

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT:
TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND OFF MAIN STREET, FOXTON, LEICESTERSHIRE

Planning Application: 12/01199/FUL
NGR: SP 7026 9029
AAL Site Code: FOMS 12
Museum Accession Number: X.A97.2012
OASIS Reference Number: allenarc1-135598



Report prepared for Landmark Planning
On behalf of Mr and Mrs Burnett

By
Allen Archaeology Limited
Report Number AAL 2012093

October 2012



Allenarchaeology



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Executive Summary

- Allen Archaeology Limited was commissioned by Landmark Planning to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land north of Main Street in Foxton, Leicestershire.
- The site lies within an area of archaeological potential, on the edge of the historic core of the medieval village. Earthworks and cropmarks indicative of medieval settlement and agriculture are recorded to the north of the site with a possible medieval house platform identified in the garden area of the proposed development.
- Two trenches were excavated in the proposed development area. In both trenches, the topsoil sealed a mixed undated clay deposit that may be the remnants of a former house platform, although the lack of associated artefacts or remains (e.g. postholes or beam slots) means that any interpretation remains unsubstantiated. The lack of artefactual material does however suggest that there was limited or no activity on the site in the medieval or later periods. On this basis it is deemed that the development is likely to have a negligible impact upon the archaeology of the village.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited (hereafter AAL) was commissioned by Landmark Planning on behalf of their clients, Mr and Mrs Burnett, to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching as part of a planning application for the construction of a single dwelling on land off Main Street in Foxton, Leicestershire.
- 1.2 The excavating, recording and reporting conforms to current national guidelines, as set out in the Institute for Archaeologists '*Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluations*' (IfA 1999, revised 2001 and 2008), the English Heritage document '*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*' (English Heritage 2006) and a specification prepared by this company (AAL 2012a). All appropriate English Heritage guidance on archaeological practice was also followed (www.helm.org/server/show/nav.7740).
- 1.3 The documentary archive will be submitted to Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service within six months of the completion of the project and will be stored under the Museum Accession Number X.A97.2012.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The development site is located in the parish of Foxton, in the administrative district of Harborough, approximately 4km to the northwest of the centre of Market Harborough. The site is located to north of the village focus itself and is centred on NGR SP 7026 9029 (Figure 1). The site gently slopes downwards from south to north to a stream bordering the north of the site and lies at a height of c. 89m above Ordnance Datum.
- 2.2 The bedrock geology comprises Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone Formation, there are no superficial deposits recorded (http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google.html).

3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 The proposed development comprises the construction of a single dwelling and garage. To determine the archaeological potential of the proposed development area, a desk-based assessment was undertaken as the first stage of investigation (AAL 2012b). This identified a significant archaeological potential for the site and following discussions with the Principal Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council it was agreed that a programme of trial trenching should be undertaken to further characterise the archaeological resource in advance of the determination of a submitted planning application. This would also provide sufficient information to allow the planning authority to develop any appropriate strategies to mitigate the effects of the development upon the archaeological resource as a condition of planning permission.
- 3.2 The approach adopted is consistent with the recommendations of Chapter 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012).

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 The preceding archaeological desk-based assessment (AAL 2012b) identified a significant archaeological potential for the proposed development area, and this information is summarised below.
- 4.2 There is no evidence for any activity in the vicinity of the site predating the medieval period. The site is situated on the edge of the historic core of the village, which appears to be a planned medieval settlement, based around three main streets running northeast to southwest, with the current site fronting onto one of these thoroughfares, Main Street. The parish church of St. Andrew and the site of two former manors are located to the south of the village. Aerial photographs have identified cropmarks and earthworks indicative of medieval settlement immediately to the north of the current site, and a possible medieval house platform was identified on the current site, extending beyond the north-western site boundary.

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 A strategy for the trial trenching was agreed with the Leicestershire County Council Historic and Natural Environment Team, comprising two trenches, each measuring 10m long by 1.6m wide, with one trench located in the footprint of the proposed dwelling and one to examine the possible house platform earthwork in the garden area of the site. Unfortunately as the southern half of the site was inaccessible due to barbed wire fencing and dense vegetation, both trenches had to be placed in the garden area. Trench 1 was aligned broadly east – west and positioned as close to the hedge boundary as possible. It was connected to the north – south aligned Trench 2 at its west end. The work was carried out by a team of experienced field archaeologists, supervised by the author over a single day, Friday 12th October 2012. Each trench was machined with a JCB 3CX wheeled excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless bucket.
- 5.2 The topsoil and underlying deposits were removed in spits no greater than 0.1m until the natural geology or first archaeological horizon was exposed. All further excavation was then 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 1:50). 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 three digit identifier (context number), and accorded a written description, a summary of these are included in Appendix 2.

6.0 Results (Figures 2 – 3)

- 6.1 The two trenches exposed an identical sequence of deposits and as such are discussed simultaneously. The uppermost deposit was a brown silty clay topsoil 100/200 varying between c.0.2m and 0.3m thick. It sealed a mixed dark yellowish brown silty clay, with moderate inclusions of rounded pebbles and cobbles, 101/201, which in turn sealed a natural geology of compact yellowish brown clay, 102/202.

7.0 Discussion and Conclusions

- 7.1 The trial trenching identified a mixed clay deposit with frequent pebbles and cobbles immediately beneath the topsoil. No dating evidence was recovered from this horizon, which appeared to be the origin of the mound within the site. Interpretation of the mounded area is therefore problematic; the erosion of mud and stud walls from an early dwelling may result in the accumulation of material to form a mound, although the lack of dateable material and the absence of any postholes, beam slots or other structural features mean it is not possible to confirm if the mound was a house platform associated with the medieval settlement.
- 7.2 The lack of artefacts from the trenching, either in stratified deposits or in residual contexts, and the absence of any cut features corroborating an interpretation of the mound as a putative house platform means it can only be concluded that the impact of the proposed development upon the archaeological resource is likely to be negligible.

8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

- 8.1 Although it was not possible to evaluate the area of the proposed new dwelling due to access restrictions, this allowed the investigations to focus on the earthwork platform to the north. Unfortunately, despite extensive trenching of the feature no dateable materials or associated features were uncovered to aid the interpretation of the mound. Nevertheless, the archaeological evaluation methodology was otherwise appropriate to the nature and extent of the proposed development and has demonstrated that it is unlikely that any associated groundworks will impact upon significant archaeological deposits.

9.0 Acknowledgements

- 9.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank Landmark Planning and their clients Mr and Mrs Burnett for this commission.

10.0 References

AAL, 2012a, *Specification for an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching: Land off Main Street, Foxton, Leicestershire*. Allen Archaeology Limited

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Knight D., Vyner B. and Allen C., 2012, *East Midlands Heritage. An updated research agenda and strategy for the historic environment of the East Midlands*, University of Nottingham, Nottingham

Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: General site shot, looking south



Plate 2: General view of Trench 1, looking west. Scales are 2m and 1m



Plate 3: West facing section in Trench 2, looking east. Scales are 1m and 0.30m

Appendix 2: Context Summary List**Trench 1**

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
100	Layer	Compact dark brown silty clay, seals 101	Topsoil
101	Layer	Very compact dark yellowish brown silty clay and moderate amount of rounded pebbles and cobbles, sealed by 100	Dumped deposit of unknown date or function
102	Layer	Compact mid yellowish brown clay, sealed by 101	Natural geology

Trench 2

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
200	Layer	Compact dark brown silty clay, seals 201	Topsoil
201	Layer	Very compact dark yellowish brown silty clay and moderate amount of rounded pebbles and cobbles, sealed by 200	Dumped deposit – truncated house platform mound
202	Layer	Compact mid yellowish brown clay, sealed by 201	Natural geology

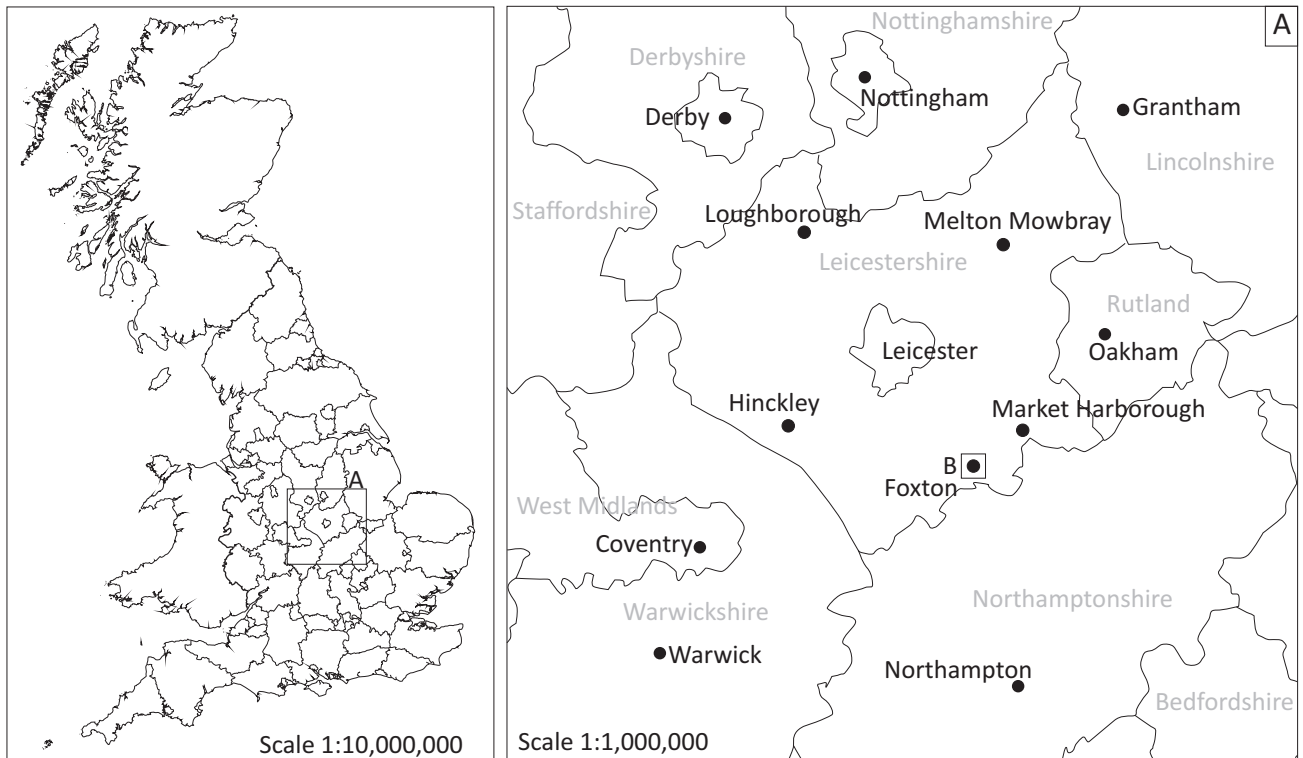
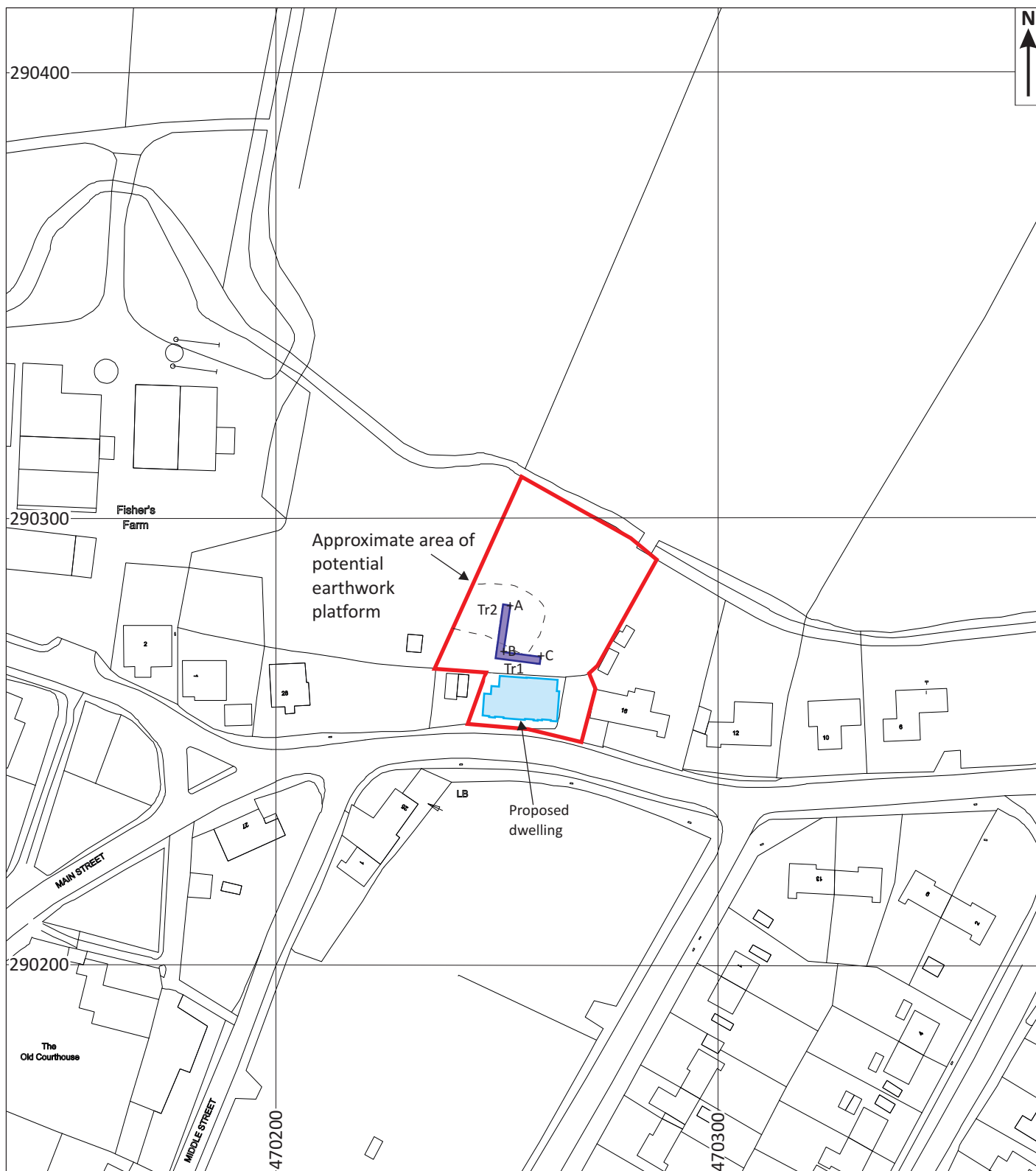


Figure 1: Site location outlined in red

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Site Code: FOMS 12
 Scales: 1:10,000,000
 1:1,000,000
 1:25,000 @ A4
 Drawn by: M Piirainen
 Date: 22/10/12

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Site Code: FOMS 12
 Scale: 1:1250 @ A4
 Drawn by: M.Piirainen
 Date: 22/10/2012

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Figure 2: Site location with the development area outlined in red, trenches in dark blue and proposed dwelling in light blue. See Figure 3 for sections A - B and B - C

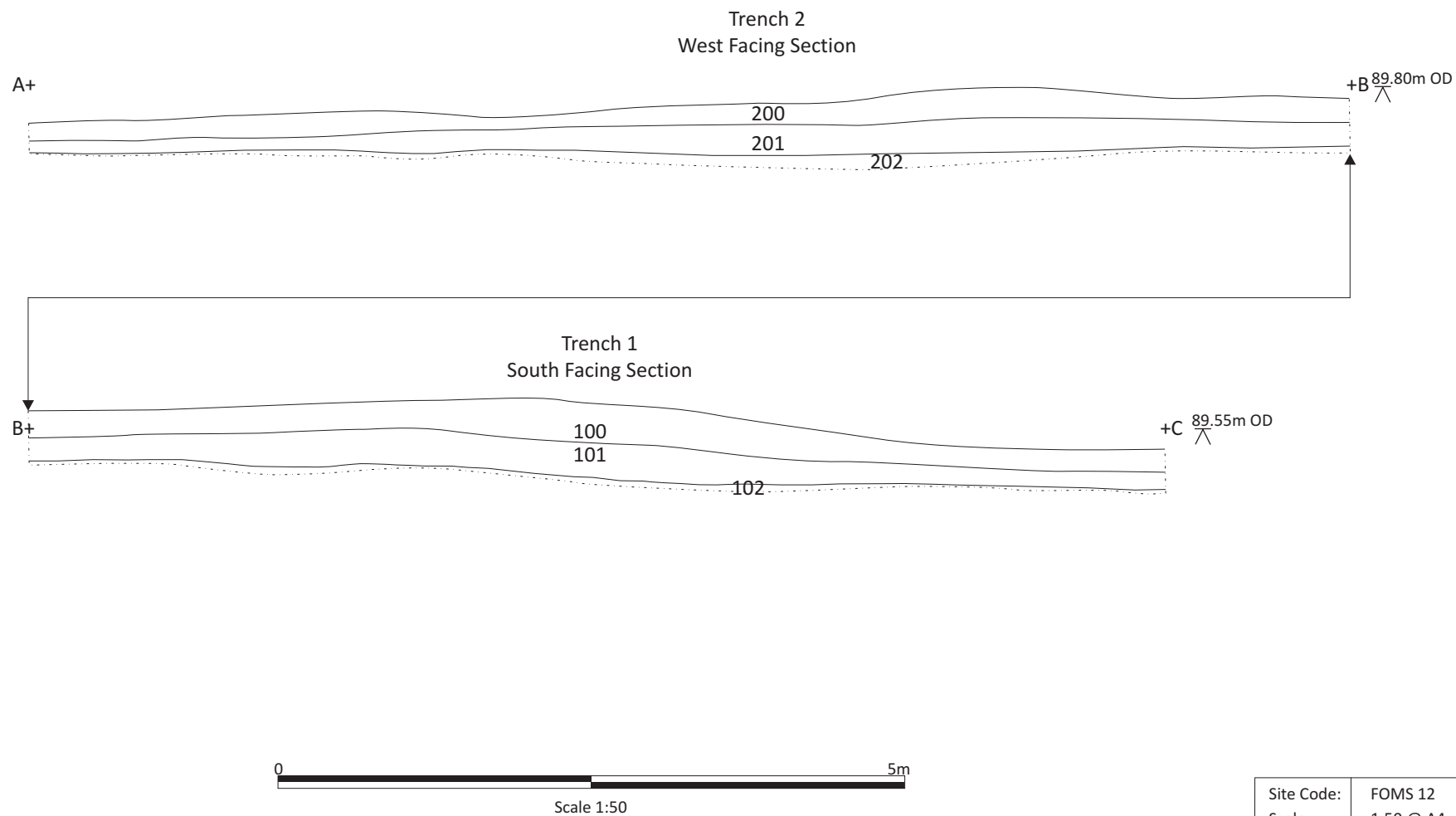


Figure 3: Representative sections of Trench 1 and 2, located on Figure 2

Site Code:	FOMS 12
Scale:	1:50 @ A4
Drawn by:	M. Piirainen
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