



Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological trial excavation on land at
Cross Lane, adjacent to St James Church
Burton Lazars, Leicestershire

September 2009

Accession no. X.A170.2009



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September 2009

Report 09/121

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QUALITY CONTROL

| | Print name | Signed | Date |
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| Checked by | Pat Chapman | | |
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| Approved by | Andy Chapman | | |

OASIS REPORT FORM

| PROJECT DETAILS | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| Project title | An archaeological trial excavation on land at Cross Lane, adjacent to St James Church, Burton Lazars, Leicestershire, September 2009 | |
| Short description (250 words maximum) | Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook an archaeological trial trench excavation ahead of the proposed extension of the existing church graveyard at Cross Lane, adjacent to St James Church, Burton Lazars, Leicestershire. A single trench was excavated that identified an undated gully and probable tree disturbance. | |
| Project type | Evaluation by trial excavation | |
| Previous work | None | |
| Current land use | Former allotments | |
| Future work | No | |
| Monument type and period | None | |
| Significant finds | None | |
| PROJECT LOCATION | | |
| County | Leicestershire | |
| Site address | Land at Cross Lane, Burton Lazars | |
| Easting Northing | SK 7681 1698 | |
| Area (sq m/ha) | 30 sq m | |
| Height OD | 119.52m above Ordnance Datum | |
| PROJECT CREATORS | | |
| Organisation | Northamptonshire Archaeology | |
| Project brief originator | Richard Clark, Leicestershire Historic and Natural Environment Team | |
| Project Design originator | Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology | |
| Director/Supervisor | Jason Clarke, Northamptonshire Archaeology | |
| Project Manager | Mike Dawson, CgMs Consulting Ltd | |
| Sponsor or funding body | Burton Lazars Parish Council | |
| PROJECT DATE | | |
| Start date | 2/09/2009 | |
| End date | 2/09/2009 | |
| ARCHIVES | | |
| | Location (Accession no.) | Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc) |
| Physical | Leicestershire | None |
| Paper | Museum Service | Site and Photographic record |
| Digital | X.A170.2009 | PDF, Digital Photographs |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | | |
| | Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report) | |
| Title | An archaeological trial excavation on land at Cross Lane, adjacent to St James Church, Burton Lazars, Leicestershire, September 2009 | |
| Serial title & volume | 09/121 | |
| Author(s) | Jason Clarke | |
| Page numbers | 14 | |
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Back cover: Development area, looking north-west

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL EXCAVATION ON LAND AT CROSS LANE,
ADJACENT TO ST JAMES CHURCH, BURTON LAZARS
LEICESTERSHIRE
SEPTEMBER 2009**

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook an archaeological trial trench excavation ahead of the proposed extension of the existing church graveyard at Cross Lane, adjacent to St James Church, Burton Lazars, Leicestershire. A single trench was excavated that identified an undated gully and probable tree disturbance.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) undertook an archaeological trial trench investigation in September 2009 at Cross Lane, adjacent to St James Church, Burton Lazars, Leicestershire for CgMs Consulting Ltd as representatives of Burton Lazars Parish Council (Fig 1, SK 7681 1698).

The work was undertaken in response to a planning application (08/00974/COU) for the extension of the existing cemetery of St James Church, which is likely to include excavation of graves and landscaping. The excavation was conducted according to an approved specification prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology to meet the requirements of a Brief issued by the Senior Planning Archaeologist of Leicestershire County Council Environment and Heritage Services (NA 2009, LCC 2009).

The purpose of the investigation was to determine the presence of any archaeological features or deposits, to date and characterise their extent, depth of burial and state of preservation.

The archaeological program followed the management guidelines of English Heritage as set out in the MAP2 procedural document (EH 1991). All works were conducted in accordance with the *IfA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (1994, revised 2008) and the *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (LCC 1997).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Historical background

The application area lies within an area of archaeological interest, within the medieval and post-medieval historic core of the village of Burton Lazars (HER MLE8797). The earliest development of the village is likely to have been during the later part of the 1st millennium AD. The adjacent parish church of St. James is itself a Grade I Listed Building (HER MLE11640). To the south of the present churchyard the land falls sharply suggesting the presence of former sand and gravel quarrying (LCC 2009). The site of the former sand quarry was confirmed by a local resident.

Extensive earthworks are mapped by the Ordnance Survey within 100m south-west of the site, on the opposite side of the Melton Road to that occupied by the church. These remains represent the grounds of the medieval leper hospital of St Mary and St Lazarus, from which the village takes its name. The hospital at Burton Lazars was founded by Roger de Mowbray, who granted to the lepers of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem 2 carucates of land at Burton, with a messuage and the site of a mill. The

date of Roger's grant is unknown, but it is likely to have been in the years 1138-1162 and was probably linked to his participation in the Second Crusade in 1147 (VCH 1954). The Hospital of Burton Lazars was subject to the Augustinian rule, and originally formed part of the Order of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem.

2.2 Topography and geology

The site is situated on the south-east side of Cross Lane, Burton Lazars, Leicestershire and is adjacent to the church of St. James which has an Ordnance Survey BM set at 119.52m above Ordnance Datum. The land lies upon a small hilltop plateau along a ridge, occupied by the core of the village. There is a sharp downward slope on the hillsides to the north-east and south-east where the village overlooks the Eye Valley. The hillside has a more gentle descent towards the north-west where it joins with the flood plain and to the south-west where the ridge line continues towards Gartree Hill.

The geology of the valley sides comprises boulder clay (Diamicton) drift overlying solid late Triassic mudstone of the Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone Formation (BGS 2002). Soils comprise chalky till of the Ragsdale Association, slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clayey/fine loamy soils (LAT 1983).

3 METHODOLOGY

A single trench was excavated; measuring 15m long by 2m wide, aligned north to south, and was located to make best use of the sample area and to avoid a known electrical cable in the south of the sample area. A mechanical excavator with a 1.80m wide flat ditching bucket was used to excavate topsoil and overburden to archaeological levels. All archaeological features were examined by hand excavation to determine their nature. Recording followed standard Northamptonshire Archaeology procedures as described in the specification (NA 2003; 2009). All archaeological features were given a separate context number, features were described on *pro-forma* context sheets, which included details of its context, its relationships and interpretation. A photographic record was kept using monochrome and colour slide film, supplemented with digital images.

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

Natural clay (103) was encountered at 0.60m. Two features were present, a gully and the other was the result of probable tree disturbance (Fig 2).

Gully [105] was aligned north-east to south-west; it measured 1.10m wide and 0.20m deep with concave sides and base (Figs 3-5). The fill comprised mid orange-brown silty clay (104), and was sealed by subsoil (102). No artefacts were recovered from the fill, nor were any residual finds recovered from the excavated soils. The gully was undated and was most likely a disused field boundary.

An irregular-shaped feature [107], 1.75m wide and 0.15m deep, had irregular and undulating sides and base. The fill comprised mid brown-grey silty clay (106) with frequent root inclusions and was sealed by subsoil (102). The irregular-shaped profile and frequent root inclusions within the fill suggest that the feature was probably tree disturbance.

Sealing the archaeology was a 0.30m thick layer of light orangey-brown silty clay subsoil (102). A 0.30m thick layer of mid grey black silty clay topsoil (101), overlay this.

5 THE SITE ARCHIVE

The site archive comprises:

Table 1: Quantification of the archive

| Records | Quantity |
|--|----------|
| Trial Trench log | 1 |
| Context sheets and other sheets | 10 |
| Colour slides | 10 |
| Black and white contacts and negatives | 10 |
| Digital photographs | 10 |

The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service in accordance with their published requirements (Pollard 2000; Accession Number X.A170.2009).

6 CONCLUSION

A single undated gully was present within the southern part of the trench. The gully was relatively wide but shallow and appeared to have been filled through natural silting. The gully showed signs of truncation, probably by later agricultural practises and was most likely a disused field boundary.

Examination of the 1885 Ordnance Survey map depicts the present site as part of a much larger field extending in a narrow strip to the rear of properties along New Road. A minor boundary in the adjacent eastern field partitions the rear of that neighbouring plot on a similar alignment to that of the excavated gully. The map of 1904 depicts the known gravel pit to the south of the site, this is also visible in 1931 along with the first extension of the churchyard into the western portion of the field that forms its present boundary.

The general character of narrow elongated plots to the rear of properties along a principal road is a common feature of medieval village plans. In Burton Lazars the principal road is New Road. A smaller lane runs parallel to New Road forming a back lane along the rear of the properties and this is Cross Lane. Together the pattern suggests that dwellings along New Road, each possessed a portion of land to the rear for subsistence purposes, which was accessed from Cross Lane. New Road and Cross Lane eventually join at the edge of the village before continuing eastward along Sawgate Road. The structured pattern of this village shows the properties extending away from the front gates of the medieval Hospital of St. Mary and St. Lazarus. It is a pattern of settlement highly suggestive of planned Norman manorial growth and has been discussed in more detail in *Landscape History* (Brown 1996).

The gully alone does not provide sufficient information to recommend further work and is probably a fragment of the wider village plan that extends beyond the bounds of the site. It is probable that this boundary predates the 1st edition Ordnance Survey and it may represent a rear boundary for one of the medieval properties. It is likely that the plot has always been open ground, which is consistent with the excavated evidence.

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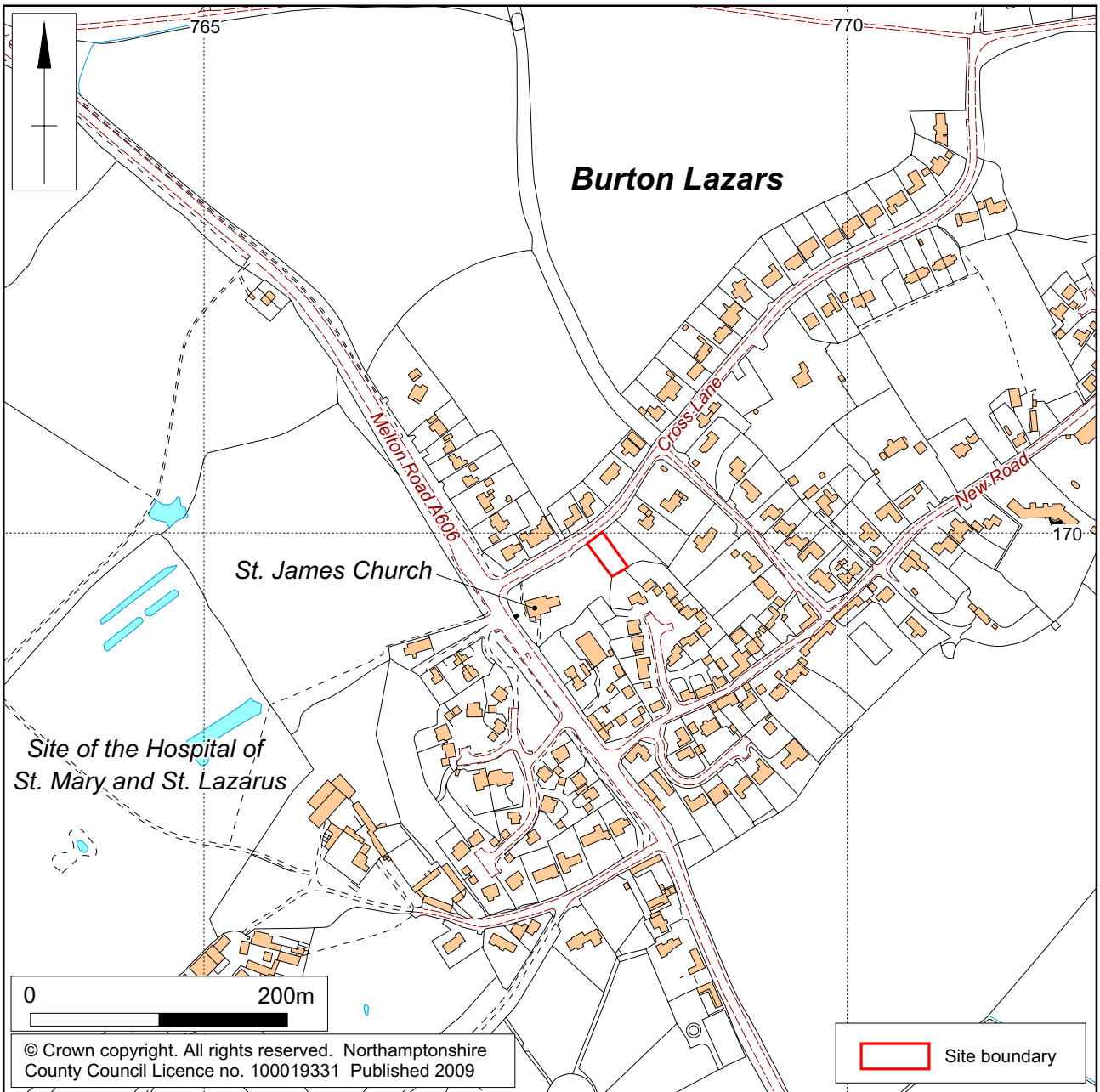
NA 2009 *A specification for an Archaeological Trial Trench on land at Cross Lane, adjacent to St James church, Burton Lazars, Leicestershire*, Northamptonshire Archaeology

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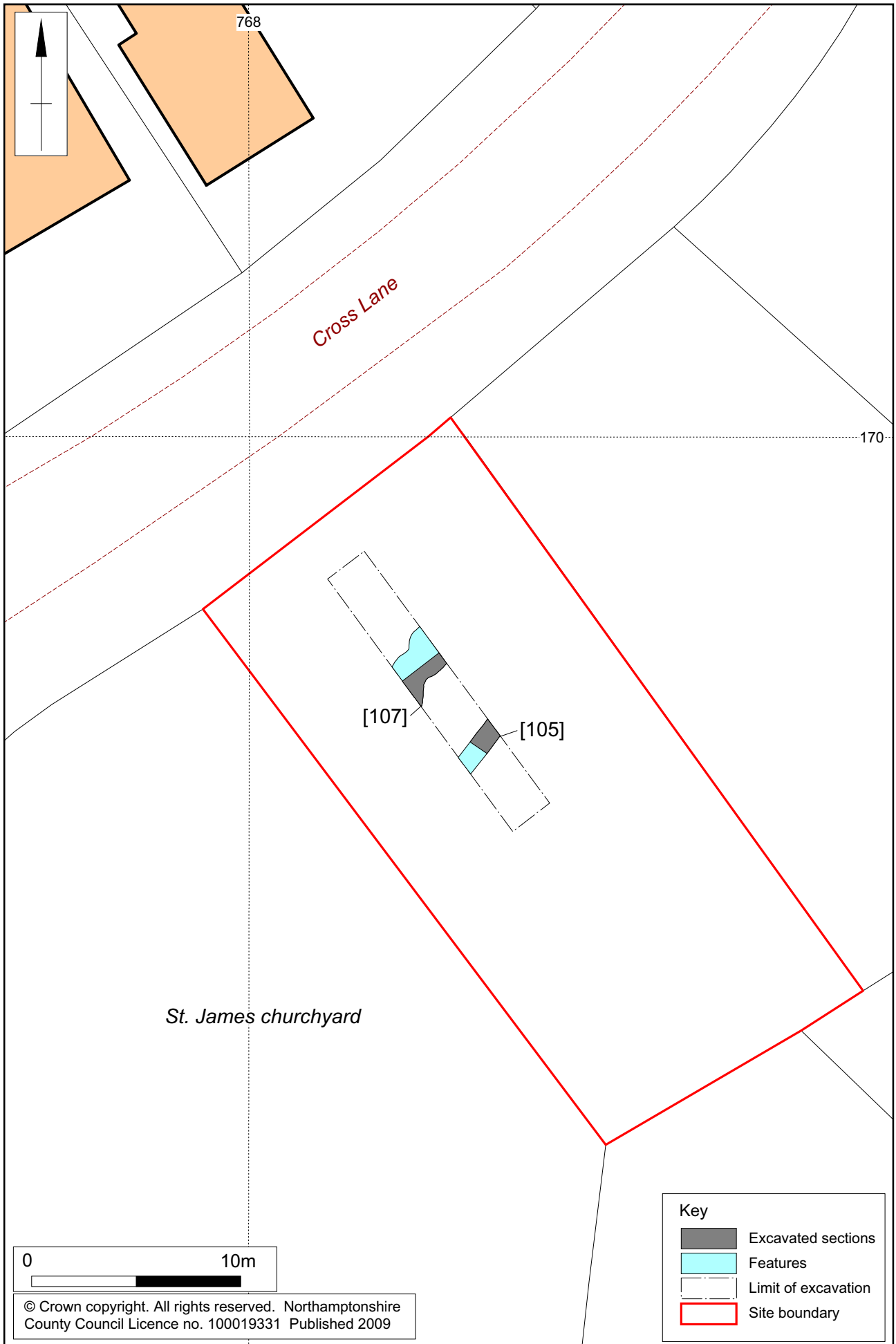
Websites

BGS 2009 <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html> British Geological Survey website



Scale 1:5000

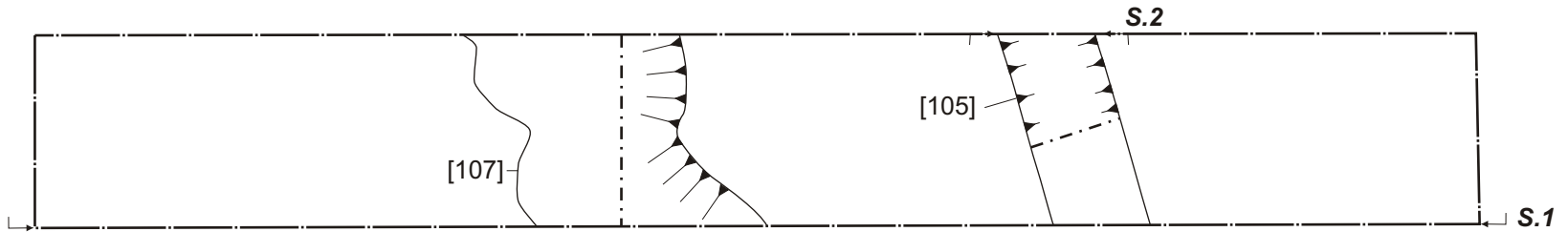
Site location Fig 1



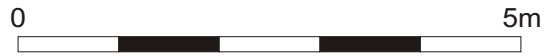
Scale 1:250

Trench location and features Fig 2

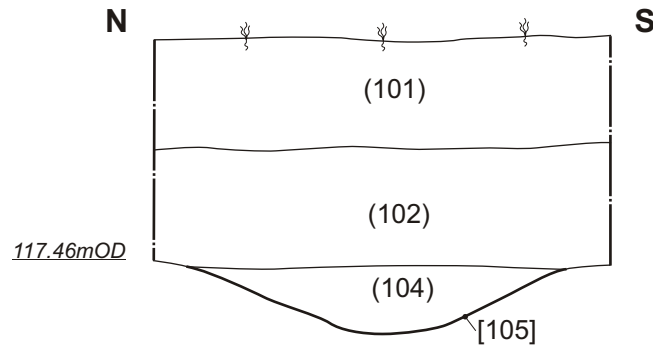
Trench 1, Plan 1



Tree disturbance



Section 2



Trench plan and section Fig 3



Fig 4 Undated north-east to south-west aligned gully [105], looking east



Fig 5 Excavated trench, looking south



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