

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT:  
TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND OFF WILSONS LANE, EXHALL, WARWICKSHIRE**

Planning Reference: 037021  
NGR: SP 3511 8487  
AAL Site Code: EXWL 21  
Museum Accession Number: TBC  
OASIS Reference Number: allenarc1-508588



Report prepared for

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Allenarchaeology



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*Cover image: Trench 1, looking north-northeast. Scales 1m*

## Executive Summary

- IREEF – UK Logistics Propco Limited commissioned Allen Archaeology Limited to carry out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching, after the granting of a planning application for an employment development on land off Wilsons Lane, Exhall, Warwickshire.
- No evidence of prehistoric activity is known within the vicinity of the site. There is limited evidence for Roman activity, a Roman coin was found c. 0.9km northwest of the site. Exhall itself is not mentioned in Domesday Book, but was land that was probably owned by the Countess Godiva. The land was passed to the Earls of Chester before being seized by the crown in 1265. In the medieval period Exhall was located on the edge of the Arden. Moated sites lie to the west and to the northwest of the site. Post-medieval activity close to the proposed area of development takes the form of former windmills, a smithy and brickworks.
- A geophysical survey was conducted on the site revealing a low potential for archaeological remains apart from a possible former trackway or ditch. The subsequent evaluation consisted of 14 trenches, 12 were 30m long and approximately 1.8m wide and 2 were 20m long and approximately 1.8m wide. Trench 3 exposed a pond which was probably an old extraction pit. Rooting was noted to the southeast of the site where trees were marked on a map of 1887.

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 IREEF – UK Logistics Propco Limited commissioned Allen Archaeology Limited (AAL) to carry out an archaeological evaluation after the granting of a planning application for an employment development on land off Wilsons Lane, Exhall, Warwickshire.
- 1.2 All site work and reporting has been undertaken in accordance with current national guidelines, as set out in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) '*Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*' (CIfA 2020a), the Historic England document '*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*' (HE 2015), provisions set out in Warwickshire County Council's '*Generic Archaeological Fieldwork Guidelines*' (WCC 2017) and a specification prepared by this company (AAL 2022).
- 1.3 The documentary and physical archive 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*' (Brown 2011) and '*Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*' (CIfA 2020b). The archive will be submitted to the Warwickshire Museum following their guidelines (WCC 2021) within twelve months of the completion of the work. An accession number will be raised at the point of deposition.

## 2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 Exhall is a settlement within the Nuneaton and Bedworth district of Warwickshire, c.6.3km north-northeast of central Coventry and 28km east of central Birmingham. The proposed development area is a triangular block of land extending to c.2.1ha (Figure 1). It is presently open land to the southeast of Wilsons Lane and west of Longford Road. The site centres on NGR SP 3511 8487.
- 2.2 The bedrock geology comprises mudstone and sandstone of the Whitacre Member, overlain by superficial geological deposits of Thrussington Member Diamicton and glaciofluvial deposits (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

## 3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 A planning application (Reference 037021) was approved for '*a proposed employment development of 6,953 sq.m of B1 (light industry), B2 (general industry) and B8 (storage and distribution) uses with associated parking, access and landscaping*'.
- 3.2 Prior to approval the Planning Archaeologist for Warwickshire County Council requested the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, including a trial trench evaluation, in order to provide further information on the nature and extent of the archaeological resource and to establish any appropriate mitigation measures.
- 3.3 The approach adopted is consistent with the recommendations of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with the particular sections of relevance being Paragraphs 187 and 189 of '*Section 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*' (The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2021).

## **4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

- 4.1 There is no evidence for prehistoric activity and very limited evidence for Roman activity close to the site, with a Roman coin (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record MWA 6984) found on Church Lane, Exhall, approximately 0.9km northwest of the site.
- 4.2 Whilst Exhall is not mentioned in Domesday Book, it was likely part of the nine hides of Ansty and Folehill belonging to the Countess Godiva (Martin 2002). The estates of Countess Godiva and her husband, Earl Leofric, including Coventry and Exhall passed to the Earls of Chester. The earldom of Chester had been appropriated by the Crown in 1265, and the manor of Cheylesmore was granted to the Earl of Warwickshire in 1549 who leased it to the corporation of Coventry, who then became the lords of Exhall.
- 4.3 During the medieval period Exhall was located on the edge of the wooded part of Warwickshire known as the Arden. Approximately 0.25km to the west of the site is Chasewood Lodge Care Home, formerly known as Moat House, which lies within Moat House Moat (MWA 1650) and is possibly related to Exhall Hall (Historic England List Entry No. 1019141), another medieval moated site, approximately 0.7km to the northwest.
- 4.4 Post-medieval activity close to the site includes the sites of two former windmills (WMA 1668 and (WMA 6643), 0.7km northwest and 0.6km north-northwest of the site, a smithy (WMA 6642) 0.3km north of the site, a brickworks (WMA 6644) 0.8km northeast of the site and a colliery (WMA 6645) 0.9km northeast of the site.
- 4.5 AAL undertook a geophysical survey by magnetometry across the site in 2019 (AAL 2019). The survey revealed very little of potential archaeological interest, other than a possible former trackway, ditch or land drain in the southern corner of the site. There was a fair amount of magnetic noise across the site. Some of this was due to modern waste along the margins of the field and other modern disturbances. The evidence suggested a negligible archaeological potential for the proposed development area.

## **5.0 Aims and Objectives**

- 5.1 The purpose of the archaeological evaluation was to gather sufficient information for the archaeological advisor to the local planning authority to make an informed decision regarding the future management of any archaeological remains and consider any appropriate mitigation to be undertaken either in advance of and/or during development.
- 5.2 Evidence was gathered to establish the presence or absence, quality and extent of archaeological remains on this site. This was to enable an assessment of the potential and significance of the archaeological remains and to assess the impact of the development upon the archaeology.
- 5.3 More specifically the aims of the evaluation trenching were to verify the results of the geophysical survey and determine if the more ephemeral features recorded in the geophysical survey still survive.

## 6.0 Methodology

- 6.1 The evaluation methodology entailed the excavation of 14 trenches, 12 trenches 30m long and approximately 1.8m wide and 2 trenches 20m long and approximately 1.8m wide (Trenches 2 and 5) (Figure 2). In each trench, topsoil, subsoil and underlying non-archaeological deposits were removed by mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket in spits no greater than 100mm in thickness. The process was repeated until the first archaeologically significant or natural horizon was exposed. Further excavation was by hand.
- 6.2 The evaluation trenches were accurately located using a survey grade GPS receiving RTK corrections to positions agreed in the WSI. Machine excavation was monitored at all times by an experienced field archaeologist. A full written record of the archaeological deposits was made on standard AAL context recording sheets. Each deposit or layer was allocated a unique identifier (context number) consisting of three digits and accorded a written description, e.g. 101; a summary of these is included in Appendix 1. Numbers in square brackets represent cut features, e.g. [303]. All excavated sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. Photography formed an integral part of the recording strategy and all photographs incorporated scales and a directional arrow, as appropriate.
- 6.3 Fieldwork was undertaken from 1<sup>st</sup> August to 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022, supervised by Jonny Milton with assistance from Chris Brown.

## 7.0 Results (Figures 2, 3 and 4)

7.1 The general stratigraphic sequence for the site was consistent across all 14 trenches (see Figures 3 and 4). The topsoil was a brown grey clay silt up to 0.48m thick. The topsoil sealed a former topsoil, a mid-brown clay silt, in Trenches 6 (Plate 1) and 7, 601 and 701 respectively, up to 0.22m thick. The natural geology was a mottled light brown or brown yellow clay sand. No finds were recovered from these layers.



*Plate 1: Trench 6 representative section, looking northeast. Scale 1m*

### ***Trench 3 (Figure 3)***

7.2 In Trench 3 the topsoil sealed a 0.24m thick brown and grey clay silt containing brick, wood and metal, 301. Beneath this was a very large feature, [303], that extended the width of the trench and was c.16m wide (Plate 2). It was filled with a dark grey/blue brown clay containing modern brick and glass, 304. This feature has been interpreted as a former pond.





*Plate 2: Trench 3, looking west-southwest, scales 1m*

#### **Trench 4**

- 7.3 The topsoil in Trench 4 overlay a modern dump of brown and grey clay silt, 401, 0.30m in thickness, also containing brick, wood and metal, suggesting it was a continuation of the layer seen in Trench 3 (Plate 3).



*Plate 3: Trench 4 representative section, looking southwest. Scale 1m*

### **Trench 13**

- 7.4 Within Trench 13, a c.0.50m wide linear feature, [1302], filled with a mid to dark grey clay silt, 1303, was noted at the eastern end of the trench (Plate 4). The irregular edge and base of the feature was suggestive of root disturbance and no further recording of the feature was made.



*Plate 4: Trench 13, looking northwest. Scales 1m*

### **Trench 14**

- 7.5 Within Trench 14, another dump of modern material, 1401, 0.10m thick, a brown and grey clay silt with modern brick and glass, was noted.

## **8.0 Discussion and Conclusion**

- 8.1 No archaeologically significant features or finds were noted in any of the fourteen trenches. This result is in keeping with the known archaeological and historical background of the site.
- 8.2 Towards the western side of the site remnants of a former plough soil were observed.
- 8.3 Modern material was noted in Trenches 3, 4 and 14 suggesting dumping and levelling on the site.
- 8.4 The pond seen in Trench 3 was to the southwest of a small pond mapped in 1887, and another large pond is shown on this map north of Trench 11, but there was nothing that corresponded with this feature (Figure 6).
- 8.5 The evaluation by trial trenching suggests a negligible potential for the proposed development area.

## 9.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

- 9.1 The evaluation trenching methodology employed was suited to the scale and nature of the project and has identified the nature and extent of the archaeological resource.

## 10.0 Acknowledgements

- 10.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank IREEF – UK Logistics Propco Limited for this commission, Faulks for providing plant, Welfare4Hire for welfare and the cooperation of the plant driver.

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### ***Cartographic reference***

Ordnance Survey map of 1887. Warwickshire, Sheet XVI.SE

## Appendix 1: Context Summary List

### Trench 1

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
100	Layer	A firm brown grey clay silt			0.34	Topsoil
101	Layer	mottled light brown clay silt				Natural geology

### Trench 2

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
200	Layer	A firm brown grey clay silt			0.34	Topsoil
201	Layer	mottled light brown clay silt				Natural geology

### Trench 3

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
300	Layer	A firm brown grey clay silt			0.46	Topsoil
301	Layer	A brown and grey clay silt containing brick, wood and metal,			0.24	Modern dump of material
302	Layer	mottled light brown clay silt			0.06>	Natural geology
303	Cut	Large amorphous feature, not excavated	c.10	1.8>		Possible pond
304	Fill	dark grey/blue brown clay	c.10	1.8>		Fill of [303]

### Trench 4

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
400	Layer	A firm brown grey clay silt			0.24	Topsoil
401	Layer	A brown and grey clay silt containing brick, wood and metal,			0.30	Modern dump of material
402	Layer	mottled light brown clay silt				Natural geology

### Trench 5

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
500	Layer	A firm brown grey clay silt			0.48	Topsoil
501	Layer	mottled light brown clay silt				Natural geology

### Trench 6

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
600	Layer	A firm brown grey clay silt			0.35	Topsoil
601	Layer	A firm mid brown clay silt			0.16	Former topsoil
602	Layer	mottled light brown clay silt				Natural geology

### Trench 7

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
700	Layer	A firm brown grey clay silt			0.30	Topsoil
701	Layer	A firm mid brown clay silt			0.22	Former topsoil
702	Layer	mottled light brown clay silt				Natural geology

### Trench 8

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
800	Layer	A firm brown grey clay silt			0.32	Topsoil
801	Layer	mottled light brown clay silt				Natural geology

### Trench 9

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
900	Layer	A firm brown grey clay silt			0.26	Topsoil
901	Layer	mottled light brown clay silt				Natural geology

### Trench 10

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
1000	Layer	A firm brown grey clay silt			0.26	Topsoil
1001	Layer	mottled light brown clay silt				Natural geology

### Trench 11

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
1100	Layer	A firm brown grey clay silt			0.24	Topsoil
1101	Layer	mottled light brown clay silt				Natural geology

### Trench 12

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
1200	Layer	A firm brown grey clay silt			0.24	Topsoil
1201	Layer	mottled light brown clay silt				Natural geology

### Trench 13

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
1300	Layer	A firm brown grey clay silt			0.38	Topsoil
1301	Layer	mottled light brown clay silt				Natural geology
1302	Cut	Linear, irregular edges and base	1.8>	0.50		Root disturbance
1303	Fill	A mid to dark grey clay silt	1.8>	0.50		Fill of [1302]

### Trench 14

Context	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness/depth (m)	Interpretation
1400	Layer	A firm brown grey clay silt			0.34	Topsoil
1401	Layer	A brown and grey clay silt containing brick, wood and metal,			0.10	Modern dump of material
1402	Layer	mottled light brown clay silt				Natural geology



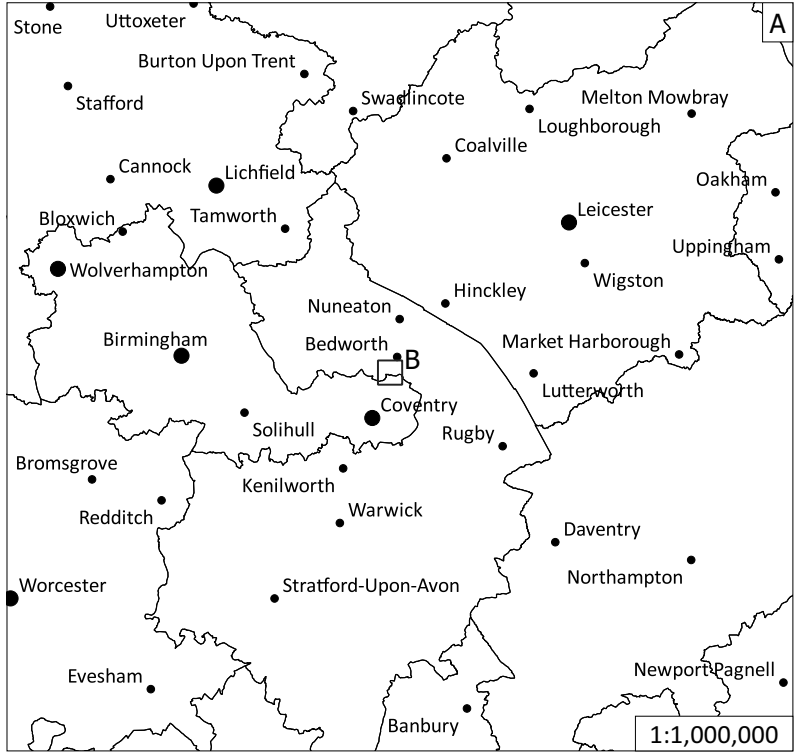


Figure 1: Site location outlined in red

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Site Code	EXWL 21
Scale	1:10,000,000 1:1,000,000 1:25,000 @ A4
Drawn by	V Zoppi
Date	04/08/2022

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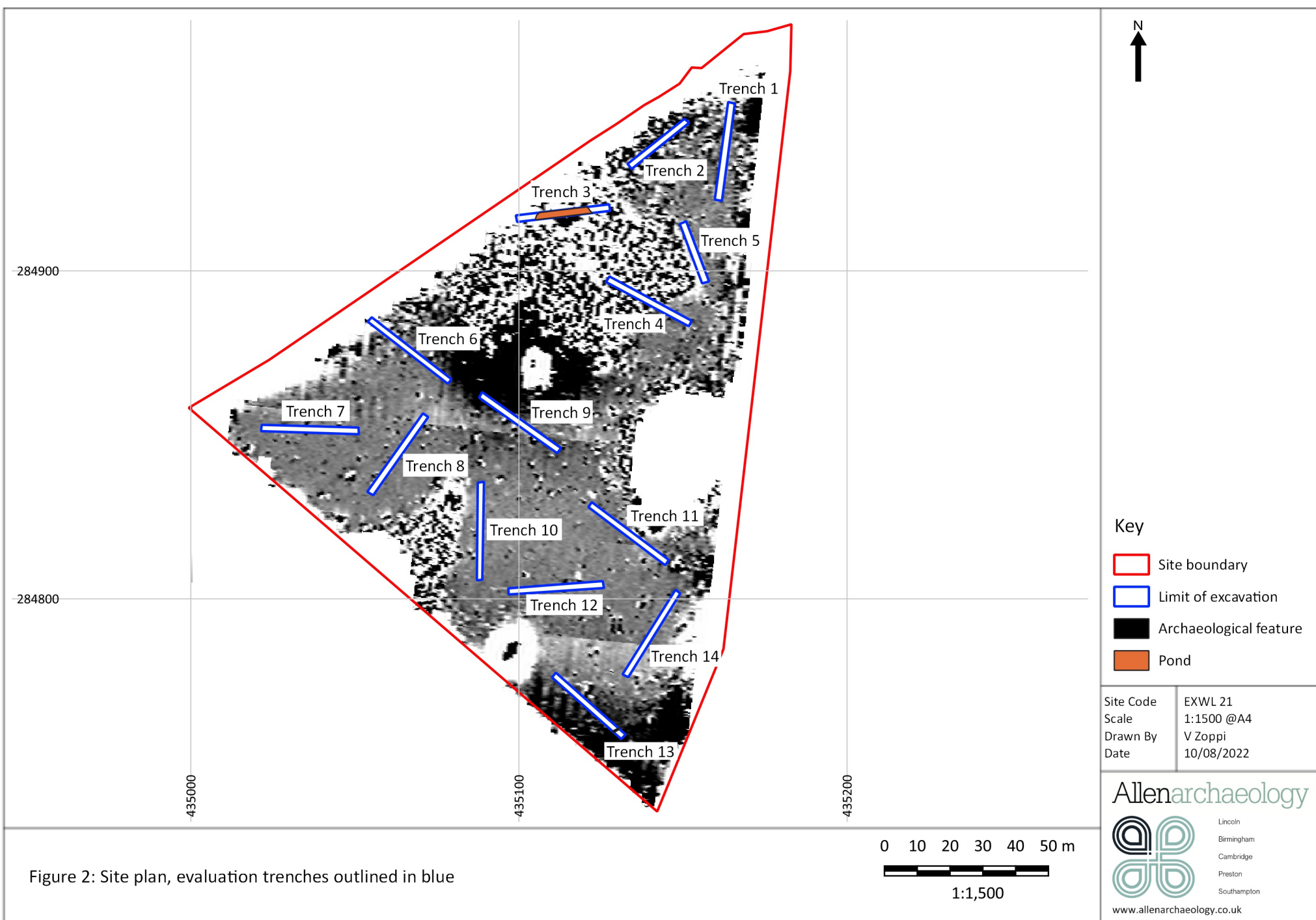
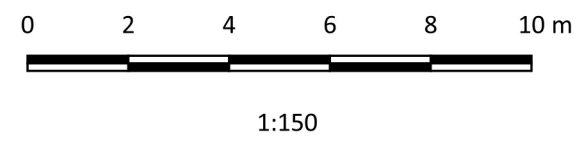
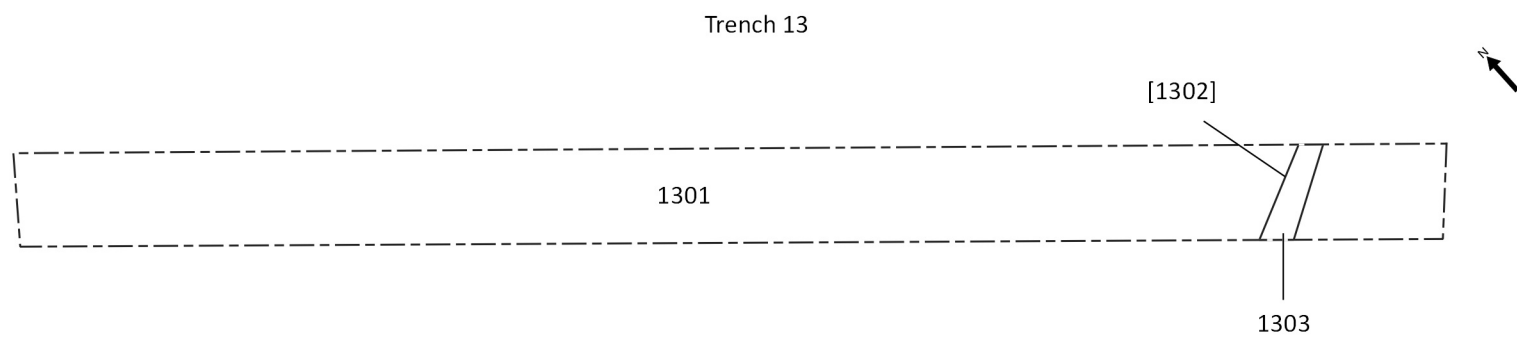
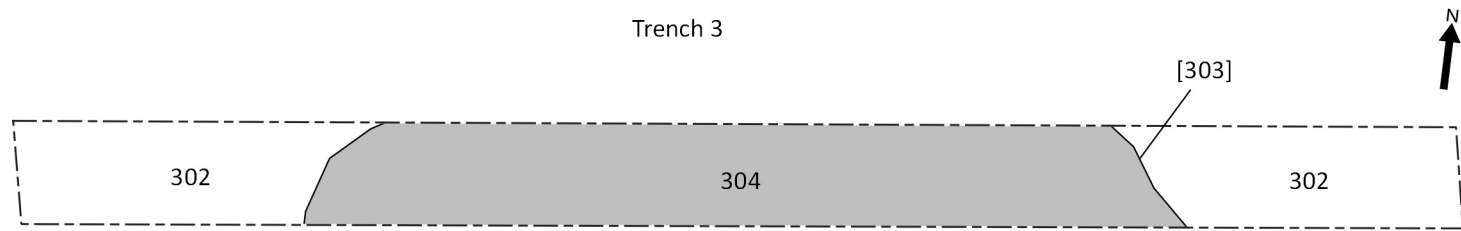





Figure 2: Site plan, evaluation trenches outlined in blue





- Key
-  Archaeological feature
  -  Pond
  -  Limit of excavation

Site Code	EXWL 21
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Drawn By	V Zoppi
Date	09/08/2022

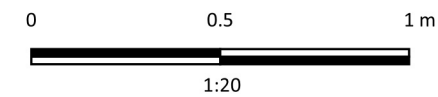
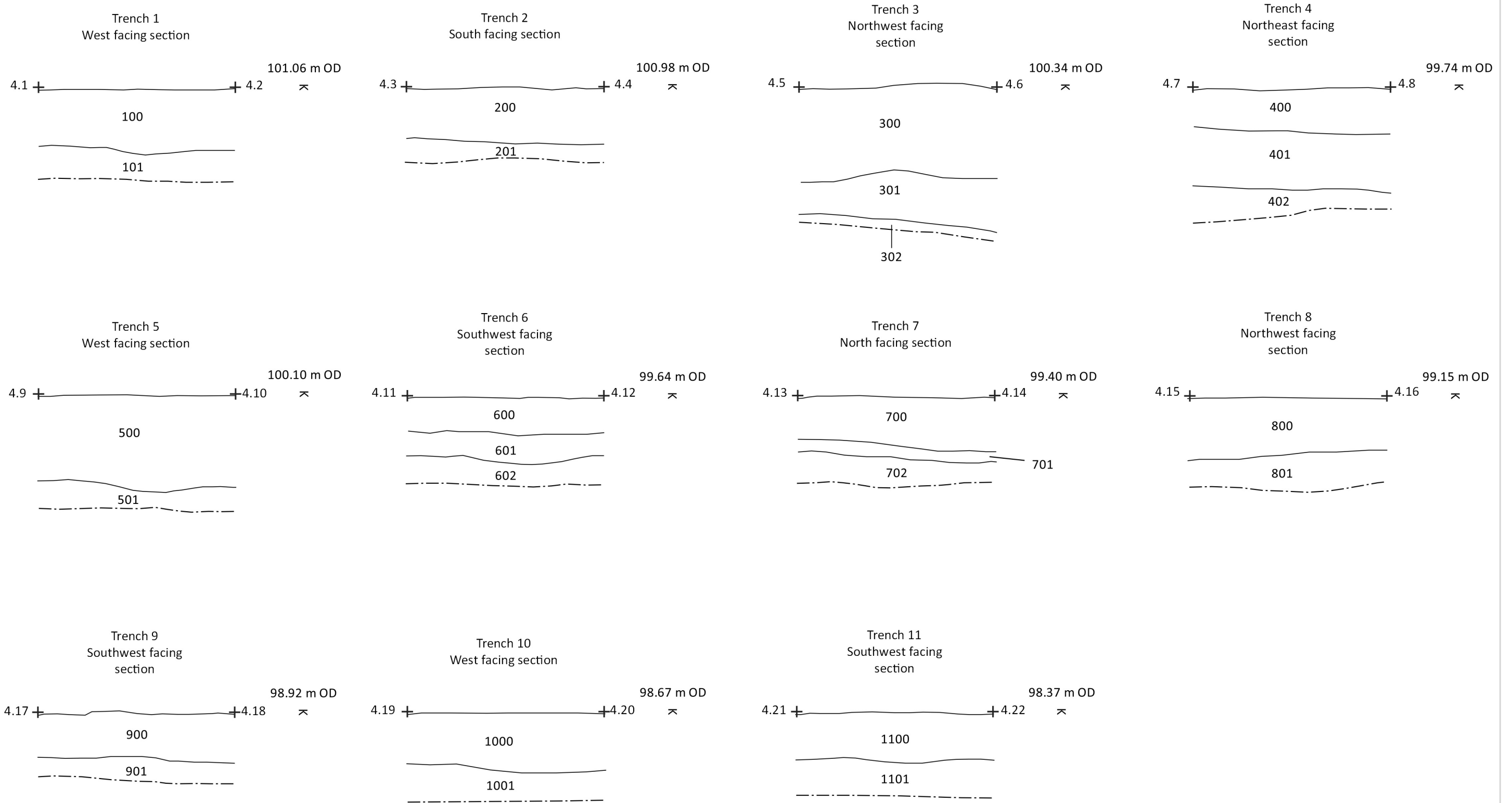
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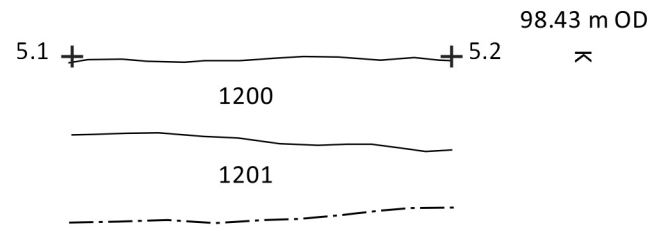
Figure 3: Plan of Trenches 3 and 13



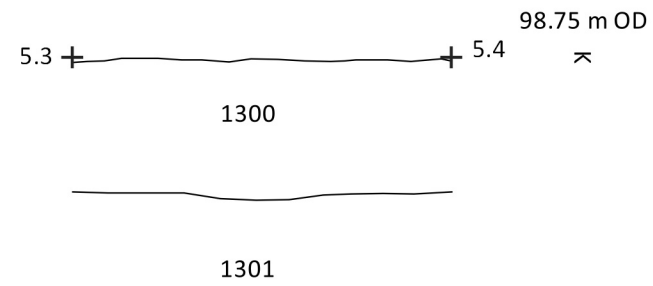
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Drawn By	V Zoppi
Date	09/08/2022

Figure 4: Representative sections

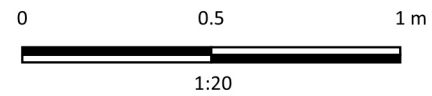
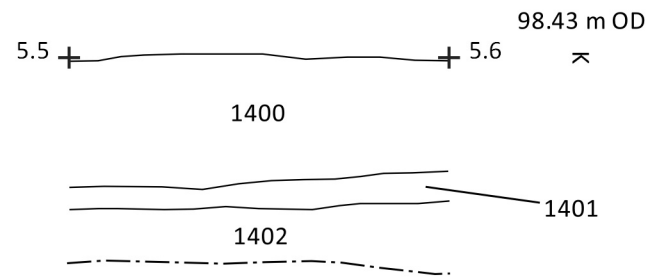
Trench 12  
North facing section



Trench 13  
Southwest facing section



Trench 14  
Northwest facing section



Site Code	EXWL 21
Scale	1:20 @A4
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Figure 5: Representative sections

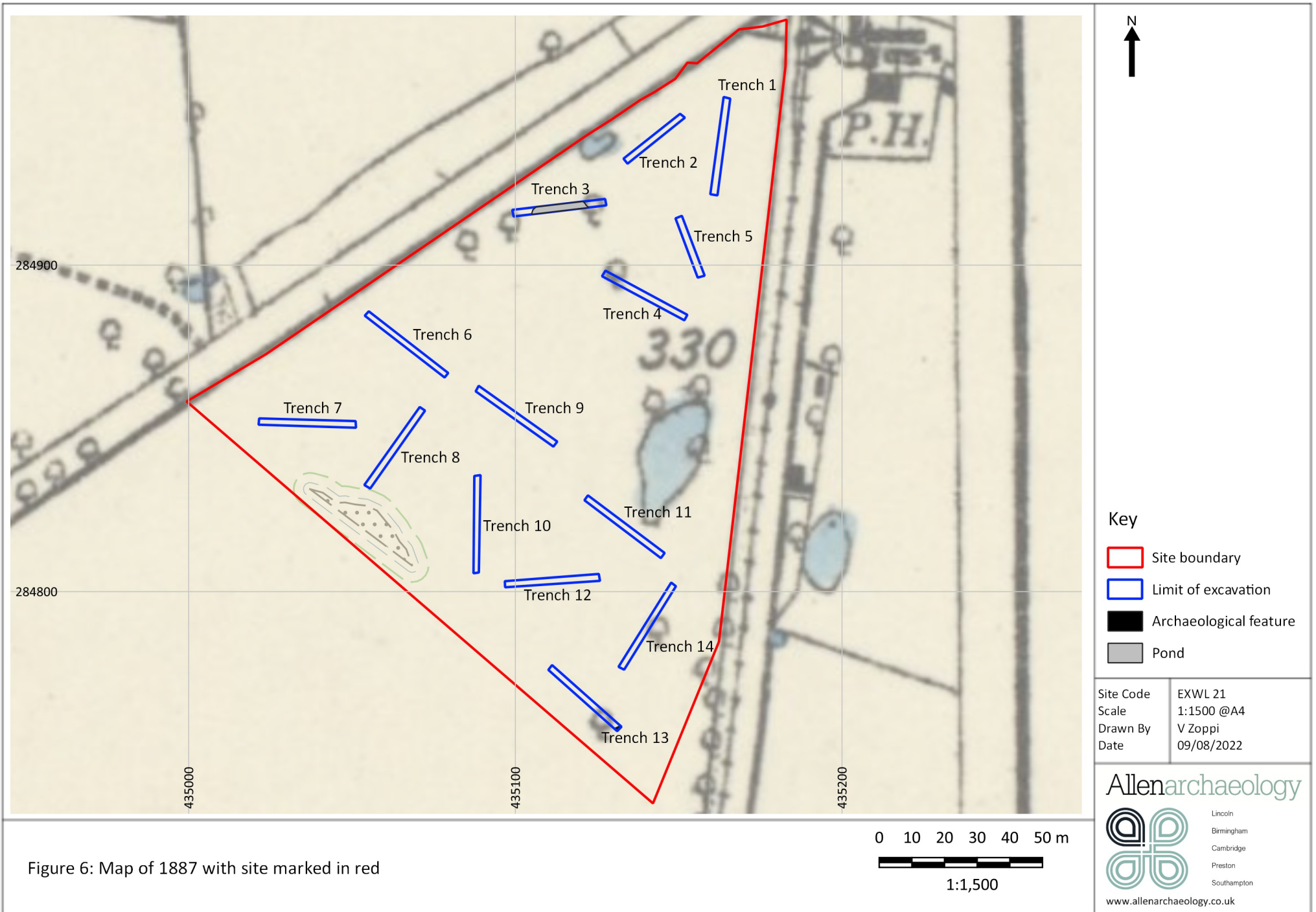


Figure 6: Map of 1887 with site marked in red



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