

**AYLESBURY CROWN COURT  
WALTON STREET  
AYLESBURY  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION**

Project: ACC1520

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Version 1.1

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On behalf of:  
HM Courts Service



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*All figures are bound at the back of this report.*



## **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 Mouchel Management Consulting on behalf of HM Courts Service. It was monitored by Eliza Alqassar, Archaeological Planning and Conservation Officer for Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS), on behalf of the Local Planning Authority.*

*The fieldwork was undertaken by Wesley Keir (Project Officer), Richard Gregson (Supervisor) and Kathy Pilkinton (Assistant Supervisor). This report has been prepared by Kathy Pilkinton and checked by Wesley Keir and Joe Abrams (Project Manager). The figures were created by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).*

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## **Version History**

Version	Issue date	Reason for re-issue
1.0	1/6/2009	n/a
1.1	8/6/09	To incorporate amendments suggested by BCAS

## **Structure of this Report**

Section 1 serves as an introduction to the project, describing the location of the site, archaeological background and the aims of the project. Section 2 describes the project 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 contains trench summary information and detailed contextual data.



## **Key Terms**

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

BCAS	Buckinghamshire County Archaeology Service
Client	Mouchel Management Consulting on behalf of HM Courts Service
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
LPA	Local Planning Authority
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



## **Non-Technical Summary**

*Mouchel Management Consulting have been appointed by HM Courts Service to provide Project Management Services during construction of a new Crown Court building in Aylesbury (Planning application 08/02787/APP).*

*The proposed development lies within an archaeologically sensitive area. As a result, Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) advised the Local Planning Authority (LPA) that a condition should be attached to the planning permission requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological evaluation prior to the demolition of an existing office block on the Development Area. BCAS issued a brief describing the requirements for an archaeological evaluation to take place prior to the demolition of existing buildings within the site. Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Mouchel Management Consulting to undertake this evaluation.*

*The proposed development area (PDA) lies to the west of Walton Street in Aylesbury and currently contains an office block and associated car parking. The car park within the PDA lies at c.80m OD and is centred on SP 8231 1308.*

*The limitations placed upon the scope of this evaluation (by contaminated ground, extant services, terraced ground, trees and the need to stand-off from structures and party walls) should be taken into consideration when assessing the significance of our results.*

*The potential for preservation of significant remains has been demonstrated. This is a significant piece of data, and has value regardless of the quality of remains recorded within Trenches 1-4. The impact of previous development and demolition on remains within the PDA has not removed all archaeological deposits. Indeed, a layer of brick rubble was identified overlying all archaeological remains revealed in Trenches 1-4, demonstrating that pre-modern construction and demolition did little to reduce archaeological potential.*

*Setting aside archaeological potential and previous development impact; the evaluation revealed remains of local significance which date to the post-medieval period. However, no traces of Saxo-Norman settlement, such as those recorded to the immediate north-west, were revealed.*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 *Project Background*

Mouchel Management Consulting have been appointed by HM Courts Service to provide Project Management Services during construction of a new Crown Court building in Aylesbury (Planning application 08/02787/APP).

The proposed development lies within an archaeologically sensitive area. As a result, Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) advised the LPA that a condition should be attached to the planning permission requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological evaluation prior to the demolition of an existing office block on the Development Area. On 17<sup>th</sup> March 2009, BCAS issued a brief (BCC 2009), outlining a three-staged approach to a 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).

Albion Archaeology was commissioned in April 2009, by Mouchel Management Consulting, to undertake Stages I and II. A decision regarding the need for Stage III will be made using the information presented in this document.

### 1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The proposed development area (PDA) lies to the west of Walton Street in Aylesbury (Figure 1) and currently contains an office block and associated car parking.

The car park within the PDA lies at *c.*80m OD and is centred on SP 8231 1308. It covers an area of *c.*7000sq m and the underlying geology is Portland Limestone underlain by Kimmeridge clay formations (Geological Sheet 238 “Aylesbury” 1923). Soils in the area are of the Denchworth Association (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

### 1.3 *Archaeological Background*

The evaluation was carried out due to the proximity of multi-period archaeological remains in the vicinity of the PDA. The remains of Saxo-Norman, medieval and post-medieval settlement activity are known to exist to the north of the PDA, at Walton.

The most significant remains in the area comprise those recorded during investigations undertaken prior to the construction of the existing Aylesbury Crown Court (Farley 1976, HER00093) and it was considered possible that related, previously unknown, remains might be present within the PDA. These remains comprised sunken featured buildings (SFB), post-built structures and a



large quantity of artefactual material dating to the Saxo-Norman period in particular.

Evaluation works within the PDA (Section 4) have not revealed remains which can be dated to earlier than the post-medieval period. Therefore, cartographic sources (consulted at the Buckinghamshire County Record Office) have been of more value in setting these remains in context. During the post-medieval to modern periods, the PDA was largely open land, although a row of 19th-century terraced houses are recorded on the Enclosure map (1800) and 1st and 2nd edition Ordnance Survey maps of the area. These were demolished prior to the construction of the extant office block within the PDA. The location of these structures and the land-boundaries associated with them is given consideration in Section 4 of this document.

#### **1.4 Project Objectives**

The objectives of the intrusive evaluation were to determine whether any archaeological remains exist within the PDA. If such remains were identified, the evaluation would also establish their extent, condition, date, nature and significance. This information was acquired through a programme of archaeological fieldwork, outlined in Section 2.

Specific objectives comprise (derived from the brief, BCAS 2009):

- Establish whether medieval or post-medieval settlement remains are present, including remains of the 19th-century terraced houses shown on the 1st and 2nd edition Ordnance Survey maps.
- Establish whether any pre-medieval remains are present.





## 2. METHODOLOGY

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Trial Trenching was undertaken between 12th and 15th May 2009. The layout of the trenches was designed to maximise their impact in terms of assessing the archaeological potential of the PDA. However, the trench layout and their size has been restricted by the presence of structures, underground utilities, contaminated ground, modern terracing and existing trees within the PDA.

The trenches were opened using a mechanical excavator, operated by an experienced driver under archaeological supervision. The trench plan (Fig. 1) was designed in consultation with the BCAS. Dimensions and exact location were decided following a site visit (29/04/09) and are in accordance with the BCAS's brief (2009).

Four trenches were opened. Trench 1 measured 2m x 5m and 2.1m deep; Trench 2 measured 3m x 3m and 1.65m deep; Trench 3 measured 2m x 8m and 1.65m deep and Trench 4 measured 4m x 4m and up to 1.3m deep.

The number and size of the trenches was due to restrictions imposed by:

- Emergency access/egress from PDA
- Contaminated ground (north-east corner of PDA)
- Trees (along the northern and north-western boundary of PDA)
- Terraced ground (where truncation has removed archaeological potential in the north-western corner of PDA)
- Presence of utilities

All excavation and recording was carried out by experienced Albion staff, with external specialists consulted as necessary.



### 3. RESULTS

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#### 3.1 Introduction

Deposits and archaeological features are summarised below (Figures 2-6). 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 revealed within the trial trenches can be found in Appendix 1.

#### 3.2 Undisturbed Geological Deposits

Undisturbed geological deposits were reached at various depths in all four trenches. These predominantly comprised a yellowish grey sandy layer, with more solid limestone being revealed in the lower levels of Trench 1.

#### 3.3 Ditches and Pit

Two large ditches, both aligned NW-SE were recorded in Trench 1. The full dimensions of neither ditch were revealed within the trench. [104] measured 1.8m wide and 1.17m deep. It was truncated by the stratigraphically later ditch [106], which measured 1.4m wide and 1.1m deep.

No artefactual material was recovered from [104], whereas deposits within [106] contained small fragments of brick. No obvious signs of gradual accumulation were apparent in the deposits of either ditch. Instead, it is suggested these were deliberately infilled during the post-medieval period in order to level the land.

A small pit [109] was recorded truncating both ditches. No datable artefactual material was recovered, although the lower deposit contained mortar pieces.

These remains are sealed by layer (102) which may be associated with the demolition of terraced houses during the 20th century (Section 1.3, Figures 3 and 4). This confirms they are at least 20th century in date, or earlier. Ditch [104] aligns well with a property boundary (Figures 2 and 7) dating to at least the 19th century, and it is considered likely that ditch [106] shared a similar function.

#### 3.4 Pond

Trench 3 (Figure 6) revealed part of a relatively large feature [304], the limits of which were not revealed within the trench. [304] was 1.05m deep and contained clay deposits (305) and (306). These deposits may have been formed in standing water (and contrasted in character with deposits revealed in ditches [104] and [106] (Section 3.3).) They contained small fragments of brick, suggesting the large feature became infilled during the post-medieval period.

Its function remains unknown, although a pond is marked on several maps of the area (Figures 2 and 7) a short distance to the north-west. It is possible that [304] represents a further pond which had become infilled prior to the production of the Enclosure and Ordnance Survey maps (none of which record any features in the location of Trench 3).



### **3.5 Demolition and Levelling Layers**

All four trenches contain evidence of relatively recent demolition and levelling. In each case a levelling layer of brick rubble (113), (202), (302), and (403) underlies a concrete make-up layer for the extant tarmac surface. These brick rubble layers have a thickness of between 0.19 and 0.34m.

An additional, earlier layer of compacted brick rubble (102/206) lay beneath an earlier concrete surface (112/203) within Trenches 1 and 2. These brick rubble layers may have derived from the demolition of structures shown on 19th/20th-century maps in the north-eastern part of the site. Trench 2 (Figure 5) also contained a dark brown layer (207), possibly a garden soil, associated with the occupation of those houses.



## 4. SYNTHESIS OF RESULTS

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### 4.1 Summary

The northern part of the site revealed two large ditches and a pit, predating the demolition of 19th century terraced houses shown on cartographic sources (Figures 2 and 7). Cartographic sources suggest these ditches mark the location of a property boundary in use in the 19th/20th centuries (still present on the 1950 Ordnance Survey map). The presence of brick fragments [106] and mortar pieces [109] suggests infilling during the modern period. It is possible these ditches were backfilled and replaced with fencing during the 20th century.

No *in situ* remains of 19th-century houses were revealed. Such structures can have shallow footings and the thorough levelling of this site may have completely removed in-situ remains.

The southern half of the site contained a probable pond, the limits of which remain unknown. Clay deposits within the pond contained small fragments of brick, which indicates it was probably infilled during the post-medieval period.

It is possible that all the features revealed were infilled during an episode of levelling in the 20th century. Clearly, this evidence dates only the ending of the period of use for these features. However, there is no evidence to suggest a pre post-medieval date.

### 4.2 Significance of Results

The limitations placed upon the scope of this evaluation (by contaminated ground, extant services, terraced ground, trees and the need to stand-off from structures and party walls) should be taken into consideration when assessing the significance of our results.

The potential for preservation of significant remains has been demonstrated. This is a significant piece of data, and has value regardless of the quality of remains recorded within Trenches 1-4. The impact of previous development and demolition on remains within the PDA has not removed all archaeological deposits. Indeed, a layer of brick rubble was identified overlying all archaeological remains revealed in Trenches 1-4, demonstrating that pre-modern construction and demolition did little to reduce archaeological potential in parts of the PDA.

Setting aside archaeological potential and previous development impact; the evaluation revealed remains of local significance which date to the post-medieval period. However, no traces of Saxo-Norman settlement, such as those recorded to the immediate north-west, were revealed.



## 5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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<http://wam.aylesburyvaldc.gov.uk:8080/WAM/doc/Supporting%20Documentation-847111.pdf;jsessionid=D5036453FAB578C9CD17C8F353BDF72A?extension=.pdf&wmTransparency=0&id=847111&wmLocation=0&location=volume2&contentType=&wmName=&pageCount=1>

Sheet 238. *Institute of Geological Sciences.* Aylesbury.

Soil Survey (1983) *Soil Map of England and Wales Sheet 1.* 1:250,000.

### 5.1 Documents consulted at Buckinghamshire County Records Office

Walton in Aylesbury Enclosure Map 1800 (IR-20)
OS 1st Ed. 25inch XXVIII-16
OS 2nd Ed. 25inch XXVIII-16
OS 3rd Ed. 25inch 1926 XXVIII-16 (1)



## **6. APPENDIX 1**

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### **6.1 Trench Summaries**

**Trench: 1**

**Max Dimensions:** Length: 5.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.8 m. Max: 0.95 m.

**Co-ordinates:** OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 82314: Northing: 13122)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 82319: Northing: 13122)

**Reason:** To evaluate potential of land and ascertain level of existing impacts upon land prior to demolition and re-development works

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Tarmac	Tarmac Thickness: 0.1m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Concrete	Concrete Thickness: 0.45m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Brick rubble	Compact rubble Thickness: 0.25m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Natural	Firm light grey white silty limestone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
104	Ditch	Linear NW-SE profile: concave base: flat dimensions: max breadth 1.8m, max depth 1.17m, min length 2.m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
105	Backfill	Firm dark grey silty clay Thickness: 1.17m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
106	Ditch	Linear NW-SE profile: convex dimensions: max breadth 1.4m, max depth 1.1m, min length 2.m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
107	Backfill	Firm mid grey silty clay occasional small ceramic building material Thickness: 1.1m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
108	Backfill	Friable light yellow grey silty sand Thickness: 0.35m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
109	Pit	Oval profile: concave base: flat dimensions: max depth 0.35m, max length 1.9m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
110	Backfill	Firm light grey silty clay Thickness 0.35m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
111	Backfill	Friable dark grey black silty clay Thickness: 0.15m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
112	External surface	Concrete Thickness: 0.08m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
113	Brick rubble	Compact sandy rubble Thickness: 0.22m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Trench: 2**

**Max Dimensions:** Length: 3.00 m. Width: 3.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

**Co-ordinates:** OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 82317; Northing: 13110)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 82321; Northing: 13108)

**Reason:** To evaluate potential of land and ascertain level of existing impacts upon land prior to demolition and re-development works

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Tarmac	Tarmac Thickness: 0.1m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
201	Concrete	Concrete Thickness: 0.25m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Brick rubble	Compact sandy rubble Thickness: 0.34m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
203	External surface	Concrete Thickness: 0.05m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
204	Make up layer	Loose sandy gravel frequent small ceramic building material Thickness: 0.25m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
205	Make up layer	Loose sandy rubble frequent small-medium ceramic building material Thickness: 0.1m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
206	Brick rubble	Compact rubble Thickness: 0.30m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
207	Layer	Firm mid brown silty clay Thickness: 0.2m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
208	Natural	Firm light yellow white clay sand	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





**Trench: 3**

**Max Dimensions:** Length: 7.50 m. Width: 1.90 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.45 m. Max: 0.45 m.

**Co-ordinates:** OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 82340: Northing: 13062)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 82344: Northing: 13056)

**Reason:** To evaluate potential of land and ascertain level of existing impacts upon land prior to demolition and re-development works

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	External surface	Tarmac Thickness: 0.1m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
301	Make up layer	Concrete Thickness: 0.25m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
302	Demolition layer	Rubble frequent small-large ceramic building material Thickness: 0.25m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
303	Natural	Firm light grey white clay sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
304	Pond	Oval profile: concave base: concave dimensions: min breadth 1.8m, max depth 1.05m, min length 7.5m Partially excavated, extent unknown	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
305	Backfill	Firm mid grey silty clay occasional flecks ceramic building material Thickness: 0.44m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
306	Backfill	Firm mid orange grey silty clay moderate flecks ceramic building material Thickness: 0.8m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Trench: 4**

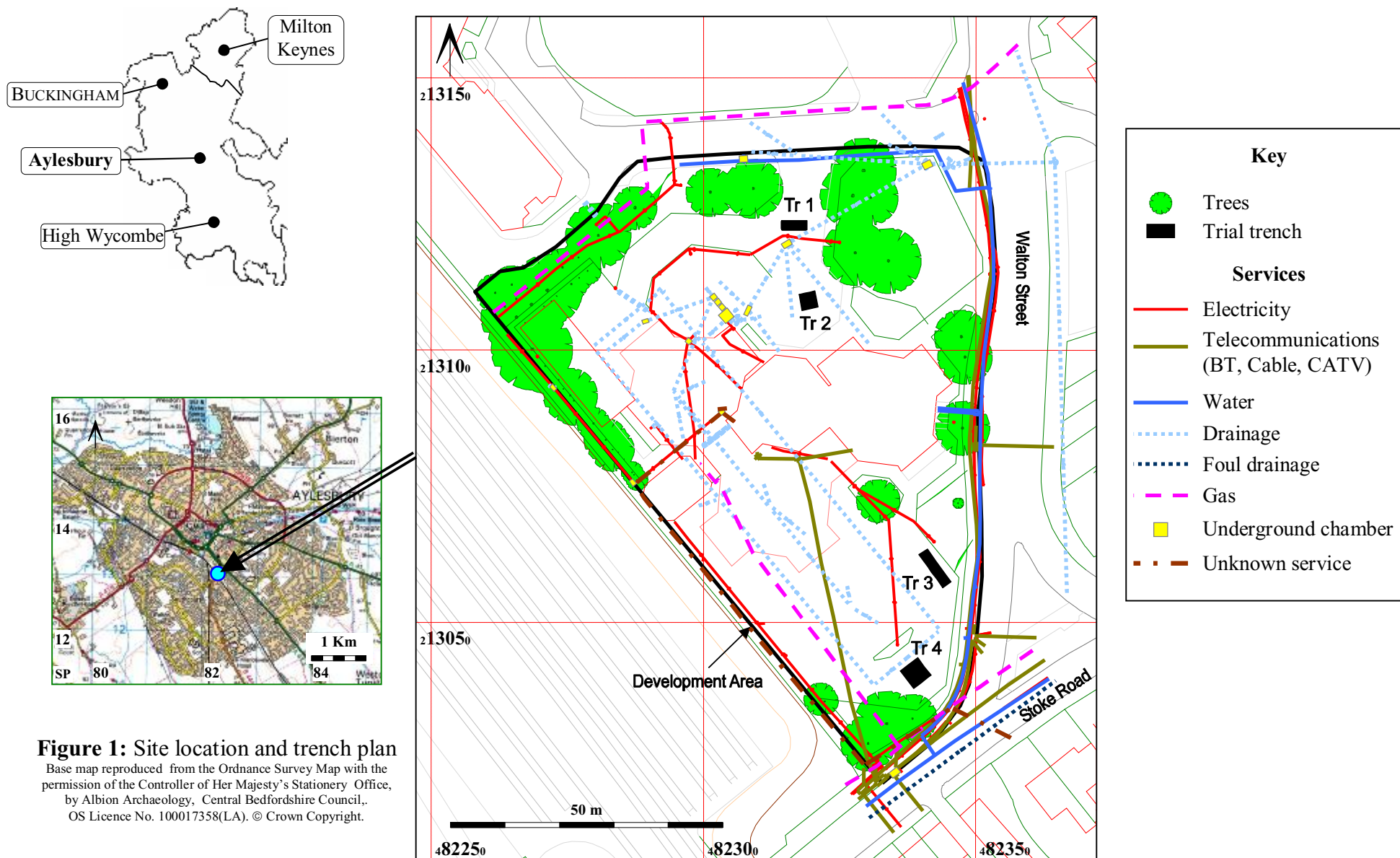
**Max Dimensions:** Length: 4.00 m. Width: 4.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

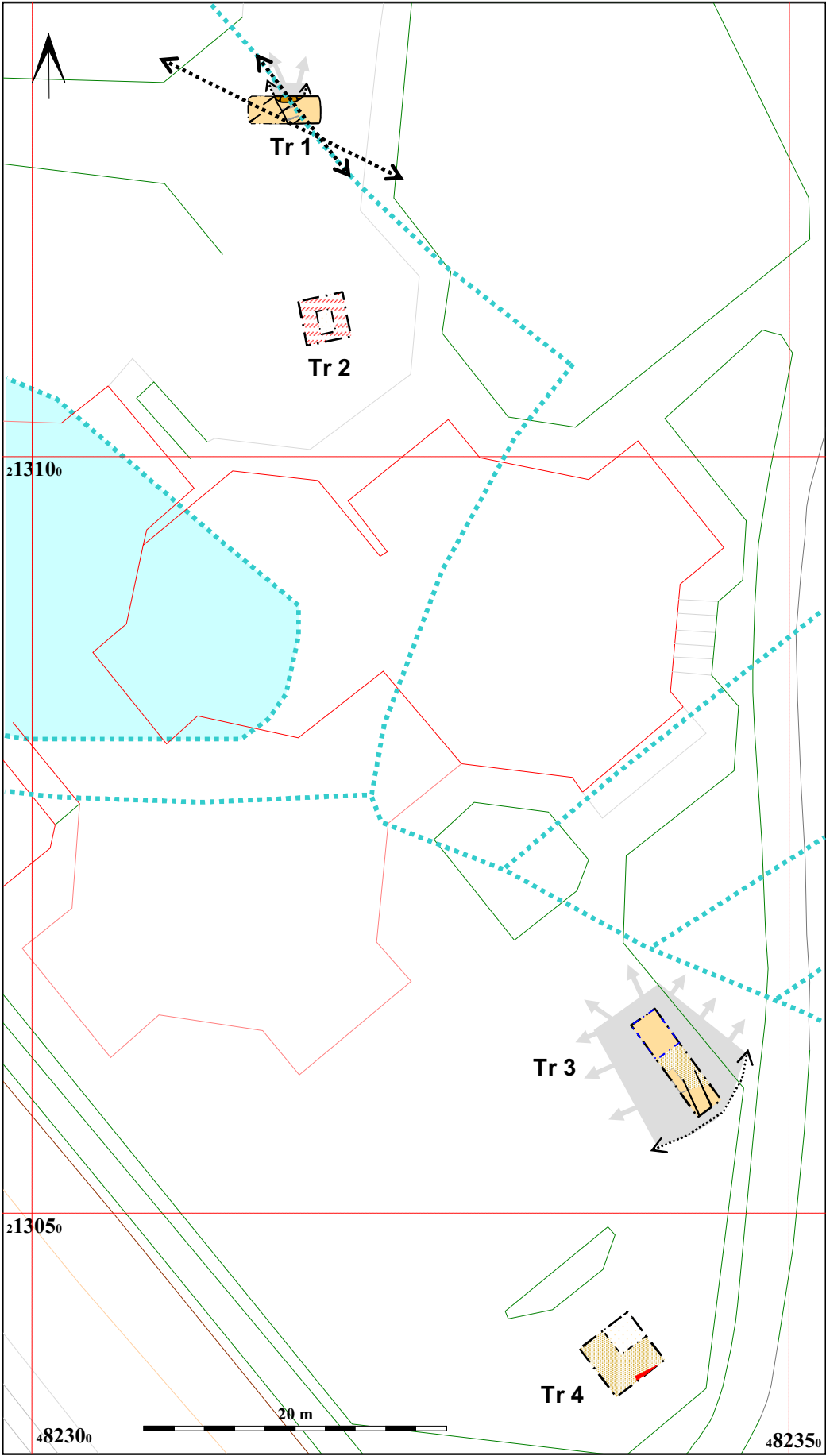
**Co-ordinates:** OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 82336: Northing: 13040)




OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 82341: Northing: 13040)

**Reason:** To evaluate potential of land and ascertain level of existing impacts upon land prior to demolition and re-development works

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
400	External surface	Tarmac Thickness: 0.08m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
401	Make up layer	Concrete Thickness: 0.4m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
402	Demolition layer	Rubble Thickness: 0.06m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
403	Brick rubble	Loose rubble Thickness: 0.19m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
404	Natural	Firm light grey yellow clay sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





-  Approximate position of features seen on 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map
-  Projected alignment of linear features in Trench 1
-  Projected position of non-linear features, (size unknown)

**Figure 2: All features plan**

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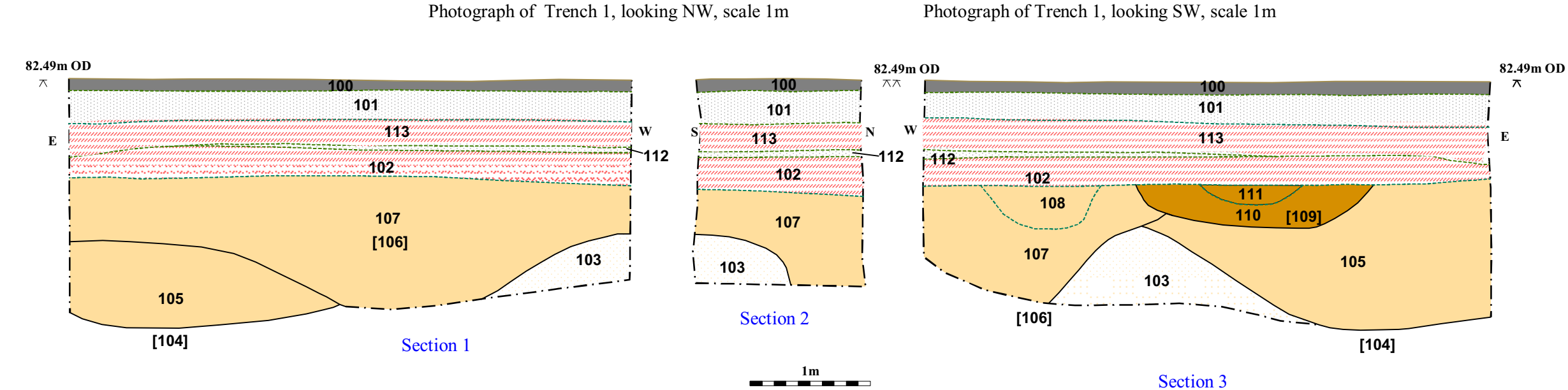
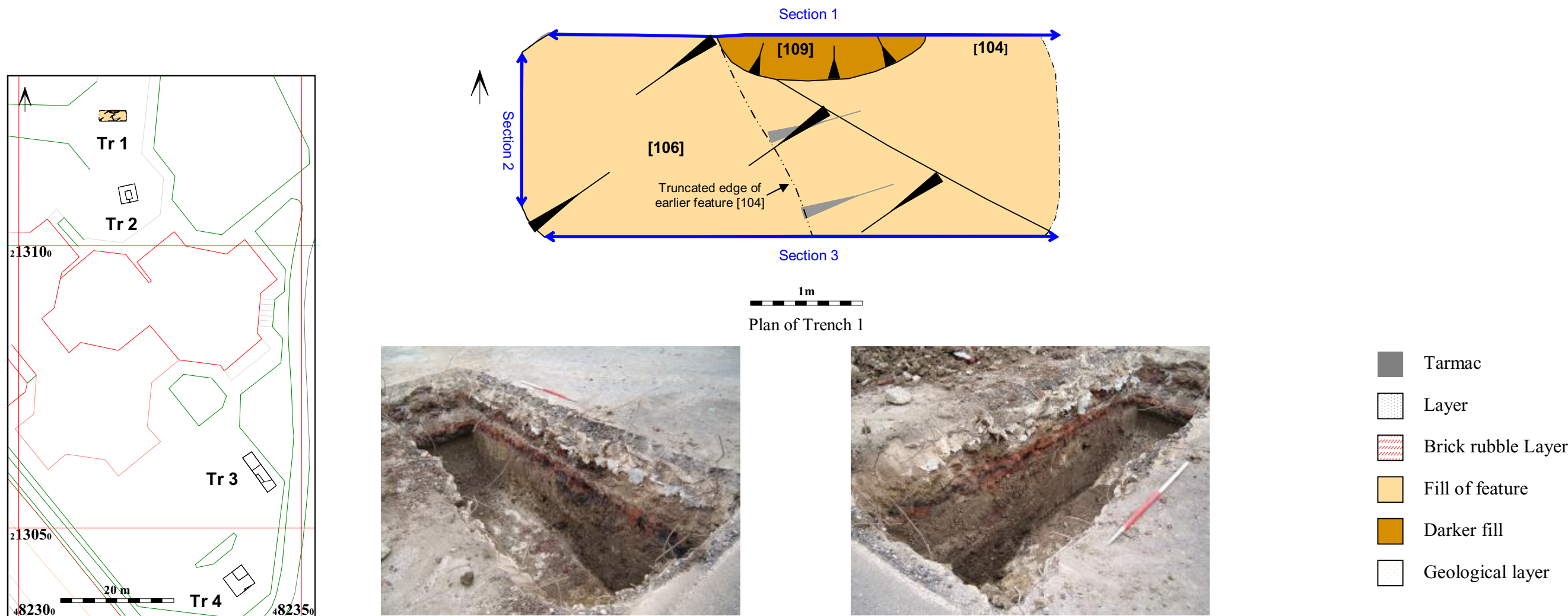


Figure 3: Trench 1 plan and sections

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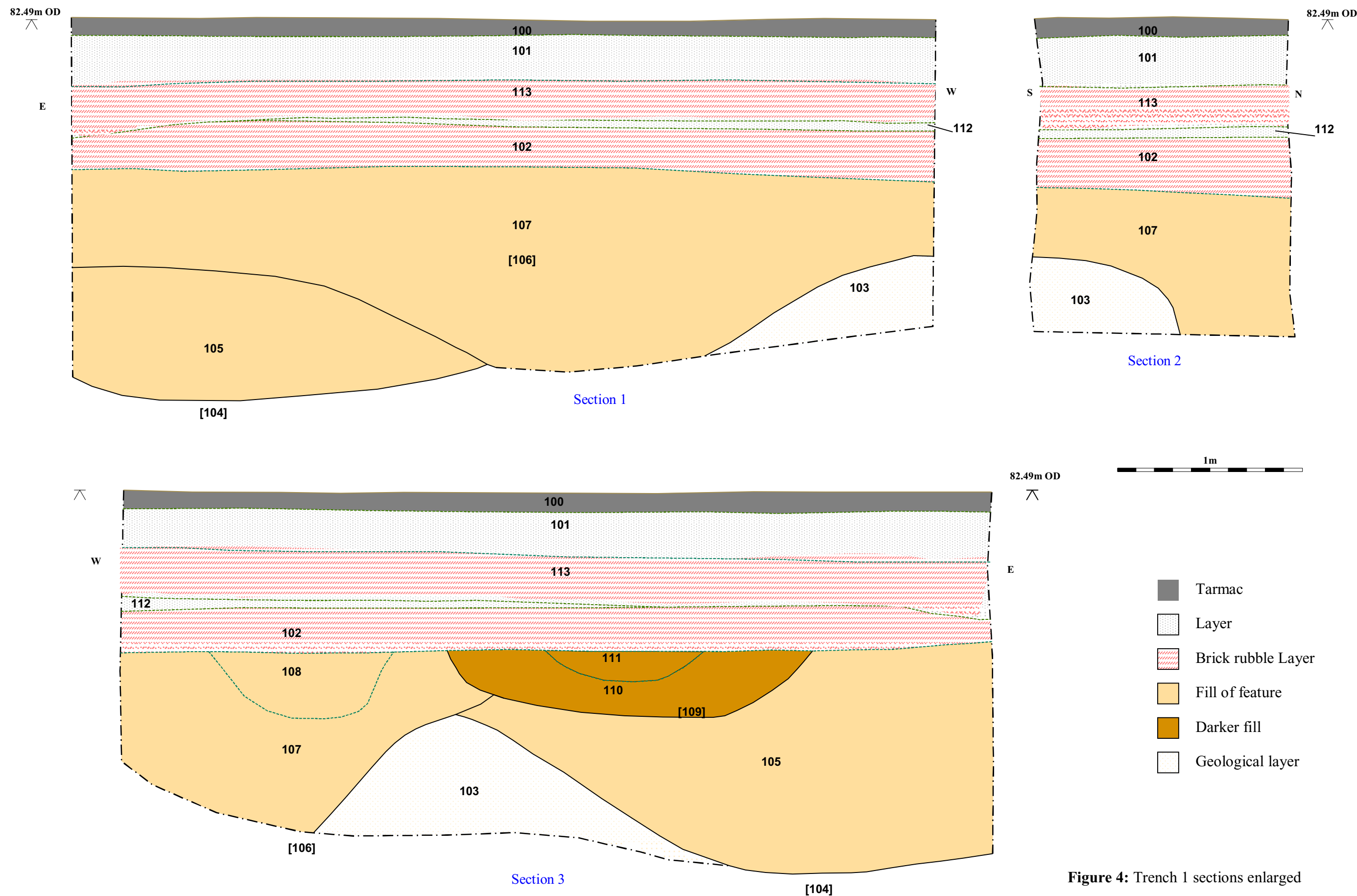
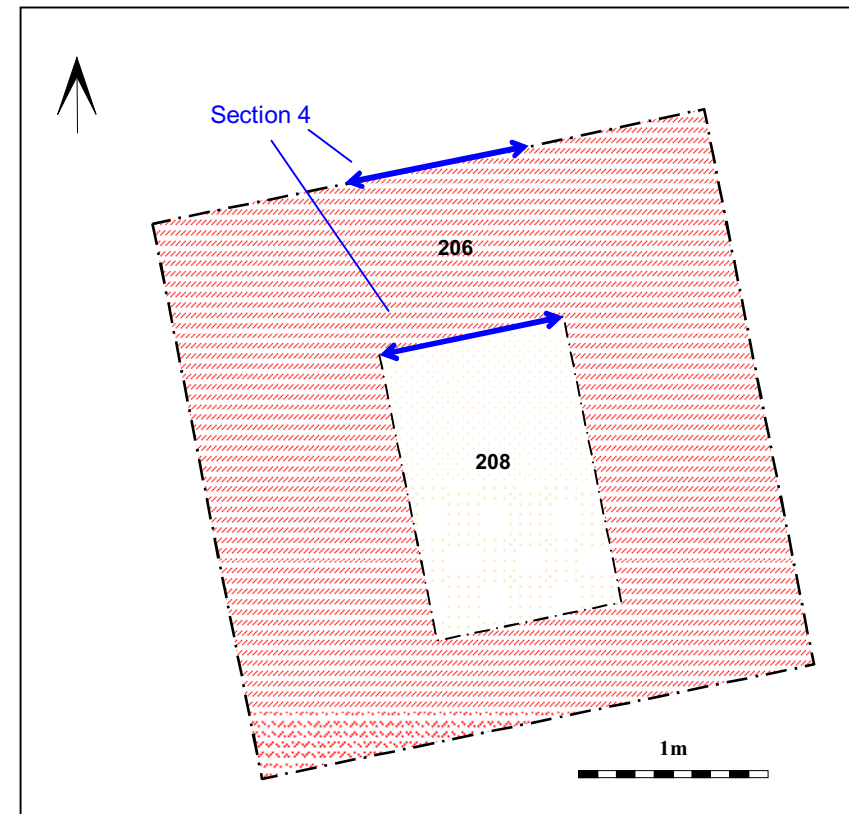
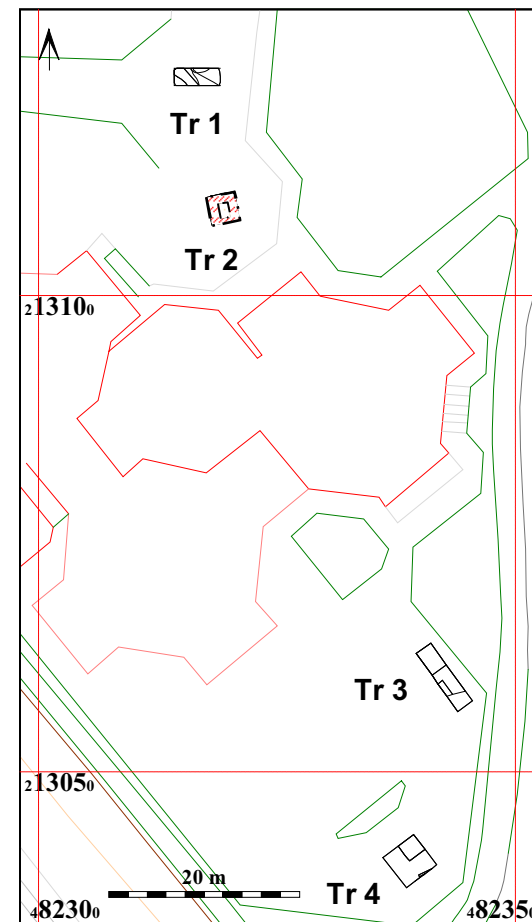
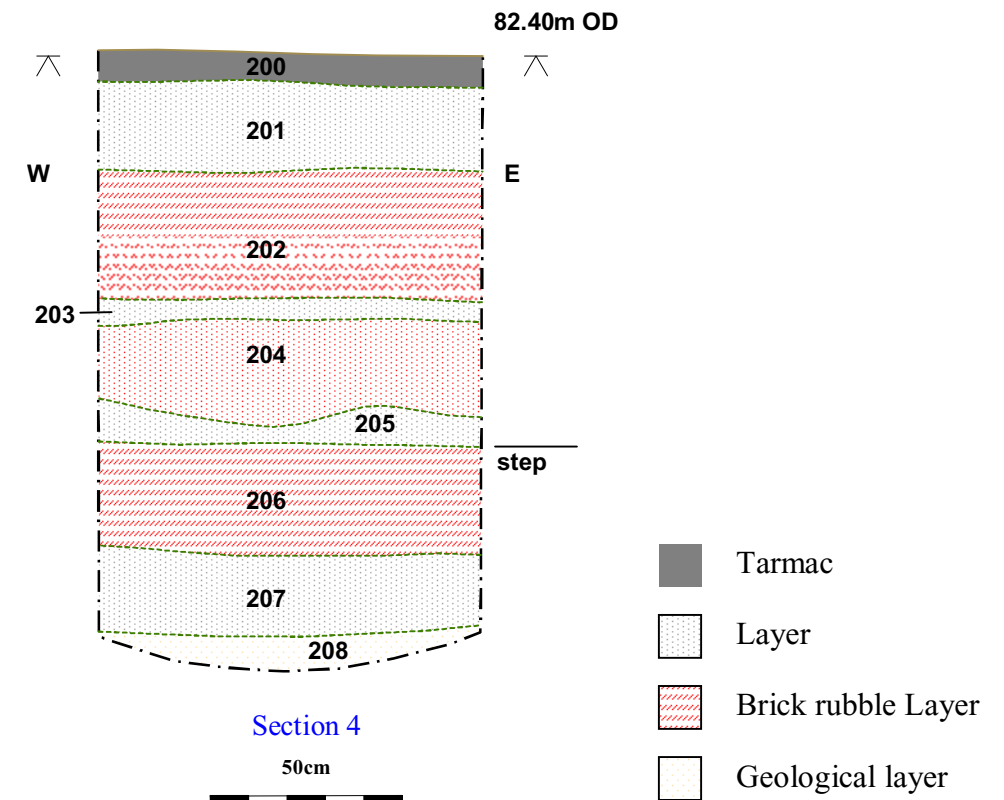


Figure 4: Trench 1 sections enlarged



Plan of Trench 2

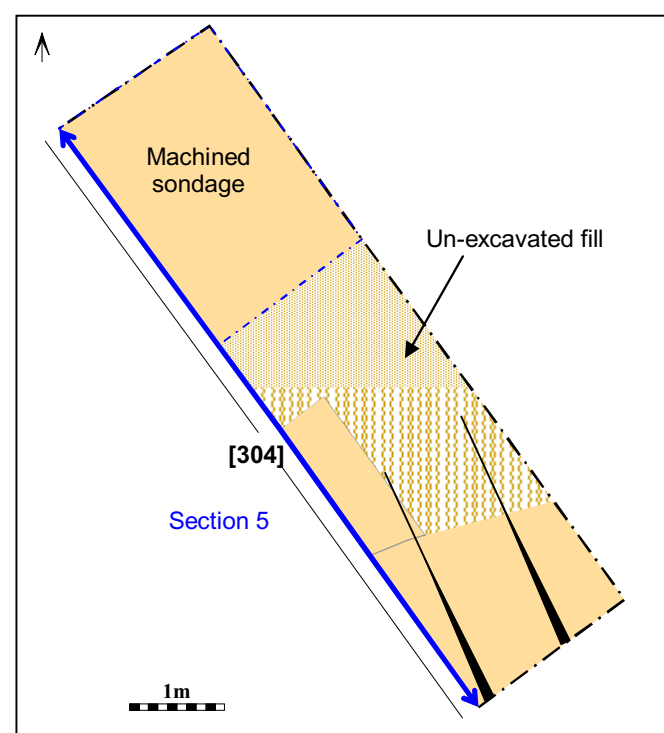
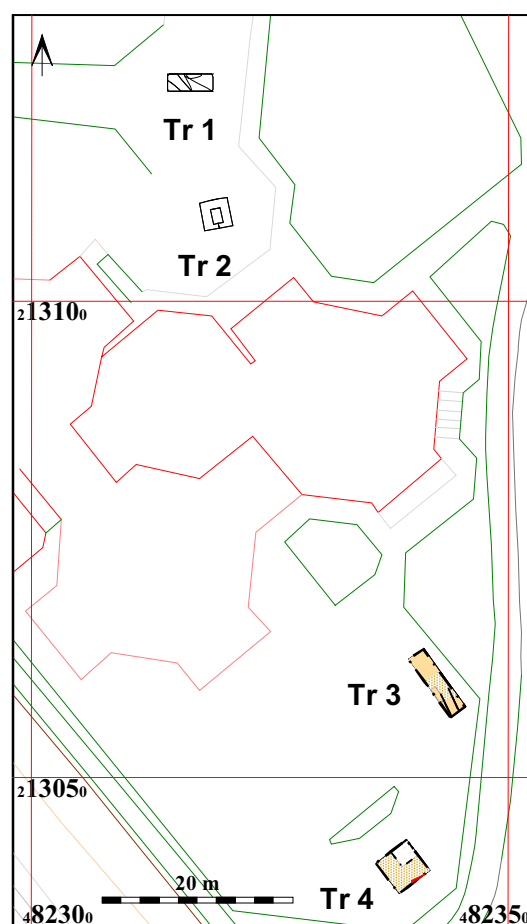


Photograph of Trench 2, looking NW, scale 1m

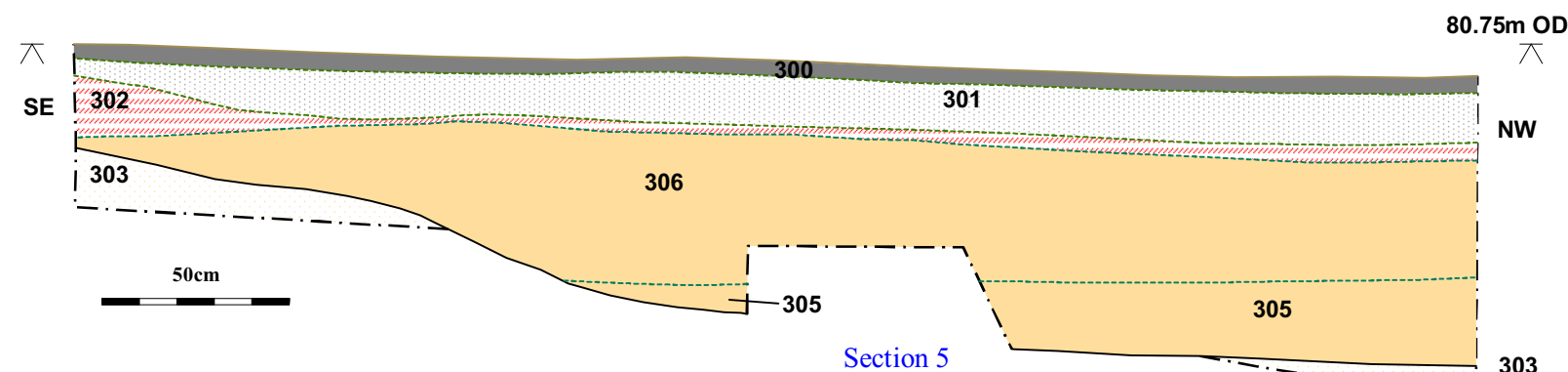
**Figure 5: Trench 2 plan and section**

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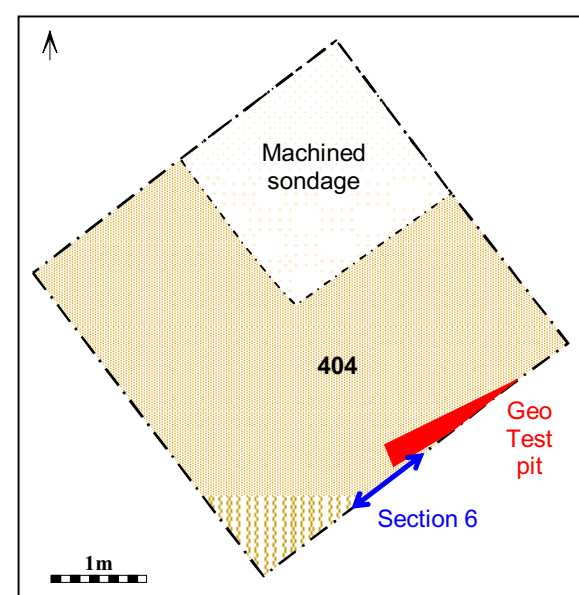
Plan of Trench 3



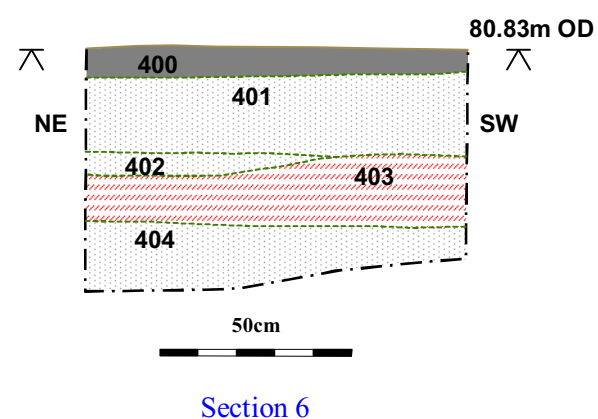
Photograph of Trench 3, looking NW



Photograph of Trench 3, looking WNW



Plan of Trench 4



Section 6

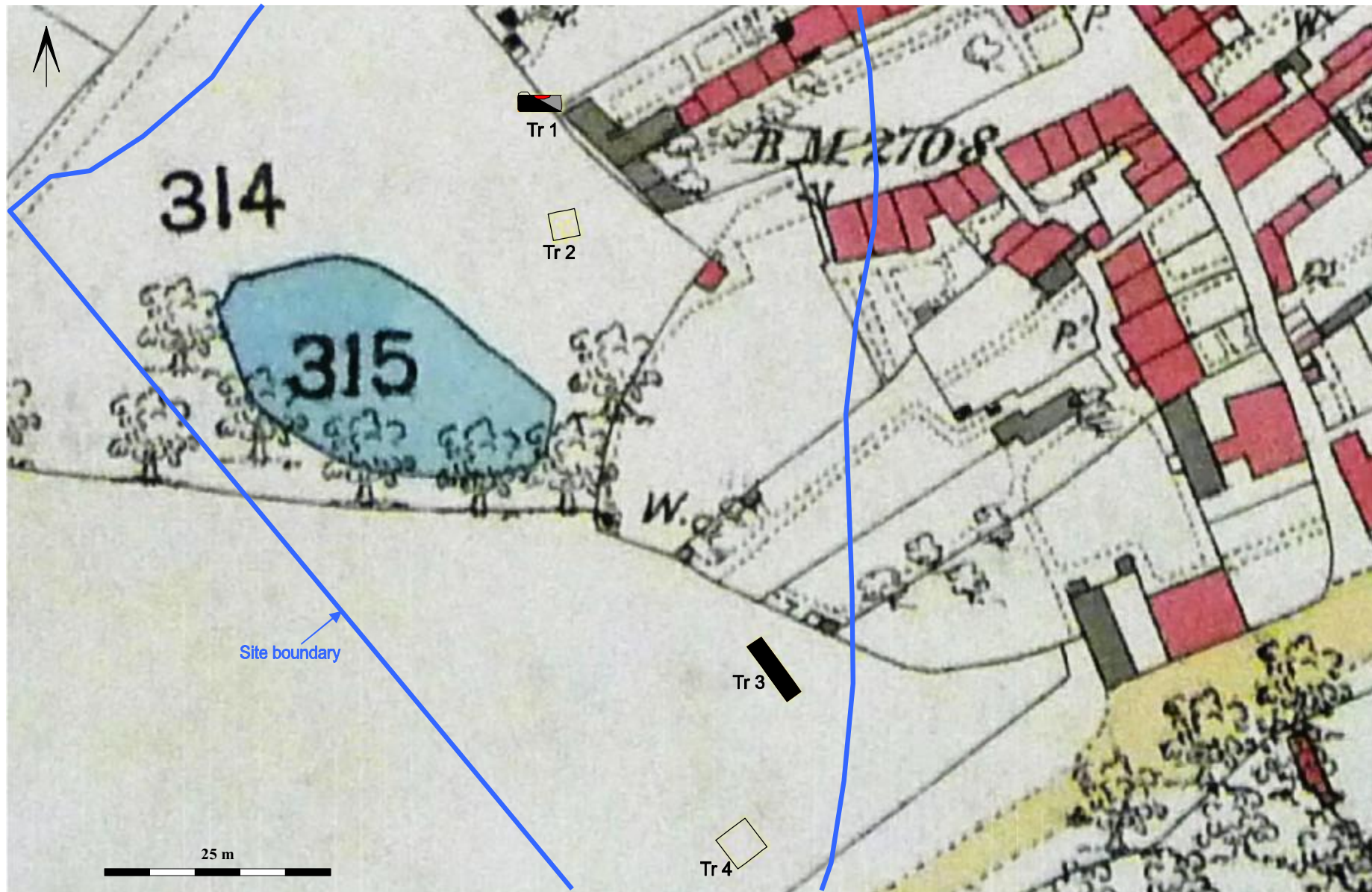


Photograph of Trench 4, looking S

- Tarmac
- Layer
- Brick rubble Layer
- Fill of feature
- Geological layer

**Figure 6: Trench 3 and 4 plans and sections**  
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**Figure 7:** Trenches overlaid onto 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map