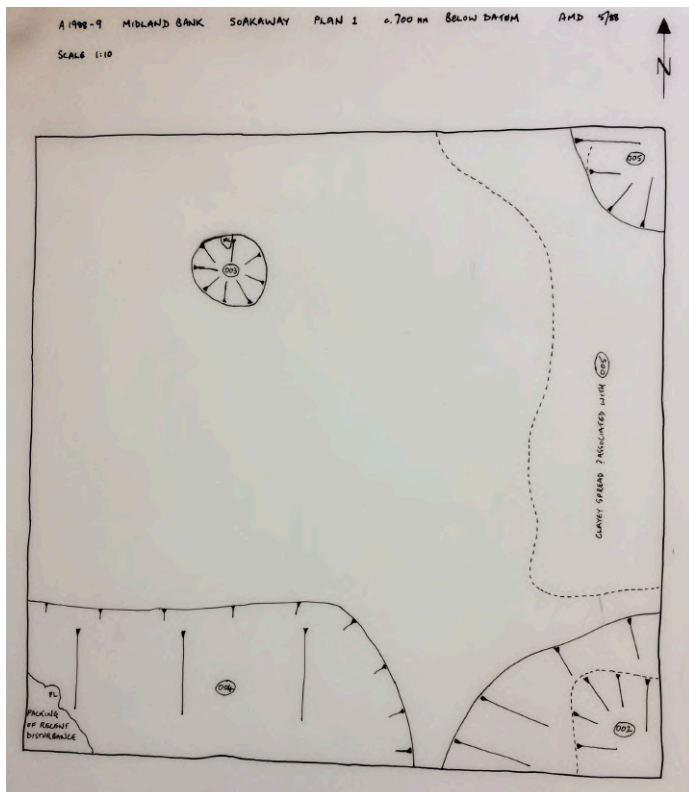
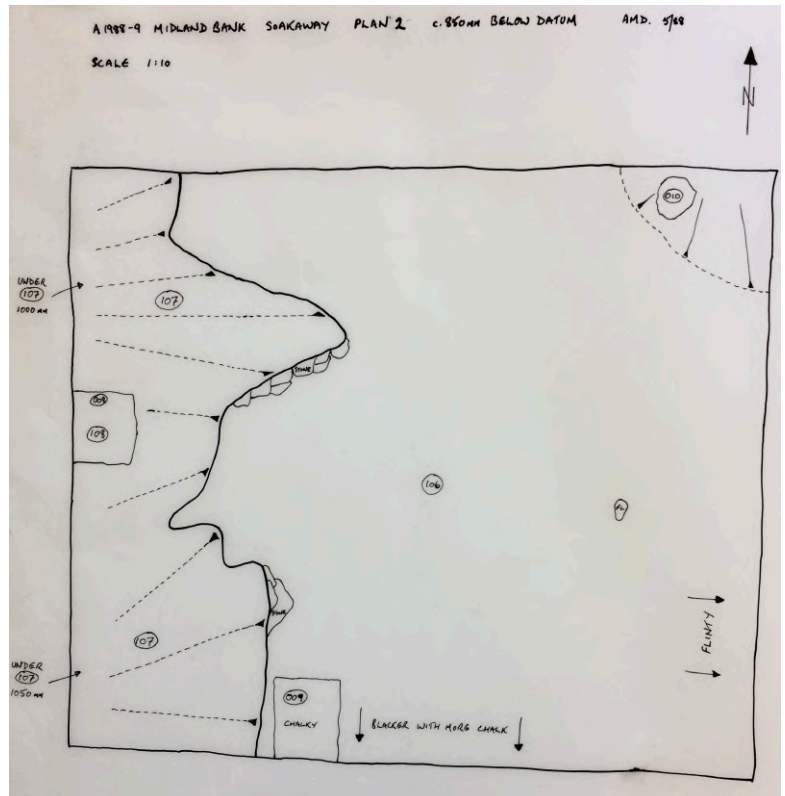


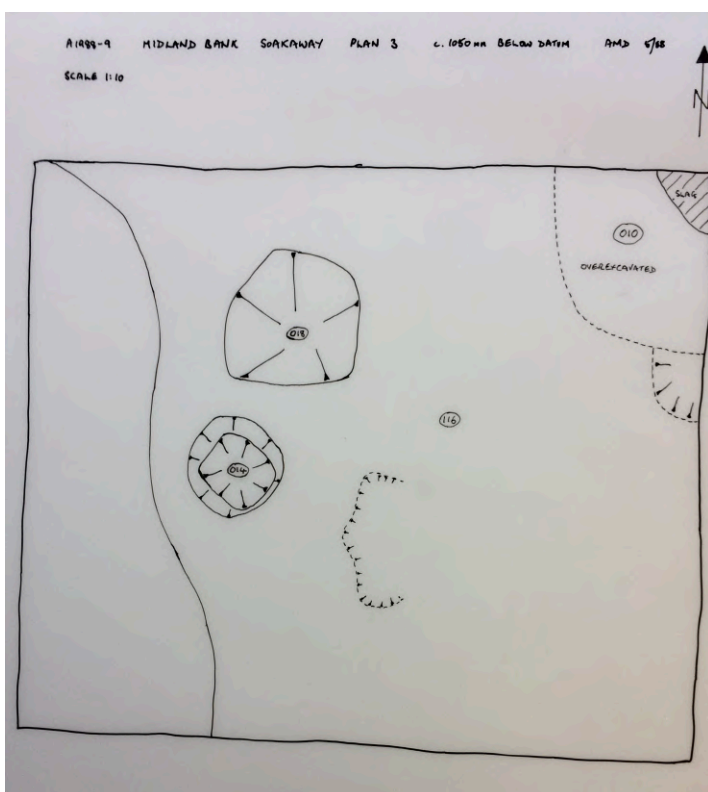
An excavation was carried out by TVAT in 1988 prior to the building of an extension at the rear of the Midland Bank, 10, Church Street (Abbotsford House). An approximately 2m x 2m trench, intended to serve as a soakaway, was excavated to the level of the natural ground surface. The lower deposits were interpreted as the infill of a dry stream bed, the early, prehistoric, course of the western branch of the Fishlake. However, the Fishlake is now recognised as an artificial watercourse constructed by the Anglo-Saxons. The 'stream bed' might simply be a relatively low-lying hollow on the river terrace.



Plan 1 c. 700mm below datum



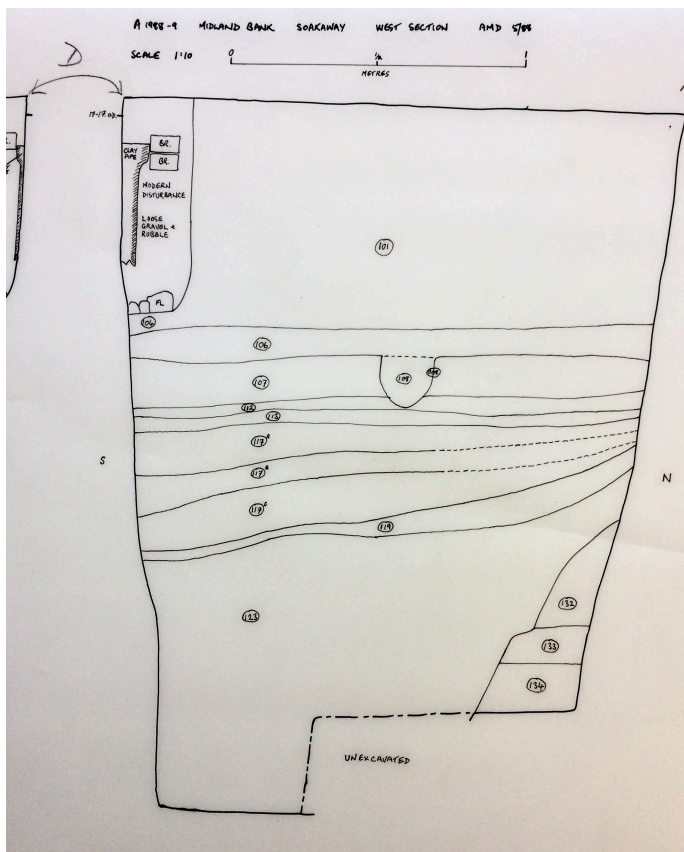
Plan 2 c. 850mm below datum



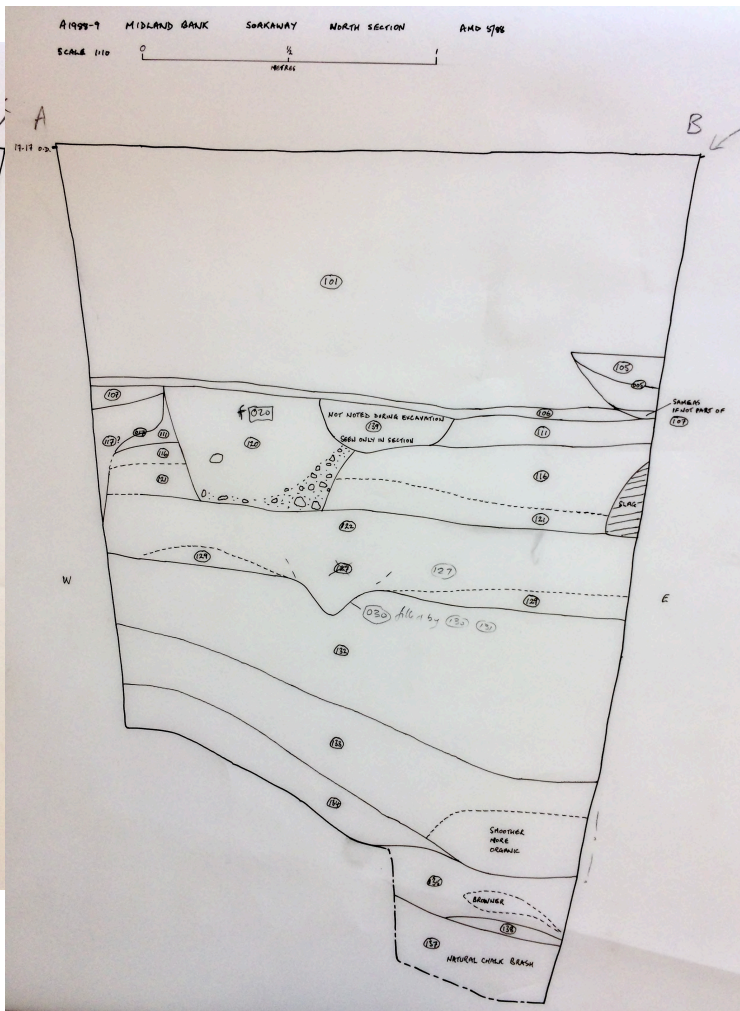
Plan 3 c. 1050mm below datum

Plan 1 recorded the trench at the level at which stratification first became apparent, below the buildup of garden soil. A ditch or pit on the west side of the trench appears at the level of plan 2. The outline of this feature is irregular where the edge has been eroded. It seems to have been dug from this level through a spread of masonry debris, context 106, and continued to the bottom of the trench. Plan 3 was drawn at the top of a deposit of iron smelting debris. The presence of pits/postholes demonstrates activity on the site.

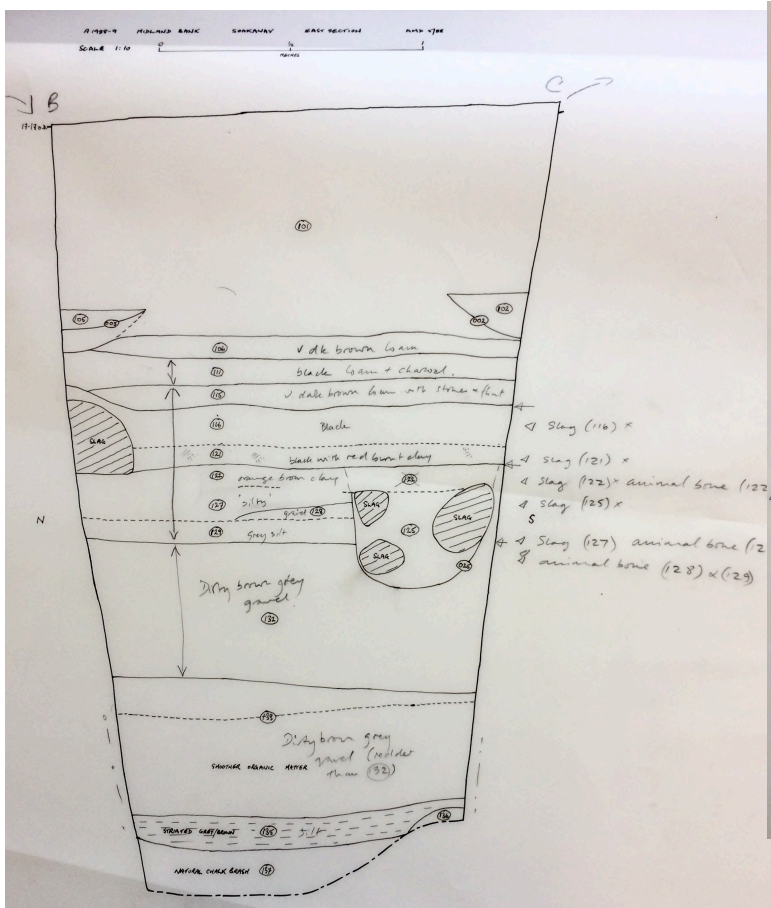




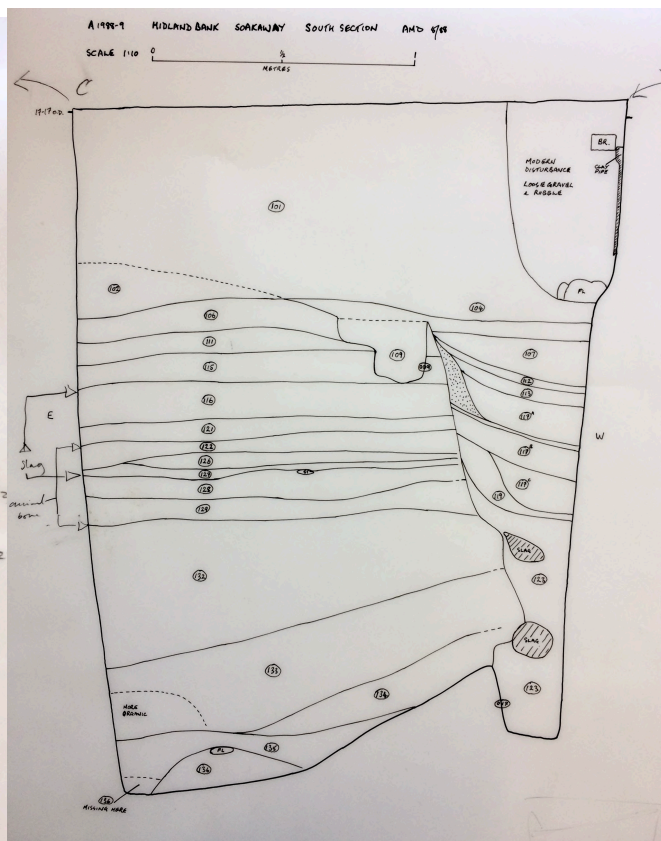
West section



North section



East section



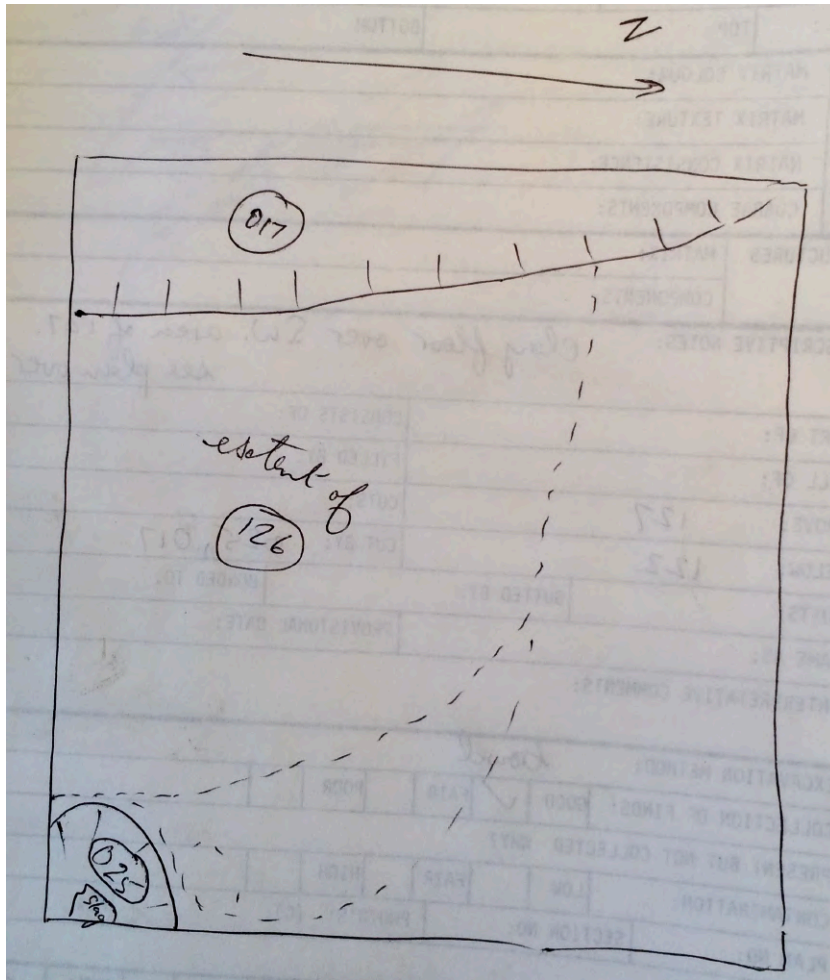
South section











Sketch showing extent of clay floor, Context 126.

Animal bone contexts -

122, 126, 127 See above.

128 Dirty, gravelly. No slag! Fades out near N section face. Finds: bone.

129 Greyey silty. Finds: bronze, bone.

Lower contexts -

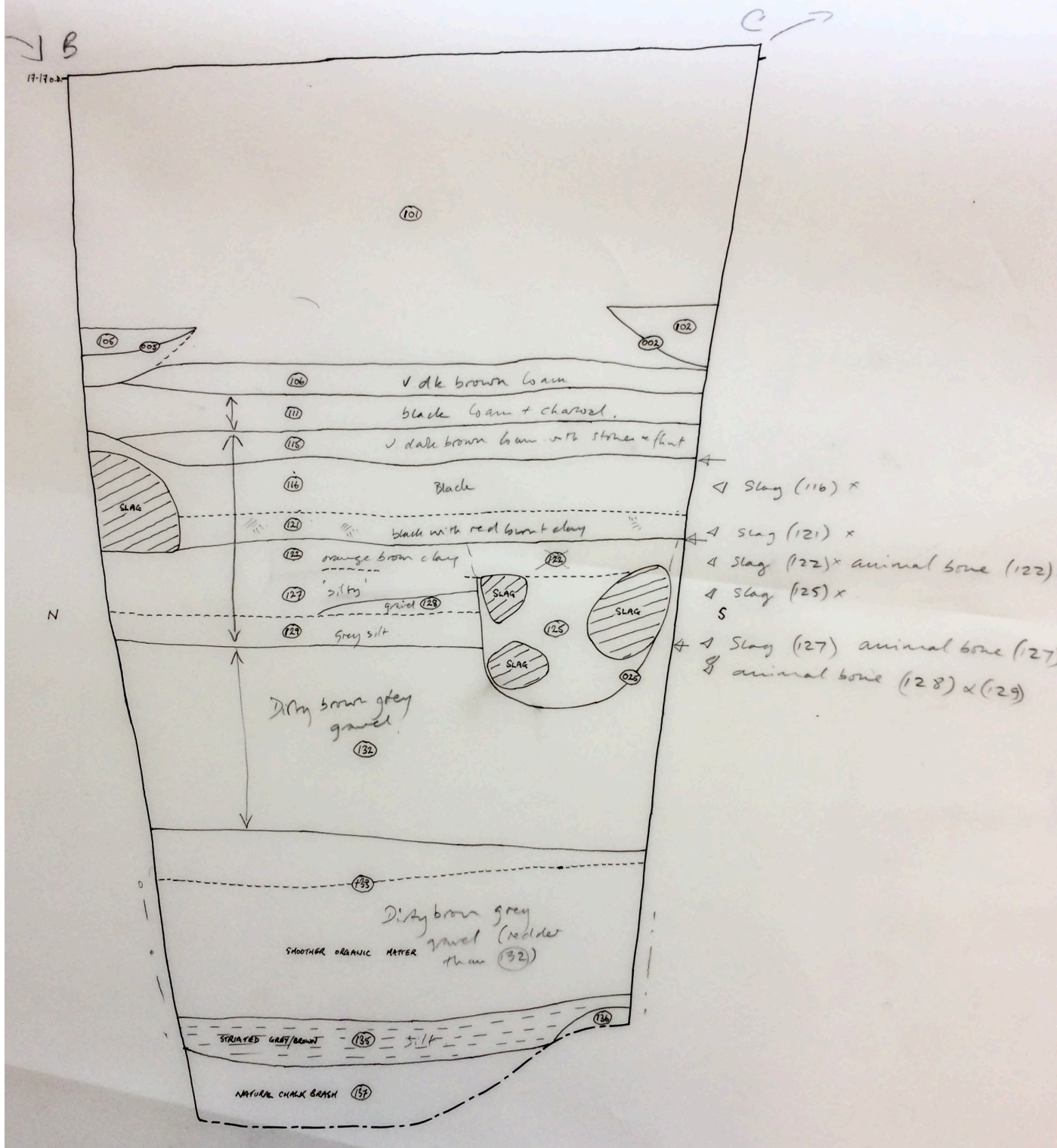
132 Dirty brown/grey. Stony, gravel. Contains charcoal, some burnt clay flecks. Finds: pottery, bone, burnt clay, burnt flint.

133 As 132 but slightly redder and less gravelly. Lowest level at E of trench has orangey organic matter. Interpretive comments: Silted materials in stream edge, probably a multiple build-up. Finds: Pottery, brick?, bone, burnt flint, charcoal.

134 As 133. Very gritty/gravelly. Finds: none.

135 Grey, silty. Descriptive notes: riverine silting. Finds: pottery, burnt flint. The section drawing indicates a more organic area on the E edge of the section.

136 Clean orange gravel. Descriptive notes: lens in SE quarter - see S section. Finds: pottery, flint flake.



East section

Most of the contexts visible in the eastern side of the south section continue across the east section. There are only three additional contexts.

105 Described as fill. No finds recorded.

125 Fill of feature 026 which was below context 121. Finds: Slag, bone, shell.

137 Grey, silty. Similar to 135. Finds: Charcoal.



A possible ditch or pit, dug from the level of context 106, cuts through the earlier deposits. The edge of the feature appears in the south section and in plan, but missed the north section.

Contexts on W side of S section, fill of feature 017:

107 Yellow, mortar spread.

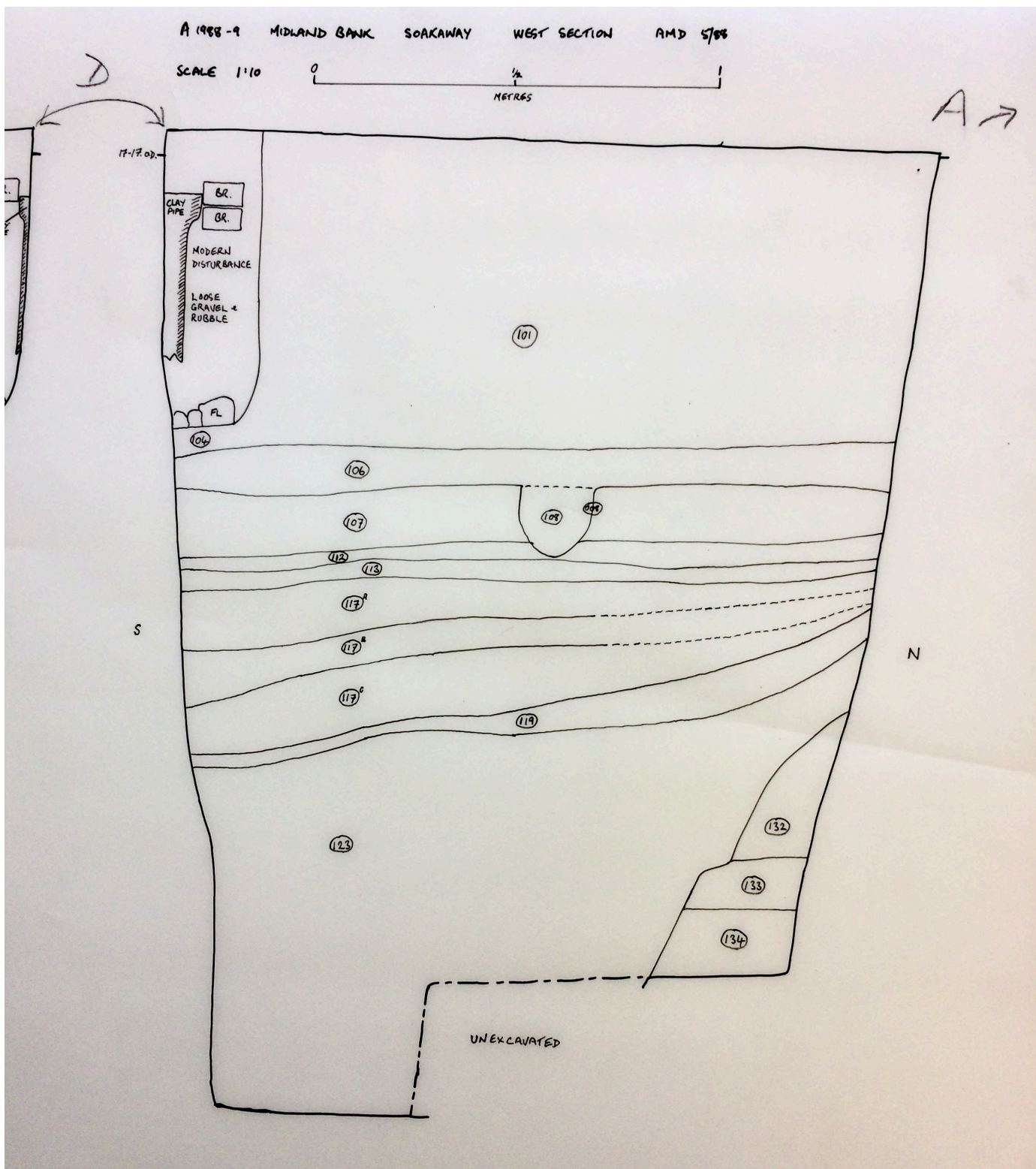
112 Black (like 111). Interpretive comments: not the same as 111 - see diagram above. Finds: stone, bone.

113 Dirty yellow, gritty mortar. Large fragments of building stone. Finds: stone.

117 Dark clay, sticky. Descriptive notes: fill of ?ditch at E side. Finds: brick, stone, bone.

119 Light orange gravel, very clean. Finds: stone, slag, bone, shell.

123 Black. Slag and burnt clay lumps. Finds: tile, stone, slag, oyster shell.

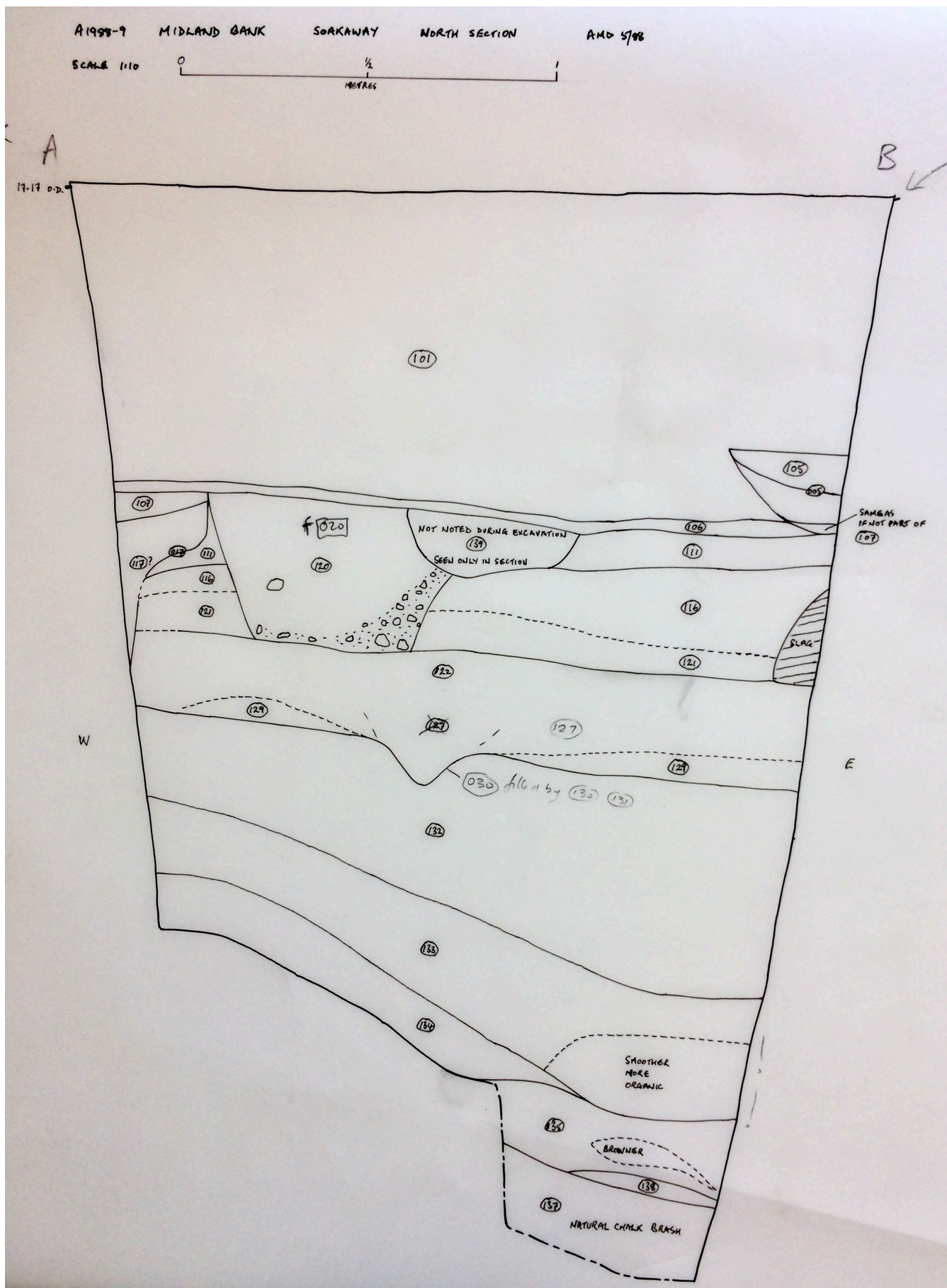


West section



Most of the contexts in the west section represent infill of the ditch or pit. The northern edge of the feature cuts through contexts 132, 133 and 134, described above. Only one additional context appears in this section, the fill of feature 008:

108 Mid-brown, smooth.



North section



There are five contexts that appear only in the north section.

120 Fill of feature 020 which was below context 106. Grey clay/ chalk. Finds: stone, chalk blocks.

130 Silty, clayey. Smooth. Finds: slag.

131 Fill of feature 030. Dark brown, charcoal flecks.

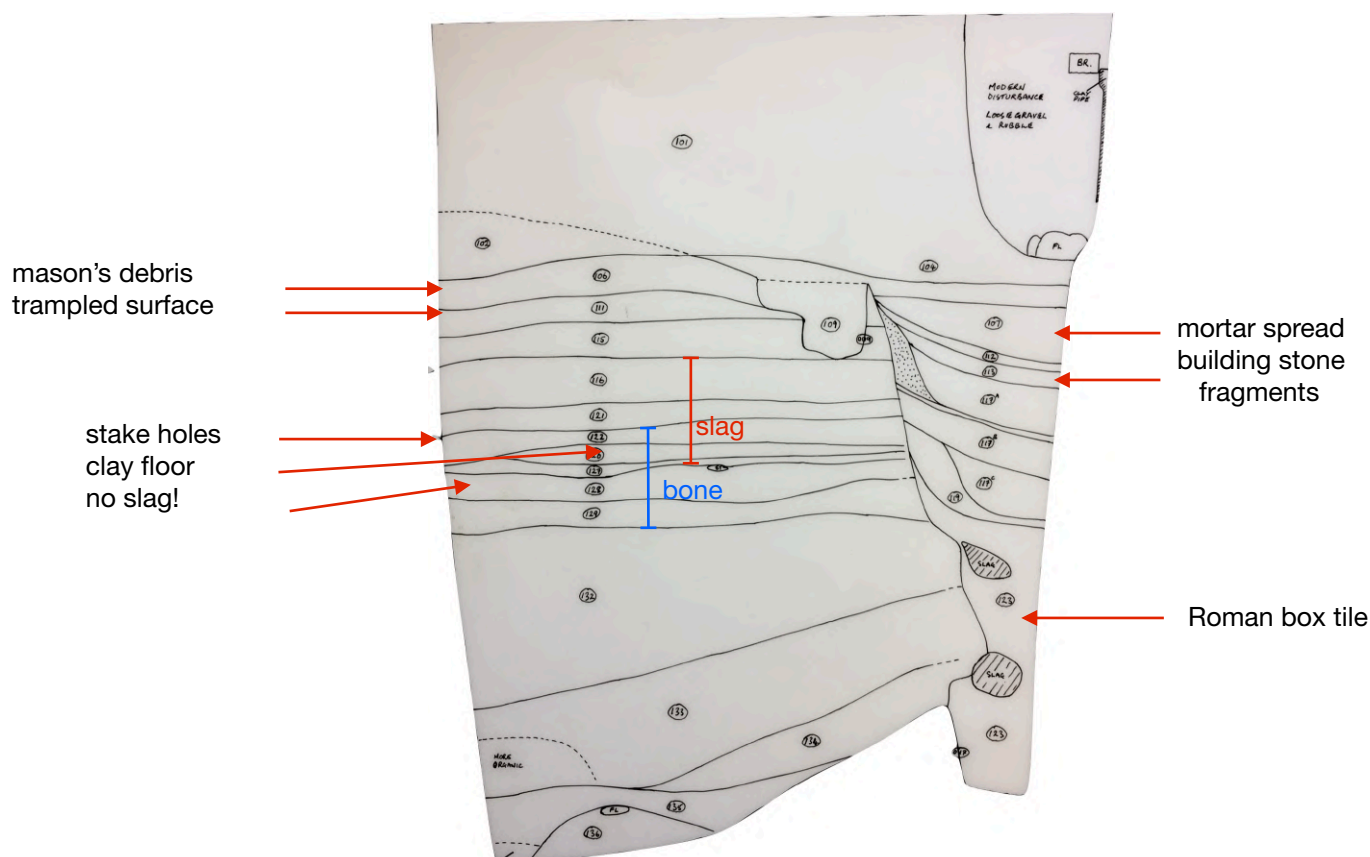
138 Dirty orange gravel. Lens in NE quarter ( see N section). Finds: none.

139 Not noted during excavation. Seen only in section. No context sheet.

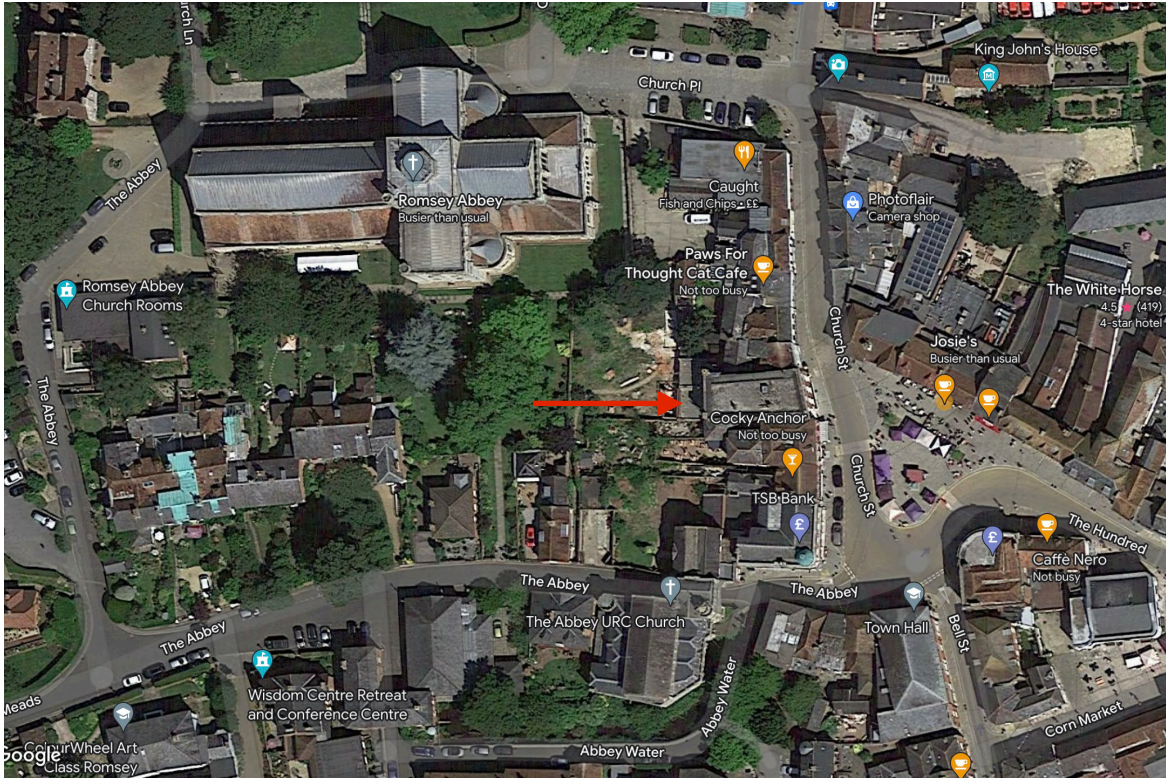
## Site Interpretation

The annotations to the south section below relate to the Anglo-Saxon and possibly post-Conquest activity on the site. Deposits of animal bones overlay layers that contained burnt flint and pottery, probably prehistoric. The bones, radiocarbon dated as mid-Saxon, indicated a high-status diet including cattle, sheep/goat and pig, along with deer, domestic fowl and fish. After serving as a dump for kitchen waste, the area was used for iron smelting. The presence of pits, post and stake holes and a clay floor show that the site was in active use. Later the area seems to have been used for stone working with a layer (106) containing smashed stone fragments that was interpreted as possible mason's debris. This could have been associated with the building of the Norman abbey or possibly with a Saxon stone church.

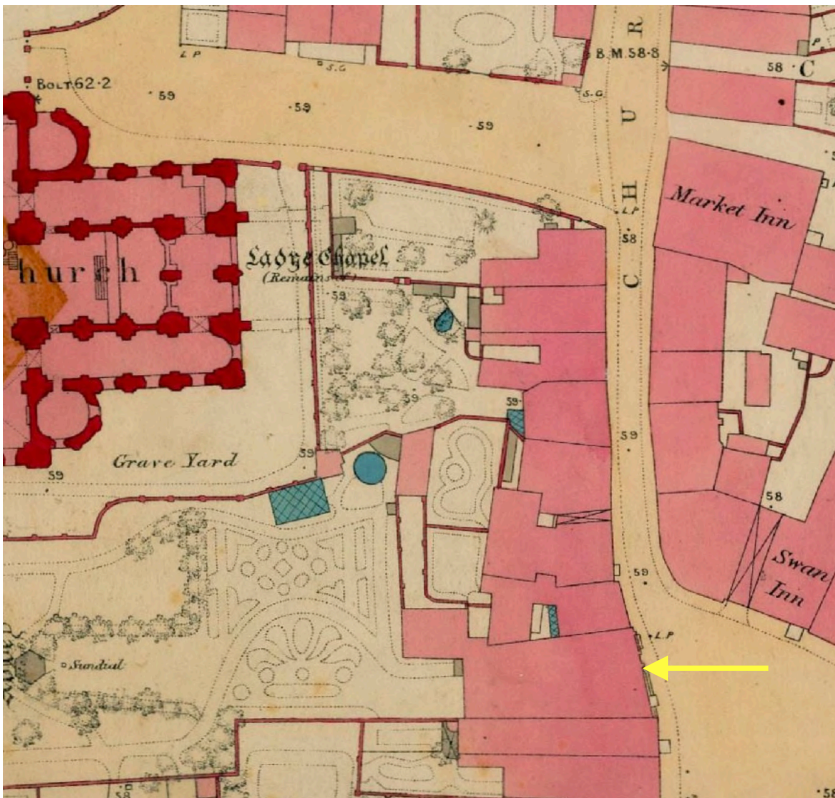
At the western side of the trench was a deep feature. It appears from the plans to have been dug from the level with the stone debris. The lower half was filled in with smelting waste, context 123. Pieces of tile were found in this context including a Roman box tile from a hypocaust. Roman tile was used in the construction of Saxon smelting furnaces on other sites in Romsey, but these pieces showed no sign of reuse. The deliberate partial infilling of the feature indicates that it was not intended as a ditch. Perhaps it was a pit dug as a source of gravel. The succession of layers in the upper fill contained stone fragments with a concentration of large fragments of building stone overlain by a spread of mortar. Again, this could relate to the building of the Saxon or Norman abbey.







View from Google Maps with location of excavation arrowed.



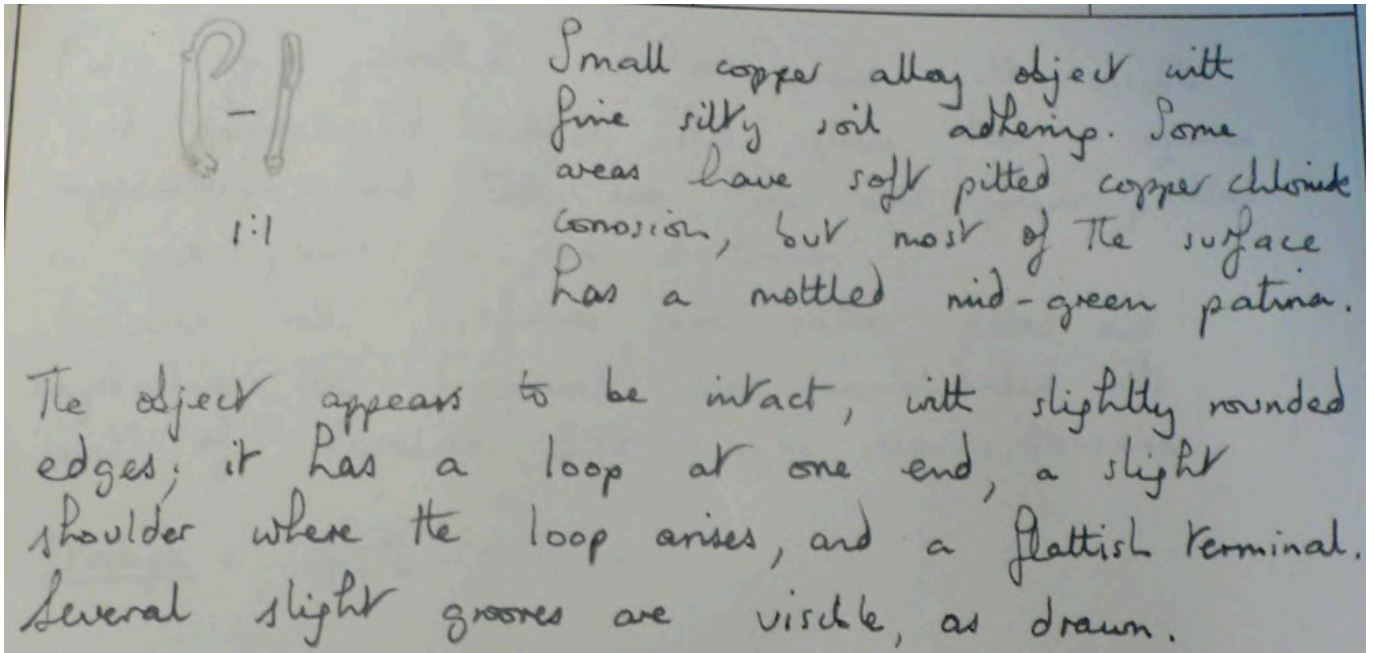
1867 OS map showing the ornamental gardens to the rear of Abbotsford House, arrowed.

Below left: Site location map.



The soakaway trench with ranging pole aligned on the east section.





Conservation lab report on a copper alloy object found in context 129, the lowest animal bone layer.



Iron ore from contexts 114 and 115 and from the lower layers of smelting debris - contexts 116, 122 and 127.





Slag from context 130, a depression within context 122. Photos by Mary Harris.



Finds from context 123, the lower fill of the ditch/pit at the west side of the trench - Roman box tile, iron ore and a rim sherd.





Fragments of building stone from contexts 122 and 128.