

**A453 Widening M1 Junction 24 to A52 Nottingham
Phase 3 Evaluation**

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Phase 3 Evaluation**

Contents

Summary	1
1. Introduction	1
2. Geology	3
3. Archaeological and Historical Background	3
4. Objectives	4
5. Methodology	5
6. Results	5
7. Conclusion	9
8. Archive	9
9. Acknowledgements	10
10. Bibliography	10

Appendix 1

The Ceramic Finds from the A453 Widening M1, Junction 24 to the A52 Nottingham, Phase 3 Evaluation Accession No: X.A6 2007 by Elizabeth Johnson.

Illustrations

Figure 1. Location plan 1:50000.

Figure 2. Site 7. Location of trenches and geophysical anomalies.

Figure 3. Sites 12 and 28. Location of trenches and geophysical anomalies.

Figure 4. Trench 36 and Trench 37 post excavation plans.

Figure 5. Trench 38 post excavation plan.

Figure 6. Trench 38 Section 17.01 and Trench 37 Section 21.01.

Figure 7. Trench 38 Sections 17.04 and 17.05, Trench 36 Sections 20.01 and 20.02.

Plates

Plate 1. Trench 36. Feature [083] after excavation.

Plate 2. Trench 37. Feature [063] and [065] southwest facing section.

Plate 3. Trench 38. Features [045] and [048] in plan.

Plate 4. Trench 38. Features [043] and [049] southeast facing section.

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the offline section of the A453 from Clifton to Barton Lane, Nottinghamshire by ULAS in June 2007. The work was commissioned by White Young Green.

In total 8 trial trenches were excavated in order to assess the potential for the survival of archaeological remains. Two trenches were excavated at Site 7, one at Site 12, and five at Site 28.

At Site 7 a northwest to southeast furrow demonstrated the presence of medieval farming.

There was an absence of archaeological deposits at Site 12.

The archaeology at Site 28 consisted of a large settlement enclosure ditch containing late first to second century pottery. Two features of Romano-British date located to the southeast could be beam slots belonging to a timber building. Finds from the vicinity indicate that it could have been roofed in imbrex tiles. Romano-British and potentially Iron Age archaeology extends to the south of the enclosure in the form of linear features that may be boundary or drainage ditches associated with land use. Medieval farming is attested by the presence of northwest to southeast aligned furrows in the eastern part of the site.

The site archive will be held by the Historic & Natural Environment Team, Leicestershire County Council under the Accession Number X. A6. 2007.

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 on the offline section of the A453 from Clifton to Barton Lane, Nottinghamshire (Fig. 1).

The work was carried out at the request of the Highways Agency as part of the Environmental Assessment of the area to identify the impact of a new road from the M1 Junction 24 to the A52 at Clifton, running alongside the existing A453. An archaeological desk-based assessment (Score 2006) identified the need for further work to identify the extent and nature of possible archaeological features along the line of the proposed road scheme. Geophysical survey had identified a number of potential archaeological features at various sites along the route and trial trenching

was required to clarify the date, nature and extent of these features. Trench locations and excavation methodology were agreed with the Senior Planning Archaeologists for Nottinghamshire County Council and Leicestershire County Council, in their capacity as archaeological advisor to the planning authorities.

The proposed road widening scheme covers the section of the A453 between the M1, Junction 24 to the Crusader Roundabout in Clifton which is approximately 11.5 km long, and comprises a 10km rural section between Junction 24 and the Crusader Roundabout, and a 1.5km urban section through Clifton between the Crusader Roundabout and the Farnborough Road/Fabis Drive junction.

The evaluation follows on from previous archaeological evaluations (Hurford 2007a) and is focused on three areas in the rural section. Site 7 is situated on land to the east of Barton lane and to the south of the A453, Site 12 to the south of Mill Hill and the A453 and Site 28 which is located opposite Millhill Spinney and to the south of the A453. (Figs. 2 and 3).



Figure 1. Evaluation area. Scale 1:50000

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2. Geology

The geology of the proposed route consists of drift deposits of alluvium, river terrace gravel and boulder clay, which overlie Mercia mudstone. Between the junction of the M1/A453 and the midland Mainline Railway are deposits of Wanlip, Syston and Hemington sand and gravel river terraces. Also in this segment of the A453 route are areas of silty sandy clay alluvium deposited by the River Trent in its floodplain, which may seal earlier archaeological deposits.

The area between Barton Lane and Clifton sits on higher ground. Previous excavations (Hurford 2007a) have shown the soils to comprise fairly heavy clays. Both Site 12 and Site 28 lie on a ridge just south of the A453. Site 7 lies on an area of flat ground between Barton Lane and the A453 (Figs. 2 and 3).

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

General Background

The study area lies close to the River Soar/River Trent confluence and the desk-based assessment has shown that the region has been utilised since early prehistoric times. Finds of flint and prehistoric cropmarks are common along the length of the route including evidence for ring ditches that may be burial mounds, possibly belonging to one of the barrow cemeteries in the region. At Red Hill there is evidence for Iron Age activity including a shrine and there are a number of undated cropmarks whose form is suggestive of an Iron Age date. There is also a possible fortified site at Brands Hill with associated lynchets and a number of Roman sites in the area containing evidence for earlier settlement and activity prior to their development.

A Romano-British presence in the area of the road corridor is shown by several pottery scatters. Scheduled monuments in the area include the Lockington villa, Red Hill with its evidence for occupation and ritual activity and burial along with Glebe Farm Roman villa close to the road. There is also the possibility that a Roman road crosses the A453 near Long Lane by the River Soar on its way to Red Hill. Current evidence suggests that the road may lie beneath Long Lane itself although the exact alignment is unknown.

The modern settlement pattern hints that the study area was well populated before the Conquest. All four of the villages appear in Domesday Book (1086) suggesting that they were well established prior to this. One site close to the road corridor shows significant evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity.

Later medieval activity in the study area is mostly confined to the buildings and layout of the villages. Aerial photographs indicate that much of the study area has the remnants of ploughed out ridge and furrow suggesting it was cultivated during the medieval period.

Many of the post-medieval sites on HER (Historic Environment Record) reflect the growing industrialisation of the Trent Valley and include a number of mines used to extract the extensive deposits of Gypsum in the area. Associated sites in the study

area include a number of tramways, quarries and mills as well as the dominant feature of the Radcliffe on Soar Power Station built in the 1960s.

The study area

Site 7

Site 7 to the east of Barton Lane comprises a cropmark identified on the HER and the NMP, suggestive of Romano-British activity. The geophysical survey failed to locate the cropmark. However, it did locate a number of pit like features between Barton Lane and the A453. Three curving anomalies noted during a previous geophysical survey (Stratascan 1993) were also identified. Only features of an agricultural (ploughing), or modern origin were noted between Site 7 and Site 12.

Site 12

Site 12 contains a cropmark not noted on the HER or the NMP which was recorded during the original aerial photographic search by TPAT (TPAT 1993). An area covering the location of the cropmark was surveyed which produced a number of positive linear and area anomalies and several pit-like features. All these could be archaeological in nature. Although no similar feature was noted in the cropmark area, there are two rounded linear features that could have caused the cropmark. Although this cropmark is not now affected by the new offline route, geophysical survey on the offline area in 2007 (Smalley 2007) identified a strong feature just to the south which will be affected.

Site 28

Site 28 comprised features identified during geophysical survey and trial trenching opposite Millhill Spinney south of the A453. Open area stripping just outside the new roadline revealed a large enclosure with finds dating from the Iron Age to the Roman period (Hurford 2007b). The geophysical survey revealed three sides of a large enclosure adjacent to the A453 with a number of linear features within it and to the east and south and a scatter of possible pits around it. The previous trenching had identified the north and east side of the enclosure. A number of other features of possible archaeological origin were seen just south-east of the enclosure, next to the A453 (Smalley 2007).

A large irregular cropmark had previously been noted between the A453 and Nottingham Road. The geophysical survey located a line of pits close to one of the cropmark features. Further east a bank and ditch were noted parallel to Nottingham Road, about 26m to the north.

4. 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*.

5. Methodology

In total two trenches each measuring 30m long and 1.5m wide were excavated at Site 7, one trench of the same dimensions at Site 12 and five at Site 28.

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 trench 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 1:50 and tied into an overall site plan of 1:500. All excavated sections were recorded and drawn at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20. The location of the trenches was surveyed using an EDM and all plans were tied into the National Grid.

6. Results

Site 7

Two trenches were located at Site 7 targeting specific features identified as cropmarks and by the geophysical survey (Fig. 2).

Trench 40

Length: 30m

Width: 1.5m

Depth: 0.40m (min) – 0.54m (max)

Orientation: NE-SW

Trench 40 targeted a rectangular enclosure, identified as a cropmark believed to be suggestive of Romano-British activity.

Between 0.32m and 0.40m of dark grey brown topsoil was removed revealing mid orange to yellow brown silty clay sand subsoil beneath which at between 0.34m and 0.50m was natural substratum consisting of light reddish brown silty clay.

A single northwest to southeast furrow was encountered 12m from the southwest edge of the trench. No other archaeological features were encountered.

Trench 41

Length: 30m

Width: 1.5m

Depth: 0.34m (min) – 0.50m (max)

Orientation: E-W

Trench 41 targeted a number of linear features identified during the geophysical survey.

Between 0.30m and 0.40m of mid yellowish brown clayey silt topsoil was removed revealing light yellowish brown silty sand subsoil in the west of the trench. Natural substratum consisting of light reddish brown sandy clay was encountered between 0.30m and 0.46m below present ground level.

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Site 12

A single trench was excavated to investigate a linear feature identified during the geophysical survey (Figs. 2 and 3).

Trench 39

Length: 30m

Width: 1.5m

Depth: 0.40m (min) – 0.66m (max)

Orientation: NE-SW

Between 0.30m and 0.40m of mid greyish brown clayey silt topsoil was removed revealing mid yellowish brown clayey silt subsoil beneath which at between 0.46m and 0.52m was natural substratum consisting of red clay with occasional patches of pale cream sand.

No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Site 28

Five trenches were located at Site 28 targeting features identified during the geophysical survey and trial trenching opposite Millhill Spinney south of the A453 which encountered Iron Age and Romano-British activity (Figs. 2 and 3).

Trench 34

Length: 30m

Width: 1.5m

Depth: 0.41m (min) – 0.60m (max)

Orientation: NW-SE

Trench 34 targeted a north to south aligned feature of possible archaeological origin identified during the geophysical survey.

Between 0.26m and 0.38m of mid yellowish brown clay sand silt topsoil was removed revealing limestone bedrock in the northwest half of the site and red clay substratum in the southeast.

Cutting the limestone bedrock in the far northwest of the trench was a north to south aligned linear feature which was steep sided with a V-shaped base. It measured 0.60m

in width and 0.23m in depth and contained red clay. This is likely to be an ice wedge geological feature.

Trench 35

Length: 30m

Width: 1.5m

Depth: 0.30m (min) – 0.58m (max)

Orientation: NE-SW

Trench 35 targeted a large irregular negative geophysical anomaly and three northwest to southeast aligned linear features of probable agricultural origin.

Approximately 0.30m of mid orange brown clayey silt topsoil was removed revealing light orange brown sandy silty subsoil in the south western half of the trench. Natural substratum consisting of light reddish brown sandy clay was reached between 0.30m and 0.40m.

Three northwest to southeast aligned furrows were encountered cutting the natural substratum.

Trench 36 (Figs. 4 and 7 and Plate 1)

Length: 30m

Width: 1.5m

Depth: 0.38m (min) - 0.45m (max)

Orientation: NW-SE

Trench 36 targeted a small rectangular feature and a northeast to southwest aligned linear feature both of which were identified during the geophysical survey.

Between 0.28m and 0.42m of mid yellowish brown sandy clay topsoil was removed revealing reddish brown sandy clay natural substratum.

Two linear features, cuts [083] and [085] were located in the north western half of the trench. Extending across the width of the trench was cut [083] and at an 80 degree angle to it was cut [085]. Cut [083] was up to 0.70m in width and up to 0.13m in depth and had a flat base and contained mid to light orange brown sandy silt fill which had Romano-British pottery dating from the late first to the middle of the second century within it and a fragment of possible kiln furniture. Cut [085] had suffered considerable truncation, in particular to the south. It was up to 0.31m in width and up to 0.07m in depth and also had a flat base. It contained dark orange brown silt fill (086). The base of both features contained tool marks. It is feasible that the features are beam slots for a timber building which measured, based on the geophysical survey, 11m by 6m. A similar anomaly was identified by the geophysical survey to the west.

Trench 37 (Figs. 4 and 6 and Plate 2)

Length: 30m

Width: 1.5m

Depth: 0.35m (min) - 0.40m (max)

Orientation: N-S

Trench 37 targeted an enclosure ditch identified by the geophysics survey and encountered on a previous excavation (Hurford 2007b).

Between 0.30m and 0.45m of mid orange to greyish brown clayey silt topsoil was removed revealing natural substratum consisting of mid reddish brown clay.

Located in the northern end of the trench was a linear feature, cut [063]. It was aligned west to east and was 3.35m in width and in excess of 0.50m in depth. The base was not reached due to time constraints. It contained a number of silty clay fills, (064), (068), and (069) that had slumped in from the north. Romano-British pottery dating from the second century and animal bone was recovered from fill (064). In the northwest edge of the ditch was a small feature, cut [065]. It contained dark grey brown silty clay fill (066) that merged with the fills in [064]. Further work is required to establish the nature of this feature and its relationship with the enclosure ditch [063].

Trench 38 (Figs. 5 and 7 and Plate 3 and 4)

Length: 30m

Width: 1.5m

Depth: 0.23m (min) - 0.35m (max)

Orientation: N-S

Trench 38 targeted a number of features of possible archaeological origin located to the southeast of the enclosure next to the A453.

Between 0.23m and 0.35m of mid greyish brown clayey silt topsoil was removed revealing natural substratum consisting of mid reddish brown clay.

Crossing each other at right angles in the southern end of the trench were two linear features, cut [045], fill (046) that was aligned northwest to southeast and [047], fill (048) that was aligned northeast to southwest. The features were a similar width, [045] being 1.05m and [048] being 1.20m, they had very similar sides, an identical depth of 0.45m and both contained mid orange brown clay fills. The relationship between the two features could not be established. It seems therefore that they could be contemporary, probably field drainage ditches which date from the second to fourth century based on the pottery recovered from the box placed at the junction of the two features. To the north was a further linear feature, cut [043]. It was aligned east to west and measured 0.60m in width and 0.27m in depth and had a wide shallow flat base. It contained mid orange brown clay sand silt fill (044) from the base of which was recovered a sherd of late Iron Age pottery. Post dating [043] was a ditch terminal or possible pit, cut [049]. It was 0.60m in width and 0.22m in depth with a flat base. It contained mid to dark orange brown clay sand silt fill, (050). No finds were recovered to assist with dating though the similarity between the features makes it likely that it represents a later phase of field system ditch cutting.

Nine fragments of Romano-British ceramic building material were recovered from the topsoil in the vicinity of [045] and [046], including *imbrex* roof tiles and flat wall tiles suggesting the presence well constructed buildings within the area.

7. Conclusion

Site 7

Medieval agricultural activity was demonstrated by the presence of a northwest to southeast aligned furrow.

Site 12

No archaeological deposits were encountered at Site 12 despite the promising cropmark evidence.

Site 28

The archaeology consists of a large enclosure ditch which from the geophysical survey and evaluation appears typical in size and shape to excavated examples in the Trent Valley (Knight and Howard, 2004, 95). The slumping within the ditch indicates that it had an internal bank. The finds within the ditch suggest that it enclosed a settlement that was occupied during the second century. However, as the base of the ditch was not reached earlier activity cannot be ruled out.

There is also potential settlement activity to the southeast of the enclosure in the form of a rectangular building. The size and shape of the possible structure conforms to those encountered on the recent excavations at Vine Street in Leicester (T. Higgins pers comm). The beam slots were wide enough to house timbers of sufficient size to construct a building capable of supporting a roof of *imbrex* tiles (T. Higgins pers comm) fragments of which were found to the west.

Romano-British and potentially Iron Age archaeology extends to the south of the enclosure in the form of linear features that may be boundary or drainage ditches associated with land use. The fragmentary remains of a sub-rectangular field system was discovered to the northeast of the enclosure (Hurford 2007b). These field systems have been shown to be closely integrated with enclosures along the Trent Valley (Knight and Howard 2004, 100).

Medieval farming is attested by the presence of northwest to southeast aligned furrows in the eastern part of the site.

8 Archive

The site archive consists of 1 drawing index sheet, 1 drawing record sheet, 5 drawings, 4 archaeological photo record sheets, 2 trench compensation record sheets, 1 access point compensation record sheet, 2 context summary sheet, 8 trench recording sheets,

19 context sheets, 3 sheets of black white photographs with 3 negative sheets and digital duplicates on CD, and 2 sets of scale drawings showing the locations of all the trenches and geophysical anomalies. The archive is listed under the Accession number X.A6 2007 and will be deposited with the relevant authority.

9. Acknowledgements

Fieldwork was undertaken by the author with the assistance of Jamie Patrick. Vicki Score managed the project.

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**Appendix 1: Ceramic Finds from the A453 Widening M1 Junction 24 to A52
Nottingham Phase 3 Evaluation, Accession No: XA6.2007**

Elizabeth Johnson

Assemblage Size and Condition

A stratified assemblage of 71 sherds of Roman period pottery weighing 609g was retrieved from excavations carried out as part of an archaeological evaluation. A sherd of Late Iron Age pottery was also recovered. Levels of preservation are variable with some large sherds but also abraded and fragmentary material, which is reflected in a relatively low average sherd weight of 8.6g.

Methodology

The material was classified using the Leicestershire/East Midlands Fabric Series (Pollard 1994; Marsden 2000) and quantified by sherd count and weight as shown in the table below. Vessel forms were also assigned where diagnostic sherds allowed using published typologies (Gillam 1968; Pollard 1994; Clark 1999).

Tren	Cont	Fabric	Form	Sherds	Weight (g)	Dating
Tr38	44	Rock inclusions (Ro1)	Misc	1	4	c.200BC-AD50 LIA
Tr38	44	Grey ware	Misc	1	19	2ndC+
Tr38	44	Grey ware	Misc	1	12	2ndC+
Tr38	44	Sandy ware	Bowl	1	6	mid/late1st-early2ndC
Tr38	46	Grey ware	Misc	1	5	2ndC+
Tr38	46/48	Grey ware	Jar	23	59	2ndC+
Tr37	64	Grey ware	Jar	2	15	2ndC+
Tr37	64	Oxidised ware	Jar	4	15	2ndC+
Tr37	64	Grey ware	Jar	2	15	2ndC+
Tr37	64	White slipped	Flagon	6	240	early-mid2ndC
Tr37	64	White ware	Misc	1	2	2ndC
Tr37	64	Black Burnished ware	Bowl	9	44	mid-late2ndC
Tr37	64	Grey ware	Jar	1	6	late1st-early2ndC
Tr37	64	Grey ware	Jar	1	15	2ndC+
Tr37	64	Grey ware	Bowl	1	33	2ndC
Tr37	64	Grey ware	Jar	4	31	2ndC+
Tr37	64	Grey ware	Jar	1	3	2ndC+
Tr37	64	Grey ware	Jar	1	7	2ndC+
Tr37	64	Grey ware	Jar	1	3	late1st-early2ndC
Tr37	64	Grey ware	Jar	1	11	late1st-2ndC
Tr37	64	Grey ware	Jar	1	8	late1st-2ndC
Tr36	84	Grey ware	Misc	1	1	2ndC+
Tr36	84	Grey ware	Jar	1	13	late1st-early2ndC
Tr36	84	Sandy ware	Jar	1	3	late1st-early2ndC
Tr36	84	Grey ware	Jar	1	15	late1st-2ndC
Tr36	84	Grey ware	Jar	1	4	2ndC+
Tr36	84	Grey ware	Jar	1	18	2ndC+
Tr36	84	Grey ware	Jar	2	6	late1st-mid2ndC

Trench 36

Context (84)

A small group of sandy and grey ware jars were recovered from (84). Forms and decoration present included a carinated Belgic style jar and barbotine dot decoration, dating from the late first century to the middle of the second. A fragment of fired clay or possibly kiln furniture was also recovered from (84).

Trench 37

Context (64)

The enclosure ditch (64) produced the most varied group of pottery within the assemblage. The local grey wares are mostly jars including carinated and cordoned forms dating to the late first-second century. A flat rimmed grey ware bowl dates to the second century. The oxidised ware jar, white ware and white-slipped ware ring necked flagon also date to the second century. These could be locally produced however the white-slipped ware flagon in particular is comparable to vessels found in Leicester (Clark 1999: 46-48) from sources such as Mancetter-Hartshill (Pollard 1986: 4). The Black Burnished ware bowl is flat rimmed with acute lattice indicating a date around the middle of the second century and no later than the end of the second century (Gillam 1968: 31).

Trench 38

Contexts (44), (46), (46/48)

The single sherd of Late Iron Age pottery was recovered from (44) spit 2. It is small, fairly abraded and undiagnostic. Three sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered from (44) spit 1 above the Late Iron Age pottery. This comprises a sandy ware bead rimmed bowl dating to the mid/late first-early second century and two sherds of undiagnostic grey ware probably dating to the early second century (Pollard 1994: 74-75). The grey ware from (46) is not closely dateable and 23 sherds from (46/48) belong to a single vessel. This has a roulette decorated cordon on the shoulder similar to East Midlands Burnished type wares dating to the third century (Todd 1968). However, the fabric is not of this type and is more indicative of a date within the second century. The grey and sandy wares are most likely locally made. Nine fragments of Romano-British ceramic building material were recovered from the topsoil above [45]/[47], including *imbrex* roof tiles and flat wall tiles used in general construction.

Summary

The assemblage suggests Roman activity largely during the second century, though there are a few earlier transitional sandy wares. The latest dateable pottery is the Black Burnished ware bowl, which, although most likely dating to the middle of the second century in view of the rest of the material, could date to the second half of the second century. The very small amounts of regional wares such as Black Burnished ware and possibly the white-slipped and oxidised wares do suggest a date within the

second century. There are no fine wares, imports or specialist vessels such as mortaria, suggesting a rural farmstead type site.

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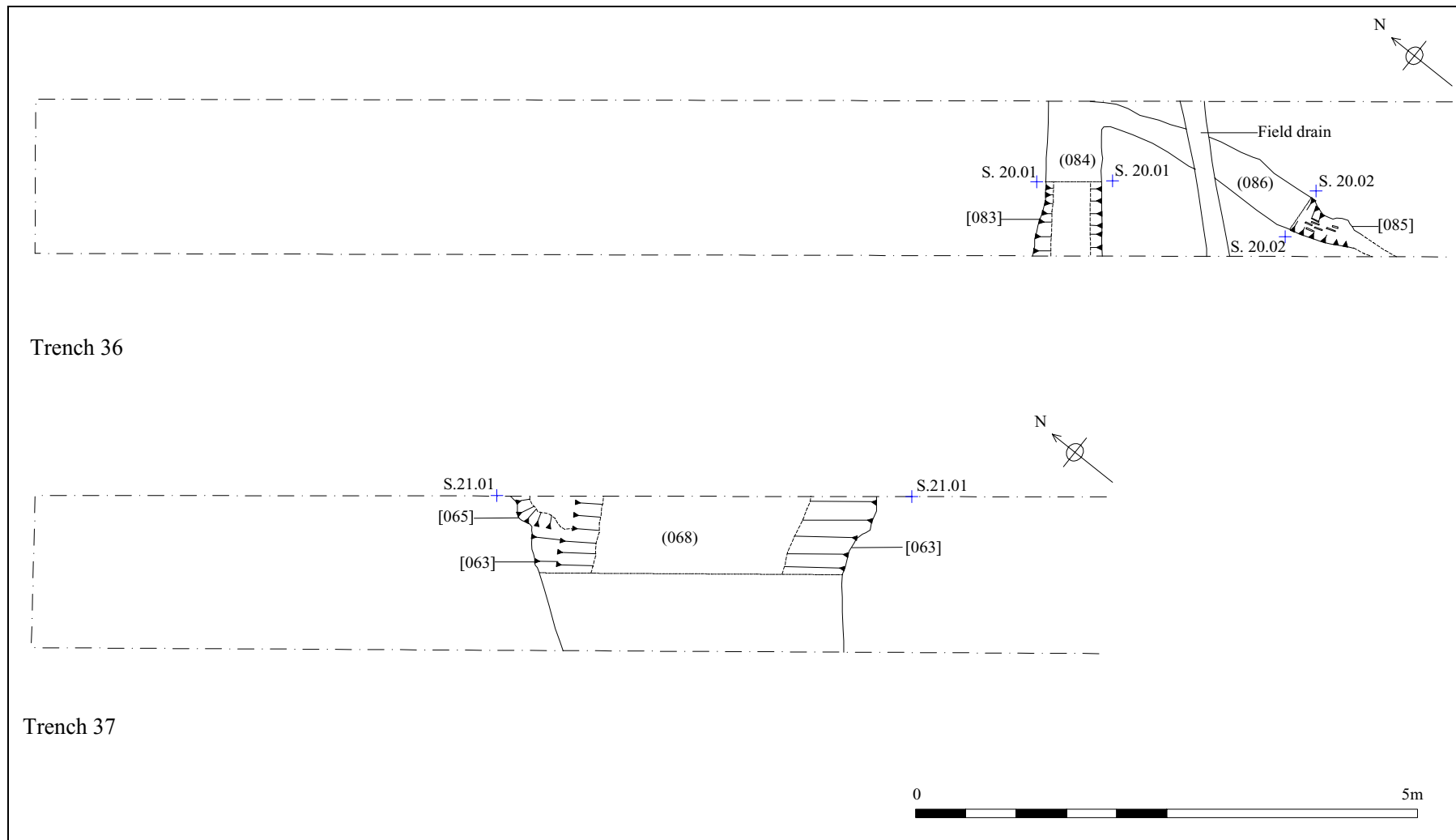


Figure 4. Trench 36 and Trench 37 post excavation plans.

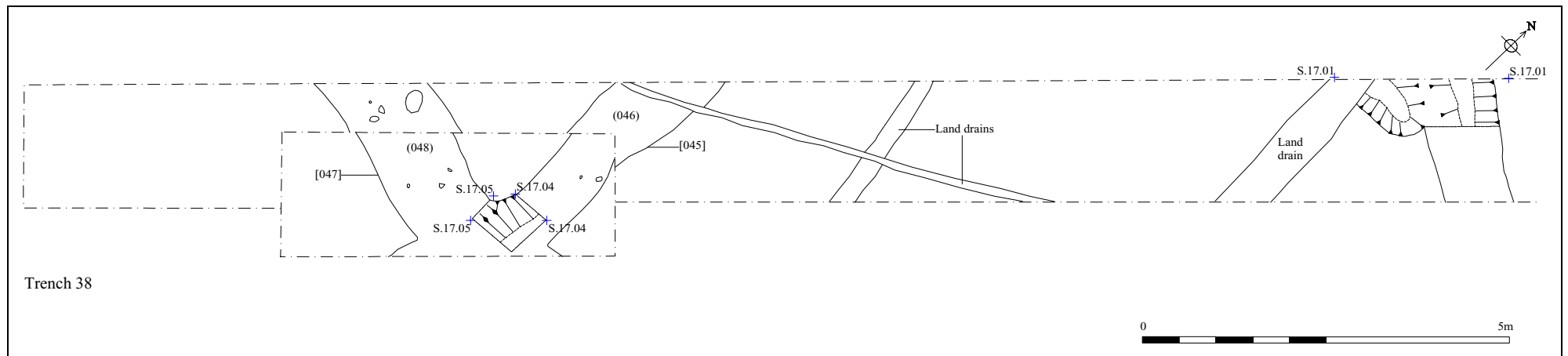


Figure 5. Trench 38 post excavation plan.

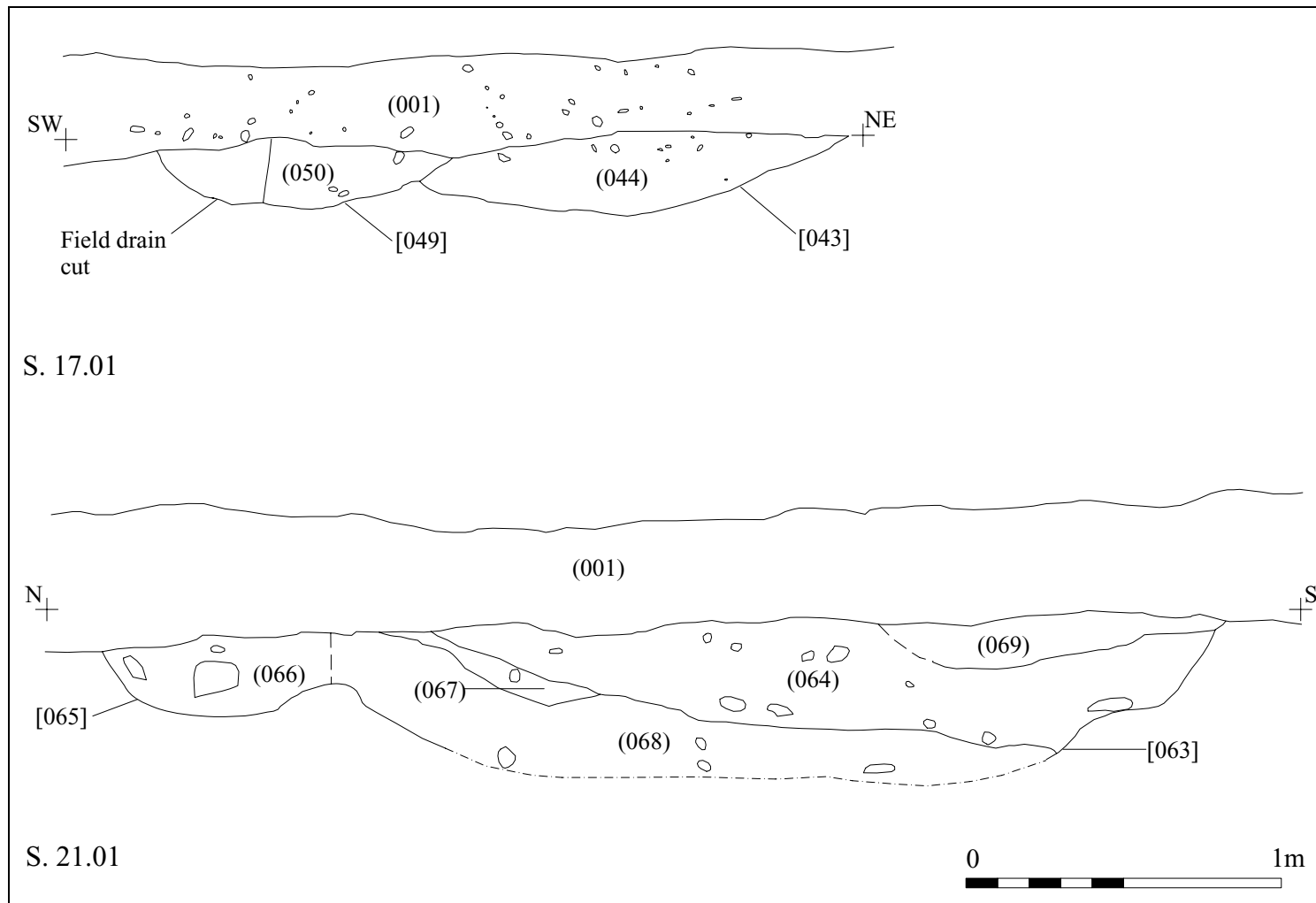


Figure 6. Trench 38 Section 17.01 and Trench 37 Section 21.01.

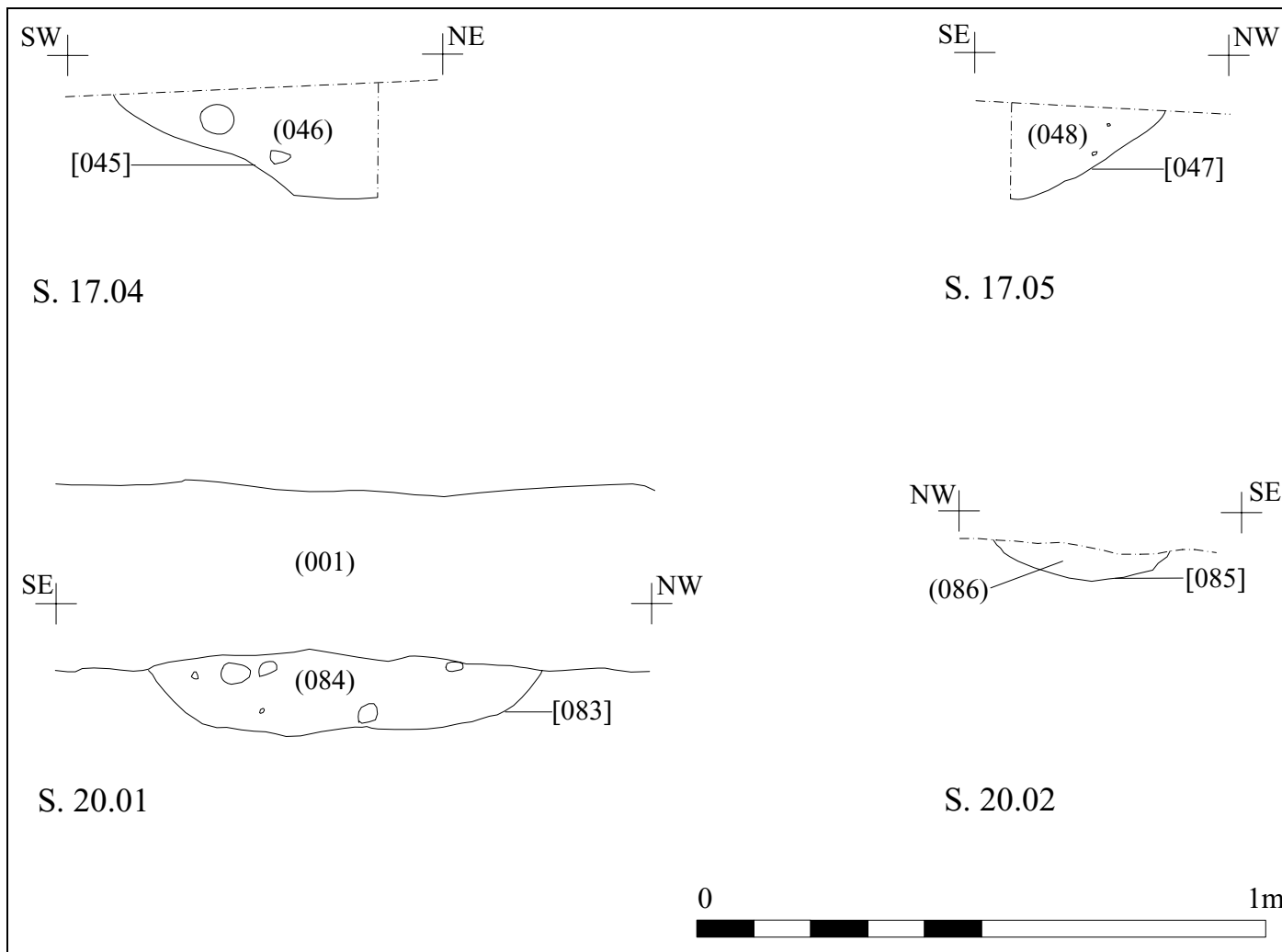


Figure 7. Trench 38 Sections 17.04 and 17.05, Trench 36 Sections 20.01 and 20.02.



Plate I. Trench 36. Feature [083] after excavation.



Plate II. Trench 37. Feature [063] and [065] southwest facing section.



Plate III. Trench 38. Features [045] and [048] in plan.



Plate IV. Trench 38. Features [043] and [049] southeast facing section.