

**STRATTON BUSINESS PARK ACCESS ROAD,
BIGGLESWADE,
BEDFORDSHIRE**

TRIAL EXCAVATION

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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the specification. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

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Structure of the Report

After the introductory Section 1, a summary of the results of the non-intrusive survey of the area, undertaken previously, is presented in Section 2. The results of the trial excavation are discussed in Section 3, followed by a brief conclusion (Section 4).

Key Terms

Throughout this report the following terms or abbreviations are used:

<i>Albion</i>	Albion Archaeology (formerly Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service)
<i>Client</i>	Babtie Group Ltd
<i>GPS</i>	Global Positioning System
<i>IFA</i>	Institute of Field Archaeologists
<i>ACAO</i>	Assistant County Archaeological Officer
<i>Procedures Manual</i>	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork, 2nd Edition 2001.</i>



Non-Technical Summary

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Babtie Group Ltd, to undertake the trial excavation of the route of a proposed road corridor for the extension of the Stratton Business Park, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire. The site is located south of Biggleswade, west of Stratton Farm and immediately south of Stratton Business Park, centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference TL (5/2) 2100 4280. Extending across three land parcels, the proposed road corridor has an angular form in plan, varying between 22 and 30m wide with a total length of c.910m. Topographically the site is situated on the western side of a low north-south ridge, at approximately 40m above Ordnance Datum. The geology of the site consists of mixed glacial sands and gravels.

In response to an enquiry prior to the submission of a planning application, the Bedfordshire Heritage and Environment Section indicated that the area was in a potentially archaeologically sensitive location and requested an evaluation. This was to assess the impact of the proposed development. Albion formulated a trenching strategy detailing the scope and methodology of the investigation.

The non-intrusive survey undertaken in 2002 and reported previously, indicated that the adjacent landscape contained a variety of archaeological remains including evidence for Iron Age to Roman, Saxon, medieval and later activity, as well as undated features. Two of the known sites recorded on the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record are identified within the road corridor. In the east (HER 16157) which consists of a variety of cropmarks including a probable trackway, defined by closely spaced linear cropmarks, extended across the area. Whilst in the western part of the area, the continuation of cropmarks including an enclosure (HER 13956) are defined. Immediately south-east of the road corridor is a rectilinear pattern of cropmarks.

The systematic recovery of artefacts from the surface of cultivated ground (field artefact collection) was conducted for the eastern and western land parcels. However, the central land parcel was excluded, as it had not been ploughed at the time of the survey. A scatter of post-medieval pottery was recovered from the line of the road corridor, with a greater density in the east, towards Stratton Farm. This is probably material associated with manuring of the farmland.

The geophysical survey covered the central and eastern land parcels, with a total of three detailed survey blocks being investigated, two of which encroached on elements of the road corridor. A pair of closely spaced parallel anomalies corresponded to the trackway defined by cropmarks. A series of parallel roughly east-west aligned linear features were defined, being regularly spaced approximately 10m apart. These would appear to be traces of ridge and furrow cultivation, which is characteristic of medieval arable farming. Evidence for modern cultivation was also detected. A modern service pipe was detected crossing the central and northern land parcels from the direction of Stratton Farm in the east.

Information from the non-intrusive survey was utilised to devise a trial excavation strategy, targeting both the identified features as well as investigating areas apparently devoid of archaeological remains. This strategy was approved by the Assistant County Archaeological Officer prior to the commencement of work.



The trial excavation was undertaken between 17th and 21st May 2004 with a total of eight trenches being opened. At the time of the evaluation the eastern land parcel was under grass, whilst the central and western parcel had not been cultivated, allowing wild vegetation to regenerate.

All of the trenches contained archaeological remains, with two archaeological zones being defined, separated by a central blank area. Within these two archaeological zones, three foci were identified which correspond to the previously identified sites, within or immediately adjacent to the road corridor.

The eastern archaeological zone comprises two foci. In the north Trench 1 contained a continuation of the cropmarks which define the trackway, with evidence of earlier features being identified. This corresponds to a previously recorded site (HER 16157) which previous investigation has indicated to be of Iron Age date. Further south the second focus within this zone comprised Trenches 2, 3, 4 and 5, which contained a series of ditches, which appear to be a continuation of the rectilinear cropmarks immediately south-east of the road corridor. A large quantity of 'Belgic' Iron Age (c.100 BC – 100 AD), together with a very small quantity of Roman pottery, had been deposited in one of the ditches. The quantity of artefacts from this ditch would suggest that there was a focus of human activity in the vicinity. In contrast the other ditches in the vicinity contained few artefacts, consisting of animal bone fragments. A series of parallel regularly spaced east-west features appear to be traces of furrows, characteristic of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation. These correspond to a series of geophysical anomalies identified in the adjacent geophysical survey block.

The second Archaeological Zone is situated on the line of the western part of the road corridor. A series of ditches were identified, with several corresponding to cropmarks of HER 13956. The density of features increased to the west, with evidence for several phases of activity being present. No datable artefacts were recovered from these features, though at least some would appear to be associated with the Iron Age trackway investigated previously in the east.

The trial excavation stage of the evaluation has confirmed the presence of archaeological features identified during the non-intrusive stages. Two Archaeological Zones have been identified. The two foci in the eastern zone appear to be of Iron Age date, corresponding to previously recorded cropmarks. The southern focus within this zone corresponds to a continuation of elements of the previously undated series of rectangular cropmarks, located immediately to the south-east of the road corridor. In the later Iron Age this would appear to have been a focus of human activity, indicated by the relatively large pottery assemblage, comprising both utilitarian and table wares. In this period both national and regional research agendas indicate that the form and structure of settlements area poorly understood. This area of the site has the potential to address such issues, indicating probable regional significance for these remains.

The second zone located further to the west, contains elements which correspond to the cropmarks of a previously recorded site. The lack of artefacts from these features would suggest a prehistoric date for the activity. If the sequential remains are of prehistoric date, they could address several research issues particularly relating to settlement distribution, form, structure and development.



The site archive, which contains all records of the project (Project number SAR 1015), is currently held at St Mary's Church. It will eventually be transferred to Bedford Museum, under Accession Number BEDFM 1991/218.

It is essential that the above summary is read in conjunction with the main body of the report.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Babbie Group Ltd to undertake the trial excavation of a proposed road corridor, which varied in width from 22 to 30m, with a total length of approximately 910m.

The Assistant County Archaeological Officer (ACAO) of Bedfordshire County Council (BCC) advised that the area being considered for the development was in a potentially archaeologically sensitive location. The *Brief*¹ issued by the Heritage and Environment Section, which covers all three land blocks, stated that further information, to be acquired through archaeological evaluation, was required on the archaeological impact of the proposed development, in order to determine any planning application and to allow an appropriate mitigation strategy to be developed. Albion produced a trenching strategy and associated methodology, in accordance with the *Brief*. The strategy was approved by the ACAO, prior to the commencement of the investigation.

1.2 Site Location and Description

The site is located south of Biggleswade, west of Stratton Farm and immediately south of Stratton Business Park, centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference TL (5/2) 2100 4280 (Figure 1). The site, which is the subject of this investigation, extends across all three land parcels west of Stratton Farm. In plan the road corridor comprises five linear segments which range in length from c.250m to less than 50m, covering approximately 0.2 hectares.

Topographically the site lies on the western side of a low north-south ridge between a north flowing tributary of the River Ivel and a series of westward flowing tributaries of the Ivel. The area slopes gently down from the eastern edge at c.40m above Ordnance Datum to c.38m above Ordnance Datum in the vicinity of the A1 trunk road. The superficial geology of the site consists of mixed glacial sands and gravels.

At the time of the evaluation the eastern land parcel was under grass, whilst the central and western land parcels were no longer under cultivation, with a covering of wild vegetation.

¹ Bedfordshire County Council, 2001 *Brief for the Archaeological Field Evaluation of Land West of Stratton Farm, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire*. V1 20th December Heritage and Environment Section.



2. NON-INTRUSIVE SURVEY

2.1 Introduction

In early 2002 Albion undertook the initial non-intrusive stages of the evaluation, which encompassed a wider study area than the present site. These stages comprised desk-based assessment, field artefact collection and geophysical survey to characterise the archaeological potential of the landscape surrounding the site and to assist in the formulation of a trial excavation strategy. A summary of the results directly relevant to the current site is presented below. Full information is contained in the original report².

2.2 Known sites in the vicinity of Stratton Farm

The Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) catalogues all known sites and historic buildings in the county. A total of four HER sites, all defined by cropmarks have been identified within or immediately adjacent to the site (**HER 13956, 16157, 16823 and 16824**) (Figure 2). Apart from elements of **HER 16157** which have been dated by associated pottery to the Iron Age, the other sites are undated. Similar features that have been investigated in the Ivel valley are generally Iron Age or Roman in date. There is also evidence for medieval ridge and furrow cultivation. A number of sites have been identified in the immediate vicinity, which are summarised in the table below.

HER No.	Location	Description
505		Roman Road: A1 trunk road marks line of Roman road.
3547	TL 217 420	Cropmarks: Linear cropmarks.
13927	TL 213 422	Field name: Clay Pit Field on Tithe map of 1838.
13932	TL 213 429	Field name: Grand Burry on Tithe map of 1838.
13934	TL 203 426	Field name: Brickhill Field on Tithe map of 1838.
13956	TL 209 427	Cropmarks: Enclosure.
16157	TL 212 430	Cropmarks: Linear cropmarks including trackway.
16158	TL 217 433	Cropmarks: Enclosure.
16162	TL 208 433	Archaeological Evaluation: Post-medieval ditches / pits.
16823	TL 214 427	Cropmarks: Irregular, possible conjoined-enclosures.
16824	TL 211 425	Cropmarks: Faint, possible 'D' shaped enclosure.

Table 1: HER sites

2.2.1 HER entries within the proposed road corridor

The cropmarks of **HER 16157** define a possible ditched trackway orientated north-east to south-west, crossing the north-eastern part of the corridor. In the western land parcel linear cropmarks of **HER 13956** cross the corridor (Figure 2).

2.2.2 HER entries in the vicinity of the road corridor

To the south and south-east of the site a series of cropmarks (**HER 16823 and 16824**) define the locations of possible enclosures (Figure 2). These are similar

²Albion Archaeology, 2003 *Land west of Stratton Farm, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire: Non-intrusive stages of Archaeological Field Evaluation*. Report No 2003/05



in size, with irregular forms. It is possible that these define occupation sites of Romano-British or earlier date.

A variety of archaeological remains are recorded at a greater distance from the site, including the cropmark enclosures of **HER 16158** to the east. The line of the Roman road (**HER 505**) which linked Baldock and Godmanchester is located further to the west. To the south-east a substantial linear cropmark site (**HER 3547**) has been dated to the Roman period by the presence of artefacts collected from the ploughsoil.

On the western side of the A1 trunk road, the fieldname Grand Burry (**HER 13932**) is of interest because 'bury' is often associated with former manorial centres. Other fieldnames in the vicinity include Clay Pit Field and Brickhill Field (**HER 13934** and **HER 13927**), indicating possible industrial activity and quarrying.

A series of rectilinear cropmarks are defined immediately to the south-east of the road corridor between **HER 16823** and **HER 16824** (Figure 2).

An archaeological evaluation of an area to the north of the site identified a small amount of post-medieval activity (**HER 16162**)³.

Excavations by Albion of the deserted medieval settlement of Stratton, situated c.1km to the north of the site has produced evidence of Saxon, medieval and post-medieval occupation (**HER 518**). Surviving earthworks associated with the settlement include a moated site (**HER 520**).

2.3 Previous Archaeological Work

In 2003 the northern part of the eastern land parcel was the subject of trial excavation⁴, utilising the results of the non-intrusive survey (Figure 2). Two areas of archaeological remains were identified, with four of the eight trenches containing no archaeological deposits. The northern area was most significant, containing a sequence of enclosures which were truncated by parallel flanking ditches of the trackway identified in the non-intrusive stages of the evaluation (**HER 16157**). Associated artefacts indicated that these features dated to the early - middle (c.650-350BC) and later 'Belgic' Iron Age (c.100BC-100AD).

The southern area contained evidence of agricultural activity and a land division. Although no associated artefacts were recovered, these were interpreted as being of medieval or later date.

Trial excavation west of the A1 trunk road, labelled as BFS 809 on Figure 2, identified evidence of Iron Age and medieval settlement.

In 1995 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the site of the Stratton Business Park⁵ (SBP 427 on Figure 2), situated to the north of the road corridor,

³ Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service 1995 *Stratton Business Park, Biggleswade, Phase III (North-East Section), Archaeological Field Evaluation*. Report No. 95/28.

⁴ Albion Archaeology 2003 *Land west of Stratton Farm Trial Excavation* Report 2003/56

⁵ Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service 1995 *Stratton Business Park, Biggleswade, Phase III (North-East Section), Archaeological Field Evaluation*. Report No. 95/28.



in the vicinity of the deserted medieval settlement of Stratton. The evaluation identified a small number of features, dated to the post-medieval period. The features also contained a small quantity of residual medieval pottery, which suggests contemporary activity in the vicinity.

2.4 Aerial Photographic Analysis

Analysis of the available aerial photographs identified two areas of cropmarks within the boundaries of the current site (Figure 3). These cropmarks correspond to **HER 13956** and **HER 16157** (see *Section 2.2.1* above). Another series of rectilinear cropmarks are identified in the area immediately to the south-east of the road corridor, which may define element of an enclosure system (A on Figure 3). For further details of the cropmarks in the adjacent area, please refer to the non-intrusive report⁶.

In the east the parallel linear cropmarks of the continuation of the trackway (**HER 16157**) crossed the road corridor. In the west several linear cropmarks of **HER 13956** crossed the road corridor. The alignment of these features varies markedly, with the eastern cropmark being associated with a possible enclosure to the south.

2.5 Historic Map Regression

No large-scale maps survive for the period prior to the early nineteenth century. The Tithe Map of 1838 and the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1881 provide the most useful information, but only show elements of post-enclosure land divisions. However, the available maps show no alterations to the land parcels boundaries which are within the present site.

2.6 Geophysical Survey

2.6.1 Introduction

The survey was conducted by specialist sub-contractor Archaeological Services (WYAS) in two stages between 7th and 10th January 2002. Initially the whole area was scanned to locate any areas of enhanced magnetism, which can be indicative of human activity. Once identified, these areas could then be targeted by detailed survey. The results of the scanning were used to determine a pattern of detailed survey in consultation with the County Archaeological Officer. Parts of geophysical survey blocks 1 and 2 are within the road corridor, with survey block 3 being situated adjacent to the road corridor in the south-east (Figure 3). The results of this survey are summarised below. For further information consult the non-intrusive report and the report provided by Archaeological Services (WYAS)⁷.

2.6.2 Results of the Detailed Survey Block 1

Situated in the northern part of the central land parcel, a field boundary and traces of agricultural activity were detected within the survey block. Although there were no anomalies which corresponded to the cropmark enclosure, there

⁶ Albion Archaeology, 2003 *Land west of Stratton Farm, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire: Non-intrusive stages of Archaeological Field Evaluation*. Report No 2003/05

⁷ Archaeological Services (WYAS), 2002 *Stratton Business Park Phase IV, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire Geophysical Survey Report 969*



was, however, some evidence of magnetic enhancement possibly associated with a pit in this area.

2.6.3 Results of the Detailed Survey Block 2

Situated in the north-east, mainly within the eastern land parcel, this block was located to investigate various possible features including the linear cropmarks interpreted as a possible trackway. This block also investigated areas of magnetic enhancement that were identified during scanning of the northern corner of the site (Figure 3). The service pipe noted during magnetic scanning was detected as a strong linear anomaly in this block (Figure 3). This crosses the line of the road corridor in the central-northern area and is also likely to cross the corridor in the east near Stratton Farm.

An area of magnetic disturbance, aligned parallel with the western field boundary was detected (dark roughly north-south area in west on Figure 3). This anomaly could define an infilled former field boundary or more probably material associated with the modern farm track/path.

A number of weak linear anomalies were identified, aligned either parallel with or perpendicular to the current field boundaries. It is probable that they are agricultural in origin. These are more obvious in the central southern area of the site (Figure 3).

The remaining variable and intermittent linear bands of magnetic enhancement were all located in the northern part of the survey block, in the area of linear cropmarks. The linear anomalies generally correspond to the cropmarks, but it should be noted that they are also on the same general alignment as the agricultural anomalies, the responses being very weak. Whilst the location of the anomalies does suggest an archaeological origin, it is possible that they are modern ephemeral features.

The areas of magnetic enhancement at the eastern limit of the survey block have strong responses and are suggestive of infilled cut features or areas of burning/industrial activity, perhaps associated with the trackway.

2.6.4 Results of the Detailed Survey Block 3

This survey block detected regularly spaced parallel linear anomalies, which appear to be traces of medieval cultivation. Fainter perpendicular linear anomalies may be associated with later agricultural activity.

2.6.5 Summary

The geophysical survey confirmed the location of the possible trackway, as well as suggesting a zone of archaeological features in the eastern area. There was no definite evidence for the anomalies associated with the possible enclosure detected on aerial photographs within the central land parcel. Evidence of medieval cultivation was also detected, being well-defined in the centre and south of the area.

2.7 Field Artefact Collection

The systematic collection of artefacts from the surface of land under arable cultivation was undertaken in early January 2002. It was not possible to



investigate the central land parcel as this land had not been ploughed. Significant clusters of material in the ploughsoil are likely to be indicative of past human occupation or other activity. All material considered to be the product of human activity was retrieved, although debris of an obviously modern nature was ignored, as far as possible.

A significant area corresponding to the proposed road corridor had been recently ploughed, and so was suitable for artefact collection. However, the central land parcel was still under stubble and was not suitable for artefact collection. A general spread of post-medieval material was recorded (Figure 4). This increased in density towards Stratton Farm, probably defining a manuring scatter. For further information regarding the nature and distribution of the material please refer to the non-intrusive report.



3. TRIAL EXCAVATION

3.1 Introduction

The trial excavation strategy was approved by the ACAO on 22nd March 2004. A total of eight trenches were opened (Figure 6), with the objectives of the individual trenches listed in Appendix 1. The evaluation was undertaken between 17th and 21st May 2004.

3.2 Methodology

- The trenches were opened using a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.6m toothless bucket. The operation of this machine was supervised by an experienced archaeologist.
- The trenches were set out using differential GPS to ensure accurate location.
- Overburden was removed by machine down to the top of the uppermost archaeological deposit or the undisturbed geological stratum, whichever, was encountered first.
- Each trench was issued a unique block of numbers for recording purposes.
- All spoil was scanned by eye for artefacts.
- Backfilling of the trenches only occurred after the ACAO had inspected them.

All archaeological and geological deposits (contexts) were assigned an individual number in a single sequence, commencing at (100). Numbers in brackets within the text refer to the context number issued on site. Within this report context numbers referring to cut features are expressed [**], layers or deposits within cut features are expressed (**).

Each trench was issued with a unique block of numbers. For example (200) identifies ploughsoil in Trench 2 and [605] identifies the construction cut for a ditch in Trench 6. Details of all contexts are listed in Appendix 2.

3.3 Results of the Trial Excavation

All eight of the trial excavation trenches contained archaeological features. The results of the evaluation will be discussed according to the two zones of archaeological remains shown on Figure 5.

3.3.1 Eastern Archaeological Zone

The eastern archaeological zone contained twenty-five features, which are subdivided into two main foci. The northern focus comprises Trench 1 and the southern focus comprises Trenches 2, 3, 4 and 5. A series of ditches were identified as well as several other features, which increased in density to the south-west. Generally artefacts were scarce with a concentration being recovered from one ditch in Trench 4.

3.3.1.1 The Overburden

The uppermost layer in each of the trenches (100), (200), (300), (400) and (500) consisted of a friable dark grey brown, silty clay ploughsoil. This deposit was between 0.30m and 0.45m thick, indicating that it was the product of agricultural cultivation.



Below the ploughsoil was a firm, mid red brown, silty clay subsoil, (101), (201), (301), (401) and (501) between 0.16m and 0.30m thick.

No artefacts were recovered from either of these deposits.

3.3.1.2 Geological Stratum

The undisturbed geological stratum was very variable, consisting in most places of orange sandy clay to brown yellow clayey sand, or coarse white yellow gravel with variable amounts of small to medium sized stones.

3.3.1.3 Archaeological Deposits

A total of twenty-five features were identified in this area, comprising:

Trench	Ditch	Pit	Furrow	Tree-throw	TOTAL
1	4	1	-	1	6
2	1	1	4	-	6
3	4	-	-	-	4
4	1	1	-	-	2
5	2	1	4	-	7
TOTAL	12	4	8	1	25

Table 2: Summary of features in Eastern Archaeological Zone

3.3.1.4 Northern Focus

The northern focus comprises Trench 1 (Figure 6) in which a total of four ditches, one pit and one tree-throw were identified (Table 2). There is evidence for sequential activity and the continuation of known cropmarks.

3.3.1.4.1 Ditches

In Trench 1 a total of four ditches were identified. Two of these ditches [105] and [111] were situated *c.* 7m apart on a north-east to south-west orientation and are the continuation of the cropmarks in **HER 16157** that define the trackway. They were *c.*2m in width, with concave profiles up to 0.80m deep, with flat bases. Ditch [107] was aligned north-east to south-west, 4.15m in width, 0.50m in depth with concave sides and a flat base (Figure 9: section 1; Figure 11: photograph 1). Unexcavated ditch [113] was aligned north-south and was 1.95m in width.

All of the ditches had similar mid brown grey silty clay fills with occasional small stones. In the two excavated ditches this deposit formed the undifferentiated fill. No artefacts were recovered from the deposits.

3.3.1.4.2 Pit

A sub-circular pit [109] 1.15m across, with an apparently concave profile 0.40m deep filled by a mid yellow grey silts clay had been truncated by ditch [107]. No artefacts were recovered from the deposits. This feature indicates sequential activity in this area (Figure 9: section 2).



3.3.1.4.3 Tree-throw

Situated in the north of the trench was tree-throw [118], with a sub-circular form in plan 2.9m in length and at least 1m in width. Tree-throws are created when a tree is uprooted, either through natural or human processes.

3.3.1.5 *Southern focus*

The southern focus comprises Trenches 2, 3, 4 and 5 (Figures 7 and 8) in which a total of eight ditches, three pits and nine furrows were identified (Table 2). The features provide evidence for sequential activity.

3.3.1.5.1 Ditches

In Trench 3, two pairs of parallel ditches were identified, situated at either end of the trench (Figure 7). The western pair of ditches [303] and [305] was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east and the eastern pair [307] and [309] was aligned roughly north to south. These ditches were between 0.60m and 1.40m wide and up to 0.40m deep with concave profiles (Figure 10: section 1). Five fragments of animal bone were recovered from ditch [309]. One of the eastern pair of ditches may have continued into Trench 2 as [205], which was 0.45m in width and 0.39m in depth (Figure 10: section 2).

A well defined west-north-west to east-south-east ditch [410], had an irregular profile 1.25m wide and 0.87m deep (Figure 10: section 3 and Figure 11 photograph 2). The profile may suggest evidence of recutting, though it was not possible to define the form of an earlier ditch. This feature probably defines a continuation of an element of the rectilinear cropmarks in the area immediately to the south-east (Figure 8). The fills of the ditch comprise a sequence of deposits including elements of natural silting and deliberate dumping. A total of 78 pottery sherds, 51 fragments of animal bone, 503g of fired clay and an oyster shell were retrieved from a dumped deposit within the ditch. The pottery indicates a later 'Belgic' Iron Age date for the ditch.

In Trench 5 two closely spaced east-west aligned ditches, [503] and [505] were located (Figure 8). They were between 0.70m and 1.20m wide, with the excavated feature having a concave profile 0.20m deep. The sterile mid yellow grey silty clay fills appear to have accumulated naturally, being derived from erosion of the lower soil profile.

3.3.1.5.2 Pits

Three oval features were identified [203], [412] and [507], measuring between 0.60m and 1.50m across and 0.15m and 0.61m deep. Generally the profiles were concave with [412] having a steeper form with near vertical edges. One of the pits, [203] was truncated by ditch [205] (Figure 10: section 2) indicating several phases of activity were present. No artefacts were recovered from these features.

3.3.1.5.3 Furrows

In Trenches 2 and 5 a series of regularly spaced linear features aligned roughly north-east to south-west, spaced, some 10m apart were defined. The features had wide though shallow concave profiles *c.*1m wide and 0.20m deep. The form suggests that they are the traces of the furrows of ridge and furrow cultivation, typically medieval in date.



3.3.2 Western Archaeological Zone

The western archaeological zone comprises Trenches 6, 7 and 8 (Figure 12). A total of fourteen features, predominantly ditches were identified, with the density of features increasing to the west (Table 3). No artefacts were recovered from the feature and deposits in this zone.

3.3.2.1 The Overburden

The uppermost layer in each of the trenches (600), (700) and (800) consisted of a dark grey brown, silty clay ploughsoil, with moderate to frequent small-medium sized stones. This deposit was shallower than that in the eastern zone, being between 0.25m and 0.30m thick.

Below the ploughsoil, a mid red brown clay silty subsoil was present (601), (701) and (801) which was between 0.18m and 0.40m thick. The shallower subsoil deposits were situated in Trench 6, gradually became thicker to the west.

No artefacts were recovered from either of these deposits.

3.3.2.2 Geological Stratum

The undisturbed geological stratum was very variable ranging in colour from mid yellow to red orange matrix of sandy clay to silty gravel.

3.3.2.3 Archaeological Deposits

A total of fourteen features were identified in this area, comprising:

Trench	Ditch	Pit	Drain	TOTAL
6	1	1	1	3
7	3	-	-	3
8	5	3	-	8
TOTAL	9	4	1	14

Table 3: Summary of features in Western Archaeological Zone

3.3.2.4 Ditches

Of the nine ditches, those in the east of the zone generally had a roughly north-west to south-east alignment. Ditch [605] was aligned roughly north-south, with an irregular concave profile 1.15m in wide and 0.38m in deep (Figure 13: section 1). A relatively stony primary fill was present. This feature had been truncated by later activity.

Evidence of sequential activity was also identified in Trench 7 towards the centre of the zone with two intercutting ditches [705] and [707] being identified (Figure 13: section 2). The ditches were between 0.85m and 1.7m wide and up to 0.53m deep.

In contrast the ditches encountered in Trench 8 [807], [809], [812] and [821] tended to be orientated roughly east-west with the exception of a curvilinear ditch [817] (Figure 14: photograph 1). The contrasting orientation of this ditch compared with the others could suggest a different phase of activity.



There was considerable variation in the dimensions of the ditches ranging from 0.65m to 3.72m in width and between 0.46m and 1m in depth. The close proximity of ditches [809] and [812] suggests that they were not contemporary (Figure 12). These ditches correlate to a linear cropmark (blue line of Figure 12).

3.3.2.5 Pits

Four features were identified as pits, with most being located in the west of the zone in Trench 8 [603], [804], [814] and [819]. The pits were either oval or sub-circular in plan, ranged in length from 0.35m to 2.50m, with generally steep sided profiles, up to 0.4m deep (Figure 13: section 3). Pit [603] truncated ditch [605] (Figure 13: section 1). No artefacts were recovered from these features.

3.3.3 Artefacts

3.3.3.1 Introduction

The evaluation produced a small artefact assemblage comprising mainly pottery and animal bone (Table 4). The material was scanned to ascertain the nature, condition and, where possible, date range of the artefact types present. No finds were recovered from Trenches 1-2, or 5-8.

Tr.	Feature	Type	Context	Spotdate*	Pottery	Animal bone	Other Finds
03	309	Ditch	310	-		5:21	
04	410	Ditch	406	Late 'Belgic' Iron Age	78:1686	51:280	Fired clay (503g), charcoal (1g) Oyster shell (37g)
Total					78:1686	56:301	

* spotdates are based on the latest artefact in the assemblage

Table 4: Artefact assemblage by Trench and context
(sherd/frag count:weight in grammes)

3.3.3.2 Pottery

Seventy-eight sherds weighing 1.6kg were recovered. These were examined by context and quantified using minimum sherd count and weight. Sherds are of moderate size (average weight 22g), and are relatively unabraded. Nine fabric types were identified using common names and type codes in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series (held by Albion Archaeology). The majority of the pottery is datable to the late 'Belgic' Iron Age (c.100 BC-100 AD), while four sherds are of Roman origin. Fabrics are listed below (Table 5) in chronological order.

Fabric Type	Common name	Sherd No.
<i>Late 'Belgic' Iron Age</i>		
Type F06B	Medium grog	8
Type F06C	Coarse Grog	17
Type F07	Shell	10
Type F09	Sand and grog	35
Type F34	Sand	4
<i>Roman</i>		
Type R	Non-specific Roman	1
Type R01	Samian	1
Type R05A	Orange sandy	1
Type R06D	Micaceous greyware	1

Table 5: Pottery fabric types and quantity



The pottery derived entirely from ditch [410]. The bulk of the assemblage comprises grog tempered vessels (fabrics F06 and F09) in the Belgic tradition, characteristic of the region⁸. A small proportion of sand and shell tempered types, (fabrics F34 and F07 respectively), also occur. Forms comprise kitchen and tablewares, including large storage jars, cordoned and a lid-seated jar, the latter sooted. Both wheel-thrown and hand-made vessels are present. Decoration comprises random combing, and one fine-walled cordoned jar bears rouletting and diagonal combing.

In contrast with the late Iron Age material, the four Roman sherds are small (average weight 3g) and abraded, and are likely to be intrusive within the feature. They comprise three undiagnostic coarseware sherds and an imported piece of continental samian ware.

3.3.3.3 *Fired clay*

Twenty-one fired clay fragments, weighing 503g were collected. Most are amorphous pieces in an oxidised sand, calcareous and organic fabric, although some retain diagnostic features such as surfaces and/or edges, suggesting their function as structural components. One slab-like fragment 55mm thick was also present. All of this material was recovered from ditch [410].

3.3.3.4 *Animal bone*

The faunal assemblage comprises 56 fragments, weighing 301g. Fifty-one fragments were recovered from ditch [410] and the remainder from ditch [309]. The material generally survives in good condition, with some surface erosion. Diagnostic material comprises teeth, mandible and long bone fragments, some of which are burnt. Identifiable species are cow and sheep / goat.

3.3.4 *Summary*

The trial excavation stage of the evaluation confirmed the presence and continuation of the features identified during the non-intrusive stage. The two areas of archaeological remains revealed more features than indicated by aerial photographic analysis and geophysical survey. It confirmed the continuation of the cropmarks of the trackway into this area. The artefact assemblage recovered from the site was small, comprising Iron Age pottery and animal bone. This material was recovered from the southern focus within the eastern archaeological zone. These artefacts suggest that this area was associated with settlement activity. The trial excavation has also confirmed the continuation of known HER sites into the area as well as identifying several episodes of activity.

At least the southern focus in the east would appear to be associated with settlement activity, based on the associated artefact assemblage.

⁸ Thompson, I, 1982, *Grog tempered 'Belgic' Pottery of South-Eastern England*, BAR 108 (I), 15-16
Stratton Business Park Access Road, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire
Trial Excavation



4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Overview

The evaluation has confirmed the continuation of three previously identified sites, including two sites recorded on the Historic Environment Record; **HER 13956** in the west and **HER 16157** in the east. The evaluation has also provided dating for the continuation of the rectilinear series of cropmarks to the south-east, which appears to be a ‘Belgic’ Iron Age settlement focus. Although no datable artefacts were recovered from the two HER sites, previous investigations in 2003 indicated an Iron Age date for the trackway and earlier series of enclosures. This would suggest that at least an element of **HER 13956** was associated with Iron Age activity, based on its form and location. The presence of a small quantity of Roman pottery, suggests contemporary activity in the vicinity. This indicates the potential for the survival of various components of the Iron Age landscape, as well as possible later, Roman activity.

4.2 Significance of the Archaeological Deposits

At least elements of both archaeological zones within the road corridor are of Iron Age date, being of probable regional significance, as they have the potential to address issues associated with both national and regional research priorities. Both English Heritage and the East Anglian research agenda⁹, identify themes which the northern area of the site has the potential to address, these include:

- In the Iron Age, particularly the earlier part of this period, the distribution, form and structure of settlements are poorly understood.

Other specific themes include

- Possibility of earlier prehistoric activity in the west, allowing investigation of themes of continuity and change
- Artefact assemblages from Iron Age sites have been identified as having high potential for refining regional chronologies as well as issues of trade and manufacture.
- Development of the agrarian economy
- The potential for examining the transition between the early-middle and later Iron Age
- The potential to investigate the impact of Romanisation

⁹ Brown N and Glazebrook J, 2000, Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties
2. Research agenda and strategy



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**APPENDIX 1**

Trenching strategy

Trench	Length (m)	Reason for trench
1	50	Investigation of parallel linear cropmarks
2	50	General coverage
3	25	General coverage
4	50	Investigation of projected continuation of rectilinear cropmarks
5	50	Investigation of area of ridge and furrow cultivation
6	50	Investigation of projected continuation of cropmarks
7	60	Investigation of linear cropmarks
8	40	Investigation of linear cropmarks/ general coverage



APPENDIX 2

Trench summary



FIGURES

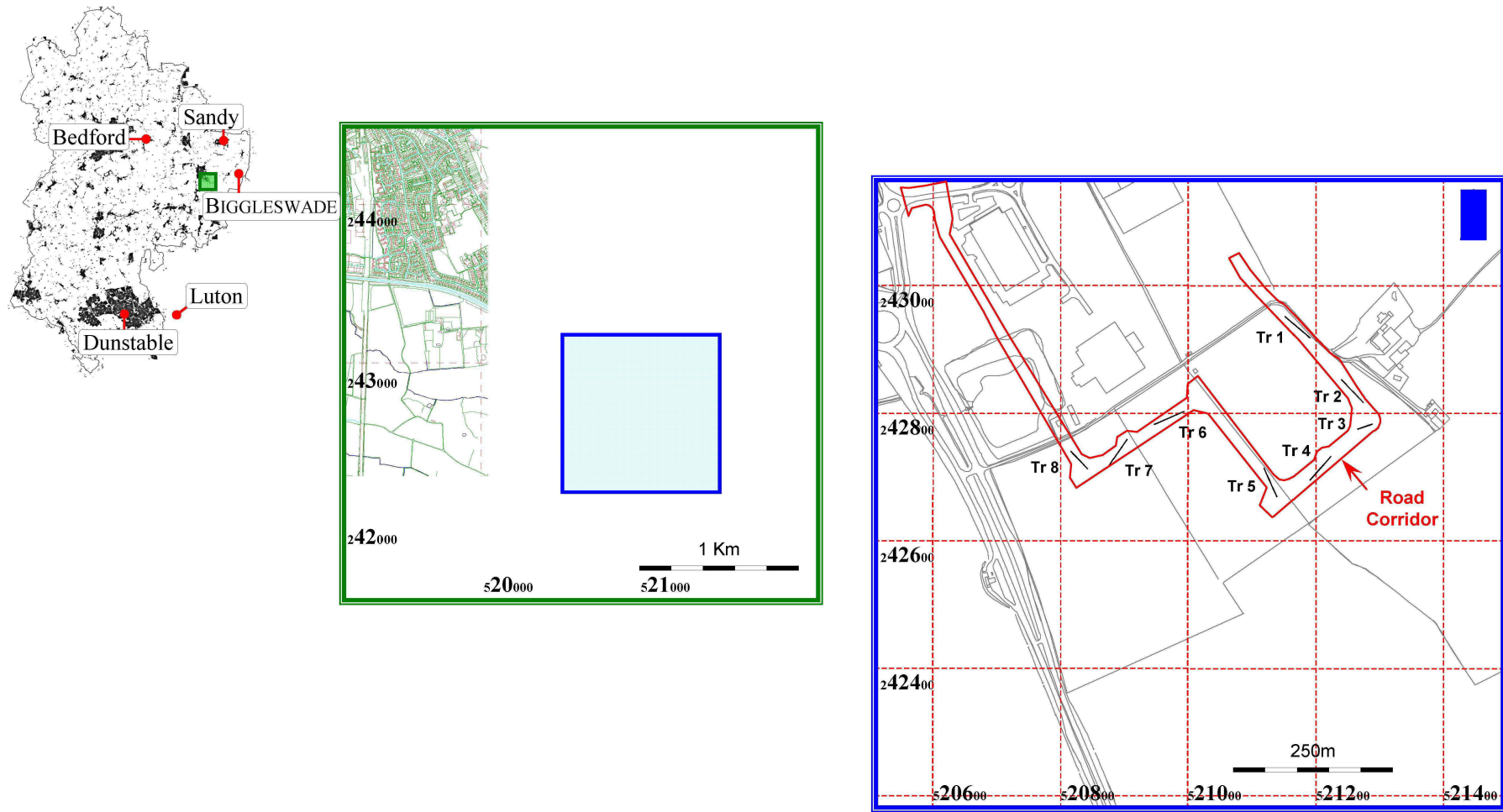


Figure 1: Site location plan

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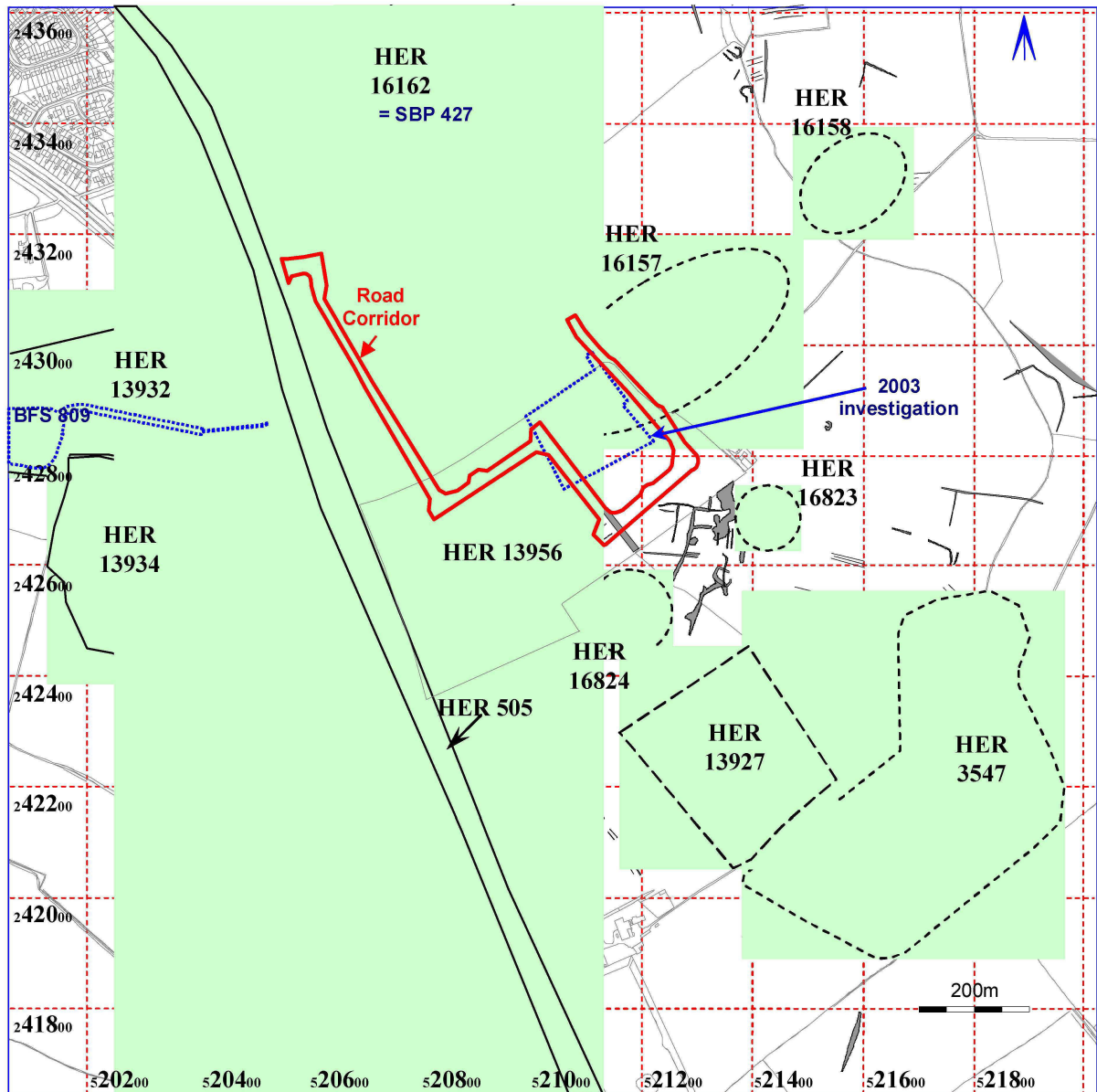


Figure 2: Previously recorded archaeological remains in the vicinity of the site

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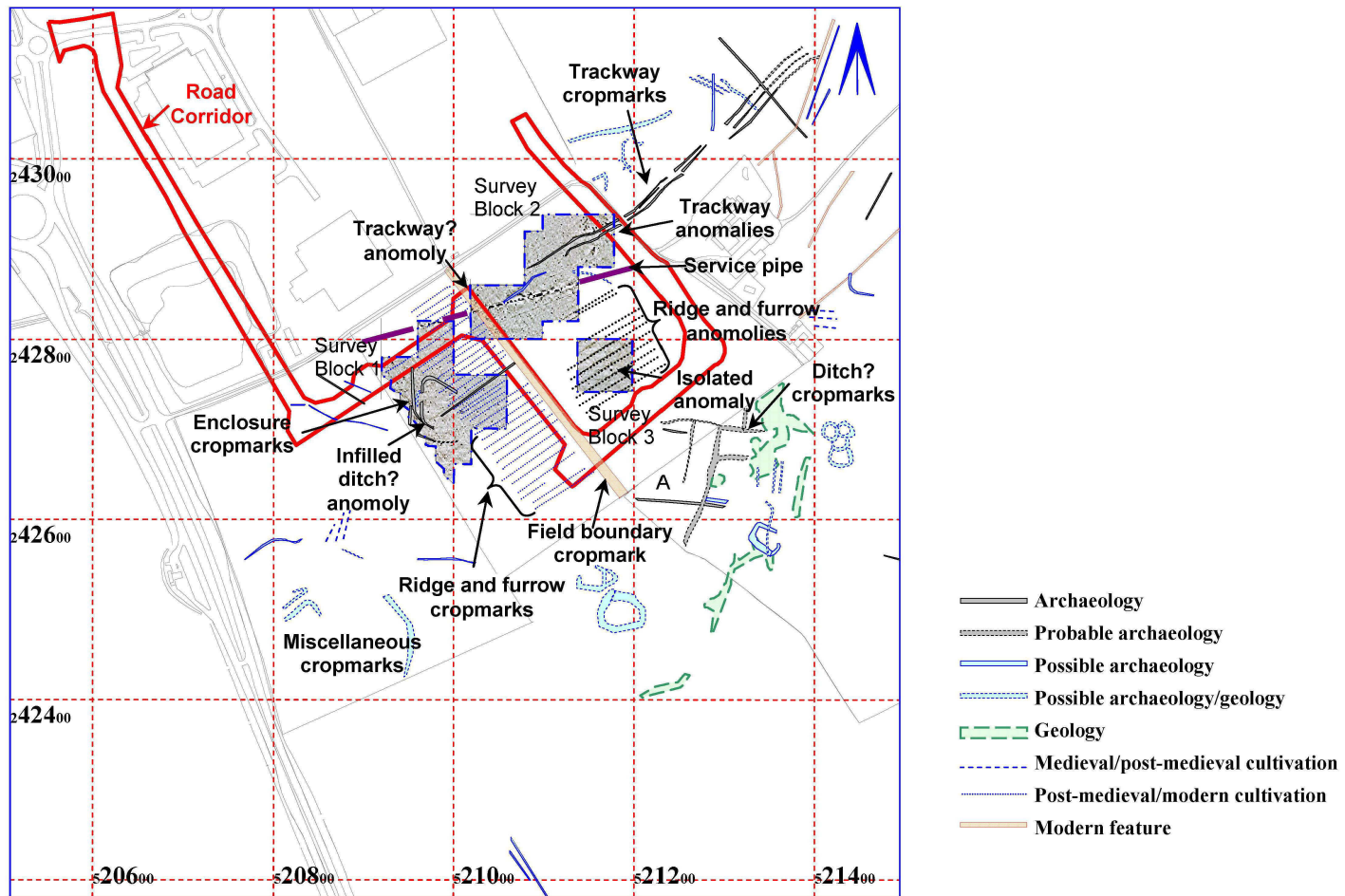


Figure 3: Results of aerial photographic analysis and geophysical survey

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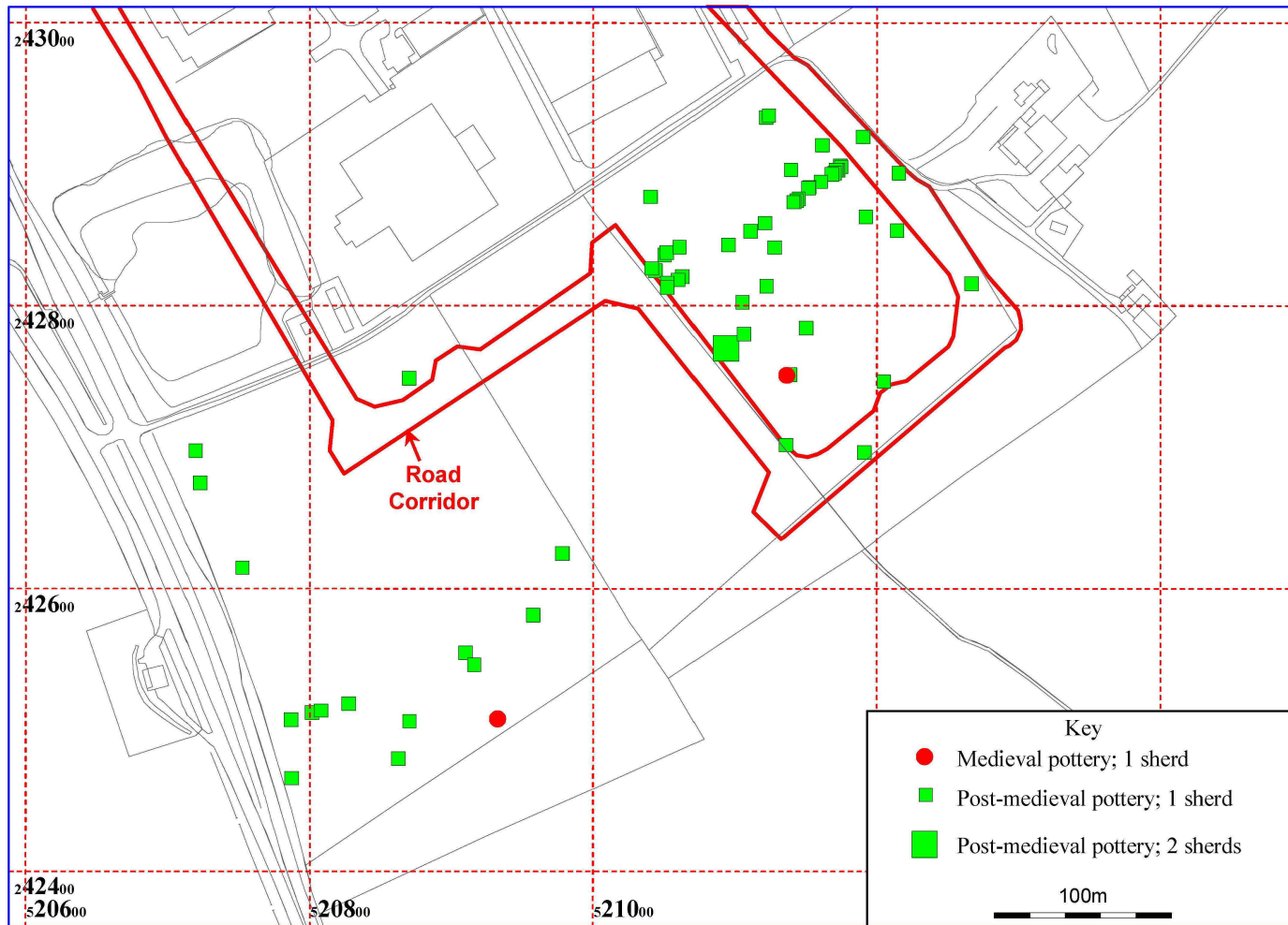


Figure 4: Field artefact collection results

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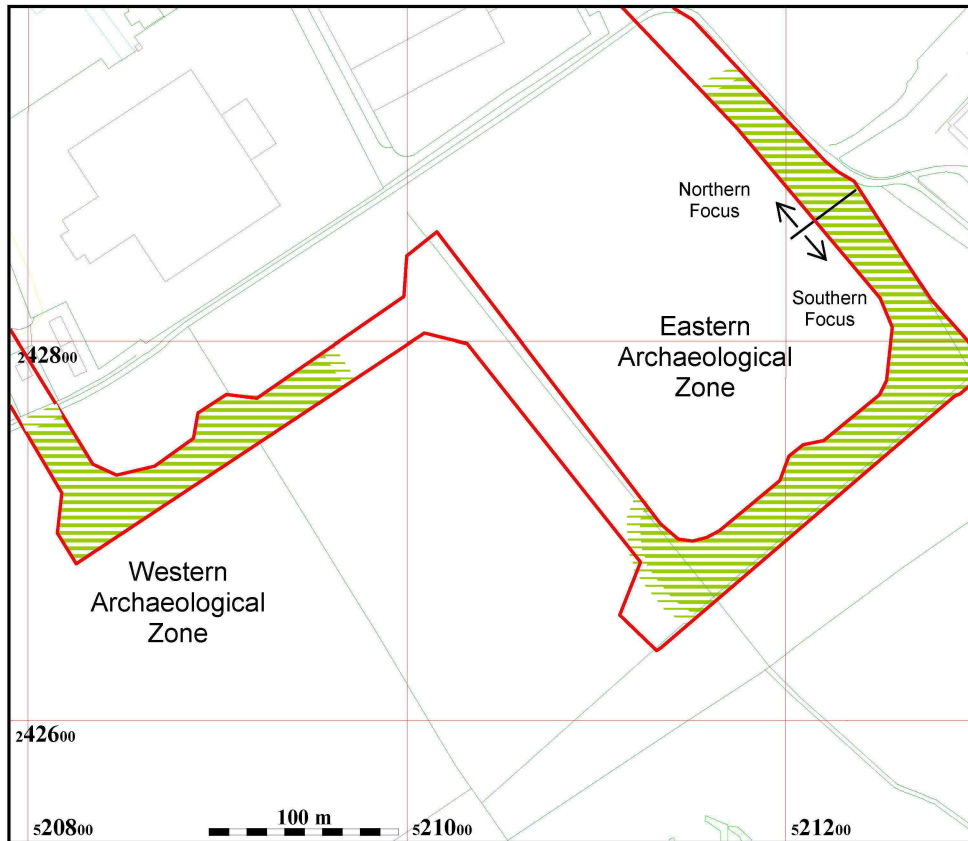


Figure 5: Archaeological Zones within the road corridor

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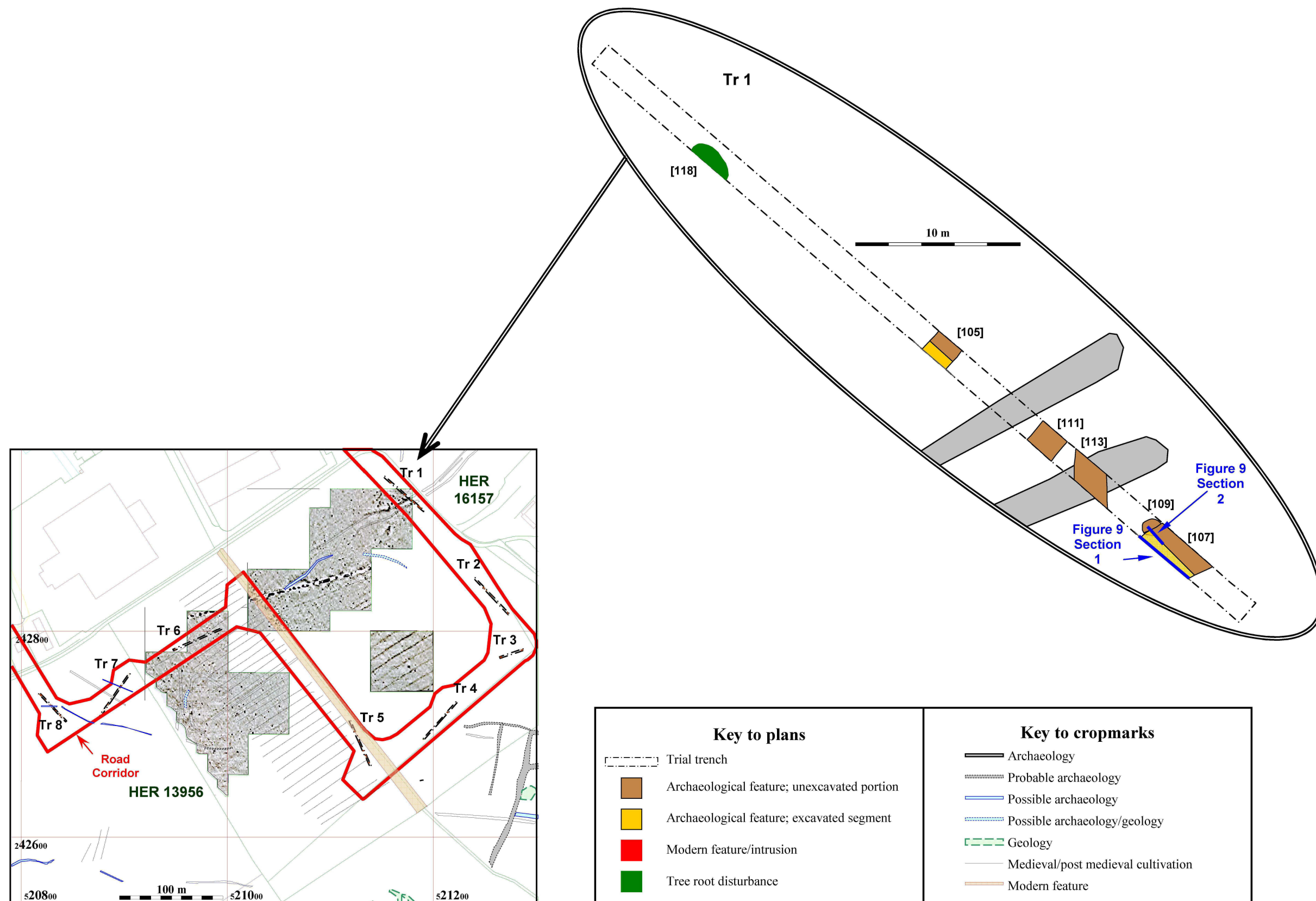


Figure 6: Detail of Eastern Archaeological Zone, Northern focus

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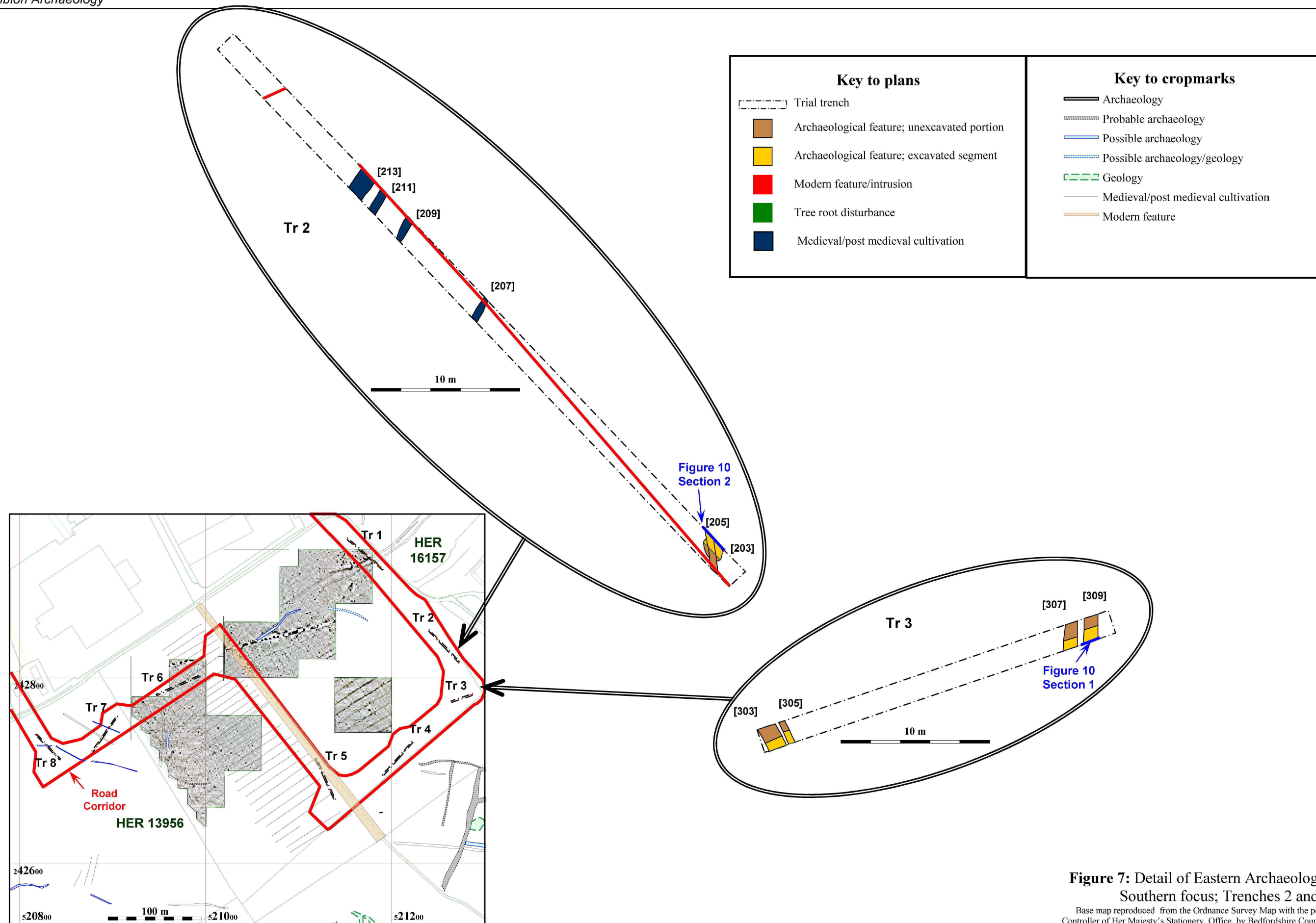


Figure 7: Detail of Eastern Archaeological Zone, Southern focus; Trenches 2 and 3
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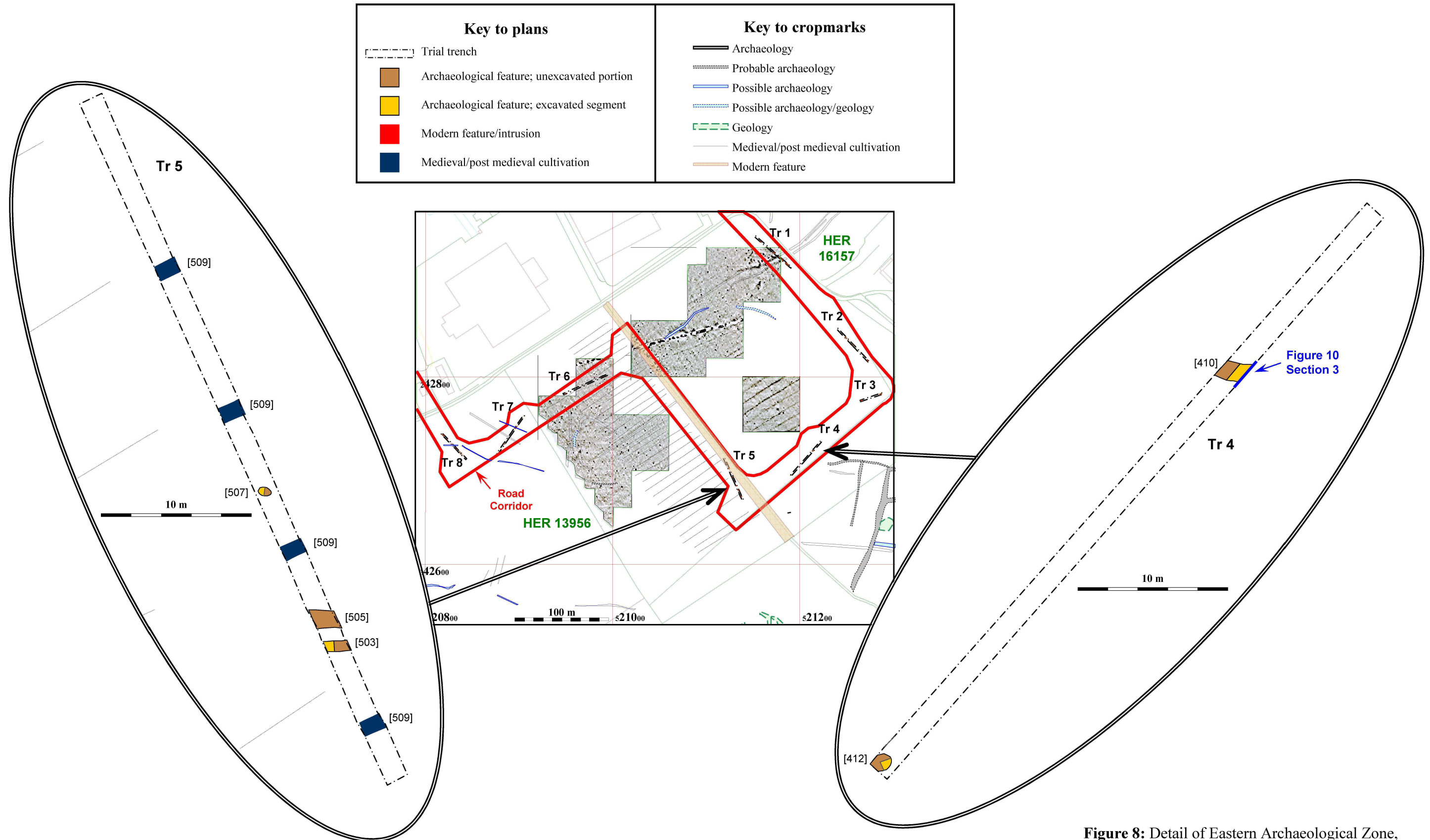
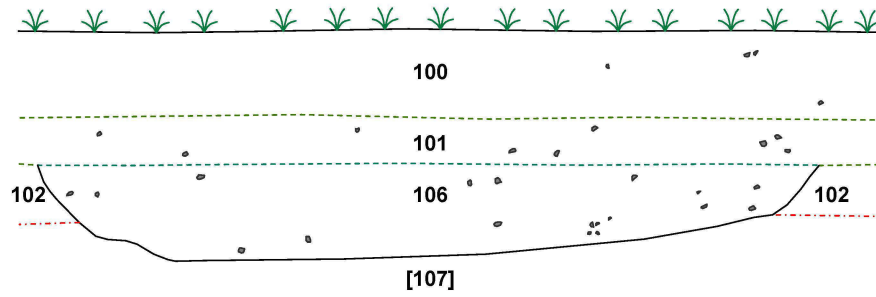
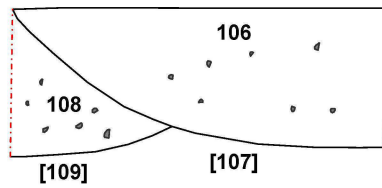


Figure 8: Detail of Eastern Archaeological Zone, Southern focus; Trenches 4 and 5
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Section 1; Ditch [107]



Section 2; Ditch [107] and pit [109]



Figure 9: Selected sections; Eastern Archaeological Zone, Northern focus

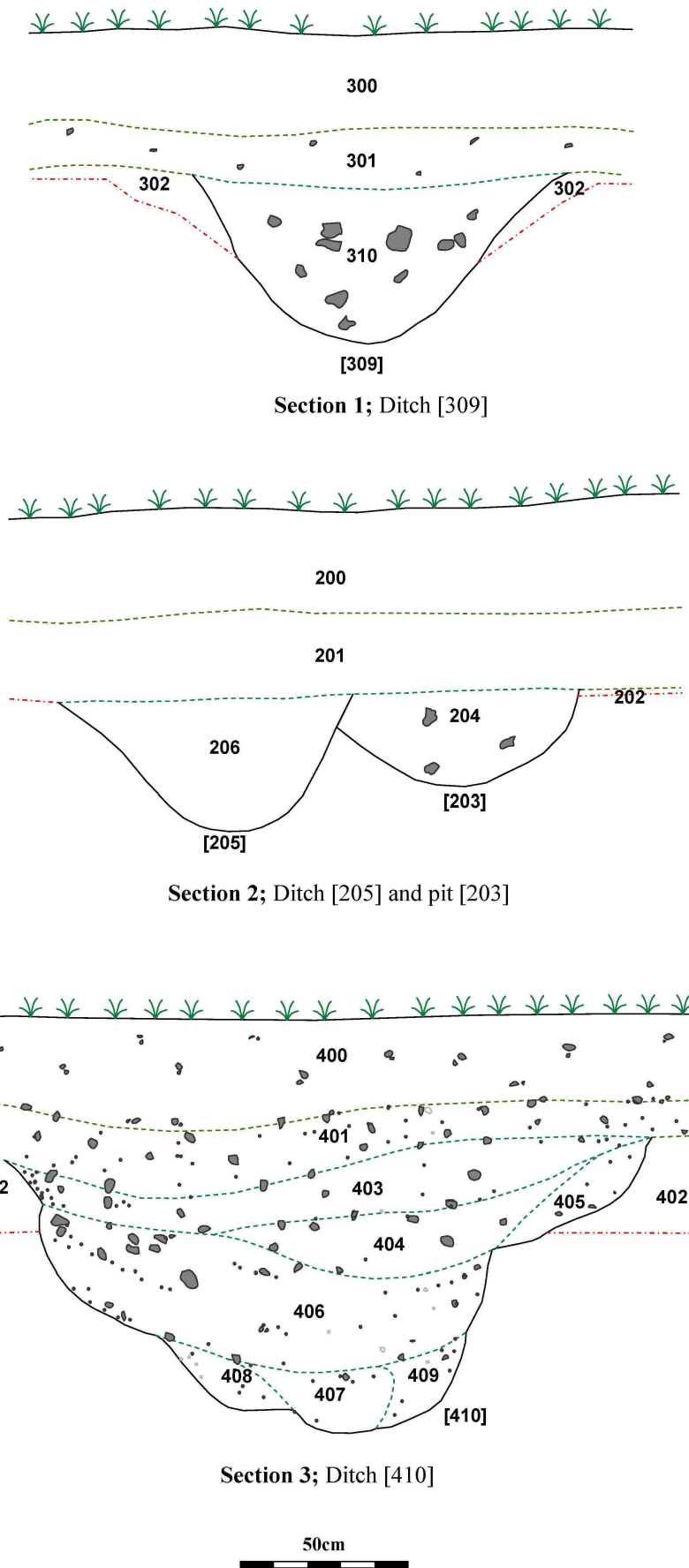


Figure 10: Selected sections; Eastern Archaeological Zone, Southern focus



Photograph 1: Trackside flanking ditch [107] intercutting features



Photograph 2: Ditch [410] with dark occupation rich fills. Scale 1metre in 0.5m divisions

Figure 11: Selected photographs 1 and 2

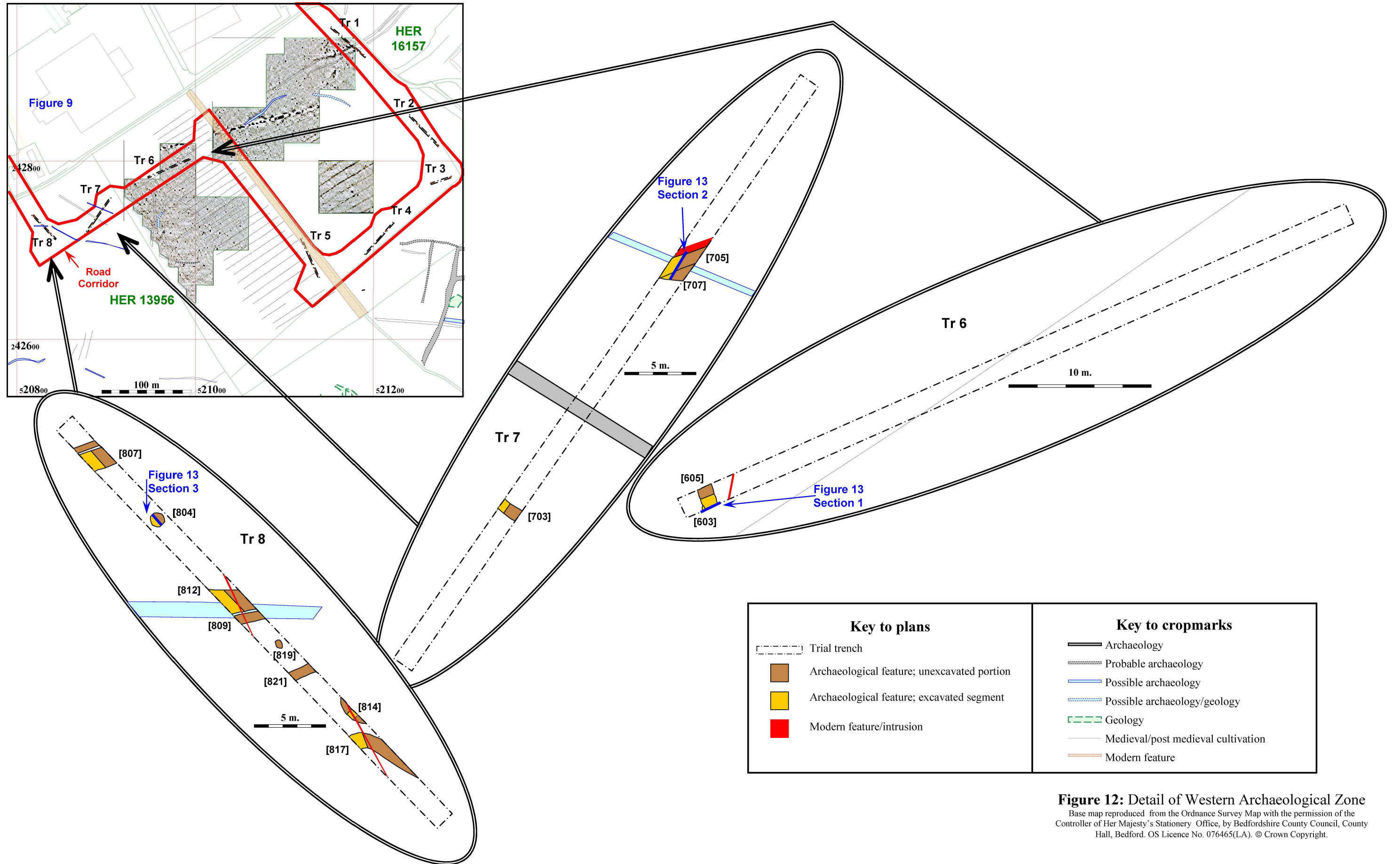
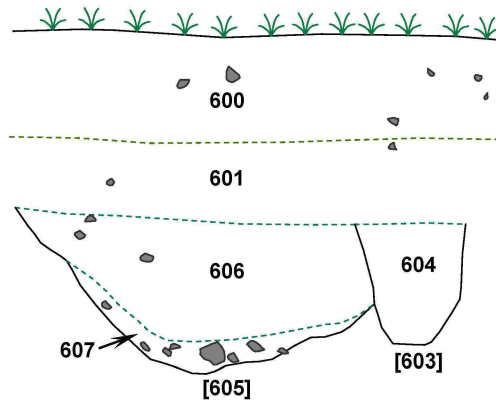
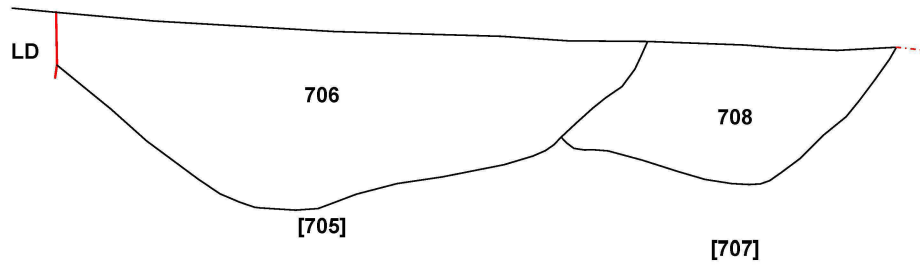


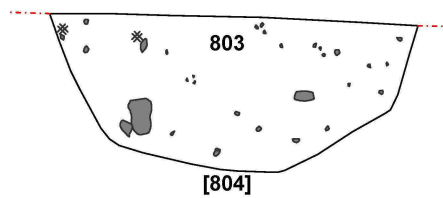
Figure 12: Detail of Western Archaeological Zone
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Section 1; Ditch [605] and later pit [604]



Section 2; Intercutting ditches [705] and [707]



Section 3; Pit [804]



Figure 13: Selected sections; Western Archaeological Zone



Photograph 1: Curving ditch [817]. Scale 1metre in 0.5m divisions.



Photograph 2: Ditch [812]. Scale 1metre in 0.5m divisions.

Figure 14: Selected photographs 1 and 2