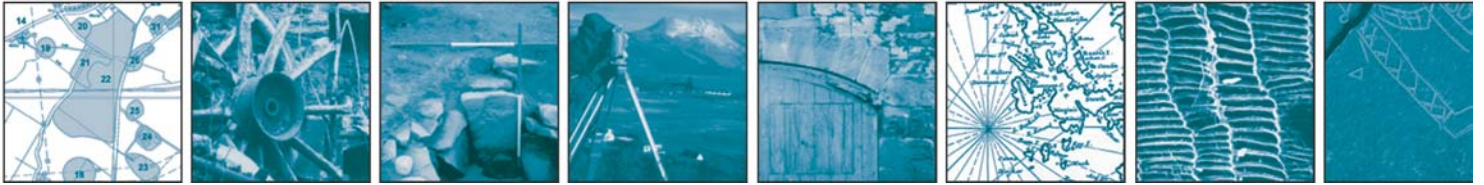


Date: December 2008
Client: tie ltd
Project code: ETCS08



Edinburgh Trams Project: Constitution Street, Leith
Evaluation of the depth and extent of burials adjacent to
South Leith Parish Church

Ross Murray

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION EDINBURGH TRAMS, CONSTITUTION STREET
PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET (ETCS08)**

Client tie Ltd

National Grid Reference NT 271 761

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Schedule

Fieldwork 22nd September 2008 – 2nd October 2008
Report October 2008

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on Constitution Street, Leith during September and October 2008. The aim was to establish the former extent of the South Leith Parish Church graveyard which had been cut through in the 18th century with the construction of Constitution Street and its housing.

The deposits beneath the road are likely to be made ground. The sandy deposit, into which the service trenches were cut was probably used to create a level surface for the road. The presence of disarticulated human bone in this made ground suggests that at least some of it originated from the original graveyard and at may have been deposited when the tenements, which have basements, were constructed on the eastern side of Constitution Street.

The graves were more numerous on the western side where they had been less disturbed. They were cut into a graveyard soil that was present at a depth of c 0.8m. This was found on the western side of both trenches and in the centre of Trench 2 where burials were also encountered. The graveyard soil in the centre of Trench 2 had been truncated leaving only a small area undisturbed. It occurred at a similar depth as that found to the west but the burials in this area occurred 0.3m into the graveyard soil, at a depth of 1.1m below the present road surface, suggesting that the profile in this area was more complete.

1. INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by tie Limited to carry out an archaeological evaluation as part of the Edinburgh Tram Project advance works. An Environmental Statement was commissioned and prepared by Parsons Brinckerhoff and Halcrow Group on behalf of Transport Initiatives Edinburgh (tie), which identified a series of archaeological mitigation proposals. A brief for the archaeological work was prepared by Parsons Brinckerhoff, Halcrow Group and Edinburgh City Council Archaeology Service (CECAS act as archaeological advisor to the City of Edinburgh Council on archaeological matters).

This report presents the results of the archaeological evaluation, which took place between 22nd September and 2nd October 2008.

2. BACKGROUND

As a result of the mitigation works carried out as part of the service diversions for the Edinburgh Trams Project, the need for further characterisation of the deposits on Constitution Street was identified. Articulated burials were discovered immediately under the pavement adjacent to the entrance to the churchyard. Further across the street, the graves appeared to be much more deeply buried, and there was more loose bone, indicating past disturbance of burials.

It appears that the graveyard of South Leith Parish Church had originally extended further to the east beyond the modern churchyard wall, and had been cut through when Constitution Street and its housing was built in the eighteenth century, or possibly even earlier when the fortifications of Leith were constructed. The potential therefore existed for a large number of burials below Constitution Street which could be affected by groundworks associated with the Edinburgh Tram Project.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objective of the evaluation was to gain information on the depth and extent of burials and disarticulated human remains that form part of the former graveyard of South Leith Parish church, now lying under Constitution Street. This information was needed in order to develop a strategy for dealing with the archaeological remains prior to construction of the tram rail bed.

4. METHODOLOGY

The work was undertaken as a Level 3 Response as set out in the Specification for Archaeological Works. A Level 3 response is defined as a Programme of Archaeological Works where groundworks were controlled archaeologically, with detailed contingencies for unhindered access to record archaeological features as they were uncovered.

Two trial trenches were opened extending across Constitution Street the positions of which had been marked out by the CECAS Archaeologist. For traffic management reasons, these were opened one half at a time. In the interest of public safety the pavement on the east side of Constitution Street was not included in the trenching. In addition, it was not possible for a

continuous trench to be excavated on the pre-agreed location of the southernmost (Trench 1). As a result a 0.9m gap was left unexcavated in the centre of the road; the CECAS Archaeologist approved this.

Archaeological staff controlled groundbreaking works and recorded stratigraphic sequences. All significant archaeological deposits were hand excavated. Excavation of burials ceased once their nature had been confirmed.

Recording followed standard archaeological methods and scales for photography and drawing. Colour slide and print film were used; plans of features were normally at 1:20, sections at 1:10; pro-forma record sheets were used.

5. RESULTS

Two trenches were excavated across Constitution Street perpendicular to the current cemetery wall (Illus 1) A full list of the deposits encountered can be found in Appendix 1. Results are summarised below. All depths are taken from the current road surface.

Trench 1 (Illus 2)

As stated above, this trench was not continuous. It was oriented northwest to southeast, had a combined length of 8.3m and was 1.25m wide. Beneath the 0.4m deep layer of tarmac and concrete that constituted the road surface were numerous service trenches. These services consisted of a mixture of cast iron pipes and modern ceramic/plastic ducts set into trenches between 0.4 and 0.9m wide and up to 1m deep. These had been cut into a deposit of dark brown coarse sand (001) containing small fragments of sandstone, large lumps of coal and occasional disarticulated human remains. This deposit was present across the whole trench and varied in depth. At the northwest end of Trench 1, closest to the current cemetery wall, it was 0.7m thick and was present to a depth 0.95m. The depth increased 2.7m from the northwest end to a maximum of 1.4m in the centre of the trench where it lay over pale yellow coarse sand.

A deposit of pale brown fine sand (002) was present in the northeast half of the trench at a depth of 0.95m. At this level it contained a rectangular grave cut (003). This was oriented northwest to southeast and was 0.6m wide. The northwest end of the grave was outwith the limit of excavation and the southeast was beneath a ceramic service duct meaning that only a 1.18m length was visible. The grave was filled by dark brown mottled sand (004). The remains of a coffin were present within the fill represented by two parallel lines of stained sand 0.41m apart. Iron coffin nails were found on the southern side at intervals of 0.1m; these were left *in situ*. To the north of this grave was a linear feature (005) only partially visible in the trench. This was also oriented northwest to southeast and filled with dark brown mottled sand (006). This was likely to be the cut of another grave given the similarities in the shape, orientation and fill to the adjacent grave containing the coffin.

Trench 2 (Illus 3)

This was located 37.5m northeast of Trench 1. It was oriented northwest to southeast, had a length of 9.4m and was 1.3m wide. Like Trench 1 numerous services were present beneath the road surface and underlying concrete. These had been cut into a deposit of dark brown coarse

sand (028) containing small fragments of sandstone, large lumps of coal and occasional disarticulated human remains. This deposit was also encountered in Trench 1.

Towards the centre of Trench 2 it was clear that deposit 028 was filling a cut (025) that had truncated a pale sandy deposit interpreted as graveyard soil (010). This was present at a depth of 0.8m, was 2.3m from the southeast end and was 1.9m long. A grave (011) containing articulated human remains was encountered 0.34m below the top of this deposit (a depth of 1.1m from the road surface). It was oriented northwest to southeast and was 0.4m wide. It had been truncated to the west by a service trench giving it a surviving length of 0.5m. A similarly oriented feature was present 0.1m to the south, was only partially visible in the trench and was likely to have been another grave. To the southeast of the graves was a small rectangular negative feature (023) measuring 0.7m by 0.3m. This was oriented northwest to southeast, like the adjacent graves, but contained no human remains.

At the northwest end of Trench 2 was a deposit similar to 010 that was also graveyard soil (021). This was present at a depth of 0.75m. Two graves were present at this end of the trench both oriented northwest to southeast and partially obscured by a cast-iron pipe. The northernmost grave (019) contained articulated human remains, the skull and upper torso were partially exposed revealing the burial to be supine and extended. A disarticulated skull was also present in the backfill. The other grave, adjacent and to the south, also had visible articulated human remains. It was not possible to determine the full dimensions of these graves, as they were only partially present within the trench.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation trenches contained four graves and three features that were not fully exposed but are interpreted as graves. This was not unexpected as previous archaeological work had shown burials to be present immediately beneath the pavement on the west side of Constitution Street and at greater depth on the east side (Humble & Murray 2008).

The deposits beneath the road are likely to be made ground. The sandy deposit, into which the service trenches were cut was probably used to create a level surface for the road. The presence of disarticulated human bone in this made ground suggests that at least some of it originated from the original graveyard and at may have been deposited when the tenements, which have basements, were constructed on the eastern side of Constitution Street.

The graves were more numerous on the western side where they had been less disturbed. They were cut into a graveyard soil that was present at a depth of c 0.8m. This was found on the western side of both trenches and in the centre of Trench 2 where burials were also encountered. The graveyard soil in the centre of Trench 2 had been truncated leaving only a small area undisturbed. It occurred at a similar depth as that found to the west but the burials in this area occurred 0.3m into the graveyard soil, at a depth of 1.1m below the present road surface, suggesting that the profile in this area was more complete.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Humble J & Murray R 2008 *Edinburgh Trams: results of watching briefs on service diversions (Leith & Haymarket) and groundworks at the Gogarburn depot* Unpublished archive report by Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd

APPENDIX 1: Site registers**Context Register**

Context Number	Trench	Description
001	1a	Made ground deposit
002	1a	Old ground surface/cemetery soil
003	1a	Cut of grave
004	1a	Fill of grave 003
005	1a	Cut of grave
006	1a	Fill of grave 005
007	2a	Made ground deposit
008	2a	Cut of service trench
009	2a	Fill of service trench 008
010	2a	Cemetery soil at the east end Trench 2a
011	2a	Cut of grave
012	2a	Fill of grave 011
013	2a	Cut of grave
014	2a	Fill of grave 013
015	2a	Cut of grave
016	2a	Fill of grave 015
017	2a	Cut of grave
018	2a	Fill of grave 017
019	2a	Cut of grave
020	2a	Fill of grave 019
021	2a	Cemetery soil at west end of Trench 2a
022	2a	Sandy levelling at the west end of Trench 2a
023	2b	Cut of rectangular feature
024	2b	Fill of rectangular feature 023
025	2b	Cut of ?????
026	2b	Fill of 025
027	2b	Cemetery soil at east end of Trench 2b
028	1a	Made ground deposit
029	1a	Cut of probable service
030	1a	Fill of cut 029
031	1a	Dark brown sand

Drawing Register

Drawing Number	Section	Plan	Description
1	1:20		North facing section of Trench 1a
2	1:20		North facing section of Trench 2a
3	1:20		North facing section of Trench 2b
4	1:20		North facing section of Trench 1b

Photograph Register

Colour print, colour slide and digital

Film No. 1

Shot No.	Direction Facing	Description
1	-	ID Shot
2	W	Post excavation view of Trench 1a
3	E	Grave cut c003 at west end of Trench 1a
4	S	North facing section of Trench 1a
5	S	North facing section of Trench 1a
6	S	North facing section of Trench 1a
7	S	North facing section of Trench 2a
8	SE	View of grave c011
9	W	Post excavation view of Trench 2a
10	E	Post excavation view of Trench 2a
11	S	View of grave cut c019
12	S	View of human skulls associated with grave c019
13	N	View of c015-grave 5 with rectification points
14	N	View of c015-grave 5 with rectification points
15	SE	View of c019-grave 7 with rectification points
16	N	View of disarticulated human bone in Trench 2b
17	W	Post excavation view of Trench 2b
18	E	Post excavation view of Trench 2b
19	S	North facing section of Trench 2b
20	S	North facing section of Trench 2b
21	S	North facing section of Trench 1b
22	S	North facing section of Trench 1b
23	E	Post excavation view of Trench 1b
24	SE	View of section of Trench 1b showing natural sand at base.

APPENDIX 2: Finds List

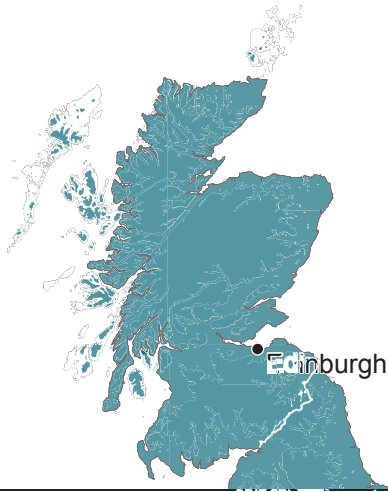
Julie Franklin

Finds Summary

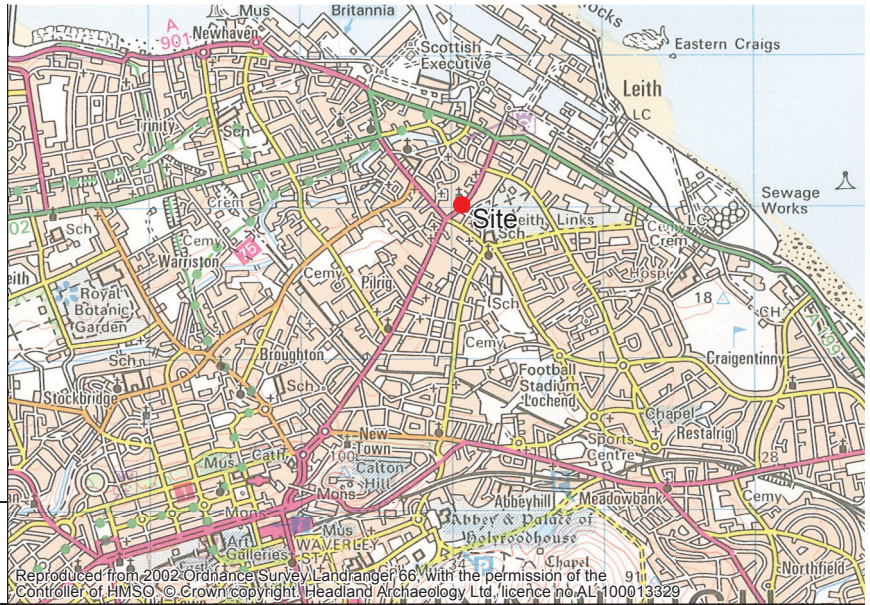
This is a small assemblage, of apparent early post-medieval date, though one sherd (Context 001) may be of late medieval date.

Finds List

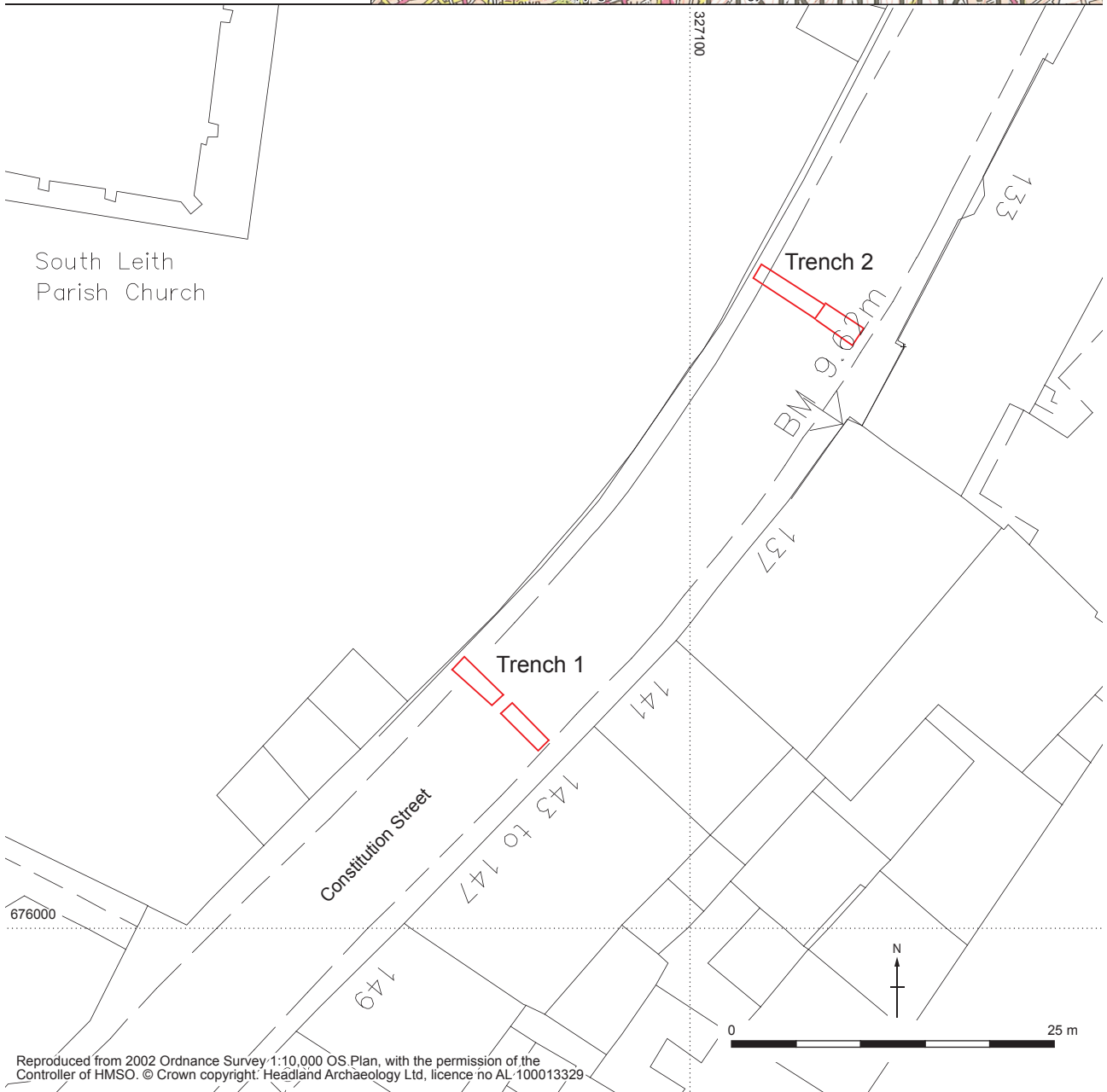
Trench	Context	Material	Qty	Object	Description	Spot Date	Period
2	U/S	CBM	2	Pan Tile?	Fragments		PM
2	U/S	Fe	1	Nail			
2	U/S	Fe	1	Object			
2	001	Pottery	1	Local	Greyware, very abraded. Coarse sandy, some olive glaze remaining	14 th /16 th	Medi
2	021	Cu	1	Pin / Lace Tag	Thick shaft, covered in sandy corrosion products	16 th /19 th	PM
2	021	Fe	1	Strap	Wide strap, shaped, possibly a bracket?		
2	026	Clay Pipe	1	Stem	Wide bore	17 th /e.18 th	PM
2	026	Cu	1	Stud	Large round domed head		
2	026	Fe	3	Nails			
2	026	Fe	1	Rod	Large thick round sectioned rod		
2	026	Mortar	1		Small lump with attached shell		
2	028	Pottery	1	Local	Redware, internal orange glaze	17 th /e.18 th	PM



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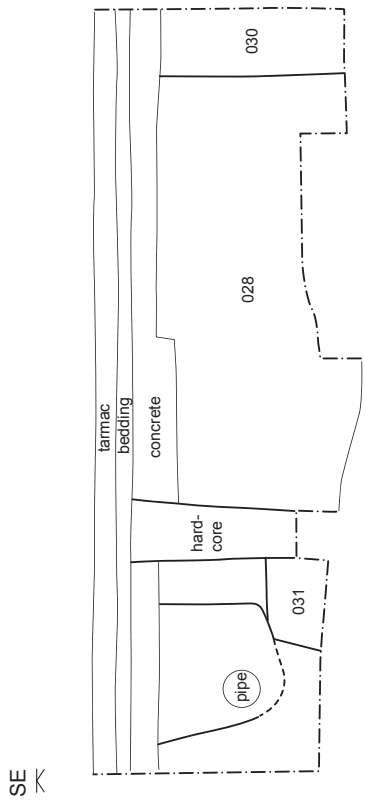
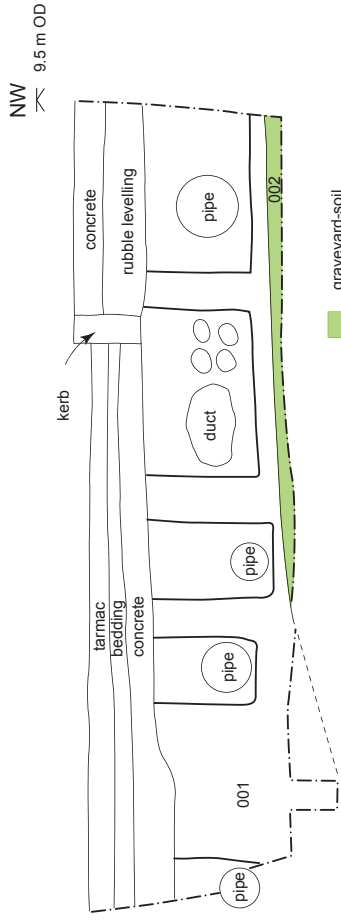
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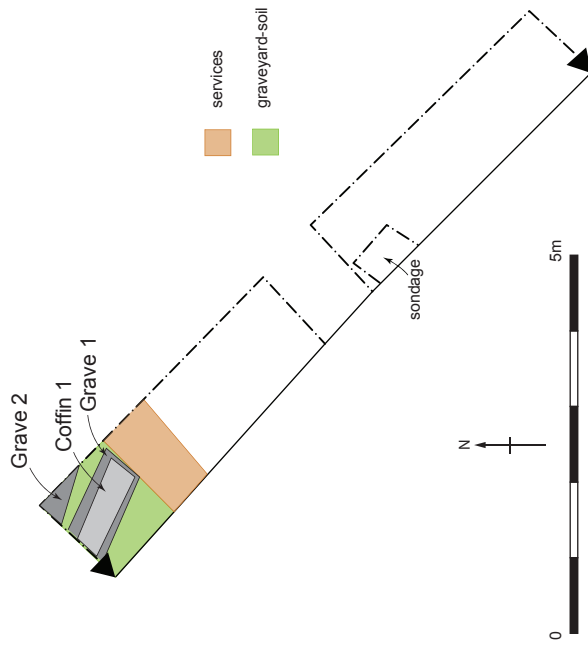
South Leith
Parish Church

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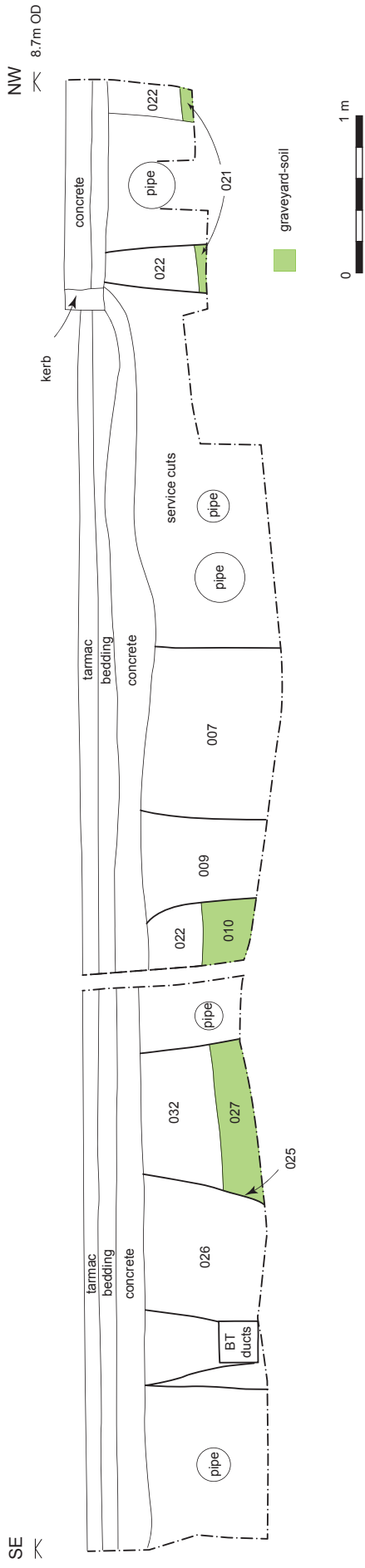
NE facing section



Trench 1



NE facing section



Trench 2

