

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS ON  
LAND AT CROSSLANDS, DAINTON, ELMS  
CROSS, NEAR IPPLEPEN, DEVON**

**Prepared on behalf of Mr William Putt**

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## Summary

Archaeological investigations on land at Crosslands, Elms Cross, Dainton, near Ipplepen, Devon (NGR SX 84829 66533), were undertaken by Exeter Archaeology during September 2007. The site is located in an area where a number of possible prehistoric features are recorded as cropmarks from aerial photographs, and where there is evidence for small-scale Romano-British activity in the form of finds of pottery and coins. The field containing the site is shown as agricultural land from the mid 19th century onwards.

The archaeological work initially comprised the monitoring of topsoil removal across a total area of *c.* 1500m<sup>2</sup>. This was not to a sufficient depth where archaeological features or deposits could be confirmed. Consequently, six deeper trenches were excavated, one of which, in the NW corner, revealed a large probable quarry pit of late Romano-British date (AD 3rd- to 4th-century). This feature contained a quantity of Roman native and imported pottery, together with animal bone, a copper alloy coin and an iron object.

Elsewhere across the site a series of linear and curvilinear features was recorded, none of which provided any dating evidence. The curvilinear features might represent evidence for prehistoric funerary or settlement activity, while the linear examples are likely to be either drainage gullies or truncated larger field divisions. These could date from any time from the prehistoric through to the post medieval period.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report sets out the results of an archaeological strip and record and trench evaluation exercise carried out in September 2007 by Exeter Archaeology (EA) on land at Crosslands, Dainton, Elms Cross, near Ipplepen, Devon (NGR SX 84829 66533). The work was commissioned by Mr William Putt and carried out as a condition attached to the grant of planning permission (No. 07/02300/FUL, Teignbridge District Council). The site is the location of a new potato grading/storage building, with an associated hardstanding area.

### 1.1 The site

The site is an 'L' shaped area covering approximately 1500m<sup>2</sup> and is positioned at the southern end of a large arable field immediately to the northwest of Elms Cross (Fig. 1). The land slopes gently down to the north and west. It lies at around 84mAOD and the underlying solid geology comprises Middle Devonian slates and shale.

There is extensive evidence for sub-surface archaeological features in the area of the site, in the form of cropmarks recorded from aerial photographs. These features may represent evidence for late prehistoric settlement, agricultural or funeral activity. A complex of cropmarks is located in the field immediately to the east of the site (HER ref. 335).

The Ipplepen parish tithe map of 1842 depicts the site as within a single arable field called 'Cross Park' (parcel no. 689), which was owned by William Metherell. The tenant was William Sowton. No structures are shown on the site at this time.

## 2. AIM

The principal aim of the work was to preserve *in situ* or by record any surviving below-ground archaeological artefacts or deposits within the area that were likely to be disturbed by the proposed development.

## 3. METHOD

The work was undertaken in accordance with a brief prepared by DCHES (Reed 2007) and a subsequent method statement submitted by EA (Valentin 2007).

The total footprint of the site was initially stripped of topsoil using a 360° mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.8m wide toothless grading bucket. This was not to a sufficient depth where archaeological features or deposits could be confirmed, therefore five deeper linear trenches totalling 47m in length were excavated through a mixed subsoil layer, as well as a larger 12m x 9m area in the northwest corner of the site (Fig. 2). Trenches 1 and 4 were positioned to coincide with the outer walls of the new building, while the remainder were positioned across the proposed yard area.

All archaeological features and deposits were cleaned and recorded in plan. Further hand-excavation was undertaken of features and deposits within the footprint of the proposed building and where significant deposits required further dating and characterisation.

Following completion of the work the site was protected by a 150mm thick layer of crushed hardcore. The new building was constructed on a raft foundation inserted 200mm above the established level of *in situ* archaeological deposits.

All features and deposits were recorded using the standard EA recording system, comprising context record sheets and individual trench recording forms. Sections and plans for each trench were drawn at 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate. A detailed black and white print and colour digital photographic record was made. Registers were maintained for photographs, drawings and context sheets on *pro forma* sheets. Finds were labelled and bagged on site and taken to the EA offices for processing and cataloguing.

#### 4. RESULTS

The overlying layer sequence comprised a *c.* 200mm thick layer of topsoil, consisting of a dark brown clay silt with occasional shale fragments, overlying a 300mm subsoil layer, consisting of dark brown clay silt with frequent small shale fragments.

##### 4.1 Trench 1 (Plan; Fig. 2, relevant sections; Figs 3.1 to 3.3)

This trench was 10m x 1.8m, located in the southeast corner of the site and orientated approximately north-south. Natural weathered shale was encountered at a depth of 0.5m below ground level, where it was cut by three small slightly curving linear gullies (104, 106 and 108). Gullies 104 and 108 were oriented approximately NW-SE, while gully 106 was E-W aligned. The fills of 104 and 106 were a dark silt with frequent shale fragment inclusions similar in character to the overlying subsoil. Both were steep-sided with a depth of 0.3m. The third gully (108) was 0.15m deep, with a pale yellowish-brown silt fill.

##### 4.2 Trench 2 (Plan; Fig. 2)

This trench was 10m x 1.8m, located in the southwest corner of the site and orientated approximately east-west. Natural weathered shale was encountered at a depth of 0.6m below ground level. Seven separate intercutting linear features of varying character cut natural shale. These were not excavated and no finds were recovered, but possibly the earliest in the sequence was 213, having been cut by 211 and 215. It was straight, aligned approximately east-west and filled by a brown, friable silty clay with occasional shale fragments. Linear features 207 and 209 were also early in the sequence, having been cut by 205 and 211 respectively. The relationship between 207 and 209 was unclear, but 207 was a curvilinear feature, while 209 appeared to be straight and aligned approximately north-south. Both features were filled by brown, friable silty clay, with frequent small shale fragments.

Gully 211 was approximately northwest-southeast aligned, cut by 215 and filled by dark brown, friable clay silt, with occasional shale fragments. Linear features 203, 205 and 215 were all straight linear features aligned approximately north-south. Gully 203 was filled with a yellowish-brown friable silty clay with occasional small shale fragments, while 205 was filled by yellowish-brown friable silty clay, with frequent charcoal flecks and occasional small shale fragments. Gully 215 was filled with a dark brown friable clay silt with occasional small shale fragments.

##### 4.3 Trench 3 (Plan; Fig. 2)

This trench was 10m x 1.8m, located in the centre of the site and orientated approximately northeast-southwest. Natural weathered shale was encountered at a depth of 0.56m below ground level, where two small and parallel linear features were present (303 and 305), but not excavated. These were aligned approximately northwest-southeast and both were filled with

very dark brown friable clay silt with occasional shale fragments, large stones and charcoal flecks. No finds were recovered from the exposed surfaces.

#### 4.4 Trench 4 (Plan; Fig. 2)

This trench was 10m x 1.8m, located on the far eastern side of the site and orientated approximately north-south. Natural weathered shale was encountered in this trench at a depth of 0.40m and no features or finds were present.

#### 4.5 Trench 5 (Plan; Fig 2, relevant section; Fig. 3.4)

This trench was 7m x 1.8m, located in the northeast corner of the site and orientated approximately east-west. Natural weathered shale was encountered at a depth of 0.36m below ground level. A single wide curvilinear feature was present (503), which was 0.1m deep and filled with a yellowish-brown friable silt, with occasional small shale fragments. No finds were recovered.

#### 4.6 Trench 6 (Plan; Fig 2, relevant section; 3.5; Plates 2 – 4)

This trench was 12m x 9m, located in the northwest corner of the site and orientated approximately east-west. Natural weathered shale was encountered at a depth of 0.60m, where a large sub-circular feature was present (607). This feature was 7.15m in diameter and was almost completely exposed in plan.

A segment of 607 was excavated to a depth of 0.9m, although the base of the feature was not exposed. The profile was characterised by gently sloping but ragged and uneven sides to a depth of 0.54m, followed by a sharp break of slope to almost vertical sides, which continued beyond 0.9m to an unknown depth ( Fig. 3.5). Four fills were identified within the feature. The lower two fills (605 and 606), contained charcoal and occasional burnt clay lumps, but little shale. Fill (605) contained a sherd of Romano-British pottery and a small quantity of degraded animal bone. The upper two fills (603 and 604) contained an increasing quantity of shale fragments. Fill 604 contained 25 sherds of Roman pottery and a copper alloy coin from the same period (see below).

## 5. THE FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLE

A small assemblage of artefacts was recovered from the fills of quarry pit 607 in Trench 6. These are itemised in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Finds listing (weight is in grams)

Context	Context date	Roman pottery		Brick/tile		Animal bone		Cu Alloy		Fe	
		Qty	Wt	Qty	Wt	Qty	Weight	Qty	Weight	Qty	Weight
604	Romano-British	25	736	2	16			1	>1		
605	Romano-British	1	40			13	66			1	46
<b>Totals</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>776</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>&gt;1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>46</b>

### 5.1 Ceramics

A total of 26 sherds of pottery was recovered, most of which was in fill layer 604. Both imported and native wares are present and all are in a largely fresh condition. Also present are two small featureless tile fragments.

There are seven sherds of mid- to late 2nd-century Central Gaulish samian ware, which consist of six plain sherds from a probable Dr 37 bowl and a foot-ring sherd from a similar vessel. There are also two amphorae sherds, the first is the partial neck and upper handle of a Spanish Dressel 20 vessel, while the second is a plain body sherd in a much finer-bodied red fabric, with buff margins and fine mica plates. This may be North African in origin.

Native wares consist of 14 late Roman South Devon ware sherds, with vessels represented including a flanged dish, a carinated bowl, a storage jar and an everted rim jar. These date to the AD 3rd to 4th century. Also present are an undiagnostic greyware sherd and a single Black Burnished ware sherd from southeast Dorset.

## 5.2 Other finds

These include a worn copper alloy late Roman barbarous radiate coin and a small, heavily corroded cylindrical object. There are 13 fragments of highly degraded animal bone, including cattle skull and teeth.

## 5.3 Soil sample<4>, context 605

A 20 litre sample was hand floated into a stack of brass sieves (1mm, 500 $\mu$  300 $\mu$ ). The resultant float was then oven dried. The majority of the float consisted of fragmented carbonised round wood and only two carbonised seeds were present. One is a cereal grain (wheat *Sp.*) while the other is unidentifiable. A single unidentified fish bone was also recovered, as were a few fragments of badly abraded burnt bone. There were also modern intrusive rootlets present.

## 6. DISCUSSION

Trench 6 contained a large sub-circular pit with a shallow outer profile, becoming near vertical towards the centre. Its large size and uneven edges suggest that its original purpose may have been as a quarry pit. The site is located within an area identified geologically as Middle Devonian slate of the Nordon Series, with this material utilised as roofing slate in Exeter from the late AD 2nd century into the 4th century (Holbrook and Bidwell 1991).

The fills within the pit contained native and traded pottery dating to the late Romano-British period (AD 3rd- to 4th-century), as well as degraded bone and charcoal/ash waste, suggesting that the secondary use for the pit was the disposal of domestic refuse. The find types present and freshness of the pottery sherds indicate that settlement of this date might be located nearby.

Trenches 1,2,3 and 5 revealed a variety of small linear features. The relative frequency of these features increased in the southwest corner of the site (Trench 2) where an intense concentration of intercutting straight and curving linear features was observed. All features were cut into natural shale and sealed by 0.3m-0.6m of topsoil and subsoil. Excavated examples of these features yielded no finds, although it is possible that the curvilinear examples may represent evidence for late prehistoric settlement or funerary activity. The straight linear features are likely to be either drainage gullies or truncated larger field divisions, and could date to any time from the prehistoric through to the post medieval period.

The site has provided new evidence for Romano-British activity in the area and, while there are no *in situ* Romano-British settlement sites known nearby, Roman pottery and a coin have been

found in Ipplepen village (Reed and Turton 2006, Devon SMR SX86NW/9) and near Dainton (Silvester 1980, 42-43). A Roman coin hoard was also discovered near Stoneycombe (Turton & Weddell 1991, 2). Part of the A381 road east of Ipplepen may represent an extension of a Roman road from Exeter to Teignbridge (Margary 1973, route 491, 118–20).

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The project was commissioned by Mr William Putt and the fieldwork was undertaken by Alex Farnell and James Aaronson. Finds were processed and catalogued by Alex Farnell and comments on these are by John Allan. Illustrations were prepared by Neil Goodwin.

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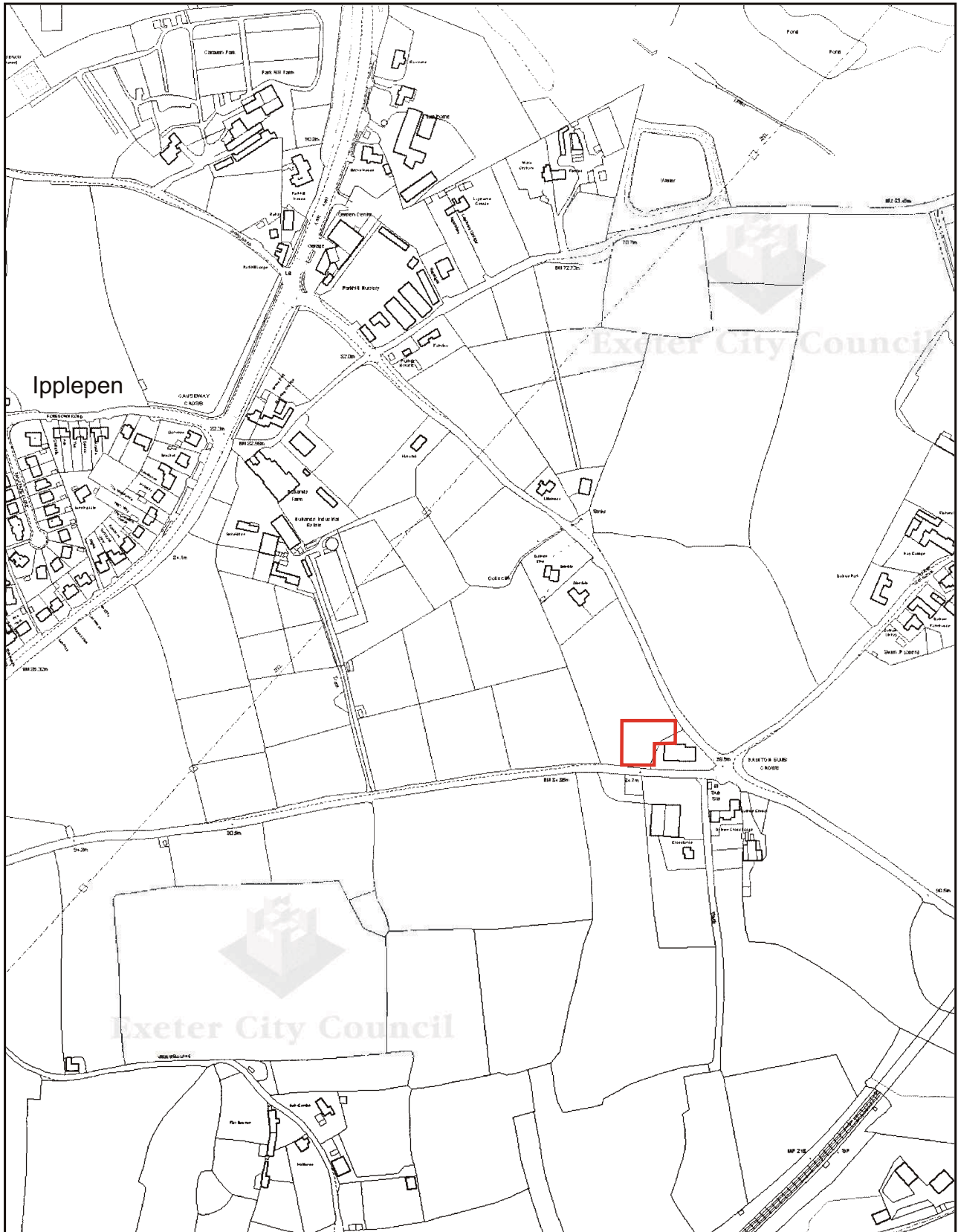


Fig. 1 Location of site. Scale 1:5,000. Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. Exeter City Council 100025345.

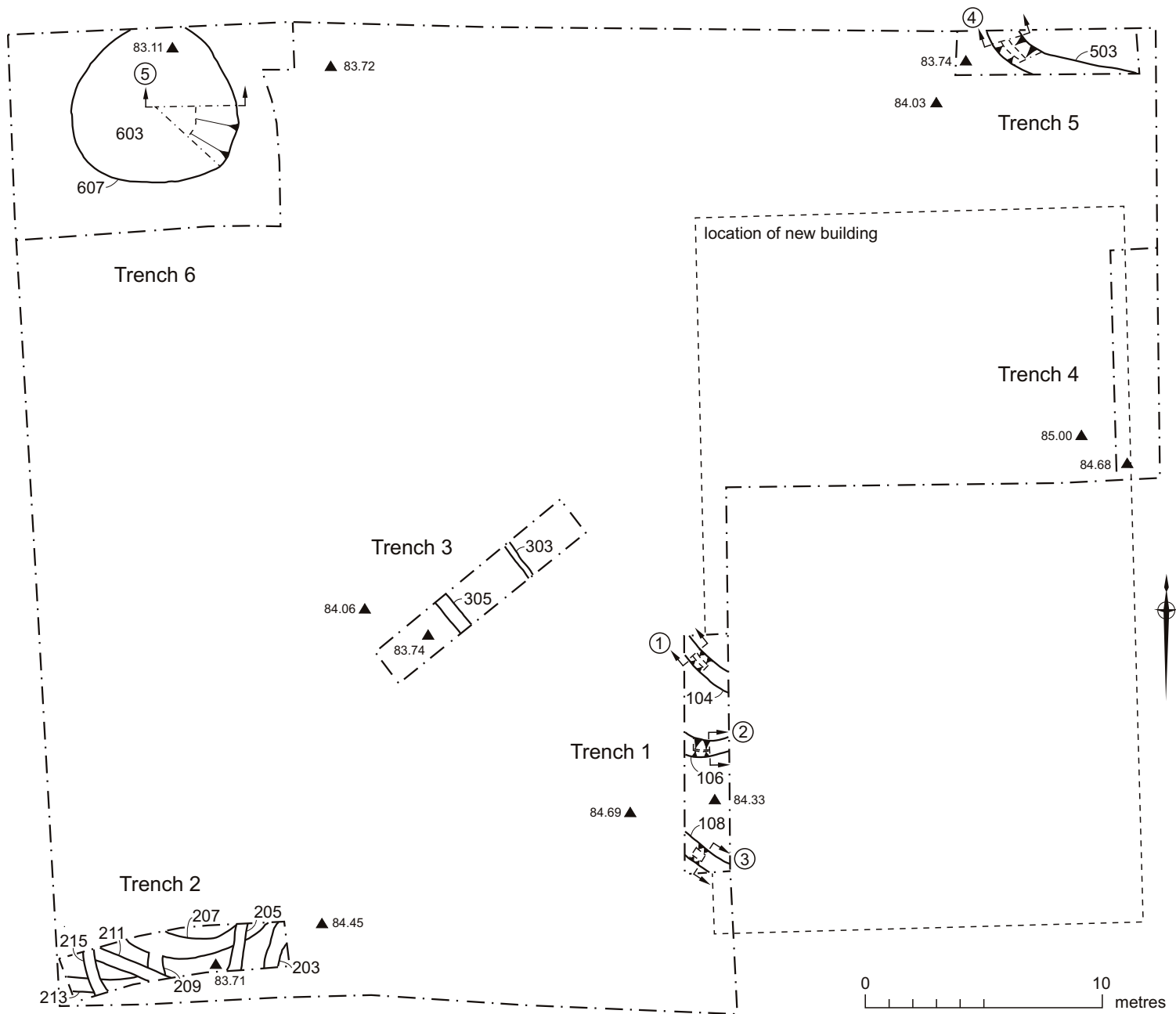


Fig. 2 Plan of trenches and features.

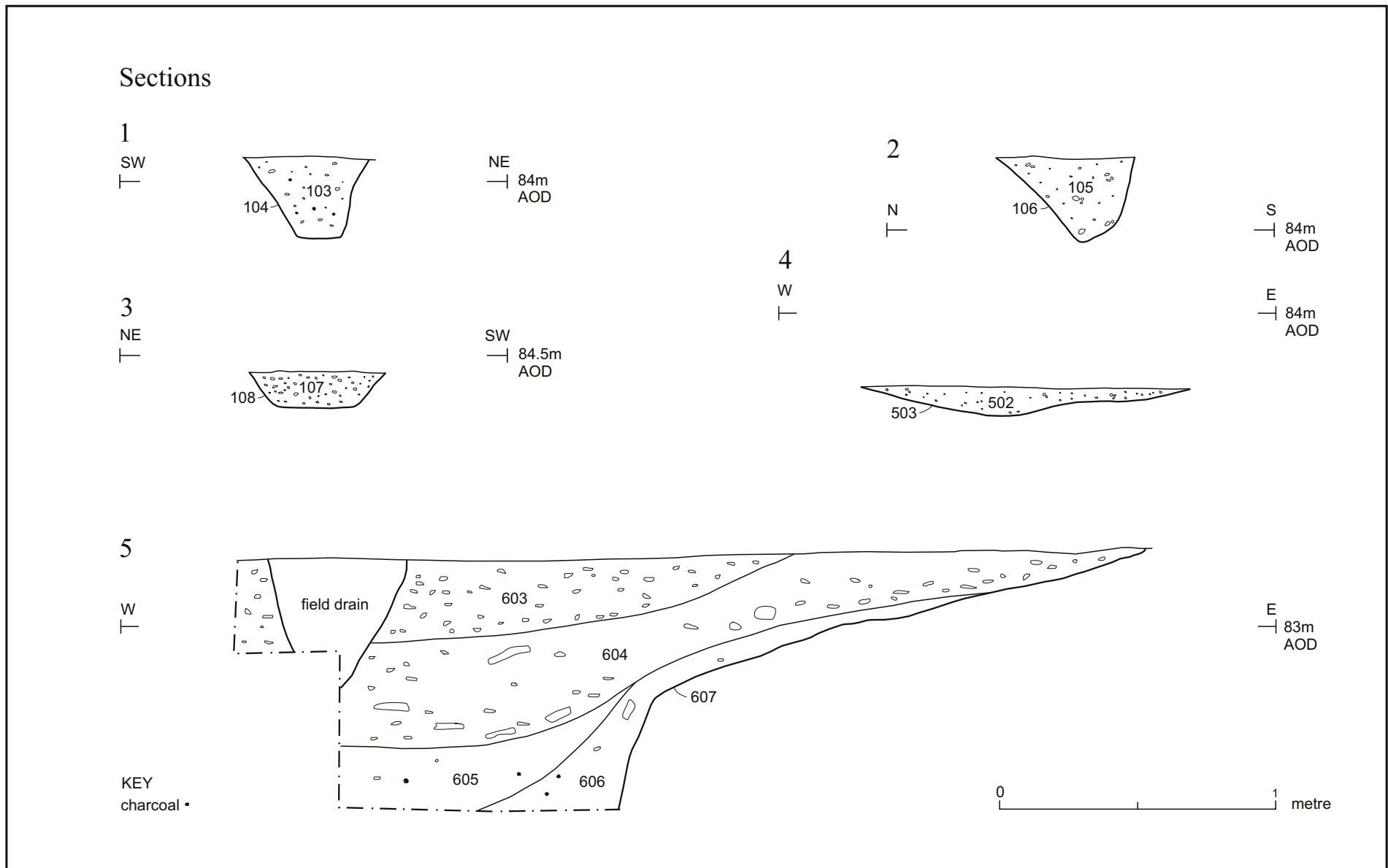


Fig. 3 Relevant sections.



Plate 1 General view of site, looking east.



Plate 2 Roman quarry pit 607, view to north-east (scales 2m & 1m).



Plate 3 Section excavated through quarry pit 607. View to west (scales 2m & 1m).



Plate 4 South-facing section of quarry pit 607. View to north (scale 2m).