

# **Tuckingmill Urban Village, Cornwall**

## **Archaeological Recording**



**Historic Environment Projects**



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### **Archaeological Recording**

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## Acknowledgements

This study was commissioned by CSA Architects (on behalf of Duchy Developments) and carried out by Historic Environment Projects, Cornwall Council.

Within Historic Environment, the Project Manager was Colin Buck. Fieldwork was carried out by Emma Trevarthen and Carolyn Royall. Illustrations and report were produced by Emma Trevarthen.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of Historic Environment Projects and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

## Freedom of Information Act

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## Cover illustration

Cover Illustration *Aerial view of the former site of Bickford Smith's Fuseworks, situated at the north end of the proposed development area.* Photo taken by Emma Trevarthen, June 2009. Photo number F91-108  
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## **Abbreviations**

CAD	Computer Aided Design
GPS	Global Positioning System
HE	Historic Environment, Cornwall Council
HEP	Historic Environment Projects
NGR	National Grid Reference
OS	Ordnance Survey
HEPAO	Historic Environment Projects Archaeological Officer

## **1 Summary**

Archaeological monitoring and recording in the former Bickford Smith/Dolcoath site was undertaken during the excavation of test pits and trenches in advance of site development. Ten test pits and five trenches were recorded. Layers of blackened material were observed in four test pits, suggesting the presence of industrial mining processes in the vicinity, and deposits of red clay with charcoal inclusions were observed in four pits on the site of the tailings/buddles area downslope of the Dolcoath mine dressing floors.

The remains of a shaft was observed in section in Trench 1; this is a previously unrecorded shaft, close to the site of the recently located Rule's Shaft, and two other known shaft locations (Thorpe 2000; Foster 2010) (see Fig 3). The feature was recorded by measured survey and a section drawing was made. Two further features, considered likely to be exploratory pits of late twentieth century date, were also observed in this trench and were recorded on the same drawing (Fig 9).

A second shaft was observed close to the surface of Trench 3. This is also a previously unrecorded feature, considered likely to be a shallow exploratory shaft of nineteenth century date. The feature was recorded by measured survey and a section drawing was made (Fig 10).

The discovery of the two shafts brings the total of known shafts within the project area to twenty two, since twenty shafts including three capped shafts have previously been recorded at the site (Woodcock 2010). It was noted that the majority of located shafts appear to follow a particular lode: the second of four, looking from the south, marked on Crofty Consultancy's mining survey of the area (Foster 2010).

## **2 Introduction**

### **2.1 Project background**

In January 2010 Historic Environment Projects was commissioned by Business Location Services (on behalf of clients), to extend and update previous archaeological desk based assessments (particularly by Buck 2005), and to produce an Impact Assessment as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment for outline and detailed planning applications for the proposed redevelopment of land at Tuckingmill, Pool (Lawson-Jones 2010, forthcoming). Much of the 24.03 acre/9.73 ha study area has already undergone previous archaeological assessments in the past (Buck 2005, Lawson-Jones 2010). It is expected that the planning applications will be for a mix of residential housing as well as open space for community use.

Historic Environment Projects (HEP) was asked by Kim Dodge of Business Location Services (on behalf of the site developers – Duchy Developments), to provide a project design and estimate (Buck 12/5/2010) for archaeological recording during the excavation of test pits and trenches to gain sub-surface geotechnical information in advance of submission of planning applications for the redevelopment of the former Bickford Smith/Dolcoath site.

The study area (see Fig 1) lies partly within both the Tuckingmill Conservation area and the Cornish Mining World Heritage Site. The northern end of the study area is dominated by the former site of Bickford Smith's Fuseworks, whilst the southern part of the site has been affected above and below ground by former mining activities (latterly) relating to Dolcoath Mine and its associated dressing floors. Within the western part of the southern area, the landscape is still characterised as Anciently Enclosed Land, with Cornish hedges (Lawson-Jones 2010, forthcoming). These are fields of medieval origin, with the potential for the survival of prehistoric features in this area. Thus, there is the potential for below ground



archaeology to survive across most parts of the site, including possibly features or structures associated with medieval and post-medieval Tuckingmill (in the Bickford Smith buildings site).

The specifications for the archaeological recording were agreed with Phil Markham (Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer (HEPAO) West, Cornwall Council) who recommended that the test-pitting/trenching programme be monitored by an archaeologist. Phil Markham's requirements for recording guided the project design (Buck 2010). The choice of pit and trench sites for archaeological recording were also approved by Phil Markham.

## 2.2 Aims

The purpose of the archaeological recording was:

- To establish the absence/presence of buried archaeological remains by viewing excavated pits and trenches.
- To establish the nature of the mining activity across the site by viewing excavated pits and trenches.
- To establish the potential for features or structures associated with medieval/post-medieval Tuckingmill (in the Bickford Smith buildings site).
- Identify areas where significant archaeological deposits may exist and areas that require further archaeological mitigation (excavation/watching brief).
- To inform proposals for any additional archaeological mitigation in advance of proposals for development.

## 3 Background

### 3.1 Location and setting

The following extract from a recent comprehensive assessment of this site summarises the character and setting of the project area: *The project area can be divided into three main sections: in the north is the former Bickford Smiths area (centred at SW 6597 4094), to the south is a rural farmland landscape with medieval origins (centred at SW 6594 4058), while running along much of the eastern length of the study area is the former Dolcoath mining landscape located along the western edge of the Red River Valley (centred at SW 6616 4071). The study area lies on the southern side of Pendarves Street, along much of the western side of Chapel Road and to the north of Dolcoath Road* (From Lawson-Jones 2010, 12).

### 3.2 Geology and lodes

The rocks underlying the area are Upper Devonian slates and mudstones of the Mylor series, intensely mineralised through proximity to the Carn Brea and Carnmenellis granite to the south (Bristow 1996, 102). Soils are Denbigh 2 type brown earths (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1974). Numerous mineral lodes run parallel to each other in a north east, south west direction, with occasional ones at right angles (ie crosscuts). Four lodes cross the site, all in the southern half of the project area, containing predominantly copper with tin at depth (Dines 1956, 276) and see Crofty Consultancy mines map (Fig 3). The area has been worked for more than two centuries, with many shafts having been sunk onto lodes that run at right angles across the Red River Valley (Buck 2005, 9). Accordingly, a number of shaft sites have been identified either at surface or from mine maps that have been cut through and then along these lodes (Lawson-Jones 2010). Ten previously mapped shafts lie within the project area; nine of these are within the south part (see Fig 3).



## 4 Methods

### 4.1 Fieldwork

The purpose of the fieldwork was to obtain information concerning the presence/absence of buried archaeological deposits and evidence of former mining activity within the project area. Archaeological information was obtained through the recording of selected test-pits/trenches. The test pits were approximately 3.0m long and 0.6m wide; the depth varied according to the level at which bedrock/water table were reached as instructed by the site geotechnical engineer. The trenches varied in length from 25.0m to 38.0m long, 0.6m wide and up to 4.5m deep. The test pits and the trenches were excavated by a JCB supplied by the client.

A total of twenty two test pits and five trenches were excavated under the supervision of the client's geotechnical mining engineer (Ian Farmer Assoc. - Mike Austen) and of these (following a meeting with Colin Buck and the geotechnical engineer), it was agreed that ten test pits and all of the trenches were to be inspected and recorded by an archaeologist. The positions of the test pits and trenches were located by GPS and plotted using CAD by the geotechnical mining engineer (see Fig 3).

All archaeological features and layers exposed in the pits and trenches were recorded by written description, sketch plans and section recording where appropriate, and a photographic record, whilst spoil was inspected for the potential discovery of artefacts.

### 4.2 Site recording

Archaeological site recording was carried out following the procedures and guidelines recommended in the project design (Buck 2010). For health and safety reasons, it was impractical to position a scale in every photograph.

All drawings were scanned, digitised and stored. The paper records have been collated and digitised where necessary and all photographs have been archived (see section 8 – Project Archive).

## 5 Archaeological results

### 5.1 Survey/recording of test pits

The excavation of test pits across the north part of the site did not impact upon many archaeological features. All of the test pits revealed a variety of deposits characteristic of modern dumping and made-up ground; however some deposits are considered likely to relate to periods in the long history of Dolcoath mine (see Fig 2, 1908 OS map of the project area). The nature of deposits and features within the test pits are described in detail below. All test pits were approximately 3.0m long by 0.6m wide. Their depths varied and have been noted individually.

#### 5.1.1 Test Pit 09

This pit was located at SW 65984 40938 (centred) in the vicinity of site 23b: fusework buildings; site 69: Wheal Plosh 18<sup>th</sup> century copper mine (Lawson-Jones 2010)

This pit was opened to a depth of 3.7m with redeposited brown clay and shillet visible from its base to a depth of roughly 1.6m. Above this was a grey/brown clay subsoil up to ground level. At a depth of 2.6m a section of 2-inch diameter lead pipe was visible running east-west across the width of the pit, which appears to be *in situ*. Viewed from the south, a layer of

black/grey rubble was visible across the top of the pit from ground surface to a depth of roughly 0.1m.

#### 5.1.2 Test Pit 10

This pit was located at SW 65955 40911 (centred) in the vicinity of site 22: powder magazine; site 23a: fusework buildings; site 69: Wheal Plosh 18<sup>th</sup> century copper mine (Lawson-Jones 2010)

The pit bottomed at 3.4m. From the pit's base approximately 2.5m of brown clay subsoil and shillet was observed. Immediately above this for a depth of 0.1m was a layer of fine, black ash and cinders (Fig 7), suggesting former industrial activity in this area.

There was no discernible topsoil layer in this pit, instead from the ground surface to a depth of approximately 0.8m was a layer of burnt rubbish, ash and dark grey sandy soil. Roughly 15% of this layer comprised building rubble (brick and concrete).

#### 5.1.3 Test Pit 11

This pit was located at SW 66109 40864 (centred) in the vicinity of site 17: modern waste dump and site 16: tailings/spoil dump (Lawson-Jones 2010)

This pit was cut to a depth of 3.1m. There were a number of distinct deposits visible: from the pit base to a depth of roughly 1.3m below the current ground surface was orange/grey clay and shillet, overlaid by a more vivid orange clay containing flecks of charcoal, in turn overlaid by more grey clay/shillet. Above these deposits was a zone of red clay and shillet: the pit was capped by a second layer of similar red clay material roughly 0.3m deep, and separating these was another grey clay/shillet deposit.

#### 5.1.4 Test Pit 12

This pit was located at SW 66130 40828 (centred) in the vicinity of site 16: tailings/spoil dump; site 17: modern waste dump; site 64: possible shafts (Lawson-Jones 2010)

This pit was opened to a depth of approximately 3.5m. The bottom of the pit, to a height from its base of approximately 1m was filled with red/brown clay flecked with charcoal. This is considered likely to be the remnants of 'slimes' or tailings from the dressing floors of Dolcoath mine.

Above this was a very loose mix of red-brown soil mixed with large pieces of building rubble including reinforced concrete slabs up to 1m wide. This layer had caused the pit to be heavily undercut by the excavator. This zone of very loose demolition debris was overlain by a dark brown clay subsoil which included building rubbish, notably lead scrap and asbestos tiles. At the top of the pit was a cap of orange/brown clay roughly 40cm deep.

It should be noted that this pit lies in the vicinity of Site 16, 'Tailings/spoil dump' described in the 2005 and 2010 archaeological assessments of the Tuckingmill Urban Village site: '*A modern excavation through a dump of rubble/stone, soil and dressing floor waste – presumably originating from clearance of the tailings plant buddle site adjacent.*' (Buck, 2005; Lawson-Jones, 2010)

#### 5.1.5 Test Pit 13

This pit was located at SW 66138 40807 (centred) in the vicinity of site 13: Dolcoath tailings plant (Lawson-Jones 2010).

Shillet bedrock found at roughly 3.5m, overlain for 0.8m by a red/brown clay containing flecks of charcoal. This is considered likely to be remnants of 'slimes' or tailings from the Dolcoath mine dressing floors.

Above this was a band of orange/brown sand and clay, capped by orange clay subsoil and a thin (0.1m) layer of loose, sandy topsoil.

#### **5.1.6 Test Pit 14**

This pit was located at SW 66141 40788 (centred) in the vicinity of site 13: Dolcoath tailings plant.

The final depth of the pit was 3.9m. From its base to a depth of roughly 3m a layer of red/brown clay, ash and cinders was observed, within which a thin (5-10cm) black band could be seen roughly 0.5m from the pit bottom. This indicates former industrial activity, or dumping of industrial waste, in the vicinity of the pit.

The red clay layer was overlain by deposits of orange-grey clay, then grey clay and shillet containing rubble, cinders and ash.

#### **5.1.7 Test Pit 15**

This pit was located at SW 66033 40878 (centred) in close proximity to site 28: Tetryl assembly building and remains of tramline network (Lawson-Jones 2010).

This pit was opened to a depth of 3.0m. From its base to a depth of roughly 1.15m was a zone of disturbed material consisting of light brown shillet and clay. Above this a thin (0.15m) band of black material was observed, suggesting former industrial activity in the vicinity of the pit.

Above this black band was a mix of clay loam and rubble topped by a thin (0.1m) layer of brown, sandy topsoil.

#### **5.1.8 Test Pit 16**

Located at SW 66057 40888 (centred) adjacent to site 30: electricity substation, of First World War date, which powered the entire Bickford Smith site (Lawson-Jones 2010).

At a depth of approximately 2.6m shillet bedrock was reached, overlain by weathered rock consisting of grey/brown shillet and clay. 0.95m from the top of the pit a thin (0.1m) band of black material was observed in the south and west sections of the pit.

#### **5.1.9 Test Pit 22**

Located at SW 65980 40981 (centred) between sites 20 and 21: packaging/storage rooms on the site of the former fuseworks (Lawson-Jones 2010).

Two sections were recorded within this pit. First, the north section was recorded (SW 65982 40980). This had been cut to a depth of 3.9m and at its base was a fine, silty grey alluvial deposit overlying the bedrock. Above this was a void for a height of almost 2.0m before the remains of poured concrete footings were revealed (see Fig 6). These footings were approximately 0.7m deep and resting above them were remains of timbers, which lay in a haphazard fashion as though they had been dumped, or had fallen, in a pile 0.8m deep. Above this and for the remaining 0.3m to the current ground surface was a layer of building rubble and ash. The remains of footings suggest that a building or structure was located in the immediate vicinity of the pit. A circular structure, number 138, is marked on a 1940 block plan of the Bickford Smith site (H&S Executive 1940) and it is possible that the footings visible in pit 22 are related to this structure.

In the southern end of the pit (SW 65979 40983), a layer of reddish brown sand lay above the alluvium silt for a height of approximately 1.5m. This was overlaid by a deposit of dark grey sand and rubble, and above this were zones of re-deposited orange and brown clay shillet which met the ash and rubble layer at 0.3m from the ground surface. Running through the clay shillet a dark grey and black rubble layer approximately 0.15m thick was observed. This

layer is roughly 1.0m below the ground surface; it is possible that it was associated with the building whose footings are described above.

## **5.2 Monitoring and recording of trial trenches**

Mining related features were observed in two of the five trenches, Trench 1 and Trench 3, that were recorded by an HEP archaeologist.

### **5.2.1 Trench 1**

SW 65986 40634 to SW 166025 40634

This trench was 38.4m long and cut to a maximum depth of 4.2m. The remains of a shallow shaft was observed in section at the east end of the trench. In section, the shaft measured 1.5m at ground level, tapering to 0.5m at a depth of 2.7m, and contained a dark grey/black clay and ash fill. It was initially considered possible that this might be the site of a shaft currently mapped immediately to the south of the trench on the other side of a field hedge (see Fig 3). However, consultation of an earlier watching brief in this area confirmed that the marked shaft, named Rule's Shaft, was accurately located through fieldwork in 1999 (Thorpe 2000) and this is therefore the site of a previously unrecorded shaft (see site plan: Fig 3, and photograph: Fig 5). The feature was recorded by measured survey and a section drawing was made. Two further features were recorded in trench 1, both cut features extending at a consistent width and each with a single fill of loamy clay and organic material, towards the base of the trench. These are considered likely to be test pits of late twentieth century date; and were recorded on the same section drawing (Fig 8).

### **5.2.2 Trench 2**

SW 66052 40656 to SW 66040 40667

This trench was 15.0m long and cut to a maximum depth of 2.8m. The trench lacked any archaeological features, but an outcrop of bedrock close to the current ground surface in the centre of the trench (Fig 8), combined with the loose, possibly re-deposited nature of the clay/shillet fill in the north half of this trench and its positioning over a mineral lode (see Fig 3) identified by Dines, containing copper with tin at depth (Dines 1956, 276), suggest that the site has been worked for ore extraction at some point in its past.

### **5.2.3 Trench 3**

SW 66111 40642 to SW 66094 40662

Trench 3 was 25.5m long and cut to a maximum depth of 3.6m. A shaft was observed close to the surface of the trench at its south end. The outline of this feature was clearly visible as the infill of the shaft had collapsed during excavation of the trench. This infill had comprised loose, re-deposited clay and shillet. A void remained in the north end of the trench, and for approximately 1.0m beneath the ground surface beyond the south edge of the trench. The shape of the shaft was roughly circular in plan, cut at a consistent diameter of approximately 4.0m to a depth of approximately 3.0m, at which point the cut drops away to the north below natural bedrock. This is a previously unrecorded feature, considered likely to be a shallow exploratory shaft of nineteenth century date. The feature was recorded by measured survey and a section drawing was made (Fig 9).

### **5.2.4 Trench 4**

SW 66122 40571 to SW 66123 40539

This trench was 32.0m long and cut to a maximum depth of 3.3m. It crossed the potential route of an adit or drainage tunnel. No sign of the adit or associated mining activity was observed in the trench; in fact it is highly likely that if there is an adit at this location, it is at a far greater depth than that of the trench. Barkle's Shaft is known to be in the vicinity of this trench (Sharpe 1993) but no evidence of a shaft was observed.

Towards the south end of the trench, a deposit consisting of loose sandy topsoil, ash and modern rubbish including plastic, asbestos tile and twisted metal was visible. This deposit was spread over 4.5m at ground level and filled the trench to a maximum depth of 2.0m. Immediately below it was a layer of dark brown loam mixed with stone and building rubble. Beneath this and down to the bedrock was a mid grey/brown clay shillet zone which showed signs of oxidisation and is likely to have been worked and re-deposited (Fig 9).

An area of recently worked ground comprising dark brown loamy clay and organic material was recorded further along the trench. This was a deposit almost 6.0m wide and 2.0m deep. This sat over the same deposit of re-worked clay and shillet described above.

### **5.2.5 Trench 5**

SW 65940 40950 to SW 65945 40945

Trench 5 was located in the very north of the project area, the former Bickford Smith's Fuseworks, and was centred around a disused diesel fuel tank. Three sections, 5A, 5B and 5C, within this excavation were recorded (see Fig 8).

5A revealed a 0.3m deep layer of ash, cinders and building rubble immediately below the concrete base and block foundations of the building described as site 24 (Lawson-Jones 2010), that adjoined the tank. Beneath this was observed a zone of mid orange/brown clay containing organic material including tree roots and other plant debris. Zones of re-deposited dark grey/brown clay and shillet lay below this, to a depth of approximately 3m where decomposed bedrock was visible for 50cm before the bedrock proper was reached.

The stratigraphy and composition of section 5B was almost identical to that of 5A. The only discernable difference was at the base of the trench, where the layer of decomposed bedrock was observed to lie above a grey silty alluvium deposit which contained evidence of root action and other plant debris. This layer was visible from the base of the trench to a height of 0.6m

5C showed the same layer of mid grey, silty alluvium muck at the base of the trench to a height of approximately 0.5m. Above this were zones of re-worked grey and brown clay and shillet which lay below the same deposit of ash and building rubble described above. Within the clay/shillet zone, at a depth of approximately 1.5m a thin layer of dark grey and black material was observed. This material was only visible in two sections: against the base of the adjoining building, and against the base of the tank where it met that building. It is considered possible that this is a layer of burnt material, that may indicate the presence of a fuse-testing room or building in the vicinity of the trench.

## **6 Discussion**

To conclude, the archaeological monitoring during excavation of test pits and trenches across the development area at Chapel Road, Tuckingmill, revealed deposits of burnt material and red clay, both likely to be associated with processes at Dolcoath mine. Of particular interest were the discoveries of locations of two shafts, that were recorded and accurately mapped for the first time bringing the total number of known shafts within the project area to twenty two.

Also of interest were the remains of building footings, observed well below the current ground surface in test pit 22 within the former Bickford Smith's Fuseworks site.

Including the two shafts recorded as part of this project, it appears that the majority of shafts within the project area follow a particular lode out-crop zone: the second of four, looking from the south, marked on Croft Consultancy's mining survey of the area (Foster 2010 and Fig 3). It is possible that this zone was either highly productive, or perhaps closer to the surface, than those to the north. The lode in the most southerly part of the project area, cut by trench 4, did not reveal any mining features during this project, but there are nonetheless six, possibly seven, shafts marked within a few metres of it. Further trial trenching across the routes of these lode outcrops is highly likely to produce further evidence of mining related features.



## 7 References

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## 8 Project archive

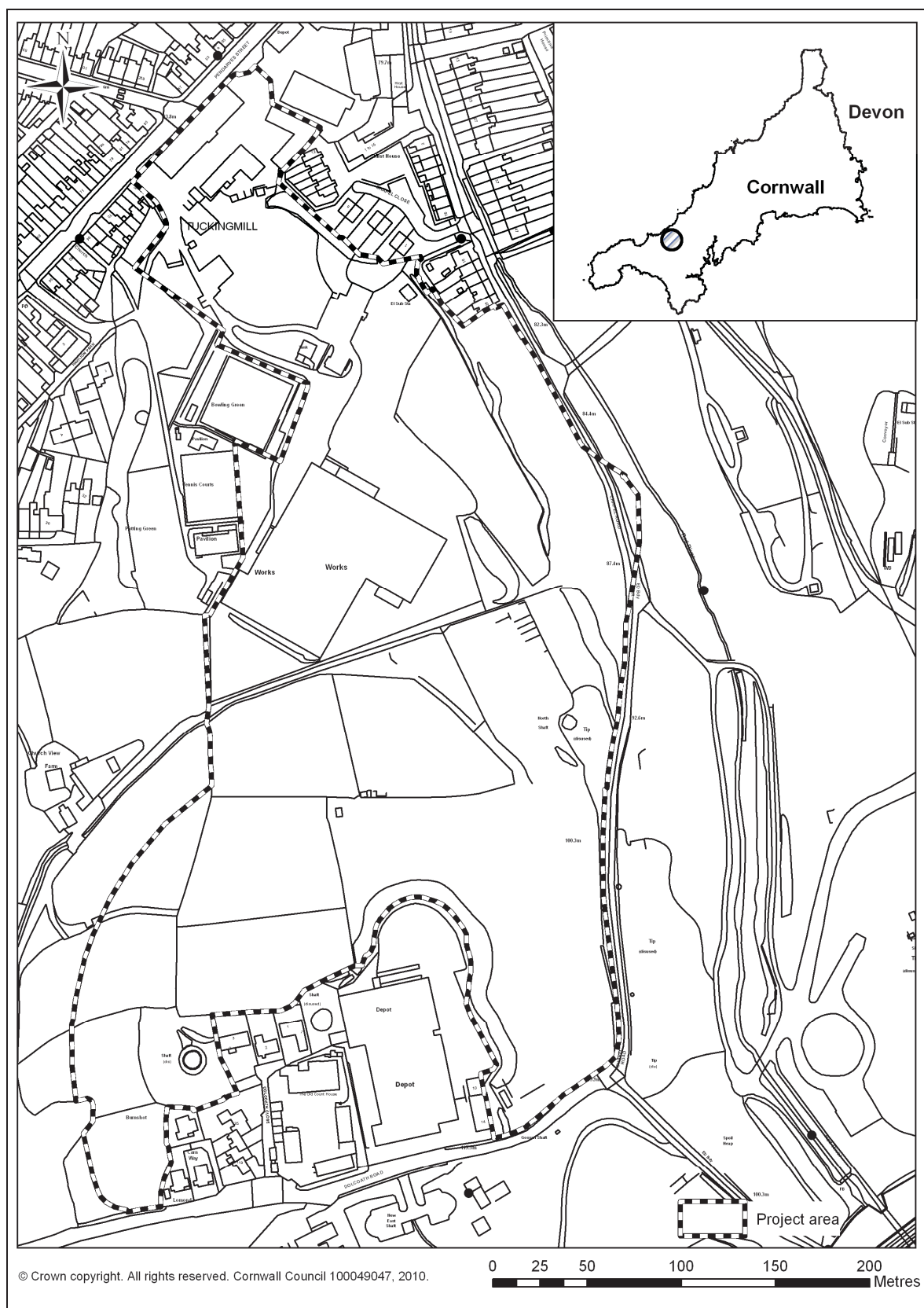
The HE project number is **2010048**

The project's documentary, photographic and drawn archive is housed at the offices of Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, Kennall Building, Old County Hall, Station Road, Truro, TR1 3AY. The contents of this archive are as listed below:

1. A project file containing site records and notes, project correspondence and administration.
2. Field plans and copies of historic maps stored in an A2-size plastic envelope (GRE 721).
3. Electronic drawings stored in the directory [R:\Historic Environment \(CAD\)\CAD Archive\Sites T\Tuckingmill SI WB 2010048](R:\Historic Environment (CAD)\CAD Archive\Sites T\Tuckingmill SI WB 2010048)
4. Digital photographs stored in the directory [R:\Historic Environment \(Images\)\SITES.Q-T\ Tuckingmill SI WB 2010048](R:\Historic Environment (Images)\SITES.Q-T\ Tuckingmill SI WB 2010048)



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*Fig 1: Site Location Map*



Fig 2: Second Edition of the Ordnance Survey 25 Inch Map, c1908 showing the study area



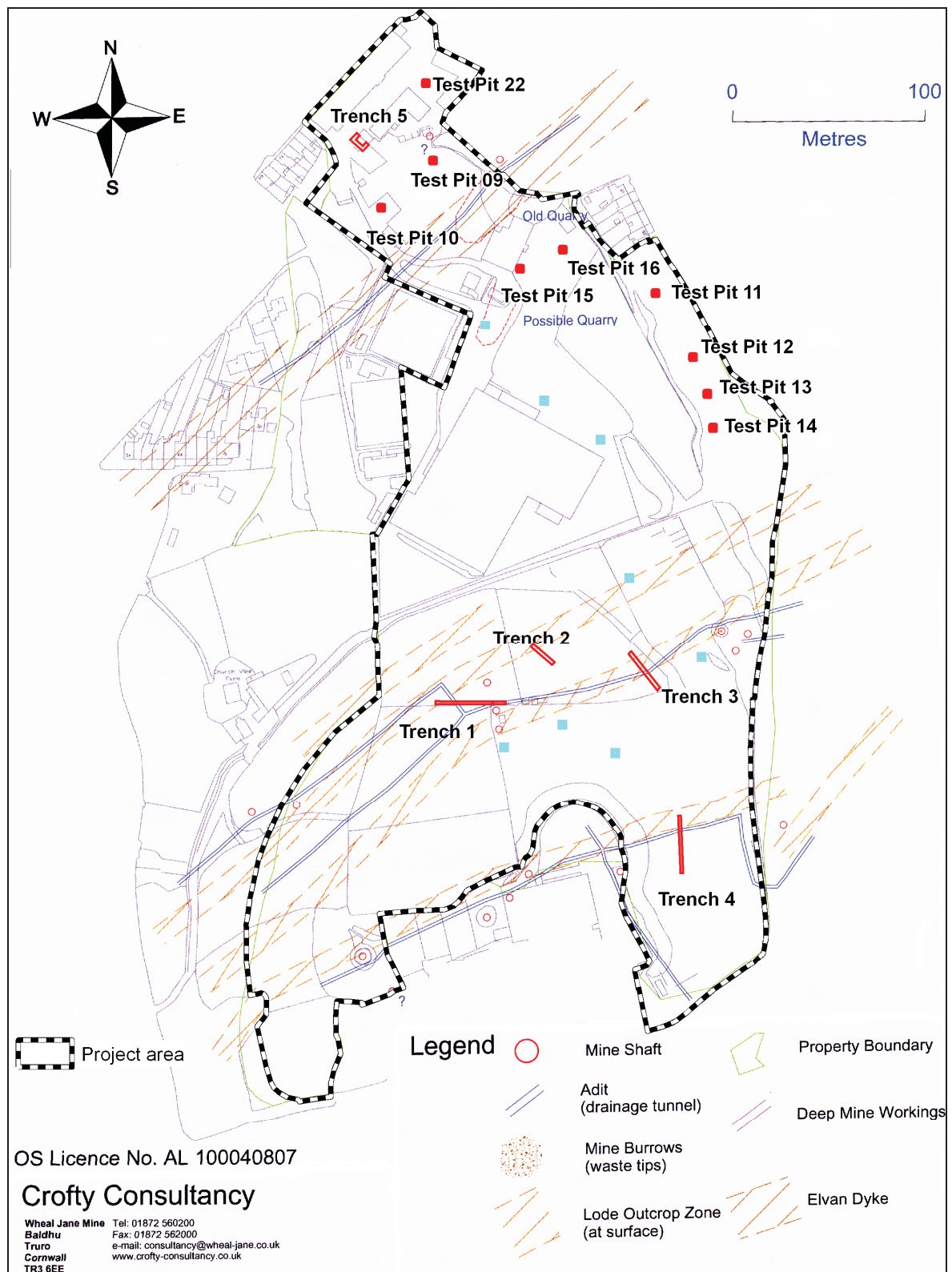


Fig 3: Site plan showing Crofty Consultancy mine report (Foster 2010, reproduced with kind permission) overlaid by locations of trial pits and trenches (in red) that were investigated for this report. Locations of all other test pits, which were not recorded for this report, are shown in pale blue.





*Fig 4: Section of trench 1. Re-deposited clay and shillet surrounds a grey clay and ash deposit, visible on the right of this image. The clay and ash fill indicates the location of a shaft.*



*Fig 5: South end of trench 3. A void, indicating the presence of a shaft, opened up beneath the trench as it was being excavated.*





*Fig 6: Concrete footings 1.0m below the current ground surface were observed within test pit 22.*



*Fig 7: A thin band of dark grey/black burnt rubbish, ash and sandy soil was observed within test pit 10.*

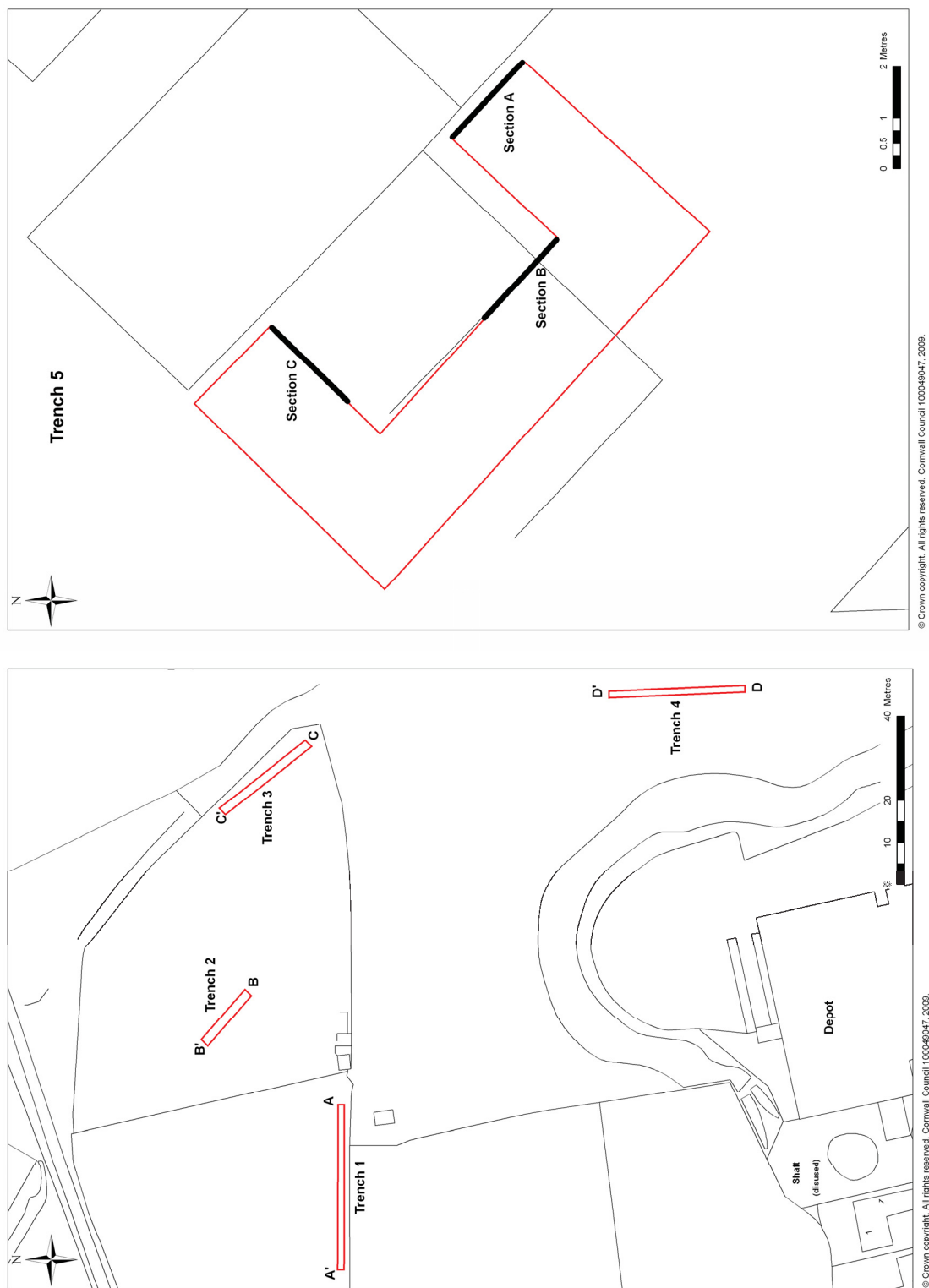


Fig 8: Site plans of section locations in trenches 1 to 4 (See also Figs 9 and 10) and trench 5.



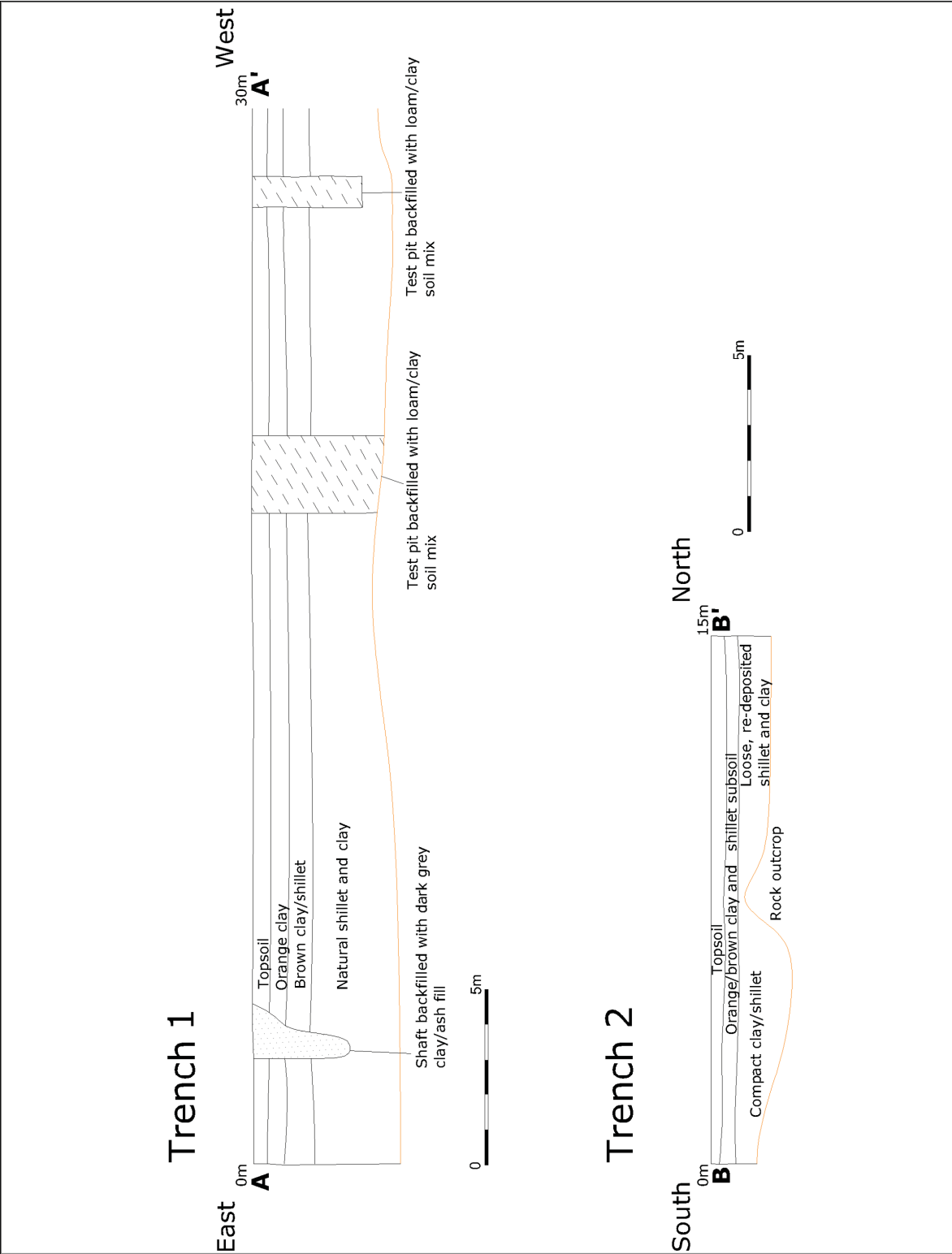


Fig 9: Sections of trenches 1 and 2.

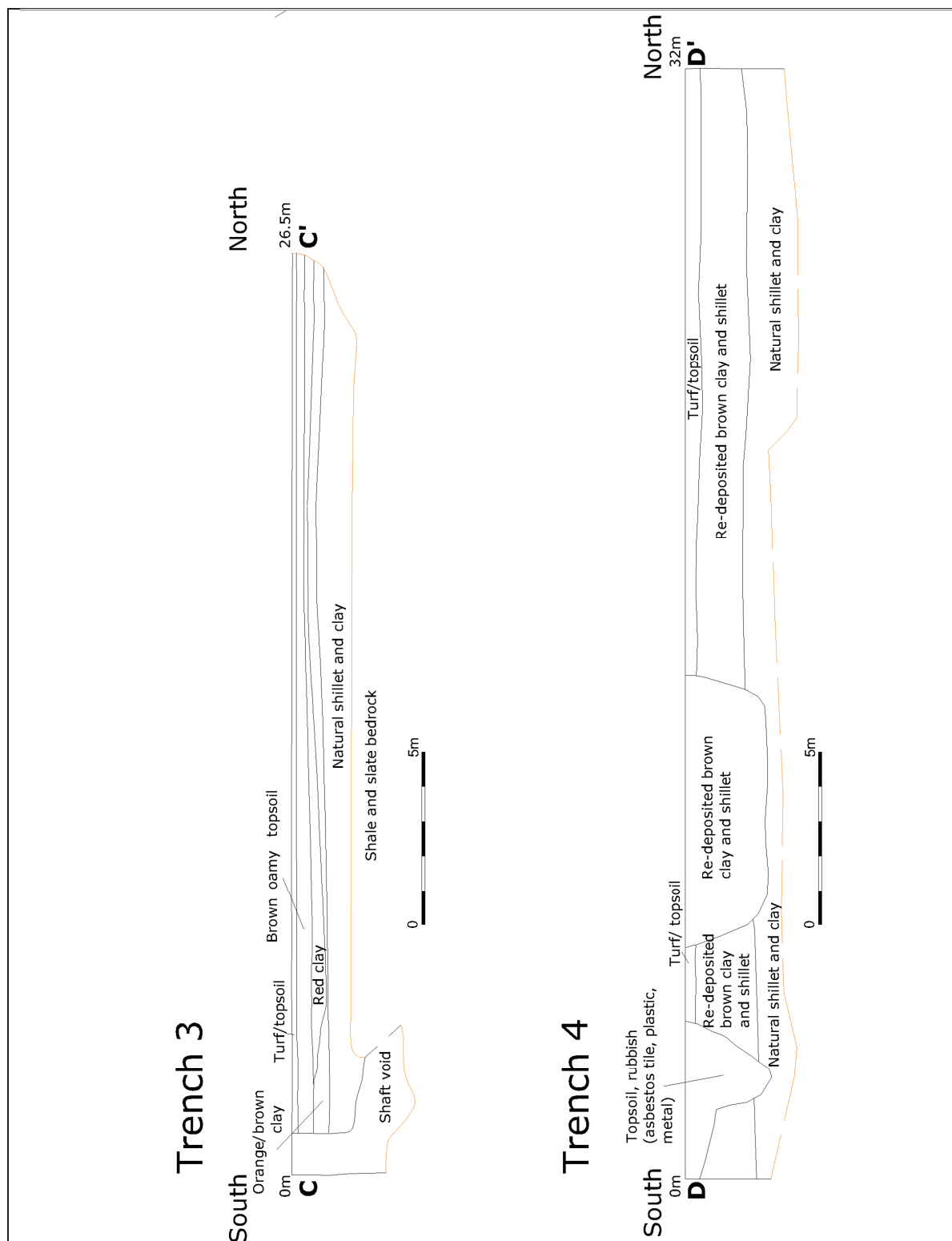


Fig 10: Sections of trenches 3 and 4.