

**An archaeological evaluation at  
Rivenhall Church of England Primary School,  
Church Street, Rivenhall, Essex**

**February 2001**

**commissioned by the  
Stanley Bragg Partnership  
on behalf of  
Rivenhall Church of England Primary School**

CAT project reference: 01/2B

HAMP site code: CERH.01

**CAT Report 128**

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## 1 Summary

*An archaeological evaluation consisting of three small trial trenches failed to identify any structural remains which might be associated with the adjacent Roman villa site. The principal remains uncovered were modern drains and other features relating to past uses of the school. Roman brick/tile and pottery were found in residual contexts.*

## 2 Introduction

2.1 This is the report on an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) between the 12th and 16th of February in the grounds of Rivenhall Church of England Primary School, Church Street, Rivenhall, Essex (figure 1). Proposed work is the construction of a new hall, classbase and ancillary accommodation, and is the subject of planning application CC/BTE/0001/01.

2.2 The site's National Grid Reference is TL829 178. The school is situated on the main road towards the north of Rivenhall village, south of the church of St Mary's and All Saints. The three trenches were located in flat grassy areas surrounding the class rooms and play areas (figure 2).

2.3 The work was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation prepared by CAT in February 2001 which in turn follows a brief written by Essex County Council's HAMP. This report follows the standards set out in the IFA's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations*.

## 3 Archaeological Background

3.1 The archaeological landscape of Rivenhall is dominated by St Mary and All Saints Church and the underlying Roman villa (EHCR 19117). The villa, which is a scheduled ancient monument, consists of at least four major Roman buildings and a variety of associated structures and features, the only surface trace of which is the platform upon which the east end of the church is built. The site has been known for some years from crop, soil and parchmarks and various investigations. The Roman Essex Society undertook fieldwalking and excavations there in 1950 and 1951 and the Essex Society for Archaeology and History excavated in advance of a sewer trench in 1971. However, the villa and church site are synonymous with Warwick and Kirsty Rodwell, who excavated there in 1972-3 and have now published the results in two volumes of CBA Research Reports.

3.2 The Rodwell excavations showed that the main villa building measured approximately 60m by 25m and lay on the west side of the complex, was aligned North to south and its southern rooms are located under the church. To the North East is a building which was possibly domestic in use, arranged around a courtyard and leading to a bath complex. Another building to the south east of the main villa building was probably a timber aisled barn. Between these buildings and surrounding them are a number of metalled areas and an east-west road. Smaller details include a T-shaped 'corn drier' (i.e. a malting oven) and a possible mill (Rodwell and Rodwell 1986 and 1993).

3.3 Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age material is also recorded at this site, including *in situ* material from a buried soil horizon. Cropmarks show field systems of a late Iron Age farmstead to the south of the villa which may be the original farm location.

3.4 Anglo-Saxon occupation of the villa site involved the construction of a post-built hall in the centre of the site. A Saxon cemetery was also located on the villa site, and this is undoubtedly connected with a small timber church which was the precursor of the medieval church of St Mary and All Saints.

3.5 On the current school site, the building of an extension in 1873 uncovered a large number of tesserae, indicating that a Roman structure may be located here (EHCR 19100). However, a watching brief in 1995 failed to locate any archaeological deposits close to the school (Heppell 1995).

## **4 Aims and Objectives**

4.1 The aim of the archaeological work was to determine and record the location, character, extent, date, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains prior to a planning decision being made. The information will enable due consideration to be given to the archaeological implications and will lead to proposals for mitigation of disturbance and / or the need for further investigation.

4.2 Specific aims of the evaluation were to assess:

- Evidence of Roman occupation, Saxon and medieval occupation
- Surviving structural elements and their state of preservation
- The range of objects that were in use, their status, presence of imports etc.
- The quality of environmental deposits surviving of the site

## 5 Methodology

5.1 The work was undertaken by two professional archaeologists. The total area excavated was 20 square metres, i.e. 5% of the available area. The dimensions of Trench 2 and 3 had to be altered to fit the area available.

- Trench 1 was located to the south of the play area on a gentle slope from west to east and measured 3m by 3m.
- Trench 2 was located to the west of the relocatable classbase and measured 2m by 2m with an extra 320mm by 1m extension to the south.
- Trench 3 was located between the boundary hedge and the entrance hall and measured 2m by 3.5m.

5.2 The trenches were excavated and cleaned by hand. In each trench a small sondage was excavated down to the natural ground.

5.3 Individual records of excavated contexts, layers, features or deposits were entered on pro-forma record sheets.

5.4 Modern features exposed in each trench were planned at a scale of 1:20. Section drawings at a scale of 1:20 were made of each trench (figs 3, 4 and 5).

5.5 Modern features including drains, soakaways and foundations were left *in situ*.

5.6 All finds from contexts were retained and numbered on pro-forma CAT record sheets. All finds were washed and examined by?. Modern finds were later discarded. Earlier finds were marked and bagged with the site code and find number. (say which have been retained).

5.7 Digital photographs were taken of all contexts. General site shots were taken using colour slide film.

5.8 A metal detector was not used to scan spoil heaps as all the material being removed was modern make up.

5.9 Richard Havis of Essex County Council made monitoring visits on the 15th and 16th of February.

## 6 Results

### 6.1 Trench 1 (fig 3) 3m by 3m.

Three modern concrete slabs were exposed, two of which are thought to be foundations of a raised swimming pool previously on the site of the play area (Features 1,2 and 4). Two soakaways also crossed the site (Features 3, 5 and 6). A small sondage was dug down to 570mm on the east side of the trench to establish the level of natural ground (Layers 6 and 12).

The stratigraphy was as follows:

Layer 1 - Turf topsoil - a mixed dark grey brown sandy loam / yellow brown clay loam with sweet wrappers and crisp packets. Thickness 160mm.

Layer 2 - made-up ground of dark grey brown sandy loam containing crisp packets, sweet wrappers, Roman? tile and slate. Thickness 140mm at the western end and 50mm at the eastern end.

Layer 3 - made-up ground of mid brown sandy loam with abundant gravel containing plastic and tin cans. Thickness - 200mm at the western end of the trench and 100mm at the eastern end.

Layer 4 - yellow modern sand layer in north east corner of the trench. Thickness 80mm

Layer 5 - Dark yellow brown clay loam with common small stones. Thickness

Layer 6 - Upper layer of sondage - dark brown slightly loam clay subsoil with small-medium large stones. Contains Roman ? tile.

Layer 12 - Lower layer of sondage - natural orange brown sand with abundant small - medium stones with patches of dark yellow brown silty sandy clay.

Feature 1 - modern concrete surface, foundation or wall of swimming pool

Feature 2 - modern concrete surface

Feature 3 - soakaway running east to west, partly under Feature 1

Feature 4 - Modern concrete slab, foundation or wall of swimming pool

Feature 5 - possible pipe trench running east to west filled with a mixed dark brown sandy loam with common small-large stone and brick and concrete pieces.

Feature 6 - overflow pipe for soakaway (Feature 3) running south-east to north-west

## **6.2 Trench 2 (fig 4)**

An electricity cable trench and a soakaway (Features 7 and 8) were encountered in this trench. A small sondage at the south side of the trench was dug down to 570mm to establish the depth of the natural (layers 8 and 11)

The stratigraphy was as follows:

Layer 7 - Turf and topsoil similar to Layer 1 but containing possible Roman brick and tile. Thickness 300mm

Layer 8 - made-up ground of dark yellowy brown clay loam containing coal and tile fragments, pottery and Roman tile, in sondage. Thickness 100mm.

Layer 11 - natural yellow brown clay in sondage

Feature 7 - electricity cable within the topsoil (layer 7) running south west to north east into the relocatable classroom.

Feature 8 - Soakaway

Feature 10 - Layer of large pieces of flint in sondage. This is interpreted as being either some sort of surface or a dump of flint building material from when the school was built in the 19th century.

## **6.3 Trench 3 (fig 5)**

A sewer pipe was uncovered running from east to west along the middle of trench for its entire length. (Feature 9). A small sondage in the north eastern corner of the trench was dug down to 1m to establish the depth of the natural ground (layer 14).

The stratigraphy was as follows:

Layer 9 - Turf and topsoil of sandy loam. Abundant small-medium stones. Contains modern pottery and Roman tile, one tessera, animal bone and a glass ointment bottle. Thickness - 200mm

Layer 13 - made-up layer of mixed sandy loam with lenses of ash and coal. Thickness 200mm.

Layer 10 - made up layer of dark yellowy brown clay loam. Contains tile and pot. Thickness 250mm.

Layer 14 - Natural dark yellow brown silty clay, no inclusions.

Feature 9 - Sewer pipe running east to west along the length of the trench at 650mm below ground level.

## 7 Discussion

No archaeologically significant features or finds were revealed in the sampled areas. One tessera, ten pieces of Roman tile and two Roman potsherds confirm that there was Roman activity close to the site (obviously the Roman villa) but no Roman structural remains were encountered. The fact that Roman material comes from modern deposits leads to the conclusion that Roman deposits have been cut into before, and material derived from them has been redeposited into the modern contexts where it was found. There has been considerable disturbance from services and also (in Trench 1) from modern concrete foundations, walls or surfaces.

## 8 Archive Deposition

The full archive including a copy of this report, the bagged and boxed finds, digital photographs and slides plus section drawings and plans on hanging strips, digital data on disc and a summary will be permanently lodged at Braintree Museum.

## 9 Acknowledgements

Colchester Archaeological Trust is grateful to the following for their co-operation at various stages of the project:

Richard Havis - Heritage Advice, Management and Promotion Officer of Essex County Council. A Horne - Rivenhall C of E Primary School

David Jenner - Stanley Bragg Partnership Ltd

## 10 References

Cotter, John	2000	Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester 1971-1985. Colchester Archaeol Rep 7
Cunningham, C M	1985	'A typology for post-Roman pottery in Essex', in Cunningham, C M and Drury, P J, Post-medieval sites and their pottery: Moulsham Street, Chelmsford, Chelmsford Archaeol Trust Rep 5, Council British Archaeol Res Rep 54, 1-16
Heppell, E	1995	<i>The church of England Primary School, Rivenhall, Essex: Archaeological Watching Brief, ECC internal publication</i>
Rodwell, WJ, and Rodwell KA	1986	<i>Rivenhall: Investigations of a villa, church and village 1950-77. 1</i> CBA Research Report 55
Rodwell, WJ, and Rodwell KA	1993	<i>Rivenhall: Investigations of a villa, church and village 1950-77. 2</i> CBA Research Report 55

## Distribution List

Richard Havis - Essex County Council HAMP  
Essex County Council, Essex Heritage Conservation Record  
Braintree Museum

Kate Orr March 2001

# Appendix

## List of Finds by Context

D = discarded (discard policy agreed with Braintree Museum). Medieval and later pottery codes after Cunningham 1985 and Cotter 2000.

Find No	Context	Description	Quantity	Weight (g)
1	T1, L2	Roman tile fragments	5	218
1	T1, L2	Roman imbrex fragment	1	39
1	T1, L2	Flower pot rim (fabric 51b). 19/20thcent. D	1	19
2	T1, L5	Burnt flint, probably prehistoric	1	12
2	T1, L5	Waste flakes	2	4
3	T2, L7	Post-medieval brick fragments. D	2	123
3	T2, L7	Peg tile fragments. D	2	48
3	T2, L7	Indeterminate brick/tile scrap. D	1	10
3	T2, L7	Roman flue tile	1	85
3	T2, L7	Roman tile	1	18
3	T2, L7	Animal bone. D	1	11
3	T2, L7	Modern glass jar rim. D	1	12
3	T2, L7	Fabric 48d (modern ironstone)	1	23
4	T2, L8	Buff brick or drain fragment, probably post-medieval	1	43
5	T1, L9	Roman imbrex fragment	1	175
5	T1, L9	Plain red Roman tessera	1	23
5	T1, L9	Flower pot sherds. (fabric 51b -19/20th cent) D.	2	18
5	T1, L9	Peg tiles. D	7	297
5	T1, L9	Modern granular brick frags. D	2	57
5	T1, L9	Post-medieval brick frags. D	4	232
5	T1, L9	Modern ceramic floor tile. D	1	49
5	T1, L9	Animal bone. D	9	156
5	T1, L9	Fabric 48d (modern ironstone). D	9	527
5	T1, L9	Ceramic drain fragment. Modern. D	1	93
5	T1, L9	Post-medieval and modern glass. D	5	301
5	T1, L9	Clay tobacco pipe stem frag. Post-med.	1	4
5	T1, L9	Fe lumps. D	2	190
6	T3, L10	Amphora sherd	1	60
6	T3, L10	Roman greyware sherd	1	3
6	T3, L10	Roman brick	1	115
6	T3, L10	Roman tile	2	151
6	T3, L10	Flower pot (fabric 51b) D	2	36
6	T3, L10	Late kitchen slipware (fabric 51a) 19-20th century. D	1	15
6	T3, L10	Fabric 40 Post-medieval red earthenware. D	1	10
6	T3, L10	Fabric 48d (modern ironstone). D	2	32
7	T1, L6	Pale brown brick fragment. <i>Possibly</i> Roman	1	71
7	T1, L6	Peg tile fragment. D	1	6



**ESSEX SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD/ESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY &  
HISTORY**

**SUMMARY SHEET**

<i>Site name/Address Rivenhall C of E Primary School</i>	
<i>Parish:</i> Rivenhall	<i>District:</i> Braintree
<i>NGR:</i> TL 829 178 (centre)	<i>Site Code:</i> CERH 01
<i>Type of Work:</i> Evaluation	<i>Site Director/Group:</i> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<i>Date of Work:</i> February 2001	<i>Size of Area Investigated:</i> 2000 m2
<i>Location of Finds/Curating Museum:</i> Braintree Museum	<i>Funding Source:</i> Developer
<i>Further Seasons Anticipated?</i> No	<i>Related SMR No's:</i> 19117
<i>Final Report:</i> CAT report no 128. Summary in EAH annual round-up	
<i>Periods Represented:</i> modern (with residual Roman finds)	
<b><i>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</i></b>	
<i>An archaeological evaluation consisting of three small trial trenches failed to identify any structural remains which might be associated with the adjacent Roman villa site. The principal remains uncovered were modern drains and other features relating to past uses of the school. Roman brick/tile and pottery were found in residual contexts.</i>	
<i>Previous Summaries/Reports:</i> N/A	
<i>Author of Summary:</i> Kate Orr	<i>Date of summary:</i> 5/2/01

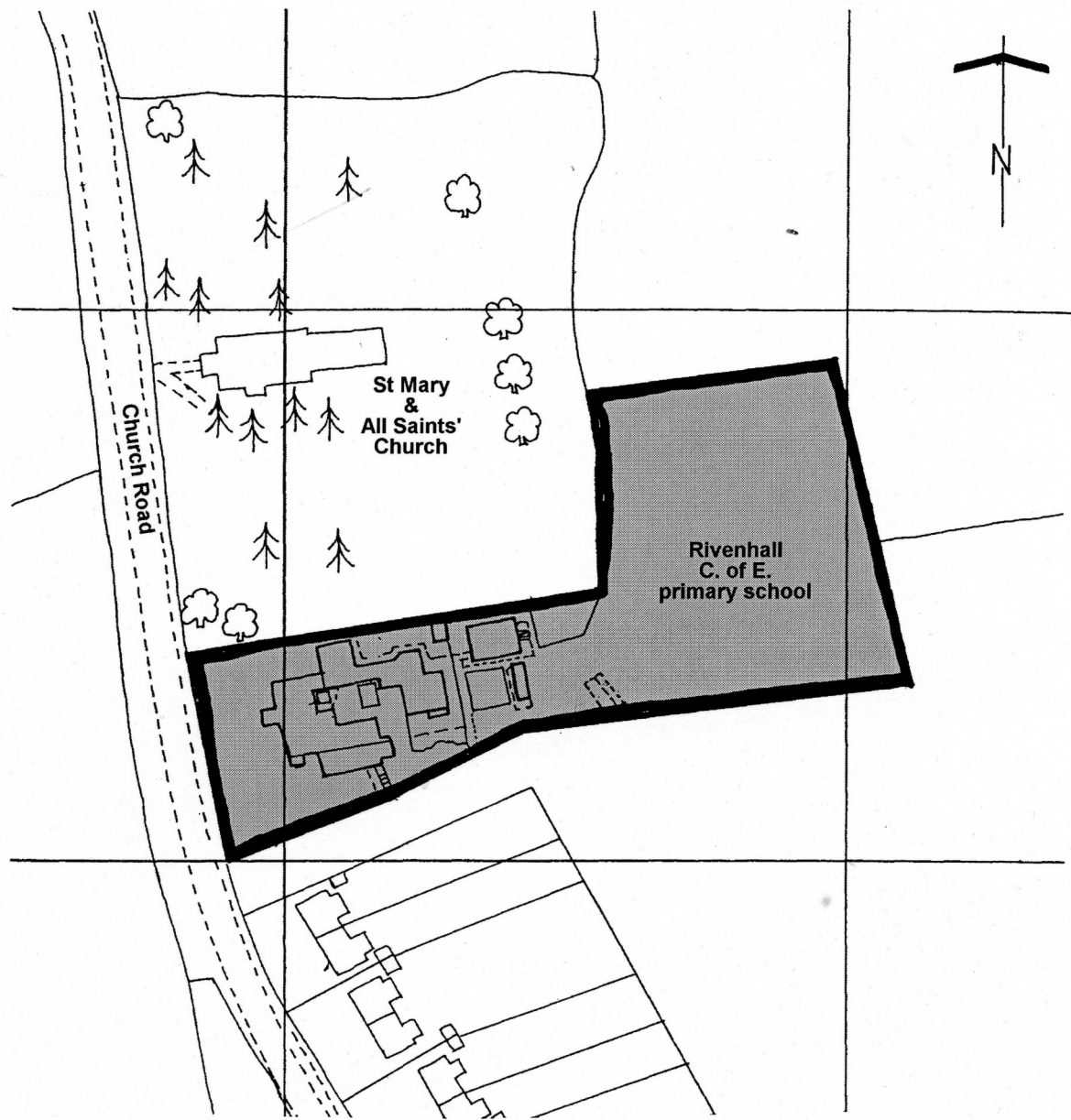
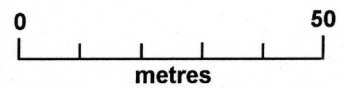
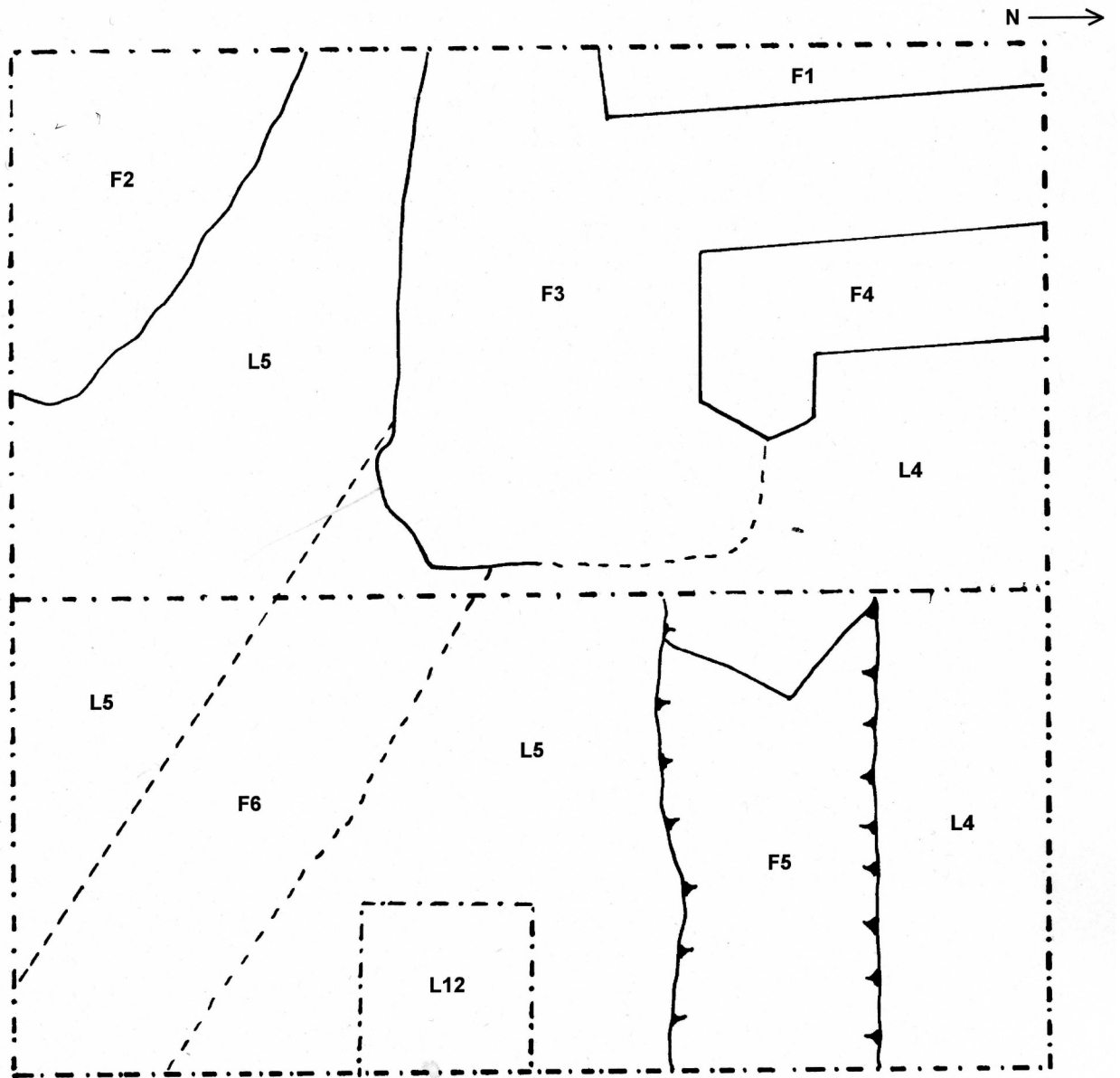


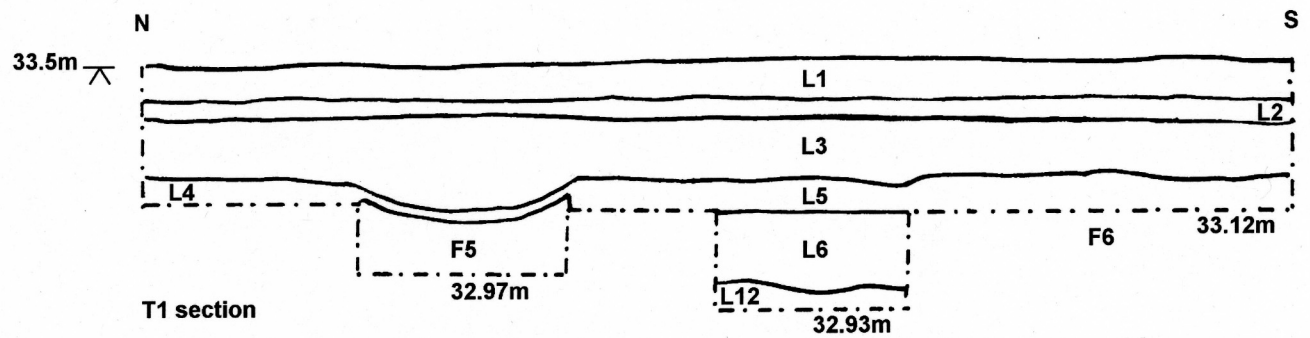
Fig 1 Site location. Scale 1:1250.







T1 plan



T1 section

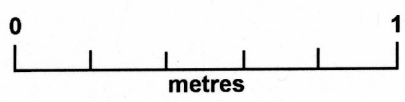
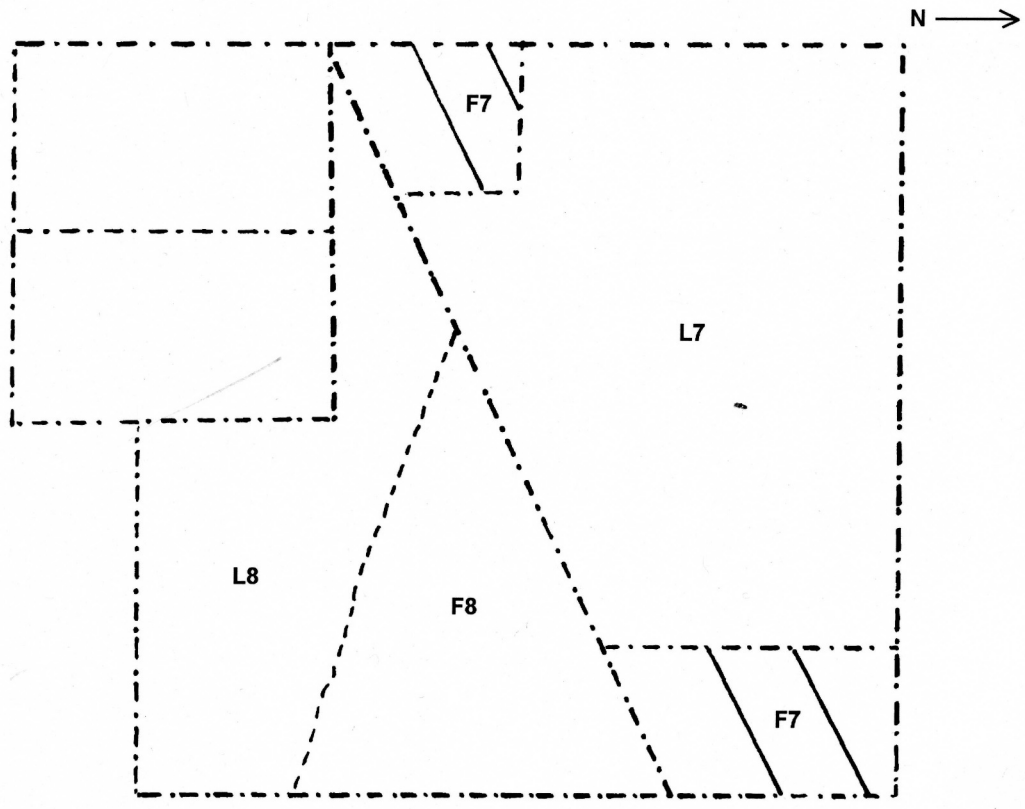
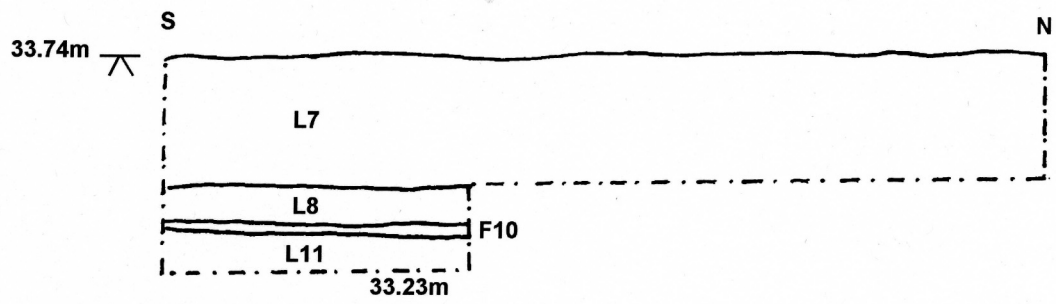


Fig 3 T1: plan and section. Scale 1:20.



T2 plan



T2 section

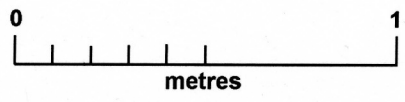


Fig 4 T2: plan and section. Scale 1:20.

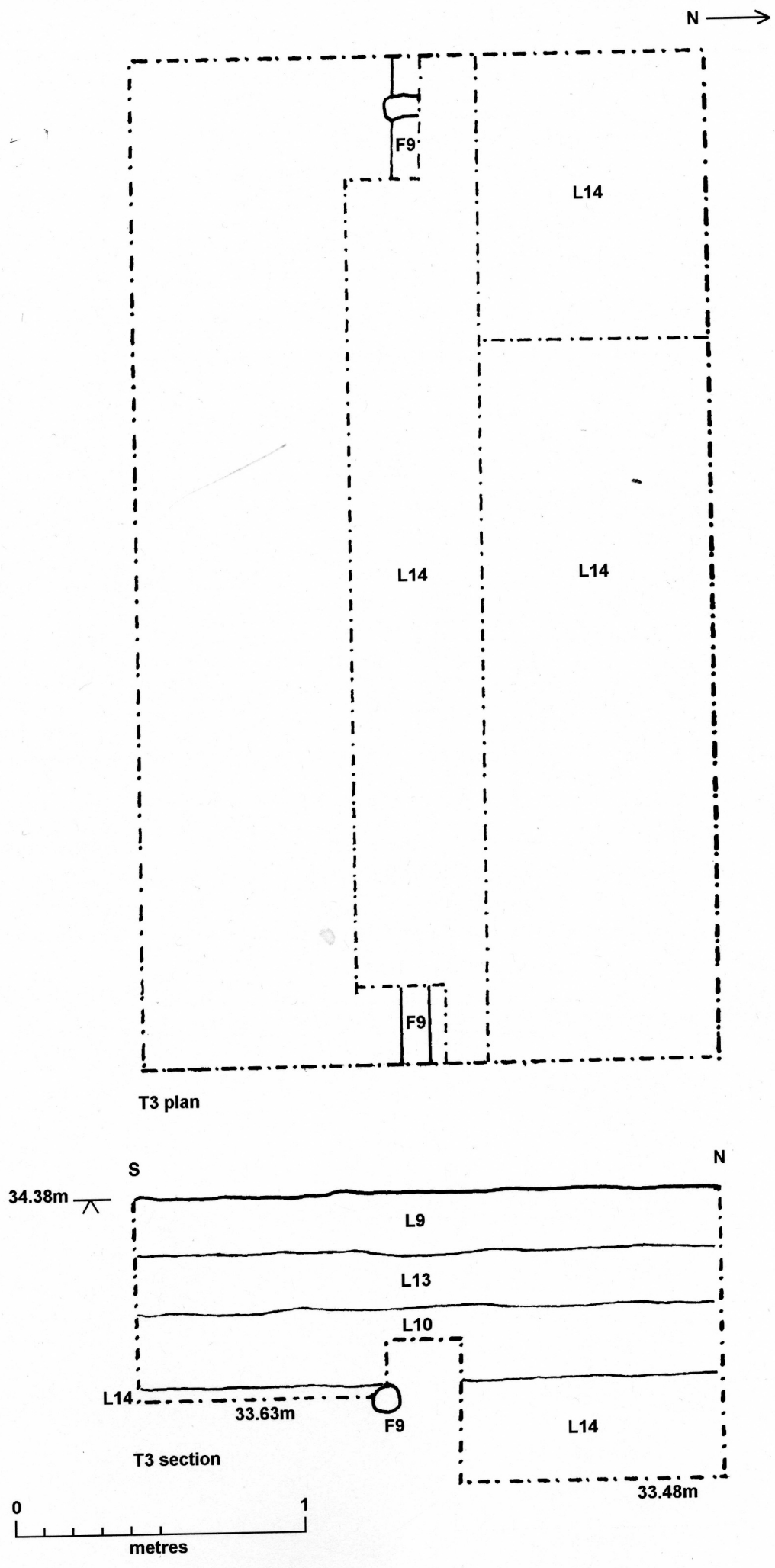


Fig 5 T3: plan and section. Scale 1:20.