

**COMBINED PARISH CENTRE FOR  
ST. MICHAEL'S AND ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCHES  
WINDHILL  
BISHOP'S STORTFORD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**



**Essex County Council  
Field Archaeology Unit**

**MAY 2008**



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

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As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report. Please contact the Archaeological Fieldwork Manager, at the

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WINDHILL  
BISHOP'S STORTFORD  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

Client: Barker and Associates

NGR: TL 48590, 21260

Site Code: BSNPC08

Oasis No.: essexcou1- 42465

Dates of Fieldwork: 6th and 7th May 2008

**SUMMARY**

*An archaeological evaluation was carried out on the proposed site of a combined parish centre for St. Michael's and St. Joseph's Churches at Windhill, Bishop's Stortford.*

*Two 7.5m-long trenches were excavated, one containing two pits of probable 18-19th century date and the other only showing signs of modern disturbance. Although the area is of some perceived archaeological potential, no features of Prehistoric, Roman, Saxon or Medieval date were identified. While further remains of 18th-19th century date may be present within the wider footprint of the proposed new building they are likely to be of limited archaeological significance and the overall impact of the proposed new development appears to be low.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching undertaken on the proposed site of a combined parish centre for St. Michael's and St. Joseph's Churches at Windhill, Bishop's Stortford. The fieldwork was carried out by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on behalf of Barker and Associates for the joint churches of St. Joseph and The English Martyrs and St. Michael, in accordance with an archaeological brief prepared by the County Historic Environment Unit of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC CHEU 2008) and a written scheme of investigation prepared by ECC FAU (2008).

The evaluation was undertaken in response to a condition placed on planning consent by the local planning authority (East Hertfordshire District Council) which required a programme of archaeological investigation prior to development (Planning Ref.: 3/07/2543 [3//06/2374]). The programme of investigation comprises a field evaluation and the subsequent implementation of any necessary mitigation measures indicated by the evaluation's findings.

The site archive will be deposited in Bishop's Stortford Museum. A digital version of this report will be submitted, along with a project summary, to the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis>).

## **2.0 BACKGROUND (Fig. 1)**

### **2.1 Topography and Geology**

The proposed development area occupies c.630 square metres and is situated approximately 55m south-west of St. Michael's Church and 35m south-east of St. Joseph's Church. The immediate vicinity is undeveloped, with St. Michael's churchyard to the east, the old monastery gardens to the north, open grassland to the south and an area of grasscrete parking to the west. The development area itself is comprised of a tarmac car park surrounded by several large trees, hedging and general shrubbery. The site slopes gradually from west (49.75 OD) to east (48.25OD).

The underlying geology consists of Middle Pleistocene glaciofluvial deposits of sand and gravel overlying clay, silt and sand of the London Clay Formation.

## **2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background**

Remains of Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman date have been found within Bishops Stortford and in the surrounding area. In the Roman period a small town grew where 'Stane Street' forded the river Stort. The proposed development site is located adjacent to Area of Archaeological Significance No. 114, as identified in the Local Plan. This denotes the historic core of the medieval and later town of Bishop's Stortford, and includes Waytemore Castle, which dates from the 11th century, and the medieval parish church of St. Michael. The present church dates to the 15th century and replaced an earlier, 12th century, church on the same spot. The application site lies close to the church and to Windhill House, a complex of listed buildings of early 17th century and later date. These buildings were acquired by the Redemptorist Order in 1903 and were known as St. Joseph's Monastery until 1994. To the immediate west of the former monastery buildings is St. Joseph's Church which was constructed in the early 1900s and consecrated in 1906.

## **3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **3.1 General aims**

The main aim of the evaluation was to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development. More specifically, it was to provide a predictive model of surviving archaeological remains likely to be present on the site and include an assessment of their significance.

### **3.2 Research objectives**

In the event that significant archaeological deposits were encountered the report would aim to highlight appropriate research themes for further work, in line with regional research frameworks (Glazebrook 1997; Brown and Glazebrook 2000). Unfortunately, due to the limited results from the evaluation, the work has little potential to contribute to any of the relevant research themes highlighted in these documents.

## **4.0 METHOD**

Two evaluation trenches, both 7.5m long by 1.6m wide, were excavated under archaeological supervision, using a small 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-bladed bucket. The trenches were hand-cleaned and potential features excavated. Both trenches were deliberately located outside of the existing tree canopies in order to avoid damaging the root systems and overhead branches.



All work was carried out in accordance with IFA (Institute of Field Archaeologists) by-laws and guidelines and complied with Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003). Standard ECC FAU excavation, artefact collection and recording methodologies were employed throughout.

## **5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS (Figs 1 & 2)**

Two archaeological features were excavated in Trench 1 and are described below, while evidence for modern disturbance was noted in Trench 2. Additional context information is presented in Appendix 1 below.

Occasional small roots were noted in the sides of both trenches. A few larger roots were noted in section at the north end of Trench 1 (in a border adjacent to shrubs), with some adjacent root disturbance in the base of the trench.

### **5.1 Trench 1**

Two oval-shaped pits were excavated in the southern half of the trench (Fig. 2). The larger pit (3), which extended beyond the limit of the trench to east and west, was 1.9m wide by 0.43m deep and contained two compact fills (4 and 5). The lower fill (4) was 0.08m thick and comprised mid orangey-brown clay. The upper fill (5) comprised mid greyish-brown clay with gravel inclusions and contained a variety of finds including three sherds of post-medieval pottery, with a broad 16th-20th century date range, fragments of brick and roof tile, animal bone and a clay pipe stem.

The smaller pit (1) was 0.82m long, 0.53m wide and 0.28m deep. It contained a single mid greyish-brown gravelly clay that contained further fragments of brick and roof tile and one sherd of 18th century pottery.

Both pits were cut through a c.0.10m thick deposit of brownish grey gravelly silt which formed an interface between the underlying natural brown gravel and an overlying deposit of dark greyish brown silt. This silt was c.0.35m thick and represented buried topsoil. It was sealed by a c.0.25m thick make-up/levelling layer of mixed yellow/ brown clay and gravel with occasional fragments of brick. This layer was covered with landscape fabric and c.0.15m of stone chippings which formed the surface of the car park in this part of the site (Plate 1).

## **Trench 2**

A modern disturbance containing wire and frogged bricks, was noted in the base of the trench and in the south section (Fig. 1). No archaeological features were identified.

Clean natural geology in Trench 2 comprised orange brown gravel and clay silt, overlain by c.0.14m of mixed silt and gravel interface deposit, which was in turn sealed by c.0.3m of buried topsoil. Overlaying the topsoil was a 0.16m-thick make-up/ levelling layer of dark grey ashy silt, containing common flecks of charcoal and occasional pieces of post-medieval tile. This was generally sealed by a second levelling deposit comprised of c.0.12m of grey stone chippings and brick fragments, apart from at the west end of the trench where it was overlain by a concrete slab of similar thickness. On top of the chippings and concrete was c.0.05m of tarmac (Plate 2).

## **6.0 FINDS REPORT** by Joyce Compton

### **6.1 Introduction**

Small groups of post-medieval finds were recovered from three contexts. All of the finds have been recorded by count and weight, in grams, by context. Full quantification details can be found in Appendix 2. The finds are described by category below.

### **6.2 Pottery** by Helen Walker

A very small amount of post-medieval pottery, four sherds, weighing 32g, was recovered. Fill 5 of pit 3 produced single sherds of Tudor red earthenware and post-medieval red earthenware, the latter broadly dated to the 16th to 19th centuries. The latest pottery from the feature is a sherd of Nottingham/Derbyshire stoneware, showing characteristic lustrous brown glaze, and dating to the 18th to 20th centuries. Fill 2 of pit 1 produced a sherd of Staffordshire-type white salt-glazed stoneware, the forerunner of modern tableware, and manufactured principally between the 1720s and 1770s.

### **6.3 Brick and tile**

All three contexts produced brick and tile fragments, amounting to 42 pieces, weighing 1557g. Ten brick fragments were recorded, most of which are too small to provide measurements. One piece from the fill of pit 1 has a depth of 24mm and may be a flooring brick or perhaps part of an edging or coping brick. A corner fragment from the fill of pit 3 has a depth of 65mm, which is a standard Victorian (and later) brick measurement. The small

quantity of roof tile fragments has few distinguishing features but they are probable post-medieval types.

#### **6.4 Animal bone**

A small quantity of animal bone came from the fill of pit 3. Most comprises small fragments, except for the sawn proximal end of a long bone from a juvenile large mammal. The animal types and nature of the assemblage suggest butchery waste.

#### **6.5 Other finds**

The fill of pit 3 also produced an iron nail, a piece of slate, a clay tobacco pipe stem and an unworked flint.

#### **6.6 Comments on the assemblage**

A variety of finds was recovered, mainly of later post-medieval date. No further work is required on the assemblage, due to the fragmentary nature of the material and its relatively recent date. The slate fragment and the smaller pieces of brick and tile have been discarded following recording. The remainder of the assemblage need not be retained beyond the archiving stage.

### **7.0 DISCUSSION**

Two post-medieval pits, both probably of 18th/19th century date, were excavated in Trench 1, while no features of archaeological interest were identified in Trench 2 which showed signs of modern disturbance in its base and south side. The site is located to the south of a building complex known as Windhill House in the 19th century and the pits, located to the rear of the property, may represent discreet rubbish disposal away from the main house.

The proximity of the two features to each other and the fact that they both contained fragments of brick and tile suggest that they were infilled at about the same time. This was most probably in the 19th century, as one of the fragments of brick in pit 3 was of this date, as possibly were two sherds of pottery. The third sherd, of Tudor red earthenware (late 15th-16th century), was clearly residual, as may be the single sherd of 18th century pottery recovered from pit 1.

A concrete slab below the tarmac at the west end of Trench 2 may have been the base of a 20th century structure such as, a garage, shed or greenhouse. Evidence from the north end

of Trench 1 suggests that where the foundation trenches for the new building cut through mature shrubbery or close to large trees, more severe root disturbance is to be expected.

## **8.0 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS**

Although the general area is of some archaeological potential, no remains pre-dating the post-medieval period were identified and it is unlikely that any such features are present within the remaining footprint of the proposed new building. The presence of further late post-medieval remains cannot however be completely discounted. Only development that goes below 0.6m in depth has the potential to adversely impact upon any remains that are present. However, the features investigated are of only minor significance and are therefore unlikely to contribute to any of the current regional research agendas/ objectives (Glazebrook 1997; Brown and Glazebrook 2000). In conclusion, the impact of the proposed development on the archaeological record appears to be low.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The investigation was commissioned by Will Bidewell of Barker and Associates on behalf of the joint churches of St. Joseph and The English Martyrs and St. Michael. The fieldwork was undertaken by Trevor Ennis with Rachel Brazil and John Hewitt of the ECC Field Archaeology Unit. Illustration by Andrew Lewsey. Finds were processed by Phil McMichael and analysed by Joyce Compton and Helen Walker. The project was managed by Adrian Scruby of ECC FAU and monitored by Alison Tinniswood of HCC CHUE.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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|--------------------------------------|------|--|
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| ECC FAU                              | 2007 | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation at The New Combined Parish Centre for St. Michael's and St. Joseph's Churches, Windhill, Bishop's Stortford</i> |
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| HCC CHUE                             | 2008 | <i>Design Brief for Archaeological Evaluation: St. Michael's and St. Joseph's Churches, Windhill, Bishop's Stortford</i>   |
| Institute of Field<br>Archaeologists | 1999 | <i>Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation (revised)</i>  |

## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA

All dimensions given in metres

Context	Trench	Type	Description	Period
01	1	Pit	Oval, aligned E/W, 0.82m x 0.53m x 0.28m	Post-medieval
02	1	Fill of 1	Mid greyish brown gravelly clay	Post-medieval
03	1	Pit	Oval, aligned E/W, 1.6m+ x 1.9m x 0.43m	Post-medieval
04	1	Fill of 3	Mid orangey brown clay	Post-medieval
05	1	Fill of 3	Mid greyish brown clay	Post-medieval
06	1	Finds	Unstratified finds from machining	Post-medieval

## APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA

All weights in grams

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
2	1	3	84	Brick fragments, one has depth of 24mm (only this retained 54g)	Post med.
		5	124	Roof tile fragments, one with peg hole (2/24g small pieces discarded)	Post med.
		1	20	Pottery; base sherd, Staffs-type white salt-glazed stoneware	18th C
5	3	1	6	Iron nail	-
		6	170	Animal bone; long bone, proximal end, unfused and sawn at mid-shaft, rib and vertebra fragments, large mammal; long bone shaft, medium-sized mammal; femur epiphysis, proximal end, sheep/goat; fragments	-
		1	18	Slate fragment (Discarded)	-
		1	6	Unworked flint	-
		1	4	Clay pipe stem	Post med.
		6	545	Brick fragments, one has depth of 65mm (3/56g small pieces discarded)	Post med.
		16	498	Roof tile fragments, two with peg holes (9/122g small pieces discarded)	Post med.
		3	12	Pottery; body sherds, Tudor red earthenware, internally-glazed PMRE and Notts/Derby stoneware	18th-20th C
6	u/s	1	82	Brick fragment	Post med.
		11	224	Roof tile fragments, two with peg holes (Discarded)	Post med.

## **APPENDIX 3: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE**

**SITE NAME:** COMBINED PARISH CENTRE, WINDHILL, BISHOP'S STORTFORD  
**SITE CODE:** BSNPC08

### **Index to Archive:**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 HCC Brief
- 1.2 ECC FAU WSI

#### **2. Research Archive**

- 2.1 Client Report
- 2.2 Finds Reports

#### **3. Site Archive**

- 3.1 Context Record Register
- 3.2 Context Records (1 to 6)
- 3.3 Plan Register
- 3.4 Section Register
- 3.5 Levels Register
- 3.6 Trench location plan
- 3.7 Photographic Registers
- 3.8 Site Photographic Record (1 set of Black & White prints, 1 Set of colour prints and 1 disk of digital images )
- 3.9 Miscellaneous notes/plans

#### **Not in File**

2 large plan/section sheets

#### **Finds**

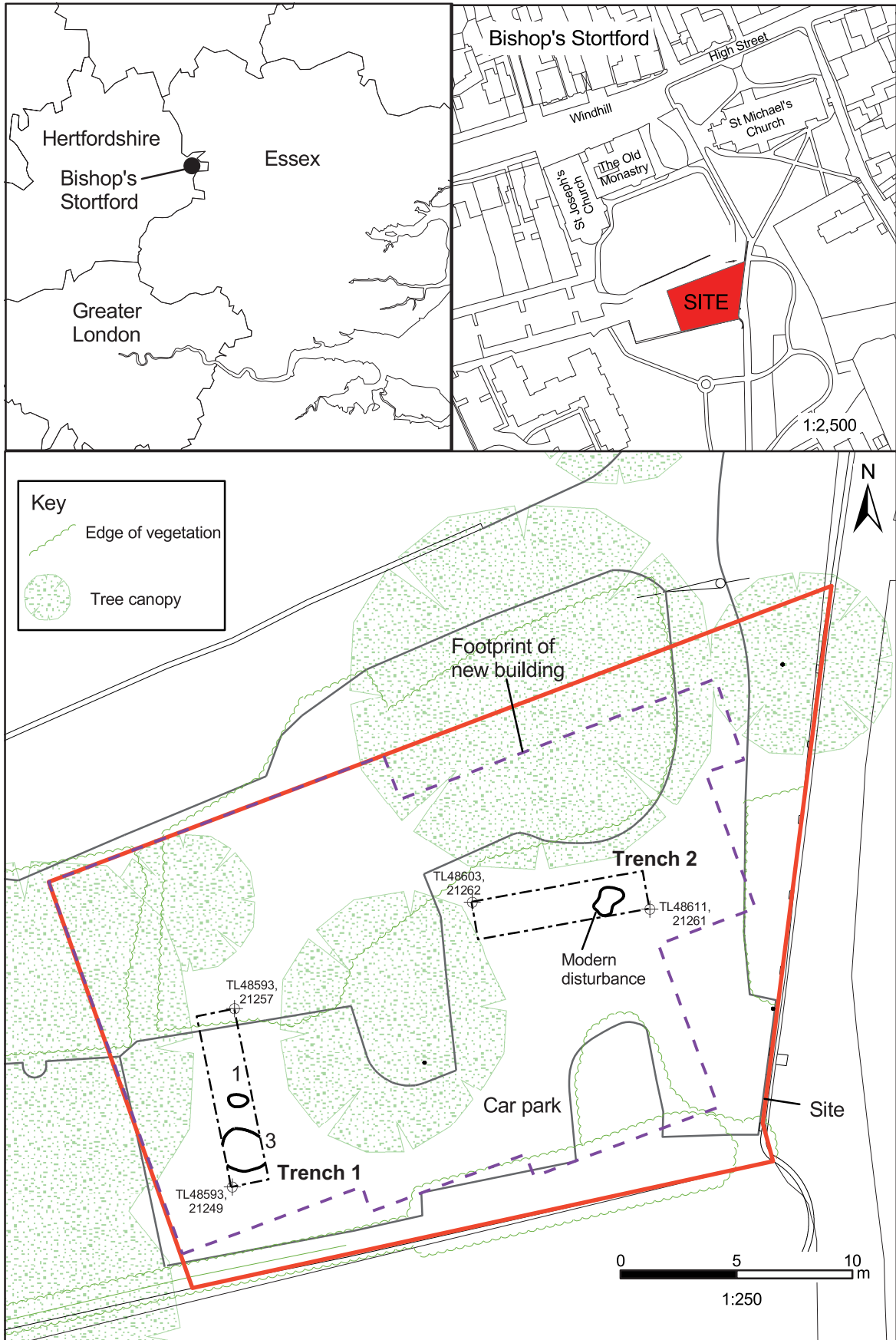
The finds occupy less than one box.

## APPENDIX 4: HER SUMMARY SHEET

### HER SUMMARY SHEET

<b>Site name/Address:</b> Combined parish centre for St. Michael's and St. Joseph's Churches, Windhill, Bishop's Stortford	
<b>Parishes:</b> Bishop's Stortford	<b>District:</b> East Hertfordshire
<b>NGR:</b> TL 48590, 21260	<b>Site Code:</b> BSNPC08
<b>Type of Work:</b> Archaeological Evaluation	<b>Site Director/Group:</b> T. Ennis, ECC Field Archaeology Unit
<b>Date of Work:</b> 6th and 7th May 2008	<b>Size of Area Investigated:</b> 24 sq m
<b>Location of Finds/Curating Museum:</b> Bishop's Stortford	<b>Funding source:</b> Client
<b>Further Seasons Anticipated?:</b>	<b>Related HER Nos.:</b> -
<b>Final Report:</b> HAH note	<b>Oasis No.:</b> essexcou1- 42465
<b>Periods Represented:</b> Post-medieval	
<p><b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b></p> <p>An archaeological evaluation was carried out on the proposed site of a combined parish centre for St. Michael's and St. Joseph's Churches at Windhill, Bishop's Stortford.</p> <p>Two 7.5m-long trenches were excavated, one containing two pits of probable 18-19th century date and the other only showing signs of modern disturbance. Although the area is of some perceived archaeological potential, no features of Prehistoric, Roman, Saxon or Medieval date were identified. While further remains of 18th-19th century date may be present within the wider footprint of the proposed new building they are likely to be of limited archaeological significance and the overall impact of the proposed new development appears to be low.</p>	
<b>Previous Summaries/Reports:</b> None	
<b>Author of Summary:</b> T. Ennis	<b>Date of Summary:</b> May 2008





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Fig.1. Site location

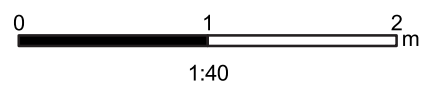
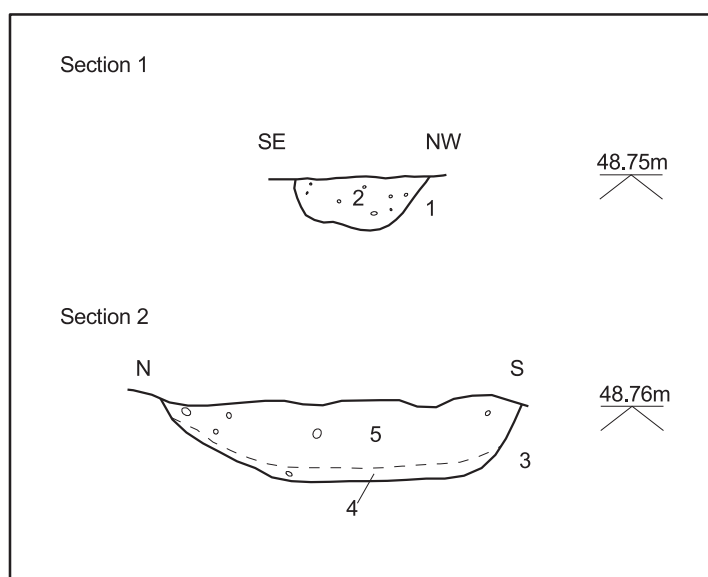
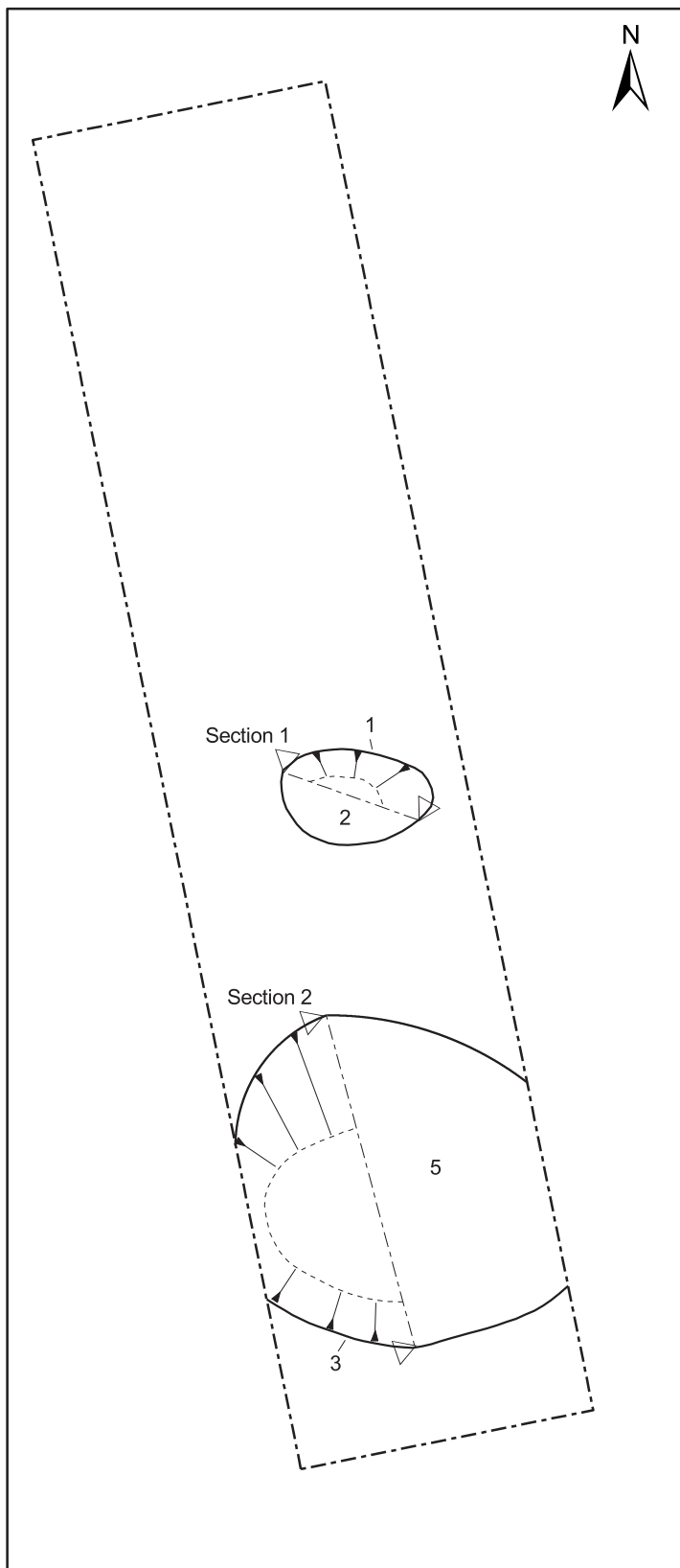


Fig.2. Trench 1 plan and sections



Plate 1 Trench 1 looking north  
(2m scale)



Plate 2 Trench 2 looking west  
(2m scale)