

**LAND AT SHUTE CROSS
SHOBROOKE
MID DEVON
DEVON**

Results of an Archaeological Evaluation



South West Archaeology Ltd. report no. 181105



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Land at Shute Cross, Shobrooke, Mid Devon, Devon

Results of an Archaeological Evaluation

By P. Webb
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Work undertaken by SWARCH for Acorus (the Agent)

Summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by South West Archaeology Ltd. for land at Shute Cross, Shobrooke, Mid Devon, Devon. The site is located in an area of archaeological potential with prehistoric enclosures and funerary monuments to the south-east, east and north-east. This phase of work carries on from, and targeted features identified by geophysical survey carried out by SWARCH.

The evaluation at Shute Cross identified a total of seven features reflecting the prehistoric and later history of the area. These features include an Iron Age pit and possible associated post-hole, possibly representing storage pits, most likely association with prehistoric earthworks (settlement) identified to the south of the site. The evaluation also confirmed the presence of a series of shallow linear ditches which may form evidence of medieval or post-medieval ridge and furrow agriculture or land division, itself identified as removed historic boundaries by the geophysical survey.

Only one of the features produced dating evidence; pit [304] which contained prehistoric finds; although whilst all of the fills are similar, which may suggest that they were contemporaneous, this is likely a result of their having been infilled and levelled by later ploughing, and it is likely that the association of the linear features with the existing field system is more likely of medieval or post-medieval date.

Given the results of the archaeological evaluation broadly validate the results of the geophysical survey, and the site appearing to have been largely truncated, the archaeological potential of the site in general is considered to be low, although located in an area of higher potential. It is possible that further archaeological investigations would be merited in the vicinity of the identified prehistoric pit, in order to establish if any further features of similar date survive. On the face of it this appears unlikely on the geophysics results, but ephemeral traces or small features, which would not show up on the geophysics are possible.



November 2018

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THE CLIENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

LOCATION:	SHUTE CROSS
PARISH:	SHOBROOKE
DISTRICT:	MID DEVON
COUNTY:	DEVON
NGR:	SX 88966 99869
PLANNING NO.	18/01184/FUL
HE OFFICER REF.	ARCH/DM/MD/33245A
SWARCH REF.	SSC18

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) was commissioned by Acorus (the agent) on behalf of a Private Client to undertake archaeological evaluation trenching on land at Shute Cross, Shobrooke, Devon, in support of a planning application for proposed development of the land. This work was undertaken in accordance with a project design (PD; Boyd 2018) drawn up in consultation with Devon County Historic Environment Team (DCHET), best practice, and ClfA guidelines; and follows on from geophysical survey carried out by SWARCH in 2018 (Bonvoisin 2018).

1.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site is located c. 5.4km east of Crediton and c.2.1km north-east of Newton St Cyres and the A377; within a steeply sloping south-east facing field, from c.80m Above Ordinance Datum (AOD) to 40m AOD. The evaluated area is located towards the south-western corner of the field at a height of between c.40m and c.48m AOD along the northern boundary. The soils of this area are the well drained gritty reddish loamy soils of the Crediton Association (SSEW 1983); overlying sandstone of the Shute Sandstone formation, where it borders the breccia of the Newton St Cyres Breccia Formation (BGS 2018) mid-way across the site.

1.3 HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The proposed site is located along the southern edge of the parish of Shobrooke, in the hundred of West Budleigh, the deanery of Cadbury and the county of Devon (Lysons 1822). Shute, meaning '*a steep slope*' comes from the old English *scȳte* (Watts 2010). The settlement at Shute has likely medieval origins, first recorded in 1244 (Devon and Dartmoor Historic Environment Record).

No archaeological works appear to have been carried out in the surrounding area but the number of local features demonstrates a high archaeological potential from the Prehistoric to Post-Medieval periods. Whilst there are no significant known features within the boundary of the proposed development site, cropmarks representing field boundaries and enclosure associated with Shute Farm (MDV121931) are located within the surrounding fields and are likely to have been associated with the orchard plots shown on the 1841 tithe mapping. Multiple prehistoric features have been recorded, mostly to the south of the site, including: cropmarks showing possible enclosures and ring ditches (MDV50143, MDV29074, MDV121904, MDV56055, and MDV56056); a barrow (MDV42786); and a flint blade find spot (MDV42997).

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The archaeological evaluation was conducted in accordance with a Project Design (PD; Boyd 2018) and in line with best practice, and based on a trench plan drawn up in consultation with Stephen Reed (DCHET). Five trenches, each 1.20m wide and totalling c.100m in length, were laid by Leica GPS and opened by mechanical excavator to the depth of weathered natural using a toothless grading bucket. Exposed archaeological deposits were excavated by hand and in accordance with the PD and ClfA guidelines.

The evaluation was designed to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any *in situ* archaeological deposits within the site; targeting features identified by previous geophysical survey; and was carried out to inform any further planning decisions. The archaeological evaluation took place between 10th and 11th October 2018.

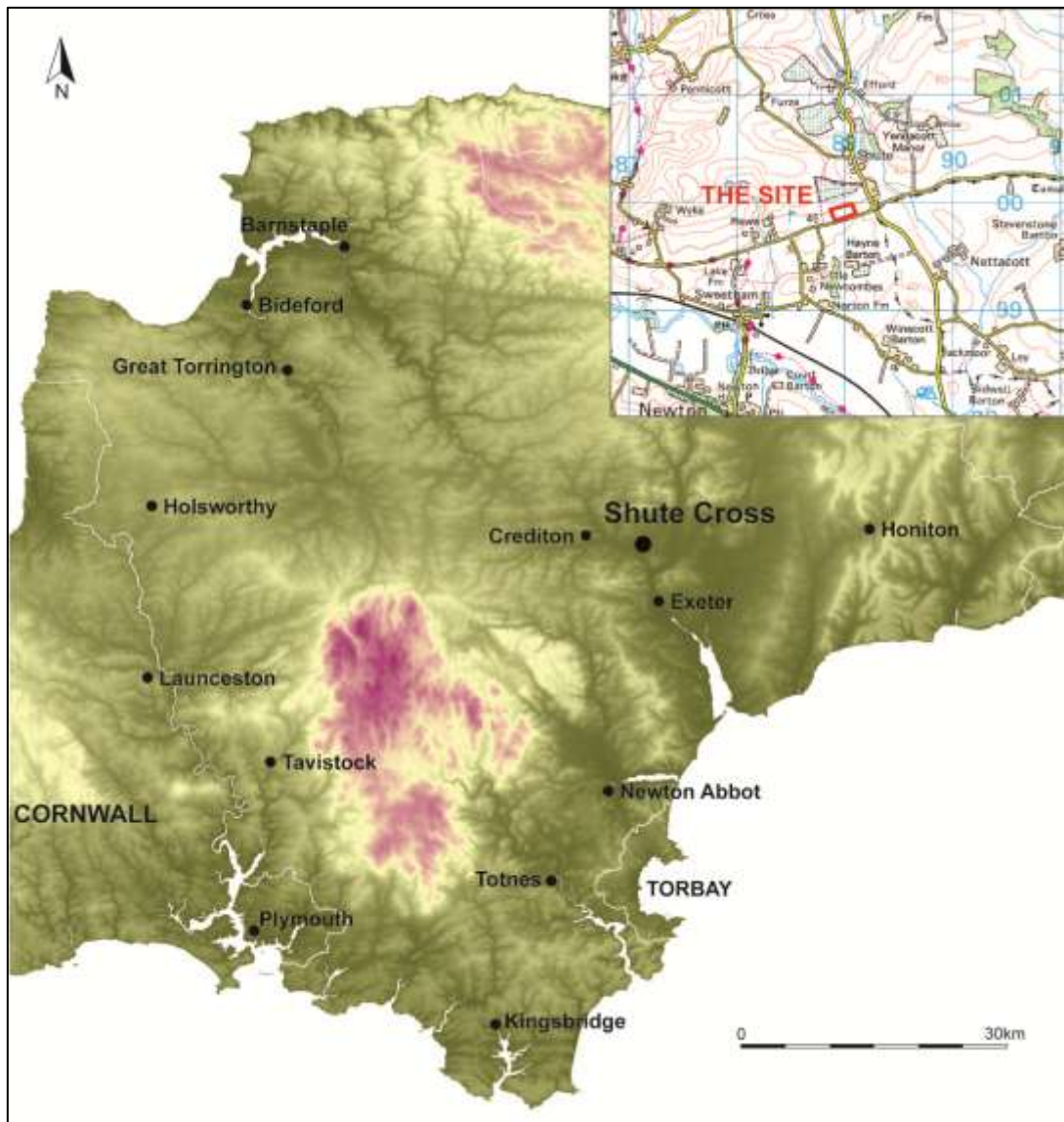


FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION (THE SITE IS INDICATED).

2.0 RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The archaeological evaluation was carried out between the 10th and 11th of October 2018. It comprised the excavation of five trenches, each c.1.20m wide and totalling c.100m in length by mechanical excavator to the depth of weathered natural using a toothless grading bucket. Exposed archaeological deposits were excavated by hand and in accordance with the PD and ClfA guidelines.

A total of 7 features were identified in the five evaluation trenches, including: four ditches; one gully; one pit; and one possible pit/post-hole (Figure 2). What follows is a summary of each trench with finds noted where they occur; see Appendix 1 for detailed context descriptions; Appendix 2 for full finds concordance; and Appendix 3 for a set of baseline photographs.

2.2 DEPOSIT MODEL

The stratigraphy of the site was fairly uniform across the whole area. A mid red-brown sand-silt topsoil, c.0.25m thick; overlay a lower topsoil, mid red-brown sand-silt c.0.35m thick; an intermittent subsoil, light red-yellow-brown sand silt, up to 0.15m thick (only identified within Trench 01, towards the eastern end of the site); and the natural, brown-red compacted sand-silt.

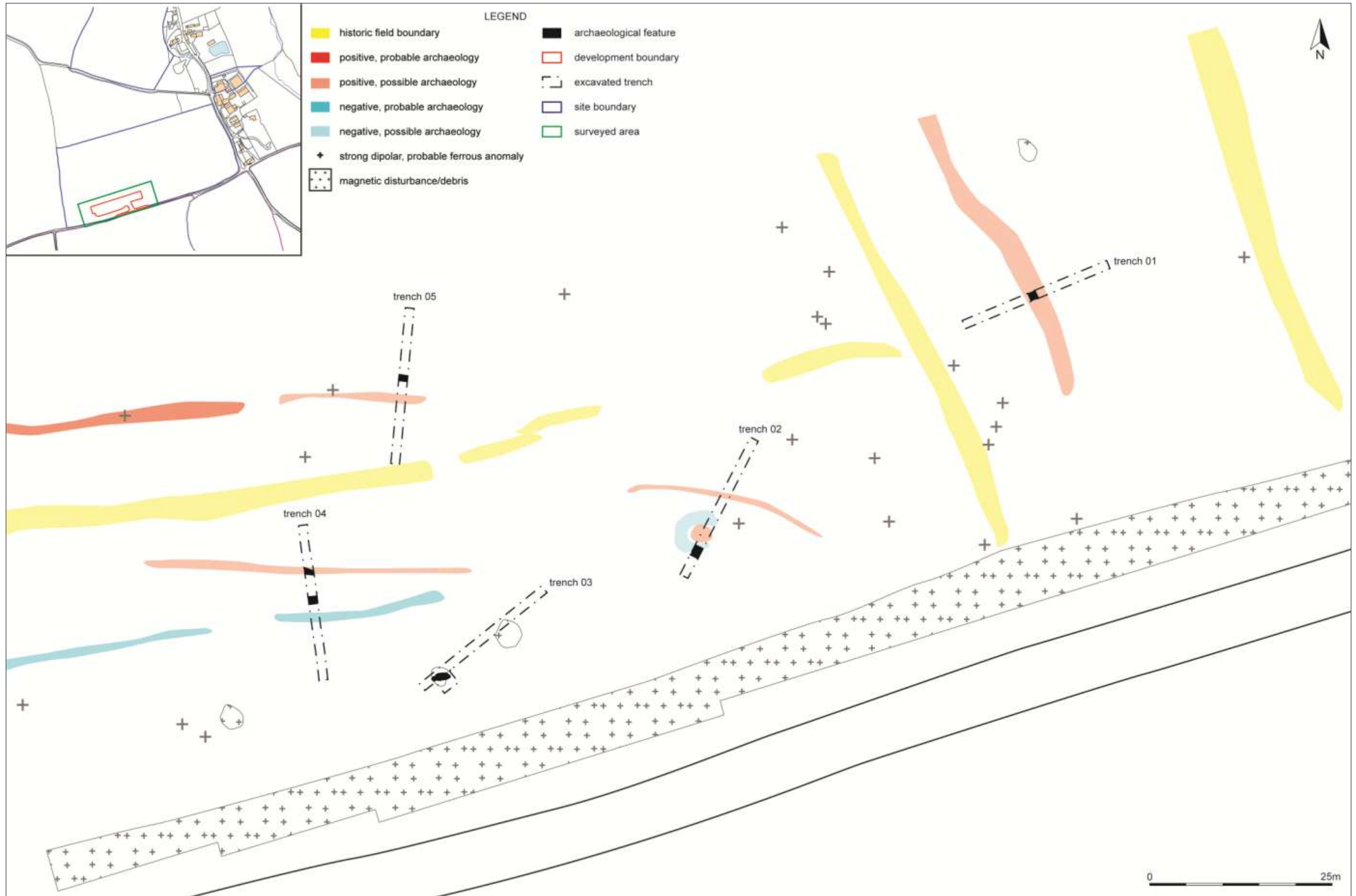


FIGURE 2: SITE PLAN SHOWING LOCATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES; OVERLAID ON INTERPRETATION OF GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY.

2.3 TRENCH 01

Trench 01 was located towards the north-eastern boundary of the site and measured 20m long on an approximate north-east to south-west alignment; the topsoils were 0.60-0.78m thick; overlying subsoil, 0.15m thick; and the weathered natural (Figure 3). The trench was located to target a positive linear anomaly identified by the geophysical survey. No finds were recovered from this trench.

A single feature, gully [106] was identified in the trench; corresponding with the position of the geophysical anomaly. It was located towards the centre of the trench and orientated approximately north-north-west to south-south-east, measuring up to 0.70m wide and 0.25m deep with steep to shallow sloping sides and concave base. It contained a single fill (105), yellow-red-brown sand-silt with small stone inclusions.

2.4 TRENCH 02

Trench 02 was located centrally towards the southern boundary of the site and measured 20m long on an approximate north-north-east to south-south-west alignment; the topsoils were 0.60-0.70m thick; and directly overlay the natural (Figures 3,5). The trench was located to target a pair of positive and negative anomalies, interpreted by the geophysical survey as a linear agricultural feature and a possible pit or geothermal response. No finds were recovered from this trench.

A single feature, ditch [204] was identified in the trench; corresponding with the southern negative anomaly. It was located at the southern end of the trench and orientated approximately north-west to south-east, measuring 1.40m wide and 0.10m deep with shallow sloping sides and very slightly concave base. It contained a single fill (202), red-brown sand-silt with stone inclusions. The northern positive linear anomaly and possible pit feature identified on the geophysical survey were not identified within the trench.



FIGURE 3: DITCH [204], WEST-NORTH-WEST FACING SECTION; VIEWED FROM THE WEST-NORTH-WEST (1M SCALE).

2.5 TRENCH 03

Trench 03 was located along the southern site boundary and measured 20m long on an approximate north-east to south-west alignment; the topsoils were c.0.60m thick; and directly overlay the natural (Figures 4,6). The trench was located to ground truth an area showing signs of possible magnetic disturbance on the geophysical survey. Finds recovered from this trench included: four pieces (9g) of animal bone, and one flint scraper (10g) from lower topsoil (301). A large Iron pin (off agricultural machinery was also noted on site.

Two features, pit [304] and pit/post-hole [307] were identified towards the southern end of the trench, corresponding with the southern area of magnetic disturbance. Pit [304] was sub-oval in plan on an approximately east to west alignment and measured 1.90m×0.95m wide and 0.27m deep with moderate sloping sides and concave base. It contained two fills: (303), and (305), red-brown soft sand-silts. Finds recovered from this feature included two sherds (6g) of Iron Age pottery and one flint blade fragment (1g) from fill (303).

Pit/post-hole [307] was an ephemeral feature located at the south-western end of [304] and was sub-circular in plan, measuring c.0.58m in diameter and up to c.0.05m deep with moderate sloping sides and concave base. It contained a single fill: (306), red-brown soft sand-silt.



FIGURE 4: PIT [304], POST-EXCAVATION; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (0.40M & 1M SCALES).

2.6 TRENCH 04

Trench 04 was located towards the south-western corner of the site and measured 20m long on an approximate north to south alignment; the topsoils were c.0.55m thick; and directly overlay the natural (Figure 6). The trench was located to target a pair of positive and negative linear anomalies, interpreted by the geophysical survey as agricultural features and a possible boundary. No finds were recovered from this trench.

Two features were identified within the trench, both ditches: [404] and [406]; roughly corresponding with the geophysical anomalies. Ditch [404] was located towards the centre of the trench and was aligned approximately east to west, to the north of the negative linear anomaly which likely represents a bank of spoil material from the ditch. It measured 1m wide and 0.10m deep with moderate sloping sides and flat base. It contained a single fill: (402), mid red-brown sand-silt.

Towards the northern end of the trench ditch [405] was aligned approximately north-west to south-east, corresponding with the northern positive linear geophysical anomaly. It measured 0.70m wide and 0.12m deep with moderate-steep sloping sides and flat base. It contained a single fill: (406), mid red-brown sand-silt.

2.7 TRENCH 05

Trench 05 was located towards the north-western corner of the site and measured 20m long on an approximate north-north-east to south-south-west alignment; the topsoils were c.0.60m thick; and directly overlay the natural (Figure 7). The trench was located to target a positive linear anomaly identified by the geophysical survey. Finds recovered from this trench included one piece (1g) of flint debitage from topsoil (500).

A single feature, ditch [503] was identified towards the centre of the trench, roughly corresponding with the position of the linear positive geophysical anomaly. It was orientated approximately east to west and measured 0.80m wide and 0.08m deep with shallow to moderate sloping sides and concave base. It contained a single fill: (502), red-yellow-brown friable sand-silt.

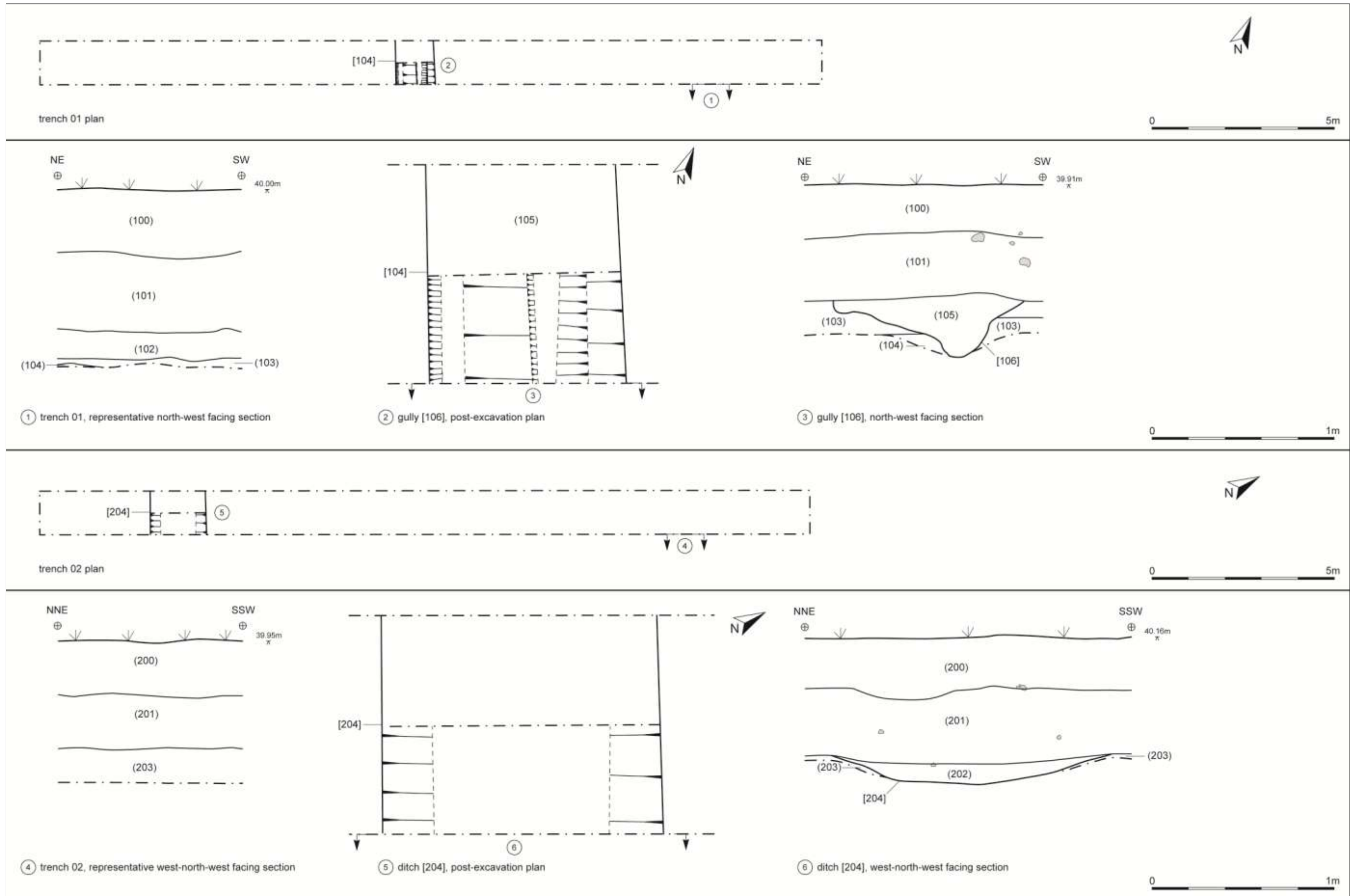


FIGURE 5: TRENCHES 01 AND 02, PLANS AND SECTIONS. HEIGHTS AT AOD.

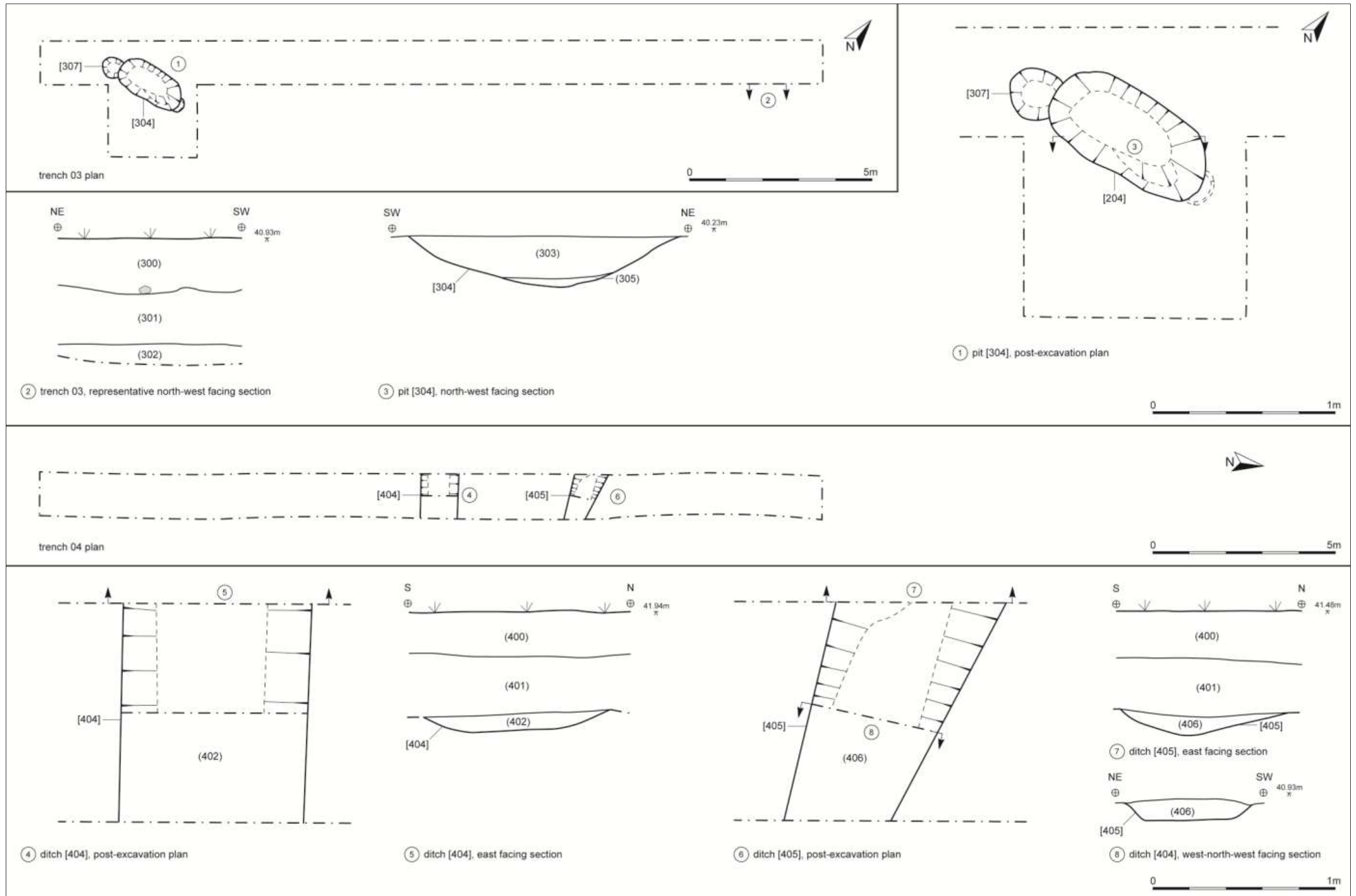


FIGURE 6: TRENCHES 03 AND 04, PLANS AND SECTIONS. HEIGHTS AT AOD.

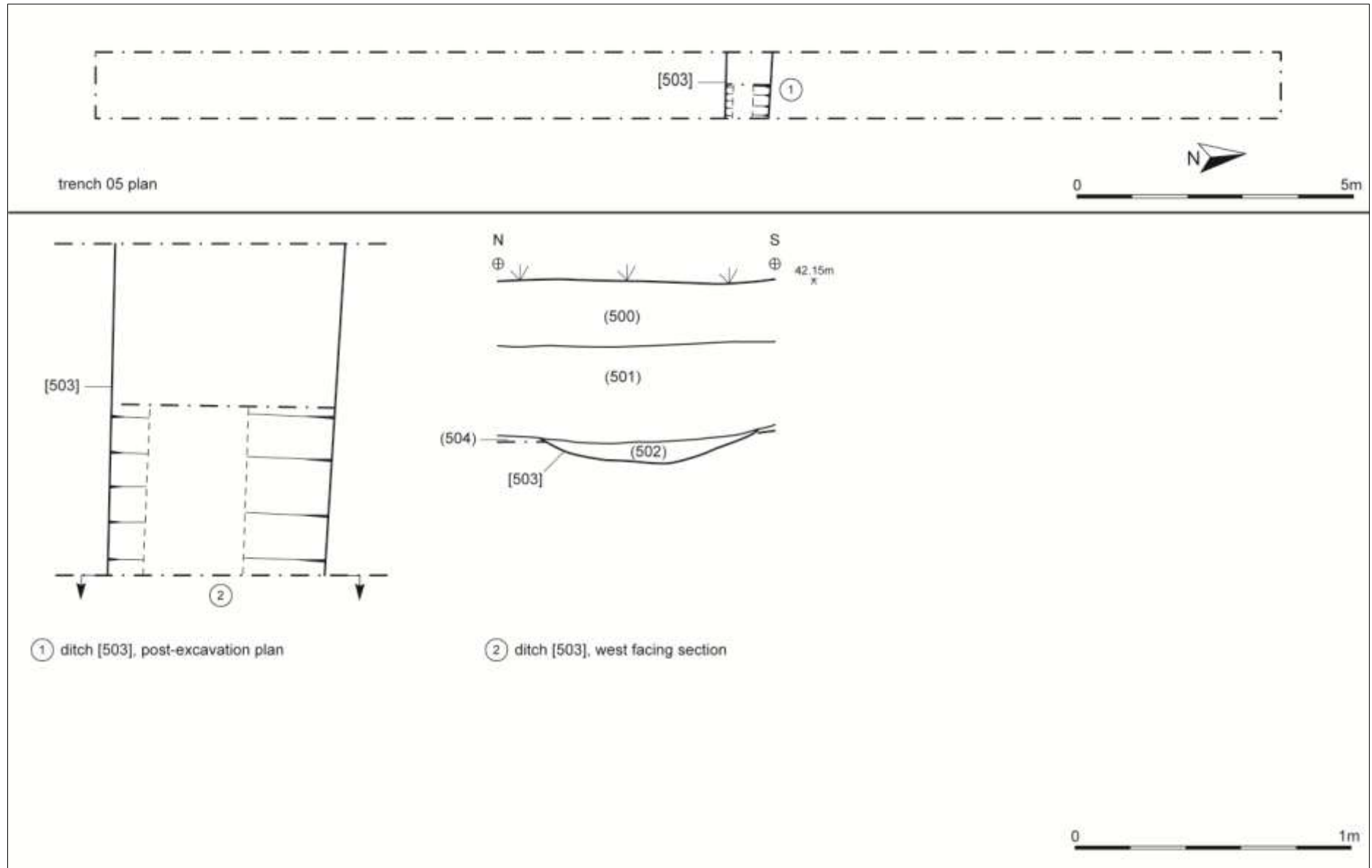


FIGURE 7: TRENCH 05, PLANS AND SECTIONS. HEIGHTS AT AOD.

2.8 FINDS

Only a very small quantity of finds was recovered during the evaluation, predominantly prehistoric in date and including: animal bone, flint, and pottery. A complete finds concordance can be found in Appendix 2. In total 2 sherds (6g) of Iron Age pottery were recovered along with an un-worked flint blade (1g) from pit [304]; with a further flint scraper (10g) and flint debitage (1g) recovered from topsoil layers.

2.9 DISCUSSION

The trenches were located to target a series of features identified in a geophysical survey, including: a series of linear features interpreted as historic field boundaries; further agricultural boundaries or possible ridge and furrow; modern services; and areas of disturbance with the potential for masking archaeological features.

The evaluation broadly validated the results of the geophysical survey, the majority of the features being identified on the ground. Only the positive anomalies within Trench 02 (one linear and one possible pit feature) were not identified, likely reflecting their poor survival and likely ephemeral nature at the location of the trench. The other anomaly which did not correspond with an actual feature was targeted to the centre of Trench 3, is likely to have been a large iron pin noted in the topsoil, in the approximate location of the targeted anomaly.

The only dateable feature identified on the site was pit [304], containing Iron Age pottery and lithic material. It indicates that there was prehistoric activity on/near the site, a further possible associated small pit/post-hole suggesting that there may have been on the periphery of a settlement at this period; and placing it within a wider prehistoric landscape including prehistoric earthworks to the south of the site.

The remaining features, all linear features identified on the geophysical survey, remain undated; and whilst they may form part of the prehistoric activity on the site, their generally shallow form, and roughly parallel alignment with the historic boundaries suggests that they are most likely to represent trace remains of later medieval ridge and furrow or strip field divisions across the field, any low ridges or banks having subsequently been ploughed flat.

Given the presence of subsoil only within Trench 01; along with the relatively weak responses of the results of the geophysical survey, the site appears to have been moderately to heavily truncated through historic episodes of ploughing with only the bases of larger or deeper cut features surviving.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The evaluation at Shute Cross identified a total of seven features reflecting the prehistoric and later history of the area. These features include an Iron Age pit and possible associated post-hole, possibly representing storage pits, most likely association with prehistoric earthworks (settlement) identified to the south of the site. The evaluation also confirmed the presence of a series of shallow linear ditches which may form evidence of medieval or post-medieval ridge and furrow agriculture or land division, itself identified as removed historic boundaries by the geophysical survey.

Only one of the features produced dating evidence; pit [304] which contained prehistoric finds; although whilst all of the fills are similar, which may suggest that they were contemporaneous, this is likely a result of their having been infilled and levelled by later ploughing, and it is likely that the association of the linear features with the existing field system is more likely of medieval or post-medieval date.

Given the results of the archaeological evaluation broadly validate the results of the geophysical survey, and the site appearing to have been largely truncated, the archaeological potential of the site in general is considered to be low, although located in an area of higher potential. It is possible that further archaeological investigations would be merited in the vicinity of the identified prehistoric pit, in order to establish if any further features of similar date survive. On the face of it this appears unlikely on the geophysics results, but ephemeral traces or small features, which would not show up on the geophysics are possible.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context	Type	Description	Relationships	Depth/thickness (m)	Spot date
Trench 01					
(100)	Layer	Topsoil – mid red-brown friable slightly sand-silt with rare to occasional small stone and grit inclusions.	Overlies (101); same as (200), (300), (400), (500)	0.25-0.35m thick	Modern
(101)	Layer	Lower topsoil – mid red-brown friable slightly sand-silt with occasional to common stone up to 0.06m.	Overlain by (100); overlies (102), (105); same as (201), (301), (401), (501)	0.35-0.45m thick	-
(102)	Layer	Subsoil - light red-yellow-brown friable sand-silt with common stone or gravel.	Overlain by (101); overlies (103)	0.15m thick	-
(103)	Layer	Subsoil - light yellow-red-brown friable sand-silt with occasional to common stone. Possibly decayed natural.	Cut by [106]; overlies (104)	Up to 0.18m thick	-
(104)	Natural	Natural – mid brown-red compacted sand-silt with rare stone and manganese flecks.	Overlain by (103)	-	-
(105)	Fill	Fill of gully [106] – light yellow-red-brown friable sand-silt with occasional small stone inclusions.	Overlain by (101); fill of [106]	0.25m thick	-
[106]	Cut	Linear gully – orientated approximately north to south, measuring up to 0.70m wide with shallow upper east side and steep west side and lower east side, and concave base.	Filled by (105); cuts (103)	0.25m deep	-
Trench 02					
(200)	Layer	Topsoil – mid red-brown friable slightly sand-silt with rare to occasional small stone and grit inclusions.	Overlies (201); same as (100), (300), (400), (500)	0.26-0.30m thick	Modern
(201)	Layer	Lower topsoil – mid red-brown friable slightly sand-silt with occasional to common stone inclusions up to 0.06m.	Overlain by (200); overlies (202); same as (101), (301), (401), (501)	0.28-0.42m thick	-
(202)	Fill	Fill of ditch [204] – mid red-brown friable slightly sand-silt with common stone inclusions up to 0.06m.	Overlain by (201); fill of [204]	0.10m thick	-
(203)	Natural	Natural –light red-yellow-brown friable sand-silt with occasional-common stone inclusions.	Cut by [204]; same as (104), (302), (403), (504)	-	-
[204]	Cut	Linear ditch – orientated approximately north-west to south-east. Measures 1.40m wide and 0.10m deep with shallow sloping sides and concave base.	Filled by (202); cuts (203)	0.10m deep	-
Trench 03					
(300)	Layer	Topsoil – mid red-brown friable slightly sand-silt with rare to occasional stone and grit inclusions.	Overlies (301); same as (100), (200), (400), (500)	c.0.30m thick	Modern
(301)	Layer	Lower topsoil – mid red-brown friable slightly sand-silt with occasional to	Overlain by (300); overlies (303);	c.0.28m thick	-

		common stone inclusions up to 0.06m.	same as (101), (201), (401), (501)		
(302)	Natural	Natural – mid red-brown to yellow-brown soft-friable sand-silt with occasional stone inclusions.	Cut by [307]; same as (104), (203), (403), (504)	-	-
(303)	Fill	Upper fill of pit [304] – mid red-brown to yellow-brown soft sand-silt with occasional stone inclusions.	Overlain by (301); overlies (305); fill of [304]	0.23m thick	Iron Age
[304]	Cut	Pit – sub-oval feature orientated approximately east to west. Measures 1.90m×0.95m wide and 0.27m deep with moderate sloping sides and concave base.	Filled by (303), (305); cuts (306)	0.27m deep	Iron Age
(305)	Fill	Lower fill of pit [304] – mid red-brown soft sand-silt.	Overlain by (303); fill of [304]	0.04m thick	Iron Age
(306)	Fill	Fill of pit/post-hole [307] – mid red-brown soft sand-silt.	Cut by [304]; fill of [307]	c.0.10m thick	Iron Age?
[307]	Cut	Pit/post-hole – sub-circular feature measuring 0.58m in diameter and c.0.05m deep with moderate sloping sides and concave base.	Filled by (306); cuts (302)	c.0.05m deep	Iron Age?
Trench 04					
(400)	Layer	Topsoil – mid red-brown friable slightly sand-silt with rare to occasional small stone and grit inclusions.	Overlies (401); same as (100), (200), (300), (500)	c.0.25m thick	Modern
(401)	Layer	Lower topsoil – mid red-brown friable slightly sand-silt with occasional to common stone inclusions up to 0.06m.	Overlain by (400); overlies (402), (406); same as (101), (201), (301), (501)	0.25-0.30m thick	-
(402)	Fill	Fill of ditch [404] – mid red-brown firm-friable sand-silt.	Overlain by (401); fill of [404]	0.10m thick	-
(403)	Natural	Natural – mid red-brown soft-friable sand-silt with occasional stone inclusions.	Cut by [404], [405]	-	-
[404]	Cut	Linear ditch – orientated approximately east to west. Measures 1m wide and 0.10m deep with moderate sloping sides and flat base.	Filled by (402); cuts (403)	0.10m deep	-
[405]	Cut	Linear ditch – orientated approximately north-west to south-east. Measures 0.70m wide and 0.12m deep with moderate-steep sloping sides and flat base.	Filled by (406); cuts (403)	0.12m deep	-
(406)	Fill	Fill of ditch [405] – mid red-brown friable sand-silt.	Overlain by (401); fill of [405]	0.12m thick	-
Trench 05					
(500)	Layer	Topsoil – mid red-brown friable slightly sand-silt with rare to occasional small stone and grit inclusions.	Overlies (501); same as (100), (200), (300), (400)	0.24m thick	Modern
(501)	Layer	Lower topsoil – mid red-brown friable slightly sand-silt with occasional to common stone inclusions.	Overlain by (500); overlies (502); same as (101), (201), (301), (401)	0.32m thick	-
(502)	Fill	Fill of ditch [503] – mid red-yellow-brown friable sand-silt with occasional to common stone inclusions.	Overlain by (501); fill of [503]	0.08m thick	-
[503]	Cut	Linear ditch – orientated approximately east to west. Measures 0.80m wide and 0.08m deep with shallow to moderate sloping sides and concave base.	Filled by (502); cuts (504)	0.08m deep	-
(504)	Natural	Natural – mid red-yellow-brown soft-friable sand-silt with occasional stone inclusions.	Cut by [503]	-	-

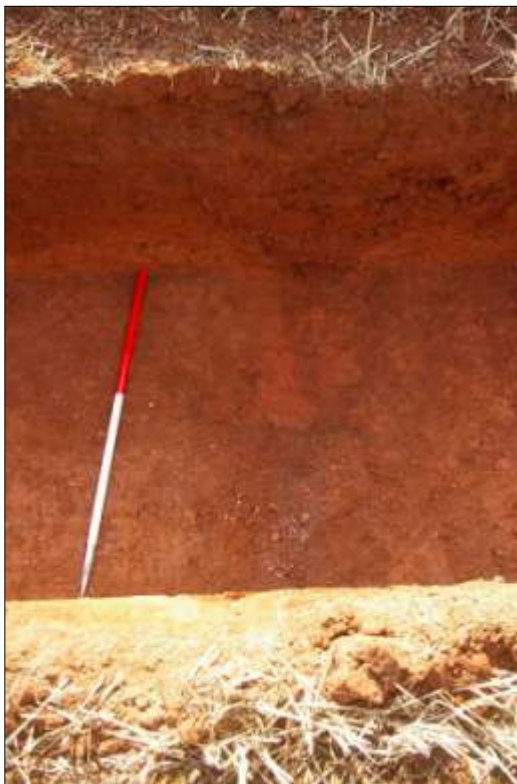
APPENDIX 2: FINDS CONCORDANCE

Context	POTTERY			OTHER			DATE
	Sherds	Wgt. (g)	Notes	Frgs.	Wgt. (g)	Notes	
(301)				4	9	Animal bone fragments	
				1	10	Flint – crude side-scraper	Prehistoric
(303)	1	5	Micaceous grey-black ware rim sherd	1	1	Flint – proximal blade fragment. Possible signs of use	Iron Age
	1	1	Micaceous red-brown ware body sherd				Iron Age
(500)				1	1	Flint – debitage	Prehistoric
TOTALS	2	6		7	21		

APPENDIX 3: EVALUATION SUPPORTING PHOTOGRAPHS



1. GULLY [104], NORTH-NORTH-WEST FACING SECTION; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-NORTH-WEST (1M SCALE).



2. (LEFT) GULLY [104], POST-EXCAVATION; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-NORTH-WEST (1M SCALE).



3. (RIGHT) TRENCH 01, POST-EXCAVATION; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-EAST (2M SCALE).



4. DITCH [204], WEST-NORTH-WEST FACING SECTION; VIEWED FROM THE WEST-NORTH-WEST (1M SCALE).



5. TRENCH 02, POST-EXCAVATION; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-SOUTH-WEST (2M SCALE).



6. PIT [304], NORTH-WEST FACING SECTION; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-WEST (2M SCALE).



7. (LEFT) PIT [304], POST-EXCAVATION DETAIL; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (0.40M & 1M SCALES).

8. (RIGHT) PIT [304], POST-EXCAVATION; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (0.40M & 1M SCALES).



9. DITCH [404], EAST FACING SECTION; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (1M SCALE).



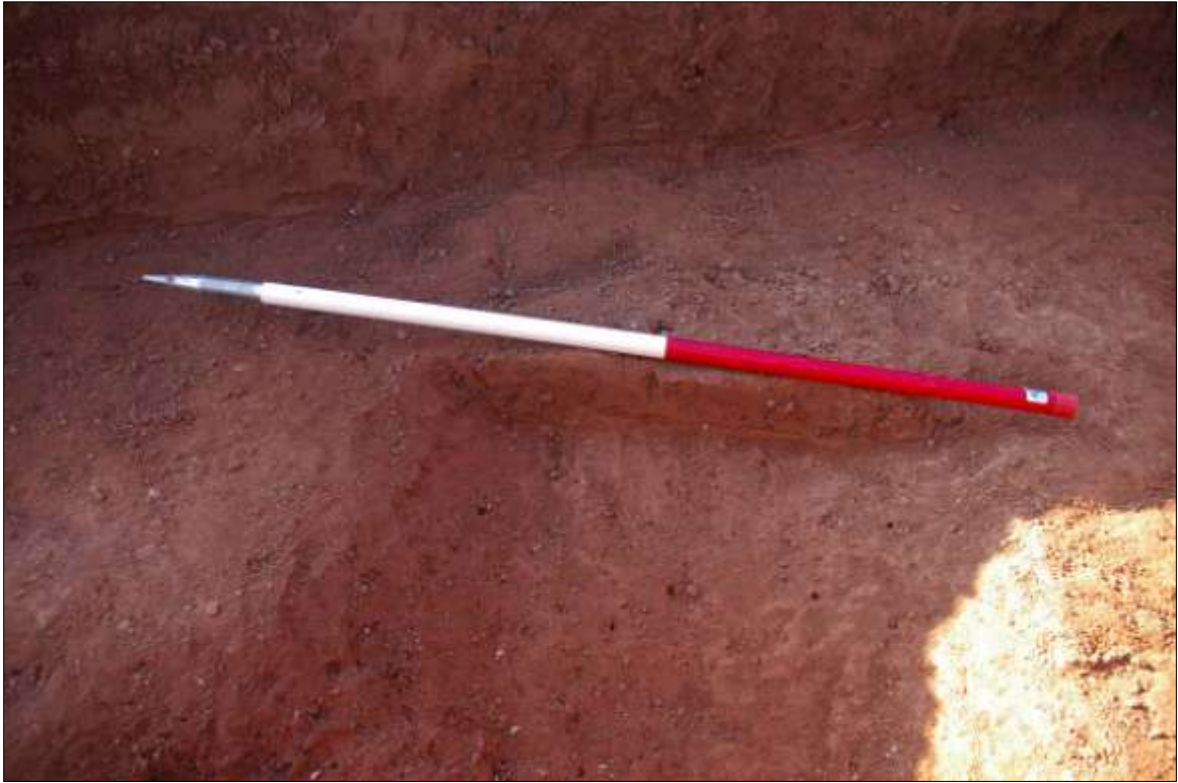
10. DITCH [404], POST-EXCAVATION; VIEWED FROM THE EAST (1M SCALE).



11. DITCH [405], EAST-SOUTH-EAST FACING SECTION, OBLIQUE; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (1M SCALE).



12. DITCH [405], POST-EXCAVATION; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST (1M SCALE).



13. DITCH [405], WEST-NORTH-WEST FACING SECTION; VIEWED FROM THE WEST-NORTH-WEST (1M SCALE).



14. TRENCH 04, POST-EXCAVATION; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-NORTH-WEST (2M SCALE).



15. (LEFT) DITCH [503], WEST FACING SECTION; VIEWED FROM THE WEST (1M SCALE).
16. (RIGHT) TRENCH 05, POST-EXCAVATION; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-NORTH-EAST (2M SCALE).



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