

**LAND OFF SUTTON COURTENAY LANE,
DIDCOT,
OXON.**

NGR: SU 502 921

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRIP, MAP AND SAMPLE
POST EXCAVATION ASSESSMENT**

August 2008

Report No. 608

Quality Assurance

This Document has been compiled and authorised in accordance with AMS's Quality Procedures (BS EN ISO 9001: 2000)

Author: Andrew Hood

Date: 21st August 2008

Approved: Tracy Michaels

QA Checked: Diana King

This report has been compiled with all reasonable skill care and attention to detail within the terms of the project as specified by the client and within the general terms and conditions of Archaeological Management Services Ltd trading as Foundations Archaeology but no explicit warranty is provided for information and opinions stated. AMS Ltd accepts no responsibility whatsoever to third parties to whom this report or any part thereof is made known. Any such party relies on this report at their own risk. Copyright of this document is retained by AMS Ltd, but unlimited licence to reproduce it in whole or part is granted to the client and/or their agents and/or assignees on payment of invoice.

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations

Glossary of Archaeological Terms and Abbreviations

Summary

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Archaeological Background
- 3 Methodology
- 4 Stratigraphic Evidence
- 5 Discussion
- 6 Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Work
- 7 Nature of the Record
- 8 Statement of Potential
- 9 Publication, Presentation and Archiving
- 10 References
- 11 Acknowledgements

Appendix 1: Pottery Assessment

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Figure 1: Site Location
- Figure 2: Area 1 Location
- Figure 3: Area 1 Plan
- Figure 4: Sections

GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Archaeology

For the purposes 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 the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) and c. AD 1500.

Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site, in this case Pleistocene second terrace gravel, which overlies Cretaceous Gault clay.

NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

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

OS

Ordnance Survey.

Post-medieval

The period after c. AD 1500.

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. 600 BC; *Iron Age* – c. 600 BC to AD 43.

Roman

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

Romano-British

Term used to describe the fusion of indigenous Iron Age traditions with invasive Roman culture.

Saxon

The period between AD 410 and AD 1066.

SUMMARY

In 2008 Foundations Archaeology was commissioned by Waterman CPM, on behalf of McLaren Construction Ltd., to undertake a programme of archaeological strip, map and sample recording in advance of development on land off Sutton Courtenay Lane, Didcot, Oxon (NGR: SU 502 921). The fieldwork was undertaken between 12th and 15th August 2008.

The archaeological investigation revealed moderate preservation of archaeological deposits. These comprised part of an earlier Roman field system and evidence for Medieval/Post-medieval ridge and furrow, along with agricultural drainage activity.

This assessment document provides an overview of the results from the archaeological works and sets out the requirements to bring the site to publication.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2008 Foundations Archaeology was commissioned by Waterman CPM, on behalf of McLaren Construction Ltd., to undertake a programme of archaeological strip, map and sample recording in advance of development on land off Sutton Courtenay Lane, Didcot, Oxon (NGR: SU 502 921). The proposed development consisted of a distribution warehouse with ancillary offices and facilities, along with a service centre and the creation of access roads and landscaping (Planning Reference: SUT/12063/16).
- 1.2 The site is located in the Parish of Sutton Courtenay, to the east of Sutton Courtenay Lane and to the north of Milton Road. The area was previously used for hire vehicles and the land surface at the time of investigation varied between scrub vegetation and hard standing. The site lies at approximately 55m OD and the geology is second terrace gravel overlying gault clay.
- 1.3 In accordance with the principles of PPG16 (Planning Policy Guidance, note 16), and the archaeological policies of Oxfordshire County Council a programme of archaeological works was required by the Historic Environment Service, prior to commencement of development.
- 1.4 The archaeological strip, map and sample recording was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2008) and with IFA *Standards and Guidance on Archaeological Excavation* (1994, revised 2001).
- 1.5 This document provides an assessment of the evidence recovered during the archaeological strip, map and sample recording and a programme to bring the results to publication. This assessment now details the proposed publication format and content of the excavation report. This document conforms to the specification set out in Appendices 4 and 5 of *The Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991).
- 1.6 In the following sections a summary of the results from the investigation is followed by an assessment of its stated aims and an overall assessment of the importance of the site is given. Finally each major category of finds is then similarly assessed in turn.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site lies in an area of considerable archaeological potential. To the south, an area of early Saxon settlement has been identified. This included burials with grave goods and Sunken Featured Buildings. A substantial later prehistoric site lies to the west. Another smaller settlement of that period lies to the north. Romano-British settlement is also found to the north and burials of that period have been found to the southeast.
- 2.2 Two phases of archaeological evaluation have previously been undertaken within the proposed development area. The Phase 1 evaluation revealed a

single undated gully (Oxford Archaeology 2003), with the Phase 2 works yielding a linear ditch in Trench 9 and three linear gullies, along with a single sherd of probable prehistoric pottery in Trench 6 (Foundations Archaeology 2008). Variable levels of chemical ground contamination were noted in the course of both evaluations.

- 2.3 In light of the presence of cut features, probable prehistoric pottery and relatively low levels of contamination within Trench 6 (Phase 2), it was considered that the area in this vicinity contained the potential for the preservation of archaeological deposits, predominately associated with the prehistoric, Roman and Saxon periods. This did not prejudice the investigation against features and finds relating to other periods.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 A 20m x 20m area was stripped through use of a 360° tracked mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket, under constant archaeological supervision (Figures 2 and 3). All cleaning and excavation was thereafter conducted by hand. All spoil heaps were visually scanned for archaeological material.
- 3.2 Archaeological features were subjected to preliminary investigation in order to characterise the nature of the deposits. Following an on-site meeting with the representatives of Oxfordshire County Council Historic Environment Service and Waterman CPM, the revealed archaeological deposits were deemed to be of relatively low significance and as such, and in accordance with the WSI (5.4), a selective recording programme was agreed. The final hand excavation sampling levels are shown in Figure 3.
- 3.3 Due to the presence of contaminated soils, and in agreement with the representative of Oxfordshire County Council Historic Environment Service, no environmental bulk soil samples were recovered.

4 STRATIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

- 4.1 The natural deposits, which were present at an average depth of 0.59m (56.75m OD) below modern ground surface, were overlaid by a mid brown clay silt subsoil (603), up to 0.35m thick. The subsoil contained a sherd of late Medieval/Post-medieval pottery and a sherd of 2nd century Roman pottery, along with occasional CBM fragments. Context (603) was overlaid by a stone and grit layer (602), up to 0.15m thick, which was, in turn, sealed by tarmac (601), up to 0.09m thick. A significant amount of chemical soil contamination occurred at the west of the investigation area. Archaeological features were present, cut into the top of the natural deposits.
- 4.2 **Feature [604]** (previously identified and investigated in the Phase 2 evaluation) was 16.5m long, 0.35m wide, 0.22m deep and comprised a northwest-southeast aligned linear gully with steep sides and a rounded base.

- Fill (605) consisted of a mid brown clay silt. The feature cut ditch [622] and was cut by a land drain at the southeast.
- 4.3 **Feature [606]** (previously identified and investigated in the Phase 2 evaluation) was 2.8m long, 0.40m wide, 0.14m deep and comprised a northwest-southeast aligned linear gully with sloping sides and a rounded base. Fill (607) consisted of a mid brown clay silt.
- 4.4 **Feature [608]** (previously identified and investigated in the Phase 2 evaluation) was 14m long, up to 0.50m wide, 0.11m deep and comprised a northeast-southwest aligned linear gully with a shallow, rounded profile. Fill (609) consisted of a mid brown clay silt.
- 4.5 **Feature [610]** was 11m long, 3.2m wide, 0.11m deep and consisted of an east-west aligned linear feature with a shallow, uneven profile. Fill (611) comprised a grey/brown clay silt with frequent gravel and small stones, which contained two sherds of Roman pottery. Feature [610] was cut by a land drain. It was not possible to establish the stratigraphic relationship between feature [610] and ditch [622].
- 4.6 **Feature [612]** was 5.3m long, 1.9m wide, 0.16m deep and comprised an east-west aligned linear feature with a shallow, uneven profile. The feature was only partly present within the investigation area. Fill (613) consisted of a grey/brown clay silt with frequent gravel and small stone. Feature [612] was cut by a land drain.
- 4.7 **Feature [614]** was 11.4m long, 0.8m wide, 0.24m deep and consisted of a northwest-southeast aligned linear ditch with an uneven, sloping profile and a flat base. Ditch [614] terminated at the northwest. Fill (615) comprised a grey/brown clay silt with occasional stone and rare charcoal flecks, which contained two sherds of Roman pottery.
- 4.8 **Feature [616]** was 17.5m long, 0.84m wide, 0.17m deep and comprised a northwest-southeast aligned linear ditch with a shallow profile. Fill (617) consisted of a brown clay silt with occasional stone, which contained a single sherd of Roman pottery. Ditch [616] crossed feature [622] to form an approximate right-angle and was cut by gully [624].
- 4.9 **Feature [620]** was 2.3m long, 0.26m wide, 0.23m deep and comprised a northeast-southwest aligned linear gully with steep sides and a narrow base. Fill (621) consisted of a dark brown clay silt with frequent stone.
- 4.10 **Feature [622]** was 23.5m long, 0.70m wide, 0.28m deep and consisted of a northeast-southwest aligned linear ditch with sloping sides and a rounded base. Fill (623) comprised a brown clay silt with frequent gravel and stone. Ditch [622] was cut by gully [604] and two land drains.
- 4.11 **Feature [624]** was 14.3m long, 0.30m wide, 0.14m deep and comprised a northeast-southwest aligned linear gully with steep sides and a rounded base. Fill (625) consisted of a brown clay silt. Gully [624] cut feature [616].

5 DISCUSSION

- 5.1 The strip, map and sample recording programme revealed a number of shallow, truncated features, which were cut into the top of the natural deposits.
- 5.2 Ditches [614], [616] and [622] were morphologically similar and appeared to form part of a northwest-southeast – northeast-southwest aligned co-axial ditch alignment. The consistency of fill at the intersection between ditches [616] and [622] supports this interpretation.
- 5.3 Ditches [616] and [622] were stratigraphically earlier than gullies [604] and [624], with ditch [622] also being cut by two land drains. Although it was not possible to determine the relationship between ditch [622] and feature [610], the relatively flat and shallow profile of ditch [622] at the location of Section 013 is probably the result of truncation by feature [610].
- 5.4 A total of three sherds of early, possibly 2nd century, Roman pottery were recovered from fills (615) and (617). It is therefore likely that ditch complex [614]/[616]/[622] represents part of an earlier Roman field system. The paucity of artefacts and charcoal, along the absence of other contemporary features within the limit of excavation suggests that the study area is not located at the focus of settlement activity.
- 5.5 Features [610] and [612] are probably the truncated remains of furrows and are indicative of Medieval/Post-medieval ploughing. The occurrence of a sherd of late Medieval/Post-medieval pottery within subsoil (603) is possibly associated with this activity. Two sherds of Roman pottery in fill (611) are almost certainly residual.
- 5.6 Linear gullies [604], [606], [608], [620] and [624], along with numerous ceramic land drains are likely to represent at least two phases of agricultural drainage.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

- 6.1 The current project has identified and recorded moderate preservation of archaeological deposits and features. These comprise part of an earlier Roman field system and evidence for Medieval/Post-medieval ridge and furrow, along with agricultural drainage activity.
- 6.2 The Roman field system is not thought to represent a focus of settlement and is therefore considered to be of relatively low significance.
- 6.3 In light of the limited number of artefacts, along with the absence of environmental bulk samples, no further work is recommended.

7 NATURE OF THE RECORD

7.1 The stratigraphic archive for the site consists of the following elements:

Context Sheets
Record Sheets
Plans
Sections
Black & White photographs
Colour slides
Digital photographs

7.2 The following contexts types were represented:

Ditch
Furrow
Gully
Land Drain

7.3 The methodologies used to recover this evidence were set out in the WSI. In summary the following excavation methods were utilised. A mechanical excavator was used to remove overburden onto the surface of archaeological deposits, thereafter an appropriate sample of selected deposits was removed by manual excavation. All contexts were recorded on a pro-forma context sheet and principal deposits were drawn in plan and section. These are available in the archive. Photographs were taken of all excavated features and sections.

7.4 Following the completion of the excavation an ordered, indexed, and internally consistent site archive was compiled in accordance with Appendix 3 of The Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage 1991).

8 STATEMENT OF POTENTIAL

8.1 The specific objectives set out in the WSI (3.2) have been satisfactorily achieved:

i) the archaeological deposits have been defined and, where possible, dated;

ii) the nature and preservation of the resource has been characterised;

iii) the complexity of the deposits has been determined and related to a coherent artefactual sample. Due to chemical soil contamination, no environmental samples were recovered;

iv) it has been determined that the site has negligible potential to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence;

v) due to the recovery of a coherent stratigraphic sequence and associated artefactual sample, it is possible to integrate the identified deposits into their local interpretative frameworks.

- 8.2 The results of the fieldwork justified the implementation of the strip, map and sample programme and the site is of sufficient quality to warrant a short note in a local journal.

9 PUBLICATION, PRESENTATION AND ARCHIVING

- 9.1 A short report, with appropriate illustrations will be submitted to Oxoniensia. A full OASIS record, with attached report, will be created. Additionally a full report of the excavations will be posted on the Internet at the Foundations Archaeology website (<http://www.foundations.co.uk>).
- 9.2 The site archive for the project will be submitted to the National Monuments Record of English Heritage for security copying upon completion of the report.
- 9.3 The site archive and artefactual collection will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Store.

10 REFERENCES

English Heritage. 1991. *The Management of Archaeological Projects*. English Heritage. London.

Foundations Archaeology. 2008. *Land off Sutton Courtenay Lane, Didcot, Oxon: Archaeological Evaluation*. Unpublished report.

Foundations Archaeology. 2008. *Land off Sutton Courtenay Lane, Didcot, Oxon: Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Recording*. Unpublished Report.

IFA. 1994 (revised 2001). *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations*. Institute of Field Archaeologists. Reading.

Oxford Archaeology. 2003 *Land at Sutton Courtenay Lane, Didcot, Oxon: Archaeological Evaluation*. Unpublished.

11 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Hugh Coddington of Oxfordshire County Council Historic Environment Service, Chris Cox and Clare King of Waterman CPM and Ian Spencer of McLaren Construction Ltd.

APPENDIX 1 – POTTERY ASSESSMENT

By Dr. Jane Timby

Summary

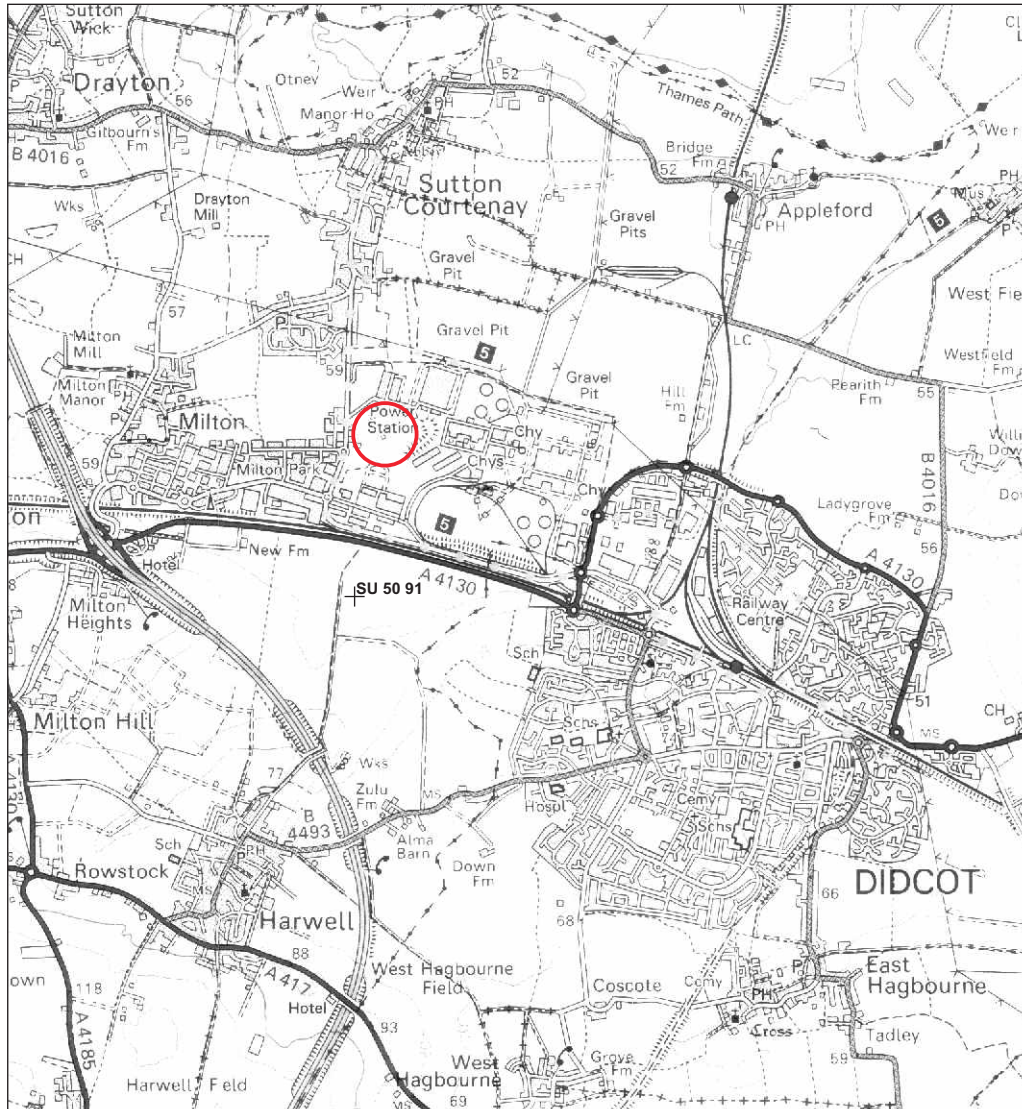
The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of just seven sherds weighing 56 g from four contexts. The group comprises six Roman sherds and one of Post-medieval date. The material was scanned to assess its likely chronology and quantified by sherd count and weight (see catalogue below). Where datable the Roman assemblage appears to indicate activity of 2nd-century date. No further work is recommended.

Catalogue

1. Context (603). One rimsherd of an Oxfordshire white ware mortarium with a broken flange. Possible Young (1977) type M6 dated AD 100-170.
2. Context (603). One slip decorated, glazed late Medieval/Post-medieval sherd.
3. Context (611), furrow [610]. Two small bodysherds grey micaceous, sandy ware. Roman.
4. Context (615) ditch [614]. One bodysherd of whiteware with red iron inclusions. Early Roman.
5. Context (615) ditch [614]. Central Gaulish (Lezoux) base from a cup or small dish. 2nd century.
6. Context (617) ditch [616]. Bodysherd of oxidised sandy ware from a cordoned, necked jar/bowl. ?2nd century.

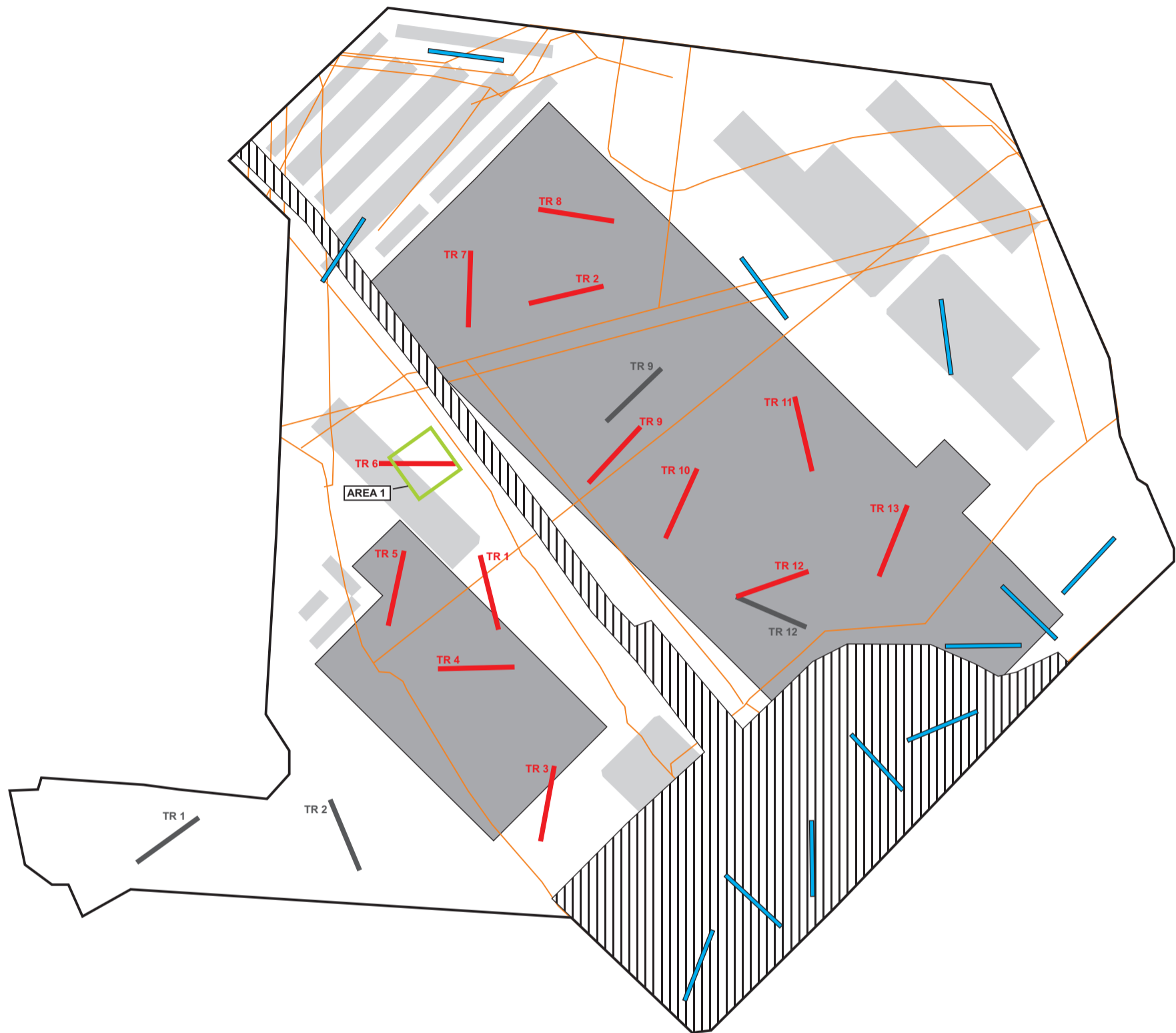
Reference

Young, C J, 1977, *Oxfordshire Roman pottery*, BAR 43, Oxford



© Crown Copyright
Reproduced under licence AL523064A

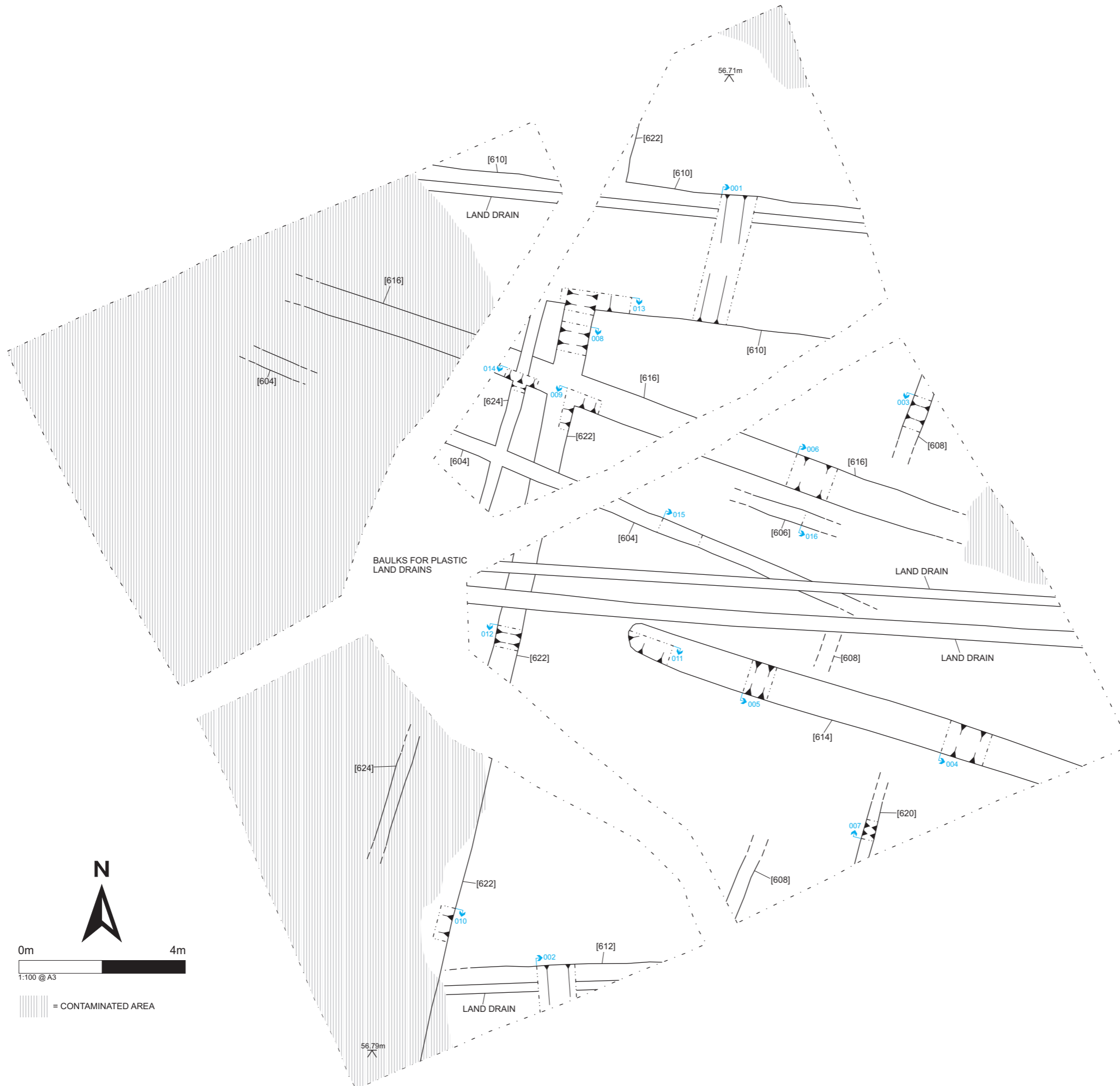
FIGURE 1: Site Location



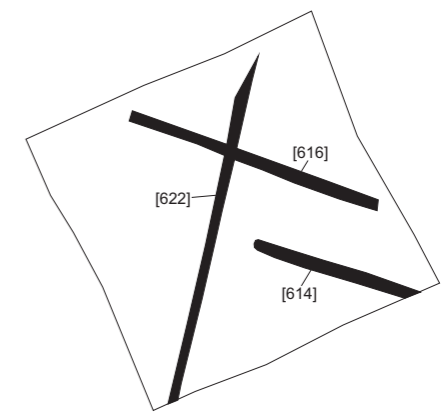
| KEY | |
|-----|---|
| | = PROPOSED BUILDING |
| | = PROPOSED PARKING BAYS |
| | = KNOWN SERVICES |
| | = TRAILER PARK AND ACCESS |
| | = PHASE 1 (OA) EVALUATION TRENCH |
| | = PHASE 2 (FA) PROPOSED TRENCH LOCATION |
| | = PHASE 2 (FA) ACTUAL TRENCH LOCATION |

FIGURE 2: Area 1 Location

AREA 1



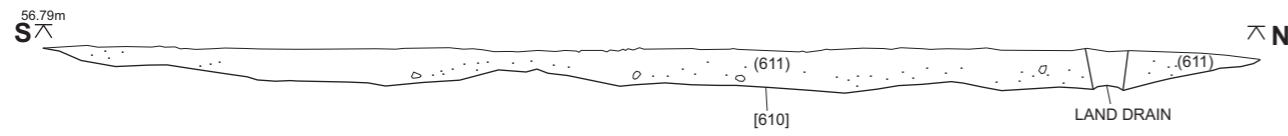
POSSIBLE ROMAN FEATURES



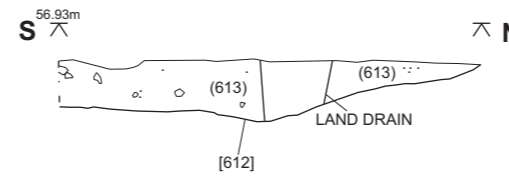
1:500 @ A3

FIGURE 3: Area 1 Plan

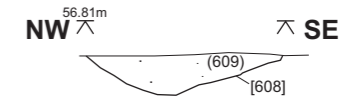
SECTION 001: EAST FACING SECTION [610]



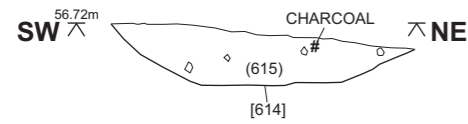
SECTION 002: EAST FACING SECTION [612]



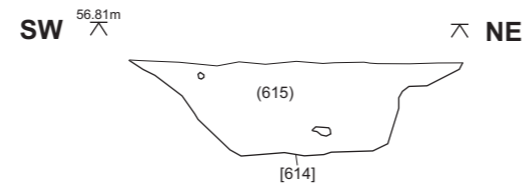
SECTION 003: SOUTHWEST FACING SECTION [608]



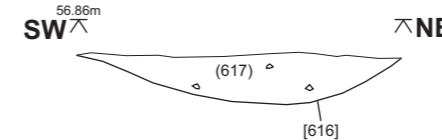
SECTION 004: SOUTHEAST FACING SECTION [614]



SECTION 005: SOUTHEAST FACING SECTION [614]



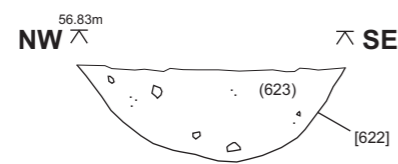
SECTION 006: SOUTHEAST FACING SECTION [616]



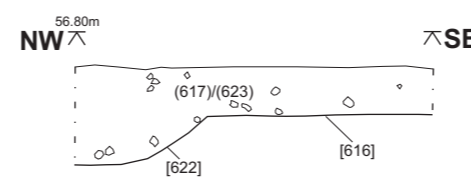
SECTION 007: NORTHEAST FACING SECTION [620]



SECTION 008: SOUTHWEST FACING SECTION [622]



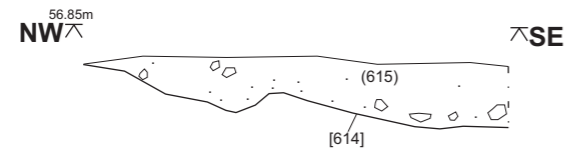
SECTION 009: SOUTHWEST FACING SECTION [616] and [622]



SECTION 010: SOUTHWEST FACING SECTION [622]



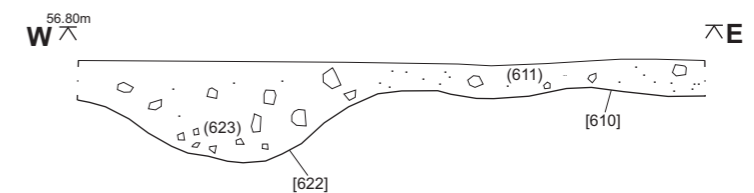
SECTION 011: SOUTHWEST FACING SECTION [614]



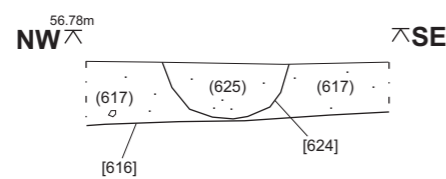
SECTION 012: SOUTHWEST FACING SECTION [622]



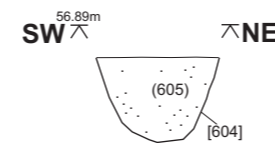
SECTION 013: SOUTH FACING SECTION [610] and [622]



SECTION 014: SOUTHWEST FACING SECTION [616] and [624]

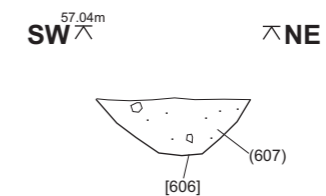


SECTION 015: SOUTHEAST FACING SECTION [604]*



* Excavated in Phase 2 Evaluation

SECTION 016: SOUTHEAST FACING SECTION [606]*



* Excavated in Phase 2 Evaluation



FIGURE 4: Sections