



THE ARCHAEOLOGY CO.

South Farm, Kirkham

Archaeological Trial Trenching Report

July 2022

1. Introduction and Non-Technical Summary

- 1.1 The Archaeology Co. has been appointed by Mr John Cookson of JCL Groundworks Ltd to carry out archaeological trial trenching at South Farm, Kirkham as a part of planning permission consent 2021/1120. 4 trenches were excavated across the site.
- 1.2 The trenches revealed Roman occupation layers to the southern side of the site. The northern side had less archaeology, although showed some features of Roman date cut into the natural clay.

2. The Development Area

- 2.1 The site is located on the southern side of Dowbridge at the wester corner with Roman Way. The postal address is South Farm, Dowbridge, Kirkham PR4 2YL and the National Grid Reference is SD 43159 31911. The site bound to the north by Dowbridge and to the east by Roman Way. To the south and west the site is bounded by fencing to the neighbouring properties. The site encompasses approximately 0.26 ha. and lies on the site of a Roman Fort (HER No. PRN73).

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

- 3.1 Evidence has been found of hunter gatherers in the Fylde area dating from the Late Upper Palaeolithic (16,000 – 8,000 BC). This took the form of the remains of an elk, which was hunted and harpooned at High Furlong, near Kirkham, found to date from 15,500 – 11,500 cal. BC (Barrowclough 2008, 48). Evidence of Mesolithic occupation has also been found, with charcoal from peat beds and changes in the pollen record showing that clearance of vegetation was taking place around 7,000 – 6,000 BC. It is believed that Mesolithic people favoured well drained sands and coastal sites, and the prehistoric coastal wetland in the area would have provided a good source of food and water, and important resources such as chert and flint were likely derived from rocks within the boulder clay (ibid., 15).

- 3.2 A rise in sea level around 4,000 BC caused the area to become a series of islands. Scatters of worked flint have been found on some of these, such as one at Peel. This scatter is believed to be the remains of a ploughed out barrow, as other barrows in the area have been discovered on the 'islands' (Barrowclough 2008, 19). Finds from the late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age (2,500 BC) have also been found across the Fylde, such as axe-hammers and maces as well as bronze implements. Further, a timber track-way known as 'Kate's Pad' and written about in 1850, was excavated by Pilling Historical Society in 1950 and radiocarbon dates placed it in the Late Bronze Age (800 BC) (Sherdley n.d., 14-19). Few permanent Iron Age settlements probably existed within the Kirkham area when the Romans arrived (Blythe 2005).
- 3.3 Excavations undertaken by Lancaster University Archaeology Unit LUAU on Roman Way, immediately east of the site, suggest that the earliest Roman activity at Kirkham is represented by a series of temporary camps defined by relatively insubstantial, successive and re-cut military ditches (Howard-Davis and Buxton 2000 in Blythe 2005). None of these camps seem to have been in use for a long period of time, although the presence of some internal features suggests that some periods of occupation were long enough to warrant semi-permanent structures. The construction of a small ditched and defended fortlet on the top of the hill enclosing what might be a tower may be associated with these temporary camps (Blythe 2005).
- 3.4 Artefactual evidence suggests that the earliest Roman activity at Kirkham was Agricola in date (c. 78 AD). Environmental research and sea level studies suggest that the Fylde was inhospitable during the Roman period, much of it probably covered in raised bogs, with the Fylde coastline lying much closer to Kirkham than it does today. The tower within the fortlet may have functioned as a beacon or lighthouse, and it is possible that the first forts or marching camps were used to accommodate troops landed from the sea en-route to Agricola's northern campaigns. Small Roman vessels could have easily been beached on the shoreline around Kirkham without the need for complex handling facilities, thus explaining Roman interest in this otherwise inhospitable location. Kirkham would be about a day's sail from the Dee at Chester, and the Lune at Lancaster, making it an excellent staging point for coast hopping (Blythe 2005).

- 3.5 A conventional stone fort was constructed at Kirkham in the early second century AD. Excavations at Dowbridge Close revealed the south-eastern defences of this structure, which seems to have had a relatively short period of occupation (Blythe 2005). Excavation by Pickering in 1959 revealed traces of the south west and south east rampart and ditch system of the fort indicating a construction of two periods. The first phase had two ditches, whilst the second followed the normal modification of the addition of a stone wall, and the replacement of the two ditches by a simple ditch 30ft wide. Several fragments of Flavian samian ware suggest initial occupation in the first century AD with the bulk of the finds falling in the first half of the 2nd century, when the site appears to have developed an extensive vicus (Lancashire Historic Environment Record (HER) No. PRN73).
- 3.6 Kirkham was linked with other Roman sites in the Ribble valley (Walton-le- Dale and Ribchester) by a road running along the north bank of the river. During the second century AD the pacification and stabilisation of the northern frontier led to a reduction in military activity in the area, and the evidence from Kirkham suggests that the fort was abandoned in c AD 160, and unlike others in the hinterland of Hadrian's Wall, was never reoccupied (Blythe 2005).
- 3.7 In 1296 the Abbot of Vale Royal constituted a free borough in Kirkham. The inhabitants were to have "a gild, with gaol, pillory and cuck-stool and other means of punishing malefactors, the assize of bread and ale, and other liberties of a borough; their bailiffs were to be presented to the abbot" (Farrer & Brownbill 1912, 152). A charter for a weekly market and a fair at Midsummer were granted to the town in 1287 by Edward I. Kirkham occurs as a surname, but in mediaeval times there does not seem to have been any important resident family, although some of the neighbouring gentry had burgages in the town (Farrer & Brownbill 1912, 150-153).
- 3.8 The site of the encampment was levelled for agricultural purposes (HER No. PRN73) and Kirkham as a whole has remained agricultural, although there were also cotton and other manufacturers in the town. Yates's map of 1786 shows Kirkham at this time, with the building focus around the cross roads. the 1848 OS map shows the site as fields at this time along with a farm building to the northwest corner. South farm is shown on the 1911 25 inch OS map Lancashire Sheet LX.5, although to the west of the site. By 1939 the farm had grown to encompass the site.

4. Aims and Objectives

- 4.1 The aim of a field evaluation is to gain information about the archaeological resource within a given area or site (including its presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality), in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context, leading to one or more of the following:
- The formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource;
 - The formulation of a strategy to mitigate a threat to the archaeological resource, and;
 - The formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research.
- 4.2 In this instance the aim of the evaluation was to assess the survival, quantity and depth of any remains associated with the Roman fort in order to inform the planning decision.

5. Methodology

- 5.1 The site was evaluated through trial trenching from 16th to 30th June 2022 to determine the extent, depth, character and date of surviving archaeological remains. Four trenches were dug in the locations shown on figure 2. Trench 1 was located at the southern end of the site, aligned roughly east – west and measured 21m x 1.5m wide. Trench 2 was located to the east of the site, aligned roughly north – south and measured 22m x 1.5. trench 3 lay at the northern end of the site, aligned roughly east – west and measured 18.5m x 1.5m. Finally, trench 4 was located to the south of trench 2 and was aligned roughly east – west. It measured 20.5m x 1.5m. The trenches were excavated by machine using a toothless ditching bucket to the top of archaeology, before being fully exposed and cleaned by hand by suitably qualified archaeologists.
- 5.2 Context sheets were used for recording on site features. Photographic recording was in the form of digital photography (DSLR 10 Megapixel minimum). An appropriate photo scale was present in each of the shots where safe to do so, and a photo register compiled,

recording the direction and subject of each shot. Features were located in plan and sections were also produced, both at 1:10 scale.

- 5.3 All encountered archaeological remains were cleaned manually to define their extent, nature, form, condition and, where possible, date. Hand excavation was undertaken by trained professional archaeologists, and occurred only where it was deemed safe to do so. All relevant features were half sectioned and recorded.
- 5.4 All finds were recorded by context and bagged and labelled. Finds storage during fieldwork followed professional guidelines (UKIC). All finds and samples were collected, processed and sorted. They were quantified and recorded for the report.
- 5.5 Post excavation involved the digitisation of drawings and the compilation of this report. Finds were cleaned and processed. A sample of finds were photographed for the report purposes.

6. Results

Trench 1

- 6.1 Trench 1 was aligned roughly east – west at the southern end of the site. It was excavated to a clay layer (104) at the base of the trench, light brown in colour containing gravels and pebbles and charcoal. Roman ceramic building material (CBM) was also found within the layer as well as several archaeological features. This layer lay below a rubble overburden layer (101), c. 0.20m thick which itself lay below a concrete pad (100). To the east of the trench the concrete was not present, with the topsoil (102) lying over a 0.02m thick subsoil (103). At the western end of the trench a fired clay conical construct (106) was found, in cut [107]. This was surrounded by heat affected clay and charcoal. The inner surface was highly fired, being a light brown colour, with the exterior a bright orange. The feature lay half under the trench baulk but measured 0.4m long by 0.22m wide and 0.22m deep. The feature was believed to be a Roman domestic feature, likely a clay oven. It was filled by clay and silt (125), likely the remains of the upper part of the oven, collapsed. A further burnt deposit (108) (detail shown on figure 6) was found to the south of this, containing daub, charcoal and heat affected clay and was up to 0.10m thick.

- 6.2 To the east a ceramic drain pipe (113) cut [112] across the trench, to the east of which was a pebble surface (105). This sat on top of the clay (104) and consisted of a small to medium sized pebbles and small gravels, containing Roman CBM and charcoal. Further east a ditch [122] was found, aligned east – west. This was cut [110] by a land drain (114) and truncated to the east by a cess pit [115]. The remaining fill (121) was a mid grey sandy silt, containing gravels and charcoal. No artefacts were found to date the feature.
- 6.3 Beyond the inserted cess pit to the east were further modern fills and features. These included a sewage pipe (116), and a loose patch of pebbles (119). These were tested and exposed the natural sands (124) over the natural clay (127). A shallow linear ditch [118] filled with a loose silt and pebbles (117) was found to the east of the pebbles (119). This contained a large quern stone fragment alongside modern material. No further Roman archaeology was found at this side of the trench. A further test slot was inserted at the western end of the trench, showing the Roman occupation layer to be c. 0.15m thick over the natural sands (124).

Trench 2

- 6.4 Trench 2 was aligned north – south to the east end of the site. The natural clay (202) lay at a depth of c. 0.6m below the surface. Above this lay a reddish brown subsoil, 0.37m thick, containing small pebbles and cobbles. This lay below a 0.30m thick topsoil layer. A thin line of pebbles and small cobbles (203) was found aligned east – west towards the centre of the trench. This sat on top of the natural clay (202) and was the only feature in the trench. A small area of Roman CBM (204) was found at the southern end of the trench.

Trench 3

- 6.5 Trench 3 lay at the northern end of the site and was aligned roughly east – west. A yellow natural clay was discovered c. 0.45m below the ground surface (304). Above this lay a reddish brown subsoil (302), c. 0.35m in depth, below concrete (301). Several features were found cut into the natural clay (304). At the western end a narrow ditch [309] was discovered, aligned roughly north – south. The sides were steep with a flat base, c. 0.20m in depth. Several fragments of Roman CBM were found within it. East of this a small post hole

was found [311], (312). This measured c. 0.25m in diameter and was c. 0.17m deep with a compacted clay post pad at the base.

- 6.6 East of this a large shallow pit [305] was found, 1.34m long and 0.12m deep. It was flat based and roughly circular and filled with a charcoal rich clay silt (306). A small amount of Roman CBM was found within it. Adjacent to this was a shallow ditch [307] was aligned roughly northeast – southwest and filled with a mid brown clayey sand (308). It contained charcoal but no artefacts. At the far eastern side of the trench was an irregular linear pit [313] with a clay ridge (315) to the east side. The pit was filled with a fine clay silt (314) and contained a small amount of Roman CBM. A small amount of heat affected clay and charcoal (316) lay to the east of this. At the far eastern end of the site was a cut [318] for modern pipe.

Trench 4

- 6.7 Trench 4 was aligned roughly east – west and excavated to a depth of c. 0.65m to the top of a firm reddish brown gravelly silt layer (402). This lay below a loose silty subsoil (401), 0.3m deep, which lay below topsoil (400). Context (402) was believed to be the top of a Roman occupation layer and had several features within it. At the eastern end a possible ditch or burrow [422] was found, linear but irregular with a u shaped section. Roman CBM was found within the loose sandy fill (423). At the base of the feature was a circular post hole [424], although due to waterlogging the relationship between this and [422] was uncertain. It also did not appear to cut into the sands (414). To the west of this was a post pad (410), 0.3m in diameter with heat affected clay. Directly adjacent to this to the south was a post hole [431], roughly square with vertical sides and filled with a clay silt (432). A small patch of heat affected clay lay (433) north of these features.
- 6.8 A further potential post pad (433) lay to the west of these, presenting as a patch of burnt clay and charcoal, south of which was a large granite boulder (409). Towards the western end of the trench a further 2 postholes were found [415] and [416]. [415] was 0.27m in diameter and 0.33m deep, filled with a loose sandy silt (404). [416] was slightly smaller, with a diameter of 0.23 m and a depth of 0.24m. This had a similar loose sandy silt fill (403). Between these postholes and heat affected clay (433) a small area of pebbles (413) was discovered below the occupation layer (402). This was interpreted as a possible path or

floor. This sat on a grey sandy silt later (414) which was found below (402) across the trench. At the western end of the pebble feature (413) was a modern cut [406] with sandy silt fill (405). At the western end of the trench, (402) was truncated down to the natural clay (426). A sondage was cut through the occupation layer at the eastern end, revealing the natural sands (414) below the 0.10m thick occupation layer (402)

7. Finds

- 7.1 Throughout all of the trenches, the main find was ceramic building material. This was found throughout most contexts, including the subsoils. However, it was most prevalent in the Roman occupation layers in trenches 1 (104) and 4 (402). Some pottery was also found, although these were small undiagnostic fragments and none contained decoration or stamps. A small amount of Grey Ware was discovered in (414), a natural sand layer above the clay and below the roman occupation layer itself. An amphora or flagon handle was also discovered in this context.
- 7.2 A single Roman coin was found across all of the trenches. This was found in the subsoil of trench 2 (201). It was badly corroded, with the emperor face completely destroyed on the obverse. The reverse retained some detail however, of a figure standing holding a possible spear in their left hand and their right hand held out at waist height. The coin is a dark grey colour, suggesting it is corroded silver and 19mm diameter.
- 7.3 Within the irregular ditch (314) in trench 3, the possible arm of a statue was found. This was from shoulder to wrist, measuring 130mm long and a diameter of 20mm. It was broken in half and no other fragments were found. It is made from a grey clay with few inclusions. A scar where it has broken off lies at one end, with the remainder being rounded.
- 7.4 A fragment of a saddle quern stone was found in (117), an otherwise modern fill, suggesting it had been redeposited. The stone is rubbed on both sides and measures 230 x 110mm with a thickness of 80mm, and a weight of 5.0kg. One side showed a good vertical face, with the others broken.

- 7.5 A fragment of Samien ware was found in the subsoil of trench 4 (401). The fragment was a smooth buff red colour with no visible inclusions, with the remains of a dark orange glaze both internally and externally. The sherd was a part of the base of a vessel, with supporting lip also present. The curve of the lip suggests the base was c. 135mm in diameter.

8. Conclusions and Discussion

- 8.1 Trenches 1 and 4 revealed the most extensive Roman archaeology, with a Roman surface found in each trench (104) & (402). Within these layers several features were found, including post holes, ditches and, in the case of trench 1, a small oven (106). Trench 2 revealed very little in the way of any archaeology at all, with an undated thin line of pebbles and cobbles (203) being the only feature, although a small amount of Roman ceramic building material was discovered at the southern end. Trench 3 revealed some Roman features cut into the natural clay, including post holes and ditches. However, no occupation layer was present.
- 8.2 The site was agricultural in the post-medieval period and was mostly undeveloped until the early 20th century. The lack of Roman occupation layers to the northern side of the site may suggest that these were ploughed out during this period. In trench 3 the natural clay (304) was found close to the surface, compared to trenches 1 and 4. The features found in trench 3 were cut into the natural however, showing that occupation had still been in this area. Trench 2 contained very little archaeology. This may have been due to the construction of the farmhouse in the early 20th century, as well as the construction of Roman Way to the east.
- 8.3 Figure 16 shows the areas of Roman archaeology. The primary area of Roman archaeology lies to the south side of the site. As the natural clays rises to the north the former Roman occupation layers have been destroyed by later activity. However, some cut features remain visible within the natural clay in these areas.

9. Archive

- 9.1 The results of the archaeological investigation form the basis of a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current Historic England guidelines ("The Management of Archaeological Projects", 2nd edition, 1991), the "Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage" (UKIC 1990), and current ClfA "standards and guidance for the creation, compilation, transportation and deposition of archaeological archive" (published October 2009). The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the course of the project. The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is considered an essential and integral element of all archaeological projects by the ClfA in that organisation's code of conduct.
- 9.2 The written, drawn and photographic archive will be placed with Lancashire Archives within a reasonable time of completion of the project. The finds shall be offered to Kirkham Museum. A digital copy of the report shall be deposited with ADS through the OASIS database. A copy of the final report will also be deposited with the Lancashire HER.

10. Acknowledgements

- 10.1 The Archaeology Co. would like to thank Peter Iles for his help and advice, as well as the staff at Lancashire Historic Environment Record. Thanks also go to Pascal Eloy and Paul Hickman for the fieldwork.

11. Copyright

- 11.1 Full copyright of this commissioned report and other project documents shall be retained by the author of the report under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

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<https://www.all-your-coins.com/en/search-by-picture/romaines-167/type-de-revers-268/divinites-debout-1576/neptune-1634/neptvno-circens-constitvt-s-c-1633/>

Maps

1786 Yates Map of Lancashire

1848 OS map Lancashire Sheet LX

1911 OS map Lancashire Sheet LX.5

1939 OS map Lancashire Sheet LX.5

Appendix 1: Figures



Figure 1: Location plan (OS Licence Number: 100057911)

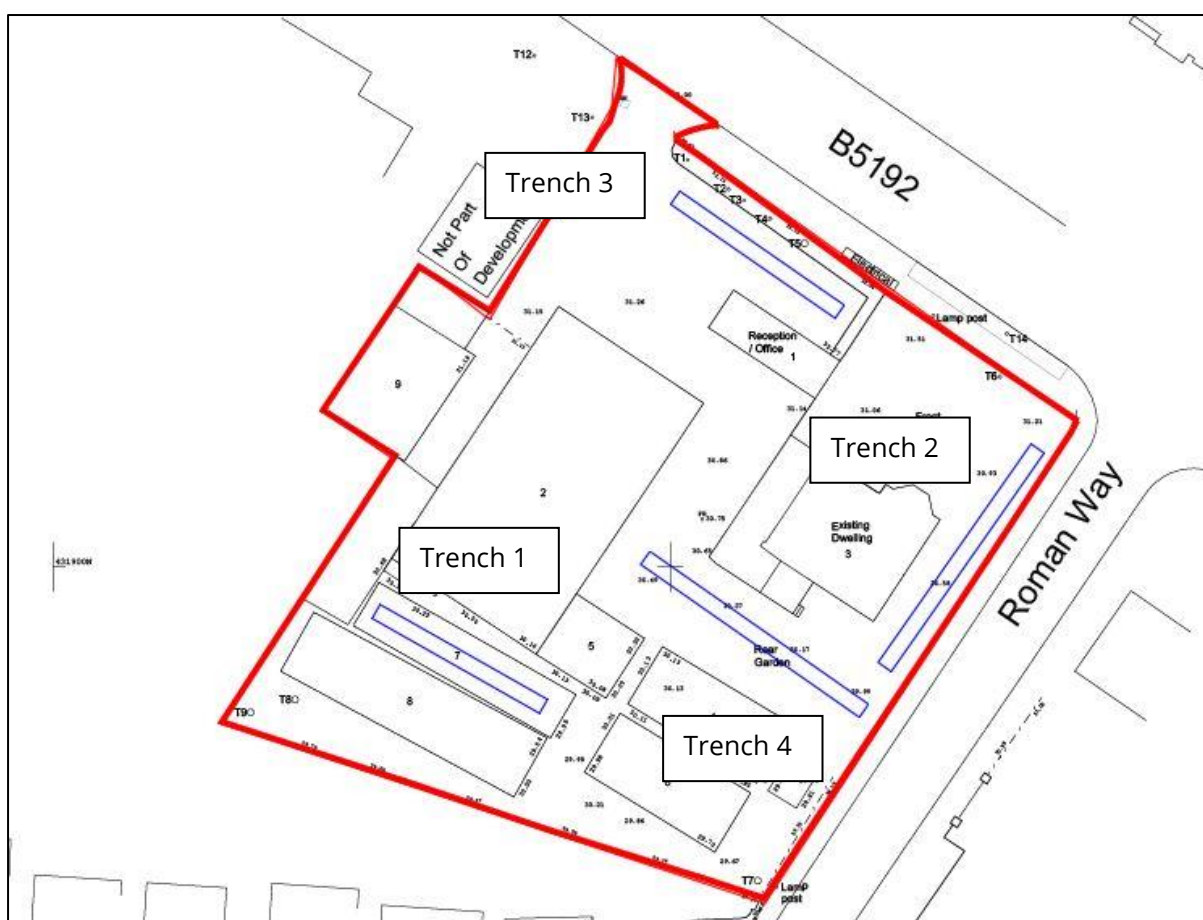


Figure 2: Trench location plan (courtesy of Sunderland Peacock & Associates Ltd.)

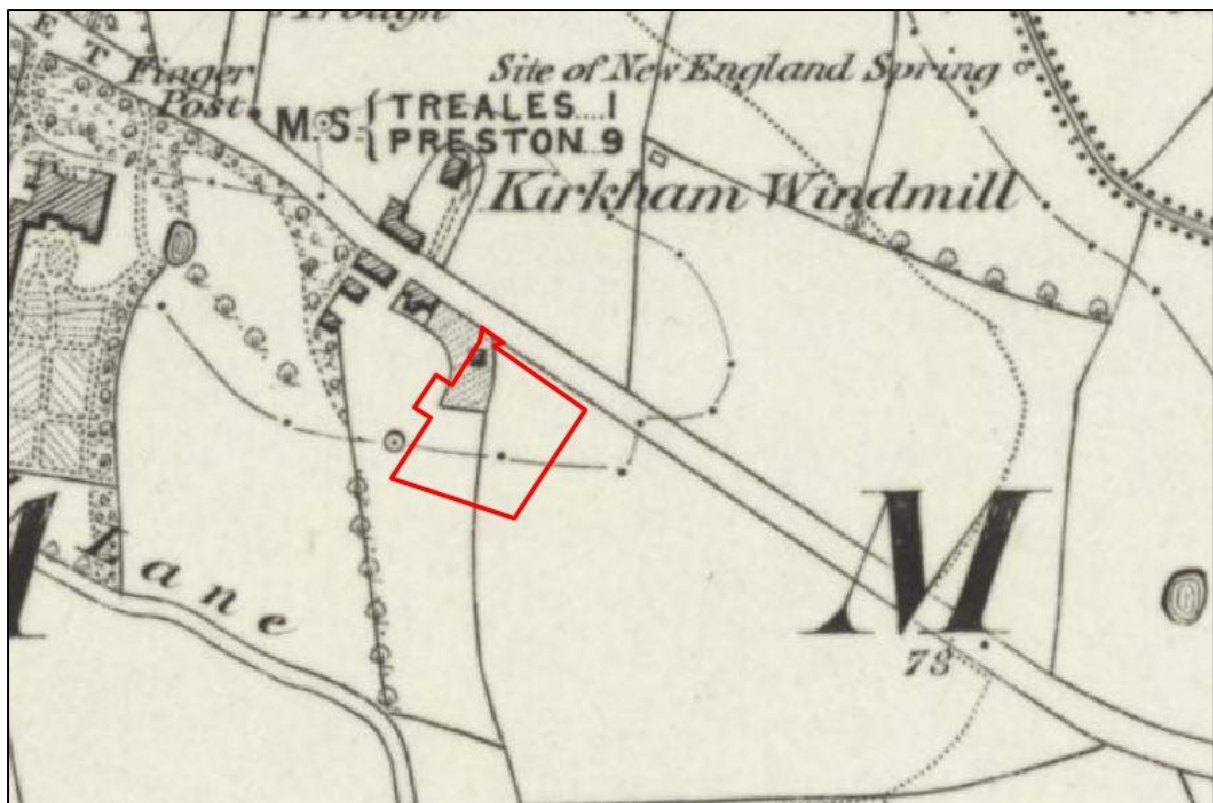


Figure 3: 1848 OS 1:10,560 map Lancashire Sheet LX



Figure 4: 1911 OS 1:2,500 map Lancashire Sheet LX.5

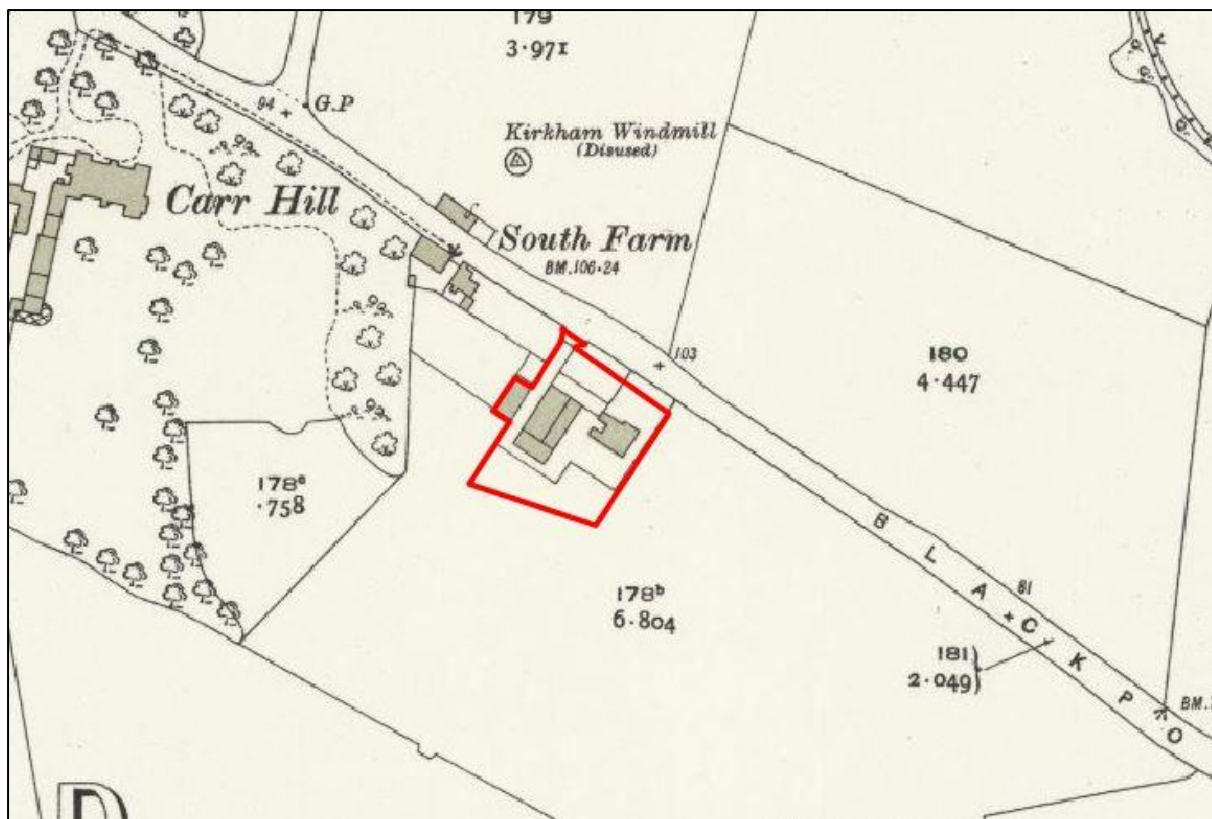


Figure 5: 1939 OS 1:2,500 map Lancashire Sheet LX.5

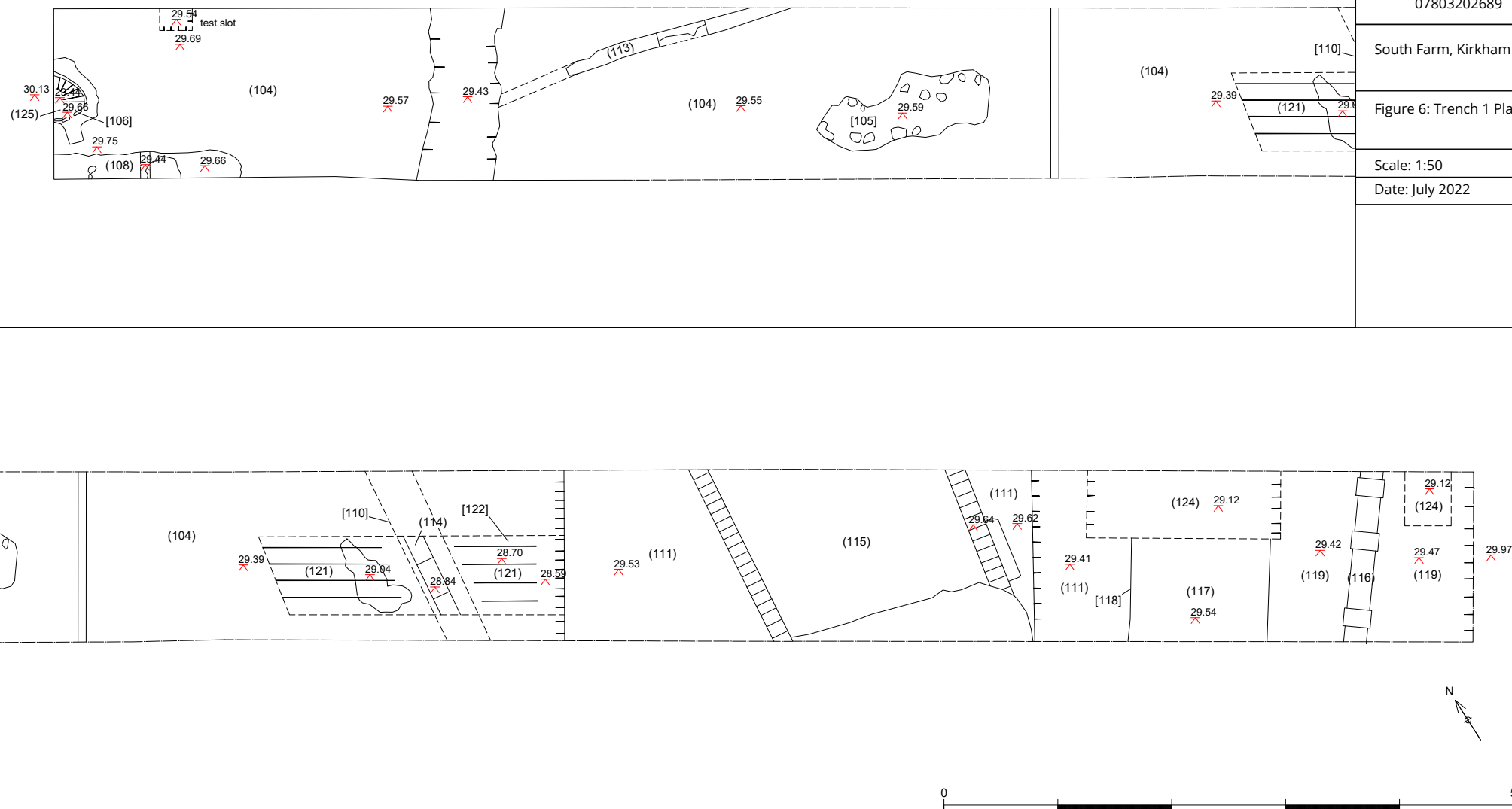


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Figure 6: Trench 1 Plan

Scale: 1:50

Date: July 2022





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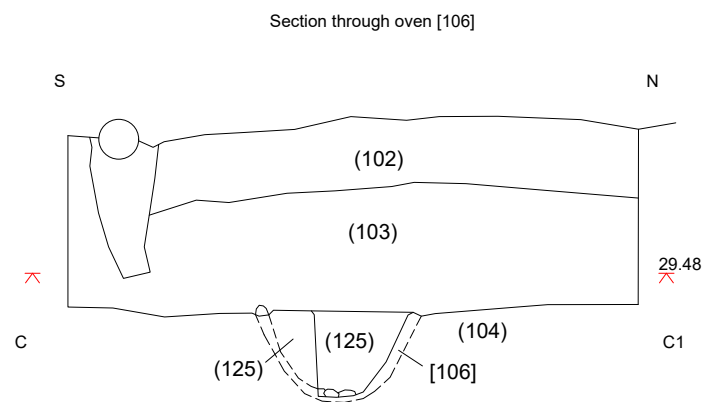
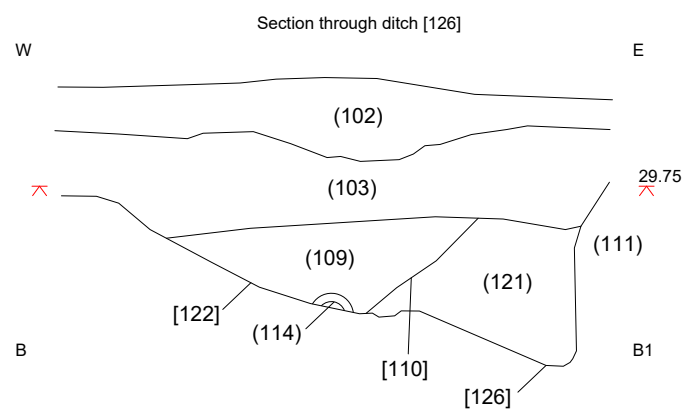
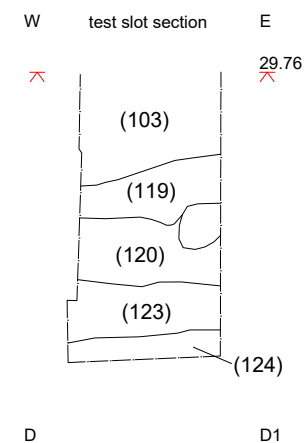
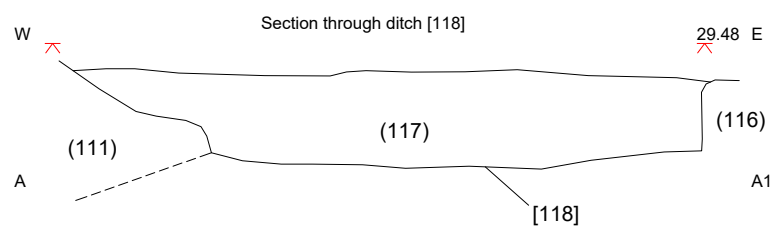
steven@thearchaeologyco.uk
07803202689

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Figure 7: Trench 1 Sections

Scale: 1:20

Date: July 2022





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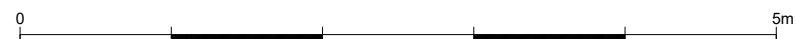
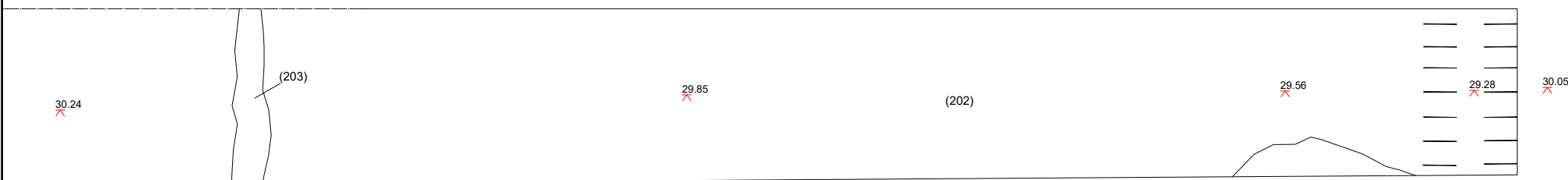
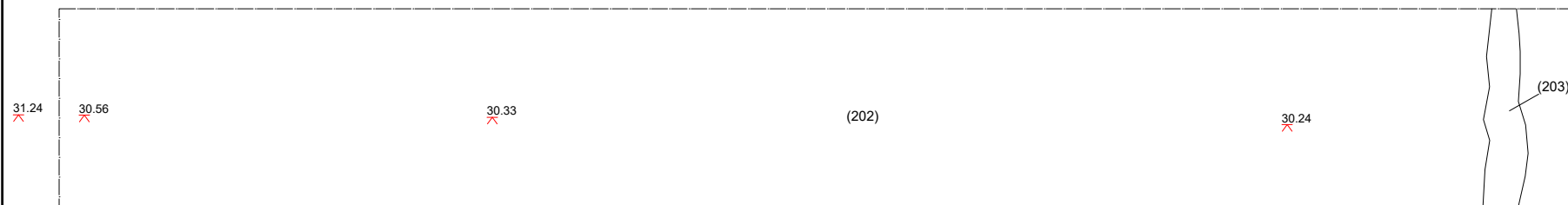
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Figure 8: Trench 2 Plan

Scale: 1:50

Date: July 2022





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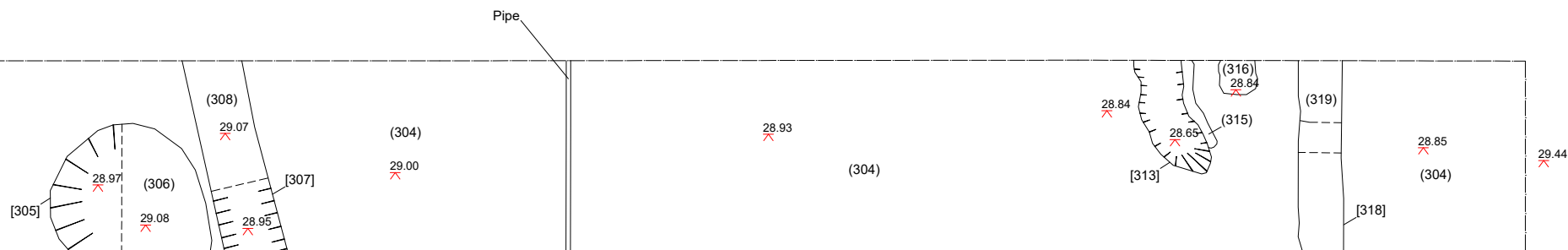
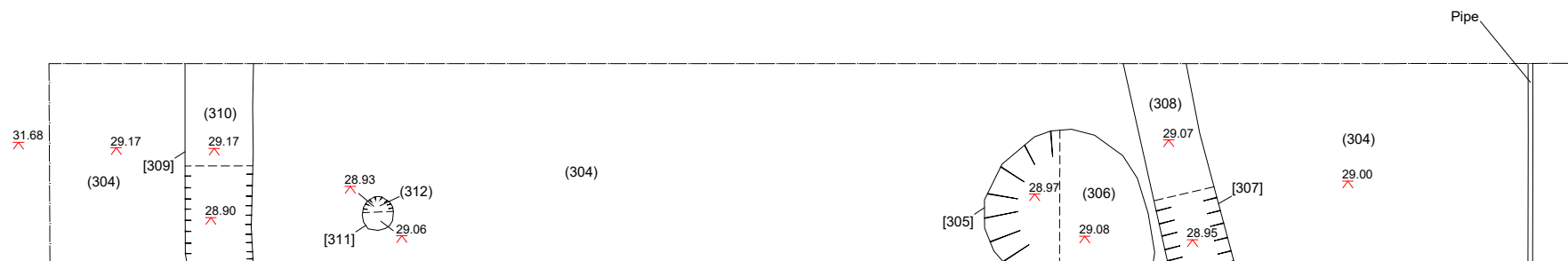
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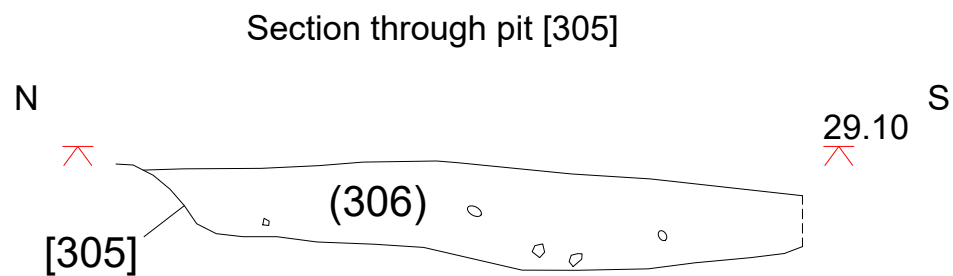
South Farm, Kirkham

Figure 9: Trench 3 Plan

Scale: 1:50

Date: July 2022





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Figure 10: Trench 3 Sections

Scale: 1:10

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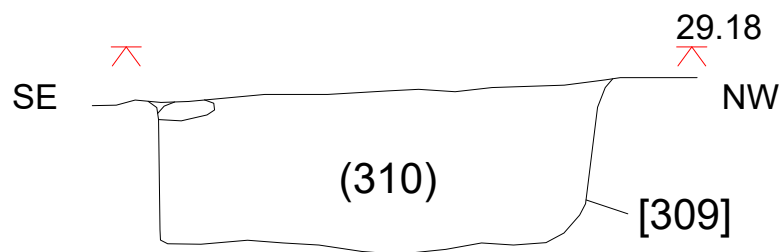
South Farm, Kirkham

Figure 11: Trench 3 Sections

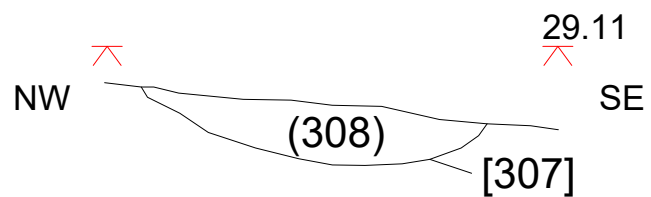
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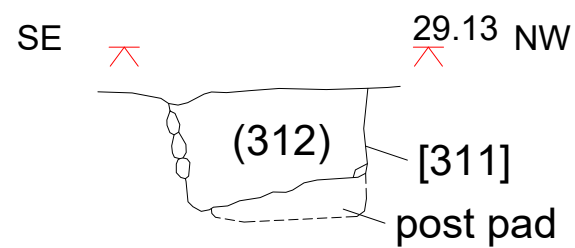
Section through ditch [309]



Section through ditch [307]



Section through post hole [311]





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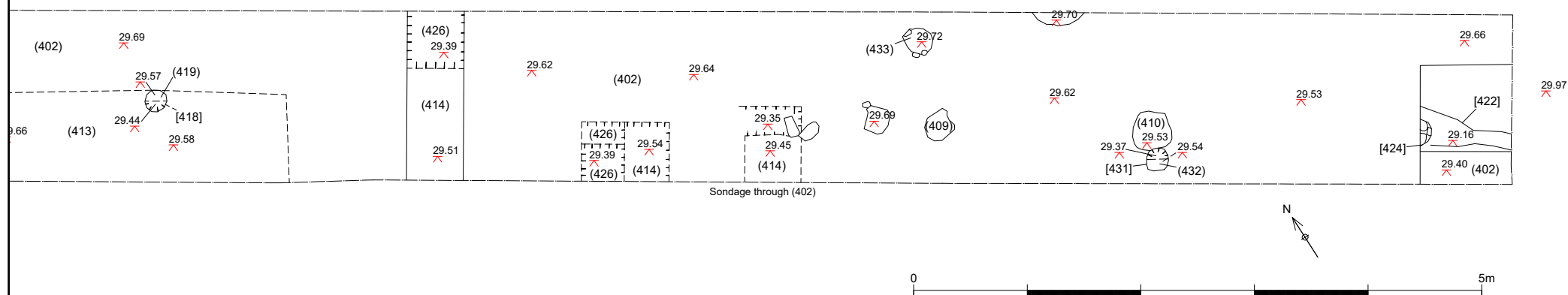
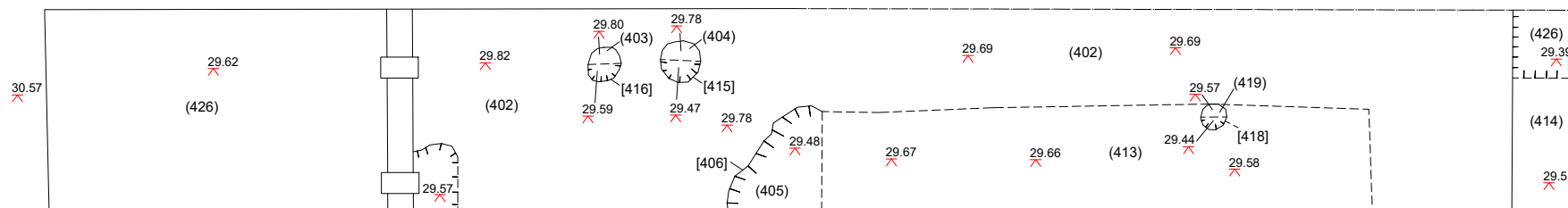
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South Farm, Kirkham

Figure 12: Trench 4 Plan

Scale: 1:50

Date: July 2022





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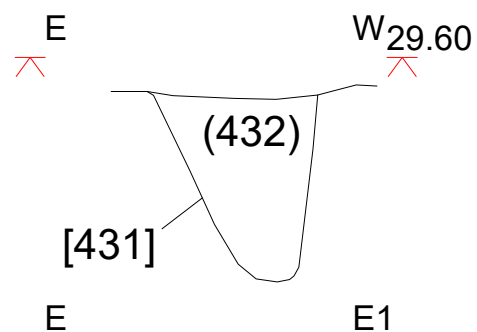
South Farm, Kirkham

Figure 13: Trench 4 Sections

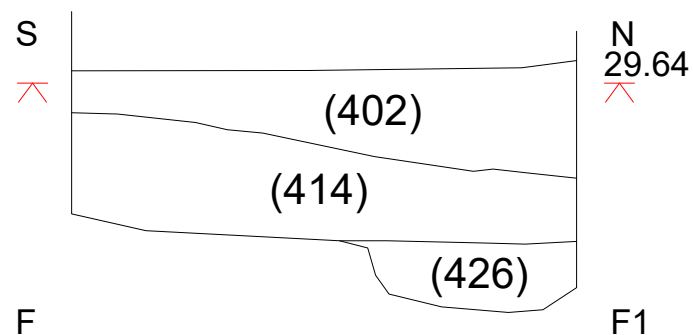
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Date: July 2022

Section through post hole [431]



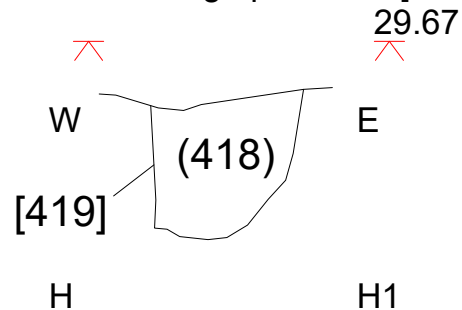
Section through deposits (402) (414)



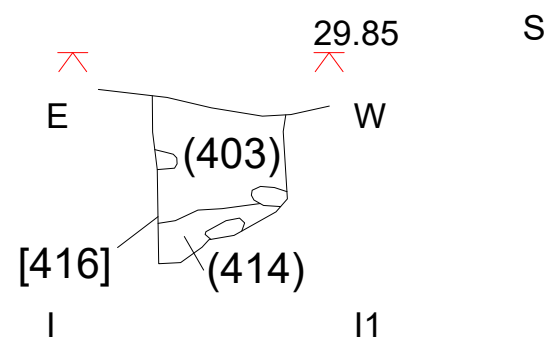
Section through deposit (414)



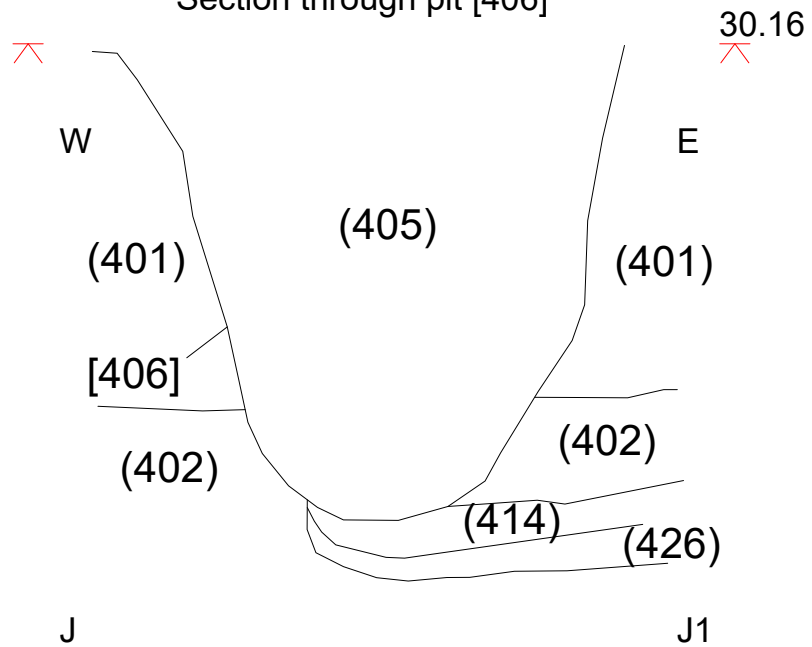
Section through post hole [419]



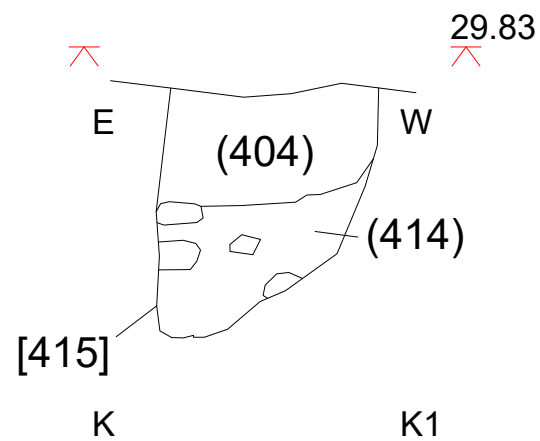
Section through post hole [416]



Section through pit [406]



Section through post hole [415]



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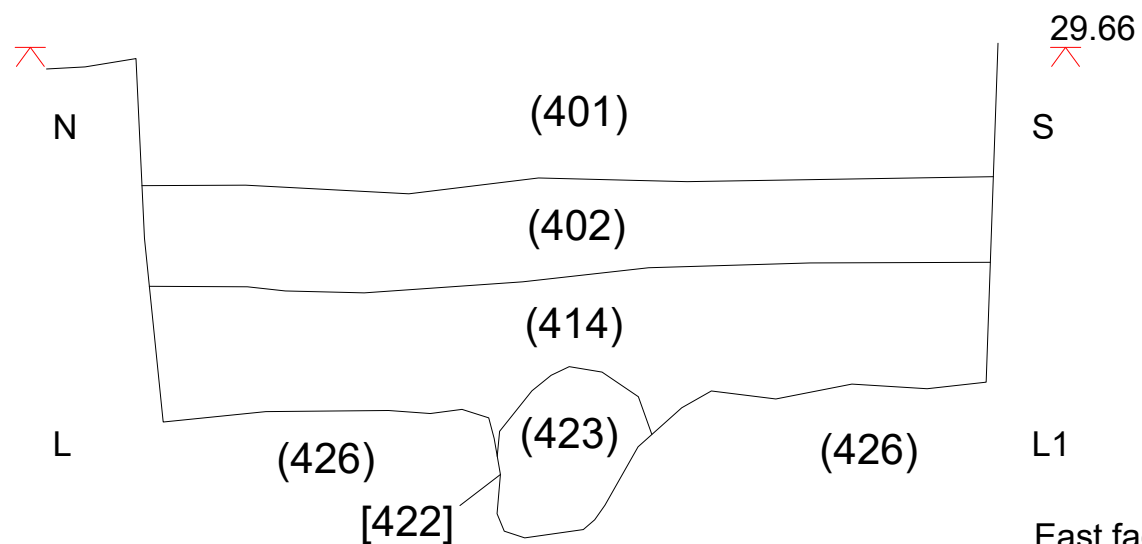
South Farm, Kirkham

Figure 14: Trench 4 Sections

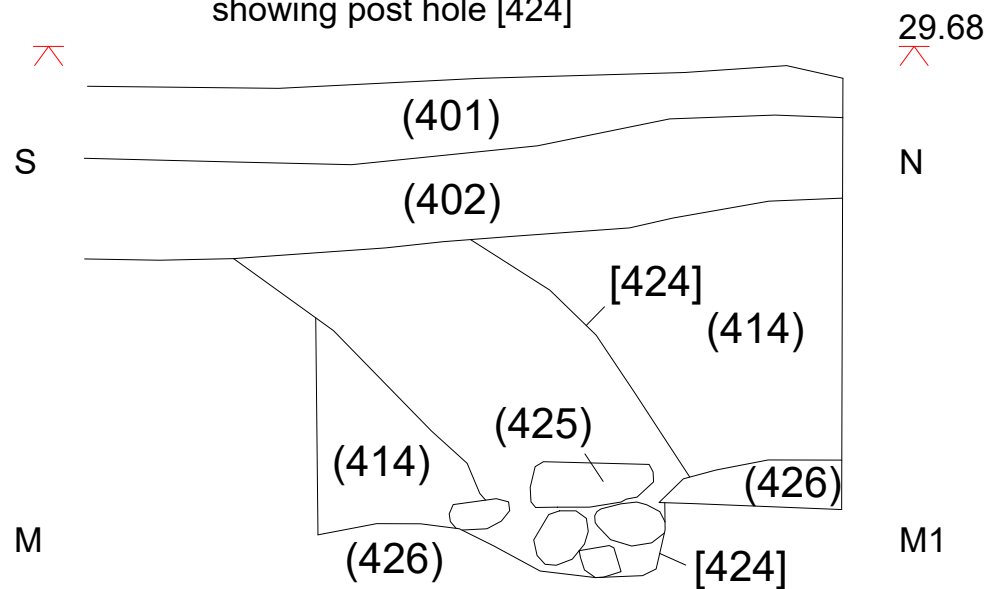
Scale: 1:10

Date: July 2022

West facing section of east sondage



East facing section of east sondage showing post hole [424]



0 1m



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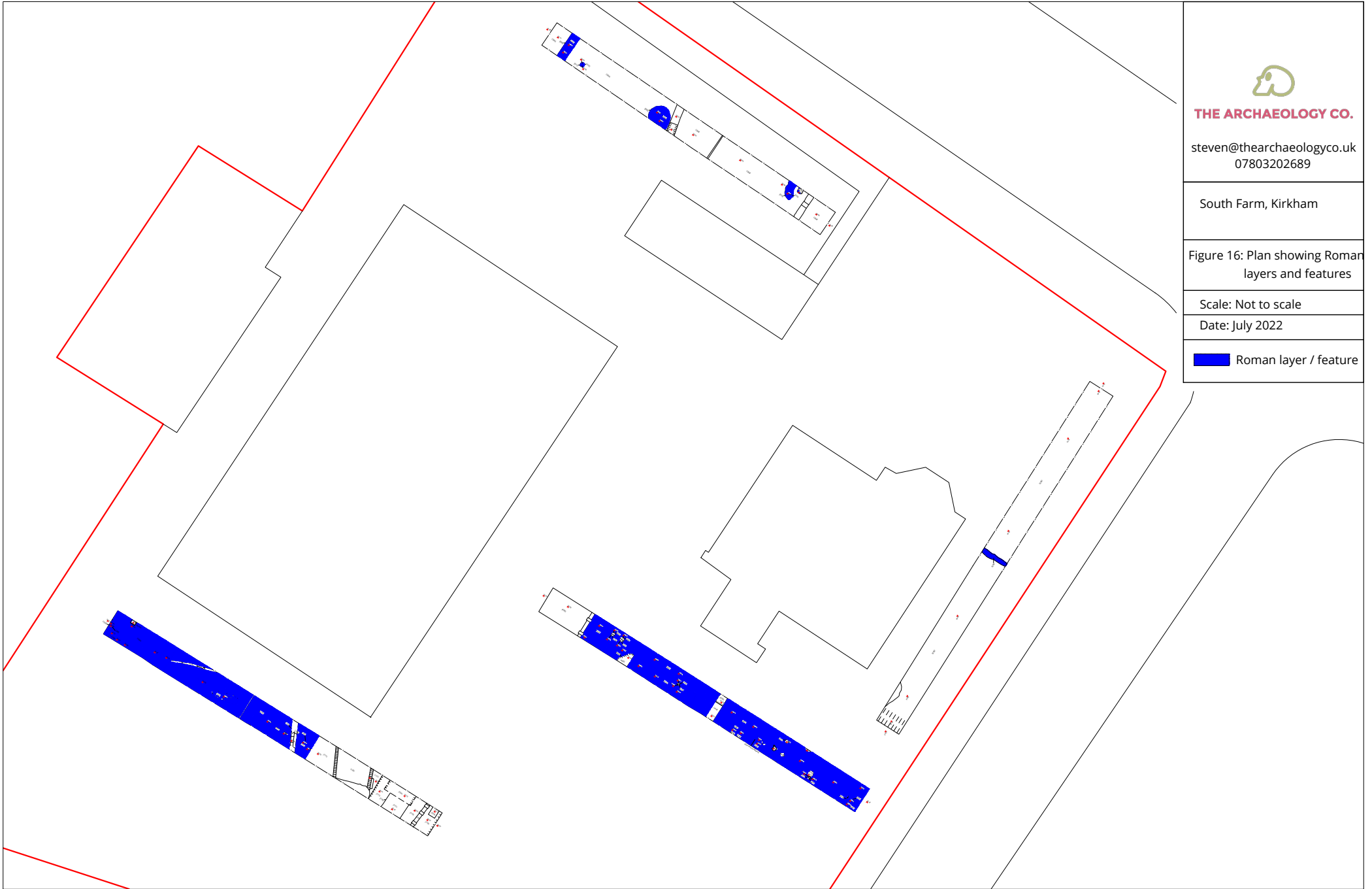
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Figure 15: Trench 4 Sections

Scale: 1:10

Date: July 2022



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Figure 16: Plan showing Roman
layers and features

Scale: Not to scale

Date: July 2022

 Roman layer / feature



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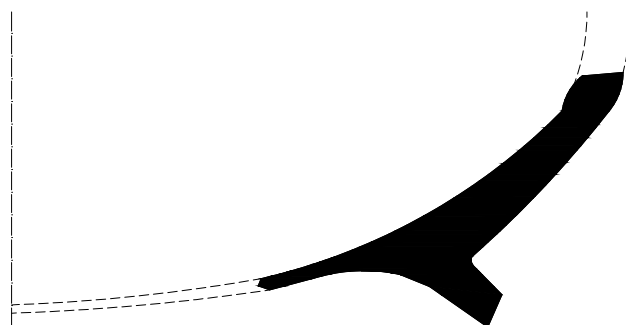
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Figure 17: Samian ware sherd

Scale: 1:1

Date: July 2022



0



100mm

Appendix 2: Plates

Trench 1



Plate 1: General shot of trench viewed from the east



Plate 2: General shot of trench viewed from the west



Plate 3: Initial view of clay oven (106) at west side of trench



Plate 4: Clay oven (106) following excavation (1m scale and 30cm scale)



Plate 5: As above (1m scale)



Plate 6: Pebble layer (105) (1m scale)



Plate 7: Pebble layer (105) (1m scale)



Plate 8: Pit [110] (1m scale)



Plate 9: As above (1m scale)



Plate 10: Pit [118] at east end of trench (1m and 2m scale, divisions at 0.5m)



Plate 11: As above (1m and 2m scale, divisions at 0.5m)

Trench 2



Plate 12: General shot of trench 2 from the south



Plate 13: general shot of trench 2 from the north



Plate 14: Pebble layer (203) (1m scale)

Trench 3



Plate 15: general shot of trench from the west



Plate 16: General shot of trench from the east



Plate 17: Post hole [311] (20cm scale)



Plate 18: Shallow ditch [309] (50cm scale)



Plate 19: Shallow pit [305] (50cm scale)



Plate 20: Irregular pit [313] (50cm scale)



Plate 21: Heat affected clay (316) (50cm scale)

Trench 4



Plate 22: General shot of trench from the west



Plate 23: General shot of trench from the east



Plate 24: Roman occupation layer (402) (1m and 2m scale, divisions at 0.5m)



Plate 25: Post pad (410) (50cm scale)



Plate 26: Pebble feature (413) below (402) (2m scale)



Plate 27: Modern pit [406] (50cm scale)



Plate 28: Post holes [414] and [415] before excavation (50cm scale)



Plate 29: Post hole [415] (30cm scale)



Plate 30: Post hole [416] (30cm scale)



Plate 31: Post hole [419] (30cm scale)



Plate 32: Sondage through occupation layer to natural clay (50cm scale)



Plate 33: Possible ditch or burrow [422] (1m scale and 50cm scale)



Plate 34: Post hole [431] (20cm scale)

Finds



Plate 35: Statue arm from context (314) (10cm scale)



Plate 36: Statue arm from context (314) (10cm scale)



Plate 37: Example of CBM from (402) (10cm scale)



Plate 38: Quern stone from (117) (30cm scale)



Plate 39: Quern stone from (117) (30cm scale)



Plate 40: Coin from (201) showing destroyed obverse (scale showing 1mm and 1cm divisions)



Plate 41: Reverse of coin (scale showing 1mm and 1cm divisions)



Plate 42: Detail of above



Plate 43: Samian ware fragment from trench 4 subsoil (401) (10cm scale)



Plate 45: Samian ware (10cm scale)



Plate 46: Grey ware fragments from (414) (10cm scale)



Plate 47: Grey ware base fragments from (414) (10cm scale)



Plate 48: Grey ware base fragments from (414) (10cm scale)



Plate 49: Amphora or flagon handle from (414) (10cm scale)



Plate 50: Amphora or flagon handle from (414) (10cm scale)