



LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

**Medieval Settlement and Cultivation Remains  
Spilsby, Lincs (SAM 22715)**

NGR: TF 4064 6723

Site Code: SMV 00

**Archaeological Evaluation**

for

**Mr J. Grant**

**LAS Report No. 427**

**July 2000**



Lancashire County Council  
Archaeology Section  
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**Summary**

*Archaeological evaluation was undertaken to assess the archaeological significance of two areas within the scheduled ancient monument at Spilsby, with a view to de-scheduling. Two trenches in the southern field identified ridge and furrow, a hollow way and associated boundary ditch. A trench placed further to the north showed evidence of landscaping associated with the construction of an earth mound for a now disused rifle range nearby.*

*The area does evaluated does not seem to contain significant archaeological remains. The southern field was situated outside the main core of the settlement in an area which was under cultivation for at least some point during the medieval period. The field to the north was heavily disturbed.*

**Introduction**

Lindsey Archaeological Services were commissioned by Mr J. Grant to carry out archaeological evaluation at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of English Heritage and the general requirements set out in the *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook* published by the Archaeology Section, Lincolnshire County Council (1998).

**Site Description**

The parish of Spilsby lies on the dip-slope of the Lincolnshire Wolds. It contains the town of Spilsby and the deserted settlement of Eresby to the south of the town. The site under investigation comprises earthwork remains east of Partney Bridge and north of the town. It is not identified on any existing maps but is known as Old Spilsby. It is located in the shallow valley of an un-named stream which flows north into the River Lymn. The land is currently pasture.

**Archaeological Background**

Although a detailed examination of the historical sources is outside the scope of this project, some of the major sources were consulted as part of the earthwork survey conducted by Lindsey Archaeological Services in April 1996. Spilsby is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 when the manor belonged to the Bishop of Durham. The manor located in Bolingbroke wapentake, is described, as containing land in Spilsby was originally the farm or village belonging to the Spillir. Thorpe, meaning secondary settlement or outlying farmstead.



Eresby was a village in Spilsby parish, probably located close to the site of Eresby Hall, which lies to the south of the town. It was originally the more important settlement, which passed to the de Bec family in 1167, who came to Britain at the time of the Norman conquest and remained at Eresby until 1302. It is probable that the chapel of St James at Spilsby was founded by John de Bec to serve his new market there (Owen 1971, 19). He was granted a charter for a Monday Market and fair in 1255 and a second fair in 1259. In 1295 his grandson John was created Baron Beke of Eresby. A church is recorded in Eresby in 1291 but it was only in 1384 that the chapel at Spilsby became a parish church, after the appropriation of Eresby church at Spilsby (Marjoram 1984, 79).

Thorpe was identified by Foster and Longley (1976, 3/22) as Thorpe St Peter which is a village about 10km SE of Spilsby, also in Bolingbroke wapentake. Enquiries at the English Place-name Society were inconclusive as their survey had not reached this part of the county. The only reference in the EPNS records which may link Thorpe to Spilsby parish is in a Spilsby charter dated to the reign of Henry III but (but written in the reign of Henry IV) and was kindly identified by Professor Cameron. It refers to a meadow in Thorpe belonging to Reginald (Duha GCB, Great Coucher Book of the Duchy of Lancaster). It is just possible that Thorpe is the settlement represented by the earthwork remains in the survey.

### **Scope of Work**

The village remains were scheduled in 1996, and the surrounding land was ploughed up. It is now proposed to de-schedule land at the north and south ends of the settlement. The purpose of the investigation was to establish whether these areas contain archaeological remains of national importance.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The criteria for scheduling a monument are set out in Annex 4 to the Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16). The specific aim of the evaluation was to determine whether the remains in the two areas fulfil these criteria, or whether there is scope for de-scheduling these parts of the monument.

In general terms the purpose of the evaluation was to

- establish the presence or absence, quality and extent of archaeological remains and their location within the development area
- gather sufficient information to enable an assessment of the significance of any archaeological remains to be made and the impact which levelling will have upon them
- enable an informed decision to be made regarding the future treatment of any archaeological remains and consider any appropriate mitigatory measures.



## Excavation

The evaluation comprised three machine excavated trenches (Fig. 2), each 20m x 1.6m. Archaeological recording was carried out by a team of 3 experienced archaeologists, including a Site Director. Each trench was machine excavated to the top of the first recognisable archaeological horizon, using a toothless ditching bucket. The trenches were hand-cleaned to reveal features in plan. Carefully selected cross-sections through the features were excavated to enable sufficient information about form; development date and stratigraphic relationships were recorded.

A full written (single context) and photographic record was made of the site, including site plans at a scale of 1:50, and section drawings at 1:20. A plan of each trench was, in addition, further plans and sections will be made of individual features, or groups of features, as appropriate. A full photographic record was made during the progress of the excavation to cover each feature together with general site shots. LAS operates a standard context recording system, developed by its staff over the past 20 years based on MOLAS and CAS models.

## Results

### *Trench 1 (Fig. 3)*

Located at the southernmost part of the southern area, and orientated north-south, this trench was positioned to examine the earthwork visible as a ditch running east west across the southern part of area (Pl. 1).

A dark brown clayey silt topsoil **100** overlay a brown grey to light orange silty sand subsoil **101**. At the southern end of the trench Ditch **106** cut through the subsoil (Pl.2). It was 2.7m wide and contained a dark brown sandy silt **107** and a ceramic field drain at its base. This, in turn, cut a much larger ditch, **109**, at least 3.5m wide, which was cut from below the subsoil. Its fill was a brown silty sand **108**. No finds were recovered from these features, but **106** was clearly part of a relatively recent drainage scheme.

To the north of this the remains of ridge and furrow ploughing **103** (shown as the shaded gentle undulation in Fig. 3, Pl. 3) was visible in the section. This was removed by machine in order to determine what was below the ridge and furrow. The ridges were approximately 9m apart, surviving to a depth of little more than 0.5m from top of the ridge to base of the furrow.

South of ditch **106** there was no evidence of ridge and furrow with the top/sub soil lying directly over a firm light to mid grey silty sand material **102** which, in turn, lay directly upon natural orange silty clay **110**. **102** was more firm than the material elsewhere within this trench and may indicate that area was used as a pathway with a ditch similar to the hollow

way found in Trench 2 where **206/207** was found. This led to a stream and ditches **130** and **106** are likely to have been drainage channels. The only artefact recovered from this trench was a single sherd of medieval pottery in a local fabric from the topsoil (see Appendix 2).

#### *Trench 2 (Fig. 4)*

This trench was located to the north east of Trench 1 (Fig. 2), and orientated east-west in order to investigate the hollow way visible as an earthwork, running approximately north to south through the area (Pl. 4), as well as any associated potential occupation deposits.

The trench was excavated through a dark brown clay silt topsoil **200** onto a natural brown orange clayey silt. There was no visible subsoil. Adjacent to the hollow way was a ditch **203** (Pl. 5), 2.30m wide and 0.65m deep containing three fills comprising **204** an orange silty clay at the base, **205** (a brown orange silty clay) which contained three sherds of medieval local pottery and, uppermost was **209** a dark grey brown silty clay. East of ditch **203** was a mid orange grey sandy silt **207**, slightly different in character to the natural **210** to the west. It is possible that **207** has a slightly different drainage regime as it is within a hollow way (Pl. 6 and Pl.7). Again ridge and furrow was present in this trench on the same alignment as that in Trench 1 (Pl. 8).

#### *Trench 3 (Fig. 2)*

Trench 3 was located immediately south of a large mound identified as a rifle range target used for training during the Crimean War (Pl. 9) at the northern end of the site. Surrounding this mound was a large scoop, which is likely to have been the origin of material for the mound and the trench was positioned to the south of this scoop in the hope of avoiding any modern ground disturbance.

Almost 1m of topsoil and overburden was present in Trench 3 which lay over natural (Pl. 10). There were no features, although the natural was uneven and hollows were filled with the same mixed material overburden material. It seems that this whole area was subject to landscaping when the mound was erected and that archaeological material, if present, was removed. Five pieces of medieval pottery and four pieces of medieval/post-medieval tile were recovered from the overburden material. Although this is not a great quantity it may indicate that Trench 3 was closer to the main area of habitation than the two trenches to the south.

#### **Discussion.**

Much of the northern part that is being considered for de-scheduling appears to be lower than the area to the south. The archaeological remains identified show that the area has been substantially landscaped, removing all evidence of the medieval settlement and there is every reason to believe that the whole of this part of the scheduled area has been heavily disturbed



by the construction of the rifle range mound.

The southern field contains mostly ridge and furrow with part of a hollow way and associated ditch running through. It seems that this area was outside the main area of the medieval settlement, but within its associated field system.

The criteria for scheduling monuments as laid down in Annex 4 of PPG 16 includes 8 criteria which are intended to be a guide for considering whether scheduling is appropriate (these are not comprehensive).

These are:

- Period
- Rarity

The monument type is not an unusual monument type and there are numerous medieval settlements, which are better preserved than this area of Spilsby.

- Documentation

There is almost no documentation associated with the monument and the limited amount, which is associated, is unlikely to relate to the actual site.

- Group value

The field system should be considered in association with the settlement itself but much was ploughed up in 1996 after being recorded by Lindsey Archaeological Services.

- Survival/Condition

The ridge and furrow is not well preserved and is almost invisible on the surface. Below ground it is severely reduced in level and no evidence of any other archaeological remains was recovered. The trench to the north indicated that this area has been completely landscaped and any archaeology completely removed.

- Fragility/vulnerability

The existing ridge and furrow would be removed by repeated ploughing events but has been fully recorded by the earthwork survey of 1996, supplemented by this evaluation.



- Diversity
- Potential

The archaeological remains that will be removed by de-scheduling of the areas in question would be ridge and furrow and part of a hollow way but there is little potential for more information than that that has already been gathered from the archaeological work carried out. There is no evidence that the area investigated have any potential for other types of archaeological remains.

### **Conclusion**

The evaluation did not reveal either the existence of, or the potential for, significant archaeological remains, certainly none that might be considered to be of national importance.

### **Acknowledgements**

The evaluation was carried out by the Author, Wendy Booth and Jeremy Mordue. LAS would like to thank Glyn Coppack (English Heritage) and Mr J Grant (the land owner) for their help and assistance on site.

Mark Williams  
Lindsey Archaeological Services  
July 18<sup>th</sup> 2000

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## Appendix 1: Context Summary (SMV 00)

Context No	Type	Relationship	Description	Contains
<i>Trench 1</i>				
100	Topsoil	Above all	Dark brown clayey silt	
101	layer	Below 100 above 102	Brown grey light orange silty sand	
102	Layer	Below 101 above 103	Light to mid grey clayey sand with iron panning	
103	Layer	Below 101	Light yellow brown clayey silt	
104	Layer	Below 101 above 103	Light orange brown silty sand	
105	Not used			
106	Cut	Below 107 above 101	Ditch	107
107	Fill of 106	Below 100 above 106	Dark brown silty sand	
108	Fill of 109	Below 101 above 109	Brown silty sand	
109	Cut	Below 108 above 109	ditch	108
110	Natural	Below all	Orange light brown silty clay natural	
<i>Trench 2</i>				
200	topsoil	Above all	Dark brown clayey silt	
201	Cut	Below 202 above 211	furrow	202
202	Fill of 201	Below 200 above 201	mid grey silty clay	
203	Cut	Below 204 above 210	Ditch	204, 205, 209
204	Fill of 203	Below 205 above 203	Orange grey silty clay	
205	Fill of 203	Below 209 above 204	Brown orange silty clay	
206	Shallow depression	Below 207 above 211	Hollow way	207
207	Fill of 206	Below 200 above 206	mid orange grey sandy silt	
208	Deposit	Below 206 above 211	Orange clay	
209	Fill of 203	Below 200 above 205	Dark grey brown silty clay	
210	Deposit	Below 203 above 211	Brown orange clayey silt	
211	natural	Below all	Yellow clayey silt	
<i>Trench 3</i>				
300	Topsoil	Above all	Dark	
301	layer	Below 300 above 302	Dark brown sandy silt	
302	Natural	Below 301	Yellow sand and blue clay	



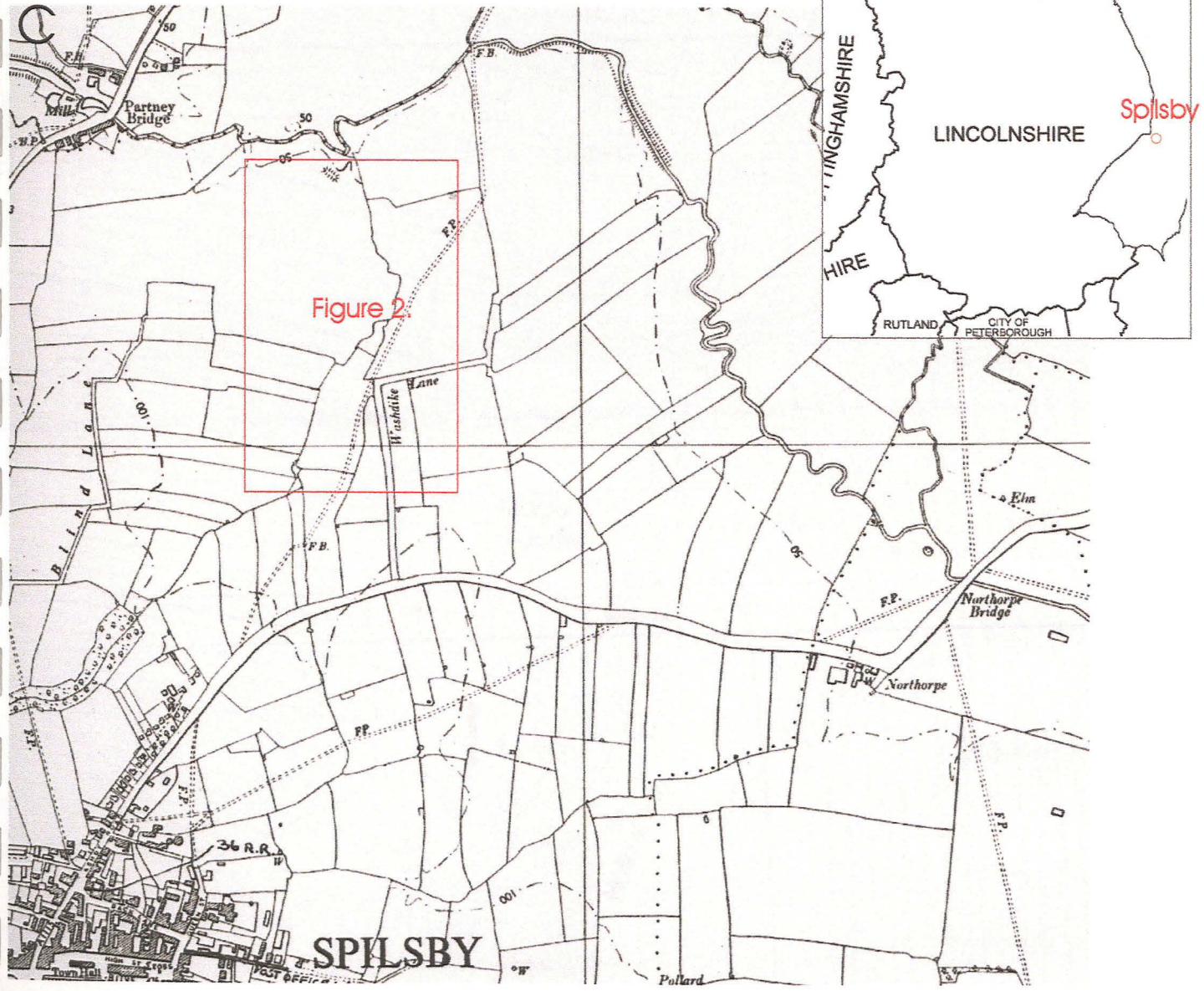
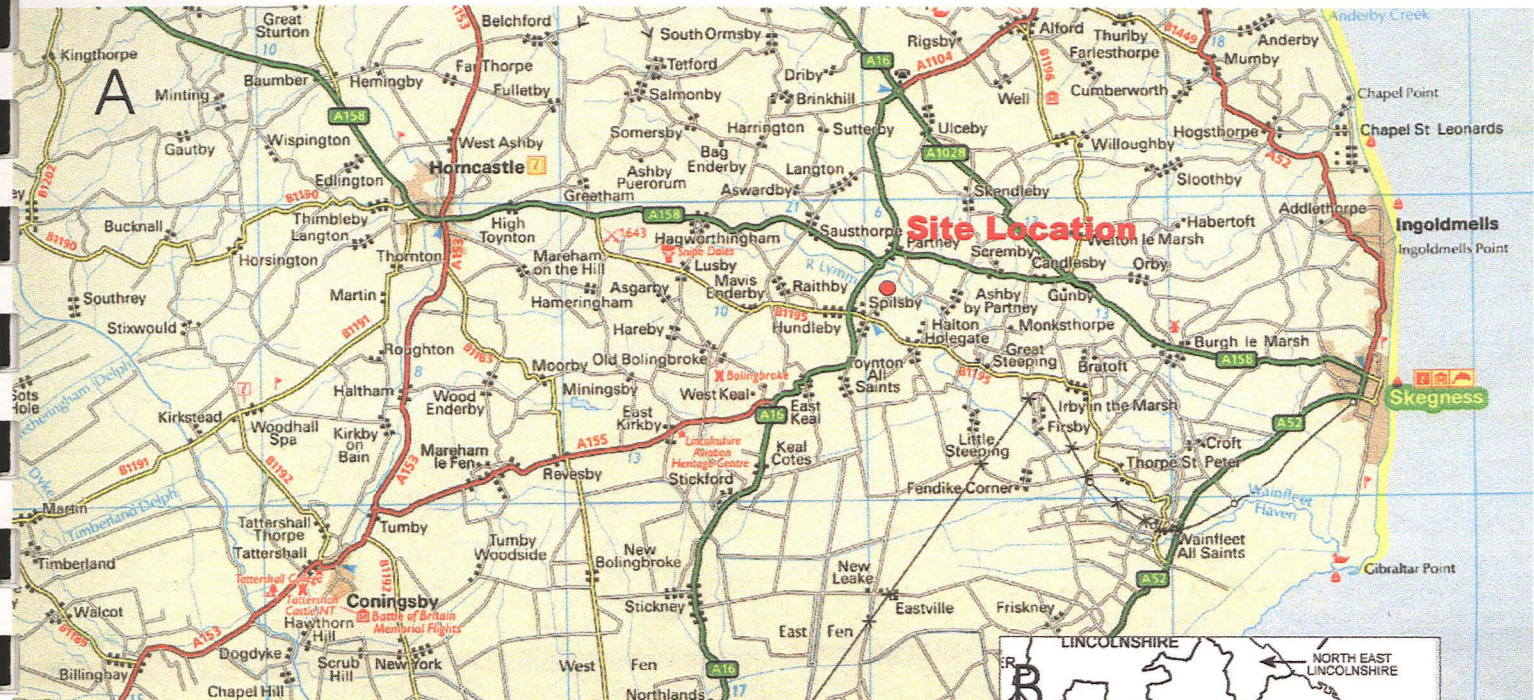


Figure 1, Site Location. (Insert C reproduced from the 1956 O.S 1:12500 scale map with the permission of the controller of HMSO, Crown copyrite. LAS licence no AL 50424A)



Scale 1:2500

Target Mound

3

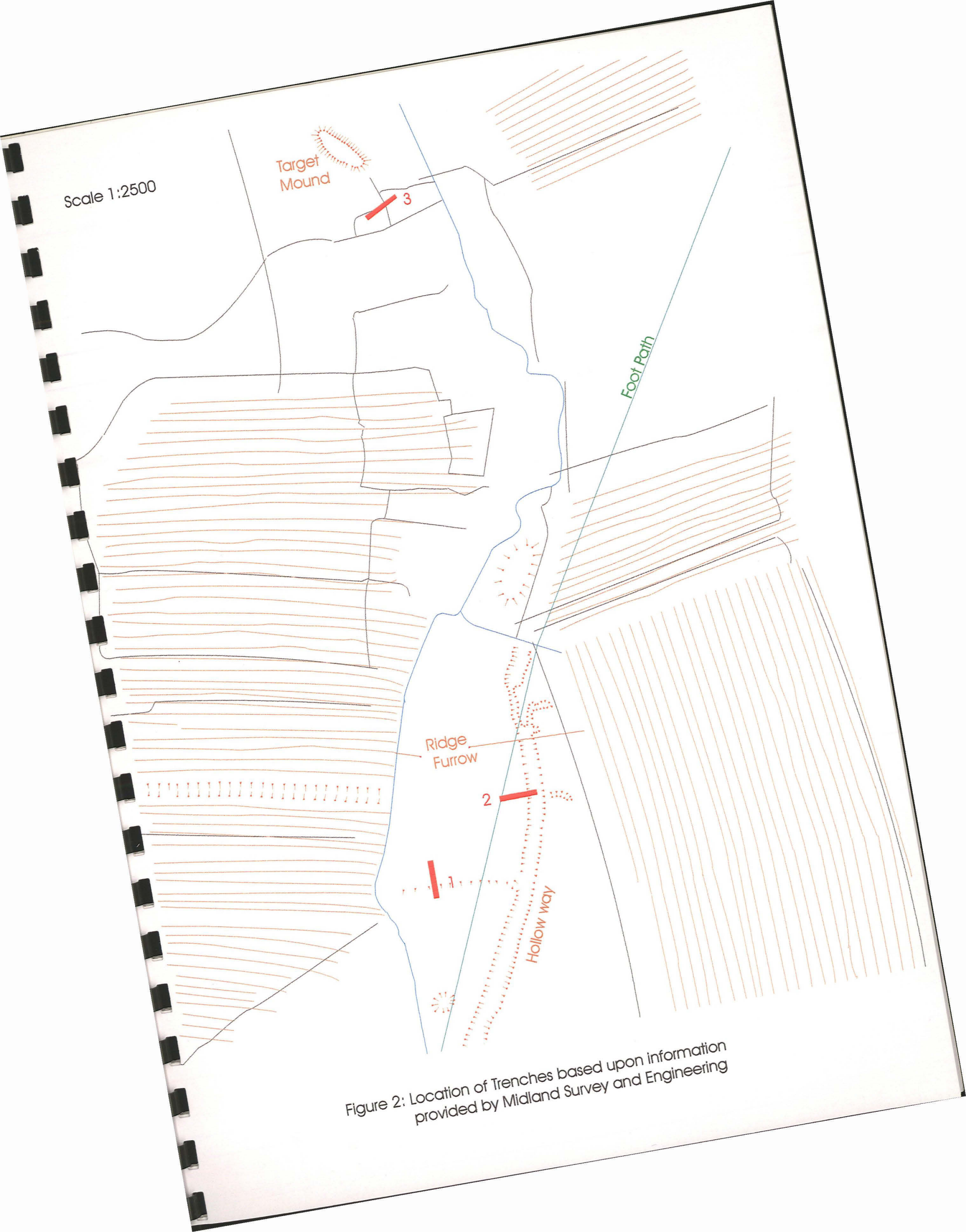
Foot Path

Ridge Furrow

2

Hollow way

Figure 2: Location of Trenches based upon information provided by Midland Survey and Engineering



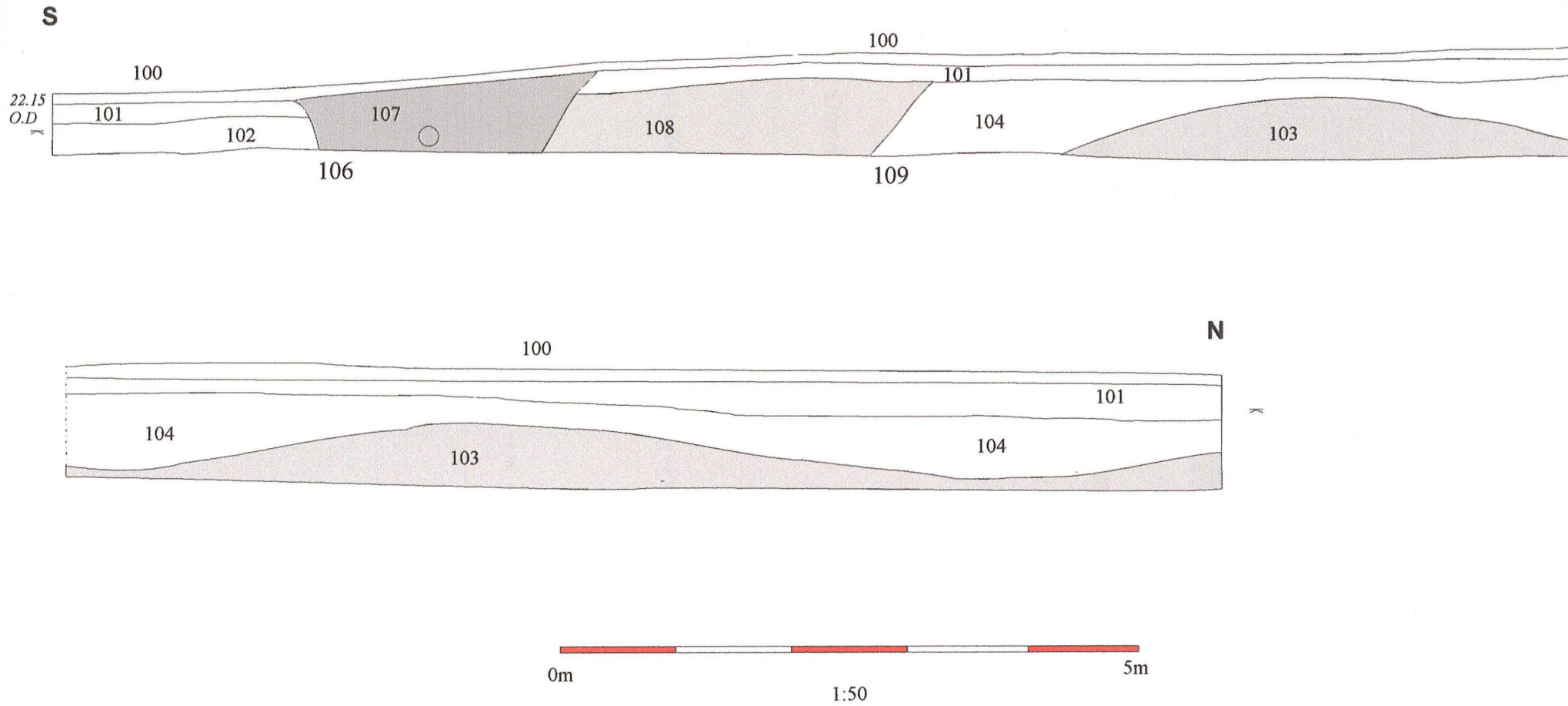
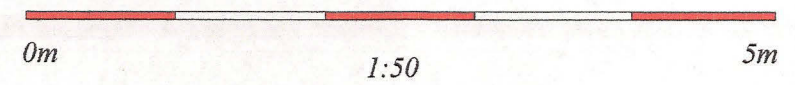
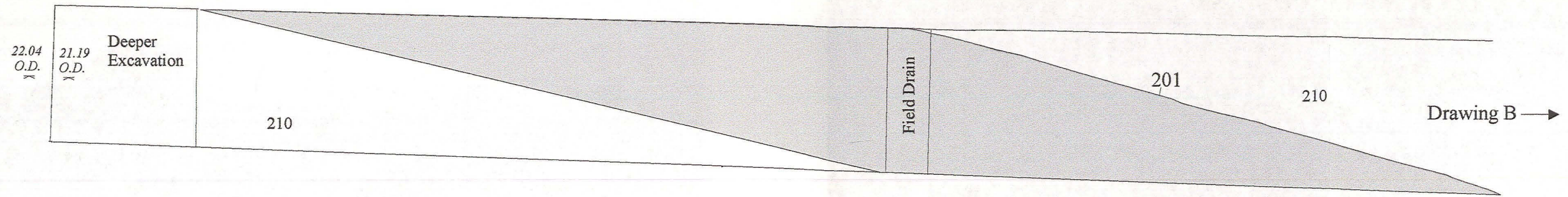


Figure 3: Trench 1, Section

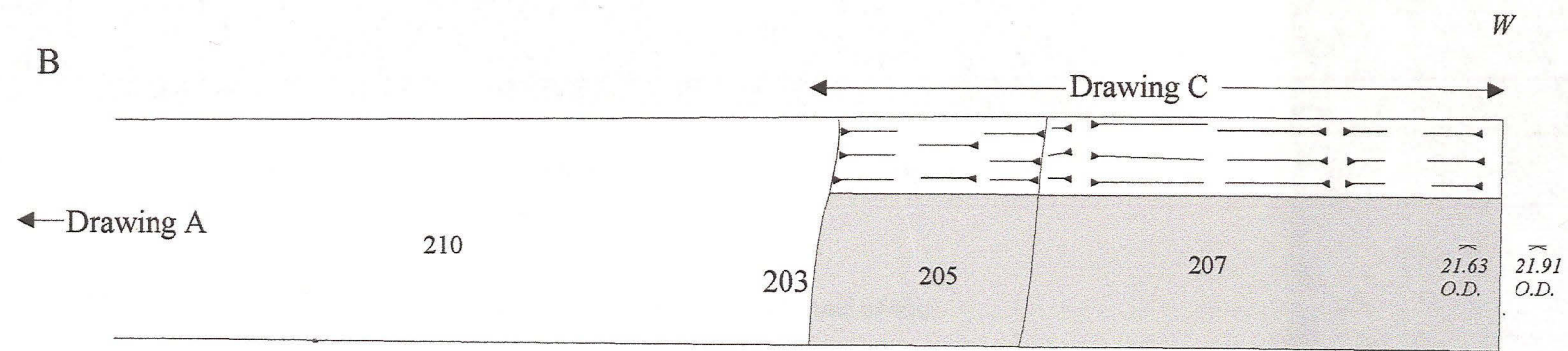


A

E



B



C

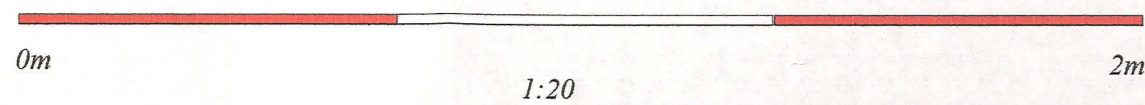
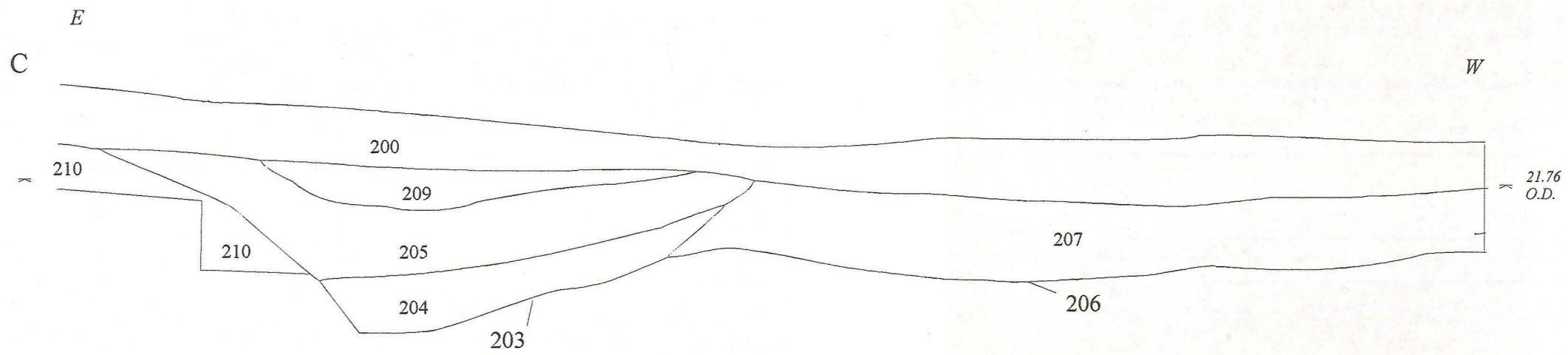


Figure 4: Trench 2, Plan and Section





**Plate 1: Trench 1, looking east, discoloration in the grass to the left of the photograph shows the position of earthwork running east west.**

**Plate 2: Trench 1, looking south, shows features 106 and 109 in left half of the photograph.**







**Plate 3: Trench 1, looking north east, undulation in the natural caused by ridge and furrow can be seen in the section.**

**Plate 4: Trench 2, looking north, discoloration to the right of the photograph shows boundary to the scheduled area and the position of the hollow way.**





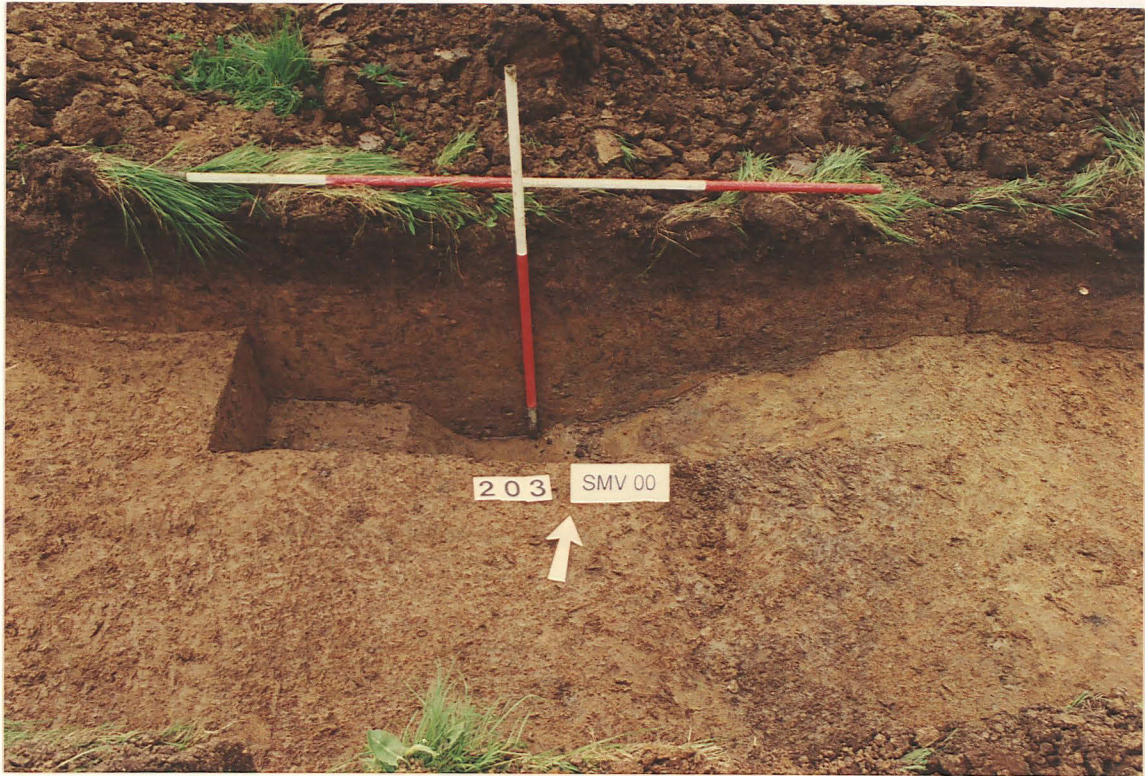


Plate 5: Trench 2, ditch 203

Plate 6: Trench 2, shallow depression 206







Plate 7: Trench 2, showing the relationship between 203 and 206

Plate 8: Trench 2, furrow 201







**Plate 9: Eastern part of Trench 3 looking north. The rifle range target can be seen behind the trench, also note the ground rising to the left of the picture (towards the uncontested scheduled area).**

**Plate 10: Trench 3**

