



# BRISTOL & WEST ARCHAEOLOGY

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Lower Knowle Farm, Bedminster,  
Bristol

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Archaeological Evaluation Report

Client: Co-housing Bristol (CoHB) Ltd

18 June 2016

# Bristol & West Archaeology

**Planning Authority:**

**Bristol City Council**

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**National Grid Reference:**

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**Author: Raymond K Ducker**

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**Lower Knowle Farm, Bedminster, Bristol**  
**Archaeological Evaluation Report**

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## **Lower Knowle Farm, Bedminster, Bristol**

### **Archaeological Evaluation Report**

#### **Summary**

In May 2016 Bristol & West Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation at Lower Knowle Farm, Bedminster to inform a planning application to demolish the remains of a ruinous agricultural building and construct 9 dwellings within 4 blocks.

A single 27 metre long trench and separate trial pit were excavated behind Grade 11 listed Lower Knowle Farm (house). This revealed several soil-cut features including three ditches, post-holes, a pit which contained pottery dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and post-medieval walls perhaps connected with a former agricultural building.

**Lower Knowle Farm, Bedminster, Bristol**

**Archaeological Evaluation Report**

**Acknowledgements**

Thanks are owed to Mr Jeremy Dain of Jeremy Dain Architects and Co-housing Bristol (CoHB) Ltd for assistance, also Bob Jones, Senior Archaeological Officer, Bristol City Council for approving the Written Scheme of Investigation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A planning application (15/03955/F) was submitted to Bristol City Council for demolition of a derelict agricultural building and the construction of 9 dwellings within 4 blocks located behind Lower Knowle Farm (house), Bedminster. Owing to the potential survival of important archaeological remains at the site, the Archaeological Officer for Bristol City Council required the results of an archaeological evaluation before determination of the planning application, in line with NPPF para 128,. The fieldwork was commissioned by Mr Jeremy Dain of Jeremy Dain Architects and the results are contained within this report.
- 1.2 The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the Archaeological Officer for Bristol City Council, which detailed the methodology to be adopted by Bristol & West Archaeology to undertake the fieldwork. It was guided in its composition by a brief from Bristol City Council, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2014), *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE: The Project Managers' Guide* (EH 2006) and by comments from the architect, Jeremy Dain.
- 1.3 The fieldwork was conducted between 23-25 May 2016.
- 1.4 The project archive will be deposited with Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery under accession number BRSMG 2015/81. The project has been entered in the Historic Environment Record for Bristol City Council as BHER 25604 and in the database of the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) as bristola3-250533.

## 2. LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 The site is centred on NGR ST 59294 70798 and sits at the end of Berrow Walk, about 2.5km from the centre of Bristol. The development site itself is largely an overgrown garden together with the remains of an 18th/19th century agricultural building lying adjacent to Lower Knowle Farm house.
- 2.2 The natural geology of the site is Mercia Mudstone. Ground levels above ordnance datum lie at between 21-22m.

## 3. HISTORICAL/ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

- 3.1 The following information is contained within a desk-based heritage assessment for the site (Avon Archaeology Limited 2015).
- 3.2 The assessment found that the study area lay within the historic tithing of Knowle, part of the early medieval royal estate of Bedminster. Knowle is likely to have formed an estate in its own right from at least late Anglo-Saxon times.
- 3.3 Eighteenth-century maps show a cluster of buildings in the vicinity of the application site, grouped around the two main farm-houses of Lower Knowle Court (the original manor house) and Lower Knowle Farm (the demesne farm, belonging to the manor). In the early twentieth century the land and surviving farm buildings were purchased by Bristol City Council. Lower Knowle Court is known to have been demolished at some point between 1867 and the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1881.
- 3.4 Illustrations of the Court of 19th century date show a large, irregularly-shaped building, with architectural details suggestive of 16th century origins, although elements of the building may well have been of earlier date. Lower Knowle Farm (house), a Grade II listed

building, much of whose surviving masonry may be of 17th/early 18th century date, is still extant within the study area. The foundations of a larger and earlier barn stand ruinous just south of the farmhouse.

#### 4. OBJECTIVES AND RECORDING METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The objective of the evaluation was to establish the character, extent, quality and, if possible, date of any archaeology within the area defined for evaluation.
- 4.2 One trench (Trench 1) measuring 27m in length and 1.8m in width was excavated by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Excavation then proceeded by hand to characterise and record all features and deposits exposed. A second trench/test pit (Trench 2) measuring 2m x 1m was excavated by hand in the garden lying north of the derelict agricultural building.
- 4.3 Recording was undertaken using Bristol and West Archaeology's single context recording system.
- 4.4 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded at suitable scales as outlined in the WSI (BWA 2015).

#### 5. RESULTS

- 5.1 **Trench 1** (27m long by 1.8m wide). Excavated onto the natural clay substrate (113) at an average depth of between 0.10m and 0.70m (19.25m and 19.75m aOD). The natural clay was cut by postholes 115 and 117, stakehole 123, pit 129 and two ditches/gullies [112] and [132]. Pit 129 appeared to be cut either by a later ditch [114] or else a recut of ditch 132. Finds from the fills of these features date between the mid. -11<sup>th</sup> century – 13<sup>th</sup> century.
- 5.2 The above features were sealed by a deposit of stiff/hard dark olive brown silty clay (111) which was itself cut by a further ditch [110] and posthole [119] which contained pottery dated between the 12<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century. The uppermost fill of ditch 110 was sealed by a layer of re-deposited red sandy clay (103).
- 5.3 Two post-medieval limestone rubble walls (125 and 128) were revealed in section lying beneath a layer of demolition material (102). It is interesting to note that Wall 125 did not continue into the trench. Running across the southern end of the trench was a possible NW-SE aligned path of Pennant sandstone rubble (126). Sealing the walls, demolition rubble and path was topsoil 101.
- 5.4 **Trench 2** (2m long by 1m wide). Excavated onto the natural clay substrate (202) at an average depth of 0.25m (19.30m aOD). No features, deposits or finds of archaeological significance were recorded in this trench.
- 5.5 **Exploratory Pit.** Hand dug alongside the southern wall face of the ruinous agricultural building to examine the depth of its footing. The wall was found to extend 750mm below the modern ground surface.

## 6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 There was a north/south divide in Trench 1 between features of medieval date in the southern half of the trench and features of 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century date in the northern half.
- 6.2 The medieval soil-filled features, perhaps agricultural in origin, are probably a reflection of the site's proximity to the medieval manor house itself which lay just a few metres away to the west, while the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> -century walls may relate to an agricultural building connected with Lower Knowle Farm.

## 7. THE FINDS

- 7.1 A small assemblage of pottery was recovered, chiefly from the ditches, but also postholes 115, 119 and layer 111

### THE POTTERY

by Alejandra Gutiérrez

#### Introduction

A total of 26 sherds (214g) of medieval and later pottery were recovered from the evaluation. The pottery was sorted into fabrics by eye, counted and weighed. The fabric types identified are listed and described below. Most of the pottery is of medieval date (90% by weight), whereas no post-medieval wares were found and the number of modern wares is small (10%).

This is a tiny assemblage of pottery that merely confirms the presence of medieval archaeology in this area. All the sherds recovered are small and mostly undiagnostic. A full listing and quantification of the pottery is shown below. Bristol Pottery Type numbers are after Vince 2004.

Pottery date	Sherd No	%	Weight g	%	
Medieval	20	76.9	191	89.3	
Post-medieval	-	-	-	-	
Modern	6	23.1	23	10.7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

### Medieval Pottery

#### Fabrics

A total of 20 medieval pottery sherds, weighing 191g, were identified. The range of fabrics identified is as follows:



Bristol A-B (Bristol Pottery Type 1). 11th-12th centuries (Ponsford 1998, 136-137). Moderate, well-sorted inclusions of quartz <0.5mm; moderate poorly-sorted sandstone up to 1.0mm; moderate rounded calcareous inclusions up to 1.0mm; occasional. Hand made, unglazed.

Bristol C (BPT 2). 11th-12th centuries (Vince 1984; 1991). This ware typically contains moderate fragments of Lower Carboniferous limestone.

Ham Green coarsewares (BPT 32). Bristol. 12th–13th centuries (Vince 1988, 258). Red or black throughout with red surfaces. Abundant subangular quartz <0.2mm; moderate rounded mudstone <1mm, grey, pink or red; sparse calcareous grains <0.5mm. Hand-made jars.

Bristol (/Redcliffe) wares (BPT 67). Bristol. Mid 13th–15th centuries (Vince 1988, 260; Ponsford 1998; Burchill 2004). Usually pale yellow or pink throughout, sometimes with a light grey core. Inclusions of quartz <1.2mm, clay pellets <1mm, occasional sandstone up to 7mm, iron ore 0.2mm across, rounded limestone <0.3mm. Wheel-thrown jugs. Green glaze on exterior, sometimes with applied clay strips.

Bath A (BPT 46). Avon Valley-West Wiltshire? Late 11th–13th centuries (Vince 1979). Usually grey core, buff margins and grey surfaces. Abundant mica, rare calcareous inclusions, moderate flint/chert <3mm, clay pellets, moderate glassy quartz <2mm. Smoothed-over surfaces. Hand-made jars. Occasional combing on exterior surface and green glaze.

Malvern Chase Ware (not BPT; HERB5). Worcestershire. 15th-16th centuries (Vince 1977). Light pinkish orange throughout. Occasional inclusions of granite of varying sizes, usually 2-3mm, but up to 8mm across. Iron wash and transparent or brown glaze, sometimes limited to certain areas of the vessel (like bases of puncheons and bowls).

A further three sherds could not be assigned to a specific BPT with any certainty on the basis of visual examination alone.

Although this group of medieval pottery is too small to draw any conclusions, it does confirm the presence of medieval archaeology in this area and help identify the date of, at least, some of the occupation. All the wares recovered are domestic. It is also worth noting the dominance of hand-made, unglazed coarsewares of the 11th-12th centuries and later.

The sherd of Malvernian ware is of the later type produced in Hanley Castle, on the west bank of the river Severn between Upton on Severn and Worcester (Vince 1977). It has a distinctive light orange fabric, although here it appears associated to a medieval coarseware; one of them seems to be an intrusion in context 109.

### Later pottery

Modern red earthenware's (BPT 264). 18th–19th centuries (Jackson 2002). Hard, red fabric. Honey or brown lead glazed, sometimes mottled.

Delftware, English (BPT 99). Several sources. 17th-18th centuries. Fine buff fabric with no inclusions visible. All-over tin glazed and painted decoration.

Refined wares: creamware (BPT 326), pearlware (BPT 202). Several sources. Mainly 18th-19th centuries.

Only six sherds of later pottery were recovered (23g). It is perhaps surprising that no post-medieval ceramics were found and only tiny amounts of modern wares, mostly from the topsoil. They are all domestic wares, including a flower pot. A small, undecorated sherd of a delftware or tin-glazed plate (17th-18th centuries) was found in context 120, the fill of a post-hole, and it could be an intrusion here.

Context	BPT	fabric	date	form	sherds	gr	mnv	rims	walls	bases
109	BPT 46	Bath A	12th-13thC		1	5				micaceous; limestone; voids; quartz; red inclusions; calcite
109	BPT 168	Malvern ware	15th-16th	bowl	2	31	1			with red slip on int surf; soot on ext around rim
109		Med3	12th-13thC?		1	7				voids; red clay/iron ore; quartz
111	BPT 26	Ham Green cw	12th-mid 13thC		1	23		1		
111	BPT 264	Modern redware	18thC+	flower pot	1	4		1		
116	BPT 67	Bristol Redcliffe	c1250-1400		1	3				
116	BPT 26	Ham Green cw	12th-mid 13thC		1	2				
120	BPT 46	Bath A	12th-13thC	West Country dish	2	22				2
120	BPT 99	Delftware	17thC+		1	1				undecorated; bluish white tin glazed on int and ext surfaces
122	BPT 46	Bath A	12th-13thC		1	3				fine quartz and limestone
122	BPT 168	Bristol A/B	mid-11th–12thC		4	43	1			no calcite; shell; limestone; unsorted quartz
122	BPT 2	Bristol C variant (AA1)	mid-11th–12thC		2	12				quartz and limestone. Similar to early types of medieval chert-tempered cw (but no chert visible here)
122	BPT 2	Bristol C?	mid-11th–12thC		1	9				limestone-rich; red inclusions (sandstone?); fine sand
122	BPT 26	Ham Green cw	12th-mid 13thC		1	4				quartz; micaceous matrix
122		Med x	medieval		1	21				shell; limestone; voids; quartz; mudstone/clay
122		MedAA2	medieval		1	6				limestone; quartz; red sandstone
topsoil	BPT 326	Creamware	1740-1800s	plate	1	2				
topsoil	BPT 264	Modern redware	18thC+		1	6				
topsoil	BPT 349	Pearlware	19thC+		2	10				
TOTAL					<b>26</b>	<b>214</b>				

#### Quantification of pottery by context

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## APPENDIX 1 TABLE OF CONTEXTS

Table of Contexts						
No	Type	Description	Length	Width	Depth	Date
101	Topsoil	Loose, friable, very dark greyish brown/black fine, sandy silt with abundant roots. Occasional small gravel inclusions..	Over whole trench		100mm	-
102	Deposit	Loose, poorly sorted, grey to dark grey small stones/gravel and limestone rubble with inclusions of brick and tile fragments as well as lime mortar and charcoal flecks. Demolition/made-ground deposit.	In section for 18m from north end of trench.		300mm	C19
103	Deposit	Hard (dry) red-brown clay with sparse (3%) small mortar and charcoal fleck inclusions and rare (1%). Redeposited natural clay as made-ground deposit.	In section for 18m from north end of trench and below Wall (128)		300mm	-
104	Cut	Recorded in section only. Probable rubbish pit cut.	1.4m wide		400mm	C19
105	Deposit	Loose, poorly sorted, grey to dark grey small stones/gravel and limestone rubble with inclusions of brick and tile fragments as well as lime mortar and charcoal flecks. Very similar to Layer (102) fills rubbish pit cut [104].	1.4m wide		400mm	C19
106	Cut	Recorded in section only. Probable rubbish pit cut.	0.7m wide		260mm	C19
107	Deposit	Loose, poorly sorted, grey to dark grey small stones/gravel and limestone rubble with inclusions of brick and tile fragments as well as lime mortar and charcoal flecks. Very similar to Layer (102) fills rubbish pit cut [106].	0.7m wide		260mm	C19
108	Deposit	Firm/hard red/brown clay and mudstone. Recorded in section only.  Forms lens in fills of Cut [110].	1m x 0.6m		240mm	C16
109	Deposit	Firm/stiff greyish brown, silty clay with rare (1%) charcoal fleck inclusions. Primary fill of Cut [110].	2.4m x 1.5m		200mm	C16

110	Cut	South side of a probable linear, flat bottomed cut that extended beyond the section edge to the north.	1.5m x 1.4m as excavated	300mm	C16
111	Deposit	Stiff/hard dark olive brown, silty clay with rare small limestone fragments. Forms layer in sections of trench sealing ditches.	In sections of trench for up to 15.60m from north end.	300mm	Med
112	Cut	Linear cut with gentle, concave sides and rounded base. Probable gully or small ditch.	1.5m x 0.75m	220mm	Med
113	Deposit	Stiff, plastic, mottled, yellow/brown and pinkish brown clay. Deposit of geological origin.	Whole trench in base	300mm as exc.	-
114	Cut	Linear cut with irregular stepped sides. Ditch cut, may be a recut of [132]?	1.7m x 1.5m	320mm	Med
115	Cut	Sub rectangular cut with slightly rounded corners. Nearly vertical sides and a flat base. Posthole cut.	0.5m x 0.4m	200mm	Med
116	Deposit	Firm, dark brown, silty clay with inclusions of medium sized limestone rubble (220 x 140 x 40mm max size) and rare (1%) charcoal flecks. Fills posthole cut [115]	0.5m x 0.4m	200mm	Med
117	Cut	Unexcavated posthole cut similar to [115].	0.32 x 0.4m	-	Med
118	Deposit	Firm, dark brown, silty clay with inclusions of medium sized limestone rubble (220 x 140 x 40mm max size) and rare (1%) charcoal flecks. Fills posthole cut [117]	0.32 x 0.4m	-	Med
119	Cut	Sub rectangular cut with square corners, vertical sides and a flat base.	0.4m x 0.4m	620mm	C19
120	Deposit	Firm, mid to dark brown silty clay. 1 large and several small limestone blocks within the fill as post-packing. Max size 450 x 300 x 100mm. Fill of posthole cut [119]	0.4m x 0.4m	620mm	C19
121	Deposit	Firm, mid-greyish brown silty clay with rare (1%) charcoal flecks. Fills ditch cut [112]	1.5m x 0.75m	220mm	C19

122	Deposit	Firm, mid-greyish brown silty clay with rare (1%) charcoal flecks. Fills ditch cut [114]	1.7m x 1.5m	320mm	Med
123	Deposit	Unexcavated stakehole.	0.2m x 0.1m	n/a.	? Med
124	Deposit	Firm, mid-brown silty clay filling possible stakehole cut [123].	0.2m x 0.1m	n/a.	? Med
125	Wall	Linear structure of limestone rubble bonded with pale pinkish brown lime mortar. Material sizes e.g. 340 x 200 x 40mm, 240 x 160 x 80mm.	0.6m x 0.4m	450mm	C19
126	Structure	Linear surface of fragmented pennant sandstone slabs. Garden Path.	1.5m x 0.8m	150mm	C20
127	Deposit	Firm/stiff greyish brown, silty clay with rare (1%) charcoal fleck and small limestone fragment inclusions. Upper fill of Cut [110].	1.6m x 1.5m	180mm	C16
128	Wall	Exposed in section only, 3 large blocks of limestone rubble forms possible course of a wall. No bonding material visible.	1.34m x ?	280mm	C19
129	Cut	Sub-rounded, irregular cut, truncated by ditch [114].	0.75m x 0.6m	230mm	Med
130	Deposit	Hard/stiff (dry) pale brown/grey brown silty clay with rare (1%) small sub-angular limestone fragments.	0.75m x 0.6m	230mm	Med
131	Deposit	Firm, mid-greyish brown silty clay with sparse (3%) charcoal flecks and a dense sub-rounded lens of charcoal. Fills ditch cut [132]	1m x 0.45m	100mm	Med
132	Cut	Shallow irregular cut truncated by [114] which may be a recut. Ditch.	1m x 0.45m	100mm	Med
201	Deposit	Loose, friable, very dark greyish brown/black fine, sandy silt with abundant roots. Occasional small gravel inclusions. Topsoil.	Over whole trench	200mm	-
202	Natural	Stiff/hard (dry) clay of geological origin.	In base of whole trench	n/a.	-

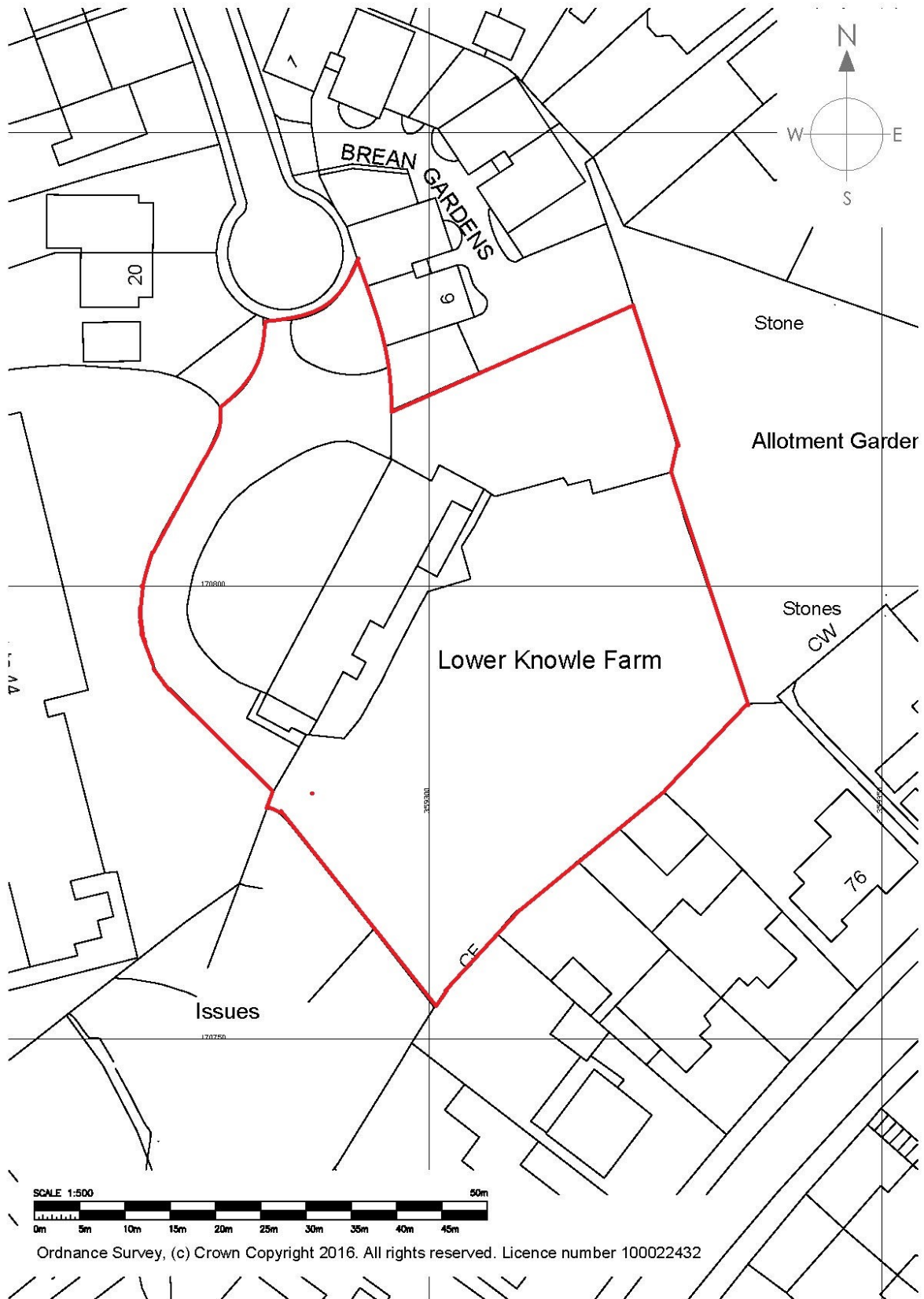


Figure 3. Location plan. Scale 1:25,000.

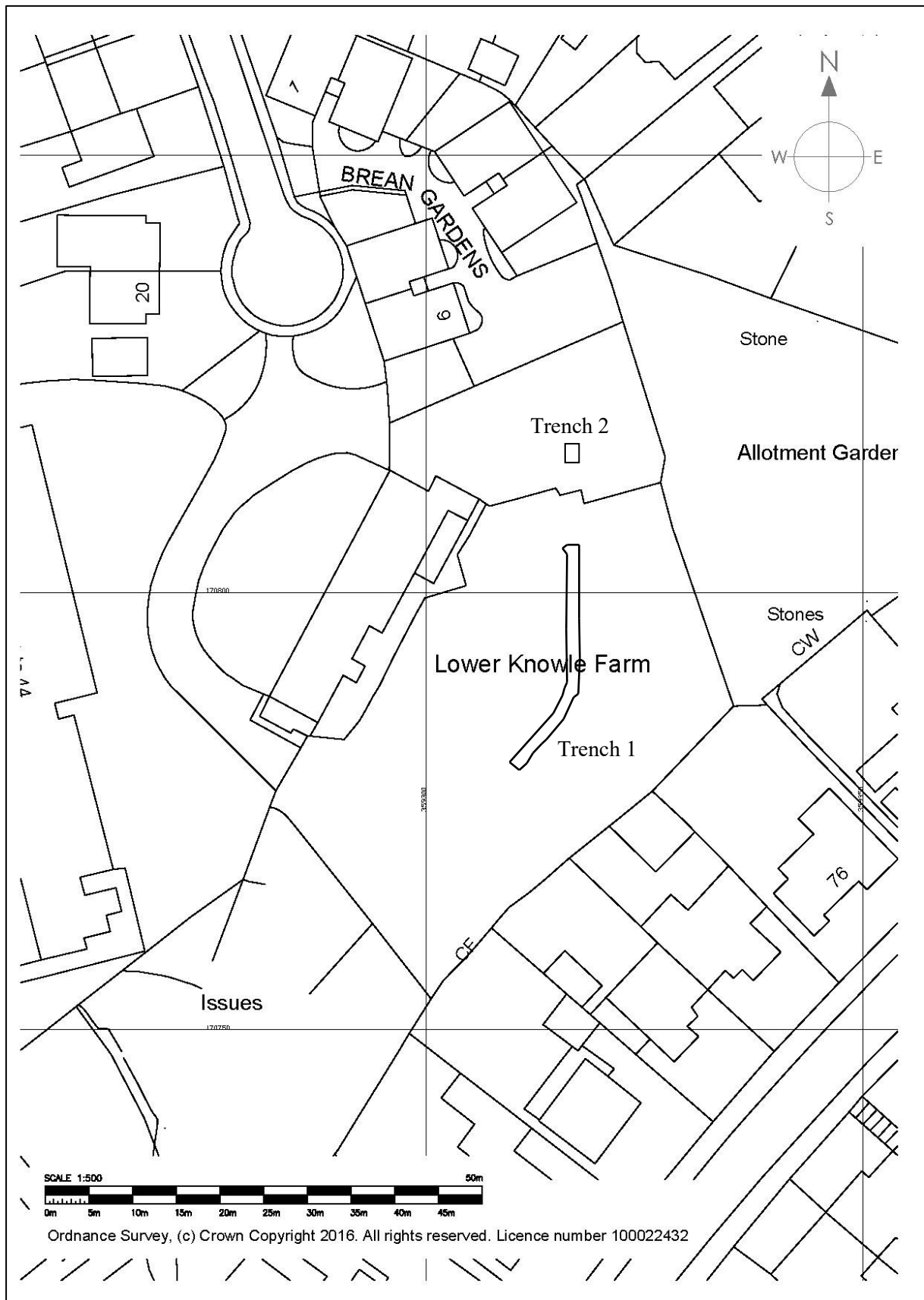


Figure 4. Trench location. Scale as shown.



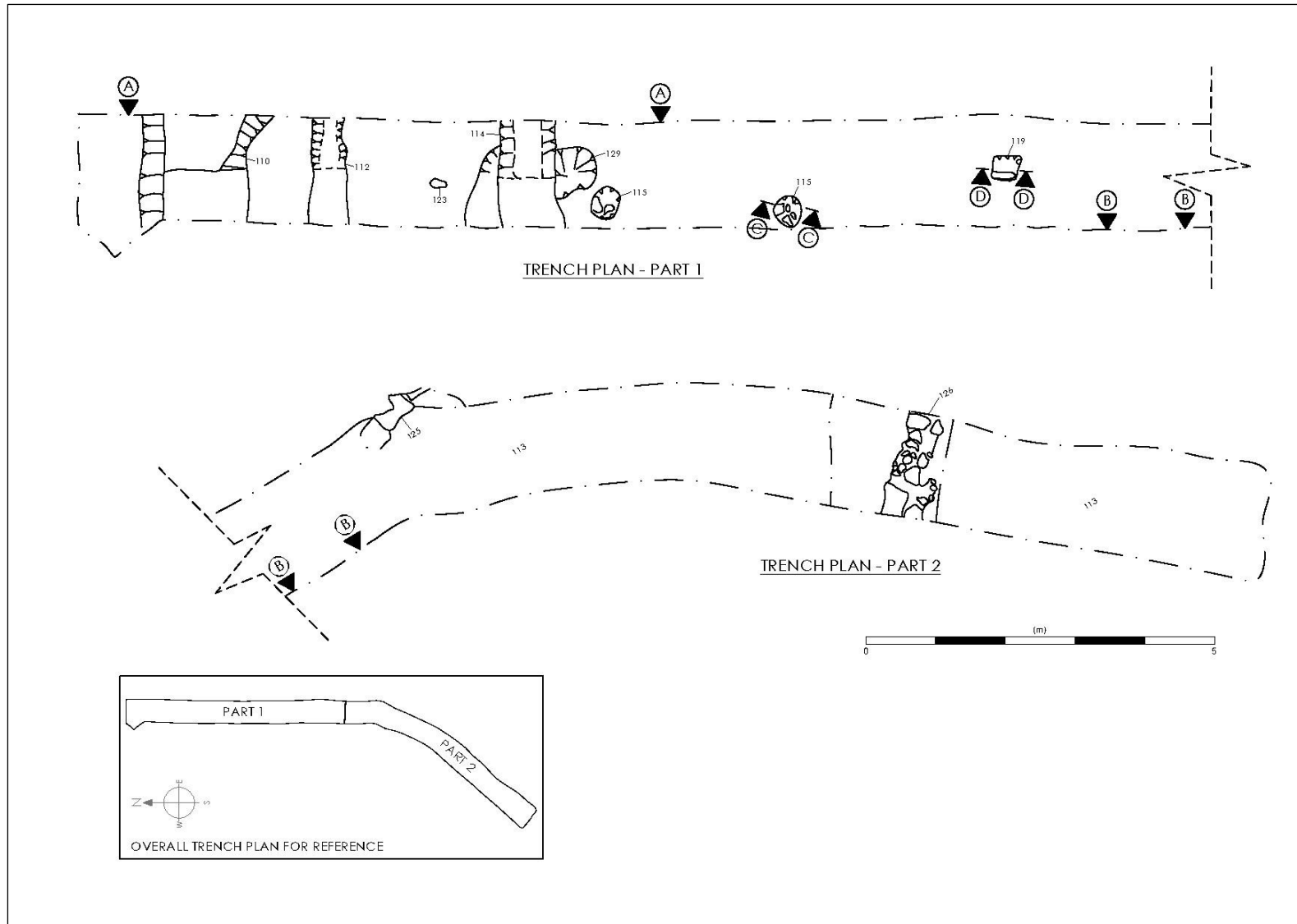


Figure 5. Detail Trench 1. Scale as shown.

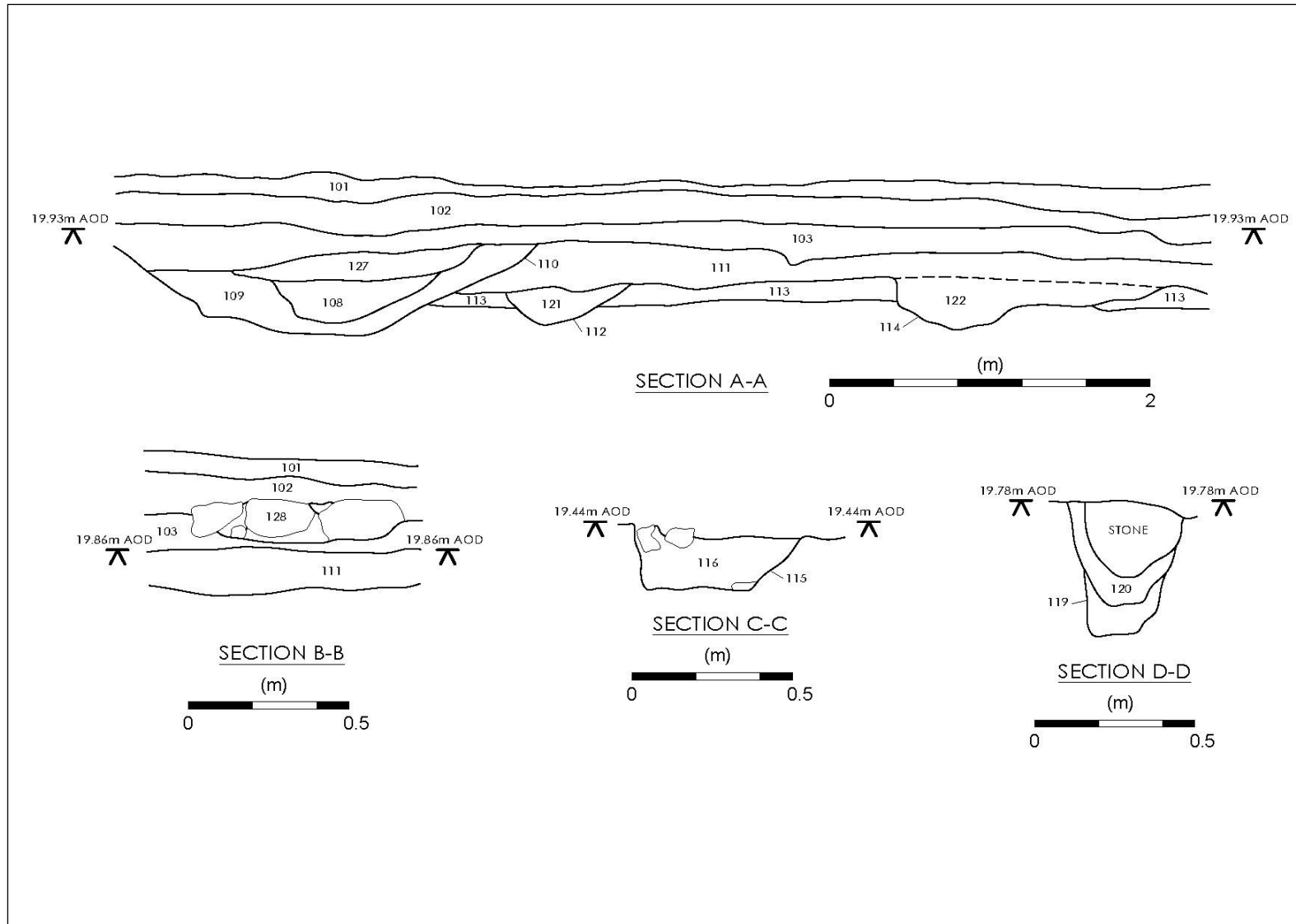


Figure 6. Trench 1 sections.

## Plates



Plate 1. View of Trench 1 as excavated, looking south. Scale 1m.



Plate 2. Cuts [110] and [112] as excavated, looking NE. Scale 1m & 0.5m.



Plate 3. Cuts [114] [129] & [132] as excavated, looking W with posthole [115] in background. Scale 1m.



Plate 4. Posthole [119] as excavated, looking W. Scale 0.5m.



Plate 5. Wall (125) and sondage as excavated, looking E. Scale 0.5m.



Plate 6. Wall (128) in section of trench as exposed, looking W. Scale 0.5m.



Plate 7. Sondage to test depth of existing building foundations, looking W. Scale 0.5m.



Plate 8. Test Pit as excavated, looking E. Scale 1m.