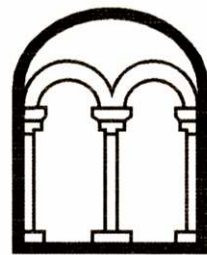


**WILLINGTON LOWER SCHOOL
CHURCH ROAD
WILLINGTON
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION,
INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND
PUBLICATION**

Albion
archaeology



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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation and submission of this document and all statements 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.

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Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Kier Construction. The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Vanessa Clarke, Bedford Borough Council Archaeologist. Fieldwork was undertaken by Ian Turner (Archaeological Supervisor).

This report was prepared by Ian Turner and edited by Drew Shotliff with contributions from Joan Lightning (CAD Technician).

All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

BBC	Bedford Borough Council
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
Client	Kier Construction
HER	Historic Environment Record
HET	Historic Environment Team of BBC
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

A planning application (15/01084/DC3) for the replacement of a temporary classroom with a single classroom building at Willington Lower School, Church Road, Willington, Bedfordshire was approved by Bedford Borough Council.

Due to the high archaeological potential of the site, a condition was attached to the planning consent requiring the implementation of an archaeological mitigation strategy. This was done on the advice of the Borough Council's Historic Environment Team (HET), in accordance with the guidelines provided in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to produce a written scheme of investigation, based on the brief issued by the HET, and to undertake the archaeological works, the results of which are set out in this report.

The site lies on the northern outskirts of Willington, c. 215m south of the River Great Ouse. The new classroom building measured 12.5m x 7.7m and was built on a series of 12 concrete foundation pads of varying sizes.

The site of the new classroom building lies within the postulated extent of the medieval settlement of Willington. The objectives of the project were, therefore, to monitor all groundworks that had the potential to reveal archaeological remains, in particular any relating to medieval Willington.

The archaeological monitoring of the mechanical excavation of the foundation pits took place in November 2015. Beneath modern overburden it revealed a possible former schoolyard surface, a buried subsoil, an undated ditch and a tree throw.

The paucity of features and artefacts within the foundation pits indicates that the site was not a focus of settlement. It probably lay within the open fields on the edge of medieval Willington. The results of the archaeological investigation are of low significance and have no further potential to address regional research priorities.

This report will be uploaded onto the OASIS website (reference no. albionar1-228875) and the project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. BEDFM:2015.81).



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 **Background**

A planning application (15/01084/DC3) for the replacement of a temporary classroom with a single classroom building at Willington Lower School, Church Road, Willington, Bedfordshire was approved by Bedford Borough Council (BBC).

Due to the high archaeological potential of the site, a condition (no. 2) was attached to the planning consent requiring the implementation of an archaeological mitigation strategy. This was done on the advice of the Borough Council's Historic Environment Team (HET), in accordance with the guidelines provided in the *National Planning Policy Framework*. The HET issued a brief (BBC 2015), describing the programme of archaeological works that was required to address the planning condition.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to produce a written scheme of investigation (Albion 2015) in response to the brief and to undertake the archaeological works, the results of which are described in this report.

1.2 **Site and Development Description**

The site lies on the northern outskirts of Willington, c. 215m south of the River Great Ouse (Figure 1). It is situated on level ground at a height of c. 24m OD at grid reference TL 1116 5008. The area of the proposed development was previously occupied by a temporary classroom.

The underlying solid geology consists of Peterborough Member Mudstone. The superficial geology comprises sands and gravels of the River Great Ouse terraces.

The new classroom building measured 12.5m x 7.7m. It was built on a series of concrete foundation pads of varying sizes.

1.3 **Archaeological Background**

The Bedford Borough Historic Environment Record (HER) records a number of significant archaeological sites in the vicinity of the school.

The site of the new classroom building lies within a locally designated Area of Archaeological Interest, based on the postulated extent of the medieval settlement of Willington (HER17123).

Excavations at the "Danish Camp" (actually a medieval moated site) revealed the well-preserved remains of buildings dating to between the 11th and 14th centuries AD (MBD769; EBB833 and 834) (Edmondson and Mudd 2004). This scheduled monument lies c. 150m north-east of the site of the new classroom building.



1.4 Project Objectives

The purpose of the archaeological investigation was to make a full record of any archaeological remains impacted by the development, and to place them within their cultural and environmental setting. The specific aims of the archaeological fieldwork were to:

- monitor all groundworks that had the potential to reveal archaeological remains.
- investigate the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of archaeological deposits encountered within the groundworks.

Dependent on the nature of any remains that were revealed, specific research aims (most probably relating to medieval settlement) would be derived from regional research frameworks (e.g. Brown and Glazebrook 2007; Oake et al. 2007; Medlycott 2011).



2. METHOD STATEMENTS

2.1 Implementation

Archaeological observation of the groundworks was undertaken on the 5th, 9th and 12th November 2015.

The works comprised the machining under archaeological supervision of 12 foundation pad pits for the new classroom building. The design of the foundation pits specified three different sizes: 0.70m x 0.70m; 1m x 1m; and 1.40m x 1.40m (Figure 2). All were dug to a depth of c. 1m.

The excavations were carried out using a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-bladed bucket, operated under close archaeological supervision. Deposits encountered were investigated and recorded in accordance with Albion's *Procedures Manual*. Spoil heaps were checked on a regular basis for the recovery of artefacts.

The other planned intrusive groundworks comprised a shallow area strip, a narrow drainage trench within the (already monitored) building footprint and an additional narrow service trench, 1m to the south of the new building. With the agreement of the HET, these areas were not monitored, as the results from the monitoring of the foundation pits indicated very limited potential for the survival of significant archaeological remains.

2.2 Standards

The project adhered throughout to the standards set out in the following documents:

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (2nd edn, 2003).
• Bedford Borough Council	<i>Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedford</i> (ver. 2.8, 2010)
• CfA	<i>Charter and by-law; Code of conduct</i> (2014)
	<i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i> (2014)
	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> (2014)
• EAA	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (2003)
• Historic England	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide</i> (2015)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation</i> , (2nd edn, 2011)



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

The foundation pad pits for the new classroom are referred to in the following text by the abbreviation FP with their allocated number, 1 to 12. Their positions are illustrated on Figure 2.

3.2 Overburden and Geology

The overburden across the site is described from top to bottom:

- 0.06m-thick layer of modern brick block-paving (100).
- 0.06m-thick layer of loose light yellow sand (101), a levelling deposit beneath the block paving.
- 0.22–0.54m-thick layer of type 1 sub-base with frequent complete and broken bricks (102), a substantial levelling deposit of variable thickness.

The undisturbed geological deposit comprised light grey-orange sandy silt (104) of variable thickness above light yellow-orange sandy gravel (105).

3.3 Archaeological Remains

3.3.1 Introduction

The archaeological remains present within the foundation pits comprised a possible former yard surface, a buried subsoil, a ditch and a tree throw. None of the features produced closely datable artefacts.

The two layers were thickest at the northern end of the site and were not present to the south where the block-paving and its sub-base directly overlay the geological horizon. This suggests that the ground to the south was severely truncated either when the school yard was block-paved (probably in the 1980s) or when the school was constructed.

3.3.2 Possible former yard surface

A layer of compact dark brown-grey sandy silt with moderate small and medium stones (103) was present at the north end of the site in FPs 1–5. The only artefact recovered from the layer was a fragment of undiagnostic peg-tile (37g) from FP5.

Lamination of the soil and its compact nature suggests it may be the unsurfaced former schoolyard (the school was built in 1868). Alternatively it may represent a buried former topsoil that pre-dates the school.

3.3.3 Buried subsoil

Beneath layer (103) in FPs 1–7 a second dark layer was present. It comprised mid orange-brown sandy silt with moderate small and medium stones (115). A small fragment of animal bone (5g) was identified close to the top of the deposit in FP 1.



The appearance of this layer was uniform and sterile and it is interpreted as a buried subsoil. The bone fragment is possibly an intrusive artefact derived from ploughing activity that predated the building of the school.

3.3.4 Ditch

An ENE-WSW aligned ditch [106]¹ was present in FP7 and FP8. It had a concave profile and measured at least 5m long, 0.60m wide and 0.32m deep. It contained a lower deposit of mid orange-brown sandy silt and an upper deposit of dark brown sandy silt. The ditch did not contain any artefacts and is thus undated.

The ditch is at odds with the alignment of the road and other plot boundaries in the modern landscape and it almost certainly predates the school. The absence of artefacts suggests that the feature was a field boundary or drainage feature, at some distance from settlement.

3.3.5 Tree throw

In FP5 a shallow irregular concave feature [112] undercut the geological deposits and continued beyond the edge of excavation. It was at least 0.50m long, 0.30m wide and 0.18m deep. It contained a lower deposit of light brown-grey sandy silt (113) that was pale and sterile in appearance and an upper deposit of dark brown-grey sandy silt with moderate small and medium stones (114). The deposits did not contain any artefacts. The upper deposit was irregular in section, suggestive of rooting.

The feature is interpreted as a tree throw or tree bole.

¹ Ditch [106] was also recorded as [109]



4. CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological monitoring of the groundworks at Willington Lower School revealed a possible former yard surface, a buried subsoil, a ditch and a tree throw.

Although some truncation of geological deposits was evident at the southern end of the site, the presence of the buried subsoil (115) across the remainder indicated that the site had the potential to preserve archaeological features.

A layer of dark soil (103) was present above the subsoil in the foundation pits in the northern half of the site. It produced a fragment of peg-tile and is likely to represent the former unsurfaced yard to the school, which was built in 1868.

A medium-size ditch [106] on an ENE-WSW alignment crossed two of the foundation pits. Its date remains uncertain but its location its different alignment to the road and other modern boundaries indicate that it predates the school. The absence of artefacts suggests that the feature was a field boundary or drainage ditch at distance from any settlement focus.

Feature [112] contained no artefacts. Its sterile fill and irregular shape suggest that it is a tree throw.

The paucity of features and artefacts within the foundation pits indicates that the site was not a focus of settlement. It probably lay within the open fields on the edge of the medieval settlement of Willington. The results of the archaeological investigation are of low significance and have no further potential to address regional research priorities.

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6. FIGURES

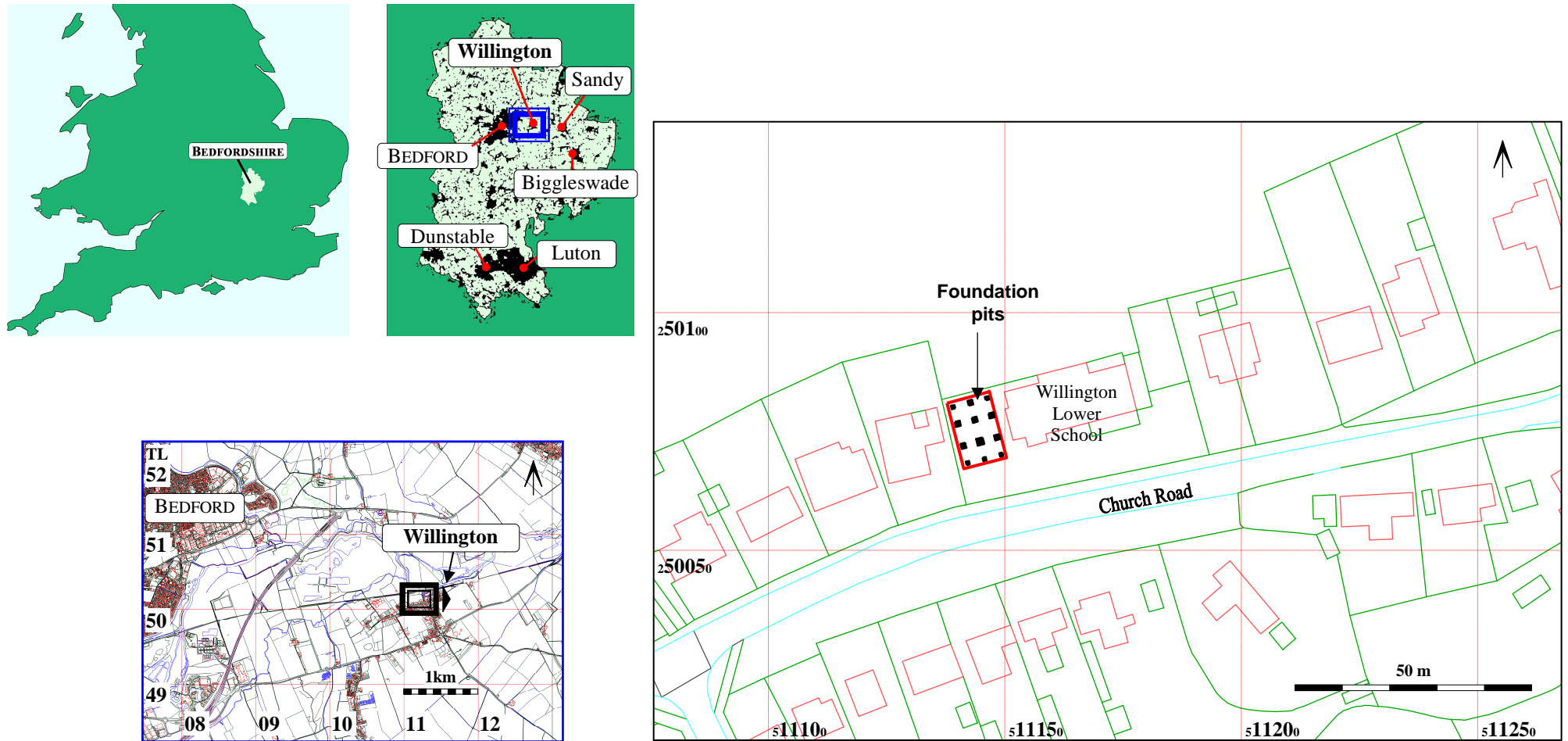


Figure 1: Site location plan

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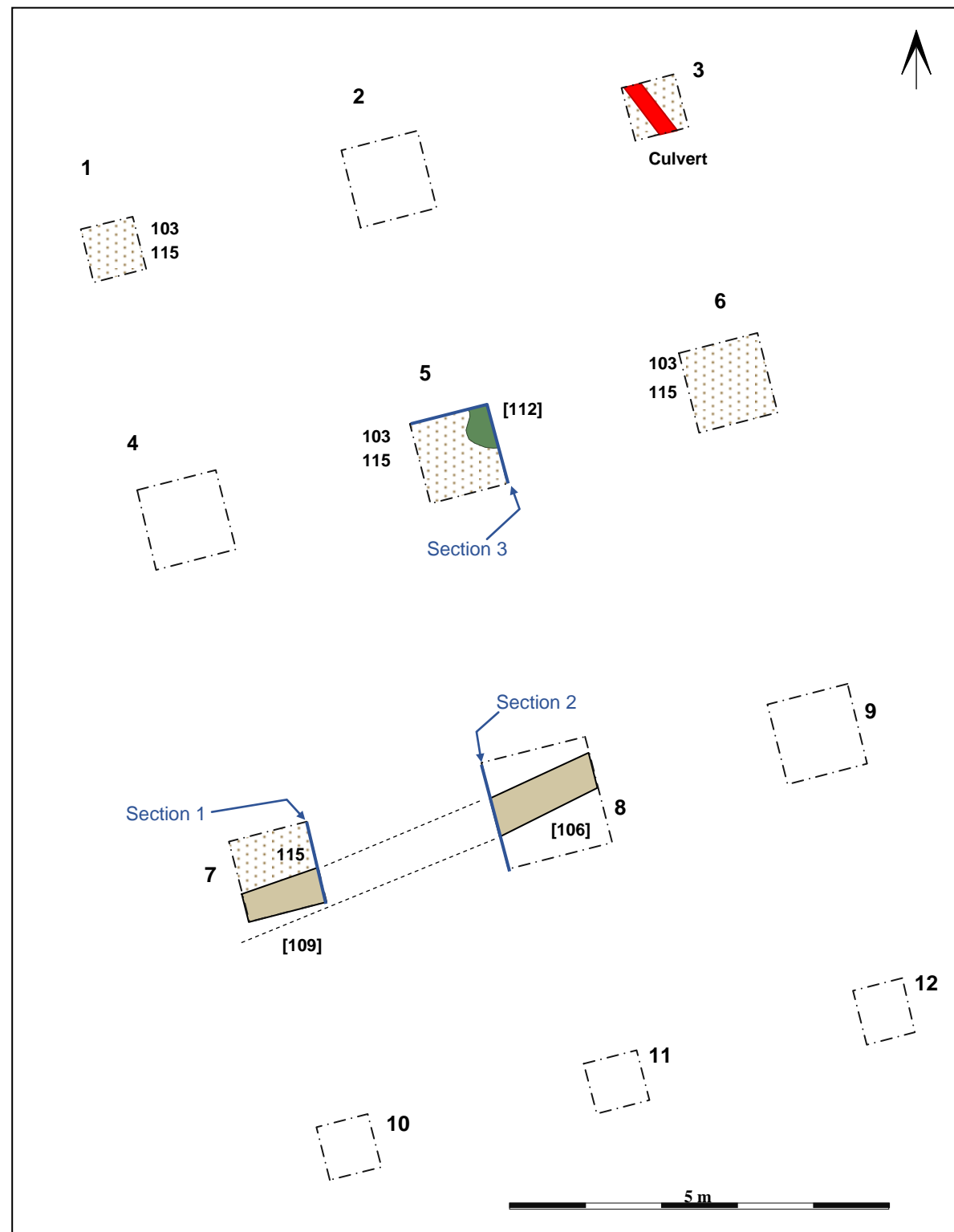
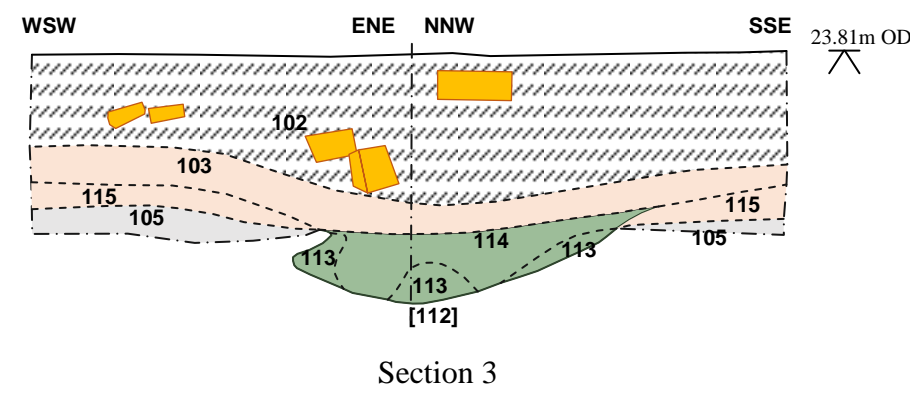
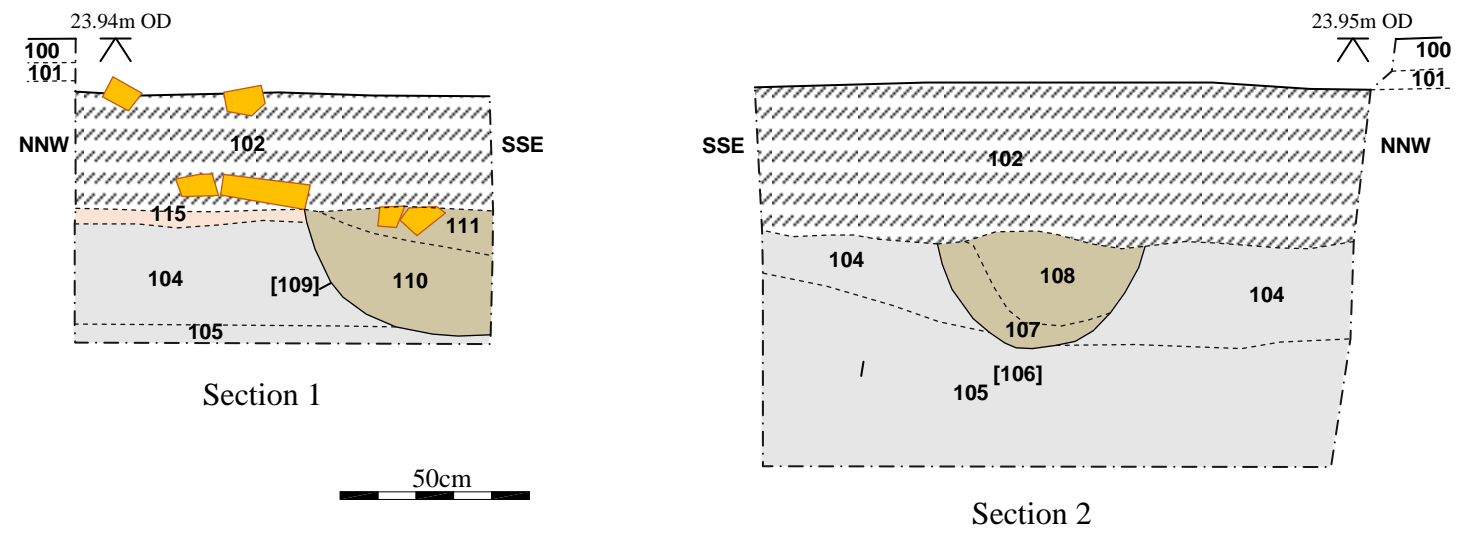


Figure 2: All features plan



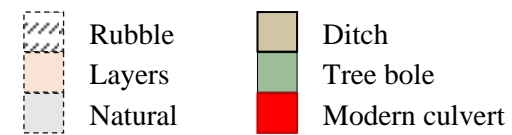
Ditch [106] Looking SW. Scale 1m



Ditch [109] Looking NE. Scale 1m



Layers 103 and 115. Scale 1m



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