

**Archaeological Evaluation on land at
Weston Road/Uttoxeter Road
Meir
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
NGR SJ 9317 4229**

Planning Application No: SOT/50387

Site Code: KAM 10

Produced for

Prime (UK) Developments Ltd.

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Non-technical summary.

Prior to the re-development of a brownfield site on the corner of Weston Road and Uttoxeter Road, Meir, Stoke-on-Trent (NGR SJ 9317 4229), Stoke-on-Trent Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation. The site was the former location of the imposing King's Arms public house built in 1935, an earlier incarnation of which had occupied the plot since at least the early 19th century.

The evaluation was carried out between the 30th June and 7th July 2010. It involved the excavation of six trenches sited to investigate evidence of multi-period activity on the site, which was adjacent to a strategic crossroads established by the medieval period on the line of a Roman road. No pre-modern features or structural remains were, however, found during the project. Below the general overburden, the stratigraphy in all the trenches mainly comprised redeposited or disturbed natural subsoils, lying directly over undisturbed natural geology encountered at relatively shallow depths, especially in trench 6. The site had been subject to levelling and landscaping for both public houses and bowling green that were located within the area from at least 1840 to 2008.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The development area (DA) on Weston Road is in the residential suburb of Meir, which is located at the south-east end of Longton, the most southerly of the six towns that comprise the modern city of Stoke-on-Trent (Fig. 1). The site was occupied by *The King's Arms* licensed house and a bowling green from at least the early 19th century until 2008.

2.0 The development area

2.1 *Planning background*

2.1.1 An application for planning permission by Prime (UK) Developments Ltd. to redevelop the DA with a primary health care centre was registered with Local Planning Authority, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, on 7th December 2009 (ref. SOT/50387). Consent was granted on 2nd June 2010 with an attached condition from the city council's Planning Archaeologist (PA) recommending an archaeological evaluation of the site in advance of groundworks.

2.1.2 The condition was in line with the planning authority's statutory planning and development process as defined by *Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan* policy NC14 (*Sites of Archaeological Importance*) and national government guidelines established in *Planning Policy Statement 5 (Planning for the Historic Environment)*.

2.1.3 An archaeological evaluation, as defined by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), aims to establish the extent, preservation and character of any archaeological features or deposits on the site. Stoke-on-Trent Archaeology (SOTARCH) was commissioned by Prime on behalf of Stoke-on-Trent NHS Primary Care Trust to undertake the project.

2.2 *Site location*

2.2.1 The DA is 2.80km south east of Longton town centre, prominently situated north east of the Broadway roundabout junction on the corner of Weston Road and Uttoxeter Road, (NGR SJ 9317 4229) (Fig. 2).

2.2.2 To the south of the site is the A50 eastbound slip road (Uttoxeter Road), although the main carriageway at this point runs under the Broadway roundabout *via* the Meir Tunnel. To the west is Weston Road, beyond which are commercial units. To the south

east is a public car park and to the north are commercial and residential properties fronting Weston Road and Station View.

2.3 Site character and topography

2.3.1 The DA is brownfield land covering an area of approximately 1605m² (0.39 acres). It is rectangular in plan and generally flat, sloping gently to the south east. Existing ground levels range from about 196m aOD in the north-west corner to 194m aOD in the south east. The site is bound to the west, south and east by brick retaining walls and to the north by walled property boundaries (Plate 1).

2.3.2 Many of the footings were left *in situ* when the public house was demolished. Two cellars beneath the main building were not broken out and were backfilled with rubble (Dale & Vincett 2010, 6). The site is covered with crushed hardcore with demolition spoil piled at the centre. Asphalt and concrete hard standings also remained on the north and north east sides and the grass area of the former bowling green in the south east.

2.4 Geology and ground conditions

2.4.1 Geotechnical boreholes within the DA indicate the presence of made ground to depths varying from 0.20m to 1.70m and comprising brown/grey clayey sandy gravel mixed with building rubble and possible colliery spoil (Dale & Vincett 2010, 13).

2.4.2 The underlying natural subsoil across the site comprises a superficial drift of Quaternary glacial till between 1.0m-3.0m thick, incorporating sandy gravelly clay with moderate pebble inclusions. This overlies a solid geology (bedrock) of red / brown Permo Triassic Sherwood sandstone with pebble layers (Dale & Vincett 2010, 7).

3.0 Archaeological and historical background

3.1 Site history

3.1.1 Meir was originally a small hamlet within the large parish of Caverswall. In the medieval period the settlement comprised a scatter of dwellings around a crossroads on a Roman road, the line of which corresponds with Uttoxeter Road, then known as Meir Lane (Hawke-Smith 1987, 96). The crossroads is now the Broadway roundabout formed by the A50 (Uttoxeter Road) running from Stoke to Derby by way of Uttoxeter, and the A520 (Weston Road) from Stone to Leek *via* Weston Coyney.

3.1.2 After the Uttoxeter road was turnpiked in 1759, Meir slowly coalesced around the crossroads. It remained a rural settlement until a brickworks was established at Wood Farm in the 1860s, with Woodville Terrace being built 700m north east of the DA to house its workers (Wakeling & Johnston 2006, 47). Meir developed rapidly in the 1920s when council housing estates were laid out between the crossroads and Woodville as part of the city's first major programme to re-house families displaced by slum clearance in the Potteries (Staffordshire Past-Track).

3.1.3 Among the developments associated with this programme was the rebuilding or 'improvement' of *The King's Arms* public house in 1935. Premises by that name had occupied the DA since at least 1834 (White, 731), when John Bloore was licensee. The tithe apportionment of 1840 reveals that the property, and much of the pastoral land around it, was held by James Meakin (Staffordshire Past-Track), possibly the Longton pottery manufacturer of that name who was also a farmer (Hampson 1990, 125).

3.1.4 A photograph of the public house's south-facing elevation taken between 1924-35 (Staffordshire Past-Track) shows a plain three-storey gable roofed, double fronted brick edifice with a single-storey extension on the east side. The image indicates dormer windows in the eaves and stone mullions in the lower windows under square-headed brick lintels. In the 1911 census the licensee, Shadrach Leese, stated that the pub had twelve rooms, aside from the parlour or kitchen spaces.

3.1.5 The pub's owner, the brewers John Joule and Sons of Stone, rebuilt *The King's Arms* on a more imposing scale, utilising a distinctive red brick style designed by John S. Redman, with deep-sloping multi-gabled roofs, tall banded chimney stacks and stone dressings. The pediments fronting Weston Road were adorned with three large, stone effect plaques including one displaying the Scottish version of the royal coat of arms.

3.1.6 The 'improved' premises were typical of many inter-war estate pubs, offering more spacious accommodation for the drinker and the licensee (Brandwood *et al* 2005, 84). The first landlord of the new pub was Robert Arthur Johnson (Kelly 1940, 303). It closed in April 2008 and the local crown bowling club, which claimed the green was established in *c.* 1840 (Harp 2008), departed the following September. Demolition and clearance of the building began in November 2008.

3.6 Site development

3.6.1 Yates' map of 1775 shows the crossroads at *Meer (sic)*, with two or three buildings on Meir Lane including one in the vicinity of the DA. The more detailed 1840 tithe map shows a square building on its prominent corner location fronting Meir Lane, with outbuildings ranged around a rectangular courtyard to the north. The apportionment designates the associated plot number (1008) as a public house, but does not give its name. East of the pub is an open rectangular space, possibly the bowling green, beyond which is Stable Meadow (1009). Immediately to the north is more pasture, named as Thistley Field (1007) (Staffordshire Past-Track).

3.6.2 The 1880 Ordnance Survey (OS) map confirms the presence of a pub, but still does not identify it by name. The map shows open space enclosed by trees to the east, from which point ribbon development on Stable Meadow extends south east along Meir Lane (Fig. 3). To the south is another licensed house, *The Saracen's Head*.

Approximately 20.0m north east of the DA is a cutting containing a railway tunnel entrance. The 1890 OS map shows no conspicuous changes, but the 1900 OS edition reveals an extension on the east side of the pub, now labelled as *The King's Arms*. There are also terraced properties to the north fronting Weston Road, on what was Thistley Field.

3.6.3 The 1924 OS map shows no overt changes to the pub apart from a small free-standing structure in the courtyard. There is a sale yard, accessed from Station View, on the north side of the site, with linear rows of sheds and stock pens (Fig. 4). The 1937 OS edition testifies to the rebuilding of *The King's Arms* as a single structure on a different alignment to its predecessor, occupying the site of the former courtyard. The open space on the east side of the pub is identified as a bowling green. A roundabout has been inserted at the crossroads since 1924, but *The Saracen's Head* and the sale yard are gone (Fig. 5).

3.6.4 There are no major changes on the 1954 OS map, although two or three structures have been added behind the pub on the north side of the bowling green, one of which may be the bowling club's pavilion. Two large glasshouses abut the northern boundary wall to the east of these structures. No major changes appear on the 1964 edition,

although the glasshouses are absent from the 1969 OS map. There are no subsequent changes within the DA, although the terraced housing to the south east is gone by 1986.

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Aims and objectives

4.1.1 The over-arching objectives of the project are described in full in the PA's project brief (Boothroyd 2010), but are broadly summarised below:

- Confirm the presence or absence of buried remains of archaeological interest.
- Determine the date, nature, phasing and the state of preservation and relationships of any archaeological deposits and features.
- Preserve by record the archaeological evidence found.
- Attempt to provide information on the character of the site within a local, regional and national context.

4.1.2 The project brief initially required the excavation of six evaluation trenches measuring approximately 10.0m x 2.0m, the positions of which were broadly determined by the historical map evidence and were designed to locate multi-period activity extending back into the site from the street frontages (Boothroyd 2010, 3) (Fig. 2). The trenching would give a combined excavation area of 120.0m², representing a 7.48% sample of the total DA. The actual trenching achieved amounted to only 91.02m² (5.67%), as a number of site constraints and conditions led to trenches being shortened or, in the case of trench 4, aborted (Fig. 2).

4.1.3 Fieldwork was undertaken between the 30th June and 7th July 2010 and was conducted in compliance with the PA's project brief (Boothroyd 2010) and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by SOTARCH (Goodwin 2010).

4.1.4 The evaluation involved the archaeological supervision of a 180° backhoe excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket to remove overburden down to the first discernible archaeological horizon. Even if no archaeological features or deposits are identified, excavation was continued either to a point where clean undisturbed natural subsoil could be confirmed or to a safe and practical working depth.

4.1.5 All archaeological horizons were cleaned by hand and the trench documented by means of a written record (site notes and individual *pro-forma* context sheets) and measured drawings (1:10 for sections and 1:20 for plans). A digital colour and 35mm monochrome print photographic record was maintained, showing specific stages of the fieldwork and the layout and relationship of any archaeological features. Finds were sampled where appropriate. A temporary benchmark (TBM) with a value of 100m was established on the corner of number 27 Weston Road; all site levels relate to this value. The trenches were backfilled after recording with the permission of the PA.

4.1.6 The site archive is stored at The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire (site code **KAM 10**).

5.0 Results of the evaluation

5.1 Trench 1 (11.55m NW-SE x 1.85m NE-SW) (Figs. 2 & 6a; Plate 2)

5.1.1 This trench was positioned in the south-east corner of the DA within the bowling green area. Beneath a horizon of turf and topsoil, a maximum of 0.14m in depth (100), was a sub-base of loose grey/pink gravel and sand (101), up to 0.12m thick. This overlay a substrate of compacted brown clayey silt and pebbles between 0.35m-0.50m thick (102), containing flecks of charcoal and 19th-century pottery sherds (see below, section **6.1**). Layer (102) also appeared to contain a localised concentration of glazed 19th-/20th-century saggar fragments (106), although no cut was discernible in plan or section to account for their presence.

5.1.2 Partly underlying (102) was a lens of black ash and charcoal (103), 2.25m in length and between 0.02m-0.10m in thickness. The undisturbed natural subsoil (104) underlay (102)/(103) at a depth of *c.*0.70m below ground level (bgl) and comprised yellow sandy clay and pebbles, which was up to 0.50m thick to the base of the trench.

5.2 Trench 2 (9.55m NE-SW x 1.80m NW-SE) (Figs. 2 & 6b; Plate 3)

5.2.1 This trench was positioned on the east side of the DA within the bowling green. Due to the presence of the spoil heap at the centre of the site it was realigned within the available space between the eastern retaining wall and the spoil after consultations with the PA.

5.2.2 Excavations revealed a grey sandy top soil (200), up to 0.38m thick, which overlay a loose, coarse gravel (201) 0.07m thick. Beneath this was a layer of grey clayey silt, with pebble inclusions (202), which, over much of the trench, sat above a 0.06m thick compacted black ash and charcoal (203). Underlying (203) was a yellow/brown layer of sandy clay with pebble inclusions (204), between 0.30m-0.70m thick. A small assemblage of 19th-century pottery sherds and clay pipe stems was recovered from (204) (see below, section **6.2**).

5.2.3 Towards the north-eastern end of the trench, a slope-sided feature [211] had cut through contexts (200), (201), (202) and (203), and into (204). This cut was only observed in the south-east-facing trench section and was approximately 1.26m wide and 0.40m deep, and contained a grey sandy fill (212) that was almost identical to top soil (200). Feature [211] appeared to have been cut from the modern ground level.

5.2.4 Beneath (204) was the natural yellow clay subsoil (205), which was 0.22m thick to the limit of excavation in the northern half of the trench. In southern half, (205) was cut by a NW-SE-aligned linear feature [208], the full length of which was not revealed, but was 1.70m wide and 0.30m deep. It contained a primary fill of soft, pink/grey clay (210), 0.02m thick, and a secondary of fine, dark grey silty sand (209), 0.30m thick. A single 17th-/18th-century pottery sherd was found within (209) (see below, section **6.3**). Directly above [208], a concentration of sandstone fragments (207) was recorded in the trench section within (204) (Plate 4). It was not clear if this deposit related to [208], nor was there an obvious cut to explain its presence within (204).

5.3 Trench 3 (8.70m NW-SE x 1.80m NE-SW) (Figs. 2 & 6c; Plate 5)

5.3.1 Due to the spoil heap at the centre of the DA, trench 3 was re-positioned in the south-west corner of the former bowling green. Removal of the 0.04m - 0.12m thick turf and topsoil (300) revealed that the south side of the trench had been heavily disturbed by a cut [310] for a flexible plastic perforated land drain (306). This was bedded in a layer of loose gravel material (305), a maximum of 0.14m thick, which overlay a fine pink/brown sand (311), up to 0.55m thick.

5.3.2 In the undisturbed south-facing section (300) overlay a loose sub-base of coarse grey gravel and light brown sand (301), a maximum of 0.15m thick, which in turn

overlay a stratum of compacted dark brown silty sand and pebbles (302), which was between 0.25m-0.40m thick. The underlying undisturbed natural subsoil (303) was encountered between 0.35m-0.45m bgl and comprised compact yellow sandy clay and pebbles up to 0.55m thick to base level.

5.3.3 Towards the western end of the trench (302) was cut by a N-S aligned drainage feature [304]. This was 0.30m wide and a maximum of 0.30m deep, and contained a fill of gravel (305) around a plastic drainpipe (306). Further east, both (302) and (303) were cut by another N-S aligned drainage feature [307]. This cut was 0.22m wide and 0.50m deep, and contained a fill of loose dark grey silty sand, small angular stones and saggar fragments (308), around a ceramic tilepipe (309).

5.4 Trench 4 (2.0m NE-SW x 1.80m SE-NW) (Fig. 2)

5.4.1 Although excavation was started on this trench, on the west side of the DA, it became apparent after machining to a depth of *c.* 1.0m that it was located within an extant cellar backfilled with demolition rubble. After consulting with the PA it was decided not to pursue the evaluation as the cellaring would have truncated any archaeological remains.

5.5 Trench 5 (8.45m NE-SW x 1.80m NW-SE) (Figs. 2 & 7a; Plate 6)

5.5.1 This trench was initially located in the north-west corner of the site, but was shifted south to avoid blocking the main site access. Excavations revealed a layer of loose grey/brown gravel and sand (500), a maximum of 0.30m deep, which sat above a compacted stratum of orange/brown sandy silt (501), up to 0.22m thick. Underlying (501) was a compacted grey/brown silty sand with medium-sized stones (503), varying in thickness between 0.14m-0.54m. Beneath (503) was the natural orange/yellow sandy clay subsoil (509), encountered at depths of between 0.35m-0.75m *bgl* and revealed to a maximum thickness of 0.80m to the extent of excavation.

5.5.2 Toward the southern end of the trench, contexts (501), (503) and (509) were cut by [504], a flat-bottomed feature visible in the west-facing trench section. The cut measured 3.10m NE-SW and was a maximum of 0.44m deep. It contained a fill of large stones, brick rubble, charcoal and one 18th -/19th-century pottery sherd (see below, section 6.4) held in a loose loam/ash matrix (505). To the south [504] terminated against

a stub of mortared red-brick wall (510), although it was not clear if the feature was related to the building of this structure. Wall (510) stood to 0.56m in height with a stepped basal course and was revealed to a length of 0.85m. It sat within the natural sandy clay (509), although no foundation cut was visible.

5.5.3 Feature [504] appeared to have truncated an earlier cut [506], which contained a loose fill of brown sandy silt and pebbles (507) packed around a NE – SW aligned 0.14m-diameter ceramic water pipe (508).

5.6 Trench 6 (10.00m NW-SE x 1.80m NE-SW) (Figs. 2, 7b & 7c; Plate 7)

5.6.1 This trench was located on the north side of the DA parallel to the northern boundary wall. The overburden consisted of mixed hardcore (600), 0.13m deep, underlain at the west end by a layer of crushed gravel (601), 0.11m thick, which extended to the east for 3.90m before petering out. Underlying (600)/(601) was the compacted yellow sandy clay natural (603).

5.6.2 A 0.15m diameter salt-glazed ceramic pipe encased in concrete (602) was encountered within (603), although there was no evidence of a cut in section. The pipe was aligned NE – SW and terminated at a brick-built inspection chamber (606) in the north-facing section. There was also a vertical cut [604] within (603) containing a modern brick and concrete culvert (605). Elements of an NW-SE-aligned double-skinned brick wall (607) were observed in the north-facing section above (603).

6.0 Ceramic finds

6.1 Context 102. A small group comprising four sherds of undecorated white earthenware (two glazed, two biscuit fired) representing two cups; a sherd of a glazed bone china saucer; three fragments of die-pressed kiln furniture (one cockspur and one stilt); and a single piece of undecorated clay pipe stem. A late 19th-century date is probable for the material.

6.2 Context 204. A collection of 25 earthenware sherds, two bone china fragments and two pieces of undecorated clay pipe stem. The earthenwares include examples of under-glaze transfer-printed vessels (at least three plates - two with ‘Willow’ print and a cup with a ‘Broseley’ design), slip-decorated hollow ware bowls, a possible under-glaze

painted hollow ware, a hollow ware with foliate moulded body, and at least two large glazed undecorated bowls. A single lustre-decorated redware hollow ware also features. The bone china sherds stem from an undecorated bowl. The sherds date from the mid-late 19th-century.

6.3 Context 209. A single abraded thrown slipware dish sherd of the late 17th or early 18th century.

6.4 Context 505. An unglazed coarse earthenware jar fragment with rolled rim. An 18th- or early 19th-century date is probable for the sherd.

7.0 Discussion

7.1 While the map evidence suggests the possibility of a building in the vicinity of the DA as early as 1775, little structural evidence was encountered on site. This was partly because trenching aimed to avoid known building footprints that would have impacted the archaeological resource. They could not be entirely avoided and comparing the location of red brick wall (510) in trench 5 with the historical map evidence suggests it forms part of the front elevation of the 1935 pub (Fig. 5). The location of wall (607) in trench 6, however, does not appear to correspond to the plans of 20th century structures and may belong to an earlier outbuilding, although the remains were too ephemeral to quantify. The pre-1935 premises largely fell outside the development area, the majority of it probably being lost in the late 20th century under Uttoxeter Road.

7.2 A number of land drainage features were encountered, which are probably 19th- or 20th-century in origin, such as the tilepipe (309) in trench 3. An example of a simple linear drainage system was encountered in trench 1 (106). This type of drain comprised a soil covered channel that would usually contain large stones to create space to create water flow, although in (106) saggar material was also utilised. Such simple systems tend to pre-date the mid 19th-century when mass-produced ceramic pipes rendered them obsolete (Harvey 1980, 71).

7.3 In trench 2 a linear cut [208] represented a shallow gully that extended across the trench. This gully contained an infill of silty sand (209), with the sandstone fragments and pebbles within the matrix suggesting that it was infilled deliberately, with the single

late 17th- or early 18th-century potsherd providing a *terminus post quem* for this action, which in turn provides a *terminus ante quem* for the layer of disturbed natural material (204) above it, which contained the largest ceramic assemblage encountered on site, broadly dating to the second half of the 19th-century.

8.0 Conclusion

8.1 It was anticipated that the evaluation trenches on the Weston Road/Uttoxeter Road DA might disclose indications of pre-modern occupation, in particular relating to Roman or medieval activity. In the event no such features or deposits were encountered. Archaeologically, with the exception of trenches 1 and 2, the trenches were largely sterile, with only two 19th-century land drains and a small assemblage of ceramic material being uncovered. It is possible that the gully in trench 2 is pre 18th-century in origin while the drain in trench 1 could be mid 19th-century.

8.2 The soil profile indicated wholesale levelling and landscaping on site. Below the general overburden, the stratigraphy in all the trenches mainly comprised redeposited or disturbed natural subsoils, lying directly over undisturbed natural geology encountered at relatively shallow depths, especially in trench 6.

8.3 Whether the putative mid to late 19th-century date for the *terminus ante quem* of disturbed layer (204) is comparable to the similar disturbed layers in trenches 1 and 3 is uncertain, although given that all three trenches are within the precinct of the bowling green it may be that these strata attest to the levelling and development of the green.

9.0 Acknowledgements

9.1 Fieldwork was undertaken by Richard Cramp (supervisor), Tony Hanna and Heather Anne Cope of SOTARCH. This report was written by Richard Cramp, with illustrations by Zoë Sutherland and finds identified by Jon Goodwin. Thanks are extended to Noel Boothroyd, Stoke-on-Trent City Council Planning Archaeologist; Steven Sprackling of Prime (UK) Developments Ltd; Portable Toilets Ltd. and T.G. Barnett Plant Hire for their assistance and co-operation on the project.

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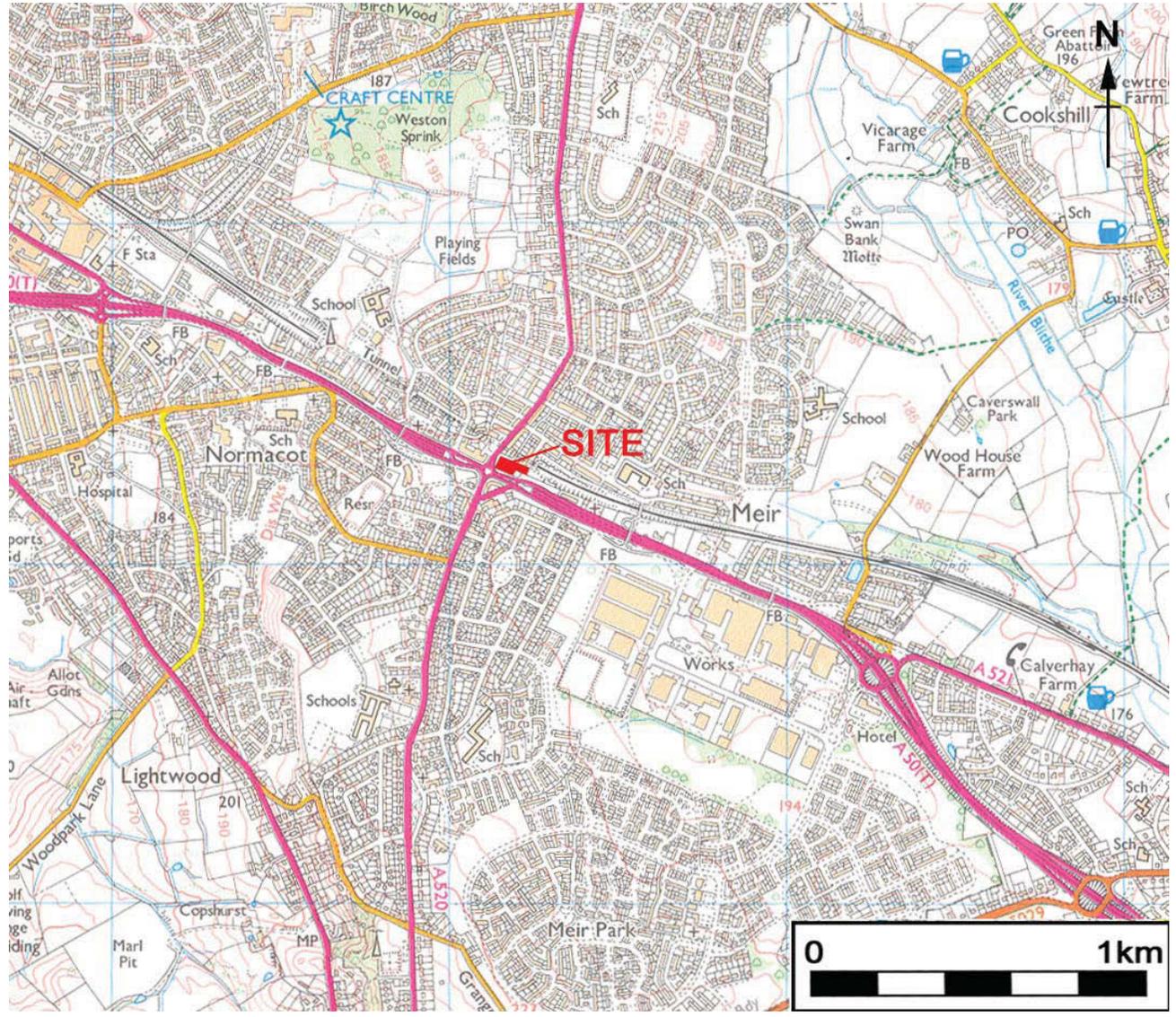
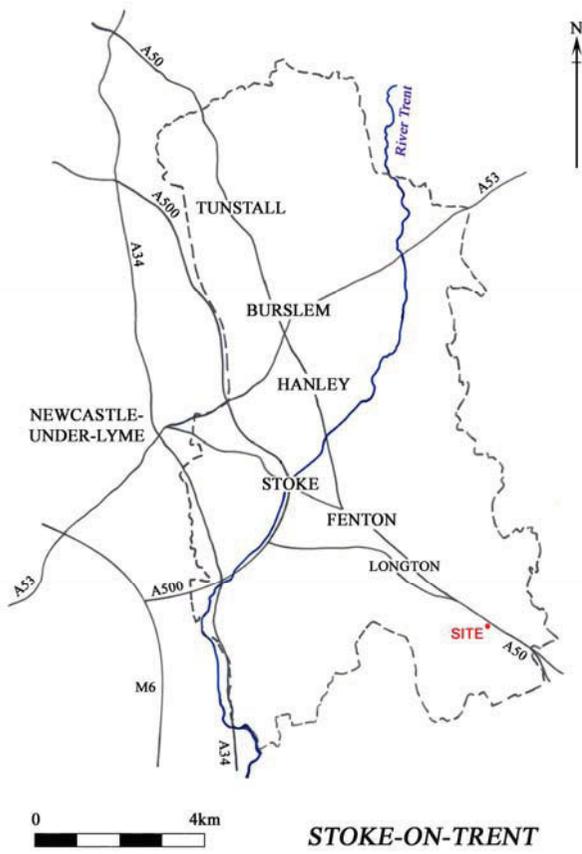


FIG. 1
Site location.

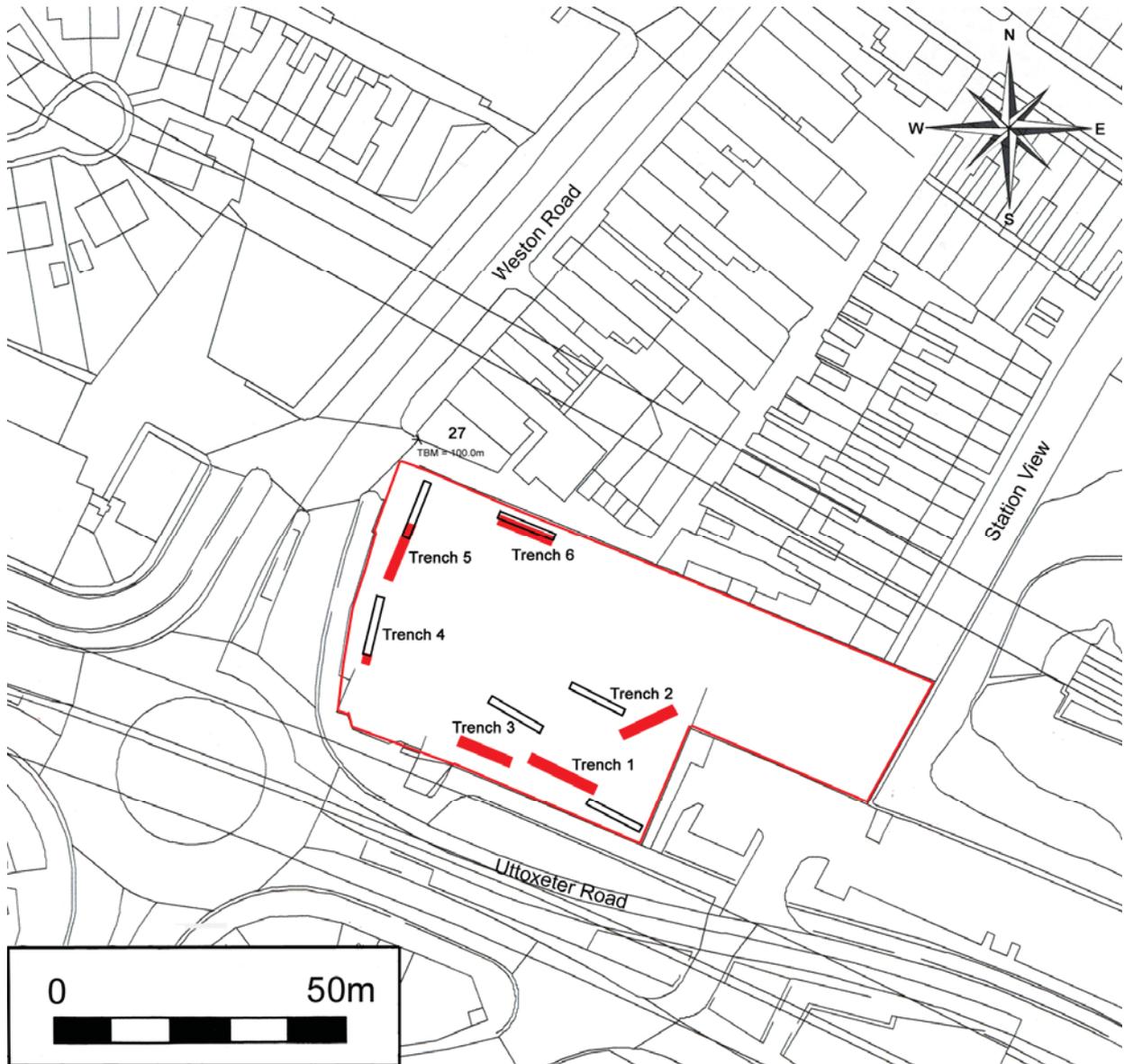


FIG. 2

The development area showing the locations of evaluation trenches. The proposed trench locations are shown in outline and the actual trenches indicated in red.

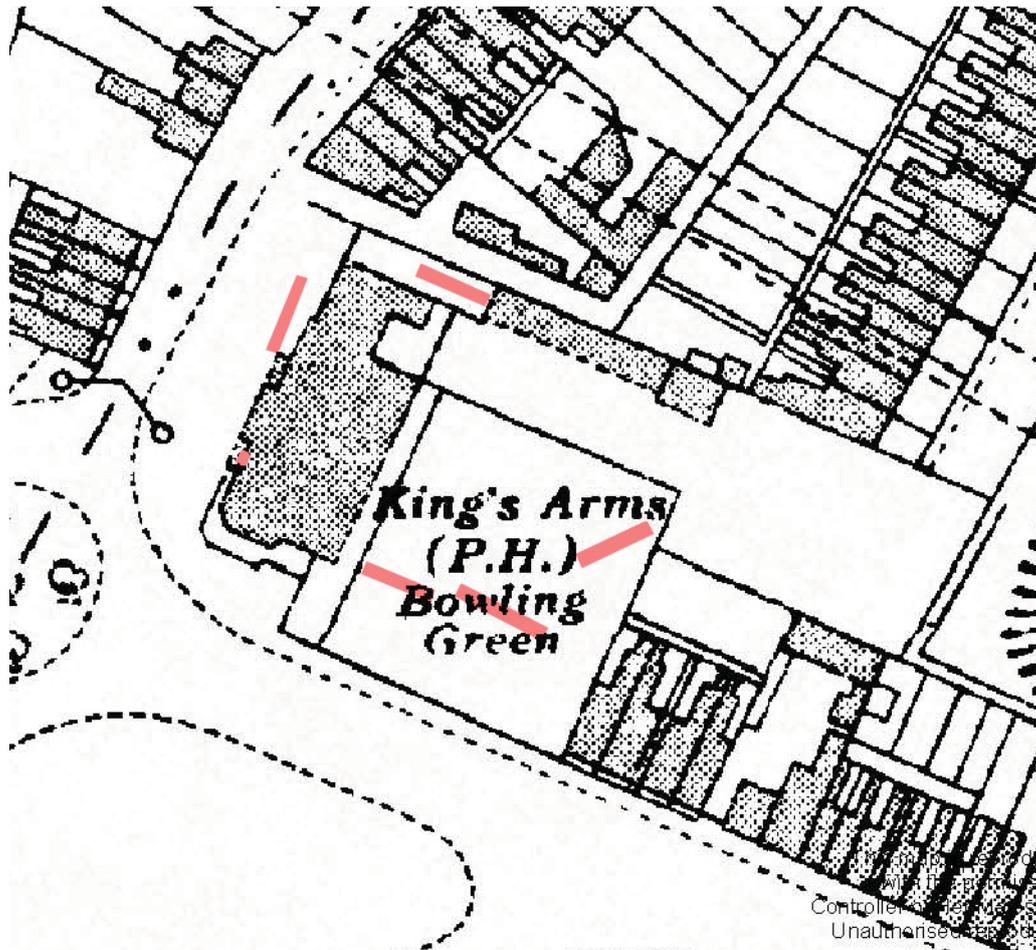


FIG. 5

Extract from the 1937 OS map, showing the rebuilt King's Arms and adjacent bowling green (evaluation trenches are indicated in pink).

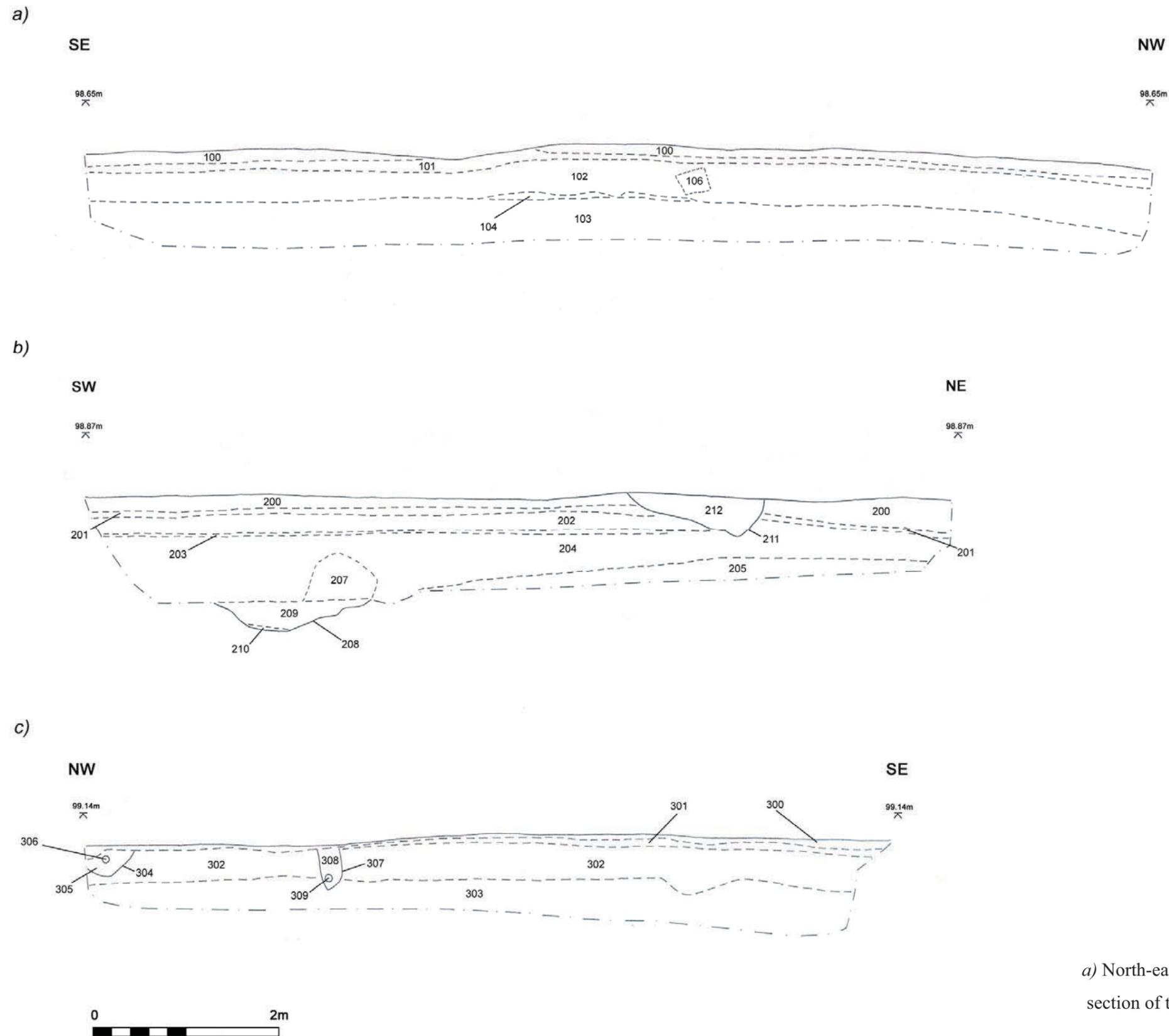


FIG. 6
 a) North-east-facing section of trench 1 b) South-east-facing section of trench 2 c) North-east-facing section of trench 3.

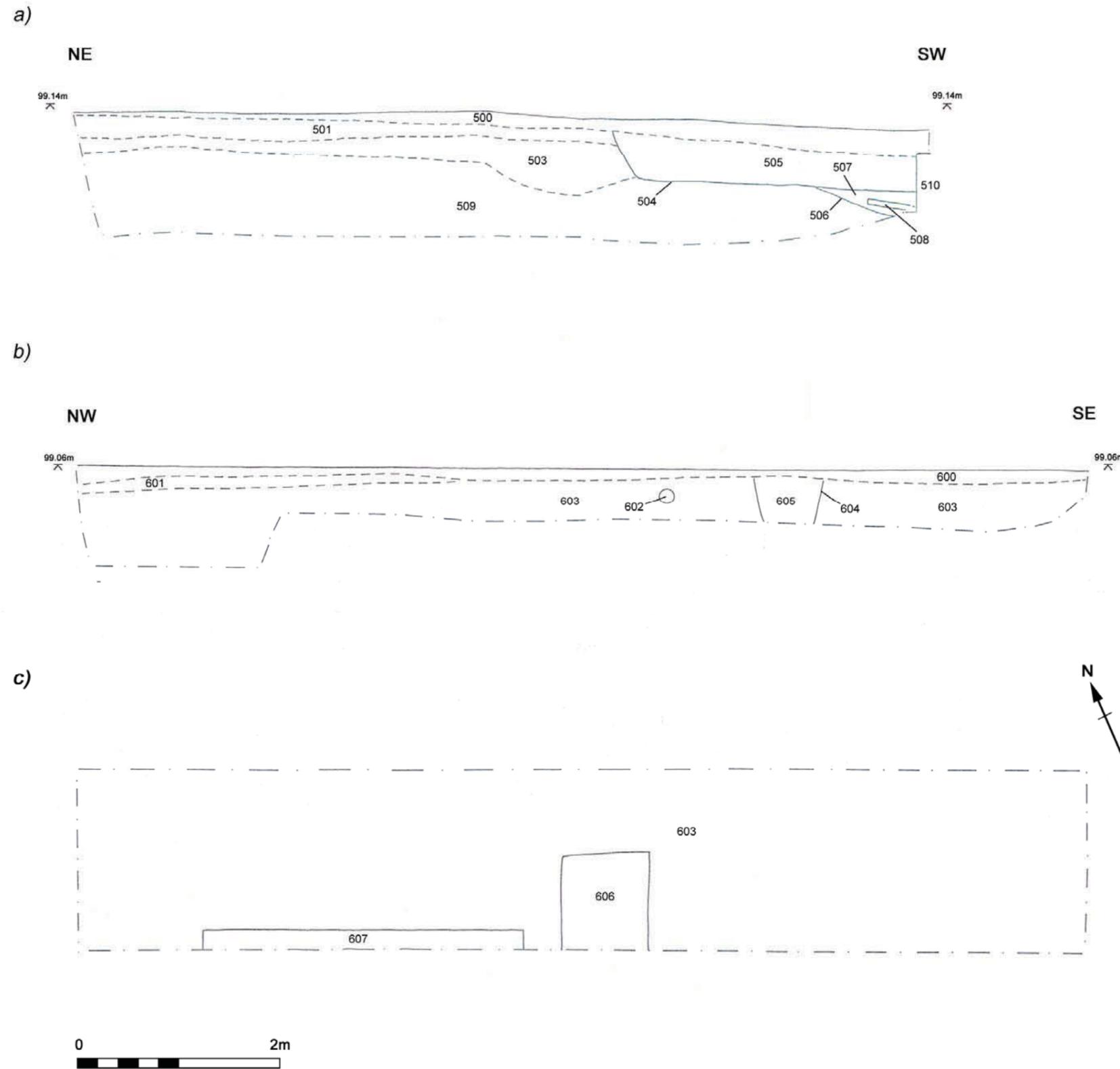


FIG. 7
 a) South-east-facing section of trench 5 b) South-west-facing section of trench 6 c) Post-excavation plan of trench 6.



PLATE 1

General view across the former bowling green prior to trenching, looking east.



PLATE 2

General view of trench 1 looking south west, showing the north-east-facing section
(scales: 1.0m & 2.0m).



PLATE 3

General view of trench 2 looking east, showing north-west facing section. Note the infilled gully extending diagonally across the trench (scales: 1.0m & 2.0m).



PLATE 4

Post-excavation detail of gully cut [208] in trench 2, looking north west. Note the dark infill (209) overlain by an arrangement of stones (207) (scales: 0.50m & 1.0m).



PLATE 5

General view of trench 3 looking south-west, showing the north-east-facing section and the longitudinal cut [310] for the modern land drain (311) (scales: 1.0m & 2.0m).



PLATE 6

General view of trench 5, looking south west. Note the stub of wall (510), probably part of the 1935 pub (scales: 1.0m & 2.0m).



PLATE 7

General view of trench 6, looking south east (scales: 1.0m & 2.0m).