NOISE REDUCTION BUNDS, THRUXTON AIRPORT ANDOVER, HAMPSHIRE

ARCHAOLOGICAL OBSERVATION INVESTIGATION, RECORDING AND REPORTING

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Contents

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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.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Matthew Smith (Project Officer), who also prepared this report. Joan Lightning (CAD Technician) produced the figures. The project was under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

Albion Archaeology
St Mary's Church
St Mary's Street
Bedford, MK42 0AS
☎: 01234 294006
Fax: 01234 294008
e-mail: office@albion-arch.com

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Structure of the Report

After the introductory Section 1, the methodology of the project is explained in Section 2. The results of the archaeological observation and recording are within Section 3, followed by a brief synthesis in Section 4. Section 5 is a bibliography and Appendix 1 contains an archaeological context summary.

Key Terms

Throughout this report the following terms or abbreviations are used:

HAHBR	Hampshire Archaeology and Historic Buildings Record
Client	Earthline Ltd
Consultant	Brook Consultants, Newbury, Berkshire
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
PAH	Principal Archaeologist, Hampshire County Council
Procedures Manual	Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork, 2nd ed, 2001 Albion Archaeology

Non-Technical Summary

In April 2008 Albion Archaeology attended preliminary earthworks being undertaken in advance of the construction of a noise reduction bund at Thruxton Airport, Andover, Hampshire.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Brook Consultants (acting on behalf of Earthline Ltd) to undertake a programme of archaeological observation in accordance with a Project Design, approved by the Principal Archaeologist for Hampshire (PAH). The work was necessary because of the site's proximity to a parish boundary and its setting within a significant, wider archaeological landscape.

The noise reduction bund is located on the north (Kimpton) side of Thruxton Airport. It is centred on National Grid Reference SU 4283 1461.
The site lies on the northern edge of relatively flat ridge at c. 93m OD before it slopes down to the Snoddington Road at c. 81m OD.

Six trenches, up to 16.5m in length, were opened across the area of the proposed bund and excavated down to 0.3m or undisturbed geological deposits.

The trenching identified the shallow nature of the overburden within the area and revealed the underlying chalk geology of the ridge.

No archaeological deposits were identified at any level within the trenches. The trenching did reveal areas of disturbed ground associated with the airfield. The parish boundary was not present in the form of a cut archaeological feature in the area observed.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

A programme of archaeological works was occasioned by the construction of noise reduction bunds at Thruxton Airport. The original landscaping plan involved the removal of a fence line and topsoil on land adjacent to existing bunds in order to create a continual noise reduction barrier at the north of the site. Because of the proximity of the proposed new bund to a parish boundary and the archaeological sensitivity of the surrounding area, the Principal Archaeologist for Hampshire (PAH) advised that a scheme of archaeological monitoring and observation of the groundworks was required.

As a result of this, Albion Archaeology were commissioned by Brook Consultants (acting on behalf of Earthline Ltd) to undertake the archaeological work. A project design was produced (Albion Archaeology 2006), outlining the circumstances of the project and giving an indication of the scope of the work required. It also included fieldwork methodologies so that the proposed works would be quantifiable and could be monitored by the PAH.

The project design was approved by the PAH prior to the commencement of the fieldwork.

1.2 Site Location, Topography and Geology

The noise reduction bund was located on the north (Kimpton) side of Thruxton Airport. It represents the continuation of the existing bund located between the racing track and Kimpton Primary School. It is centred on National Grid Reference SU 4283 1461 (Figure 1).

The site lies on the northern edge of relatively flat ridge at *c.* 93m OD, from which the land slopes down to the Snoddington Road at *c.* 81m OD.

The soil profile in the area generally comprises calcareous brown earths and argillic or palaeo-argillic brown earths, characterised by well-drained shallow chalky soils, associated with deeper, loamy or clayey, flinty soils (Ordnance Survey 1975). More specifically the soil profile is characterised by mid brown slightly clayey silt topsoil with sparse flint inclusions. This overlies relatively uniform pale brown clayey silt subsoil with rare flints and chalk grains.

Work that had recently taken place in the vicinity of the site comprised the removal of a tree/fence line in preparation for creation of the bund and the demolition of war time air raid shelters associated with the airfield.

1.3 Archaeological Background

1.3.1 The vicinity

The site lies in a landscape rich in archaeological remains with sites of Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and medieval date known in the vicinity.

Approximately 500m north of the site in the vicinity of Kimpton, several ring ditches of probable Bronze Age (2200-700BC) date appear as cropmarks on aerial photographs.

Extensive late Bronze Age (1100-700BC) linear ditches and Iron Age (700BC-AD43) field systems, some associated with the large, late Bronze Age linear ditches of the Quarley Hill system, have been recorded to the immediate north-west, west and south-west of the site, including the Lains Farm complex. Information derives from aerial surveys and limited excavations (Bellamy 1992).

Immediately to the south of the Thruxton Airport, at Lains Farm (SU 269 444) limited excavations of a large early-late Iron Age (5^{th}-1^{st} century BC) possible "banjo" enclosure were undertaken prior to the upgrading of the A303 (Bellamy 1992). Associated features included pits, postholes and hearths as well as late Roman (AD 240-410) inhumations. Archaeological works carried out along the route of the A303 prior to the improvement scheme recorded north-west to south-east orientated linear ditches of probable late prehistoric date (Bellamy 1992, 71).

Late Roman (AD 240-410) inhumations were located to the south of Thruxton Airport during the upgrading of the A303 (Bellamy 1992). To the west of the site, a Roman villa was excavated in 1823 and has been the subject of intermittent fieldwork since then. In 2002 it was again investigated as part of the Danebury Trust's study of Roman villa establishments on the chalklands of eastern Hampshire. The main villa building comprised an aisled hall which contained an elaborate mosaic in contrast to the rest of the rooms which were of chalk. A possible ritual shaft and burials suggest a possible ritual association with the villa.

Approximately 500m to the south-east of the site, and just outside the Airport, are the earthwork remains of a medieval (AD1066-1539) manorial site. This comprises at least two large enclosures defined by a substantial bank and ditch. The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and therefore only limited investigation has been undertaken. Another possible medieval settlement is located 700m to the north-east of the site in the vicinity of Littleton Farm

1.3.2 Within Thruxton Airport

A fieldwalking survey was carried out within the south-west part of the airport in May 1994 by Thames Valley Archaeological Services. Worked flint was relatively abundant occurring across the whole site with a noticeable denser concentration to the western perimeter (TVAS 1994). Seven sherds of Iron Age/Roman pottery were recovered but were not thought to be indicative of sub-surface features. Overall the density of finds was higher than those obtained from comparable surveys carried out on the Upper Chalk of East Berkshire and South Oxfordshire (*ibid,* 3). The results are thought to reflect considerable prehistoric activity in the area (*ibid,* 4).

During the watching brief on soil stripping for the access road within the south-west part of the airport by Wessex Archaeology in 1997, four archaeological features were identified and investigated (Wessex 1997). Two

were large pits which contained late Bronze Age pottery (1100-700BC) and associated worked and burnt flint. The remaining features were interpreted as field boundary ditches; they contained worked flint, burnt flint, worked stone, possible fragments of quernstone and animal bone. Although both ditches contain material that is not closely datable, the finds would not be inconsistent with a late prehistoric date, *i.e.* Bronze Age or Iron Age.

The parish boundary crosses the site from south-west to north-east and continues as a field boundary to the north and east of Thruxton village. It has been suggested that some such boundaries have their origins in the prehistoric or Roman periods (Frank Green and David Hopkins pers. comm.). However, the recently removed chain-link fence/hedge/tree line is likely to be post-war because it is not shown on the wartime Air Ministry airfield plans of Thruxton and is unlikely to have been present for operational reasons.

Thruxton was constructed as a three-runway airfield in 1940 and was opened in August 1941 (Ashworth 1990, 191-3). By 1942 the runways had been extended and the perimeter track featured extensive panhandle dispersals. Based on the Air Ministry airfield plan, parts of three aircraft dispersals were located in the vicinity of the proposed bund. Only the concrete of the eastern one, to the west of Kimpton Primary School, is still visible. The dispersals would have had air raid shelters, sleeping shelters, latrines and flight offices/crew rooms nearby. In 1946, the airfield was deemed surplus to requirements and was leased to the Wiltshire School of Flying. Its perimeter track has been used for motor racing since the early 1960s.

1.4 Nature of Groundworks and Project Objectives

Originally it was proposed that topsoil would be removed from the footprint of the new bund. However, when construction started the proposals had altered. Stripping of topsoil was no longer necessary as the new bund was to be built on the existing ground surface (Figure 2).

Following on-site consultation with the client's consultant, a series of six trenches were dug along the site of the bund. Their purpose was to:

- Test for the survival of archaeological features beneath the shallow overburden on the ridge.
- Determine whether the parish boundary survived as a sub-surface archaeological feature.
- Assess whether or not any sub-surface archaeological features on the site of the bund might be damaged by heavy machinery used in the construction of the bund.

Within this framework, the objectives of the archaeological work were to:

- Record the trenches and investigate and record any archaeological deposits within them.
- Prepare a report of the fieldwork findings for deposition in the Hampshire Archaeology and Historic Buildings Record (AHBR) and with OASIS.
- Deposit the project archive with Hampshire County Museum Service.

2. METHODOLOGY

The programme of archaeological observation was undertaken on 14th April 2008. During this period all groundworks requiring archaeological monitoring were completed. The trenches were opened by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket.

The archaeological works and observation adhered to the standards and field methods set out in the Project Design (Albion Archaeology 2006) and comprised the following;

- All machine excavation was monitored to try to identify any *in situ* archaeological deposits that were revealed.
- All disturbed soil was scanned for artefacts.
- All revealed deposits and potential archaeological features were investigated and recorded in accordance with Albion's *Procedures Manual*.
- The trenches were mapped at a scale of 1:100 on base plans that were tied into the OS national grid.
- A photographic record was maintained for all significant deposits, along with overall photographs of the groundworks undertaken.

Throughout the project the standards set out in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Codes of Conduct* and Standards and Guidance documents (specifically *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*, September 1999) were adhered to.

3. RESULTS OF THE FIELDWORK

3.1 Introduction

All recorded deposits were issued with unique context numbers. Within this report, context numbers referring to cut features are written as [**], and layers or deposits within cut features are written as (**).

Detailed information on all the deposits and archaeological features referred to below can be found in Appendix 1.

3.2 Trenching Results

The six trenches were opened, on a north-south alignment, dispersed evenly along the length of the proposed bund. They ranged in length from 8m to 16.5m, depending on the location of fence lines, machine routes and the maintenance of site health and safety (Figure 2 and Plates 1-6).

The depth of stripping never exceeded 0.3m. At this level, all topsoil (100) and most subsoil (101) were removed. Areas of disturbed ground (102 and 103) were revealed in Trenches 2, 3, and 4. The underlying chalk geology (104) was exposed in all trenches, except Trench 4. The depths of these deposits varied slightly from one end of the site to the other.

The underlying, undisturbed geological deposits consisted of solid chalk (104) approximately, 0.2 – 0.3m below ground level.

Within and overlying the chalk were layers of modern disturbance, located immediately beneath the topsoil. Layer (102) was a dark grey brown silty clay that included abundant debris in the form of rubble and red brick/tile. It is interpreted as a modern intrusion associated with the airfield.

Layer (103) was a dark grey brown humic silty clay with abundant root disturbance. It is interpreted as root disturbance from the modern, recently removed tree/hedge line.

Subsoil (101) consisted of a firm mid red brown colluvial clay silt up to 0.25 thick.

Topsoil (100) consisted of dark brown grey clay silt with occasional small stones. It was up to 0.2m thick. This deposit was entirely removed from the trenched areas.

No archaeological features or finds were revealed in the trenches.

4. SYNTHESIS

4.1 Interpretation

Although no archaeological remains were uncovered during the investigations, useful information on the depth of overburden along the chalk ridge was recorded. All the trenches showed the topsoil to be shallow but generally uniform and the subsoil to be thin on the top of the ridge, increasing in thickness as it sloped down.

The exposure of chalk natural in the majority of the trenches revealed that, if the parish boundary had followed the previous tree line, it was not in the form of a cut feature. In this particular area, the boundary appears to have consisted of the ridgeline itself.

The presence of modern intrusions within two trenches suggests that the site has been subject to modern disturbance. This is almost certainly associated with the nearby airfield and the recently demolished air raid shelters. The level of this disturbance is likely to have had a large impact on the archaeological potential of the site, as any significant archaeological remains would have been destroyed in the construction of such buildings.

4.2 Summary

The trenching revealed that the parish boundary did not take the form of a cut feature located beneath the previous tree line. It also revealed the shallow nature of the overburden on the top of the ridge. Finally, it revealed that the area has been subject to disturbance, probably associated with the former airfield, and that this would have had a highly detrimental effect on any archaeological remains that might once have been present.

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6. APPENDICES

Appendix 1, Context Summary

Area: 1
Extent (ha):
OS Co-ordinates: SU4283014610
Description: Contexts from all six trenches

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Friable mid grey brown clay silt moderate small-medium stones	☑	☐
101	Subsoil	Friable mid red brown clay silt . Colluvium	☑	☐
102	Modern disturbance	Compact dark grey brown silty clay frequent small-medium ceramic building material, moderate small-large concrete	☐	☐
103	Modern disturbance	Loose dark grey brown silty clay . Frequent rooting	☐	☐
104	Natural	Compact mid brown white chalk . Natural	☐	☐

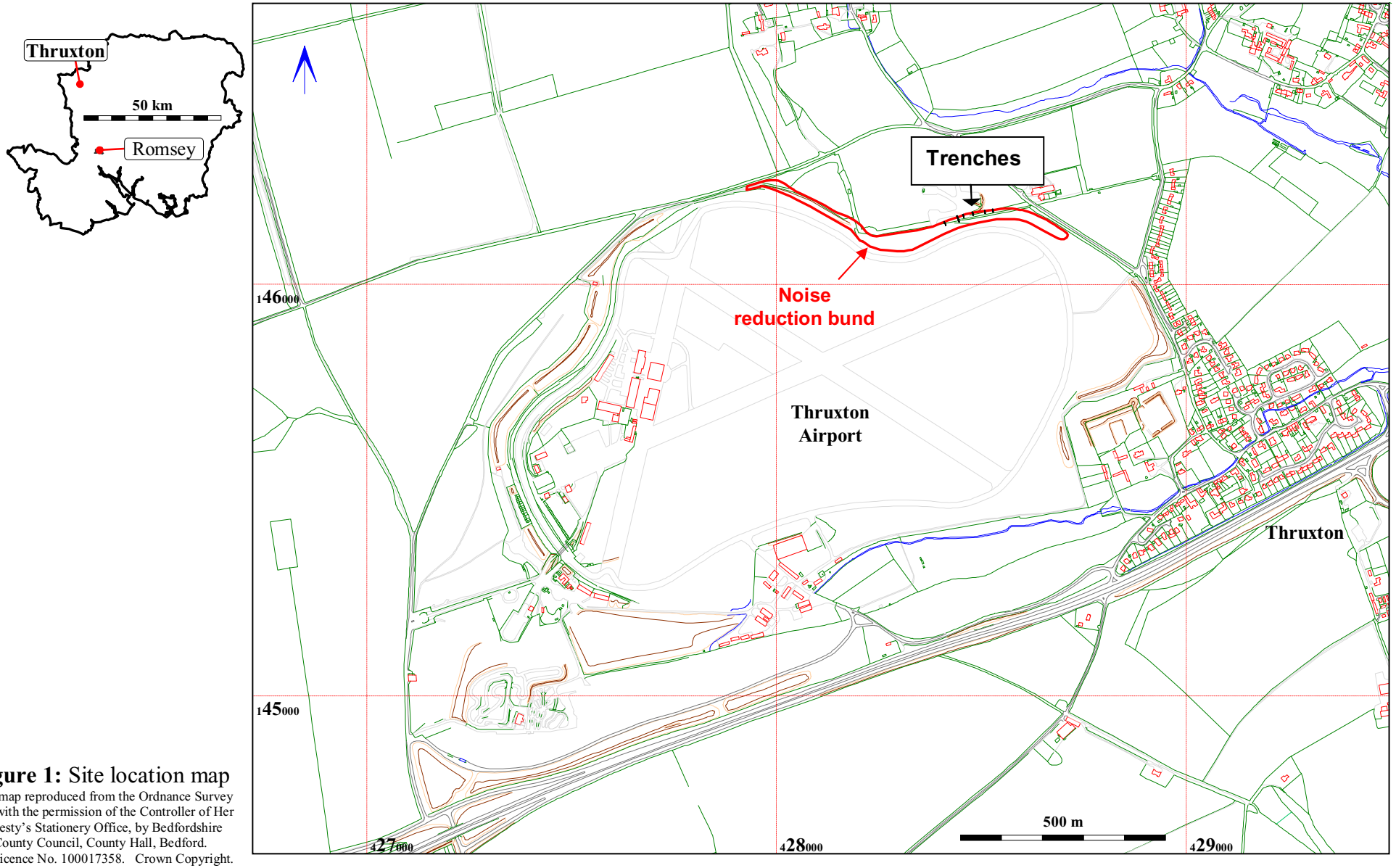

Figure 1: Site location map

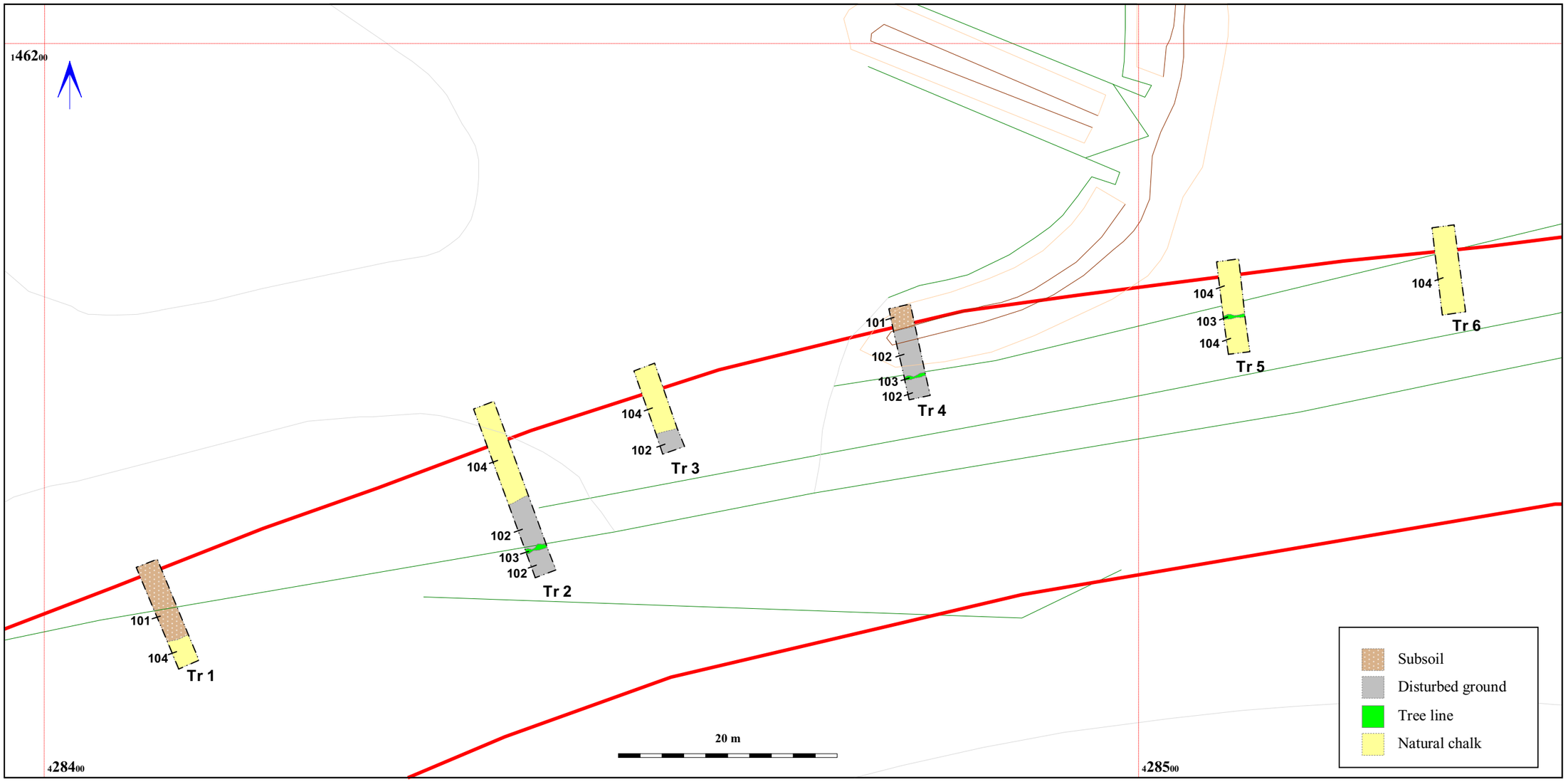

Figure 2: Trench and all features plan

Plate 1: Trench 1; scale 1m (facing south)

Plate 2: Trench 2; scale 1m (facing south)

Plate 3: Trench 3; scale 1m (facing south)

Plate 4: Trench 4; scale 1m (facing south)

Plate 5: Trench 5; scale 1m (facing south)

Plate 6: Trench 6; scale 1m (facing north)

Plate 7: General view of site (facing west)