

**NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

Report No.850

**An Archaeological Evaluation at  
Hill Farm, The Street,  
Croxton**

39585 CRX

Chris Birks  
September 2003

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Local Authority No.076759

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Location: Hill Farm, The Street, Croxton  
Grid Ref: TL 87281 86722  
HER No.: 39585 CRX  
Date of Fieldwork: 28th July to 1st August 2003

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation was carried out at Hill Farm, The Street, Croxton in advance of residential development of the site. No archaeological features were recorded, although a small quantity of multi-period finds were recovered from the subsoil.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

(Fig. 1)

The site was in an area of proposed residential development at Hill Farm, The Street, Croxton near Thetford and comprised an area measuring approximately 0.43 hectares.

The works were commissioned and funded by Bennett Homes.

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: 04/09/02/DG) and a Method Statement prepared by Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU Ref: MS/Eval/1609).

The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is held by the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

## **2.0 Geology and Topography**

The site lies within Central Breckland at the south-west extent of the Upper Chalk solid geology and east of the Lower and Middle Chalk. The main difference between the two chalk deposits is that the latter is often harder and does not contain the characteristic flint nodules found in the Upper Chalk (Funnell 1994). It displays coversands typical of Breckland, and this particular site has a surprisingly deep subsoil, mostly colluvial in origin.

The site varies considerably in height from c.38m OD at the western boundary to c.33m OD at the eastern boundary. It does not slope gradually between these heights across the site, but is somewhat stepped in places due to the levelling of parts of the site for the construction of agricultural buildings.

The land is well drained and whilst bordered by extensive arable land to the north, west and east sides, it has remained unused and is very dense with grasses, thistles, nettles and wild plants.

### **3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

The site is situated within an area containing a number of known archaeological remains, as recorded in the Norfolk Historic and Environment Records (HER). Saxon finds were recovered to the north of the site (30031), and Neolithic worked flint, Roman coins and medieval pottery to the south-west (31251). A sub-rectangular enclosure was also identified within this HER as a positive cropmark on the Ordnance Survey air photograph for this location.

An old loam pit known as Hadler's Hole (5736) lies to the east, from which Neolithic flint artefacts were recovered as early as 1860. A watching brief was carried out by the NAU immediately east of Hadler's Hole during the construction of a farm reservoir in 2000 (35198) and recorded a number of pits that produced worked flints and pottery dated to the Neolithic period and the Early Bronze Age. Worked flints and burnt flint (pot-boilers) of the same periods were recovered during fieldwalking of this same area (30420 and 30421) in addition to pottery dating to the Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods.

A round-towered church of probable late 12th century date lies within the village to the south-east of the site (5743). There are documentary accounts of a cross base, Norman font and possible chapel that may pre-date the existing church.

### **4.0 Methodology**

(Fig. 2)

The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence or absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The Brief required that four trenches be excavated, and upon request by Mr Ward of Bennett Homes and approval by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA) these were located away from the footprint areas of the four proposed houses. A meeting was held on-site with Mr Ward on Monday 28th July to identify the site boundaries, and hence approximate location for trenches. Due to the limited distribution of trenches across the site, and in agreement with NLA following a monitoring visit on Thursday 31st July, a small additional trench (Trench 5) was positioned close to the track, away from the footprints of proposed houses. The trench was excavated prior to, and recorded during, backfilling of the four main trenches.

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds, other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU *pro forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

Two temporary benchmarks associated with a contour survey of the site, STN3 and STN4, were used to transfer levels.

Due to the lack of suitable deposits, no environmental samples were taken.

The site was very overgrown with grasses, nettles and thistles. Access was good and the weather was mostly dry, with some showers.

## **5.0 Results**

Trench 1 was located close to the east of the site, Trenches 2, 3 and 4 were located at the western boundary and Trench 5 centrally on the southern edge of the site. Due to the depth of subsoil deposits in Trenches 2, 3 and 4, the trench edges were stepped for safety reasons and involved manual excavation of exploratory 1m wide slots through the deepest areas to establish whether any features cut the underlying undisturbed 'natural' deposits. Full descriptions of contexts are listed in Appendix 1.

### ***Trench 1***

(Figs 2, 3 & 4)

Trench 1 was orientated north-east to south-west and measured c.10m by 1.8m. It was excavated to a maximum depth of c.1.2m (to c.32.81m OD) removing (from top to bottom) c.0.3m of mid to dark brown slightly humic silty sand topsoil ([10]), c.0.5m of mid to dark brown grey silty sand ([11]) and c.0.4m of light to mid brown orange silty sand ([12]). These overlay a patchy mid brown and bright orange fine sand undisturbed 'natural' deposit ([13]). No finds were recovered other than obviously modern metal finds (note the chicken wire illustrated in Section 4), mostly found with the use of a metal detector. No archaeological features were present.

### ***Trench 2***

(Figs 2, 5 & 6)

Trench 2 was approximately orientated north-to-south and measured c.15m by 1.8m. It was excavated to a maximum depth of c.1.37m (to c.37.17m OD) removing (from top to bottom) c.0.54m of mid to dark brown slightly humic silty sand topsoil ([1]), c.0.43m of mid brown grey silty sand ([8]) and c.0.4m of mid brown orange silty sand ([7]). These overlay a patchy mid brown and bright orange fine sand undisturbed 'natural' deposit ([6]). A modern brick soakaway and drains were identified (Fig. 5). No finds were recovered other than obviously modern metal finds through metal detecting. No archaeological features were present.

### ***Trench 3***

(Figs 2, 5 & 6)

Trench 3 was approximately orientated north-to-south and measured c.14m by 1.8m. It was excavated to a maximum depth of c.1.75m (to c.36.72m OD) removing c.0.29m of mid to dark brown slightly humic silty sand topsoil ([1]), c.0.23m of chalk, flint, stone, mortar and brick rubble layer ([9]). These overlay c.0.55m of mid to dark brown grey silty sand ([8]) and c. 0.68m of mid brown orange silty sand ([7]) and a patchy mid brown and bright orange fine sand undisturbed 'natural' deposit ([6]). A small quantity of finds were recovered from subsoil [7]. No further finds were recovered other than obviously modern metal finds within the topsoil through metal detecting. No archaeological features were present.

## **Trench 4**

(Figs 2, 5 & 6)

Trench 4 was orientated approximately north-to-south and measured c.6m by 1.8m. It was excavated to a maximum depth of c.1.4m (to c.37.30m OD) removing c.0.28m of mid to dark brown slightly humic silty sand topsoil ([1]), c.0.05m mid orange brown silty fine sand ([2]), c.0.3m of mid brown grey silty sand ([3]), c.0.5m of light grey silty fine sand ([4]), c.0.25m of mid orangey brown silty sand ([5]). These overlay a patchy mid brown and bright orange fine sand undisturbed 'natural' deposit [6]. Finds were recovered unstratified from subsoil deposits [4] and [5] and included worked flints and pottery. No archaeological features were present, either in the subsoil or the underlying undisturbed 'natural' deposits and the source of these finds is unknown. A disused (non-mains) gas pipe was exposed at the northern end of this trench, that had been used to supply the agricultural building to the north, from a tank to the south.

## **Trench 5**

(Figs 2, 7 & 8)

Trench 5 was orientated approximately south-west to north-east and measured c.6m by 1.8m. It was excavated to a maximum depth of c.0.5m (to c.37.22m OD) removing c.0.2m of dark brown silty sand topsoil ([14]) and c.0.2m of mid grey silty very fine sand ([15]) that overlay a mixed yellow and very light brown quite fine sand with few inclusions ([16]). No archaeological features or finds were present.

## **6.0 The Finds**

A small quantity of finds were recovered unstratified from subsoil within Trenches 3 and 4 and comprised pottery and worked flints.

No further finds were recovered other than those of obviously modern date that comprised nails, an electricity earthing rod and tin cans found through metal detecting.

### **6.1 Pottery**

#### **Introduction**

A total of seven fragments of pottery weighing 0.86kg was recovered from the evaluation. The material ranged from the Late Saxon through to the post-medieval period in date.

#### **Methodology**

The ceramics were quantified by recording the number of sherds present in each context, the estimated number of vessels represented and the weight of each fabric. Other characteristics such as condition and decoration were noted, and an overall date range for the pottery in each context was established. The pottery was recorded on *pro forma* sheets by context using letter codes based on fabric and form.

The fabric codes used are based mainly on those identified in *Eighteen centuries of pottery from Norwich* (Jennings, 1981) and supplemented by additional ones compiled by the Suffolk Archaeological Unit (S Anderson, unpublished fabric list).



### ***The pottery by period***

All the pottery was recovered from three subsoil deposits [4], [5] and [7].

#### ***Late Saxon***

Two pottery sherds of Late Saxon date were identified from contexts [5] and [7], with pottery of a later date. A single fragment from the base of a Thetford-type ware vessel was present in [5], dating to between the 10th and 11th centuries. The rim of a calcite-gritted cooking vessel or jar was found in [7], which is also of a similar date. The vessel is made of a moderately soft fabric which has an oxidised inner surface. The fabric itself contains abundant plates of shell of varying sizes, and other sparse inclusions, some of which may be burnt material, possibly from carbonised wood. Although not dissimilar to St Neots-type ware, the fabric is not the same, as it does not have any of the fossil shell inclusions such as bryozoa (McCarthy 1979, 156). The fragment was also compared to reference sherds of two Lincolnshire fabrics, Lincolnshire Saxo-Norman Shelly (10th to 11th century), and Lincoln Fine Shelled ware (11th to early 13th century), but there were not enough similarities in these two fabrics for a match to be proposed. The fragment has been provisionally classified as a Saxo-Norman ware; further work would be required to establish its identity.

#### ***Medieval***

Four fragments of medieval date were present in contexts [5] and [7]. A single rim sherd from a Local medieval unglazed ware cooking vessel or jar was present in [5], dating to between the 11th to 13th century. Three undiagnostic body sherds of medieval coarsewares were found in [7] which have a general date range of between the 11th to 14th century.

#### ***Post-medieval***

A single rim fragment from a very abraded glazed jar or chamberpot was found in [4]. Although the vessel has been catalogued as a Glazed red earthenware dating between the 16th to 18th centuries, it has an iron-flecked glaze which may indicate that it dates to the later part of this range, that is to the late 17th or 18th century (Jennings, 1981, 155).

## **6.2 *Flint***

### **Introduction**

A total of 26 struck flints were recovered from the site (Table 1). A single piece of burnt flint, weighing 0.023kg, and two non-struck fragments of flint have been discarded.

### **Methodology**

Each piece of flint was examined and recorded by context on *pro forma* recording sheets. The technological class of degree of cortication and completeness of flakes were noted. Any retouched or utilised flakes were noted and summary comments were made. Burnt flint was recorded and discarded. Recording sheets will be held in the site archive.

## Results

The assemblage consists mainly of unmodified flakes. Many of the flakes are small irregular pieces and many of them are clearly struck by hard hammer. These criteria suggest a later prehistoric date for the material. Four pieces are blade-like in shape but there are no true blades and no evidence for the careful preparation of cores which might suggest an earlier prehistoric date. Three flakes ([7]) have very slight wear of their edges which is probably due to their utilisation. One very small subcircular flake ([7]) has been carefully retouched around all but its proximal edge to form a 'thumbnail' type scraper. Such pieces are usually considered to be of later Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date and are often associated with Beaker pottery. The rest of the flint cannot be closely dated.

All of the flint was recovered from subsoil contexts and this is reflected by the slightly edge damaged nature of much of it.

Type	Number
Blade-like flake	4
Flake	17
Scraper	1
Struck fragment	1
Utilised flake	3
Total	26
Burnt fragment	1

Table 1: Summary of flint

### 6.3 Stone

A single fragment of burnt, non-local stone weighing 0.487kg was recovered ([7]).

### 6.4 Animal Bone

A single piece of animal bone weighing 0.082kg was recovered ([7]). It is part of a butchered cattle scapula, no further analysis is recommended.

## 7.0 Conclusions

No archaeological features were identified, and only small quantities of archaeological finds were recovered from subsoil in Trenches 3 and 4.

The earliest activities in the vicinity of the site were attested by the recovery of worked flint of a probable later Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date and may relate to Neolithic activities identified to the south-west and east of the site.

Saxon activities had been identified to the north of the site and the village church has elements within it potentially of this date. The recovery of 10th to 11th century pottery during this evaluation adds to this evidence. As the land to the north of the site lies at a lower elevation it is possible the source of these finds is closer to this site and that truncation of any subsoil features through plough action in addition to the effects of hillwash have moved material down-slope.

Medieval and post-medieval occupation were again inferred through the recovery of domestic pottery finds dating to these periods.

The topsoil, subsoil and undisturbed 'natural' deposits were similar within all trenches. Trenches 2 to 4 included evidence relating to the construction, use and disuse of modern agricultural buildings, and the presence of these were confirmed by the previous landowner. Deposits within Trench 5 were of a much reduced depth in comparison to those in Trenches 2 to 4 and may be due to some of this material being used to level the land to the west, again for location of an agricultural building. The topsoil and subsoil in Trench 1 were very disturbed, evidenced by the presence of chicken wire fencing quite low within the subsoil, most likely in association with the location of a building close to the street. Local knowledge stated that a building had once stood in this area.

Recommendations for future work based upon this report will be made by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

### ***Acknowledgements***

Fieldwork was undertaken by Chris Birks and Cath Ranson, and monitored by David Gurney of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology. Finds were processed and catalogued by Lucy Talbot and reported upon by Richenda Goffin (pottery), Sarah Bates (flint) and Julie Curl (animal bone). Report writing and digitising of site drawings was undertaken by the author. The report was illustrated and produced by Maggie Footit and edited by Alice Lyons. Many thanks to Jan Allen and staff at the Norfolk Environment and Historic Records office at Gressenhall.

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### **Appendix 1: Context Summary**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Trench</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Period</b>
1	2, 3, 4	Deposit	Topsoil	Modern
2	4	Deposit	Layer	Modern
3	4	Deposit	Subsoil	Modern
4	4	Deposit	Subsoil	Modern
5	4	Deposit	Subsoil	Modern
6	4	Deposit	Subsoil	Modern
7	2, 3	Deposit	Subsoil	Modern
8	3	Deposit	Subsoil	Modern
9	3	Deposit	Rubble layer	Modern
10	1	Deposit	Topsoil	Modern
11	1	Deposit	Subsoil	Modern
12	1	Deposit	Subsoil	Modern
13	1	Deposit	'Natural'	
14	5	Deposit	Topsoil	Modern
15	5	Deposit	Subsoil	Modern
16	5	Deposit	'Natural'	

### **Appendix 2: Finds Summary**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Weight (kg)</b>
4	Post medieval pottery	1	0.022
4	Flint	1	-
5	Medieval pottery (Late Saxon to medieval)	2	0.032
5	Flint	6	0.023
7	Medieval pottery (Late Saxon to medieval)	4	0.032
7	Flint	22	-
7	Stone	1	0.487
7	Animal Bone	1	0.082

### **Appendix 3: Pottery**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Fabric</b>	<b>Form</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Weight (kg)</b>	<b>Date</b>
4	Glazed red earthen ware	?Chamber pot	1	0.021	16th to 18th century
5	Thetford type ware	Base	1	0.017	10th to 11th century
5	Local medieval unglazed ware	Cooking pot	1	0.015	11th to 14th century
7	Saxo-Norman ware	Cooking pot	1	0.017	850 to 1150
7	Medieval coarseware	Body sherd	3	0.016	11th to 14th century

### **Appendix 4: Flint**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Number</b>
4	Flake	1
5	Burnt fragment	1
5	Blade-like flake	3
5	Flake	2
7	Blade-like flake	1
7	Flake	14
7	Subcircular scraper	1
7	Struck fragment	1
7	Utilised flake	3

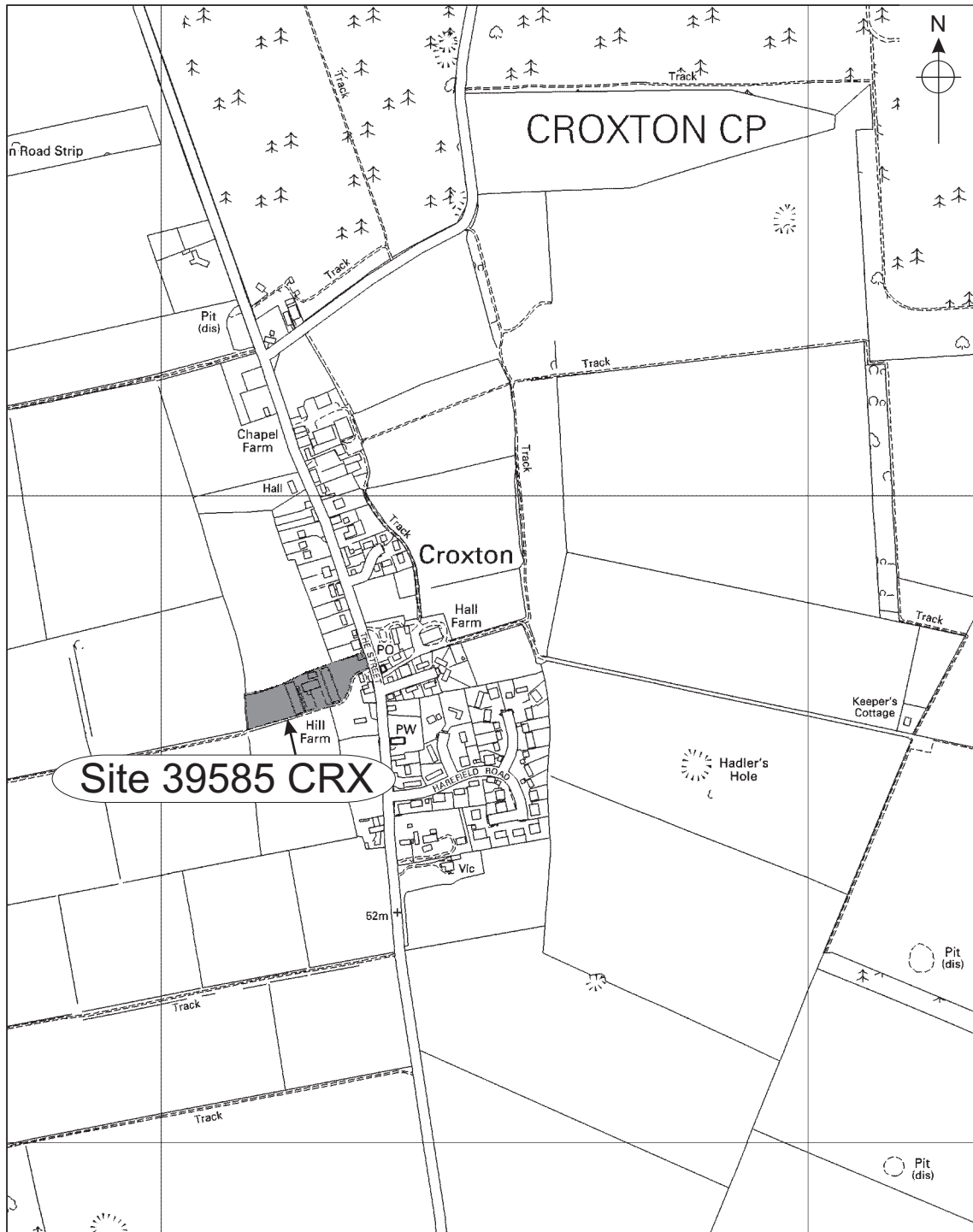


Figure 1. Site Location. Scale 1:10,000



Figure 2. Plan showing trench location. Scale 1:500



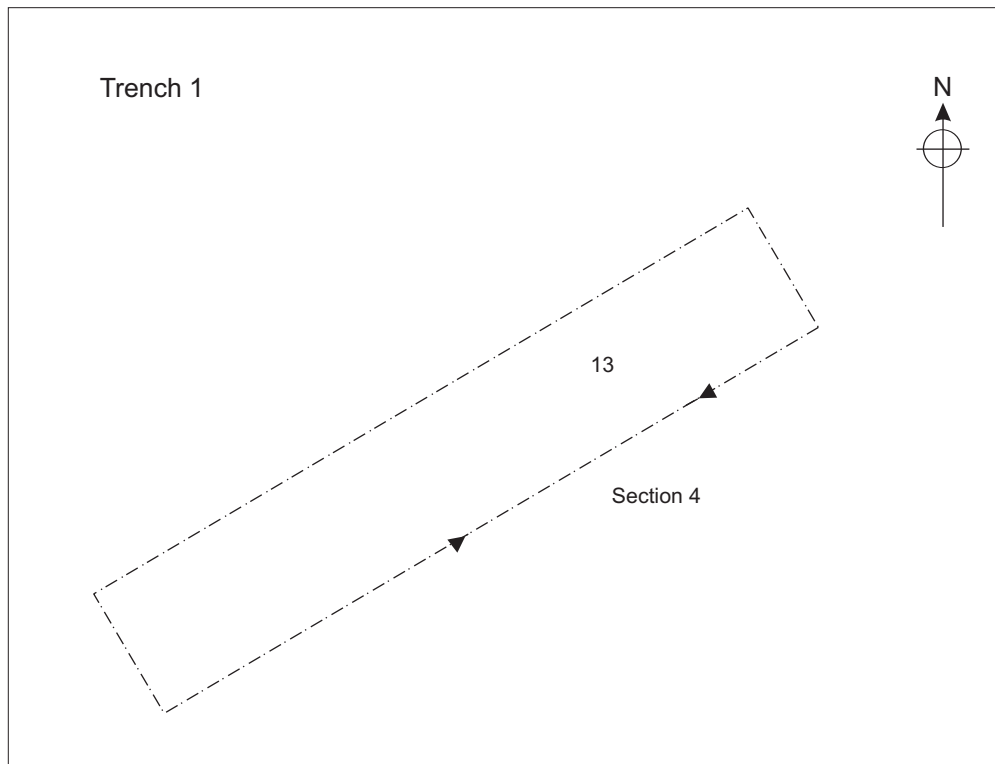
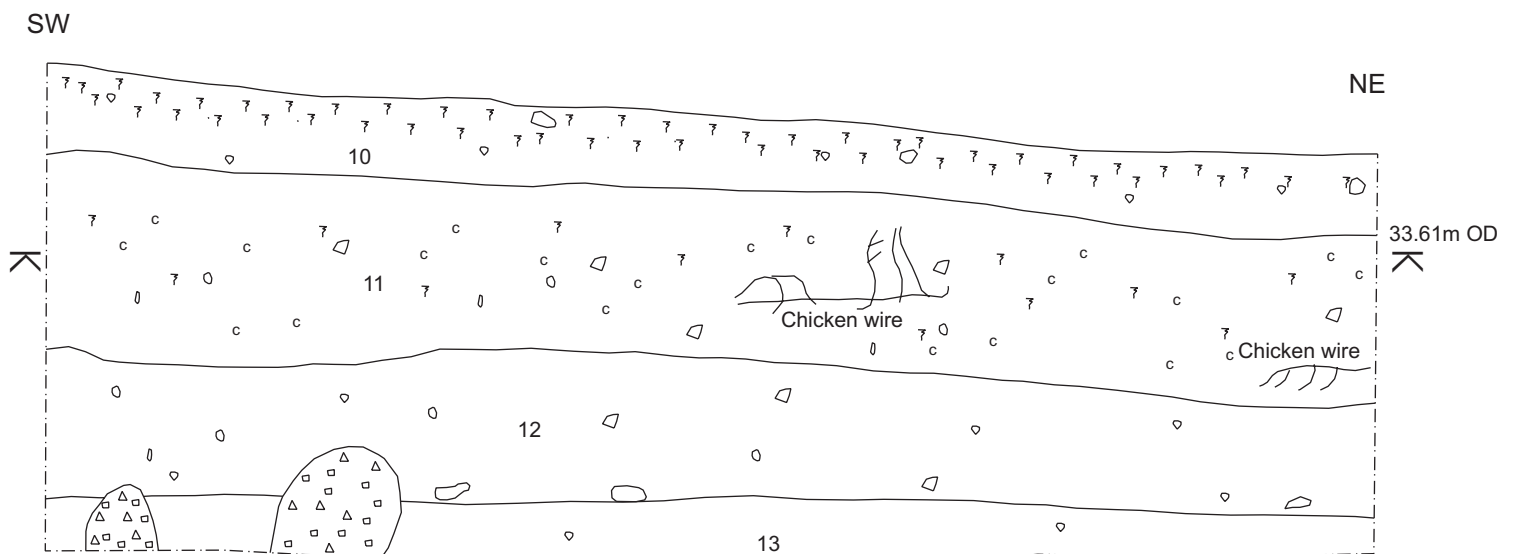


Figure 3. Trench 1, plan. Scale 1:100



Key  
 □ Chalk

Figure 4. Trench 1, north-west facing section No. 4. Scale 1:20

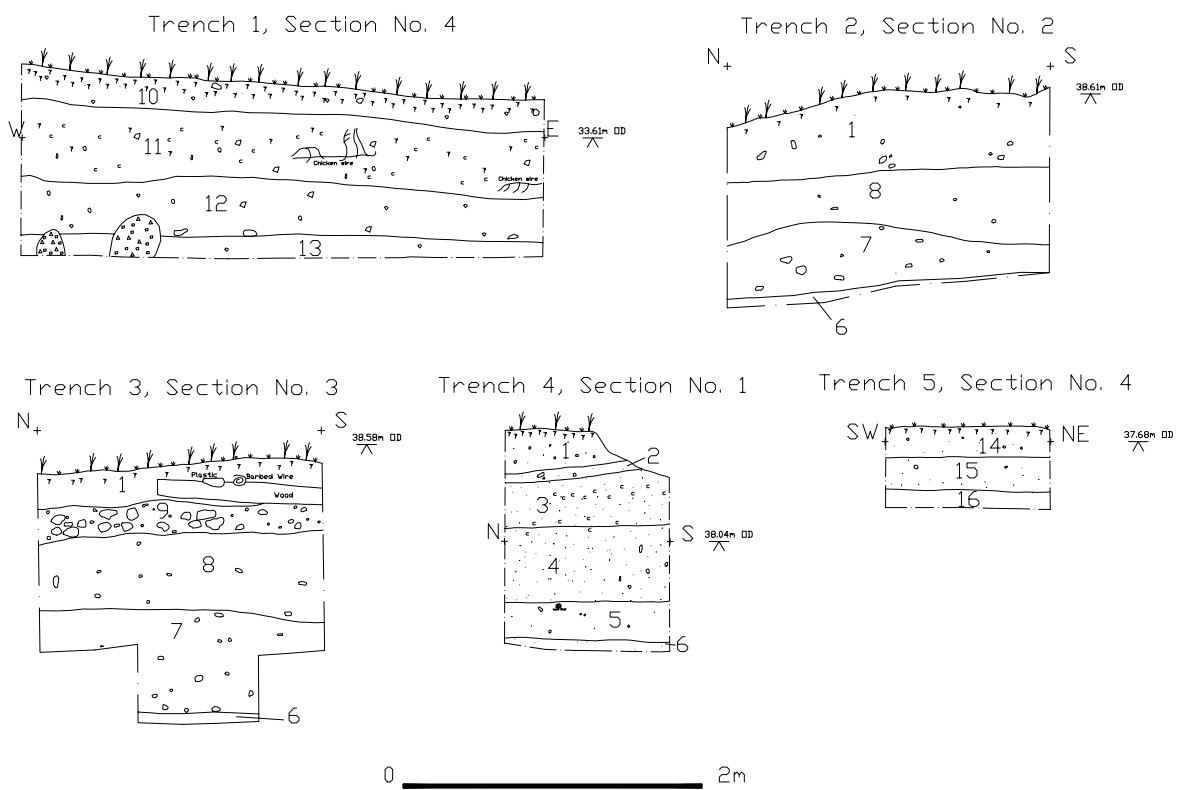


Fig. 4: Sample Section Drawings. Scale 1:20



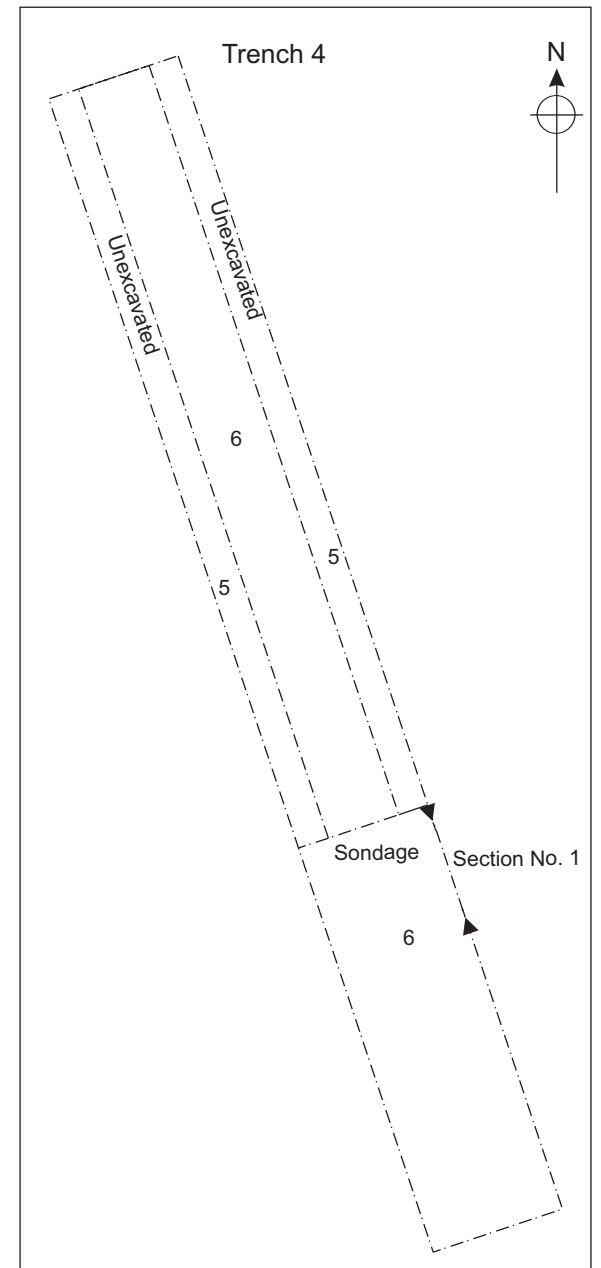
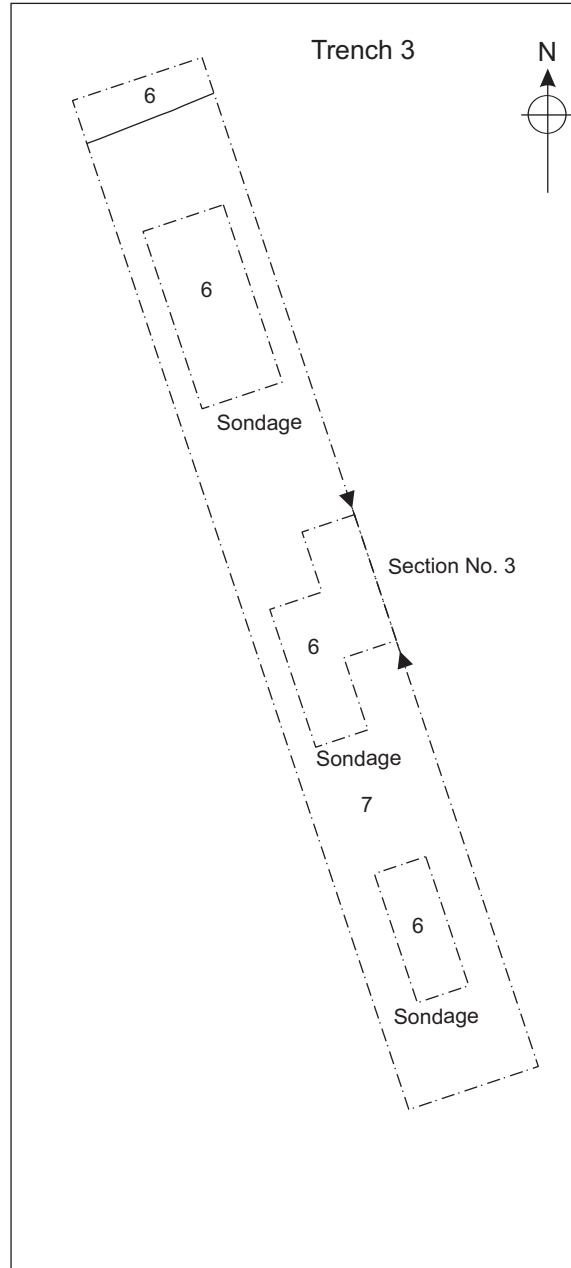
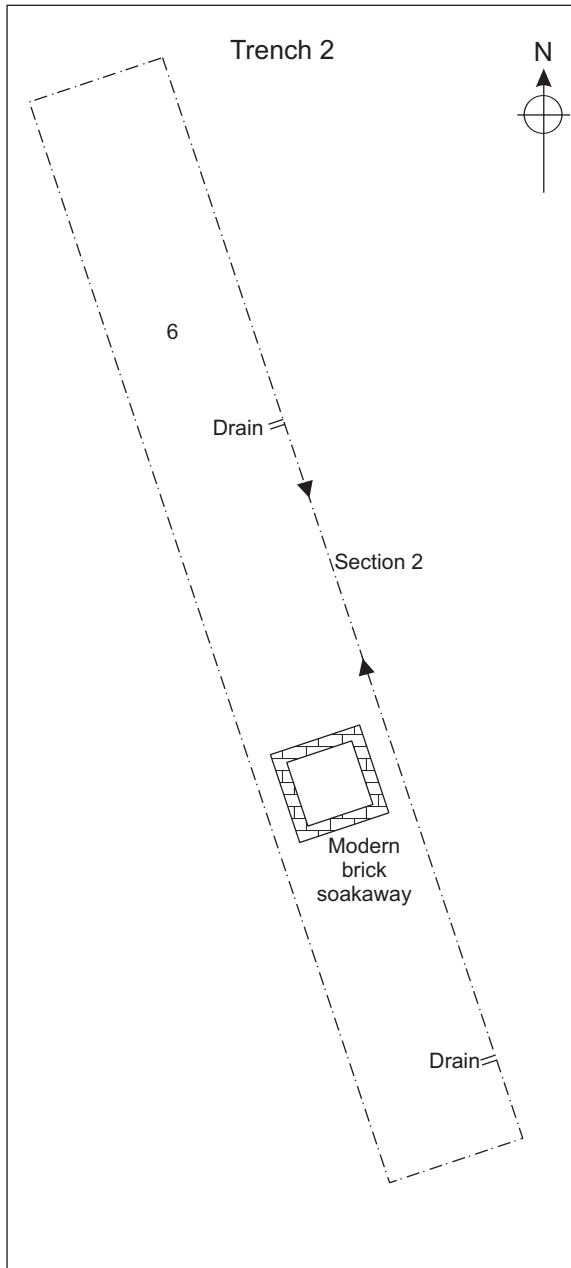
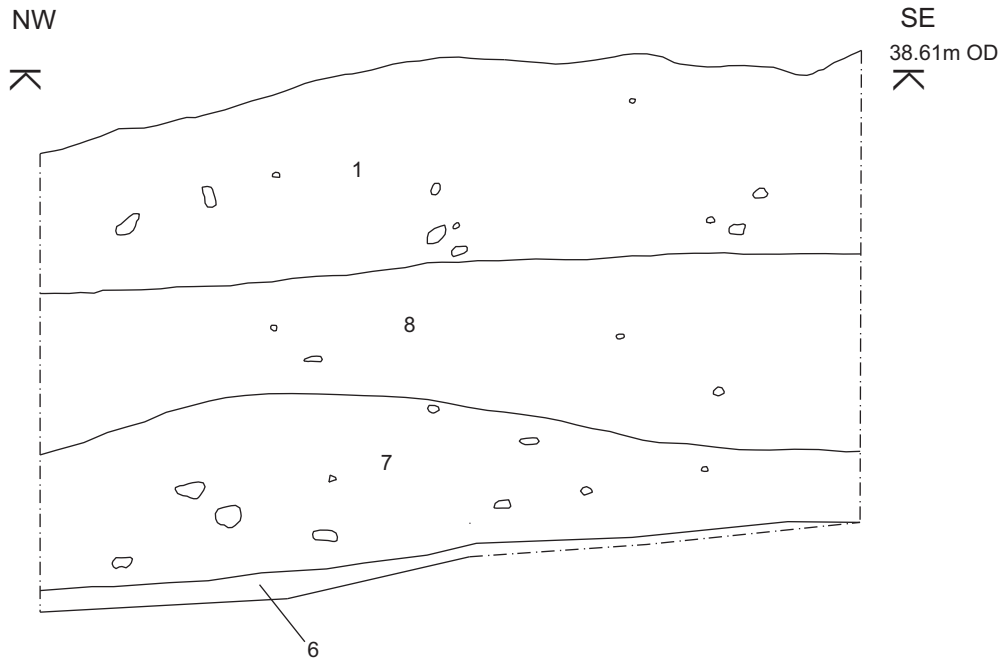
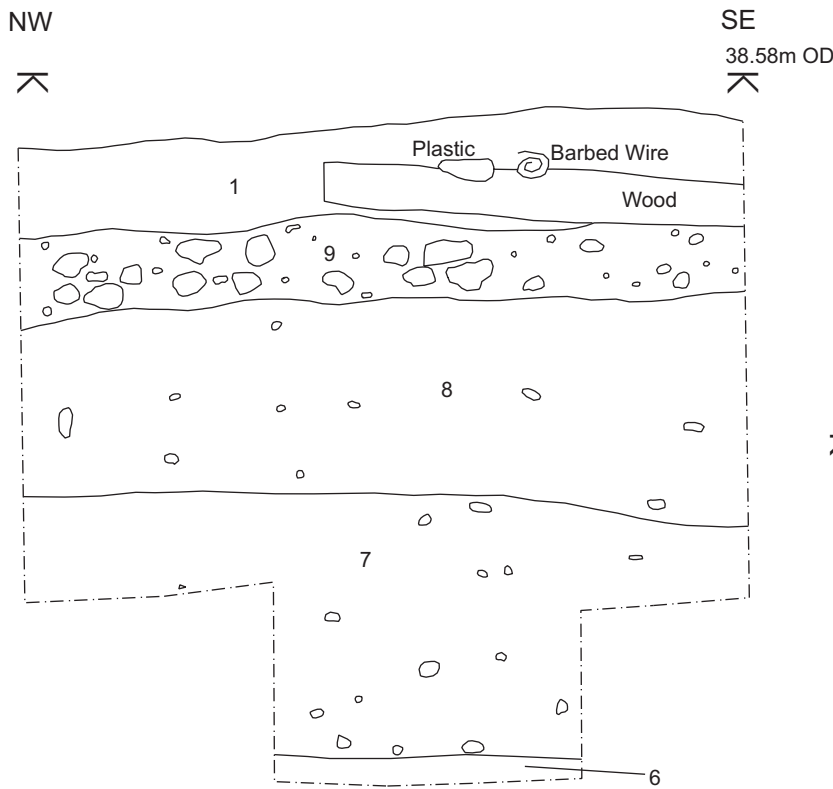


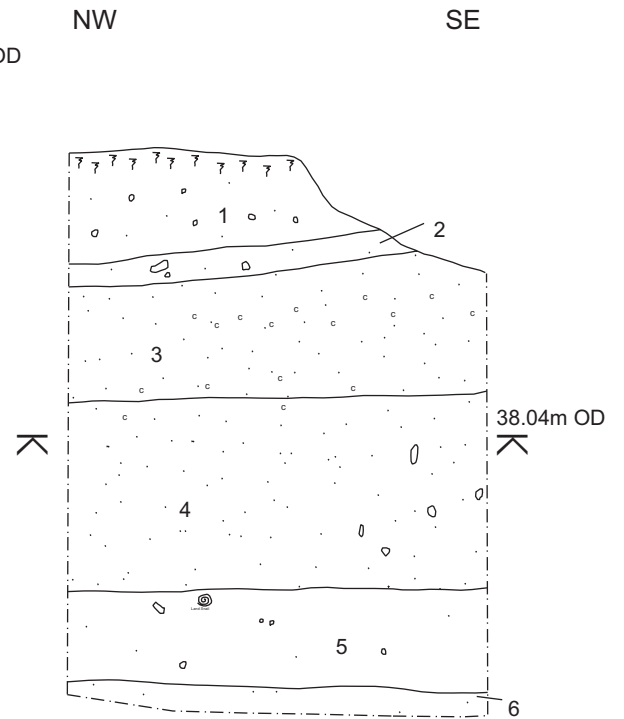
Figure 5. Trenches 2, 3 and 4, in plan. Scale 1:100



Trench 2, south-west facing section No.2



Trench 3, south-west facing section No. 3



Trench 4, south-west facing section No. 1



Figure 6. Trenches 2, 3 and 4, sections. Scale 1:20

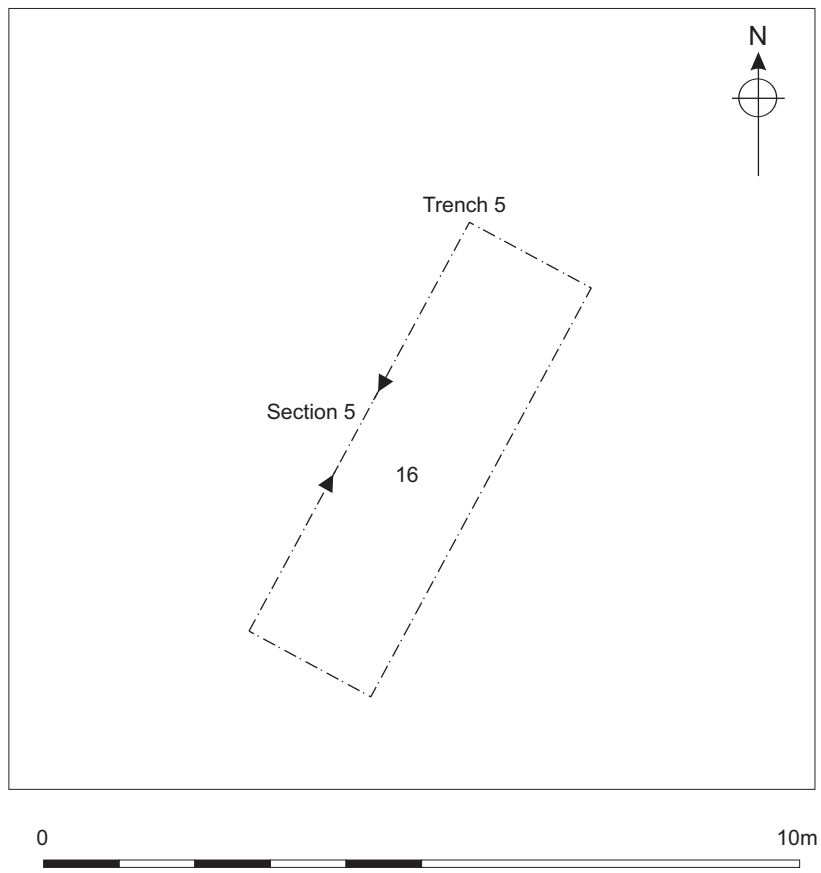


Figure 7. Trench 5, plan. Scale 1:100

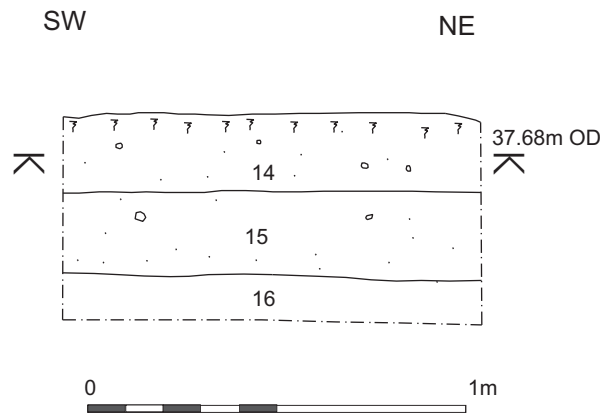


Figure 8. Trench 5, south-east facing section No. 5. Scale 1:20

