

**LAND OFF WHITING WAY,
WELLS, SOMERSET.**

NGR: ST 5462 4585

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

Quality Assurance

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SUMMARY

Between 16th and 26th April 2012 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation and recording on land off Whiting Way, Wells, Somerset, centred on NGR: ST 5462 4585. The work was commissioned by Orbell Associates.

Planning permission (ref: 2009/1908) has been approved with conditions by Mendip District Council for the construction of a Class A1 foodstore and a car park deck on the adjoining Whiting Way public car park with associated services, access, landscaping and works. An archaeological evaluation has been requested by the Local Planning Authority to inform any requirements for further mitigation in accordance with saved policy EN13 of the Mendip Local Plan and in accordance with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012).

A total of six trenches, each measuring 30m by 2m, were excavated across the study area, although only 7m of Trench 1 was excavated.

No archaeological finds, features, or deposits pre-dating the late Post-medieval period were present within the evaluated area. The two linear features identified within Trenches 3 and 4 were of late Post-medieval origin and probably represented land management features, such as boundary or drainage ditches. A deposit of stone present in Trench 5 did not appear to represent structural remains and was probably a 'dump' of stone within a layer.

The results of the evaluation suggest that the site lies outside the Medieval and Post-medieval town of Wells and was open fields in the 19th century. The clay-rich nature of the soil layers may suggest the lower layers were alluvial in nature, which could in turn suggest that the area was historically wet. The general absence of any significant archaeological finds or features, the presence of remnant soil layers across the site and relatively undisturbed natural geology, indicates that the site may be considered to be of low archaeological potential.

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, Triassic mudstones.

NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level.

OS

Ordnance Survey.

Roman

The period traditionally dated AD 43 to *c.* AD 410.

Saxon

The period between AD 410 and AD 1066.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Between 16th and 26th April 2012 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation and recording on land off Whiting Way, Wells, Somerset, centred on NGR: ST 5462 4585. The work was commissioned by Orbell Associates.
- 1.2 Planning permission (ref: 2009/1908) has been approved with conditions by Mendip District Council for the construction of a Class A1 foodstore and a car park deck on the adjoining Whiting Way public car park with associated services, access, landscaping and works. An archaeological evaluation has been requested by the Local Planning Authority to inform any requirements for further mitigation in accordance with saved policy EN13 of the Mendip Local Plan and in accordance with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012).
- 1.3 The works were undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2012) in response to discussions with Steve Membery of the Somerset Archaeological Service, acting as archaeological advisor to Mendip District Council.
- 1.4 The Written Scheme of Investigation was compliant with *The Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) issued by English Heritage (2006) and the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (revision 2008) and with the IfA *Codes of Practice and Conduct*. Foundations Archaeology is a registered archaeological organisation and is certified to BS EN ISO 9001: 2008 for quality assurance in the provision of archaeological services.
- 1.5 This report constitutes the results of the project.

2 PROJECT AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Planning Permission has been granted for the construction of a Class A1 foodstore and a car park deck on the Whiting Way public car park and adjoining EMI Club with associated services, access, landscaping and works by Mendip District Council (ref: 2009/1908). An archaeological evaluation has been requested by the Local Planning Authority to inform any requirements for further mitigation in accordance with saved policy EN13 of the Mendip Local Plan.
- 2.2 The site is centred on NGR: ST 5462 4585 and covers approximately 1 hectare. The area is split into two separate parts with separate entrances, divided by a boundary wall; the council's Whiting Way public car park and the EMI Club with

associated car park. At the time of the investigations, the site was in operation as live car parks and all excavation was undertaken within car park plots under Tarmac. The site is bounded by Whiting Way to the southwest, from which the public car park is accessed, by built land to the northeast and southwest and by a public footpath to the northwest, beyond which is a skate park. The EMI Club is accessed from Chamberlain Street from the southeast.

- 2.3 The site is situated within the centre of historic Wells. The City of Wells is designated as an area of high archaeological potential and an outstanding heritage settlement under local and regional policy (Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review, 1991 – 2011, Mendip Local Plan).
- 2.4 The geological sequence comprises Triassic mudstones (British Geological Survey, 1977).
- 2.5 The site therefore contained the potential for the preservation of archaeological deposits. In particular the site may have contained information relating to Medieval and Post-medieval activity. This did not prejudice the works against the recovery of evidence dating to other periods.

3 AIMS

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological works, as set out in the brief, were to record any historic environment assets which may be disturbed by the proposed development, to conserve any archaeological records and discoveries and to report on the findings. It was a further aim of the archaeological works 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.
- 3.2 These aims were achieved by the pursuit of the objectives as stated in the Written Scheme of Investigation (2012).
 - (i) To determine the existence or absence of archaeological remains and, should archaeological remains be present, to assess their general nature and significance.
 - (ii) To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of the remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
 - (iii) To determine or confirm the approximate extent of the remains.
 - (iv) To determine the condition and state of preservation of the remains.

- (v) To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.
- (vi) To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- (vii) To determine the implications of the remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity and to characterise the intensity, status and environment of the activity from recovered artefactual and ecofactual assemblages.
- (viii) To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.
- (ix) To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeo-environmental, geo-archaeological and/or economic evidence. The forms in which such evidence may be present will be determined in accordance with the guidelines set out in English Heritage's *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation* and *Geoarchaeology: Using earth sciences to understand the archaeological record*.

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 An archaeological evaluation in the form of six 30m long x 2m wide trenches was to be excavated in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation in order to comprise a suitable sample of the area (see Figure 2 for trench locations).
- 4.2 The trench locations were subject to minor change from the plan in the Written Scheme of Investigation due to on-site constraints. The alterations were agreed by Steve Membery of Somerset Archaeological Service. Trench 1 was moved 2m northwest to avoid the car park barrier. Trench 6 was moved 3m south in order to gain enough space to fit a 30m length across the area. Trenches 3, 4 and 5 were split either side of surface drains and Trench 5 was also split either side of a car park barrier.
- 4.3 The overburden was removed to the top of archaeological deposits or natural, whichever was encountered first, with the exception of Trench 5 where excavation along its central section ceased at the top of a trench containing a live cable. A total of seven metres of the proposed 30 metres of Trench 1 were excavated. It was agreed, in consultation with Somerset Archaeological Service, that the

remainder of the trench would remain unexcavated due to the depth and instability of the deposits exposed within the southeast end.

- 4.4 Excavation was undertaken with the use of an 8 ton 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket working under the constant supervision of a suitably experienced archaeologist. Spoil tips were scanned for unstratified finds across the entire study area by eye.
- 4.5 Any significant archaeological deposits and/or features within the study area were manually cleaned, investigated and recorded in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation.

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 Six trenches, or portions thereof, were excavated in the positions shown on Figure 2. The trenches were 2m wide and 30m in length, although some length was lost in all trenches, with the exception of Trench 2, as detailed in Table 1 and on Figure 2.
- 5.2 Natural deposits comprising red brown to brown orange sand clay which contained some brash inclusions within Trenches 3, 4 and 5 were encountered within all trenches. The natural deposits were present at a depth of 0.7m to 1m below the existing ground level within the public car park at the northern side of the site. The overburden above the natural ground was much thicker in the southern part of the site at 1.2m to 1.5m thick, with the exception of the east end of Trench 6 where the natural was encountered at 0.6m below the existing ground level. Natural was encountered at a depth of 43.9m OD in the north corner of the site and the natural slope declined gradually to the southwest, where the natural was encountered at a depth of 42.5m OD at the centre of the site and at 41.2 along the southwest side of the site. This was a natural drop of 2.7m east northeast to west southwest.
- 5.3 Remnant soils overlying the natural substrate were present across the site. Trenches 3, 4, 5 and 6 contained a possible subsoil layer consisting of orange brown sand clay with a few mudstone fragment and charcoal fleck inclusions, from which a fragment of possible late Post-medieval tile was recovered from Trench 4 (403). This layer may have represented an alluvial layer rather than a subsoil layer. This layer was overlain by a buried topsoil layer in Trench 3 and the natural was directly overlain by the buried topsoil in Trenches 1 and 2, the subsoil layer being absent from these latter trenches. The buried topsoil layer comprised orange brown sand clay with occasional to frequent mudstone and rare charcoal fleck inclusions within Trenches 1 and 2. The buried topsoil layer within Trench 3

was more disturbed and comprised dark brown sand clay with late Post-medieval finds.

- 5.4 The buried soil layers were overlain by thick, 0.70-0.80m, make-up layers containing Modern finds within Trenches 1 and 6. These trenches were located within the EMI Club car park in the southeast of the site. These make-up layers and the buried soil layers in Trenches 2-5 were directly overlain by a thick layer of hardcore, up to 0.40m thick, which was in turn overlain by tarmac.
- 5.5 No finds, features or deposits predating the late Post-medieval period were present within the trenches. A total of two linear features were present within Trenches 3 and 4 as well as a deposit of stone within Trench 5.
- 5.6 The feature within Trench 3 [305] was a very shallow northwest-southeast aligned ditch which contained a deposit very similar to the subsoil (304). It was sealed by the subsoil layer and cut the natural deposits. Small fragments of slate were recovered from this feature, suggesting a Post-medieval date.
- 5.7 Feature [404] within Trench 4 was a very shallow northwest-southeast aligned ditch which contained a dark deposit and 19th century finds of china wares, glass, CBM fragments, slate as well as animal bone fragments and Fe objects. The feature was sealed by hardcore layer (402) and cut soil layer (403) and the natural deposits.
- 5.8 A deposit of unshaped stone fragments and smaller stones (505) was present at the south southeast end of Trench 5. The stones spread across an area measuring approximately 1.6m by 1m and lay in the top of layer (503), immediately beneath hardcore (502). They were encountered at a depth of 0.5m below the existing ground level. The larger stones measured 0.30m-0.40m in length, 0.2m in width and 0.10m thick and at first appeared to form a linear arrangement to the east of much smaller stones; further investigation, however, suggested that the stones had not been laid in place, but 'dumped' in the top of layer (503). There was no evidence of mortar amongst the stones, they were only one course in depth and deposit (503) was around, between and below the stones. A single sherd of red-glazed pottery of 17th-19th century date was found in association with (505). Following investigation of stones (505), they were removed by machine and the trench excavated to the top of natural deposits.
- 5.9 No suitable contexts were identified for palaeoenvironmental sampling.
- 5.10 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but will be deposited within 12 months with the Museum of Somerset under accession number TTNCM: 8/2012. A short note will be submitted for publication in the

relevant local archaeological journal and an OASIS form will also be submitted to ADS.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 No archaeological finds, features, or deposits pre-dating the late Post-medieval period were present within the evaluated area. The two linear features identified were of late Post-medieval origin and probably represented land management features, such as boundary or drainage ditches. Both linear features were on a northwest-southeast alignment. A deposit of stone, possibly associated with a late Post-medieval pottery sherd, present in Trench 5 did not appear to represent structural remains and was probably a 'dump' of stone within a layer.
- 6.2 The results of the evaluation suggest that the site lies outside the Medieval and Post-medieval town of Wells and was open fields in the 19th century. The clay-rich nature of the soil layers may suggest the lower layers were alluvial in nature, which could in turn suggest that the area was historically wet. The general absence of any significant archaeological finds or features, the presence of remnant soil layers across the site and relatively undisturbed natural geology, indicates that the site may be considered to be of low archaeological potential.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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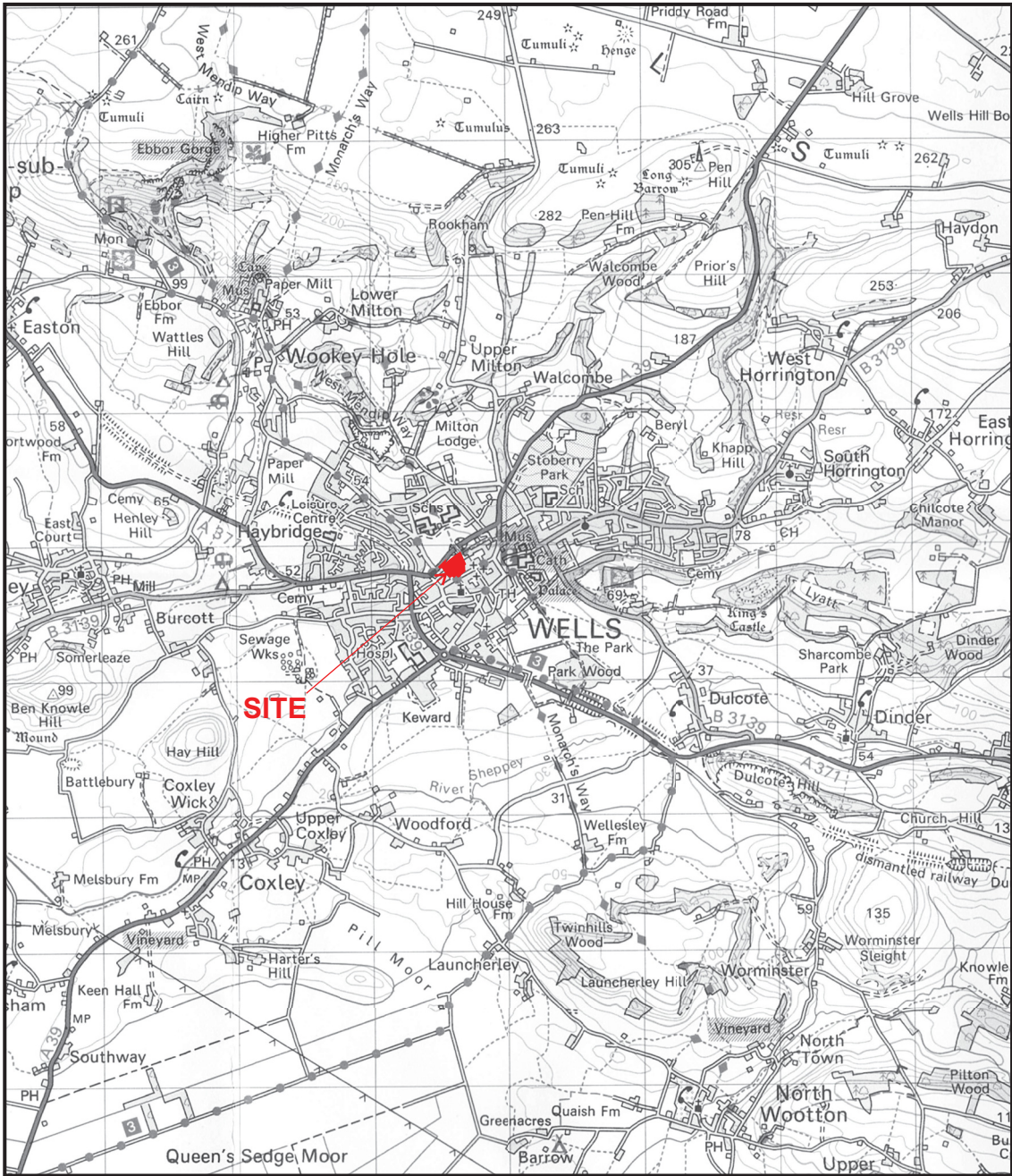
8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Tom Orbell and David Orbell of Orbell Associates and Steve Membery and colleagues of Somerset Archaeological Service for their help and co-operation during the course of the project.

APPENDIX 1: Stratigraphic Data

CXT	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	DESCRIPTION
				TRENCH 1 - 7m long and 2m wide; only the SE end of the originally proposed trench was excavated. Natural deposits comprised red-brown/ pink-brown sand-clay at an average depth of 1.5m (41.30m OD) below modern ground.
101	7	2	0.08	Layer of Tarmac
102	7	2	0.34	Layer of modern hardcore
103	7	2	0.83	Modern make-up/ levelling deposit comprising loose demolition rubble including stone, CBM, slate and concrete.
104	7	2	0.25	Possible layer of buried topsoil. Mid red-brown sand-clay with occasional small to medium sized Mudstone inclusions
				TRENCH 2 - 30m long and 2m wide. Natural deposits comprised light red-brown sand-clay at an average depth of 0.89m (41.08m OD) below modern ground at SE end and 0.99m (41.29m OD) below modern ground at NW end.
201	30	2	0.2	Layer of Tarmac
202	30	2	0.35	Layer of modern hardcore
203	30	2	0.19	Compact layer of probable buried topsoil. Mid grey-brown friable sand-silt-clay with inclusions of frequent charcoal flecks and rare slate and CBM
204	30	2	0.33	Possible layer of remnant subsoil. Light orange-brown friable sand-clay with frequent inclusions of small to medium stones and rare charcoal flecks
[205]	1.5	2+	1+	Modern cut seen in section towards the SE end of the trench 2. Filled with 206. Overlain by 202, cut 203, 204 and natural.
206	1.5	2+	1+	Fill of [205]. Consists of modern hardcore and CBM mixed with redeposited elements of 203, 204 and the natural red-brown sand-clay.
				TRENCH 3 - 30m long (minus 1.3m of baulk for drain) and 2m wide. Natural deposits comprised firm mid brown-orange plastic brashy-clay at an average depth of 1.0m (43.0m OD at NE end and 42.29m OD at SW end) below modern ground.
301	30	2	0.17	Layer of tarmac
302	30	2	0.41	Layer of modern hardcore
303	30	2	0.24	Firm layer of possible buried topsoil. Dark brown fairly compact sand-clay with inclusions of frequent charcoal flecks and occasional 19th century china wares, residual 17th-18th century pottery, clay pipe, slate fragments and rare CBM and animal bone fragments.
304	30	2	0.16	Thin layer of possible remnant subsoil. Compact, plastic orange-brown sand-clay with occasional flecks of charcoal.
[305]	2.1+	1.2	0.06	Shallow E-W aligned linear feature with gently sloping sides and a wide, undulating base. Filled with 306, cut natural.
306	2.1+	1.2	0.06	Moderately soft fill of [305]. Mid red-brown clay-silt with occasional small to medium stone inclusions, rare charcoal flecks and rare slate fragments.
				TRENCH 4 - 30m long (minus 1.1m of baulk for drain) and 2m wide. Natural deposits comprised firm mid brown-orange plastic brashy-clay at a depth of 0.67m (43.92m OD) below modern ground at NE end and 0.77m (43.26m OD) below modern ground at SW end.
401	30	2	0.22	Layer of tarmac
402	30	2	0.4	Layer of modern hardcore
403	30	2	0.05-0.15	Possible buried subsoil. Layer of firm, plastic mid orange-brown sand-clay with occasional inclusions of small fragments of stone brash, rare charcoal flecks and 1 tile fragment.
[404]	2.3+	0.94	0.08	Shallow late post-medieval linear feature at the NE end of Trench 4. NW-SE aligned with gently sloping sides and a wide, undulating base. Filled with 405, overlain by 402, cut 403 and natural. Cut by a modern metal fence post.

CXT	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	DESCRIPTION
405	2.3+	0.94	0.08	Fill of [404]. Dark black brown firm, compact clay silt with frequent small-medium sub-angular stones and occasional flecks of charcoal. Finds included animal bone fragments, sherds of china wares, glass, brick fragments and Fe objects.
				TRENCH 5 - 30m long (minus 4.8m of baulk for fence and 2m of baulk for drain) and 2m wide. Natural deposits comprised firm, plastic mid pink-orange brashy-clay at a depth of 0.85m (43.16m OD) below modern ground at SSW end. Natural light pink-orange with yellow-white patches of clay at a depth of 0.7m (43.87m OD) below modern ground at NNE end. Natural deposits were not encountered within the central 12m section of the trench as excavation ceased at the top of a live cable (top of 504) which ran the length of this section of trench.
501	30	2	0.2	Layer of tarmac
502	30	2	0.34	Layer of modern hardcore
503	30	2	0.16	Thin layer of possible remnant subsoil. Compact, plastic mid orange-brown sand-clay. Inclusions at NNE end included occasional flecks of charcoal. Inclusions at SSW end included frequent small stone fragments, rare charcoal flecks and 1 animal bone fragment.
504	12	2	?	Layer equivalent to 503 but with more frequent stone inclusions and rare CBM fragments. Located within the central section of the trench, between the two baulks. Machined to the top of this layer. Cut by a modern cable trench.
505	0.4	0.3	0.2	Dump of stone overlying 503 towards SSW end of trench 5. Associated with a sherd of post-medieval pot.
				TRENCH 6 - 29m long and 2m wide. Natural deposits comprised red-brown/ pink-brown sand-clay at an average depth of 0.59m (43.48m OD) below modern ground at E end and 1.2m (42.66m OD) below modern ground at W end.
601	29	2	0.08	Layer of tarmac
602	29	2	0.3	Layer of modern hardcore. Overlay 603 and 605.
603	29	2	0.38	Probable layer of remnant subsoil. Mid red-brown sand-clay with frequent inclusions of small to medium mudstones and occasional charcoal flecks. Overlay natural, overlain by 602 and 604. .
604	15	2	0.05-0.6	Modern make-up/ levelling deposit at W end of Trench 6. Comprises mid brown sand-clay with lenses of redeposited natural, frequent CBM fragments and occasional animal bone. Overlay 603 and overlain by 605.
605	15	2	0.09	Clinker-like make-up/ levelling deposit at W end of Trench 6 only. Overlay 604 and overlain by 602.



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Site Code: WWW12

Accession Code:

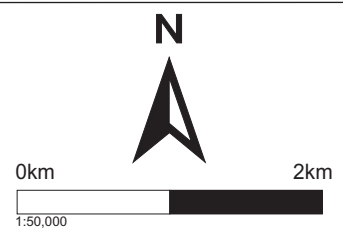


FIGURE 1: Site Location



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- ORIGINAL EVALUATION TRENCH LOCATIONS
- Tr1** FINAL EVALUATION TRENCH LOCATIONS
- SECTIONS OF TRENCH UNEXCAVATED
- [404] ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS

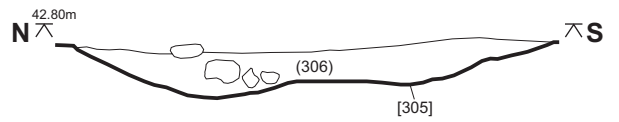


FIGURE 2: Trench Location Plan

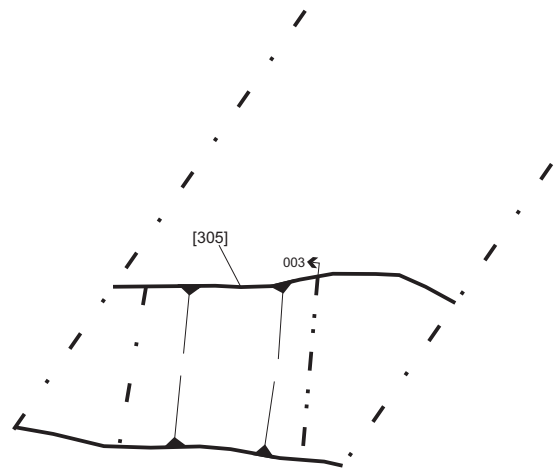
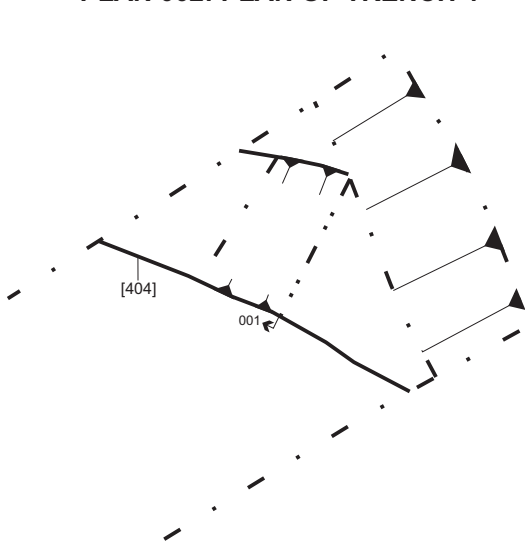
SEC 001: SOUTHEAST FACING SECTION [404]



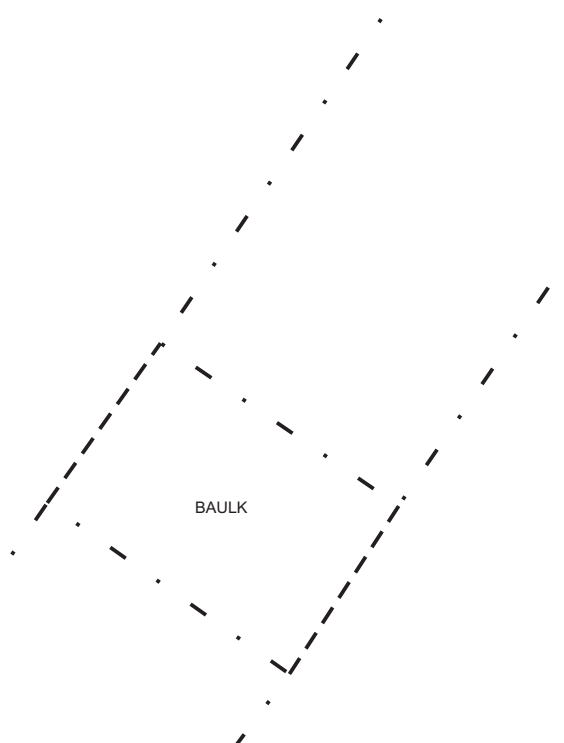
SEC 003: WEST FACING SECTION [305]



PLAN 002: PLAN OF TRENCH 4



PLAN 004: PLAN OF TRENCH 3



Site Code: WWW12

Accession Code:

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SCALE AS ABOVE UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED

FIGURE 3: Trenches 3 and 4, Plans and Sections