Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

An Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation

Sandy Lane North Improvement Scheme

Northampton

November 2006

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Report 06/164

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation, Sandy Lane North Improvement Scheme, Northampton	
Short description (250 words maximum)	An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northampton Archaeology on land at Sandy Lane, Northamptonshire during November 2006 on behalf of Atkins Heritage. The work was carried out prior to the proposed Sandy Lane Improvement Scheme. In total 33 trenches were excavated within the proposed road corridor and the footprint of an associated balancing pond. Archaeological remains were only encountered in four of the trenches. These comprised undated ditches and gullies most of which corresponded with geophysical anomalies. Other features identified by the geophysical survey were found to be attributable to modern disturbance or to be of probable geological origin.	
Project type	Trial trench evaluation	
Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)	Geophysical survey (Heard 2006) DBA (Atkins 2006)	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type and period		
Significant finds (artefact type and period)		
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address (including postcode)	Sandy Lane Northampton	
Easting	4707	
Northing	2626	
Height OD	90m OD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Northampton County Council (Flitcroft 2006).	
Project Design originator	Atkins Heritage (2006)	
Director/Supervisor	Edmund Taylor	
Project Manager	Adam Yates (NA), Julia Bennett (Atkins Heritage)	
Sponsor or funding body	Atkins Heritage	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	November 2006	
End date	November 2006	
ARCHIVES	**Location (Accession no.)**	**Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)**
Physical		
Paper		Plans; sections; pro-forma sheets, colour slides, B+W contact sheets
Digital		Photographs
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Title		
Serial title and volume		
Author(s)		
Page numbers		
Date		

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION
SANDY LANE NORTH IMPROVEMENT SCHEME
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
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Abstract

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out during November 2006 by Northamptonshire Archaeology on land at Sandy Lane on the western side of Northampton. The work was carried out on behalf of Atkins Heritage prior to the proposed Sandy Lane Improvement Scheme.

In total, 33 trenches were excavated within the proposed road corridor and the footprint of an associated balancing pond. Archaeological remains were only encountered in four of the trenches. These comprised undated ditches and gullies most of which corresponded with geophysical anomalies. Other features identified by the geophysical survey were found to be attributable to modern disturbance or to be of probable geological origin.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation on behalf of Atkins Heritage during November 2006 on the proposed route of the Sandy Lane Improvement Scheme on the western edge of Northampton (NGR SP 707 626, Fig 1). The evaluation comprised thirty-three 20m-long trenches and met the requirements of a specification prepared by Atkins Heritage (Atkins 2006a) acting on behalf of their clients Northamptonshire County Council.

The section of the proposed route examined during this evaluation comprised a linear corridor from the junction of Sandy Lane and Berrywood Road at the south of the scheme to land near the junction of Port Road and White Lane in the north on the A428. In addition, the footprint of a proposed balancing pond between the route corridor and the existing Sandy Lane was examined.

The topography comprises gently rolling land, cut by stream valleys, at a height of 90m OD. The underling geology of the area comprises Northampton Sand and Ironstone with areas of Great and Inferior Oolite limestone and Lower Estuarine Series. There is also a corridor of

alluvium associated with the Dallington Brook which crosses the proposed corridor. The overlying soils are of the Hanslop and Banbury types. Land use is mixed arable and pasture. An area of woodland at the north end of the proposed route was not examined.

2 BACKGROUND

A desk-based assessment (Atkins 2006b) concluded that whilst no known site would be impacted by construction, the scheme lay within an area of known prehistoric and Roman activity, which provided a high potential for further Iron Age and Romano-British remains as well as other periods within the footprint.

A geophysical survey of the proposed corridor identified a range of anomalies of potential archaeological interest (Heard 2006). Trial trenches were positioned in order to examine these anomalies (Atkins 2006a, NA 2006)

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The general aim of the evaluation was to identify the nature, extent and significance of any archaeological deposits surviving within the Sandy Lane Improvements route corridor and associated balancing pond. The specific aims of the evaluation were:

- To date and characterise features identified in the desk-based assessment and geophysical survey; and
- To assess the potential of areas to contain archaeological deposits which were not highlighted by the desk-based assessment and geophysical survey.

4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

In total 33 trenches, each 20m long, were excavated (Fig 2) using a JCB 3CX, fitted with a 1.60m wide toothless ditching bucket, under continuous archaeological supervision. Several of these were targeted over sub-surface anomalies detected by the geophysical survey (Heard 2006). Mechanical excavation proceeded as far as the first significant archaeological layer

or, in its absence, the surface of the natural substrate.

The trenches were laid out and located relative to Ordnance Survey National Grid using a Leica 1200 GPS system while level heights were taken and related to Ordnance Datum.

All archaeological features were investigated by hand excavation and recorded on pro-forma sheets. Sectioned features were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and trenches containing archaeological features were planned at 1:50.

A full photographic record comprising both 35mm monochrome negatives, with associated prints, and colour transparencies was maintained. Additional digital photographs were also taken

All works were conducted in accordance with the IFA *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (1999) and the *Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists* (1985, revised 2000).

5 SUMMARY OF EXCAVATION RESULTS

A total of 33 trenches were excavated along the route of the proposed corridor and associated balancing pond area. The natural substrate varied, generally comprising alluvial clay and sand in the southern part of the scheme and sand, ironstone and limestone to the north. The overlying subsoil comprised a mid brown sandy clay loam which ranged in depth from 0.15m to 0.80m. The topsoil, which was mostly between 0.15m and 0.30m thick, comprised a dark brown sandy clay loam which became more brashy over the ironstone in the northern part of the scheme.

Archaeological features were encountered in Trenches 11, 16, 25 and 26 (Figs 3 and 4). None of the features produced dating evidence and all were sealed by the subsoil and cut the underlying natural.

Only the trenches containing features are described below. A full context index is included in Appendix 1. Table 1 provides a summary of the results of the trenching.

Table 1: Summary of excavation results

Area	Trenches	Objective	Results
1	1-4	'Blank' area at southern end of scheme	No archaeological remains
	5-6	To confirm that geophysical anomalies 30 (5) and 31 (6) are modern in origin	No archaeological remains. Anomalies likely to be of pedological origin
	7	'Blank' area	No archaeological remains
	8-9	Geophysical anomalies 16 (9) and 17 and 26 (8)	No archaeological remains. Anomalies likely to be of pedological or geological origin
	10	Geophysical anomaly 23, to confirm interpretation as a structural feature	Modern disturbance corresponding with anomaly 23
	11-13	Area around geophysical anomaly 23	Undated linear ditch present in Tr 11 corresponding with anomaly 14. Modern disturbance in Tr 12 and 13 corresponding with anomalies 23 and 29
	14-15	Geophysical anomalies 22 (14) and 28 (15)	No archaeological remains. Anomalies likely to be of geological origin
	16	'Blank' area	Possible ditch not shown on geophysics
	17-19	Examine twin anomaly 8 (17-18) and 'blank' area to west (19)	No archaeological remains. Anomalies likely to be of geological origin
2	20	To confirm geophysical anomaly 20 as an old stream course	No archaeological remains. Deep alluvial subsoil. Possible stream course corresponding with anomaly 20
	21-22	To confirm interpretations of geophysical anomalies 19a and 19b as pits	No archaeological remains. Anomalies likely to be of geological origin
	23-24	Geophysical anomaly 4	No archaeological remains. Anomaly likely to be of geological origin
	25-26	Geophysical anomaly 1 and 2	Anomaly 1 likely to be of geological origin. Parallel anomaly corresponds with gully present in Tr 26. Anomaly 2 corresponds with gully present in Tr 25
	27-29	To examine pit-like and linear anomalies in vicinity of anomalies 1 and 4	No archaeological remains. Anomalies likely to be of geological origin
	30-31	To examine 'blank' areas in balancing pond land take	No archaeological remains
3	32	To examine geophysical anomaly 18	No archaeological remains. Anomalies likely to be of geological origin
	33	To examine 'blank' areas	No archaeological remains

Trench 11

A linear ditch [1107], aligned north-west to south-east was revealed at the south-east end of the trench (Figs 3 and 4, section 1). This was 1.40m wide and 0.61m deep. The edges were well defined and sloped steeply to a narrow rounded base (Plate 1). The primary fill (1106) comprised mid greyish brown silty sand with frequent angular ironstone fragment inclusions and was 0.48 m thick. The upper fill (1105) was similar in composition but with fewer stone inclusions and was 0.13m thick.

Trench 16

A near north to south aligned ditch [1605] was present at the south-west end of the trench (Figs 3 and 4, section 2). The ditch was 2.10m wide by 0.18m deep with gradually slopping edges and a flat but slightly irregular base (Plate 2). The fill (1604) comprised mottled mid brown and yellow sandy clay. Given the shallow, irregular nature of the ditch and its sterile fill, it is possible that it represents a variation in the natural substrate rather than an archaeological feature

Trench 25

A linear gully [2505] was present at the south-east end of the trench (Figs 3 and 4, section 3). This was 0.70m wide, 0.20m deep and aligned north-west to south-east. In profile, both edges sloped at 45° to a broad slightly concave base (Plate 3). The fill (2504) comprised mid brown sandy clay with frequent inclusions of large angular ironstone fragments indicative of its use as a probable drain.

Trench 26

At the north-west end of the trench there was a north-east to south-west aligned gully [2605] (Figs 3 and 4, section 4). This was 0.60m wide by 0.16m deep. Both edges sloped at 45° to a broad flat base, and the fill (2604) comprised mid brown sandy clay (Plate 4).

6 DISCUSSION

The evaluation revealed little archaeological activity within the proposed corridor route and associated balancing pond area.

Trench 11 confirmed the presence of a linear anomaly associated with a possible enclosure to the north-west as suggested by the geophysical survey (anomaly (14) Heard 2006). The gully in Trench 26 is likely to be the continuation of a linear anomaly to the north-west of anomaly (1) (*ibid*). The possible drain in Trench 25 corresponds well with linear anomaly (2) (*ibid*) but, contrary to the geophysical survey results, this did not appear to extend to Trench 22.

Trenches 10 and 13 revealed the disturbance in this area to be derived from recent landfill activity.

The trial trench evaluation has suggested that many of the anomalies identified by the

geophysical survey are not of archaeological origin, but are more likely to be natural variations and features of the natural substrate. This was most evident in the case of Trench 15 where a plough-damaged natural ridge of limestone corresponded well with linear anomaly (10).

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Atkins 2006b *Sandy Lane Improvements, Northampton, Stage III Assessment for Cultural Heritage,* Atkins Heritage

Heard, H, 2006 *Geophysical Survey Report, Sandy Lane, Duston, Northamptonshire,* Stratascan

NA 2006 *Sandy Lane North Improvements, Northampton, Method statement for archaeological works,* Northamptonshire Archaeology

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APPENDIX 1: Index of contexts by trench

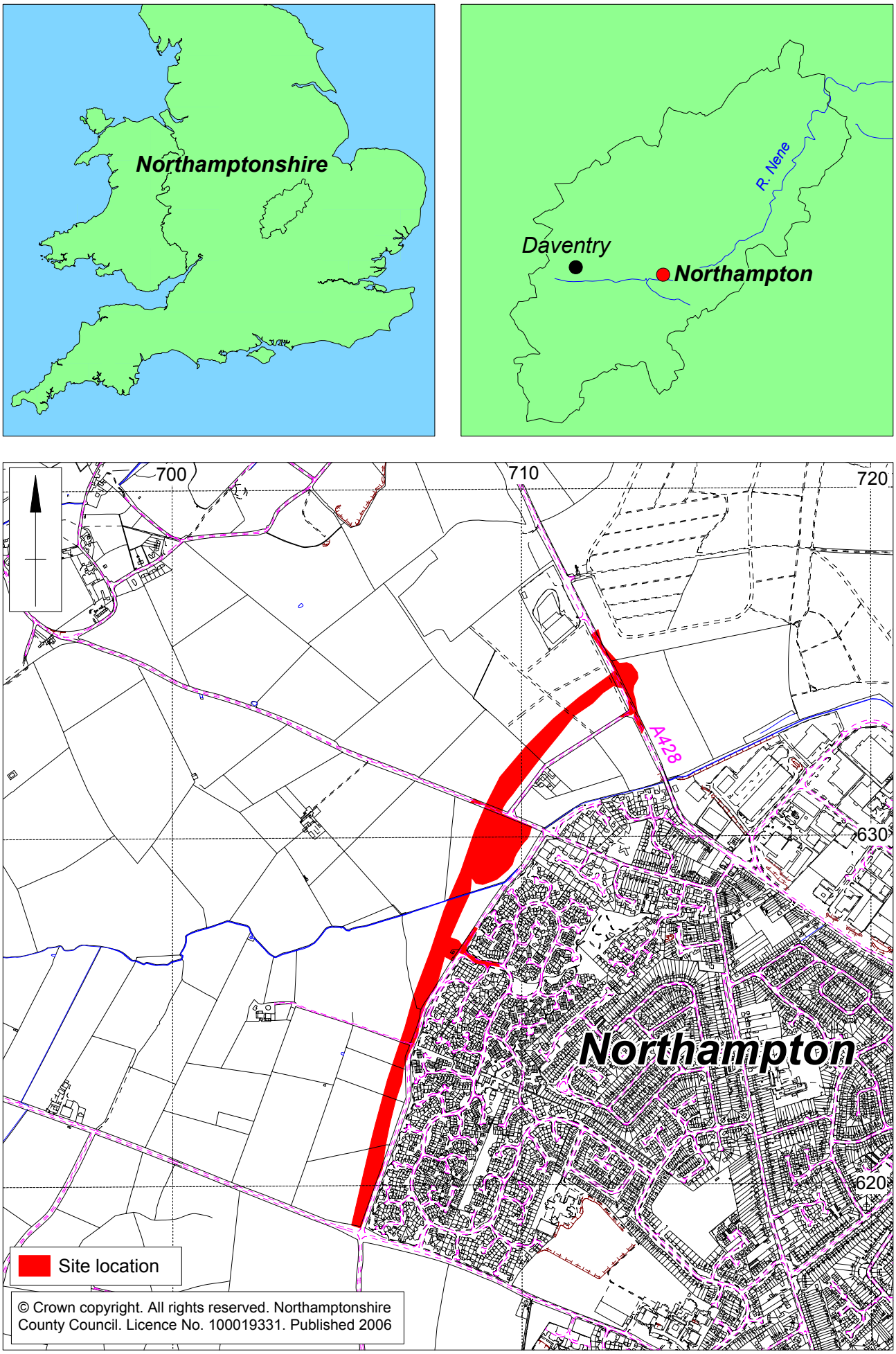
Trench No	Context	Type	Description	Date
1	101	Layer	Topsoil. Mid greyish brown sandy clay loam. 0.25-0.30m thick	
	102	Layer	Subsoil. Mid orange brown sandy clay. 0.40-0.45m thick	
	103	Layer	Natural clay	
2	201	Layer	Topsoil. 0.25-0.27m thick	
	202	Layer	Subsoil. 0.24-0.40m thick	
	203	Layer	Natural sand	
3	301	Layer	Topsoil. 0.24-0.27m thick	
	302	Layer	Subsoil. 0.16-0.20m	
	303	Layer	Natural clay	
4	401	Layer	Topsoil. 0.25-0.8m thick	
	402	Layer	Subsoil. 0.25m-0.27m thick	
	403	Layer	Natural sand	
5	501	Layer	Topsoil.0.12-0.17m thick	
	502	Layer	Subsoil. 0.13-0.23m thick	
	503	Layer	Natural sand	
6	601	Layer	Topsoil. 0.09-0.15m thick	
	602	Layer	Subsoil. 0.20-0.24m thick	
	603	Layer	Natural sand	
7	701	Layer	Topsoil. 0.10-0.17m thick	
	702	Layer	Subsoil. 0.22-0.23m thick	
	702	Layer	Natural sand	

Trench No	Context	Type	Description	Date
8	801	Layer	Topsoil. 0.24-0.30m thick	
	802	Layer	Subsoil. 0.38m-0.40m thick	
	803	Layer	Natural sand	
9	901	Layer	Topsoil. 0.2-0.24m thick	
	902	Layer	Subsoil. 0.45m-0.47m thick	
	903	Layer	Natural sand	
10	1001	Layer	Topsoil. 0.34-0.36m thick	
	1002	Layer	Natural sand and iron stone	
11	1101	Layer	Topsoil.0.32m thick	
	1102	Layer	Subsoil. 0.20-0.21m thick	
	1103	Layer	Alluvial clay 0.42m thick	
	1104	Layer	Natural sand and iron stone	
	1105	Fill	Greyish brown silty sand. 0.13m thick	
	1106	Fill	Greyish brown silty sand with frequent ironstone inclusions. 0.48m thick	
	1107	Cut	Ditch. NW-SE. 1.40m wide, 0.63m deep	
12	1201	Layer	Topsoil.0.28-0.32m thick	
	1202	Layer	Subsoil. 0.16-0.32m thick	
	1203	Layer	Natural sand and ironstone	
13	1301	Layer	Topsoil. 0.30m thick	
	1302	Layer	Modern landfill material. >1.10m thick	
14	1401	Layer	Topsoil.0.25-0.28m thick	
	1402	Layer	Subsoil. 0.15-0.29m thick	
	1403	Layer	Natural sand and iron stone	

Trench No	Context	Type	Description	Date
15	1501	Layer	Topsoil. 0.32m-0.34m thick	
	1502	Layer	Subsoil. 0.14m-0.16m thick	
	1503	Layer	Natural sand and limestone	
16	1601	Layer	Topsoil. 0.25m-0.26m thick	
	1602	Layer	Subsoil. 0.19m-0.150m thick	
	1603	Layer	Natural clay	
	1604	Fill	Mid brown and yellow sandy clay. 0.18m thick	
	1605	Cut	Possible ditch. NW-SE. 2.10m wide, 0.18m deep	
17	1701	Layer	Topsoil. 0.22m-0.25m thick	
	1702	Layer	Subsoil. 0.26m thick	
	1703	Layer	Natural clay	
18	1801	Layer	Topsoil. 0.25m-0.30m thick	
	1802	Layer	Subsoil. 0.14-0.40mm thick	
	1803	Layer	Natural clay and sand	
19	1901	Layer	Topsoil. 0.14-0.27m thick	
	1902	Layer	Subsoil. 0.16-0.20m thick	
	1903	Layer	Natural clay	
20	2001	Layer	Topsoil. 0.20-0.29m thick	
	2002	Layer	Subsoil. 0.38-0.83m thick	
	2003	Layer	Natural sand and iron stone	
21	2101	Layer	Topsoil. 0.12-0.17m thick	
	2102	Layer	Subsoil. 0.15-0.86m thick	
	2103	Layer	Natural sand and ironstone	

Trench No	Context	Type	Description	Date
22	2201	Layer	Topsoil. 0.12m thick	
	2202	Layer	Subsoil. 0.15m thick	
	2203	Layer	Natural sand and ironstone	
23	2301	Layer	Topsoil. 0.08-0.12m thick	
	2302	Layer	Subsoil. 0.13-0.19m thick	
	2303	Layer	Natural sand and ironstone	
24	2401	Layer	Topsoil. 0.08-0.12m thick	
	2402	Layer	Subsoil. 0.16-0.18m thick	
	2403	Layer	Natural sand and ironstone	
25	2501	Layer	Topsoil. 0.13-0.20m thick	
	2502	Layer	Subsoil. 0.22-0.24m thick	
	2503	Layer	Natural sand and ironstone	
	2504	Fill	Fill. Mid brown sandy clay. 0.20m thick	
	2505	Cut	Gully. NW-SE. 0.70m wide, 0.20m deep	
26	2601	Layer	Topsoil. 0.12-0.16m thick	
	2602	Layer	Subsoil. 0.30-0.38m thick	
	2603	Layer	Natural sand and ironstone	
	2604	Fill	Mid orange brown sandy clay. 0.16m thick	
	2605	Cut	Gully. NW-SE. 0.60m wide, 0.16m deep	
27	2701	Layer	Topsoil. 0.08-0.12m thick	
	2702	Layer	Subsoil. 0.10-0.15m thick	
	2703	Layer	Natural sand and ironstone	

Trench No	Context	Type	Description	Date
28	2801	Layer	Topsoil. 0.08m-0.10m thick	
	2802	Layer	Subsoil. 0.13m-0.18m thick	
	2803	Layer	Natural sand and ironstone	
29	2901	Layer	Topsoil. 0.06m-0.09m thick	
	2902	Layer	Subsoil. 0.13m-0.16m thick	
	2903	Layer	Natural sand and ironstone	
30	3001	Layer	Topsoil. 0.10m-0.14m thick	
	3002	Layer	Subsoil. 0.15m-0.20m thick	
	3003	Layer	Natural sand and ironstone	
31	3101	Layer	Topsoil. 0.21m-0.25m thick	
	3102	Layer	Subsoil. 0.36m-0.44m thick	
	3103	Layer	Colluvium. 0.27m-0.38m thick	
	3104	Layer	Natural sand and ironstone	
32	3201	Layer	Topsoil. 0.12m-0.26m thick	
	3202	Layer	Natural sand and ironstone	
33	3301	Layer	Topsoil. 0.12m-0.26m thick	
	3302	Layer	Subsoil. 0.15m-0.20m thick	
	3303	Layer	Natural sand and ironstone	



Scale 1:15,000

Site location Fig 1

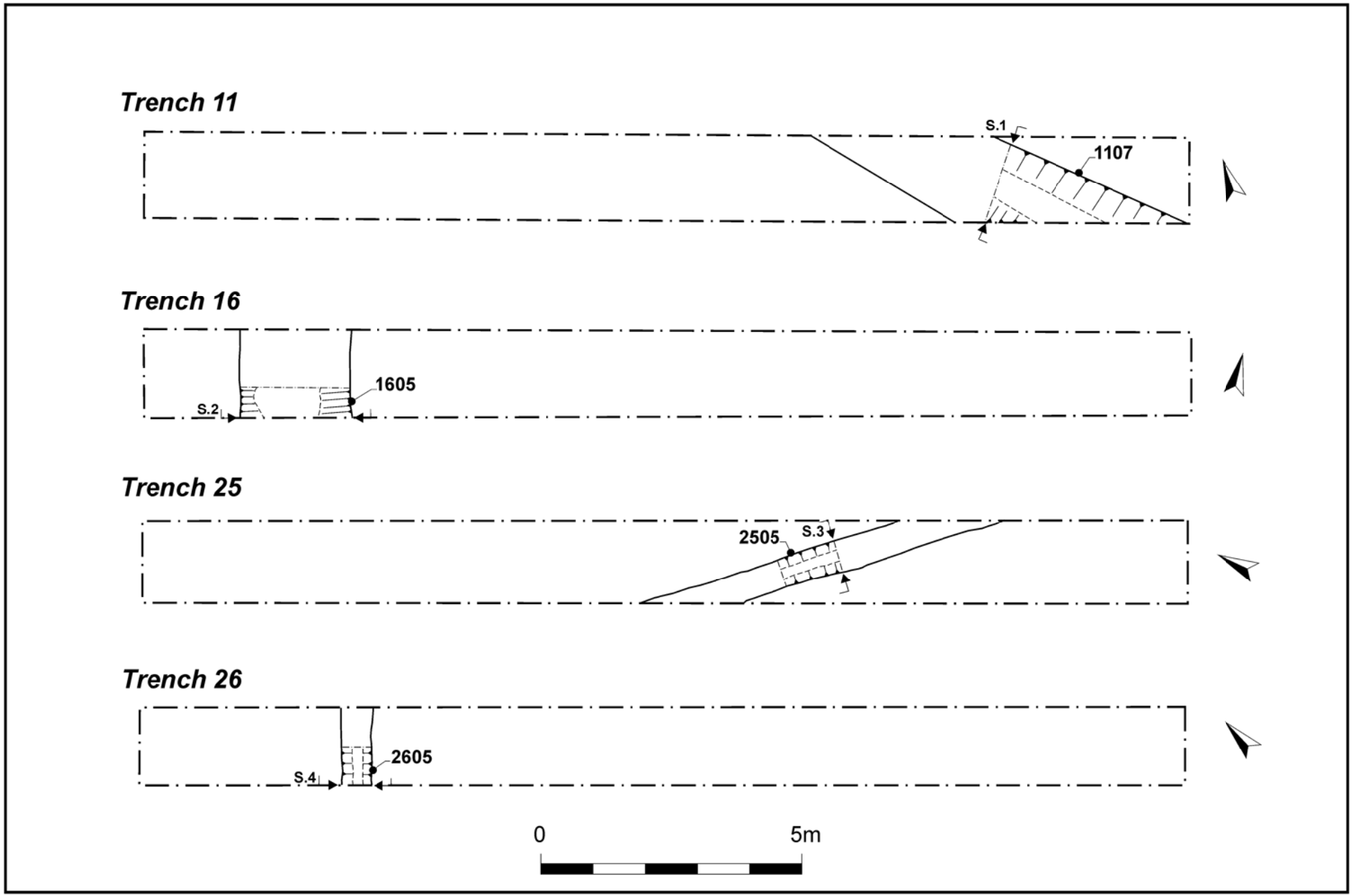
Site outline
Trench location
Geophysical features

Sandy Lane

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33

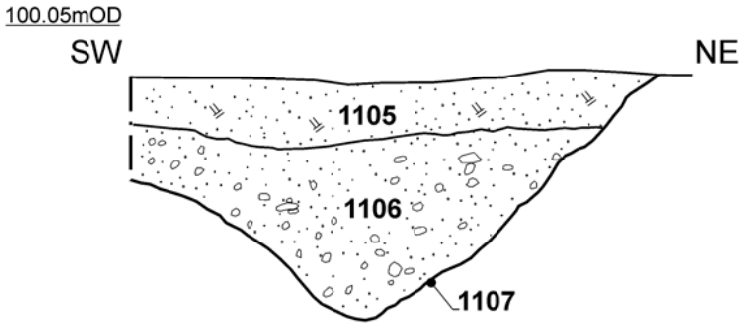
Scale 1:5000

Trench locations Fig 2

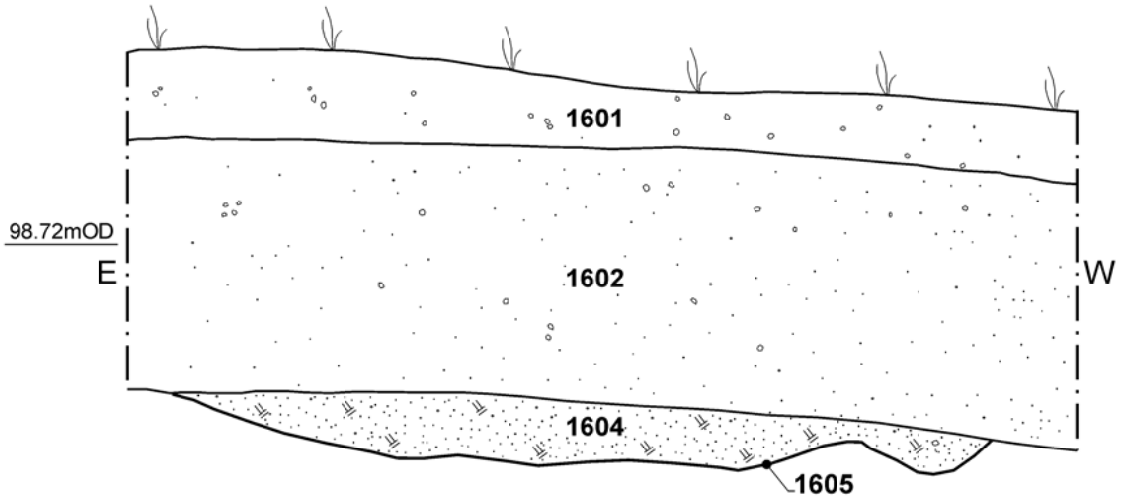


Trench plans Fig 3

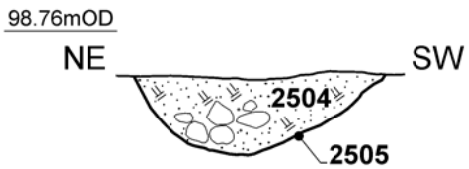
Section 1 - Trench 11



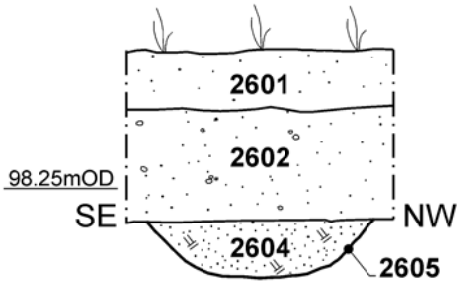
Section 2 - Trench 16



Section 3 - Trench 25



Section 4 - Trench 26



Clay

0 1m

Sections 1-4 Fig 4

Plate 1: Trench 11, Ditch 1107, looking north-west.

Plate 2: Trench 16, Ditch 1605, looking south.

Plate 3: Trench 25, Gully 2505, looking north-west.

Plate 4: Trench 26, Gully 2605, looking south-west.