

**POLLARDSTOWN STABLES,
FOXHILL,
BOROUGH OF SWINDON**

NGR: SU 231 820

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

May 2000
Report No. 113

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY, MANAGEMENT & FIELD SERVICES

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CONTENTS

Summary

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND
- 3 AIMS
- 4 METHODOLOGY
- 5 RESULTS
- 6 DISCUSSION
- 7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FIGURE LIST

- | | |
|----------|------------------|
| Figure 1 | Site Location |
| Figure 2 | Trench Locations |
| Figure 3 | Plan - Trench 2 |
| Figure 4 | Plan – Trench 3 |
| Figure 5 | Plan – Trench 6 |
| Figure 6 | Feature Sections |

SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken between 2nd and 3rd May 2000 on land at Pollardstown Stables, Foxhill, Swindon by Foundations Archaeology. The evaluation comprised the excavation and recording of six evaluation trenches.

No significant archaeological features were identified in trenches 1, 4 and 5. In Trench 2, 3 and 6 a number of linear, pit and posthole features were identified. These features were predominantly undated, although two contained struck flint flakes and one contained a sherd of prehistoric pottery. Most of the undated features contained fills that were visually similar to those which could be dated to the prehistoric period and may consequently be roughly contemporary. The features in Trench 6 predominantly contained darker fills with some organic, root derived content. One of these features, however, contained a struck flint flake and was cut by two possible postholes, indicating that they are also likely to be of archaeological origin.

All dated features were of prehistoric origin and it is likely that the majority of undated features are roughly contemporary with them. Within the limits of the evaluation, it would appear that the possibility exists for the presence of at least one ring ditch.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology in May 2000 on land at Pollardstown Stables, Foxhill, Swindon (NGR: SU 231 820). The work was commissioned by Gill Associates on behalf of Mr & Mrs Stan Mellor.

1.2 The evaluation was undertaken in response to a proposal to build a series of new stables, storerooms and accommodation buildings within the bounds of the existing stables. The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a project design prepared by Foundations Archaeology (PT/00/FA.doc 1.ev) on 2nd-3rd May 2000. The project design was based upon a brief provided by Roy Canham of Wiltshire County Council on 23rd March 2000 (RAC/MJU/00RAC012br) and was prepared in accordance with *IFA Standards and Guidance on Archaeological Evaluation* (1994) and the *Standards for Archaeological Assessment and Field Evaluation in Wiltshire* (County Archaeological Service 1995). The programme of archaeological works was undertaken in accordance with the principals of Planning Policy Guidance note 16, Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990).

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

2.1 Pollardstown Stables are situated on Chalk at an average height of 190m OD (Figure 1). The site was previously known as Hill Farm and included a number of outbuildings and cottages. Numerous lynchet systems are known from the west of the site and ring ditches representing Bronze Age burial sites have been recognised from arable fields to the south. The full extent and nature of prehistoric settlement in the vicinity is unknown and therefore potential existed for archaeological discoveries to be made within the area of the proposed development.

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; as well as to make recommendations for management of the resource, including further archaeological works if necessary. 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 project required the excavation of three 30m x 1.8m trenches (Trenches 2-4), two 21m x 1.8m trenches (1 and 6) and a single 18m x 1.8m trench (5). In all cases the trenches were excavated along the long axis of the proposed new buildings (Figure 2).

4.2 Topsoil and non-significant overburden was removed to the top of archaeological deposits or natural, whichever was encountered first. This was achieved with the use of a mechanical excavator with a toothless grading bucket. Thereafter the trenches were cleaned and all additional excavation was conducted by hand.

5 RESULTS

5.1 The trenches were excavated to an average depth of 0.35m. The natural substrate consisted of Chalk. Natural deposits were reached at c. 187.30m OD in Trench 1, c. 186.60m OD in Trench 2, c. 187.12m OD in Trench 3, c. 187.50m OD in Trench 4, and c. 186.00m OD in Trenches 5 and 6. The stratigraphy consisted of a 0.15m thick layer of light brown clay subsoil beneath 0.20m of topsoil.

5.2 No archaeological features were identified within Trenches 1, 4 and 5. Trench 1 (21m long by 1.8m wide) was bisected by the foundations of a range of four previously unidentified farm cottages that were demolished circa 1950. Trench 2 (30m long by 1.8m wide) was excavated through an area that had clearly suffered considerable disturbance in recent years, but nonetheless contained three distinct features. Feature [203] comprised a small pit 0.50m in diameter by 0.12m deep. The pit had sloping sides at 45° with a rounded base and contained a dark brown clay fill. No finds were recovered from the pit which is likely to have been of relatively recent origin. Feature [205] comprised a U-shaped linear 1.28m wide by 0.25m deep on an east-west alignment. The ditch contained a mid-light brown chalk and clay fill. No finds were recovered from the fill of this feature, but it was visually identical to the demonstrably prehistoric fills of features in Trench 3. Feature [207] comprised an irregular linear feature 0.92m wide by 0.33m deep. It contained a visually similar fill to [205], but the irregular profile casts some doubt on its authenticity and may indicate that the feature was of natural origin.

5.3 Trench 3 (30m long by 1.8m wide) contained five distinct features. Feature [302] comprised a steep-sided slightly curving linear 0.96m wide by 0.42m deep, aligned north-south. The ditch contained a mid-light brown chalky clay fill from which a single undiagnostic struck flake was recovered. The feature may represent part of a ring ditch from a levelled Bronze Age round barrow. Feature [304] comprised either a small pit or the terminus to a linear feature. It was 0.86m wide by 0.11m deep with

shallow sides and a flat base. The feature contained a light brown chalk and clay fill from which a single sherd of Neolithic or Bronze Age pottery was recovered.

5.4. Feature [306] appeared to form the terminus of another linear feature 0.75m wide by 0.13m deep with shallow sloping sides and a rounded base. It contained a mid brown chalk and clay fill from which small fragments of burnt clay were recovered. Feature [308] comprised a shallow linear feature terminating at its western end within the trench. The feature was 0.38m wide by 0.08m deep with shallow sloping sides and a rounded base. The feature contained a light brown chalky clay fill from which no finds were recovered. Feature [310] comprised a further small pit or linear terminal 0.70m across by 0.07m deep with shallow sloping sides and a rounded base. It contained a light brown/grey silty clay fill from which no finds were recovered.

5.5 Trenches 4 (30m long by 1.8m wide) and 5 (18m long by 1.8m wide) revealed no archaeological or natural features. No finds were recovered from the two trenches.

5.6 Trench 6 (21m long by 1.8m wide) revealed five features. Feature [604] comprised a slightly irregular linear 1.22m wide by 0.46m deep. The feature was aligned north-south and appeared to curve slightly with 45° sides and a rounded base. The feature contained two fills, a primary fill of mottled brown chalk and clay (606) and a secondary fill of dark brown clay (605). A single undiagnostic struck flake was recovered from the primary fill. The feature was cut by a posthole [607] on its western edge. The posthole was 0.19m in diameter by 0.10m deep with near vertical sides and a rounded base, containing a dark brown clay fill. A second possible posthole was identified in the base of linear [604]. This feature was very ephemeral but measured 0.22m in diameter by 0.05m deep and contained a brown clay fill. A number of very small fragments of fired clay or degraded pottery were recovered from the fill of this feature.

5.7 Feature [611] comprised a U shaped pit 0.84m in diameter by 0.46m deep. It contained two fills, a primary fill of dark brown clay and chalk (612) and a secondary fill of dark brown clay (613). Feature [614] comprised a small oval pit or terminus 0.46m in diameter by 0.15m deep. The feature had sloping sides and a rounded base and contained a mid brown clay fill. No finds were recovered from either of these features.

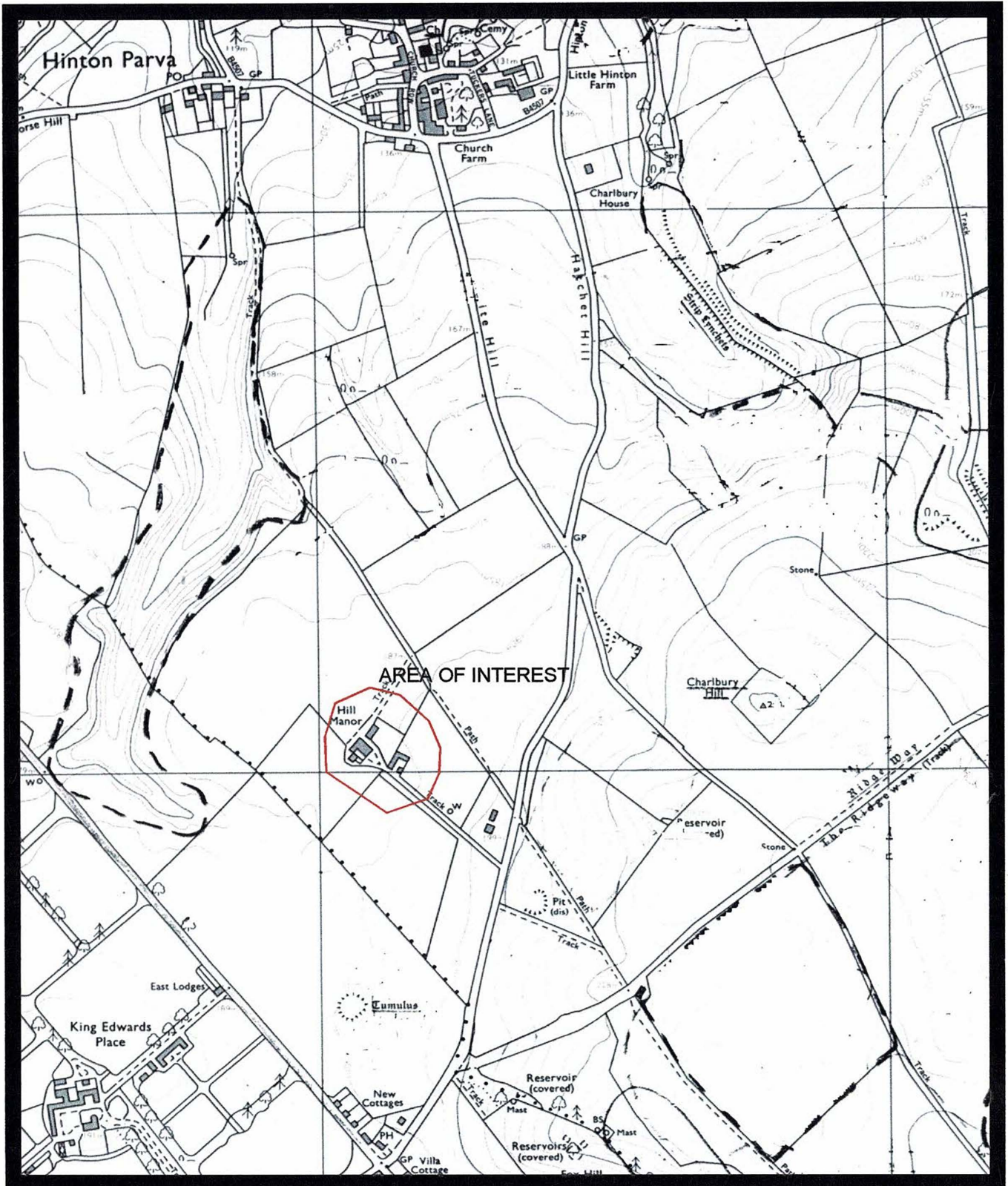
6 DISCUSSION

6.1 The evaluation has identified significant archaeological deposits within the area sampled by the six trenches. Trenches 2, 3 and 6 revealed a series of negative features, both linears and pits/postholes cut into the natural chalk. All the features identified were sealed beneath intact subsoils and may, therefore, be considered to be of at least some antiquity. There was a noticeable lack of finds from all the features, with the exception of two struck flint flakes, one sherd of pottery, and small quantities of burnt clay, all of which appeared to be prehistoric in origin. The absence of any archaeological finds of later date suggests that the development area does not encroach upon the limits of any medieval settlement associated with the farm, which may lie closer to the old farmhouse near the site entrance.

6.2 The results of the archaeological evaluation suggest that prehistoric features, including at least one possible ring ditch, survive within the development area. The potential therefore exists for the proposed development to have a negative impact on archaeological deposits in the areas around Trenches 2, 3 and 6.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Roy Canham of Wiltshire County Council Archaeological Section, Helen Garside of Swindon Borough Council, Jackie Gill of Gill Associates, and Mr. and Mrs Mellor and staff for their assistance and co-operation during the course of this project.



82



Figure 1 : Site Location

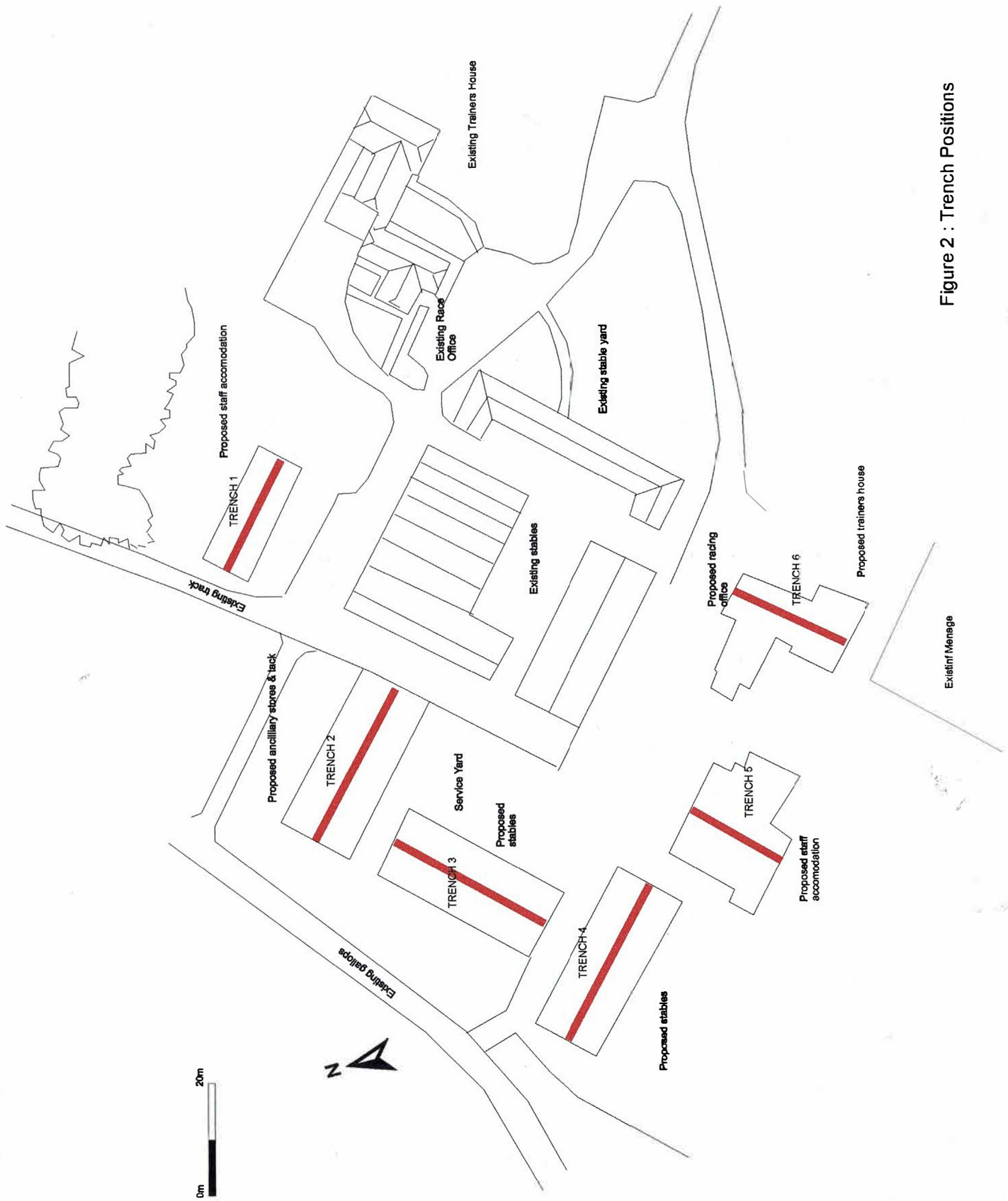


Figure 2 : Trench Positions

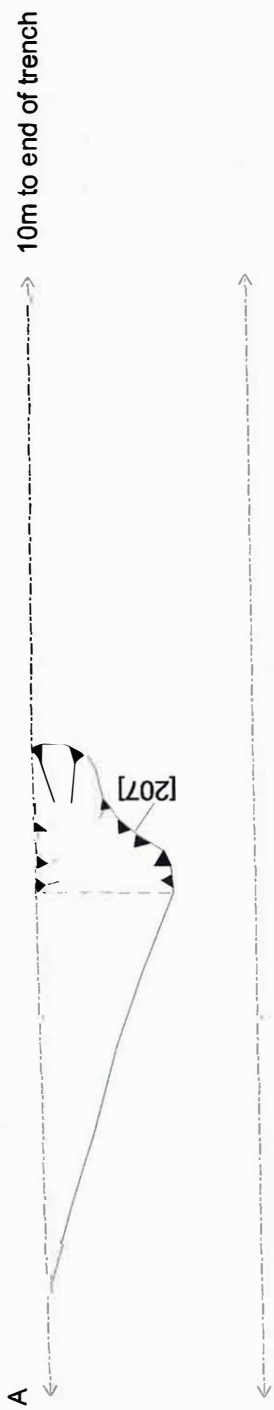


Figure 3 : Plan of trench 2

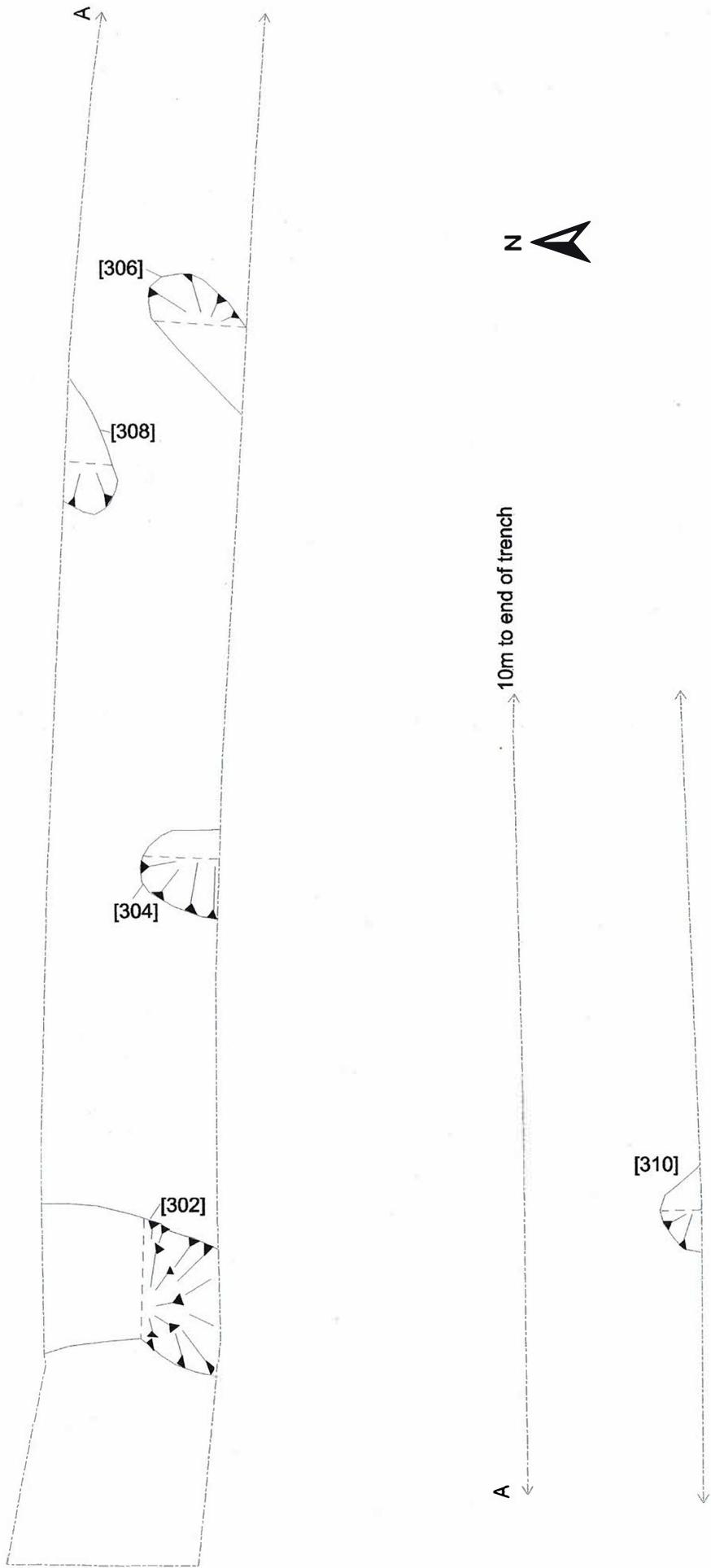


Figure 4 : Plan of trench 3



0m 2m

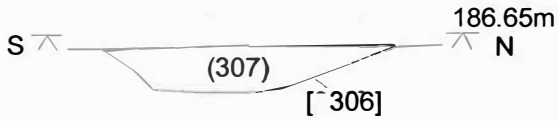


Figure 5 : Plan of trench 6

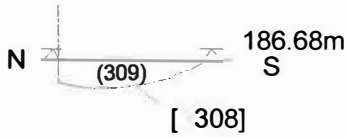
East facing section through [203]



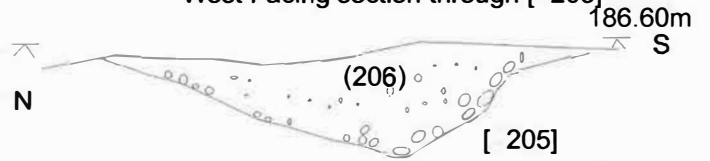
East facing section through [306]



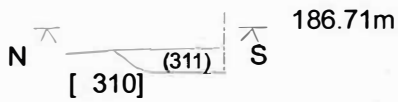
West facing section through [308]



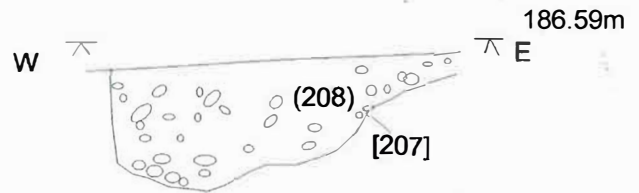
West Facing section through [205]



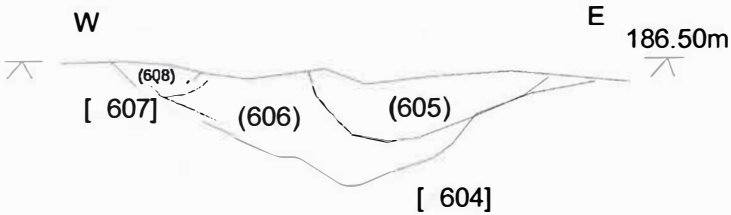
West Facing section through [30]



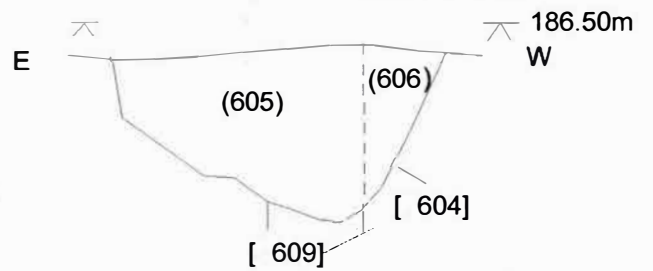
South facing section through [207]



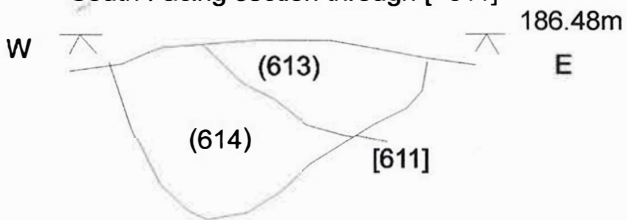
South facing section through [604] & [607]



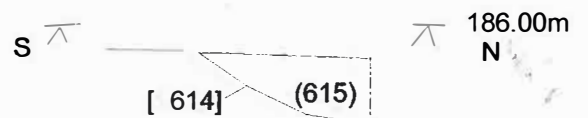
North facing section through [604]



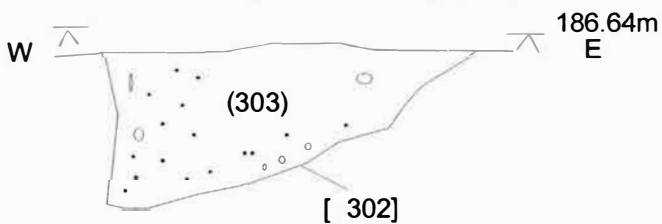
South Facing section through [611]



East facing section through [614]



South facing section through [302]



West facing section through [304]



Figure 6 : Sections