FILE RK235 (1-9)

A POSSIBLE ROMANO/BRITISH TILE KILN SITE: A TRIAL EXCAVATION.

The site lies to the N.E. of the village of Newbold Verdon in West Leicestershire. O.S. grid ref. SK456041. It was first revealed in 1978 by field walking carried out by the Newbold Verdon Field Archaelogy Group working under the auspicies of the professional survey team at the Jewry Wall Museum in Leicester.

Field walking results showed a pottery scatter to the South of the area, consisting mainly of Romano/British 'Grey' ware with Mortaria, colour coated and Samian wares also represented. This scatter is concentrated on the level area, above the subsequent excavation, on glacial sand and gravel deposits. Further field walking then revealed two distinct 'red areas' on the slope down to the north on Triasic Keuper Marl. In these 'red areas' were found many pieces of R/B brick and tile some of which were overfired and of distorted form; also present were pieces of the tile, bonded together with clay, that had been in contact with high temperatures as they also were overfired and showed evidence of splitting.

It was thought that we were possibly dealing with a Romano/British tile kiln site, none off which had previously been found in Leicestershire, the nearest being in North Warwickshire.

The next stage was to carry out a geophysical survey of the immediate area. This was done by the Geology Dept. of Leicester University using a Proton Magnatometer, the results of which (fig.1) showed marked anomalies over the 'red areas' found by field walking.

A trial excavation was then undertaken (fig. 2) by the Newbold Verdon group with the aid and advice of the Atherstone Archaeological Society. A box approximately 4m x 2m was taken out on the Northern of the two 'red areas'; immediately under the plough soil was an area of red clay covering most of the box, also showing, on the Southern side, was an area of sandy soil with charcoal and tile fragments included.

Immediately under the surface of the red clay was revealed several tiles laid flat consisting of plain tile and tegulae set into the red clay. Along the Southern side of these tiles were several pieces of stone similar to the Charnwood Pre - Cambrian series, and a large sandstone block, all set in Keuper Marl clay. The interface of the Keuper Marl and the red clay showed as a distinct edge, and at 'B' on the plan the tile showed in the section formed by the pit as being at least four courses high. At this stage it was thought that we had located a cross wall of a kiln made of tiles, and the kiln back wall built of stone. Cutting this phase of construction, but under the red clay, was a pit lined with Swithland slate, the possible projection of which is shown on the plan.

The only firm evidence for a kiln was found in a box taken out of the North of the sandstone block, but this only consisted of small fragments of tile which were bonded together with clay.

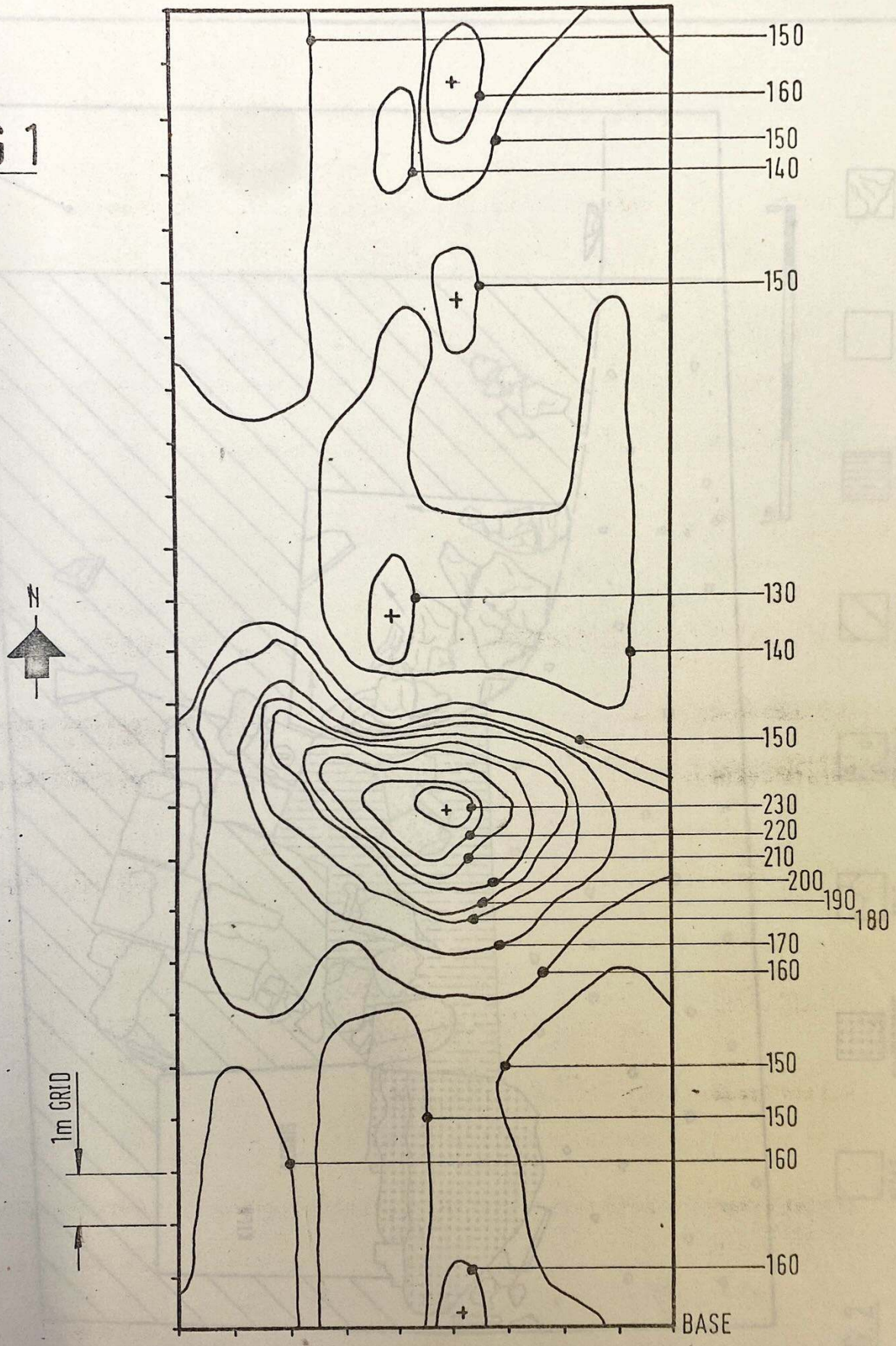
Several phases seem to be represented; kiln debris at the lowest level; stone blocks set in Keuper Marl; a slate lined pit, tiles set in red clay, and the sandy area to the South of the excavation containing charcoal flecks and tile fragments.

It is clear that the site needs further investigation, possibly a larger area needs opening up to elucidate the problems raised by the trial excavation; we are not dealing with a simple kiln as we first hoped for, but several phases of activity relating to the manufacture of Romano/British tiles.

Mick Harding.

RK235(2-9)

FIG 1



RESULTS OF PROTON MAGNATOMETER SURVEY OVER EXCAVATED AREA

POSSIBLE ROMANO-BRITISH TILE KILN

TRIAL EXCAVATION NEWBOLD VERDON LEICS.

PLAN SK 456 041

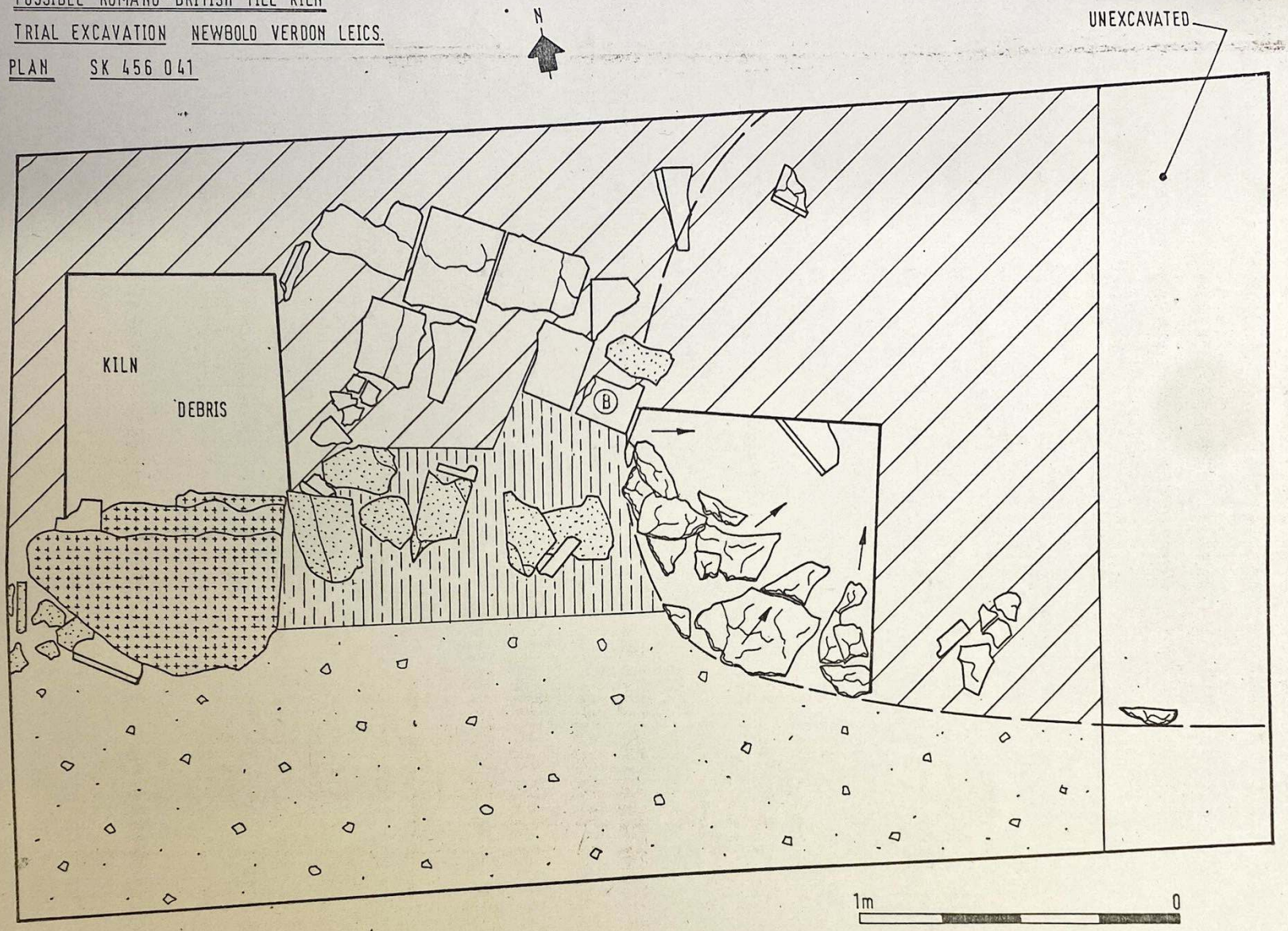


FIG. 2

STONE

SANDSTONE

TILE

CHARCOAL-SANDY-TILE

RED-CLAY

KEUPER-MARL

NATURAL

SLATE

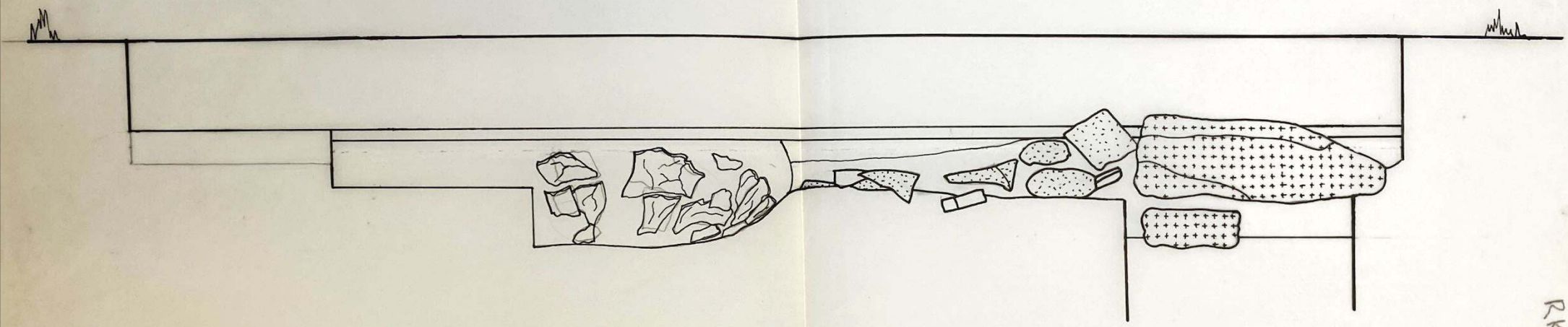
RK 225(3-9)



RK235 (4-9)

TRIAL EXCAVATION, NEWBOLD VERDON LEICS.

SECTION. SK 456 041

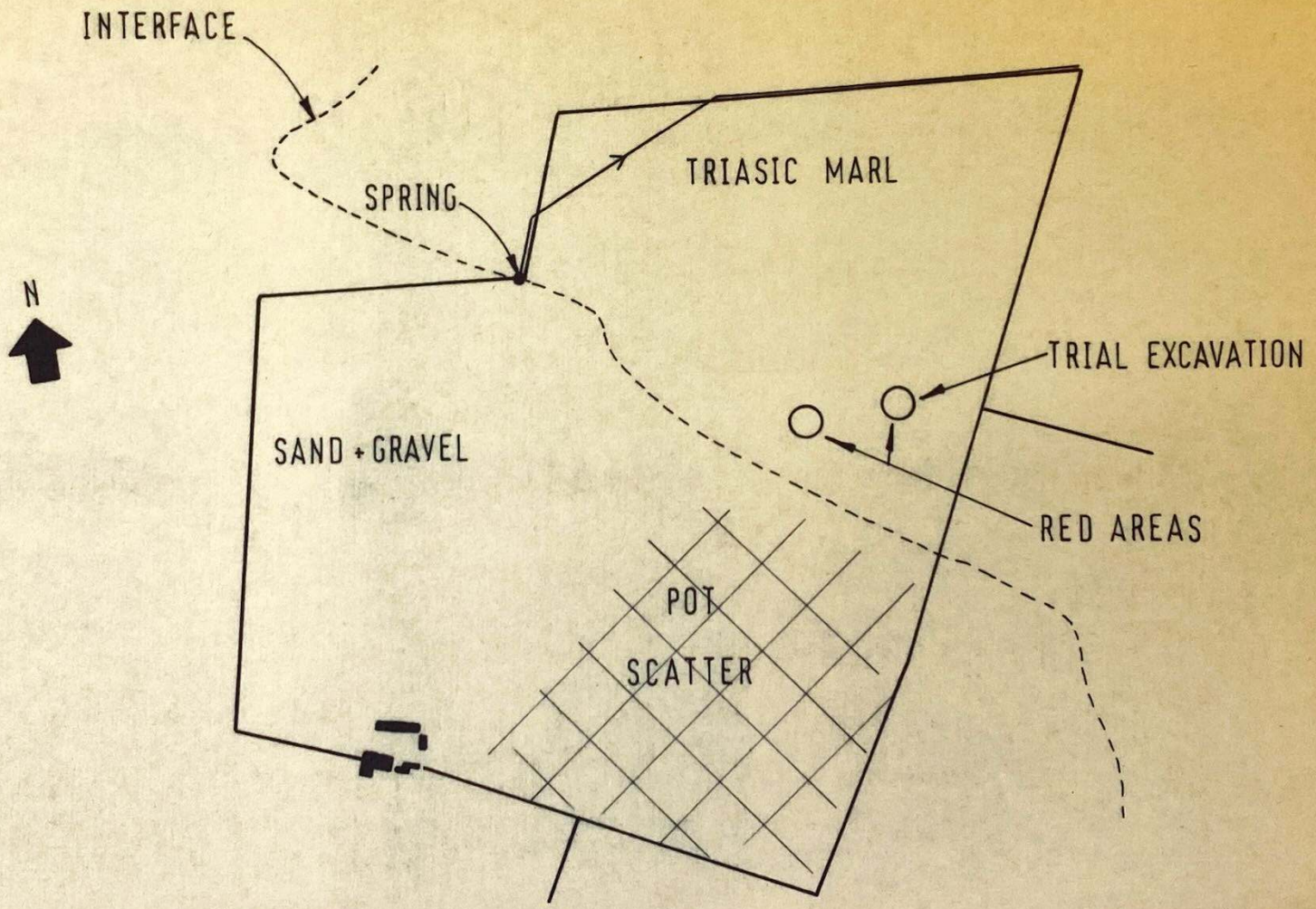


RK235 (5-9)

POSSIBLE R/B TILE KILN AREA

NEWBOLD VERDON LEICS. SK456 041 (SK 40 SE)

GENERAL LAYOUT OF SITE O.S. 25 SCALE

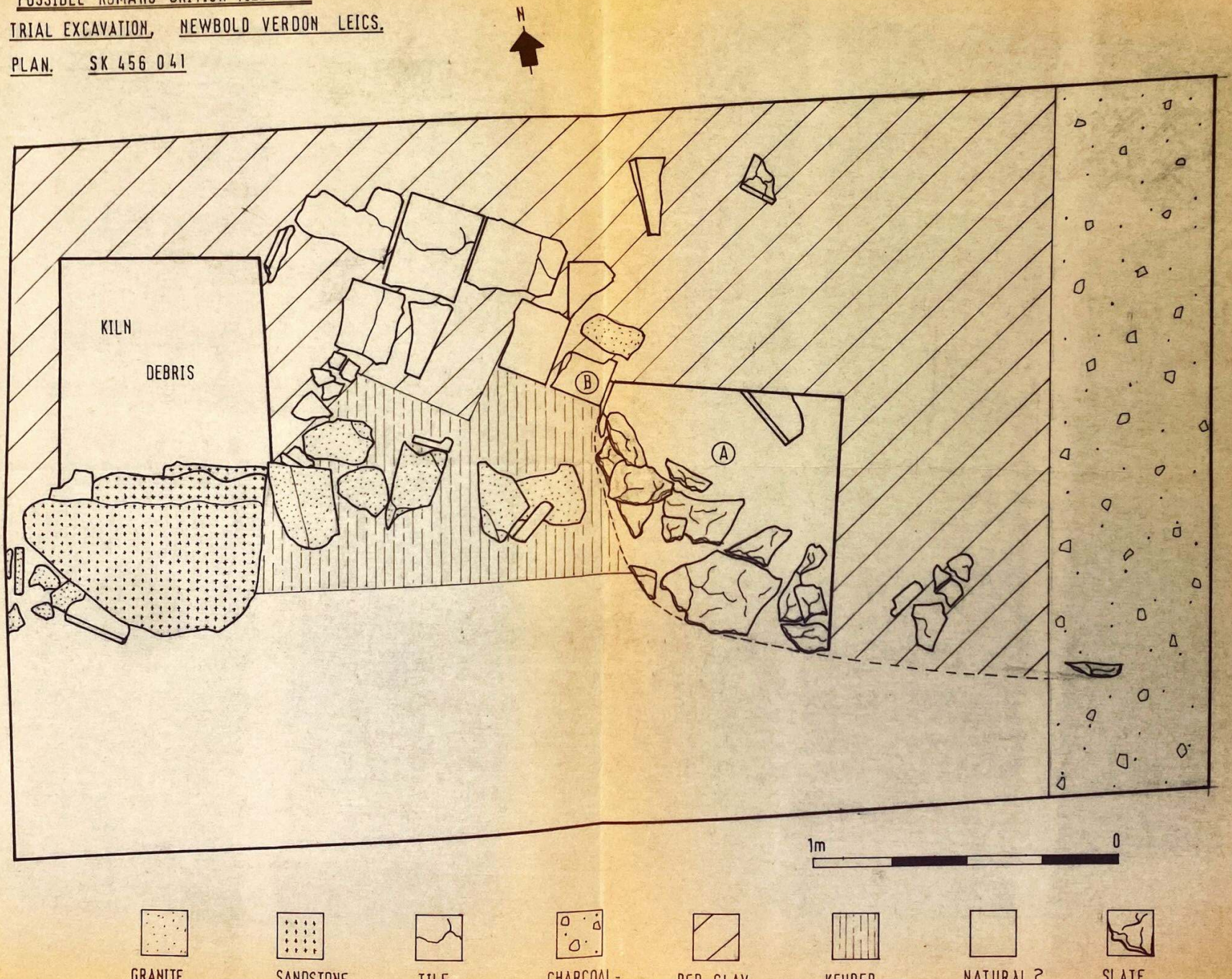


RK 234 (7-9)

POSSIBLE ROMANO-BRITISH TILE KILN

TRIAL EXCAVATION, NEWBOLD VERDON LEICS.

PLAN. SK 456 041



RK235 (8-9)

Newbold Verdon Tile Kiln SK456041

The tiles from this kiln site are nearly all of the same fabric-for the purpose of this note it is called fabric A (based on a sample analysis)

FABRIC definition

sub rounded/rounded quartz grains-both clear, glassy and white(av. 0.05mm) and some dark(0.01-0.02mm). 7-8% concentration.

Also a 3% conc. of red rounded/sub rounded ferrous oxide(0.05mm or less) and a 2-3% conc. of rounded/sub rounded black ferrous oxide(some around 0.05mm, some 0.1-0.2mm)

A 3-4% conc. of off-white mudstone(0.7-1.0mm with some less than 0.05mm). The larger inclusions tend to break the surface of the clay.

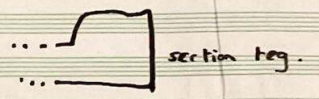
A light spread of mica flecks, with the odd flattish oval void.

Has a pale orange fabric, which is more reddy orange when underfired. The texture is medium/ill-sorted

TEGULAE

General characteristics:-

Flanges are steep sided with a slightly humped top that falls away towards the edge-but rises suddenly right at the edge. It is usually around 35mm wide but narrows at the top end to around 25mm. About 20mm high.



The bottom cut out rises at an angle of 35-45 deg. and is around 40mm long and just a little wider-42mm or more.

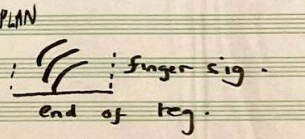
Knife trimming- flange sides are done irregularly but there may be a pattern of trimming from the bottom. The ends are trimmed slightly at the top and bottom edges. The bottom surfaces are often trimmed- up to 75% and have the rather typical linear grooves. The top surfaces have faint linear striations, and there are always the wide grooves by the flanges. Chacacteristic of the top surface is the bumpy, slightly uneven surfaces that are often broken up by large mudstone inclusions.

No overall length of the tile is known- min. length is 347mm. They are between 289 & 297mm wide, and are usually 20mm thick.

No top cut outs were present.

One teg. had a nail hole.

One teg. had a trace of a 3 (min.) finger signature- curved (a very common sig.) This was in fabric A but no other teg had any evidence of this signature. This implies either a one off doodle, or more prbably a second tiler. More evidence is needed here.



The overfired/reduced tegs could not be analysed. They were almost vitrified (a very glassy looking fabric) They have flanges very similar to the fabric A type.

IMBREX

Only one fragment, 16.5mm thick in Fabric A, but very softly fired. A pretty typical imbrex. Nothing of note to say about it.

UNCLASSIFIED TILE

2 frags

WALLTILE

All fabric A, pretty similar looking; as with all tegulae have uneven, bumpy top surfaces(with mud stone breaking through).

Knife-trimmed on the top and bottom edges of the sides, and patchily on the bottom surface (up to 50-60%, with linea grooving).

Usually 280-290mm wide and aroung 35mm thick. No overal lengths are measurable, minimum length is 200mm.

There are pawprints on one tile.

One (reduced/overfired) has an irregular finger signature. This does not appear on any other tile and may just be a doodle, especially as it is so irregular.



RK235 (9-9)



PLAN
Comb pattern.

BOXTILE

One fragment with a (minimum) five-tooth comb (but probably just five), in fabric A.

Also three fragments with a (minimum) four-tooth comb (quite coarse). Overall patterns not visible. The fabric is very slghtly different from fabric A (less mudstone, red 4-5%, black 3-4%) but probably not a different clay source, just a slight variation.

OSBASTON MATERIAL

In the sample looked at, none of the tile was fabric A. Some fabrics similar, generally more black ferrous oxide and less mudstone. Perhaps suggests the clay source is not too far from the Newbold Verdon tile kiln clay source.

The grey (walltile) material is very different, having a lot of quartz (25% or more).

The boxtile has a coarse four-comb pattern, but is not fabric A.