

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION ON THE SITE OF
THE FORMER WHITE HART INN,
HARBY, LEICESTERSHIRE**



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SUMMARY

- Between 29th August and 30th August 2012, Trent & Peak Archaeology, conducted an archaeological evaluation trenching investigation on the site of the former White Hart Inn, Harby, Leicestershire, on behalf of Gilbert & Hall Ltd.
- The village of Harby is situated in north-east Leicestershire, towards the centre of the Vale of Belvoir, with the site centred at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference SK 7436 3104.
- The key objective of the archaeological investigation was to establish through evaluation trenching the presence or absence, significance of, depth of and state of preservation of any surviving archaeology within the overall.
- The study area was formerly occupied by the recently demolished White Hart Inn. Buildings were present on the site during the time of enclosure in 1793, the main building probably being a farmhouse at that time, rather than an inn. The site is within the historic boundary of the medieval village. Its position at a road junction would have been convenient for a farm, if not within the medieval period, possibly not long afterwards. The site is close to a Roman road and numerous objects from this date have been found within the village, though not within the site.
- Evaluation trenching established that most of the underlying deposits over much of the site were removed, or re-worked, in the early 21st century when the White Hart Inn was demolished.
- Fragmentary building remains relating to the White Hart Inn survived in the eastern half of the site beneath modern levelling and demolition deposits. In the western half of the site layers of hardcore and tarmac associated with the inn's drive or carpark, were encountered beneath modern demolition layers.
- No features or finds of demonstrable medieval date or earlier were encountered in either trench. The poor survival of remains relating to the White Hart Inn indicated that the site had been extensively landscaped, with most of building the materials relating to the inn having being removed during its recent demolition.

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M. Hurford

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Acknowledgements

Fieldwork was directed by M. Hurford, with assistance from D. Reyman. The project was managed by R. Sheppard.

1. INTRODUCTION

Between 29th - 30th August 2012 Trent & Peak Archaeology, conducted an archaeological investigation of the site of the former White Hart Inn, Harby, Leicestershire, on behalf of Gilbert & Hall Ltd (Figure 1).

Fieldwork and reporting was conducted in accordance with the provision of an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI): Sheppard, R., 2012. *A Proposed Archaeological Evaluation at the Site of the Former White Hart Inn, Harby, Leicestershire Method Statement*. Trent & Peak Archaeology.

2. SITE BACKGROUND

Topography

Harby lies on sloping land that runs from the Harby Hills 1.2 miles to the south-east of the village, to the bottom of the vale 3 miles to the north-west. The village is largely situated between the 50-55m contours, with the land sloping down to the west of the village.

Geology

The underlying geology is Lodge Farm limestone, within a band of the Scunthorpe Mudstone Formation running north-east along the vale of Belvoir (Inker 2005). The drift geology is lower lias clay known as Rotherby Clay, a red brown laminated clay and silt (British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series, Sheet 142).

Archaeological and Historical Background

From:

Wilson, A. and Sheppard, R., 2010. *An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of the Site of the Former White Hart Inn, Harby, Leicestershire*. Unpublished report by Trent & Peak Archaeology.

Prehistoric activity in the vicinity is attested by a small number of artefacts recovered from the surrounding area, including Iron Age pottery from The Wongs, located to the east of Harby church.

A Roman road passes along King Street Lane, close to the site, which joined the so-called Salt Way, an ancient road believed to have been the main route for the transportation of salt to ports in the Wash during the Bronze Age, Roman and Medieval periods. Artefacts have also been uncovered from the surrounding fields, in such density at The Wongs to suggest settlement activity.

Harby was established prior to the Norman Conquest as the name Harby is of Scandinavian origin, 'heorde' potentially meaning herdsman and 'by' meaning settlement. Furthermore, Anglo-Saxon finds have been found in both the churchyard and at The Wongs.

Earthwork remains attest to medieval land use and a number of buildings within the village potentially date to this period, including the church of St Mary the Virgin and the timber-framed Nag's Head public house, located

on Main Street opposite the site; this is thought to date to the 15th century. The site is located within the historical medieval boundary of the village and its position at a road junction would have been convenient for a farm, if not within the medieval period, possibly not long afterwards.

In the post medieval and modern eras the site was occupied by the White Hart Inn. The building's origins and the date of the outbuildings are unknown although they were mostly present at the time of the 1793 Enclosure map for Harby (Figure 2). It was probably a farmhouse that at some point added the selling of beer to its farming activities. It is first listed as the White Hart Inn in White's County Directory of 1846. Ordnance Survey maps appear to show that the layout of the inn and outbuildings changed little after 1884 (Figure 3).

3. EVALUATION TRENCHING OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The objectives of the fieldwork were in accordance with a WSI produced by R. Sheppard of Trent & Peak Archaeology approved by the Senior Planning Archaeologist at the Historic and Natural Environment Team, Leicestershire County Council.

Trench Locations (Figure 4)

Two evaluation trenches were excavated, the first being located in the east part of the site and positioned over the footprint of the former White Hart Inn. The second trench was located over a number of former outbuildings in the east. Both trenches were 20m in length and 1.6m in width, resulting in 5% of the site being sampled.

Methodology

Surviving topsoil and modern levelling material was removed using a machine with a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision. Trenches were excavated to a level at which archaeological features or deposits were encountered or, if not present, to the top of the natural stratigraphy.

All archaeological deposits were hand cleaned where appropriate and representative sections photographed and drawn at a scale at 1:20. Plans were also drawn at 1:50. Archaeological features and natural deposits were given an individual four figure context number e.g. 0001. All recovered artefacts were bagged by context. Weather conditions were generally very wet at the time of the excavation (see Plates).

3. RESULTS

Trench 01 Figures 4-6, Plates 1-7

Trench 01 measured 20m x 1.6m and was located in the eastern half of the site. It was positioned on a north-west to south-east alignment over the former White Hart Inn, with the aim of investigating remains of the demolished building and establishing if any earlier building phases or archaeological deposits survived.

In the south-east part of the trench, beneath between 0.3m and 0.5m of modern demolition debris 0001 and 0002, the fragmentary remains of a north-west to south-east orientated ironstone wall (0005 – Plate 5; 0006) were encountered. It comprised a single course of sandstone blocks up to 0.6m in width, cut into the natural clay 0003. Adjacent to the footings a small number of flagstones (0007), possibly flooring, were uncovered. To the west of 0006 and 0007 a well (0008; Plate 7) was revealed. It had been capped with stone and was constructed of nineteenth century bricks measuring 8⁷/₈ inches (225mm) x 4 inches (102mm) x 2³/₄ inches (69mm). The bricks were bonded with pale yellowish brown sandy mortar. The well extended beneath the south-west baulk but it was possible to establish that it was c. 1.00m in diameter and exceeded 1.5m in depth.

Cutting the ironstone wall 0006 was feature 0004. It was over 0.7m in depth and was probably the remnants of the cellar, all the bricks having been removed during demolition, and the resulting hole backfilled with building debris containing modern pottery. Located in the centre of the trench and cutting the natural clay 0003 was a square brick-built plinth (0009; Plate 8). It was of two courses and measured 0.75m x 0.60m and constructed of modern bricks measuring 8⁷/₈ inches (225mm) x 4³/₈ inches (110mm) x 2³/₄ inches (71mm). To the north-west of 0009 the demolition debris 0001 extended to a depth of just under a metre before natural olive brown clay mottled with yellowish brown and bluish grey clay 0003 was encountered. The small numbers of finds recovered from the trench were of Victorian to modern date.

Trench 02 Figures 4 and 7, Plates 9, 10

Trench 02 measured 20m x 1.6m and was located in the western half of the site on a north-east to south-west alignment. It too was positioned over buildings relating to the White Hart Inn, with the aim of investigating any surviving structural elements of the outbuildings, or earlier archaeological deposits.

In the north eastern half of the trench removal of the black silty loam topsoil 0101 revealed a layer of tarmac (0102) and a layer of orange brown sandstone hardcore in a matrix of orange brown sandy clay (0105). Beneath 0102 was a further layer of hardcore (0103), comprising angular to sub-angular stones up to 100mm in size, within a pinkish red sandy matrix. The hardcore and tarmac layers are likely to indicate the location of the drive or car park of the former public house. Natural olive brown clay mottled with yellowish brown and bluish grey clay was encountered

at a depth of between 0.16m and 0.42m beneath the modern topsoil, tarmac and hardcore layers.

To the south-west of the hardcore and tarmac layers demolition deposit 0108 extended to a depth of up to 0.70m beneath which natural clay 0106 was exposed. As in Trench 01, only a small number of finds were recovered, ranging from Victorian to modern in date.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The trenches produced no features or finds of demonstrable medieval or earlier date. The lack of archaeology, in particular the poor survival of remains relating to the former White Hart Inn, suggest that the site had been extensively landscaped, with most building materials relating to the inn having been removed during its recent demolition. The surprisingly few finds recovered from the site were also of a late date, further suggesting that any earlier phases that may have been present on the site have been removed.

5. REFERENCES

Inker, P., 2005. *Harby Flood Alleviation Scheme: an archaeological watching brief undertaken between February and March 2005*. Unpublished report by Trent & Peak Archaeology

Wilson, A. and Sheppard, R., 2010. *An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of the Site of the Former White Hart Inn, Harby, Leicestershire*. Unpublished report by Trent and Peak Archaeology

ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURES

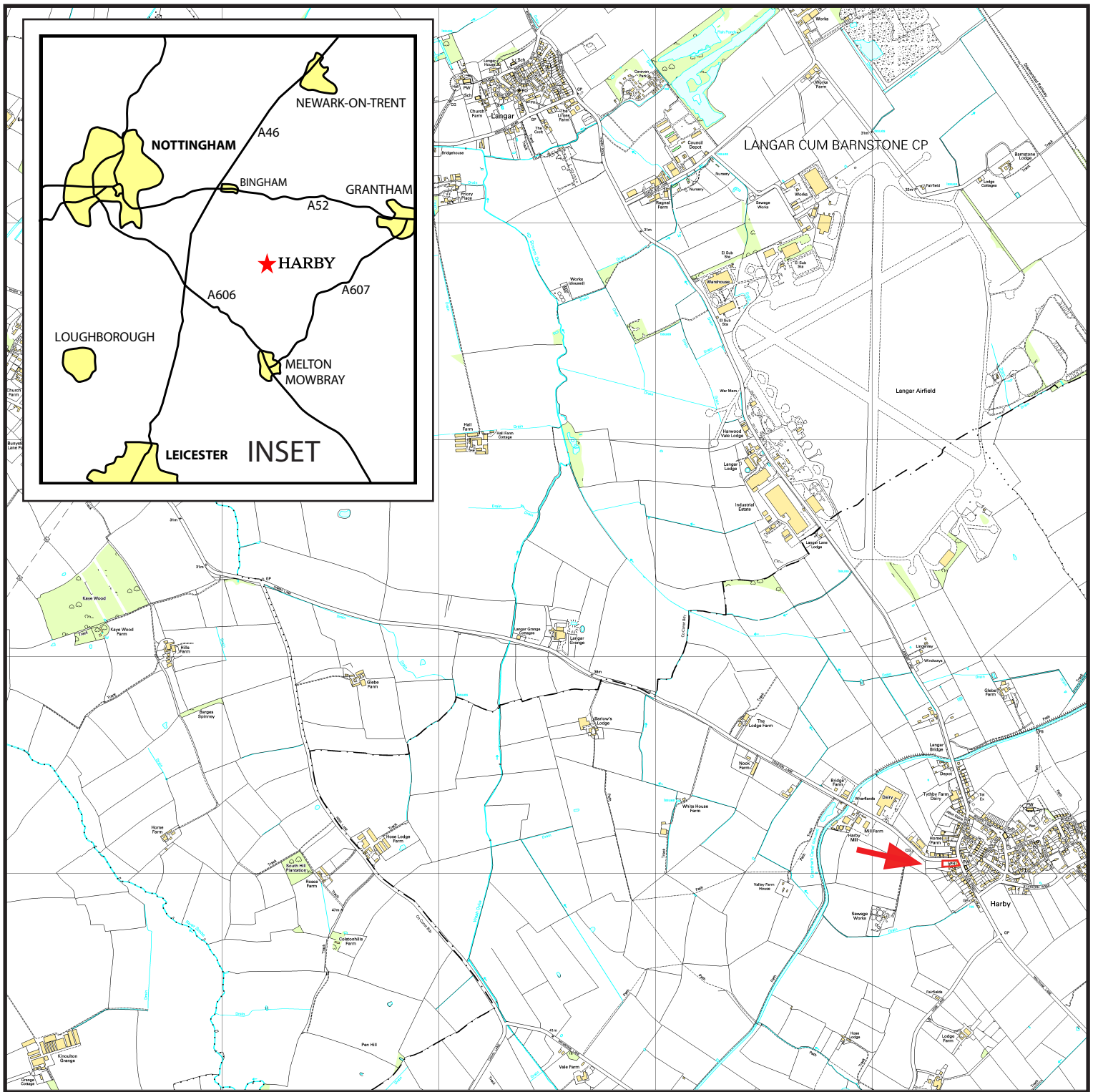


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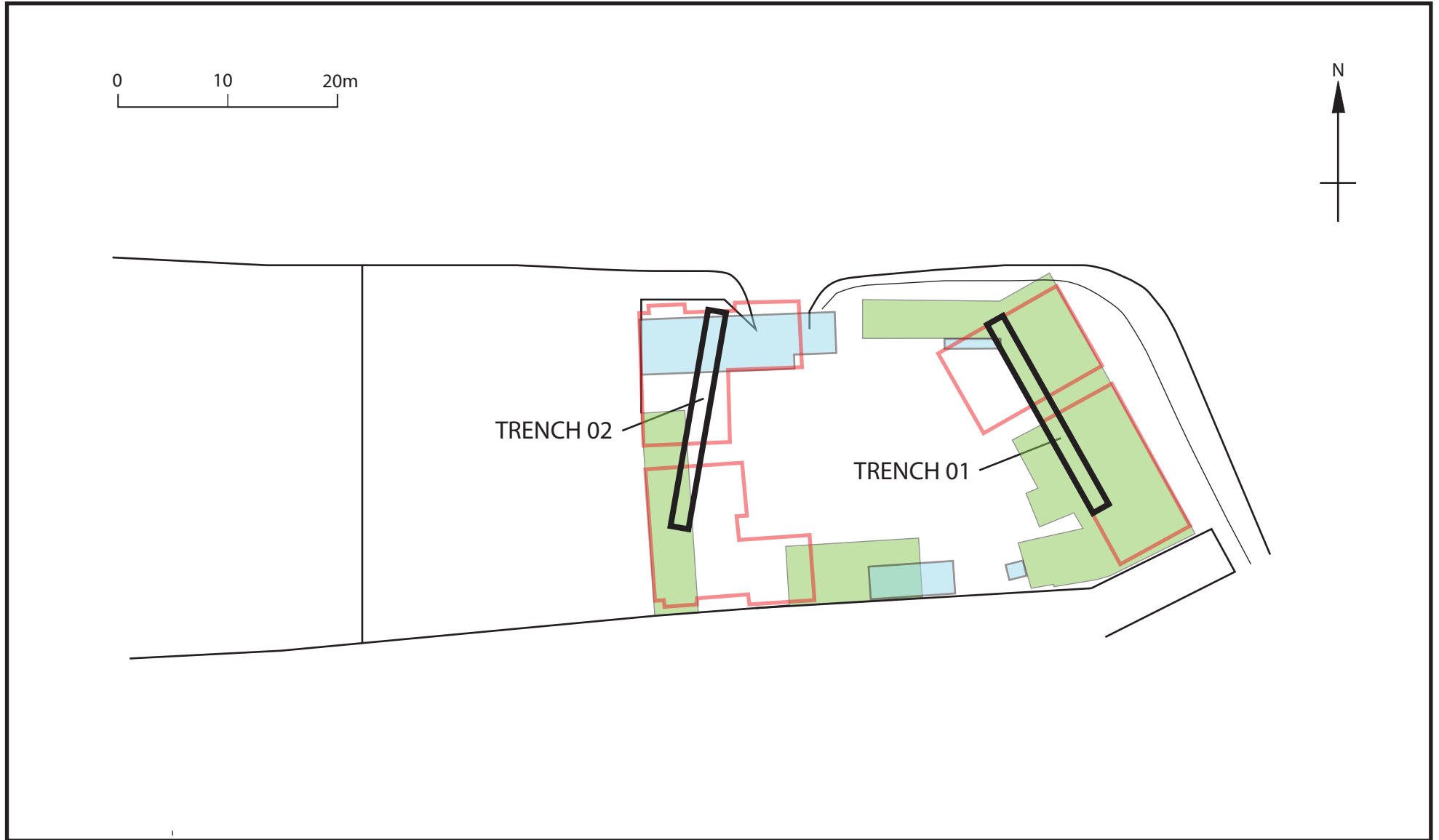


Figure 4: Plan of former White Hart Public House, Harby, Leicestershire with trench positions shown. Former buildings shown in green and blue (latter the later ones) and proposed new housing shown in red outline. Scale 1:500.

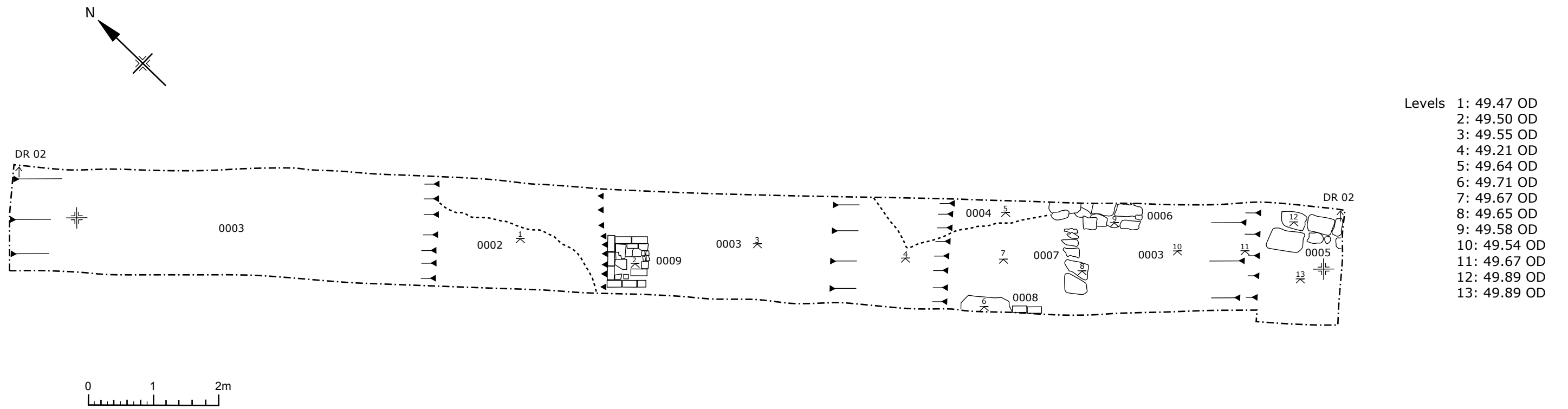


Figure 5: Plan of Trench 01. Scale 1:50 x 80% @ A3

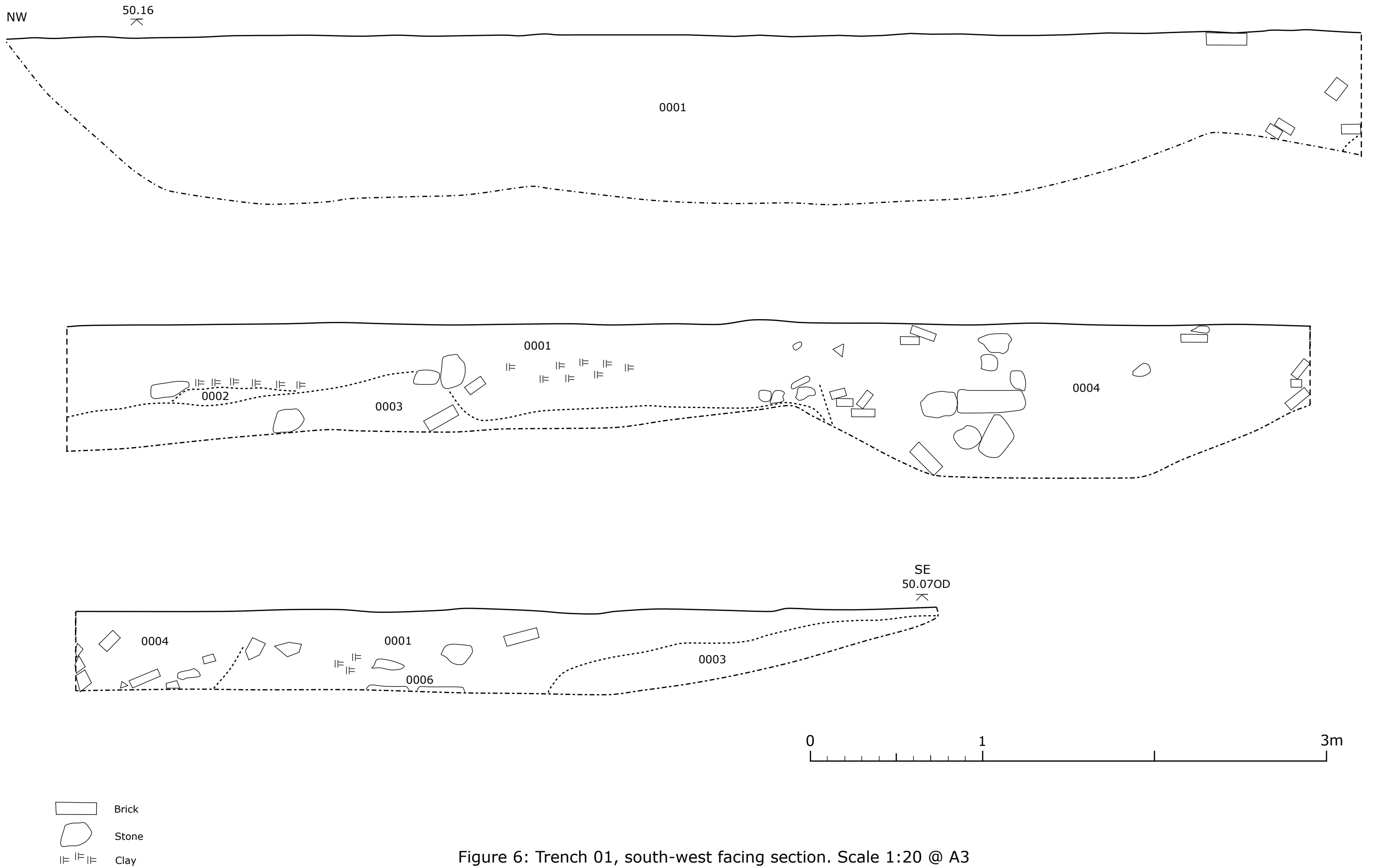


Figure 6: Trench 01, south-west facing section. Scale 1:20 @ A3

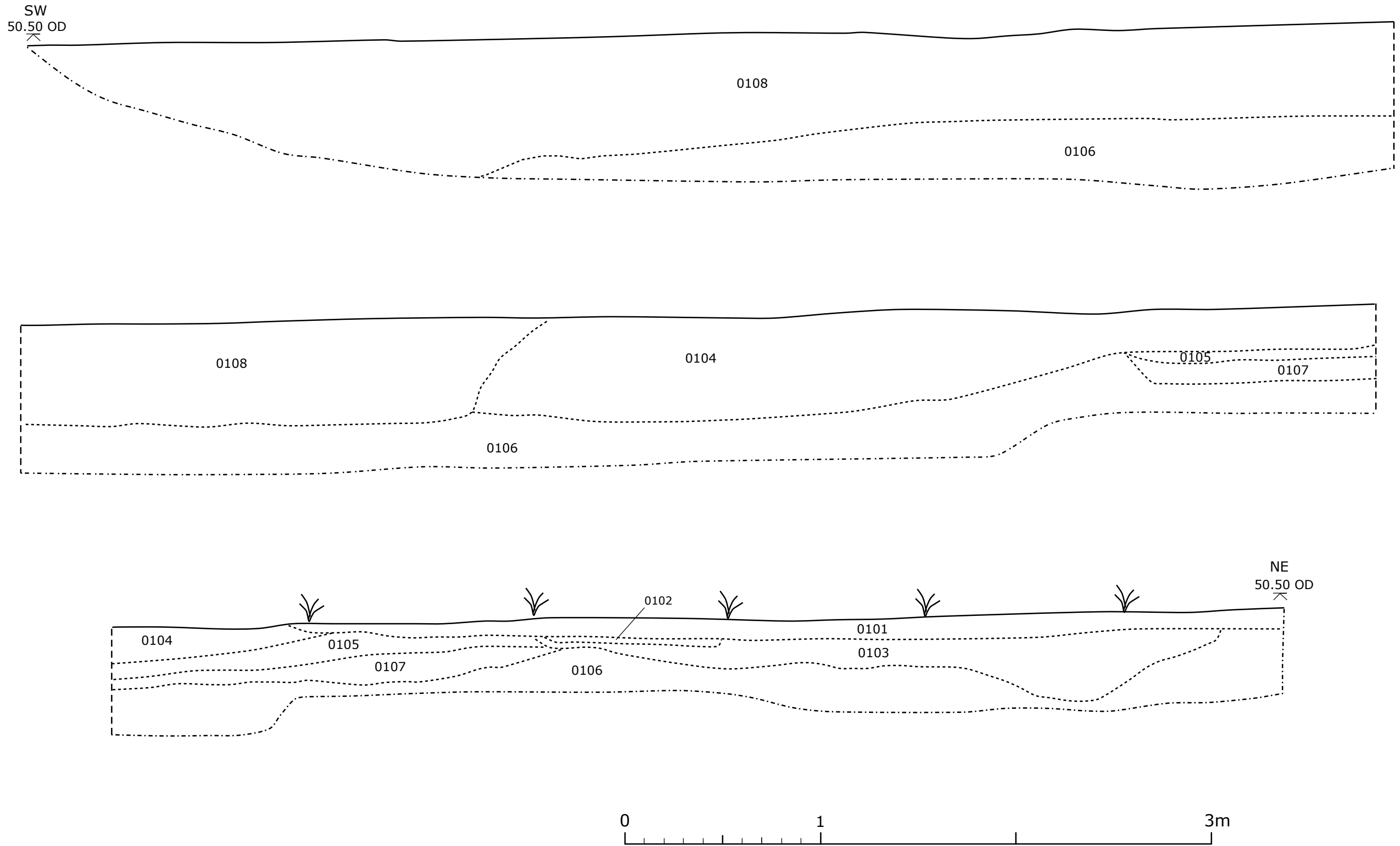


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ILLUSTRATIONS

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Plate 2: Trench 01, general view looking north-west



Plate 3: Trench 01 , general view of the south-west facing section looking north-east



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Plate 5: Trench 01 , context 0005 looking north-west



Plate 6: Trench 01 , contexts 0004 to 0007 looking south-east



Plate 7: Trench 01, context 0008 looking south-west



Plate 8: Trench 01, context 0009 looking south-east



Plate 9: Trench 02, general view looking south-west



Plate 10: Trench 02, south-east facing section looking south-west



Plate 11: Finds from Trench 01 (tile and white pottery) and from Trench 02 (willow pattern)