



Assessment Report on a Programme of Trial Trenching at Kennilworth Gardens, Upton, Wirral.

Site Code 173

NGR SJ 26450 88850



Prepared for Magenta Living

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Non-Technical Summary

This report describes the results of a programme of trial trenching at Kenilworth Gardens, Upton, Wirral. The fieldwork was undertaken on behalf of the client in advance of the construction of new housing on the site which lies adjacent to the site of a medieval church which is a scheduled ancient monument.

A total of five trenches were excavated, two of which showed that the eastern half of the site had been extensively disturbed during demolition of the flats which formerly occupied the site. The other three trenches were located on the western half of the site which was much less disturbed. A small group of post-holes and pits were present in these trenches, though all of these could be confidently dated to the 19th century or later. A single flint blade and a fragment of unworked burnt flint provide evidence of human activity in the area but are unlikely to relate to below ground archaeological deposits.

Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. The Site	1
3. Solid and Drift Geology, and Soils	1
4. Legislation	2
5. Archaeological and Historical Background	2
6. Aims, Objectives and Methodology	2
7. Location of Project.....	3
8. Trial Trenching.....	3
9. Finds Report.....	4
10. Conclusions.....	4
11. Recommendations for Further Mitigation.....	5
12. Acknowledgements	5
13. Bibliography.....	6
14. Figures	6
15. Plates	11

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1. Introduction

This document is a report on a programme of archaeological trial trenching at Kenilworth Gardens, Upton, Wirral produced on behalf of Magenta Living Ltd (hereafter the Client). The Client proposes to construct domestic accommodation on the site and this project is part of a scheme of archaeological mitigation required as part the conditions imposed by The Planning Inspectorate following the client's appeal against Wirral Borough Council's decision to refuse planning permission (Appeal Ref APP/W4325/W15/3004022, Planning Ref APP/14/00951).

The project described in this document aimed to help establish the nature of archaeological deposits at the site. This will mitigate the impact on any archaeologically sensitive remains and generate useful information on such archaeological remains that may be present at the site. This is consistent with national planning policy on archaeology and planning (National Planning Policy Framework) as well as local policies and published guidelines prepared by English Heritage.

2. The Site

Kenilworth Gardens is situated at Upton, Wirral (centred NGR SJ 26450 88850), 1 km south of Moreton town centre (Fig. 1). The site is part of an area of historic and archaeological interest, lying 30 metres to the south east of the site of a medieval church and churchyard at Overchurch, a Scheduled Monument. Wirral MBC has granted planning permission subject to conditions including the requirement for programme of archaeological investigations.

The site area covers an area of 0.44 hectares. The plot comprises grassed open land within a housing estate and had previously been occupied by two blocks of flats. The land is at a height of c. 21.9 m AOD at the north-west adjacent to the woodland boundary and at c. 21.5m AOD at the south-east. The plot was undeveloped up until c. 1935-56 when Kenilworth Gardens was constructed, consisting of a new road, garages and the entrance and two blocks of flats 1-12 and 13-24. The flats were demolished between 2000 and 2005. (Fletcher 2014, Farr 2015).

3. Solid and Drift Geology, and Soils

The underlying geology is composed of the Sidmouth Mudstone Formation; mudstone sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 217 to 250 million years ago in the Triassic Period. This is overlain by either clay, sandy, gravelly or cobbly superficial deposits formed up to 2 million years ago and sealed by heavily rooted topsoil.

(<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html?location=Upton&qobBtn=qo>)

The soils are slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils of soilscape 18. These soils are of moderate fertility, mostly suited to grass production

for dairying or beef, though there is some cereal production, often for feed. Land is tile drained and periodic moling or sub-soiling will assist drainage.

(<http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/>).

4. Legislation

The former churchyard north of the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1015602>) and as such is legally protected from disturbance.

5. Archaeological and Historical Background

There have been a number of previous archaeological investigations within the area including a small amateur excavation within the churchyard in 1965 (O'Hanlon & Pealin 1999); a magnetometer survey undertaken in 1977 by the Ancient Monuments Laboratory Geophysics Section in the field to the north of the churchyard which contained ridge and furrow earthworks (Bartlett 1977); a measured churchyard survey carried out in 1983-6 by members of a Liverpool University Continuing Education class (O'Hanlon & Pealin 1999); an evaluation was carried out in 1989 by Liverpool Museum Field Archaeology Section, to the north of the churchyard, ahead of the construction of the motorway and bypass (Philpott 1990); in 1993 Liverpool Museum Field Archaeology Section conducted an earthwork survey of the churchyard (Liverpool Museum Field Archaeology Section 1993) and finally a desk-based assessment of the proposed site has recently been carried out in advance of this development (Fletcher 2014).

The study area contains a Scheduled Monument, the site of a church and churchyard at Overchurch, lying 30 metres to the south-east of the plot, which will be unaffected by the proposed developments. However, the former medieval church may have had Anglo Saxon origins. The fact that the site may be located within a possible early enclosure, allows for the potential presence of early medieval or medieval settlement associated with the nearby church, which may have resulted in the formation of archaeological deposits. The 1993 excavations produced several sherds of medieval pottery and one Roman sherd indicating the possibility of an earlier settlement where archaeological deposits may have the potential to survive.

6. Aims, Objectives and Methodology

The aims of the project were:

- To provide information on the presence/absence, location and characteristics of archaeological remains at the site.
- To obtain dating evidence for the earthworks identified in the desk-based assessment.

The specific objectives of the site works were:

- To excavate an appropriate number of trenches across the earthworks to identify the method used in their construction and to obtain dating evidence where available. The number, size, extent and location of these trenches will be determined by the results of the topographic survey.
- To excavate evaluation trenches in an archaeologically controlled manner in order to

identify and date (where possible) any anomalies identified by the geophysical survey.

- To recover all artefacts and, where necessary, palaeo-environmental samples from deposits of potential significance.
- To analyse the site records, artefacts and ecofacts to produce a report on the archaeology of the site.
- To identify the significance of any archaeological remains to inform the planning process and design of the respective schemes.
- To submit an ordered archive to a suitable local repository.

The methodology as described in the project design (Adams & Ahmad 2015) was applied through-out, the only revision being the excavation of an addition trench to account for restricted access in the area around Trench V.

7. Location of Project

The evaluation was confined to the extents of the approved development as discussed with the client and their representatives and as submitted in the planning application to Wirral (Fig. 2).

8. Trial Trenching

Trench locations are given on Fig. 2.

8.01 Trench I

The deposits in this area appear to have been badly disturbed by demolition of the flats and excavation was limited by potential services which could not be confirmed as disconnected. Top soil c. 0.2 m deep was locally excavated to sub-soil and glacial till identical to that in Trench II and with similar evidence of disturbance (Plate 1). No archaeological deposits were present.

8.02 Trench II

Trench II measured 2x10 m. Topsoil c (Context 1) 0.16 m thick was excavated to a layer of reddish brown sub-soil (Context 2) c. 0.30m thick which sealed glacial till, the upper levels of which were contaminated with demolition material from the flats which formerly occupied the site (Plate 2). No archaeological deposits were present.

8.03 Trench III

Trench III measured 2 x 10 m. Topsoil (Context 1) 0.26-0.28 m thick was excavated to a layer of mid-brown silty clay loam sub-soil containing occasional fragments of 20th century brick (Context 2) which was 0.22-0.26 m thick. Context 2 sealed geological deposits consisting of very firm orange and yellow mottled clay with occasional rounded pebbles (Plate 3). No other deposits were present. At the southern end of the trench a tarmac path (context 4) sealed context 2 and probably formed part of the landscaping around the flats (Plate 4).

8.04 Trench IV

Trench IV was an additional trench excavated to compensate for the restricted access around Trench V. It measured 2x 10 m with a small 2x2 m extension to the north which was inserted after the discovery of a single prehistoric flint tool (See below).

Topsoil c. 0.3-0.1 m thick was excavated to a layer of mid-brown silty clay loam containing occasional fragments of 20th century brick (Context 2). This was c. 0.15-0.13 m thick and sealed glacial till (Context 4). A linear feature (un-contexted) at the western end of the trench was found to contain a modern ceramic drain when excavation was terminated (Plate 7).

Context 5 was a circular feature 0.28 m in diameter and 0.10m deep filled by context 8, a mid-brown silty loam with two large fragments of hand-made brick. It was probably a setting for a timber post but can be accurately dated to the 19th century or later. Context 7 was a similar cut feature 0.18 m in diameter and 0.05 m deep. The fill, context 6, was similar to context 8 but contained no brick fragments (Fig. 3, Plates 5 & 6).

SF1, a prehistoric flint blade (see Section 9) was found pressed into the top of geological deposits close to these features but was unrelated to them.

8.05 Trench V

In general the deposits in this trench were identical to those Trenches III and IV and are not described in detail here. The only archaeological deposit present was a 0.44 m wide and 0.05 m deep north-south aligned gully (Context 11). Irregularities in the base may be traces of stakes or have been caused by root activity, though the latter is considered more likely. It was filled by Context 12, a firm, mid-grey to yellow silty clay with occasional sub-rounded pebbles (Fig. 4, Plates 8 & 9) very similar in character to the geological deposits. The function and date of this feature is uncertain, though its orientation appears to respect that of the post-medieval boundary shown on historic mapping of the area so may be related to that.

9. Finds Report

The only finds were a single flint blade (SF1) in yellowish brown flint 37 mm long (Plate 10) found pressed into the top of geological deposits in Trench IV and a fragment of unworked burnt flint (SF2) 17 mm across found in Trench V which was also pressed into geological deposits (Plate 11).

The blade can only be very broadly dated to the Mesolithic to Bronze Age (R. Cowell pers. comm.), the burnt flint is often found on Prehistoric settlement sites but could be later.

10. Conclusions

Trenches I and II show that the eastern end of the site has been badly disturbed during the demolition of the flats which formerly occupied the site. Large fragments of brick pressed into the top of geological deposits suggest that the top soil in that area had been removed (or was absent) prior to demolition and the area used for the temporary storage of demolition debris and/or an area of hard standing. The eastern half of the site is therefore of low or no archaeological potential.

The western half of the site (around Trenches III, IV and V) appears to be less disturbed though no significant archaeological deposits were present. The flint blade and fragment of burnt flint are suggestive of Prehistoric activity in the area but are unlikely to be associated with any below ground deposits (R. Cowell pers. comm.). The linear feature in Trench V is of

uncertain origin, though the nature of its fill suggests that it probably relates to plant or animal activity rather than being humanly produced.

11. Recommendations for Further Mitigation

No further archaeological mitigation is required on this site.

12. Acknowledgements

The role of John Siddel of Magenta Housing as project sponsor is gratefully acknowledged. The project was monitored on behalf of Magenta by Sarah-Jane Farr of SJF Archaeology. Ron Cowell (Curator of Prehistoric Archaeology, Museum of Liverpool) provided advice on the Prehistoric flint and its significance. Site Assistants were Michael Chapman, Carolanne King and Jeff Speakman.

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14. Figures

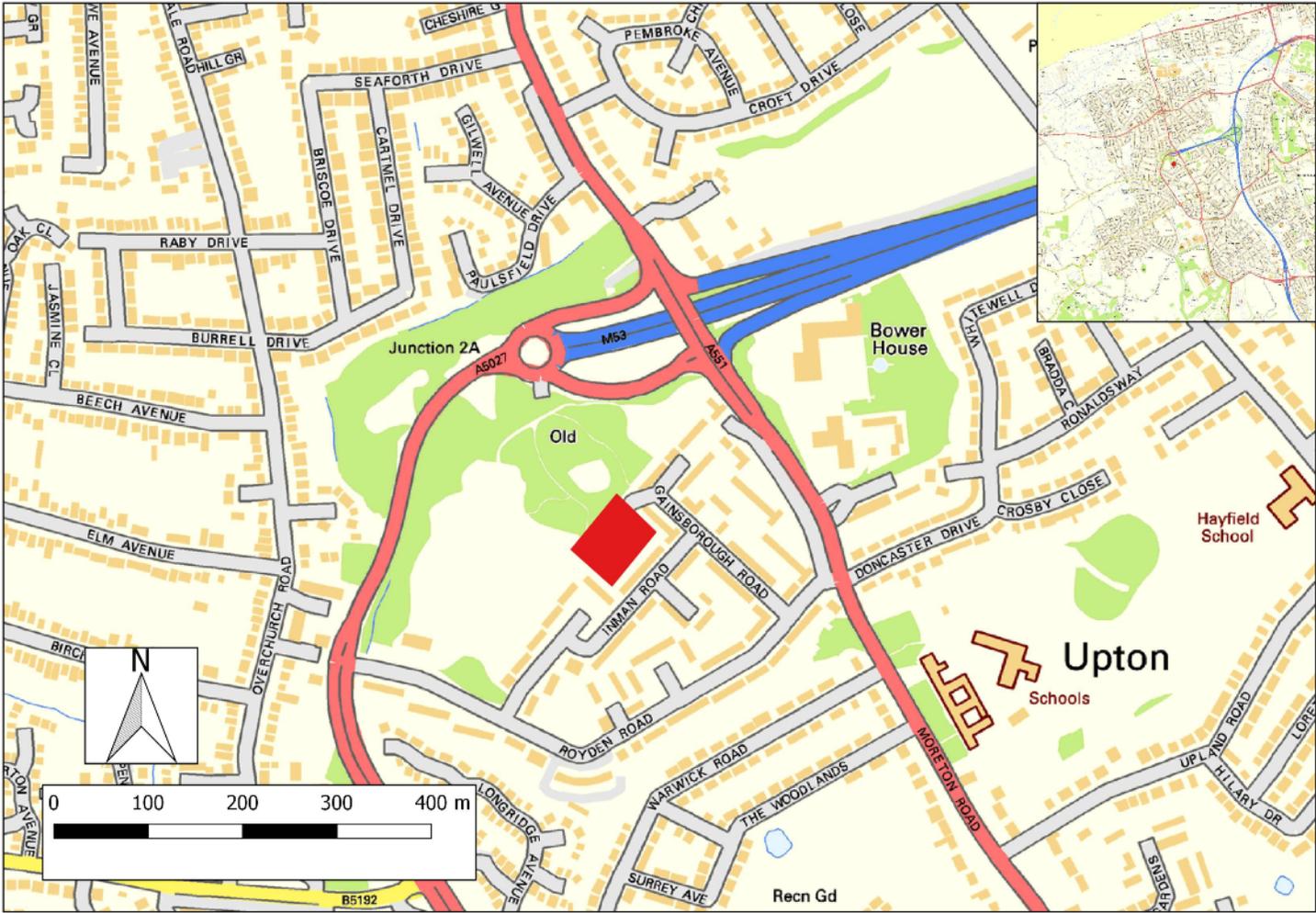


Fig. 1 Site location

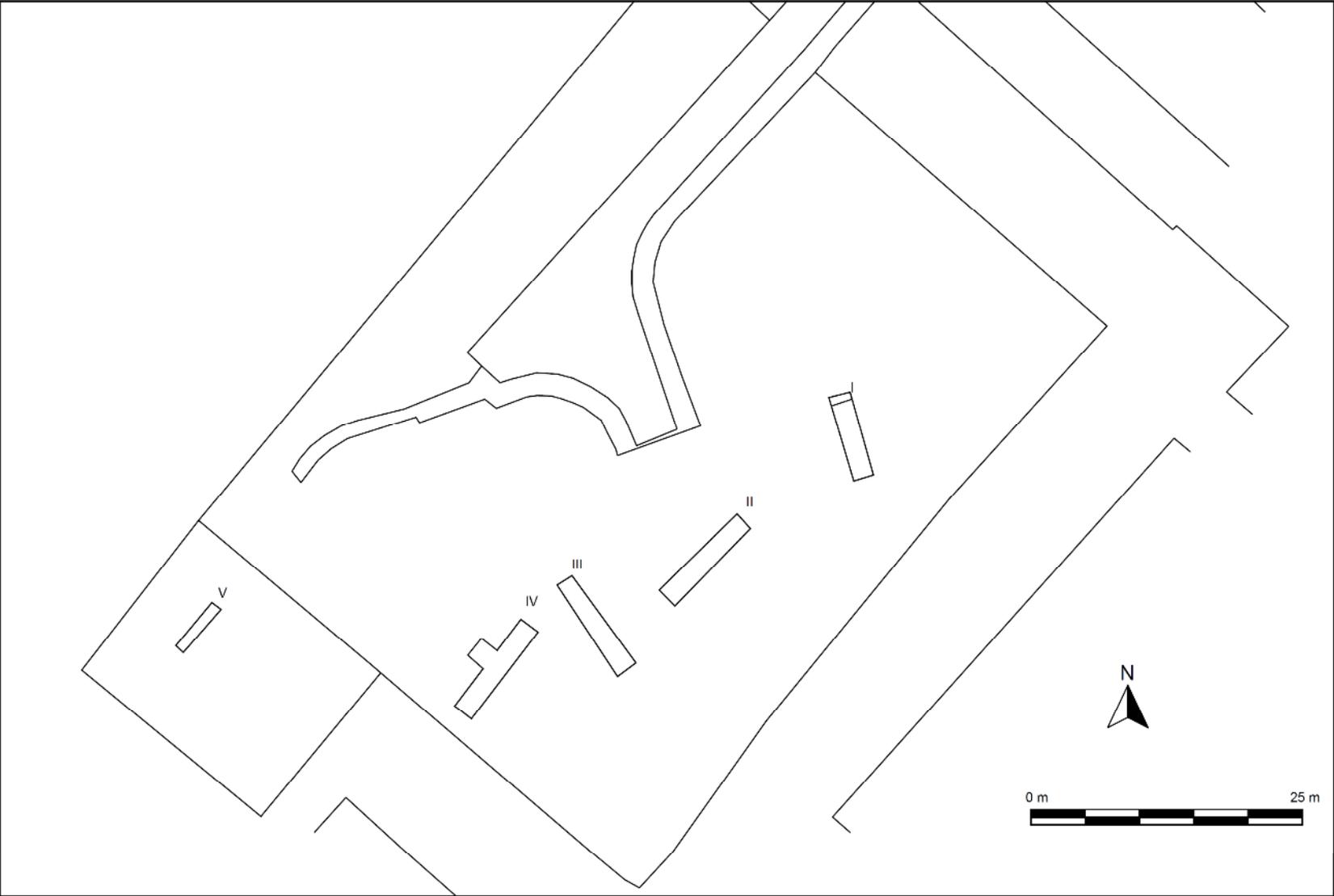


Fig. 2. Trench locations.

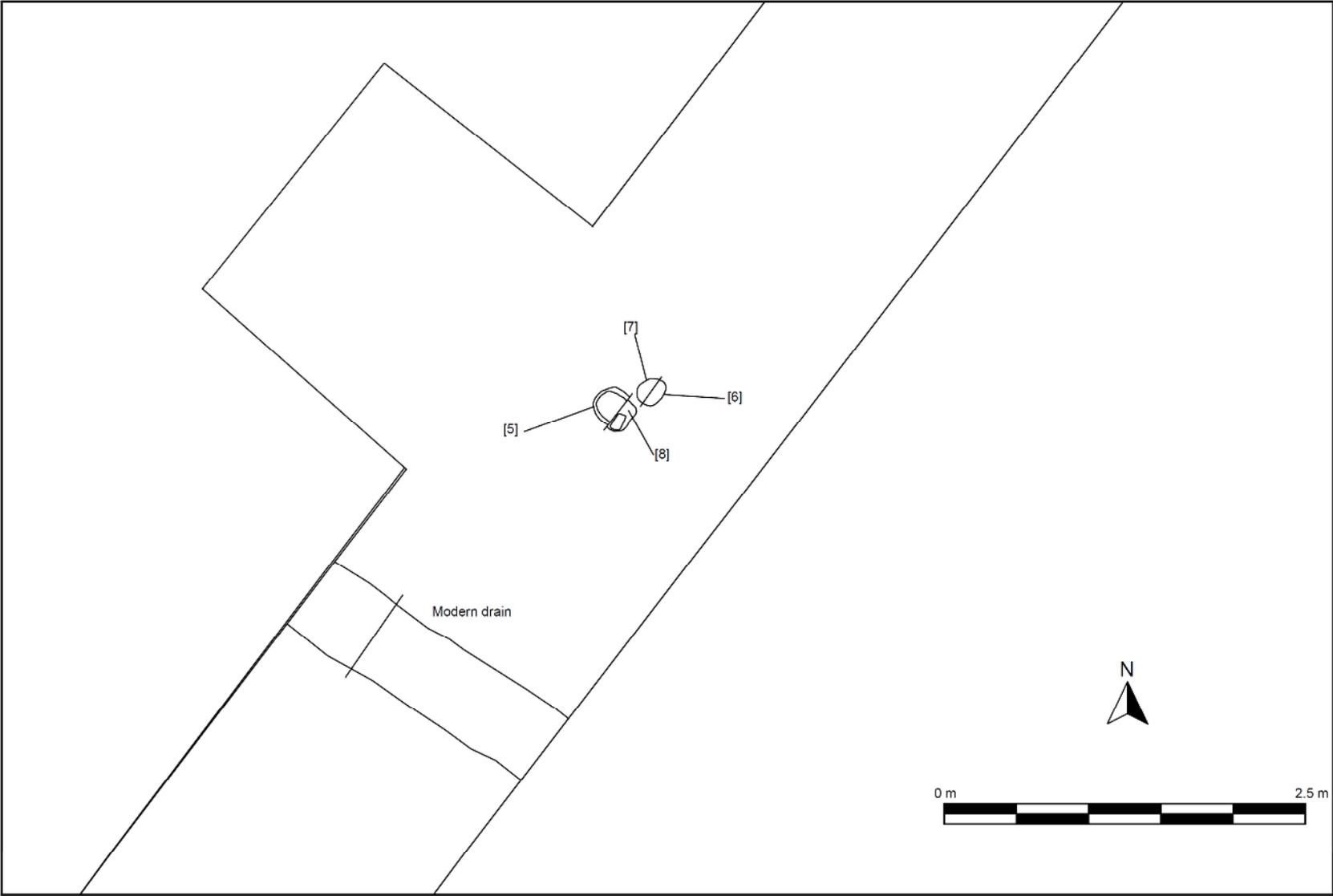


Fig. 3. Plan of features in Trench IV.

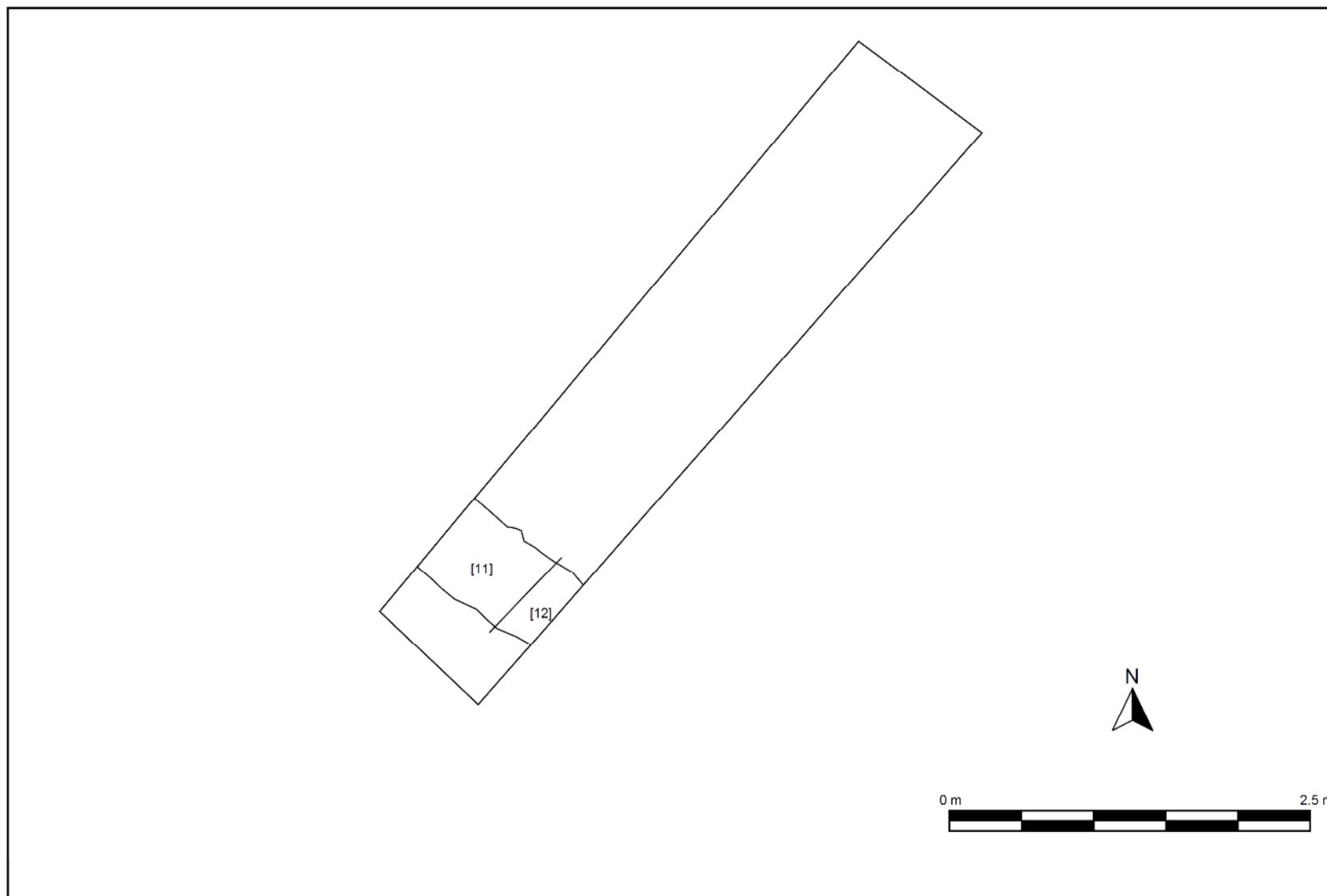


Fig. 4. Plan of features in Trench V.

15. Plates



Plate 1. Trench I. View looking North.



Plate 2. Trench II. View looking West.



Plate 3. Trench III. View looking South.



Plate 4. Trench III. West facing profile showing remains of tarmac path.



Plate 5. Trench IV. Contexts 6 & 8, pre-excavation.



Plate 6. Trench IV. Contexts 6 & 8 after sectioning.



Plate 7. Trench IV, modern drain.



Plate 8. Trench V. Contexts 11 & 12.



Plate 9. Bank B3. Trench V. Contexts 11 & 12.

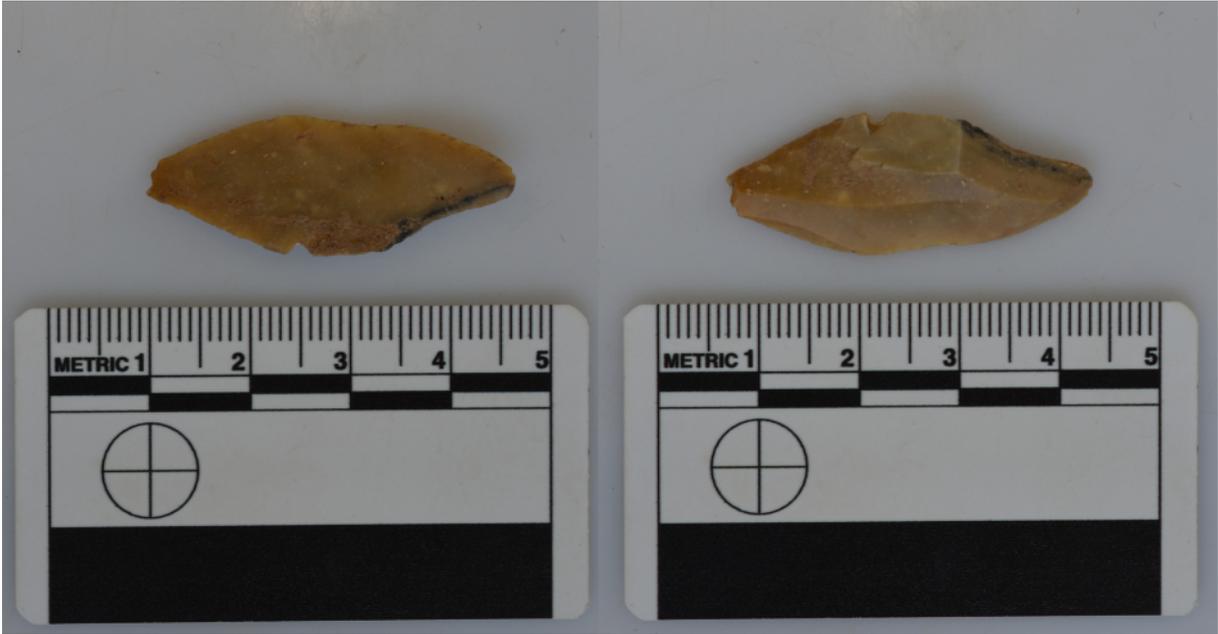


Plate 10. Flint blade SF1.



Plate 11. Burnt flint SF2.