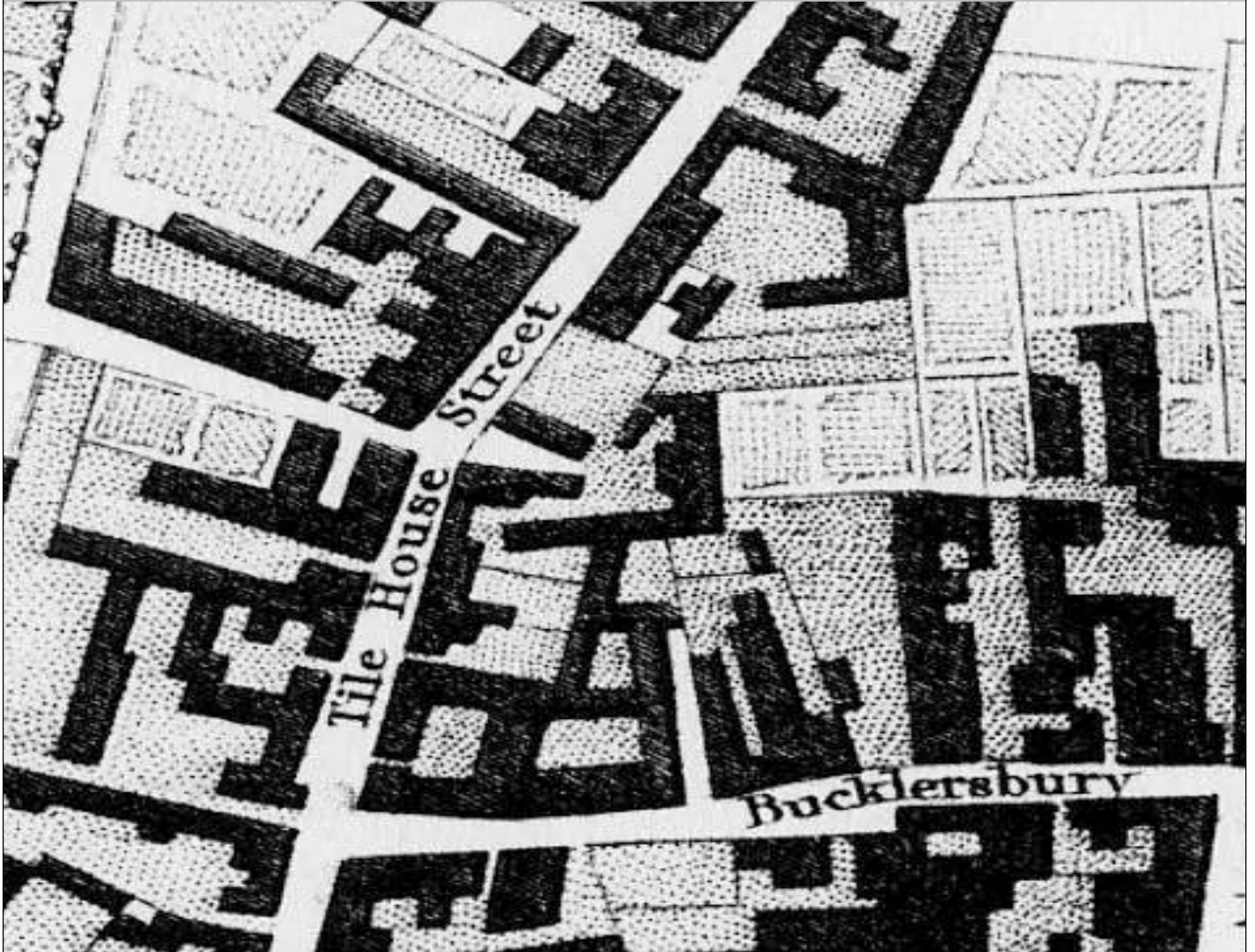


# HERITAGE NETWORK



**R/o 84 TILEHOUSE STREET  
Hitchin, Herts.**

HN487

*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  
84 TILEHOUSE STREET  
Hitchin, Herts.

HN487

*Archaeological Evaluation Report*

*Prepared on behalf of Lauren Homes Ltd*

*by*

Geoff Saunders, BA

Report No.253

*September 2004*

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*The cover illustration is an extract from the Map of Hitchin of 1820*

## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Mark Winter, and Geoff Saunders. Illustrations were prepared by David Kaye, and the report was edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Brendan Sherry, Lauren Homes Ltd; and Jonathan Smith, County Planning Archaeologist, Hertfordshire County Council, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

## Summary

<b>Site name and address:</b>	Land to the rear of 84 Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire		
<b>County:</b>	Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b>	North Hertfordshire
<b>Village/town:</b>	Hitchin	<b>Parish:</b>	Hitchin
<b>Planning reference:</b>	02/0322/1	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 18260 29020
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Lauren Homes Ltd, 19A High Street, Pulloxhill, Bedford		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	New Housing	<b>Present land use:</b>	Car park
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	c.500m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	c.15m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN487	<b>Other reference:</b>	n/a
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Type of work:</b>	Evaluation	<b>Archive location:</b>	NHDC Museums
<b>Start of work</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> August 2004	<b>Finish of work</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> August 2004
<b>Related SMR Nos.:</b>	N/a	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Post-medieval
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	N/a		

**Synopsis:** In order to determine the archaeological risk posed by a proposal for new development on land to the rear of 84 Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, the Heritage Network was commissioned by Lauren Homes Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation.

A single trial trench measuring 1.5 x 9.7m was excavated across the footprint of the new building. The natural geology of sandy silt and gravel was encountered at a depth of c.1.20-1.40m below the existing ground level. Two shallow postholes were observed cut into the natural in the northeast end of the trench, one of which yielded fragments of tile of late post-medieval date.

# 1. Introduction

**1.1** This report has been prepared on behalf of *Lauren Homes Ltd* as part of the archaeological evaluation of a proposed development site located on land to the rear of rear of 84 Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, Herts. Planning permission granted for the development by the North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) under application no. 02/0322/1, has been subject to a standard archaeological condition, in accordance with the provisions of the DETR's *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16). The scope of the required work has been agreed in discussion with the County Archaeological Office (CAO) of Hertfordshire County Council, acting as advisor to the planning authority, and a full specification was contained in the Heritage Network's approved Project Design dated August 2004.

**1.2** The site forms a yard area to the rear of nos. 84 and 85 Tilehouse Street, centred on NGR TL 18260 29020, and is currently used as a car park. The development proposes the construction of a terrace of four cottages. The property is currently open and under hard standing.

**1.3** Tilehouse Street lies on the south-western edge of Hitchin, within Archaeological Area 142 (AA142) as defined in Policy 16 of the District Local Plan. This defines the medieval borough of Hitchin and encompasses the medieval core of the town. The street forms the former main road leading from the centre of Hitchin to Luton. Archaeological remains of late prehistoric, Roman-British, Anglo-Saxon and medieval date have been recorded in the vicinity, and 84 Tilehouse Street is a Grade II listed building of 18<sup>th</sup> century date which has been grouped with its neighbours on either side.

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

**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 town lies in the centre of the Hitchin Gap, a glacially derived deep cutting. Hitchin lies in the bottom of the valley of the River Hiz, with the land rising on both the eastern and western sides of the river. The site lies at c.68.5m AOD on the west side of the river.

**2.2** The underlying geology is of firm, strong brown (7.5YR 4/6), sandy silt with gravel.

### **METHODOLOGY**

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

**2.4** The A single trench was set out by triangulation from known points (Fig.2). It was excavated using a 360<sup>0</sup> tracked mini-digger fitted with a 1.30m wide toothless bucket, under close archaeological supervision. Spoil from the machining was inspected for archaeological artefacts. The trench was machined to the first significant archaeological horizon.

**2.5** The trench was cleaned by hand, and all potential archaeological features and deposits were sampled to ascertain their nature, depth, date, and quality of preservation.

**2.6** 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 1:50.

**2.7** All levels were recorded relative to the benchmark on the front wall of 32 Tilehouse street, having a value of 73.07mAOD.

### **RESULTS**

**2.8** The trial trench was located inside the footprint of the proposed new building and was aligned northeast – southwest. The trench measured 1.5 x 9.70m and was a maximum of 1.40m in depth.

**2.9** The stratigraphy in the trench consisted of a modern layer of black tarmac over levelling aggregate. Beneath this was a layer of soft, very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2), sandy clay over a soft, dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2), clayey sand. This overlay a soft, very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2), sandy clay beneath which the natural geology of firm, strong brown (7.5YR 4/6), sandy silt with gravel was reached.

**2.10** Two features were observed in the northeast end of the trench: postholes [101] and [103].

**2.11** Posthole [101] was sub-circular in shape with shallow straight sides and a slightly rounded base. The feature had a diameter of 0.65m and a maximum depth of 0.05m. The single loose, brown (10YR 4/3), sandy silt fill yielded no datable artefacts.

**2.12** Posthole [103] was sub-ovoid in shape with shallow straight sides and an uneven base. The feature which ran beneath the southeast baulk measured at least 0.60m in length by 0.45m wide and had a maximum depth of 0.09m. The single firm, dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2), sandy clay fill yielded several fragments of late post-medieval peg tile.

#### *Recorded contexts*

<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions (m)</b>
101	Cut	Sub-circular cut feature with shallow straight sides and a slightly rounded base. Posthole.	Diameter: 0.65m Depth: 0.05m
102	Fill	Loose, brown (10YR 4/3), sandy silt. Fill of [101].	Diameter: 0.65m Depth: 0.05m
103	Cut	Sub-ovoid cut feature, running beneath southeast baulk, with shallow straight sides and an uneven base. Posthole.	Length: 0.60m+ Width: 0.45m Depth: 0.12m
104	Fill	Firm, dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2), sandy clay. Fill of [103].	Length: 0.60m+ Width: 0.45m Depth: 0.00m
105	Layer	Modern black tarmac, surface layer.	0.08m thick
106	Layer	Modern levelling aggregate for tarmac [105].	0.17m thick
107	Layer	Soft, very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2), sandy clay.	0.37m thick
108	Layer	Soft, dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2), clayey sand.	0.40m thick
109	Layer	Soft, very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2), sandy clay.	0.18m thick

#### ***FINDS CONCORDANCE***

**2.13** Although fragments of modern pottery and ceramic building material were observed in the overburden during machining and further late post-medieval tile fragments were observed in posthole [103], this material was not considered to be of archaeological significance and none was retained for further analysis.

### **3. Discussion**

**3.1** Despite the location of the site in an area of known archaeological potential, the evaluation of the site revealed only two cut features, a shallow undated posthole [101], and a late post-medieval posthole [103].

**3.2** The loose nature of the fill in posthole [101] suggests a modern date for this feature.

**3.3** The evaluation has demonstrated that the natural geology lies at 1.20 – 1.40m below the present ground surface.

#### ***Conclusions***

**3.4** The archaeological evaluation has demonstrated the presence of features of late post-medieval date on the site.

**3.5** No features of a medieval or earlier date were encountered, and no artefacts or ecofacts indicative of occupation prior to the late post-medieval period.

**3.6** On this basis, it is considered unlikely that any significant archaeological features or deposits would be disturbed by the proposed development.

#### ***CONFIDENCE RATING***

**3.7** In the course of the fieldwork weather and ground conditions were generally acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation.

**3.8** There are no circumstances which would lead to a confidence rating for the present evaluation which is less than High.

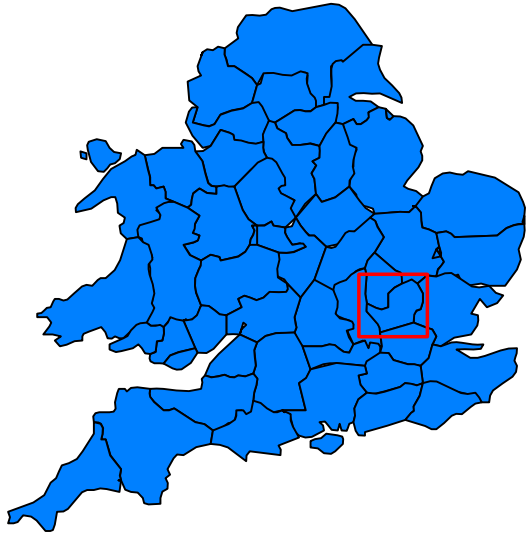
## 4. Bibliography

Hillelson, D. 2004. *Land to the rear of 84 Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, Herts. Project Design: Archaeological Evaluation*. Heritage Network, August 2004.

## 5. Illustrations

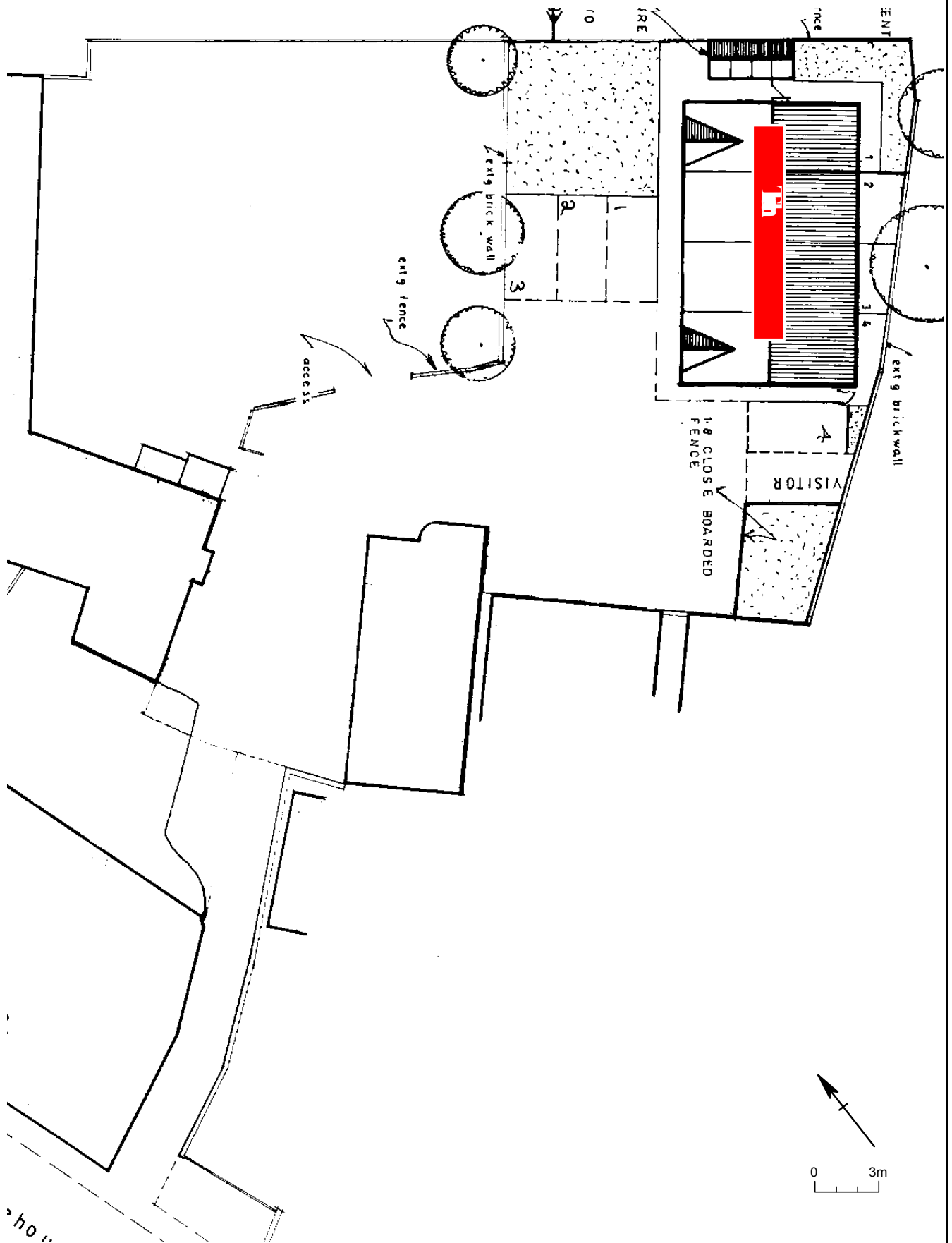
Figure 1 .....	Site location
Figure 2 .....	Trench location
Figure 3a .....	Trench plan and section
Figure 3b .....	Feature sections





Site Location

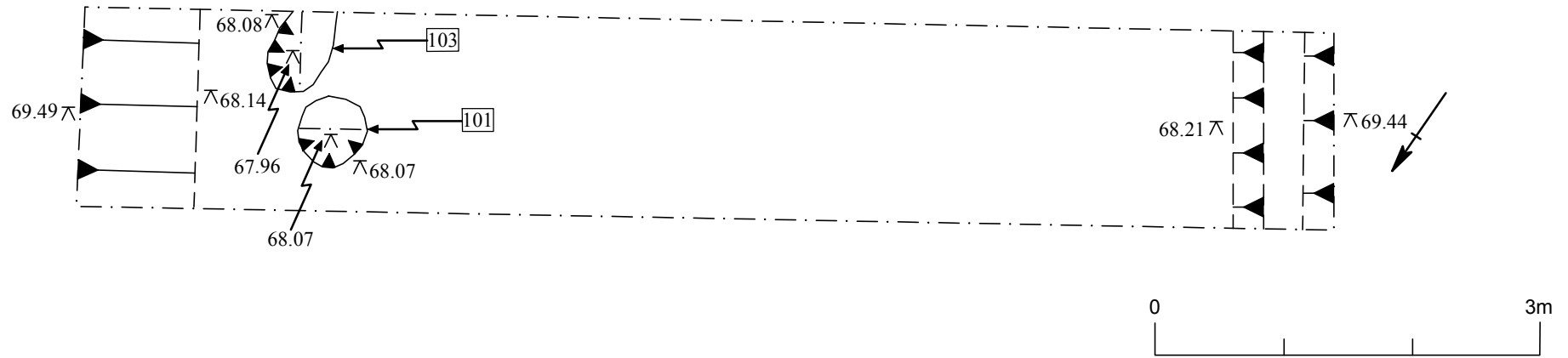
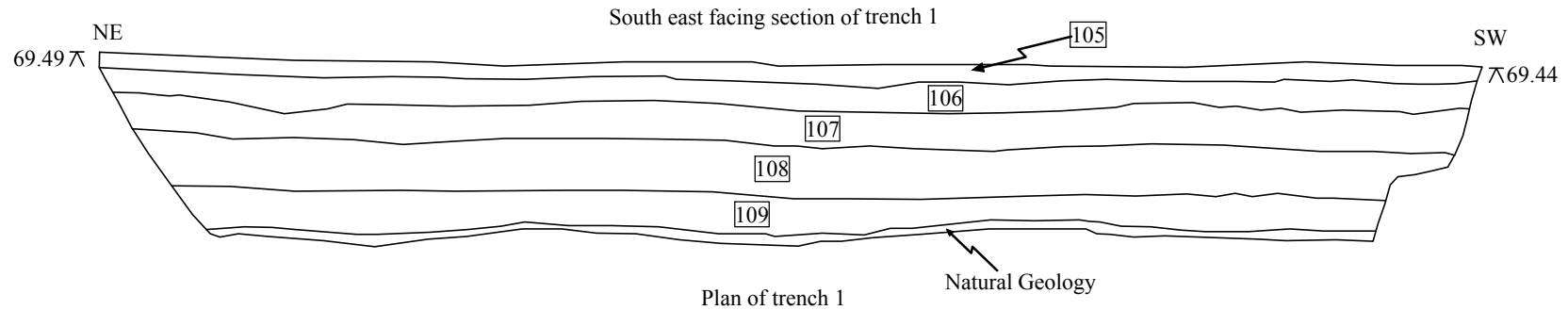
Scale 1:1250



Trench location

Scale 1:250

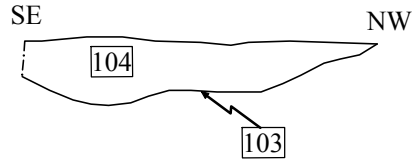
Figure 2



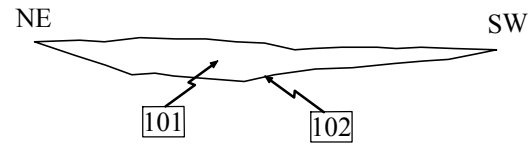
Trench plan and section

Scale 1:50  
Figure 3a

Southwest facing section through [103]



Northwest facing section through [101]



Feature sections

Scale 1:10  
Figure 3b