

**LAND OFF BODIAM AVENUE, GLOUCESTER,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

NGR: SO 8155 1476

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

February 2003

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SITE CODE: BAG03ex

Report No. 297

June 2003

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SUMMARY

In January 2003 Foundations Archaeology was commissioned by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants to undertake an archaeological excavation on land off Bodiam Avenue, Gloucester (centred at NGR: SO 8155 1476). The fieldwork was undertaken during February 2003.

A programme of archaeogeophysical survey combined with archaeological field recording and evaluation, undertaken between 1998 and 2002, revealed the presence of a substantial Romano-British boundary ditch situated adjacent to the A38, which is possibly associated with the Olympus Park villa complex. An archaeological excavation was subsequently required in order to preserve the feature *by record*.

The current programme of works comprised the excavation and recording of five trenches, 20m long by 2m wide, across the projected location of the Romano-British ditch.

The excavation revealed numerous undated and truncated linear ditches, a complex of east-west aligned, undated linear ditches and an undated and truncated north-south aligned adult inhumation. No artefacts were associated with the inhumation.

Limited evidence of Romano-British activity was provided by pottery sherds dating to this period occurring in the sub-soil.

Truncation of features across the site indicates a high level of plough damage in and around the investigated area.

The excavation failed to locate, date and define the previously identified Romano-British ditch.

GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Archaeology

For the purposes of this project archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

CBM

Ceramic Building Material.

Medieval

The period between the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) and *c* AD 1500.

Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site.

NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

Ordnance Datum; used to express a given height above sea-level.

OS

Ordnance Survey.

Romano-British

The period between AD 43 - *c* AD 410.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Between 1998 and 2002 a programme of archaeogeophysical prospection combined with archaeological field recording and evaluation revealed the presence of a substantial Romano-British boundary ditch situated adjacent to the A38, which is possibly associated with the Olympus Park villa complex (Bartlett 1998, Cotton 1998, OAU 1998 & Nichols 2002).
- 1.2 In February 2003 a programme of archaeological excavation, centred on the Romano-British ditch, was undertaken. The excavation comprised five trenches, 20m long by 2m wide (total = 200m²).
- 1.3 The archaeological works were undertaken in response to a proposal to construct residential housing on the site (planning applications 98/00212/OUT, 91/1160/OUT and 91/1161/OUT). The excavation was undertaken in accordance with a Specification prepared by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants (2002). The Specification was prepared in accordance with IFA *Standards and Guidance on Archaeological Excavation* (1994, revised 2001), and approved by the Local Planning Authority's nominated archaeologist. The programme of archaeological works was undertaken in accordance with the principles of Planning Policy Guidance note 16, *Archaeology and Planning* (DoE 1990).
- 1.4 This document provides an assessment of the evidence recovered during the excavation. This document conforms to the specification set out in Appendices 4 and 5 of *The Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site lies within the parish of Quedgeley, located immediately to the west of Bodiam Avenue and to the east of the A38. The total study area is 11.3ha, of which Area A is 9.1ha (figure 2). The site is centred at NGR SO 8155 1476 and lies geologically on *lower lias clays* overlain by areas of *River Severn gravels* at a height of 15-20m OD. Current land use is rough grassland. The development proposal consists of the construction of residential housing across the area. The planning application for Area A includes proposals for a corridor of Public Open Space at the east end of the site and noise mitigation measures along the western edge. These areas will not be disturbed by the proposed development.
- 2.2 A full desk-based archaeological assessment was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology Unit (1998) and should be read in conjunction with this report.
- 2.3 An evaluation undertaken on the site by Oxford Archaeology Unit in 1998 involved the excavation of 31 trenches. A substantial Romano-British ditch, cut into the natural clay, occurred in three of the trenches, at the western edge of Area A, adjacent to the A38. This feature measured approximately 3.30m-4.50m wide

and extended to a maximum depth of 1.42m. Its full extent and nature could not be determined within the limitations imposed by the programme of evaluation.

3 AIMS

3.1 The aims of the archaeological excavation were to preserve, by record, remains of archaeological interest.

3.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:

i) to define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible.

ii) to attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence.

iii) to recover coherent artefact, and where appropriate, ecofact and environmental samples.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Five trenches measuring 20m long by 2m wide, located along the projected route of the Romano-British ditch, were excavated (Figure 2). The excavation was undertaken using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless, grading bucket, under constant archaeological supervision.

4.2 Deposits of non-significant over-burden were removed to the top of archaeological deposits or underlying natural, whichever was encountered first. Thereafter cleaning and excavation was conducted by hand. The spoil tip was scanned for finds.

4.3 No suitable contexts for environmental sampling were identified during the course of the excavation.

4.4 All site recording was undertaken in accordance with Foundations Archaeology *Technical Manual 3 (Excavation Manual)*. A written, drawn and photographic record of the excavation was compiled in accordance with the specification.

5 NATURE OF THE RECORD

5.1 The stratigraphic archive for the site consists of the following elements:

Context Sheets

Record Sheets

Plans
Sections/Elevations
Black & White photos
Colour slides

- 5.2 Following the completion of the excavation an ordered, indexed, and internally consistent site archive was compiled in accordance with Appendix 3 of The Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage 1991).

6 RESULTS

- 6.1 The stratigraphic sequence was essentially uniform throughout and consisted of yellow/grey silty clay alluvial deposits sealed beneath approximately 0.15m-0.40m of light brown clay silt subsoil. The subsoil was itself sealed beneath approximately 0.16m-0.30m of mid brown humic topsoil.
- 6.2 **Trench 1** was orientated north-north-west/south-south-east and was excavated onto yellow/grey silty clay alluvium at an average depth of 0.46m (15.88m OD) from the modern ground surface. The alluvial deposits were sealed beneath a sub soil layer of light brown silty clay (102) 0.18m-0.30m thick. This context contained occasional small and abraded sherds of Romano-British pottery and CBM. Overlying layer (102), context (101) consisted of a mid brown humic clay topsoil 0.20m-0.25m thick. A land drain, aligned north-west/south-east occurred at the north end of the trench. Six features [115], [103], [113], [111], [108] and [106] were present within the trench.
- 6.3 Feature [115] was a shallow profile, 'U' shaped linear cut aligned north-west/south-east, up to 0.22m deep by 0.80m wide. It was cut into the alluvial deposits and sealed beneath layer (102). The south-east end of this feature was extremely ephemeral in appearance. Cut [115] contained fill (116), 0.22m thick, which consisted of a mid orange/brown, silty clay containing occasional charcoal flecks. No artefactual data was recovered from this context.
- 6.4 Cut into [115] and sealed by layer (102), grave-cut [103] comprised a sub-oval shaped pit, 1.54m long, 0.54m wide and up to 0.05m deep, aligned approximately north-south. Feature [103] contained context (105); a north-south aligned incomplete adult inhumation, situated in the *supine* position and context (104), 0.05m thick, a dark brown, compact, silty-clay back-fill. No artefacts or coffin remnants were associated with either of these contexts. After consultation with the County Archaeologist, the human remains were removed prior to destruction by the proposed development (*Burial Act 1857, Section 25. Licence No. 28365*).
- 6.5 Feature [113] was a shallow profile, irregular based 'U' shaped linear cut aligned north-east/south-west, up to 0.29m deep by 1.80m wide. It was cut into the alluvial deposits and sealed beneath layer (102). The cut contained fill (114),

- 0.29m thick, which consisted of a mid grey/brown silty clay, containing occasional charcoal flecks and occasional CBM fragments. No dating evidence was recovered from this context.
- 6.6 Feature [111] was an ephemeral 'U' shaped linear cut aligned approximately east/west, up to 0.35m deep by 0.50m wide. It was cut into the alluvial deposits and sealed beneath layer (102). The cut contained fill (112), 0.35m thick, which consisted of a mid grey/orange clay sand. This fill was homogeneous throughout. Limited root disturbance occurred at the interface between contexts (112) and (102). No artefactual evidence or other anthropogenic indicators were recovered from context (112).
- 6.7 Feature [108] was a shallow 'U' shaped linear cut aligned approximately east/west, up to 0.36m deep by 1.80m wide. It was cut into the alluvial deposits and sealed beneath layer (102). The cut contained fill (109), 0.03m thick, which consisted of a dark grey/black silty clay lens with occasional organic component. No artefactual data was recovered from this primary context. Overlying lens (109), context (110), 0.33m thick, formed the secondary fill of the cut and consisted of a mid grey/orange silty clay containing occasional manganese flecks. No artefactual data was recovered from this context.
- 6.8 Cut into [108] and the alluvial deposits, [106] was sealed beneath layer (102). This feature comprised a steep sided 'U' shaped linear cut aligned approximately east/west, up to 0.38m deep by 1.80m wide. Cut [106] contained context (107), 0.38m thick, which consisted of a mid orange/brown silty clay containing occasional/rare charcoal and CBM flecks. No dating evidence was recovered from this context.
- 6.9 **Trench 2** was orientated north-north-west/south-south-east and was excavated onto yellow/grey silty clay alluvium at an average depth of 0.49m (15.45m OD) from the modern ground surface. The alluvial deposits were sealed beneath a sub soil layer of mid brown silty clay (202) 0.15m-0.28m thick. This context contained occasional small and abraded sherds of Romano-British pottery. Overlying layer (202), context (201) consisted of a mid brown humic clay topsoil 0.23m-0.30m thick, containing occasional CBM. A land drain, aligned north-west/south-east occurred at the south end of the trench. Two linear features [203] and [205] were present within the trench.
- 6.10 Feature [203] was an irregularly based 'U' shaped linear cut aligned approximately east/west, up to 0.44m deep by 2.10m wide. It was cut into the alluvial deposits and sealed beneath layer (202). This feature occurred at the north end of the trench. The cut contained fill (204), 0.44m thick, which consisted of a mid brown silty clay. No artefactual data was recovered from this context and root disturbance was visible throughout.

- 6.11 Feature [205] was a flat based, shallow profile linear cut aligned approximately east/west, up to 0.10m deep by 1.30m wide. It was cut into the alluvial deposits and sealed beneath layer (202). This feature occurred at the south end of the trench and was cut by an archaeological evaluation trench (previous evaluation). The cut contained fill (206), 0.10m thick, which consisted of a mid brown, compact silty clay. No artefactual data was recovered from this context.
- 6.12 **Trench 3** was orientated north/south and was excavated onto yellow/grey silty clay alluvium at an average depth of 0.49m (15.26m OD) from the modern ground surface. The alluvial deposits were sealed beneath a sub soil layer of light brown silty clay (302) 0.20m-0.28m thick. This context contained occasional CBM fragments. Overlying layer (302), context (301) consisted of a mid brown humic clay topsoil 0.20m-0.30m thick. A land drain, aligned north-west/south-east occurred at the south end of the trench. A single linear feature [303] was present within the trench.
- 6.13 Feature [303] was a flat based, shallow profile linear cut aligned north-east/south-west, up to 0.09m deep by 0.59m wide. It was cut into the alluvial deposits and sealed beneath layer (302). This feature occurred at the north end of the trench. The cut contained fill (304), 0.09m thick, which consisted of a light brown, plastic silty clay. A single Romano-British *Dorset Black Burnished Ware* pottery sherd and two CBM fragments were recovered from this fill.
- 6.14 **Trench 4** was orientated north/south and was excavated onto yellow/grey silty clay alluvium at an average depth of 0.35m (14.98m OD) from the modern ground surface. The alluvial deposits were sealed beneath a sub soil layer of light brown silty clay (402) 0.10m-0.28m thick. Overlying layer (402), context (401) consisted of a mid brown humic clay topsoil 0.16m-0.20m thick. A land drain, aligned north-west/south-east occurred at the south end of the trench. A single linear feature [403] was present within the trench.
- 6.15 Feature [403] was a shallow profile linear cut aligned north-east/south-west, up to 0.06m deep by 0.81m wide. It was cut into the alluvial deposits and sealed beneath layer (402). This feature occurred at the north end of the trench. The cut contained fill (404), 0.06m thick, which consisted of a mid brown, mottled, sandy clay. A single small and abraded pottery sherd datable to the Romano-British period was recovered from this fill.
- 6.16 **Trench 5** was orientated north-east/south-west and was excavated onto yellow silty clay alluvium at an average depth of 0.54m (14.67m OD) from the modern ground surface. The alluvial deposits were sealed beneath a sub soil layer of light brown silty clay (502) 0.23m-0.40m thick. This context contained occasional CBM fragments. Overlying layer (502), context (501) consisted of a mid brown humic clay topsoil 0.20m-0.25m thick. An area of natural clay banding occurred at the south end of the trench. A single linear feature [503] was present within the trench.

- 6.17 Feature [503] was a shallow profile, 'V' shaped linear cut aligned east/west, up to 0.08m deep by 0.50m wide. It was cut into the alluvial deposits and sealed beneath layer (502). This feature occurred at the south end of the trench. The cut contained fill (504), 0.08m thick, which consisted of a mid/light brown, silty clay. No artefactual data was recovered from this context. Limited root disturbance was visible throughout.

7 DISCUSSION

- 7.1 Linear features [113], [115], [205], [303], [403], [503] and grave cut [103] were extremely ephemeral and are indicative of plough truncation/disturbance occurring across the investigated area.
- 7.2 Contexts (304) and (404) both contained pottery sherds datable to the Romano-British period. Due to the ephemeral and truncated nature of cuts [303] and [403] and the abraded appearance of the pottery, this dating evidence may be residual/intrusive.
- 7.3 In general, no features yielded securely stratified dating evidence.
- 7.4 Limited evidence of Romano-British activity in the area was provided by pottery sherds dating to this period occurring in sub-soils (102) and (202).
- 7.5 Inhumation (105) was sealed beneath sub-soil layer (102) which contained occasional Romano-British pottery sherds. Artefacts occurring in the sub-soil horizon are, however, likely to be out of their primary contexts and therefore context (102) does not provide a chronologically secure *terminus-ante-quem*.
- 7.6 Features [111], [108], [106] and [113] formed a complex of linear cuts which were spatially approximate and shared a similar east-west alignment. This possibly represents plough marks or remnant *ridge and furrow*. No dating evidence was, however, recovered from any of these features. Only [106] and [108] were stratigraphically related.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 None of the excavated features yielded section profiles, maximum depths or fill sequences comparable to those excavated in the initial site evaluation (OAU 1998, Fig 5: Trench 9; Section 15, Trench 10; Section 16).
- 8.2 Due to the lack of fill descriptions (Colour, Texture, Consistency, Course Component) in the initial evaluation report (OAU 1998) it is not possible to compare these excavated components.

- 8.3 None of the excavated features yielded securely stratified Romano-British dating evidence.
- 8.4 The occurrence of a previous evaluation trench in Trench 2 indicates a discrepancy in the survey techniques utilised between the evaluation and subsequent excavation.
- 8.5 The excavation failed to confirm and record the location, date, nature and anticipated extent of the previously identified Romano-British ditch.
- 8.6 A single, incomplete adult inhumation (105) is undated.

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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OAU. 1998. *Bodiam Avenue, Gloucester: Archaeological Evaluation Report*. Oxford Archaeological Unit.

10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Kate Brayne and Sharon Clough of The Rudyard Consultancy, Phil Greatorex of Gloucester City Archaeology Unit and Jenny Young of John Samuels Archaeological Consultants.

11 APPENDIX 1 – POTTERY REPORT

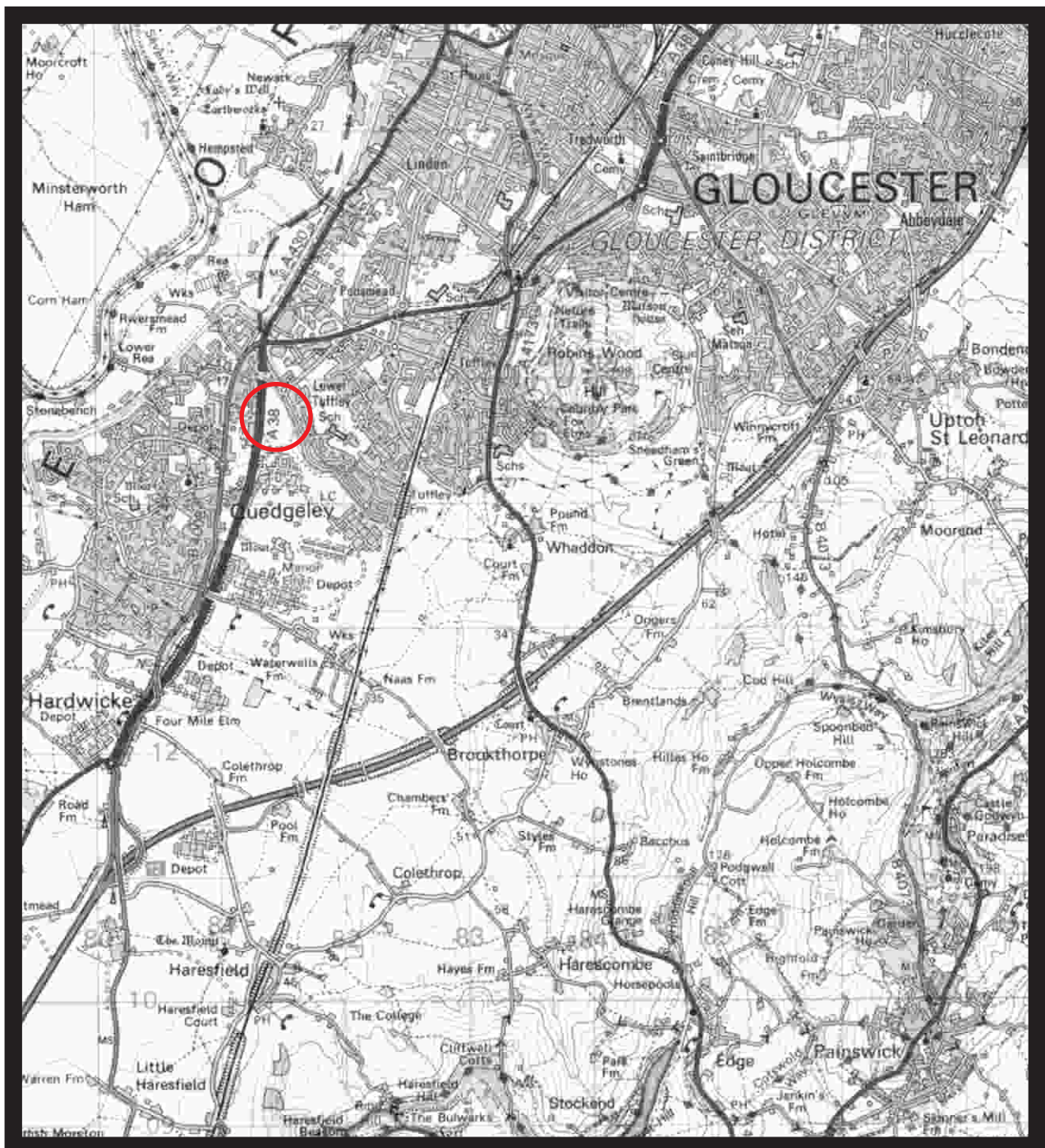
SITE: BAG

The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of four very small sherds of pottery weighing 13g and at least one, possibly two, abraded fragments of ceramic building material (cbm). The assemblage was recovered from three contexts. The fragments are in extremely poor condition and are probably redeposited. As far as could be ascertained they appear to date to the Roman period with at least one sherd of Dorset black burnished ware from (304). The single fragment from (104) could be pot or cbm and dating is not possible.

J R Timby
March 2003

12 APPENDIX 2 – HUMAN BONE REPORT

Available as 'hard copy' in site archive.



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FIGURE 1: Site Location Map

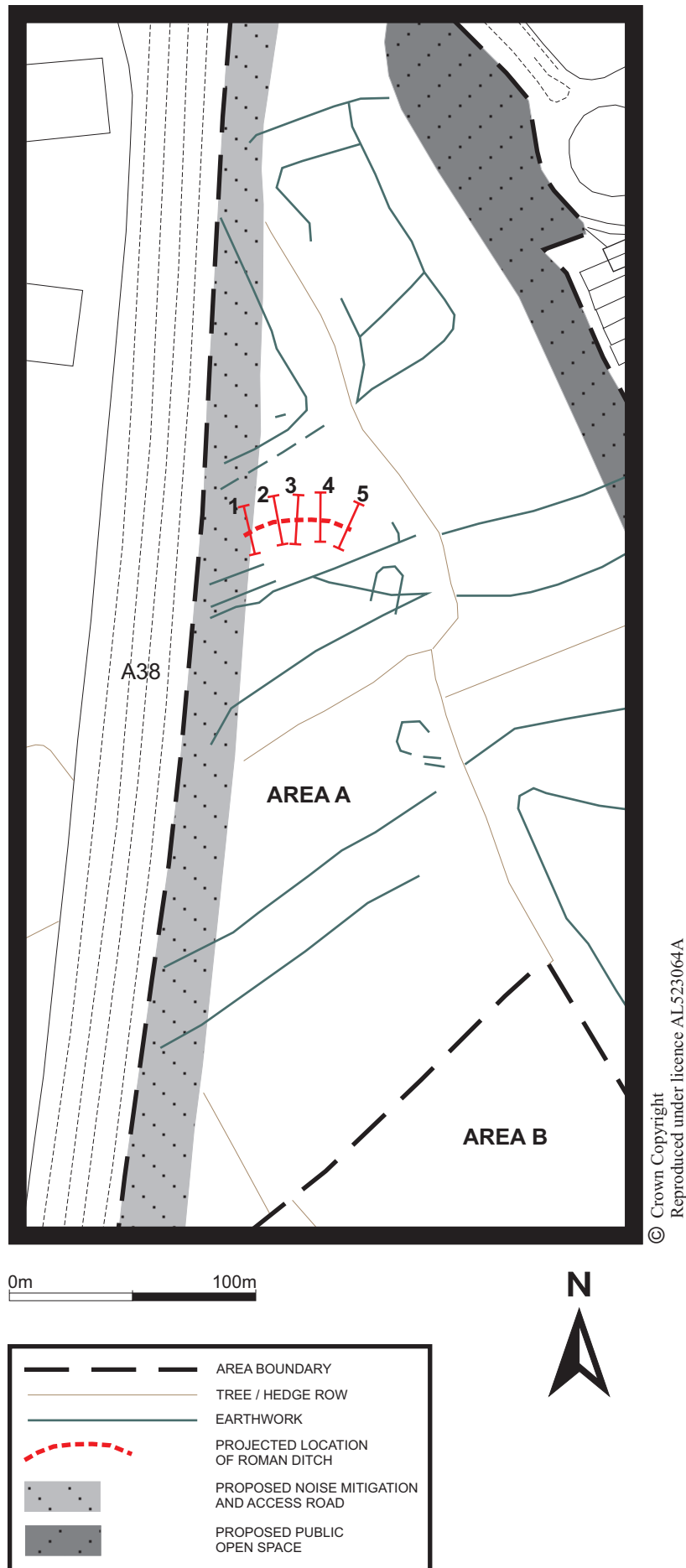
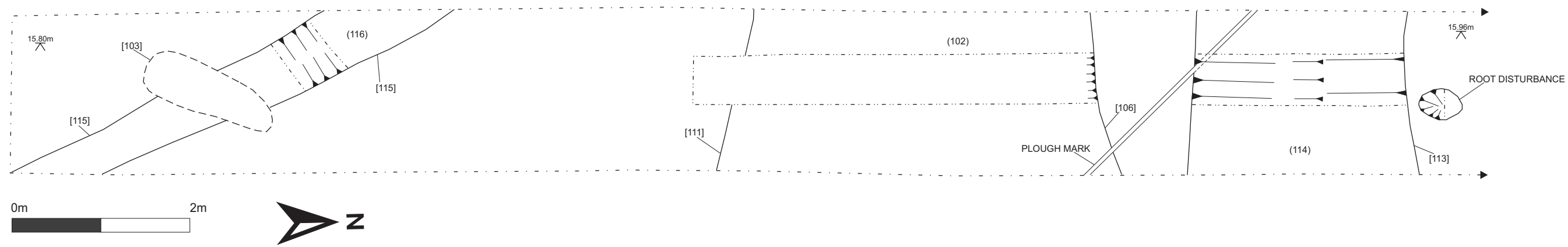
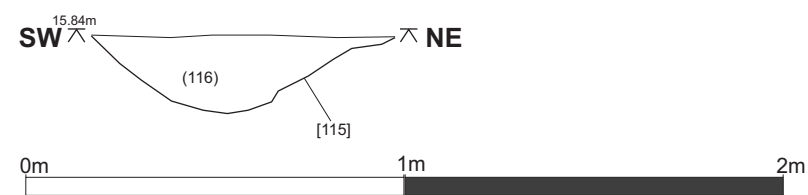


FIGURE 2: Trench Location Plan

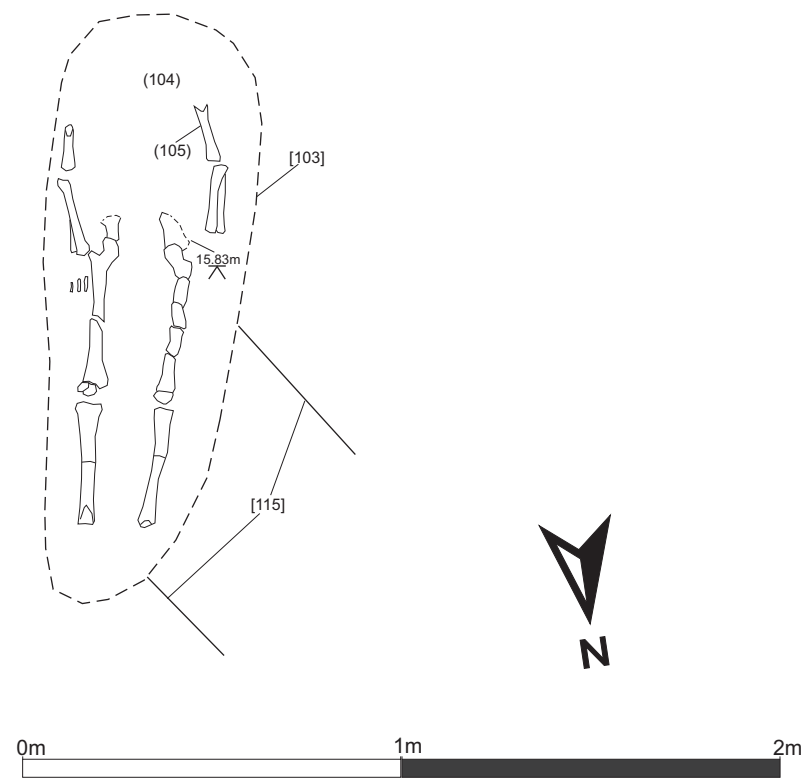
TRENCH 1 PLAN



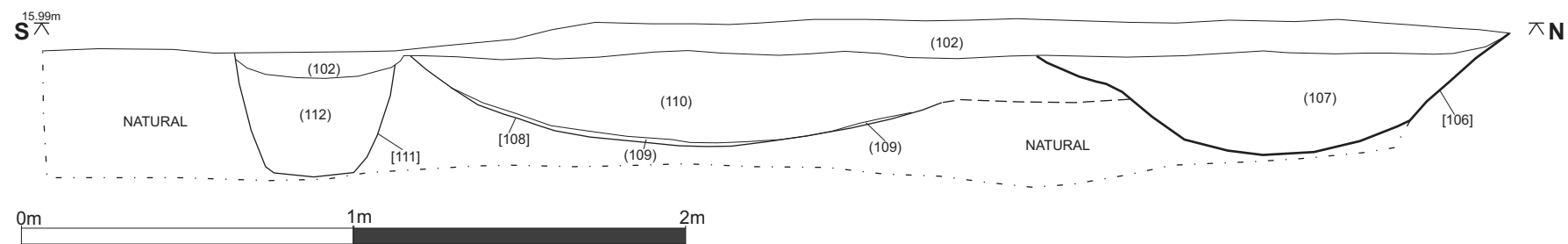
SOUTH EAST FACING SECTION [115]



PLAN OF SKELETON (105)



EAST FACING SECTION [106], [108] AND [111]



EAST FACING SECTION [113]

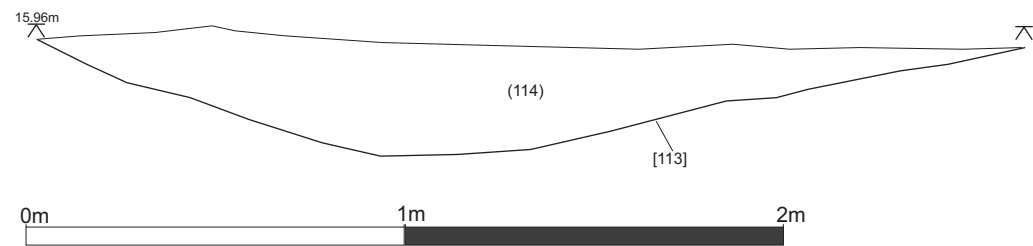
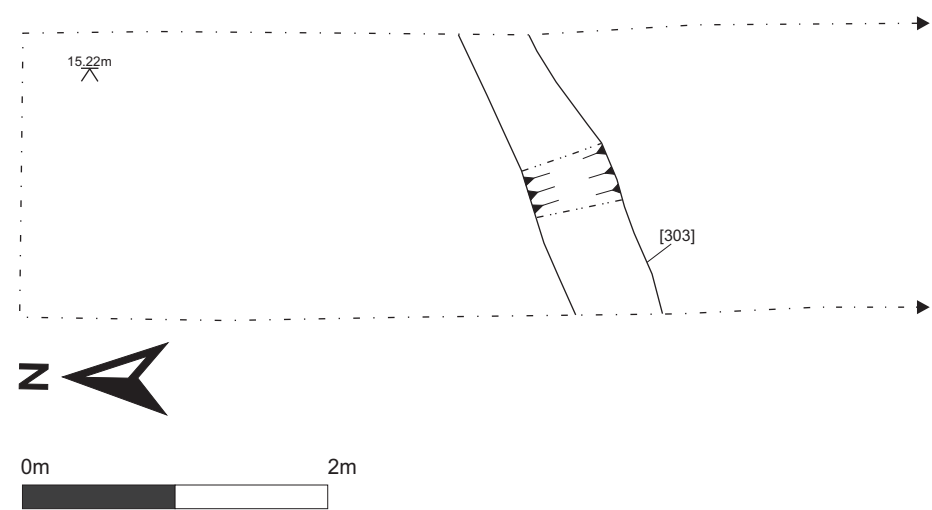


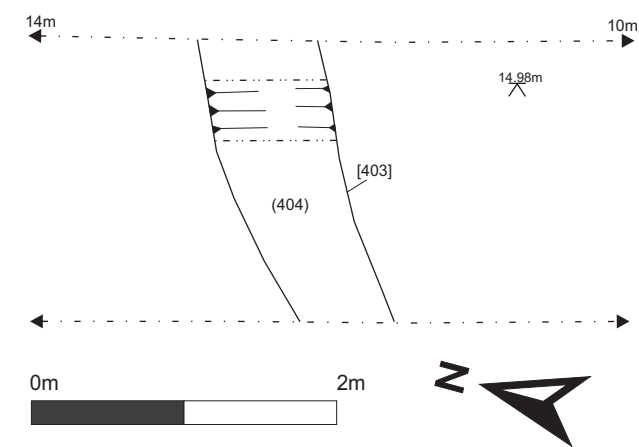
FIGURE 3: Trench 1 Plan and Sections

FIGURE 4: Trench 2 Plan and Sections

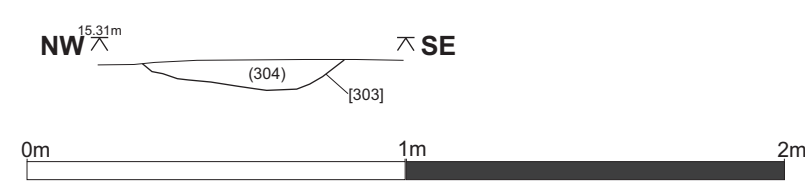
TRENCH 3 PLAN



TRENCH 4 PLAN



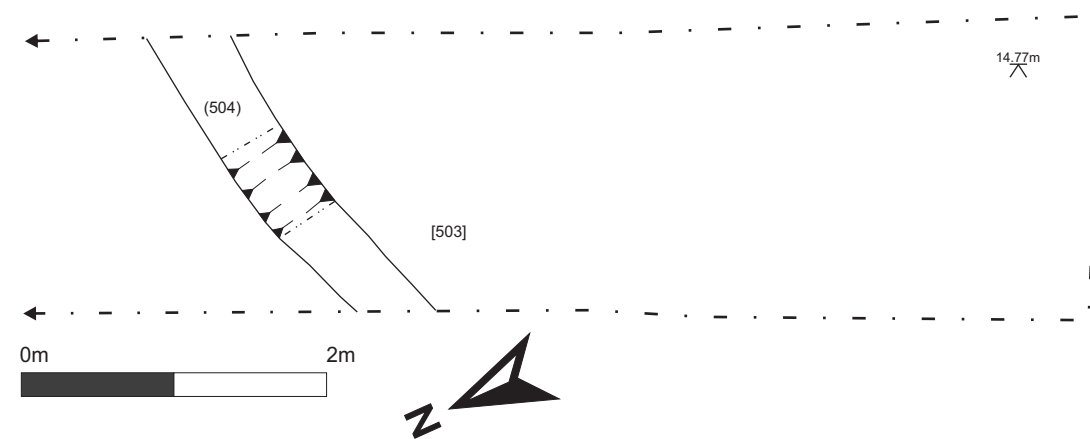
SOUTH WEST FACING SECTION [303]



WEST FACING SECTION [403]



TRENCH 5 PLAN



EAST FACING SECTION [503]

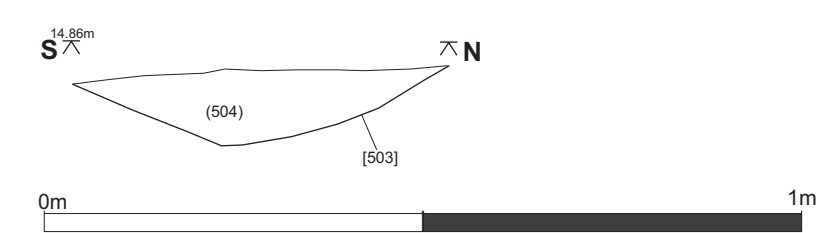


FIGURE 5: Trenches 3,4 and 5 Plans and Sections