

**An Archaeological Test Pit Evaluation
and Watching Brief at
51, St Johns Road, Buxton, Derbyshire
(SK 050 735)**

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<p>Checked by Project Manager</p> <p>SignedDate.....</p> <p>Name.....</p>
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For: Busyallyear Ltd.

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Buxton, Derbyshire (SK 050 735).**

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Design Specification for Archaeological Work at 51, St Johns Road, Buxton,
Derbyshire (SK 050 735)

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by Matthew Hurford

Summary

An archaeological test pit evaluation and watching brief by control and supervision was undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services at 51, St Johns Road, Buxton, Derbyshire (SK 050 735) where planning permission was being sought for the land to be re-developed.

In total ten test pits, each measuring one metre square, were excavated down to the natural substratum. They produced little evidence of archaeological activity within the area. This is possibly due to modern re-landscaping and drainage work that has been carried out within the garden. Only Test Pit 09 contained an earth-fast feature of possible archaeological interest. It was a shallow north to south aligned linear gully or ditch. As with the other test pits it did not produce any significant finds.

The machine stripping that was undertaken during the watching brief was not of sufficient depth to disturb any underlying archaeological deposits that may have been present.

1. Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services were commissioned by Busyallyear Ltd. to undertake an archaeological test pit evaluation and watching brief by control and supervision prior to the proposed re-development of land at 51, St Johns Road, Buxton, Derbyshire (SK 050 735) as requested by Derbyshire County Council as archaeological advisers to the planning authority.

The site is located close to the nationally important Early Neolithic settlement at Lismore Fields, Buxton. This is one of the few Neolithic settlement sites located in Britain with evidence for buildings and was located following evaluation across a projected line of a Roman road (Garton 1991, 12-13). Situated on boulder clay substratum within an upland basin formed by the Wye Valley at 300 OD and surrounded on all sides by hills the site consisted of a lithic and pottery assemblage associated with a group of features including sub-rectangular buildings with preserved floors, post holes and pits. Charred plant remains from the buildings included emmer grains and chaff and flax seeds. A series of five radiocarbon dates ranging between 3990-3105 cal BC (95%) were obtained from the site. The field immediately to the south of the application area was a Scheduled Ancient Monument as it comprised ancient pasture similar to that where the Lismore Fields Neolithic site was found.

All work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists' (IFA) *Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation and Watching Briefs*. A specification for these works was produced by University of

Leicester Archaeological Services (Clay 2005), which outlines the definition and scope of the following archaeological work (Appendix 1).

2. Objectives

The main objectives of the test pitting and watching brief was to identify the presence or absence of any archaeological deposits. If archaeological remains were present their character, extent and date range is to be established.

3. Methodology

Test Pits

In total ten 1m sq test pits were excavated within the garden area that was going to be re-developed providing a c. 5% sample. The topsoil and subsoil was removed in level spits by hand at 100mm intervals. A c.20% proportion of the spoil was dry sieved for the recovery of artefacts.

The test pits were hand cleaned and the archaeological deposits were planned at 1:20 and excavated by hand to establish the stratigraphic and chronological sequence. All the plans were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

Sections of archaeological features were drawn at 1:20. At least one longitudinal face of each test pit was also recorded. All the sections were levelled and tied to a gas service cover on the pavement to the west of the development.

Test pits 1 to 5 were located in the southern half of the development and were originally going to be placed at 5m intervals. However, Test Pit 03 was moved 2m to the south as its intended location would have placed it in an area where the original ground level had been substantially lowered, probably during the construction of the current bungalow.

Test pits 6 to 8 and 10 were located in the eastern half of the development. Originally there were going to be 5 test pits placed at 5m intervals within this part of the development. However, due to re-landscaping and the presence of a hedge it was decided to move the two northerly test pits 2m to the south. After consultation with the Development Control Archaeologist, Dr. A Myers, it was decided to put the fifth test pit in the western part of the development where a car park was to be built.

Watching Brief

The watching brief took place in the western half of the development where it was proposed to build a car park. A 90 square metre area was machined using a 1.5m wide toothless ditching bucket under full archaeological supervision. The surface that was exposed once the topsoil had been removed was hand cleaned and recorded.

4. Results

The Southern Area

Test Pit 01 was located in the south western corner of the southern development. It contained topsoil (001) to a depth of up to 0.30m that consisted of dark brown to grey brown soft clayey silt with 10% sand mottles and up to 5% sub-rounded stones and 1% charcoal flecks. Modern pottery was recovered from each spit. Beneath this was a layer of subsoil (002) that was up to 0.20m thick and was light orange brown soft silty clay with 10% sand mottles and 2% rounded stones up to 0.01m in size. The subsoil overlay natural substratum that consisted of light greyish orange friable silty sand with 20% patches of clay and 2% tiny sandstone fragments. Cutting the subsoil and substratum in the eastern half of the test pit was a land drain [004] (005). No artefacts or significant archaeological deposits were encountered.

Test Pit 02 was located 5m north of Test Pit 01. It contained topsoil (006), subsoil (007) and substratum (008) that were identical to those found in Test Pit 01. In the southern half a land drain [009] (010) cut the subsoil and substratum. Landscaping in the northern half of the test pit had reduced the topsoil depth by 0.26m.

Test Pit 03 was located 3m north of Test Pit 02. It revealed that the ground had been re-landscaped following the insertion of a drain or sewer that was 0.72m below the current ground level.

Test Pit 04 was located 5m east of Test Pit 01. It had 0.16m of topsoil (018) beneath which was a charcoal layer (019) that produced modern finds. This was overlying the subsoil (020) beneath which was natural substratum. The topsoil, subsoil and substratum were the same as those encountered in Test Pit 01.

Test Pit 05 was located 5m north of Test Pit 04. It contained topsoil (029) that was up to 0.30m thick and consisted of dark greyish brown, friable to soft clayey silt with 1% charcoal flecks and 10% roots. It contained modern finds. Beneath this was a layer of subsoil (030) that was 0.10m thick and consisted of light orange brown, soft clayey silt with 20% sand mottles and 1% sub-angular stones up to 0.04m in size. The natural substratum beneath the subsoil was light greyish orange, friable, silty sand with 20% clay patches. No artefacts or significant archaeological deposits were encountered.

The Eastern Area

Test Pit 06 was located in the north western corner of the eastern development. It contained topsoil (035) to a depth of up to 0.50m that consisted of dark brownish grey, soft silty clay with 10% limestone flecks throughout and 7% rounded limestone fragments up to 0.03m in size. It produced modern finds. The layer beneath this consisted of a mid yellowish grey, friable to soft clayey silt with 20% rounded stones up to 0.06m in size and 5% charcoal flecks. It was up to 0.34m thick. As it is made of a mixture of (035), (038) and the substratum (037) and contained modern pottery it is likely to have been formed during a period when the garden was re-landscaped in the last century. Up to 0.06m of subsoil (038) survives that consists of light yellowish grey, soft silty clay. The substratum at the base of the test pit was light orange to

yellowish grey, soft silty clay with 10% sand. Cutting (036), (037) and (038) was a shallow north to south aligned feature with a flat base [040] that had in turn been cut by [039], a feature of undetermined dimensions and shape. As both features cut modern deposits they must be recent in date.

Test Pit 07 was located 5m to the east of Test Pit 06. It contained topsoil (032) to a depth of 0.52m that that was the same as in Test Pit 06. In the south eastern corner subsoil (033) was present. It consisted of light grey, soft, clayey silt with 30% sand inclusions and 10% roots. The substratum (034) was light greyish orange, friable, silty sand with 20% clay patches and 2% angular stone fragments up to 0.02m in size. No artefacts or significant archaeological deposits were encountered.

Test Pit 08 was 3m to the south of Test Pit 06. It contained topsoil (041) to a depth of 0.30m that was identical to that in Test Pit 06 beneath which was the substratum (043) that consisted of light greyish orange, friable to soft silty clay with 10% sand inclusions. No artefacts or significant archaeological deposits were encountered.

Test Pit 10 was 3m to the south of Test Pit 07. It contained topsoil (025) to a depth of 0.12m that consisted of mid orangish brown, soft, silty clay with 10% coal inclusions and 1% limestone fragments. Beneath this was a thin layer (026), up to 0.04m thick, that consisted of bright brownish grey, clayey silt with 15% coal fragments and 25% decayed limestone fragments. The bottom layer (027) was up to 0.18m thick and consisted of dark grey to brown, soft, silty clay with 1% small sub angular pebbles and limestone flecks. The substratum (028) was the same as in Test Pit 08. Cutting (028) was a square post hole [044] that was 0.25m by 0.25m and 0.25m deep. It was filled with (027) that contained modern material and so is probably of recent date.

The Western Area

Test Pit 09 was located in the southern end of the western development. It contained topsoil (011) to a depth of 0.26m that consisted of very dark greyish brown to black, soft, silty clay with 1% charcoal flecks, 2% angular stones up to 0.02m in size and 5% roots. Beneath this was a 0.14m thick layer of subsoil (013) that was mid grey, soft silty clay. The substratum (017) was greyish orange clay 75% and sand 25%. Beneath the subsoil and cutting the substratum was a possible linear feature, [014]. It was aligned north to south and was 0.34m deep with concave sides and a flat base to the south. Its width was not established as it exceeded the size of the test pit. The upper fill (015) was 0.10m thick and consisted of mid grey, and bright orange brown, soft sandy clay with 1% gritstone fragments up to 0.07m by 0.06m in size. The lower fill (016) was dark grey, soft clay with 30% orange soft clay mottles with 1% gritstone fragments up to 0.07m by 0.06m. No dating evidence was recovered from the feature. As a watching brief was to be conducted in the area it was decided to do further work on the feature only if it was to be disturbed by the ground works for the car park.

Only the southern 6.50m of machine stripping of the western development area penetrated the topsoil. It revealed that the eastern half of the area had been re-landscaped and that a modern drain aligned east to west ran across the northern part of the site. The exposed subsoil (045) was the same as that found in Test Pit 09. Substratum (046) was only exposed in the south western corner of the site and it was

identical to that found in Test Pit 09. As the machining was not of sufficient depth to expose more of the potential feature [014] it was decided to preserve it *in situ*.

5. Conclusion

The test pitting and watching brief have produced little evidence of archaeological activity within the area. This is possibly due to re-landscaping and drainage work undertaken within the garden.

The eastern development area lies over a metre below the level of the garden to the south and west and contains little subsoil suggesting that it has been lowered. Furthermore, the difference in topsoil between the southern and eastern areas could be due to soil from elsewhere being used in this re-landscaping.

Though the test pits suggest that the land in the southern area, except test pit 03, had been relatively untouched by its conversion into a garden, no archaeological artefacts or features of significance were found.

Test Pit 09 produced evidence of a possible north to south aligned linear ditch or gully in the western half of the development. No artefacts were recovered to assist with dating. As it lay below the formation level of the development it was decided that further excavation was not required.

The watching brief in the western area contained considerable modern disturbance and was not of sufficient depth to disturb archaeological deposits.

6. Acknowledgements

Thanks are expressed to the developer, Bob Wales of Busyallyear Ltd. and to David Grindley for the machining. The author supervised the fieldwork with the assistance of J. Patrick. Dr. Patrick Clay managed the project.

7. Bibliography

Garton, D., 1991 'Neolithic settlement in the Peak District: Perspective and Prospects', in Hodges, R. and Smith, K. (eds), *Recent Developments in the Archaeology of the Peak District*. Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 3-21.

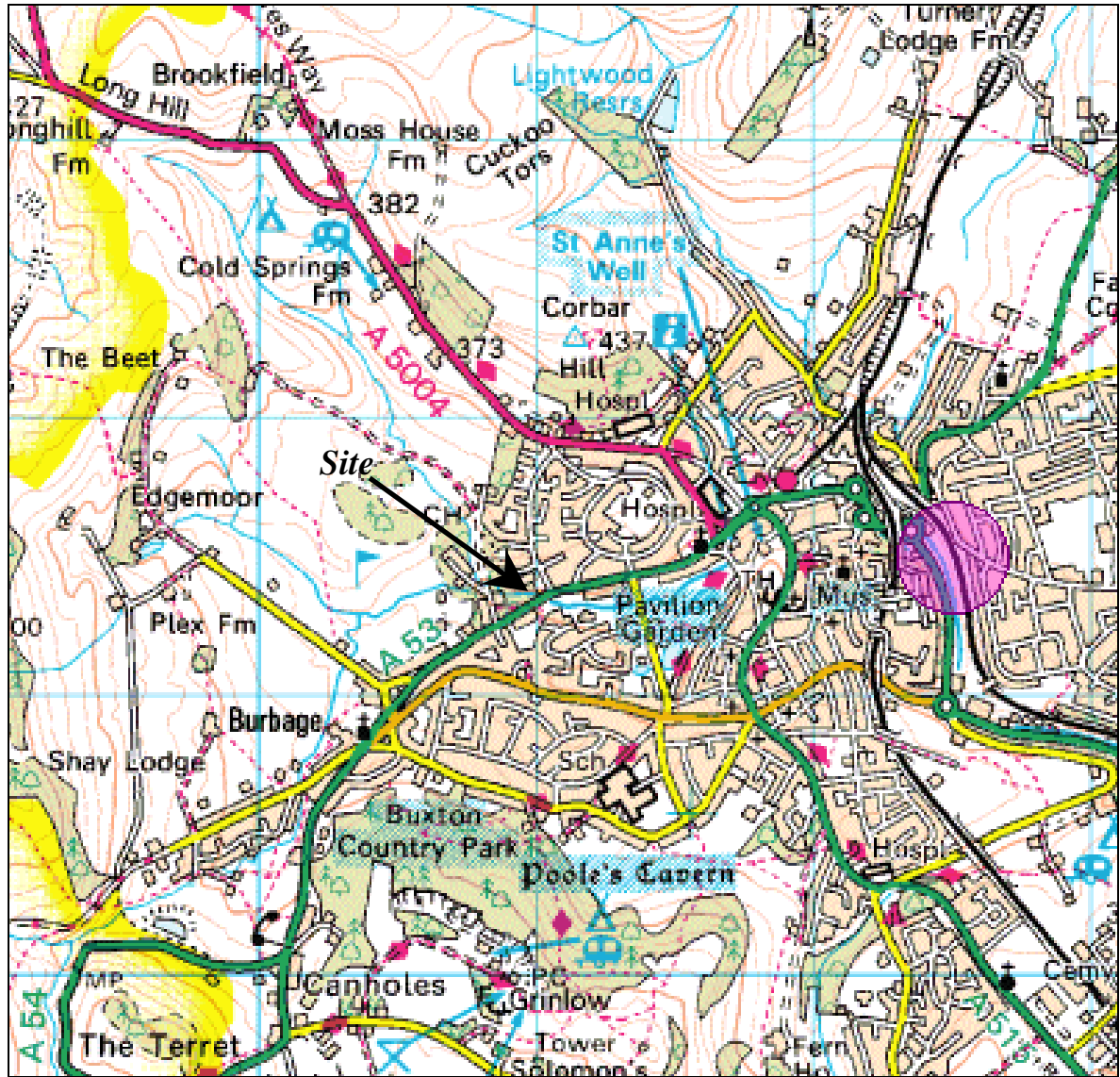


Figure 1. Site location 1:50000.

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Figure 2. Site location 1:25000.

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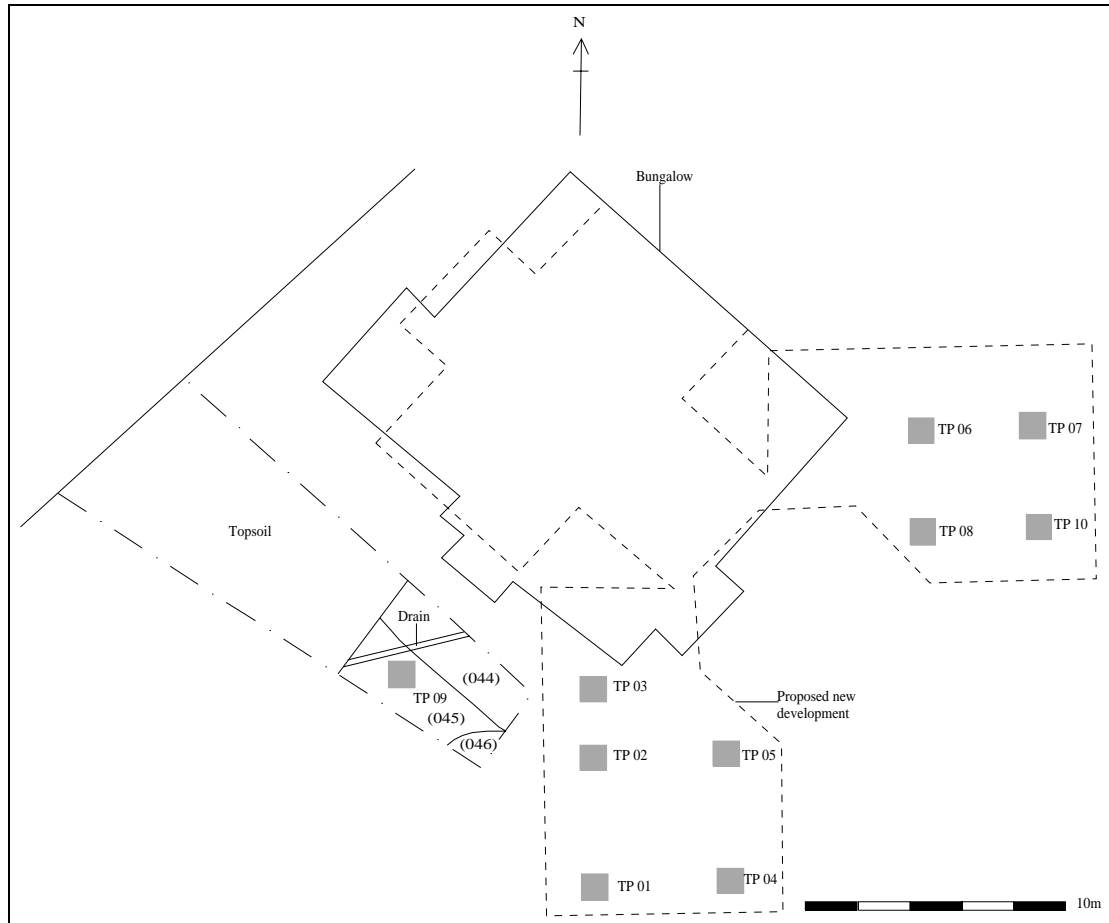


Figure 3. Location of the test pits and watching brief.

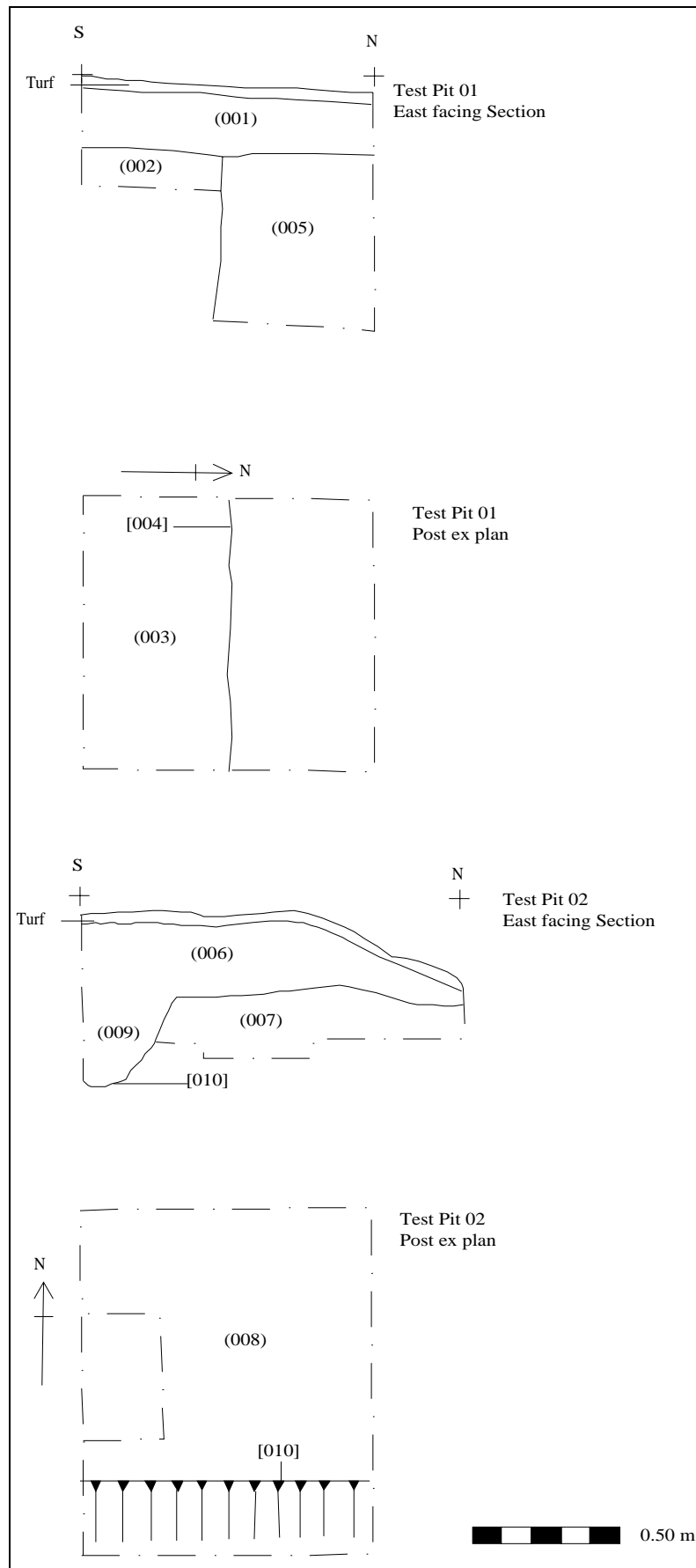


Figure 4. Test Pits 01 and 02.

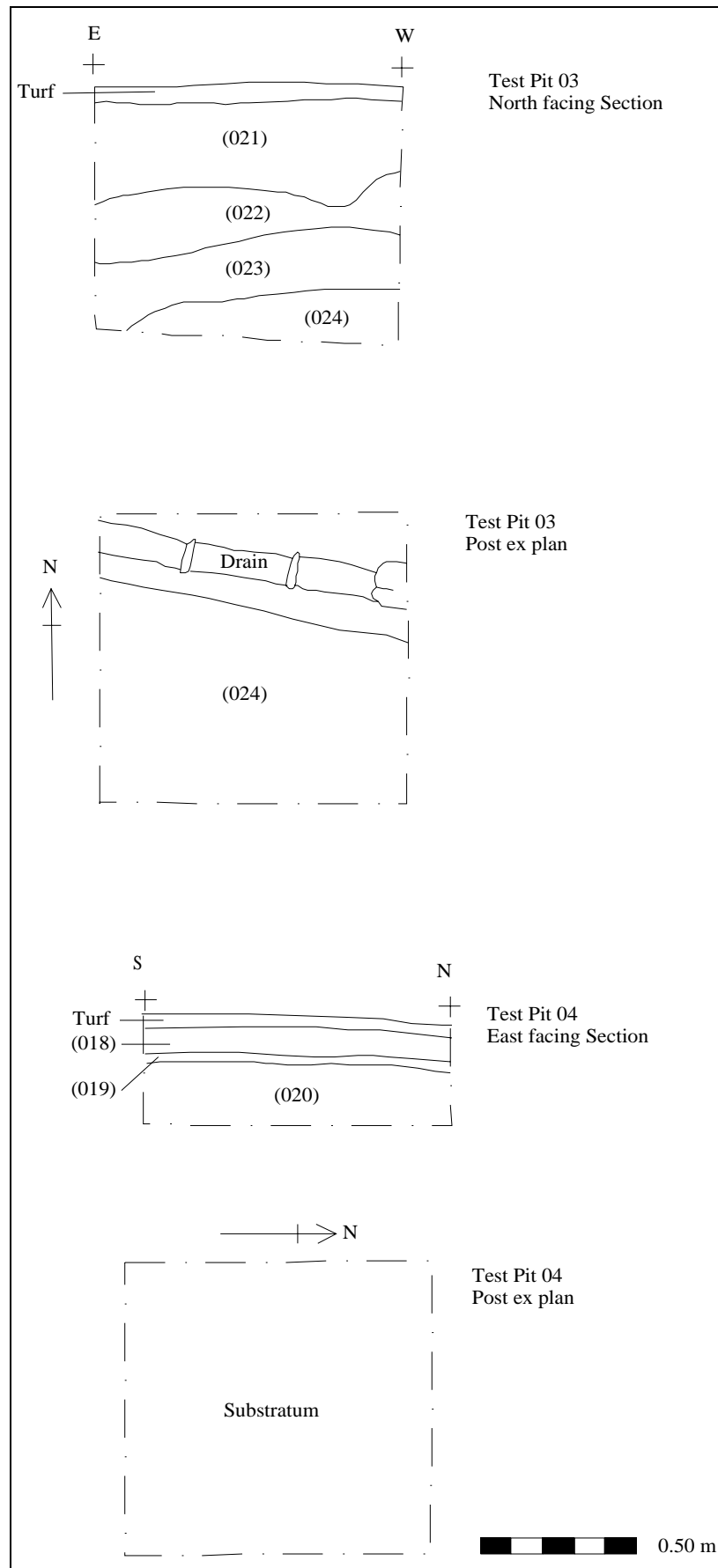


Figure 5. Test Pits 03 and 04.

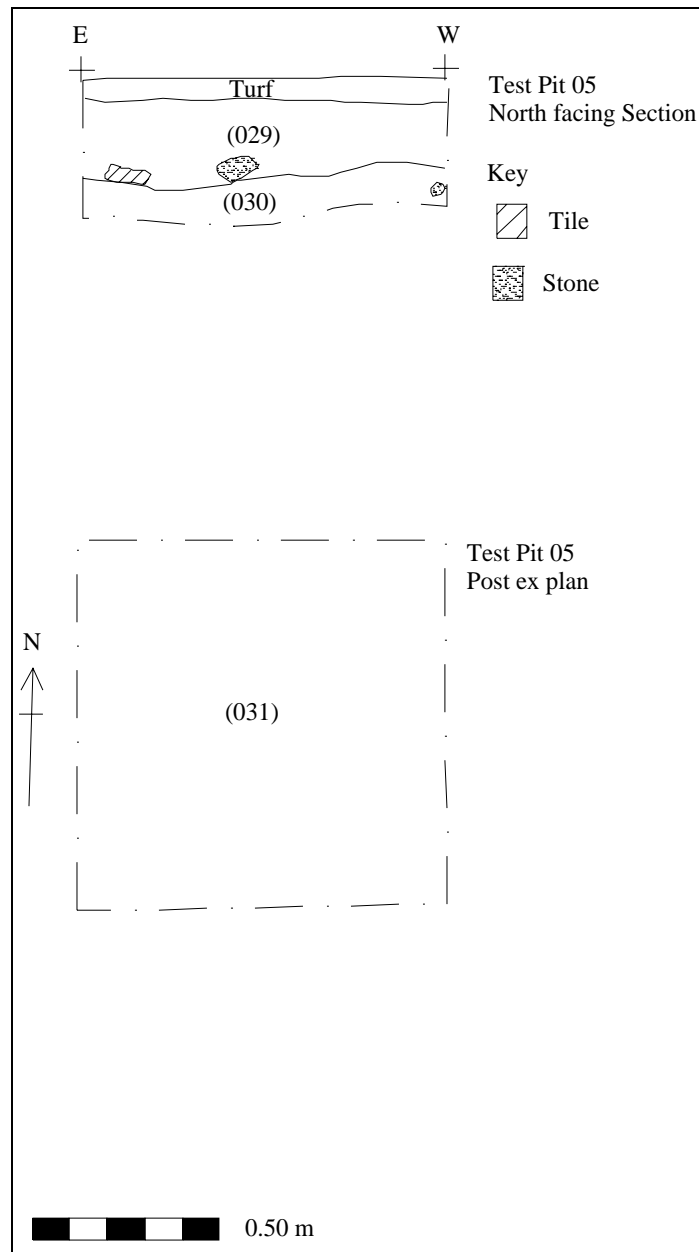


Figure 6. Test Pit 05.

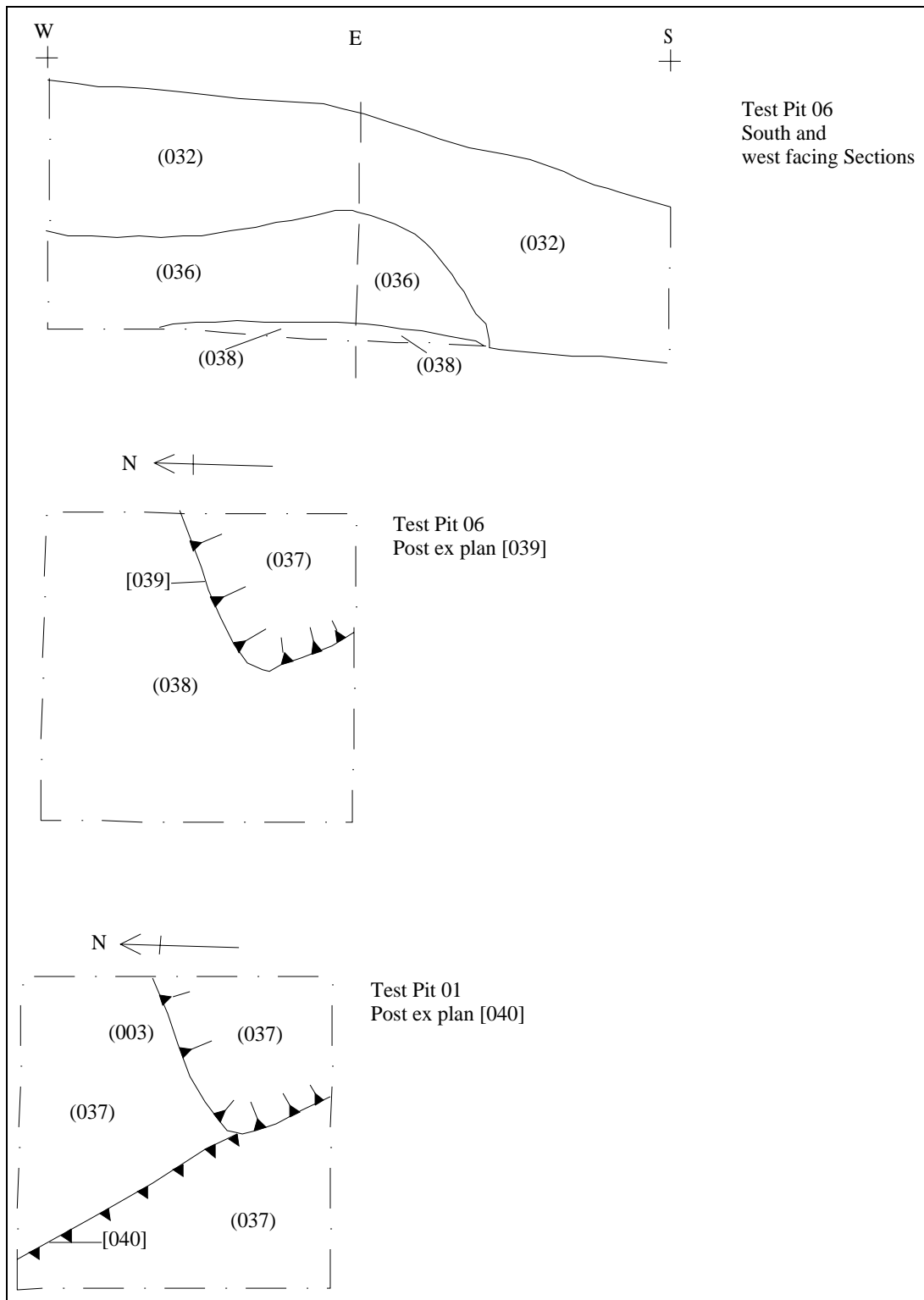


Figure 07. Test Pit 06.

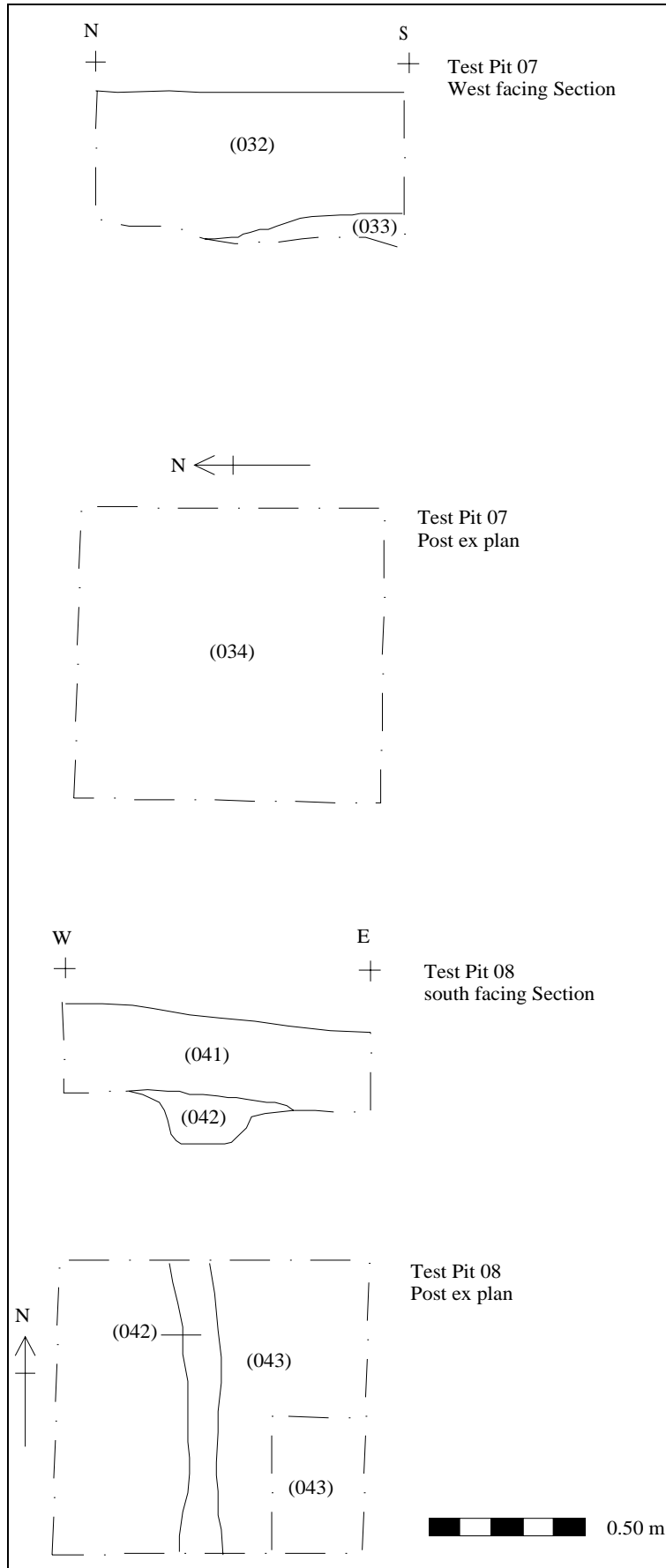


Figure 8. Test Pits 07 and 08.

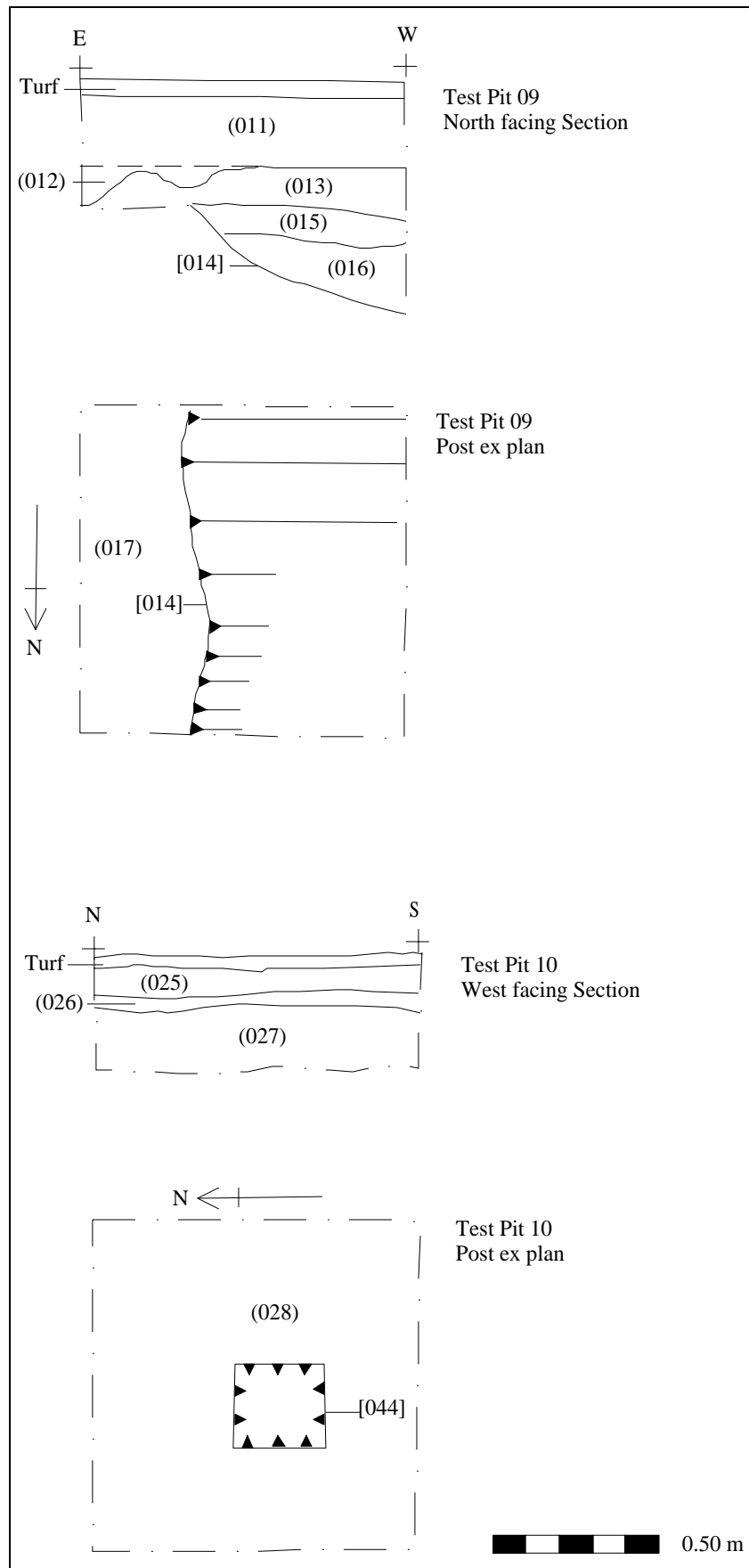


Figure 9. Test Pits 09 and 10.



Plate 1. Test Pit 09, [014] north facing section.



Plate 2. Test Pit 09, [014] post excavation.



Plate 3. The western area after machining.