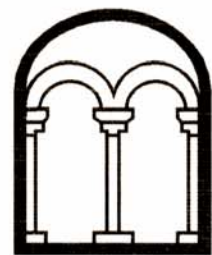


**FLITWICK LEISURE CENTRE
STEPPINGLEY ROAD
FLITWICK
BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

Albion
archaeology



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STEPPINGLEY ROAD
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BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

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Compiled by	Approved by
Wiebke Starke	Drew Shotliff

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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the method statement. 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.

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Bedfordshire County Council Leisure & Culture Services and monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Martin Oake, the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist. The fieldwork was undertaken by Wiebke Starke (Archaeological Supervisor) and Allan King (Archaeological Technician). This report has been prepared by Wiebke Starke 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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Key Terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used throughout this report:

CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
HER	Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation
PDA	Proposed development area



Non-Technical Summary

Central Bedfordshire Council are preparing a planning application for the expansion of Flitwick Leisure Centre onto a site to the north-west of the current Leisure Centre.

The Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) has advised that an archaeological field evaluation must be undertaken in order to obtain information required to compile a heritage asset assessment to accompany the planning application.

This is in accordance with the Central Bedfordshire Local Validation Checklist and national planning guidelines in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework – Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, which was published on 27 March 2012.

The field evaluation comprising the excavation of six trial trenches measuring 2m in width and 30m in length took place between 19th and 20th June 2013.

The archaeological evaluation uncovered no features predating the modern period. The modern features were exclusively observed in Trenches 3-6, defining the centre of the Proposed Development Area (PDA) as an area of modern disturbances.

The features comprised make-up and levelling layers which raised the current ground level in an area that represents either an infilled natural hollow or a quarried area. Dating evidence was available from one of the lower deposits placing the origins of the levelling events in the modern period. A hardcore surface recorded in Trench 5 is thought to be contemporary with the back filling and levelling works associated with the construction of the football pitches.

In summary, although some anthropogenic activity has taken place at the site, it is likely to be related to 20th-century development to the east and north-east of the PDA. It is of limited archaeological interest and of no more than negligible to local significance in terms of archaeological regional research frameworks.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

Central Bedfordshire Council are preparing a planning application for the expansion of Flitwick Leisure Centre onto a site to the north-west of the current Leisure Centre.

The Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) has advised that an archaeological field evaluation must be undertaken in order to obtain information required to compile a heritage asset assessment to accompany the planning application.

This is in accordance with the *Central Bedfordshire Local Validation Checklist* and national planning guidelines in the form of the *National Planning Policy Framework – Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*, which was published on 27 March 2012¹.

In accordance with the recommendation of the CBCA, Albion Archaeology was commissioned to produce a written scheme of investigation (Albion Archaeology 2013) to undertake the archaeological trial trenching of the site and to produce a report detailing the results (this document).

1.2 *Site Location, Topography and Geology*

The proposed development area (PDA) lies on the north-western fringe of Flitwick, approximately 1.2km from the town centre (Fig. 1). Flitwick lies near the centre of the SW–NE aligned Greensand Ridge, which is a significant landscape feature and has been a determinant in the pattern of road communications at least since the Roman period. The confluence of the SW–NE aligned River Flit and one of its tributaries occurs 2km east of the town, and the actions of these rivers have dissected the ridge in this area, creating low-lying land to the north, east and south of the town.

The site is bounded to the south-west by the Steppingley Road, to the south-east by the current Flitwick Leisure Centre, to the north-west by Valley Farm and open agricultural land and to the north-east by allotments. It lies at the northern end of a NE-facing slope but the land itself is fairly flat at 75m OD. The site currently accommodates a series of football pitches for the adjacent Flitwick Leisure Centre. Slopes on the southern, northern and eastern boundaries of the area suggest that it has been reduced in order to create a levelled surface for the football pitches.

The geology of the application site is Lower Greensand with local deposits of Oxford Clay, Boulder Clay and glacial gravel².

¹ National Planning Policy Framework, published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (2012). Available at: www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/nppf.

² Contains British Geological Survey materials © NERC [2013]



1.3 **Archaeological and Historical Background**

Flitwick lies in a landscape with a rich archaeological heritage. An extensive area (possibly up to 10ha) of late Iron Age and Roman settlement (HER 918) is known at the moated 12th-century monastic site of Ruxox Farm (HER 919), c. 2km east of the PDA. Sporadic archaeological investigations since the 1950s have identified burials, enclosures, buildings, ovens, pits, ditches and possible roads (Luke 1999).

The remains of a Roman plantation have been excavated c. 1km north-east of the PDA (Northamptonshire Archaeology 2010), while excavations at Hinksley Road, Flitwick (HER 573) also identified significant settlement activity dating to the middle Iron Age, Roman and Saxon periods (Luke 1999). A Roman corn-drying oven was recorded c. 500m south of the application site (HER 564), and occupation evidence and pottery kilns have also been found c. 300m to the north-east (HER 6743).

Flitwick itself is an amalgamation of three separate settlements: Denel End, Church End and East End (Page 1912). The latter two are known to have medieval origins (HERs 17004/5), and the former probably dates to the same period. A medieval deer park is known to the west of the PDA (HER 11466), while Flitwick Wood to the south (HER 13239) is listed as ancient woodland.

A set of medieval ridge and furrow earthworks (HER 5475) is recorded to the north-west of the PDA near Froghall Farm. Froghall farmhouse (DBD 4149) is a Grade II listed building of 17th-century origin. Cartographic evidence suggests that the proposed development area most likely also consisted of agricultural land.

Denel End, Church End and East End all expanded in the 19th century, but could still be regarded as separate entities into the 1930s. Post-medieval industrial activity in the surrounding landscape was widespread (Albion 2011), with much of it centred around clay and sand extraction (HER 5971, 6705, 6706).

A set of cropmarks forming a series of contiguous sub-rectangular enclosures (HER 562) lies to the north of the PDA. Extensive evaluation of this land adjacent to Steppingley and Froghall Road through geophysical survey and trial trenching (EBD1067, EBD1068) revealed a relatively low level of past human activity indicative of an agricultural landscape and with no evidence of settlement. An extensive programme of ploughsoil sieving failed to reveal any significant concentrations of artefacts. The geophysical survey also revealed no trace of the rectilinear enclosures, suggesting that they were either geological in origin or the remains of drainage (Albion 2011).

1.4 **Project Objectives**

The general purpose of the evaluation was to recover information on the:

- location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present within the application site;
- integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present within the application site.



2. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach to the project is summarised below. A full methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2013) which was approved by the CBCA prior to commencement of fieldwork.

2.1 Standards

The standards and requirements set out in the following documents will be adhered to throughout the project:

• IfA	<i>By-Laws and Code of Conduct</i>
	<i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation (2008) and finds (2008)</i>
• English Heritage	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment PPN3: Archaeological Excavation (2008)</i>
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation. 2nd ed. (2011)</i>
	<i>Geophysical Survey in Archaeological Field Evaluation (2008)</i>
• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork (2nd edn, 2001).</i>
• EAA	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (2003)</i>
• Bedford Museum	<i>Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedford (2010)</i>

2.2 Archive

The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (Accession No. LUTNM 2013/10). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (ref: albionar1-153532) in accordance with the guidelines issued by English Heritage and the Archaeology Data Service.

2.3 Trial Trenching

Trial trenching took place between 19th and 20th June 2013. The layout of the six trenches, measuring 2m in width and 30m in length, was agreed by the CBCA. The trenches were opened by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, operating under close archaeological supervision.

Overburden was removed down to the top of the archaeological deposits or undisturbed geological deposits, whichever was encountered first. The spoil heaps were also scanned for artefact recovery.

Any potential archaeological features were investigated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's pro forma sheets. Each trench was subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate. All deposits were recorded using a unique number sequence, commencing at 100 for Trench 1, 200 for Trench 2



etc. Context numbers in square brackets refer to the cuts [***] and round brackets to fills or layers (***). The trenches were inspected by the CBCA prior to their backfilling.



3. TRIAL TRENCHING RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

All deposits and features found within the trial trenches are described chronologically below and shown on Figures 2 and 3-7. Detailed information on deposits, features and finds can be found in Appendices 1 and 2.

3.2 Overburden and Geological Deposits

The topsoil comprised 0.18–0.47m of dark brown grey sandy silt. In trenches 1, 2, 3 and 5 this overlay 0.1–0.32m of subsoil of sandy silt composition that varied from mid orange brown to dark brown grey in colour. The undisturbed geological deposit varied from loose light orange yellow silty sand in Trenches 1 and 2 to mid grey brown/mid orange brown silty sand in Trenches 3 and 5 and mid grey white silty sand in trenches 4 and 6.

3.3 Modern Levelling Deposits

A sequence of modern, late 20th-century levelling deposits was observed in Trenches 3 to 6.

Layer (503) in Trench 5 comprised compact mid orange brown silty sand and gravel hardcore of up to 0.3m thickness beneath topsoil (Figure 6a). A more friable mid orange brown gravel deposit (303) beneath *c.* 0.34m of topsoil was observed in Trench 3 where it overlaid modern land drains and an area of modern disturbance at the east end of the trench.

In Trenches 4 and 6 the layers comprised re-deposited geological deposits or aggregate sand, reworked soil with mixed topsoil lenses and re-deposited topsoil. In Trench 6, a dark brown-black deposit (604), *c.* 0.08–14m thick, overlay geological deposits at a depth of 0.88m from the current ground surface. It was observed over the full length of the trench in sondages 1-3 (Figures 2 and 6b-d).

Deposit (403) in Trench 4 is of similar composition to deposit (604). It was *c.* 0.17m thick and covered a large part of Trench 4, overlying geological deposits at a depth of 0.94m from the current ground surface. This deposit contained ceramic building material and glass fragments. It is likely to represent re-deposited topsoil which was used to fill in a natural hollow or a quarried area (Figures 2 and 7a-c).

Both deposits (403) and (604) were overlaid by a number of levelling deposits comprising reworked soil (401), (601) and (603), re-deposited topsoil (602) and re-deposited geological or aggregate sand (402) to make up the current ground level (Figures 6b-d and 7a).

The disturbance at the east end of Trench 3 might be associated with the disturbance in Trench 4 and 6.

The hardcore layer in Trench 5, which extended over a width of *c.* 18.5m, could represent a former haul road or compound area associated with construction of



the leisure centre and the football pitches.

3.4 Archaeological Remains

No archaeological features older than the above described levelling deposits were identified in the six trenches.



4. CONCLUSIONS AND HERITAGE ASSET ASSESSMENT

4.1 *Summary and Significance of the Evaluation Results*

The archaeological evaluation did not uncover features older than the 20th-century levelling layers beneath the subsoil.

Undisturbed geological deposits were encountered at a depth of 0.35–0.5m in Trenches 1-2 and at a depth of 0.6–0.9m in Trenches 3-6.

Very few artefacts were recovered from the lowest levelling deposit; they comprised brick and glass fragments of 20th-century date.

The presence of this deposit in Trenches 4 and 6 and further modern disturbance in Trench 3 suggest that the entire area between these three trenches might be affected by the same sequence of events — either the infilling and levelling of a natural hollow or the backfilling and levelling of a previously quarried area.

The hardcore layer recorded in Trench 5 is likely to be associated with those backfilling and levelling events.

The slopes observed in the terrain on the north, east and south boundaries of the PDA suggest that a certain amount of ground reduction took place in association with the construction of the football pitches.

4.2 *Heritage Asset Assessment*

The trial trenching undertaken on the site has revealed no significant heritage assets in the form of sub-surface archaeological remains. The levelling and makeup deposits can be dated to the modern period and are likely to be associated with the ground preparation for the existing football pitches which suggests that they are of limited archaeological interest. They have no potential to address archaeological research frameworks for Bedfordshire or the eastern region.

Given the absence of significant archaeological heritage assets on the site, development of the PDA will have a negligible archaeological impact.



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6. APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARIES



Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 30.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.35 m. Max: 0.5 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2510: Northing: 35534)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2486: Northing: 35532)

Reason: To evaluate area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey sandy silt occasional small-medium stones 0.18-0.32m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Subsoil	Friable mid orange brown silty sand occasional small stones 0.17-0.18m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Natural	Loose light orange yellow silty sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 30.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.35 m. Max: 0.52 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2461: Northing: 35551)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2452: Northing: 35574)

Reason: To evaluate area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Topsoil	Friable dark grey brown sandy silt occasional small stones 0.25-0.3m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
201	Subsoil	Friable mid orange brown sandy silt occasional small stones 0.1-0.12m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Natural	Friable light orange yellow silty sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 3

Max Dimensions: Length: 30.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.63 m. Max: 0.68 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2465: Northing: 35602)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2490: Northing: 35601)

Reason: To evaluate area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey sandy silt occasional small stones 0.37-0.34m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
301	Subsoil	Friable dark grey brown sandy silt occasional small stones 0.26m thick at west end, not present at east end. Truncated at c. 13m from east-end by modern disturbances incl. land drains and makeup layers.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
302	Natural	Friable light orange grey silty sand Present in west half of trench, east half of trench ground heavily affected by modern disturbances.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
303	Make up layer	Friable mid grey brown sandy silt occasional small-medium stones Not present at west end of trench; at east end c. 0.34m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 4

Max Dimensions: Length: 30.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.64 m. Max: 0.73 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2514: Northing: 35584)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2524: Northing: 23556)

Reason: To evaluate area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
400	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey sandy silt occasional small stones 0.47-0.27m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
401	Levelling layer	Friable mid orange brown silty sand occasional small stones 0.17-0.46m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
402	Redeposited natural	Friable mid orange yellow silty sand occasional small stones 0.24-0.42m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
403	Make up layer	Friable dark brown black sandy silt moderate small CBM, occasional small stones 0.04-0.17m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
404	Natural	Friable light grey white silty sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 5

Max Dimensions: Length: 30.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.61 m. Max: 0.62 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2561: Northing: 35587)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2556: Northing: 35612)

Reason: To evaluate area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
500	Topsoil	Friable mid brown grey sandy silt occasional small stones 0.3-0.4m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
501	Subsoil	Friable dark brown grey sandy silt occasional small stones 0.21-0.32m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
502	Natural	Friable mid grey orange silty sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
503	Make up layer	Compact mid orange brown sandy silt frequent small-medium stones Max. 0.3m thick, extends over 18.5m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 6

Max Dimensions: Length: 30.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.43 m. Max: 0.53 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2530: Northing: 35633)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2505: Northing: 35631)

Reason: To evaluate area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
600	Topsoil	Friable dark grey brown sandy silt occasional small stones 0.3-0.32m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
601	Levelling layer	Friable mid orange brown sandy silt occasional small stones 0.23-0.27m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
602	Make up layer	Compact dark brown black sandy silt occasional small stones 0.08-0.16m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
603	Levelling layer	Friable mid grey brown sandy silt occasional small stones 0.2-0.4m thick with lenses of compact dark grey black sandy silt - redeposited topsoil?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
604	Make up layer	Compact dark brown black sandy silt occasional small CBM, occasional small stones 0.008-0.14m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
605	Natural	Friable mid grey white silty sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
606	Make up layer	Friable light yellow brown sandy silt occasional small stones Min. 0.2m thick, contemporary with (603)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



7. APPENDIX 2: FINDS SUMMARY

7.1 Introduction

The evaluation produced a small finds assemblage comprising mainly pottery, ceramic roof tile and window glass (Table 1). No finds were recovered from Trenches 1-3, or 5.

Tr.	Feature	Description	Context	Date range	Finds Summary
4	403	Layer	403	Modern	Ceramic roof tile (7g); brick (70g); roof slate (16g); vessel glass (1g); coal (2g); clinker (2g)
6	603	Levelling deposit	603	Modern	Pottery (25g); clinker (1g)
	604	Layer	604	Modern	Ceramic roof tile (14g); roof slate (9g); window glass (4g)

Table 1: Finds summary by trench and feature

7.2 Ceramics

Pottery of 17th-century date was recovered from levelling deposit (603), and comprises single undiagnostic sherds (total weight 20g) of glazed red earthenware and German (Frechen) stoneware (respectively fabric types P01 and P25³). The layer also contained a mass-produced white ware sherd (5g) from a modern saucer.

Five abraded sand-tempered pieces of post-medieval/modern ceramic roof tile (total weight 21g) derived from layers (604) and (403). The latter also contained four pieces of modern brick (70g).

7.3 Non-ceramic Finds

All non-ceramic finds are modern in date. A sliver of leaf-green translucent vessel glass (1g) of indeterminate form derived from layer (403), and three pieces of colourless window glass (4g) from layer (604). Each deposit also contained single pieces of roofing slate (total weight 25g). A fragment of coal (2g) and six pieces of clinker, none of which have been retained, derived from layers (403) and (603).

³ Fabric types defined in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series, currently maintained by Albion Archaeology.

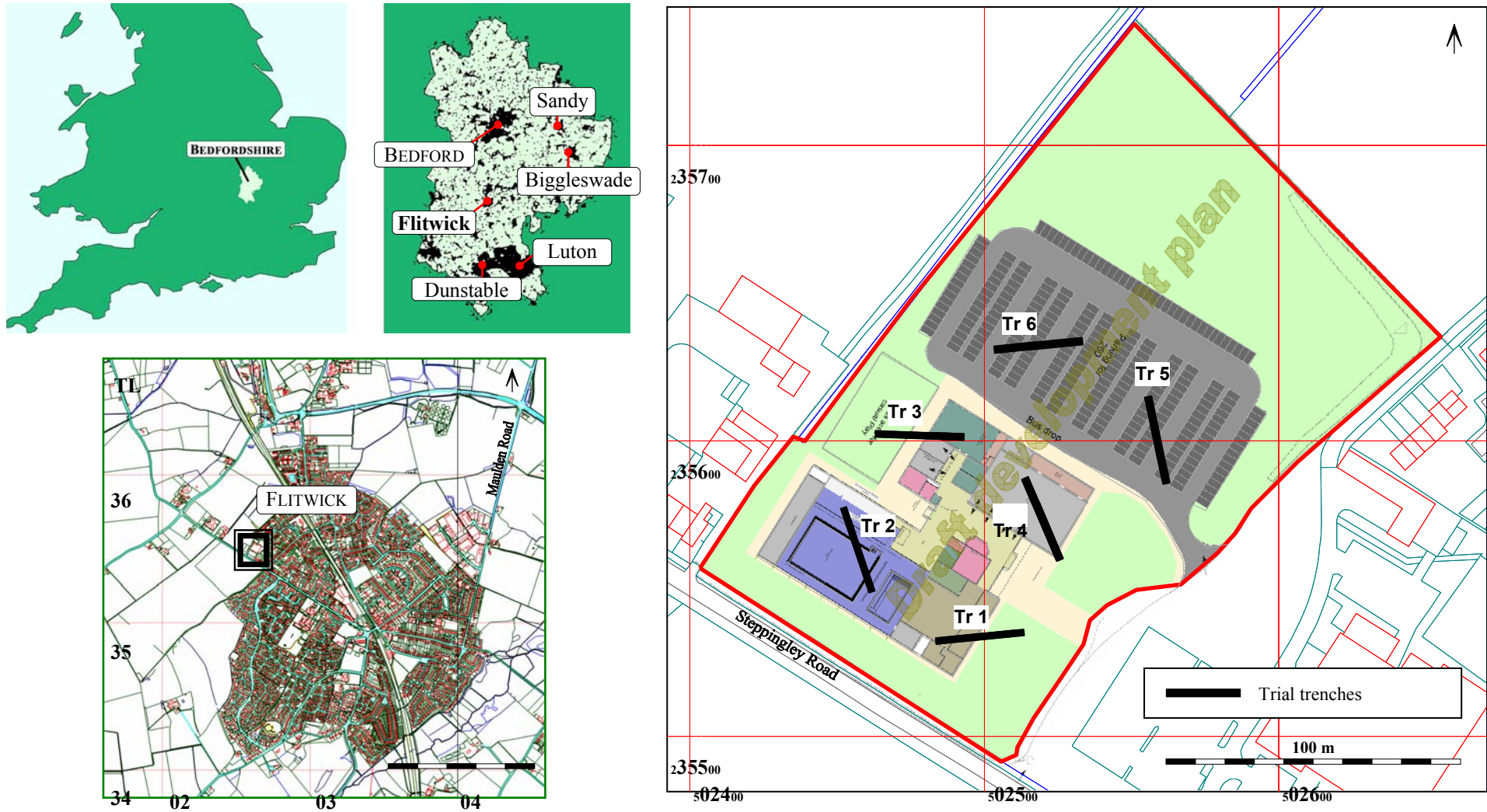


Figure 1: Site and trench location

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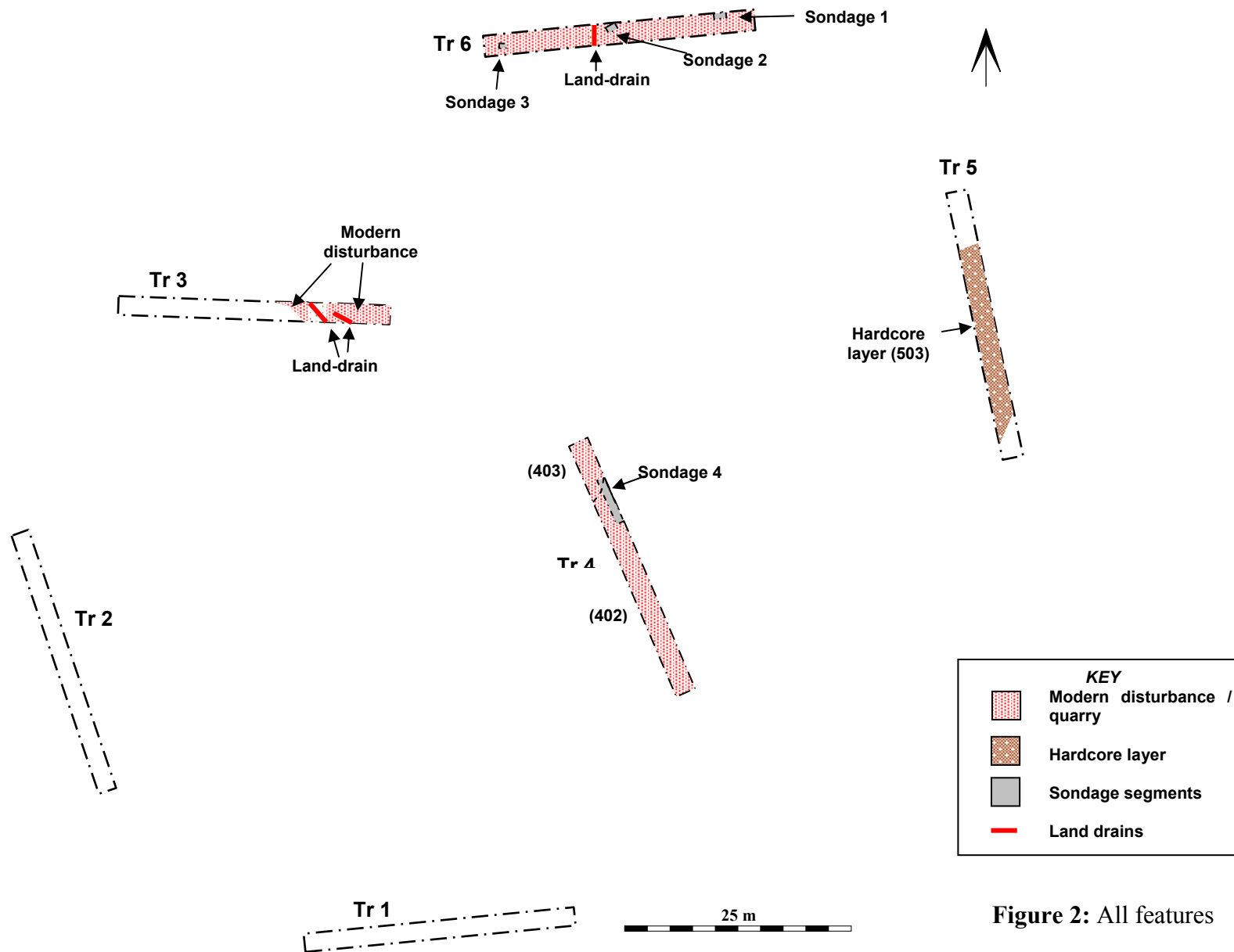


Figure 2: All features

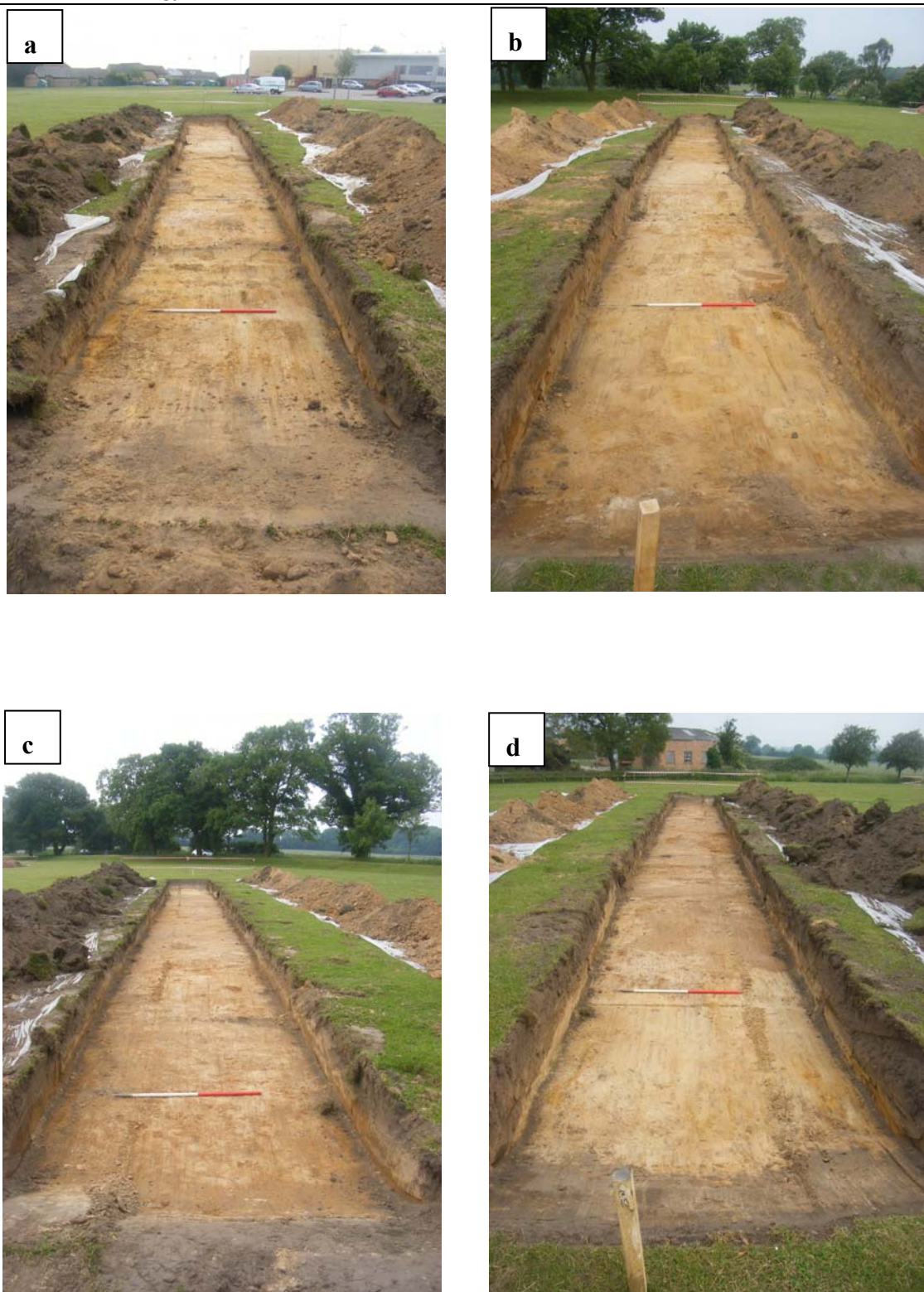


Figure 3: a) Trench 1 looking NW; b) Trench 1 looking SE; c) Trench 2 looking E; d) Trench 2 looking W. 1m scale



Figure 4: a) Trench 3 looking E; b) Trench 3 looking W; c) Trench 4 looking SE;
d) Trench 4 Looking NW. 1m scale



Figure 5: a) Trench 5 looking SE; b) Trench 5 looking NW; c) Trench 6 looking W; d) Trench 6 looking E. 1m scale

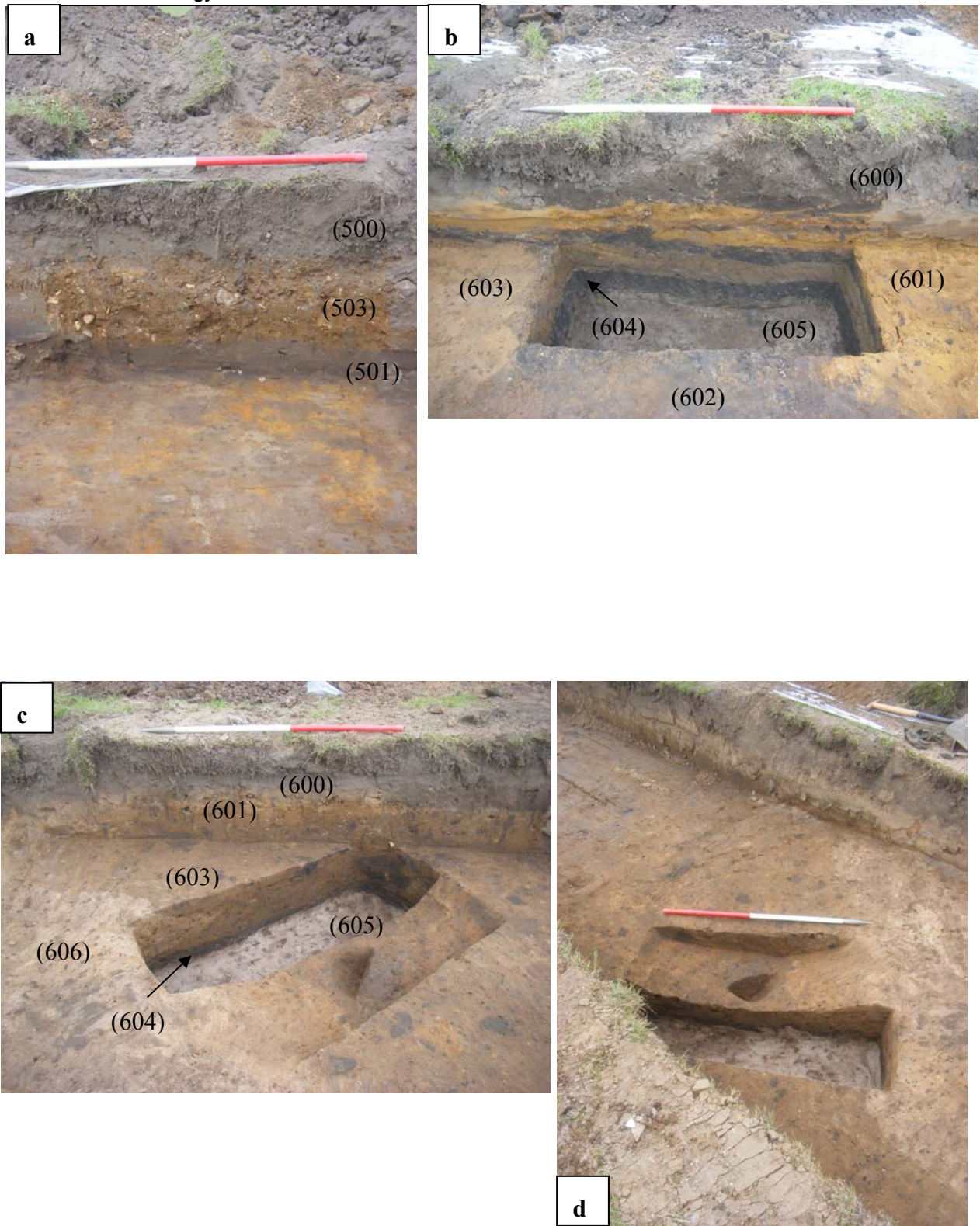


Figure 6: a) West facing section Trench 5 (503); b) South facing section Sondage 1, Trench 6; c) South facing baulk section Sondage 2, Trench 6; Sondage 2 looking SW, Trench 6. 1m scale.

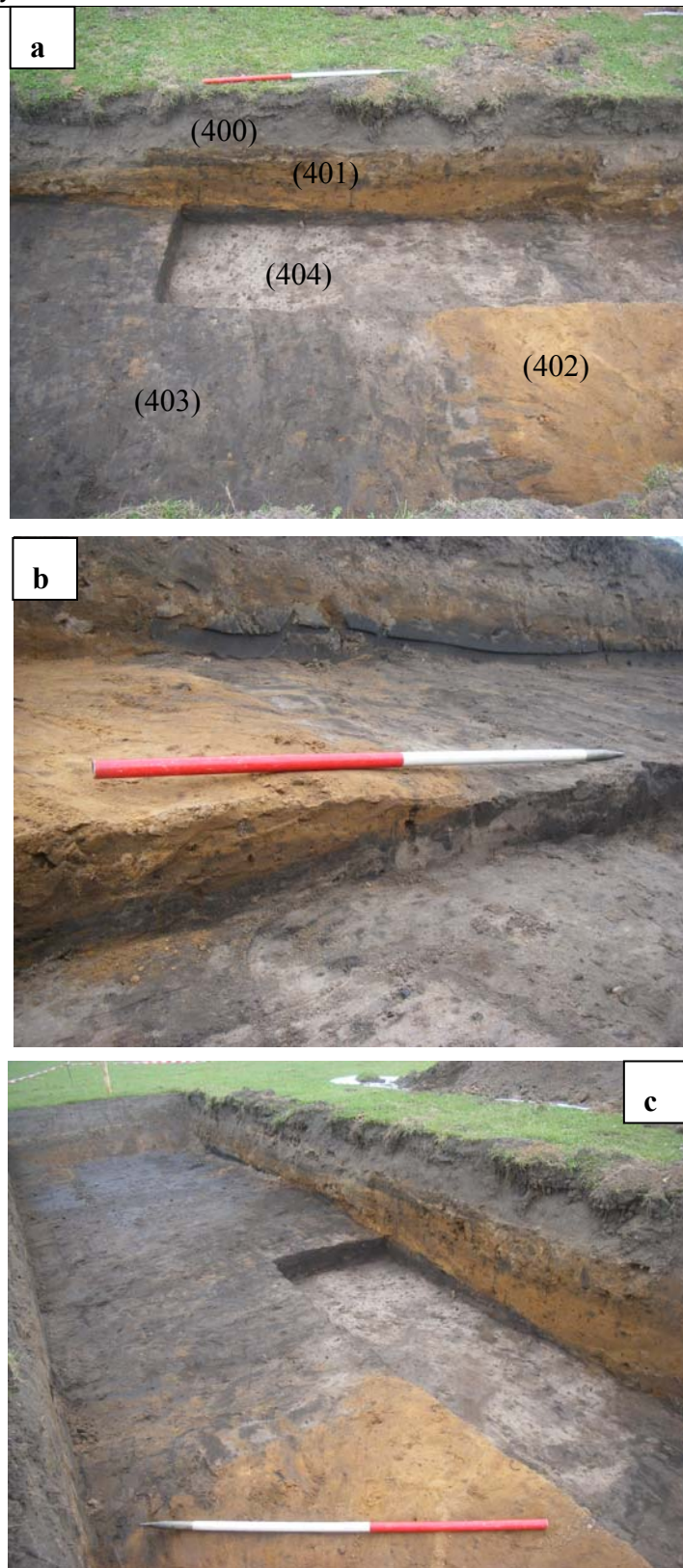


Figure 7: Sondage 4 Trench 4 – a) SE facing baulk section; b) NW facing section of sondage; c) general shot NW end of trench with deposits (403) and (402). 1m scale.

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