

Civil Parish & District: Ashburton, West Devon	National Grid Reference: SX 75500 69720	DNP Identifier:
Subject: Construction of a Biomass Boiler and Associated Service Trenching to the Rear of St Andrews House, West Street, Ashburton, Devon		Photo Attached?: Yes
Planning Reference: 0347/14; 0353/14	Recipient Museum: N/A	
OASIS ID: southwes1-507657	Museum Accession Number: N/A	
Contractor's Reference: ASA14	Dates Fieldwork Undertaken: 13.10.14 - 16.10.14 and 21.10.14	
<p>Description of Works</p> <p>A programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) at the request of David Dunn of Dunn Marino Associates (The Agent) on behalf of Mr J. Christophers (The Client) to monitor groundworks during the creation of a biomass boiler, at St Andrews House, Ashburton.</p> <p>The work was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation drawn up by SWARCH in consultation with Andrew Crabb, Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA). The work was undertaken by Emily Wapshott on 15th October 2014.</p> <p>Ashburton is located on the south-east border of the Dartmoor National Park, approximately 35km south-west of Exeter on the A38 (Figure 1). The site is located within the historic core of Ashburton, a designated Conservation Area at a height of approximately 78m AOD. The soils of this area are the well drained fine loamy and fine silty soils of Denbigh 1 and well drained fine silty over clayey soils of Nordrach Associations (SSEW 1983), overlying limestone of the Chercombe Bridge Limestone Formation (BGS 2015). The town is documented in the Domesday Book and had a market charter by the 1150sAD, receiving borough status in 1238AD. In the 14th century it became a stannary town of regional importance, serving the tin industry on Dartmoor. The freehold of the town was held by the Bishop of Exeter. The town has 210 Listed Buildings, with a 15th century Grade I Listed parish church, St Andrews, on the site of an earlier church.</p> <p>St Andrews House, the former church rectory, is an undesignated heritage asset of 19th century date, located immediately to the south-west of the church. It is set back from West Street, sharing a party wall with the graveyard. Previous archaeological investigations to the north-east of the site identified structures relating to the late medieval or early post-medieval period (Bell 2006). There is therefore high potential for the survival of archaeological deposits relating to the early settlement of the town.</p> <p>The proposed development involves converting an existing pig sty and the creation of a biomass boiler, with associated trenching for pipe works. The proposed site is located to the south of St Andrews House, within its gardens. The site slopes to the south and east (away from the house) and the lawns are laid to open grass, with scattered apple trees to the east; there is noticeable evidence of both terracing within the site and large areas of suspected 'made ground'. This landscaping would appear to be of 19th century date and relate to the creation of a formal lawn for the Rectory.</p> <p>Results</p> <p>Trench #1 (74m x 0.5m x 0.7m depth), orientated north-west to south-east, was excavated across the lawn. After 34m the linear trench turns slightly to the west, turning to the west again at 40m, skirting the pig sty before continuing to the biomass boiler site. The trench was excavated to a depth of 0.7m, required for the laying of the pipe. Natural bedrock was identified at the base of trench at its northern end, though at 10.3m it dropped away below the limits of excavation. Two short offshoots were dug to the west of trench #1, at 50m (0.48 x 1.85m) and 52.35m (0.48m x 1.6m).</p> <p>The trench revealed; an upper topsoil (103); soft dark grey silt-clay (0.22m thick) with common small roots associated with the established grass lawn. Extending for approximately 8.8m, and overlain by the topsoil, was lower topsoil (102); looser 'sticky' rich red-brown clay (0.4-0.42m thick) with common small fragments of blue-grey shillet. A layer of 'made' ground (104) was identified starting at 7.85m, overlying the lower topsoil. It comprised reddish-yellow-brown clay-silt (up to 0.6m+ thick), with occasional small sub-angular stones and common inclusions of shale/slate fragments and lime, suggesting a mixed source of re-deposited natural and building debris used to level the slope and form the lawn. Overlain by (102) was subsoil (101); dark blueish-brown dry silt-loam mixed with broken blue-grey rotted shillet (0.08-0.1m thick). This overlay the natural bedrock (100); blue-grey shillet/shale, that was slightly rotted in its upper extents.</p> <p>The length of the trench had been crossed by a number of service trenches: [105], at 10.55m; [107], at 14.1m; [112], at 26.2; [114], at 27.75m; [116], at 37.5m; and [118], at 48.1m. These trenches were between 0.5-1m in width, all being modern (20th and 21st centuries) and backfilled with a mix of hardcore gravel and topsoil.</p>		

Two deposits of rubbish had been made beneath 'made' ground layer (104): an upper lens of material (109) containing animal bones, champagne and wine bottles, pipe stems and numerous sherds of post-medieval domestic/kitchen pottery. This overlay another deposit (110), very similar to (104), but with heavier inclusions of slate and lime throughout. Both of these spreads had been truncated by the modern service trenching making it impossible to identify the interface with the 'made' ground (104). It would appear likely, however, that they relate to individual dumping episodes during the process of raising and levelling the lawn. A further feature [111] was identified at 17.9m, comprising tightly packed slate fragments, some stone and loose lime, and may form the deposit of demolished building material within the 'made' ground. An additional spread of 19th century building debris (120) was also identified within the topsoil at 47.10m, and had been used to level the ground and lay a hardcore path servicing the pig sty, with a similar hardcore spread [121] forming a path at 59m.

Trench #2 (0.95m x 1.5m), located extending to the north-east from trench #1 at 12.4m, was excavated to examine the rubbish layer (109) in more detail. It ascertained that it was a deposit beneath (104) representing a single dump event, and overlay an additional, earlier, dump (110) described above.

Trench #3 (8m x 0.5m), located extending south-west from trench #1 at 15.5m, was excavated to provide pipe access from the main trench to the purpose-built accommodation care wing to the west of the care home. As with trench #1, this was excavated to a depth of 0.7m and revealed the same stratigraphic sequence.

Trench #4 (10 x 0.5m, 2 x 0.5m), located within the patio adjacent to the existing building, was 'L'-shaped in plan and wholly comprised back-filled building rubble associated with the construction of the immediately adjacent house in the 19th century and the digging of a cellar, and later addition of service trenching and the formation of the terrace. No surviving archaeological deposits were identified.

Conclusions

The excavation revealed only layers dating to the 19th century or later, showing the build-up of land relating to the landscaping of the garden lawns, and it is likely that the dump deposits (109) and (110) also relate to the deposition of the main 'made' ground deposit (104). The small assemblage of primarily 19th and 20th century finds were subsequently discarded.

References

Bell, J.S. 2006: *Archaeological recording at St. Andrews House, West Street, Ashburton, Devon*. Exeter Archaeology report no. 06.34

Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW) 1983: *Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales (a brief explanation of the constituent soil associations)*. Harpenden.

Websites

British Geological Survey 2015: *Geology of Britain Viewer*. http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html [accessed 23.09.15].

A plan and any other relevant drawings must be attached to show the location and the extent of the site, the areas that were investigated, and the features that were exposed.

Recorders:

Emily Wapshott (South West Archaeology Ltd.)
Peter Webb (South West Archaeology Ltd.)

Date sent to DNP:

24.09.15

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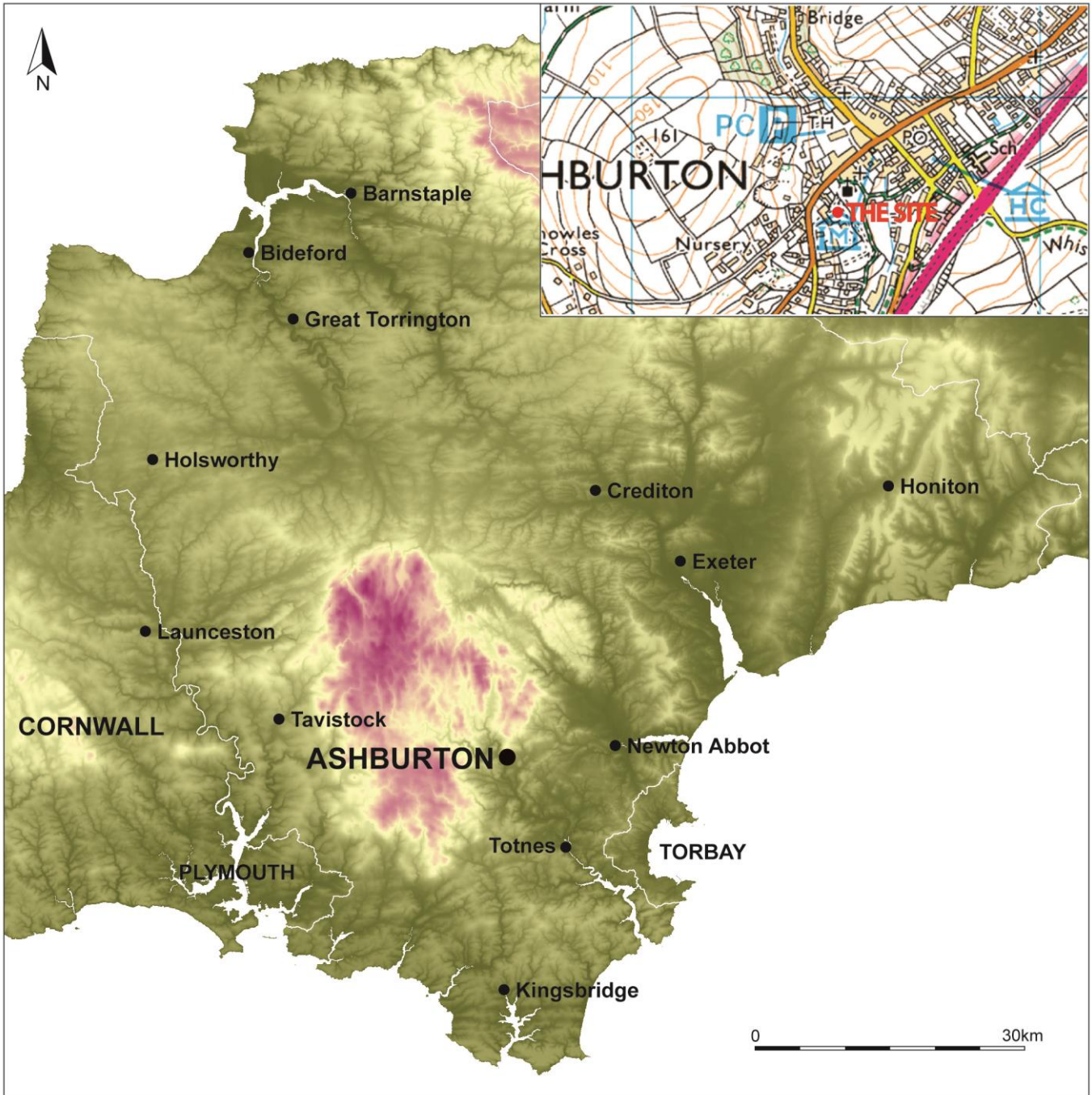


Figure 1: Site location

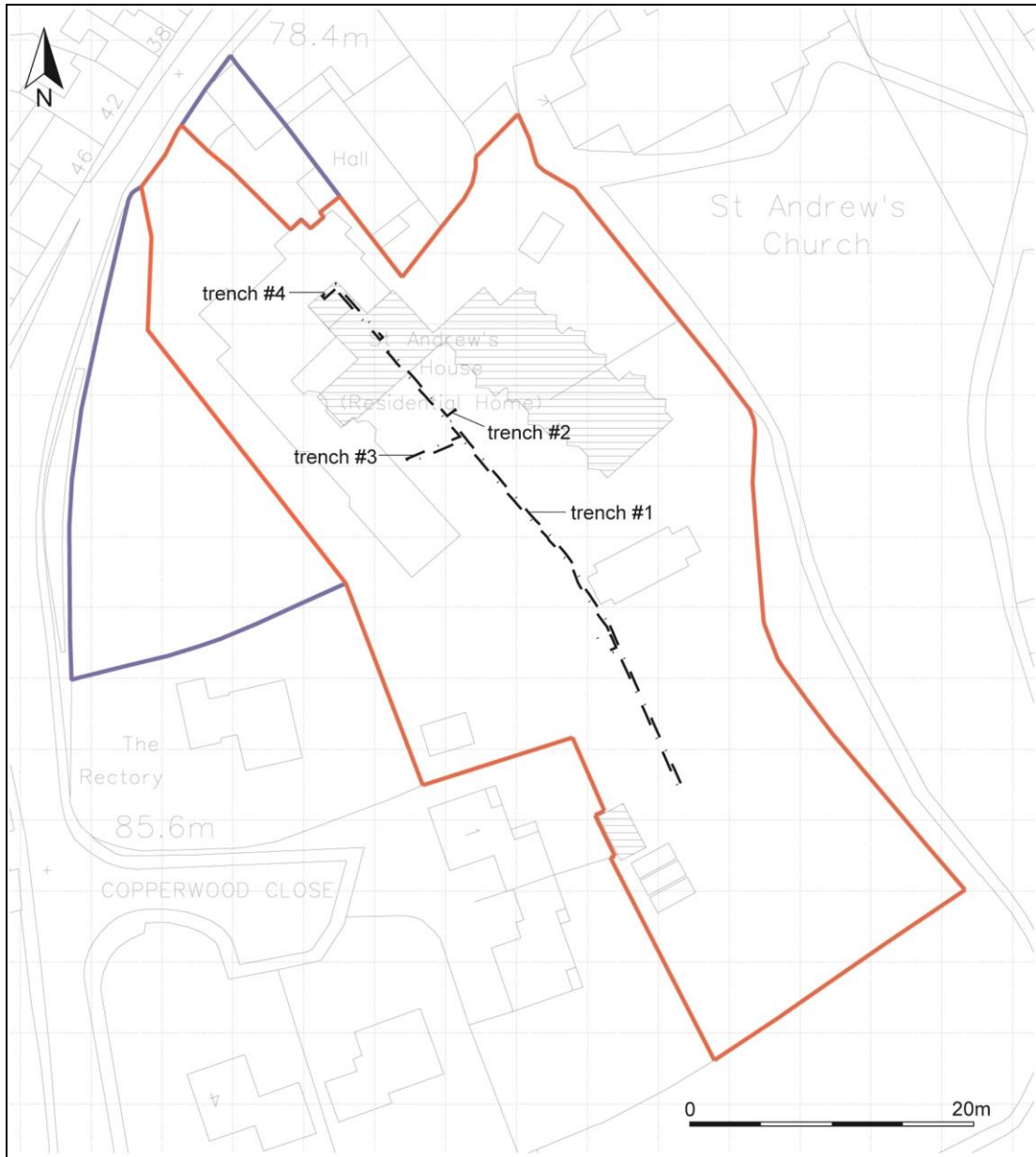


Figure 2: Site plan showing location of pipe trenching

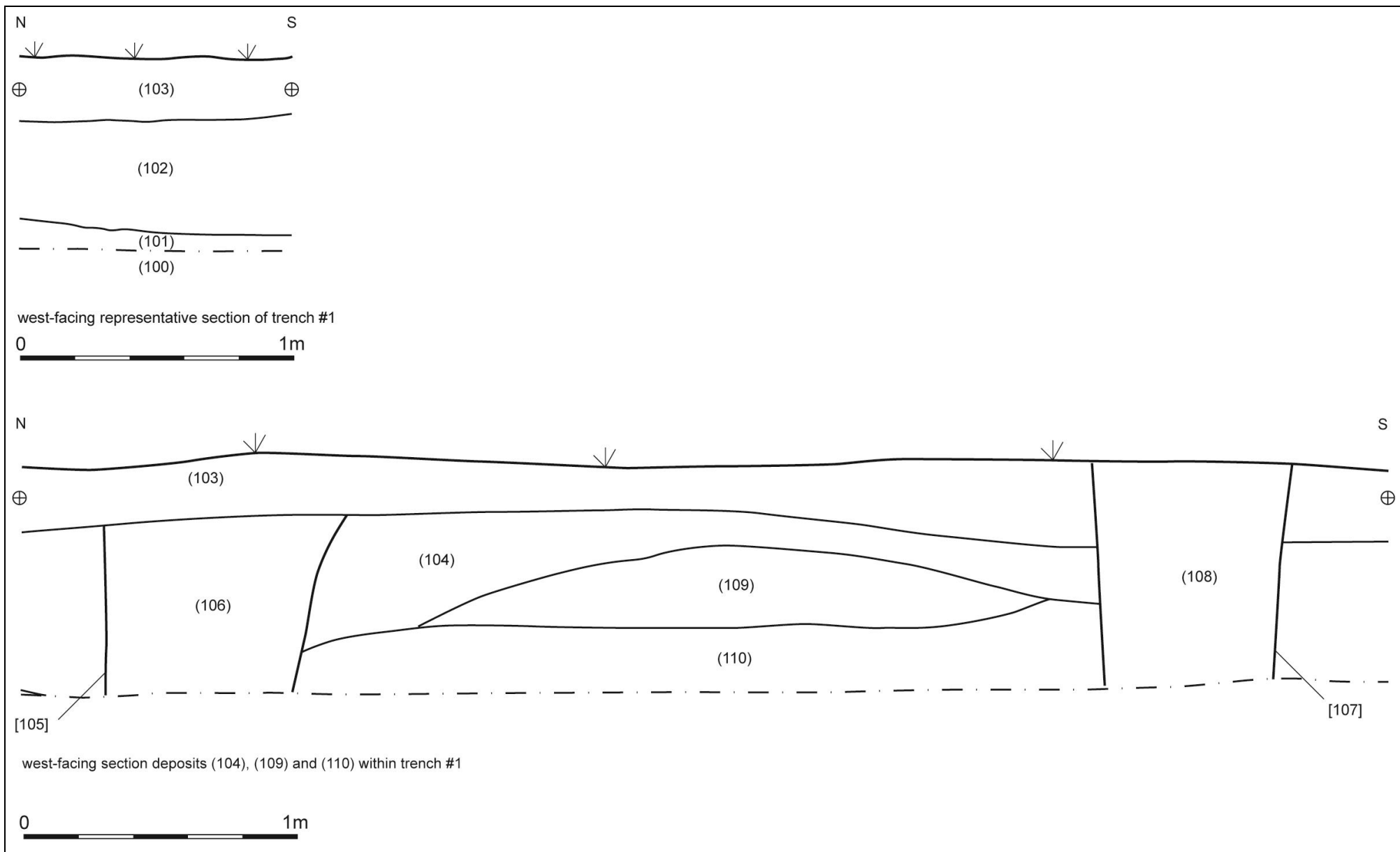


Figure 3: Trench sections.



Figure 4: North end of trench #1; viewed from the north-west (2m scale).



Figure 5: Trench #2, showing dump deposits (109) and (110); viewed from the west-south-west (2m scale).



Figure 6: South end of trench #1; viewed from the north (2m scale).



Figure 7: Trench #4; viewed from the north (2m scale).