

**NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

Report No. 863

**An Archaeological Evaluation at  
the former Coach House, Withburga Lane,  
East Dereham, Norfolk**

39448 DEE

Kenneth Penn  
September 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 (25/09/2003). **Reference copy: no further copies to be made.**



Location: The former Coach House, Withburga Lane, East Dereham  
Grid Ref: TF 9875 1329  
HER No.: 39448 DEE  
Date of Fieldwork: 30th June 2003 to 1st July 2003

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## **Summary**

*Three trenches (1 to 3) were excavated in a plot alongside Withburga Lane, close to St Nicholas' church, in Dereham. No significant archaeological features were recorded, nor did any older soils survive above the natural Boulder Clay subsoil (they may have been removed in modern times). Trench 3 revealed the base of a 19th century chimney.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

(Fig. 1)

The site lay near the centre of East Dereham on a site close to St Nicholas' church, some 520m<sup>2</sup> in extent. The work was commissioned by Brown and Co of Norwich on behalf of their Client.

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: ARJH 22.1.03) and a Project Design prepared by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU Ref: WAB 5.6.03).

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. 1)

The site lies in the centre of the old part of Dereham, close to the church, on the gentle slope down towards the river to the west. The site stands at about 49m OD at the lowest (east) end. The natural subsoil here is Boulder Clay.

## **3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

The background to this work has already been set out in the desktop assessment (*Report on an Archaeological Desk Top Assessment of the former Coach House, Withburga Lane, East Dereham* by K. Penn 2002 (NAU Report 778)) which outlines the known history of the town and the legendary history involving St Withburga.

## 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 three trenches were dug, each 3m x 3m.

Machine excavation was carried out with a tracked mini-digger with a breaker.

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.

A level was transferred from an Ordnance Survey benchmark of 50.01m OD on the church tower to a TBM of 49.97m OD on the EEB cover on the pavement immediately outside the site.

Site conditions were good with vegetation over Trenches 1 and 2 and thin concrete over Trench 3.

## 5.0 Results (Appendix 1)

(Figs 2, 3, 4 & 5)

### **Trench 1**

Trench 1 lay closest to the road, and was 3m x 3m in dimension. A series of modern car park surfaces and recent dark soils (between 0.3 and 0.5m deep) overlay the natural Boulder Clay subsoil. A cutting some 0.15m deep was made into the clay to establish that this was the natural subsoil. At the south side, the Boulder Clay was heavily stained by modern ash and root disturbance.

There were no archaeological features or finds.

### **Trench 2**

(Figs 3 & 4)

Trench 2 lay halfway along the plot, and a little further up the slope than Trench 1. Removal of the car park surfaces and recent soils revealed the surface of the natural Boulder Clay subsoil. A cutting some 0.15m deep into the clay was made to establish that this was the natural subsoil.

Two modern service trenches ([1] and [3]) were recorded, besides two pits ([5] and [7]) both of which lay partly below the baulk. Pit [5] was possibly rectangular with steep sides and was dug some 0.30m into the Boulder Clay.

Pit [7] was possibly circular, with sloping sides. This feature produced a single sherd of medieval unglazed pottery.

### **Trench 3**

(Fig. 5)

Trench 3 lay at the east end of the plot, at its highest point, about 2m above the lowest part of the plot at the west end.

Removal of the concrete and modern carpark surfaces ([17] to [19]) and earlier soils ([20]) and demolition deposits ([21], [16], [15]), revealed a circular brick structure ([11]) cut ([12]) into the natural. What was possibly a stoke-hole or access to the chimney ran to the north, also cut [12]. The base of the chimney contained a deposit of bright orange sand ([13]) overlain by a thin layer of black greasy ash ([14]). Above this, the cut or access was filled with demolition rubble ([15] and [16]). This was followed by further modern accumulation. On the south side, cut into the natural surface was an irregular shallow pit (or perhaps depression) ([9]) filled with a dark loam, probably the same as [16]. This soil contained three sherds of pottery.

Apart from this feature, the cut [12] for the chimney and possible associated stoke-hole had removed any earlier features in Trench 3.

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

Finds were very few, due in part to the probable scarping of earlier soils down to the natural Boulder Clay surface.

Pit [7] produced a single medieval unglazed sherd from fill [8] and feature [9] produced three medieval unglazed sherds from fill [10].

### **7.0 Conclusions**

There was no sign of occupation at the street frontage, except for the remains of a brick wall visible at the west side of Trench 1, and the two pits in Trench 2 were essentially undated; the potsherd if pit [7] may have been residual. In Trench 3 modern features (the chimney) had removed most of the natural surface.

It would also appear that the earlier spoils had been removed from the areas of Trenches 1 and 2, possibly for the laying of carpark surfaces. It might also be noted that the present slope up from the west has been enhanced by dumping of soils and demolition material. The level of the natural subsoil at the west in Trench 1 was 48.50m OD, the level at the east in Trench 3 was 49.55m OD, a rise of about 1m, whereas the present surface rise is about 2m.

The chimney seen in Trench 3 belongs to the 19th century. Both the map of 1757 and the Enclosure Award map of 1812 show this plot to have been empty (Penn 2002, figs 3 and 4). By 1928 a small building stood in the north-west corner and at the east end the present stable range (Penn 2002, fig. 5).

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

### **Acknowledgements**

The writer was assisted on site by Lucy Talbot and Ben Davenport. Machining was arranged by Bryn Williams. The finds were reported on by Richenda Goffin. The report was illustrated and produced by Maggie Footitt, edited by Alice Lyons.

## ***Bibliography***

Penn, K.J., 2002

*Report on an Archaeological desk Top assessment of the former Coach House, Withburga Lane, East Dereham, Norfolk (NAU report 778)*



### Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Trench	Category	Description	Period
1	2	Cut	Service trench	Modern
2	2	Deposit	Fill of 1. Modern material	Modern
3	2	Cut	Service trench	Modern
4	2	Deposit	Fill of 3.	Modern
5	2	Cut	Cut for pit	Post-medieval
6	2	Deposit	Fill of 5 mottled grey/brown silty clay with fragments of chalk	Post-medieval
7	2	Cut	Cut for pit	Post-medieval
8	2	Deposit	Fill of 7, mid-dark grey-brown sandy loam. Some pebbles and flecks of brick. V compact. 1 sherd	Post-medieval
9	3	Cut	Cut for pit?	Post-medieval
10	3	Deposit	Fill of 9, dark brown loam	Post-medieval
11	3	Masonry	Base of brick chimney in 12	19th century
12	3	Cut	Cut for 11	19th century
13	3	Deposit	Bright orange sand fill of 12	19th century
14	3	Deposit	Mixed black ash, below 15	Post-medieval
15	3	Deposit	Mixed layers of mortar rubble	Post-medieval
16	3	Deposit	mid grey-brown loam (=10?)	Post-medieval
17	2 & 3	Deposit	Car park surface. concrete	Modern
18	3	Deposit	Gravel hoggin surface	Modern
19	3	Deposit	Tarmac surface	Modern
20	3	Deposit	Dark brown silty loam garden soil	Modern
21	2 & 3	Deposit	White chalky clay with flint and rubble	Post-medieval
22	3	Masonry	Brick structure, remains of? Possibly part of the chimney structure	19th century

### Appendix 2: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (kg)
08	Medieval pottery	1	0.002
10	Medieval pottery	3	0.013



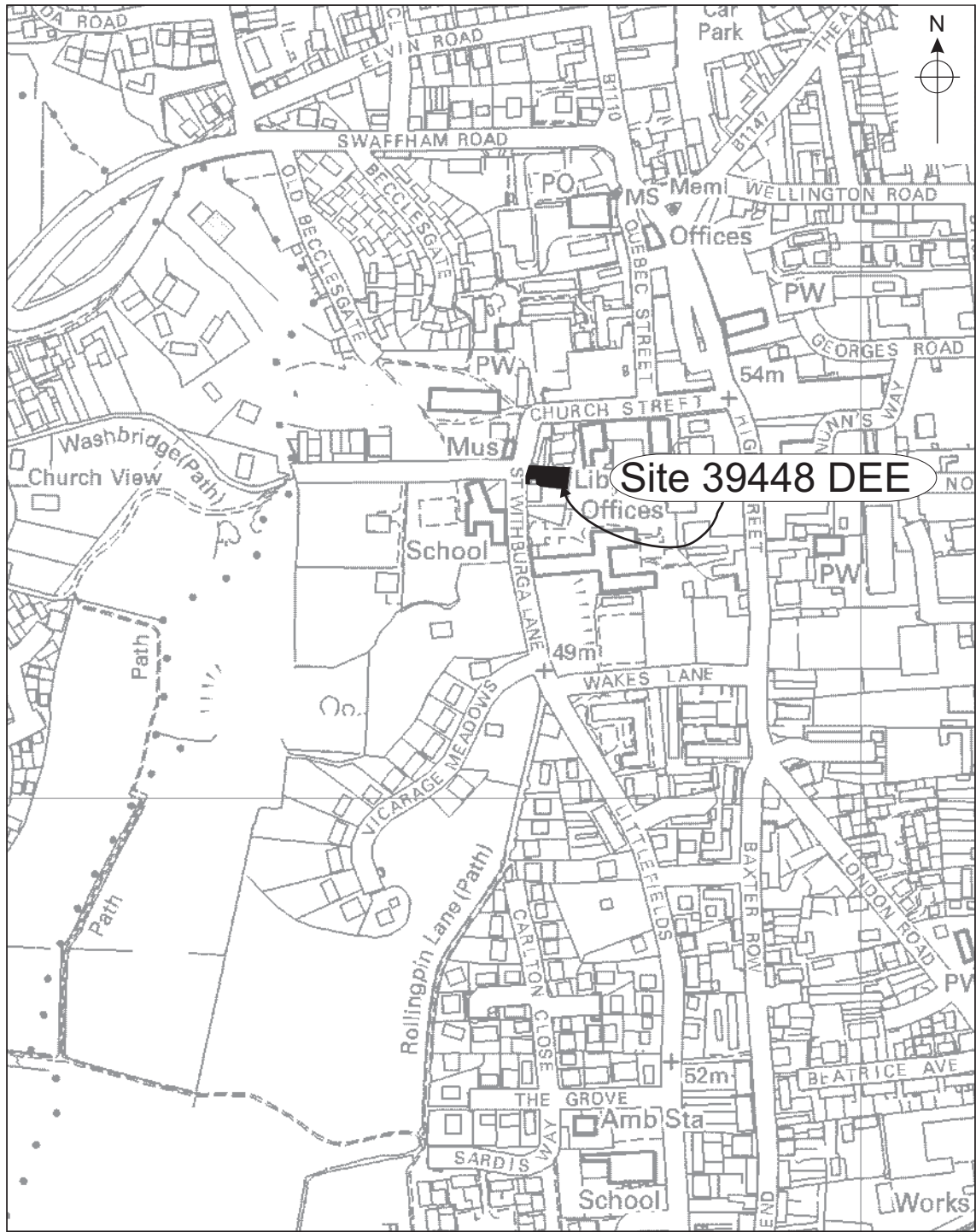


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

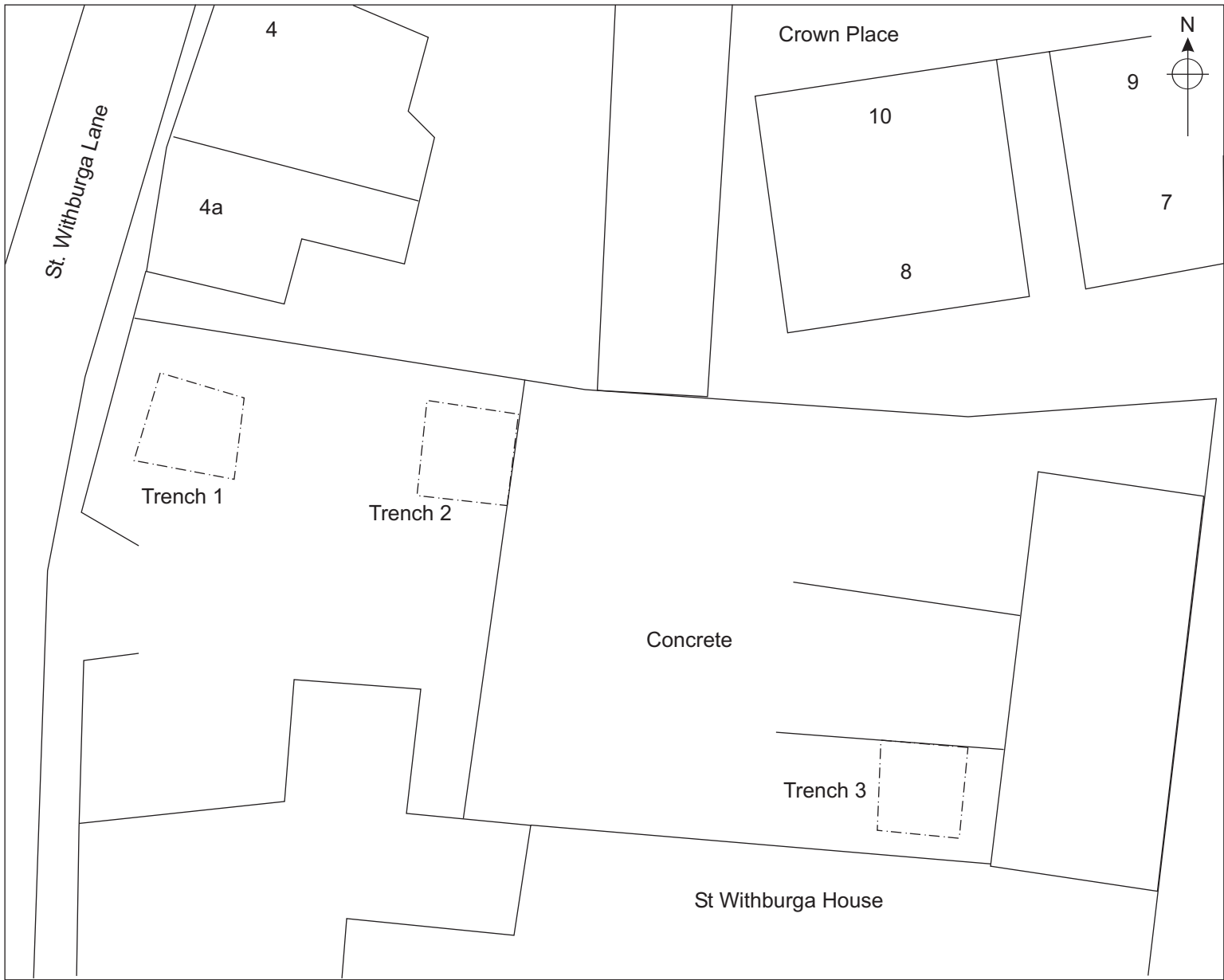


Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:200

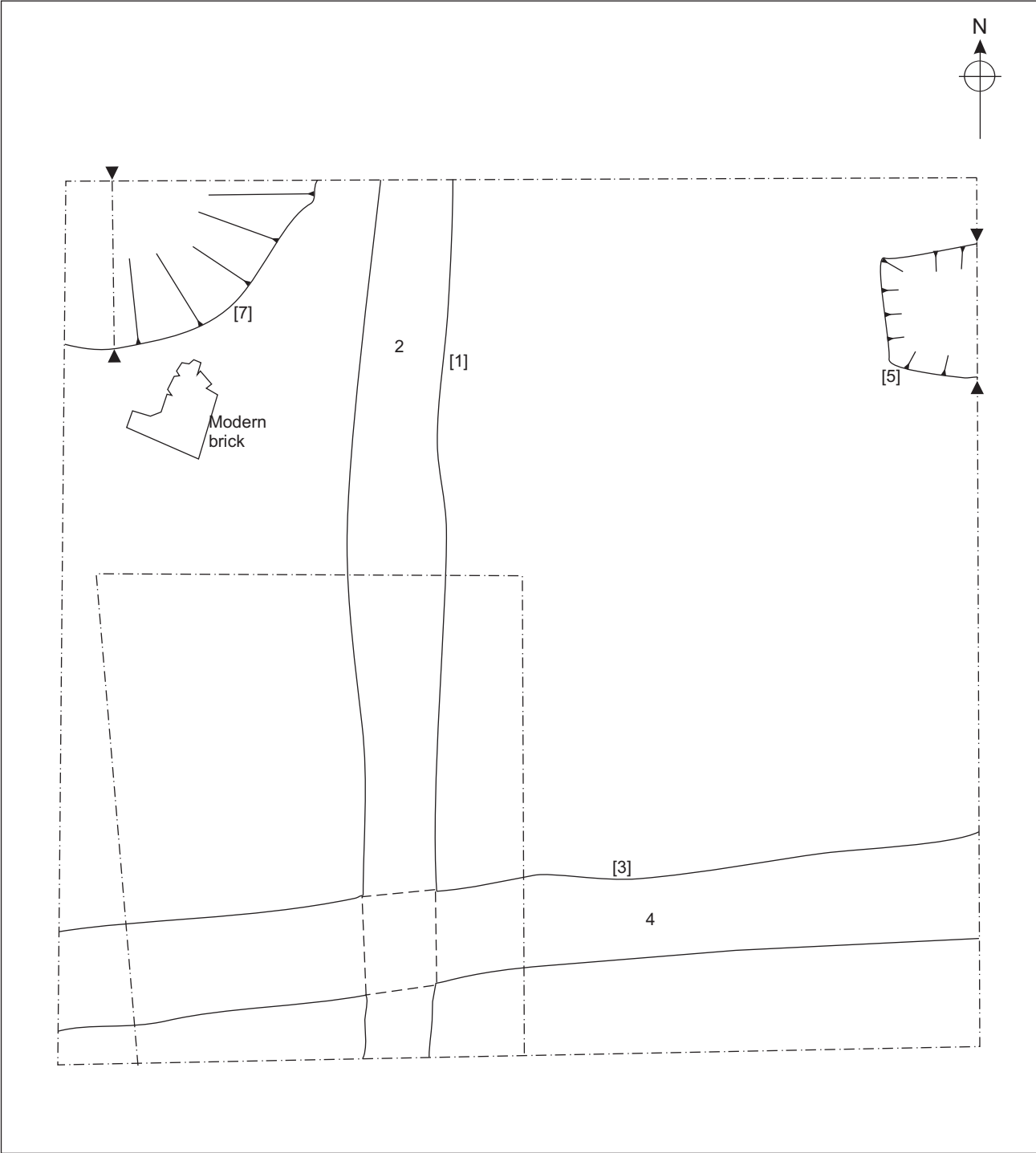


Figure 3. Trench 2 plan. Scale 1:20

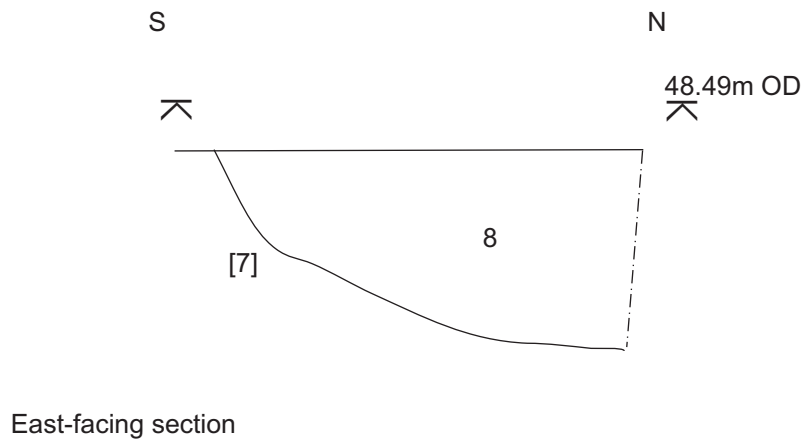
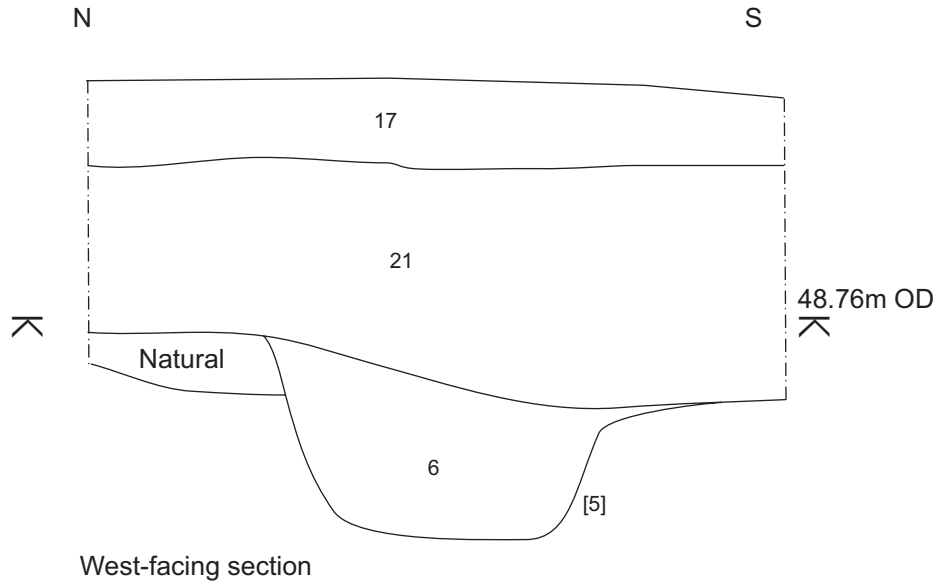


Figure 4. Section of pits [5] and [7]. Scale 1:10

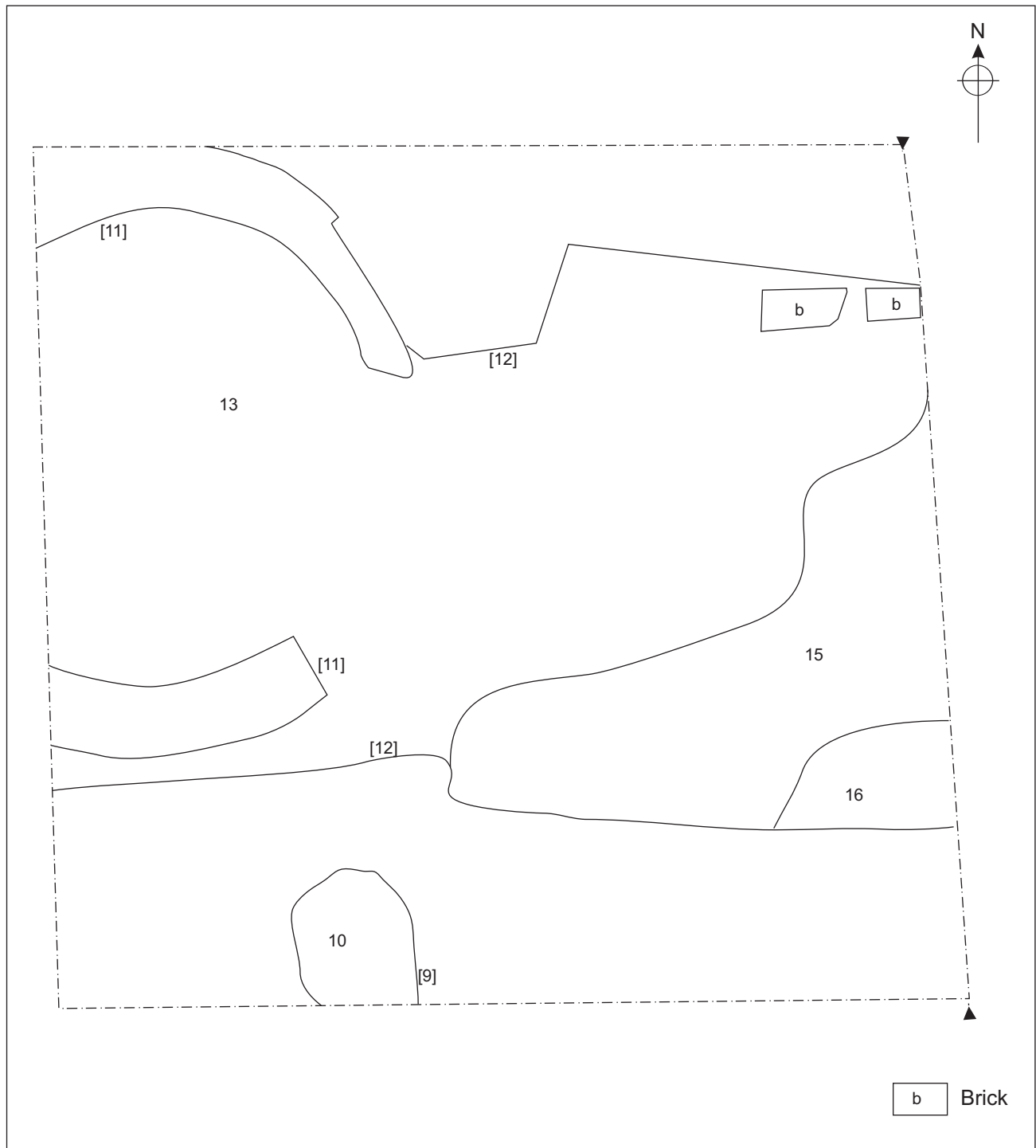


Figure 5. Trench 3 plan. Scale 1:20