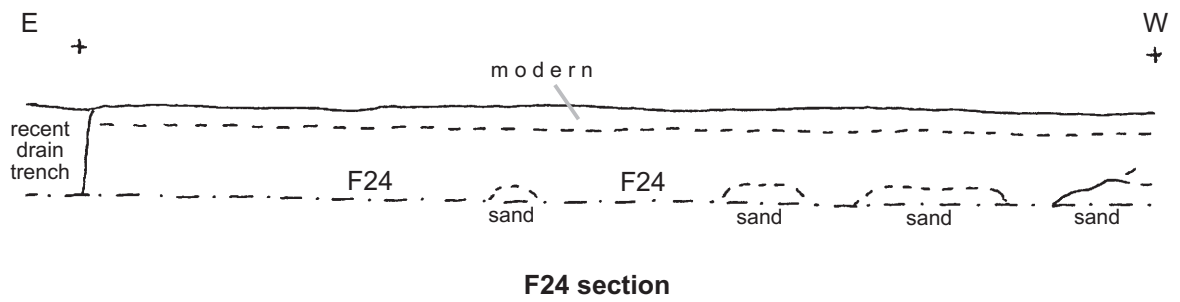
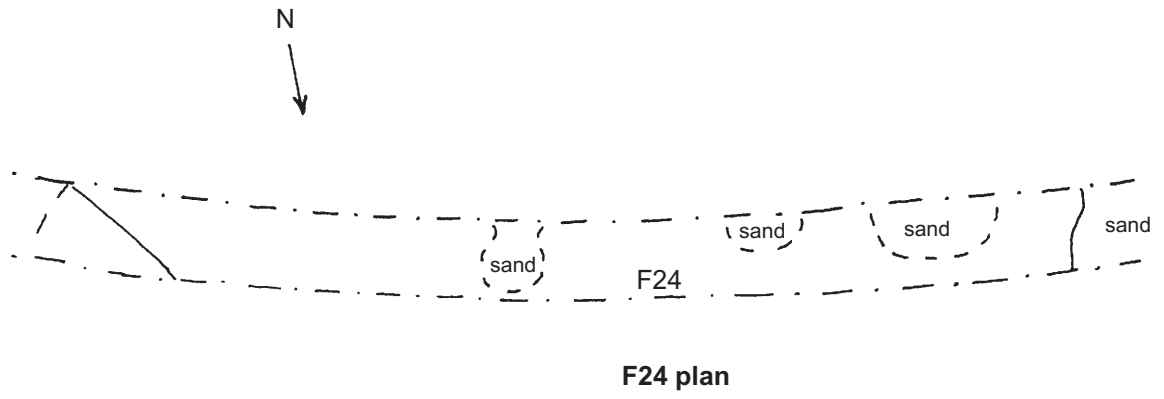


Fig 9 Feature 24.