

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT:  
TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND AT 2A VALLEY GARDENS, COLLIERS WOOD, LONDON BOROUGH  
OF MERTON, SW19 2HR**

Planning Reference: 17/P0039  
NGR: TQ 26824 70373  
AAL Site Code: CWVG 17  
Museum of London Site Code: VLR17  
OASIS Reference Number: allenarc1-305570



Report prepared for Astenway Building Contractors Ltd

By  
Allen Archaeology Ltd  
Report Number AAL2018004

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Allenarchaeology



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*Cover image: General view of site, looking west*

## **Executive Summary**

- Allen Archaeology Limited was commissioned by Astenway Building Contractors Limited to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land at 2A Valley Gardens, Colliers Wood, London Borough of Merton, to inform the archaeological mitigation of the site, following planning permission for a number of residential flats.
- The site lies in an area of significant archaeological potential, with information suggesting that a Roman Road (Stane Street) may cross the site, with further potential for a contemporary roadside settlement and industry to be present here.
- Two trenches were excavated, each measuring 10m long by 1.6m wide, and targeted in the footprint of the proposed development area. Trench 1 revealed no archaeological deposits, and Trench 2 contained one small modern pit and a concrete inspection cover sealing modern drainage.
- The results suggest a negligible archaeological potential for the proposed development area.

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited (AAL) were commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land at 2A Valley Gardens, Colliers Wood, London Borough of Merton, which was to advise the archaeological mitigation of the site following planning permission for a number of residential flats.
- 1.2 The site works and reporting conformed to current national guidelines as set out in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists '*Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluations*' (CIfA 2014), and the Historic England document '*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*' (English Heritage 2006), local guidance in '*Guidelines for Archaeological Projects in Greater London*' (GLAAS 2015), and a specification by this company (AAL 2017).
- 1.3 The documentation and records generated by the evaluation will be assembled in accordance with the national guidelines in '*Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation*' (AAF 2011) and in accordance with the Museum of London Guidelines '*General standards for the preparation of archaeological archives deposited with the Museum of London*' (2009). The documentary and physical archive will be deposited with the Museum of London within six months of the completion of the report, where it will be stored under the museum site code VLR17.

## 2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The development site is located at the northwest end of Valley Gardens, in Colliers Wood in the administrative district of the London Borough of Merton. It is located 7.36km south-southwest of central London. The site is approximately 0.01ha in area, and prior to demolition the site contained a single storey workshop/storage area and ancillary offices. The site is centred at NGR TQ 26824 70373 (Figure 1).
- 2.2 The bedrock geology comprises London Clay Formation clay and silt bedrock, overlain by superficial deposits consisting of alluvial clay, silt and gravel (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

## 3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 Planning application has been granted for the '*erection of a part 3, part 4 storey building with part basement to provide 6 x self-contained flats*' (Planning Reference 17/P0039). The Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) advised that the site lies within an Archaeological Priority Zone (APZ); namely Stane Street Roman road. The road follows Colliers Wood High Street (the A24) and continues south where it had the potential to cross the site. Immediately to the southwest of the site the Scheduled Monument Augustinian Priory of St. Mary at Merton is located. As such a programme of intrusive trial trenching was requested in order to provide further information concerning the archaeological potential of the site, and to provide the planning authority with sufficient information to establish any appropriate mitigation measures that may be required.
- 3.2 The approach was in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012), which states that '*Where a site on which development is proposed includes...heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning*

*authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.'* (para 128).

#### **4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

- 4.1 Information for prehistoric activity close to the development area is sparse, with a Palaeolithic tool and flake recovered from Morden Hall Park approximately 2km to the south (GLHER 020008 and 030601). Three handaxes were recovered approximately 1km to the west (GLHER 030675), with flint artefacts recovered approximately 2.3km to the south near Ravensbury Park (GLHER 030602).
- 4.2 Information provided by GLAAS has shown that a Roman road (Stane Street) may cross the site (Booth 2016), and there is also the potential for roadside settlement and industry to be present, or field systems of that date. Further to this a Roman brooch and coin have been recovered from near Stane Street (GLHER 030662 and 030653) and an excavation by the Museum of London Archaeology Service in 1993 at the site of Deen City Farm Grazing, approximately 1.2km to the southwest of the site, uncovered at least 12 inhumation burials of Roman date (Nielsen 1993).
- 4.3 The scheduled Augustinian Priory of St. Mary at Merton, approximately 0.4km southwest of the site, was founded in 1117 and was lost in the Dissolution in 1538. Over 700 burials were excavated between 1976 and 1990, with charnel pits and other disturbed residual remains suggestive of approximately a further 664 individuals (Saxby 2007). The site of the Priory now lies beneath a modern shopping centre and Meretun Way.
- 4.4 In the post-medieval period factories were built up alongside the Wandle, using the river's current to power various types of industry. Notable examples of this include the William Morris Works and Liberty Print Works (Booth 2016), which were both located close to the site of the former Priory.

#### **5.0 Aims and Objectives**

- 5.1 The purpose of the trial trench evaluation was to gather sufficient information for the local planning authority to be able to formulate a policy for the management of the archaeological resources present on the site.
- 5.2 Evidence was gathered to establish the presence/absence, nature, date, depth, quality of survival and importance of any archaeological deposits to enable an assessment of the potential and significance of the archaeological remains, and to allow for the determination of any appropriate strategies to mitigate the effect of the approved development upon the archaeological resource.
- 5.3 The site lies within an Archaeological Priority Zone (APZ) designated by the London Borough of Merton (Booth *et al.* 2016). As such, work within this location has the potential to answer or contribute to a number of questions outlined in the supporting documentation and to a number of wider Framework Objectives as set out by Nixon *et al.* (2002).

### ***Prehistoric and natural environment***

There is the potential for archaeological and palaeoenvironmental deposits dating from the prehistoric periods to survive within the site (Nixon *et al.* 2002, 79, 24):

- Can the work add to our understanding of the topography and natural environment of the Wandle Valley?
- Is there any evidence to support and explanation of why the areas of the Wandle was a focus for feasting and ritual activity?
- Can the site improve our understanding of the development of the early farming landscape?

### ***Roman***

The Roman road of Stane Street, which linked *Londinium* to *Noviomagus Regnorum* (Chichester), follows the approximate line of Colliers Wood High Street (A24) which runs to the northwest of the site, and the site has the potential to contribute to the following research framework objectives (Nixon *et al.* 2002, 30, 33, 34, 41):

R1: Understanding how the relationship between hinterland and *territorium* of *Londinium* operated.

R1: Defining the economic character of different parts of the region – focusing on production, consumption and distribution.

R3: Further refining our understanding of the functioning and management of the countryside.

R4: Analysing the nature and reasons for the evolution of the road system, river crossings and internal street layouts and their importance as engines of development and change.

R12: Investigating the relationship between town and country in the production and supply of food.

Specific research questions which may be answered are:

- Does Stane Street pass within the site?
- Is there any evidence of associated roadside settlement and if so what is its character?
- Is there any evidence of the economic activities that were being undertaken in the area?
- Is there any evidence of specialised production including activities related to milling? (Booth *et al.* 2016, 11)

### ***Medieval***

The site lies to the north of the site of the Augustinian Priory of St. Mary Merton (SAM 1001976), much of which remains unexcavated, and work has the potential to contribute to the following medieval research objectives (Nixon *et al.* 2002, 59):

M2: Understanding the influence of the environment on human habitation, and the impact of man on the environment.

M2: Understanding what London and its region looked like to its medieval inhabitants and visitors.

Specific research questions which may be answered are:

- What is the character of the medieval landscape within the site?
- Is there any evidence for how the Priory of St. Mary operated within its wider landscape context?
- Can the site provide archaeological evidence to support the assertion that St. Mary Merton was one of the most important and influential medieval monastic houses?

### ***Post-medieval***

The industrial heritage of the Wandle Valley is of at least regional significance (Booth *et al.* 2016, 13). It was an important site for early industrial activity particularly that associated with textiles and the site has the potential to contribute to the following research objectives (Nixon *et al.* 2002, 74):

L9: Identifying the industries that especially represented London (the conurbation, different neighbourhoods or areas and the region as a whole)

Specific research questions which may be answered are:

- What industrial activities were taking place within the site?
- Is there any evidence of the consumption of locally made specialist goods?

## **6.0 Methodology**

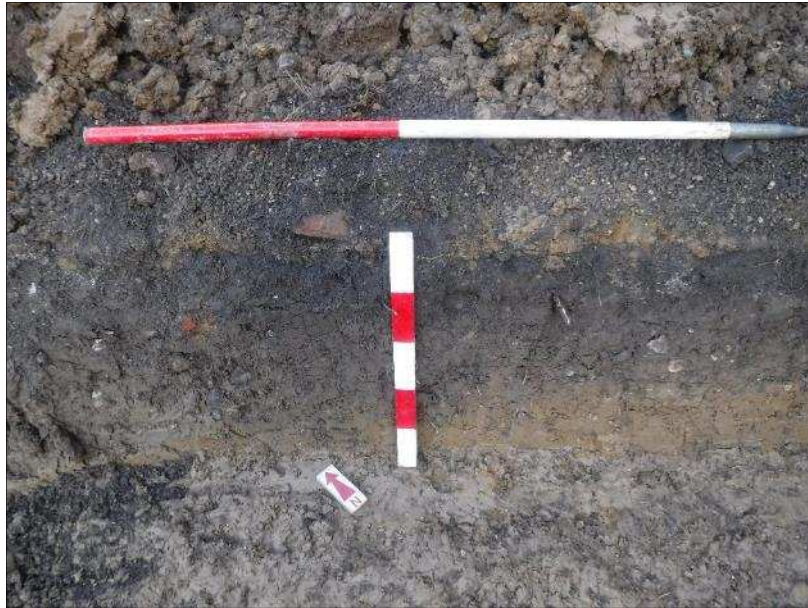
- 6.1 A trenching strategy was agreed with GLAAS, comprising two trenches, each measuring 10m long by 1.6m wide (Figure 2). The trenches were located on site using a Leica GS08 RTK NetRover GPS.
- 6.2 In each trench, topsoil and underlying non-archaeological deposits were removed by a tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket in spits no greater than 0.1m thick. The process was repeated until the first archaeologically significant or natural horizon was exposed. All further excavation was then undertaken by hand.
- 6.3 The fieldwork was undertaken by a team of two experienced field archaeologists on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2017.
- 6.4 A full written record of the archaeological deposits was made on standard AAL context recording sheets. Archaeological deposits were drawn to scale, in plan and section (at scale 1:20 or 1:50), with Ordnance Datum heights being displayed on each class of drawing. Photography formed an integral part of the recording strategy, with all photographs incorporating scales, an identification board and directional arrow.
- 6.5 Each deposit, layer or cut was allocated a unique 3-digit identifier (context number) and accorded a written description; a summary of these is included in Appendix 1.



## 7.0 Results

### *Trench 1*

7.1 The earliest deposit revealed was a compact mid yellowish brown clay 102, which represented the natural geology. This was sealed by 0.13m of compact mid grey silty clay, 101, containing modern debris, which represented a layer of made ground. Deposit 101 was sealed by 0.25m of friable dark grey sandy silt, 100, which represented a mixture of topsoil and made ground (Plate 1 and Plate 2).



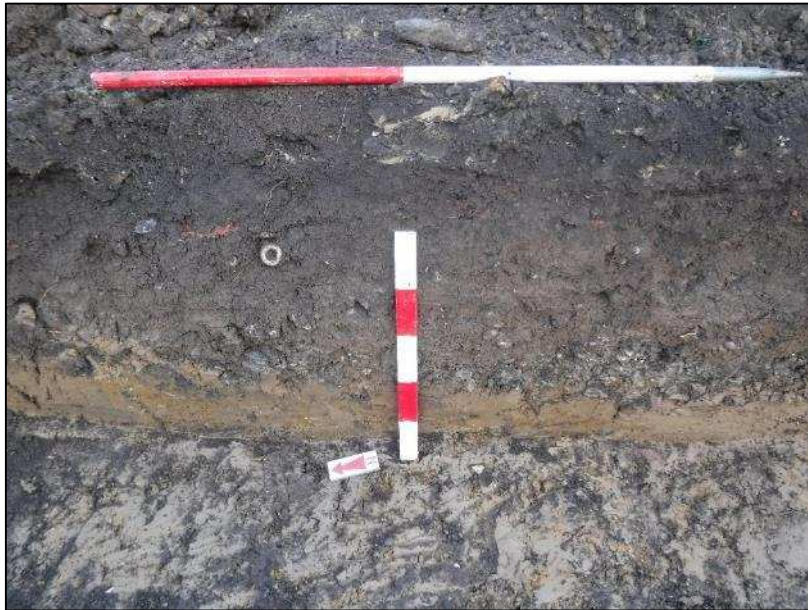
*Plate 1: Southwest-facing representative section of Trench 1. Scales 1m and 0.5m*



*Plate 2: Trench 1, looking southeast. Scales 2m and 1m*

## **Trench 2**

- 7.2 The earliest deposit revealed was a compact mid yellowish brown clay 203, which represented the natural geology. This was sealed by 0.08m of hard mid grey silty sand 202, which either represented a levelling layer or a dumped deposit. This was sealed by 0.29m of compact mid brown clayey silt, 201, containing some modern debris, which represented made ground. The most recent deposit was 0.25m of friable dark brownish grey sandy silt, 200, which represented a mixture of topsoil and made ground (Plate 3). Extending from the southern end of the trench for approximately 2.5m, was a concrete plinth serving as an inspection cover over drains (Plate 4).



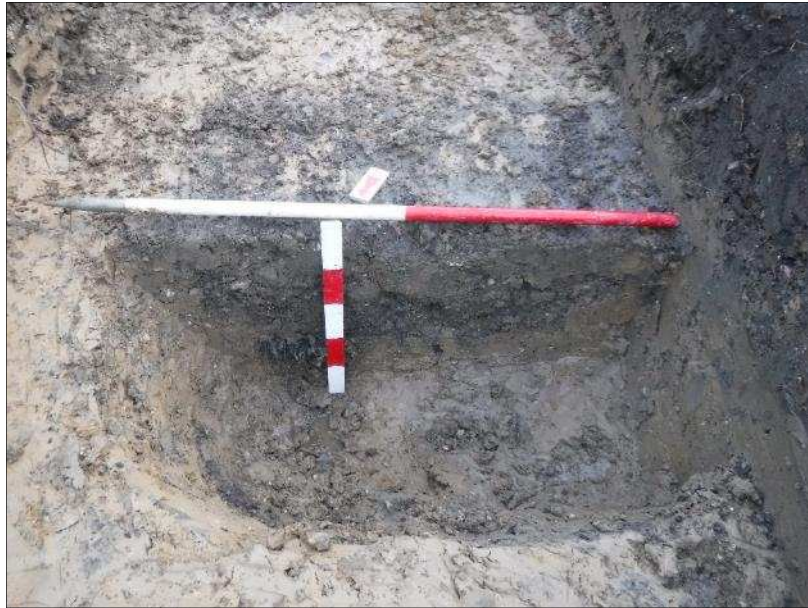
*Plate 3: West-southwest-facing representative section of Trench 2. Scales 1m and 0.5m*



*Plate 4: Trench 1, looking north-northeast. Scales 2m and 1m*

- 7.3 Extending from the western edge of the trench was a sub-oval pit [204], measuring 1.15m by 1.10m. This was filled by a compact dark grey silty clay, 203, 0.40m thick, which was a deliberate

backfill and a mixture of topsoil, made ground and natural clay and some modern debris (Plate 5).



*Plate 5: Northwest-facing section of [205]. Scales 1m and 0.5m*

## **8.0 Discussion and Conclusions**

8.1 Trench 1 revealed made ground layers over natural clay geology with no archaeological deposits uncovered. Within Trench 2, similar layers of made ground sealed the natural geology. One small modern pit was revealed and a concrete inspection cover covering modern drainage was uncovered. No other archaeological deposits or features were revealed. The results suggest a negligible archaeological potential for the proposed development area.

## **9.0 Effectiveness of Methodology**

9.1 The methodology employed was appropriate to the scale and nature of the proposed development. It has served to adequately evaluate the archaeological potential of the site.

## **10.0 Acknowledgements**

10.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank Astenway Building Contractors Limited for this commission.

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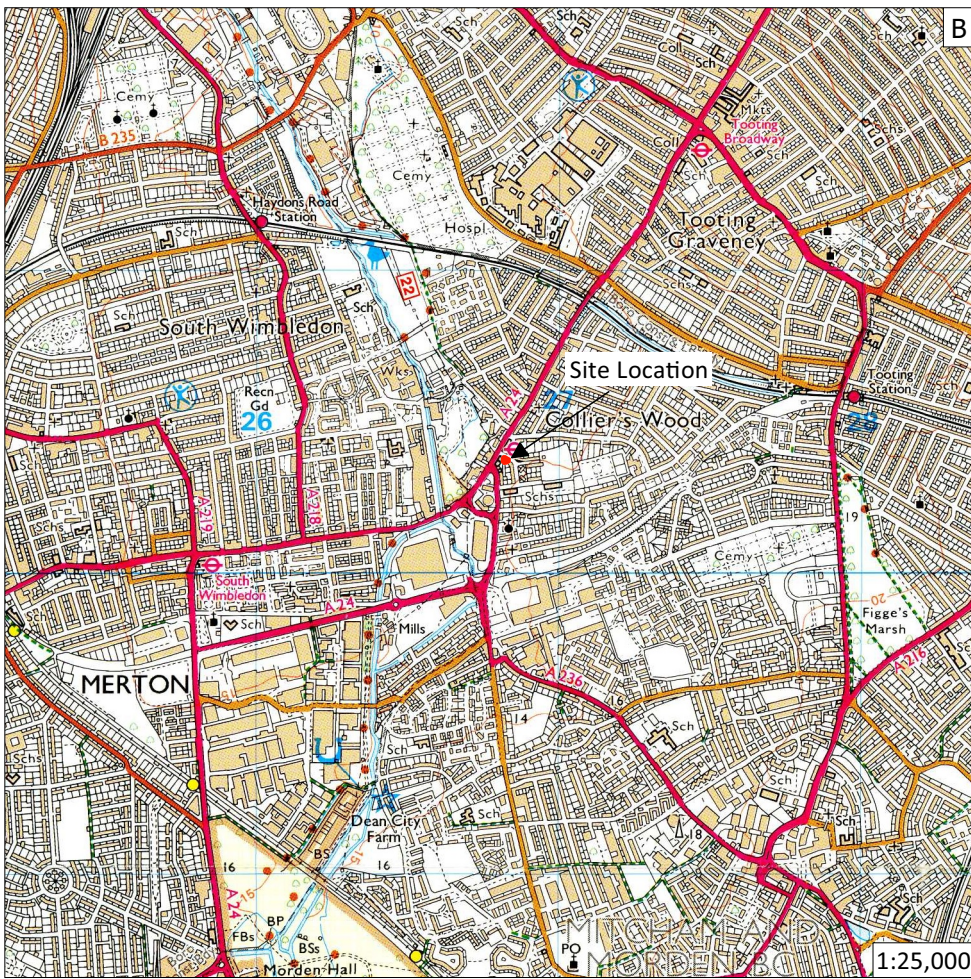
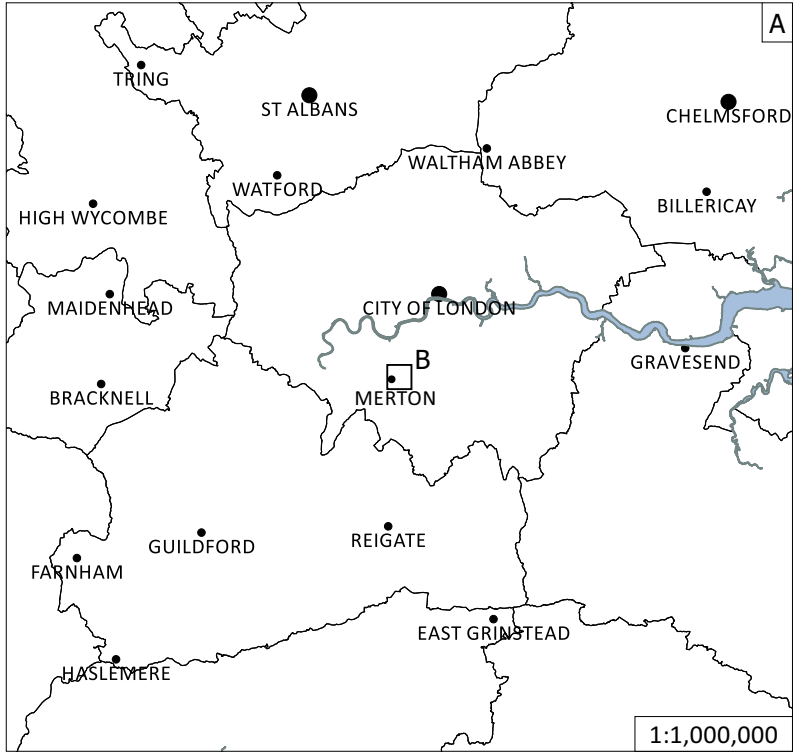
## Appendix 1: Context Summary List

### Trench 1

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
100	Layer	Friable, dark grey sandy silt with frequent modern debris			0.25	Made ground, topsoil mixed with building rubble
101	Layer	Compact, mid grey silty clay with occasional small rounded stones and modern debris			0.13	Made ground
102	Layer	Compact, mid yellowish brown clay				Natural geology

### Trench 2

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
200	Layer	Friable, dark brownish grey sandy silt with occasional bioturbation and moderate modern debris			0.25	Made ground, topsoil mixed with building rubble
201	Layer	Compact mid brown clayey silt with occasional small rounded stones and modern debris			0.29	Made ground
202	Layer	Hard, mid grey silty sand with occasional angular small to medium stones			0.08	Levelling layer
203	Layer	Compact, mid brownish yellow clay with occasional fragments of flint				Natural geology
204	Cut	Circular, moderately straight sides and moderate base of slope to flat base	1.15	1.10	0.40	Cut of modern pit
205	Fill	Compact, dark grey silty clay with occasional rounded stones and bioturbation, with some modern debris	1.15	1.10	0.40	Deliberate backfill of [204]



**Figure 1:** Site location outlined in red

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Site Code	CWVG 17
Scale	1:10,000,000 1:1,000,000 1:25,000 @ A4
Drawn by	R Evershed
Date	08/01/17

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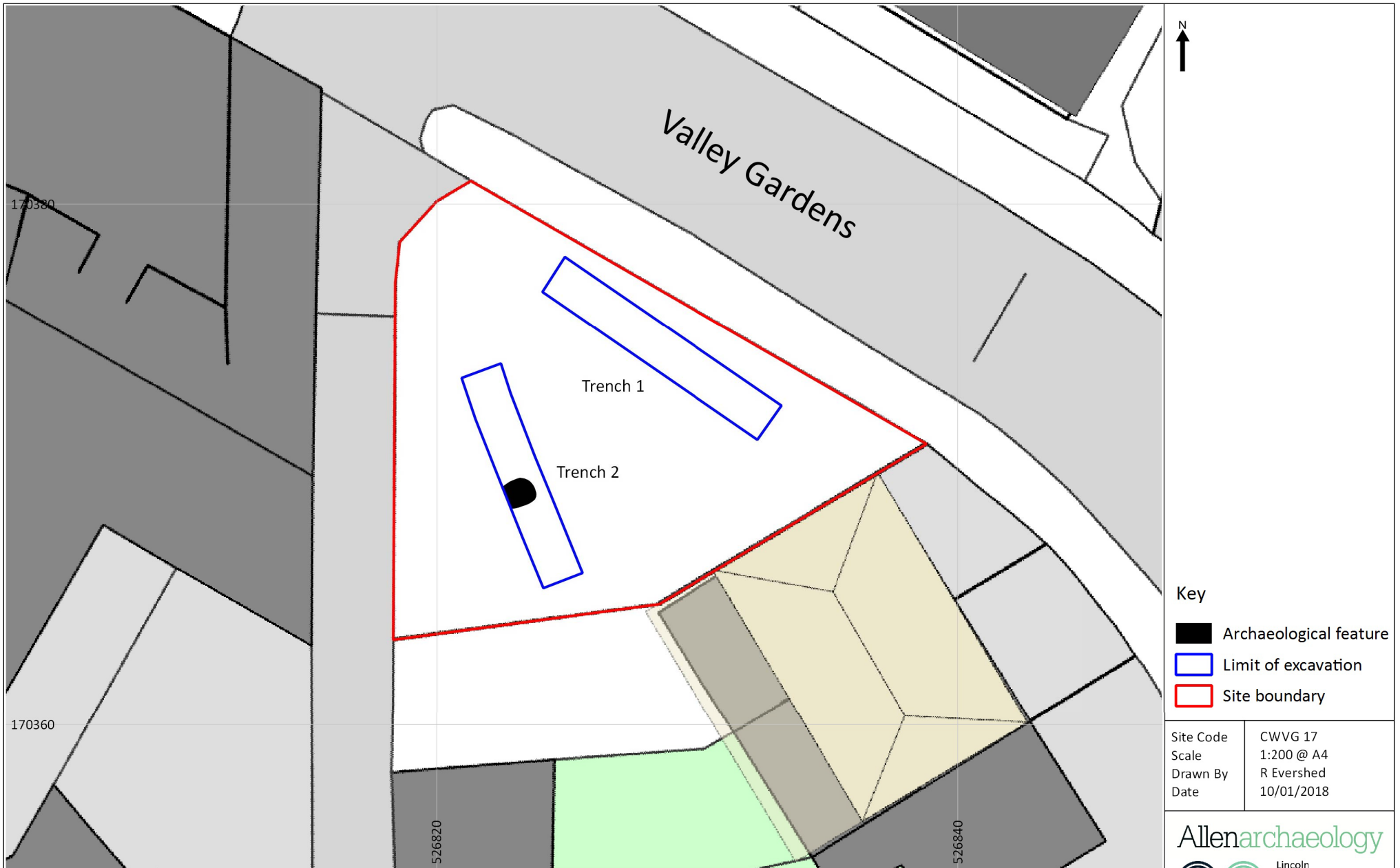
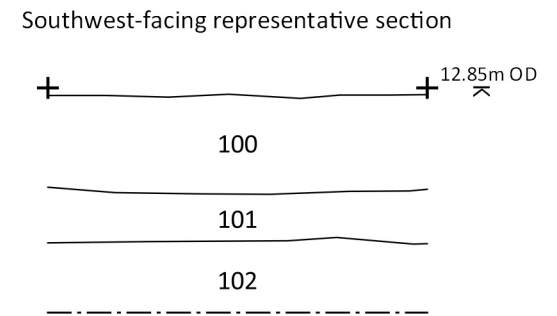
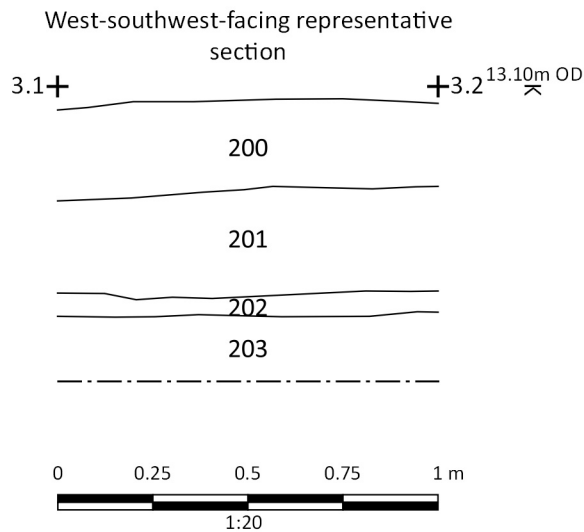
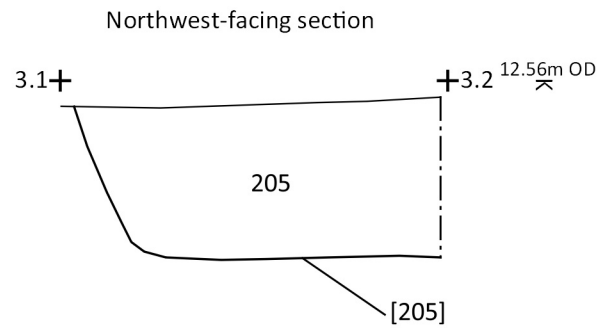
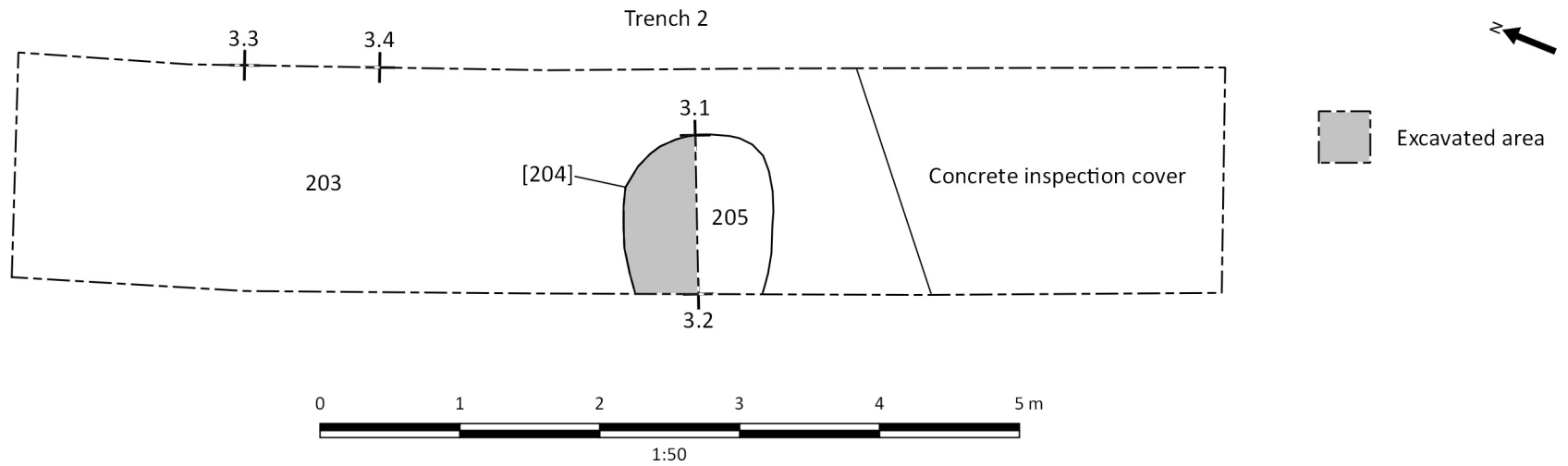


Figure 2: Evaluation trenches showing location of archaeological features





Site Code	CWVG 17
Scale	1:50 and 20 @ A4
Drawn By	R Evershed
Date	10/01/2018

Figure 3: Plan and sections for Trench 2 and representative section for Trench 1





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