

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation
on land at
Upton, Northampton
(CVLR Phase)
August - November 2006



Anne Foard-Colby

November 2006

Report 06/166

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION
ON LAND AT
UPTON, NORTHAMPTON
(CVLR PHASE)
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UPTON, NORTHAMPTON (CVLR PHASE)

OASIS REPORT FORM

| PROJECT DETAILS | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Project title | Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation on land at Upton, Northampton (CVLR Phase) | |
| Short description | Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out archaeological trial trench evaluation on land proposed for the Cross Valley Link Road, Upton, Northampton. The trial trenching revealed part of a possible late Bronze Age/early Iron Age to early middle Iron Age pit alignment. There were also a series of ditches possibly of Roman or medieval date underlying a ridge and furrow landscape identified from geophysical survey and aerial photographs. A few sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered from two pits and medieval pottery was found in two ditches, together with a small flint flake. | |
| Project type | Archaeological trial trenching | |
| Previous work | Desk-based assessment Geophysical survey | |
| Future work | Open area excavation | |
| Monument type And period | Prehistoric, Roman and medieval field systems | |
| Significant finds | | |
| PROJECT LOCATION | | |
| County | Northamptonshire | |
| Site address | Upton, Northampton | |
| Easting | 470806 - 471030 | |
| Northing | 260204 - 258777 | |
| Height OD | 60m – 72m | |
| PROJECT CREATORS | | |
| Organisation | Northamptonshire Archaeology | |
| Project brief originator | NCCHET | |
| Project Design originator | Halcrow Group Ltd | |
| Director/Supervisor | Anne Foard-Colby | |
| Project Manager | Anthony Maull | |
| Sponsor or funding body | English Partnerships | |
| PROJECT DATE | | |
| Start date | August 2006 | |
| End date | November 2006 | |
| ARCHIVES | Location (Accession no.) | Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc) |
| Physical | | |
| Paper | | |
| Digital | | |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | | |
| Title | | |
| Serial title & volume | | |
| Author(s) | | |
| Page numbers | | |
| Date | | |

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION
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AUGUST - NOVEMBER 2006**

ABSTRACT

Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out archaeological trial trench evaluation on land proposed for the Cross Valley Link Road, Upton, Northampton. The trial trenching revealed part of a possible late Bronze Age/early Iron Age to early middle Iron Age pit alignment. There were also a series of ditches possibly of Roman or medieval date underlying a ridge and furrow landscape identified from geophysical survey and aerial photographs. A few sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered from two pits and medieval pottery was found in two ditches, together with a small flint flake.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out archaeological evaluation between August and November 2006 on land at Upton, Northampton for the Cross Valley Link Road (NGR SP 708 602 to SP 710 587, Fig 1).

The work was undertaken in order to inform archaeological potential and mitigation strategy for the road scheme. Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Halcrow Group Ltd, acting on behalf of their clients English Partnerships and Northamptonshire County Council. The fieldwork was based on a specification produced by Halcrow (2006) and approved by Northamptonshire County Council Historic Environment Team (NCCHET).

2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The application area follows the route of the proposed Cross Valley Link Road (CVLR) which is situated between a point on the north side of the A45 Weedon Road, to a point on the southern side of the River Nene (Fig 1). At the time of the trial trenching, the land use was pasture and arable. The proposed road corridor is situated within the Upper Nene valley flood plain, at between 60mOD in the south to 72mOD in the north.

The British Geological Survey has mapped the area as a mixture of glacial boulder clay,

sand and gravel and alluvium overlying Middle Lias clay, mudstone and ironstone (BGS1960). Overlying soils of the Nene valley flood plain consist of Fladbury 2 deposits (SSEW 1983).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A search of the Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the site of the proposed road corridor and its immediate hinterland lies within an area of archaeological interest ranging from the prehistoric to the post-medieval periods (Fig 2). The archaeological resource of the proposed road corridor is also discussed within a desk-based assessment undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2005 (Brown 2005).

Although there were no known archaeological sites within the proposed road corridor, a geophysical survey undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in September 2006 (Butler 2006), revealed a pit alignment, a series of ditches, remnant furrows of a former ridge and furrow cultivation.

Within the proposed road corridor the only previous finds of note are a number of medieval pottery sherds dating from c 1066 – 1539 (NSMR 5137/0/1).

Immediately outside of the proposed road corridor, a number of archaeological sites have been identified. In chronological order they include:

- To the north-east, possible prehistoric ditches, investigated between 1991 and 1992 by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NSMR 1475/0/1-2; Jackson 1993a; 1993b, 74-75).
- To the north-east, during widening of the A45 in 1965, pits and ditches of Iron Age date were excavated (NSMR 5134; Jackson 1969).
- To the south, extensive Iron Age and Roman settlement evidence, together with field systems, located and recently excavated at Pineham North (NSMR 5088/0/1 and 5092/0/6; JSAC 1999; 2000; Buteux & Jones 2000; Morris 2000; Pears 2005; and Carlyle pers comm).
- To the north-east, a Saxon *Grubenhau*s was excavated during widening of the A45 in 1965 (SMR 5773/0/3; Jackson 1969, 213).

- To the east, extensive open area excavation of a pit alignment, late Iron Age settlement and Roman settlement (Maull 2000). This site lies at the western margin of Duston Roman town.
- To the north-east, possible Saxon or early medieval linear features have been identified from aerial photographs (SMR 5177/0/9).
- In addition, a post-medieval field boundary (NSMR 5092/0/6) has been identified below the south end of the road corridor.

4 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The objectives of the trial trenching were to identify record and retrieve archaeological remains, which had been located through a programme of geophysical survey. Specific objectives were, to define the character, quality, extent and significance of the archaeological remains to inform mitigation.

In total eleven trial trenches were excavated, four to the south of the River Nene, and seven to the north. They measured from between 15m to 40m in length and were excavated using a mechanical digger fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket under continuous archaeological supervision (Fig 3). In all trenches mechanical excavation proceeded as far as either the archaeological horizon or the surface of the undisturbed natural geology which consisted of orange-brown/grey mottled clay with patches of ironstone, gravel and light blue grey clay.

All potential archaeological features were examined by hand excavation. Standard Northamptonshire Archaeology recording procedures were employed. The location of the trenches was related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Contexts were recorded on pro-forma sheets with a unique context number being allocated to each distinct deposit. A full photographic record comprising both 35mm monochrome negatives, with associated prints and colour transparencies was maintained, with additional digital photographs.

All records were compiled during fieldwork into a comprehensive and fully cross-referenced site archive. The site code is CVLA06. Monitoring of the programme of

fieldwork was carried out by the Senior Environment Planner for Northamptonshire County Council.

All works were carried out according to the Policy and Guidance for Archaeological Fieldwork Projects in Northamptonshire (NCCNH 1995). All procedures complied with the Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and *Northamptonshire Archaeology Advisory Document, Health and Safety at Work* (NA 2003).

All works were carried out in accordance with the *IFA Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* (1994, revised 1999).

5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

Trenches to the south of the River Nene (Trenches 1 – 4)

Four trial trenches were excavated to the south of the River Nene (Trenches 1-4), (Fig 3, Plate 1 and frontispiece). All the trenches were positioned to investigate a series of possible linear geophysical anomalies identified by Geophysical Survey of Bradford, (figs 8 and 10, GSB 2000). The trial trenching revealed no archaeological features within any of these trenches, however, a probable tree throw was observed in Trench 1. Trenches 3 and 4 contained a layer of alluvium and were in close proximity to the River Nene (Table 1, Plate 2).

The natural undisturbed geology was orange brown sand and gravel with patches of pale blue clay (103, 203, 304 and 404) and was encountered at a depth of between 0.65m – 1.2m below the present ground surface. Overlying this in Trenches 3 and 4, was a layer of alluvium (303) and (403) consisting of mid orange brown silty clay, 0.34m to 55m thick (Plate 2). Subsoil in Trenches 1 and 2 consisted of light yellow brown silty clay (102 and 202) 0.3m to 0.44m thick. In Trenches 3 and 4 the subsoil consisted of mid brown stiff clay (302 and 402) 0.2m to 0.45m thick. A layer of topsoil in Trenches 1 and 2 consisted of mid brown clayey loam (101, 201) and in Trenches 3 and 4 was dark brown friable loam 0.15m to 0.3m thick.

Trenches to the north of the River Nene (Trenches 5 – 11)

Seven trenches were excavated to the north of the River Nene (Trenches 5-11) (Figs 3 and 4). A similar sequence of deposits was present. The natural comprised a pale to mid orange brown and grey mottled clay with patches of gravel, ironstone and grey clay. It was located at depths of between 0.4m and 0.6m. Overlying the natural was a mid brown clay subsoil,

which varied in thickness from between 0.1m to 0.3m in all trenches. Topsoil in all the trenches was approximately 0.3m thick. Archaeological features were present within all of the trenches, cutting the natural and sealed by the subsoil. The archaeological features comprised part of a pit alignment, a series of linear ditches and two possible postholes.

The pit alignment (Trenches 9 and 11)

Trenches 9 and 11 were positioned to intercept an east-west pit alignment, which was identified from geophysical survey (Figs 4, 5 and 6, Section 4, Plates 3 and 4). Three pits were revealed, one in Trench 9, [909] and two in Trench 11, [1105] and [1107], which was widened at the request of Myk Flitcroft, Senior Environmental Planner. Two of the pits were sectioned, [909] and [1105], and were found to be roughly 2.2m square by 0.45m deep, with rounded corners and steep sides and flat bases. The fills (908) and (1104) consisted of firm, orange/brown silty clay with small pebbles and charcoal flecks and contained a few fragments of probable Iron Age pottery.

The ditches (Trenches 5 – 11)

Trench 5

Trench 5 was 28m long. It contained a single south-east to north-west ditch [505], 1.1m wide by 0.1m deep, with a shallow 'U'-shaped profile and concave base (Fig 4 and 5). It was filled with medium red/brown silty clay with some pebbles (504).

Trench 6

Trench 6 was 37m long and contained three east – west aligned ditches, [605], [607] and [609] (Figs 4, 5 and 6, Section 1). Ditch [607] was 1.5m wide and 0.23m deep. Its profile was wide and uneven, with a concave base. Its fill (606) which was partly cut by ditch [605], consisted of medium red brown silty clay with frequent pebbles and charcoal flecks. Ditch [605] measured 0.92m wide and 0.3m deep and had a 'U'-shaped profile. It cut the fill of ditch [607]. It was filled with medium red brown silty clay with pebbles and charcoal flecks (604). Further to the north, a ditch [609], 1.5m wide and 0.5m deep, with a 'V'-shaped profile, had a fill (608) of medium red brown silty clay with some pebbles.

Trench 7

Trench 7 was 40m long, and contained four ditches, aligned east-west (Figs 4 and 5, Plates 5 and 6). At the south of the trench, ditch [714] measured 0.45m wide and 0.32m wide and a steep 'V'-shaped profile. Its fill [713] was medium grey orange/brown silty clay with some pebbles and charcoal flecks. Fifteen metres to the north, ditch [705] was 0.92m wide

and 0.18m deep with shallow sides and a concave base. Its fill (704) consisted of light orange/brown and grey silty clay with few pebbles. To the north, ditch [710], measured 1.18m wide and 0.4m deep with a 'U'-shaped profile. The primary fill (709) was light blue grey silty clay with some small pebbles. The upper fill (708) consisted of light orange/brown silty clay with some small pebbles and charcoal flecks. Ditch [712], measured 0.66m wide and 0.3m deep. Its fill (711) was the same as the fill in ditch [714]. A rectangular posthole [709] measuring 0.17m wide and 0.29m deep, with vertical sides, was filled with blue/black silty clay with frequent charcoal lumps (708).

Trench 8

Trench 8 was 28m long, and contained four ditches which were aligned east-west (Figs 4, 5 and 6, Section 2, Plate 7). At the south end of the trench, ditch [805] measured 0.7m wide and 0.31m deep and had a 'U'-shaped profile. Its fill (804) was mid dark brown silty clay with occasional small pebbles and charcoal flecks. Further north, ditch [807] measured 0.52m wide 0.21m deep, with a 'U'-shaped profile. Its fill (806) was firm mid grey brown silty clay with occasional small pebbles and charcoal flecks. At the north end of the trench was ditch, [809] measuring 0.79 wide and 0.25m deep with a 'U'-shaped profile, which cut ditch [811]. Fill (808) consisted of mid yellow/brown ironstone flecked, silty clay with occasional small pebbles and charcoal flecks. Ditch [811] was 0.7m wide and 0.5m deep and had a 'V'-shaped profile with a flat base. Fill (810) was cut by ditch [809] and consisted of mid dark grey/brown silty clay with occasional pebbles and charcoal flecks.

Trench 9

Trench 9 was 30m long and contained a pit from the pit alignment (see above), a ditch and a furrow (Figs 2 and 3, Plate 4). Ditch [905] was aligned north-south and measured 2.1m in width and 0.3m deep. It had a wide and shallow 'U'-shaped profile and fairly flat base. Its fill (904) consisted of mid brown sandy, silty clay with occasional small pebbles and charcoal flecks. Because of its shallow profile and its alignment with a geophysical anomaly aligned in the same direction it is possible that this feature is a furrow. Feature [907], aligned north-south is the base of a furrow.

Trench 10

Trench 10 was 16m long, and contained five ditches and a small pit or posthole (Figs 4, 5 and 6, Section 3, Plate 8). Ditches [1005] and [1016] were aligned north-south and parallel to each other, approximately 9m apart.

Ditch [1005] measured 1m wide and 0.23m deep. Ditch [1016] measured 0.9m wide and

0.15m deep and both had a wide, shallow 'U'-shaped profile with flat bases. Their fills (1004) and (1015) respectively, consisted of yellow/orange brown silty clay with some pebbles and charcoal flecks. Fill (1004) contained a sherd of Potterspury ware and a flint flake. Each ditch was cut by another ditch aligned north-east to south-west and parallel to each other, approximately 9m apart. These ditches [1008] and [1014] were 0.75m wide, and 0.45m and 0.28m deep respectively. Ditch [1008] cut the fill (1004) and ditch [1014] cut the fill (1015). They both had 'V'-shaped profiles, but ditch [1008] also had a wider flat base. Its primary fill (1007) was mid orange/brown silty clay and mottled grey silty clay with occasional larger pebbles and charcoal flecks. Its upper fill (1006) consisted of pale to mid orange/brown silty clay with occasional pebbles and charcoal flecks. The fill of ditch [1014] was mid to dark grey brown silty clay with occasional larger pebbles and redeposited natural clay on the north side. These two sets of parallel ditches may represent a re-cutting of a ditched trackway.

Ditch [1010] was aligned north-south and 0.5m wide, 0.15m deep. It cut fill (1006) of ditch [1007]. Its fill (1009) consisted of pale orange/brown silty clay with occasional large pebbles and charcoal flecks.

A small pit or posthole [1012], 0.62m long, 0.3m wide and 0.15m deep, cut the natural clay. It had fairly steep sloping sides, with a concave base. Its fill (1011) consisted of light orange/grey silty clay with occasional pebbles and charcoal lumps.

Trench 11

Trench 11 was 29m long (Figs 4, 5 and 6, Section 4, Plate 3). It contained two pits of the pit alignment (see above), and a ditch. Ditch [1109] measured 1.7m in width and 0.19m deep. Its shallow and uneven based profile, together with its north south alignment, which was also the direction of the ridge and furrow, suggested that it was probably the remains of a furrow. Its fill (1108), consisted of light orange/brown silty clay with occasional pebbles.

6 THE FINDS

Flint

by Adrian Burrow

A single, small, blocky flake was recovered from fill (1004) of ditch [1005]. It comprised dark brown translucent flint, with cortex present on one margin, and minor re-touch present on the other.

Iron Age pottery

by Andy Chapman

A very small quantity of pottery was recovered from the two pits in the pit alignment that were partially excavated.

The fill (908) of pit [909] contained three small body sherds, weighing 10g and up to 8mm thick, probably from a single vessel. The fabric is soft, with a brown core and inner surface and a grey-brown external surface. The voids probably come from leached shell inclusions, and some small pieces of shell survive. There are also some grog inclusions.

The fill (1104) of pit [1105] contained three small body sherds, weighing 8g and up to 7mm thick, probably from a single vessel. The fabric is black, with brown inner and outer surfaces. A few voids suggest that sparse small shell inclusions have been leached out.

As small plain body sherds these offer little in the way of diagnostic features. All that can be said is that they would not be out of place within the broad late Bronze Age/early Iron Age to early middle Iron Age date range (9th-4th centuries BC) that would be considered appropriate for a pit alignment on analogy with examples in the region that have been radiocarbon dated.

Medieval pottery

by Iain Soden

Four sherds of medieval pottery weighing 26g were recovered from three different contexts. In trench 6, from the subsoil (602), in trench 7, fill (704) of ditch [705] and in trench 10, fill (1004) of ditch [1005]. All four sherds were of Potterspury ware (Northamptonshire County Type Series, fabric 329).

7 DISCUSSION

The trial trenching to the south of the River Nene concluded that the area was devoid of archaeological activity. This would suggest that the geophysical anomalies identified during the geophysical survey by GSB were of natural origin.

The trial trenching to the north of the River Nene was, however, successful in recovering evidence for an approximate east-west pit alignment (late Bronze Age/early Iron Age to middle Iron Age), a series of Roman or medieval ditches and two possible postholes, supporting the geophysical evidence undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in September 2006 (Butler 2006).

The pit alignment may form part of a larger pattern of pit alignments and may link with those excavated at Upton (Maul 2000), to the west of the proposed road corridor, and observed again during archaeological trial trenching in the grounds of Quinton House School (Foard-Colby 2006), also to the west. A small number of sherds of Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age to middle Iron Age pottery were recovered from two of the pits excavated.

The sequence of ditches, most of which were aligned east-west appear to form part of a field system, with a possible trackway identified in Trench 10, the ditches generally aligned perpendicular to and beneath the later medieval ridge and furrow. Although the dating evidence for the ditches is limited to a few sherds of medieval Potterspury ware, and a small flint flake, it is unclear whether the ditches relate to Roman or medieval activity, though it is possible that these ditches formed part of the open fields to the surviving medieval village earthworks at Upton, situated 1km to the east.

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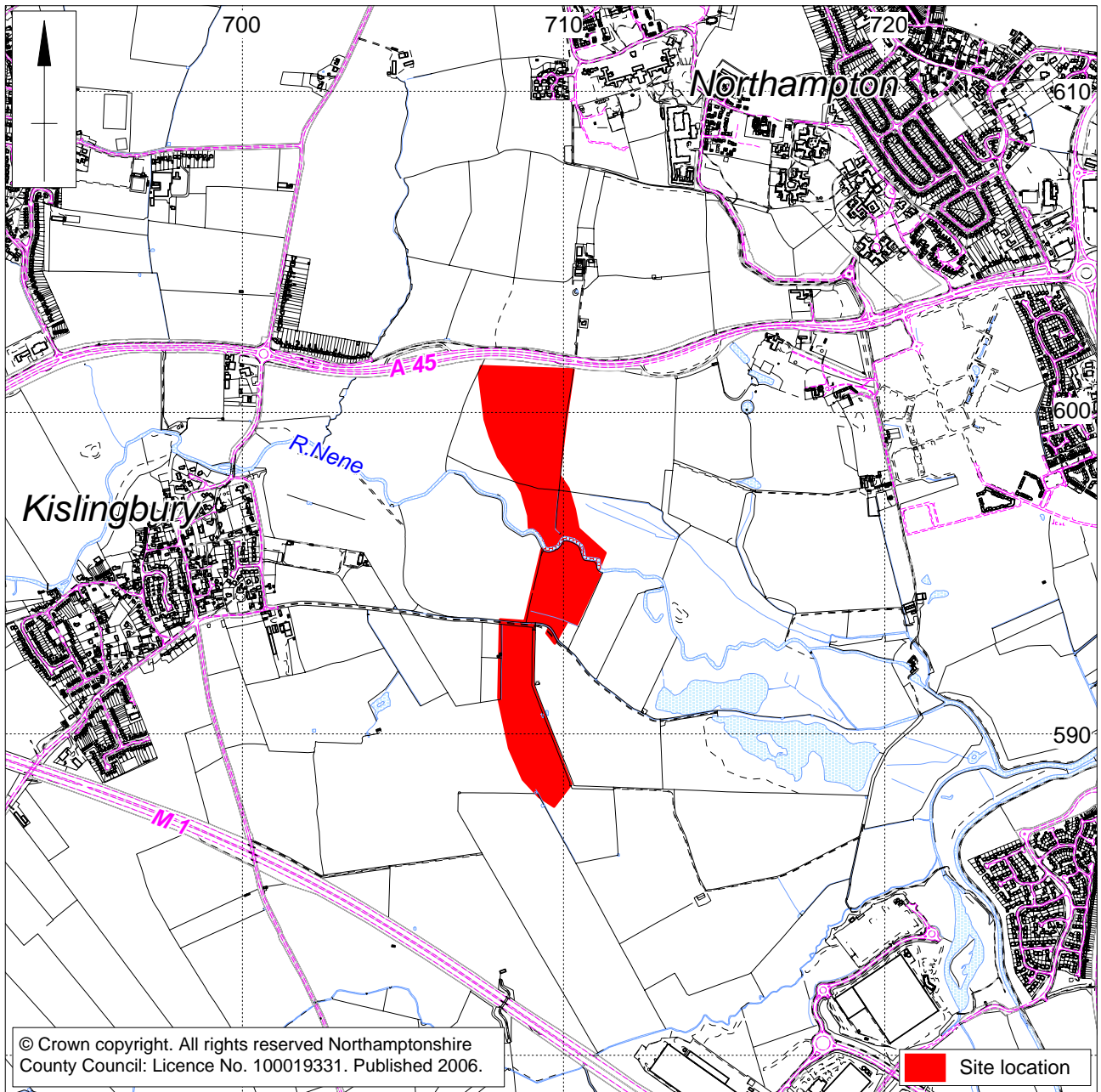
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UPTON, NORTHAMPTON (CVLR PHASE)

Table 1: Layers by context

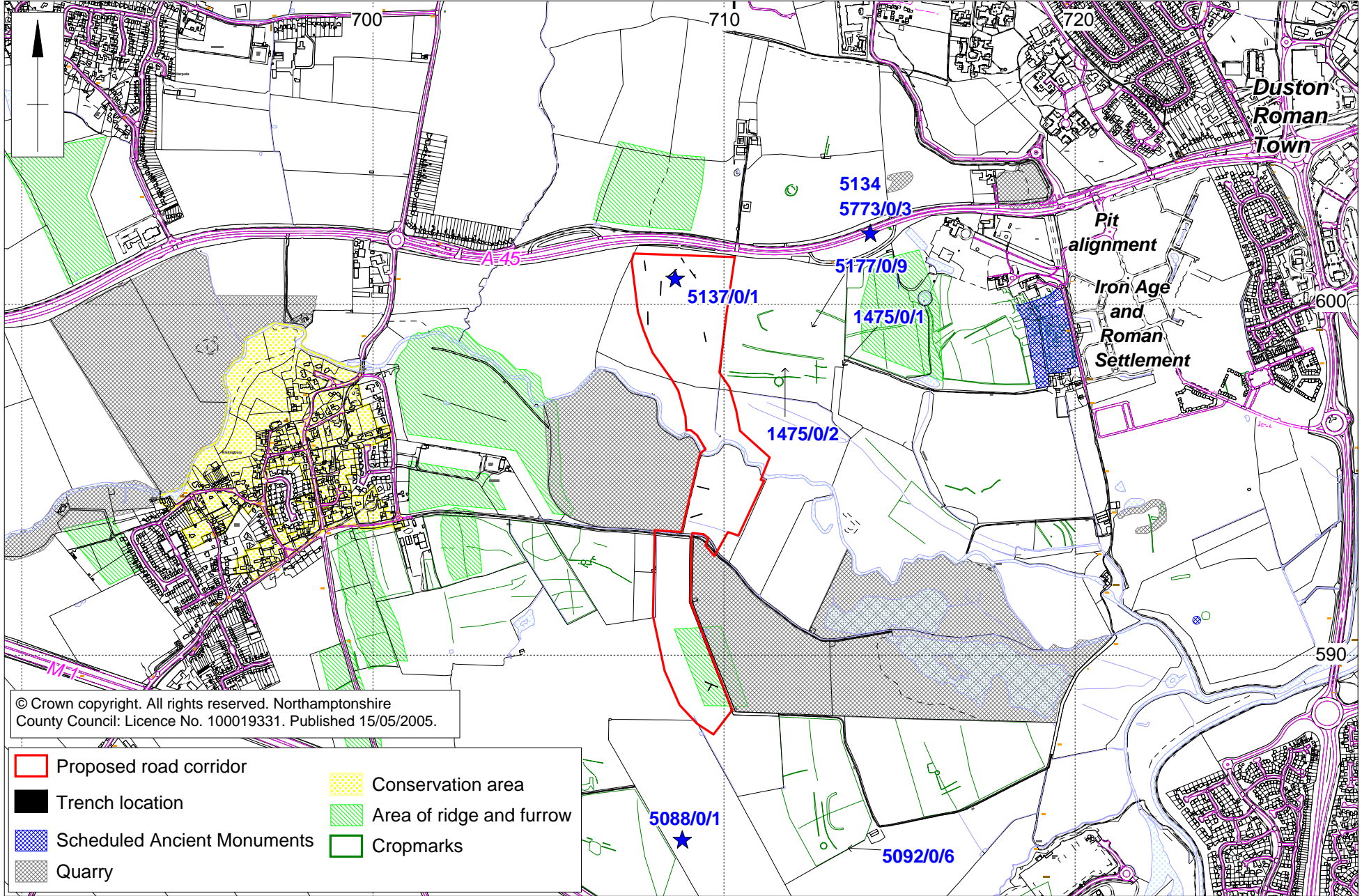
| Trench | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Description | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Topsoil | (101) | (201) | (301) | (401) | (501) | (601) | (701) | (801) | (901) | (1001) | (1101) |
| Subsoil | (102) | (202) | (302) | (402) | (502) | (602) | (702) | (802) | (902) | (1002) | (1102) |
| Alluvium (orange/brown) | - | - | (303) | (403) | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Natural clay with gravel and/or ironstone | (103) | (203) | (304) | (404) | (503) | (603) | (703) | (803) | (903) | (1003) | (1103) |



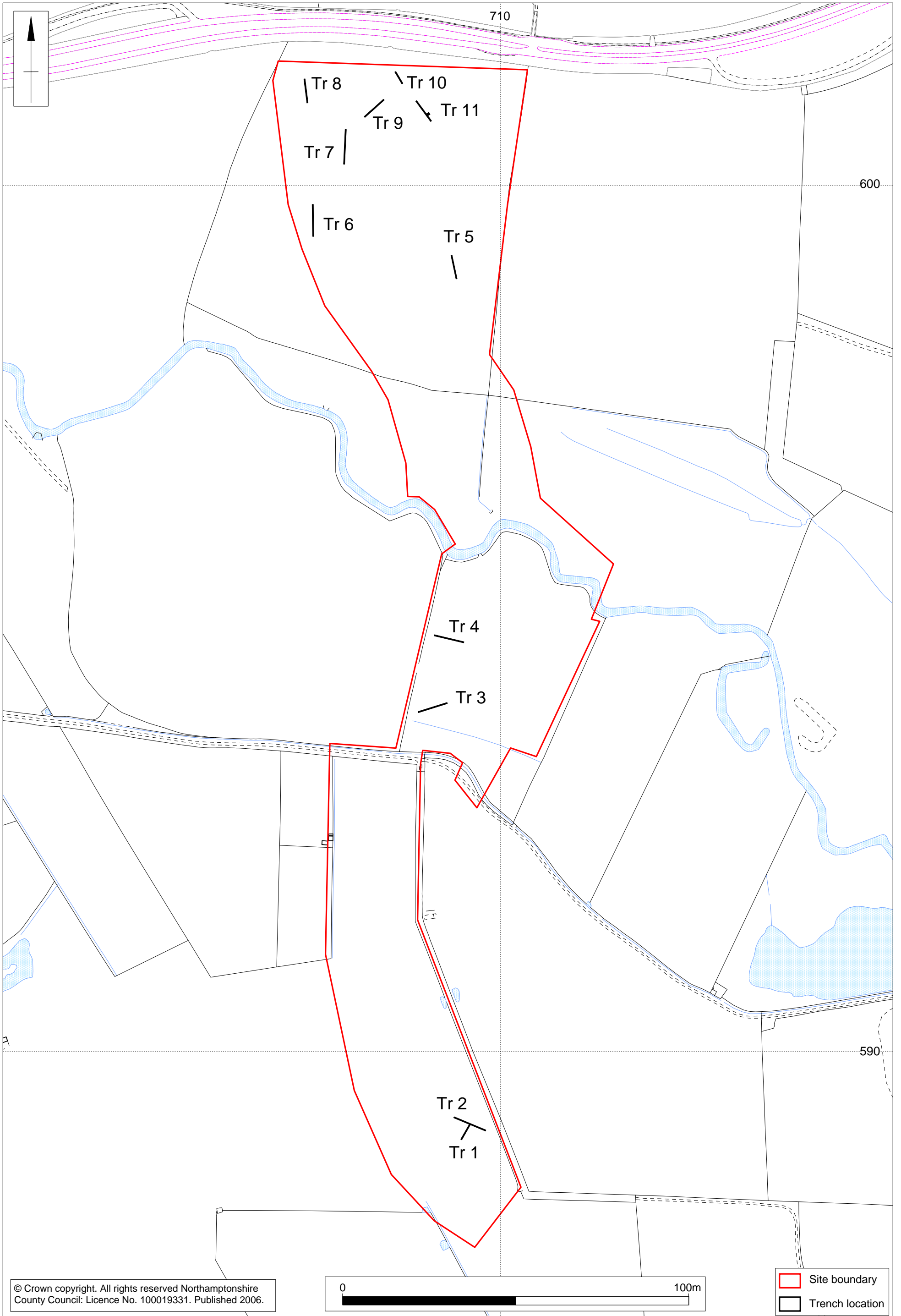
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Site location Fig 1

Scale 1:15,000



Historic Environment Record Fig 2



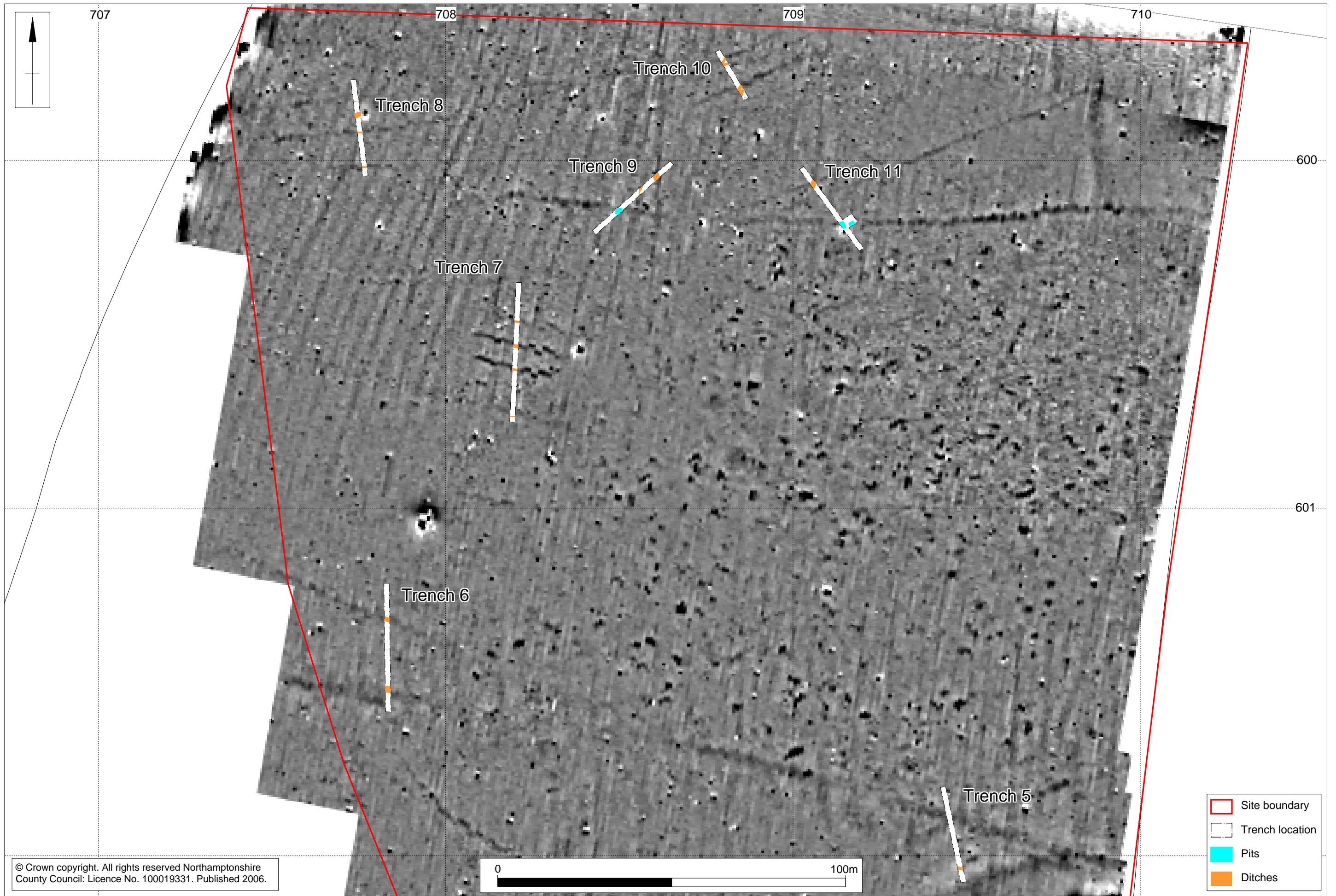
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0 100m

Site boundary
Trench location

Trench location Fig 3

Scale 1:4000

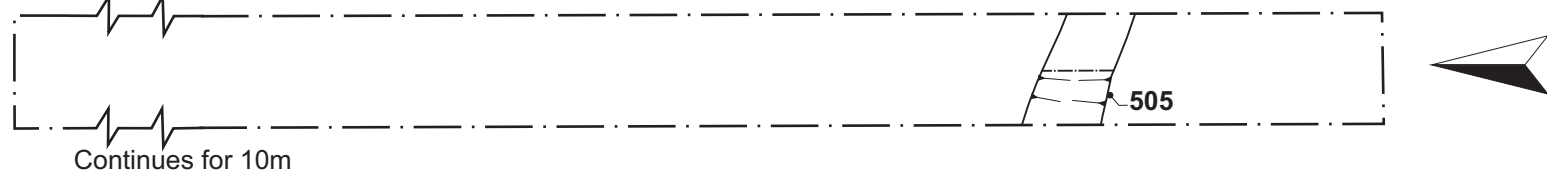


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Scale 1:1000

Trench location and features overlaying geophysical survey Fig 4

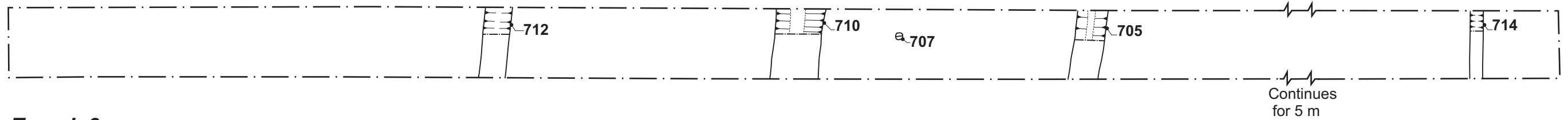
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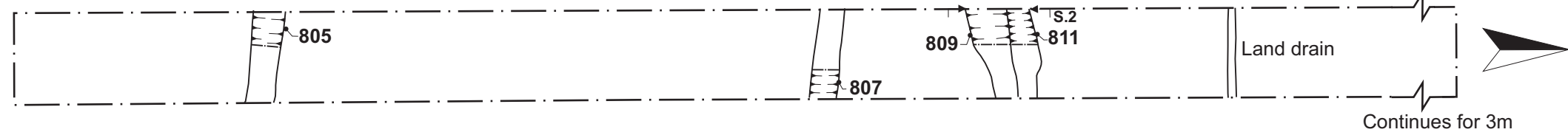
Trench 6



Trench 7



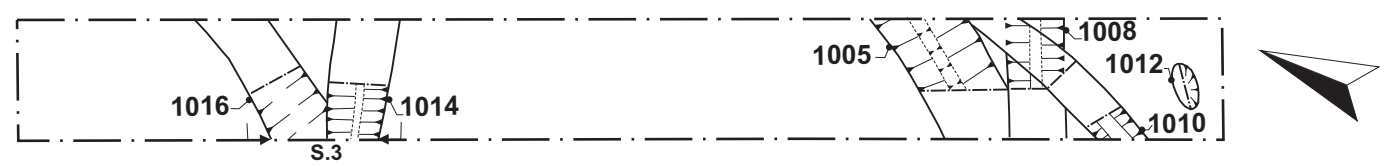
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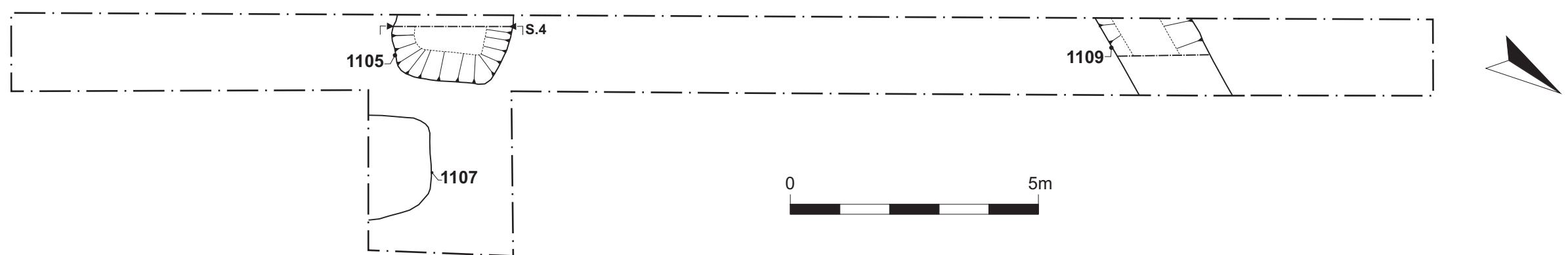
Trench 9



Trench 10

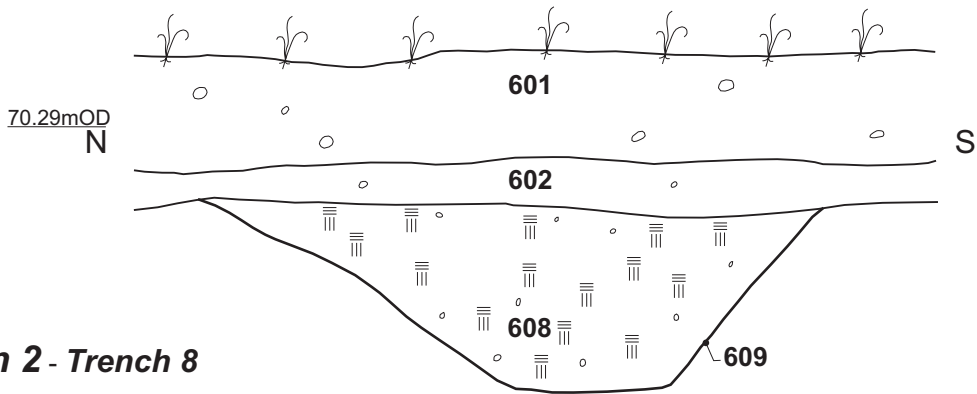


Trench 11

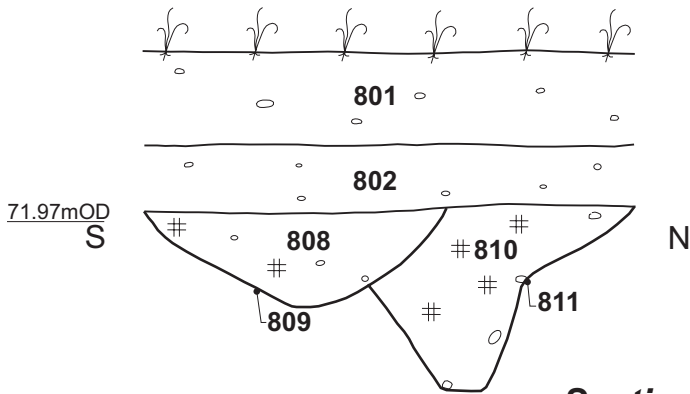


Trench plans 5 -11 Fig 5

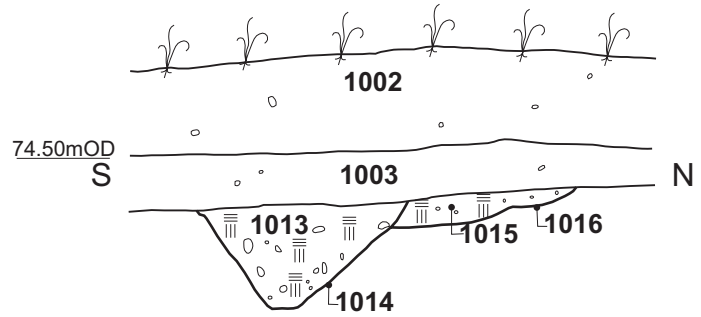
Section 1 - Trench 6



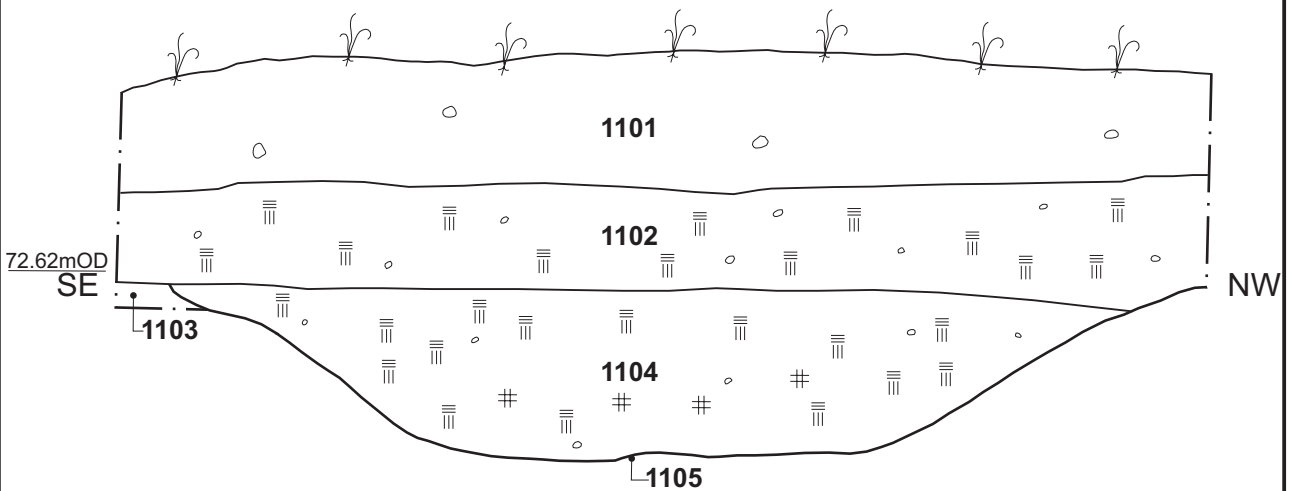
Section 2 - Trench 8





Section 3 - Trench 10



Section 4 - Trench 11



 Clay
 Charcoal



Sections 1-4 Fig 6



Plate 1: Excavating Trench 2 at the south end of road corridor, looking north-west



Plate 2: Trench 4, showing layer of alluvium, looking north



Plate 3: Trench 11, pits [1107] and [1105] of the pit alignment, looking south-east



Plate 4: Trench 9, pit [909] of the pit alignment, looking south



Plate 5: Trench 7, Ditch [710], looking east



Plate 6: Trench 7, ditch [712], looking east



Plate 7: Trench 8, ditch [809] cutting [811], looking west



Plate 8: Trench 10, ditches [1005] and [1008] cut by gully [1010], looking east