

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT:
TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND OFF THIEVES LANE, SHREWSBURY, SHROPSHIRE**

Planning Reference: 17/06157/FUL
NGR: SJ 5162 1047
AAL Site Code: SHTL 18
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Report prepared for Eurogarages

By
Allen Archaeology Ltd
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Allenarchaeology



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| Element: | Name: | Date: |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| Report prepared by: | Emily Doe BA (Hons) | 21/03/2019 |
| Illustrations prepared by: | Emily Doe BA (Hons) | 21/03/2019 |
| Report edited by: | Chris Clay BA MA (Hons) | 21/03/2019 |
| Report reviewed by: | Natasha Powers BSc MSc MCifA MCMi FSA | 22/03/2019 |
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Cover image: General view of the site showing Trenches 4, 5, 7 and 8. Looking northeast

Executive Summary

- Allen Archaeology Limited was commissioned by Eurogarages to conduct an archaeological evaluation to support a planning application for the construction of a petrol station, drive through café, parking, new office park and other infrastructure work on land off Thieves Lane, Shrewsbury, Shropshire.
- In the vicinity of the site evidence of prehistoric activity is recorded, including ring ditch cropmarks, a Late Bronze Age to Iron Age settlement and a potential Iron Age Banjo enclosure. There is no evidence for Roman activity close to site. The name Shrewsbury comes from the Saxon name '*Scrobbesbyrig*' and the town was probably founded in the 8th century, but the current site lies well beyond the historic core of the settlement.
- Prior to the trial trenching, a geophysical survey was undertaken, and identified possible former field boundaries, potentially earlier linear boundaries and possible circular enclosures or ring ditches.
- Ten trenches were excavated, nine measuring 25m long and one measuring 50m long by 1.80m wide. Trench 1 revealed four aligned postholes, Trench 6 exposed a single pit and Trench 7 revealed a natural feature. Trenches 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10 were devoid of archaeology, however geological variation was noted in several areas and corresponded to the anomalies seen in the geophysical survey.
- Overall, the results of the archaeological evaluation suggest a negligible archaeological potential for the proposed development area.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited was commissioned by Eurogarages to conduct an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching to support a planning application for a mixed use development on land off Thieves Lane, Shrewsbury, Shropshire.
- 1.2 The fieldwork, recording and reporting conforms 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*' (Historic England 2015) and the specification produced by this company (AAL 2019b).
- 1.3 The documentary and physical archive 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 local guidelines issued by the Shropshire Museums Collections and Curatorial Services '*Standards for the preparation and deposition of archaeology archives*' (SMCCS 2015). The archive will be submitted to Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery, Shrewsbury, within six months of the completion of the report.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The proposed development area is located south of Thieves Lane, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, approximately 3.2km to the southeast of Shrewsbury town centre (NGR SJ 5162 1047). The site comprises a c.3.2ha sub-rectangular block of agricultural land. It is bounded by the B4380 to the north, agricultural land and Emstrey Island to the east, the A5 to the south and agricultural land and a residential dwelling to the west (Figure 1).
- 2.2 The bedrock geology comprises limestone of the Salop Formation – Mudstone, Sandstone and Conglomerate, overlain by superficial geological deposits of glaciofluvial sand and gravel (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 Planning permission has been granted for a '*Hybrid application (part full, part outline) - Full - erection of a petrol filling station (Sui Generis) and drive through cafe (Use Class A3/A5) together with the creation of a new access, parking, landscaping and various other infrastructure works. Outline - provision of a new office park (Use Class B1) to include access (some matters reserved)*'. Prior to commencement of development, the Natural and Historic Environment Manager at Shropshire Council Historic Environment Archaeology Service has requested the implementation of a phased programme of archaeological work, in order to provide further information concerning the nature and extent of the archaeological resource, and to provide information to allow the planning authority to make a reasoned decision as to whether any further intrusive investigations will be required, and to establish any mitigation measures that may be appropriate. An initial geophysical survey was undertaken in February 2019, followed by the current programme of intrusive trial trenching.

- 3.2 The approach is in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with the particular chapter of relevance being 'Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2018).

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 There is a reasonable amount of archaeological evidence for prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the site, with a ring ditch cropmark (HER PRN 04483) likely representing the remains of an Early Bronze Age funerary monument located 380m southeast of the site, a late Bronze Age to Iron Age settlement site (HER PRN 00085) approximately 600m west of the site, a mid to late Iron Age farmstead (HER PRN00020) 600m to the northeast of the site and a potential Iron Age Banjo enclosure (HER PRN 00017) 500m northwest of the site. However, a possible ring ditch (HER PRN 04162) 250m west of the site was established as natural feature during a strip, map and sample exercise.
- 4.2 There is no evidence for Roman activity close to the site, despite the major Roman city of *Wroxeter (Viroconium)* being located five miles to the southeast of Shrewsbury.
- 4.3 The name Shrewsbury comes from the Saxon name '*Scrobbesbyrig*', and the town was probably founded in the 8th century by the Saxon rulers of Mercia (Mitchell 2016). It is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as '*Sciropesberie*' and had a total population of 86 households (Williams and Martin 2002).
- 4.4 Post-medieval activity close to the site is limited to Emstrey Rough Quarry, 300m northeast of the site and the site of a Toll House dating from the mid-18th century, which is located immediately to the west of the site.
- 4.5 The preceding geophysical survey identified a number of features of potential archaeological interest (AAL 2019a), including former field boundaries present on historic mapping, as well as linear boundary features of a likely earlier date. Two circular features representing ring ditches or small enclosures of a possible later prehistoric date were also recorded.

5.0 Aims and Objectives

- 5.1 The purpose of the trial trench evaluation was to gather sufficient information for the archaeological curator 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 assess the impact of the development upon the archaeology.

6.0 Methodology

- 6.1 The trial trenching strategy comprised of the excavation of 10 trenches, nine measuring 25m long by 1.8m wide and one 50m long by 1.8m wide, positioned to target the anomalies highlighted by the geophysical survey (Figure 2). Fieldwork was conducted by a team of four

experienced archaeologists, between Monday 11th March and Friday 15th March 2019, and was supervised by the author.

- 6.2 The trenches were located using a survey grade Leica GS08 RTK NetRover GPS, which allowed centimetre accuracy, and were tied into the National Grid. In each trench, a tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket was used to remove the topsoil, subsoil and underlying non-archaeological deposits in spits no greater than 0.1m in thickness. The process was repeated until the first archaeologically significant or natural horizon was exposed. All further excavation was carried out by hand. Pre-excavation plans of each trench were prepared using the GPS prior to hand excavation.
- 6.3 A full written record of the archaeological deposits was made on standard AAL context recording sheets. Each deposit, layer or cut was allocated a four or five-digit unique identifier (context number), and accorded a written description. A summary of these are included in Appendix 1. Numbers within square brackets represent cut features e.g. ditch [2100].
- 6.4 Archaeological deposits were drawn to scale, in plan and section (at 1:20 and 1:50), with Ordnance Datum (OD) heights displayed on each section drawing. Colour photography formed an integral part of the recording strategy, and photographs incorporated scales, an identification board and directional arrow.

7.0 Results

- 7.1 The stratigraphic sequence varied slightly across the ten trenches. The topsoil was fairly consistent in composition, comprising dark greyish brown sandy silt with gravel inclusions and varied between c.0.28m and 0.43m thick. Within Trenches 4, 7, 8 and 9 the topsoil sealed a subsoil composed of either a mid greyish brown sandy silt, or a mid reddish brown sandy silt (4001, 7004, 8001 and 9001), between 0.17m and 0.30m thick. Beneath this colluvial deposits were present in Trenches 7 and 8 (contexts 7001, 7002, 7003 and 8002), each comprising varying shades of reddish or greyish brown sandy silts.
- 7.2 Trenches 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 10 did not contain a subsoil or colluvium, instead the topsoil sealed a variety of sand and gravel superficial geologies and naturally occurring and archaeological features. The superficial geology typically comprised an orange or grey brown silty sand or sandy gravels.
- 7.3 The geophysical survey results corresponded primarily with geological changes that were observed across the site. Trenches 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10 were devoid of any archaeological or natural features. Sondages were excavated in Trenches, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 10 to investigate potential features but each proved to be geological layers of sand, silt and clay (1011, 2003, 3004, 5002, 5003, 5004, 5006, 6005 and 10003).

Trench 1: (Figure 3)

- 7.4 Trench 1 was located towards the west end of the site, east of the residential dwelling and situated along the slope of a hill. The trench was aligned northeast to southwest and measured 50m long. It was targeted on potential linear and circular anomalies.
- 7.5 Located towards the southwest end of the trench were four, undated, shallow sub-circular postholes [1003], [1005], [1007] and [1009], running in a northeast to southwest alignment,

and spaced c.3.50m apart (Plate 1). They measured between c.0.4m and 0.56m in diameter, and 0.14m to 0.19m deep, and each were filled with a greyish brown silty sand fill; 1004, 1006, 1008 and 1010 respectively, all of which were devoid of finds.



Plate 1: Postholes [1005], [1007] and [1009], looking southwest

- 7.6 East of the postholes was an irregular spread of yellow brown silty clay, 1011, interpreted as natural geological variation. Its position broadly corresponds with one of the circular anomalies recorded in the geophysical survey.

Trench 6: (Figure 4)

- 7.7 Trench 6 was located towards the centre of the site in a raised area, it was northwest to southeast aligned and measured 25m long.
- 7.8 Located toward the northwest end of the trench, emerging from the northeast section, was [6003] a southwest northeast orientated sub-rectangular pit or ditch terminus, with concave sides and a flat base. It measured 0.70m wide and 0.13m deep, and was filled with a single fill, 6004, a mid greyish brown sandy silt.
- 7.9 Towards the southeast end of the trench was an irregular spread of orange brown clayey sand and gravel, 6005, interpreted as geological variation.

Trench 7: (Figure 5)

- 7.10 The trench was located towards the southern side of site. It was aligned northwest to southeast and measured 25m long. It was targeted on a large irregular geophysical anomaly.
- 7.11 The trench was devoid of archaeological features but did contain an irregular shaped natural feature in the centre of the trench, [7007]. It measured 1.8m long, 1.3m wide and 0.24m deep, and was filled with a light yellowish brown clayey silt, 7008. It was cut into a spread of possible colluvial material and sealed by two further greyish brown possible

colluvial deposits, 7001 and 7002. This corresponds with the positive anomaly highlighted in geophysical survey results.



Plate 2: Northeast-facing representative section of Trench 7, looking southwest, scale 2m

8.0 Discussion and Conclusions

- 8.1 The results of the archaeological evaluation demonstrate that there were few features and deposits of archaeological interest. The geophysical survey results, in most cases, corresponded to variations within the superficial natural geology.
- 8.2 Trench 1 exposed four postholes, each similar in shape, size, and spacing. These probably indicate a former temporary fence line. None of the postholes produced artefacts and as such their date is unknown. Trench 6 revealed a single shallow pit or ditch terminus. Although undated, the fill appeared to be a redeposited topsoil, suggesting it is likely to be of a recent date. Trench 7 exposed only a naturally occurring feature, a tree throw sealed below layers of colluvium.
- 8.3 The results of the evaluation trenching suggest that the proposed development will have little to no impact upon the archaeological resource.

9.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

- 9.1 The trial trenching methodology employed was appropriate to the scale and nature of the development and has identified a negligible archaeological potential.

10.0 Acknowledgements

- 10.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank Eurogarages for the commission.

11.0 References

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Appendix 1: Context Summary List

Trench 1

| Context | Type | Description | Length (m) | Width (m) | Thickness/depth (m) | Interpretation |
|---------|-------|--|------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1000 | Layer | Friable, mid greyish brown sandy silt | | | 0.4 | Topsoil |
| 1001 | Layer | Loose, mid yellowish brown with red inclusions silty gravel | | | 0.4 | Superficial geology |
| 1002 | Layer | Loose, grey silty sand | | | 0.34 | Superficial geology |
| 1003 | Cut | Sub-circular, with shallow concave sides leading to a concave base | 0.44 | 0.38 | 0.18 | Cut of posthole |
| 1004 | Fill | Loose, dark greyish brown silty sand with stone inclusions | | | 0.18 | Fill of posthole |
| 1005 | Cut | Sub-circular, with shallow sides leading to a concave base | 0.42 | 0.36 | 0.19 | Cut of posthole |
| 1006 | Fill | Loose, mid greyish brown silty sand with stone inclusions | | | 0.19 | Fill of posthole |
| 1007 | Cut | Sub-circular, with shallow sides leading to a concave base | 0.48 | 0.33 | 0.14 | Cut of posthole |
| 1008 | Fill | Loose, mid greyish brown sandy silt | | | 0.14 | Fill of posthole |
| 1009 | Cut | Sub-circular, with shallow sides leading to a concave base | 0.56 | 0.44 | 0.2 | Cut of posthole |
| 1010 | Fill | Loose, mid greyish brown silty sand | | | 0.2 | Fill of posthole |
| 1011 | Layer | Loose, mid yellowish brown silty clay | 0.95 | 0.5 | 0.18 | Superficial Layer |

Trench 2

| Context | Type | Description | Length (m) | Width (m) | Thickness/depth (m) | Interpretation |
|---------|-------|---|------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 2000 | Layer | Friable, mid greyish brown sand silt | | | 0.43 | Topsoil |
| 2001 | Layer | Loose, mid reddish brown silty gravel | | | 0.41 | Superficial geology |
| 2002 | Layer | Compact, mid greyish brown silty gravel | | | 0.28 | Superficial geology |
| 2003 | Layer | Loose, mid greyish brown silty sand | | >1.5 | 0.05 | Superficial geology |

Trench 3

| Context | Type | Description | Length (m) | Width (m) | Thickness/depth (m) | Interpretation |
|---------|-------|--------------------------------------|------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 3000 | Layer | Friable, mid greyish brown sand silt | | | 0.4 | Topsoil |
| 3001 | Layer | Loose, reddish brown silty sand | | | 0.32 | Superficial geology |
| 3002 | Layer | Compact, mid brownish yellow clay | | | 0.2 | Superficial geology |

| Context | Type | Description | Length (m) | Width (m) | Thickness/depth (m) | Interpretation |
|---------|-------|---|------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 3003 | Layer | Compact, reddish brown silty gravel | | | 0.25 | Superficial geology |
| 3004 | Layer | Compact, mid brownish orange silty sand with occasional gravel inclusions | | | 0.1 | Superficial geology |

Trench 4

| Context | Type | Description | Length (m) | Width (m) | Thickness/depth (m) | Interpretation |
|---------|-------|---|------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 4000 | Layer | Friable, mid greyish brown sandy silt | | | 0.32 | Topsoil |
| 4001 | Layer | Loose, mid reddish brown sandy silt with occasional sub-rounded gravel inclusions | | | 0.17 | Subsoil |
| 4002 | Layer | Loose, mid orangey brown sandy gravel | | | 0.18 | Superficial geology |
| 4003 | Layer | Loose, mid greyish brown sandy gravel | | | 0.32 | Superficial geology |

Trench 5

| Context | Type | Description | Length (m) | Width (m) | Thickness/depth (m) | Interpretation |
|---------|-------|---|------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 5000 | Layer | Friable, mid greyish brown sandy silt | | | 0.36 | Topsoil |
| 5001 | Layer | Loose, mid brownish yellow silty sand with occasional gravel inclusions | | | 0.36 | Superficial geology |
| 5002 | Layer | Loose, mid reddish brown sandy gravel | | | 0.38 | Superficial geology |
| 5003 | Layer | Loose, mid reddish brown silty clay with occasional stone inclusions | >0.95 | 1.5 | 0.28 | Superficial geology |
| 5004 | Layer | Compact, mid yellowish brown gravel | 1.8 | 2.2 | 0.4 | Superficial geology |
| 5005 | Layer | Compact, greyish brown silty gravel | 1.8 | 2.2 | 0.16 | Superficial geology |
| 5006 | Layer | Friable, mid greyish brown sand | 1.8 | 2.2 | 0.28 | Superficial geology |

Trench 6

| Context | Type | Description | Length (m) | Width (m) | Thickness/depth (m) | Interpretation |
|---------|-------|---|------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 6000 | Layer | Friable, mid greyish brown sandy silt with occasional gravel inclusions | | | 0.33 | Topsoil |
| 6001 | Layer | Loose, mid reddish brown silty sand with occasional gravel inclusions | | | 0.3 | Superficial geology |

| Context | Type | Description | Length (m) | Width (m) | Thickness/depth (m) | Interpretation |
|---------|-------|---|------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 6002 | Layer | Loose, grey with reddish brown lenses, silty sand | | | 0.3 | Superficial geology |
| 6003 | Cut | Sub-rectangular SW-NE orientated feature with concave sides, leading to a flat base with a gradual break of slope | 1.12 | 0.7 | 0.13 | Cut of pit |
| 6004 | Fill | Loose, mid greyish brown sandy silt | | | 0.14 | Fill of pit |
| 6005 | Layer | Loose, mid orangey brown clayey sand with gravel inclusions | | | 0.12 | Superficial geology |

Trench 7

| Context | Type | Description | Length (m) | Width (m) | Thickness/depth (m) | Interpretation |
|---------|-------|---|------------|-----------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 7000 | Layer | Friable, mid greyish brown sandy silt with occasional gravel inclusions | | | 0.41 | Topsoil |
| 7001 | Layer | Loose, mid greyish brown silty sand with stone inclusions | | | 0.36 | Colluvial layer |
| 7002 | Layer | Loose, dark greyish brown sandy silt with occasional sub-rounded gravel inclusions | | | 0.28 | Colluvial layer |
| 7003 | Layer | Loose, light greyish brown clayey silt with occasional sub-rounded gravel | | | 0.08 | Colluvial layer |
| 7004 | Layer | Loose, mid reddish brown sandy silt with medium, sub-rounded gravel inclusions | | | 0.3 | Subsoil |
| 7005 | Layer | Loose, light orange brown sandy silt with gravel inclusions | | | 0.34 | Superficial geology |
| 7006 | Layer | Compact, mid greyish brown silty sand with occasional sub-rounded gravel inclusions | | | 0.12 | Superficial geology |
| 7007 | Cut | Irregular, with irregular sides leading to not fully excavated base | 1.8 | 1.3 | >0.24 | Cut of natural feature |
| 7008 | Fill | Firm, light yellowish brown clayey silt | | | >0.24 | Fill of natural feature |

Trench 8

| Context | Type | Description | Length (m) | Width (m) | Thickness/depth (m) | Interpretation |
|---------|-------|--|------------|-----------|---------------------|----------------|
| 8000 | Layer | Friable, mid greyish brown sandy silt | | | 0.28 | Topsoil |
| 8001 | Layer | Loose, mid greyish brown sandy silt with rounded and sub-rounded gravel inclusions | | | 0.28 | Subsoil |
| 8002 | Layer | Loose, mid reddish brown sandy silt with rounded and sub-rounded stone inclusions | | | 0.28 | Colluvial |

| Context | Type | Description | Length (m) | Width (m) | Thickness/depth (m) | Interpretation |
|---------|-------|-----------------------------------|------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 8003 | Layer | Compact, mid orangey brown gravel | | | 0.54 | Superficial geology |

Trench 9

| Context | Type | Description | Length (m) | Width (m) | Thickness/depth (m) | Interpretation |
|---------|-------|--|------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 9000 | Layer | Friable, mid greyish brown sandy silt with gravel inclusions | | | 0.32 | Topsoil |
| 9001 | Layer | Loose, mid greyish brown sandy silt with gravel inclusions | | | 0.3 | Subsoil |
| 9002 | Layer | Loose, light orangey brown silty sand with gravel inclusions | | | 0.4 | Superficial geology |
| 9003 | Layer | Loose, mid greyish brown silty sand with gravel inclusions | | | 0.12 | Superficial geology |

Trench 10

| Context | Type | Description | Length (m) | Width (m) | Thickness/depth (m) | Interpretation |
|---------|-------|--|------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 10000 | Layer | Friable, mid greyish brown sandy silt with gravel inclusions | | | 0.34 | Topsoil |
| 10001 | Layer | Loose, mid orange brown silty sand with gravel inclusions | | | 0.24 | Superficial geology |
| 10002 | Layer | Loose, mid greyish brown silty sand with gravel inclusions | | | 0.38 | Superficial geology |
| 10003 | Layer | Loose, mid orange brown silty sand with gravel inclusions | | | 0.1 | Superficial geology |

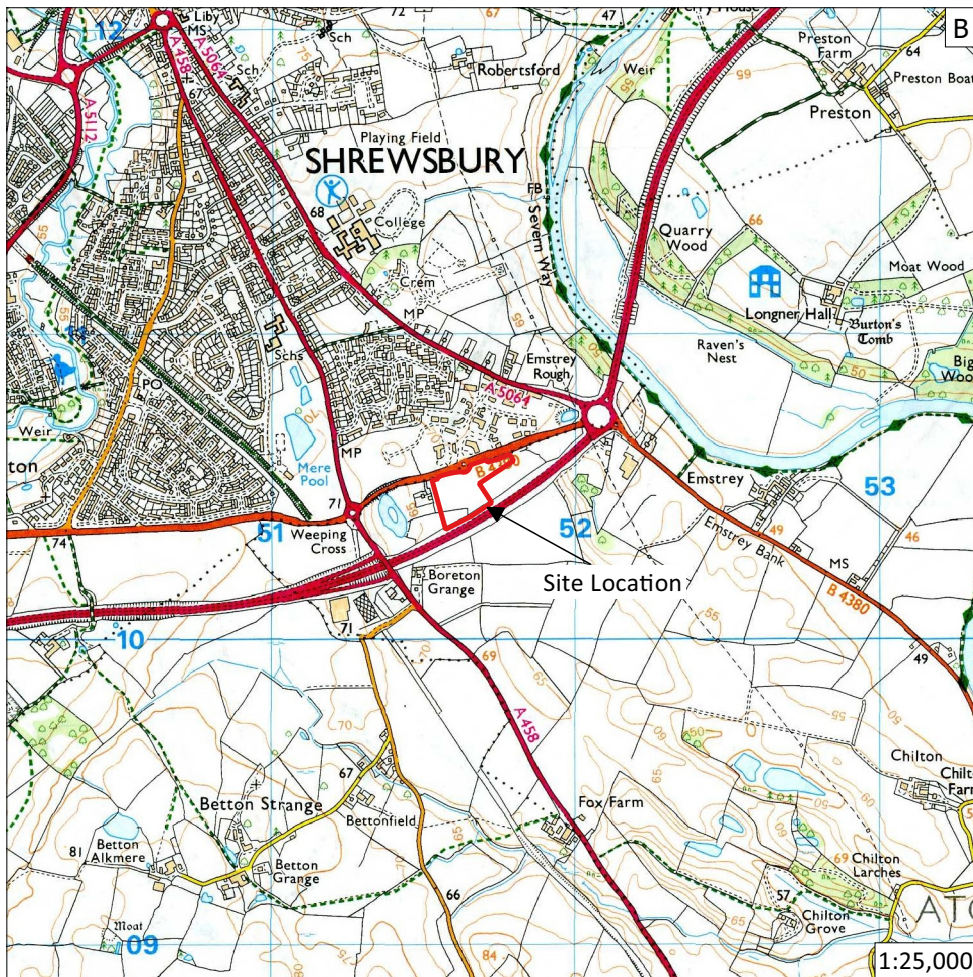
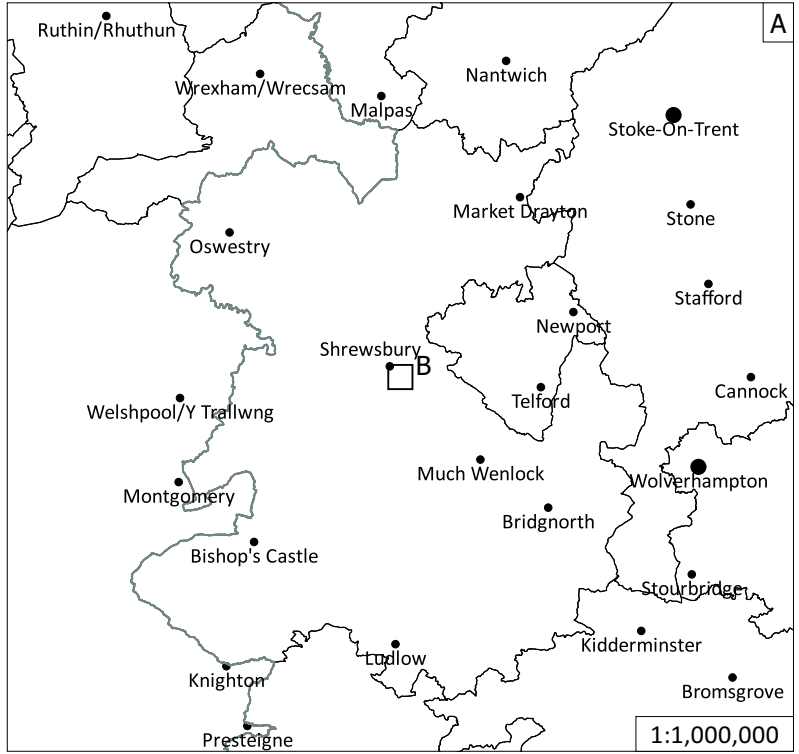


Figure 1: Site location outlined in red

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| | |
|-----------|--|
| Site Code | SHTL 18 |
| Scale | 1:10,000,000 1:1,000,000 1:25,000 @ A4 |
| Drawn by | R Evershed |
| Date | 13/02/2019 |

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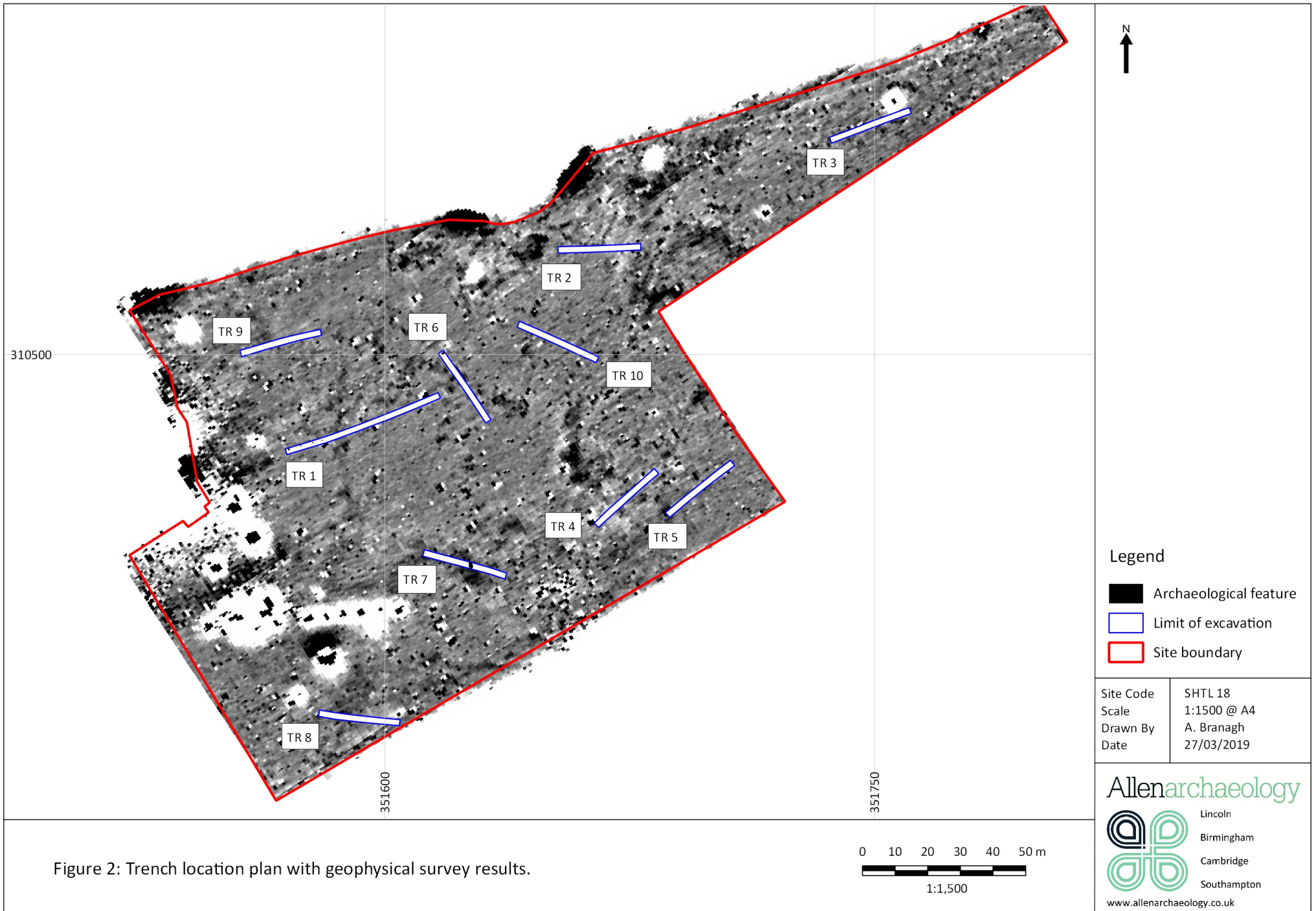
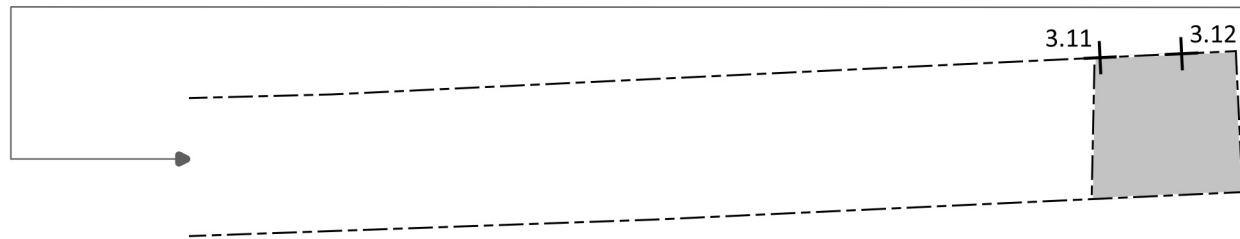
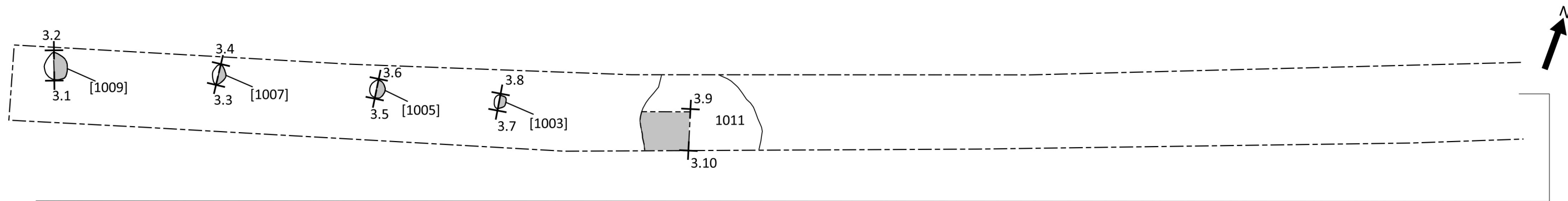


Figure 2: Trench location plan with geophysical survey results.



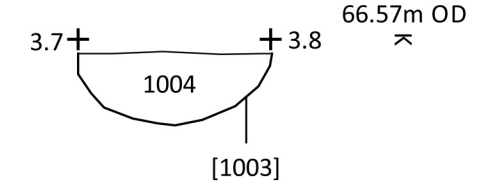
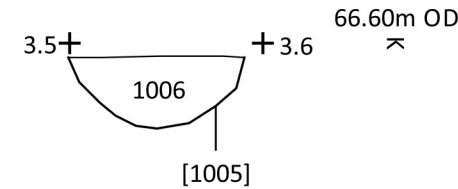
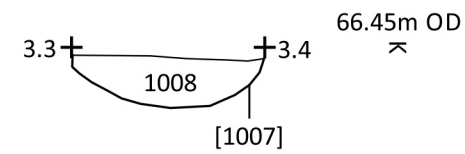
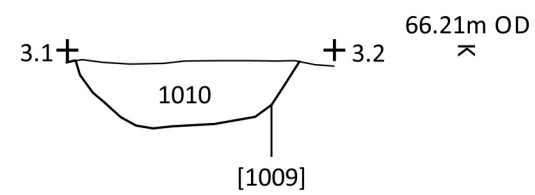
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East-facing section of posthole [1009]

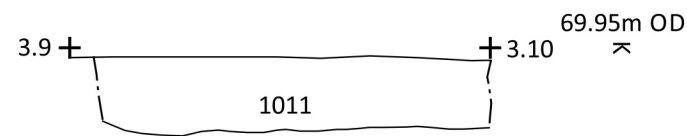
East-facing section of posthole [1007]

East-facing section of posthole [1005]

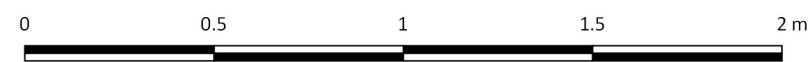
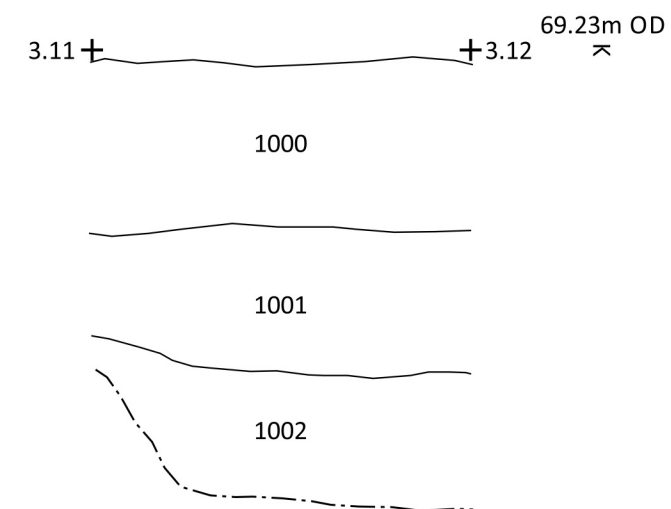
East-facing section of posthole [1003]



Southwest-facing section of layer 1011



South-facing representative section of Trench 1

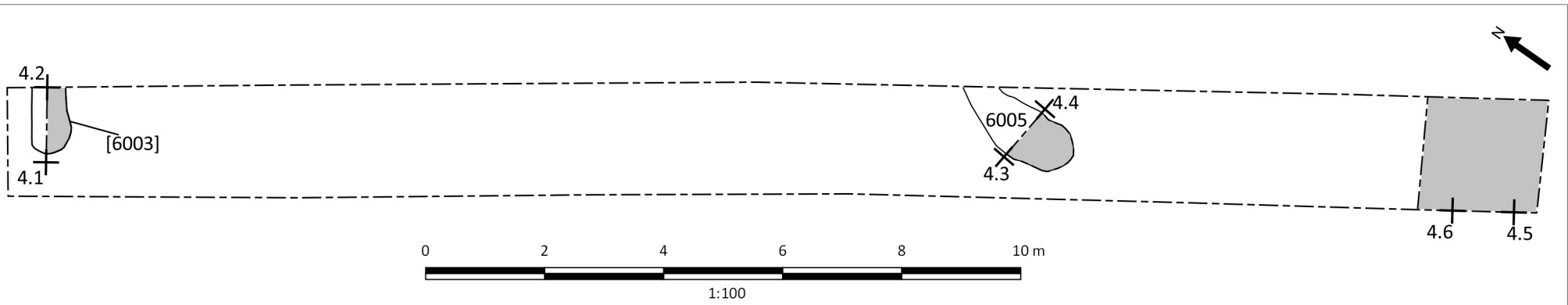


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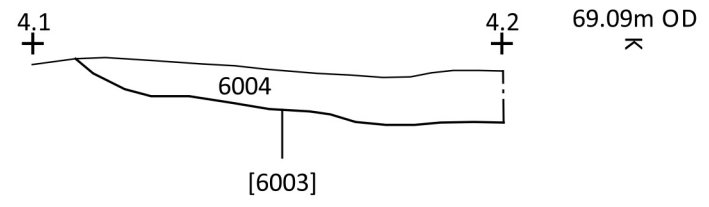
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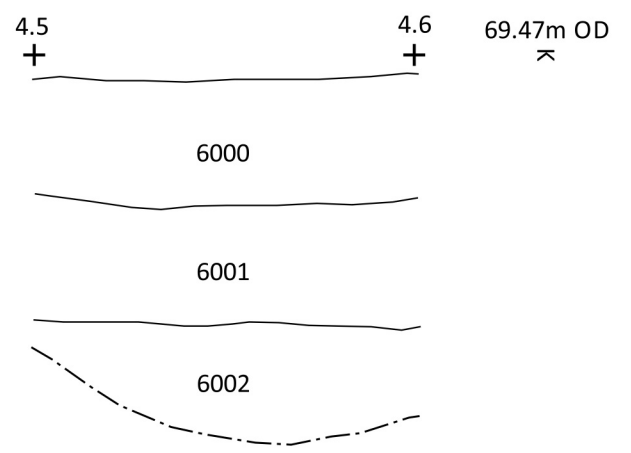
Figure 3: Plan and sections of Trench 1



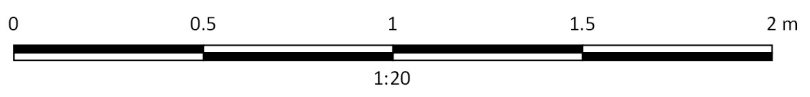
Southeast-facing section of pit [6003]



Northeast-facing representative section of Trench 6



South-facing section of layer 6005



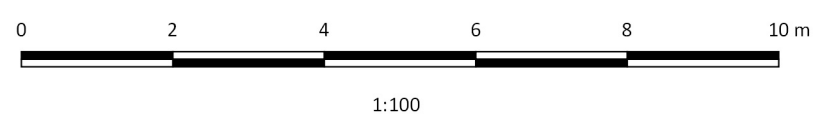
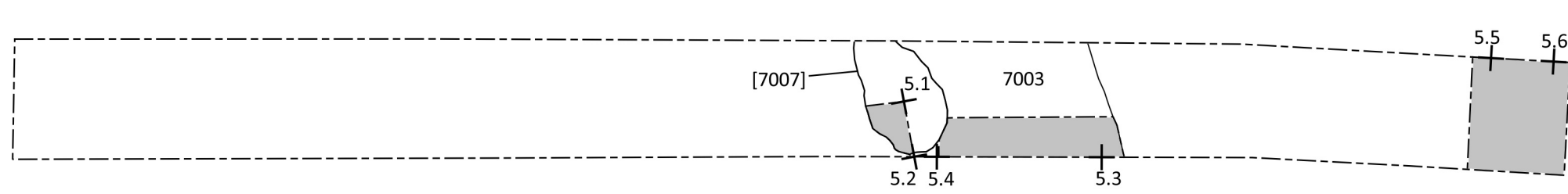
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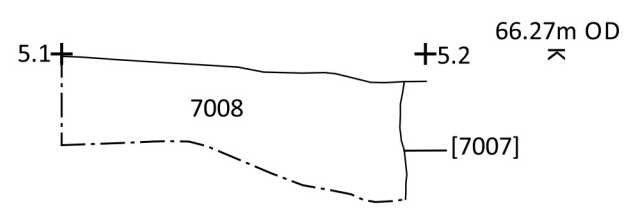
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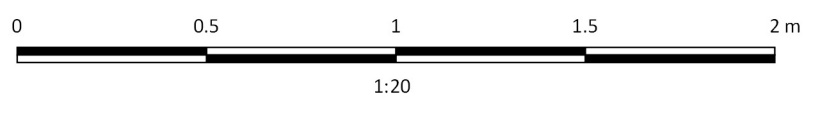
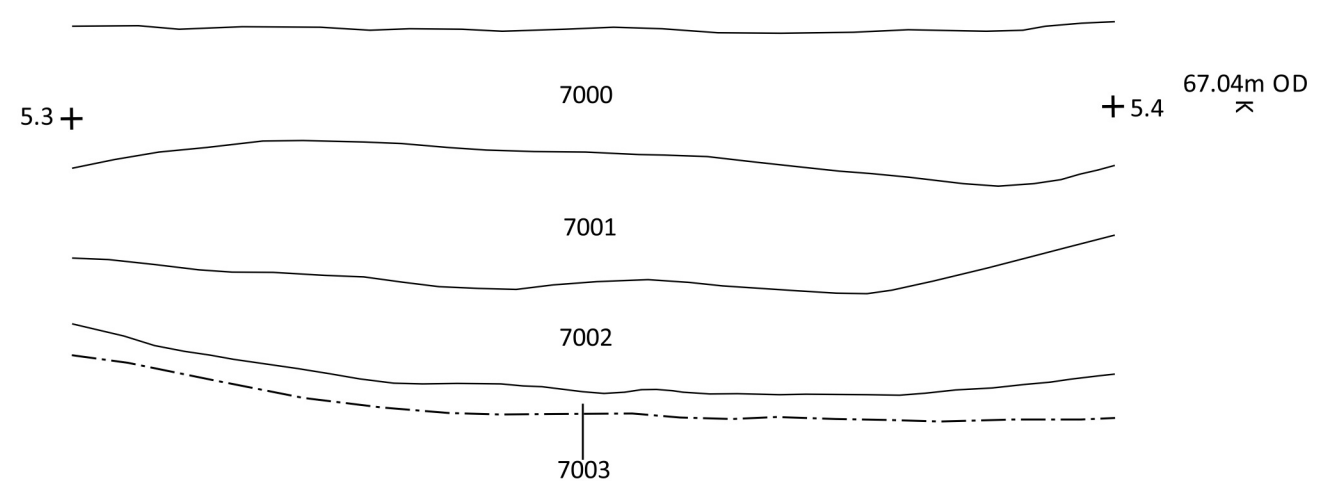
Figure 4: Plan and sections of Trench 6.



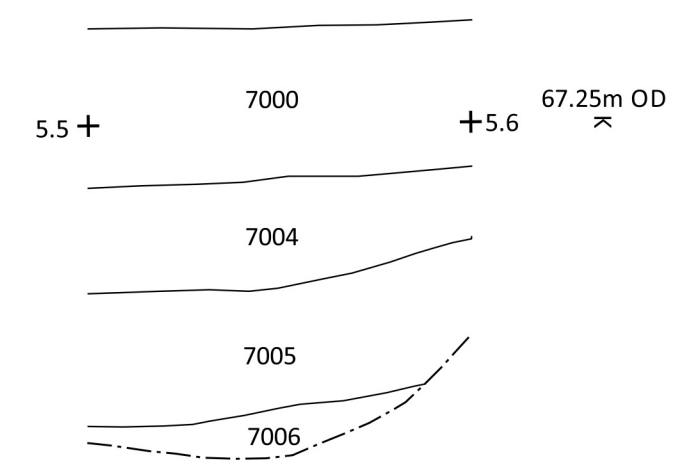
West-facing section of natural feature [7007]



Northeast-facing representative section of Trench 7



Southwest-facing representative section of Trench 7

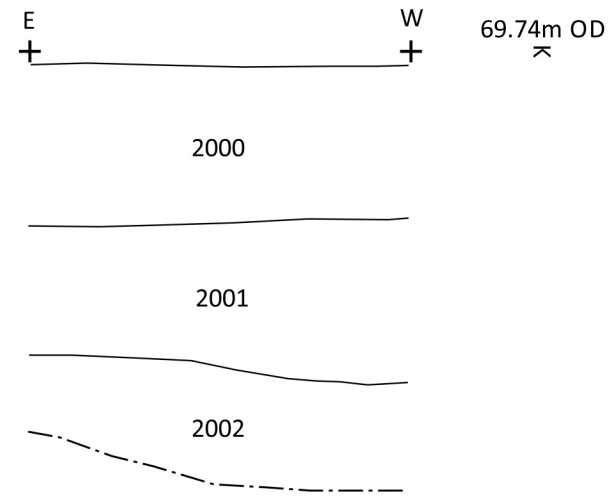


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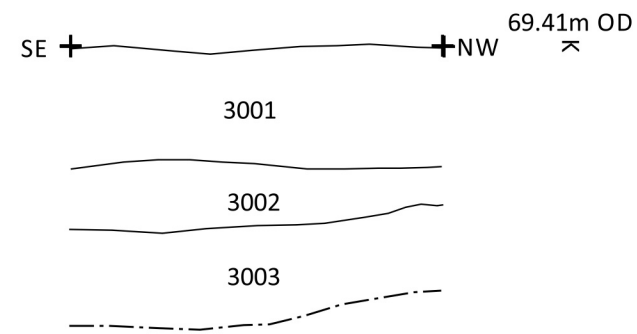
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Figure 5: Plan and sections of Trench 7

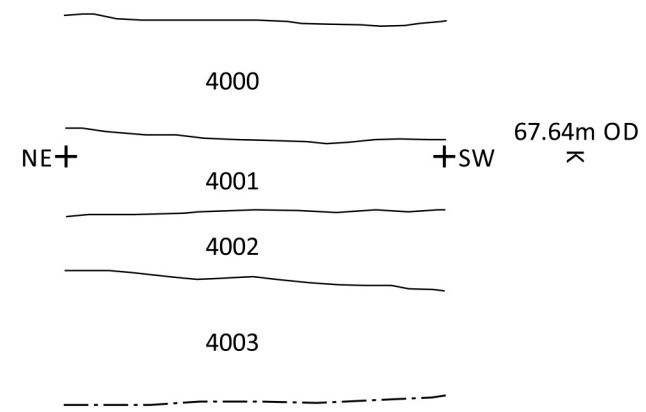
North-facing representative section of Trench 2



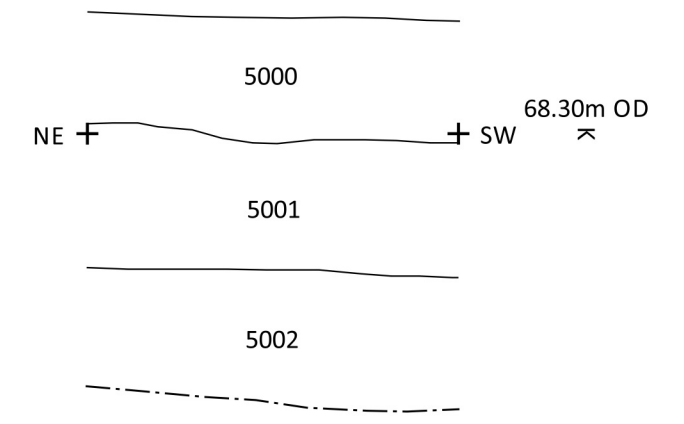
Northeast-facing representative section of Trench 3



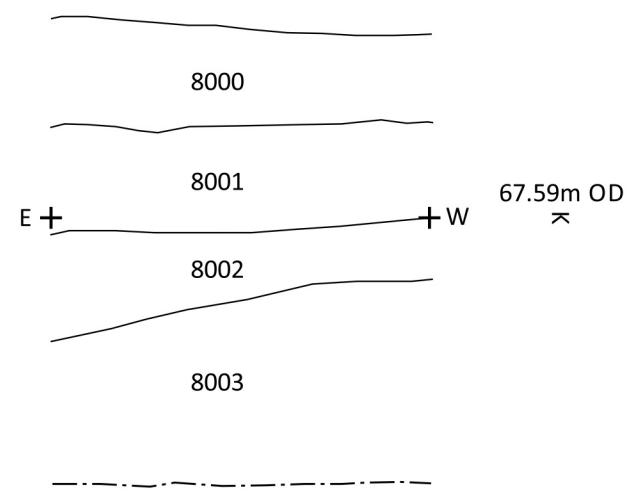
Northwest-facing representative section of Trench 4



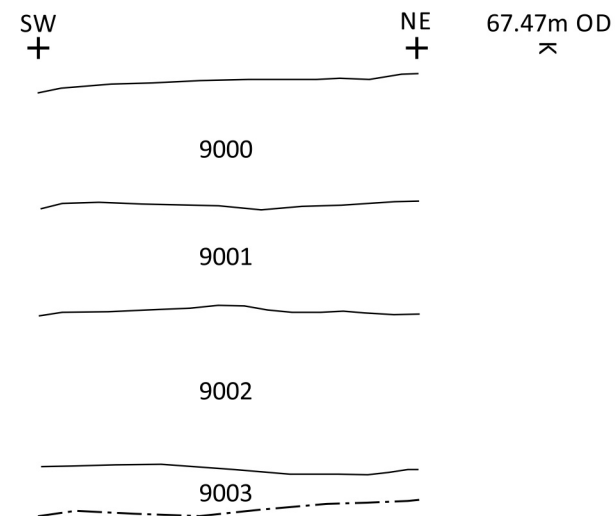
Northwest-facing representative section of Trench 5



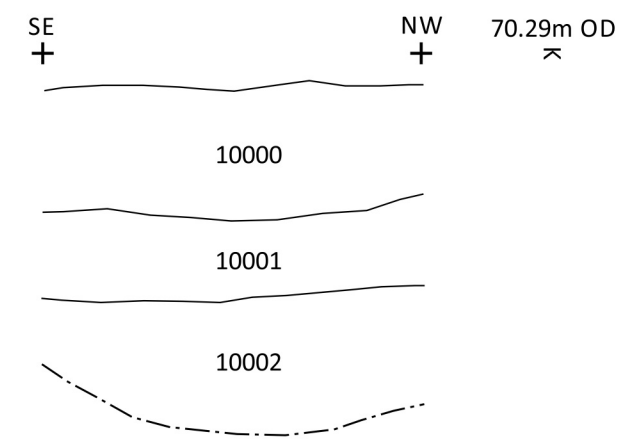
North-facing representative section of Trench 8



Southeast-facing representative section of Trench 9



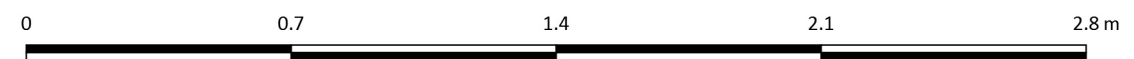
Northeast-facing representative section of Trench 10



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Figure 6: Representative sections of Trench 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 & 10





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Birmingham

+44 (0) 800 610 2545
birmingham@allenarchaeology.co.uk

Cambridge

+44 (0) 800 610 2550
cambridge@allenarchaeology.co.uk

Lincoln

+44 (0) 1522 685356
info@allenarchaeology.co.uk

Preston

+44 (0) 7710 099052
t.rayner@allenarchaeology.co.uk

Southampton

+44 (0) 800 610 2555
southampton@allenarchaeology.co.uk