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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES WYAS

North Rigton Primary School
North Rigton
North Yorkshire

Archaeological Evaluation

July 2002

Report No. 1023

CLIENT

Stott Thompson Architects Limited

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North Rigton Primary School

North Rigton

North Yorkshire

Archaeological Evaluation

Contents

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land bordering a medieval moated manor site (Scheduled Ancient Monument 29538) at North Rigton. The investigations revealed a number of archaeological features comprising of pits, a gully and two ditches, some of which certainly pre-dated the moated bank of the manor site. No previous archaeological work had been undertaken at North Rigton prior to this evaluation.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Archaeological Services WYAS were commissioned by Stott Thompson Architects Ltd, agents for the Governors of North Rigton Church of England Primary School, to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land within the boundary of the school at North Rigton, Harrogate. The site is located at the eastern end of North Rigton village, approximately 700m west of the A658 Harrogate to Bradford road at SE 282 494 (Figs 1 and 2). The work took place in advance of a proposed building re-development (North Yorkshire County Council planning application 6.134.64E.CLA). SE28167 49360

1.2 The area under investigation included the footings of a drystone wall, a tree stump and a ground cover of grass vegetation. The underlying geology of millstone grits comprises Almscliff and Marchup grits (British Geological Survey 1974).

1.3 The archaeological evaluation of a trench, approximately 25m in length and 3m in width, was carried out between 11th June and 21st June 2002.

2. Archaeological and Historical Background

2.1 The area of investigation lies immediately to the south-west of a deeply cut moat that surrounds the site of a hall or manor house. While this moated site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 29538), the evaluation trench lies outside this scheduled area. The moated site was owned by the De Lethley family in the 13th century and was held by Fountains Abbey from 1244 until the Dissolution in 1539. Prior to the current archaeological investigations, no archaeological work had been carried out in North Rigton (see Appendix I).

2.2 The settlement of Rigton was recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Riston(e)* meaning farmstead on the ridge (Smith 1961, 44). Rigton appears on Jeffreys' Map of Yorkshire from 1775, although the moated site is not apparent. The earthworks are indicated on the first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6 inch map of 1851 and from this map it is clear that Rigton became known as North Rigton sometime after the mid 19th century.

3. Method

3.1 A written brief for the stripping, recording and evaluation of the current re-development area was prepared by Neil Campling of the Heritage Unit, Environmental Services, North Yorkshire County Council (Appendix I).

3.2 The aims of the archaeological investigations were:

- to collect sufficient data to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area,
- to determine the extent, condition, quality of survival, character, importance and date of any archaeological remains present,

- to gather sufficient information to enable the assessment of the potential and significance of the archaeology of the site and the impact the development will have upon this.

3.3 The archaeological evaluation involved the stripping of a 25m by 3m trench (Fig 3). This was to investigate the possibility that an external earthwork bank existed around the moat, perhaps as upcast from the digging of the moat. In addition to upcast deposits, rubbish layers, building rubble or features may have been anticipated.

3.4 The area of investigation was excavated using a 360° tracked back-acting mini-excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under direct archaeological supervision. Topsoil and subsoil deposits were removed in level spits to the top of the first archaeological horizon or undisturbed natural. Given restricted access, it was necessary to excavate the trench in two halves, reinstating material into the first half before the second half could be excavated. The resulting surfaces were cleaned manually and inspected for archaeological remains.

3.5 All archaeological features were hand excavated. Sections of 1-1.5m were excavated through linear features, with the section located and recorded adjacent to the trench edge where possible. If dating evidence was scarce, additional sections were excavated or the features, as exposed, were excavated in their entirety. Discrete features were half-sectioned in the first instance and fully excavated when appropriate.

3.6 In accordance with the Archaeological Services standard method (Boucher 1995), a full written, drawn and photographic record was made of all archaeological remains. Hand-drawn plans were made of excavated features at a scale of 1:20 and sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10. All plans and sections include spot-heights related to Ordnance Datum in metres as correct to two decimal places. The trench limits were surveyed and fixed within a local grid using a level.

3.7 A soil-sampling strategy was undertaken for the recovery and identification of carbonised plant remains, vertebrate remains and molluscs. Soil samples of up to twenty litres were taken from the primary fills of excavated features and from possible bank deposits where appropriate.

3.8 An officer of the Heritage Unit, Environmental Services, North Yorkshire County Council monitored the work in progress on 20th June 2002.

3.9 Following completion of the archaeological evaluation, the site archive was prepared in accordance with the specification outlined in the Management of Archaeological Projects, Map 2 (English Heritage 1991). The site archive contains all the information collected during the fieldwork (Appendix II) and the records have been checked and indexed as necessary. The paper archive and artefacts are currently held by Archaeological Services WYAS in appropriate and stable environments. These will be deposited with Harrogate Museum following the completion of the post-excavation work (accession number: Hargm 11392).

4. Results

4.1 The evaluation trench, measuring 25m in length and 3m in width, was situated along the south-west boundary of a moated site. The trench followed the same alignment as a bank, which was presumably upcast during the creation of the moat that surrounded the hall or manor house (Figs 2 and 3). Vegetation and topsoil deposits extended across the entire area under investigation and these were removed by machine as described above (Section 3.4). The topsoil varied in depth from 0.54m in the eastern end of the trench to 0.18m in the western end. A direct physical relationship was noted between the topsoil and archaeological deposits: no subsoil deposits were identified. Undisturbed natural was encountered at a height of 143.26m OD in the north-western end of the trench and this sloped away gradually to 142.28m OD towards the south-eastern limits of the trench.

4.2 Although dateable artefacts were scarce, and completely absent from the fills of the earliest features, two distinct phases are proposed: activity occurring prior to the construction of the moat and early modern activity associated with the construction of school buildings.

4.3 Context, artefact and environmental sample inventories are presented in Appendices II to IV.

Pre-moat construction activity

4.4 The five features identified during the archaeological investigations as cutting through the natural contained no dateable artefacts. Nevertheless they have been treated as a single phase of activity and as pre-dating the construction of the moat (i.e. medieval or earlier). The cutting of pit 106 by ditch 104 (Section 4.5), however, and the possibility that feature 128 was overlain by upcast material from the cutting of ditch 123/126/137 (Section 4.8) suggests that at least two phases of activity were represented. The ditch (123/126/137) and possible pit (128) identified towards the eastern limits of the trench predated the moated site as they were overlain by bank deposits.

4.5 Pit 106 situated 2.5m from the north-western limits of the evaluation trench, was 1.3m in length, at least 0.7m in width and 0.3m in depth (Plate 1). In profile the pit was U-shaped with steep sides and a rounded base (Fig 4, S.7). It contained a single fill (105) of mid grey-brown clayey silt with infrequent sub-angular sandstone fragments, but no function for this pit was identified. In section, it was apparent that pit 106 was cut by a later ditch (104) (Section 4.7).

4.6 Gully 102, orientated northeast/southwest, was uncovered in the north-western limits of the trench, approximately 2.0m west from pit 106. The feature was 0.62m in width, 0.1m in depth and was exposed for a length of 2.8m. In profile the gully was a shallow U-shape with a rounded base (Fig 4, S.6 and S.2). It contained a single fill (101) of mid to dark grey silty clay with occasional sub-angular sandstone fragments.

4.7 Ditch 104 was situated only 0.5m to the east of gully 102 and shared a common alignment. While this suggests that the two features were contemporary, possible up-cast (120) from the construction of ditch 104

sealed gully 102 and indicates that the two linear features did not co-exist. Perhaps a drainage function served by the gully was rapidly superseded by the construction of a larger ditch. Ditch 104 was seen in section to bisect pit 106 and cut through a possible buried soil (110/114/129/130) (Fig 4, S.3 and S.7). This mid grey clayey silt, although thin and patchy in places was visible over the majority of the trench.

4.8 Ditch 104 was U-shape in profile with a rounded base and measured 0.95m in width and 0.60m in depth and was exposed for 3.1m (Fig 4, S.8). It contained a primary fill (103) of mid grey-brown silty clay and a secondary fill (119) of grey-brown sandy silt, both with occasional sandstone fragments. Both deposits were disturbed by root action. Between these features identified in the western end of the trench and a ditch and possible pit towards the eastern limits, no further features cutting into the natural were noted (Plate 2).

4.9 A possible pit (128) was located within the south-eastern corner of the trench. It was exposed for 0.90m in length, 0.80m in width and 0.26m in depth, but its limits were not determined (Fig 4, S.4). It contained a single fill of dark to mid grey clayey silt (127) as well as a large sandstone boulder. This fill was succeeded by a dark grey sandy silt with mottled brown-grey deposits (113) and a mid orange brown clay (112). These deposits may represent material removed during the creation of ditch 123/126/137 (Section 4.10) and used to form a bank to the south of the ditch (Fig 4, S.9).

4.10 Ditch 123/126/137 situated immediately to the north of possible pit 128, occupied a very different alignment to ditch 104. It ran south-east/north-west from the most easterly trench edge, before gradually turning to the north in the direction of the moat (Fig 3). The ditch was V-shape in profile with steep sides and a rounded base (Fig 4, S.9) and measured approximately 1.2m in width, between 0.83m and 1.20m in depth and was exposed for a length of approximately 9m (Plate 3). Two episodes of infilling were identified, a primary fill (122/125/136) of dark grey-black clayey silt, and a secondary fill (121/124/135) of mid reddish orange to grey silty clay. Finally, the ditch was sealed by a dark brown-grey clay (138/139/111) that represented deliberate backfilling of the ditch during the construction of the moat's bank.

4.11 This primary make-up of the moat's bank (138/139/111) was revealed at a depth of 0.62m at the south-eastern end of the trench (Fig 4, S.9) before petering out 11.50m further west (Fig 4, S.3). This was overlain by a secondary deposit of bank material (109) that was more widely distributed. This grey to reddish brown clay measured 0.56m in depth at the south-eastern limits of the trench and reached a maximum depth of 0.86m approximately 2.8m to the east of ditch 104. These upcast deposits, created during the cutting of the moat, were seen to peter out approximately 0.46m from the southern limits of the trench (Fig 4, S.9). A narrow deposit of mid grey-brown silty clay (131) noted between bank material 128/139/111 and 109 in the eastern section of the trench (Fig 4, S.9) probably represents slumping from the primary bank material (111). This apparent hiatus between the deposition of bank material 111 and 109

suggests that two separate episodes of moat/bank construction may have occurred.

Early modern activity

4.12 Two deposits, a mid grey-brown clayey silt (134) recorded in the eastern end of the trench (Fig 4, S.9) and a grey-red brown clay (107) recorded in the western limits (Fig 4, S.1) may represent levelling of the ground surface prior to the development of the school complex in the mid 1800s. Layer 107 contained a fragment of glazed tile of post-medieval date, presumably re-deposited during the preparation of the site for construction works. This development was identified in the southern section of the trench (Fig 4, S.4) with a construction cut (118) for Building 2 (Fig 3). In profile the foundation trench was a broad U-shape with fairly steep sides and a flat base and measured 6.4m in length and 0.6m in depth. The construction cut contained a primary fill (117) of mid yellow-brown clay and a secondary fill (116) of brown-yellow clay mixed with topsoil deposits of grey-black sandy silt, which included a distinctive lens of dark grey-black sandy silt (115). Artefacts were exclusive to fill 116 and were identified as early modern potsherds and metal objects.

Unphased activity

4.13 Finally, deposit 108, a grey-brown silty clay identified towards the western end of the trench (Fig 4, S.3) was interpreted as a natural accumulation of soil from higher ground to the north-west, perhaps encouraged by plough action. Although post-dating the construction of the bank (Section 4.11), this activity is of unknown date and may relate to the medieval, post-medieval or early modern period.

5. Artefact Record

5.1 All artefacts were either post-medieval or early modern in date and were re-deposited during the construction of the school buildings or were associated with this 19th-century activity. No artefacts associated with the medieval construction and occupation of the moated site were found. No further analysis of this material is required.

Pottery and tile

5.2 Five sherds of a redware open bowl or pancheon with brown glaze internally and three sherds of a possible jar with metallic brown glaze internally and externally, all of post-medieval date, were recovered from fill 116 within the construction cut for the 19th school buildings. A floor tile fragment with orange/brown glaze and yellow 'combed' decoration from layer 107 is probably of post-medieval date also. Finally, five sherds of early modern willow pattern pottery and two fragments of early modern flowerpots were recovered from unstratified/topsoil deposits. No ceramic artefacts

Building materials

5.3 Three slate tiles and one brick fragment represent early modern building activity, although all four pieces were retrieved from unstratified deposits.

Metal objects

5.4 Three iron pieces represent the only metal artefacts recovered from the archaeological evaluation. All of these were recovered from fill 116 within the construction cut for the 19th school buildings. They include a fragment of a shovel blade (approximate blade width of 244mm), a sickle/scythe blade (length 320mm) and an undiagnostic flat strip of iron (length 330mm, width 53mm).

Other artefacts

5.5 All the remaining artefacts were retrieved from unstratified deposits. They include two glass bottles (a complete pharmacy bottle and a near complete ink bottle), a glass stopper and undiagnostic glass fragment, presumably of 19th or 20th-century date. Three slate pencils attest to the presence of a school on the site from the 19th century and the bowl of a clay pipe (with no surviving decoration) is probably of 18th-century date. Again, none of these artefacts relate to medieval activity associated with the scheduled monument.

6. Environmental Record

Botanical remains

6.1 The assessment of the botanical component of selected soil samples was undertaken to investigate activities that may have been associated with the moated site when in use. A sub-sample of one litre of soil was processed from seven deposits using a system of flotation in an Ankara-style flotation tank. The floating remains (the flot) were collected in a 300μm sieve and the heavy fraction (the retent) was collected in a 1mm mesh. The flots, once dry, were scanned using a binocular microscope and the results are presented below in Table 1. The retents (the heavy fraction) were scanned by eye for botanical remains, artefacts and metallurgical debris.

6.2 All the flot samples contained only modern root material and occasionally leaf litter. No charcoal or charred cereal remains were noted and consequently no indications of the types of activities that may have occurred in the vicinity were identified. The retents consisted solely of inorganic material and were subsequently discarded.

6.3 Given the absence of environmental material from the samples, it is recommended that no further work be carried out on these deposits. In the event of further archaeological works in this area, a paucity of environmental remains is likely once again, although the potential of waterlogged remains, particularly from moat deposits, should be recognised.

Table 1. Results from the flot samples

Context	Sample no.	Flot vol.	Cereal grain	Charred seeds	Cereal chaff	Charcoal	Modern plant material
101	500	1ml					++++
103	501	>1ml					++++
105	502	>1ml					++++
111	506	>1ml					++++
114	503	5ml					++++
120	507	>1ml					++++
122	505	>1ml					++++
127	504	1ml					++++

Key: + = rare (1-5), ++ = occasional (6-10), +++ = common (11-50), ++++ = abundant (>50)

7. Discussion

7.1 The five features cutting into the natural have been treated as a single phase of activity and as pre-dating the construction of the moat. Sub-phases have been identified, however, with ditch 104 cutting pit 106 and the assumption that feature 128 and gully 102 were overlain by bank deposits created during the construction of ditches 123/126/137 and 104 respectively. Although somewhat tentative, the difference in orientation between ditch 123/126/137 (essentially east/west) and ditch 104 and gully 102 (northeast/southwest) also supports the suggestion that sub-phases of activity existed. Alternatively, ditch 123/126/137 and ditch 104 may have formed the northern and western boundaries of a rectangular enclosure.

7.2 Unfortunately in the absence of any artefacts from the ditches, gully and pits, the activities represented by these features could not be dated and the sub-phases could not be further refined. The absence of artefacts and environmental remains and the limited extent of the investigations also precluded the identification of the function of these features. The ditches and gully may represent boundaries, enclosure ditches or drainage features, but no suggestion as to the function of the pits can be made.

7.3 Ditch 123/126/137 and possible pit 128 were overlain by bank deposits that were upcast during the construction of the moat. Two bank deposits were identified (138/139/111 and 109) and a possible hiatus in the formation of the bank (represented by layer 131) was suggested. Layer 131 may represent a period of erosion of deposit 138/139/111 that occurred prior to the deposition of layer 109. Unfortunately no artefacts were recovered from these deposits to provide an indication of the date of construction.

7.4 Early modern activity is represented by the construction of School Building 2. This presumably occurred in 1851 as detailed on the front of the main school building (Building 1, Fig 3). Levelling deposits and fills within the foundation trench for Building 2 contained all the stratified

artefacts recovered during the investigations. These were either post-medieval (presumably re-deposited) or early modern in date. None of these artefacts appeared to be associated with occupation of the medieval moated site.

8. Conclusions

8.1 The evaluation of a 25m by 3m trench in the grounds of North Rigton Church of England Primary School was designed to assess the construction methods and appearance of a medieval moated site. The archaeological investigations revealed bank deposits associated with the cutting of the moat and raised the possibility that two phases of construction had occurred. The southern limits of the bank were also identified. These bank deposits sealed features of medieval or earlier date (ditch 123/126/137 and possible pit 128) and three further features cut into the natural were presumed to be of similar date. While the function of all these features was unclear, ditches 123/126/137 and 104 may represent an enclosure or tenement relating to an earlier phase of the village. Finally, a foundation trench for the construction of school buildings in the 19th century was identified in the southern section of the trench.

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Project management

Jane Richardson PhD

Report

Bernie McCluskey BSc, Jane Richardson

Graphics/illustrations

Jon Prudhoe

Fieldwork

Bernie McCluskey

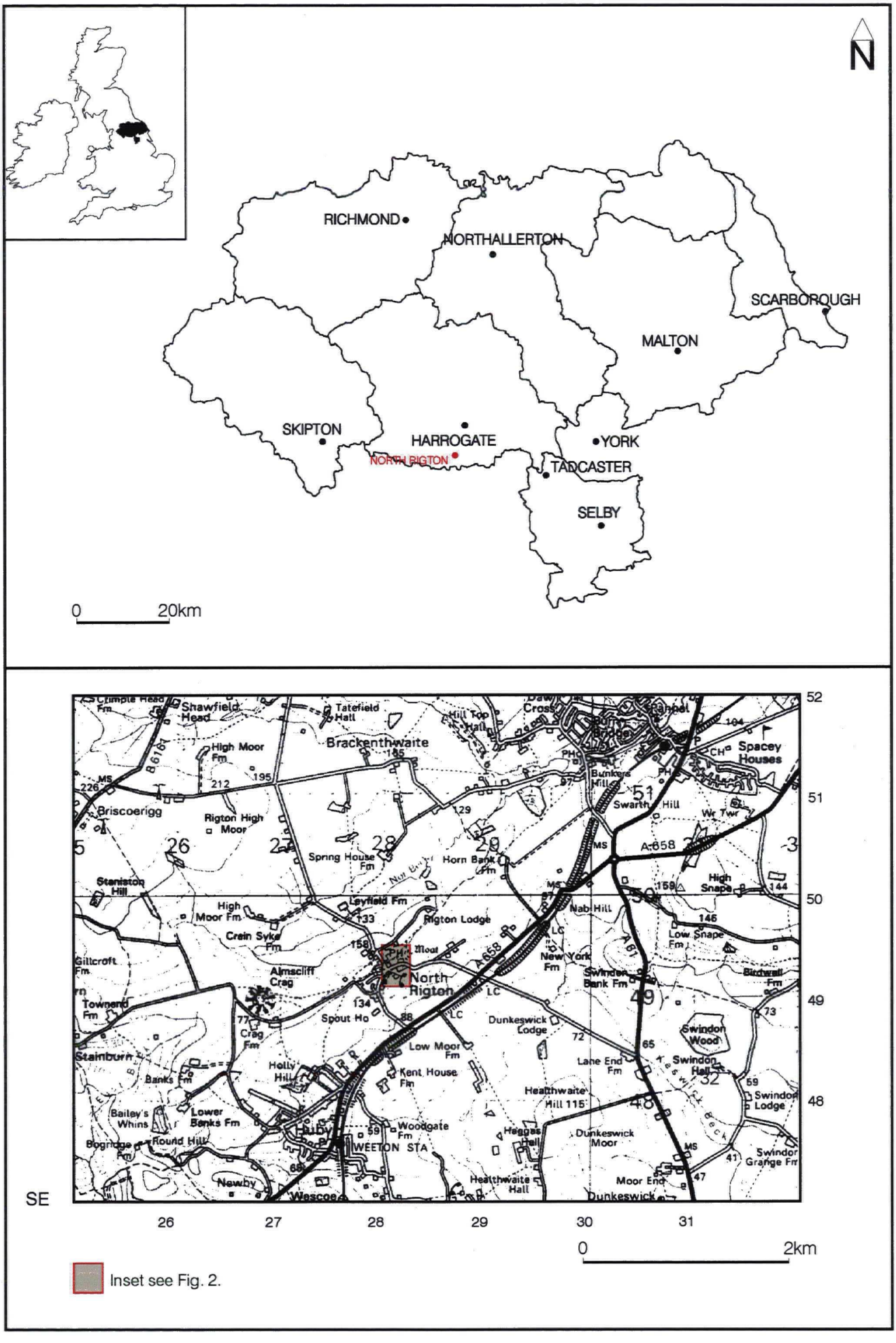

Fig. 1. Site location

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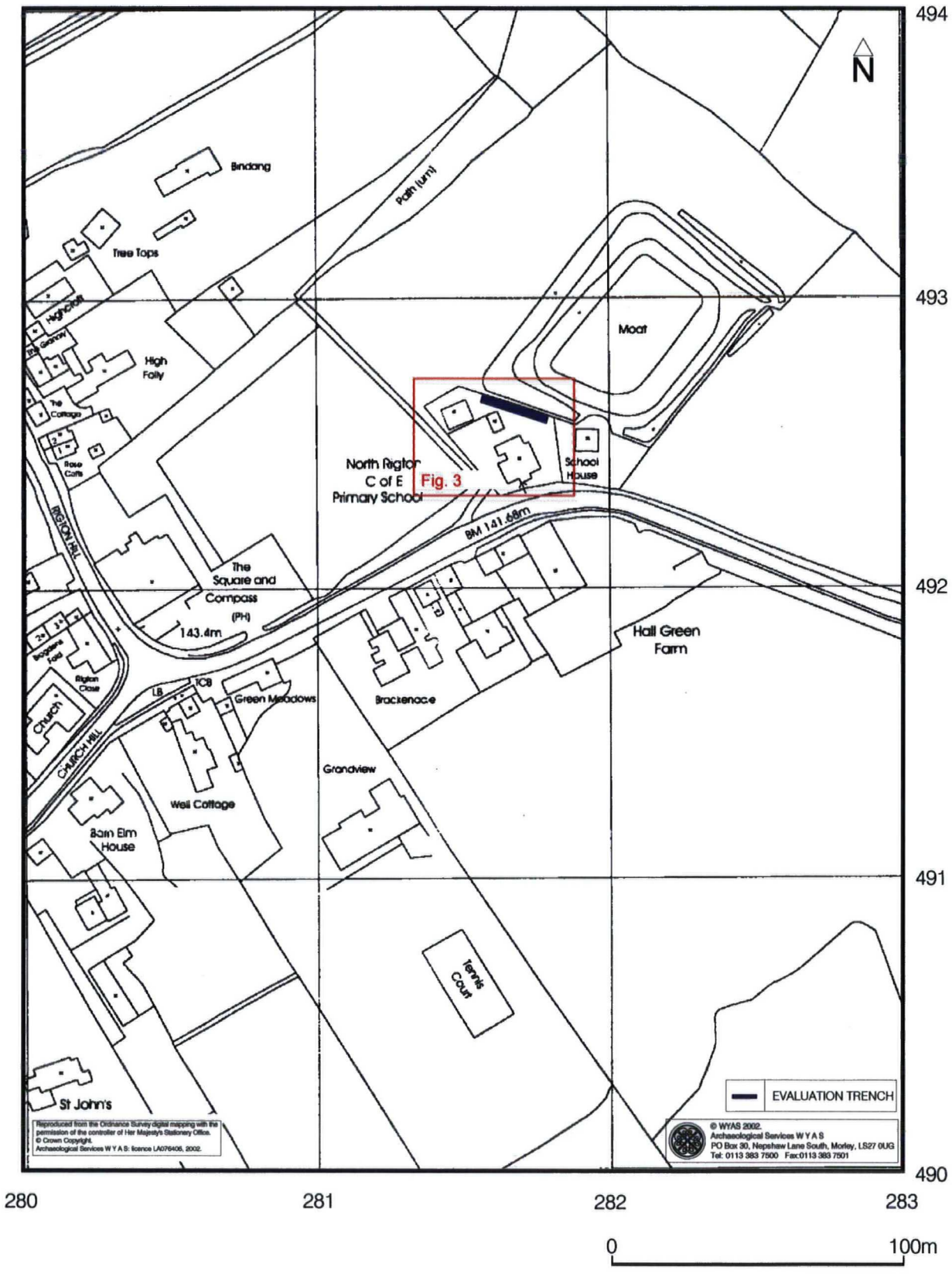

Fig. 2. Trench location

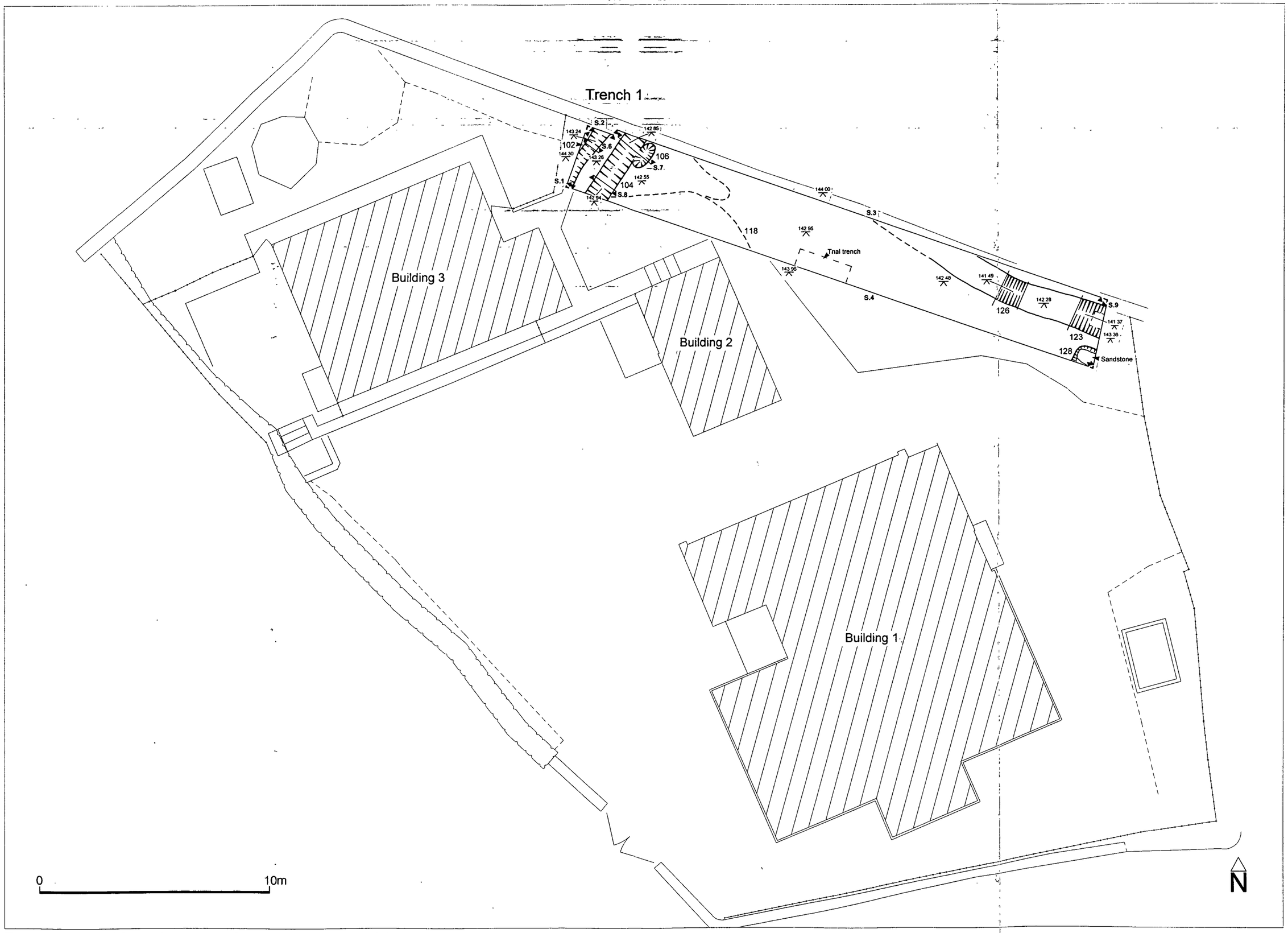

Fig. 3. Location of the evaluation trench showing the excavated features

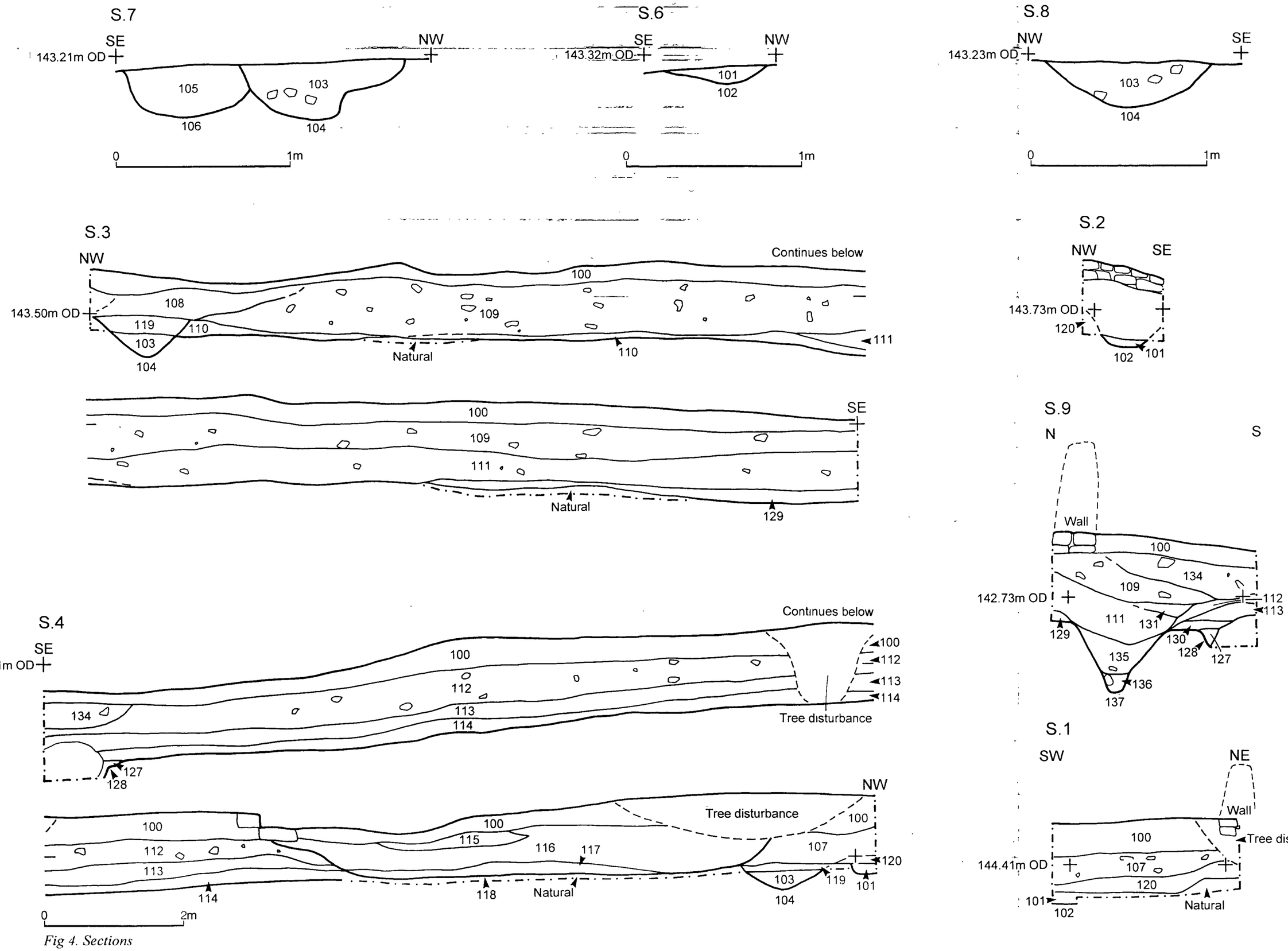

Fig 4. Sections