

HERITAGE NETWORK



**10 NORTHBRIDGE STREET
Shefford, Beds.**

HN454

Archaeological Evaluation Report



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

Land to the rear of
10 NORTHBRIDGE STREET
Shefford, Beds.

HN454

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Prepared on behalf of Lauren Homes Ltd

by

Chris Turner, BSc and Geoff Saunders, BA

Report No.229

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Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Karin Semmelmann, Chris Turner, Geoff Saunders, and David Kaye. Illustrations were prepared by Karin Semmelmann and Chris Turner, and the report was edited by David Hillelson.

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Summary

Site name and address:	Land to the rear of 10 Northbridge Street, Shefford, Bedfordshire		
County:	Bedfordshire	District:	Mid Bedfordshire
Village/town:	Shefford	Parish:	Shefford
Planning reference:	03/1160	NGR:	TL 1438 3920
Client name and address:	Lauren Homes Ltd, 'Chequers', 28 New Road, Clifton, Shefford, Bedfordshire		
Nature of work:	New Dwellings	Present land use:	Former Laundry
Size of affected area:	c.1225m ²	Size of area investigated:	c.102m ²
Site Code:	HN454	Other reference:	N/a
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Type of work:	Evaluation	Archive location:	Bedford Museum
Start of work	16 th March 2004	Finish of work	26 th March 2004
Related SMR Nos.:	N/a	Periods represented:	Med/post-med/modern
Previous summaries/reports:	N/a		

Synopsis: In response to an archaeological condition on the planning permission for four new dwellings on land to the rear of 10 Northbridge Street, Shefford, Bedfordshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned by Lauren Homes Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation of the site.

Four trial trenches were opened across the proposed development area. These demonstrated that the site lay within the flood plain of the rivers Flit and Ivel. All the trenches were waterlogged at the lower levels, and the stratigraphy was indicative of repeated flooding.

Despite the presence of Roman activity in the vicinity of the site, no evidence dating to this period was identified in the course of the evaluation. Artefacts dating to the 12th-14th century were found on the site, but their density and the nature of their deposition, suggests that the centre of medieval activity lay outside of the boundaries of the site.

A post setting made up from interlaced cattle horn cores and a horse mandible was uncovered on the eastern side of the site. This would have been intended as a good luck charm placed in or near to a building foundation, probably of late post-medieval date.

It is likely that the focus of early settlement, as today, lay on higher ground to the north and west of the present site and outside of the flood plain formed by the confluence of the two rivers.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of *Lauren Homes Ltd* as part of an archaeological evaluation of a proposed development on land to the rear of 10 Northbridge Street, Shefford, Bedfordshire. The planning permission for the development (ref. 03/1160) controlled by the Mid Beds District Council, had been granted subject to a standard archaeological condition requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, in accordance with the provisions of the DETR's *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16). The scope of the works had been set out in a *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Investigation* and a *Brief for an Archaeological Field Evaluation* both dated 9th February 2004 and prepared by the County Archaeological Officer (CAO) of Bedfordshire County Council, acting as adviser to the planning authority. The specification for the work carried out is contained in the Heritage Network's approved *Project Design* dated February 2004.

1.2 The site is located on the east side of Northbridge Street, close to the junction with the High Street, and just to the west of the confluence of the rivers Ivel and Flit, centred on NGR TL 1438 3920 (see Figure 1). The frontage of the site is occupied by a listed building (no.10 Northbridge Street) which is to be retained. The rear of the site was occupied by the former Shefford Hand Laundry which was demolished prior to the works starting. The development proposes the construction of four dwellings with gardens, in a terrace of three and one detached. The existing access will be retained with some alterations. The area affected by the development is approximately 1225m² in size including the access.

1.3 Lying in the medieval core of Shefford, there was considered to be a high probability that remains of this date would be affected by the development. Roman activity has also been identified within 80m of the site.

1.4 The aim of the evaluation has been to consider the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any remains that may be threatened by the development, and to provide a local and regional, archaeological and historical context for them, in accordance with the current published regional research agenda (Glazebrook 1997, Brown and Glazebrook 2000).

1.5 The present report has been prepared to provide the planning authority with sufficient data to allow it to consider the archaeological implications of the proposed development, and to determine what further mitigation measures, if any, may be required.

2. Fieldwork

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 The site lies at c.38m AOD, on land which falls gradually to the north-east, towards the river Flit c.175m away.

2.2 The underlying geology is mixed reddish brown sand and gravel.

METHODOLOGY

3.2 During machining, Trenches 3 and 5 defined in the Project Design were conjoined to make one trench and recorded as Trench 3.

3.3 All other work was carried out in accordance with the approved *Project Design*, current health and safety guidelines, and IFA standards.

3.4 Trenches were set out using fibreglass tape measures by triangulation from known points.

3.5 Four trenches were opened using a 2-tonne tracked 360° mini-excavator fitted with a 1.5m wide toothless bucket, under close archaeological supervision (see Figure 2). Spoil from the machining was inspected for archaeological artefacts.

3.6 The trenches were machined in two stages:

- Stage 1: the trenches were machined to the first significant archaeological horizon where features were clearly visible cut through floodplain deposits (see Figure 3).
- Stage 2: further machining was carried out through the floodplain deposits in order to identify any possible earlier horizons of activity (see Figure 4).

3.7 The trenches were cleaned by hand, and within limits of health and safety regulations all potential archaeological features and deposits were sampled to ascertain their nature, depth, date, and quality of preservation.

3.8 All identified contexts were photographed and recorded using the appropriate pro-forma. Scaled plans and sections were drawn on drafting film at scales of 1:10 and 1:20.

3.9 Trenches were located relative to the plot boundaries using an electronic theodolite.

RESULTS

Site Stratigraphy

3.10 The stratigraphy across the site varied according to whether the trench was located on the inside or the outside of the footprint of the former Shefford Hand Laundry.

3.11 On the inside of the laundry footprint the stratigraphy consisted of a modern demolition layer of dark grey silt with frequent ceramic building material (CBM) fragments overlying mixed layers of redeposited natural sand. These layers of redeposited sand probably represent levelling layers put down prior to the construction of the laundry. Beneath the levelling deposits a layer of flood deposits was encountered below which lay the undisturbed natural formed of reddish brown sandy gravel.

3.12 On the outside of the laundry footprint the stratigraphy consisted of a modern demolition layer of dark grey silt with frequent CBM fragments overlying a layer of mid greyish brown sandy silt overburden. Beneath the overburden a dark grey sandy silt flood deposit was encountered below which lay a mottled greyish green sandy clayey silt which may represent an area of permanently waterlogged and marshy ground associated with the floodplain of the rivers Flit and Ivel. Beneath this lay the undisturbed natural formed of reddish brown sandy gravel.

Trench 1

3.13 Trench 1 was located across the southwest end of the proposed terrace of three dwellings and the new access route. The trench measured 1.70 x 15.45m, and 1.30m in depth, and was aligned northwest to southeast. The stratigraphy demonstrated extensive disturbance from the laundry building.

Stage 1 machining

3.14 Four possible features were identified during this phase (108, 101/109, 103, 110 and 111). In addition, a large levelling layer of redeposited sandy gravels from the construction of the laundry was exposed along the eastern baulk at this depth.

3.15 Features [110], [109/101] and [111] form a post-medieval soakaway, which may pre date the recently demolished laundry building.

3.16 Running across the trench was an indistinct linear of disturbed cobbles [108], approximately 0.60m wide. This may be the lower remains of a wall; pottery recovered from this feature suggests a medieval date. The presence of post-medieval/modern disturbance at this level in the trench indicates that any potential medieval remains on the site would have been truncated by later activity, particularly the construction of the laundry building.

3.17 Feature [103] was a small sub-circular post-medieval pit (see Figure 5a). Of all the features in Trench 1, only [103] was also observed following the second stage machining.

Stage 2 machining

3.18 Two features, [103] and [105], were encountered in the trench at this level.

3.19 Horncore, and fragments of CBM were recovered from the base of pit [103].

3.20 To the north of feature [103] was a small 'U' shaped gully [105], running across the trench (see Figure 5a). It is possible that this feature is a continuation of gully [203], identified in Trench 2.

Recorded contexts

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
101	Cut	Oval shaped cut feature with sloping sides and a flat base, aligned northwest to southeast. Small post-medieval pit (same as [109])	Length: 0.66m Width: 0.41m Depth: 0.10m
102	Fill	Mixed rubble infill, with brick and clay pipe, of post-medieval pit. Fill of [101].	Length: 0.66m Width: 0.41m Depth: 0.10m
103	Cut	Sub-circular cut feature with steep concave sides and a slightly rounded base, aligned north to south. Small pit.	Length: 0.58m Width: 0.48m Depth: 0.17m
104	Fill	Fill of [103], contained frequent fragments of horn core.	Length: 0.58m Width: 0.48m Depth: 0.17m
105	Cut	Cut of linear feature, with concave sides and a rounded base, aligned northeast to southwest. Shallow gully.	Length: 1.70m+ Width: 0.43m Depth: 0.22m
106	Fill	Secondary fill of shallow gully [105]	Length: 1.70m+ Width: 0.43m Depth: 0.18m
107	Fill	Primary fill of shallow gully [105]	Length: 0.51m+ Width: 0.21m Depth: 0.04m
108	Structure	Loose alignment of rounded cobbles, may represent the remains of a wall.	Length: 1.70m+ Width: 0.60m
109	Feature	Same as [101]	Length: 0.66m Width: 0.41m Depth: 0.10m
110	Feature	Unexcavated sub-circular feature of mid brown clay.	Diameter: 1.10m
111	Feature	Unexcavated indistinct linear feature of light green silty clay aligned north to south. Appears to run into [110], probable drainage gully running into a soakaway.	Width: 0.45m
112	Layer	Dark grey silt and CBM rubble. Demolition layer.	0.15m thick
113	Layer	Redeposited yellowish brown sand. Levelling layer.	0.30m thick
114	Layer	Redeposited reddish brown compact sand with flat stones. Levelling layer.	0.50m thick
115	Layer	Mid grey clayey sandy silt with sub-rounded stones.	0.30m thick
116	Layer	Dark grey sandy silt with frequent CBM inclusions.	0.70m thick
117	Layer	Mid grey sandy silt. Flood deposit.	0.60m thick
118	Layer	Reddish brown sandy gravel. Natural geology.	-

Trench 2

3.21 Trench 2 was located along the proposed new access road into the site. It measured 1.50 x 12.00m, was 1.30m in depth, and was aligned approximately north to south.

Stage 1 machining

3.22 One possible feature, [201], was identified during this stage (see Figure 5a). This was a sub-circular post-medieval pit, which was also observed following the second stage machining. Pottery recovered from this feature suggests an 18th century date.

Stage 2 machining

3.23 Three features, [201], [203] and [205], were encountered in the trench at this level.

3.24 Pit [201] was observed during the first stage machining.

3.25 A small gully [203] ran across the southern end of the trench and turned eastwards towards Trench 1 (see Figure 5a). This appears to be part of gully [105], observed in Trench 1. This type of gully may have provided simple drainage to a yard area. Alternatively it could demarcate a late medieval plot division, turning away from the waterlogged areas to the west.

3.26 A large square cut cess pit, [205], was recorded in the middle of this trench (see Figure 5b). The cess in this pit was sealed by fill (207). Two sherds of pottery suggest a medieval date for this feature. The depth of the pit and the high water table prevented the full excavation of this feature.

Recorded contexts

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
201	Cut	Sub-circular cut feature with steep sides undercutting in places and a flat base, aligned north to south. Small post-medieval pit.	Length: 0.80m Width: 0.70m Depth: 0.18m
202	Fill	Dark yellowish brown clayey sandy silt with CBM and flint inclusions. Fill of small pit [201].	Length: 0.80m Width: 0.70m Depth: 0.18m
203	Cut	Linear cut feature with moderately steep slightly concave sides and a slightly rounded base, aligned northwest to southeast, turning to run east to west. Possible natural channel.	Length: 1.30m+ Width: 0.49m Depth: 0.12m
204	Fill	Light brownish grey silty clay with frequent sub-rounded stones. Fill of [203].	Length: 1.30m+ Width: 0.49m Depth: 0.12m
205	Cut	Sub-square cut feature with very steep sides undercutting in places, aligned southwest to northeast. Cess pit.	Length: 2.40m+ Width: 1.20m+ Depth: 0.41m+
206	Fill	Greyish blue clayey silt with moderate angular flints. Cess fill of pit [205].	Length: 2.40m+ Width: 1.20m+ Depth: 0.38m+
207	Fill	Dark reddish brown silty sand with occasion angular stones. Upper fill of cess pit, probably laid down to seal	Length: 2.40m+ Width: 1.20m+

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
		the pit at the end of its use.	Depth: 0.11m
208	Layer	Dark grey silt and CBM rubble. Demolition layer.	0.30m thick
209	Layer	Redeposited reddish yellow sand. Levelling layer.	0.25m thick
210	Layer	Dark grey sandy silt with frequent CBM fragments.	0.40m thick
211	Layer	Dark grey sandy silt.	0.45m thick
212	Layer	Light to mid grey sandy silt. Flood deposit.	0.30m thick
213	Layer	Reddish brown sandy gravel. Natural geology.	-

Trench 3

3.27 Trench 3 was located to run along the axis of the proposed terrace of three new dwellings and across the parking area in the northeast corner of the site. The trench measured 1.50 x 25.30m, was 1.30m in depth, and was aligned southwest to northeast before turning to run approximately north to south.

3.28 Apart from 4m in the northeastern corner of the trench, the stratigraphy was highly disturbed by the footprint of the former laundry building.

Stage 1 machining

3.29 During this stage of machining four potential features were observed. All of them formed part of the post-medieval disturbance layers associated with the laundry building. The top of the animal bone in pit [301] was also observed at this level.

Stage 2 machining

3.30 Three features, [301], [303] and [305], were encountered in the trench at this level.

3.31 The trench was dominated by a large area of dark brown silty sand (304) within cut [303]. This area covered 9m of the trench's length and extended east and westwards beyond the trench sides. The location of this deposit coincides with disturbance caused by the footprint of the former laundry building and may represent runoff from the laundry's activities.

3.32 The edges of pit [301] were poorly defined, but it was cut into the fill of [303]. This feature contained a rough wooden post which was supported by a mesh of 13 horn cores and a horse mandible. The horn core was arranged in a cage formation with the mandible lying flat in the centre. Upon this was the fragment of oak post.

- Similar settings of horn cores in association with horse skulls have been documented elsewhere. They have generally been found placed at the corners of buildings, or beneath gateposts, as a good luck charm intended to ward off evil spirits.

3.33 A medieval cess pit [305] was excavated at the western end of trench. This feature was similar in nature to cess pit [205] in Trench 2. The main cess deposit (306) was sealed by brown clay silt (307). On the side of the pit, a dump of redeposited sandy natural (308), was observed. Late medieval green glazed pottery was recovered from the cess deposit.

Recorded contexts

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
301	Cut	Sub-circular cut feature with steep sides and a rounded base, aligned northwest to southeast. Small pit.	Length:0.80 M Width: 0.60m Depth: 0.35m
302	Fill	Dark greyish brown clayey silt, contained large amount of horn core, two complete jaw bones from a horse, and a large fragment of an oak post. Fill of pit [301].	Length:0.80 M+ Width: 0.60m Depth: 0.35m
303	Cut	Large cut feature of indeterminate shape, with steep straight sides.	Length: 1.24m+ Width: 1.08m+ Depth: 0.17m+
304	Fill	Dark brown silty sand. Upper fill of [303]	Length: 1.24m+ Width: 1.08m+ Depth: 0.17m+
305	Cut	Sub-circular cut feature with moderately steep concave sides, aligned northwest to southeast. Post-medieval cess pit.	Length: 1m+ Width: 1.10m Depth: 0.30m
306	Fill	Blue Grey cess fill of pit [305], sealing cess.	Length: 1m+ Width: 1.10m Depth: 0.30m+
307	Fill	Brown silty clay fill of pit [305].	Length: 1m+ Width: 1.10m Depth: 0.12m
308	Fill	Yellowish brown sand, fill of pit [305]. Redeposited natural.	Length: 1m+ Width: 1.10m Depth: 0.15m
309	Layer	Dark grey silt and CBM rubble. Demolition layer.	0.20m thick
310	Layer	Brown sandy silt with CBM fragments. Levelling layer.	0.30m thick
311	Layer	Dark grey sandy silt.	0.25m thick
312	Layer	Reddish brown sandy silt	0.33m thick
313	Layer	Grey sandy silt. Flood deposit.	0.35m thick
314	Fill	Redeposited natural sand. Fill of large cess pit [303].	Length: 8.20m+ Width: 1.60m+ Depth: 0.30m+
315	Fill	Mixed brownish grey sandy silt. Fill of large cess pit [303]	Length: 8.20m+ Width: 1.60m+ Depth: 0.60m+
316	Layer	Dark grey sandy silt with CBM fragments. Overburden	0.50m thick
317	Layer	Dark grey sandy silt. Overburden.	0.30m thick
318	Layer	Mid grey sandy silt. Flood deposit	0.55m thick
319	Layer	Reddish brown sandy gravel. Natural geology.	-

Trench 4

3.34 Trench 4 was located to run along the access of the proposed detached single dwelling in the south east corner of the site. The trench measured 1.50 x 13.20m, was 1.30m in depth, and was aligned approximately northeast to southwest.

3.35 The southeastern baulk of this trench showed undisturbed floodplain stratigraphy which was also observed in the northeastern end of Trench 3.

Stage 1 machining

3.36 A possible post-medieval pit, [403], was observed directly below the foundation line of the footprint of the former laundry building.

3.37 Unstratified medieval pottery was recovered from the flood deposits at the eastern end of this trench.

Stage 2 machining

3.38 Pit [403] was still visible in the trench at this level.

3.39 It is likely that gullies [401] and [402] may be part of the same feature with a patch of redeposited natural separating them. Nevertheless, both appear to relate to the large contamination deposit, (304), in Trench 3. It is likely that these two features represent drainage for that deposit.

Recorded contexts

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
401	Feature	Unexcavated linear feature, Mid greyish brown clay silt. (below water table making excavation impossible)	Length: 1.5m+
402	Feature	Unexcavated linear feature, Mid greyish brown clay silt. (below water table making excavation impossible).	Length: 1.5m+
403	Feature	Unexcavated sub-circular feature, reddish grey brown post medieval (below the water table making excavation impossible).	Length: 1m+ Width: 1.40m
404	Layer	Dark grey silt and CBM rubble. Demolition layer.	0.10m thick
405	Layer	Mid greyish brown sandy silt with CBM fragments. Overburden.	0.50m thick
406	Layer	Dark grey sandy silt. Flood deposit.	0.25m thick
407	Layer	Mottled greyish green sandy clayey silt. Possible former marshy ground.	0.30m thick
408	Layer	Reddish brown sandy gravel. Natural geology.	-

FINDS CONCORDANCE

Ctxt	Pottery		CBM		An.bone		Fe.object		Daub		Stone		Shell		Other*		Comments
	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	Comments
102			6	1020	27	185			2	2	1	10			4	15	*Clay Pipe
104	1	5	10	105	36	110			1	2	3	35	1	1			
106	1	20	2	95	1	2					3	155					
107											1	20					
108	2	4			1	15											
Tr1 U/S	3	95			9	440	2	20									
202	4	15	14	325	2	35			2	10	4	85	3	5			
206	2	35													8	210	*Wood
302	1	3	3	925	198	5845	1	10			1	320	1	5	1	1	*Charcoal
302															1	4715	*Wood
306	5	55	1	70											7	55	*Wood
307					2	45											
308					1	10									6	100	*Wood
Tr3 U/S	1	10			1	25	4	115							2	5	*Clay Pipe
Tr4 U/S	3	65													1	55	*Slag
Total	23	307	36	2540	278	6712	7	145	5	14	13	625	5	11	30	5156	

ARTEFACT ASSESSMENTS***Pottery***

3.40 A total of 23 sherds of pottery, weighing 307g, was recovered during the evaluation. The bulk of this material comprised undiagnostic greyware bodysherds of 12th to 14th century date, which were residual in later contexts.

3.41 A small number of other fabrics were represented, including four sherds of late medieval green-glazed ware from context (306) and two sherds of early medieval calcite-gritted ware from context (206).

3.42 Post-medieval pottery was surprisingly absent from the assemblage. Only two sherds that could be dated to this period were present, both from context (202). These comprised part of a small brown-glazed cup handle, of possible 18th century date, and an unglazed bodysherd that cannot be closely dated.

Recommendations

3.43 Although most of the pottery recovered from the present site dates to the medieval period, it was recovered from the fills of demonstrably later features. Given that this material is residual and comprises mostly undiagnostic bodysherds no further work is proposed on this assemblage.

Ceramic Building Materials

3.44 A total of 36 pieces of brick and tile, weighing 2540g, was recovered during the evaluation. The material varied between large unabraded pieces and smaller broken fragments.

3.45 The bulk of this material is represented by peg tile fragments of 18th-19th century date. A small number of early post-medieval tile fragments are also present, including 1 piece from context (306). Two large brick pieces were also recovered from context (101).

Recommendations

3.46 The present assemblage may have been imported on to the site as backfill for the pits. On this basis no further work is proposed on this material.

Iron Objects

3.47 A total of 7 iron objects, weighing 145g, was recovered during the evaluation. The only identifiable objects were three nails, two of which were unstratified in Trench 1 and one was from context (302) in feature [301].

Recommendations

3.48 Given the fragmentary nature of this material, no further work is proposed on this assemblage.

Daub

3.49 A total of 5 pieces of daub, weighing 14g, were recovered during the evaluation.

Recommendations

3.50 This assemblage consisted of tiny, abraded fragments, that could have been imported on to the site. On this basis no further work is proposed on this material.

Stone

3.51 A total of 13 pieces of stone, weighing 625g, were recovered during the evaluation. Much of the assemblage consists of unworked pieces of naturally occurring ironstone.

Recommendations

3.52 As the stone from the site consists of unworked fragments, no further work is proposed on this material.

Clay Pipe

3.53 A total of 6 pieces of clay pipe, weighing 20g, was recovered during the evaluation. The fragments, from fill (102) in pit [101], and unstratified in trench 3, were all stem fragments.

Recommendations

3.54 This material was represented by a small number of undiagnostic clay pipe stems. On this basis, no further work is proposed on this material.

ECOFACTS

Animal Bone

3.55 A total of 278 pieces of animal bone, weighing 6712g, were recovered during the present evaluation. The majority of the assemblage is made up of horn core, including both complete examples and broken fragments.

3.56 The lower mandible of horse and fragments of 13 bovine horn cores came from post pit [301]. The horn cores were arranged to cradle the mandible which was positioned flat supporting the wooden post fragment. Pit [103] contained the only other fragment horn core encountered on the site.

3.57 The rest of the bone assemblage was indicative of normal domestic rubbish with small quantities of butchered bovine rib, tarsal and sheep/goat long bones.

3.58 There was no indication of industrial processes utilising these species on site.

Recommendations

3.59 The assemblage is well preserved but fragmentary. On this basis no further work is proposed on this material.

Oyster Shell

3.60 A total of 5 fragments of oyster shell, weighing 11g, were recovered during the evaluation.

Recommendations

3.61 Oyster shell is common on urban sites of medieval and post-medieval date. Given the small size of this assemblage, no further work is proposed on this material.

Wood

3.62 A total of 22 pieces of wood, weighing 5080g, were recovered during the present evaluation.

3.63 A single piece, weighing 4715g, was recovered from fill (302) in pit [301]. This has been identified as part of an oak post, measuring 0.27m in length, 0.21m in width and 0.14m in depth. It appeared to have been cut on one side, but was broken on the other.

3.64 A number of smaller pieces were recovered from contexts (206), (306) and (308). Several of these appear to have been roughly worked and may have formed pegs. Two pieces

from context (308) had angled cuts at one end and one piece from (206) had a straight cut at one end.

Recommendations

3.65 Apart from the post setting in (302), most of this material appears to have been used as part of the backfill for the large cess pits, and therefore is out of context. On this basis no further work is proposed on this assemblage.

Charcoal

3.66 A single fragment of charcoal, weighing 1g, was recovered from fill (302) in feature [301] during the evaluation.

Recommendations

3.67 Given the small size of the assemblage no further work is proposed on this material.

4. Discussion

4.2 The site's location, close to the confluence of the rivers Ivel and Flit, raised the possibility that it might have provided a focus for commercial or trading activities associated with river transport. The evaluation has demonstrated that the site lay within the flood plain of the two rivers and no evidence was found for it having been built up, or for the construction of wooden walkways or wharves. All the trenches were waterlogged at the lower levels, and the stratigraphy was indicative of repeated flooding.

4.3 Despite the presence of Roman activity in the vicinity of the site, no evidence dating to this period was identified in the course of the evaluation.

4.4 Artefacts dating to the 12th-14th century were found on the site, but their density and the nature of their deposition, suggests that the centre of medieval activity lay outside of the boundaries of the present site. It is possible that these finds were washed onto to the site by river flooding and that they originated upstream.

4.5 The presence of post setting [302], with its connection to superstitious beliefs, suggests that there was a timber structure at the eastern end of the site that predated the laundry building. This would not be an unexpected location for a stable block, barn or outhouse, although no other traces of such a structure were observed, and the 1885 Ordnance Survey (6-inch series) is inconclusive.

4.6 It is likely that the focus of early settlement, as today, lay on higher ground to the north and west of the present site and outside of the flood plain formed by the confluence of the two rivers.

Conclusions

4.7 The archaeological evaluation has demonstrated that the site has been heavily disturbed by the former Shefford Hand Laundry and its associated drainage and services.

4.8 Finds of wooden pegs (tree-nails), and a ritual post setting suggest the presence of a timber framed building at the east end of the site, probably post-medieval in date, predating the recently demolished laundry building.

4.9 The site lies at the edge of the combined flood plain of the rivers Ivel and Flit and as such would have been unsuitable for settlement.

CONFIDENCE RATING

4.10 The weather during the course of the evaluation was poor with high rainfall. This combined with a high water table to cause flooding in the trial trenches and make archaeological investigation difficult. Despite these conditions, it is considered that an adequate opportunity was gained to assess the archaeological potential of the site, and the evaluation can be considered to have a moderate to high confidence rating.

5. Bibliography

Hillelson, D. 2004. *10 Northbridge Street, Shefford, Beds. Project Design: Archaeological Evaluation*. Heritage Network, February 2004.

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Ordnance Survey, 1885, County Series, 1st edition, 1: 10,560 (Courtesy Landmark Information Group Ltd.)

6. Illustrations

Figure 1 Site location

Figure 2 Trench layout

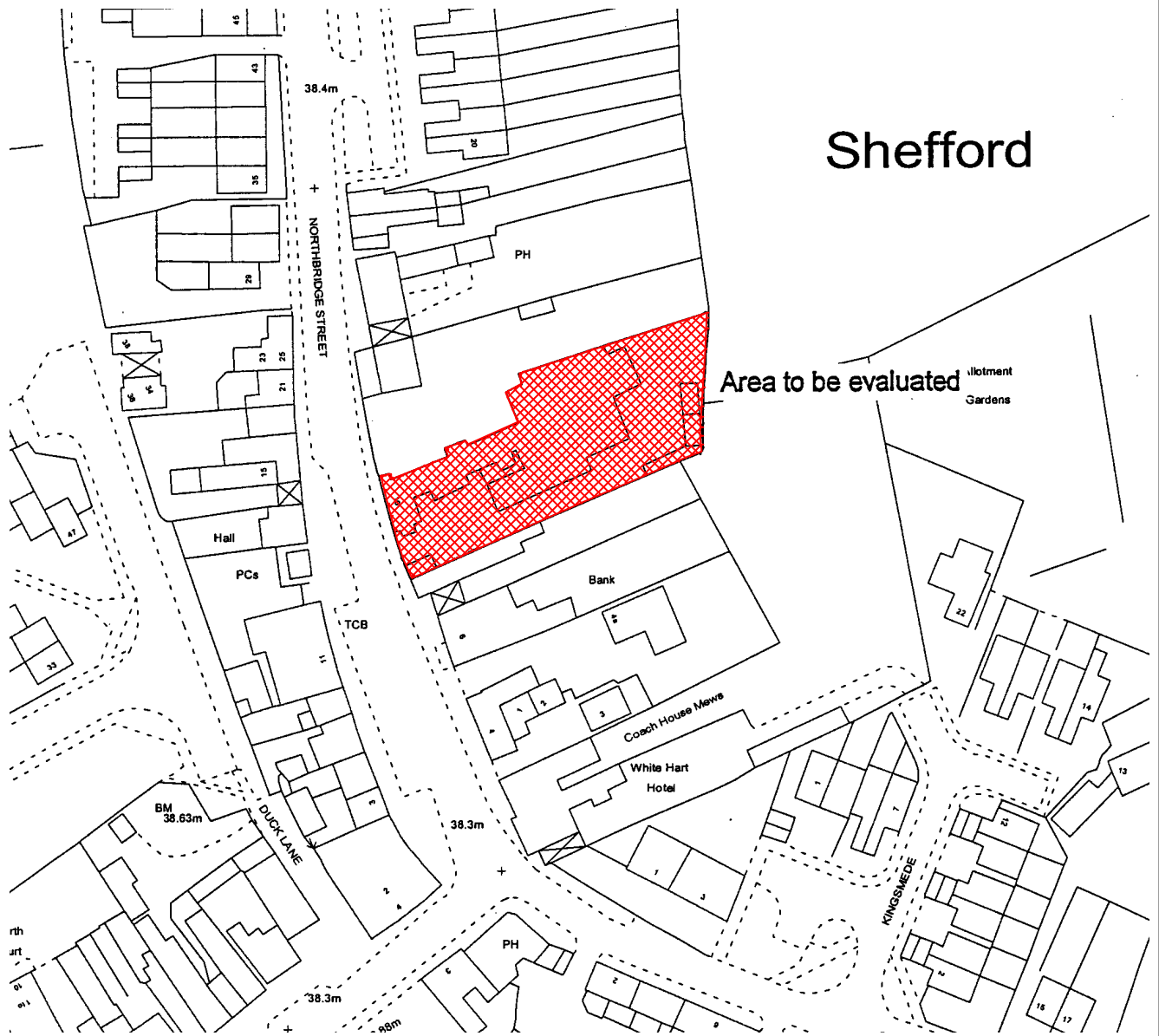
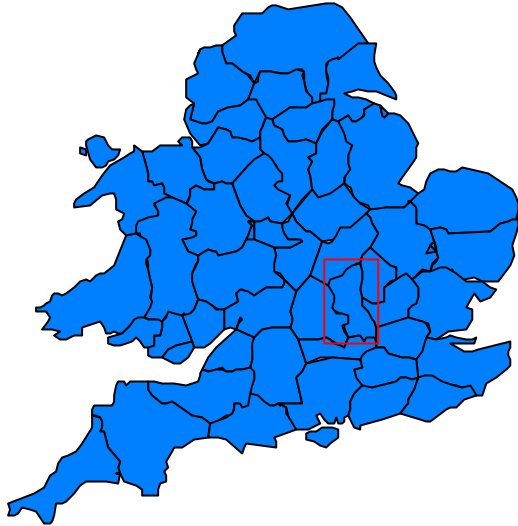
Figure 3First machined level

Figure 4 Second machined level

Figure 5a Plans and sections (1)

Figure 5b Plans and sections (2)

Figure 6 Trench profiles

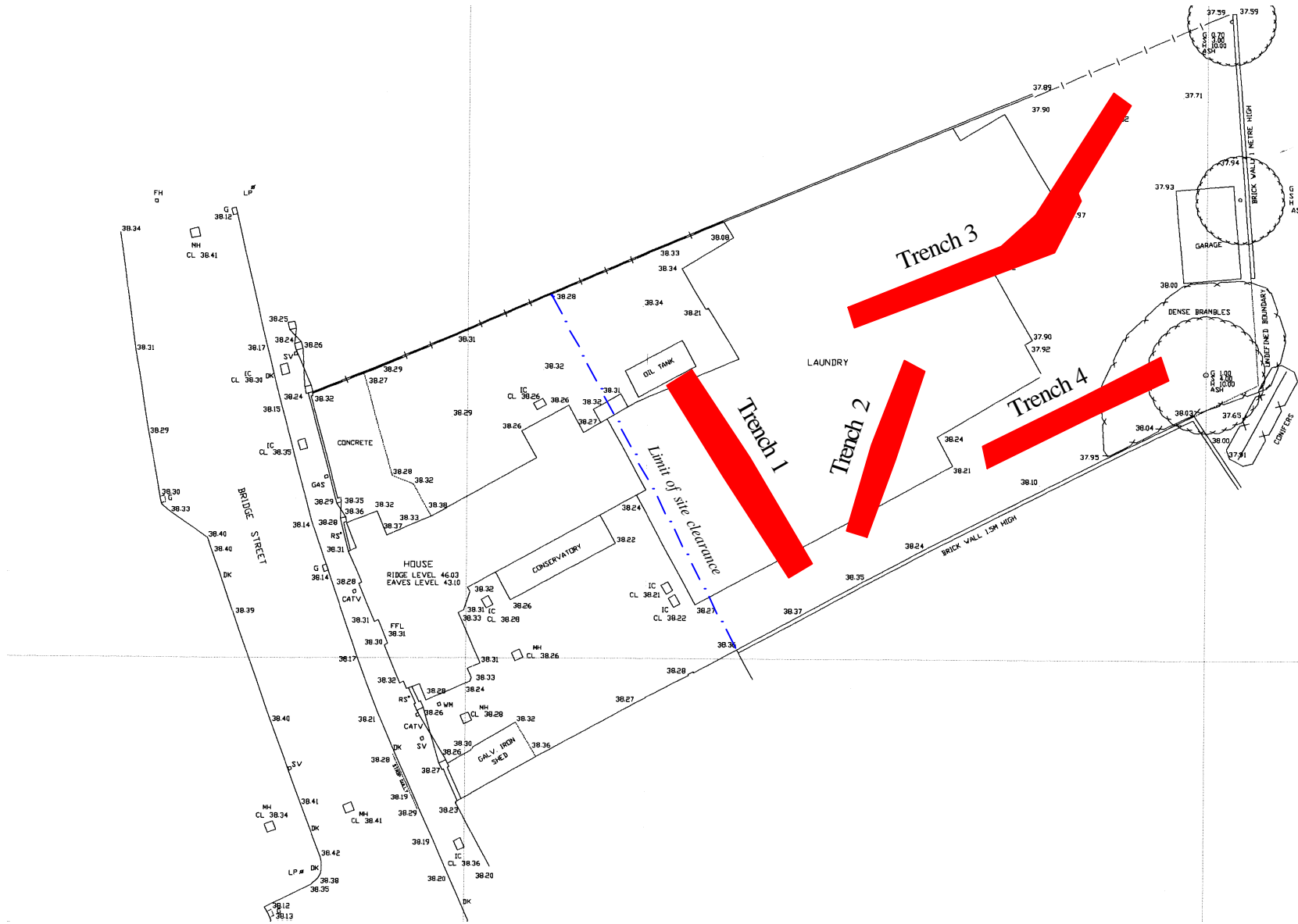


Site Location

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Scale 1:1250

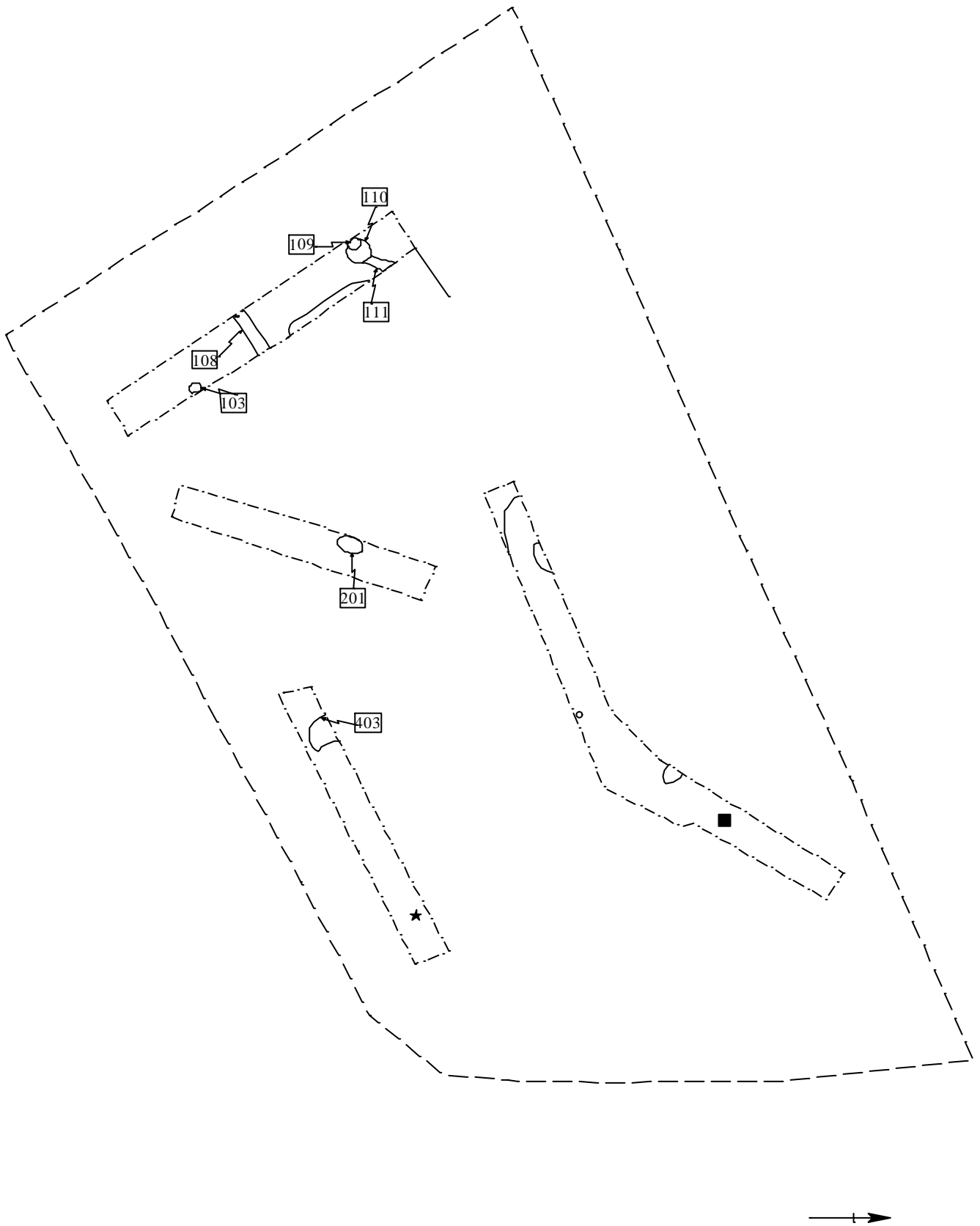
Figure 1



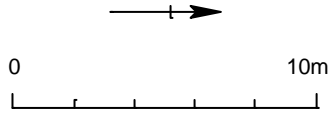
Trench layout

Scale 1:400

Figure 2



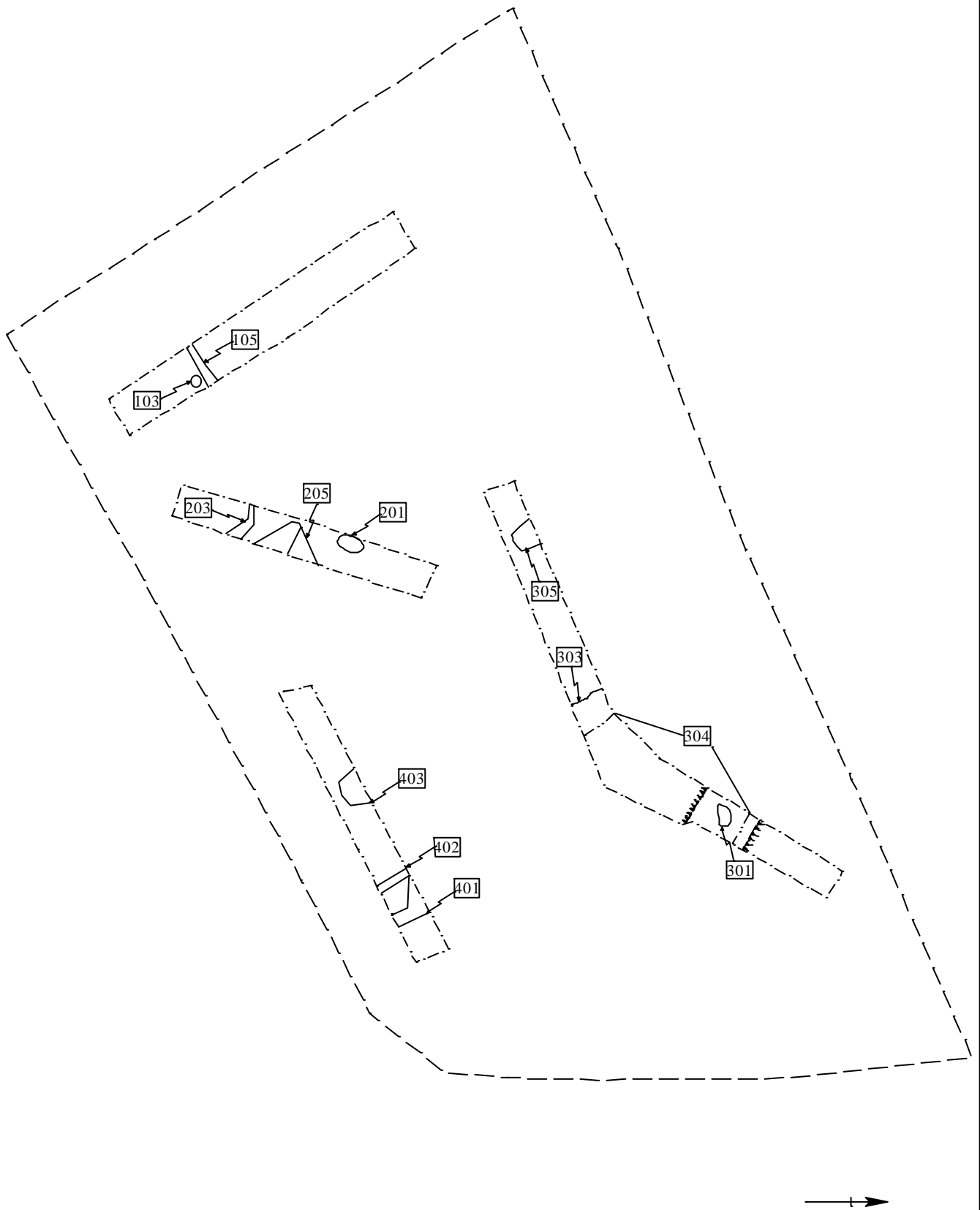
■ Animal bone
★ Pottery sherd



First machined level

Scale 1:250

Figure 3

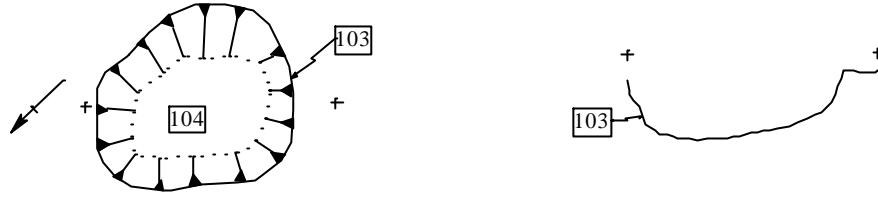


Second machined level

Scale 1:250

Figure 4

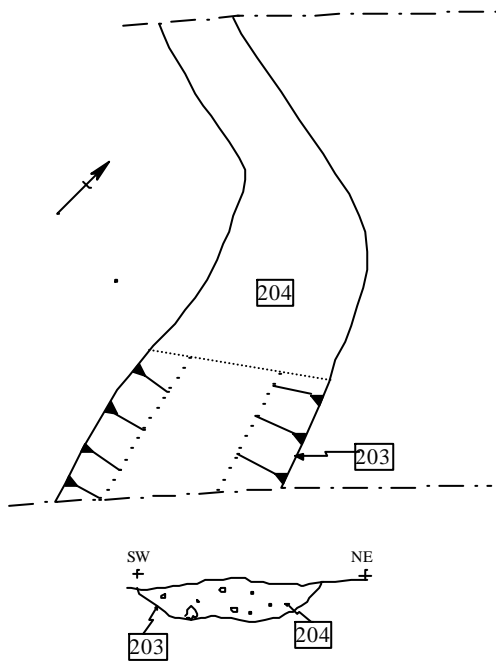
Plan & profile of [103]



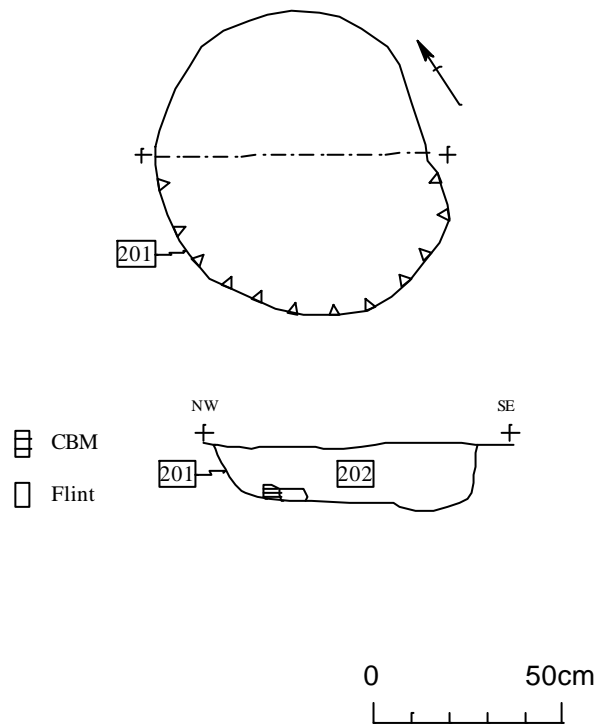
Plan & east facing section of [105]



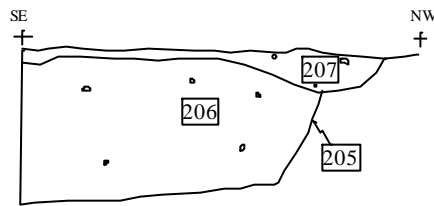
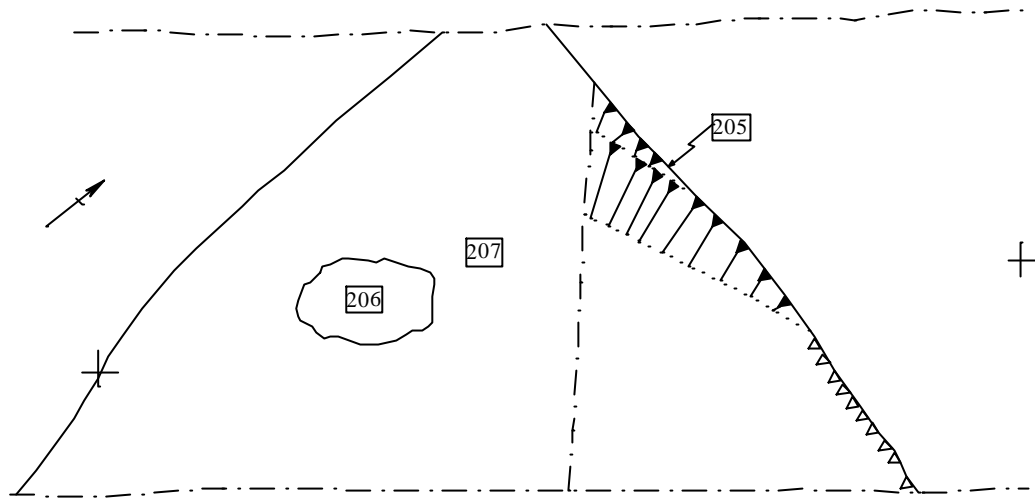
Plan & south-east facing section of [203]



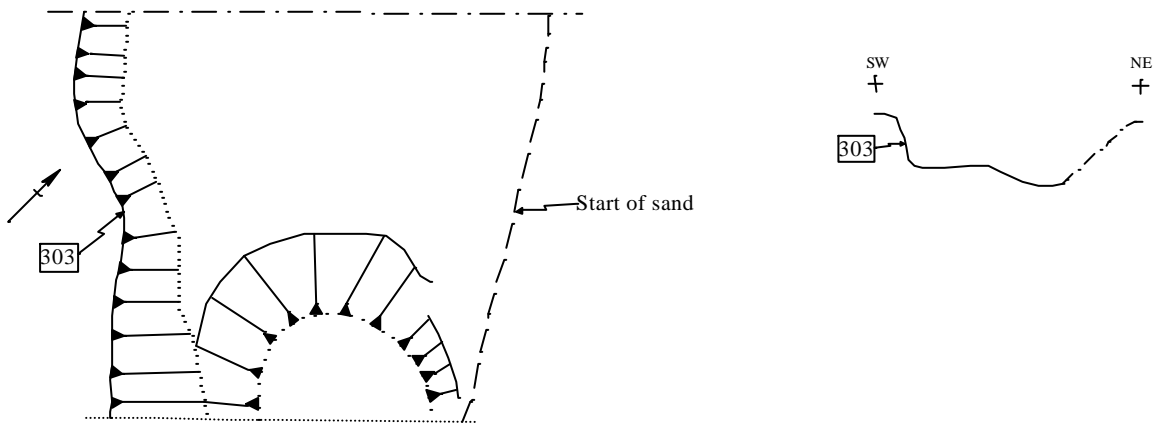
Plan & south-west facing section of [201]



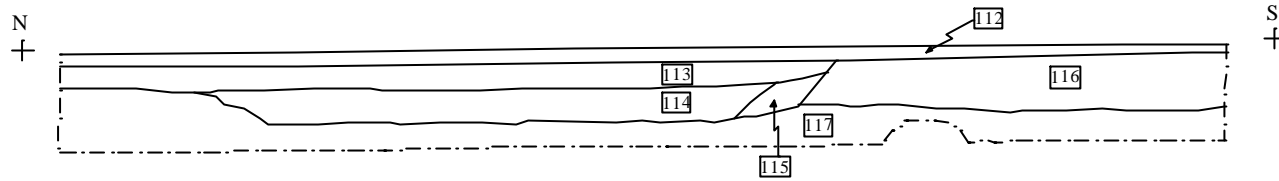
Plan & north-east facing section of [205]



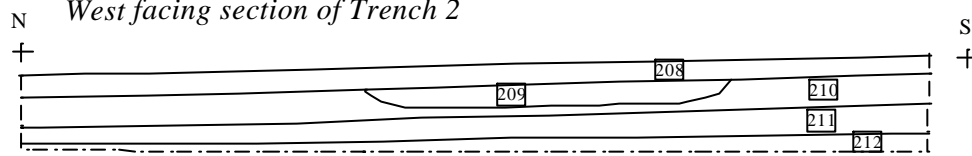
Plan & south-east facing section of [303]



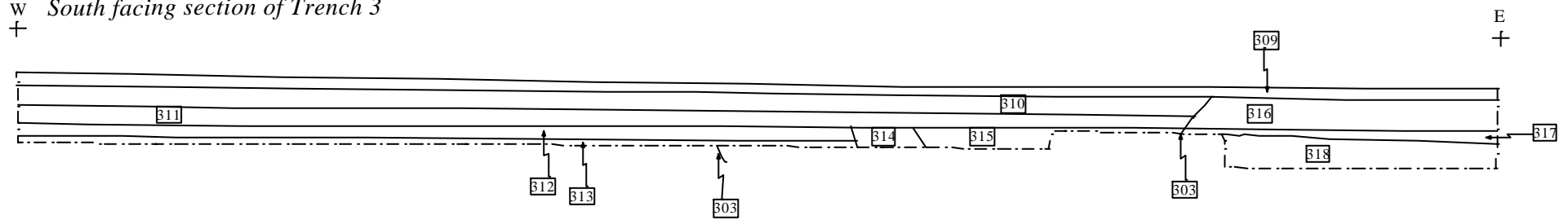
West facing section of Trench 1



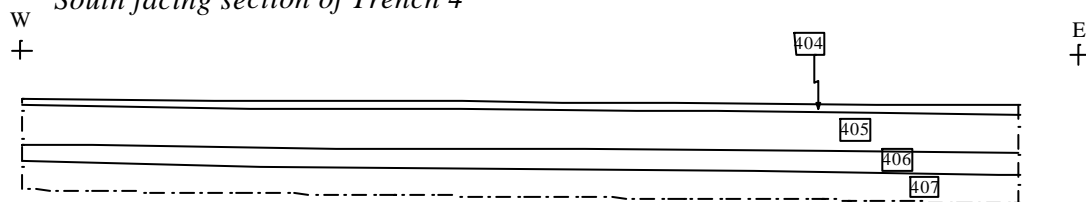
West facing section of Trench 2



South facing section of Trench 3



South facing section of Trench 4



Trench profiles

Scale 1:100

Figure 6