

An Archaeological Evaluation at The Angel Inn, Main Street, Corbridge, Northumberland



View of The Angel Inn towards its street frontage.

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Executive Summary

In November 2015 Archaeological Research Services Ltd was commissioned by The Angel of Corbridge Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation within the carpark of the Angel Inn, Main Street, Corbridge, Northumberland. This work was carried out in part fulfilment of a planning condition related to the addition of a new kitchen and bin storage area (Ref 15/02109/FUL).

The condition required an archaeological evaluation and was prompted by previous archaeological works conducted adjacent to the proposed area of development.

The Previous archaeological works comprised a watching brief which monitored groundworks relating to the northern expansion of The Angel Inn and associated services. The results of the watching brief led to a small-scale excavation in February 2007 by Wardell Armstrong LLP which revealed human remains and the remnants of five medieval buildings, a small horticultural plot dating from between the 12th and 15th centuries, and numerous areas of iron and bronze metalworking. The groundworks involved in the construction of the proposed kitchen and bin store were regarded as having the potential to cause Harman impact to any additional in-situ archaeological features. The work outlined in this report was conducted in order to determine the presence of any further archaeological deposits or features and to determine the potential impact such construction may cause.

The evaluation trench measured 6m x 2m x 0.74m and was situated to the rear of The Angel Inn, a Grade II, 17th century building. The uppermost deposit comprised a modern tarmac surface (001) and sealed a former brick laid yard surface (002). The brick surface overlay a modern reinforced concrete (rebar) deposit (003) and a former cobbled surface (004). Both the concrete (003) and the cobbled surface (004) covered a green-brown, silty loam deposit (005) which had a depth of 0.60m. Deposit (005) was interpreted to be a medieval/post-medieval garden soil and contained frequent fragments of small, stony inclusions with occasional fragments of brick as well pockets of deliberate dumping of large rounded stones (006) and slag waste (007). Below (005), and contained within the northern section of the trench, a mid-brown sandy deposit (008) was identified and appeared to be a slight mixing of natural substrate (009) and overlying deposits, and is believed to be the result of root action. Below deposits (005) and (009) the natural substrate, a yellow-brown sand, was observed at a depth of 0.74m below the modern ground surface.

The evaluation successfully characterised the deposit sequence in this area. No finds were recorded, however, small dump deposits of slag waste within deposit (005) suggest the presence of metalworking on site, as demonstrated during archaeological works carried out in 2007.

1. Introduction

1.1. In November 2015 Archaeological Research Services Ltd (ARS Ltd) was commissioned by The Angel of Corbridge Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation of Land to the rear of The Angel Inn, Main Street, Corbridge, Northumberland. This work was carried out in part fulfilment of a planning condition related to the addition of a new kitchen and bin store area (Ref 15/02109/FUL). The evaluation trench was excavated in order to determine the presence of any archaeological constraints that may impact upon the proposed development.

2. Location and Geology

2.1 The development site was located in the centre of Corbridge, Northumberland and was centred at NGR NY 9909 6438 (Figure 1 & 2).

2.2 The geology of the immediate area consists of stepped alluvial terraces which have been created by the River Tyne and its changing course. Alluvium is fine-grained sediment typically comprising snads and silts. The underlying geology consists of the Stainmore Group of limestone and sandstone which contain thin coal seams overlain by glacial sands, gravel and boulder clay (Lovell 1981, 3-4)

3. Historical and Archaeological Background

3.1. Evidence for prehistoric activity within the vicinity of Corbridge includes the recovery of important Mesolithic flint scatters at Leazes Cottage to the north of the town and around Red Houses, Shorden Brae, Gallowhill and Caistron Field (HER 8683). Later prehistoric activity and settlement close to Corbridge includes an Iron Age site located at Bishop Rigg (HER 8671) and an Iron-Age hillfort situated at Shildon Hill (HER 9011).

3.2 The Roman fort at Corbridge was established after AD 85 on the line of the Stanegate Roman road. When Hadrian's Wall was built to the north of the Stanegate, running between the Tyne-Solway gap from AD 122 to 128, forts like Corbridge became redundant as they were now situated within the hinterland of the newly established frontier. However, Corbridge maintained its overall strategic importance as a town due to its location guarding the main supply route from York to Newstead in Scotland as well as the river crossing of the Tyne. The extra-mural settlement was enclosed within the defences and a significant civilian *vicus* grew up around the military site. By the mid-second century it was a defended market town and had expanded to occupy an area of approximately 13ha-17ha by the third and fourth centuries (Finlayson and Hardie 2010).

3.3 The development site (Figure 2) is situated to the east of an area of high archaeological potential related to the Roman remains and the associated garrison

town (Finlayson and Hardie 2010). However, due to the intensive and prolonged Roman activity taking place in the vicinity, the possibility existed for archaeological features of Roman date to be present within the development site.

3.4 Archaeological investigations across Northumberland and within Corbridge have shown that medieval burgage plots were used for a variety of activities ranging from industrial activity to garden use and rubbish disposal (Jones 2004a and b). This variety of uses can vary on a plot by plot basis with the build-up of later deposits also varying significantly.

3.5 Previous archaeological works on site comprised a watching brief which monitored groundworks relating to the northern expansion of The Angel Inn and associated groundworks and services that this necessitated. The results of this work led to a small-scale excavation in February 2007 which revealed human remains and the remnants of five medieval buildings, a small horticultural plot dating from between the 12th and 15th centuries, and numerous areas of iron and bronze metalworking

3.6 The development was regarded as being located in an area of high archaeological potential.

4. Aims and Objectives

4.1 The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to gather sufficient information to establish the extent, condition, character and date of any archaeological features and deposits within the area of the proposed development, and to record any features or deposits.

5. Methodology

5.1 The archaeological evaluation consisted of one trench measuring 6m x 1m with a 90 degree turn and aligned on a broadly north – south, west - east alignment (Figure 3). The evaluation trench was situated approximately 1m east of The Angel Inn and 5m north of the fire escape.

5.2 The trench was excavated by a 360° mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket in level spits until the depth of the development's impact was reached, or natural sediments were encountered, or sensitive archaeological material was identified. The base of the trench was then examined and cleaned by hand. All machine excavation was carried out under careful archaeological supervision.

5.3 The deposits were recorded according to the normal principles of stratigraphic excavation. Each context was recorded on pro-forma records which included the following: character and contextual relationships; detailed description (dimensions and shape; soil components, colour, texture and consistency); interpretation and phasing as well as cross-references to the drawn, photographic and finds registers.

5.4 A plan of the trench was produced at a 1:50 scale and all archaeological features encountered were planned and drawn in section at a suitable scale.

5.5 A photographic record was maintained throughout all excavation work and contained images taken in digital format with a graduated photographic scale.

6. Results

6.1 The evaluation trench (Figure 3) was excavated across The Angel Inn carpark. The uppermost deposit consisted of a modern tarmac surface (001) and sealed a former brick laid yard surface (002). The brick surface overlay a modern reinforced concrete (rebar) deposit (003) and a former cobbled surface (004). Both the concrete deposit (003) and the cobbled surface (004) covered a greenish-brown, silty loam deposit (005) which had a depth of 0.60m. Deposit (005) was interpreted as a medieval/post-medieval garden soil and contained frequent fragments of small, stony inclusions with occasional fragments of brick as well pockets of deliberate dumping of large rounded stones (006) and slag waste (007) (Figure 4). Below (005) and contained within the northern section of the trench, a mid-brown sandy deposit (008) was identified and appeared to be a slight mixing of natural substrate (009) and overlying deposits, and is believed to be the result of root action. Below deposits (005) and (009) the natural substrate, a yellow-brown sand alluvial sediment, was observed at a depth of 0.74m below the ground surface.

6.3 No archaeological finds or features were encountered during the archaeological evaluation.

7. Discussion

7.1 The evaluation has successfully characterised the nature of the deposits within the development area and no finds or features of archaeological significance were identified, however, small dump deposits of slag waste within deposit (005) suggest the presence of metalworking on site, as demonstrated during previous archaeological works carried out in 2007. The area surrounding the proposed development area shows signs of significant disturbance as a succession of surface layers have been constructed but below this however, in-situ deposits remain relatively undisturbed.

8. Publicity, Confidentiality and Copyright

8.1 Any publicity will be handled by the client.

8.2 Archaeological Research Services Ltd will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

9. Statement of Indemnity

9.1 All statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

10. Acknowledgements

10.1 Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to thank all those involved with this work, in particular Daniel Mole, Kevin Lang and Angel of Corbridge Ltd.

11. References

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Keys to the Past <http://www.keystothepast.info>

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Tyne and Wear Sitelines <http://www.twsitelines.info>

Appendix I - Context Register

Context	Description
001	Tarmac
002	Former rick surface
003	Concrete rebar
004	Former cobbled surface
005	Mid greenish brown silty loam
006	Medium sub-rounded stone deposit
007	Stone and slag waste deposit
008	Mid brown sand deposit
009	Mid yellow sand natural

Appendix II- Photograph Register

Shot	Description
1	SW-facing view of Trench
2	S-facing view of Trench
3	W-facing view of Trench
4	N-facing section through Trench (Scale - 1 x 2m)
5	N-facing section through Trench (Scale - 1 x 2m)
6	N-facing section through Trench (Scale - 1 x 2m)
7	SW-facing view through trench (Scale – 1 x 2m)
8	SW-facing view through trench (Scale – 1 x 2m)
9	E-facing view through trench (Scale – 1 x 2m)
10	E-facing view through trench (Scale – 1 x 2m)
11	SE-facing view through trench (Scale – 1 x 2m)
12	SE-facing view through trench (Scale – 1 x 2m)
13	E-facing view through trench (Scale – 1 x 2m)
14	N-facing view through trench (Scale – 1 x 2m)
15	N-facing view through trench (Scale – 1 x 2m)

APPENDIX III: FIGURES

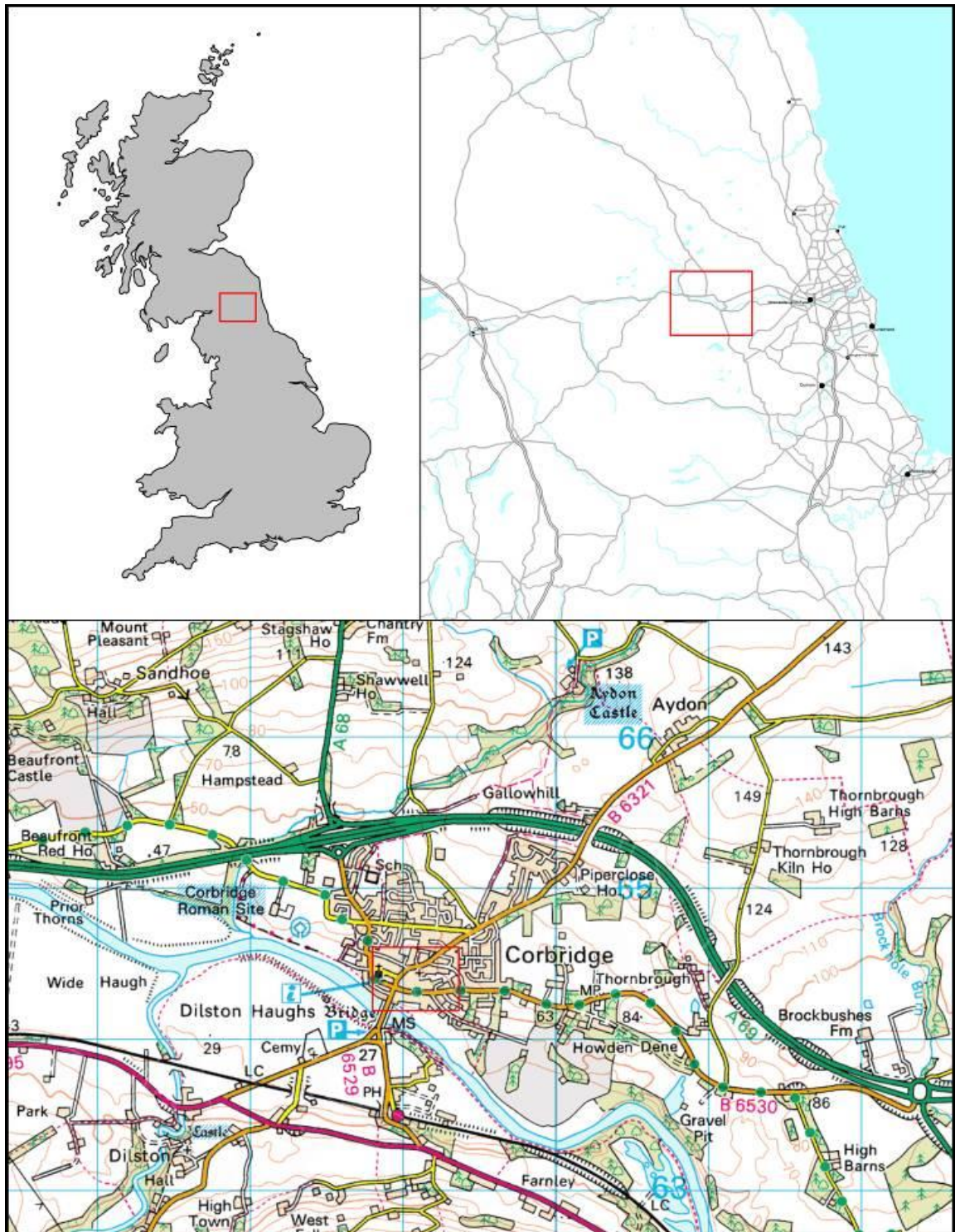
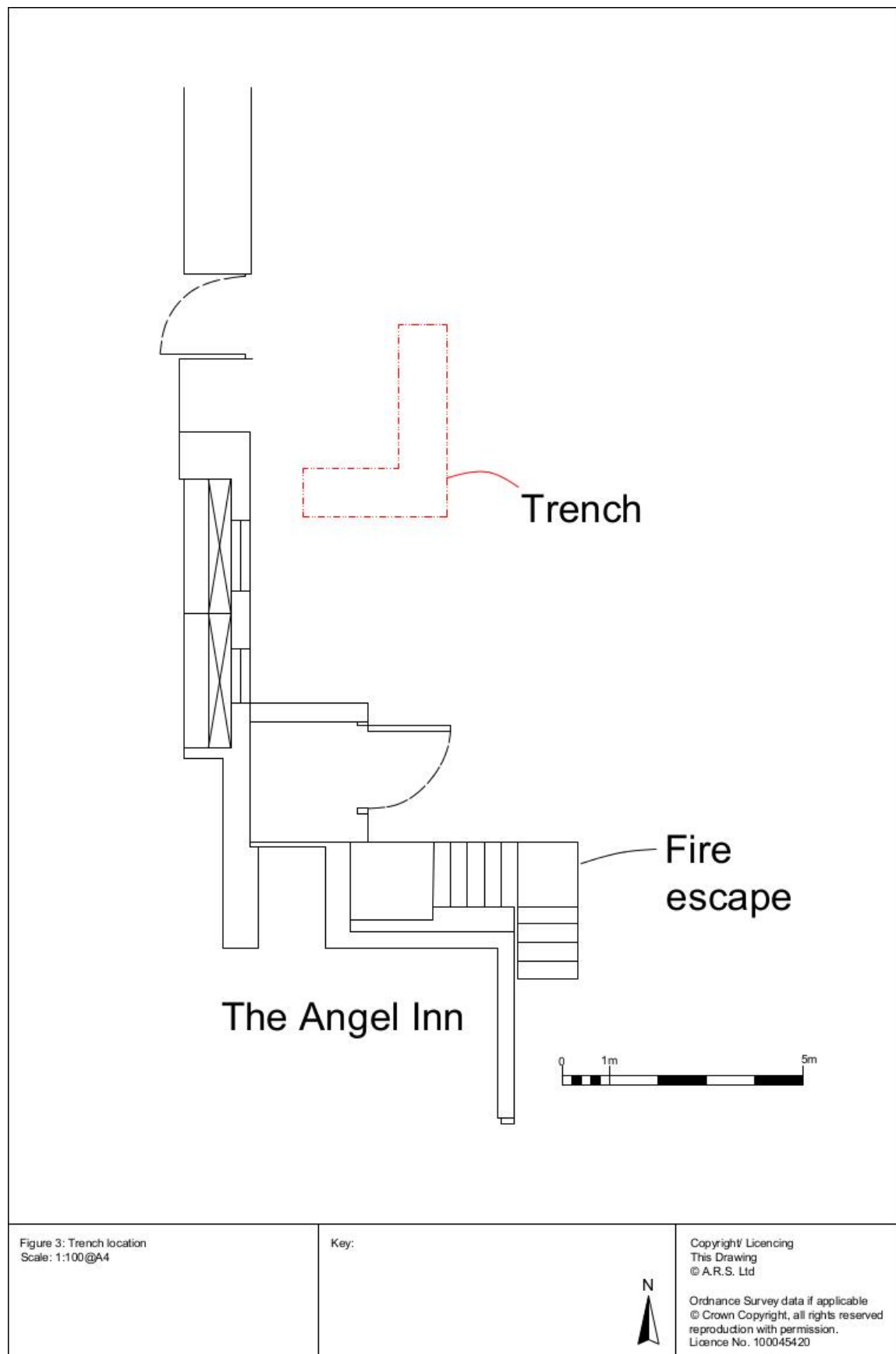


Figure 1: Site Location. (Ordnance Survey data Copyright OS, reproduced by permission, Licence No. 100045420).





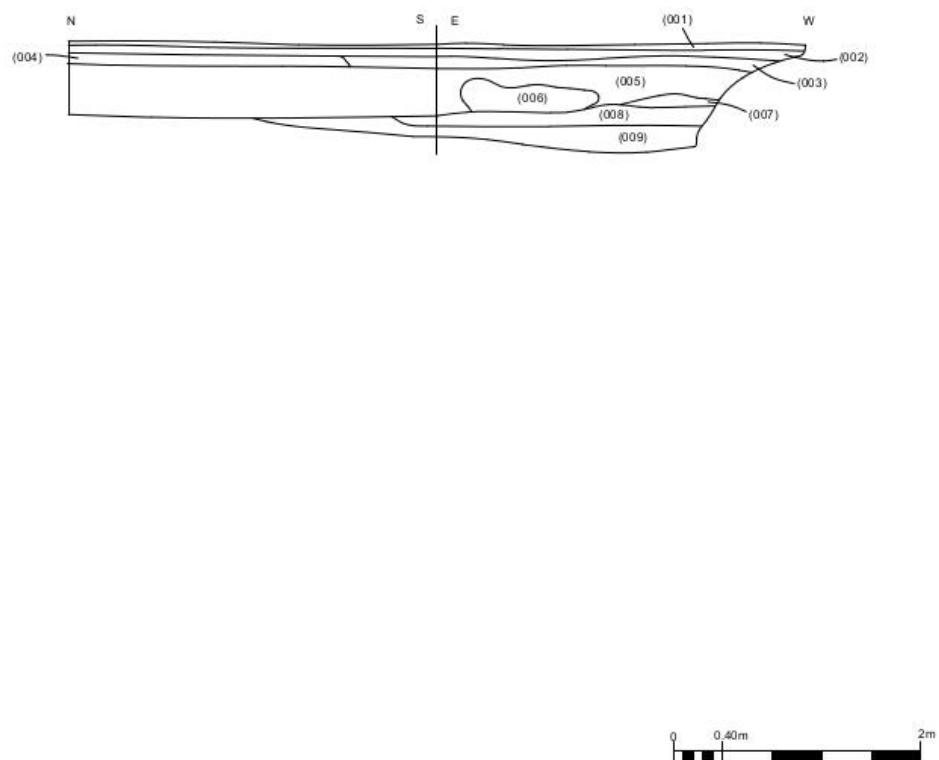


Figure 4: East and North facing section of the evaluation trench:
Scale: 1:20 @A4

Key:

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Figure 5. South-west facing view of evaluation trench (scale= 2m).



Figure 6. East facing view of evaluation trench section with alluvial sediment at the base (scale= 2m).



Figure 7. South-east facing view of evaluation trench (scale= 2m).



Figure 8. South-west facing view of evaluation trench showing its general location.