

**CHELMER VALLEY PARK AND RIDE
PRATTS FARM LANE
CHELMSFORD
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY TRIAL-TRENCHING



Essex County Council

FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT

January 2010

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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:

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**CHELMER VALLEY PARK AND RIDE, PRATTS FARM LANE, CHELMSFORD
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY TRIAL TRENCHING**

Client: WPP Architects acting for Essex County Council

Planning application: 09/01052/FUL

Grid reference: TL 571806 211837

Date of fieldwork: 5/1/10 to 14/1/10

ECC FAU project no: 2153

Site code: LWPF09

Oasis reference: essexcou1-71309

SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching undertaken in advance of the construction of a Park and Ride on the northern outskirts of Chelmsford has found few archaeological remains, suggesting that the site has not been intensively settled in the past.

A high status Roman settlement, possibly a villa, is believed to lie in the area immediately north-east of the Park and Ride site based on the results of an earlier evaluation carried out near Belsteads Farm in May 2000 (Vaughan 2000) and the fact that numerous Roman artefacts have been found in that area by metal detectorists. An apparent absence of similarly dated remains within the Park and Ride site possibly indicates that it was used for cultivation or grazing when the villa was in use, a theme which may have continued through to the present day.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The site of a new Park and Ride on the northern outskirts of Chelmsford was archaeologically evaluated in January 2010 on the recommendation of Essex County Council Historic Environment Management (ECC HEM). The archaeological work was commissioned by WPP Architects acting on behalf of Essex County Council and was carried out by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU). The work was undertaken in accordance with an archaeological brief (ECC HEM 2009) and a written scheme of investigation (ECC FAU 2009) and was monitored by ECC HEM on behalf of Essex County Council.

The Park and Ride will be situated off Pratts Farm Lane and Essex Regiment Way (A130) and will consist of a bus terminus building, a 1,000 space car park, and improved access and landscaping.

Copies of this report have been sent to WPP Architects, ECC HEM and the Essex Historic Environment Record. A digital copy of the report will be uploaded to the Online Access Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) (<http://www.oasis.ac.uk>). The site archive will be stored at Chelmsford Museum.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location

The site covers 3.8ha of arable land and is situated 5km north of Chelmsford town centre (Fig. 1). Essex Regiment Way (A130) and Pratts Farm Lane define the western and southern sides of the site respectively. The south-eastern corner of the site is reinstated land and was formerly a sand and gravel pit. Pratts Farm Lane originally crossed the south-western corner of the site (Fig. 6) but was divided in two and diverted when Essex Regiment Way was constructed in the late 1980s. The site has a gradual south-facing slope.

2.2 Geology

The surface geology of the site comprises Diamicton above London Clay. The topsoil consists of greyish brown plastic silt clay with infrequent small stones and is between 0.2m and 0.37m thick. In the eastern half of the site it overlies a thin layer of subsoil, consisting of dark orange brown silt clay with infrequent small stones.

2.3 Archaeological background

The following information is partly derived from the Essex County Council Historic Environment Record (EHER) and suggests that farming and/or other settlement related activities were taking place either within or close to the Park and Ride site during the prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods.

Archaeological trial trenching to the north-west has revealed two post holes and a ditch containing Iron Age and Roman artefacts (EHER 18979). Fieldwalking of the park and ride site has discovered thin scatters of prehistoric worked flint, Roman and medieval pottery and post-medieval tile (EHER 14448). Groundworks to the immediate west of Essex Regiment Way have uncovered sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery, a prehistoric flint blade and an area of burning (EHER 6075, 17915). Further finds from the park and ride site comprise a sherd of post-medieval stoneware pottery and the upper part of a beehive quern stone (EHER 6071 and 6076).

Metal detectorists have found numerous Late Iron Age and Roman artefacts, including over 200 coins, a votive figurine, military finds, brooches and bracelets, to the north and west of the site (EHER 46785; local metal detectorist, pers. comm.), suggesting the presence of a significant site, potentially a high status villa (Fig. 5).

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The general aim of the trial trenching evaluation was to establish the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains present within the footprint of the Park and Ride site.

The specific objectives of the evaluation were:

- to obtain more information about the location, nature and extent of the probable Roman villa, as implied by the metal detecting finds from the adjacent fields
- to investigate the former route of Pratts Farm Lane in the south-western corner of the Park and Ride site, to find evidence for former roadside settlement

4.0 METHOD

The site was sampled by twenty-two 40m-long trenches, stripped of topsoil and subsoil by a tracked excavator equipped with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket (Fig. 1, trenches 1 to 22). The south-eastern corner of the site was not investigated as it is a former sand and gravel pit and archaeological remains are unlikely to have survived in that area. The trenching was subsequently supplemented by a further three trenches at the request of ECC HEM so that the context of a small number of archaeological features found in the eastern part of the site could be investigated in more detail (Fig. 1, Trenches 23 to 25). These trenches measured 30m long by 1.8m wide.

The location of the trenches was recorded by using a directional GPS with on-board map-based software. The error margin of the GPS varies, but is always less than 0.2m.

The trenching was carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* and the Association of Local Government Officers' *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (IFA 1999; Gurney 2003). The ECC FAU is a registered archaeological organisation with the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The ECC FAU uses its own recording system to record all archaeological deposits and features (ECC FAU 2006). Further details of the recording strategy and method can be found in the written scheme of investigation (ECC FAU 2009).

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

Six of the twenty-five trenches contained archaeological remains, namely trenches 3, 4, 8, 11, 17 and 22 (Fig. 1). These comprised a post-medieval ditch in trench 17, an undated ditch in trench 11, three undatable pits and post-holes in trench 22, and a post-medieval / modern field ditch in trenches 3, 4 and 8. Metal detecting of the trenches and spoil heaps found a small lead weight and a lead weight or plumb bob. No remains of Pratts Farm Lane were found at the point where it formerly crossed the south-western corner of the site. More detailed feature descriptions can be found in Appendix 2.

Trench 5 and most of the trenches in the eastern half of the site contained a thin layer of dark orange brown subsoil between topsoil and subsoil. The subsoil was not a natural deposit as it overlay archaeological features. The topsoil in trench 21 and in the south-western end of trench 19 near the Pratts Farm / Essex Regiment Way roundabout lay beneath two layers of modern made ground with a combined thickness of 0.5m.

5.1 Trenches 3, 4 and 8

Trenches 3, 4 and 8 uncovered a field ditch (11) recorded on the first four editions of the Ordnance Survey (1872 to 1953) (Fig. 1). A section dug across the ditch in trench 8 revealed three fills and a small amount of post-medieval tile and pottery (Fig. 2, section 1). The latest of the three fills comprised a patchwork of topsoil and redeposited natural and probably represents a deliberate backfilling of the ditch.

5.2 Trench 11

Trench 11 revealed a small undatable ditch (3) containing a single fill with a small piece of undiagnostic struck flint lying on its surface (Fig. 3, section 2).

5.3 Trench 17

A small ditch (9) in the middle of trench 17 contained a single fill and several pieces of post-medieval tile (Fig. 3, section 3).

5.4 Trench 22

Two small post holes (5 and 7) and a pit or natural feature (1) lay in trench 22 (Fig. 4). None of the features contained any finds. The post-holes were of similar dimensions and may have been paired.

6.0 FINDS, by Joyce Compton

Finds were recovered from four contexts, across three of the excavated trenches. In addition two metal items were metal-detected from the spoil heaps of a further two trenches. All of the finds have been recorded by count and weight, in grams, by context. Full quantification details can be found in Appendix 3. The finds are mainly post-medieval and are described by category below.

6.1 Pottery

A single sherd of post-medieval red earthenware came from the top fill of ditch 11 in trench 8. This is a base sherd with an internal amber-brown glaze, dated by Helen Walker to the 17th century or later.

6.2 Metalwork

Two items of lead were metal-detected from spoil-heaps. The first, from the spoil of trench 18, comprises a cylindrical weight or plumb bob, pierced centrally along the length. The

second, from the spoil of trench 14, is a probable disc-shaped weight, nominally ¼ ounce, in poor condition.

6.3 Roof tile

A total of nine pieces of roof tile, weighing 184g, were recorded in three contexts. All are small and featureless and of probable post-medieval date.

6.4 Flint

A small piece of undiagnostic struck flint was found lying on the surface of ditch 3 (trench 11).

6.5 Comments on the assemblage

Very small amounts of finds were recorded. Apart from the flint, the material is post-medieval and all of these finds are likely to be contemporary. It may be worth noting that almost all of the assemblage came from trenches in the eastern part of the evaluation area, although, with so few finds, this is unlikely to be significant.

Further work is not required on any of the finds. Due to the small quantity and recent date of most of the material, nothing needs to be retained beyond the archiving stage.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The number of features and finds found by the trial trenching evaluation is very low and probably indicates that the Park and Ride site has seen no previous intensive occupation. The evaluation has discovered no identifiable Roman remains pertaining to the putative Roman villa to the north-east and no evidence for roadside settlement during the medieval and post-medieval periods alongside the no longer extant section of Pratts Farm Lane.

The area between the Park and Ride site and the May 2000 Belsteads Farm evaluation is probably the location for a Roman villa, since metal detectorists have found numerous Roman artefacts in that area and all of the undated features and Iron Age and Roman finds found during the Belsteads Farm evaluation appear to be clustered near it (EHER 18979, 46785; Vaughan 2000; local metal detectorist, pers. comm.) (Fig. 5). The Park and Ride site was possibly woodland or used for cultivation or grazing when the villa was in use since the current evaluation has found no identifiable Roman remains.

Ditch 9 in trench 17 and ditch 11 in trenches 3, 4 and 8 are former field boundaries which have been backfilled within the last 200 years in order to create larger fields. Both ditches contain post-medieval finds and ditch 11 is recorded on the first four editions of the Ordnance Survey. The other four features found by the evaluation – ditch 3 in trench 11 and discrete features 1, 5 and 7 in trench 22 – are undatable. A thin layer of subsoil in the eastern half of the site overlies archaeological features and is of probable agricultural origin. A thick layer of modern overburden in trench 21 and the south-western end of trench 19 probably relates to landscaping for the adjacent Pratts Farm Lane / Essex Regiment Way roundabout.

8.0 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

The Park and Ride site contains no significant archaeological remains, although the remains of a Roman villa are suspected to the immediate north-east. No further archaeological work will be required in connection with the current scheme.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The archaeological work was commissioned by WPP Architects acting on behalf of Essex County Council.

The fieldwork was carried out by Mark Germany, John Hewitt and Andy Lewsey. The finds were analysed by Joyce Compton and Helen Walker. The figures and the site surveying were carried out by Andy Lewsey. The project was managed by Adrian Scruby, and monitored by Teresa O'Connor of ECC HEM.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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| ECC FAU | 2009 | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trenching. Pratts Farm Park and Ride Site, Chelmsford, Essex. ECC FAU wsi 2153</i> |
| ECC HEM | 2009 | <i>Archaeological Trial Trenching, Pratts Farm Park and Ride Site, Chelmsford.</i> |
| IFA | 1999 | <i>Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation (Revised).</i> Institute of Field Archaeologists |
| Gurney, D. | 2003 | <i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England.</i> E. Anglian Archaeol. Occ. Paper 14 |
| Vaughan, T. | 2000 | <i>Belsteads Farm, Little Waltham, Essex. Archaeological Evaluation.</i> ECC FAU report 736 |

APPENDIX 1: TRENCH LOCATIONS

Trenches 1 to 22 and trenches 23 to 25 are 40m and 30m long respectively. The trenches are all 1.8m wide. The coordinates for each trench refer to the opposite ends of the central axis.

Trench	Coordinates
1	TL 571752.0 211976.5 TL 571752.0 211936.5
2	TL 571767.9 211956.5 TL 571807.9 211956.5
3	TL 571767.9 211956.5 TL 571807.9 211956.5
4	TL 571844.8 211956.5 TL 571884.8 211956.5
5	TL 571844.8 211956.5 TL 571884.8 211956.5
6	TL 571806.5 211921.7 TL 571806.5 211881.7
7	TL 571825.0 211910.0 TL 571865.0 211910.0
8	TL 571752.0 211897.1 TL 571752.0 211857.1
9	TL 571767.9 211863.6 TL 571807.9 211863.6
10	TL 571826.4 211883.6 TL 571826.4 211843.6
11	TL 571844.8 211863.6 TL 571884.8 211863.6
12	TL 571740.0 211817.0 TL 571780.0 211817.0
13	TL 571806.5 211837.0 TL 571806.5 211797.0
14	TL 571833.0 211817.0 TL 571873.0 211817.0
15	TL 571752.0 211800.5 TL 571752.0 211760.5
16	TL 571767.9 211778.9 TL 571807.9 211778.9
17	TL 571826.4 211790.7 TL 571826.4 211750.7
18	TL 571844.8 211770.7 TL 571884.8 211770.7
19	TL 571780.9 211749.3 TL 571758.8 211716.0
20	TL 571806.5 211758.6 TL 571806.5 211718.6
21	TL 571741.6 211728.8 TL 571774.7 211706.4
22	TL 571880.1 211921.7 TL 571880.1 211881.7
23	TL 571857.0 211817.0 TL 571857.0 211786.0
24	TL 571870.2 211853.5 TL 571870.2 211823.5
25	TL 571849.1 211899.4 TL 571880.1 211899.4

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT DATA

No.	Tr.	Category	Description	Date
1	22	Pit	Rounded and slightly irregular. Moderately to steeply sloping sides, uneven base. 1.02m+ long, 1.12m wide, 0.28m deep. Filled by 2	Undated
2	22	Fill	Brown plastic silt clay with no inclusions or finds. Single fill of pit 1	Undated
3	11	Ditch	Linear. Gradually sloping east side, steeply sloping west side, concave base. 2m+ long, 1.8m wide, 0.4m deep. Filled by 4	Undated
4	11	Fill	Dark orange brown friable silt clay with infrequent small stones and large flecks of charcoal. Single fill of 3	Undated
5	22	Post-hole	Circular. Steeply sloping sides, flat base. 0.49m long, 0.49m wide, 0.13m deep. Filled by 6	Undated
6	22	Fill	Dark orange brown friable silt clay with occasional small stones and flecks of charcoal. Single fill of 5	Undated
7	22	Post-hole	Circular. Contains two small depressions. 0.4m long, 0.4m wide, 0.09m deep. Filled by 8. Possible natural feature – animal or root disturbance	Undated
8	22	Fill	Dark orange brown friable silt clay with infrequent small stones and flecks of chalk. Single fill of 7	Undated
9	17	Ditch	Linear. Moderately sloping sides, flat base. 6m+ long, 1.3m wide, 0.3m deep. Filled by 10	Post-med.
10	17	Fill	Orange brown friable silt clay with no inclusions. Single fill of 9	Post-med.
11	8	Ditch	Linear. Steeply sloping sides below gradually sloping shelf. Slightly concave base. 2m+ long, 4.2m wide, 0.93m deep. Filled by 12, 13 and 14	Post-med / modern
12	8	Fill	Dark orange brown friable silt clay with infrequent small stones. Primary fill of 11	Post-med / modern
13	8	Fill	Dark brown friable silt clay with infrequent small stones and occasional flecks of charcoal. Secondary fill of 11	Post-med / modern
14	8	Fill	Mixed deposit of pale brown and brownish yellow plastic silt clay with infrequent small to large stones. Top fill of 11	Post-med / modern
15	18	Artefacts	Metal detecting find (spoil heap, trench 18)	
16	14	Artefacts	Metal detecting find (spoil heap, trench 14)	

APPENDIX 3: FINDS DATA

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
4	3	1	1	Flint chip	-
10	9	2	44	Roof tile fragments	Post med.
13	11	2	70	Roof tile fragments	Post med.
14	11	5 1	70 34	Roof tile fragments (2/2g discarded) Pottery; base sherd, green internal glaze	Post med. Post med.
15	Finds	1	32	Lead weight/plumbob, length 24mm, dia 16mm, pierced lengthways (1¼ oz)	-
16	Finds	1	6	Lead ?weight, disc-shaped, poor condition (¼ oz)	-

APPENDIX 4: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE

1. Client report
1. Archaeological brief
1. Written Scheme of Investigation
1. Finds report and table
1. Context register
16. Context sheets
25. Trench sheets
1. Photo register
1. Plan register
1. Section registers
1. Computer disk containing 38 photographs and digital copies of the client report, the WSI and the finds report and table
2. Large sheets of site plans and section drawings

No finds have been retained.

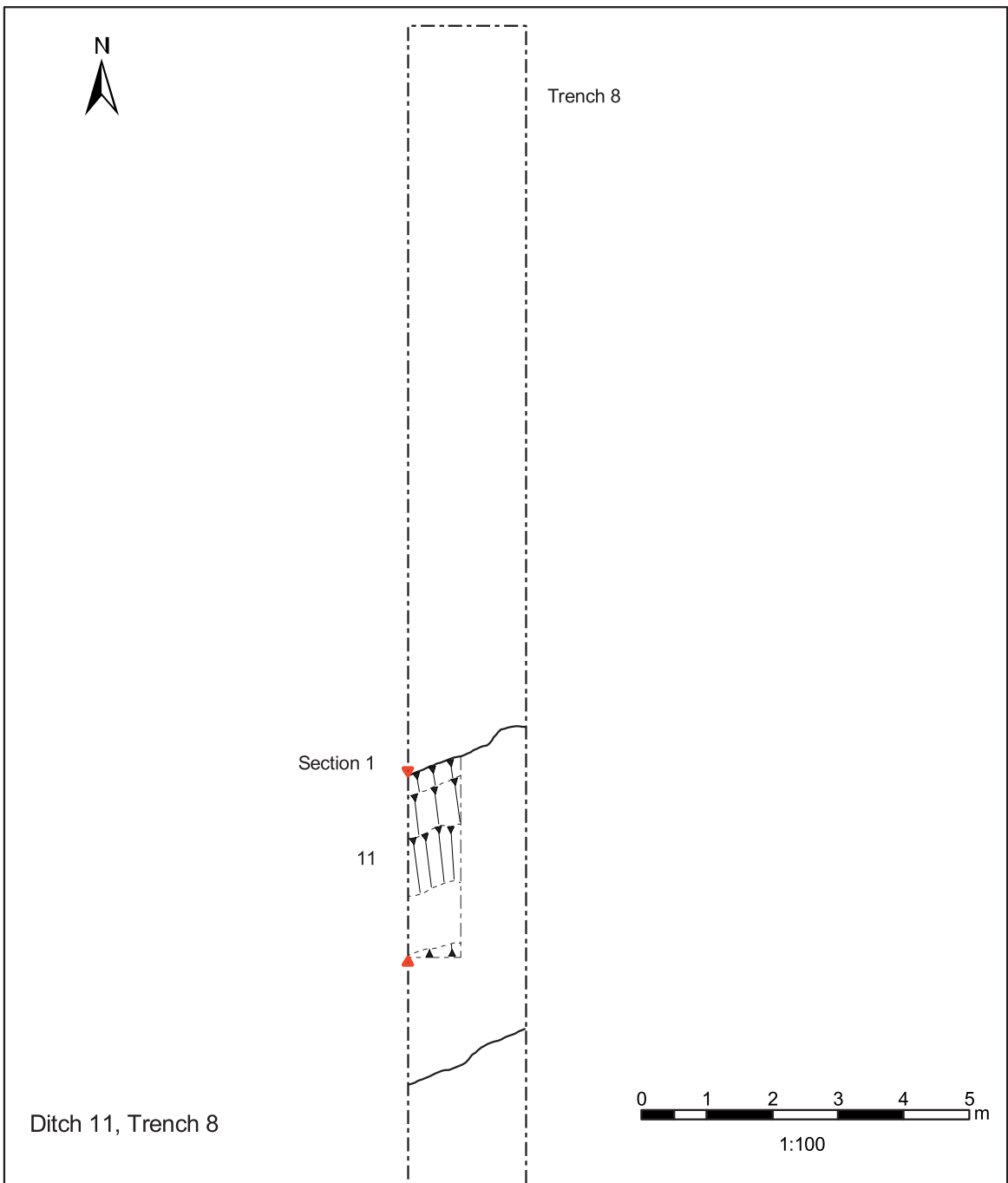
APPENDIX 5: ESSEX HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD

Site name/Address: Chelmer Valley Park and Ride, Pratts Farm Lane, Chelmsford	
Parish: Springfield	District: Chelmsford
NGR: TL 571806 211837	Site Code: LWPF09
Type of Work: Archaeological evaluation by trial trenching	Site Director/Group: Mark Germany, Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit
Date of Work: 5/1/10 to 14/1/10	Size of Area Investigated: 25 trenches, totalling 1746m ²
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Chelmsford	Client: WPP Architects acting for Essex County Council
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HER Nos.: 14448, 18979, 46785
Final Report: Essex Archaeology and History (Summary)	
Periods represented: Post-medieval Modern	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</p> <p>An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching preceded the proposed construction of a Park and Ride alongside Essex Regiment Way and Pratts Farm Lane on the northern outskirts of Chelmsford. The archaeological work was recommended and monitored by the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team. The site for the Park and Ride consisted of 3.8ha of arable land.</p> <p>A high status Roman settlement, possibly a villa, lies in the area immediately north-east of the Park and Ride site, based on the results of an earlier evaluation carried out near Belsteads Farm in May 2000 (Vaughan 2000) and the fact that numerous Roman artefacts have been found in that area by metal detectorists (EHER 46785). The south-western corner of the Park and Ride site was formerly crossed by Pratts Farm Lane.</p> <p>The aims of the trial-trenching were to obtain more information about the postulated Roman villa and to look for possible medieval and post-medieval roadside settlement alongside the no longer extant section of Pratts Farm Lane.</p> <p>The Park and Ride side was sampled by three 30m and twenty-two 40m-long trenches, each stripped of topsoil and subsoil using a tracked excavator equipped with a 1.8m-wide toothless ditching bucket. The trenches were located by using a directional GPS with on-board map-based software.</p> <p>The trenching discovered few archaeological features or finds. The main discoveries were two post-medieval / modern field ditches, an undatable ditch and a small number of undatable pits and post-holes.</p> <p>The low number of features and finds found by the trial trenching probably indicates that no previous intensive occupation has taken place within the Park and Ride site. It may also indicate that the Park and Ride site was used as farmland or woodland when the adjacent Roman settlement was in use.</p>	
<p>Previous Summaries/Reports:-</p> <p>Germany, M. 2010 <i>Chelmer Valley Park and Ride, Pratts Farm Lane, Chelmsford, Essex. Archaeological evaluation by trial trenching.</i> ECC FAU report 2153</p> <p>Vaughan, T. 2000 <i>Belsteads Farm, Little Waltham, Essex. Archaeological Evaluation.</i> ECC FAU report 736</p>	
Author of Summary: Mark Germany	Date of Summary: January 2010

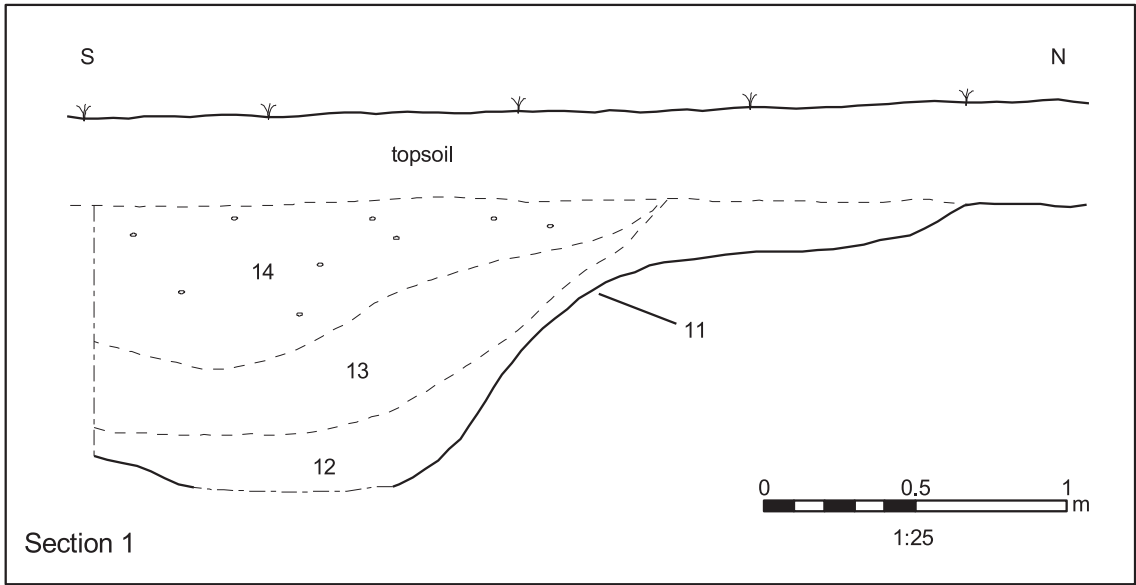
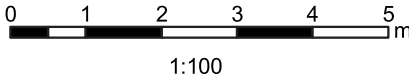


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Fig.1. Trench location plan



Ditch 11, Trench 8



Section 1

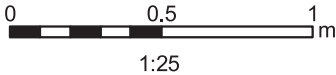


Fig.2. Trench 8

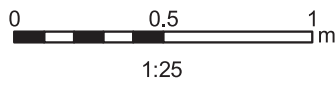
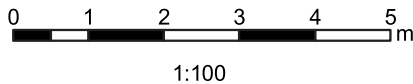
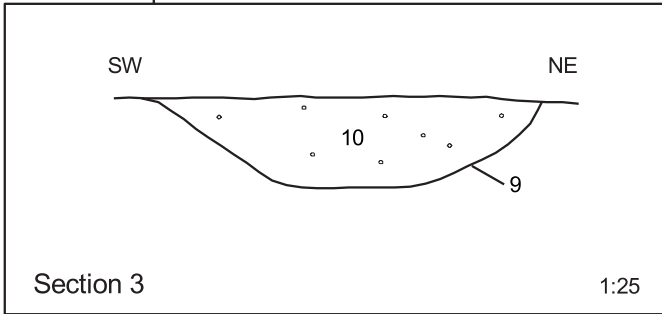
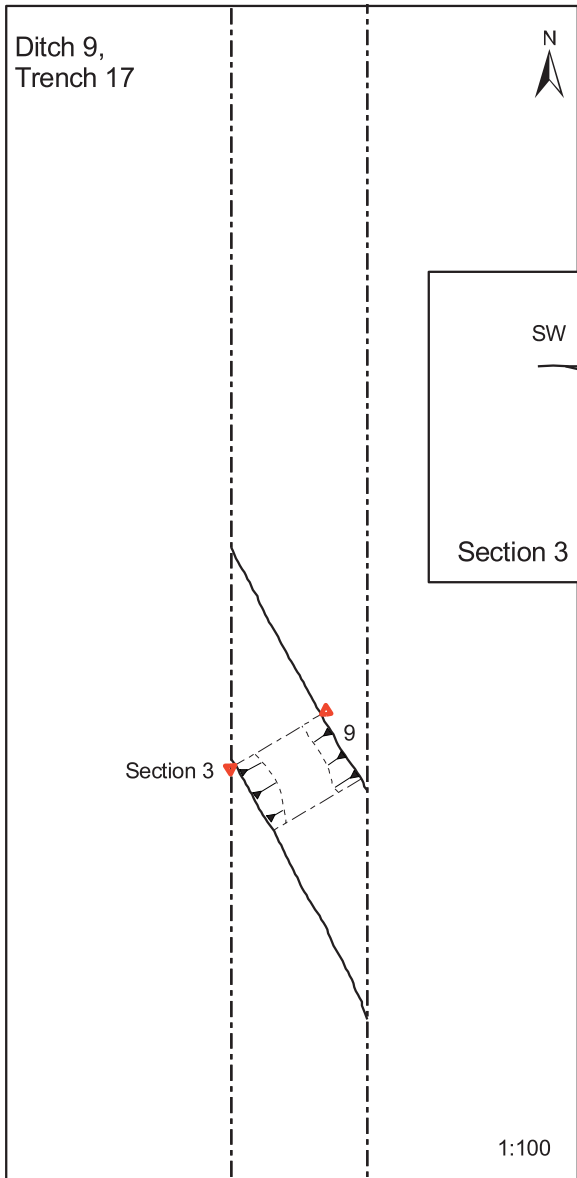
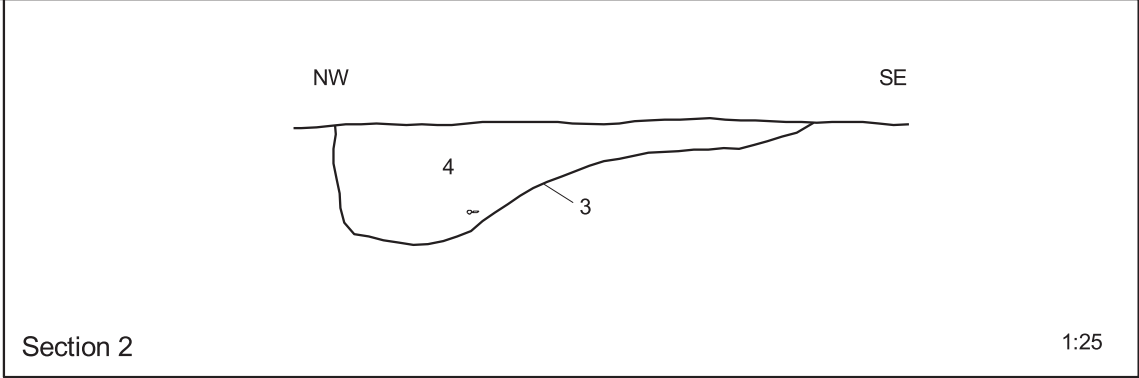
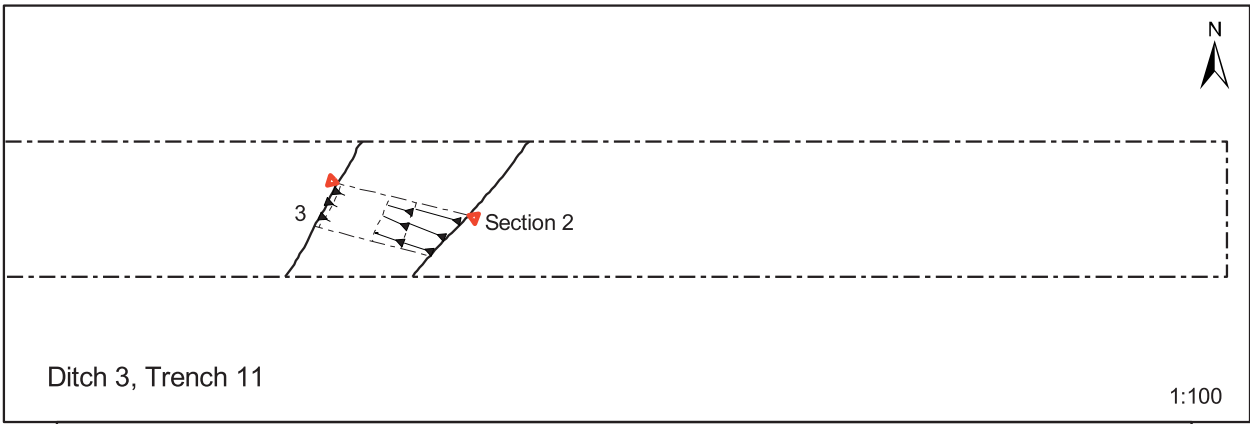


Fig.3. Trenches 11 and 17

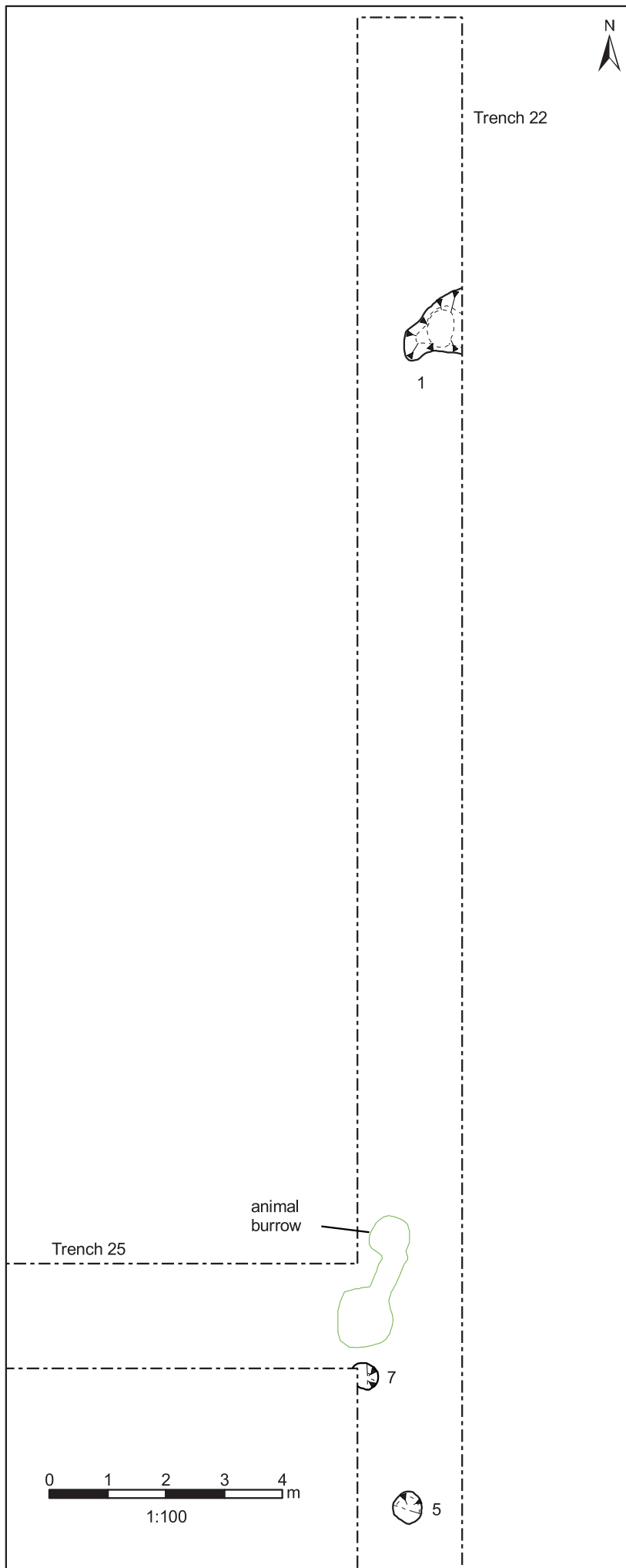
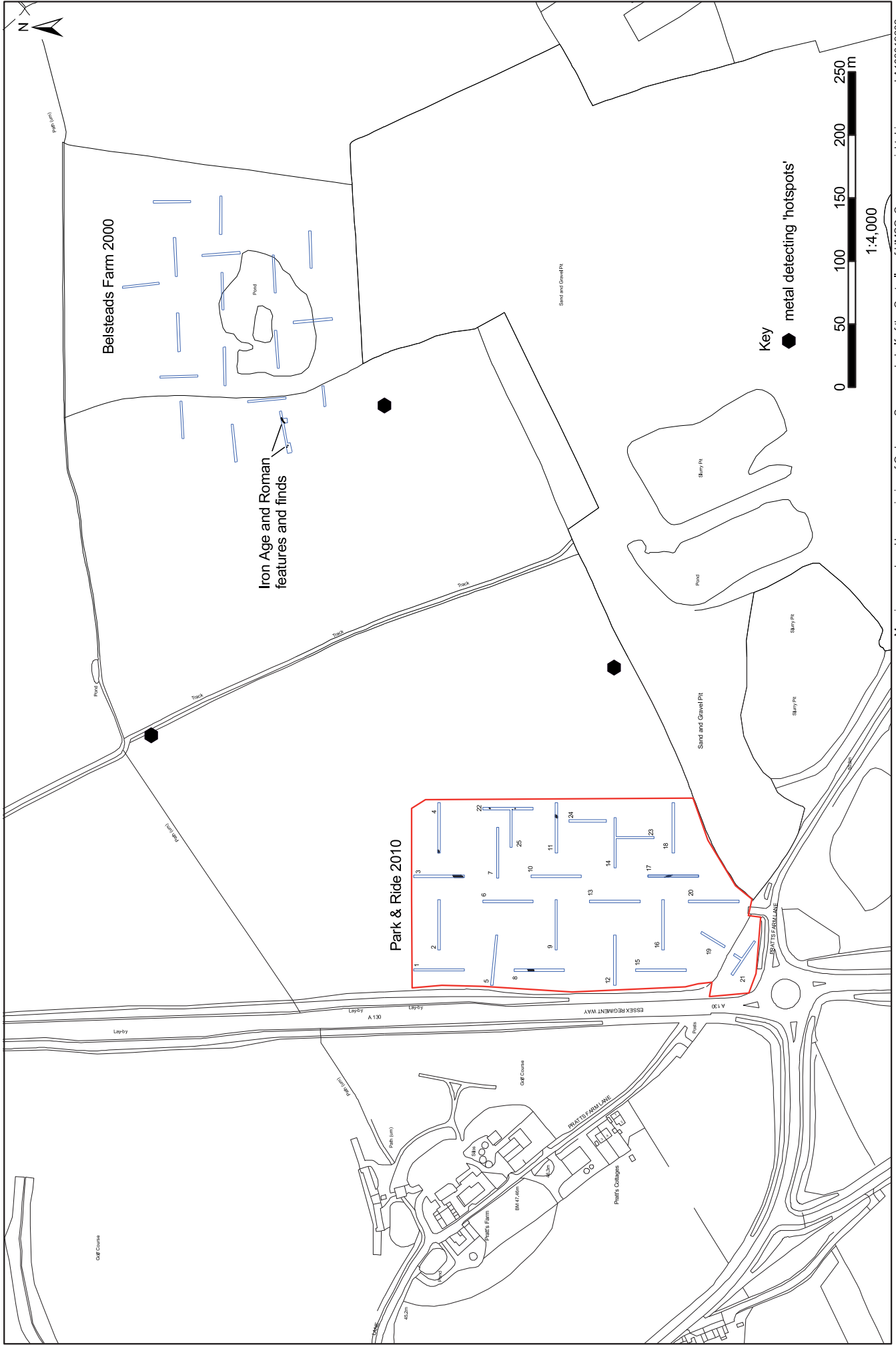
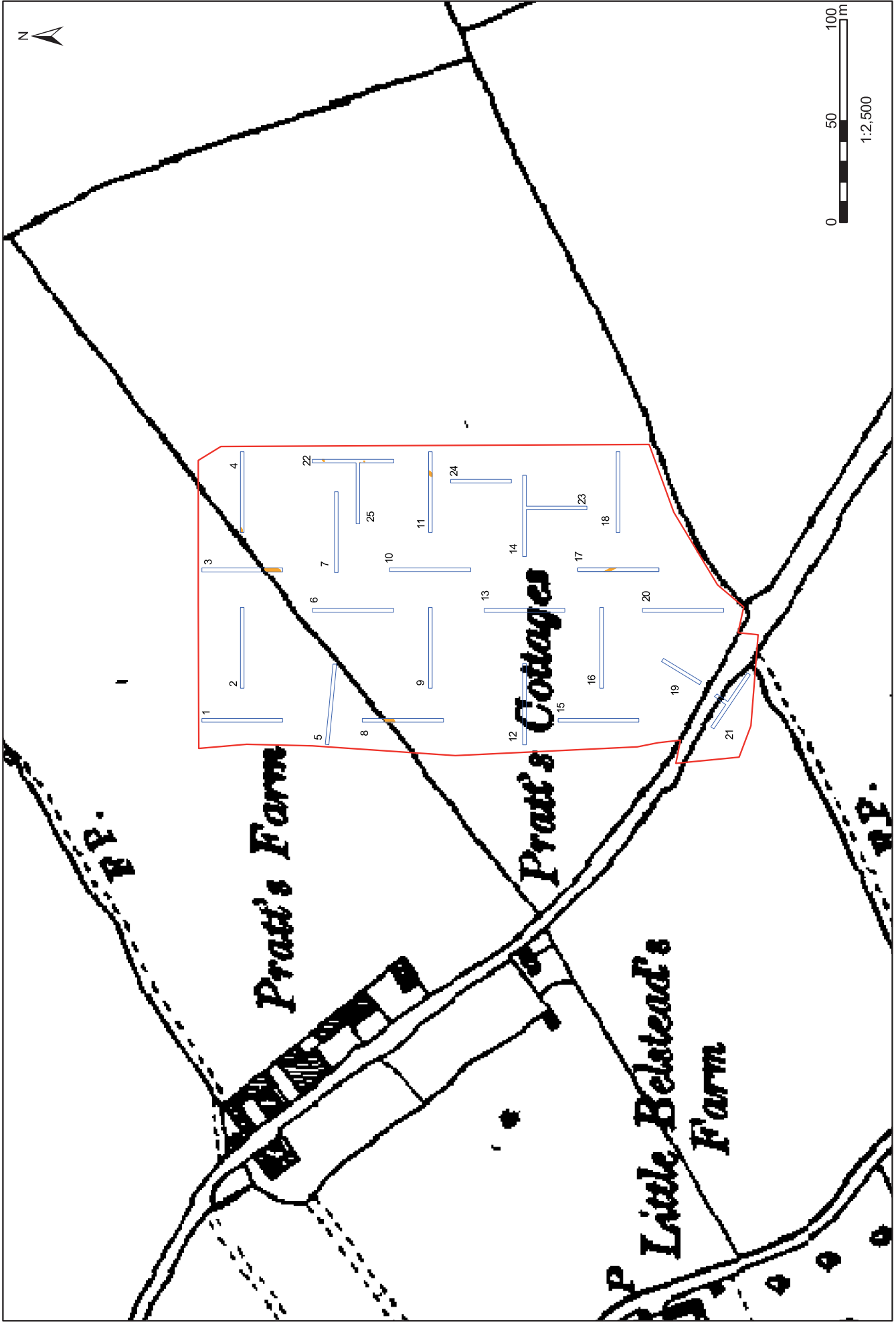


Fig.4 Trench 22



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Fig.5. Park & Ride in relation to previous archaeological work



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Fig.6. Trench location plan with 3rd edition Ordnance Survey (1915-1924)



Plate 1. Trench 20, looking north



Plate 2. Ditch 11, Trench 8, looking south



Plate 3. Ditch 3, Trench 11, looking north



Plate 4. Ditch 9, Trench 17, looking south-east



Plate 5. Trench 22, looking north