

# Birmingham Road Ansley Warwickshire

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



*understanding heritage matters*

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1705

JANUARY 2017



*Working for  
Warwickshire*

<b>Project:</b>	Land at the rear of Ansley United Reform Church
<b>Commissioned by:</b>	Heritage Collective
<b>Project Report No.</b>	1705
<b>Site Code:</b>	AB16
<b>Planning Reference:</b>	PAP/2015/0652
<b>Planning Authority:</b>	North Warwickshire
<b>Planning Archaeologist:</b>	John Robinson, Warwickshire
<b>National Grid Reference:</b>	SP 297 917
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## CONTENTS

	Summary	2
1	Introduction	3
2	Site Location	4
3	Archaeological and Historical Background	5
4	Aims and Methods	6
5	Results	7
6	Conclusions	8
	Acknowledgements	9
	References	10

## PHOTOGRAPHS

1	Gully 103	11
2	Pit 303	11
3	Pit 503	12
4	Posthole 506	12
5	Pit 603	13
6	Gully 703	13
7	Posthole 705	14

## APPENDIX

A	Table of Contexts	15
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## FIGURES

1	Location of excavated trenches
2	Detail of trenches 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and sections

## SUMMARY

*An archaeological evaluation, consisting of thirteen trial trenches, was undertaken on behalf Archaeology Collective in advance of housing development in an area of potential medieval settlement. A few undated gullies, pits and postholes were recorded in Trenches 1-7. There were no archaeological deposits in Trenches 8-13. No finds were recovered from any of the trenches.*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission has been granted by North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC) for the erection of 34 dwellings, with access onto Birmingham Road, Ansley, Warwickshire (North Warwickshire District Council Planning Application PAP/2015/0692).
- 1.2 NWBC had determined that the proposed development lies within an area of archaeological potential. A planning condition attached to the consent therefore required that the applicant secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work.
- 1.3 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the planning authority. This was carried out in January 2017. This report presents the results of that work.

## 2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site is located in the village of Ansley, close to the western outskirts of Nuneaton, c.6.5 km west of the historic town centre, and c.17 km north of Coventry. It lies at the rear of properties (including Ansley United Reformed Church and Parish Hall) fronting the B4112 Birmingham Road to the west, and north of properties fronting St. Lawrence Road to the south, with open farmland to the north and east. The site is centred around National Grid Reference SP 297 917 (Fig 1).
  
- 2.2 The underlying geology of the site is Whitacre Member – Mudstone and Sandstone (British Geological website). The drift geology is Thrussington Member – Diamicton (British Geological website). The overlying soils are known as Rufford, which are typical stagnogley soils, associated with deep sandy soils (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 3Midland and Western England).

### **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 An archaeological desk-based assessment has been undertaken by Heritage Collective. This assessment considered archaeological sites and finds and investigations within a 2 km radius held on the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER), together with a map regression exercise charting the history of the application site from the early 19th century to the present day.
- 3.2 An area of medieval settlement has been identified from cartographic evidence and aerial photographs immediately west of, and partially extending into the southwest edge of, the application site. The area of medieval settlement is conjectured to extend both northwest and southeast of the application site, on either side of the Birmingham Road. Earthworks of possible medieval date have been identified from aerial photographs south the application site, on the south side of the road. However, there has been little fieldwork to confirm these conjectural areas of settlement. The evidence suggests that the application site lay in the rural hinterland, beyond any settled areas. Apart from the former Congregational Chapel there is no evidence for any post-medieval activity adjoining the application site, or in close proximity to it. There has been development within the southwest corner of the application site since at least 1844.

#### **Mapping**

- 3.3 The earliest detailed historic map of the area is the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887-9 which shows the site formed the south-west part of a field.

#### **Geophysical Survey**

- 3.4 A detailed gradiometry survey was conducted across the area (Stratascan 2016). The survey did not identify any anomalies of archaeological origin. The anomalies identified were all modern in origin, relating to an underground service, scattered magnetic debris, ferrous objects, and fencing.

## **4 AIMS AND METHODS**

- 4.1 The main aim of the evaluation was to determine if there was any significant archaeological remains in the area to be developed; to form an understanding of their value and their potential to shed light on the subsequent development of the area.
- 4.2 Secondary aims include placing the results in their wider local and regional contexts as appropriate.
- 4.3 The objectives were to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format.
- 4.4 The thirteen trenches were opened up by a JCB excavator fitted with a 1.60m wide toothless ditching bucket. Topsoil and other plough soils were removed under the supervision of an experienced archaeologist until either the top of archaeological remains or geological natural was reached. All thirteen trenches were 30m long.



## 5 RESULTS

### Geological Natural

- 5.1 The natural across the site consisted of a mixture of strong brown gravel and brownish yellow clay yellow clay. It was encountered in all the trenches, at a depth of between 0.25m and 0.60m (average of 0.44m) below the current ground level.

### Undated

- 5.2 Trenches 1-7 revealed undated archaeological features.
- 5.3 In Trench 1 gully 103 was aligned NNW-SSE and had a rounded profile backfilled with pebbly sand (104). A parallel gully in Trench 2, 203, contained a similar fill.
- 5.4 Trench 2 also contained a sub-oval pit, 303, that was less than 1.0m in diameter.
- 5.5 Trench 4 contained a land drain 403 that was aligned NW-SE.
- 5.6 Trench 5 contained an oval pit, 503. A basal fill of burnt red clay (505) was overlain by a charcoal rich deposit (504), suggestive of an in-situ burning event. A sub-square posthole (506) at the other end of the trench was very likely modern.
- 5.7 Trench 6 contained an undated, oval shaped pit (603) filled with greyish brown silty clay.
- 5.8 Trench 7 revealed NW-SE aligned gully 703 which may relate to a field boundary depicted on 19<sup>th</sup> century mapping (Fig 1). To the northeast of the gully was small, circular posthole 705.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The evaluation has revealed several disparate and undatable archaeological features. A pit in Trench 5 displayed evidence for a burning event but as this was not dated and cannot be linked to any other features, it is unlikely to be significant.
- 6.2 A number of basally rounded gullies crossed the site of which may relate to former field boundaries, or, given the high pebble content, drainage. In no case could they be linked between trenches and they do not generally relate to the modern field matrix.
- 6.3 Several modern looking postholes may have been associated with an equestrian use of the field.
- 6.4 Trenches 8-13 contained no archaeological deposits at all.
- 6.5 The absence of any artefactual material from the evaluation trenches is unusual but probably indicates that there are no occupation sites in the near vicinity.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Dr Anne Johnson at Archaeology Collective for facilitating the project.

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1. Gully 103



2. Pit 303





3. Pit 503



4. Posthole 506





5. Pit 603



6. Gully 703





7. Posthole 705



## APPENDICES

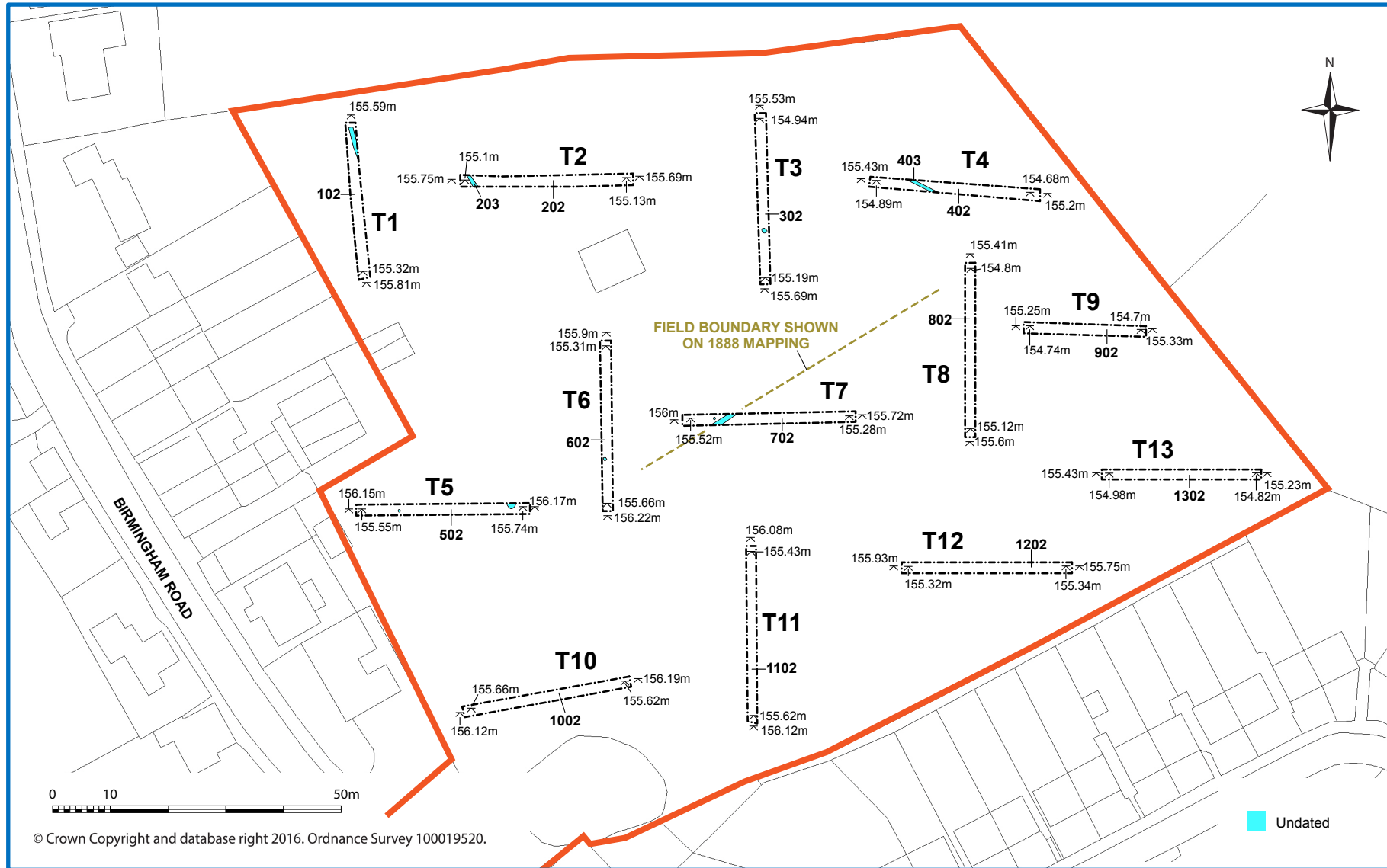
### A Table of contexts

<b>Trench</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1	100	Dark greyish brown sandy silt		0.19 - 0.26	Topsoil
1	101	Greyish brown sandy silt		0.06 - 0.12	Layer
1	102	Strong brown sand with clay patches			Geological Natural
1	103	Cut of gully	>6.0	1.0	Linear, aligned E-W, undated
1	104	Greyish brown sandy clay		1.0	Fill of 103, no finds
1	105	Cut of ditch			Linear, aligned E-W, undated
1	106	Silty clay			Fill of 105
2	200	Dark greyish brown silty clay		0.35	Topsoil
2	201	Greyish brown silty clay		0.25	Layer
2	202	Brownish yellow clay with gravel patches		0.12 - 0.25	Geological Natural
2	203	Cut of drain			Modern drain, aligned NE-SW
2	204	Dark greyish brown			Fill of 203
3	300	Dark greyish brown silty clay		0.30 - 0.35	Topsoil
3	301	Greyish brown silty clay		0.15- 0.18	Layer
3	302	Strong brown sand with clay patches			Geological Natural
3	303	Cut of pit	0.82	0.22	Sub-oval pit, undated
3	304	Greyish brown silty clay		0.22	Fill of 303, no finds
4	400	Dark greyish brown silty clay		0.30 - 0.35	Topsoil
4	401	Light greyish brown sandy		0.12	Layer

		clay			
4	402	Light brown yellow sand with strong brown gravel patches			Geological Natural
4	403	Cut for drain			Drain, aligned NW-SE
4	404	Drain fill			Fill of 403
5	500	Dark greyish brown silty clay		0.25 – 0.29	Topsoil
5	501	Light greyish brown sandy clay		0.25	Layer
5	502	Light brown yellow sand with strong brown gravel patches			Geological Natural
5	503	Cut for pit	1.22	0.12	Sub-oval pit, post-medieval
5	504	Very dark grey clay, with very, very high charcoal content			Secondary fill of 503
5	505	Red, burnt clay natural			Lower fill of 503
5	506	Cut for posthole	0.31	0.09	Sub-square posthole, possibly post-medieval
5	507	Dark greyish brown silty clay		0.09	Fill of 506
5	508				Upper fill of 503
6	600	Dark greyish brown silty clay		0.20 – 0.23	Topsoil
6	601	Light greyish brown sandy clay		0.20 – 0.23	Layer
6	602	Strong brown gravel with brownish yellow clay patches			Geological Natural
6	603	Cut for pit	0.46	0.20	Oval pit, undated
6	604	Greyish brown silty clay			Fill of 603
7	700	Dark greyish brown silty clay		0.25 – 0.30	Topsoil

7	701	Light greyish brown sandy clay		0.20	Layer
7	702	Strong brown gravel with brownish yellow clay patches			Geological Natural
7	703	Cut for gully	0.54	0.05	Gully, aligned NNE-SSW
7	704	Yellowish brown sandy silt		0.05	Fill of 703
7	705	Cut for posthole	0.30	0.15	Circular posthole, undated ?
7	706	Yellowish brown sandy silt		0.15	Fill of 705
8	800	Greyish brown silty clay		0.30	Topsoil
8	801	Light greyish brown sandy clay and strong brown gravel		0.12 – 0.14	Layer
8	802	Light brown yellow sand with strong brown gravel patches			Geological Natural
9	900	Dark greyish brown silty clay		0.26	Topsoil
9	901	Light greyish brown sandy clay		0.12 – 0.16	Layer
9	902	Light brown yellow sand with strong brown gravel patches			Geological Natural
10	1000	Dark greyish brown silty clay		0.24 – 0.32	Topsoil
10	1001	Light greyish brown sandy clay		0.18 – 0.20	Layer
10	1002	Light brown yellow sand with strong brown gravel patches			Geological Natural
11	1100	Dark greyish brown silty clay		0.24 – 0.30	Topsoil
11	1101	Light greyish brown sandy		0.18 –	Layer

		clay		0.20	
<b>11</b>	1102	Strong brown gravel with brownish yellow clay patches			Geological Natural
<b>12</b>	1200	Dark greyish brown silty clay		0.18 – 0.32	Topsoil
<b>12</b>	1201	Light greyish brown sandy clay		0.16 – 0.19	Layer
<b>12</b>	1202	Strong brown gravel with brownish yellow clay patches			Geological Natural
<b>13</b>	1300	Dark greyish brown silty clay		0.23 – 0.29	Topsoil
<b>13</b>	1301	Light greyish brown sandy clay		0.09 – 0.15	Layer
<b>13</b>	1302	Light brown yellow sand with strong brown gravel patches			Geological Natural



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Fig 1: Location of excavated trenches

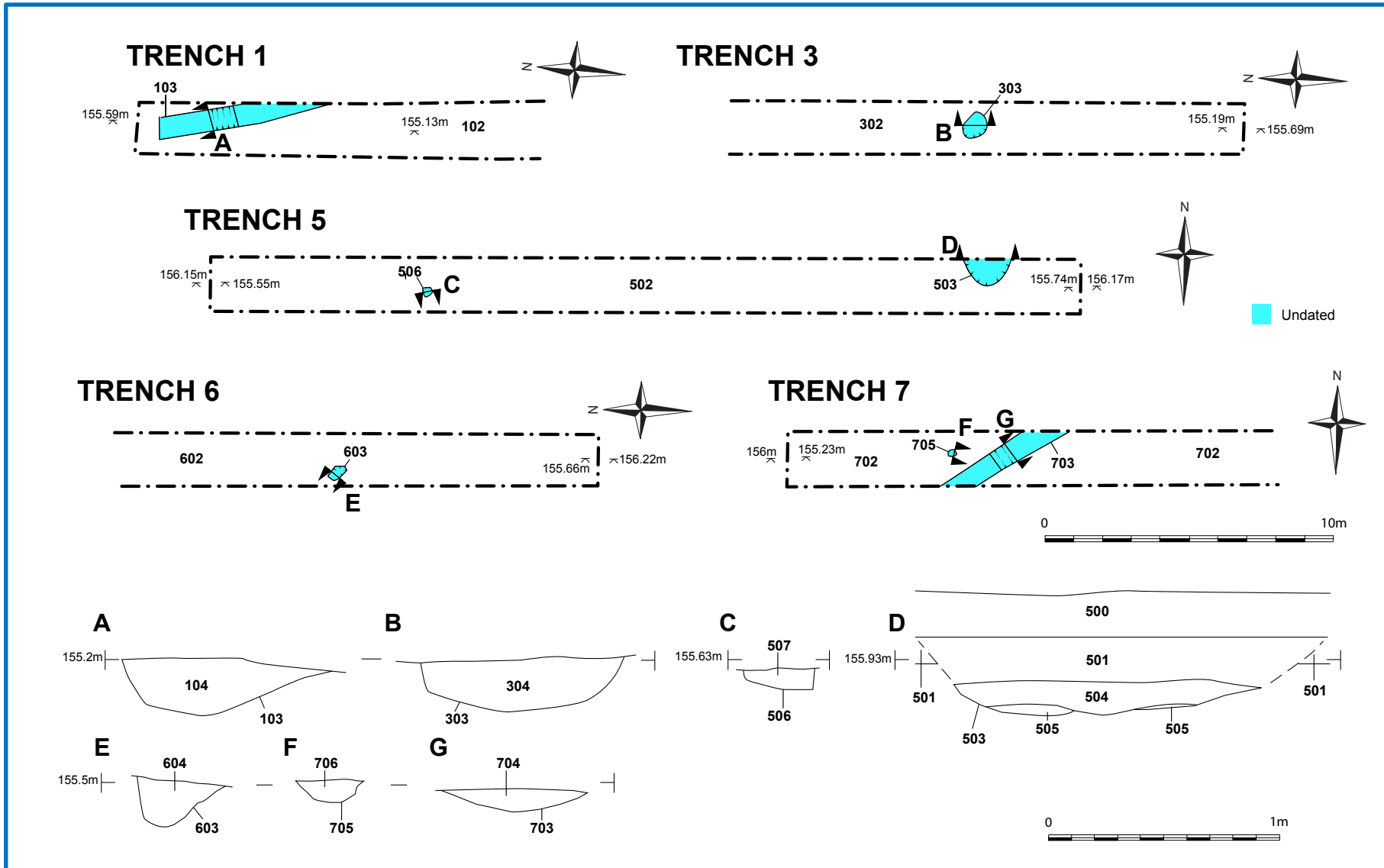


Fig 2: Detail of trenches 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and sections