

Merrybrook Farm, Hampton, Evesham, Worcestershire

Archaeological Evaluation

WSM 50220
NGR SP 0207 4342



By Rachel Heaton BSc
On behalf of Elan Homes

Avon Archaeology Unit Limited
July 2014



SUMMARY

Avon Archaeology Limited were contracted by Elan Homes to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land at Merrybrook Farm, Hampton, Evesham, Worcestershire (centred on NGR SP 02067 43419). The project was designed to inform the planning process in relation to an application (ref. 13/00109) which intends to demolish the existing building and to construct new residential dwellings on the site. The development site encompassed an area of approximately 9800m² and reflects the first phase of a larger development, which will extend into a second, area, to the west of the site. The project was requested as a condition of planning consent by the archaeological planning officer for Worcestershire, Mike Glyde.

A total of eight trenches were opened by machine at selected locations around the site. The trenches contained very little of archaeological interest with natural clay deposits being reached within approximately 0.5m below the current ground surface. Modern ceramic land drains were recorded in Trenches 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, all running in an east to west direction. The land drains were cut into the surface of the natural clay and sealed by a subsoil. Several possible features were investigated accordingly in Trench 3, but all were recognised as geological deposits

No datable artefacts were recovered from the site.



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Project Health and Safety Statement

In all matters pertaining to this fieldwork project Health and Safety has taken priority *over all archaeological matters.*



All archaeological fieldwork has been undertaken in accordance with the guidelines set out by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers (SCAUM 2002, *Health & Safety in Field Archaeology*) and also the relevant requirements set out in Construction (Design & Management) Regulations 1994 (Health & Safety Commission 1994).

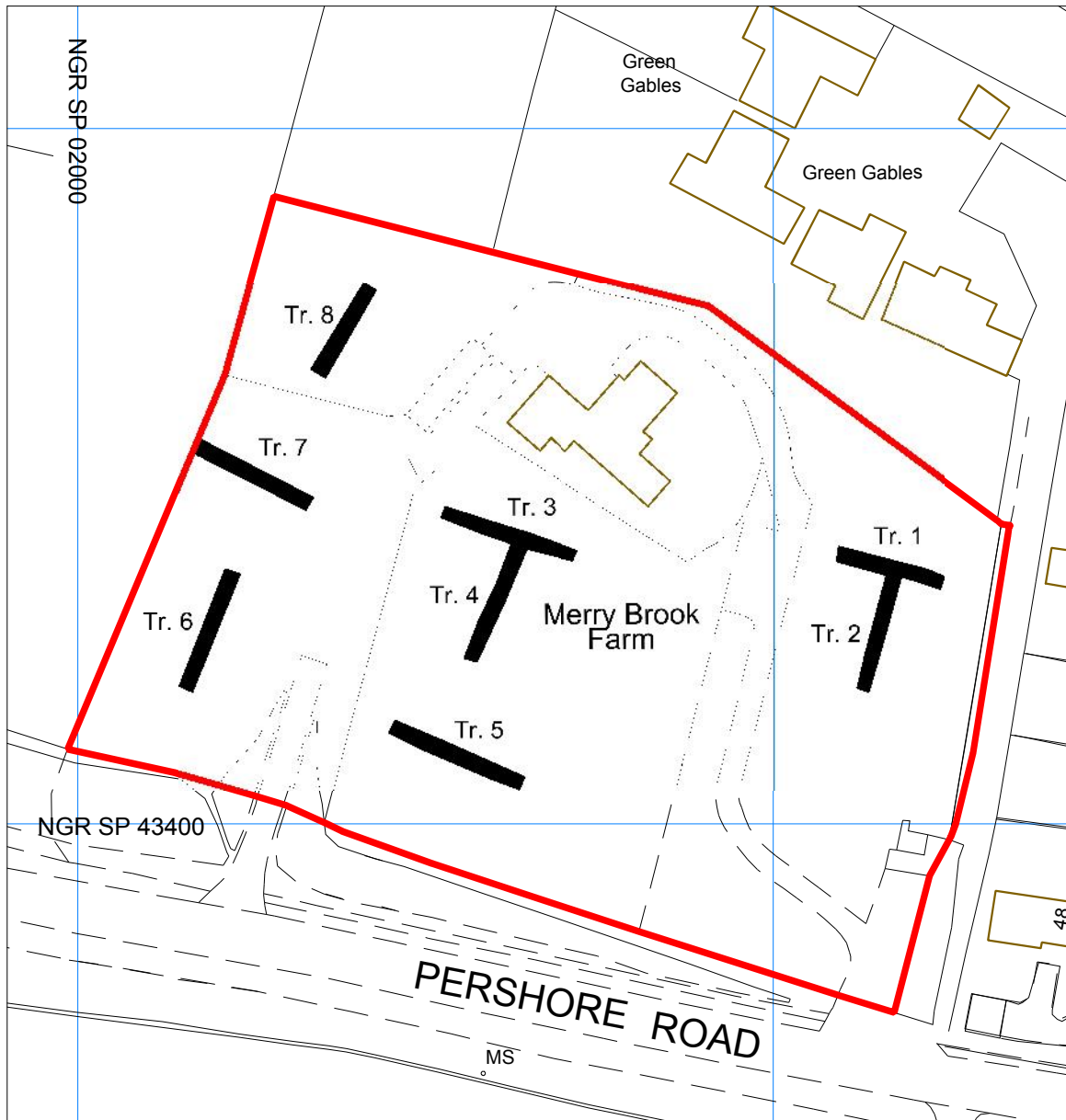
Note

Whereas Avon Archaeology Limited has taken all care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused



Figure 2

Trench location plan with site boundary



0 50m



1 Introduction

Avon Archaeology Limited (AAL) were commissioned by Elan Homes to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land at Merrybrook Farm, Hampton, Evesham, Worcestershire.

The project was commissioned in compliance with a condition of planning consent (application ref 13/00109), imposed by the County Archaeologist for Worcestershire County Council.

The fieldwork was undertaken between during June 2014 under the direction of the author and Kevin Potter BA MIFA.

The project archive will be given to the care of the Worcestershire County Museum, and an entry detailing the project will be placed in the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record under the reference WSM 50220 .

2 Location, Topography and Geology

Merrybrook Farm is located on the western edge of Hampton, a village on the western flanks of Evesham. It is bounded by Pershore Road to the south, by the rear gardens of Merry Brook Heights to the north, by open fields to the west and by an access road to properties on Merry Brook Heights to the east.

The evaluation was focused upon the land (see **Figure 2**) directly surrounding the house known as Merrybrook Farm and covers a total area of approximately 9800m². The land, which could be considered as an extension of the house's garden, is currently overgrown but was previously a fruit orchard.

The site lies close to the crest of a small hill which rises fairly steeply from the east to west from c48.5m aOD to c52.5m aOD.

The underlying geology of the site comprises inter-bedded Limestone and Mudstone (Wilmcote Limestone Member) of the Jurassic and Triassic systems (BGS online viewer).

3 The Site Setting : Archaeological, Historical and Cartographic Background

No archaeological projects had been carried out on the site prior to the current evaluation project. The land to the south of the site, on the south side of Pershore Road has been the subject of a Desk-Based Assessment (Robson-Glyde, 2010). The following account is only a summary of the site background, and is drawn largely from that document.



Archaeological Setting

There is evidence of human activity in the Hampton area dating back to the prehistoric period. An archaeological evaluation of land at Hampton Cemetery, on the south bank of the River Avon, recorded a pit containing a selection of worked flints and pot boiling stones (WSM 33906). The site is located just under a kilometre away, to the east of Merrybrook Farm.

Numerous entries of Romano-British date are recorded in the wider site area within the Worcestershire Sites and Monuments Record.

Roman Pottery was recorded in fields directly south of the site during the 1930s (WSM703) which is indicative of a Romano-British settlement in the vicinity.

Further possible features of this date including roads, enclosures and settlements have been recorded between Hampton and Hinton-on-the-Green, where a Roman coin of 1st Century AD date has been recorded on the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS WAW-739F07).

There is no direct evidence of archaeological discoveries of medieval date within the site. Aerial views of land to the west and south of the site show clear evidence of ridge and furrow indicating an open field system which could date back to this period.

Historic and Cartographic Setting

Merrybrook Farm is bounded by the 'Merry Brook' which is located just beyond the field to the west of the site. It is likely that this is an established boundary as its name suggests a Saxon origin. The name '*Merebroc*' or 'boundary stream' was first documented in the 8th century.

Hampton is referred to in Domesday, which records that the land was held partially by Evesham Abbey. A grange was built at Hampton by Abbot John de Brockhampton in the late 13th to early 14th century. He also built the church of St Andrew (WSM 1282) which replaced an earlier 12th century building.

The land directly in the vicinity of the site has consistently been used for arable farming. The layout of the fields on the south side of Pershore Road, shows larger fields are enclosed furlongs dating to the enclosure act of 1776. Map evidence of the 19th century shows the land is planted with orchards.

Much of the development of Hampton occurred during the post-medieval period with the most significant expansion to the west of the village.

The farm house, which at the time of writing stands towards the centre of the northern half of the site, is of a modern date, built between 1973 and 1985. The farm buildings first appear on the 1985 OS map for the area, when it was called 'Meadow Brook Farm'. Map data shows that prior to 1985, the site was occupied by orchards.



4 Methodology

The evaluation fieldwork was conducted in accordance with methodologies outlined in a Written Scheme of Investigation (Potter 2013), produced in response to criteria defined by Mike Glyde of Worcestershire County Council. The standards and guidelines set out in MoRPHE (Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment) and the relevant guidelines issued by the Institute for Archaeology were followed.

The trenches were opened using a mechanical excavator to the first significant archaeological or geological deposit, after which excavation was undertaken by hand. The Avon Archaeology single context recording system (AAL 2013) was used to create written records of all features and stratigraphic units. Plans and sections were drawn at 1:20 and 1:10 respectively. Levels were reduced from a spot height located on Pershore Rd (adjacent to the site, spot height towards the west and downslope) which has a recorded value of 44.8m aOD.

The conditions for the duration of the site work were hot, dry and bright.

5 The Archaeological Trenches

Eight trenches were opened by machine, equipped with a toothless grading bucket, at selected locations across the site (**Figure 2**). Trenches 1 and 2 formed a T shape and were located in the north-east site corner, east of the driveway. Trenches 3 to 7 were all located in the neglected orchard to the west of the driveway and south of the Merrybrook Farm buildings. Trenches 3 and 4 also formed a large T shape. Trench 8 was located in the north-west corner of the site adjacent to the outbuildings connected to the main house. The trenches were all approximately 20 x 2m, although this varied according to local conditions. In particular Trench 8 had to be reduced in size due to the presence of abandoned vehicles.

The depositional sequence revealed in the trenches was broadly similar across the site, consisting of a topsoil layer (possibly re-deposited), overlying subsoil layers and bands of natural clay. In general the subsoil deposits within the trenches located towards the east of the site contained more inclusions, including charcoal flecking, which may suggest more intensive agricultural activity and possibly ploughing. Solid bedrock geology was reached in at least two trenches; Trenches 5 and 6.

Yellow-grey natural clay was reached in all of the trenches at depths ranging from 0.45m to 0.55m below the current ground surface. Box sections were cut into the natural in each trench (usually at one or both ends) to a depth of approximately 1m below the current ground level to expose the full depositional sequence onto the natural substrate.

Detailed context descriptions for all of the trenches can be found in Appendix 1



Trench 1 (Figures 4 and 12; Plates 1, 2 and 15)

Trench 1 was located in the north east corner of the site, on an east to west orientation, measuring approximately 16m in length. Ground level rose from the east end of the trench, at 48.93 aOD to 49.34m aOD at the west end. A hand dug box section was cut into the natural at the east end of the trench within a larger machine cut box section.

The natural soil horizon (103) was reached at a depth of approximately 0.38m below the current ground surface. It consisted of a sterile yellow-grey clay. Sealing it was a subsoil deposit (102), of yellow-grey silty clay containing very occasional flecks of charcoal and rounded pebbles.

At the east end of the trench, extending approximately 2.5m from the baulk, Deposit (102) was overlain by a further deposit (101). Deposit (101) formed a layer, 0.16m thick, of dark-brown black silty sand containing frequent flecks of charcoal, small pieces of ceramic building material and small angular stones along with occasional rounded pebbles. Overall, the inclusions observed, particularly the ceramic building material, suggest modern origins.

The topsoil, deposit (100) sealed Deposit (101). It consisted of a mid brown friable sandy silt, approximately 0.12m thick.

No significant archaeological deposits were recorded in this trench.

Trench 2 (Figure 5; Plates 3, 4 and 16)

Trench 2 was located at 90° to Trench 1 to form a 'T' shape. Ground level fell from the north end of the trench at c49.09 aOD to 48.65m at the south end. A small hand dug box section was cut through the natural, towards the centre of the trench to a level of 47.92 aOD.

Natural yellow-grey clay, Deposit (202) was reached at approximately 0.4m below current ground level. It was sealed by a yellow-grey silty clay subsoil deposit (201), which measured up to 0.19m thick. This was in turn sealed by topsoil, (deposit (200)).

A single feature was present and consisted of an early modern ceramic land drain transecting the centre of the trench on a roughly east-west alignment. No cut for the field drain was visible in the deposits overlying it.

Trench 3 (Figures 6, 13, 14, 15 and 16; Plates 17 to 21)

Trench 3 was located to the south of the main house and ran approximately, parallel with the houses southern wall, measuring 19m in length. The ground level rose rapidly from east 50.42m aOD at the east end of the trench to 51.36m aOD at the west. Machine dug box sections were excavated at both ends. Three further hand dug box sections were excavated through potential archaeological features.



Natural (deposit (302)) was reached at approximately 0.5m below the current ground surface. Deposit 302 consisted of a firm yellow-gey clay. Three irregularly shaped patches of grey clay were visible towards the surface of Deposit (302). A hand dug section was excavated across each feature. In all cases the clay, (deposit (303)) was completely sterile and had no clearly defined edges suggestive of an archaeological feature. More likely they reflect undulations within the natural substrate.

The natural clay was sealed by a 0.15m thick, subsoil deposit (301), which was in turn, sealed by topsoil (300) which measured 0.35m thick.

There were no significant archaeological features or deposits within this trench.

Trench 4 (Figure 8; Plates 5, 6 and 22)

Trench 4 measured 19m in length and was located at 90° to Trench 3 forming a 'T' shape. Ground level fell from the north end of the trench, at 51.03m aOD, to 50.88m aOD at the south. Two box sections were dug through into natural, one 2.5m from the north end of the trench and the another at the south end.

The natural yellow-grey clay (402) was reached at 0.43m below current ground level. It was sealed by a subsoil layer (401) measuring 0.15m thick, which was in turn sealed by topsoil (400) of 0.28m.

The only features within the trench were two early modern ceramic land drains, both of which ran roughly east-west across the trench. There were no discernable cuts for either land drain. Both were situated on top of the natural.

Trench 5 (Figure 8; Plates 7, 8 and 23)

Trench 5 was located toward the southern boundary of the site, aligned east-west almost, parallel with Pershore Road, and measured 19.5m in length. The ground level in the location of the trench rose from east to west from 51.13m aOD to 51.54m aOD. Three machine cut box sections were excavated into the natural substrate, one at each end and one in the centre.

Natural clay, (deposit (502)) was reached at 0.4m below current ground level. It was sealed by a 0.2m thick layer of subsoil (501) which was in turn sealed by 0.2m of topsoil (500).

The top of the natural lias bedrock was exposed in the deeper machine cut box section at the west end of this trench at 50.29m aOD.

No archaeological features or deposits were recorded.



Trench 6 (Figure 9; Plates 9, 10 and 24)

Trench 6 was located in the south west corner of the site, aligned north south and was 18.7m in length. The ground level dropped slightly from the north end 52.47m aOD to 52.63m aOD at the south end. One machine excavated box section was cut through the natural 2m from the north end of the trench, avoiding damage to a ceramic drain pipe.

The natural clay (602) was reached at 0.34m below the current ground level. It was sealed in turn by a subsoil (601) of 0.18m thick and a topsoil (600) of 0.16m thick. The top of bedrock (603) was visible in the deeper machine cut box section at a level of 51.75m aOD.

Two early modern ceramic land drains were recorded in this trench, one at the north end and the other approximately 8m to the south. There was no discernible cut for either feature, which had been constructed on the surface of the natural clay.

Trench 7 (Figure 10; Plates 11, 12 and 25)

Trench 7 was located towards the middle of the western side of the site. It was orientated roughly east-west, and measured 17m in length. The current ground level rises from 52.2m aOD at the east end of the trench to 52.51m aOD at the west end.

Natural clay (702) was reached at 0.38m below the current ground level. It was sealed by a 0.17m thick subsoil layer (701) which was in turn sealed by topsoil (700), which was also c0.17m thick.

The only feature was a ceramic land drain, which crossed the centre of the trench on a roughly east-west alignment.

Trench 8 (Figure 11 and 17; Plates 13, 14 and 26)

Trench 8 was located in the north-west corner of site, west of the bungalow and adjacent out buildings. It was oriented north-south and was approximately 15m long. The ground level surrounding the trench rose from 52.09m aOD at the south end of the trench to 52m aOD at the north end. The top of the natural soil horizon (802) was located at a depth of approximately 0.45m below the current ground surface. The natural was sealed by a 0.14m thick yellow-grey silty clay subsoil (801), which was sealed by roughly 0.2m of topsoil.

A machine excavated box section was excavated at each end of the trench, to a depth of 51.66m aOD.

A modern ceramic land drain ran across the trench on a roughly east to west alignment.

No dateable artefacts were recovered from this trench.



6 Discussion and Conclusions

In summary, all eight trenches contained very little of archaeological interest. Several indistinct 'features' were present within Trench 3 none of which resolved, upon excavation, into archaeological features. In Trench 1, a distinct band of material, visible between the subsoil and the topsoil, was present and clearly reflected a modern deposit.

Modern ceramic land drains were recorded in Trenches 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, all running in an east to west direction and constructed in the uppermost levels of the natural clay. This alignment follows the general topography of the land, which slopes down from west to east.

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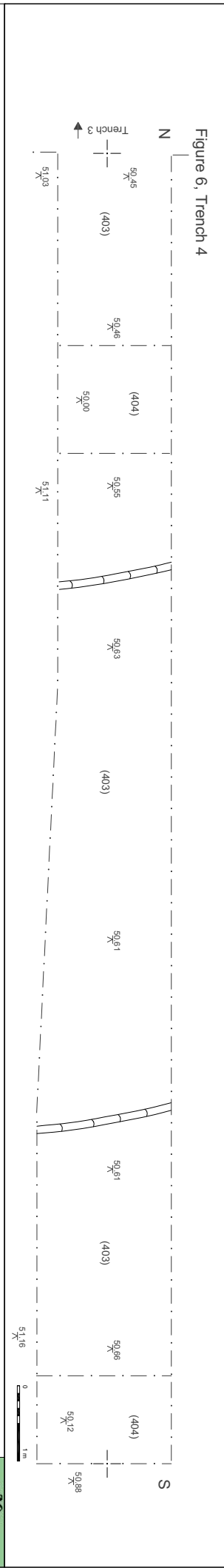
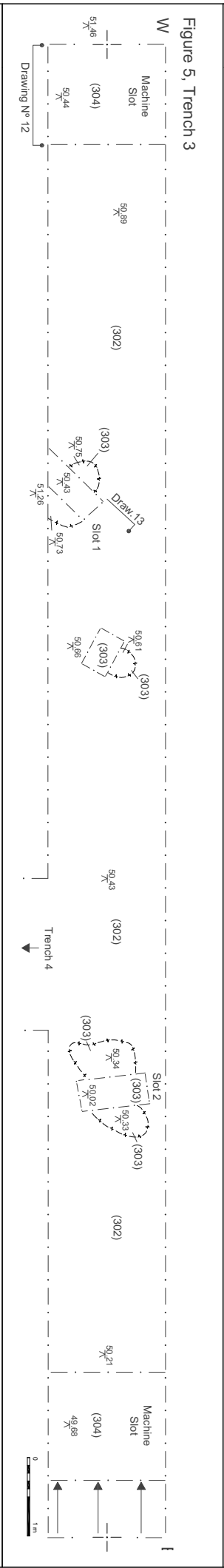
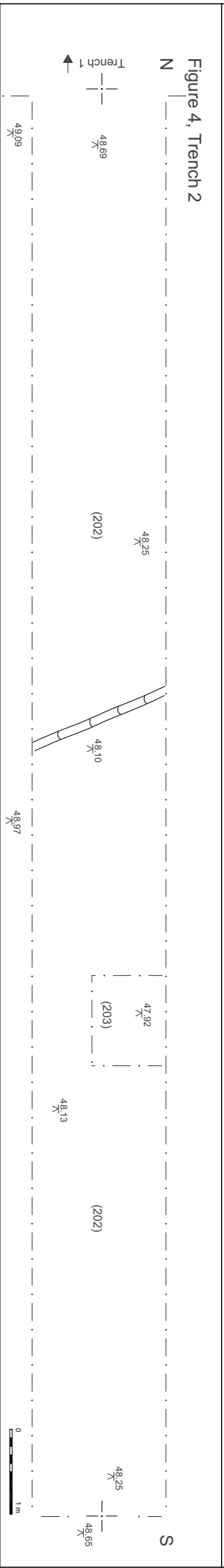
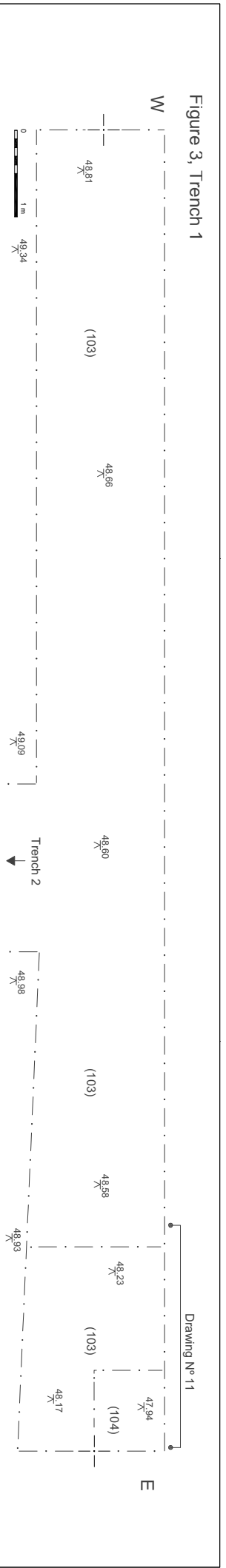
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Figures 3 to 6. Trench Plans



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Top Vegetation
Break Line, uncertain limits
Land Drains

Figures 11, 12 and 13

Figure 11, South Facing Section, Trench 1



Figure 12, North Facing Section, Trench 3

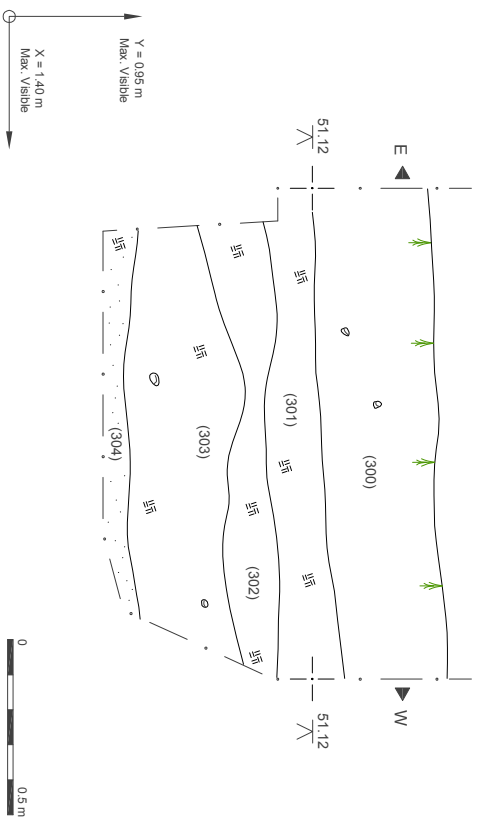


Figure 13, South east Facing Section of Box Section 1 in Trench 3

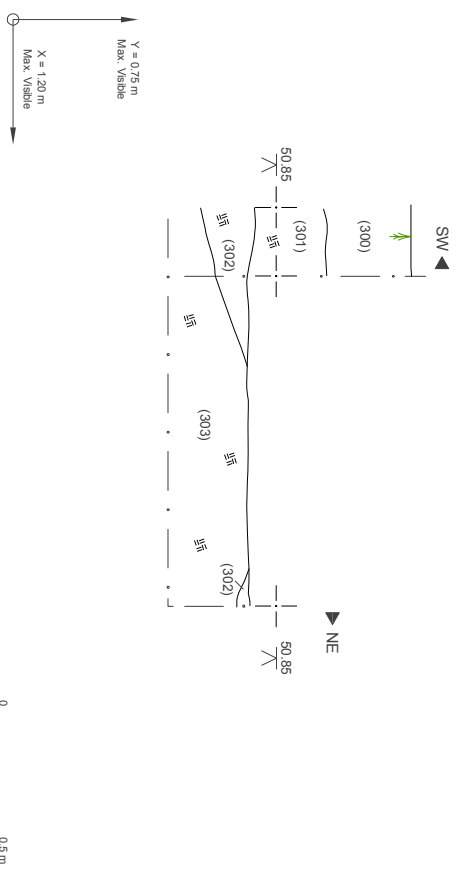




Plate 1: Trench 1, view west.



Plate 2: Trench 1, view east.



Plate 3: Trench 2, view south.



Plate 4: Trench 2, view north.



Plate 5: Trench 4, view north.



Plate 6: Trench 4, view south.



Plate 7: Trench 5, view west.



Plate 8: Trench 5, view east.



Plate 9: Trench 6, view south.



Plate 10: Trench 6, view north.



Plate 11: Trench 6, view west.



Plate 12: Trench 7, view east.



Plate 13: Trench 8, view north.



Plate 14: Trench 8, view south.



Plate 15: Trench 1, south facing section at east end of trench.



Plate 16: Trench 2, west facing section towards centre of the trench.



Plate 17: Trench 3, view east.



Plate 18: Trench 3, view west.



Plate 19: Trench 3, north facing section at the west end of the trench.



Plate 20: Trench 3, north facing section at east end of the trench.



Plate 21: Trench 3, box section 1 looking south west.



Plate 22: Trench 4, east facing section towards middle of the trench.



Plate 23: Trench 5, north facing section at the west end of the trench.



Plate 24: Trench 6, east facing section at the north end of the trench.



Plate 25: Trench 7, south facing section at the west end of the trench.



Plate 26: Trench 8, east facing section at the south end of the trench.