

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT:

TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND OFF 70 REACH ROAD, BURWELL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Planning Reference: 12/00272/FUL

NGR: TL 5836 6601

Oasis Reference: allenarc1-131664

AAL Site Code: BURR 12

CHER Event Number: ECB3827



Report prepared for
Armtrac Ltd

By
Allen Archaeology Limited
Report Number 2012068

August 2012



The
Authority on
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Executive Summary

- Allen Archaeology Limited was commissioned by Armtrac Limited to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land at 70 Reach Road in Burwell, Cambridgeshire as a condition of a planning application for a new office and training facility.
- The site lies within an area of recognised archaeological potential. An evaluation carried out by Allen Archaeology in the adjacent field in 2007 revealed evidence for later prehistoric and Roman activity as well as two late Iron Age burials along the edge of a former stream channel.
- The 2012 evaluation did not find anything comparable to the burials or industrial finds of the earlier works and revealed a pit of possible later Iron Age or Roman date sealed beneath an alluvial layer that may be associated with the inundation events identified in the 2007 evaluation. Two undated ditches cutting the alluvial horizon date and a modern posthole relating to a modern shed, which was demolished prior to the works, were also identified.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited (hereafter AAL) was commissioned by Armtrac Limited to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching in advance of the construction of new office and training facilities on land at 70 Reach Road, Burwell in Cambridgeshire.
- 1.2 The excavating, recording and reporting undertaken in relation to the evaluation conform to current national guidelines, as set out in the Institute for Archaeologists '*Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluations*' (IfA 1994, revised 2001 and 2008), the regional guidelines in '*Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*' (Gurney 2003), a brief prepared by the Historic Environment Team of Cambridgeshire County Council (hereafter CHET) (McConnell 2011), a specification prepared by this company (2012) as well as all relevant English Heritage guidelines on archaeological best practice (www.helm.org/server/show/nav.7740).
- 1.3 The documentary archive will be submitted to the Cambridgeshire's County Archaeological Store within six months of the completion of the project and sorted under the CHER event number ECB3827.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The site is situated to the southwest of the centre of Burwell, to the northeast of Reach Road. It comprises a block of land measuring c.1.5ha, centred on NGR TL 5836 6601 (Figure 1).
- 2.2 The local geology comprises a Marly soil overlying a bedrock geology of West Melbury Chalk Formation (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>). The site is relatively flat, lying at a height of approximately 5.5 – 5.9m above Ordnance Datum.

3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 A planning application was submitted for the construction of new office/training facilities and ancillary works (Planning Application Reference 12/00272/FUL). The application was granted, with conditions, including the undertaking of a programme of archaeological trial trenching in order to determine the archaeological potential of the proposed development area.
- 3.2 This decision was in line with the recommendations of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with the particular chapter of relevance being '*Chapter 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*' (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012).

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 The Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) holds information regarding archaeological remains in the vicinity of the site. In much of the parish, prehistoric activity is attested by isolated findspots of worked lithic material, including the Burwell jadeite axe (CHER Reference Number 06477). A scatter of worked flints has been recorded c.200m northwest of the site (CHER Reference Number 04337) and a Bronze Age dagger c.350m west of the site (CHER Reference Number 06459). Late Bronze Age artefacts are recorded from the vicinity of the parish church (CHER Reference Number 06769) and at least ten round barrows once existed on Burwell Heath (Cambridgeshire County Council 2006). Undated ring ditches are

recorded c.750m to the south (CHER Reference Number 06455 and 06456) with similar cropmarks c.440-950m to the southwest (CHER Reference Number MCB18177 and 09247).

- 4.2 Romano-British remains from the parish indicate a possible villa site may have existed at Reach, to the west of the application area, with a further potential villa adjacent to Burwell Castle to the east. Other contemporary activity is recorded in and around the village of Burwell, including Roman pottery, tile and small finds recorded (Archaeology Data Service (ADS) Record ID – NMR_NATINV-374690), (CHER Reference Numbers 40298, 04663, CB14758, 06843, 06768, 06807 and 10953).
- 4.3 The place-name Burwell is probably of Anglo-Saxon origin, and means 'spring by the fort'. A late Saxon coin dating to 946 – 955 AD was found c.400m northeast of site (CHER Reference Number CB14760) and further east a cemetery of early to mid Saxon date has been located (CHER Reference Number 06764). At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 AD, land was owned by The Abbot of Ramsey, the nuns of the church of Chatteris and Count Alan (Williams and Martin 2002).
- 4.4 A medieval arrowhead (CHER Reference Number 06466) was found 280m east-southeast of the site in the vicinity of Burwell Castle (CHER 01775). The motte castle is an unfinished structure built by King Stephen's forces in the 12th century. North of the castle area there is a moated site (CHER Reference Number 01122). Medieval ridge and furrow systems have been recorded c.0.5 – 1km west and south of the site (CHER Reference Number 06702, 06716-06719 and 06701). Evidence of medieval industry has been recorded on Isaacson Road 800m east-southeast of the site (CHER Reference Number MCB17444) and a clunch quarry 550m to the west (CHER Reference Number CB15739). A possible house platform of medieval date has been reported on The Causeway c.930m north of the site.
- 4.5 A clunch quarry of post-medieval date has also been recorded on Isaacson Road (CHER Reference Number 10889), and a post-medieval malt kiln and granary belonging to the manor house (CHER Reference Number 06722) has been recorded c.670m east of the site. Approximately 740m north of the site a ditch and postholes of 17th century date were recorded during archaeological works (CHER Reference Number CB14590)
- 4.6 Archaeological works undertaken immediately to the west of the site (AAA 2007) revealed remains of prehistoric and Roman date, based around a former water channel, with late Iron Age burials recovered from the edge of the channel itself. A pit filled with fuel ash slag was dated to the Romano-British period and may be indicative of nearby industry during the period. At the time the landscape was most likely short turfed open grassland with some shaded/overgrown areas, with disturbance of the grassland and channel muds by livestock, probably cattle. The palaeoenvironmental evidence showed that the area became inundated with the local landscape becoming a fen meadow with few trees and standing water.

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of three trial trenches, each measuring 10m in length and 1.6m wide (Figure 2) and was carried out during the week beginning 30th July 2012 by a team of field archaeologists, supervised by the author. Prior to the fieldwork the southern half of the site had been partly cleared of waste and vegetation. Nevertheless all three trenches had to be moved slightly from their proposed locations due to trees and an existing shed.

- 5.2 Machine excavation was undertaken using a JCB wheeled excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless bucket, removing topsoil in spits no greater than 0.1m in depth until the natural geology or the first archaeological horizon was exposed. All further excavation was undertaken by hand.
- 5.3 A full written record of the archaeological deposits was made on standard AAL context recording sheets. Archaeological features and deposits were drawn to scale, in plan and section (at scales 1:10, 1:20 and 1:50). Photography formed an integral part of the recording strategy. All photographs incorporated scales, with an identification board and directional arrow, and a selection of these images has been included in Appendix 1.
- 5.4 Each deposit, layer or cut was allocated a unique identifier (context number), and accorded a written description, a summary of these are included in Appendix 3. Three digit numbers within square brackets reflect cut features (e.g. pit [205]).

6.0 Results (Figures 2 – 5)

6.1 Trench 1 (Figure 3)

- 6.1.1 The uppermost deposit in Trench 1 consisted of 0.12m thick modern overburden, 100, comprising loose sandy silt with frequent modern building debris and waste material. It sealed a 0.36m thick layer of buried topsoil, 101, which consisted of friable, mid brownish grey sandy silt with frequent roots. The deposit overlay the natural geology, 102, which consisted of compact and friable chalky marl.
- 6.1.2 Apart from a modern disused water pipe which ran broadly northwest to southeast, the trench proved to be devoid of archaeological finds and features.

6.2 Trench 2 (Figure 4)

- 6.2.1 The uppermost deposit encountered in Trench 2, was a 0.15m thick layer of modern overburden, 200, comprising a gritty mix of orange sand and flint gravel and dark brown clayey silt with pebbles. It sealed a 0.18m thick, compact chalk deposit, 201, which was possibly the remains of a modern surface. This was set into a 0.22m thick layer of buried topsoil, 202, which comprised friable mid grey clayey silt with occasional charcoal flecks.
- 6.2.2 Two features were sealed by layer 202, an undated ditch and a modern posthole. The ditch, [206], which was aligned northwest to southeast, had gradually sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a primary fill, 207, which was heavily disturbed by roots and was sealed by a secondary dumped deposit of mid brown clayey silt 208. The posthole, [209], was evidently modern and contained an in-situ wooden post, 211, surrounded by packing 210, which included three 18th – 19th century brick fragments and was sealed by backfill 212.
- 6.2.3 Both features were cut into a 0.27m thick deposit of possible alluvium, 203, which comprised very firm mid brown clayey silt with frequent root intrusions. This deposit sealed an undated circular pit measuring c.0.96m in diameter and 0.36m deep. It contained a single fill 213, which consisted of very compact dark grey clayey silt with pebbles and chalk flecks and was devoid of finds. The pit was cut into the natural chalk geology 204.

6.3 Trench 3 (Figure 5)

- 6.3.1 The uppermost deposit encountered in Trench 3 was a 0.22m thick layer of topsoil, 300, which comprised loose and coarse light greyish brown silt and sealed a 0.42m thick layer of buried topsoil, 304, consisting of friable light brown clayey silt with occasional charcoal flecks and chalk flecks.
- 6.3.2 A single north to south aligned ditch [301] was sealed by layer 304 and was cut into the natural chalk geology 303. The ditch had shallow gradual sloping sides and an undulating base, and contained a single undated natural silting deposit 302.

7.0 Discussion and Conclusions

- 7.1 A total of five features were identified during the evaluation at 70 Reach Road, comprising two ditches, a pit, a posthole and a modern water pipe. The only dating evidence recovered was provided by three re-used brick fragments of 18th to 19th century date recovered from a posthole in Trench 2.
- 7.2 The pit recorded in Trench 2, although undated, is potentially the earliest feature encountered during the evaluation. It was sealed by a possible alluvial deposit, 203, and evidently pre-dates either a major flooding event, or perhaps more likely, a period when the area became generally more susceptible to flooding. Archaeological remains encountered in the adjacent field indicate that a rising water table probably led to the abandonment of that site at some time in the later Roman period (AAL 2007) and it is possible that alluvial deposit 203 dates to this period, with the pit possibly being contemporary with at least some of the remains encountered at the adjacent site. It is possible that the north to south ditch encountered in Trench 3 is also broadly contemporary with the remains at the adjacent site but an absence of finds and stratigraphic evidence means that the ditch could conceivably be of almost any date prior to the deposition of layer 304, which was probably of relatively recent date.
- 7.3 The ditch encountered in Trench 2 had been cut into the alluvial deposit 203 and therefore could not have been contemporary with the pit encountered in the same trench. Both its date and function remains unclear but the presence of a modern posthole within the same trench may suggest a relatively recent origin, possibly relating to outbuildings at the site.
- 7.4 The Ordnance Survey Maps from 1887 to 1959 show the site as being open agricultural land. The outbuildings on the site date to the early 1970s, and some were demolished in advance of the trial trenching.
- 7.5 The low density of deposits of potential archaeological interest that may be contemporary with the later Iron Age and Romano-British remains encountered in 2007 suggests that further activity of this date is more likely to be concentrated to the south and east of the 2007 excavations.

8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

- 8.1 The archaeological evaluation methodology was appropriate to the nature and extent of the proposed development. It has demonstrated that there are a small number of undated and modern features on the site that are of limited local significance.

9.0 Acknowledgements

- 9.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank Armtrac Limited for this commission and their cooperation during the evaluation.

11.0 References

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Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: General site shot, looking northeast. Scale is 1m



Plate 2: Trench 1, looking southeast. Scales are 1m



Plate 3: Trench 2, looking north-northeast. Scales are 1m



Plate 4: West-northwest facing section of pit [205] in Trench 2, looking east-southeast. Scales are 0.3m and 0.5m



Plate 5: Trench 3, looking northwest. Scales are 1m



Plate 6: North-northeast facing section of ditch [301], looking south-southwest. Scales are 1m and 0.5m

Appendix 2: Ceramic Building Material Report

Dr Anne Irving

Table 1, Ceramic Building Material Archive

Cxt	Cname	Fabric	NoF	W (g)	Description	Date
210	BRICK	Fine oxidised sandy + flint	1	1059	Handmade; slop moulded; 60 x 105mm	18th to 19th
210	BRICK	Fine oxidised sandy + flint	1	887	Handmade; mortar; slop moulded; 60mm	18th to 19th
210	BRICK	Vitrified + flint	1	981	Handmade; mortar; 60 x 105mm	18th to 19th

All three bricks appear to be manufactured in the same way from the same fabric. The presence of a vitrified brick may suggest the three fragments come from a Glazed-headed Flemish Bond structure; this brickwork bond was common in the early part of the 18th century.

None of the material requires further work and all the fragments can be discarded.

SPOT DATING

The dating in Table 2 is based on the evidence provided by the finds detailed above.

Table 2, Spot dates

Cxt	Date	Comment
210	18th to 19th	Date on bricks

Appendix 3: Context Summary List

CBM = Ceramic Building Material (e.g. brick and tile)

Trench 1

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
100	Layer	Moderately loose sandy silt with frequent modern building debris and waste material, seals 101	Modern overburden
101	Layer	Slightly friable mid brown grey sandy silt with frequent roots, sealed by 100, seals 102	Buried topsoil
102	Layer	Compact and friable chalk, sealed by 101	Natural geology

Trench 2

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
200	Layer	Gritty mix of orange sand and flint gravel and dark brown clayey silt and pebbled gravel, seals 201	Modern overburden
201	Layer	Compact chalk, sealed by 201, seals 202	Possible modern platform
202	Layer	Friable mid grey clayey silt with occasional charcoal flecks, sealed by 201, seals 208 and 212	Buried topsoil
203	Layer	Very firm mid brown clayey silt with frequent root intrusions, cut by [206] and [209], seals 213	Alluvial deposit
204	Layer	Friable and very firm light brown chalk, cut by [205]	Natural geology
205	Cut	Circular feature with steep sides and curved base, contains 213, cuts 204	Cut of pit
206	Cut	NW-SE aligned linear with gradual sloping sides and slight curving base, contains 207 and 208, cuts 203	Cut of ditch
207	Fill	Friable and firm mottled light brown and mid brown clayey silt with frequent rootlets, sealed by 208	Primary fill of ditch [206]
208	Fill	Firm mid brown clayey silt with rare charcoal flecks, seals 207, sealed by 202	Secondary fill of ditch [206]
209	Cut	Circular feature with vertical sides and flat base, contains 210, 211 and 212	Cut of modern posthole
210	Fill	Red bricks of an average size of 60x100x60mm, packed around 211, sealed by 212	Packing bricks of posthole [209]
211	Fill	Wooden post with a diameter of c.110mm and length 130mm	Post of posthole [209]
212	Fill	Moderately compact mottled greyish white and light brown chalk and clayey silt with occasional brick fragments and chalk, seals 210	Backfill of posthole [209]
213	Fill	Compact dark grey clayey silt with pebbles and chalk flecks	Fill of pit [205]

Trench 3

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
300	Layer	Loose and coarse light grey brown silt, seals 304	Topsoil
301	Cut	N-S aligned shallow linear with gradual sloping sides and undulating base, contains 302, cuts 303	Cut of ditch
302	Fill	Very compact brownish grey clayey silt with crushed chalk, sealed by 304	Natural silting of ditch [301]
303	Layer	Beige white chalk, cut by [301]	natural geology
304	Layer	Friable light brown clayey silt with occasional charcoal flecks and chalk flecks, sealed by 300, seals 302	Buried topsoil

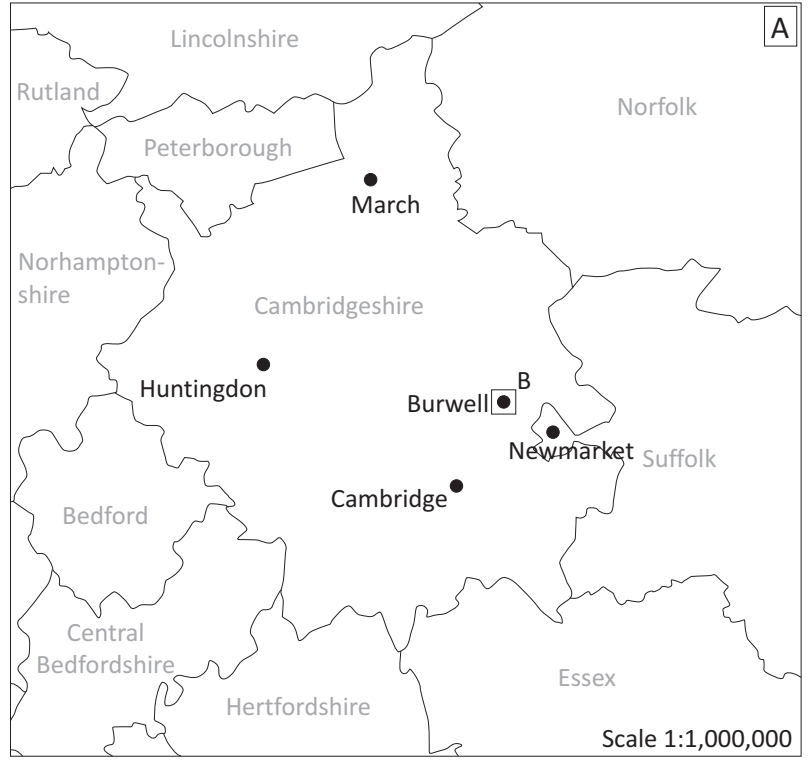
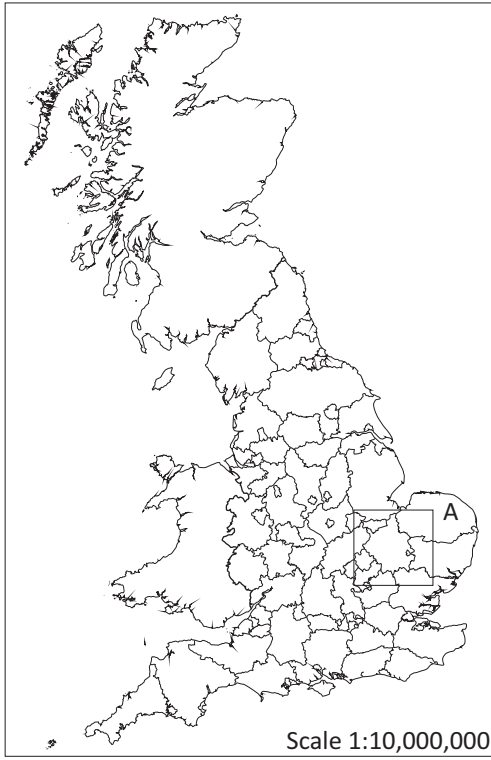
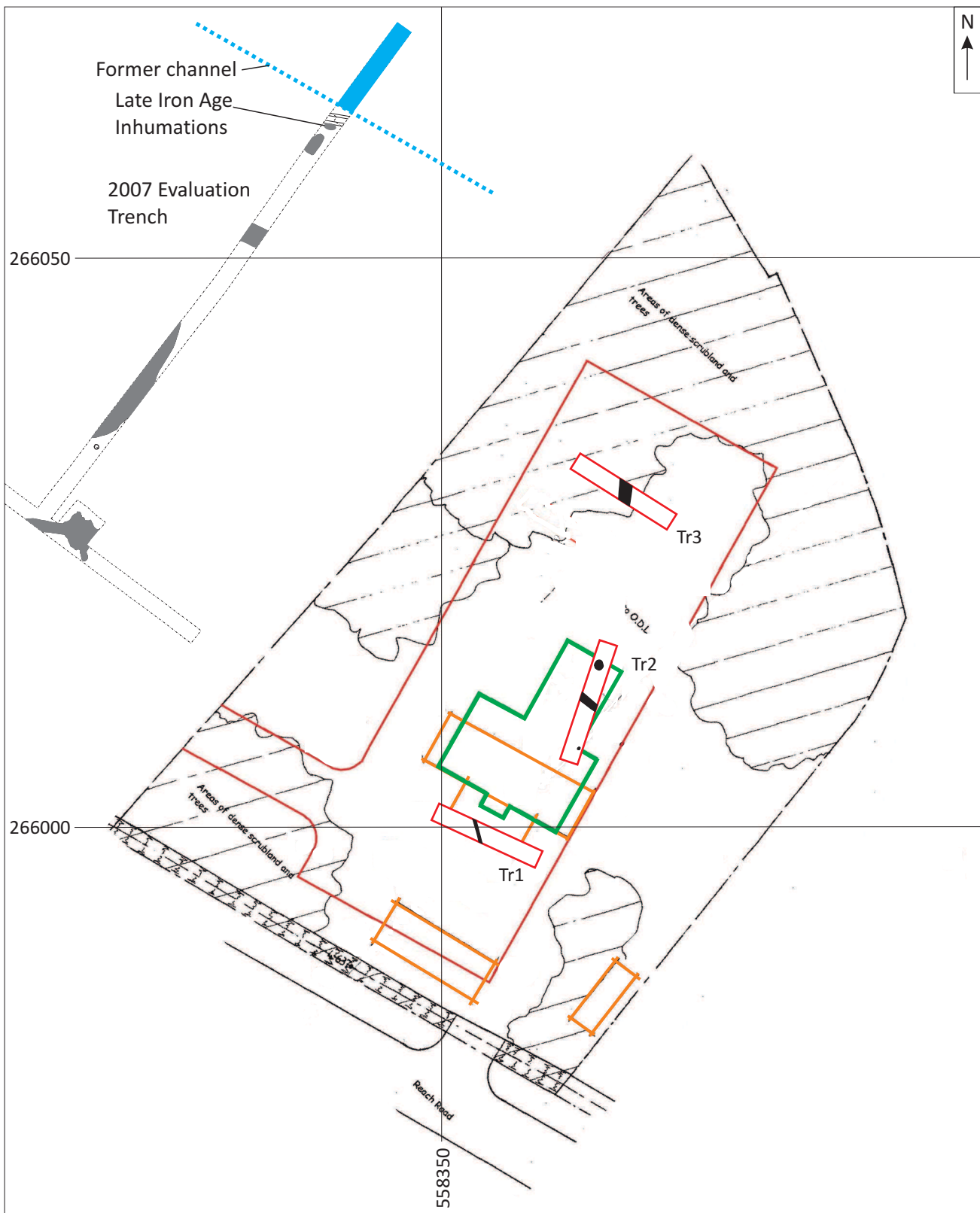


Figure 1: Site location with proposed development site shown in red
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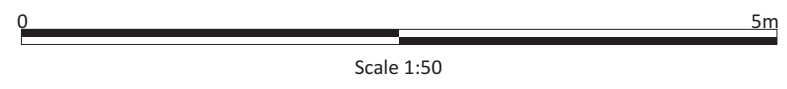
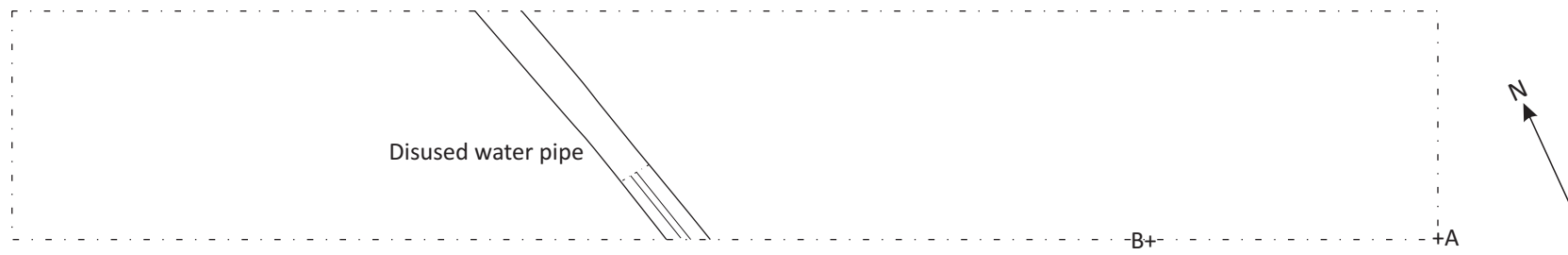
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Scale	1:500 @ A4
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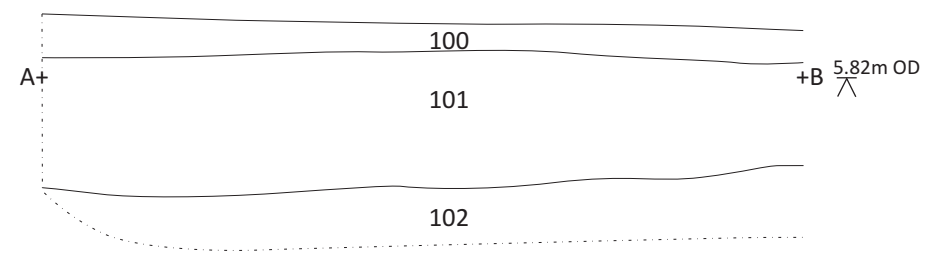
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Figure 2: Site location with development area and trenches in red, and archaeological features in black. 2007 evaluation archaeological remains shown in grey and former channel in blue. Proposed new building in green and demolished sheds in orange



North-northeast Facing Section



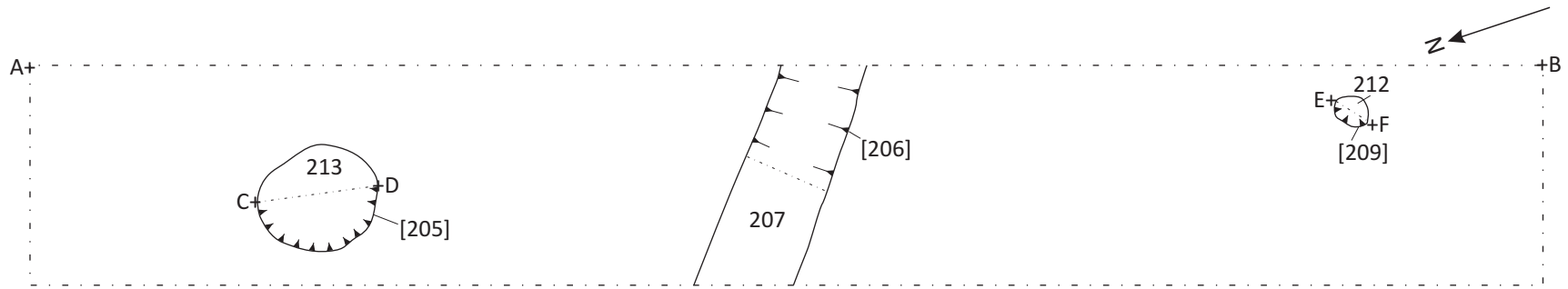
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Drawn by	M. Piirainen
Date	06/08/2012

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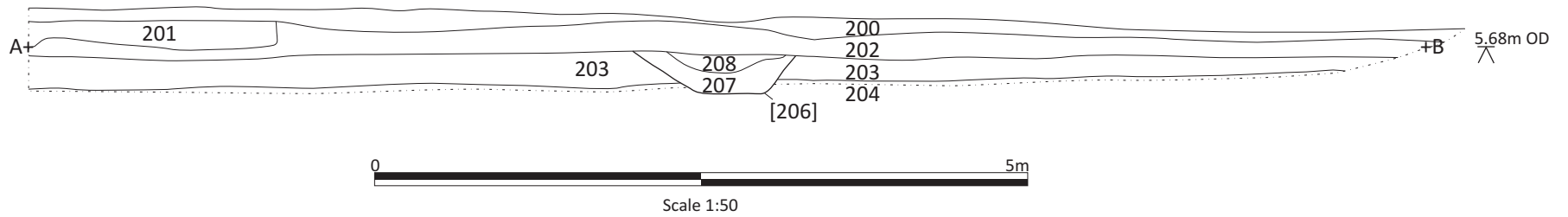
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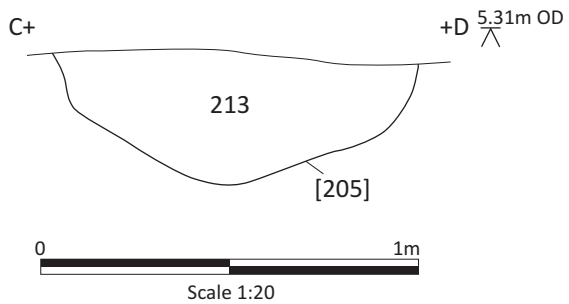
Figure 3: Trench 1 plan and section



West-Northwest Facing Section



West-Northwest Facing Section



North-West Facing Section

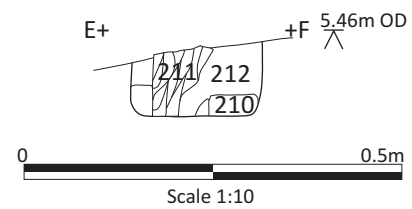
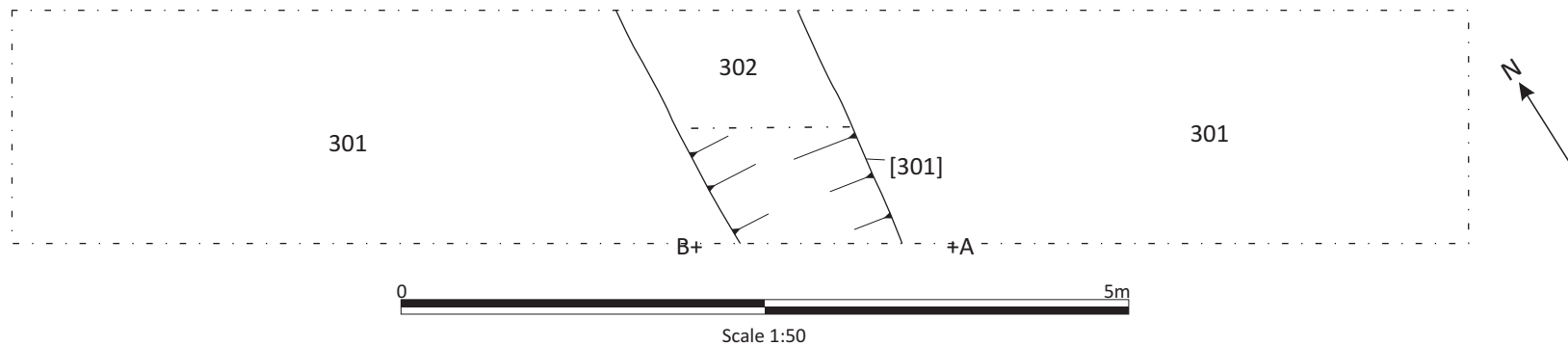
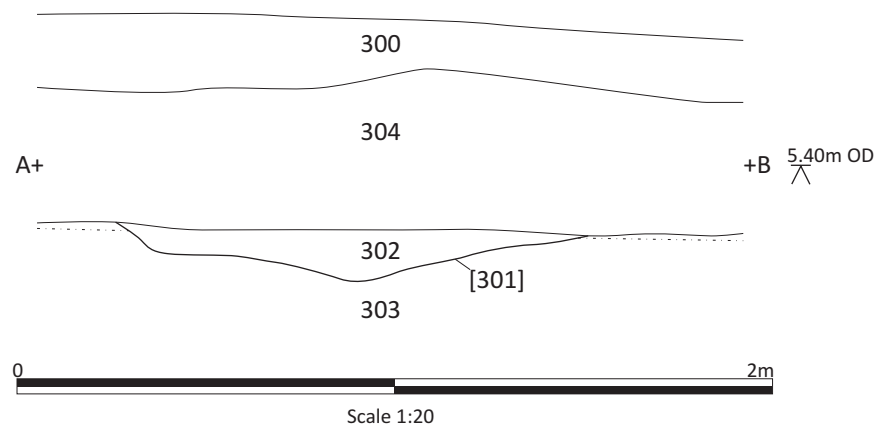


Figure 4: Plan and sections of Trench 2

Site Name	BURR 12
Scale	1:50, 1:20, 1:10 @A4
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South-Southwest Facing Section



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Figure 5: Plan and section of Trench 3



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