

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Peters Marland, Torridge	National Grid Reference SS 4783 1358	Number:
Subject: Archaeological evaluation on land at Marland School, Peters Marland, Torridge, Devon		Photo attached? YES
Planning Application no: Pre-planning	Recipient museum: Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon	
OASIS ID: southwes1-184003	Museum Accession no: N/A	
Contractor's reference number/code: PMS15	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 4 th August 2015	

Project background.

Evaluation trenching was undertaken by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) at the request of Claire Walkey on behalf of Marland School, Peters Marland, Torridge, Devon. This work took place in advance of a planning application for the construction of a new school building. The evaluation was carried out by P. Webb on 4th August 2015. This work was undertaken in accordance with a Project Design drawn up in consultation with Ann Dick of the Devon County Historic Environment Team (DCHET).

Peters Marland is located c.5.2km south-south-west of Great Torrington (Figure 1). The site is located within a landscape of gently-rolling hills ranging in height from 90-150m (described by Hoskins as 'dullish country' 1954, 451), with the village of Peters Marland on a narrow ridge orientated north-west to south-east at a height of approximately 130m. The soils of this area are the well-drained fine loamy soils of the Neath Formation (SSEW 1983), overlying the thickly-bedded argillaceous and silty sandstones of the Bude Formation (BGS 2015). The proposed site is located c.50m north-east of the Grade II Listed 15th century parish church, within fieldscape described by the Devon HLC as *medieval enclosures based on strip fields*. Peters Marland appears to have been the capital manor within the parish, and therefore of some importance at Domesday. The volume of fieldwork in this area is limited, but an evaluation trench opened in 2012 located north-east of the church uncovered features and pottery dating to 13th-14th century (SWARCH report 120321). This was taken to indicate the presence of a (manorial?) settlement close to the church. Investigations north-west of the proposed site failed to identify any archaeological deposits (Context One C1/EVA/13/PMD).

Results.

Three trenches with a total length of c.40m (Figure 2) were opened by a JCB using a toothless grading bucket under archaeological supervision. The friable brown clay-silt topsoil across the site was c.0.15-0.35m thick. This overlay a soft grey-brown silt-clay subsoil c.0.24-0.3m thick, which in turn sealed the soft-to-firm yellow natural clay.

Trench #1 was located in the south-eastern corner of the proposed development and was orientated north-west to south-east. It was 14.4m long and excavated to a depth of 0.64m. A modern water-pipe trench was located at its southern end, cutting a post-medieval or modern dumped deposit (110) of brown friable silt-clay. The trench contained two other archaeological features: ditches [103] and [108] (Figures 3-5). Located towards the centre of the trench, Ditch [103] was orientated north-east to south-west, 2.8m wide and 0.7m deep with moderate-to-steep sloping sides, with a clear/sharp break of slope and concave base (Figures 6-7). There was a basal fill (104) of greyish-yellow clay derived from natural silting; subsequent fills (105) and (106) were brown silt-clays. The upper fill (107) was of re-deposited clay. A single sherd (6g) abraded of North Devon medieval coarseware pottery was recovered from context (106). On its southern side Ditch [103] had truncated an earlier shallower feature: Ditch [108]. This was on the same north-east to south-west alignment and was 0.6m wide and 0.16m deep; it had moderately-sloping sides, clear/sharp break of slope and flat base. It contained a single fill (109) of soft brown silt-clay.

Trench #2 was located towards the centre of the development area and was orientated north-east to south-west. It was 14.5m long and was excavated to a depth of 0.5m. It contained three archaeological features: Ditches [203], [205], and [207] (Figures 6-10). Ditch [203] extended 0.9m from the southern section and terminated within the trench; it was orientated north-south, was 0.5m wide and 0.04m deep with fairly steep edges, a clear break of slope and flat base. It contained a single fill (204) of soft brown silt-clay. To the east of this, Ditch [205] was orientated approximately north-west to south-east. It was 0.96m wide and 0.36m deep with steep sides, a clear/sharp break of slope and a slightly concave base. It contained a single fill (206) of friable brown silt-clay.

Further to the east, Ditch [207] was also orientated north-west to south-east. It was 0.66m wide and 0.1m deep with gradual sloping sides, clear break of slope and a slightly concave base. It contained two fills: a basal layer (209) of yellowish-brown silt, and (208), a soft brown silt-clay.

Trench #3 was located in the north-western corner of the development area, and was orientated north-west to south-east. It was 11.5m long and excavated to a depth of 0.45m. At its northern end there was a backfilled cut [303] that had been created following the removal of some playground equipment. A series of post-holes [305], [307], [309], [311], and [313] containing concreted posts were observed along the western edge of the trench (Figure 11-13). No archaeological features were identified within this trench.

Conclusions.

The results of the evaluation trenching indicate the presence of medieval activity in the local area. The main ditch [103/108] appears to correlate with a boundary shown on the 1840 tithe map, but the two shallow ditches in Trench #2 may be earlier, either a narrow trackway or (more probably) ditches flanking a central hedgebank. The absence of features in Trench #3 would suggest the church was the locus of activity in this area.

Finds

Apart from the single sherd (6g) of medieval North Devon coarseware from (106), the only other finds to be recovered came from dump (110). This produced: 6 fragments (161g) of 19th century vessel glass; 14 sherds (108) of white refined earthenware, some with blue transfer print (post AD c.1770); and a single sherd (3g) of Chinese porcelain from the neck of a tall vase or similar, slightly unusual in a remote inland Devon context.

Bibliography

Fairclough, T. 2013: *Devon County Council HER entry*. Context One C1/EVA/13/PMD.

Hoskins, W.G. 1954: *Devon*.

Rohan, N. and Morris, B. 2012: *Marland School, Peters Marland, Devon: Results of a desktop assessment & archaeological monitoring and excavation*. South West Archaeology report 120321.

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Websites

British Geological Survey 2015: *Geology of Britain Viewer*.

http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html [accessed 05.08.2015].

Recorder: P. Webb

Date sent to HER: 02.09.15

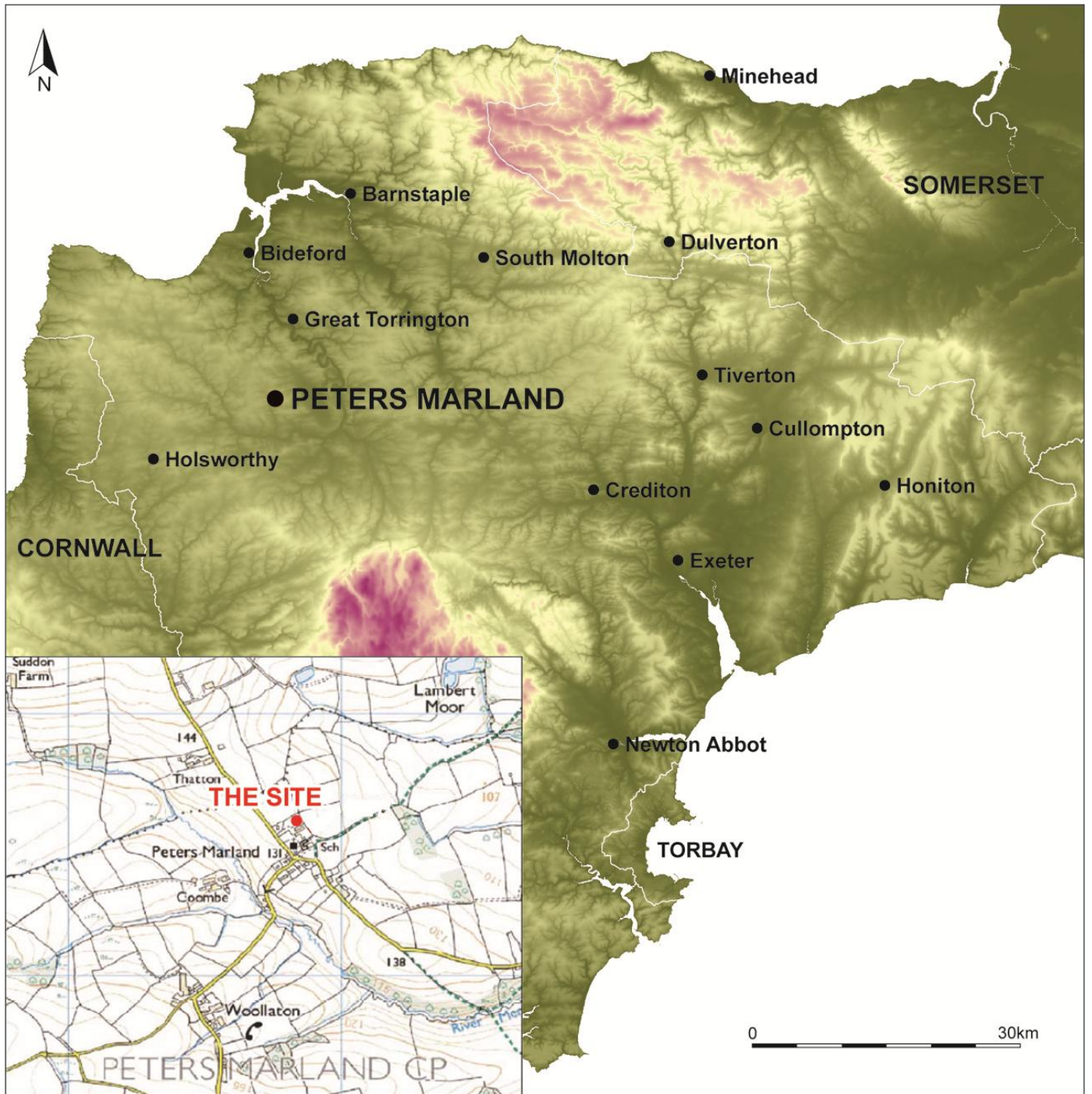


Figure 1: Site location.

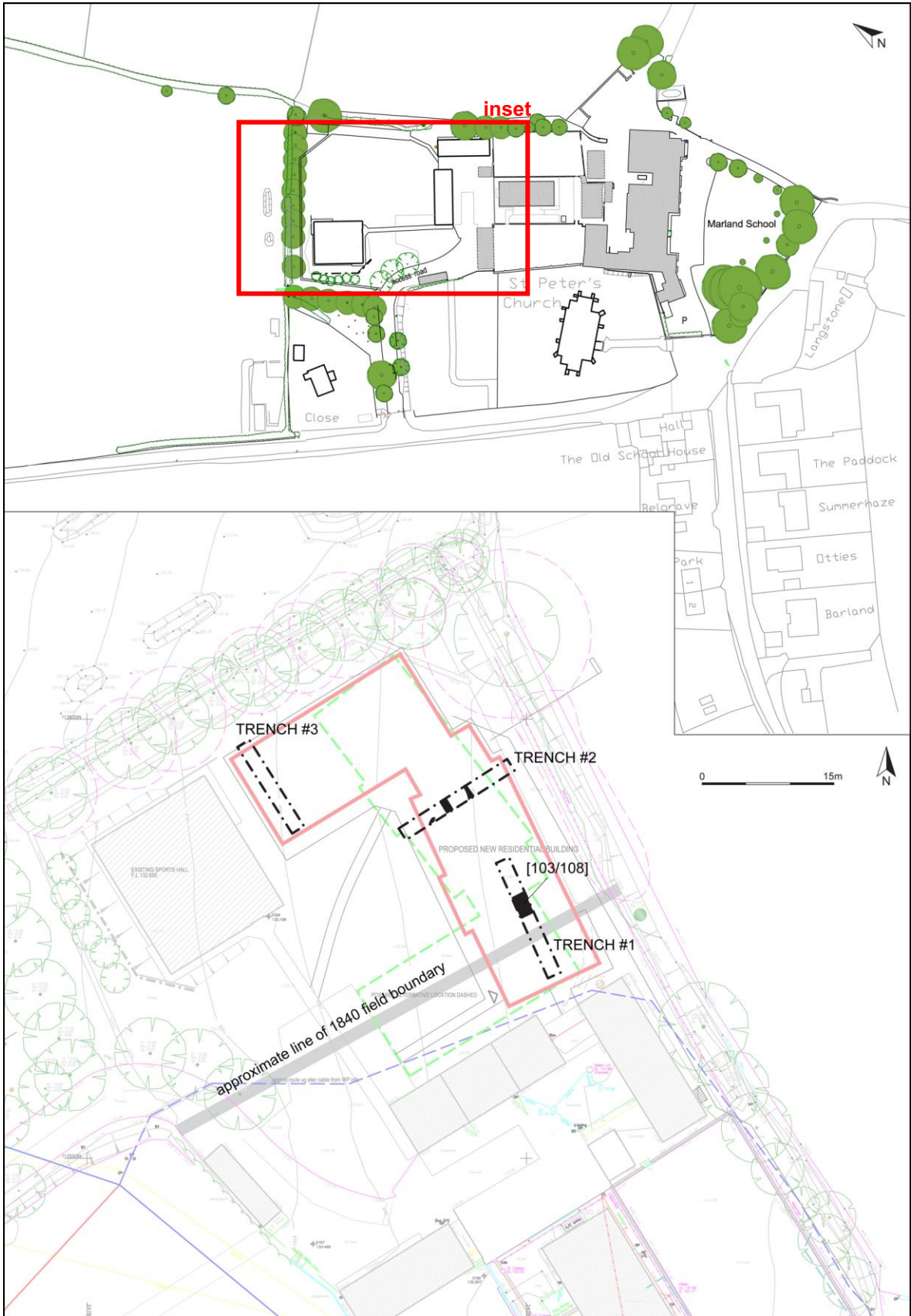


Figure 2: Site plan showing locations of trenches (based on supplied architect's drawings).

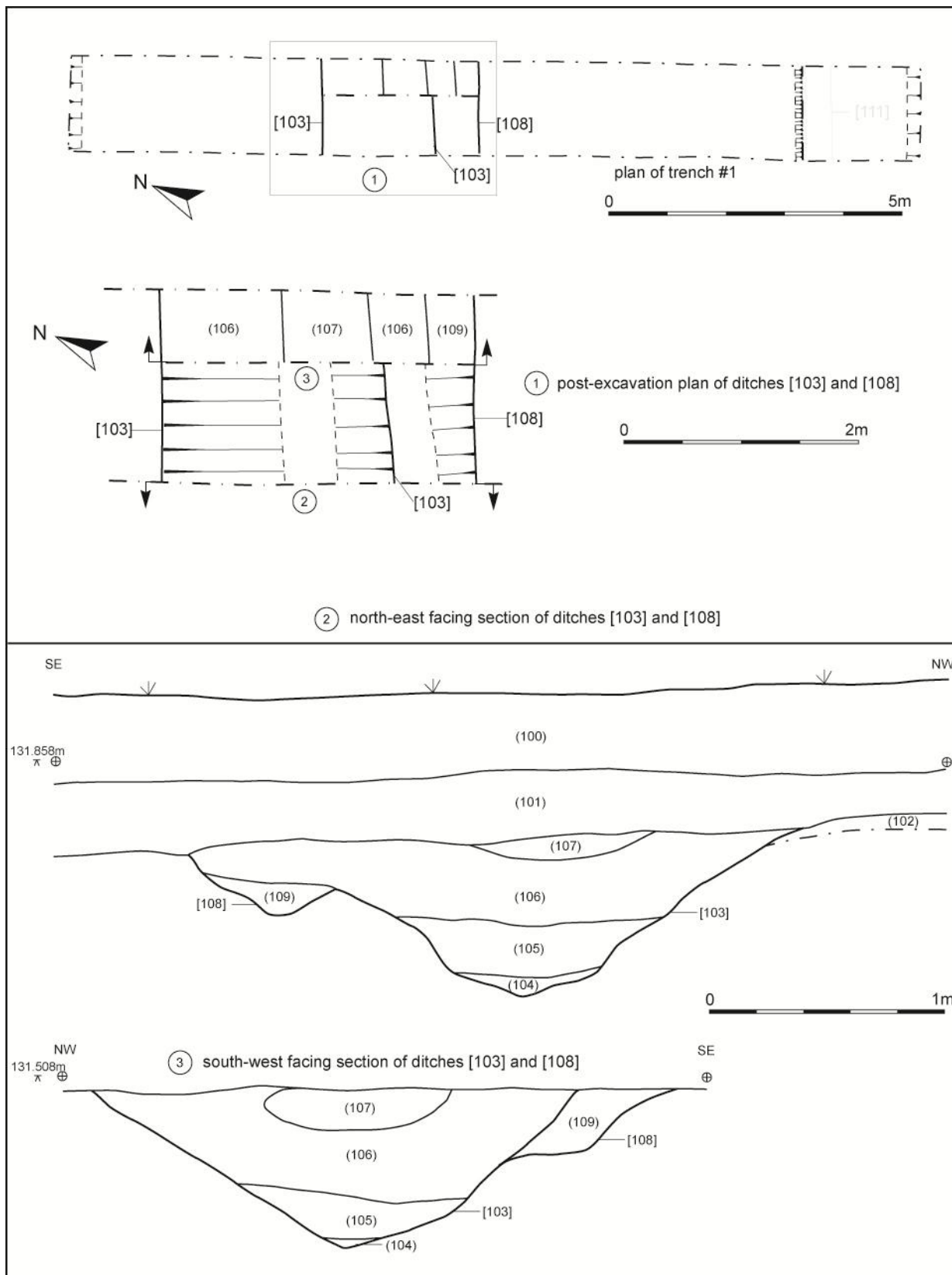


Figure 3: Plans and sections of features in Trench #1



Figure 4: Trench #1, showing ditch [103] pre-excitation; viewed from the north-west (scales 1m and 2m).



Figure 5: North-east facing section of ditches [103] and [108]; viewed from the north-east (scale 1m).

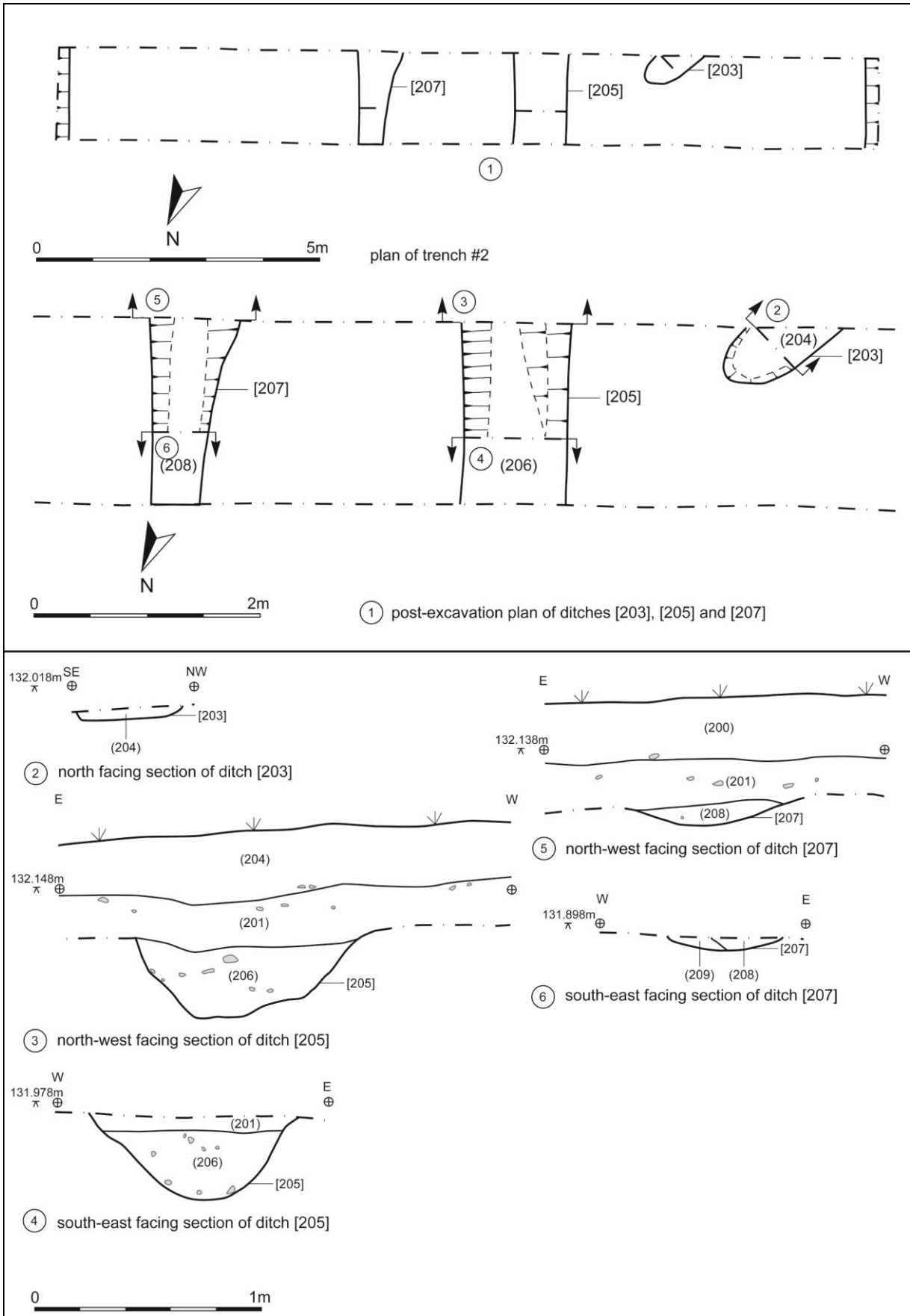


Figure 6: Plans and sections of features in Trench #2.

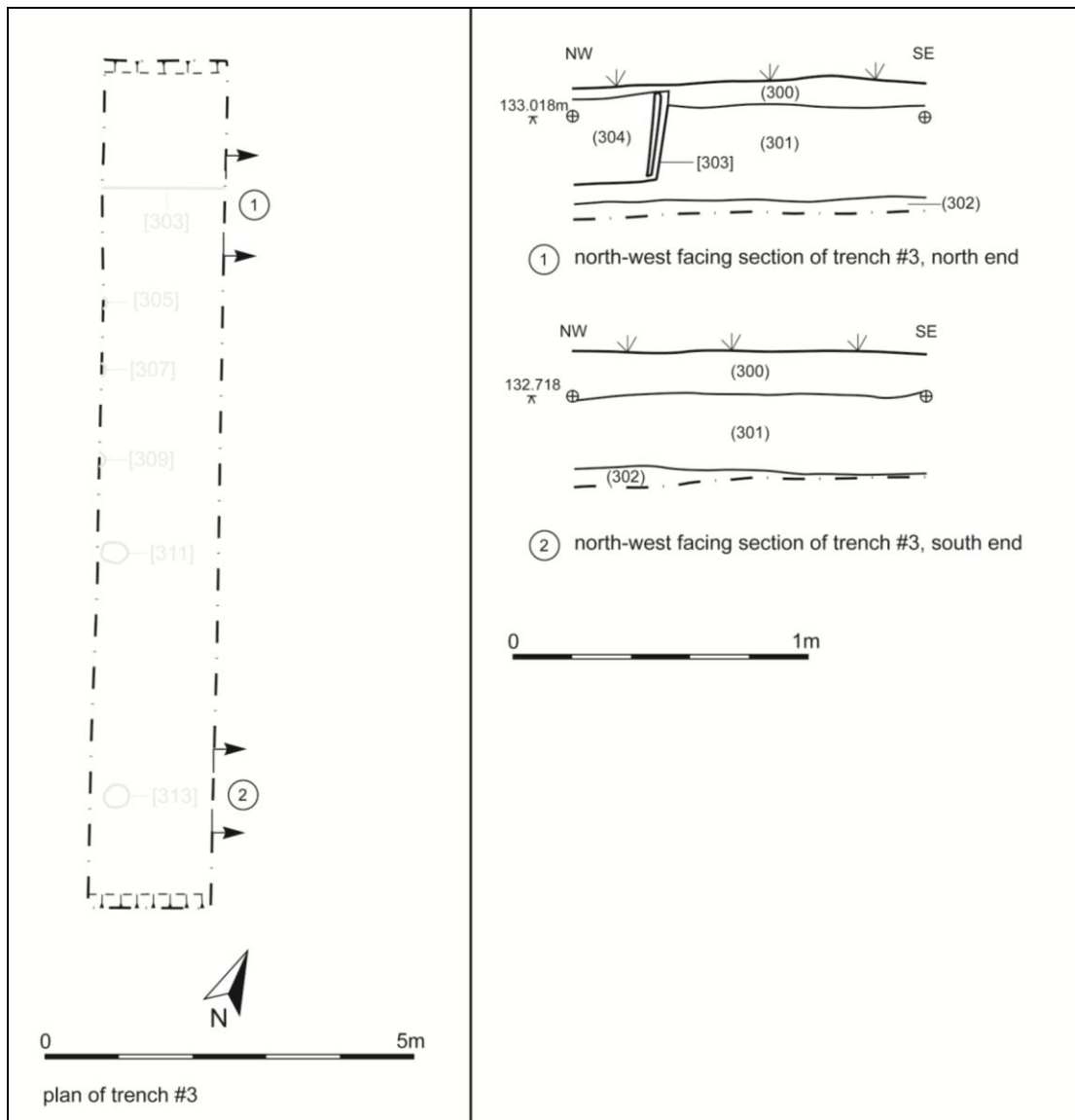


Figure 7: Plans and sections of features in Trench #3.