

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRENCH  
EVALUATION ON LAND AT FLAMBERTS,  
PRIGG LANE, SOUTH PETHERTON, SOMERSET**

**prepared for Strongvox Homes**

**by Alex Farnell and John P. Salvatore**

**Exeter Archaeology**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared for Strongvox Homes and presents the results of an archaeological trench evaluation undertaken by Exeter Archaeology (EA) in March 2010, on land at Flamberts, Prigg Lane, South Petherton. It represents archaeological work required by South Somerset District Council as a condition of the grant of planning permission for the erection of 6 dwellings and the conversion of an existing barn into 3 dwellings (planning ref: 09/03095/FUL).

### 1.1 **The site** (ST 34339/11695, Fig. 1)

The site lies within the village of South Petherton in South Somerset about 12k west of Yeovil. The proposed development area was level and occupied a low lying area towards the centre of the village with land rising to the east and west. A narrow water course extended along the western boundary of the site, contained on its western side by a boundary wall and on its eastern side by a stone revetment. The area available for investigation was approximately 50sqm but evaluation was restricted to areas of proposed below ground disturbance. The underlying geology is Jurassic and Cretaceous siltstone and sandstone (SSEW, 1983) although these geological levels were not reached in evaluation

## 2. PROJECT SPECIFICATION

Specifications for archaeological evaluation were set out in a written scheme of investigation put forward by Exeter Archaeology in March 2009 in accordance with guidelines set out by Somerset County Council (*Heritage Service Archaeological Handbook*). The principal requirements were:

- evaluative trenching sufficient to investigate targeted areas within the footprint of the proposed development site, these target areas determined by the proposed location of new build.
- reporting and archiving as appropriate and sufficient for the purposes of fulfilling the planning requirements of South Somerset District Council.

## 3. AIMS

The principal aim of the project was to establish the presence or absence of archaeological deposits within the site. If present, the aim was to establish the date, character and function of the archaeological levels or deposits exposed with the further aim of informing the planning process response and the need or otherwise for a subsequent programme of archaeological investigation or mitigation within the site either prior to, and/or during construction.

## 4. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

South Petherton was recorded in Domesday (AD 1086) as a large manor previously held as a Royal Estate under King Edward prior to the Norman Conquest. The name Petherton derives from settlement ( Anglo-Saxon *tun*) alongside the river Parrett – the subsequent corruption bringing (South) Petherton. The river Parrett lies east of the present settlement. The main settlement was a Saxon mint site with a the Church of St peter and St Paul having origins probably as a Saxon minster (Ellison, 1983, 91-4)

whilst the development site can be identified as lying to the south of the early manor house (probably outside of the core Anglo-Saxon settlement area) within an area of possible medieval occupation. It is one of a number of Somerset villages identified by Aston (1988, 76) as 'composite' in nature i.e. a village which has grown from an amalgam of closely juxtaposed hamlets or small settlements clustered around a small centre with spaces between the hamlets later infilled.

No known sites of archaeological interest were previously recorded as lying within the development area.

## 5. METHOD

Six trenches totalling 95.5m in length were excavated using a tracked machine fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless grading bucket. Trenches were positioned to investigate areas where below ground disturbance by development was expected to occur; primarily the footprints of proposed houses (Fig. 2).

Machining continued until either natural subsoil or archaeological deposits were reached. Where archaeological deposits were exposed, trenches were cleaned back by hand, and the deposits investigated and recorded. Deeper investigation of alluvial deposits was conducted by way of sondages (limited but deeper test excavations) at either end of trenches 1 and 4 (details below).

Standard EA recording procedures were employed. Stratigraphic information was recorded on pro-forma single context record sheets; a drawn record was compiled in plan and section at scales of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate and a photographic record was prepared in black and white film and digital (colour) format.

## 6. RESULTS (Figs.1-3)

Deep alluvial deposits were encountered within the trenches across the site, which were investigated to a depth of at least 1.2m with a maximum depth of 2.42m at either ends of Trench 1. A broadly consistent sequence of deposits was encountered across the site; typically comprising (below topsoil) of a post-medieval subsoil above alluvial deposits. The alluvial deposits consisted of thick gleyed silty clay layers and contained occasional preserved organic matter towards the bottom of the sequence which eventually gave way to peat layers (individual trench details provided below). Due to a high water table the trenches flooded below a depth of approx 1m.

### 6.1 Trench 1 (Figs.2 and 3; Plates 1 and 2)

This trench measured 32m in length and was orientated approximately N-S.

#### Deposit sequence

0-200mm Modern surfaces (Contexts 101, 102)  
 200-520mm Topsoil (103)  
 520mm-2.42m Alluvial clay (104-107)  
 2.42m-2.6m+ Peat (108)

The alluvial deposits (104-107) were excavated to a maximum depth of 2.42m within the sondage at the north end of the trench (Fig. 3, Section 2). A layer of dark black peat (108) was recorded at the base of the excavated sequence.

A single archaeological feature was recorded in Trench 1 (see below).

Feature 109 (Fig.3, Section 1) was a ditch located on an approximate E-W alignment. It measured 1.5m wide and 600mm deep and contained two fills. The primary fill of the ditch (111) consisted of bluish-grey silty clay whilst the secondary fill (110) was light yellowish-brown silty clay. A small number of 17th-19th-century pottery sherds and a small number of animal bone fragments were recovered from the ditch fills.

### 6.2 Trench 2 (Fig.2)

This trench measured 9m in length and was orientated approximately N-S.

#### Deposit sequence

- 0- 200mm Topsoil/modern surfaces (Contexts 201, 202)
- 200-400mm Subsoil (203)
- 400mm-1.3m Alluvial clay (204)
- 1.3m+ Peat (205)

### 6.3 Trench 3 (Fig.2)

This trench measured 11m in length and was orientated WSW-ENE.

#### Deposit sequence

- 0-440mm Topsoil/modern surfaces (Contexts 300, 301)
- 440-850mm Post-medieval subsoil (302)
- 850mm-1.05m Course rubble (303)
- 1.05m+ Alluvial clay (304)

A course rubble layer (303) recorded between layers 302 and 304 extended over a distance of 5m in the north of the trench. The rubble was tentatively interpreted as a consolidation layer.

### 6.4 Trench 4 (Figs.2 and 3; Plate 3)

This trench measured 17m in length and was orientated approximately E-W.

#### Deposit sequence

- 0-200mm Topsoil (Context 400)
- 200-400mm Subsoil (401)
- 400mm-1.3m Alluvial clay: dark greyish-black clay (404)
- 1.3m-1.6m+ Alluvial clay: whitish-grey clay (405)

The alluvial deposits (404, 405) were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.6m below the modern ground surface within the sondage in the west end of Trench 4 (Fig. 3, Section 3).

### 6.5 Trench 5 (Fig.2)

This trench measured 20.5 m in length and was orientated approximately E-W.

#### Deposit sequence

0- 150mm Topsoil (Context 500)

150-630mm Subsoil (501, 502)

630-900mm Alluvial clay: pale greyish-brown clay (504)

900mm+ Alluvial clay: bluish-grey clay (505)

#### 6.6 Trench 6 (Fig.2)

This trench measured 6m in length and was orientated approximately E-W.

#### Deposit sequence

0-0.38m Modern surfaces (600, 601)

0.38m-0.86m Subsoil (602)

0.86m-1m Alluvial clay: dark orangey-brown (603)

### 7. THE FINDS

The evaluation produced a very small assemblage of pottery and faunal bone from the fills of the ditch 109 recorded in Trench 1. The pottery, two sherds only, was identified as South Somerset coarseware of the 17th - 19th centuries. Six fragments of bone were recovered from the lower fill of the ditch (111) including a cattle radius, cattle vertebra and a sheep ulna. No butchery or pathology signs were noted.

### 8. DISCUSSION

The evaluation has demonstrated the presence across the site of alluvial deposits which, where tested, were found at depths between 1.3m to 2.42m below the ground surface. Compressed organic material (peat) was observed in several locations beneath the alluvial. The evaluation produced no features or evidence of medieval occupation nor any compelling evidence of activity prior to the post-medieval period.

Post-medieval activity is represented by topsoil found across the site; this mixed topsoil is probably associated with the domestic and garden use of the area as a house plot from at least the early 20th century. A feature representing a shallow E-W aligned ditch was exposed within trench 1, cutting from the level of the upper horizon of the alluvial clay. It is interpreted as a post-medieval drainage and/or boundary ditch of probable 19th-century date.

### 9. CONCLUSION

Although the site area was relatively close in proximity to the Domesday manor house, the Church of St Peter and St Paul and the main area of Anglo-Saxon settlement of South Petherton the archaeological evaluation has demonstrated a paucity of activity with only a single post-medieval feature recorded. No evidence of medieval or earlier occupation was exposed or has been evidenced by finds material.

### 10. PROJECT ARCHIVE AND 'OASIS' REPORT

A fully integrated project archive has been compiled and will be deposited at the Somerset County Museum, Taunton under museum accession number 28/2010

A report of the evaluation (including a pdf version of this document) will be submitted to the on-line database OASIS (On-line Access to the Index of archaeological investigationS), under OASIS ID: exeterar1-75380.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work was commissioned and funded by Strongvox Homes and managed by Scott Gill (Strongvox) and Peter Stead (EA). Site work was supervised by Alex Farnell with assistance from Jerry Austin and Fiona Pink. The report was written by John P. Salvatore with input from Alex Farnell and with illustrations prepared by Tony Ives. The finds were identified by J. Allan.

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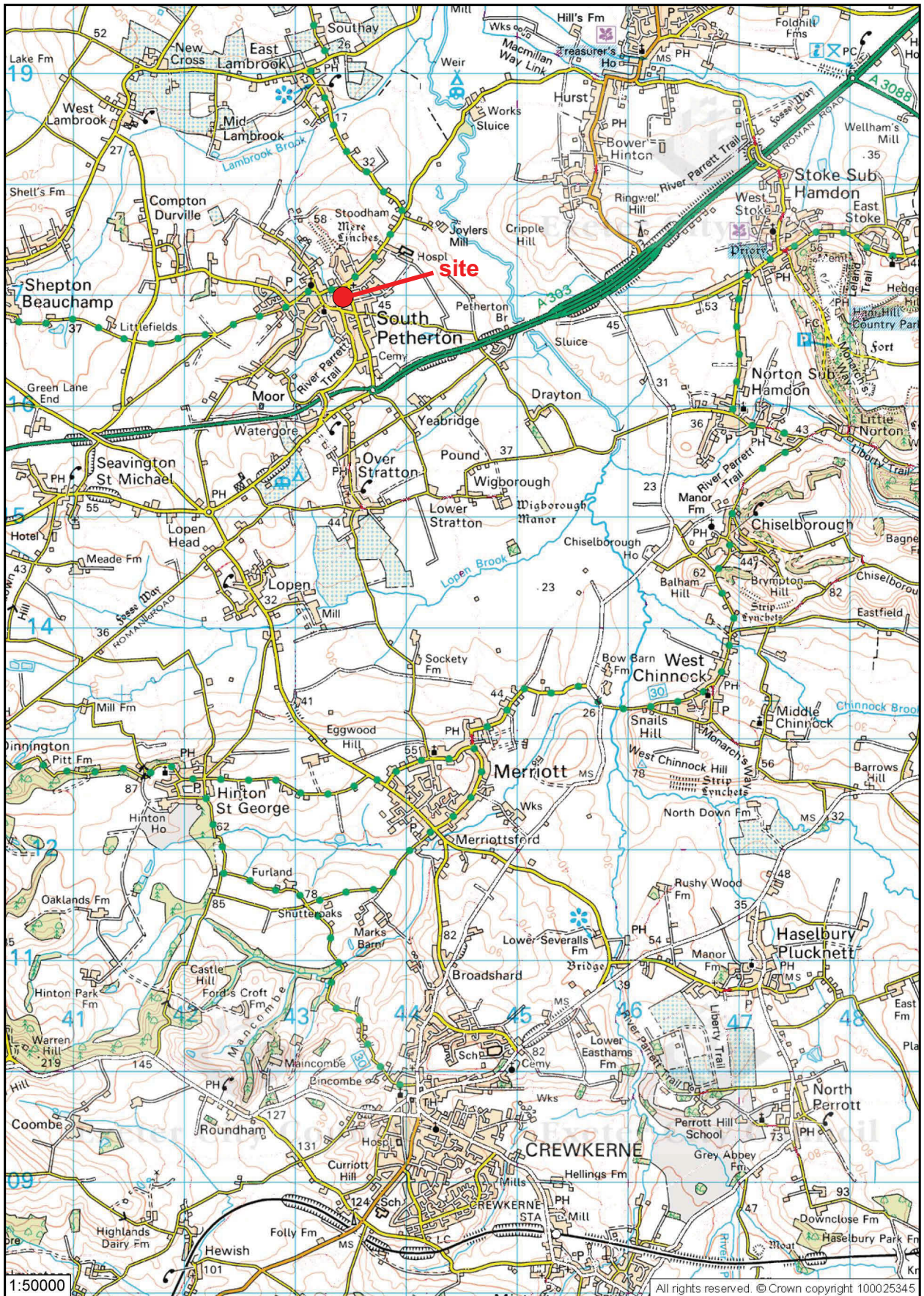


Fig. 1 Location of site.



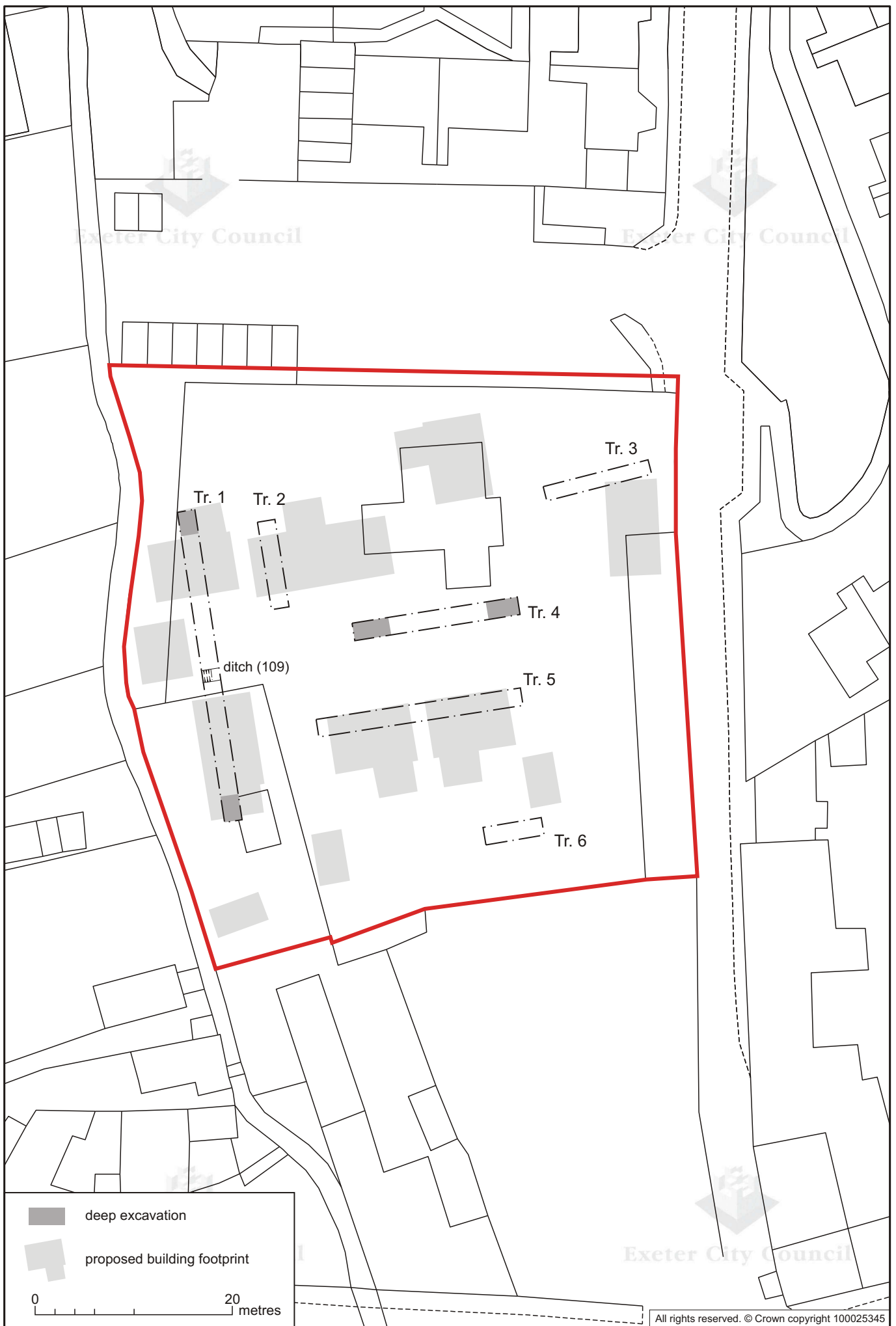
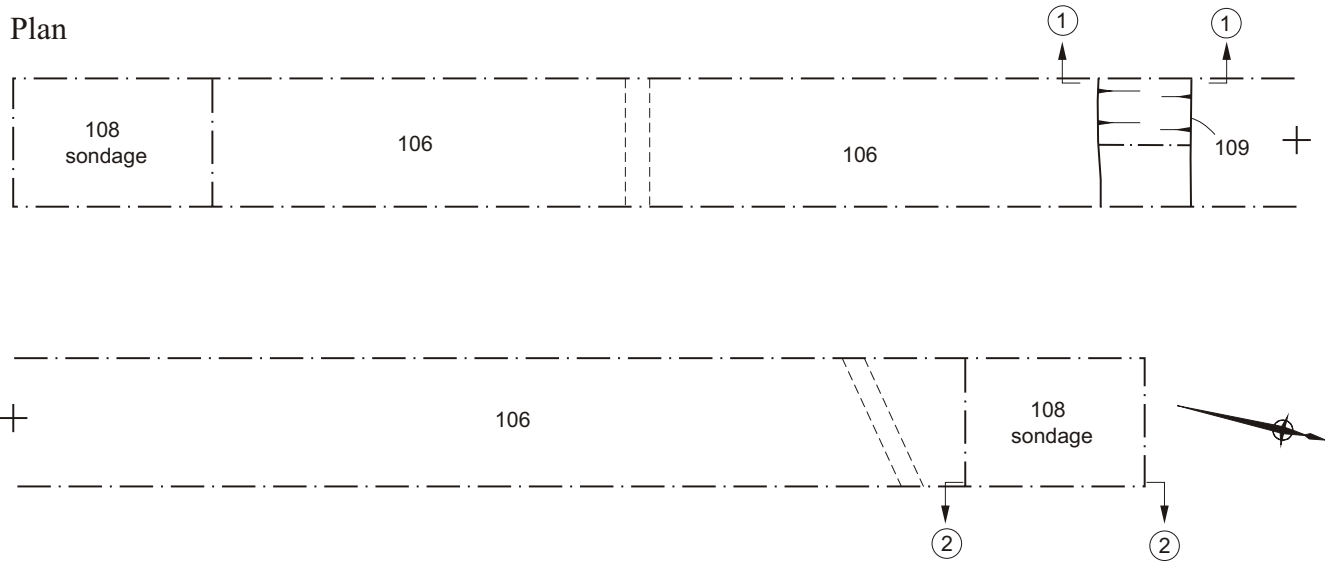


Fig. 2 Location of trenches

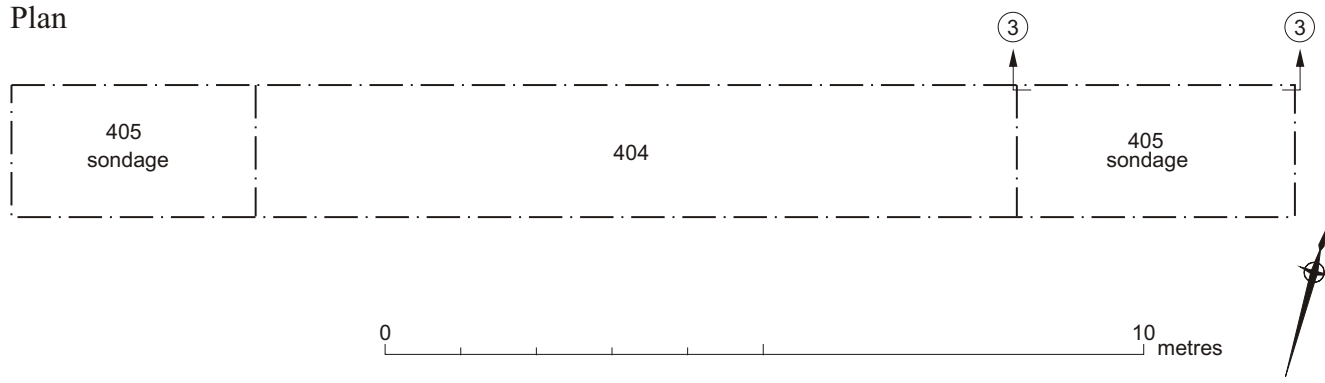
# Trench 1

## Plan

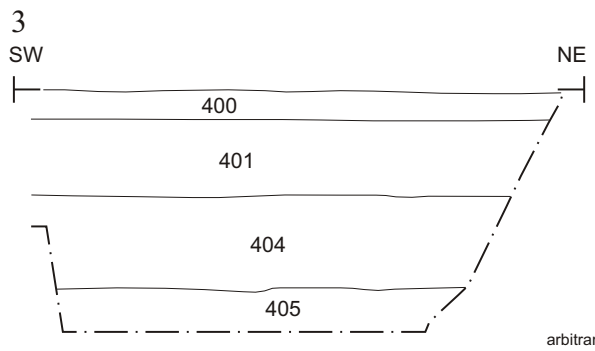
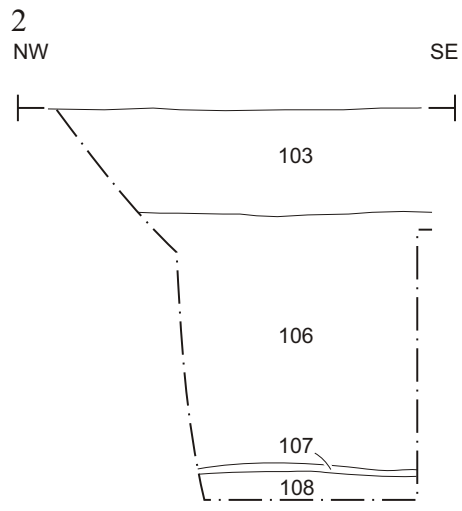
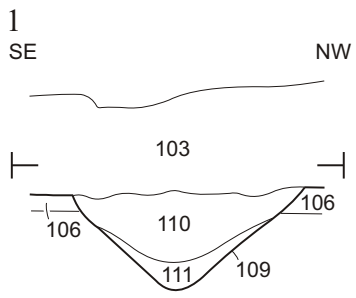


# Trench 4

## Plan



## Sections:



arbitrary datum throughout



Fig. 3 Trenches 1 and 4, plans and sections.



Plate 1 General view: Trench 1, looking north.



Plate 2 Trench1: detail of Section 2, looking east.



Plate 3 Trench 4: sondage, looking north.