

**NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

Report No. 864

**An Archaeological Evaluation at  
Manor Farm, South Walsham**

39600 WLS

Kenneth Penn

October 2003

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Local Authority No.076759

Fig.1 is based upon the Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 map with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office © Crown Copyright 'Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings' Norfolk County Council, County Hall, Norwich (17/10/2003). **Reference copy: no further copies to be made.**



Location: Manor Farm, School Lane, Pilson Green, South Walsham  
(Broadland DC)  
Grid Ref: TG 3730 1335  
HER No.: 39600 WLS  
Date of Fieldwork: 18th to 19th August 2003

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation was carried out south of School Lane, Pilson Green, South Walsham, in an area of undated cropmarks. Two evaluation trenches were excavated in which features anticipated from air photographs and features not visible from the air were found. Four ditches were recorded, two of which were certainly of medieval date. Two undated postholes and part of a large medieval feature thought to have been in use as a cesspit where also found. There were few finds to aid dating, but a medieval date for some of the cropmarks seems likely. There was no evidence to indicate any particular focus of domestic activity, but the presence of a cesspit suggests occupation near by.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

(Figs 1 & 2)

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at School Lane, Pilson Green, South Walsham prior to a residential development by Peter Crook Esq. Two trenches were placed within the proposed development site in order to intercept linear crop-marks visible in aerial photographs.

The evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Peter Crook Esq. in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: ARJH 2.10.02), supplemented by a Project Design prepared by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU Ref: 28.07.03 WAB).

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 - Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). 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 currently held by the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

## **2.0 Geology and Topography**

(Fig. 2)

The site overlies a drift geology of sand and gravel above sand and gravel deposits of the Norwich Crag. The area lies close to the main river valley at about 5m OD.

The site is a rectangular area, formerly occupied mostly by animal sheds erected in 1984, with a residential property immediately to the west. The field to the south and east is ploughed and under an arable crop.

The site lies at an elevation of approximately 5m OD, although the surface of the site is uneven since clearance of the sheds and the front of the site is currently occupied by a dump of concrete hardcore. On the east side of the site, a major sewer and a filled ditch of animal effluent were noted, on a general north-south alignment (this prevented excavation of cropmarks known to exist in that area of the site). The site originally occupied an area of c.3200m<sup>2</sup> now reduced by the sale of a strip of land from the west part of the site.

## **3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

(Fig. 1)

The site is designated as Historic Environment Record (HER) 9600 and is situated to the east of the village of South Walsham at Pilson Green. It lies within the south-western part of HER 11859 which consists of an extensive areas of cropmarks. While there is evidence to suggest that the area has been the focus of settlement for at least two thousand years there has been little excavation or systematic field survey within the immediate area.

Prehistoric activity is represented by a possible Bronze Age round barrow 500m to the north-east (HER 18444). A pottery rim sherd of Roman date was found to the north-west (HER 28603). Other finds include a Roman copper alloy coin recovered from the green at Pilson Green some distance to the north-east.

The major cropmark site (HER 11859) comprises a series of irregular and rectangular crop-mark enclosures and field boundaries immediately to the east and north-east of the development site. Along the south side of School Lane there is a series of crop-mark field boundaries which do not appear to be contemporary with the enclosures and are on a different alignment to the modern road and fields. A number of east-to-west and north-to-south linear features run across the development area, besides several features of uncertain character (one, context number [22], excavated here).

The date and nature of the crop-mark features are unclear, but metal-detecting within this general area has recovered finds which include a Roman period copper alloy seal box lid, an Early Saxon copper alloy brooch, a medieval copper alloy belt mount, a 14th-century brooch or buckle pin, a ring brooch, a strap end buckle, a harness pendant, and an early post-medieval book clasp or fitting. The concentration of finds however, is insufficient to positively indicate a settlement from any of these periods.

There is a crop-mark of a sub-rectangular enclosure in the field immediately to the east (HER 13096), also undated.

Excavation on a site to the north of School Lane in 1998 (Brennand 1998) recorded pits, postholes and ditches of probable early post-medieval date, and possibly agricultural in function.

Sixteenth-century records place a medieval hall to the south of School Road and immediately to the east of the present Manor Farm, but the Hall is not depicted on 17th-century maps and had presumably been demolished (information from P Warren: see records held in HER 11859). This site is thought to lie in the area of the rectangular enclosures, and elements of the crop-marks here may represent boundary features associated with the medieval hall.

## **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 two trenches each 4m x 4m were excavated, the exact configuration and location to be decided on site, and through examination of air photographs held in the Norfolk Air Photograph Library and plotting cropmarks.

As a result of on site conditions and reference to the aerial photographs Trench 1 measured 12m x 2m and Trench 2 measured 15m x 1.5 to 2.0m.

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

A level was transferred from an Ordnance Survey benchmark of 3.50m on the cottage to the east at Pilson Green and transferred to a TBM on the road edge of 4.55m OD.

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

The site was arable until 1984, when a set of animal sheds was erected, the remains of which are represented by a pile of concrete currently standing in the north part of the development site. The footprint of the proposed house occupies the centre of the site. A major sewer and a channel containing animal effluent run along the east part of the site, both aligned approximately north-to-south.

## **5.0 Results (Appendix 1)**

(Figs 2 to 7)

### **5.1 Aerial photographs**

(Fig.2)

The site lies within a complex of cropmarks known from air photographs and it was intended to place the two trenches so as to intercept some of these. Photographs were taken in the 1970s and 1990s (after the erection of the sheds), and these are held in the Norfolk Air Photograph Library at Gressenhall.

The relevant photographs are TG 3713 A-R and AC-AE. Plotting cropmarks from these enabled several features to be identified within the development site, mostly ditches but including features such as that excavated as [22], possibly a cesspit, of circular shape.

Two trenches were excavated. Trench 1 lay close to the south edge of the site, aligned east-to-west, and Trench 2 lay towards the west edge of the site, aligned north-to-south.

#### **Trench 1**

(Figs 2, 3 & 4)

Aerial photos show a major enclosure ditch running through this area with a pair of smaller north-south ditches to the immediate west, all terminating at about this point on the site.

In Trench 1 removal of the rubble surface and a deep brown sandy loam ([06]) revealed a natural subsoil of a sandy clayey nature with patches of stones. Three archaeological features were recorded, two ditches ([01] and [03]) and a posthole ([13]).

Ditch [03] was a large linear feature, nearly 2m wide and observed as a band of brown sandy loam. Excavation showed this to be a ditch, recorded as cutting the brown loam subsoil ([06]) to a depth of 0.5m, with a total depth of c.1m (Fig. 4). The fill of this ditch ([04]) was a red-brown sandy silt which contained animal bone and small fragments of brick or burnt daub.

Ditch [01] ran just to the west, and was also seen as a band of grey-brown silt. This was smaller, about 1.3m wide and some 0.60m deep, also apparently cutting the subsoil ([05]) (Fig.4). The fill ([02]) was a mid-brown sandy silt, there were no finds.

To the west was a shallow but distinct posthole ([13]), with a fill ([14]) of grey silty clay.

#### **Trench 2**

(Figs 2, 5, 6 & 7)

Aerial photos indicate a single large feature running east-to-west across the line of Trench 2, and a large circular feature just to the north.

Removal of a deep subsoil ([19]) revealed several features, varying in character and colour.



Posthole ([11]) lay at the south end of the trench. Its fill ([12]) was a distinctive grey silt (similar to ditches [7] and [9] to the immediate north). There were no finds.

Ditches [7] and [9] lay side by side and were alike in size and fills ([8] and [10]), that is a leached grey silt, mottled brown (Fig. 6). The fill ([8]) of ditch [7] produced part of a lava quernstone and much of a single vessel of early medieval date (11th to 14th century), and fragments of animal bone. Ditch [9] appeared to cut a small circular feature [15] of uncertain date.

A large irregular feature ([20]) lay towards the centre of the trench. The full extent of this feature could not be excavated as it ran under the western edge of the trench. Upon excavation this feature proved to be a shallow hollow with an irregular base and a distinctive fill of grey mottled silt ([21], Fig.6). This fill produced two sherds of late medieval glazed pottery and fragments of fired clay, probably daub.

Feature [22] lay to the immediate north of ([20]) and was another very large feature of which only part lay within the trench. Its upper fill ([24]) graded down from the red-brown loam subsoil ([19]) and was probably the result of slumping into [22]. Below this, the main fill ([23]) was a deposit of grey and brown mottled silts, which became very moist and 'sloppy' towards the bottom of the cutting (Fig.7). Upon excavating this cutting, water entered and prevented further excavation. Two further cuttings were made to the north, within the area of this feature, and the same soil profile recorded, demonstrating that feature [22] did continue beyond the trench. Fill [24] produced a single sherd of medieval pottery, the lower fill ([23]) merely some fragments of animal bone. This feature is interpreted as a cesspit, probably of medieval date.

## **6.0 The Finds (Appendix 2)**

### **6.1 The Pottery (Appendix 3)**

#### ***Introduction***

A total of twelve fragments, weighing 0.118kg was recovered. The pottery is all medieval 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 on those identified in *Eighteen centuries of pottery from Norwich* (Jennings 1981).

#### ***Discussion***

Nine fragments of Local medieval unglazed ware was identified from the site. Most of this pottery derived from a single vessel present in ditchfill [8]. Eight body sherds including several joining fragments are from a globular hand-made fine grey ware cooking vessel of a medieval date. No rim or other diagnostic features are present, but the hand-made globular shape of the cooking vessel does suggest a date between the 11th to 13th centuries, rather than later.

In addition a small sliver of a similar fabric was present in a possible cesspit fill [24]. Three fragments from a Grimston ware jug were present in fill [21] of the possible cesspit. The sherds are decorated with iron oxide vertical strips, indicative of a date of between the 13th to 14th centuries.

## **6.2 Fired Clay**

The site produced five small pieces of fired clay, weighing 0.053kg, from a single deposit ([21]). The material is orange and yellow poorly mixed clay with chalk inclusions.

## **6.3 Small Finds**

A single small find number was allocated to a group of over fifty fragments of grey, vesicular lava quern (SF1 [08]). The material is very brittle, and few original surfaces remain.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

The results, albeit with dating resting on a small number of finds, points to a medieval date for several of the excavated features, with some of the cropmarks being of more recent date. Ditches [01] and [03] are probably post-medieval in date. Ditch [03] is part of an enclosure that appears to be connected with School Lane and part of the more recent landscape. Other features however, are apparently unconnected with the present field and road alignments and may be earlier. This includes those with distinctive grey silty fills: ditches ([07] and [09]), neither evident on air photographs, and the two large features ([20] and [22]). It is possible that [22] was used as a cesspit as both its mottled character and distinctive smell suggest this.

Whether the medieval features reflect the presence of a manorial site or other occupation nearby remains unknown, although a large cesspit may suggest occupation of a significant size and character nearby.

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

## **Acknowledgements**

We are grateful to Peter Crook for commissioning this work and to David Murrell for assisting with the machining. The excavation was undertaken by Kenneth Penn and Steve Morgan. Aerial photographs were consulted at Norfolk Air Photograph Library, Gressenhall. Finds were identified by Richenda Goffin, Lucy Talbot and Julie Curl. The report was illustrated and produced by Maggie Foottit and edited by Alice Lyons.

## **Bibliography**

- |              |      |   |
|--------------|------|---|
| Brennand, M  | 1998 | <i>Report on an Archaeological Evaluation at Wymer's Lane, Pilson Green, South Walsham</i> (NAU Report 414) |
| Jennings, S, | 1981 | <i>Eighteen centuries of pottery from Norwich</i> , EAA Report No 13.                                       |

## Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Trench	Category	Description	Period
01	1	Cut	Cut for ditch.	?post-medieval
02	1	Deposit	Fill of [1] Red-brown sandy loam.	?post-medieval
03	1	Cut	Cut for ditch	?post-medieval
04	1	Deposit	Fill of [3]. Fine sandy silt, mid brown	?post-medieval
05	1	Deposit	Fine sandy silt subsoil	?medieval
06	1	Deposit	As [5]	?medieval
07	2	Cut	Cut for ditch	?medieval
08	2	Deposit	Fill of ditch [7]. Grey silt, mottled	?medieval
09	2	Cut	Cut for ditch	?medieval
10	2	Deposit	Fill of [9]. Grey-brown silt, mottled	?medieval
11	2	Cut	Cut for posthole	?medieval
12	2	Deposit	Fill of [12]. Grey silt, mottled	?medieval
13	1	Cut	Cut for posthole	?medieval
14	1	Deposit	Fill of [13]. Grey silty clay	?medieval
15	2	Cut	Cut for ?posthole	?medieval
16	2	Deposit	Fill of [15]. Red0brown sandy loam	?medieval
17	2	Deposit	As 10	?medieval
18	2	Deposit	Present topsoil	Modern
19	2	Deposit	Present subsoil. Red-brown sandy loam	?Post-medieval
20	2	Cut	Cut for 'hollow'	?medieval
21	2	Deposit	Fill of 20. Grey-brown silt, mottled	?medieval
22	2	Cut	Cut for ?cesspit	?medieval
23	2	Deposit	Lower fill of [22]. Grey silty clay, mottled	?medieval
24	2	Deposit	Upper fill of [22]. Red-brown sandy loam, grading down from subsoil [19]	?medieval

**Appendix 2: Finds by Context**

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Period
04	Animal bone	-	0.070	
08	Pottery	8	0.098	Medieval
08	Lava quern (SF1)	50+	-	?Medieval
08	Animal bone	-	0.039	
21	Pottery	3	0.018	Medieval
21	Fired clay	5	0.053	
23	Animal bone	-	0.020	
24	Pottery	1	0.003	Medieval

**Appendix 3: Pottery**

Context	Fabric	Form	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Date
08	Local medieval unglazed ware	Body sherd	8	0.099	11th to 14th century
21	Grimston ware	Body sherd	3	0.016	Late 12th to 14th century
24	Local medieval unglazed ware	Body sherd	1	0.003	11th to 14th century

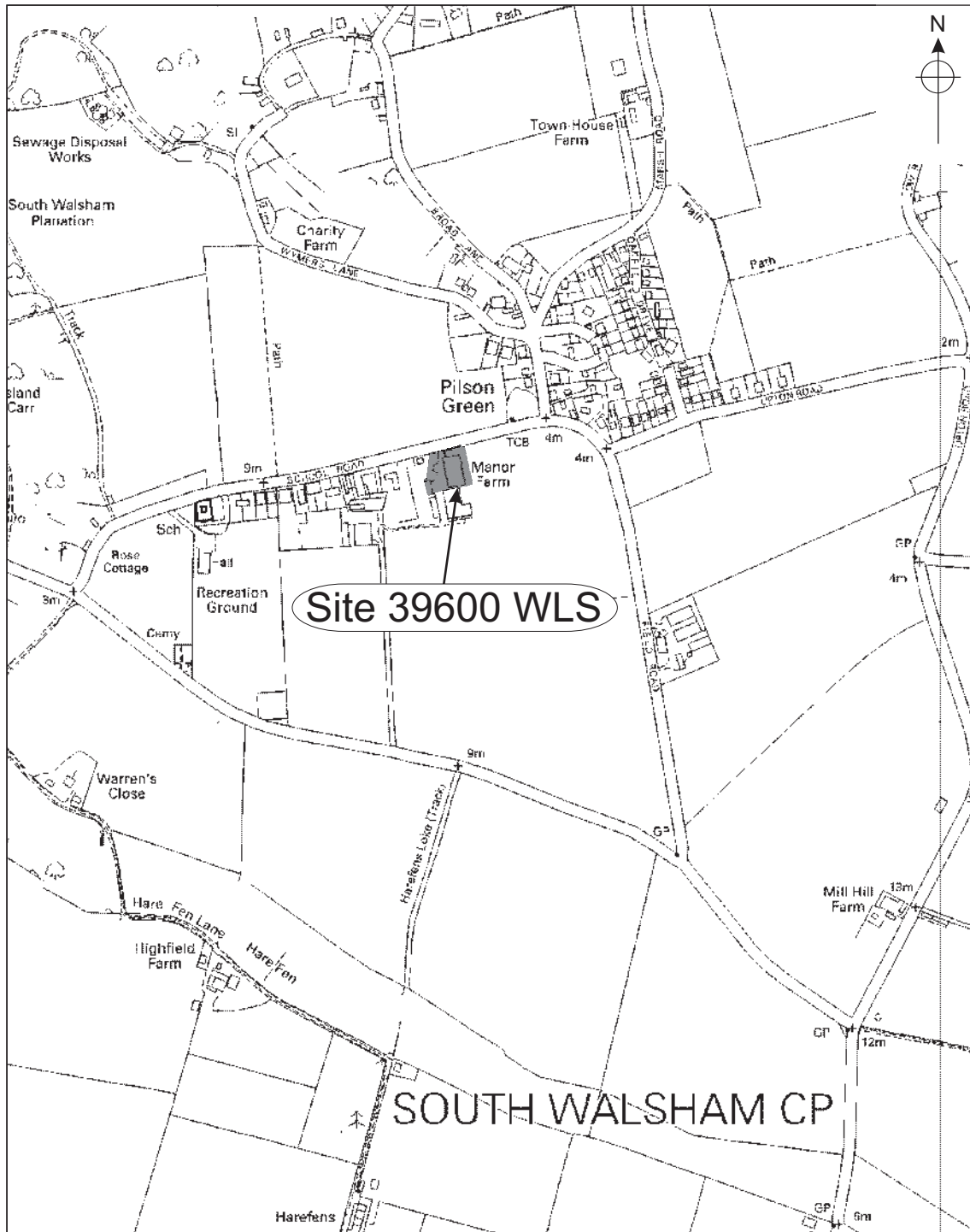


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

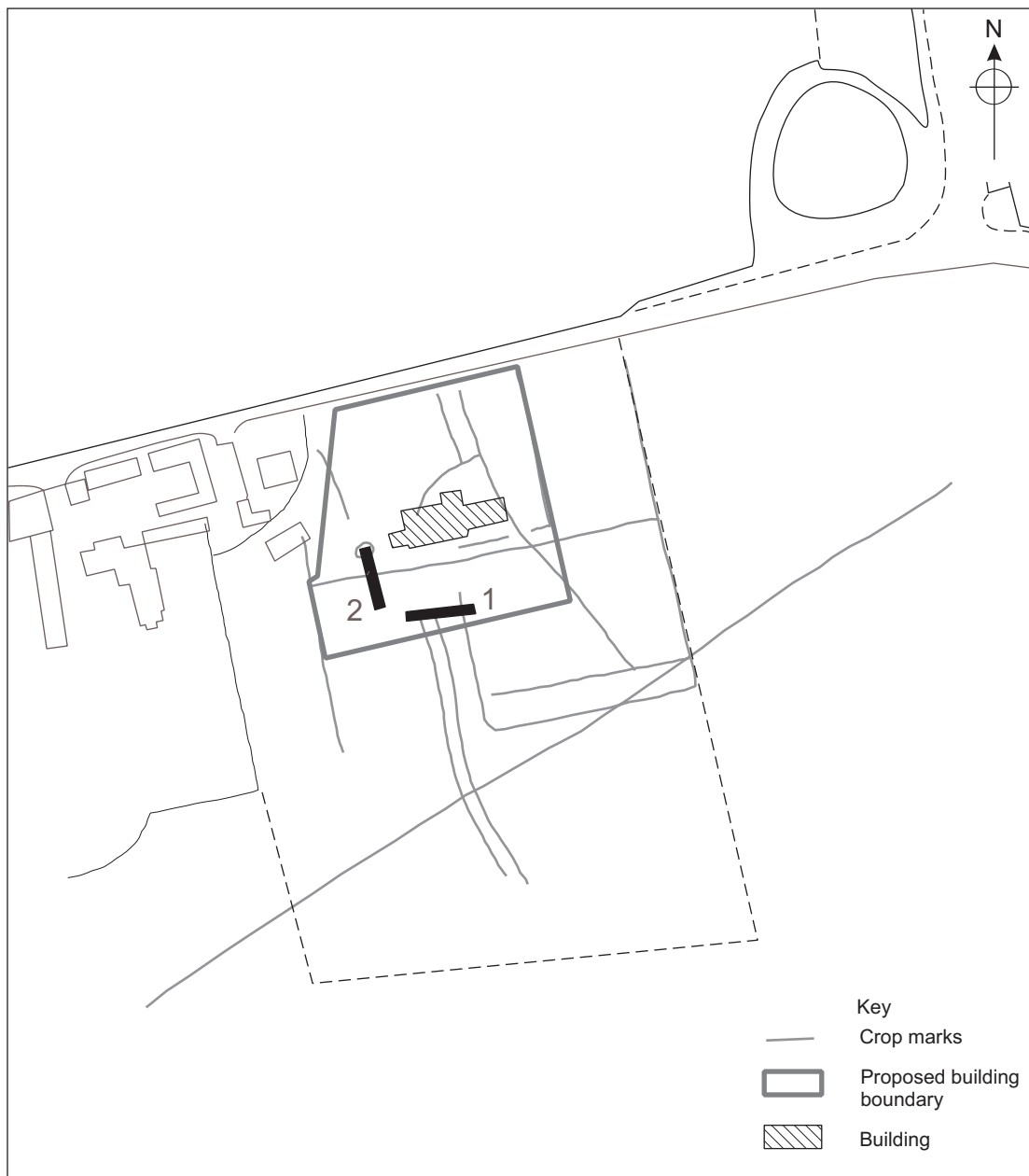


Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:1000

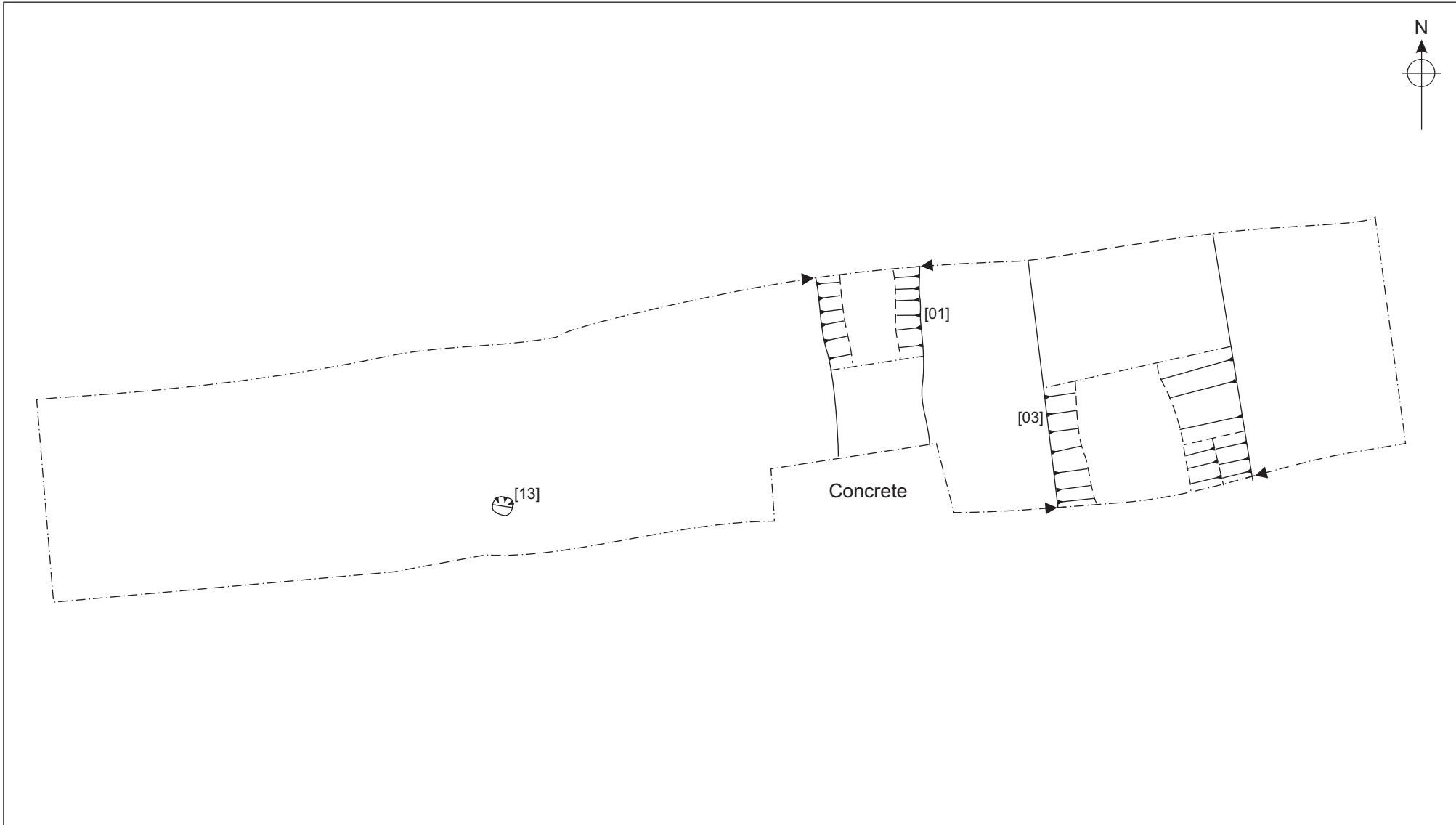
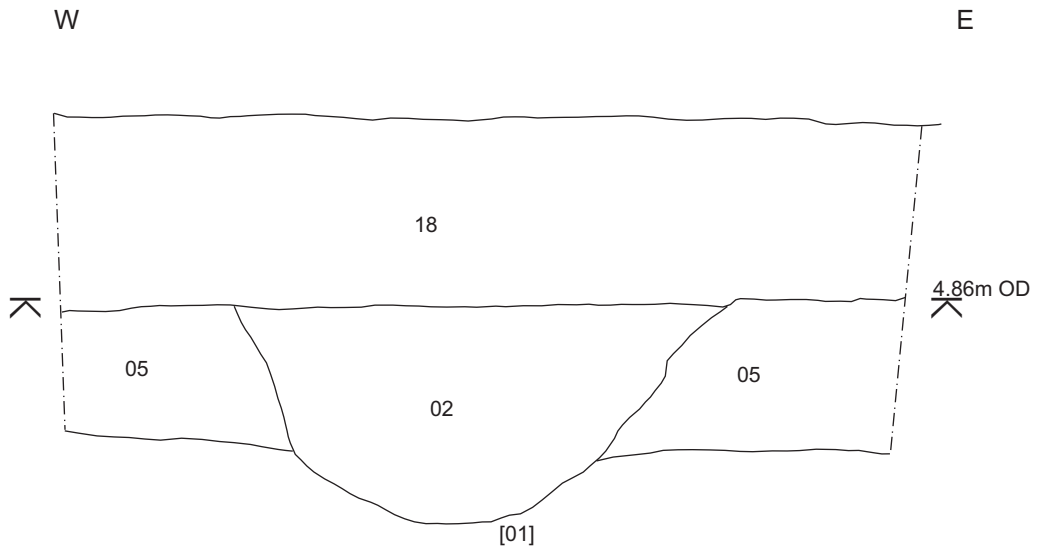
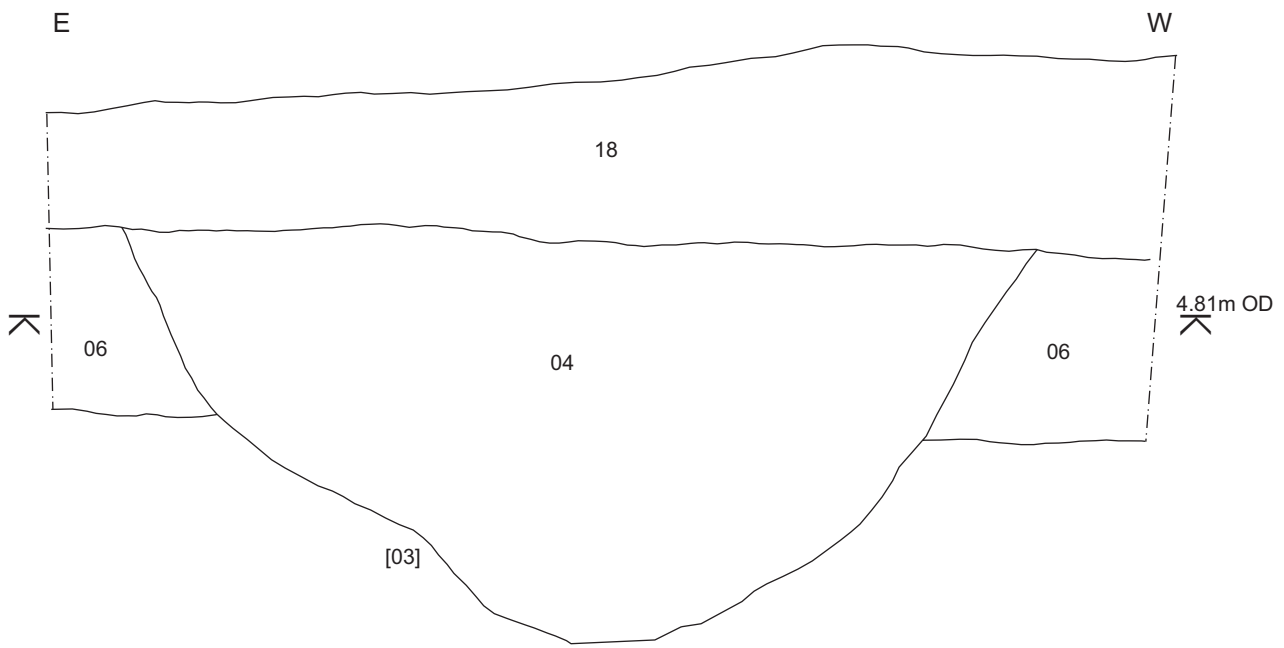


Figure 3. Trench 1, plan. Scale 1:20



South-facing section

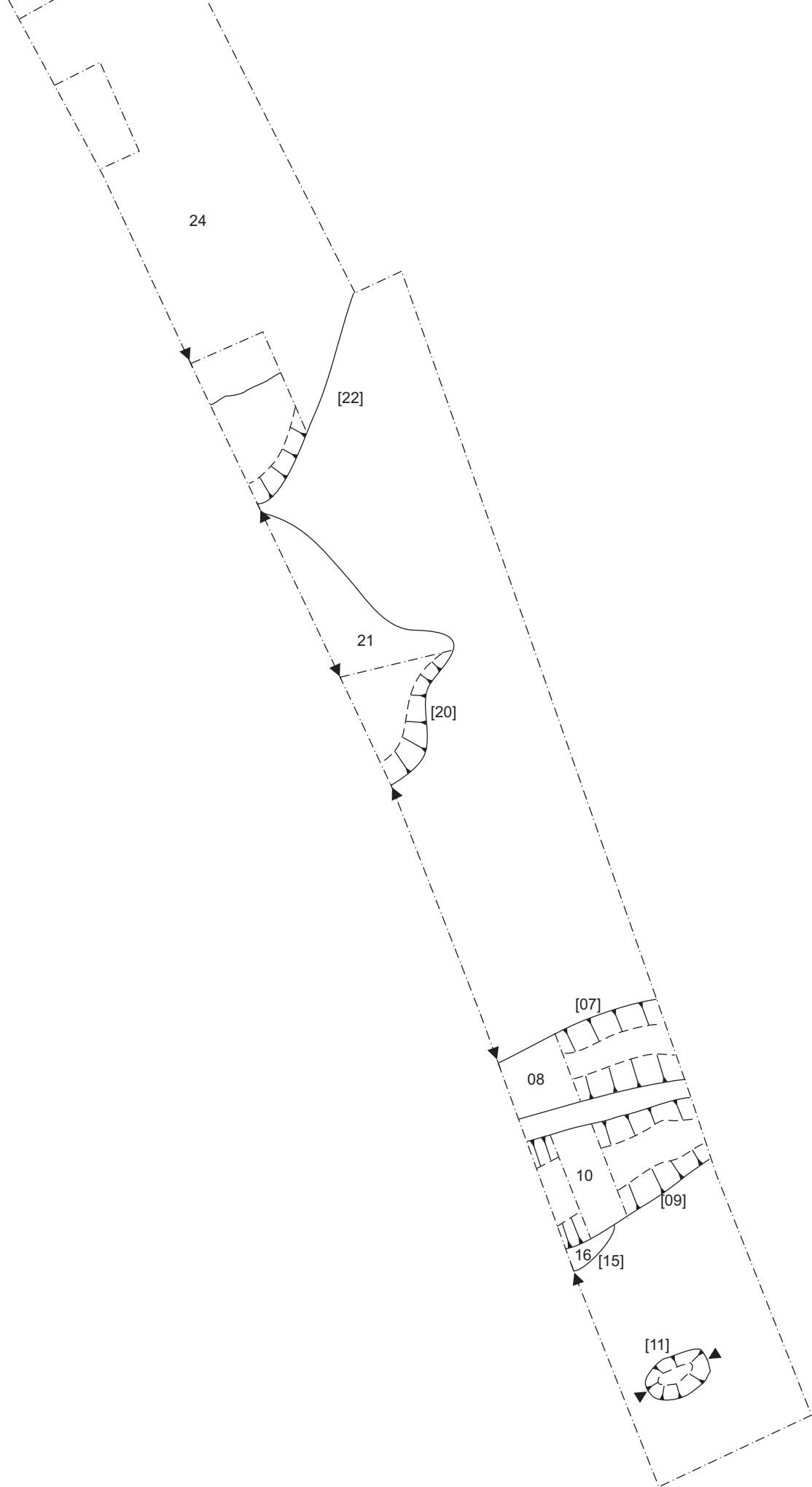


North-facing section



Figure 4. Trench 1, sections of features [01] and [03]. Scale 1:20





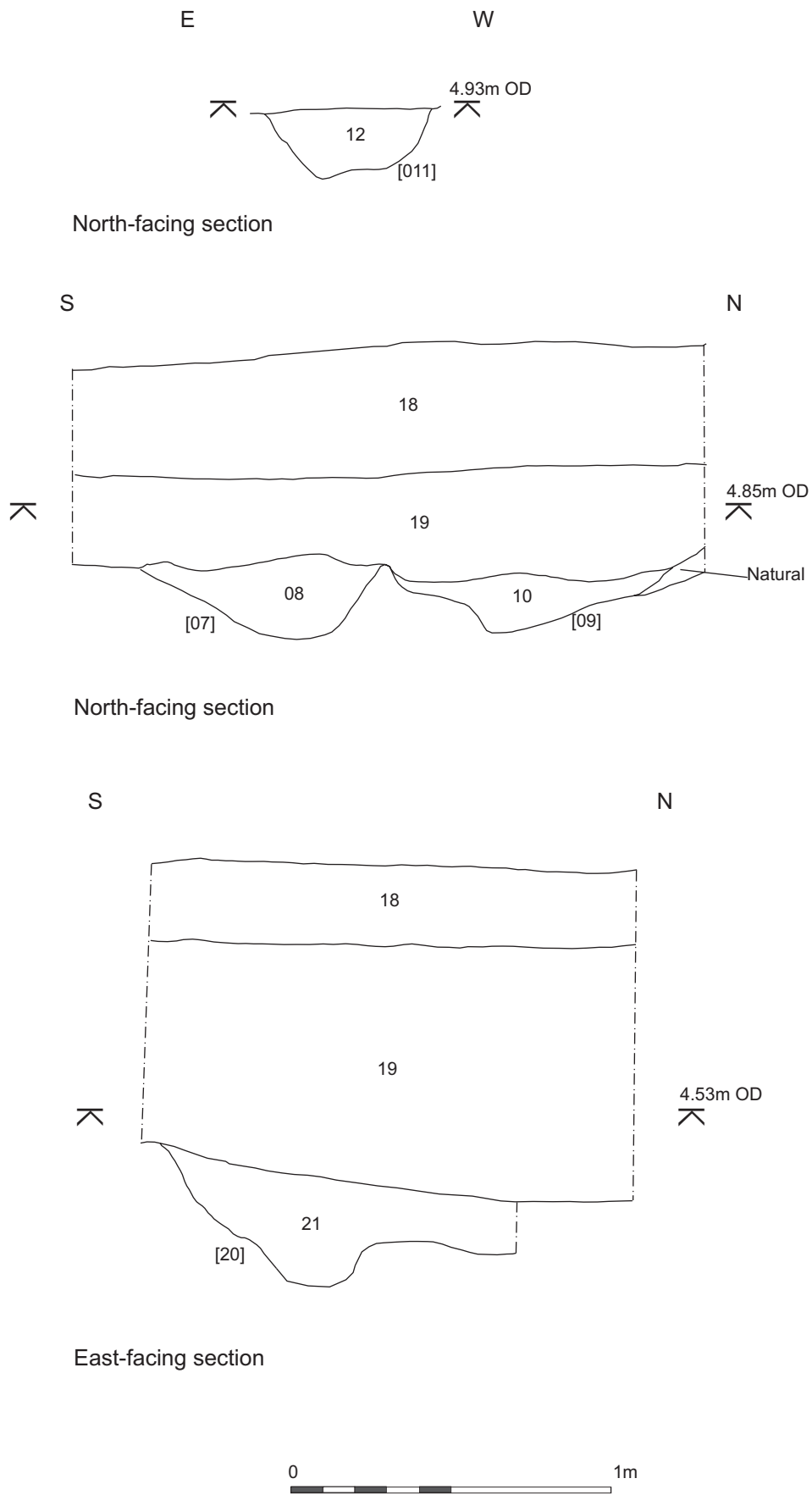
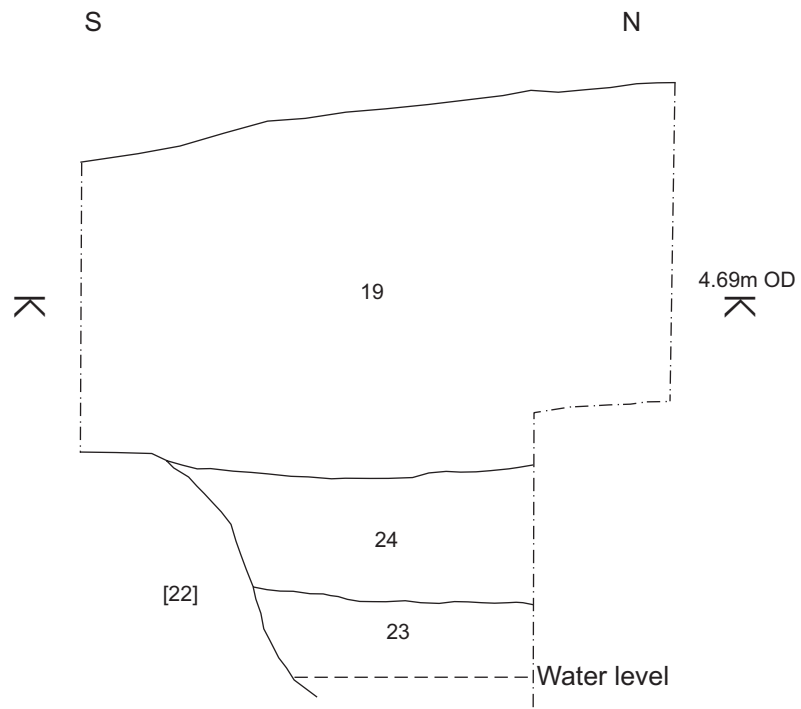


Figure 6. Trench 2, section of features [11], [07], [09] and [20]. Scale 1:20



East-facing section



Figure 7. Trench 2, section of feature [22]. Scale 1:20

