

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION OF A PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT CHURCH FIELD, SHROTON, DORSET (NGR 86051442)

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation of the proposed development site comprised a 2% sample by machine-excavated trenches. Two trenches revealed the presence of deep modern infilling in the area of a former pond; while all other trenches revealed that subsoil archaeological deposits survive over most of the site area. The presence of small quantities of often abraded pottery makes accurate dating of all features problematic. It is clear, however, that in the central area of the proposed development site there exists evidence for settlement activity of late Iron Age and Romano-British date, probably spanning the 1st century BC to the 2nd century AD. Elsewhere other subsoil features may be of this date, but the presence of Medieval pottery in subsoil deposits may indicate that more dispersed Medieval activity is also present. The presence of slight earthworks on the site can be shown at the S end to be related to a backfilled pond, but in the central zone cannot be shown to be of archaeological origin. The impacts from development of the site would arise from the excavation of deep footings or service trenches, although the focus of early archaeological activity would seem to lie in an area proposed for car parking and therefore in a zone where deep disturbance may be unnecessary during development.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological field evaluation on the site of a proposed residential development of land at Church Field, Shroton (Iwerne Courtney), Dorset (Planning application no. 2/99/00020). The investigation has been requested by North Dorset District Council as advised by the County Archaeological Officer, Dorset County Council.

1.2 The work was commissioned by Mr. A.F.G. Brimble of Brimble Lea and Partners on behalf of clients and carried out by AC archaeology during August 1999.

1.3 This evaluation incorporates an area of approximately 0.5 hectares on land currently used as pasture, within a larger field which slopes gradually down to the River Iwerne, forming the eastern boundary to the site. The western half of the site is raised above the floodplain on ground which is undulating, some of which may be a naturally-formed terrace and some which may have been formed by deliberate earthmoving.

1.4 The site lies at around 60mOD, the underlying geology consisting of a mixture of colluvial chalk and alluvial clays overlying greensand.

1.5 There are no records of any previous archaeological investigations or finds on the site. However, the field contains raised areas which may represent surface evidence for early settlement. The site also lies opposite the Medieval parish church of St Mary, within the historic core of the village. To the S of the site, at Everley water meadow (ST861 115) previous archaeological investigations in the 1980s revealed a complex sequence of occupation and environmental changes adjacent to the River Iwerne dating back to at least the early Bronze Age (Mercer 1985).

1.6 The aim of the investigation was to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features or deposits on the site by the least destructive means and to determine their date, nature,

function and degree of survival, thus allowing an informed decision to be made regarding the planning application.

2. Methodology

2.1 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a brief provided by the County Archaeological Officer, Dorset County Council. Following an inspection of the surface of the site a trench layout was prepared by AC *archaeology* which was submitted to, and approved by, the County Archaeological Officer prior to commencement of works. The trenches were located both to target areas of the site most likely to be affected by proposed development (principally in areas of new building construction) and to investigate specific surface features. Trench 7 was located to cross the line of a stub of brick wall visible at ground level on the edge of a raised area.

2.2 The work initially comprised the machine-excavation of seven trenches (Tr1 - Tr7), all located in within the boundaries of the proposed development. An additional trench (Tr 8) was subsequently excavated in the SE portion of the development area, to clarify whether archaeological features encountered in other areas of the site continued into this zone. It was agreed with the County Archaeological Officer that in this trench no detailed recording by manual excavation was required once the presence or absence of archaeological deposits was established. The total length of trench excavated was 70m and each trench was 1.50m wide; amounting to an approximate 2% sample of the total site area. The position of all trenches is shown on Fig. 1.

2.3 Topsoil and overburden were removed by mechanical excavator under constant archaeological supervision onto the top of naturally formed soils, bedrock or archaeological features. Clarity of subsoil features was initially good, but hand-cleaning was carried out across all trenches to clarify the sequence of deposits.

2.4 The site was recorded in accordance with AC *archaeology's* standard recording system. Trench plans were produced at 1:20, with sections of all trenches and excavated features drawn at 1:10 or 1:20. A colour transparency and monochrome photographic record was also taken. All levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

2.5 The archive has been prepared using the site code AC 560.

3. Trench Results

The locations of all trenches and principal archaeological features are shown on Fig. 1. Detailed plans and sections are included as Figs. 2 to 5. The presence of many archaeological features resulted in only limited hand-excavation within each trench in order to clarify the nature, date and function of selected deposits.

3.1 Trench 1 (Plan Fig. 2A and section Fig. 2B)

This trench was approximately N-S aligned with plan dimensions of 5 x 1.50m. It was located towards the NW corner of the site in an area of proposed building construction. The general depositional sequence comprised 100mm of dark greyish-brown silty clay topsoil (100), overlying a redeposited horizon (108) composed of a brownish-white redeposited calcareous soil with a depth of 150mm. Below this was a possibly deliberately deposited layer (109) of dark greyish-brown silty clay with a depth of 400mm, which was overlying a possible colluvial deposit (110) of light to mid-brown sandy clay with a depth of 100mm. The removal of this layer revealed a light-brown chalk and clay colluvial deposit (101), and at this level the following archaeological deposits were revealed :

F107 was located in the NW corner of the trench continuing beyond its limits. The feature was irregular in both plan and profile, and may represent a sequence of three intercutting postholes. However, the fill (105) was identical throughout, being composed of a mid to dark brown silty clay with frequent chalk fragments. Finds recovered comprised worked flint and animal bone.

F106 was a clearly-defined post hole located in the central portion of the trench. It was approximately circular in plan with a diameter of 150mm and depth of 200mm, the profile had vertical sides onto an irregular base. It contained a single fill (104), composed of a dark greyish-brown silty clay with frequent chalk fragments. Finds consisted of animal bone only.

F111 was located in the SW corner of the trench. It possibly represents a post hole, which appears to have been extended as a result of animal burrowing. The profile was irregular and its fill (103) was composed of a loose mid to dark brown silty clay. No artefacts were recovered.

3.2 Trench 2 (Plan Fig. 3A and sections Figs, 3B -D)

This trench was approximately W-E aligned with plan dimensions of 5 x 1.50m. It was located in low-lying ground, towards the NE portion of the proposed development. The general depositional sequence comprised 220mm of blackish-brown silty clay topsoil (200) overlying a probable colluvial deposit (213) of 500mm depth, composed of a grey clayey silt. The removal of this layer exposed a reddish-brown alluvial clay deposit (201), and at this level intercutting features comprising two ditches and a probable pit were encountered. Layer 201 had a thickness of 300mm and was immediately overlying colluvial chalk layer context 214, which was identical in composition to deposits identified in most other trenches.

The earliest feature in this sequence was F211, a probable pit continuing beyond the northern and eastern trench edges with visible dimensions of length 900mm+ and depth 300mm+ (not bottomed). The exposed profile had moderately sloping sides. The feature contained a single fill (212), composed of a dark greyish-brown clay silt containing occasional chalk fragments and charcoal flecks. Pottery of late Iron Age to Romano-British date and a small quantity of burnt flint was recovered. This feature was cut by ditch F206 on its W side.

F206 was an approximate N to S aligned linear ditch continuing beyond the confines of the trench. It had a width of 980mm and depth of 850mm, the profile had wide and steep-sloping sides at the top, narrowing to a clearly defined slot towards the base. There were four fills present, the primary fill of which (context 210) was composed of a dark brown clay silt with a depth of 200mm, containing frequent chalk fragments and flecks. This contained a single flint flake and a fragment of animal bone. Immediately above was context 209, a dark grey homogenous silty clay with a depth of 150mm, which may represent a stabilisation horizon. The secondary (central) fill was context 208, a mixed green/white/brown silt and sand with a depth of 230mm, containing occasional flint and chalk fragments. Finally, the upper fill (context 207) was composed of a greenish-brown clay silt with a depth of 300mm containing frequent charcoal flecks and occasional chalk. Later prehistoric and (probably) Medieval pottery were recovered from fill 208, and animal bone and a flint flake from 210. Ditch F206 was cut by a second linear feature, F203, on its W side.

F203 was a NW-SE aligned linear ditch continuing beyond the trench edges. It had a length of 2m, a width of 1.25m and depth of 600mm. The profile was moderately sloping towards its top with a narrow and rounded slot at the base. It contained two fills; the primary fill (205), comprised a light greyish-brown clay silt with a depth of 150mm containing occasional chalk fragments. The upper fill (204) comprised a mid-grey clayey silt with occasional chalk and flint fragments. Artefacts recovered from context (204) consisted of late Iron Age to Romano-British pottery and burnt flint; from (205) a single fragment of burnt clay.

3.3 Trench 3 (Plan Fig. 4A and sections Figs 4B - E)

This trench was approximately N-S aligned with plan dimensions of 10 x 1.50m. It was located in the central portion of the site against the western boundary, in a proposed parking area. The

general depositional sequence comprised 200mm of dark greyish-brown sandy silty clay topsoil (300), overlying a possibly deliberately deposited layer (311) of mid to dark greyish-brown calcareous silty clay with a depth of 400 to 500mm. The removal of this layer revealed a light-brown chalk and clay colluvial deposit (301), and at this level the following archaeological deposits were revealed :

F308 was an approximate NW - SE aligned linear feature located at the northern end of the trench and not fully exposed in plan. Only the SW edge was excavated, which revealed a profile with a moderate and regularly sloping side onto a seemingly flat base at a depth of 700mm (see detailed section 4C). It contained a single fill (307), comprised of a mid greyish-brown silty clay with occasional chalk and unworked flint fragments and frequent charcoal flecks. A single sherd of late Iron Age to Romano-British pottery was recovered as well as burnt flint, worked flint and animal bone.

F309 was located immediately to the south of F308 and was aligned approximately E - W, linear in plan with a slight curve. It was 1.00m wide and 500mm deep, with a moderately sloping profile onto a concave base. Its fill (context 306) was composed of a mid to dark greyish-brown silty clay with occasional chalk and unworked flint fragments and frequent charcoal flecks. A single sherd of late Iron Age to Romano-British pottery was recovered.

F310 was approximately E - W aligned and appeared as slightly curvilinear in plan, and seemingly wider on its exposed western side. Its width ranged between 700mm and 1.40m. The excavated profile was moderately sloping with a slightly rounded base. Its fill (context 304) was composed of a dark reddish-brown silty clay containing frequent chalk and charcoal flecks. Pottery of possibly later Bronze Age and late Iron Age to Romano-British date were recovered as well as burnt flint and animal bone.

Two further features were present but remained unexcavated. Deposit (303) was located towards the southern end of the trench, continuing beyond the eastern edge. It probably represents a pit, possibly circular in plan with an estimated diameter of 900mm. The fill was composed of a very dark grey/black silty clay containing frequent charcoal and chalk fragments. F305 is likely to represent a posthole and is located between F308 and F309. It was approximately circular in plan with a diameter of 250mm. Its fill was composed of a dark brown silty clay with frequent chalk flecks. No artefacts were recovered from the surface of either of these two features.

3.4 Trench 4 (Plan Fig. 4F and section Fig. 4G)

This trench was aligned approximately E-W with plan dimensions of 10 x 1.50m. It was located in the central portion of the site, in an area initially identified as containing an earthwork platform, in a proposed parking zone. The general depositional sequence comprised 200mm of dark greyish-brown silty clay topsoil (400), overlying a possibly deliberately deposited layer (417) of mid to dark greyish-brown calcareous silty clay with a depth of 400mm. Immediately below this was a continuous layer (418) of very dark grey/black humic silty clay with a depth of 150mm containing frequent charcoal and chalk fragments. This layer may represent a buried topsoil. This was sealing layer 419, a deposit with a depth of 400mm, composed of a very dark greyish-brown calcareous silty clay containing frequent chalk fragments and charcoal flecks. The removal of this layer by machine revealed a light-brown chalk and clay colluvial deposit (401), which was cut by many archaeological features, only some of which were hand-excavated.

F413 was a linear ditch or gully aligned approximately N-S and terminating within the trench. The exposed length was 1.3m with a maximum width of 800mm. Two opposing quadrants of the feature was excavated and revealed the feature to be shallow (maximum depth 150mm) with moderately sloping sides onto a flat base. It contained two principal fills: layer (407/412) was a mid grey brown calcareous clay with rare small flint fragments containing late Iron Age to Romano-British pottery, burnt flint, worked flint and animal bone; layer (415/416) was a mid

yellow-brown calcareous silty clay with chalk fragments and flecks. No artefacts were recovered.

F414 was a portion of a large, apparently sub-circular, pit only partly revealed against the N trench edge. The feature had a width (or minimum diameter) of 1.3m and a maximum length of 4m. It was very shallow, (maximum depth 100mm) with moderately sloping sides onto a flat base and contained one fill (408). This layer was a mid grey-brown slightly sandy clay loam with a moderate amount of chalk fragments and rare large flint fragments. The layer contained possible late Bronze Age, and late Iron Age to Romano-British pottery, burnt flint, worked flint and animal bone. This deposit may represent an occupation spread rather than a pit fill.

Unexcavated deposits include a possible linear feature filled with (406), pits filled with (403), (410) and (411) and possible post holes filled with (404) and (405). Only from (411) were any finds recovered - a single sherd of late Iron Age to Romano-British pottery.

3.5 Trench 5 (Plan Fig. 5A sections Figs. 5B and C)

This trench was aligned approximately NW - SE with plan dimensions of 14.5 x 1.50m. It was located in the central portion of the site, across the S edge of a slightly raised area, in a proposed parking zone. An electricity cable trench was exposed and left unexcavated at the N end of the trench. The general depositional sequence comprised a deep sequence of successive soil horizons, up to almost 1.0m deep in total, and overlying a series of subsoil features cut into weathered chalk. These horizons comprised 200mm of dark greyish-brown silty loam topsoil (502), overlying a mid grey-brown silty loam that increased in depth to the south (503). Below this a further colluvial soil accumulation (504) consisted of a mid grey silty clay loam with sparse angular flint and chalk fragments. A lower horizon (505) of mid grey silty clay loam with moderate quantities of angular flint and common sub-angular chalk fragments was only apparent in the northernmost two-thirds of the trench; at its southernmost extremity it merged with layer (504). Beneath this two distinct lenses of material were present; (506) a mid grey brown silty clay loam containing burnt flint, abundant sub-rounded chalk fragments and moderate small angular flint fragments, and (507) a dark orange-brown clay with rare angular flint fragments and rare chalk flecks. This deposit may be a natural subsoil layer.

Beneath these deposits several archaeological features were recorded, with further hand excavation limited to the principal curvilinear features:

F512 and F513 were two, apparently converging, curvilinear gullies present within the central and southern portion of the trench. F512 was a maximum of 0.45m wide and 170mm deep. It had steeply sloping sides with a flat base and filled with (509), a dark grey-brown silty clay with moderate chalk and sparse flint fragments. Layer (509) contained one sherd of Romano-British pottery and one of probable later Bronze Age or early Iron Age date as well as animal bone. The outer gully F513 was of similar proportions, but had less steep sides and a rounded base. It was filled with layer (511), a light grey-brown silty clay with increasing chalk fragments with depth. This deposit contained one sherd of Romano-British pottery and one of uncertain, but possibly Medieval, date, as well as burnt flint and animal bone. These two features have the appearance of gullies associated with the plan of round houses, and their apparent convergence might indicate two phases of use.

Other, unexcavated features within the trench included a spread of closely-packed angular limestone blocks and burnt flint in a mid grey-brown soil matrix (510). This deposit lay directly above the natural subsoil and appeared to coincide with the edge of gully F513. The deposit may represent the remains of a structure, possibly an unmortared stone wall. A single sherd of pottery recovered from the deposit may be Medieval in date. A second area of stone (515), at the southern end of the trench, consisted of closely set angular limestone blocks, probably overlying the continuation of ditches F512 and F513. This may also represent structural remains. In the N of the trench the fills of a possible pit and post hole, (516) and (517) respectively, were unexcavated, and the fill of a large pit or ditch (514) was observed to be cut through by the electricity cable trench and could not be further investigated.

3.6 Trench 6 (not illustrated)

This trench was located in the raised zone at the S end of the proposed development area, aligned approximately W - E, and was 10m by 1.5m in plan. The trench was machined to a maximum depth of 1.8m before being abandoned. Two deposits were recorded. The topsoil (600) comprised a dark grey sandy loam and was 150mm thick. Beneath this a single context was identified for the full depth of the excavation (601). This was a mixture of redeposited chalk with brick and flint nodules, becoming more soil-filled with depth and containing large limestone blocks and brick. Natural chalk bedrock was not exposed. A local resident confirmed that this had been the site of a pond, backfilled in the 1980s.

3.7 Trench 7 (not illustrated)

This trench was also located in the raised zone at the S end of the proposed development area, aligned approximately SW - NE to cross the line of a partly-exposed brick wall, and was 10m by 1.5m in plan. The trench was machined to a maximum depth of 2m, at either end only, before being abandoned. The topsoil (700) comprised a dark grey sandy loam and was generally 150mm thick. Beneath this was a succession of deposits; bands of redeposited chalk, soil lenses, brick rubble and redeposited greensand. The brick wall was exposed and had a concrete render. It would appear that the dumped material surrounded it. Natural chalk bedrock was not exposed. This area would also appear to have been in the area of the former pond.

3.8 Trench 8 (Plan Fig. 5D section 5E)

This trench was approximately N-S aligned with plan dimensions of 5 x 1.50m. It was located in the SE of the development area and was an additional trench, requested by the County Archaeological Officer to determine the extent of the deposits identified in the central area of the site. The trench was machine-excavated only to reveal the presence of any subsoil archaeological deposits, which were recorded in plan only. The general depositional sequence comprised 220mm of dark greyish-brown silty clay topsoil (800), overlying two soil horizons: (802) was a mid grey-brown silty clay with frequent chalk fragments and flecks, and (803) was a very dark grey-brown silty clay with frequent chalk flecks and greensand fragments. These deposits overlay natural weathered chalk which appeared either to be cut or overlain by two archaeological features, identified by their soil fills:

(805) was a sticky brownish grey silty clay with very frequent chalk fragments, occasional charcoal and flint fragments. The deposit was extensive across the trench and may have been a spread of occupation material rather than a cut feature. Finds of prehistoric and Medieval pottery, burnt flint, worked flint and animal bone were recovered from the deposit.

(806) was grey-brown silty clay with reddish-brown mottles and frequent chalk and occasional charcoal. A cluster of greensand and burnt flint nodules against the W trench edge may be associated with this deposit, but no find were recovered from either context.

4. The Finds

4.1 All finds recovered are itemised in Table 1. Comments on the principal artefact types (pottery and worked flint) are included in sections 4.2 - 4.3.

4.2 The pottery

The pottery assemblage chiefly comprises abraded sherds of small average size with few diagnostic elements in terms of identifiable vessel forms or decoration. Attributions of date are therefore largely based on fabric. A high proportion of the finds came from unstratified contexts or from the surface of features where material of differing dates was intermixed. The pottery has been scanned and quantified by context (Table 1). Four broad periods are represented:

Late Prehistoric

Pottery of probable late Bronze Age or early Iron Age date was recovered as body sherds, principally in fabrics tempered with sparse, ground calcined flint but also including a shell-tempered sherd from context 408. One very fragmentary sherd from context 509 had what appeared to be fingernail impressions and one carinated or shoulder sherd was recovered from context 804, but no other diagnostic items were present.

Iron Age / Roman

The majority of the sherds are of late Iron Age or Roman date. Again there are few diagnostic elements, but the presence of acute-lattice decoration on sherds of BB1 and other fabrics (eg contexts 202, 306, 408 and 501), a fragment of Samian Ware (context 202) and Romanised forms and fabrics (eg a necked jar in a buff or greyware fabric from context 307) might suggest an emphasis in the AD 1st to 2nd century for this activity. No diagnostically late Roman elements were present within the assemblage.

| Trench no. | Context | Late prehistoric (?LBA/EIA) | | Late Iron / Romano-British pottery | | Medieval pottery | | Post Med. pottery | | Burnt Flint | | Worked flint | | Animal bone | | Other/Comments |
|------------|---------|-----------------------------|-----|------------------------------------|-----|------------------|-----|-------------------|-----|-------------|-------|--------------|-----|-------------|-----|--|
| | | No. | Wt. | No. | Wt. | No. | Wt. | No. | Wt. | No. | Wt. | No. | Wt. | No. | Wt. | |
| 1 | 102 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 124 | 1 | 118 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Unstratified: spoilheap |
| | 104 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 8 | |
| | 105 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | |
| 2 | 202 | 1 | 8 | 7 | 136 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 28 | 1 | 18 | 7 | 30 | unstratified: incl. modern window glass 1/8g; burnt clay 1/36g |
| | 204 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 34 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | 205 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | burnt clay 1/18g |
| | 208 | 1 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 10 | burnt clay 1/16g |
| | 210 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 28 | |
| | 212 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 44 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 3 | 302 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 174 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | unstratified |
| | 304 | 4 | 38 | 9 | 70 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 162 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 48 | |
| | 306 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | 307 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 56 | 1 | 16 | 4 | 42 | |
| 4 | 402 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 74 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | unstratified finds |
| | 407 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 80 | 1 | 26 | 1 | 10 | |
| | 408 | 3 | 44 | 8 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 220 | 1 | 8 | 7 | 112 | |
| | 411 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | 412 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 28 | 0 | 0 | |
| 5 | 500 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | unstratified finds |
| | 501 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 378 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 222 | Ceramic floor tile (prob. RB) 1/110g |
| | 502 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 42 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 102 | 0 | 0 | |
| | 509 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 19 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 126 | |
| | 510 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 26 | 3,844 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | 511 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 78 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 26 | burnt clay 1/24g |
| 8 | 804 | 2 | 28 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | unstratified |
| | 805 | 2 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 108 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 132 | 2 | 72 | 2 | 28 | slag 1/86g |
| TOTALS | | 14 | 159 | 50 | 452 | 14 | 159 | 14 | 394 | 55 | 5,164 | 11 | 273 | 41 | 695 | |

Table 1 : Finds summary

Medieval

Medieval pottery included quartz tempered wares (including coarse white wares), some scratchmark elements, but very few glazed sherds in a collection dominated by jars or cooking pots. An absence of diagnostic elements makes an attribution of date speculative, but none of the material collected is necessarily earlier than the 13th century.

Post-Medieval

Later pottery included lead-glazed earthenwares and traded wares, with an emphasis on pottery of 19th-century or later date.

4.3 Worked flint

All worked flint fragments comprise cortical flakes of varying size and patination, all derived from chalk. No attributes of an early blade-type technology is present and the material is best considered to be of Bronze Age or later date.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The evaluation has comprised a 2% sample of the development area. This level of investigation routinely would be expected, for a rural development of this scale, to be sufficient to identify both the character of the principal archaeological deposits that survive on the site and the likely extent of any impacts that development might have on these or other associated remains that may lie outside the limits of the investigation trenches. Notwithstanding the potential for other significant, but unpredictable, remains within the unevaluated areas of the site, the conclusions drawn from this investigation should therefore be viewed with a high level of confidence.

5.2 Within the development area as a whole there exists varying, but generally deep, soil overburdens up to c. 1m in depth. These effectively seal and protect horizons of intact subsoil archaeological deposits, although these overburden deposits themselves contain artefacts of several historic periods. Such finds may be considered to have been disturbed in antiquity, and most probably by ploughing during the Medieval and later periods either on or near the site. The presence of hillwash material in several trenches suggests that some artefacts at least will have been derived from elsewhere. Generally only a limited number of finds has been recovered from individual overlying deposits as these were removed under supervision by mechanical excavator at the time of the investigation and not closely scrutinised for finds other than from spoil heaps. The exception to this situation is in Trenches 6 and 7 where there is evidence for substantial previous deep ground disturbance (in excess of 2m) during the construction of a pond, since infilled. Here there is no evidence to suggest that subsoil archaeological deposits, of a type seen elsewhere on the site, survive and all overburden deposits (infilling of the pond) are of recent deposition.

5.3 Subsoil archaeological features can be shown to survive in all evaluation trenches other than in 6 and 7. The density of deposits is greater in the central area of the site (Trenches 4 and 5) when compared to the northernmost trenches (1 - 3). Furthermore, there is a greater diversity in the type of archaeological features in this central area. Postholes only have been identified in Trench 1, linear ditches or gullies predominantly in Trenches 2 and 3, while Trenches 4 and 5 contain a range of pits, postholes, curvilinear gullies and stone-filled or stone-constructed features suggestive of settlement activity. The curvilinear features F512 and F513 may represent the remains of a round house. Trench 8 was observed also to contain a relatively high density of subsoil features, but these remained largely unexcavated and so their nature could not be fully established.

5.4 It is clear within Trenches 1, 2, 4 (possibly) and 5 that several subsoil features are intercutting. This superimposition of features, particularly in the case of ditches on altered

alignments, demonstrate that at least two phases of activity are present on the site; a characteristic discussed below in relation to artefacts.

5.5 The range of artefacts and material finds present on the site consists of moderate quantities of burnt or worked flint, animal bone, fired clay, and pottery with single occurrences of fragments of glass and slag. None of the worked flint contains diagnostic dateable attributes and the principal dating evidence for individual layers or features therefore is provided by pottery. An examination of the pottery assemblage suggests that only a small proportion is wholly diagnostic although fabrics characteristic of later prehistoric, Romano-British and Medieval date are all present. The size and abraded nature of the individual pieces does not allow many of the fragments to be confidently assigned to any one period. Furthermore, the quantities obtained from excavated samples of features are in any case generally too small to confirm the dating of features with total confidence (e.g. one small Romano-British pottery sherd in Feature F308).

5.6 Several groups of pottery can be identified with confidence on the basis of fabric, form or surface treatment to be of late Iron Age or Romano-British date. Many of the sherds from Trench 5 (including finds recovered from spoil heaps) are of this period without later elements; context (509) includes at least one possible later Bronze Age sherd along with Romano-British material, context (511) predominantly late Iron Age or Romano-British pottery although one fragment is uncertain and may be of Medieval origin. Similarly, in Trench 4 pottery recovered from feature F414 is exclusively of late Iron Age or Romano-British date, although the one sherd recovered from F413 may only possibly be of this period. In Trench 3 finds from features F308 and F310 are exclusively of late Iron Age and Romano-British date

5.7 In Trench 8 Medieval pottery predominates, significantly from the lowest soil horizon exposed (805), although later prehistoric and Romano-British pottery is also present. As no manual excavation was undertaken in this trench detailed conclusions cannot be reached other than that deposits of at least Medieval date are present.

5.8 Despite these problems in providing concise dating of all features present on the site, the relative concentrations of dateable finds suggest that on balance the area of activity represented by subsoil features in Trenches 3, 4, and 5 is most probably of late Iron Age and Romano-British date and represents a focus of settlement activity. Elsewhere, features maybe of this period, but Medieval activity, possibly of a settlement nature, is suspected to exist only in Trench 8. No features in Trench 1 can be assigned dates by the presence of ceramic artefacts and two sherds from the stratigraphically earliest feature in Trench 2, F206 maybe of Medieval origin, perhaps suggesting more dispersed Medieval activity across the site.

5.9 The presence of late Iron Age and Romano-British settlement activity is an important addition to the local archaeological record, particularly in this valley position below the Iron Age hillfort of Hambledon Hill. Previous archaeological investigation in this topographic zone, in the Everley Water Meadow to the south (Mercer 1985) revealed a similar sequence of hillwash deposits containing Medieval and late Iron Age to Romano-British finds. Here these overburden deposits sealed extensive late Bronze Age activity, evidence of which is only hinted at in the current investigation by the presence of occasional pottery fragments of this period. The evidence for Medieval settlement activity within the site may not be surprising given the site's proximity to the Medieval church, but it is apparent that this is neither extensive, nor can it be directly associated with the presence of earthworks on the site.

5.10 The principal archaeological potential to the site lies in the presence of deposits associated with a late Iron Age and Romano-British settlement. Remains of this period should be anticipated over much of the site, except in the area of the former pond, but it is apparent from current evidence that the principal focus of activity lies in the centre of the site and in a zone of the development where parking only is proposed. Here, the presence of deep overburden provides an opportunity for preserving those archaeological deposits *in situ*. To the north of this zone deposits are of a differing character, less easily dated and appear less intense. Proposed building construction in this area is likely to involve the excavation of footings and service trenches to depths greater than c. 0.5m and will disturb horizons where archaeological deposits exist. Similarly in the SE zone of the development, the excavation of footings and service trenches is likely to affect remains of Medieval, and possibly earlier, date at depths of less than 1m.

6. References

Mercer, R., 1985 'Everley Water Meadow, Iwerne Steepleton, Dorset' *PDNHAS Vol 106* (1984), 110 - 111

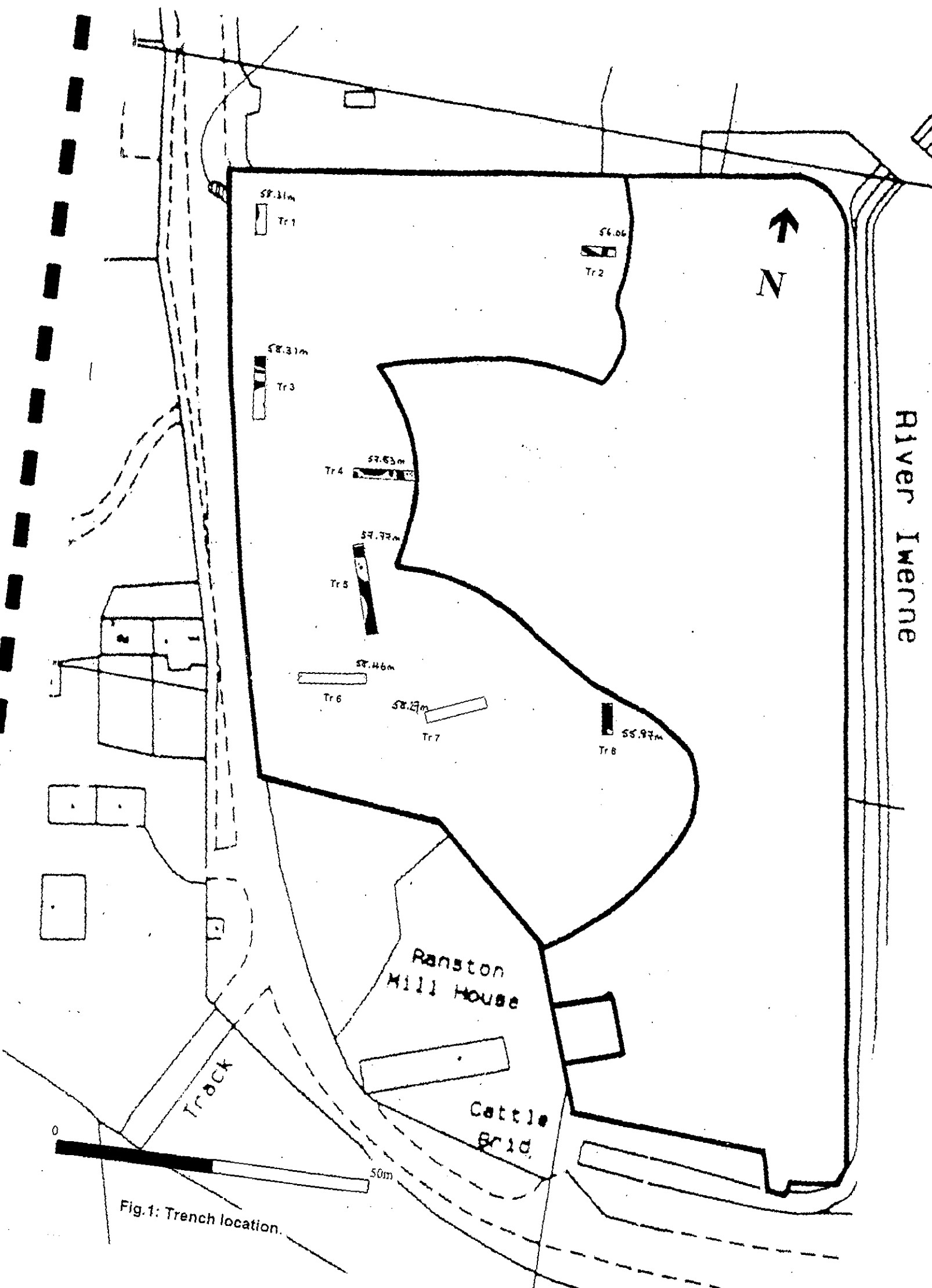


Fig.1: Trench location.

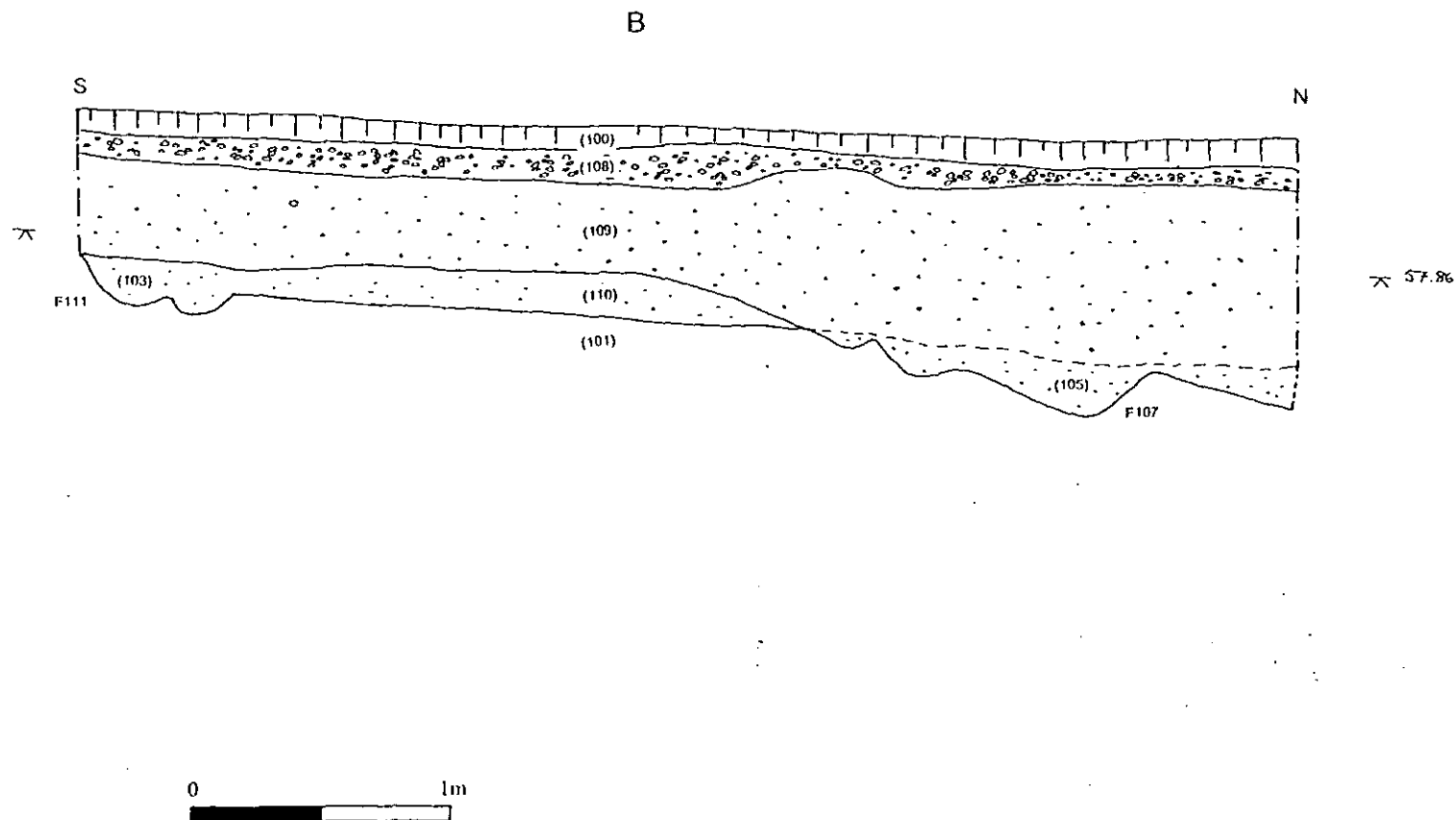
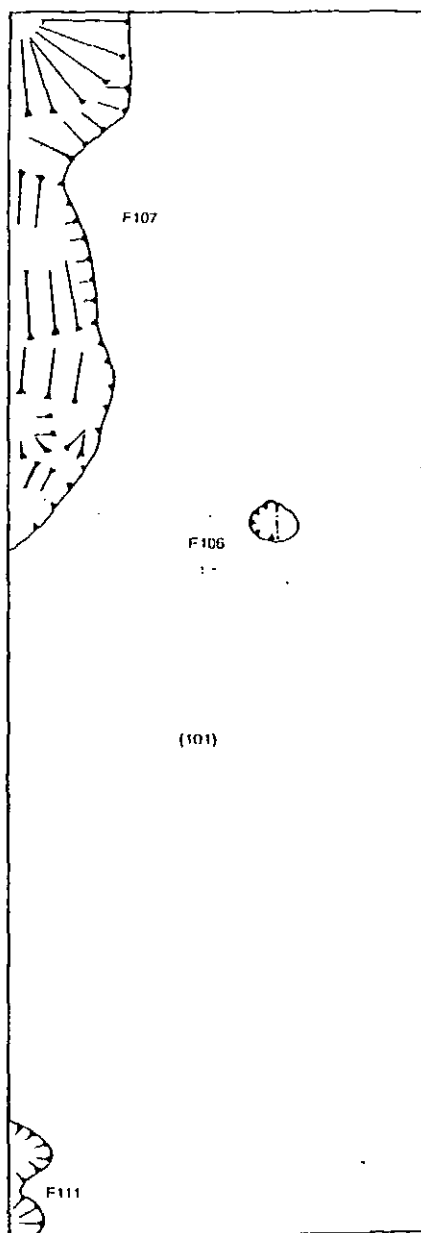


Fig.2: Plan and section of Trench 1

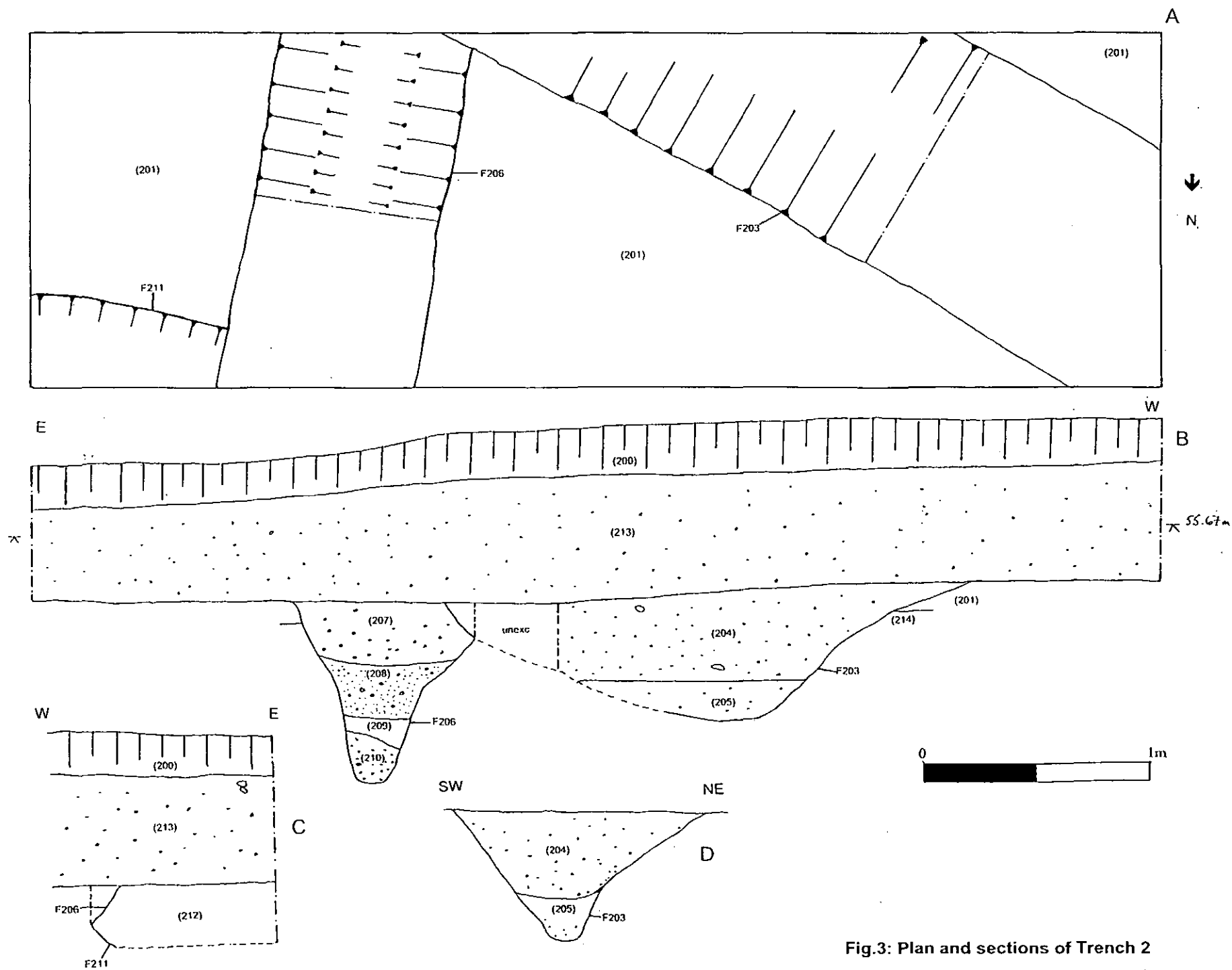


Fig.3: Plan and sections of Trench 2

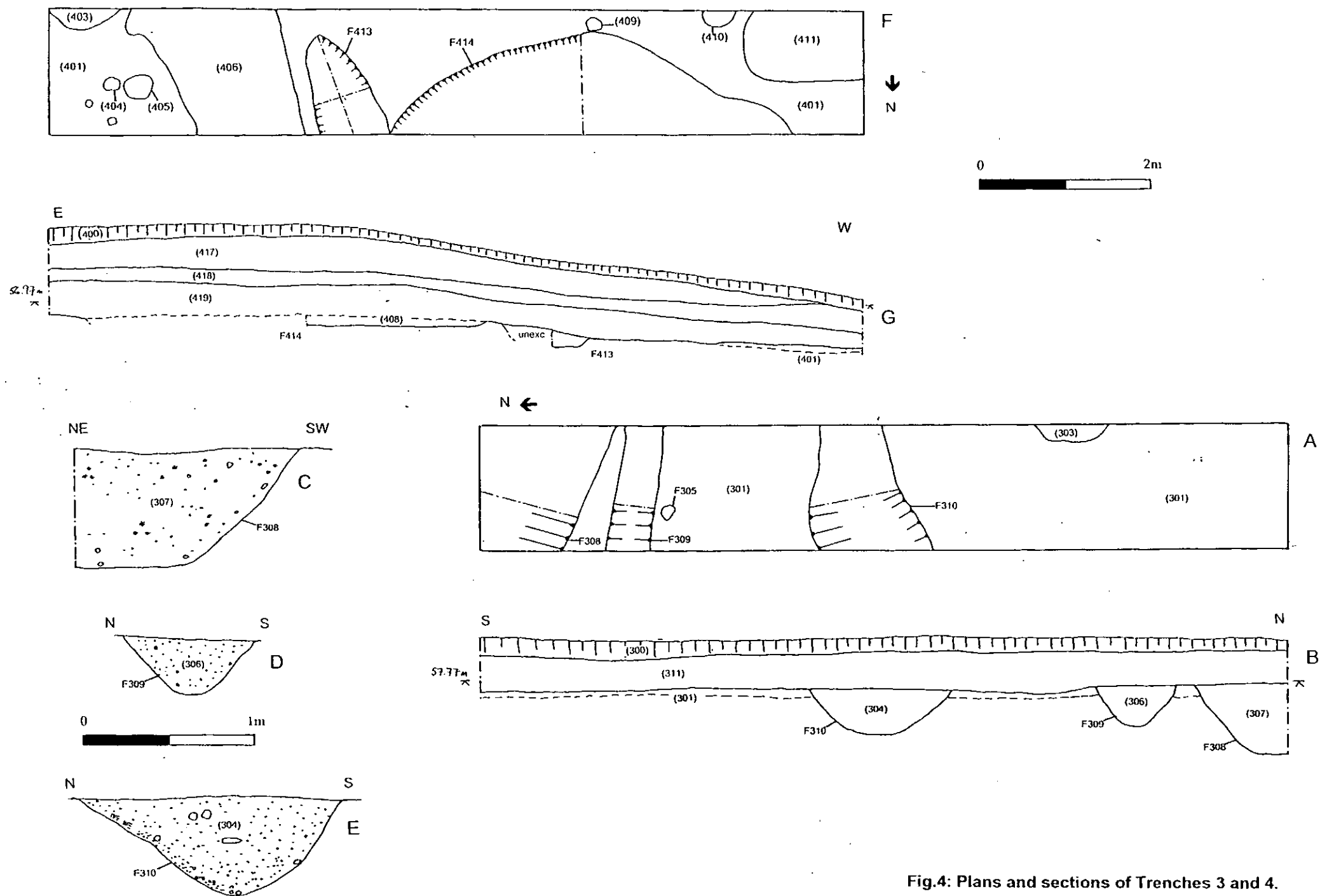


Fig.4: Plans and sections of Trenches 3 and 4.

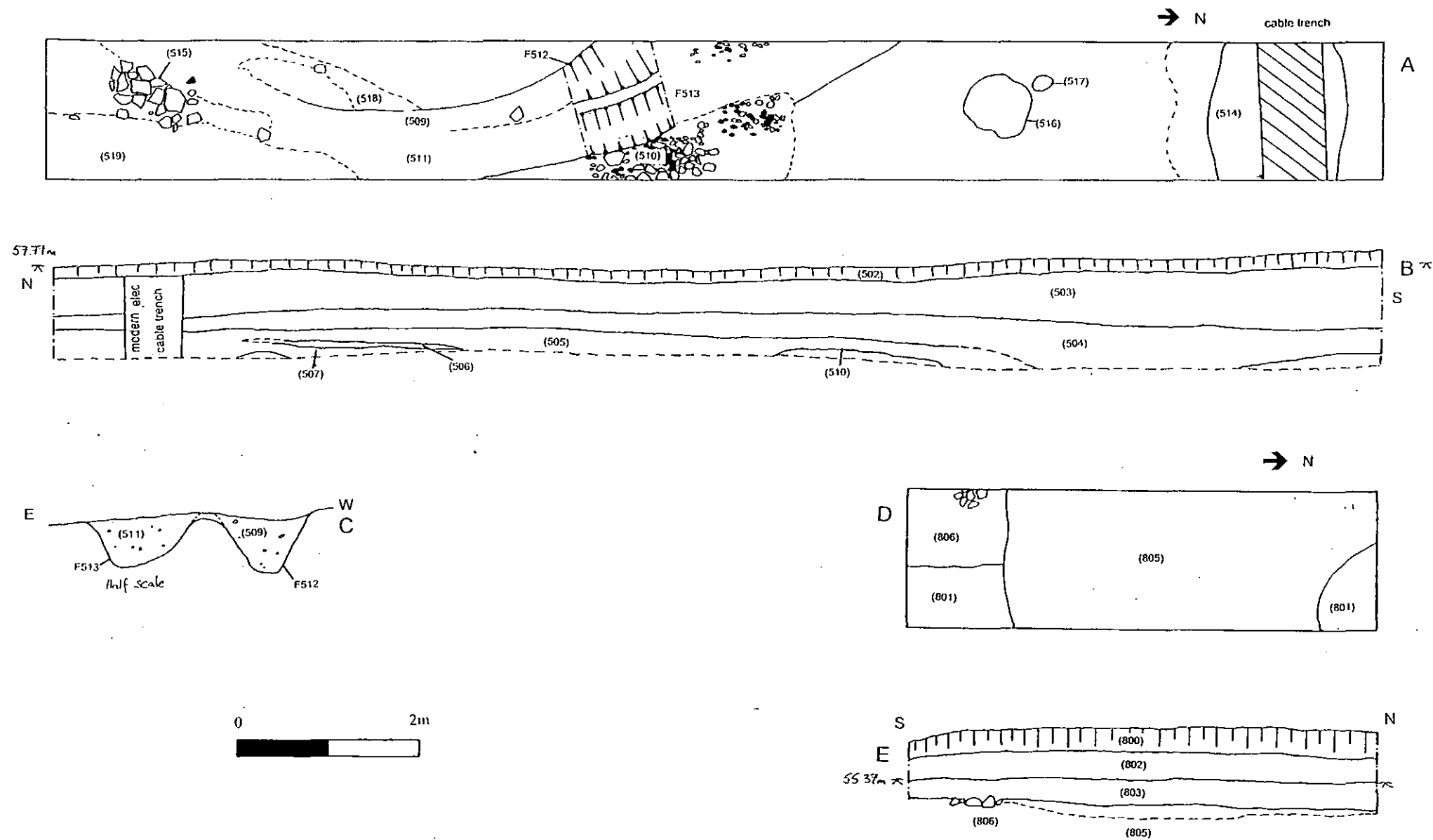


Fig.5: Plan and section of Trenches 5 and 8.