

An Archaeological Evaluation and Excavation at
19 St. Mary's Court, Barwell,
Leicestershire
(SP 422 964)

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For: Tony Morris Builders Ltd.

University of Leicester Archaeological Services
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**An Archaeological Evaluation and Excavation at 19 St. Mary's Court, Barwell,
Leicestershire (SP 422 964)**

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation and excavation was undertaken at 19 St. Mary's Court, Barwell, Leicestershire (SP 422 964) by ULAS in February and March 2006. The work was commissioned by Tony Morris Builders Ltd.

The archaeological work revealed evidence for prehistoric settlement consisting of a number of postholes forming part of a roundhouse. Roman settlement activity is also suggested by the presence of a number of finds including tile. Two linear features were also excavated that may represent boundary ditches of medieval date for dwellings outside of the excavation area, or drainage features associated with occupational or land use. Additionally a large irregular feature was excavated that could be associated with the medieval fishponds that are present to the south and east.

The site archive will be held by the *Historic and Natural Environment Team, Leicestershire County Council, under the Accession Number XA20 2006.*

1. Introduction

In accordance with Planning Policy Guidelines 16 (PPG 16, Archaeology and Planning, para 30), this document presents the results of an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching and excavation at 19 St. Mary's Court, Barwell, Leicestershire (SP 422 964) required by Leicestershire County Council, Historic and Natural Environment Team, in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the planning authority.

The area had been subject to a planning application (P.A.03/01190/4) for the development of the site to new residential dwellings. It follows an initial archaeological desk-based assessment of the proposed development area that was commissioned by Tony Morris Builders Ltd. from University of Leicester Archaeological Services (Parker 2006) which concluded that the site had potential for archaeological remains.

Following the results of the desk-based assessment, a brief for archaeological evaluation was prepared by Leicestershire County Council, Historic and Natural Environment Team detailing further archaeological work that would be required as a condition of planning permission.

A subsequent stage of archaeological excavation was undertaken following the results of the evaluation and the assessed impact of the proposed development on the archaeological remains. This stage of mitigation was formulated through discussions with Leicestershire County Council, Historic and Natural Environment Team, ULAS and the developer and implemented following the evaluation.

2. Site location

The proposed development site is located at 19 St. Mary's Court, Barwell, Leicestershire (SP 422 964). It consists of an area *c.* 0.3 ha. that is currently a farmyard.

3. Geological and Topographical Background

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 156 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of boulder clay. The site lies at *c.* 118 OD.

4. Archaeological and Historical Background

A desk-based assessment (Parker 2006) had established the archaeological potential of the development area. Prehistoric (MLE2800, MLE2801, MLE2810 and MLE2811) and Roman (MLE2812, MLE2822, MLE7933, MLE7934 and MLE9618) sites are also located within the surrounding area and may well extend into the proposed development area. There are also number of medieval (MLE2802, MLE2804, MLE2805, MLE2813, MLE2815, MLE2816, MLE2818, MLE 2819, MLE2820, MLE2821, MLE2869, MLE6787, MLE10020, MLE10249, MLE10661 and MLE12974) and post-medieval (MLE2803, MLE2806, MLE2870, MLE7351, MLE10090, MLE12976 and MLE12977) sites within the vicinity of the proposed development.

An evaluation in the adjacent southern property (Jarvis 2003) produced medieval remains in the form of two substantial linear features and a smaller 'scoop' like feature which produced 12th to 13th century Potters Marston and Chilvers Cotton ware pottery. Additionally, a possible back-filled pond was identified.

5. Objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of

archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

All work follows the *Institute of Field Archaeologist's Code of Conduct* and adheres to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological evaluations*.

Following the evaluation a further stage of archaeological excavation and recording was implemented in mitigation of the potential damage to archaeological deposits from the proposed development.

6. Methodology

Trial trenching totalled *c.* 287 sq metres that provided a *c.* 10 % sample of the *c.* 0.3ha. development area. This comprised Area 01 that measured 12m x 12m, Trench 01 that measured 28.90m x 2m, Trench 02 that measured 22.15m x 2m and Trench 03 that measured 20.8m x 2m.

The trenches were all located within the proposed footprints of the new buildings.

The topsoil and subsoil was removed in spits by machine with a toothless ditching bucket under full supervision, until archaeological deposits or undisturbed substrata was encountered.

Each of the trial trenches was hand cleaned. Samples of the archaeological deposits located were hand excavated and planned addressing the aims and objectives of the evaluation. Measured drawings of all archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:20 and tied into an overall site plan of 1:100. All plans were tied into the National Grid.

All excavated sections were recorded and drawn at a scale of 1:10 and were levelled and tied into the Ordnance Survey datum. Spot heights were taken as appropriate.

7. Results

Area 01

Length: 12.00 m

Width: 12.00m

Depth: 0.70m (average)

Area: 144 square metres

Area 01 was located in the north eastern corner of the development. Approximately 0.60m of mid brown sandy silt garden soil was removed revealing a layer mid orangish brown silty sand subsoil beneath which, at an average depth of 0.70m below ground level, was natural substratum consisting of clayey sand. The base of Area 01 lies at a height of *c.* 117.17 OD.

No archaeological features were encountered.

Trench 01 (see fig. 5)

Length: 28.90 m

Width: 2.00m

Depth: 0.56 (min) – 1.35 (max)

Area: 57.80 square metres

Orientation: NE-SW

The topsoil was removed to a depth of between 0.21m and 0.33m to reveal the subsoil beneath which, at a depth of between 0.48m and 0.67m below ground level was natural substratum. The base of the trench was between 117.01 OD and 118.10 OD.

Located in the north eastern half of the trench was a linear feature, cut [008]. It ran northwest to southeast and was 0.80m wide and up to 0.46m deep and contained mid brown silty clay fill (009) within which was a single sherd of Medieval Sandy ware.

Trench 02 (see fig. 4)

Length: 22.15m

Width: 2.00m

Depth: 0.58 (min) 0.69m (max)

Area: 44.30 square metres

Orientation: N-S

The topsoil was removed to a depth of between 0.28m and 0.30m to reveal the subsoil beneath which, at a depth of between 0.48m and 0.69m below ground level was natural substratum. The base of the trench was between 118.13 OD and 117.80m OD.

Associated with the postholes uncovered during the excavation to the south was posthole, cut [006]. It was 0.39m wide and up to 0.12m in depth with mid grey friable sandy silt fill (007).

Trench 3 (see fig. 4)

Length: 20.80m

Width: 2m

Depth: 0.12 (min) 0.75 (max)

Area: 41.60 square metres

Orientation: E-W

The topsoil was removed to a depth of between 0.04m and 0.26m to reveal the subsoil beneath which, at a depth of between 0.08m and 0.75m below ground level was natural substratum. The base of the trench was between 117.75m OD and 116.60m OD.

Running north to south was a linear feature, cut [010]. It was 2.27m wide and up to 0.54m deep. Fill (011) was mid orangish brown silty sand and contained pottery dating to the 13th to 14th century. The ditch contained a single re-cut [012], the uppermost dark brown clay silt sand fill (014) of which also contained 13th to 14th century pottery. To the west of [010] was posthole, cut [003] that forms part of the

posthole structure discovered during the excavation. It was up to 0.45m wide and 0.14m in depth and contained mid grey sandy silt fill (004) and mid red clay fill (005). To the east of [010] was posthole, cut [001]. It was very similar to those located to the west in size and shape and contained a similar mid grey sandy silt fill (002).

Excavation (see figs. 4, 5 and 6)

The excavation was located in the south west of the development area targeting the linear feature, cut [010] and the postholes, cuts [003] and [006] that were uncovered during the evaluation.

Located in the southwest of the excavation was a posthole structure. It consisted of seven postholes, cuts [015], [017], [020], [003], [021], [023], and [006] that were in a curvilinear alignment with a further posthole, cut [025] to the west. The majority of the postholes contained mid grey silty clay or sandy silt fill with the exception of cut [023] that contained light orangey brown soft silty sand (024). They were generally between 0.30m and 0.44m in diameter apart from [019] that was 0.72m in diameter. Its larger size and shape suggests that this was two inter-cutting postholes though this could not be confirmed in section. The postholes had an average depth of 0.15m though the northern postholes, cuts [021], [023] and [006] had been badly truncated with an average depth of *c.* 0.10m. Pottery of uncertain date was recovered from [019] and a sherd of Roman Grey Ware was recovered from the top of [023]. The substrata to the northwest appeared more mixed than elsewhere suggesting that the trees present on the 1886 Ordnance Survey map (Parker 2006) were located in this area. Root activity from these trees could explain the absence of postholes in this part of the excavation. The alignment of the posts suggests that they originally formed a circle suggesting they represent a roundhouse that would have been *c.* 11.50m in diameter. The posthole to the west could be evidence for an internal ring of roof supports that would have been *c.* 3m in diameter.

The linear, cut [010] was found to extend to the south and north. As it was not encountered in Trench 01 or 02 during the evaluation it must be presumed that it terminates or runs east in the northern part of the development area.

Cutting the linear was an irregular feature, cut [027]. It was up to 5.94m wide and 0.63m deep and contained mid grey brown sandy silty clay fill (027). Residual medieval pottery was found together with a fragment of late medieval Cistercian ware, dating from *circa* 1450 to *circa* 1550. It may be related to the medieval fishponds that are located 0.1km to the east (**MLE2820**), 0.4 km to the west (**MLE2815**) and 1km to the southwest (**MLE 28050**) of the site or may alternatively have been a clay extraction pit.

The presence of two Roman tile fragments and three sherds of Roman pottery from the site are suggestive of Roman settlement activity within the vicinity of the development area.

8. Discussion

The evaluation and excavation has revealed a number of archaeological features. The posthole structure is likely to be the remains of a large roundhouse of prehistoric date and is consistent with other examples excavated in Leicestershire (Beamish pers. com.). Its presence clearly indicates prehistoric settlement activity in the area. Roman settlement is also suggested by the residual finds present. The linear features may represent boundary ditches of medieval date for dwellings outside of the excavation area, or drainage features associated with occupational or land use. The largest ditch is probably a continuation of a linear that was excavated during an evaluation at Ivens Farm to the south (Jarvis 2003). The large irregular feature could be a clay extraction pit but could equally be associated with the medieval fishponds that are present within the vicinity.

9 References

Jarvis, W., 1998 An Archaeological Evaluation at Ivens Farm, Barwell, Leicestershire (NGR: SP 4425 9640). Unpublished ULAS Report No. 2003/177

Parker, M., 2006 An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment for Land on 19 St. Mary's Court, Barwell, Leicestershire (SP 442 964). Unpublished ULAS Report No. 2006/009

10. Acknowledgements

Fieldwork was undertaken by the author with the assistance of Andy Hyam and Greg Jones. Dr. Patrick Clay managed the project.

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Appendix 1

The medieval and later pottery and miscellaneous finds from an evaluation at 19 St Mary's Court, Barwell, Leicestershire.

D. Sawday

The pottery, twenty three sherds, weighing one hundred and seventy grams, was examined under a binocular microscope and catalogued with reference to the ULAS fabric series (Davies and Sawday 1999). The results are shown below, (Table 1).

Fabric/Ware	Sherd Nos.	Weight Grams	Av. Sherd Weight
<i>Roman</i>			
GW – Grey ware	2	9	
CG	1	2	
Roman Sub Total	3	11	3.6
<i>Medieval</i>			
PM – Potters Marston	2	25	
CO2 – Coventry A ware	4	18	
CG – Calcite Gritted ware	2	24	
CC1 - Chilvers Coton ware 1	3	11	
CC2 - Chilvers Coton ware 2	2	44	
CC5 - Chilvers Coton ware 5	1	4	
MS2 – Medieval Sandy ware 2	1	6	
MS3 – Medieval Sandy ware 3	2	10	
MS – Medieval Sandy ware	1	10	
CW1 – Cistercian ware 1	1	1	
Medieval Totals	19	153	8.0
EA – Post Med/Modern Earthenware	1	6	
Totals	20	170	

Table 1: The late Saxon and medieval pottery totals by fabric sherd numbers and weight (grams)

One context, [23] produced a single fragment of Roman Grey ware, the other two sherds of Roman pottery were residual in later contexts. A tiny fragment of soft fired Calcite Gritted ware of uncertain date, but possibly Saxo Norman, was found in context [19].

Contexts, [8] [10] and [12], all contained small sherds of medieval pottery with a terminal date in the fourteenth century if not slightly later. Residual medieval pottery was found in context [27] together with a fragment of late medieval Cistercian ware, dating from *circa* 1450 to *circa* 1550.

The pottery does provide some evidence of medieval activity in the village from the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, if not slightly earlier though the degree of abrasion and relatively low average sherd weight suggests that none of the pottery is primary refuse – but evidence of activity in the area over a period of time.

Typically most, if not all, of the medieval pottery is local in origin, Potters Marston, Coventry and Chilvers Coton were all centres of pottery manufacture in the medieval period. The Medieval Sandy wares may also originate from the Chilvers Coton kilns, whilst the medieval Calcite Gritted wares probably come from kilns based on the Jurassic at Stanion or Lyveden in north Northamptonshire. The coarse Cistercian ware fabric CW1 is also thought to be a late medieval product of the Chilvers Coton kilns.

Bibliography

Connor, A., and Buckley, R. *Roman and Medieval Occupation in Causeway Lane, Leicester*, Leicester Archaeology Mon. **5**.

Davies, S., and Sawday, D., 1999. 'The Post Roman Pottery and Tile' in A. Connor and R. Buckley, 1999, 165-213.

Site/Parish: St Mary's Court, Barwell Leicestershire Accession No/ Doc Ref: XA20 2006 Material: Pottery & misc. finds Site Type: village core	Submitter: M. Hurford Identifier: D. Sawday Date of Id: 11.04. 06 Method of Recovery: evaluation
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Context	Fabric/ware	Nos.	Grams	Comment – with terminal date for each context
9 [8]	MS3 – Medieval Sandy ware 3	2	10	1250 – 1400+
11 [10]	PM – Potters Marston	1	20	
11 [10]	CO2 - Coventry A ware	3	12	
11 [10]	CC1 – Chilvers Coton ware 1	1	1	
11 [10]	CC5 – Chilvers Coton ware 5	1	4	
14 [12]	CO2	1	6	
14 [12]	CC1	1	3	1250-1300+
14 [12]	MS – Medieval Sandy ware	1	10	Exterior rilling & slip does not look like Chilvers Coton, fine white sandy body, pos Tamworth, mid/late 13 th – 14 th C.
20 [19]	CG – Calcite Gritted	1	1	Soft fired – possibly Saxo Norman
24 [23]	GW – Grey ware	1	3	Roman – late 1st/2 nd C - 4 th C AD
28 [27]	PM	1	5	
28 [27]	CG – Calcite Gritted ware	1	23	Simple thickened flared bowl rim with internal thumbing
28 [27]	CC1	1	7	
28 [27]	CC2 – Chilvers Coton ware 2	2	44	
28 [27]	CW1 – Cistercian ware 1	1	1	Mid to late 15 th C+
28 surface	GW	1	6	Roman
28 surface	MS2 – Medieval Sandy ware 2	1	6	c.1250+
U/S	CG	1	2	Fine shell, pos Roman
U/S	EA - Earthenware	1	6	Modern flower pot
Misc				
14 [12]	Animal Bone	3		

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26 [25]	Flint	1		
28 [27]	EA - Earthenware	1	74	Roman tile
28 surface	EA	2	157	Roman tile

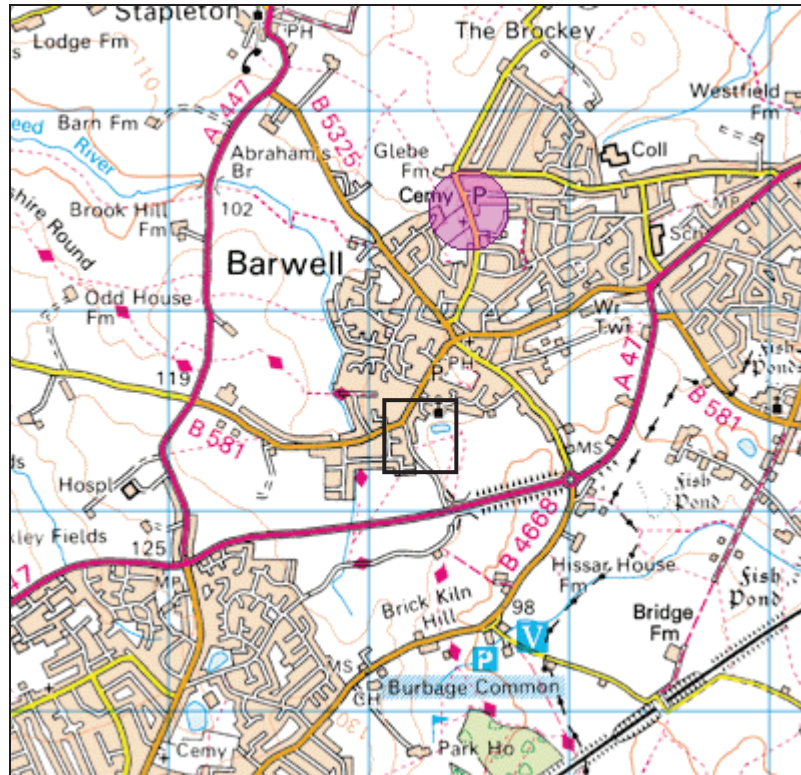


Figure 1. Location plan with the application area outlined.

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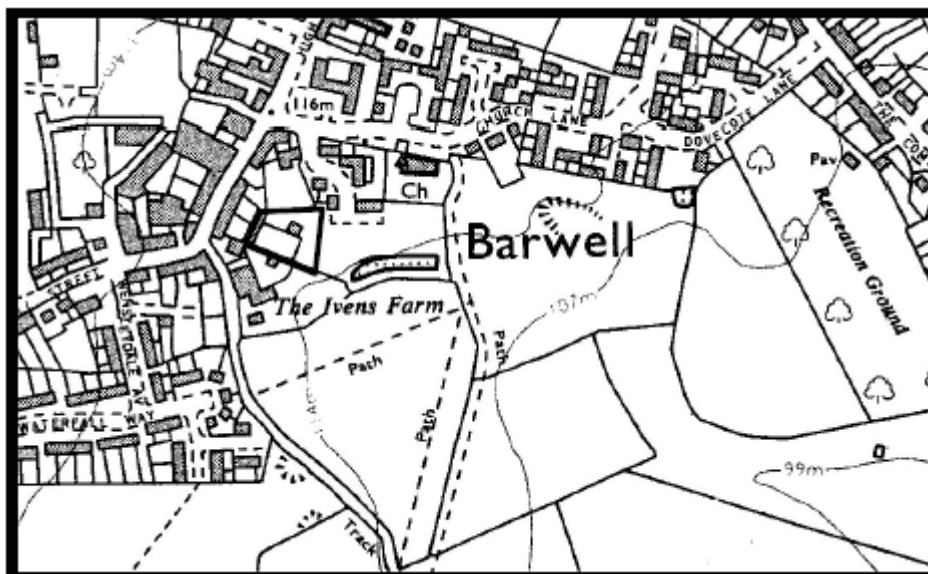


Figure 2. Location plan with the application area outlined.

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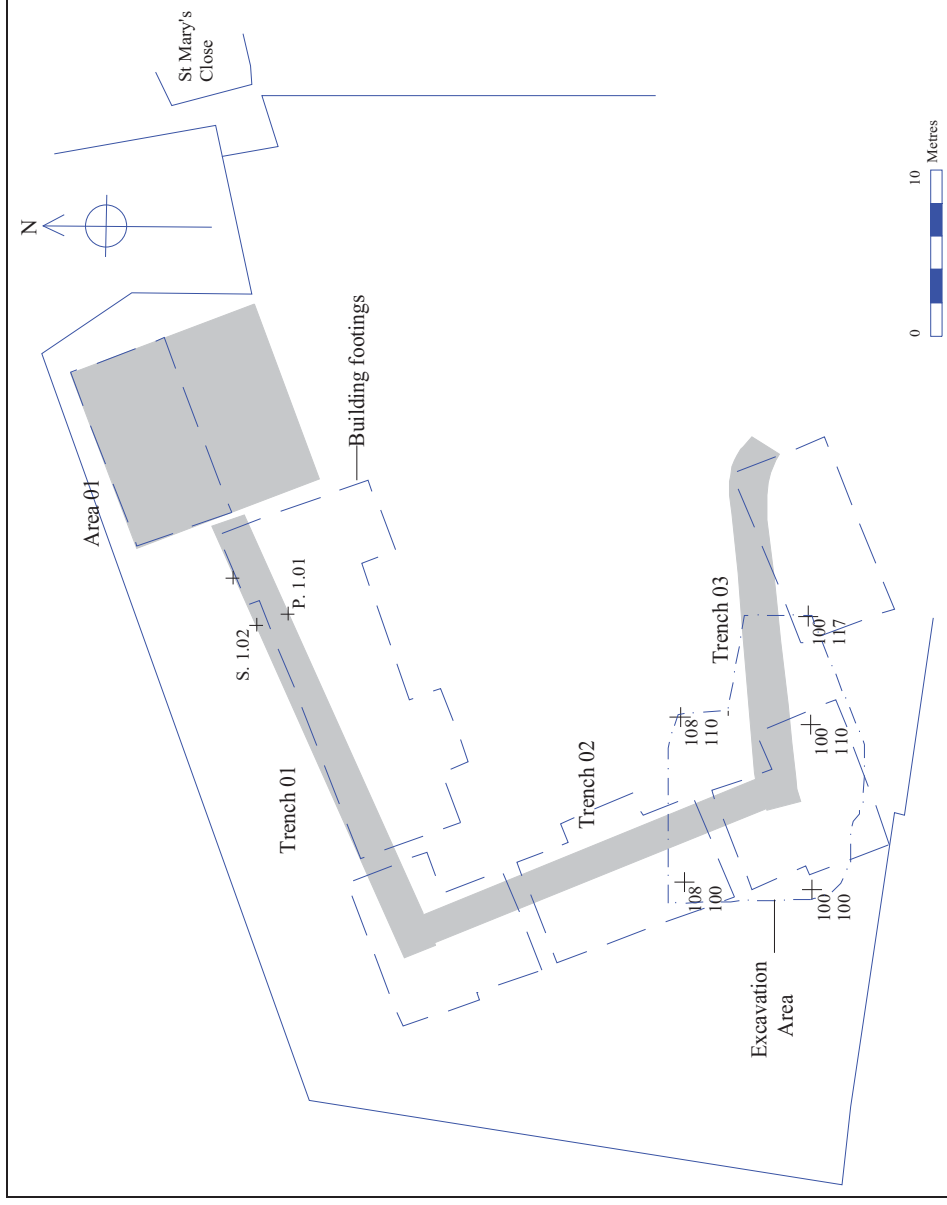


Figure 3. The Proposed Development Site showing the proposed footprints of the new buildings, evaluation trenches and excavation area

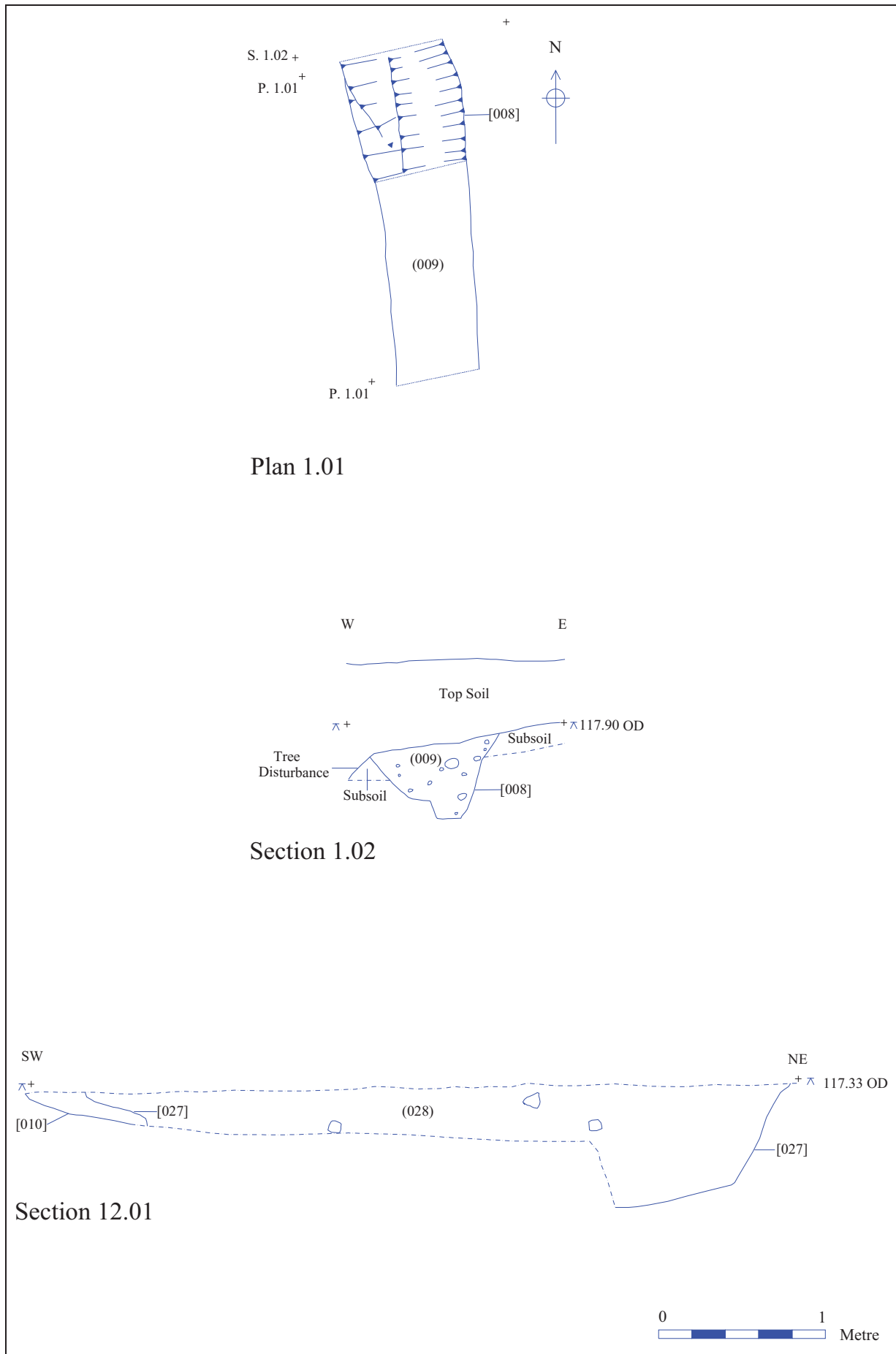


Figure 5. Plan 1.01 and Sections 1.02 and 12.01.

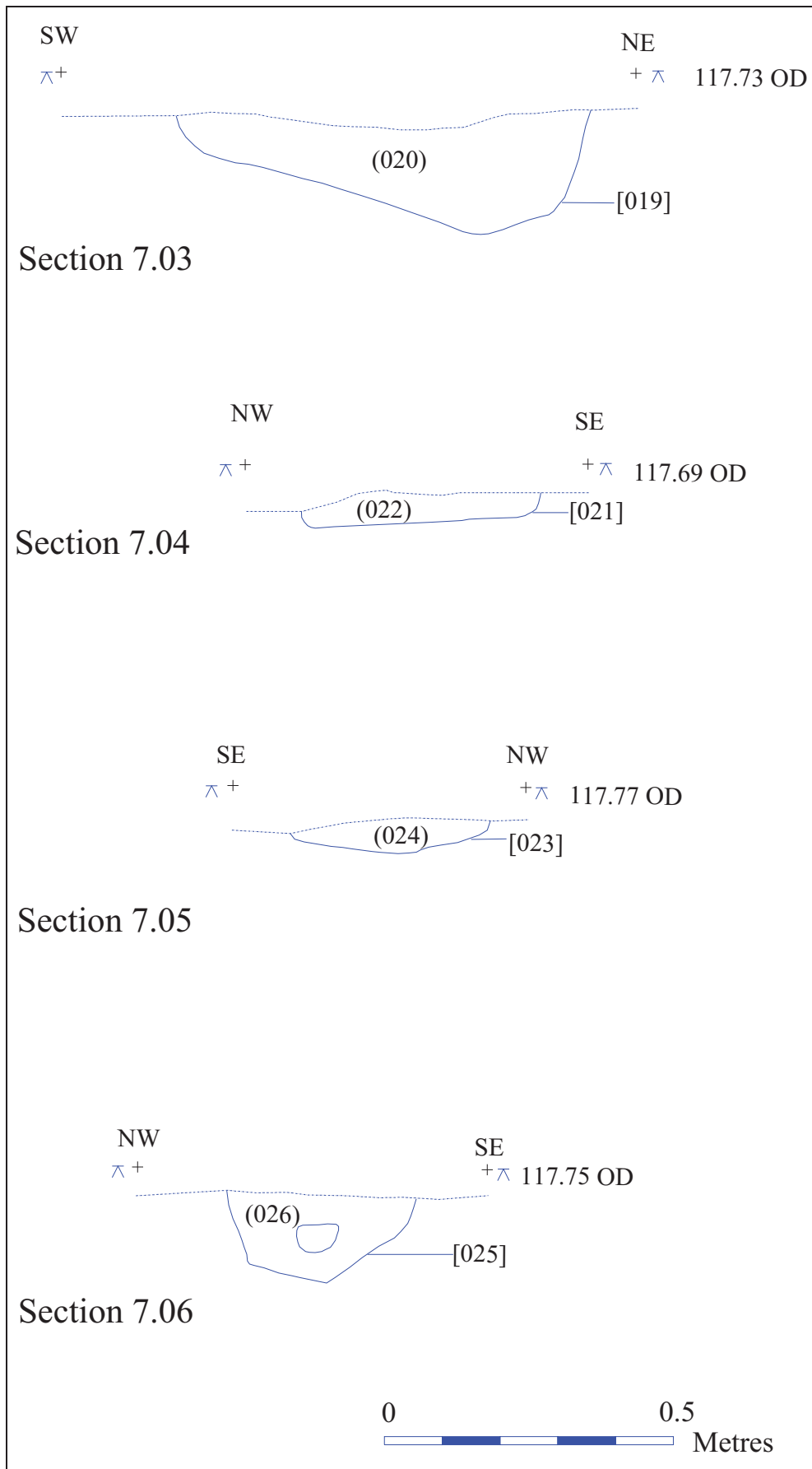


Figure 6. Sections 7.03, 7.04, 7.05 and 7.06

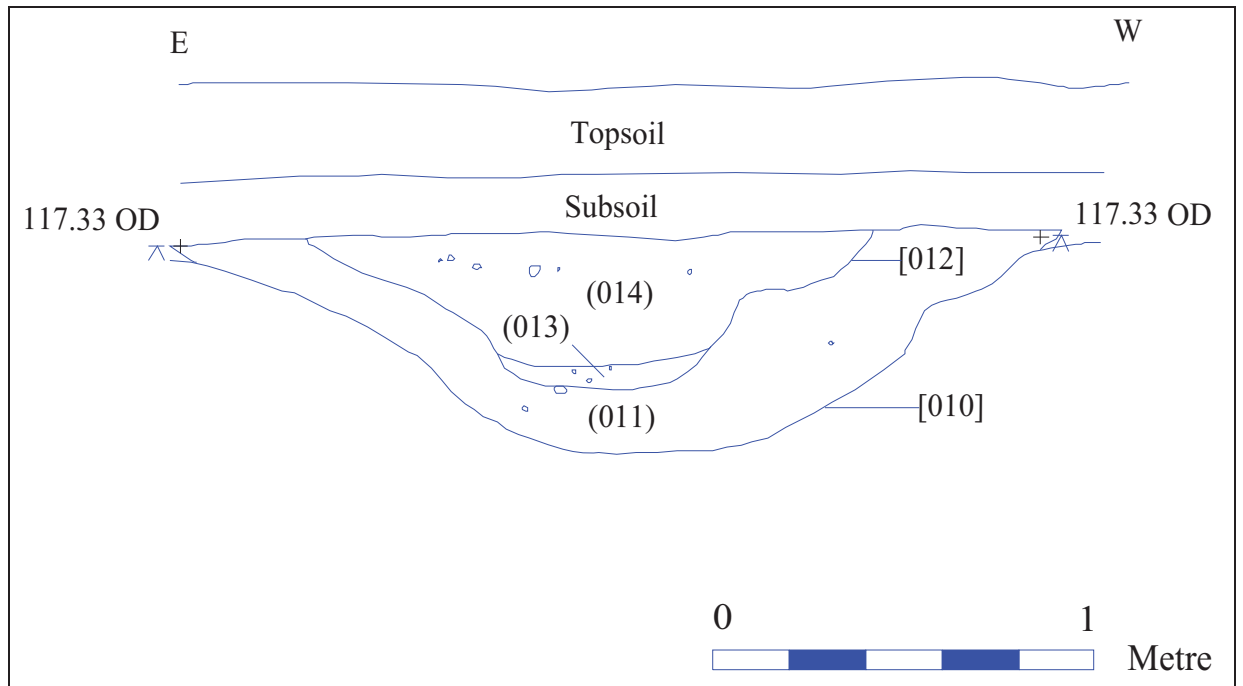


Figure 7. Section 2.01



Plate 1. The roundhouse looking north.



Plate 2. The roundhouse looking south.



Plate 3. Ditch [010] looking south.



Plate 4. Feature [027] looking southwest.