

**Archaeological Evaluation Report  
Hermitage Farm, High Hurstwood  
Buxted, East Sussex**

**NGR: TQ 4935 2489**

**Planning Ref: WD/2012/0280/F**

**ASE Project No: 4596  
Site Code: HFR12**

**ASE Report No: 2012113  
OASIS id: archaeol6-125607**

**By Ben Sharp**

**May 2012**

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**Abstract**

*Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Mrs Julia Cooper to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of the redevelopment of land at Hermitage Farm, Hurstwood road, East Sussex. Three trenches, totalling 30m in length were opened in the field adjacent to existing properties, to reveal no archaeological features or finds.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE) a division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA) at the Institute of Archaeology (IoA), University College London (UCL) was commissioned by Mrs Julia Cooper to conduct an archaeological evaluation in advance of redevelopment of land at Hermitage Farm, High Hurstwood, Buxted, East Sussex, NGR TQ 4935 2489 (Figure 1).

1.1.2 The proposed development consists of the demolition of the existing house, workshop, timber car shed and gazebo, and the construction of a new house and music studio on the site.

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

1.2.1 The site overlies deposits of mid orange/light blue Weald Clay and occupies an area c. 50-100m east of the top of a hill, within a field, south of the existing properties on Hurstwood Road.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

1.3.1 Planning permission for the development has been granted (Application No.: WD/2012/0280/F). The condition attached to the proposed scheme of works is as follows:

*“No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, including a timetable for the investigation, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority and the works shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details”.*

*REASON: To enable the recording of any items of historical or archaeological interest as the development is likely to disturb items of archaeological interest in accordance with the requirements of Planning Policy Statement 5 – “Planning for the Historic Environment” and Policy BE12 of the Non Statutory Wealden Local Plan.*

1.3.2 Accordingly, a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (ASE 2012) was submitted to East Sussex County Council for approval prior to commencement of fieldwork. All work was carried out in accordance with this and with the standards and guidance documentation of East Sussex County Council (ESCC 2008) and of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).

#### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

- 1.4.1 The aims of the archaeological investigation were to ascertain whether archaeological remains are present on the site, and if so, assess the character and date of these remains. Specifically, to assess whether any Mesolithic or early prehistoric features may exist within the area of proposed development, and if there is any evidence for medieval occupation of the site, associated with a hermitage to the north. The results of the evaluation will determine whether further archaeological mitigation will be required in advance of development.

#### **1.5 Scope of the Report**

- 1.5.1 This report details the findings of the trial trenching which took place on 09/05/12, supervised by Ben Sharp, and surveyed by John Cook. The project was managed by Andy Leonard (fieldwork) and Dan Swift (post-excavation).

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

2.1 A search of the ESCC Historic Environment Record (HER) within a 1km radius of the site was completed to help gain a wider archaeological picture of the area which the site inhabits, and an indication of the deposits which may be encountered during evaluative works. The results of this search, centred on NGR TQ 4935 2489 are summarised in Table 1 overleaf and locations are shown on Figure 1.

### **2.2 Prehistoric**

2.2.1 Most entries in the HER relate to the early prehistoric period. Most notably, excavations which took place in 1974 and 1975 by Jacobi and Tebbutt on a site c. 150m northeast of Hermitage Farm recovered 4,329 pieces of worked flint associated with three hearth features dated by radiocarbon to the Mesolithic period (SAC 119, 1-36).

### **2.3 Romano-British**

2.3.1 Fieldwalking by the Wealden Iron Research Group in 1976 revealed the site of a probable Romano-British bloomery (MES 2904) with refuse deposits of slag, cinder, roasted ore and furnace debris, and six sherds of Romano-British courseware (SAC 119, 57-64). This site exists c. 500m to the southwest of the proposed development.

### **2.4 Medieval**

2.4.1 Approximately 100m to the north of Hermitage Farm, a habitation cut into solid rock, comprising three rooms connected by passages with a hearth and aperture in the roof above, exists at Vineyard Rocks (MES 2848). Although undated it is thought to be a hermitage and medieval in origin.

<b>ESCC HER No.</b>	<b>OS Co-ordinates (TQ)</b>	<b>Description</b>
MES 2825	TQ 5004 2426	Post-medieval iron furnace and pond bays
MES 2832	TQ 4943 2570	15 <sup>th</sup> century farmhouse
MES 2841	TQ 4964 2508	Mesolithic rock shelter
MES 2848	TQ 494 250	Medieval rock shelter
MES 2865	TQ 485 253	Bloomery of unknown date
MES 2872	TQ 4910 2490	Bloomery of unknown date
MES 2881	TQ 504 251	Medieval bloomer
MES 2884	TQ 500 244	Flint scatter of Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age date
MES 2885	TQ 502 248	Flint scatter of Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age date
MES 2901	TQ 488 240	Neolithic arrowhead
MES 2902	TQ 486 241	Mesolithic Axe
MES 2903	TQ 495 248	Palaeolithic arrowhead
MES 2904	TQ 490 246	Romano-British bloomery
MES 2905	TQ 496 243	Mesolithic Axe
MES 2906	TQ 497 242	Flint scatter dating to the Mesolithic and Neolithic
MES 2907	TQ 486 241	Mesolithic Axe
MES 2908	TQ 4988 2419	Post-medieval earthwork (pond bay?)
MES 7169	TQ 4987 2532	Mesolithic core found within a burnt mound, possibly a hearth
MES 15931	TQ 4985 2529	16 <sup>th</sup> century coin
MES 15933	TQ 4991 2556	Post medieval spur

Table 1: Summary of ESCC HER records within 1km of NGR TQ 4935 2489



### 3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

(Figure 2)

- 3.1 The evaluation initially comprised the machine excavation of 2 x 10m x 1.8m trenches (Trenches 1 and 2) situated outside the limits of existing buildings but within the impact area of new structures on the development. The location of Trench 1 was moved roughly 3m to the south of the proposed trench location prescribed in the WSI (ASE 2012) in order to avoid a well-established tree.
- 3.2 Trenches locations were thoroughly checked with a CAT tool before excavations began to ensure no live services existed. Excavation took place under constant supervision of ASE staff using a JCB fitted with a 1.8m flat-bladed ditching bucket.
- 3.3 Following the discovery of two archaeological features in Trench 2 Greg Chuter (ESCC) asked that another 10m long trench (Trench 3) be excavated c. 5m to the south of and parallel to Trench 2 in order to better understand the character and extent of the deposits encountered.
- 3.4 All deposits were excavated and recorded as per the WSI methodology (*ibid.*) using standard ASE recording sheets. Sections were drawn at an appropriate scale on plastic drafting film, and a full digital photographic record was kept of all features and trenches opened during the excavation.
- 3.6 All excavated features and the position of trial trenches dug across the site were recorded in plan by GPS.

### 3.7 The Site Archive

- 3.7.1 The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE. Lewes Museum were contacted by email on 27/04/12 with regards to housing the material, we await their reply. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 2).

Number of Contexts	15
No. of files/paper record	1 File
Plan and sections sheets	1
Bulk Samples	-
Photographs	11 Digital
Bulk finds	-
Registered finds	-
Environmental flots/residue	-

Table 2: Quantification of site archive

## 4.0 RESULTS

### 4.1 Geology

4.1.1 The natural geology encountered on site comprised mid orange/light blueish grey Weald Clay with infrequent inclusions of ironstone. Such deposits were encountered beneath well defined layers of topsoil and subsoil at depths ranging from 59.27m OD in Trench 3, to 60.68m OD in Trench 1.

### 4.2 Trench 1

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Max. thickness	OD
1/001	Layer	Topsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.27m	61.22m
1/002	Layer	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.27m	60.95m
1/003	Layer	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	N/A	60.68m

Table 3: Trench 1 list of recorded contexts

4.2.1 Trench 1 measured 10m x 1.8m. It was found to contain no archaeological features. Natural Weald Clay (1/003) was encountered at a depth of 60.68m OD, below distinct topsoil and subsoil layers (1/001) and (1/002), which were of equal thickness, 0.27m.

4.2.2 A cable was located running roughly west – east through the centre of the Trench, presumably running to an existing workshop building on site. The cable was undetected by CAT scanning and was presumed dead but was nevertheless unbroken by the excavations.

### 4.3 Trench 2 (Figure 3)

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Max. thickness	OD
2/001	Layer	Topsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.27m	60.05m
2/002	Layer	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.27m	59.70m
2/003	Layer	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	N/A	59.50m
2/004	Cut	Tree throw	0.80m	0.94m	0.37m	59.50m
2/005	Fill	-	0.80m	0.94m	0.37m	59.50m
2/006	Cut	Tree throw	0.50m	0.60m	0.23m	59.65m
2/007	Fill	-	0.50m	0.60m	0.23m	59.65m

Table 4: Trench 2 list of recorded contexts

- 4.3.1 Trench 2 was excavated on a southwest to northeast alignment and measured 10m x 1.8m. Natural Weald Clay (2/003) was encountered at an average depth of 59.50m OD beneath a thicker layer of topsoil (2/001) and subsoil (2/002) than elsewhere on site.
- 4.3.2 Two features were observed in the southern side of Trench 2, cutting into the natural geology, sealed by the subsoil, and disappearing into the Trench edge.
- 4.3.3 Feature [2/004] resembled a reasonably defined pit or ditch terminus, measuring 0.94m in width and 0.37m in depth, with 0.8m length visible in the trench. Excavation revealed fill (2/005), a mid greyish orangey brown silty clay, with very infrequent charcoal inclusions. This contained no finds. The base of the feature showed some signs of rooting and it was concluded that [2/004] was a tree bole.
- 4.3.4 Feature [2/006] existed approximately 2m west of [2/004] and resembled another ditch terminus or small pit, measuring 0.6m in width and 0.23m in depth, with 0.5m length visible in the trench. Excavation revealed that fill (2/007) was extremely similar to (2/005) but contained no charcoal. No finds were recovered. It was concluded that [2/004] was also a tree bole.
- 4.3.5 To support the interpretation that these features were naturally formed and to rule out the possibility that they might extend to the south, Trench 3 was opened parallel to Trench 2.

#### 4.4 Trench 3

List of recorded contexts:

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Max. thickness	OD
2/001	Layer	Topsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.25m	59.70m
2/002	Layer	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.20m	59.47m
2/003	Layer	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	N/A	59.27m
2/004	Cut	Burrow Cut	2.00m	0.20m	0.05m	59.27m
2/005	Fill	Burrow Fill	2.00m	0.20m	0.05m	59.27m

Table 5: Trench 3 list of recorded contexts

- 4.4.1 Trench 3 was opened parallel to and to the south of Trench 2. Natural Weald Clay (3/003) was encountered at an average depth of 59.27m OD, beneath well defined layer of topsoil (3/001) and subsoil (3/002), 0.25m and 0.20m in depth respectively.
- 4.4.2 No trace of features corresponding to those recorded in Trench 2 was seen.
- 4.4.3 The trench did however contain another naturally occurring feature, [3/004] which was rectilinear in nature and measured 0.2m wide, 0.05m deep and 2m x 1m. The fill (3/005) was a light/mid greyish brown silty clay with no inclusions, and no finds recovered. The base of the feature was very irregular. It was concluded that it was also caused by root damage. The feature was therefore not planned.

**5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 No archaeological features or finds were recorded during the excavations. Therefore no evidence of prehistoric or medieval (or other) date was recorded.
- 5.2 Features [2/004] and [2/006] in Trench 2 could not be traced into Trench 3. Feature [3/004] within Trench 3 was insubstantial and irregular.
- 5.3 All three features are considered to be naturally occurring tree boles.
- 5.4 Given the total lack of archaeological remains uncovered during the excavation of the three trenches it is not considered that any further archaeological mitigation is required.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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ESCC 2008. *Recommended Standard Conditions For Archaeological Fieldwork, Recording, and Post-Excavation Work (Development Control) in East Sussex*

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Sussex Archaeological Collections 1860, Vol. 12, 13-16

Sussex Archaeological Collections 1981, Vol. 119 1 - 36

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**HER Summary Form**

Site Code	HFR12					
Identification Name and Address	Hermitage Farm, High Hurstwood, Buxted					
County, District &/or Borough	East Sussex					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 4935 2489					
Geology	Weald Clay					
Arch. South-East Project Number	4596					
Type of Fieldwork	<b>Eval.</b>	Excav.	Watching Brief	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	<b>Green Field</b>	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	<b>Eval. 09/05/12</b>	Excav.	WB.	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Mrs Julia Cooper					
Project Manager	Andy Leonard					
Project Supervisor	Ben Sharp					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM	Other Modern		
<p>Summary</p> <p>Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Mrs Julia Cooper to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of the redevelopment of land at Hermitage Farm, Hurstwood road, East Sussex. Three trenches, totalling 30m in length were opened in the field adjacent to existing properties, to reveal no archaeological features or finds.</p>						

**OASIS Form**

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**OASIS ID: archaeol6-125607**

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**Project details**

Project name	Hermitage Farm, High Hurstwood, Buxted, East Sussex
Short description of the project	Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Mrs Julia Cooper to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of the redevelopment of land at Hermitage Farm, Hurstwood road, East Sussex. Three trenches, totalling 30m in length were opened in the field adjacent to existing properties, to reveal no archaeological features or finds.
Project dates	Start: 09-05-2012 End: 09-05-2012
Previous/future work	No / No
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Monument type	N/A None
Significant Finds	N/A None
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Rural residential
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

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**Project location**

Country	England
Site location	EAST SUSSEX WEALDEN BUXTED Hermitage Farm, High Hurstwood, Buxted, East Sussex
Postcode	TN22 4BH
Study area	800.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 4935 2489 51.0034212501 0.128878683618 51 00 12 N 000 07 43 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 59.50m Max: 60.68m

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**Project creators**



Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	Private Client
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Andy Leonard
Project supervisor	Ben Sharp
Type of sponsor/funding body	Private
Name of sponsor/funding body	Mrs Julia Cooper

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**Project archives**

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Local Museum
Digital Contents	'other'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography'
Paper Archive recipient	Local Museum
Paper Contents	'other'
Paper Media available	'Photograph','Report','Section','Survey '

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**Project bibliography 1**

Publication type	An article in published serial
Title	-
Serial title	Sussex Archaeological Collections
Author(s)/Editor(s)	-
Serial or multi-article editor(s)	Vol 12
Page numbers	13 - 16

Date 1860

Issuer or publisher -

Place of issue or  
publication -

ISSN -

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**Project  
bibliography 2**

Publication type An article in published serial

Title -

Serial title Sussex Archaeological Collections

Author(s)/Editor(s) -

Serial or multi-  
article editor(s) -

Page numbers 1 - 36

Date 1981

Issuer or publisher -

Place of issue or  
publication -

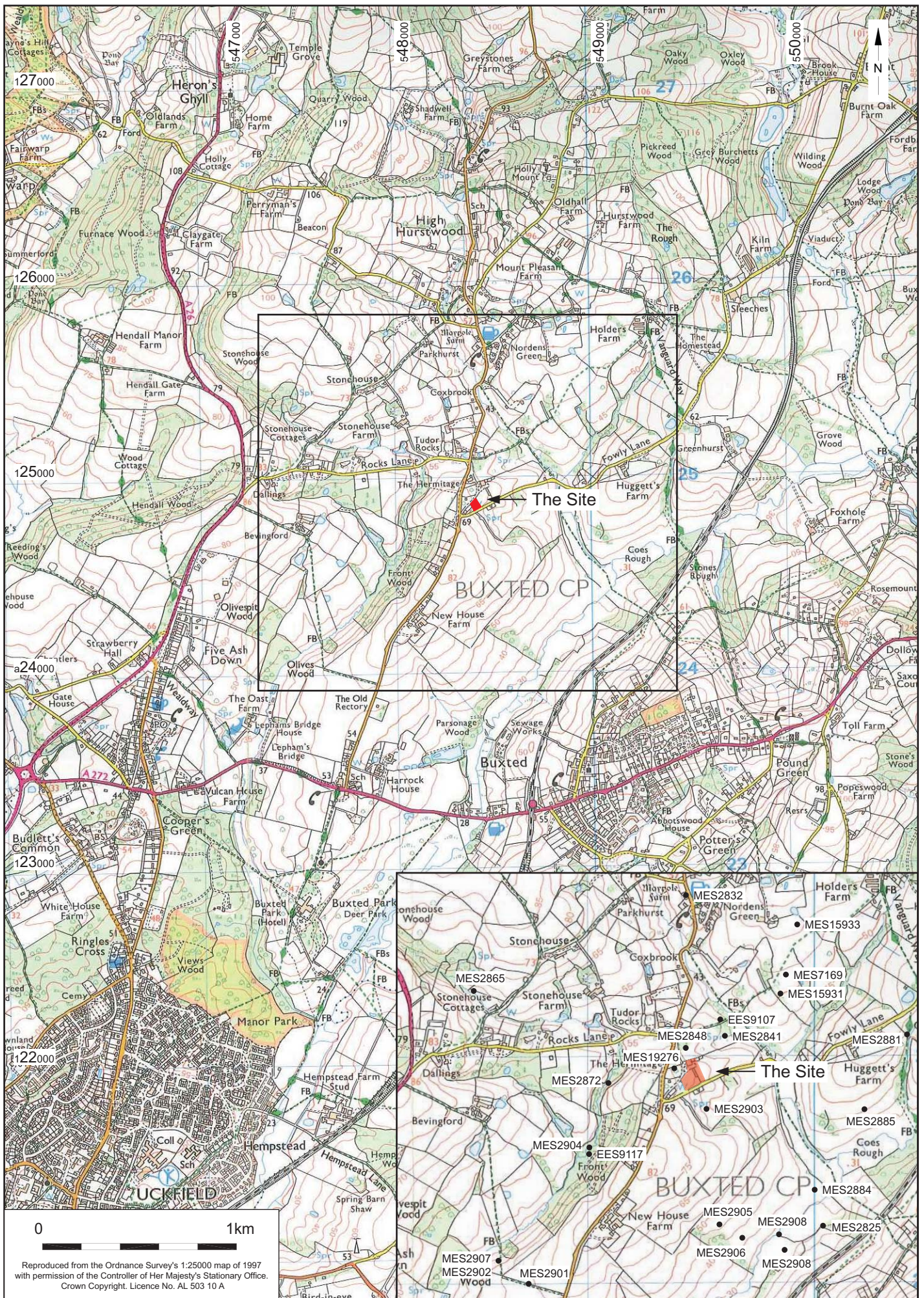
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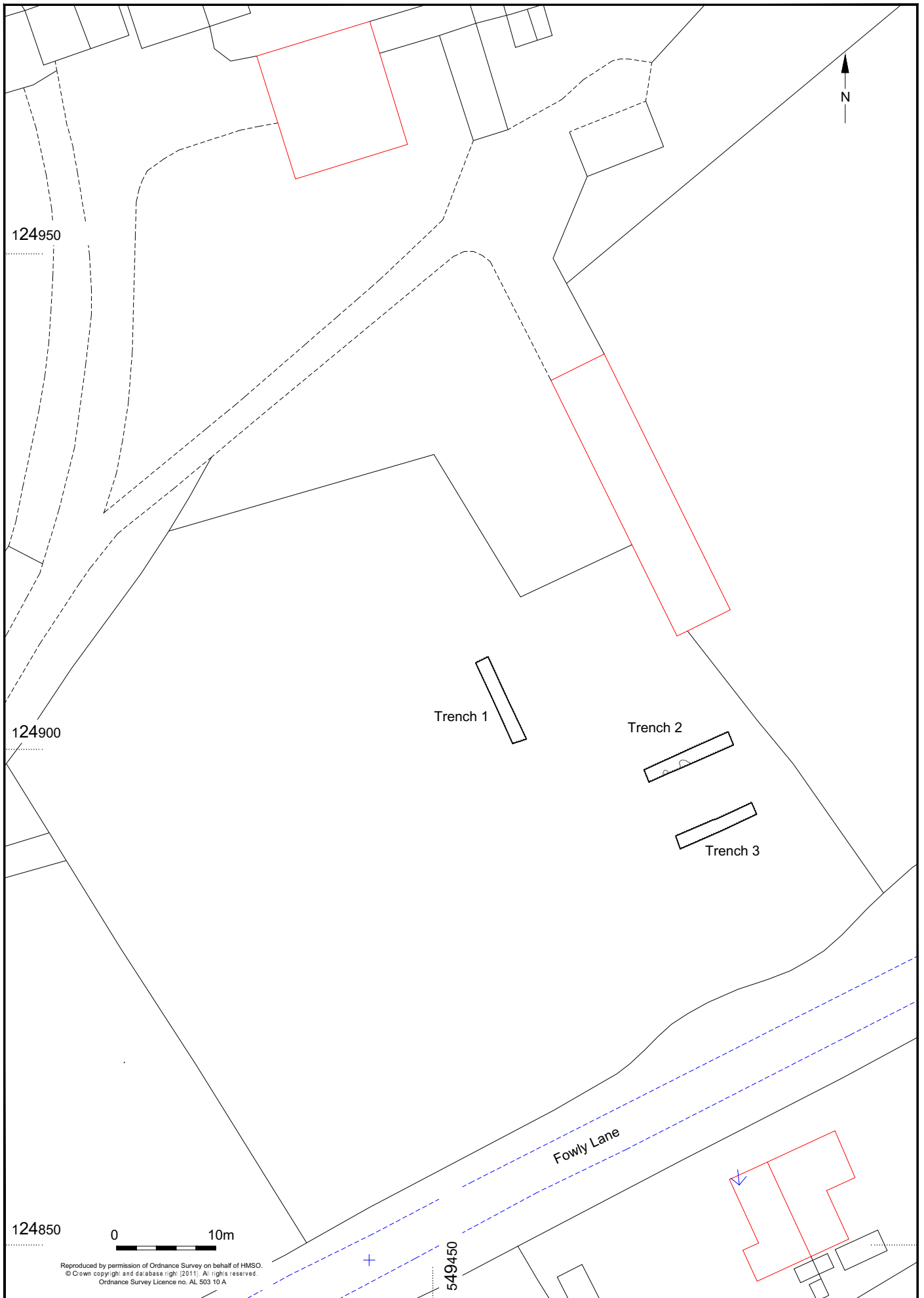




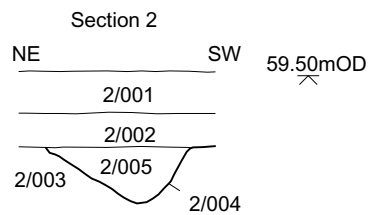
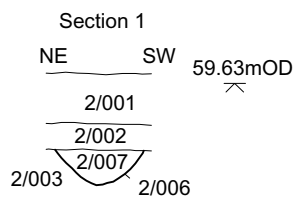
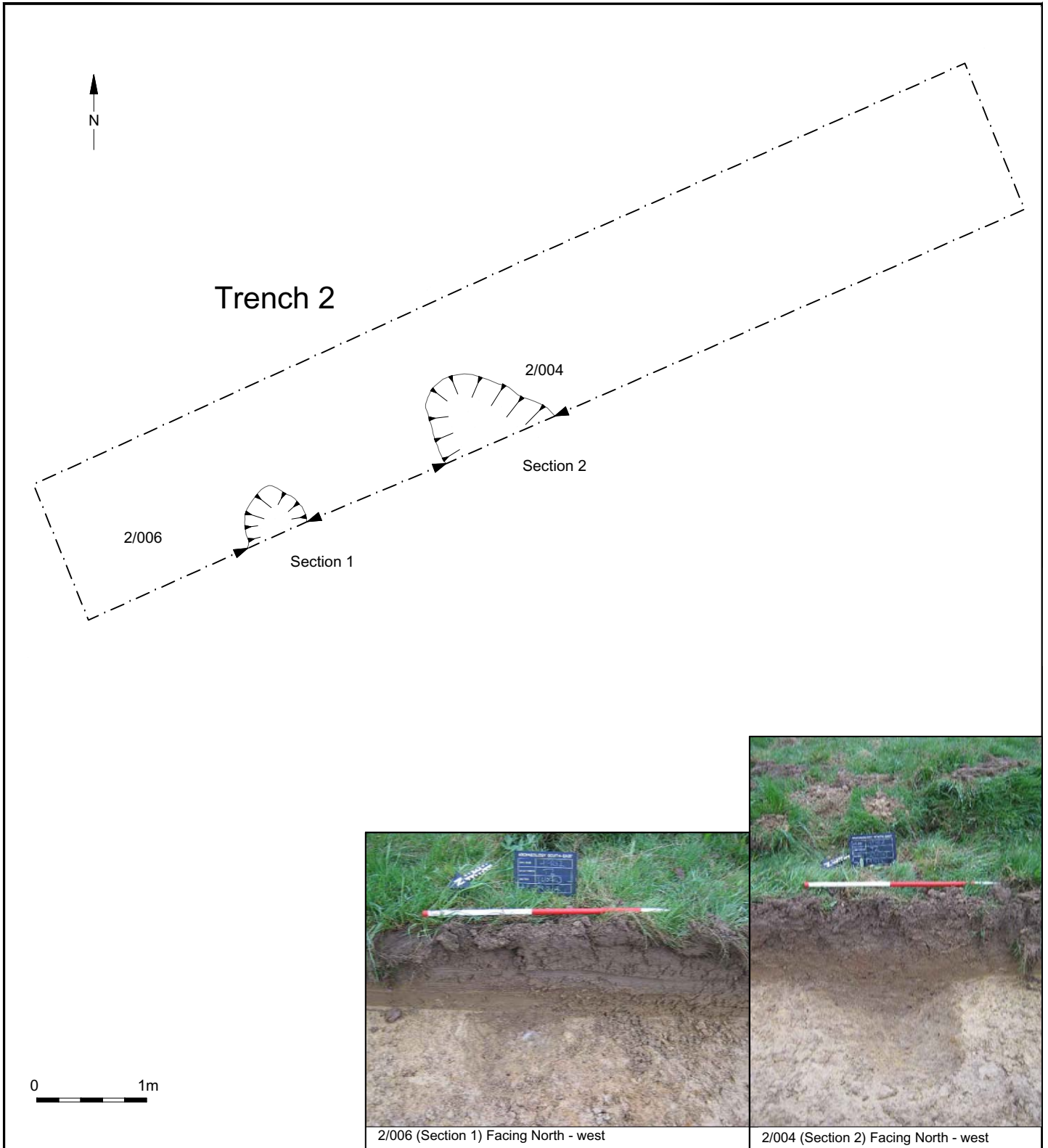
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Project Ref: 4596	April 2012	Site location with HER data	
Report Ref: 2012113	Drawn by: AR		

Fig. 1





© Archaeology South-East		Hermitage Farm, Hurstwood		Fig. 2
Project Ref: 4596	May 2012	Trench location		
Report Ref: 2012113	Drawn by: AR			



© Archaeology South-East		Hermitage Farm, Hurstwood	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 4596	May 2012	Trench 2, plan, sections and photographs	
Report Ref: 2012113	Drawn by: AR		

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