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An Archaeological Evaluation at RAF Newton, Nottinghamshire 2002

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

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An Archaeological Evaluation at RAF Newton, Nottinghamshire

by
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Nottinghamshire
2002

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation on land at RAF Newton, Nottinghamshire (NGR SK 692 408, Fig. 1), was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of the Home Office. The work was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) in June 2002 prior to a planning application for development. A desk-based assessment (Mould 2002a) identified a potential for prehistoric and Romano-British remains within the site boundaries, due mainly to the proximity of the Fosse Way to the east of the site and a series of cropmarks to the north of the site. A series of geotechnical test-pits and bore-holes was excavated under archaeological supervision prior to the evaluation. No archaeological remains were identified during these works.

A total of 19 trenches was excavated, each measuring 1.8m wide and between 10m and 50m in length. Archaeological remains, comprising clusters of discrete features and linear features, were identified within seven of the trenches. A pit located in the northern part of the site produced four degraded fragments of Iron Age pottery. No other dating evidence was recovered during the evaluation. Although the lack of dating evidence is problematic, the morphology of many of the linears and the concentrated distribution towards the Roman Fosse Way suggests a Roman or pre-Roman date for the archaeology encountered.

1.0 Introduction

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken on land at RAF Newton, Nottinghamshire (NGR SK 692 408, Fig. 1). The work was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of CgMs Consulting to provide archaeological information in advance of determination of a planning application for development. A series of geotechnical test-pits and bore-holes was excavated under archaeological supervision prior to the evaluation (Fig. 2). No archaeological remains were identified during these works.

The archaeological evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999), and complied with a Specification for Archaeological Evaluation prepared by CgMs Consulting (Mould 2002b). The evaluation was also conducted within the general parameters defined by PPG16 'Archaeology and Planning', the Nottinghamshire Structure Plan Review, the Rushcliffe Borough Council Replacement Local Plan Deposit Draft (February 2000) and the East Midlands Research Framework.

2.0 Site Location (Fig. 1)

The site (centered on NGR SK 692 408, Fig. 1) is situated within a former RAF base which is bounded by the Newton Road to the north, the A46 Fosse Way to the east, a railway track to the south and a minor road to the west. Within the RAF base, the site comprises an area of accommodation fronting the Fosse Way (Fig. 2).

3.0 Archaeological Background

A desk-based assessment of the site was previously undertaken by CgMs Consulting (Mould 2002b), the results of which are reported on separately and only briefly referred to in this report.

The desk-based assessment identified a moderate to high potential for artefactual material and possible sub-surface features of Neolithic, later prehistoric and Roman date.

A Palaeolithic hand axe was found c250m from the site. A series of probable prehistoric cropmarks is recorded close to the Site. Activity associated with these and with a Neolithic and Bronze Age henge (SAM 29902) to the southeast may have extended into the Site.

The close proximity of the Roman Fosse Way, the town of Margidunum (SAM 4) and its associated cemetery, and the recording of Roman finds spots and scatters, suggested that the site had a moderate to high potential for settlement and artefactual evidence dating to this period.

4.0 Objectives

The objectives of the archaeological evaluation were to:

Clarify the presence/absence and extent of prehistoric and/or Roman deposits evidencing settlement at the site.

Identify, within the constraints of the evaluation, the date, character, condition and depth of any surviving remains within the site.

Assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits.

5.0 Methodology (Fig. 2)

A total of 19 trenches was excavated (Fig. 2), the location of which were determined in advance by CgMs Consulting and the Archaeological Advisor to Nottinghamshire County Council. In consultation with CgMs Consulting Trenches 6, 9 and 11 were slightly realigned on the ground to avoid services and allow access.

The topsoil and underlying silt-clay layers were mechanically removed using a 360° excavator, under direct archaeological supervision, to the top of the uppermost archaeological horizon, or to the top of the natural subsoil where no archaeological deposits were encountered.

All stratigraphic sequences were recorded on BUFAU *pro-formas*, even where no archaeology was present. Contextual information was supplemented by scale drawings, plans (at a scale of 1:50), sections (at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20) and black and white and colour print photography. These, together with recovered artefacts, form the site archive.

6.0 Archaeological Results

Trench 1

Trench 1 was 25 metres long and was orientated northwest-southeast. The natural subsoil in this trench comprised a compact red clay (1002), which was exposed at a depth of 0.37m below the modern ground surface. Two possible features were identified within this trench. At the northwest end of the trench a 0.75m wide and 0.09m deep gully (F102) was identified running in a north-south direction. The fill of the gully was a light brown silt-sand with charcoal flecks throughout (1004). It is likely that this feature represents an undulation in the natural and is not of archaeological origin. At the southeast end of the trench a small scoop (F101) was identified. This was filled by a red/brown silt-clay with charcoal flecking (1003). It is probable that this feature is the remains of a treebole.

Overlying the natural subsoil (1002) was a 0.07m deep layer of mid-brown silt-clay (1001). This layer was sealed by a 0.3m deep layer of dark brown clay-silt topsoil (1000).

No features of archaeological significance were identified within this trench.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was 25m in length and was orientated northwest-southeast. The natural subsoil in this trench comprised a dark red silt-clay with bands of a light blue/green silty clay (1502), which was exposed at a depth of 0.4m below the modern ground surface. Overlying this was a 0.2m deep layer of light brown silt-clay with stone inclusions (1501). This layer was sealed by a 0.2m deep layer of dark brown/black organic clay-silt topsoil (1500).

No archaeological features were identified within this trench.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was 20m in length and was orientated east-west. The natural subsoil in this trench comprised a red silty clay with bands of light grey clay (2002), which was

exposed at a depth of 0.70-1.0m below the modern ground surface. Overlying the natural subsoil was a 0.5-0.7m deep layer of mid/dark brown clay-silt (2001). This was sealed by a 0.2-0.3m deep layer of mid/dark brown silt topsoil (2000).

No archaeological features were identified within this trench.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was 50m in length and was orientated northeast-southwest. The natural subsoil in this trench comprised a red clay with light grey bands (2502), which was exposed at a depth of 0.9-1.1m below the modern ground surface. Two possible features were identified cutting the natural subsoil in this trench. At the northeast end of the trench a 4.0m wide and 0.2m deep semi-circular feature with irregular sides and evidence of tree root activity (F401) was identified. This feature was filled with a grey/red clay with patches of degraded stone (2506) and a dark brown humic silt-sand with fragments of brick/tile (2505). At the southwest end of the trench a 1.0m wide and 0.35m deep feature with irregular sides and evidence of root activity (F400) was identified. This feature was filled by a dark grey clay-silt with small stone inclusions (2503). Both these features have been interpreted as probable treeboles due to the amount of root activity present.

Overlying the natural subsoil (2502) was a 0.4-0.5m deep layer of mid/dark brown clay-silt (2501). This was sealed by a 0.5-0.6m deep layer of mid/dark brown humic topsoil (2500).

No features of archaeological significance were identified within this trench.

Trench 5

Trench 5 was 45m in length and was orientated east-west. The natural subsoil in this trench comprised a red/brown clay with bands of grey/blue clay (3002), which was exposed at a depth of 0.5m below the modern ground surface. Overlying the subsoil was a 0.2m deep layer of mid/light brown silt-clay (3001). This was sealed by a 0.3m deep layer of mid brown silt-clay topsoil (3000).

No archaeological features were identified in this trench.

Trench 6

Trench 6 was 10m in length and was orientated east-west. This trench was shorter than originally specified due to services located during machine excavation. The natural subsoil in this trench comprised a compact red clay with bands of green/blue clay (3502), which was exposed at a depth of 0.8m below the modern ground surface. Overlying the subsoil was a 0.4m deep layer of mid/light brown silt-clay (3501). This was sealed by a 0.4m deep layer of mid brown silt-sand topsoil (3500).

No archaeological features were identified in this trench.

Trench 7

Trench 7 was 15m in length and was orientated northwest-southeast. The natural subsoil in this trench comprised a red/brown clay with grey/green clay bands (4002), which was exposed at a depth of 0.30m below the modern ground surface. Overlying the subsoil was a 0.35m deep layer of mid-brown silt-clay (4001). This was sealed by a 0.2m layer of mid brown silt sand topsoil (4000).

No archaeological features were identified in this trench.

Trench 8

Trench 8 was 15m in length and was orientated northwest-southeast. The natural subsoil in this trench comprised a red clay with bands of blue clay (4502), which was exposed at a depth of 0.6m below the ground surface. Overlying the subsoil was a 0.4m deep layer of mid/light brown compacted silt-clay (4501). This was sealed by a 0.2m deep layer of mid brown silt-sand topsoil (4500).

No archaeological features were identified in this trench.

Trench 9 (Fig. 3)

Trench 9 was 22m in length and was orientated northeast-southwest. This trench was shorter than originally specified due to services located during machine excavation at the northeastern end. The natural subsoil in this trench comprised a dark red silt-clay (10002), which was exposed at a depth of 0.75-1.0m below the modern ground surface. Three archaeological features were identified in this trench. Towards the northeast end a post-hole was identified (F901). This post-hole was 0.34m wide and 0.2m deep with a rounded base, and was filled with a dark brown/black silt-clay (10005). Also identified was a 0.84m wide and 0.2m deep linear ditch (F900). This was filled with a dark brown/black silt-clay (10003). This linear (F900) was cut on its southwest side by a 0.6m wide and 0.2m deep linear ditch (F902). This re-cut was filled with a mid brown/red compact silt-sand-clay (10004).

Overlying the subsoil and sealing the archaeological features was a 0.15m – 0.25m deep layer of dark brown clay silt (10006). This layer was continuous throughout the trench, though varied in colour and depth. Although no dating evidence or organic material was recovered from this layer, it is possible that it represents an archaeological horizon. A layer of broken stone (10007), similar to the natural bedrock at the base of the trench, was encountered above this layer. The stony layer (10007) did not appear to be structural in nature and was encountered only at the northeastern end of the trench. Again, it is possible that this layer represents an archaeological horizon. Overlying both these layers was a 0.4-0.5m deep layer of light brown silt-clay (10001). This in turn was overlain by a 0.25-0.4m deep layer of dark brown/black silt topsoil (10000).

Trench 10 (Figs. 4 and 5, Plates 1 and 2)

Trench 10 was 50m in length and was orientated northeast-southwest. The natural subsoil comprised a red/brown clay with orange/grey clay patches (9003), which was exposed at a depth of 1.2m below the modern ground surface. There was a number of archaeological features identified within this trench cutting the natural subsoil (9003). Towards the northeast end of the trench was a 0.07m deep shallow scoop/pit (F1000). This was filled with a mid brown silt (9004). Also located to the northeast of the trench was a 1.3m wide and 0.9m deep steep-sided ditch (F1001, Plate 1). This was filled by a mid/light grey brown sand-silt (9005). This ditch had been re-cut on its north side by F1002, which was filled by dark brown/black silt with some small stone inclusions (9006).

A 1.0m wide and 0.23m deep curvilinear feature (F1003) was also identified towards the northeast end of the trench. This was filled with a dark brown clay-silt (9007). To the southwest of this a 0.45m wide and 0.2m deep steep-sided linear feature (F1009) was identified. This feature was filled with a light red brown silt sand (9014). Located towards the centre of the trench was another 0.4m wide and 0.2m deep straight-sided linear feature (F1008). This was also filled with a light red brown silt sand (9016).

Cut into the natural subsoil (9003) at the southwest end of the trench were two linear features. The first of these was a 0.8m wide and 0.45m deep irregular-sided ditch (F1007), which was filled by a brown/red clay (9015). To the northeast of F1007 was a shallow irregular feature F1010, interpreted as being a natural channel. These two linear features (F1007 and F1010) both appeared to have been cut by F1006, a 0.5m wide and 0.47m deep pit. This pit was filled by a light grey silt-sand-clay (9013).

Further to the southwest of these features was a 0.25m wide and 0.15m deep shallow scoop/posthole (F1005). This was filled by a dark brown/black sand-clay (9010). At the southwest end of the trench was a steep sided post-hole or small pit (F1004, Plate 2). This was filled with a dark grey/black clay with patches of orange clay (9009) and above this, a black clay (9008).

Sealing these features was a 0.2m deep layer of black/brown clay-silt with small stone inclusions (9002), similar to the layer encountered above the natural subsoil in Trench 9 (10006). Again, no dating evidence or organic material was recovered from this layer, though it is possible that it represents an archaeological horizon. Above this was a 0.6m deep layer of mid/light brown silt-clay (9001). This was sealed by a 0.2-0.4m deep layer of mid brown silt topsoil (9000).

Trench 11

Trench 11 was 25m in length and was orientated east-west. The original orientation of Trench 11 was altered due to problems with access. The natural subsoil comprised a grey clay with patches of red clay and bedrock (5002), which was exposed at a depth of 0.65-0.75m below the modern ground surface. Cut into the natural subsoil towards the west end of the trench a 2.10m long and 0.26m deep irregular feature

(F1100) was identified. This was filled by a dark humic silt-sand with areas of bedrock throughout (5003). This feature has been identified as a probable treebole.

Overlying the natural subsoil was a 0.2-0.25m deep layer of red/brown compact clay (5001). This was sealed by a 0.45-0.5m deep layer of light brown humic silt-sand topsoil (5000).

No features of archaeological significance were identified within this trench.

Trench 12 (Fig. 6)

Trench 12 was 25m in length and was orientated east-west. The natural subsoil comprised a red clay with narrow bands of a grey clay (7502), which was exposed at a depth of 0.55-0.65m below the modern ground surface. Two archaeological features were identified cutting the natural subsoil in this trench. At the west end of the trench a 0.5-1.7m wide ditch (F1200) was identified. This ditch had steeply sloping sides and a flat base. The lower fill of this ditch was a mid dark brown silty sand with some small stones (7504). The upper fill was a dark brown clay-silt-sand (7503). Adjacent to F1200 was a 0.04m deep irregular scoop with sloping sides and an even base (F1201). This feature was filled with a dark brown clay-silt-sand (7505).

Sealing these features and overlying the natural subsoil (7502) was a 0.2-0.25m deep layer of dark brown compact clay (7501). This in turn was overlain by a 0.35-0.4m deep layer of mid brown silt-sand topsoil (7500).

Trench 13 (Fig. 7, Plate 3)

Trench 13 was 25m in length and was orientated north-south. The natural subsoil comprised a red clay with patches of light grey clay (5502), which was exposed at a depth of 0.7m below the modern ground surface. Two possible archaeological features were identified within this trench. At the northern end of the trench a 1.2m wide and 0.3m deep pit (F1300) was identified (Plate 3). This pit had steep sloping sides and a flat base, and was filled with a dark brown/black silty clay with small stone inclusions (5503). Further to the north of pit F1300 was a 0.59m wide and 0.06m deep scoop (F1301). This feature had shallow sloping sides and a 'U'-shaped base and was filled with a dark brown silt-clay with blue clay patches (5504). It is possible that this feature represents a depression in the natural subsoil and is not of archaeological origin.

Overlying the natural subsoil and sealing the archaeological features was a 0.4m deep layer of mid/dark brown clay-silt (5501). This in turn was overlain by a 0.3m deep layer of dark brown silt topsoil (5500).

Trench 14 (Fig. 7)

Trench 14 was 30m in length and was orientated northeast-southwest. The natural subsoil comprised a red/brown clay with grey/green clay patches (6502), which was exposed at a depth of 0.3m below the modern ground surface. Cutting the natural

subsoil in the centre of the trench was a 2.0m wide and 0.6m deep ditch (F1400). This ditch had curving sides and a flat base and was filled by a mid/dark brown clay with small stone inclusions (6503).

Overlying the natural subsoil and sealing F1400 was a 0.2m deep layer of light/mid brown silt-clay (6501). This in turn was sealed by a 0.1m deep layer of mid brown silt topsoil (6500).

Trench 15

Trench 15 was 30m in length and was orientated northeast-southwest. The natural subsoil comprised a red/brown clay with grey/green clay patches (7002), which was exposed at a depth of 0.3m below the modern ground surface. Overlying the natural subsoil was a 0.1m deep layer of mid red/brown silt-clay (7001). This was overlain by a 0.2m deep layer of mid brown silt topsoil (7000).

No archaeological features were identified in this trench.

Trench 16 (Fig. 8)

Trench 16 was 20m in length and was orientated northeast-southwest. The subsoil comprised a dark red silt-clay with light blue/green clay patches (8502), which was exposed at a depth of 0.5-0.8m below the modern ground surface. Two archaeological features were identified within this trench. At the southwest end of the trench a 1.8m wide and 0.8m deep 'V'-shaped ditch (F1600) was identified. This was filled by a dark brown silt-sand-clay with small stone inclusions (8503). At the northeast end of the trench was 2.1m wide and 0.84m deep roughly 'V'-shaped ditch (F1601). This was filled by a light grey/brown silt-clay with small stone inclusions (8504).

Overlying the subsoil and sealing the two features was a 0.3m-0.5m deep layer of light brown silt-clay with small stone inclusions (8501). This was sealed by a 0.2-0.4m deep layer of dark brown/black silt topsoil (8500).

Trench 17

Trench 17 was 20m in length and was orientated north-south. The subsoil comprised a dark red silt-clay with light green/blue silt-clay patches (11002), which was exposed at a depth of 0.42m below the modern ground surface. Overlying this was a 0.2m deep layer of light brown silt-clay with small stone inclusions (11001). This was sealed by a 0.22m deep layer of dark brown/black silt topsoil (11000).

No archaeological features were identified in this trench.

Trench 18 (Fig. 7, Plate 4)

Trench 18 was 50m in length and was orientated northwest-southeast. The subsoil comprised a compact red clay with blue clay patches and orange sand (9502), which was exposed at a depth of 0.6m below the modern ground surface. One archaeological feature was identified within this trench. Towards the southeast end of the trench was a 1.3m wide and 0.4m deep sub-oval pit (F1801) with a flat base (Plate 4). The lower fill of this feature was a brown sand-silt (9506). The upper fill was a very mixed red clay with irregular patches of brown sandy silt (9505). Four fragments of prehistoric pottery were recovered from the upper fill of this feature (9505).

Sealing this feature and overlying the subsoil was a 0.3m deep layer of compact light red/brown silt-clay (9501). This was sealed by a 0.3m deep layer of brown silt-clay-sand topsoil (9500).

Trench 19

Trench 19 was 15m in length and was orientated northeast-southwest. The subsoil comprised a red/brown sand-clay with grey/blue clay mottling and stone inclusions (10502), which was exposed at a depth of 0.4-0.6m below the modern ground surface. Overlying this was a 0.1-0.3m deep layer of light brown clay-silt (10501). This was sealed by a 0.2-0.3m deep layer of brown/grey organic sand-silt topsoil (10500).

No archaeological features were identified in this trench.

7.0 Discussion

The earliest phase of activity, identified from the only dated feature encountered during the evaluation, is of the Iron Age period. This may relate to the prehistoric cropmarks identified in the area (though outside the site) by the desk-based assessment, though the highly degraded nature of the pottery recovered suggests that the feature is not necessarily indicative of settlement in the immediate vicinity.

No other archaeological features encountered during the evaluation produced any artefactual dating evidence. The size and shape of many of the linear features identified, together with the clustering of features adjacent to the Fosse Way, suggests that a Romano-British date for these features is highly likely. The negative evidence provided by the lack of pottery recovered from these features suggests that the features are not evidence of settlement activity in themselves, but represent the remains of field systems dating to this period, located outside an area of Roman settlement. However (although it is not possible to say for certain within the constraints of the evaluation) the apparent alignment of the ditches with respect to the Fosse Way is not quite at a 90° angle. This could suggest that some of the linear features might predate the construction of the Fosse Way, as Roman roads do not respect earlier field systems. This may also explain the lack of Roman artefacts recovered from any of the features encountered.

8.0 References

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Mould, C. 2002b *Specification for Archaeological Evaluation: RAF Newton, Nottinghamshire* CgMs

9.0 Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1

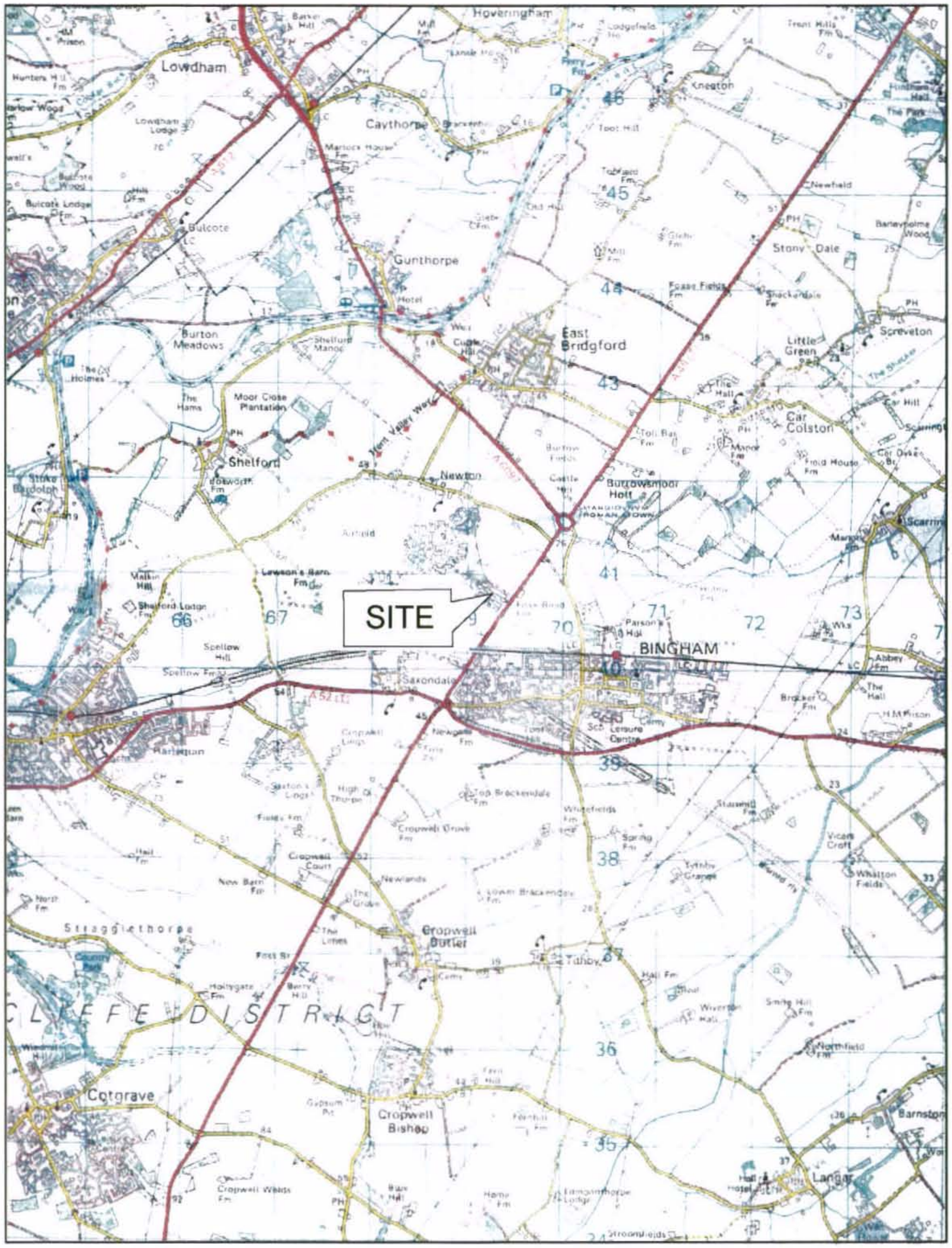
Table of Height Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) for top of topsoil, subsoil and archaeological features in all trenches.

Trench Number	Trench End/Feature Number	Height AOD (M) Top of Topsoil/Feature	Height AOD (M) Top of Natural
Trench 1	NW	33.38	32.78
	SE	33.48	33.03
Trench 2	NW	33.42	33.03
	SE	33.22	32.95
	Base of Sondage		31.91
Trench 3	W	33.39	32.76
	E	32.95	32.15
Trench 4	NE	31.8	30.87
	SW	31.64	30.54
	Base of Sondage		30.15
Trench 5	W	31.76	31.02
	E	31.12	30.5
Trench 6	W	28.14	27.42
	E	28.47	27.76
Trench 7	NW	27.52	26.92
	SE	27.14	26.66
Trench 8	NW	26.86	26.36
	SE	26.53	25.92
Trench 9	NE	25.01	24.27

Trench Number	Trench End/Feature Number	Height AOD (M) Top of Topsoil/Feature	Height AOD (M) Top of Natural
	SW	25.03	24.05
	F900/F902	24.22	
	F901	24.25	
Trench 10	NE	24.90	23.91
	SW	24.70	23.75
	F1000	23.75	
	F1004	23.81	
	F1005	23.77	
	F1006/F1007	23.76	
	F1008	23.87	
	F1009	23.75	
	F1003	23.86	
	F1001/F1002	23.80	
Trench 11	W	25.89	25.35
	E	25.97	25.41
Trench 12	W	28.93	28.22
	E	28.82	28.18
	F1200	28.39	
Trench 13	NW	28.84	28.09

Trench Number	Trench End/Feature Number	Height AOD (M) Top of Topsoil/Feature	Height AOD (M) Top of Natural
	SE	28.43	27.93
	F1300	28.31	
Trench 14	NE	29.85	29.38
	SW	29.88	29.55
	F1400	29.42	
Trench 15	NE	30.57	30.30
	SW	31.32	30.83
	Base of Sondage		29.56
Trench 16	NE	32.03	31.22
	SW	32.03	31.46
	F1601	30.96	
	F1600	30.99	
	WATER TABLE	30.36	
Trench 17	N	33.64	33.08
	S	33.52	33.08
Trench 18	NW	30.92	30.30
	SE	30.24	29.86
	F1801	29.89	
	Base of Sondage		29.64

Trench Number	Trench End/Feature Number	Height AOD (M) Top of Topsoil/Feature	Height AOD (M) Top of Natural
Trench 19	NE	31.91	31.59
	SW	32.13	31.50
	Base of Sondage		30.88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Newton
Burton Meadows
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Bulcote
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Stragglethorpe
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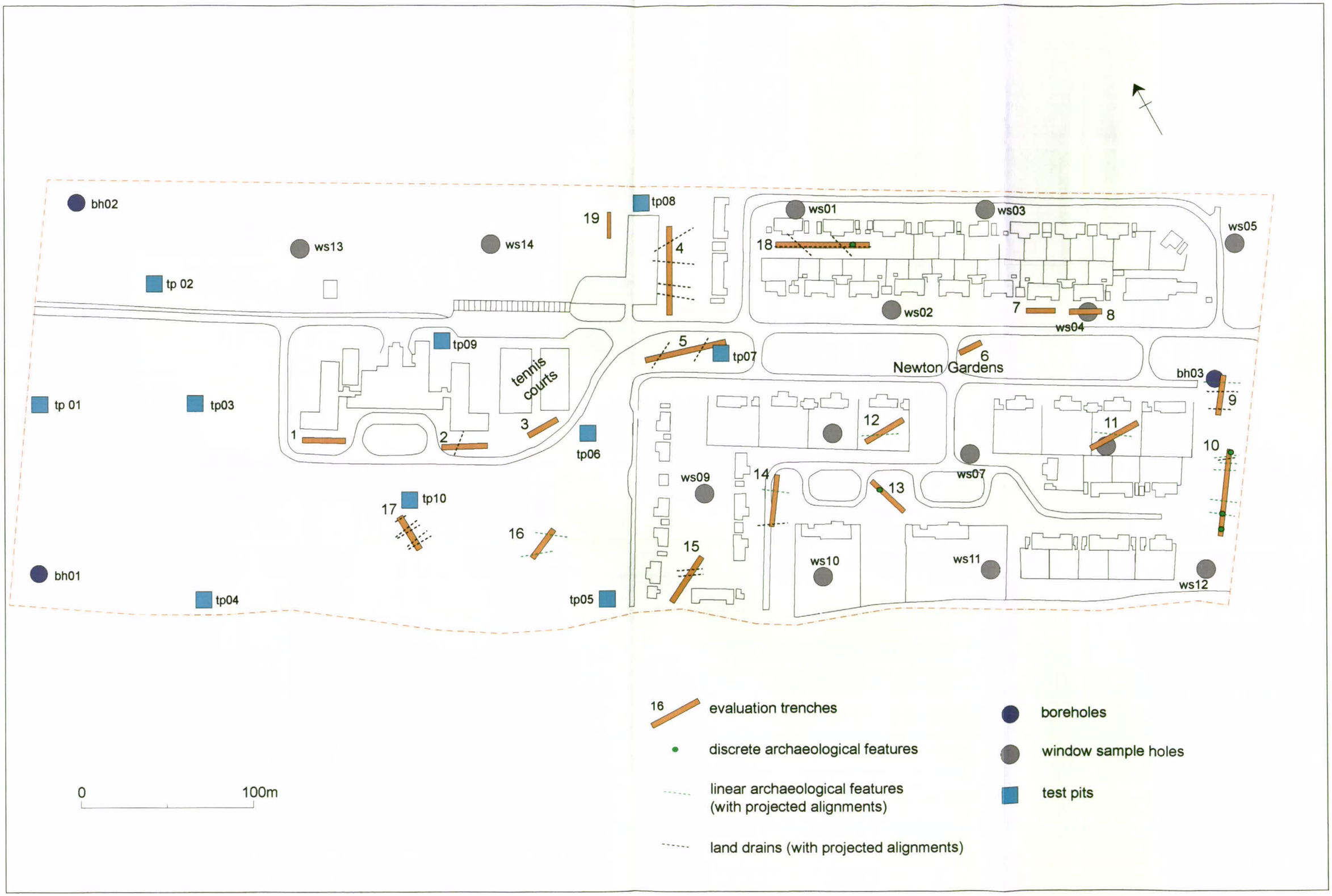
Fig. 1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tp06
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14
ws07
13
17
tp10
16
15
ws10
ws11
ws12
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tp04
tp05
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100m
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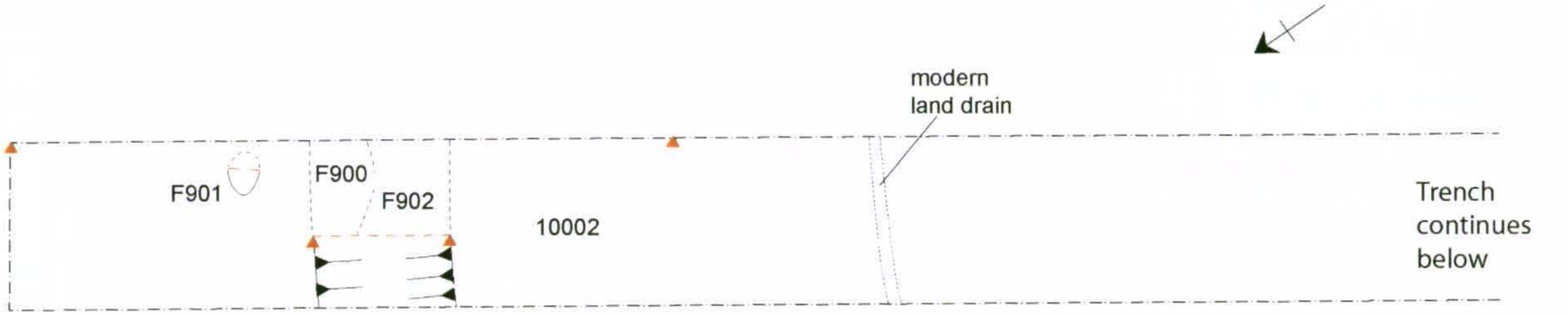
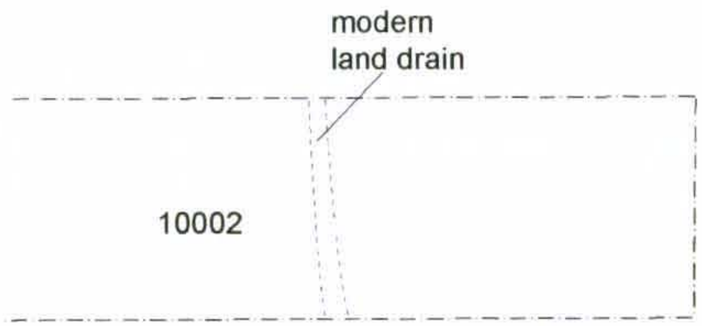
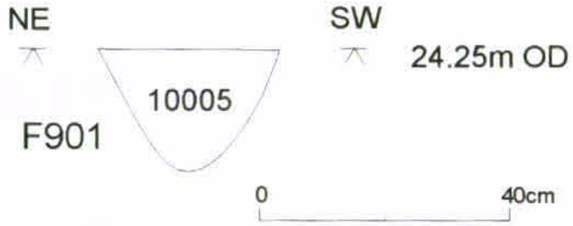
evaluation trenches
discrete archaeological features
linear archaeological features (with projected alignments)
land drains (with projected alignments)
boreholes
window sample holes
test pits

Fig. 2

TRENCH 9







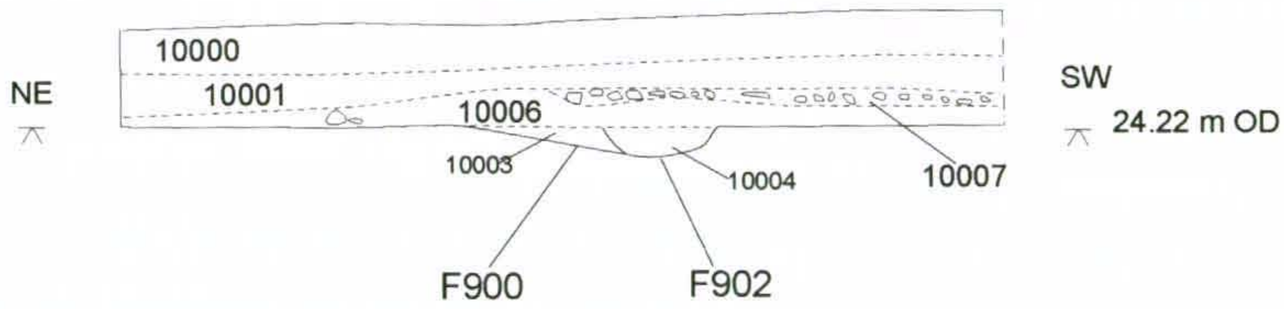


Fig. 3

TRENCH 10

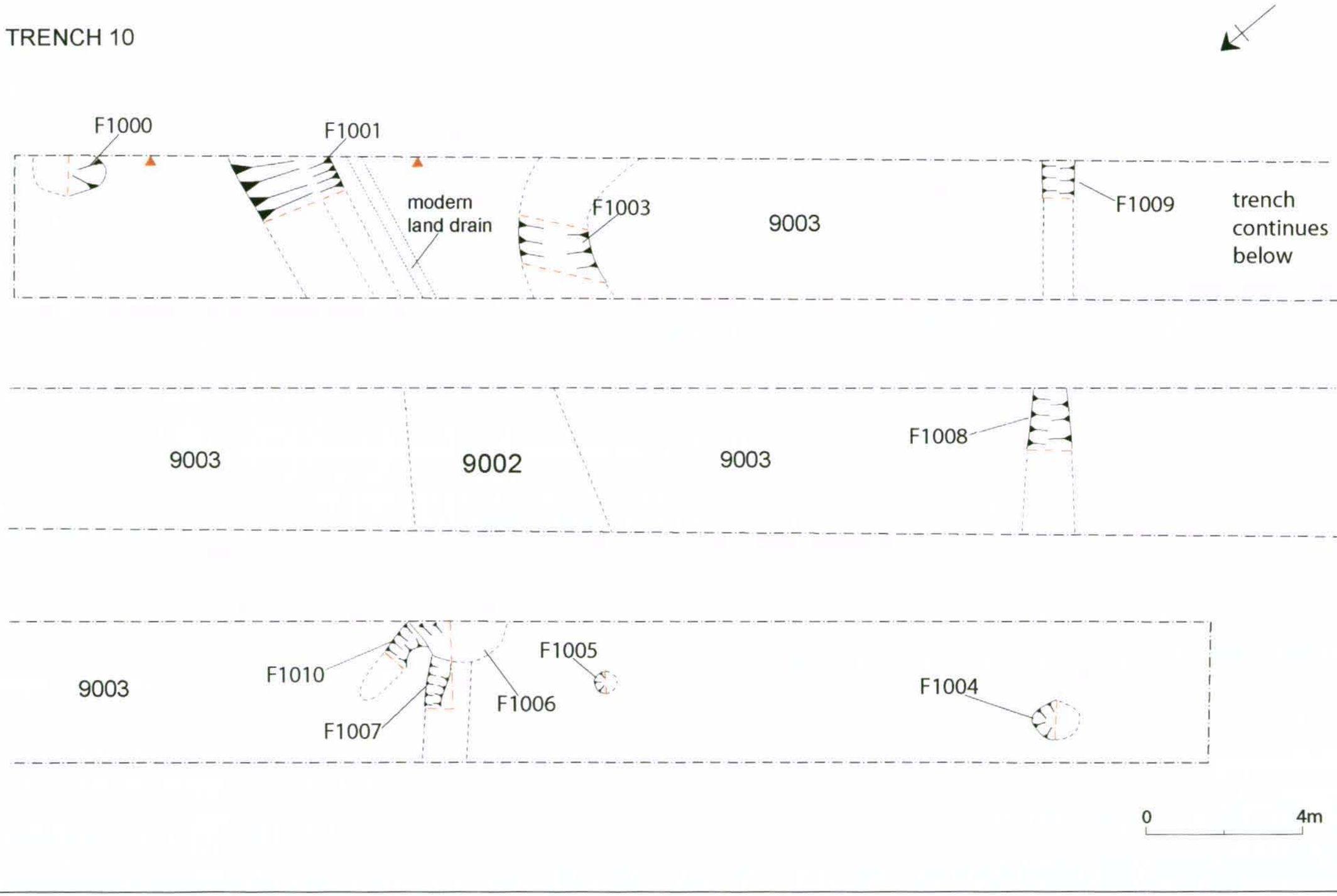


Fig. 4

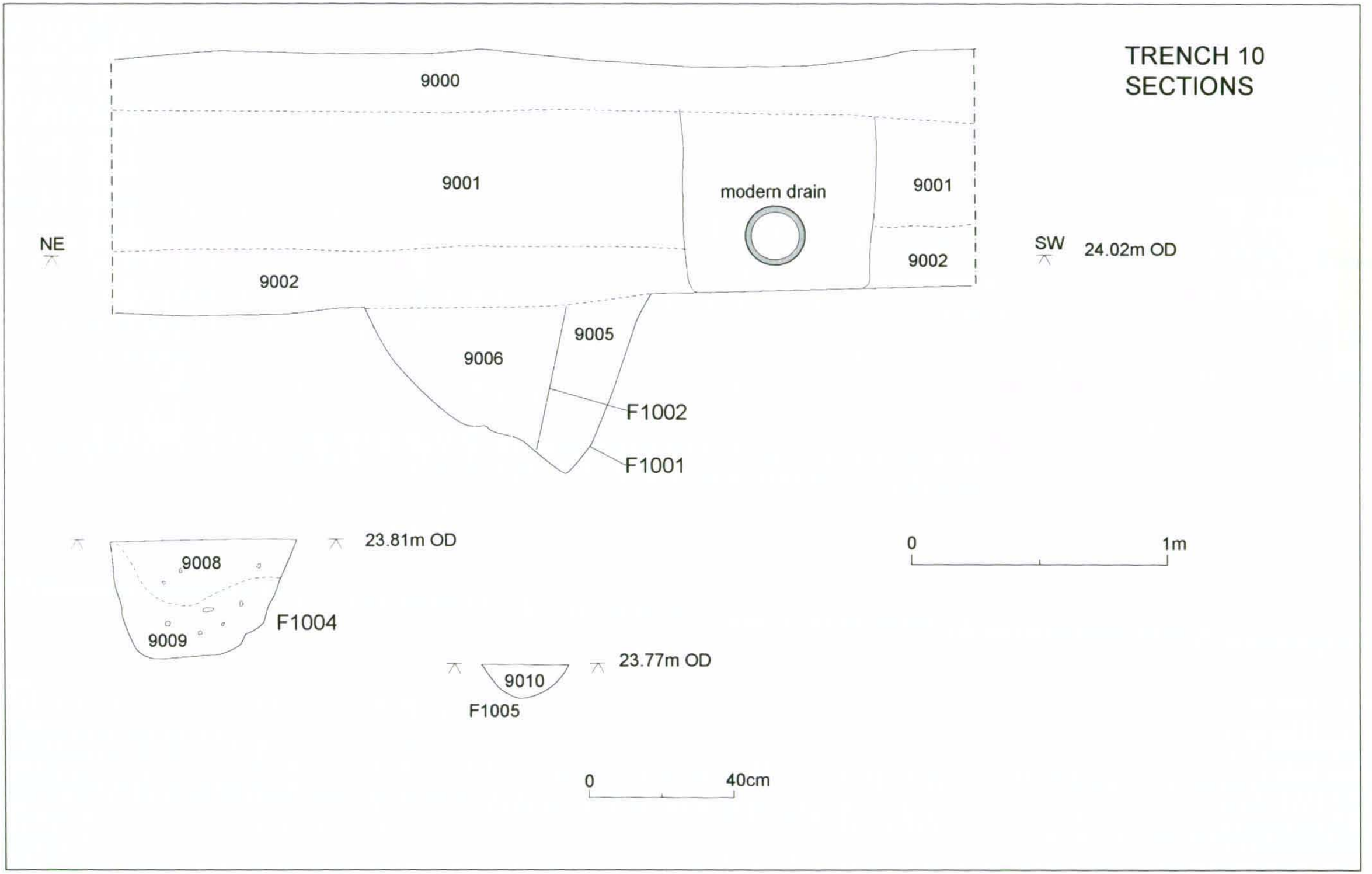

TRENCH 10
SECTIONS
9000
9001
modern drain
9001
NE
SW
24.02m OD
9002
9002
9005
9006
F1002
F1001
0
1m
23.81m OD
9008
F1004
9009
23.77m OD
9010
F1005
0
40cm

Fig. 5

TRENCH 12

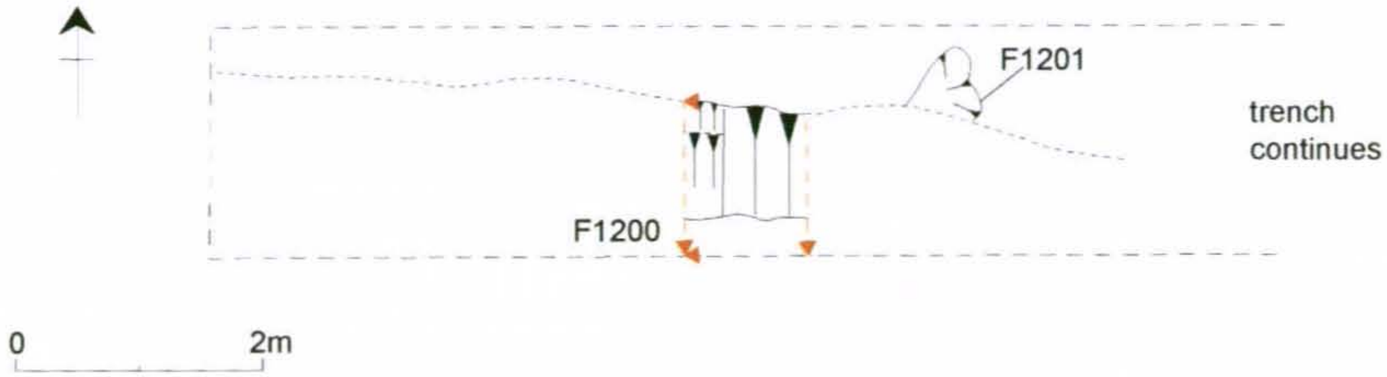


Fig. 6

TRENCH 13

0 4m

TRENCH 14

TRENCH 18

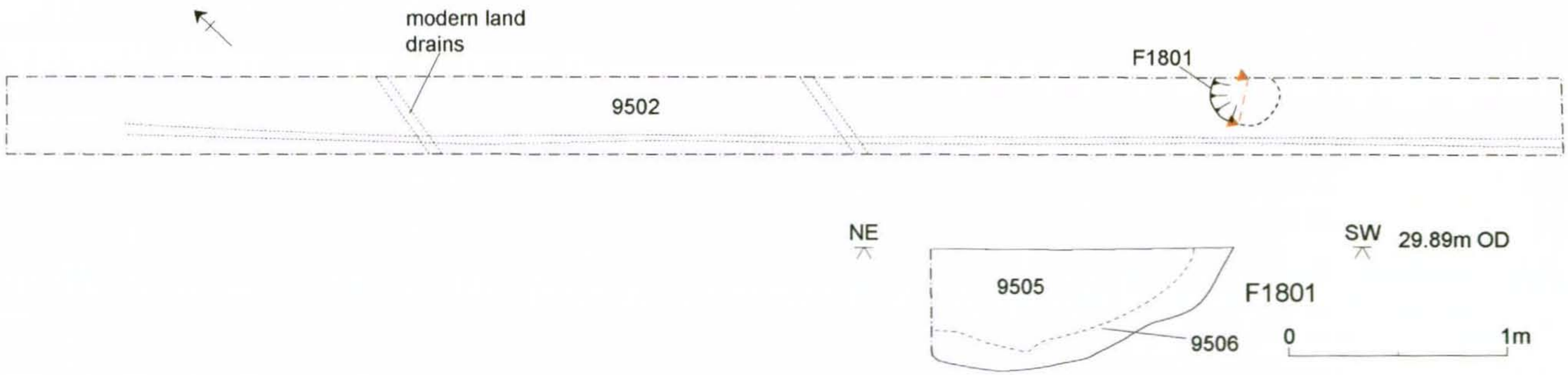


Fig. 7

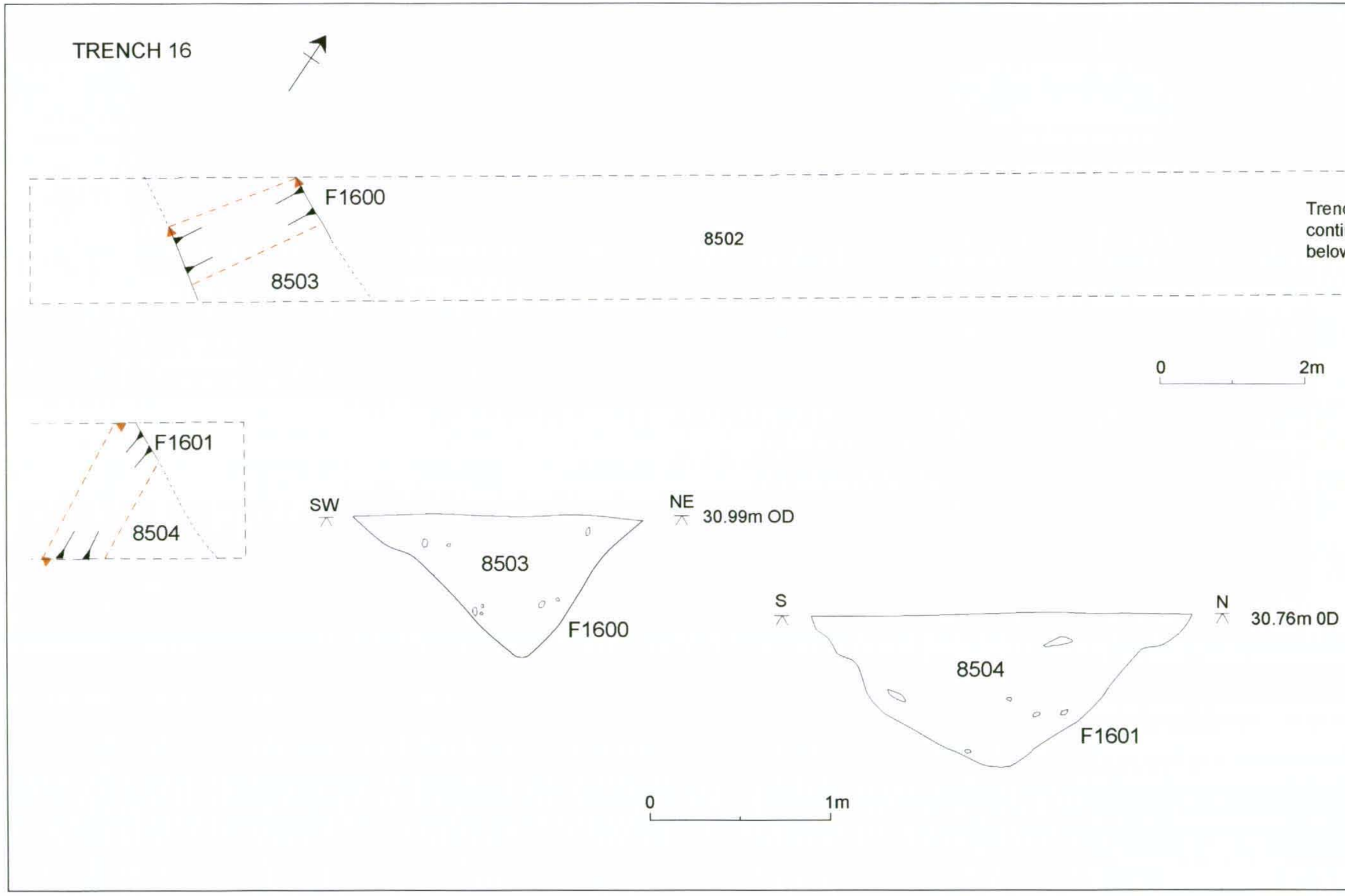

TRENCH 16
F1600
8503
8502
Trench continues below
0
2m
F1601
8504
SW
NE
30.99m OD
8503
F1600
S
N
30.76m 0D
8504
F1601
0
1m

Fig. 8

Plate 1, F1001 and F1002

Plate 2, F1004

Plate 3, F1300

Plate 4, F1801