

**LAND AT WILLIS WAY,
PURTON,
WILTSHIRE.**

NGR: 408568.187356 (centred)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

April 2016
Report No. 1122



ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY, MANAGEMENT & FIELD SERVICES

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Quality Assurance

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SUMMARY

In April 2016 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation on land at Willis Way, Purton, Wiltshire (NGR: 408568.187356 - centred). The project was commissioned by Adrian Daghish of GGA Developments Ltd.

The evaluation comprised the excavation and recording of five trenches. Previous archaeological works, undertaken in the 1980s, revealed a Roman cemetery within the site.

The archaeological trenching revealed the presence of moderate – well preserved archaeological pits and postholes within the site, outside the footprint of the former North View House. The archaeological remains most likely date to the Roman period, however, there was artefactual evidence which suggested the possibility of Prehistoric activity.

None of the features were demonstrably related to the previously identified Roman cemetery, although, two of the postholes appeared to be set on a similar alignment to the cemetery wall and associated post-settings. The absence of human remains within the evaluation trenches does not preclude the possibility that further burials or cremations may be present outside of the investigated areas.

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.

Medieval

The period between AD 1066 and AD 1500.

Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site.

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.

Post-medieval

The period between AD 1500 and AD 1900.

Prehistoric

The period prior to the Roman invasion of AD 43, traditionally sub divided into; *Palaeolithic* – c. 500,000 BC to c. 12,000 BC; *Mesolithic* – c. 12,000 BC to c. 4,500 BC; *Neolithic* – c. 4,500 BC to c. 2,000 BC; *Bronze Age* – c. 2,000 BC to c. 800 BC; *Iron Age* – c. 800 BC to AD 43.

Roman

The period traditionally dated AD 43 until AD 410.

Saxon

The period between AD 410 and AD 1066.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology in April 2016 on land at Willis Way, Purton, Wiltshire (NGR: 408568.187356 - centred). The project was commissioned by Adrian Daghish of GGA Developments Ltd.
- 1.2 The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2016), CIfA *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (2014) and *Standards for Field Evaluation and Assessment in Wiltshire* (CAS 1995).
- 1.3 The code of conduct of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists was adhered to throughout.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Planning permission is being sought for a new residential development at the site. The site occupies the former grounds of North View House and consists of waste ground which slopes gently downwards from north to south.
- 2.2 Previous archaeological works, undertaken by Thamesdown Archaeology Unit within the site in the 1980s (Digby, no date), revealed a previously unknown Roman cemetery (MWI9264). Among the seven identified burials was a cremation in a glass vessel, set inside a decorated lead container, within a stone ossuary; as well as a lead lined coffin which contained a fine clear glass vessel and the remains of the cloth in which the body was buried. Also identified within the site was the north and west wall of the Roman cemetery as well as a series of postholes, which were positioned parallel to the wall and were most likely contemporary. Further Roman evidence in the surrounding area was identified approximately 60m southeast of the centre of the study area. This was in the form of a brooch fragment, a coin of *Crispus* and Roman building material in the form of a box flue and *pilae* tiles (MWI9266).
- 2.3 The main archaeological potential of the site was therefore for the presence of Roman remains. This did not prejudice the works against evidence relating to other periods.

3 AIMS

- 3.1 The aim of the archaeological evaluation was 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 This was 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 and preservation of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning and extent of features present on the site;

iii) to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence which will attempt to determine the complexity of the horizontal and vertical stratigraphy present, and to recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples;

iv) to determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Five trenches were excavated within the site, as shown in Figure 2. The trenches were located in order to provide a representative sample of the site, outside the footprint of the recently demolished former North View House. Non-significant overburden was removed, under constant archaeological supervision, to the top of archaeological remains or the underlying natural deposits, whichever was encountered first. This was achieved through the use of a mechanical excavator, equipped with a toothless grading bucket. Spoil tips were visually scanned for finds.

4.2 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 A full description of all contexts identified during the course of the evaluation is presented in Appendix 1, along with a report on the recovered ceramics in Appendix 2 and a Miscellaneous Finds List in Appendix 3. A summary of the results is given below.

5.2 The general stratigraphic sequence within Trenches 2, 4 and 5 was relatively uniform and consisted of natural limestone deposits sealed beneath a subsoil layer, which was, in turn, overlaid by mixed Modern overburden. The presence of relatively intact subsoils indicated that preservation conditions were generally moderate - good in the vicinity of these trenches.

5.3 The natural deposits within Trenches 1 and 3, which were located in the area of a former car park, were directly overlaid by compacted Modern gravel. The area around these trenches had clearly been previously stripped, however, the presence of posthole [303], at the north end of Trench 3, suggested that there had not necessarily been a significant degree of truncation.

- 5.4 The natural substrates were present at depths below Modern ground, which ranged between 0.44m at the north of the site and 1.16m at the south. A total of seven features were present, cut into the top of the natural deposits.
- 5.5 **Trench 1** did not contain any archaeological features, finds or artefacts. The presence of three Modern services in the southern half of the trench indicated that this area had been subjected to localised Modern disturbance.
- 5.6 **Trench 2** contained part of a fairly substantial cut feature [203], possibly a pit, which had been cut through and mostly obscured by two Modern service trenches. The pit contained three soil fills (204-6) which yielded 32 sherds of 2nd century Roman pottery and 20 fragments of Roman CBM, along with bone fragments, an oyster shell, iron nail fragments and a struck flint.
- 5.7 **Trench 3** contained a single possible posthole [303], which yielded a single sherd of Prehistoric pottery and a fragment of bone.
- 5.8 **Trench 4** contained two probable postholes [403]/[405], which were set on an approximate east – west alignment, similar to the alignment of the previously identified Roman cemetery wall and associated post-settings. Two sherds of Prehistoric pottery were recovered from the fill of posthole [403].
- 5.9 **Trench 5** contained a possible shallow pit [503] and two possible postholes [505]/[508], which were set on an approximate north-northeast – south-southwest alignment. A small finds assemblage, comprising Prehistoric and 2nd – 3rd century Roman pottery, as well as bone fragments, was recovered from the fill of pit [503]. Postholes [505] and [508] both yielded 2nd century Roman pottery and Roman CBM fragments. A single bone fragment was recovered from posthole [505].

6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The evaluation has indicated that preservation conditions outside the footprint of the former North View House are likely to range between moderate to good, although the presence of Modern services indicated the potential for areas of localised disturbance.
- 6.2 The evaluation trenches contained a total of two pits and five postholes, which generally represented a dispersed set of features. The associated dating evidence suggested that they most likely dated to the Roman period, although, a small amount of Prehistoric pottery and a struck flint indicated the potential for on-site Prehistoric activity.
- 6.3 None of the evaluation features were demonstrably related to the previously identified Roman cemetery, however, postholes [403] and [405] appeared to be set on a similar alignment to the cemetery wall and associated post-settings. The absence of human remains within the evaluation trenches does not preclude the possibility that further burials or cremations may be present outside of the investigated areas.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The archaeological evaluation has revealed the presence of moderate – well preserved archaeological pits and postholes within the site, outside the footprint of the former North View House. The archaeological remains most likely date to the Roman period, however, there was artefactual evidence which suggested the possibility of Prehistoric activity. None of the features were demonstrably related to the previously identified Roman cemetery, although, two of the postholes appeared to be set on a similar alignment to the cemetery wall and associated post-settings.
- 7.2 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but will be deposited in due course with the appropriate museum. A short note will be submitted for publication in the relevant local archaeological journal and an OASIS form will also be submitted to ADS.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Digby, H. no date. *Summary of the 1989 excavations at Northview Hospital, Purton*. Unpublished.

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9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger of Wiltshire Council and Adrian Daghish of GGA Developments Ltd. for their help during the course of the project.

APPENDIX 1: Stratigraphic Data

CXT	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	DESCRIPTION	LATER THAN	EARLIER THAN
				Trench 1: 20m (top) by 1.6m (top). Natural = solid beige limestone with occasional patches of beige grey clay.		
				Top of natural at average height of 130.87m OD		
101	na	na	0.19	Tarmac.	102	na
102	na	na	0.25	Mixed beige and pink compacted gravel; Modern bedding layer.	natural	101
				No archaeological features, finds or deposits were present within the trench.		
				Trench 2: 18m (top) by 1.6m (top). Natural = beige limestone brash.		
				Top of natural at average height of 131.10m OD		
201	na	na	0.33	Mixed soils; Modern overburden.	202	na
202	na	na	0.4	Layer of tan brown clay silt, which contained rare abraded CBM fragments; subsoil.	natural	201
[203]	>1.40	>1.25	>0.56	Cut feature, possibly a pit, with a steep eastern edge. Only partly excavated.	natural	206
				Contained fills 204, 205 and 206.		
204	?	0.5	0.33	Fill of pit [203]; mid brown clay silt, which contained occasional stones and occasional charcoal flecks.	205	2 x service trenches
205	?	0.7	0.26	Fill of pit [203]; dark brown clay silt, which contained occasional stones and occasional charcoal flecks.	206	204
206	?	0.87	0.3	Fill of pit [203]; light brown clay silt, which contained occasional to frequent limestone fragments, as well as occasional charcoal flecks.	[203]	205

Land at Willis Way, Purton, Wiltshire: Archaeological Evaluation

CXT	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	DESCRIPTION	LATER THAN	EARLIER THAN
				Trench 3: 14.50m (top) by 1.6m (top). Natural = solid beige limestone with occasional patches of beige grey clay.		
				Top of natural at average height of 130.89m OD		
301	na	na	0.2	Tarmac.	302	na
302	na	na	0.35	Mixed beige and pink compacted gravel; Modern bedding layer.	natural	301
[303]	0.47	0.42	0.13	Sub-circular possible posthole with a shallow, rounded profile. Contained fill 304.	natural	304
304	0.47	0.42	0.13	Fill of posthole [303]; mid brown clay silt, which contained frequent stones and rare charcoal flecks.	[303]	302
				Trench 4: 19.60m (top) by 1.6m (top). Natural = beige limestone brash.		
				Top of natural at average height of 129.92m OD		
401	na	na	0.8	Mixed soils; Modern overburden.	402	na
402	na	na	0.36	Layer of tan brown clay silt, which contained rare abraded CBM fragments; subsoil.	natural	401
[403]	0.5	0.33	0.17	Sub-circular probable posthole with a shallow, flat profile. Contained fill 404.	natural	404
404	0.5	0.33	0.17	Fill of posthole [403]; brown clay silt, which contained occasional stones and rare charcoal flecks.	[403]	402
				Trench 5: 14.90m (top) by 1.6m (top). Natural = beige limestone brash.		
				Top of natural at average height of 130.02m OD		
501	na	na	0.9	Mixed soils; Modern overburden.	502	na
502	na	na	0.25	Layer of tan brown clay silt; subsoil.	natural	501
[503]	1.06	>0.7	0.2	Cut feature, possibly a pit, with a shallow, rounded profile. Contained fill 504.	natural	504

Land at Willis Way, Purton, Wiltshire: Archaeological Evaluation

CXT	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	DESCRIPTION	LATER THAN	EARLIER THAN
504	1.06	0.7	0.2	Fill of pit [503]; dark grey brown clay silt, which contained occasional charcoal flecks.	[503]	502
[505]	0.37	>0.27	0.22	Sub-circular possible posthole with a steep, rounded profile. Contained fills 506 and 507.	natural	506
506	?	0.14	0.22	Fill of posthole [505]; light brown grey clay silt, which contained occasional small stones.	[505]	507
				Possible post-packing fill.		
507	?	>0.17	0.21	Fill of posthole [505]; dark brown clay silt, which contained occasional charcoal flecks	506	502
				and occasional small stones. Possible post-pipe.		
[508]	0.42	0.39	0.12	Sub-circular possible posthole with a shallow, rounded profile. Contained fill 509.	natural	509
509	0.42	0.39	0.12	Fill of posthole [508]; brown clay silt, which contained occasional stones.	[508]	502

APPENDIX 2: The Pottery

By Dr Jane Timby

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The archaeological evaluation work resulted in the recovery of a small assemblage of 45 sherds, weighing 485.5 g accompanied by 24 fragments (1400 g) of ceramic building material (CBM). The assemblage includes material of Prehistoric and Roman date.
- 1.2 Pottery was recovered from eight separate contexts. All, with the exception of (204), yielded five or less sherds which has an impact on the accuracy of any dating.
- 1.3 The condition of the material was quite variable with a few larger sherds and also some fragmented pieces with worn edges. The overall average sherd size of 10.7 g is typical of rubbish material from small features.
- 1.4 For the purposes of the assessment the pottery assemblage was briefly scanned to assess its likely chronology and quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. The resulting data is summarised in Table 1.

2 Prehistoric

- 2.1 Five sherds of potential Prehistoric date were recorded from three contexts (304), (404) and (504). The two sherds from (504) had a coarse, sparse fossil shell temper and are probably Iron Age. Two very small oxidised sherds with fine sandstone and angular fine quartz/quartzite from (304) and (404) may be earlier Prehistoric in date. The fifth piece was too small to determine fabric.
- 2.2 In the case of (303) and (404) these sherds were the only pottery present. The two sherds from (504) are residual in a Roman deposit.

3 Roman

- 3.1 Most of the assemblage, some 40 sherds, dates to the early-mid Roman period.
- 3.2 The group mainly comprises wares from the North Wiltshire pottery industry with in particular fine sandy wares in reduced or oxidised fabrics (WIL OX; WIL RE). In addition there are single sherds of Savernake ware (SAV GT) (Tomber and Dore 1998, 191) and South-west white-slipped ware (SOW WS (*ibid.* 192)).
- 3.3 The only imports are two sherds of Dorset black burnished ware (DOR BB1) (*ibid.* 127) from context (204).

3.4 Forms were limited to four simple everted rim jars and one jar or beaker.

4 Ceramic building material

4.1 A total 24 pieces, (1400 g), of ceramic building material (CBM) were recovered from five contexts with the greatest quantity, some 18 pieces, from (204).

4.2 These all date to the Roman period and include at least two *tegulae* (roofing tile) and one, or two, pieces of flat tile/*pilae*.

5 Summary and further work

5.1 The assemblage recovered appears to document occupation at or near the site during the early-mid Roman period. The North Wiltshire pottery industry probably developed from the later 1st century into the 2nd century and kilns have already been documented in the Purton area producing identical wares to those present here (Anderson 1979). Savernake ware has earlier origins but continues to feature in 2nd-century assemblages. South-west white-slipped ware is more typical of the mid-later 2nd or 3rd centuries.

5.2 The group is too small to draw any conclusions with regard status or type of activity.

5.3 No further work is recommended.

References

Anderson, A S, 1979, *The Roman pottery industry in North Wiltshire*, Swindon Archaeol Soc Rep 2

Tomber, R, and Dore, J, 1998 *The National Roman fabric reference collection: a handbook*, Museum of London / English Heritage/ British Museum

Land at Willis Way, Purton, Wiltshire: Archaeological Evaluation

Table 1: The ceramics from Willis Way, Purton

Cxt	Preh	BB1	Wilre	Wilox	Savgt	SOWWS	Other	Tot No	Tot wt	Date	CBM	CBM
											No	Wt
204	0	2	13	5	1	0	6	27	331	C2	18	680
205	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	4	46	C2	1	627
206	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	13	C2	1	74
304	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	Preh	0	0
404	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.5	Preh	0	0
504	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	5	47	C2- C3	0	0
507	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	32	C2	2	10
509	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	14	C2	2	9
Total	5	2	24	6	1	1	6	45	485.5		24	1400

APPENDIX 3: Miscellaneous Finds

CXT	DESCRIPTION
204	12 x iron nail fragments (some of which may represent hobnails)
204	1 x struck flint
204	11 x bone fragments
204	1 x oyster shell
205	10 x bone fragments
206	2 x bone fragments
304	1 x bone fragment
502	1 x iron nail fragment
504	7 x bone fragments
507	1 x bone fragment



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Site Code: WWP16
Accession Code:

FIGURE 1: Site Location



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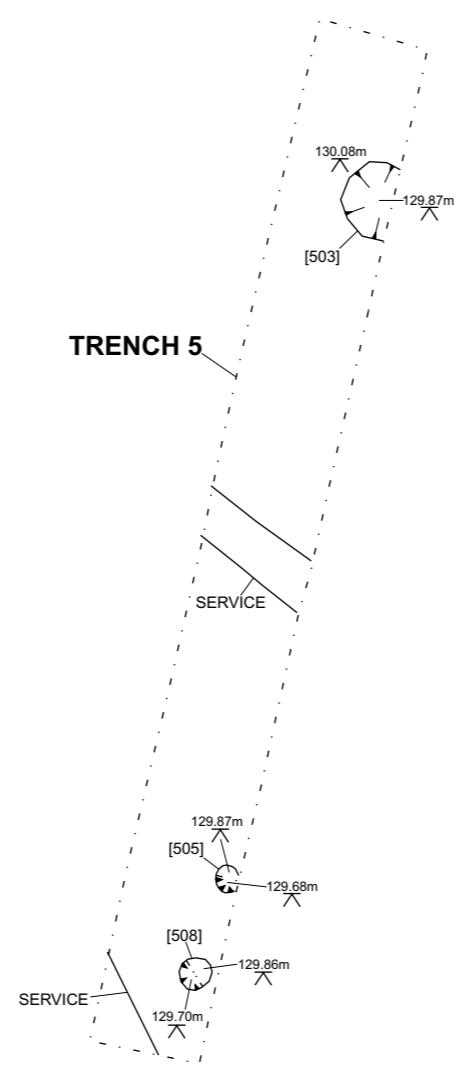
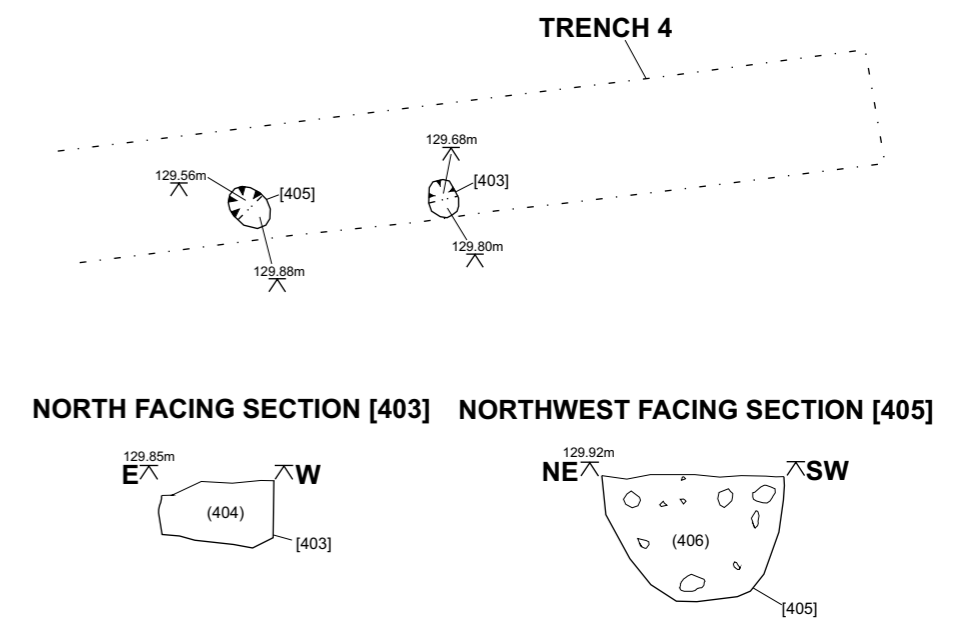
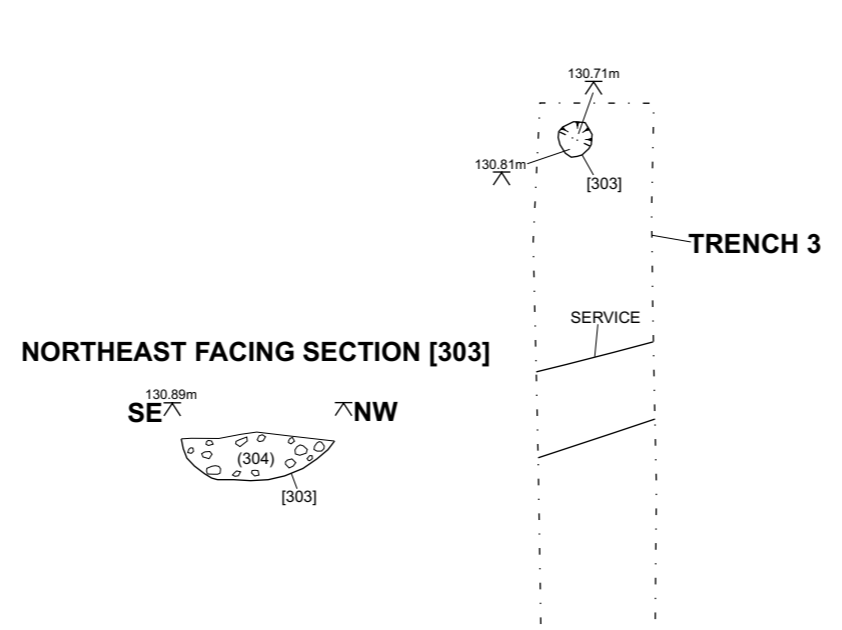
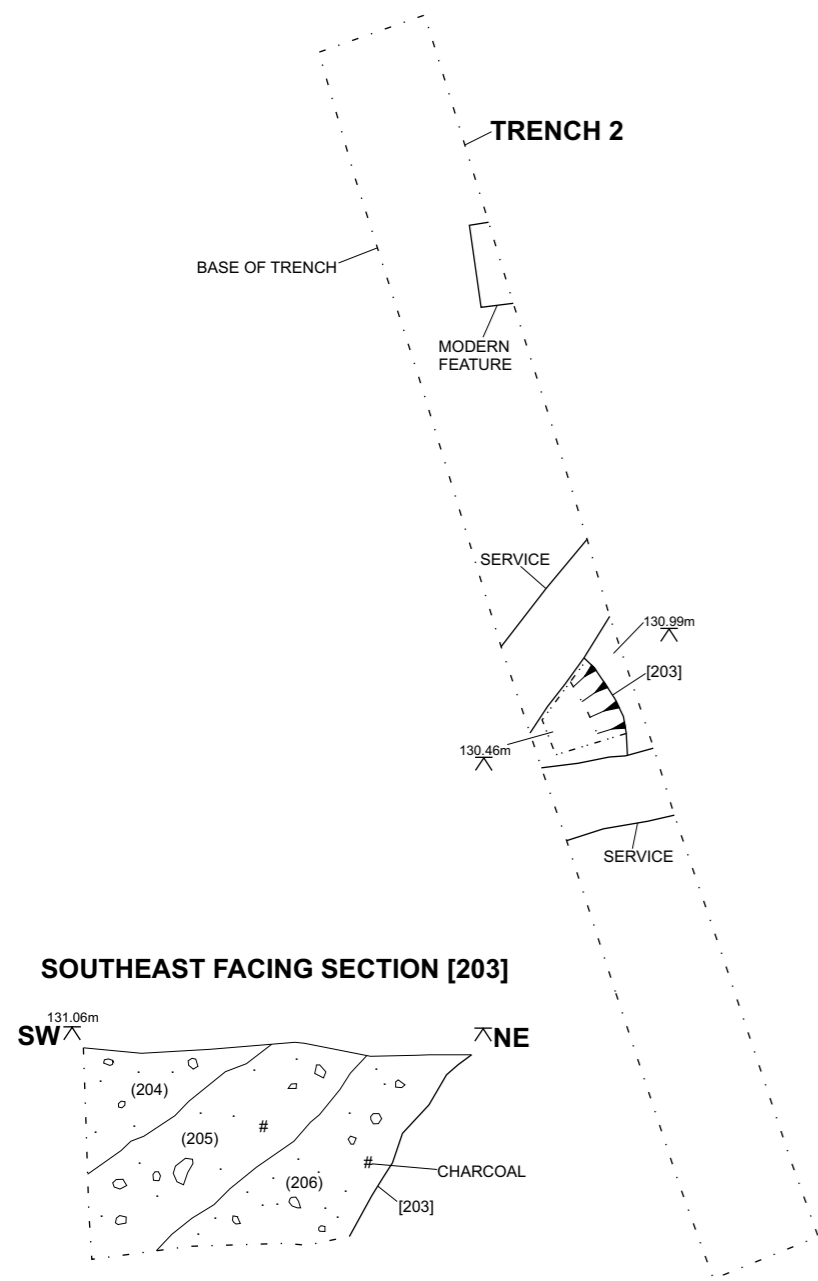
Site Code: WWP16

Accession Code:



- = EVALUATION TRENCH
- = ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURE WITHIN EVALUATION TRENCH
- = PREVIOUSLY IDENTIFIED ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURE - AS SHOWN ON THE THAMESDOWN ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT PLAN (BEST FIT OVERLAY)

FIGURE 2: Site Plan



Site Code: WWP16
Accession Code:

N

0m 4m
PLANS

0m 1m
SECTIONS

FIGURE 3: Plans and Sections