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COUGHTON COURT
WARWICKSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION
AHEAD OF PROPOSED
FLOOD ALLEVIATION
SCHEME

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Project No. 1939

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Coughton Court

Warwickshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

By
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Coughton Court, Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation, June 2009

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Coughton Court, Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation ahead of proposed flood alleviation work, June 2009

SUMMARY

A proposed flood alleviation scheme on the scheduled monument of Coughton Court, Warwickshire (SP 082 605) was considered likely to affect below ground archaeological remains. On instruction from Jeremy Milln representing The National Trust, Birmingham Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation of the site between the 18th and 29th May 2009.

The work involved the excavation of nine trenches measuring 8m by 1m and a watching brief on eight geotechnical boreholes situated to the west of Coughton Court House. Six of the trenches were located to test particular anomalies identified by geophysical survey and associated with structures on the Thorp Plan of 1746, the others were speculative trenches placed across the southern half of the site. The principal aim of the evaluation was to determine the character, extent, date, state of preservation and the potential significance of any buried remains.

The results of the evaluation highlighted three areas of archaeological potential. The two trenches (A-B) placed across the northern limit of the evaluation site may serve to indicate that the area had been utilised for the creation of a pond.

The trenches in the area to the west of Coughton Court House (C-F) revealed low potential for the survival of medieval archaeological features. That part of the site had apparently been subjected to levelling activity and there was evidence of late post-medieval and modern drainage and service trenches which further limited the chances of finding significant archaeological remains.

The trenches (G-I) at the southern end of the development revealed evidence that archaeological features and deposits would have been more likely to have survived. Evidence supporting that impression was provided by a large northeast-southwest-aligned ditch (Trench I) which contained an assemblage of medieval pottery sherds. The feature might have been a former boundary ditch associated with the deserted medieval village known to have been located in the area to the southwest of Coughton Court House. It had been cut through a layer which may have represented a medieval plough soil. Signs of post-medieval activity were provided by a cobbled layer (Trench G) which may have been a yard surface and a levelling layer which contained a large amount of ceramic building material.

Coughton Court, Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation, June 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1.1. Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by The National Trust, on instruction from Jeremy Milln, the client representative of the National Trust, to carry out an archaeological evaluation on the scheduled monument of Coughton Court, Warwickshire, in advance of a proposed Flood Alleviation Scheme.

1.1.2. The report outlines the results of an evaluation carried out in May 2009. It has been prepared in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standards and Guidance Notes for Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Briefs (IFA 2001).

1.1.3. The evaluation has been targeted to evaluate anomalies identified by ground penetrating radar, caesium magnetometry and electrical resistance geophysical surveys (Cook 2008; Roseveare and Roseveare 2008; see Fig. 3-5).

1.1.4. The evaluation conformed to a Supporting Statement for Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent (Milln 2009) and a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2009; Appendix A) which was approved by the Scheduled Ancient Monument Inspectorate prior to implementation, in accordance with guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DOE 1990).

2. LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

2.1.1. The site is located within the grounds of Coughton Court, a Grade 1 Listed Building and Scheduled Ancient Monument (centred on NGR SP 080 064; SAM No. 30030) (Fig. 1).

2.1.2. The underlying drift geology consists of silt-clay with gravel towards the south-east.

2.1.3. The present character of the site is pasture to the west of the main house of Coughton Court.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1.1. The archaeological and historical background of Coughton Court was described extensively in the application for consent (Sections 3 and 4). A short summary of the significant archaeology and history of the site is detailed below.

3.1.2. The main archaeological evidence for the site came from excavations undertaken by Warwickshire Museum in the early 1990s (Evans 2001; 2003). Limited archaeological evidence dating to the prehistoric and Roman period has been recovered from the site. The majority of the archaeological evidence dates to the medieval period with the earliest evidence of occupation relating to the original moat and platform from the 12th/ 13th century. The Throckmorton family inherited the house in 1409 and it has been in their possession ever since. The house dates to the early Tudor period and archaeological evidence dating to the 15th and 16th century conforms to a period of extensive redevelopment. Several phases of further redevelopment took place in the period between the 16th and 18th century.

3.1.3. The area surrounding the house was originally investigated in a survey of the Deserted Medieval Village was undertaken in the early 1980s (Hooke 1985). Further surveys focused on the post-medieval remains of the house and gardens as opposed to the village (Moore and Knox 1990; Fretwell 1991)

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

4.1.1. The principal objective of the evaluation was to determine the character, extent, date, state of preservation and the potential significance of any buried remains.

4.1.2. More specific aims were to:

- to achieve better definition of the archaeological remains.
- to generate a more reliable predictive model of the extent, character, date, state of preservation and depth of burial of the remains within the area of study than it has been possible to obtain by geophysical survey or desk top assessment.
- to make a satisfactory evaluative record from which reasonable inferences will be made such that a fuller understanding of the archaeological potential of the whole site is achieved.
- to prepare recommendations, where warranted, for further archaeological investigations.
- to create and deposit a satisfactory archaeological archive and publication.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1.1. The proposed development covers an area to the west of Coughton Court House. A total of nine trenches were excavated, each measuring 8m in length by 1m in width across the site totalling 72m², in order to provide a 3% sample of the total area (Fig. 2).

5.1.2. Six of the trenches (A, B, C, D, E and F) were located to test specific anomalies identified by geophysical survey and associated with structures on the Thorp Plan of 1746, with the remainder (G, H and I) located at random across the southern half of the site. Trial trenches were surveyed in using an EDM total station and located on the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

5.1.3. Turf was removed using a de-turfing machine and rolled and stored adjacent to the trench. All topsoil and modern overburden was removed by hand, down to the top of the uppermost archaeological horizon or the subsoil. Subsequent cleaning and excavation was by hand. Spoil was collected and placed adjacent to the trench on geotextile fabric with topsoil kept separate from subsoil.

5.1.4. A representative sample of archaeological features and deposits was manually sampled and excavated sufficiently to define their character and to obtain suitable dating evidence. Deeply stratified deposits were excavated by sample boxes to examine stratigraphy in section.

5.1.5. All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. Features were planned at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50, and sections were drawn through all cut features and through all vertical stratigraphy at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20. A comprehensive written record was maintained using a continuous numbered context system on pro-forma context and feature cards. Written records and scale plans were supplemented by photographs using monochrome, colour slide and digital photography.

5.1.6. Environmental samples were taken from datable archaeological features. The environmental sampling policy followed the guidelines contained in the Birmingham Archaeology Guide to On-Site Environmental Sampling. Finds were cleaned, marked and remedial conservation work was undertaken as necessary. Treatment of all finds conformed to guidance contained within 'A Strategy for the care and investigation of finds' published by English Heritage.

5.1.7. The full site archive includes all artefactual remains recovered from the site. The site archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage 1991), the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (UKIC 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission 1992). Finds and the paper archive will be deposited with the appropriate repository subject to permission from the landowner.

5.1.8. The geotechnical investigations were monitored by an archaeologist and comprised of eight bore-holes to inform the design of the flood alleviation scheme. The bore-holes were excavated by means of a cable-percussion rig and undertaken by a separate contractor.

5.1.9. Samples from the boreholes (1-8) were inspected, photographed and recorded as part of the archaeological monitoring. The details of the stratigraphy were recorded and compared with the final bore-hole logs.

6. RESULTS (EVALUATION)

6.1. Trench A

6.1.1. Trench A (Fig. 6; Plate 2) measured 8m in length and 1m in width and was aligned north – south. Three evenly-spaced sondages were excavated across the trench, each measuring 1m x 1m in diameter.

6.1.2. At the southern end of the trench a yellowish-grey sandy clay deposit (106) was exposed at a depth of 0.63m below the topsoil however further excavation was not possible due to excessive water seepage. It had been sealed by pale-grey clay silt (105) which measured 0.16m in depth. The aforementioned deposit was sealed by reddish brown clay layer (104) which equated to context 102 recorded in the sondage at the northern end of the trench.

6.1.3. The deepest of the sondages was excavated between three and four metres from the northern end of the trench. A yellowish-orange sandy clay (115), which may have represented the natural subsoil was exposed at a depth of 51.29m AOD. A dark-grey sandy silt (114) overlay the possible natural subsoil, this silt may have been a deposit infilling a pond. It measured in excess of 0.10m in depth and was sealed by reddish brown clay layer (107).

6.1.4. The reddish brown clay layer (102/ 104/ 107) was recorded at a depth of 0.60m below the topsoil in a sondage at the northern end of the trench. The clay layer was sealed by reddish-grey sandy silt layer of subsoil (101).It contained frequent small and large rounded stones and an array of finds including late-18th century pottery, also glass, metal, animal bone, brick and tile. The subsoil had been cut by a feature (113) which measured 1.20m wide and 0.60m deep and followed an east-west alignment. The feature appeared to represent a drainage ditch and was comprised of a number of fills (108-112). The lowest context, mid grey clay silt (112) was sealed by dark grey silt,(111) which had a high organic content. The uppermost fill (108) grey silt with patches of clay, measured 0.34m in depth and contained pieces of 18th century pottery, also brick and tile. It was sealed by dark grey-brown sandy silt layer of topsoil (100) which measured 0.20m in depth.

6.2. Trench B

6.2.1. Trench B (Fig. 6; Plate 3) measured 8m in length and 1m in width and was aligned northeast – southwest. At a distance of 3m from the northeast end of the trench a sondage was excavated. Excavation was stopped at a depth of 1.10m below the topsoil due to water seepage. A dark grey sand and gravel (204) which contained fragments of brick and tile was visible in the section at this depth (51.31m AOD). The deposit (204) may have been the infill of a pond or one of a series of levelling layers. It measured in excess of 0.16m in depth and was overlain by a blue-grey silty clay deposit (203) which contained pieces of brick and was 0.22m deep. The aforementioned context was sealed by a levelling layer of brown sandy clay (202), which measured 0.30m in depth and contained frequent pieces of brick and tile and a small number of sherds of post-medieval pottery. The presence of large rounded cobbles and sandstone enhanced the impression of demolition material used as a make up layer. The layer was overlain by a layer, 0.20m in depth, of grey-brown sandy clay subsoil (201) which contained pottery, brick and tile. It was sealed by 0.18m of topsoil (200).

6.3. Trench C

6.3.1. Trench C (Fig. 7; Plate 4) measured 8m in length and 1m in width and was orientated east – west. The natural orange silty sand and gravel subsoil (302) was uncovered at a depth of 51.79m AOD. It had been overlain by a layer of subsoil (301) which was made up of mid-grey clay sand and frequent pebbles. The subsoil measured 0.15m in depth and was overlain by 0.20m of topsoil (300). The only evidence of disturbance was provided by a modern drainage ditch (304) and pipe (303), which was visible following a north – south alignment situated approximately 1.40m from the eastern end of the trench. The ditch measured 1.25m wide and had been cut through the subsoil and sealed by between 0.15-0.20m of topsoil.

6.4. Trench D

6.4.1. Trench D (Fig. 7; Plate 5) measured 8m in length and 1m in width and was aligned east – west. The natural sand and gravel subsoil (402) was exposed at a depth of 51.76m AOD. Approximately 1.30m from the eastern end of the trench the natural subsoil had been cut by a shallow north – south aligned ditch (403). The undated ditch had steep sides and a U-shaped profile and measured 1.34m in width. It had been filled with a dark greyish-brown gravely silt (404) and had been truncated by a north – south aligned drainage ditch with pipe (405). Excavation was stopped at a depth of 51.14m AOD once the top of the pipe was exposed. The truncated ditch (403) was sealed by a greyish-brown stony layer of subsoil (401) which measured 0.18m in depth and contained animal bone, brick and tile. A northwest – southeast

aligned ditch (408) cut the subsoil approximately 1.40m from the western end of the trench. The ditch represented the continuation of the post-medieval ditch (503) which was excavated in Trench E and was therefore recorded in plan but not excavated. It had been sealed by 0.15m of topsoil.

6.5. Trench E

6.5.1. Trench E (Fig. 8; Plate 6) measured 8m in length and 1m in width and was aligned east – west. The natural orange silty sand and gravel subsoil (506) was exposed at a depth of 51.85m AOD. It had been overlain by a layer of subsoil (501) which measured 0.15m in depth and was comprised of light grey-brown clay silt with very abundant small stones. The subsoil contained post-medieval pottery, glass, animal bone, brick and tile. In the central area of the trench the subsoil had been cut by a northwest – southeast aligned ditch (503). The ditch had steeply-sloping sides and a flat base, measuring 2.02m wide and 0.32m deep. The ditch was filled with dark grey-brown silty clay (502), which contained a varied assemblage of finds dating to the first half of the 19th century, including pottery, glass, clay pipe, slag, metal, animal bone, brick and tile. At the eastern end of the trench the continuation of the north – south aligned pipe trench seen in Trenches 3 and 4 was recorded but not excavated. The natural subsoil (506) had been cut at the western end of the trench by a small sub-circular cut (505) which measured 0.47m in diameter and 0.25m deep with steeply sloping sides and a flattish base. No finds were recovered, but the irregular nature of the edges suggested a possible tree bole. It was sealed by 0.10m of topsoil (500).

6.6. Trench F

6.6.1. Trench F (Fig. 8; Plate 7) measured 8m in length and 1m in width and was orientated northeast-southwest. The natural orange-brown sand and gravel subsoil (602) was exposed at a depth of 51.84m AOD. The natural subsoil had been cut by a rectangular pit (604) 1m from the southwestern end of the trench. The pit measured 0.46m deep and approximately 0.90m in diameter and continued beyond the southern edge of excavation. It had been filled with dark grey gravelly silt (605) and contained fragments of brick and tile. A shallow northwest – southeast aligned feature (606) was excavated immediately to the east of pit 604. It may have been a drainage ditch or evidence of ridge and furrow. It measured 0.35m wide and 0.14m deep but did not contain any datable finds. A second pit (608) was partially exposed to the east of the aforementioned gully. The pit measured 0.37m deep and approximately 0.70m in diameter and extended beyond the southern edge of the trench. The fill (609) was directly comparable to pit 604 and also contained brick and tile fragments. At a distance of 3m from the northeastern end of the trench a northwest – southeast aligned ditch (610) was uncovered. The ditch had steep sides and contained two courses of a red brick drain (612). Each of the pits and drainage ditches in the trench had been overlain by a layer of grey gravelly silt subsoil (601). The subsoil was 0.12m deep and contained pieces of brick, tile, clay pipe and metal; it was overlain by 0.16m of topsoil (600).

6.7. Trench G

6.7.1. Trench G (Fig. 9; Plate 8) measured 8m in length and 1m in width and was aligned northeast – southwest. The natural brownish-orange sand and gravel subsoil (709) was uncovered at a depth of 52.11m AOD. Over a distance of two metres at the northeastern end of the trench the natural subsoil was overlain by a layer of cobbles (705) which may have represented the western edge of a north – south aligned track or rough road surface continuing beyond the edges of the trench. The

cobble surface was sealed by a levelling layer (702) which was comprised of building demolition rubble within a matrix of brown silty clay. A significant amount of finds which dated to the 17th century were recovered from the layer, including pottery, glass, clay pipe, metal, brick and tile. At the southwestern end of the trench the natural subsoil had been cut by a wide drainage ditch and pipe (707) which was sealed by two layers of compacted stones (706 and 708). The uppermost layer (706) was cut by a shallow, narrow cut (704) which ran north – south and may have been a trench for a pipe which had been removed. It was sealed by a layer of topsoil measuring 0.15-0.20m in depth.

6.8. Trench H

6.8.1. Trench H (Fig. 9; Plate 9) measured 8m in length and 1m in width and was orientated east – west. The natural reddish brown sand and gravel subsoil (802) was located at a depth of 52.05m AOD. It was overlain across the entire length of the trench by a layer of mid grey-brown silty sand (801). The layer may have represented a medieval plough soil, it measured between 0.40-0.55m in depth and contained pottery sherds dated to the 12th to 13th century. The possible plough soil had been cut in the extreme eastern and central area of the trench by two service trenches which were sealed by 0.15m of topsoil (800).

6.9. Trench I

6.9.1. Trench I (Fig. 9; Plate 10) measured 8m in length and 1m in width and was aligned northwest – southeast. The natural orange-brown sand and gravel subsoil (905) was exposed at a depth of 51.71m AOD. The natural subsoil was overlain by a layer of mid grey-brown silty sandy clay (906). The layer measured 0.30m in depth and may have been a medieval plough soil. At a distance of between two and four metres from the northwestern end of the trench the aforementioned layer had been cut by a large ditch (903). The ditch measured approximately 2.90m wide and had steeply sloping sides and a U-shaped profile; it was orientated northeast – southwest. It was not possible to excavate the ditch fully due to continuous water seepage, however a number of pottery sherds dated to the 12th to 13th century were recovered from the upper and lower fills (902 and 904) respectively. The ditch was in excess of 0.65m deep and was sealed by a very stony layer of grey-brown silty sandy subsoil (901). Pieces of brick and tile were retrieved from the subsoil which measured 0.15m in depth and was sealed by 0.18m of topsoil.

7. RESULTS (CABLE PERCUSSION CORES)

7.1.1. The boreholes were located along the line of the proposed flood alleviation to the west of coughton court house (fig. 1). The results of the boreholes are listed below.

7.1.2. **Borehole 1:** the topsoil measured 0.20m in depth; it sealed a layer of dark brown sandy silt which contained fragments of brick, tile and sandstone and was 0.30m deep. The natural orange-brown sand and gravel subsoil was located at a depth of 0.50m.

7.1.3. **Borehole 2:** the topsoil measured 0.28m in depth; it sealed a grey-brown sandy gravely silt layer which was 0.42m deep and contained occasional fragments of brick. The natural orange-brown sand and gravel subsoil was uncovered at a depth of 0.70m.

7.1.4. **Borehole 3:** the topsoil was 0.16m in depth. It sealed a grey layer of gravely sandy subsoil which measured 0.12m in depth. The natural orange-brown sand and gravel subsoil was located at a depth of 0.30m.

7.1.5. **Borehole 4:** the layer of topsoil was 0.18m in depth. It sealed a layer of grey-brown sandy clay silt subsoil which measured 0.15m in depth. A layer of brown sandy gravely clay with fragments of brick underlay the subsoil and sealed a blue-grey gravely clay layer of alluvium. The alluvial deposit was located at a depth of 1.10m, it measured 0.20m in depth and overlay a very wet dark grey sand and gravel river terrace deposit.

7.1.6. **Borehole 5:** the layer of topsoil measured 0.20m in depth. It sealed a layer of greyish brown sandy gravely silt subsoil which was 0.15m deep. The aforementioned layer overlay the natural subsoil which was an orange-brown silty sand and gravel, located at a depth of 0.30m.

7.1.7. **Borehole 6:** the topsoil measured 0.18m in depth. It sealed a layer of greyish brown sandy gravely silt subsoil. The subsoil was 0.15m deep and contained occasional fragments of brick and concrete. It overlay brown silty sandy gravel which was perhaps representative of a paleochannel or the infill of a drainage ditch. The aforementioned context sealed the natural subsoil, a greyish brown silty sandy gravel river terrace deposit which was located at a depth of 0.60m.

7.1.8. **Borehole 7:** the layer of topsoil measured 0.12m in depth and overlay a light greyish brown gravely silt subsoil. The layer of subsoil contained occasional fragments of brick and charcoal and was 0.15m deep. It sealed a brown sandy silt gravel which may have been a paleochannel but was more likely to have been the infill of a pipe trench. The aforementioned context overlay the natural sand and gravel river terrace deposit located at a depth of 0.40m.

7.1.9. **Borehole 8:** the layer of topsoil was 0.20m in depth. It overlay a layer of greyish brown sandy gravely silt subsoil. The subsoil measured 0.18m in depth and contained occasional fragments of brick. It sealed a probable levelling layer comprised of dark grey sandy gravely clay which contained fragments of brick, tile, charcoal and a piece of pottery. The levelling layer was 0.65m deep and overlay dark greyish orange sandy gravely clay which was located at a depth of 0.95m. The clay deposit was 0.35m in depth and contained charcoal and occasional brick fragments. It sealed a dark brown sand and gravel which was located at a depth of 1.30m and contained very occasional fragments of brick. The uppermost of the natural sand and gravel river terrace deposits was located at a depth of 1.60m.

8. THE FINDS

8.1. **The pottery** by Stephanie Rátkai (see Appendix 3)

8.1.1. The small assemblage of medieval pottery, found mainly in Trenches H and I, well to the south of Coughton Court, was composed mainly of locally produced 'Alcester ware' cooking pots (Cracknell and Jones 1989), which were made in the 12th and 13th centuries. Some Malvernian cooking pot sherds, which are most likely to date to the 13th century, were present in 902 and a further two small fragments were noted in 901. Two abraded whiteware jug sherds were found in 902. These were probably not from the kilns at Chilvers Coton, Nuneaton (Mayes and Scott 1984) and are closer in type to whitewares found during excavation along the route of the M6 Toll Road (Rátkai 2008). It is unlikely that the whiteware sherds

pre-date c 1250. Most of the medieval pottery was heavily abraded and consistent with manuring scatters. The medieval pottery has been tabulated (Appendix 3, Table 3). The sherds from 202 were heavily abraded but appeared to be from one vessel.

8.1.2. A sherd with oolitic limestone temper was found in 801. The temper suggests a source in the Cotswolds.

8.1.3. There was no medieval pottery dating from after *c* 1300. Borehole 8 produced a single cistercian ware sherd dating to the late-15th or 16th century. The remaining pottery dated from the 17th to mid-19th centuries. This pottery consisted of very small quantities of blackware, blue transfer-printed wares, brown salt-glazed stoneware, creamware, coarseware, industrial slipware, pearlware, slip-decorated ware, slip-coated ware, utilitarian whiteware and white salt-glazed stoneware. This material is so fragmentary and poorly represented that it has not been recorded in detail.

8.1.4. Medieval and post-medieval pottery in very small quantities has previously been excavated at Coughton Court in 1991 (Rátkai 2003) from the moat platform itself, in the area of the now demolished eastern range. The pottery was similar to that recovered from this evaluation with locally produced Alcester ware being dominant and a single sherd of Malvernian cooking pot also present. Rátkai (*ibid*, 98) postulated a forerunner to the Tudor range from this evidence and from a medieval zoomorphic roof finial (*ibid.,* 103-5*)*. However, there is no documentary evidence for a medieval building on the site, although the stratigraphic information (Evans 2003, 97) did confirm the existence of a medieval moated platform before the construction of the present Tudor range.

8.1.5. The evaluation trenches were situated to the south and west of Coughton Court, with the medieval pottery being concentrated in trenches H and I. Thus the evaluation pottery was found from contexts far from those from which the 1991 medieval pottery came. Whether the pottery represents manuring scatters derived from medieval buildings on the platform or from buildings outside the platform, representing a separate focus of medieval occupation, is impossible to say.

8.1.6. The post medieval pottery was found in all trenches apart from Trenches F and H. It was generally fairly basic in marked contrast to the post-medieval pottery recovered in 1991 which suggested rather higher status and which almost certainly represented the pottery used by the inhabitants of Coughton Court.

8.2. **The Ceramic Building Material** *by Erica Macey-Bracken*

Tile

8.2.1. A total of 472 fragments of tile were recovered from the site. The fragments were divided into five fabrics using x10 magnification, as shown below:

Fabric One: orange, slightly sandy with dense fine quartz, sparse-moderate red ferrous, and sparse grog pellets and elongated voids. This fabric is identical to that described by Rátkai in the report on tile recovered from previous excavations on the site in 1991 (Rátkai 2003, 103).

Fabric Two: similar to Fabric One, sandy and reddish-brown with frequent grog pellets.

Fabric Three: brown surface, sandy, with orange-red core, reduced to grey in patches. Very hard-fired.

Fabric Four: similar again to Fabric One, but with larger occasional grog pellets.

Fabric Five: very hard-fired orange-red. Modern drain.

8.2.2. Fabric One dominated the assemblage, with 406 of the sherds recovered being identified as being of this fabric. Conversely, only one sherd of Fabric Four was recovered. The tile was evenly distributed across all of the evaluation trenches, with no apparent correlation between forms and areas of the site.

8.2.3. Most of the fragments were undiagnostic roof tile, although seven nibs were noticed (101, 201 x 4, 202, 702) along with one square peg hole (401) and one round peg hole (202). The small size of the fragments meant that it was not possible to say whether the tiles had both nibs and peg holes or whether they only had nibs or only peg holes.

8.2.4. One small glazed fragment (310) with dark green glaze was also noted. This was too small to be diagnostic but may represent a hearth tile fragment.

8.2.5. Roof tile from the 1991 excavation was mainly of the nibbed type, although, as here, the fragmentary nature of the material made it difficult to ascertain how many tiles were nibbed only and how many had nibs and nail holes. A small number of ridge tile fragments were found in 1991 (Rátkai 2003, 103) but were noted in this evaluation material. As with the pottery, it is difficult to know whether the tile and other ceramic building material was derived from Coughton Court or from other buildings outside the moat platform. be diagnostic

Brick

8.2.6. Eighteen fragments of brick were also recovered from the site. Three distinct fabrics were identified, again using x10 magnification.

Brick Fabric One: hard, sandy pink with occasional large sub-rounded pebbles.

Brick Fabric Two: hard, sandy orange.

Brick Fabric Three: smooth orange-pink fabric, quite poorly levigated.

8.2.7. No fabric was particularly prevalent in the assemblage, although the small size of the assemblage may have some bearing on this. Most of the brick fragments were very small, although two joining fragments (102) enabled partial dimensions of 2" thick x 4¾" wide x at least 6" long to be recorded for one brick.

8.2.8. The size of the brick is indicative of early post-medieval bricks but could not be more accurately dated than the 16th to early 18th century.

8.3. **Other finds** *by Erica Macey-Bracken*

8.3.1. Other finds from the site included animal bone, glass, clay pipe, iron, stone, slag, mortar and charcoal. The material was quantified by count and weight, and examined macroscopically for the purposes of this evaluation report. The

assemblage is stable, and presents no problems for long-term storage (For details see Table 1, Appendix 2).

Glass

8.3.2. Thirteen fragments of green glass were recovered from the site. Just over half of these fragments came from bottles (101 x 2, 400 x 1, 502 x 1, 800 x 2) or in one case (900) another vessel. The fragments were too small to be diagnostic, but one fragment was identified as being from the neck of a bottle (502). The remainder of the assemblage was composed of fragments of green window glass (500 x 4, 501 x 1, 600 x 1), all of which were very small and undiagnostic.

Clay Pipe

8.3.3. A small of assemblage of clay pipe stems were recovered from across the site (101 x 1, 201 x 1, 406 x 1, 502 x 1, 601 x 2, 702 x 1, 900 x 1). No diagnostic marks or stamps were noted on any of the stems.

Iron

8.3.4. The iron assemblage consisted of twelve nails (301 x 1, 400 x 1, 502 x 2, 600 x 1, 601 x 1, 701 x 3, 702 x 1, 901 x 1, 906 x 1), most of which were near-complete. Other finds included an S-shaped hook (101), an L-shaped bracket (502), four pieces of iron plate (502), a strip (701), a curved, tapering strip (702) and a curved section from a car or motorbike exhaust (500).

Miscellaneous

8.3.5. Other finds recovered from the site included four fragments of charcoal (400 x 1, 501 x 1, 901 x 2), one fragment of non-magnetic slag (502), two fragments of stone (101 x 1, 611 x 1), and a piece of mortar (105).

8.4. **The animal bone** *by David Brown*

8.4.1. Nineteen fragments of animal bone were recovered from the site. The bone was heavily fragmented, and the overall condition of the assemblage was rated as poor/ satisfactory.

8.4.2. Most of the bone was unidentifiable to species and/ or element, and no bird or fish elements were identified. All of the identifiable fragments were from mammals, namely a cattle mandibular M2 (301), a degraded rib fragment and a suspected maxilla fragment, both from a large mammal (401), an unfused distal femur articulation from a sheep/ goat (502) and a sheep/ goat proximal ulna fragment (701). No evidence of butchery or other processing was noted.

8.4.3. Such a small assemblage cannot really tell us much about the exploitation of animals on this site. Sheep/ goat element representation and age of specimens at the time of death may hint at their exploitation as a food resource. Further interpretation at this point would be speculative.

9. DISCUSSION

9.1.1. Excavation of the two trenches located at the northern end of the site (A and B) suggested the presence of fairly deep levelling layers or possible signs of a deposit relating to a series of Stew Ponds (Milln *pers comm.*). The natural subsoil had not been reached at a depth of 51.26m AOD, 1.10m below the topsoil in both trenches which served to indicate that further work might be needed to assess the environmental potential of the deposits. This corresponded closely with the large anomaly located by the Electrical Resistance Survey in this location (Roseveare and Roseveare 2008). Dating evidence was scarce and the broad dates given by the ceramic building material cannot suggest a more accurate date for infilling than that proposed previously from the map evidence of the late-17th to 18th centuries (*ibid*, 9).

9.1.2. The depth of material in Boreholes 4 and 8 suggest these correspond with the large pond feature identified on geophysical survey and in trenches A and B. The depth of the feature below surface level would appear to be 1.40 to 1.60m. Clay and alluvial deposits at the base of these boreholes suggest the feature was allowed to silt before rapid infilling occurred. The shallower depth of material in Borehole 5 strongly indicates that the southern edge of the feature lies between Borehole 5 and 8 corresponding with the edge of the geophysical anomaly (see Fig. 4).

9.1.3. Excavation of the trenches (C-F) immediately adjacent to the Court however, implied that any signs of archaeological activity pre-dating the post-medieval period in the area had been scoured out during episodes of ground levelling. The electrical resistance survey revealed an area of undisturbed ground. The evidence of activity in these trenches was restricted to occasional undated small pits, a large drainage ditch which was dated to the first half of the 19th century and a number of red brick pipes which traversed the site on a north – south orientation. The absence of material relating to the demolished stable blocks that occurred in the late-18th century may suggest that the material was removed from the ground and deposited within the moat as suggested by historical documents (Roseveare and Roseveare 2008, 8). Another possibility exists that the relatively small scale of the evaluation may mean that potential features have been missed by the trenches and lie outside these areas. The evidence from aerial photographic survey and geophysical survey would suggest there still remains the potential for archaeological remains.

9.1.4. In Borehole 2, south of Trench F, there was an anomalous depth of material to a depth of 0.70m below current ground level. This may represent a cut feature or change in the ground level. The limited nature of the evidence, derived from boreholes, prevents speculation.

9.1.5. The evaluation illustrated that the area to the southwest of Coughton Court House afforded the greatest potential for the survival of medieval archaeological remains. Two of the three speculative trenches (H and I) provided evidence of a fairly deep possible medieval plough soil. It had perhaps sealed and protected earlier archaeological remains. The ditch excavated in Trench I may have represented a medieval boundary line. It followed a northeast – southwest alignment and contained an assemblage of medieval pottery sherds. The alignment of the ditch does not correspond with any of the geophysical anomalies or the ground penetrating radar and is marginally too far north to correspond with the boundary depicted on Thorpe's Map. This would suggest we may have surviving archaeological evidence relating to the shrunken medieval village known to have existed to the southwest of Coughton Court.

9.1.6. Evidence of later activity during the post-medieval period was provided by a stone surface recorded in Trench G. The large compact cobbles may indicate a surviving

road or track surface which ran in a north – south direction along the western side of Coughton Court House. Magnetic resistance data for the area adjacent to the road produced strong responses and the archaeological evidence supports the supposition that the area contained a metalled surface (Roseveare and Roseveare 2008, 9). The bands of low resistance interpreted as ditches may relate to the buried services located in Trench H. The area contained considerable quantities of tile. It is unclear whether this was scatter from an immediately adjacent building or imported levelling material.

10. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

10.1.1. The northern area of the site (Trenches A and B) appeared to contain the remains of a large water feature. The infilling of the feature dates to the post-medieval period but the present knowledge of the feature cannot disprove a potentially earlier date. At present the extent and depth of the feature are poorly defined and further archaeological evaluation should allow better understanding of this feature. Given the extent of the proposed development, depths may not impact on this feature and the potential redesign of the development should suffice to negate the necessity for any further work. There would appear to be a medium/ high potential for significant archaeological remains in this area. Should archaeological work impact upon this area the level of the water table would certainly suggest there is the possibility for waterlogged archaeological remains particularly in view of the interpretation of the area as a stew pond. Any proposed scheme should take account of this and factor in the potential risk of disturbing these remains.

10.1.2. The evaluation of the central area of the site would appear to contain few or no remains that pre-date the post-medieval period. The evaluation trenches (C-F) imply that the area had a relatively shallow build-up of material and potential remains may have been scoured away during remediation or landscaping work associated with the rebuilding of the hall in the later 18th century. The geophysical survey of the area and map evidence in this location did suggest a high concentration of material. Therefore the results of all the archaeological work as a whole would suggest a low/ medium potential for archaeological remains. It may be deemed suitable to maintain a watching brief on initial topsoil removal during the scheme to confirm the suggestion that the area was devoid of archaeological features. All initial stripping of the site should be undertaken with a toothless bucket. A suitable contingency of time and resources should be allowed for archaeological recording of remains within this area.

10.1.3. The area of greatest potential for archaeological remains would appear to lie at the southern end of the proposed flood alleviation. The trenches that run parallel to the roadway (H-I) contained potential archaeological features for medieval and post-medieval period probably associated with activity adjacent to the road. Of greatest interest was the southwest – northeast ditch that contained medieval pottery and would appear to suggest activity associated with the outskirts of the shrunken medieval village towards the centre of the village of Coughton. The area would appear to have a medium/ high potential for archaeological remains. Given the potential for remains a programme of archaeological mitigation is recommended for the area. The form of this mitigation should be discussed at greater length with the Scheduled Monument Inspectorate. At the present stage a programme of strip and record would be recommended with a suitable contingency of both time and resources to allow recording of any remains encountered. This should involve a watching brief on all stripping of topsoil, which should be undertaken with a toothless bucket, and subsequent mapping of the features encountered. The contingency should allow sufficient time to sample and record archaeological features encountered during the topsoil strip.

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Appendix 2

Table 1: Quantification of Finds

Strat No	Tile: ceramic	Brick: ceramic	Building stone	Mortar	Medieval pot	Post-medieval pot	Clay pipe	Iron nails	Other iron	Slag	Bottle glass	Window glass	Other stone	Animal Bone (g)	Charcoal / Coal
101	33	9	1			3	1		1		2			1	
102		2													
105	3	5		2		2									
107	1	4													
108	7	1				1									
110	3	1													
200	21														
201	28	1				5	2								
202	5														
203			2												
300	25	4													
301	90	4	3			1		1						21	
400	21							1			1				1
401	9	3												25	
406	8					1	1								
407	3														
500	7	12				4			1			4			
501	54					8						1		1	1
502	13	21	3			18	1	2	5	1	1			17	
600	6							1				1			
601	2	2					2	1							
605	6														
609	6														
611	11	3											1		
701	8	2			1	2		3	1					5	
702	10	3	3			1	1	2							
703					1									1	

Strat No	Tile: ceramic	Brick: ceramic	Building stone	Mortar	Medieval pot	Post-medieval pot	Clay pipe	Iron nails	Other iron	Slag	Bottle glass	Window glass	Other stone	Animal Bone (g)	Charcoal / Coal
800	4		1								2				
801					1										
900	8	3				3	1				1				
901	20		1		1			1							2
902	10				4										
906	4		1		11			1						1	
1000	4					1									

Appendix 3

Table 2: Summary of pottery dates

Context	Spot Date
101	Later 18th century
108	18th century
201	Later 18th century –residual 17th century
202	17th century sherd; 19 medieval cp sherds (12th-13th century)
301	18th century
406	17th century
500	2nd half of 19th century
501	Early 19th century
502	1st half of 19th century
701	17th century
702	17th century
801	12-13th century
900	*c* 1720-1750
901	12th-13th century
902	12th-13th century
904	12th-13th century

Table 3: Quantification of Medieval Pottery

	202	801	901	902	904	pipe trench	Total
Pottery							
Alcester cooking pot rim		2		4	1	1	8
Alcester cooking pot base/body	19	8	5	54	1	1	88
Malvernian cooking pot base/body			2	5			7
Oolitic tempered base/body		1					1
Glazed whiteware				2			2
Total	19	11	7	65	2	2	106

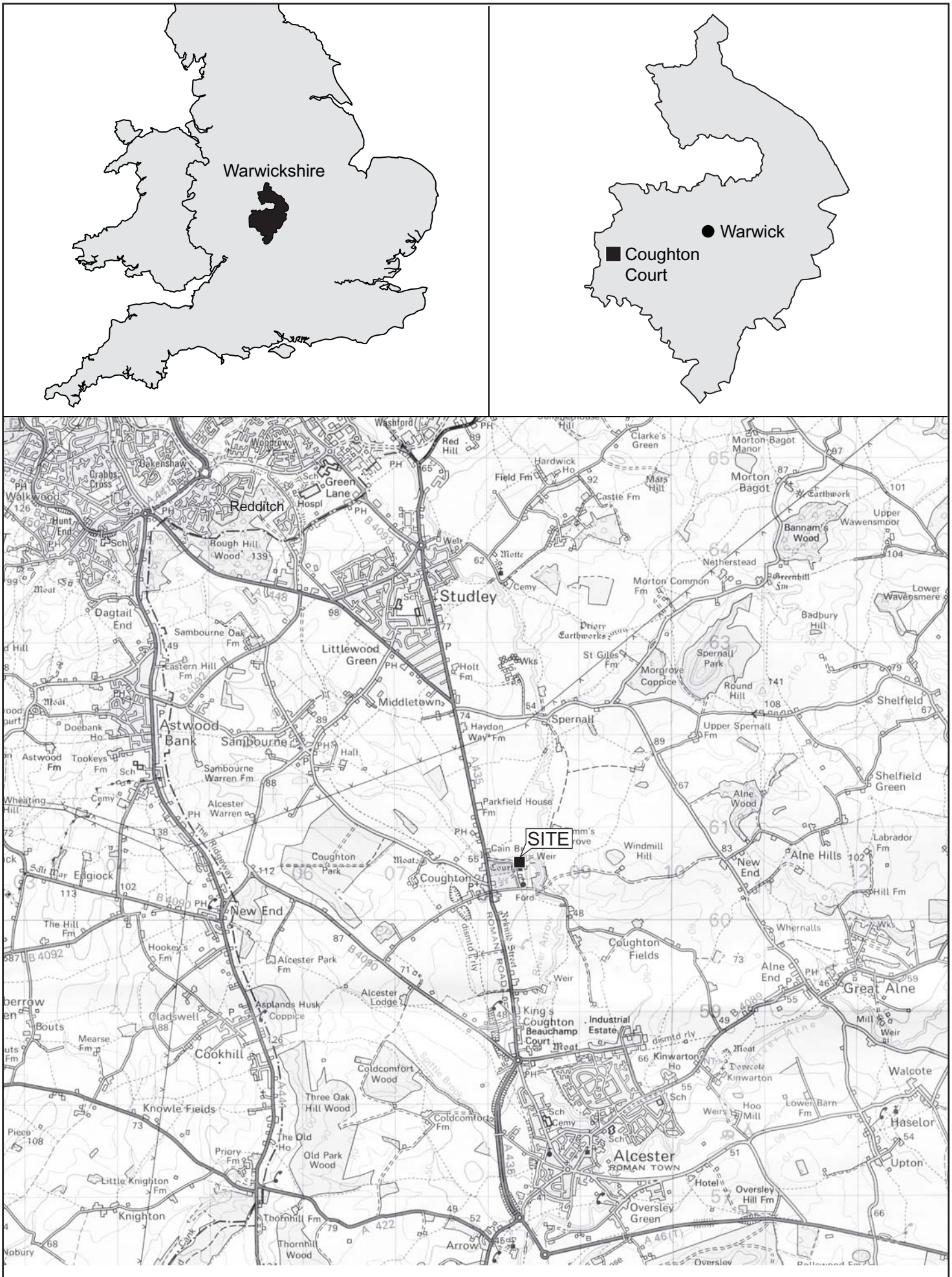

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Figure 1: Location of site

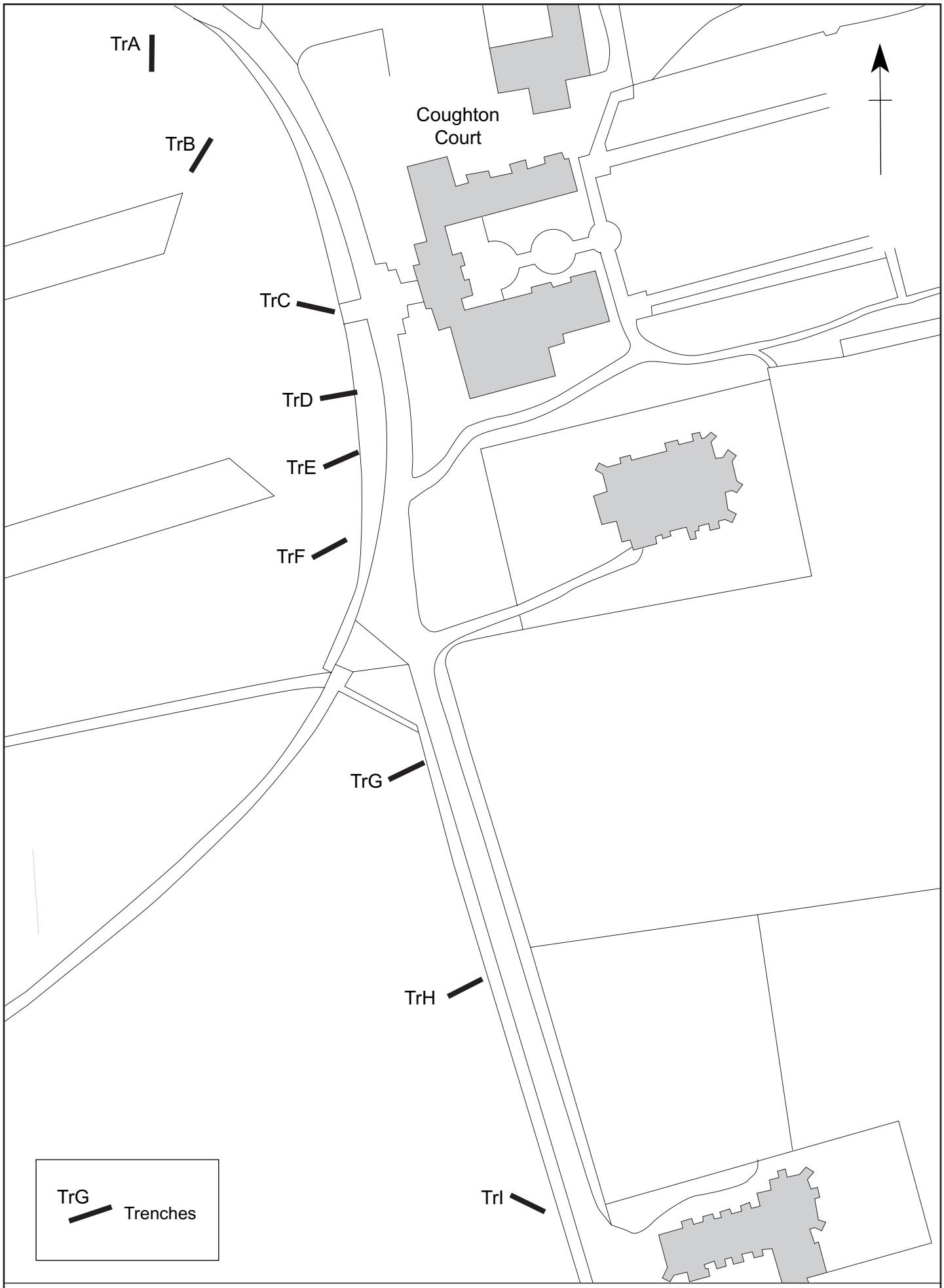

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Figure 2: Location of trenches

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Figure 3: Interpretation Overview

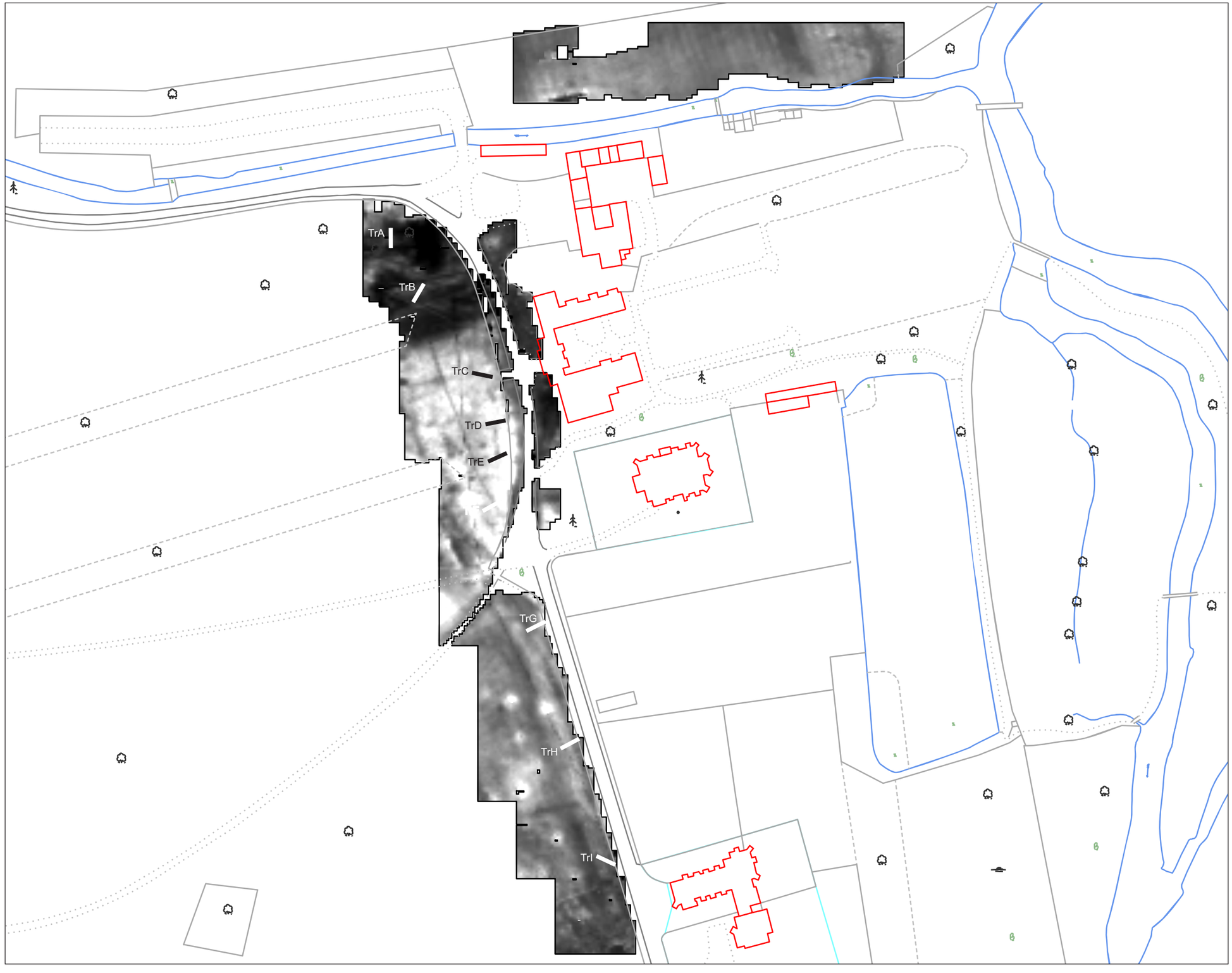

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Figure 4: Electrival Resistivity Survey

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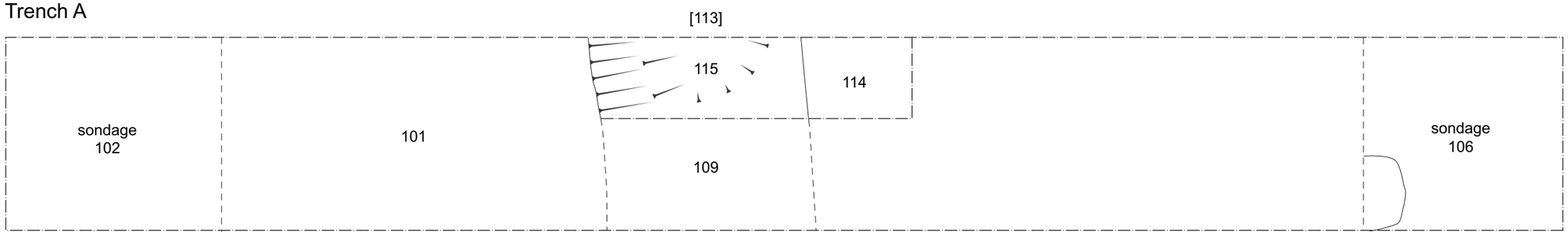
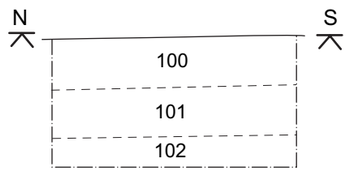
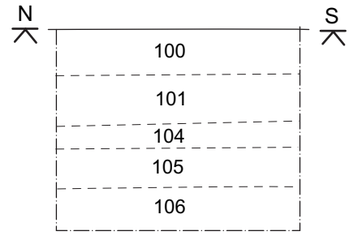
Figure 5: Magnetometer Survey

Trench A







Trench B

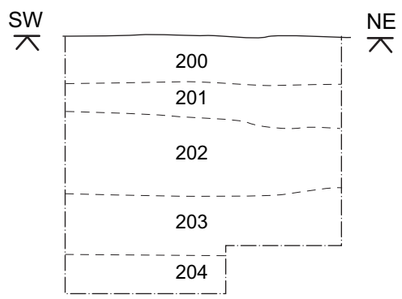


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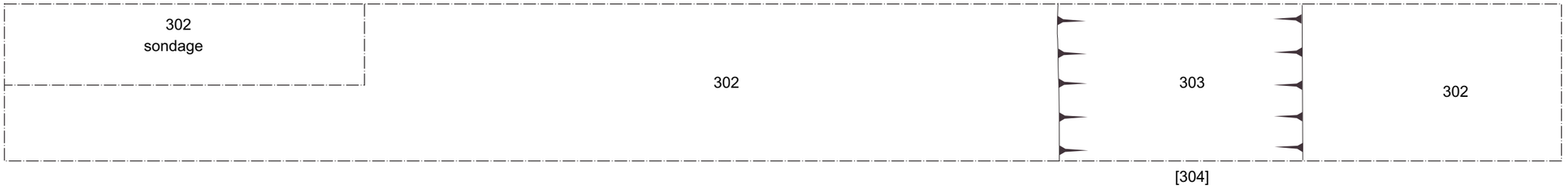
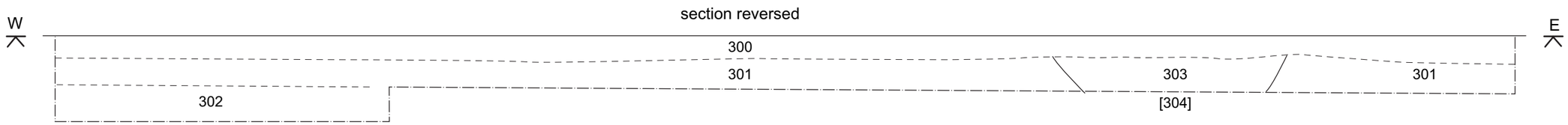
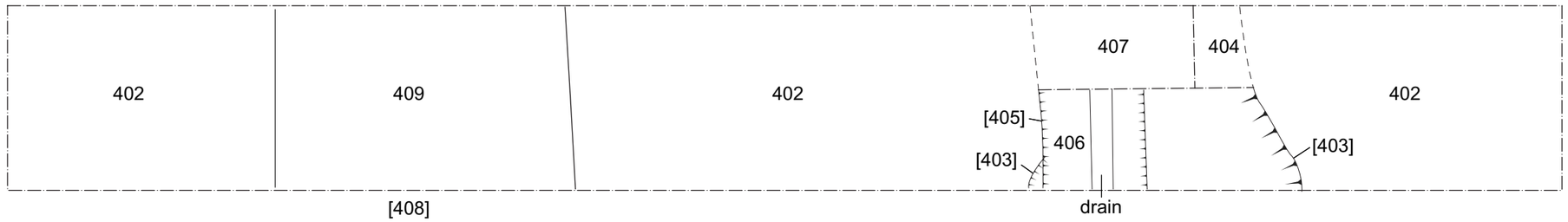
Figure 6: Plans and sections of trenches

Trench C





Trench D



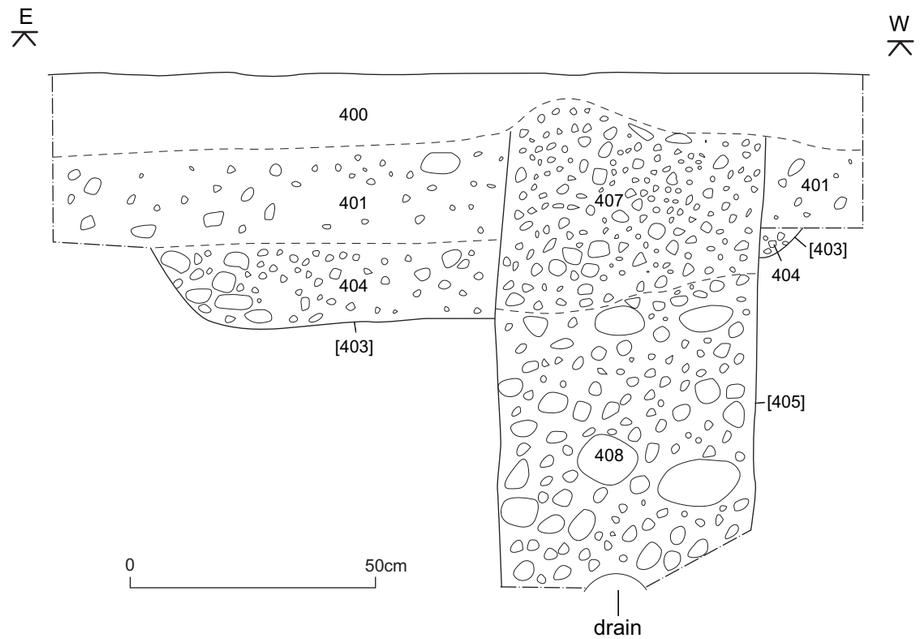


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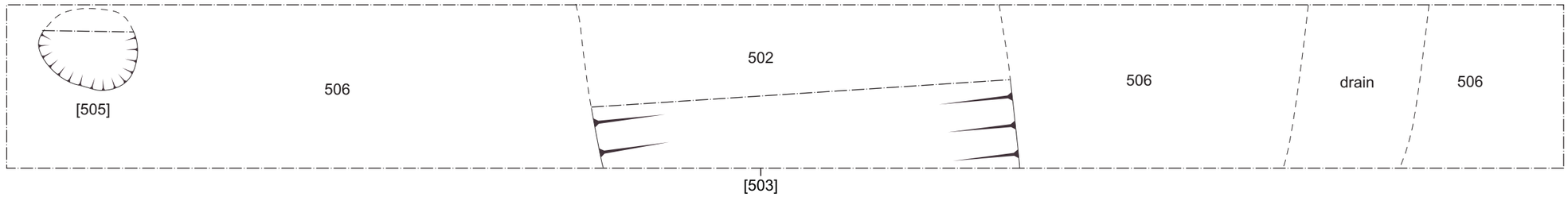
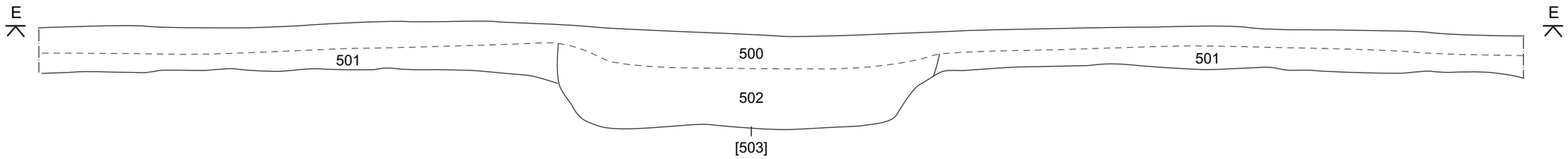
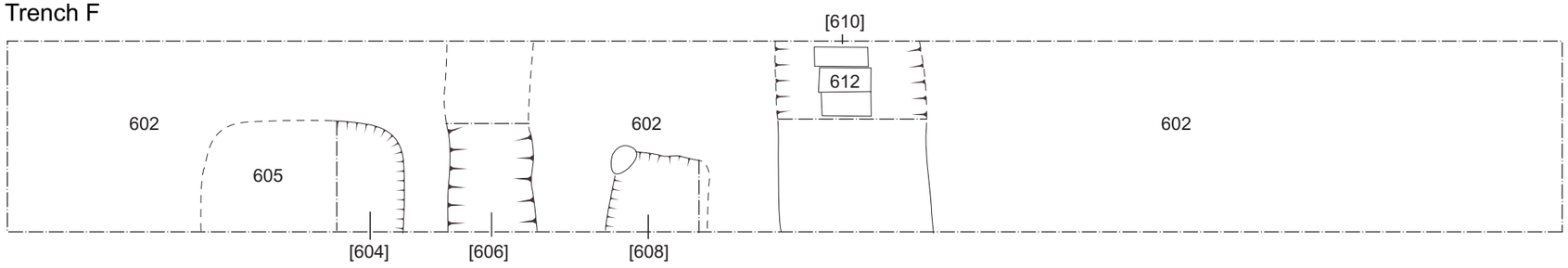
Figure 7: Plans and sections of trenches

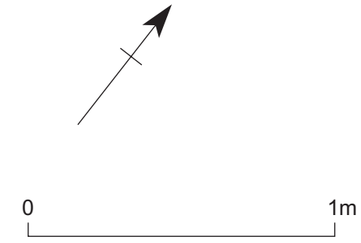
Trench E

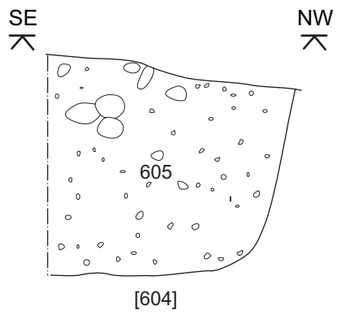


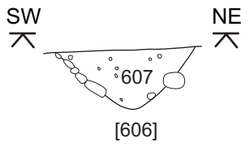


Trench F









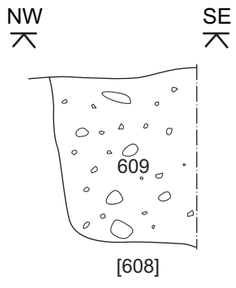


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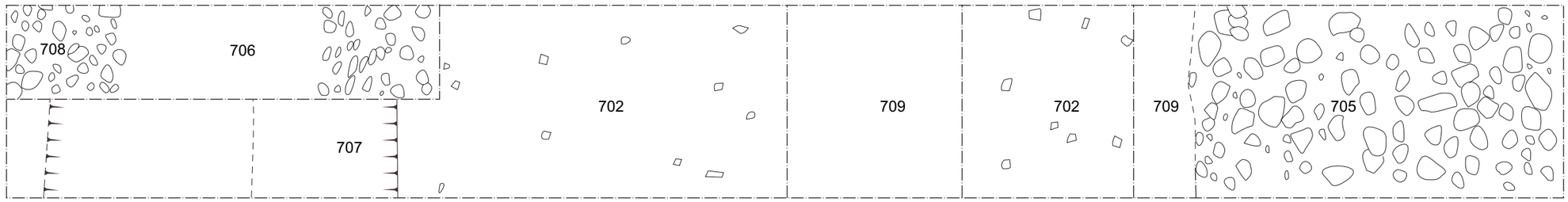
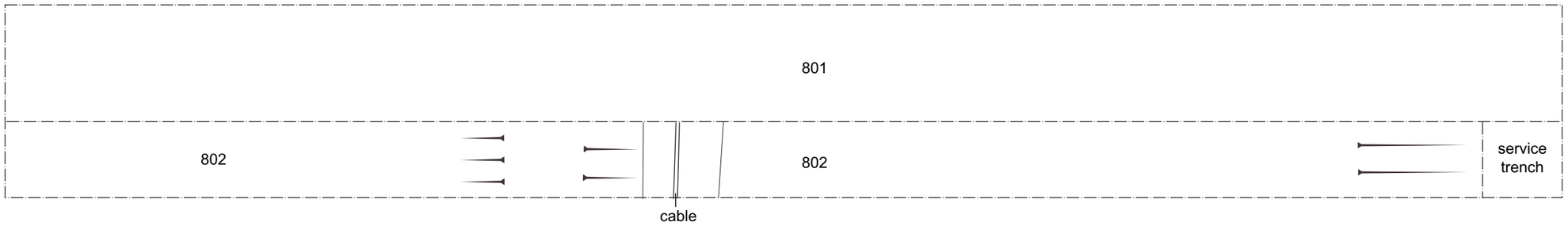
Figure 8: Plans and sections of trenches

Trench G



Trench H



Trench I

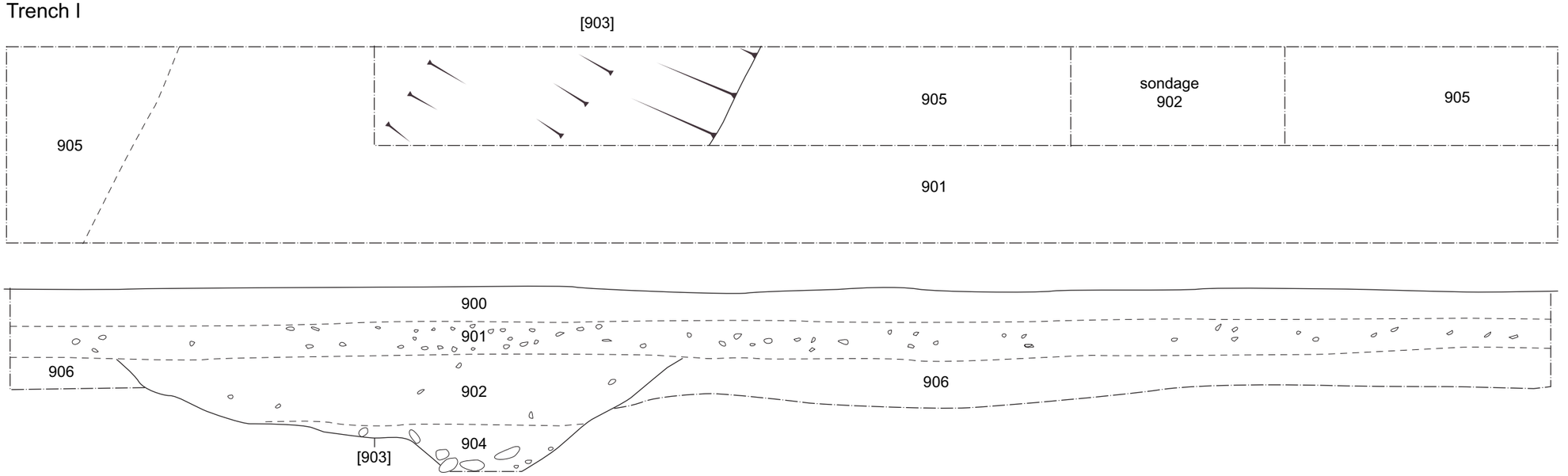


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Figure 9: Plans and sections of trenches

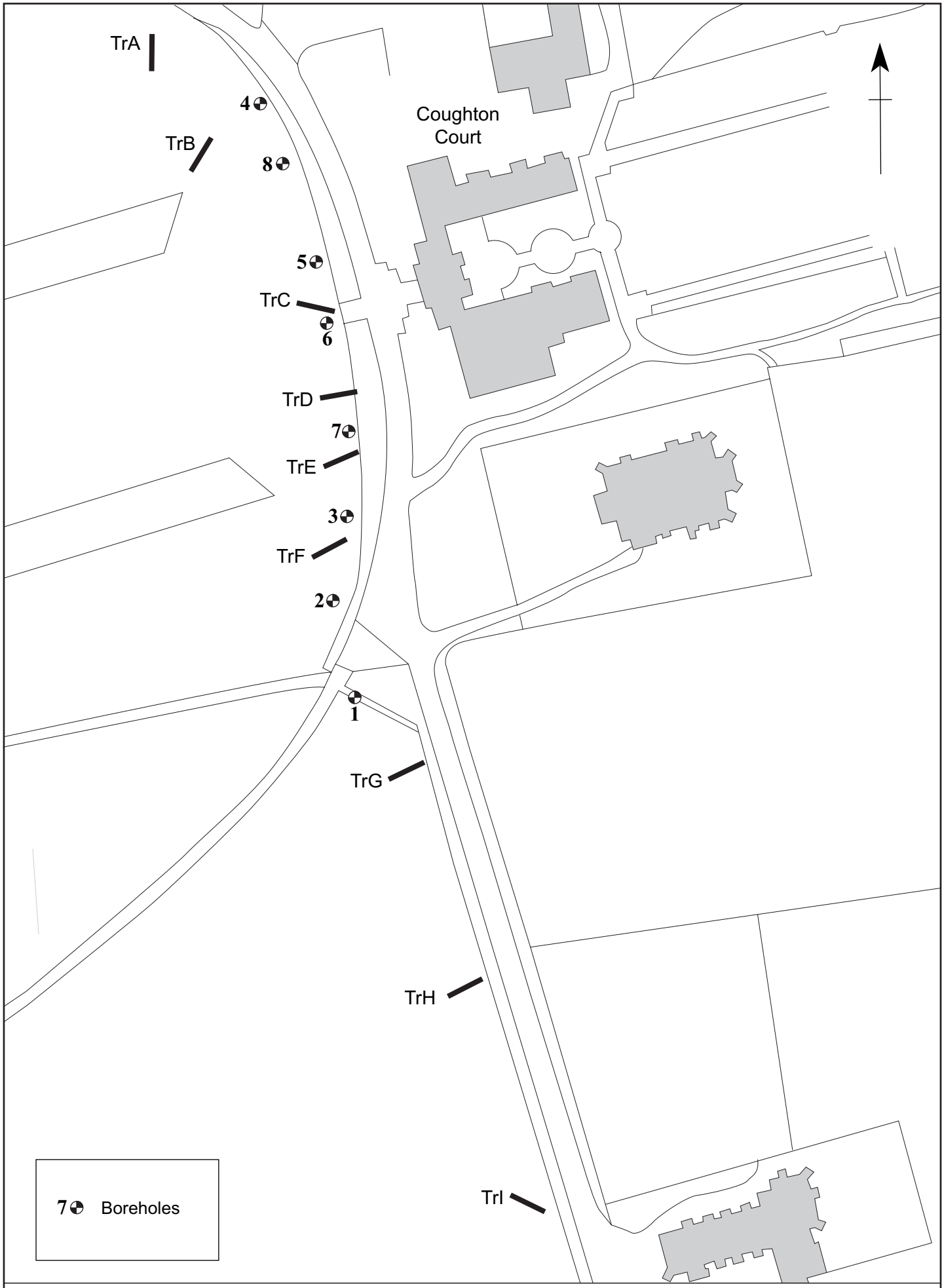

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Figure 10: Location of boreholes

General working shot, facing North

Trench A, general shot, facing Southeast

Trench B, facing Northeast

Trench C, facing East

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Plates 3 and 4

Trench E 503, facing Northwest

Trench E, facing East

Trench F, facing Northeast

Trench G, facing Southwest

Trench H, facing East

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Plates 7, 8 and 9

Trench I, general shot, facing Southeast

Trench I, Southwest facing section