



# CHESTER NORTHGATE REDEVELOPMENT: AREAS B, C AND D

## Archaeological Evaluation



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## SUMMARY

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Oxford Archaeology (OA) North was commissioned by Chester West and Chester Council to carry out a programme of evaluation trenching and boreholes across an area within the north-western quadrant of the historic city centre of Chester. This programme was undertaken during March and April 2016, comprising the excavation of eight trenches and five boreholes, in three parts of the redevelopment. This work follows, and was informed by, evaluations undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North on behalf of Chester West and Chester Council during April/May 2015. The work was required to inform the design process of the proposed major scheme of redevelopment within the area, by identifying the presence/absence and representative depth (according to Ordnance Datum), of significant archaeological deposits relating to the former Roman legionary fortress.

The state of the archaeological remains across the present bus station (indeed, whether any significant archaeology survived) in the aftermath of previous redevelopments and excavations in the early 1980s was unclear and thus three trenches were excavated in this area. The trenching produced important results, establishing that a depth of 600mm of intact Roman archaeological deposits, as well as structural remains, survive intact and undisturbed. Considered in conjunction with the evidence from further west on Hunter Street, the work indicates that a large area to the south of Hunter Street retains significant archaeological deposits.

In addition, a further small trench was excavated in July 2016 at the location of Borehole 7. This was to test the infiltration capacity of the area of the new Market Square.

A further trench was excavated at the west end of Princess Street, close to the Crowne Plaza Hotel. In contrast to the evidence from the bus station, it was established that a substantial overcut for the hotel exists, which has removed all significant archaeology at that location. This adds to the evidence gathered previously for the Crowne Plaza area, which includes both part of a post-medieval graveyard, and a probable Roman wall, and other areas, which have been largely stripped of significant archaeology during groundworks for the Market Hall and Crowne Plaza Hotel.

South of the Market Hall, less modern excavation had occurred and thus less was known about the archaeological survival. The trenches and boreholes there revealed post-medieval 'made ground' within several trenches around Hamilton House and Goldsmith House, and a large post-medieval cistern was uncovered to the east. Whilst potential archaeological horizons were noted at a depth of 1.2m within several boreholes, there is evidence for recent made ground and post-medieval deposits overlying significant archaeology at less than 1m below the present ground surface in several areas.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The watching brief and recording associated with the boreholes was undertaken by Aidan Parker (OA North) and the boreholes themselves were excavated by Betts Hydro. The evaluation trenches were excavated by Gary Crawford-Coupe and his team and Steve Clarke (OA North), who also undertook the recording. The trenches were excavated by W E Parsons Ltd. The small trench excavated in July 2016 was undertaken by Betts Hydro and supervised by Mark Leah of CAPAS. The finds were examined by Chris Howard-Davis, Finds Manager for OA North. The report was written by Ian Smith and John Zant, with a contribution by Chris Howard-Davis, and the drawings produced by Mark Tidmarsh. The project was managed by Karl Taylor, with input from Rachel Newman, who also edited the report.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) North was commissioned by Cheshire West and Chester Council in April 2016 to undertake an archaeological field evaluation, as part of a proposed scheme to redevelop an area on the western side of the historic core of the city of Chester (Fig 1). A written scheme of investigation (WSI) established the methodological parameters for a series of evaluation trenches and boreholes to be excavated within the bounds of the proposed development (OA North 2016a).
- 1.1.2 Proposals for the redevelopment of a large part of Chester's historic city centre, to the west of Northgate (one of the city's most important thoroughfares), have been under consideration for many years, though the precise nature of these has evolved considerably over time. Over the last 27 years, there have been several archaeological audits and many small archaeological interventions in the redevelopment area (OA North 2016b).
- 1.1.3 In general terms, these works have provided valuable information concerning the likely character and, in the case of the trial trenching, the depth and condition of archaeological remains across parts of the study area. However, additional, targeted, evaluation work was needed in order to answer specific questions relating to the possible impact of the scheme on Chester's internationally significant archaeology. In view of this, the Development Control Archaeologist for the Cheshire Archaeological Planning Advisory Service (CAPAS) requested that a programme of archaeological field evaluation should be undertaken. The purpose of this work was to assess the character and preservation of buried archaeological remains within these zones, and the extent to which these may be impacted upon by any proposed groundworks. Of particular importance was the need to determine the depth of the uppermost significant archaeological levels below the present-day ground surface, and the extent to which archaeological remains have been damaged or destroyed by earlier works. The resulting data will also be used to assist in the formulation of an appropriate scheme of archaeological mitigation in advance of, and in association with, the proposed development.
- 1.1.4 The present document provides a summary of the results of this scheme of archaeological evaluation. The work undertaken followed the parameters set out in the WSI devised for the scheme (OA North 2016a), and all relevant industry standards, as set out by Historic England (English Heritage 1991; Historic England 2015) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeology (CIfA 2014a; 2014b; 2014c).
- 1.1.5 In addition, a further small trench was excavated in July 2016. This was to test the infiltration capacity of the area of the proposed new Market Square, in the area of the bus station.

### 1.2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 1.2.1 The proposed development area forms part of the north-west corner of the historic core of the city of Chester, roughly centred at SJ 4039 6638 (Fig 1). It takes in an area bracketed by Hunter Street to the north, St Martin's Way to the

west, Northgate Street to the east, and Watergate Street to the south. It therefore incorporates a variety of topographical areas and features, including the open and recently landscaped, largely grassed, area, immediately east of St Martin's Way (between Hunter Street and Princess Street), the current bus exchange, immediately east of the landscaped area, and numerous modern buildings, including the Crowne Plaza Hotel and car parking facilities on Trinity Street, and the current Chester Market Hall and further car parking facilities along Princess Street. To the south, it incorporates a block of land currently occupied by modern offices.

- 1.2.2 The solid geology of the immediate area is characterised as Triassic sandstone and conglomerate sedimentary bedrock. The overlying drift geology is characterised as alluvium, comprising a mix of clay, silt and sand (BGS 2015), which form soils that are classified as slightly acidic loamy clayey soils (Cranfield University 2015).

### 1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 1.3.1 Chester is renowned as a place of immense historic importance and is defined as an Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI) under the terms of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979). This is one of only five such designations in England, which should be treated as if the area has been given statutory protection.
- 1.3.2 The proposed development area has been the subject of several previous studies and schemes of fieldwork. The following section is intended to provide a brief archaeological and historical background, sufficient to contextualise the current archaeological works. The following is a summary of a more comprehensive assessment undertaken for a desk-based assessment (OA North 2016b) which was submitted in support of the planning application. To facilitate the compilation of this summary, the Chester Urban Archaeological Database (UAD) was consulted by appointment, in order to gather additional information on earlier archaeological interventions ('Events', in UAD parlance, each identified on the UAD by a unique Event Number) undertaken in the vicinity of the evaluation areas. Based on the evidence provided by these investigations, the principal archaeological and historical features ('Monuments', each referenced by a Monument Number) that are known to be located in these areas were also identified.
- 1.3.3 ***Prehistoric and earliest Roman Activity (to c AD 75):*** there is evidence for prehistoric activity from within the development site and across the City. Arguably, the earliest archaeological evidence from Chester takes the form of flints of microlithic type, from the Deanery Field (Monument 6989), and evidence for Mesolithic activity from recent excavations (undertaken by the former Chester Council and English Heritage) at the amphitheatre (Beckley and Campbell 2013, 11). The Neolithic finds within the development area include a stone axe (Monument 6978) from Hunter Street, prehistoric finds from the Odeon Cinema (Monument 7296) and prehistoric worked flint from Hamilton House (Monument 7010). Both Bronze Age flint (Monument 6987) and fragments of Late Iron Age pottery (Monument 6988) have been recorded to the west, from the Linenhall Stables. To the east of the development area, at Abbey



Green, evidence was recovered for pre-Roman cultivation soils (Monument 6981) in addition to Iron Age pottery (Monument 6982). Other additional prehistoric finds from the wider area include an antler mattock from the Roodee (Monument 6984), Iron Age pottery and heat-fractured stone from Pepper Street (Monument 7009), prehistoric flint from Bridge Street (Monument 6974) and Tower Wharf (Monument 7152), and a prehistoric spindle whorl from the White Friars (Monument 6979). The presence of an Iron Age granary, field systems and a roundhouse (400-200 cal BC) below the amphitheatre, and the presence of cultivation soils and/or evidence for ploughing from other parts of the City (Ward 2009, 5), clearly indicate prehistoric communities in residence in this area by the Iron Age.

- 1.3.4 In view of Chester's strategically important position relative to early Roman campaigning in Wales and northern England, it is likely that a Roman military presence was established before the foundation of the legionary fortress (Shotter 2002). Several features, perhaps representing two phases of early military activity, have been identified towards the centre of the development area (Event 3122; Mason 2012, 35-6).
- 1.3.5 **The Roman legionary fortress (c AD 75-410):** the fortress was probably established in the early/mid-AD 70s (Mason 2012, 49-50), and was occupied more-or-less continuously to the middle of the fourth century AD at least (Mason 2007, 14). As was usual, it was divided into three principal areas: the central range, containing many of the most important buildings; the front, which at Chester lay south of the central range; and the rear (Mason 2012, 55, fig 20a). Each zone was sub-divided into rectilinear plots (*insulae*), for which a modern numbering system (*Insula I, Insula II, and so on*) has been established (*op cit*, 56, fig 20b). A road (often referred to as the '*via sagularis*') ran around the inside of the defences, and this 'intervallum area' also commonly held bread ovens and other structures. With certain exceptions, all the primary buildings were wooden, and the defences were also initially of earth and timber, but reconstruction in stone occurred during the late first- to early second century AD (*op cit*, 138).
- 1.3.6 **Early medieval activity (c AD 410-1066):** there is very little evidence to show what was happening in Chester from the fifth- to the eighth century AD (Mason 2007, 27), though the site is likely to have retained a degree of regional significance. The documented history of the Anglo-Saxon town begins in 907, with its reformation as a stronghold (*burh*) by Aethelflaed, Lady of the Mercians, against Viking incursions (*op cit*, 79-80, figs 19, 20). Much of the modern street plan probably originated at this time (Ward 1994, 7), when Chester seemingly prospered as an administrative and trading centre (Ward 2009, 28). Several excavations have revealed evidence for intensive activity during this period, in the form of sunken-featured structures, evidence for stone reclamation, rubbish pits, latrines and a range of small finds. In the northern half of the redevelopment area, relevant sites include Hunter Street School (Events 5857, 2843) and Hunter's Walk (Event 2848) (Strickland 1982; Ward 1994, 43-68). There is more such evidence further to the south on Goss Street (Event 3144), Hamilton Place/Goss Street (Event 5099), Crook Street (Events 2840 and 5124) (Mason 1994, 38-40; Ward 1994, 21-7, 32) and Hamilton Place (Event 5161), where a quarry pit and two sunken-featured buildings were recorded (Ward 1994).

- 1.3.7 **Later medieval activity (1066-c 1540):** following the Norman invasion of 1066, Chester suffered severely in the so-called 'Harrying of the North', being described by one chronicler as 'thoroughly devastated' (Mason 2007, 145). However, by 1086 the town appears to have recovered significantly, its rents to the Crown having more than doubled since 1071 (Ward 2009, 43). The basic pre-Norman street plan was retained, but new streets developed and extensive replanning occurred in some areas (Mason 2007, 145). It was at this time that the system of long, narrow burgage plots extending back from the street frontages, which remained largely unchanged into the nineteenth century, probably emerged (*ibid*). With the exception of Hunter Street, which was not created until much later, most of the streets and lanes within the development site were in existence in the later medieval period (Lilley 2011), for example Trinity Street (Monument 10008) and Crook Street (Monument 10011). Most of the frontages would have been densely built up with private houses and shops, whilst the 'backlands' would have contained yards, kitchen gardens, refuse pits, and so on (*op cit*, 85-7). Excavations at Hunter's Walk and Hunter Street School found evidence for occupation on Parson's Lane (modern Princess Street; Monument 10007) from at least the thirteenth century (Emery 1995, 4), but the land to the north, behind the street frontage, appears to have remained largely open. Indeed, the Chester UAD states that much of the area north of Princess Street, known as St Martin's Fields, remained open and undeveloped for an extended period, probably from the early medieval period into the twentieth century.
- 1.3.8 Chester reached a peak of prosperity and importance in the late thirteenth/early fourteenth century (Laughton 2008, 17), but declined thereafter (Ward 2009, 55). A modest recovery occurred towards the end of the fifteenth century, and the citizens were rewarded for 'good and laudable' service to the new Tudor king, Henry VII (Laughton 2008, 38), by the granting of the town's 'Great Charter' in 1506 (*op cit*, 39).
- 1.3.9 **Post-medieval activity (c 1540-present):** Chester continued to develop as a regional centre during the post-medieval period. The earliest surviving maps (Lilley 2011), produced in the 1580s (Braun and Hogenberg c 1580; Smith 1585), show most of the street frontages within the development site as densely built up. However, away from the street frontages, much of the area north of Princess Street (Parson's Lane) is shown as largely open, being occupied by orchards and formal gardens. Gardens and yards/courts are also a feature of the backlands further south, adjacent to Trinity Street and Crook Street. The first really detailed map of Chester, published in 1745 (Lavaux 1745), is broadly consistent in showing the street as being densely built up, with much of the area to the rear of the properties on Princess Street still occupied by gardens and orchards.
- 1.3.10 Much of the rest of the development area, away from the street frontages, appears to have been open but, by the time Hunter's map was produced some 45 years later (Hunter 1789), significant infilling was underway. On the evidence of a series of similar maps produced in the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century (*eg* Stockdale 1795; Batenham 1816; Wood 1833), the greater part of the development area saw little substantive change in the following 40-50 years. All show the area south of Princess Street as densely built up, contrasting with the area of St Martin's Fields, to the north, large parts of which remained open

into the late nineteenth/early twentieth century (Ordnance Survey 1872; 1910). There, infilling only really commenced following the construction of Hunter Street around the beginning of the twentieth century. Excavations at Hunter Street School and on Hunter's Walk found 'extensive' remains of post-medieval buildings, with associated yards, pits, and so on. Some were cellared, but by no means all (Emery 1995, 4). Behind the street frontage, much of the area remained open into the nineteenth century, though several large seventeenth-century rubbish pits were found in these areas.

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## 2. METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; OA North 2016a) was submitted by OA North in response to a request by Cheshire West and Chester Council. The WSI was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) and Historic England guidelines (CIfA 2014a, 2014b, 2014c; Historic England 2015).

### 2.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.2.1 The general aims and objectives of the evaluation scheme were to add to the data gathered in 2015 (OA North 2015) and provide as comprehensive as possible assessment of the stratigraphic sequence of deposition within the study areas. This was to give a clear indication of the presence/absence, extent, character and composition of all archaeological deposits encountered on the sites, and, in addition, ascertain at what level the uppermost significant archaeological horizon occurs below the current ground surface, and, more importantly, according to ratified heights above Ordnance Datum. Site-specific objectives were also defined for each area.

2.2.2 **Academic Aims:** the main research aims of the investigation were to assess the character and preservation of buried archaeological remains within the proposed evaluation areas, and the extent to which these might be impacted upon by the proposed redevelopment of these sites. To that end, it was particularly important to determine the depth of significant archaeological levels below the modern surface, and the extent to which the archaeology had been damaged or destroyed by earlier groundworks. The main aims were summarised as:

- to assess the nature, date, depth and extent, function and state of preservation of archaeological remains, together with their significance;
- to determine the presence or absence of possible Roman remains within the bus station;
- to determine the presence or absence of a cellar associated with the Masonic Hall to the south of the eastern end of Hunter Street;
- to provide an adequate record of any significant archaeological remains encountered during the works;
- to examine the surviving archaeological remains in order to establish the development of the site;
- to provide information to aid an understanding of any remains or deposits that may be affected by the design proposals;
- to inform wider regional, national and period-based research frameworks.

2.2.3 **Significance:** the programme was designed to investigate and evaluate the nature and preservation of any archaeological remains. All work was to be conducted in accordance with the government's National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012).

2.2.4 The sites lie within the Zone of Primary Archaeological Character (considered to have the highest potential for significant heritage assets and the highest

sensitivity to change) in the Chester Archaeological Plan (Beckley and Campbell 2014). At a more detailed level, they lie within Character Zones 4 (St Martin's Fields), 5 (Princess Street/Hunter Street) and 7 (Princess Street/St Martin's Way) of the Chester Archaeological Characterisation. Both the Archaeological Plan and the Archaeological Characterisation are part of the Chester Urban Archaeological Database Project, which was funded by English Heritage. The Plan was produced in 2013 and was endorsed by the Cheshire West and Chester Local Development Framework Panel as a key Evidence Base Document supporting the preparation of the Local Plan (M Leah *pers comm*).

- 2.2.5 **Archaeological investigation:** a series of evaluation trenches was excavated, positioned appropriately to assess adequately the character, condition and depth below the modern surface of significant archaeological deposits within the targeted zones (Fig 2). This was to involve the excavation of eight trenches, each 2 x 2m square.
- 2.2.6 A series of boreholes was excavated to gather geotechnical information. Five of these were subject to a permanent archaeological presence during excavation. The aim was to determine the nature of the archaeological remains in a similar fashion to the evaluation trenches, but was to be limited by the extents of each individual borehole, and was subject to the contractor's timescales. The siting of the boreholes had not been considered with regard to below-ground archaeology.
- 2.2.7 In addition, in July 2016, a further small test pit was excavated in the vicinity of Borehole 7, on the eastern side of the bus station. This was to test for infiltration capacity of the proposed new Market Square.

### 2.3 INVESTIGATION METHODOLOGY

- 2.3.1 **Trench Methodology:** eight trenches were excavated archaeologically and five geotechnical boreholes were observed by archaeological staff. Originally, ten trenches were envisaged, but two of these (Trenches 5 and 10) proved impossible (K Taylor *pers comm*).
- 2.3.2 Prior to excavation, the positions of all the trenches were surveyed for the potential presence of buried services, using a cable avoidance tool and signal generator, operated by a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist. Trenches (excluding Trench 1) were initially excavated by W T Parsons Ltd using a three-tonne, hydraulically powered, mechanical excavator, equipped with a flat-bladed bucket. All such excavations were conducted under supervision by a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist. All deposits were removed in controlled spits of no more than 0.20m, and spoil was stored immediately adjacent to, but at a suitable distance from, the excavation area, to allow rapid and efficient reinstatement upon completion of the works. Upon completion of the excavation of each trench, and during all relevant recording of deposits and features, the area was adequately fenced off using Heras fencing panels, to prevent unsupervised access, until such a time that the trench was backfilled. Trench 1 was entirely hand dug.
- 2.3.3 All deposits were removed in a reverse stratigraphic sequence, down to the uppermost horizon of significant archaeology or the maximum recommended

safe depth of 1.2m, without recourse to stepping the excavation or use of shoring. Below this depth, additional limited excavations were occasionally undertaken by hand, only where it was safe to do so, in order to test the character and composition of deposits or identified features encountered, and to provide firm dating evidence. In a number of instances, where only modern deposits were encountered, further limited excavations were undertaken in the form of a sondage, placed at the centre of the trench. Such excavations were undertaken using the mechanical excavator, and no attempt was made to enter the trench during or after the excavation. Such additional excavations were conducted to expose the level at which natural deposits could be identified, and therefore to establish the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits. Upon completion of such additional excavations, a photographic record was made and the trench immediately backfilled.

- 2.3.4 All trenches were excavated in a stratigraphical manner. Trenches were located by use of a combination of a Real Time Kinematic (RTK) Global Positioning System, and a Leica 1200 Total Station Survey System, with altitude information established with respect to Ordnance Survey Datum.
- 2.3.5 All information identified in the course of the site works was recorded stratigraphically (*Appendix 2*), using a system adapted from that used by the former Centre for Archaeology of English Heritage, with an accompanying pictorial record. Primary records were available for inspection at all times.
- 2.3.6 Results of all field investigations were recorded on pro-forma trench record sheets. The site archive also includes a photographic record.
- 2.3.7 **Borehole methodology:** a ‘start hole’ was hand excavated by Betts Hydro personnel to a depth of 1.2m. Drilling then began at this depth until bedrock was hit, and coring began at the level of bedrock. Therefore, the window for observing an archaeological presence or potential for such was small, falling within either the hand-excavated start hole or any spoil created by drilling, which was often minimal. It was, however, possible to identify a ‘potential archaeological horizon’ between the base of the start hole and the top of the bedrock.
- 2.3.8 The small infiltration trench, excavated in July 2016 at the location of Borehole 7, was excavated following the same general methodology as the other trenches.

## 2.4 FINDS

- 2.4.1 The recovery of finds was carried out in strict adherence to the WSI (OA North 2016a) and in accordance with best practice (following current Chartered Institute for Archaeologists guidelines; CIfA 2014d), and subject to expert advice, to minimise deterioration. All artefacts recovered from the evaluation trenches were retained in suitable packaging, adequately marked to allow identification by site, context and material. No finds were retrieved from the boreholes nor the infiltration test pit.

## 2.5 ARCHIVE

- 2.5.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the WSI (OA North 2016a), and in accordance with current CIfA (2014b) and Historic

England guidelines (Historic England 2015). The paper and digital archive, together with finds suitable for retention, will be deposited with the Grosvenor Museum, Chester.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1.1 In total, eight 2 x 2m trenches and five boreholes were excavated within the areas designated for evaluation. Four of the trenches and four boreholes were to the south of the Market Hall, three within the bus station, together with a further borehole, and one to the north of the Crowne Plaza Hotel (Fig 2). In addition, the test pit to investigate infiltration in the area of the proposed new Market Square was excavated in the vicinity of Borehole 7.
- 3.1.2 The results of the work are described according to the three broad chronological phases of activity identified (Roman, post-medieval and modern; Table 1). Somewhat tentative conclusions regarding most of the boreholes (especially beyond 2.1m in depth) relate to the limited exposure.

Phase	Chronological period of activity
1	Roman
2	Post-medieval
3	Modern

Table 1: Broad chronological phases recognised

#### 3.2 THE CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL

- 3.2.1 **Trench 1:** Trench 1 was placed near the north-west corner of the Crowne Plaza Hotel, on the east side of St Martin's Way (Fig 2). This trench was on the approximate line of the western rampart of the Roman legionary fortress, to the west of *Insula XVIII*, a large block that may have held the legion's principal workshops (Monument 8321; Mason 2012, 191). To the west of Trench 1, Trinity Street follows the line of the intervallum road inside the western fortress defences.
- 3.2.2 Trench 1 was hand-dug from ground level (22.69m aOD) to excavation base level at 21.49m aOD. Below the modern flagstones, and 0.5m of 'crushed red sandstone' (**101**), and a 0.18m compact levelling layer of sand, there was a recently disturbed and levelled post-medieval deposit (**102**) to a depth of 1.2m (Fig 3; Plate 1), containing clay pipe and ceramic fragments. A service cable, on a north-west to south-east alignment, was noted on the east side of the trench at c 22.19m aOD.





Plate 1: Trench 1, facing east, showing a section through 'made ground' associated with the Crowne Plaza Hotel complex

### 3.3 SOUTH OF THE MARKET HALL

- 3.3.1 The trenches to the south of the Market Hall (Trenches 2 - 4 and 6) were placed within UAD Character Zone 7 (Princess Street/St Martin's Way), in an area presumed to have been occupied largely by Roman barracks (OA North 2016b). They were excavated to explore the extent of overcut around Hamilton House and Goldsmith House, and to investigate the sequence just to the east of Goss Street.
- 3.3.2 **Trench 2:** Trench 2 was 2.2 x 1.7m and was situated in the pavement at the north-west end of Hamilton House on the south side of Hamilton Place (Fig 2).
- 3.3.3 Post-medieval made ground was recorded at 0.18m (Fig 4; Plate 2), extending to at least 1.7m below the modern surface (c 25.18m aOD to 23.66m aOD). However (as more tentatively recognised in the deeper part of the sondage), this post-medieval made ground (**201**) appears to have extended to the base of the trench (at 2.15m depth, 23.21m aOD). Above this, there was sand and gravel to 0.18m and the concrete raft for the road was exposed in the north section. There were also linear cuts for modern services to a depth of 1m, with the uppermost and clearly modern services at 25.02m aOD.



Plate 2: Trench 2, facing west, with large cuts for service pipes, and the concrete raft which extends beneath the road

- 3.3.4 **Trench 3:** Trench 3 was 1.8 x 1.8m and was placed to the north of Goldsmith House (Fig 2), within an area characterised by a series of north to south Roman barrack blocks within *Insula XIII*. The evidence from some of these barrack blocks appears to relate them to the legionary first cohort, and excavations at Goldsmith House in 1995 and 2002 revealed at least two periods of activity (Earthworks 2002).
- 3.3.5 A gravel levelling layer was observed to 0.1m (Fig 5; Plate 3), and at a depth of 1.5m, a ceramic service pipe (c 26.48m aOD). A concrete raft extending 0.5m from the west section (**302**) was at 1m below the modern ground surface (c 26.98m aOD). Extending 0.9m from beneath the concrete raft, at a depth at 1.3m, there were post-medieval wall footings (at 26.78m aOD; **303**). Backfilled soil and rubble were encountered to a depth of 1.8m (**301**). The features and deposits identified in this trench were all either apparently recent or post-medieval.



Plate 3: Trench 3, facing north, illustrating the concrete raft (at 1m deep) and post-medieval wall footings (26.78m aOD), which include post-medieval brick

- 3.3.6 **Trench 4:** Trench 4 was 2.1 x 1.7m, and was situated in the pavement on the west side of Crook Street (Fig 2), just to the east of Hamilton House. This trench (like Trench 3) is within *Insula XIII* of the Roman legionary fortress.
- 3.3.7 Gravel levelling was observed to 0.15-0.2m (Fig 6; Plate 4), below which, on the east side, there were concrete footings for the kerb. Services were seen on the east and west sides, at 0.3m (c 26.73m aOD). Most notably, there was a (nineteenth- to twentieth-century) tiled floor (**402**) at a depth of 1.72m. A layer of soil and rubble (**401**), to a depth of 2.06m (24.97m a OD), may possibly relate to a backfilled cellar.



*Plate 4: Trench 4, facing north, with services on both sides of the trench and four tiles of a post-medieval floor in situ at the base*

- 3.3.8 **Trench 6:** Trench 6 was 1.9 x 1.7m, excavated on the east side of Goss Street (Fig 2). This was to the south of excavated Roman buildings, and pre-Norman postholes and other early medieval features (Monuments 9025, 9026) known in the area. This extraordinary range of multi-phase activity included early Roman occupation, evidenced by hard-standings, stakeholes, Roman debris and early Roman buildings (Monuments 8186, 8187). A centurion's quarters (with a first phase of timber and then rebuilt in stone) was situated on the east side of Goss Street (Monument 8176) and at least one Roman alley traversed the area between the military buildings, on an east-west alignment (Richmond and Webster 1951; Ward 1975). A layer suggesting a military hiatus (Monument 8495) has also been recorded on Goss Street, characterised by latrines and refuse pits. In addition to the early medieval features to the north of Trench 6, a possible cultivation layer and stone robbing (Monument 9024) are in evidence on Goss Street, and subsequently there is evidence for medieval stone reclamation (Monument 10115). Goss Street itself was a medieval road (Monument 10012), bordered by the remains of medieval, Tudor and late seventeenth-century buildings (Monuments 10155, 10156, 10157), as well as other medieval masonry, medieval pits (Monument 10142) and excellent organic (including leather and wood) preservation.
- 3.3.9 Tarmac and gravel levelling were recorded at 0.15m in depth (*c* 27.47m aOD; Fig 7; Plate 5). The top of a brick-vaulted cistern (**601**) was revealed at 27.42m aOD, and the same feature extended beyond the maximum excavated depth of 1.86m (25.71m aOD).



Plate 5: Trench 6, facing west, showing the brick-built cistern, which had a vaulted roof and had been backfilled with demolition rubble

### 3.4 THE BUS STATION

- 3.4.1 The trenches in the bus station area (Trenches 7, 8, 9) were placed within the north end of the Urban Archaeology Database Character Zone 5 (Princess Street, Hunter Street). This zone is defined by the extent of the Roman Elliptical Building and the large Roman courtyard building complex to the north of it. Both buildings are unusual and poorly understood, and have been variously interpreted, but the northern structure may have been a market or storage area. Also of great archaeological importance and rarity, this northern part of Character Zone 5 is notable in having produced important pre-Norman industrial and domestic structural remains (Strickland 1982; Ward 1994, 43-53). Subsequently, medieval plots, the focus of both industrial and domestic activity, were established fronting onto Princess Street. The UAD demonstrates that the potential for the recovery of significant Roman and pre-Norman remains (some of potentially national importance) is high, particularly within this northern half of the zone, and that a sensitive approach is needed to any development.
- 3.4.2 **Trench 7:** Trench 7, which was 3 x 1.3m, was placed in the centre of the bus station (Fig 2), between Hunter Street and Princess Street. This location is within the footprint of the massive multi-phased colonnaded courtyard building in *Insula XVI* (Monument 8312/2/1), which occupied this space during the Roman period. Part of this enormous (157 x 65m) structure, which spanned the area between the Forum Shopping Centre and the Odeon Cinema, was first uncovered in 1935/6 and since then other parts have been revealed in excavations in 1968/9 and during the late 1970s and early 1980s (Strickland 1982).
- 3.4.3 A considerable depth (0.6m) of surviving Roman stratigraphy and structural remains was uncovered in this trench (Fig 8). A Roman soil horizon (**701**) was revealed at 27.87m aOD, comprising a firm dark brown sediment with charcoal

flecks, Roman ceramic building material, including fragments of Roman tile (or *tegula*), pottery fragments and animal bone. At the north end of the trench, there was a dressed sandstone block (at 27.98m aOD), set horizontally within Roman sediments and aligned approximately north-north-west to south-south-east (Plate 6). The block (703), measuring *c* 300 x 200mm, was apparently in association with another such sandstone block, although this was largely under the north section. Although it is dangerous to speculate from a small trench such as this, this appears to be some kind of structure, possibly an approximately north to south wall and (given the alignment and what is known of the archaeology of the immediate area) it is potentially part of the large Roman building that has been identified to the north of the Elliptical Building complex (in *Insula XXI*).



Plate 6: Trench 7, facing west, showing the position of the sondage and Roman dressed sandstone block(s)

- 3.4.4 A twentieth-century (*c* 1982) feature was the 1m-thick concrete, tarmac and hardcore overlying the Roman archaeology (Plate 7). The concrete was 0.45-0.5m in depth and included a 0.25m-thick, heavily reinforced layer. The concrete overlay a further 0.5m of limestone aggregate, which in turn overlay the Roman deposits.



Plate 7: Trench 7, facing approximately northwards, showing the depth of concrete (including reinforced concrete) which overlies the surviving Roman archaeology

- 3.4.5 **Trench 8:** Trench 8 was 1.8 x 1.8m, and was situated on the west side of the former Hunter Street School (Fig 2). Several sunken-featured early medieval buildings are known from the bus station area, including one from the former site of Hunter Street School (Monument 9020). Also at the Hunter Street School, and encountered across much of the area under consideration, dark soils have been revealed, possibly formed during the pre-Norman period by cultivation and/or animal husbandry (Ward 1994, 116; Event 5857; Mason 2007, 66).
- 3.4.6 A Roman soil horizon (c 26.88m aOD) was revealed at a depth of 1.4m (Fig 9; Plate 8), extending to a recorded depth of 1.87m (the base of excavation was recorded at 26.50m aOD). The Roman sequence comprised at least two deposits (**802** and **803**), both with inclusions of Roman ceramic building material, pottery and bone. Layer **802** was a medium yellow/brown, firm sandy clay, 180mm in depth, and **803** was a dark brown friable silty sand, 200mm deep, which in turn overlay **804**, a yellow-brown firm sandy clay. It is worthy of note that Roman walls, which probably relate to a barrack block within *Insula XXII*, were recorded to the south-west of this trench on the west side of the Masonic Hall (Earthworks 2006a). The present work demonstrates that such survival should also be expected to the east of the Bowling Green area, now the pocket park.



Plate 8: Trench 8, facing north, showing a post-medieval brick wall (west) and service pipes

- 3.4.7 Below the modern paving slabs (28.37m aOD) and a gravel levelling layer to a depth of 0.15-0.2m, there was ‘made ground’ (at c 28.22-28.17m aOD) of probable post-medieval date, cut by the trenches for a brick wall and ceramic drain pipe (27.45m aOD). A lead pipe was recorded at c 27.67m aOD. The position of the trench (which was in line with the projected east wall of the still extant Kirkton House, just to the north of Hunter Street) was of necessity sited several metres to the east of the projected position of the Masonic Hall (Ordnance Survey 1959). It therefore appears probable that the wall exposed was the earlier westernmost boundary associated with the former Hunter Street Secondary School (Ordnance Survey 1913; 1947).
- 3.4.8 **Trench 9:** Trench 9 was 3 x 2.45m and was placed on the east side of the bus station at the south end of a raised flower bed (Fig 2). Like Trench 7, it was situated within the footprint of the massive multi-phased colonnaded courtyard building in *Insula XVI* (Monument 8312/2/1), which occupied this space during the Roman period (*Section 3.4.2*).
- 3.4.9 The surface level in the flower bed was 29.41m aOD. A depth of 0.4m of garden soil overlay limestone aggregate, which was recorded to a depth of 1.2m. Post-medieval walls were recorded on the north (an east to west wall) and east sides (a north-south wall) of the trench (Fig 10; Plate 9), and a concrete surface (**902**) was revealed at a depth of 2.15m (27.36m aOD). These post-medieval walls appear to relate to an area of housing located to the west of the present library, and on the east side of the original (more easterly) ‘Hunter’s Walk’. These buildings were demolished by the early 1980s to make way for the bus station (Strickland 1982).





*Plate 9: Trench 9, facing north, showing limestone aggregate to 1.2m, post-medieval walls on the north and east sides, and demolition rubble overlying a concrete floor at a depth of 2.05m*

### **3.5 BOREHOLES**

3.5.1 Borehole 7 was dug to the rear of the library on the east side of the bus station (Fig 2). The substrate recorded (Plate 10) was topsoil to a depth of over 1.2m. The test pit demonstrated that made ground extended to a depth of 1.7m, where sandstone bedrock was encountered.



*Plate 10: Borehole 7, on the east edge of bus station, to the rear of the library*

3.5.2 Borehole 10 was placed at the corner of Trinity Street and Hamilton Place at the west end of the Market Hall (Fig 2). No archaeology was recorded

within the start hole (Plate 11), as it did not exceed the limits of the modern overburden used in the construction of the current pavement/road. The overburden consisted of building sand, gravel and concrete rubble. Drilling began at a depth of 1.2m and hit solid-rock geology at a depth of 3.5m. A potential archaeological horizon was observed at c 1.2m, but, due to the size of the borehole, whether this was ‘made ground’ or intact archaeology remains unclear. Thus Borehole 10 was important in establishing that there is a depth of 1.2m of modern deposits to the immediate south of the present Market Hall, which overlies any potential archaeology (OA North 2016b, 37).



*Plate 11: Borehole 10, on the Corner of Trinity Street and the north side of Hamilton Place*

3.5.3 Borehole 15 was situated on the south side of Hamilton Place, to the north of Merchant’s House (Fig 2). A brick-lined drain was observed within the start hole (Plate 12) at a depth of 0.45m, the backfill of which contained clay pipe stem and modern building rubble. The overburden appeared to be similar to that observed in Borehole 10. Drilling began at a depth of 1.2m and hit bedrock at 2.5m. A potential archaeological horizon was observed at c 1.3m, although the deposits, given the very restricted exposure, could not be adequately characterised. Thus, the observations of Borehole 15 appear to suggest modern and disturbed deposits to a depth of 1.2m.



*Plate 12: Borehole 15, adjacent to the south-east corner of Hamilton Place and Crook Street*

- 3.5.4 Borehole 18 was located on the east side of Goss Street, adjacent to the bike park (Fig 2). A tarmac and gravel surface (0-0.3m in depth) overlay post-medieval deposits (Plate 13), including what appeared to be ‘made ground’, apparently comprising demolition rubble. There was also a possible post-medieval structure on the east side of the trench. Bedrock was recorded at a depth of 3m.



*Plate 13: Borehole 18, on the east side of Goss Street, adjacent to the bike park*

- 3.5.5 Borehole 19 was excavated on Crook Street, adjacent to the pavement on the south side of the Goldsmith House car park (Fig 2). A tarmac and gravel surface at 0-0.3m overlay further gravel and levelling rubble to 0.3-0.7m (Plate 14), and appears to be modern levelling. A post-medieval deposit was recorded at 0.7-

1.2m prior to drilling, which was interpreted as relating to modern disturbance. Bedrock was recorded at 3.5m.



Plate 14: Borehole 19, Crook Street, to the rear of Goldsmith House, adjacent to the pavement

### 3.6 THE FINDS

3.6.1 A small assemblage of material, 48 fragments in total and mainly comprising Roman pottery and ceramic building material, was recovered from the evaluation trenches (Table 2). The material was collected on a trench-by-trench basis, but is sufficient to give an indication of Roman and medieval activity in the close vicinity.

	Roman Pottery	Roman ceramic building material	Medieval pottery	Bone	Other	Total
Trench 4					1	
Trench 7 (701)	3	23		5	1	32
Trench 8	5	4	3	3		15
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>48</b>

Table 2: Finds recovered, by trench

3.6.2 Material from Trench 4 is of no particular significance, being a single fragment of undiagnostic ceramic building material, probably, but not certainly, a hand-made brick. As such, it is most likely to be of post-medieval date.

3.6.3 Three small fragments of Romano-British or imported Roman pottery were recovered from Trench 7, including one from a Dressel 20 oil amphora. A single small fragment of Black-Burnished ware 1 suggests a date range after *c* AD 120, when such pottery came into widespread use, with the acute lattice burnished decoration pointing to a date before *c* AD 200 (Tyers 1996). Ceramic building material from this trench is mixed in origin, and largely undiagnostic, but it includes flange fragments from *tegulae*, which are undoubtedly of Roman date. A small fragment of lead is likely to have been used in building, but cannot be dated. The single fragment of bone from the trench is burnt.

- 3.6.4 Trench 8 produced the base and part of the wall of a relatively large stamped samian cup of form 33, the most popular cup form in the mid-late second century, although it was introduced in the first century (Webster 1996, 45). Preliminary attempts to identify the stamp via the database developed by the Römisch-Germanisches ZentralMuseum at Mainz were unsuccessful (<http://www.rgzm.de/samian/home/frames.htm>), but a broad second-century date would seem most likely. A small rim fragment in an oxidised orange sandy fabric, likely to be a Cheshire Plains product (Tyers 1996), is again most likely to date to the second century AD. This trench also produced three battered fragments of medieval pottery, clearly indicating significant later deposition.

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## 4. DISCUSSION

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### 4.1 THE CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL

- 4.1.1 It appears clear from the nature of the exposed sections that Trench 1 was within the area of ‘overcut’ for the Crowne Plaza Hotel (Fig 2; Plate 1), although the full extent or outer edge of overcut was not within this trench. *In situ* human burials and Roman sandstone masonry have been identified elsewhere within this area (OA North 2015) and ‘islands’ of archaeology survive beyond the major areas of groundworks on each side of Trinity Street associated with underground parking to the east and the Crowne Plaza complex to the west.

### 4.2 SOUTH OF THE MARKET HALL

- 4.2.1 The trenches and boreholes south of the Market Hall are characterised by a considerable build-up of post-medieval levelling or ‘made ground’, much of the evidence relating to paved areas adjacent to buildings. The trenches appear to confirm the tentative conclusions regarding the depth of post-medieval overburden arrived at through examination of the boreholes (*Section 3.5.3*). These conclusions, cannot, however, be extrapolated or extended across the whole area. This will, though, allow some redefinition of the archaeological sensitivity in these areas, as it provides some guidance to the level at which construction can be achieved without disturbing sensitive archaeological stratigraphy, where a considerable depth of made ground can be proven (Table 3). The evidence from Goss Street (Trench 6) is valuable, since the cistern was previously unknown. The fact that some areas south of the Market Hall are characterised by post-medieval and recent deposits to a depth of over 1m must be seen in the context of wider investigations, which have revealed a complex picture in which some areas of significant archaeology survive to a higher level than adjacent areas that may be either cellared or disturbed by service trenches. Thus, for instance, at Goldsmith’s House, Earthworks Archaeology (2002, 9-10) revealed significant archaeology at 700mm below the present ground level, but just to the east, sensitive archaeology has been recorded within 800mm of the modern ground surface at 1 Hamilton Place (Earthworks 2006b). It is notable that although the area south of Hamilton Place has a lower modern ground level than the bus station, some of the levels of significant archaeology in these areas are similar. Trenches 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6, and Boreholes 10, 15, 18 and 19 are all within the southern half of the UAD Character Zone 7 (Princess Street/Hunter Street), a key element within the Area of Archaeological Importance, which is defined by an area of medieval settlement arranged around the streets that ran northwards from Watergate Street. The southern half of the zone contains a series of north-south-aligned Roman barrack blocks. The zone contains remains that should be approached with particular sensitivity and which may influence national perspectives on Roman and medieval urban development.

South of Market Hall	Trench 2	Trench 3	Trench 4	Trench 6
Modern surface	25.36m aOD	27.98m aOD	27.03m aOD	27.57m aOD
Top of Roman archaeology	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Base of excavation	23.21m aOD	26.21m aOD	24.97m aOD	25.71m aOD

Table 3: Significant heights above Ordnance Datum in trenches south of the Market Hall

### 4.3 THE BUS STATION

4.3.1 An obvious difference between Trench 7 and many previous interventions to the west, on Hunter Street, is that in the latter a 0.5m depth of cultivated or 'garden' soils has often been recorded (OA North 2015), whereas in the bus station, the Roman archaeology was overlain solely by a depth of concrete and limestone aggregate placed there during the construction of the bus station. The latter may well largely relate to the 'designed destruction' referred to by Emery (1995, 5). The evaluation results would support the supposition that the bus station area is characterised by more severe truncation of post-Roman deposits than further to the west. The results of one of the interventions in 2006 (Earthworks BH-7 which was located just to the north-east of Borehole 7; *Section 3.5.1*) appear to suggest the same (Earthworks 2006a, 8). The landscaped area to the rear of the library appears to be characterised by significant depths of topsoil (Borehole 7) and recent building rubble (Earthworks 2006a, 8), which can be attributed to the bus station and library groundworks of the early 1980s. It may be very difficult in this area to distinguish (in boreholes) between sandstone structures or rubble and (sandstone) bedrock, and thus the results of small interventions, unless part of multiple transects, might reasonably be regarded with some caution.

4.3.2 Undoubtedly the most crucial and valuable point demonstrated by the present evaluation is that significant and important archaeology survives underneath the bus station (Table 4). Trenches 7, 8, and 9 add significantly to knowledge of the extent of survival across the area to the south of Hunter Street. The results need to be considered in addition to both the results from further west on Hunter Street (the majority of which retains a considerable depth and complete sequences of Roman and later archaeology) (OA North 2015). The bus station area now appears to bear much in common with the area to the west, in that there is demonstrably excellent survival of deposits pertaining to the Roman legionary fortress across the majority of the areas investigated to the south of Hunter Street (with the exclusion of a corridor adjacent to St Martin's Way).

Bus Station	Trench 7	Trench 8	Trench 9
Modern surface	28.94m aOD	28.37m aOD	29.41m aOD
Top of Roman archaeology	27.98m aOD	26.97m aOD	N/A
Base of excavation	27.37m aOD	26.50m aOD	27.36m aOD

Table 4: Significant heights above Ordnance Datum in trenches in the bus station

4.3.3 Thus, in terms of the Roman fortress layout (Mason 2012, 56, fig 20b), significant portions of both *Insula XXII* and *Insula XXI* retain excellent archaeological preservation and potential. The evaluation and the multiple interventions further west on Hunter Street (including OA North 2015) suggest

the probability that stratigraphic sequences relating to the occupation of the Roman legionary fortress survive over a considerable area. This represents a highly significant resource, since it potentially provides future opportunities to refine chronologies and advance understanding of the fortress development, in accordance with Initiative 3.18 of the Roman-period research agenda for north-west England (Philpott and Brennand 2007, 62). Whilst definite evidence for late Roman or early medieval archaeology was not recognised in the trenches south of the Market Hall, such evidence is often ephemeral and difficult to recognise in small trenches (although it has been recorded previously in this area). Equally, however, it is possible that any post-Roman deposits have been destroyed in the bus station. Further to the west on Hunter Street, the possible survival of late Roman or early medieval deposits (OA North 2015) has been noted and highlighted as of considerable importance, since these periods are comparatively poorly understood, both at Chester and elsewhere in the region, as the regional research agenda makes clear (*op cit*, 72; Newman and Brennand 2007, 76-8, 82-3).

#### 4.4 OVERVIEW

4.4.1 From the results of the fieldwork, it is evident that the evaluation scheme was largely successful in achieving the aims and objectives set out in the WSI (OA North 2016a; *Section 2.2*). In terms of the project's aims (*Section 2.2.1*), the evaluation has succeeded in determining the presence or absence of significant archaeological remains in all of the eight trenches investigated, the five boreholes and the test pit, provide some additional information. In those areas where surviving archaeology was found, the work has provided important information on its character and date, together with the depth below the modern surface of the uppermost archaeological levels, and the nature and extent of modern disturbance. South of the Market Hall, a considerable depth of post-medieval 'made ground' was generally encountered down to about 1.2m below modern ground level. In the bus station, Trenches 7 and 8 demonstrated the presence of a considerable depth of surviving Roman archaeology. Furthermore, in Trench 7 (sited to investigate the survival of a Roman wall), structural remains were uncovered. It appears highly probable that the boundary wall on the western side of the Hunter Street School was located in Trench 8. The fact that Roman deposits were encountered in this trench is clearly also valuable. North of the Crowne Plaza Hotel, the evaluation has added detail regarding the extent and depth of modern disturbance associated with the overcut relating to this building on the south side of the junction of Princess Street and St Martin's Way. Overall, therefore, the information generated by the evaluation represents an important addition to the pre-existing body of data from previous archaeological works in the vicinity.



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## 6. ILLUSTRATIONS

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### 6.1 FIGURES

Fig 1: Chester Northgate Redevelopment location

Fig 2: Location of evaluation trenches, boreholes, and infiltration pit

Fig 3: Plan and cross-section of Trench 1

Fig 4: Plan of Trench 2

Fig 5: Plan and cross-section of Trench 3

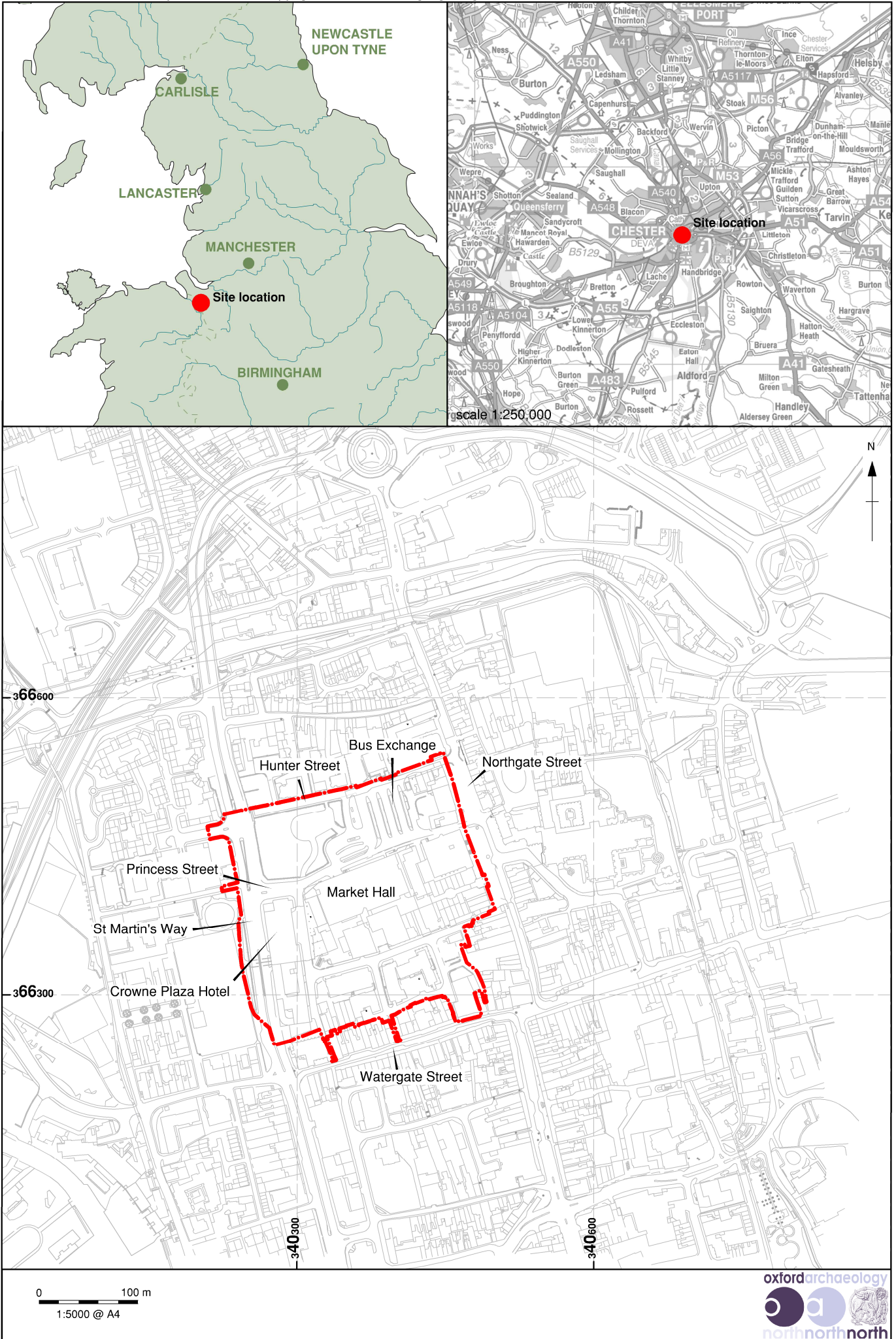
Fig 6: Plan and cross-section of Trench 4

Fig 7: Plan and cross-section of Trench 6

Fig 8: Plan and cross-section of Trench 7

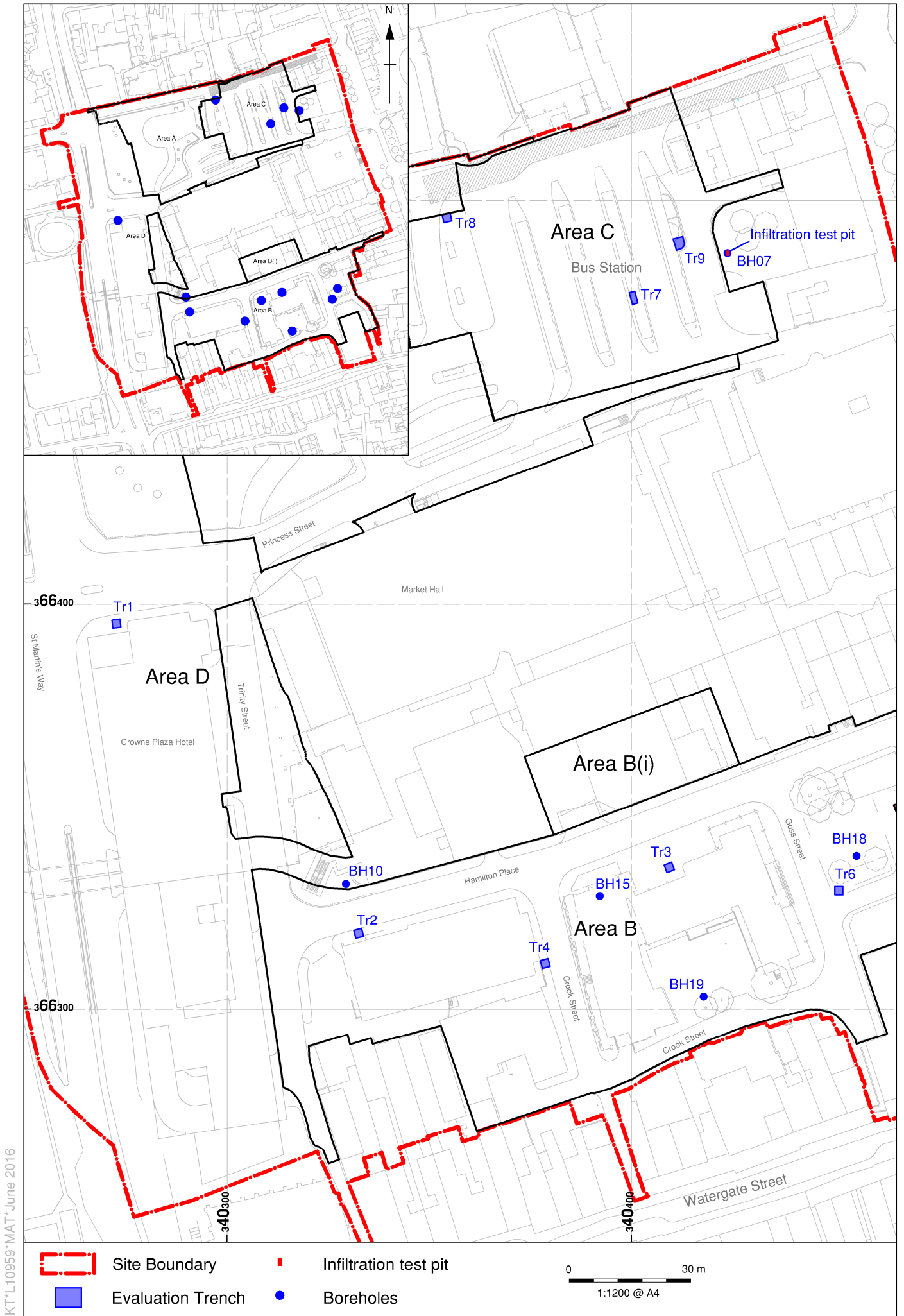
Fig 9: Plan and cross-section of Trench 8

Fig 10: Plan of Trench 9



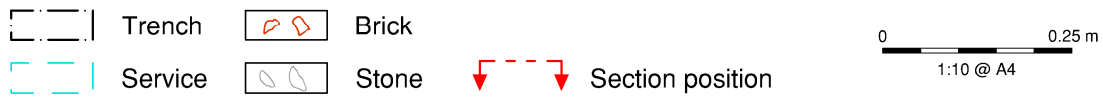
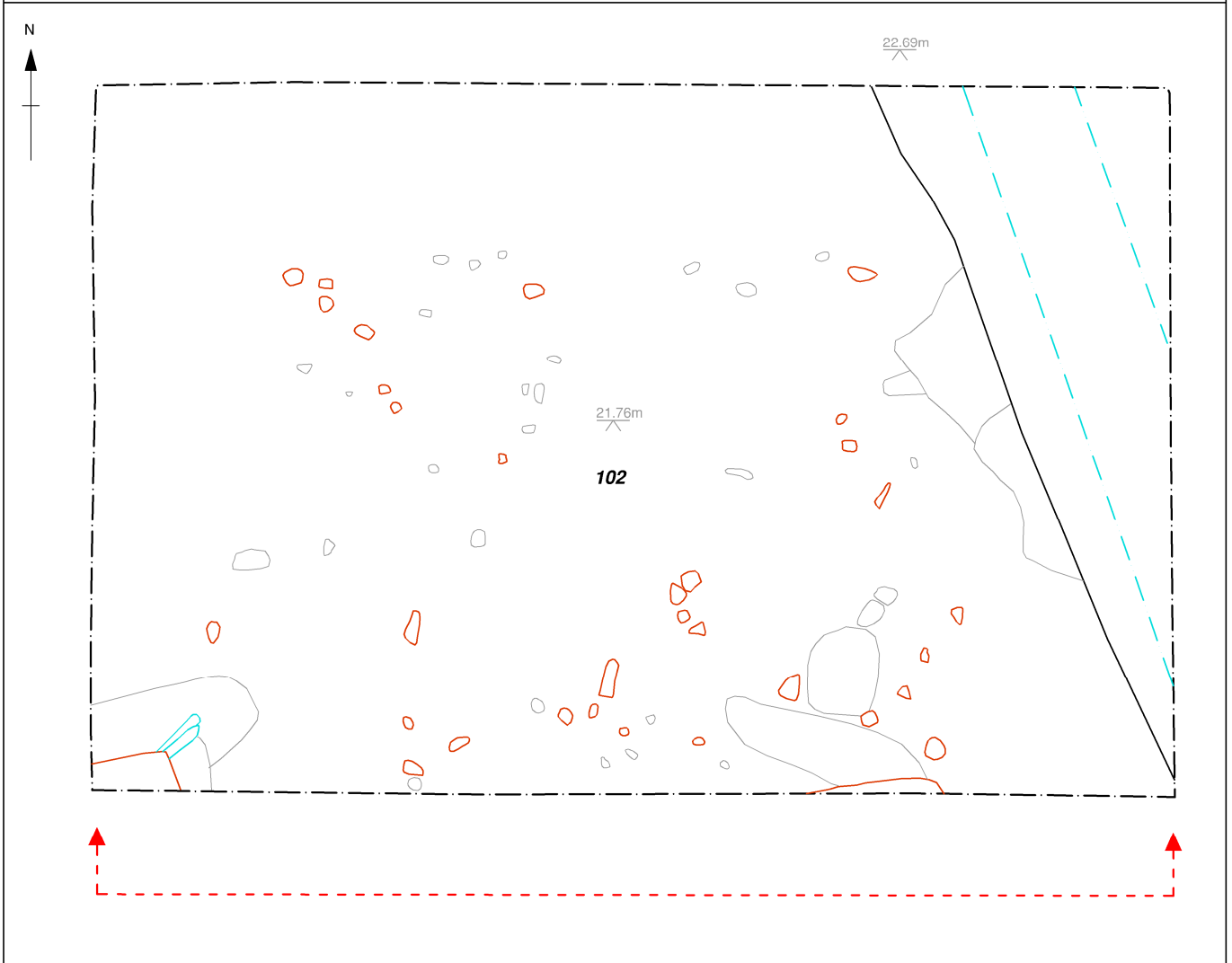
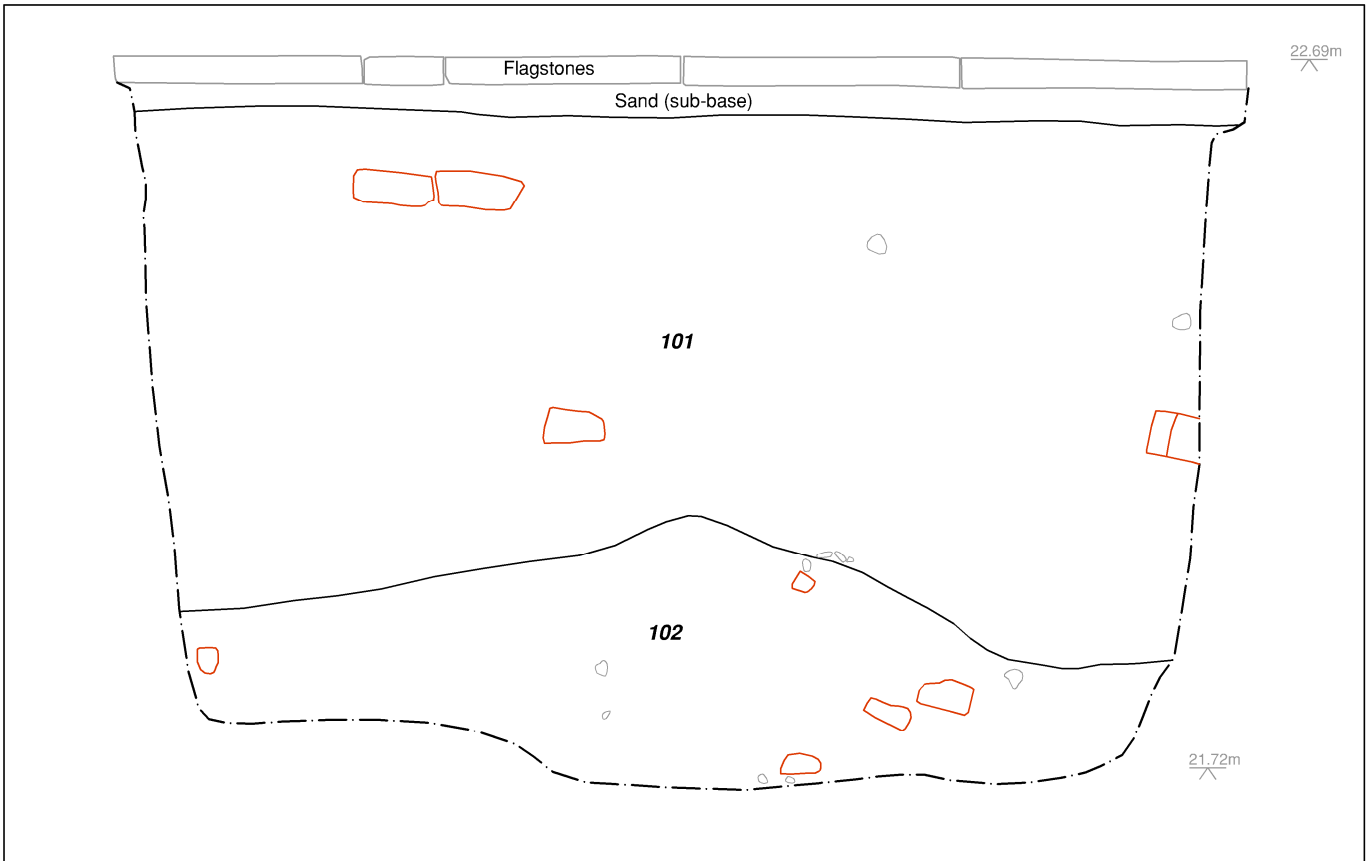
KT\*L10959\*MAT\*May 2016

Figure 1: Chester Northgate development location



KT\*L10959\*MAT\* June 2016

Figure 2: Location of evaluation trenches, boreholes and Infiltration test pit



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Figure 3: Plan and cross-section of Trench 1

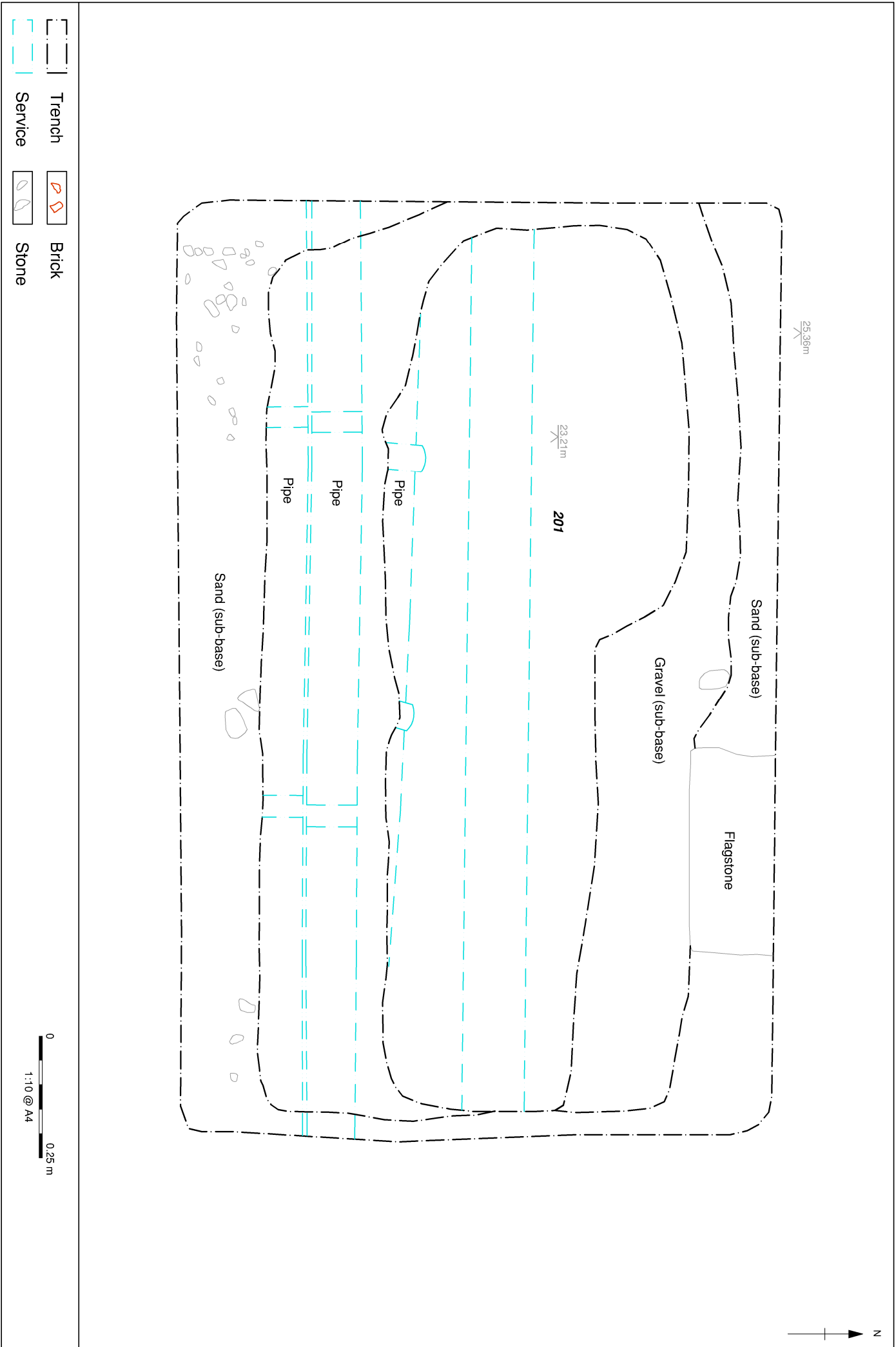
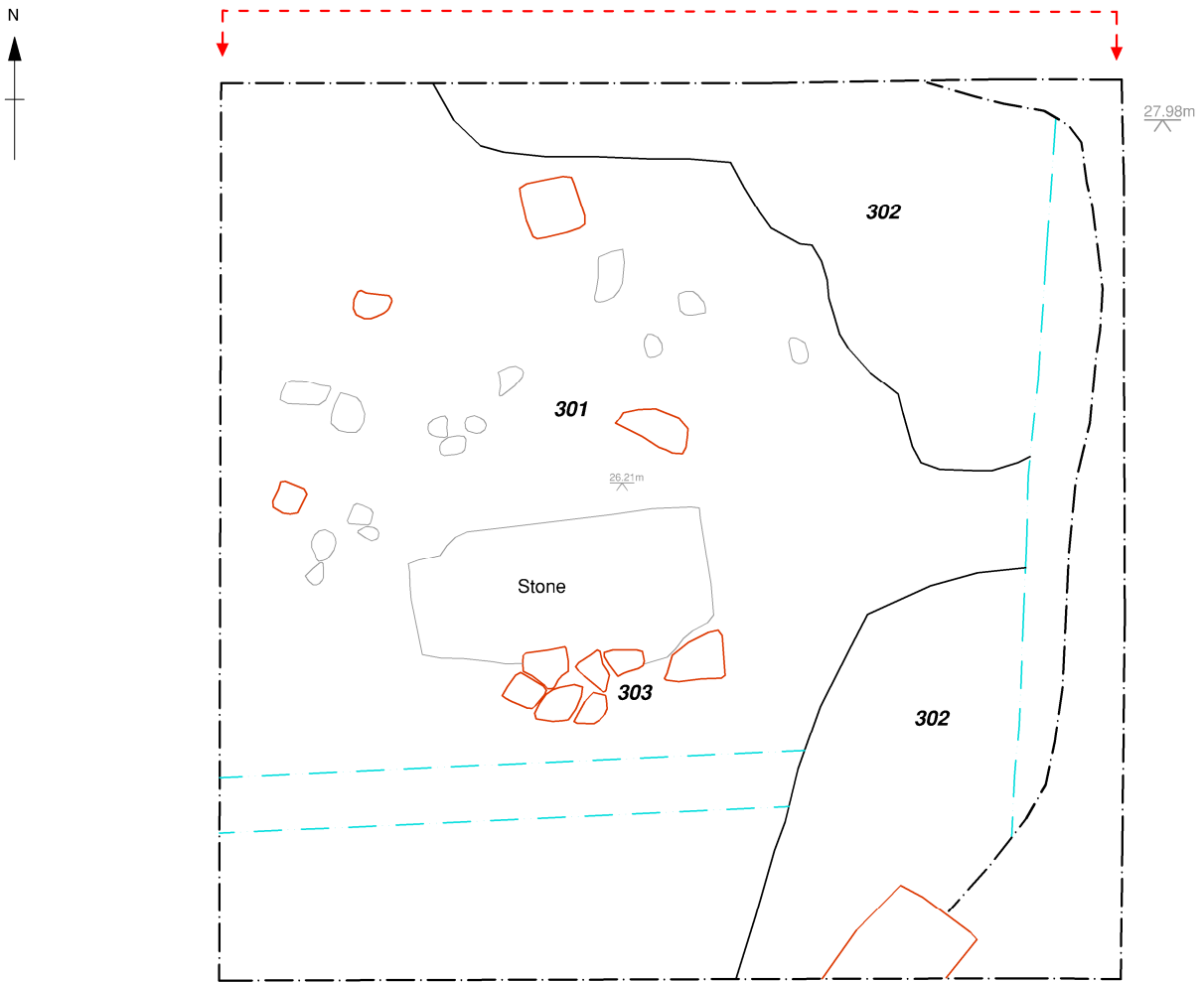
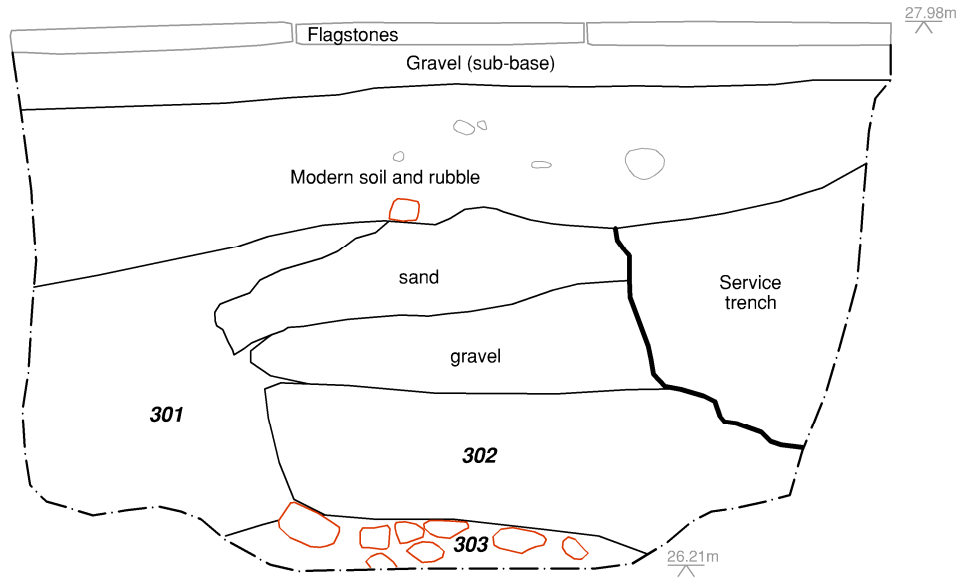


Figure 4: Plan of Trench 2





- Trench
- Brick
- Service
- Stone
- Section position

0 0.3 m  
1:15 @ A4

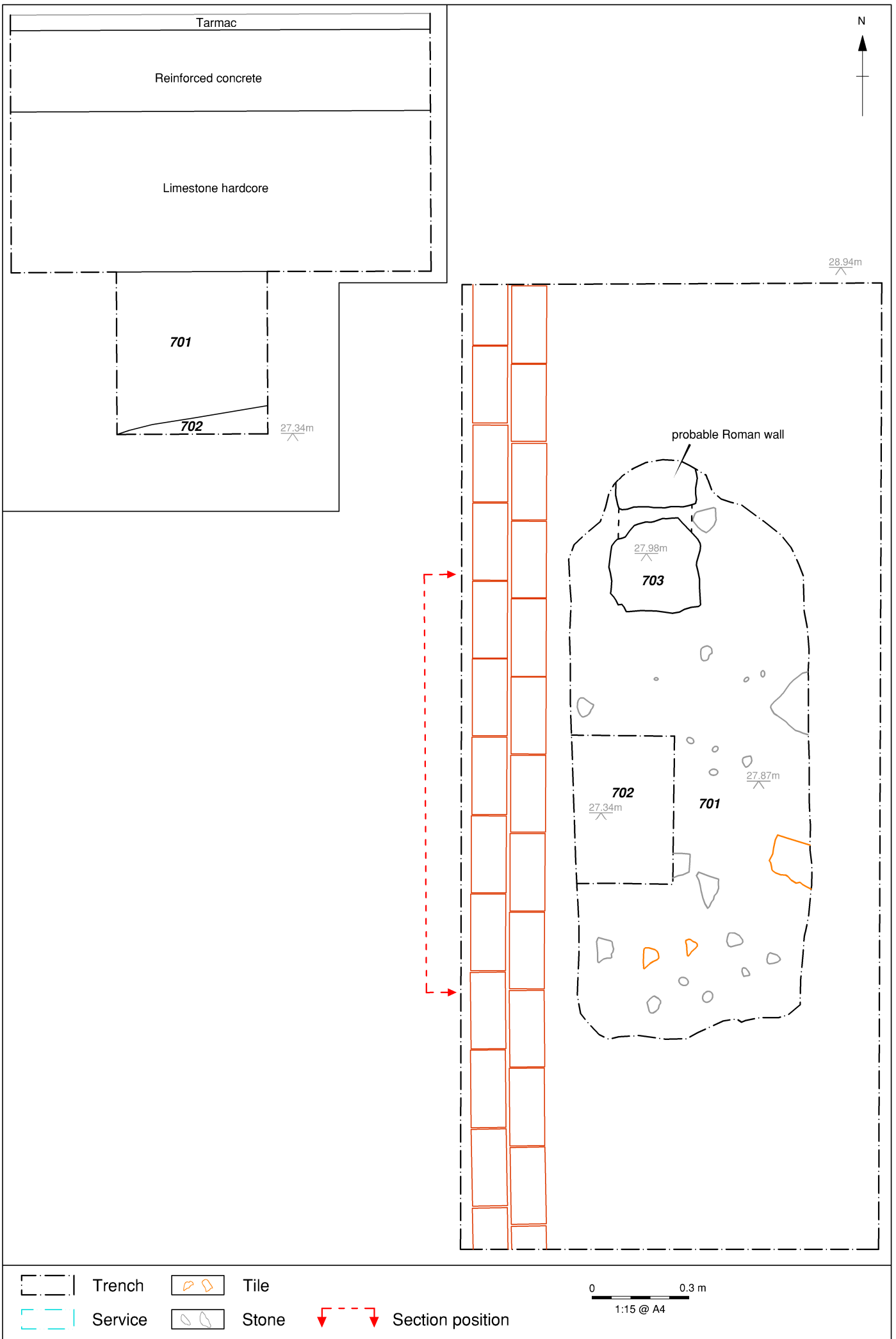
Figure 5: Plan and cross-section of Trench 3



Figure 6: Plan and cross-section of Trench 4



Figure 7: Plan and cross-section of Trench 6



KT\*L10959\*MAT\* June 2016

Figure 8: Plan and cross-section of Trench 7

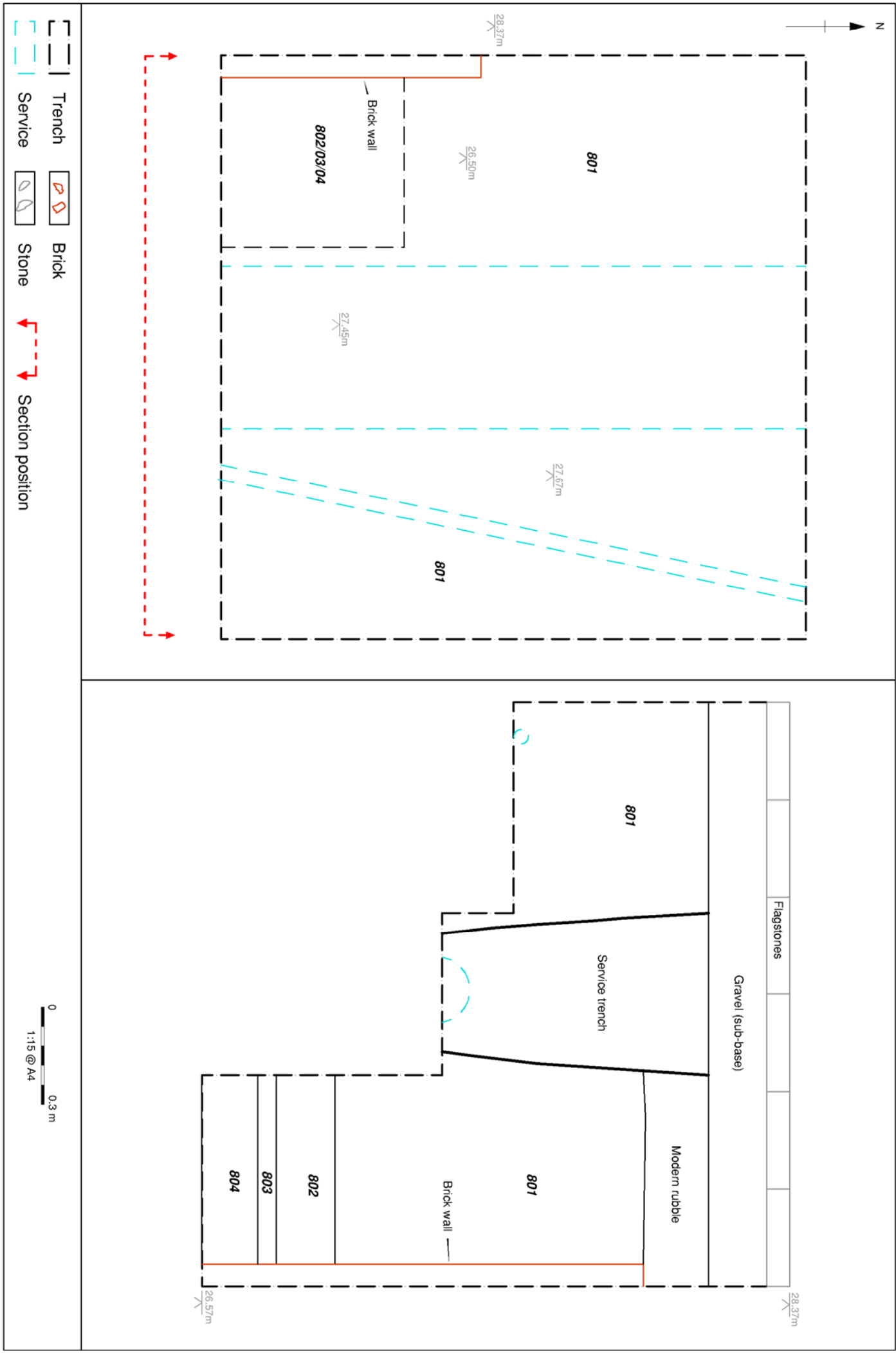


Figure 9: Plan and cross-section of Trench 8

KT\*L10959\*MAT\* June 2016

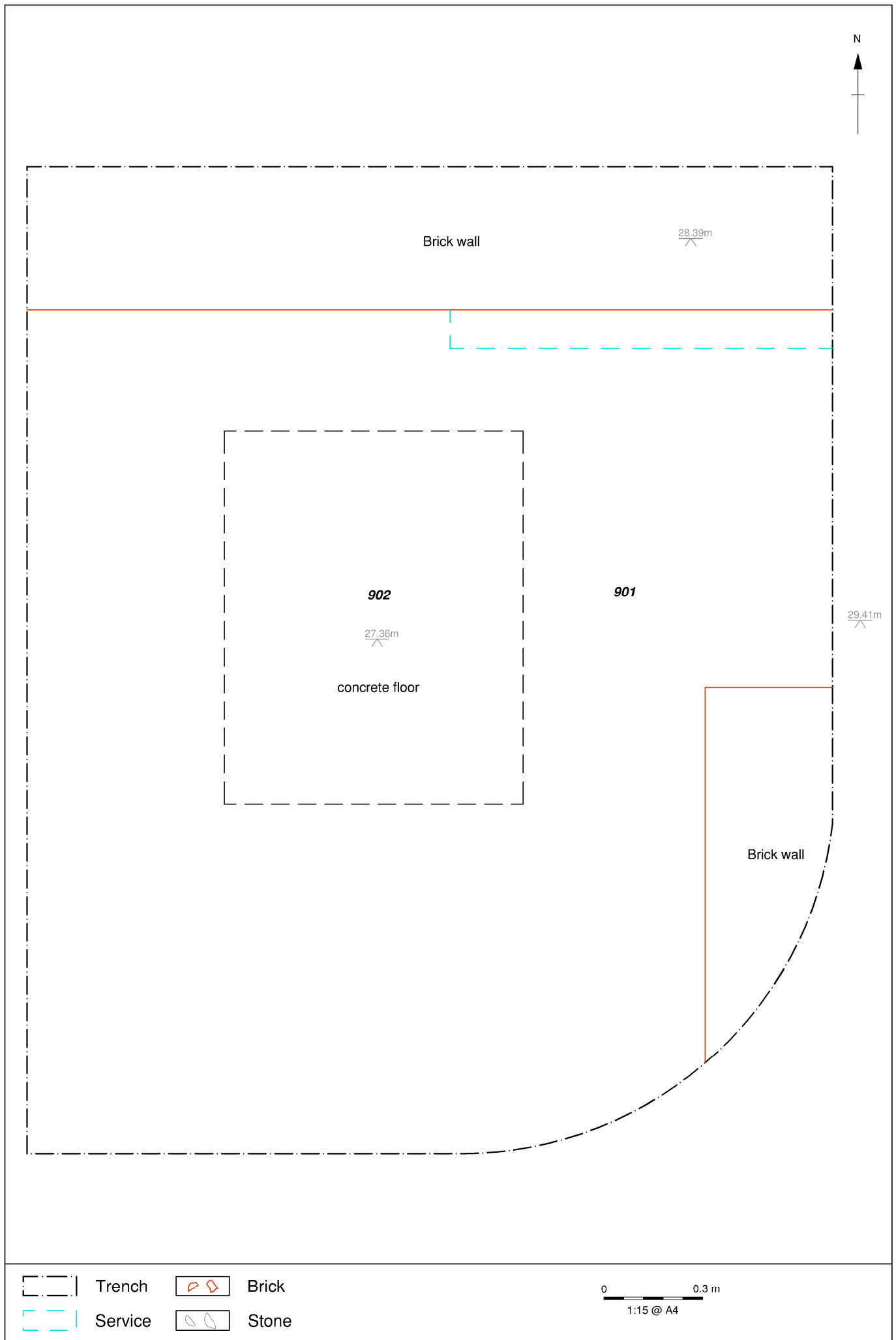


Figure 10: Plan of Trench 9



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