

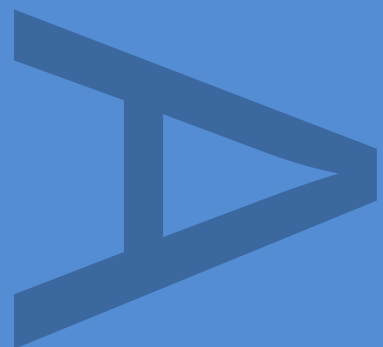
**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EVALUATION AT NO. 14 PIT HILL,  
SMEETON WESTERBY,  
LEICESTERSHIRE LE8 0QR**

**EVALUATION REPORT**

**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:  
HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**PCA REPORT NO: R11633**

**FEBRUARY 2014**



**PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY**

**Archaeological Evaluation of land at No. 14 Pit Hill, Smeeton Westerby,  
Leicestershire LE8 0QR**

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**Local Planning Authority:** **Harborough District Council**

**Central National Grid Reference:** **SP 67665 92611**  
**Site Code:** **PHSW13**  
**Report No.** **R11633**  
**Museum Accession No.** **X.A199.2013**

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**February 2014**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This report details the working methods and results of an archaeological evaluation on land at 14 Pit Hill, Smeeton Westerby, Leicestershire, by Pre-Construct Archaeology. The work was commissioned by the Graham Harris Partnership Ltd and as a consequence of a condition attached to planning permission 13/01445/FUL. The fieldwork, undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology on the 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> January 2014, comprised the machine excavation of three trial trenches, measuring 1.6m wide and 5m long. Although there was thought to be a high potential for surviving medieval archaeological remains, the trenching uncovered two ditches and three later post-medieval pits. No evidence pre-dating the later post-medieval/modern period was recognised on site.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd was appointed by Richard Harris of Graham Harris Partnership Ltd to undertake a trial trench archaeological evaluation, carried as a consequence of a planning condition attached to planning permission 13/01445/FUL.
  
- 1.2 The proposed development site is located within the village of Smeeton Westerby. The site lies within the gardens of No.14 Pit Hill (Figure 1) a modern post-war detached house situated to the south and west of the main focus of the village along the Main street, south of Saddington Road and c. 130m south-west of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century parish church of Christ Church. The site is situated directly opposite the Pit Hill allotments, south of Saddington Road and to the east of Westbury Lane. The site is flanked by residential buildings to the north and south. To the west are the rear gardens to properties fronting Westbury Lane and to the east Pit Hill and the allotment gardens. The site is centred on NGR SP 67665 92611.
  
- 1.3 This archaeological evaluation was conducted following discussions with the Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council, Teresa Hawtin. The appropriate archaeological intervention to assess the potential impacts of the proposed development was deemed to be a trial trench archaeological evaluation (letter dated 11/11/2012).
  
- 1.4 The solid geology of the site is characterised by the bedrock of Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone Formation that was formed in the Jurassic and Triassic periods. The Superficial geology is characterised by Mid Pleistocene Till, consisting of Sand and Gravel deposits. (British Geological Survey [www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)).

- 1.5 The site is located within a relatively flat formal garden that gently slopes east towards Pit Hill Road. A spot height on the driveway of 14 Pit Hill is recorded at 111m AOD.
  
- 1.6 Three linear trenches of c.5m x 1.6m were machine excavated within the areas that will be impacted by the proposed development (See Figs. 2 & 3). The trial trenches were excavated to the depth of the underlying natural subsoil and the level of the archaeological horizon. Archaeological features, totalling two later post-medieval ditches, three later post medieval pits and a modern post hole, were encountered in all three trenches.

## **2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the application site lies within an area of significant archaeological potential.
  
- 2.2 Smeeton Westerby is an historic settlement (HER Ref: MLE9333) which historically was originally two separate villages, Smeeton and Westerby. References to Smeeton; 'Smitone; or 'Smithstun', old English names existed since well before the ninth century and Westerby, once known by its Old Norse name of Vesterbyr, the 'West Farm', is thought to have been founded by Viking settlers after the Viking Army disbanded in 877. The boundary between the two is believed to be marked by the two white stones next to Westerby House.
  
- 2.3 The Pit Hill allotments, immediately east of the site, were originally the site of a number of mud-thatched cottages which stood until around 1861 and, at that time, were occupied by seven families, living in the 'Pitts'. The cottages were demolished prior to the start of sand extraction which commenced around 1886. Test pits, undertaken as part of the BBC's Kibworth Dig at Pit Hill Allotments, identified large quantities of Post Medieval pottery (MEL19985 & 19986). Post-

medieval pottery was also identified at No. 6 Pit Hill (MLE 19981) and Nos. 24 -26 Pit Hill (MLE 19980), both within c.20m of the site.

- 2.4 To the north of the site is Smeeton Terrace, built in 1730 as the workhouse for the three villages of Harcourt, Beauchamp, and Smeeton.
- 2.5 To the west of the development site and within 100m are the earthwork remains of medieval settlement. The BBC's Kibworth Dig test pits identified large quantities of 12<sup>th</sup> century pottery (MEL 19982), c.200m to the northeast of the site at No.18 Saddington Road while a small number of medieval pottery sherds were also discovered at Pit Hill allotments (MEL 19993) and Nos. 24-26 Pit Hill (MEL 19979).

### **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 The evaluation was undertaken on the 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> January 2014.
- 3.2 All aspects of the evaluation work were conducted in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and the Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (2008), as well as the Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003). Field techniques and guidance are detailed within the PCA fieldwork induction manual (Taylor and Brown 2009).
- 3.3 For full details of the methodologies employed during the project reference should be made to Written Scheme of Investigation (Brook, K 2013) approved by Teresa Hawtin prior to the commencement of works
- 3.4 Three trenches (1-3) measuring 5m in length and 1.6m in width were excavated within the proposed development area. They were laid out according to the approved trench location plan illustrated in Figure 2 of the WSI. The excavation of the trenches was undertaken using a mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless bucket and in the presence and under the supervision of a professional archaeologist. Modern surfaces and underlying modern deposits were removed in spits to a depth where the first archaeological horizon or features could be observed and recorded.

- 3.5 The exposed sections and surfaces were cleaned by hand to define the archaeological features, structures and deposits on site. These were described on pro-forma recording sheets and sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20 showing the sequence of deposits and features in each trench. Later post-medieval/modern finds, mainly consisting of plant pot, transfer printed china and glass were context recorded, bagged and processed. The trenches and the excavated spoil were scanned with a metal detector during and after machining and a photographic record of the trial trenches, and general site and working shots, was maintained.



## **4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE**

- 4.1 The earliest deposits encountered during the evaluation were the clayey glacial till (context 103). These deposits predate the human occupation of the site or human modification of the surrounding landscape and are referred to in this report as being of 'natural' origin. This deposit of firm dark yellowish-grey clay with occasional stones was recorded in all the trenches 1-3. This deposit represents the top of the superficial deposits as described by the British Geological Survey for the area: Glacial till.
- 4.2 **Trench 1:** This trench aligned east-west and located parallel with and alongside the northern gable wall of No. 14 Pit Hill. It measured 4,7m in length and was excavated to a depth of 0.5m (max). The oversite comprised topsoil (101) measuring 0.2m thick, overlying a subsoil (102) measuring 0.3m thick. The natural, was encountered directly below subsoil (102). This revealed a small posthole cutting the natural clay, which, when excavated, was shown to be modern in date.
- 4.3 **Trench 2:** This trench was aligned on a north-south orientation and immediately west of the rear elevation of the house. It measured 5m in length and was excavated to a depth of 0.61m (max) deep. Topsoil (101) was 0.35m (max) thick, and the subsoil (102) which it overlay, was 0.26m thick. The natural or the archaeological horizon was directly encountered below subsoil. This trench revealed a number of cut features, including a ditch, [110] and three small pits [105], [108] and [109].
- 4.4 The ditch or gully [110] was aligned east-west, extending 0.6m into trench 2 from the western baulk and terminating, approximately centrally within the trench with a butt end. Excavation revealed that it was a shallow feature, measuring 0.04m in depth with irregular edges. It contained a single fill (111) of light brown firm slightly silty clay, which produced no diagnostic finds. Three small pits, contexts [105, [108] &

[109] were located to the north of gully [110]. Pits [105] and [109] were intercutting, pit cut [105] truncating the fill of [109] along its eastern edge. Excavation revealed that pit [105] was a small (0.42m dia) steep sided but shallow (0.05m max) circular pit which contained a single fill (104), a pale brown sandy clay soil containing many small brick fragments, plant pot, china and charcoal. Pit [109] to the west measured 0.73m in diameter but extended beyond the western baulk of the trench. It contained a single context (106) with very similar soil characteristics and finds as that found in [105]. Though [105] appeared to cut [109] at the surface, similarities in their back-fill suggest they were disused at a contemporary point. Another sub-circular pit [108] was located at the northern end of the trench. It was the larger of the three pits measuring 1.10m in diameter. This contained a firm greyish brown sandy clay fill (107) with many of the same soil and finds characteristics (fragmented brick, pot and degraded lime) found in the two pits to the south.

- 4.5 **Trench 3:** This trench was aligned east-west and located along and parallel with the southern gable wall of No. 14. It measured 5.4m in length and was excavated slightly deeper to 0.8m (max) deep. Topsoil (101) was recorded as 0.35m thick and the subsoil (102) was slightly thicker to the south of the house at 0.45m thick. A single ditch [112] aligned north-south and crossing the trench approximately centrally was found. It measured 0.49m in width and survived to a depth of just 0.02m. It contained a single yellow brown sandy clay fill which produced fragments of post-medieval/modern brick and charcoal. The ditch was cut on its eastern side by a modern service trench.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 A number of archaeological features, dating from the later post-medieval/modern period were identified in within trenches 2 and 3. These comprised two undated and unrelated linear features, gully [110] & ditch [112] and a series of, at earliest, later post medieval pits, grouped within an area to the rear of the present house. All of the features were distinctly shallow in depth suggesting either truncation or that they were cut from a higher level. The presence of a constant deposit of subsoil may discount truncation and argue that these features were cut through the subsoil, and only seen when contrasting against the natural.
- 5.2 The research aims were, 'To confirm the presence or absence of any prehistoric to Saxon remains that may be associated with the earlier settlement in the Smeeton Westerby area and to confirm the presence or absence of medieval and post-medieval activity relating to the wider settlement. Whilst the site was thought to have a high potential for saxon and medieval activity, lying close to medieval settlement features recorded to the west of the site, the archaeological evaluation uncovered no evidence, either as features, deposits or artefacts, from those periods, suggesting this area may lay outside or was on cusp of the medieval settlement. Post-medieval activity was present on site, unsurprising given the proximity and level of post-medieval finds recovered during the Kibworth Dig at the Pit Hill Allotments. However this activity mainly took the form of later post medieval/modern pitting toward the rear of the plot and as undated boundary features.

## **6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

PCA would like to thank Richard Harris of Graham Harris Partnership Ltd for commissioning this evaluation. Thanks to Jennifer Simonson for preparing the figures and to Teresa Hawtin, archaeological advisor to Harborough District Council, who monitored the fieldwork.

## **7 REFERENCES**

**Gurney, D.** 2003 Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper No. 14, ALGAO, Gressenhall

**Brook, K.** 2013 Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation at 14 Pit Hill, Smeeton Westerby, Leicestershire. Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd, Cambridge

**Institute for Archaeologists** 2008 Code of Conduct and Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations

**Taylor, G. and Brown, J.** 2009 Fieldwork Induction Manual. Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd.

## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT REGISTER

Context No.	Cut	Type	Description	Trench	Description
101		Layer	Topsoil	1-3	/
102		Layer	Subsoil	1-3	/
103		Layer	Natural	1-3	/
104	105	Fill	Fill of pit 105	2	Grey/brown silt/clay- charcoal, brick frags, pot and china
105		Cut	Cut of pit	2	Small circular and shallow pit
106	109	Fill	Fill of pit [109]	2	Pale brown sandy/clay- charcoal, brick frags, pot and china
107	108	Fill	Fill of pit [108]	2	Grey brown sandy/clay- charcoal, brick frags, abraded lime, pot and china
108		Cut	Cut of pit	2	Contains 107
109		Cut I	Cut of pit	2	Contains 106
110		Cut	Cut of gulley	2	Shallow E-W aligned gulley, butt ends to east
111	110	Fill	Fill of gulley	2	Light grey silty clay, No finds
112		Cut	Cut of ditch	3	N-S aligned ditch
113	112	Fill	Fill of ditch	3	Yellow brown sandy/clay – brick frags

## APPENDIX 2: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: [preconst1-171522](#)

### Project details

Project name	Archaeological Evaluation of land at No. 14 Pit Hill, Smeeton Westerby, Leicestershire
Short description of the project	The archaeological work was commissioned by the Graham Harris Partnership Ltd and as a consequence of a condition attached to planning permission 13/01445/FUL. The fieldwork, undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology on the 23rd-24th January 2014, comprised the machine excavation of three trial trenches, measuring 1.6m wide and 5m long. Although there was thought to be a high potential for surviving medieval archaeological remains, the trenching uncovered two ditches and three later post-medieval pits. No evidence pre-dating the later post-medieval/modern period was recognised on site.
Project dates	Start: 23-01-2014 End: 24-01-2014
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	13/01445/FUL - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	DITCH Post Medieval
Monument type	DITCH Modern
Monument type	PIT Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	"Targeted Trenches"
Development type	Small-scale extensions (e.g. garages, porches, etc.)
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	LEICESTERSHIRE HARBOROUGH SMEETON WESTERBY No. 14 Pit Hill, Smeeton Westerby, liecestershire
Postcode	LE8 0QR
Site coordinates	SP 67665 92611 52.5267993538 -1.00249674463 52 31 36 N 001 00 08 W Point

### Project creators

Name of	Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
---------	-----------------------------------

Organisation	
Project brief originator	Leicestershire County Archaeology Office
Project design originator	Kathryn Brook
Project director/manager	Kevin Trott
Project supervisor	Jan Janulewicz
Type of sponsor/funding body	Private Client

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#### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Leicestershire Museums Service
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Survey", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Leicestershire Museums Service
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Microfilm"

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#### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological Evaluation of land at No. 14 Pit Hill, Smeeton Westerby, Leicestershire LE8 0QR
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Janulewicz, J.
Date	2014
Issuer or publisher	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Place of issue or publication	Cambridge
Description	typescript grey lit report

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Entered by	Adam Garwood (agarwood@pre-construct.com)
Entered on	13 February 2014

## APPENDIX 3 PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATES



Plate 1 Trench 1, Post Excavation, looking east

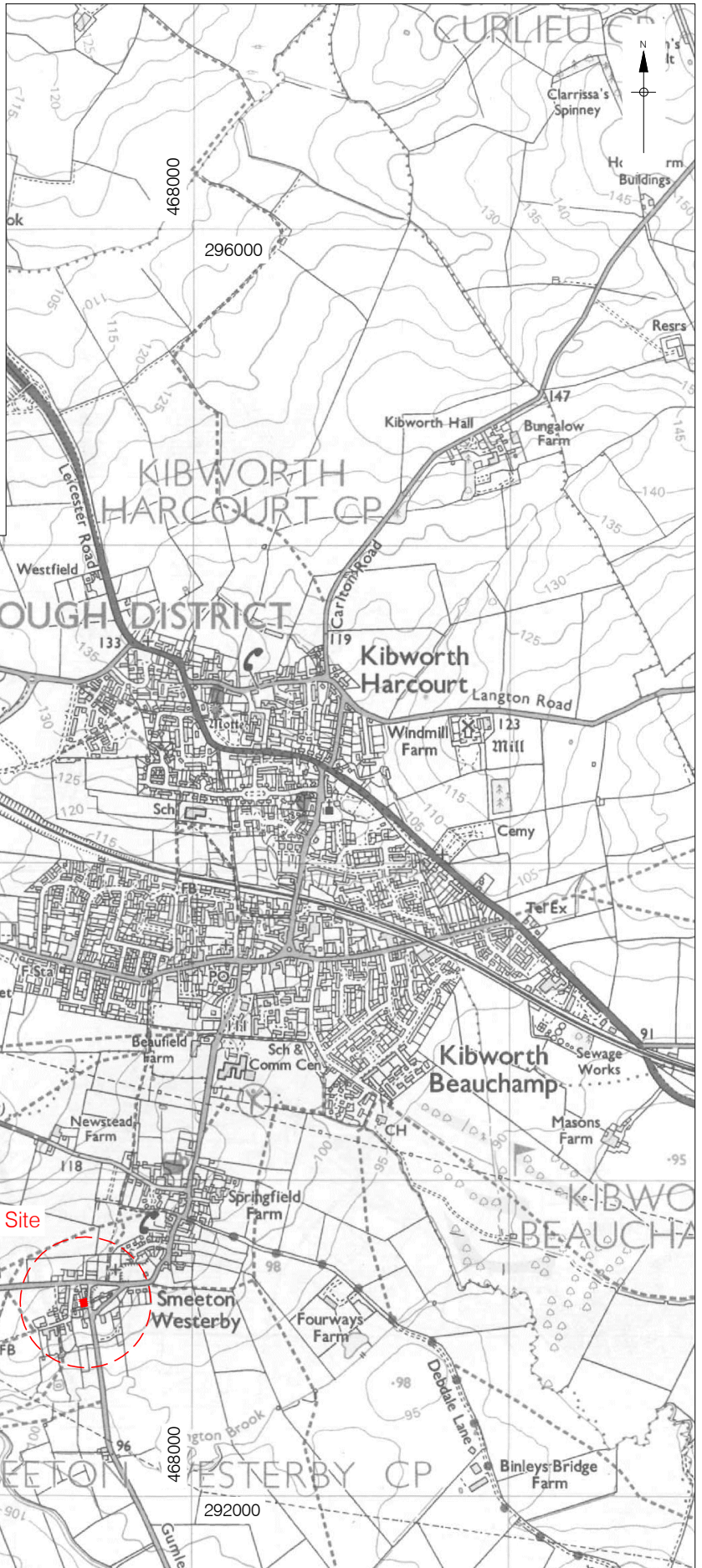
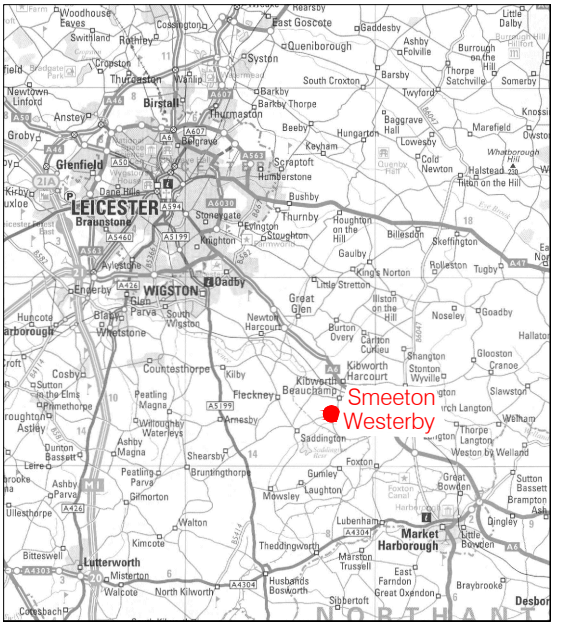




Plate 2 Trench 2, Post Excavation, looking north



Plate 3 Trench 3, Post Excavation, Looking east



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Figure 1  
 Site Location  
 1:400,000 & 20,000 at A4



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Figure 2  
Trench Location  
1:400 at A4

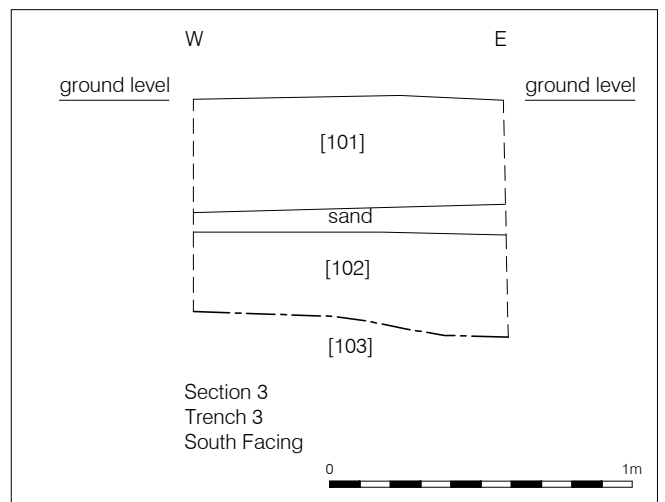
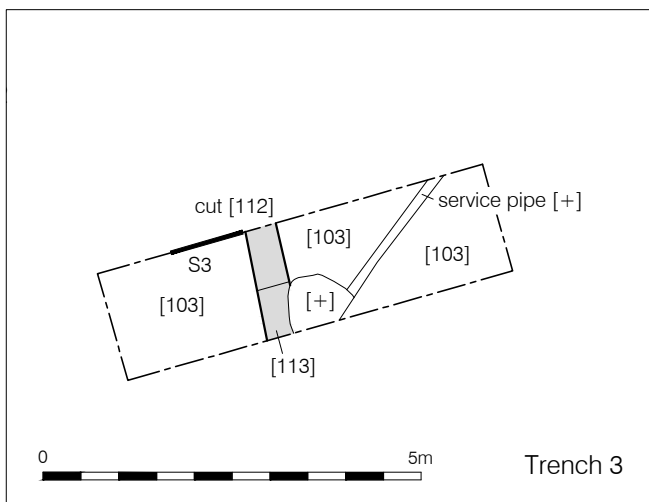
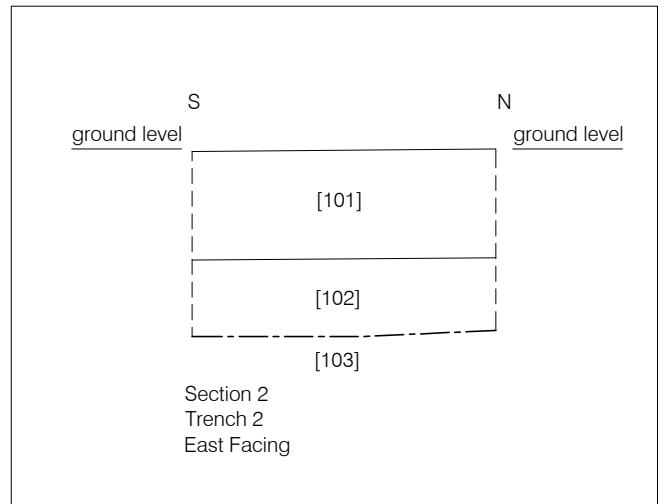
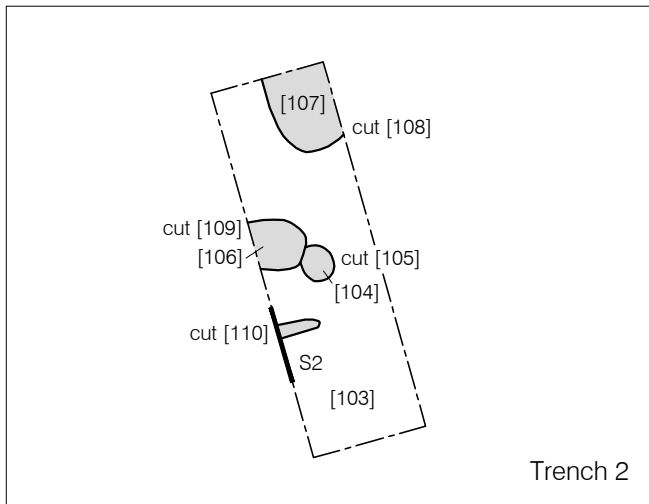
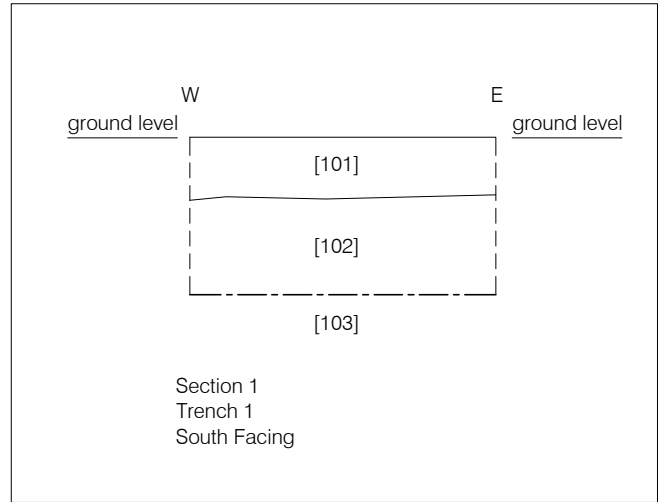
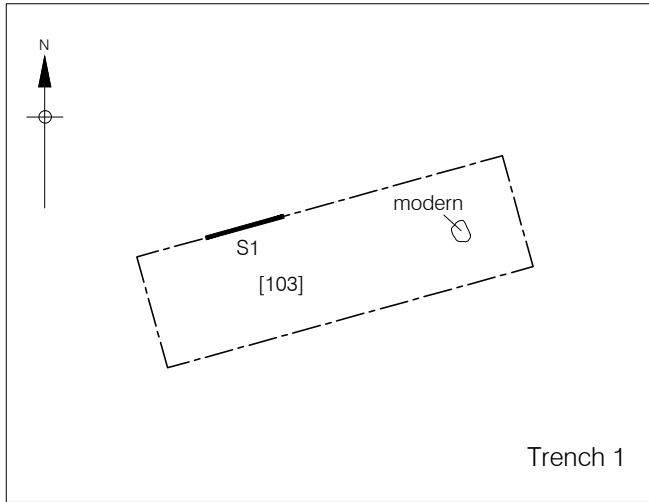


Figure 3  
Trenches and Sections  
Plans: 1:100; Sections 1:25 at A4

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