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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION**

**OF LAND AT
BILHAM FARM
PARK FARM EAST
ASHFORD
KENT**

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Summary

Archaeology South-East have carried out an archaeological evaluation at Bilham Farm, Park Farm East, Ashford, Kent as part of a predetermination survey prior to development. A total of 39, 25m trenches were excavated, 34 of which produced archaeological remains. These are mostly pits, post-hole and gullies, several of which have been dated to the Late Iron Age-Early Romano-British period. The remains are thought to represent a possible small settlement or farmstead concentrated on the higher ground at the east / northeast of the site with associated field systems spreading into the lower ground to the west / southwest. Several features of an earlier prehistoric date were also identified and also one possible Saxo-Norman gully.

Archaeology South-East

Archaeology South-East is a division of the Field Archaeology Unit, University College London, one of the largest groupings of academic archaeologists in the country. Consequently, Archaeology South-East has access to the conservation, computing and environmental backup of the college, as well as a range of other archaeological services.

The Field Archaeology Unit and South Eastern Archaeological Services (which became Archaeology South-East in 1996) were established in 1974 and 1991 respectively. Although field projects have been conducted world-wide, the Field Archaeology Unit retains a special interest in south-east England with the majority of our contract and consultancy work concentrated in Sussex, Kent, Greater London and Essex.

Based in the local community, the Field Archaeology Unit sees an important part of its work as explaining the results to the broader public. Public lectures, open days, training courses and liaison with local archaeological societies are aspects of its community-based approach.

Drawing on experience of the countryside and towns of the south east of England the Unit can give advice and carry out surveys at an early stage in the planning process. By working closely with developers and planning authorities it is possible to incorporate archaeological work into developments with little inconvenience.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Archaeology South-East (a division of University College London Field Archaeology Unit) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land at Bilham Farm, Park Farm East, Ashford, Kent (NGR TR 0240 3900 centred) (Fig. 1).
- 1.2 The site has been identified for potential future development. The evaluation forms part of a predetermination survey to assess archaeological significance of the proposed development area.
- 1.3 Previous work has shown the immediate vicinity of the current site to be potentially archaeologically significant (see 2.7). Because of this, and the significant threat posed to any archaeological remains by the proposed development, evaluation by trial trench was deemed appropriate. A Specification for this work was provided by CgMs Consulting. This report details this first stage evaluation.
- 1.4 The aims of the trial trench evaluation were to establish the presence/absence, date, nature and extent of any archaeological remains that may be adversely affected by the proposed development. This would allow informed decisions to be made regarding the likely impact of the proposed development on the archaeological resource and thus mitigation measures to be formulated to limit those impacts.
- 1.5 The Geological Survey of Great Britain (sheet 305) shows the underlying geology to be Weald Clay. Immediately to the west there is Alluvium. The site is located on agricultural land, a crop having just been harvested at the time of the evaluation. The local topography consists of high ground forming a plateau at the northeast corner of the site (40-41mOD) sloping down to the west and southwest with the lowest ground at the southwest corner (37-38mOD). This low ground extends to the west, beyond the development area, forming a river valley before rising again in the vicinity of the Park Farm excavations (see 2.4) approximately 500m to the west / southwest.
- 1.6 The on-site work was undertaken by Jim Stevenson, Gary Bishop, Chris Derham, Rob Beck and Alice Thorne between 14th August and 5th September 2003. The project was managed by Neville Hall (Project Manager) and by Luke Barber (Post-Excavation Manager).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND AND PREVIOUS WORK

- 2.1 The site is located in an area of south Ashford that has been subject to a series of formal excavations in recent years. These have highlighted the development of the prehistoric and Roman landscape in the area and are briefly summarised below.

- 2.2 Archaeology South-East have carried out a series of excavations at Brisley Farm located some 3.3km to the west. This work revealed part of a Late Bronze Age field system overlain by a Late Iron Age settlement which developed from c.150BC through to and post, the Roman Conquest in 43AD. This settlement included enclosed and unenclosed elements, a possible cremation cemetery and other evidence for 'ritual' and 'religious' activity. Of national importance were two warrior-burials placed within square ditched enclosures located within the settlement area and dated to approximately 0-50AD (Johnson 2003 forthcoming).
- 2.3 Westhawk Farm (Booth *et. al.* forthcoming) lies c.2.5km to the west and is an important Roman crossroads settlement site, which may have developed after the abandonment of Brisley Farm. Christchurch School (Stevenson forthcoming), located 2.8km to the west revealed evidence for a Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age field system and some limited settlement evidence. Park Farm, has just been excavated and shows further Iron Age occupation (Casper Johnson *pers.com.*)
- 2.4 Park Farm is located 500m to the west / northwest on the other side of the river valley from the site. Here there was extensive evidence of a large Late Iron Age settlement with associated field systems Casper Johnson *pers.com.*
- 2.5 The Kent County Council Archaeological Officer has also highlighted the sites potential for the Palaeolithic period.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 A pattern of 36 trenches, each of 25m length, was produced by CgMs Consulting and agreed by the KCC Archaeological Officer (Fig. 2). This pattern represented approximately 4% of the total development area. Contingency trenching was also available should it become necessary to further clarify any remains exposed. In the event three extra trenches (T37-39) were cut.
- 3.2 The trenches were set out using set out using a total station.
- 3.3 The trenches were excavated under constant archaeological supervision using a 13 ton 360 degree excavator equipped with a 1.8m wide toothless bucket, mostly in very dry, hot conditions. The underlying substrate was found to dry hard almost instantly.
- 3.4 The trial trenches were taken to a level slightly below that of the initial horizon of the underlying Weald Clay (or to the top of any significant archaeological deposit; whichever was the higher). Previous work on this geology has shown that this over-cutting of the 'natural' slightly is necessary to adequately identify archaeological features. Any features identified were immediately marked with line paint.

- 3.5 The sections of the trenches were cleaned at either end and a mid point to observe and record their stratigraphy. The removed spoil was scanned for the presence of any unstratified, artefacts.
- 3.6 Unless otherwise stated, all pits were half sectioned and ditches sampled by segment.
- 3.7 The trenches were left open for two weeks. During this time they were periodically checked and further features identified as they 'weathered out'.
- 3.8 All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were recorded according to the procedures in the draft ASE Field Manual, using standard ASE context record sheets.
- 3.9 All encountered archaeological features and deposits were leveled to the Ordnance Datum by reference to a bench mark at Cheeseman's Green Farm
- 3.10 A full photographic record of the work was kept as appropriate and will form part of the site archive. The archive is presently held at the Archaeology South-East office in Ditchling and will be offered to a suitable local museum in due course.

4.0 RESULTS

- 4.1 All the trenches excavated exhibited a similar stratigraphy of dark grey brown silty clay ploughsoil overlying the natural orange brown Weald Clay. The ploughsoil was at its thinnest in the plateau area (Trenches 30 to 36) where it ranged from 0.20m to 0.25mm in depth. This layer increased in thickness down the slope and towards the far southwest corner of the site, ranging in thickness from 0.30m to 0.55m. The underlying substrate variously contained patches of manganese staining and areas of thicker, heavier sterile grey clay (hand sampled and shown to be natural variations). All features identified were sealed by the ploughsoil and cut into the Weald Clay. A total of 90 possible archaeological features were identified in 34 of the 39 trenches (see Figs 3-8 for plans and sections).

Except where otherwise stated, all the trenches were of 25m in length and 1.80-1.90m in width.

Cut numbers are shown [xxx]. Fill numbers are shown (xxx) in the following text.

- 4.2 Trench 1 had a maximum depth of 0.40m. One gully, [236], was identified. No unstratified finds were collected from the spoil heaps.
- 4.2.1 Feature [236] was aligned north-east to south-west and had a steep 'V'

shaped profile. It possessed an upper fill of light to mid grey silty clay (237) and a basal mid grey silty clay fill, (238), which was probably formed by standing water when the ditch was in use. This ditch appears to be on the same alignment as [243] in Trench 5 and [244] in Trench 13 and it is likely that it continues across the field in this direction. No finds were recovered from this feature.

4.3 Trench 2 had a maximum depth of 0.50m. One ditch, [255], was identified and sampled. This trench was extended by six metres to the north to clarify the alignment of this feature. No unstratified finds were collected from the spoil heaps.

4.3.1 Ditch [255] formed a corner at this point, running north to south and west-northwest to east-southeast. The corner was sampled by a 2m segment. The ditch exhibited steeply sloping sides and a slightly undulating base and had three fills, (256), (257) and (258). Fill (256) was a mid grey brown silty clay, (257) a mid orange grey brown silty clay and (258) a mid grey silty clay, probably basal silting. Late Iron Age-early Romano British pottery and a flint flake were recovered from (256). This ditch probably represents the corner of a field that extended to the east.

4.4 Trench 3 had a maximum depth of 0.40m. One feature was identified [241], although not sampled. No unstratified artefacts were recovered.

4.4.1 Feature [241] was an east-west aligned gully with a pale grey, with orange patches, silty clay. This feature also occurs in Trenches 11, 15 and possibly 17 (Contexts [249], [252] and [283]).

4.5 Trench 4 had a maximum depth of 0.45m. Three features were recorded but not sampled [259], [294] and [295]. No unstratified finds were recovered.

4.5.1 Feature [259] was an ephemeral north-west to south-east aligned gully with a mottled light grey / orange silty clay fill. Features [294] and [295] were irregularly shaped, both with a very light grey silty clay fills. They were very similar to features sampled in Trenches 6, 11, 28 and 30.

4.6 Trench 5 had a maximum depth of 0.40m. One feature [243] was identified but not sampled. No unstratified finds were recovered.

4.6.1 Feature [243] was an ephemeral north-east to south-west aligned gully with a mottled light-mid grey / orange silty clay fill. This is a continuation of gully [236] in Trench 1 and [244] in Trench 13.

4.7 Trench 6 had a maximum depth of 0.50m. Three features were identified, [251], [262] and [264]. No unstratified artefacts were collected.

4.7.1 Features [262] (263) and [264] (265) were both irregular in plan. [262] had a moderately steeply sloping 'V' shaped profile; [264] had a gently sloping / irregular profile. Both had a light grey silty grey fill that produced no finds.

- 4.7.2 Feature [251] was an unexcavated probable post-hole with a dark grey / black silty clay fill with charcoal flecking.
- 4.8 Trench 7 had a maximum depth of 0.45m. One gully [242] and one possible post-hole [266] were identified. No unstratified artefacts were collected.
- 4.8.1 Feature [242] was a slightly curvilinear, north-south aligned gully, which terminated just short of the southern edge of the trench. It had a mid grey compact silty clay fill (243) and a gentle 'U' shaped profile. A possible post-hole, [266] (267) was identified and sampled in the terminal of this gully.
- 4.9 Trench 8 had a maximum depth of 0.40m. Two features [239] and [240] were identified. No unstratified artefacts were collected.
- 4.9.1 Feature [239] was a west to east aligned gully that was not excavated. It had a single light grey silty clay fill. This feature is similar in form to other gullies that were hand sampled.
- 4.9.2 Feature [240] was not hand sampled. It was circular in plan and possessed a light-mid grey silty clay fill. This feature appears to be a pit or possible post-hole. No finds were recovered.
- 4.10 Trench 9 had a maximum depth of 0.50m. Three post-holes were identified [232], [234] and [235] and two gullies, [228] and [230]. No unstratified artefacts were collected.
- 4.10.1 One of the post-holes, [232] (233) was sampled and proved to have a steep sided, flat based profile. All the post-holes were circular in plan and had a similar light grey / white silty clay fill. No finds were recovered. These features appear in line and possibly represent the alignment of an ancient fence.
- 4.10.2 Feature [228] was a north-east to south-west aligned gully with a moderately steeply sloping sides and a 'V' shaped base (becomes less steep to the south-west). It had a single light grey silty clay fill with orange clay patches, (229) which produced no finds. This feature appeared to terminate just short of the western edge of the trench. The gully was cut by another gully, [230], a relationship clearly visible in section. This may represent a re-cutting or re-defining of the gully.
- 4.10.3 Feature [230] was a north-east to south-west aligned gully with a moderately steeply sloping 'U' shaped profile. It possessed a single mid grey brown silty clay fill (231) that produced no finds. This feature clearly cut [228] (see 4.10.2).
- 4.11 Trench 10 had a maximum depth of 0.45m. One feature [260] was identified. No unstratified artefacts were collected.

- 4.11.1 Feature [260] (261) was oval in plan with a steep 'U' shaped profile. It had a mid grey silty clay fill that produced no finds (261). This feature appears to be a pit of uncertain function.
- 4.12 Trench 11 had a maximum depth of 0.45m. One gully [249] and three other features, [294] [295] and [297], were identified. No unstratified artefacts were collected
- 4.12.1 Feature [249] (250) was a north-west to south-east aligned gully with gentle sloping sides and an undulating base. It had a single mottled light grey and orange silty clay fill that produced no finds. This gully also appears in Trenches 3, 15 and possibly 17.
- 4.12.2 Features [294] [295] and [296] were unsampled, irregular in shape with a light grey silty clay fill. These were very similar to other amorphous features sampled in Trenches 6, 4, 28 and 30.
- 4.13 Trench 12 had a maximum depth of 0.50m. No features were identified. No unstratified artefacts were collected.
- 4.14 Trench 13 had a maximum depth of 0.50m. No unstratified artefacts were collected. Two gullies, [244] and [246] were identified.
- 4.14.1 Feature [244] was an north-northeast to south-southwest aligned gully, a probable continuation of [236] and [243] in Trenches 1 and 5. It had steeply sloping sides and a fairly flat base. One fill was identified, (245), a mid grey slightly brown, silty clay which produced no finds.
- 4.14.2 Feature [246] was an ephemeral north-west to south-east-aligned fragment of gully with a light-mid grey silty clay fill.
- 4.15 Trench 14 had a maximum depth of 0.45m. No features were identified. No unstratified artefacts were collected.
- 4.16 Trench 15 had a maximum depth of 0.50m. One feature was identified: [252] although not sampled. No unstratified artefacts were recovered
- 4.16.1 Feature [252] was an east-west aligned gully with a pale grey, with orange patches, silty clay fill. This feature also occurs in Trenches 3, 11 and possibly 17 (contexts [241] [249] and [283]).
- 4.17 Trench 16 was 0.50m in depth. One gully [247] was identified. No unstratified artefacts were collected
- 4.17.1 Feature [247] was a north-south aligned gully with an irregular profile. It possessed a single mixed light-mid grey silty clay (248) which produced no finds. This gully appeared to terminate just short of the southern edge of the

trench although given the shallowness of the feature; it may have been completely truncated at this point.

- 4.18** Trench 17 had a maximum depth of 0.35m. Two features [221] and [205] were identified. No unstratified artefacts were collected.
- 4.18.1** Feature [221] was an east-west aligned possible gully with gentle sides and an undulating base. It possessed a single mottled light grey orange silty clay fill (222). This context was ephemeral and may represent a natural variation. However, it is on the same alignment as the gully sampled in Trenches 3, 11 and 15 and if genuine may be a continuation of this feature.
- 4.18.2** Feature [205] (206) was oval in plan with an irregular profile. It had a mid-dark grey silty clay fill that produced no finds. This feature may be a natural variation.
- 4.19** Trench 18 had a maximum depth of 0.35m. One possible ditch [218] was identified. No unstratified artefacts were collected.
- 4.19.1** Feature [218] was a north-south aligned possible ditch with moderately steeply sloping sides and a flat base. It possessed a single mottled mid yellow /orange silty clay fill (219). This context was diffuse and may represent a natural variation. No finds were recovered.
- 4.20** Trench 19 had a maximum depth of 0.45m. One curvilinear gully [253] was identified. No stray artefacts were collected.
- 4.20.1** Feature [253] was a slightly curvilinear, north-west to south-east aligned gully, with moderately sloping sides and a fairly flat base. It had a mid grey and orange silty clay fill (254) which produced no finds.
- 4.21** Trench 20 had a maximum depth of 0.50m. Two features, [224] and [226] were sampled. No stray artefacts were collected.
- 4.21.1** Features [223] (224) (225) and [226] (227) were both roughly circular in plan with moderate to steeply sloping sides and flat bases. The features had a similar upper fill of a light grey brown silty clay (224) and (227). A basal fill was identified in [223], this fill (225) was a brown grey clay. Fragments of Late Iron Age pottery were produced from (224). These features are either small pits or post-holes.
- 4.22** Trench 21 had a maximum depth of 0.45m. No features were identified. No unstratified artefacts were collected.
- 4.23** Trench 22 had a maximum depth of 0.35m. Two gullies, [188] and [203] and a pit, [173] were identified and sampled. No stray artefacts were collected.
- 4.23.1** Feature [188] was a north-west to south-east aligned gully with 'V' shaped

- profile. It had a pale-mid grey silty clay fill [189]. This feature appears to continue into Trench 23 (context [220]). No finds were forthcoming
- 4.23.2** Feature [203] was a north-south aligned gully with gentle to moderately sloping sides and a flat base. It had a pale grey, with orange mottling, silty clay fill [204] which produced no finds.
- 4.23.3** Feature [173] was a pit running into the northern edge of the trench. It was semi-circular as exposed with steeply sloping sides, the base was not fully exposed. It possessed a single mid grey silty clay fill (174) with orange manganese mottling and frequent charcoal flecks throughout. Degraded burnt clay was also apparent although no other finds were recovered. This feature was clearly a substantial pit, though of unclear function.
- 4.24** Trench 23 had a maximum depth of 0.30m. Two gullies [220] and [181] and four other features [179], [185], [183] and [198] were identified. One flint flake was collected from the spoil.
- 4.24.1** Feature [220] was an unsampled north-west to south-east aligned gully with a pale grey, silty clay fill. This feature is probably a continuation of gully [188] in Trench 22.
- 4.24.2** Feature [220] (221) was a north-east to south-west aligned gully with a shallow, 'V' shaped profile. It had a single mottled light grey and orange silty clay fill that produced no finds.
- 4.24.3** Features [185] (186) (187) and [179] (180) were both roughly circular in plan with fairly steep 'V' shaped profiles. The features had similar upper fills of a light-mid grey silty clay (186) and (180). A basal fill was identified in [185], this fill (225) was a red-brown clay. The profiles of these features suggest that they are post-holes.
- 4.24.4** Features [183] (184) and [198] (199) were both irregular in plan. Feature [183] ran into the northern edge of the trench [183] had a gently sloping / irregular profile; [198] had moderately sloping sides and a flat base. Both had light grey /red silty grey fills which produced no finds. Fill (199) had charcoal flecking throughout. The nature of these features is unclear.
- 4.25** Trench 24 had a maximum depth of 0.35m. Five features were identified: [190], [192], [194], [196] and [200]. No stray artefacts were collected.
- 4.25.1** All the features were roughly circular in plan. Features [190] (191), [192] (193) and [196] (197) had a very similar profile, steep on one side, less so on the other with a 'V' shaped base. These features had similar light grey-brown silty clay fills with charcoal flecking throughout in (193) and (197). Features [194] (195) and [200] (196) had a 'U' and 'V' shaped profile respectively and similar light grey silty clay fills. Context (195) produced an abraded sherd of Romano-British pottery. The profile of these features,

particularly [190], [192] and [196], was suggestive of post-holes. Four of the features [192], [194], [196] and [200] seem to be forming part of a circular pattern which possibly indicates a building.

- 4.26 Trench 25 had a maximum depth of 0.35m. Five possible features were identified: [207], [212], [215], [214] and [216]. No stray artefacts were collected.
- 4.26.1 Feature [207] (208) was irregular in plan with irregular sides and base. It possessed a single mid grey brown silty 'soily' clay fill with occasional burnt clay and charcoal. The amorphous, irregular nature of this feature perhaps suggests that it is a tree removal feature.
- 4.26.2 Feature [212] (213) was circular in plan with a steep 'V' shaped profile. It had a single dark grey fill with charcoal flecking and burnt clay. The profile of this feature is suggestive of a post or stake-hole. Features [214] and [215] appeared similar in nature and were not sampled.
- 4.26.3 Feature [216] (217) was irregular in plan with gently sloping sides and base. It had a single light-mid grey brown silty clay fill which produced a sherd of potentially Early Iron Age pottery. This feature appears to be a pit, presumably very truncated.
- 4.27 Trench 26 had a maximum depth of 0.30m. One gully [209] was identified. One piece of blast furnace slag was collected from the spoil.
- 4.27.1 Feature [209] was a north-west to south-east aligned gully with a steep, 'V' shaped profile. It contained two fills: (210) an upper fill of grey brown clay and (211) a grey silty clay basal fill, probably the result of silting. Both fills contained flecks of charcoal. No finds were forthcoming.
- 4.28 Trench 27 had a maximum depth of 0.55m. In this trench, the ploughsoil overlay 0.10m of grey brown silty clay which overlay the natural clay. No features were identified. No unstratified artefacts were collected.
- 4.29 Trench 28 had a maximum depth of 0.35m. One feature [177] was identified. No stray artefacts were collected.
- 4.29.1 Feature [177] (178) was either a linear pit or ditch terminal with very gently sloping sides and a rounded base. It possessed a very light grey silty clay fill which produced a flint flake of possible Neolithic date. This feature was very similar to those identified in Trenches 4, 6, 11 and 30.
- 4.30 Trench 29 was 28m long and had a maximum depth of 0.35m. Ten features were identified: gullies [101], [105], [111], [123]; pits [107], [109]; post-holes [103], [115], [117], [125]. No stray artefacts were collected.
- 4.30.1 Gully [101] (102) was east-west aligned, running down slope with

moderately steeply sloping sides and an irregular base. It had a single light-mid grey silty clay fill which produced a flint flake. This gully possible continues into Trench 34 where there are a number of gullies on the same alignment.

- 4.30.2** Gullies [111] (112) and [123] (124) possibly formed a corner or joined just outside the trial trench. Both had 'U' shaped profiles and mid, slightly reddish grey silty clay fills, charcoal was present in context (124). Gully [111] terminated mid trench. A flint flake was collected from context (112).
- 4.30.3** Gully [105] (106) had a gentle 'U' shaped profile and was aligned north-west to south-east. It had a light-mid grey silty clay fill with charcoal flecking.
- 4.30.4** Features [107] (108) and [109] (110) were both roughly oval in plan with moderately steeply sloping 'U' shaped profiles. The features had similar fills of a light grey silty clay with manganese staining; (108) produced fragments of fired clay. These features appear to be pits but of unclear function.
- 4.30.5** Features [103] (104) and [125] (126) were both circular in plan with steep profiles and fairly flat bases. Both had a dark grey brown silty clay with charcoal fragments. The profiles of these features are indicative of post-holes
- 4.30.6** Features [115] (116) and [117] (118) were both circular in plan with steep 'V' shaped profiles. Both had a light grey silty clay with charcoal fragments. The profiles of these features are indicative of small post or stake-holes.
- 4.31** Trench 30 had a maximum depth of 0.45m. One feature [171] was identified. No stray artefacts were collected.
- 4.31.1** Feature [171] (172) was irregular in plan with gently sloping sides and a flat base and appeared very truncated. It had a light grey silty clay fill that produced no finds. This feature appears to be a pit of uncertain function and is similar to features in Trenches 4, 6, 11 and 28.
- 4.32** Trench 31 had a maximum depth of 0.25m. One feature [175] was identified. No stray artefacts were collected.
- 4.32.1** Feature [175] (176) was circular in plan with a gentle 'U' shaped profile. It had a mid grey 'soily' clay fill that produced no finds. This feature appears to be a post-hole although the nature of the fill suggests a modern inception.
- 4.33** Trench 32 had a maximum depth of 0.30m. No features were identified. No unstratified artefacts were collected.
- 4.34** Trench 33 had a maximum depth of 0.35m and six features were identified:

- gullies [160], [163], [167]; pit [157]; post-hole [169] and feature [165]. No stray artefacts were collected.
- 4.34.1 Feature [160] was a north-east to south-west aligned gully with a steep, 'V' shaped profile. It contained two fills: (161) an upper fill of red brown clay containing flecks of charcoal and (162) a grey brown silty clay basal fill. This gully appears to continue on the same alignment, appearing in Trenches 35 and 36, Contexts [151] and [141]. No finds were forthcoming.
- 4.34.2 Gullies [163] (164) and [167] (168) were both aligned north-east to south-west. Context [163] was a narrow terminal with steep sides and a flat base; [167] had a wider, 'U' shaped profile. The features possessed mid grey to orange brown silty clay fills. A flint flake was collected from fills (164) and (168). Gully [167] may continue on the same alignment and be present in Trench 35, context [137].
- 4.34.4 Feature [157] was a pit running into the northern edge of the trench. It was oval as exposed with steeply sloping sides and a flat base. It possessed an upper fill of mid grey silty clay fill (159) with orange manganese mottling. Beneath this was a basal fill (158) of light grey silty clay. This feature was a fairly substantial pit, though of unclear function. Late Iron Age to early Romano-British pottery and flint flakes were recovered from (158) and two flint flakes from (159).
- 4.34.5 Feature [169] (170) was circular in plan with vertical sides and a flat base. It had a grey brown clay fill that produced no finds. This feature appears to be a post-hole.
- 4.34.6 Context [165] was found to be a natural variation.
- 4.35 Trench 34 had a maximum depth of 0.30m. Eleven features were identified: gullies [127], [155], [119], [129], [131], [135]; post-holes [121], [133], [145], [147] and [149]. No stray artefacts were collected. Contingency Trench 38 was excavated at right angles across this trench.
- 4.35.1 Gullies [119] (120), [129] (130) and [131] (132) were all aligned north-west to south-east. Contexts [119] and [131] both had moderate to steeply sloping sides and 'V' shaped / rounded bases; [129] had a wider, more gentle sloping profile. The features possessed single mid grey green silty clay fills. A flint flake was collected from fill (120) as was early Romano-British pottery and pottery of 11th to 12th century which may have been intrusive. Context (132) produced a flint flake. Feature [119] was cut by small pit / post-hole [121]. It is possible that one of these gullies may link up with gully [101] in Trench 29 which is on a similar alignment.
- 4.35.2 Feature [127/155] was a curvilinear, segmented (presumably through truncation) gully with a gentle, 'U' shaped profile. It had a single mid grey silty clay fill that produced no finds. The form of this feature is suggestive

of a ring gully, although this is not certain.

- 4.35.3** Feature [135] (136) was the terminal end of a east to west aligned gully with a gentle 'U' shaped profile. It had a single mid grey silty clay fill. Fire-cracked flint, struck flint and early Romano-British pottery was recovered.
- 4.35.4** Features [133] (134), [145] (146) were both circular in plan with gentle 'V' shaped profiles and were probably truncated. A similar feature, [149] (150) ran into the eastern trench edge with a steeper profile. All the features had a light-mid grey silty clay fill with orange patches. Charcoal was present in contexts (148) and (150). Late Iron Age to early Romano-British pottery was recovered from context (150). The profiles of these features are indicative of small post -holes. A further small post-hole or stakehole [147] (148) was investigated.
- 4.36** Trench 35 had a maximum depth of 0.30m. Two features were identified [151] and [153]. No stray artefacts were collected.
- 4.36.1** Feature [151] (152) was a probable east to west aligned gully with moderately steeply sloping sides and a flat base. It had a single mottled light red brown and silty clay fill that produced no finds. This feature may be a terminal of gully [160] and [142] in Trenches 33 and 36. This would suggest an entrance is in the vicinity.
- 4.36.2** Feature [153] (154) was an east to west aligned gully with gently sloping sides and a rounded base. It had a single grey brown silty clay fill that produced no finds.
- 4.37** Trench 36 had a maximum depth of 0.30m. Four gullies were identified [137], [139], [141] and [143]. No stray artefacts were collected.
- 4.37.1** Gullies [137] (138) and [141] (142) were both aligned north to south. Context [137] had moderately steeply sloping sides and a flat base, [141] had steep, 'V' shaped profile. The features possessed light-mid grey brown silty clay fills. Late Iron Age pottery was collected from fill (138) and Late Iron Age- early Romano-British pottery from (142). Gully [137] may continue on approximately the same alignment and be present in Trench 33, context [167]. Similarly, gully [141] also seems likely to be present in Trench 35 [151] and Trench 33 [161]
- 4.37.2** Gullies [139] (140) and [143] (144) were both of a similar nature, terminating mid trench with what may have been a small post-hole. Context [139] extended to the north-east, [143] to the southwest. Both had a 'V' shaped profile and appeared to be truncated. They possessed a similar grey brown to dark grey brown silty clay fill. Context (140) produced Late Iron Age to Early Romano-British pottery. Although it is impossible to be certain, the slight curvilinear nature of gully [143] may suggest that it is the terminus of a ring gully.

- 4.38** Trench 37 was a contingency trench dug after consultation with the KCC archaeological officer to ascertain whether the Roman Road ran along the edge of this field. It was 23m long and had a depth of 0.40m. No evidence of the road was forthcoming although one ditch, [268] was sampled.
- 4.38.1** Context [268] was a west to east aligned ditch with a 'U' shaped profile and a single mid brown, manganese rich, silty clay fill (269). There was some evidence for possible bank material to the north of this gully consisting of a spread of mid grey / brown silty clay, again manganese rich (270/271). The alignment of this feature perhaps points to it being an old field boundary. In the absence of any other evidence, there is no reason to believe it is related to the Roman Road.
- 4.39** Trench 38 was a 30m long contingency trench excavated at right angles across Trench 34 in order to investigate the contour of the slope at this point. It was primarily placed to test for the possibility that an enclosure ditch may run around the plateau at this point. No such ditch was detected. Several features were identified but not sampled: [278], [272] [274] and [276].
- 4.39.1** Feature [272] (273) appeared to be roughly linear and north-south aligned. Late Iron Age-early Romano British pottery was collected from the surface of the feature. (This feature appeared on the wrong alignment and in the wrong topographic position to be an enclosure ditch). Contexts [274] and [276] appeared to be small pits or post-holes whilst [278] seems to be an irregular shaped pit. All the features had a fairly similar mid grey silty clay fill.
- 4.40** Trench 39 was a contingency trench. It was located on the advice of the KCC Archaeological Officer to fill a gap between the trial trenches at the base of the plateau. Several features were identified but not sampled: [280], [282] [284] [286] and [288].
- 4.40.1** All these features appeared genuine. Context [280] appeared to be a substantial pit. Contexts [282] and [284] formed a 'T' junction of gullies. Context [286] may have been a gully terminal and context [288] a small pit. All possessed similar light-mid grey / brown silty clay fills.

5.0 THE FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES by Luke Barber

5.1 The evaluation produced a relatively small assemblage of finds. These are summarized in Table 1.

Context	Pot no/g	W flint no/g	Bclay no/g	FCF no/g	Other	Provisional spot date
T23 west end spoil		1/5				
T26 spoil					slag 1/325	
100		1/5				
102		1/2				
108			1/5			
112		1/2				
120	55/325	1/2		3/50		ER-B intru. c.11th-12 th resid. IA
132		1/5			fstone 2/5	
136	3/10	1/2	3/5	1/5		ERB?
138	91/150					LIA
140	2/2					LIA-ERB
142	1/1		2/2			LIA-ERB
150	2/5			2/10		LIA-ERB
158	1 / 2			1/2		LIA-ERB
159		2/5	1/2			
164		1/2				
168		1/50				
174					charcoal 10/5	
178		1/10				
186					stone 8/125	
195	2/5					RB
217	1/15					EIA
224	25/10					LIA ??
256	3/15	1/1				LIA-ERB
273	8/25					LIA/ERB

Table 1: Finds Quantification

5.2 All the pottery sherds from the site are small and abraded. This is probably due to both re-working and the acidic nature of the subsoil. The material is of two main periods: the Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British and the medieval. The former material consists of grog, grog and ?chalk and sand tempered fabrics though virtually no diagnostic pieces are present. Medieval pottery only appears in Context 120 where, due to the quantity of Roman material it is considered to be intrusive (though a larger assemblage may alter this). The pottery is present in both sand tempered and flint tempered fabrics, the former including a Saxo-Norman cooking pot rim.

5.3 The worked flint from the site consists mainly of hard hammer waste flakes. Three pieces have signs of retouch including a blade/point with retouch to

both edges from 178. As such, although the majority of the flint is probably of Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age date, some pieces suggest some Mesolithic/Neolithic activity in the area.

- 5.4 The remaining categories of material are only represented by very few pieces. These include irregular fired clay, some local siltstone and a single piece of post-medieval blast furnace slag.
- 5.5 Eleven environmental samples were taken during the evaluation. These are listed below in Table 2.

Context No. (date)	Sample Size (litres)	Sub-Sample Size (litres)
103 undated	7	7
106 undated	7	7
120 ER-B with intrusive med and resid IA	28	14
136 ER-B	14	7
150 LIA-ER-B	7	7
174 undated	21	14
193 undated	7	7
197 undated	7	7
236 undated	14	7
254 undated	14	7
257 undated	14	7

Table 2 : Environmental Samples

- 5.6 The larger samples were subjected to a sub-sampling policy for the purpose of assessment. A 50% sub-sample was processed for these samples with a view to processing the remainder of the sample if the results from the sub-sample merited it. In the event none of the sub-samples showed a high potential for environmental/economic remains. The smaller samples (ie 7 litres) were processed in full for assessment. All samples were processed using bucket flotation. The flot from each sample was caught on a 500 micron sieve with the residue being retained on a 1mm mesh. Once the residues were dry they were sorted by eye to extract material of archaeological/environmental interest with the remaining stones etc being discarded. The results of this sorting are given in Table 3 below. The dried flots were also scanned by eye, and with the help of a microscope (x20 magnification) where necessary, to assess the presence/absence and quality of archaeobotanical remains (seeds) and charcoal (Table 3) and thus the

potential of the current site for addressing important environmental and economic questions regarding the Late Iron Age to Early Roman activity at the site.

- 5.7 The flots from the samples (Table 3) do not contain large amounts of charcoal and that which is present is generally of a small size and in poor condition. Without exception the flots appear to contain no/very few seeds and no cultivated species were noted. Modern contamination on site from roots etc appears to be low to moderate.

Context No. (date)	Modern Roots	Charcoal	Seeds	Residue (*retained)
103 undated	*	**/**	- Cereal - Wild	-
106 undated	***	** to 8mm	- Cereal - Wild	-
120 ER-B with intrusive med and resid IA	***	**/** to 4mm	- Cereal - Wild	Pot 4/4g
136 ER-B	*	**/** to 5mm	- Cereal - Wild	Pot 4/4g Burnt clay 6/2g
150 LIA-ER-B	**	** to 4mm	?* Cereal - Wild	Pot 3/2g
174 undated	**	*** to 8mm	- Cereal - Wild	Ironstone 16/5g
193 undated	*	**/** to 10mm	- Cereal - Wild	-
197 undated	***	* to 3mm	- Cereal - Wild	-
236 undated	No Flot			-
254 undated	*	* to 1mm	- Cereal ?* Wild	-
257 undated	***	* to 1mm	- Cereal - Wild	-

Key : - : None * : Very Low ** : Low *** : Moderate **** : High (frequency)
(Wild - non-cultivated plants)

Table 3 : Results of Environmental Samples : Flots and Residues

- 5.8 The residues from the samples contain virtually no stone and only three produced pottery. No worked or fire-cracked flint was recovered. No bone or shell material was evident, however, this is almost certainly the result of acidic ground conditions and cannot be seen to be representative of the site's dietary intake.

6.0 Discussion

- 6.1 As highlighted above, the underlying substrate was uniformly Weald Clay. The coverage of ploughsoil above this increased from the higher plateau area at the northeast of the site to the lowest lying ground to the southwest. This differential has probably been caused by the cumulative effect of ploughing causing increased downhill colluviation. This has a direct effect on the survival of the archaeological remains. Generally, the features seem to be more truncated by this modern ploughing in the vicinity of the highest ground; some remains are extremely ephemeral and survive as little more than a shallow stain.
- 6.2 Archaeological remains have been identified and sampled across the entire development site. Only Trenches 12, 14, 21, 27 and 32 produced no evidence. Although positive dating evidence was generally sparse, the fill of the majority features (mostly light-mid grey silty clay) and their form directly corresponds to other such remains excavated on a number of sites in the south Ashford area (Park Farm, Brisley Farm, Westhawk Farm and Christchurch School, Booth forthcoming, Johnson 2003, Stevenson, Forthcoming) and are thought to be of broadly later prehistoric to Roman in date. The features from which dating evidence was recovered (generally Late Iron Age to early Romano-British) also had a similar fill.
- 6.3 Although archaeological features survive virtually everywhere on the site, there is a greater density of remains in the north-east corner, particularly centred around Trenches 29, 33, 34/38, 35, 36 and 39. This pattern is closely associated with the nature of the archaeological remains which is, in turn directly related to the topography of the site.
- 6.4 As highlighted above, the highest ground forms a plateau in the approximate vicinity of Trenches 29-39 which slopes away to the west and south-west. Within this area, there was a higher proportion of post-holes and possible ring-gullies (Trenches 34 and 36, contexts [127/155], [139] and [143]). Although, given the keyhole nature of trial trench evaluation, it is difficult to be certain, such features may represent buildings such as roundhouses. Of course, post-holes can also be the remains of other structures such as fence lines, four post-constructions etc, but the density of remains in this areas points to something more substantial.
- 6.5 There are also a high proportion of gullies/small ditches in this area of the site. Possibly these were for drainage purposes (many run down slope). There is no direct evidence of any being an enclosure ditch. No such ditches were detected in contingency Trenches 38 and 39, which were located to account for such a possibility.
- 6.6 The post-holes in Trench 24 may also represent a structure and indeed seem to form part of a circle. These features are located slightly down slope rather

than on the plateau area.

- 6.7 These remains suggest that this higher area of the site was used for occupation. The post-holes and possible ring-gullies perhaps point to this area being used for a settlement such as a farmstead. As the ground continues to rise slightly to the east and north-east, the settlement may continue in this direction, only its southern edge being detected in the evaluation. It is perhaps worth highlighting that the possible structures may have other functions beyond the purely domestic but without further investigation it is impossible to ascertain this.
- 6.8 The evidence from further down the slope and onto the flattest ground at the south-west (the vicinity of Trenches 1-9) is of a different nature. Again, the site topography is important. This lower ground will be wetter, potentially flooded in winter as it is closer to the river valley floor making direct settlement undesirable and probably suggesting the seasonal use of land.
- 6.9 The archaeological evidence from the slope and this low flat land generally consists of gullies with several scattered post-holes and pits. The gullies are probably related to stock control enclosures/field boundaries. Similarly, the post-holes in this area are most likely to be related to stock pens or fence lines (for example post-holes [232], [234] and [235] in Trench 9).
- 6.10 One ditch, [255] in Trench 2 seems to represent the corner of an enclosure that extends beyond the southwest / west corner of the site and into the river valley. This suggests that archaeological remains continue beyond the potential development area in this direction.
- 6.11 Some of these gullies seem to run broadly at right angles to the alignment of the Roman Road (for example gullies [236] [243] and [244] in Trenches 1, 5 and 13). Although dating evidence was not forthcoming, this may point to a later restructuring of the land in the Roman period. Such a phenomena has been noted at Brisley Farm (Johnson 2003) and Park Farm (D. Hawkins *pers.com.*).
- 6.12 It seems logical to assume that the people who were using the potential fields / stock enclosures were occupying the probable settlement at the top of the slope.
- 6.13 Across the site, there were examples of amorphous, irregular shaped shallow pits with a very light colour, almost white fill. Several of these produced flintwork of a fairly early (potentially Neolithic-Early Bronze Age) date. These features in particular seemed to 'weather' out and become visible after the trenches were open for a number of days. It is difficult to speculate with any confidence on their function. There was one example of a potential later feature of Saxo-Norman date (gully [119] in Trench 34). This evidence suggests that there were several phases of land use on the site.

- 6.14** The evaluation has highlighted the precarious state of some of the archaeological remains present. It is likely that given many more years of ploughing, features in the plateau area will be entirely lost. It is probable that even now only the deepest original features have survived.
- 6.15** The evaluation has shown that there is the potential for understanding the local development of a Late-Iron Age-early Romano-British settlement and its associated fields / enclosures. At a local level, the topography and the underlying ground conditions seem to be influential in this development. The interrelationship between the potential 'domestic' area and the outlying features in the lower lying ground, which is still open to question, should be taken into account in any future investigation.
- 6.16** The site has the potential to add to the understanding of the development of the Iron Age and Romano-British landscape in the south Ashford area as well as the earlier prehistoric aspects that may also be present. It is important that in any future work or analysis, the wider interpretation of this landscape is highlighted.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 The assistance and advice of Casper Johnson of Kent County Council and Duncan Hawkins of CgMs is gratefully acknowledged.

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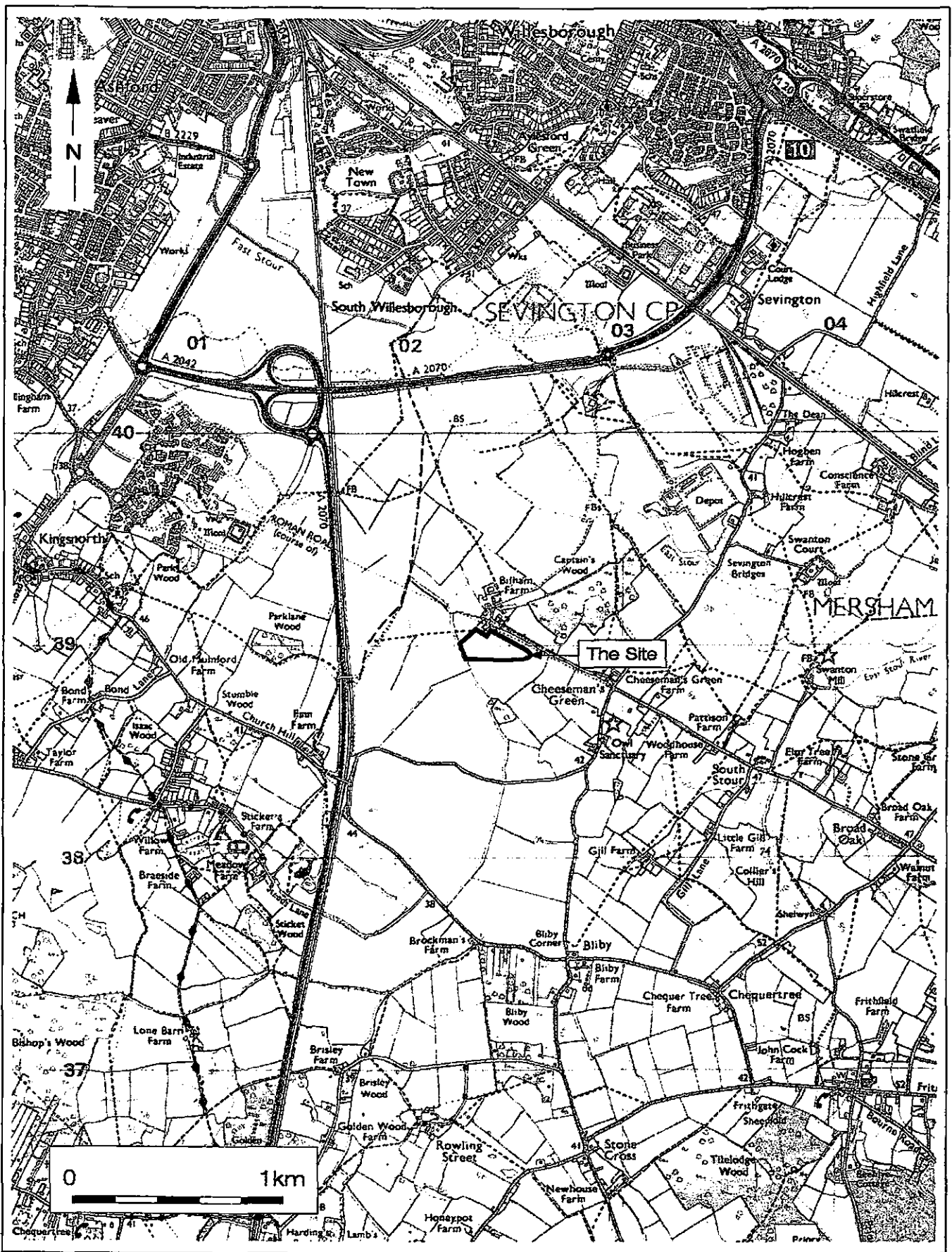
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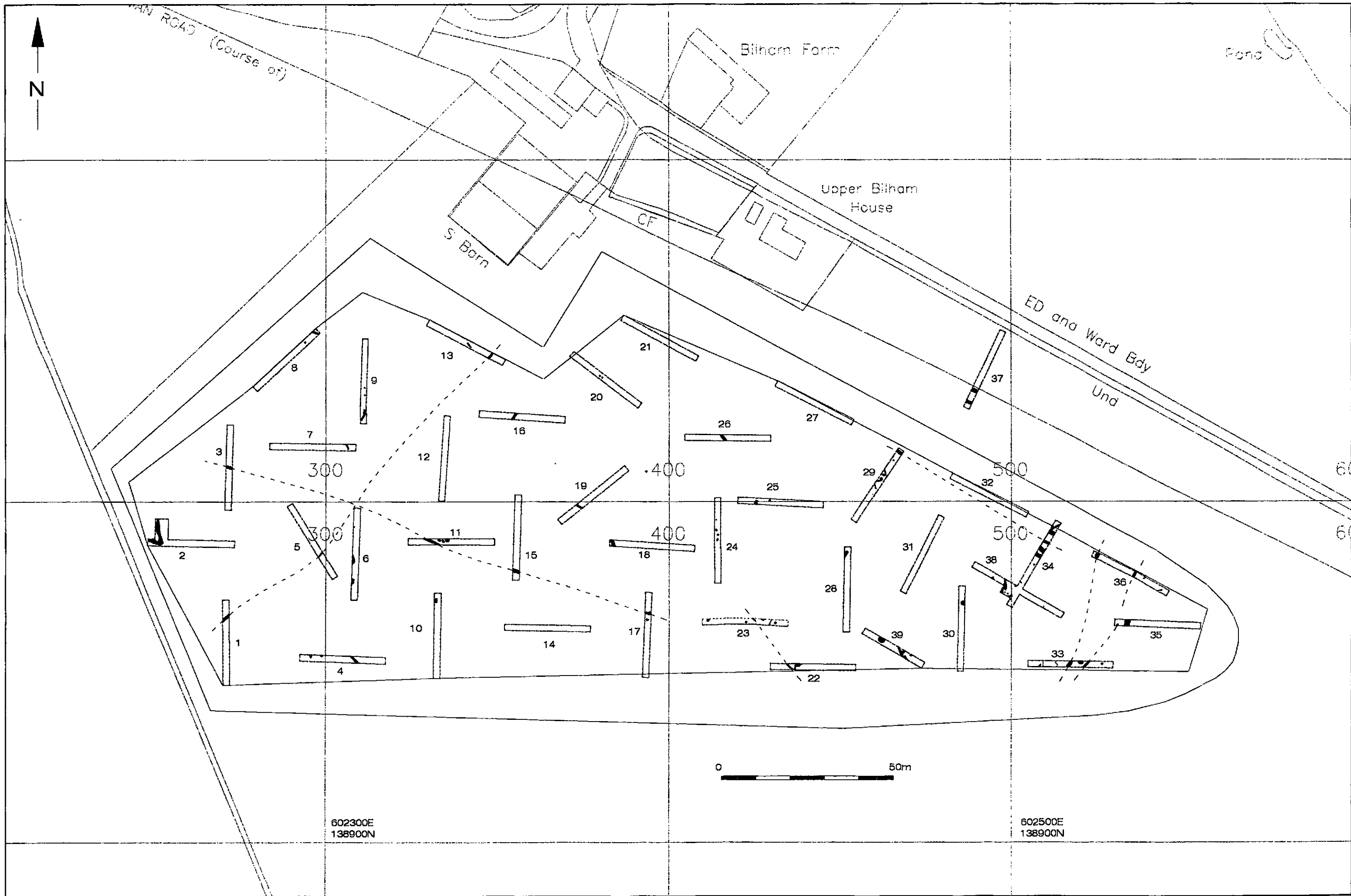
SMR Summary Form

Site Code	PFA 03					
Identification Name and Address	Bilham Farm, Park Farm East, Ashford, Kent					
County, District &/or Borough	Kent					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR TR 0200 3900					
Geology	Weald Clay					
Arch. South-East Project Number	1733					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval. ✓	Excav.	Watching Brief	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field✓	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval. August-Sept 03	Excav.	WB.	Other		
Sponsor/Client	CgMs Consulting					
Project Manager	Neville Hall/ Luke Barber					
Project Supervisor	Jim Stevenson					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo. ✓	BA	IA✓	RB ✓
	AS	MED	PM	Other: Prehistoric		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p>Archaeology South-East have carried out an archaeological evaluation at Bilham Farm, Park Farm East, Ashford, Kent as part of a predetermination survey prior to development. A total of 39, 25m Trenches were excavated, 34 of which produced archaeological remains. These are mostly pits, post-hole and gullies, several of which have been dated to the Late Iron Age-Early Romano-British period. The remains are thought to represent a possible small settlement or farmstead concentrated on the higher ground at the east / northeast of the site with associated field systems spreading into the lower ground to the west / southwest. Several features of an earlier prehistoric date were also identified and also one possible Saxo-Norman gully</p>						

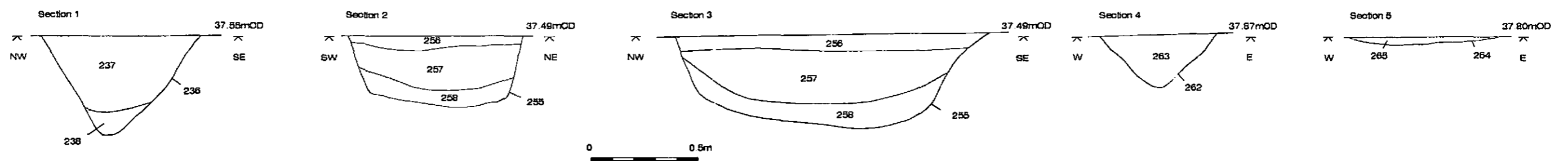
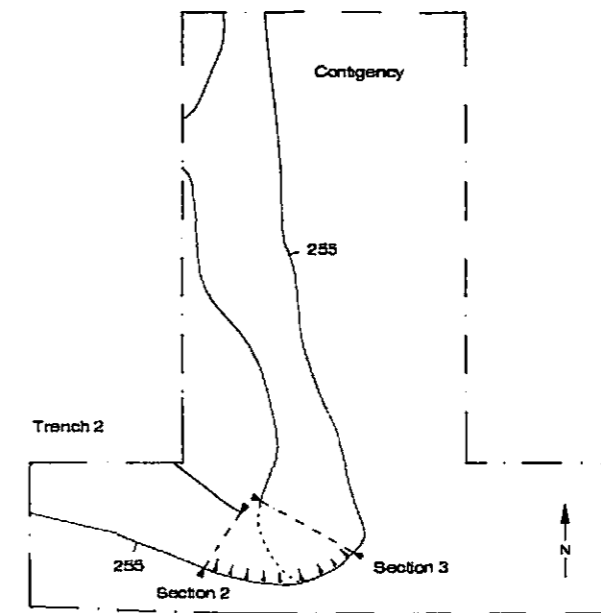
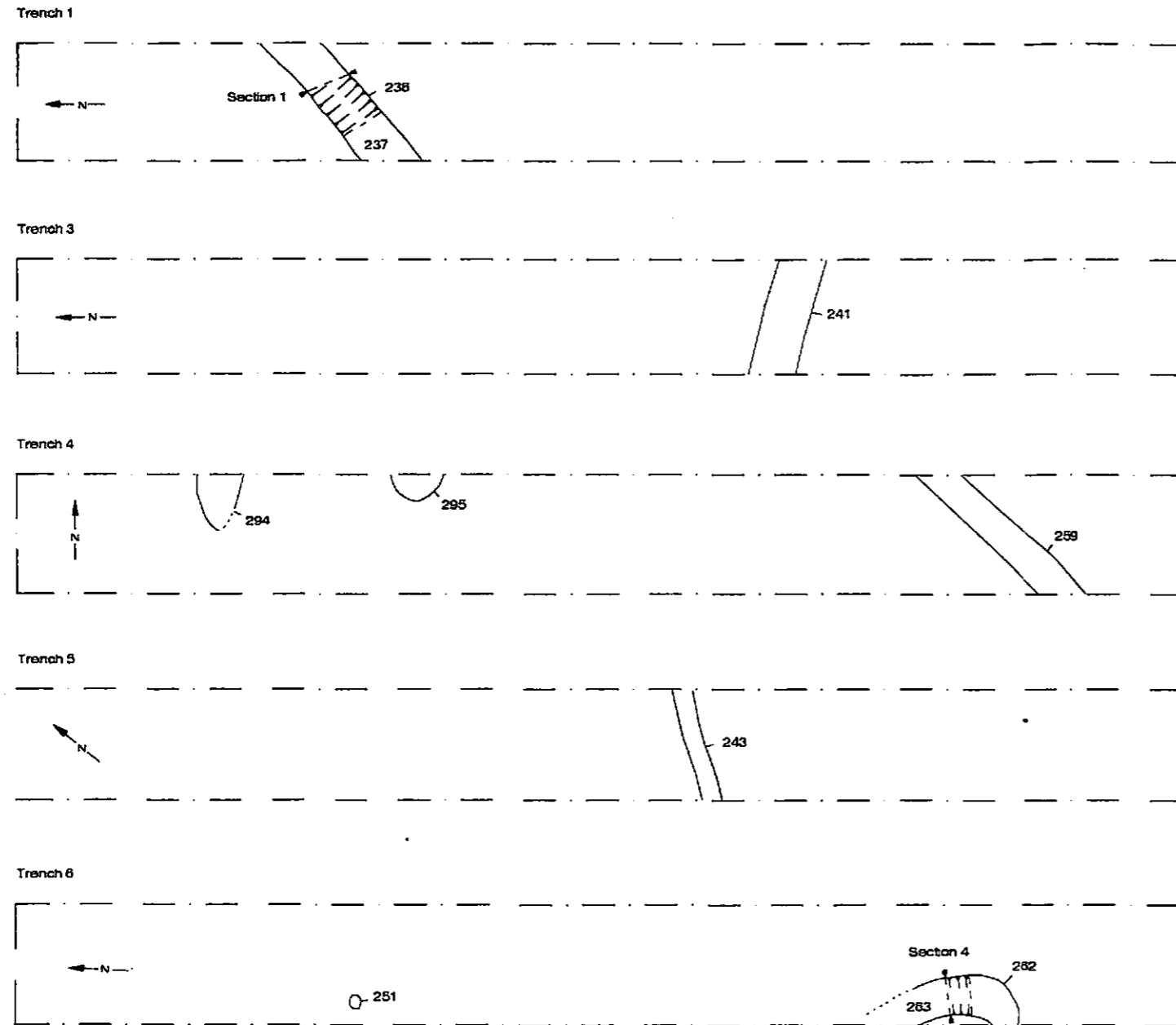


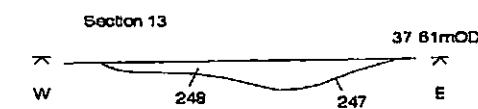
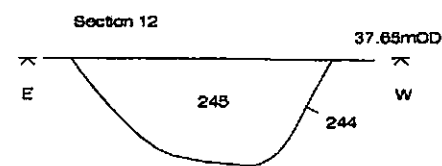
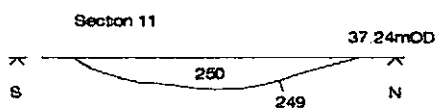
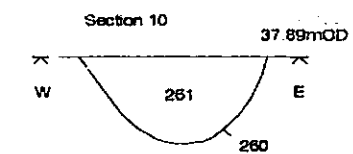
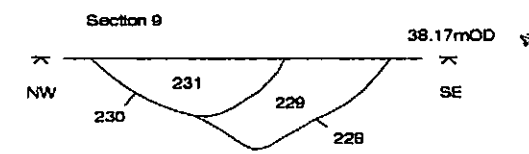
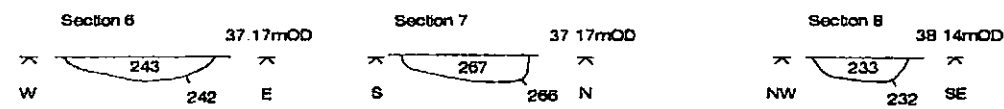
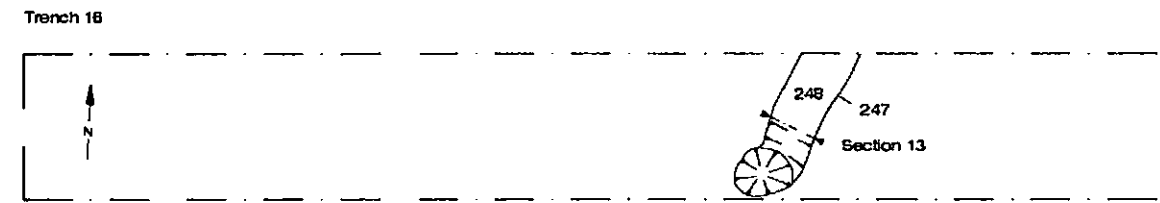
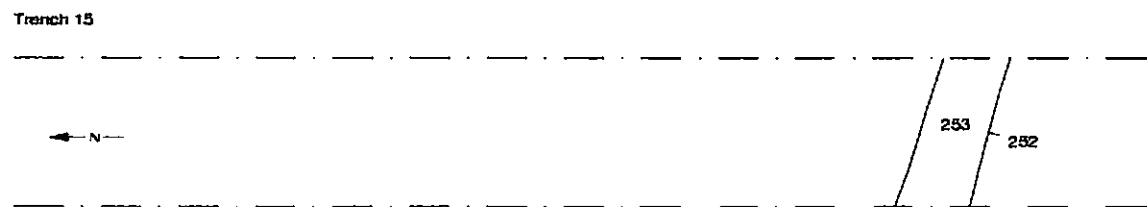
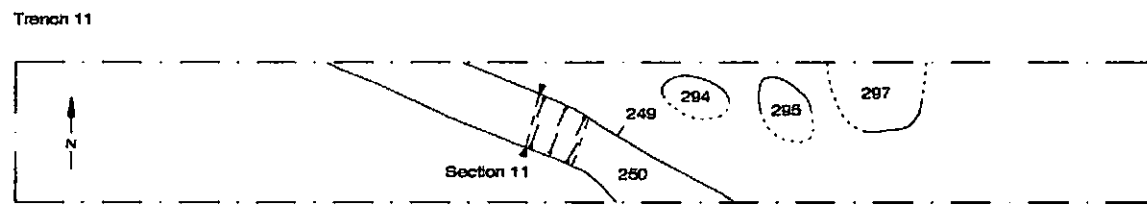
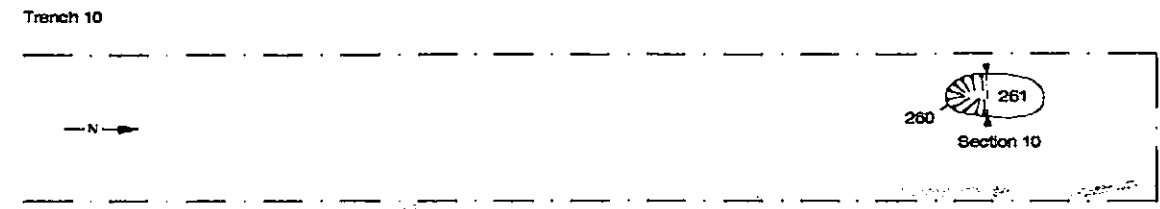
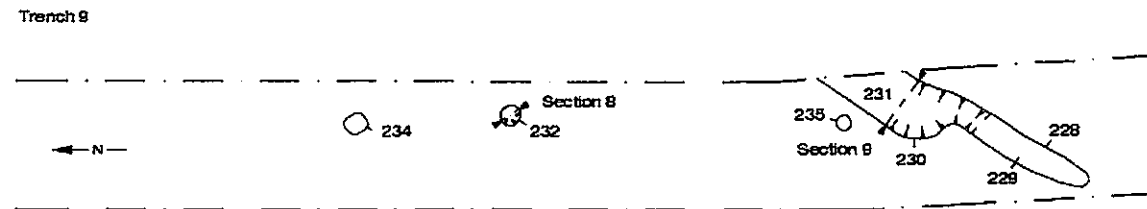
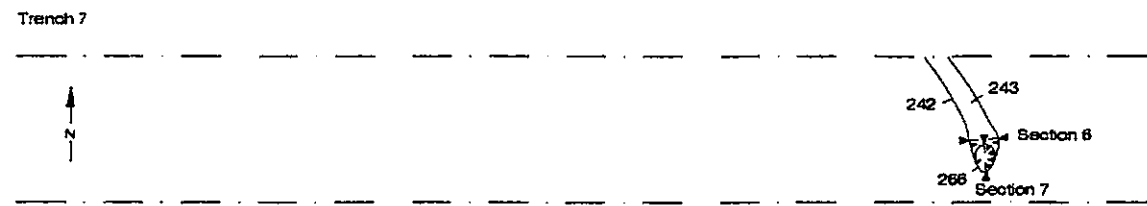
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Ref: 1733	Oct 2003	Site Location Plan		

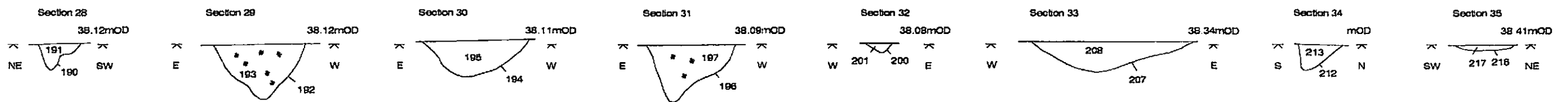
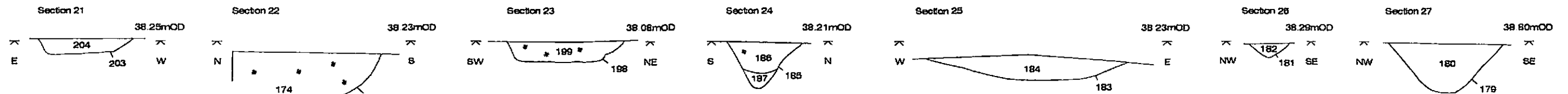
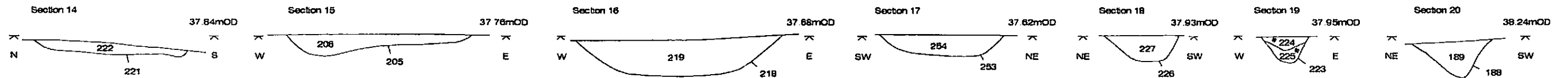
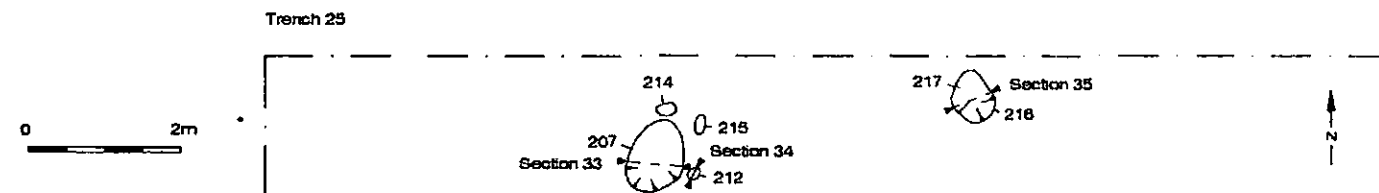
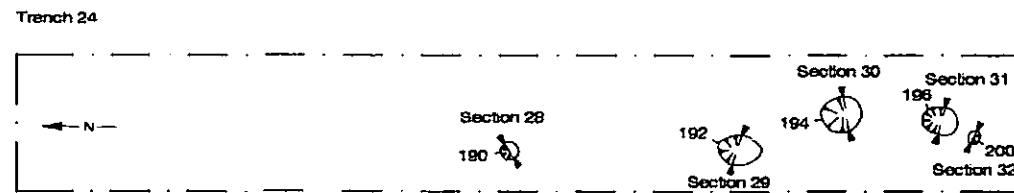
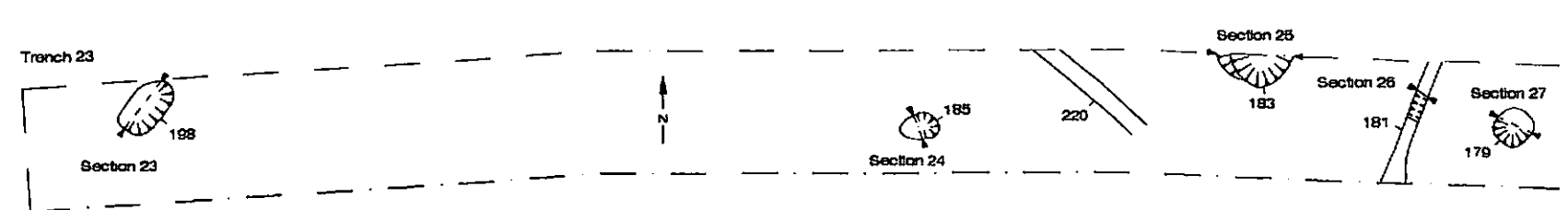
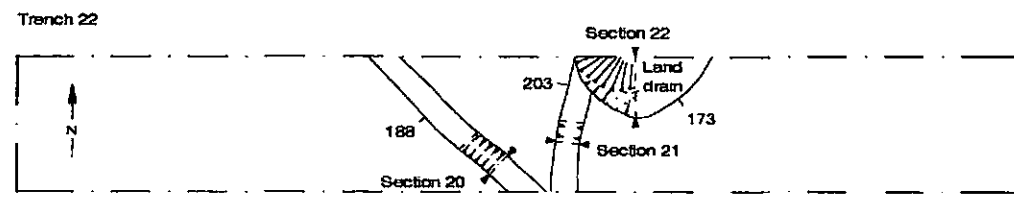
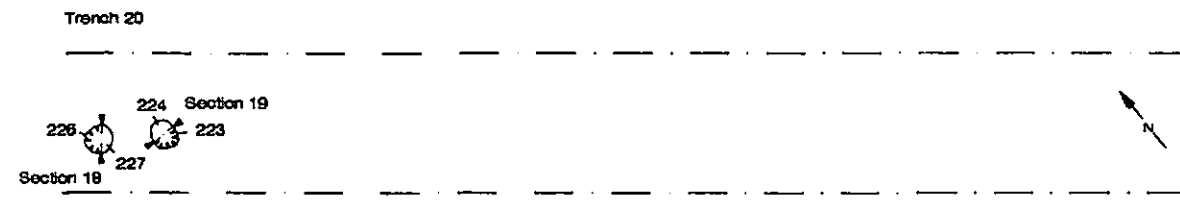
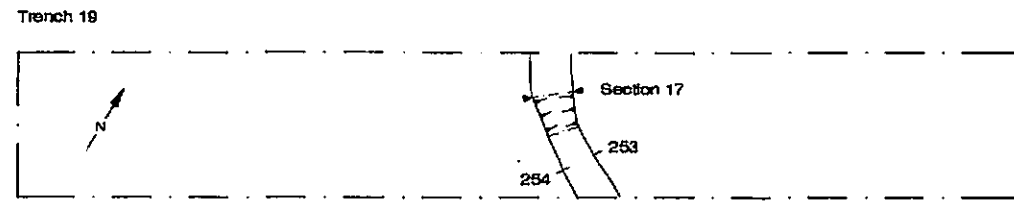
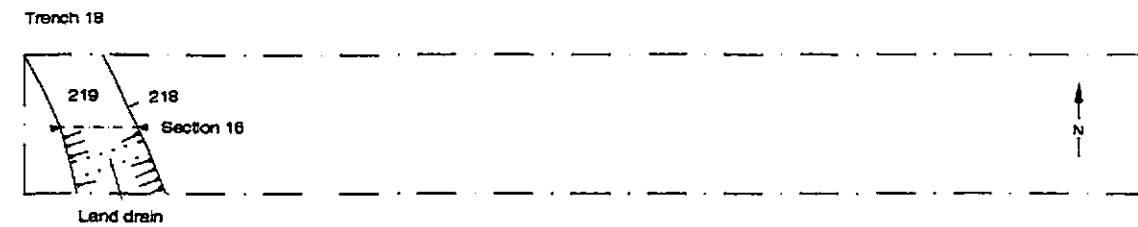
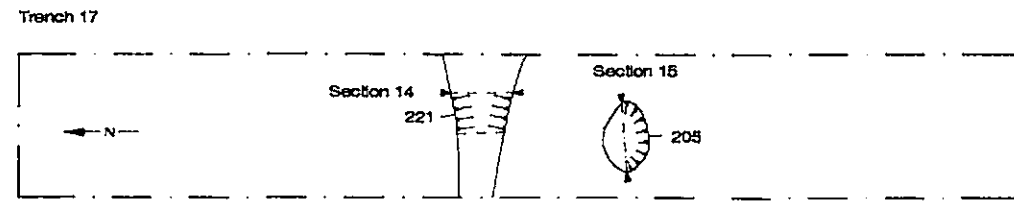
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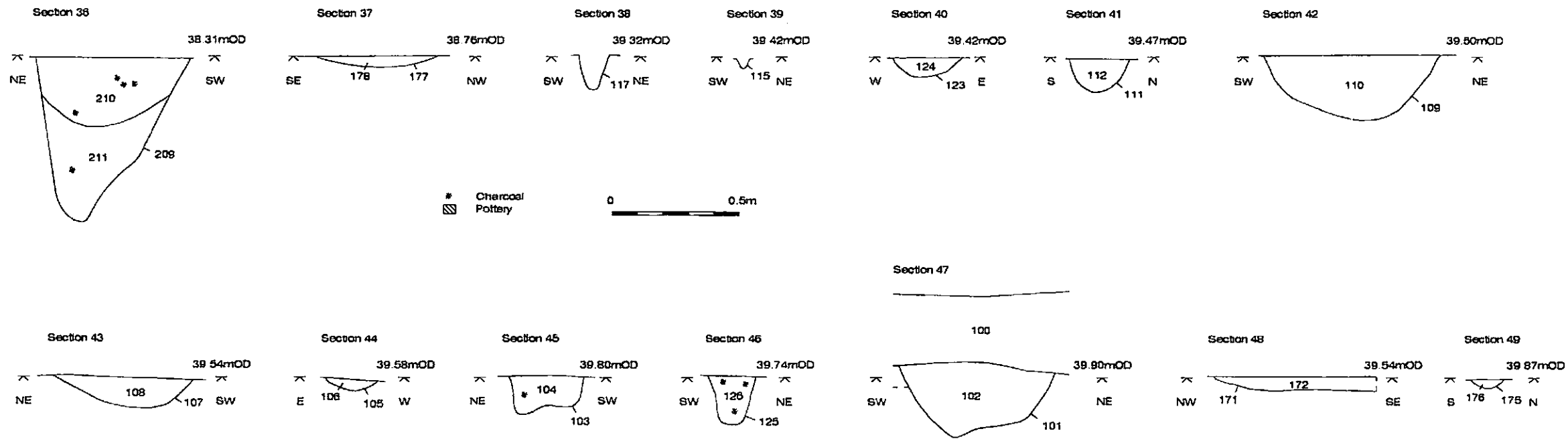
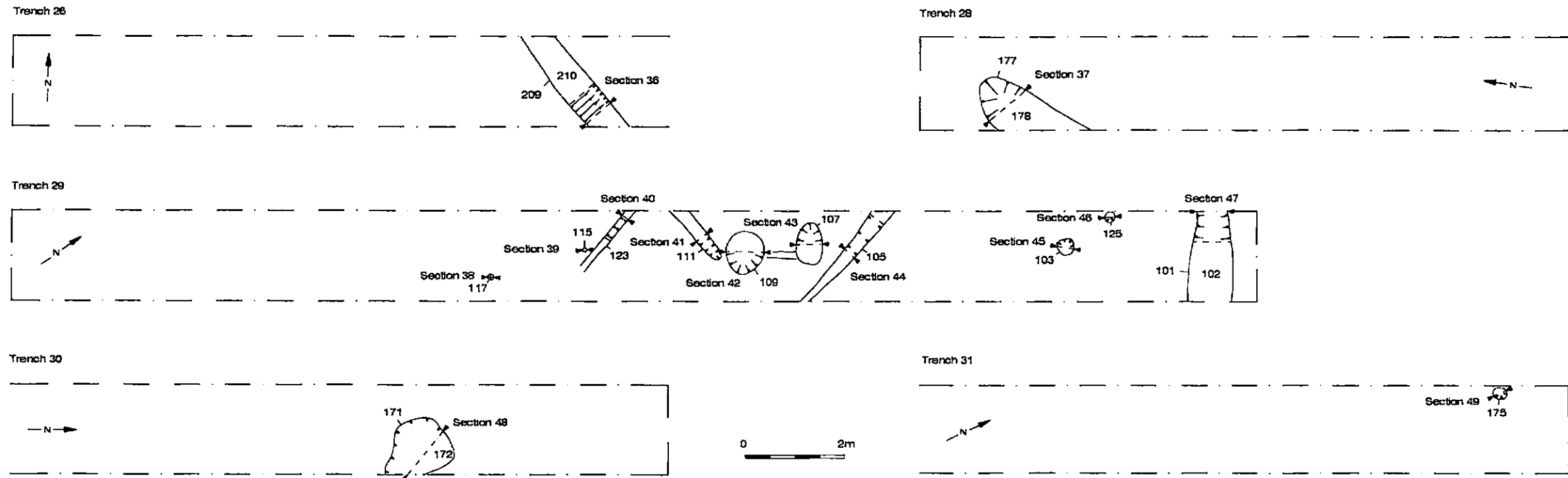
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Ref: 1733	Oct 2003	Trench Location Plan		

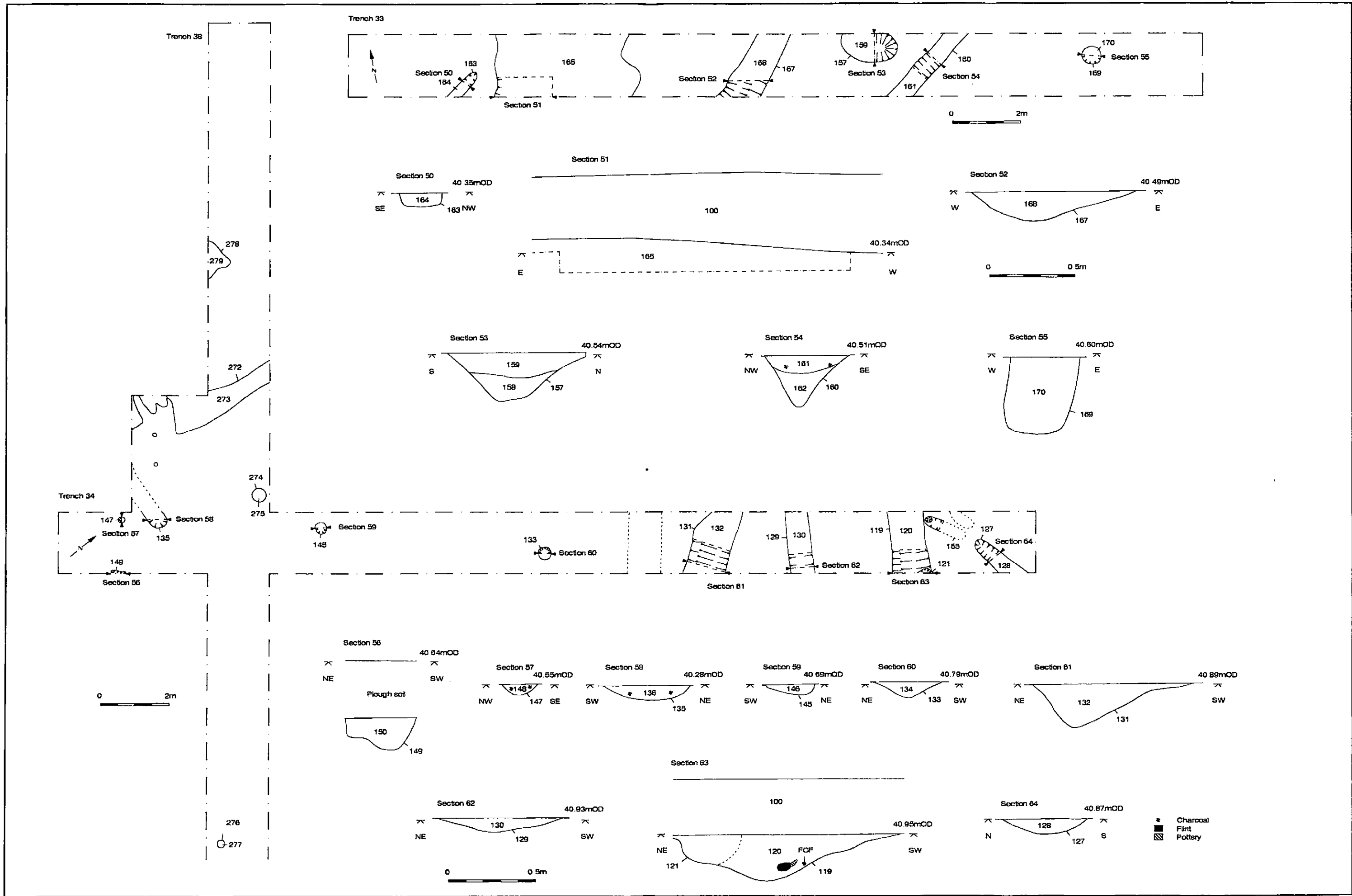






* Charcoal
 P Pottery





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Fig. 7

