



**Northamptonshire
County Council**

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological recording at

Sites S1, S2 and X

Bedford Purlieus National Nature Reserve

Thornough

Peterborough

February 2005



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April 2005

Report 05/068

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Bedford Purlieus National Nature Reserve	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by the Forestry Commission to carry out a measured earthwork survey in Bedford Purlieus Wood, Thornaugh, near Peterborough. Evidence for possible enclosures was uncovered at Sites 1 and 2. While at Site X evidence of a substantial walled and earthwork structure was revealed.	
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Earthwork survey	
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)		
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	Hall, D, 2001	
Current Land use	Forest	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown	
Monument type/ period	Unknown	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	Roman pottery and tile	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Cambridgeshire	
Site address (including postcode)	Bedford Purlieus National Nature Reserve, Thornaugh, Peterborough	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	Circa 2 ha	
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. numbers)	504000, 300000	
Height OD	60m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Peterborough City Council	
Project Design originator	Adam Yates Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Carol Simmonds Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	Adam Yates Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	Forestry Commission	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	2/2/2005	
End date	22/2/2005	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper		
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title		
Serial title & volume		
Author(s)		
Page numbers		
Date		

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING AT SITES S1, S2 AND X

BEDFORD PURLIEUS NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

THORNAUGH

PETERBOROUGH

FEBRUARY 2005

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by the Forestry Commission to carry out a measured earthwork survey in Bedford Purlieus Wood, Thornaugh, near Peterborough. The sites were located in the north-eastern part of the wood. Evidence for possible enclosures was uncovered at Sites 1 and 2. At Site X evidence of a substantial walled and earthwork structure was revealed.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned to carry out a survey at Bedford Purlieus Woods on behalf of the Forestry Commission. This survey comprised the recording of two earthwork and stone structures identified by David Hall in 2001 (Sites 1 and 2) and one further site identified by the Forestry Commission. The works were undertaken according to a brief prepared by Peterborough City Council (Robinson 2003), and a Project Design prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (2005).

The three sites are located at Bedford Purlieus National Nature Reserve, Thornaugh, Peterborough (centred on NGR TL 041 995; Fig 1). At the time of the survey, the sites were under cover of deciduous trees, bracken, grass and leaf fall. Site 1 was located around 850m north-east of the main entrance off 'Roman Road'. Site 2 was at 1350m due north and Site X at 1150m north by north-east of the entrance.

2 OBJECTIVES

The general objective of the survey was to provide detailed information regarding the character and date of the features, and to provide interpretation within their local, regional and national context.

The sites specifically to be recorded were as follows (Fig 2):

- Site 1 A stone-built 'D-shaped structure some 48m across, which coincides with the location of a major Roman building noted by E T Artis in the 19th century.
- Site 2 The remains of a rectangular stone building 30m by 9m, probably a lodge.
- Site X Footings of a stone building.

3 **ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

A full and detailed assessment of the archaeological background is available in Hall 2001. The features surveyed are in the largest area of woodland in the Soke of Peterborough to survive 13th century deforestation. Bedford Purlieu Wood (formerly Thornaugh Wood) formed part of Rockingham Forest and during the 18th century passed to the Dukes of Bedford. Large parts of the wood were cleared during the 1860s. The wood was declared a National Nature Reserve by English Nature in 2000.

Archaeological remains thought to be associated with Roman ironworking were noted by E T Artis during the early 19th century, together with structural remains. Recent excavations to the northwest have recorded evidence for Anglo-Saxon ironworking. A walkover survey of the woods undertaken by David Hall in 2001 (Hall 2001) identified a range of sites including modern military structures, woodland banks and ditches.

4 **METHODOLOGY**

The sites were cleared minimally of dead non-sensitive vegetation to sufficiently define their plan forms. This was undertaken according to informal guidance from the Forestry Commission.

Survey was by means of hand measurement using tapes offset from a baseline. The position of the baseline, in each case, was established relative to Ordnance Survey National Grid, by means of differential Global Positioning System using 1m accuracy and downloaded into Map Info. Levels related to the OS datum point were established by dumpy level and profiles drawn across the sites. A hachured plan of each site was produced, supplemented at Site 1 by plans of the walls, and elevations at certain points. Individual elements were given unique identifying context numbers which are shown on the accompanying plans and appear as bold in the text.

Overall photographs of each site were taken using 35mm black and white print and colour slide film as well as individual digital photos, from several viewpoints. Detailed photographs of any areas of features of particular interest or note were also taken. The survey conformed to the requirements of a Level 4 survey specification as designed by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME 1999).

The isolated nature of site X probably accounts for its better preservation, although no identified features appeared to be more than 0.5 metres above the surrounding ground surface at any given point. The ability to identify earthworks was hampered by the presence of trees, undergrowth and animal disturbance. However, in places the earthworks appeared to be largely undisturbed especially where they were clear of tree growth. The ground was tested for potential stonework by probing with a lamp-iron at various places. Areas where there were banks correlated with a positive response; thus indicating the potential presence of stonework beneath. From this the basic potential floor plan was ascertained.

5 EARTHWORK SURVEY RESULTS

5.1 Site 1 (Fig 3-4)

Site 1 was located around 850m north-east of the main entrance off 'Roman Road'. It was adjacent to the track along the eastern boundary of the woods. It was a 'D'-shaped walled enclosure 50m long and 20m wide. The immediate landscape was dominated by established trees including a single avenue of deciduous species. This avenue was aligned parallel with the track and a fence line shown on current Ordnance Survey maps. The site itself was covered by coppiced ash trees and undergrowth. Visibility was good for the straight section of wall, but the majority of the curved wall of the enclosure was obscured and was not visible on the surface (Plate 1). Although the two main segments were identified, there was enough to reconstruct an overall plan. Along the straight part of the enclosure **101**, **(102)** there were places where debris had obscured the face of the wall.

A general profile across the enclosure running northeast/southwest, showed that there was little change in the level of the interior ground surface; the average height being 56m OD. There was also little change in the ground surface outside of the enclosure to the south west from the interior.

Segment A was a straight section of wall **101** 50m long (southeast-northwest axis) by 0.60m wide, with a maximum surviving height of 0.07m (Plate 2). The wall was faced on two sides with worked limestone, with a limestone rubble and soil core **(102)** comprising small angular fragments bound by a firm dark brown clayey loam (Plate 3). In places there were two courses of masonry surviving. Each stone measured *c* 0.20m long, 0.10m wide and 0.07m high.

There were also anomalous single stone blocks at regular *circa* 1m intervals on the inside of Segment A, about 2m from the inside edge. They were later found to be covering modern chicken wire, which formed a fence running through the site on a south-east to north-west alignment. This line correlates with the Ordnance Survey data, which clearly shows a fence/boundary cutting through the site.

Of the curve of the feature only two parts remained visible, these have been labelled Segments B and C respectively.

Segment B was approximately 18m west of Segment A and curved round from the southeast to the north. It comprised three parts, and measured 13.50m long by 0.70m wide, and with a maximum identified height of 0.10m (Plate 4). The best surviving stretch of walling **103**, was to the north, this was 5.50m long and in places had two identifiable courses. As with **101**, it appeared roughly squared, internal and external facing stones with a rubble and earthen core **(104)**, which was the same as **(102)**. There was a further stretch of similar walling at the south-east end which was less complete, being 3m long. In between the two parts of wall **103** and **(104)** there was what appeared to be a robbed out section roughly 6m long and 0.80m wide and 0.25m deep.

Segment C was approximately 15m west of Segment A and 22m south-east of segment B, and curved round from the east to the north-west. It was a limestone built wall approximately 4m long and 0.60m wide, with a maximum height of 0.06m (Plate 5). Segment C was comprised **105** the limestone masonry wall, and **(106)**, the rubble and earthen infill identical to **(102)** and **(104)**. Wall **105**, was limestone faced on both sides by single worked stretcher masonry. Only one course of stone was visible.

No other features were noted within the enclosure, nor were there any identifiable material noted on the surface.

5.2 Site 2 (Fig 5)

Site 2 was 1350m due north of the main nature reserve entrance at 65m OD. It was a roughly rectangular banked enclosure on an east/west axis, bisected by an unsurfaced trackway, forming a slight hollow (Plate 6). It was 32m long and 13.30m wide, with a maximum height of 0.20m from outside of the earthwork to the top of the bank. It was located on a raised plateau which is identifiable looking north from the woodland track. The survival of the earthwork was poor, and the site is better preserved at the corners (Plate 7).

The main earthwork (**201**) was a rectangular banked enclosure. The southern, outer break of slope at base and top was gradual with steady concave sides. The ground inside the feature was at an approximate level of 65m O.D., and was more or less flat, although it sloped downwards gently from the west for 7m before being interrupted by the track. The northern edge did not have a bank of note, but was planned as a projected line.

The west to east profile had more definite banks but both with gradual breaks of slope at bottom and top. In places on the surface of the bank there were embedded small rounded stones, which may be indicative of walling or of natural placement and movement of material.

A stretch of wall **202** was present in the south-east corner (Plate 8). This was 4m long, with 1.5m of that visible as actual stonework, the rest was covered in grass and earth. It had two lines of worked faces in-filled with rubble; the faced stones had an average size of 0.15m by 0.08m. Wall **202** was 0.70m wide, with a maximum visible height of 0.08m.

Site 2 had been disturbed by trees. In certain places of the earthwork, tree root action had been responsible for the movement of debris such as stone. No internal features or surfaces were identified. Site 2 could have been part of a building or walled enclosure, but there was not the means of dating it.

5.3 Site X (Fig 6-7)

Site X was located in the middle of woodland away from identifiable landmarks. The overall form of Site X comprised a large oblong earthwork complex measuring at least 80.00m long and 34.00m wide, on a north to south alignment, with two separate wings possibly delineating an internal courtyard. The south wing comprised structures **A-L**, walls **301** to **306** and the north wing comprised **N-R** with wall **307**. They were connected by structure **M**. It was likely that there were further structures and/or features, both to the west and to the south. Site X was at a height of approximately 60.50m OD.

An unmapped track was aligned south-east to north-west leading from the outside of structure **B** and to the north of Structures **H** and **G**. The track is at a right angle to the track through Site 2. Site X when viewed looking west is situated on a raised plateau or platform. Further to the west beyond the site is an area of dolines ('swallow-holes').

The south wing

Structures **A-L** and walls **301** to **306** formed the south wing of the complex, divided from the north wing by structure **M**. The south wing measured 46.00m by 34.00m. From the surviving surveyed evidence it appeared that this wing was L-shaped with structures **A** to **D** forming the base of the shape and **F, J** to **L** the leg. There were two further cells (**G** and **H**) to the north of **E** and **J**. The north extents of **G** and **H** were not visible due to erosion, but it is possible that they may have lain to one side of a courtyard. To the south was **I**, whose southern boundary was not visible due to erosion.

Structure A

Structure **A** was a 10.00m long by 8.00m wide rectangular banked cell (Plate 9). It had a possible interior division bank dividing it into roughly two equal parts. It adjoined structures **B** to the south and **M** to the north. The integrity of the banks was in places undermined by tree roots, particularly in the south eastern and north-eastern corners. Furthermore the bank for this structure was eroded in two places and its line has had to be extrapolated. There was an amount of limestone embedded on the surface of the banks, as well as tile. A sample of tile was retrieved for analysis and shown to be box flue tile dating from the Roman period (1st -4th centuries AD).

Structure B

Structure **B** was a rectangular banked cell, 5.50m long by 5.00m wide and *circa* 0.25m high (Plate 10). It was joined to structures **A, C** and **D**. Structure **B** was a noticeable earthwork due to its sharp definition between the heights of the interior surface (approximately 60.75m OD) and the top of the banks (approximately 61.01m OD on the eastern and southern boundaries). The inside edge of the western bank was disturbed by tree roots masking the base of slope of the interior of the cell. There was a considerable amount of limestone embedded on the surface of the banks, as well as building materials such as tile. A sample showed it dated to the Roman period.

Structure C

Structure **C** was a 5.00m square banked adjoining structures **A, B** and **D**. Its interior formed a plateau, with its eastern and southern boundaries sloping down instead of banked, as in structures **A** and **D** (Plate 11).

Structure D

Structure **D** was a rectangular banked cell measuring 11.50m by 8.00m wide adjoining structures **B, C** to the north, **E** to the south and **H** to the west. It was damaged on the surface by a probable wheel rut in the south-western corner, and the boundary it shared with structure **E** was masked by long grass. However, the east-west profile (Fig. 7, profile 9) illustrated how the outer east bank was more prominent than the 'dividing' bank between structures **D** and **H**.

Structure E

Structure **E** (Plate 12) was a 13.00m by 22.00m rectangular cell. It shared boundaries with structures **D, F, H I, J** and **L**. There was a disruption of the outer bank on the eastern edge due to the presence of a substantial animal set. From the top of its southern bank (60.49m OD) to the base of the interior (60.27m OD) it was 0.22m high.

There was a small section of the northern wall **301** visible. This was limestone-faced with rubble infill, and approximately 1.5m long by 0.70m wide with no identifiable height. It was within a bank running along the same axis and was at 60.80m O.D.

Structure F

Structure **F** was 8.00m by 6.00m cell. It was bounded by visible sections of walls **303** and **304**, which probably extended all the way round. From the top of its southern bank (61.01m OD) to the base of the interior (60.75m OD) the height was 0.26m. On the

surface of the banks, tile was noted, as was a considerable amount of loose limestone fragments (Plate 13).

Wall **303** was constructed of roughly squared limestone facing stones with rubble infill approximately 6m by 0.50m with a visible height of 0.15m. It divided structures **F** and **J**. To the east it was not visible under a bank, although this bank had a potential wall beneath. Heavy undergrowth obscured any possible boundaries to the south and west.

Structure J

Structure **J** was a 5.50m by 2.50m rectangular cell bounded on two sides by walls **302** and **303** and next to structures **E**, **F** and **G**. It was noted that the interior of **J** was a firm, flat surface at roughly the same level as walls **302** and **303**.

Wall **302** was of similar construction to **303** and divided structures **G** and **J**. To the east it was not visible under a bank, although this bank had a potential wall beneath. Heavy undergrowth obscured any possible boundaries to the west.

Wall **304** was constructed like the others and formed the south-eastern corner of structure **F**. Heavy undergrowth obscured any possible boundaries to the north and west. **304** was of further note because of the visible large dressed corner stone at the south-eastern corner of structure **F**.

Wall **305** was constructed like the others forming the north-western corner of structure **L**. It also forms the north-eastern corner of structure **K**. **305** was not visible to the south.

Wall **306** was constructed like the others but was wider at 0.80m. To the east it was not visible under a bank, although this bank had a potential wall beneath. It was not visible to the west.

Structure K

Structure **K** was a 3.50m square cell. It was a shallow depression, and if it were not for the presence of walls **305** and **306**, as well as the prominent west boundary; it would not have been noticeable.

Structure L

Structure **L** was a 5.50m by 3.20m cell. From the top of its northern wall **304** (60.89m OD) to the base of the interior (60.87m OD) it was 0.02m high. It joined **F**, **I** and **K**, and had an ambiguous relationship with structure where there was no eastern boundary. It was bounded on two sides by walls **304** and **305**, with **306** in the southern corner.

Structure I

Structure **I** was substantial, though incomplete in plan, measuring 28.00m long and at least 10m wide. It shared boundaries with structures **E**, **L** and **K**. The boundary it shared with structure **E** was characterised in its midsection by lack of definition between the top of bank and the base of bank on the inside of structure **I**. A surface scatter of material, including 2nd to 4th century AD pottery was recovered from the vicinity of Structure **I**, notably from the top of the west/north-west bank and in the interior of the structure (Fig. 7, profile 6).

Structure G

Structure **G** was an 8.00m by at least 5.00m cell. From the top of its south bank (60.95m OD) to the base of the interior (60.80m OD), it was 0.15m high. Only one definite boundary was identified, wall **302**. The eastern and western banks appeared to have been eroded at around 5m.

Structure H

Structure **H** was a 11.50m by at least 5.00m cell. From the top of its southern bank (60.80m OD) to the base of the interior (60.66m OD), it was 0.14m high. Like structure **G**, the full extent was not identified during survey. It shared a boundary with structure **E** as well as wall **301** forming part of its southern boundary.

Structure M

Structure **M** probably marked the line of a dividing wall, linking the northern and southern wings. It was a single bank measuring 13m between structures **A** and **N**. The bank was characterised by its gradual break of slope at base and top on the eastern and western edge with gentle sloping concave slope. The top of bank was a slightly rounded ridge averaging 1.20m thick and was at 60.64m OD. The outside base to the east averages 60.60m OD, whilst the inside of the bank to west averages a height of 60.79m OD.

The north wing

Structures **N** to **R** formed the northern wing of the complex (Plate 14). It measured 30m long by 13m wide. **N** was the southern cell with structures **O** and **P** two small adjacent structures to the north of **N**. Beyond structures **O** and **P**, was a larger structure **Q**, with wall **307** delineating part of its west boundary. Finally, structure **R** was beyond the north boundary of **Q**, its full extent not visible due to erosion.

Structure N

Structure **N** was a 9m square cell and measured 0.05m high from the top of the south bank (60.99m OD) to the base of the interior (60.95m OD).

The profiles across the east-west and north-south showed gradual breaks of slopes at base and top. The banks were approximately 3.75m wide. The interior between the two banks was slightly undulating. The surface of the banks of this structure had small limestone fragments embedded into the surface.

Structure O and P

Structures **O** and **P** were similar cells measuring 5.50 by 4.50 m. **O** measured 0.15m high from the top of its south boundary (61.16m OD) to the base of the interior (61.01m OD).

P measured 0.17m high from the top of its south boundary (61.33m OD) to the base of the interior (61.16m OD).

Structure Q

Structure **Q** was a 11.50m by 8.50m cell with a 0.27m high bank, from the top of its south boundary (61.33m OD) to the base of the interior (61.06m OD). There was also a wall **307** on the western boundary.

Wall **307** appeared to be mainly comprised of limestone rubble, approximately 5m by 1.25m with a visible height of 0.30m. It was at 61.42m OD.

Structure R

Structure **R** appeared to extend further to the north. Its visible portion was 8.50m wide with a bank at least 0.23m high.

Structures **M-R** in Site X, were measured approximately in relation to the grid used for **A-L**. It should be noted that it is extremely likely that there are further structures to the

north-east of the site. The area concerned has a lot of undergrowth and tree disturbance, but earthworks can be identified by difference in slope and by the presence of masonry rubble in the vicinity. It is estimated that any further features extend at least 20m beyond that already recorded.

Within the complex there was a dearth of positive interior surfaces or floors. Roman building debris was identified on the surface throughout the site and samples were taken from the surface of certain areas, taking care not to damage the site and surroundings. Material taken has been identified as pottery and tile.

6 THE FINDS by Tora Hylton and Carol Simmonds

Ceramic building material from Site X

The tile from structure **A** comprised a single non-diagnostic structural tile and two examples of box flue tile with combed keying lines on one side. They were identified as being Roman in date.

From structure **B** there were two box flue tiles with combed keying lines on one side. A single imbrex roof tile and a single structural pilae tile with knife trim. There were also two samples of tegulae roof tile, including a corner fragment. All are Roman in date.

From structure **I**, there was a single example of abraded undiagnostic tile, as well as a small square fragment of flue tile with combed keying lines on one side.

Pottery

There were three sherds of pottery from Site X, structure **I** comprising a grey Nene Valley Colour Coat body sherd dated to post AD 250. A sherd of colour coated decorated beaker and a fine greyware sherd with faint grooving are dated to the 2nd to 4th centuries AD.

7 DISCUSSION

The survey of Site 1 agreed confirmed that the structure is probably a D-shaped walled enclosure, although the course of the curving wall is to some extent conjectured. However, the survey was unable to ascertain any related features except a probable late 20th century woodland boundary defined by chicken-wire underneath large placed stones. The wall itself is well made with a dual faced construction infilled with rubble, indicating a certain amount of time and effort in construction. No dating evidence was retrieved and the interpretation of the structure remains uncertain.

The survey of Site 2 revealed a rectangular structure with evidence of walling. It was on a similar alignment to Site X 100m to the west. It could be that the two sites are in some way related. However, the lack of surface dating has meant that no provenance or further interpretation can be attached.

The survey of Site X, the area that was uncovered by forestry staff during clearance could be the 'Roman building' marked to on the Ordnance Survey map for the area. It was a substantial structure, and some 80m long by 30m wide was surveyable. It appeared to be comprised of many cells formed a coherent plan. Small segments of limestone wall were present, as well as Roman ceramic tile on the surface. There were two wings divided by a central structure, creating a non-symmetrical complex. Furthermore the likelihood of more remains to the south and north emphasises the potential size of this site. There is also a possibility of further walling in the area sharing the western boundary of structures **F**, **G**, **I**, **J**, and **K**. a more complete plan of the

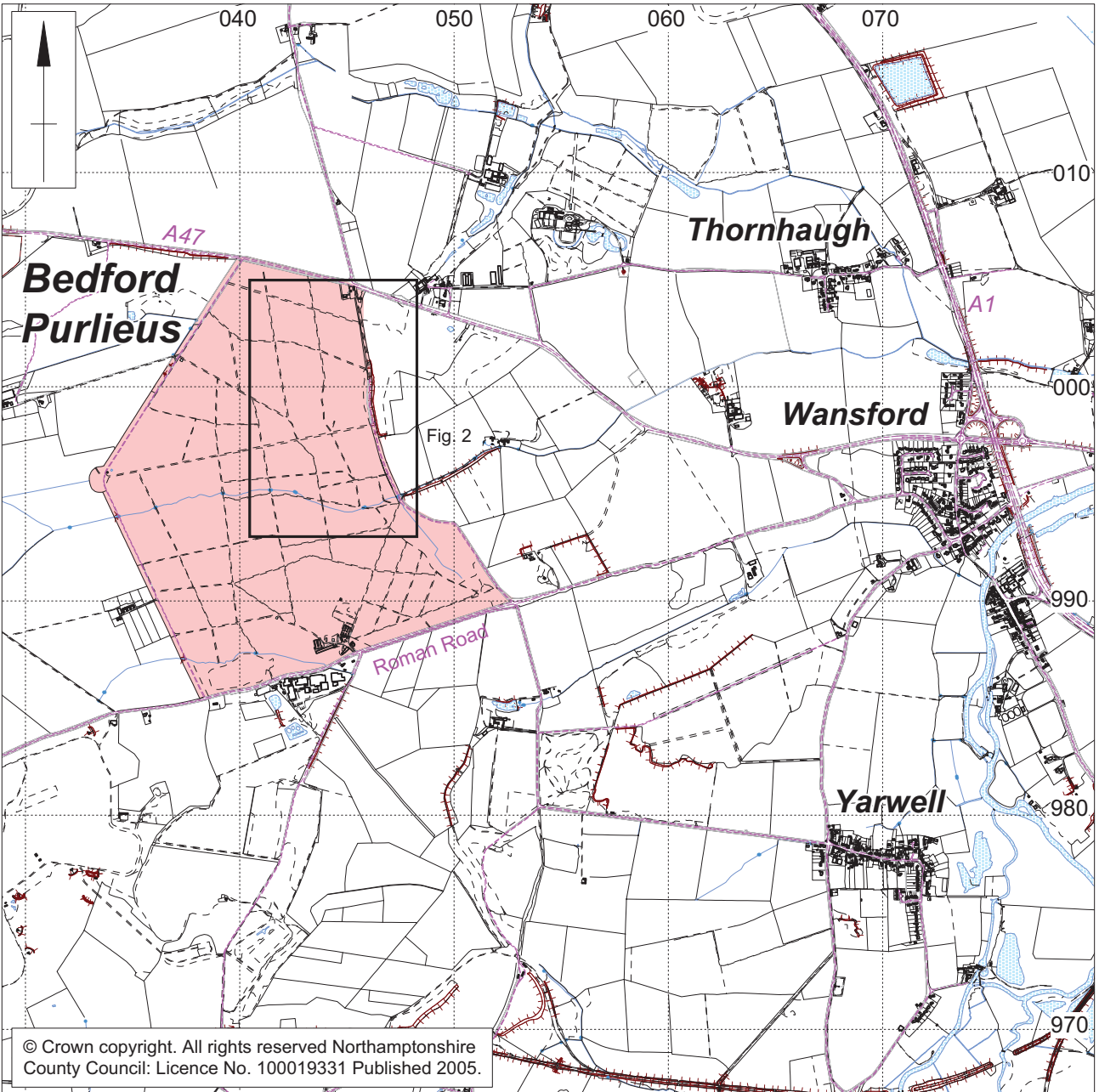
complex would not be obtainable without a certain amount of overburden removed to expose buried features.

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Northamptonshire Archaeology
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Scale 1:30,000

Fig. 1



Scale 1:5000

Fig. 2

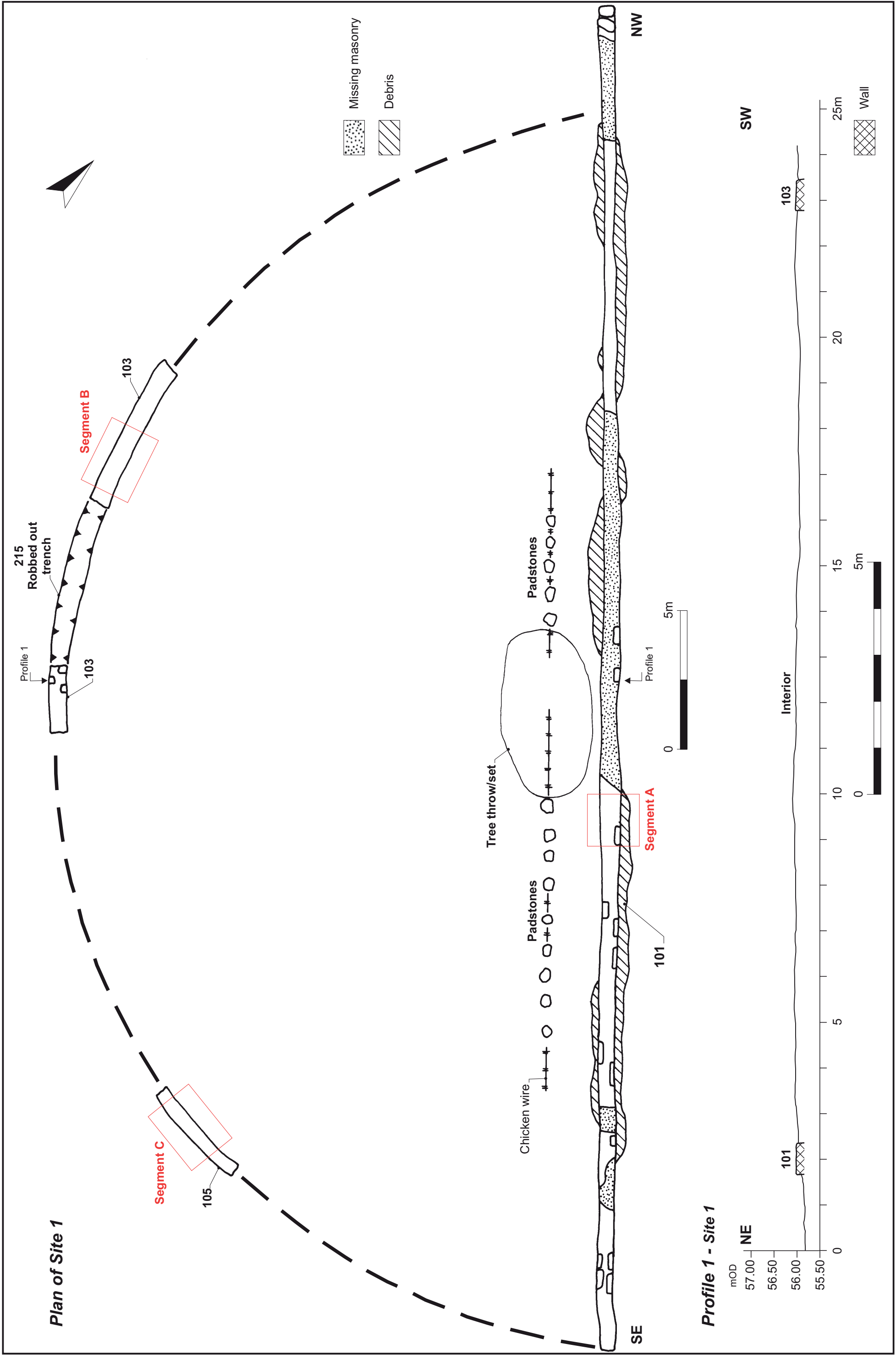
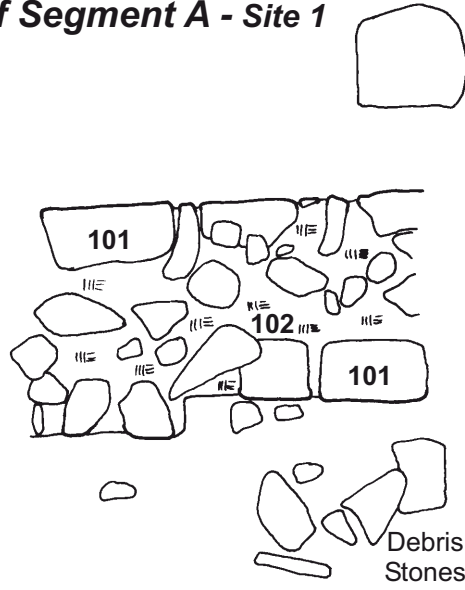
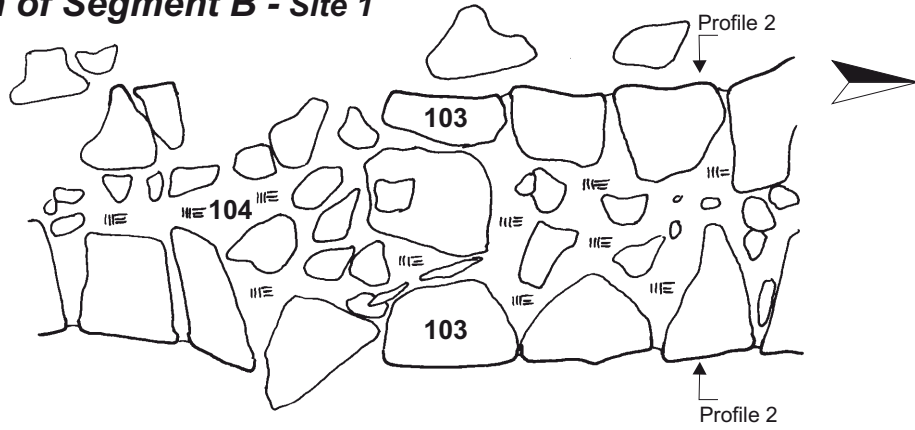


Fig. 3

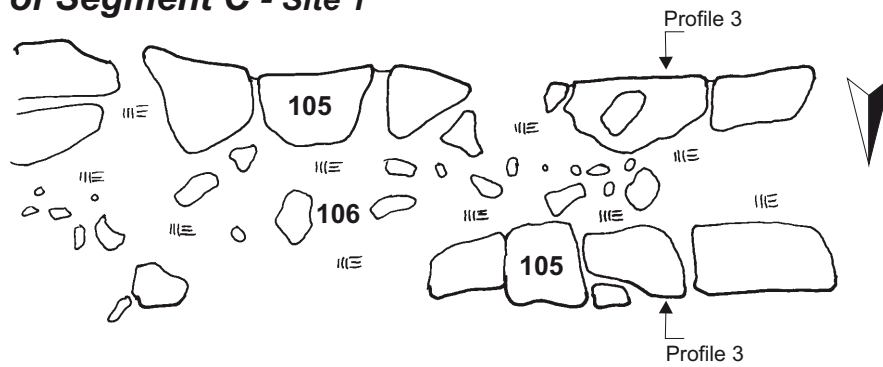
Plan of Segment A - Site 1



Plan of Segment B - Site 1

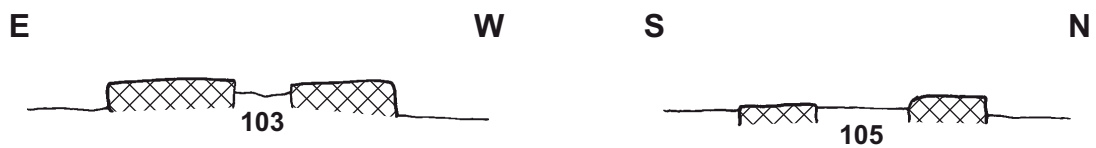


Plan of Segment C - Site 1



**Profile 2 - Site 1
Segment B**

**Profile 3 - Site 1
Segment C**



 Wall



Fig. 4

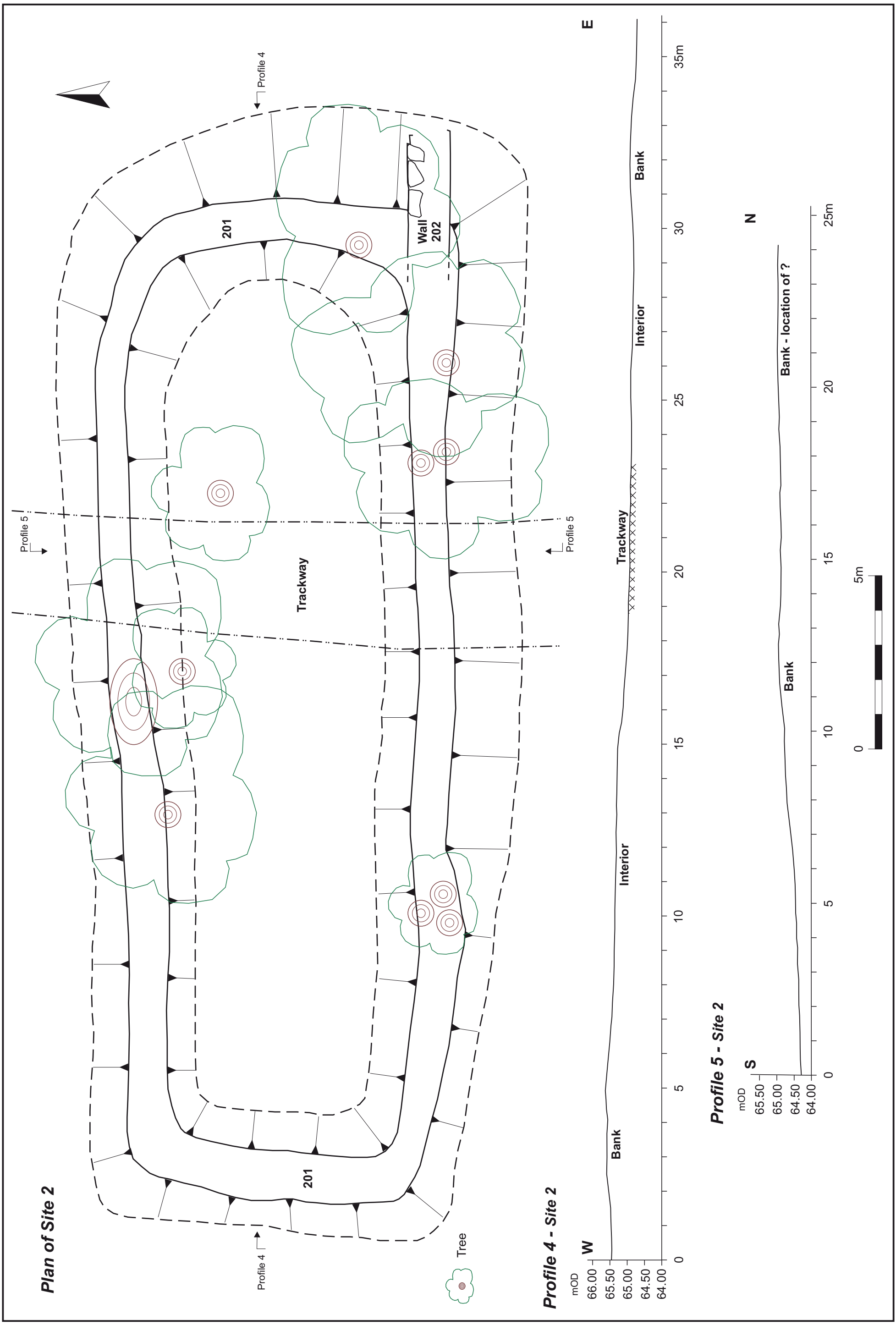


Fig. 5

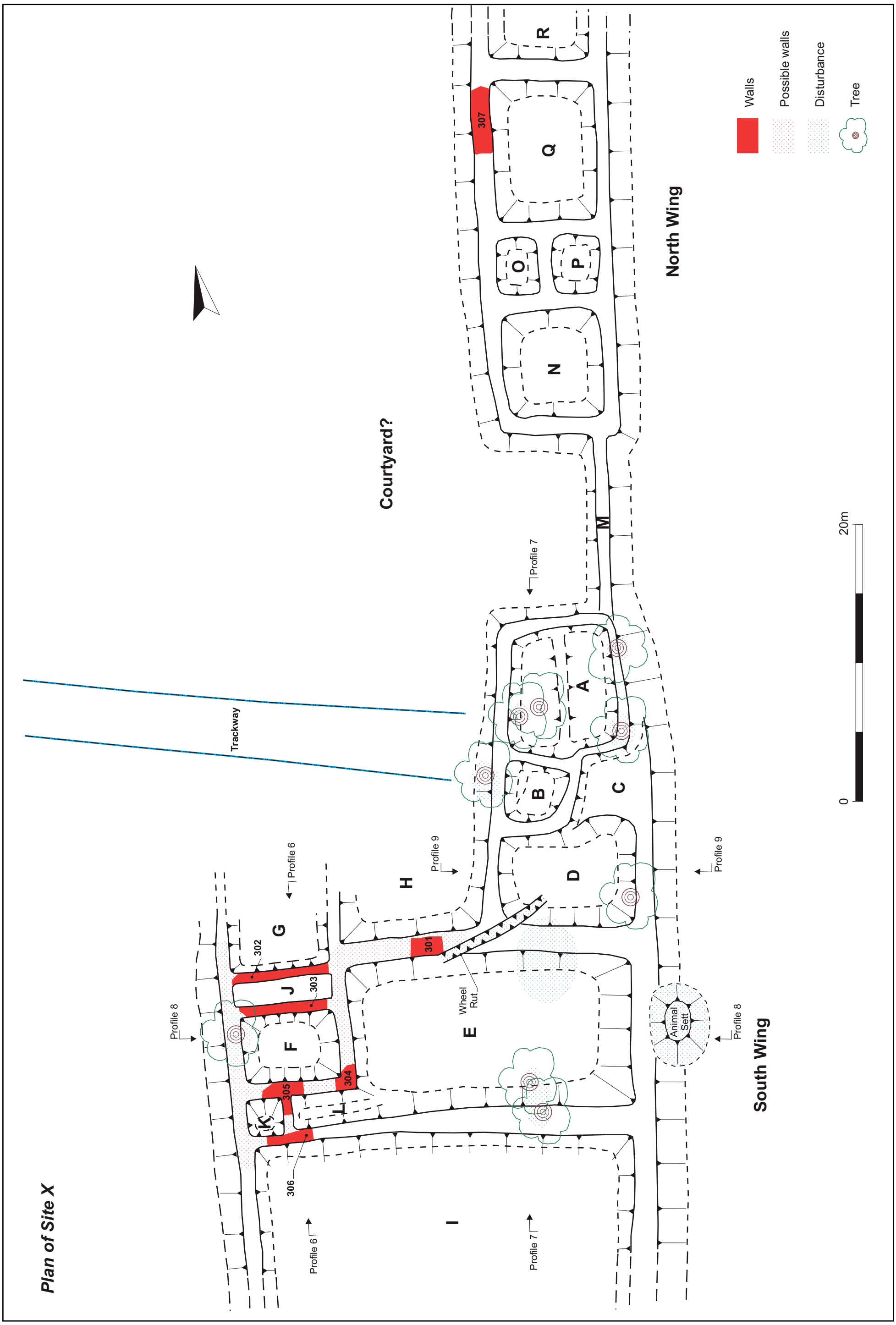
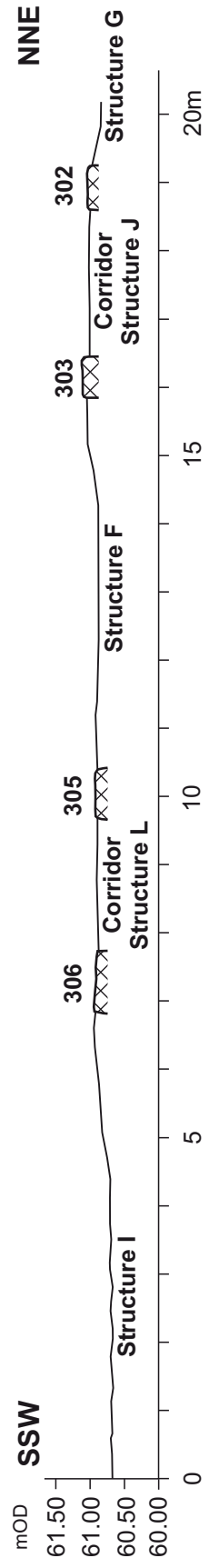
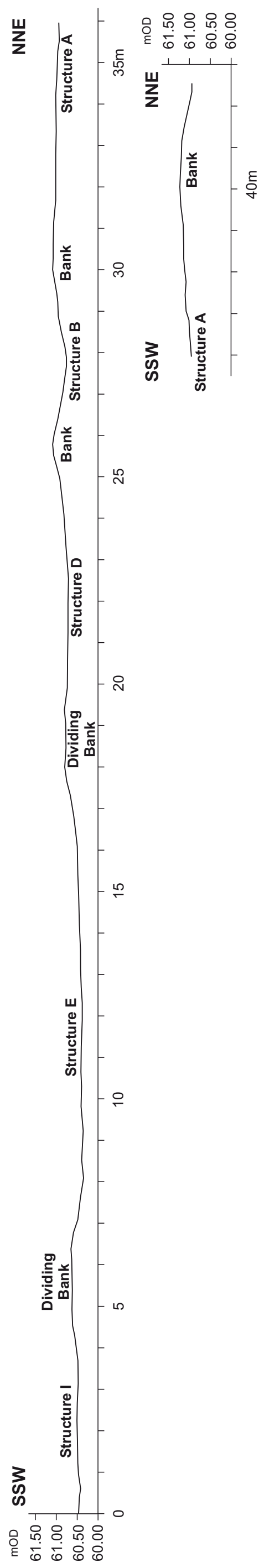


Fig. 6

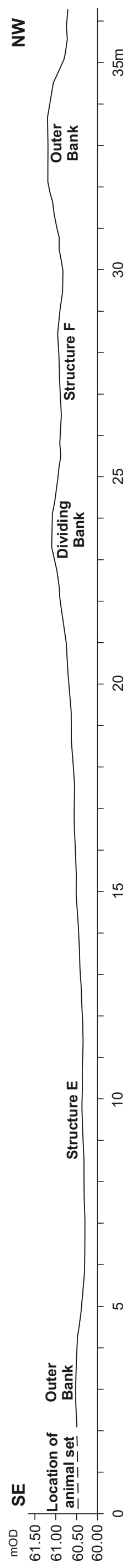
Profile 6 - Site X



Profile 7 - Site X



Profile 8 - Site X



Profile 9 - Site X

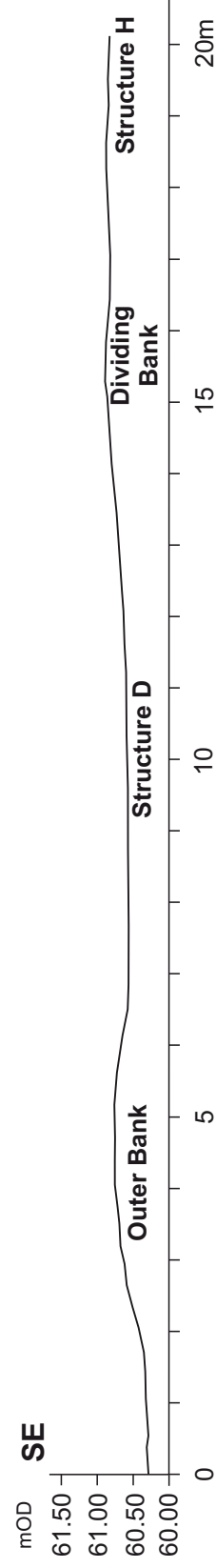




Plate 1: Site 1.
General shot from
Segment A
(foreground) looking
south west.



Plate 2: Site 1.
Wall 101, looking
south east.

Plate 3: Site 1. Wall 101 elevation.





Plate 4: Site 1. Segment C. Wall 105, looking west.



Plate 5: Site 1. Segment B, Wall 103, looking south.



Plate 6: Site 2. Looking south.



Plate 7: Site 2. Looking west.



Plate 8: Site 2. Portion of Wall 201.



Plate 9: Site X.
Structure A, north
east corner of
bank, looking
west.



Plate 10: Site X.
Structure B with
A to left, looking
north-east.



Plate 11: Site X.
Structure C (foreground)
and B (background),
looking west.



Plate 12: Site X.
Structure E and D
(mid-ground) with C
(foreground), looking
south.



Plate 13: Site X.
Structure F with
305 (foreground),
303 and Structure
J (background),
looking north.



Plate 14: Site X.
North wing of
Structure A,
looking north.