

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT:

TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND AT THE DIAL, WEST LANE, PIRTON, HERTFORDSHIRE

Planning References: 12/01859/1 and 13/00047/1

NGR: TL 1450 3207

AAL Site Code: PID113

OASIS Reference Number: allenarc1-155897

HER Enquiry Reference: 99/13



Report prepared for Mr and Mrs Lidder

By
Allen Archaeology Limited
Report Number AAL2013096

August 2013



Allenarchaeology



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Executive Summary

- Allen Archaeology Limited was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Lidder to carry out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching of land at The Dial, Pirton, Hertfordshire, to fulfil a planning condition for the construction of a single dwelling.
- There are known cultural heritage assets near the development site including Saxo-Norman and medieval remains associated with the pre- and post-conquest settlement of Pirton. As such the development site was deemed to be of archaeological interest.
- The evaluation revealed a single pit of medieval date, located in Trench 2, within the footprint of the proposed development. Pottery recovered from the pit backfill indicates a date of 12th to early 13th century, which would correspond with the expansion of the village and any associated farmsteads following construction of the motte and bailey castle and St Mary's Church.
- Groundworks for the proposed development area can be reasonably expected to encounter a low density of similar features of medieval date.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited (hereafter AAL) was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Lidder to carry out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching of land at The Dial, Pirton, Hertfordshire, to fulfil a planning condition for the construction of a single dwelling.
- 1.2 The excavation, recording and reporting conforms to current national guidelines, as set out in the Institute for Archaeologists '*Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation*' (IfA 1995, revised 2001 and 2008) and the English Heritage documents '*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*' (English Heritage 2006) and '*Management of Archaeological Projects*' (English Heritage 1991). The regional guidelines '*Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*' (Gurney 2003) were also followed as well as a specification prepared by Allen Archaeology Limited (AAL 2012). All relevant English Heritage guidelines on archaeological best practice were also followed.
- 1.3 The documentary and physical archive will be deposited with North Hertfordshire District Council Museums Service within six months of the completion of the report. A copy of the archive listing will also be submitted to the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Team. A summary account on the results of the evaluation in the form of an OASIS form will be forwarded to the ADS in York following the completion of the works.

2.0 Site Location and Description (Figure 1)

- 2.1 The village of Pirton is situated in the administrative district of North Hertfordshire District Council, approximately 4.5km northwest of the centre of the town of Hitchin. The site is situated towards the northern extent of the village, north of West Lane and east of Burge End Lane. The development area is situated in an area of former garden attached to The Dial, immediately to the east, and centres on NGR TL 1450 3207, at approximately 63m above Ordnance Datum.
- 2.2 The local geology comprises bedrock deposits of West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation, with no superficial deposits recorded (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 A planning application was submitted to North Hertfordshire District Council for '*Hip to gable roof extensions to existing dwelling and insertion of 3 rear dormer windows in rear roof slope to facilitate conversion of loft into habitable accommodation. Erection of detached 4 bedroom dwelling with integral double garage and 2 associated car parking spaces. Widening of existing vehicular access and ancillary works*' (Planning Application Reference 12/01859/1). A subsequent application was submitted with amendments to this application for '*Proposed side extension to incorporate integral single garage with first floor accommodation, first floor extension above existing sitting room and single storey rear extension*' (Reference 13/00047/1). Planning permission was granted subject to conditions, including for a programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching in advance of development, in order to provide further information on the archaeological resource present in the proposed development area and to allow the planning authority to develop any appropriate mitigation strategies that may be required prior to development, as a subsequent stage of work.

- 3.2 The relevant planning policy which applies to the effect of development with regard to cultural heritage is Chapter 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012). This superseded Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5) in March 2012.

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 A full search of the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (hereafter HHER) was requested (reference 99/13) for an area extending 500m from the centre of the site and the results are detailed below along with other information gathered from secondary sources.
- 4.2 A Bronze Age hoard of four looped and socketed bronze axes has previously been found in the parish (HHER Reference 553). Further evidence for prehistoric activity in the local area is limited to the discovery of a probable Iron Age pot base (HHER Reference 195).
- 4.3 Roman discoveries include findspots of pottery (HHER references 1475 and 1477), a spindle whorl (HHER reference 1480), a Roman pit at Pirton Primary School (HHER reference 17170) and a pit and ditch located off Pollards Way (HHER reference 18649).
- 4.4 Pirton is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Pirtone*, which may translate from Old English for 'Pear Farm'. The manor was owned by Ralph de Limesy and formally held by Archbishop Stigand. Stigand was a major figure in pre-conquest England and was excommunicated and imprisoned, with his land holdings confiscated in 1070. At the time of the survey, the manor had 10 hides (c.1200 acres) with land for 20 ploughs (per team of 8 oxen) with an attached settlement including 24 villans, 4 cottars and 10 slaves who owed direct service to the manor, along with several freemen including a Knight, a priest and a sokeman. Also noted was enough meadowland to support another 10 ploughs, woodland to support 500 pigs, and four mills (Williams and Martin 2002, 382). This suggests a relatively affluent settlement that was already well developed prior to the Conquest.
- 4.5 Evaluation and excavation at The Fox Public House just south of the site revealed evidence for Saxo-Norman occupation including wall foundations, enclosures, pits and postholes dating to c.900 – 1450 AD (HHER reference 9676). Further investigation uncovered a series of buildings surrounding a cemetery (HHER reference 9677), with one of the buildings possibly representing an early church, predating St Mary's Parish Church, which itself includes elements from the 12th century (HHER reference 4315).
- 4.6 A programme of test pitting undertaken by Cambridge University identified the focus of the Saxon-Norman settlement as being north of the modern village (HHER reference 16620) centred around Burge End Farm, which lies north of the site. Mid 11th to mid 14th century pottery was recovered from most test pits, indicating a large and densely settled village focussed around the site of the scheduled motte and bailey castle at Toot Hill (Scheduled Monument (SM) 13612), which was built in the 12th century for the de Limesy family. The bailey was likely a timber structure and may have been dismantled during Henry II's reign as an unlicensed castle, as with many others. It is believed the motte and bailey may cover an earlier Saxon fortification, although this is as yet unproven.
- 4.7 After the 14th century, the village is believed to have contracted into a number of isolated farmsteads until the post-medieval period (HHER reference 16620). Several features of this date survive in the area. Hammonds Farm, just northwest of the site has a 16th century

farmhouse (HHER Reference 4513) and a post-medieval dovecote (HHER Reference 6300). A similar dovecote survives at the adjacent Burge End Farm located at the end of Burge End Lane (HHER Reference 6301). Rectory Farm on the western edge of the village has a 17th century manor house and a farmstead which includes 16th – 17th century barns (HHER References 154 and 6302) as well as a scheduled moated enclosure (HHER Reference 2221 and SM 20648).

- 4.8 Unusually for the county, the village remained as a nucleated settlement with an historic field pattern of open strip fields. This has been characterised by Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record as: HLC 6 Pirton Parliamentary Enclosure of common arable, now prairie fields.

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 Two trenches, each measuring 10m long by 1.6m wide were positioned within the footprint of the proposed development in an inverted L-shape (Figures 2 and 3).
- 5.2 Topsoil and underlying non-archaeological deposits were removed in spits no greater than 100mm using a machine excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless bucket, monitored at all times by an experienced field archaeologist, until the first archaeological or natural horizon was encountered.
- 5.3 The evaluation was undertaken by the author and Dr Edward Oakley of AAL on the 16th July 2013. Scale drawings were produced to illustrate the site stratigraphy. The trench locations and drawn sections were accurately located using a survey grade Leica GS08 RTK NetRover GPS.
- 5.4 All archaeological deposits were recorded photographically, with an identification number board, appropriate scales and a directional arrow included in each shot. General site shots were also be taken to show the location of the groundworks.
- 5.5 Standard AAL context recording sheets were used to record all archaeological and non-archaeological deposits encountered on the site.

6.0 Results (Figures 2 – 4)

- 6.1 The inverted L-shaped trench comprised an east – west arm (Trench 1) and a north – south arm (Trench 2) (Figure 2).
- 6.2 Trench 1 was aligned approximately east – west and revealed friable dark grey brown silty clay topsoil 100, measuring 0.6m thick and overlying a compact chalky marl natural 101 (Figure 4 and Plate 1).
- 6.3 The sole feature exposed in Trench 1 was a modern service trench in the base of the trench, aligned approximately southwest by northeast and containing an electric cable (Figures 2 and 3 and Plate 2).
- 6.4 Trench 2 was aligned approximately north – south and joined Trench 1 at its eastern end (Figures 2 and 3). A steep-sided pit [203] was revealed cut into natural chalky marl 204 approximately 4m from the northern end of the trench.

- 6.5 This pit was truncated by a live electric service, with a bund of earth left *in situ* around the cable. As such, the pit was only partially exposed in section and plan. Where exposed, the excavated pit measured 1.6m wide by 0.89m deep with a steep southern side and a flat base (Figures 3 and 4 and Plate 3).
- 6.6 Pit [203] contained a lower silting episode of friable dark grey silt clay 202 measuring 0.31m thick, which was overlain by deposit 201. This later deposit measured 0.58m thick and represents a backfill of grey silt clay with occasional stones and a small group of early medieval pottery (Appendix 2). The backfilled pit was sealed by modern topsoil measuring 0.38m thick, from which further medieval pottery was recovered, likely to have been disturbed from the underlying pit.

7.0 Discussion and Conclusions

- 7.1 The evaluation revealed a large pit dating from the medieval period, located just west of the existing building. Pottery dating from 12th to early 13th century was recovered from the pit, while the topsoil from Trench 2 produced a small collection of artefacts spanning the early medieval to post-medieval periods.
- 7.2 This pit, while isolated, indicates some potential for nearby medieval occupation, which will add to the existing body of known heritage assets in the area. The Saxo-Norman core of Pirton is believed to lie to the north of the site around Burge End Farm, with a nucleated settlement then developing in the early medieval period around the motte and bailey castle and St Mary's church in the 12th century.
- 7.3 The development site would have lain roughly between the pre-conquest settlement and 12th century village, perhaps as part of a farmstead on the village periphery. Pottery dating suggests this pit was backfilled after the construction of the motte and bailey castle and St Mary's Church, at which point the settlement had become nucleated around the new core to the south of the site, with the former focus of late Saxon settlement around Burge Farm to the north fading from prominence.
- 7.4 The pit was backfilled with domestic refuse, including broken cooking pots, suggesting habitation within the immediate area, with such rubbish pits unlikely to be located far from a medieval building. No evidence for any structures was revealed in this evaluation but it cannot be discounted that remains may exist beyond the limits of evaluation trenching.
- 7.5 No further remains or artefacts were recovered from either trench. Modern services transect the proposed development, with the service in Trench 2 connecting to the existing bungalow and the service in Trench 1 appearing to pass across the lawn and heading northeast to a pasture field. It is uncertain where the services connect to southwest of both trenches.

8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

- 8.1 The archaeological scheme of works methodology was appropriate to the nature and extent of the proposed development. Whilst the exact foundation design is not known, there is a reasonable possibility that any foundation trenches will risk impacting on further buried heritage assets.

9.0 Acknowledgements

- 9.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank Mr and Mrs Lidder for this commission and Corn Plant for their cooperation during the fieldwork. Hertfordshire Historic Environment Team gave advice throughout the project.

10.0 References

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Williams A. and Martin G. H., 2002, *Domesday Book. A complete Translation*. Penguin Books: Bath

Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: General view of the site, looking north



Plate 2: Trench 1 looking west with a modern service visible bisecting the trench. Scales are both 1m



Plate 3: Representative section of Trench 1, looking north. Scales are 1m and 0.5m



Plate 4: Trench 2 looking north. A live electric cable is present at the northern end of the trench surrounded by a bund, and cutting pit [203]. The scales are both 1m



Plate 5: Pit [203], looking east. Scales are both 1m

Appendix 2: Medieval Pottery Report

Dr Anne Irving

THE POTTERY

Introduction

All the material was recorded at archive level in accordance with the guidelines laid out in Slowikowski *et al.* (2001). A total of 23 sherds from a maximum of 21 vessels, weighing 356 grams were recovered from the site.

Methodology

The material was laid out and viewed in context order. Sherds were counted and weighed by individual vessel within each context. The pottery was examined visually and using x20 magnification. This information was then added to an Access database. An archive list of the pottery is included in Archive Catalogue Table 2.3, with a summary in Table 2.1. The pottery dates to the early medieval period.

Results

Table 2.1: Summary of the pottery

Period	Cname	Full name	Earliest date	Latest date	NoS	NoV	W (g)
Early medieval	EMW	Early Medieval ware	1100	1230	2	2	14
	EMWG	Early medieval ware Gritty	1100	1230	2	1	18
	EMWM	Early Medieval Micaceous ware (generic)	1100	1230	12	11	257
	EMHM	Early Medieval Handmade ware	1100	1250	6	6	55
	SNEOT	St Neots-type ware	870	1200	1	1	12
				TOTAL	23	21	356

Potential

All the pottery is stable and poses no problems for long-term storage. No further work is required on the assemblage.

Discussion

The pottery was recovered from topsoil 200, and 201 fill of pit [203]. All the material dates to the early medieval period; similar groups of this date have been excavated from neighbouring Cambridgeshire (for example, at Huntingdon). A wide range of fabrics have been classified for ware types EMW, EMWM and EMHM, including Hertfordshire Grey wares, which are manufactured in the locality from the later 12th century. Early medieval vessels display distinct methods of manufacture, as they are often handmade and wheel finished, with knife trimmed bases and flared rims. Decoration tends to be limited to square roller stamped lines on the body or rim. All these features are present on the assemblage from Pirton and suggest the pottery dates from the 12th to early 13th century.

CONTEXT DATES

The dating in Table 2.2 is based on the evidence provided by the finds detailed above.

Table 2.2: Spot dates

Cxt	Date
200	12 th to early 13 th century
201	12 th to early 13 th century

ABBREVIATIONS

ACBMG Archaeological Ceramic Building Materials Group

BS Body sherd

CBM Ceramic Building Material

CXT Context

LHJ Lower Handle Join

NoF Number of Fragments

NoS Number of sherds

NoV Number of vessels

TR Trench

UHJ Upper Handle Join

W (g) Weight (grams)

REFERENCES

~ 2001, *Draft Minimum Standards for the Recovery, Analysis and Publication of Ceramic Building Material*, third version [internet]. Available from <http://www.geocities.com/acbm1/CBMGDE3.htm>

Slowikowski, A. M., Nenck, B., and Pearce, J., 2001, *Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics*, Medieval Pottery Research Group Occasional Paper

Archive Catalogue

Archive Catalogue Table 2.3: The Pottery

Cxt	Cname	Fabric	Form	No S	No V	W (g)	Part	Decoration	Description
200	EMHM	Buff	Jar/ bowl	1	1	22	BS	Square roller stamped lines on body	
200	EMHM	Dark reduced	Jar/ bowl	1	1	7	BS		
200	EMHM	Dark reduced	Jar/ bowl	1	1	8	BS		
200	EMHM	Oxidised	Jar/ bowl	2	2	13	BS		
200	EMW	Reduced	Jar/ bowl	2	2	14	BS	?ID or Roman?	
200	EMWG	Gritty	Jar/ bowl	2	1	18	BS + Rim	Soot; same vessel?	
200	EMWM	Oxidised	Jar	2	1	13	Rim + BS	Very abraded; ?ID	
200	WM	Reduced	Jar/ bowl	2	2	21	BS		
200	WM	Reduced	Jar/ bowl	1	1	8	Rim	Everted rim	
200	WM	Reduced	Jar/ bowl	2	2	26	Base	Soot	
200	WM	Reduced with oxidised surfaces + ca	Jar/ bowl	1	1	7	BS		
200	EOT		Jar/ bowl	1	1	12	BS		
201	HM	Buff	Jar/ bowl	1	1	5	BS	Square roller stamped lines on body	
201	WM	Reduced	Jar/ bowl	1	1	23	Rim		Soot
201	WM	Reduced	Jar/ bowl	1	1	113	Base		Knife trimmed; soot
201	EMWM	Reduced with red margins	Jar/ bowl	1	1	7	BS		
201	EMWM	Reduced with red margins	Jar/ bowl	1	1	39	Base		Knife trimmed; soot

Appendix 3: Clay Tobacco Pipe and Metal Finds Report

By Mike Wood

Introduction

Two fragments of clay tobacco pipe weighing 11g were recovered during archaeological work on land at The Dial, Pirton in Hertfordshire. The finds date from the late 17th to 19th century.

Methodology

The material was counted and weighed in grams, then examined visually to identify any diagnostic pieces and the overall condition of the assemblage. Reference was made to published guidelines (Higgins & Davey 2004). Where no other identification has been possible, stems have been dated by established stem bore guidelines (Oswald 1975). It should be noted that dates provided by stem- bore size can have an appreciable margin for error and are intended only as a general guide. A summary of the material is recorded in Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

Assemblage

Table 3.1: Clay tobacco pipe

Context	Date range	Stems	Bowls	Weight (g)	Stem bore	Comments
200	c.1660-1690	2		11	5/64"	Round, flat foot from a thick stem.

Table 3.2: Metal

Context	Date range	Material	Object	Weight (g)	Comments
200	c.1800-1900	iron	Nail	5	Flat headed tapering square shaft wrought iron timber nail. Machine cut.
200	c.1650-1750	Iron	Fork	18	Two pronged iron fork with a bulbous design just above the tapering tang, which would have fitted into a wooden or more likely bone handle.

Discussion

The assemblage contained a mix of post-medieval artefacts all derived from topsoil. This group includes fragments of clay tobacco pipe, a wrought iron nail and an iron fork, typical of those used prior to the 19th century. The fork would have been fitted onto a wooden or bone handle, which was not present.

Recommendations for further work

No further work is recommended. All of the artefacts could be returned to the landowner, passed to a teaching collection or be discarded.

References

Atkinson D. and Oswald, A., 1969 "London Clay Tobacco Pipes." *Journal of the Archaeological Association* . Third Series vol. XXXII, 1969.

Higgins, D A & Davey, P J, 2004, 'Appendix 4: Draft guidelines for using the clay tobacco pipe record sheets' in S D White, *The Dynamics of Regionalisation and Trade: Yorkshire Clay Tobacco Pipes c1600-1800*, *The Archaeology of the Clay Tobacco Pipe*, XVIII, *British Archaeological Reports (British Series 374)*, Oxford, 487-490 (567pp)

Oswald, A, 1975 *Clay Pipes for the Archaeologist* BAR 14, Oxford

Appendix 4: Context Summary List

Trench 1

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
100	Layer	Friable dark grey brown silty clay with occasional stones, seals 101	Topsoil
101	Layer	Compact chalky marl, sealed by 100	Natural geology

Trench 2

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
200	Layer	Friable dark grey brown silty clay with occasional stones, 0.38m thick, seals 201	Topsoil
201	Fill	Friable mid grey silt clay with occasional stones, 0.58m thick. Upper fill of [203], sealed by 200. Contains medieval pottery	Backfill of pit [203]
202	Fill	Friable dark grey silt clay with occasional chalk flecks, 0.31m thick. Lower fill of [203]	Lower fill of pit [203], initial silting episode
203	Cut	Sub-rounded pit with a steep southern side, the northern side is hidden by a baulk and the base only partially bottomed. Over 1.6m wide and 0.89m deep. Filled by 201 and 202, cuts 204	Medieval pit
204	Layer	Compact chalky marl, cut by [203]. Sealed by 200	Natural

Appendix 5: HER Summary Sheet

HERTFORDSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address: Pirton, The Dial, West Lane, Pirton, Hertfordshire		
County: Hertfordshire		District: North Hertfordshire
Village/Town: Pirton		Parish: Pirton
Planning application reference: 12/01859/1		
HER Enquiry reference: 99/13		
Funding source: Private developer		
Nature of application: Residential development		
Present land use: Garden		
Size of application area: 0.1ha		Size of area investigated: 32m2
NGR (to 8 figures minimum): TL 1450 3207		
Site code (if applicable): PID1 13		
Site director/Organization: Mike Wood		
Type of work Evaluation		
Date of work:	Start: 16/7/13	Finish: 16/7/13
Location of finds & site archive/Curating museum: North Hertfordshire Museums Resource Centre		
Related HER Nos:		Periods represented: Medieval
Relevant previous summaries/reports		
Summary of fieldwork results: A large medieval pit was located in Trench 2 parallel to the existing building.		
Author of summary: M Wood		Date of summary: 24/7/13

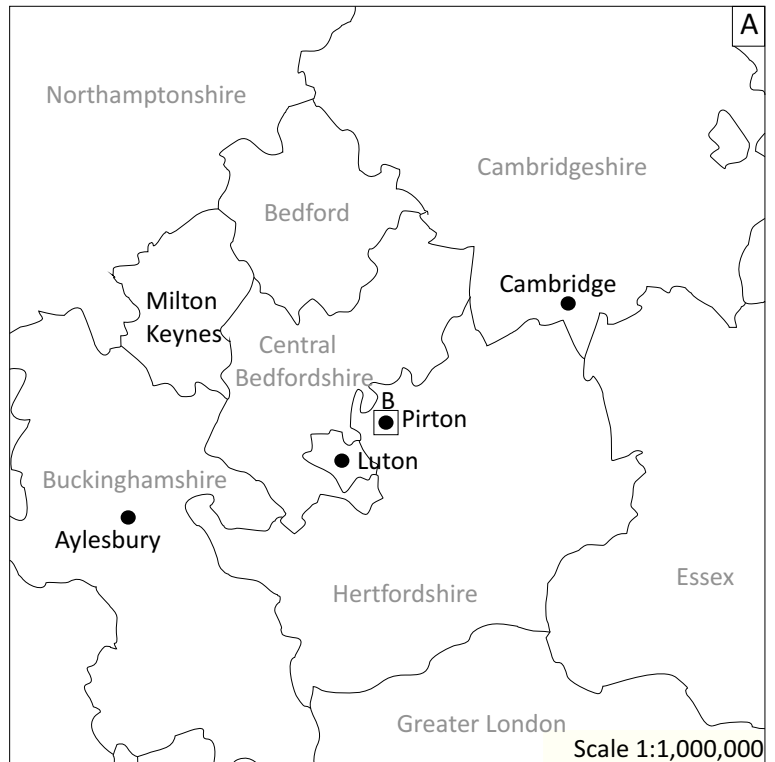
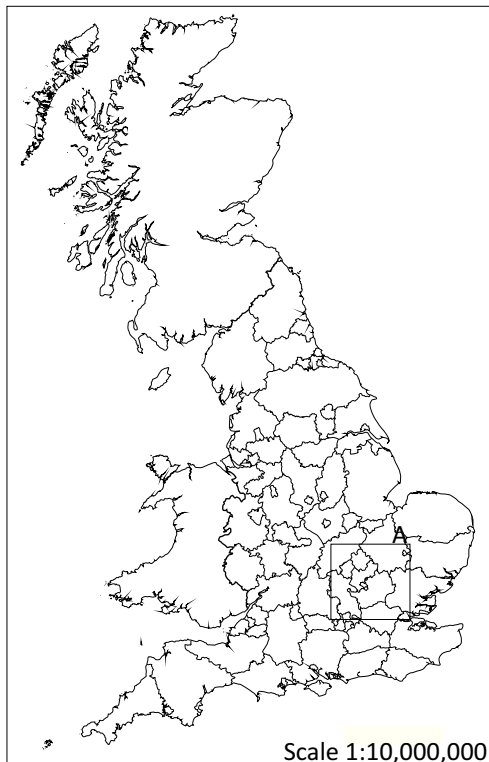


Figure 1: Site location outlined in red

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Site Code	PIDI 13
Scales	1:10,000,000 1:1,000,000 1:25,000 @ A4
Drawn by	M Wood
Date	29/07/13

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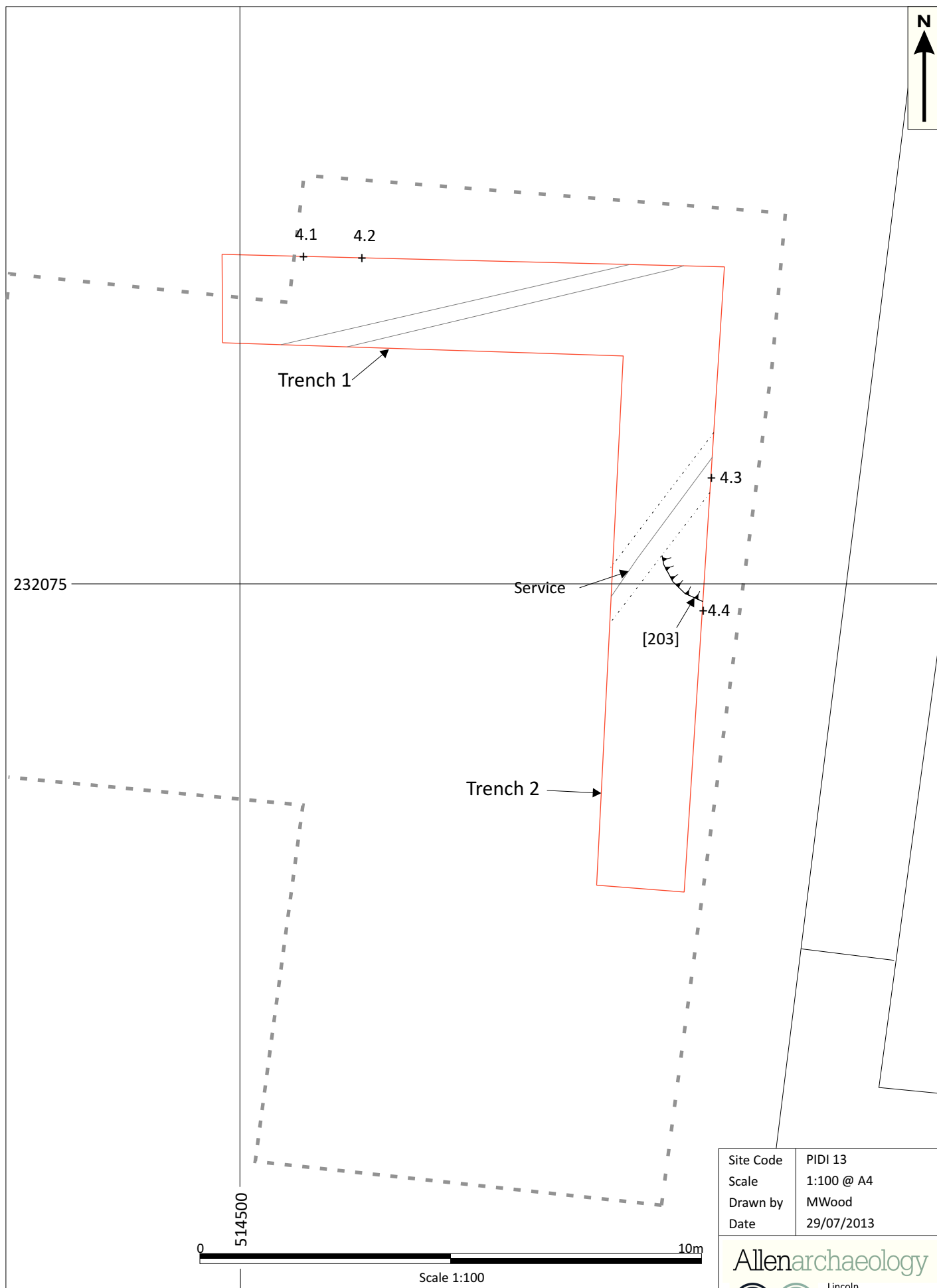


Figure 3: Plans of Trenches 1 and 2 overlain on proposed building

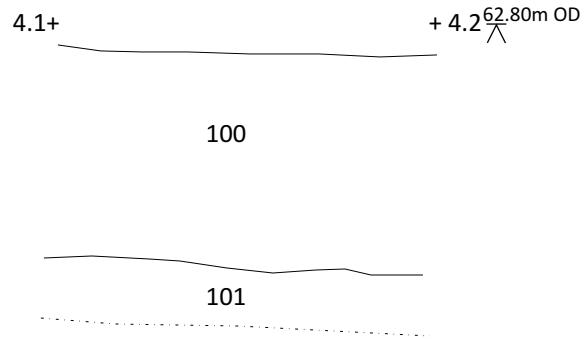
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Drawn by	MWood
Date	29/07/2013

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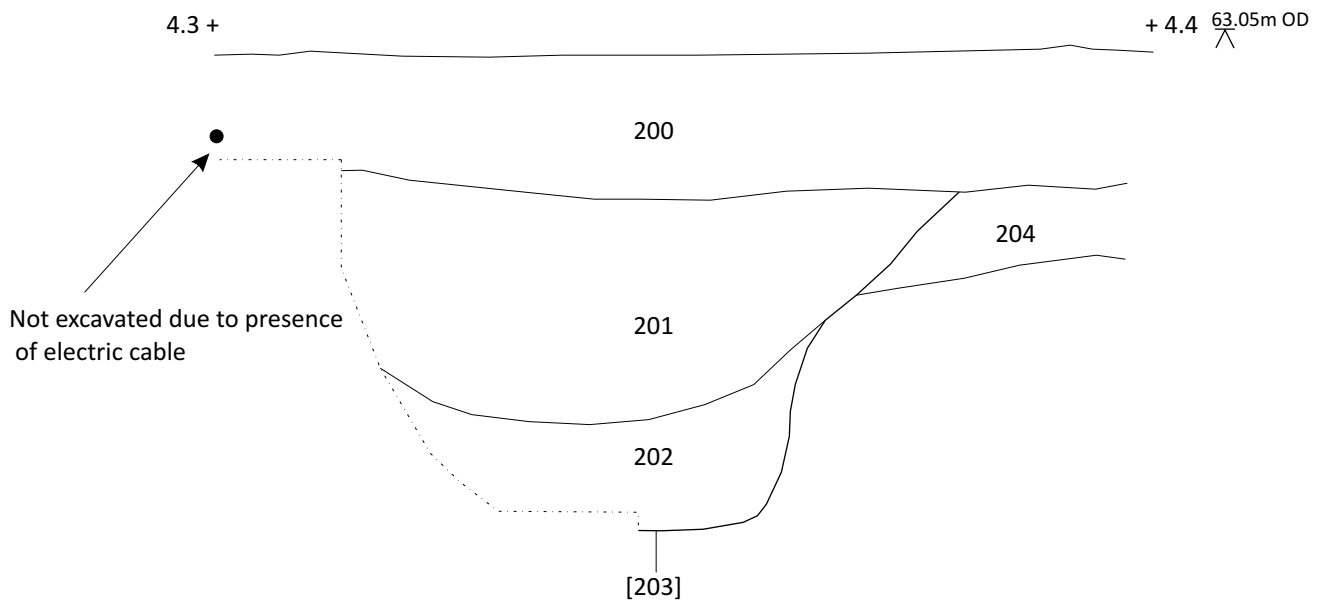
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South Facing Section



West Facing Section



Site Code	PIDI 13
Scale	1:20 @ A4
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Figure 4: Sections from Trenches 1 and 2, located on Figure 2



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