

**Land to the Rear of 47 & 49 Edward Street,  
Westbury, Wiltshire**

**Report on an Archaeological Evaluation**

NGR ST 87369 51157



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**Avon Archaeology Limited**

Bristol: January 2019



## SUMMARY

Avon Archaeology Limited were commissioned by Heritage Planning Services Limited to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land to the rear of 47 & 46 Edward Street, Westbury, Wiltshire (centred on NGR ST 78380 51160).

The evaluation comprised the excavation of two archaeological trenches each measuring 7 x 2m. The site is located within an area of red brick walled garden, orientated NE – SW. It is divided, roughly, into two halves, the northern half having been previously reduced and now under hard standing. The evaluation was located within the southern half which was at a higher elevation and covered by turf.

The trenches revealed a sequence of garden soil deposits, up to 0.8m deep, overlying the natural substrate. Garden soils also sealed post medieval brick structures, which most likely reflect garden walls. A single sherd of medieval pottery was found along with a small assemblage of mixed post medieval ceramics.

The results would suggest that there are no buried buildings on the site, and that there was only limited activity in the medieval (the evaluation itself found no evidence from the medieval period) and no evidence of prehistoric activity. Throughout the post-medieval period the evidence suggests that the site has been largely, if not solely, a garden.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Avon Archaeology Limited wishes to acknowledge the assistance given during the project by the following: Rachel Foster, of Wiltshire County Council Archaeological Services; Sam Driscoll, of HPS Ltd; and the client, Mr Noad.

## NOTES

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AAL	Avon Archaeology Ltd
aOD	above Ordnance Datum
NGR	National Grid Reference
OS	Ordnance Survey



## 1 INTRODUCTION

Avon Archaeology Ltd were commissioned by Heritage Planning Services on behalf of their client, Mr Noad, to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land to the rear of No's 47 and 49 Edward Street, Westbury in Wiltshire. A planning application was submitted to Wiltshire Council on 11/12/2015 for the demolition of a small detached garage and the construction of a building to contain four self-contained flats and associated parking, Planning Reference No. 15/12308/FUL. The site lies within an area of the town known to have existed since medieval times. Wiltshire County Council requested a programme of archaeological investigation prior to proposed development.

The general scope for the evaluation was established via consultation between the client, HPS Archaeological Services and the local Planning Authority's archaeological advisors at Wiltshire County Council Archaeological Services (WCCAS).

The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Heaton, 2018), which was prepared in response to criteria defined by WCCAS. The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* issued by the Chartered Institute of Field Archaeologists (2014) and the *Management of Archaeological Projects II* (EH 1991).

The evaluation comprised the excavation and recording of 2 small trial trenches (each measuring 7m by 2m), excavated within the footprint of the proposed development (**Figure 2**).

The project was supervised by Kevin Potter, assisted by Gareth Dickinson and the work was undertaken on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2018. An archive will be produced and remain in storage at the office of Avon Archaeology Ltd until the relevant collecting museum (Wiltshire Museum, Devizes) are able to accept it for long term storage.



## 2 SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

Westbury is a small market town in Wiltshire on the north side of the valley, of the Biss Brook, which flows northwards into the River Biss, ultimately a tributary of the River Avon. It is located close to the western border of the county, between the larger towns of Trowbrige to the north and Warminster to the south.

The development area lies at the south end of Edward Street, to the rear of Nos. 47 and 49, at the junction with Warminster Road and Bratton Road (centred on NGR ST 87369 51157). The plot of land is essentially rhomboid in shape, aligned on an approximately east-west axis. One half is given over to grass, while the other half is hard standing and occupied by a small square garage structure. It is bounded to the north by the rear yard of No. 45 Edward Street, and to the east by the grounds associated with Abbey Field House. A broad alleyway forms the southern boundary, with Westfield House, a car park and buildings fronting Bratton Road beyond.

Topographically the site lies on a slope, rising from east to west. The area of hard standing to the south-west of the site rises relatively gently from 72.50m to 72.80m aOD, while the grassed area to the north-east, which was the focus of the evaluation is at a higher elevation of 75.70m aOD.

The underlying geology of the town is Upper Greensand, which forms a narrow strip beneath the north-western escarpment of Salisbury Plain, dividing the chalk uplands in the south-east of the district from the gault and Kimmeridge clay in the north-west.

The Upper Greensand geology is a sedimentary bedrock which was formed approximately 94 to 113 million years ago in the Cretaceous period, when the local environment was dominated by shallow seas (BGS).

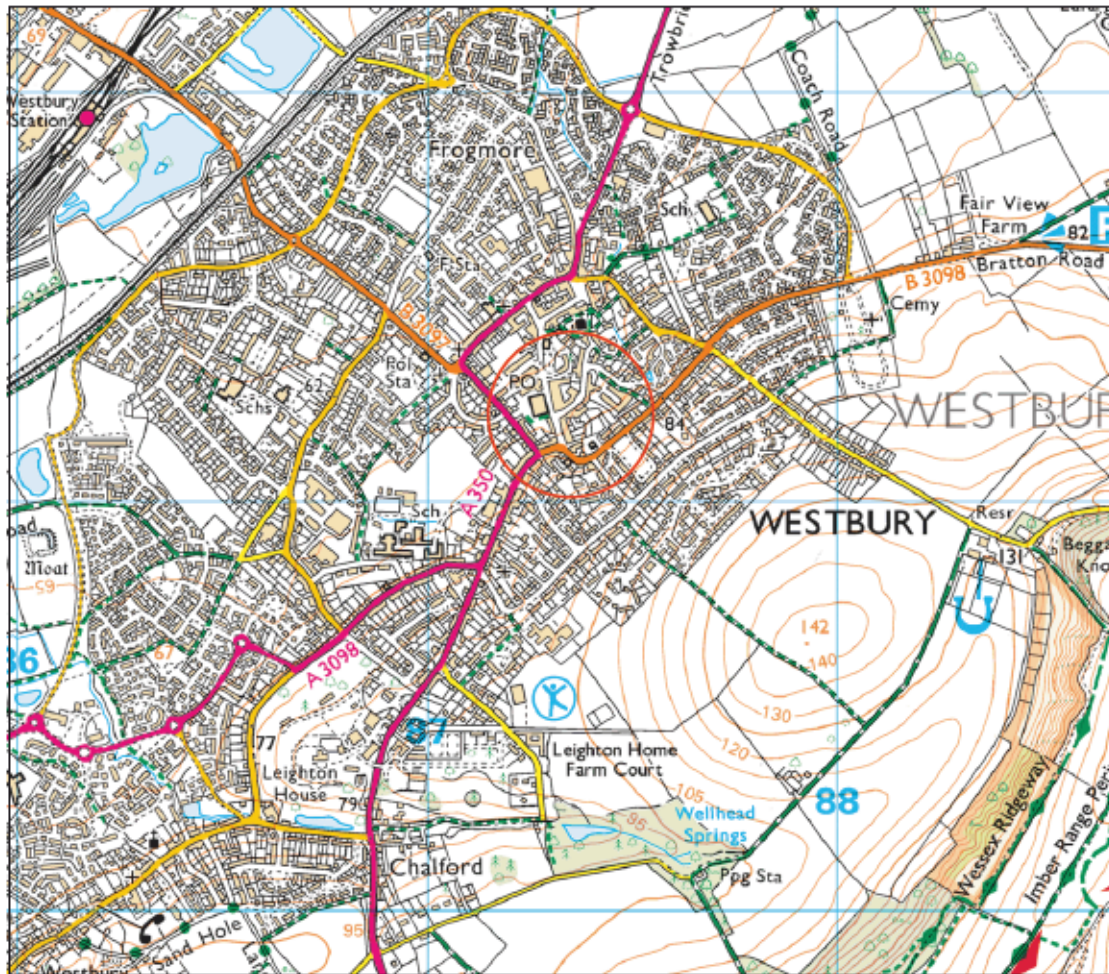


Figure 1

Site Location Plan

○ Site location

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Grid lines at 1km intervals

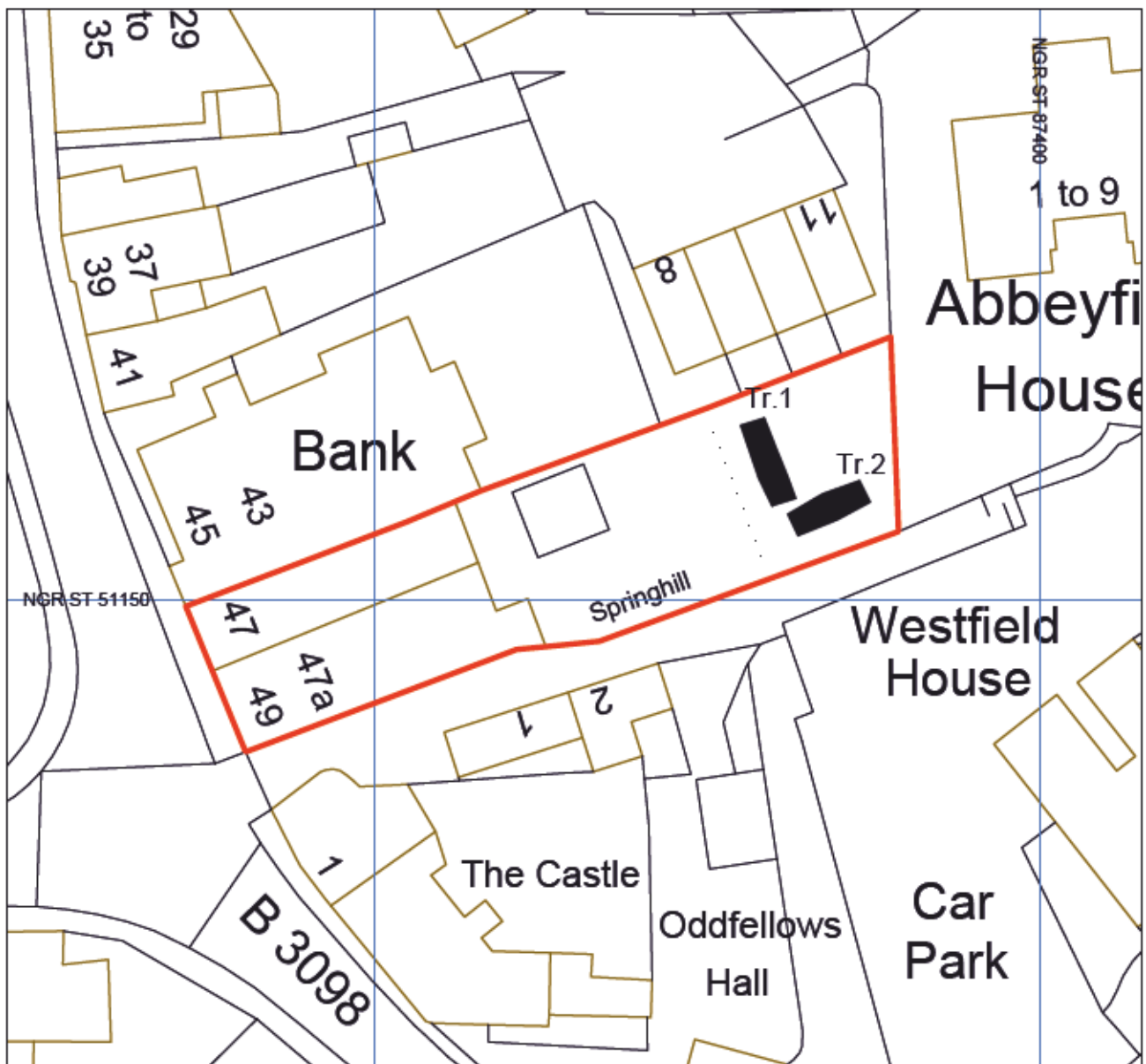
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Figure 2



Plan of the Site with Trench Locations and Site Boundary in Red





### 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND DOCUMENTARY BACKGROUND

Westbury is first referred to in the Domesday Survey, which records the place name variously as 'Westberie' and 'Wesberie', from 'west-burgh' (Haslam 1976). The 'burgh' element is sometimes taken to indicate the former presence of an early medieval fortified settlement, although the exact meaning of the term in this case is uncertain (Westbury Urban Survey, 2004).

The town lies within an area of significant evidence of prehistoric activity, most notably the Iron Age hill fort located a short distance to the south east, at Bratton Camp. This may be the origin of the bury element of the place name.

A significant Romano-British settlement existed on the north side of the town, in an area known as The Ham, close to the modern railway station. It was completely destroyed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century by open-cast mining, but an extensive collection of artefacts recovered from the site span the entire Romano-British period (about 350 years). There have been Romano-British spot finds around the town also, including two inhumations found at Bitham Park (WE007).

A sizeable settlement is known to have existed at Westbury during the Anglo-Saxon period, though there is little surviving *material* evidence for it. In 1086, the Domesday survey records Westbury as a large royal manor, but as it had no burgesses at this time, the settlement was not considered as a town. However, Westbury was an important administrative centre, as it was the centre of a hundred and was also the location of a minster church. The Domesday record for Westbury lists six mills, swineherds, beekeepers and potters, although the latter may not necessarily have been working within the settlement itself. The late medieval church of All Saints, which is located 250m north-east of the present site, is thought to be on the site of an earlier Anglo-Saxon Church. An assemblage of early medieval, grass-tempered pottery was discovered at Wellhead, probably indicating settlement activity.



There is considerable documentary and material evidence for the settlement of medieval Westbury. Recent research has concluded that the centre would have been on the north side of the church, where the central market place would have been located. A licence to hold a weekly market was granted in 1252. A number of archaeological interventions in close proximity to the Edward Street site have recorded deposits and features dating from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The Extensive Urban Survey for Westbury indicates that the development site is situated within the grounds of the Rectory Manor (WE015) and Farm which are known to have existed since the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Westbury, in common with other towns of north and west Wiltshire, emerged as a centre of the cloth industry towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The industry continued to prosper until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when trade was considerably hampered by a combination of economic depression, plague and a major fire, which destroyed much of the town. There was a reprise during the 18<sup>th</sup> century which reached its peak with a record number of fifteen clothiers in the town. The peak was, however, short lived and during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the industry declined again, leaving just two working mills.

The arrival of the railway in 1841 brought vastly improved communications, enabling the rise of a wider trading sphere. Construction of the railway was also responsible for the discovery of iron ore in the geological strata beneath The Ham, and the ore was extensively mined for smelting at the adjacent Westbury Iron Foundry in north Westbury.

Available cartographic sources show that the present development site has consistently been part of an open yard or garden from the 1841 tithe map onwards. The tithe shows a large rectangular plot, fronting Edward Street, extending to the north side of No. 43. The land was at that time occupied by a single building only – currently No. 49. The adjacent buildings, now Nos. 47, 45 and 43, were constructed towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, appearing on the Second Edition OS map of 1903.



## 4 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The objectives of the archaeological fieldwork requested were defined in a brief laid out by the Wiltshire County Council Archaeological Services (WCCAS). The site is located within a Conservation Area recognised as having high archaeological potential.

The brief outlined the need for archaeological evaluation of the site to inform the planning process, prior to consent for the development of the land. In this instance the project formed a condition of planning permission (application ref: 15/12308/FUL).

The evaluation was designed to characterise buried archaeology within the site, including its character, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality in accordance with the standards and guidelines set out in MoRPHE (Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment). These objectives and methodology for the work were formally laid out in a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Avon Archaeology Limited (2018), which was approved by the County Archaeologist.

The site occupies a relatively small area of approximately 110 sq m; therefore only two small trenches were excavated (**Figure 2**). The trenches were not exactly as proposed in the WSI due to limitations of machine access and movement.

The trenches were opened using a mechanical excavator to the first significant archaeological or geological deposit. Features and deposits were excavated and recorded 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 1:50, 1:20 and 1:10, although trenches were in most instances planned and located using a survey grade GPS unit.



## 5 RESULTS

### Trench 1

Natural substrate was reached at a depth of 73.26m aOD in the north of the trench and 73.47m aOD in the south. The earliest archaeological feature encountered was a rough brick and stone wall foundation bonded with a white lime mortar (context 103) located broadly centrally within the trench. The wall terminates approximately 1.25m from the eastern edge of the trench at which point it is butted by a white lime mortar deposit (context 105). Finds within the fill of the construction cut for this wall (construction cut context 104, fill context 107) indicate a date of 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is likely that the wall represents a boundary garden wall which can be seen running from the northern wall of No. 47 Edward Street on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map, with the break in the wall, and associated lime mortar spread, marking the position of an opening. Two garden soil deposits (contexts 102 and 101) were recorded overlying Wall [103], the uppermost of which (context 101) was overlain by the current top soil and turn ground level deposit.

### Trench 2

In trench 2 natural substrate was seen at between 73.77m aOD and 74.01m aOD. Overlying this was a thin layer of buried soil (context 206). This deposit was cut by a construction cut (context 202) for a brick wall bonded with a white lime mortar running on a north east by south west alignment in the edge of the trench. Although not depicted on 19<sup>th</sup> century maps the similarity between this wall and wall [103], in trench 1, suggests that it was a garden wall of broadly contemporary date.

Post-dating this wall were two pits of unknown function (contexts 204 and 208). The fill of pit [204] (context 205) contained a sherd of pottery dated to the 18 – 19<sup>th</sup> century. Both pits were overlain by a subsoil (context 201) which was in-turn overlain by the ground surface of topsoil and turf (context 200).



**Table 1: Table of contexts**

*Trench 1*

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions
100	Deposit	Topsoil & turf	Up to 0.18m thick
101	Deposit	Friable dark-brown silt subsoil. Probably garden soil	Up to 0.27m thick
102	Deposit	Friable dark-grey/brown silt with occasional brick fragments	Up to 0.18m thick
103	Structure	White lime mortared E – W orientated red brick wall	Full extent not exposed
104	Cut	Construction cut for Wall [103]. Filled by [103] & (107)	Not excavated
105	Deposit	White lime mortar filling gap in Wall [103]	Max 0.1m thick
106	Natural	Yellow-grey lias brash.	N/A
107	Fill	Light rubble laden grey-brown silt filling [104] around [103]	Not excavated

*Trench 2*

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions
200	Deposit	Topsoil & turf	Up to 0.18m thick
201	Deposit	Friable dark-brown silt subsoil. Probably garden soil	Up to 0.36m thick
202	Cut	Construction cut for Wall [203]	Full extent not exposed
203	Structure	White lime mortared NE-SW orientated red brick wall, revealed only in section	Full extent not exposed
204	Cut	Steep sided flat based pit/trench.	0.7m+ deep (not fully ex)
205	Fill	Mid greyish brown silty clay. Fill of [204]	0.7m+ thick (not fully ex)
206	Deposit	Mid greyish brown silty clay. Buried medieval soil.	0.2m thick
207	Natural	Yellow-grey lias brash.	N/A
208	Cut	Cut of post med pit.	0.50m deep, 1.63m+ diameter
209	Fill	Dark greyish brown silty clay. Fill of 205.	0.50m deep, 1.63m+ diameter

## 6 FINDS

Table 2

Context	Find type	Count	Description
107	Pottery	5	base sherds (some conjoining) of large Somerset redware bowl/pancheon, internally glazed, 18th/19th century.
205	Pottery	1	base sherd, with foot-ring, of salt-glazed stoneware, possible tankard, 18th/19th century

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

The majority of the features and deposits appeared to be related to 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century gardens to the rear of No. 47 Edward Street, in the form of garden walls, pits and garden soils. Remains of archaeology pre-dating this was limited to a thin, and heavily truncated, band of buried soil encountered in trench 2 (context 206). Given the relatively poor preservation of this buried soil it is unlikely that further deposits or features predating the 18<sup>th</sup> century will be well preserved elsewhere on the site.

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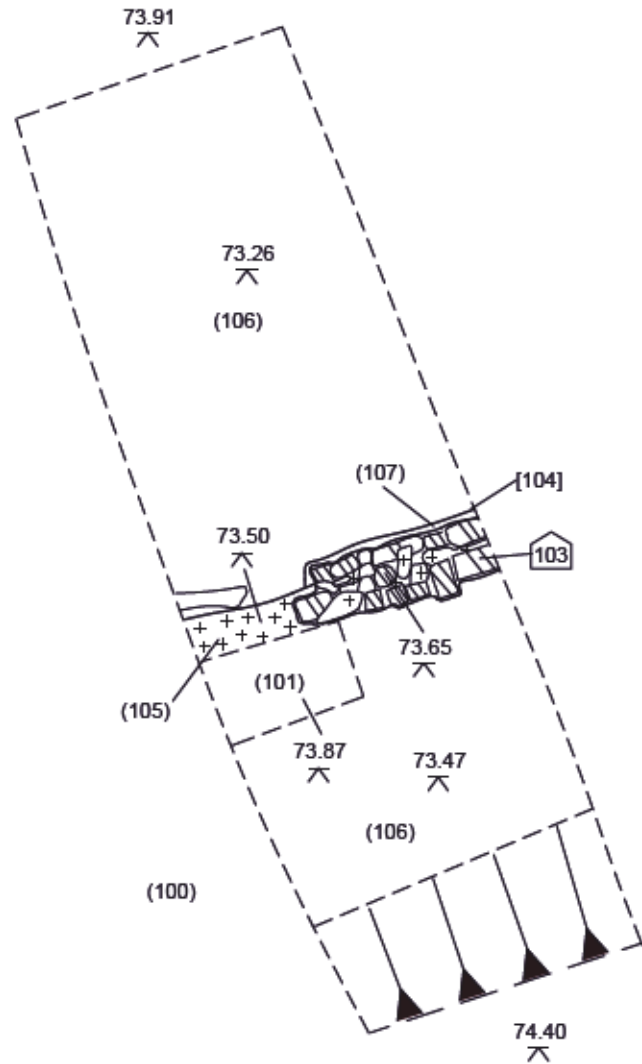
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### Plan of Trench 1



### Plan of Trench 2

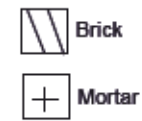
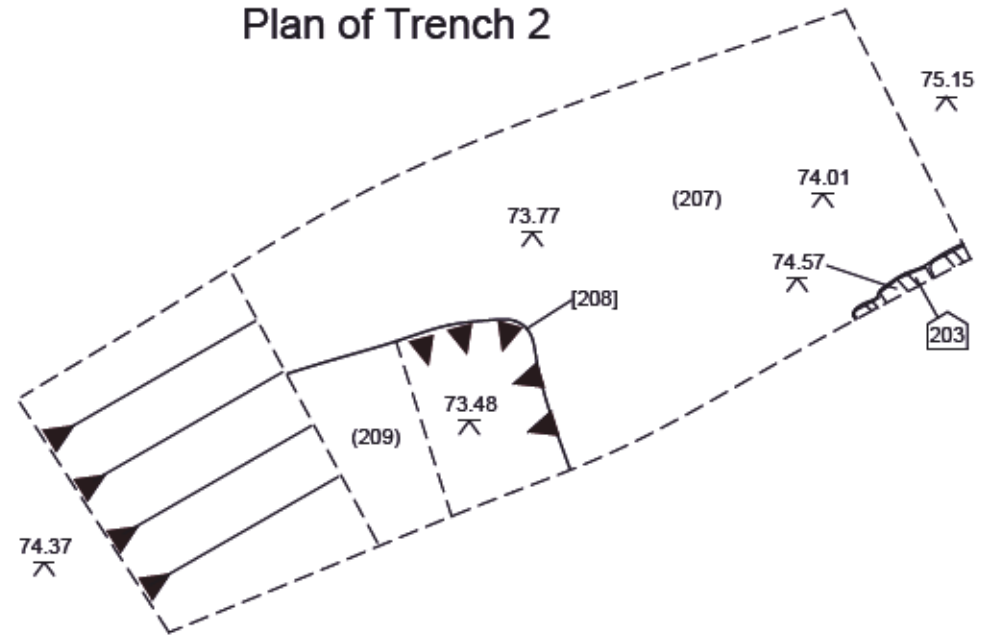
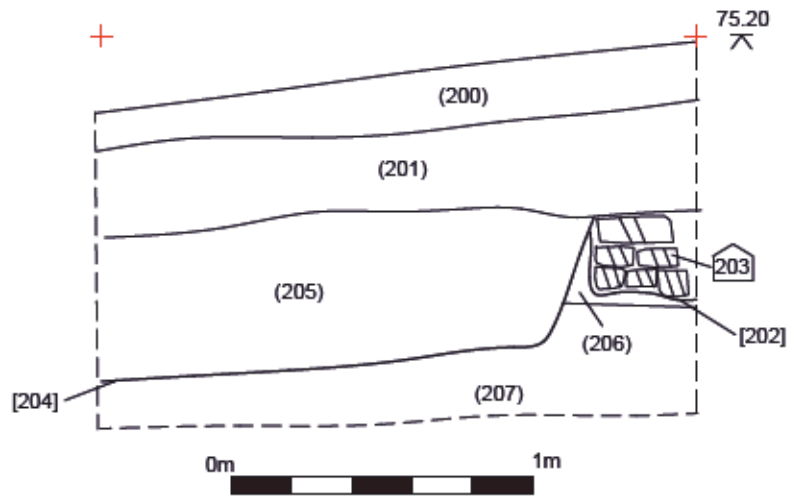


Figure 3

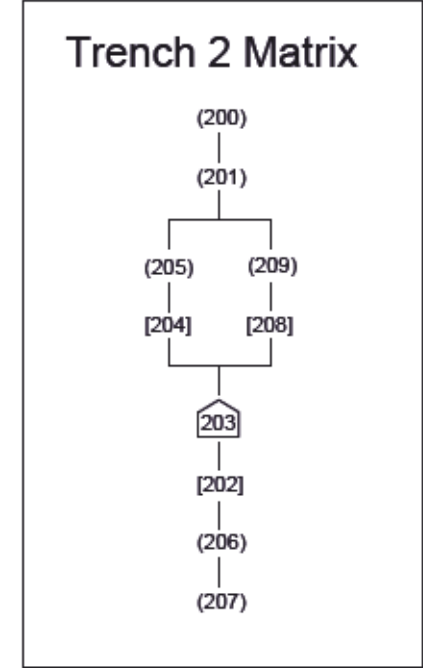
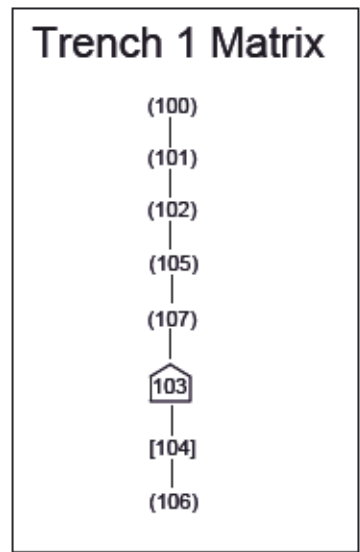
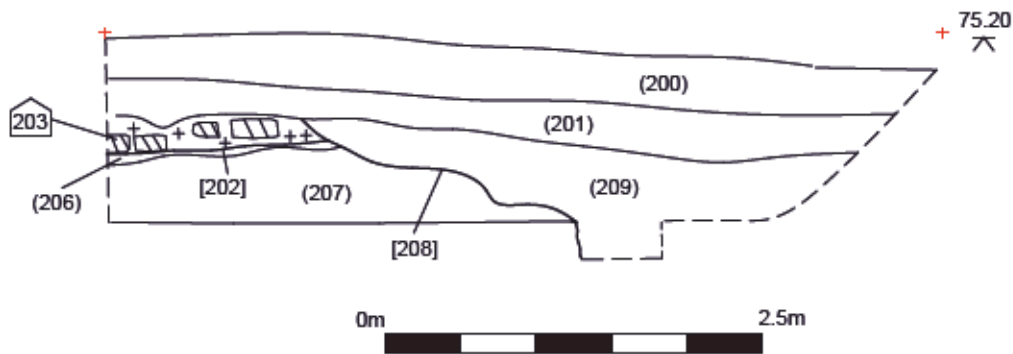


Figure 4

Section 1 (South West Facing)



Section 2 (North West Facing)





**Plate 1:** General view of site during trench excavation. Looking north west.



**Plate 2:** Looking south east along trench 1. Showing wall 103. 1 x 1m scale.



**Plate 3:** Looking north east along wall 103 in trench 1. 1 x 1m scale.



**Plate 4:** North west facing elevation of wall 103, trench 1. Break in wall and lime mortar spread (105) can be seen on the right. 1 x 1m scale.



**Plate 5:** Looking south west along trench 2. 1 x 1m scale.



**Plate 6:** Plan view of pit [208], trench 2. 1 x 1m scale, north west to top of plate.



**Plate 7:** South west facing section of trench 2. Showing pit [204] to the left and wall 203 to the right. Buried soil 206 can be seen below wall 203 (see section 1). 1 x 1m scale.



**Plate 8:** North west facing section in trench 2. Showing pit [208]. See section 2. 1 x 1m scale.