

**LAND AT WESTONING LOWER SCHOOL
HIGH STREET, WESTONING
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
TRIAL TRENCHING**

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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.

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Structure of this Report

The project and its background are introduced in Section 1. This is followed by an outline of the methodology employed during the project in Section 2 with the results of the fieldwork presented in Section 3. Section 4 is a synthesis and discussion of results and Section 5 a bibliography. Appendix 1 contains a finds summary and Appendix 2 detailed data on trenches and deposits.

Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

| | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|
| BCC | Bedfordshire County Council |
| CAO | County Archaeological Officer |
| IFA | Institute of Field Archaeologists |

Acknowledgements

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The fieldwork was carried out by Lennard Anderson and Slawomir Utrata. The report was prepared by Robert Wardill with contributions by Joan Lightning (illustrations) and Jackie Wells (finds).



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission has been granted by Bedfordshire County Council for the construction of an extension to the existing school buildings at Westoning Lower School, High Street, Westoning, Bedfordshire, centred on grid reference TL 0345 3260.

The site lies within the historic core of Westoning, a settlement of medieval origin. Very little archaeological investigation has been undertaken in the area, however, the site had the potential to contain important archaeological remains most likely from the medieval period.

Because of this potential, a condition was attached to the planning permission requiring a programme of archaeological evaluation be carried out in advance of the development. A single trial trench measuring 2m x 12m was excavated within the footprint of the proposed new extension.

A relatively large number of archaeological features were found within the trench. Finds and circumstantial evidence suggest all are likely to date to the early medieval period. The majority of remains are characteristic of boundary features and domestic features such as waste or storage pits. It is possible that the domestic features uncovered in the trench represent activities carried out within the back plots of dwellings that front the High Street and are bounded to the rear by ditches and fences.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

Planning permission has been granted by Bedfordshire County Council for the construction of an extension to the existing school buildings at Westoning Lower School (ref. 08/2). Because of the archaeological potential of the site, a condition was attached to the permission requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological investigation.

The planning authority's archaeological adviser, BCC's CAO issued a brief (BCC 2008a), outlining a three-staged approach to the programme of archaeological work:

- Stage I – archaeological field evaluation.
- Stage II – appraisal of the results of the archaeological field evaluation.
- Stage III – implementation of an agreed programme of archaeological investigation and recording (if required, following completion of Stage II).

The CAO issued a further brief for the Stage I archaeological field evaluation (BCC 2008b), detailing the requirements for trial trenching at the site.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Mouchel Limited to carry out the Stage I trial trenching. A Project Specification was prepared (Albion Archaeology 2008) and approved by the CAO prior to the commencement of fieldwork which took place on the 23rd and 24th June 2008.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The village of Westoning is located on the A5102 approximately 1.5km south of Flitwick, and the school lies in the north-eastern corner of the village.

The proposed extension is located on the north-western side of the school and is centred on TL 0345 3260 (Figure 1). The c.220m² extension is to comprise new classrooms, reception area and offices.

The ground height in the vicinity of the site is around 75m OD and the geology of the area comprises gleyed brown earth and lower greensand over Jurassic clay.

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

The site lies within the historic core of Westoning, a settlement of medieval origin. To the west of the site lies Westoning Manor, a Scheduled Ancient Monument consisting of a circular medieval moated site with associated rectangular enclosures.

Very little archaeological investigation has been undertaken in the area, however, the site had the potential to contain important archaeological remains most likely from the medieval period.



1.4 Project Objectives

The principal object of the trenching was to establish if archaeological remains were present at the site. If so, the following was to be ascertained:

- the location, extent, nature and date of any archaeological features or deposits;
- their integrity and state of preservation.

The information gained during the trenching would assist with the formulation of an appropriate mitigation strategy to safeguard any remains found at the site.

If medieval remains were uncovered, it was hoped that they may help elucidate the origins and early development of the village. The Medieval Settlement Research Group has identified still-inhabited settlements as a potential fruitful source of information on the development of medieval settlement (MSRG 1996). This potential is also highlighted within the County research agenda (Oake et al 2007).



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Standards

In addition to the requirements set out in the CAO brief, the standards set out in the following documents were adhered to:

- *Albion Archaeology Procedures Manual for Archaeological Fieldwork and the Analysis of Fieldwork Records* (2001)
- *IFA Standards and Guidance for Field Evaluation and Code of Conduct*
- *English Heritage Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991)

Prior to commencement of fieldwork, a risk assessment was carried out and measures put in place to minimise the potential for harm from any identified hazards.

2.2 Trenching

A single trial trench measuring 2mx12m was excavated within the footprint of the proposed new extension (Figure 1). This equated to 24m² of trenching which represented an 11% sample of the site.

Overburden was removed from the trench by mechanical excavator fitted with a flat edged ditching bucket whilst under the constant supervision of an archaeologist. The base and sections of the trench were cleaned by hand where necessary to clarify archaeological deposits. All archaeological deposits and natural strata were provided with unique identifying context numbers, commencing at 100 and recorded on *pro forma* sheets. Scale drawings and photographs of trench and deposits were made where appropriate.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

Deposits and features recorded within the trench are summarised below. Detailed information on all contexts can be found in Appendix 1.

3.2 Overburden and Geological Deposits

Archaeological remains were encountered cutting geological deposits at a depth of around 0.4-0.5m below ground level (Figure 2). Above this was a cultivation soil layer (101) comprising medium grey clay silt. This was overlain by a layer of tarmac (100) which was the surface of the school playground.

The geological deposits exposed in the trench comprised yellow/orange sandy clay.

3.3 Archaeological Remains

The trench contained a concentration of archaeological features comprising post-holes, pits and ditches. All of the features were filled with a similar mid-grey sandy silt deposit (Figure 2), (Photograph 1).

At the western end of the trench was a line of six closely spaced and intercutting post-holes [111], [113], [115], [117], [119] and [121]. Most were around 0.30m in diameter and all were approximately 0.10m deep. Post-hole [117] contained a sherd of early medieval (12th-13th century) pottery.

A metre to the east of the post-holes was a rectilinear pit [107], 0.40m deep with near vertical sides (Photograph 2). It contained animal bone, pieces of charcoal and several pieces of early medieval pottery. Within the base of the pit was a small post-hole [109].

To the east of the pit were a series of linear features, [129], [125], and [123], on a northeast-southwest orientation (Photograph 3). The closest [129] was a small ditch or gully approximately 0.5m wide and 0.2m deep. Adjacent to this was a wide shallow ditch around 2.2m wide and 0.4m deep. This feature cut a smaller ditch/gully [125] and a post hole [127]. All of the ditches/gullies contained early medieval pottery with [125] also containing the remnants of two iron nails and [123] some animal bone.

A further pit [103] and intercutting post-hole [105] were located to the east of the ditches (Photograph 4). The pit was circular, approximately 0.8m in diameter and 0.14m deep. The post-hole was 0.28m in diameter and 0.20m deep. The pit contained sherds of early medieval pottery.



4. SYNTHESIS OF RESULTS

4.1 *Summary of Findings*

A relatively large number of archaeological features were found within the trial trench. Finds and circumstantial evidence suggest all are likely to date to the early medieval period. The features were located beneath a cultivation soil in a good state of preservation with no truncation from post medieval or modern developments. The majority of remains are characteristic of boundary features, including a possible fence line, and domestic features such as waste or storage pits. The finds assemblage supports a general assumption that the remains are indicative of settlement activities as they comprise moderate quantities of simple, locally produced cooking vessels and some animal bone.

4.2 *Interpretation and Significance*

All of the boundary features found within the trench are on a similar alignment to that of the nearby High Street. It is highly likely therefore that these features, along with the other remains uncovered in the trench, are associated with this prominent medieval thoroughfare. It is possible that the domestic features uncovered in the trench represent activities carried out within the back plots of dwellings that fronted the High Street and were bounded to the rear by ditches and fences.

The findings of the trial trenching suggest that the site contains further well preserved medieval archaeological remains that could potentially add greatly to our understanding of the origins and early development of Westoning. This would be of considerable local significance, considering the lack of previous archaeological work in the village, and moderate regional significance.



5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bedfordshire County Council, 2008a *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Investigation at Land at Westoning Lower School High Street, Westoning, Bedfordshire*

Bedfordshire County Council, 2008b *Brief for an Archaeological Field Evaluation of Land at Westoning Lower School High Street, Westoning, Bedfordshire*

MSRG, 1996, *Medieval Rural Settlements - A Policy on their Research, Survey, Conservation and Excavation*

Oake *et al*, 2007. *Bedfordshire Archaeology. Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy*. Bedfordshire Archaeology Monograph 9.



6. APPENDIX 1: ARTEFACT SUMMARY

6.1 Introduction

The evaluation produced a finds assemblage comprising mainly pottery, the majority deriving from ditch [123] (Table 11). The material was scanned to ascertain its nature, condition and, where possible, date range.

| Feature | Type | Context | Spot date* | Finds summary |
|---------|------------|---------|----------------|----------------------------------|
| 101 | Ploughsoil | 101 | Early medieval | Pottery (12g) |
| 103 | Pit | 104 | Early medieval | Pottery (100g) |
| 107 | Pit | 108 | Early medieval | Pottery (83g); animal bone (13g) |
| 117 | Post hole | 118 | Early medieval | Pottery (5g) |
| 123 | Ditch | 124 | Early medieval | Pottery (170g); animal bone (3g) |
| 125 | Gulley | 126 | Early medieval | Pottery (8g); iron nails x 2 |
| 129 | Gulley | 130 | Early medieval | Pottery (54g) |

* spot date based on date of latest artefact in context

Table 1: Artefact summary by trench and context

6.2 Pottery

Sixty-six pottery sherds (432g), datable to the 12th-13th centuries were recovered. These were examined by context and quantified using minimum sherd count and weight. Sherds are fairly small (average weight 6g) and moderately abraded. Few vessels are represented by more than single sherds. Six fabric types were identified using common names and type codes in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series, currently maintained by Albion Archaeology on behalf of Bedfordshire County Council. Fabrics are listed below (Table 2) in chronological order.

The assemblages comprises predominantly wheel-thrown body sherds in a range of fine to coarse sand tempered fabric types characteristic of the early medieval period. All are likely to be of local manufacture, although an exact provenance is uncertain. Diagnostic forms are three flat rim jars and a bowl. The exterior surfaces of a number of sherds are sooted, indicating their use as cooking pots.

| Fabric type | Common name | Sherd No. | Context/Sherd No. |
|-----------------|------------------------|-----------|--|
| <i>Medieval</i> | | | |
| Type C03 | Sand (fine) | 2 | (130):2 |
| Type C04 | Sand (coarse) | 2 | (130):2 |
| Type C53 | Sand (pasty) | 9 | (101):1, (108):1, (125):5, (126):1, (130):1 |
| Type C59A | Sand (coarse) | 17 | (104):3, (108):4, (124):7, (126):1, (130):2 |
| Type C59B | Sand (harsh) | 34 | (101):1, (104):6, (108):8, (118):1, (124):11, (126):1, (130):6 |
| Type C71 | Sand (buff-grey cored) | 2 | (124):2 |

Table 2: Pottery type series

6.3 Non-ceramic finds

The fill of gulley [125] yielded the fragmentary remains of two flat-headed iron nails with short rectangular shanks. One may be a shoeing nail, although x-ray is required to confirm this identification.

6.4 Animal bone

Twelve pieces of animal bone weighing 13g were recovered from pit [107] and a single tooth fragment (3g) from ditch [123]. Fragments are small with an average



weight of only 1g, and are generally abraded. Diagnostic elements are long bone fragments of indeterminate species and two incomplete sheep/goat teeth.



7. APPENDIX 2: TRENCH SUMMARIES



Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 12.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.4 m. Max: 0.5 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 343380: Northing: 3262660)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 344370: Northing: 3261990)

Reason: Evaluate site of new building

| Context: | Type: | Description: | Excavated: | Finds Present: |
|----------|------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 100 | Tarmac | Hard black gravel frequent small stones Tarmacadam surface for school playground 0.1 - 0.17m thick. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 101 | Ploughsoil | Firm mid grey clay silt occasional small stones Thickness of 0.2 - 0.3m. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 102 | Natural | Hard yellow orange sandy clay frequent small stones | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 103 | Pit | Oval N-S profile: concave base: uneven dimensions: min breadth 0.73m, min depth 0.14m, max length 0.93m | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 104 | Pit | Firm grey orange clay silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small stones Sole fill of pit containing pot 0.14m thick. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 105 | Posthole | Circular profile: concave base: v-shaped dimensions: max depth 0.2m, max diameter 0.28m Cuts pit [103]. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 106 | Posthole | Firm mid grey clay silt Sole fill of posthole 0.2m thick. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 107 | Pit | Rectangular NE-SW profile: vertical base: flat dimensions: max breadth 1.03m, max depth 0.41m, max length 0.72m Cut posthole [109]. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 108 | Pit | Firm mid orange grey silty clay occasional large charcoal, occasional small charcoal, occasional large stones, occasional small stones Sole pit fill containing pot, animal bone and teeth and burnt stone. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 109 | Posthole | Circular profile: 45 degrees base: uneven dimensions: min depth 0.15m, min diameter 0.23m Cut by pit [107]. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 110 | Posthole | Firm orange grey sandy clay frequent flecks charcoal Sole posthole fill 0.15m thick. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 111 | Posthole | Sub-oval E-W profile: concave base: flat dimensions: min depth 0.11m, min diameter 0.3m Easternmost posthole of six in a line. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 112 | Posthole | Firm mid grey clay silt occasional small charcoal Thickness of 0.11m. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 113 | Posthole | Sub-oval E-W profile: vertical base: uneven dimensions: min breadth 0.27m, min depth 0.1m, min length 0.3m | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 114 | Posthole | Firm mid orange grey silty clay occasional flecks charcoal Sole posthole fill 0.1m thick. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 115 | Posthole | Circular Heavily truncated posthole with only a segment surviving. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 116 | Posthole | Firm light orange grey silty clay moderate small charcoal Sole fill of heavily truncated posthole. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 117 | Posthole | Sub-circular NE-SW profile: vertical base: flat dimensions: min breadth 0.31m, min depth 0.08m, min length 0.28m Posthole which cuts [113] and [119]. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 118 | Posthole | Firm mid grey clay silt occasional small stones Sole posthole fill containing pot 0.08m thick. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 119 | Posthole | Sub-circular N-S profile: near vertical base: flat dimensions: min breadth 0.08m, min depth 0.08m, min length 0.22m Posthole cut by [117]. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 120 | Posthole | Firm mid orange grey sandy clay occasional small stones Sole fill of posthole 0.08m thick, containing frequent orange sandy clay lumps. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 121 | Posthole | Oval NW-SE profile: near vertical base: flat dimensions: min breadth 0.29m, min depth 0.1m, min length 0.43m Westernmost posthole of six in a line. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 122 | Posthole | Firm mid grey clay silt occasional large stones, occasional small stones Sole posthole fill 0.1 m thick with lumps of orange sandy clay. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 12.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.4 m. Max: 0.5 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 343380: Northing: 3262660)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 344370: Northing: 3261990)

Reason: Evaluate site of new building

| Context: | Type: | Description: | Excavated: | Finds Present: |
|-----------------|--------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 123 | Ditch | Linear NE-SW profile: concave base: concave dimensions: min breadth 2.3m, min depth 0.44m, min length 2.3m | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 124 | Ditch | Friable mid grey sandy silt occasional small charcoal, occasional medium stones, occasional small stones Sole ditch fill 0.44m thick containing pot and iron object. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 125 | Gulley | Linear NE-SW profile: concave base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.28m, min depth 0.14m, min length 2.2m A gulley truncated by and parallel to ditch [123] on northern side. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 126 | Gulley | Firm mid grey sandy silt moderate small charcoal, occasional small stones Sole fill of gulley 0.14m thick. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 127 | Posthole | Circular profile: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.25m, min depth 0.2m, min length 0.2m Small posthole truncated by ditch [123], on southern side. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 128 | Posthole | Firm mid grey sandy silt occasional large stones Sole fill of posthole 0.2m thick. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 129 | Gulley | Linear NE-SW profile: concave base: flat dimensions: min breadth 0.55m, min depth 0.13m, min length 2.2m | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 130 | Gulley | Friable mid grey sandy silt occasional small charcoal, occasional small stones Sole fill of a gulley 0.13m thick containing pot. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

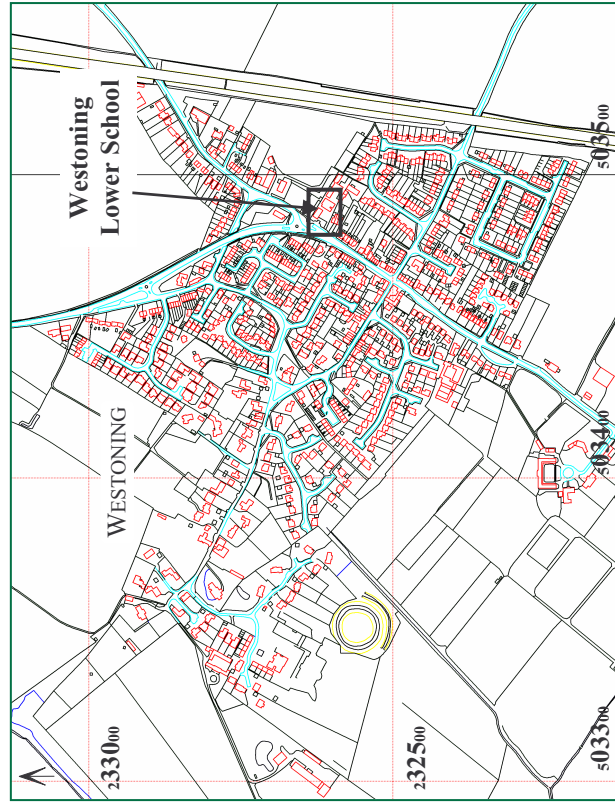
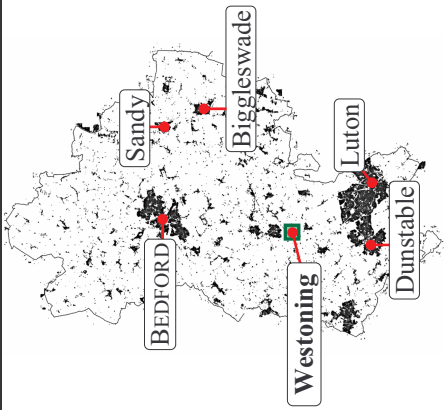


Figure 1: Site and trench location map

Base map reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map with the permission of the Controller of the Stationery Office, by Bedfordshire County Council, County Hall, Bedford. OS Licence No. 100017358. © Crown Copyright

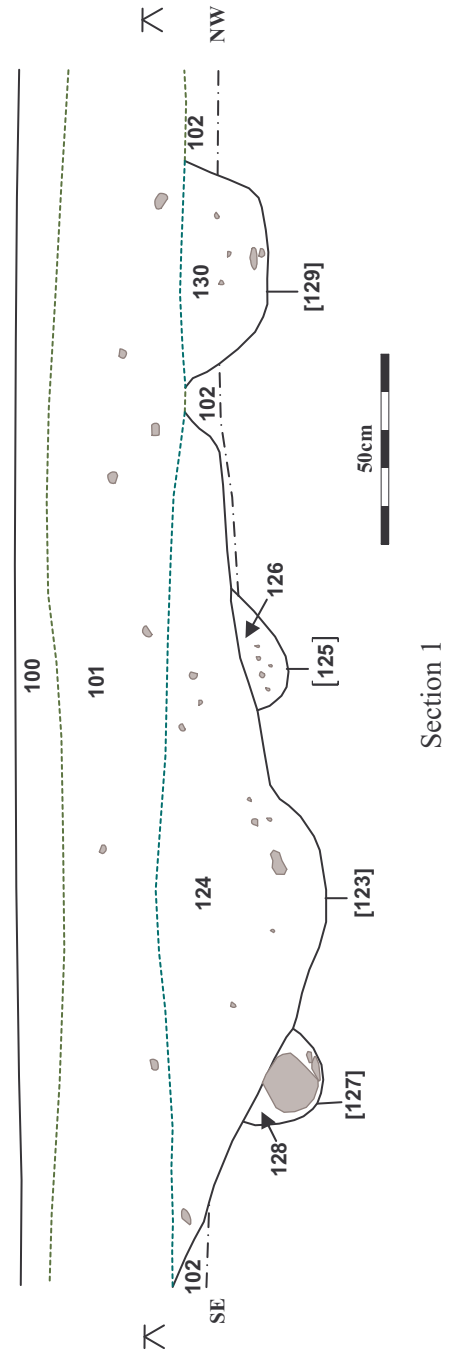
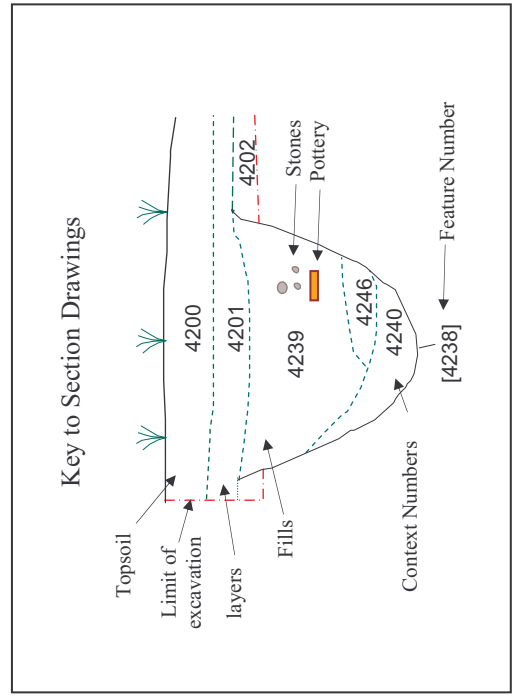
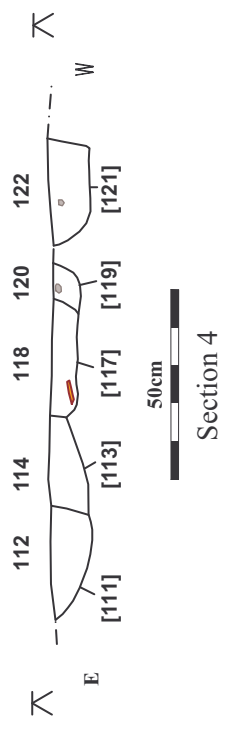
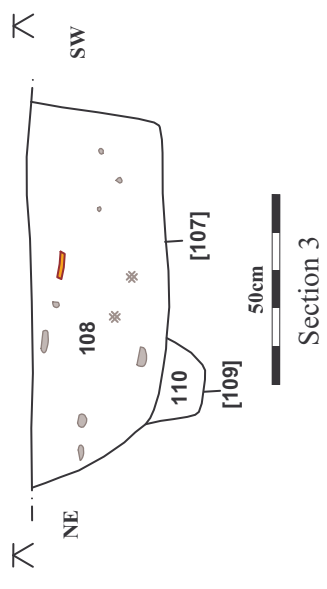
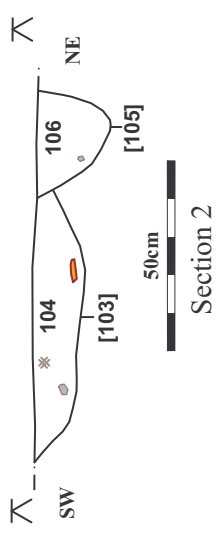
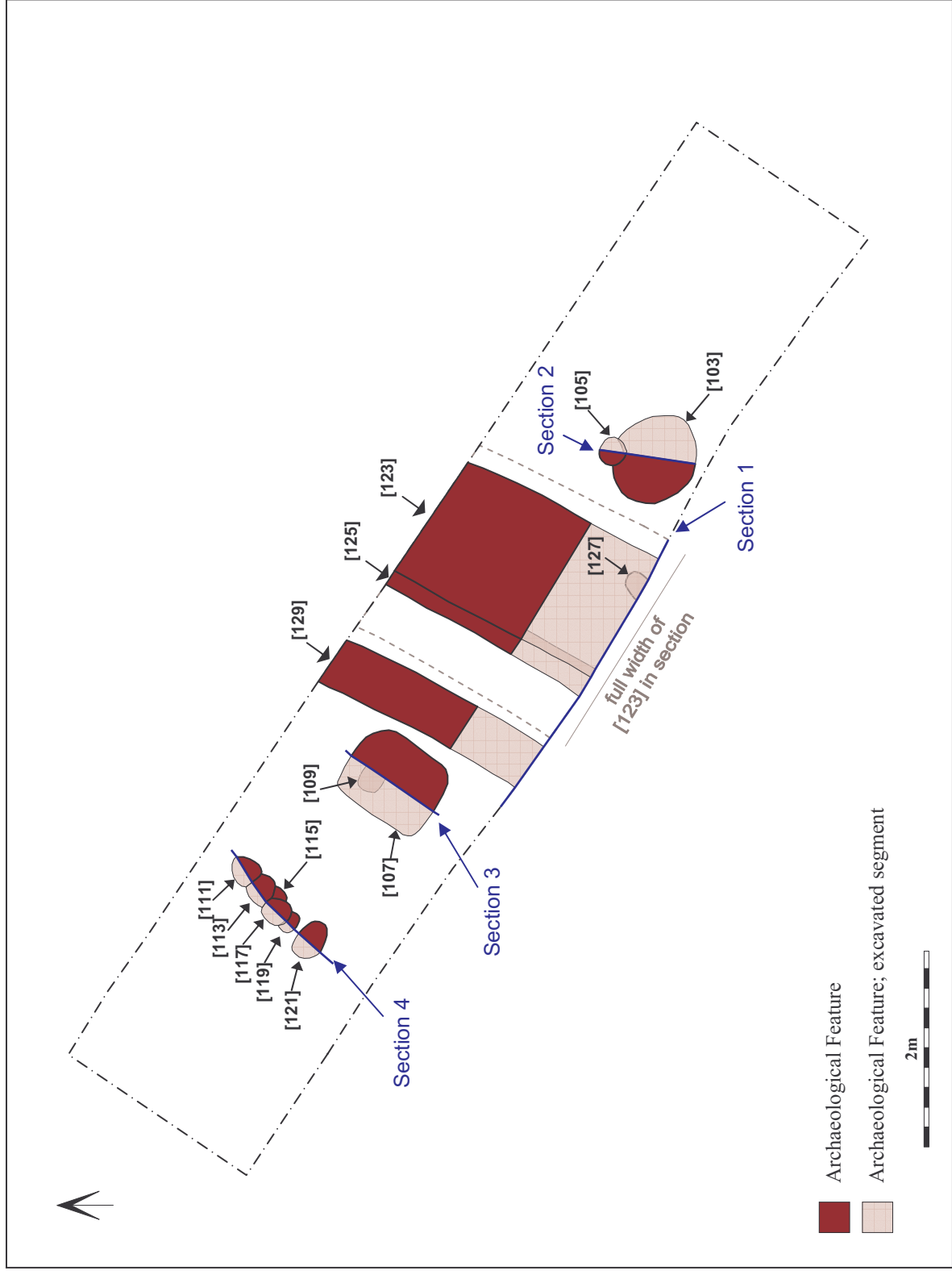


Figure 2: All features.



Photograph 1: View of trial trench from the south-east.



Photograph 2: Pit [107] and post-hole [109].



Photograph 3: Left-right, ditches [123], [125] and [129].



Photograph 4: Pit [103] and post-hole [105]