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Land to the rear of the Three
Tuns, Long Street, Atherstone,
Warwickshire:

archaeological watching brief
2009

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**Land to the rear of The Three Tuns,
Long Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire:**

archaeological watching brief 2009

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for
Arragon Construction Ltd

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by Arragon Construction Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during residential development at the rear of The Three Tuns, Long Street, Atherstone (Planning Application Numbers PAP/2006/0535 and PAP/2006/0536).
- 1.2 This report outlines the results of the watching brief carried out during April 2009 and has been prepared in accordance the brief produced by Warwickshire Museum (Appendix 1), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2009, Appendix 2) which was approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to implementation in accordance with guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE 1990). The project conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (IFA 2008).

2. LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 The proposed development area (hereafter referred to as 'the site', Figs. 1 and 2) is located at land to the rear of The Three Tuns Public House, 93-95 Long Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire CV9 1BB (centred on NGR SP 3078 9779). The Three Tuns is a Grade II listed late 18th- century building formerly known as the Black Boy Inn (North Warwickshire Borough Council 2006) and is located within the Atherstone conservation area. The site is situated on the south side of Long Street and is bounded to the east by retail premises housing a chemist (No.97, Grade II listed mid- 18th century merchants house) and associated car park, to the west are further commercial premises (No.91) and rear yard. To the south the site backs onto Station Street.
- 2.2 The site is at a height of approx. 87m AOD. The drift geology of the site comprises of superficial sand and gravel deposits (middle Pleistocene) overlying solid geology of the Mercia Mudstone (British Geological Survey 2006).
- 2.3 The present character of the site is a grassed area and yard.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The principal aim of the watching brief is to record any archaeological features and deposits uncovered during groundworks and, where possible, to determine the character, extent and date of any archaeological features or deposits.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Long Street, Atherstone was formerly part of the Roman road Watling Street. Roman activity appears to be concentrated to the south at Mancetter.

- 4.2 Atherstone is listed in Domesday as part of the estate of Countess Godgifu (Godiva of Coventry). Place name and cartographic evidence may suggest continuous settlement may have begun as early as the Anglo-Saxon period, although there is little archaeological evidence for this. In the 11th century Atherstone was granted to the Abbey of Bec erlouin in Normandy by the Earl of Chester. The Abbey was given a charter allowing the right to hold markets by King Henry III in the 13th century. A new town including a rectangular market place was laid out from the 13th century. To the north of the site is the Atherstone Friary (SMR No. MWA267), a building that was refounded in 1378 but may lie on the foundations of an earlier 12th-century abbey. Also to the north is the Church of St Mary (SMR No. MWA269), a building of a similar date.
- 4.3 The present site lies at Long Street within the historic medieval settlement of Atherstone (SMR No. MWA 9488). This is an area of high archaeological potential and structural remains and evidence of burgage plots, probably laid out in the 13th and 14th centuries, and backplot activities could be present within the site. Evidence of possible medieval and post-medieval pits probably associated with backplot activity was recorded at the site during a previous evaluation (Mann 2008) and further medieval and post-medieval remains were found during a recent evaluation to the northwest of the site at Phoenix Yard (Mann forthcoming). An archaeological watching brief carried out at 45-47 Long Street (SMR No. MWA 7478) revealed evidence of 17th/18th - century structures and residual 15th and 16th - century pottery.
- 4.4 The earliest depiction of Atherstone is Hewitt's plan of 1716. This simplified plan shows the market place and houses represented schematically in a nearly unbroken row along either side of Long Street. The rear of the plot corresponding to the site is shown as undeveloped at this time as are almost all the former burgage plots to the rear of the buildings on Long Street. Later mapping including early OS maps show the site has remained relatively free of development up to the present.
- 4.5 The 18th and early 19th century saw a growth in tenements and court- type housing with the rise of industry, notably hat manufacture. This court type housing was demolished in the mid 20th century and later mainly infilled with modern structures. Large housing estates were built beyond the historic settlement area from the 1930s to the 1970s.

5 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 Available historic maps, aerial photographs and other relevant background material including the records of the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record were studied.
- 5.2 An appropriately qualified archaeologist was on site to observe all groundworks for the development, including topsoil stripping, foundation trenches, access and services. Any ground reduction across the site was undertaken using a wide, toothless ditching bucket. Use of any other bucket type was to be approved by the Planning Archaeologist prior to any groundworks being undertaken. The archaeologist had the authority to halt any earth moving activity, if necessary. Adequate time was allowed for observation and recording to take place. Any archaeological features exposed were cleaned, investigated and recorded by written description, drawing and photography.
- 5.3 The foundations trenches within the footprint of the new building and new holding tank were to be reduced to the required levels using a mechanical excavator under the supervision of the archaeologist. Due to safety and engineering reasons the proposed holding tank trench was not excavated. Any archaeological deposits exposed were archaeologically excavated and recorded. All other ground disturbance associated with the development including service trenches, soakaways, access roads, landscaping and any other groundworks across the site was carried out in the presence of the archaeologist.

- 5.4 All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. Features will be planned at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50, and sections will be drawn of all cut features and significant vertical stratigraphy at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20. A comprehensive written record will be maintained using a continuous numbered context system on *pro-forma* cards. Written records and scale plans were supplemented by photographs using black and white monochrome, colour slide and digital photography.
- 5.5 Recovered finds were cleaned, marked and remedial conservation work undertaken as necessary. Treatment of all finds conformed to guidance contained within the Birmingham Archaeology Fieldwork Manual and *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson and Neal 1998).
- 5.6 The full site archive includes all artefactual remains recovered from the site. The site archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage, 1991), the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (UKIC, 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992). The paper archive will be deposited with the appropriate repository along with the finds, subject to permission from the landowner.

6 RESULTS (Fig. 3)

- 6.1 The natural subsoil was a red clay with (103) located c1.3-1.5m below the current ground level, although in some areas of the foundation trench subsoil 103 was not reached (Plates 1 and 2).
- 6.2 Cut through subsoil 103 at the centre of the site were two small pits (114 and 116) which extended beyond the foundation trench. Pit 114 (Plate 3), 1.1m in width and 0.3m in depth, with a 'U'- shaped profile. It was filled by a black silty sand (113). To the north of pit 114 was a similar pit (116). Pit 116 (Plate 4), at least 0.75m in width and 0.18m in depth with a 'U'- shaped profile. It was filled by a black silty sand (115). No finds were recovered from these features.
- 6.3 Overlying these features was a layer of black silty clay (102) that contained large amounts of charcoal and small stones throughout, c.0.5m in depth.
- 6.4 Towards the southern end of the site layer 102 was sealed by a layer of orange silty clay and mixed brick rubble (101), c.0.7m in depth, which contained numerous modern finds (not retained),.
- 6.5 Towards the northern end of the site layer 102 had been cut by a brick boundary wall which consisted of a foundation of irregularly sized sandstone blocks (106) lying below red handmade bricks (9 x 4.5 x 3 inches) bonded by a lime mortar (105). This wall survived to a height of 12 courses, and was 0.25m wide .
- 6.6 Cut through wall 105 was a later modern service trench (108), 2.0m in width and 1.0m in depth, which was filled by a dark brown silty clay (107) that contained fragments of brick rubble. Overlying this was a tarmac path (104) that formed the present ground surface at the west part of the site.
- 6.7 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

7 CONCLUSIONS

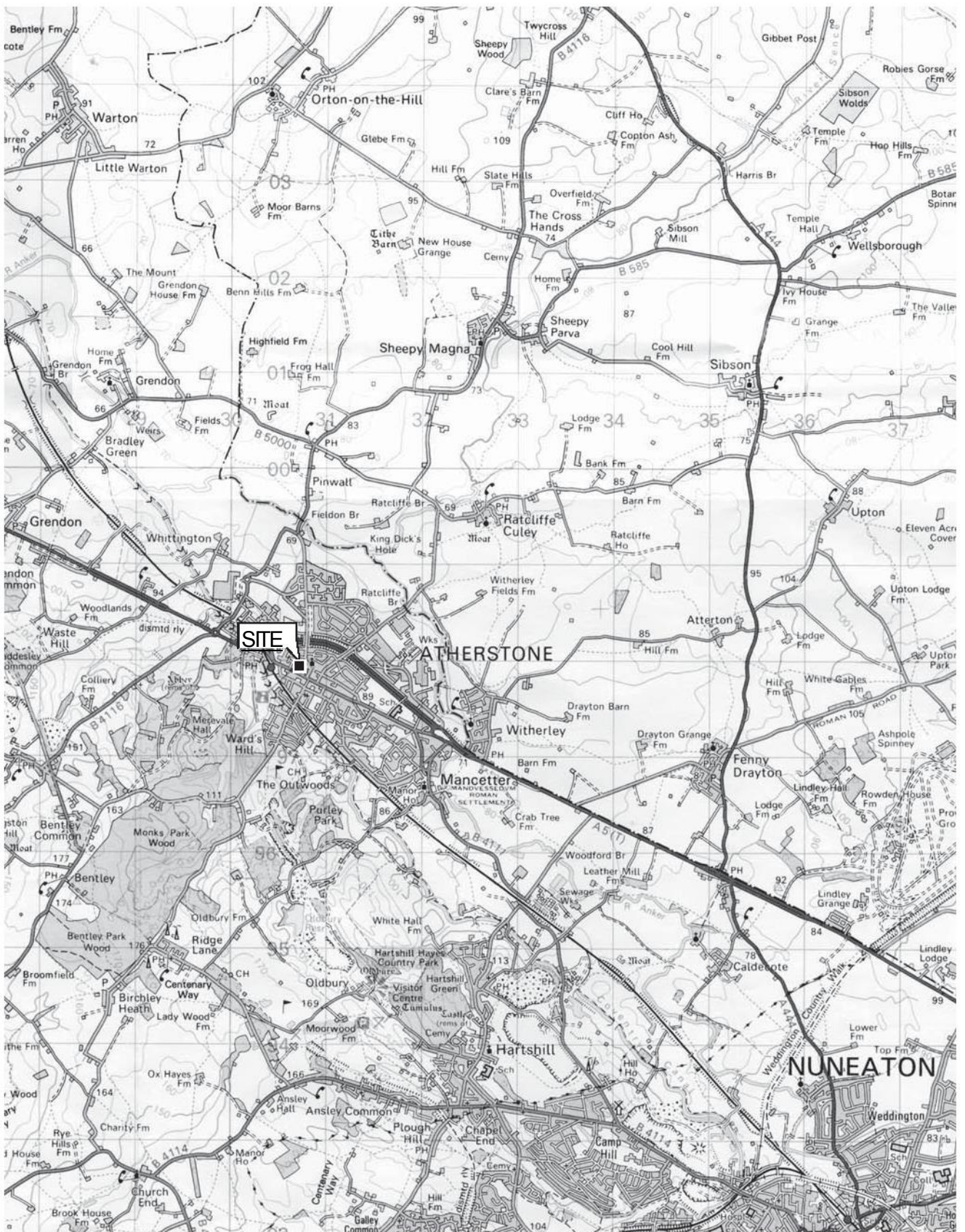
- 7.1 The two undated pits recorded in the area of the site that was excavated down to the top of the natural subsoil appear to be similar to pits of possible medieval or early post-medieval date recorded during the previous evaluation. These pits may be associated with low-level medieval and post-medieval activity at the rear of burgage plots fronting onto Long Street.
- 7.2 As much of the foundation trench for the new building did not extend to the depth of the top of archaeological features and deposits or to the top of natural subsoil it is possible that further archaeological features are present, sealed by post-medieval layers and not affected by the current development groundworks.

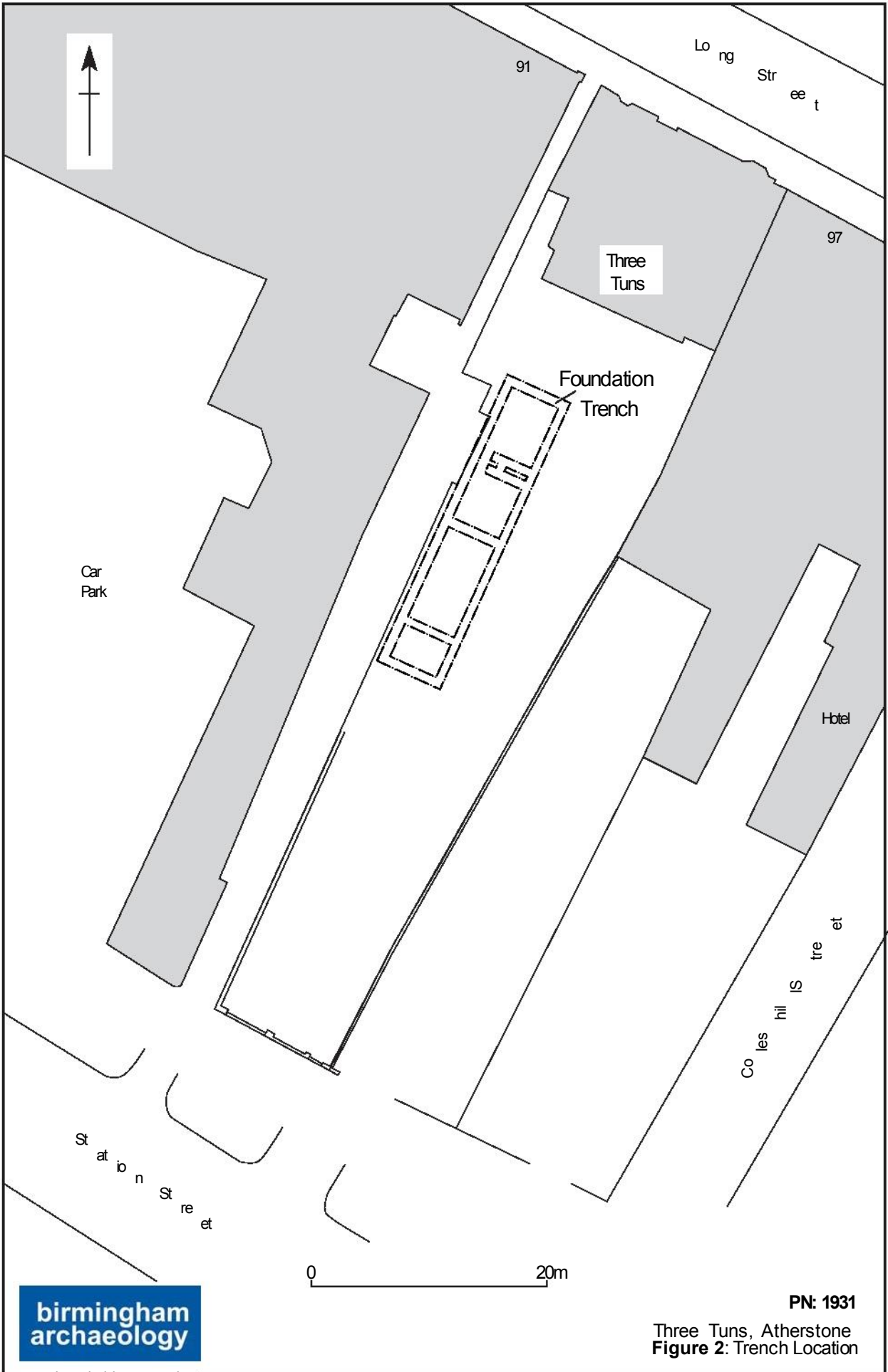
8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

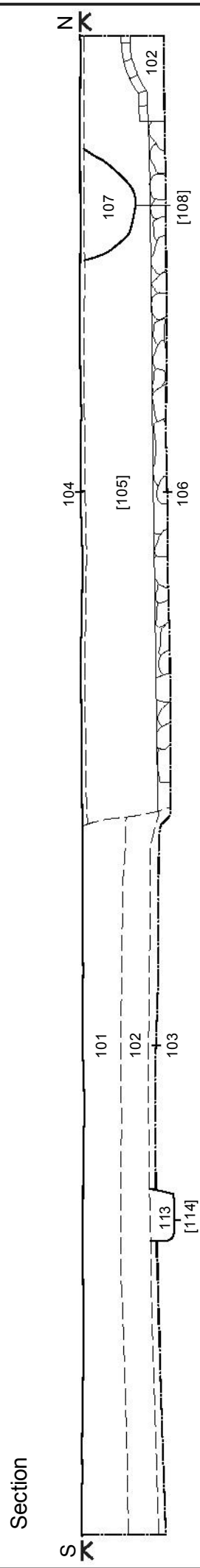
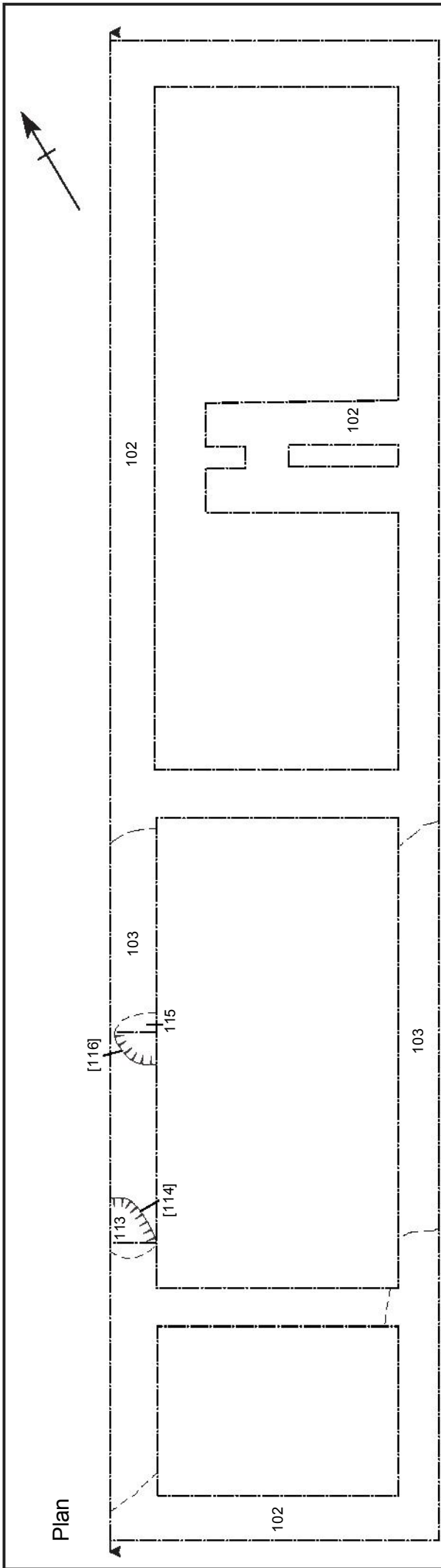
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