

Land Adjacent to  
3 Stonepail Cottages, Gatley,  
Archaeological Evaluation

On Behalf Of:  
Ms A King & Mr C Bateman



By

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## **Archaeological Test Pit Evaluation of Land Adjacent to 3 Stonepail Cottages, Styal Road, Gatley**

**NGR 384089 388284**

### ***Summary***

*Absolute Archaeology was commissioned by Ms A King and Mr C Bateman, to carry out an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to 3 Stonepail Cottages, Styal Road, Gatley, Cheadle. This was carried out in response to the planning condition preceding the intended construction of a three bedroom, detached dwelling with access off Styal Road and parking to the rear (Planning reference DC/042286), in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation submitted by Absolute Archaeology and approved by Stockport Borough Council, June 2010.*

*The test pitting revealed no archaeological features. All four test pits revealed the same sequence of stratigraphy with a modern aggregate parking surface, sealing a rough make up layer/earlier hard standing which was overlaying a 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century garden soil and subsoil.*

### **Acknowledgements**

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## **Abbreviations**

### aOD

Above Ordnance Datum; used to express a given height above mean sea level.

### SEA LEVEL

Heights are to the nearest metre above sea level at Newlyn.

### The Site

The specific development area

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This report sets out the results of archaeological test pitting on land adjacent to 3 Stonepail Cottages, Styal Road, Gatley, Cheadle (NGR 384089 388284). The work was intended to assess the archaeological potential of the development area, ahead of the planned construction of a detached three bedroom dwelling, with access off the Styal Road, to include a parking area to the rear and associated landscaping (planning reference DC/042286). The evaluation was carried out on the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

1.2 The work was commissioned by the landowners, Ms A King and Mr C Bateman.

### **1.3 Geology, Topography and Hydrology**

1.3.1 The site is approximately 40m aOD. Geologically the area is defined by boulder clay with associated glacial sands and gravels, with alluvial deposits close to Stonepail Cottages.

1.3.2 To the east of the site is the south-north flowing Gatley Brook. The site occupies high ground, which slopes gradually to the River Mersey, just over 1km north of Stonepail Cottages.

## **2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL/HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Palaeolithic-Mesolithic (700000 - 4000 BC)**

There is no known evidence of Palaeolithic or Mesolithic activity within the study area.

### **2.2 Neolithic (4000-2350 BC)**

Two Neolithic find spots are recorded within the study area. Two polished axes have been recovered from Cheadle (1905) and Gatley (1934); however the exact

location of the finds and the archaeological context is not recorded (Driscoll, S & Martin 2010).

### 2.3 **Bronze Age (2350 – 80 BC)**

Evidence for Bronze Age activity within the study area is acknowledged in the form of the discovery of one perforated stone axe and a macehead, dating to the period, recovered within 300m of the site. Evidence for activity in the area during the Bronze Age is further supported by the potential barrow situated 260m to the northeast of the site (Driscoll, S & Martin 2010).

### 2.4 **Iron Age (800 – 43 AD)**

There is no known evidence of Bronze Age activity within the study area.

### 2.5 **Romano British (43 – 410 AD)**

There is no known evidence of Romano-British activity within the study area.

### 2.6 **Early Medieval – Medieval (410 – 1650 AD)**

There is no directly associated evidence for medieval activity upon, or immediately adjacent to, the site.

### 2.7 **Post Medieval (1650 – 1900 AD)**

There is a greater quantity of archaeology of the Post Medieval period within the Study Area, but also more secure evidence in the form of monuments and settlement.

There are four sites within the Study Area that date to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, although all are located to the east of Gatley Brook that forms the easterly boundary to the development site. Gatley Old Hall was situated 600m NE and was originally a late 16<sup>th</sup> century timber and thatched building, potentially associated with dairy farming. 240m east of Stonepail Cottages was a timber framed cottage, potentially built in 1556-7. This building is referred to as the Court House and was the meeting place for the manorial court of Etchells. Gatley Hill Farm and settlement was

situated roughly 200m SE of Stonepail Cottages. Originally documented in the 1580s as Holts Farm (later Gatley Hill Farm), the site survived through to the 19<sup>th</sup> century after being acquired by Thomas Alcock, builder of Gatley Hill House.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the piecemeal development of the area continued. Activity within the study area included a 17<sup>th</sup> century farm at Kinsay, located 550m NE of the Site (in existence by 1642). A late 17<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed cottage, situated 180m east of the site, was demolished in 1896. 350m ENE of Stonepail Cottages is the recorded location of a late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century butcher's shop.

More importantly was the establishment of Stonepail Hall, only 30m northwest of the site. This was a cruck-framed building built in 1624 and demolished in 1969. This building, along with Baxter Hall built in 1681 and located 105m NNE of Stonepail Cottages, are the sole examples of settlement evidence on the western side of Gatley Brook.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, development can be seen to increase to the east of Gatley Brook. A series of public houses survive in this area and are all indicative of a growing town.

To the west of Gatley Brook, weavers cottages (now destroyed) were built to the west of Stonepail Hall in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, whilst 3 Stonepail Cottages is recorded as a weavers cottage built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and one of the few established 18<sup>th</sup> century structures on the western brook.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries there is a growth of sites within the study area, focussed to the east of Gatley Brook. To the west of the boundary, where Stonepail Cottages are located there is an absence of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century growth, and it is not until the middle to latter stages of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when modern housing is erected over what was a rural landscape, that this area of Gatley became more intensively settled.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 Four test pits measuring 1m sq m were excavated by hand, to a depth <1m. The trenches were staggered, in order to ensure that the potential for archaeology within the area could be satisfactorily assessed. The test pits covered 4 sq m, which is equal to c. 5 % of the total estimated area for excavation necessitated by the planned development of the site.
- 3.2 All recording was carried out using Absolute Archaeology's recording system, which includes written, drawn and photographic records.
- 3.3 The archive has been prepared using the site code A Arc 29.

### **4 RESULTS**

Results from the test pit evaluation are listed below. Being in close proximity to each other, the results are stratigraphically homogenous throughout.

- 4.1 Test Pits 1, 2, 3, and 4 were positioned strategically to cover the groundworks for the proposed development. All Test Pits were located within the footprint of the foundations of the planned construction and orientated in line with the existing Stonepail Cottages. The sequence of soil layers in each pit was removed stratigraphically, by hand. All sections were cleaned and each test pit was recorded in plan with a representative section recorded to illustrate the sequence of layers. Each Test Pit is summarised below.

#### **4.2 Test Pit 1 (Fig. 3)**

Test Pit 1 measured 1 sq m x 600mm (d). A compact aggregate stone surface (100) for parking, to the north of the existing properties was removed to a depth of 150mm. This surface was seen to be overlying a hardcore surface (101), comprising loose broken stone, brick and industrial waste. As this layer was not present to the

south (nearer the existing cottages), it is interpreted as an earlier modern surface/path giving access to the yard to the rear of the properties. Beneath surfaces (100) and (101) was a humic garden soil (102). The layer comprised >300mm of very dark, yellowish brown (7.5YR 3/1 ) soft silty clay. The garden soil sealed a subsoil (103) comprising a medium yellowish brown soft silty clay (7.5YR 3/2). No archaeological features were noted, cut into the subsoil. An investigative sondage revealed the continuation of the subsoil to a depth >400mm. This layer was not bottomed.

#### 4.3 **Test Pit 2 (Fig. 4)**

Test Pit 2 measured 1 sq m x 500mm (d). The same compact aggregate stone surface (200) for parking, to the north of the existing properties was removed to a depth of 100mm. Two 20<sup>th</sup> century concrete in situ garden pavers [201] were revealed beneath the surface. The pavers were set into a buried turfline/topsoil (202). The turfline topsoil layer comprised 400mm of degraded turf (still visible) and a dark yellowish brown, silty clay garden soil. Although heavily abraded, 19<sup>th</sup> century ceramic sherds were found within the garden soil, the preserved nature of the turf and the fabric of the pavers would suggest that the garden was still in use in recent history. Layer (202) was seen to overlie subsoil (203), throughout all the trenches. In Test Pit 2, (203) was seen to be cut by a sub rectangular post hole [204], filled by the dark silty clay fill (203), representing a backfill of the garden soil above. The fill of the post hole contained further 19<sup>th</sup> century finds, however, these would have been deposited from the context used to backfill the pit.

#### 4.4 **Test Pit 3 (Fig. 5)**

Test Pit 3 measured 1 sq m x 620mm (d). The aggregate surface encountered in Test Pits 1 & 2, was recorded to a depth of 130mm, in Test Pit 3 (300). This was sealing a degraded tarmac and broken brick surface (301), similar to that observed in Test Pit 1 and probably representing an old access area to the garden area to the rear of 3 Stonepail Cottages. Small cast concrete paving stones [302] (>100mm l x >100mm w x 40mm d) were visible in the NNW and SSE facing sections and are interpreted as representing a 20<sup>th</sup> century garden feature. Beneath the pavers the dark yellowish silty clay garden soil was identified (303), the same as the layer recorded in Test Pits

1 & 2. Once again, this was seen to be overlying a subsoil (304), comprising a medium yellowish brown soft silty clay.

#### 4.5 Test Pit 4 (Fig. 6)

Test Pit 4 measured 1 sq m x 800mm (d). The same sequence of layers was recorded in Test Pit 4, as in Test Pits 2 & 3. The aggregate surface (400) was recorded to a depth of 150mm and the hardcore surface (401) beneath was measured to a depth of 250mm. Topsoil (402) (400mm depth) and subsoil (403) were the same as those recorded in Test Pits 1, 2 & 3.

## 5 COMMENTS

- 5.1 The Test Pitting confirmed the absence of archaeological deposits or features within the development area.
- 5.2 The rich humic soil identified in all four Test Pits confirmed that the area to the north of 3 Stonepail Cottages has undergone prolonged use as a garden up until recent history, when the area was covered in a loose stone aggregate in order to provide a parking area for the cottage. A few sherds of heavily abraded, 19<sup>th</sup> ceramics were identified in all four pits, (not retained), whilst pits 2 & 3 revealed evidence of 20<sup>th</sup> century gardens features, in the form of cast concrete pavers. Beneath the top soil, in all four Test Pits, was identified a soft silty clay sub soil. This layer was not bottomed, but recorded to a depth >400mm as identified in investigative sondages, dug into the base of all four Test Pits. A feature identified in the base of Test Pit 3 was half sectioned and interpreted as a post hole supporting a gate post/fence upright, belonging to the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century garden layout. No archaeological layers or deposits were identified as a result of the above.

## **6 FINDS**

- 6.1 Occasional sherds of heavily abraded, 19<sup>th</sup> ceramics were identified in all four Test Pits, (not retained).

## **7 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 As discussed above, no archaeological features were identified as a result of the Test Pitting. The investigation focussed on the area designated for the construction of a detached dwelling adjacent to 3 Stonepail Cottages, and confirmed the absence of archaeological activity within the development area.

## **8 REFERENCES**

Driscoll, S and Martin, P. 2010. *3 Stonepail Cottages, Gatley*. Unpublished Archaeological Desk Based Assessment.

IFA. 2008. *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological field evaluation*

9. FIGURES

Figure 1: Location of Site (Not to Scale)

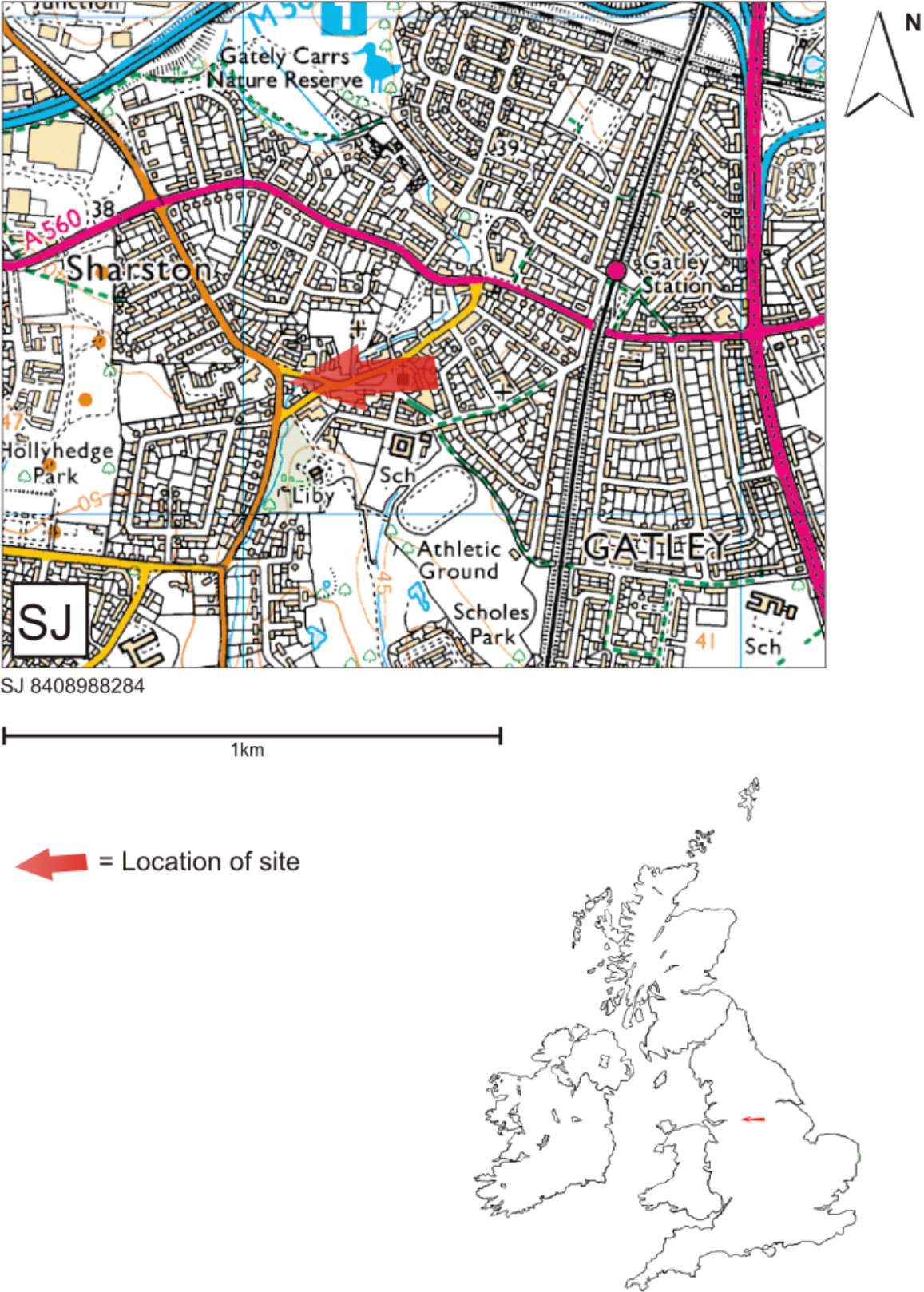
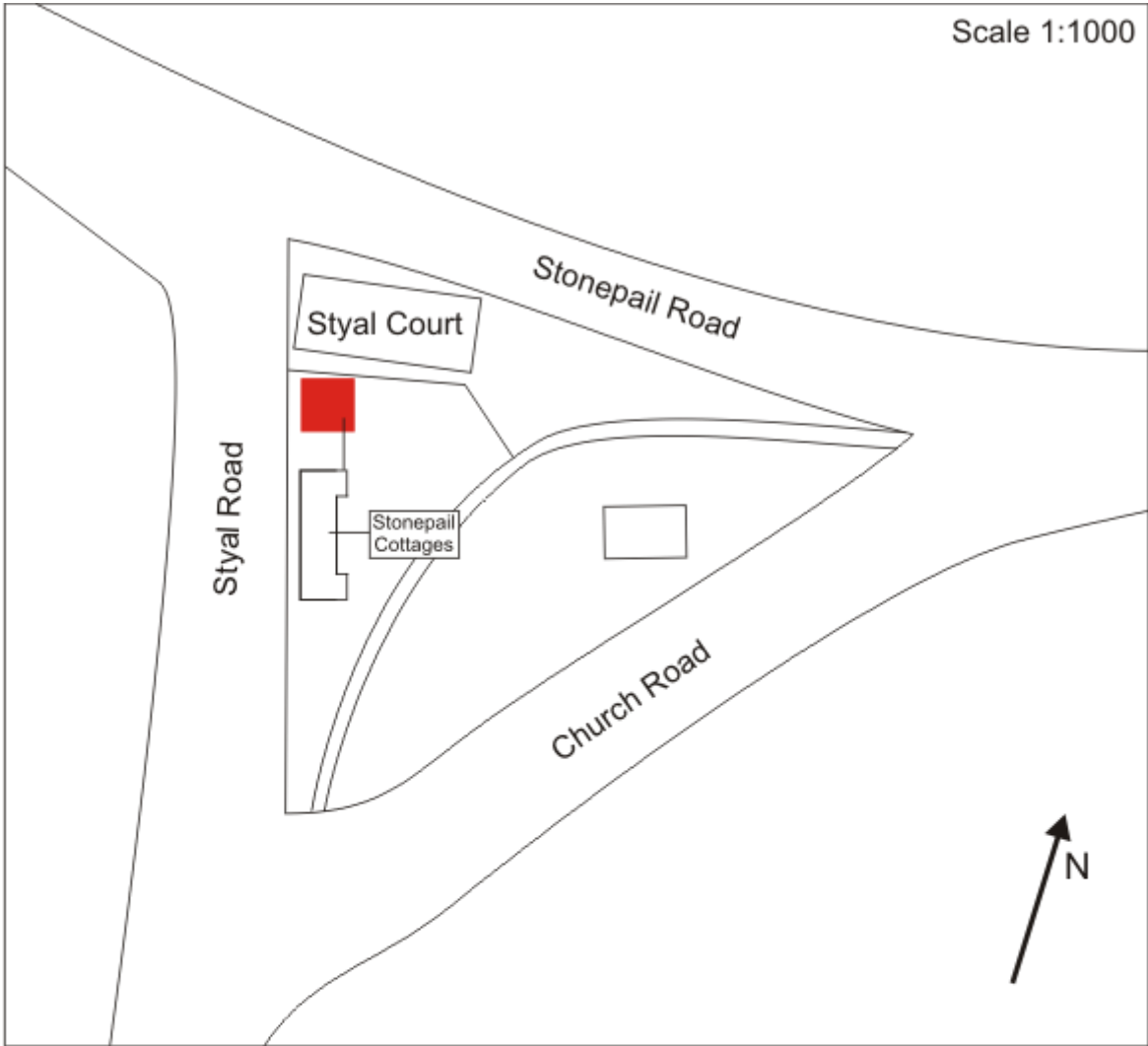


Figure 2: Test Pit Location



 = Planned Location of Development



Detail: Location of Test Pits (1:150)

Figure 3: Test Pit 1 Section (1:10)

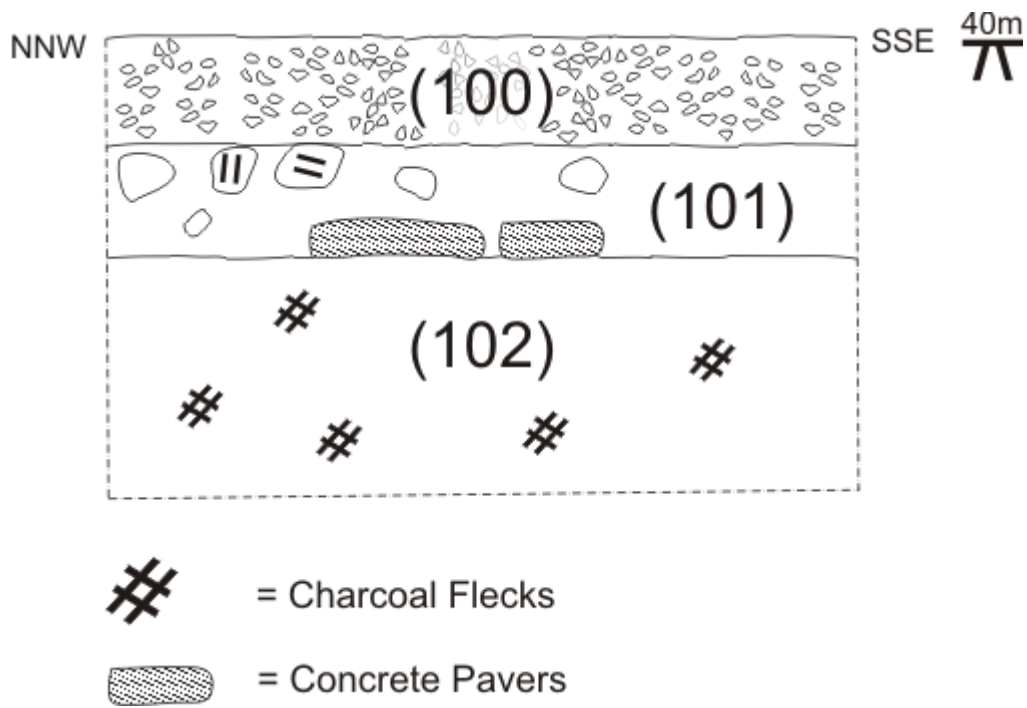


Figure 4: Test Pit 2 Section (1:10) & Plan (1:20)

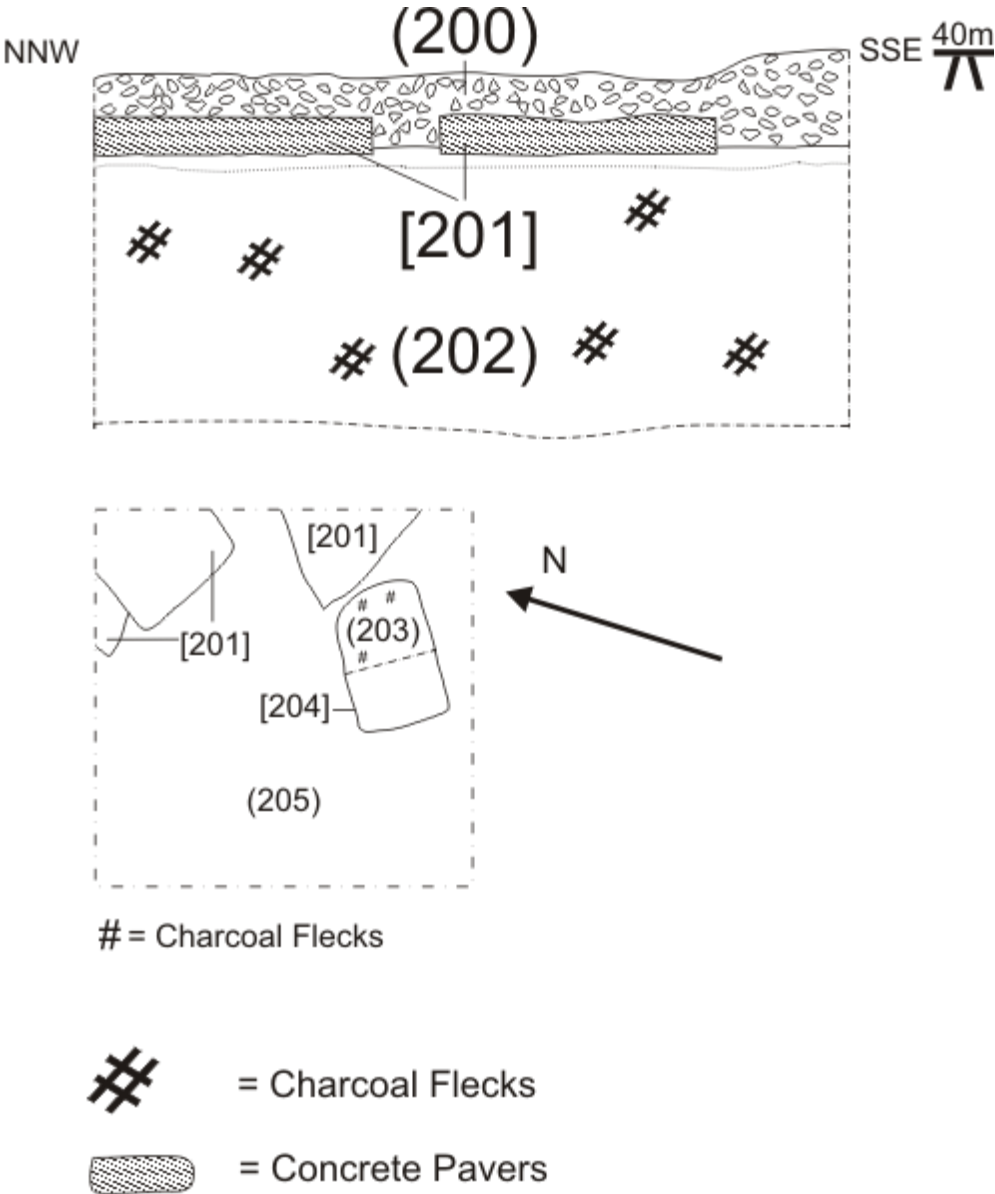


Figure 5: Test Pit 3 Section (1:10) & Plan (1:20)

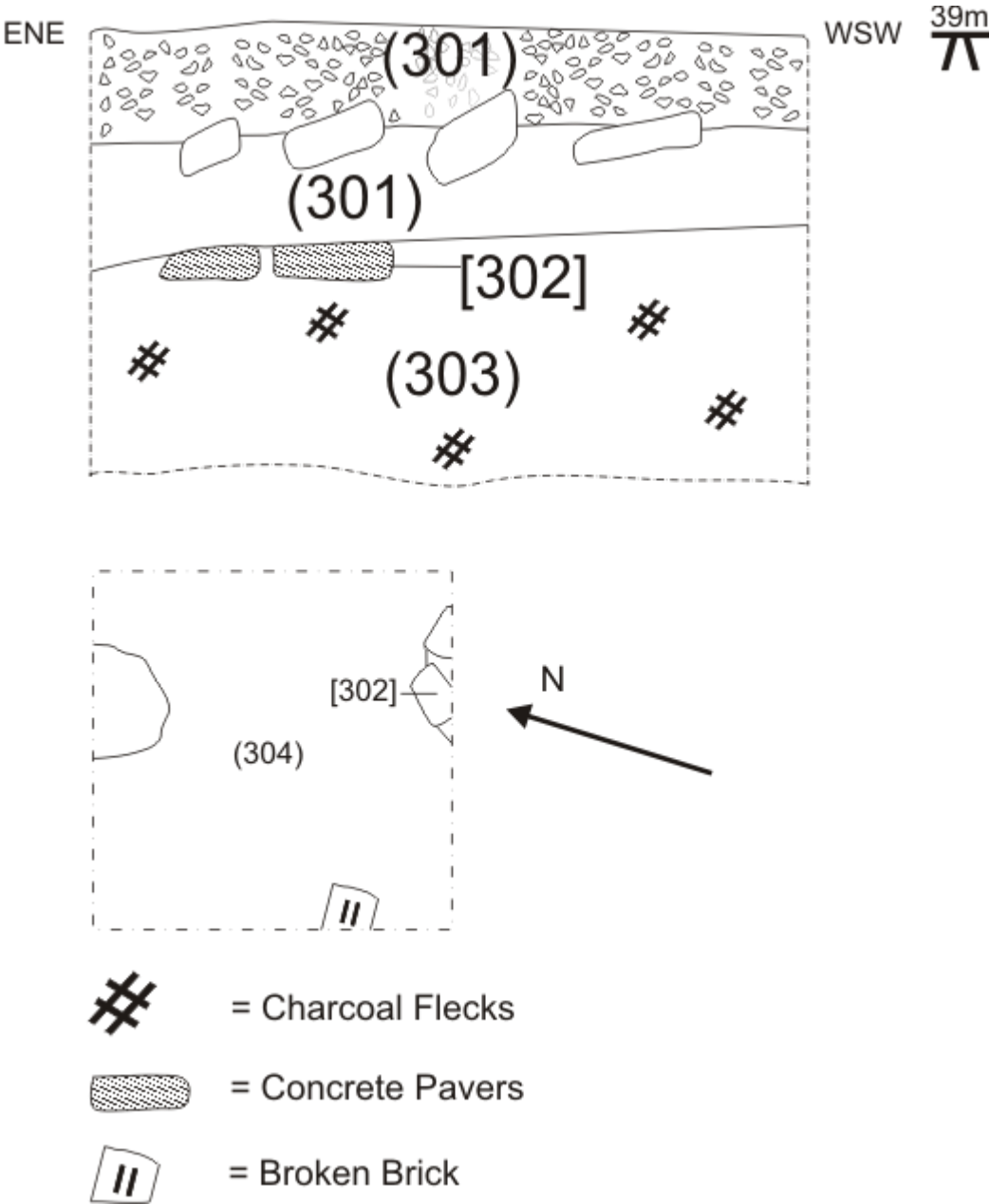
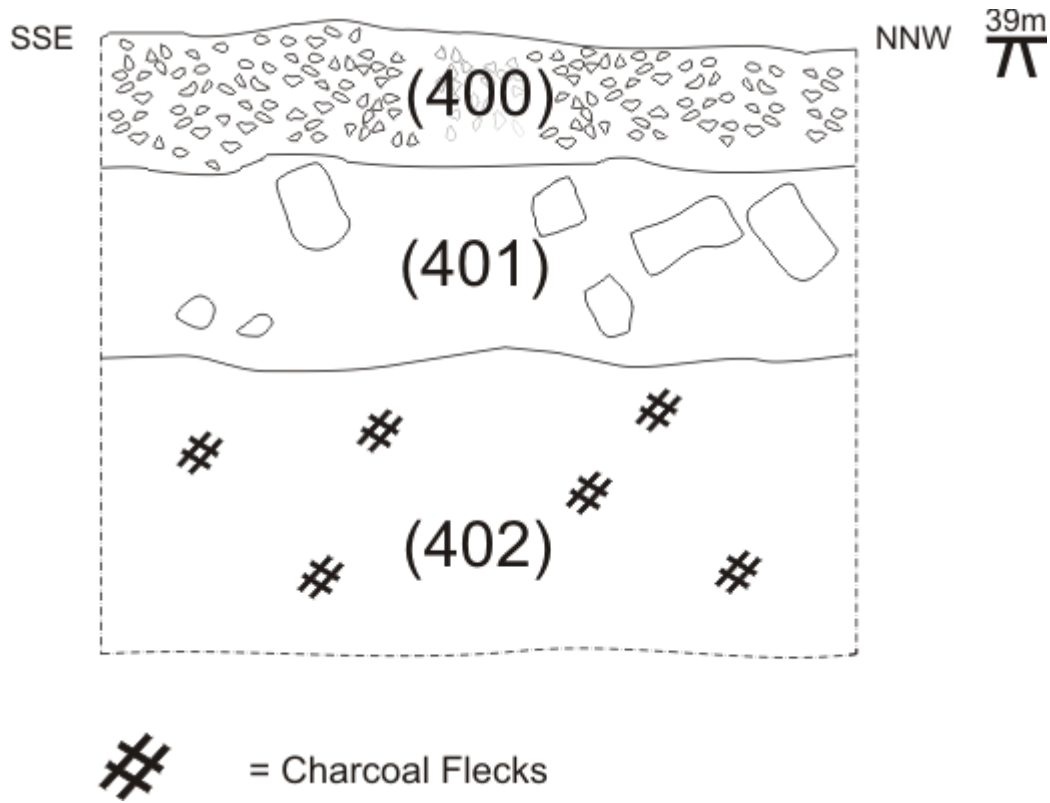


Figure 6: Test Pit 4 Section (1:10)



## 10: PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1: WSW Facing Section Test Pit 1  
Scales 1 x 1m & 1 x 500mm



Photo 2: WSW Facing Section Test Pit 2 Showing Post Hole [204]  
Scales 1 x 1m, 1 x 500mm, 1 x 400mm & 1 x 200mm



Photo 3: SSE Facing Section Test Pit 3  
Scales 1 x 1m & 1 x 400mm



Photo 4: ENE Facing Section Test Pit 4  
Scales 1 x 1m & 1 x 500mm