STARHUST SCHOOL, DORKING, SURREY

NGR: TQ 1742 4811 (centred)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND INVESTIGATION

Andrew Hood BSc. AIFA

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SUMMARY

In June 2005 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation on land to the south of Starhusrt School, Dorking, Surrey, NGR: TQ 1742 4811 (centred). The project was commissioned by CPM on behalf of CALA Homes (South) Ltd.

The evaluation comprised the excavation and recording of six 50m trenches, across the proposed development area.

The archaeological evaluation revealed archaeological features of Romano-British date in Trench 1 on the flat ground at the top of the hill. These features appeared to be isolated and not part of a nucleus of activity. The archaeological potential of the remainder of the development area would appear to be negligible.

GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Archaeology

For the purpose of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

CBM

Ceramic Building Material.

Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site, in this case clay.

NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level. (AOD Above Ordnance Datum).

OS

Ordnance Survey.

Prehistoric

For the purpose of this report prehistoric is defined as being the period prior to the Roman invasion of AD 43.

Romano-British

The period between AD 43 – *circa* AD 410.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology in June 2005, on a plot of land south of Starhurst School, Dorking, Surrey, NGR: TQ 1742 4811 (centred). The project was commissioned by CPM on behalf of CALA Homes (South) Ltd.

1.2 A programme of archaeological works was required by Surrey County Council in advance of development, in accordance with the principles of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990) and the archaeological policies of Surrey and Mole Valley Councils.

1.3 This report constitutes the results of the archaeological works. The work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Foundations 2005) which complied with CPM's specification and was agreed with the Council's archaeological advisor. The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994, revised 2001). The code of conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists was adhered to throughout.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

2.1 The planning application is for the construction of 37 affordable residential units and 18 private houses with an associated access road.

2.2 At present the site consists of grassland to the north of the footpath and cleared scrub to the south (Fig. 2). The site is bounded by Deepdene Avenue (A24) to the west, Starhust School playing fields to the north and residential units to the south and east.

2.3 The underlying geology consists of heavy clays. The soils are well drained coarse loam and sands. The site slopes from south (*circa* 81m AOD) to north (*circa* 71m AOD).

2.4 The archaeological background to the site is detailed in a desk-based assessment prepared by CPM Environmental Planning and Design (2004). No archaeological remains have been documented within the site area, although there was potential for archaeological finds and features, in particular dating from the prehistoric and Roman periods to be present.

2.5 The study area therefore contained the potential for archaeological features and deposits, predominantly associated with the prehistoric and Roman periods. This did not prejudice the evaluation against the recovery of evidence relating to other periods.

3 AIMS

3.1 The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits, in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains. In turn this would allow reasonable planning decisions to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed development.

3.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:

i) To define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;

ii) To attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;

iii) To recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 The archaeological specification required the excavation of six trenches measuring 50m long by 2m wide. In the event, a number of minor alterations to trench lengths and widths were necessary in order not to damage protected fauna and flora. Final trench locations are shown in Figure 2.

4.2 Non-significant overburden was removed, under constant archaeological supervision, to the top of the archaeological deposits or the underlying natural deposits, whichever were encountered first. This was achieved through the use of a JCB-type mechanical excavator with a toothless grading bucket. Thereafter cleaning and excavation was conducted by hand. Spoil tips were scanned for finds.

4.3 All excavation and recording work was undertaken in accordance with the WSI and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

5 RESULTS

5.1 **Trench 1** (50m by 2m) was aligned north east-south west and was excavated onto the natural orange yellow clay at an average depth of 0.41m (78.18m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural clays were sealed beneath a mid grey sand silt subsoil (102), up to 0.18m thick. This was sealed by a dark brown clay sand topsoil (101), up to 0.35m thick, which contained frequent charcoal flecks and modern artefacts. Two archaeological features were present within the trench.

5.2 Feature [103] was cut into the natural clay and sealed by subsoil (102). It was 2.40m long, 0.90m wide and up to 0.17m in depth and consisted of a linear pit, aligned north west-south east. The feature had near vertical sides at the south west and shallow sloping sides at the north east, which descended to a flat base. Fill (104) comprised a mottled grey brown clay with rare charcoal flecks.

5.3 Feature [105] was cut into the natural clay and sealed by subsoil (102). It was 4.25m long, 1.65m wide and up to 0.18m in depth and consisted of a sub oval pit, aligned north west-south east. Feature [105] had shallow sloping sides which descended to a flat base. Fill (106) consisted of a mottled grey brown clay with rare charcoal flecks from which 20 sherds of early Romano-British pottery were recovered.

5.4 Due to the recovery of archaeological material from feature [105] and the probability that it was contemporary with pit [103], Trench 1 was extended to comprise a machine stripped area measuring circa 540m² (Fig. 2). The mechanical removal of non-significant overburden was conducted under constant archaeological supervision. The revised methodology for Trench 1 was agreed on site and in writing with CPM and the archaeological representatives of Surrey County Council.

5.5 Two further archaeological features were present within the extended area.

5.6 Feature [107] was cut through subsoil (102), into the natural clay and was sealed by topsoil (101). It was 23.50m long, 0.50m wide and up to 0.10m in depth and consisted of a linear ditch aligned north east-south west. Feature [107] had sloping sides which descended to a flat, irregular base. Fill (108) comprised a dark grey brown clay silt. Post medieval blue-green bottle glass was recovered from this context. Feature [107] was cut by a stone lined land drain.

5.7 Feature [109] was cut through subsoil (102), into the natural clay and was sealed by topsoil (101). It was 11.00m long, 0.40m wide and up to 0.06m in depth and consisted of a linear ditch aligned north west-south east. Feature [109] had sloping sides which descended to an irregular base. Fill (110) comprised a dark grey brown clay silt from which two sherds of 18th-19th century pottery and fragment of brick/tile were recovered. Features [107]/(108) and [109]/(110) were similar.

5.8 A total of three stone lined land drains and one ceramic pipe land drain were also present within the extended area.

5.9 **Trench 2** (55m by 2m) was aligned north west-south east and was excavated onto the natural orange clay at an average depth of 0.44m (79.68m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural clays were sealed beneath an orange brown sand silt subsoil (202), up to 0.16m thick. This was sealed by a mid brown silt sand topsoil (201), up to 0.55m thick, which contained rare charcoal flecks. A stone lined land drain, similar to the type identified in Trench 1, and

a ceramic pipe land drain occurred within the trench. No archaeological features or deposits were present.

5.10 **Trench 3** (48m by 2m) was aligned north east-south west and was excavated onto the natural orange clay at an average depth of 0.52m (81.89m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural clays were sealed beneath an orange brown sand silt subsoil (302), up to 0.15m thick. This was sealed by a mid brown silt sand topsoil (301), up to 0.46m thick, which contained rare charcoal flecks and occasional CBM flecks. A stone lined land drain, similar to the type identified in Trench 1, occurred within the trench. No archaeological features or deposits were present.

5.11 **Trench 4** (44m by 2m) was aligned north west-south east and was excavated onto the natural orange clay at an average depth of 0.39m (78.81m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural clays were sealed beneath an orange brown sand silt subsoil (402), up to 0.12m thick. This was sealed by a mid brown silt sand topsoil (401), up to 0.35m thick, which contained rare charcoal flecks and rare CBM flecks. No archaeological features or deposits were present.

5.12 **Trench 5** (44m by 1.5m) was aligned north east-south west and was excavated onto the natural orange clay at an average depth of 0.56m (75.85m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural clays were sealed beneath an orange brown sand silt subsoil (502), up to 0.16m thick. This was sealed by a mid brown silt sand topsoil (501), up to 0.60m thick, which contained rare charcoal flecks, occasional CBM flecks and occasional modern glazed pottery sherds. No archaeological features or deposits were present.

5.13 **Trench 6** (43m by 2m) was aligned north east-south west and was excavated onto the natural orange clay at an average depth of 0.51m (71.49m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural clays were sealed beneath an orange brown sand silt subsoil (602), up to 0.32m thick. This was overlaid by a layer of rubble, brick and glass (603), up to 0.22m thick. Layer (603) only occurred in the north eastern half of the trench. Topsoil (601), up to 0.21m thick, overlaid subsoil (602) and dump layer (603) and comprised a mid brown silt sand which contained frequent CBM flecks, frequent charcoal and occasional modern artefacts. A stone lined land drain, similar to the type identified in Trench 1, and a ceramic pipe land drain occurred within the trench. No archaeological features or deposits were present.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 In general, visibility and preservation conditions were good across the site. Intact subsoils were present in all trenches.

6.2 Trenches 2 to 6 were located on the slope of a hill and were devoid of archaeological features, artefacts or deposits. Trench 1 was located on a relatively flat part of the hill and revealed a number of features, at least one of

which was of early Romano-British date. There was a general lack of charcoal, at subsoil level or below, across all of the trenches.

6.3 Pits [103] and [105] shared a similar form and fill and are likely to be contemporary. Artefactual material recovered from feature [105] dated to the early Romano-British period.

6.4 No other features contemporary with pits [103] and [105] were present within the extended Trench 1 study area. The lack of other features along with the general absence of charcoal across Trench 1 suggests that features [103] and [105] are unlikely to represent evidence of settlement activity within the study area. This does not preclude the possibility that these pits are outliers to nearby contemporary activity.

6.5 Features [107] and [109] shared a similar form and fill, were aligned perpendicular to each other and are probably contemporary. These features are securely dated to the Post medieval period.

6.6 Ditches [107] and [109], along with the various stone lined and ceramic drains identified across the site, probably represent repeated attempts to drain the study area during the Post medieval and Modern periods.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 The archaeological evaluation has revealed archaeological features of Romano-British date in Trench 1 on the flat ground at the top of the hill. These features appeared to be isolated and not part of a nucleus of activity. The archaeological potential of the remainder of the development area would appear to be negligible.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX 1

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE POTTERY FROM STARHURST SCHOOL, DORKING, SURREY (SSD05)

Surrey County Archaeological Unit
Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road,
Woking, Surrey, GU21 6ND

Tel: 01483 518777 Fax: 01483 518780
email: archaeology.scau@surreycc.gov.uk

website: www.surreycc.gov.uk/archaeology

Project Manager	Rob Poulton
Author	Phil Jones
Date	June 2005
Client	Foundations Archaeology

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE POTTERY FROM STARHURST SCHOOL, DORKING, SURREY (SSD05)

Introduction

Pottery was examined from an evaluation/ excavation conducted during 2005. All sherds were examined at X20 magnification to determine their fabric type in accordance with the guidelines established by the three ceramic study organisations concerned with prehistoric, Roman, and medieval pottery.

Quantification

Pottery Count and Weight (no sherds/wt in g)

Context No.	Notes	Roman			Post Med	Misc
		2A	3A	Grog/Q	RW	Tile
106	Fill in pit 105	Join/124	12+/34			
110	16-18 century				2/9	
Tr 1 u/s	Grog/Q is LIA/ER; PM is 18-19 c		2/3	1/14	3/24	2

Join = number of joining sherds

ROMAN POTTERY FABRIC TYPE SERIES (SURREY)

2A Shell-tempered course 'native' type
3 Grey/brown Sandy wares A Alice Holt/Farnham & similar types

Comment

Pit 105, of which 106 is a fill, is of early Roman date, incorporating an unusually western example of a coarse shell-tempered bead rimmed storage jar and several sherds of Alice Holt/Farnham type greyware, including the rim of a bead-rimmed beaker and the neck of a flagon.

Apart from a rolled LIA/ER sherd , the remaining is of uninteresting post-medieval types.

FIGURE 1: Site Location

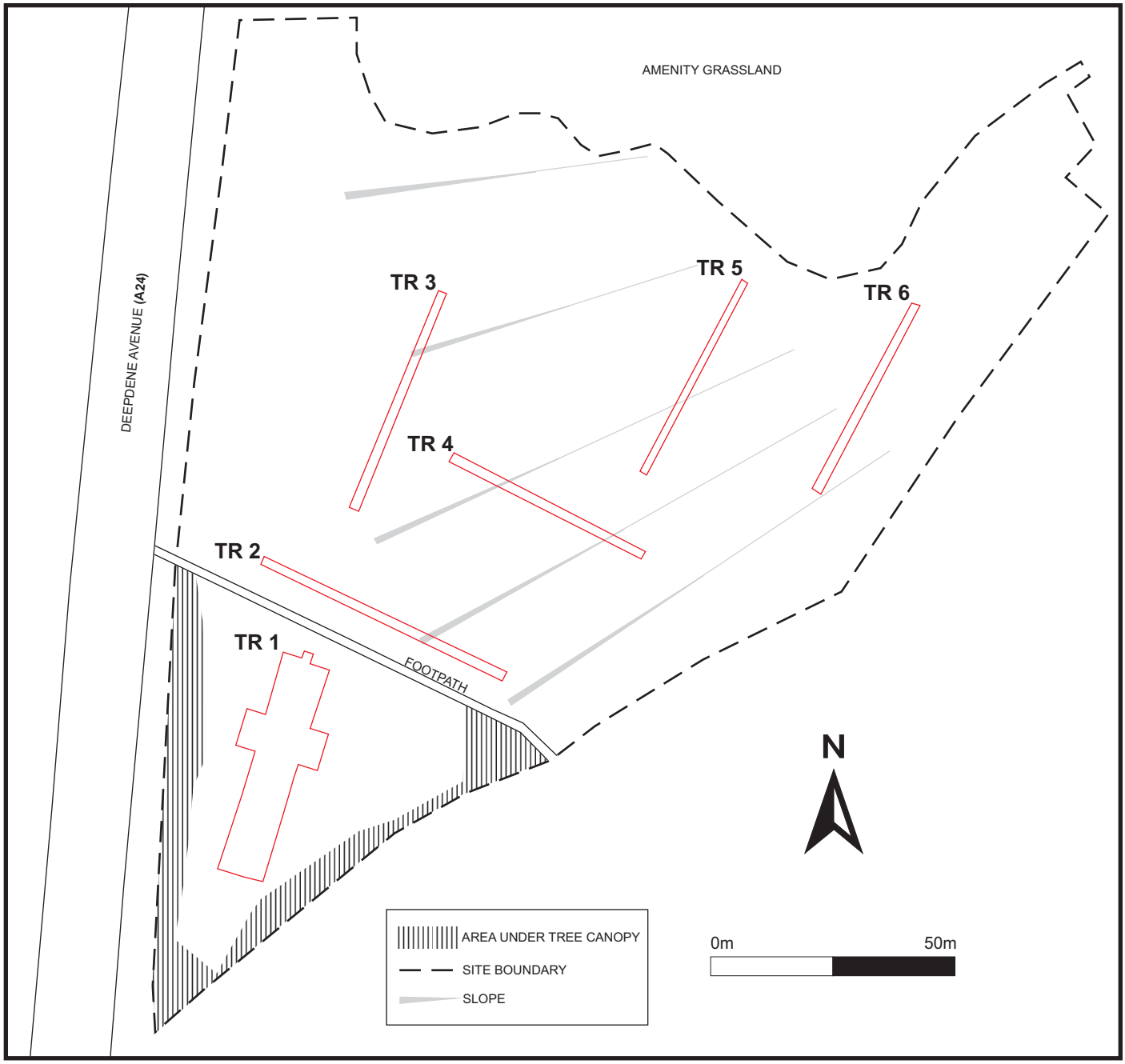


FIGURE 2: Trench Location

TRENCH 1 PLAN

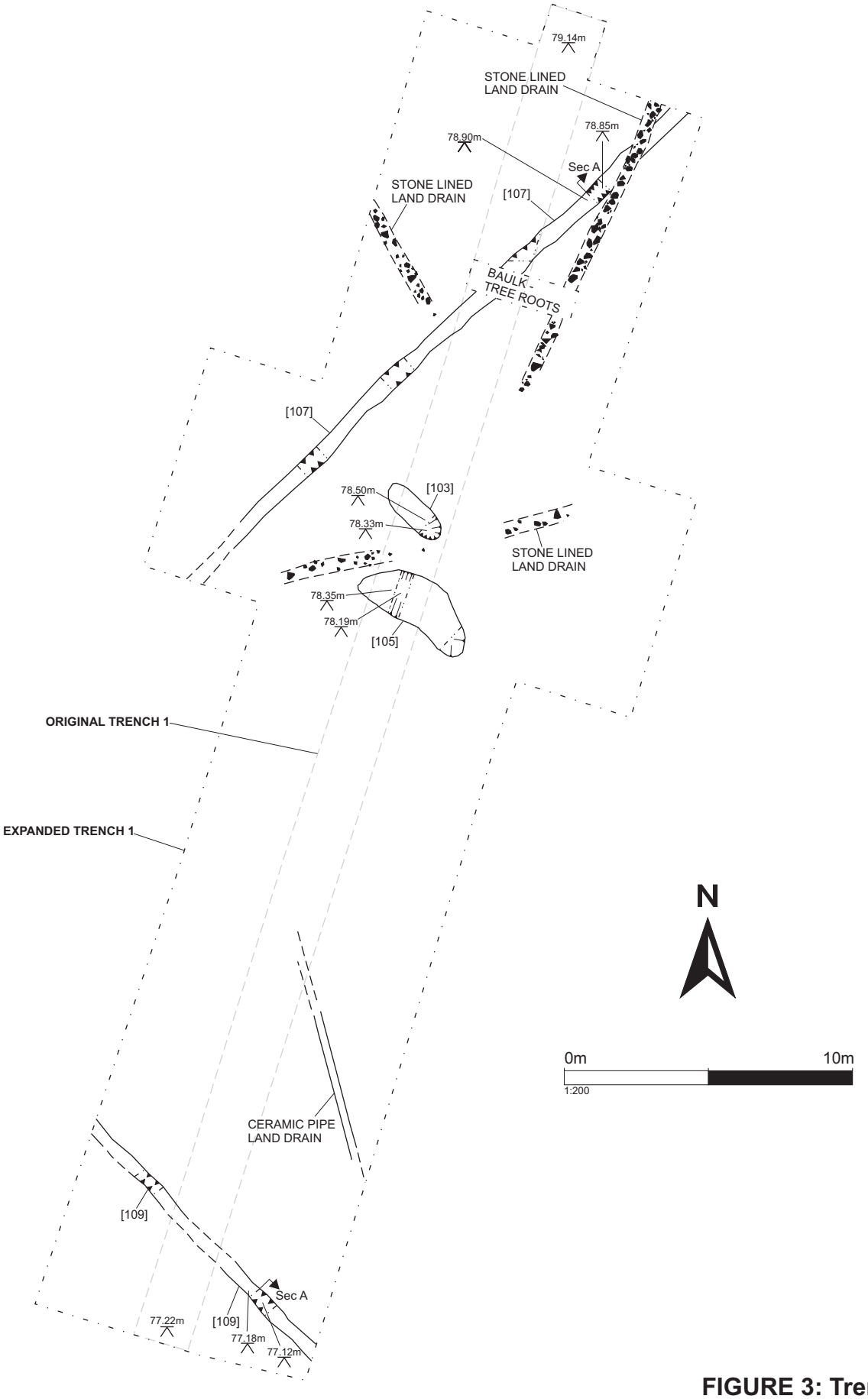


FIGURE 3: Trench 1 Plan

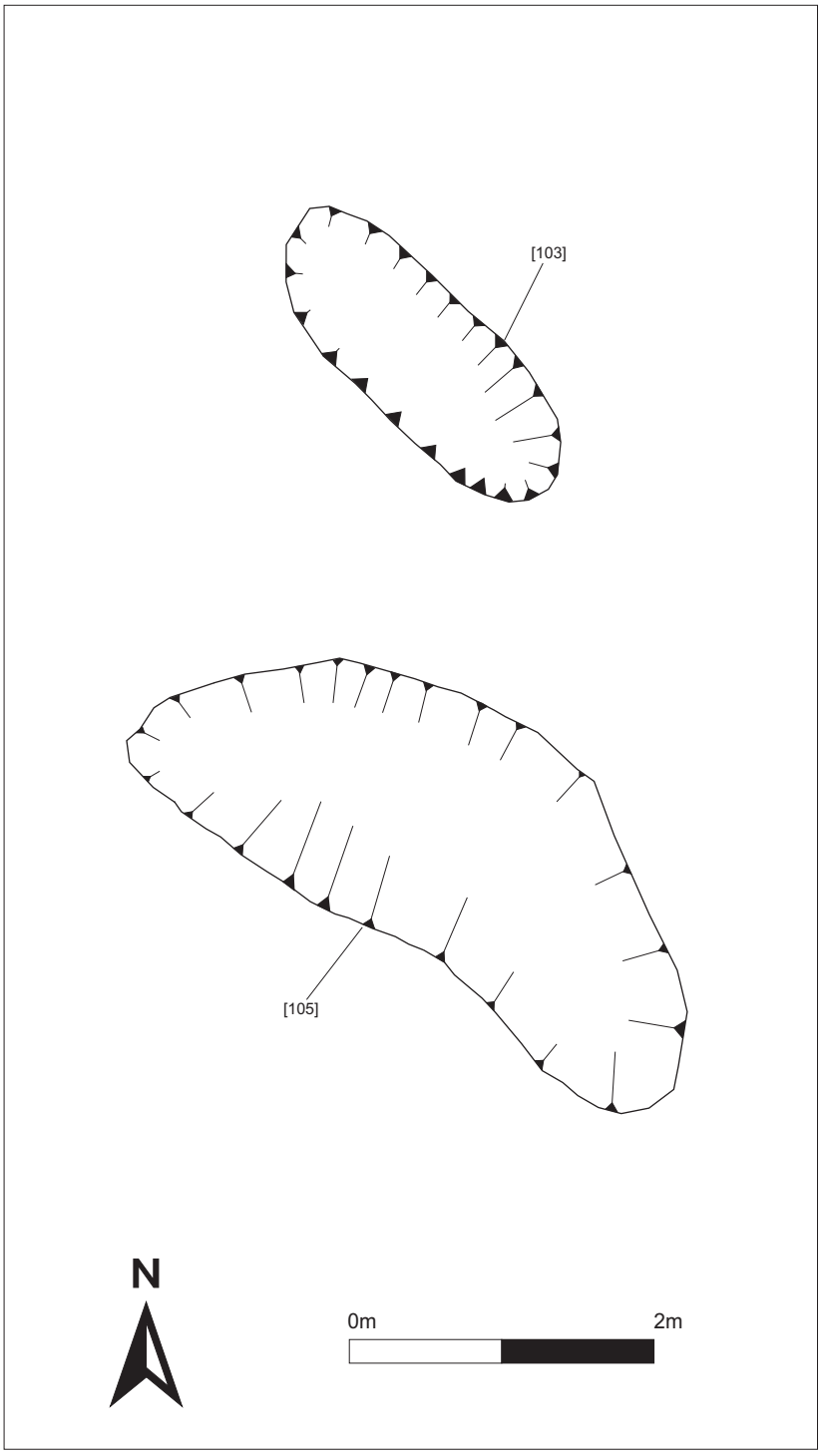
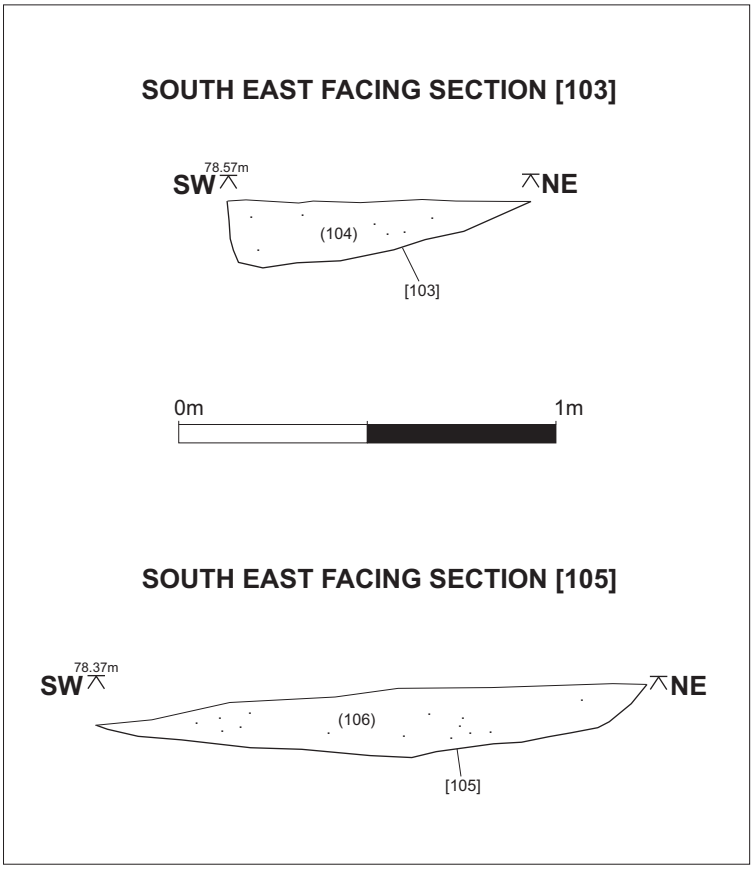


FIGURE 4: Features [103] and [105] Post Excavation



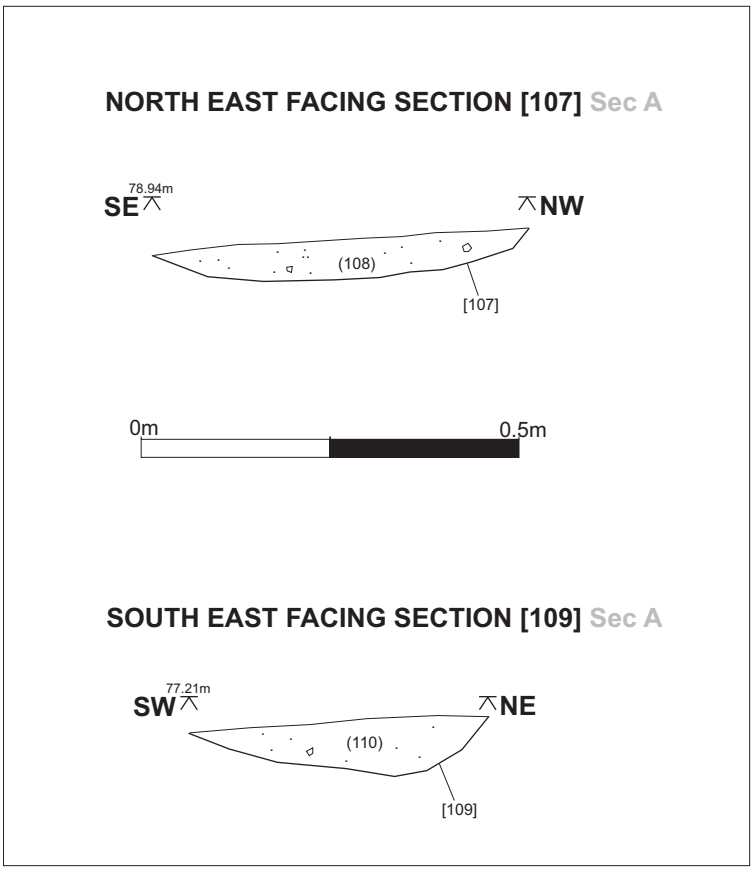


FIGURE 5: Sections