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**An Archaeological Evaluation of the proposed car park on land
behind the Old Forge Garage, Dymock, Gloucestershire**

For Mrs J. B. Thick of Dymock Parish Council

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out on land behind the Old Forge Garage, Dymock, Gloucestershire in advance of the determination of planning permission (FDDC ref: DF11902). The evaluation recorded a number of archaeological features many of which contained Romano-British pottery. The evaluation produced evidence of postholes, possible gullies, ditches and a possible robbed out wall, which seem to indicate Romano-British settlement activity in the proposed development area. Several of the features extended outside the trenches, preventing definite interpretation of their nature and function. Three residual worked flint flakes were also retrieved from the sampled features.

1 Introduction

1.1 Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service were commissioned by Mrs J. B. Thick of Dymock Parish Council to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land behind the Old Forge Garage, Dymock, Gloucestershire. The work was carried out on 14th November 2001, in advance of the determination of planning permission (FDDC ref: DF11902).

1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a project specification (Derham 2001) and a standard brief issued by the Senior Archaeological Officer of Gloucestershire County Council. The work was also in accordance with 'Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations' produced by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999).

1.3 Dymock is located in the north-west corner of the county, 2 miles north of Newent. The proposed development area is located on the eastern side of Dymock, on land fronting the northern side of the B4215, to the rear of the Old Forge Garage. The site covers a c.2290m² area centred on NGR OS SO 7018 3315. It is geologically located on an outcrop of Lower red Sandstone, bordering the southern edge of the flood plain of the River Leadon (OS 1988).

1.4 Thanks are due to: Jo Vallender (Senior Project Officer) for supervising the evaluation; the staff of the Gloucestershire Sites and Monuments Record (GSMR) for providing background information; and Site Assistant Neil Wright.

2 Background information

Published and unpublished reports, the Gloucestershire Sites and Monuments Record (GSMR) and Ordnance Survey maps curated by the County Records Office have been consulted in the preparation of this specification. The main source for this section has been the report on the excavations at Dymock Sewage Treatment Works (Catchpole 2000).

2.1 Pre-Roman Dymock

Evidence for pre-Roman activity at Dymock has been found in the area of the present cricket ground to the south-east of the village and in a further field to the north-east. Artefacts include a gallo-belgic gold coin of the Belocasses found during the nineteenth century (GSMR 5358), and a silver coin of the Dobunni found with pottery of the early first century AD during excavations in 1958 (Gethyn-Jones 1966, 7). A barbed flint arrowhead (GSMR 5354), said to be "from Dymock" is in the Hereford Museum.

2.2 Origins of the Roman settlement

2.2.1 The date and circumstances of the foundation of the Roman small town at Dymock are uncertain. Leech (1981, 30) has suggested that Roman occupation may have originated as a fort situated to the east of the Still House Stream which flows into the River Leadon, to the east of the modern village and the sewage treatment works. Three parallel ditches were discovered in this area in 1966, which have been dated from an associated Claudian coin, although there is little evidence to indicate that they were of military origin. It may be relevant that Smith considers that the modern name is derived from *din*, meaning 'fort' although Ekwall has suggested that the name may be derived from a combination of the Welsh word *ty*, meaning 'house', and *mock* meaning 'swine', i.e. a pigsty (Smith 1964, 168).

2.2.2 On current evidence, it is more probable that the settlement developed at the junction of two Roman roads, one running from Kenchester to Gloucester, and the other probably originating at Oldbury in Tewkesbury and terminating at Dymock. The Ravenna Cosmography indicates that the road which ran from *Magnis* (Kenchester) to *Glevum* (Gloucester) (GSMR 7677) passed through two now unlocated towns - *Epoessa* and *Macatonium*. Gethyn-Jones has identified *Epoessa* as Stretton Grandison, while *Macatonium* may have been the settlement at Dymock (1966, 11). Stopping points at Stretton Grandison and Dymock would have divided the journey from Gloucester to Kenchester into three roughly equal stages. The exact courses of the Roman roads are not fully known, especially the minor road running towards Tewkesbury. Its course has been traced through part of Dymock churchyard and at SO 7039 3113, 280m to the east of the proposed development area. It is thought to run close to the north of the site. Roman paving has been discovered at SO 699 312, 380m to the west of the site. The road running towards Stretton Grandison and Kenchester is clearly shown on modern Ordnance Survey maps to the north of Dymock. The volume of travellers and trade passing along these roads may have been sufficient to encourage the development of a trading settlement (Douthwaite and Devine 1998).

2.3 Location and extent of the Roman settlement

Evidence for Roman occupation at Dymock extends over a large area from the north-western edge of the existing village, eastwards into the cricket ground. The main area of Roman settlement is thought to lie on the highest ground, where the church stands and where the main part of the medieval village was located. According to Gethyn-Jones (1991, 97) the occupation covers an area of 35-40 acres (14-16 Ha), and the "quantity and quality of the pottery, coins, glass and metal objects of the first to fourth centuries confirm the belief that the present village is sited upon a small Roman town".

2.4 Recorded sites in Dymock

2.4.1 A number of archaeological investigations have taken place at the sewage treatment works (GSMR 15285), 50m north-east of the proposed development area. In 1994 four evaluation trenches recorded a number of Romano-British features including a drainage ditch, a large possible boundary ditch, a wall with associated robber trench, a medieval drainage ditch indicating the periphery of a Roman settlement and a number of medieval/post-medieval furrows associated agricultural use. The area was excavated in 1995 and produced evidence of occupation on the site dating from the early Roman period onwards. The major archaeological features excavated included at least one, possibly two, phases of timber framed building covering an area of some 200 square metres. The timber

buildings appeared to be surrounded by two large ditches, terminating to form a gated entrance or causeway and may represent an enclosed building or farm. The ditches are located on the highest level of a natural slope and could represent the boundary of the Roman settlement. A number of pits were situated within the area enclosed by the ditches from which large amounts of iron slag were retrieved. The type of slag found indicates iron smelting, while small fragments of mould indented with the shape of small tools or items of jewellery suggests metal working was taking place in the vicinity. Five adult human burials were excavated outside the ditches, aligned approximately north-south. Three infant human skeletal remains were also excavated from the upper fills of a large feature situated within the ditches. The Romano-British features may have been aligned with a road which is thought to have run c.30m to the south of the excavated area, c.10-20m north of the proposed development area. Evidence of later use of the site in the late medieval and post-medieval period was recorded in the form of ditches, field boundaries and the robbing of earlier walls.

2.4.2 Evidence for structures of the Roman period has been found in the churchyard and at SO 69403136 and SO 69833134 (GSMR 14042, GSMR 14044). Chance finds of Roman material include 2nd to 4th century pottery in the form of Samian, Black Burnished Ware and coarse wares (GSMR 6806, GSMR 14047, GSMR 14044, GSMR 14045, GSMR 14048, GSMR 14060 and GSMR 14402) and a number of coins, ranging from an *as* of Nero to an *antoninianus* of Carausius. Evidence for burials comprises a skeleton found in c.1900 and a possible funerary urn found in 1938 (GSMR 14045) (Douthwaite and Devine 1998).

2.5 Cartographic Evidence

The 1847 tithe map (Gwatkin 1992) shows the proposed development area within a large field annotated as 'Dowles'. The same information is shown on the First Edition (1880) and Third Edition (1925) Ordnance Survey (OS) County Series maps.

3 Method (Fig 1)

3.1 Three trenches, each measuring 10m by 1.5m, were excavated to fulfil the 2% sampling requirement for the proposed development area. The trenches were located taking into account the location of services, access, surrounding walls and vegetation.

3.2 The trenches were machine excavated down to the first significant archaeological horizon or undisturbed natural deposits, whichever is encountered first. Context numbers were attributed to all deposits.

3.3 The site archive is presently stored at Shire Hall, Gloucester, under GSMR 21168, but it is intended that it will eventually be deposited at the Dean Heritage Centre.

4 Results (Figs 1, 2, 3 and 4)

4.1 Trench 1 (Figs 1 and 2)

4.1.1 Trench 1 was orientated north-east to south-west and measured 10m by 1.5m and was excavated to a depth of 0.55m.

4.1.2 Undisturbed natural deposits of red sandy clay (102) were recorded at c.34.61m AOD. A sondage was excavated at the south-western end of the trench to establish that the natural deposits were undisturbed. A 0.15m thick lens of degraded sandstone (107) was recorded within the natural clay in this area. The natural deposits were cut by two archaeological features.

4.1.3 Feature [105] was recorded in the southern end of the trench on a north-east to south-west alignment, continuing under the southern and eastern limits of excavation. The feature was in excess of 3m long, 0.85m wide and 0.7m deep and was filled with a single fill, (106). Fill (106) was a mid-reddish brown sandy clay containing moderate inclusions of charcoal, degraded sandstone, two small undiagnostic sherds of pottery and two flint flakes. Although the flint has been naturally fragmented, possibly through frost damage, there is evidence of man-made flaking on some of the faces. It was not possible to establish the nature of the feature within the limited trench area, but it has been provisionally interpreted as the western side of a curvilinear ditch.

4.1.4 Posthole [104] was recorded in the northern half of the trench. It was 0.28m in diameter and 0.1m deep, with a single fill, (103). Fill (103) was a dark reddish brown sandy clay containing moderate inclusions of sandstone, degraded animal bone, Romano-British pottery and one flint flake. The flint flake has been worked into a specific tool and has been typologically identified as a small burin or borer (J. Hoyle, GCC Project Officer *pers. comm.*).

4.1.5 The archaeological features were overlain by 0.55m of topsoil (101), which extended across the whole trench and contained Romano-British pottery.

4.2 Trench 2 (Figs 1 and 3)

4.2.1 Trench 2 was orientated north-east to south-west and measured 10m by 1.5m and was excavated to a depth of 0.55m.

4.2.2 Undisturbed natural deposits of red sandy clay (202) were recorded at c.34.20m AOD. It was cut by four archaeological features.

4.2.3 Posthole [204] was recorded in the northern half of the trench. It measured 0.28m in diameter and 0.12m deep with a single fill (203). Fill (203) was a mid-greyish reddish brown sandy clay containing occasional fragments of sandstone and degraded bone, but no datable evidence.

4.2.4 Feature (207) was recorded terminating in the centre of the trench and continuing under the western limit of excavation, on a north-west to south-east alignment. The feature was recorded without excavation, due to the retrieval of datable evidence from the upper fill. The upper fill (207) of the feature was a mid-greyish sandy clay containing Romano-British

pottery, in excess of 0.6m long and 1.3m wide. This feature has been interpreted as a possible pit or terminal end of a ditch.

4.2.5 Feature [206] was recorded to the east of feature (207). It was recorded continuing under the eastern limit of excavation, on a north-west to south-east alignment. The feature was in excess of 0.4m long, 0.3m, wide and 0.22m deep. It was filled with a single fill (205), comprising a mid-greyish reddish brown sandy clay containing no significant inclusions. It has been interpreted as the possible terminal end of a gully.

4.2.6 Deposit (208) was recorded in the southern half of the trench. Due to the increasingly poor light, it was recorded in plan but not excavated. The upper fill (208) was a mid-greyish reddish brown sandy clay containing no significant inclusions. The feature may represent a possible posthole.

4.2.7 The archaeological features were overlain by 0.55m of topsoil (201) which extended across the whole trench and contained Romano-British and glazed post-medieval pottery.

4.3 Trench 3 (Figs 1 and 4)

4.3.1 Trench 3 was orientated north-west to south-east and measured 10m by 1.5m and was excavated to a depth of 0.6m.

4.3.2 Undisturbed natural deposits of red sandy clay (306) were recorded at c.34.20m AOD. The difference between the natural clay and overlying deposits was less distinct in this trench, therefore a sondage was excavated in the centre of the trench to establish that the clay was undisturbed. The natural clay was cut by two archaeological features.

4.3.3 The natural clay was cut in the eastern half of the trench by east-west orientated feature [304], which continued under the southern and eastern limits of excavation. It measured in excess of 3.5m long, 1m wide and 0.17m deep with a single fill (303). Fill (303) was a mid-greyish reddish brown sandy clay containing occasional inclusions of sandstone, animal bone, Romano-British pottery, a fragment of probable daub and a lump of slag. The feature has been interpreted as the northern side of a ditch.

4.3.4 A rubble filled linear feature (305) was recorded cutting the natural clay in the western half of the trench. The north-south orientated feature was recorded continuing under the northern and southern limits of excavation. The feature comprised a number of fragments of sandstone (up to 0.2m in diameter), laid roughly flat, with a concentration of larger stones at the northern end. The areas between the stones were filled with a mid-reddish brown sandy clay, similar to the overlying deposit (302). The feature was not excavated due to failing light, however it has been provisionally interpreted as a possible robber trench for a wall. It is interesting to note that this feature was located at right angles to possible ditch [304].

4.3.5 Feature (305) was overlain by (302), a 0.2m deep mid-reddish brown sandy clay extending across the north-western end of the trench. It was overlain by 0.35m of topsoil (301) which extended across the whole trench and contained Romano-British pottery.

5 Conclusions

5.1.1 The archaeological evaluation recorded archaeological features within all the trenches, many of which contained Romano-British pottery. While a number of features continued outside the limit of excavation, they have been given provisional interpretations, based on size and form. The features recorded on site include postholes, possible gullies, ditches, a possible ditch terminal or pit and a possible robbed out wall, all of which contained similar fills. It is considered that the flint flakes recorded in two of the features are residual

5.1.2 The features have been interpreted as possible evidence of Romano-British settlement activity within the proposed development area. The features and the pottery assemblage are similar to those excavated at the sewage treatment works, 50m to the north-east of the site in 1994-95 (Catchpole 2000) and may represent a continuation of activity in this area.

6 References

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------|---|
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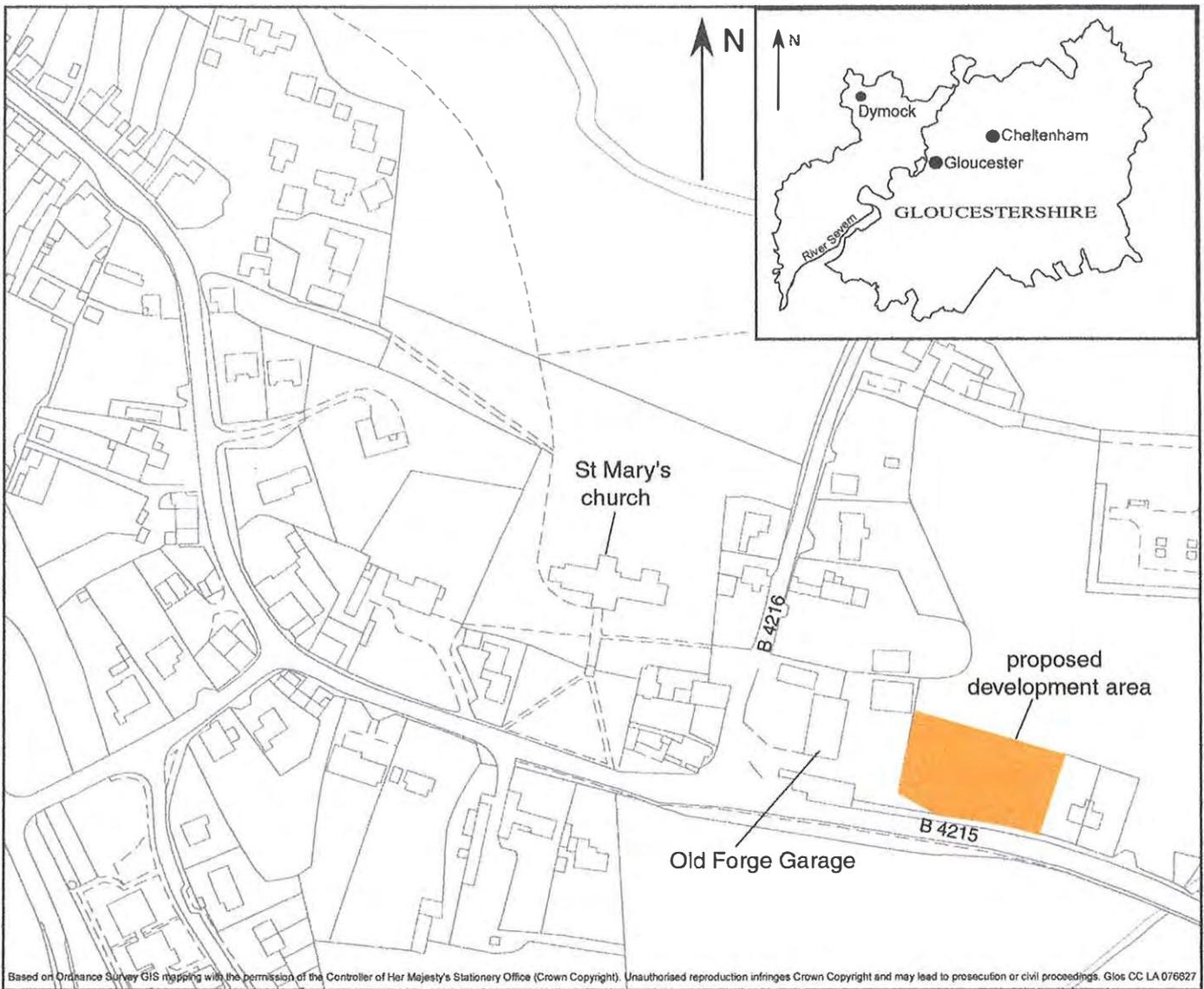


Fig 1a: Site location plan (Scale 1:2500)

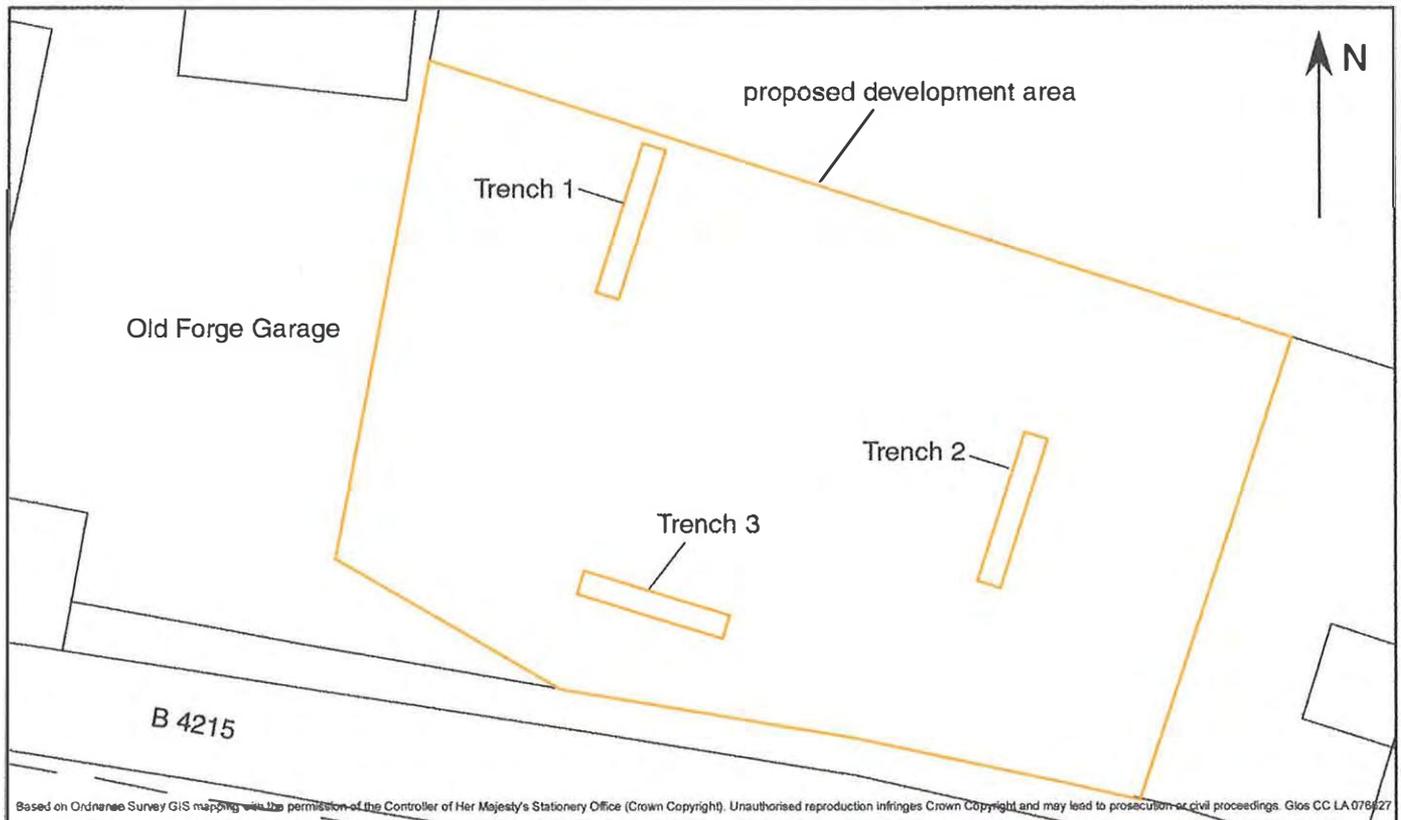


Fig 1b: Trench location plan (Scale 1:500)

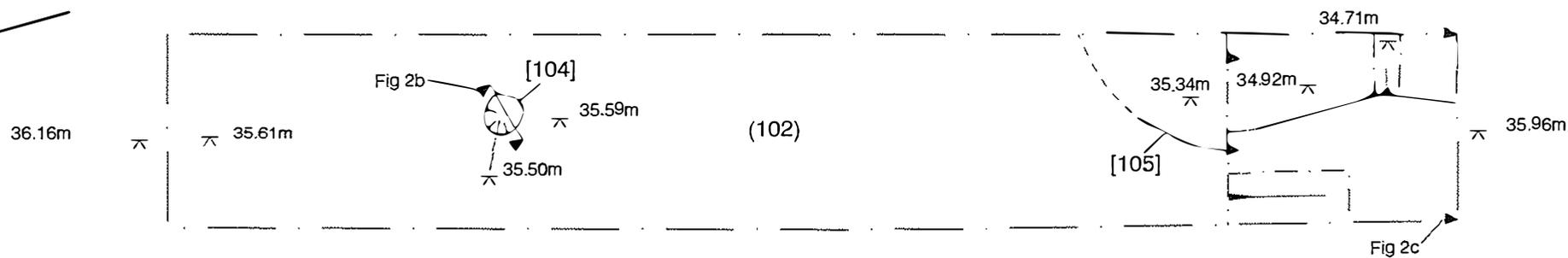


Fig 2a: Post-excavation plan of Trench 1 (Scale 1:50)

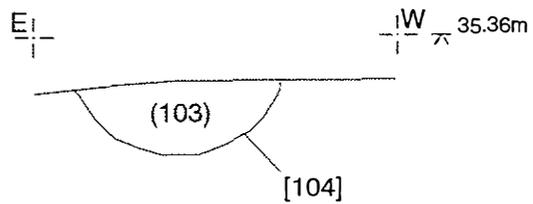


Fig 2b: North facing section through posthole [104] (Scale 1:10)

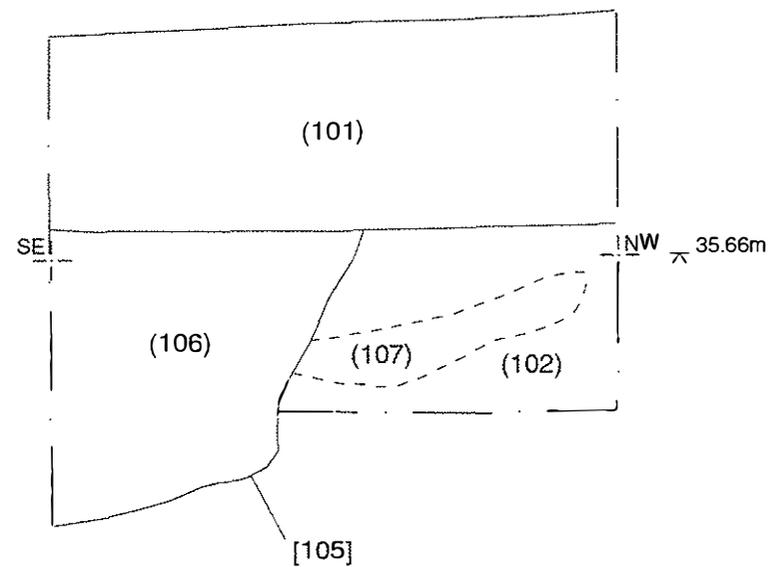


Fig 2c: North-east facing section through possible ditch [105] (Scale 1:20)

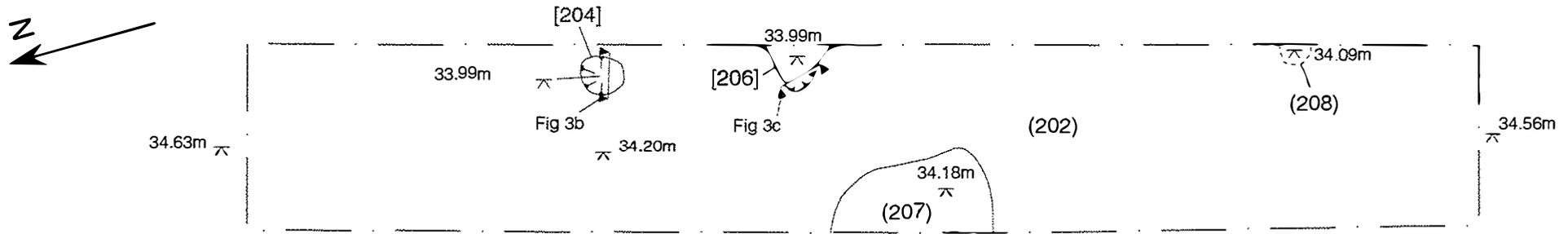


Fig 3a: Post-excavation plan of Trench 2 (Scale 1:50)

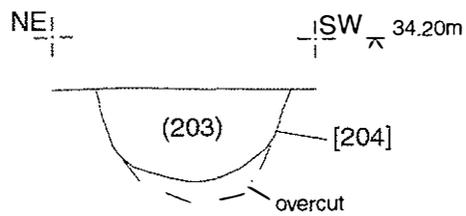


Fig 3b: North-west facing section through posthole [204] (Scale 1:10)

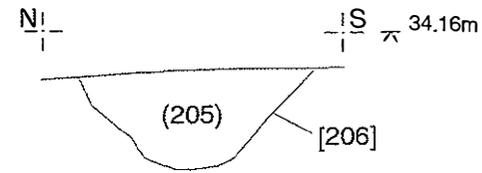


Fig 3c: West facing section through possible gully [206] (Scale 1:10)

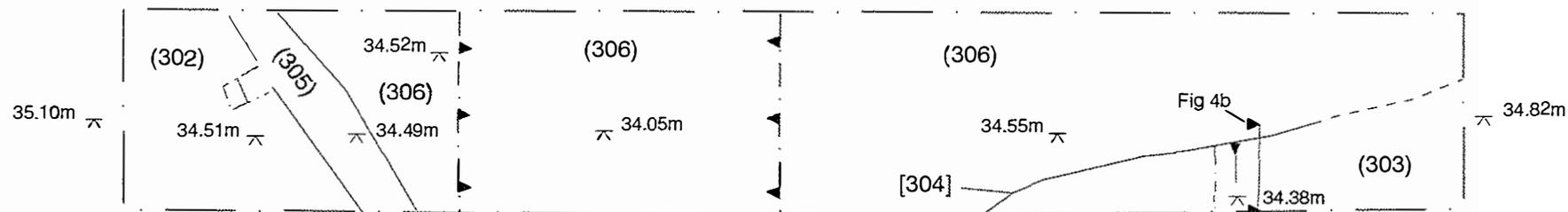


Fig 4a: Post-excavation plan of Trench 3 (Scale 1:50)

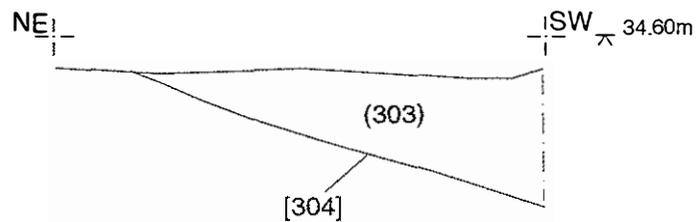


Fig 4b: North-west facing section through possible ditch [304] (Scale 1:10)