

NOS. 109-111, STAPLEHURST ROAD, SITTINGBOURNE, KENT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

NGR:	TQ 89694 64374
Planning Ref.:	SW/12/0829
PCAS job no.	1303
Site code:	SITE 14

Prepared for
Balloch Construction
by
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Summary

An archaeological evaluation consisting of ten 10m x 2m trenches was undertaken on land at nos. 109-111, Staplehurst Road, Sittingbourne, Kent, in order to inform a forthcoming planning application for the construction of 14 terraced houses. The site comprises one field to the south-east of Staplehurst Road and between two active railway lines.

The Sittingbourne and Milton area is rich in prehistoric, Roman and Saxon remains which are a common feature of investigations around the towns and in this area of North Kent generally.

The evaluation encountered 19th and 20th century deposits likely relating to the construction of the railway lines and later re-use of the land between them. No earlier finds or features were revealed.

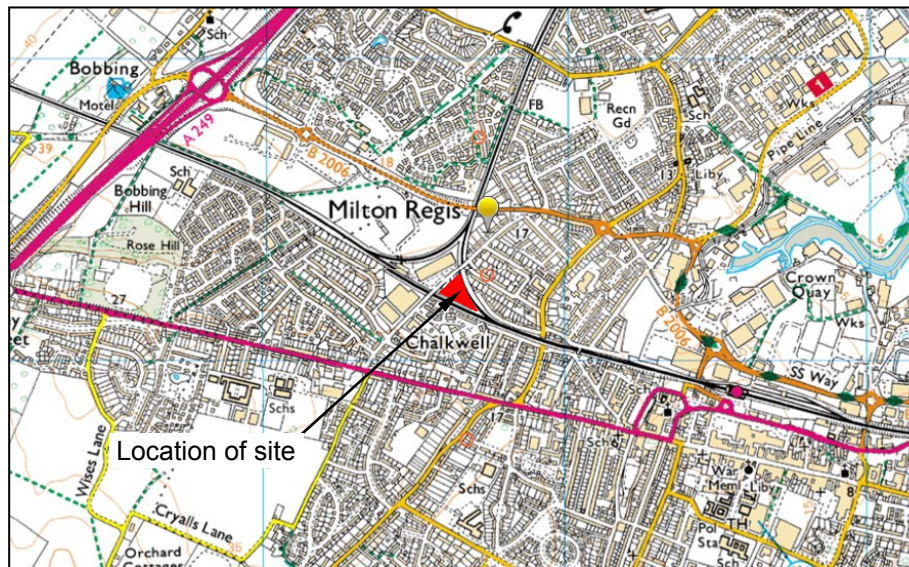


Figure 1: Location plan of the site (marked in red) at scale 1:25,000. OS mapping © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. PCAS licence no. 100049278.

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd (PCAS) was commissioned by Balloch Construction to carry out an archaeological evaluation on land at Nos. 109-111, Staplehurst Road, Sittingbourne, Kent. The evaluation took place in order to inform a forthcoming planning application.

2.0 Location and description (figs. 1 and 2)

The town of Sittingbourne lies some 45 miles to the east of London, to the south of The Swale, a tidal channel separating the Isle of Sheppey from mainland Kent. The modern town incorporates the historic and formerly more important town of Milton Regis, which was sited on Milton Creek and was a centre for fishing and wharfage (SBC, 2011)

The proposed development site lies within the Milton Regis neighbourhood, outside the Sittingbourne Conservation Area. It is triangular in shape, bounded by Staplehurst Road to the north-west and by active railway lines to the north-east and south. The site currently appears to be occupied by light industrial premises, consisting of several scattered buildings around a concrete apron, screened by trees along the north-eastern and southern boundaries. Its central National Grid Reference is TQ 89694 64374.

3.0 Topography and Geology

The land in the vicinity of the site slopes downwards to Milton Creek to the east. The site lies at approximately 15m above Ordnance Datum sea level.

The British Geological Survey records no drift geology on the site, although a neighbouring deposit of clay and silt Head may extend slightly onto its north-eastern edge. The underlying solid geology on the site itself is Seaford Chalk Formation, with a solid geology of Thanet Formation sand, silt and clay directly to the north (BGS).

4.0 Planning Background

Planning permission for a residential development of 14 terraced houses, consisting of ten 3-bedroom and four 4-bedroom dwellings, was granted by Swale Borough Council in June 2013 (application no. SW/12/0829). This permission was granted subject to conditions: condition 19 requires the applicant to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, in accordance with a written specification (this document) and timetable, submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

5.0 Archaeological and historical background

Sittingbourne and the neighbouring Milton Regis grew up as early medieval settlements on the Roman military road of Watling Street; there is no evidence of a Romano-British roadside settlement in the area. Milton Regis has its origins in the earlier Saxon period as the centre of a royal estate (SBC, 2011).

The main industry in the medieval period was cloth making, with Sittingbourne taking second place to the market at Milton and the associated import and export facilities of Milton Creek (SBC, 2011).

The Sittingbourne railways were built in 1858, linking the town to London and the coast, enabling the growth of industry at the time and of commuter housing later. The railway connections encouraged the development of new manufacturing industries, most notably

paper and brick making, which were predominantly established in the area of Milton Creek (SBC, 2011). The 1st edition Ordnance Survey 25" to the mile map of 1895 shows the site as open agricultural land; on this map, Staplehurst Road is named 'Blind Lane'. The 2nd edition map of 1908-9 shows a low level of development on the site, with buildings adjoining Staplehurst Road (here given its current name) and plot divisions running perpendicular to the road. Brickworks are shown to the north-east.

The towns of Sittingbourne and Milton Regis were amalgamated in 1929 (SBC, 2011).

The Kent Historic Environment Record (HER) does not record any sites, monuments or findspots on the site itself. In its neighbourhood, the HER records a dene-hole of unknown date, encountered on the route of the railway directly to the south of the site (HER ref. TQ 86 SE 33); two post-medieval brickworks on either side of the B2006, some 300m to the north-east of the site, corresponding to the brickworks shown on the 2nd edition OS map (HER refs. TQ 86 SE 66-7); a rectilinear enclosure of unknown date, identified during an archaeological walk-over survey approximately 300m to the north-west (HER ref. TQ 86 SE 63), and a pillar-box from the reign of George V, at the junction of Staplehurst Road and Springfield Road directly to the north of the site (HER ref. TQ86 SE 252).

6.0 Methodology

The scheme of archaeological trial trenching consisted of 10 trenches 10m long by 2m wide. The works took place prior to the construction groundworks on site, and consisted of the machine stripping of modern ground. These works were undertaken by a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under the supervision of a PCAS Field Officer.

Features exposed were planned at a scale of 1:50 on a base plan. All excavated features were drawn in section at a scale of 1:20. The section drawings were located on the base plans; Ordnance Datum levels were taken using a Global Position System. Deposits were recorded on standard PCAS record sheets, and an excavation site diary was also kept; a digital photographic record, supplemented by colour slide photography, was made, and extracts from this are reproduced in Appendix 1.

The fieldwork was carried out by Simon Savage, Leigh Brocklehurst and Martin Wagstaff, and took place between the 11th and 15th of September, 2014. Weather conditions were clear and bright, with some cloud.

7.0 Results

Trench 1 consisted of seven layers of material with a total depth of 2.3m (Fig 3a and b). A clean natural substrate was not revealed. The lowest of these was (106) compacted mid orange-brown sandy clay up to 0.2m deep, overlain by (105) friable mid orange-brown sandy clay up to 0.45m deep. Abutting this was (104) re-deposited loose chalk fragments up to 0.3m deep. Overlying both (104) and (105) was a layer (103) of mid grey sandy clay up to 0.5m deep, and overlying this was (102) compacted mid orange-brown re-deposited brick clay up to 0.35m deep. This was overlain by (101) mid greyish brown clay up to 0.5m deep. All layers were overlain by (100) mid grey-brown loose sand up to 1m deep. All deposits other than (100) were angled down to the north-east accounting for tipping horizons.

Trench 2 consisted of six layers on its north-west end, with a total depth of 2m (Fig 3c and d). A clean natural substrate was not revealed. The lowest of these (207) comprised loose black fragments up to 1.2m deep, overlain by a small lens (206) of mid orange sandy gravel up to 0.1m deep. This was overlain by a layer (205) of the same material as (207), up to 0.3m deep. This was overlain by (204) friable dark greyish brown silty sand, up to 0.15m deep. This was overlain by modern crushed stone and asphalt.

On the south-east end of the trench was a feature [203] with a rounded edge on its north-western side; the south-eastern edge was not exposed. This had a primary fill (202) of soft dark brown silty clay up to 0.3m deep, and was overlain by a layer (201) of mid orange brown silty clay up to 0.5m deep. This was overlain by a final layer (200) of friable dark greyish brown silty sand up to 0.25m deep, and overlain by concrete.

Trench 3 consisted of five layers of material with a total depth of 1.7m (Fig 4c). A clean natural substrate was not revealed. The earliest of these was a layer (304) of soft dark brown silty clay up to 0.3m deep, overlain by a layer (303) of friable dark greyish brown silty sand up to 0.7m deep. This was overlain by a layer (302) of mid orange-brown silty clay up to 0.25m deep. This was covered by concrete (301) up to 0.45m deep and then subsequently tarmac (300) up to 0.3m deep.

Trench 4 consisted of four layers of material with a total depth of 1.1m (Fig 3e and f; plate 3). A clean natural substrate was not revealed. The earliest of these was a layer (410) of mid yellow-brown sandy clay up to 0.3m deep, overlain by a layer (409) of bricks fixed in with concrete 0.14m deep. These were overlain by another layer of concrete (408) up to 0.18m deep. This was overlain by a final layer (407) of mid greyish-blue sandy silt up to 0.35m deep.

At the north end of Trench 4 was a shallow sub-circular pit [401], 1.04m wide and 0.20m deep, with a fill (402) of mid greyish brown silty sand (Fig 3g; plate 7). This fill contained a fragment of 19th/20th century pottery and clay pipe stem.

Slightly to the south of this, was another shallow sub-circular pit [403], 0.3m wide and 0.14m deep, with a fill (404) of mid greyish brown silty sand (Fig 3h; plate 8). Adjacent to this was a further shallow sub-circular pit [405] 1.08m wide and 0.09m deep, with a fill of light greyish brown silt sand (Fig 3i; plate 9).

Trench 5 consisted of three layers of material with a total depth of 1.3m (Fig 4d). A clean natural substrate was not revealed. The earliest of these was a layer (503) of mid grey-brown silty clay, up to 0.30m deep. This was overlain by a layer (501) of mid brown-white clayey chalk up to 1m deep. The east end of the trench had a deposit (502) overlying this of mid brown-grey clayey silt, up to 1m deep.

Trench 6 consisted of three layers of material with a total depth of 1.5m (Fig 4a and e; plate 4). A natural substrate (603) of mid orange-brown clayey silt was revealed. This was overlain by a layer (602) of firm mid grey-brown silt, up to 0.75m deep, deepest in the centre of the trench and rising to the north-east and south-west. This was overlain by a layer (601) of firm dark grey-brown silt, up to 0.75m deep, which was overlain by a final layer (600) of loose dark brown silt, up to 0.5m deep.

Trench 7 consisted of five layers of material with a total depth of 1.3m (Fig 4f). A natural substrate (705) of mid orange-brown clayey silt was revealed. This was overlain by a layer (704) of mid brown-grey silty clay, up to 0.5m deep, and was overlain by a layer (703) of dark brown-grey silty clay, up to 0.4m wide. This was overlain by a layer (702) of mid brown sandy silt up to 0.12m deep. This was overlain by a layer (701) of brick rubble up to 0.08m deep, and this was overlain by a final layer (700) of Dark grey silty rubble up to 0.2m deep.

Trench 8 consisted of four layers of material with a total depth of 1.15m (Fig 4b and g; plate 5). A natural substrate (804) of mid orange-brown clayey silt was revealed. This was overlain by three layers, the earliest of which was a deposit (803) of mid brown silt up to 0.65m deep, on the north-east end of the trench. Next to this was a deposit (802) of re-deposited chalk, up to 0.4m deep. To the south-west of this was a deposit (801) of mid brown silt, up to 0.6m deep. These three deposits were all overlain by a final layer (800) of dark grey silty rubble, up to 0.45m deep.

Trench 9 consisted of four layers of material with a total depth of 1.2m (Fig 5a and b). A clean natural substrate was not revealed. The earliest of these was a layer (903) of mid grey sandy silt, up to 0.4m deep, and was overlain by a layer (902) of compacted re-deposited chalk, up to 0.2m deep. This was overlain by a layer (901) of loose dark brown silt, up to 0.4m deep. This was overlain by a final layer (900) of light brown-white chalk rubble, up to 0.2m deep.

Trench 10 consisted of two layers of material with a total depth of 0.7m (Fig 5c; plate 6). A natural substrate (1002) of mid orange-brown clayey silt was revealed. This was overlain by a layer (1001) of mid brown-grey sandy silt, up to 0.2m deep. This was overlain by a layer (1000) of dark brown-grey sandy silt up to 0.15m deep.

The majority of deposits listed above, excluding the natural substrates where present, also contained fragments of modern brick and tile, none of which was recovered.

8.0 Discussion and Conclusions

All of the deposits identified during the evaluation, including the three pits in Trench 4, were modern, probably dating from the mid 19th century onwards at the time of the construction of the railway system bordering the site. Parts of the site were developed during the following century, resulting in the concrete and later hard standing layers in some trenches.

9.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

Archaeological evaluation was effective in demonstrating the majority of the site has been disturbed by several phases of modern activity. The small number of features identified dated to the late post-medieval period, and it is unlikely earlier remains would be encountered on the site.

10.0 Project Archive

The project archive, consisting of the site recording will be deposited with printed copies of this report to The Historic Research Group for Sittingbourne; following deposition, the archive will be available for consultation by contacting the research group directly. A copy of the full report will also be uploaded to the Archaeology Data Service OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS) database, where it will be publicly accessible online.

11.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeological Services would like to thank Balloch Construction for this commission.

12.0 References

British Geological Survey consulted online 08-09-2014 at <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

Kent Historic Environment Record (HER) consulted online 08-09-2014 at <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway>

Ordnance Survey historic mapping consulted online 08-09-2014 at <http://www.old-maps.co.uk/index.html>

Savage, R. D., 2014, *Nos. 109-111, Staplehurst Road, Sittingbourne, Kent: specification for an archaeological evaluation*. PCAS. Job No. 1303

Swale Borough Council (SBC), 2011, *Sittingbourne Conservation Area: Character Appraisal and Management Strategy*.

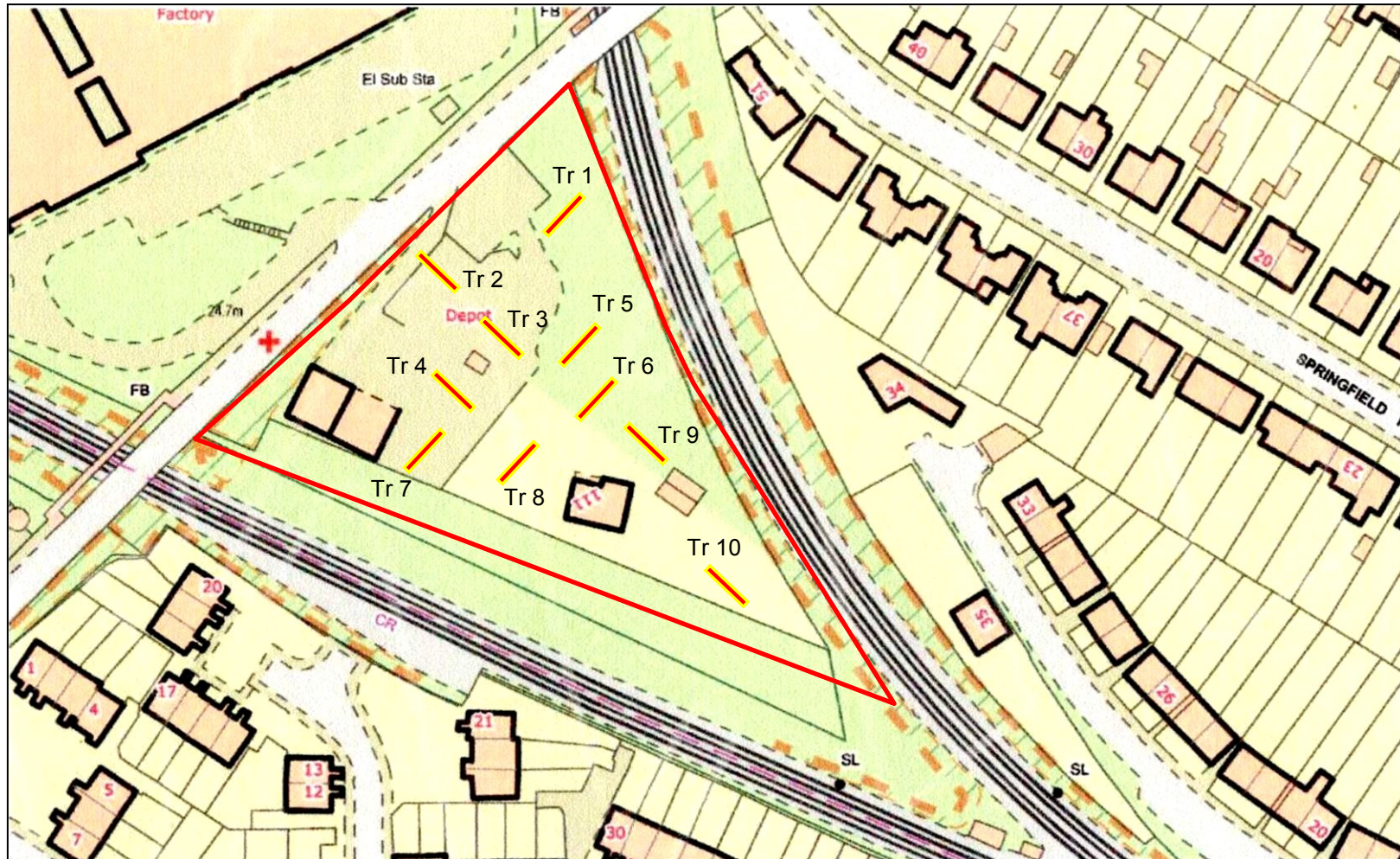
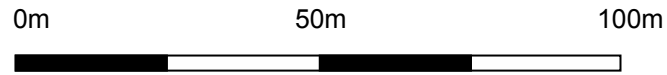


Figure 2: As-existing plan of the site at scale 1:1250, showing the proposed trench locations. Plan supplied by client.

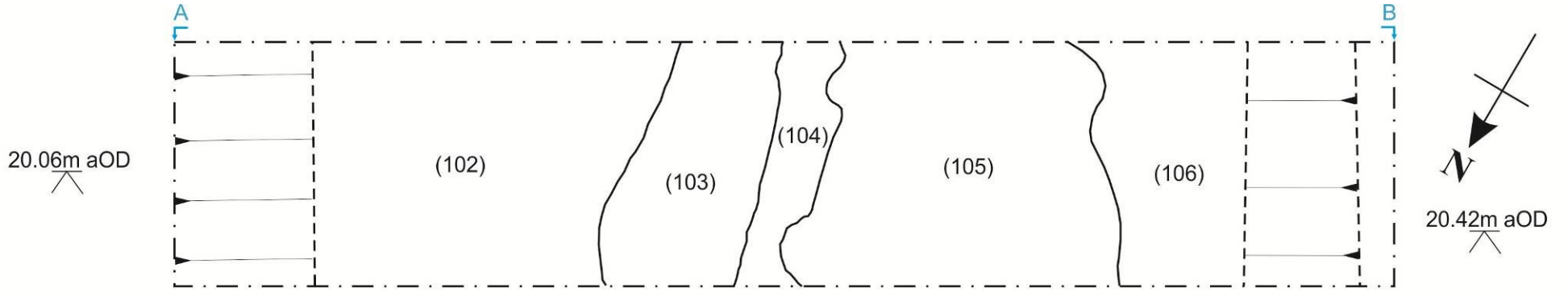


Figure 3a: Trench 1 plan (1:50)

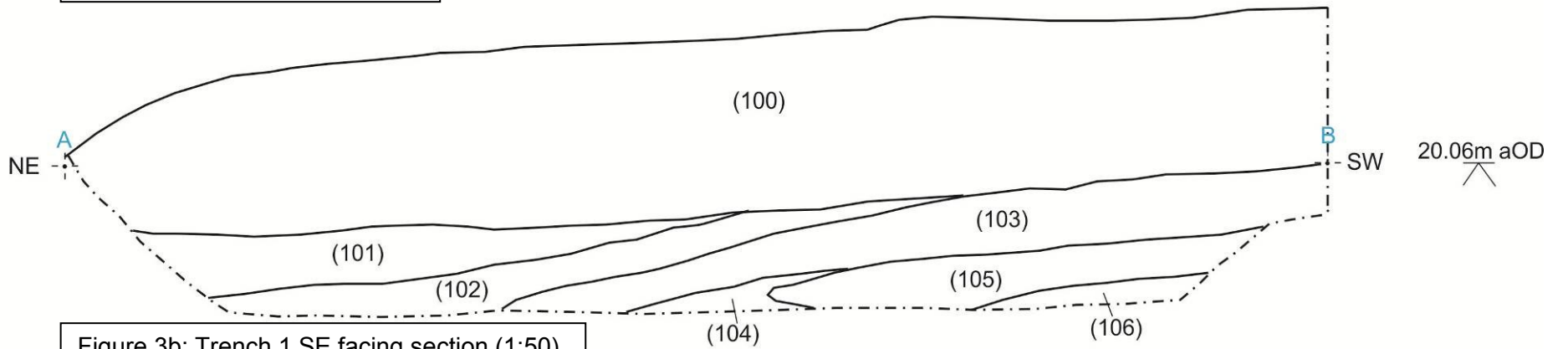


Figure 3b: Trench 1 SE facing section (1:50)

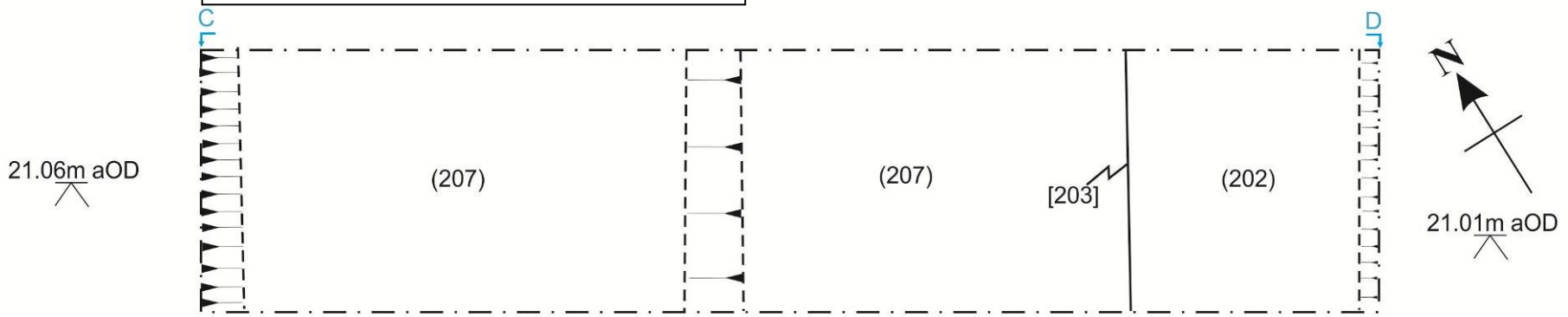


Figure 3c: Trench 2 plan (1:50)

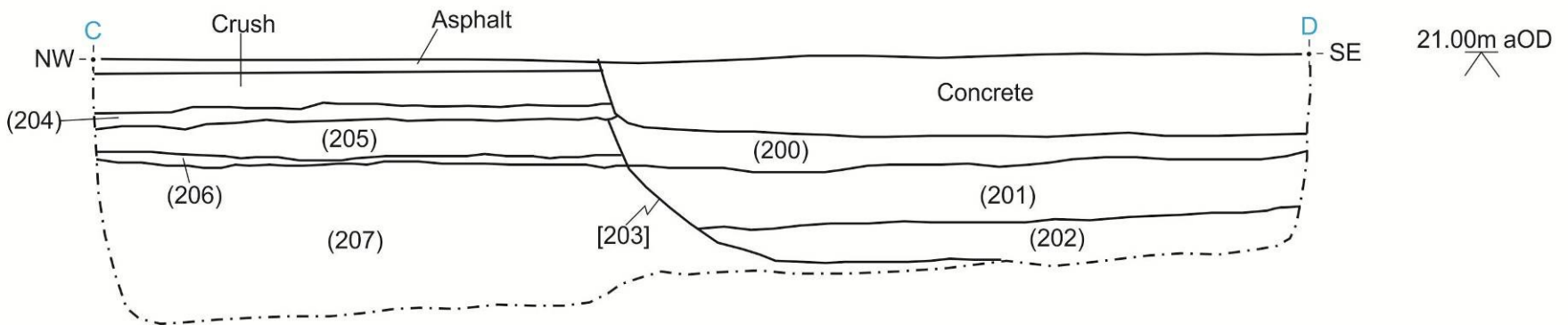


Figure 3d: Trench 1 SW facing section (1:50)

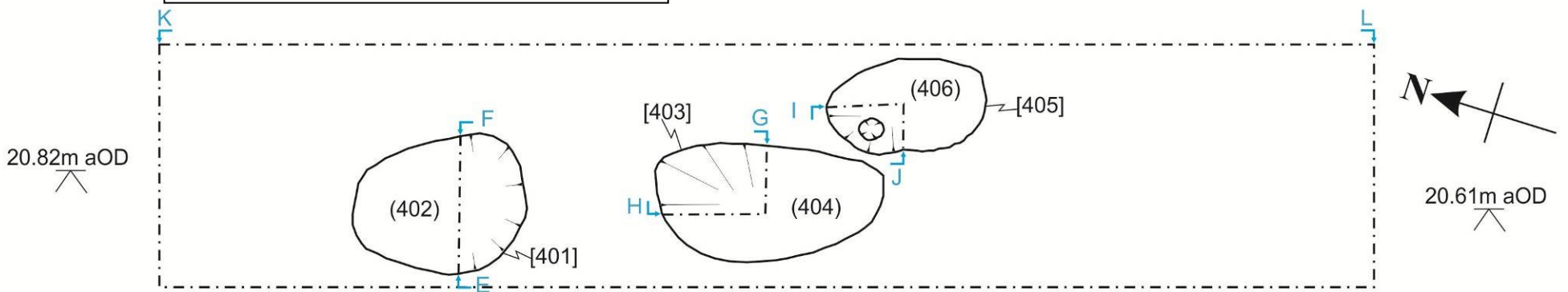


Figure 3e: Trench 4 plan (1:50)

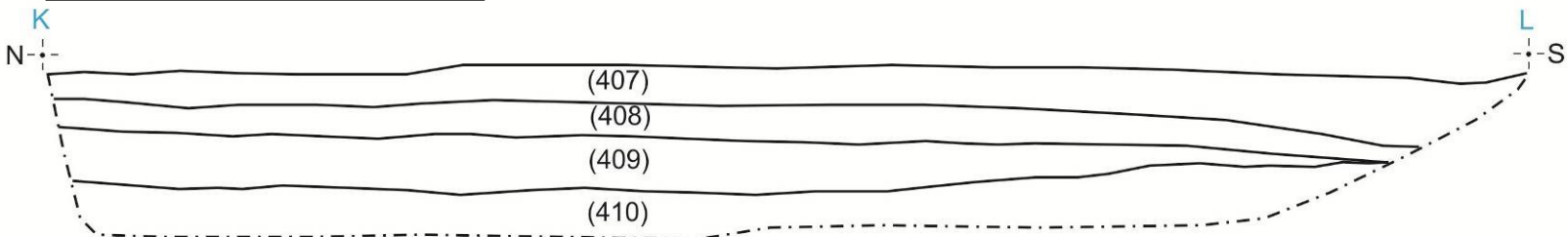


Figure 3f: Trench 4 W facing section (1:50)

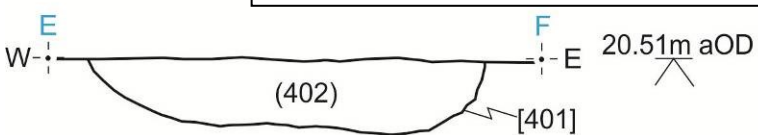


Figure 3g: Pit [401] (1:50)



Figure 3g: Pit [403] (1:20)

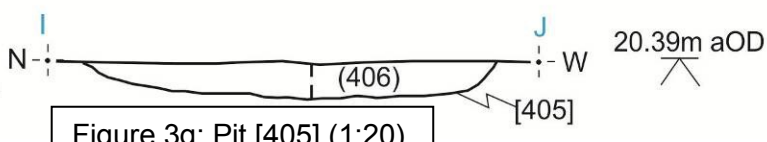
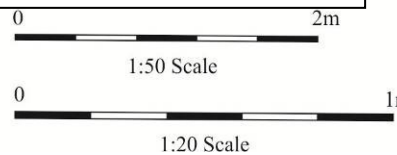


Figure 3g: Pit [405] (1:20)

Figure 3: Trenches 1, 2 and 4 plans and representative sections (1:50); pits [401], [403] and [405] sections (1:20)

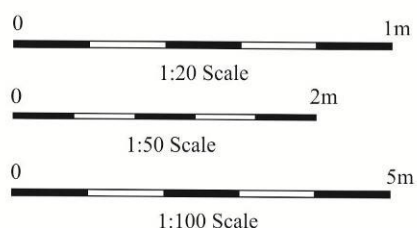
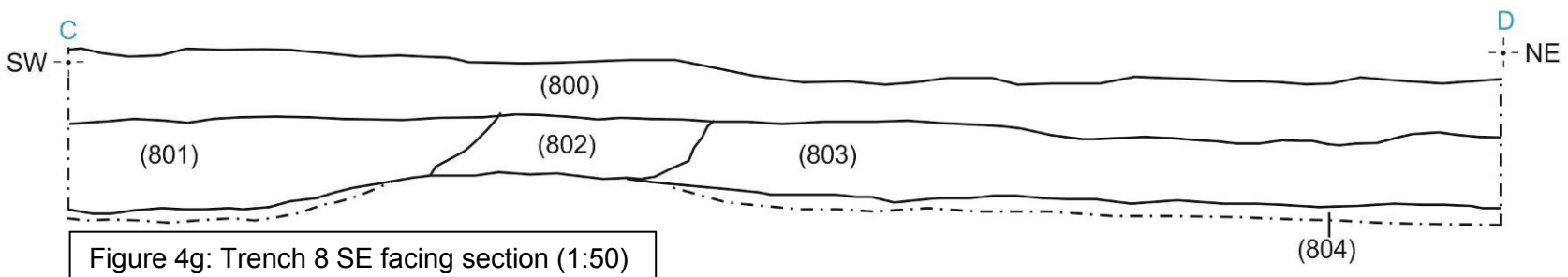
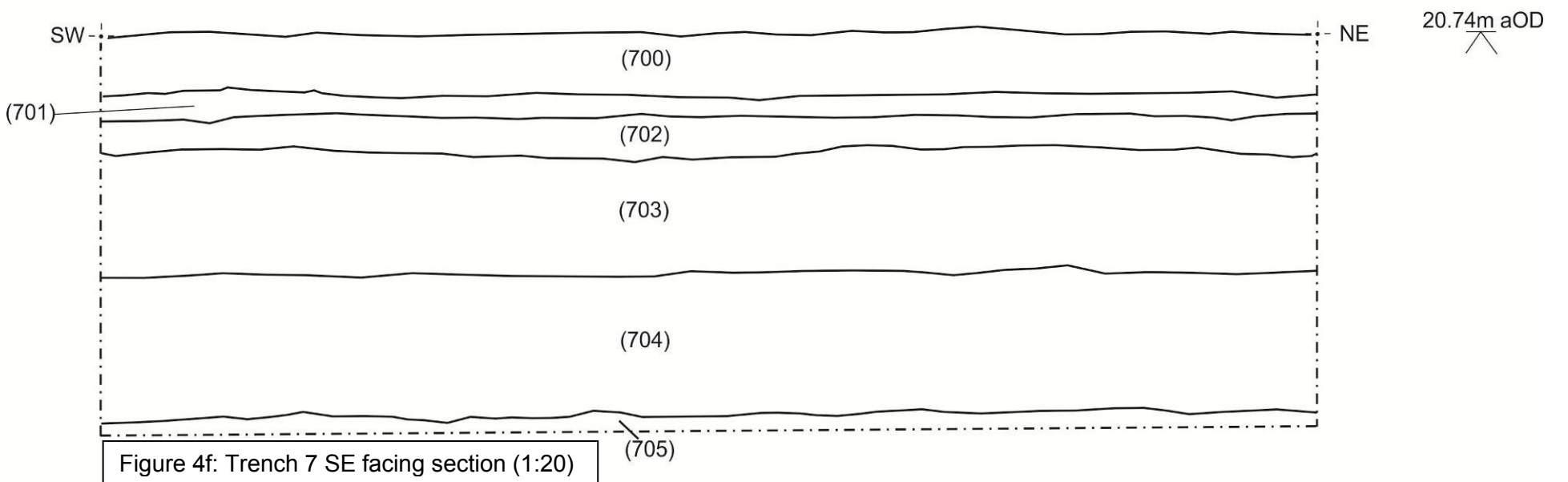
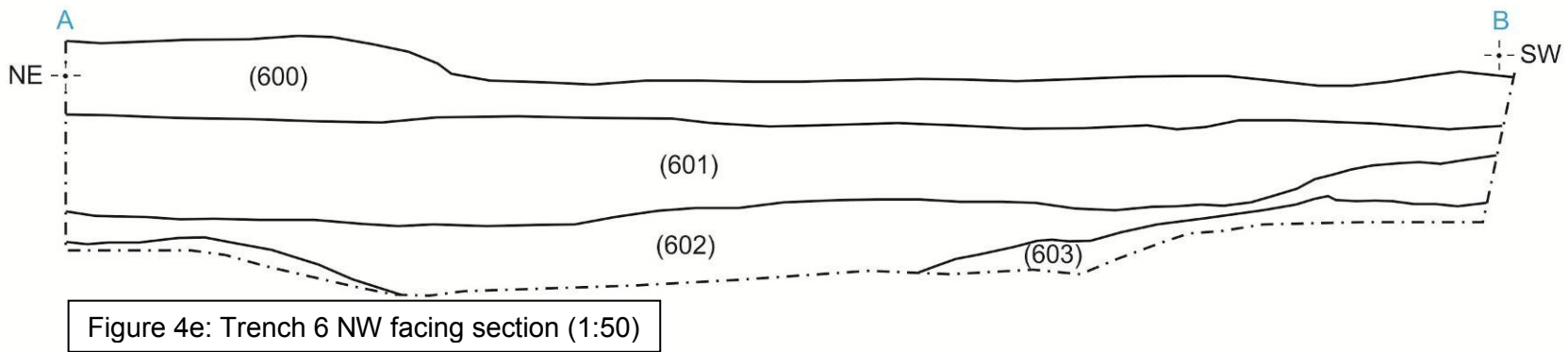
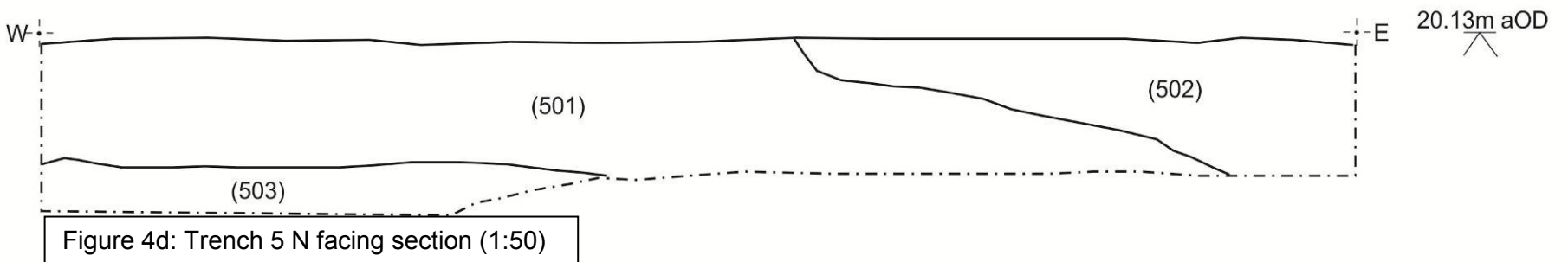
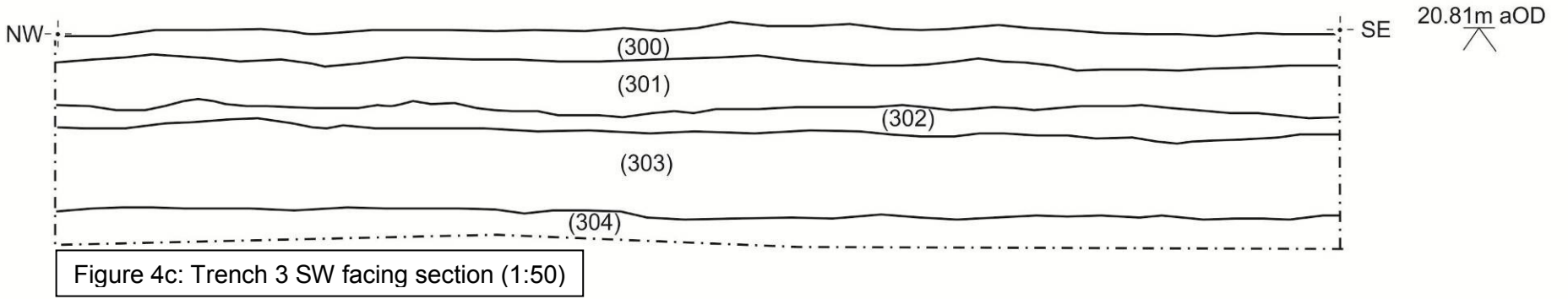
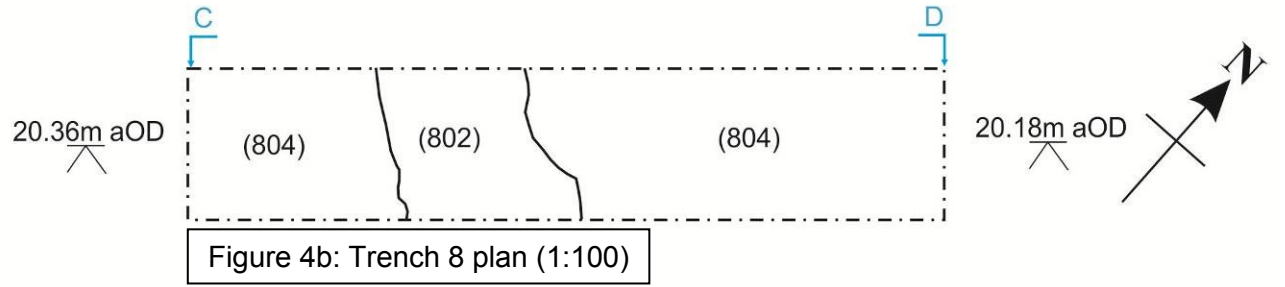
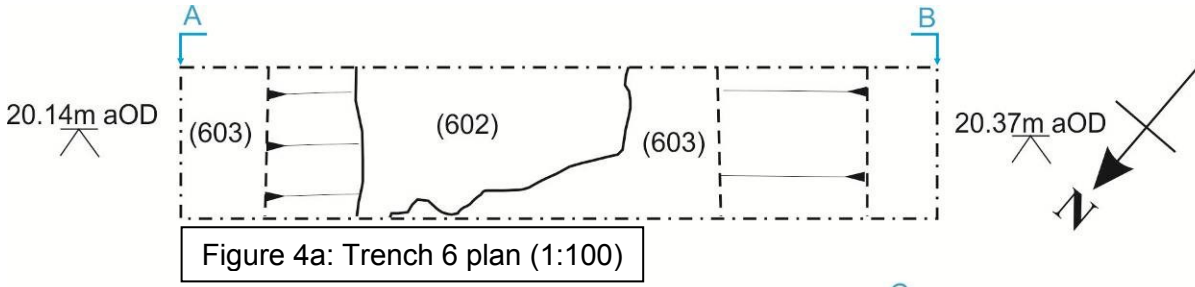


Figure 4: Trenches 6 and 8 plans (1:100), Trenches 3, 5, 6 and representative sections (1:50) and Trench 7 representative section (1:20)

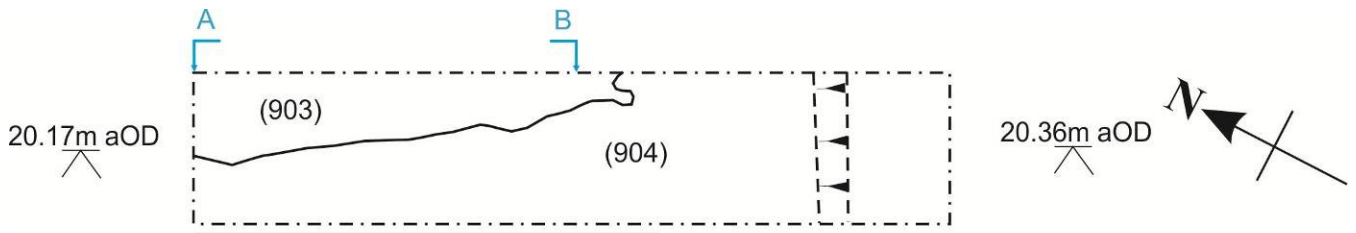


Figure 5a: Trench 9 plan (1:100)

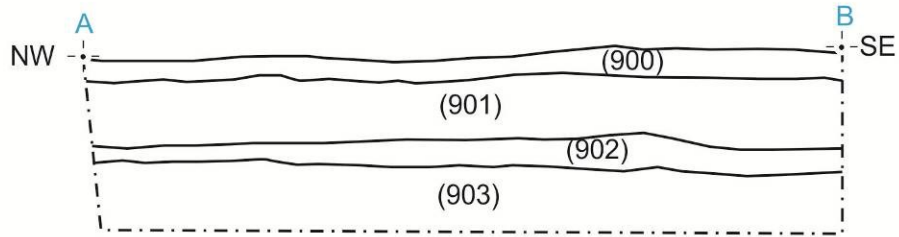


Figure 5b: Trench 9 SW facing section (1:50)

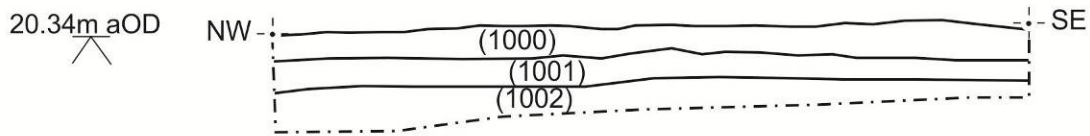


Figure 5c: Trench 10 SW facing section (1:50)

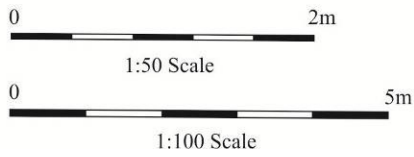


Figure 5: Trenches 9 plan (1:100), and Trenches 9 and 10 representative sections (1:50)

Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: General view of the site, facing WNW



Plate 2: General view of the site, facing SE



Plate 3: Trench 4 pre-excitation, facing NE



Plate 4: Trench 6, facing W



Plate 5: Trench 8, facing WSW



Plate 6: Trench 10, facing SE



Plate 7: Pit [401], facing NW



Plate 8: Pit [403], facing W



Plate 9: Pit [405], facing NE

Appendix 2: Context Summary

Context no.	Type	Description	Finds/dating
Trench 1			
100	Layer	Mid grey loose sand with occasional patches of mid orange gritty clay	Modern
101	Layer	Compacted mid greyish brown clay	Modern
102	Layer	Compacted mid orange-brown redeposited brick clay	Modern
103	Layer	Mid grey clayey sand	Modern
104	Layer	Redeposited loose chalk	Modern
105	Layer	Mid orange-brown sandy clay	Modern
106	Layer	Compact mid orange-brown sandy clay	Modern
Trench 2			
200	Layer	Friable dark greyish brown silty sand	Modern
201	Layer	Mid orange-brown silty clay brick earth	Modern
202	Layer	Soft dark brown silty clay	Modern
203	Cut	Machine cut for modern hard standing	Modern
204	Layer	Friable dark greyish brown silty sand	Modern
205	Layer	Loose black cinder fragments	Modern
206	Layer	Mid orange sandy gravel lens	Modern
207	Layer	Loose black cinder fragments	Modern
Trench 3			
300	Layer	Modern tarmac	Modern
301	Layer	Modern concrete	Modern
302	Layer	Mid orange-brown silty clay brick earth	Modern
303	Layer	Friable dark greyish brown silty sand	Modern
304	Layer	Soft dark brown silty clay	Modern
Trench 4			
401	Cut	Irregular sub-circular shallow pit with steep sloping sides and a flat base, 1.04m wide and 0.20m deep	Post-med
402	Fill	Mid greyish-brown silty sand, 1.04m wide and 0.20m deep	Pottery, clay pipe, Post-med
403	Cut	Irregular sub-circular shallow pit with sloping sides and a flat base, 1.30m wide and 0.14m deep	Post-med
404	Fill	Mid greyish brown silty sand, 1.30m wide and 0.14m deep	Post-med
405	Cut	Irregular sub-circular shallow pit with sloping sides and a flat base with a slight depression in the middle, 1.08m wide and 0.09m deep	Post-med
406	Fill	Light greyish brown silty sand, 1.08m wide and 0.09m deep	Post-med
407	Layer	Mid greyish-blue sandy silt, 0.35m deep	Modern
408	Layer	Modern concrete, 0.18m deep	Modern
409	Layer	Brick layer with concrete fixing, 0.14m deep	Modern
410	Layer	Mid yellow-brown sandy clay, 0.30m deep	Modern
Trench 5			
501	Layer	Mid brown-grey clayey-silt, up to 1.00m deep	Modern
502	Layer	Mid brown-white clayey chalk, up to 1.00m deep	Modern
503	Layer	Mid grey-brown silty clay, up to 0.30m deep	Modern
Trench 6			
600	Layer	Loose dark brown silt with modern waste material, up to 0.50m deep	Modern
601	Layer	Firm dark grey-brown silt, up to 0.75m deep	Modern
602	Layer	Firm mid grey-brown silt, up to 0.75m deep	Modern
603	Layer	Mid orange-brown clayey silt – brick earth	Geological
Trench 7			
700	Layer	Dark grey silty rubble, compacted to form ground surface, 0.20m deep	Modern
701	Layer	Brick rubble, up to 0.08m deep	
702	Layer	Mid brown sandy silt, up to 0.12m deep	Modern
703	Layer	Dark brown-grey silty clay, up to 0.40m deep	Modern

Context no.	Type	Description	Finds/dating
704	Layer	Mid brown-grey silty clay, up to 0.50m deep	Modern
705	Layer	Mid orange-brown clayey silt – brick earth	Geological
Trench 8			
800	Layer	Dark grey silty rubble, compacted to form ground surface, 0.45m deep	Modern
801	Layer	Mid brown silt, up to 0.60m deep	Modern
802	Layer	Redeposited natural chalk, 0.40m deep	Modern
803	Layer	Mid brown silt, up to 0.65m deep	Modern
804	Layer	Mid orange-brown clayey silt – brick earth	Geological
Trench 9			
900	Layer	Light chalk rubble ground surface, up to 0.20m deep	Modern
901	Layer	Loose dark brown silt with modern waste material, up to 0.40m deep	Modern
902	Layer	Compacted redeposited natural chalk, up to 0.20m deep	Modern
903	Layer	Mid grey sandy silt, up to 0.40m deep	Modern
Trench 10			
1000	Layer	Dark brown-grey sandy silt, up to 0.15m deep	Modern
1001	Layer	Mid brown-grey sandy silt, up to 0.20m deep	Modern
1002	Layer	Mid orange-brown clayey silt – brick earth	Geological

Appendix 3: Finds Catalogue

Context	Material	No.	Weight (g)	Description	Date	Action
402	Pot	1	59g	English stoneware bottle base	C19th/20th	Discard
402	Clay Tobacco Pipe	1	1g	Stem fragment	C19th/20th	Discard

Appendix 4: OASIS Summary