

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AT 20-22 EAST STREET, NEWTON ABBOT**

**prepared for
Park Green Investments Ltd**

Exeter Archaeology

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SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was carried out in February 2008 at 20-22 East Street, Newton Abbot. Two trenches with a total length of 20.7m were excavated. Although the site lies close to the medieval core of Newton Abbot, no structures, features or deposits of this period were exposed. One medieval pottery sherd and part of a medieval Beer stone sculpture were found, both residual within a later pit. Very few features were found and the majority of pottery dated to the 18th century or later.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared for Park Green Investments Ltd and presents the results of an archaeological field evaluation undertaken by Exeter Archaeology (EA) in February 2008 at 20-22 East Street, Newton Abbot. The work was required by the local planning authority (Teignbridge District Council), advised by the Devon County Historic Environment Service (DCHES), as a condition of the grant of planning permission for the redevelopment of the site as residential accommodation (planning reference 07/03683/MAJ).

2. THE SITE (SX 8591 7112, Fig. 1)

The development site occupies an area of approximately 880sqm, close to the historic centre of Newton Abbot. It is bounded by East Street to the north and Tudor Road to the west, and by residential and industrial buildings to the south and east. Historically, it lies within an area enclosed by narrow, possibly medieval, property boundaries aligned on and radiating north and south from East Street. To the north and west are two listed buildings of 17th-century date, demonstrating that this part of Newton Abbot was built upon by the 1600's at the latest. The evaluation was carried out immediately following the demolition of buildings; a cottage, No. 20, (the rear wall of which was cob-built) and a modern steel and concrete garage, No. 22.

3. AIMS

The principal aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence or absence, depth, extent, character and date of archaeological deposits within the site. The results will inform the planning process and may be used to formulate a subsequent programme of archaeological mitigation should such additional work be required.

4. METHOD

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation prepared by EA and approved by DCHES on behalf of Teignbridge District Council.

Two trenches totalling 20.7m in length were excavated. Hard standing and underlying modern deposits were removed using a machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket. Machining continued either to the top of archaeological deposits or natural ground (whichever was higher), at which point machining ceased and excavation continued by hand. Stratigraphic information was recorded on *pro-forma* EA context record sheets. A drawn record was compiled in plan and section and a photographic record completed in black and white and colour digital format.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Trench 1 (Figs 2, 3)

Trench 1 measured 2m wide by 12.1m long and was aligned north-south across the footprint of the recently demolished cottage (No. 20 East Street).

Modern overburden (100), primarily comprising stone and cob rubble resulting from the recent demolition of the cottage, was found to directly overlie natural subsoil (103) throughout, with the exception of the southern end of the trench where it sealed the fill of a pit. The pit (102) appeared to be broadly sub-rectangular in plan, its southern edge having been removed by a modern drain. Measuring approximately 1.5m long, 1.2m wide and 500mm deep, it contained three deposits (101, 104-5). Fills 101 and 105 were similar in composition, containing mixed soil and slate, mortar and re-deposited clay. Fill 104 comprised a thin layer of broken slate. Four sherds of pottery with a date range of 1550-1650 were recovered from base fill 101.

To the immediate south of the pit was a shallow, flat-based linear feature (107) measuring 500mm wide. Its fill (106) was very similar in composition to that of the base fill (101) of the pit and it produced a single sherd of pottery dating to 1550-1650. The southern edge of the feature appeared to be continuous with the southern edge of the pit, though physically separated from it by a modern drain. This apparent relationship, together with the similarity of the fills and the dating of the pottery recovered, suggests that feature 107 and pit 102 were associated, and infilled at the same time.

5.2 Trench 2 (Figs 2, 4)

Trench 2 measured 2m wide by 8.6m long and was sited to the south of trench 1.

The earliest recorded activity consisted of the terracing of the natural subsoil, to form a level area, presumably for the construction of a building. The rear (southern) limit of this levelled area was represented by a shallow terrace cut (36), exposed 1.5m from the southern edge of the trench. The terrace was approximately 200mm deep and provided a levelled area at approximately 8.5m AOD. No evidence of any contemporary structure within the terrace was found. The base fill of the terrace comprised red silty clay, which contained tobacco pipe stems and coarseware pottery sherds dating to the 17th century.

Towards the southern end of the terrace this material was overlain by a layer of reddish brown clay loam (26), most probably a former garden soil that developed across the terrace following its disuse. A number of fragments of clay pipe and a single pottery sherd were recovered from this material, dating to 1660-90. This material extended beyond the terrace to the south where it directly overlay natural subsoil. Within the northern part of the trench, later activity had virtually removed all contemporary deposits, down to the level of terraced subsoil. Thin layers of reddish brown loam (27-28) did survive, and are likely to represent a continuation of this garden soil. Pottery and clay pipe fragments recovered from these deposits were also of late 17th-century date. Layers 27 and 28 both contained significant amounts of building rubble comprising limestone fragments and mortar flecks, likely to represent demolition debris from the building that formerly occupied the terrace. They were cut through by a single feature (30), a shallow pit 700mm wide and 200mm deep, which contained pottery of mid 18th-century date.

The very fragmentary remains of slate wall footings (25) were exposed 2m from the southern end of the trench. Only part of a single course survived, but this was sufficient to establish that it would have been aligned east-west, parallel with East Street. The footings had been set onto the pre-existing garden soil (26) and were very loose, with little bonding. At only 440mm wide they are unlikely to represent part of a domestic building. Sealing the wall footings and occupying the southern half of the trench was a 250mm thick layer of reddish brown clay loam (24), representing further garden soil. Pottery and clay pipe fragments recovered from this material dated to between 1700-1720, slightly later than those from underlying deposits.

Subsequent deposits all dated to the 19th or 20th century. Within the centre of the trench an east-west aligned limestone-built wall (34), was exposed. Bonded with a very strong lime ash mortar, it was set within a construction trench (37) and measured 600mm wide.

To the south of the wall was part of a large (3m x 1.5m+) pit (35). This cut through the wall construction trench and contained a series of fills (21-23) all of which contained mortar and plaster fragments as well as a single fragment of late 19th- or early 20th- century brick. Deposit 23 also contained a single, residual fragment of medieval pottery together with a fragment of carved medieval sculpture, also residual.

6. THE FINDS

The evaluation has produced a modest assemblage of finds, predominantly of a post-medieval date. Artefacts include 91 pottery sherds, two tin-glazed wall tile fragments, 47 tobacco clay pipe fragments, seven bottle glass shards, one ridge tile, one roof slate, a whetstone and a brick fragment. Two items date from the medieval period; a single sherd of pottery and an unusual sculptured stone in the form of a human head. The finds are quantified by context within Appendix 1.

Pottery

The majority of pottery dates from the late 17th to mid 18th century. Imported wares include the ubiquitous Rhenish stonewares of the Frechen and Westerwald factories, rim sherds from a decorated Delft tin-glazed dish (c. 1680-90), a Dutch or English decorated tin-glazed dish sherd (late 16th/early 17th century) and late 17th- or early 18th-century plain English delft tin-glazed wares. English 18th-century imported types consist of Staffordshire salt-glazed stonewares and Bristol or Staffordshire yellow-glazed slipware cups. Local coarsewares are mainly Totnes-type with some South Somerset products. Of particular interest are two North Devon yellow-glazed sgraffito (scratched) vessels. The first is a dish base sherd with a complex floral design and is dated 1672. The second is an unusual shallow bowl form rarely seen in archaeological collections. The overall forms, where identified, indicate that it is domestic assemblage in character, mostly tablewares such as dishes, cups, tankards and a single chafing dish sherd. There are a few bowl fragments, which are likely to have been for kitchen use.

Although residual, the earliest sherd is from context 23. It is medieval in date and consists of a thumbled jug base in Exeter fabric 40. Jug bases of this fabric and form were in production from the mid 13th to the early 15th centuries. The earliest post-medieval wares are from contexts 101 and 106 which contain a Frechen stoneware

plain jug base (c. 1550-1650) and context 27 which has a late 16th- or early 17th-century English/Dutch tin-glazed dish sherd. The latest material is English 19th-century stonewares and transfer printed types from contexts 22 and 100.

Clay tobacco pipes

The tobacco clay pipes range in date from the late 17th to the mid 18th century. Types of c. 1660-90 and 1690-1720 date are of the West Country flat heel style, which form the majority of the assemblage. However there are three forms from context 29 with spur bowls and the production of these falls between the years c. 1730-60.

Carved stone

The sculpture is of Beer stone, and although fairly worn, is in the form of a human head with long hair or a head covering surrounding the face. The facial features barely survive. This was an unstratified find and dates to the medieval period. Its provenance is unknown, but the nearby former chapel of St Leonards provides a possible context.

Other Finds

The green bottle glass shards are similar in date to the majority of the pottery in that they are typically late 17th or first half of the 18th century in character. There are two fragments of roof furniture, a Totnes-type post-medieval ridge tile and a single post-medieval roof slate. Context 24 produced a well-used whetstone. The brick fragment from context 22 is late Victorian and outside the date range of the majority of finds.

7. DISCUSSION

The evaluation has not identified any evidence of medieval survival within the site. If the site had been occupied during this period, the most likely area for preservation would be the northern part of the site, close to East Street. The results from Trench 1 have established that within this area, natural subsoil lies very close to the surface, a result, in part, of terracing or levelling prior to the construction of the recently demolished cottage; No. 20 East Street. Although it is possible that a medieval building did once stand here, as no structural (wall foundations/postholes) or artefactual evidence for such a building has been found, it is possible that the plot remained undeveloped at that time. The absence of any medieval rubbish pits, normally found in association with, and to the rear of, domestic buildings, would lend support to this view. Only two items of medieval date were recovered (a pottery sherd and carved sculpture fragment), both residual within a relatively modern pit. Of these, the fragment of carved sculpture would have been imported to the site and therefore has no meaningful association with it. As they were found within the same soil layer, the same may be true of the pottery sherd.

Pottery evidence (pit 102, trench 1), indicates that the site was first occupied between 1550 and 1650. Pottery recovered from the southern end of the site (trench 2) is slightly later, being predominantly late 17th- or 18th-century in date.

In view of the absence of any significant evidence for medieval occupation of the site, the demonstrated loss through truncation of the later post-medieval deposits within and to the rear of the footprint of No. 20, and the wholesale reduction of ground level to from the adjacent garage (No. 22), the archaeological implications of the proposed development can be viewed as minimal.

8. ARCHIVE

An integrated site archive has been prepared and is currently held by Exeter Archaeology at their premises in Custom House, The Quay, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4AN, pending deposition at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter under accession number 722/2007.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation was commissioned and funded by Park Green Investments Limited and managed by S. Thompson (Park Green) and P. Stead (EA). The fieldwork was undertaken by P. Pearce and A. West (EA). The project was monitored on behalf of Teignbridge District Council by S. Reed (DCHES).

APPENDIX 1: FINDS QUANTIFICATION (weight in grams)

[illegible]



Fig. 1 Location of site

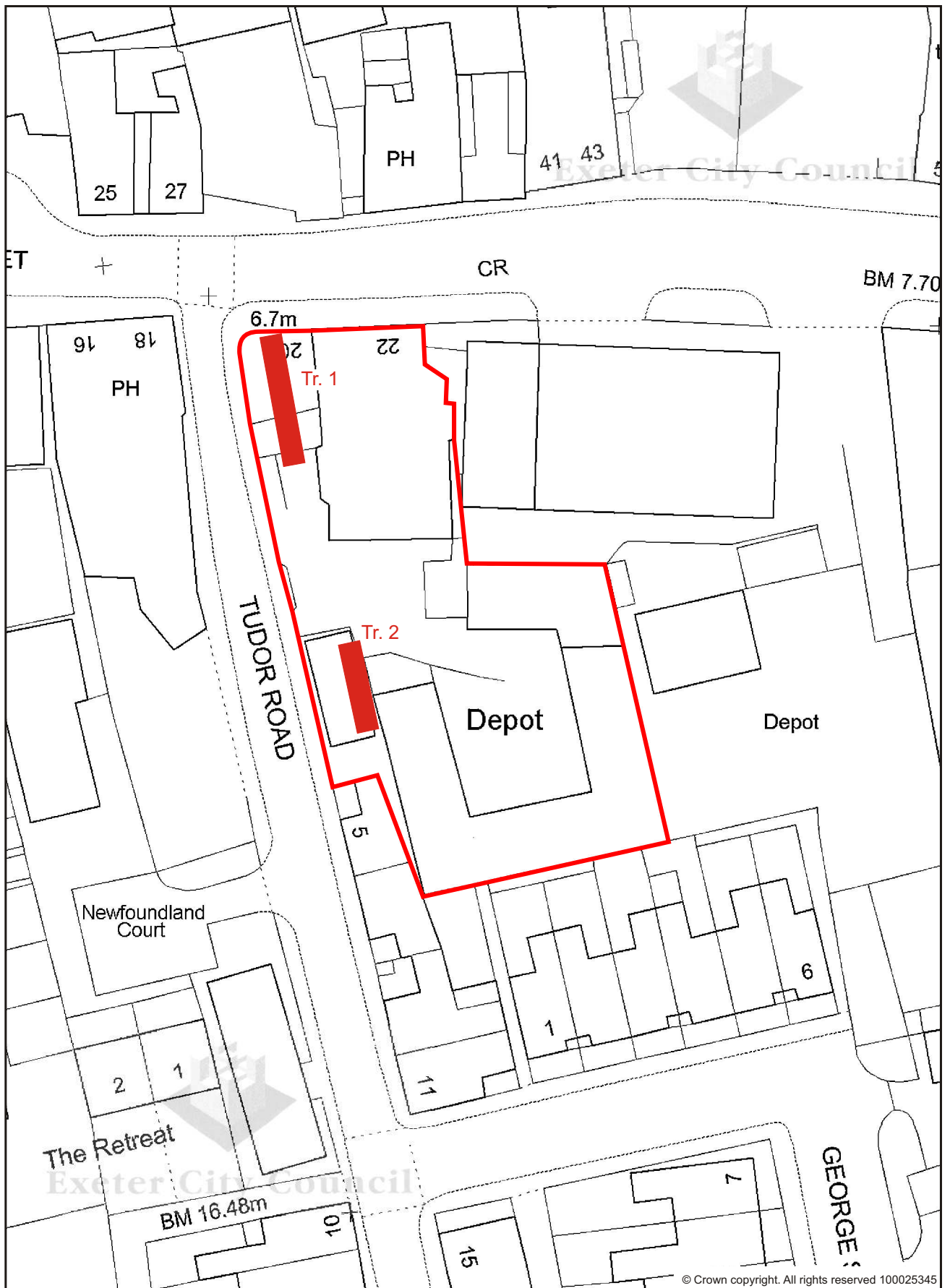
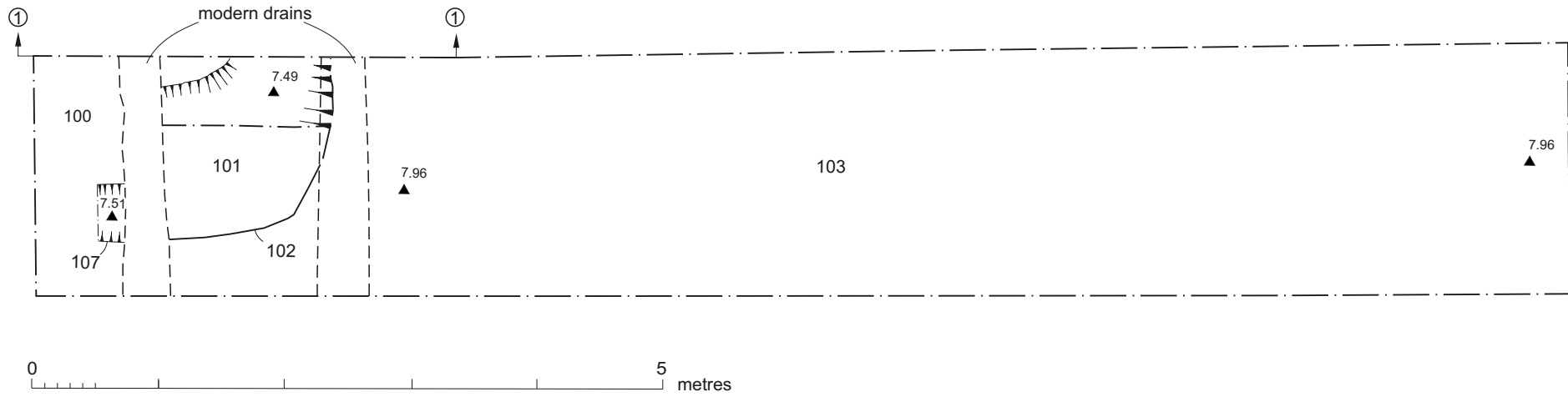


Fig. 2 Location of trenches. Scale 1:500.

Trench 1 Plan



Section

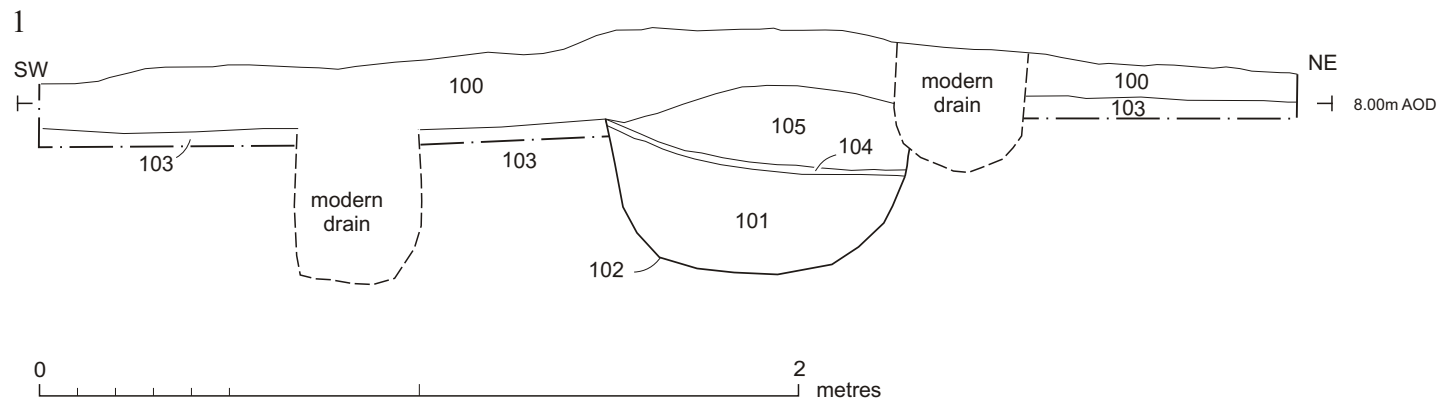
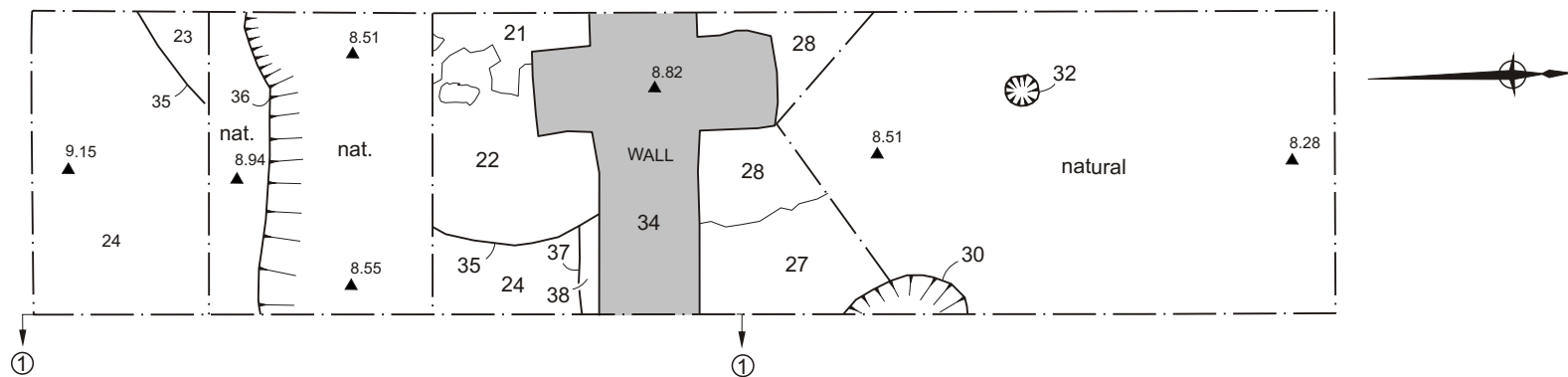


Fig. 3 Plan and Section, Trench 1.

Trench 2

Plan



Section

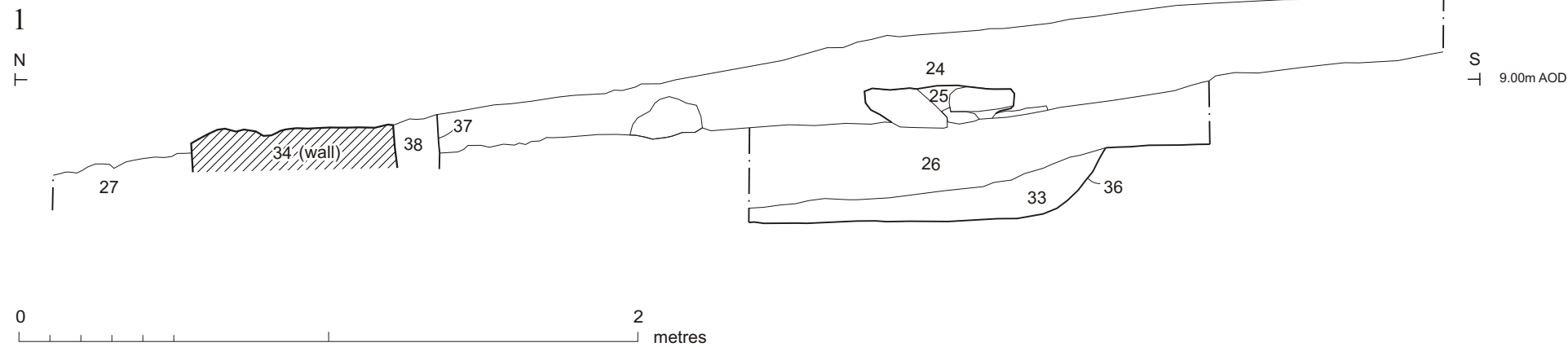


Fig. 4 Plan and Section, Trench 2.