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**Archaeological Evaluation at Risk Street, Dumbarton,
West Dunbartonshire
Data Structure Report**

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PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET (RSD 03)

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Schedule	
Fieldwork	29 & 30 July 2003
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Abstract

Headland Archaeology was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Risk Street, Dumbarton, West Dunbartonshire. The work was undertaken in order to establish the likely archaeological impact of an extension to the existing Risk Street car park.

Trial trenching identified a cultivation soil and associated horticultural features sealed below modern demolition debris. Pottery recovered from the cultivation layer and the associated features spanned the medieval to early modern periods.

The results of the evaluation suggest that the area has seen activity from the medieval period and that archaeologically significant deposits or features may survive. The extension is likely to disturb or destroy such deposits. Suggestions for appropriate archaeological mitigation are attached.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Risk Street, Dumbarton, West Dunbartonshire. The work was carried out in advance of an extension to the existing car park at Risk Street and was commissioned by Ferguson McIlveen, acting on behalf of West Dunbartonshire Council.

The evaluation was required to satisfy a condition of planning consent placed by the local planning authority, following advice from West of Scotland Archaeological Service (WoSAS), because the development had the potential to damage or destroy archaeologically significant deposits or features. An evaluation was necessary to establish the potential archaeological impact of the extension and thereby allow the formulation of an appropriate programme of archaeological mitigation work, if necessary.

2. SITE LOCATION, DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND

The site (Figure 1) is located to the north of the existing car park at Risk Street, Dumbarton (NGR NS 3960 7547) and is bounded to its north by Glasgow Road (A814). The extension takes in a roughly rectangular area of approximately 600 m² and is situated on the embankment of the Glasgow Road. The site was under grass at the time of the evaluation and several small trees were present within the evaluation area.

Risk Street car park lies at the northern edge of the medieval burgh of Dumbarton. Erected a burgh in 1222, the medieval settlement was focussed on the shore of the River Leven. The modern High Street and Church Street follow the main medieval thoroughfare. College Street, which formerly ran to the east of the site, may also have had similarly early origins. During the medieval period the site may have fallen into feued plots running back from the High Street or College Street.

Early maps of Dumbarton depict the site and its immediate surroundings as fields running between College Street and latterday Station Road (Ross 1777 and OS 1864). The site remained undeveloped until the construction of tenements in the late 19th century.

No archaeological work had been carried out in the immediate area of the site. However, a trial excavation carried out approximately 140 m to the south-west in 1973 (NMRS No. NS37NE 73) identified a series of rubbish pits, with nothing predating the 15th century. An excavation in 1997 at 94 – 102 High Street (Coleman 1997) identified the remains of a number of medieval and post-medieval buildings.

3. OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

The evaluation was intended to establish the presence/absence and nature of archaeologically significant deposits or features within the development area that might be disturbed by the construction of the extension to the car-park. This information would then be used to formulate an appropriate programme of archaeological mitigation work.

The work was undertaken in line with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Headland Archaeology and agreed with WoSAS.

A trench approximately 35 m long, orientated east – west, was excavated using a JCB 3CX, operating under archaeological control and fitted with a 1.6 m toothless ditching bucket. The trench was slightly shorter than specified by the WSI, this was necessary because of the presence of live services and trees on site.

Initially machine excavation ceased at the first archaeologically significant deposit with occasional test pits being dug through this to establish its depth and the presence or otherwise of features sealed below. Such features were then sample excavated and recorded appropriately. At the request of WoSAS, the machine was then used to excavate down to clean subsoil.

4. RESULTS

The evaluation (Figure 2) established that the site is covered by fairly uniform dumps of modern material, associated with the demolition of the tenement building that formerly occupied the site and the subsequent construction of the embankment of the A812. These deposits (1, 2, 3 & 4) comprised compacted dark brownish grey silty sand and sandy loam with large quantities of red sandstone rubble, frogged bricks and other similar modern material. Substantial brick-built foundations were exposed approximately half way along the trench. Added to the imported topsoil these deposits totalled 0.8 – 0.9 m in depth.

Sealed below the modern material was a cultivation soil, which contained a very mixed pottery assemblage, ranging in date from medieval to modern. When this deposit was removed, a series of parallel furrows was exposed. These were aligned north-east – south-west and their fills were identical to the cultivation soil overlying them.

The furrows were cut into natural subsoil, the upper 0.15 m of which had been disturbed by bioturbation.

The underlying subsoil was a light yellowish brown medium to coarse sand becoming increasingly silty to the eastern end of the trench.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of the evaluation are consistent with the site having remained undeveloped until the construction of tenement blocks in the late 19th/early 20th century. The mixed pottery assemblage is indicative of the use of domestic refuse for manuring of the fields from the medieval period onwards. The furrows contained pottery ranging from the medieval to post-medieval periods. On the basis of the pottery and typological grounds, these are likely to date to the post-medieval period.

Although the evaluation did not expose any undisturbed deposits or features likely to date earlier than the post-medieval period, the ground level has not been reduced and this, in conjunction with the presence of medieval pottery on site, indicates that there is the potential for medieval features to survive.

6. MITIGATION

The proposed finished level of the car park is 4.37 – 5.11 m OD and it was originally proposed that the formation level would be 0.5 m below this (3.87 – 4.61 m OD). The surface of the cultivation soil lies at approximately 4.25 m OD and clean natural subsoil at approximately 3.9 m OD. The clearance of the site to formation level will therefore disturb the cultivation soil and, given this deposit's soft nature, any deposits or features sealed below will also be disturbed by the excavation itself, the tracking of dumpers or by work to compact the ground surface prior to formation.

Given the potential for disturbance, it is likely that the planning authority, advised by WoSAS, will require further archaeological mitigation work. In this event, it is recommended that the modern overburden is machine excavated under archaeological control to expose the surface of the cultivation soil. This will then be sampled and recorded to the satisfaction of the local planning authority, before being machine stripped to expose the furrows identified during the evaluation. These and any other features revealed will then be recorded and sampled to the satisfaction of the local planning authority. The site will then be machine stripped to clean subsoil to ensure that no features are masked by the furrows. Any artefacts recovered should be catalogued by a specialist and the archive deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland.

If further work is required a detailed Project Design will be produced and agreed with all relevant parties.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND OTHER REFERENCES

- Coleman, R 1997 '94-102 High Street, Dumbarton' in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, 1997, 82. CSA, Edinburgh.
- Dennison, EP, & Coleman, R 1999 *Historic Dumbarton: the archaeological implications of development*. Historic Scotland, Edinburgh.

Maps

- Ordnance Survey (1864) *Dunbartonshire* XX.6.
- Ross, C 1777 *A Map of the Shire of Dumbarton*.

APPENDIX 1: SITE REGISTERS

1.1 Context Register

Context Number	Description	Depth (m)
1	Make-up. Spread of crushed red brick and stone.	0.2 m
2	Make-up. Very dark greyish brown silty sand with very common brick and sandstone fragments and other modern debris.	0.12 – 0.3 m
3	Make-up. Light yellowish brown coarse sand with abundant rounded gravel.	0.1 – 0.2 m
4	Make-up. Very dark brownish grey silty sand with very common brick (frogged), sandstone, slate etc.	0.5 m
5	Fill of Furrow 13. Dark greyish brown silty loam with common cinder flecks and rare gravel.	0.1 m
6	Disturbed natural. Light yellowish brown silty clay loam.	0.15 m
7	Natural deposit. Light reddish yellow silty clay.	0.7 m
8	Natural deposit. Light yellowish brown sand.	<0.2 m
9	Fill of Furrow 12. Dark greyish brown silty loam with common cinder flecks and rare gravel.	< 0.1 m
10	Fill of Furrow 11 (Unexcavated) Dark greyish brown silty loam with common cinder flecks.	-
11	Cut of furrow (Unexcavated) Linear orientated south-west – north-east.	-
12	Cut of furrow. Linear orientated south-west – north-east with moderate slightly concave sides and near flat base.	<0.1 m
13	Cut of furrow. Linear orientated south-west – north-east with moderate slightly concave sides and near flat base.	0.1 m
14	Cut of furrow (Unexcavated) Linear orientated south-west – north-east.	-
15	Cut of furrow (Unexcavated) Linear orientated south-west – north-east.	-
16	Cut of furrow (Unexcavated) Linear orientated south-west – north-east.	-
17	Fill of Furrow 14 (Unexcavated). Mid brownish grey sandy silt with common cinder frags	-
18	Fill of Furrow 15 (Unexcavated). Mid brownish grey sandy silt with common cinder frags	-
19	Fill of Furrow 16 (Unexcavated). Mid brownish grey sandy silt with common cinder frags	-

Context Number	Description	Depth (m)
20	Fill of furrow (Unexcavated). Mid brownish grey sandy silt with common cinder frags	-
21	Fill of Furrow 22. Mid brownish grey firm sandy silt with common cinder frags rare gravel, 5 cm and rare pottery and bone.	0.08 m
22	Cut of furrow. Linear, orientated north-east – south-west with moderate concave sides and broad flat base.	0.08 m
23	Fill of furrow (Unexcavated). Mid brownish grey sandy silt with common cinder frags	-
24	Fill of furrow (Unexcavated). Mid brownish grey sandy silt with common cinder frags	-
25	Cultivation soil. Mid brownish grey firm sandy silt with common cinder frags rare gravel, 5 cm and rare pottery and bone.	<0.2 m

1.2 Photographic Registers

Film 1: Colour Slide and Black & White

Shot no.	Direction Facing	Description
1	-	ID shot
2	W	General view of site
3	W	General view of site
4	SW	General view of site
5	SW	General view of site
6	S	General view of site
7	S	General view of site
8	NE	General view of site
9	W	General view of site
10	-	Discarded
11	S	Representative section north facing, east end
12	S	Representative section (incl Furrows 12 & 13), north facing, east end
13	S	Representative section (incl Furrows 12 & 13), north facing, east end
14	S	North facing section, Test Pit
15	S	North facing section, Test Pit
16	S	Plan view of furrows, east end of trench
17	S	Plan view of furrows, east end of trench
18	W	General view of furrows, west end of trench
19	W	General view of furrows, west end of trench
20	S	Representative section, north facing, west end
21	S	Representative section, north facing, west end
22	S	North facing section Furrow 22
23	W	East end of trench excavated to clean natural

24	W	West end of trench excavated to clean natural
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1.3 Drawing Register

Drawing No.	Scale	Description
1	1:10	Representative section, north facing, east end of trench
2	1:50	Overall plan of trench
3	1:10	Representative section, north facing, west end of trench

1.4 Finds Register

Preliminary identifications and dating by Simon Stronach. A full assessment and report is recommended as a part of further work.

Context	No. of fragments	Description	Preliminary dating
05	3	Small abraded sherds of reduced green-glazed pot	Post-med
05	1	Small fragment of clay pipe bowl	Post-med
05	1	Small abraded sherd White gritty ware with green glaze	Med
21	1	Rim sherd, burnt post-deposition, white gritty ware (?)	Med
21	1	V small frag reduced green-glazed pot	Post-med
25	1	Sherd of yellow, green and brown glazed oxidised pot, polychrome spongeware bowl or similar	Post-med
25	3	Green-glazed post-medieval reduced ware type pottery, inc one hands and a decorated rim	Post-med
25	7	Reduced green-glazed pot	Post-med
25	1	Redware, green-glazed	Med
25	4	White glazed fragments, white fabric	Post-med/Modern
25	2	Blue transfer print porcelain	Modern
25	1	Possible tin-glazed white fabric	Post-med
25	5	Brown glazed oxidised fabric	Post-med/Modern
25	4	Clay-pipe stems	Post-med
25	2	Small mammal bone fragments	-
25	1	Small fragment yellow glazed pale fabric	Post-med/Modern

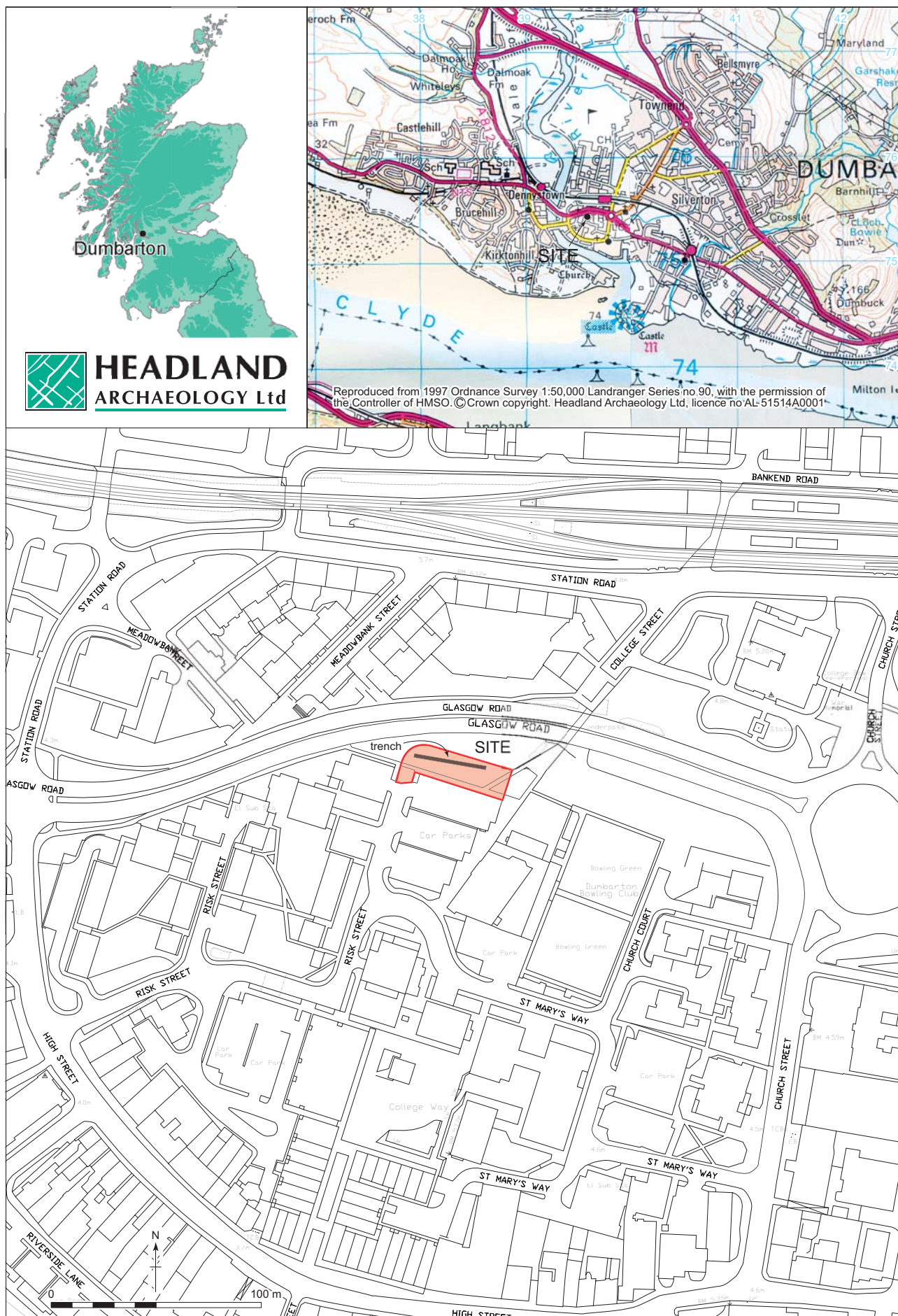


Figure 1 - Risk Street, Dumbarton:Site location

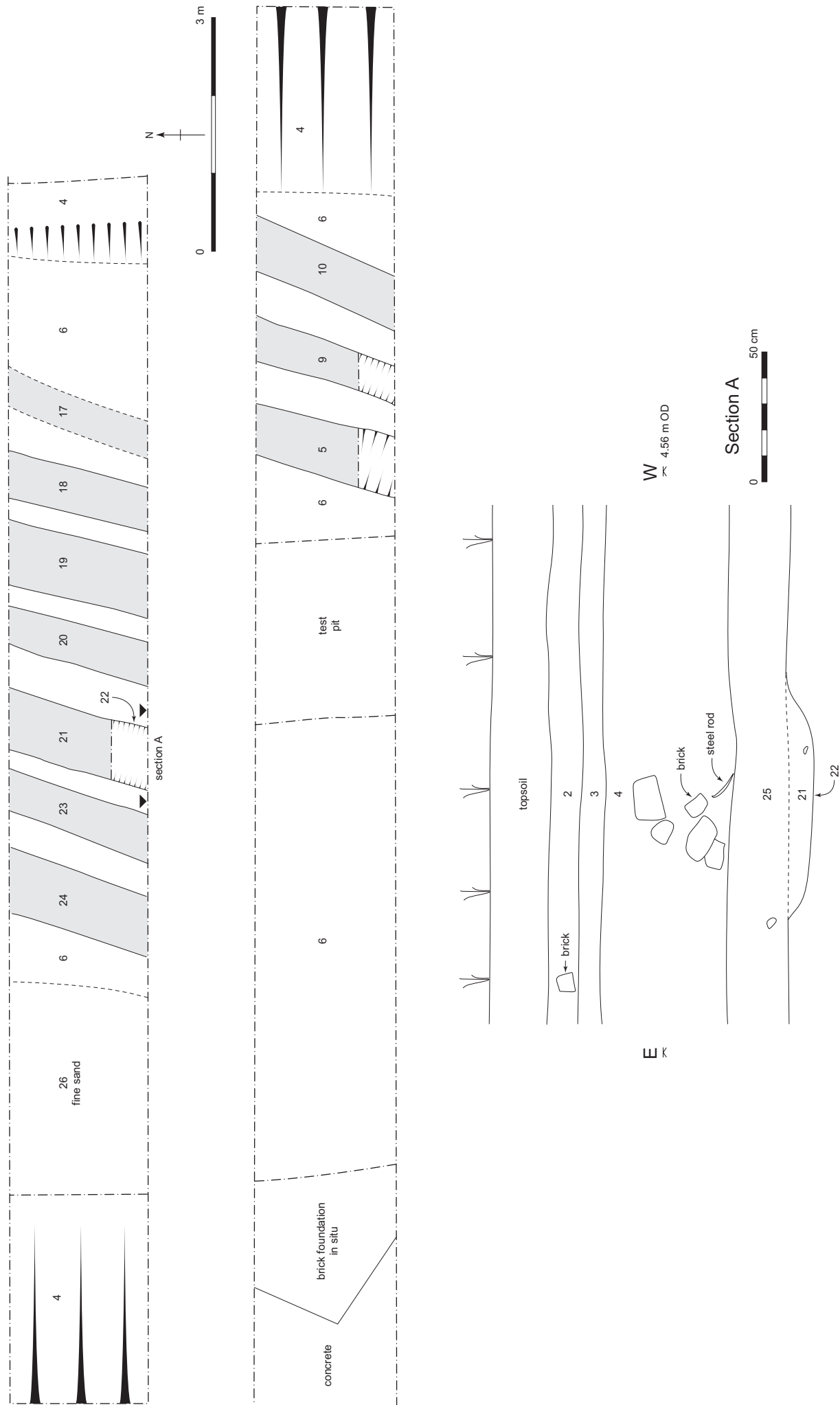


Figure 2 - Risk Street, Dumbarton: Trench plan and section.