



Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

An Archaeological Evaluation Of

**land at The Forge
Slimbridge
Gloucestershire**

**For Mark Snook Planning
on behalf of Richard Barton**



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Archaeology Service
Environment Directorate

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Details

Site address: Land at The Forge, Churchend, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, GL2 7BL
Report Title: An Archaeological Evaluation of Land at The Forge, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire
OS NGR: 373926 203579
Site type: Evaluation
Client: Mark Snook Planning on behalf of Richard Barton
GSMR No: 35581
DC ref: 475.33.5
Planning Ref: SDC/S09/2176/FUL
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Date of report: 29th June 2010
Author: Nathan Thomas
Recipient museum: Museum in the Park, Stroud
Archived finds: Yes

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Summary

Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service was commissioned by Mark Snook Planning on behalf of Richard Barton to carry out an archaeological evaluation of land at The Forge, Churchend, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, in connection with a planning application, (SDC/S09/2176/FUL), for the construction of 3 dwellings and associated parking and access routes. The evaluation was undertaken at the request of the Senior Archaeological Officer of Gloucestershire County Council as the site was thought to contain archaeological deposits associated with medieval settlement around the parish church of St. John the Evangelist may exist. Three trenches were excavated during the evaluation, with six archaeological features revealed. Dating evidence recovered from the features indicates a Roman and Medieval date for the deposits encountered. In Trench 1, three linear features were recorded, two probably date from the medieval period, ([103 and [107]), while feature [105] contained fragments of early Roman pottery. In Trench 2, linear feature [203] contained joining fragments of early Roman Savernake ware and animal bone fragments and is most likely of a 1st or 2nd century date. Feature [207] contained abraded fragments of probable Roman pot, flint and animal bone, however, its morphology and the degraded state of the finds may indicate a natural origin. Trench 3 contained a large pit, [304], that yielded a broad assemblage of imported and native Roman wares, flint, animal bone, fired clay and CBM. Dating of the pottery suggests an early 2nd century date for the filling of the pit. The archaeological evaluation revealed the presence of extant archaeological remains across the area of the development. The archaeological deposits encountered were negative features cut into the geological substrate between 0.78 and 0.96m below the present ground level. The features recorded indicate possible settlement from both the early Roman period, (1st to 2nd century AD), and the medieval period, (13th to 15th century). The range of Roman pottery recovered is similar to other sites within the locality such as Frochester, Frampton and Eastington and points to a densely occupied area in the early Roman period within this part of the Severn Valley. The medieval pottery is contemporary with both the deserted medieval village, to the east of the Site, and the church of St John the Evangelist, possibly confirming a continuation of settlement activity from this period within the development area.

1 Introduction

1.1 Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service (GCCAS) was commissioned by Mark Snook Planning on behalf of Richard Barton, to carry out an archaeological evaluation of land at The Forge, Churchend, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire (OS NGR 373926 203579), hereafter referred to as "the Site". The evaluation was conducted in connection with a planning application, (SDC/S09/2176/FUL), for the construction of 3 dwellings and associated parking and access routes at the Site. The evaluation was carried out on the 15th and 16th of June 2010 by Andrew Walsh and Nathan Thomas. The project was managed by Paul Nichols. Pottery analysis was conducted by Dr. Jane Timby.

1.2 The evaluation was completed in accordance with the requirements of the standard 'Brief for an Archaeological Field Evaluation' issued by the Senior Archaeological Officer of Gloucestershire County Council (Parry 2010). Specific requirements for the evaluation were detailed in the project design (Williams 2010). The work was also carried out in accordance with the 'Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation' produced by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008). GCCAS is an Institute for Archaeologists Registered Organisation (IfA RO 42).

2 Site location (Figure 1)

2.1 Slimbridge is located on the eastern bank of the River Severn approximately 20 kilometres southwest of Gloucester and 5 kilometres north of Dursley. The Forge lies on the southwest side of Churchend c.100m northwest of the parish Church of St. John the Evangelist.

2.2 The Site comprises the garden of The Forge and an orchard to the south, covering an area of 0.24ha. The development area is fairly level, at a height of 13m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), and is mainly grassed with patches of nettles and bracken interspersed among the fruit trees. Geologically the Site is located on Cheltenham Sand and Gravel overlying Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone (BGS 2010).

3 Archaeological, historical and cartographic background

3.1 Information regarding the historical and archaeological background of the study area and its immediate surroundings was sought from Gloucestershire County Council Sites and Monuments Record (GSMR).

3.2 The church of St John the Evangelist (GSMR 8387) lies to the east of the proposed development area and is considered to be the best example in the country of 13th century Early Gothic style. The nave with its four bay north and south arcades was built c.1200, and the church was restored in 1845.

3.3 An archaeological watching brief was carried out in 2003 by GCCAS at Ty-Taig, which lies opposite the Site on the eastern side of Churchend (GSMR 22334). The work recorded an undated ditch and a probable pit, which was also undated.

3.4 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by GCCAS in 1999 at Glebelands, Slimbridge in relation to an application to extend the burial ground of the Church of St John the Evangelist (GSMR 20591). Four trenches were excavated and archaeological features were recorded in three of these. In Trench 1, a ditch was interpreted as a drainage feature and although undated, 2nd - 4th century pottery was found in the trench and the ditch may therefore be Roman in date. Features identified in Trench 2 were thought to be the remains of Roman settlement. They are typical of the type of gullies dug as palisade trenches for roundhouses, and the fill of one was suggestive of deliberate backfilling to support a palisade wall. Associated features, including a possible pit and posthole, were identified.

In Trench 4, a deposit of soft silty sand and a possible remnant of a curvilinear feature bordering this were initially identified as prehistoric domestic features. However, the pottery assessment suggested that these features may be evidence for a previously unknown 5th century Saxon settlement. Fifty-eight sherds of pottery, from the lower part of a handmade vessel, were set into the soft sandy silt deposit and may be 5th century in date, (however given the state of knowledge of mid-late Saxon pottery in Gloucestershire, they may be slightly later). A large cut was interpreted as an enclosure ditch, continuing the line of the churchyard boundary shown on 19th and early 20th century maps.

3.5 The fields lying 190m to the east of the site are believed to contain the remains of Slimbridge deserted medieval village (GSMR 5261). House platforms, traces of foundations and a pond all surrounded by ridge and furrow are identifiable from aerial photographs.

3.6 Cartographic Evidence

The First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1880-84 (OS 1880-84) shows the Site much as it is today, with the forge labelled as the Smithy and a small structure located adjacent to the northern boundary. The main area of the Site is shown as an orchard. The Second and Third Edition Ordnance Survey Maps (OS 1903 and 1921-22) show the addition of a small structure adjacent to the existing building and a small structure lying on the boundary with what is now called Rose Lea.

4 Purpose of the evaluation

4.1 The purpose of the evaluation was *“to gain information about the archaeological resource ... including its presence or absence, character and extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and relative quality, in order to make an assessment of its worth in the appropriate context, leading to: the formulation of a strategy for the preservation or management of those remains; and/or the formulation of an appropriate response or mitigation strategy to planning applications or other proposals which may affect adversely such archaeological remains, or enhance them; and/or the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research.”* (IfA 2008).

5 Methodology

5.1 Three trenches were machine excavated using a toothless bucket. The location of the trenches is shown on Figure 2.

5.2 All deposits were recorded on pro-forma context sheets and plan and section drawings were made on pre-gridded waterproof draughting film. Site and trench location plans, based on the Ordnance Survey maps, were prepared. Levels above Ordnance Datum (aOD) were recorded for archaeological deposits as required in the brief.

5.3 The site archive will be temporarily stored at Shire Hall, Gloucester under a unique site code, GSMR 35581, issued by the County Sites and Monuments Record Officer. It is intended that it will eventually be deposited with the Museum in the Park, Stroud.

6 Results of the evaluation (Figures 3, 4 and 5)

6.1 The results of the evaluation are outlined below, with the deposits discussed in stratigraphic order starting with the earliest. Cut numbers are shown in square brackets [] all other context numbers are shown in round brackets ().

6.2 Trench 1 (Plate 1 and Figure 3)

6.2.1 Trench 1 was located towards the northern boundary of the orchard. Its intended position was closer to the area of The Forge and the northern part of the development, however, a live electric cable running across the area necessitated it be moved further to the south. The trench was orientated approximately northwest to southeast and measured 17.7m in length and 1.5m in width. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.8m below the present ground level. The earliest deposit encountered was the undisturbed natural geology, (102), consisting of a brownish yellow clayey silt with sand and occasional patches of compact gravel. The natural formed the base of the trench at a height of between 12.24m and 12.28m aOD.

6.2.2 Three archaeological features cut deposit (102). At the northwest end of the trench, cut [103] was a 1.6m wide linear feature running perpendicular to the axis of the trench and oriented approximately northeast to southwest. The sides of the cut were fairly steep, with a gentler incline present at the break in slope to the southeast, and a slightly concave base. The depth of the cut was 0.58m below the base of the trench at a height of 11.70m aOD. The cut contained a single fill, (104), a mid greyish brown clayey silt with sand. The fill contained a number of large disarticulated mammal bones and two sherds of pottery, comprising a large sherd of Roman Savernake ware dating from the 1st or 2nd century and a small sherd of medieval Herefordshire border ware dating from the 13th to 15th century. Feature [103] was interpreted as a drain or field boundary of medieval date. Cut [105] was located 0.8m to the southeast of [103], and measured 2.5m in width and was again oriented northeast to southwest. The sides of the cut were both fairly shallow at an angle of approximately 45°, apart from a sharp change in slope to 90° on the southeast side, with a flat base. The depth of the cut was 0.46m below the bottom of the trench at a height of 11.65m aOD. A single fill, (106), was excavated from the feature, this consisted of a firm mid yellowish brown clayey silt that contained three sherds of Roman pottery and fragmented animal bone. The pot assemblage included a single sherd of Severn Valley ware and two sherds of an undiagnostic black micaceous ware all probably dating to the 1st to 2nd century. It is likely that this feature is a field drain or boundary that dates to the early Roman period. Cut [107] was a shallow linear feature, 1.4m wide, located towards the southeast end of the trench. The sides of the feature were shallow with a u-shaped profile. The bottom of the feature was located at a depth of 0.16m below the base of the trench at a height of 12.34m aOD. A single fill (108) consisting of a friable light greyish brown silt was recorded and contained seven small fragments of medieval pottery, see appendix 1. Feature [107] was interpreted as a possible plough furrow or shallow drainage ditch of 13th to 14th century date.

6.2.3 Overlying all the features was the subsoil (101), a mid yellowish brown clayey silt, with occasional inclusions of small (<0.05m diameter) sub-angular stones. This was sealed by the topsoil (100), a dark greyish black silt with common inclusions of modern glazed china fragments and occasional iron nails.

6.3 Trench 2 (Plate 2 and Figure 4)

6.3.1 Trench 2 was located towards the southwest corner of the orchard and adjacent to the western boundary. The trench was orientated approximately northeast to southwest and measured 20m in length and 1.5m in width. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.96m below the present ground level. The earliest deposit encountered was the undisturbed natural geology, (202), consisting of a brownish yellow clayey silt with sand and occasional patches of compact gravel. The natural formed the base of the trench at a height of between 12.01m and 12.12m aOD.

6.3.2 Two features were recorded as cutting (202). At the southwest end of the trench, the terminus of a linear cut [203] was revealed. The cut measured 0.8m in width with 1.2m in length of ditch present within the trench on a north-south orientation. The sides of the cut were variable, with the east side close to vertical and the west side at angle of around 45°. The base of the feature was concave and located 0.28m below the bottom of the trench at a height of 11.81m aOD. The feature contained a single fill, (204), a firm mid yellowish brown clayey silt containing pottery and animal bone. The pottery consisted of five joining sherds of Savernake beaded rim jar probably dating from the 1st century AD and produced in North Wiltshire. The animal bone included skull fragments of a sheep/goat and other small fragmented pieces of long bones. It is likely that this feature is a drain or gully from the early Roman period. At the northeast end of the trench, an irregular discrete feature, [207] was revealed. This feature measured 2.16m in length, with 0.9m in width of the feature evident within the trench. The feature had a gently sloping side to the southwest with a distinct break in slope defining a more pit like feature with steeper sides towards the northeast. The base of the feature was concave and located 0.26m below the bottom of the trench at a height of 11.94m aOD. A single fill was excavated from the feature, (208), which consisted of a mid yellowish brown clayey silt with a mottled appearance due to iron staining. The fill contained a single small flint flake with a brown patination, two small abraded fragments of early Roman pot and two very degraded fragments of animal bone. Due to the irregular nature of this feature and the abraded state of the finds, it is probable that it is a natural feature, for example a tree throw, however, an anthropogenic origin cannot be ruled out.

6.3.3 Overlying these features was the subsoil (201), a mid yellowish brown clayey silt, with occasional inclusions of small (<0.05m diameter) sub-angular stones. Within the southwest terminal section of the trench, a further possible feature was revealed, [205], cut through (201). The cut was approximately 0.2m in depth with 0.4m in width exposed within the section. The base of the feature was flat and located on the base of the trench at a height of 12.01m aOD. The feature contained a single fill, (206), a mid brownish grey clayey silt with occasional inclusions of small stones (<5%). Within the fill, the articulated hind remains of a medium sized mammal were recovered. The full extent of the cut was not clear and it is possible that this feature has a natural origin, having been created by the burrowing action of animals. The subsoil (201) was sealed by the topsoil (200), a dark greyish black silt with common inclusions of modern glazed china fragments and occasional iron nails, as seen in Trench 1.

6.4 Trench 3 (Plate 5)

6.4.1 Trench 3 was located near the southeast corner of the orchard. The trench was orientated approximately northeast to southwest and measured 22m in length and 1.5m in width. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.78m below the present ground level. The earliest deposit encountered was the undisturbed natural geology, (306), consisting of a brownish yellow clayey silt with sand and occasional patches of compact gravel. The natural formed the base of the trench at a height of between 12.54m and 12.28m aOD.

6.4.2 Two archaeological features were recorded as cutting (306). At the southwest end of the trench was a linear cut, [302], running on a northwest to southeast orientation. It was filled by (303), a light yellowish brown silty clay with inclusions of modern ceramic building material (CBM) and animal bone. Due to the modern date of the material identified within (303) it was not excavated. Located northeast of [302] was [304], the cut of a large pit. This feature measured 3.7m in diameter and at least 1.5m in width. The sides were gently sloping with a concave base located 0.43m below the bottom of the trench, at a height of 12.09m aOD. A single fill (305) was excavated from within [304]. This consisted of a mid greyish brown sandy clayey silt with charcoal flecking (2%) and occasional sub angular small stones (<0.1m). The fill was found to be increasingly silty towards the base of the feature. Finds recovered from (305) included 47 sherds of Roman pot, flint, CBM and fired clay. The pot assemblage included a mixture of imported continental and regional wares as well as more local wares dating from between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, see appendix 1 for the full pottery analysis. Feature [304] has been interpreted as a rubbish or cess pit of Romano-British date with the ceramic evidence suggesting it was infilled during the early 2nd century AD.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Three trenches were excavated during the evaluation at The Forge, with six archaeological features revealed. Dating evidence, in the form of pottery recovered from the features indicates a Roman and Medieval date for the deposits encountered. In Trench 1, three linear features were recorded, two probably date from the medieval period, ([103 and [107]), while feature [105] contained fragments of early Roman pottery. In Trench 2, linear feature [203] contained joining fragments of early Roman Savernake ware and animal bone fragments, and is most likely of a 1st or 2nd century date. Feature [207] contained abraded fragments of probable Roman pot, flint and animal bone, however, its morphology and the degraded state of the finds may indicate a natural origin. Trench 3 contained a large pit, [304], that yielded a broad assemblage of imported and native Roman wares, flint, animal bone, fired clay and CBM. Dating of the pottery suggests an early 2nd century date.

7.2 The archaeological evaluation revealed the presence of extant archaeological remains across the area of the development. The archaeological deposits encountered were negative features cut into the geological substrate between 0.78 and 0.96m below the present ground level. The features recorded indicate possible settlement from both the early Roman period, (1st to 2nd century AD), and the medieval period, (13th to 15th century). The range of Roman pottery recovered is similar to other sites within the locality such as Frochester, Frampton and Eastington and points to a densely occupied area in the early Roman period within this part of the Severn Valley. The medieval pottery is contemporary with both the deserted medieval village to the east of the Site and the church of St John the Evangelist, possibly confirming a continuation of settlement activity from this period across the development area.

8 References

- | | | |
|-------------|--------|--|
| BGS | 2010 | British Geological Survey data held on County Council GIS |
| IfA | 2008 | <i>Standard and guidance for field evaluations</i> . Institute for Archaeologists |
| OS | 1880-4 | <i>Ordnance Survey First Edition County Series Map</i> , held on County Council GIS |
| OS | 1903 | <i>Ordnance Survey Second Edition County Series Map</i> , held on County Council GIS |
| OS | 1921-2 | <i>Ordnance Survey Third Edition County Series Map</i> , held on County Council GIS |
| OS | 2009 | <i>Ordnance Survey Map</i> . Digital Data held on County Council GIS. |
| Parry, C | 2010 | Standard brief for an archaeological evaluation |
| Williams, B | 2010 | <i>An archaeological field evaluation of Land at The Forge, Churchend, Slimbridge Gloucestershire. Project Design</i> . GCCAS Typescript report. |

Plates



Plate 1, Trench 1 looking southeast



Plate 2, Trench 2 looking northeast



Plate 3, Trench 3 looking southwest

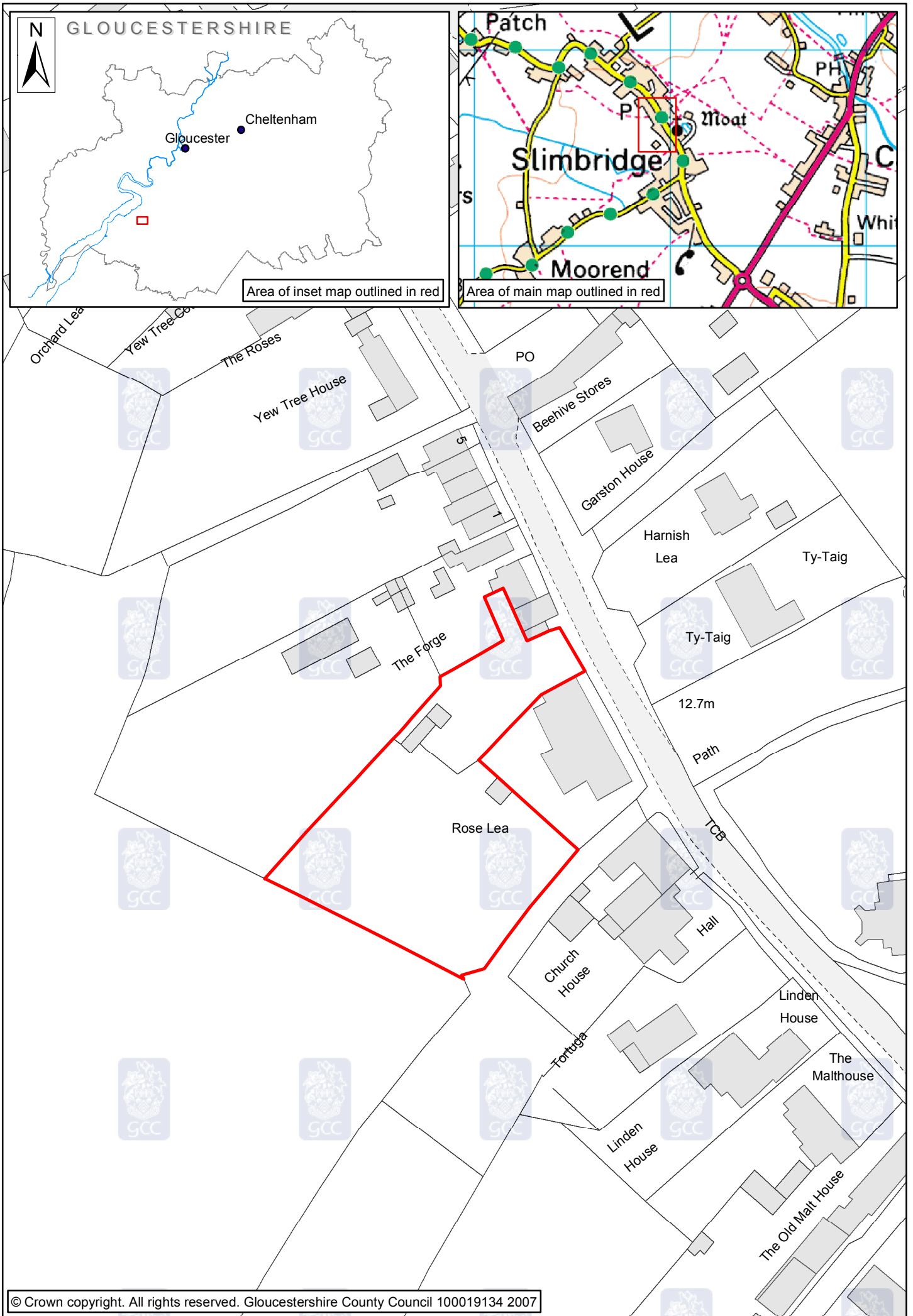


Figure 1: Site Location of The Forge, Churchend, Slimbridge: Site shown in red (Scale 1:1000)

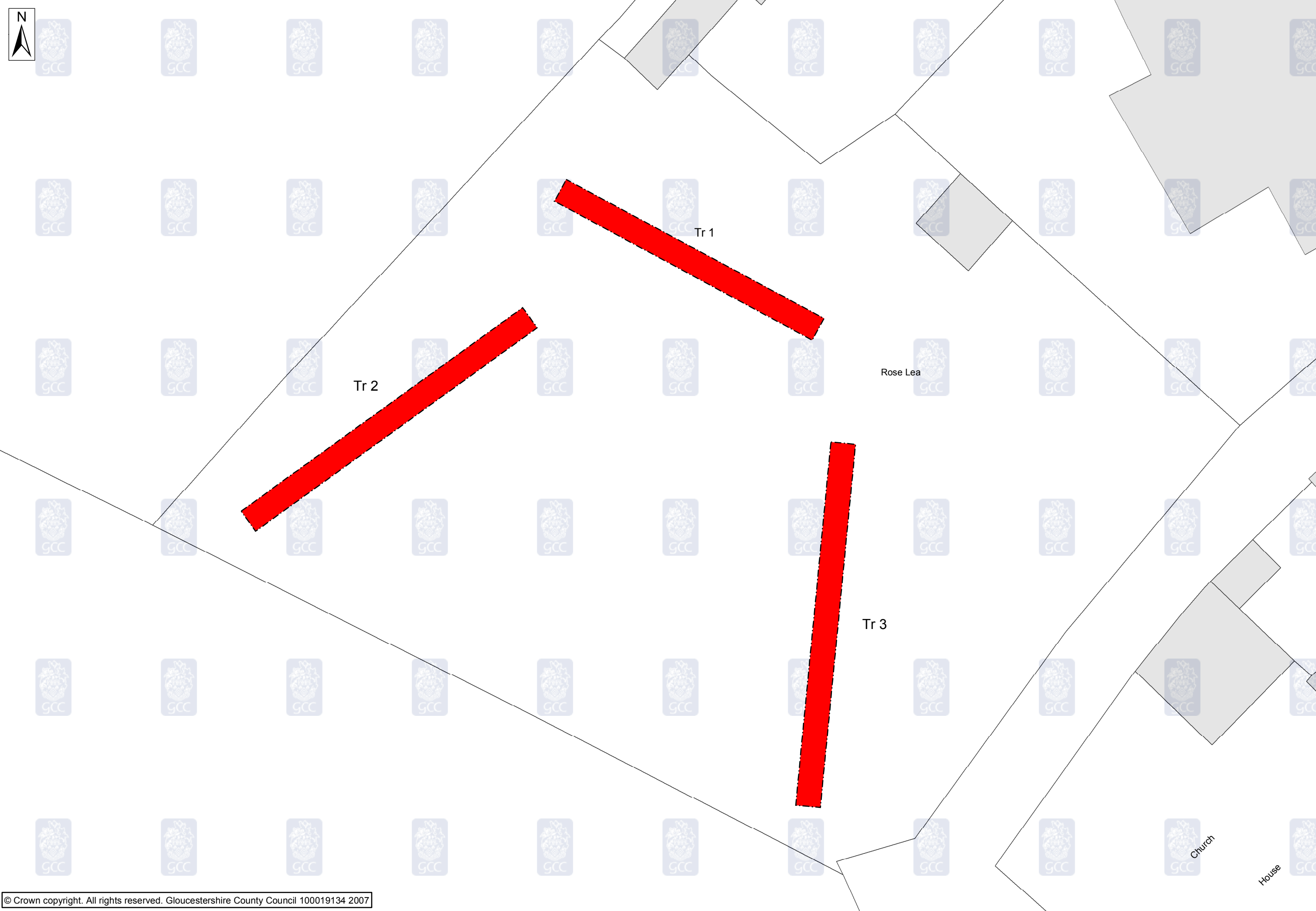
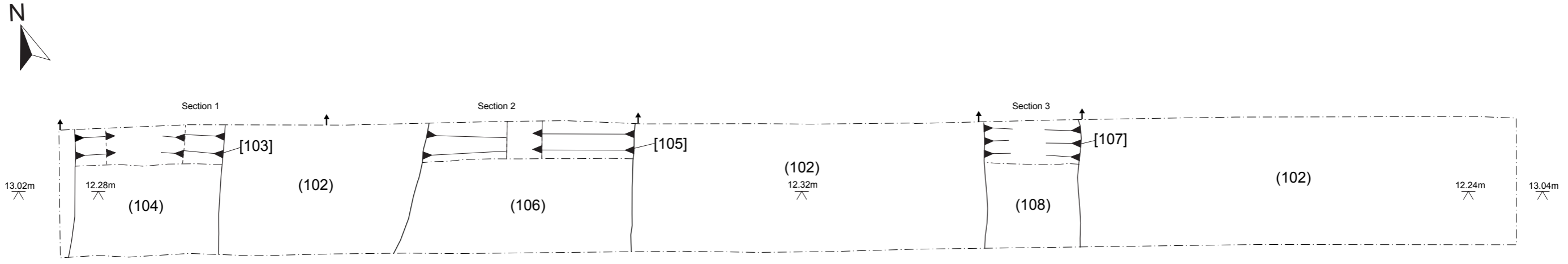
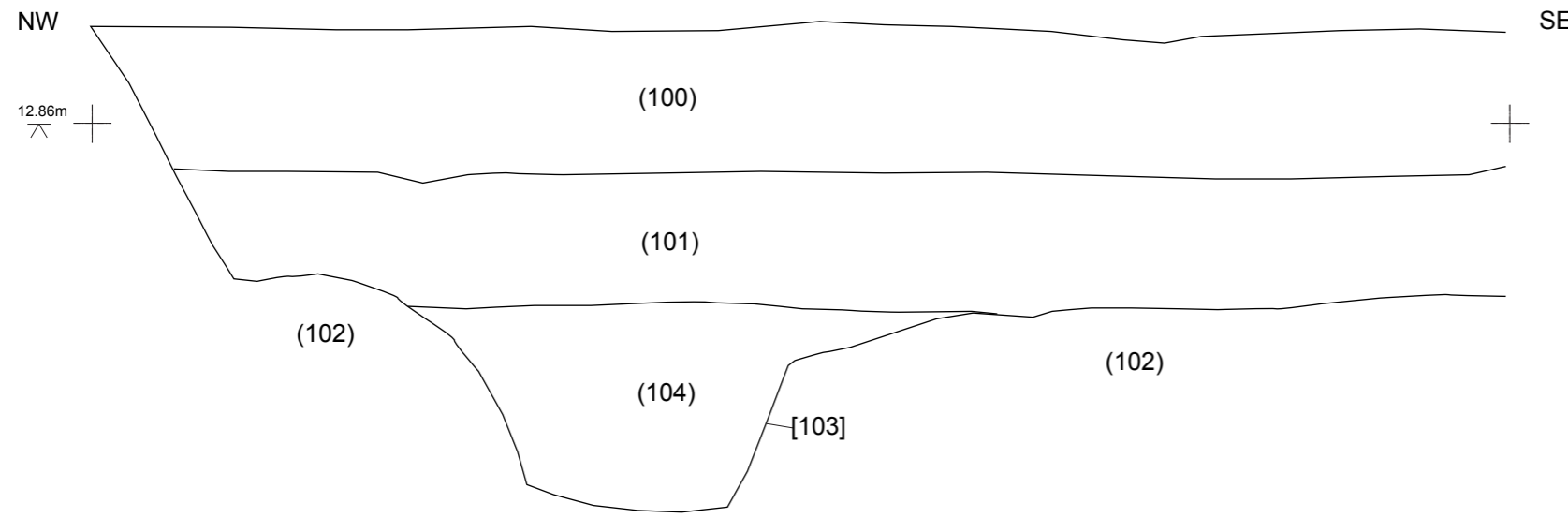


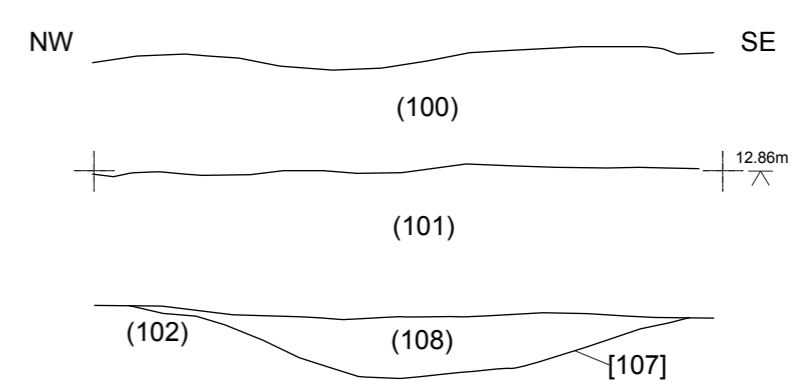
Figure 2: Trench location plan (Scale 1:200) @ A3



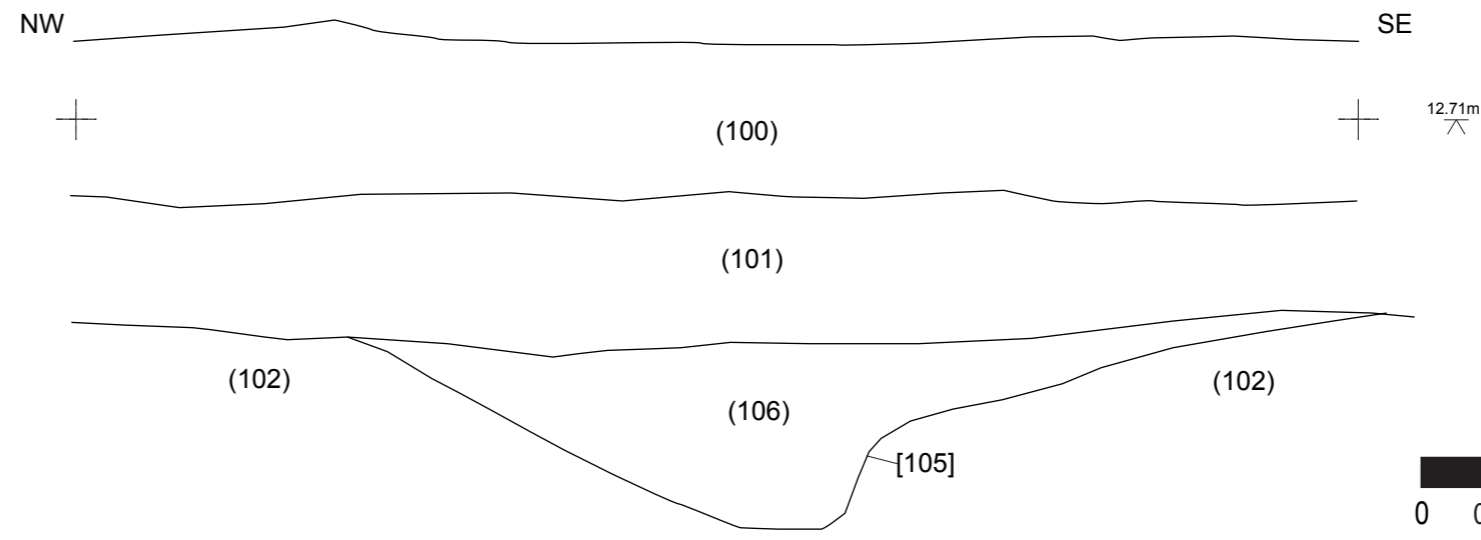
Plan of Trench 1 (Tr 1)



Section 1, Southwest facing section of [103]



Section 3, Southwest facing section of [107]



Section 2, Southwest facing section of [105]



Figure 3: Trench 1 Plan and sections of excavated features. Plan at 1:50, Sections at 1:20 @ A3

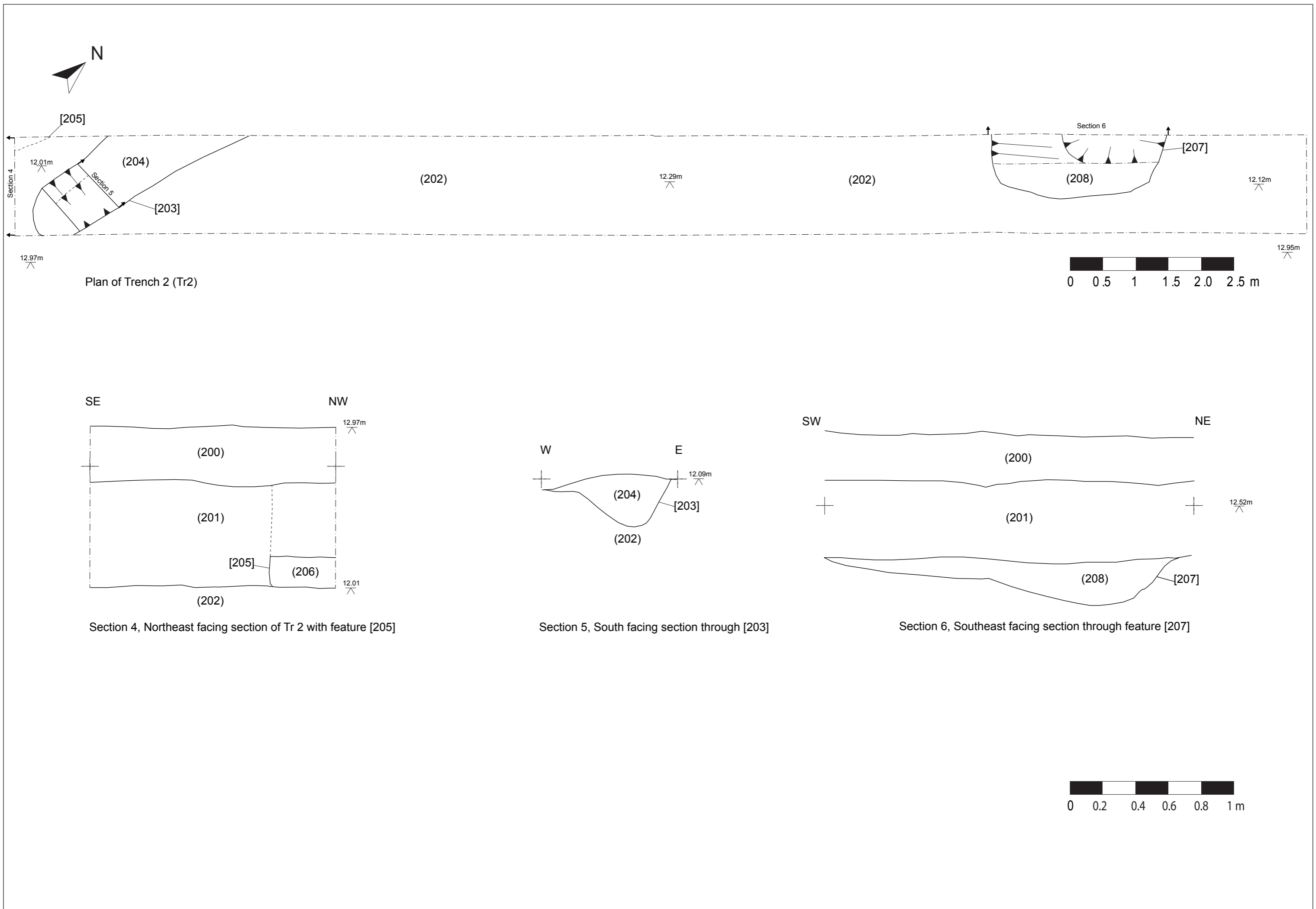


Figure 4: Trench 2 Plan and sections of excavated features. Plan at 1:50, Sections at 1:20 @ A3

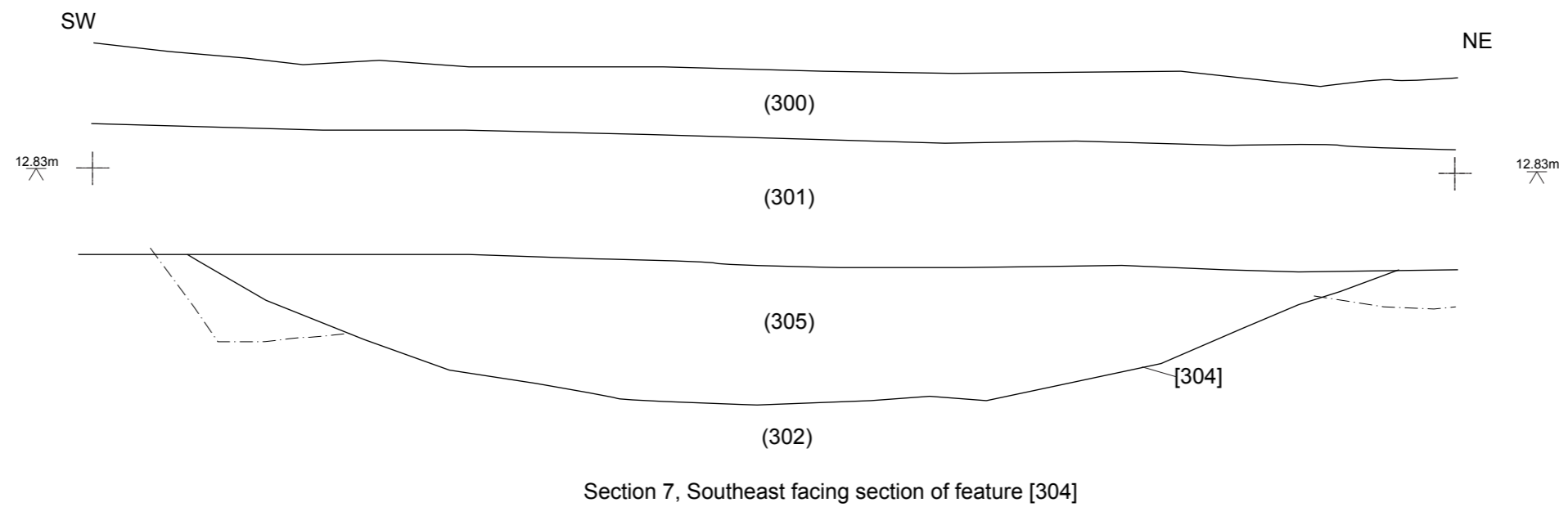
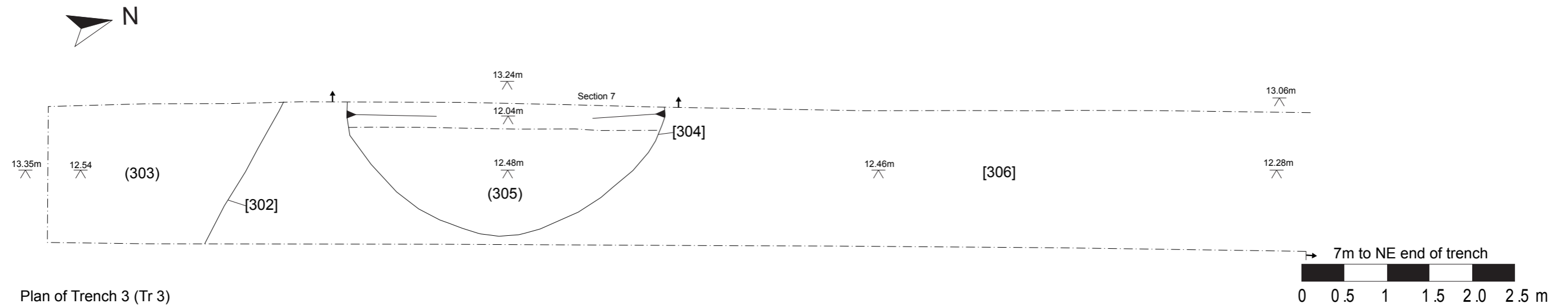


Figure 5: Trench 3 Plan and sections of excavated features. Plan at 1:50, Sections at 1:20 @ A3

Appendix 1

The pottery and other ceramic material by Dr. Jane Timby

1 Introduction

1.1 The archaeological evaluation resulted in the recovery of a small assemblage of 66 sherds of pottery, weighing 834 g, dating to the Roman and medieval periods. In addition two joining fragments of ceramic building material and a single small fragment of fired clay were found.

1.2 Pottery was recovered from trenches 1, 2 and 3, a total of six recorded contexts, the quantities ranging from a single sherd up to a maximum of 46 sherds from context (305). The sherds are in variable condition with a few moderately fresh and well-preserved pieces, occasionally joining, and some smaller, more abraded, fragmented sherds. The overall average sherd size of 12.6 g, rather lower than average for well-fired material, reflects this mixture.

1.3 For the purposes of the assessment the assemblage was scanned to assess its likely chronology and quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. Several sherds had fresh breaks and in terms of the quantification these are counted separately but in reality the total 66 sherds can be reduced to 58 sherds. The resulting data is summarized in Table 1.

2 Roman

2.1 Most of the assemblage comprises sherds of Roman date and, where this can be determined, specifically the early Roman period (1st-2nd century).

2.2 The earliest sherds are seven sherds of handmade Palaeozoic limestone-tempered ware present in contexts (208) and (305). This ware originates in the Iron Age but continues to feature in deposits through to the early 2nd century AD. It was probably made somewhere in the area of the Woolhope Hills, south of the Malverns, and was largely used to make jars including some very large storage vessels.

2.3 The remaining assemblage comprises a mixture of imported continental and regional imports alongside wares of more local origin.

2.4 Continental imports are represented by two sherds of samian, one from South Gaul; the other from Central Gaul; and a handle from a Baetican (South Spanish) olive-oil amphora, all recovered from context (305). Amongst the regional imports is a single sherd of Dorset black burnished ware, Savernake ware from North Wiltshire and several sherds from a black sandy ware decorated with a zone of tooled lattice, also possibly a Wiltshire product.

2.5 Amongst the named local wares are some pieces of oxidised Severn Valley ware, in particular three joining rimsherds from a tankard from context (305).

3 Medieval

3.1 Eight sherds of pottery of medieval date are present, all from Trench 1. These comprise a mixture of unglazed jar or cooking pot and glazed jug.

3.2 Context (104) produced a single bodysherd of Malvernian Border ware. The few splatters of glaze suggest this may have been from a jug.

3.3 The remaining medieval sherds all came from context (108) and include a sherd of Minety ware (North Wiltshire), Malvern Chase ware, three joining sherds from a sandy ware jar, possibly from the Worcester area and a sherd of green-glazed jug, probably also a Worcester product. In terms of date these wares span the later 12th to 15th centuries.

4 Ceramic building material and fired clay

4.1 Two small joining pieces of ceramic building material (CBM) were recovered from context (305). The pieces are quite degraded but probably come from a Roman roofing tile. The same context also produced a small amorphous fragment of fired clay of unknown purpose but by association is likely to be Roman in date.

5 Summary

5.1 In summary, Trench 1 produced a total of 14 sherds of pottery of mixed Roman and medieval date. Linear [103] produced a sherd of Roman and a sherd of medieval pottery and would thus appear to be a medieval feature. Linear [105] produced five Roman sherds which after joins represent three sherds. These are not particularly diagnostic but would intimate an early Roman date for this feature, although with such a small group the possibility of redeposition in a later feature cannot be discounted. The shallow linear feature [107] with seven medieval sherds is more conclusively of 13th-14th century date.

5.2 Trench 2 yielded just seven sherds from linear feature [203] and feature [207]. Linear [203] had five joining sherds from a Savernake beaded rim jar probably of 1st century AD date. Feature [207] produced just handmade native ware and could be of later Iron Age or early Roman date although the latter is more likely.

5.3 Trench 3 produced a small assemblage of 48 sherds from the large pit feature [304]. This includes a mixture of 1st and 2nd-century wares the latest pieces suggesting it was filled in the early 2nd century.

6 Potential

6.1 This is a very small assemblage but makes a useful contribution to identifying various phases of activity in and around Slimbridge. The range of pottery is similar to that from many other sites in the locality such as Frocester, Frampton and Eastington and points to quite a densely occupied area in this part of the Severn Valley in the early Roman period.

6.2 No further pottery analysis is recommended.

Table 1, summary of pottery by context

Trench	Context	Fabric	Form	Weight	Sherds	Date
1	104	Herefordshire border ware		13	1	C13th-15th
1	104	Savernake ware		170	1	C1-C2
1	106	Severn Valley ware variant		16	1	Roman
1	106	black micaceous ware		11	4	Roman
1	108	Minety ware		6	1	C13-15th
1	108	Malvern Chase ware	cooking pot	9	2	C12-14th
1	108	sandy ware (?Worcestershire)	cooking pot	24	3	C12-15th
1	108	?Worcester glazed ware	jug	16	1	C13-15th
2	204	Savernake ware	bead rim jar	105	5	C1-C2
2	208	Palaeozoic limestone-tempered ware		6	2	C1 BC/AD - eC2
3	305	Baetican amphora	amphora handle	307	3	C1-C3
3	305	Dorset black burnished ware	jar	14	1	C2-C4
3	305	ceramic building material		27	1	Roman
3	305	Savernake ware	jar	20	1	C1-C2
3	305	Severn Valley ware	tankard	30	7	C1-C2
3	305	Palaeozoic limestone-tempered ware	jar	17	5	C1BC-AD - eC2
3	305	black micaceous ware		1	1	Roman
3	305	South Gaulish samian		1	1	C1
3	305	Central Gaulish samian		3	1	C2
3	305	Wiltshire black sandy ware	?bowl	65	26	C1-C2
3	305	fired clay		10	1	no date
TOTAL				871	69	