



Aldershawe Hall, Lichfield

Archaeological Evaluation



By
Dr Amelia Pannett MIFA

Report No. 656

Cambrian Archaeological Projects Ltd
Old Chapel Farm, Llanidloes
Powys SY18 6JR
Telephone: 01686 413857
E-mail: info@cambarch.co.uk





CAMBRIAN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PROJECTS

Aldershawe Hall, Lichfield

Archaeological Evaluation

Prepared For: Engrez Singh

SEP Properties Ltd
3rd Floor, Dudley House
Stone Street
Dudley DY1 1NP

Edited by:
Signed:
Position:
Date:

Authorised by:
Signed:
Position:
Date:

By
Dr Amelia Pannett MIFA

Report No: 656

Date: **October 2010**



Contents

	Summary	1
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Aims and Objectives	2
3.	Archaeological and Historical Background	2
4.	Archaeological Evaluation	2
5.	Finds	4
6.	Discussion and Interpretation	4
7.	Acknowledgements	4
8.	Bibliography	5
	Appendix 1: The pottery (Paul Courtney)	6

Figures

1	Location of site
2a	Location of trenches
2b	Plans of trenches 1 and 2
3	Trenches 1 and 2 sections
4	Trench 1 post-ex looking south
5	East-facing section of Trench 1
6	Trench 2 post-ex looking SW
7	West-facing section of Trench 2

Copyright Notice:

Cambrian Archaeological Projects Ltd. retain copyright of this report under the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988, and have granted a licence to SEP Properties Ltd to use and reproduce the material contained within.

The Ordnance Survey has granted Cambrian Archaeological projects Ltd a Copyright Licence (No. AL 52163A0001) to reproduce map information; Copyright remains otherwise with the Ordnance Survey.

Summary

In September and October 2010, Cambrian Archaeological Projects carried out an intrusive field evaluation on the site of a proposed swimming pool complex within the grounds of Aldershawe Hall, near Lichfield. The Hall is thought to have been built on the site of a medieval moated house and lies within a 1km of a number of significant Roman sites.

The evaluation revealed no features of archaeological significance. However, sherds of pottery, dating from a period covering the late 14th to 16th centuries, were collected from a buried soil horizon, which was located above the natural ground surface. Residual sherds of 13th century pottery were recovered from later deposits.

Evidence for the landscaping of the gardens was also revealed. This probably dates to the early twentieth century, when the current Aldershawe Hall was built.

1. Introduction

1.1 Location and scope of work

In September 2010, Cambrian Archaeological Projects undertook an intrusive field evaluation within land adjacent to Aldershawe Hall, Lichfield, in advance of the proposed development of the site.

The proposed development site is located within an area of parkland to the south-east of Aldershawe Hall (figs. 1 & 2a), adjacent to an existing car park (NGR: SK 1039 0749). The proposed development involves the construction of a new swimming pool complex. The development proposal has been submitted by Paul Lees of Paul Lees Designs, 14 Sonning Drive, Wolverhampton, on behalf of SEP Properties Ltd. The local planning authority is Cannock Chase District Council and the planning application number is 10/00507/FUL.

The proposed development site lies 700m north of the scheduled Roman Forts and Vicus of Letocetum, located in the modern village of Wall. The local landscape is known to have been the focus of occupation since the prehistoric period, with findspots of Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age date, together with extensive evidence for Roman activities. As a result, Stephen Dean, Principal Archaeologist, Staffordshire County Council recommended that an intrusive field evaluation be carried out. The purpose of the intrusive field evaluation was to determine the archaeological potential of the site through the excavation of strategically positioned evaluation trenches. The aim of the works was to elucidate the presence or absence of archaeological remains, their character, distribution, extent, condition and relative significance.

1.2 Geology and Topography

The site lies at around 120m AOD in an area of Triassic mudstone.

2. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the field evaluation were:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area.
- To provide sufficient information to allow mitigation against any adverse effects the proposed development may have on the buried archaeological resource.

Site specific research aims were:

- To determine the presence/absence of medieval and post-medieval occupational remains associated with the putative moated site at Aldershawe Hall.
- To determine the presence/absence of Romano-British remains across the site and to record and recover stray finds from that date.
- To identify the presence/absence of other archaeological remains previously unknown across the site.
- To make recommendations for further work upon the site and identify specific areas of interest.

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

The local landscape around Aldershawe is archaeologically significant, containing evidence for occupation from the Neolithic period to the present day. Findspots of prehistoric artefacts are known from the area around the Hamlet of Wall, and an Iron Age/Romano British site is recorded 1.5km to the south-east of the proposed development site.

The most significant archaeological remains are Roman in date. These include the Forts and Vicus settlement of Letocetum, which lie within the modern Hamlet of Wall. Two Roman roads run through the area: Watling Street, which runs east/west 1km to the south of Aldershawe Hall (the modern A5), and Ryknild Street, which runs northeast/south-west 1.2km to the east of the site (the modern Knowle Lane). These roads meet just east of Letocetum.

The site of the modern Aldershawe Hall is thought to have been the location of a high status, possibly moated, house in the medieval period. However, no evidence for such a structure has been found.

4. Archaeological Evaluation

The evaluation was carried out between 29th September and 1st October 2010 by Ian Davies, in generally wet conditions.

Two trenches were excavated along the line of the garden wall, one linear trench and one E-shaped trench (fig. 2b). The trenches were excavated by a JCB fitted with a toothless ditching blade.

4.1 Trench 1 (fig. 3, 4 and 5)

Trench 1 was located at the southern end of the proposed building footprint. It measured 7.5m long and 1.5m, was excavated to a depth of 0.8m, and was orientated NNE/SSW.

Underlying the turf and topsoil, a deposit of mid-reddish grey sandy silt (100) was revealed. This subsoil was up to 0.3m deep and contained very occasional fragments of coal, coke and CBM. A second subsoil (101) was revealed below this. It comprised a mid-reddish brown clay silt with no inclusions and was around 0.3m deep.

At the northern end of the trench, a layer of charcoal and unburnt wood (102) was revealed between the two subsoils (100 and 101). This deposit was 1.5m in length and up to 0.05m deep. The presence of unburnt wood indicates that it formed as the result of relatively modern activities.

Below subsoil deposit (101) the natural was revealed. This comprised a reddish brown sand and reddish sandstone bedrock.

No features of archaeological significance were revealed.

4.2 Trench 2 (fig. 3, 6 and 7)

Trench 2 was located in the central area of the proposed building footprint. It consisted of one main, 21m long, trench orientated north/south, and three 5m long trenches. The latter were spaced 7m to 8m apart and orientated east/west, at 90° to the main trench. All four trenches were 1.5m wide and excavated to a depth of 0.8m.

Evidence for the landscaping of the garden was revealed in this trench. At the northern end of the trench a deposit of yellow-grey sand (200), 0.4m to 0.5m thick, was revealed below the turf and topsoil. This directly overlay a thin, 0.1m deep, band of dark grey silt (201) that is thought to be a layer of turf. This turf layer overlay a thin, 0.1m deep, band of crushed red sandstone (202) that may have been laid down to aid drainage of the original lawn.

At the southern end of the trench, a thick, 0.4m deep, deposit of reddish brown crushed sandstone mixed with clay (205) was revealed below the turf and topsoil. In the middle of the trench the turf and topsoil overlay a mid-reddish grey, sandy silt (203), 0.4m thick. Both subsoils (203) and (205) overlay a second subsoil deposit, up to 0.6m thick, comprising a yellow grey sandy silt (204) containing several sherds of medieval pottery. A number of these sherds were large and unabraded, suggesting that they had not been disturbed since their deposition and

that the soil horizon could be medieval in date (late 14th to 16th century, see section 5.1).

A modern service trench cut through the southern end of the trench.

5. Finds

5.1 Pottery (Paul Courtney)

Twenty three sherds (459g) of medieval and post-medieval pottery were recovered; also 5 sherds (154g) of unglazed post-medieval brick/ridge tile. All the ceramics appear to be common Staffordshire types derived from the locally widespread Coal Measure clays. The wheel-thrown nature of all the medieval pottery suggests a date in the late 13th century or later.

A single sherd of orange-ware from 204 suggests a date not before the very late 14th century, probably 15th or 16th (Ford 1995, 33).

6. Discussion and Interpretation

The evaluation trenches failed to uncover any evidence for structural remains dating from the putative medieval moated site, or any evidence for Roman activity. However, the medieval pottery is an important find, indicative of medieval occupation in the area from the 13th/14th centuries AD.

The stratigraphy identified in both trenches provides information about the more recent history of the site, with clear evidence for the landscaping of the garden. In trench 2, the identification of a preserved turf line demonstrates that this part of the garden has been raised. Although it is not possible to determine when this occurred, the evidence is consistent with a date contemporary with the construction of Aldershawe Hall in the early 20th century.

This view is reinforced by the preservation of unburnt wood in a deposit of charcoal lying between the two subsoil deposits in trench 1.

In conclusion, the recovery of pottery of 13th / 14th century date substantiates the theory that a medieval moated manner house existed in the vicinity of the modern Aldershawe Hall. However, structural remains associated with this house probably lay outside the area of the proposed development.

7. Acknowledgements

Thanks to Ian Davies for supervising the evaluation.

8. Bibliography

Ford, D 1995, *Medieval Pottery in Staffordshire, AD 800 - 1600: A review*,
Staffordshire Archaeological Studies No. 7. City Museum and Art Gallery,
Stoke-on-Trent.

Appendix A: The Pottery

Paul Courtney Nov 2010

Fabric Series

(The fabric series is based upon Ford 1995)

Medieval

MWC medieval white ware cooking pots.

Cooking pots in a sandy (quartz sand) white-firing fabric probably derived from an iron-poor Coal Measures clay source. Wheel-thrown with extensive external sooting indicating use in cooking. 10 shs; 199g.

MWJ medieval white ware jugs

White-firing oxidised jugs with varying amounts of quartz sand inclusions; lead glazed. Manufactured from an iron-poor clay, of Coal measures origin. Wheel-thrown. Probably late 13th-14th century. 5 shs; 128g.

MPW medieval pink ware jug

A variant of MWW with slightly more iron in clay. Wheel-thrown. Probably late 13th-14th century. 1 sh; 3g.

MOW medieval Orange ware

Orange-firing fabric (wheel-thrown) with quartz sand inclusions made from an iron-rich clay of Coal Measures origin; with lead glaze. This late medieval ware develops into the more highly-fired Midland Purple ware. Late 14th or early 15th-16th centuries. 2 shs; 45g.

Post-Medieval

CMR Coal Measures Redware

Red-firing (oxidised) earthenware. Coal Measures clay source. c.17th-18th centuries. 1 sh; 9g.

Tile/Brick

Red-firing brick and tile. A single worn sherd probably from a brick and three sherds from mould-produced ridge tiles with sanded undersides; all unglazed. Probably post-medieval. 5 fragments; 154g.

Discussion

23 sherds (459g) of medieval and post-medieval pottery were recovered; also 5 sherds (154g) of unglazed post-medieval brick/ridge tile. All the ceramics appear to be common

Staffordshire types derived from the locally widespread Coal Measure clays. Contexts 200 and 204 are probably of medieval date based on their ceramic content. The wheel-thrown nature of all the medieval pottery suggests a date in the late 13th century or later. A single sherd of orange-ware from 204 suggests a date not before the very late 14th century and probably later (Ford 1995, 33).

Reference

Ford, D 1995, *Medieval Pottery in Staffordshire, AD 800 - 1600: A review*. Staffordshire Archaeological Studies No. 7. City Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent.

CATALOGUE

Context 100

Fabric	Shs	Wt	Form	Comments
CMR	1	9	Unglazed large jar or bowl.	
Tile	4	76	Unglazed red ?ridge tiles, 11 and 18mm thick	Sanded undersurfaces
Tile/Brick	1	78	Worn ?brick or tile- buff to orange, soft, c.25 mm in thicknes	

Ceramic date: 17th-18th century based on CMR sherd

Context 200

Fabric	Shs	Wt	Form	Comments
MWC	1	29	Cooking pot/jar	sooted
MWJ	1	27	Glazed jug	

Ceramic date: Late 13th-14th century

Context 204

Fabric	Shs	Wt	Form	Comments
MOW	2	45	Internally glazed (base)	Same vessel
MWC	9	170	Unglazed cooking pots.	Sooting on many sherds
MWJ	4	101	Glazed jug sherds and unglazed strap handle with stabbing and painted surface	
MPW	1	3	Glazed jug	

Ceramic date: Late 14th-16th century based on MOW

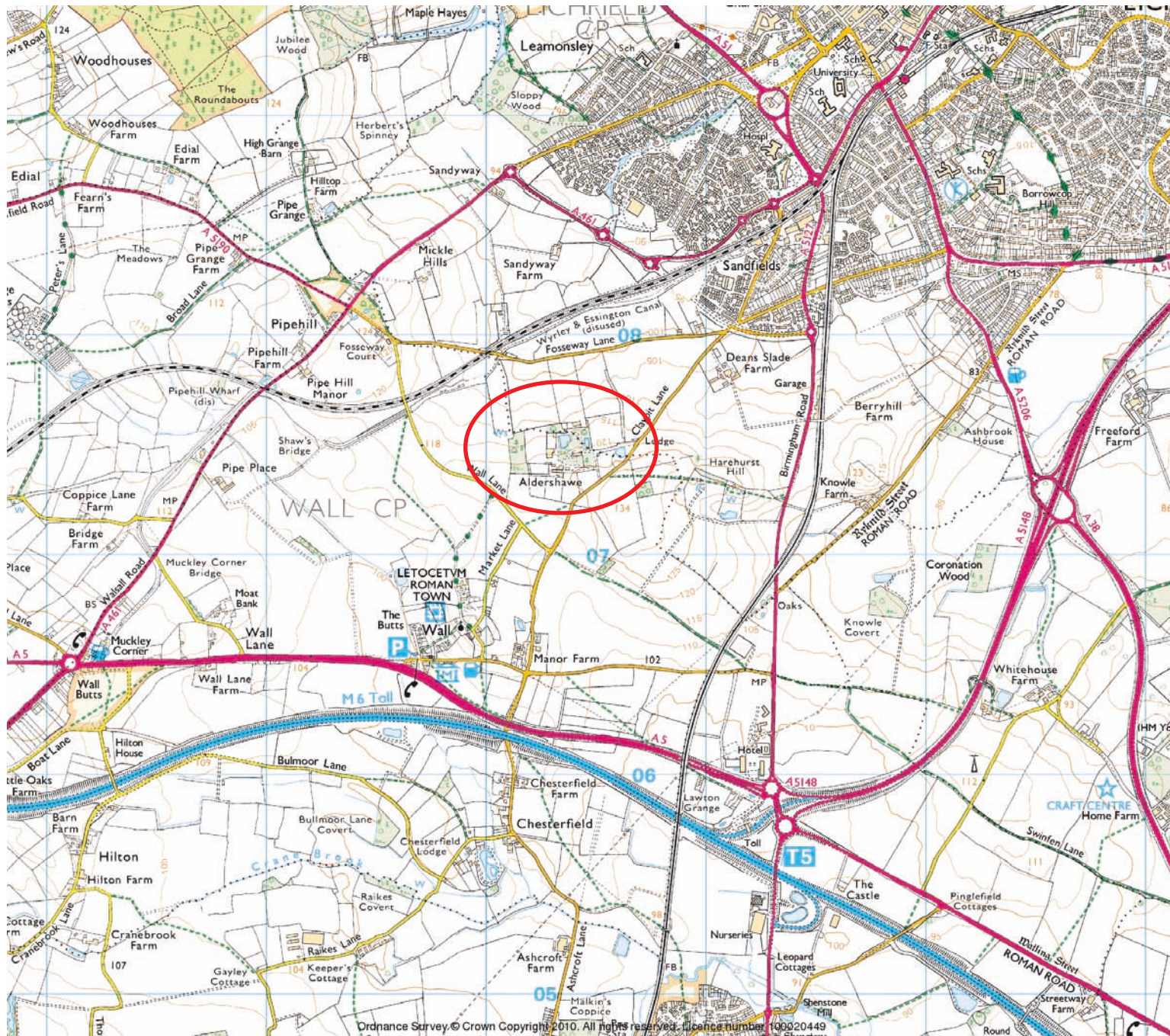


Fig. 1
Location of Site

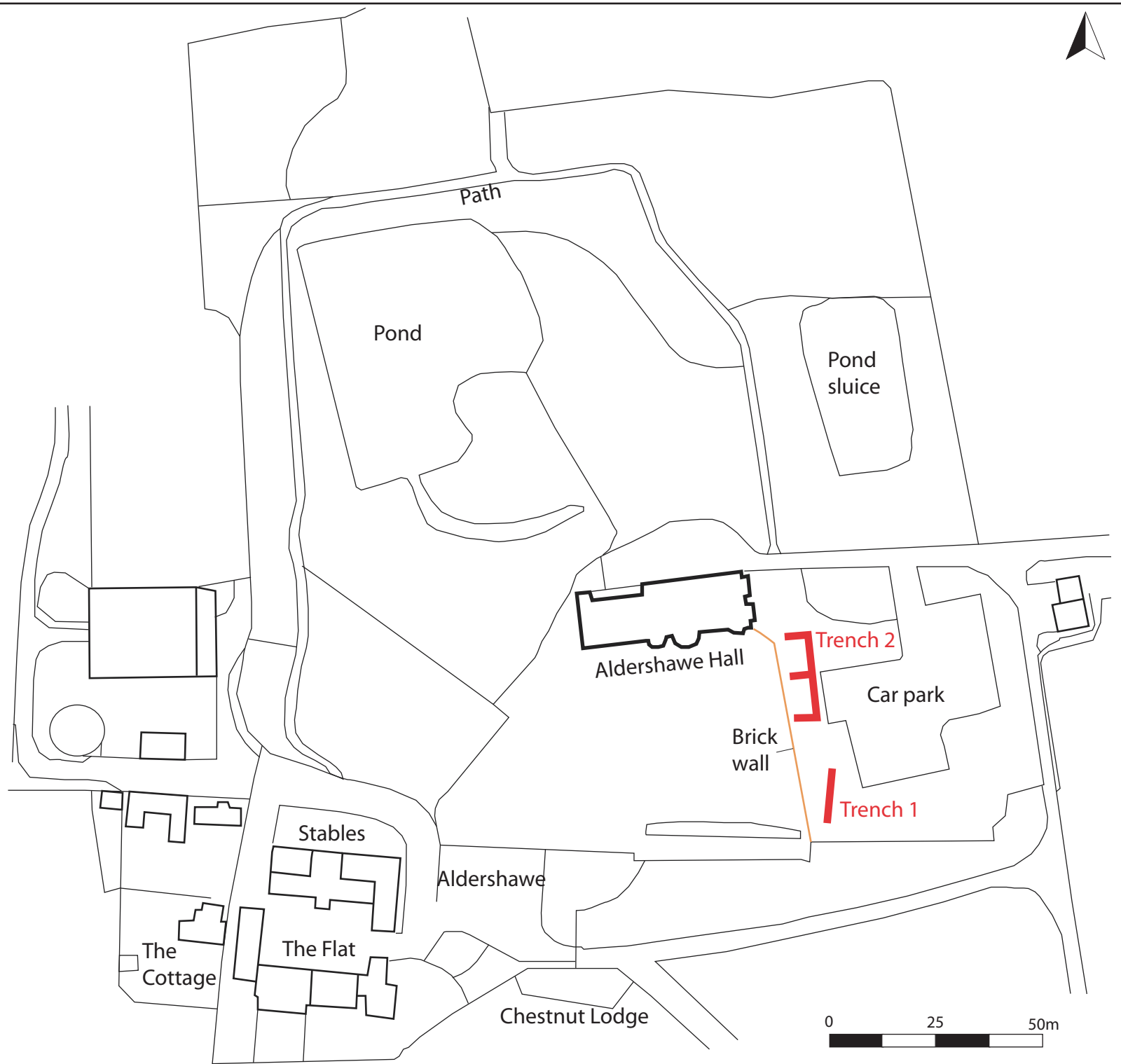
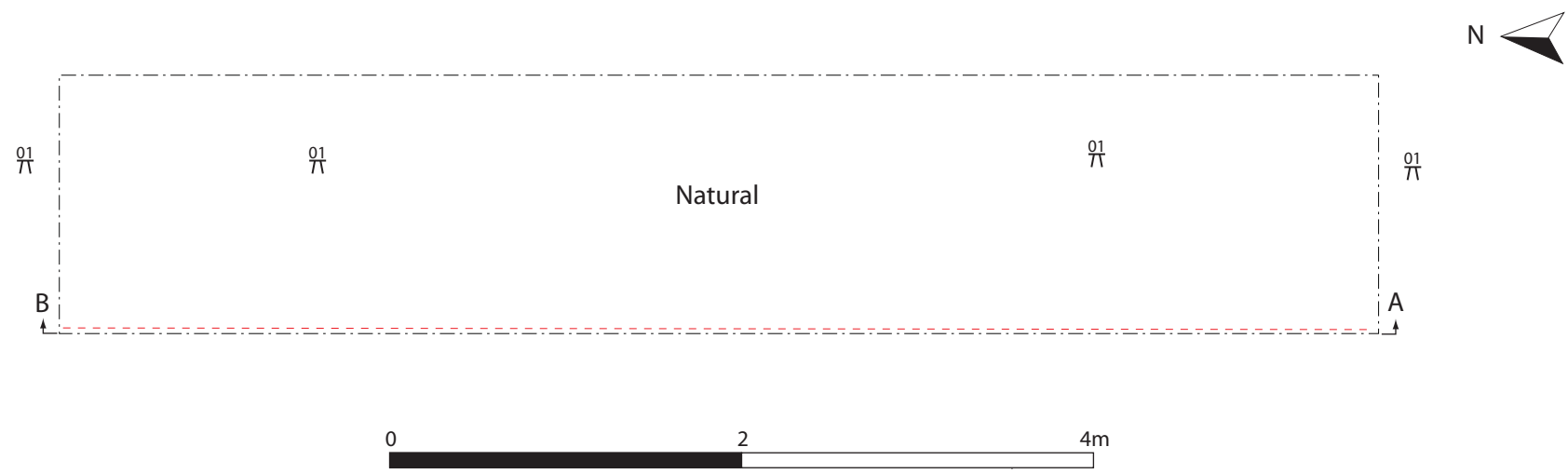


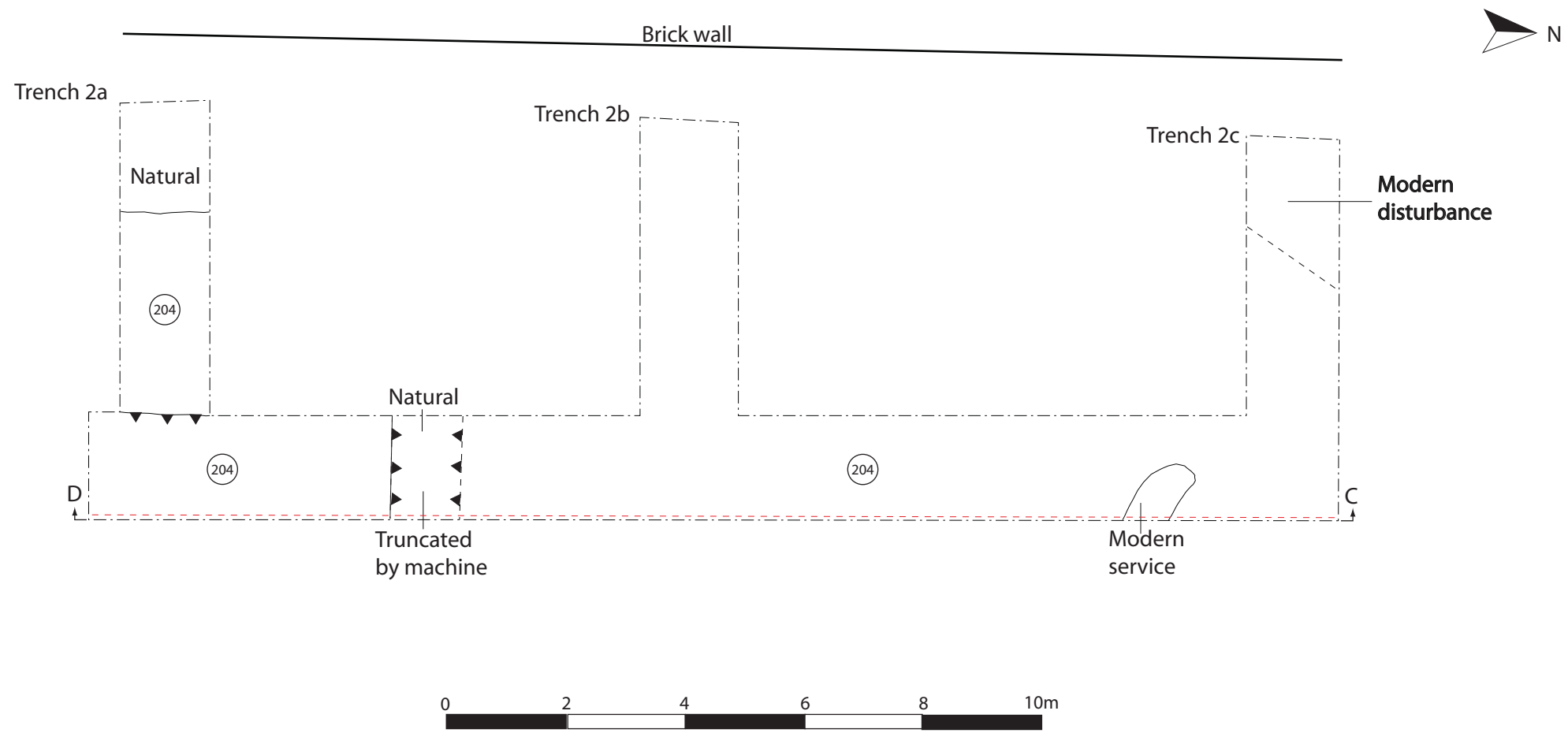
Fig. 2A: Location of trenches

Scale: 1 : 1250

Plan of trench 1



Plan of trench 2



Job Title: Aldershawe Hall, Wall

Drawing Title: Plans of trenches 1 & 2

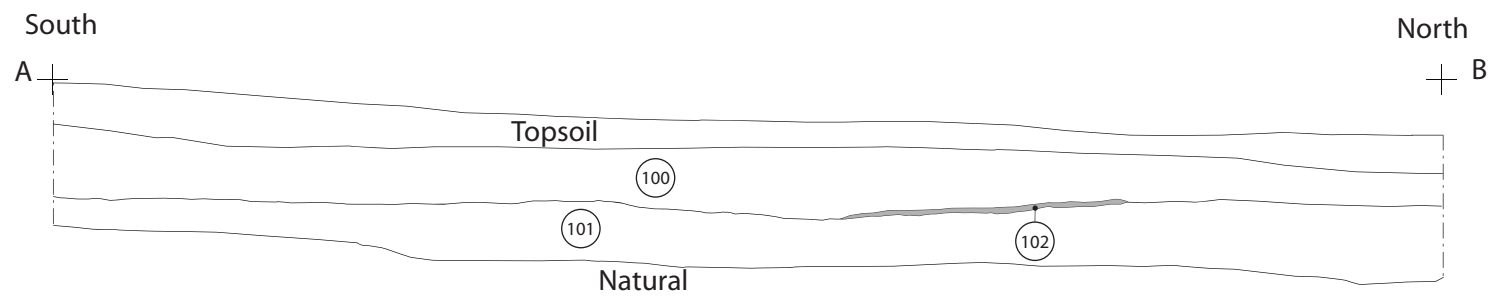
Date: October 2010

Drawn By: Irma Bernardus

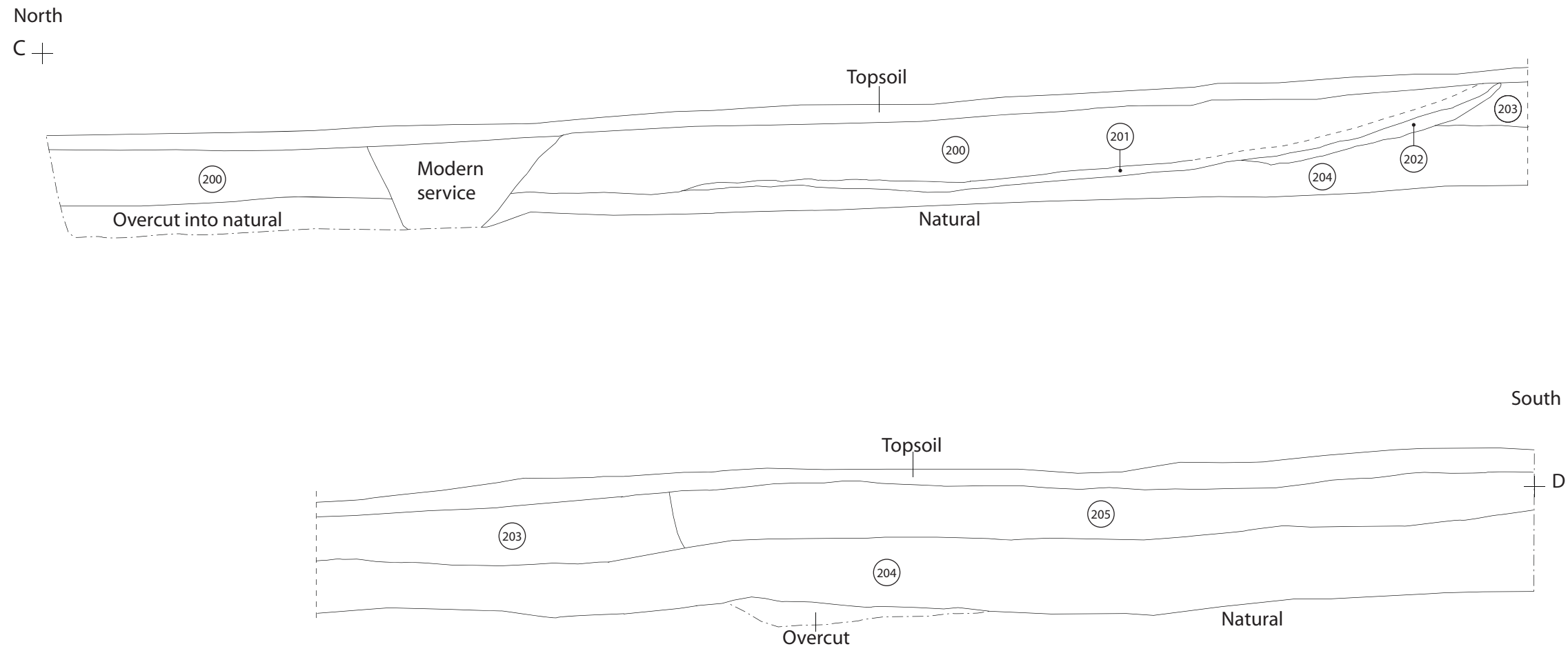
Scale: 1:40 & 1:100 @ A3

Figure 2B

Section of trench 1



Section of trench 2



Job Title: Aldershawe Hall, Wall

Drawing Title: Plan of trench 1 & 2

Date: October 2010

Drawn By: Irma Bernardus

Scale: 1:40 @ A3

Figure 3





Fig. 4
Trench 1 post-ex
Looking South



Fig. 5
East-facing section
of Trench 1
Scale = 2m



Fig. 6
Trench 2 post-ex
Looking SW



Fig. 7
Trench 2
West-facing
section
Scale = 2m



CAMBRIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECTS

Cambrian Archaeological Projects Ltd
Old Chapel Farm, Llanidloes
Powys SY18 6JR
Telephone: 01686 413857
E-mail: info@cambarch.co.uk

