CRONEENS CAR PARK, RAILWAY STREET, GILLINGHAM, KENT

Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation

Archaeology Evaluation Report NGR: 577845 168565

Planning Ref: MC/13/0102



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HER Summary sheet

Site name: Croneens Car Park, Railway Street, Gillingham, Kent

Grid reference: NGR: 577845 168565

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 30th Jan – 2nd Feb 2017

Site supervisor: Dr C. Carlsson

Site code: CCPG 16

Area of site: c. 0.2 hectares (2500m²)

Summary of results: Trenches at the southern end of the site revealed deposits of modern made ground overlying natural geology (variously sands and clays). A sondage within Trench 5 revealed a ditch (thought to be Roman) surviving beneath the made ground. In the centre and the northern parts of the development area were early Roman features, the most important being an early Roman kiln with an associated stoke pit. The remains of the kiln are considered to be of regional significance, as only one other has been excavated in north Kent.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Independent Archaeology Consultants in Peterborough, but will be deposited at the Guildhall Museum, Rochester as a complete archive following the next stage of field works.

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Abstract

Independent Archaeology Consultants carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation of six trenches randomly spaced across Croneens Car Park, Railway Street, Gillingham, Kent during late January and early February 2017. The earliest features were Romano-British ditches and pits seen in Trenches 1, 3, 4 & 5 which covered the central and northern parts of the development area, surviving approximately 0.60m beneath the existing ground level (approximately 32.50m AOD).

The circular feature in Trench 1 displayed characteristics of an early Roman pottery kiln of 1st century AD date. A modern ditch truncated the archaeological horizon to the north of the kiln. The larger and deeper pit in Trench 1 was interpreted as the stoke pit, although not fully excavated during the evaluation. This pit may have been open by the time the dome of the kiln was crushed, as the bottom fill consisted of a similar fill of charcoal and fired clay as the kiln itself. There was no evidence of a more permanent superstructure and it must be assumed that, when fired, the kiln was not used again. In order to fully understand the function and layout of the kiln, and its associated stoke pit, further investigations of this important feature will be carried out during the second stage of fieldworks.

All of the ditches were broadly contemporary with predominantly early Roman pottery within the fills. The ditches were generally 0.50m deep with gradual concave sides filled with dark brownish black silty clay, which looked deliberately backfilled rather than gradual filling over time. The ditches probably once formed the enclosure of a 1st Century AD Romano-British industrial area for pottery production, which is rare in Kent, with only one other such site known. The site was then abandoned and left as pasture until modern times, when it became a brick works in the 1950s which caused disturbance and truncation of large parts of the site.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site is located at Croneens Car Park, Railway Street, Gillingham, Kent (NGR: 577845 168565) and covers an area of 2500m2.
- 1.2 The method of the archaeological investigation was an archaeological trial trench evaluation consisting of 6 trenches randomly spaced across the development area and set out in a Specification designed by Kent County Council.
- 1.3 All fieldwork was undertaken in late January and early February 2017 and adhered to the Code of Conduct issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). All relevant CIfA Codes of Practice were adhered to throughout the course of the project, in particular the Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation (CIfA 2014).

1.4 Site Location and Geology

- 1.4.1 The development site is located at Croneens Car Park in Gillingham, Kent, some 40km southeast of London. It encloses an area of some 2500m² at an average height of 32m AOD. The site is located north of Railway Street and west of the former railway spur connecting to Chatham Dockyard, whilst further car-parking and the Railway Street Industrial Park is located north and west of the site.
- 1.4.2 The geology of the area comprises clays, sands and silts of the Thanet formation over Seaford Chalk Formations (British Geological Survey).

2. PLANNING BACKGROUND

2.1 Planning Permission has been granted (MC/13/0102) for a new development at Croneens Car Park, Railway Street, Gillingham, Kent. The development comprises the erection of a new mosque with associated community centre and carpark. Condition No. 9 of the planning permission states that:

"No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority."

2.2 This trial trench evaluation was carried out as the first stage of a programme of archaeological works to discharge the planning condition in accordance with the KCC Brief.

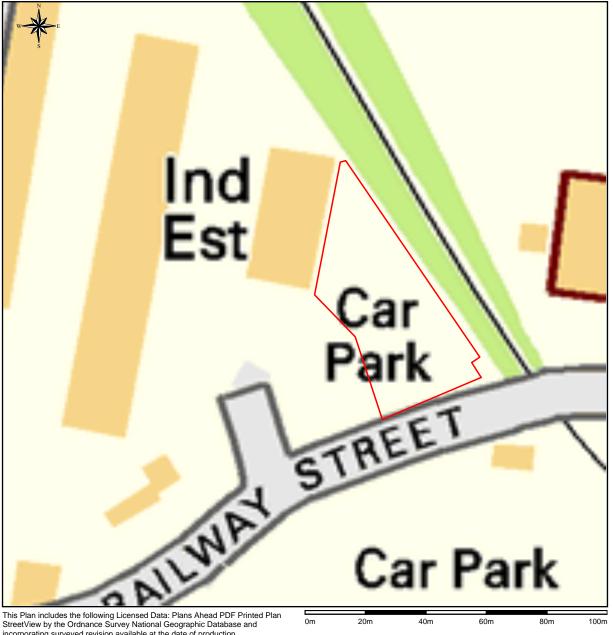
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Croneens Car Park, Railway Street, Gillingham



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Scale: 1:1250, paper size: A4

Figure 1 Site Location Plan



3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Archaeological sites and monuments are known from the area. A search of the KCC HER was conducted for the site in July 2016 and the following is a summary of the results.
- 3.2 An enclosure cropmark feature, some 130m east of the site (TQ 76 NE 137) is thought to be from a Bronze Age settlement. It is without internal features or entrance, and was identified from poor quality air photographs.
- 3.3 Immediately adjacent to the development area a Romano-British burial group was found in 1935 during excavations at the former Croneens brickworks factory. Whilst there were no remaining calcined bone traces, finds included an olla, a portion of an amphora, a large urn and a Samian dish. The finds were dated to the 1st century AD and were last seen in Gillingham Museum (TQ 75 NE 12).
- 3.3 A Romano-British vase, containing pieces of a human skull, and some black coloured pottery, was found in 1934 by workmen between Woodlands Lane and Grange Lane on the old tram track that ran along the Rainham Road at Gillingham. The vase was dated to the 2nd century AD. The present whereabouts of the vase are uncertain (TQ 76 NE 15).
- 3.5 The Cavefield brickworks in Gillingham, a post-medieval Brickworks factory, was situated about 300m east of the proposed development site. It is marked on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map, but was no longer visible on the 3rd edition map from *c*.1905-1922 (TQ 76 NE 314).
- 3.6 A post-medieval limekiln was situated in the Navy Row Brickfield some 500m north of the site, and is marked on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map from 1858-1873. On the later edition maps the name of the brickfield had changed name to the White House and Hilly Field Brickworks. The remains of the limekiln are no longer visible (TQ 76 NE 364).
- 3.7 A Victorian pillar box from ca 1887-1892 was situated at Kingswood Road, some 100m to the southwest of the proposed development site (TQ 76 NE 701).
- 3.8 A post medieval regular courtyard farmstead with buildings on three sides of the yard incorporating a L-plan element (MKE 84860) and a post-medieval outfarm were situated some 400m north of the proposed development site (MKE 88899).

4. AIMS AND OBJCTIVES

- 4.1 The aims and objectives of the archaeological evaluation set out in the KCC Brief were:
 - to gain information about the heritage assets within the proposed development area;

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- to provide detailed information regarding the date, nature, extent, integrity and degree of preservation of the identified heritage assets;
- to define the sequence and character of activity at the site, as reflected by the excavated remains;
- to interpret the archaeology of the site within its local, regional and national archaeological context.
- 4.2 Specifically, the following investigative aims were accommodated in the programme of archaeological works:
 - characterisation of the sites in the broader landscape;
 - characterisation of the activities identified on the site; and
 - characterisation of changes affecting land-use through time.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Trial Trenching

- 5.1.1 The archaeological evaluation consisted of 6 test trenches set out randomly across the site excavated with a 360° seven tonne tracked excavator equipped with a flat bladed ditching bucket. The trenches comprised four that measured 25m by 1.8m and two further trenches which measured 15m by 1.8m. The trenches covered a percentage of the site recommended for archaeological evaluations (CIFA 2014) and the layout of the trenches was established by KCC in a Specification.
- 5.1.2 Ground Investigation confirmed that deposits present within the site are thick. Made ground from the 19th and 20th centuries was known to cover large parts of the development area, especially the south central part. For this reason the evaluation trenches were initially excavated down to a maximal depth of 1.2m below the present ground level. Sondages were then excavated down to natural deposits at each end of the trenches, where necessary.
- 5.1.4 Trenches 1-4 were excavated to the upper interface of secure archaeological deposits some 0.6m below the present ground level, while trenches 5-6 were excavated down to a level of 1.2m below the present ground level before sondages were open up in each end to reach natural deposits or potentially archaeological features.

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5.1.5 No contingency trenching was required.

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5.2 Metal Detecting

5.2.1 Metal detector sweeps of archaeological features and spoil heaps took place, but no finds were recovered.

5.3 Hand Excavation

- 5.3.1 All man-made features were investigated. Hand excavation and feature sampling was sufficient to establish the date and character, and to allow appropriate levels of recording.
- 5.3.2 Deposits and layers (including buried horizons of top- and subsoils) were sampled sufficiently to enable a confident interpretation of their character, date and relationships with other features.
- 5.3.3 All exposed archaeological features were subject to a minimum of 50% excavation. At least 25% of linear features and/or very large and deep features were hand excavated. Particular attention was given to terminals and intersections, to ascertain stratigraphic and physical relationships.

5.4 Palaeoenvironmental Sampling

5.4.1 No samples thought suitable for bulk sampling were identified during this stage of fieldwork. The charcoal layer at the base of the Roman kiln was too thin to collect a 40-litre sample, but the feature will be more closely investigated during the next step of fieldworks.

5.5 Recording

- 5.5.1 A numbered single context-based recording system, written on suitable forms and indexed appropriately, was used for all elements of the archaeological recording programme.
- 5.5.2 Measured plans were produced that show all exposed features (including natural features, modern features, etc.) and excavated areas. Individual measured plans and sections in the scales 1:50 and 1:20 were produced for all excavated features and deposits. These were accurately tied in to trench plans/trench location plans, that in turn were accurately related to the Ordnance Survey grid and to suitably mapped local features (boundaries, buildings, roads, etc.). All sections and plans were related accurately to Ordnance Datum.
- 5.5.3 A photographic record comprising digital photos were taken and will form part of the excavation record.

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6 RESULTS

6.1 Trench 1

6.1.1 Trench was excavated to a length of 15m and was 1.8m wide at an average depth of 0.60m (levels at the base of trench ranged from 32.19-32.47m AOD).

Overburden

6.1.2 The earliest deposit which was encountered was the natural mid yellow clay silt geology (116). The natural was overlain by 0.30m thick dark brownish black buried topsoil (103), and finally 0.20m hardcore (102) capped by 0.10m tarmac (101).

Cut into the natural (116) overlain by (103)

- 6.1.3 Gully 115 was 0.40m wide and stratigraphically the earliest feature within Trench 1. It was orientated on an approximate east-west direction, was cut by pit 113 and gully 110. It was filled by mid brown silt clay (114) with 3 sherds of early Roman pottery.
- 6.1.4 The sub-circular shaped pit 107 was 1m wide/length and up to 0.21m deep. The pit was interpreted as the lower part of an early Roman pottery kiln, with its earliest deposit consisting of a 0.05m thick dark black charcoal deposit which covered the entire base (108). The charcoal layer was covered by 0.19m thick dark greyish brown silty clay (106) with 10 sherds of Roman pottery sherds from a storage jar dated 70AD-150AD. This layer of clay was interpreted as the collapsed dome itself. It seems as the dome of the kiln had been crushed and pushed towards the south, where a spread of fired clay can be seen in the photos from the site. This deposit (117) was seen as a spread of material from the kiln, and consisted of mottled heterogeneous burnt clay and charcoal. This thin layer of charcoal is likely to be the carbonised skeleton of thin branches that once supported the dome of the kiln.
- 6.1.5 Pit 113 was approximately 4m long and a minimum of 1.4m wide (the pit extended beneath the eastern baulk section) and 0.75 deep. It had gently sloping concave sides and rounded base. It was located next to the remains of the kiln, and has for this reason been interpreted as the stoke pit for the kiln. The primary fill of the pit (112) was 0.30m thick dark greyish black silty clay with frequent charcoal and burnt clay flecks with four sherds of early Roman pottery and one flint scraper. This is possibly a part of the collapsed dome, which would have been pushed into the open stoke pit. The latest fill of the stoke pit (111) was 0.48m thick mid brown silty clay with two sherds of early Roman pottery and four sherds of later Roman pottery, providing a *terminus post quem* for the closure of the pit as late as 250-300AD.
- 6.1.6 Adjacent to the stoke pit was a 0.70m wide and 0.15m deep gully 110 with gradually sloping concave sides and gently rounded base, orientated on an approximate NE-SW direction. It was filled by 0.15m thick dark blackish grey silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks (109) with no finds.

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6.2 Trench 2

6.2.1 Trench was excavated to a length of 25m and was 1.8m wide and an average of 0.60m deep (levels at the base of trench ranged from 32.30-32.24m AOD).

Overburden

6.2.2 The earliest deposit which was encountered was the natural mid yellow clay silt geology (209). The natural was overlain by 0.22m thick dark brownish black buried topsoil (203), and finally 0.20m hardcore (202) capped by up to 0.18m thick tarmac (201).

Cut into natural (209), overlain by (203)

6.2.3 A series of modern rubbish pits were sampled within Trench 2, but no archaeological features were encountered. A list of these features can be found within Appendix A.

6.3 Trench 3

6.3.1 Trench was excavated to a length of 25m and was 1.8m wide and an average of 0.60m deep (levels at the base of trench ranged from 32.30-32.20m AOD).

Overburden

6.3.2 The earliest deposit which was encountered was the natural mid yellow clay silt geology (306). The natural was overlain by 0.25m thick dark brownish black buried topsoil (303), and finally 0.22m hardcore (302) capped by up to 0.18m thick tarmac (301).

Cut into natural (306), overlain by (303)

6.3.3 One linear feature orientated on approximate north-south direction 305 was 1.10m wide and 0.38m deep. It was filled by dark brown (304), silty clay with frequent charcoal flecks and forty eight sherds of early Roman pottery.

6.4 Trench 4

6.4.1 Trench 4 was excavated to a length of 25m and was 1.8m wide and an average of 0.60m deep (levels at the base of trench ranged from 32.09-32.54m AOD).

Overburden

6.4.2 The earliest deposit which was encountered was the natural mid yellow clay silt geology (409). The natural was overlain by 0.25m thick dark brownish black buried topsoil (403), and finally 0.22m hardcore (402) capped by up to 0.18m thick tarmac (401).

Cut into natural (409), covered by (403)

6.4.3 One linear feature 405 was 1.10m wide and 0.30m deep orientated on an approximate north-south direction. It was filled by dark brown (404), silty clay with charcoal flecks and nine sherds of early Roman pottery. The feature was slightly curved and terminated in the trench.

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6.4.4 All other features were modern and a full description can be found in Appendix A.

6.5 Trench 5

6.5.1 Trench 5 was excavated to a length of 15m and was 1.8m wide and an average of 1.60m deep. A deeper sondage was excavated at the western end of the trench to establish the depth of the overburden to the natural ground (base of trench 30.59m AOD).

Overburden

- 6.5.2 The earliest deposit which was encountered was the natural mid yellow clay silt geology (505). The natural was overlain by 0.88m thick made ground with tarmac fragments, concrete, stones, bricks, occasional iron objects. This was overlain by 0.22m hardcore (502) capped by 0.18m tarmac (501).
- 6.5.3 One ditch feature was seen at the base of the sondage which was orientated on an approximate east-west direction. As it was discovered in a deep sondage it was not safe to excavate the feature, but it is considered from its stratigraphic location, shape and colour of its fill to be Roman.

6.6 Trench 6

6.6.1 Trench 6 was excavated to a length of 25m and was 1.8m wide and an average of 1.60m deep (base of trench 32.34-31.77m AOD). A deeper sondage was excavated at the south eastern end of the trench to establish the depth of the overburden to the natural ground (base 30.44m AOD).

Overburden

- 6.6.2 The earliest deposit which was encountered was the natural mid yellow clay silt geology (605). The natural was overlain by 1.38m thick made ground with tarmac fragments, concrete, stones, bricks, occasional iron objects. This was overlain by 0.22m hardcore (602) capped by 0.18m tarmac (601).
- 6.6.3 There were no finds or features observed within trench 6.

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7. THE FINDS

7.1 Roman Pottery by Malcolm Lyne

7.1.1 Introduction

The site evaluation yielded 82 sherds (1844g) of mid-to-late 1st c. Roman pottery, of which 25 came from a pottery kiln, its stoke-pit and adjacent drainage gully. The rest of the pottery came from two ditches sectioned by Trenches 3 and 4.

7.2 Methodology

- 7.2.3 All of the pottery assemblages were quantified by numbers of sherds and their weights per fabric. These fabrics were classified using a x8 magnification lens with built-in metric graticule in order to determine the natures, forms, sizes and frequencies of added filler inclusions and those naturally present in the potting clay. A numbered fabric series was drawn up with the prefix R for Roman (Appendix 1).
- 7.2.4 None of the pottery assemblages were large enough for any further quantification by Estimated Vessel Equivalents (EVEs) based on rim sherds (Orton 1975).

7.3 The Assemblages

- 7.3.1 The kiln fills (Contexts 106 and 108) yielded 12 sherds (403 g.) of pottery, all of which are in North Kent Shell-tempered ware and include a rim sherd from a storage-jar of Monaghan's type 3D1.3 (1987, c.AD.43-150) and a bead-rim jar of his class 3G5 (c.AD.43-70).
- 7.3.2 A further 10 sherds (70 g.) of pottery came from the fills of the kiln stoke-pit (Contexts 111 and 112). Sherds in a variety of fabrics are present, including three from a dish of Monaghan's type 7A2.2 in North Kent Fine ware (c.AD.43-120).
- 7.3.3 The presence of the sherds from a shell-tempered bead-rim jar of class 3G5 in the fill of the kiln oven suggests that the feature was pre-AD.70 in date and engaged in the production of such wares. This is important in that only one other, later, production centre for North Kent Shell-tempered ware is known; at Kingsnorth Power Station, Hoo (Lyne 2010). A late 2nd c. kiln dump at this site (Ibid. Assemblage 11) has wasters in North Kent Shell-tempered, North Kent Fineware and Hoo St Werbergh fabrics, and indicates that the Thameside kilns could be used to fire pots in a variety of wares.
- 7.3.4 The fill of the ditch sectioned by Trench 3 produced the largest pottery assemblage from the site. The 48 sherds (933 g.) of pottery span the period between the Roman Conquest and some time after AD.70: the majority of the fragments are in North Kent Shell-tempered ware and include those from a type 3F1.1 bead-rim jar (c.AD.43-150), two type 3F3.1 bead-rim jars (c.AD.70-150) and a class 3G5 example (c.AD.43-70). Another class 3G5 bead-rim jar is in a local sandy black fabric (c.AD.43-70) and a very-fine-sanded greyware neck-cordoned jar of type 4A3.4 (c.AD.70-90) is also present.

8. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

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- 8.1 The archaeological evaluation was successful by determining there are surviving archaeological features on the site and established the features are of early Roman date (43AD-150AD) and surviving mostly at approximately 0.50m beneath the present ground level. The archaeological features were most dense across the northern and central parts of the development site. The southern portion of the site was made up with a series of various modern made ground deposits, but even so at the northwestern end of trench 5, beneath 2m of made ground, was the remains of a linear feature thought to be Roman, indicating archaeology is even surviving beneath these later dumped in levelling deposits.
- 8.2 The most important discovery was in Trench 1, with what has been interpreted as the remains of a Roman kiln and associated stoke pit by its form and charcoal rich primary fill. In addition, the presence of the sherds from a shell-tempered bead-rim jar of class 3G5 in the fill of the kiln feature suggests that it was pre-AD 70 in date which is important as only one other, later production centre for North Kent Shell-tempered ware is known (Lyne 2010).
- 8.3 It is difficult to postulate whether this will be the only kiln oven within the site, but the decoration on the collected pottery suggests a variety of forms were being produced.
- 8.4 The archaeological significance of this site is therefore high and discussion with the KCC archaeological officer has indicated that a further stage of archaeological work will be required under full excavation conditions.

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APPENDIX 1: POTTERY FABRICS

R1.North Kent Shell-tempered ware

R2A.North Kent Fineware

R2B.Hoo St Werbergh oxidised fineware with external white slip

R3A.Black wheel-turned fabric with profuse <0.50 mm. quartz-sand filler

R3B.Similar fabric but with <0.75 mm. multi-coloured quartz sand filler and occasional additional alluvial-flint inclusions

R4.Wheel-turned grey fabric with profuse <0.50 mm. black ironstone and quartz-sand filler

R5.Wheel-turned pink fabric fired brown-grey with profuse <0.30 mm multi-coloured quartzsand and sparse <0.50 mm. soft rounded brown and white grog filler

R6.Silty grey fabric with additional sparse ill-sorted 0.30<1.00 mm. quartz-sand filler

Context	Fabric	Form	Date-range	No of sherds	Wt.in gm	Comments
Tr 1. 106	R1 ox	3D1.3 storage jar	c.43-150	8	305	Fresh
	R1 bl	Storage jar	c.43-170	2	61	SI abraded
			c.43-150	10	366g	Upper fill of kiln
Tr.1. 108	R1 ox	Jar	c.43-140	1	10	Fresh
	R1 bl	3G5 jar	c.43-70	1	27	Fresh
			c.43-70	2	37g	Lower fill of kiln
Tr.1. 111	R1	Closed forms	c.43-140	2	6	Fresh
	R2A	Closed form	c.43-250/300	4	12	Fresh

APPENDIX 2 FINDS CATALOGUE

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			c.43-140	6	18g	Upper fill Stoke Pit 113
Tr.1. 112	R2A	7A2.2 dish	c.43-120	3	51	Fresh 1 dish
	R6			1	1	Abraded
	Flint	Scraper		1		
			c.43-120	4	52g	Lower fill Pit 113
Tr.1. 114	R1 bl	3F4 jar	c.70-140	3	29g	Fresh. 1 pot. Fill of gully next to kiln.
Tr.3. 304	R1 bl	Storage jar	c.43-170	4	400	Fresh
	R2A	Biconical beaker	c.43-130	1	5	Fresh
	R3A	Closed form	c.43-70	4	4	Fresh
			c.43-70+	9	409	Ditch fill
Tr.4. 404	R1 bl	3F3.1 bead-rim	c.70-150			Fresh
		x2	c.43-70	23	499	Fresh
	R1 ox	3G5 bead-rim jar	c.43-150			Fresh
		3F1.1 bead-rim	c.43-170	8	275	Fresh
	R2B	Storage jar	c.43-150	4	13	Fresh
	R3A	Flagon	c.43-70	7	103	Fresh
	R3B	3G5.5 bead-rim		1	14	Fresh
	R4	Jar		1	3	Fresh
	R5	Jar	c.70-90	4	26	Fresh
		4A3.4 jar				
			c.43-70/100	48	933g	Ditch fill

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APPENDIX 3: SELECTED PHOTOS



Figure 1: General view of Trench 1 looking northwest



Figure 2: Trench 2 looking southwest

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Figure 3: Pre-ex view of 107 thought to be an early Roman pottery kiln (1m scales)



Figure 4: South facing section of the early Roman stoke pit 113 looking north (1m scale)

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Figure 5: West facing section of the early Roman kiln 107 looking east (1m scale)



Figure 6: West facing section of Trench 1 overburden deposits (1m scales)

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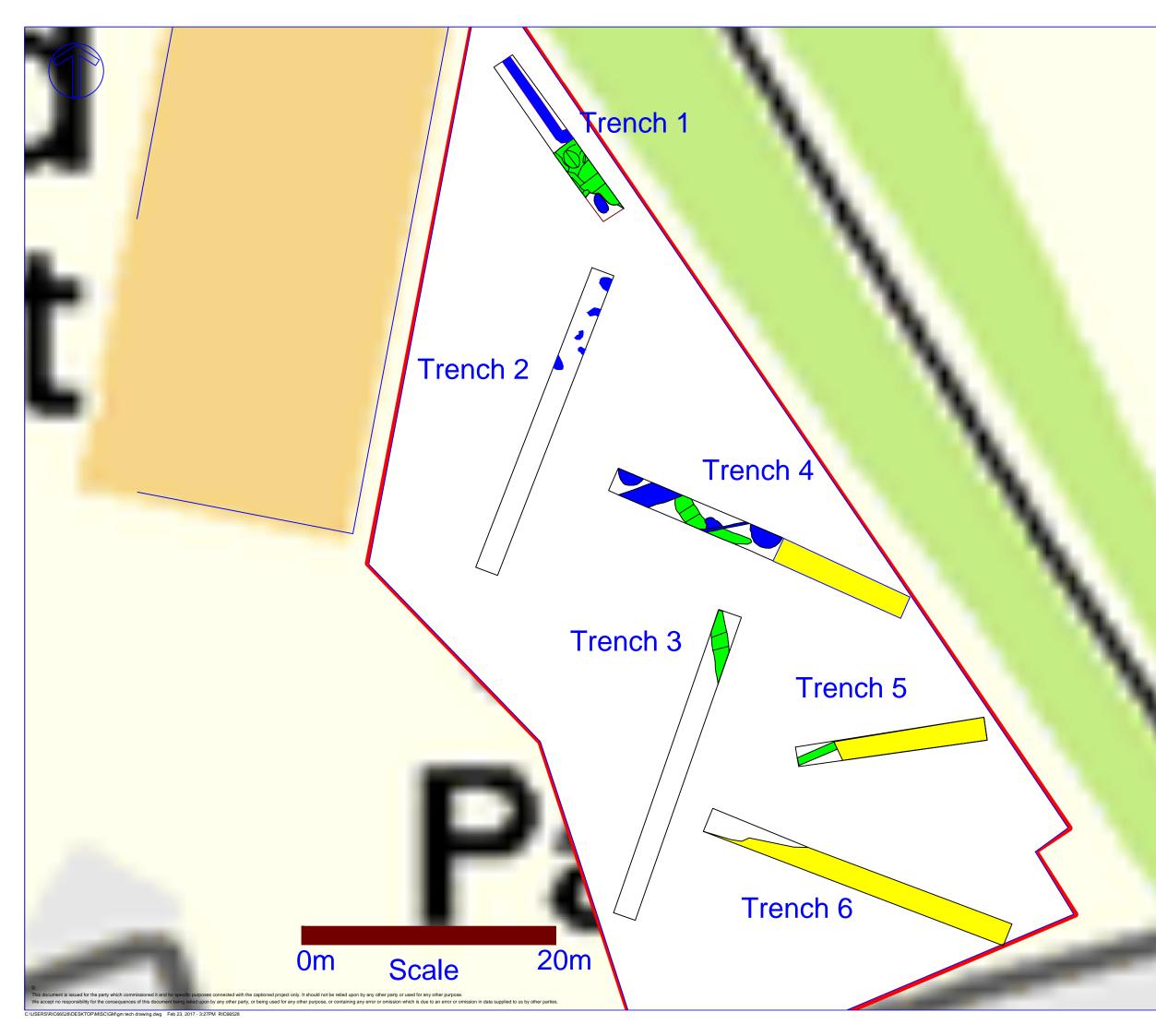
APPENDIX D: SITE LOCATION AND TRENCH PLANS AND SECTIONS

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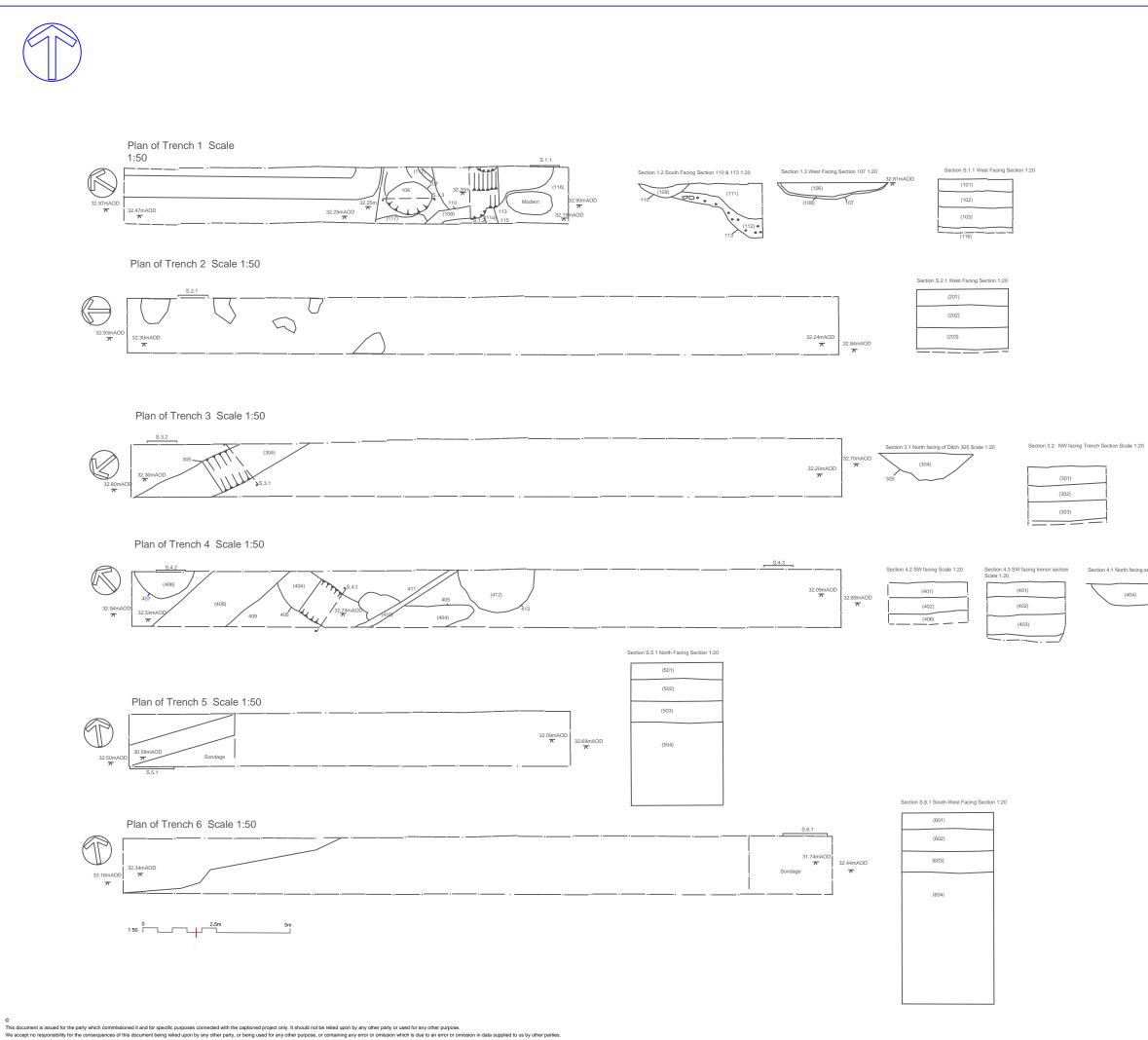
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