

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF
AT BRETBY HALL PARK,
BRETBY, DERBYSHIRE, 2011**



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OS Grid Reference SK 3002 2261
TPA Project Code: BBD
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SUMMARY

- **Background:** The watching brief was carried out by Trent & Peak Archaeology between 29th June and 7th July 2011 at Bretby Hall Park, Bretby, Derbyshire, during ground works for a new bungalow. The work was commissioned on behalf of the site owner by Montague Architects Ltd. The project was managed by R. Sheppard and the fieldwork carried out by D. Baxter.
- **Location and description:** The area covered by the archaeological watching brief is located immediately north-west of Bretby Hall and to the south of an earthwork platform of unknown date and function (SK 3002 2261). The site cover the footprint of a former bungalow, demolished before the current works began.
- **Historical context:** The current Bretby Hall was built in the early 19th century, replacing a large hall of mainly 17th century date, most of which was demolished between 1771-81.
- **Results:** Topsoil up to 0.22m deep and comprising mid-brown sandy silt loam extended across the site, beneath which there were numerous layers and lenses of re-deposited material, predominantly sandy clays and sandstone, up to 0.9m thick. The underlying red sandy clay natural substrata was encountered at a depth of around 1.0m, the base-line of the trenches. The redeposited material was largely devoid of finds, apart from some brick fragments found in the north-east corner of the site which included a complete brick of likely 17th century date.
- Apart from two modern disturbances, the only features encountered were found set within the lower level of the redeposited material. In seven positions the watching brief revealed a number of what were more likely to have been roughly 'constructed' drains, whose alignments varied and were of short length. None appeared to have been cut from above. Roughly angled pieces were set onto flattish stones which penetrated through the natural clay at the base of the trenches. Several cavities were evident but no build-up of silt appeared to have occurred. How they functioned remains unclear.
- **Conclusion:** The redeposited layers may be associated with the demolition in 1777-81 of the building started by Philip, 1st Lord Stanhope in the early seventeenth century and / or the subsequent re-landscaping of the park grounds. The site appears to have remained largely unaffected until a bungalow was built on it in the 20th century.

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1. Project background

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Trent & Peak Archaeology between 29th June and 7th July 2011, in the grounds of Bretby Hall Park, Bretby, Derbyshire and at a site centred at OS grid reference SK 3002 2261 (Figure 1). The site is within the footprint of a former bungalow that was located immediately north-west of the Hall and to the south of an earthwork platform of unknown date and function (Plate 1). Trent & Peak Archaeology was commissioned by Montague Architects Ltd to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of the foundations for a new replacement bungalow on behalf of Mr J. Gattrell (Plate 2). This was a condition of Planning Application 9/2011/0029/FM and ERE/0211/0044 to South Derbyshire District Council. The project was managed by R. Sheppard and the fieldwork undertaken by D. Baxter. The site archive number is DBYMU 2011-22 and the archive will be deposited at Derby Museum & Art Gallery by June 2012. The TPA site code is BBD.

2. Historical background and site description

Prior to the Norman invasion Bretby was owned by Algar, Earl of Mercia. After 1066 it was held by the King as a berewick of his manor of Newton Solney. By the end of the thirteenth century it had come to the Segrave family and in 1301 John Segrave obtained a licence to crenellate, which implies the existence of a fortified site. Earthworks on the site of Bretby Castle to the north-west of the current hall is the probable location of buildings of this date. Bretby Castle passed to the Berkeleys via the Dukes of Norfolk, and was last lived in by John Mee, the agent of the Berkeley estate in the late sixteenth century.

After this period the site was purchased by the Stanhopes of Shelford, Nottinghamshire, and Philip, 1st Lord Stanhope, obtained Royal consent in 1610 to enclose a park. The house he proceeded to erect within the park was located just to the north-west of where the current hall stands. A chapel was added in 1696, at the east end of the main range. The hall was both of a considerable size - at the time of the 1670 hearth tax it had 68 hearths - and grand, being likened by one authority to a palace. The hall was mostly demolished in 1777-81 and rebuilt as a castellated mansion with a Jacobean-style range in the early 19th century (Craven and Stanley 1991, 43-44).

The site lies on Shepshed Sandstone of the Permian Period (Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 141), at an elevation of around 115m OD.

3. Watching brief

The objectives of the fieldwork were to determine the presence or absence, significance of, depth of and state of preservation of any surviving archaeology within the overall site, in accordance with the strategy agreed by the Derbyshire Control Archaeologist (Steve Baker) in a Written Scheme of Investigation provided by the project manager.

Foundation trenches were excavated by machine with a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision. The trenches were 0.6m wide and 1m deep and were numbered on plan 01-23. The sections were partially hand cleaned where appropriate and representative sections of each photographed, and drawn at 1:20. Archaeological features and deposits were given an individual four digit context number. All artefacts were bagged by context.

Results

Topsoil up to 0.22m deep (0001) and comprising mid-brown sandy silt loam extended across the site, beneath which there were numerous layers and lenses of re-deposited material (0002-0006, 0008a-0017, 0025-0026), predominantly sandy clays and sandstone. These layers were up to 0.9m thick. The underlying red sandy clay natural substrata (0007) was encountered at a depth of around 1.0m, the base-line of the trenches.

The re-deposited material was found to be largely devoid of finds or building materials, apart from an area in the north-east of the site, at the junction of Trenches 01 and 02, where some brick rubble was evident (0005a – Plate 4). A complete brick measuring 2 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches (53mm) thick and 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches (232mm) long, along with several fragments of similar thin brick, were found at a depth of 0.50m within a layer of red brown sandy silt loam (0005).

Two modern disturbances were present in the south part of the site (0022 and 0028), located in Trenches 17 and 16 respectively (Figure 3). Feature 0022 extended at least 0.70m into the trench and was about 3m in and in excess of 1m in depth (Plate 3). It contained modern bricks and mortar in a matrix of reddish brown sandy clay. It cut through a re-deposited layer (0008a) comprising mid reddish brown sandy clay and the natural substrata (0007). Feature 0028 also appeared to be a modern disturbance, possibly a former service trench; this also cut 0008a and 0007. It was 1.0m in depth, 0.80m in width and with vertical sides and a concave base

and contained a reddish brown sandy clay fill with a moderate amount of angular limestone pieces.

Set within the base level of the redeposited layers, generally within a matrix of whitish sandstone, a number of apparent stone features (0018-21, 0023-4, and 0027) were evident in a number of the trenches – see Figure 4 for locations. These were generally found to be 0.6m (2ft) in width and were extending down through or into the underlying natural clay. Towards the west end of the site, Feature 0018 was found, extending west to east across Trench 17 (Figs 4, 6; Plate 5). It exceeded 0.30m in depth and comprised angular to sub-angular pieces of limestone up to 180mm x 140mm, within a matrix of reddish brown sandy clay. It was interpreted as a possible drain, or perhaps a building footing. Just to the south of there was another similar feature in Trench 16, but here on an apparently differing alignment (0020).

To the north-west of 0018, also within Trench 17, there was Feature 0019 (Fig 6; Plate 6). It was a south-west to north-east aligned linear feature that was at least 0.35m in depth and consisted of sub-rounded sandstone pieces measuring up to 400mm x 300mm in size (Figure 4). It appeared to be more like a drain than a wall footing, and was aligned to a similar feature (0021) in Trench 14, to the north-east (Plate 7).

Two other similar features were noted in the east part of the site. One was found in Trench 03 (0023), again appearing to be of similar appearance to a drain, with stones roughly set at angles to one another to form a cavity - see Fig. 5 and Plate 8. In Trench 02 Feature 0027, running roughly east-west, was aligned to 0024 in Trench 8. Such alignments appeared to be relatively of short length, with anticipated extensions not being seen in trenches beyond.

4. Conclusions

The watching brief revealed a number of what were more likely to have been roughly 'constructed' drains than wall footings, although their alignments varied and they were of short length. None appeared to have been cut from above and they appeared to have been set within a lower matrix of probably redeposited stone. Roughly angled pieces were set onto flattish stones which penetrated through the natural clay at the base of the trenches. Several cavities were evident but no build-up of silt appeared to have occurred. How they functioned remains unclear.

The layers both around and above the features were interpreted as mainly redeposited natural clays and sandstone, possibly resulting

from a major landscaping episode. The only possible dating material was found in the north-east corner of the site, within 0005a, where a likely 17th century intact brick was found. This was not an obviously later disturbance but was probably part of the overall build-up of redeposited material across the site.

These layers may be associated with the demolition in 1777-81 of the building started by Philip, 1st Lord Stanhope in the early seventeenth century and / or the subsequent re-landscaping of the park grounds. The site appears to have remained largely unaffected until a bungalow was built on it in the 20th century.

5. Acknowledgements

Fieldwork was undertaken by D. Baxter and the project managed by R. Sheppard. Fieldwork was monitored on behalf of Derbyshire County Council by S. Baker, Development Control Archaeologist at Derbyshire County Council.

6. Reference

Craven, M. and Stanley, M. 1991. *The Derbyshire Country House*. Breedon Books.

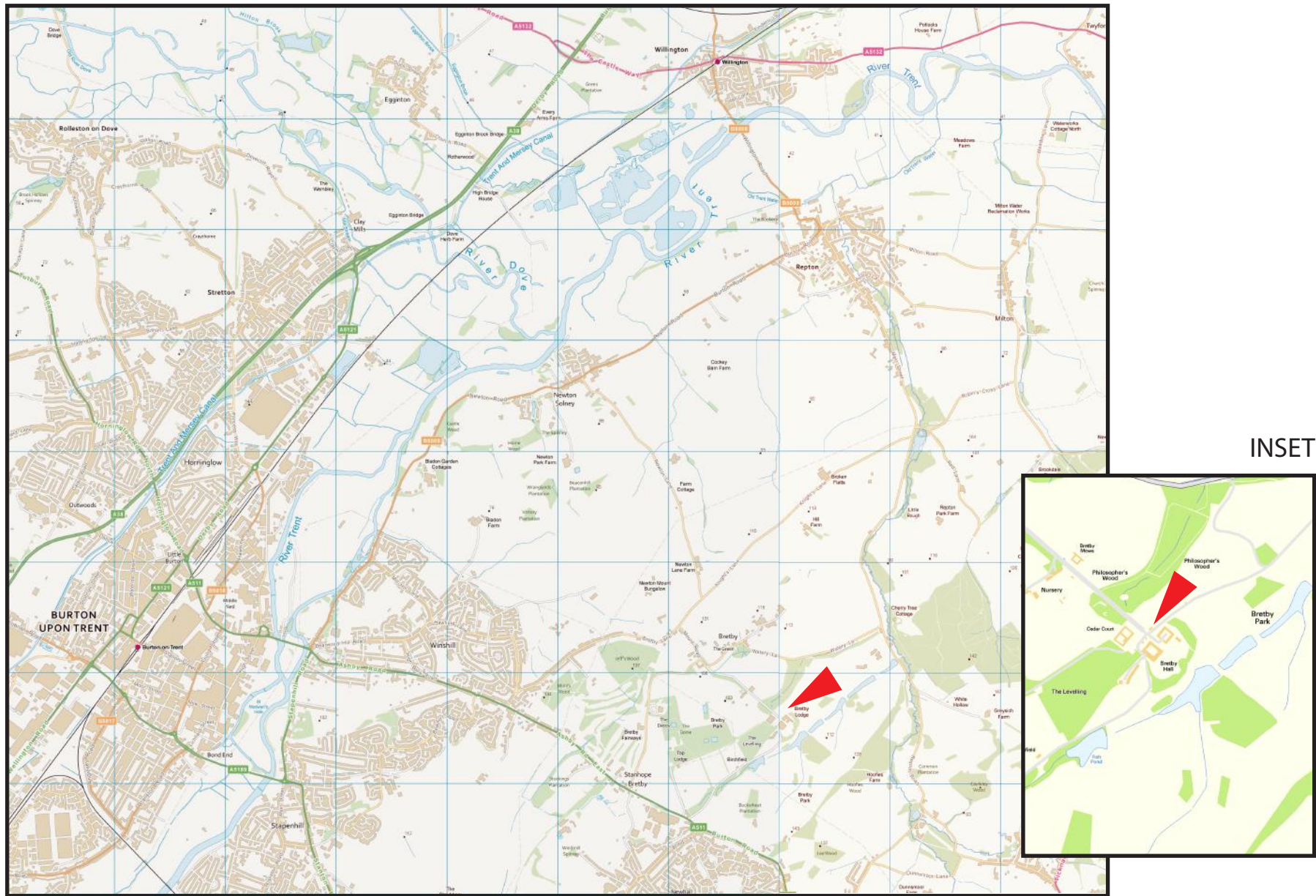
Appendix

List of contexts

- 0001: Topsoil, mid brown sand silt present in Trenches 01-17
- 0002: Re-deposited layer of white grey sand with degraded sandstone in friable lumps present in Trenches 01-02
- 0003: Re-deposited layer of white Grey degraded sandstone with significant voids present in Trenches 01-06
- 0004: Re-deposited layer of white grey mixed clay/ sandstone with blocks 100mm max present in Trench 01
- 0005: Mid brown sandy silt with brick and tile fragments in Trenches 01-03
- 0005a: Similar material in north-east corner of site. Has inclusions of possible 17th century bricks. ?possible feature
- 0006: Re-deposited layer of white/ grey clay with sand inclusions in Trench 01
- 0007: Natural, red sandy clay
- 0008a: Re-deposited layer of red Brown sandy clay in Trench 02 – 06, 08, 09, 11, 14, 16, 17,
- 0008b: Re-deposited layer of white/ grey sandstone, large fragments in Trench 17
- 0009: Re-deposited layer of compacted, white sandy clay, in Trench 03
- 0010: Re-deposited layer of mixed red brown clay present in Trench 04
- 0011: Re-deposited layer of dark brown sand silt containing brick fragments present in Trench 04
- 0012: Re-deposited layer of mid brown sandy silt with brick fragments present in Trench 06
- 0013: Re-deposited layer of mid brown to reddish brown silty clay present in Trench 06
- 0014: Re-deposited layer of compacted reddish brown sandy clay present in Trench 06
- 0015: Re-deposited layer of yellowish grey sandstone present in Trench 06
- 0016: Re-deposited layer of topsoil, roadstone and 20th material present in Trench 09
- 0017: Re-deposited layer of mid brown sandy silt with occasional brick frags present in Trench 09
- 0018: Drain west to east aligned extending across Trench 17. It was 1.05m in width and exceeded 0.30m in depth and comprised angular to sub-angular pieces of limestone up to 180mm x 140mm in a matrix of reddish brown sandy clay
- 0019: Drain, southwest to northeast aligned linear 0.45m in width and exceeding 0.35m in depth and was made of sub-rounded sandstone pieces measuring up to 400mm x 300mm in size in Trench 17

- 0020: Footings/drain, northwest to southeast aligned and was 0.40m in width and exceeded 0.20m in depth and made of angular limestone pieces up to 200mm x 150mm in size in Trench 16
- 0021: Drain, northwest to southeast aligned, extends across whole width of Trench 16, 0.35m wide, exceeds 0.3m depth, sandstone pieces, angular, up to 380mm x 270mm in size
- 0022: Modern pit extended 0.70m into the Trench 17 and was 1.4m in width and in excess of 1m in depth. It contained modern bricks and mortar in a matrix of reddish brown sandy clay
- 0023: Drain. Southwest to northeast aligned feature extending across Trench 03, 0.4m wide and 0.4m deep, sandstone pieces forming the feature up to 400 x 200mm
- 0024: Drain. Linear, southwest to northeast aligned, in both sections of Trench 08, 0.20m wide, exceeds 0.20m depth (unexcavated), sub circular in cross-section, sandstone pieces, angular, up to 150mm x 150mm in size
- 0025: Re-deposited layer. Mid grey brown sandy silt, charcoal present. Trench 05
- 0026: Re-deposited layer. Mid dark brown sandy silt, Trench 12, brick frags throughout
- 0027: Drain. Northwest to southeast aligned linear, extends across whole width of Trench 02, 0.35m wide, exceeds 0.3m depth, sandstone pieces, angular, up to 380mm x 270mm in size
- 0028: Modern pit. U-shaped pit or ditch in Trench 17 (not seen in plan so unable to ascertain precise form, not visible in other sections so presumably doesn't extend much beyond where seen), 1.0m deep, 0.80m wide, vertical sides, concave base, fill reddish brown sandy clay, 10% limestone pieces, angular up to 70mm in size

ILLUSTRATIONS



INSET

Figure 1: Location of Bretby Hall in relation to Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire and Repton in South Derbyshire. Scale 1:50,000. Inset: Site position. Scale 1:20,000. Contains Ordnance Survey data. © Crown Copyright and database right 2012.

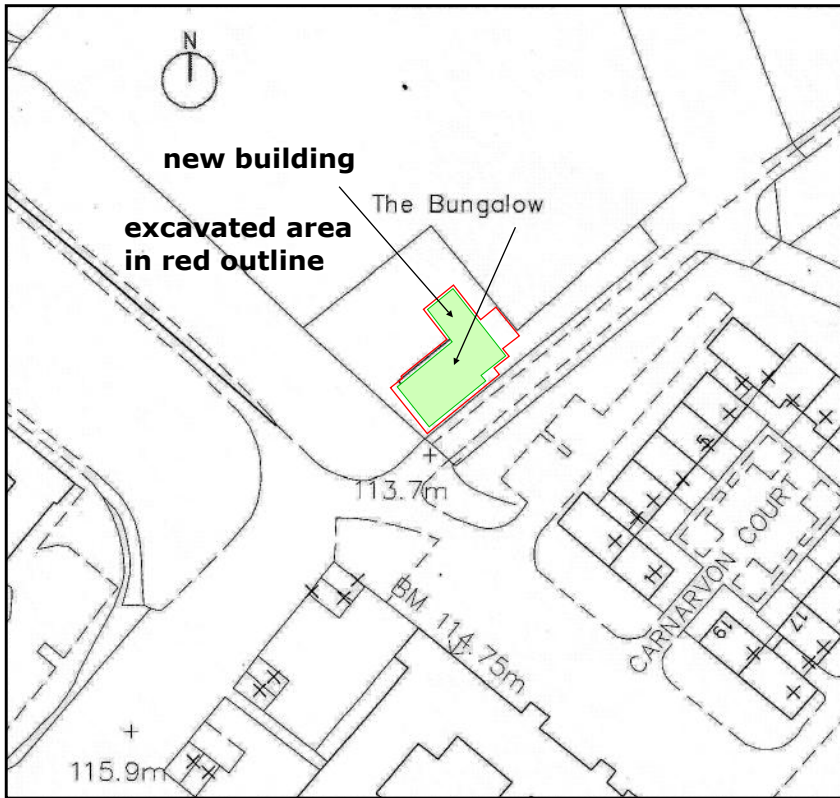


Figure 2: Detailed location plan of the new building at Bretby Hall Park, Derbyshire. Scale 1:1,250.

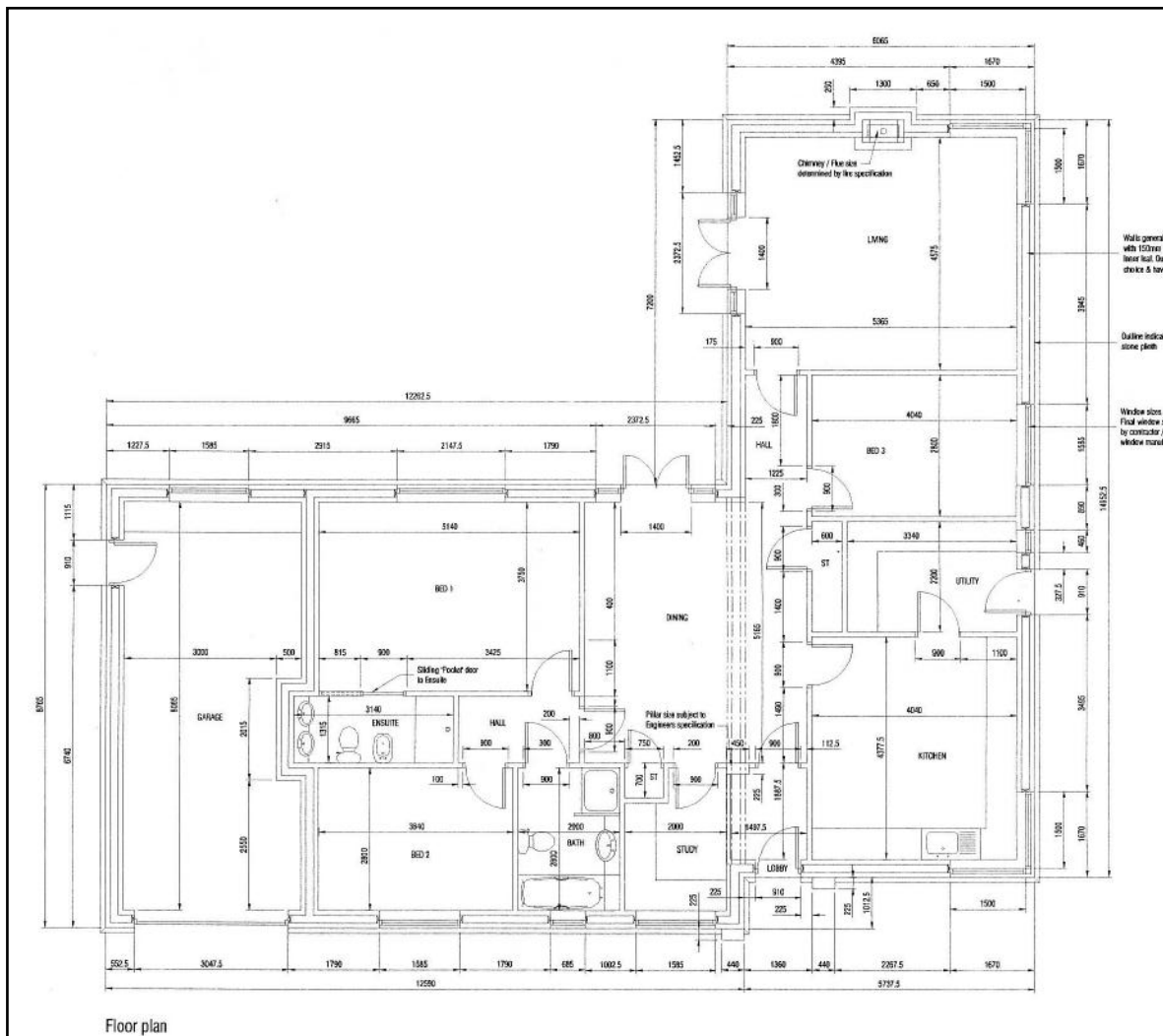
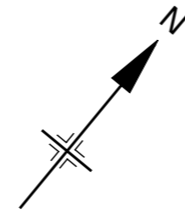
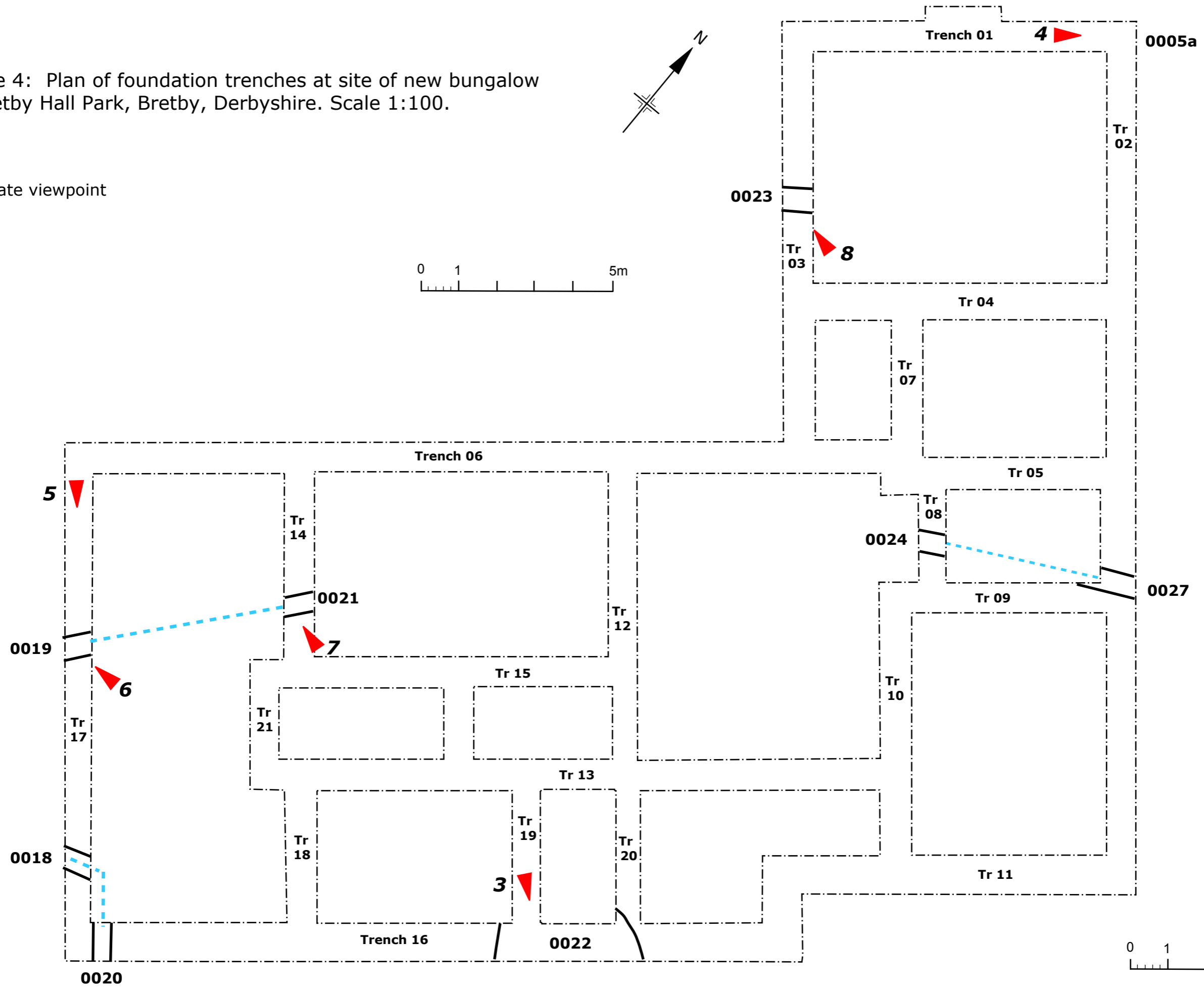
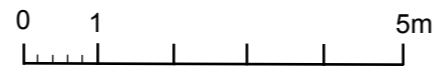


Figure 3: Architect's plan of the new building at Bretby Hall Park, Derbyshire. Not to scale.

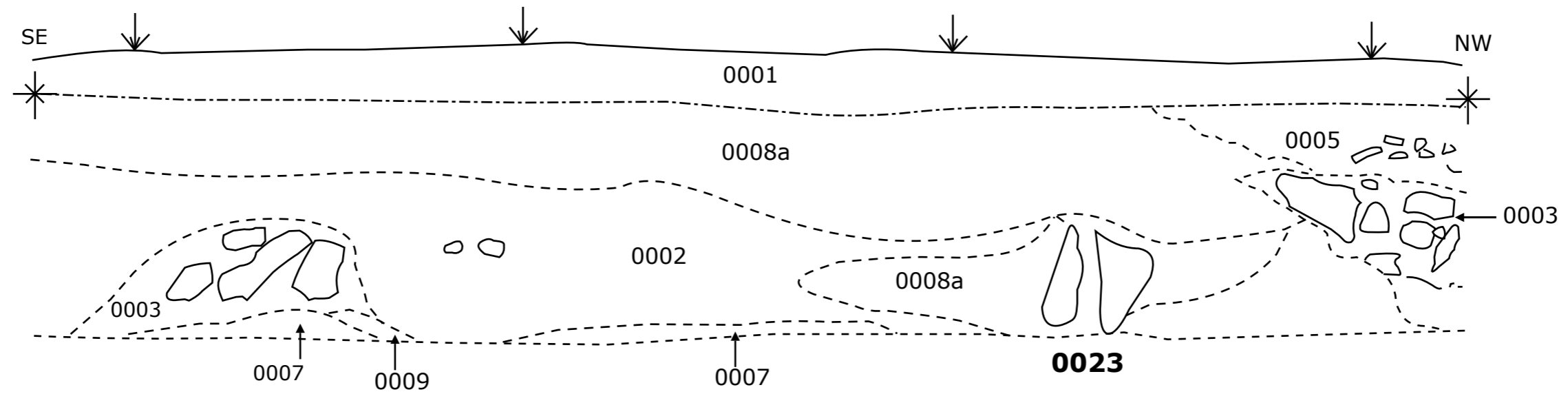
Figure 4: Plan of foundation trenches at site of new bungalow in Bretby Hall Park, Bretby, Derbyshire. Scale 1:100.



▶ plate viewpoint

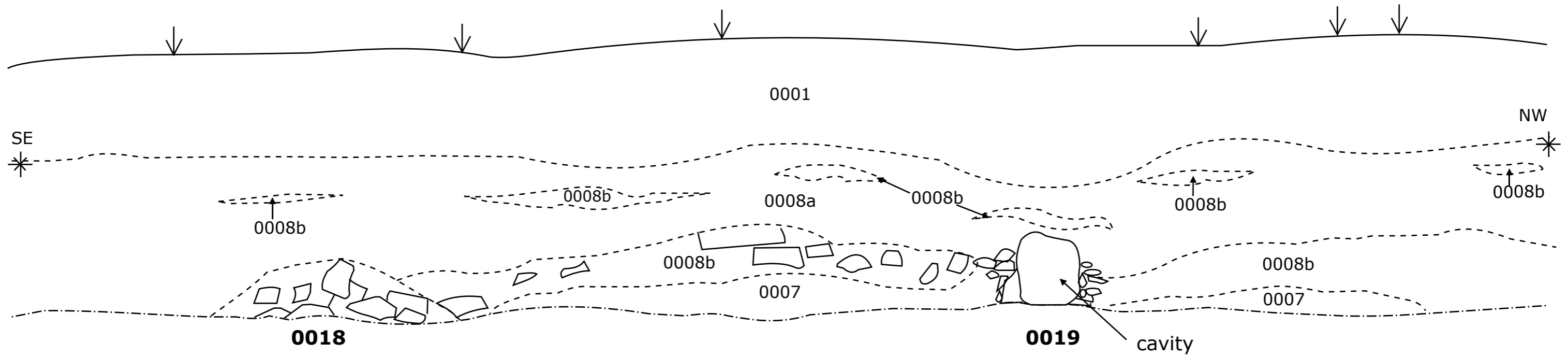


2 ▶



- 0001 - Topsoil, mid brown sandy silt. Behind cut
- 0002 - White grey sand with degraded sandstone in friable lumps
- 0003 - White Grey degraded sandstone with significant voids
- 0005 - Mid brown sandy silt with brick and tile fragments
- 0007 - Compacted natural, red sandy clay
- 0009 - Compacted natural, white sandy clay
- 0023 - Sandstone pieces up to 400 x 200mm forming part of linear drain SW-NE aligned, much disturbed, no cuts visible

Figure 5: Trench 03, north-east facing section
Scale at A3 1:20



0001: Topsoil, mid brown sand silt

0007: Natural, red clay sand

0008a: Red Brown sandy clay

0008b: White/ grey sandstone, large fragments in bedding plane

0018: Irregular sandstone pieces, angular to sub-angular, up to 180mm x 140mm in size, W-E aligned linear visible in plan, sandstone set in a matrix of red brown sandy clay. No visible cut through 0008a visible, cuts natural, 1.05m in width, exceeds 0.3m in depth possibly extends to trench 16, collapsed drain cut 450mm

0019: Stone drain - drain hole, sub rounded 400mm x 300mm, formed of irregular sandstone pieces 300mm x 440mm set in a matrix of red brown sandy clay. Cut is 500mm. No cut through 0008a visible, cuts natural. 0007 SW-NE aligned. Extends into trench 14



Figure 6: Trench 17, north-east facing section
Scale at A3 1:20.



Plate 1: Earthwork platform to the north of the site, viewed looking north



Plate 2: General site appearance after trenching, viewed looking north



Plate 3: Modern feature 0022 in Trench 16, viewed looking south-east



Plate 4: South-west facing section of feature 0005a at the junction of Trenches 01 and 02, viewed looking north-east



Plate 5: View looking south along Trench 17 with features 0019 and 0018 showing in base of trench



Plate 6: Feature 0019 in Trench 17, viewed looking west



Plate 7: Feature 0021 in Trench 14, viewed looking north-west



Plate 8: Feature 0023 in Trench 03, viewed looking north-west