

An Archaeological  
Excavation at  
The Manor Centre,  
Church Street, Beeston  
Nottinghamshire (SK 528 367).

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**For: Braemore Properties.**

**University of Leicester Archaeological Services**

**Report 2005/114**

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Nottinghamshire, (SK 528 367).**

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**1. Summary**

*An archaeological excavation was undertaken at The Manor Centre, Church Street, Beeston, Nottinghamshire (SK 528 367) by ULAS in July 2005. The work was commissioned by Braemore Properties. Excavation revealed a probable prehistoric boundary ditch and possible medieval structural remains in the form of two post settings and a posthole that may have formed part of a building. A pit feature was also partially excavated that could be evidence of medieval quarrying for sand and gravel. Further postholes and pits were located indicating the presence of further activity within the area.*

**2. Introduction**

This report presents the results of archaeological excavation at The Manor Centre, Church Street, Beeston, Nottingham. The site is bounded by Church Street, Middle Street and Styring Street and is centred on SK 528 367. The work took place from the 7th to the 18th July after the demolition of a previous building and prior to the construction of new residential buildings (Planning Application No: P.A. 01/000468).

A desk-based assessment (Kinsley and Brown 2003, 6) and field evaluation (Kinsley 2004, 7) concluded that the site had potential to contain archaeological deposits, as it was located in the medieval village core of Beeston. The Senior Archaeological Officer for Nottinghamshire County Council therefore requested further archaeological work as a condition of planning permission.

**3. Geology**

The British Geological Survey 1:500000 Series England and Wales Sheet 125 indicates that the underlying geology is First Terrace Gravel. The site lies at a height of c. 30-31m OD.

**4. Archaeological and Historical Background**

A desk-based assessment (Kinsley and Brown 2003) concluded that the area was in a key position in the medieval village of Beeston and that it was an area which was likely to have been occupied during the medieval period. The site was identified as having the potential to contain evidence for the development of the street system

including the origin of Church Street and the possibility of burials including a 16th century 'plague hole' which may lie within the application area.

An evaluation (Kinsley 2004) established that the site stratigraphy comprised of modern overburden overlying a buried soil that overlay a gravel terrace substratum, the surface of which occurred at between 30.0m and 31.4m OD. The only possible archaeological features were located cutting the higher areas of the gravel substratum to the north east. Only one of these, a small pit, contained dating material and this comprised a single sherd of medieval pottery. Disturbance by 19th century intrusions or modern drain features was evident in the majority of the evaluation trenches.

## **5. Objectives**

The main objectives of the excavation were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To formulate a strategy for their recording in consultation with Nottinghamshire County Council, Environment Dept.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

## **6. Methodology**

The archaeological work followed the programme set out in the *Design Specification for Archaeological Work* (ULAS Report No: 05/555, See Appendix II).

A 360 mechanical digger with a 3m wide toothless ditching bucket was used to excavate the modern overburden and buried soil in spits under archaeological supervision down to the gravel terrace substratum. All archaeological deposits located were hand cleaned, recorded and excavated.

All plans were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Excavated sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20 and the plans drawn at 1:20 and were levelled and tied into the Ordnance Survey Datum. Spot heights were taken where appropriate. All archaeological deposits were recorded using the standard ULAS Recording Manual. This involved a written description, a drawn record and a photographic record of all excavated deposits.

The location of the excavated area was surveyed using a Topcon GTS 303 Total Station Electronic Distance Meter (EDM) linked to a hand held Psion Data Logger. The data was processed using n4ce software, and the final illustrations were produced with the aid of TurboCad drawing software version 7.

All archaeological work adhered to the Institute of Field Archaeologist's (IFA) *Code of Conduct* and followed their *Standard and guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs and Excavations*.

The site archive will be held by the Environment Section, Nottinghamshire County Council under the code BSN 2005.

## **7. Results**

The layers of modern overburden and the buried soil (036) were machined in spits to a depth of *c.* 31 OD to reveal the gravel terrace substratum. Archaeological features were revealed cutting the substratum in the north eastern and south eastern areas of the site. The site contained considerable modern disturbance in the form of walls and services.

### *Area 01*

Area 01 was located in the northern part of the development site. Located at the northern end was the butt end of a northeast to southwest aligned linear feature [002] that contained orange brown (001) and yellowish brown (021) silty sand. The large number of stones within the fill suggest that it was deliberately backfilled. In the base of (001) a prehistoric flint blade was recovered. Cutting it were modern toilet blocks to the north and an irregular pit to the south [020]. The fill of [020] was mid brown silty sand (019) that contained two sherds of 13th century pottery.

To the south east of [002] and [020] were a number of circular and sub-circular features. In a west to east alignment were features [004] and [014]. Their measurements were almost identical, [002] measuring 0.84m by 0.74m and 0.19m in depth and [014] measuring 0.80m by 0.76m and 0.23m in depth. The sides of both features were near vertical and both had a flat base. Each feature also contained mid to light orange brown silty sand. Their size and shape would suggest that they were post settings. No finds were recovered to assist with dating. Between [004] and [014] was a small circular posthole [005] measuring 0.39m by 0.39m and 0.19m in depth. It had a light orange brown sandy silt fill (004) that contained a single sherd of medieval sandy ware pottery dated to the 13th century. Cutting [014] was a small posthole [012] that contained a charcoal rich silty sand fill (011). To the north west of [012] was a similar sized posthole [010] that measured 0.25m by 0.23m and 0.05m in depth and contained a mid orange silty sand fill (009).

### *Area 02*

Area 02 was located in the eastern part of the development site. It contained two sub-circular pits. The smaller of the two, [023] measured 0.95m by 0.96m and was 0.20m in depth. It contained a mid orange brown fill (022). To the south east was [025]. It measured 1.18m by 0.60m and was 0.15m in depth. It contained the same fill as [023]. Neither produced any finds to assist in dating.

### *Area 03*

Area 03 was located in the south eastern part of the development site. It contained two sub-circular pits. Feature [031] was a modern pit that contained brick fragments and modern pottery. Pit [029] contained mid orange brown silty sand fill (028) and was

0.22m in depth. Its size could not be established as it was cut to the north and south east by modern services.

## **8. Discussion**

Any interpretation of [002] is problematic as only a small section survived due to later intrusions. It most probably functioned as a boundary ditch at some time in the prehistoric period.

The irregular nature of the pit [020] would suggest that it was a gravel quarry pit probably dating to the medieval period.

The similarity of size, shape and fill of the post settings [004] and [014] suggests that they were part of the same structure. It is tempting to argue that [005] was also part of the structure perhaps being evidence of an earthfast stud. As no similar post settings were found to the south it must be presumed that the structure extended to the north where it would have been truncated by modern development. The most likely interpretation of these features is that they formed part of a building. The construction of the building using earthfast timber posts combined with the discovery of sandy ware pottery from [005] is suggestive of a 13th century date. However, construction using earthfast timber post persisted into the 19th century, particularly in the dwellings of the poor and ancillary buildings (Meeson and Welch 1993, pp.1-17; Alcock and Harris 1987, p. 52, Finn 2002 p. 16). The function of this building is uncertain.

The other postholes and pits indicate the presence of further activity within the area. The date for these, except [031] that is modern, is uncertain due to the lack of finds.

## **9. Conclusion**

The excavation at The Manor Centre, Beeston has established that some archaeological remains survive within the development area. In the northern part of the site a boundary ditch of probable prehistoric date was found. It had been cut by a quarry pit of probable 13th century date. To the southeast a possible building of earthfast timber construction was located that is also likely to date to the 13th century. Further postholes and pits indicate the presence of further activity though there was no clear structural pattern and the lack of finds makes dating them impossible.

## **10. References**

Alcock, N.W. and Harris, R., 1987 'Earthfast Posts in the Cartshed at Hall Farm, Coxley, Warwickshire' *Vernacular Architecture* **18**, p.52

Kinsley, G, and Brown, J., 2003 An Archaeological Desk-Top Assessment of The Manor Centre Site, Church Street, Beeston, Nottinghamshire Trent and Peak Rep. No. BMC.1

Kinsley, G, 2004 An Archaeological Field Evaluation of The Manor Centre Site, Church Street, Beeston, Nottinghamshire Trent and Peak Rep. No. BMC.2

Meeson, R.A. and Welch, C.M., 1993 'Earthfast Posts: The Persistence of Alternative Building Techniques' *Vernacular Architecture* **24**, ppp.1-17

Finn, N, 2002 Mill Lane, Leicester: Evaluation and Limited Excavation of an Area to the South of the Historic Town ULAS Rep. No. 2002-026

## **11. Acknowledgements**

Fieldwork was undertaken by the author with the assistance of J. Patrick and G. Richards. Dr. Patrick Clay managed the project.



## Appendix 1.

### The pottery and miscellaneous finds from an excavation at Beeston, Nottinghamshire.

#### D. Sawday

The pottery, seven sherds, weighing one hundred and nineteen grams, and a fragment of medieval ridge tile, were examined under a binocular microscope and catalogued with reference to the ULAS fabric series and reference collection, (Davies and Sawday 1999), (Table 10). The reference collection includes material from Nottingham, identified by former staff at the Nottingham Castle Museum, Victoria Nailor and Charles Young, to whom I am much indebted.

Ware	Sherd Nos	Weight Grams	Average Sherd Weight
POTTERY			
<i>Medieval</i>			
Nottingham Splashed ware	1	4	
Nottingham Pink Bodied Green Glazed Sandy ware	1	16	
Nottingham Light Bodied/Reduced Green Glazed Sandy ware	2	86	
Unclassified Medieval Sandy ware	2	5	
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>18.5</b>
<i>Modern</i>			
Nottingham Stoneware	1	8	
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>119</b>	
MEDIEVAL RIDGE TILE			
Medieval Sandy ware	1	6	

Table 1: The pottery and ridge tile totals by fabric, sherd/fragment numbers and weight (grams)

All the pottery from the stratified contexts dated from the thirteenth century, save for a modern sherd in context [31]. Typically, the medieval pottery appears to be local in origin, all but two of the sherds are in Nottingham wares. The remainder and the ridge tile may come from Derbyshire.

The relatively large average sherd weight for the medieval pottery of 18.5 grams, suggests that archaeological levels may survive relatively intact in the vicinity.

#### Bibliography

Davies, S., and Sawday, D., 1999. 'The Post Roman Pottery and Tile' in A. Connor and R. Buckley, *Roman and Medieval Occupation in Causeway Lane, Leicester*, Leicester Archaeology Mon. **5**, 165-213.



Fig. 1. Location of proposed development area.

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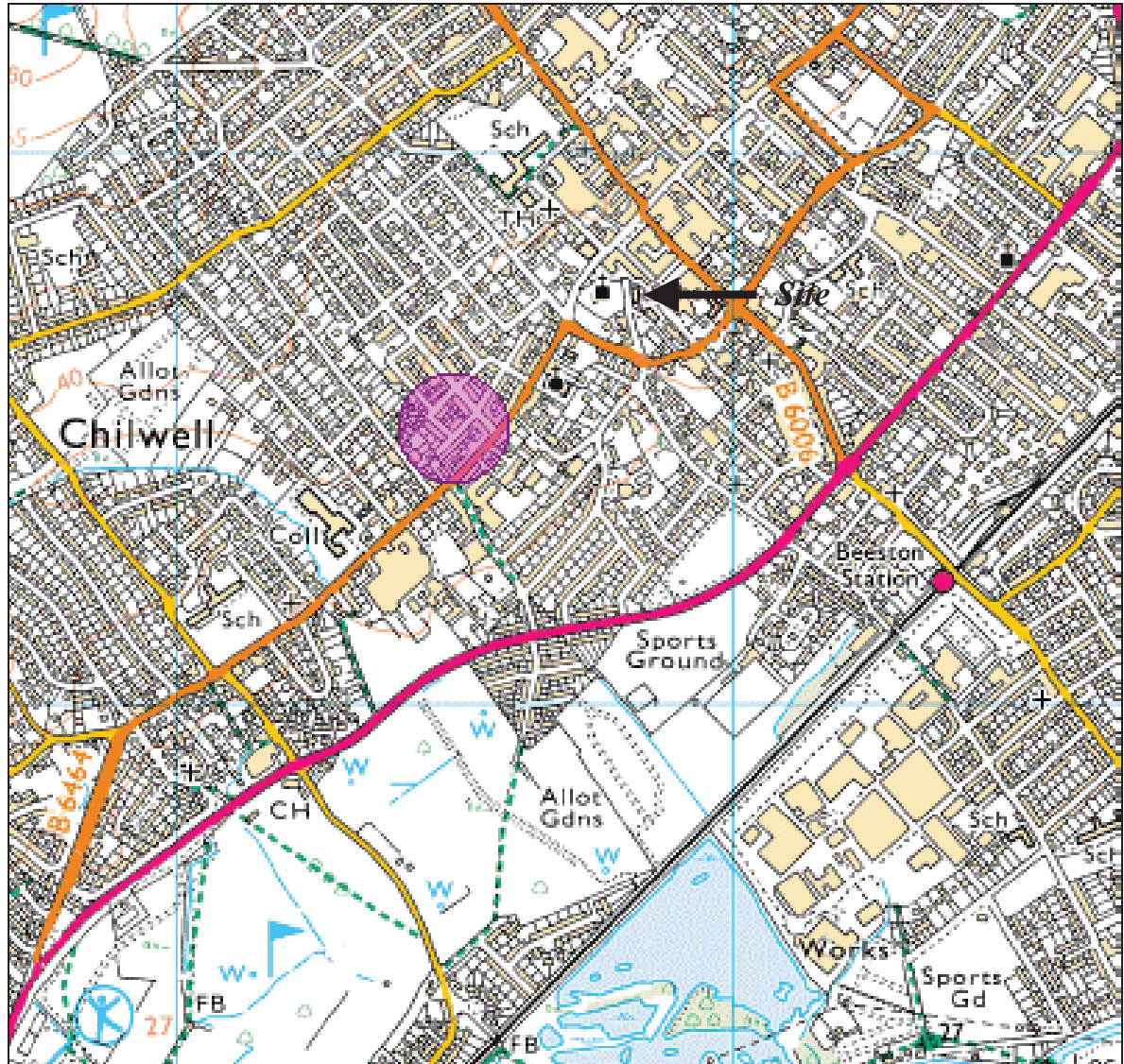


Fig. 2. Location of proposed development area.

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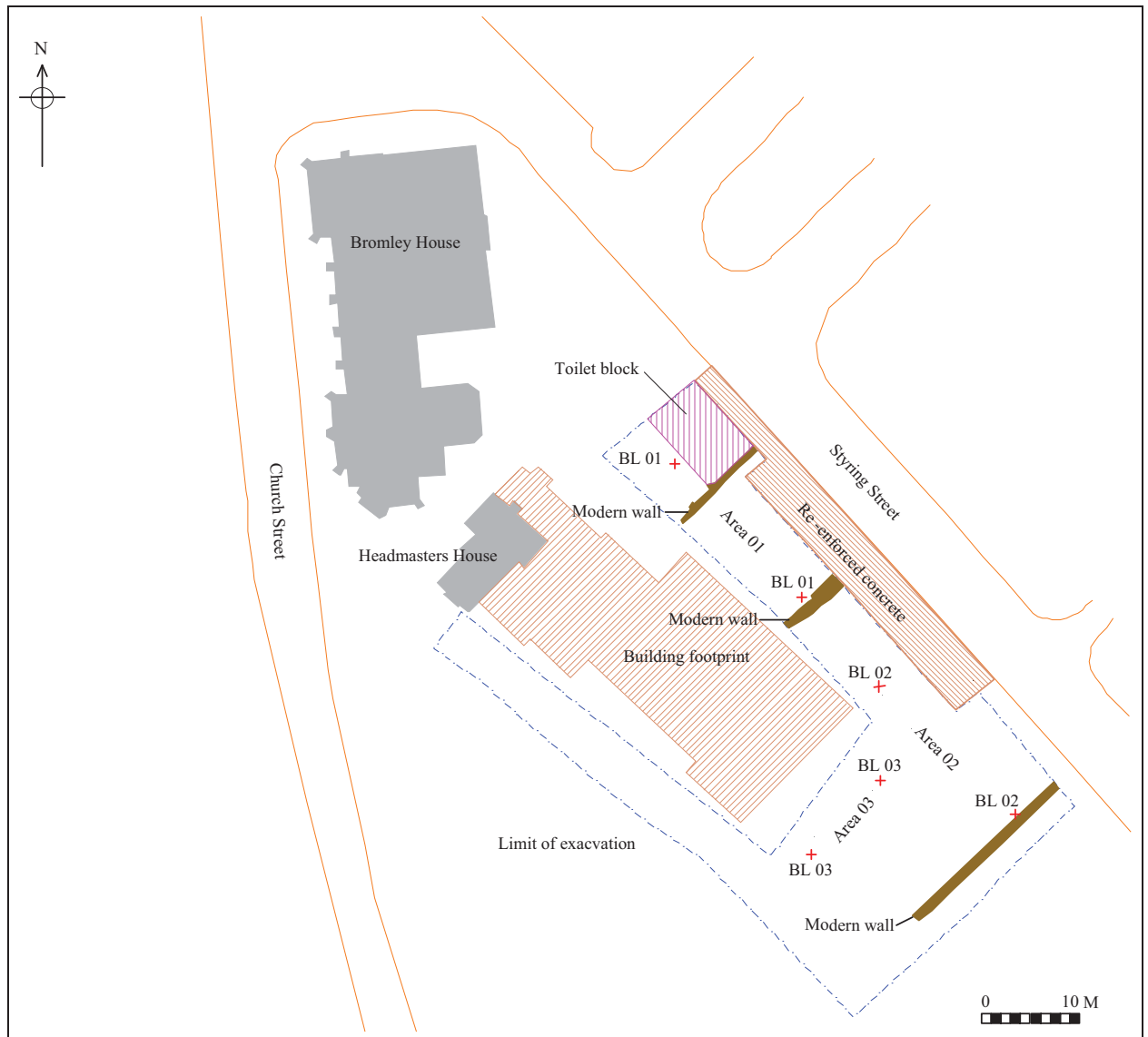


Figure 3. Area location plan.

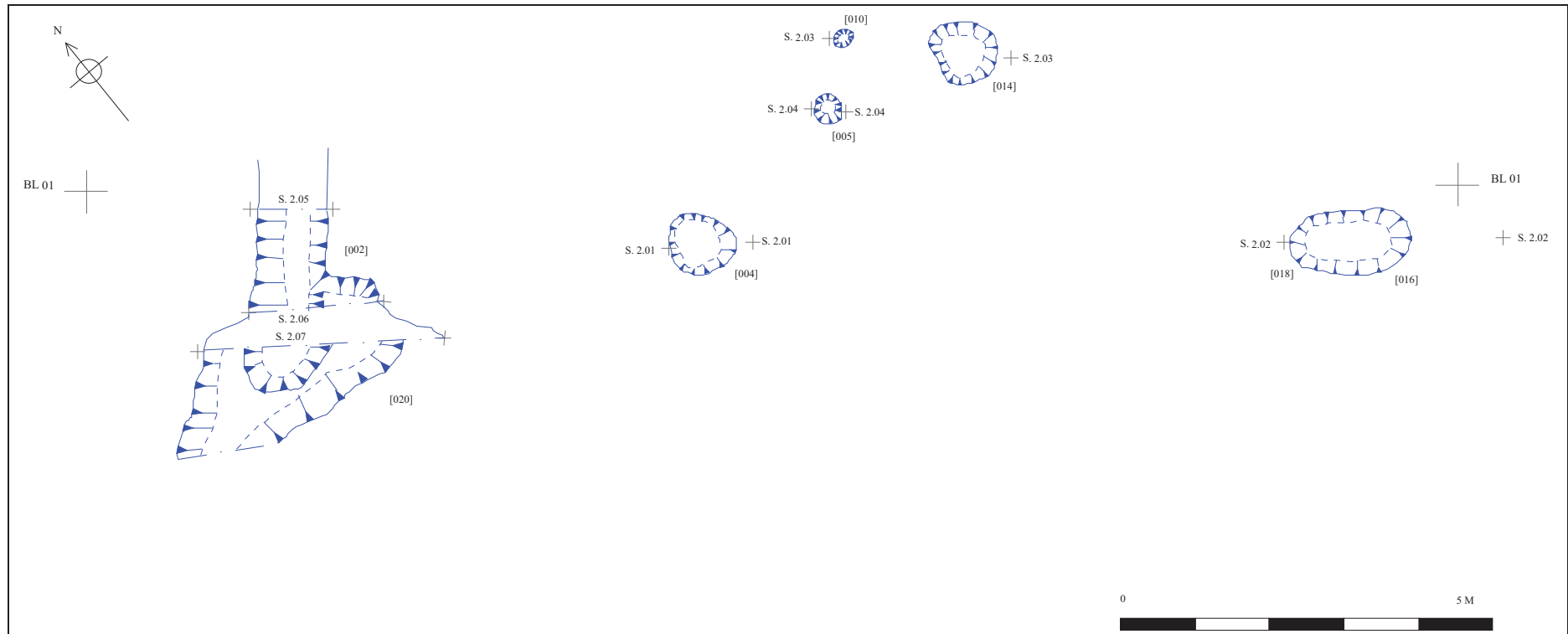


Figure 4. Plan of features in Area 01.



Figure 5. Plan of features in Area 02.

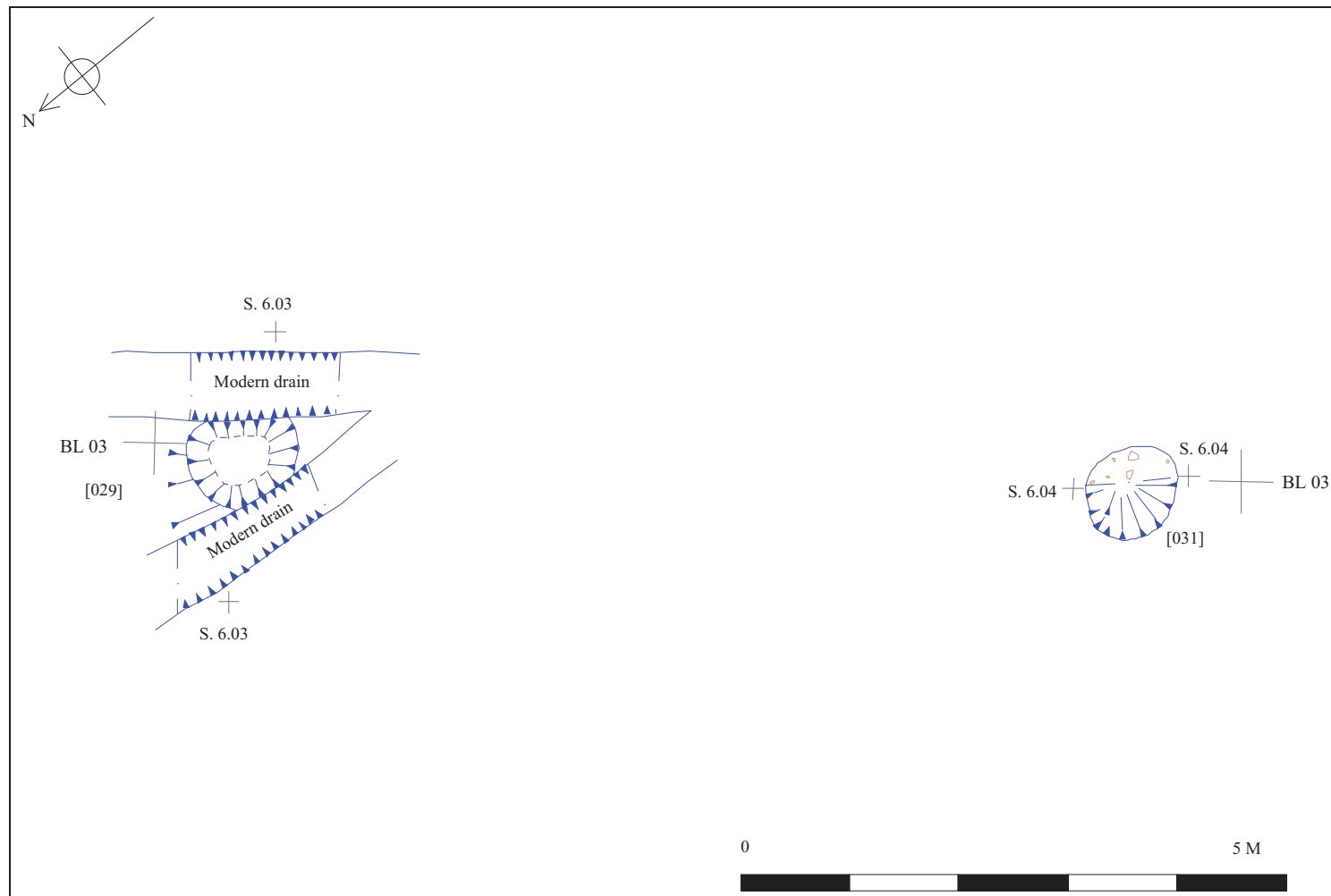


Figure 6. Plan of features in Area 03

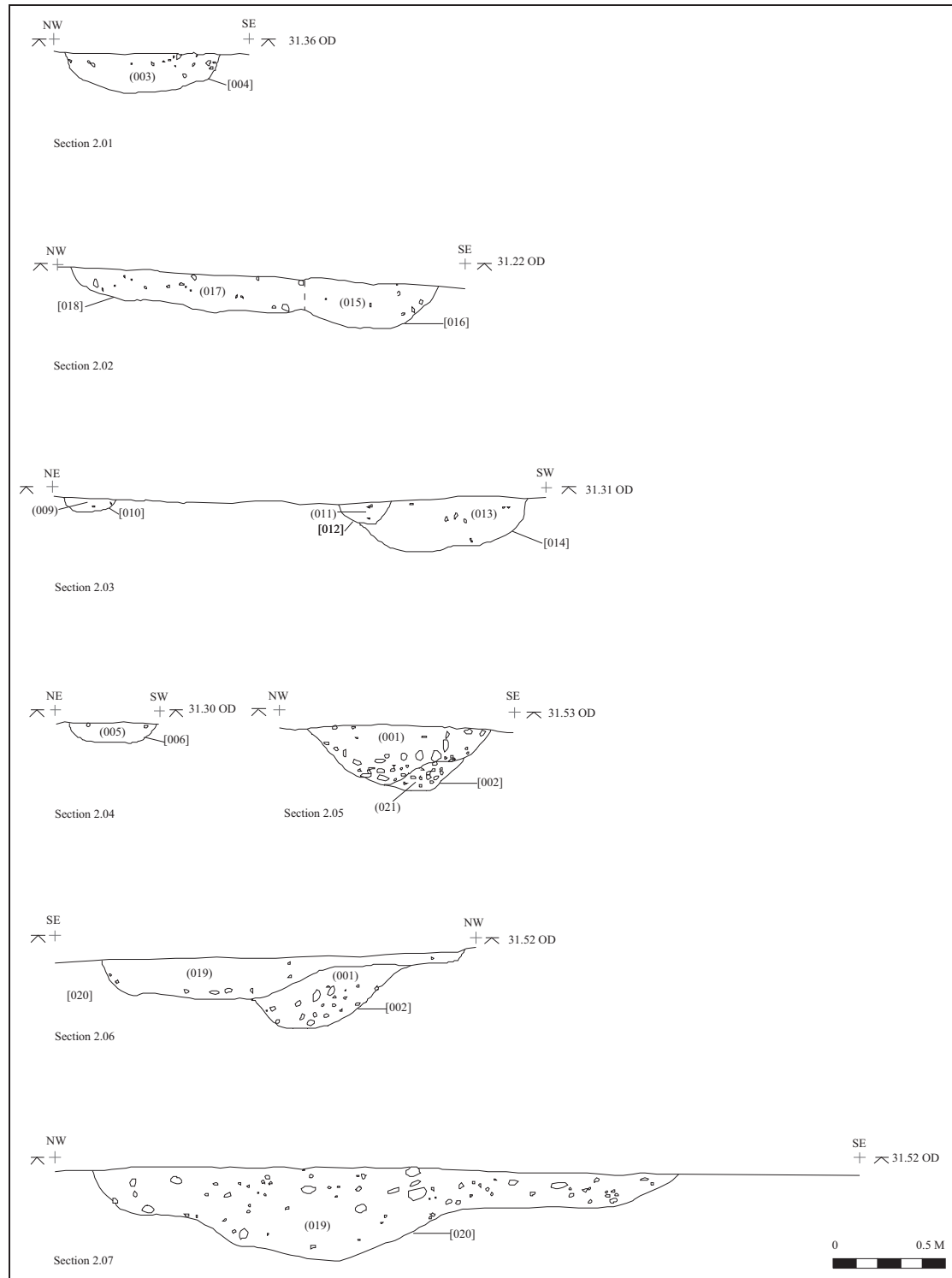


Figure 7. Sections 2.01 to 2.07.



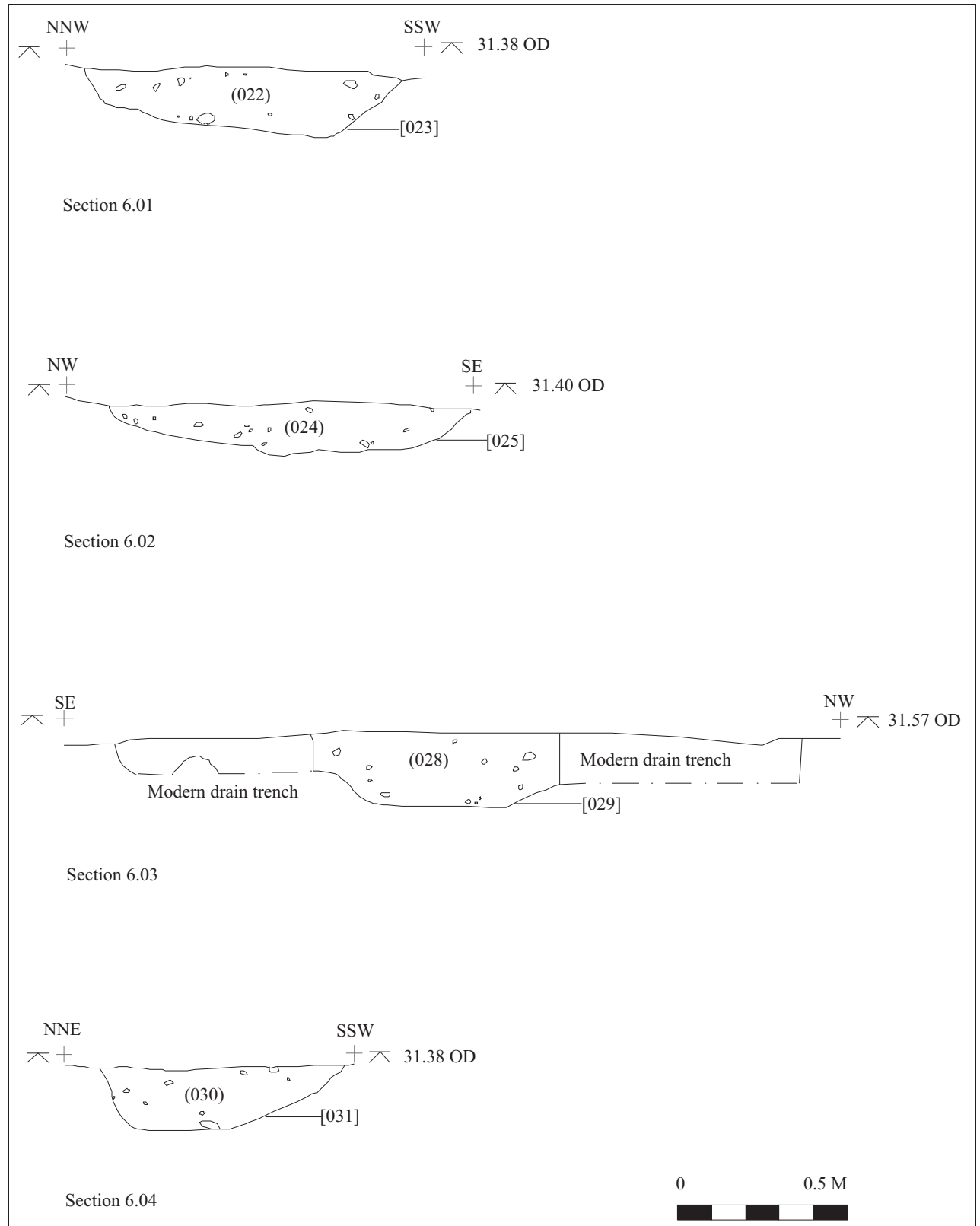


Figure 8. Sections 6.01 to 6.04.



Plate 1. Area 01, northern end post excavation looking northeast.



Plate 2. Area 02, pit [023] looking northeast.



Plate 3. Area 02, pit [025] looking northeast.



Plate 4. Area 03, pit [029] looking southwest.