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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT
TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND OFF WARDENTREE LANE, PINCHBECK, LINCOLNSHIRE

NGR: TF 25656 24989

Report prepared for
The Martin Design Partnership

by Chris Clay

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Cover photograph: 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map of Pinchbeck (1890)

Summary

- A programme of archaeological trial trenching was carried on in advance of development on land off Wardentree Lane, Pinchbeck, Lincolnshire.

- The site lies in an area that would have been seasonally flooded for much of the prehistoric through to early medieval periods. Evidence of Iron Age, Roman and medieval salt making has been found in the area, as well as evidence of Anglo-Saxon settlement and medieval field systems.

- Eight 50m long trenches were excavated. There was a low density of archaeological and natural features across the site, comprising possible palaeochannels and recent field boundaries. The only dating evidence was a 14th – 17th century brick fragment from a buried soil in Trench 6, and 19th – 20th century pottery and a residual 5th – 8th century pottery sherd from a ditch in Trench 8.

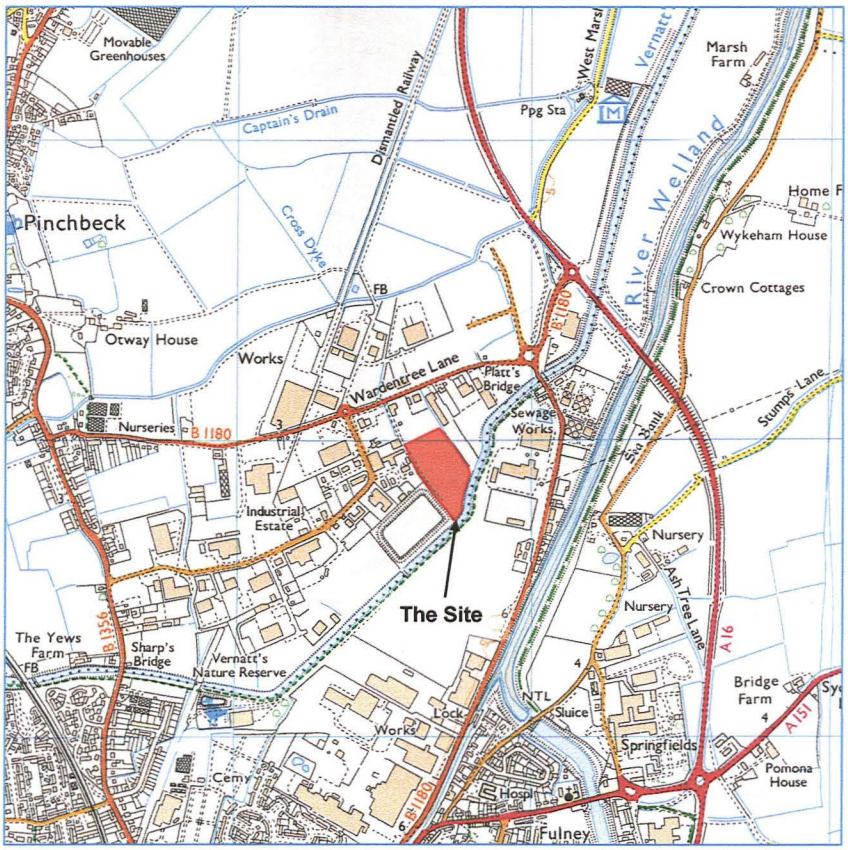

Fig. 1: Site location (scale 1:25,000)

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Allen Archaeological Associates was commissioned by The Martin Design Partnership to carry out an archaeological evaluation in advance of development on land off Wardentree Lane, Pinchbeck, Lincolnshire.

1.2 The site works and reporting conform to current national guidelines, as set out in the Institute for Field Archaeologists 'Standards and guidance for archaeological evaluations' (IFA 2001), and a specification prepared by this company (Allen 2006).

1.3 The archive will be submitted to the museum in Lincoln (The Collection) for long-term storage.

2.0 Site location and description

2.1 Pinchbeck is situated in south Lincolnshire, in the administrative district of South Holland. It is approximately 54km south-south-east of Lincoln. The site lies towards the south-east corner of the parish, east of the village. It is to the south of Wardentree Lane, with industrial units bounding the site to the north and east. Shotbolt Lane runs along the west side of the development area, and the south side of the site is defined by Vernatt's Drain, which also forms the parish boundary with Spalding.

2.2 The site centres on NGR TF 25656 24989. It is low-lying, sloping down from approximately 3.0m above Ordnance Datum at the south end of the site, to a low point of c.1.1m towards the north end of the site. At the time of the fieldwork, the site was waste ground, covered in dense vegetation upto 3m high.

2.3 The local geology consists of drift deposits of the Terrington beds; younger marine alluvium, salt marsh, tidal creek and river deposits, laid down over the last 2500 years. This seals a solid geology of Oxford Clay (British Geological Survey 1992).

3.0 Planning background

3.1 An outline planning application for the construction of an industrial unit on land of Wardentree Lane, Pinchbeck, was submitted to South Holland District Council in 2006 (ref. H14/0527/06 & H14/0528/06). The Built Environment Officer for Lincolnshire (who advises the local planning authority on archaeological planning matters), has recommended that any decision on the application should be deferred until the results of the evaluation are known.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

4.1 For much of prehistory, the site would have been subject to repeated marine transgressions and hence largely unsuitable for human occupation. However, small quantities of worked flint have been identified in the wider region, attesting to a limited degree of at least seasonal occupation.

4.2 Sea levels fell in the Iron Age, allowing settlement and agricultural exploitation on a more permanent basis. The Fenland Survey, which incorporated the western side of Pinchbeck parish, has identified a number of artefact scatters of Iron Age date; however these are significantly further inland than the proposed development area, and were therefore less subject to marine inundation (Hayes & Lane, 1992).

4.3 Sea levels continued to fall in the Romano-British period, during which time the Fenland Survey identified a greatly increased density in the settlement pattern in the west side of the parish (Hayes & Lane 1992). Fieldwork to the immediate east of the development area recovered small quantities of residual Romano-British pottery (Albone 1999). Tentative evidence of Romano-British salt making activity was also identified to the east of the site during the construction of the sugar beet factory in 1926 (HER ref. 23592).

4.4 Anglo-Saxon pottery found in the Spalding area suggests settlement from at least the 6th century AD, and a permanent settlement had developed in Pinchbeck by at least the 9th century AD, as attested by a number of surviving land grants. In 810, Aelfgar granted land in Pinchbeck and Spalding to Siward, abbot of Crowland, and in 851, Berhtwulf, king of Mercia also granted land in both Spalding and Pinchbeck to Siward (Sawyer 1998).

4.5 By the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, the land in the parish of Pinchbeck was owned by Guy of Craon and Ivo Tallboys, who owned four fisheries, rendering 1500 eels (Morgan & Thorne 1986). At this time, the parish was still very close to the coastline, which is believed to have run east – west along a line of villages such as Holbeach and Whaplode to Spalding, turning northwards and running to the east of Vernatt's Drain, approximately 100m to the east of the site (British Geological Survey 1992). Gradual reclamation took place throughout the medieval period, with extensive programmes of land drainage and sea defences. By c.1300, a major sea bank, the 'Roman Bank' had been constructed. To the east of the development area the bank followed the earlier Saxon coastline, running north along the line of West Marsh Road (ibid.).

4.6 A number of sites in the area have been subject to archaeological investigation in recent years. Extensive cropmarks were investigated to the west of the dismantled railway line (north-west of the site), exposing medieval and post-medieval field systems (Stevens 2002). To the east of the site, fieldwork on both sides of Wardentree Lane identified numerous palaeochannels, as well as further field systems of medieval and post-medieval date, and pottery scatters of Saxo-Norman to medieval date (Albone 1999, Clay 2003, Munford 2004). This suggests a largely agrarian landscape, exploiting the low-lying reclaimed coastal grazing lands. It should be noted however that the salt-making industry that had developed in the Iron Age and Romano-British periods continued to be an important part of the economic life of the region. The County Historic Environment Record lists a number of sites where evidence of this industry has been recovered, particularly to the north of the site, towards Surfleet, running along the line of the Roman Bank (HER ref. 23633). Documentary references mention salt making in Pinchbeck from the 13th century, ceasing by 1477, probably due to the gradual reclamation of land pushing the coastline further eastwards from the village (Hallam 1960).

5.0 Methodology

5.1 In order to fully evaluate the archaeological resource within the proposed development area, a programme of intrusive archaeological investigation was undertaken. This required the excavation of eight trenches, each measuring 50m long by 2m wide. The location of the trenches was agreed with the Built Environment Officer prior to the works. They were located by use of tapes, offsetting from the site boundaries. The trenches were then accurately surveyed using differential GPS (figure 2).

5.2 Initial excavation of the trenches was undertaken by a tracked 360° excavator, fitted with a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket. Topsoil and subsoil deposits were removed in spits

no greater than 0.2m in depth, under close archaeological supervision, until the first archaeologically significant horizon was exposed. Further excavation was then carried out by hand. Deep sondages were machine excavated in Trenches 1 and 5 to observe the stratigraphic sequence.

5.3 Archaeological features were sample excavated in order to establish depth, profile, orientation, and where possible, date and function.

5.4 A full written record of all archaeological features and deposits was made on standard Allen Archaeological Associates recording sheets, accompanied by plan and section drawings at an appropriate scale (1:50 and 1:20). A full photographic record was also made, and selected prints have been included in this report.

6.0 Results

6.1 Trench 1

6.1.1 Machine excavation removed approximately 0.4m of a grey/brown clayey silt topsoil, 100. This sealed a clean yellowish brown silt, 101, typical of natural alluvial deposition, by intermittent, perhaps seasonal flood events.

6.1.2 Approximately 13.5m from the east end of the trench, a single linear feature, 102, was exposed. This was relatively modern, as it cut both the natural silt 101, and topsoil 100, and was sealed only by a thin layer of surface vegetation. The ditch was 1.1m wide and 0.9m deep, with steep sides and an uneven base. It contained a backfill deposit of grey/brown silty clay, 103.

6.1.3 A sondage was excavated at the west end of the trench, to a depth of 1.9m below the modern ground surface. This showed the natural silt layer 101 to be 0.4m deep. It sealed a compact grey clay layer, 104, of 0.6m depth, which suggests deposition by very slow moving or standing water. This in turn sealed 105, a layer of pale grey silty clay, that extended beyond the limit of excavation and evidenced deposition in an environment of slightly faster moving water, perhaps through intermittent flooding. No dating evidence was recovered from any of these deposits.

6.2 Trench 2

6.2.1 The uppermost layer was topsoil 200, which was upto 0.6m deep. This sealed a 0.2m deep subsoil, 201. The underlying natural deposit was clean, yellowish brown silt, 204.

6.2.2 A single linear feature, 202, was exposed below subsoil 201, approximately 11m from the south end of the trench. It was 2.1m wide and 0.4m deep, with shallow sides and a concave base. The undated fill, 203, was yellowish brown clayey silt, formed through natural silting. The feature had diffuse edges and a slightly irregular profile, and was archaeologically sterile, suggesting that it may have been a naturally formed palaeochannel rather than a man-made feature, although it was not possible to prove this.

6.3 Trench 3

6.3.1 The topsoil within this trench, 100, was a 0.5m deep greyish brown silt that incorporated small amounts of modern concrete and tarmac. It lay directly upon a clean yellowish brown silt, 301, measuring 0.25m deep.

6.3.2 Towards the west end of the trench was a large modern pit, filled with large concrete and tarmac fragments. Machine excavation of this modern feature exposed a layer of compact grey silty clay, 302, directly below silt layer 301. The deposit extended beyond the limit of excavation, at 1.4m below the modern ground surface.

6.4 Trench 4

6.4.1 Trench 4 was sealed by a topsoil deposit, 400, varying between 0.4 and 0.6m deep. This in turn sealed a subsoil, 401, comprising light brown silty clay. 401 is likely to have been formed by the continual process of disturbance by plant root and animal burrows, as well as some deposition of alluvial material by flooding.

6.4.2 401 sealed a single linear feature, 402, running north-north-east to south-south-west. This was slightly irregular in plan, varying between 0.7 and 1.2m wide, and was upto 0.5m deep. The fill was a compact greyish brown clay, 403, which was undated. It is likely that this feature was a palaeochannel. The natural silts to either side of the cut had a wavy, laminated pattern, strongly suggestive of intermittent flood events derived from the adjacent feature.

6.5 Trench 5

6.5.1 The machine excavation of the trench removed a 0.5m deep topsoil deposit, 500, which sealed a single large linear feature, 506. This was approximately 6.6m wide and ran on a broadly north – south alignment, approximately 14m from the east end of the trench. A slot was excavated through the east side of the feature, revealing a slightly irregular, shallow sloping edge, extending to a depth of 0.4m. The feature contained a primary fill of greyish brown silty clay, 503, sealed by an orange/brown fine silt, 502. Both deposits were undated, and were suggestive of gradual natural silting. The feature was interpreted as a probable natural palaeochannel.

6.5.2 506 was cut through a clean yellowish brown natural silt, 504/505. In the sondage at the west end of the trench, this deposit was shown to be approximately 0.5m deep, sealing a compact brownish grey clay, 507, that extended beyond the limit of excavation (over 1.6m below the modern ground surface).

6.6 Trench 6

6.6.1 The topsoil in this trench was a 0.4m deep greyish brown silt, 600, which sealed a yellowish brown sandy silt, 601. This deposit may represent a layer of redeposited natural silt that had been deliberately dumped to raise the ground surface, as it was seen to seal a probable former ground surface, 602, comprising a 0.25m deep layer of dark greyish brown sandy silt. A single fragment of hand made brick was recovered from this context, dating to the 14th – 17th century.

6.6.2 The underlying natural deposit was a clean yellowish brown silt, 603.

6.7 Trench 7

6.7.1 The uppermost deposit in the trench was a 0.45m deep topsoil, 700, which sealed an intermittent subsoil layer 704, comprising a yellow brown silt up to 0.35m deep. Below this was a layer of clean yellowish brown silt, 701. Towards the east end of the trench, a patchy deposit of sterile grey silty clay, 705, was exposed in plan, and was initially believed to indicate an infilled palaeochannel. A slot excavated through the deposit showed it to represent a slightly undulating layer that ran below natural silt layer 701. It was interpreted as a deposit that had formed naturally in an environment of very slow moving or standing water.

6.7.2 Further to the west, a linear feature, 702, ran across the trench on a north-west to south-east alignment. It was 0.75m wide and 0.2m deep, with a moderately steep sided profile and a flat base. It was filled with an undated deposit of compact greyish brown silty clay, which mounded up slightly above the surviving cut towards the east side of the feature. It is possible that this feature represents a small roddon, a naturally formed landscape feature common in low-lying fenland environments. These features form as a result of the infilling of palaeochannels by silt or clay (such as 703), and then the shrinkage of the surrounding land through drainage (Brown 2001), thus leaving a slight linear earthwork.

6.7.3 Below 702 was a deposit comprising laminated bands of grey silty clay and brown clayey silt, with occasional iron pan, 706. It is likely to represent the same depositional event as 705.

6.8 Trench 8

6.8.1 The trench was sealed by a 0.4m deep topsoil layer, 800, and a subsoil layer, 801, comprising a yellowish brown clayey silt, up to 0.3m deep. 801 sealed two intercutting linear features, running east – west across the trench.

6.8.2 The earliest feature was 803, which survived to a depth of 0.2m and was 1.6m wide. It contained a single undated fill of brownish grey clayey silt, 804. To the west, the ditch cut a thin lens of dark greyish brown clayey silt, 807, no more than 0.1m thick. This may represent the truncated remains of a former ground surface, through which 803 had been cut.

6.8.3 The east side of 803 was cut by 805, which had a shallow bowl shaped profile, approximately 1.55m wide and 0.3m deep. It contained a fill of greyish brown clay/silt, 806, which produced four sherds of 19th – 20th century pottery and a single residual sherd of pottery of 5th – 8th century date.

6.8.4 Both ditches were cut through a natural alluvial deposit of fine brownish yellow silt, 802.

7.0 Discussion and conclusion

7.1 Features of possible, but limited archaeological significance, were exposed in seven of the eight trenches, the exception being Trench 3, where only the natural stratigraphic sequence was exposed, and a large modern intrusion filled with tarmac and concrete chunks.

7.2 No cut features were exposed in Trench 6, although a possible buried soil was identified, which suggested that there had been some deliberate dumping of material to raise and level the ground surface in that locality. The reason for this event is unclear, nor can the

date be accurately established, although a single fragment of hand made brick from the buried soil was dated to the 14th – 17th century, providing a broad *terminus post quem* for the overlying ground raising deposit.

7.3 The exact nature of the features exposed in Trenches 2, 4, 5 and 7 was not clear. They may possibly indicate man made drainage/boundary features. However, they do not appear on the 1890 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of the site (Figure 11) and are archaeologically sterile. As such, they are more likely to represent naturally formed palaeochannels, typical of the low lying coastal floodplains of the Lincolnshire Fens.

7.4 A single undated linear feature in Trench 1 was of modern date, as it cut the topsoil and was sealed only by a thin layer of surface vegetation.

7.5 The only dateable feature was a ditch running across Trench 8, cutting an earlier ditch. This produced four sherds of 19th – 20th century pottery, as well as a small residual sherd of probable 5th – 8th century Anglo-Saxon pottery. The ditches do not appear on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of the site (Figure 11). Unfortunately, the dating evidence is not sufficiently precise to determine whether the ditches pre- or post-date the map.

7.6 The sherd of Anglo-Saxon pottery is tentative evidence of limited activity in the area, at a time when the coastline was within approximately 100m of the site. At the time the locality would probably have been seasonally flooded coastal saltmarsh. Anglo-Saxon activity has been identified within the region; however these remains lie at the western end of the parish, away from the site. The recovery of a single sherd of abraded pottery does not provide enough evidence to suggest activity on the site at this time.

8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

8.1 The evaluation methodology employed was appropriate to the scale and nature of the proposed development. It indicated that the site contained few archaeological features, that were largely undated and of limited significance.

9.0 Acknowledgements

9.1 Allen Archaeological Associates would like to thank The Martin Design Partnership for this commission. Thanks also go to the site staff, Charlotte Burrill and Jon Tanner.

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11.0 Site archive

11.1 The documentary and physical archive is currently in the possession of Allen Archaeological Associates. It will be deposited at The Collection, Lincoln, within six months.

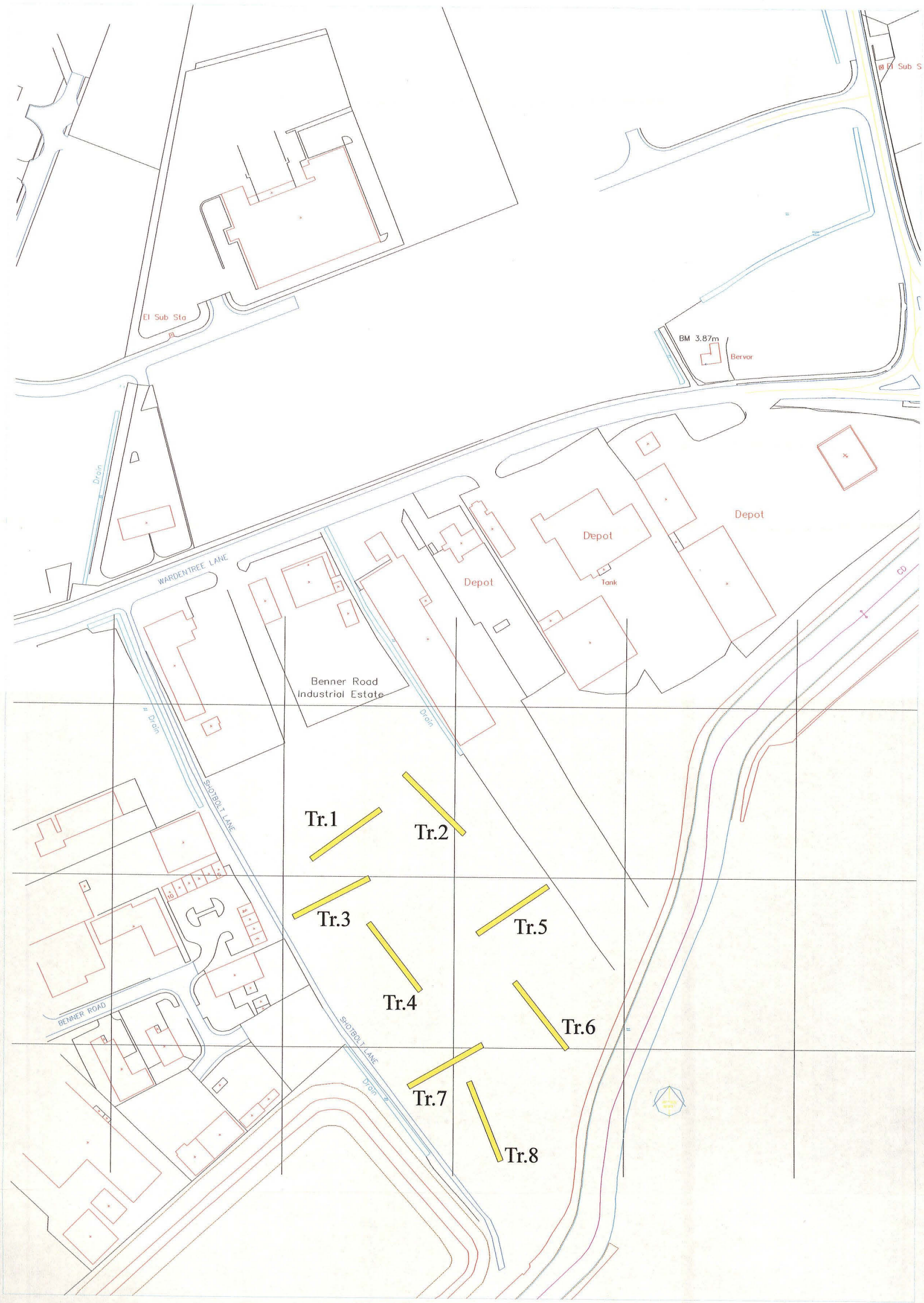


Fig. 2: Trench location plan (scale 1:2500)

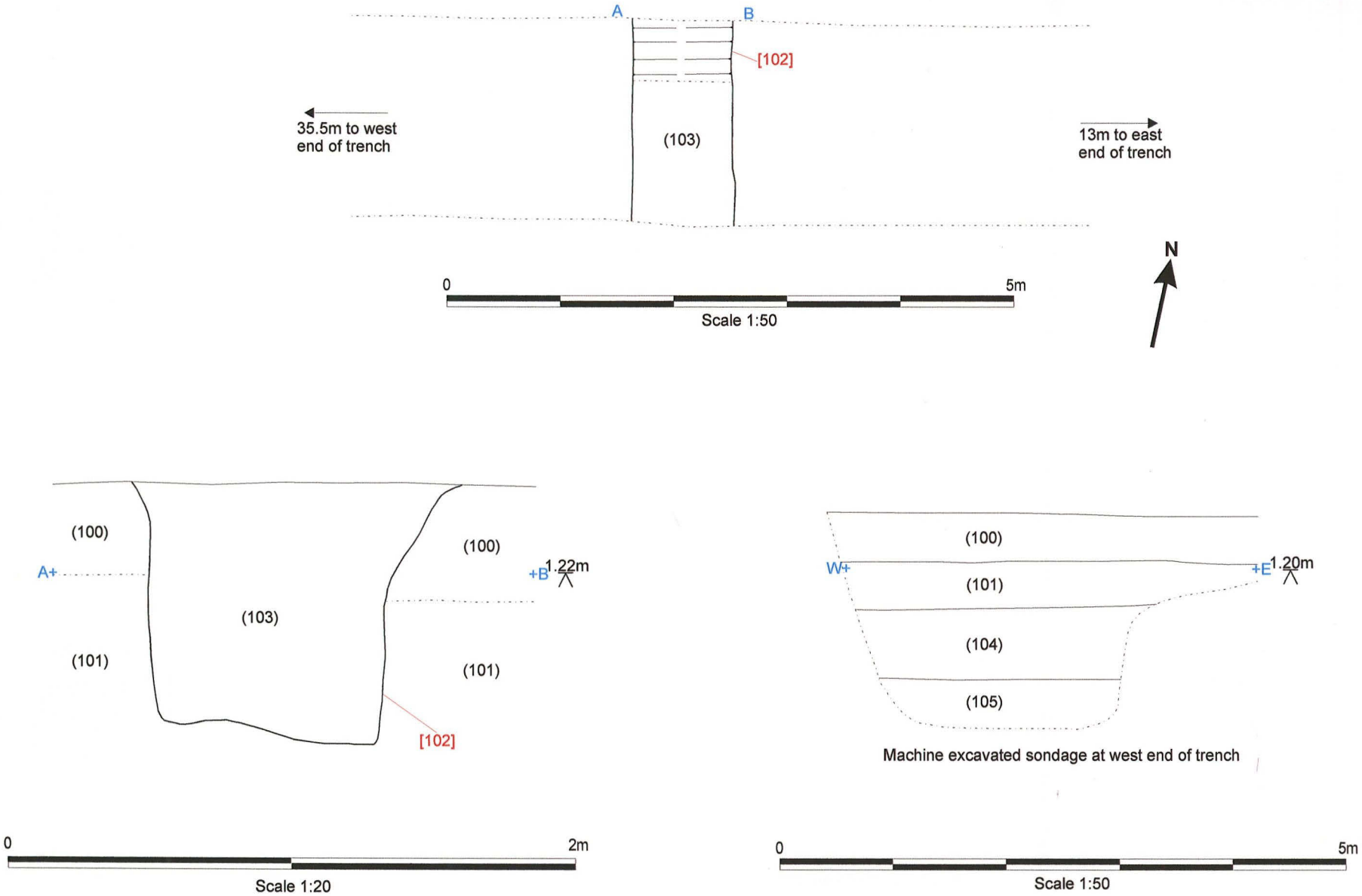


Fig. 3: Trench 1 plan and sections (scales 1:50 and 1:20)

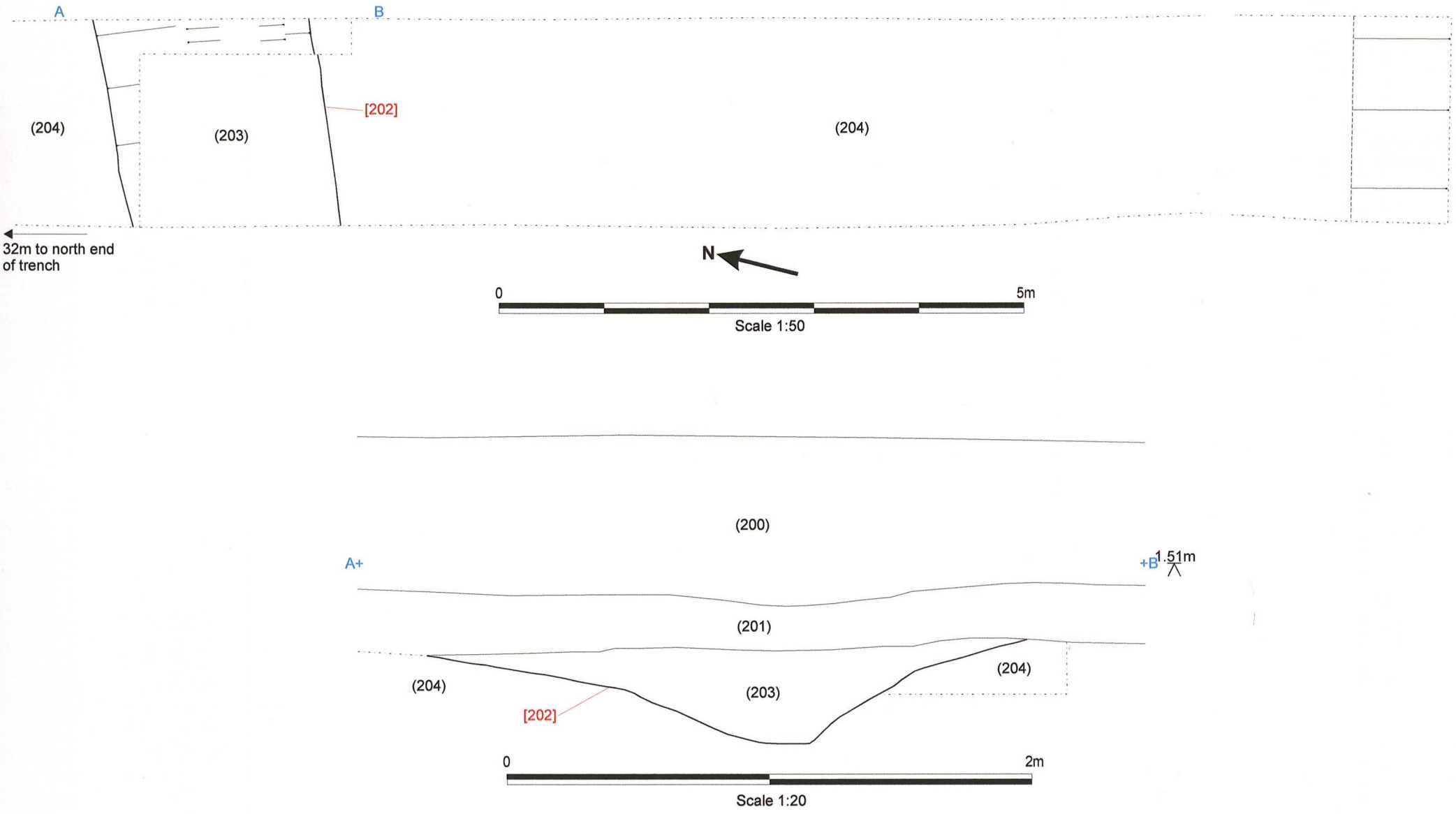


Fig. 4: Trench 2 plan and section (scales 1:50 and 1:20)

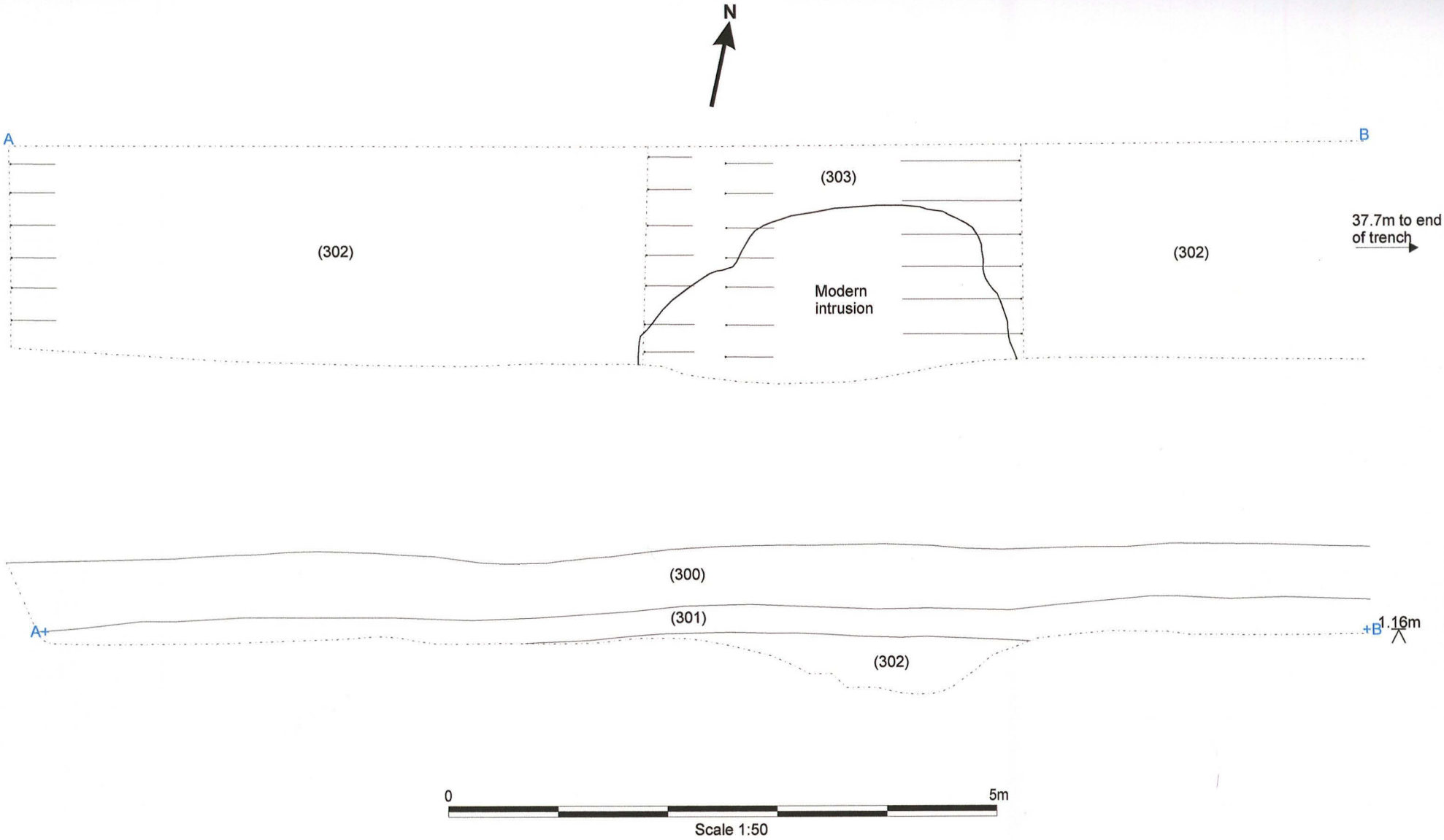


Fig. 5: Trench 3 plan and section (scale 1:50)

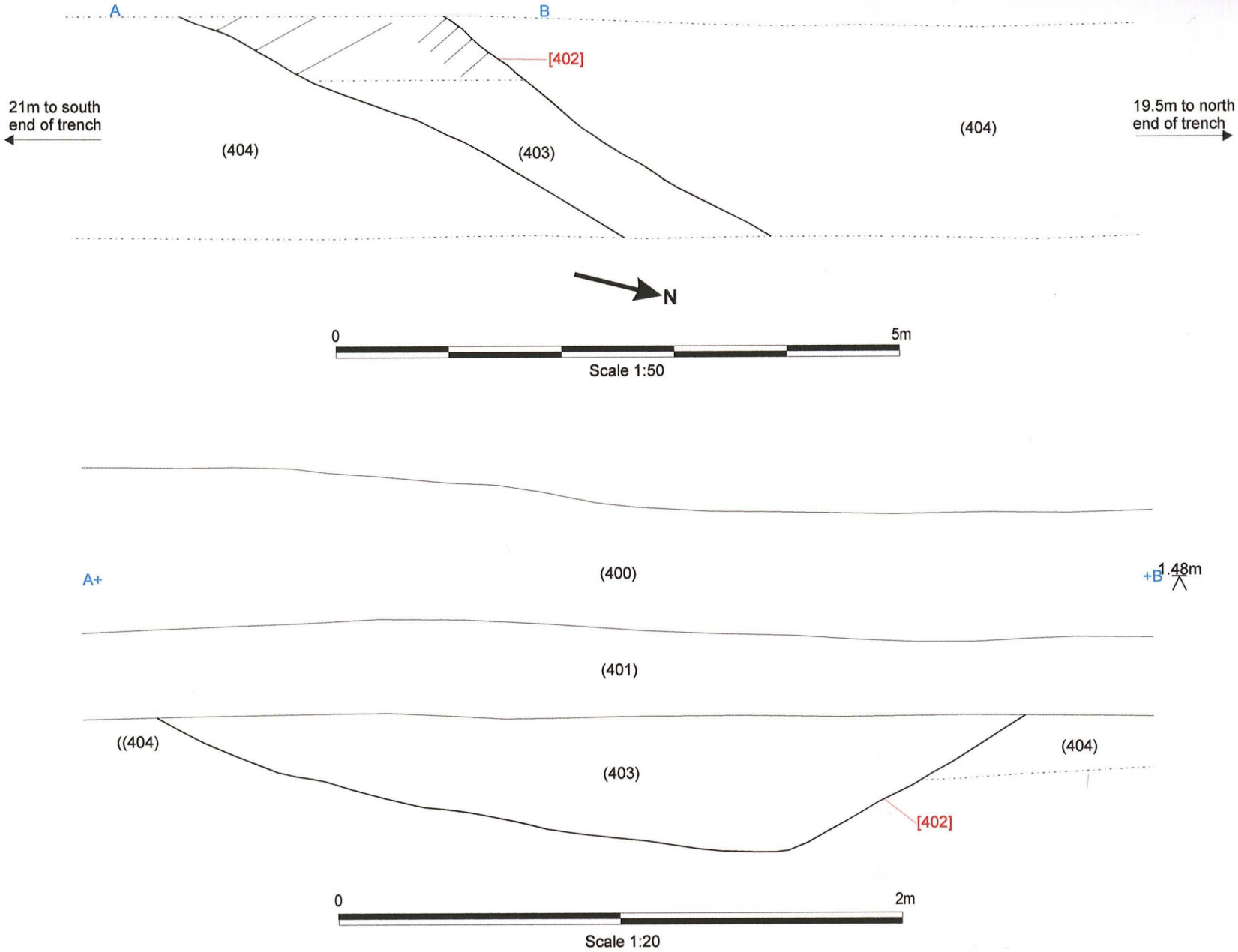


Fig. 6: Trench 4 plan and section (scales 1:50 and 1:20)

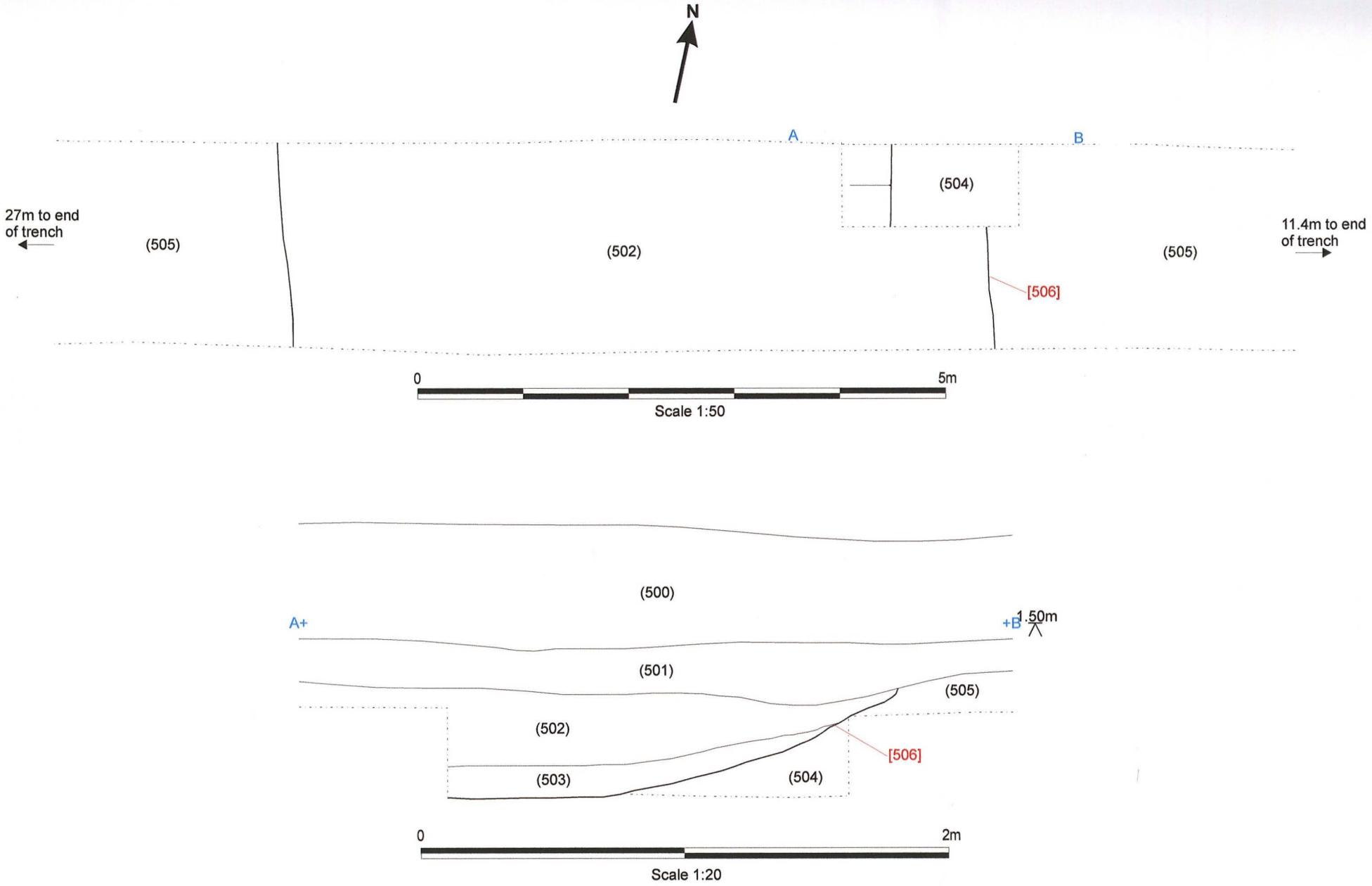


Fig. 7: Trench 5 plan and section (scales 1:50 and 1:20)

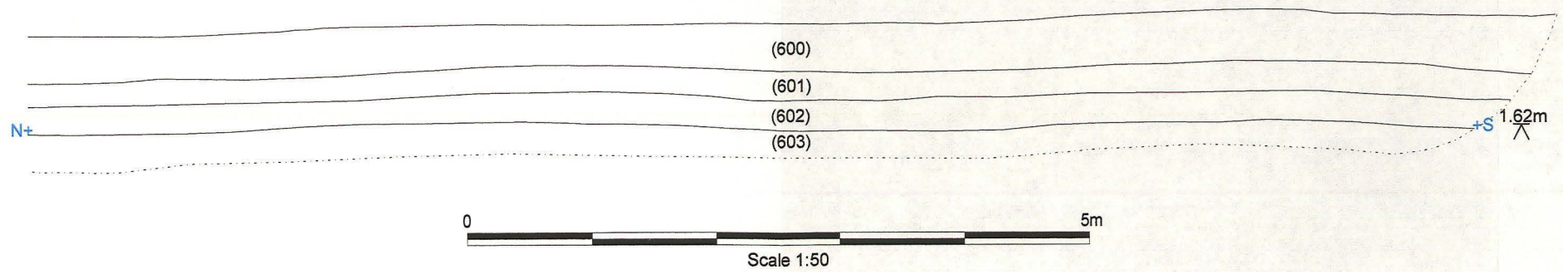


Fig. 8: Trench 6 section (scale 1:50)

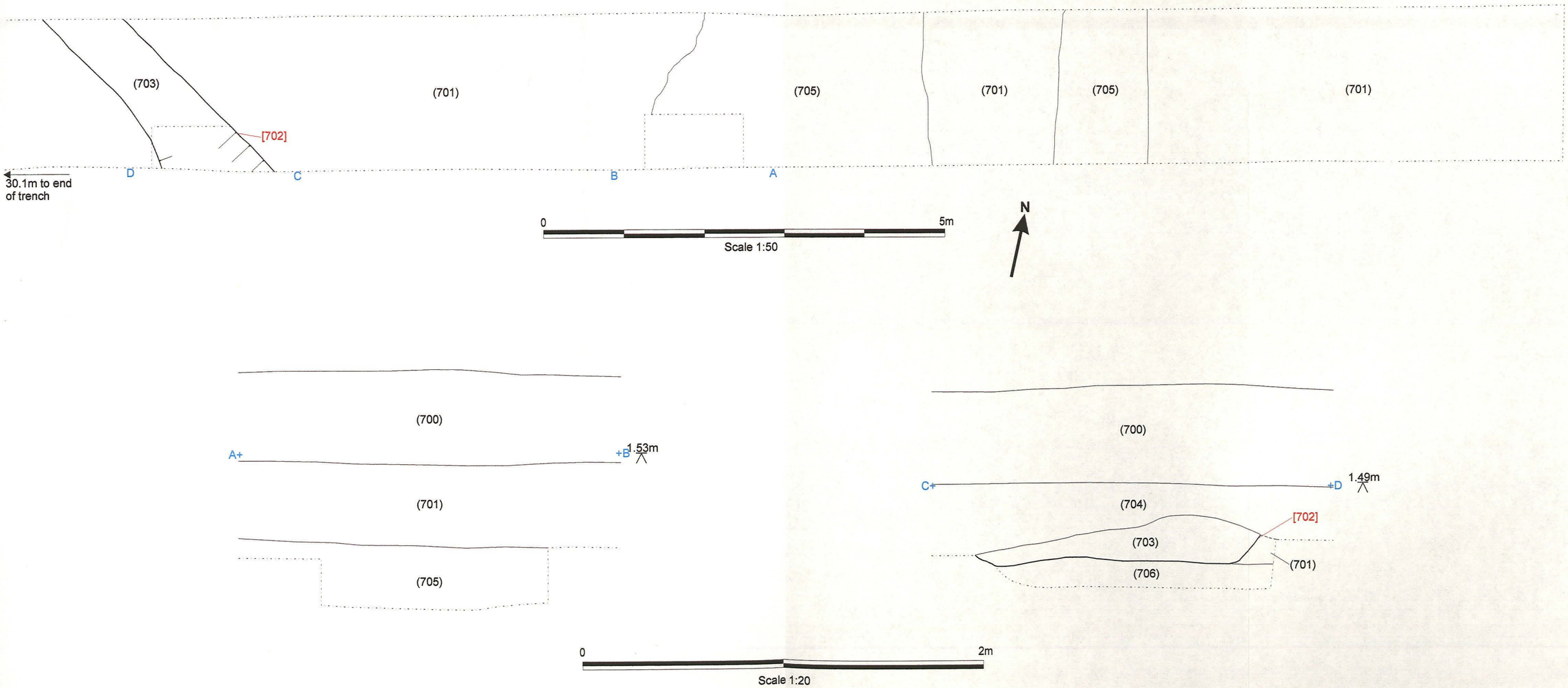


Fig. 9: Trench 7 plan and sections (scales 1:50 and 1:20)

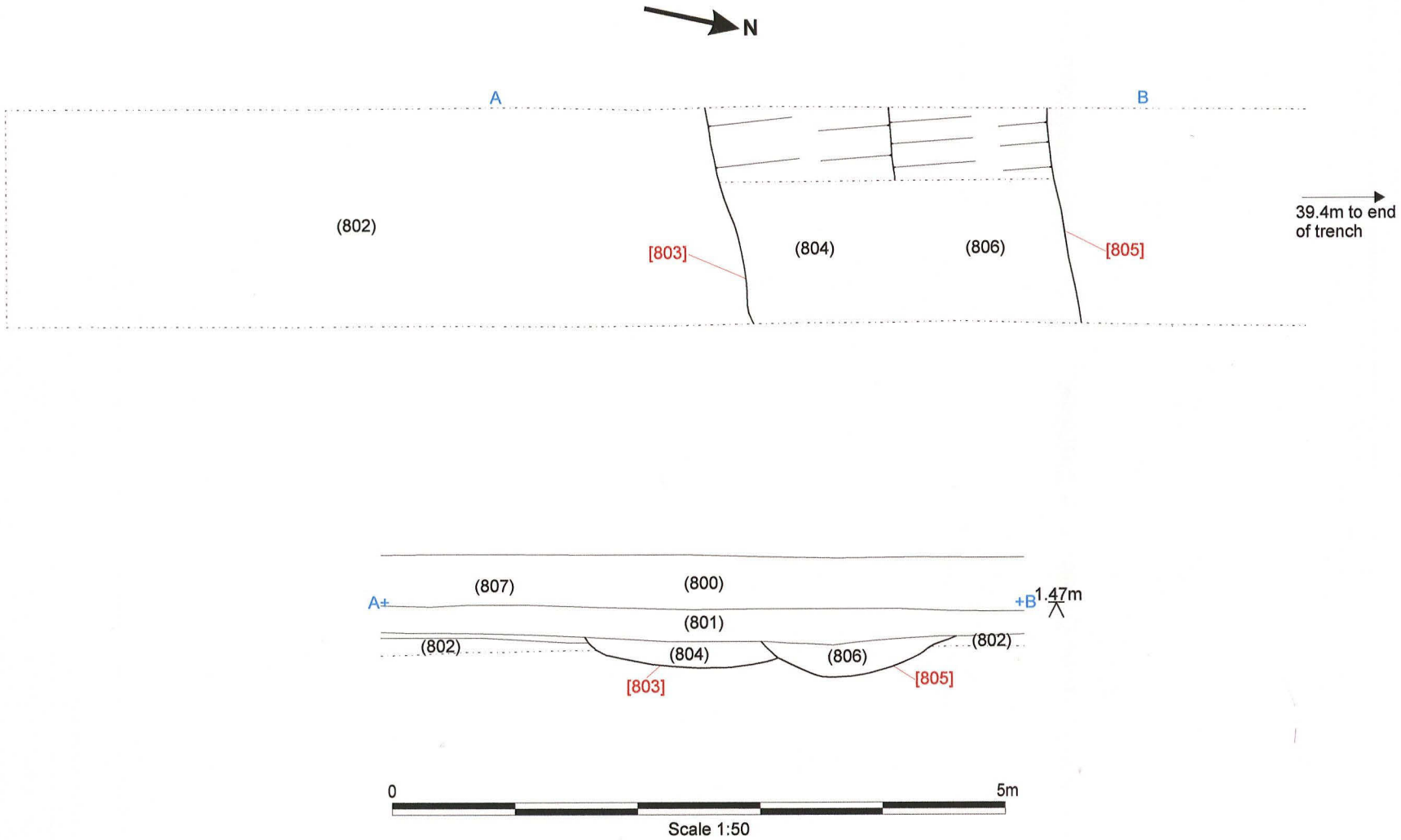


Fig. 10: Trench 8 plan and section (scale 1:50)

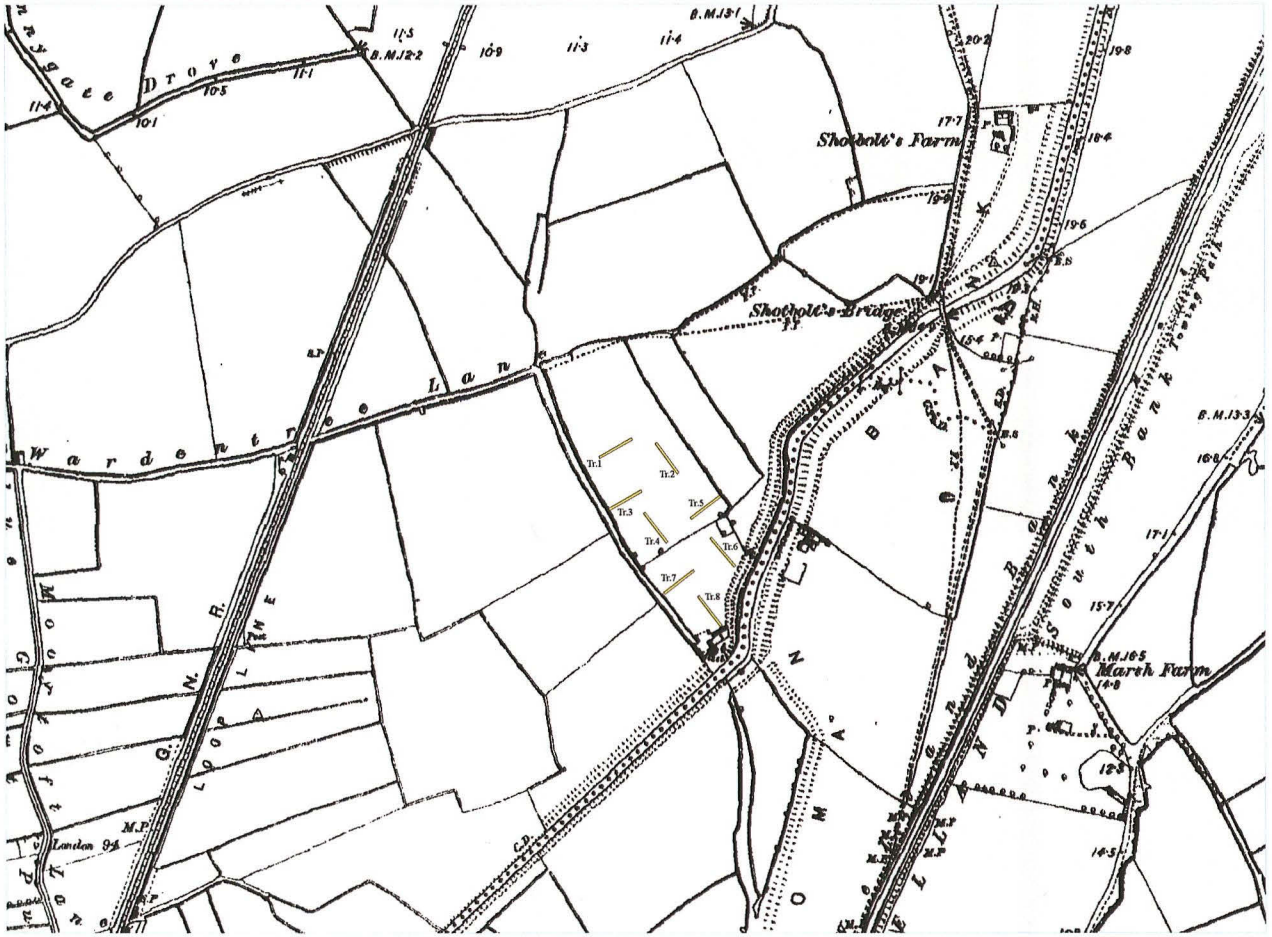
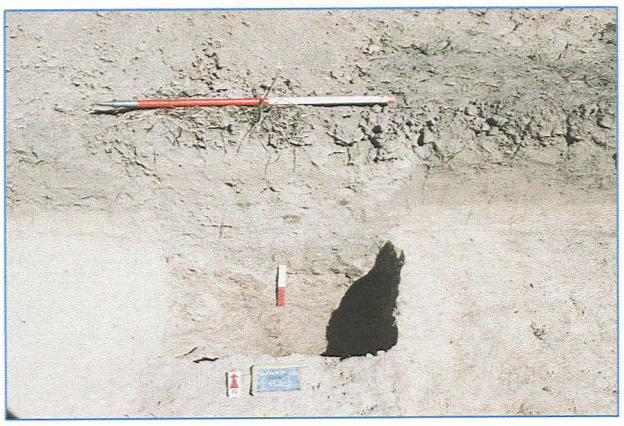


Fig. 11: 1890 Ordnance Survey First Edition 6" to one mile map of the site, showing the location of the evaluation trenches (scaled to 1:10,000)

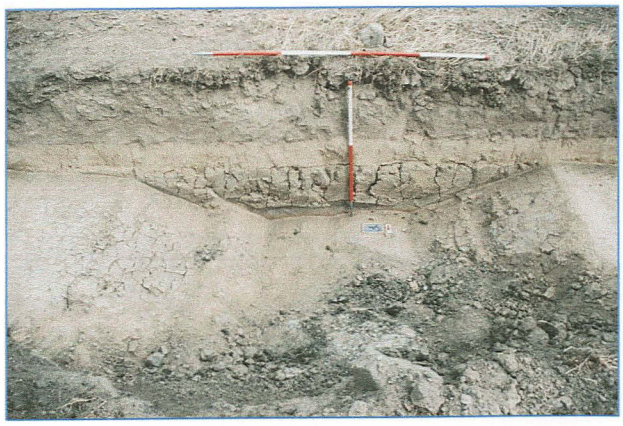
Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Pl. 1: Modern ditch [102], Trench 1, looking north.

Pl. 2: Trench 2, pre-excavation, looking north

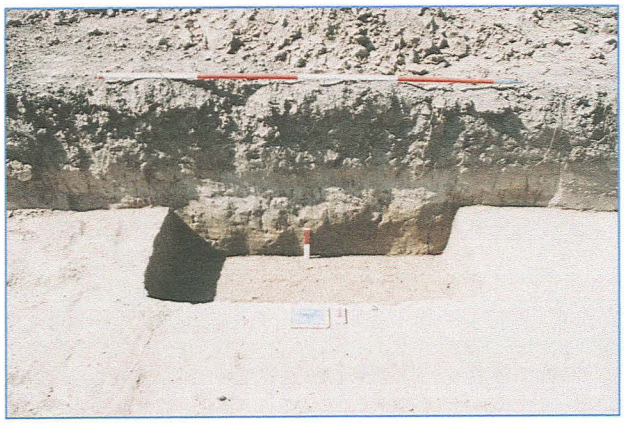
Pl. 3: Trench 3, pre-excavation, looking east



Pl. 4: Stratigraphic sequence in Trench 3, where the modern intrusion has been removed by machine. Looking north.

Pl. 5: Probable palaeochannel [402], Trench 4. Looking west.

Pl. 6: Trench 5, pre-excavation. Looking east.



Pl. 7: Slot through palaeochannel [506], Trench 5. Looking north.

Pl. 8: Stratigraphic sequence in Trench 6, showing the buried soil and ground raising deposits. Looking east.

Pl. 9: Trench 7 pre-excavation. Looking west.

Pl. 10: Slot through possible roddon [702]. Looking south

Pl. 11: Trench 8 pre-excavation. Looking south.

Pl. 12: Ditches [803] and [805], looking west.

Appendix 2: Pottery and CBM report

WARP06 Pottery Archive

Anne Boyle and Jane Young

Context	cname	full name	form type	sherds	vessels	weight	part	description	date
806	LERTH	Late earthenwares	small garden pot	2	1	31	base	discarded	19th to 20th
806	LERTH	Late earthenwares	small garden pot	2	1	16	base+BS	discarded	19th to 20th
806	RQCL	Central Lincs Early to Mid Saxon Rounded Quartz Fabric	jar / bowl	1	1	7	BS	? ID as in poor state; no surfaces; abun fine sub round to round quartz + mod med round to sub round quartz; sparse ca incl fossil ? + mod fine background ca + mod fine voids from carb veg? + mod carb veg + sparse grey soft rock;micaceous clay; handmade	5th to 8th ?

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context	cname	full name	fabric	frags	weight	description	date
602	BRK	Brick	mixed silty + calcareous clay ?	1	61	v abraded; salt surfacing	14th – 17th

Appendix 3: List of archaeological contexts

Trench 1

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
100	Layer	Greyish brown silt, occ small stones	Topsoil
101	Layer	Yellowish brown clayey silt	Natural alluvial silt
102	Cut	Linear ditch cut, running N-S. Contains 103, cuts 100, 101.	Modern linear feature, sealed by surface vegetation
103	Fill	Greyish brown silty clay	Backfill of 102
104	Layer	Compact grey clay	Natural waterborne deposit
105	Layer	Pale grey silty clay	Natural waterborne deposit

Trench 2

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
200	Layer	Greyish brown clayey silt	Topsoil
201	Layer	Greyish brown silt	Subsoil
202	Cut	Linear feature, aligned E-W. Contains 203	Probable natural palaeochannel
203	Fill	Yellowish brown clayey silt	Natural silting of 202
204	Layer	Light yellowish brown clayey silt	Natural alluvial silt

Trench 3

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
300	Layer	Greyish brown silt, occ small stones	Topsoil
301	Layer	Light yellowish brown clayey silt	Natural alluvial silt
302	Layer	Compact grey clay	Natural waterborne deposit, laid down by very slow moving/standing water

Trench 4

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
400	Layer	Dark brownish grey clayey silt, occ small stones	Toposil
401	Layer	Mid – light brown clayey silt	Subsoil
402	Cut	Linear feature aligned NE-SW	Probable natural palaeochannel
403	Fill	Compact dark greyish brown clay	Natural silting of 402
404	Layer	Light yellowish brown clayey silt	Natural alluvial silt

Trench 5

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
500	Layer	Greyish brown clayey silt	Topsoil
501	Layer	Light greyish brown silt	Subsoil
502	Fill	Orange/brown clayey silt	Secondary natural silting of 506
503	Fill	Greyish brown silty clay	Primary natural silting of 506
504	Layer	Light yellowish brown clayey silt	Natural alluvial silt, same as 505
505	Layer	Light yellowish brown clayey silt	Natural alluvial silt, same as 504
506	Cut	Linear feature aligned N-S. Contains 502, 503	Probable natural palaeochannel
507	Layer	Compact grey clay	Natural waterborne deposit

Trench 6

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
600	Layer	Greyish brown silt, occ small stones	Topsoil
601	Layer	Light yellowish brown silt. Seals 602	Ground raising/levelling deposit
602	Layer	Dark greyish brown silt. Sealed by 601	Buried soil/former ground surface
603	Layer	Light yellowish brown clayey silt	Natural alluvial silt

Trench 7

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
700	Layer	Greyish brown clayey silt	Topsoil
701	Layer	Light yellowish brown clayey silt	Natural alluvial silt
702	Cut	Linear feature aligned NW-SE. Contains 703	Palaeochannel/roddon
703	Fill	Greyish brown silty clay.	Natural silting of 702
704	Layer	Yellowish brown silt. Seals 703	Subsoil/natural alluvial deposit
705	Layer	Compact grey silty clay, laminated bands of light grey silt. Sealed by 701	Natural alluvial clay layer. Same as 706?
706	Layer	Laminated bands of light grey silty clay & orange/brown clayey silt, occ iron pan. Sealed by 701	Natural alluvial clay layer. Same as 705?

Trench 8

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
800	Layer	Dark brownish grey clayey silt, occ small stones	Topsoil
801	Layer	Light yellowish brown clayey silt	Subsoil, some alluvial component
802	Layer	Light yellowish brown clayey silt	Natural alluvial silt
803	Cut	Linear feature, aligned E-W. Contains 804. Cuts 807	Possible boundary feature, recut by 805
804	Fill	Brownish grey clayey silt. Cut by 805	Natural silting of 803
805	Cut	Linear feature, aligned E-W. Contains 806, cuts 804.	Possible boundary feature, recut of 803
806	Fill	Greyish brown clay/silt	Natural silting of 805
807	Layer	Mixed dark greyish brown clayey silt, occ lenses of brown silt.	Possible former ground surface, cut by 803.