

# Land at 123a Main Road, Kempsey Worcestershire

## Archaeological Evaluation

WSM 46778  
NGR SO 8527 4969



By Kevin Potter BA, MIFA  
On behalf of Elan Homes

**Avon Archaeology Limited**

February 2014



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Frontispiece. Looking south east across the site

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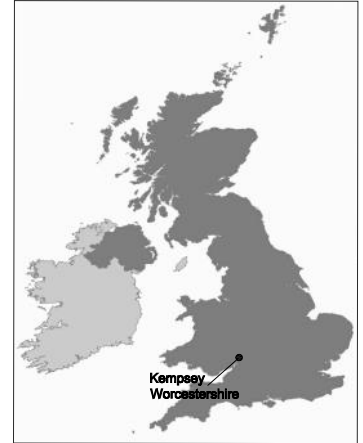
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Figure 1



Location of the Study Area  
Grid lines at 1 km intervals (extract from OS 1:25 000)

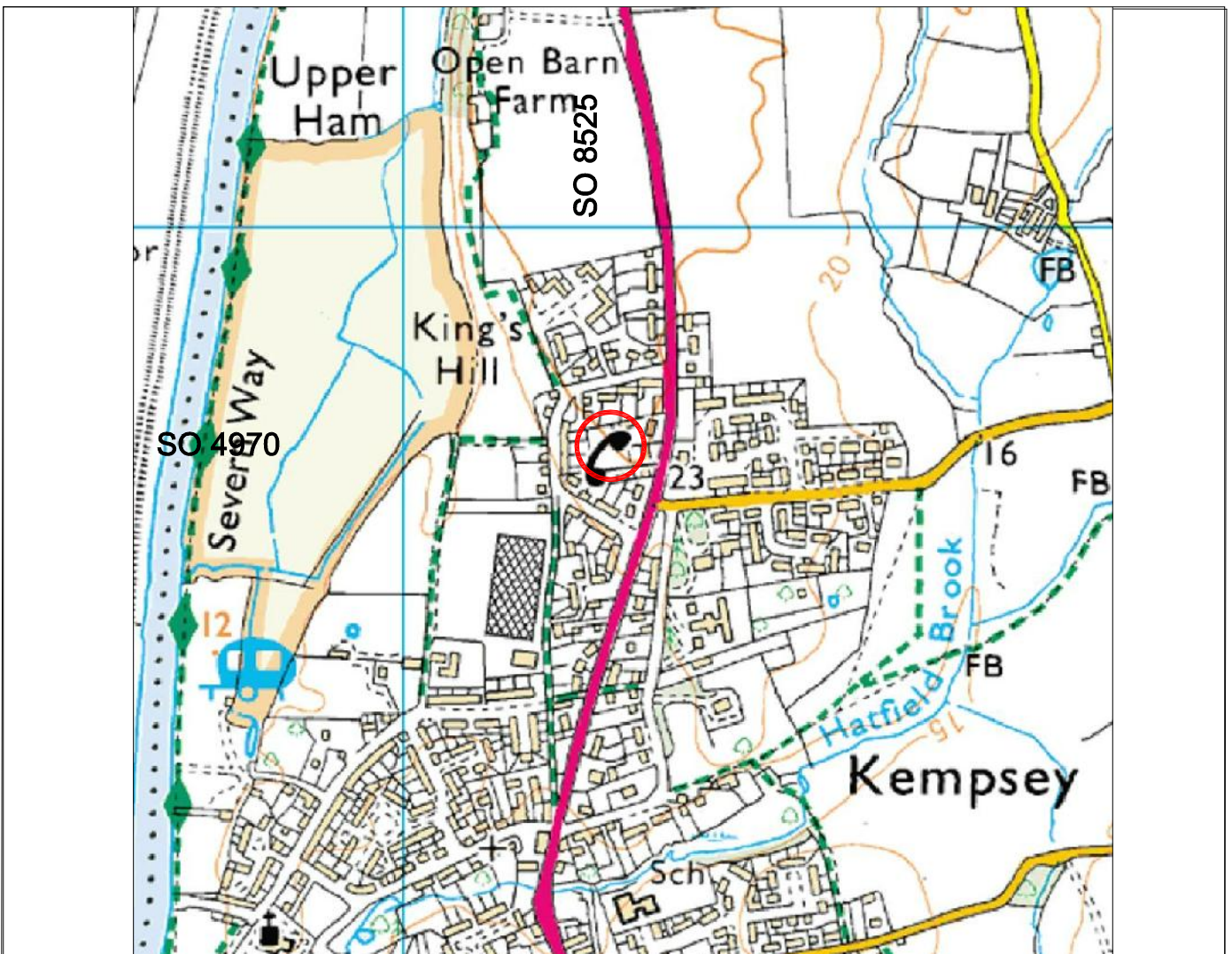


Figure 2

Site Location Plan with Boundary of Study Area in red

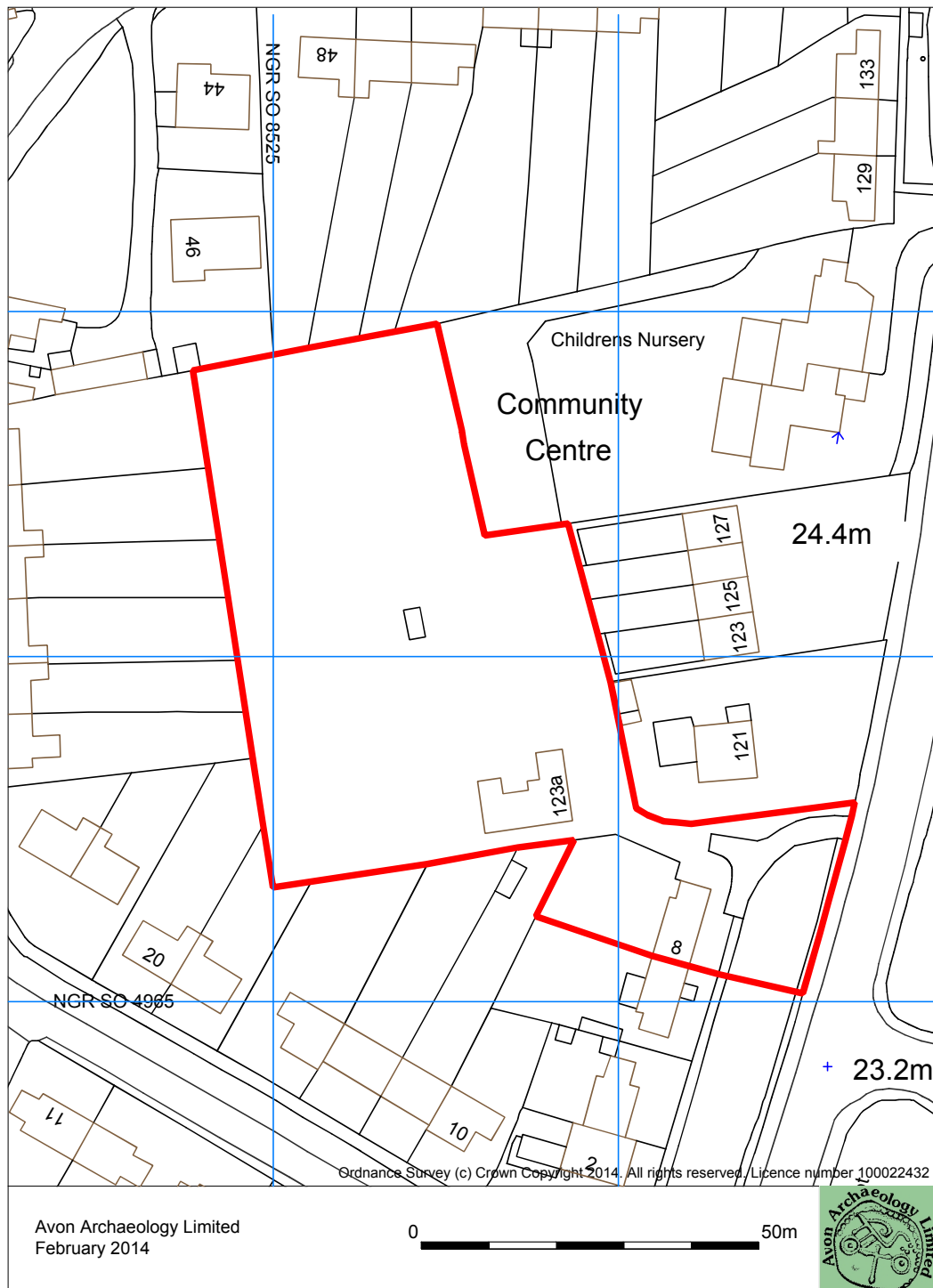
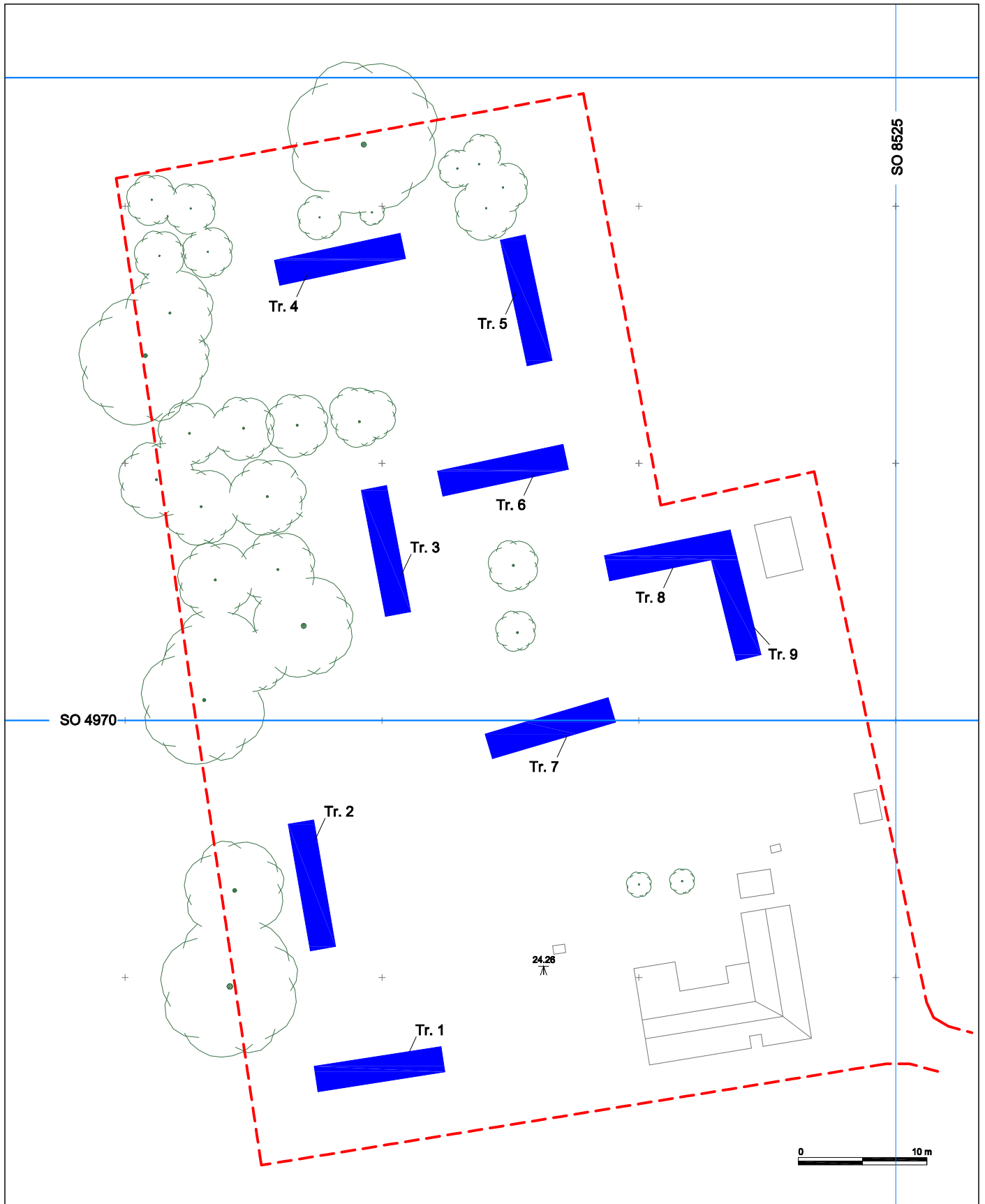




Figure 3

Trench Layout on Developer Produced Topographic Survey  
Archaeological Evaluation at 123A Main Road, Kempsey



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views towards the Malvern Hills beyond the river. The A38 runs through the centre of the village, joining Tewkesbury and Worcester, while the M5 motorway passes the village approximately 1m to the east.

The project site is located towards the north end of the village, on a small parcel of land approximately 4474m<sup>2</sup> in area. The site is bounded to the east by the rear gardens of buildings, including the Kempsey Village Centre, which front onto Main Road, and to the west by a 'D' shaped housing estate, called Windmill Lane. Access to the site is from a driveway which opens onto Main Road (Figure 2).

The underlying bedrock geology of the site consists of the Sidmouth Mudstone Formation, formed during the Triassic period circa 217-250 million years ago when the local environment was dominated by a hot dry climate. The mudstone is sealed by overlaying superficial deposits consisting of the Holt Heath Sand and Gravel members which formed 2 million years ago during the Quaternary period when the area became dominated by rivers (BGS).

## 4 Archaeological and Historical Background

The site had not been subject to any archaeological investigation or site specific desk based assessment prior to the current project. The following comprises a brief overview of the archaeological and historical background for the village of Kempsey.

There is evidence for low level prehistoric and Roman activity throughout the parish of Kempsey; however, there is *at present* no proven or significant evidence for settlement or activity of these periods in the area covered by the present village.

Contrary to both the county HER and oft-repeated opinion, there is no firm archaeological evidence for what is usually described as an 'Iron Age hillfort' in the area around what is now St Mary's Churchyard. It is possible that there was minimal modification of a low spur here in the Iron Age but successive excavations also suggest that apparent bank and ditch features here may be natural. The same area has in the past been attributed to a 'Roman Camp' by antiquarian writers, but this suggestion can certainly be dismissed. Stray finds of pottery and brooches, and a single coin, all of Roman date, have turned up in Kempsey from time to time; and a possibly Iron Age brooch from a location about half a km to the south-west of the study site. A Roman milestone is probably the most significant find, discovered in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century re-used in a farm garden wall not far from the western side of the churchyard; its provenance is entirely unknown, although it may be more than coincidence that a Roman road runs to the east of the historic and modern village.

In the post-Roman period, from about the seventh to the ninth centuries AD, it is likely that an original settlement occupied the slightly elevated spur where the church now stands. This formed effectively a peninsula between the river and the marshland, and it is this feature which seems ultimately to have been the origin of the place-name, from the Old English word *eg*, 'an island', combined with a personal name, *Cymi* (Mills 1993). An estate at Kempsey was the subject of a grant of 30 hides in 799 by the then



King of Mercia to the church of Worcester, and the Kempsey estate was mentioned in Domesday Book (1086). It remained in the hands of the Bishops of Worcester until the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century, when it was confiscated by Parliament and sold into secular hands (VCH 1913).

Apart from a 12<sup>th</sup> century fragment, the earliest parts of the present St Mary's church date from the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century. To the west of the church is the site of the Bishop of Worcester's summer palace, thought to have been demolished by 1695, but its foundations still exist in the field south west of Lane's End. The core of the late Anglo-Saxon and medieval settlement is likely to have been centred on the church, but nothing remains of it; although it is known that the population of the village was decimated by the Black Death in the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century. Three of the earliest domestic dwellings in the village are all situated in Church Street, and number 36 Church Street is said to have been used as a hospital by parliamentary forces during the Battle of Worcester in 1651. On the southern wall of the Church tower are bullet holes, which are said to have been made at that time by soldiers during target practice.

Of its more recent development, the Kempsey Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy, notes that

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Kempsey became a highly desirable place to live. Middle class gentry began to settle and their fine, spacious houses set in large acreages within the orchards, gave the village a gracious character that lingers today and which forms the basis of the conservation areas. The new settlers brought work in the form of servants and staff so that by the early C19 the village saw the rise of a range of minor service industries and businesses, such as workshops, bakeries chapels and public houses. By this time the main road had become a focus for the village and, possibly to attract passing trade, much of the artisan development was centred along this route.....Further development of Kempsey began in the 1950's when, in order to meet demand for post-war housing, Local Authority housing was located in the vicinity of Windmill Lane to the north of the village and on the area of land now known as Court Garth. Development continued apace into the 1960's and 1970's and as a result a large number of orchards were replaced by relatively high-density housing developments. Sadly, a number of large detached properties were also demolished to make way for new houses in areas such as Plover's Rise and, significantly, on land now known as Squires Walk / Close which was on the site previously occupied by Kempsey House, a C18 Vicarage with much acreage.....Today, Kempsey is the largest village within Malvern Hills District, with a.....population of 2,514 (2001 Census) (MHDC 2008, p6).



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# Trench Plans. Land at 123 A, Main Road Kempsey

Figure 4

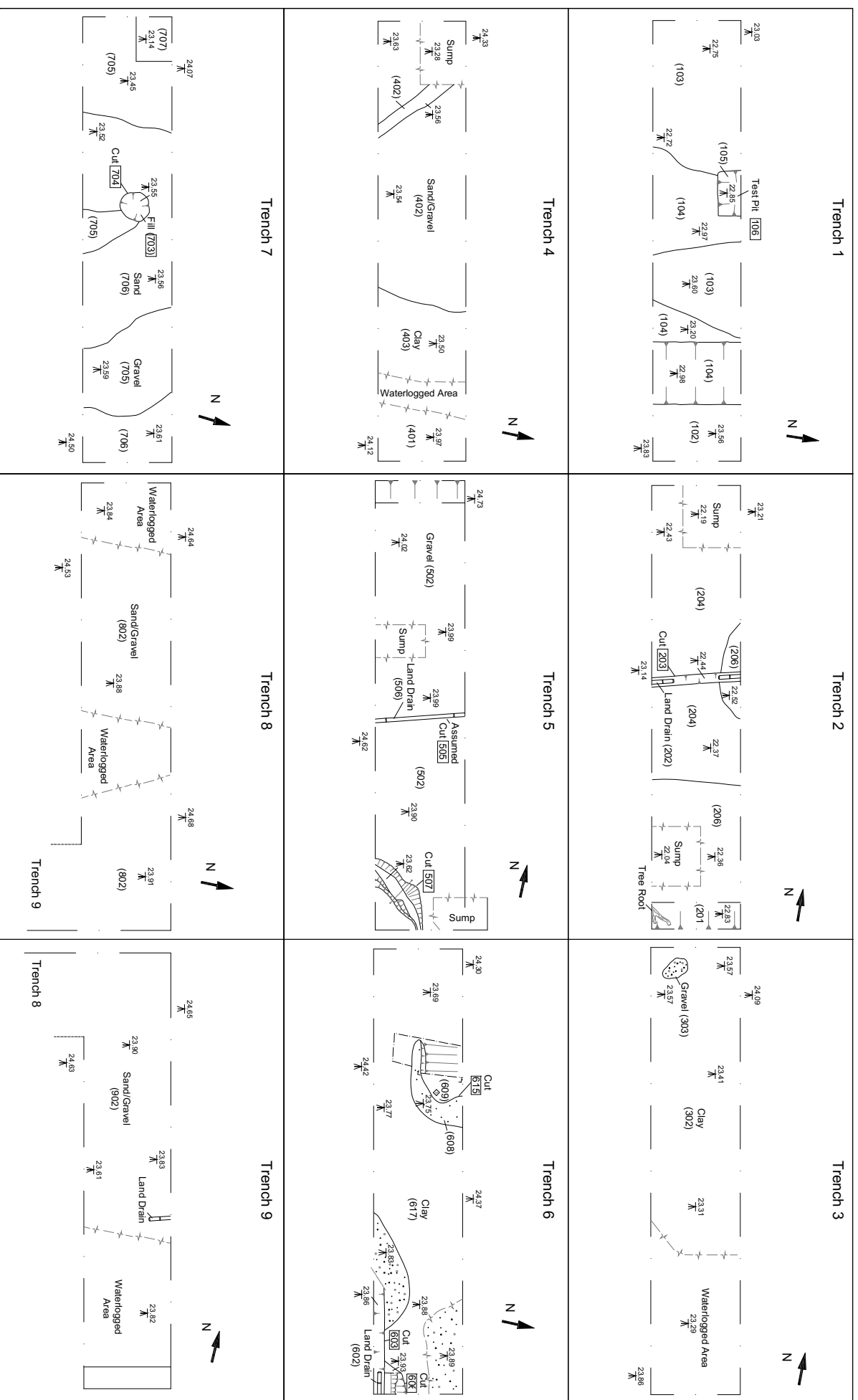


Figure 5. Trench 5 Detail Plan

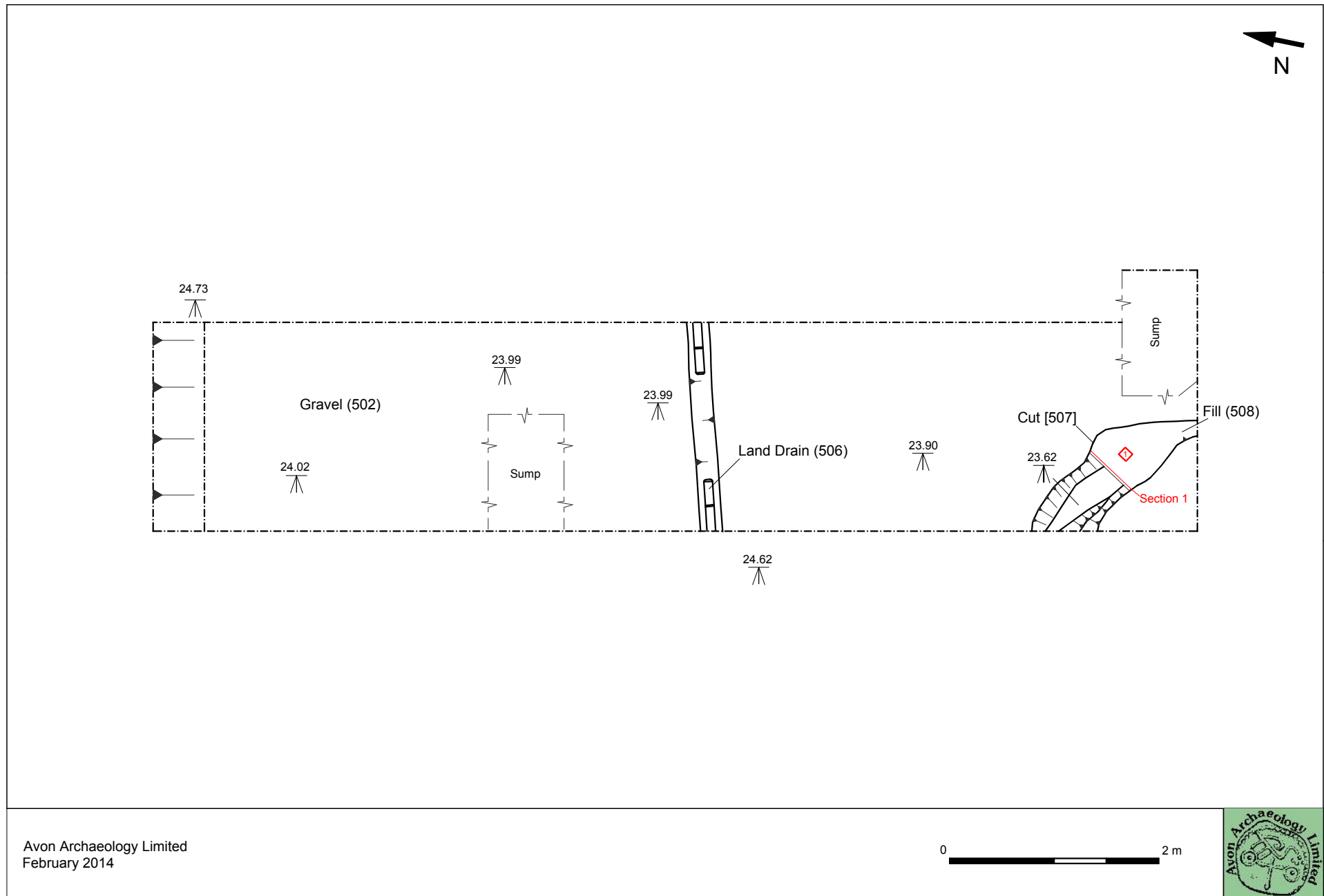


Figure 6. Trench 6 Detail Plan

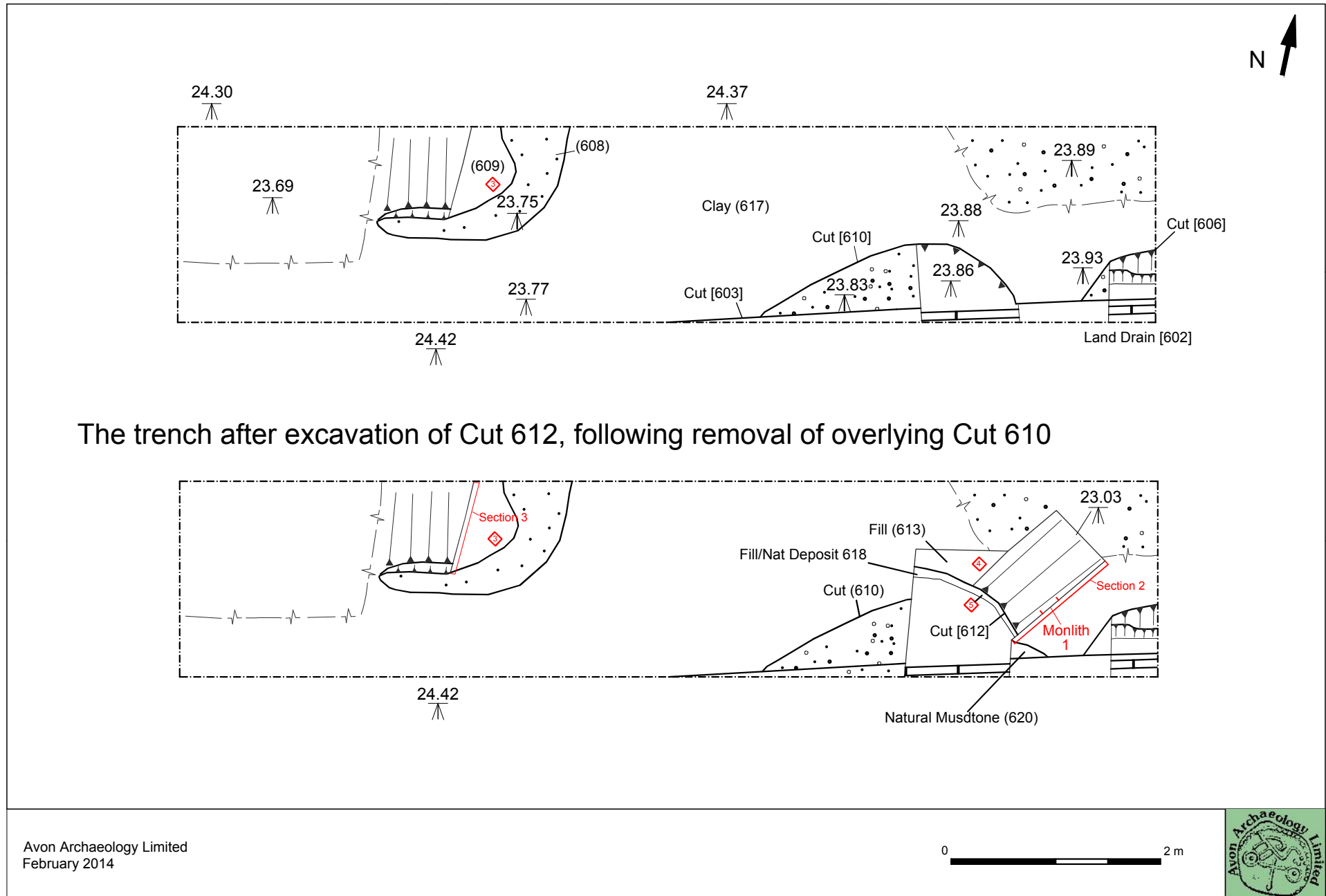


Figure 7. Section Drawings

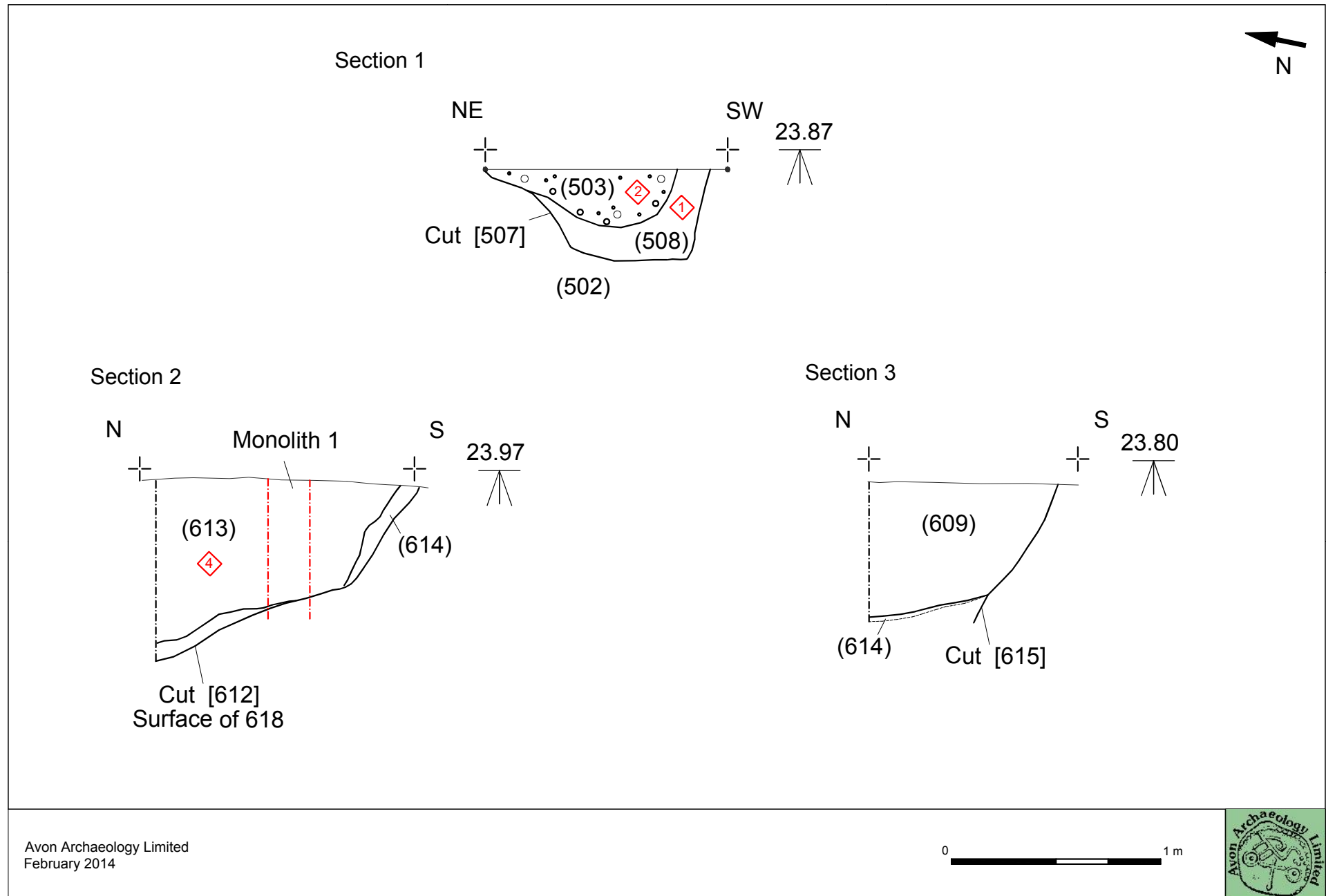




Plate 1. Looking west at Trench 1. 2 x 1m scale.



Plate 2. Looking south-west during excavation of Trench 1



Plate 3. View of Trench 2 looking north-east. 1 x 2m scale



Plate 4. Looking north at Trench 2. 1 x 1m scale



Plate 5. Detail of Land Drain 202. Trench 2. 1 x 1m scale



Plate 6. Looking north at Trench 3.



Plate 7. View of the north end of Trench 3. 1 x 1m scale



Plate 8. Looking west along Trench 4.  
2 x 1m scale



Plate 9. The western end of Trench 4. 2 x 1m scales.



Plate 10. Looking south at Trench 5  
during machine excavation.



Plate 11. Looking north at Trench 5. 2 x  
1m scale



Plate 12. Detail of Cut 507 after excavation looking  
south.



Plate 13. Looking west at Trench 6 pre-excavation. 1 x 1m and 1 x 2m scales



Plate 14. The eastern end of Trench 6 after excavation of Cut 610. 1 x 0.4 and 1 x 1m scales



Plate 15. The eastern end of Trench 6 after excavation of Cut 612. 2 x 1m scales



Plate 16. Cut 612 in section looking east. 2 x 1m scales



Plate 17. Looking east at Cut 615. 1 x 0.6 and 1 x 1m scales



Plate 18. Looking east at Cut 615 after investigation of gravel fill 608.



Plate 19. Looking west at Trench 7. 2 x 1m scales



Plate 20. Detail of section profile above box section into the natural marl of Trench 7. 2 x 1m scales



Plate 21. Looking east along Trench 8.  
1 x 1m scale.



Plate 22. Looking north-west at the junction of Trenches  
8 and 9.



Plate 23. Looking north along Trench 9.  
1 x 1m scale.