

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT:
TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND OFF MILL LANE,
SHARNFORD, LEICESTERSHIRE**

Planning Reference: 08/0550/1/PY
NGR: SP 4834 9213
Site Code: SHAM 10
Accession Number: X.A100.2010
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Report prepared for Sharnford Parish Council

By
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Summary

- Allen Archaeology Limited was commissioned by Sharnford Parish Council to carry out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land north of Mill Lane in Sharnford, Leicestershire.
- The site lies in an area of some archaeological interest, with prehistoric flint scatters and cropmarks discovered nearby, as well as a small number of Roman finds from the village.
- Three trenches were located within a meadow area north-west of the new car park and landscaped area on the site. All trenches were devoid of archaeological finds or features, exposing only a sequence of natural clays.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited (hereafter AAL) was commissioned by Sharnford Parish Council to carry out an archaeological evaluation by trial excavation on land to the north of Mill Lane in Sharnford, Leicestershire.
- 1.2 The excavation, recording and reporting conforms to the national guidelines set by IfA (1994, revised 2001 and 2008) and a specification prepared by this company (Clay 2010).
- 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 2007), and the local guidelines in '*The Transfer of Archaeological Archives to Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service*' (LMARS 2001). The archive will be submitted to Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service within six months of the completion of the fieldwork where it will be stored under the accession code X.A100.2010.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 Sharnford is located in the administrative district of Blaby District Council, approximately 16km south-west of central Leicester. The proposed development area is situated north-east of the village core, on the east side of Mill Lane, and comprises a rectangular block of former arable land of approximately 0.4 hectares.
- 2.2 The local geology comprises a superficial deposit of glacial Diamicton Till, overlying a solid geology of Mercia Mudstone (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience/home.html?Accordion1=1#maps>). The site centres on NGR SP 483 921.
- 2.3

3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 A planning application was submitted in June 2008 for '*Change of use from agricultural land to create cemetery, erection of timber shelter, fencing around north, south and east boundaries of site and access gates with 1.8m high fence to side (Revised Scheme)*' (Planning Application Reference 08/0550/1/PY). The application was granted in September 2008, subject to conditions, including a programme of archaeological trial trenching and reporting to characterise the nature of the archaeological resource in the proposed development area.
- 3.2 This approach is consistent with Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5). This planning policy supersedes PPG16 (Planning Policy Guidance Note 16), which was in place when the planning condition was attached.

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 Prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the site is represented by a scatter of Neolithic flints found c.600m to the west-north-west (National Monuments Record (hereafter NMR) Reference 338073), and another scatter of Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic flints c.450m to the south-east (NMR Reference 338082). Aerial photographs held by the National Monuments Record have identified two circular cropmarks c.100m south-west of the site, one approximately 35m in diameter with a possible entrance in its western side, and one 10m in diameter (Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (hereafter LHER) Reference MLE 17102), which may represent later prehistoric enclosures, although there is no supporting dating evidence.

- 4.2 Romano-British activity nearby is represented by the discovery of a Roman brooch and probable seal box lid (LHER Reference MLE 7724), as well as a mortarium rim found in the village c.450m to the west-south-west (NMR Reference 340581). Two Roman roads; Fosse Way and Watling Street also pass through the parish (LHER References MLE 1380 and MLE 1388). Fosse Way runs from Lincoln, through Leicester to Exeter and passes to the east of the village, while Watling Street runs from the fort at Richborough to Chester, passing to the south of the village.
- 4.3 Archaeological evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity in Sharnford is restricted to the discovery of a single brooch (LHER Reference MLE 6092). However, the place name is Old English in origin, meaning 'dung/muck ford' (<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~aezins/kepnp.php>). The village also appears in the Domesday Book of 1086, when land was in the ownership of the Bishop of Lincoln, Hugh de Grandmesnil and Countess Judith (Williams and Martin 1992).
- 4.4 Circa 200m to the south lay the parish church, a Grade II Listed Building (LBS Reference 189032), dedicated to St. Helen. It has 13th century elements surviving, but the spire was removed in 1772, and significant restorations were undertaken in 1846, 1854 and 1866, and in 1985 following a fire.

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 The fieldwork was carried out by the author and one experienced field archaeologist on the 19th and 20th July 2010. A trial trenching brief was prepared by the Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council, comprising a minimum 2% sample of the development area, or 81m². The subsequent specification prepared by AAL proposed to excavate three trenches, each 17m long and 1.6m wide, evenly spaced across the site. A diversion had to be made from the original plan however as the area was already partially developed. A car park and a landscaped area with gravelled pathways were already in place, towards the south end of the site, as was a new wooden perimeter fence. A mound of modern topsoil had been dumped along the north side of the site which further reduced the area available for trenching to the central portion of the site.
- 5.2 The trenches were located on site using tapes, measuring in from fixed boundaries. An 8 ton 360° tracked excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless bucket was used to excavate the trenches in spits not exceeding 100mm in depth, down to the first significant archaeological or natural horizon. A sondage was machine excavated in the end of each trench to determine the deeper stratigraphic profile.
- 5.3 All exposed plan and section surfaces were inspected for any archaeological features and deposits to determine the stratigraphic sequence. Each context was recorded on pro-forma AAL context record sheets, accompanied by plan and section drawings at appropriate scales. A photographic record was maintained by the use of a digital camera with selected digital shots included as an appendix to this report (see Appendix 1).
- 5.4 Each deposit, layer or cut was allocated a unique identifier (context number), and accorded a written description, a summary of these are included in Appendix 2.

6.0 Results (Figures 3 – 5)

6.1 Trench 1 (Figure 3)

- 6.1.1 Trench 1 was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.51m and revealed six distinct layers. The uppermost layer 100 was a modern topsoil consisting of a firm mid grey brown silty clay with rounded pebbles and natural flint. The topsoil sealed a natural subsoil deposit 101 of probable colluvium (hillwash) comprising a firm mid grey brown silty clay with occasional rounded

pebbles. It sealed natural drift geology of yellowish red clay 102. Below layer 102 the sondage exposed 103 a mid brown clay with fine limestone grit and mudstone. This sealed another natural silty clay deposit 104. Boulder clay 105 was the earliest natural drift geology exposed at the base of the sequence.

6.2 Trench 2 (Figure 4)

6.2.1 Trench 2 was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.33m. Topsoil 200, which was identical to the topsoil in Trench 1, sealed a yellowish brown clay colluvial subsoil 201. A greyish brown clay 202 with occasional inclusions of manganese was exposed below 201 and sealed a firm yellowish grey silty clay 204. A lens of natural variation comprised sterile natural boulder clay 203.

6.3 Trench 3 (Figure 5)

6.3.1 Trench 3 was excavated to a maximum depth of c.1.54m. Topsoil 300, again identical to Trenches 1 and 2 sealed a mid orange brown silty clay colluvial subsoil 301. This layer sealed a reddish brown natural clay deposit 302 which in turn sealed a mid orange brown silty clay 303.

6.3.2 A single ceramic land drain [304] was observed in this trench, running west-south-west to east-north-east and a modern plough mark [307] running on the same alignment and cutting the land drain cut.

7.0 Discussion and Conclusion

7.1 The evaluation showed all three trenches to be devoid of archaeological finds or features, exposing only a natural sequence of glacial clays and silty clays. A possible hillwash deposit was also identified in Trench 1.

8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

8.1 The evaluation by trial trenching was appropriate to the scale and nature of the scheme. No archaeological deposits of significance were uncovered during the works.

9.0 Acknowledgements

9.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank Sharnford Parish Council for this commission.

10.0 References

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Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: General shot of excavation area taken from northern corner of landscaped area, looking north-west



Plate 2: South-east-facing representative section of Trench 1, looking north-west



Plate 3: East-north-east facing representative section of Trench 2, looking west-south-west



Plate 4: North-north-west facing representative section of Trench 3, looking south-south-east

Appendix 2: Context Summary List

Trench 1

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
100	Layer	Firm and dry mid grey brown silty clay with rounded pebbles and natural flint Seals 101	Modern topsoil
101	Layer	Firm mid grey brown silty clay with rounded pebbles. Sealed by 100, seals 102	Natural subsoil/ hillwash
102	Layer	Very compact pale yellowish red clay. Sealed by 101, seals 103	Natural drift geology
103	Layer	Very compact mid brown clay with fine limestone grit. Sealed by 102, seals 104	Natural drift geology
104	Layer	Fairly firm greyish brown sandy clay. Sealed by 103, seals 105	Natural drift geology
105	Layer	Firm and compact greyish brown clay with mudstone and occasional manganese fragments. Sealed by 104	Natural drift geology

Trench 2

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
200	Layer	Firm and dry mid grey brown silty clay with rounded pebbles and natural flint Seals 201	Modern topsoil
201	Layer	Very compact yellow brown clay with occasional rounded pebbles and natural flint. Sealed by 200, seals 202	Subsoil
202	Layer	Very compact greyish brown clay with occasional manganese fragments. Sealed by 201, seals 203	Natural drift geology
203	Fill	Very compact dark reddish brown clay with limestone and manganese fragments	Natural drift geology
204	Layer	Fairly firm yellow grey silty clay	Natural drift geology

Trench 3

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
300	Layer	Firm and dry mid grey brown silty clay with rounded pebbles and natural flint. Seals 301	Modern topsoil
301	Layer	Mid orange brown silty clay with occasional rounded pebbles. Sealed by 300, seals 302	Subsoil
302	Layer	Firm and very compact mid reddish brown clay with moderate limestone and flint fragments, occasional mudstone flecks, and manganese flecks. Sealed by 301, seals 303	Natural drift geology
303	Layer	Firm mid orange brown silty clay. Sealed by 302	Natural drift geology
304	Cut	Narrow linear running west-south-west to east-north-east. Contains 305, 306	Cut of modern land drain
305	Fill	Firm and very compact reddish brown clay	Backfill of land drain [304]
306	Pipe	Ceramic pipe	Land drain pipe in cut [304]
307	Cut	Narrow linear running west-south-west to east-north-east. Contains 308	Modern plough mark
308	Fill	Firm and very compact greyish brown clay	Infill of modern plough mark [307]

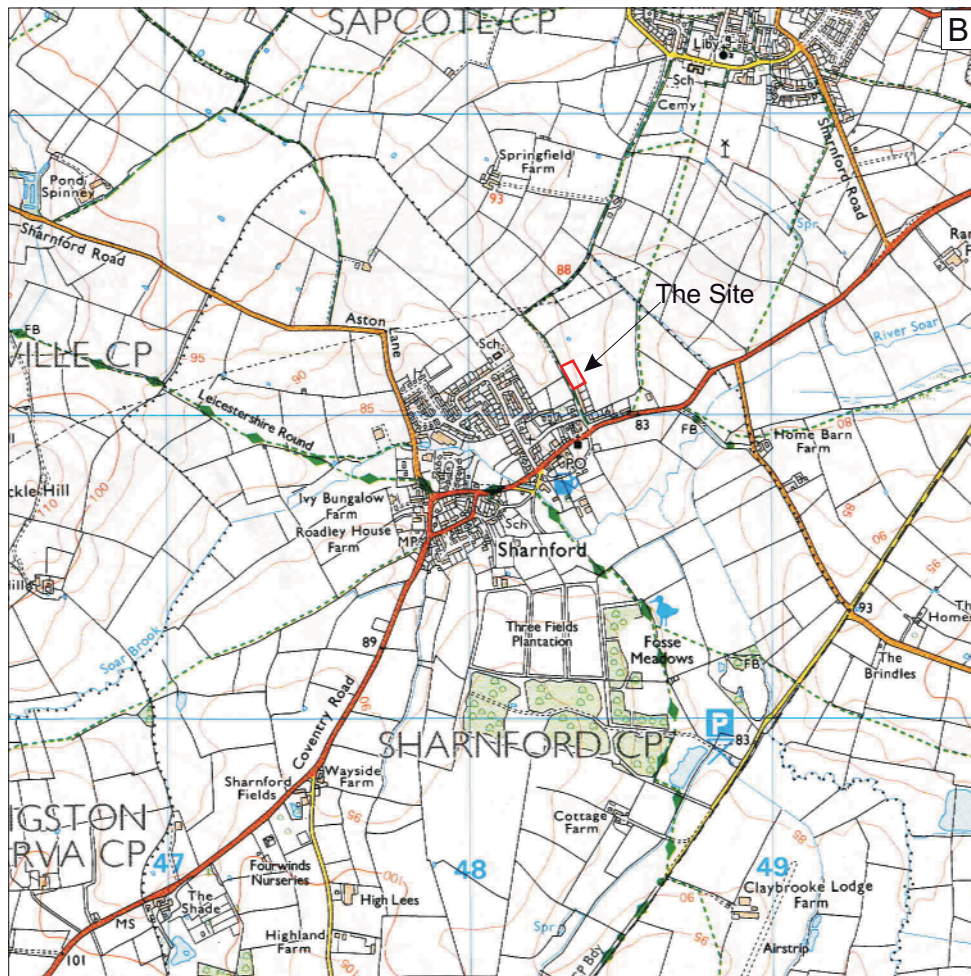
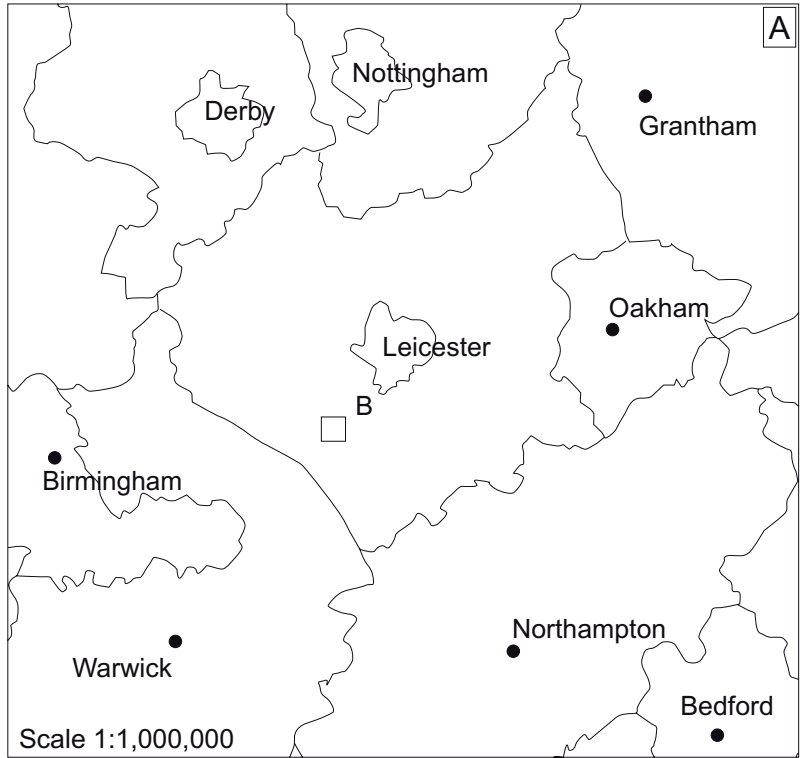
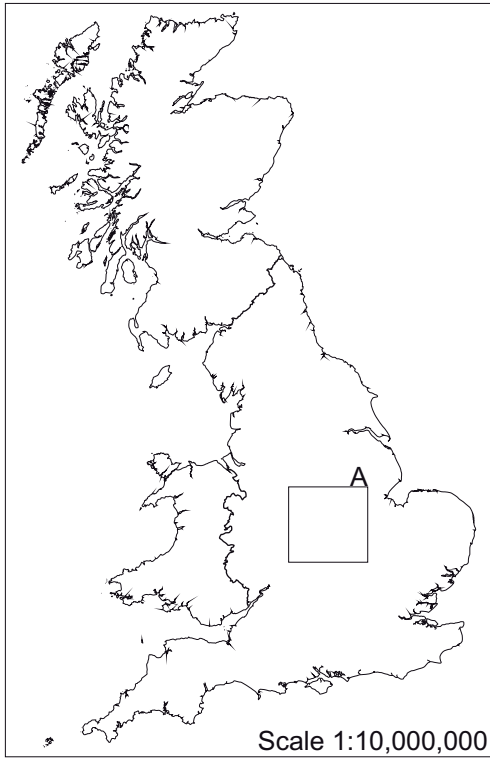


Figure 1: Site location at scale 1:25,000, with site shown in red
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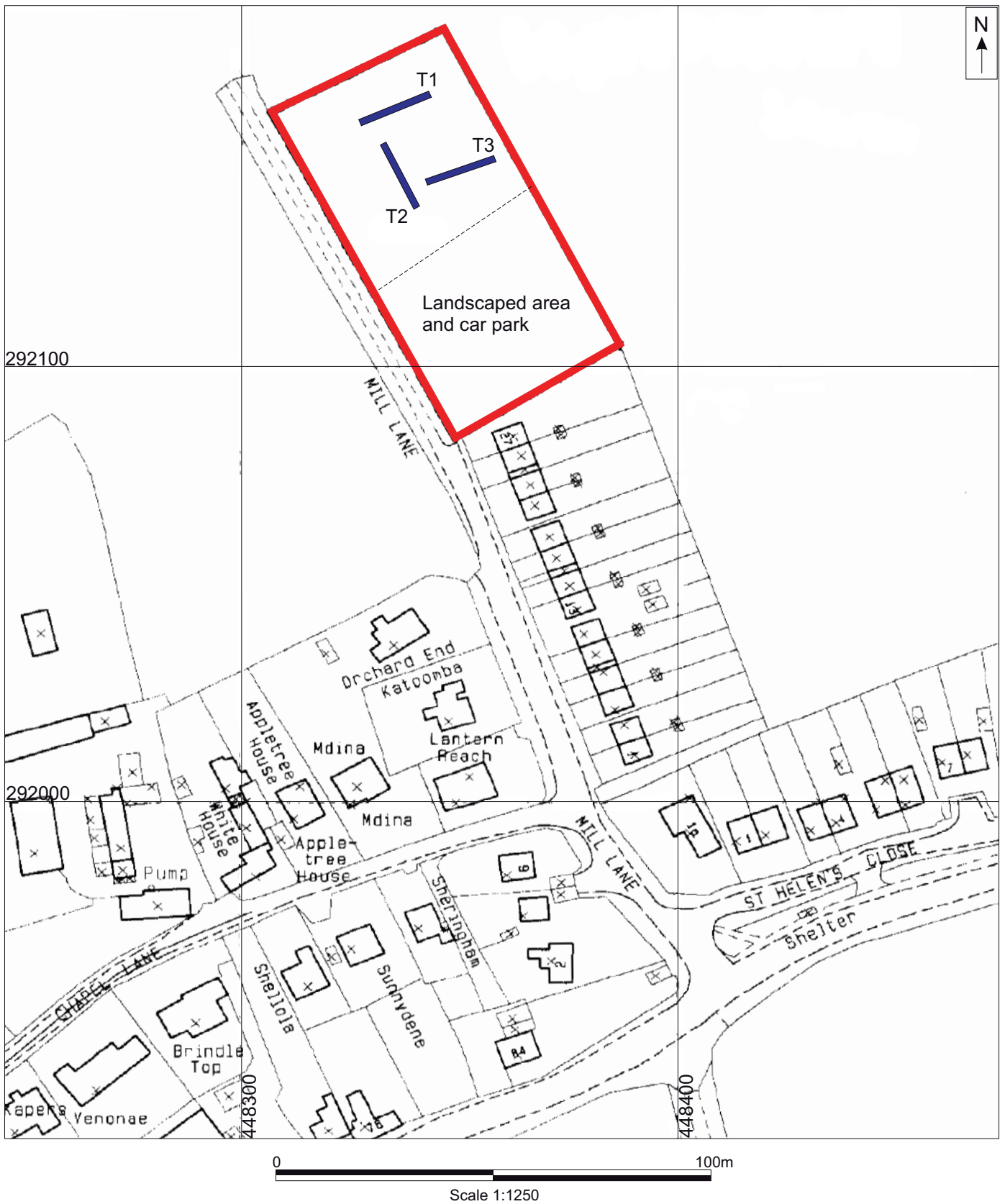
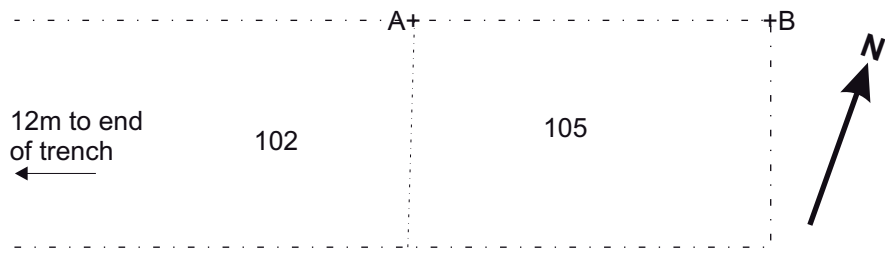


Figure 2: Trench locations in blue at scale 1:1250, with the site outlined in red



South-east facing section

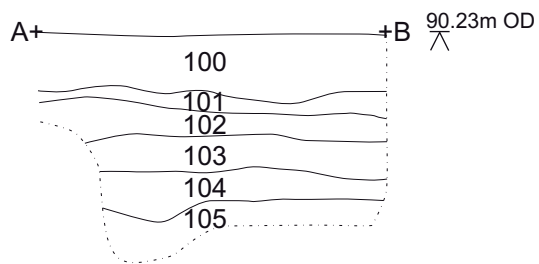
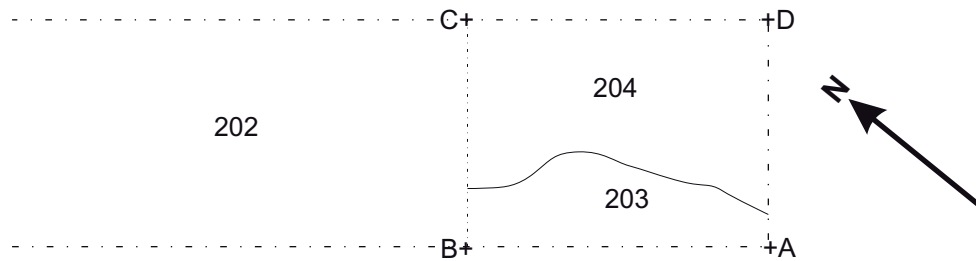
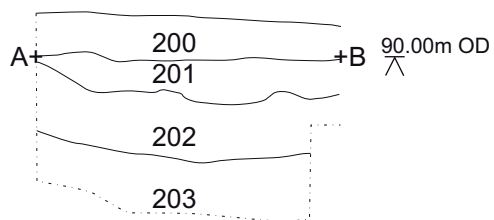


Figure 3: Trench 1 plan and section at scale 1:50



North-east facing section



South-west facing section

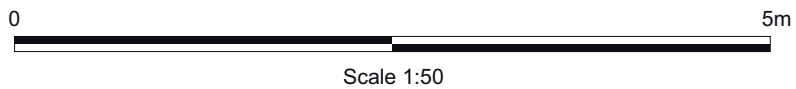
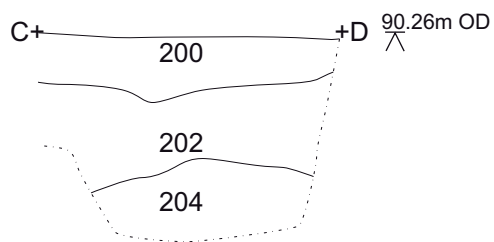


Figure 4: Trench 2 plan and section at scale 1:50

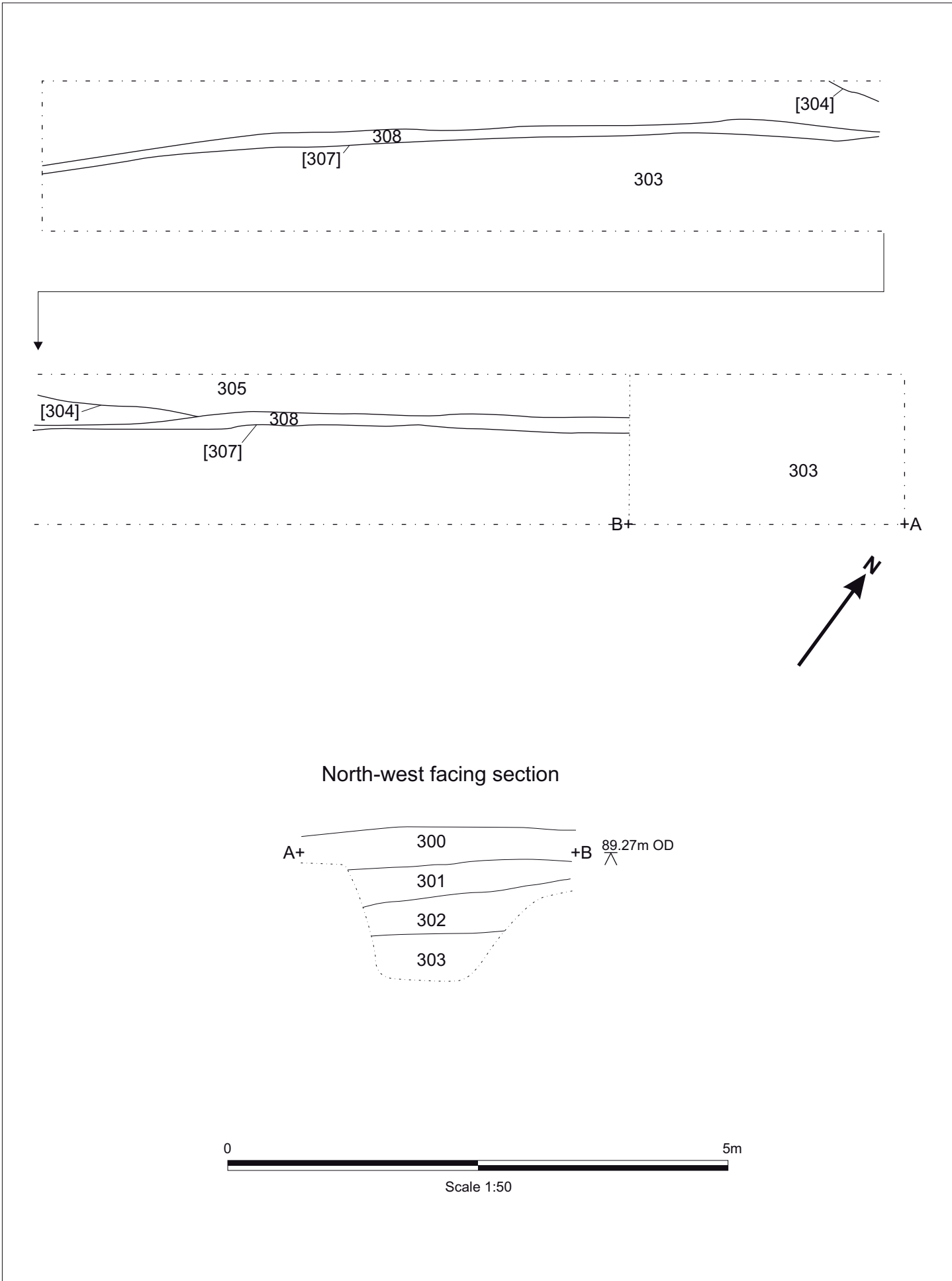


Figure 5: Trench 3 plan and section at scale 1:50