

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT:
LAND OFF NEWBRIDGE ROAD, BILLINGHURST, WEST SUSSEX**

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NGR: TQ 0796 2590
AAL Site Code: BINR 20
Museum Accession Number: Pending due to COVID-19
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Report prepared for Wyeth Projects Services

By
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Allenarchaeology



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Cover image: General view of the site during machine backfilling of trenches, looking northeast

Executive Summary

- Wyeth Project Services commissioned Allen Archaeology Limited to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land off Newbridge Road, Billingshurst, West Sussex, as a condition of planning consent for a mixed use development.
- The site lies in an area of some archaeological potential, with prehistoric activity recorded nearby during work in advance of construction of the adjacent bypass. The Roman road Stane Street, runs through the middle of the town, to the east of the site.
- The works comprised the excavation of eleven trenches, measuring 30m long by 1.8m wide. The trenches revealed very little of archaeological interest, with only three trenches containing potential archaeological features.
- A number of irregular features in Trench 2 were interpreted as probably representing natural processes of bioturbation. An undated pit of unclear function was recorded in Trench 9, and a re-cut ditch in Trench 11 is likely to represent a former woodland boundary shown on 19th century mapping. No artefactual material was recovered from any of the excavated features, and overall, the results of the evaluation demonstrated a negligible archaeological potential for the proposed development area.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Wyeth Projects Services commissioned Allen Archaeology Limited to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching as a condition of planning consent for a mixed use development on land off Newbridge Road, Billingshurst, West Sussex.
- 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), the Historic England document '*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*' (English Heritage 2015) and a brief for the works (Medlycott 2020).

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 Billingshurst is located in the county of West Sussex and the administrative district of Horsham, c.10km southwest of the town of Horsham. The site comprises a c.1.5ha block of agricultural land on the west side of the town, immediately to the south of Platts Roundabout. It is bounded by the A29 to the east and by the A272 to the north and west.
- 2.2 The bedrock geology comprises Weald Formation mudstone, with no overlying superficial deposits recorded (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 Full planning permission has been granted for '*Hybrid application for the erection of petrol filling station with convenience store and sandwich bar, car wash, jet wash and car parking; motorcycle showroom and workshop with associated car parking; outline planning permission for flexible employment space (B1b/B1c/B2/B8) totalling 4,627sqm with associated car parking and circulation space (scale, landscaping and appearance reserved); new access to the site from A272 and pedestrian link to footbridge over A29*' (Reference DC/19/0295). As a condition of planning consent, a programme of archaeological evaluation trenching has been requested by the planning authority, in order to determine the nature and extent of the archaeological resource present on the site, and to establish any further mitigation strategies that may be required to mitigate the impact of the consented development.
- 3.2 The approach adopted was consistent 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*' (Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government 2019) and local planning policy.

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 Prehistoric activity was identified during works in advance of construction of the bypass, adjacent to the northern site boundary, where a possible hearth was identified, along with Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age pottery (West Sussex Historic Environment Record (WSHER) Reference MWS7202). A number of pits were recorded to the southwest, but these were devoid of dateable artefacts. Further possible prehistoric activity was recorded

c.200m to the north of the site, where an undated linear was identified, along with an assemblage of fire-cracked flint (WSHER Reference MWS7929).

- 4.2 The Roman road Stane Street, running from London to Chichester, runs through the middle of Billingshurst. A scatter of Roman coins, pottery and tesserae were found close to the line of the road, c.500m east of the site (WSHER Reference MWS3698).
- 4.3 The site lies to the west of the historic core of the settlement, which remained focussed on the line of the Roman road in the medieval period. The parish church of St. Mary is located just to the east of the line of the Roman road, c.600m east of the site (WSHER Reference MWS5112). Two Saxo-Norman pits were recorded on the line of the bypass, c.600m south of the site (WSHER Reference MWS7200), and archaeological monitoring approximately 300m to the east-southeast recorded four ditches, two of which contained medieval pottery (WSHER Reference MWS8105).
- 4.4 Monitoring during groundworks for a residential development immediately to the east of the site identified only a small number of undated features and late post-medieval ceramic building material (CBM, e.g. brick, tile) (WSHER Reference MWS7195).
- 4.5 Historic Landscape Characterisation records the site as falling within parcel HWS248, described as 'modern field amalgamation', representing large open fields created by the removal of historic boundaries and coppices.

5.0 Aims and Objectives

- 5.1 The purpose of the evaluation was to gather sufficient information for the Senior Historic Environment Officer at Essex Place Services, advising Horsham District Council, to be able to formulate a policy for the management of the archaeological resources present on the site and to develop a programme of further archaeological investigations, where required.
- 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 any archaeology encountered.

6.0 Methodology

- 6.1 The evaluation trenching comprised a 4% sample of the site, amounting to 11no 30m x 1.8m trenches. The trenches were located on site using a survey grade Leica GS08 RTK NetRover GPS, allowing millimetre accurate real-time precision. In each trench, topsoil was removed by mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket 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 then by hand.
- 6.2 Each deposit or layer was allocated a unique three- or four-digit identifier (context number) and accorded a written description, a summary of these is included in Appendix 5. Numbers in square brackets represent cut features (e.g. pit [902]).
- 6.3 A full written record of the archaeological deposits was made on standard Allen Archaeology Limited 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, and all photographs incorporated scales, an identification board and directional arrow.

- 6.4 Currently due to the COVID-19 lockdown there is no accession number available due to the Horsham curatorial team being on the government retention furlough scheme. It is anticipated that an accession number will be provided when the curatorial team return to work.

7.0 Results

Trenches 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10

- 7.1 These trenches contained no archaeological features or deposits of significance. The earliest deposit in each was the natural geology, comprising a compact yellow brown sandy clay. This was sealed by a topsoil of firm mid grey sandy silt, measuring 0.25m to 0.35m thick (Plate 1).



Plate 1: Representative section in Trench 1, looking northwest, 1m and 0.25m scales

Trench 2

- 7.2 The earliest deposit in this trench was the natural geology, 201. Cutting the natural towards the centre of the trench were a series of small cut features; [202], [204], [206], [208], [210] and [212]. The features were all small and irregular in plan, with uneven sides and concave bases. All fills were a firm mid grey sandy clay, and were devoid of finds. The irregular profile and sterile fills suggests a natural origin for these features, such as bioturbation.
- 7.3 A ceramic land drain cut passed through this group of features on an east – west alignment.



Plate 2: Cuts [202] and [204] looking northeast, 0.40m scale

Trench 9

- 7.4 Cutting the natural geology in Trench 9 was [902], a sub-oval undated pit with moderately steep sides and a concave base. This contained a single fill 903, a compact mid-grey brown silty clay 0.24m thick, which contained no finds.

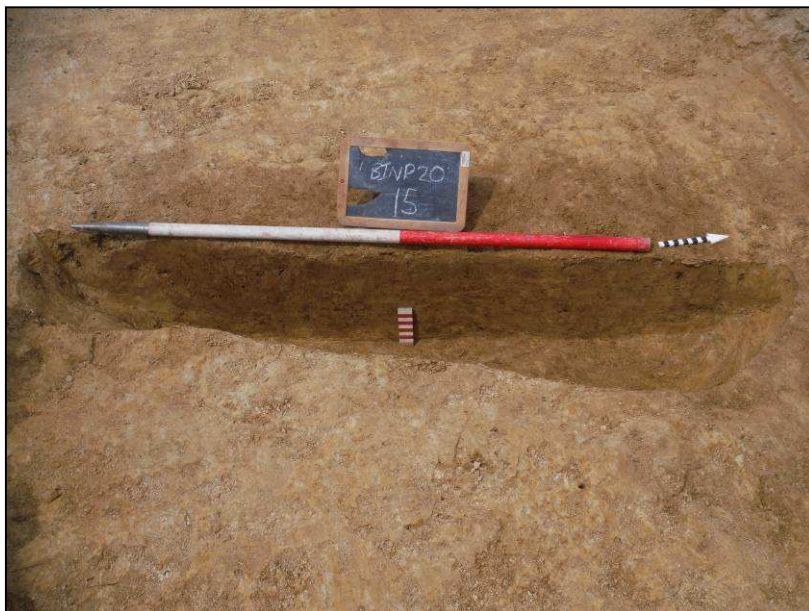


Plate 3: Pit [902] looking northwest, 1m and 0.10m scales

Trench 11

- 7.5 Just to the south of the centre of the trench was a shallow linear ditch [1102] orientated west-northwest to east-southeast with gradual sloping sides and a concave base. It

contained a single undated fill 1103, a mid-brown grey sandy clay, 0.18m thick. It was cut by [1104], a similarly orientated linear ditch with moderately steep sides and a concave base. It contained a single undated fill of mid-grey silty clay 0.37m thick, 1105.



Plate 4: Ditch cuts [1102] and [1104] looking east, 1m and 0.40m scales

8.0 Discussion and Conclusions

- 8.1 Eleven trenches were excavated across the proposed development area. Eight of the trenches were devoid of archaeological features, and a small group of probable natural features were investigated in Trench 2. The only features identified were an undated pit in Trench 9, and a re-cut ditch in Trench 11, which was also undated. The location of the ditch corresponds with the northern boundary of an area of woodland called Cob Wood, shown on the 1876 Ordnance Survey map of the area. This woodland had disappeared from the mapping by 1897.
- 8.2 Overall, the evidence suggests a negligible archaeological potential for the proposed development area.

9.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

- 9.1 The methodology was appropriate to the scale and extent of the project and has identified a negligible archaeological potential for the proposed development area.

10.0 Acknowledgements

- 10.1 Allen Archaeology would like to thank Wyeth Project Services for this commission.

11.0 References

AAL, 2020, *Specification for an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching: Land off Newbridge Road, Billingshurst, West Sussex*, Allen Archaeology Limited, unpublished planning document

CifA, 2014, *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluations*, Institute for Archaeologists, Reading

Historic England, 2015, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide*, London: Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England

Medlycott, M., 2020, *Brief for archaeological trial trenching at land at Platts Roundabout, Newbridge Road, Billingshurst*, Essex Place Services

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019, *National Planning Policy Framework*. London: Department for Communities and Local Government

Appendix 1: Context Summary List

Trench 1

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
100	Layer	Firm light grey sandy silt			0.25	Topsoil
101	Layer	Compact yellowish brown sandy clay				Natural geology

Trench 2

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
200	Layer	Firm light grey sandy silt			0.35	Topsoil
201	Layer	Compact yellowish brown sandy clay				Natural geology
202	Cut	Sub circular cut with moderately steep sides and a pointed base	0.10	0.18	0.16	Cut of small pit
203	Fill	Firm mid-grey sandy clay with occasional inclusion of very small irregular stones	0.10	0.18	0.16	Natural silting of [202]
204	Cut	Sub circular cut with concave sides and a concave base	0.18	0.15	0.14	Cut of small pit
205	Fill	Firm mid-grey sandy clay with occasional inclusion of very small irregular stones	0.18	0.15	0.14	Natural silting of [204]
206	Cut	Sub circular cut with steep sides and a pointed base	0.21	0.15	0.18	Cut of small pit
207	Fill	Firm mid-grey sandy clay with occasional inclusion of very small irregular stones	0.21	0.15	0.18	Natural silting of [206]
208	Cut	Sub circular cut with moderately steep sides and a concave base	0.20	0.15	0.16	Cut of small pit
209	Fill	Firm mid-grey sandy clay with occasional inclusion of very small irregular stones	0.20	0.15	0.16	Natural silting of [208]
210	Cut	Sub circular cut with uneven sides and a concave base	0.24	0.10	0.10	Cut of small pit
211	Fill	Firm mid-grey sandy clay with occasional inclusion of very small irregular stones	0.24	0.10	0.10	Natural silting of [210]
212	Cut	Sub circular feature with uneven sides and a concave base	0.20	0.12	0.16	Cut of small pit
213	Fill	Firm mid-grey sandy clay with occasional inclusion of very small irregular stones	0.20	0.12	0.16	Natural silting of [212]

Trench 3

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
300	Layer	Firm light grey sandy silt			0.40	Topsoil
301	Layer	Compact yellowish brown sandy clay				Natural geology

Trench 4

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
400	Layer	Firm light grey sandy silt			0.40	Topsoil
401	Layer	Compact yellowish brown sandy clay				Natural geology

Trench 5

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
500	Layer	Firm light grey sandy silt			0.32	Topsoil
501	Layer	Compact yellowish brown sandy clay				Natural geology

Trench 6

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
600	Layer	Firm light grey sandy silt			0.46	Topsoil
601	Layer	Compact yellowish brown sandy clay				Natural geology

Trench 7

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
700	Layer	Firm light grey sandy silt			0.28	Topsoil
701	Layer	Compact yellowish brown sandy clay				Natural geology

Trench 8

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
800	Layer	Firm light grey sandy silt			0.40	Topsoil
801	Layer	Compact yellowish brown sandy clay				Natural geology

Trench 9

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
900	Layer	Firm light grey sandy silt			0.25	Topsoil
901	Layer	Compact yellowish brown sandy clay				Natural geology
902	Cut	Sub circular cut with moderately steep sides and a concave base	1.25	0.40	0.24	Cut of pit
903	Fill	Compact mid-grey sandy clay fill	1.25	0.40	0.24	Natural silting of [902]

Trench 10

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
1000	Layer	Firm light grey sandy silt			0.35	Topsoil
1001	Layer	Compact yellowish brown sandy clay				Natural geology

Trench 11

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
1100	Layer	Firm light grey sandy silt			0.37	Topsoil
1101	Layer	Compact yellowish brown sandy clay				Natural geology
1102	Cut	East to west orientated ditch with gradual concave sides and a concave base	1.8	0.35	0.18	Cut of ditch
1103	Fill	Firm mid-brown grey sandy clay with occasional sub rounded pebbles	1.8	0.35	0.18	Natural silting of [1103]
1104	Cut	East to west orientated ditch with moderately steep sides with a concave base	1.8	0.78	0.37	Re-cut of ditch
1105	Fill	Firm mid-grey sandy clay with occasional medium sized irregular shaped pebbles	1.8	0.78	0.37	Natural silting of [1104]

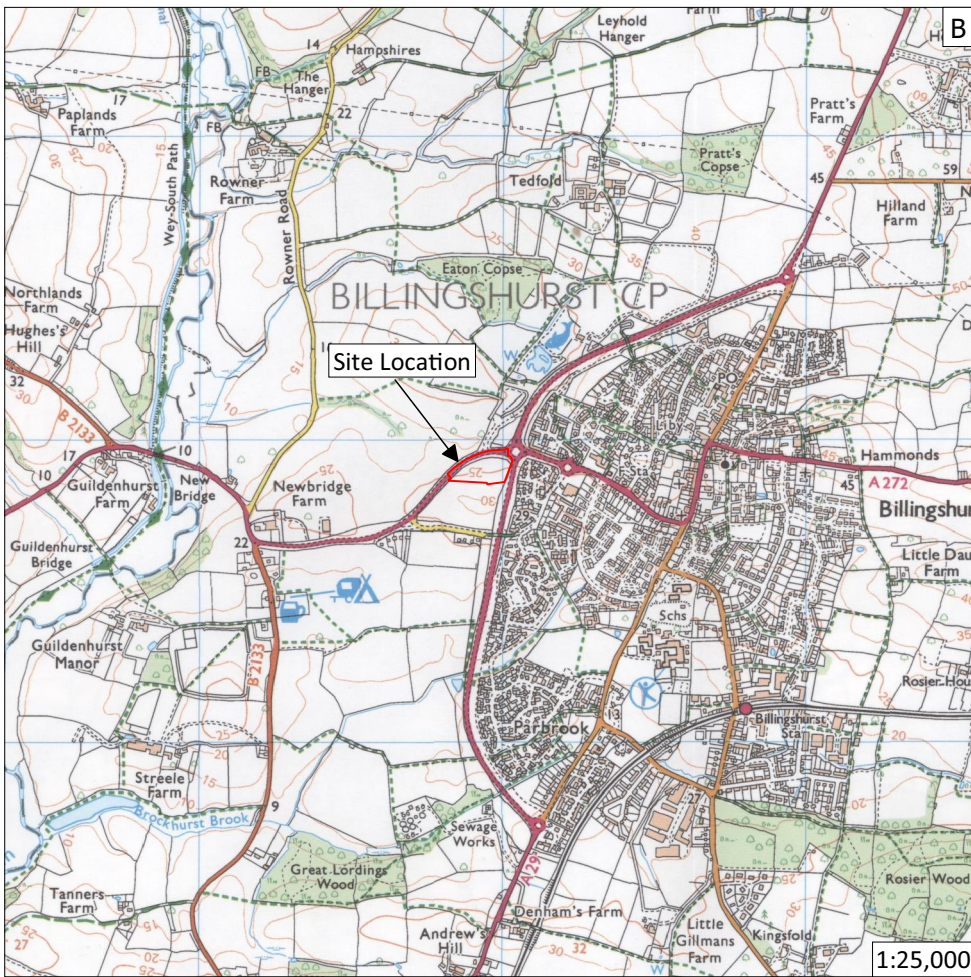
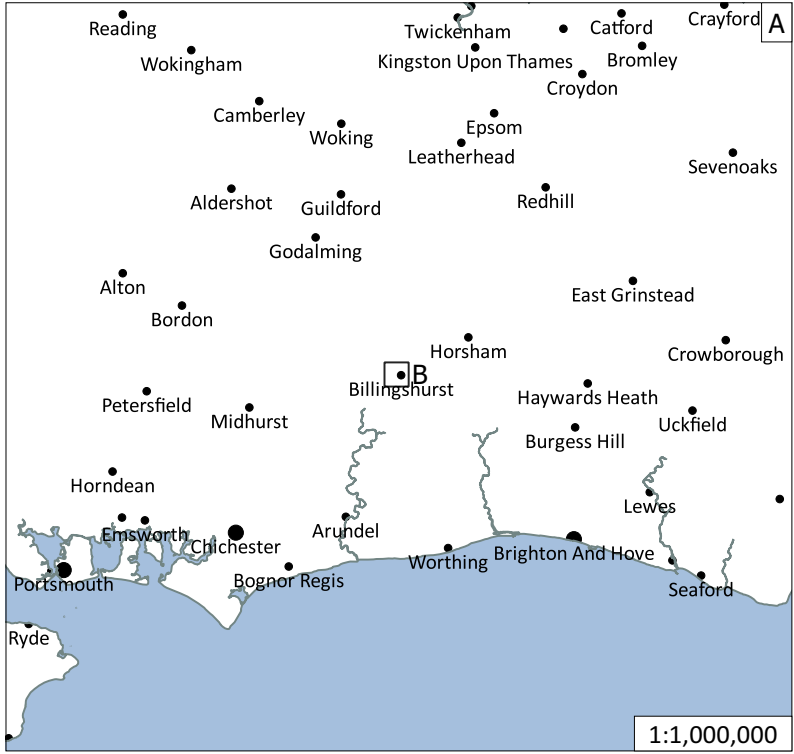


Figure 1: Site location outlined in red

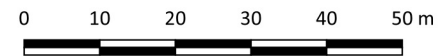
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Figure 2: Trench locations in blue, site boundary in red and archaeological features in black



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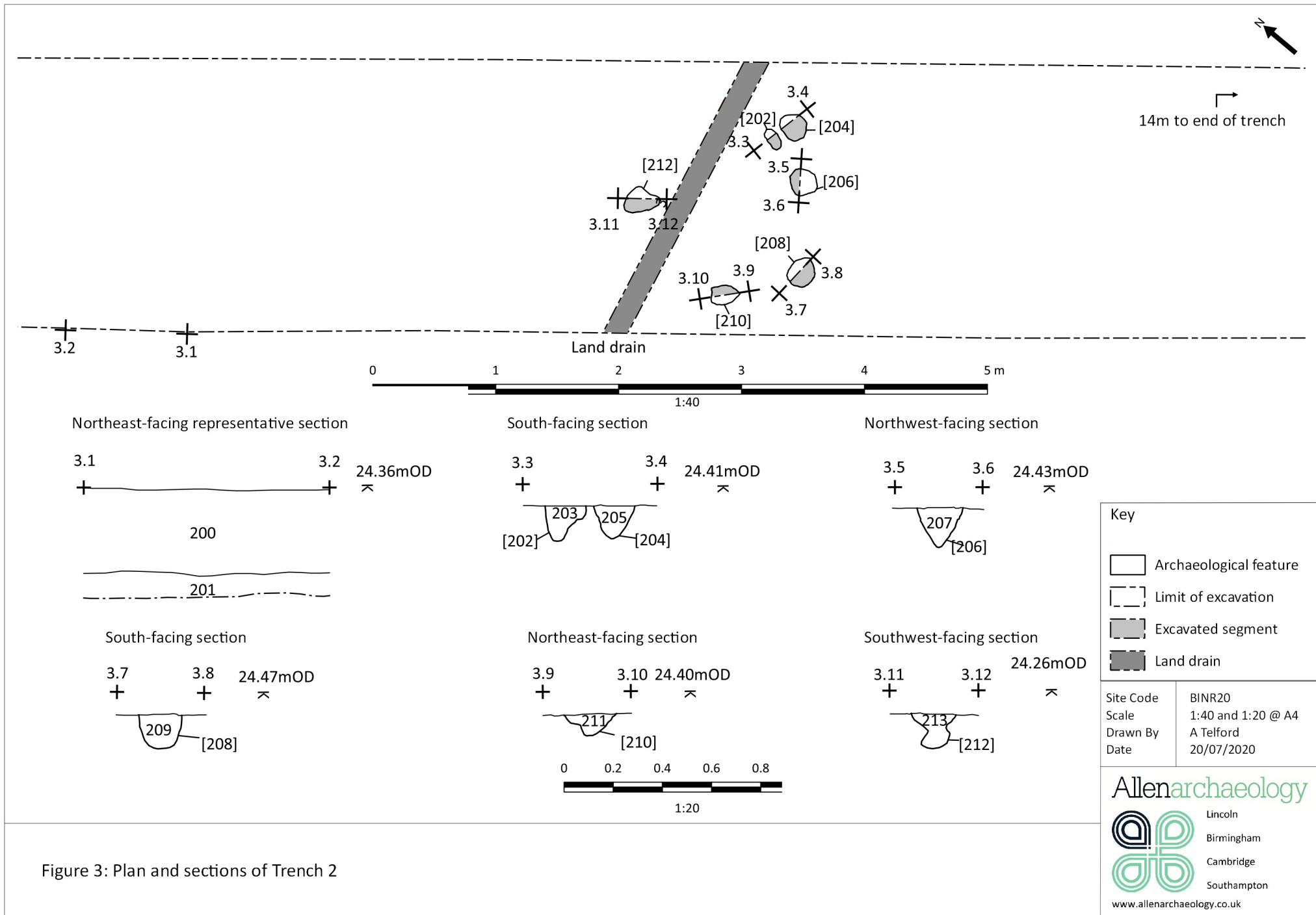
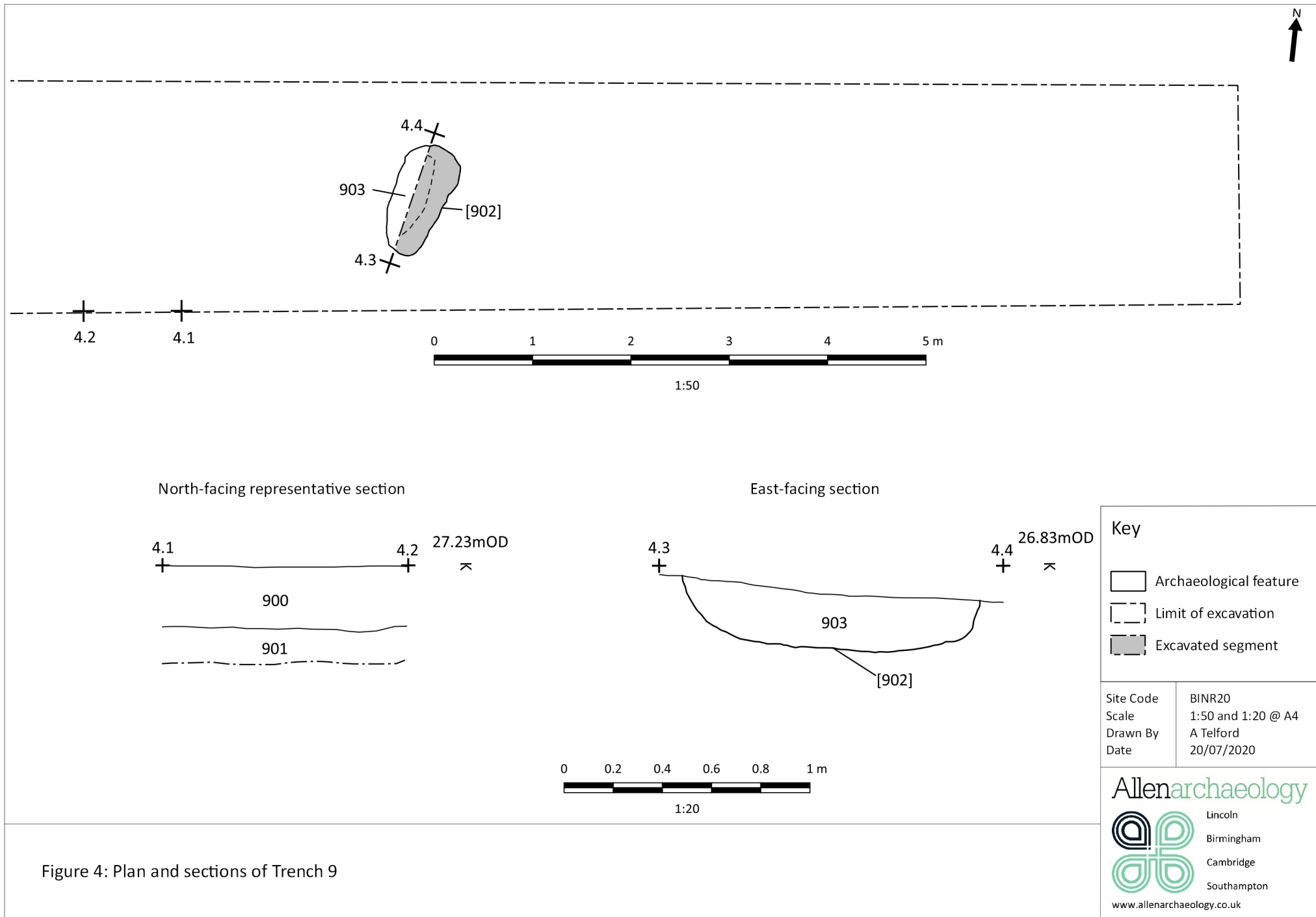


Figure 3: Plan and sections of Trench 2



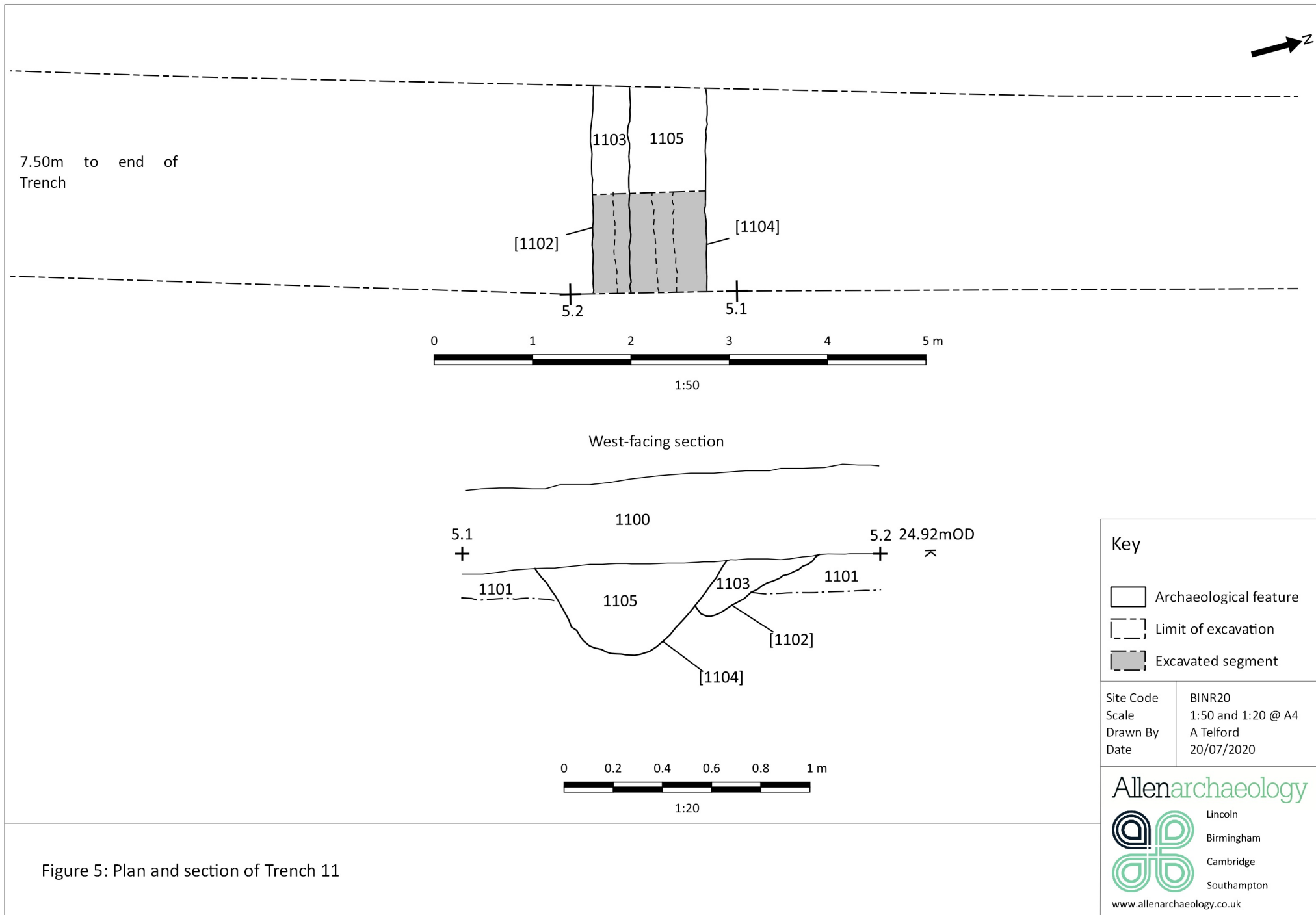
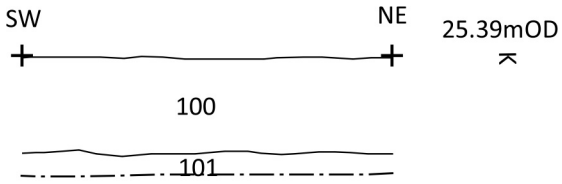
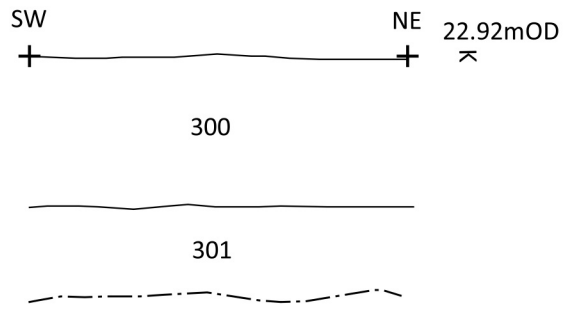


Figure 5: Plan and section of Trench 11

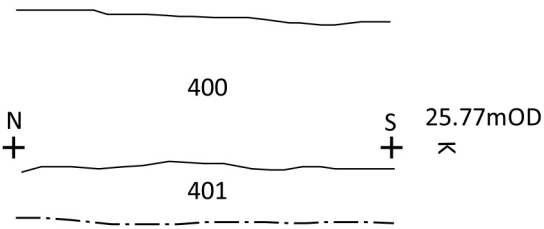
Southeast-facing representative section of Tr. 1



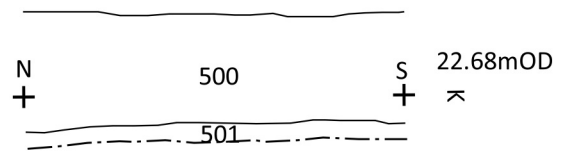
Southeast-facing representative section of Tr. 3



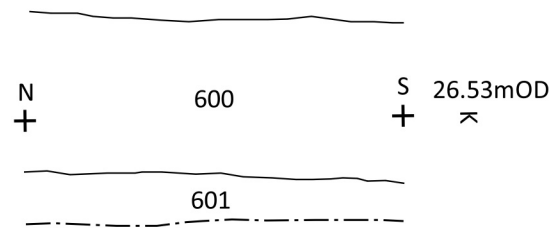
West-facing representative section of Tr. 4



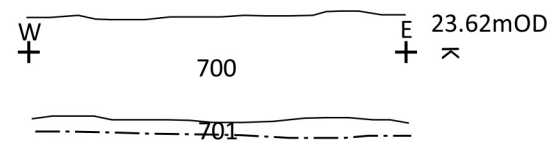
West-facing representative section of Tr. 5



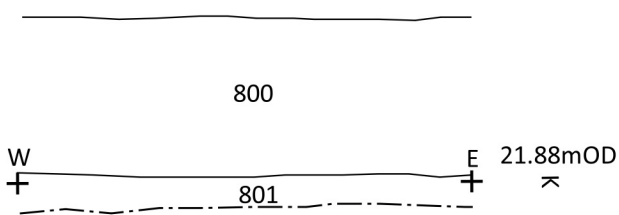
West-facing representative section of Tr. 6



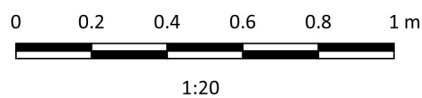
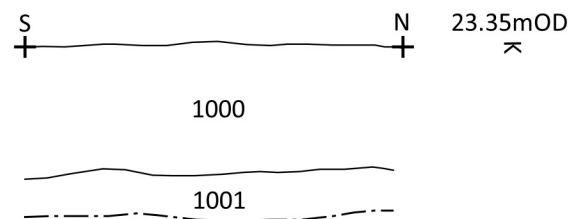
South-facing representative section of Tr. 7



South-facing representative section of Tr. 8



East-facing representative section of Tr. 10



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Figure 6: Representative sections of Trenches 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10



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