

HERITAGE NETWORK



ELMDON BURY
Elmdon, Essex

(HN546)

Archaeological Monitoring Report



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

Outdoor Riding Arena
ELMDON BURY
Elmdon, Essex.

HN546

Archaeological Monitoring and Excavation Report

Prepared on behalf of Mrs V Smith

by

Geoff Saunders, BA AIFA

Report no.343

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The cover photograph shows the column capital from ditch [01]

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Geoff Saunders and David Kaye. The report text and illustrations were prepared by Geoff Saunders. The report was edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Vicky Smith, Elmdon Bury; Dave Oliver, Charles Britton Equestrian Construction; Dr Jackie Hall, and the staff of the Historic Environment Management Team, Essex County Council for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

Summary

Site name and address:	Elmdon Bury, Elmdon, Essex		
County:	Essex	District:	Uttlesford
Village/town:	Elmdon	Parish:	Elmdon
Planning reference:	UTT/0561/05/FUL	NGR:	TL 46225 39840
Client name and address:	Mrs V Smith, Elmdon Bury, Elmdon, Essex		
Nature of work:	New Riding Arena	Present land use:	Pasture
Size of affected area:	c.1250m ²	Size of area investigated:	c.1250m ²
Site Code:	ELEB05	Other reference:	HN546
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Type of work:	Monitoring	Archive location:	Saffron Walden Museum
Start of work	27/07/2005	Finish of work	1/08/2005
Related SMR Nos:	3878, 3879	Periods represented:	Late Bronze Age – Late Post-Medieval
Previous summaries/reports:	n/a		

Synopsis: In response to an archaeological condition on the planning permission for a new outdoor riding arena at Elmdon Bury, Elmdon, Essex, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owner to undertake the archaeological monitoring of the development groundworks.

The fieldwork revealed unstratified pottery ranging in date from the late Bronze Age to the late post-medieval period, indicating that the site is located in an area of high archaeological potential. The only features revealed were late post-medieval field boundaries and a ha-ha. The backfill of the ha-ha yielded worked stone. The only identifiable piece was part of a 13th century octagonal capital, carved from a fine grained limestone, possibly chalk. The stone may have come from the nearby church of St Nicholas.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of *Mrs V Smith*, as part of a programme of archaeological investigation in association with development works at Elmdon Bury, Elmdon, Essex.

1.2 The monitoring of the development groundworks was a requirement of the planning consent for the development (ref. UTT/0561/05/FUL), under the provisions set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note No.16 (PPG16) on Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990). The scope of the required work was agreed verbally with the *Historic Environment Management Team* (HEMT) of Essex County Council, acting as advisers to Uttlesford District Council (UDC), and follows their model brief covering archaeological monitoring and excavation projects. A full specification for the work was contained in the Heritage Network's approved *Project Design* dated July 2005.

1.3 The study area (centred on NGR TL 46225 39840) is located on grazing land lying between the present buildings forming Elmdon Bury (SMR 3879) 75m to the north, and the parish church of St Nicholas 150m to the south. Elmdon is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1087, and the Bury is considered to be the centre of the manorial settlement. Castle Grove, a ring motte earthwork, lies 250m north-west of the study area. Although no earthworks have been identified in the immediate vicinity of the study area, the whole area surrounding Elmdon Bury preserves the pre-enclosure field pattern. The development of the site was considered to have the potential to reveal archaeological remains dating to the medieval period. The development involved the construction of a riding arena.

1.4 The aim of the present project has been to identify and record any archaeological features and deposits which were uncovered; and to retrieve artefactual and ecofactual elements which would allow the date, character, and significance of the site to be assessed in accordance with current regional research agenda (Brown and Glazebrook, 2000), and subject to the limitations of reasonable safety and practicality.

1.5 The present report describes the findings of the monitoring programme, and is intended, together with the deposition of the site archive with Saffron Walden Museum, to complete the requirements of the planning condition.

2. Fieldwork

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 The site is located immediately to the north of the centre of the village of Elmdon on land which slopes from north-west to south-east. The underlying natural geology of the area consists of a friable, light olive brown (2.5Y 5/3) clay with bluish mottling, and frequent chalk fragments.

METHODOLOGY

2.2 The timetable for the fieldwork followed the client's groundwork schedule. Several site visits were made to monitor the groundworks necessary for the development.

2.3 The machining was undertaken using a tracked 360⁰ fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.

2.4 Spoil from the various stages of the groundworks was inspected for archaeological artefacts.

2.5 The project has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the model HEMT Design Brief, and followed the Heritage Network's approved Project Design.

MONITORING AND RECORDING

2.6 The groundworks included the removal of all topsoil across the new arena, ground reduction across part of the arena to create a level surface, and the excavation of a soakaway.

2.7 The stratigraphy was consistent across the site and comprised a layer of firm, very dark grey (10YR 3/1), slightly silty clay topsoil over a friable, olive brown (2.5Y 4/3), clay subsoil. Beneath this lay the natural geology of friable, light olive brown (2.5Y 5/3), clay with frequent chalk fragments.

Topsoil removal

2.8 The topsoil was removed across the entire area marked out for the new arena. The topsoil was approximately 0.15m deep.

2.9 Several artefacts were recovered unstratified from the topsoil. Pottery sherds ranging in date from the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age to the late medieval/early post medieval periods. Further Victorian and modern pottery was observed but not collected. A small fragment of worked marble which may represent a Roman tessera was also recovered.

2.10 No archaeological features or deposits were observed in the course of this stage of works.

Ground reduction

2.11 Due to the sloping nature of the ground across the proposed arena, it was necessary to reduce the level across the north-west half and use the material removed to raise the level of the south-east half. The subsoil was approximately 0.2m deep and was completely removed across approximately one third of the site (see Figure 2).

2.12 Three ditches [01], [04], and [06], were observed during this stage of the groundwork.

- Ditch [01] was observed cut through the natural geology running on a north-east – south-west alignment along the north-west edge of the arena. The full dimensions of the ditch were not evident as it was only partially revealed within the reduced area. Only the south-eastern edge of the ditch was visible, and this was steep and straight. At the base of the ditch the chalk rubble footing for a retaining wall [03] was visible. The solitary friable, dark olive brown (2.5Y 3/3), clay fill of the ditch yielded two fragments of worked stone along with late post-medieval peg tile.
- Ditch [04] was observed cut through the natural geology on a north-west – south-east alignment. The ditch measured 0.5m in width, and contained a friable, olive brown (2.5Y 4/3), clay fill (05) which yielded late post-medieval peg tile. The ditch ran at right angles to and into ditch [01]. The linear likely represents a field boundary or drainage ditch.
- Ditch [06] was observed cut through the natural geology on a north-west – south-east alignment. The ditch measured 0.8m in width, and contained a friable, olive brown (2.5Y 4/3), clay fill (07) which yielded late post-medieval peg tile. The ditch ran at right angles to and into ditch [01]. The linear likely represents a field boundary or drainage ditch.

2.13 Ditch [01], appears to mark the boundary between the formal garden of the Bury and the surrounding fields, and it is likely that ditches [04] and [06] also represent boundaries in the field system surrounding the Bury.

2.14 No further archaeological features, deposits, or artefacts were observed during the ground reduction.

Soakaway

2.15 A single soakaway was excavated close to the southern corner of the new arena. The soakaway measured 3.2m long by 2.0m wide by 1.6m deep.

2.16 No archaeological features, deposits, artefacts were observed in the soakaway.

FINDS CONCORDANCE

Ctxt	Pottery		CBM		Marble		Stone	
	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.
02			240	4			3205	2
05			190	2				
07			510	4				
U/S	335	50			65	1	1055	1
Total	335	50	940	10	65	1	4260	3

FINDS ASSESSMENT

2.17 A total of 50 sherds of pottery, weighing 335g, was recovered unstratified from the present site. The majority of the pottery assemblage consists of small, heavily abraded, undiagnostic body sherds.

2.18 The earliest sherds in the assemblage are five very small and abraded fragments of flint tempered pottery of late Bronze Age/ early Iron Age date. Although the sherds were undiagnostic and were recovered unstratified, they are an indication of prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the site.

2.19 Several abraded sherds of Romano-British greyware were collected, but the only diagnostic sherd recovered is part of a heavily abraded rim. The remaining sherds are all small undiagnostic bodysherds. The sherds were recovered unstratified and are an indication of Roman activity in the vicinity of the site.

2.20 The pottery assemblage contains no Anglo-Saxon sherds.

2.21 Several sherds of late Medieval/early post-Medieval pottery were collected, including a small abraded fragment of a c.14th century jug handle. The sherds were recovered unstratified and are an indication of Medieval activity in the vicinity of the site.

2.22 The ceramic building material (CBM) was collected from the fills of ditch [01], and ditches [04] and [06]. It consists of late post-Medieval peg tile.

2.23 Three pieces of worked stone were recovered during the present project, including part of a column capital, and two undiagnostic fragments.

2.24 The capital was submitted to Dr Jackie Hall for identification. It consists of an octagonal fragment dating to the late 13th century. Only the upper mouldings are preserved, the bell and the necking having been lost. It is uncertain whether the capital was free standing or inlaid but it is most likely to have originated from a church. The stone preserves traces of a red ground, with other slightly smeared layers of paint on top. It is possible that these traces are original. The capital is made of a very fine grained limestone probably chalk. The stone was recovered from the backfill of ditch [01], which has been dated to the late post-medieval period.

2.25 The remaining fragments are of a harder limestone. One fragment consists of the corner of a stone block, with chisel marks clearly visible, suggesting that the stone may have broken

before the work had been completed. This fragment was also recovered from ditch [01] in close association with the capital. The other fragment was recovered unstratified and shows signs of being worked on one side.

2.26 A single small fragment of marble, measuring approximately 44mm long by 35mm wide by 18mm deep, was recovered unstratified from the topsoil. The fragment, which is damaged and missing one corner, had been cut into a rectangular shape. The Roman pottery recovered indicates activity of that period in the vicinity and it is possible that the marble fragment represents a tessera.

3. Discussion and conclusion

3.1 The monitoring and recording of the groundworks associated with the construction of a new menage at Elmdon Bury has demonstrated archaeological activity in the vicinity of the site from the late Bronze/early Iron Age onwards.

3.2 Three linear features were identified, two of which have been interpreted as post medieval field boundaries. The third, ditch [01], appears to be a continuation of a ha-ha which separates the gardens of Elmdon Bury from the adjoining fields. It was subsequently backfilled and the line of the retaining wall replaced by a hedge. Ha-has became popular in the 18th century as a way of preventing livestock and wild animals from entering formal gardens without obstructing the view of the surrounding landscape.

3.3 The ha-ha is not shown in this location on the first edition Ordnance Survey of 1881 suggesting that it had already been backfilled by this date.

3.4 The 13th century octagonal stone capital recovered from the backfill of the ha-ha may have originated from the nearby church of St Nicholas.

3.5 The ha-ha, together with the field boundaries, demonstrates that the study area is located on the boundary between the traditional formal gardens of the Bury and the surrounding agricultural land.

Conclusion

3.6 The present site is located in an area of known archaeology with the potential for revealing remains from the late Bronze Age period onwards. Although the fieldwork revealed no archaeological features or deposits predating the late post-medieval period, pottery recovered unstratified from the topsoil does indicate activity in the vicinity from the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age period onwards.

3.7 Elmdon is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1087, and the Bury is considered to be the centre of the manorial settlement. The Laws of King Athelstan stated that a Thane should have a church on his estate. Given the proximity of the church and the Bury it is likely that the church represents a late Saxon manorial foundation. The stonework recovered from the ha-ha suggests a continued close link between the church and the Bury through the medieval and post-medieval periods. No evidence was recovered to date the backfilling of the ha-ha or the date of deposition of the stonework.

3.8 The presence of the ha-ha together with the late post-medieval field boundaries demonstrate that at this time the majority of the present study area lay within the agricultural land surrounding the Bury.

4. Schedule of site visits

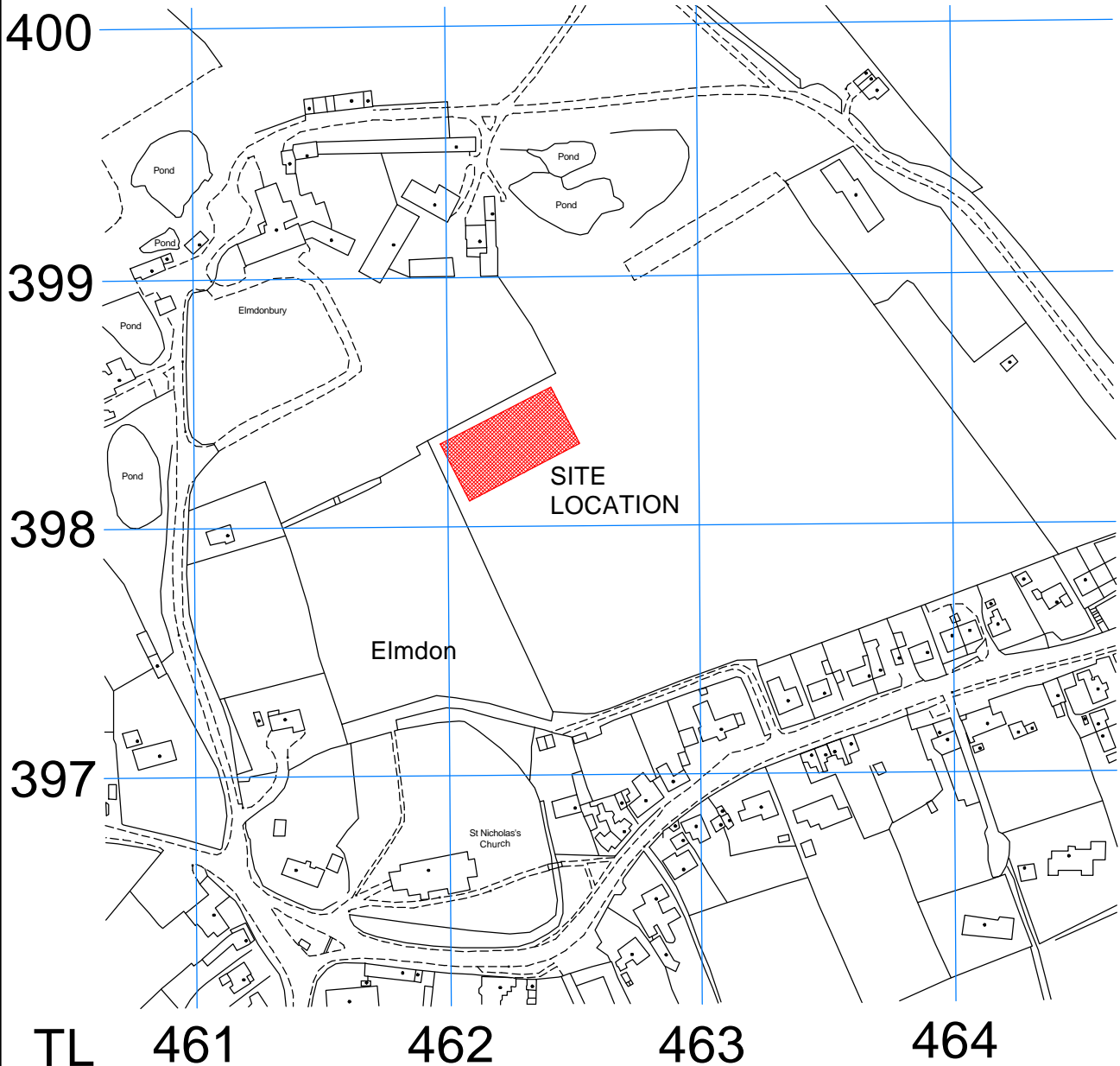
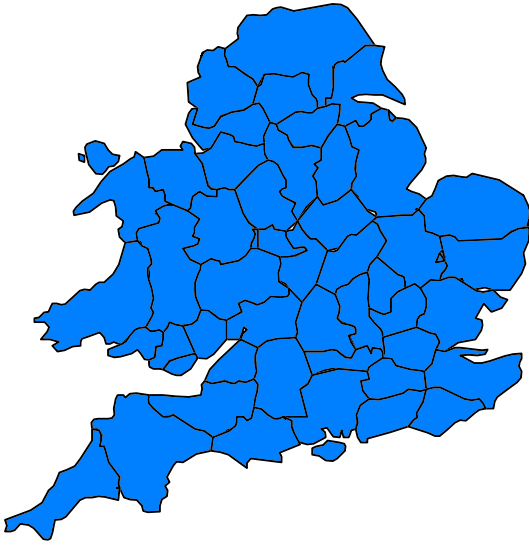
Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
27/07/2005	GIS	6.5	Monitoring topsoil strip
28/07/2005	GIS	9.5	Monitoring topsoil strip and ground reduction
29/07/2005	GIS	8	Monitoring ground reduction, recording features
01/08/2005	DGK	6	Monitoring ground reduction and soakaway

5. Bibliography

Hillelson, D. 2005, *Elmdon Bury, Elmdon, Essex: Archaeological Project Design*. Heritage Network July 2005

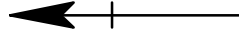
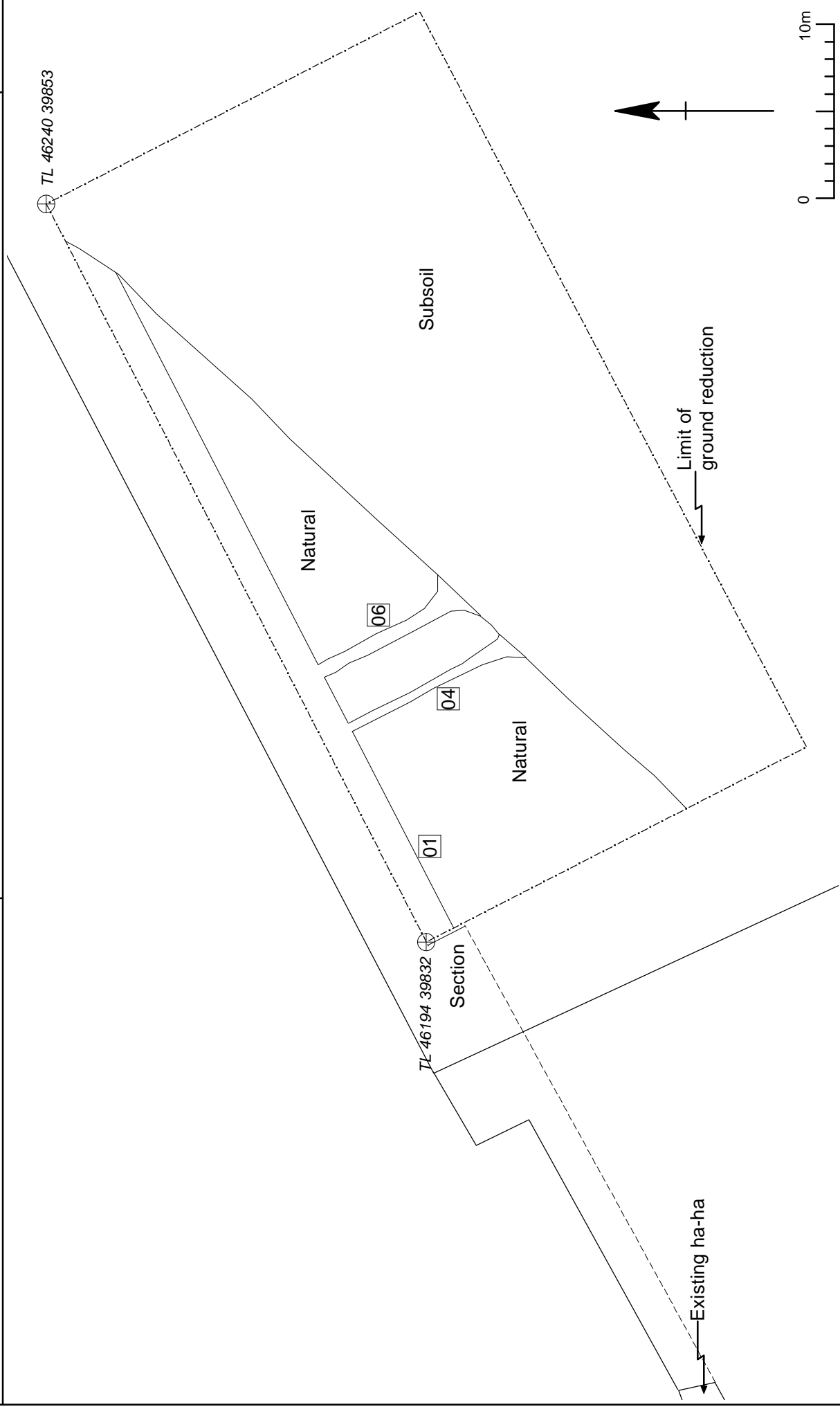
6. Illustrations

Figure 1	Site location
Figure 2	Site layout
Figure 3	Feature section
Figure 4	Stone illustration



Site Location

Scale 1:2500

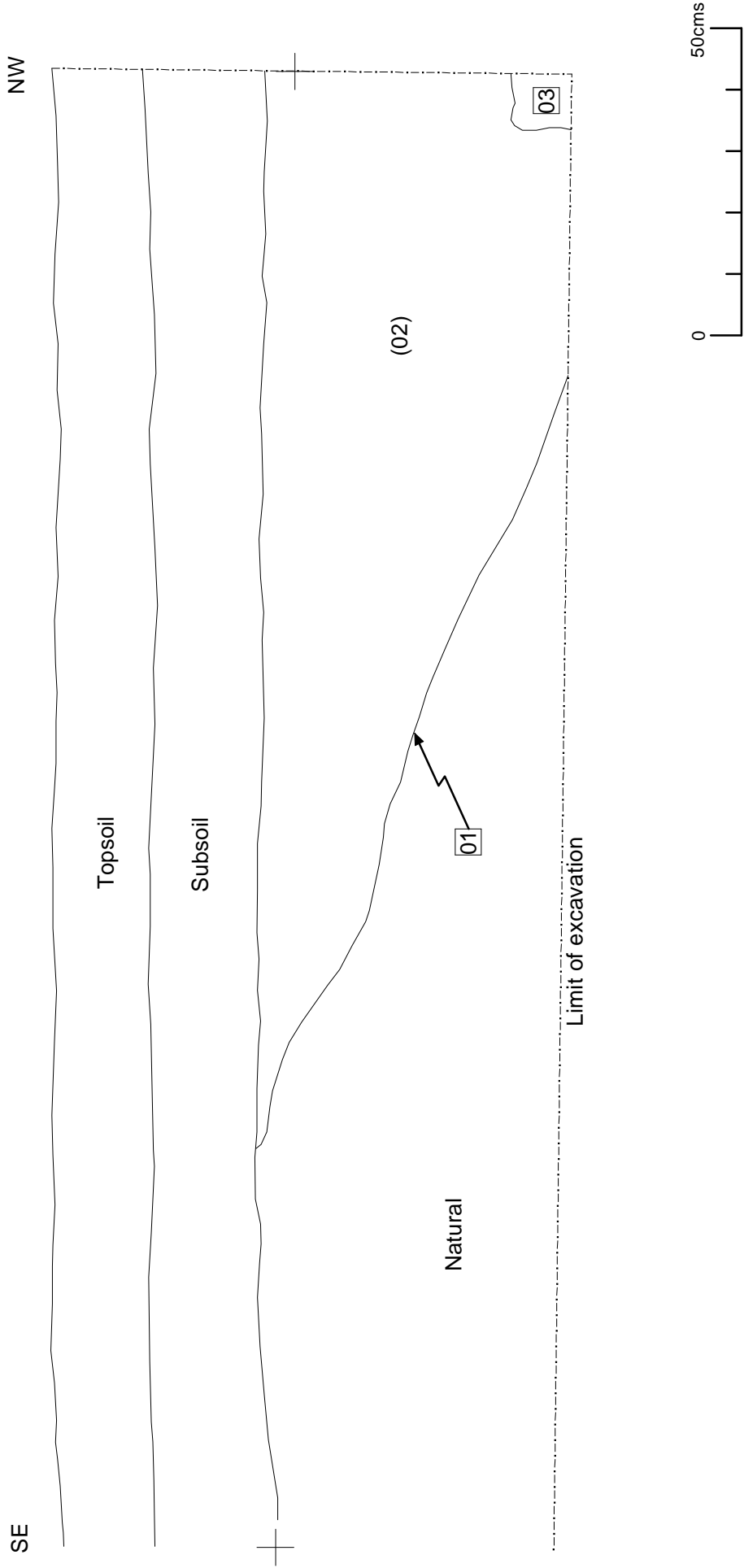


Scale 1:300

Figure 2

Site Layout

North-east facing section through ditch [01]



Section through ditch [01]

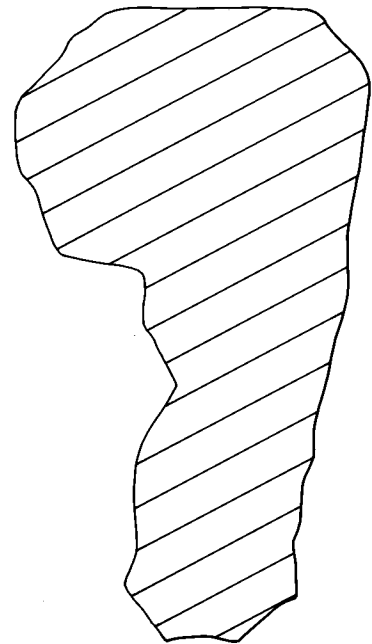
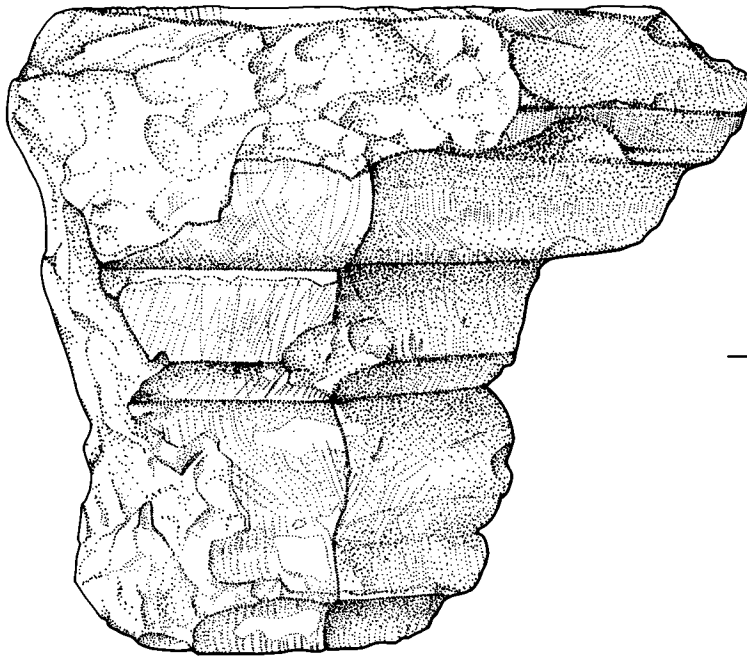
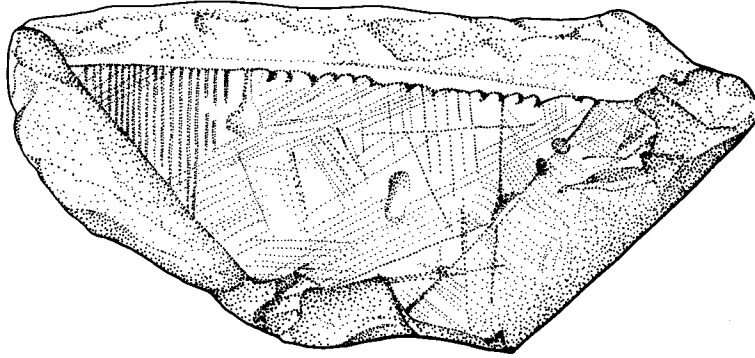


Illustration : Donna Watters

Stone capital from (02)

Scale 1:2

Figure 4