

**ALL-WEATHER MANEGE,  
THE BRITISH RACING SCHOOL, SNAILWELL ROAD,  
NEWMARKET, CAMBRIDGESHIRE:  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**ECB 3365**



**Essex County Council**

**FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT  
May 2010**



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SNAILWELL ROAD  
NEWMARKET  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**SUMMARY**

Client: KWA Architects acting for The British Racing School  
FAU Project No.: 2218  
NGR: TL 6500 6585  
Planning Application No.: 10/00049/FUL  
Site Code: ECB3365  
Date of Fieldwork: 04/05/10 – 06/05/10

*An archaeological evaluation comprising four trenches was conducted prior to the construction of an all-weather manege at the British Racing School, Newmarket. The site is located immediately to the west and south-west of the Snailwell Barrows- a group of ten late Neolithic to early Bronze Age barrows (MCB 12063 Taylor 1981), elements of which were excavated in 1939 prior to the construction of RAF Snailwell.*

*A large number of tree boles and natural depressions were present in all of the trenches but no archaeological features were identified, although one sherd of undiagnostic Saxon? pottery was recovered from trench 1.*

*Accordingly the development is unlikely to have any impact upon the archaeological and no further work will be required.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This report presents the results of a programme of archaeological trial trenching at the British Racing School (TL 6500 6585), conducted by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) prior to the construction of a new all-weather manege. The fieldwork was undertaken in response to a condition (10/00049/FUL) placed upon the development by East Cambridgeshire District Council following advice from Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning & Countryside Advice (CAPCA), given in line with Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (DoE 1990), now replaced by Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment. The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with a brief issued by CAPCA (2010) and a written scheme of investigation provided by ECC FAU (2010), and was monitored by CAPCA on behalf of the local planning authority.

Bound and digital copies of this report will be supplied to KWA Architects acting for the British Racing School (including a copy for the Local Planning Authority), CAPCA and the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record. A digital copy of the report will be uploaded on the online access to the index of archaeological investigations ([www.oasis.ac.uk](http://www.oasis.ac.uk)). The site archive and copies of the report will be deposited at the Cambridgeshire County Store.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Location, Geology and Topography** (Figures 1 and 2)

The British Racing School (NGR TL 6500 6585) is sited c. 1.5km to the north-east of Newmarket and 1.8m to the south-south-east of Snailwell village. The site is located to the immediate west of a group of late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age barrows known as the Snailwell Barrows and is situated on land formerly part of the World War II airfield RAF Snailwell. The site sits on a geological deposit of Holywell Chalk at an average height of 24m AOD. The trial trenches were located within the area of the proposed manege and associated access track.

### **2.2 History and Archaeology**

Prehistoric activity is well attested along the south-eastern Cambridgeshire chalk uplands (Taylor 1981) and a series of Late Beaker period barrows are documented at, and in the vicinity of, the site (Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) MCB12063; Taylor 1981). An excavation in 1939 at RAF Snailwell investigated a group of ten barrows during levelling prior to the airfield construction. Several burials and cremations were identified. The barrows date from the Beaker



Period while 18 cremations within one of the barrows represents Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age activity, c. 600 B.C (English Heritage Monument No. 377320).

A map of c. 1800 shows that the site formed part of an open field named 'Newmarket Field' (Wareham and Wright 2002) and the site remained free of development until the construction of the former RAF airfield when the site was levelled.

### **3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **3.1 Aims**

The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits and to preserve any archaeological features or deposits affected by the construction of the new manege.

#### **3.2 Objectives**

The specific objectives of the evaluation were to:

- assess the amount of truncation to buried deposits;
- implement an appropriate environmental and soil sampling strategy;
- assess the potential of the site to yield fish and small mammal bones;
- provide a predictive model of surviving archaeological remains detailing zones of relative importance against the development proposals.

### **4.0 METHOD**

The site was investigated by four trial trenches totalling 150m<sup>2</sup>, 4% of the total development area (Fig. 1). The topsoil and subsoil were stripped using a tracked excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. All identifiable archaeological deposits were investigated and recorded.

The archaeological fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (IFA 1999) and the Association of Local Government Officers' *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003). The ECC FAU uses its own recording system (ECC FAU 2006).

## **5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS** (Appendix 1)

### **5.1 Trench 1** (Fig. 2, Plate 1)

Dimensions: 20m x 1.8m x 0.65m

Alignment: North-west to south-east

mAOD: 23.956

Trench 1 was located parallel to the northern site boundary. Two large natural depressions (features 3 and 8) covered the majority of the trench and contained very similar fills. One small body sherd of Saxon? pottery (see section 6) was recovered from feature 3. The natural features extended beyond the south-western trench edge and though no relationship between the two could be identified the similarity in fill indicates the features were infilled at the same time.

### **5.2 Trench 2** (Fig. 1, Plate 2)

Dimensions: 15m x 1.8m x 0.32m

Alignment: North-east to south-west

mAOD: 24.106

Trench 2 was located to the south of Trench 1 and contained no archaeological features or finds.

### **5.3 Trench 3** (Fig. 3, Plate 3)

Dimensions: 20m x 1.8m x 0.37m

Alignment: North-west to south-east

mAOD: 24.261

Trench 3 was located to the south of Trench 2. Several natural features or depressions were excavated and recorded in plan, none yielded any finds. One undated pit (5) was present along the south-western trench edge in the centre of the trench (Plate 4). The primary fill contained large flint nodules and comprised the only clayey deposit encountered on the site. The irregular shape in plan and lack of finds suggest that this was probably a tree bole.

### **5.4 Trench 4** (Fig. 4, Plate 5)

Dimensions: 15m x 1.8m x 0.58m

Alignment: North-east to south-west

mAOD: 24.736

Trench 4 contained several root channels, a tree bole and natural depressions. No archaeological features or finds were present.

## **6.0 FINDS**

By Joyce Compton

A single sherd of pottery was recovered. This comprises a body sherd in a sandy fabric with rounded and angular quartz inclusions. The sherd is difficult to date empirically, since there are no firm diagnostic features. On balance, however, a Saxon date is the most likely, although a later prehistoric date (perhaps Middle Iron Age) cannot be ruled out.

## **7.0 SOIL DEPOSIT MODEL**

Each trench was excavated down to the geological deposit of Holywell Chalk which was overlain by a mid brown orange silty sand subsoil (deposit 2). The subsoil contained no finds and varied in thickness considerably from trench to trench, with the deepest deposit present in trench 1 at an average of 0.33m, while trench 2 contained only a thin deposit with an average thickness of 0.10m. A grey brown silty sand topsoil (deposit 1) was present across the site at an average depth of 0.32m and yielded one piece of modern brick (not retained). The varied thickness of the subsoil across the site, coupled with the generally consistent depth of the topsoil, supports the documentary evidence that the site was levelled prior to the construction of the airfield.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION AND ASSESSMENT**

Archaeological trial trenching revealed no archaeological features and only one sherd of Saxon? pottery. The variant thickness of the subsoil suggests that it was truncated during levelling works prior to the construction of RAF Snailwell in the early 1940s. Despite the very close proximity of a series of Beaker period barrows it would appear that this area of the landscape was not impacted upon by the human population until the 1940s. The large number of natural depressions and tree boles indicates that the land was formerly scrub – none of the features were deep, indicating an absence of mature trees. Nearly all of the natural features were infilled with the subsoil deposit.

The lack of archaeological features is indicative that the development will not have a significant impact upon the archaeological record and future work in advance of, or during, construction is unlikely to be required.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ECC FAU would like to thank the British Racing School, in particular Mr. R. MacDonald, for commissioning and funding the archaeological investigation.

The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken by Phillippa Sparrow, Adrian Scruby and Andrew Lewsey. The finds were processed, analysed by and reported upon by Joyce Compton. The figures were drawn by Andrew Lewsey.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brown, N & Glazebrook, J.	2000	<i>Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties, 2. research agenda and strategy</i> , E. Anglian Archaeol. Occ. Paper <b>8</b>
Gurney, D.	2003	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> , E. Anglian Archaeol. Occ. Paper <b>14</b>
McConnell, D.	2010	<i>Brief for Archaeological Evaluation CAPCA</i>
Taylor, A.	1981	'Appendix II: The Barrows of Cambridgeshire' <i>The Barrows of East Anglia</i> East Ang. Archaeol. <b>12</b> 108-120
Wareham, A. F. and Wright, A. P. M.	2002	'Snailwell' <i>A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely: Volume 10 - Cheveley, Flendish, Staine and Staploe Hundreds (north-eastern Cambridgeshire)</i> 475-488

## APPENDIX 1: FIELDWORK DATA

All dimensions are given in metres.

Feature	Deposit	Category		Details
	1	Topsoil		Loose grey brown silty sand. Frequent flint stones and chalk. 0.3m thick across site.
	2	Subsoil		Firm mid brown orange silty sand with chalk flecks. 0.33m max thickness – varied across site.
3	4	Natural depression	9.84m+ x 1.7m+ x 0.25m. Shallow irregular natural depression, irregular base and edge.	Light grey brown orange silty sand with chalk large flints and rare flecks of charcoal. One sherd of pottery. Probably the same as natural depression 8.
5	6	Pit/tree bole	3.3m x 1.4m x 0.54m. Oval irregular shape, steeply sloping stepped edges.	Greyish brown silty clay upper fill. No finds.
	7			Orange brown silty clay and common large flint nodules. No finds.
8	9	Natural depression	5.06m+ x 1.58m+ x 0.07m. Very shallow and irregular.	Light grey brown orange silty sand with chalk large flints and rare flecks of charcoal. Probably the same as natural depression 3. No finds.

## APPENDIX 2: FINDS

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
4	3	1	6	Pottery; body sherd	?Saxon

## **APPENDIX 3: ARCHIVE INDEX**

### **ALL-WEATHER MANEGE, THE BRITISH RACING SCHOOL, SNAILWELL ROAD, NEWMARKET, CAMBRIDGESHIRE (ECB 3365)**

#### **Index to the Archive**

File containing:

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Brief for evaluation
- 1.2 WSI for evaluation

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

- 2.1 Evaluation report
- 2.2 Pottery report
- 2.3 1 sherd of pottery
- 2.4 CD Rom

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

- 3.1 Trench record sheets
- 3.2 Context record register
- 3.3 Original context records 1 - 9
- 3.4 Plans register
- 3.5 Sections register
- 3.6 Levels register
- 3.7 Photographic register
- 3.8 Photograph contact sheet
- 3.9 Research documents
- 3.10 Miscellaneous maps and plans

#### **Not in Files:**

Site Drawings (3 permatrace sheets)

## APPENDIX 4: OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

**OASIS ID: essexcou1-76829**

### Project details

Add or edit entries

Project name	New all-weather manege, the British Racing School, Snailwell Road, Newmarket, Cambridgeshire
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation comprising four trenches was conducted prior to the construction of an all-weather manege at the British Racing School, Newmarket. The site is located immediately to the west and south-west of the Snailwell Barrows- a group of ten late Neolithic to early Bronze Age barrows (MCB 12063 Taylor 1981), elements of which were excavated in 1939 prior to the construction of RAF Snailwell. A large number of tree boles and natural depressions were present in all of the trenches but no archaeological features were identified, although one sherd of undiagnostic Saxon? pottery was recovered from trench 1. Accordingly the development is unlikely to have any impact upon the archaeological and no further work will be required.
Project dates	Start: 04-05-2010 End: 06-05-2010
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	ECB3365 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	2218 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 15 - Other
Significant Finds	POTTERY Early Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Manege
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)
Status	Incomplete
Missing Fields	Monument type

### Project location

Add or edit entries

Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE SNAILWELL New all-weather manege, the British Racing School, Snailwell Road, Newmarket
Study area	150.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	NGR - TL 6500 6585 LL - 52.2655847303 0.418226830382 (decimal)

LL - 52 15 56 N 000 25 05 E (degrees)  
 Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 23.38m Max: 24.74m

Status Incomplete

**? Project creators** Add or edit entries

Name of Organisation Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit

Project brief originator Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (CAPCA)

Project design originator Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit

Project director/manager Adrian Scruby

Project supervisor Phillippa Sparrow

Type of sponsor/funding body Landowner/developer

Name of sponsor/funding body KWA Architects acting for The British Racing School

Status Incomplete

**? Project archives** Add or edit entries

Physical Archive recipient Cambridgeshire County Store

Physical Contents 'Ceramics'

Digital Archive recipient Cambridgeshire County Store

Digital Contents 'none'

Digital Media available 'Images raster / digital photography','Text'

Paper Archive recipient Cambridgeshire County Store

Paper Contents 'none'

Paper Media available 'Context sheet','Map','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Unpublished Text'

Status Incomplete

**? Project bibliography 1** Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript) ▼ Add or edit entries +

Title New All-weather Manege, The British Racing School, Snailwell Road, Newmarket, Cambridgeshire



Author(s)/Editor(s) Sparrow, P.

Other bibliographic details 2218\_rep

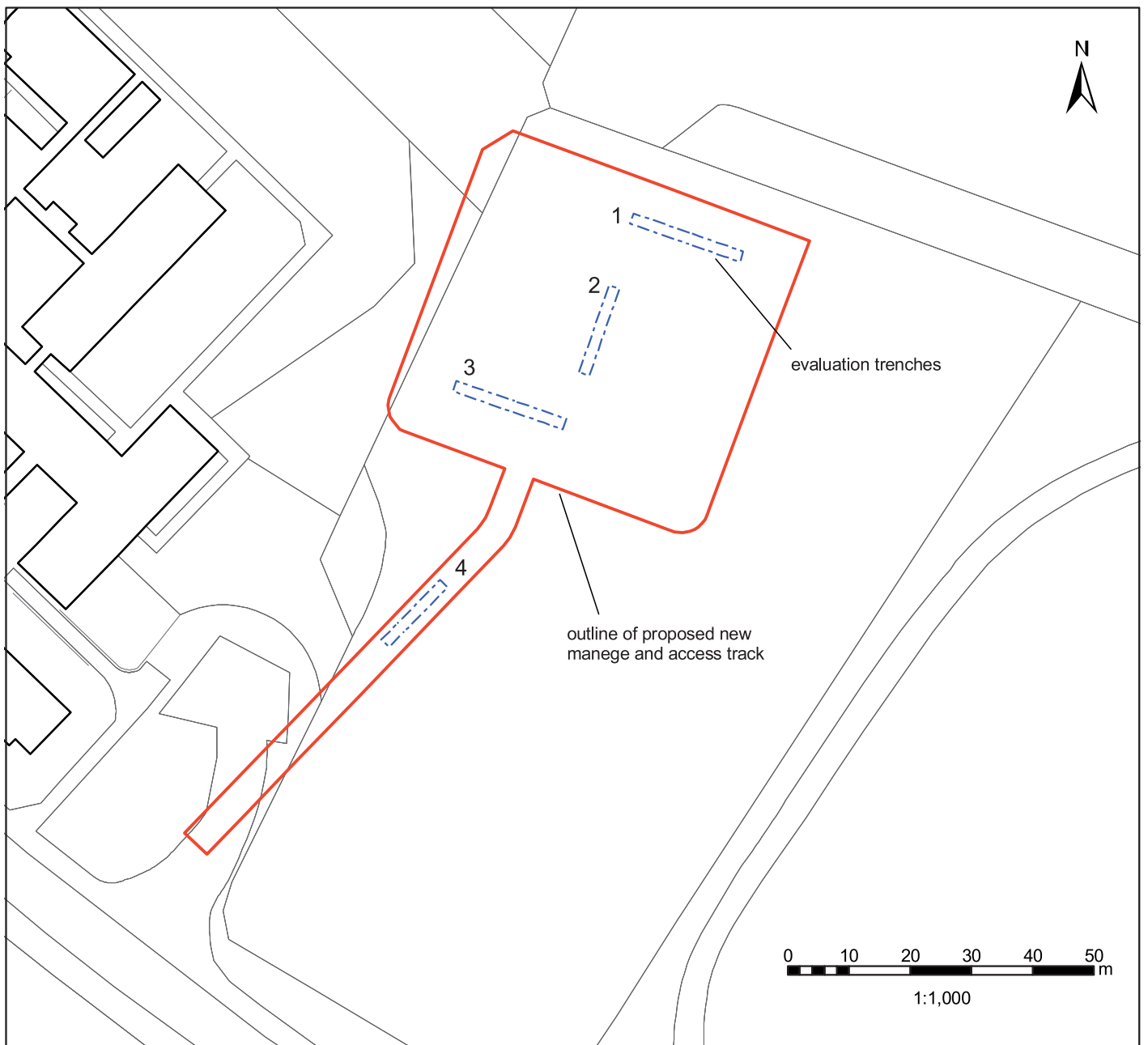
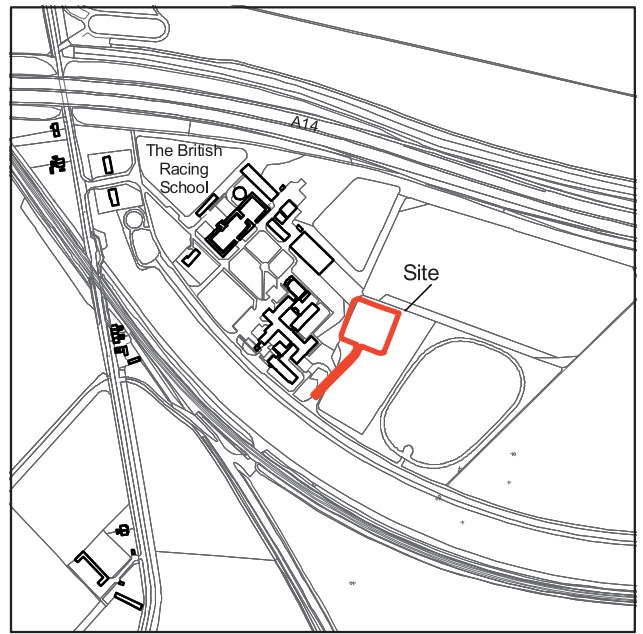
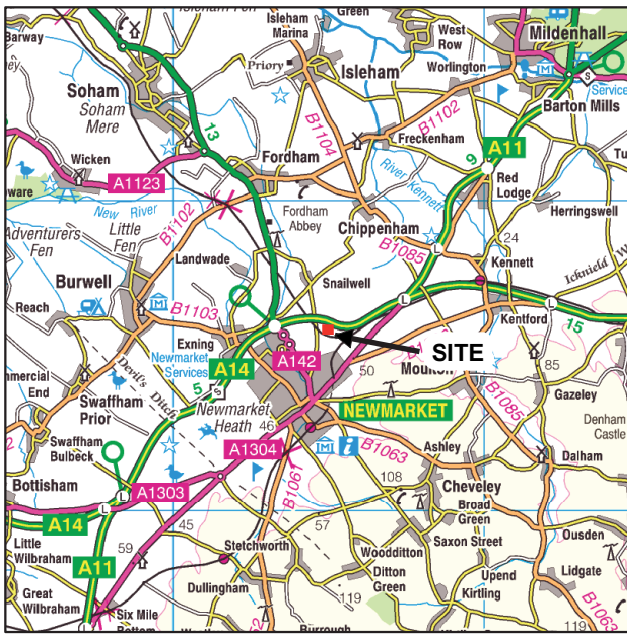
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Fig.1. Locations of archaeological evaluation trenches

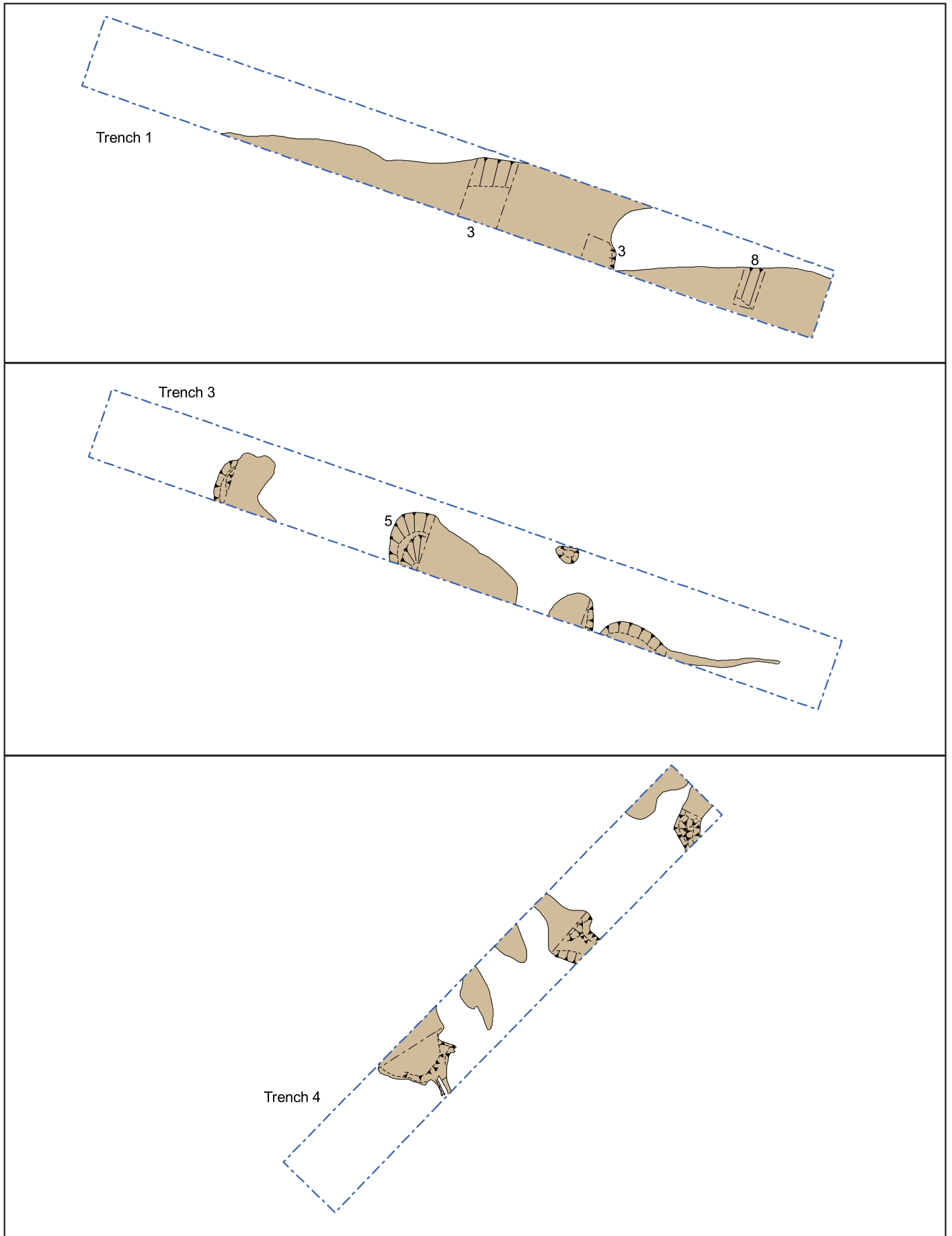
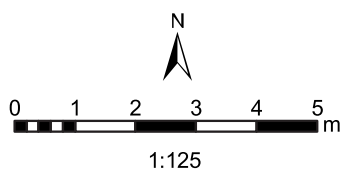


Fig.2. Trenches 1, 3, & 4

Key  
 natural feature



## Plates



Plate 1. Trench 1, looking north-west. 2m scale



Plate 2. Trench 2, looking north-east. 2m scale.

## Plates



Plate 3. Trench 3, looking south-east. 2m scale.



Plate 4. Pit 5, trench 3, looking south-east. 1m scale.

## Plates



Plate 5. Trench 4, looking west-south-west