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LAND AT GIPSY LANE, NUNEATON WARWICKSHIRE

Archaeological Evaluation Report



Ref: 87690.03
March 2013



**LAND AT GIPSY LANE, NUNEATON
WARWICKSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION REPORT**

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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LAND AT GIPSY LANE, NUNEATON WARWICKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Trenport Investments Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Gipsy Lane, Nuneaton, Warwickshire (NGR 436899 289408; hereafter 'the Site') in advance of residential development. The evaluation comprised the excavation of eleven trial trenches in line with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Wessex Archaeology and approved by Warwickshire County Council (WCC). The works followed on from a desk-based assessment and were targeted on the results of a geophysical survey and within areas of proposed development impact, in accordance with a brief from the WCC Planning Archaeologist, Anna Stocks.

The evaluation revealed evidence for a post-medieval field boundary that appears on 19th century OS maps, and corresponded with an east-west aligned geophysical anomaly. Two residual sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered from the upper ditch fill that may hint at earlier activity within the surrounding landscape. A possible ring gully was identified by the geophysical survey in the centre of the Site. No evidence of this feature was found but a natural feature was recorded close by.

The archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Sheffield, under the project code 87690. The archive will be deposited with the Warwickshire Museums Service under the temporary accession number T/1193 in due course. An OASIS form will be submitted at the time of deposition.



LAND AT GIPSY LANE, NUNEATON WARWICKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned by CgMs Consulting and Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Lorraine Mayo in this regard. Anna Stocks of Warwickshire County Council monitored the works.

The evaluation fieldwork was carried out by Sam Fairhead, Kirsty Squires and Jess Tibber. The report was compiled by Ashley Tuck and the illustrations produced by Chris Swales. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Andrew Norton and the finds were recorded by Lorraine Mephram and Andrea Burgess.



LAND AT GIPSY LANE, NUNEATON WARWICKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Trenport Investments Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of development of land at Gipsy Lane, Nuneaton, Warwickshire (hereafter 'the Site'; **Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 A previous geophysical survey (GSB 2012) revealed possible archaeological anomalies within the Site, and as such, following consultation with CgMs Consulting, Anna Stocks of Warwickshire County Council (WCC) proposed a programme of archaeological trenching.
- 1.1.3 The work was completed in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (Wessex Archaeology 2012). Eleven trenches measuring 50m by 2m were targeted over geophysical anomalies and to test 'blank' areas (**Figure 2**).

1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 The Site is situated to the north of Gipsy Lane on the southern outskirts of Nuneaton, Warwickshire, within agricultural land between Marston Lane to the east and Coventry Canal to the west (NGR 436899 289408).
- 1.2.2 The Site lies at c. 94m and is 28ha in area. The underlying geology comprises Mudstone of the Outwoods Shale Formation (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The following is summarised from a desk-based assessment for the Site (CgMs 2012). There are no Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens or Registered Battlefields on or in the area of the Site. There are, however, undesignated archaeological assets recorded in the vicinity of the Site.

2.2 Archaeological sites in the area

- 2.2.1 Prehistoric flints have been recorded along the Griff Brook and the Wem Brook, close to the Site. In addition a Palaeolithic handaxe was recorded during fieldwalking in the north of the Site. Palaeolithic handaxes and associated finds have also been found to the south of the Site.
- 2.2.2 A Roman tile kiln and isolated find spots have been recorded within 1km of the Site; most notable being a hoard of 29 *denarii* discovered at Griff granite quarry.



- 2.2.3 The Site lies within the medieval parish of Chilvers Coton and is likely to have formed agricultural land from the Anglo-Saxon period onwards.

2.3 Previous fieldwork at the Site

- 2.3.1 The first phase of field evaluation at the Site comprised a geophysical survey, which identified anomalies of potential archaeological origin (GSB 2012).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims and objectives

- 3.1.1 The evaluation comprised the excavation of eleven trenches measuring 50m by 2m, which were targeted on geophysical anomalies and blank areas (**Figure 2**). The trenches were located by means of a RTK GPS system and tied into the Ordnance Survey grid (to within 0.1m).

3.2 Fieldwork methodology

- 3.2.1 The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation and current industry best practice (Wessex Archaeology 2012, IfA 2008, 2010).
- 3.2.2 Topsoil or overburden was removed using a mechanical excavator (6ton tracked excavator) fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, working under the continuous direct supervision of a suitably experienced archaeologist. Topsoil was removed in a series of level spits down to the level of the upper archaeological horizon.
- 3.2.3 All trenches were hand-cleaned where necessary to clarify the extent of any revealed archaeological remains. Where possible archaeological features and deposits were encountered, excavation was carried out by hand. A sufficient sample of each layer/feature type was excavated in order to establish the date, nature, extent and condition of the archaeological remains.

3.3 Recording

- 3.3.1 All archaeological features and deposits encountered were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording sheets and a continuous unique numbering system. A stratigraphic matrix was compiled to record the relationships between features and deposits (including those within 'blank' trenches).
- 3.3.2 The spot height of all principal features and levels was calculated in metres relative to Ordnance Datum, correct to two decimal places. Plans, sections and elevations were annotated with spot heights as appropriate.
- 3.3.3 Photographs were taken of all archaeological features to produce a photographic record consisting of 35mm monochrome prints and colour slides; digital images supplemented the photographic record.



4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The trial trenches revealed a post-medieval field boundary, an area of modern disturbance and a natural channel or hedgerow. Context descriptions for each trench are presented in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.1.2 A variety of soils were encountered across the Site. Topsoils were typically light or dark greyish brown silty clays with stone inclusions. These were typically 0.3m deep, except where accompanied by subsoil, where they could be as thin as 0.06m. Subsoil was not seen in all localities, but where it was present (Trenches 2, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 11) it was typically dark brown sandy loam with stone inclusions. It extended from the topsoil horizon to 0.4 or 0.5m below ground level and represented a buried ploughsoil.
- 4.1.3 The underlying natural deposits ranged from orange to brown and from sandy clay with stone inclusions to silty clay loam with stone inclusions. The natural soils oxidised on exposure to the air and quickly turned from orange to brown. This may explain the recorded variations between trenches.

4.2 Post-medieval

- 4.2.1 In the northern end of Trench 1 and the western end of Trench 2, patches of modern disturbance were noted (**102, 204; Plates 1 and 2**). These comprised a mix of natural deposits and soils contaminated with 20th century bricks and glass. In Trench 11, insubstantial traces of modern burnt material were noted in a natural hollow and are thought to explain the geophysical anomaly here.
- 4.2.2 A post-medieval field boundary corresponding with a ditch shown on the 1884 ordnance survey map was revealed in Trenches 1, 4, 6 and 7 (**103, 404, 602 and 705; Plates 3-6**). Within Trench 7 (**Figures 2 and 3**) the ditch was found to have three fills. The base fill was a loose dark greyish brown silty sand with stone inclusions (**706**). Above this was a light greyish brown silty sand with pea gravel (**707**), below a mid-reddish brown silty clay with pebbles and redeposited Romano-British pottery (**708**). Within Trench 4 the ditch was seen to have only one fill (**405; Figure 3**), consisting of very dark brownish black silty clay loam with stone inclusions.

4.3 Natural features

- 4.3.1 In Trench 8, a possible gully was identified (**804; Plate 7**). However, it is thought that this was a natural channel or hedgeline due to its irregular shape and the presence of root-disturbance. The fill was a very dark brownish grey loamy sand with stone inclusions (**805**).

5 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE

5.1 Summary

- 5.1.1 The artefact assemblage comprised one piece of green bottle glass from modern disturbance **204** in Trench 2, two sherds of pottery from the upper fill (**708**) of a field boundary ditch, and a sherd of pottery and a fragment of roof tile from subsoil **702** in Trench 7.



- 5.1.2 The glass bottle is of limited local interest as it was marked 'The Property of MH Horns Atherston'. The town of Atherstone lies approximately 10km north-west of the Site and historic trade directories indicate that MH Horns was a mineral water manufacturer based on Meadow Street during the early 20th century (Bennetts 1914).
- 5.1.3 The material from layer **702** comprise a piece of medieval/post-medieval roof tile and a sherd of modern (19th/20th century) refined whiteware.
- 5.1.4 The two (joining) sherds from **708** are not particularly distinctive, but the sandy grey fabric is most likely to be Romano-British.
- 5.1.5 No further description or analysis of the artefacts is warranted and the material can be discarded.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Summary

- 6.1.1 No archaeological features were identified except a known post-medieval field boundary, which had been previously identified by the geophysical survey. The 1884 OS plan shows the boundary with a gap in the centre of the Site, with returns to the north. These returns were not identified by the geophysical survey and may be shallower in form.
- 6.1.2 Several other anomalies were identified by the geophysical survey that could not be found in the ground. The natural feature in Trench 8 may represent one of the four anomalies identified by the geophysical survey, but does not directly correspond with any of them. A natural hollow in Trench 11 accounts for one of the geophysical anomalies that this trench was targeted to investigate.
- 6.1.3 The finds represent medieval and/or post-medieval manuring and this may also account for the redeposited Romano-British sherd(s) of pottery. However, the Site lies within 1km of a Romano-British kiln and other find spots, and the pottery may represent a background noise of similarly dated activity.

6.2 Conclusions

- 6.2.1 It has been demonstrated that the only significant feature within the Site is a post-medieval field boundary. The majority of the possible archaeological features identified by geophysical survey are most likely a result of differences within the natural clay geology.

7 STORAGE AND CURATION

7.1 Archive

- 7.1.1 The complete project archive will be prepared in accordance with Wessex Archaeology's Guidelines for Archive Preparation and in accordance with national guidelines (Brown 2007; UKIC 2001).
- 7.1.2 All work has been carried out under the Site code 87690. The archive is currently stored in the Wessex Archaeology Sheffield office. A summary of the archive contents will be submitted to Warwickshire County Council and the archive deposited with the



Warwickshire Museums Service under the temporary accession number T/1193 in due course.

7.2 Copyright

- 7.2.1 Wessex Archaeology retains full copyright of any report under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the Client for the use of the report by the Client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the specification. Any document produced to meet planning requirements can be copied for planning purposes by the Local Planning Authority.
- 7.2.2 Wessex Archaeology will assign copyright to the Client upon written request but retains the right to be identified as the author of all project documentation and reports as defined in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (Chapter IV, s.79).

8 REFERENCES

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9 APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 1		
Depth (m bgl)	Context	Description/Interpretation
0-0.3	101	Topsoil: dark greyish brown silty clay with occasional rounded pebbles (small-medium)
0.3+	102	Modern disturbance layer - probably from flooding. Dark greyish brown silty clay. Contains brick frags and glass.
0.3+	103	Ditch cut (post-med). Same as Trench 7
0.3+	104	Ditch fill (post-med). Same as Trench 7
0.3+	105	Natural: orange sandy clay with occasional bands of gravel.

Trench 2		
Depth (m bgl)	Context	Description/Interpretation
0.0.06	201	Topsoil - light brownish grey silty sand (20:80) with common (20%) medium rounded and subrounded inclusions, poorly sorted.
0.06-0.31	202	Subsoil - dark greyish brown silty clay loam. Sparse (5%) small rounded stone inclusions - poorly sorted.
0.31+	203	Natural - mid brownish red sandy clay loam (higher percentage of sand compared to 202). Abundant (40-50%) small and medium stone.
0.06-0.52	204	Modern Disturbance - dark greyish orange mix of subsoil and natural and brick and modern material including green glass bottle found with "inscription" - "The property of M. H. Horns Atherstone".

Trench 3		
Depth (m bgl)	Context	Description/Interpretation
0-0.3	301	Topsoil: dark brown silty sand. Occasional small-medium rounded pebbles.
0.3+	302	Natural: orangish brown sandy gravel (frequent small-medium rounded pebbles)



Trench 4		
Depth (m bgl)	Context	Description/Interpretation
0-0.12	401	Topsoil - light brownish grey silty sand (20:80). Sparse (5%) small-medium subrounded and rounded stone inclusions.
0.12-0.41	402	Subsoil - dark greyish brown humic sandy loam (40:60). Very common (30%) small and medium subrounded and rounded stone inclusions.
0.91+	403	Natural - Mid brownish yellow. Oxidises very quickly and turns from yellow to dark brown. Silty clay loam with abundant (40%) medium rounded stone inclusions.
0.34-0.91	404	Cut - Field boundary. V-shaped. Also runs through Trench 7. On 1884 OS map.
0.34-0.91	405	Fill of 404 - very dark brownish black silty clay loam. Common (20-25%) medium rounded stone inclusions. Sparse (5%) iron pan inclusions (including 1 very large fragment 10 x 20cm located near the bottom of this fill.)

Trench 5		
Depth (m bgl)	Context	Description/Interpretation
0-0.3	501	Topsoil: dark greyish brown silty sand with occasional small rounded pebble with inclusions and roots.
0.3-0.4	502	Colluvial deposit consisting of light grey fine sandy clay. Infrequent small pebble inclusions.
0.4+	503	Natural: light yellowish orange sandy clay with bands of gravel (small-medium rounded pebbles).

Trench 6		
Depth (m bgl)	Context	Description/Interpretation
0-0.3	601	Topsoil: dark greyish brown silty sand. Occasional small-medium rounded pebbles.
0.3+	602	Ditch cut (post med). Same as Trench 7.
0.3+	603	Ditch fill of 602 (post med.) Same as Trench 7.
0.3+	604	Modern drain same as 710. Contains redeposited natural.
0.3+	605	Natural: orange sandy gravel with bands of sandy clay (orangish brown).



0.3-0.4	606	In patches. Possibly thin layer of subsoil towards south end of trench (same as in Trench 7). Orange brown silty clay.
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Trench 7		
Depth (m bgl)	Context	Description/Interpretation
0-0.3	701	Topsoil: brownish grey silty clay. Frequent small-medium rounded pebbles. Occasional roots
0.3-0.5	702	Subsoil: mid reddish brown silty clay with infrequent charcoal flecks and occasional small-medium rounded stones (not present across whole trench)
0.3-0.7	703	Colluvium: light greyish orange sandy gravel. Frequent small-medium rounded pebbles.
0.3-0.46	704	Modern drain. Stone lined- running east-west
0.3-1.05	705	Cut of ditch (post med.) Appears on OS map 1884. Linear enclosure ditch.
0.3-0.5	706	Lower fill of 705: dark greyish brown silty sand with occasional small rounded pebbles and patches of humic/organic material and infrequent flecks of charcoal. Filling with 0.08m depth of water per hour.
0.5-1.05	707	Middle fill of 705: light greyish brown silty sand with occasional pea gravel and rare charcoal flecks.
0.5-1.05	708	Top fill of 705: mid reddish brown silty clay with frequent small-medium rounded pebbles and residual sherds of Romano-British pot.

Trench 8		
Depth (m bgl)	Context	Description/Interpretation
0-0.1	801	Topsoil - light brownish grey silty sand (10:90). Very common (30%) small and medium subrounded-subangular stone inclusions. Poorly sorted.
0.1-0.49	802	Subsoil - dark brownish grey sandy loam. Common (20%) small and medium rounded stone inclusions, poorly sorted.
0.49+	803	Natural - mid brownish red silty sand (20:80). Abundant (50%) small through to large stone inclusions - subrounded and rounded, well sorted.
0.48-0.64	804	Irregular cut of gully or natural water channel. Severe bioturbation/disturbance.

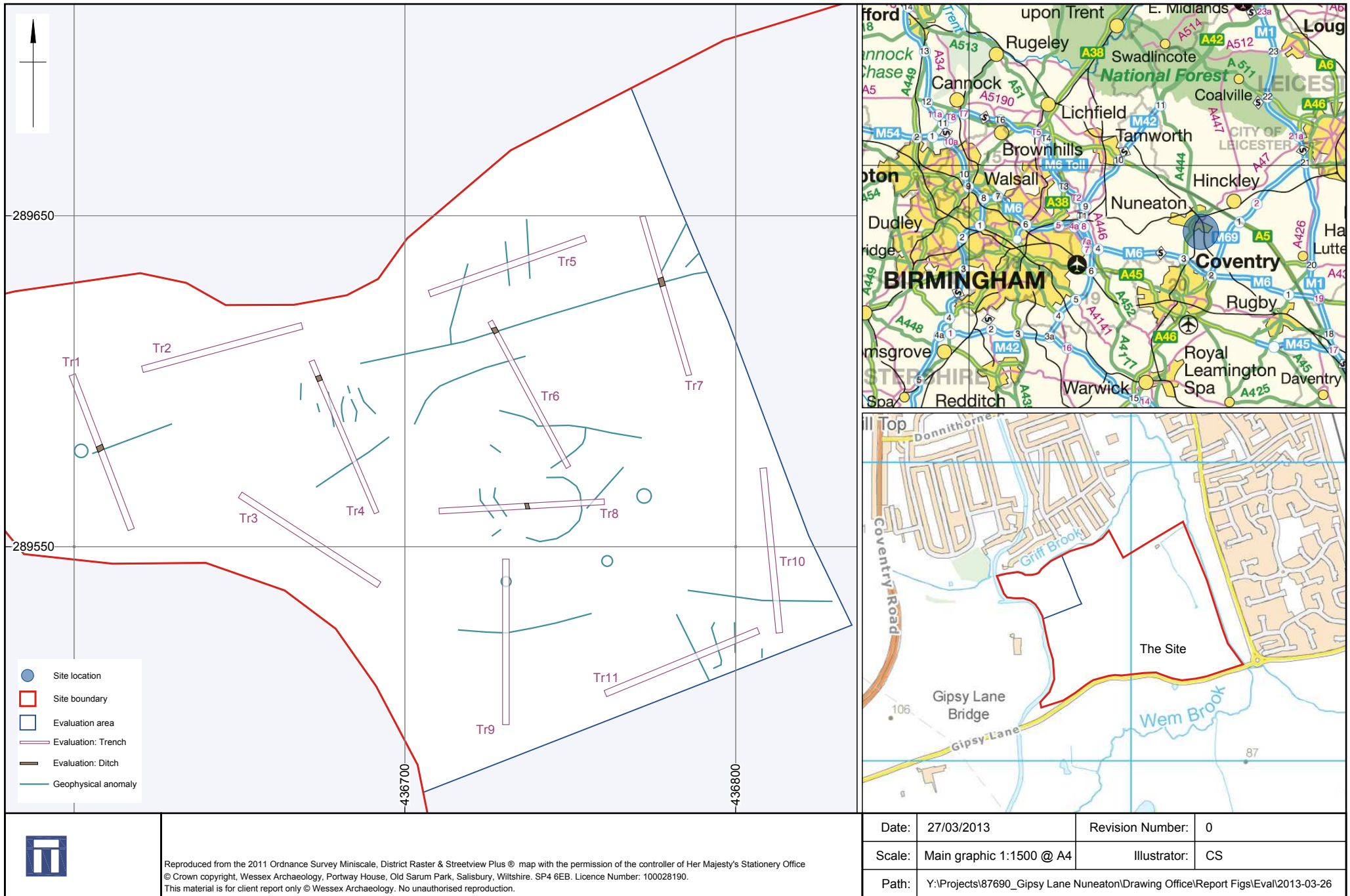


0.48-0.64	805	Fill of 804: very dark brownish grey loamy sand with common 20% small and medium subrounded stone inclusions - poorly sorted.
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Trench 9		
Depth (m bgl)	Context	Description/Interpretation
0-0.4	901	Topsoil: dark greyish brown silty sand occasional roots and small-medium rounded stones
0.4+	902	Natural: orange gravel banded with orangish brown sandy clay. Frequent small-medium rounded pebbles.

Trench 10		
Depth (m bgl)	Context	Description/Interpretation
0-0.32	1001	Topsoil: dark greyish brown sandy clay with occasional fine roots and small-medium rounded pebbles.
0.1-0.23	1002	Natural: orangish brown sand with frequent patches of rounded gravel (loose - small/medium). Occasional bands of sandy clay natural running across trench too.

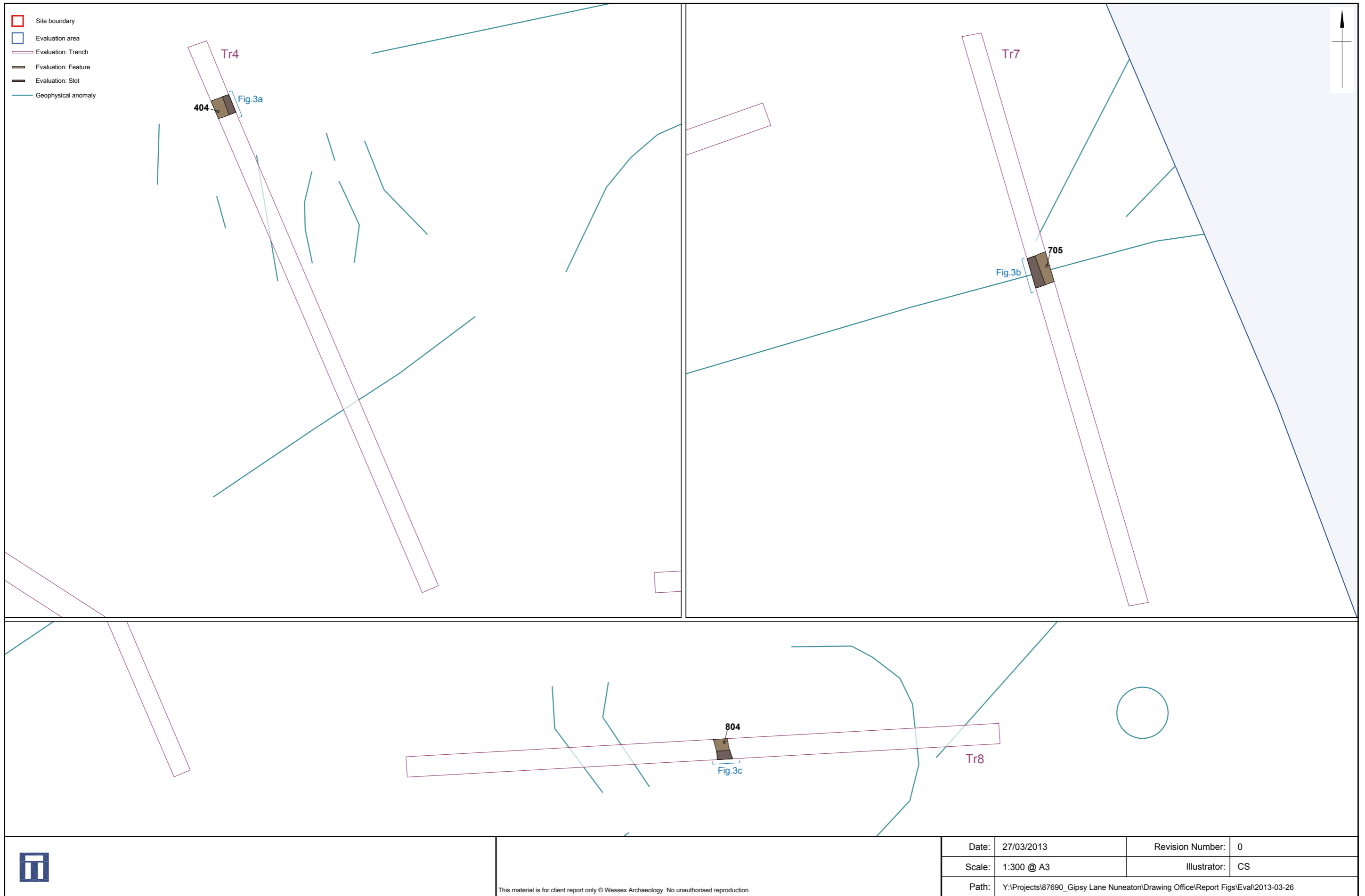
Trench 11		
Depth (m bgl)	Context	Description/Interpretation
0-0.06	1101	Topsoil - light yellowish grey silty sand (10:90). Very frequent small and medium rounded stone inclusions.
0.06-0.38	1102	Subsoil: dark brownish grey-humic sandy loam (40:60). Frequent medium subrounded and rounded stone inclusions.
0.38+	1103	Natural: mid brownish orange silty sand (20:80) with abundant (75%) small to large subrounded and rounded stone inclusions. Geophysics anomaly is a natural hollow/dip with limited traces of burnt modern rubbish at 0.09m deep.



Site location and plan

Figure 1

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Plan of Trenches 4, 7 and 8

Figure 2

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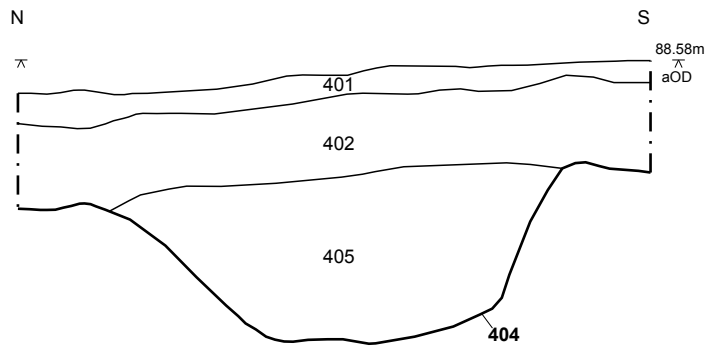


Figure 3a: Trench 4

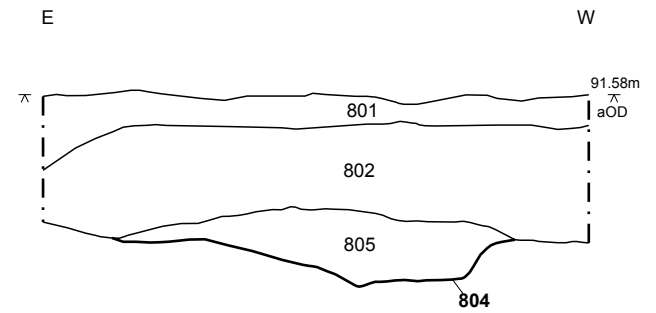


Figure 3c: Trench 8

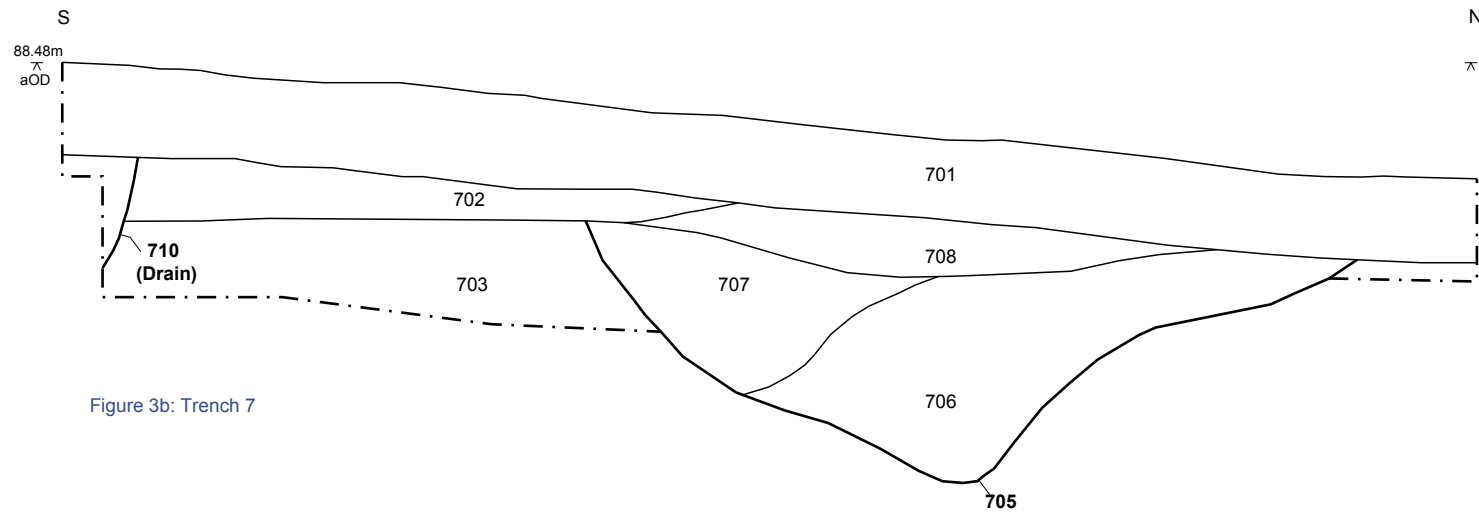
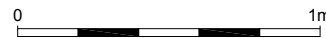


Figure 3b: Trench 7



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Plate 1: Modern disturbance **102** in Trench 1



Plate 2: Natural **202** in blank part of Trench 2



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Plate 3: Unexcavated post-medieval field boundary **103** in Trench 1



Plate 4: Excavated post-medieval field boundary **404** in Trench 4


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Plate 5: Unexcavated post-medieval field boundary **602** in Trench 6



Plate 6: Excavated post-medieval field boundary **705** in Trench 7



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Plate 7: Natural feature **804** in Trench 8

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