BARNWELL EAST (FORMERLY COLLENSWOOD) SCHOOL STEVENAGE HERTFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

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Produced for: Vincent and Gorbing

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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete an assessment as possible, within the terms of the specification. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

The project was commissioned by Vincent and Gorbing on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council and was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Andy Instone, County Planning Officer (CPA), Hertfordshire County Council.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Ian Turner (Archaeological Supervisor) and Kathy Pilkinton (Assistant Supervisor). This report has been prepared by James Newboult (Project Officer) and Ian Turner and edited by Joe Abrams (Project Manager) with contributions from Jackie Wells (Finds Officer) and Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Structure of this Report

Section 1 serves as an introduction to the site, describing its location, archaeological background and the aims of the project. Section 2 describes the trial trenching methodology and Section 3 summarises the results. Section 4 provides a synthesis of the results and assesses their significance. Section 5 is a bibliography.

Appendix 1 is an artefact summary and Appendix 2 contains trench summary information and detailed contextual data.



Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

HCC Hertfordshire County Council

CPA Hertfordshire County Council's County Planning

Archaeologist

Client Vincent and Gorbing on behalf of Hertfordshire County

Council

HER Hertfordshire's Historic Environment Record

IfA Institute for Archaeologists

LPA Local Planning Authority

Procedures Manual Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork, 2nd edn, 2001

Albion Archaeology



Non-Technical Summary

As part of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, Vincent and Gorbing (acting on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council) are preparing an outline planning application for housing development on land at Barnwell East (formerly Collenswood) School, Stevenage. This land is henceforth referred to as the Potential Development Area (PDA).

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) carried out by Albion Archaeology (2008) demonstrated the need for a non-intrusive (built heritage assessment) of the school buildings within the PDA. Albion Archaeology undertook this work in January 2009 and produced a report on the results (Albion Archaeology 2009a).

The DBA also identified the potential for sub-surface archaeological remains within the eastern part of the PDA. It demonstrated the need for an intrusive (trial trenching) evaluation of this area prior to submission of a planning application. These proposals were discussed (25th November 2008) with Hertfordshire County Council's County Planning Archaeologist (CPA) and an agreement was reached on the size and location of the intrusive evaluation area. This area is henceforth referred to as the Evaluation Area (EA).

Albion Archaeology prepared a Written Scheme of investigation (WSI) for an intrusive evaluation of the EA (Albion Archaeology 2009b). In February 2009, Albion Archaeology carried out the intrusive evaluation of the EA and prepared a report on the results (this document).

The evaluation revealed the remains of several ditched field boundaries and/or enclosures in the southern part of the EA. Similarities in morphology and character between the ditches and their fills suggest that they broadly date to the same period. Artefactual evidence suggests they are possibly Roman in date. However, the overall scarcity of pottery recovered, coupled with the levels of abrasion suggests this dating evidence should be viewed with caution.

Possible Roman remains identified in the southern part of the EA represent low density field-systems within what was, prior to the 20th century, an area of open farmland. These remains are considered to be of local significance. Their identification augments our knowledge of the limits/locations of historic farmland and settlement in Stevenage.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

As part of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, Vincent and Gorbing (acting on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council) are preparing an outline planning application for housing development on the land at Barnwell East (formerly Collenswood) School, Stevenage. This land is henceforth referred to as the Potential Development Area (PDA).

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Albion Archaeology prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an intrusive evaluation of the EA (Albion Archaeology 2009b). In February 2009, Albion Archaeology carried out the intrusive evaluation of the EA and prepared a report on the results (this document).

1.2 Site Location and Description

The PDA comprises the whole of Barnwell East School, Stevenage, centred on (NGR) TL 2645 2391 (Fig. 1). The school lies between c. 95m OD and c. 107m OD and the underlying geology is clay. The southern and western parts of the PDA is dominated by the school buildings, where a considerable amount of terracing has taken place. The EA comprises a grassed, landscaped area in the eastern part of the PDA.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The built heritage potential of the PDA has been summarised by Albion Archaeology (2009b).

The DBA (Albion Archaeology 2008) identified that the southern and western parts of the PDA had been heavily disturbed by the construction of school buildings and by significant levels of terracing. Archaeological remains would have been removed over large parts of this area. The potential for the preservation of archaeological remains in this part of the PDA is therefore considered to be low.



No sites of archaeological or historical significance are recorded within the PDA. However, Six Hills Way runs 100m north of it and is thought to be originally Roman in date. Ditches dating to the Roman period (HER442) were recorded along this route during construction works. If the interpretation of Six Hills Way is correct, then it is possible that associated, contemporary field systems and/or settlement remains exist in the vicinity of the PDA.

In addition, the post-medieval amalgamation of fields will almost certainly have left its mark in the form of backfilled field boundary ditches and/or grubbed out hedgerows.

The following table summarises the archaeological potential of the PDA from the prehistoric to the modern periods, and gives an indication of the relative significance of any remains from those periods when considered on a regional/national basis.

Period	Potential for finding archaeological remains (Low, Moderate, High)	Relative significance of archaeological remains on a regional/national level (Low, Moderate, High)
Prehistoric (before AD 43)	Low	High
Roman (43–450)	Moderate	High
Anglo-Saxon/Saxo-Norman (450–1066)	Low	High
Medieval (1066–1550)	High	Low-High
Post-medieval (1550–1900)	High	Low
Modern (1900–present)	High	Low

1.4 Project Objectives

The layout of the trenches was discussed with and approved by the CPA. The trenches were arranged to maximise their ability to test the archaeological potential of the EA. The overall objectives of the work were to gain information on:

- the location, extent, nature and date of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present;
- the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present; and to
- recover artefacts to assist in the development of a type series within the region;
- recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.



2. METHODOLOGY

Trial trenching took place between 16th and 20th February 2009. All three of the proposed trenches were opened.

Throughout the project the standards set out in the following documents were adhered to:

- If A's Code of Conduct (1999a)
- If A's Standards and Guidance for Field Evaluation (1999b)
- Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual for Archaeological Fieldwork* and the Analysis of Fieldwork Records (2001)
- English Heritage's Management of Archaeological Projects (1991)

The location of the trenches was marked out on the ground in advance of machine excavation. Overburden was removed using a mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket and operating under close archaeological supervision. These deposits were removed down to either the top of archaeological deposits or undisturbed geological deposits, whichever was encountered first.

The bases and sections of all trenches were cleaned by hand in order to clarify the nature of potential archaeological remains. The deposits and any potential remains were noted, cleaned, excavated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. The trenches were subsequently drawn, and photographed as appropriate. All deposits were recorded using a unique recording number sequence commencing at 100 for Trench 1, 200 for Trench 2 *etc*.

The trenches were inspected by the CPA prior to backfilling.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

Deposits and features of archaeological interest are summarised below in chronological order. Allocated context numbers are prefixed with the trench number they were recorded from, *i.e.* contexts (100) and (101) are from Trench 1.

Detailed technical information on all deposits and archaeological features can be found in Appendix 2 (Section 6.2). The record will be archived at North Hertfordshire District Council Museum.

3.2 Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Deposits

Overburden consisted of silty clay topsoil overlying a sequence of modern dumped clay layers (101, 201, 305, 107, 204 and 304) to a total thickness of 0.20–0.95m. These contained large fragments of modern plastic, metal, brick and wood and are probably associated with the construction of the school and or the roundabout to the immediate west of the EA.

Below these, a buried, clay-silt topsoil (102/202/301) was identified overlying a buried clay subsoil (103/203/302) with a combined thickness of 0.4m. These deposits represent the original land surface, prior to the remodelling of the EA. The undisturbed geological deposits comprised clay with chalk fragments.

3.3 Archaeological Remains

Trenches 2 and 3 contained seven, E-W aligned ditches [206, 208, 210, 212, 214, 306 and 310]. Two of these [208] and [214] were re-cuts, closely following the route of earlier ditches [206] and [212] respectively. Ditch [308/312/314], identified in Trench 3, was aligned broadly north-south (Fig. 4).

The ditches shared morphological similarities and the deposits within them were largely derived from the surrounding undisturbed geological clay (Figs. 3 and 4). This suggests these ditches broadly date to the same period. The deposit within [306] appeared darker in colour and more sharply defined, suggesting it derived from a different source to the deposits within the other ditches (Fig. 4). This may indicate that it is from a different period to the others.

A single sherd of abraded late Iron Age/early Roman pottery was recovered from the base of ditch [214]. The upper part of ditch [308/312/314] also produced a single sherd of abraded, 2nd-century Roman pottery. The presence of these artefacts suggests the ditches may be Roman in date. However, the number of artefacts is very low and, given their abraded condition, it is possible that they are residual artefacts deposited within later ditches. Conversely, the abrasion on these potsherds could also be a result of natural, *in situ* wearing from the surrounding clay deposits (J Wells pers. comm.).

The east-west aligned ditches are likely to represent the remains of field boundaries of possible Roman date. Their character and the scarcity of artefactual



material recovered from them suggest that they are outside any area of dense settlement activity. The north-south aligned ditch [308/312/314] is perpendicular to, and morphologically similar to, ditch [210]. Together, they may form the north and west sides of an enclosure (Figs. 3 and 4).

An undated piece of worked flint was recovered from the deposit within ditch [214]. This is considered to be residual.

3.4 Modern Intrusion

A large pit [108] was identified at the western end of Trench 1 (Fig. 2). It contained large stones and modern concrete and tarmac fragments. It is possible that it truncates the continuation of north-south aligned ditch [308/12/314]. A similar modern pit [204] was also encountered in the south-western end of Trench 2. These remains are probably associated with the construction of the adjacent roundabout.

3.5 Tree-throws

A tree-throw [104] was identified in Trench 1 (Fig. 2). Two rooting boles [219] and [221] were also identified c.1.50m north of ditches [206] and [208] in Trench 2 (Fig. 3). They were investigated as possible post-holes, but were judged to be the remains of root disturbance.



4. SYNTHESIS OF RESULTS

4.1 Summary

The evaluation revealed the remains of several ditched field boundaries and/or enclosures in the southern part of the EA. Similarities in morphology and character between the ditches and their fills suggest that they broadly date to the same period. Limited artefactual evidence suggests that they are possibly Roman in date.

Seven of the ditches were aligned broadly east-west and together are likely to represent the continued migration of a single boundary over time. Two of the ditches were truncated by re-cuts, suggesting that they had been, to some degree, maintained along their original courses. One of the re-cuts [214] contained an abraded sherd of late Iron age/early Roman pottery, suggesting it may date from this period.

An eighth, north-south aligned ditch [308] may represent part of an enclosure (Fig. 2) — it is aligned perpendicular to, and has a similar profile to, ditch [210]. It produced a sherd of abraded, 2nd-century Roman pottery and it may represent a break in the pattern of earlier east-west aligned boundaries. However, the overall scarcity of pottery recovered, coupled with the levels of abrasion on the sherds, suggests that this dating evidence should be viewed with caution.

The remains identified in this evaluation represent a palimpsest of boundaries, probably laid down over a relatively short period of time. They may form an early phase of a long-lived agricultural landscape which survived into the 20th century. The Ordnance Survey map of 1924 indicates agricultural use at this time (Albion Archaeology 2008).

4.2 Preservation and Potential

Two pockets of modern truncation have been identified at the western end of Trench 1 and the south-western end of Trench 2 (Figs. 2 and 3). These are likely to have impacted on archaeological remains. However, the overall preservation of archaeological remains within the EA is good.

Given the identification of eight ditches in Trenches 2 and 3, the potential for archaeological remains within the southern part of the EA is considered to be moderate. The potential of the northern part of the EA is considered to be low.

4.3 Significance

The possible Roman remains identified in the southern part of the EA represent low density field-systems within what was, prior to the 20th century, an area of open farmland. These remains are considered to be of local significance. Their identification augments our knowledge of the limits/locations of historic farmland and settlement in Stevenage.



5. **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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- IfA 1999a. Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct
- IfA 1999b. Institute for Archaeologists' Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings)



6. APPENDICES

6.1 Appendix 1 – Artefact Summary

The evaluation produced a small artefact assemblage comprising pottery, ceramic building material and a worked flint (Table 1). The material was scanned to ascertain its nature, condition and, where possible, date range.

Tr.	Feature	Type	Context	Spot date	Finds Summary		
1	102	Buried topsoil	102	Modern	Ceramic roof tile (60g); land drain (27g)		
2	208	Ditch	209	Late Iron Age/early Roman	Pottery (4g)		
	214	Ditch	215	Undated	Worked flint (4g)		
3	314	Ditch	315	Roman	Pottery (6g)		

Table 1: Artefact summary by trench and feature

Pottery comprises two abraded and undiagnostic sherds weighing 10g, recovered from the deposits within ditches [208] and [314]. They are a late Iron Age/early Roman body sherd in grog and micaceous fabric type F39¹, and an early Roman sand-tempered grey ware rim sherd (fabric R06C). Both are well attested types and are likely to be of local manufacture. Two sand-tempered pieces of late post-medieval/modern flat roof tile (60g) and a modern land drain fragment (27g) derived from buried topsoil (102).

Deposits within ditch [214] yielded an undatable flint flake (4g), the distal end of which terminates in a hinge fracture. The latter may result from an incorrect flaking angle, or from a flaw in the raw material.

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¹ Fabric types defined in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series, currently maintained by Albion Archaeology.



6.2 Appendix 2 – Trench Summaries



Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 25.00 m. Width: 1.60 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 1.36 m. Max: 1.55 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 26460: Northing: 23860)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 26490: Northing: 23860)

Reason: To assess archaeological potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated: 1	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey clay silt 0.23m thick		
101	Levelling layer	Mid grey yellow clay moderate large ceramic building material 0.95m thick	✓	
102	Buried topsoil	Friable dark brown grey clay silt 0.3m thick	✓	✓
103	Buried subsoil	Firm mid grey brown clay 0.2m thick	✓	
104	Treethrow	Irregular profile: concave base: uneven dimensions: min breadth 0.75m, mi depth 0.27m, min length 2.35m	n 🗸	
105	Fill	Friable mid grey brown silty clay moderate flecks manganese staining 0.27m this	ck 🗸	
106	Natural	Firm light brown yellow clay		
107	Levelling layer	Friable mid brown grey silty clay frequent medium ceramic building materia 0.43m thick	al 🗸	
108	Modern intrusion	profile: concave dimensions: min breadth 1.5m, min depth 0.5m, min length 6.15m	✓	
109	Redeposited natural	Firm mid brown yellow clay 0.36m thick	✓	
110	Dump material	Loose dark black tarmac frequent medium-large stones 0.13m thick	\checkmark	



Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 31.30 m. Width: 1.60 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.8 m. Max: 1.6 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 26470: Northing: 23820)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 26490: Northing: 23850)

Reason: To assess archaeological potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Topsoil	Friable mid grey brown clay silt occasional small stones 0.26m thick	✓	
201	Levelling layer	Firm mid brown orange clay occasional large ceramic building material Redeposited natural with patches of re-deposited former topsoil containing modern brick, land-drain, wood, metal and paper fragments, 0.88m thick	n	
202	Buried topsoil	Friable dark grey brown clay silt occasional small chalk, occasional small stones 0.2m thick	✓	
203	Buried subsoil	Firm mid grey brown clay occasional small chalk, occasional small-medium stones 0.25m thick	V	
204	Levelling layer	Loose light pinkish grey gravel occasional small ceramic building material 0.26m thick	✓	
205	Natural	Firm light brown orange clay occasional small chalk Occasional patches of light grey clay		
206	Ditch	Linear E-W profile: 45 degrees base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.4m, min depth 0.18m, min length 2.m	✓	
207	Fill	Firm mid orange grey clay 0.18m thick	✓	
208	Ditch	Linear E-W profile: concave base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.68m, min depth 0.27m, min length 2.m	V	
209	Fill	Friable mid orange brown clay silt moderate small chalk, occasional small-medium stones 0.27m thick	· •	✓
210	Ditch	Linear ESE-WNW profile: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.65m, max depth 0.35m, min length 1.6m	✓	
211	Fill	Firm mid orange grey clay occasional flecks chalk 0.35m thick	✓	
212	Ditch	Linear E-W profile: concave base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.5m, m depth 0.34m, min length 2.m	in 🗸	
213	Fill	Friable dark orange brown clay silt occasional small chalk, occasional small-mediu stones 0.34m thick	ım 🗸	
214	Ditch	Linear E-W profile: 45 degrees base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.8m, min depth 0.4m, min length 2.m	✓	
215	Fill	Friable mid orange brown clay silt moderate small chalk, occasional small-medium stones 0.4m thick	V	\checkmark
216	Land drain	Linear E-W profile: near vertical base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.44m, min depth 0.5m, min length 2.m	✓	
217	Land drain	Land-drain pipe sections	\checkmark	
218	Backfill	Firm mid orange grey clay 0.5m thick	✓	
219	Treethrow	Sub-circular profile: concave base: concave dimensions: min depth 0.1m, min diameter 0.3m	V	
220	Fill	Firm dark orange grey clay 0.1m thick	✓	
221	Treethrow	Sub-circular $$ profile: near vertical base: uneven dimensions: min depth 0.05m min diameter 0.17m $$	ı, V	
222	Fill	Firm dark orange grey clay 0.05m thick	✓	



Trench: 3

Max Dimensions: Length: 25.00 m. Width: 1.60 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 1. m. Max: 1.1 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 26460: Northing: 23840)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 26460: Northing: 23850)

Reason: To assess archaeological potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey silty clay 0.15m thick	✓	
301	Buried topsoil	Friable dark brown grey silty clay 0.17m thick	✓	
302	Buried subsoil	Firm mid brown grey clay 0.22m thick	✓	
303	Natural	Firm light grey yellow clay		
304	Levelling layer	Friable mid brown grey silty clay moderate medium-large ceramic building material, moderate medium stones Re-deposited topsoil and modern brick fragments, 0.7m thick	✓	
305	Levelling layer	Firm mid brown yellow clay occasional medium ceramic building material R deposited natural, 0.56m thick	e- 🗸	
306	Ditch	Linear ENE-WSW profile: steep base: flat dimensions: min breadth 0.48m, max depth 0.24m, min length 1.5m	✓	
307	Fill	Firm mid yellow brown clay moderate flecks chalk 0.24m thick	✓	
308	Ditch	Linear NNE-SSW profile: 45 degrees base: flat dimensions: min breadth 0.9r min depth 0.5m	m, 🗸	
309	Fill	Firm light yellow brown clay 0.5m thick	✓	
310	Ditch	Linear ENE-WSW profile: convex base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.58m, min depth 0.16m	✓	
311	Fill	Firm light yellow brown clay 0.16m thick	✓	
312	Ditch	Linear NNE-SSW profile: 45 degrees base: flat dimensions: min breadth 0.75 min depth 0.48m	5m, 🗸	
313	Fill	Firm light yellow brown clay 0.48m thick	✓	
314	Ditch	Linear NNE-SSW dimensions: min breadth 0.9m, min length 6.5m General number for ditch		
315	Fill	Firm light yellow brown clay		✓



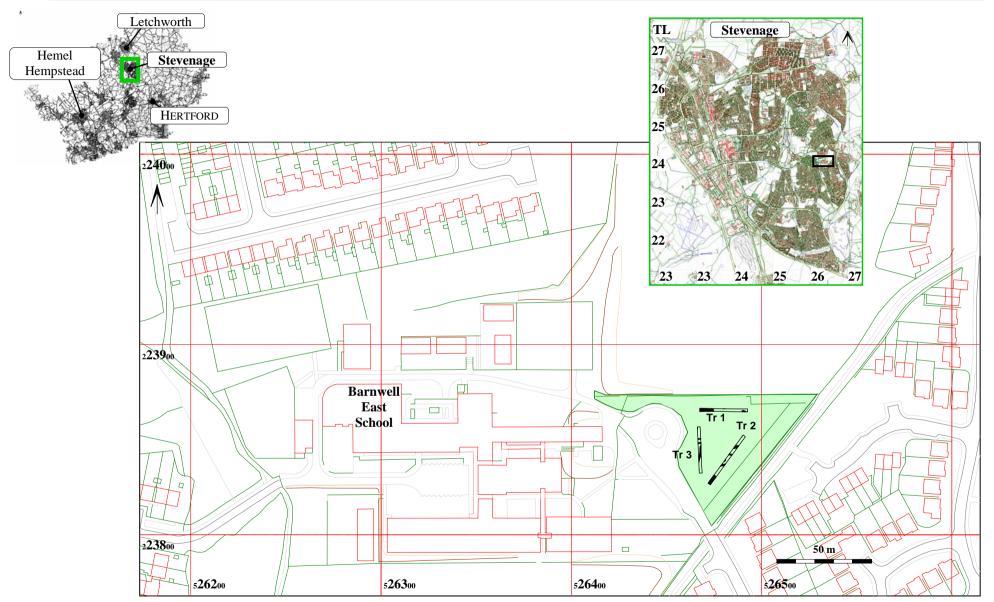


Figure 1: Site location and trench plan

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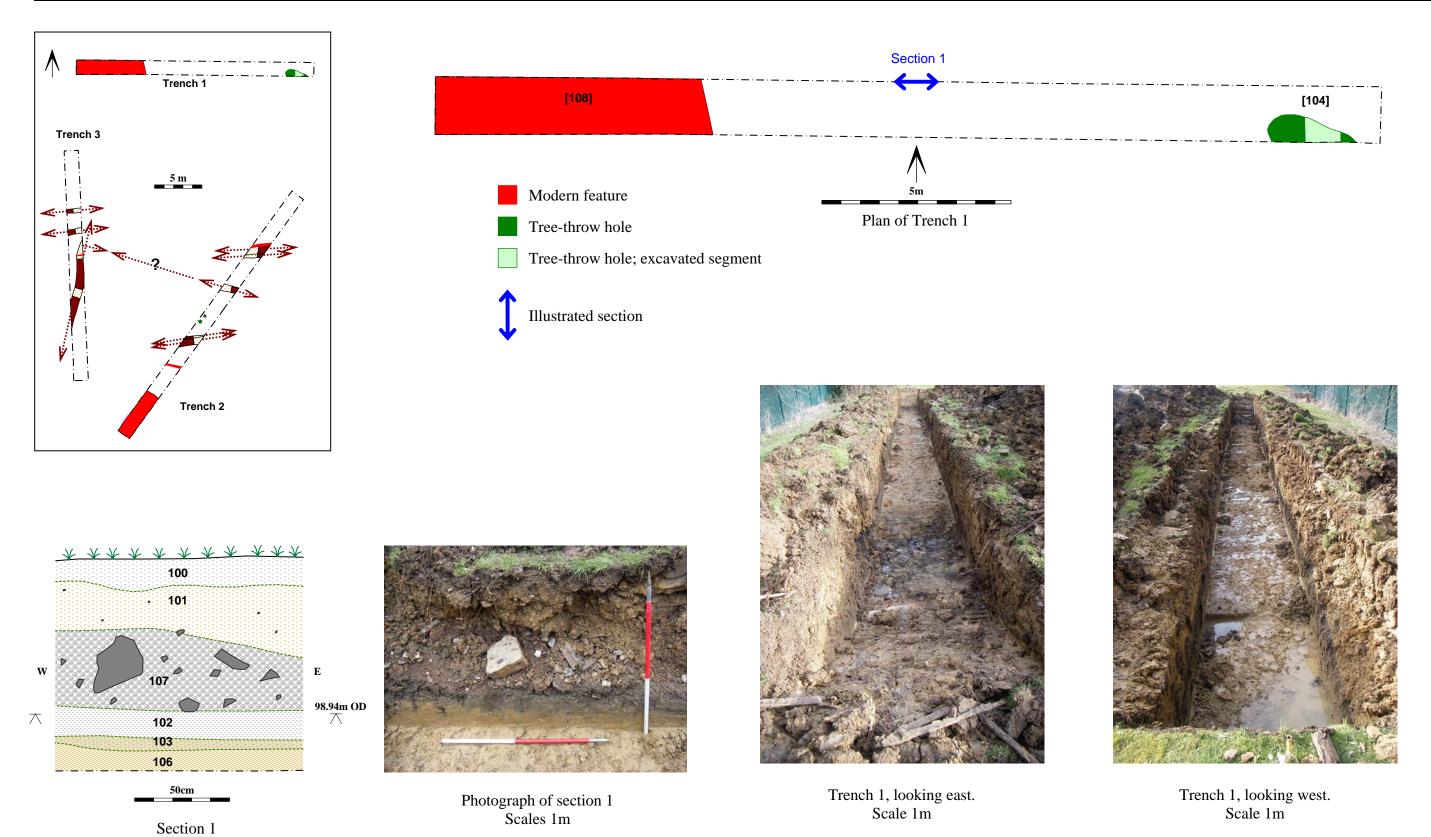


Figure 2: Trench 1



